

ART. XXIV.—*Urswick*. By the REV. T. N. POSTLETHWAITE.

*Read at Urswick Church, September 5th, 1923.*

THE Furness monks claimed that during the two years they were at Tulket, before they moved to Furness Abbey in 1127, they held the patronage of the church of Urswick.\* Tradition says the church was then two or three hundred years old. It is unsafe to trust to tradition, but the fragments of the pre-Norman crosses show that in this case it is not misleading.

Since this Society paid its last visit to the church in 1905, other interesting items have come to light. A certain amount of absolutely necessary restoration has been undertaken. Some of the work, personally, I sometimes regret. A gallery pew fixed against the S.W. wall of the chancel has been removed. It had been erected by Christopher Wilson Esq. of Bardsea Hall about 1753. It was considered a great eyesore, but at the same time it was curious and very typical of the period. However, it became more or less unsafe owing to a fire, and it seemed best to remove it. The chancel was largely spoilt from an antiquarian and artistic point of view about the year 1840. It was said at that date to be ruinous, and the top portion of the walls were rebuilt and cheap deal timber put in the roof. The chancel flooring was then re-laid with Hutton Roof flags. As in the case of some old churches there was no chancel step, but a gradual slope towards the west. After some hesitation the floor has

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\* "Nota hic quod patronatum ecclesiarum de Daltona et de Ursewyk habuimus priusquam fuimus Ordinis Cisterc. quando scil. ut suppono fuimus fundati in Tulket" (*Furness Coucher*, p. 111). They were founded at Tulket 1124; got the grant of land in Furness and removed thither 1127, and became Cistercian 1148.

been recently levelled and a step constructed. Although this step, ritually, is a great convenience, I sometimes regret its presence.

The body of the church underwent a drastic renovation in 1828, when the present west gallery was inserted, and the old irregular oak seats removed to give place to the present uniform pews of painted deal.

For the sake of warmth a ceiling, after considerable parochial controversy, was constructed in 1751. This has now been removed and the old oak timbers exposed to sight. On the most easterly beam will be found the date and the initials of those who were interested in a re-roofing of the Church in 1598. This date is followed by the initials W. L. V. (William Lindow, Vicar.) Two other initials possibly indicate an assistant priest. On the next line come the initials of the leading men of the parish, starting with J. A. Esquire. The Esquire is grav'd in full. J.A.—James Anderton, the husband of Dorothy, one of the co-heiresses of Nicholas Bardsey of Bardsey Hall—was at that time by far the most important man in the parish. When the ceiling was removed we found that there was no beam-filling; in places the daylight from beneath the eaves could be seen. This caused some surprise at the time, but later in the course of an enquiry on a matter that dealt with the, apparently, undue importance attached to the right of gravng sods in the 17th and 18th centuries, local enquiry showed that old men could remember the time when sods were used for beam-filling in barns and out-houses. In earlier days the use appears to have been general, and I have little doubt such was the case in Urswick Church.

I think—I will not say the original—but a very early church covered the area that now forms the nave. Outside can be seen in both the N. and S. walls a series of arch-holes at about two thirds the height of the present walls. I am inclined to think that they supported light

timbers which carried a steep—possibly reed—roof. Later the walls were heightened at presumably two different periods, and windows inserted. The masonry below the arch-holes is of a very rude character. The walls of the chancel and porch are not bonded into the nave, thus postulating additions.

There are indications that the chancel arch was pierced in an existing wall or heightened from an existing apse. At your last visit, I suggested that a recess, used as a cupboard for the choir books, was really a hagioscope. This has proved to be the case. A visitor to the Church some years ago told me he had made a study of hagiscopes in the S. W. of England and in S. Wales. He asserted that hagiscopes such as these, with one corner shot off, were so constructed for a short time in the early years of the 13th century. He suggested that the chancel arch was then pierced, the hagioscope made, a veiling rood constructed and at the same time the window in the S. E. of the nave opened to light the rood. It was above this window that the "Tunwini Cross" was found. My visitor declined to give his name, affirming that names were of no value. The tower must have been an addition, at first squat and low, and I think saddle-backed—there are indications in the interior walling that suggest this. Afterwards, probably in Tudor times it was heightened and embattled and the buttresses added, also possibly a low string-course.

