

ART. XVI.—*St. Cuthbert's Church, Bewcastle.* By J. F. CURWEN, F.R.I.B.A.

Read at Kirkby Stephen, August 29th, 1901.

THE camp at Bewcastle, which is in close proximity to the old British road called the Maiden Way, from its irregular hexagonal form * has been considered by some to have been a Pictish or British encampment, before it was occupied by the Romans as a fortress about the year A.D. 79.† It covers some six acres of ground and is girt about by an outer wall of considerable thickness.‡ Several foundations of ancient buildings occur in every part of the station, and there is hardly a grave that is dug now that does not cut into some masonry or pavement; shewing that it must have been at one time of considerable importance. A Roman altar § (now at Tullie House) discovered near the foundations of the church, shows that the station was occupied by the second legion (Augusta) and also by the twentieth legion (Valeria Victrix).

When, however, the Romans at last retired from England, the Angles entered in and took possession of this stronghold, and here for centuries has stood, on the rising ground leading up from the rivulet Kirkbeck, that famous and very beautiful Runic pillar—a column formed of one entire block of grey freestone || which, from the inscription, was set up in the year 670-671, to mark

* Roman camps were usually square, and any departure from this rule generally denotes an adaptation of some earlier stronghold.

† Maughan says that about the year 1835 a silver coin of the Emperor Nerva was found near the *decuman* or southern gateway, bearing the inscription COS. iii., in which case Bewcastle might thus date from Agricola's second campaign.

‡ For description see *A Memoir of the Roman Station and Runic Cross at Bewcastle*, by the Rev. John Maughan, A.B., 1857.

§ For description see *Transactions*, vol. xv, p. 460.

|| For description see Calverley's *Early Sculptured Crosses*, pp. 39-47.

the burial place of the Anglian King Alcfrith, by his wife and his sister-in-law. And would it not seem natural to suppose that they who had carved and raised this wondrous cross to the memory of the great dead, must likewise have erected some kind of wattle church wherein to worship their God?

It would seem that after the destruction of Carlisle by the Danes in 876, the "Bishop Eardulfe of Lindisfarne and Abbott Edride Lulisc* did tacke, carry and beare awaie the bodie of Sancte Cuthbert from Holy Eland southward, and fled vij yere from towne to towne, for the great persecution and slawghter of the Panymes and Danes." Now Wessington, prior of Durham, 1416-1446, confirms the fact that Bewcastle was one of the spots where the monks rested for a time with their precious burden † whence the present dedication of the church to the honour of this holy saint. ‡

We hear first of the dark and gloomy fortress some eighty-seven feet square and with walls 42 feet in height, built in the most barbarous order calculated for defence, and situated at the north-east corner of the station, in the manuscript of John Denton § (1610), who says "I read of one Beweth, || a Cumberland man, about the time of

* From Luel the ancient name of Carlisle.

† This is supposed to have been on the return journey eastward along the Maiden Way, after the shipwreck on the Galloway coast. See *Transactions*, vol. ii., page 19.

‡ In 1580 the church was known by the dedication to St. Mary.

§ See John Denton's *Accompt*, edited by R. S. Ferguson, p. 129.

|| I am indebted to the Editor for the following note:—

Bueth, a name occurring twice among 12th century landholders in North Cumberland, is probably Gaelic *Buidh*, modern *Boyd*, i.e., "yellow-haired." The relatives of the two Bueths bear Gaelic and Norse names, as well as Norman, later on: so that it may be presumed these people, whether one family or not, were originally Galgael, or Viking who had intermarried with Gaels. Bewcastle, and also Buetholme and Buethby (Norse place-names) are obviously derived from Bueth (Chancellor Prescott's *Wetherhal*, p. 197). The two Bueth's are (a) father of Gilles—not the French Giles, but Gilles which, like Malise, means "Servant of Jesus" (Giolla-Iosa in full Gaelic spelling). This Gilles was a Cumbrian witness in an inquisition as to lands of Glasgow Church, 1120-21, and owned "Gilles-land" to his death, after which it was given to Hubert de Vallibus (1157) (*Wetherhal*, p. 195-6); (b) Bueth or Bueth-barn (i.e., Bueth "the child," junior; though Chancellor Prescott says "Bueth's child.") He gave land in Bewcastle to Wetherhal Priory, and his son Robert confirmed

