

ART. XIII.—*Urswick Church*. By the Rev. T. N. POSTLETHWAITE, B.A.

Read at Urswick, June 29th, 1905.

IT will be most convenient to start with the age of the church. Here I propose to walk round rather than surmount a difficulty. Most of the authorities appear to have expended their energies in fixing the date of the first mentioned vicar. I venture to suggest that this has practically no connection with the age of the church. Daniel le Fleming is the first named vicar, but not the first incumbent, since the church of Urswick was included in the gift of lands to Furness Abbey in the grant of Stephen of Boulogne in 1127. Somewhere about 1205, in a dispute between the monks and one of the le Flemings, the monks claim that the advowson had been theirs *ab antiquis temporibus*. In the précis of a Bull of Pope Honorius III. (*Coucher Book*) occurs the clause, "Note here that we held the patronage of the Churches of Dalton and Urswick before we were of the Cistercian Order, that is to say, as I suppose, when we were settled at Tulket." There is another précis of an earlier Bull to much the same effect (*Beck*, p. 184).

I come now to the dispute in reference to the nomination of Daniel to the benefice. The principal lord in the immediate neighbourhood was Michael le Fleming. He settled at Aldingham probably very shortly after the Domesday survey. His lands are specially excepted from the grant of Stephen to the Furness colony. In the time of the first abbot Evanus an exchange of land was made between the monks and Michael. The monks took Crevilton and Roos, *i.e.*, Newton and Roose, and gave in exchange Bardsea and Urswick, Urswick Church being

excepted by name from the bargain. The deed of exchange is undated, but it mentions the fact that the benefice of Urswick shall be held by Daniel, son of Michael, since it was given him by the abbot John. Now it is obvious that if this deed is between Michael and the first abbot Evanus there could have been no previous abbot John to bestow patronage. The earliest "John" was John de Cansfield, sixth abbot, and the first Michael, who is frequently mentioned as a party to the deed, would have been in his time of an almost impossible age. I venture to suggest that the following may be an explanation of the difficulty. Both parties wished to reap full value of the exchange. There were constant confirmations of the bargain. The monks had possibly acted *ultra vires* in concluding the transfer without the previous consent of their benefactor, and had to obtain a formal confirmation. Each of Michael's successors had in his turn to confirm the exchange, and I suggest that the mention of Daniel's presentation to the benefice crept into the copy of the first deed through the carelessness of some early copyist who knew of the dispute and of the arrangement arrived at in a later deed in reference to Daniel's appointment to the vicarage.* The le Flemings as lords of Urswick probably resented the fact that they were not at the same time patrons of the advowson, hence on a vacancy they attempted to nominate Daniel. The monks refused to forego their right, but accepted Daniel provided he was nominated by themselves.

This arrangement may have been not altogether acceptable to the le Flemings, and it seems possible that they then built a church at Aldingham in their own manor to which Daniel was instituted about the year 1180. It is perhaps worthy of note that the boundary of Much Urswick and Little Urswick runs between the churchyard and the present Sunday school. That is, the church is

* Several of the le Flemings bore the baptismal name of "Michael."

not in Much Urswick, or as some would call it "Michael's Urswick." I am endeavouring to claim Urswick Church as the first place of Christian worship in the immediate locality, with the exception possibly of Dalton. The monks of Furness claimed for Urswick the chapelries of Ulverston and Pennington. Pennington dates prior to 1135; Ulverstonians talk of the four "I's" (1111). The claim was at first apparently admitted, but the fact that the claim was made at all appears to prove that Urswick was regarded as an older foundation than either Pennington or Ulverston, since it is obvious that no claim would be made by a recognised younger foundation to lordship over an older one. In the long dispute between the monks and the le Flemings in reference to the advowson, no plea is ever put forward that either party is the immediate successor of the original builders of the church. Such a plea would have possessed great weight; it therefore seems safe to assume that even at that early date the origin of the church was lost in oblivion. Is it too much to assume that the church existed in pre-Norman times?*

There is an interesting line in a metrical version of the legend of the village submerged under Urswick Tarn. The verses were based on local tradition. I quote two stanzas:—

The peasants tell, that years ago,
 In the time of the vengeful Dane,
 A village stood where the watery flood
 Now covers o'er the plain.

