

ART. XXV.—*The Registers of Great Orton, Carlisle, 1568 to 1812.* By the REV. W. F. GILBANKS, M.A.

Read at Carlisle, July 23rd, 1885.

THE register of Great Orton begins in the tenth year of Queen Elizabeth 1568, the first entry being on May the 17th. It is written upon parchment; the earlier sheets being about ten inches across by twenty-one inches long, and, from their awkward size, are considerably dog-eared. These large sheets are followed after the year 1626 by two smaller ones, and those again by others of varying sizes till 1802, when paper commences.

The entries are, of course, written in many different hands, the first of which is a neat and legible character, going on from 1568 till 1599.* The later hands form great contrasts, being in some cases neatly and carefully engrossed and in others ill-formed and illegible. There are numerous stains from grease, dirt, and damp, throughout the book, making the task of examining it more arduous. There are also numerous gaps of greater or less extent, (1) from 1599 to 1609. (2) from 1626 (with a few entries on very scrappy pieces of parchment as exceptions) to 1666. Several entries exist for some of the missing years, viz: 1627, 1628, 1629, 1630, 1635, 1636, 1638, 1639, 1641, 1655, 1661, 1662, 1664-5, not in their proper places but scattered promiscuously through the earlier years and more orderly entries of Queen Elizabeth's days, doubtless inserted at the request of parishioners, who felt aggrieved at the loss of the register of the period 1626-66.

* In the year 1597, an injunction of Elizabeth required all clergy to transcribe their existing registers on parchment: consequently the writing down to 1597 is generally in one hand. It would seem that the Orton rector did not make his transcript till 1599.—H. W.

The

The dating of the register is two-fold; the *annus Elizabethæ* being noted in November, the 17th of that month being the date of that queen's accession, and the ordinary calendar year until 1752 beginning in March. The saint's days and festivals are always noted when an entry occurs upon any of them, and very frequent is a Christmas day baptism.

To understand our registers one must be in sympathy with the place which to this day always treats of itself as a town, and that too a gated town, a town with a market cross (the shaft of this cross I learn from Mr. Cory, was a few years ago to be seen, with runic knot work engraved thereon, as the lintel of the old schoolhouse fire place, but was, when the old school was added to the church in 1867, so a mason declares, broken up for "ties" to a buttress of the present bellcot.) Orton has a head, and a middle, and a downgate for a foot. One has to know too its sister hamlets of Woodhouses, Ortonrigg, Baldwinholme, Little Orton, and the Bow, as well as the detached houses surrounding these places, Pow, Sparrowrigg, Ortonhow (now Red House), Scaughmires, Stonerigg, &c. Nor is one fully learned even then, as entries are frequent of people from places just outside, as Watchtree, Wiggonby, The Flatt, Kelhouses, Newby, Broomhills, Thurston Field, etc.

There are, unfortunately, no house ruins left to show us how much larger Orton once was, as the houses being "clay daubins" are carted away as excellent manure as soon as they fall into ruin. Several collapsed, and one or two more are doing so, from the effects of the terrible gale of last January year.

There are few lintels over the doorways in Orton of any age, and few tombstones exist of any value, and if in the various researches of antiquarians or others, any bits of lore bearing upon Orton and its early institutions are found, they will be most acceptable to me; that such discoveries

discoveries do turn up occasionally is undoubted :— witness my own discovery, only a day or two before this paper was written, of sufficient carved stone from a wall in the rectory premises to be a clue to restore the very early English arch of the north (or devil's) door of Orton church, when funds allow ; and also the chance inquiry of Mr. Cory about the runic cross, which led to my learning its miserable end.

Certain families occupy the principle places in the Orton registers ; their names are, (1) Twentyman, (2) Moore, (3) Norman, (4) Nixon, (5) Wilson, (6) Hind, (7) Blain, (8) Johnston (9) Pattinson or Pattyson. The localities of several of these names are definitely marked.

