

adds that, apart from its general form, it possesses distinctly both the little spur in the part where it was hafted and, on one side of the blade, the little shoulder or lump which occur in Viking axes. On both sides of the blade there are considerable traces of splinters of wood, the grain showing quite clearly; this, however only occurs near the cutting-edge, which suggests that a powerful blow has driven the edge into wood perhaps a shield or palisade or possibly the wall of a wooden church—the weld gave way, the eye broke and the head flew off from the handle.

Dr. Haakon Shetelig, Director of the Bergen Antiquarian Museum, and a recognised authority on Scandinavian Antiquities writes "I am extremely interested in the Repton "find" It is no doubt a Viking axe-head. The type is dated by Petersen to the late 9th and early 10th century and is specially common along the west coast of Norway. Thus the date corresponds well to the Norse occupation of Repton in 874." Professor Baldwin Brown very kindly allows us to reproduce one of his photographs of the axe.

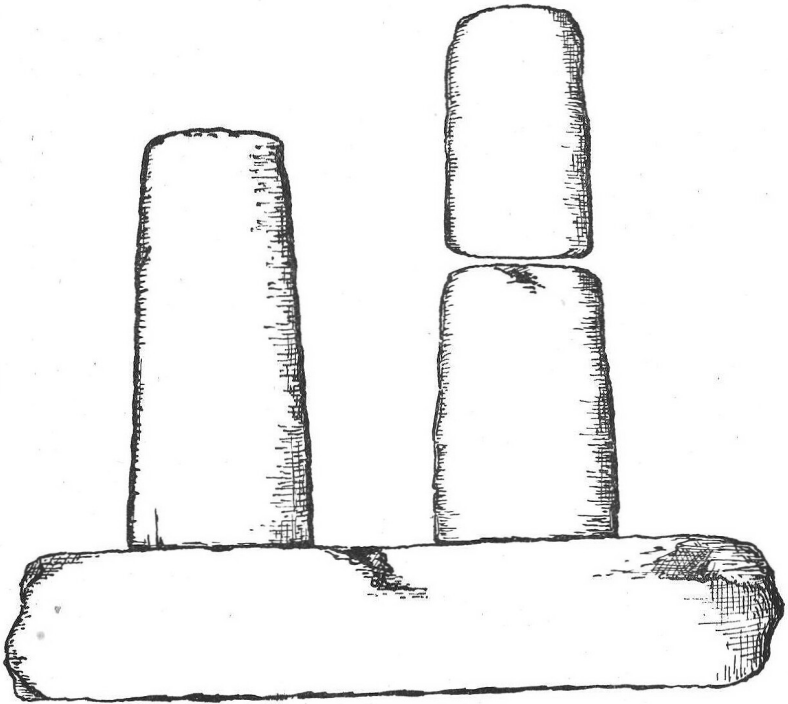
H. Vassall, F.S.A.

## VI.

### ROBIN HOOD'S PICKING RODS.

It will be remembered that these stones were referred to on page 10 of last year's *Journal*, as possibly of pre-Conquest date. Mr. W. J. Andrew in Vol. xxvii of the *Journal* also includes them in that category as does Mr. G. le Blanc Smith in volume N.S. xii, 237 of the *Reliquary*. The accompanying sketch shows that it is unlikely that the stones themselves ever had any ornamentation of an Anglian character. Earlier writers such as Lysons, Glover and Aitken made the wildest suggestions as to their origin, but these writers are so entirely uncritical in their methods, that one cannot pay any serious attention to

their theories. The isolated position of the stones, far from any known centre of contemporary Christian worship, their distance from a high road, the entire absence of ornamentation, their unusual appearance—two stones fixed into one base—are all arguments against their having been erected either as preaching crosses, or as memorials of the dead during the Anglian period. Is it



possible to suggest a more probable purpose? If we remember that all through the mediæval period the whole of this part of the country was uncultivated forest-land, interrupted only at wide intervals by little settlements, where a few families endeavoured to win the means of existence from a none too generous soil: that roads were practically non-existent, and that the only really im-

portant institution in the locality was the Forest itself we can realize how necessary boundary stones would be in establishing the divisions of Forest jurisdiction and determining the spheres of influence of foresters and other officials. Such stones are very common in Lancashire, Cumberland and Cheshire, and attention has often been called to the similarity between the Picking Rods and the Bow-stones in the last named county.

Mr. Henry Taylor in *The Ancient Crosses and Holy Wells of Lancashire* is emphatic in his opinion that stones of this character were originally erected as boundary stones, probably in the twelfth or thirteenth century. The same writer quotes from the Cartulary of Cockersand Abbey an account of the erection of one of these boundaries, which is particularly interesting in view of the fact that here also the property was in monastic hands. The remains of many similar stones are dotted about the Forest of Peak, and the late Dr. Cox in a very interesting paper in *Bygone Derbyshire* gives a considerable amount of information on the subject derived for the most part from the records of the Duchy of Lancaster. There can be little doubt, I think, that the "Picking Rods" were originally erected to serve the purpose of boundary stones. A single stone usually marked a place where there was a sharp turn in the boundary or where two boundaries met. What more natural than that two stones should denote the meeting place of several such boundaries. At the present time the boundaries of the townships of Chisworth, Ludworth, Mellor and Rowarth all meet at or close to the Picking Rods. Mr. W. G. Collingwood is of opinion that there is no real evidence of their Anglian origin and concurs in the belief that they were originally erected as boundary stones, though the absence of ornamentation of any kind makes it difficult to suggest a date. It is quite possible, however, that they were erected in the twelfth century soon after the abbey of Basingwerk came into possession of the manors of Longdendale. H. L.