

ART. XIII.—*St. Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle.* By the
Rev. H. B. WILSON.

Read at Carlisle, September 25th, 1940.

CARLISLE has its store of memories of S. Cuthbert. But of the history of Carlisle in the years after he visited it we know almost nothing. We do know that two hundred years after S. Cuthbert's visit, Halfdene the Dane destroyed it, so thoroughly that William Rufus found it a heap of ruins grown over with great oaks. The Red King's successor Henry I founded the ecclesiastical establishment here, Priory and Bishopric, but the two ancient parishes of S. Cuthbert and S. Mary must have been in existence before then and indeed tradition tells of a church standing on the site, soon after the time of Cuthbert himself. Of its foundation Denton the historian writes, "every citizen offered a piece of money, a coin of brass then current, which they buried under the foundation of the church steeple. . . This was found to be true at the late new reedifying of S. Cuthbert's steeple, for when they took up the foundations of the old steeple, they found well near a London bushell of that money." Denton leaves the date of the new steeple blank. But as he wrote about 1610, the rebuilding of the steeple probably took place in Queen Elizabeth's day. So we may say that the first church was older than the Red King about whose time it would be rebuilt on its old site in the Norman fashion. It was very early on in its history appropriated to the Priory and in 1302 so hard hit was the parish by the Scots that the bishop had to excuse it the payment of its tithe.

In the library at Naworth there is a book belonging to one Sir Brown who is described as Rector of S. Cuthbert's Church in Carlisle. In this book is a Latin note by Sir Brown which runs " This day 23 Sep., 1553 was the Mass again celebrated in S. Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle. Mary Tudor came to the throne on 6th July, so the authorities here lost no time in reviving the Roman use."

During the Civil War the Cathedral was badly damaged and Dr. Todd says that it was the intention of the Parliamentary leaders to leave only one church in Carlisle and that S. Cuthbert's. About this time the Mayor and Corporation shifted their chapel or pew from S. Mary's to S. Cuthbert's and began their long connection with the church which continues to-day.

There is a reference to the old church in the Life of Thomas Storey of Justice Town, The Quaker. " The place I went to (1690) was that called S. Cuthbert in the city of Carlisle, there being usually prayers and a service there in the afternoon of the first day, but not with that noise, pomp and show as at the Cathedral, and therefore I rather chose it."

Bishop Nicolson who visited the church in 1702, gives us this description. " On the west end of the Tower without, is a new coat of arms, clap't under an old helmet and crest, thus inscribed, ' Arma Johannis Aglionby, Armiger '. The quire here has nothing of that decency in it which one would hope for so near the Cathedral, and its proprietors the Dean and Chapter. The north end of the Communion Table is clogged with a high tombstone, of nobody knows who, nor are there any rails above the steps. The roof also is in great disorder. On the east end of the south stall are (I think) the Stapleton Arms, bearing this motto, ' Servite dno in Letitia.' In the body of the church, the seats are mostly very ruinous and irregular, the pulpit ill-placed and the reading pew (under it) narrow and inconvenient. In the north aisle over

against the middle window (on which are the Aglionbys' Arms in glass) lies a man in armour with his wife by his side and over her 'Orate pro anima Katarine Denton que. obiit A Dni 1428'. (These monuments, by the way, after various vicissitudes are now in Ainstable Church. A full account of them by Mr. T. H. B. Graham is printed in these *Trans.* n.s. xvi, 53*f.* and there is an illustration in *Ibid.*, o.s. xv, 417). In the same aisle nearer the ascent towards the altar, is an old remnant of a carved seat, which has probably been brought hither from the Abbey Church at Holm Cultram, bearing these two Gothic letters R.C. and a chained bear with a pastoral staff through a mitre and underneath chamber. In the vestry stands an old cupboard (of the same fashion as that in the Cathedral) of Prior Gondebour's gift, as appears by the two initial letters of his name. The Register begins in 1603. Both the churchyards in the town are fenceless and in great disorder, the gravestones shabby or broken, the graves unlevelled, etc." Chancellor Waugh, who flourished in the '45, says that the church in his day had been greatly improved, had a new pulpit and reading desk, and many good but irregular seats and it had rails to the chancel.

