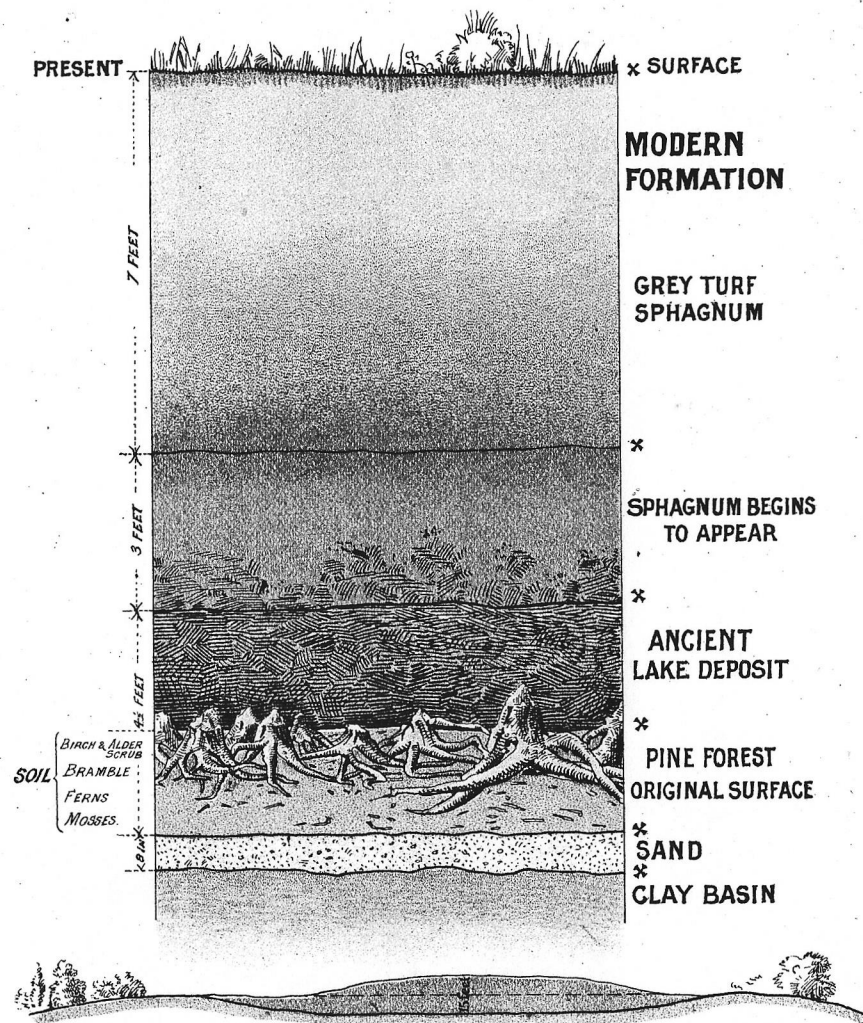


Transactions of Lancs & Cheshire Antiquarian Society 1884

SECTION OF PEAT BOG ON LINDOW COMMON



SKETCH SECTION ACROSS BOG

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OCT. 1884.



LINDOW COMMON AS A PEAT BOG : ITS AGE AND ITS PEOPLE.

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A HINT was thrown out by our learned president, in his speech at the inauguration of our Society, that "it would be one part of our business to place on record the old before it disappeared utterly in the new." The peat bogs of Lancashire and Cheshire are fast disappearing, and will soon be things of the past. Our great Chat Moss is going rapidly from view as a bog; others are entirely gone. Lindow, the subject of my paper, is fast being cultivated, and in a few more years all that can be said will be—"This once was Lindow!"

I may remark at the outset that Lindow, in its structure and age, seems to be similar to Chat Moss and the other peat bogs of the locality; so that if we take this it will serve as a sample of all the rest—certainly of all those with which I am acquainted—and, therefore, after these general remarks, I shall confine myself to this moss.

