

ART. XXIII.—*Report on an Ancient Settlement at Stone Close, near Stainton-in-Furness.* By JOHN DOBSON, Urswick.

Communicated at Carlisle, April 11th, 1912.

QUARRYING operations in the fields called Stone Closes, to the north of the village of Stainton and bordering on its western side the lane which leads from that village towards Lindal, have, at different times from 1894 up to the present date, brought to light tools and implements of stone and bronze in such numbers as would lead to the supposition that a prehistoric settlement had occupied the eastern slope of the enclosure numbered 736 on the 25-inch Ordnance Survey Map, Lancashire, sheet xxii. 2. In West's "Antiquities of Furness" (1805 edition, p. 24) the high ground which these Stone Closes include is described as being in the centre of Furness and commanding the whole internal prospect of Low Furness. It is here, on almost the highest point of land in the immediate neighbourhood, 275 feet above the sea level, that the site of the supposed ancient settlement is believed to have been in part traced out. Although, as before mentioned, many finds of tools and weapons had been made at this place, it does not appear to have occurred to any one that remains of ramparts or of enclosing walls similar to those at Urswick Stone Walls, Foula, and at Appleby Slack on Birkrigg might be expected to exist here also. The broken and boulder-strewn nature of the ground, with its thick growth of bracken and whin, would also render difficult the recognition of indistinct remains of walls or earth-works.

In the autumn of 1904 the writer, when examining the ground at the north end of the quarry for signs of ancient implements, noticed among the whins two or three large stones which seemed from their alignment to have formed part of the boundary of some old enclosure. Closer examination proved that these stones stood on a slightly raised ridge from which at intervals it was plain that other and smaller stones had recently been removed, probably to be used as rockery material. This earthen bank with its embedded footing-stones terminated towards the south at the then edge of the quarry, but, first northward, then westward, and finally southward, it was traceable almost to the stile on the footpath leading into the more southerly Stone Close which slopes down to the railway line running from the quarry behind the houses of Stainton village. When it was remembered that all or nearly all the finds of tools and weapons of both stone and bronze associated with this quarry had been made within the roughly quadrangular space enclosed on the east, north, and west by the ridge of earth already in part described, it became evident that here very probably was the site of an ancient settlement of some importance.

The attention of the late Mr. Harper Gaythorpe having been called to this discovery, he, along with Messrs. W. G. and R. Collingwood and the writer, visited the place, and on their report the Council of the Society made a small grant to enable such excavation to be carried out as might test the settlement theory, though it was pointed out that, as the greater part of any traces of enclosures which might formerly have existed had evidently been already obliterated by quarrying operations, it was exceedingly improbable that such excavation as was now possible would produce any very striking discoveries. The permission of the owners of the land—the Barrow Hæmatite Steel Company—and of Mr.

Joshua Wilkinson, the tenant, having been obtained, work was commenced at the point where the earth-bank with its embedded stones left the northern edge of the quarry. This bank was traced in a north-north-western direction for some 30 yards, and was found to contain several stones of considerable size, not lying, as boulders usually lie when deposited naturally, on one of the larger faces, but planted edgewise with their longer axes pointing in the direction of the run of the wall, so as to give, for their size, the greatest possible amount of facing surface. These edgewise-planted stones were found sometimes on one face of the bank, sometimes on the other, and in several cases opposite each other, so giving the breadth of the ancient wall which would appear to have been from 5 to 6 feet. Besides the footing stones *in situ*, the holes were found from which several others had been removed not very long ago; indeed, rockery stones, ready for carting away, were lying all along the land to the north of the quarry. At the point already indicated, that is to say 30 yards from the then northern edge of the quarry, the earthbank turned sharply to the west and ran in that direction for another 18 yards, with footing-stones in position in sufficient number to render the course of the wall easy enough to follow. From this point the direction of the rampart was difficult to determine, but a large stone set on edge with its long axis north and south gave the direction as now northward, and in this direction, partly by disturbed footing stones, partly by the now very indistinct ridge of earth, and partly by the nature of the surface soil the wall was followed for some 20 yards where it apparently turned sharply to the west again, and at a further distance of 15 yards struck the eastern edge of an outcrop of weathered limestone which thence westward, for some 40 yards more, probably acted as the northern boundary of the enclosure. Here, at the north-west corner of the outcrop, all trace

