

ART. XII.—*Ireby church*. By the Rev. F. B. SWIFT  
and C. G. BULMAN.

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PART I: *Ireby church and parish : History and changes.*  
By the Rev. F. B. SWIFT.

THE parish of Ireby consists of the villages of Ireby, High Ireby and Ruthwaite with a few scattered houses and farms. The place-name Ireby means the town or village of the Irishman (or men)<sup>1</sup> and points to its having been settled by the descendants of Scandinavians who had made their home in Ireland.

Though the main village is now simply called Ireby it has been previously known as Low Ireby, Base Ireby and Market Ireby, the last name being connected with the fact that in 1236 William de Ireby was granted permission to hold a weekly market and a yearly fair.<sup>2</sup> The only tangible reminder of the market is to be seen in the remains of the old market cross at the south end of the village. Nearby is the Moot Hall, much added to and made into a number of dwellings last century; the middle part contains fabric of an early date. Its name, if not its appearance, recalls that it was originally built to serve as the meeting-place of the village elders or moot. After the Norman manorial system was established the manor court would meet there.

Somewhere in the vicinity was the old moated manor-house mentioned in 1367 in a grant of land by Sir Robert de Tilliol, whose will was dated at Ireby on 5 April of the same year.<sup>3</sup>

The parish church of St James, Apostle and Martyr, was built in 1845-6, the foundation stone being laid on

<sup>1</sup> *Place-Names of Cumberland* 299-300 (English Place-Name Society).

<sup>2</sup> Lyson's *Cumberland* 118.

<sup>3</sup> CW2 xxi 148 and *Test. Karl.* 82.

13 August 1845: it was opened for worship on 6 December 1846 and consecrated by the Bishop of Carlisle on 10 May 1847. Stone from the old church appears to have been used to some extent and according to tradition the woodwork, stone windows, door jambs and most of the furniture were brought from a demolished temporary church in some place unknown. The fact that the church only cost about £500 to build seems to support this view. Its most cherished possession is the late Norman font, preserved from the old church of Ireby, together with a piscina, a medieval grave-slab and a few other stone fragments which have been built into the boundary wall and the porch. The grave-slab (in the porch) is 13th century and bears the inscription:

*H. Jacet: Joh: De: Ireby:  
Cum: Matri: Sibyl Diccione*

The first line is, of course, "Here lies John de Ireby", but the second is a puzzle for it does not appear to be grammatically correct. Possibly the craftsman who carved it made a mistake either in trying to abbreviate or through misunderstanding. Presumably it was meant to mean "With Sibil mother of the aforesaid".<sup>4</sup>

The church, being much infested with dry-rot, was restored in 1961. The furnishings, which were for the most part of poor quality and design, were removed and in their place were substituted the altar, rails, pews and pulpit from St John's, Uldale, these being no longer required in their original setting. The result is a great improvement and a credit to the people of the parish for having the scheme carried out and for raising the necessary funds.

#### **The old church.**

The dedication is unknown and all that remains is the chancel, as the nave and north aisle were demolished

<sup>4</sup> The slab is illustrated opposite p. 18 in CW2 ix and described with another fragment on p. 22 f. The word given as *Diccione* is really *Diccione*.

when St James's church was built in 1845-6. The chancel stands in the old churchyard, about a mile to the west of Ireby village, and a description of its interesting features is given by Mr Bulman in the second part of this paper.

