



NOTES ON THE REGISTERS AND CHURCHWARDENS' ACCOUNTS OF ST. MICHAEL'S, CHESTER.

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RATHER more than twelve months ago I had the pleasure of reading before this Society a paper on "The Ancient Parish Books of the Church of St. Mary-on-the-Hill, Chester,"¹ in which I directed special attention to the importance of the information to be obtained from the parish registers and particularly from the churchwardens' accounts, which commenced at an unusually early date. Since then, at the beginning of this session, the Rev. Mr. Cooper Scott read an interesting paper upon the churchwardens' accounts of St. John's,² and this evening I have been asked to give an account of the parish books of St. Michael's.

As already explained, the churchwardens' accounts of St. Mary's go back to the præ-Reformation times, to the year 1536, the twenty-seventh year of the reign of King

¹ Printed in vol. ii. of the Society's *Journal*, pp. 132-148.

² See *postea*.

Henry VIII., and from that early date to the present time they present a practically unbroken series. The registers, on the other hand, do not now begin till 1628, the earlier ones having unfortunately been lost. At St. John's, the earliest volume of churchwardens' accounts begins in 1633, a century later than St. Mary's, but it contains many items of interest in connection with the civil war and subsequent periods. The registers, I believe, begin in 1559.

The parish books of St. Michael's, on the other hand, occupy an intermediate position between those of St. Mary's and St. John's, as far at least as age is concerned. The registers begin in 1581, the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign, and the churchwardens' accounts begin in 1560, the third year of that queen's reign. They are, therefore, twenty-four years later than St. Mary's, but over seventy years earlier than those of St. John's.

Of the early history of St. Michael's comparatively little is at present known. We have no knowledge by whom the church was built, and the first distinct reference to it, which is known, is in the foundation charter of Stanlaw Abbey, an abbey founded in Wirral Hundred, in the year 1173, but subsequently, in 1187, removed to Whalley, in Lancashire, where it became a very famous establishment, known far and wide as Whalley Abbey. The foundation of this abbey was due to John de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, and, in his charter founding it, he grants to the abbey certain premises in Chester, "*juxta ecclesiam Sancti Michaelis,*" which clearly shows that the church was then existing seven hundred years ago.

Prior to this, however, about the year 1155, in a confirmation of the various churches and lands belonging to the Priory of Norton, in Cheshire, granted by King Henry II., there is mention of "the monastery of St.

Michael, in Chester, with one dwelling-house in the same city," which then belonged to that priory. Little is known of this "Monastery of St. Michael, at Chester," and it is possible that having been burnt down in the year 1118, as Bradshaw states, it fell into decay, and that St. Michael's Church, which may have been the church of the monastery, was alone kept up. The prior and convent of Norton are believed to have presented the various clergy, who officiated at St. Michael's, but, unfortunately, hardly one of their names has come down to us, and the history of the church to the middle of the sixteenth century may practically be said to be a blank. The chancel is said to have been built, or probably rather rebuilt, in 1494. The general appearance of the church, as it existed at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, is shown in the accompanying illustration, copied from a sketch made by one of the Randle Holmes, and now preserved in the British Museum (Harl. MS. 2073). As will subsequently be explained, it was rebuilt in this form in 1582.

The earliest volume of the St. Michael's registers is a narrow folio volume, of some thickness, which has been rebound in modern times in reddish brown calf. One half of the volume is parchment, the rest paper. It is closely and carefully written and is in good condition. The volume is lettered on the side "The Register of St. Michaels Parish, Chester, from 1581 to 1754." The entries are arranged under baptisms, marriages, and burials. Unlike the St. Mary's registers, there is a gap between March 10th, 1644[-5], and May 3rd, 1650, during which no entries were made.

The following entries are curious and seem to merit attention:—

1581, November. Rondulph Smith clericus [buried] 23 [day].

Mr. Smith's name occurs as minister or curate in the

Churchwardens' accounts from 1578, but he may have been at St. Michael's before that year.

