

ART. XXVI. *Note on Sandford's History of Cumberland.*

By GEORGE WATSON.

Read at Appleby, July 3rd, 1890.

IN Sandford's History of Cumberland circa 1675, lately published by the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archæological Society, at page 37 occurs a quaint paragraph relative to the so-called "Giants Grave," at Penrith. He says :—

I was told from Mr. Page himself: a stranger gentleman coming to the Crown Inn at peareth prayed his host to get him oth discret Mrs. of the Town to supe with him and he brought this Mr. Page the Marshall or Steward and Schoolmr. The stranger said he came to see the antiquities and drew forth a paper that said that Sir Hugh Cesario lived in disert place in a rocke: a marshall man: like knight errant: killing monster man and beast: The place he lived in called Isey Perlis, where a little from thence is 3 vaults in a rocke 100 may live in: and he was buried in the north side of the church ith green field: & they went to the church & on the north side there was 2 crosses distant the length of a man one at head and other at feet.

Thus far the story is a communication from Mr. Page to Sandford, the concluding part of the paragraph being a reminiscence of Sandford's own :—

And was opened when I was a Scoller ther by William Turner & ther found the great Long Shank bones & other bones of a man and a broad sword besides found then by the Church Wardens.

Now as the visit of the strange antiquary took place when Mr. Page was schoolmaster (presumably of the Penrith Grammar School), which according to Nicolson and Burn* was from 1581 to 91, and Sandford wrote his history in 1675 it becomes an interesting question, when

* Vol ii, p. 410.

during

during the 84 or 94, years interval between the strange antiquary's visit and Sandford writing his history, did Page and Sandford meet.

I propose to enquire into this by collating such facts about the two men as I have been able to meet with.

First as to Edmund Sandford's place in the pedigree of the Sandfords of Askham and Howgill, as given by Nicolson and Burn.* There does not appear to be any room for doubt that the author was Edmund, the second son of Thomas Sandford, who stands 9th in the pedigree and who died 7th James 1st (1610). Now as this Thomas Sandford had five daughters born after Edmund, the date of the latter's birth could not in the natural course of life be much later than about 1600; of course it might be earlier, but if much earlier, would make him too old a man in 1675 to be writing a history of Cumberland. There is no evidence of an Edmund Sandford in the succeeding generation, and if there had been he could not have conversed with Mr. Page who died in 1623. Dating Sandford's birth then at 1600, and supposing him to have been 16 years old when he was a pupil at Penrith Grammar School, we get the probable date of 1616 for the opening of the grave by William Turner, and the finding of the bones and broad sword.

The long shank bones of a man mentioned by Sandford do not I think mean anything abnormal, but only the thigh bones, as distinguished from the shorter shin bones: it is also to be noted that Sandford describes the crosses as the *length of a man distant*, not of a giant 15 feet of altitude, to which towering dimensions he has since grown. When and by whom then was the "giant" introduced? He is I believe first met with in print in Dr. Todd's appendix to Gibson's edition of Camden, in 1695 (only 20 years after the date assigned to the writing of Sandford's

* Vol. i. pp. 387, 423.

history),

history), but where the learned doctor found the "giant" we are not told; he only quotes as his authority "they say" or "they tell you," and says that the crosses were then five yards apart, the length of the giant who lay between them. It looks very like as if the learned doctor was the father of the Penrith giant.