The first, the Twentyman family (often written XXman), at Little Orton, claimed some degree of position and influence, to judge by their successful caveat in 1579 against the gift of Orton living by Thomas Blenerhasset, and their own gift of the same to Leonard Lowther, (Nicolson and Burn's History of Westmorland and Cumberland, vol. II. p. 208.) There is no Twentyman family at Little Orton now, but there are three families of the name at Ortonrigg, one being the representative of the Woodhouses family, and the other two being connected with and being offshoots of a family from Baldwinholme, possibly descendants of the Little Orton stock. The Moores occupied three houses at three different stations in the village of Great Orton, Townhead, Midtown, and the Cross. The Townhead family sent an offshoot to Little Orton, with the family name of Christopher to mark them, and though there is no Moore in Orton now, there still exist some descendants of the Little Orton branch, one of whom is a clergyman in Yorkshire.

The Normans have dwelt from time immemorial at the Bow, their neighbours being the Nixon family, both of which have thrown offshoots into Great Orton at times,
and

and into Little Orton ; both families are still represented at the present time. The Wilsons, though the name still exists, are not represented in Orton now, yet when they were so they held their place. John Wilson, though he could not write, was a churchwarden in 1626, as we see his name as a marksman affixed to the register in that year. One of the family, as tradition asserts, was the hero who drew a bow at a venture and nailed a rash moss-trooper to his saddle while he was riding as a scout through the mosses to spy out the fatness of Orton, Hutchinson's Cumberland, vol. II. p. 516. This may be true, for Orton feared these Scottish thieves enough to have a "barras gate" with a chain to fasten at night, and not far to the west is a place still called "Watchtree," whence any raid could be detected afar by the sounds of clashing churchbells, or the bleating and lowing of driven stock, or perhaps the more dread sight of flaming stacks against the darkness of the midnight sky.* There were also one or two embanked cattle kraals, notably one between Great Orton and Little Orton, now ploughed up, whither the beasts might be driven and sheltered at night. The small deep embrasured windows both of the church and of the clay-built houses would suggest the same unsettled state of the country which the tales of the Ettrick shepherd make so vivid. The Wilson family are also, in the 17th century, marked in the register by a nick name "Dob Willy," "Dob Willy Dick" extending even to "Dob Willy Dick's nurse." The "Dob" part of the name they share with one of the Hinde's of Baldwinholme, Dob John,† which brings us to that family ; small statesmen now, they were seemingly the same then, and were probably such further back than the time when

* A subsequent paper in this volume on *The Beaumont Hoard* shows how exposed Orton was to the raids of the moss-troopers.

† *Dob Willy Dick*, i.e., son of Willy, who was the son of Dob. But it is odd that "Dob" is shared by another family.—H.W.

“ man's

“man’s memory runneth not to the contrary.” The present member lets his farm and acts as clerk to the school board, etc. His ancestor was a “gunner” in the days when Birmingham had not yet dared to compete in the matter of small arms with the country trade.*

Besides these six families there were Blaines, still represented;—the Johnstones; the first head of the family entered as buried being styled by the alias of “Duke John,” a notable man surely; the Pattysons, Pattisons, or Pattinsons, not now in Orton, but all around, the present owners of the name at Baldwinholme being new comers from Carlisle, not of the old Orton stock; and several other families.

The attractions of Orton lasses seem to have drawn swains from all the country round far and near; Westward is the first locality mentioned as affording a bridegroom, then Aikton, Cockermouth, Shap, Kelsick, etc. Nor have they lost their spell even now, as anyone who knows can say.

The first entry of any note is in the 25th year of Elizabeth 1579, when Sir Richard Place, parson of Orton, is buried on Monday, December 18th, and so many people were buried during that year that one may read between the lines and conclude that the plague having showed itself, the parson went about amongst his stricken people as in Kingsley’s “Two Years Ago” till he sank exhausted; in this case an easy victim to the disease he had relieved in others.

