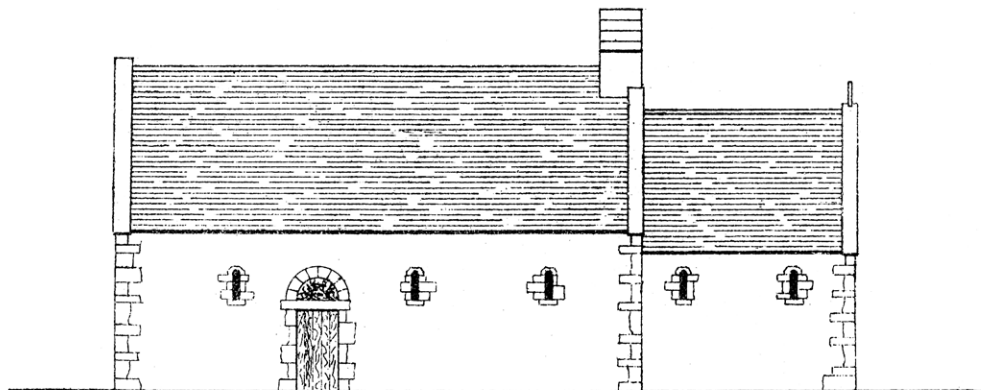


Long Marton Church



Original South Elevation

about the year 1100.



ART. XX.—*Historical Account of Long Marton Church, as shewn by its Masonry.* By J. A. CORY.

Communicated at Kirkby Stephen, August 18th, 1880.

THAT a church existed here before any portion of the present one was erected is tolerably certain, without reference to the present building, but the only thing which indicates the existence of a former church is to be found, perhaps, in the extreme irregularity of the existing fabric.

The south wall of the nave is nearly parallel with that on the north side, but the west wall is by no means at right angles with either; also the north and south walls of the chancel are strangely divergent, one from the other. This may indicate that the walls were built around a small wooden structure, which continued in use while the stone church was being reared around it, preventing the masons taking their lines with any degree of accuracy.

Various fanciful theories have been started to account for the axis of the chancel not corresponding with that of the nave; for instance, that the chancel was so turned that the rising sun should shine directly in at the east window on the day dedicated to the saint, after whose name the church is called. Why the whole church should not have so turned, instead of only the chancel, I cannot pretend to explain. As this church is dedicated to St. Margaret and St. James, the walls of the chancel, pointing in two directions, would have been very confirmatory of the theory had both been correct, but as neither of them point in the proper direction, that notion must be abandoned.

Another idea is that the chancel, inclining on one side, indicates the position of Our Saviour's head on the cross :
this

this certainly had nothing to do with this chancel, leaning as it does to both sides. I believe it was simply a mistake, caused per chance by some peculiarity of a pre-existing building.

About the year 1100 or 1110, the earliest part of the present building was erected. It was not an imposing church; it consisted simply of a nave and chancel, with a belfry either on the west gable, or, more probably, over the chancel arch, as a place for a bell remained there till last century.

I have annexed a plan and south elevation of this building.

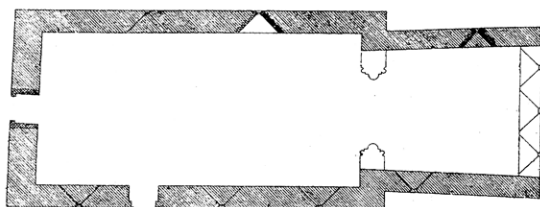
The side windows were unglazed, and consequently made as small as possible; one still remains on the north side of the nave, and one on the north side of the chancel, elevated nine feet from the ground. The small size and height of these windows from the ground suggests that defence from carnal foes might be not overlooked by the builders of the church. The east end windows probably had glass or horn in them, as candles could hardly have been kept alight on the altar, had they not been protected from the storm. The whole of the walls were coated with plaster, both outside and inside. Much of this plaster still remains outside, on the north wall, after seven and a half centuries of exposure to the rain and climate of Westmorland. From its proved durability we should have expected the plaster to have been compounded with care, but on inspection it certainly seems very badly mixed. The sand, however, is excellent, and the plaster must have been laid on at the proper season.