The church was given by Alan, son of Waldeve, and lord of Allerdale, to the prior and convent of Carlisle by whom it was appropriated, the grant being confirmed by Henry II and Edward III.<sup>5</sup> The circumstances of the gift are interesting because Alan gave it, together with a relic of the Holy Cross, when his son, Waldeve, was buried in the priory *c.* 1150.<sup>6</sup> After the establishment of the bishopric in 1133, when the priory church became the cathedral, all endowments belonging to the priory and bishopric were held in common. Later they were divided between them, and Ireby church and its endowments naturally remained in the hands of the prior and convent as is shown by an extract dated 1249 taken from a Charter Roll of 1290.<sup>7</sup> The church is listed among the spiritual possessions of the priory in Bishop Welton's Primary Visitation in 1355, and was served by paid chaplains (*per capellanos conducticios*).<sup>8</sup>

The late Norman features of the old chancel show that the church was built about the time of Alan's gift to Carlisle Priory, *i.e.* *c.* 1150. Presumably there was a church there before, but we have no evidence of this.

Like similar churches, Ireby is mentioned in the papal taxation of 1291 and the revised one of 1318.

Originally the benefice was rectorial. When a benefice was appropriated, the appropriating body became thereby the perpetual rector and the bishop concerned usually directed that a vicarage should be constituted, which meant that a vicar had to be appointed and the lesser tithes allotted for his stipend. This did not happen in the

<sup>5</sup> N. & B. ii 129.

<sup>6</sup> *Wetheral* 387; *Holm Cultram* 118.

<sup>7</sup> *VCH Cumberland* ii 124-126.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* ii 136.

case of Ireby and, as already noticed, the priory paid secular priests, called chaplains, to carry out the parochial duties. By the 16th century the priest was styled curate and about a hundred years later perpetual curate, the latter style continuing in use until the middle of the 19th century. A perpetual curate came to be little different in status from a vicar, but the former was licensed, not instituted, usually had a very meagre stipend and was not always provided with a house.

This was the case at Ireby, the stipend in the 18th and early part of the 19th century being only £25 per ann., but in the early years of the latter century a small dwelling, with a few acres of land, at High Ireby was bought (possibly through Queen Anne's Bounty) to serve as a parsonage. In 1868 under *The Incumbents' Act*, which came into force on 31 July, the style of the benefice was changed to a vicarage, and the Rev. Joshua Clark, who had been perpetual curate for some years, being also rector of Uldale, automatically became the first vicar and resigned his other benefice. The property at High Ireby was sold and a house in Ireby village was bought for use as a vicarage (it is now called the Old Vicarage) and was in turn sold when the present vicarage was built by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1879 at a cost of £1,506. The same Commissioners had also helped to increase the stipend in 1868.

Nothing much is known about the vicissitudes of the church until the early 17th century when the Episcopal Registers and Visitation and Correction Books<sup>9</sup> begin to furnish some items of interest. From the latter we get the earliest known name of a perpetual curate — Thomas Jennings in 1606. Among the presentations for inadequacies and wrong-doings are the following:

- 1663 Churchwardens for want of a book of homilies, a chest for alms & a chest or coffer for the register book
- 1664 Churchwardens for wanting a Bible of ye new translation and two books of homilies

<sup>9</sup> Deposited at the Record Office, Carlisle Castle.

- 1665 July 26 Thomas Buttermer of Low Ireby for plowing up  
ye churchway  
1669 William Jennings of Ireby for scaling manure on ye Lord's  
Day by ye testimony of John Simpson  
1674 Want of Bishop Jewel's works  
1674-5 Want of Tables of degrees  
1788 Simon Cowper for disturbing the minister in time of  
Divine Service  
1691 Richard Smithson for teaching school without a licence

On 21 August 1725 Joseph Slack and Abraham Jenings both of Ireby, "having competent estates in the parish" but no seat in the parish church, petitioned the bishop for leave to erect a pew 9 ft. long by 5 ft. 4 in. breadth "near the north<sup>10</sup> door in the nave or body of the church" for them and their families. The petition was certified by Tho: Nevinson, curate, Lancelot Salkeld and Jacob Messenger, churchwardens and a number of parishioners. A faculty was granted 9 October 1725,<sup>11</sup> so presumably they got their pew.

