COULD THIS BE THE ANSWER TO WHO EXCAVATED THE LARGE CAIRN IN SLEIGHTS PASTURE CHAPEL- LE- DALE?

A BATTY

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Front cover. Aerial photograph of Cairn. *Photograph A Batty.*
List of places visited and contacted in this research.

Visited.

Kendal Records office.
Kendal Library.

Westmorland Gazette newspaper archive Kendal.
Dales Countryside Museum Hawes.

Contacted

Carlisle Museum.
Carlisle Library.
Barrow Library
Lancaster Library.
Lancaster University Library
British Library London.
British Library Wetherby.
National Trust Town End Troutbeck.
County Hall Kendal.
Darlington and Stockton Times Newspaper.
Lancaster Guardian Newspaper.
Craven Herald Newspaper.
Yorkshire Dales National Park Office Bainbridge.
National Trust Swindon.
Armitt Museum Ambleside.
North Yorkshire County Records Office.

Collections Studied at Kendal Records Office.

Brown Family from Town End Troutbeck.
B. L. Thompson employed by National Trust.
Clare Fell Lake District Archaeologist.
While studying Transactions of the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society journals, I came across the following article written by Clare Fell (Fell C. 1953) in this she quotes information supplied to her by Mr B L Thompson. This was from a copy of the “Westmorland Advertiser and Kendal Chronicle” dated Saturday 29th March 1828 and states as follows.

“There are now lying in our office two remarkable relics of antiquity, found in a Druid’s Temple about 21 miles from Lancaster, on the road to Richmond, by Mr John Tatham, coal proprietor of Hawes. One is a spearhead of bronze, about 4 inches long and one broad, with a rib on each side of the centre. The other bears more venerable marks of antiquity being a flint arrowhead about an inch and a quarter long and half an inch wide. The formation of the latter is very curious and even with assistance of modern iron implements, would appear to be made with some difficulty. Mr Tatham informs us, that in exploring the ruins, a number of other curiosities have been found; one of them he describes as an antique drinking vessel.”

Clare Fell then states “The “Druid’s Temple” in question may be the stone circle near Casterton, part of which still survives.” The newspaper states that the Druids Temple is on the Lancaster to Richmond road which does not go by Casterton, so therefore Fell’s statement is incorrect, this road comes from Lancaster through Ingleton to Ribblehead then to Hawes and on to Richmond. The diaries of Mr Alexander Fothergill (Hartley M 1985) go into extensive detail concerning the repair, and piecing together of sections of old roads to create the Lancaster to Richmond turnpike road, so there can be no doubt about the route.

We now have to re-consider a possible location for the Druids Temple along this route 21 miles from Lancaster, this takes us to somewhere above the Hill Inn, on the area called Sleights at the NE end of Chapel-le-dale. I have previously published two papers (Batty A. 2011 and Batty A. 2014) giving details of archaeological remains in this area, the publication dated 2014 discusses and shows a large cairn on the SE side of the road Plate 1. which I considered to have been excavated Plate 2. Harry Speight in his book (Speight H.1892) does mention that a large cairn was opened in this area about 100 years ago, which takes the date back to the early 1800’s, so the excavation date could tie in with the date of the newspaper article, meaning they could both be referring to the same location and event.

Alternatively there may have been two separate excavations as Speight also states that a skeleton was found in a “rude stone coffin”, this is not referred to in the newspaper article, John Tatham’s excavation could have occurred a few years later, removing cairn remains left from a previous excavation. However it is probably more likely that Speight’s reference and Tatham’s possible excavation are one and the same event, the spearhead
and drinking cup are probably grave goods from within the burial cist/coffin rather than outside it and would have been found at the same time. The drinking vessel found by Mr Tatham was considered by Clare Fell to have possibly been from the Beaker period, this would tie in with the other artefacts to give a date for the Cairn of around 2000BC. Our publication dated 2011 discusses a Ring Cairn in Haws House pasture on the opposite side of the B6255 road, this was radiocarbon dated to around the same period.

The newspaper states that Mr J Tatham was a coal proprietor of Hawes, research reveals that he had the lease's on two collieries one above Gayle called Storth, and one on the other side of Sledale valley called Banks (Spensley I M. 2014). It is possible that he put some of his miners to work on excavating the cairn in Sleights pasture. The linear dumps of stone radiating out from the cairn remains may be suggestive of excavators with mining experience being involved. I have put this idea to several people with a knowledge of mining, and they seem to be in agreement with me.

On websites discussing Casterton Stone Circle Clare Fell’s paper appears to have become accepted as fact, one site even adding to the confusion saying there was 1,828 finds there, leading to others saying there was over 1,800 finds. I think there is a clue here, the newspaper article is dated 1828. I have not found any information regarding an excavation at the stone circle, this shows that if you repeat something often enough it becomes fact even without any evidence and therefore breaking the rule of following the evidence. The extract from the newspaper given to Fell may not be the complete article so I carried out extensive research in an attempt to find a full copy, this has so far proved unsuccessful. This research is on-going and I have included a list of places contacted and visited, if anybody has any other suggestions as to where I may find a copy of “The Westmorland Advertiser and Kendal Chronicle” for Saturday 29 March 1828 please contact me at arthur44batty@hotmail.com If I find more information concerning this paper, it will be updated.
Bibliography.

Batty A. 2011 *Ring Cairn in Haws House Pasture Chapel-le-Dale.*
www.ingleborougharchaeology.org.uk

www.ingleborougharchaeology.org.uk


Speight H. 1892 *The Craven and North-West Yorkshire Highlands.* re-print 1989 by Smith Settle Otley.

Plate 1. Cairn in Sleights Pasture.  
*Photograph  A Batty.*

Plate 2. Excavated interior of cairn.  
*Photograph  A Batty.*