1592, December. M^{rs} Elizabeth Gamull buried 26 [day].

She was the widow of William Goodman, mayor of Chester in 1579, and at this time the second wife of Mr. Edmund Gamul, grandfather of Sir Francis Gamul. Edmund Gamul died in 1616.

1605, Nov. S^r George Connye Buried at γ^o hospitall 8 [day].

George Coney succeeded Randle Smith as rector or minister, and he is given the title of "Sir," then in common use and generally signifying one who had taken the B.A. degree at one of the universities. I do not quite understand what building is alluded to under the name of "γ^o hospitall," but so the entry stands in the register. It may be that "the Hospitall of St. John's without the Northgate" may be intended, or "the Spittall House at Boughton."

1615, June. Lady Thimbelby Buryed 20 [day].

"The Lady Thimbleby" is first mentioned in the Churchwardens' accounts in the list of parishioners in 1597-8 and her name occurs regularly, year after year, till her death in 1615. She belonged, no doubt, to the Lincolnshire family of that name, but what brought her to live so many years in Chester I do not know.

1630, December. James a tawnie Moore Bur. 16.

1632, December. Petrus Leigh et Anna Burkenet. Nup. 12.

This Piers Legh was of Bruche, co. Lanc., Esq., sometime M.P. for Newton, a younger son of the celebrated Sir Peter Legh, of Lyme, knt. She was his second wife, the daughter of Henry Birkenhead, of Backford, Esq. (see *East Cheshire*, vol. ii., p. 305).

1633, September. Hugo Hollinshead et Maudlina Burkenet. Nup. 17.

Mr. Hugh Hollinshead was of Heywood, in the parish of Alderley, co. Chester, and his wife was another daughter of Henry Birkenhead, of Backford, Esq. (see *East Cheshire*, vol. ii., p. 617).

1644-5, January. Carolus filius Christopheri Paslei cler. bap. 9.

The Rev. Christopher Pasley or Paslew, D.D., was a distinguished ecclesiastic, who was for some time rector of Hawarden (presented by Lord Strange on the 20th May, 1639), and who about this time had taken refuge in Chester. He was buried at St. Mary's in 1654.

There is a gap in the register from 1645 to 1650, but the Churchwardens' accounts are perfect for those years.

1651. S^r Timothy ffetherston knt dyed 15 Oct.

Sir Timothy Featherstonhaugh, as his name should be written, was tried at Chester at the same time as the brave Earl of Derby, on the 29th September, 1651; but whilst the latter was ordered to be executed at Bolton, the former was beheaded at Chester and here buried.

1689. Ellenour daughter to the Lord Blaney of Dublin baptized May the twenty-sixth.

1693. Weston sonne of Captain Paris was buryed the twenty-ninth day of October.

1694. Fardinando John Son to Captain Fardinando Parris was baptized March the thirty-first.

1695. Will^m Portman of 7^e City of Worcester A.B. and Ann Mainwaring of 7^e Parish of Wibunbury in 7^e County of Chester were married by License (bearing date 7^e 30th of September) October the first.

1699. Elizabeth dau. of S^r William Meredith Knight & Baronett. bur. 29 Sept.

Sir William Meredith lived at Henbury near Macclesfield, and an account of him, with a pedigree of his family, will be found in *East Cheshire*, vol. ii., pp. 419-21.

1700, Sept. 19. Martha-Maria the daughter of Thomas Tindal Esq^r collector of his majestys customes for ye port of Chester was then baptized

1700 [-1], January 11th. Daniel Markes of Kettering in Northamptonshire clerk and Mary Ardern of Clayton bridge in Manchester parish in Lancashire spinster were married by license dat. 8 inst^{nt}, γ^e kings tax to be p^d by γ^e husband.

It would be interesting to know what brought these two persons so far from their homes to be married at St. Michael's?

1704, Aug. 27. M^r Thomas Hoghton gent & M^{rs} Catharine Moor spinster both of St Mich^{ls} parish married by a license dated Augst 21.

