



THE CHRISTOPHER WOOD PANEL, KIRKBY LONSDALE.

Photo. by the Rev. John Hodgkin

TO FACE P. 321

ART. XV.—*Christopher Wood's inscription in Kirkby Lonsdale Church.* By the REV. R. PERCIVAL BROWN, M.A.

Read at Kirkby Lonsdale Church, September 12th, 1924.

THE inscribed tablet here reproduced, which is preserved in the vestry, is probably the best-known curiosity of the church. It is said to have hung formerly in the south porch.* The inscription has been repeatedly printed in various forms, none exactly identical with that which now appears. Thomas Machell the antiquary took a note of it in 1692, when it was placed "over the door." It was "half-illegible" to Jonathan Otley†—though his transcript is substantially correct—and about the same date Sayer‡ declares that "not a letter of it was to be seen." He prints an amended version of Machell in modern spelling. Let us examine, side by side, the text as it now stands and Machell's note of it.§

This porch by ye banes first
 builded was,
 of heigholme hall they weare ;
 and after sould to Christopher
 wood
 by willyam baines therof last
 heyre ;
 and is repayred as you see
 and sett in order good
 by the true owner nowe thereof
 the foresaide Christopher wood.

In a frame over the door of 45
 years since this 16th July
 1692

thys porch by Baynes I Builded
 was
 of Hegholme Hall they were
 And after sold to this Christo-
 pher Wood
 to keep in good repare
 and is repared as you see
 and kept in order good
 By the trewe owner thereof
 the foresaid Christopher Wood
 The S. Porch built by Baines
 of Egham Hall.

* Ware, *Notes on the Parish Church of Kirkby Lonsdale.*

† 'A descriptive guide to the English lakes' (8th ed. 1849).

‡ *History of Westmorland* (1847) i. 364. He notes it as in 'an ancient chapel.'

§ Machell MSS. vol. v, p. 215. (I am indebted to the Rev. Christopher Gathorne M.A. for the transcript.)

It is at once clear that Machell found such an inscription as we now have, and that it bore a date: but it is impossible that he copied the fourth line which now appears. Which line is original? If we look at the content, the tameness of Machell's line is apparent, though metrical and verbally well-fitted to its context. In contrast we have, regardless of metre, a historical addition, verifiable or not, which is natural enough, if original, but hardly conceivable as a gloss of a century later. Intrinsically the existing line is more convincing.

And the whole inscription has the appearance of antiquity. The black letter, the spelling (with the versatility displayed in the same) and the spare use of capitals, are all in character. Such antiquarianisms are capable of reproduction. But in the present case we have also to reckon with an armorial shield. It will hardly be questioned that this was in far greater danger of being lost than the outlines of the black letter—at the present day it is dim by comparison. But this has been kept in being. I conclude therefore, that the original outlines of the lettering have been preserved and the original text is still extant, repainted from time to time. The tablet, placed over a door under a porch, may have been wholly or partly illegible at times, while still susceptible of restoration.

I think that Machell reconstructed this rhyme for his journals *from memory* when developing his notes, and that so we may account for his fourth line and for a superfluous word in the third. His interest in the matter is summed up in the notes appended. The transaction recorded—its why and wherefore—does not call for comment: he notes the evidence of the date and builder of the porch. It was Saturday, and I know not whether Kirkby Thore expected him on the morrow. But certainly his notes on Kirkby Lonsdale are suggestive of a hurried visit. He sets down the extent and boundaries

of the parish, and the six Constablewicks in which the lordships are distributed. He notices " a fine carte gate to main entrance," and " a fine flaged walk to the south porch," and " 3 Belles whereon 1 Ringer rang 29 changes " but there is not a word about the architectural interest within the church or without.

The centre of interest in the inscription for the modern mind is entirely different. What always excites comment is the fact that the porch was bought and sold, and the question is raised of who the parties were and what their motives, and how such a transaction was possible. It is remarkable that the matter has not hitherto provoked investigation as to its historical basis.

