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On the recent destruction of a Gloucestershire Mehir

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ON THE RECENT DESTRUCTION OF A
GLOUCESTERSHIRE MENHIR.

READ AT GLOUCESTER, AUGUST 26TH, 1876, BY

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In all ages the antiquary has had to deplore the mutilation or destruction of ancient works, but in the present day this is especially the case. Year by year interesting buildings disappear, or are so restored as to lose their antiquarian interest, earthworks are levelled, and ancient landmarks removed, and one useful end to be aimed at by our Society will be to preserve, by its Annual publications, records of such changes, and descriptions of objects of interest thus destroyed: with this view I bring before you a notice of the recent destruction of a fine Gloucestershire Menhir.

Amongst the recorded antiquities of the Forest of Dean are two Menhirs, one of which stands about a mile from the Buckstone near Stanton, and the other until recently stood near St. Briavels. Last year in the course of a ramble through the Forest in order to visit its ancient camps and other antiquities, I experienced some difficulty in consequence of the depth of the narrow, winding lanes, bordered by high banks and hedgerows, in finding the site of the St. Briavel's "Longstone." On reaching at length its locality as shewn by the Ordnance Map and inquiring of a labouring man for the "Longstone," he replied, with a broad grin, "you be come too late, sir, you should have come a month sooner." Seeking an explanation he informed me that it had just been blown to pieces, and that it had been done so well that it only took three charges of gunpowder to blast it, and that then it was broken up with sledge hammers and carted away into an old quarry.

The St. Briavel's "Longstone" was a large block of the sandstone of the district, and according to our county historian Samuel Rudder, was 10 feet high, 6 feet broad, and 5 feet thick. It stood in a large open field, not on the highest ground of its neighbourhood, and there was no appearance of any artificial earthwork near it.

The object with which these Menhirs were set up is a subject open to discussion. I will only point out that the St. Briavel's "Longstone" was *due east* (at five miles distance) of the fine megalithic monument at Trelech, and that the Stanton Longstone stands *due east* of the Buckstone, and they may possibly have been set up to mark the Orientation from these "Highplaces," just as in the case of the Rollright stones in Oxfordshire, a cromlech stands *due east* and the Menhir known as "the Kingstone," stands *due north* from the centre of the circle. This marking of the cardinal points of the compass is also traceable in the case of the fine Cotteswold Menhir, known as "the Longstone," near Minchinhampton which stands *due east* of a spot on the edge of Minchinhampton Common where formerly lay a remarkably fine stone, known as "Cobstone," whilst *due south* of "Cobstone" was another monolith which is marked on the Ordnance Map as "the Picked Stone." Both "Cobstone" and "the Picked Stone" were removed about 40 years ago and used as building materials.

The destruction of the St. Briavel's "Longstone" one of the finest Menhirs of our county, was the work of the farm-tenant during the absence abroad of his Landlord, and affords a strong argument in favour of legislative protection of our national antiquities.