The parish clerk of the place, an important functionary, who presided as school master, singing master, and master of the ceremonies generally in a parish, is not unrepresented in the Orton registers; on December 23rd, 1611, we find William Denton, clarke, amongst the burials: and

* Is not a “gunner” a professional sportsman, like “fowler” on p. 252?—*Editor.*
his

his successor William Bell, clerke, we find died in June 1616. Nicholas Deane succeeded William Bell till 1626, perhaps till later, but the registers he kept are to blame for not giving any information of his further tenure of office. He seems to have been a bombastic sort of fellow, preferring latin to english in his entries, vexatious latin with interlardings more obscure than interesting; when the time of his clerkship occurs in our course through the register I will give instances of his craft. After the long gap of more than half a century we find James Bell installed as clerk, he being buried on March 6th, 1703.

Then comes another gap, probably in consequence of the entries of Mr. Thompson, the curate for forty-three years and more, being very methodical and not, as the older registers did, giving any special particulars. John Wilson next appears, dying at the age of 61 years in 1777. He is followed by the celebrated Richard Dixon, whose epitaph is the glory and comment of Ortonians to this day. His clerkship and schoolmastership ceased on March 20th, 1811, at the age of 68, and his tombstone records his worthiness as follows:—

Seven times seven years he taught this school,
And canvassed many a tedious rule;
Five times five years as you may mark
He served here as Parish Clerk.

He was a just and upright man,
As far as we his life could scan;
But now he rests beneath this clod
Till called upon to meet his God.

With Richard Dixon ceased, I fancy, for Orton, the old historic personage of the "Parish Clerk."

"Poor travellers"* form rather a feature in Orton regis-

* Orton is near a line of road from the fords over Eden, frequented by travellers from Scotland, who did not care to go through Carlisle, where the authorities might ask awkward questions. For this road see a subsequent paper in this volume on "the Beaumont Hoard."—*Editor.*

ter;

ter; they either are found dead, or die on the road, or have children baptized at Orton. November 28th, 1598, "a German,"* that is the whole entry! *subject* enough for a poet. March 13th, 1618, a pore Scotswoman buried! had she been one of the hapless followers of Jamie to London who had failed like so many, to better themselves? "In Scotland she was born and bred, and though a beggar must be fed;" if so, the days when this poor woman lived are best exemplified in the "Fortunes of Nigel." On January 20th, 1670, William Carrudas, a traveller, is buried; on January 6th, 1673, Henry Speddy a traveller's son is buried; on June 16th, of the same year, Thomas Browne a travelling Pether, (no doubt a pedlar,) buried; on November 4th, 1674, William Lindsay (scotch again) a poore traveller is buried; March 30th, 1705, John Richardson, the Oxford carrier, is buried; † what does this mean? One has story after story suggesting itself at this entry. On January 10th, 1719, a traveller died at Orton, named Charles Pearson. Then after the rising of 1745, we might expect such an entry as, "March 28th, 1749, Robert son of Dougell Campbell, a poor traveller, baptised;" though it is rather a long time after, and the Campbells *were* on the Hanoverian side, I believe. ‡ June 4th, 1761, John Barr, a scotchman died upon the road at Orton How.

I am sorry that none of the tombstones in Orton churchyard are older than the end of the 18th century, and that very few of the houses have early initials and dates, in consequence of the clay daubin, having been succeeded at an unhistoric period by brick. §

* The most pathetic entry I have ever met with, is in the Brampton register: "Esther, a vagrant in transitu."—H.W.

† So many Cumberland men were always at Queen's College, Oxford, that the Oxford carrier was an important person to Cumberland. I have met with him in letters of last century from Queen's College.—H.W.

‡ There was a Robert Campbell came to Brampton with Charles Edward Stuart, and finally settled there.—H.W.

§ Yet in Brampton parish, there are stone lintel inscriptions in brick houses, dated 17th century.—H.W.