The dressed stone at the summit of the tower and pieces built in the buttresses suggest that these together with the figure of the "Mater Dolorosa" on its W. front were "quarried" from Furness Abbey. Two unfilled niches seem to indicate that further sacrilege was contemplated. I had these niches explored, but nothing could be found behind them. It is of course possible that these alterations were made before the Dissolution. Reconstructions were constantly taking place at Furness Abbey, and it is highly probable, that the Abbey donated any discarded material to the various churches it possessed.

The oldest bell in the tower—the Harrington bell—bears the donor's name together with that of his wife. The late Mr. H. Gaythorpe surmised that this bell came from Conishead Priory. Quite recently confirmation of his theory has been found. Mr. Brownbill has very kindly sent me an extract from a 16th century MS. that he has unearthed in the British Museum (Additional MS. 38133, f 36d) formerly attributed to Robert Aske the Yorkshireman, but possibly from another hand. Mr. Brownbill writes:—"The notes are obviously taken from a book once belonging to Conishead Priory . . . An annual requiem Mass for the Lord and Lady Harrington and a daily commemoration were to be the monks' return for the gifts recorded:—three sets of vestments and copes, the great bell in the tower with the names of the benefactors stamped thereon, two glazed windows in their chapel and a lead roof, an altar with alabaster reredos and marble image of S. Mary, a missal and a churchyard cross. This description is of particular interest as confirming Mr. Gaythorpe's conjecture that the Urawick church bell inscribed:—

Maria ✠ Wilelmus de Haryngton Dominus de Aldyng-  
ham Et Domina Margareta Uxor eius ✠  
came from Conishead Priory."

So far Mr. Brownbill, who will have an article on the subject in the current volume of *Transactions of the Lancs. and Ches. Hist. Soc.* The Latin of the original MS. note is a little obscure, and the early copyist has made obvious errors, but there can be no doubt that the bell referred to, which was apparently the second in size that the Priory possessed, now hangs in our tower, probably purchased at metal value by the churchwardens at the Dissolution. Mr. Brownbill has earned our gratitude by his discovery, and by his generosity in handing it on.

I am inclined here to make a conjecture. The inventory of church goods at Urawick 6 Ed. VI (1552) enumerates:—

Two bells, one chausable of . . . two olde vestements of yelowe and grene sylke, one albe, one cope of blacke chamlett, one hande belle, an altar clothe of rede . . . two other bells being in the steeple not mencyoned in the first Inventorie. The churche wardens doo depose that the said pyssheners doo owe for two of the said bells—x<sup>li</sup>

Mr. Gaythorpe in *Furness Lore* writes:—"Clearly then the two other bells, making four in all, were obtained sometime between 1547 and 1552. If the Harynton bell is one of these, the other one (the fourth) is not now in the 'steeple'." Before the bells, quite recently, were re-hung, there was in the tower the frame for a fourth bell larger than the others. Mr. Gaythorpe, sometime before 1900, measured this frame and found it  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches wider than that of the Harynton bell. Tradition says a bell from Urswick was "stolen" by the Vicar of Dalton. Probably for some reason or other the wardens sold or gave it to Dalton—not of necessity to be rung there, but easily it may have been a damaged bell and the metal intended for use, in some recasting of Dalton bells. The history of Dalton bells is involved and contradictory, and although Canon Postlethwaite has kindly given me free access to his church accounts I have not so far been able to obtain much light on the matter. Mr Gaythorpe surmises that this bell may have gone to Dalton in 1711, 1724 or 1790. Or, for Dalton, Kendal might be the correct reading. Anyhow there is a strong probability that Urswick had at one time a larger bell than the Harynton bell, and my conjecture is that at the Dissolution the wardens bought the two bells from Conishead Priory, referred to in Mr. Brownbill's note.

