

ART. XVII.—*Stone Circles near Shap, Westmorland.** By
REV. CANON SIMPSON, LL.D., F.S.A.

IN the neighbourhood of Shap, in the county of Westmorland, may still be seen several of those curious stone circles, the use and object of which have not yet been satisfactorily explained. They are more or less complete according to the nature and cultivation of the ground upon which they stand, and sometimes consist of two, in some cases of three concentric circles. The stones have been originally upright, though many of them are now fallen, and some of them are partially buried in the ground. In any particular circle, the stones do not much vary in size, but there is a wide difference between those forming one circle, and those used for another. In some instances, the stones are five or six feet in length, and of proportionate thickness. They are, for the most part, though by no means invariably, granite boulders, are of great weight, and must have cost much labour to place them in position. They would not, indeed, have to be conveyed any great distance, and it is not improbable that the difference in sizes of the stones used in the formation of different circles may have depended entirely upon the size and character of the "boulders" scattered about the particular locality in which the circle stands. At Gunnerkeld, † not far from Shap, I had the pleasure of showing Mr. Stuart, Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries (of Scotland), one of those circles, the stones of which are of

* Reprinted (revised by the author) from Proc. Soc. Antiq., Scotland, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 443.

† For plan and account of this circle by Mr. Dymond, see Transactions of this Society, vol. iv., p. 538.

great

great size and weight. At Gamlans,* in the parish of Orton, there are the remains of another, which, with the exception of the long upright stone, is in its general characteristics not unlike the circle in Cumberland, well known as Long Meg and her Daughters.† Several of the stones have been broken up and destroyed, but there is no difficulty in fixing their original site, and clearly tracing the circumference of the circle, the diameter of which is 135 feet. At Gunnerkeld there are two concentric circles, the outer of which measures about 100 feet across, the inner about 49 feet. It may be observed that these measurements cannot be made with exact accuracy, because the stones forming the circles having fallen in different directions, it is not always easy to fix the points to and upon which the measurement should be made. There are other stone circles in the neighbourhood similar to those at Gamlans and Gunnerkeld; but at present I wish to call attention to a class formed of upright stones, much smaller in size, standing not more than twenty inches or two feet above the ground, and I may remark that it is not unusual to find two of these circles adjoining, one of which is much more perfect than the other. I have specially noted two instances in which the circles are concentric, in one of which most of the stones remain, in the other the outer circle has either been partially destroyed, or it may be the few stones now remaining mark the commencement of a work which has never been completed. Two such concentric circles as these I have described may be seen upon

* This place may owe its name, not to the stones themselves, but to the use of the land in former times on which they stand. Laurentius filius Roberti senescalli de Neubygine, in a grant to the monks of St. Mary of Holme, gives them "*communem pasturam trecentis et sexaginta ovibus, et viginti vaccis, et uni tauro, et triginta bobus, in campo de Newbiginge.*" What the *campus* was to Newbiggen, the Gamlans or Camplands might be to Orton. Another explanation suggests itself. The place may owe its name to Gamel, the first Lord of the Manor, of whom we have not any account, but this does not seem likely. They would not call the lands Gamel's land, it not being demesne land, unless Gamel devoted it to some special use, or enclosed it for his own use. For plan and account of this circle, see Transactions, vol. v, between pp. 24 and 25, and the paper immediately following this.

† For plan and account of this circle, see Transactions of this Society, vol. iv., p. 537.

Knife

Knipe Scar, a short distance from Shap, another in the adjoining field, and two others exactly similar, with the exception of the third innermost circle, may be found at Odendale, in the parish of Crosbyravensworth. I mention these more particularly, because I have had the space within the circles carefully examined, and in each of them discovered faint traces of burnt matter. At Knipe Scar I had the advantage of Mr. Stuart's great experience and careful judgment, and the results of our examination were sufficient to satisfy us that at some remote period burnt matter had been deposited within the innermost of the three concentric circles. Near the centre of the larger and more perfect of the two sets of circles adjoining each other, about eighteen inches below the surface, we found a rough flat-shaped stone, fifteen inches in width and about two feet six inches in length. Under this stone there were evident traces of charcoal and burnt earth, but no bones. The deposit was not exactly in the centre, but rather towards the north-west of the circle, a peculiarity which I noted in two other instances in which the deposit was found. The diameter of the outside circle is sixty-three feet, the second twenty-one feet, and the innermost of the three, within which the flat stone covering the deposit was placed, is seven feet. From the centre of this circle to the centre of the one adjoining, the distance is ninety-six feet. In the centre space of the other circle, about the same depth below the surface, we found a rude pavement of cobbles, about six feet in length and four feet in width, and under the pavement a similar deposit of charcoal. At Odendale, where two circles occupy the same relative positions, there was the same kind of deposit found within the innermost circle; but if there ever had been a stone or pavement, it had been disturbed on some previous occasion when the ground had been partially examined. The position of the deposit was the same as in the circles upon Knipe Scar, and the present condition of the two circles is relatively
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the same. There is, however, at Odendale a stone placed half-way between the two concentric circles. It is of the same size and character of those forming the circles, and though not in a line due east from the centre, is very nearly so. Neither at Odendale nor Knipe Scar was any deposit found either within the space between the circles or near to or under the stones forming it, though some of them were dug round, and some taken out of their position, and the site carefully examined. I need hardly say that the stones disturbed were replaced, and the circles left as nearly as possible in the condition in which they were found. I do not at present venture to offer any opinion upon the use of these circles, or their date, or the people by whom they were erected, my object is to collect and record facts, not to deduce inferences from or found theories upon these facts; and I shall merely observe that whatever other uses they may have had, they have at some period or other been used as places of deposit for the ashes of the dead. It is, however, worthy of observation, and suggestive of interesting thoughts, that barrows, or what are, in the neighbourhood of Shap, called hurrocks or raises, seem to have been formed in places originally occupied by these stone circles. At a place called Penhurrock, on the same moor as the circles at Odendale, there still exists one of these stone circles, connected with which, at no distant period, there was a large barrow. Tradition says that when the barrow or hurrock was removed burnt bones were found deposited in a small cist-shaped hole cut into the rock, and covered with a flat stone. Within the innermost circle at Gunnerkeld there are still the remains of a barrow or hurrock, which, though disturbed, does not appear to have been at any time thoroughly examined. Barrows or raises similar in character, though not always surrounded by a circle of stones, are by no means uncommon in the locality. At Sill-how, Odendale, closely adjoining the stone circles, I had one of these barrows opened, and on removing the stones,

