

ART. X.—*Ancient Landmarks.* By THOMAS HAY.

“Trackway and camp and city lost,
 Saltmarsh where now is corn;
 Old wars, old peace, old arts that cease,
 And so was England born!”—*Kipling.*

THERE are some signs of man's handiwork upon our fell country which are in themselves so insignificant that they may escape observation but which nevertheless have their interest for those who do not scorn the little things. In other parts of the country land is precious and when something, once useful, has lost its value to the owner, away it is cleared and its place knows it no more. But in our rough country where there is so much relatively poor land the old things often survive simply because there is no point in clearing them away.

Some years ago when I was engaged in the search for a certain physiographic feature in the Ullswater area I came across many examples of a type of surface modification which puzzled me at first. These were the charcoal-burner's hearths or platforms which are extremely common in this area. A typical example consists of a circular patch of fellside about seven yards in diameter made by choosing a relatively horizontal piece of ground and then scooping out the upper side and moving the earth so obtained, forwards towards the downhill side. This provides the flat circular area with a slight recess above it in the hill and a slight semi-circular projection on the front. These platforms are found all over the more or less wooded areas surrounding the upper end of Ullswater wherever the natural character of the ground has a park-like appearance. These spots are often close beside tracks still in use. The great number

of such platforms in certain areas is explained by the fact that when the charcoal-burners had much wood to deal with it was found easier to make a fresh platform than to move the timber over a big distance. One specially prolific area is Glemara Park and local tradition says that these hearths were in use during the Napoleonic wars. Sometimes one finds them now in places where there are no trees or even bushes but this is the exception. At all levels from the valley bottom up to about 1000 feet or even more they are to be discovered.

Charcoal has been wanted in the past for two very important industries:—the making of gunpowder and smelting. In his *Lake District History*, W. G. Collingwood mentions that the Company of Mines Royal was formed in 1564 with Daniel Hechstetter as the active agent on behalf of the Augsburg financiers and promoters. Almost every dale sent workmen to these mines and possibly the charcoal was furnished from a wide area.

Cleator and Cleator Moor, Past and Present, by Caesar Caine, has one or two interesting quotations on this subject of charcoal-burners. In referring to the Benn family, the author says that:—"Thomas born 1686 appears to have succeeded his father during his father's lifetime by purchase. In 1729 he married Dinah Ashburner. It is worth while to linger a few moments on this new name in the Parish—Ashburner. This name was applied at first to the charcoal-burners, when iron ore was smelted by wood, not coal or coke. The name is therefore allied to the staple industry of the district. It represents those humble workers, who were the pioneers of the iron trade, which has created so many millionaires and lords of wealth."

An article by H. M. Parker (these *Trans.* N.S. v) on "Inglewood Forest," gives an account of an inquisition before the Sheriff of Cumberland, the Sheriff of Lancashire and William de Dacre in the presence of the Verderers and

Foresters of the Forest of Carlisle to ascertain what privileges Thomas de Multon and his predecessors in the office of Forester in Fee in that forest made use of during their terms of office." After a long list of privileges the 18 important testifiers say that Thomas and his predecessors have been accustomed to make charcoal of the loppings and other timber which belong to him by reason of this bailiwick.

In these *Trans.* N.S. viii, there is an interesting article by John Rawlinson Ford on the "Manufacture of Iron in Leighton Furnace in Yealand Redman." This makes use of two manuscript volumes by John Lucas on the "Antiquities and History of the Parish and Parish Church of Warton in Lancashire." The author says with regard to oak trees "Their Top and Underwood they here make into charcoal, the method of which is this. They cut or rive the Wood into Pieces which they make up into Cords or Stacks (a Cord by Statute is to be Eight Foot long, Four Foot broad and Four High and every Stick at least Three Inches about. They place the pieces all upright in three several Stories, in a Conic or rather in a Cupola form, having first stuck a Stake into the Ground in the middle of the lowest Floor for the rest to lean upon. Such a Pile they call their Hearth, or in some Places, though very improperly, a Pit. They cover the Wood with a thin Covering of Straw or Stubble and over that they place a layer of Sand or Earth. They leave a Hole at the Top of the Pile where they put in the Fire and then cover it up. They make here and there small Vent-holes for the Smoak as they see occasion and take particular care never to let it flame for that would consume the Wood. A whole Hearth will be coal'd in 6 or 7 Days. Six loads of Wood will make but one of Charcoal. The greener the Wood the weightier and more lasting is the Coal made of it."