Lindow Common, which is largely a peat bog, lies in the townships or hamlets of The Hough, Fulshaw, Morley, and Chorley, all in the parish of Wilmslow; in Great Warford, which is in the parish of Alderley; and a large slice of it

lies within the parish of Mobberley. The moss was formerly very much larger than it is now, and it is not difficult to fix its original boundary. The area of the ancient moss, roughly measured from the ordnance map, was about one thousand five hundred acres. Fifty years back (when I first knew it) it was about half that, and now it may be taken roundly as only one-fourth of the original amount.

By using our eyes, and by examining the levels, we find that it is the highest land in the locality. Not that the bog has grown until it is higher than the surrounding land, but the dish in which it lies is placed on the highest land; the bog is, in fact, formed in a shallow dish of clay lying upon an elevation. A shallow meat dish with a rim round about not unfitly represents the contour of the land, while a pie made in the dish, and raised up above the rim, with a slight depression running parallel therewith, is a fair picture of the bog. Through the rim of the dish the sluggish watercourses escape into the neighbouring rivers or brooks: on the northerly and westerly sides into the Bollin, on the easterly and southern sides into the Birkin and its tributary rivulets.

Under the bog is an original surface of soil, in which ordinary surface plants and shrubs have grown—a soil formed from mosses, ferns, and other vegetable matter, like other fertile soils. On this grew heaths, brambles, birches, alders and other brushwood, and at the time when these were produced this surface was comparatively dry; for the plants found are of kinds that only grow on comparatively dry surfaces; we have nuts, firbobs, and other seeds, and even the remains of weeds in plenty that are now found on the surface in our cultivated fields, as the arsmarts and others. That this was an ordinary dry surface producing ordinary surface plants is as clear as anything can well be.

In a natural order, after the brambles, birches, and alders,

came the pine forest—just what we should expect; and next in order came, to some extent, oaks, yews, and other more advanced forest timbers, though these are rare in comparison with the pines. After a time, from some cause, the growth of the pine forest was arrested, and in the main the boles of the trees perished; for we find a hundred roots or stocks for one bole. The roots have remained *in situ*, and are generally found with the upper part ending in a spike of heart from which the bole has rotted and eventually broken off. In some cases this bole is found detached from the root, and lying in a partially rotten state,—near the outside of it especially so; a sound bole, or indeed one with any considerable portion sound, being rare. In some few cases, in special localities, there are charred stocks, showing that the boles have been burned from them, but this is not by any means a common case. The fact we want chiefly to notice is, that the boles have perished, while the stocks have remained, for the most part, where they have grown.

The *forest*, also, must have grown upon a comparatively dry surface, for a forest will not grow in water. Immediately above it we find aquatic plants, proving clearly that this forest perished by water. By some means the outlets for the water became blocked, either by the intentional work of man, or naturally by the *débris* from the forest. The watercourses got choked, and the whole dish became a lin, or lake, and, as we might expect, reeds and other aquatic plants are deposited immediately above the forest timber. These plants are strictly water plants, distinct from the sphagnum and other bog plants found higher up in the bog, which require a sort of middle state between water and soil for their production. When the forest perished is a point to be considered. Many opinions are held having a wide range—from old Neddy Cumberbich's theory, that the bog is a remanent of Noah's flood and that the timber was floated

hither, an east wind jamming these great trees against the Hardhill, down to others who maintain that our bogs in England are post-Roman, and that their formation is due to the action of the Romans who destroyed the forests, into which the ancient inhabitants of the country had retreated. Those who wish to reason out for themselves the different theories held upon this subject will do well to get Rennie's essays on *Peat Moss*, in which they will find almost everything that can be said about peat mosses of various kinds, and also a large amount of carefully collected facts about different peat bogs. The book is very readable, and is full of information on the subject. Those who believe our bogs to be post-Roman reason as follows:—"The great forests were used as defences: the Roman historians bear testimony to this. They all agree that the inhabitants of Britain retreated to their woods on every emergency: there they rallied; thence they rushed forth with impetuous fury upon the foe. Cæsar mentions many instances of this. Cassivelaunus, after his defeat, retired beyond the Thames and took refuge in the woods and marshes. The Silures, when attacked by Agricola, did the same. The King of the Brigantes imitated the example." They say further:—"Trees in mosses are straight, therefore they are close grown. The roots are in masses, one crop above another, sometimes three tiers deep, and in some cases one tree grows over another. These circumstances render it probable that time alone will not account for the wreck of these forests."