Bishop Nicolson visited the church 26 August 1703 and has left an interesting description of its condition.<sup>12</sup> He notes that the quire had been "brush'd up" in expectation of his visit but "'tis still very tawdry——". Here are no rails; and the floor is not half levell'd. There are in it three clumsy seats, for the impropiator and the tenants of Prior Hall.

He orders some benches behind the altar to be removed and makes a note of the inscription on the Crage monument, which Mr Bulman gives in the second part of this article, and continues:

The body of the church is pretty well seated; and somewhat beautify'd of late. The font stands in a corner; But order'd to be remov'd. The books are good. They want a flaggon for the wine at sacraments; and a platter for the bread. No book of homilies. One bell they have good; the other being broken and lost. Mr Ballantine petitions for a gallery; But will be slow in erecting it.

<sup>10</sup> "north" must be a mistake for "south" as the nave door was on the south side.

<sup>11</sup> Episcopal Registers, 1702-1734, 607.

<sup>12</sup> Nicolson, *Miscellany Accounts*, 91.

Though the bishop does not mention it, the church possessed a silver chalice of *c.* 1565. Unfortunately it was given away but was for some years preserved in a private house in a glass case on a plinth made of oak from the old church with the following inscription on a brass plate:

To/Mrs Grainger of High Ireby,/And in reversion to her son/  
Henry William Allerdale Grainger./This ancient sacramental  
cup/is gratefully presented/By the churchwardens of Ireby/  
as a memorial/Of the gift of a new Communion Service,/And  
of the baptism of her son in the new church/By the Right  
Reverend Hugh Percy,/Lord Bishop of Carlisle,/A.D. 1848.

The chalice was sold after Mrs Grainger's death in 1891 and its whereabouts are unknown.<sup>13</sup>

The curious lack of a paten ("platter for the bread") mentioned by the bishop was rectified because one is mentioned in a terrier and inventory of 1749 (at the Diocesan Registry), though both it and a pewter flagon listed in the same inventory are no longer in the church's possession. The book of homilies referred to was a volume of discourses issued under Elizabeth I and ordered to be read in churches, as was an earlier volume put out in the reign of Edward VI.

Dr John Waugh has something to say about the church and parish. He was chancellor of the diocese 1726-1765, and during that period he entered some notes about the state of the churches in his copy of Bishop Nicolson's *Miscellany Accounts*.<sup>14</sup> Of Ireby he wrote, *c.* 1740:

Mr Edward Backhouse (Rector of Uldale) the present curate nominated in 1736. This church stands a mile from the town (a very poor, forsaken ancient market town) and, nearer Uldale Church than their own. Mr Backhouse keeps a curate and between them the parish is very well taken care of. Mr Nevinson & Mr Thos. Nicolson held this curacy before with Torpenhow. The Tythes & Rectory are now in the possession of Mr Salkeld of Whitehall, or Mr Christian on mortgage & must soon be sold.

<sup>13</sup> *Old Church Plate in Diocese of Carlisle* 61 f.; *Supplement* (ed. Mrs H. Ware) 12.

<sup>14</sup> A copy of Waugh's notes made by the late R. S. Ferguson is in an interleaved copy of Nicolson's *Miscellany* at Tullie House, Carlisle.

I have often gone by this church which looks very decent on the outside, but it is so far from any Homes that I never got into it. Value £25 paid by the lesse, who used to give the curate also the surplice fees, but he has no claims to them. Fam[ilies] 71 Dissenters 3 fam: Quakers 2 Presbyterians — & papist 1 Patron the Dean & Chapter of Carlisle. The church was presented at the last visitation as out of repair. Mr Salkeld is gone out of England & his affairs left in great confusion.

Two points in connection with the extract call for comment. The first is about Mr Backhouse keeping a curate. There is a minor error on p. 360 of the late Canon Bouch's *Prelates and People of the Lake Counties* where it is stated that Waugh had noted that at Ireby "the vicar keeps a curate". Actually, it was Edward Backhouse who kept the curate in his capacity as Rector of Uldale and Perpetual Curate of Ireby. As explained earlier in this article, the style "vicar" did not come into use at Ireby until 1868.

