



Photo by Green Brothers.

MARDALE CHAPEL.

TO FACE P. 141

ART. XII.—*Mardale Chapel and the Holmes of Mardale.*

By the Rev. J. WHITESIDE, M.A., Incumbent of
Helsington.

Communicated at Durham, June 20th, 1901.

MARDALE is a secluded valley at the head of Hawes-water, nestling under Harter Fell, High Street, Bason Crag, and other heights. The chapel is in Shap parish, but the chapelry, which, like Swindale, appears to have no clearly defined boundaries, is formed from Shap and Bampton. There are ten inhabited houses—viz., the School House, Whelter, Parsonage, Flake How, Riggindale, Chapel Hill, Goose Mire, Grove Brae, Dun Bull Inn, and Brackenhov. Ruins of old buildings are to be seen in Gurness, at the eastern head of the lake, where was a beerhouse. Along this side of the water has been from time immemorial a footpath to the Naddle Bridge, and thence through Thornthwaite Park to Rosgill. Not without cause let this be noted. Bowderthwaite in Riggindale, Slape Stones, and Rowan Park were also once inhabited.

The Diocesan Calendar assigns to the chapel the dedication of Holy Trinity—I question whether with any solid authority. In a Mardale document, at least a century old, I found the dedication of “St. Michael or St. Mary Magdalene,” shewing the uncertainty of the time. These, too, were probably guesses, based upon the respective dedications of Shap Church and Abbey. It is likely that, as at Swindale, there was neither consecration nor dedication.

THE FABRIC.

The measurements of the fabric, as taken by the incumbent, are:—Length, 37ft. 8in.; width, 22ft. 6in.; height of tower, 29ft. 6in.; width of tower, 10ft. 3in.; projection of tower beyond body of chapel, 5ft. The interior is kept decently and in order, having always been lovingly tended by the Holmes. A brass pathetically records the death on November 27th, 1885, of Hugh, “last of that name at Chapel Hill.” Another brass is to the memory of the Rev. Thomas Holme, who, with the co-operation of his family and some others, built the parsonage, and restored and adorned this tiny sanctuary in 1860.

The font was the gift in 1872 of Mary Elizabeth Holme, his widow, who resides in a villa attached to the inn. The pulpit was formerly in Crosby Ravensworth Church; the oak of its predecessor now panels the wall under the seats of the chancel, which is separated from the rest of the chapel by a neat oak screen. This, with the semi-circular altar and surrounding rails, may be assigned to the year 1736, a date painted on the centre panel of the gallery. The massive axe-hewn beams of native oak in the roof are noticeable. The walls are of considerable thickness, and it is suggested that they were so built for defensive purposes in days of warfare. On Castle Crag above the parsonage are traces of a fort, mounds, and trenches.

The windows on either side are plain and round-headed, about 1ft. wide and 3ft. high. They appear to be coeval with the whole fabric. The east window was inserted in 1860, taking the place of a two-light of the same style as the others.

What is the date of the present chapel? The tower is certainly quite modern, and is tied on. The original doorway, about 3ft. wide and 8ft. high, is traceable on the south wall. Tradition declares that one Radulphus

or Rudolphus Holme founded an oratory in the fourteenth century, but has the existing chapel the appearance or the architecture of such antiquity? With open minds we must receive what evidence has hitherto been disclosed.

In the chest is a parchment deed in Latin of the consecration of the graveyard in 1728 that refers to Divine service having been performed "from time immemorial"—a vague and unreliable phrase which may be made to mean anything over fifty years.

The Shap Registers, which commence in 1559, make mention of Chapel Hill, but I do not remember noticing such an entry before 1670. It is sometimes said that the Mardale Register begins in 1628, but this, I think, is not strictly correct. For a considerable number of years the entries are merely copied in one hand from the Shap and Bampton books.

The Bampton Register in 1731 states that the "first body that ever was interred at Mardale Chapel was that of John, son of John Turner (by his first wife) of the Fold. Buried by T. Wearing, vicar, Friday, October 15." Before 1728 the dead were usually carried to Shap up by Hopgill and Swindale, thence by the "kirk gate" to Talebert, and across the moor to the parish church. If there was a chapel at Mardale five centuries before, is it conceivable that the people would bear corpses to Shap by so laborious a mountain route—at least seven miles—for so long a period without petitioning for consecration of a graveyard? No bishop could have refused a request so reasonable.

I do not venture to reject the tradition of the early foundation. It may be trustworthy, but all we know for certain is that there was a chapel before 1700. The present fabric can hardly be the ancient oratory. The list of curates, so far as known, begins in 1703. I have seen statements that the yews around the chapel are 300 or 400 years old, and even 700 or 800. If their age could be determined, they would supply important evidence.

