

ART. IX. *The Pitch-pipes of the Rural Deanery of Gosforth.*

BY THE REV. W. SLATER SYKES, M.A.

*Read at Keswick, June 29th, 1899.*

THE history of the old pitch-pipes that were used in many of our Parish Churches is in very nearly every case closely connected with the duties of the clerk, and these were manifold, as an old clerk in Derbyshire used often to say:—

“ I, Richard Furness, schoolmaster, Dore,  
Keep parish books, and pay the poore ;  
Draw plans for building, and indite  
Letters for those who cannot write ;  
Make wills, and recommend a proctor,  
Cure wounds, let blood with any doctor ;  
Draw teeth, sing psalms, the hautboy play  
At chapel on each holy-day ;  
Paint sign boards, cart names at command,  
Survey and plot estates of land ;  
Collect at Easter, one in ten,  
And on the Sunday say ‘ Amen.’ ”

My attention was first drawn to these pipes by inquiry concerning two in Millom Church (Holy Trinity), and the first information I received was a story of amusement said to have been caused to the congregation by a very audible whisper from the clerk. On one occasion, when a hymn or chant should have been started, there was a long pause, the clerk was seen struggling with the pipe, blowing into it and shaking it, but no sound came. A member of the choir got impatient, and cried to the clerk:—

“ Pyke’ tune, man, pyke’ tune.”

But the old man in very bothered tone replied:—

“ Ah can’t; pipe’s fu’ o’ moock.”

The

The pitch-pipes of this Rural Deanery are for the most part of square shape, that of Bootle (Plate II., Figs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) may be taken for illustration. It consists of four boards of mahogany, 27 by  $2\frac{5}{8}$  by  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches, pinned together, and bound with brass plates to form a body (Fig. 4, *a*). The upper end of the tube thus formed is closed by a stop end (Fig. 8, *b*),\* which, in this case, is a cube of wood out of which a section has been cut to form the air chamber (*c*). The air passes into it by the mouth-piece (*d*), and thence over the base of the chamber, which is slightly cut away for the purpose, to reach the vent (Fig. 4, *e*), where it strikes the lower lip (*f*). The air chamber is covered by a section of the body—in some cases movable—which is called the upper lip (*g*)†. The slide or stick (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6, *h*) is usually roughly fitted to the body,‡ but to prevent any escape of air is provided at its upper extremity with a plug (Fig. 6, *j*), in this case of wood, bound with soft leather, but oftener of cork (Fig. 2 in the same plate). In the case under description, the slide is much smaller than the size of the body, because of the weight and to prevent side motion is wedged at the lower end of the body. The slide terminates in a knob or handle (Fig. 7 and Fig. 4, *k*). In Fig. 7 it will be noticed a bar has been dovetailed in at *l*, to prevent the slide being driven against the upper lip and stop end. The scale of notes is engraved upon a slip of metal (Fig. 5, *m*) sunk and pinned into the slide.

BECKERMET.—No. 1—There are two pipes here, one square, the other round. The first (Plate I., Figs. 1, 2, 3) is made of bay wood,  $18\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length when closed. The body (Fig. 1) is  $15\frac{3}{4}$  inches  $\times$   $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches  $\times$   $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The upper lip has been made to slide, but afterwards fastened with pins. The mouthpiece (Fig. 3) is

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\* Whitbeck Plate III., Fig. 3, gives an interesting pattern of stop end.

† Millom Plate V., Fig. 1, the upper lip consists of a slip of ivory inserted between the cover and the body.

‡ Ulpha Plate VI., Fig. 2, still shows the saw marks.

formed

formed by bevelling off the body and filling up with a stop end, the shape of which cannot be ascertained. It is carefully bound with waxends.

The slide (Fig. 2),  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches  $\times$  1 inch  $\times$  1 inch, is of deal, stained red to match the body; the lower end terminates in a plain knob, the other has held a cork plug, fastened on with a dowel and wedge. The scale is somewhat roughly marked upon a strip of lead sunk into the slide.

The date of the last use of this instrument is very accurately remembered—November 22nd, 1860—as on the following Sunday a harmonium, presented to the parish, was used for the first time.

