

NOTES ON THE ARCHÆOLOGY OF MILBURN AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.¹

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The village of Milburn adjoins the northern border of Westmoreland, close to the line where the steep edge of the great upland tract culminating in Cross Fell merges into the undulating lowlands of Edenside. Being remote from any of the larger towns, and even yet some few miles off the line of any of the principal highways, Milburn lies out of the track of the general tourist; and consequently the many objects of antiquarian interest that its seclusion has helped to preserve in a form comparatively unmodified, remain as yet very little known.

It has therefore occurred to me that it might be of service to call attention to some of these with the purpose of inducing competent archæologists to visit the place, and to describe these objects in a manner more complete than my own knowledge will warrant me in attempting to do myself.

The great Roman Highway between Carlisle and Stainmoor is, as is well known, joined by another Roman Road somewhere in the neighbourhood of Appleby, coming in southward from the Alston district. From its highest point on Ousby Fell, where it reaches an elevation of 2,200 feet above the level of the sea, this branch of the Roman Road can be easily traced southward almost without interruption for nearly three miles—indeed the pavement was so good, and so easily seen in some places on Ousby Fell, that it was regarded as a convenient stone quarry when the common was enclosed, and part of it was actually taken up to build the walls with. From Bank Hall the road is traceable in the direction of Appleby only by some obscure indications until Lownthwaite Bridge is reached, where some agricultural operations on the Lownthwaite Farm disclosed part of the pavement some few years since. Then it re-appears at Underwood, and thence, so far as I have been able to learn, no certain indications of its course up to its junction with the main highway have yet been discovered. Under these circumstances it may be worth while to record any facts that may serve in any way to indicate the course taken by the remaining part of the road.

On the Ordnance maps the road is marked as extending southwards from Underwood, over Newbiggin Moor, about midway between the village of Milburn and the Earthworks at Loscars; thence, past the Mill, up the rising ground to a point about half-a-mile to the east of the Earthwork near Moorland Head; whence all further indication of its course southward is wanting. But there seems just a possibility that the Roman Road may have taken a somewhat different course after leaving Underwood, for the part of the present road lying between Milburn and Milburn Church, and extending southwards from Mill Lane to Gullom Holme, is called Low Street to this day (there are no

¹ Read in the Section of Antiquities at the Carlisle Meeting, August 3rd, 1882.

houses anywhere near); and the southward continuation of the same road, as far as the branch road to Milburn Grange, is also still known as High Street. Low Street and High Street together form part of a nearly straight road leading in the direction of Appleby as far as Long Marton, which, if prolonged a little over a mile, would strike the Stainmoor-Carlisle Road about Castrigg, a mile or thereabouts north of Appleby. Moreover, the name of the village of Milburn might also be taken into account in the same speculation, for if the word *Mil* is, as it is said to be, the Early English name for a Roman Road, it is not unlikely that Milburn may have meant the Borran, or stone-clearing, by the Roman Road. At any rate the suggestion may be worth further consideration on a future occasion. The form of the township of Milburn, like that of the adjoining townships of Kirkland, Ousby, Melmerby, Addingham, Kirkoswald, and others on the Cumberland side, and of Long Marton, Bongate, Warcop, Musgrave, Brough, and others on the Westmoreland side of the county boundary, is also a point worth drawing attention to. My colleague, Mr. Topley, in an article on the Parish Boundaries of the Wealden area (*Trans. Anthropol. Institute*) has shewn that all the earlier colonists of that part of England pitched their settlements near the foot of the Weald Escarpment along lines where they could command a good supply of water; and he has also shewn that they parcelled out the colony in such a way that each community might be furnished with such proportions of wood, arable, meadow, pasture, and common land as would meet the remainder of their respective requirements. Thus the entire area adjoining that Escarpment was divided into long strips extending from the fertile lowlands at its foot up to the summit ridge, and usually some distance down the slope beyond. It is interesting, if it is nothing more, to note that the early settlers of Edenside followed precisely the same course. The Parish of Kirkby Thore, where the Township of Milburn forms the principal part, extends upwards from the Eden, which forms the lower boundary of nearly all the fell-side townships and parishes, over the arable land, meadow, wood, and pasture land of the low ground, straight across the rough grazing land on the steep face of the Escarpment there, and away over the summit ridge, to include a long strip of the moorland down as far as the adjoining county boundary the Teesdale part of Yorkshire.