The second is that Waugh says the tithes and rectory were in the possession of Mr Salkeld of Whitehall. It was the practice of the Dean and Chapter to grant leases of the land and tithes belonging to some of their appropriated rectories, and in the case of Ireby it was conditional on the payment by the lessee of the perpetual curate's stipend of £25 per ann.<sup>15</sup> As lessee, Mr Salkeld was evidently responsible for the repairs to the chancel.

The two oldest county histories (Nicolson & Burn and Hutchinson) have little to say about the church and not much about the parish, though Hutchinson (1799) gives a view of the village from the east (ii 368).

Although a Roman trough or vat of lead was turned up by a plough in 1943 about 400 yds. west of Ireby village, there is no evidence that there was a Roman fort here. The 17th-century belief that Ireby was the Roman *Arbeia* is no longer held, as competent scholars hold it to be untenable, though it is thought that the vat may

<sup>15</sup> *Fleming-Senhouse Papers* (ed. Edward Hughes) 107.

indicate agricultural development under Roman influence.<sup>16</sup>

Ireby was in the ancient deanery of Allerdale and is now in the modern one of Wigton. The Dean and Chapter of Carlisle have always been patrons of the living. In 1925 the benefice was united with that of Uldale (the parishes, however, remaining separate) and the patronage is now exercised by the Dean & Chapter and The Queen's College, Oxford (patrons of Uldale) alternately.<sup>17</sup>

#### The old churchyard.

With the consecration of the new church and churchyard in 1846 the old churchyard gradually went out of use, the last burial there being in 1902. It contains a number of headstones, some in memory of the Gilbanks family of Scawthwaite Close, and to the north-west of the chancel is the headstone of the Rev. James Marshall who died in 1842, after being perpetual curate for 64 years. On the south is the socket stone of the churchyard cross.

#### Parish Registers.

As the first volume commences as late as 1705 there must obviously have been earlier ones, but they have long ago disappeared. Baptisms, marriages and burials for 1666-1704 can be obtained from the Bishop's Transcripts in the Record Office, Carlisle Castle.

### PART II: *Ireby old church : Architectural description.*

By C. G. BULMAN.

It is a curious fact that the adjoining parishes of Uldale and Ireby, now united in one benefice (1925) but from time immemorial separate and distinct, should each of them possess an ancient church lying at some distance from the main centre of population, the distance of

<sup>16</sup> See Sir Ian Richmond's article, *A Roman vat of lead, from Ireby, Cumberland*, CW2 xlv 163-171. The vat is in Tullie House Museum.

<sup>17</sup> A complete list of incumbents from 1606 will be given in a future article.

course being the reason for the erection of a new church in Ireby for the better convenience of the parishioners. Uldale old parish church has already been described. (CW2 lix.) This article deals with the ancient church in Ireby.

Of this church only the chancel remains, for the nave was unfortunately completely demolished in 1845. The surviving chancel stands remote in its churchyard, surrounded by meadow land, at least a mile westward of the present village of Ireby. No road leads directly to the site; the only access is by a footpath across a field. This remaining fragment has until now been unrecorded, and has also, until recently, been almost completely unvisited, neglected, and practically forgotten.

As Mr Swift has pointed out in his historical introduction, even its dedication is unknown. The church, when entire, must have been one of more than ordinary interest judging by the fittings and fragments which remain, and it is hoped to show in this article that the surviving chancel has considerable architectural significance. Unfortunately, it was probably much tampered with at the time of the destruction of the nave in 1845, and it also underwent a drastic "restoration" by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1880, when the external faces of the east and west walls were largely reconstructed and a good deal of the architectural history of the fabric obliterated. From the demolished nave there fortunately survives the rare and very remarkable 12th-century font, hitherto unrecorded, and happily transferred to the new church in the village over a century ago. It will be described later in this article.

