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To cite this article: J. Holme Nicholson M.A. (1899) Antiquities of Lancaster and District: Being the Address of the President of the Historical Section of the Royal Archæological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, July 20th, 1898, *Archaeological Journal*, 56:1, 15-27, DOI: [10.1080/00665983.1899.10852808](https://doi.org/10.1080/00665983.1899.10852808)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00665983.1899.10852808>



Published online: 16 Jul 2014.



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ANTIQUITIES OF LANCASTER AND DISTRICT: BEING
THE ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE ROYAL ARCHÆOLOGICAL
INSTITUTE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,
JULY 20TH, 1898.

By J. HOLME NICHOLSON, M.A.,

President of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society.

The ancient and venerable town of Lancaster, which the Institute has this year chosen for its annual gathering, stands on the threshold of scenery which has inspired the pen of the poet and the pencil of the artist, and which has become the paradise of the brain-weary toiler, who seeks and finds amidst its sylvan and pastoral beauties, its enchanting lakes, and its mountain solitudes, rest and refreshment from the labours, the cares, and the anxieties which in this active busy nineteenth century is the lot of most of the dwellers in our towns and cities. Here we have just left behind us the grimy homes of the manufactories and workshops, whose products are distributed over the wide world, civilised and uncivilised alike. The exigencies of modern life have hardly as yet sullied and vulgarised the charms of nature, and traces of our remote ancestors are not entirely obliterated. Celt, Roman, Saxon, Dane, and Norman, still speak to us through the remains they have left behind them, and if we let our imaginations have full play, we may in some measure realise the conditions under which they lived.

In the few remarks which I have the honour to address you as introductory to the Session of the Historical Section, I propose in brief terms to glance at the landmarks which the successive occupants of this district of North Lancashire have left behind them, and the chief incidents in their history, which touch the great events in our National History. In doing so, I make no claim to the production of any new and original matter. The main facts which I shall bring to your notice are very generally known, or may be readily learnt by a study of our

local historians, and the transactions of our Historical and Antiquarian Societies, but as it is probable there may be many attending this meeting who are more or less strangers to the district and its history, I have thought it might be useful to them if I were to gather up from various sources a story of the past.

Of the earliest race of men who are known to have peopled Britain in prehistoric times, those belonging to the Palæolithic, or early stone age, we have no authentic vestiges such as are found in the river gravels of Southern England in the shape of rudely fashioned and unpolished stone implements. At that period Northern Britain was covered with glaciers descending from the great ice sheet which overspread all Northern Europe. If there was a population here at all any relics of it must have been swept away in the great geological changes which took place subsequently.

North Lancashire, however, furnishes undoubted evidence of the people who succeeded them, those of the Neolithic or newer Stone Age. This evidence chiefly rests on specimens of stone axes, perforated hammer heads, and other implements and weapons, well-shaped and polished to a smooth surface, various articles made from flint, such as knives, scrapers, spear points, and exquisitely wrought arrow heads. Some of these it is possible belonged to the latest portion of the Neolithic Age, and may indeed have been contemporary with the coming in of the Bronze Age. In the south-eastern portion of this county, on the flanks of the Pennine range, distinct Neolithic floors are found, that is to say, that on removing the surface soil flint chippings, cores, finished and unfinished implements are found in great abundance, in one spot indeed there seems to have been a regular manufactory of flint implements.

In the Furness district, on the high moor lands between the valley of the Crake and the Duddon, are very extensive remains of a human settlement. They consist of walled enclosures, the smaller of which are probably the walls of dwellings, whilst the larger ones would serve for the shelter and protection of the flocks and herds of their inhabitants. Cairns and evidences of burial, or cremation abound in and about these settlements. As no implements

or weapons of metal have been found near these settlements, we are justified, I think, in ascribing them to the Neolithic Age.