1705, July 12. Edward Norris of Speke in Lancashire D^r of Physick & Esq^r & Ann Gerrard of S^t Mich^{ls} in Chester Spinster married by a license.

1708[-9], March 7. Dan^l Dunbavand of Warrington apothecary & Elizabth Ashton of Penkett in Prescott Parish Spinster married by a license of γ^e same date.

1710, Septemb. 21. Madam Mary Hoghton spinster of Hoghton Tower [in Lancashire] [buried].

She was the eldest daughter of Sir Richard Hoghton, of Hoghton Tower, Knt. and Bart., and the Lady Sarah, his wife, daughter of Philip, Earl of Chesterfield.

1711 [-12], March 18. William son of S^r Henry Peirce Baronth baptized.

1714 [-15], Jan^{ry} 29. Owen Prythergh of Llanrhaydr in Kim-margh in Denbighshire clerk & Sarah Harvey of S^t Michaels parish Spinster by a licence of γ^t same date.

1716, Jan. 1. John Perrot of Tewksbury in Glocest^rshire gentleman and Ann Hardware of Bromburrow spinster married by license of γ^t date

1718 [-19], Jan. 1. Charles Mainwaring of Turton in Lancashire gentleman & M^{rs} Elizabeth Legh of S^t Michaels parish in Chester spinst^r by a license of Decemb. 31.

1718 [-19], January 5. John Evans gentleman a stranger and *comedian* buried.

1723, April 27. M^{rs} Ann Hesketh of Rufford [in Lancashire] widow buried.

1724 [-5], January 30. M^{rs} Elizabeth Brooks, spinst^r a Stranger, [buried].

1724 [-5], March 16. M^{rs} Mary Brooks spinst^r γ^o Strangers sister [buried].

1729, Nov. 18. John Weldon Armiger or Captain, of S^t Michaels parish & Mary Glynn of γ^o parish of S^t Brigitt Spinst^r by license.

The lady here married was possibly one of the Glynn's of Hawarden.

1735, Nov. 23. Holcomb and frances, son and daughter of James Christian *Landskip painter* [baptized.] [Holcomb was buried 5 Dec.]

1741, July γ^o 8. Colonel William Beckworth [buried].

1768. Zeba Desaubrie Buried January 6.

1787. Robert Bulkeley Esq. from or near London. Dec. 19, buried.

1803. Thomas Hughes *the City Huntsman* is mentioned.

With these entries I must, for the present, conclude my extracts from the St. Michael's registers, but their number might be very considerably augmented with but little trouble. Situated as St. Michael's is at the very entrance to the city from the south side, and almost the first church which was reached by those coming into the city from North Wales, it seems to have been a very favourite church for the celebration of marriages, particularly of those of

persons coming from a distance. Several instances of this have already been given. After the year 1700, the entries of the marriages are very numerous, sometimes being more than thirty in a single year.

The registers contain entries relating to the following families, all of whom occupied positions of more or less importance in the parish: Hurleston, Goodman, Ball, Thorp, Aldersey, Fitton, Philips, Fletcher, Leicester, Harper, Golborne, Sir Humphrey Briggs, Knt. and Bart., 1652 to 1659; Rocke, Gregge, Buckley, Bridge, Lloyd, Salisbury, John Tylston, M.D.; Edwards, Comberbach, Barnston, &c., &c. The later volumes of the registers, after 1754, are well kept and contain many entries of interest and importance.