But so much depends upon soil and climate that trees are not the surest witnesses. They do not look so very old, and one might conjecture them to be contemporary with the fabric—say, 300 years at most.

THE CLERGY.

I have compiled from various sources the following list of readers, curates, and incumbents. The date is usually that of licence :—

May 24, 1703.—Michael Sommers. *Licentia concessa est Michaeli Somers Diacono ad peragendum officium Curati et ad [educandos?] pueros in Capella de Mardale.* On January 8th, 1708, having been ordained priest, he was licensed to be curate of Shapp.

About 1721.—William Langhorn. Father of a vicar of Shap. Also master of Measand.

March 11, 1722.—Jonathan Tinclar. Master of Measand. Founder of Tinclar's Library at Bampton Vicarage.

April 26, 1725.—William Robinson, M.A. Reader and master of Measand.

December 19, 1726.—Thomas Baxter. To read prayers and teach school in Mardale Chappel. Ordained deacon June 16, 1728. Probably he was son of Thomas Baxter of Swindale. [See v. i., n.s., p. 261, of *Transactions*.]

June 15, 1731.—Richard Holme. Deacon, to preach the Word of God in the chapel or elsewhere in the diocese of Carlisle.

August 20, 1734.—William Collinson. Master of Measand.

June 18, 1739, to December 2, 1741.—John Watson. Master of Measand. Afterwards curate of Shap.

December 2, 1741.—Bartholomew Hayes. Reader and master of Measand. Nominated by the vicar of Bampton, the curate of Shap, and the principal inhabitants. Curate of Mardale September 20, 1742.

July 2, 1749.—Richard Hebson. Nominated by the vicars of Shap and Bampton* and by the principal inhabitants. Died September 25, 1799, aged 75 years. He was also master of Measand

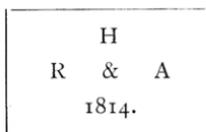
* The joint nomination by the "vicars" of Shap and Bampton is noticeable. I suppose it is due to three causes—(a) the chapelry being carved out of two parishes, (b) the non-existence of a Shap vicar at the time, and (c) the frequent attachment of the mastership of Measand, which is in Bampton, to the incumbency. The Rev. James Darling, of Bampton, twenty years ago claimed the right of joint presentation; but the Rev. Stephen Whiteside, of Shap, successfully resisted, and the claim was withdrawn. The present vicar of Bampton makes no such claim.

for upwards of 50 years. A memorial stone at the west end of the chapel "pretends not to be the record of his virtues: they built not their hopes on such perishable materials; but only a small token of grateful attention from one who profited by his instructions and reveres the example he set of unaffected conscientious integrity."

October 22, 1800, to 1842.—John Bowstead, B.D. He was also rector of Great Musgrave, but he "got it too late to enjoy it." When he was master of Bampton Grammar School (see Miss Noble's *History of Bampton*), it became of considerable reputation, and turned out a few hundreds of local priests, who often served an apprenticeship in Swindale and Mardale. Men like John Rowlandson and James Holme of Shap, Thomas Sewell and Stephen Walker of Swindale, were his pupils. The buildings were small, but the students boarded in the neighbouring farms. Many quaint pictures of this able pedagogue are to be seen throughout Bampton parish. He always wore such a hat as is there represented. The snuff-box was the gift of pupils. To all natives of these dales who have read pp. 133-5 of the *Life of Bishop Goodwin*, which paint the average dale priest of sixty years ago, it may be reassuring to know that men like Richard Hebson, John Bowstead, and John Rowlandson were godly and learned ministers. It would not be easy to find many parish priests in any diocese with half the classical and theological attainments of John Bowstead of Mardale. It is a shame that such a man should have received no ecclesiastical reward.

January 26, 1842.—John Rowlandson, vicar of Shap. He drove over for service in the afternoon. Under him John Briddon Wightwick was curate for a time from September 25, 1842.

March 26, 1858.—Thomas Holme, M.A., Queen's College, Oxford. Born at Chapel Hill, February 15, 1810. Died at the parsonage, April 23, 1880. He was formerly curate of Emmanuel Church, Loughborough, under his uncle, Rev. William Holme, B.D., who was sometime Fellow of Emmanuel, Cambridge. Subsequently rector of Puttenham, Hertfordshire. He was son of Richard Holme, whose initials are above the front door at Chapel Hill.



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- July 21, 1880—July 6, 1882.—Henry Wilkinson Scaife, M.A., Cantab.
- September 6, 1882—November 18, 1882.—Charles Henry Hatfield, M.A., Cantab, who never came into residence. Now vicar of St. Philip's, Southport.
- December 6, 1882—1885.—Arthur Anderson Williams, M.A., Cantab. Afterwards vicar of Colton, and now of Osmotherley.
- January 21, 1885—October 8, 1890.—Charles Newton Greenwood, M.A., Durham.
- March 18, 1891—1894.—Hugh Charles Baldwin, B.A., Cantab. Afterwards rector of Moreleigh, Devon.
- 1894.—William Terry, L. Th. Durham. Previously curate of All Saints', West Hartlepool.