The Furness district is also rich in archæological remains which may be ascribed either to the Neolithic Age or that which succeeded it, namely, to the period when weapons and implements of bronze had superseded stone and flint. Amongst the most interesting of these may be mentioned several hut circles, or camps at Holmbank, Sunbrick, Scales, and Birkrigg, in the parish of Urswick. For the most part they take the form of oval enclosures formed of loose earth and stones with traces of a protecting ditch. The largest and most important of these is commonly known as the "Stone Walls." Dr. Barber describes them as "two enclosures, one an elongated circle or rude oval, the other rectangular in form and placed to the southward of the first. The principal figure measures 350 feet by 315 feet, these dimensions including the outer walls, which are from 9 to 10 feet in thickness at their foundations. The plan of these walls is very curious. They are composed of blocks of limestone placed without mortar, the basement stones being in some instances of huge proportions and set endways in the ground in double rows, other stones of smaller size being filled in between. A portion of the enclosure is covered with wood and intersected by a fence-wall. Within this oval, but not quite in the centre, is a smaller circle communicating with the outer wall by several slightly curved ways which divide the whole into a series of compartments." I have quoted this description in detail, as I think it gives us a good idea of the conditions under which the people lived at that time. A small tribe or clan built their rude huts around that of their chief, and the whole settlement was surrounded by a vallum of earth and stones with a ditch on the outer side, and its entrance probably protected by trunks of trees. It is the common type of settlement prevailing among savage people in other lands.

So far we are dependent for our history of North Lancashire on deductions drawn from a study of the remains which the earliest inhabitants have left behind them. With the advent of the Romans, we have, in

addition, the light of written history for our guide, and this begins for us with Agricola's northward march. The Britons inhabiting the North-West of England, consisted of various tribes leagued together under the general name of Brigantes. They seemed to have maintained their independence for some time, but were in A.D. 69 and 70 reduced to submission by Petilius Cerealis. The subjugation, however, was not complete. The spirit of insurrection broke out from time to time—but they were soon to fall under a master's hand—Agricola assumed the command in A.D. 78, and having during the latter portion of that year, by severe repression and wise administration, brought North Wales and Cheshire into a state of quiet, he in the Spring of 79 turned northwards.

His progress must have been difficult, as Lancashire was mostly a vast tract of forest and bog. Reaching the site of the town we are now assembled in his most direct route seemed to be by the valley of the Lune, and for a long time it was generally supposed that it was the route actually taken, but the researches of the late Mr. William Jackson, F.S.A., and Chancellor Ferguson have, I think, conclusively shown that Agricola, with consummate judgment and daring, crossed the sands of Morecambe Bay and the Duddon Sands, and proceeded by the coast of Cumberland to the shore of the Solway. The camps which he formed to keep open his base in North Lancashire are still conspicuous at Ribchester and Lancaster, but we find no trace now existing of another camp on the coast route until we reach Ravenglass in Cumberland.

Sites for camps of some kind have been suggested at Cartmel and Castle Head, near Lindal, and at Dalton in Furness. The positions in the centre of the two peninsulas seem to be suitable for the purpose.

A considerable number of Roman coins have been found at Castle Head, and slight indications, now levelled down, of a rampart at Cartmel. The Roman roads running through North Lancashire are those of the Maiden Way from Ribchester through Overborough up the valley of the Lune by Tebay, and so on through Westmorland and Cumberland to the Great Wall at Thirlwall Castle—a road from Ribchester, and another from Walton near Preston which converged near Galgate,

then ran through Lancaster, whence it threw out three branches, the eastern one to Overborough, the central one to Kendal, and the western one to Hest Bank, and across the Cartmel and Low Furness peninsulas. These roads are in some places the sites of modern roads and lanes, and in other places have only been discoverable when the surface soil has been disturbed by draining, ploughing, or building operations.

The period which followed the departure of the Romans early in the fifth century was one of anarchy and misery to the unfortunate Britons, harassed on all sides by savage foes. North Lancashire would no doubt suffer perhaps to a greater extent than many other parts of the Kingdom, as it lay exposed to easy attack from the Picts and Scots from Ireland and the West of Scotland. We know the old story how the Britons, unable to withstand their enemies, called in the aid of the Teutonic tribes, and how eventually, but not until after long struggles, they became their masters and founded the English nation. The history of the making and conquest of England is told in the most complete and graphic manner by the late J. R. Green, and from it we learn that the English supremacy was not established over the Northern Britons until A.D. 603, when Æthelbert gained a victory over them and their allies the Scots at the battle of Daegsastan, localised by Green in Liddesdale.

The antiquarian remains in North Lancashire during the Anglo-Saxon period until the Normans were in full possession, nearly five centuries, are chiefly earthworks and moated mounds or "Burhs," possibly a few examples of architecture and sculptured stones and crosses. The Saxon Thane seems in many instances to have fixed his dwelling on some steep natural or artificial mound, and to have encompassed it with a ditch, sometimes a dry one but filled with water when this was possible, but always strongly palisaded. The accommodation on the top of the mound must have been limited, but probably he desired to have none but his own family and a few of his most trusted dependents very near him. For the bulk of his dependents he provided room in an outer bailey, which would probably be also protected by palisades. Four of these mounds are in the Lune Valley

between Lancaster and Kirkby Lonsdale, viz., at Halton, Arkholme, Melling, and Gressingham, and one named the Moat Hill at Aldingham in Low Furness. The last named is interesting from the fact that contiguous to it is a moated enclosure on the level ground which probably was the outer bailey, such as I have described.