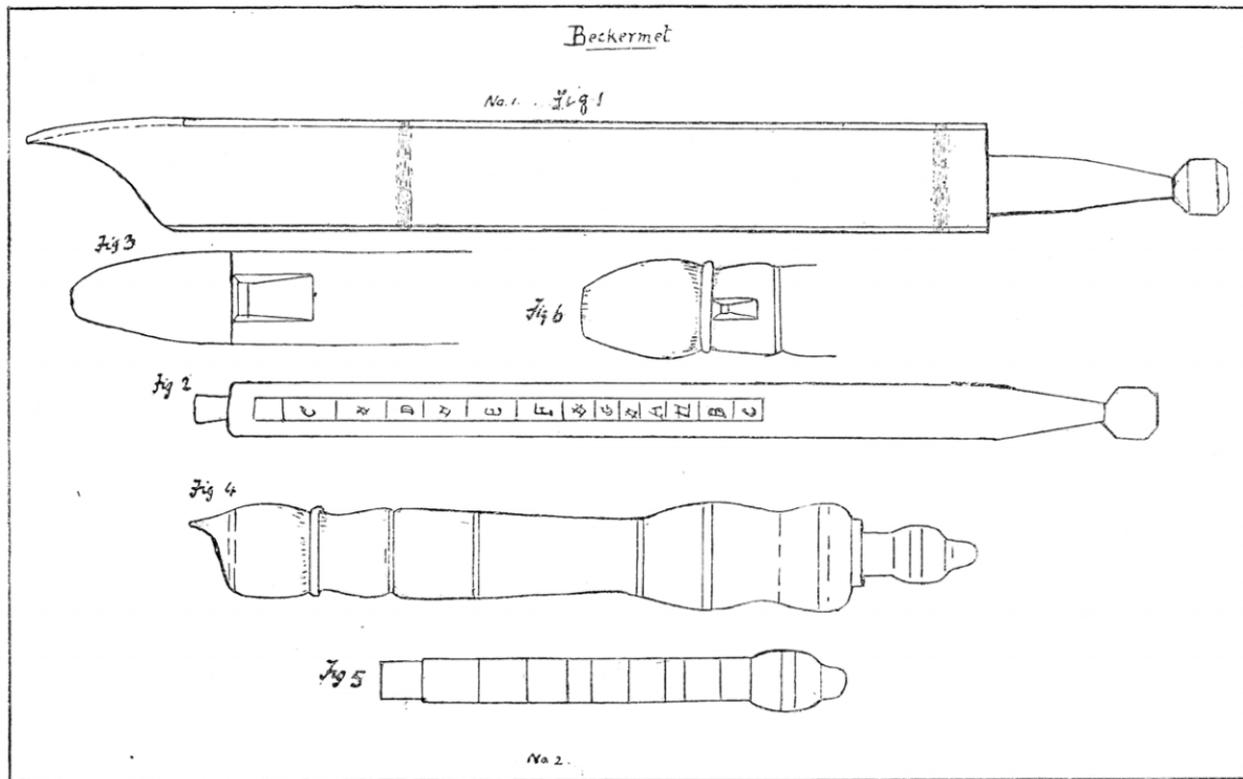
The pipe is now in the hands of the Misses Bewley, whose father was clerk from 1847-1886. It was handed on to him by his predecessor, Mr. Thomas Kirwen, about whom is told a little story. On one occasion, he tried to start the tune of a hymn three times, getting either too high or too low on each occasion; after the third attempt he banged the book down on the desk, and, looking up to the clergyman in the desk above him, exclaimed in a tone of great disgust—

“Ga’ on.”

No. 2—The round pipe (Plate I., Fig. 4, 5) is believed to be much older than the other; it is made of apple or beech and has been finely turned, but it is now much disfigured by many wrappings of cobbler’s waxends because of a split. It is 12 inches long over all when closed, and varies from  $1\frac{1}{8}$  to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in diameter. The stop end is of some white wood—holly, I think, but in many cases I have found it very difficult to judge the precise wood. The slide is of old mahogany; the scale is lost, except that concentric lines mark the places. Originally the notes were printed or written on a slip of parchment and glued on to a place prepared for them. There was no plug, but the end was bound with a washer of tow and worsted.

BOOTLE.—Here again there are two pipes in existence. No. 1, (Plate II., Figs. 4-8). Of this no one in the parish seems to have any recollection. After the death of the late rector, Rev. S. W. Watson, it was noticed hanging up in the vestry by the Vicar of Waberthwaite, who had occasion to visit the church. It is by far the largest in the Rural Deanery that I have seen, although a lead one that used to be at Whicham must have been very like it in size. When closed it measures 2 feet  $11\frac{1}{4}$  inches. The body (Fig. 4) is 28 inches  $\times$   $2\frac{3}{4}$  square. It is made of mahogany and bound with brass, one broad plate at the lower end remaining, a narrower band at the other end, together with the upper lip, has disappeared.

The



PITCH PIPES.—PLATE I.

The slide (Fig. 5) is 23 inches  $\times$   $\frac{7}{8}$  inch square, terminating in a very clumsy plug (Fig. 6, *j*), covered with fine soft leather. The other end has been rounded to form a handle. The scale is very neatly engraved on a slip of brass, sunk and pinned to the slide.

The vent is very wide,  $2\frac{1}{8}$  inches. The stop end, air chamber, and mouthpiece (Fig. 8, *b*, *c*, *d*) are evidently a copy of those of Millom No. 1 (Plate V., Fig. 3), but to my mind a clumsy imitation. The body of the pipe has at some time been painted green.

No. 2 (Plate III., Figs. 4, 5, 6)—This pipe is in very fragile condition and unless cared for soon will be altogether broken and lost. It is made of a dark red wood, and is  $19\frac{1}{2}$  inches full length. The body (Fig. 4),  $14\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$ , is finely dovetailed together. The mouthpiece and stop end (Fig. 6) are bevelled off to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch; unfortunately some parts have been lost, so that it is not possible to compare the air chamber with that of Whitbeck, to which the pipe bears strong resemblance. The slide (Fig. 5) is 16 inches long, including the cork plug; it tapers off at the opposite end and is finished by a pear-shaped knob.

The scale is of boxwood and the notes appear to have been punched out rather than carved. The half notes are marked by faint lines.