The old font was removed from the church nearly a hundred years ago. Fortunately it was preserved from destruction by William Cranke, a grandson of James the painter. It stood for many years in the garden at Hawkfield, together with the old tracery of the E. window.

The property coming into the possession of the late Earl of Derby he returned both to the church. The window-tracery was restored in 1907, and quite recently General Gale has caused the font to be reinstated, and, with his family, has provided it with a carved oak cover

When the plaster was removed from the walls, a doorway, of which all knowledge had been lost, was discovered on the N. side of the church. Traces were also found of mural decorations, of the same character as those recently discovered at Aldingham. They were too fragmentary to retain. Mr. J. F. Curwen, F.S.A. has kindly referred me to his paper on Grasmere church (these *Trans.* N.S. xiv) where he deals with this form of decoration. He points out that at Grasmere and at Kendal these mural devices and texts were carried out by James Addison of Hornby in Lancashire. The colours employed seem to have been green, yellow and black. The devices at Urswick, which apparently were of an elaborate character, consisted of combinations of the same colours, and it seems almost safe to assume that the work done here was executed by Addison. As in the case of Grasmere it was later obliterated by white-wash, but the first obliteration bore signs of an attempt at decoration, as the white-wash was plentifully studded with rosettes or elementary Tudor roses in Indian red, a shade reminiscent of the 'raddle-pot' of sheep-farmers. In turn these were covered by successive layers of unadorned white-wash, that smothered not only the plaster but also the stone-work.

A "Mass-hour" was recently found almost simultaneously by Mr. Gregson of Liverpool and Mr. Paul Woodroffe of Campden, Glos. on the left hand of the porch on entering the church. On the right hand are the indentations made by men sharpening arrows in Tudor times, when practising at the butts was compulsory. The piscina and some pre-reformation glass in the S. windows of the chancel are worthy of note. The shafts and steps

of the rebuilt sundial, in the churchyard, were recently found in a wall of a glebe field. The stone head bears the date 1722 and the initials of the wardens for that year. The design is earlier than the date, but a half buried stone was pointed out in the drive leading to Hawkfield. This proved to be part of the head of a previous sundial that obviously had borne the initials of the wardens of its day. The 1722 shaft was evidently a reproduction of an earlier one that had fallen into decay.

As closely connected with the Church I should like to add a few words about the advowson. At the present time the patrons of the living are set down as "The Resident Landowners," that is to say anyone owning real property and residing in the parish is a patron. It is a case of "one man one vote." Before the Dissolution, Furness Abbey claimed the presentation and substantiated its claim against the Flemings, the Lords of Aldingham (cf. *Furness Coucher*). For some time after the Dissolution the Crown appointed in right of the Duchy of Lancaster. The sale of the rectorial tithes, as in other cases, seems to have modified this right, or possibly the owner of the most important bunch of tithes may have considered himself the patron. After the Crown had appointed in 1554, in 1557, in 1579 and in 1585, we find Robert Curwen, Christopher Gardner, Thomas Fell and Thomas Marshall presenting in 1620-1.

Yet the Commonwealth Commissioners in 1650 found—

That ye Parish Church of Urswicke . . . . is a Viccaradge p'sentative from ye Duchy of Lancaster, And That the Tithes of Corne and graine are impropriate to *Mr. ffleming* of Rydall, *Mr. Anderton* of Bardsey a papist delinquent, and to the parishioners worth in all Sixty pounds p'ann' to ye impropriator[s] (*Comw. Ch. Surveys*, Lanc. & Ches. Rec. Soc. vol. i, p. 138).

