

ART. XIII.—*The Church and Churchwardens accounts of Clifton, Westmorland.* By the Rev. C. M. L. BOUCH.

Read at Clifton, September 2nd, 1948.

CLIFTON was first visited by our Society in July 1879 (see CWI iv 387-92 for a description of the hall and 541-3 for one of the church) and again in July 1888, when Chancellor Ferguson read his important paper on the skirmish on Clifton Moor in December 1745 (CWI x 186-228). Since then the place has never been honoured in this way until the present paper was read.

The lay-out of the parish presents the ordinary combination of church, rectory and hall, in close proximity. The same plan can be seen in the adjacent village of Cliburn, with this difference, that at Clifton the village has grown up on the side of the church and hall away from the market town, while at Cliburn the opposite has happened; the village there stretches along the road from the hall towards Penrith. This is what one would expect; the nearer the market the greater the convenience. The puzzle is why this has not taken place at Clifton. The reason may perhaps be that the south side of the hall, away from possible raiders, was safer. This church, rectory, hall combination, is also found at Askham. Can we say that in these places we have evidence of the planning of a 12th Century lord? In the adjoining parishes of Brougham and Lowther the castle or hall is sited well away from the church; it seems therefore reasonable to deduce that in these cases the church was there first. But can we in the other villages assert that there the lord first built his hall and then, as in some way an afterthought, decided it would be

pleasant both for his comfort and his dignity to have a church and a parson on his doorstep? If this reasoning is correct, the fact that the rector of Clifton owed a pension of 13/4 to the incumbent of Barton would suggest that here we have evidence of the mother parish out of which Clifton was carved¹. The fabric of the church is fully described by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, in their Westmorland volume² and so need not detain us.

One of the most interesting medieval remains in the church was not there when the Commissioners made their survey. This is the glass now in the east window. Behind its restoration to its true home lies a story to which that much abused word romantic may perhaps be applied. The volume mentioned duly notes, in the west window of the north aisle, a figure of a virgin saint of the 15th century, with a shield of arms of Wybergh impaling Engayne which can perhaps be dated c. 1700. Today that glass is in the east window; so is another figure. But in the Westmorland volume the latter will be found described under Shap (p. 207a) as "probably of St. John, foliage background, 15th century partly restored, said to have come from Clifton church." The romantic story is the history of its return to its home.

The glass is first mentioned by the Westmorland antiquary, Thomas Machell, in his manuscript *History of Westmorland* (vol. iii p. 123, in the Dean and Chapter muniment room at Carlisle); he enumerates three windows:—

- (a) "a picture of a woman with dejected countenance" with a coat of arms, of which he gives a drawing, underneath it. This trick shows the arms of Engayne only.

¹ J. F. Curwen, *Later Records of North Westmorland*, 296.

² *RCHM Westmorland* 69.

- (b) The middle window "a crucifix, much defaced."
- (c) "a boy or man leaning his cheek upon his right hand and holding a book in his left, and above that, but I suppose misplaced for it should be underneath, the arms of Fallowfield of Great Strickland." The drawing below shows only two escallops, the other had presumably been broken away.

Of the later history of these windows:—

- (a) is noticed by Bishop Nicolson in his *Miscellany Accounts*, page 68, in 1703, and by Nicolson and Burn (i, p. 417) in 1777. At that time it was still in the east window, but when our Society visited Clifton in 1879 it was in the south aisle. And when the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments reported on the church they gave the arms, not as Engayne, but as Wybergh impaling Engayne; further they dated this coat of arms to c. 1700. Presumably the arms were changed when the glass was moved. Then, in 1943, as a result of a gas explosion in the church, the glass was blown outside it. Largely owing to the activity of our member the Rev. W. Breay, then assistant curate of Lowther, it was recovered and in due course restored to its original place in the east window.
- (b) Nicolson & Burn state "in the middle window is a Crucifix." Then in *Westmorland Church Notes*, by E. Bellasis (published in 1888), I p. 178, there is a note that this window now "has only arms that are neither fish, flesh, nor heraldry, i.e. two-thirds of a shield from top checky ar. az. vert. gules and purp. alternatively, base sa., thereon an escallop or. A piece of modern patchwork by a Penrith glazier, and the latter glowing with all the colours which his shop afforded, and inserted during Mr Dand's incumbency (1841-7). Machell says there was a shield over the dexter figure in one of the east