Many persons superficially acquainted with ancient ecclesiastical work suppose our forefathers were ignorant of, or quite scorned the use of plaster for external work, and some supposed restorations have been made by taking off all the plaster, even from the inside, but our old church builders, rightly or wrongly, used it very frequently, even on the outside. So it was at Long Marton.

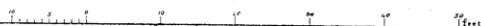
A

Long Marton Church Plan N° 1.

Original Norman Church about 1100.

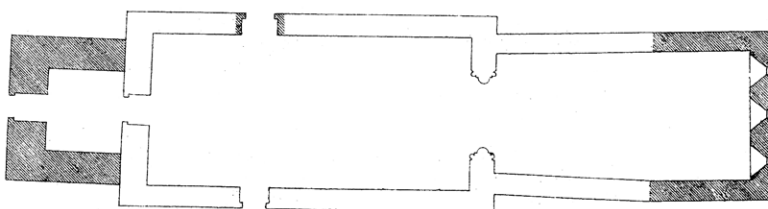


the parts shaded shew the remains of that date.

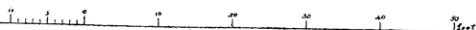


Long Marton Church Plan N° 2.

about the year 1150.



the parts shaded shew the remains of that date



A peculiarity about the old church was the long and short masonry, as it is called, particularly to be seen on the north-east quoin of the nave. This is supposed to indicate Saxon work, and in all probability Long Marton Church was built by Saxon hands from a Norman design, and it possibly may be altogether a Saxon structure.

This old church had two doors, not one opposite the other in the north and south walls, as is usually the case, but one at the west end and one on the south side, which also indicates great antiquity. Both doorways were of the same width and design, having a straight lintel with a tympanum above, filled with sculpture. These sculptures are very difficult to decipher. One has been broken through for the gallery door, and its remains are still in the masonry of the staircase leading to the gallery.* The other over the south door is perfect, and shews the influence of what may be called the Celtic school very little impaired. On the left hand is a four-legged beast, its neck branching off into two out-spread wings and a bird's head ; below is a dragon or serpent with feet, its tail wandering about, and finally tied in a complicated knot. Above the dragon on the right is a body not unlike a Roman amphora with wings.

Fifty years had hardly passed when some ecclesiastical change took place. The Church of Rome had well nigh reached its zenith, a more elaborate ceremonial perhaps demanded a more capacious building, and though the nave still sufficed for the worshippers, the chancel was too small for the priest and choir; accordingly it was elongated, and the curious divergence of the walls was got over as well as the case allowed. The new part of the chancel had its walls built nearly parallel, and the east end wall at right angles with one of them. The whole of this addition may be traced by the base-course, the string-course, and style

* During the repairs now in progress all these stones have been recovered, and replaced in their original position. The sculpture is a human figure with upraised hands, terminating in the body of a scaly monster, having fins and a tail tied in a knot, confronted by another monster having wings and a long knotted tail.

of masonry. In the vestry this is most clearly apparent. No windows of this date remain, but the position and size of the east triplet is indicated by the outer jambs of the two outer windows. The north doorway of the nave, used for processional purposes, was inserted, and the plastering of that date has crumbled away, showing how much of the old wall was removed to insert this doorway. At the same time the tower was built against the west face of the old church. Being very badly tied in, it has partly separated, so that between the tower and the nave the plastering of the external nave wall can be seen perfectly uninjured.

The tower contained the bells, and the original bell-cote was then only used for a sanctus bell.