From this it would seem difficult to escape the conclusion that Milburn, as a township, must date as far back at least as the times when the greater part of Edenside was held by village communities, before the ownership of any great area of the land by individuals had gained a footing there; and that the change from the past state of land tenure to the present must have been a gradual change, and one that has not been materially affected by any seizure and occupation of the land by foreign hordes, since the boundaries of each township were adjusted by the mutual agreement of the early colonists.

Who were those early colonists? Were they really the Celts of Strathclyde? Did they form part of the first great wave of Teutonic immigration composed of the peoples known collectively as the Angles, or, were they not rather some representatives of the later invaders whose Scandinavian affinities have been so completely demonstrated by Mr. Robert Ferguson and others? If a systematic study of the dialects of Edenside and the parts adjoining has any value, there ought not to be

much doubt upon this point. The area including the dialects wherein the Anglian element preponderates at the present day extends southward from the Lowlands of Scotland through Northumberland, northern Durham, and north Cumberland, as far as a line,—vague and unsatisfactory where it traverses the great colliery districts of Durham—but ranging in an east and westerly direction through Weardale Head, south of Alston, up along the watershed of the South Tyne to near Croglin. There the line turns to the south on entering Edenside, and after ranging thence to a point a mile or so to the east of Kirkoswald, follows the Eden northward to somewhere near Wreay, where its precise position is lost, but whence, in a general way it may be said to extend in a westerly direction as far as the Solway. That is to say the lower part of Edenside is occupied by people whose dialect partake more or less of the character of that of the Anglian part of the kingdom; while on the other side of that line, down to north Lancashire, and thence round to the eastern counties, the affinities of the dialects are all more or less decidedly with those of the parts known to have been colonised by one kind or another of Northmen.

Milburn thus lies within the area characterised by the forms of speech of later introduction than the Anglian, and it was probably these later settlers who appropriated the land and parcelled out the townships into the form they retain to the present day.

Vestiges of these early English settlers at Milburn exist in one or two other directions. Milburn Church, like Long Martin Church, already described by Mr. Cory and the Rev. T. Lees, is an aggregation of structures of very different ages, ranging back from the period when the ugly square windows were knocked out of the north wall (at the time when the people got the Bible into their own hands at church and wanted more light to see to read it by), to the period when the wide-jointed masonry of the western part of the edifice and the round-headed doorway at its south-western angle were constructed. Mr. Ferguson tells me that this doorway represents the late Norman period. Masonry similar to that built at the same time as the Norman doorway can be traced along the lower courses of the stonework about half the entire length of the building on the south side; along nearly the entire front at the west end, and about two-thirds of the way along the north side, up to the line where the present chancel has been added on in later times. Mr. Lees has already mentioned the occurrence of a fragment of old stonework rudely carved into a diaper pattern, which has been employed in building up the window at the west end; but the relation of this stone to the surrounding masonry does not afford any clue to the age of the diaper work referred to. Lower down the building, however, and on the south side of the porch at the west end, stones with similar carving are built into and form part of the original Norman masonry. Traces of stones similarly carved can be seen also on the south side of the church on the west side of the Norman doorway before mentioned, and these stones occur in such a position in the Norman masonry as to suggest that they represent the carved work of an older structure again made use of at the time when the existing Norman part of the building was being constructed. This view is considerably strengthened by the occurrence, in the carved stonework of the Norman doorway itself, of two old sundials, which are built in such positions as to be now utterly useless for their original purpose; while, as if to prove that they are of older date than the building where

they now occur one of them is built in upside down. In regard to the dials themselves I hope that Mr. Ferguson, to whom I am indebted for nearly all the information I possess about these and the other antiquities in and around Milburn Church, will examine them himself and describe them at length on some future occasion.

I wish particularly to direct attention to the evidence that these dials and the old diaper work seem to afford in regard to the antiquity of the village of Milburn itself; because, it seems safe to assume that if there was a pre-Norman church there must also have been a pre-Norman village. This village may well have been a place of much more importance than it is now, because, it is said that Mr. Tyson, one of the late incumbents, made a series of trials and excavations outside the limits of the present building, with the result of discovering distinct traces of a much larger edifice than the church is at present. The size and importance of the church in the adjoining village of Long Marton, which Mr. Cory has shewn to have a history similar to what I have supposed to belong to Milburn, seems to lend support to the view that some of these fell-side villages are of great antiquity, and that, in times past, they were places of much more importance than they are at the present day.