Dr. Barber is of opinion that the Moat Hill was originally a barrow, and mentions that the late Col. Braddyll sunk a shaft down the centre of the hill from the top, and portions of human bones were brought to light; this fact, however, is not incompatible with the after use of the mound as the "burh" of a Saxon lord.

The traces of early Christianity in the district are, I believe, few, but what we have are interesting. The earliest churches were mostly wooden ones, and would therefore soon disappear, but one at least of stone at Heysham is, I think, long anterior to the Norman Conquest. I refer to the small chapel or oratory of St. Patrick which stands on the headland overtopping the present parish church, itself a structure with remains if not of Saxon of very early Norman work. The late Rev. Thomas Lees, F.S.A., who had devoted much study to early church history and architecture, conjectured that St. Patrick's Chapel might have been a cell or oratory of a hermit, or an anchorite, and that the graves hewn in the solid rock on which the chapel stands may have been those of successive occupants of the monastic cell. I do not think this explanation is quite satisfactory, for one at least of the graves is that of a child. That the graves belong to the Anglo-Saxon period may be inferred from the fact that on removing the surface soil from the rock in which the graves are cut interlacing knot-work so characteristic of the period was discovered by Mr. Roper. But whatever has been the nature of this chapel I think there can be little doubt that it owes its foundation to that missionary zeal of the Irish Celtic Church which spread the Gospel among the British tribes of Strathclyde. If we accept the opinion of Monsignor Gradwell we have also in the parish church of Overton, but a few miles distant near the mouth of the Lune, and which is also dedicated to St. Patrick, an edifice which dates as far back as the seventh century. I cannot myself

see any valid evidence for ascribing so early a date for this church. The most distinctive feature of its architecture is its doorway, but that in my judgment is early Norman. Churches of pre Norman date existed at Lancaster and Halton, as examples of carved stones, characteristic of work of the period, are to be found inserted in their walls. The most important relic of the early church at Lancaster is the Runic Cross, which was discovered in 1807, in digging a grave in the churchyard. After many vicissitudes it has found a resting place in the British Museum. There it is lost to the general public, for who would notice it amongst the crowd of monuments of antiquity. I think it would have been better to have preserved it in the place to which it belonged, and where it would have helped to illustrate the local history. Its special features of interest lie in its being one of the few Christian monuments in Great Britain bearing inscriptions in Anglian Runes. The reading generally accepted is that suggested by the late John Mitchell Kemble, as slightly varied by Professor Stephens, "Bid (pray ye) for Cūnibalth Cuthbærehting (Cuthbert's son)," and its erection is ascribed to the seventh century. To this date, or the eighth century, may also be ascribed a fragment of a cross at Heversham, and the still more important crosses at Halton and Heysham. At Heysham we have one of those curious sculptured pre Norman stones, known as "Hogbacks," which has long been an object of speculation and interest. I forbear to say more about the Heysham stone and the Halton cross as we shall have an opportunity of visiting them, and hearing the interpretation which the learning and research of the Rev. W. S. Calverley and Dr. Colley March have put on the figures sculptured thereon.

At the time of the Norman Conquest Lancashire must have been but thinly peopled. Vast tracts of forest overspread the country, the lower lying lands were interspersed with bog and morasses. Isolated portions were cleared and cultivated, and here the wooden dwellings of the free man or ceorl, with those of the unfree man or læt, the tiller of land which another man owned, clustered around the castle or fortified habitation of the thegn.

The land we now know as Lancashire did not exist as a separate county at the time of the Norman invasion. The southern portion was described in Domesday Survey under Cheshire, but it formed no part of that county, but was spoken of as the land between the Mersey and Ribble. Its ecclesiastical ties, its dialect, and its people were all Mercian. The land north of the Ribble was settled, not from Mercia but from Northumbria, and its traditions, people, and dialect were Northumbrian, and in the Survey it was treated as a part of Yorkshire under the sub-head of "Agemundrenesse," and it includes not only the modern hundred of Amounderness but the whole of Lancashire north of the Ribble, and a number of manors in Craven and Westmorland. In the century or two which preceded the Conquest, this northern portion had been the scene of constant conflict between Saxon and Dane, and a great portion of the land laid in consequence thereof untilld, and is described in Domesday Survey as waste and of no value. This was perhaps more especially the case in the land between the Ribble and Lune than in Lonsdale. Col. Fishwick, from data furnished by the Survey, estimates that out of over 78,000 acres in three parishes of Amounderness only 8,400 were under cultivation. From this it would appear that, in this district at least, nine-tenths of the land was forest, moorland, or waste.

