

ART. XXV.—*A Bishop's Visitation to Furness in 1554.*  
By HARPER GAYTHORPE, F.S.A.Scot.

WHEN King Henry VIII., in the year 1541, formed the diocese of Chester, John Byrde, S.T.P., was consecrated the first bishop, and at the same time was made suffragan to Canterbury.\* In 1542 the new diocese was subjected to York. In 1546 the bishop alienated some of the revenues of his see, and made leases injurious to his successors. In 1553 he was considerably in debt for tenths and subsidies, but these were remitted through the interest of Bishop Bonner, with whom he complied in every respect. Breaking his vow of celibacy, he was deprived on March 1st, 1553-4. Retiring to London, he was by Bishop Bonner made vicar of Great Dunmow, 1554. Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, states that after the bishop's deprivation he lived in obscurity at Chester and, dying there in 1556, was buried in the cathedral, but Le Neve records that he is buried at Dunmow in Essex, and that historian believes he died there.†

He was succeeded April 1, 1554, by George Cotes, D.D., who was master of Balliol College, Oxford, in 1539, and prebendary of Chester in 1554. Three months after his consecration he visited this remote part of his extensive diocese. He did not long survive his last appointment, for he died at Chester in the year 1555.‡ George Marsh suffered martyrdom at Boughton, Chester, in the time of this bishop.

So far as I can trace this is the first record of a bishop's

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\* Hemingway, *History of Chester*, i., 301-2.

† Raine's *Notit. Cestr.*, i., 6.

‡ Wood's *Athenæ Oxon.*, vol. ii., cols. 763 and 764, 3rd ed., 1815.

visitation into Furness. It was held at Kirkby Ireleth on the 1st August, 1554, in the 2nd year of Queen Mary. The year is written "1334" in the record at the Diocesan Registry, Chester, but it is clearly intended for 1554.\* How the bishop came to Furness from Chester is more than we can tell. He may have come by boat and landed at the Peel of Fotheray, or he may have travelled through Lancashire to Lancaster, and so across the sands of Morecambe Bay past Harlesyde Isle, the then recently dissolved priory of Conishead, and Ulverston, on his way to Dalton and Kirkby Ireleth. One wonders if he went along the "vale of Nightshade" to look at the ruined abbey of St. Mary of Furness!

## Decanae de ffournes.

Visitac' Reue'nd' in Chr'o prīs Georgii p'missione diūā Cestrien' ēpi celebrat primo die Augusti anno d'ni 1334<sup>o</sup> Apud Kyrbie Irelethe.

Kyrbie }  
Irelethe }

. D'ns Thoms' Askeywe vic'	} pauper† et excus'
. D'ns Willmo' Croudeson	
+ D'ns Leondo' ffell p'tz	

Gardianj

p Thoms Wailes	} broughton'
p Rich. Askewe	
. George postlethwat	
p Reynalld pennyngton	
	Nicholes Carter

Inqūis	Robert Garnett	} p Jamez Lewtethe
	Edmde Aisckewe	
		p Geffraye Carter
		p Thoms Towhers

Dallton'

+ d'ns Rynialld wright vic' 7'  
+ d'ns Edward pyrrre 7'  
+ d'ns Robert Alanson 7'

\* *Chronicon Cestriense*, 1656, by Samuel Lee, M.A. See Ormerod's *History of Cheshire* for biography, i., 154, 171.

† "Poor and excused" probably refers to "D'ns Willmo' Croudeson."

Gardianj

p Ris p'ke  
 p James Staynton  
 p Arthure Bollton  
 p Rich. P'ker

p Geiffraze Wyllde	}	Inquis
p Thoms. hudleston		
. Thoms. Presse ye		
p Alexander Staynton		
p Roger Askewe		