the conquest. He builded Bewcastle and was Lord of Buecastle Dale." A great Celtic lord, Gilles,* (who also gave his name to "Gilles-land" was certainly possessed of this district, stretching between the Irthing and the Liddle in pre-Norman days, and likewise we find that in the reign of Henry I., one Gilles Bueth held the same Barony. It was probably the latter Gilles Bueth who built the earliest castle in this lonely wilderness of heather, like many another fortress in the north, out of the ruins of the Roman station.† But on being banished for taking part with the Scots in King Stephen's time, he seated himself in Scotland, and the dale, together with all the rest of his lands, were given by Henry II. (1157) to Hubert de Vallibus, the first baron of Gilsland, by the description of *totam terram quam Gilbertus filius Boet tenuit die quo fuit vivus et mortuus, de quocumque illam tenuisset*. "Hubert followed the fortunes of the young Prince Henry in his long struggle with Stephen, and was probably an old man before he received this reward for his services. His son, Robert de Vallibus, fills a large

the grant (1177-78). Robert joined William the Lion (1173-74) and was fined one mark for the act of rebellion (*Pipe Rolls*, 1177). His name appears in several charters with contemporary lords and clerics. He had two sisters, Eda and Sigrid (a Norse name) one of whom married Robert, son of Asketill (a Norse name) and their son was John. Chancellor Prescott hints a doubt as to the report that Robert de Bueth-castle, son of Bueth-barn, gave the church of Bewcastle to the Priory of Carlisle (*Wetherhal*, p. 196).

We cannot say that Bueth-barn was descended from Bueth, father of Gillès, but as it was common to give a grandson his grandfather's name, it is likely that we have here four generations:—Bueth, Gillès, Bueth-barn, Robert.

The Gilemor (Great Gille or more likely "Servant of Mary") son of Gilander ("Servant of St. Andrew") who built a wicker chapel at Triermain (1056-71) may possibly have been of the family; but the Irish names beginning with Gille are not uncommon in our district in the 11th century and later. A Gilist (perhaps Gil-christ) witnesses a charter (*Wetherhal*, pp. 222-3) of the early 13th century. Gile-michel was a great holder in Lonsdale temp. Edward the Confessor (Domesday). Gilmartin ridding, perhaps the ridding of one Gilmartin of earlier date, is mentioned temp. John, and Gos-patrick is only the translation into Cymric of Gille-patrick. We cannot therefore press the resemblance of names so far as to say Gilander and Gilemor were the two generations preceding Bueth and Gillès at Bewcastle.

* See Chancellor Prescott's *Wetherhal*, p. 224 note.

† The late Chancellor Ferguson thought that William Rufus built the castle, to protect his newly acquired province of Cumberland from incursion by the Maiden Way, just as he built the castle of Carlisle to protect the passage of the Eden and one of the two only roads by which wheeled carriages could enter the district from Scotland.

space in history and legend,"* and it is said that, about the year 1200, he gave the advowson of the church to the prior and convent of Carlisle,† when both lands and money were given, perhaps no mean sum in those days, to retain the services of a resident priest.

From this time forward the fortunes of both castle and church would be shaped by the great lords of the barony. The low narrow quaint old church, with rude walls and thatched roof, would become by degrees of greater importance and be rebuilt at the lord's instigation in the prevailing Early English style, as is still noticeable in the triple east-end windows of the chancel. We are told that in the 7th year of King Edward I., the then possessor of the castle—John Swinburne—obtained permission for a fair and market to be held here, so that in time a considerable sized market town sprang up, and the church became of far greater importance and more comely in appearance than it is possible for the present generation to realise.

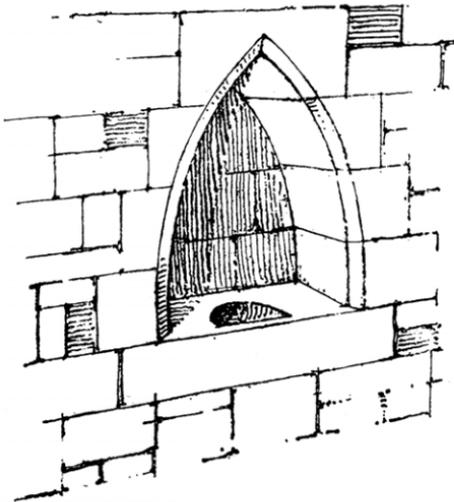
Then followed a period of great unrest. In 1298 the Scots after burning Hexham returned through Gilsland devastating the whole country side. In 1333 Lord Douglas made great ravages here, and in 1346 the district was again pillaged and destroyed. The only available information during this period is that a certain Robert de Southayke was rector between the years 1306 and 1356. Following him we have handed down to us the names of his five successors, and then again the list of rectors is broken for two hundred years, *i.e.*, from 1380 to 1580, after which time Camden speaks in his *Britannia* of the church being "now almost quite ruined." However, with the Reformation things improved. The ancient chalice cup and paten, still in use, bear the date 1630, and although the castle was laid in ruins during the border warfare in 1641, the garrison of