The advocates of the post-Roman theory further state that marks of edge-tools and hatchets of Roman workmanship, and Roman coins and household implements, have been found in the bogs. That "it is to be noticed that not one vestige remains of the ancient forests that Cæsar describes along the whole of the Roman way excepting in the mosses where the least-ruined trunks of trees now lie."

That in some cases several feet of moss has been found on undoubted Roman roads, and that this must have grown since the days of Julius Cæsar.

We may observe here that Lindow is not far from the Roman road from Manchester to Chester, and that Lindow would be on the verge of what was in ancient times Macclesfield Forest.

Some years back a decomposed skeleton of a boar was found on the Lower Moss in Mobberley. It might have been hunted from Wildboardclough, and rushing over Paddock Hill and into this marshy lake have there perished.

I think that I have given in substance the main reasons urged for supposing these bogs to be of post-Roman origin. I may say, however, that on Lindow I have failed to find the characteristics set forth above in any marked degree. No coins or tools are found, and no hatchet marks excepting in cases where a layer of bog has been taken off in later times for fuel. In this case tool marks are common enough, but they evidently belong to a later date than the formation period. The only things that I can gather that favour the post-Roman theory are that one Peter Cash found, somewhere on the Mobberley side of Lindow, what appeared to be a roadway made of logs of timber placed end to end, with sleepers across laid close together, and this I am told continued for some length up the Moss, and I think it was at the bottom of the bog, but of this I am not sure. Another is, that the late Peter Haworth told me that when he was a lad helping his father to cut turf on the Morley side of the common he found large quantities of firbobs at the bottom of the bog in a sound state, and he gathered twenty-five, and afterwards set them in his garden, and out of these thirteen vegetated. This would seem rather in favour of the more recent deposit of these seeds.

While allowing for these facts what they are worth, I am of opinion that there is not much on Lindow bog to support the post-Roman theory.

But if the Romans did not destroy this forest, how was it done? We have seen that the growth up to the pine forest was in a natural order—mosses, ferns, brambles, birch-and-alder-scrub, a thicket in fact; then the pines and some oaks; and that up to this point the place was dry. But when the pine forest became established it would kill all the under scrub, as may be seen now at Soss Moss and Alderley Edge, for nothing of any account grows under pines, and then the foliage of the pines would constantly fall, and this waste with the rotten brushwood would find its way into the little water-courses, and would soon effectually block them. The water would be held up more and more, and this would kill the pines. The place would become a shallow lake; reeds and other aquatic plants would follow; the boughs of the trees and the bark would rot and fall; the boles, bare and gaunt, would stand for a time rotting through being bleached in the sun, soaked with the rain, and rifted by frost. Tremendous hurricanes would come at times, and as some of the trees were partially rotten, they would soon be broken off the stocks. Some might be fired by lightning or other means; others would stand until completely rotten. The roots being buried, and therefore not exposed to these conditions, and from the antiseptic nature of bog, remained sound as we find them to-day (not forgetting that we find a hundred stocks for one bole). The forest completely destroyed, a shallow reedy lake filled with slimy reptiles supervened, while on its surface would breed innumerable herons, geese, ducks, coots, and all kinds of aquatic birds, undisturbed by any human being. What a desolation!

These conditions occurred long before the Romans were

in Britain, and upon this, the likelier supposition, we can do without them, and give our bog a more respectable antiquity.

We have gotten the forest destroyed and its place occupied by a shallow, reedy lake—a lin or lynne—the rest is easy.