The visitation adds another name to the list of vicars of Kirkby Ireleth—"Dominus Thomas Askeywe." The previous vicar, "Sir Cristofer Bolton, deayn of Furness," was living on 24th May in the year 1541, before whom the "Inventorie of the goods of the last abbot of Furness, Roger Pele, lately parson of Dalton in Furness," was made and indented. In the year 1541 the centre of ecclesiastical life in Furness had been removed from Furness Abbey to Kirkby Ireleth, which place as the abode of the dean constituted the capital. The word "Gardianj," an obsolete form of the word guardian, is equivalent to the modern word churchwarden. The official duties of the Inquisitors were to enquire, examine, or investigate. The custom at Ulverston of the past generation of churchwardens remaining outside the church till the "Te Deum" was sung is a relic of the duties of the inquisitors who went round and saw that all the inns were closed and the people assembled in the church. All the names in the list are of local interest, but it is singular that no member of the ancient family of Kirkby of Kirkby Ireleth is recorded. The number of members of the Askew family is remarkable. No one of that name is now living in Kirkby; the last—Robert Askew—died about 25 years ago. The priest "Dominus Leonard Fell," present at the visitation, was probably the "Sir Leonard Fell" who was buried in St. Mary's Church, Ulverston,

March 17th, 1561.\* Other names recorded, with their modern equivalents, are as follows:—Croudeson, Croudson; Egidius, Giles; Lewtethe, Lewthwaite; Towhers, Towers; Rīs Pke, Richard Parke; Rich Pker, Richard Parker; Presseye—Presow. The abbreviation after the name D'ns Leonard Fell and the other symbols after the names of the priests at Dalton probably mean "paruit"—*i.e.*, he appeared. The letter "p" before the names of the "Gardianj" and "Inquisitors" may also have the same meaning. Broughton was then a chapel under Kirkby Ireleth. Seathwaite is not referred to, though there was a chapel there in 1547.† The last three names mentioned in the list under Broughton probably refer to Seathwaite and Dunnerdale. Walney Chapel is curiously omitted, though there was a chapel on Walney in 1577, and the third recorded "Gardianj" in the Dalton list was most probably a Walney man who represented the Hawcoat Byerlow. The name Bolton is still found at North Scale, Walney Island. The incumbent of the chantry in Kirkby Church, founded by Henry Kirkby, who died 1524-5, is also unrecorded, though in 1553 a pension of £6 a year was paid to Robert Burrowe, priest. An inventory of church goods at Kirkby Ireleth in the year prior to the visitation records "Foure chalyses of Sylver, fyve belles, thre hande belles, thre copes of Say and worstede, ix vestements, viij Albes, vj Altar clothes, foure Candelstycks of brasse, one Surples, two pixes of brasse and iiij cruetts of Tynn belongyng to the said psh Church."

An inventory of church goods at Dalton at the same time is as follows:—"Two chalyses one of Sylver an other of Tynne, one hole Suyte of vestements of rede worstede, a grene Cope of say, a vestement of white chamlet w<sup>th</sup> the albe, ij vestements of russet say, an olde vestement of rede worstede, two corporaces with their caces, thre altar clothes,

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\* Bardsley, *Chronicles of Ulverston*.

† See these *Transactions*, N.S., vol. ii., p. 304.

two front clothes for the altar, foure towells, two hande belles and four tynn cruetts, two lattyn candelstycks, one crosse of brasse, thre belles in the stepil and iij sackerling belles belonging to the said psh churchē." One of the three bells referred to was of the fifteenth century. It had the following inscription:—"Joachim Generoe Rge Devotos Primogenite,"\* in black letter, with crowned capitals. Following the inscription was a shield or maker's stamp, on which were three bells, similar to the shield found on a bell at Thrybergh, Yorkshire (*Notes on the Bells of the Ancient Churches of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, by J. Eyre Poppleton, pl. xiii. and p. 65); and on another at Abberley, Worcestershire (*The Church Bells of Worcestershire*, by H. B. Walters, part i., pl. ii., p. 24). The bell formerly at Dalton was probably cast at York. Similar black lettering with crowned capitals is found on bells in Durham and Lincolnshire. The bell at Kirkby Fleetham in Yorkshire, with a similar shield, has the name Richard Pette placed on the crown, and he may possibly be the founder of the bell (*North's Church Bells of Lincolnshire*, pl. viii., p. 78).

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\* From a MS. by William Close, editor of West's *Antiquities of Furness*, 1805.