It is now time to leave the registers and to devote some attention to the Churchwardens' Accounts. Last year, when describing those belonging to the parish of St. Mary-on-the-Hill,¹ I spoke of the value they possessed as exhibiting to us the form of worship, which was carried on in the parish churches of Chester, as also throughout England, prior to the Reformation, and during the reigns of Edward VI., Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth. As there pointed out, up to the end of Henry VIII.'s reign, the ritual used in that church was that of Roman Catholicism, and this continued till about 1550, the third year of Edward VI. (whose reign began in 1547), when the reformed religion was introduced and great changes took place. In 1553 the city was visited by the commissioners appointed by the Privy Council: John [Bird], bishop of Chester; Thomas Smith, mayor of the city; Sir Lawrence Smith, knight; and Roger Hurleston, gentleman; the latter being most probably a resident in St. Michael's parish. Their duties

¹ *Journal Chester Archaeological Society*, N.S., vol. ii., pp. 132-148.

were to enquire as to "all and singular the copes, vestments, chalices, ornaments, and goodes" of all and every the churches and chapels within the city, and an inventory, now preserved in the Record Office, London, was made of all such as had been sold and such "of the chalices, copes, and vestments of cloth of gold" which they had received, and retained for the king's use as well as "such goods, crosses, plate or bells" as had been sold or stolen by the parishioners or others. The following is the return for St. Michael's (the spelling being modernised):—

"The inventory of all the goods, chalice[s], and bells delivered by the King's Majesty's Commissioners unto William Ball and Thomas Monkesfeld, churchwardens, there and by them safely to be kept without alteration, alienation, or embezzlement until the king's highness' further pleasure be therein known.

"First, one chalice with a paten for the same, over gilt 'ponderous' [or weighing] 18 ounces.

"Two vestments of green and red satin, now altered into a carpet for the pulpit.

"Two albs.

"Four towels.

"Three bells in the steeple.

"All the books now used in the church.

"Two chests or coffers.

(Signed) WILLIAM BALL,
 THOMAS MONKESFELD."

The various articles, "copes, vestments, ornaments, and other goods" belonging to the parish which the commissioners had sold realised only 15s. 9d., a very great contrast to those of St. Mary's, which had sold for £10. 13s. 6d., thereby showing how richly endowed and how important the latter church was.

This was in May, 1553. In July of that year the young king died, and Queen Mary succeeded, and the Roman Catholic ritual at once revived. Many of the vestments

and ornaments formerly in the church would no doubt be restored to it and once more used as in times gone by. Unfortunately, we have no records of this period as far as St. Michael's is concerned, as the churchwardens' accounts do not commence till 1560.

Queen Mary died in November, 1558, and it is now that the interest and value of these early accounts become apparent. The bulky folio volume, now exhibited in its original binding of thick oaken boards, covered with black leather, and formerly fastened by two broad clasps, begins with the accounts of the churchwardens elected on the 21st April, 1560. And what do we find? Here in the second year of Queen Elizabeth, that Protestant Queen of England, in whose reign the Roman Catholic ritual finally disappeared from all the churches in the land, we find a long list of "implements" and vestments belonging to St. Michael's Church, which were handed over from the outgoing churchwardens to the new ones. This list is such a lengthy one that a copy of it occupies nearly three folio pages, and what is still more interesting, the list of the articles handed over in 1564 is practically identical with that of 1560. Thus it is perfectly clear that in this church, at any rate, for the first six years of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the vestments and ornaments, which had been in use in the reign of Queen Mary and in that of Henry VIII., and for centuries prior to him, were still existing and may or may not have been employed in the regular course of the services. It is not till the year 1565 that we find the list of the "parcels," as they are quaintly termed, "which the parish hath sold," and after that there is no further mention of any copes, albs, and other vestments in connection with the church.

I am anxious to direct special attention to this point, because, curiously enough, there is nothing in the church-

wardens' accounts of St. Mary's which would lead any one to imagine that the old ecclesiastical vestments and other articles were by any possibility permitted to remain in the possession of the parish throughout the first six years of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Of course it may be said it is only an assumption that they were used in the ordinary services, but if not used why were they retained? Unfortunately, too, the churchwardens' accounts of St. Mary's and these of St. Michael's, neither of which have ever been previously examined, as far as I am aware, by any antiquary, are now the *only* ones remaining in any of the parishes in Chester, which go back prior to the seventeenth century. True it is that those of Holy Trinity, going back to 1532, were in existence in the time of Randle Holme, the second, who made a very full series of extracts from them, but the originals cannot now be found, and hence the early records of St. Mary's and St. Michael's are so valuable and instructive and deserve to be most carefully preserved.