In 1660 Sir Jordan Crosland acted as patron. Sir Jordan had married Bridget Fleming. The connection with Urswick parish of the younger branch of Flemings is

interesting. The property here, as also at Coniston, came to this younger branch of the Aldingham Flemings through a marriage with the heiress of the Urswicks. Land in Uрсwick was sold by W<sup>m</sup> Fleming of Coniston and Rydal in 1569 to William Sawrey, the then Vicar, and possibly to others. In 1603 Agnes, widow of W<sup>m</sup> Fleming, bought back this and possibly other land from Walter Curwen and Richard his son of Over Kellet (I have in my possession her Indenture). In the deed a place name, Burrowe Place, which I cannot identify, appears. This property formed part of the marriage portion of Bridget Fleming. Sir Jordan and Bridget his wife sold the estate, or perhaps part of it, early in 1661 to George Inman Senr. of Uрсwick, yeoman, and George Leathom of Ulverston, yeoman, having previously, in 1660, presented George Inman's son, also George, to the living of Uрсwick, probably in view of the projected sale. I have not seen this conveyance which is not likely now to be in existence. This property passed to the Vicar before his father's death at the end of 1661. On George the Vicar's death, he was succeeded in the living by his half brother Thomas Inman, who after a time resigned and became curate of Aldingham. George Inman, the Vicar, left four daughters, minors and ultimate co-heiresses, who in 1729 sold their Uрсwick property to Thomas Briggs. I have this conveyance. There is a curious clause in it which I print in italics. It reads:—

All that their and every or any of their Message and Tenement with its Appurtenances And all those Five Acres and an half or [*sic*] arable Meadow and Pasture Ground thereunto belonging lying and being in Great Uрсwick aforesaid And also all and singular the Tythes of Corn Grain and Sheaves and all other the Tythes of what nature Kind or Quality soever the same be arising happening growing and renewing yearly within the several Townships or Divisions of Great Uрсwick and Scales or either of them which have been usually held and enjoyed with the said message and tenement and accepted and esteemed as parcel of the same *And also*

*all that the Advowson Patronage Free Nomination and Free Disposition of the Vicaridge of the Parish Church of Urawick aforesaid with the Appurtenances and all that the Rectory Improprate of Urawick aforesaid and Tythes of Corn Grain Sheaves Hay Line Hemp Wool and Lamb Easter Dues or Easter Reckonings Oblations Obventions and all Compositions in Money or other wise or yearly payments whatsoever for or in Respect of Tythes and all other Tythes of what Sort soever arising happening growing and renewing yearly in the said Townships or Divisions of Great Urawick and Scales or either of them or within the Town Fields Precincts and Liberties therof or either of them as the same were heretofore granted and conveyed by Sir Jordan Crosland knight and Dame Bridgett Crosland his wife and others to George Inman late of Great Urawick aforesaid Yeoman Grandfather of the above named Elizabeth Bardsey Margaret Thompson Jane Hartley and Alice Casson\* and one George Leathom of Ulverstone in the said County Yeoman and by them the said George Inman and George Leathom granted and conveyed unto the above named George Inman Clerk son of the said George Inman Yeoman and which descended from the said George Inman Clerk to them the said Elizabeth, etc. etc.*

The tithes of Scales in the parish of Aldingham, here conveyed, represent those on a small area of land around that village. They are marked in the schedule made by the Commissioners at the time of the Commutation of Tithes, as tithes that have merged in the ownership of the soil. The landowners evidently have at some time bought them up from Thomas Briggs or his successors. The Bishop of Barrow—the present Rector of Aldingham, kindly allowed me to consult his Tithe award. Thomas Briggs' estate descended to his great-grandson Rowland. I have several cotemporary lists of his property, but have not been able so far to identify it all, notably the "Mesuage" and two fields that bear respectively the significant names of "Glebe" 2a. 1r. and "Tithlath Garth" 1a. 2r.

If anyone were inclined to raise a question about the patronage it might be difficult to answer. There is no written record of any existing right in the Advowson.

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\* The vendors, daughters of George Inman, Clerk.

I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. R. O'Neill Pearson and Mr. Edward Baldwin for the possession of these deeds. They were found amongst the papers of the late Col. Baldwin, and belong to no estate now known.

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