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THREE PIGEONS

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AN OLD ENGLISH STADDLESTONE,

Oxfordshire, limestone,

the circular domed top raised on a tapered square-section base, roughly hewn, old lichen and moss,

DIMENSIONS: 80cm (31^½") High, 48cm (19") Wide, 48cm (19") in Diameter

STOCK CODE: 45475



HISTORY

Staddle stones



Staddle stones were originally used as the supporting posts for granaries, hayricks, game ladders, etc. The staddle stones lifted the granaries above the ground thereby protecting the stored grain both from vermin and water ingress from damp foundations. The word “staddle” is derived from the Middle English word “stadle” or “stathel”, meaning a foundation, support or trunk of a tree. Old staddle stones can be mainly found in England and Scotland, but versions of them are found in France and Northern Spain.

The staddle stones usually had a separate head and base which gave the whole structure a ‘mushroom’ form. Different areas adopted different designs – so vernacular styles can be identified – square tops, fluted designs and slate tops – the shapes can vary from cylindrical to

tapered, in plan – rectangular to near triangular. The material used for these heavy stones would obviously be whatever was locally available. The tops are usually flat to support the beams of the granary base.

The Museum of Scottish Country Life near East Kilbride has two 'Stathels', made in Edinburgh of cast iron and there are similar sets at The Chiltern Open Air Museum. The structure is basically a cast iron version of a set of staddle stones with a connecting wooden framework.

Granaries were often constructed with wooden weather-boards but if grain was stored loose then the sides were filled in with brick nogging and light lath-and-plaster at the wall tops. Wooden steps up to the buildings were detachable and stored by hanging them up on the side of the structure. If stone or brick steps were built then the top step was omitted.

Most granaries were used for the storage of two or three separate crops, having a capacity of 500 to 2500 bushels. The arrangement of the stones to support the structure and its weight when in use, required nine, twelve or sixteen staddles. The production of staddles was therefore a fairly significant local industry. Small granaries could make do with five, one being in the middle. The Upper Hexford granary in Oxfordshire uses thirty-six staddles.

Bee hives were often set on top of staddle stones to keep out predators and provide dry and airy conditions. Small staddle stones were used to support roofed box-shaped larders which were used on the larger estates for storage of game, such as pheasant, brought back by shooting parties, etc.