Geographically, the situation of the old church is singular, for it stands not only apart from the village, but also on the very confines of the parish. In fact, only the nearby stream separates it from the parish of Torpenhow. It is not, perhaps, very unusual for an ancient parish church to be sited at some distance from the village

it served and there are a number of instances in our diocese, apart from that of the adjoining parish of Uldale. There are generally reasons for the separation of the church and its nearest centre of population, and in some cases, such as those of Arthuret, Longtown; and Kirkoswald in the Eden Valley, it is obvious that the church was sited near to a hallowed spring, the village being elsewhere. In other cases it is difficult to account now for the isolation of the ancient foundation, the reason having disappeared with the passing of so many centuries. There is now nothing to show why this secluded site at

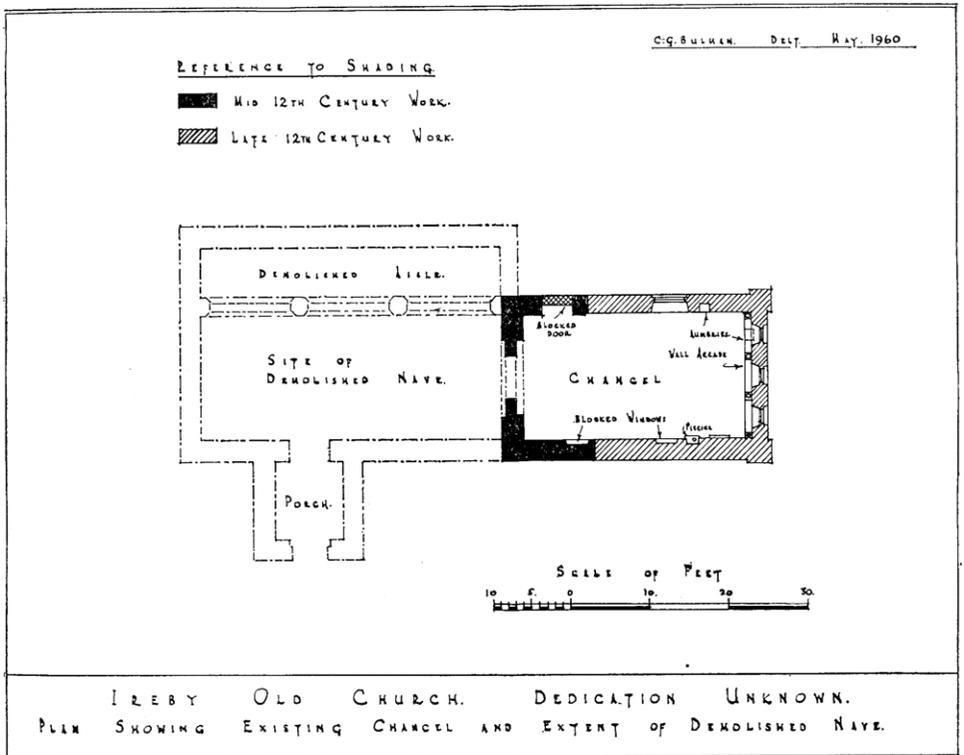
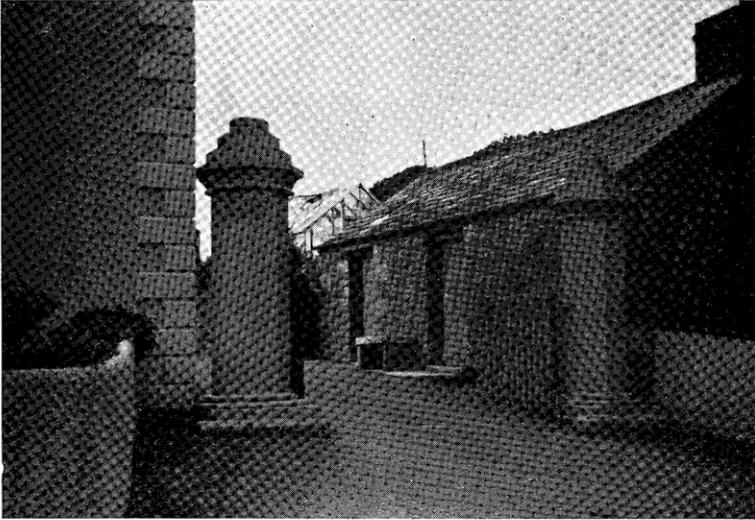


