

# Rarun



Arthur Batty

Rarun, (2010) © Ed. Anita Batty

Published by Batty and Batty

Front Cover: Looking towards Rarun Ridge.

# Rarun

The Monastic boundary perambulations for Southerscales in the Coucher Book of Furness Abbey, all describe a point called Rarun, this name continued to be used on boundary perambulations, and is still shown on the OS map of 1853. Rarun is usually written on maps over an area or ridge of land situated to the north west of Newby Head and south of Wold Fell. Mary Higham mentions Rarun and contacted Dr M Gelling concerning the translation of the name. According to the references in Higham's work, Gelling suggested that Rarun might mean 'at the cairns', from the ON (Old Norse) '*hreyrr*' (Higham,1992). Higham does not appear to have done any other research on the name to verify Gelling's suggestion.

We carried out research of the word Rarun and found the following information. On the north side of the A66, on Stainmoor, stands a stump consisting of a socket and a fragment of a shaft that stood on a mound of rock called the Reys Cross also known as Rere Cross. All the evidence seems to point to its use as a boundary marker between Cumbria and Northumbria. The name has been explained as deriving from ON '*hreyrr*' (cairn or boundary cairn) WRef<sup>1</sup> the same as Gelling suggested to Higham for Rarun.

Not having found any written record of a cairn related to Rarun on the Monastic Southerscales Boundary perambulations or any more recent ones, field walking of the area was carried out. During this exercise the possible remains of a robbed out cairn, right on the line of our proposed location of the boundary perambulation, was discovered (Plate 1). The photograph (Plate 2) shows a roughly circular area of short grass sward within an area of *Juncus* moorland, there is no limestone bedrock visible at this location which could have accounted for the change in vegetation. The area had approximately 100 mm to 125 mm of soil cover with sandstone boulders under laying it and several were visible. There are remains of a T shaped sheep shelter and an enclosure wall nearby - these could have been built with stones from the cairn. However, as no reference could be found to a cairn in this location, it is possible that robbing was carried out long before the shelter or the enclosure walls were built.

The name Rarun, and possibly the remains of a cairn, situated on a boundary does indicate a connection between ON '*hreyrr*' AS (Anglo Saxon) '*hryre*' OI (Old Icelandic) '*reyrr*' all of these refer to either a heap of stones, cairn, boundary cairn, or a stone pile on a mountain, and the more modern names Rere, Rey and Rarun are possibly derived from these words (WRefs<sup>2 and 3</sup>).

We have attempted to throw some light on the word Rarun, the results may not be correct but we think they are worth serious thought. We know the word Rarun with various ways of spelling it exists, and every boundary perambulation since the early 13<sup>th</sup> century puts it in roughly the same location, if our translation of the word is correct?, Rarun has been describing a cairn all along ,so the question is, where's the location of the cairn, and not is there one.

The location of the 'Burned house'/ 'Hermitage house' on the Southerscales boundary perambulation as described in 'Is there a Hermitage on Black Rake' (Batty and Batty, 2009), is written as Whitrakeend on the Dent boundary perambulation of 1540. This name can be broken down to Whit-rake-end, Wiht in OE translates as 'a bend' with topographical association such as a curving recess or a bend in a river or valley (Smith, 1956). This fits perfectly the possible location of 'Burned house'/ 'Hermitage/House'. The rest of the name *rake-end* fits as this location is the top end of Helmit Rake and also Black Rake. House Steads fold is the modern name for this location as shown on Plate 3. This new evidence, if correct, helps to validate all previous research we have done on the location of the boundary, and the names used to describe it.