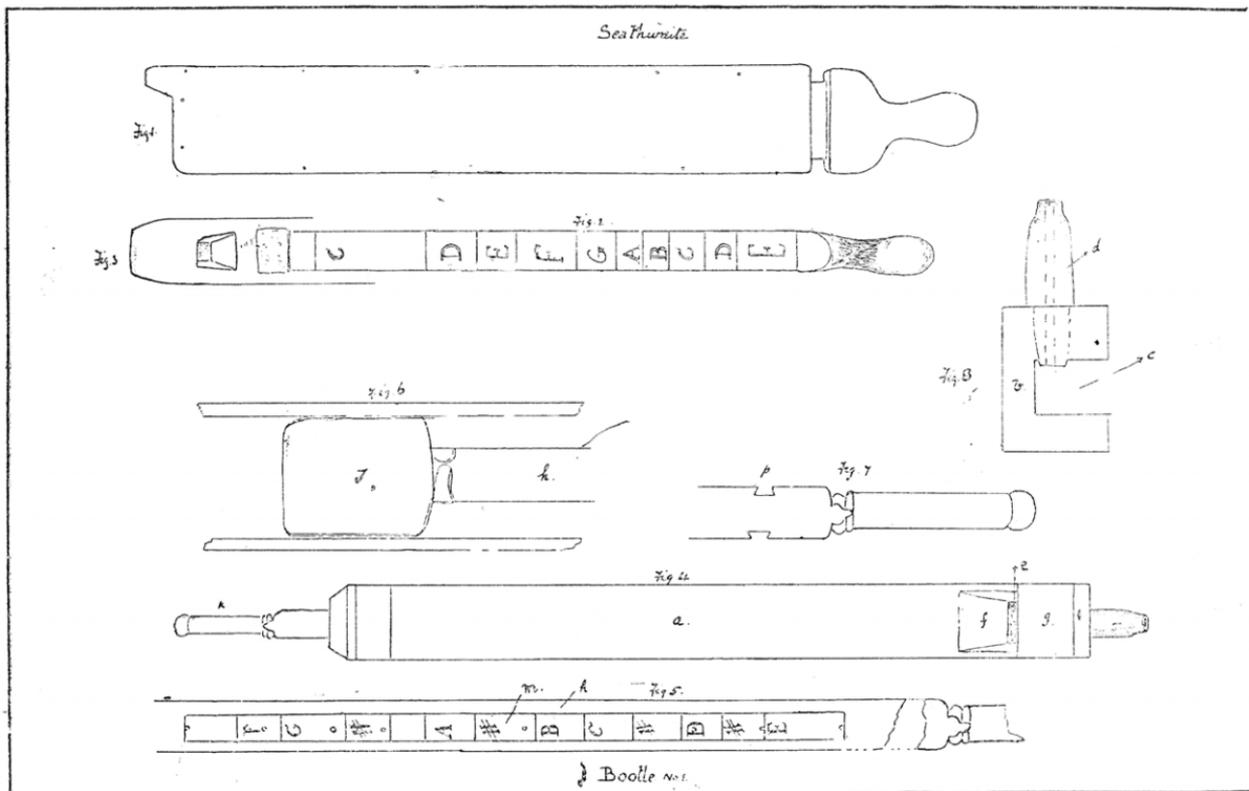
For reasons given under the heading of Whicham, I am inclined to think that this pipe was of local make and of date subsequent to the year 1839. It has been a very good instrument and it is a great pity that of late years it has been so poorly cared for, but this remark does not apply more to Bootle than many other places.

CALDER-BRIDGE.—No information obtainable.

CORNEY.—There is no pipe in existence.

DRIGG.—There is no pipe in existence.

ESKDALE.—On inquiry at Eskdale I was told that there was a very good one in the parish and indeed it is. But after long and patient hunt I found that the pipe, which is in private hands, probably belongs to Lowther. The visit to the parish, however, was very fortunate; information from the vicar's warden induced me to go to Gosforth and make inquiry from a former clerk's daughter, Mrs. John Wilson, now resident at Gosforth Gate. Her son, to whom I spoke first, hardly knew what a pitch pipe was, but the mother went to an old cupboard and brought out a pipe (Plate IV., Fig. 1, 2, 3) in very perfect condition and of good tone. She told me that her father, who was born at the King of Prussia Inn and afterwards lived at Sword House, Austhwaite, was appointed clerk of Eskdale about 1830 A.D. He filled many offices, from drawing up of wills



PITCH PIPES—PLATE II.

wills, to vaccination, for which purpose he made his own vaccine. It is about 30 years since he ceased to perform the duties of clerk, but till that time the pipe was often seen in his hands. He kept it at his own house, on top of the case of a fine old grandfather's clock. In that way, it is to be presumed, it came to be considered his own property—as he was clerk 40 years. Mrs. Wilson seems to value the pipe very highly as having been used so often by her father, but it is to be hoped she will at some time restore it to its proper parish.

It is a very perfect specimen and its tone as good, if not better, than any other in the Rural Deanery. It is made of bay wood,  $14\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$ , tapering almost to a point for mouthpiece. The upper lip has been made to slide, but is now fastened by pins. The body has been carefully bound with waxed thread to strengthen it and the lower end bound with iron.