THE HOLMES OF MARDALE.

The tradition of the Holme family is best given without much comment in the actual words of two old documents, kindly lent to me by Mrs. Holme of Mardale. The older is in the handwriting of about the year 1800. Both profess to be copies of earlier documents. But one would wish to see the originals, which have disappeared.

I.—“In the year of the Incarnation of our blessed Lord and Saviour one thousand 67, at the time that William the Conqueror brought his army into Brittain's Isle many lords and Gentlemen came along with them. Amongst the rest was a certain gentleman out of the Country of Stockholme a valiant young squire whose name was John being one of very handsome conduct and being taken notice of by the General himself who made him captain in his army. When the invasion was ended and all feuds and disturbances were quietly settled and this notable Conqueror fixed upon the throne of England, this worthy Prince forthwith rewarded his soldiers with every one an estate for their famous valour and trusty manhood.

All his officers and men of note in the first place were taken notice of.

This same John from Stockholme being of an ancient family being the 9th or 10th of that family or name, was by this great prince settled on an Estate in Yorkshire of the yearly value of 350 pounds, deriving his name from the place of his nativity.

In the county of York he lived peaceably for the term of 35 years, having several sons and daughters. After his decease his eldest son

William succeeded him who lived after him 40 years leaving a son whose name was Richard, he died after he had lived 37 years: his son Henry succeeded him enjoying the estate 23 years until the reign of king John in the year 1203.

This same died and left a son whom he called Hugh Holme. This Hugh lived upon this Domain quietly until the decree came out from the king."

Written on the same paper at Mardale are the following comments:—

"Here the document above quoted (copy of an original, which is now illegible) abruptly ends. Probably the rest of the paper perished before the copy was made. However, another paper has it that Hugh incurred King John's displeasure for siding with some monks of Canterbury, and it is a matter of history that King John was excommunicated in 1209 for his violence to religious houses and for refusing to acknowledge Stephen Langton, and about that time many of his barons and others fled into Scotland or Ireland. Taking his journey northwards then, Hugh 'chanced to light into Mardale;' and, no doubt, its complete seclusion would suggest safety to his mind. Here he remained, and here his descendants have lived down to the present time—the same family in the same place.

In the fourteenth century, Rudolphus Holme founded an oratory or house of prayer near his habitation, from which the place took the name of Chapel Hill.

In 1882, Hugh Parker Holme, who died in 1885, gave the following account to Mr. T. Wilson, of Windermere, who was compiling a *Directory*:—"The first Holme came to Mardale in 1209. The stranger was kindly received by an old man near the middle of the valley, whose small estate he (Hugh Holme) eventually bought; and there can be no doubt that from that time down to the present day the same family has continued to live in unbroken succession at the place.

The history of the family previous to 1209 consists of the circumstantial account which Hugh Holme gave of himself to his friend, the old dalesmen, and others. The account was accepted at that time, and must have been supported by some proof. Well, then, in the Conqueror's army was a 'valiant young squire' called John of Stockholme, who was taken notice of by the Norman Duke and promoted. He was afterwards rewarded for his services by having an estate granted to him in 1068 for 'famous valour and trusty manhood.'

Tradition says the estate was in Northamptonshire,* and upon it the family lived peaceably 'until the decree came out from the king.'

II.—Copied from an old MS. without date, but apparently written early in the nineteenth century:—

"It is understood that a family of the surname of Holme has long been in possession of a small estate at Chapel Hill in Mardale that they are descended from one John born in Sweden and surnamed Holme from Stockholme the capital of his native country, that he was a volunteer or adventurer in the armie of the Norman Duke when he invaded this island in the year of the incarnation 1066: and having performed his part to the satisfaction of the Conqueror was by him rewarded by an Estate which (as tradition says) was in the county of Northampton and that he and his descendants resided there until the time of John King of England

It is well known that in this reign that there were several disputes and quarrels between the King and his subjects and in the year 1209 King John was engaged in a very serious dispute with some Monks of Canterbury and other Ecclesiastics and finding that several of his lay subjects were likely to join the clergy, he endeavoured to prevent such as he most suspected: from some he required hostages, their friends or children, to be put into hands as pledges of their loyalty: some he imprisoned and some fled: among these last was Hugh Holme who then represented the family in Northamptonshire and feeling himself liable to be questioned he thought better to fly rather than starve in a jail (*sic*) or perhaps lose his head, taking his journey Northward he chanced to light into Mardale, which being nearly surrounded by high mountains and these in a great measure covered with wood he thought proper to stay for a while, and was civilly entertained by an old man near the middle of the Dale who proved a faithful friend to him and directed him to a place where he might retire when he chose to be in secret: the place is near the foot of a great rock called Riggindale Crag and still retains the name of Hugh's Cave.

