



FIG. 1.—Uldale. Old Parish Church of St. James. General view from S.W.

facing p. 51.

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ART. V.—*Uldale Church.*

Read at Carlisle, April 11th, 1959.

Part i. *Uldale church: history and changes.*

By the Rev. F. B. SWIFT.

THE parish of Uldale extends about five miles westward from the slopes of Skiddaw and includes some fine scenery; the wild beauty of the eastern part being particularly attractive with its fells, valleys, narrow roads, isolated farms and two small "lakes."

The parish is sparsely populated and the actual village of Uldale is a small cluster of houses standing on the ancient highway from Cockermouth to Carlisle. In the fourteenth century there was a chapel of ease¹ in the village, but in 1523 it was stated to be in decay, and no trace of it remains.

The name Uldale comes from the old Norse *ulfs dair* meaning Ulf's valley or from *ulfa diar*, wolves valley,² and it should be noted that it is not derived from the river Ellen as was suggested by John Denton.³

Known locally as "The Old Church", to distinguish it from the new church built in 1869, the church of St. James the Apostle lies about three-quarters of a mile to the north-west of the village and stands on the upper bank of the Ellen on a site which has been occupied by a church for at least seven hundred and fifty years. Mr Bulman shows in Part ii of this paper that although it was rebuilt in 1730 the walls contain masonry of a much earlier date. That the church was here at the beginning of the 13th century is established by a report drawn up about 1217, when the area between Pallet Hill (near

¹ Nicolson & Burn ii 132 and *Prelates and People* 160.

² *The Place-Names of Cumberland* 327 (English Place-Name Society).

³ *An Account*, by John Denton, 48 (CW Tract Series II).

Greystoke) and Uldale was added to Allerdale forest, for the document contains the useful information that the new boundary ran: by the old King's road to the water of Alne [the Ellen] by the Church at Ulvedale.⁴

There are two other 13th-century references to the church which are of interest. One occurs in the Holm Cultram Abbey register (c. 1250) where the name of Thomas de Morisceby, rector of Ulvedale, appears as a witness,⁵ while the other is in the papal taxation returns of 1291 which give the value of the benefice as £18.⁶ The existence of the church at such an early date suggests that, like others in the deanery of Allerdale which are mentioned in these returns, it may have had a pre-Norman foundation. When the papal taxation lists were revised in 1318, the value of the benefice had fallen to £5, a marked decrease occurring in many other places in the county and possibly due to Scottish depredations.⁶

In December 1358, Adam de Bastenthwayt made his will (which was proved at Rose on 31 January 1358-9). In it he left some marks to the priest of Uldale for requiems for his soul.⁷

Probably about this time an unknown benefactor presented the chalice case made of boiled leather; a treasured possession, still used for its original purpose.

A list of rectors beginning with Robert de Depyng, who died 19 May 1305, is given in N. & B.,⁸ and the well preserved medieval grave-slab in the south-east part of the churchyard, displaying chalice and missal, without doubt commemorates a 14th-century rector.

At the valuation of ecclesiastical benefices in 1535 the living⁹ was returned as worth £17. 17s. Unfortunately the church's possessions cannot be identified in the

⁴ CW2 v 43.

⁵ *Register & Records of Holm Cultram* 29.

⁶ *P. & P.* 472.

⁷ Test. Karl 23.

⁸ ii 131-133. A complete list of rectors is not given in the present article as it is hoped to do this on another occasion.

⁹ Hutchinson ii 371.

inventory of church goods compiled in 1552¹⁰ because its name, like others in the deanery, is missing from the appropriate page of the manuscript owing to deterioration or other cause.

The church passed through the vicissitudes of the Reformation period without there being anything unusual to record, and although there were changes there was no break with the past.

Early in the next century, and about 1618, the entry "Parson of Ulndale a musket" appears in an assessment of the clergy for horse and armour,¹¹ and in the Visitation and Correction Books at the Diocesan Registry among the presentations for things needing attention are the following:

1663 Churchwardens for want of a bason to receive the almes in, and for want of a chist or coffer with three locks (1664-1670, f. 17).

9 Jan. 1666 Churchwardens for want of a Bible of the new translation & 2 books of Homilyes (*ibid.*, f. 260).

25 July 1682 Matheu Cape for teaching school without a licence (1682-1692).

April 1689 Churchyard wall out of repair (*ibid.*).