stones, found a cist, one side of which was formed by the rock, and the other and the ends of large stones, and the cover was a rough limestone slab cut from the rock, where it had cropped up to the surface, and placed upon its natural bed. The cist was not square, measuring on one side twenty inches, and on the other sixteen inches, the width was thirteen inches, the depth ten inches, and the length of the stone that formed the covering thirty inches. Another raise which I have examined is on Muir Divock, not far from a circle of stones called Standing Stones.* This raise is remarkable, not only because it is star-shaped, but because towards the west side, about half-way between the centre and the circumference, there are four upright stones placed in a straight row, and probably there were originally five. Opposite the largest of these stones, and in the centre of the same, was found a deposit of ashes and burnt bones, which had been enclosed in an urn. The stones forming the heap had been much disturbed, and the urn was broken, but when first discovered the rim was entire, and measured thirteen inches across. It was of the rudest manufacture, imperfectly burnt, and had been placed upside down. The raise could not at that time be further examined, but it is probable that each of the upright stones may have marked a similar deposit. Upon the same moor, within a very short distance, there is another barrow formed in the same way, having the same general appearance, and called by the same name of "raise," which, when opened, was found to consist of a cist formed of stones, and measuring four feet four inches in length, fourteen inches in width, and twenty-six inches in depth. Each of the two sides had originally been formed of one stone, but one had evidently been broken by the workmen employed to place it, and the two pieces were supported by a third. The cover consisted of two

* Since this paper was first published Mr. Greenwell and myself examined the centre of this circle, and found an urn containing burnt bones. Vide vol. i, p. 24, of Transactions of this Society.

limestone

limestone slabs taken from the surface of the rock, and placed with the natural bed downwards; the bottom was flagged with flat stones of different sizes. This cist or coffin contained portions of a skeleton, and from the position in which the thigh bones were found, it would appear that the legs must have been doubled underneath. The body had been laid east and west, and the thigh bones were at the east end of the coffin. Careful search was made for weapons or ornaments, but nothing whatever could be found. The bones were afterwards restored to their place, and the cover of the cist replaced in its original position. I have mentioned the barrows thus examined, partly because the three, though similar in appearance and character, disclosed three different kinds of sepulture, and partly because, though not now themselves surrounded by upright stones, they are similar to others so encircled, and are all of them in close proximity to stone circles. It is not improbable that the people by whom these barrows or raises were erected occasionally chose the space within an existing stone circle upon which to deposit the ashes of their dead, and then raised a barrow to cover them, and commemorate the fact. At some earlier period the ashes of another race may have been buried in the same place, and a circle of stones formed to mark and protect the deposit. As a general rule, when an urn or cist is covered by a barrow or raise, it seems originally to have been placed on the surface of the ground, and the stones or earth heaped round it. When any deposit is found within a circle of stones it is fifteen or twenty inches below the natural surface, and the ground remains at its original level. Whether these stone circles have had any other use than to mark a place of sepulture, protect the ashes of the dead, or do honour to the deceased, it is impossible to determine. That some of them have been used as places of burial there can be no doubt; that some of them have been twice used by two different races is highly probable; but whether, when originally constructed, they were meant

meant to enclose the ashes of one person, or of as many as there are stones in the circles, or of a whole tribe, or of the chief of a tribe, it is impossible to say. So far as I have been able to examine the subject, I am inclined to the opinion that in each circle, or each set of concentric circles, there will be found one deposit.* More deposits than one have been found both in circles and barrows, but where such is the case there is reason to believe that the circle or barrow was intended for the central deposit, the others were placed after its construction at a period subsequent to the central deposit. It may be necessary to observe that though many of the stones forming the circles have been carefully examined, I have never found any marks or characters upon them. I have purposely omitted all allusion to the remains of the avenue near Shap, and "the huge stones of a pyramidal form, some of them nine feet high and fourteen feet thick, standing in a row for near a mile, at an equal distance," described by Camden, because the facts connected with this remarkable monument have been recently published in the *Archæological Journal*, vol. 18, p. 25. But there are scattered about the district several large granite boulders, which seem to have been placed in their present position by the hand of man; and with the kind permission of the Society, I shall on some future occasion have much pleasure in detailing a few facts connected with these huge and massive monoliths in my own immediate neighbourhood.

* See the Leacet Hill circle, *Transactions of this Society*, vol. 5, p. 76.