windows which looked like the arms of Fallowfield of Strickland partly defaced, i.e. three escallops or, the sinister one gone. The lower escallop has been apparently retained in the new checkey above. Hill MSS. vi 81, 85."

Mr Hill must have made this note between 1847 and 1861 when he died. The crucifix window must presumably have been removed when this new window was put in.

- (c) This window is not mentioned by Bishop Nicolson. Nicolson and Burn (*ibid.*) imply that it was not in their time in the east window, where Machell had seen it.

Then in the year 1870 there died one Willam Hogarth, a solicitor, who lived at Clifton, where his father had been curate from about 1788. His goods were put up for sale; among those who attended the event was the Rev. Joseph Brunskill, Vicar of Swindale. He seems to have enjoyed a good prowling round and in the course of his wandering came across some old glass lying in the corner of a barn. The glass was the Fallowfield window. The Rev. J. Whiteside, in "Shappe in Bygone Days," blames Lord Brougham for removing it from the east window, but Nicolson and Burn's account suggests that he was blameless, that the vandal lived many years before, and that somehow the glass had come into the possession of Mr Hogarth's father and had been left lying about ever since. Mr Brunskill, honest man, told the Clifton Churchwardens of the value of his find. But as they declined to bother with it, he gathered up the fragments, had them cleaned and repaired, at a cost of 20/-, and placed in Swindale Chapel. Then, in 1938, the Manchester corporation demolished the chapel. When the matter of the disposal of its contents came before the chancellor, he refused the application of the rector of Clifton for its return and assigned it to Shap,

the mother parish of Swindale. But, with true Christian courtesy, the Vicar and Parochial Church council agreed to return it to Clifton. Owing to the war nothing further was done, so fortunately it escaped damage in the explosion. The story of its adventures ends with its replacement in the east window in the restoration of the church that took place after that event. (This account is based upon Mr Whiteside's book, on a manuscript history of the parish compiled by the rector, Rev. W. M. Keys-Wells, and on notes about the explosion and the restoration of the church made by the Rev. W. Breay).

By one of those fortunate events that help to make life bearable for the historian, the churchwardens' accounts of this parish have survived at the very time when an extensive restoration of the church took place in 1677-95. The rector concerned was Rowland Burrows, 1668-1707; he was also rector of Brougham from 1680. In 1677 we get this entry "changing the silver bowle £1. 2s. 2d." The earliest piece of plate surviving is dated 1709, so the meaning of this entry is lost. Next year (1679-80) the work commenced in earnest. The Royal Commission volume says the porch is "of uncertain date"; our accounts tell us about it:—

	s.	d.
The Mason for mending the church porch.	5	1
George Abbot for two days work at ye sd porch.	1	0
Robert Robinson for one day at the said porch.	6	
for two cartfuls of stones and leading them.	6	
taking down and setting up ye door top, in drink.	6	
Robert Robinson for once going to Penrith.	2	

The next task undertaken was slating the church roof, which seems to have been a long job.

1679—one cartful of slate and fetching it from Clifton Quarry.	9	
1685-6 cartful of slate and fetching it from Penrith Fell.	1	
1688-9 5 cartfuls of slate and fetching it.	6	8
1692, mending church slate.	3	
	4	

In 1685-6 there are entries "for moss to ye church 12d. and mossaing of it 5s." and in 1688-9 an entry "for moss 1s. 2d." and in 1709 "for moss and mending of ye church slate 8d."

