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## **Folklore notes**

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STAUNTON. Wall pulpit with no pedestal or corbel. Pulpit plain save for a simple cornice moulding. Approached by the same newel stair as the rood-loft.

THORNBURY. Massive pedestal pulpit, with panelled pedestal. Single panels with trefoil heads.

TURKDEAN. Massive panelled and transomed octagonal stone pulpit on a low plain base. Upper panels have foliated heads.

WESTERLEIGH. Pedestal pulpit, panelled with foliated heads to panels. Square cut billet-like moulding at the base of the body. Pedestal also panelled.

WINSON. Octagonal stone pulpit with pointed base supported on a corbel in the form of a male head. Panels of base and body ornamented with tracery. Pulpit much scraped and possibly not in its original position.

DINA PORTWAY DOBSON, D.Litt.

## FOLKLORE NOTES

Folklore has a peculiar interest, and is especially attractive as it seems to keep alive some knowledge of the past in the form of a story. The story may appear to be absurd, incredible, impossible, but if the key can be found, the truth may be seen in the midst of the apparent absurdity.

Here are given a few local stories with some considerations on them as suggestions (suggestions only) of the truth that lies at the back, and to account for their origin.

### BLACK DOG

A phantom large black dog seems to have traditional history. Apart from appearances which 'they say' have occurred, one meets persons free from ordinary superstitions who tell of occasions when they have seen fine-looking black dogs which have suddenly disappeared mysteriously. Such appearances are said to be seen at

Woeful Dane Bottom, Minchinhampton, and near the Long Stone at Gatcombe. The former place has a *traditional* reputation of slaughter in a fierce battle between Saxons and Danes; the latter is near the Long Stone and the chambered long barrow called Gatcombe Lodge barrow. Indeed wherever this phantom dog appears is near an ancient burial-place or place of ill-repute or ill-omen, as, for instance, near a field such as Evil Piece.

### HEADLESS BEINGS

At the end of the lane from Bisley towards Battlescombe and the field path to Edgeworth is the site of a long barrow, now almost destroyed, but known as Giant Stone. Here, it is reported, men have had the terrifying experience of seeing headless human beings which have vanished.

Mr R. Webb of Chalford gives an interesting account of an experience by two men, whom he knew, in the days before Bisley Common was enclosed. The Common seems to have been popularly accounted prolific of weird and uncanny visitations, and on the night of Bisley Feast two Chalford men returning from the festivities followed the track past Money Tump towards France Lynch. Seeing people in front and supposing them to be friends who had started before them, they hurried to overtake them and found a group of men—without heads. The consequent fright had an abiding effect on the men.

There is good reason to think that Bisley is not the only place in the county where headless beings are reputed to have been seen.

The interest in these apparitions is that they occur near prehistoric burial sites. A long barrow is the first; and the second occasion was along a track passing between two round barrows, one Money Tump and the other a little to the east of it.

The question of the reality of these apparitions is of

little moment ; but for the present purpose it is important that they occur close by early burial sites and take this particular form. For the popular mind has kept alive in this way the *idea* of violent death suffered by those buried in the mounds. That they were killed in battle, for instance, may be the origin of thought which has kept the fact from dying out ; but this is less likely than a later origin which has sought the explanation of burials outside consecrated ground,<sup>1</sup> a natural difficulty when Christianity had displaced heathenism and the old customs were forgotten.

Although there is an opinion more or less commonly held that these mounds are the burial places of those killed in battle, there is reason to believe that the bulk of them, if not all, are the ordinary burial places of the people living in the neighbourhood.

#### THE LONG STONE

The story of the Long Stone at Gatcombe is that when it hears the clock at Minchinhampton strike midnight, on an unspecified night, it gets up and walks in the field. Owing to lack of adjacent water this is obviously a curtailed variant of a longer story found in other places. The fuller story gives treasure as buried under the stone, and that at a given time the stone goes down to the water (generally a stream) for a drink ; at Carnac the stones are said to swim.<sup>2</sup> In some cases the further interesting detail is given that some man tried to steal the treasure during the stone's absence, but that the stone returned while he was still in the hole and he was buried beneath it.