of a boundary disappeared, but about 40 yards south-west of this corner a low and narrow grassy ridge was noticed and traced, with a sweep round until it ran almost due south about 100 yards, nearly to the wall of the modern enclosure where it is pierced by a narrow stile for the footpath. This grassy ridge was examined and found to be composed under the sod of earth and limestone rubble as if from the remains of a wall, all the larger stones of which had been removed, as indeed they probably were when the modern fence walls were put up. At this point, near the stile, all traces of a rampart disappeared, but almost due east, at the very edge of the quarry, indeed partly overhanging it, a large boulder set edgewise with its long axis east and west was taken as evidence that the boundary wall of the supposed settlement had turned sharply to the east, and the remainder of this boundary was conjecturally laid down as shown in the rough sketch-plan which accompanies this report.

Within the enclosure, trial was made in various "likely" places, in the hope of finding the site of ancient dwellings, or the tools, weapons, or earthenware of the inhabitants, but without success. Near the point marked on the plan "Grit quern, 1901," a circular hollow was noticed and cleared out in the hope that it might prove to have been the site of a hut, but though it contained perhaps a couple of cartloads of limestone rubble intermixed with dark soil of vegetable origin, no trace of hearth or charcoal or anything showing man's handiwork was unearthed. As it was evident that the only way to discover whatever of prehistoric handiwork still lay hidden within the enclosure would be to remove the sod and examine the soil of every foot of the area, and as this would be too big and too costly a work to be worth while undertaking, the excavation was discontinued, but arrangements were made with Mr. William Trenouth, the foreman quarryman, for a careful look-out to be kept by his men

as the work of clearing the rock surface in preparation for quarrying proceeded, so that any further finds might be observed, recorded, and preserved.

As it may prove of some value to record the finds made within or near this ancient settlement, they are appended :

In 1894 a socketed celt and palstave of bronze, figured and described in the "North Lonsdale Magazine," 1896, vol. i., p. 91, acquired by the late Canon Ayre and now in the possession of Mrs. Ayre.

In 1901, an upper quern stone of local millstone grit, found just under the turf in the position indicated in the sketch plan, now in the Municipal Museum, Barrow-in-Furness, to which it was presented by the late Mr. Gaudie.

About a dozen stone celts, mostly polished, at various dates between 1894 and 1901. Two of these were thrown away (!) and buried in the rubbish on the east side of the quarry; three or four found in a crevice of the limestone on the low side of the quarry near Stone Barrow Lane were handed over to the late J. W. Lawn, then manager of the quarries, and their present whereabouts has not been traced; one, found by Mr. Job Huxley in a weathered crevice in the limestone, was acquired by the late Harper Gaythorpe and presented by him to the Municipal Museum, Barrow-in-Furness; five or six others, each 5 or 6 inches long, mostly polished, some of them broken, found as a rule just under the sod, two or three of them in the weathered hollows of the limestone, appear to have been little regarded, and their present whereabouts is uncertain; probably the late Mr. Lawn had most of them.

In 1901, a bronze ring, some three inches in diameter, handed over to Mr. Lawn.

In 1903, an upper quern stone of granite, found in the north-west corner of this "Devonshire Quarry," about 15 yards west of the fence wall end, now in the possession of the Rev. T. N. Postlethwaite, vicar of Urswick.

A quantity of bloomery cinder, perhaps a cartload, found near the place where the bronze celt and palstave were obtained, but more to the south, near the present wall corner. As far as can be gathered, no hearth was observed, but about a cartload of iron ore was lying near the cinder and, like it, overgrown by the close upland turf.

In 1904, a large piece of a saddle quern of hard large-grained

sandstone, and near it a broken grinding or mealing stone of whinstone (?) now in the possession of the writer.

In 1909, a large fragment of an upper quern stone of coarse-grained grit with large quartz crystals, now in the possession of the Barrow Naturalists' Field Club.

In August, 1910, at the north-west corner of the quarry, a very interesting celt of hard granitic stone of very dark colour, found just under the turf. The natural shape of the rolled pebble has been taken advantage of, and the broad end is ground and polished to a fine edge. The rest of the tool is left rough with quartz grains standing out like warts on the surface. This celt is now in the possession of Mr. Edward Trenouth, of Longlands Cottage, Dalton-in-Furness.

