

ART. XIV.—*Cliburn Church*. By the Rev. C. WRIGHT.

Read at the church, July 14th, 1911.

THE parish church of Cliburn, dedicated to St. Cuthbert, has undergone since its foundation four material changes in the furniture and fashion of the inside. The first three are mentioned in a brief history of Cliburn Church inscribed at the back of an old church register, presumably by the Rev. William Jackson, D.D., chancellor of Carlisle 1846, archdeacon 1855, and rector of Lowther.

According to this manuscript architectural and patronal reasons point to the thirteenth century as the date of foundation. In the original plan of the church there appear to have been no wooden seats for the congregation, but only a stone bench, about 18 inches high and one foot wide, which went all around the church, or nearly so. This bench existed down to 1849, when it was removed.

In Dr. Jackson's opinion, the first change took place shortly after the Reformation, and consisted in the introduction of strong oak benches on both sides of the church. Probably also the window on the south side of the chancel was altered at the same time.

The second change he attributes to the time of the Great Rebellion in the seventeenth century. There were then added to the existing seating accommodation two pews in the chancel. Upon the door of the pew on the left hand was inscribed "Timothy Wynill,* 1642." According to tradition this pew had been granted to Winderwath when a chapel which stood at the latter

* This name, as pointed out by "Northerner" in a recent issue of the *Penrith Observer*, ought to be "Wyll."

place was united to Cliburn parish. There were also two smaller pews erected beneath the arch, one of them being marked with the initials A.P., standing, it is said, for Anne, countess of Pembroke, of renowned memory, whose forest-ranger had a seat here. Two other seats next to the arch on the left belonged to the family of the Cliburns of Cliburn Hall, and were marked with their initials. Down to this time sermons and addresses would have been delivered from before the Communion table, for there was no pulpit; but now one was erected, though somewhat farther down the church than the present one, for a pew intervened between it and the arch.

In the year 1849 certain repairs and additions not specified by the historian were effected.

The fourth and last change was in 1887 (Jubilee year) when the church was most thoroughly restored and beautified during the incumbency of the late Canon Burton. The church was entirely re-seated, a new roof was put on, a new floor laid, and the present pulpit and organ erected.

On the Communion table stands a Jerusalem cross of great intrinsic and historical interest, presented to Canon Burton by the late Christopher James Cleborne, M.D., of the U.S.A. Navy, a descendant of the Cliburns of Cliburn Hall. Preserved among the papers at Cliburn Church is the following copy of a letter having reference to this cross, and addressed to Dr. Cleborne:—

Florence,

19th April, 1873.

Dear Sir,

Your note of the 5th inst. is before me and in reply to your inquiries I regret that I cannot assure you positively that the antique is the veritable cross of St. Giovanni di Vallombrosa.*

* S. Giovanni Gualberto (985-1073) founded the monastery of Vallombrosa, which was suppressed in 1866. It is of him that the legend, illustrated in Burne-Jones's picture of the Merciful Knight, is told; how the crucifix at San Miniato near Florence bent down to him when he forgave the murderer of his brother.

In fact I think it more than doubtful, as the Saint died long before the year 1100. All that is known with any degree of certainty is that the cross was in the Vallambrossa monastery some seven hundred years, and was included in its inventories of effects up to the time of its suppression by His Majesty King Victor Emmanuel, when with the relics it fell into the hands of an antiquary, and I believe that Signor Caprianni offered a thousand and lira advance on his purchase to Signor Victor Barone. As a specimen of early Jerusalem crosses, it is the most perfect and best preserved of any that I have seen, indeed the exquisite inlay of Ormus pearl in ebony, inlaid in Gethsemane olive, is declared by Caprianni—no mean connoisseur—to be exquisitely fine and rare. I am glad to hear it is to go to a church, instead of a private collection of an individual.

I am, yours truly,

F. HAMILTON CORNIER.

In correction of a statement on the brass erected by Dr. Cleborne the following letter has been received from the Rev. F. W. Ragg :—

July 13, 1911.

The brass put in by my kinsman Christopher Cleborne, doctor and afterwards Vice-Admiral of the American Navy, was put in when he was under the impression that ' Hervey ' of Cliburn was a direct paternal ancestor. This my researches amongst old records show was a mistake. My kinsman has been dead some years now, or I have no doubt he would wish to have the error corrected. The Hervey mentioned on the brass belonged to a family some few members of which were called de Cliburn but they came to an end and the heiress was apparently married to a Robert de Cliburn, not of the same blood, and whose descendants held and kept to the name. Whether the heiress was actually descended from the Hervey mentioned I can not at present say, or whether she was only of a collateral line, though she was apparently descended from an earlier Hervey.

Among other objects of interest are the pedestal of an ancient cross which, surmounted by a modern cross, stands in the churchyard; and a dial on the eastern jamb of the Norman door, with five rays marking the hours from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Built into the wall of the porch are the

two inscribed Roman stones found in July, 1886, in pulling down the fabric of the church. One of these relates to the building of a bath, and (according to the late W. Thompson Watkin, who figured and described the stones in these *Transactions*, O.S., ix., pp. 284-291) to the restoration of a basilica by the *Ala Petriana* and the *Ala Sebusiana*. The other is part of an altar with its inscription too defaced to read.

To turn from ancient to modern, Cliburn Church possesses three extremely beautiful Communion table fronts, worked by Mrs. Burton, widow of Canon Burton, the late rector.