* Ferguson's *History of Cumberland*, p. 162.

† See, however, Chancellor Prescott's *Wetherhal*, at foot of p. 196.

100 men being removed to Carlisle, and although the market town became a thing of the past, yet the church still lived on under the shadow of King Alcfrith's cross, side by side, silent witnesses of both life and death.

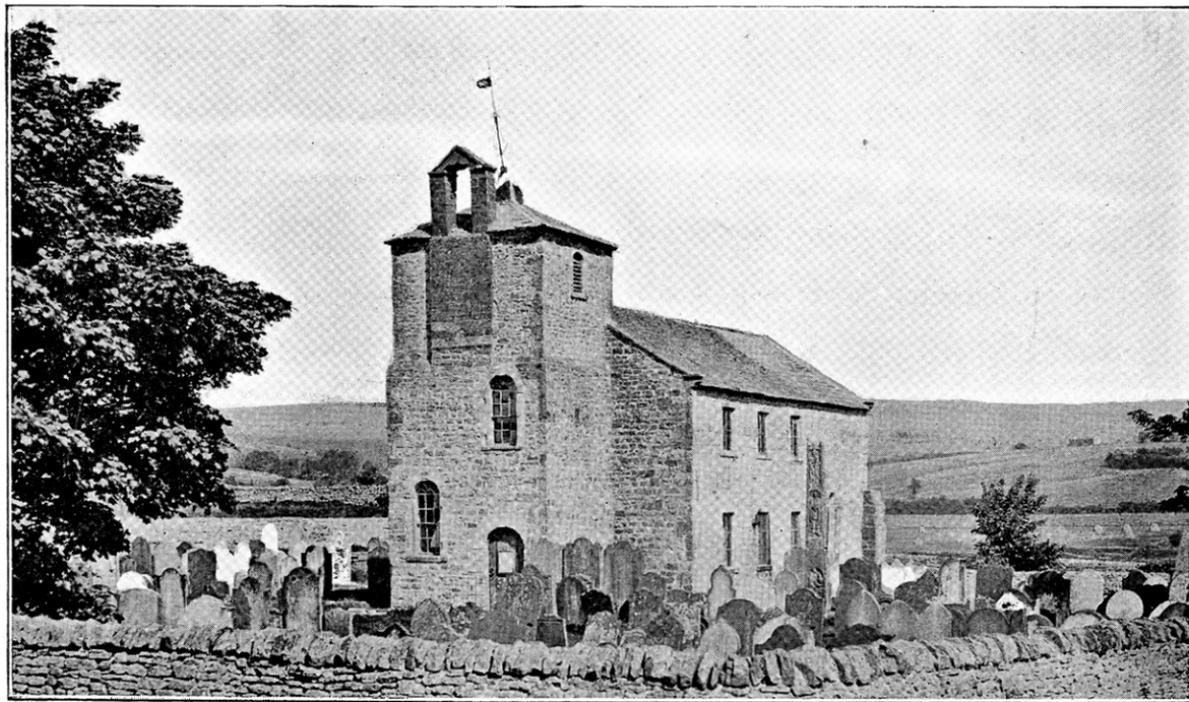
From the year 1580 the list of rectors is complete, but they have left behind them no record of the church until we come down to the year 1792, when we find from the following faculty, that it was practically rebuilt, and irredeemably spoilt. Six and a half yards were cut off the nave at the west end, reducing its length by one third, and the curiously ugly tower, I suppose, erected as a set-off. Inside galleries forsooth were erected at the west and north sides to supply a certain amount of accommodation should it be needed. As one sin generally leads to another, so here we find that to make room for the gallery the walls had to be raised some four feet, altering the old



PISCINA IN BEWCASTLE CHURCH.

high pitched roof into an ugly 45 deg. pitch. The old Early English windows of the nave thereupon appeared too short, so to make matters worse the vandals cut off their shapely lancet heads, lintoled them over square, and pierced the upper parts of the southern wall with a second tier of three square sashed windows. There are no windows in the nor-

thern wall, and it would seem that this is customary in all buildings in this stormy district. The rector, the Rev. John Bird, repaired at this time also the chancel roof,



BEWCASTLE CHURCH BEFORE RESTORATION, 1901.