The reeds and other water plants would grow and fall, and in time the lake would fill with mud and vegetable matter—for it must be observed that the lake was not fed by water from mountains or higher lands, there being none within range—and at this stage the black turf was formed. As may be seen, it is of a different composition altogether from the upper grey turf, and is evidently of water formation, especially the lower strata. When the lake had filled with mud, the sphagnum, the chief ingredient in the grey or upper turf, would appear just as it does now in a half grown-up hole on the surface of the bog. This would grow rapidly, and as speedily decay, forming a spongy substance which would settle down. Upon this other bog plants would follow, especially cranberry and the cotton grass. When the surface became somewhat dry heath would appear, but only on the driest places. This process would go on for ages. The dish filled up as high as the surrounding rim; but from the spongy nature of the material filling it, which held water by capillary attraction, the growth did not stop when the dish was filled, but went on, the bog rising, especially in the middle, until it got higher by some yards than the surrounding land—so high, indeed, that a person standing on one verge could not see the opposite side, and what was formerly a depression in the crown of the land became a considerable elevation, and our bog was at its highest point. What arrested its growth?

If left alone it would have continued to grow; not,

indeed, until it had reached the clouds, but until gravitation had brought it down by slips, as the snow falls from the mountains.

What, then, arrested the growth?

The turf-getter.

When the country was conquered and the lands seized by the conquering peoples, the original inhabitants, like the aborigines in our colonies, were pressed back to the worst parts of the land—the commons and bogs; and here the wild old commoner (the heathman or heathen) built his hut of sods, and thatched it with ling or rushes. He lived as best he might; doubtless a somewhat irregular life outside of civilisation for the most part. There was plenty of game and fish, and, likely, of wild cattle, and these, with the beechmast, acorns, nuts, crabs, and other wild fruits, furnished the ancient commoner with food.

But in whatever way he might find his food, he must have fire or perish. The forest lands were grubbed up or appropriated, so that timber was not readily to be got. He found the bog would burn when dry, and he began to cut turf for fuel, at first on the edges of the bog. He would very soon find himself obstructed by water, and then he would open the natural outlets that had been blocked up for ages by the growth of the bog, and from this period the growth of the common was arrested—slowly at first, very slowly, so slowly that for long ages after the middle of the bog, remote from his operations, might continue to some extent to grow; but the edges were attacked, and the process has continued with increasing effect until now, and even yet it is not completed, although of late years rapid strides have been made in this direction. The decline of the growth of the bog dates from the first attack on the common for fuel purposes. As the commoner cut his turf, and somewhat

drained his turfroom, he planted his corn or vegetables, and lived in the most primitive way. But when did this process commence?

It is not easy to determine when it commenced on any particular bog. We know, however, that Turf Einar "finding the indispensable fuel all wasted invented peat in the Orkneys" about a thousand years back; so that in the Orkneys the bogs were in perfection then, perfectly enough settled to cut into turf for fuel. Similar people under like conditions would produce like results, and therefore I am going to assume what took place in the Orkneys also happened in England, that turf began to be cut on Lindow say about a thousand years back—slowly, very slowly, yet regularly. We know that a "lift" has gone off the entire moss from Lindow End to Hardhill, and this would take a long time with the sparse population that surrounded the common, although turbaries in later times were assigned to the homesteads in the contiguous towns and hamlets. Assuming, I say, that turf began to be cut for fuel on Lindow when Turf Einar invented peat in the Orkneys, the moss here, as I have observed of that place, must have been solid enough for fuel; and I submit that from the Roman occupation of Britain, time enough had not elapsed to form the bog in that perfection in which it was found. The Romans had only been left about four hundred years, although it would be somewhat more than that from the time at which they are supposed to have destroyed the forests. I will not dogmatize. I feel too uncertain about the matter to do that; but I incline to the opinion that the peat bog of Lindow is not of post-Roman formation:—

1. Because in it we find no reliable marks of Roman works or implements.
2. Because at the early period at which we believe turf to have been cut for fuel on this bog sufficient time had

not elapsed after the Roman invasion to form the solid bog. Dr. Page, the geologist, says that peat bog is of various ages, from the recent grey turf formed of sphagnum to the black turf, the old forest and lake deposit, which is many thousand years old, and apparently belongs to a period coeval with the dawn of the human race, and this supports my theory.