In

In 1596-7, an attack of some pestilence seems to have devastated Orton terribly; in the two years of its visit as many as 54 deaths are recorded.* In 1618, "Sept. 1st, we find Joseph son of John XXman, Woodhouses, buried being ^{ye} First corps ^{yt} was buried in woollen at Orton church, according to act in the case made and providing;" and again on "Sept. 21, John Moore the son of Christopher buried in woollen, being the second that was buried soe at Orton church, 1678."†

An interesting entry occurs in 1783. "The duty upon baptisms, marriages, and burials took place October 2nd, 1785."‡ And now having taken what I could from the registers in order, I will give the most interesting or curious sporadic items that I find. John Moore, buried in March 1611, is spoken of as "Cowp.;"§ John Hynd, when his son is baptized, is described as a "fowler," Nov. 3, 1614; William Dand, buried 1615, Feb. 20, has an undecipherable appellation; John Wilson, on Jan. 1st, 1622, is called "vestiarius"|| (repeated in 1629); Robert Wilson is called "Tax barne de Wood howses" in May, 1623. In 1626, Mr. Nicholas Deane writes as in former years

* The plague was prevalent in the north of England in 1597. See *Annales Caermoelesenses*, pp. 560-569. The Bishop of Carlisle (Meye) died at Rose of it; 1196 persons, or one-third of the inhabitants of Carlisle, also perished: at Penrith 2260, at Kendal 2500, at Richmond 2200.—*Editor*.

† *Burials in Woollen*. Similar entries occur in all registers, and refer to a well-known matter. An act of parliament 30. Car. II. c. 3. ordered it, to encourage the woollen trade, and there was a fine for burying in anything else: only two entries are in Orton register mentioning this circumstance, because they were the two first instances of it. It is not mentioned afterwards because taken for granted. In Brampton register there is an entry about that time to the effect that some one was "buried in *linen*," meaning that this was exceptional. For a form of affidavit of burial in woollen, see these Transactions vol. iv., p. 36. Numbers of these affidavits are in the muniment chest in Hawkshead church.—H.W.

‡ The duty was not on baptism, but on the registration of it; Act 23 George III., c. 71, imposed a duty of 3d. on every entry in the parish registers. It was a very unfair and unpopular tax, and led to defective keeping of the registers, vicars not registering out of consideration to their poorer parishioners. The Act was repealed in 1794. H.W.

§ *Cowp*. Probably an abbreviation of cooper.—H.W. [Perhaps a cowper, or merchant, generally in horses; a horse cowper. *Editor*.]

|| For sutor-vestiarius, a tailor.

“Anno

“Anno Domini milesimo sexcentesimo vicesimo sexto et anni regni domini nostri Charoli regis primo”; and further down is an entry “executum fuit hoc mandatum vicesimo die Julii A.D. 1626,” followed by the signatures of “John Briskae, Richard Flemig contract:— Clerke, John Senhouse William Briskoæ Nicholas Deane Clerke, Edward Hayre, (his † marke) John Wilson (S his marke), John Addison (O his marke), Churchwardens.” Then below follows:—

“Lecti sunt articuli religionis
 vicesimo primo die Octobris 1626
 articulis habeat.

R. B.”*

The gaps show what is illegible. All these signatures are interesting.

John Hind, in 1763, is spoken of as “a webster,” and weaving was till within the memory of man the great trade of Orton, vanishing at the introduction of machinery. On May 12th, 1678, occurs a curious entry:— “Ann, illegitimate and supposed daughter of a young man who is gone away amongst the volunteers and Lucy Johnson of Little Orton, spinster.” Who were these volunteers, and what army was there to repel?†

There seems to have been great mortality at Baldwinholme in 1700. In 1710 is a “Memorandum Mr. David Bell, A.M. was inducted into this rectory on Thursday

* From Hutchinson’s History of Cumberland it appears that the living of Orton was vacant in 1625, and from Nicolson and Burn that there was litigation about it. This latin document records the institution of a new rector who read himself in on the first of October, and signs R.B. He is probably the Mr. Burton, rector in 1643.—*Editor*.

† “The Prince of Orange was suddenly invited to England and wedded to Mary the eldest daughter of the Duke of York * * presumptive heiress of the crown * * Lewis was bitterly enraged * * and again set his army in the field: * * the withdrawal of the English ambassador from Paris was followed * * by a warlike address from the House, supplies were granted and *an army raised.*” *Green’s History of England*, p. 635. Many young men, in a similar predicament, have gone to fight the French.—*Editor*.