1691 George Scott & Robert Nicholson for not repairing their part of the churchyard wall (*ibid.*).

1675 Want of tables of degrees (1670-1682, f. 148).¹²

To these can be added from the Bishops' transcripts an answer given by the churchwardens to a 1674 list of inquiries:

2ly. Concerninge the church all things are in good repaire save, onely, the King's armes which are now in repairinge.

The royal arms, painted on wood, hung over the door at the west end of the church until about two years ago when the board was removed owing to the paintwork having worn off.

¹⁰ CWI viii 186-204.

¹¹ Episcopal Registers, 1561-1643.

¹² The figures in brackets indicate the volumes in which the entries appear.

Bishop Nicolson visited the church on 24 August 1703 and thanks to him¹³ we know something about its condition at that time. He observes:

“Uldale. Aug. 24. The quire wants rails about the Altar, and is miserably crowded with seats; three of which are (Mr Dalston’s) the Patron’s, and the fourth is claim’d by Mr Richmond of Orthwait. This last was given in exchange for one where the reading-desk is now placed. The rector’s is inconveniently wedged in on the north side of the Communion-table. Mr Gregory the rector, had newly roughcasten & plaster’d it against my coming; and promises to put the south window into a more decent posture, it being now almost half wall’d up.

“In the body of the church (wch was likewise put lately into a better condition within and without) the pulpit is newly remov’d for the better: But the whole looks dark still, and wants the opening of its little windows to the bottome. Halfe the seats are good; and the rest (for the women) look a little mean. They have not a bible of the new translation;¹⁴ But the common-prayer book, book of Homilies, etc. are well.”

The next official comment on the church is from the pen of John Waugh, Chancellor of the diocese 1727-1765. Shortly after 1730 he wrote in his notes under “Uldale”:

“Mr Joseph Backhouse the present rector instituted in 1719. There is a new neat decent church built.¹⁵ It is remarkable that this little parish in a year or two built their church-built and enlarged a school with £200 — Value [of benefice] £60 abetter [in a footnote he adds: so valued in 1749]. Families 1730-50. Dissenters 2 & Quakers 2 — Patron Mr Dalston of Acorn Bank. In 1747 only 43 families & but one a Dissenter a Quaker.”

That the date of rebuilding was 1730 is confirmed in Hutchinson’s *Cumberland* (1797), in which there is a description of the church which, though brief, is specially valuable because it was contributed (as was most of the other information about Uldale) by the Rev. Joseph Cape, rector of the parish. It reads (ii 371):

“It [the church] was rebuilt in the year 1730, at the sole

¹³ *Miscellany Accounts* 78-79. The brackets are the Bishop’s.

¹⁴ The authorised version of 1611.

¹⁵ Waugh’s notes are in the archives department, The Courts, Carlisle. There is a copy of the notes at Tullie House. He was wrong in stating the church to be new built. It was a rebuilding incorporating earlier work.

expençe of the inhabitants. It is but small, being twenty-two yards in length, and but eight in breadth. It is decently pewed, and kept in tolerable good repair."

After 1730 the only major alteration to the structure of the church was the rebuilding of the chancel in 1837. There is nothing to support the statement in CW2 xxiii 241 that rebuilding took place in 1830.

In 1837 a faculty was granted to rebuild and enlarge the chancel and to build a vestry. By the same faculty a seat was allotted in the gallery at the west end of the nave to Mr J. Gilbanks of Whitefield who, with the rector (the Rev. Joshua Clark), had had the work carried out, as the inscription over the vestry door testifies. This is the only evidence that such a gallery existed and it must have been removed many years ago.

A vestry book (1844-1921) records that the nave was reroofed and receiled in 1855 for £21. 17s. 6d.

At the end of last century the church still had box pews and no doubt some kind of a three-decker pulpit, but in 1901 a welcome improvement took place when the former were replaced by the present seats. Boards on which were inscribed the creed and ten commandments were removed from the east wall, presumably from the two recesses, and from behind the altar, but though the old pulpit was taken away a new one was not provided. The sanctuary was furnished with a new altar and a credence table. In 1914 the plaster ceiling in the nave was removed and the present fine open roof constructed, and in 1955 cylinder gas lighting was installed. As for some time the south wall, both in chancel and nave, had been suffering from the effects of extreme dampness, the defective plaster on it was removed in 1959 and the wall replastered on metal lathing.

