

- P. polydactyla (Neck.)Harm. Occasional in grass near Rocket Pond.
- \*P. horizontalis (L.)Hoffm. Abundant on banks of Quarry Pool.
- \*Sphaerophorus globosus (Huds.)Wain. Common in crevices, west side.
- \*S. melanocarpus (Swartz.)Schaer. In sheltered cracks, Earthquakes.

\*Not previously recorded for Lundy.

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## DARK AGE REMAINS ON LUNDY

### Introduction.

The object of this paper is to present a brief summary of such evidence as is at present available for the occupation of Lundy in the Dark Ages.

In the period between the early 5th and late 9th Centuries the lowland, southern zone of Britain was over-run by successive waves of Teutonic invaders who, in establishing themselves, tended to destroy what was left of civilized existence on a Roman pattern. For the archaeologist the first two centuries of the period are frustratingly lacking in material cultural remains, particularly when compared with the preceding centuries and their abundant relics of Romanized life.

The highland zone, including the Celtic West, would appear not to have been civilized by Roman culture to the same extent as the area south and east of the Fosse Way. Such Romano-British remains as pottery and trinkets which turn up in Cornwall for example, would appear to be associated merely with native habitations; there are few princely villas or

well laid out towns. The chaos which descended on Roman Britain in the 5th century was felt to a much lesser degree in the south-west, and continued trade with the Mediterranean was responsible for the introduction of good quality pottery which, having been found and dated in Cornwall, Ireland and the Mediterranean, is now being recognized on sites outside the highland zone(1). It is indeed proving to be a key to solving many of the problems of the period in lowland Britain.

It should not be assumed from the foregoing notes however that the Celtic West, in escaping much of the Teutonic pressure from the east, remained entirely free from the attention of belligerents, for the Scots and Irish were by this time moving east. From Pembrokeshire to the Western Isles we have well-attested proof of Dark Age occupation from Erin and in Cornwall too the existence of Christian memorial stones of Irish type indicates an Irish influence upon the scene(2). The rise of Christianity among the Irish resulted in the foundation of small monastic communities and the evidence available suggests that one of these was on Lundy.

### The Evidence

The archaeological evidence for Dark Age occupation of the island consists basically of three items: (a) pottery of the type imported from the Mediterranean during the period, (b) glass necklace beads of a type found on Dark Age Irish sites, and (c) a carved memorial stone of Christian-Irish type.

Supplementing this is the tradition of the existence of a chapel dedicated to the wife of a Dark Age saint — St. Elen.

(a) The Pottery. A close search of Field No. 23 (25" O.S.Map) by the writer and Mr. R. Penwarden produced a considerable quantity of

pottery. One small sherd has been thought to be Romano-British but is too small to be dogmatic about and it would be unwise to speculate on the strength of it. Most of the collection was of 16th/17th century date.

The most significant sherd is part of the wall and basal angle of a bowl<sup>†</sup>; pottery of this exact type has been discovered at Hellesvean, St. Ives, and is sub-Roman possibly as late as 6th century. The fabric is described by Mr. Charles Thomas, M.A., to whom I am indebted for the exact identification, as a "fine brick-red paste, laminated, with a sharp fracture. The surfaces are a darker shade, micaceous, and show traces of careful horizontal burnishing before firing".(3)

It is worthy of note in passing that Chanter refers to sherds of red pottery having been found with the beads in the Giants Graves (q.v.)(4).

(b) The Beads. Three glass beads are to be seen in the Dark Age display case at Bristol Museum, having apparently been discovered with the skeletons in the Giants Graves. They are of a type found in Dark Age Irish contexts.

One is spherical and opaque blue in colour whilst another in darker blue is segmented. The third is green, translucent and divided into three segments.\*

Many others were found according to Chanter, most of them spherical.