(TO FACE P. 246).



BEWCASTLE CHURCH, INTERIOR, BEFORE RESTORATION, 1901.

(TO FACE P. 247).

but fortunately left the walls and ancient buttresses untouched, so that we have preserved to us the credence table in the north wall, a piscina in the south wall and an aumbry in the east wall. There are also two very interesting sculptured heads, one on either side of the central east window.

At the Consistory Court held on the 18th May, 1792, before Chancellor Paley, application was made for a faculty to be granted to the churchwardens of Bewcastle, and also to James Nixon, Thomas Potts, Andrew Dodgson, Isaac Dodgson, and John Armstrong as commissioners, or a majority of them, to contract for the taking down six yards and a half in length of the west end of the church in order to diminish the length thereof; also to unroof the whole of the church, and to raise the walls thereof one yard or more (as may be found necessary) in order to heighten the same; also to erect and build a gallery at the west end of the church entirely across, the same being about six yards and a half in breadth; and also another gallery along the north side wall of the church, to extend six yards and a half in length and two yards and three-quarters in breadth; and also to reroof the said church, and finish and complete the same; and also to empower and authorise the said churchwardens and commissioners to levy an equal rate or assessment according to the pound rate upon all lands, tenements, and other rateable property within the parish for the purpose of raising sufficient monies to defray the cost of such works. The faculty (which is dated 15th June, 1792) was granted to the churchwardens and the above-named commissioners, authorising them to carry out the said works and to levy the rate on the parish.

It is curious to notice that there is no mention whatever of a tower, nor any faculty for its erection or for the re-seating of the church. Over the porch is the date 1792, and cut out from the vane is the date 1793.

Along the new gallery front a number of long tin cases were hung, suspended by chains, wherein were kept the plans of common allotments in the parish. Mr. T. Hesketh Hodgson has written a very interesting paper on "Village Communities"* prior to the introduction of enclosed

* See *Transactions*, vol. xii., p. 133.

allotments, from which it will be seen how very necessary it was to have reliable plans of the "riggs" kept in some common place.

The dean and chapter of Carlisle are still the patrons. The living was valued in Pope Nicholas' valuation, 1291-2, *Ecclesia de Botecastre*, at £19 : 0 : 0 ; in 1318 it was not taxed ; *quia non sufficiunt pro stipendio capellani*. In 1546 *Bewcastell rectoria valet per an' tempore pacis* £2 : 0 : 0 ; *tempore guerre, nihil*. At the first date the Bishop of Carlisle had a pension on Bewcastle *vicaria* of 6/8 ; at the second, nil ; nothing said at the third date. Of course the second date was after the 1298 raid, after which it does not seem to have had a resident chaplain permanently. A Parliamentary grant of £800 was given in 1814, and £600 of this was spent in purchasing 40 acres of freehold land ; the remainder is still in the hands of Queen Anne's Bounty and produces £6 15s. 8d. per annum to the living.

By an indenture dated 1837, Sir J. R. G. Graham, Bart., conveyed to the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty half an acre of land (which now forms part of the glebe premises), and appointed unto the said Governors a clear yearly rent charge of £20, chargeable on the whole manor of Bewcastle—to be paid by the said Sir J. Graham and his successors in four quarterly payments upon Michaelmas Day, Lady Day, Christmas Day, and Midsummer Day in each year in the porch-door place of the Parish Church of Bewcastle, between the hours of nine and eleven in the forenoon.

Then the tithes were commuted in the year 1842 for the sum of £60 os. 6d. per annum, and in 1843 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners made a further grant of £13 a year. In 1878 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners made a grant of £26 13s. 4d. to meet a benefaction of £800. In the same year the governors of Queen Anne's Bounty made a donation of £320, resulting in an additional annual payment of £16. In the same year £800 stock of the Furness Railway Company was purchased with the £800 already mentioned and it produces

an annual payment of £31 6s. to the living. The present value of the living, with tithes at net, and including rent received for glebe, is a little over £170 per annum.