On the west wall of the nave a brass commemorates Thomas Thomlinson, master of Uldale Grammar School, who became a merchant in North Carolina and died in 1802, leaving the residue of his property to certain schools,

including Uldale. An 18th-century tablet on the same wall records a gift to the poor by Thomas Cape, born at Horsemoor Hills, who died in 1773; and a brass fixed to a flagstone in the floor is in memory of John Fell of Stockdale, who died in 1713. On the north wall of the chancel are two monuments to the Gilbanks family.

The original small churchyard, slightly enlarged by eleven perches at the north-west corner in 1911, received an addition of about 1/5th of an acre in 1957. At the corner of the field near the lychgate is a small building, formerly the church stable, and either it or an earlier one was built as Nicolson records at the charge of John Fell of Stockdale, "at the gate of the churchyard for the use of those that live at the like distance from the church with himself."¹⁶ It is now private property. John Fell is the man commemorated on the brass already mentioned, and the same person who visited the Bishop on 21 April 1704 to consult him about getting a new bible and common prayer book for the church.¹⁷

The parish registers date from 1642, and volume one, which ends in 1698, is stated on the fly-leaf at the beginning to be a copy "taken from an old paper register" and the copyist has entered at the end "Copy'd by me Edward Backhouse rector in the year 1725." When Nicolson visited the church in 1703 he saw an older volume commencing 1605,¹⁸ but unfortunately it has been missing for many years. Volume one contains, among other things, a list of briefs 1725-1766 and the estimate for building the new rectory in 1871. The former rectory was presumably the one that Nicolson says "was mostly built (from the ground) by Mr Nevinson, the late rector",¹⁸ and of which Waugh wrote in 1730: "I have often seen the house, which is kept as well as so damp a situation will allow and always inhabited by Mr Backhouse & family." The plan of the parish given in the

¹⁶ *Miscellany* 79.

¹⁷ CW2 i 116.

¹⁸ *Miscellany* 79.



photo by G. C. Bulman.

FIG. 2.—Uldale Old Church. From the N.E.

facing p. 56.

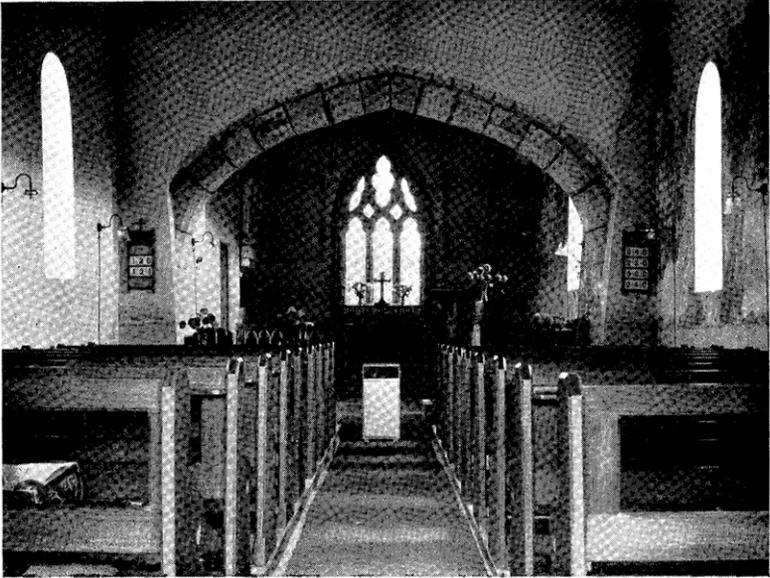


FIG. 3.—Uldale Old Parish Church of St. James. Looking East.

facing p. 57.

title award of 1840 shows that it stood in the front garden of the present rectory. The fine, though dilapidated, Georgian gateway into the garden at the south-east end of the boundary fence is probably the only thing appertaining to the older house that remains, and it was obviously erected at the time of the 1730 rebuilding of the church.

The benefice (once in the deanery of Allerdale and now of Wigton) has always been rectorial, though the advowson which was for long attached to the manor was sold in 1798 by Thomas Gaff of Whitefield, then lord of the manor, to the Rev. Joseph Cape; his son Jonathan sold it in 1833 to Joseph Gilbanks, one of whose descendants transferred it to The Queen's College, Oxford. It was united with that of Ireby in 1925 (the parishes, however, remaining separate) and the patronage is now exercised by the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle and The Queen's College alternately.

