

**TWO LECTURES ON THE  
REMAINS OF ANCIENT  
PAGAN BRITAIN**

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Two Lectures on the Remains of Ancient Pagan Britain by Thomas Stackhouse

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**TWO LECTURES**  
ON THE  
**REMAINS**  
OF  
**ANCIENT PAGAN BRITAIN;**  
ILLUSTRATED WITH  
**FORTY LITHOGRAPHIC DRAWINGS**  
OF  
**DRUIDICAL CIRCLES, BARROWS, CROMLECHS, SEPULCHRAL URNS, CELTS,**  
AND OTHER ANCIENT MEMORIALS.

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By **THOMAS STACKHOUSE,**

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL LIVERPOOL ACADEMY; AUTHOR OF "AN ESSAY ON TUMULI, OR ANCIENT BARROWS, AND OTHER VESTIGES OF EQUAL ANTIQUITY;" "BIBLICAL RESEARCHES;" "KEY TO THE EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHIC ALPHABET;" "VIEWS OF REMARKABLE DRUIDICAL ROCKS NEAR TODMORTON," &c. &c.

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## PREFACE.

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THERE are, perhaps, no subjects over which the lapse of time has drawn so impenetrable a veil, as those erections of rude unsculptured stones, to which the appellation of DRUIDICAL has been generally given; and which abound in almost every part of this island.

To remove, as much as possible, this obscurity from these important and highly interesting remains;—to shew the source from which the aborigines of our country derived them;—the period in which, and the people by whom, they were introduced;—and the circumstances that led to their introduction; became a desideratum with the author many years ago. The difficulties, however, that arose out of the absence of every vestige of inscription, and the want of historical documents respecting them, opposed a barrier to his research, that, at first seemed insurmountable; but, at length, struck with the analogy that existed between these British erections and the unhewn pillars and altars noticed in the sacred history of patriarchal times, he was led to pursue his researches through the medium of the Bible. From this inestimable source of natural as well as sacred science, he derived that satisfaction, which induced him to compose these Lectures, and to deliver them publicly—so much to the satisfaction of his hearers, as to induce many of them to request their publication.

Among his auditors, ministers, of different religious denominations, expressed the pleasure they received, from contemplating that light which the British and the patriarchal pillars, &c. mutually reflected on each other. Among these, a much and deservedly esteemed minister, now deceased, while listening to these lectures, and viewing the drawings exhibited for their illustration, conceived the design of drawing up a course of lectures on History, and delivering them, illustrated in a similar manner. This design he executed, and delivered them, much to the satisfaction of his audiences, in various places. They were afterwards published, for the benefit of his widow and children; and form a valuable accession to historical literature.

The *FIRST* of these Lectures, the reader will observe, is confined to erections of stone; the *SECOND* is restricted to certain earth-works, appropriated to sacred, military, and social purposes. The drawings are similar to those exhibited in the lecture-room.

Trusting that his readers will not derive less pleasure from the perusal, than his auditors from the public delivery of these Lectures, he respectfully submits them to their candid and impartial judgment.

## LECTURE I.

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FEW pursuits are more *generally* pleasing than researches into the ages that are past, into the manners and customs of mankind in early times, and in remote countries, into the origin and antiquity, the rise and progress of ancient nations ; but when these researches are directed to our NATIVE LAND, to that focal point in which all our best affections and tenderest feelings, our present joys and future hopes, as to this life, are chiefly centered, they then become *particularly* and *deeply* interesting.

OUR ardour for this pleasing pursuit, is however, greatly damped by the discouragements that we meet with at the very outset ; for the infant state of every ancient nation, that of the Jews excepted, is involved in almost impenetrable darkness. It is not till after the lapse of ages, has brought a country into some considerable degree of eminence, that an enquiry into the circumstances that attended, or contributed to, its rise and progress is thought of : it is then unfortunately too late.