If we turn to the list of the "implements" and vestments handed over to the new churchwardens elected on the 23rd April, 1564, we find the following articles, amongst others, the spelling being modernised:—

- A silver and gilt chalice, weighing eighteen ounces.
- A cope of scarlet, embroidered.
- A vestment of green satin of Bruges.
- Another red vestment of say and all things belonging thereto.
- Two banners. Three altar cloths of linen cloth.
- A painted cloth, which covered the rood.
- The best frontal [for the altar] of yellow satin of Bruges with a fringe belonging to the same.
- Three other frontals. Three flaxen towels and a golden cushion.
- A cross of brass. Two sacring bells and two cruets.
- A painted cloth of the twelve apostles.

An old canvas cloth, which was next the stone altar.

A cear cloth of red branched work.

The Bible, with a book of Erasmus.

A Communion Book, and a Book of the Homilies in the passion week.

A Judas of wood "that the candeles was stikte on."

A Judas that the pascal [the large candle made at Easter] stood on.

A staff that the pascal was made on.

Thirteen small pascal staves.

Three coffers, and the poor man's box.

A frame that was the Sepulchre.

An altar stone that is in the coffer.

A coffer in the rood loft.

Four stumps of torches. A cake of wax weighing 13lb.

A holy water stone. A brasen censer and a pax.

A small sanctus bell. Six small brass rods.

A holywater bucket of brass, a cross staff of brass and the banner of the cross.

Truly a very curious catalogue for the sixth year of Queen Elizabeth's reign!

Many of these are recorded as being sold in the following year 1565, and no "vestments" beyond the ordinary "surplices," belonging to the rector or minister, are subsequently recorded or alluded to. It may be added that in the old accounts of Trinity parish there was a list of the vestments in that church in 1560, but apparently none of any later date.

The churchwardens' accounts of St. Michael's are also very valuable for another reason, and that is because from the earliest date, 1560, they contain, year by year, full lists of the names of all the inhabitants in the parish, with the amounts which each contributed to the church "lay." They thus become almost a directory of this part of Chester from the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign. It is very notable that in the early part of the seventeenth century

many persons of good rank and position are found residing in the parish. Thus, in 1610, the list begins:—

Mr. Edmund Gamull alderman	- - - - -	4s.
Mr. Philip Philips alderman	- - - - -	3s. 4d.
Mr. William Leycester alderman	- - - - -	3s.
Mr. Grosvenor Esq.	- - - - -	20d.
Mrs. Hurleston	- - - - -	4s.
Mrs. Aldersey	- - - - -	4s.
Mr. Kendrick ap Evan alderman	- - - - -	2s.
Mrs. Knight	- - - - -	15d.
Mr. Thomas Throppe	- - - - -	2s.
Mr. Charles Fitton	- - - - -	12d.
Mr. Edward Gregge.		
Mr. William Holland.		
Mr. Robert Fletcher.		
Mrs. Conway.		

and the list of the other inhabitants not styled "Mr." or Mrs. occupies three pages.

Some thirty-five years later, the list of important names, for the year 1644-5, when the registers cease to be kept, is as follows. Possibly some of the persons here named had come to reside in Chester owing to the Civil War:—

Sir Richard Grosevenor.
 M^r Richard Grosevenor.
 M^r Thomas Throppe Ald^rman.
 The Lady Wilbram.
 S^r Thomas Carie.
 M^r . . . Bavand.
 M^r Henry Harpur.
 M^r Allin in M^r Gregges house.
 M^r William Parnill.
 M^r James Reade.
 M^{rs} Margaret Gregory.
 M^r John Sproston.
 M^r Garrard Jones.
 M^{rs} Chenie.

Pepper Street.