FIG. 1.--Plan of Ireby church.

Ireby was chosen, but we may be certain that there was a reason and that the choice was a deliberate one.

Before proceeding to describe the remaining chancel let us look at the plan of the church. (Fig. 1.) Fortunately, the site of the nave was the subject of investigation by the late Canon J. C. Cantlow in 1933-34, and the Society is indebted to him for the plan which I have been able to reproduce from his notes, handed to me by Mr Swift, in addition to my own survey of the remaining chancel. From this it will be seen that the church, when entire, consisted of a nave with a north aisle of three bays, a south porch, and a spacious chancel, some 28 ft. long by 16 ft. wide internally, separated from the church by a semicircular chancel arch. However, it is obvious that when first erected, the church consisted of no more than the usual two-chamber plan of a small Norman church, with aisleless nave and small chancel, separated by a chancel arch. The chancel was probably a good deal shorter than it is at present. There is no record of the exact date of the erection of this early church, but as Mr Swift has shown, the first mention of the church was shortly after 1150, when Alan, lord of Allerdale, gave it to the priory and convent of Carlisle. The surviving architectural evidence would agree with this and we may take it that the original church was built about the middle of the 12th century. The chancel and nave of this early church would appear to have been the same width, which in itself is a little unusual, for normally a chancel is set out narrower than the nave.

As usually happens in our parish churches, the original building underwent extensions at a later date. Possibly the chancel was first enlarged by an extension eastwards towards the end of the 12th century. A break in the masonry on the north side suggests this, as does the architectural character of the eastern wall with its Transitional internal arcade and its external "clamp" buttresses, which, according to the notes left by the late



*photo: C. G. Bulman*

PLATE I.—Piers from the old church.



*photo: Alfred Brown, Ireby*

PLATE II.—Ireby old chancel; external view.



*photo: Alfred Brown*

PLATE III.—Ireby old chancel, east wall.



*photo: Alfred Brown*

PLATE IV.—12th-century font, Ireby church.

Canon Cantlow, do not appear on the western angles of the nave. Had both been built at the same time one might have expected similar types of buttresses to both east and west of the church.

A few years later, probably in the first quarter of the 13th century, an aisle was set out to the north, separated from the nave by an arcade of three bays. The arches were carried by two great octagonal monolithic piers, 6 ft. 2 in. in height and 2 ft. 4 in. in diameter. Each pier was carried on a well-moulded base and supported a simply-moulded capital, giving a total height of over 8 ft. These two massive columns (Plate I), each consisting of a single stone, were removed from the nave at the time of its demolition and were subsequently re-erected at the entrance to a residence in the village of Ireby where they still remain for inspection. The character of the column bases, with their typical "water-holding" moulding, is Early English in style and suggests a date for the erection of the aisle as early in the 13th century. One would like to have known if the arches they supported were pointed or semicircular.

