

ART. XII.—*Crosthwaite Church*. By GEORGE WATSON,
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Read at Keswick, June 29, 1899.

IN this paper I propose to give my reminiscences of Crosthwaite Church in its pre-restoration condition. My first acquaintance with it was in the early part of 1836, I then being twelve years old. In 1836, the most conspicuous feature was whitewash, inside and out—whitewash on ceilings, walls, arches, pillars, windows—whitewash piously renewed yearly. The next most conspicuous feature was the huge steeply-sloping singers' gallery filling up the west end of the nave, whereon a formidable company of singers and musicians performed. These were called into action at the proper moment by the sexton sounding his pitch-pipe, and giving out the psalm in a singing tone, whereupon the whole congregation rose to their feet, wheeled round, and "faced the music." At that time, the appropriated seats were in the aisles and chancel; the nave was free, the side north of the centre path being exclusively occupied by women and the south side by men. The glories of the old singers' gallery came to an end the following year (1837), when Mr. Stanger, at his sole cost, presented the church with an organ, built by Bishop, and erected an organ gallery—the old singers' gallery being reconstructed at a lower level to accommodate the Sunday School scholars.

It has been asserted that Mr. Gilbert Scott designed Mr. Stanger's organ gallery, but such was not the case. My father was employed to make plans of the west end of the church to send to Mr. Bishop, who furnished plans and sections for the new gallery, which was erected under
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my father's directions. At that time, Mr. Scott had not entered into practice ; After this, the old church had rest until the death of Southey, in 1843. A subscription was got up to place a monument in the chancel to his memory. Mr. Stanger was the chief promoter of the scheme, and he, as I heard him say, feeling that the church was in such a rude condition as to be unfit for the reception of the monument, undertook at his own cost to restore the chancel. Then it was that Mr. Scott, of the then firm of Scott & Moffatt, was called in, who at that time, was quite in the early stage of his fame as an architect. The restoration, begun in the chancel, speedily extended to the whole church, principally at Mr. Stanger's cost, who, it is said, expended £4,000 in the work.

When Mr. Scott took the church in hand, the chancel contained the original three-light 14th century window, with the apex of its equilateral arch covered by the plaster ceiling, leaving a communication between the church below and roof above, through which, the colony of birds in the roof used to dart out and soar about the church.

This historic east window was 4 feet 6 inches nearer the north side of the church than the south, plainly telling that the original church had been 4 feet 6 inches narrower than as we now see it. The tower and its arch were untouched by the restoration. That the tower as it now stands was no part of the 14th century church its west window plainly shows, it being of the latest and most debased type of Tudor work ; but the tower arch, by being out of the centre of the widened nave in the same way that the chancel east window was, indicates that a former and probably smaller tower had existed.

At what time the church was widened and the tower rebuilt, is pretty clearly indicated by the post-reformation character of the work, and is to be learned from the will
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of Dame Alice Ratcliffe, whose monumental brass, along with that of her husband Sir John, is in the chancel. The will is given in full in a paper by the late Mr. William Jackson, on Dudley of Yanwath, printed in the *Transactions* of this Society, vol. ix. Dame Alice made her will on the last day of March, 1554, in the first year of Queen Mary, and it was proved on July 5 the same year. She had lived at Salisbury, and, at her death, had survived her husband Sir John 27 years. Her reference to Crosthwaite Church makes it clear, I think, that it was in the year 1554 that the tower was rebuilt and the church enlarged by the addition of a south aisle.

My theory is that up to that time the church comprised only a nave and chancel, about four feet and a half narrower than it now is, and a north aisle as we now see it—all its original windows, like that of the chancel, being of the 14th century, or decorated period, of the simplest type. The Marian post-reformation works were, I think, the tower and the south aisle, which would involve the removal of the south wall, and substituting for it the present south arcade, the builders taking the opportunity of widening the nave and chancel. They, however, had the good sense to leave the original east window untouched to tell its own 14th century story to posterity, and it is to be sincerely wished that modern restorers had been equally discreet. Dame Alice's bequests to Crosthwaite Church and Parish may be briefly stated in modern English, thus:—

She leaves to Crosthwaite Church works 40s., showing that works were then going on at the church; she also leaves £140 to pay a chantry priest £5 a year, so long as the money lasts, to pray for her husband's and her own soul, and all Christian souls, upon Sundays and holy days in the church of Crosthwaite, and upon working days in the chapel at Keswick; she also leaves 40s. each to the maintenance of the Chapels of St. John's and Wythburn; and, further on in the will, she leaves 100s. more to each of these chapels, and 100s. to the poor people of the same lordship; she also leaves 20s. each to the

the works of Salisbury Cathedral and three other church works in that neighbourhood.

