

ART. XIV.—*Milburn Church.* By the Rev. R. S. E. OLIVER, Vicar of Milburn.

Read at the Church, September 10th, 1908.

THE church, like several others in this neighbourhood, is placed at a distance from the village, in this case about two hundred and fifty yards away. Nicolson and Burn (i., p. 388) say that Robert de Veteripont gave Milburn Grange to Shap Abbey for the purpose of establishing a chantry; and the chapel was there before, as appears from the grant of Adam de Kirkby Thore to the said Robert.

The building is an aggregation of structures of various ages, ranging back from the time when the ugly square-topped windows were knocked out of the north wall—as Mr. Goodchild says,* the people had got the Bible into their hands, and needed more light to enable them to read it—to the period when the wide-jointed masonry of the west wall was constructed, and the present doorway. The late Mr. C. J. Ferguson said that the doorway represents the late Norman period; Mr. Goodchild noted that masonry similar to that seen in it “can be traced along the lower courses of the stonework about half the entire length of the building on the south side, along nearly the entire front at the west end, and about two-thirds of the way along the north side, up to the point where the present chancel has been added in later times.” For many years—to the restoration of the building in 1894—the entrance to the church was at the west end, but in that year the west entrance was closed, and the ancient one at the south-west was reopened. This enabled the old, built-up

* These *Transactions*, O.S., vi., p. 485.

window at the west end to be opened out. A stone carved into a diaper pattern was one of those employed in building up that window, and it can still be seen at one of the angles. There are similar stones placed lower down, built into and forming part of the Norman masonry, and Mr. Goodchild found traces of stones carved in the same way on the south side of the church to the west of the doorway. The suggestion is that these stones form part of the carved work of an older building again made use of when the existing Norman portion was constructed.

I have been told that at the restoration in 1894 certain stones similarly carved were broken up and cast aside. It is to be hoped that it was not so. But at this time there was brought to light the excellently preserved grave-slab with floriated cross and shears which has been placed immediately within the south-west entrance, and which was found built in over the old east window. There is also an old stone built into the west wall, carved with a combination of curious wheel crosses and with the Book of the Gospels.* But perhaps to the antiquary the old dials are the most interesting features of Milburn Church. Two are built almost in the old doorway, and in their present position they are certainly useless as sun-dials. The Rev. W. S. Calverley says of these :—

One is a very early dial *upside down*, its alternate rays being more deeply cut and longer than the intermediate rays, as though the greater time divisions had here once been subdivided. The stone was a good one, and the mason made use of it when he inserted this Transitional Norman doorway, as he also used the carved diaper work, and no doubt any other useful stones which came to hand. Luckily the quiet sculptures on these stones did not protrude sufficiently to excite his wrath, and so they got built in face outwards; whereas a thousand others have been scabbled past recognition, or built with their faces inwards, bedded in lime and buried alive. Below is another *removed* dial, for it is too low to allow us to think that this was its original place. Right side up, much like the upper

* For description and illustrations, see these *Transactions*, N.S., vii., p. 171.

one, its rays vary in depth; the one which should probably mark about one o'clock appears to have crossed the circle, but as this stone has been recut to form the second coign from the foundation of the jamb, we cannot be certain that this ray now marks the hours it was first intended to mark, nor indeed that the mark beyond the circle is in this case a part of the dial at all."*