Part ii. *Architectural descriptions*. By C. G. BULMAN.

I. ST. JAMES'S CHURCH.

The church of St. James, Uldale stands picturesquely isolated in its churchyard midway between Uldale and Ireby. Although the site is level towards the main road on the east of the church, there is a steep descent to the little river Ellen immediately below the west end.

The dedication is to St. James the Apostle, as at Hutton-in-the-Forest and Waberthwaite, both on pre-Norman sites. There are similar dedications at Burton-in-Kendal, Ormside, Long Marton and Temple Sowerby, but these dedications are not mentioned until late. (Cf. "Patron Saints in the Diocese of Carlisle" by T. H. B. Graham and W. G. Collingwood, CW2 xxv 1-27.)

It is remarkable that no account of this church appears to have been compiled for these *Transactions*, nor, so far as is known, has it ever been visited by the Society. The

reason for this may be that it was largely abandoned for services after the church of St. John the Evangelist was built in 1869 and it remained more or less disused until recently. With the closing of the new church in 1957 for services it is now in use and in good structural condition.

It is a comparatively humble structure consisting of an aisleless nave and chancel, separated by a chancel arch, and vestry. There is a small bell-cote at the west end. The walls are limewashed externally and the church sits unobtrusively on its site in the Cumberland fell-church tradition, making no attempt whatever to compete with its magnificent scenic surroundings.

Mr Swift has shown in Part i that the first mention of the church is *c.* 1217, from which we may assume that there was already a building on the site. There are no remains or indications in or about the church from which a Saxon origin might be assumed, although it is possible that the builders of the present structure swept away completely an earlier church. The building displays the usual two-chamber plan of a small Norman church; that is, an aisleless nave separated by an arch from a slightly narrower chancel. This simple plan has remained almost completely unaltered during successive rebuildings, apart from the addition of the vestry. There are no indications of a south porch and the entrance has probably always been at the west end where it now is. The existing chancel is an almost complete rebuilding of last century (1837) but an examination of the plan shows that it is proportionate to the nave — the length of the chancel is exactly half that of the nave. It is tempting to suppose that in rebuilding the chancel the 19th century builders simply rebuilt on the existing foundations and that the original builders had set out their little church in this way. There would certainly be nothing unusual in such a lay-out, and Barton can be instanced, where the original 12th-century church, although set out with a more ambitious

three-chamber plan — a nave of two squares, an axial tower of one, and a chancel beyond of one square, is also an example of a calculated proportion of masses.

The church at Uldale was almost completely Georgianised during the reconstruction of 1730 and the outer walls now show simple semi-circular headed windows, each with narrow stone dressings and a small key-stone. At the west end there is a large but well-proportioned door with a cornice of simple classical type, and with dressings of yellow sandstone. A close examination of the masonry, however, so far as the successive coats of limewash externally and the plastered walls internally will allow, reveals something of the small building's architectural history.

The north wall stands on a rough rubble plinth, projecting approximately 2 in. This wall, 2 ft. 3 in. in thickness, is somewhat thinner than the south wall, which is 2 ft. 6 in. and shows signs of irregular masonry below the roughcasting and limewash of later date. The three windows are obvious insertions of 1730 and we may assume that this is perhaps the oldest portion of the church. The west end with its western entrance has been almost completely rebuilt and has certainly been refaced, probably with some of the older material. One of the quoin stones displays an equal-armed cross in outline. The wall here is over 3 ft. thick. The south wall appears to be a complete rebuilding on a well defined plinth with regular coursed masonry and containing three semi-circular headed windows matching the windows on the north side all of 1730. This walling stops abruptly at the east end of the nave, where it sets back to join the chancel. The wall here, abutting the chancel arch internally, is obviously of earlier date.