BELLS.

Bishop Nicolson, who visited this parish on July 30, 1703, states in his *Miscellany Accounts of the Diocese of Carlisle*, p. 56, that he found "no Bell, to call them in to Divine Service." Some fifty years later, in a marginal note to the Bishop's MS., on the page relating to Bewcastle, Chancellor Waugh says:—"Nor have they yet any bell."

The terrier of 1828 informs us when the want was supplied:—"there is a good Church Bell, purchased by the parish about the year 1785. Prior to that time the Church had no bell." The same story is told, with a sequel, in the terrier of 1868. "A Church Bell was purchased by the parish about the year 1785, before which time there appears to have been none. This bell was broken and a new one purchased by the parish in 1845." The new bell, which is still in use, is without inscription, date, stamp, or mark of any kind. It is 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter, and therefore weighs nearly 2 cwt.

During the present restoration the builders have discovered a large quantity of honey in the base of the vane, a bucket full has already been taken away, but the bees resolutely refuse to allow more to be abstracted from their store.

PLATE.

The plate consists of a plain cup 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, weighing 9oz. 2dwt. 7g., with an inscription:—"R (Rectory?) Bewcastle 1630." Marks:—York rose and fleur-de-lis, maker's initials, C.M., and date letter the old English Y of 1631-2. It is covered by a kind of paten placed on the cup upside down from which the stalk is gone.

REGISTERS.

Vol. No. I. of baptisms and burials dates from 1737 to 1812, and Vol. II. of marriages from 1738 to 1812. The marriages from 1738 to 1754 were originally registered in Vol. I., from which book the leaves containing them have been torn out and are now loose and crumbling to pieces. A copy of them, however, has been made into the separate book Vol. II., procured for the purpose by order of Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act in 1753. This book was rebound in 1893.

Transcripts of earlier registers are preserved in the registry at Carlisle, commencing at 1665, but some of them between this date and 1690 are missing, as are also those for the year 1729.

The following are copies of a few of the presentments that occur in these registers :—

Bewcastle ye 28th. of June 1667. Wee present John Armestrong of Cleughside and Jane Armestrong for committing of fornication. Wee present Jeffery Sowerbye and Jennett Ffoster for ye like. Wee present Adam Routledge of ye Cragge and Elizabeth Ffoster of thys pish for ye like. We present Annie Nixon for bearing a child to Archibald Nixon ye supposed ffather.

John Raper, curate

William Croser, churchwarden.

1686.—The presentments of the Parish of Bewcastle. Imprimis the dissenters from the Church are those following.

Adam Hogg of the Crew

John Armstrong of the Flatt

Thomas Routledge of the Low Toddhills, Quaker.

James Routledge of Nixonstown, Quaker.

Thomas Nixon, Quaker.

Rowland Ffoster of Low Grange.

Signed William Frazer, Curate.

In 1702 there are several presentments for women with bastard children ; in 1709 there are seven presentments, all for fornication, and then coming down to the year 1713 we have more such enlisted under this most

flourishing heading :—" A true presentment of all such persons and things as are presentable from ye pish of Bewcastle from June 1st. 1713 to May 12th. 1714 &c. &c."

The Churchwarden's Book commences in 1828, and there are some quaint entries concerning the provision and cost of wine used for sacred and other less sacred purposes. The little inn by the brook side, known as the "Shop Ford," was the receiver of the Visitation expenses, and the average cost for "Bread and Wine" at each celebration amounted to nine shillings! Here also is a side light :—" Ordered that no wine be given to any clergyman to carry home."

RECTORS.

- 1306—1356. Robert de Southayke.
Pr. and conv. pr.
After being rector for 50 years, exchanged to Stapleton.
- 1356— Henry de Whitebergh.
- 1360—1361. John de Bromfield.
He resigned.
- 1361— Adam Armstrong.
— Robert.
- 1380— John de Stapleton.
—1580. Thomas Aglionby, alias Nickson.
Died in 1580.
- 1580— William Lawson.
Collated by the bishop.
- 1623— Charles Forebench.
Presented by James I., the deanery of Carlisle being then vacant.
- 1632— William Patrick.
Notorious freebooter, also his curate John Nelson.
- 1643— Henry Sibson, D.D.
- 1663—1671. Robert Lowther, LL.D.
Chancellor of the diocese. Died 1671. He had for a curate John Raper in 1665.
- 1671— Ambrose Myers, M.A.
- 1673— George Usher, B.D.