We are barred at the outset from the natural assumption that the porch was simply a pious gift to the Church. It was a piece of private property erected in the church-yard. If it was possible for an individual to erect a pew inside a church and to retain property in it, subject to maintenance, it cannot have been impossible in itself to place a porch outside in contact with the consecrated building and to preserve property on the same conditions. But in the latter case there could be no exclusive possession, as in the case of a pew, for there was an inalienable right of access to the church door for all alike. Did then the pious benefactor expressly refrain from making the porch a gift, in order that its maintenance should never fall as a charge upon the parish? This would be pleasant to contemplate: but our credence is strained when we find a purchaser obtaining at a price no more than the privilege of succeeding to this burden. I think we must look beneath the surface for more convincing motives. The porch covered a certain portion of the burial-ground: and if we once assume that ownership of the structure covered the burial rights beneath, the transaction becomes intelligible. It is well-known that parts of the churchyard were anciently sold for family burial-places. The ground in contact with the south wall was in high esteem.

This is the interpretation I offer of the facts. Baines of Hegholme, desiring to inclose a burial-ground for his family, undertook to erect and maintain for ever a porch to the south door for this purpose. The shelter of the porch was a public benefaction: it doubtless evoked general gratitude and entailed distinction for the Hegholme family. But the structure with its rights could be bought and sold like any other piece of private property:* and it is intelligible that a new owner, having been called upon to fulfil his responsibilities, might feel moved to proclaim his rights. What certainly happened, as will appear in due course, is that Christopher Wood acquired *Hegholme Hall*. If it seems highly improbable that he was "let in" for the burden of the church-porch, it will be a necessary inference that William Baines sold not only the family home, but also his fathers' sepulchres.

Hegholme was possibly reputed as a manor in ancient times. The earliest record I have found of it is in a Final Concord of 10 Edw. II [1316] "Int. Rogūm de Kernetby Clicum quer. et Johem filium Gervasij de Whiteby deforc. de trīs in Berburn Mannesherd Ryggmayden and Hegholm et quarta pt Man'ij de Kirkby in Lonesdale jus Rogi." *Gilfoot*, which cuts it off from the river, has the appearance of having been carved out of it, and was described as "in Hegholme" till the 18th century.

In 1428 "Adam Banys of Hegholme" acquired land in Whinfell (Records of Kendale, vol. i, p. 225), which his son William still lived to enjoy in 1497 (*ibid.*, p. 226).

In 1544, when the place is first mentioned in the parish register, John Banes is there:—

14 Dec. 1544. Bapt. Thomas Baynes sone of Jo: Banes of hegholme.

* Ware notes that in later days the upkeep of the porch devolved upon the Carus-Wilsons of Casterton, and that several members of that family were buried beneath it: but he does not suggest any interdependence of the two facts (Notes upon the Parish Church of K. L., p. 12).

By a Fine of Easter, 1546, George Baynebrig acquired "in villa de Manser" 40 a. of land, 10 a. of meadow, 60 a. of pasture and 60 a. of juniper and scrub. If this was Gilfoot—where George Bainbrig's descendants are found in several generations—it had been sold off from Hegholme at an earlier date: for the deforcians in 1546 are John Rigmaden sen. and Anthony Rosse with their wives.

A John Baynes was buried 4 April, 1547, and six months later, at Mich., 1547, four closes "in Hegholm" passed by Fine from Adam Baynes to Miles Bainbrig, which looks like another step in the disintegration of the estate.

It is clearly possible therefore that we have in these references the proprietors in four out of five generations, the succession being taken as Adam—William—[Adam]—John—Adam.

Shortly after 1547 a new family of Adam Baines begins in the register. The baptisms are of Mabel (Jan., 1550-1), Thomas (Feb., 1553-4) and, after the gap in registration of 1556-60, James (Dec., 1560). The burial of Adam Baines is recorded 18 May, 1564. The most probable conjecture I can form is that William "the last heyre" of Hegholme belonged to this family.* He had, as will appear, a brother Thomas, and the register does not supply any possible brothers of these names. Thomas Baines had a first child baptized as Adam, 18 Dec., 1573. If the conjecture be right, the family were all young at the father's death in 1564.

William Baines, after being registered as the father of a bastard, 18 Jan., 1593-4, had a lawful son Adam baptized 2 Feb., 1599-1600, when he is described as of Killington.†

* First children in olden times were often born in the mother's old home and baptized in that parish.