I was puzzled what this could be for, but a reference to Miss Fair soon solved the problem. She tells me that there are similar entries in some of the Eskdale accounts and that her father, being likewise puzzled, was told by one of the oldest inhabitants that "the old, imperfect way of slatting the roof made it necessary to stuff the slates with moss (as a ship is caulked) to make the roof weather tight when there was wind and driving rain and snow. A friend in this district with an old house which leaked had the builder to cope with it pro. temp., to save expense of complete roofing, and the builder stuffed lead under the slates in the same way as his forefathers used moss."

Meanwhile an extensive scheme of general repair must have been going on because the accounts for 1682 record "spent in repairing the church £13. 7s. od." Bishop Nicolson in 1703 noted that it was "exceedingly well seated" and the Royal Commission volume mentions, on the south wall of the chancel, three 17th century panels and on the north choir stalls a small panel with the initials and date I.B.D. 1683 (? James and Dorothy Bird). In 1848 there was also in the chancel a panel with R.B.L. 1682 on it, perhaps the initials of the rector and his wife. In 1684 the accounts include "for setting up the dyall 12d." Does this refer to the placing of the sundial at present on the top of the churchyard cross? If so, what was the fate of the original cross-head? In this connection it is interesting to note that W. G. Collingwood, in his "Inventory of Ancient Monuments" (CW2 xxvi 14) states "15th ? cent. cross-head now on E gable." Is this the lost head? The next year's accounts contain entries for "mending ye church bible 8d. and mending the reading pew 4d."

Now the story of the repair of the church bells must be told. It commences with these entries:—

1683	for carriage of bell to Penrith to Tho. Boak.	—
	for a link to hang ye bell in.	—
1684	for a bell rope.	12d.
	for mending a bell, to David Harrison.	5s. 6d.
	for ye head stock of bell.	6d.
	and spent in ale at same time.	10d.
	for hanging ye bell.	6d.
1689	for 2 bell ropes.	2s.
1694	mending great bell.	—
	ropes to the bells.	—

Bell ropes seem to have had rather a short life in those days. Did they perhaps use them more than we do to-day?

In 1687-8 the altar and its furnishings were looked to; the rails are not noticed by the commissioners. The entries are:—

(Ric)hard Dalton	for Rayles about the alter.	2s.
—	Harrison and Henry Cliburn for smith's work.	
	and mason work to ye sd Rayles.	—
—	pound of lead and drink when the Rayles were set up.	—
	for a Communion Table.	5s.

What was there before the table was set up? The use of the word altar in the previous entry makes one wonder if by any chance the medieval stone had survived. In this year there is also an entry "for mending the church Wicket 6d." which shows that the churchyard was properly fenced in, and one in 1691 "for mending the churchyard wall, 7d." Next year the church fabric again needed attention, and the bill was £1. 6s. 9d., with an extra 1/6 "in ale to ye workmen."

So the rector must have received his notice of the coming visitation of the bishop with equanimity. And indeed Nicolson was unusually complimentary. He noted that "both the Quire and Body of ye church here are exceedingly well seated, well floored . . . Most of the Quire lately new roofed by the present incumbent. The books and vestments are all very good . . . the arch

betwixt ye chancell and body of ye church has been lately taken down and that alteration makes both much warmer than they were before." (*Miscellany Accounts*, 68).

This last statement is puzzling; it seems as if there must have been originally a low 12th century arch between nave and chancel. By this time the accounts have ceased to be preserved. But the worthy rector surely deserves that the record of his burial from the parish register should be given:—

"Mr Rowland Borrow Rector of Browhame and Clifton, chaplain to the earle of Thanet, M.A. St. John's College, Cambridge was buried in Clifton Quire Nov. 26 1707."

Then in 1709, Jeremiah Seed, 1707-22, being rector, we again have accounts, preserved perhaps because of their interest, since they record some extensive work on the church.

