

ART. VII.—*The Grey Yauds, a vanished Stone Circle.* By  
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*Read at Penrith, September 13th, 1906.*

UPON the eastern slope of the fell known as King Harry Fell or Common, lying ten miles from Carlisle, there existed, not many years ago, one of those rude circles of stones which never fail to awaken in our minds a lively sense of wonder. The people called it "the Grey Yauds," or grey mares, from the appearance which its weathered blocks presented as they lay amongst the surrounding heather.

It must have been the second in size of the megalithic circles in our district; smaller than the circle of Long Meg, but considerably greater in diameter than those of Keswick and Swinside.

In Nicolson and Burn's *History*, 1777, vol. ii., 495, it is described as consisting of 88 pretty large sparry stones, set nearly in an exact circle of about 52 yards diameter; and one single stone, larger than the rest, stood out of the circle about five yards to the north-west. Hutchinson, writing a few years later, describes them (vol. i., 175) as granite stones lying in the middle of a dark and dreary waste, and being comparatively small, the largest not exceeding four feet in height, but nevertheless distinguishable at a great distance. This is an error, unless the remaining stone, 5 feet 4 inches high, was not reckoned as one of the stones of the circle; but it must be remembered that the surface has been levelled by ploughing and denuded of heather, and consequently the apparent height of the standing stone may have increased. "The ground," he adds, "is everywhere rent with torrents, and the deep-worn channels are filled with stones, whilst the inter-

mingled plots, where any vegetation appears, are just covered with a scanty growth of heath. We scarce know a more desolate spot."

Lysons, in 1816 (p. cxxix.), and Whellan, in 1860 (p. 673), merely repeat the description of the circle given by Nicolson and Burn. But in 1882, the Rev. G. Rome Hall, F.S.A., read to our Society a paper (these *Transactions*, o.s., vi., pp. 467, 468) describing his visit to the site "a few years" earlier. He was told by his guide exactly what Nicolson and Burn had said, but found the number of the stones "now much reduced . . . by the supposed necessities of agriculture; the stones having been broken up and used for the adjoining field-walls."

The inhabitants of the district confidently assert that a certain King Harry once pitched his camp here, and they point to the great stone of which that monarch availed himself when he wished to mount his charger! We all know, however, that tradition is but a bruised reed whereon to lean.

The name of the place in olden times—as long ago, indeed, as 1268 (52 Hen. III.; see Mr. F. H. M. Parker's paper in these *Transactions*, n.s., vi., pp. 169, 170)—was *Kynheure*,\* which with Northsceugh is mentioned as an inhabited site.

It is most improbable that any of the three sovereigns of the name of Henry who lived before 1268 ever entered Cumberland as kings, though Roger de Hoveden records that Henry II. as a youth of sixteen was knighted at Carlisle during Whitsuntide, 1148, by David, King of Scots. Prince Henry had been brought up at the Scottish Court, and after this event "crossed over into Normandy;" it does not seem that he marched from the south to Carlisle, nor returned south through England, then under his enemy Stephen. The suggestion which

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\* There is a house named King Harry two-thirds of a mile south-south-west of the circle. The inquisition of 31 Eliz. (*Hutchinson*, i., 176) mentions "the wasts of more called King Henry."

has been made (these *Transactions*, o.s., vi., p. 468) that "the unhappy Henry VI. may have been constrained to pass this way in his hasty flight from the fateful and decisive battlefield of Hexham, on May 15th, 1464, to find a refuge in some remote Westmorland manor-house," is not impossible, but it does not explain the name, which was in existence nearly 200 years earlier. And so it would seem that the tradition is only a tale invented to account for the name.