(c) "Tigernus" Stone<sup>Ⓢ</sup>. This block of granite, 5'-9" long and 1'-8" in width, bears the inscription IGERNI ITIGERNI and would appear to be typical of many early Christian memorial stones. Loyd(5) goes into some detail on the subject and it is not intended to repeat in full his comments on the meaning and dating of the inscription which runs along the length of

one side. Briefly, it would appear to be a memorial to "Tigernus, son of Tigernus", — a Celtic name which is traditionally associated with a chieftain, e.g., Vortigern Tigernac, Tighearna, etc. The detail of the lettering, the recumbent terminal letter I, the sickle-shaped G and the variations of the letter E would seem to be typical of the period.

The stone was discovered in 1905 when the resting place of Miss Amelia Heaven was being prepared inside the ruins known as St. Helens Chapel on Beacon Hill (Field No. 30, O. S. 25" Map). Miss Heaven's grave occupies a position in the N.W. corner of the Chapel site and it would seem that the stone had been incorporated in the wall at this point. Stones of this type were intended to stand upright in cemeteries attached to Chapels but it is not unknown for them to have been incorporated into the fabric of later successive Chapels and this may well be the case here.

#### General Discussion.

Cemeteries. In 1850<sup>(6)</sup> workmen discovered two granite burial chambers covered by single slabs and being equipped with stone head and foot rests. These each contained a "skeleton of a gigantic nature", the larger measuring 8'-2" as he lay! Seven other skeletons without cists were buried in a row, and then came a mass of bones as if in a communal grave.

From the "Giants Graves" as the cists were called, came the three glass beads already described and if we accept these as contemporary grave goods then the burials must be of Dark Age date.

The site of these graves is on the eastern side of Field No. 33 and is marked on the large-scale O.S. Maps. A number of banks and mounds still remain in this field and in 1933 Dr. Dollar and Mr. T. C. Lethbridge conducted

an excavation which revealed three more burials. In each case the graves had been dug through a layer of medieval pottery and rubbish including several coins of 14th century date(7).

It would appear from this scanty evidence that Field No. 33 was in use as a burial ground from Dark Age times to at least the 14th century. The present cemetery, which has the appearance of being of some considerable age, is situated over quarter of a mile away in Field No. 30.

Chapels. As we have seen, the present cemetery is associated with a grass-covered mound of stones which is said to be the ruin of an ancient chapel. Loyd infers(8) that this chapel is possibly Celtic in origin and presents a useful historical case for the presence of a chapel on the island from Dark Age times. This may be summarized as follows:-

(a) There are references to a Chapel on Lundy dedicated to Elen, wife of Maxim Wledig (Magnus Maximus), who was widowed in 388 AD.(9)

(b) Ecclesiastic registers from AD.1325 refer to the Church of St. Elen on Lundy.(10)

(c) There are references in the time of Elizabeth I to the ruins of St. Helen's Chapel.(11)

The existence of Dark Age burials in Field No. 33 and the presence of a contemporary memorial stone on the island supports the suggestion that some sort of ecclesiastic establishment was founded there before the 9th century AD. That this should be dedicated to St. Elen, a popular figure of the period, would seem reasonable enough.

The fact that a similarly dedicated Chapel existed in the 14th century can be compared with the fact that burials were still being made near the Giants Graves in post-13th

century times.

There are however several features concerning the siting of the Chapel and Cemeteries which the writer regards as somewhat incongruous. For example, if the ruin in Field No.30 is the original site of St. Elens why are the contemporary burials a quarter of a mile away and, bearing in mind the fact that St. Elens was said to be in ruins in the 16th century, why is the modern cemetery in Field No.30?

Another problem arises when Loyd says,<sup>(12)</sup> "To the Chapel was attached an oratory of St. Anne, whether a side chapel, second altar or what is not known." He goes on to quote Lewis<sup>(13)</sup> who refers to "The ruins of an ancient chapel dedicated to St. Anne", commenting that he, Loyd, regards as improbable the impression conveyed by Lewis that this was an entirely separate building to that dedicated to St. Elen.

Can this really be the case however? Are the ruins on Beacon Hill, Field No.30, really the tumbled walls of St. Anne's, a post-Elizabethan successor to the ruined St. Elen's? Did the Beacon Hill Chapel incorporate a tradition from an earlier site in the form of the "Tigernus" stone, which itself may have been part of the Giants Graves complex? Is St. Elens to be found among the banks and mounds of Field No.33? It is an interesting fact, as our member Mr. A. Langham has been good enough to point out, that the only well named after St. Helen is situated a hundred yards or so east of the Giants Graves.