Mr John Wright & Doc^{tor} Wollie.¹

M^{rs} Mary Capper.

M^{rs} Taylor.

M^{rs} ffitton in Hunts house.

The following extracts from this old volume of accounts have been selected because of their quaintness, or as illustrating the customs and habits of the times. The spelling has been modernised :—

1568.

Received more of Mr. Thomas Lynial for the timber that we sold him the 15th day of December, 1568, that was of the rood loft and the vaults [or vaulting] over the two altars, the sum of - - - - -	3s. 4d.
Paid for rushes [to cover the floor of the church] - -	6d.
Paid more for the pulpit - - - - -	8s.

1569.

Paid for a quart of claret wine on Palm Sunday - -	4d.
Received of Roger Lynialls wife for christening, churching, and "cryssom" - - - - -	8d.

This is a very interesting entry, the "cryssom" being the white baptismal robe, with which, in mediæval times, the child was enveloped when christened. If the child died within a month of its baptism, it was not unfrequently buried in this "chrisom," and was then called "a chrisom child," and is so recorded in some early registers.

Here are other entries in the same year :—

Received of Robert Monksfeld for a "cryssom" - -	2d.
Received of Sir John Savage for the alabaster stone -	26s. 8d.
Received at the marriage of Richard Whitehead - -	13d.
Received of the young men and maidens at Easter -	5s. 2d.

¹ Probably Dr. Edward Wolley, the well-known Royalist divine, of whom an account is given in the *Cheshire Sheaf*, vol. ii., pp. 391 and 394.

1570.

Received for the coffer of the cappers [company] which was then in the church - - - - -	12d.
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1572.

Paid for 2 pound and a half of wax to make 8 tapers to set in the quire - - - - -	2s. 1d.
Paid for the making of the same - - - - -	7d.
Paid for 3 quarters of a pound of wax candles to serve the church - - - - -	9d.
Paid for two pounds of tallow candles - - - - -	7d.
Paid to the clerk when they rang throughout the city for the Queen's grace - - - - -	12d.

1578.

Received for lead 220lbs. which was found in the cross when it was taken down - - - - -	18s.
Received of Mr. Cowper for his license to permit him to eat flesh [in Lent] being sick - - - - -	6s.
Paid for taking down the cross - - - - -	20d.

In the year 1582 the church appears to have been almost entirely rebuilt, the accounts for the same, very clearly written, occupying six folio pages. One of the items refers to the building of the steeple and "a chamber to the church." This is very clearly shown in the view of the church given in the illustration from a sketch made by one of the Randle Holmes early in the seventeenth century, and now preserved in the British Museum. The steeple evidently of wood and "the chamber" built out at the west end overhanging the Row, and no doubt uniform with it, are clearly shown. This chamber or living-room was built in the black and white timber and plaster style, and was approached from the outside by the flight of steps shown in the drawing. It is quite possible that the rector or curate who officiated in the church lived in this "chamber,"

for at this time he was only receiving the stipend of £8 a year, paid to him quarterly by the churchwardens!

The curious word "laystall" or "leastall," which puzzled me when I first met with it in the St. Mary's churchwardens' accounts, is commonly employed in this volume and was clearly a word then in ordinary use. It means "a burial place," and part of the income of the churchwardens was derived from the payments made for the "laystalls" or burial places in the church or churchyard, and also for the various "kneeling places" allotted to the parishioners.

1566. Received for a laystall for Mr. Manley, priest 12d.
 1595. Received of Mr. John Vaughan, vicar of
 Abergeley, for his child's leystall - - - - 2s.

This, I may add, is an interesting find, as it records the name of a vicar of Abergele hitherto unknown.

1615. Received for ye leastall of my Lady Thimblebye 6s. 8d.

Continuing the extracts from the churchwardens' disbursements the following are noteworthy:—

1597.

Paid to Robert Leech for writing stories upon the
 walls and laying colour upon the church door - - 7s. 4d.
 Paid for hollins [at Christmas] - - - - - 6d.