3. Because we believe that the race of people found about this and every other bog we know, up to, say, fifty years back, were of an ancient race, probably of the first people of the island, who, upon the country being invaded and conquered at various times, were pressed to the commons and bogs which were then in existence, and who have continued to live upon them and about them until within living memory; and, indeed, at this day I could point out not a few cases in which, intermarriages having taken place between Commoners, the characteristics are even yet strongly marked.

4. I am most diffident in mentioning the etymology of the name Lindow; but I make the venture, and claim the name as of more ancient origin than the Roman invasion. *Lin* is decidedly Celtic, meaning a water or a lake; *dow* I take to be a contraction of *down*, which is (see Skeats) from *dun*, signifying an open hill, or at least high open ground, as Bowdon Downs, which, by the way, is a double—evidently Bowdown is the original. Saying Bowdon Downs is like saying Burley Hurst Wood, Hurst meaning a wood. So that our Lindow is a contraction of Lindown, which means literally a *lin* or lake on high open ground, and this is just what it was before it filled with bog. (See Leo on "Anglo-Saxon names," page 20, note 3.) This may be considered fanciful, so far as *dow* is concerned. Most such inquiries are open to the same charge; but there is no doubt of *lin* being Celtic, and therefore I shall claim the name in sup-

port of my theory that the moss of Lindow is of a date far earlier than the Roman invasion of Britain.

Before closing my paper I will add a few remarks on the peculiar race of people who, until recently, dwelt on the verges of these old commons. From actual observation of their physical characteristics and habits during the last fifty years, I am of opinion that they are of a very ancient race, totally different from the surrounding people. The physical peculiarities are very marked. They have the long head (*Dolicho-cephali*), projecting eyebrows, high cheek bones, strong and coarse limbs, leaden aspect, slow motions, and, in a very marked degree, the Moorish skin—the colour of the skin very like the gipsy's, but very unlike in every other feature. Their habits and modes of life in the early part of the present century were peculiar. They were often buck-stealers, poachers, and fishers, the transmitted instincts of the chase having come down with them through the ages. This would lead them to the commons and most neglected parts of the country. Their callings and handicrafts also seem to point to their being of a primitive people who have kept their ancient habits. They are expert in using twigs or osiers, in making besoms from birch and broom, also in making straw-work, beehives, &c., from split briars and straw, and they are very expert in making primitive traps and snares from withes and bands; in fact, in using all kinds of natural and ready products of the country. Those who kept animals had the most primitive kinds, as dogs, pigs, geese, and ducks, but especially asses, for carrying their baskets and brooms to where they could sell them.

They were very sly and very suspicious, as aboriginal races are always; apparently very harmless, but not so safe as they appeared to be. When exasperated they would fight with anything that lay next them—bills, spades,

pikels, swipples, or any of their rude implements, and with these they were, as they say in their vernacular, "lungeous." Some of the fiercer kind, if close pressed, would fight with their mouths, and bite like bulldogs. I may add that they in a general way shunned society, and appeared to be almost destitute of religious instincts.

With the view of supporting my theory that these people are of a most ancient race—that they are, in fact, the Euskarians or Turanians, the people that preceded the Celts in this island—you will permit me to give a few extracts from a series of articles in a popular periodical that lies ready to my hand, written by Grant Allen, in which the peculiar characteristics of this people are set forth with great clearness and conciseness. I ought to add, however, that the information he has furnished to us is gathered from the labours of Thurnham, Huxley, and our own learned president. After referring to the Palæolithic men of the long, long past, Grant Allen in the articles referred to above says:—

Long after these a second race occupied Britain, some of whose descendants almost undoubtedly *exist in our midst in the present day*. These were the Neolithic, who have been identified as a branch of the isolated Basque or Euskarian race, which now lives among the valleys of the Western Pyrenees and the Asturias mountains. They were swarthy, like the darkest Italians and Spaniards or even the Moors.

