

ART. XXII.—*The Stone Circle on Knipe Scar.* By MISS NOBLE.

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THE circle of stones on Knipe Scar, commonly known as the "Druids' Circle," differs from many in not being a circle of large stones brought from a distance. It is a space of rocky ground from which the stones have been cleared in a circle, and the pieces used to fill the vacancies between the "clints" left standing and the spaces where none previously existed. It lies on the common to the north-east of a line drawn from what is called the "Scar Nib" and the wall dividing the "out" from the "in" or enclosed scar. It is in the midst of a bed of fissured limestone or clints scattered about in all directions, and probably at the time this circle was made lying close together; but as this class of stone is ornamental for rockery work and easily collected, much has now been carried away.

Almost in the centre of the circle is a large stone standing alone, irregular in outline, about four feet long and under three feet broad at the widest part; it stands from twenty to twenty-three inches high, and has evidently never been moved. On the south-east of the circle is an opening six feet wide, and here and around by the east the outline is not so well rounded as on the west. The general diameter is sixteen yards internally, with an irregularity of about four feet on the east. The ground inside is thinly covered with turf through which the rock crops out here and there, showing that there is a very thin coating of soil on any part.

On the most recent Ordnance Survey maps this circle can be seen, and on the earlier large ones a tumulus is marked on what is called the "In" scar, now a part of Lowther Park. This, owing to the removal of fences and the growth of young plantations, is difficult to locate at the present day.

The earliest mention of this circle is in the *Beauties of England and Wales*, written about 1815 by Hodgson, the historian of Northumberland, and a native of the district. Describing local antiquities, he says:—"The Folds in the Wood' on Knype Scar denote the site of a British village. On Lowther Scar is a circle of large stones, seventy feet in diameter, probably the burial place of some ancient chieftain." This distinction between "Lowther" and "Knipe" Scar is a little puzzling, as at the present time the former name has ceased to exist. I think the Lowther Scar circle was probably the "tumulus" of the Ordnance Survey, and also the one referred to by Dr. Simpson in his paper on "Stone Circles near Shap" (these *Transactions*, O.S., vi.) :—

Two such concentric circles as those I have described may be seen upon Knipe Scar, a short distance from Shap; another in the adjoining field. 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 [*i.e.*, Dr. John Stuart, secretary to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland; died in 1876], and the results of our examination were sufficient to satisfy us that at some 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 18 inches below the surface, we found a rough flat-shaped stone 15 inches in width and about 2 feet 6 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, a peculiarity which I noted in two other instances in which the deposit was found. The diameter of the outside circle is 63 feet, the second 21 feet, and the innermost of the three, within which the flat stone covering the deposit was placed,

is 7 feet. From the centre of this circle to the centre of the one adjoining the distance is 96 feet. In the centre space of the other circle, about the same depth below the surface, we found a rude pavement of cobbles, about 6 feet in length and 4 feet in width, and under the pavement a similar deposit of charcoal. . . . Neither at Odendale nor Knipe Scar was any deposit found either within the space between the circles or under the stones forming them, though some of them were dug round and some taken out of position, and the site carefully examined. Whatever other use they may have had they have at some period or other been used as places of deposit for the ashes of the dead.

In *Stone Monuments, Tumuli, and Ornaments of Remote Ages*, by J. B. Waring (1870), is the following quotation from the *Transactions* of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, which seems likely to be Dr. Stuart's account of the same stone circle :—

On Shap Moor, Westmorland, the diameter of the outer circle is 63 feet, of the inner circle 21 feet; the ashes of the dead were in a central cist. Numerous other examples occur at Odindale and Penhurrock in the same district. These graves, in which cremation was practised, differ naturally from those in which the body was buried entire—types possibly of two distinct creeds, the one not believing, the other believing, in the resurrection of the body. In the last case it was but natural that the home of the person when living should be reproduced as his abode in death, burying his greatest treasures with him, and this we find to such a degree that it is sometimes difficult now to say which was the dwelling and which the grave.

If these ancient dwellers on the scar were sun or fire worshippers their games and rites would have some connection with the seasons, and I am told that the Scar Races were held here in early summer. There is a stretch of ground more than a mile long and several yards wide which has at some period been cleared and roughly levelled like a terrace, and this is known as "the race-course." On Moor Divock, across the valley, sports were held till within the last thirty years in September near the well-known Copt Stone. Those in Bampton were dis-

continued probably seventy years ago; hence there is conflicting testimony as to the exact time of year at which they were held. The fact, however, that this institution had existed from time out of mind gives a peculiar interest to the site.

[The accompanying plan is from a survey by the Author, redrawn for reproduction by the Editor.]