THUS it is with respect to the earliest condition of this our native country : no national record, no tablet or pillar inscribed with the name or the actions of our British predecessors, now meets the eye of the curious and diligent enquirer ;



indeed it is highly probable that no such documents ever existed, and even the garrulous tongue of tradition itself, has, by length of time, been lulled into an almost death-like silence.

By what means then, it may reasonably be asked, are the dense clouds of ignorance which envelope the infancy of our native country to be dispelled? From what source are we to derive that pure and genuine light, which is so indispensably necessary to guide our steps through the long dark vista of unrecorded years?

To this we answer, that the only satisfactory substitute for historical record, is to be sought for in the ancient remains of that country whose infant state we are enquiring into. In proportion as these are rude, and destitute of every appearance of art, so much nearer do they bring us to the primitive state of mankind, to the earliest ages of the world.

To these vestiges of ancient times, these silent but faithful monuments of men and days that have long since passed away, and are now totally forgotten, we must have recourse in our enquiries into the ancient state of Britain; and fortunately, there is perhaps no country in the world, in which such ancient remains are so numerous as in this. It is scarcely possible to go a day's journey in any direction, without meeting with many objects of this kind, both to contemplate and to admire. On the one hand we observe numerous mounds of earth, so neatly formed, that they seldom fail to attract the traveller's attention, and excite his curiosity. On the other hand, single masses of stone, or groups of such masses, variously arranged, surprise him by their enormous magnitude, and he feels his mind awed into a kind of solemn feeling, by the silence and mystery that hover round them.

It must be obvious to the most cursory observer, that these works were erected at a time, when not only architecture and sculpture, but even cemented walls and regular masonry were unknown in this country: they mark a period in which the occupations of the people were principally of the pastoral kind, and in which their religious ceremonies were performed in the open air, and in the vicinity of these stone circles and massy pillars.

It would seem, that the British priests, not having the advantage of the arts that accompany civilization and refinement, had recourse to this rude magnificence and massy grandeur, in order to give an imposing dignity to their superstitious rites and corrupt institutions: indeed it is evident, both from sacred and profane History, that the sublime, resulting from magnitude only, preceded that sublimity which was the offspring of magnitude, combined with elegance and beauty.

Writing must either have been totally unknown to the most ancient Britons, or the public use of it forbidden, since none of their erections of stone that now remain, exhibit the least trace of either literal or symbolical character.

At the first view of the subject, this total absence of every appearance of written document seems to be an insurmountable obstacle to the attainment of that knowledge which we are in search of: there is, however, one favourable circumstance that revives the ardour of hope, and stimulates to unremitting perseverance; that is, the perfect dissimilarity of these ancient structures to the erections of modern times in this, or any other country; for, by this, their distinct character, we are enabled, with ease, to recognise the analogy of these ancient British remains to the pillars and altars erected in patriarchal times, and in that country from which all the nations of the earth first emanated.

The erections of stone noticed in Sacred Writ, are

The Single Stone, or Pillar  
 The Altar of un-hewn Stone  
 Groups of Pillars, twelve in number, and  
 The circular conical Heap of Stones ;

British Structures analogous to these, are

The Single Stone, or Pillar  
 The Cromlech, or Altar  
 Groups of Pillars, indefinite as to number, and  
 The Cairn, or circular heap of loose stones

Other erections of Stone, having nothing analogous to them in Sacred Writ, are

The Tolmen, or Holed Stone  
 The Logan, or Rocking Stone :

Of the patriarchal erections of un-hewn stone, the Altar is the most ancient—the Pillar, the most simple—and, on that account, probably the most numerous.

The religious, and expressively figurative act of sacrificing, is of still more remote antiquity than the Altar itself, if we date the latter from the time that it is first noticed in the sacred writings, for as early as the first-born sons of Adam we find this practice existing, and the offerings of Cain and Abel are recorded in connexion with circumstances of the highest importance to the Christian religion; but these are not within the limits of our present researches.

The first Altar on record is that which Noah erected immediately after the exit of himself and family from the Ark ; thus the first building in the post-