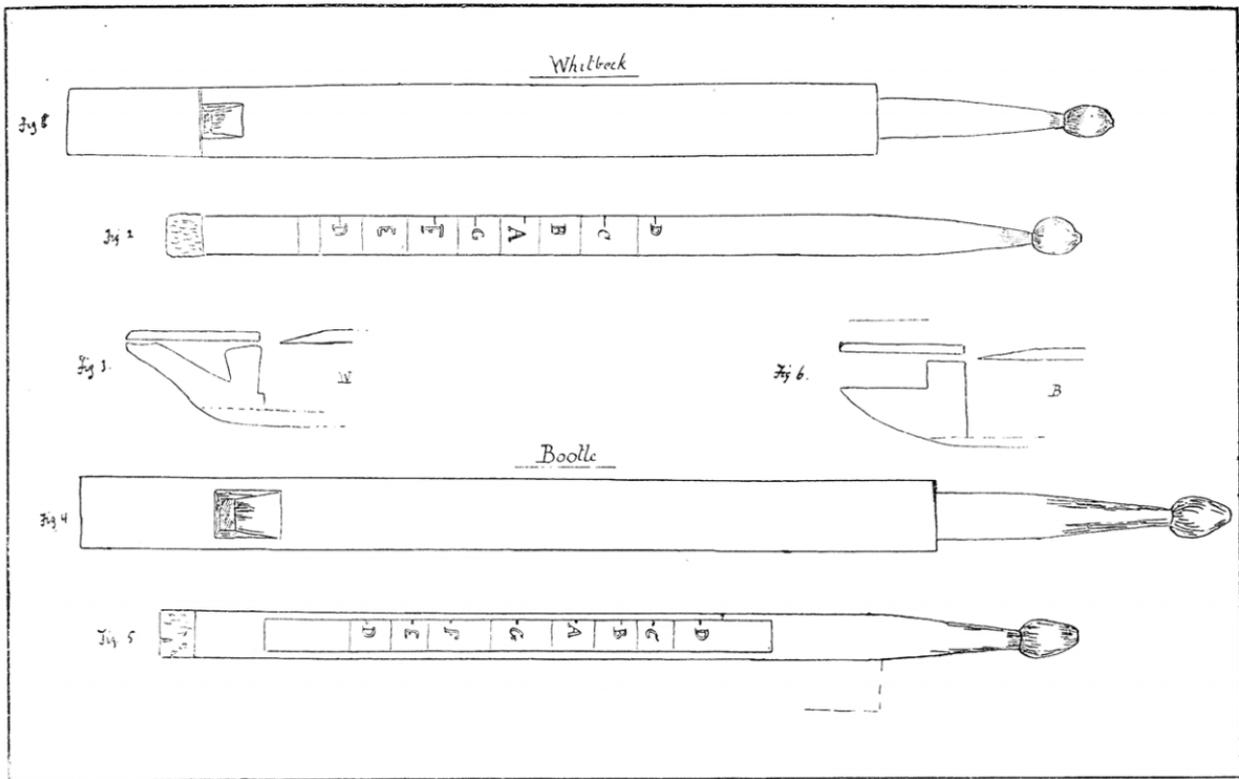
The slide (Fig. 2) is of deal,  $14\frac{3}{4} \times 1 \times \frac{3}{4}$ , stained red to match the body; the scale is of lead, with notes and half notes engraved upon it.

In *Rural Deanery of Gosforth*, by Rev. A. G. Loftie, is stated that "a new pitch pipe" was bought. The vicar, Rev. R. H. Snape, gives the quotation thus:—"May 25th, 1832—New pitch pipe and books binding, 9s 9d;" but in the same year a few lines earlier occurs this also:—"To repairing organ by Mr Leach, £6 10s." So that it would appear that like Gosforth, their great rival in all matters of music, they had shortly before this obtained a 'barrel-organ,' but that some great calamity had befallen it and they had returned to their 'first love.' They got a new pitch pipe in the interval before repairs could be made.

GOSFORTH.—(Plate IV., Fig. 4, 5).—This pipe can hardly be said to exist. All that is left of it is the bottom board of the body and part of the slide. These, however, show that it was nearly four-square in girth, and in shape closely resembling Bootle No. 2. It was made of bay wood and the slide of mahogany. The total length when closed would be about 19 inches. The scale is like that of Bootle No. 2 (Plate III., Fig. 5), of some white wood, probably box; but the notes and half notes are only marked in ink, though the divisions are deeply scored from side to side.

By an old resident to whom I was introduced by Rev. Rees Keene, I was told that a Mr. Shepherd, who was clerk 64 years ago, used it in the Sunday School held in the vestry. It was not used in the church in his day, because the parish owned a barrel-organ.

In Mr. Loftie's *Rural Deanery of Gosforth*, it is stated that "a barrel-organ was presented in 1828 by Mrs. W. Senhouse . . . . The use of the barrel-organ was discontinued in December, 1868, and



PITCH PIPES.—PLATE III.

and an American organ lent by the Rector, James Albert Cheese." A later clerk, Mr. Wallace Roan, had a great reverence for the old instrument and noticing its bad condition took it home to repair, but died without carrying out his intention. It has lain in his (and successor's) shop for 18 years, during which time, I suppose, the other loose pieces got squandered. His widow has since my visit restored the remnants to the church and the rector proposes to have it reconstructed so that it may for the future be properly preserved. If he does so, I would respectfully suggest that he have the Eskdale pipe for a model, but with a square mouthpiece.\*

HAILE.—No pipe in existence. No information.

IRTON.—No pipe in existence.

MILLOM.—There are two pipes at the Parish Church, one apparently much older than the other.