Thus the church remained for about two centuries, excepting that about 1230 one lancet window was inserted, or an old window enlarged, and its arch altered, and the ground plan, as it then appeared, is shewn on the second plan. The want of light from the small Norman windows had long been felt, and a desire to follow newer fashions induced the remodeling of the chancel and introduction of larger windows into the church about the year 1350. At that time also the Piscina, the Sedilia, and the Easter Sepulchre on the north wall were built, and windows of the same character and design introduced into the nave.

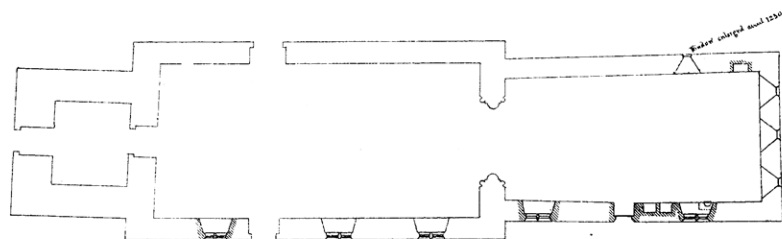
The church, as it existed from 1350 to 1450, is shewn on the third plan. About the year 1450 a chapel was erected, forming a transept on the south side, at which time also the existing vestry and porch were built, and the windows on the north side of the chancel inserted.

The fourth plan shews the church as it existed at this period down to the Reformation.

Bishop Nicolson, in his report on the church, says of this chapel, which he calls Knock Porch, "built, as I guess, from the Cliffords arms in the window, by the patron for the use of his tenants." No stained glass, however, now remains to tell its history or point to its founders.

The

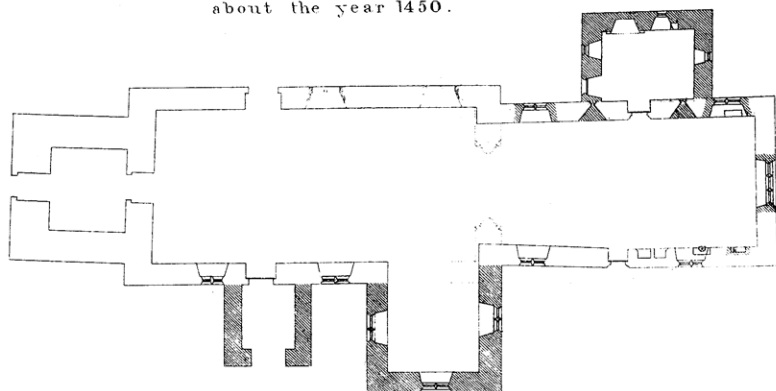
Long Marton Church Plan N^o 3.
about the year 1350.



the parts shaded shew the remains of that date

10 20 30 40 50 feet

Long Marton Church Plan N^o 4.
about the year 1450.



The parts shaded shew the remains of that date

10 20 30 40 50 feet

The vestry has an original fire-place in it and an external door. It was possibly used as a living room for an assistant priest as well as a vestry. In Nicolson's time, 1700, it was used for a school-room. This completed the pre-reformation church.

Nothing was done after this date till the very end of the 17th century, when the church must have been beautified and rendered more fit for divine services. Then were introduced the larger windows and new seats, which gave it the clean white and lightsome appearance so pleasing to the good bishop, not without some reason, for the seats were all of oak; and the windows, if deplorable in taste, were not put in as the cheapest possible repair, but with the good intention of rendering the church light and airy. The roofs were probably replaced at a later date, at a lower pitch and ceiled flat; a gallery was placed across the west end, as was usual at this period; the old west door of the original church was taken down to give access to this gallery. Lastly, a gallery was erected in Knock Porch, or the Clifford Chapel, without any regard whatever for the beauty of the building, or anything except making accommodation for school children.

This completes the church, and thus it stands at the present day, 1879, while time and decay have made it damp, cold, and cheerless, filled with pews in which it is uncomfortable to sit, impossible to kneel, and its proportions spoiled by the low flat ceiling and its unsightly gallery. The whole church is now undergoing an extensive repair, and every care has been taken so to preserve, that it may continue to tell its history for centuries yet to come.