This story seems to keep alive a burial of prehistoric times, when treasure (not of our valuation) was buried with the dead. Indeed, the idea of buried treasure still

<sup>1</sup> See O. G. S. Crawford, *The Long Barrows of the Cotswolds*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> T. Eric Peet, *Rough Stone Monuments*, p. 13.

survives, as in the ' Field of the Golden Coffin ' at Oakridge where there is a disturbed round barrow ; why the excavation was made at the Avenis barrow where they were ' seeking for treasure of some kind ' ; and as explaining the excavation at the site near Tarlton described on the o.s. map as ' Hullacide. Site of Saxon hamlet ', where the excavators are said to have been seeking a gold coffin.

The burial seems fairly clear, but the connexion with water is not obvious. Perhaps a clue to it may be seen in the customs of the Maoris. It is a long cry to New Zealand, but the account of Maori forts given in *ANTIQUITY*,<sup>3</sup> shows work of the stone age Maori which bears a remarkable likeness to that of our own stone age ancestors. Their burial customs too may have some relation to the early customs here.

In this country and elsewhere it seems that megalithic folk had a custom of burying bones (skeletons) as distinct from bodies.<sup>4</sup> This was the custom of the Maoris according to an account by one who lived amongst them whilst the old national customs were in full force.<sup>5</sup> The dead were arranged with knees nearly touching the chin and put in a box lined with blankets, which was then suspended from a branch of a tree or set on a platform about nine feet from the ground. Those who had to do with this arranging of the corpse then went to the nearest stream and plunged several times overhead in the water. Later the bones were tied together and set in their last resting-place.

It would seem from this that the ritual of purification was of prime importance in this early form of culture, and such a ritual may be the origin of the connexion of the site with water in the above story.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. 1, 1927.

<sup>4</sup> Crawford, *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 14 ; Peet, *op. cit.*, p. 79 ; and p. 68 for connexion with water.

<sup>5</sup> William Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, 1835, pp. 136 ff.

In common with other stones, this one is said to be deeply set in the ground: a statement which has been proved on occasions not to be literally true.

#### DEVIL'S CHURCHYARD

This is situated east of Minchinhampton, between Crackstone and Dunkerpool, and about the same distance from it are (1) northeast, an unexplained circular depression; (2) southeast, an early enclosure at Aston; (3) west, a probable long barrow now destroyed at Crackstone; and (4) southwest, the Long Stone and Gatcombe long barrow. Nearby stony patches indicate destroyed barrows.

Here were large stones which were moved to the Lammas at Minchinhampton—it is said at the instigation of a former incumbent—on the grounds that unholy rites had been performed on the site. Of these stones two are described, with what reason is not stated, as sacrificial stones.

The following story is related. There was an intention to build a church there, but the building done during the day was pushed down by the Devil during the night, until at last, despairing of the work, a new site was chosen and the church built at Minchinhampton.

This story is similar to tales told elsewhere, but seems to have an explanation if pre-Christian rites took place here, and the traditional memory of them remained after the introduction of Christianity with a new church on another site. It is perhaps pertinent too that the name of Dunkerpool is said to be a wrong pronunciation and that the name should be Dunkirkpool.

Considering the story in connexion with the Lammas stones, especially the 'sacrificial stones', it seems not unreasonable to infer that a stone circle stood in the Devil's Churchyard. And it is of considerable interest that Mr A. Simmonds of Minchinhampton quotes his father as saying that the stones originally stood in a circle.

If this inference and statement be correct the site is of great importance, as hitherto there has been no known circle in the county.

It is perhaps natural that such a site should have the reputation of being haunted, and so it is here. The haunting seems to be by uncanny noises only.

This may perhaps be accounted for by the name of the field immediately to the south, in which is a hollow, doubtless a dried-up stream-bed, and below which it is probable a stream still runs in an underground channel. The field is known as Nogganoise (phonetic spelling owing to absence of written evidence), which seems to have a suggestive relation to 'knocking noise'.

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## GLOUCESTERSHIRE WORDS, EXPRESSIONS AND SUPERSTITIONS

[The following words, sayings, and superstitions were found in the note-books of the late ALFRED E. W. PAINE, who was for many years a Member of our Society, and they were kindly sent to the Editor by Miss Paine. Alfred Paine was a close observer of country life, and the collection was made in the course of his residence in various parts of Gloucestershire. It included a few words, etc., already printed in such lists as those of Northall and Robertson and these have been omitted.—EDITOR].

WORD	MEANING	PLACE
Barebind	bedwine	Dymock
Bather or Pather	beat	Maisemore
Butt up	fill the middle of a wagon when loading	
Buzzard	a moth	Stroud