No. 1 (Plate V., Fig. 1, 2, 3)—This is of oak, made of four slips of wood, pinned together and bound with brass; total length, 18 inches. The body is  $13\frac{3}{8} \times 1\frac{1}{8} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ .

The stop end (Fig. 3) forming the air chamber is cut out of a piece of Spanish mahogany and the mouth piece and upper lip are of ivory.

The slide (Fig. 2) also of oak, terminates in a small square knob and is  $13\frac{1}{4}$  inches in length. At the upper end a plug of cork is nailed on, to make it fit tightly.

The scale is a slip of brass sunk and pinned into the slide and the notes and half notes carefully engraved upon it. On the opposite side a strip of leather has been nailed on.

This is I think the most highly finished instrument in the Rural Deanery and has been made by some first-rate workman of a good firm of musical instrument makers, but it bears neither name nor date.

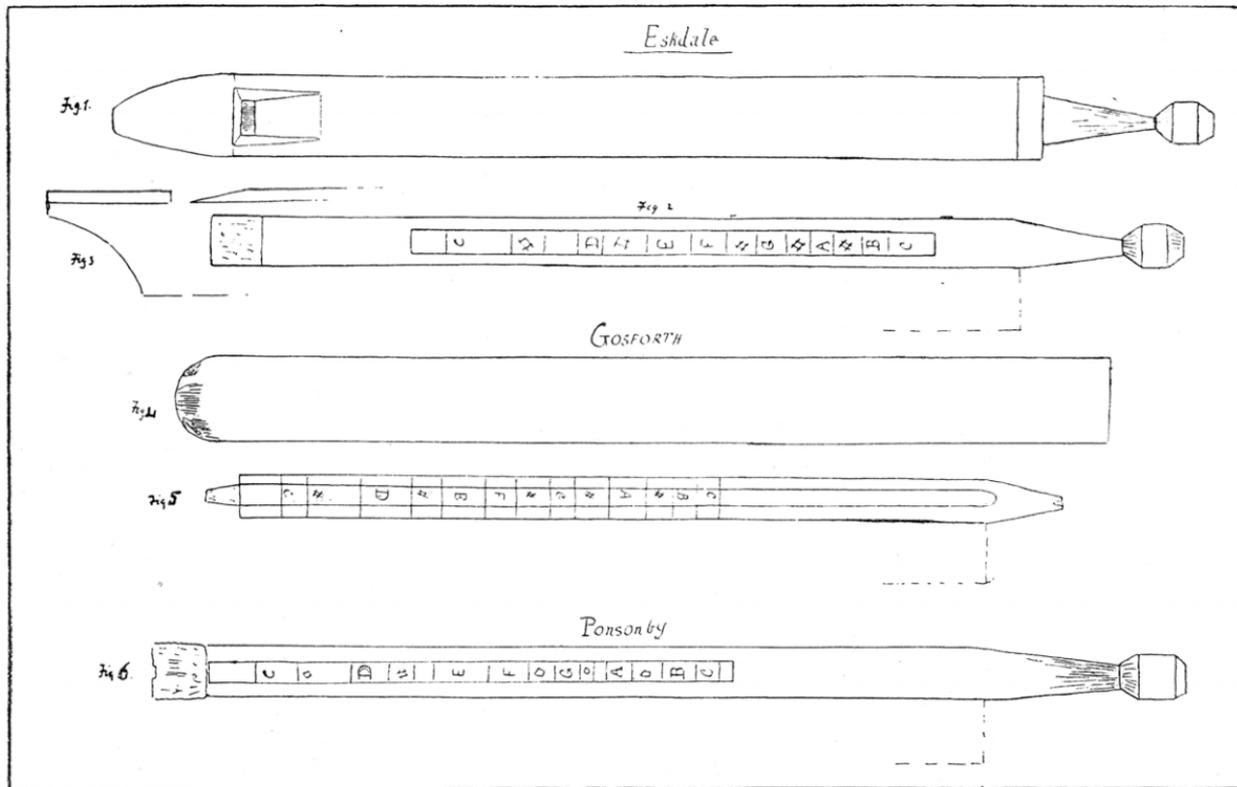
No 2 (Plate II., Figs. 4, 5, 6)—This is made of applewood, properly turned on a lathe; it is ornamented with concentric lines and a figure marked out with compasses, but not carved. The total length when closed is 17 inches, and the diameter  $1\frac{7}{8}$ , increasing to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  at the bulge. The notes are marked by letters printed on small squares of parchment pasted into thumb nail notches. Several attempts have been made at notching before the correct places were discovered.

The slide (Fig. 5) is of different wood to the body, probably sycamore, it is 13 inches long by  $1\frac{1}{8}$ ; it terminates in a well turned

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\* The line of parish clerks as far back as can be remembered includes following names:—Messrs. Benson (died 80 years ago), Jno. Stamper, Gamford, John Shepherd, Hy. Sherwin, Roan, John Watson. In Rev. H. Bragg's time the clerk Benson used to stand on one of the tombstones in the churchyard as the people came out of church to call out parish notices, boons, fairs, &c.

knob



PITCH PIPES—PLATE IV.

knob. The opposite end has been deeply grooved and a plug made of worsted and tow. Some threads of an old blue stocking still remain.

