

CHAPTER 10 - HEMLOCK STONE

Whereas the cross is the oldest man-made monument in the county, Hemlock Stone must be the most remarkable outcrop of natural stone in the same area. Situated as it is on the lower eastern slope of Stapleford Hill in the north-eastern extremity of the parish, it commands a fine view (and did so before so many buildings were put up around and about) over much of Stapleford. In height it is some 30 feet, in girth, 70 feet at its widest, and is capped by a wonderful natural protection against all weathers.

It is considered by some to be the remains of the upper part of the hill upon which it stands, the rest of the surrounding earth having been gradually worn away by weather and by man through the ages. Others hold that there are definitive traces of its use in Druidical rites.

During the past it has been given inadequate protection from man and bears witness to those who wished to leave their mark in the world-be it only their initials; it has also been a great attraction for budding Everest conquerors. Some little while ago the authorities saw fit to fence it around with iron railings.

The reader, if he has come across other notes concerning our Hemlock Stone, will no doubt have found allusions to Cromleck Stones etc. Without setting off on flights of fancy it should be considered that “Hemlock” is a combination of two Old English words- “hemm”, meaning border or edge, and “loca”, meaning enclosure; the name means, therefore, quite simply, “The stone in the border enclosure” and describes its position exactly. The meaning that in very early days it was within an enclosure suggests that the case was rudely fenced off and reserved for some specific purpose.