In September, 1910, a piece of one of the large leg bones of an ox or horse, found in a crevice in the limestone in this same north-west corner of the quarry, along with a barrow load or more of the empty shells of the land snails, *helix aspersa* and *helix nemoralis*. The bone, now in the possession of the writer, was not gnawed, but had apparently been split open for the purpose of extracting the marrow.

At the same time and within a few yards of the same place a small fragment of a rubbing stone, sharpening stone, or maybe a lower quern stone of fine-grained sandstone—Hawcoat stone—showing signs of shaping, smoothing, and polishing on two faces and one edge.

It may also be of some interest in connection with this list of finds at Stone Close to record here a few other discoveries made in the immediate neighbourhood which may possibly have a more or less close relation to the ancient settlement with which this report is concerned :

About half a mile west-south-west from the point at which the bronze celt and palstave were found in 1894, close by the roadside between Stainton Head and Tithe Barn, several cinerary urns were brought to light in a mass of sand which was being dug out for building purposes. (For particulars see Bolton's "Geological Fragments," p. 139.) According to Mr. Joseph Walker, of Stainton, who worked in this sand pit as a boy, between 1866 and 1870, several more urns were found besides those mentioned by Bolton; he says he remembers three being smashed up by the workmen in one afternoon. The whole of this fine

bed of sand was not removed, and it is possible that more of these burial urns exist under the roadway. Perhaps here was the cemetery of the Bronze-age dwellers in the Stone Close Settlement.

About three furlongs to the south-east of the settlement, in the dark peaty earth of the hollow which runs towards Gleaston, a very fine saddle quern was found in 1905 during draining operations, buried about 18 inches in the moss. It is now in the possession of the writer.

In 1904 a small bronze coin of the Emperor Constantine (A.D. 306-337) was found in the vicarage garden at Little Urswick, but as the vicar, the Rev. T. N. Postlethwaite, had just before received several loads of soil and turf from the top of Stone Close quarry, it is more than likely that the Roman coin really came from the ancient settlement.

In February, 1912, an interesting find in the shape of a bronze knife was made at a spot $\frac{1}{4}$ mile north of the central hut-circle at Urswick Stone Walls, and less than half a mile N.N.W. of the eastern end of the village of Little Urswick. It lay quite on the surface among the angular fragments at the southern end of a mass of limestone rock. This outcrop, deeply weathered, full of crevices and overgrown with brushwood, here forms a long hillock in the gravel-filled valley down which formerly ran a small stream—the Clerk's Beck—to Urswick Tarn. Evidently, in post-glacial times a considerable river brought down from the flanks of Kirkby Moor the immense mass of gravel and sand which now forms the subsoil of this fertile valley bottom. The implement recently picked up is what is generally termed a tanged knife. It is, in its present condition, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, of which the tang takes up slightly over an inch, but, when perfect, the total length was probably about 6 inches. The greatest width is $\frac{7}{8}$ th of an inch, but, as the blade shows signs of long use and is much chipped by the rough treatment it has undergone during long ages from the trampling of animals among the angular fragments of stone among which it lay, its original width was probably slightly over an inch. Exposure to the air has favoured oxidation, and there is probably very little metallic bronze left. On the flat surface of the tang on both sides a ridge has been formed $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long and $\frac{1}{8}$ inch high to keep the knife steady in its handle. A tool almost exactly like the one now under consideration, only larger and less elegant in shape, is figured and described by Canon Greenwell in *Archæologia*, vol. liv., as having been found in Heathery Burn Cave, co. Durham (fig. 6). The form, though

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not, so far as is known, previously recorded for the Furness District, is not unusual in the United Kingdom (see Evans' *Ancient Bronze Implements*, l.c. 212, fig. 252). The Urswick specimen was found by the writer, in whose possession it at present remains.

In conclusion it may be mentioned that any vestiges of a settlement at Stone Close are fast disappearing before the advance of the quarry, and in a few years all will have been removed.

The best thanks of the writer are due to Mr. William Trenouth, without whose assistance the compilation of the list of finds would have been impossible.