January

January the fifth on Thousand seven hundred and nine, by Tho: Benson, Vicar of Stanwix. witness J Brisco, Jo Nicholson, Tho Nevinson, Geo Bell, Gerard Atkinson, John Carlile's mark Churchwarden."

This is the only place where the name of Nicholson or Nicolson occurs, and thus the tradition that Bishop Nicolson was born in the rectory house at Orton must, unless further testimony be forthcoming, remain a tradition with a doubt; that a Nicolson was ever rector here is certainly a mistake.*

Jan. 6th, 1716, the wife of one Hornsby was buried who lived at Woodhouses, her name I know not; and the next entry in Latin "Maria infanta supposita Johannis Edger de Parva Ortensi oppidi baptizata est." On October 26, 1721, was buried Jannet Robinson, widow, Woodhouses, aged near one hundred and ten! I cannot find her baptismal register, not knowing her maiden name; nor yet her marriage lines. 1722, October 14th, Mr. Thomas Richardson, curate of Orton, was buried, and was succeeded by Mr. Thompson for 43 years, who died in 1765, five months after his wife. Chancellor Burn is called "Doctor" in 1768, so he probably took his doctor's degree for the bishop's visitation in 1767.

The wife's christian name begins to be added to the husband's at a baptism after the General Chapter in June, 1771. In 1778, begin very careless entries in what seems a woman's hand, and last till the end of the register. I fear these are the only practically useful remains of

* The story arose from a misprint of "Orton" for "Plumbland," in Nicolson and Burn, vol. ii., p. 293, where the bishop's father is stated to have been rector of "Orton," but see p. 120, where his monumental inscription from Plumbland is given, recording that he was rector thus:—

H. P. S.

Deposita Josephi Nicolson Rectoris hujus Ecclesie; et Mariæ Uxoris eius, Filie Johannis Brisco de Crofton armigeri. Obit ille A.D. 1686 illa 1689. Parentibus religiosissimis P. Guil Carliol. Episc.

"Happy

“Happy Dick,” the Richard Dixon aforesaid, who seven times seven years taught the Orton rustics the three R’s, and five times five years wrote the registers carelessly in an enormous copy-book hand. In 1784 is written “settled this account towards the duty for the year ending 1st of October, 1784, by order of Mr. Thos: Ramshay P Thos: Lawson.” Can anyone explain this ?*

In 1788, Feb. 8th, John Liddell is the schoolmaster of Great Orton. Was “Happy Dick” then his assistant? Can Dick’s monument be an imposition? Perhaps Liddell was schoolmaster elsewhere, on a visit. An interesting list of trades occurs in 1792 in the baptismal list: — 1, is a basketmaker; 2, a weaver; 3, a tailor; 4, a servant; 5, a yeoman; 6, a widow; 7, a shoemaker; 8, a farmer; 9, a joiner; and 10, a pauper. In 1794, we find also a grocer, a nailer, and a cooper were in business, so surely Orton had a right to be a town: places have had civic rights for less before now. The last entry to trouble you with is that of Mr. Richard Dixon again: “was schoolmaster 48 years of the parish of Orton, he was 68 years old when he was buried *and likewise Parish Clerk.*” Comment is needless!

On the fly-leaf of the later register is

1832. June &c. The east end wall of the Chancel of the Parish Church of Orton in the co of Cumberland &c being in a very dilapidated state, was taken down in the year 1832 and rebuilt at the expence of the Rev^d John Mayson Rector.

When the old register was bound in its present case is not clear—probably in the 18th century. Perhaps Mr. Joseph Thompson had it done. At all events, it was done earlier than 1752; witness the following: — “According to an Act of Parliament passed in the 24th year of His Majesties Reign and in the year of our Lord 1751. The old style ceases here and the new one takes place, and

* The duty on registration of births, &c.—*Editor.*

consequently,

consequently, the next day which in the old account would have been the third, is now to be called the 14th, so that all the intermediate nominal days, from the 2nd to the 14th, are omitted, or rather annihilated this year, and the month contains no more than 19 days. N.B. The word this year and the month (viz :) September y^e 14th 1752 new style." This, as you will remember, was the time when the rabble formed riots and shouted as a political cry, " Give us back our days."
