

ART. XIII.—*Hartside Cross*. By R. E. PORTER, M.C.,
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Read at the Site, July 10th, 1929.

THE Ordnance Maps mark Hartside Cross, but in such a manner as to indicate doubts both of age and existence. The County historians do not mention the Cross, and a very detailed account of the boundaries of the Manor of Alston also fails to refer to it, despite the fact that the boundary passes by the site. On the 9th May, 1929, Dr. W. Goodchild and I made a search, and found several pieces of red sandstone lying on the surface of the ground and a stone embedded in the soil near the line of the old highway, about sixty yards from the present main road. The stone was just showing above the turf, and when this was cut away, we discovered flat pieces of sandstone packed about the stone, and these chips seemed to have been placed there deliberately to hold it in position. When the stone was raised, tool marks became apparent, and the lower end had been cut away to form a tenon, as though at one time it had been fixed in a base. We therefore concluded that we had discovered the lower end of the shaft of a cross or boundary stone. The present dimensions are 15 inches in length, 10 inches by 11 inches in section and the tenon 3 inches deep.

When the stone was lifted up we had an unexpected find, for I noticed a small coin drop back into the hole from the fine black mud, which was adherent to the under surface of the tenon. We first thought the coin was English, but more careful examination proved it to be a silver penny of Alexander III of Scotland. It is of the second issue of coinage of this reign, and bears obverse: the king's head crowned to left, with sceptre, surrounded

by ALEXANDER DEI GRA., reverse, a long single cross pattée, having a mullet or star in each angle, and REX SCOTORUM. Alexander III married a daughter of Henry III of England, and, after a long reign, died in 1286. The regal barony of Tyndale, long held by the Scottish kings, lies to the east of Hartside, and the western boundary of the Manor of Alston runs along the ridge, so it may be inferred that the stone or cross marks that boundary and that the coin was placed beneath it to mark the erection or re-erection, during the latter years of Alexander's reign. If this is a correct inference, the coin remained undisturbed for about 650 years.

The discovery was described to the Society on July 10th, 1929, during the Summer Excursion in the Alston district, and our President, speaking at Hartside, said: "I can only endorse what Mr. Porter has said; that this stone has been part of a cross put up to mark the boundary of the Manor of Alston, and that the coin of Alexander III dates it to some year before 1286, when he died. I can only add a suggestion of the occasion for this erection and consequently for other boundary crosses of Alston, such as the Killhope Cross, which has lately been restored by the care of the Rev. W. T. Taylor, on the opposite side of the district.

Everybody knows, but most of us who are not teachers of history forget, that Edward I, soon after he came to the throne, tried to regulate the position of the Crown in regard to the landholders of England by enquiring the grounds of their various tenures. He asked them to show by what warrant—quo warranto—they held their estates. The Chronicle of Lanercost tells the story, perhaps too good to be true, of Warrenne, Earl of Surrey, who lugged out a rusty sword saying 'This was my father's: here is my warrant.' And when it came, in 1279, to the question of the ownership of Alston by Alexander III and his tenant Robert de Veteriponte, the King of Scots had

little more to say. He pleaded immemorial use and had no charter to show. Indeed, I am as much at a loss as he was, for I cannot find the occasion of a grant, if any there were. But the Rev. F. W. Ragg has printed in our *Transactions* (N.S. xi), a charter by King William the Lion, granting Alston to William de Veteriponte and dated rather more than a hundred years before this trial. This, at any rate, would have shown a century of possession, and Robert de Veteriponte's lawyer actually seems to have produced it.

Unfortunately our Society was not founded at that time, and the lawyer had too little help in his history. He said that the charter was by "William II" of Scotland, and there was no William II. Counsel for the king of England fixed on the blunder and the jury found—erroneously—that the charter was spurious. Now it is often fancied that medieval kings were tyrants and their judges were harsh; but in this case Alexander, who had nothing to show, was permitted to keep Alston, and when Robert de Veteriponte died, a couple of years later, his son Nicholas was allowed, at the request of Alexander to Edward I, to enter in upon the property.

This trial of 1279 took place when the coin which was found under the cross was in circulation. The fact suggests that after the trial the bounds were beaten afresh and the marks set up again. The Hartside Cross must have been earlier because it has a tenon which means that it once had a base. Crosses like this might date any time in the thirteenth century, or even earlier, though they are not pre-Conquest; and in course of time the base had probably split and shattered, which happens to sandstone in an exposed site, especially if it was originally face-bedded. So, I suppose, they stuck the shaft into the earth, without going to the trouble of getting a new base, and used the bits to wedge up the shaft, which must then have been complete enough for service. In 650 years it

is no wonder that it has been broken off short, perhaps by animals rubbing against it, and that this stump has never been noticed—at any rate, never recorded—until now.”