Some other reasons have been spoken of (though not much credited) as the cause of his flight, namely that he had been too biggoted a Loyalist and exasperated those of a different opinion till they were ready to pull him in peices: another cause mentioned was that he had 'plowed' some ground contrary to a law then in force.

* The document above quoted says Yorkshire, not Northamptonshire.—J.W.

These different reasons seem like evasions to put off the impertinent inquirer as it is not very likely that he would give a true account to everyone whence he came or upon what occasion.

After some time he ventured more freely abroad and purchased the old man's estate who had been so friendly to him and it is believed that he and his descendants and successors have continued thereon to this time.

It has been said that one of the family Rudolphus Holme founded an oratory or house of prayer near his habitation from which the place took the name of Chapel Hill. It is also reckoned that a part of the Estate was given to a younger brother which must have been at an early period as no degrees of kinship were remembered between the two families near two centuries ago. We find no correct genealogy of the family till about the Reformation when it appears that a William Holme was upon the premises and that in the reign of Philip and Mary he purchased a Tenement of Anthony Martin and Mary Martin his wife of Penrith called Bowderthwaite which continued in the family a few generations and was afterwards given as a portion to a younger brother."

There can be no doubt that the Holmes are a very old family resident here. In the first Shap Registers the name is found frequently, and it is most credible that they had taken root some centuries earlier. The tradition, which has much to support it, is acceptable as a whole, if very questionable in one or two details when subjected to scientific criticism. It is sad to see at Mardale the grave of the last male in the direct descent of so ancient a stock, and pleasant to meditate upon the generosity and devotion to their dale and chapel of a long succession of Mardale kings.

I end with the will of John Holme, of Riggindale, dated 1735. The document was found at Hutton Gate, Rosgill, among some old papers belonging to Mrs. George W. Betham :—

"In the name of God. Amen. I John Holme of Riggindale in the Parish of Bampton and County of Westmorland yeoman tho' weak in Body but of sound and perfect Mind and Memory (praised be Almighty God) do make and ordain this my Last Will and Testament in manner and form following. First and principally I commend my soul to Almighty God Hoping through the Meritorious

Death and Passion of my Saviour Jesus Christ to have free pardon & forgiveness of my Sins and to Inherit everlasting Life; And my Body I com't to the Earth to be decently Buried according to the Discretion of my Executor hereafter named, and touching the disposition of all such Temporal Estate as it hath pleased Almighty God of his goodness to bestow upon me I give and dispose thereof as followeth. Imp^s I give to my beloved wife Jane Holme ten pounds to be paid by my Executor. Item I give to my daughter Elizabeth Holme Thirty Pounds to be paid as above. Item I give to my daughter Jane Holme Thirty Pounds. Item I give to my son John Holme the Meal Chest standing upon the first Loft and the Bedstead wherein I lay and the Boards laying for the Roof Loft together with my Apparel and Cloathing. Item I give to my son Richard Holme Five Shillings. Item I give to my wife Jane Holme and my Daughters Elizabeth and Jane Holme all the Pewder, Bedding and Household Stuff (over and before the before mentioned Legacies) to be equally divided amongst 'em excepting the Couboard and Side Saddle and a Line Wheel w^{ch} I give to my daughter Elizabeth and my Box and the great Caldron I give to my Daughter Jane. All the Rest of the above mentioned Goods to be equally divided as above excepting the Oak Chest standing in the First Loft, the Table standing in the House and y^e Wainscot Chest and the Bedstead and Bedding for it w^{ch} stands in y^e best Room w^{ch} I give to my son Thomas Holme. Item all the Rest and Residue of my Goods and Chattles whatsoever not afore bequeathed I give to my son Thomas Holme who I make full and sole Executor of this my Last Will and Testament he paying and discharging all my Just debts and Funeral expences and I do hereby revoke and disannul all other and former Wills and Testaments whatever heretofore made by me either by word or writing this taken to be my Last. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal the 20th Day of July One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty Five. John Holme his mark and seal. Signed sealed and declared in the presence of us

William Holmes mark sworn
John Holme sworn

This will was Proved the 9th of May 1738 by the Executor sworn of which the above written is a true copy being examined the 7th day of August 1738 By me Tho^s Jackson prin^l Register."

Little interest attaches to this document except that it helps to illustrate the habits and manners of the time. The Mardale Registers have been copied and printed by Dr. Haswell of Penrith.