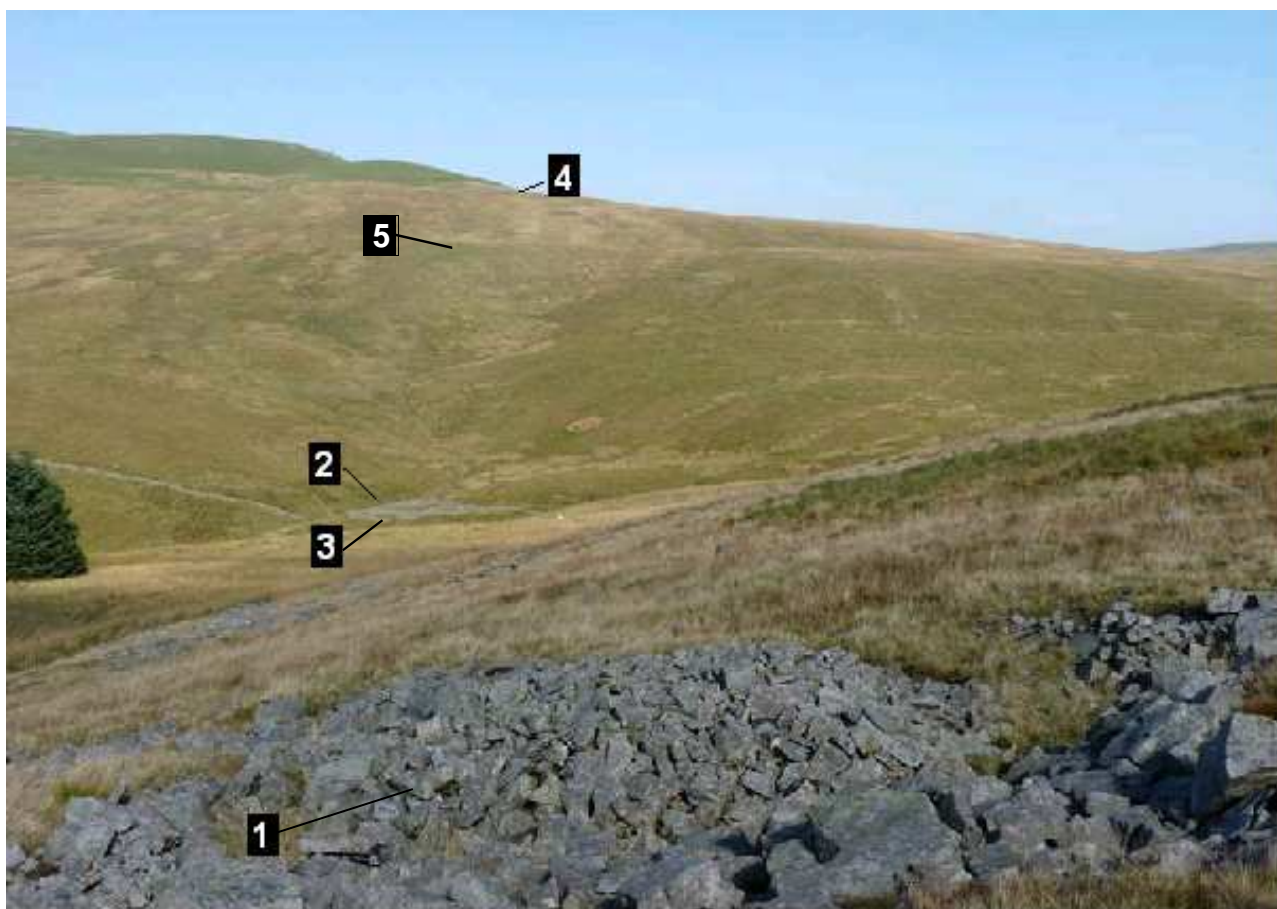


Plate 1: (1) Boundary marker in hurle of stones (2) 'Hermitage House' (3) 'burned house' (4) Whinistone Keld and (5) is site of the possible robbed-out cairn.

*Photo: Arthur Batty*



Plate 2: The green area in the foreground is the possible site of the cairn. (A close up of No 5 on Plate 1).

*Photo: Arthur Batty*



Plate 3: The sheep fold in the centre (now known as Housesteads Fold) is shown on Plate 1 as Nos 2 and 3. The bend in the stream is probably the feature that gives this area its name in the perambulation of 1540 (Whit-rake-end) as in Old English '*wiht*' translates to 'a bend' (see text).

### Bibliography

**Batty, A and Batty A.,** (2009) *Is there a Hermitage on Black Rake?* Batty & Batty

**Higham, M.C.,** (1992) *Souterscales - A Furness Abbey Estate in Lonsdale.* In Rumble, A. R., Mill, A.D., (ed) Names, places and people: an onomastic miscellany in memory of John McNeal Dodgson (Stamford: Paul Watkins, pub. 1997) pp 131- 43

**Smith, A. H.,** (1956) *English Place name Elements Vol 26 Part 2.* English Place-Name Society, Cambridge pp 265

### WRef

(1) [http://wapedia.mobi/en/Eric\\_Bloodaxe?t=9](http://wapedia.mobi/en/Eric_Bloodaxe?t=9).

(2) [http://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate\\_c?hl=en&sl=is&u=http...](http://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?hl=en&sl=is&u=http...)

(3) <http://norse.ulver.com/dct/zoega/r.html>

### Photographs

Front Cover and Plates 1 & 2 - Arthur Batty

Aerial Photograph (Plate 3) - Google Earth