Of course, the value of these bequests must not be estimated by the value of money now; £5 a year was then considered ample for the maintenance of a priest. The chapel at Keswick, where on working days the priest had to officiate, was probably in connection with the Ratcliffe Mansion, on Lord's Island. There is, I believe, no tradition or trace of a chapel in the town.

The earliest record of a church at Crosthwaite is a curious one. In the year 1306 the inhabitants of Cocker-mouth presented a petition to Parliament that their market was fast declining through the inhabitants of Crosthwaite dealing in corn, flour, beans, flesh, and fish at their church on Sundays, and that thereby they (the petitioners) were unable to pay their tolls to the King. An order was issued closing the church market at Crosthwaite. This incident is given in Whellan's *History of Cumberland*, pp. 333-4, and is also mentioned in a discussion in *Notes and Queries*, on Sunday markets, September 28th, 1895. And that Crosthwaite was not alone in Cumberland in the possession of a Sunday market, the following note may be adduced from Hutchinson's *History of Cumberland*, under the head of Parish of Wigton :—

A meat market was held at Wigton, in Cumberland, on a Sunday, and the butchers suspended carcasses of meat at the church door to attract the persons attending divine service, and it was no uncommon thing for people, who had made their bargains before the service, to hang their joints of meat over the backs of their seats until the ceremony was concluded. The practice was so distasteful to the priest that, being unable to prevent it, he made a journey to London on foot, with a petition to the King to alter the market day to Tuesday, a request which was readily granted.

Hutchinson says the name of this priest was Warkup, who was incumbent of Wigton during the civil war time
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of Charles the First, and was obliged to fly on account of his loyalty to his Sovereign. After the restoration he returned to his cure, and the tradition is, as before stated, about the Sunday market at Wigton. To return to the restoration of Crosthwaite Church, under Mr. George Gilbert Scott, I will briefly recount the principal works done. The church was entirely re-roofed, re-floored, and re-seated; the chancel fittings were in Dantzic oak, carved, from Mr. Scott's designs, by carvers brought from London. The flat plaster ceiling gave place to the massive, open-timbered roof of American red pine; and the incrustation of whitewash was got rid of, by stripping the old plaster from the walls, and by chisel and mallet from the stone work of pillars, arches, and windows.

The original east window, besides being non-central with the widened nave, was so dilapidated, and the east wall was so ruinous, that the whole had to be taken down and re-built. Before being disturbed, however, the window was carefully measured in all its parts by my father and the late Mr. William Bromley, the master mason. I made a drawing of it to scale, which was sent to Mr. Scott, who returned a perfect working drawing, from which Mr. Bromley worked the beautiful facsimile of the original window, which, until lately, adorned the church; but which—oh! the pity of it—has been taken out, and a late perpendicular window inserted in its place, thereby falsifying the original architectural character of the church, as well as at once slighting the memory of Mr. Stanger and the reputation of Sir George Gilbert Scott.

When the plaster was stripped off the walls of the north aisle, there was disclosed the internal stonework of an ancient doorway in a line with the south door and font. Such doors were peculiar to ancient churches, and were known as penitent's or devil's doors. It is said they were set open on the occasions of baptisms, that evil spirits

spirits, driven out of the child by the holy rite, should make their exit to their proper place—the north side of the church. The doorway had been walled up, inside and out—time out of mind—and plastered over so that there was no trace of it visible, until discovered as just described. Mr. Scott had it opened internally to show that a devil's door had been part of the ancient church. There was then no reason for opening it through. The ground outside was still under the ban of popular prejudice as a place of burial. Nobody liked the back of the church, or wanted anything with it. The church abounds with architectural irregularities: amongst these may be mentioned the variety in size, height from floor, and diversity of detail in the pre-reformation windows of the north aisle, the utter lack of uniformity between the clear-storey windows and the arches below them, especially on the north side of the church. Again, while there are seven arches in both arcades, the arches differ in positions and spacing; and, while the north side has seven clear-storey windows, that on the south has only six. Many other odd features may be observed, but the foregoing are the principal.