The chancel is an almost complete reconstruction of 1837, but there are indications of older masonry in the lower courses of north and south walls near the junction with the nave. It contains two semi-circular headed

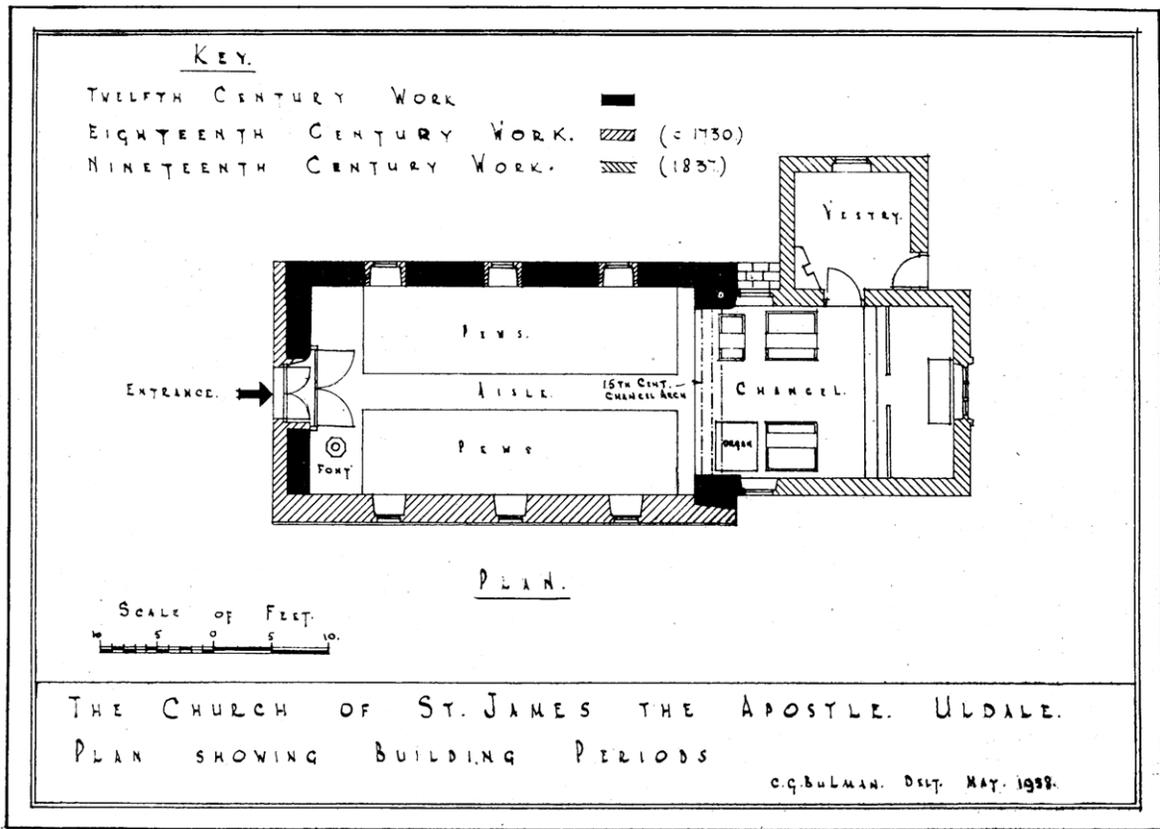


FIG. 4.

windows of similar type to those in the nave, probably preserved from the earlier chancel restored or rebuilt in the 1730's and reinserted during the 1837 rebuilding. These two windows face each other at the west end of the chancel, and the only other window in the chancel is the east window. This, rather surprisingly, is of Gothic design and has an acutely pointed arch with some elaborate tracery of intersecting ogee arches, presumably an insertion of 1837. Its construction is interesting. The jambs of the window are built up and coursed in with the main eastern wall, and are of rather rough finish, obviously done by a local mason. The two mullions are monoliths and have the same rough finish as the window jambs. The elaborate tracery in the window head is, however, of different stone and finer finish, and has been inserted separately into the window head. Presumably it was executed elsewhere by a more skilled craftsman and imported into the parish.

The vestry is the same age as the chancel (1837) and is separately gabled at right angles to it. It is lighted by a semi-circular headed window. I have surveyed the church and prepared a plan showing the various building dates (fig. 4).

The interior of the church is simple and effective. The most noticeable feature is the chancel arch, the only visible ancient feature now remaining in the church. It is a four-centred arch of two orders, of late Gothic type, simply chamfered and springing from imposts which slope back slightly. It is probably of Tudor date, constructed by the local stone-mason and possibly superseding an earlier chancel of Norman date. The bell-cote was originally situated directly above this chancel arch before being transferred to the west end, and Nicolson noted on 24 August 1703 that "the Belfrey, betwixt the Church and Quire, endangers the Arch whereon it stands." There is no sign at all of any weakness or settlement in the arch now. Perhaps Nicolson was misled by the depressed four-centred form of the arch.