When the Royal Commissioners were making their

survey of Westmorland for Historical Monuments I remember pointing out to them a very rough specimen of Early Settlement which they only accepted after some demur. The chief authority thought at first that it was not convincing but he finally let it pass on account of some definite indications of the usual hut-circle type. But the principal and most obvious thing in this case was not the hut-circles at all but two much bigger hollows which were certainly fashioned by man. Now this was a practical illustration of the fairly obvious fact that even before our early settlements were made, man must have had something more primitive still. The next paragraph or two will be concerned with some rough shelters or boulder arrangements which are so extremely primitive that it is impossible to say what they were used for. One has to be careful in such things for the youthful holiday maker sometimes builds houses for his amusement and it is amazing what one man with a crowbar can accomplish. But the three which I am going to mention seem undoubted relics of some human activity in the past.

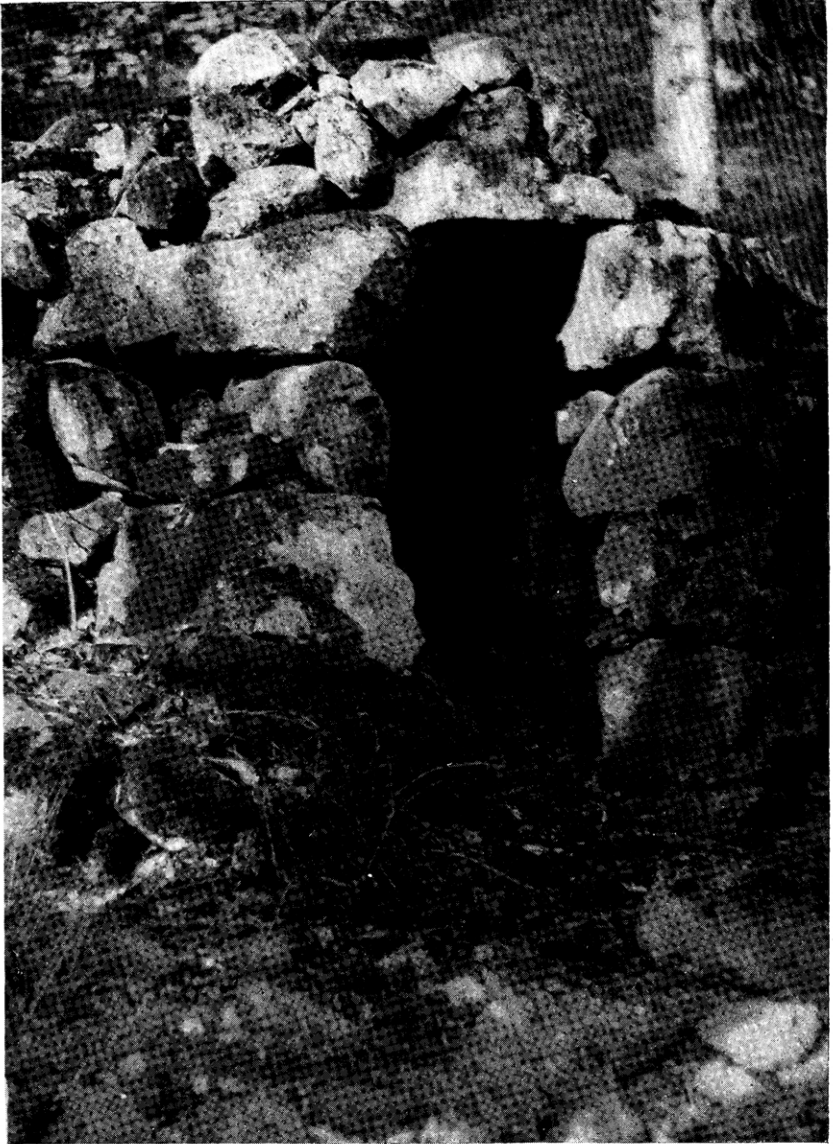
On the slopes of Glenridding Dodd there is a small piece of rough masonry on a projecting cliff which is commonly reported to have been the outlook post occupied by Mounsey's party in their encounter with the raiding Scots. It was this act of Mounsey which made him King of Patterdale. Those who have access to *Westmorland, Cumberland, Durham and Northumberland*, published in 1833 by Fisher Son & Co., and illustrated by steel engravings from Allom's drawings, may see at page 180 an amusing picture of warriors, presumably Scots, toppling off like ninepins from Stybarrow Crag into Ullswater below.