We can now examine the chancel in detail. Much of the architectural evidence has been obliterated by the drastic restoration of 1880. Externally it is built of regularly-coursed yellow sandstone. The walling on the south is very regular and built of sizeable blocks, but it may be a complete refacing, for it shows no windows at all although two large blocked-up windows can be seen internally. This may have been done in 1845, when the nave was demolished, using existing material, or when the chancel was restored in 1880. The north wall is also regular but shows some patching and also a built-up doorway with a segmental head. There is one window in this north wall, a simple rectangle and probably of 18th-century date. Both north and south walls stand on a well-defined plinth. The eastern wall is much the most interesting and shows the original clamp buttresses at

the angles, and a substantial plinth course. This wall has been rebuilt to a great extent by the Commissioners in 1880, but appears to follow the original design. Three small windows appear at mid-height, long and narrow in proportion, and with semicircular heads. There is a similar window in the gable which preserves its original head. Above the centre light of the three windows are two rather crudely carved gravestones with a cross, and the top half of a cross.

The western wall is also in the main a rebuilding, but it shows in outline a semicircular chancel arch, the stones of which have obviously been re-tooled. The arch is exceedingly plain and is carried on simple chamfered imposts. It was filled-in when the nave was removed and a doorway with a semicircular head inserted. At each side of the wall can be seen indications of the old masonry jointing where the original nave walls abutted, showing that the nave and chancel were of equal width.

Above the main door has been built-in a semicircular stone, which is obviously the tympanum of an early door. It is rather irregular in outline and may originally have occupied the head of the arch above the main entrance to the nave. These tympana are more frequent in churches of the Norman period than in doorways of the succeeding Gothic styles, and its modest size shows how narrow was the original doorway. Upon it is carved a floreated cross incised in a circle. This is probably late 12th-century work. Above the chancel arch a large grave-slab has been built in. It is carved with a cross and possibly a sword, and also another object which cannot now be deciphered owing to the weathering of the stone.

The interior of the chancel is spacious, but very dark owing to the building-up of the two windows on the south side. Easily its most remarkable feature is the eastern wall which displays a wall-arcade of three semicircular arches, each arch containing a narrow splayed window, tall in proportions and with a semicircular head. The

arches of the wall arcade are carried by slender shafts with capitals and bases of well-developed Early English type, and the whole arcade rests on a broad masonry shelf some 6 ft. from the floor. There is also a narrow window in the gable apex. The whole of this arcade is a most interesting example of the fleeting "Transitional" period when the earlier Norman was developing into the first phase of the Gothic style. Here we have the rather attractive mixture of the semicircular arch, a lingering relic of the departing Norman, combined with the slender colonettes, capitals and bases of the Early English style.

The windows are interesting also, for although they have rounded heads, they are long in proportion and are obviously developing into the "lancet" window so typical of the new Gothic style. This east end may perhaps be dated to the years after 1175 and probably nearer to 1200, allowing for the delay in architectural fashion reaching so remote an area. Something of the same kind exists in a similar position on the east wall of Beaumont church, near Carlisle, but examples of Transitional work are by no means frequently found, and this one at Ireby is a most instructive example. (Plate III.) It should be compared with the wall-arcade at Beaumont, for there the transition is complete, all the arches are pointed, and the new Gothic style has finally arrived.

On the south side of the chancel are the outlines of two blocked windows, each with a slightly pointed head. These must have been built-up at some later period when the external wall was refaced, for it is impossible to suppose that the chancel would always have remained in its present gloomy state. In this wall is also to be found an attractive little piscina under a small pointed arch, with a shelf at the side; a rather unusual feature. The north wall shows a blocked doorway near the west end with a well-built segmental head. A little to the east of this doorway the wall shows a distinct break in the masonry and this may indicate where the original chancel

ended. It may even possibly have continued round to form an apse although there is nothing externally to confirm this. This wall also contains the rectangular window of indeterminate date. The west wall is mostly modern but displays the built-up chancel arch and modern infilling and doorway. Two aumbries remain, one on the north wall and a larger one on the east wall. A fragment of a carved cross is built-in the east wall and nearby is also a broken grave-cover with the carving of a sword and shears, bearing the fragmentary inscription in Lombardic capitals, "Hic Jacet Eva Fil . . .".