Lancaster from its commanding position, and from its having been a fortified camp of the Romans, and probably of the Britons before them, must have been the place of greatest importance in the district, but strange to say, in Domesday it appears only as a dependency of the manor of Halton, which had been held as part of the possessions of Tostig, Earl of Northumbria, one of the sons of the great Earl Godwin, and the brother of Harold, the last of the Saxon Kings. Tostig fell at the battle of Stamford Bridge, three days before the landing of the Normans.

Soon after the Conquest the land between the Mersey and the Ribble was granted, with other large territories in many other counties, to Roger of Poitou, a scion of the great Norman family of Montgomery. Whether it was he or his father who commanded one of the divisions of William's army at the battle of Senlac was the subject of

an interesting controversy some years ago, between our President, Sir Henry Howarth, and Mr. Freeman, the historian of the Norman Conquest. The arguments on either side were weighty, and I will not presume to judge between two such competent advocates, but we may take it that the rich endowments he received were the reward for valuable services rendered, if not by him personally, by his family. At the time of the Survey, Lancaster was amongst the King's lands in Amounderness and belonged to his demesne; at a later period it appeared to have been granted to Roger, and became the *Caput Honoris*.

Thereupon he restored and partially rebuilt great parts of the Castle, and erected the massive Norman Keep, still the most important and imposing part of the Castle. After repeated rebellions Roger de Poitou was banished in 1102, and his possessions were escheated to the Crown. Four years later it was granted to the successor of Ivo de Taillebois, the first baron of Kendal. The fifth baron of Kendal assumed the name of De Lancaster, and in this family it remained until it passed by an heiress to the FitzReinfreds until the reign of King John, when it became temporarily alienated from them in consequence of FitzReinfred having joined the Barons in revolt against the King, but it was restored to William de Lancaster the third in 1241, at whose death without issue it reverted to the Crown. In 1267 Henry III granted the Castle, honour and town of Lancaster, to his second son Edmund (surnamed Crouchback), creating him at the same time Earl of Lancaster. His son Thomas, second Earl, vastly increased his possessions by marriage with the heiress of Henry de Lacy, and in virtue of that marriage became the most opulent as well as the most powerful subject in England, possessed in his own right and that of his wife of the Earldoms of Lancaster, Leicester, Lincoln, and Salisbury, with all the jurisdiction and power which in that age were annexed to such dignities. The part he took in heading the opposition to the King's favourites, Gaveston and the Le Despensers, brought about his fall and his humiliation, and his tragic end forms a notable incident in our national history. His honours, of course, were forfeited, but his brother and heir, Henry, was restored in blood and honours. He died in 1345 and was

succeeded by his son and heir, a second Henry. In him the family fortunes culminated. He was created Earl of Derby in his father's lifetime, the Earldoms of Lancaster and Leicester devolved upon him at his father's death, the Earldom of Lincoln was bestowed upon him a few years after by a new grant, and finally he was raised to the highest rank as Duke of Lancaster, "with power to have a chancery in the county of Lancaster, and to issue out writs there under his own seal, as well touching pleas of the Crown as any other relating to the common laws of this realm; as also to enjoy all other liberties and regalities belonging to a County Palatine in as ample a manner as the Earl of Chester had within that county." The "Good Duke of Lancaster," as he was called, died of the plague, and left two daughters coheiresses. The Lancaster estates with many others fell to the share of the younger, Blanch, who had married John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward III. By the death of the elder without issue, the remainder of her father's great possessions came into the hands of the Lady Blanch. Of this lady Chaucer, alluding to her name, says :

" And goode faire White she hete,
That was my lady name ryghte.
She was bothe faire and bryghte,
She hadde not hir name wronge."

but her personal charms were not her only endowments—

" Trewely she was to myn eye,
The soleyne fenix of Arabye;
For ther lyveth nevyr but oon,
Ne swich as she, ne knowe I noon.
To speke of godenesse, trewely she
Had as moche debonairyeté
As ever had Hester in the Bible,
And more, yif more were possyble."