At present the points to which I wish to call attention are, firstly, the fact of their existence in early days in Britain, *and, secondly, the fact that many of their descendants still remain among us to the present day*.

It will suffice to point out that before the arrival of the Celts and other Aryan tribes in Britain these Euskarians spread over the whole of our islands, and were apparently the only people then inhabiting them. Their descendants exist almost unmixed at the present day as the so-called Black Celts in certain parts of Western Ireland and Scotland, and in a few places in South Wales; while their blood may be still traced in a more mixed condition in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, East Anglia, the Scotch Highlands, and in *many other districts of England and Scotland*.

The vanquished and enslaved Euskarians learned to speak the dialect of their Celtic lords as they afterwards learned to speak that of their Roman conquerors.

But from the ethnological point of view a Euskarian is a Euskarian still, whatever language he may happen to speak. His tongue would produce no immediate change in the colour of his skin and eyes. To this day the darker people are mainly to be found among the peasantry.

And, I might add, *especially* on the borders of commons and mosses.

Our oldest element is a dark one, now scattered up and down through the population, and only gathered into a little nucleus here or there in Ireland or Scotland. This element was Celticised but not exterminated by the Aryan Celts, and became with them the Celt-Euskarian "Ancient Britons" of our history books. It is probable that the numerical proportion of all the older element, especially the Euskarian, is far greater than people generally at all imagine.

Let anyone who is acquainted with the different localities, and who can remember fifty years back, recall the kind of people there were on Lindow Common, Sale Moor, Heyhead, Lifeless Moss, Mottram Common, Broken Cross, Rudheath, and Biddulph Moor, and I think I might add Southport—whose donkey drivers and sand-grounders are from the end of a bog at Churchtown, and who were there before Southport was built—and I think he will arrive at the fact that these different peoples were until recently of a distinct race from the people of the rest of the country; that they were, in fact, of the old Euskarian race, driven to these bogs long ages before the Romans set foot in Britain, and who have continued almost intact until recently; and, doubtless, as is intimated by Grant Allen, in the quotations given, well-marked specimens of them might be found even in the present day. If this be granted—and I have no doubt of the facts—it is conclusive against the post-Roman theory of the age of these peat bogs. How, then, have these people remained intact? At first they fled to these "dismal swamps" from the face of the conquering peoples,

and lived outside of civilisation in their own primitive way for long ages. In later times there is a legal reason for their continuing upon these bogs. After the breaking up of the feudal system and serfdom came the Poor Law, with its law of settlement, which is principally derived from 13 and 14 ch. 2, cap. 12, which, after reciting that, "Whereas, by reason of some defects in the law, poor people are not restrained from going from one parish to another, and therefore do endeavour to *settle themselves* in those parishes where there is the best stock, the largest commons or wastes to build cottages, and the most woods for them to burn and destroy," provides "that upon complaint made to any justice of the peace, within forty days after such person coming to settle, or who coming to inhabit is *likely* to be chargeable, such justices shall by their warrant convey such person to such parish where he was last legally settled, either as a *native, householder*, sojourner, apprentice, or servant." If such person returned after removal, he was summarily convicted as a vagabond and sent to prison—and this whether he troubled the parish or not. After a time this law was somewhat ameliorated in its incidence (though it yet disgraces our statute-book), and then a man could remain anywhere provided he asked for nothing; but if when in poverty he asked for help, the old inhuman law laid hold of him and took him to his old place, so that this law of settlement would have a strong action in keeping these ancient people to their old haunts. Improved legislation in the direction of freedom helped to absorb these people to a great extent in the surrounding populations; but the final agent in almost obliterating the distinctive traces of these old people about our mosses was the spread of education and religion among the common people, first done by the Sunday schools of the latter part of the last century and the earlier part of this century. The old parish

churches were far distant, and in the best parts and heart of the parishes; but upon Sunday schools being established around the commons, the commoners' children were gathered with the farmers' and labourers' children of the locality; intermarriages followed, and eventually almost all traces of our ancient commoner—the ancient Euskarian—have disappeared, and will, ere long, disappear entirely and for ever.