† The entry has been interpolated, apparently by the regular scribe, after the transcript of 1601 was made. The baptism probably took place at Killington chapel which from 1585 had been licensed for celebrating the Sacraments, and for marriage and burial. The Killington registers before 1619 are lost. In this case the father was evidently concerned that his true heir's baptism should be recorded in the parish register in view of the earlier record. There is no record of Isabel.

He was buried 23 Aug., 1603, and his will, dated eight days earlier, is extant.* He describes himself as "of Hegholm" and one of the witnesses is George Bainbrig [of Gilfoot]. He leaves land in Hegholme and Killington to his son Adam at age, and his goods (valued at about £32 with debts of £20) to his wife Jane and his daughter Isabel (under age). If his widow re-marry before Adam is of age, testator's brother Thomas and his brother-in-law Oliver Wright (the supervisors) are to have two-thirds of the land to bring up the children. Jane relict of William Banes was married 19 Oct., 1608 to Richard Walker; and on 23 Jan., 1625-6, at Killington, Adam Baynes married Elinor Bainbrig, a grand-daughter of George Bainbrig last mentioned. On the whole it seems impossible to doubt that this William Baines is the man who sold Hegholm Hall and (with greater realism than Charles Surface) the "room full of ancestors."

I think that the transaction may be assigned to *c.* 1593, in view of what follows as well as of what has been already gathered. About that time Christopher Wood, a lawyer, who already had a brother farming lands within the parish (not improbably in the Mansergh township) was about to found a family of his own. Such a man would be a likely purchaser of the Hall as a residence without the agricultural land that belonged to the estate. And in these circumstances William Baines would remain the owner of Hegholme, as distinguished from Hegholme Hall, while for registration purposes he would naturally be ascribed to the township in which he actually resided.

The only Christopher Wood records in the parish register are as follows:

- 16 Jan. 1594-5 Bapt. Margretae woodd filiæ Xpoferi.
 8 Feb. 1611-2 Sepult. Xpo: wood gent.
 28 Feb. 1611-2 Sepult. vx: Xpo Wood viduæ.

* Arch. of Richmond: Lonsdale Deanery.

A man of this name was Escheator in local Inquisitions post mortem as late as 8 James I (1610)* and the identification appears certain. His will was proved 13 Feb., 1611-2 in the Archd. of Richmond Court. It has now fallen to pieces, but the legible fragments establish the following points—(i) he is described as of Hegholme Hall (ii) he proceeds at once to provide for “my daughter Margaret” (iii) there is a bequest to “Edward Wood my brother’s son” (iv) the Will is witnessed by John Bainbrig of Gilfoot, who is also named as an executor together with “my cousin Mr. Thomas Dalton” and “my brother John.”

Upon this evidence I conclude not only that Christopher Wood followed the profession of the law, but that Margaret was an only child and heiress. She was married within a few days of her father’s death to Edward Moore, who is the next person seated at Hegholme:

17 Feb. 1611-2 Nupt. Edw: moore et m’gretæ wood.

10 Dec. 1615. Bapt. Annæ moore filia Edwardi de hegholme.

Edward Moore was still there in 1617:† but from 1626 till at least 1659, it appears from the Killington registers that Walkers were in possession.‡

The date originally painted on the board is now matter for pure conjecture. Not only is the year 1668 wrong, but the date indicated by Machell in 1692 is seen to be impossible. An obvious suggestion, of course, is 1608. Personally I prefer to hazard 1606, or 1596, on the following grounds. The whole is set out with considerable symmetry, the point of the shield being central and the initials CW carefully placed: but by measurement the second 6 occupies the place of the final digit in the date.

* My note is taken from Chancery Series ii, vol. 675: one of the same year is quoted in the Court of Wards in *Records of Kendale* i. 293, and a number of others appear in the 2nd vol. including (p. 424) that on William Baynes.

† Inq. p.m. of 15 March 15 James I. Chan. Ser. ii, vol. 675, no. 227.

‡ cf. *Records of Kendale* i. 200, and *ibid.* ii, p. 393 for the transition of the property.

It is not unlikely that if Machell read it as 1646 he might note it as 45 years before 1692, his concern being with the modernity of the structure in relation to the ancient church. And either of the alternatives suggested is consistent with the facts already gathered, for it may have been neither necessary nor desirable to raise or to face the question of property in the porch so long as William Baines was alive. So far as the parish was concerned, it would probably arise only when there was urgent need of reparation.