A similar sun-dial can be seen built into the south-eastern angle of the present chancel, and there are traces of several others. The diaper work and the sun-dials then imply a church earlier than the Transitional period (end of the twelfth century), and therefore a contemporary village. The late Rev. T. Lees, F.S.A. (in these *Transactions*, o.s., ii., p. 18), suggested that Milburn was one of the resting places of Eardwulf and the bearers of the body of St. Cuthbert (about A.D. 876), and that this visit originated the building and gave to it the dedication to St. Cuthbert. But why St. Cuthbert's body only? Is there any reason why he should not have visited, or at any rate passed through Milburn during his lifetime? For in his episcopal labours he went across from Holy Island to Lugubalia (Carlisle), and there met the hermit Herebert, who lived on an island in Derwentwater. We have, however, no definite remains at Milburn of the Anglo-Saxon period, though the evidence of the fabric itself is amply sufficient to prove the existence of an early village and church. One of the late vicars of Milburn, Mr. Tyson, is said to have made a series of excavations outside the site of the present building, with the result of discovering distinct traces of a much larger building. I do not know if he has left any record of this work; but he did unearth the mutilated so-called "Crusader, or Knight Templar,"† which leans against the south wall of the building. The stone in which the figure is carved is

* See Calverley's *Early Sculptured Crosses*, p. 237, and illustration on p. 56.

† This is described in these *Transactions*, o.s., xv., p. 449, as the effigy of a lady, but it seems to represent a male figure in a costume like that of the late thirteenth century effigy at Kirkland.—ED.

not the St. Bees sandstone of the neighbourhood, but carboniferous sandstone—as if the stone had been carved at a distance, and afterwards brought here.

Mr. Goodchild says that in the interior of the church “there are two recesses in the south wall.” I have only been able to find one, which is situated close to the Howgill Chapel, indicating possibly the position of an older chancel that existed at what is now the east end of the south aisle before the present chancel and Howgill Chapel were added. Also that there was a break in the level of the paving of the church, “ranging along a line joining the junction of the newer masonry with the older on the north and south sides of the church, as if the present chancel and Howgill Chapel had been built while the flooring of the older part of the church was concealed from view.”

There are two brasses on the walls—one, “Sacrum Memoriam ANNÆ SANDFORD Uxoris Richardi Sandford de Howgil armigeri, quæ in vita sua honeste Pieque vixit, piisque fecit finem, Stetitque circa 38 Annos uxor ejusdem Richardi, et habuit 18 liberos, obiitque Vicesimo Nono die Mensis Januarij Anno Domini 1605 ætatis suæ circa 59 Annos.” This is our oldest inscribed monument. The other brass was erected a few years ago by Miss Threlkeld to the memory of “Philip Threlkeld, vicar of this parish from 1786 to 1831; also of Philip Threlkeld, his son, vicar from 1831 to 1842.” The stained-glass windows, by Powell of London, are also recent, having been placed in the church in 1903 by the Misses Nicholson and Mr. W. A. Nicholson. A small marble tablet calls for passing notice. It is “to the memory of Rich^d Atkinson, whose truest praise is that he was an honest man. He was born y^e 25th March 1688 and died y^e 20th March 1760, aged 71 years 350 days. Eil: (*sic*) sui pignus amoris H. M. P.” Why is the age so carefully stated in years and *days*? And why is the number of the days as given ten too little, for from the dates it should

be 360, not 350? Is it simply a mistake, or is it intended to point out that the "honest man's" life included the year 1752, in which September 3rd was called September 14th, and which was therefore ten days short? If so, Mr. Atkinson kept up his character for honesty to the last, and beyond the last. What is the meaning of the "Eil:" in the Latin inscription? Close examination reveals that the bottom stroke of the "E" is roughly done—quite different from the remainder of the letter. If it was intended for "Fil:" all is clear. In the churchyard one man is honoured by having two gravestones erected to his memory. At the head of another grave is a stone which has certainly been used twice for the same purpose. The inscription on one side is in ancient form, "here lyeth y^e body," and in ancient letters; moreover, it is upside down. On the other side is a much more modern inscription—a second-hand gravestone!

The registers date back to 1678.* The oldest, consisting of a few leaves only, containing baptisms, marriages, and burials, terminates 1719. It is stained by some liquid, and was discovered in 1759 by the Rev. T. Kilner, the then curate of Milburn, among some old papers that were found in a box in one of the houses in the village.