On the ridge separating Grisedale from the Glenridding valley at 1220 feet and close beside an old slate working there is another curious enclosure. It lies on the north side of a projecting knob of rock so that this rock forms its

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southern boundary and dominates it. The enclosure is very rough, approximately rectangular and formed of the great angular boulders of which there is a plentiful supply from the weathering of the aforesaid knob. Inside there is a much smaller rectangular hollow which might conceivably have been some kind of hut. There is a fine open view commanding all the approaches from the shores of the lake. This may have been some kind of retreat where the valley dwellers could take refuge with their cattle in times of emergency. The third illustration of these rough enclosures is near Sandwick on the east side of Ullswater. The lateral moraine of the valley glacier made with the northern slope of Sleet Fell, a sheltered and unsuspected cavity which is now bordered by huge rough boulders obviously placed in position by the hand of man. This cubby hole lies close beside, but well above, the track along the east side of the lake from Sandwick to Patterdale. What it has been it is impossible to say but one thinks of it as a possible human haunt or even a bandit's den in times far enough back to be troublous. Readers will remember how Thorstein in W. G. Collingwood's delightful tale, makes his house between the projecting rock ribs on Peel Island.

In the National Trust property which the Rev. H. D. Rawnsley was mainly instrumental in securing in the original portion of Glencoin wood several people have pointed out to me a curious construction which they claimed as a charcoal-burner's pit. It was in danger of being destroyed by the construction of a boathouse but when the owner of the latter heard of this, he promptly took steps to have the ancient monument put in good repair. Probably it is now in better condition than it has been for many a long day. I do not believe that this is a charcoal-burner's pit at all but that it is a small lime-kiln. It consists of a good stone-built fireplace with a flue leading under and into a saucer-shaped hollow lined with



SMALL LIME-KILN NEAR STYBARROW CRAG.

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rough stones. The entrance or fireplace is four feet three inches high, two feet wide at the bottom and one foot five inches at the top. It goes in six feet. The circular pit above is five feet ten inches across and the battered walls surrounding it would give a depth of three feet eight inches or thereabouts. It lies just above high watermark. This lake never varies more than six feet from the highest to the lowest of its levels. The limestone would be brought by water from the Pooley Bridge end of the lake where there is a plentiful supply of limestone in Heugh Scar Hill.

Exactly opposite on the east side of the lake in the ground near Blowick there is a similar construction but in this case either the fireplace has not been so spacious or else it has been more or less silted up with rubbish. Probably there are other examples of such kilns scattered about the Lake District in places where the transit of limestone was possible and where there was plenty of wood for burning.

Peat is found in places where the natural drainage does not carry off all the surface water. It occurs at all heights for many of the intermediate ridges are more or less flat-topped and thus provide a suitable site for its growth. The valley beds occur in old filled-in tarns or alluvial stretches and it can even grow under water. Dr. Marr suggests that the Floating Island of Derwentwater is due to this phenomenon. The low-level peat mosses do not concern us here for the tracks are not particularly noticeable but the high-level mosses often give rise to peat tracks which show up conspicuously in certain lights or during slight falls of snow. Where these tracks cross soft ground on a steepish slope they are often developed into deep sunken ways. The combination of traffic with running surface water had a similar effect in Sussex on the chalk and greensand in creating those sunken roads which were such an advantage to the smugglers of the south

coast. There is a very striking set of these peat tracks on the slopes of Place Fell between Scalehow Beck and Sandwick. Here quite a series of sunken tracks has been developed, the deepest of which is 15 feet below its boundary edges. First one track would be used and gradually elaborated until, when its development had been so pronounced that it was impossible to get the sledges along such a deep narrow gully, then a parallel track would be started. This would be used until it too had to be abandoned. A third followed suit and in this case there are actually four or five big parallel tracks.