She fell a victim to the last visitation of the Black Death in 1369, during the absence of her husband in France, leaving a son, the future King Henry IV.

During the reign of Edward II the county of Lancaster had suffered greatly from the devastations of the Scots. One of their incursions was made in 1320, when the town of Lancaster was burnt, and the Castle alone survived the fury of the invaders, though it did not escape the marks

of their violence. They ravaged not only Lancaster but the whole district round for a period of eighteen days. The inhabitants were reduced to a dreadful state of misery, and it was only by slow degrees that the town was rebuilt and the Castle recovered from the ruin, but under the munificent hand of John of Gaunt it was restored with more than its original strength and splendour. The name of John of Gaunt, "time honoured Lancaster," is intimately associated with the ancient town and Castle. Here he had held his court with almost regal pomp, and received the homage of his dependent knights and feudal tenants, and bestowed his protection and patronage on the burgesses of the town, obtaining for them several Royal Charters which granted them many important privileges.

None of the great Wars of the Roses were fought out in Lancashire, but Lancashire blood was copiously shed in those hideous and remorseless conflicts, and the castle was held at various times by both parties.

In the Scottish invasion of England in 1513, Lancashire men played an heroic part at the battle of Flodden under their brave leaders, Sir Edward Stanley of Hornby, and Bryan Tunstal of Thurland, the latter of whom fell in the battle—

" It is, I see
Bryan Tunstal, that bold esquire,
For in his banner I behold
A curling cock, as though he would crow . . .
His clean and undefiled blood
Good speed doth promise at my heart."

Tunstal is generally designated as the undefiled or "stainless knight," but this honourable appellation belonged to his father, Thomas Tunstal, and was bestowed upon him by Henry VII, after the battle of Bosworth—

" With Earl of Richmond he remained,
And Lords of the Lancastrian kin;
When then the Earl the crown had gained,
And England's empire fair did win,
He rendered Tunstal all his right,
Knowing his valiant blood unstained,
The king he caused this trusty knight
Undefiled Tunstal to be named."

The great religious movements which began, or rather

were revived, in the reign of Henry VIII, and which have influenced the whole current of our National History, stirred profoundly the hearts of Lancashire folk. Here were situated the great Abbeys of Whalley, Furness, Cockersand, with many smaller religious houses. The suppression of the monasteries in 1536 and the following years, caused great excitement in the northern counties, and led to the uprising, known as the "Pilgrimage of Grace." The Abbots of Whalley, Sawley, and Furness, either joined the army of the Commons or exercised their influence in inducing others to do so. Large numbers assembled around the Market Cross in Lancaster, and under the exhortations of the Abbot of Whalley, took the oath of fidelity to the Commons. The temporary success of the insurgents, and the melting away of the rebel host are matters of general history. Severe retribution fell upon the instigators and leaders. At the Spring Assizes at Lancaster in 1537, John Paslew, the aged Abbot of Whalley, was sentenced to death, and was hanged on a gallows near his own monastery. Two days previously the Abbot of Sawley and two monks of Whalley suffered death on Lancaster Moor. The Abbot of Furness and the Prior of Cartmel, though their sympathies were with their co-religionists, had been careful not to commit themselves to their extreme measures, but they did not escape the heavy hand of plunder and confiscation. The Commissioner reported that he "had determined to assay the Abbot of Furness himself, whether he would be contented to surrender to the King the said monastery, which thing so opened to the Abbot fairly, we found him of a very facile and ready mind to follow my advice in that behalf." The deed of surrender was accordingly signed by the Abbot and his brethren. The former was consoled by the gift of the Rectory of Dalton, and small pensions were granted to the monks. Thus fell the great Abbey of Furness, the second in England of the Cistercian order, and exceeded in opulence only by Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire.

North Lancashire was the scene of many stirring events during the early years of the Civil Wars, the tide of battle on many occasions surged up the valley of the

Lune. The Castles of Lancaster, Hornby and Thurland were besieged, taken, and retaken, and once Lancaster suffered severely by fire and sword, but I will not weary you with details, for which time will not allow, nor will I recount the incidents of the two attempts in 1715 and 1745, of the Stuarts to regain the throne of their ancestors so far as they relate to this county.

My endeavour in this brief account has been to show that this corner of our country is full of interest to the antiquary and the historian, and that the Royal Archæological Institute has done well in inviting its members to visit "the good old town of Lancaster."