The old church of which the bishop gives such an uninviting description was pulled down to make room for this present building of 1778.

In digging for the foundations, the foundation of a building older than the Norman one was found and also a stone figure, said to have been a Nun. The figure is lost, but in all probability it was no Nun, but a Roman figure.

Little of the old church remains in the present one. Near the west end of the gallery, huge pieces of oak, portions of the old stalls do duty in supporting the seats, whilst there is a mixture of old glass, fragments of several windows no doubt, preserved in the second window of the S. aisle

An organ was erected in 1826, although so early as 1806 the church had had the offer of the old Cathedral organ, which was promptly declined, on the ground that if you have an organ you have to pay an organist.

There is an interesting chalice with a Patten cover dated 1642. This was brought from the Cathedral when the Mayor and Corporation moved to S. Cuthbert's. Whether it belonged to the Corporation to bring is another matter. Chancellor Prescott said "no" and roundly accused the Vicar and Churchwardens of having "imbezzled it." Under the flooring are a number of graves, but none of them bear stones earlier than 1700.

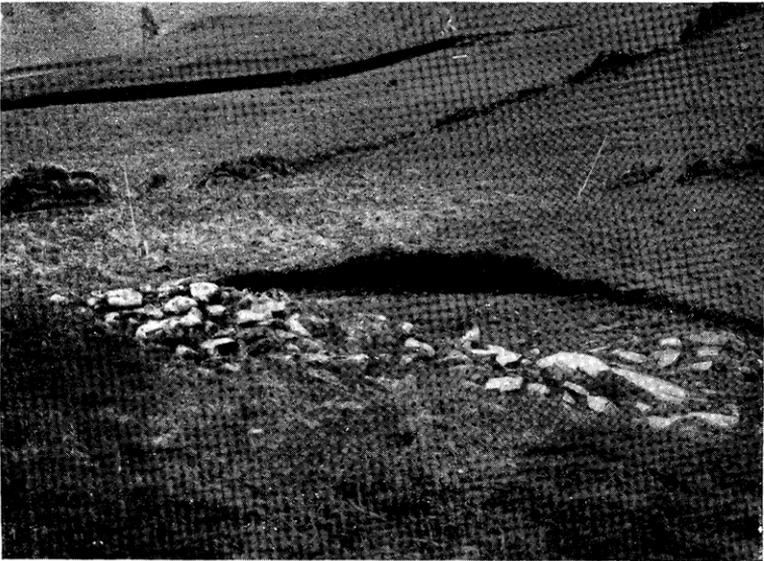
Of the monuments. Joseph Dacre Carlyle, a great eastern traveller and oriental scholar, Chancellor of Carlisle and once Vicar is commemorated on the family tablet. John Fawcett a name long revered in evangelical circles, vicar for over 50 years, has his bust in the chancel, whilst the memorial to Capt. Wm. Mounsey speaks of a gallant naval action in mid-Atlantic in 1809. Richard Ferguson the founder of the cotton trade in Carlisle is commemorated here too.

Somewhere in the churchyard, probably under the present vestry, Archibald Primrose, a brave man who was implicated in the '45 and was hung, drawn and quartered on Harraby Hill, an ancestor of Lord Rosebery, lies buried, as do several of Cumberland's troopers, who were stationed in the Cathedral and died in the epidemic which broke out there.

There is an interesting Lectureship connected with the church, which at the present time is held by the vicar. Particulars of it and of some of the men who held it will be found in an article by the late Chancellor Ferguson, *The Lectureship and Lecturers at S. Cuthbert's, Carlisle* (these *Trans.* o.s. vii, 312ff).



N.-W. Wall of upper enclosure. Earth bank tending to run behind orthostat.
(Entrance?)



Upper enclosure, junction of stone and earth in S.W. Wall.
MEASAND, 1939.

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