	£	s.	d.
To Mr Tho. Webster for beautifying ye church.	3	15	0
for 2 frames for ye Q's Armes and 10 Com.		12	6
for canvas to write ye Comandmts on.		4	0
for mending a frame, making scaffolds and many other things.		2	6
to smith for crooks and nails.		2	5
spent when we made ye bargain with Mr Webster.			8
spent when ye Q's arms was hung up.		1	0
for a cartload of slate and bringing it.		1	6
for moss and mending ye church slate.			8
for mending ye churchyard wall.			6
for sending up to London and bringing down ye plate.	2	0	

This word "Beautifying" above means painting texts surrounded with decoration on the walls; these survived until the explosion when they were whitened over. The church thus lost an interesting period piece but gained in lightness. The plate mentioned is the paten still in use. The chalice was given by Thomas and Mary Wybergh in memory of their eldest son in 1747; it is described in *Old Church Plate in the Diocese of Carlisle*, 146-7.

There are several matters of interest in the churchwardens' accounts which seem worthy of notice, even though strictly they are outside the scope of this article. In almost every one of these accounts a charge is made for "setting up the cuckstool." Sometimes this has happened once in the year, at other times twice; in 1709 the return is three times, so its use does not appear to have been diminishing. The dictionary describes the ducking or cucking stool as a chair in which common scolds were tied and plunged into water. In the illustration to my dictionary a woman is shewn about to suffer this punishment; but upon the question as to which sex was most frequently found in it, I will not venture an opinion. Strange though it be, little on this subject can be found in our *Transactions* or other books on local history; Thomas Curwen claimed the right to have a cuckstool and a pillory in his manor of Seton in 1292 (CW2 xiv 354), and the abbot of Furness had the same privileges in Dalton in Furness, also in 1292. In the latter place its site is preserved in the place name Cuckstool-dub (CW2 x 313). As the stocks are also mentioned in the accounts for 1682 — mending them cost 7d. — it looks as if the Lords of the manor of Clifton must at some time have had a charter conferring these privileges. The subject is an interesting one that requires further elucidation. The only other matter of interest is an entry in the 1782 accounts "spent the day we perambulated the fields 7d.," which shews this ancient custom was still observed.

To return to the history of the church, no record of anything of interest has come down to us until 1846 except for a reference in 1795 to the sale of the two old bells, the proceeds from which were to go towards the purchase of one new bell.

In about 1846 the chancel was in danger of falling down; it is generally said that it was rebuilt, with the

suggestion that little of the old work remained. Fortunately Mr Keys-Wells kept a letter from the second Lord Brougham which gives the facts:—

“ When I, many years ago, undertook the rebuilding of Clifton chancel, being satisfied from the very peculiar construction of the lancet window arches, that the date was late 12th century—viz. 1180—I was so anxious to restore it intact that I had every stone, as it was taken down, distinctly numbered — only two were broken—namely the lintel of the door way and one of the east window arch. They were carefully copied from the broken pieces and it is difficult now to tell them from the old stones. The wall decoration is an exact facsimile of the original, not so old as the walls but still such as had existed there for centuries. The stalls had to be remade for the originals were broken to pieces when the walls fell down and crushed them.”

From an inscription, with 1683 on it, still remaining in the church, it is obvious that some of the old wood-work was also saved. The explosion on 3 November has already been mentioned. In many ways it was a blessing as it blew down the ceiling, so we can now see the roof beams and also it blew out the Victorian glass, so we can not only see in the church but can also see out of the church the fells and the blue sky and the shifting clouds and the busy world passing by.

It is strange but true that according to our indexes only two articles—on those of Kendal and Shap—have been published in *Transactions* on Churchwardens' Accounts. Yet here is a class of document generally easy to read and to be found, not in faraway London but in the custody of the local clergy. So may the hope be expressed that some more papers on them may be forthcoming.