On the south side of the porch that forms the present entrance at the west end of Milburn Church there is built in a rudely carved combination of wheel crosses. Canon Knowles considers that this may be dated about the twelfth century. With regard to the age of a much-worn recumbent figure, which seems at one time to have had the hands clasped over the breast, Canon Knowles refers the date to the fifteenth century. In the village there is a kind of tradition that it is effigy of a Knight Templar. It may be worth while to mention that the stone in which it is carved is not the St. Bees sandstone of the neighbourhood, which has furnished the material for all the stonework of the church, but carboniferous sandstone, as if the stone had been carved at a distance and afterwards transported to its present resting place. It is said to have been disinterred some years ago by Mr. Tyson.

On the inside of the church there are two recesses in the south wall; one only a few yards to the east of the point where the church used to be entered through the Norman doorway, and the other close to where a small chapel was annexed in later times in connexion with Howgill Castle. It would almost seem as if the more easterly recess indicates the position of an older chancel that existed at the east end of what is now the south aisle before the present chancel and the Howgill Chapel were added. In connection with this it may be worth while to note that there is a break in the level of the stone paving in the church, ranging along a line joining the junction of the newer masonry with the older on the north and the south sides of the church as if the present chancel and Howgill chapel had been built while the flooring of the older part of the church was concealed from view. At the farm called Kirkhouse, close to the church, is the Tithe Barn, called "tean leath" to this day.

At the entrance to the field called Kirkrains, which forms the approach to the church from Low Street, is the shaft and pedestal of what is said to be an old cross, now too much battered and weather-worn to afford any satisfactory indication of its original form. The base of a similar cross, approached by steps, stands in the middle of the village green, and now serves to support the maypole that was erected there some years ago.

The green itself is oblong in form with its greatest length lying in a north-easterly direction. Houses shut it in nearly all round, except where a narrow road affords an entrance. It is said that, in times past, the villagers used to close all the entrances to the village, and turn out all their cattle there during the winter. One of these approaches, the one leading into Milburn from Blencarn and Newbiggin, is called the Butts, probably because the bank facing towards the village, at the point where the present road bends abruptly to the south, was made use of for archery practice in bygone years.

It is remarkable, considering the physical character of the neighbourhood, and the strong antecedent probability that traces of the old non-Teutonic population of the neighbourhood might be found here, that so few remains of anything like either long or round barrows have yet been detected. A mound of stones like a tumulus occurs on the south side of the bridle road leading from Blencarn to Cross Fell, close to where there is an old lime-kiln by the side of Litledale Beck; but, with almost that sole exception, the wild fell sides of this part present a remarkable contrast, in respect of the number of pre-historic remains, to the great belt of rising ground ranging through from Kirkby Stephen, by Orton and Shap to near Blenco.

It is said that vestiges of old enclosures, of unknown date, may be traced amongst the accumulations of loose rock matter on Middle Tongue, about a mile or so to the south of Cross Fell summit; but these seem to be too ill-defined to be worth more than the mere mention. One such enclosure, however, perhaps better worth further investigation, lies along the Melmerby-Ousby township boundary, about midway between the remarkable hill called Cuns Fell (probably a word of Celtic form) and the limestone scar, known as Melmerby High Scar. Non-Teutonic place names are common thereabouts, as if the older races lingered there later than elsewhere in the neighbourhood; and it might be worth while to institute a closer search than I have been able to make, with a view to discovering some more satisfactory traces of their former existence here.

In conclusion, there is one other fact bearing upon the early history of Milburn that seems worth taking into consideration here. The Roman Road, wherever I have seen it, seems to be well made, and in many respects well adapted for use as a highway between the places it was intended to connect, even at the present day. Yet, although it is true that the modern highways do here and there run over the same lines for a few miles, the two do not, by any means, invariably coincide, even when the object of establishing communication between the same places has been in view. In a great many cases the new road seems to have been laid out without any reference to the older road already existing; and the newer road as often as not runs side by side with the older, as if the road makers were unaware of its very existence. Does this not look as if there came a time after the Roman left the country when nearly all the older population were cleared off, and the entire country lay desolate long enough for the roads to become overgrown and lost sight of? There seems to be a great blank in the history of Edenside at this time; and a blank of such a nature as could hardly have existed if the district had been continuously peopled from Celtic times down to the advent of the Teutonic races.