Of these No. 1 was frequently used by Mr. Richard Noble, who was appointed clerk, April, 1826. Some of the old people remember him in his later days; he got very infirm and walked with two sticks. It took him a long time to get from his place in the three decker pulpit to the gallery at the west end of the church, but he used to fill up the time as he stumped along by giving out all the parish notices of things found or lost, of sales and such matters; at other times starting earlier he would halt in his walk to utter the proper responses and amens in their places and then proceed.

Unhappily in the church accounts the "Church-Mesters" had the knack of grouping several things together, so that in accounts presented June 29th, 1827, it is difficult to rightly understand item "Wm. Bleasdle & Pych Pipe £1 12s. 6d."

Wm. Bleasdle's name does not occur in a list of ratepayers of about that date, nor indeed in any other list of inhabitants of Millom, that I have ever seen. So that I am inclined to think that it might be read "To Wm. Bleasdle for a Pych Pipe £1 12s. 6d." Though the amount seems a good deal, Thwaites paid nearly as much for theirs, but theirs is not exactly a pipe.

There is another entry a few years later, 1834-5, which shows that they also followed the prevailing custom and bought a barrel organ.

Joseph Parks, Acct.—"A journey to enquire after a person to repair the organ. 1/-."

Later again mention is made of the organist, "Ap. 27, 1838, to Thomas Braithwaite, organist's salary £1 6s."

Of the use of No. 2, I can obtain no information. Very few people know of its existence, although along with the church tinder box it has lain on top of a cupboard in the Vestry for many years. But since the square one was always used by the clerk Noble, and one was bought when he entered the office and again but few years after the barrel organ came into use, it seems necessary to conclude that this is much the older.

MUNCASTER.—This parish at one time possessed a barrel organ, but I can obtain no information about a pitch pipe.

PONSONBY.—(Plate IV. Fig. 6)—The only remains are a slide of deal wood, stained red. It measures  $15\frac{3}{4} \times 1 \times \frac{3}{4}$ . The pipe must have been very like that belonging to Eskdale. The cork is fastened on with a wooden dowel. The scale is of lead like Eskdale and Beckermeth (1). The existence of this pipe (?) was entirely forgotten; but the churchwarden on being asked remembered seeing something



something like what was described to him, in the vicarage loft; it had been there for 20 years at least. It is about 40 years since it was last used.

SEATHWAITE (Plate II., Fig. 1, 2, 3).—I am informed that I am a few years too late to obtain any particulars about this pipe. It had been in the possession of one man for upwards of 60 years, but he died recently and no one else knows anything about it. I do not however think that its age is much greater than 60 years, it has a decidedly new look about it and has been very little handled. It is made of light oak and is well varnished and but for its unusual shape, appears of no great interest. I should think that it is of local make, possibly by a village joiner.

When closed it measures over all 15 inches  $\times$  2  $\times$  1  $\frac{1}{4}$ . There is no scale but the letters are cut into the stick without any uniformity of size, and darkened with black lead.

THWAITES (Plate VI., Fig. 4)—The musical instrument formerly in use here is not a pipe at all, but is more like what I believe is called an Harmonicon. It is 7  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches long by 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  square. It is made of mahogany with boxwood mouthpiece and brass back with 3 rows of vent holes for each note. On the mouthpiece are also engraved the notes and half notes, below each is a separate blow hole which can be closed by a brass clip. These clips are somewhat difficult to shew in the drawing but the general idea may be best seen there.

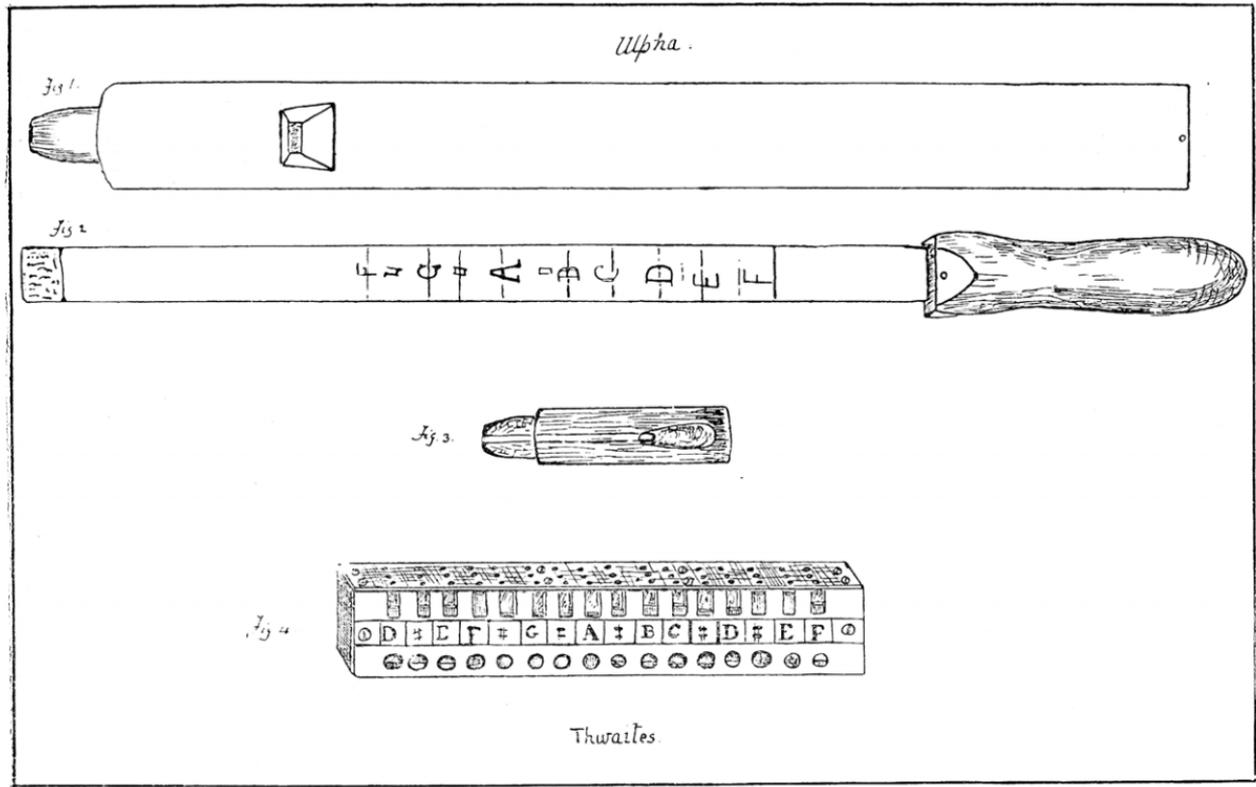
I am informed that it was purchased from a pedlar for the sum of 30/- by Messrs. George Newton and Richard Kitchen. The latter was uncle to the present clerk of Millom, he died June, 1839. The instrument then remained in the hand of Mr. George Newton, clerk of Thwaites and singing master of the church. From him it came into the possession of his nephew, Mr. G. N. Warbrick, Yeoman, of Bridge End, The Green, Millom.

