

ART. XI.—*The Forgotten Dedication of Great Orton Church, Cumberland.* By F. H. M. PARKER, of Fremington.

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IN the diocese of Carlisle there are seven churches of which the dedications are lost or forgotten, and though it is possible that information about them might be gathered from private title deeds, or more probably from documents preserved at the Record Office in London, yet the vastness of the mass of history existing there, almost entirely in the form of unindexed manuscript, renders it almost unlikely that otherwise than by accident even the most laborious searcher should discover it.

The churches of which the dedications are now unknown are given by Mr. George Watson in his work *Orientation and Dedication of Ancient Churches*. One of these is that of Great Orton, lying some five miles west of the outskirts of Carlisle on the edge of the remote stretch of land reaching away from the Wigton road to the banks of the Solway. None of the county histories give information on the matter, and tradition is silent. The church has been rededicated to St. Mungo, but this, however appropriate, is of recent date. In the course of a search in the Record Office the present writer had the good fortune to light on a document* which mentions the original dedication. It dates from the year 1452. The following is a rendering of the material part:—

The King to his escheator in the county of Cumberland Greeting. Whereas by an inquisition held before Thomas Crakenthorp late escheator in the county aforesaid it was found that Joan late wife

* Fine Rolls, Cumberland, Hen. VI., No. 259. The entry quoted here occurs on the third membrane.

of John Middleton, Knight, deceased, held on the day of her death in her demesne as of fee the third part of the manor of Great Staynton near Penreth with its appurtenances, and that the said Joan died seised in her demesne as of fee of the third part of the manor of Orton with its appurtenances and of the third part of the advowson of the church of St. Giles of Orton appendant to the said manor and of the third part of a parcell of waste land under the city of Carlisle and of three messuages in the hamlets of Weganby also of the moiety of one tenement in Selywra and of the third part of one tenement in Burgh and of the third part of one tenement called Patriklees, also of one tenement in Thornby and of the third part of one cottage in Grindesdale

Dated the 24th of October. The deceased lady's son and heir is John Blenerhasset.

The dedication apart from the mere fact possesses some features of interest. St. Giles was a French saint, and his commemoration here may have been due to Norman influence, as is supposed to have been the case with the church of St. Leonard at Warwick. The church at Orton dates from about the time of Henry I., so that this result may have followed the Norman influx consequent on the reduction of Carlisle by William Rufus.

St. Giles was the patron of the lame. In towns his churches used to be erected in the outskirts, where the cripples could congregate; thus in London we find St. Giles' church in "Cripple-gate." We learn, moreover, from Mr. Watson that there is no other dedication to St. Giles in this diocese.

There is another reference to Orton in the same roll which also bears on the history of the manor. On the eighth membrane there is an entry similar to the one cited above; here Alice, late wife of John Bellasis, is found to have died possessed of practically the same estate; the third part of the manors of Staynton and Orton and of the advowson, a share of the tenement at Patriklees in "Banton," and in addition a rent of ten shillings and sixpence from Wigganby, and something at Warton and Gamlysby.

Her son and heir is Nicholas Redle.

Now we are told by the histories, the authority apparently being Denton,* that Orton originally belonged to a family called de Orton; that Sir Giles, the last of them, had a daughter who brought the estate to one of the Skeltons, Sir Clement; and that they had four daughters, of whom Agnes married Leigh of Isell, and the others whose names are not given married Blenerhasset, Ridley and Bellasis. The last-named received a rent-charge, while the other three divided the estates. It seems that Alicia and Joan were two of these daughters, but the extracts from the fine roll suggest a query as to the identity of Bellasis, and whether he was only the second husband of Alice de Skelton, or whether there were two members of the Bellasis family involved.

The connection of the four families with Orton has long ceased. Bellasis sold his interest to the Coldhall family, from which it descended to the Briscos. The Leigh share, on the extinction of that family, came to the Lawsons; while the portions inherited by Ridley and Blenerhasset were sold by them nearly three hundred years ago.

* See *An Account*, &c., by John Denton (Tract series No. 2, Ed. Chancellor Ferguson, p. 82).