A parallel to the corruption of *Kyn* into *King* is found in "King Edward" (Aberdeenshire), spelt in 1300 *Kyn-edward*, and explained by Johnston in his *Place-names of Scotland* as "the head or height of Edward." Kinmont, near Corney in South Cumberland, spelt *Kynemund* in 1235 (19 Hen. III., *Pipe Rolls of Cumberland and Westmorland*, ed. F. H. M. Parker, p. 60), exhibits the same prefix; while Kinnewry and Kinure (*ceann-iubhair*) in Ireland, meaning "yew-head" (Joyce, *Irish Names of Places*, i., 546), bear a remarkable likeness to, and perhaps explain, "Kynheure," the ancient mode of spelling the local name "King Harry." Celtic names, it must be observed, are not very common in Cumberland for inhabited sites, though they cling to certain marked features of the landscape, such as rivers and mountains. Still, we have Penrith, Carlisle, and others, so that there is reason to include in the list the name of the site where the Grey Yauds stood.

I had often wished to see the remains, if any, of this curious relic of prehistoric man, but my inquiries amongst the people of the neighbourhood failed to receive any satisfactory answer. Some, to be sure, had heard of a place called Grey Yauds, but none of them knew of any circle of stones being there. In the course of last month, however, I was able to visit its former site. It is correctly described by the county historians as situate within the parish of Cumwhitton, though it is remote from the village of that name, but easily accessible from Cumrew

and Newbiggin. All that remains of the monument at the present day is a solitary block of stone, standing at a point indicated on the Ordnance Survey map\* by a dot, and marked thereon "Stone Circle," though the circle has entirely disappeared.

The standing stone occupies the north-west corner of a pasture field enclosed by dry stone walls. The stone is twenty-six yards from the north wall, and twenty yards from the west wall. It may be described as a quadrangular block of dark grey limestone, rising on its eastern side, or front, to the height of 5 feet 4 inches above the surface of the ground, and measuring 5 feet at its greatest breadth. Its thickness varies, for the northern face measures 3 feet 3 inches across, and the southern face, which tapers to a point, only 2 feet at the base. The cattle make use of it as a rubbing block; it is perhaps for that reason that it has been allowed to remain *in situ*, but the same circumstance will one day cause its downfall, for the soil around it is so worn away, especially on the northern side, that its foundation is in danger of being undermined. Like Long Meg, it differs in its material from that of its former satellites, which consisted of granite. Like Long Meg, too, it is so placed as to command a view of the great escarpments of the eastern fells.

Immediately to the north of the pasture field containing the standing stone is a tract of heather-clad ground still known as "Grey Yauds;" but for all that I do not think that it actually comprised any portion of the old circle, which lay entirely in the pasture field, if the remaining stone be the larger one mentioned by Nicolson and Burn as standing five yards to north-west of the circle. I can find no vestiges of its circumference. The foundation of the wall which bounds the western end of the pasture field

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\* Cumberland sheet, xxxii., N.W., second edition, 1901 (six inches to the mile), a copy of which has been given to the Society by the author, and is deposited with the Society's papers at Tullie House.—ED.

is formed of large blocks of sparry granite, doubtless the old grey stones of the circle, or their fragments.

I examined the standing stone, and also the blocks of granite embedded in the field walls, in order to discover if possible any traces of ancient artificial markings, but did not observe any. I do not say there are none, but a conclusive examination would entail much time and patience, having regard to the remote situation of the place and the weathered condition of the stones.

It would be desirable that our Society, one of whose objects is the preservation of local antiquities, should obtain permission to enclose the monument with a wooden fence, and so prevent damage by cattle—and, what is more important, damage by irresponsible persons who carve their initials on the stone. When I mentioned this matter to a neighbouring resident, he laughed, and asked if I was afraid that they would blow the stone up with gunpowder. I replied that this was the very thing I most feared! So dull is the mind of the average rustic, and so wanting in imagination, that he actually appraises these venerable relics of a bygone age at their value for road metal. There is a little circle of stones at Maughanby, known to many of our members (see these *Transactions*, N.S., ii., pp. 381, 382), which stands so very near to the high road that whenever I pass it, I tremble for its safety.

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