- 1699. James Lamb, M.A.
Divinity lecturer in the Cathedral. He was promoted to Appleby. Died 1720. William Frazer was curate in 1686-7.
- 1699—1700. Jeffrey Wybergh, LL.B.
Promoted to Caldbeck. Died 1727.
- 1700—1713. Edward Tonge, A.M.
He resigned.
- 1713—1737. Matthew Soulby.
Died September 28th, 1737, aged 85 years. There is a mural monument to him in the church.
- 1738—1750. Edward Birkett, M.A.
Resigned. James Currie was curate from 1737 to 1754.
- 1750— James Faresh, LL.B.
Resigned. He volunteered as an A.D.C. in the 1745 rebellion, and "acted with a spirit equal to that of any military man." He does not seem to have resided at Bewcastle, as his name only occurs in registers twice as having read the banns in church. William Baty was curate from 1754-1761, and Michael Holme from 1761-1774.
- John Bird.
- 1776—1806. Thos. Messenger.
William Graham was curate from 1778-1790.
- 1806—1834. John Graham.
Died August 17th, 1834, aged 66 years. There is a mural monument to him in the church.
- 1834—1836. John Jackson.
John Lawson was his curate.
- 1836—1874. John Maughan, A.B.
He was a man of many parts, being also a qualified medical doctor, schoolmaster, archæologist, magistrate, and farmer.
- 1874—1897. Titus E. Laurie.
St. Bees 1865. Deacon 1866. Priest 1867. Curate at Calder Bridge 1866-69, Wythop 1869-71, Great Asby 1871-74. Now Rector of Musgrave.
- 1898— Edward Walker, B.A.
Univ. Coll. Dur. B.A. 1884, Deacon 1886. Priest 1887, York. Curate of Kimberworth, Yorks, 1886-88; All Saints, Cockermouth, 1888-94; S. Mary's, Carlisle, 1894-96; Bilton, Yorks, 1896-98.

THE RECTORY.

The Rectory was built in the year 1837 by the Rev. J. Maughan, nearly upon the site of the old house, with a grant of £400 from the Queen Anne's Bounty, a gift of £50 from Hugh Percy, Bishop of Carlisle, and from his own resources.

On the fly leaf of the Baptismal Register, dated 1737, there is this curious entry:—"The Rev. Mr. Messenger planted 2 Apple Trees in Vicarage Garden in the spring 1803, and 4 in the spring 1806." The young life of the trees must evidently have received the baptismal blessing of the Rev. gentleman.

CHURCHYARD.

At the north-west corner, which is nearly the centre of the Roman station, the foundations of the prætorium, or general's quarters, are very conspicuous. There are some curious old headstones bearing quaint coats of arms and epitaphs, perhaps the oddest of all being quite a recent one to "Jonathan Telford of Craggy Ford, who died April 25, 1866, aged 72. Deceased was one of the best moor game shooters in the North of England; in the time of his shooting he bagged 59 grouse at seven double shots."

There was no Parish Clerk for years until recently, the parishioners having passed a resolution at a vestry meeting not to pay any money for the discharge of the duties; and when a grave needed digging those who needed it had to find their own grave digger. This has now been remedied; the woman who cleans the church rings the bell, and a grave digger has been appointed.

[In 1899 the old fabric was found to be not only out of repair, but dangerous. The roof was rotten, and threatened to come down; the walls were damp, and the floor of the chancel in ruins. There

was no vestry, and the heating was inadequate and unsightly. Many antiquaries would have liked to preserve the quaintness of the place, and at first it was thought that a little patching up would suffice, without structural alterations. But it was soon found that the roof must come off, and that the three-decker must come down. The present rector, Mr. Walker, and his churchwardens made great efforts to raise the necessary funds, difficult to find in so out-of-the-way a neighbourhood; and very wisely put the work into the hands of Mr. Curwen, who has spent unusual pains and sympathetic skill in the restoration. It would have been absurd to perpetuate the worst points of the local builders of 1792-3. As much as possible has been preserved, and the changes introduced are in the style of the Early English part of the building. The restored church was opened on Sunday, November 3rd, 1901.—ED.]