ULPHA (Plate VI., Fig. 1, 2).—This is somewhat similar to Millom No. 1, but of clumsier make. The body (Fig. 1) of oak is 16  $\frac{1}{2}$   $\times$  1  $\frac{3}{8}$   $\times$  1  $\frac{1}{8}$ . The stop end and mouthpiece (Fig. 3) are cut out of one block of wood. The vent is unusually low down. The slide (Fig. 2), also of oak, is 18  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, and the length over all 22  $\frac{3}{4}$ . The handle is unlike any other in the Rural Deanery. The notes and three half notes are carved into the wood.

WABERTHWAITE.—There was one here 60 years ago, when Mr. Ben Jackson was clerk. After his death his family removed to Aspatria, but whether they took the pipe with them I have no information.

But here, I may mention, that at a sale in Bootle some 10 years ago, a pipe was sold to a curiosity dealer from Carlisle, for about £2.

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PILCH PIPES.—PLATE VI.  
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A local gentleman tried to obtain it, but had to give way before the dealer. I expect that it would belong to either Waberthwaite or Corney.

WASDALE HEAD.—From two sources I have heard there used to be one here, but it has been searched for in vain. A former resident now living in Ponsonby positively declares that it was like a flute, “wi’ the blow hole a laile bit a’ one side.”

NETHER WASDALE.—There was a pipe in use here 50 years ago, but no further information can be given.

WHICHAM.—It is distinctly remembered that there used to be three pipes belonging to this parish, but so far, I have not been able to trace them. They were last seen some 10 years ago lying in the window bottom at the west end of the church.

They were (1) of lead, very heavy.

(2) square shaped, of wood.

(3) round, turned on a lathe.

No. 3 was made by Mr. Weeks, joiner, of Bootle, prior to the year 1847, when a man called Todhunter was engaged to instruct the village choir. Todhunter came from Dearham and gave instructions to Bootle choir one week end and Sunday, Whicham the next.

This pipe, as also that of Whitbeck, was made of dark red wood, which my informant, the present clerk of the parish, Mr. W. Knight, calls Brazil wood. He says that in 1839, a vessel called “The Vernon,” a trader between Liverpool and Glasgow, came ashore opposite Southfield, Silecroft. Part of its cargo was logwood and this red wood, which was used all over the neighbourhood for fancy articles. It was in billets about four feet long. A Kirby man got some of it to try whether it would do for fiddlesticks.

Bootle pipe No. 2 seems to be made of the same red wood as Whitbeck. It seems a little finer in the grain and more brittle than the mahogany or bay wood of other places.

My informant thinks that Whicham No. 1, the lead pipe, was made in Ulverston.

WHITBECK (Plate III., Fig. 1, 2, 3).—This pipe is made of dark red wood, called above Brazil wood. It is 18 inches full length when closed. The body (Fig. 1) is  $13\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$ . The four boards are carefully dovetailed together and glued. The upper lip is made to slide, and the stop end (Fig. 3) is curiously cut out of a solid piece of wood to form the air chamber.

The slide (Fig. 2) is  $15\frac{3}{4} \times 1 \times \frac{5}{8}$ , the notes being carved into the wood and the cork plug at the end fastened on with a plate of copper and a screw. The knob at the opposite extremity is pear shaped like that of Bootle No. 2.

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The clerk of Whicham, formerly also of Whitbeck, tells me that it was made by Mr. Weeks, joiner, of Bootle, out of the wood washed ashore from "The Vernon."

There are two other pipes in the Deanery:—

- (1) Formerly in the possession of a vicar of Winstler.
- (2) Formerly in the possession of a clerk of Lowther.

