

Remains of a Wayside Cross at Clifton Cross, Near Ashbourne.

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THE erection of a stone "where four lanes meet" dates from pre-Christian times. In those early days they were the menhirs, uncut standing slabs of stone, and they were often places for worship or other ceremonial proceedings by our pagan ancestors. In Christian times, many of these stones were destroyed, or, if alteration were possible, converted to the Christian emblem by carving or hewing them into crosses in conformity with papal injunctions.

Crosses were found not only at cross-roads, or by the wayside, but in churchyards, and occasionally on bridges after the manner of bridge chapels. These crosses, whether by the roadside or in market places or in churchyards, were associated in different places and in different times with such diverse objects as:

- (1) Worship and preaching.
- (2) Public penance, as were the stocks in later times.
- (3) Stopping places in religious processions of pre-Reformation days, when a corpse on the way to burial passed the spot, or during the perambulation of the parish bounds on rogation days.
- (4) To define the borders of the right of sanctuary in the locality where they were found.

- (5) To commemorate a person or event, as for instance Neville's Cross in co. Durham, which commemorated the battle between English and Scots in 1346.
- (6) Boundary stones, or mark-stones to define a track or to mark the limits of parishes, or even of individual properties before the land was subdivided by fences and hedges.
- (7) Hiring places for labourers.
- (8) Market crosses or stones for trading, sale of of produce, etc. As time went on, more elaborate structures with shelter for the traders, occupying the centre of the market place, took the place of the simple cross.
- (9) The centre of municipal or village life, where all kinds of meetings took place, and where public proclamations, speeches or announcements were made.
- (10) Places where the people could leave their produce to be fetched when a town was stricken with plague or other epidemic.

Neither the nature, nor the structure, nor the situation of a cross had anything to do with its uses. Crosses in churchyards were used for trading as well as for preaching, and crosses by the wayside were associated with religious ceremonies as well as with secular purposes.

The word "cross" in a place-name far more often refers to the position of the place at cross-roads, than to the fact that there had been a standing cross at the spot, though it is true that wayside crosses more often occurred on cross-tracks than at other parts of the roads.

It is impossible to say exactly which of the many uses to which the old crosses were put, applied to the cross at Clifton Cross. We have only definite evidence of its use as the site of a market or trading place. Clifton Cross is a small hamlet consisting of a few cottages on the road

from Ashbourne to Clifton, only a few hundred yards from the village of Clifton. Mr. Thomas Titterton, now in his 79th year, who has lived in Clifton all his life, as did his father and grandfather before him, tells that he has often heard his father, and his grandfather (who died at the age of 76, about the year 1870) tell of the times when the farmers' wives of the surrounding district brought farm and garden produce and sold them at the cross, or rather at its base or socket, which was the only part of the cross then left, as is the case to-day. At that time the stone was situated at the S.W. corner of the cross-roads; it was removed into the garden of one of the cottages near by, when these cottages were re-built in the middle of the 19th century. And there the stone is to be seen to-day. (See Plate I).

In the days when the cross stood at the cross-roads, the lane from Ashbourne to Clifton village was crossed by a road from Leek and Manchester which had passed over Hanging Bridge in Mayfield parish, and through Green Lane, running thence across unenclosed moorland country to join the old road from Ashbourne to Tutbury about a mile and a half on the S. side of Ashbourne. The south limb of this cross-road from Clifton Cross onwards has been closed for at least half a century, though it was kept open for a number of years longer as a bridle track. Many traces of the road exist on what are now pasture lands and on parts of the Ashbourne and Clifton golf-links; a muddy lane leading into Dobbin Horse Lane between Clifton village and the Tutbury road is a part of the old road.

An alteration to existing roads which probably had as much as anything to do with the gradual disuse of this track from Clifton Cross to the Wyaston Road was the development of a more direct road from Hanging Bridge to Clifton village and Wyaston through the new railway station at Clifton, when the old North Stafford line to Ashbourne was opened in 1852.

The only part of the old cross at Clifton Cross which remains is a roughly square massive socket or base measuring at the upper surface 23 inches by 21. It projects $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches above the ground, and is buried more than 2 ft. underneath. Each of the four upper corners is carved with what appear to be masks with large ears; the upper edge is rounded off and there are two grooves cut in the sides of each of the four faces, each section projecting a little beyond the one above. The same characters are met with in the part beneath the ground, the lowest section being the largest.

The stone was evidently not a simple boundary or mark-stone, for on its upper surface are the remains of a shaft of stone broken and worn off almost level with the surrounding stone base, and led into the top of the socket, showing that it was originally part of a cross. The base of the shaft measures $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 10 inches.

There is in the village of Clifton outside the present Inn and near the Church a plain cylindrical gritstone pillar 16 inches in height. There are remains of an old pavement around it, and I am told by Mr. Titterton that this was the "butter-cross," butter being brought for sale to this spot, while eggs and other farm produce were sold at the cross at Clifton Cross.



BASE OF CROSS AT CLIFTON CROSS NEAR ASHBOURNE.