The walls are plastered and distempered internally. The open-timbered roof is modern, but adds greatly to the effect of the interior. It was erected in 1914 when the plaster ceiling was removed.

The church was re-seated and repaired in 1901 by Mrs Lawrence of Whitefield, and assumed its present internal appearance.

The fronts of the choir stalls consist of the remains of 18th century panelling, formerly in the chancel.

The font has an ancient base of indeterminate age. The upper part is a plain red-sandstone basin octagonal on the outside. It may date from the rebuilding of the church in 1730 and has possibly been re-tooled at the time of the rebuilding of the chancel last century.

The main oak entrance doors, and the inner vestibule doors and screen of pitch-pine were presented to the church by the trustees of St. Mary's Church, Carlisle, when that church was demolished. They were designed, with the church, by Ewan Christian who built St. Mary's Church in 1870. They were erected at Uldale in 1955.

Easily the most important and interesting fitting connected with the church is the case of "cuir-bouilli." This is mentioned by Nicolson thus: "The Cup for the Communion is thin, old and little, kept in a fair old leathern case bearing the date 1571." The case is 7 in. high and the outside is ornamented with patterns of crowns and leaves. This case is much older than 1571 and may have been made for the original medieval chalice. It may possibly date from the 14th century. It is described in CWI vii and illustrated by a drawing. It has now been photographed and is reproduced in this article (fig. 5).

The chalice is of silver, 6 in. high and dates from the reign of Elizabeth I.¹⁹

The lychgate is modern and was erected in 1915 by a resident from a design by Sir Charles Nicholson.

In conclusion it may be said that these small fell

¹⁹ *Old church Plate in Diocese of Carlisle* 65.



photo by Alfred Brown, Ireby.

FIG. 5.—Uldale Church. Chalice case of "Cuir bonilli".
Probably 14th century.

facing p. 62.

churches, built in the folds of the mountains or upon the bare uplands, are usually constructed with local materials and by local labour, unambitious in scale and sufficient for the communities they served. Because of these facts they must claim our interest and attention, however modest their proportions. In post-Reformation times, as we may observe from Bishop Nicolson's remarks, they became cluttered up with pews and galleries, the pews even invading the chancel. Plastered ceilings were constructed below timbered roofs, destroying the usual happy proportions of the interiors. When all these accretions are swept away, as at Uldale, we can see and admire the simplicity of the interiors.

When they were completed they were limewashed for protection, for limewash is a wonderful preservative against the weather. What is more attractive than these small fell churches of ours, set against a green hillside or an autumn landscape, with their whitewashed walls standing out against a blue sky? The old parish church of St. James at Uldale is a pleasant and well-preserved example. We may well rejoice that it has once again returned to its original purpose as the mother church of the ancient fell parish of Uldale.

2. ST. JOHN'S CHURCH.

This church is a modern building in the village of Uldale, and was built in 1869 by the two sons of the Rev. J. Cape, rector for forty-four years.

It consists of an aisleless nave and chancel, separated by a chancel arch. There is a tower with a broach spire to the south-west of the nave, and a vestry on the south side of the chancel. The church is an example of the Gothic revival of last century and is an essay in the Early-English-Decorated style. It is constructed of red sandstone with rusticated masonry, and is a singularly inappropriate design for its position. It has been remarked

that churches in mountainous or hilly districts do not as a rule have tall towers and spires and do not compete with their surroundings. It is in flat districts that great towers and spires appear. This Victorian Gothic church might have been designed for a town suburb rather than for a Cumberland fell-village.

The interior is dark, lighted only by a few lancet windows with a quatrefoil in the head of each. The church, although designed by an architect, lacks the charm and suitability of the old church of St. James, built by local labour with local materials, and so entirely appropriate to its position. The architect was Mr Greyson of Liverpool.

The church has become structurally unsafe and may ultimately be demolished. This brief description, together with the accompanying photograph will serve as a record of a Victorian Gothic-Revival church of indifferent merit, the loss of which may not be greatly deplored.



FIG. 6.—New Church of St. John the Evangelist, Uldale.
View from S.W.