It seems difficult to try and classify these pipes and yet there is evident connection between several of them. They may perhaps be grouped thus:—

- Group I.—Beckermet (2), Plate I., Fig. 4, date prior to 1832.  
 Millom (2), Plate V., Fig. 4, date prior to 1826.  
 These seem connected in general form, and in manner of making a plug; also, perhaps, stop end.
- Group II.—Millom (1), Plate V., Fig 1, possible date 1826.  
 Bootle (1), Plate II., Fig. 4 } later copies.  
 Upha, Plate VI., Fig 2 }
- Group III.—Beckermet (1), Plate I., Fig. 1.  
 Ponsonby, Plate IV., Fig. 6.  
 Eskdale, Plate IV., Fig. 1.  
 Evidently made by the same hand, the last of date 1832.
- Group IV.—Gosforth, Plate IV., Fig. 4, 5, the model of much older date, prior to 1828.  
 Whitbeck, Plate III., Fig. 1.  
 Bootle (2), Plate III., Fig. 4.  
 One of Whicham.  
 The latter three by the same maker, Mr. Weeks, of Bootle, subsequent to the year 1839.

Unclassified—Seathwaite.

I may add that in one case at least (Beckermet) it has been found quite possible to play a proper hymn accompaniment, so that they were very likely used for giving a choir some previous instruction, as well as pitching the note in the church.

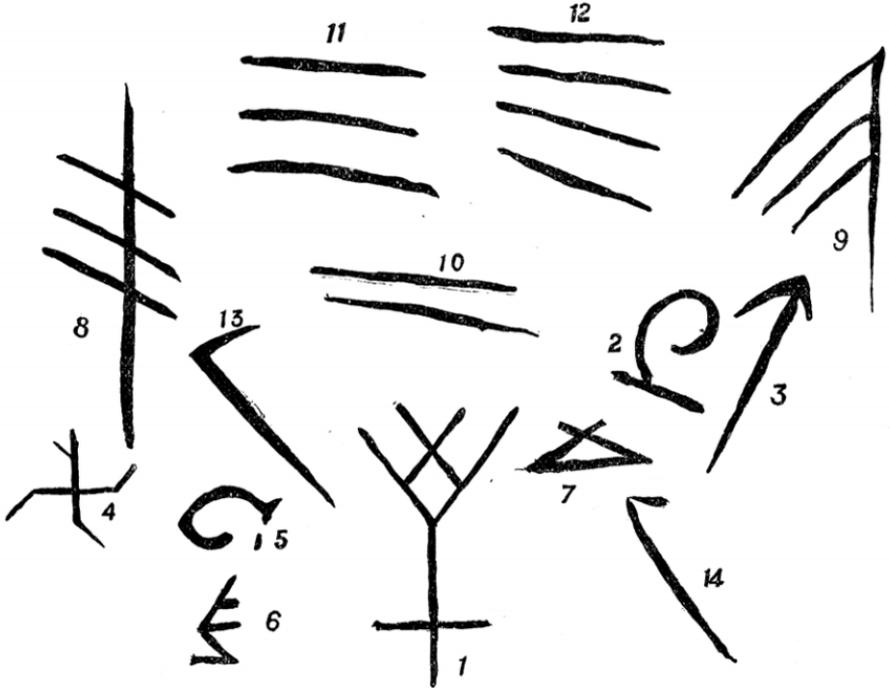
I should like to express my thanks to the vicars of the parishes in the Rural Deanery for their courtesy and willing help.

MILLOM

ART. X.—*Masons' Marks. Millom Parish Church.* By  
the Rev. W. SLATER SYKES, M.A.

*Read at Keswick, June 29th, 1899.*

UNTIL about 40 years ago, the outside of this church was roughcast with mortar and small sea pebbles, and the inside covered with many layers of whitewash. The first seems to have been carefully peeled off, but unfortunately the inside suffered from the overzeal of the



would-be restorer and was rechiseled. No record is preserved of any discoveries made at the time.

On the outside, a few marks are still visible, one or two being well preserved, but the red sandstone of which it is

is

is largely built, is very soft, and in many places the surface has peeled off, so that of many other marks still left, it is difficult to distinguish those of a few decades from the original and in some cases to say whether a mark is accidental or by design.

Of those on the diagram I am doubtful whether to include 10, 11, 12, for they look more modern than the rest, but as they are at the height of about 12 feet from the ground, it seems unlikely they can have been made by other than workmen.

No. 1—Still very distinct, though the surface of the stone is much worn. It may at any time disappear, as the stone—a shaft of a three light window—is broken. The window has been blocked by the erection inside the church of a mural tablet to members of the Hudleston family.

No. 2-7—Are all upon one window in the chancel. A trefoil headed window of two lights, under square dripstone.

No. 2-3—Are both on the same stone, on the right-hand side. The former, well preserved, is on the moulding, the latter on the wall face, much weathered.

No. 4—On the left side of the window is very distinct.

No. 5—On the dripstone, appears to be by the same hand as 2, but smaller, on account of the narrow width of the face of the stone. The line from which the curve springs is either much defaced or has been badly made.

No. 6—Very distinct, also on the dripstone.

No. 7—This is on the elbow of the dripstone and will shortly be lost as the stone is badly cracked.

No. 8-9—On the same stone, one of the coines of the chancel, are nearly rubbed away.

No. 10-13—On the east window of chancel are on stones one above another in order.

No. 14—On the sill. I am doubtful whether this should be counted as a mark.