Bishop Nicolson, when making his first visitation, wrote of Milburn on August 19th, 1703 (*Miscellany Accounts*, ed. R. S. Ferguson, p. 65):—

This is a parochial Chapple under the Rector of *Kirkbythore*; and the Curate (M^r Moor) has (too great) an Allowance of 25li Besides this late and unreasonable Charge, the Rector still maintains the Quire; which is in good Condition. On the South of this S^r *Richard Sandford* of *Howgil*, Lord of the Mann^r, has an Isle; which is in a ruinous State, and will shortly (if not repair'd) do

* The Rev. H. Whitehead (these *Transactions*, o.s., xiii., p. 135) remarks that 1678 was the year in which the Rev. T. Machell issued precise instructions to the chapelwardens of Temple Sowerby and Milburn concerning the registration of burials in woollen, to begin August 1st, 1678.

great Damage to the Quire. . . . The Church part is repair'd by the Hamlet; who hire it out by the Great. They have a couple of small pitiful Bells, both miserably crack'd; and, some time agoe, petition'd for leave to have them both new founded into one good one. This I assented to: But I do not see that anything is like to be done in it without some sharp Treatm^t of the Churchwardens in the next year's visitation.

The wall surrounding the churchyard is in portions, and certain inhabitants and property-owners are responsible for the upkeep and repair of each his own portion. These portions are known as "dawts," "dolts," "douts," "daughts"—indeed, the local spelling of the word depends upon the taste and fancy of the speller.*

At the gate of the field called Kirkrain there is a broken red sandstone cross socket, measuring 24 by 24 by 17 inches, and of the type belonging to the mediæval high crosses. A stone post is loosely placed in the socket hole. It is quite invisible from the present road. The base of another cross, approached by steps, now serves to support the maypole in the village.

A word in conclusion as to our village, of which we are more than proud, for it is beautiful and interesting, and deserves to be better known. The green is oblong in shape, with its greatest length in a north-easterly direction, and almost entirely surrounded by houses, except where the roads afford entrance. It is said that in times past the inhabitants used to close all the entrances to the village, and turn their cattle on to the green during the winter. I have been told that this "closing" was a measure of protection against marauders, whose object was cattle. Almost round the village, behind the houses, runs another road, "Back Lane," which might, and ought to, be far better kept than it is. One of the approaches,

* See Prevost's Dickinson, p. 102. *Dote*, *dalt*, a specified share in an open field, &c.; a share generally: with a quotation from the *Penrith Observer* giving the spelling "date." Elsewhere it is spelt "dault": probably from Old Norse *deild*, a "dole" or share; from *deila*, to divide. The Anglo-Saxon *dæl* becomes "dale" in the sense of portion of land.

the one leading to the village from Blencarn and Newbiggin, is called the Butts, probably because the bank facing towards the village, at the point where the present road bends abruptly to the south, was made use of for archery practice in bygone years.

List of vicars of Milburn, made by C. B. Robinson, Esq., of York, in the year 1879, and completed to 1908 :—

John Spedding	...	...	...	...	1572
Robert Moor	...	...	...	...	1704
Matthew Wilkinson	...	...	...	...	1715
John Milner	...	...	...	...	1719
Henry Wilkinson	...	...	...	...	1732
Isaac Hodgson	...	...	...	...	1738
William Kilner	...	...	...	...	1751
Thomas Kilner	...	...	...	...	1752
Philip Threlkeld	...	...	...	...	1753
Philip Threlkeld	...	...	...	...	1786
John Wharton	...	...	...	...	1831
W. D. Tyson	...	...	...	...	1843
R. J. Gorman	...	...	...	...	1858
Daniel Smith	...	...	...	...	1865
Henry Jackson Hardcastle Faulkner	...	...	...	...	1876
Norman Braithwaite Stead	...	...	...	...	1892
J. F. Smith	...	...	...	...	1893
Alfred Mence	...	...	...	...	1895
Reginald Samuel Edward Oliver	...	...	...	...	1897
					1902