If either of these conjectures be accepted as probable, what account is to be given of the 8 which disturbs the symmetry? It is not impossible that some curve in the flanking ornament may have suggested this figure to a restorer, but there is nothing now remaining in the decorative scheme which positively suggests this. Another possibility worth considering is that the date was originally set out as *e.g.* A° 1606° and that by some chance the final letter survived to be mistaken for the upper half of 8, which is still seen slightly above the natural level. The substance of the existing figures suggests that they have been thickened and enlarged in repainting. Outlines so clear and bold must have endured as long as the lettering, and the figures of *c.* 1600 are generally small and wiry. But the error in date has a paradoxical value. It is an honest mistake in restoration. If the date had been to seek, it would surely have been found within the lifetime of Christopher Wood.

Ware has left an important record* that the porch taken down at the restoration of the church in 1866 was not earlier in date than 1625. It was therefore not Christopher Wood's porch, and his repair may have been short-lived. The parish history does not teem with individual benefactors; but it is known that about this

* "Notes upon the Parish Church of K.L." p. 12.

time Henry Wilson, of Underley (d. 1639) was extremely active in good works for the church.* One cannot ignore the possibility that the rebuilding of the south porch was one of his unrecorded benefactions.†

The phrasing of the inscription and its whole conception are quite natural for a lawyer. Such occasional flights in verse—*pennis inusitatis*—were, of course, not uncommon, and were apt to be embarrassed by mechanical trouble. One is reminded of the lines carved on the lintel of the manor-house of Newbiggin which Dr. Taylor (*Old Manorial Halls of W. and C.*, pp. 154, 357) gives as follows

Cristofer Crakanthorpe‡ thus ye me call
Whiche in my tym dyde bylde this hall,
The yer of our lorde who lyst to see
A M. fyve hundreth thyrty & three.

This is quoted by Nicolson and Burn with a poor substitute for the third line—"And framed it as you may see"—evidently a mere stop-gap in a reminiscence. Some such example challenged imitation at Hegholme Hall.

Whence the two brothers John and Christopher Wood sprang has not been ascertained. The earliest registration of the name is in Nov., 1575, when John Wood married Margaret Mansergh, a widow. Their first child William (b. Oct., 1576) and Edward§ and Alice Mansergh died of

* In 1619 he gave choir-stalls and a "three-decker."

† Col. Chippindall, who has kindly read this paper, points out that this would account for the property descending to the Carus-Wilsons of Casterton Hall as mentioned above.

‡ His father was John Crackanthorp acc. to Taylor. It is worth noting that Thomas Langton, Bishop of Winchester in his Will of Jan. 1500-1 left 40 marks to John Crakenthrop "to build his house." From the context it appears likely he was a brother-in-law. Christopher Crakanthorp married Ann Blenkinsop in 1524 (Surtees Soc: Test. Ebor. iii p. 373).

§ This child appears to be the last male representative of the Manserghs of Mansergh. Edward Mansergh who died in June 1543 was no doubt the head of the family, the Edw. Mansergh esq. of 1539 (*Records of Kendale* i, p. 84). His will dated in April 1543 shows that he left three sons Christopher, George and Alexander, and two daughters Alice and Elizabeth, the latter married to John

plague and were buried on one day, 23 Oct., 1578, as the children of John Wood. Seven more children followed in 1579-92 among whom Edward (b. 1586) was the youngest son. John Wood, yeoman, is one of the Parish Feoffees incorporated by the Charter of 1591 as Governors of the Grammar School. He was buried 17 July, 1617, and his widow a fortnight later. It will probably be inferred that Christopher married in middle age.

Baynes (probably of Hegholme). Christopher who died seised of Nether Hall etc., in 1568 had a son Edward (b. 1542) who died in infancy: and at his inquisition of 1591 his heir was found to be Jane (b. 1544). Alexander was buried two months after his father. After 1568 therefore only George was left. In 1571 a daughter (name not registered) of George Mansergh was baptized, and in 1573 a son, registered as Richard: George Mansergh was buried 28 March 1575. On these facts it seems practically certain that Richard is a mistake for Edward and that Margaret Mansergh whom John Wood married in Nov. 1575 was the widow of George Mansergh.