Of Sandford's informant Mr. Page, we learn from the parish register the following. He married in 1586, and the fact that his marriage in another parish is so carefully recorded in the Penrith register shows he was a man of some consequence: the entry is as follows.—"1586, June 12th day was Anthonie Paig and Isabell Lancaster married at Mardell chappell by Parson Burton." In due course the "chrystnings" of five of his children are recorded up to September, 1597, when the plague broke out in Penrith, and during the fifteen months of its ravages in the parish Anthony Paig had a son born and lost his wife with the pestilence. In 1601 he witnessed the induction of the Rev. John Hastie to the living of Penrith, being described as Mr. Anthony Page, steward (presumably of the manor); he is not there described as schoolmaster so far confirming N. and B's. record, that he ceased to be schoolmaster in 1591. In 1612 a daughter of Mr. Anthony Page is buried, and in 1623 Mr. Anthony Page himself is buried: his age we can only guess at (ages at that time not being registered), supposing however that in 1581, when he first held the two responsible positions of master of the Grammar School, and steward of the manor, he was 35 or 40 years of age, he would be about 80 at his death, in 1623. When then did Sandford hear from Page, the story of the strange antiquary's visit? I think it is almost certain that it was, when Sandford was, as he says, "a scoller there" (at the Grammar School), Page then being far advanced in years: probably it was on the occasion of the opening of the grave by William Turner, which incident might well recall to the old man's recollection the strange antiquary's

quary's visit some 30 years before, which he then related to the intelligent pupil at the Grammar School: the way Sandford groups Page's story of the antiquary's visit, the opening of the grave, and his own pupilage at the Grammar School into one paragraph would appear to favour this assumption. The name of William Turner, mentioned by Sandford, is also found in the register; he was married in 1614, and his children's "chrystnings" are from time to time recorded.

In reading Sandford's quaint account of the ancient monuments at Penrith, one is naturally led to ask how it is that he makes no mention of the four hog-backed side stones, and also to wonder if he, before penning his accounts, refreshed his memory by a visit to Penrith, for, if he wrote solely from recollection of what he had heard and seen 60 years before, we must make allowance for omissions and errors.

If it was a fact that in Sandford's time the two crosses were only the length of an ordinary man apart, I should conjecture that the two crosses, and four hog-backed side stones, then marked *two distinct graves* in a line with and contiguous to each other, the cross at the head of the eastern grave being at the foot of the western one, each grave having a pair of hog-backed stones to itself, and I should be led to believe that the cross at the head of the eastern grave, was afterwards removed to the foot, thus forming to all appearances one grave, 15 feet long, to which popular fancy afterwards gave the name of the "giant's grave".

As tending to confirm this theory I may mention that while the western cross stands in what is evidently its original socket stone, a regularly shaped circular stone of Blencow or Lamonby flesh coloured rock, same as the crosses themselves, the eastern cross is clumsily fixed into an unwrought square block of local red freestone, now sunk a foot below the surface of the soil: moreover it stands

stands (as also do the hog-backed stones), upon a gruesome deposit of churchyard soil, bones and building rubbish, making it certain that this cross at least does not occupy its original position ; perhaps it had fallen and in its fall had broken two of the hog-backed stones in the way we now see them.

Having lately directed the work of raising the hog-backed stones from their previous embedded condition, and placing them upon base stones bedded upon a deep foundation of concrete I had an opportunity of making the observations above recorded, to which I may add that the artificial deposit upon which the eastern cross and hog-backs stand, extended downwards seven feet to where the undisturbed boulder clay comes in, and at the bottom of the rubbish I found a piece of blue willow pattern pot, proving the modern character of the earth upon which the monuments stand.

But besides the change of relative position of the two crosses as inferred from Sandford and Dr. Todd differing as to their distance apart, there is I think good reason to believe that an entire change in their position was made when the church was rebuilt in 1720-2. Bishop Nicolson has left it on record, that at the time of his visitation, 16 years before the church was rebuilt, the crosses and the hog-backs stood "before the great north door" of the old church: now if the monuments then occupied the same ground as now, the north door must have been much further eastward in the church than was usual. Taking this into consideration, along with the modern character of the ground upon which the monuments stand, I feel certain that when the church was rebuilt, the hog-backs and the eastern cross were moved to their present position, to give uninterrupted access to the new north door which probably occupies the same position as the old one did. It is not unlikely that the present western cross was originally the eastern one and still retains

retains its old position, it being noticeable that the ground near its base was much firmer and quite different in character to that under the eastern cross, and hog-backs as already described.