1602.

Paid to Mr. Coney, the minister, for his whole year's
 wages - - - - - £8.
 Paid on the 5th of June at the visitation [of the
 bishop] - - - - - 16d.
 Spent then upon the minister, the [4] sworn men, and
 ourselves - - - - - 2s.
 Paid for cotton candles - - - - - 16d.
 Paid for holly and ivy to dress the church at Christmas 12d.
 Paid for ringing at eight of the clock in the evenings
 and at four of the clock in the mornings for 3
 quarters - - - - - 5s.

1606.

Paid for a gallon of sack the third of August bestowed on the Lord Bishop - - - - - 3s. 4d.

1607.

Paid for ringing 'day bell' and 'corfett' [curfew] for the whole year - - - - - 10s.

1609.

Paid to Randle Holmes for laying the pulpit and the cover in colours and gilding the "bobbes" - - - 10s. 4d.

With these few extracts I am afraid I must for the present be content, for this paper is already sufficiently long.

In conclusion, I would only say that I trust I have shown that these ancient Churchwardens' Accounts are full of quaint and curious information as well as of particulars relating to local and family history, which cannot be found elsewhere. And it is therefore most important that they should be well cared for, and that all risk of their being lost or destroyed should be avoided. And yet, as every one who has had to do with local history knows, how frequently is it the case that such valuable books as these get lost or mislaid. In fact, this very volume of churchwardens' accounts of St. Michael's was found thickly covered with dust at the bottom of an old box in the upper part of the belfry, which was only to be reached by climbing up a very steep and by no means comfortable wooden ladder. There it and many later volumes of accounts had reposed for many long years, known, I believe, to hardly any one, and certainly never looked at by any one from year's end to year's end. It is not a wonder they have not long since disappeared altogether, as have those of the neighbouring parishes of St. Bridget's and St. Martin's.

And if I might venture to make the suggestion, I would like to ask, why should not these old books and any others,

which may from time to time be found in this ancient city of Chester, be deposited in the library of this Society, where they could be calendared and labelled, and where they could always be examined by those interested in investigating the history of the past, and where there would be no risk of their ever being lost. A receipt could be given for them to the churchwardens, and they would always be accessible, if wanted for purposes of reference in connection with local charities, &c., &c. I believe that if this were done it would be the means of preserving to future generations many most interesting local records, which otherwise run great risk of loss or destruction.

To take one example only, and that relating to St. Michael's parish. As already explained, the earliest volume of accounts, that exhibited this evening, begins in 1560. And yet, when Hemingway wrote his *History of the City of Chester*, in 1831, he refers to and makes a few quotations from a "MS. which appears to have been a book for the account of receipt and expenditure of the church revenue" of St. Michael's, and which was then "in the possession of Mr. Leacroft, solicitor of this city." And as the extracts he gives relate to the time of Edward VI., it would almost seem as if we had there the volume of churchwardens' accounts *preceding* this one, and probably dating back to pre-Reformation times, the discovery of which would be of the greatest possible interest and importance. Does any one know who now represents Mr. Leacroft¹ or his firm,

¹ Enquiries made since this paper was read tend to the belief that there is little or no hope of recovering this important early volume of accounts. Mr. Leacroft has been dead for many years, and it is believed that his papers have been long since dispersed. His burial is thus entered in the St. Michael's Registers:—

1836. Thomas Leacroft (formerly Dicas), solicitor, of this parish, buried December 30th, aged fifty-six years.

and is it in any way possible to recover this volume, which was certainly in existence as late as 1831, rather over fifty years ago? And if, by any good fortune, it can be recovered, may I add the expression of my earnest hope that it will then be handed over to the care of the Society, so that all risk of its being lost may become impossible. There was no "Chester Archæological Society" in 1831, but as there is one now, it is its bounden duty to do all in its power to preserve and take care of the priceless relics of the past, which are still in existence, but which generation by generation are becoming fewer and fewer.