These interesting questions can only be answered by intelligent research and co-operation by archaeologist and historian alike, and it is hoped that within the next few years such answers may indeed be forthcoming.

KEITH S. GARDNER.

## Footnotes and References.

- (1) E.g. The author has recently recovered examples of these wares from an Iron Age Hill Fort at Congresbury in Somerset, suggesting its re-occupation during troubled times.
- (2) See also "Cornwall in the Dark Ages": Proceedings West Cornwall Field Club, Vol.2, No.2, 1957-8.
- (3) "Some Imported Post Roman Sherds in Cornwall and Their Origin". A.C.Thomas. Fig.5, Nos. 10 & 11 (Proc. West Cornwall Field Club, Vol.2, No.1, 1956/7.
- (4) J.F. Chanter published two works in which he refers to the discovery of skeletons: "A History of Lundy Island", Trans. Devon Assoc. 1871, and "Lundy Island" 1877. In the former his references to the discovery are vague and even cursory, and in the latter he gives a degree of detail which can hardly be first-hand and seems contradictory of his 1871 comments.
- (5) Loyd, "Lundy - Its History and Natural History", P.23. See also: "Devon & Cornwall Notes & Queries" No.13. Antiquaries Journal Oct.1923, Vol. III, No.4, pp.372-3.
- (6) Loyd, P.15 "In 1850.... " There is some doubt whether this date quoted by Loyd is in fact correct. Mr. John Dyke has discovered a written account which would appear to refer to the "Giants Graves" and which would place the discovery in the year 1860.
- (7) I am indebted to Mr. T.C.Lethbridge for supplying this information, which as far as I am aware is unpublished.
- (8) Loyd, P.33.
- (9) Rev. Boggis "History of the Diocese of Exeter".
- (10) Bishop Stapledon's Register AD.1325.
- (11) Loyd, P.34, quoting Risdon.

(12) Loyd, P.35.

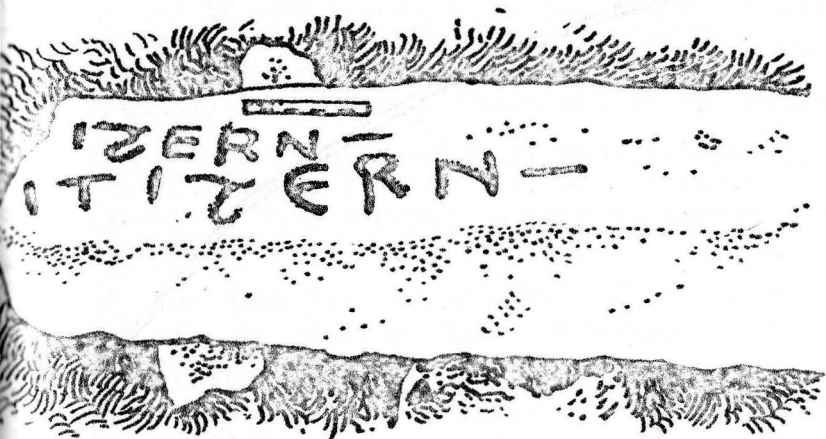
(13) Loyd, P.36.

† Line Drawing, P.62.

⊕ Photo-copy, P.61.