On the south wall, near the east end, are two interesting monuments. One is a fine 18th-century memorial to Thomas Wilson of Ireby, who died in 1769. The memorial is of the usual classical type with a broken pediment, and Ionic pilasters. The lettering is of the usual 18th-century elegance. The other monument is the early 17th-century tomb mentioned by Bishop Nicolson, and is much the more interesting. The side towards the chancel is divided into three panels, the centre one of which bears a shield with a heraldic device. The tomb is dated 1626, and the inscription carved on the outer panels reads:

GEORGE CRAGE DE PRIOUR HALL. GENT.  
 WHO FAITHFULLY SERVED QUEENE  
 ELIZABETH, KING JAMES, PRINCE HENRY  
 AND KING CHARLES, KING OF ENGLAND.  
 1626.

In contrast to the later memorial, this one is obviously of local workmanship, probably carved by the local stonemason. The lettering is clumsy and the lines have obviously not been set out before being carved, for the words in some cases are not complete at the end of a line but have had to be split up and continued on the next line. This is part of the charm of such memorials and we would not have it otherwise.

By far the most precious relic of the ancient church,

happily preserved for posterity by the wisdom of the parishioners of 1845, is the splendid and hitherto unrecorded 12th-century font, now situated in the new church. It is here for the first time illustrated and described. (Plate IV.) It is indeed a subject for thankfulness that in spite of troubles and vicissitudes, the English Church has been able to preserve and to hand down to posterity such priceless relics of ancient art. From the earliest days of Christianity the sacrament of baptism has been held at all times to be of primary importance, and throughout the ages the font has been one of the essential fittings of a church. Many of these remain, representing all the ages of the Christian faith, and ornament and craftsmanship have been lavished upon them in proportion to the wealth of the particular church. Of Norman fonts generally a large number survive, some of them of rich and ornate workmanship, and it is not in effect its actual date which makes this font at Ireby so rare, as its form, which is extremely unusual. The workmanship, although rough, is vigorous. The bowl is circular and carved from a single block of stone, and is supported upon a stem, the design of which, so far as I know, is unique. It has been squared and upon each face is worked a large roundel, treated as a boss. All four roundels are carved with a different device. The equal-armed cross is artistically far older than the Norman period and is pre-Conquest in origin. It is often associated with St Cuthbert and its appearance on this font shows how earlier art-forms survived the Conquest. The other three sides display a "beaded interlace", a formalized "rose" and a circular geometrical pattern, all of them designs not uncommon in the 12th century and each chosen because of its suitability for filling a circle satisfactorily. The font rests upon a sturdy squared base, slightly chamfered, and it originally stood at the west end of the ancient church, on the north side of the nave.

As Mr Swift has stated, a piscina and a 13th-century

mediaeval grave-cover with an inscription were also removed to the new church when the old church was abandoned. The unusually large number of carved stones and inscriptions still remaining in and around the old church suggests that it was a building of more than usual interest. The two piscinas suggest also that it contained a chapel, a supposition borne out by the presence of the two aumbries. Their presence is an indication that the church had sufficient plate and possessions in mediaeval times to warrant cupboards which could be locked for protection.

A sketch of the old church as it existed at the beginning of last century, is illustrated (Fig. 2). It will be seen that it was not architecturally very imposing and, like its neighbour at Uldale, it made no attempt to compete with its surroundings.



FIG. 2.—Ireby old church before 1846, from a pencil-sketch in Tullie House, Carlisle.

Questions which cannot now be satisfied inevitably arise when confronted with an ancient church like this. We want to know why it was built in so secluded a spot; what band of masons came here to build a church in contemporary architectural style and later brought the latest architectural fashion to so remote a district. Who designed and carved the remarkable font with patterns current in other parts of England? Those are questions which cannot now be answered.

I am indebted to the Rev. F. B. Swift for bringing this 12th-century chancel to my notice. It is satisfactory also to record that services are again held in this ancient shrine from time to time, and a continuity of worship resumed whose origin lies far back in the 12th century, and possibly beyond.