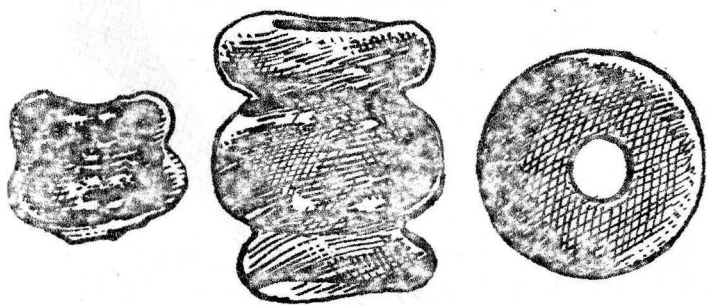
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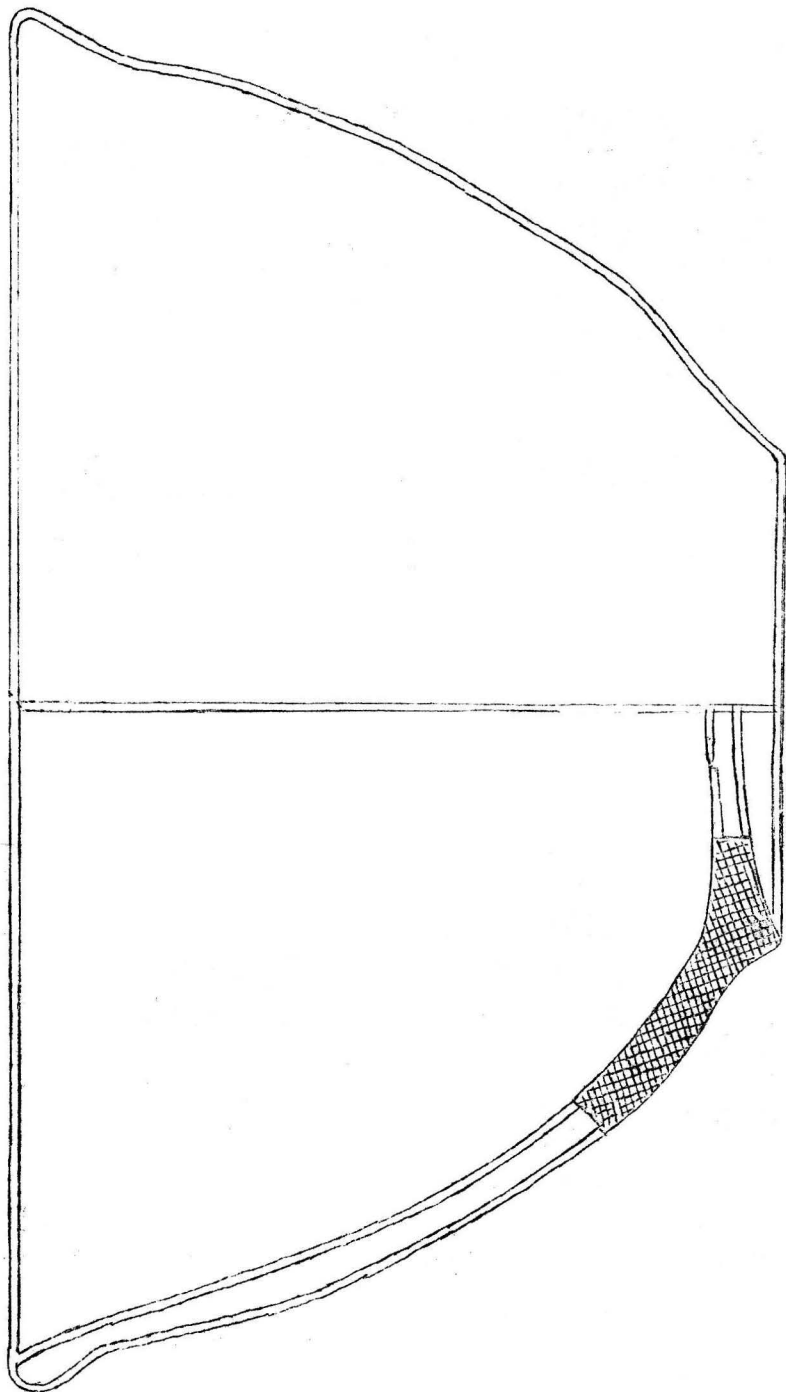
"Tigernus" Stone

from a photo by K. S. Gardner.



Glass Beads from Giants Graves. Scale - Centimetres

from a photo by J. Hancock. (by permission of Bristol Museum.)



SCALE 1" = 1 IN 5/8 CM