When the sun went down, its red light fell
 On lowly roof and byre,
 And the solemn knell of the vesper bell
 Peal'd from the village spire.

* Strong local tradition assigns the present building to the beginning of the tenth century, *i.e.*, "more than 200 years older than Furness Abbey."

Are we to relegate "the vengeful Dane" to mere poetical license? In a prose version of the legend, which however makes no attempt to date the catastrophe, the present church is indicated, as the *Mater Dolorosa* on the west face of the tower is specially mentioned.

Coming to the building itself there is no distinctive mark of pre-Norman architecture; but the portions of the building that would show architectural variety have been altered from time to time.

The porch is probably very early Norman. The summit of the tower has been altered, the difference in the stone courses being noticeable. The windows have been renewed at various periods. Somewhere about 1850 a very beautiful Flamboyant window was taken from the east end, and the present one substituted. The tracery of this window and that of a smaller one removed previously from the south side of the sanctuary, were piously preserved by the late Mr. Wm. Cranke at Hawkfield. They have recently been given back to the church by the Earl of Derby.

I would note here to avoid future mistakes that the sketch in Jopling's *Furness and Cartmel* of the church of Urswick is incorrect; the line of the building is wrong and the tracery of the south window in the sanctuary never existed as he has figured it. The old glass of the present south sanctuary window, and possibly the lancet window, was rescued by the late Canon Gwilym. It came from the old east window and was distributed amongst the villagers. Canon Gwilym collected what he could and inserted it in the window at the cost of £20. The present east window was given by Mrs. Ashburner of Holmbank.

The lancet window contains the arms of Furness and Citeaux. Part of the Furness arms and probably most of the Citeaux arms are in modern glass. There are dotted about in the window most interesting fragments of ancient glass. The arms in the south sanctuary window likewise consist of ancient and modern glass.

In the eastern light the two top arms are those of Coupland and Kirby. The lower arms present difficulty. Mr. Harper Gaythorpe assigns them to Curwen. I have not been able to find the arms of Curwen thus blazoned; though there is a record of a Thomas de Corowen who bore arms *circa 1277-1287, arg. fretty gules*. I find that one of the le Flemings is recorded as bearing arms *arg. fretty gules over all a label of three points vert* (Glover's Ordinary), thus reversing the tincture usually assigned to the le Flemings. These arms in the window certainly are doubtful, as the field is entirely of modern glass, and was I think intended to be without tincture. The original may have been a metal or a fur. The *vert* is not a difficulty as the *frét* was often borne *cluée* or nailed at the intersections. In the western light the arms are Broughton, Pennington, and probably le Fleming. There is the head of a monk or saint in the window in ancient glass. It is not easy to decide whether the nimbus is ancient or modern.

The Flamboyant tracery of the old east and south sanctuary windows is remarkable, being rare in English architecture: it is, however, frequently seen in Normandy. I have surmised that it may owe its origin in Urswick Church to Sir William Harrington, who gave a bell (which we now have); he fought at Agincourt (1415) and was a keen supporter of various churches. The next window in the south side is an ancient lancet, the head being fashioned in the same manner as the louvres on the south-east and north sides of the tower. Those on the west side are different. Then comes a decorated window with glass of comparatively modern date. The next is a square window of distinctly Protestant utility; it used to light the pulpit that stood by it, and enabled the parson to read his erudite discourses. The next two windows are modern, being substituted for square-headed ones subsequent to 1850.

The porch is noticeable, until about 1850 the present

outer doors stood where the inner ones now are. The porch was simply guarded by the "cow chain." The parson as owner of the freehold grazed his cow amongst the tombs, but the wardens wisely drew the line at permitting it to use the porch as a "boose"—hence the protecting chain.

There is a story going of a farmer who had regaled himself none too wisely at the "General Burgoyne" entering the porch to slumber off the effects. When he awoke, finding there the chain, he imagined he was "in limbo" and was forced to wait for full daylight to realise his true position. Mr. Cranke can remember the time when mourners watched in the porch during the nights following a funeral to frustrate the evil designs of body snatchers. On the cheeks of the porch are graven deep furrows, said to have been made by those who, waiting for the morning service to begin, sharpened the arrows they designed for practising at the butts in the afternoon. The west window in the tower is of mediæval design. The door in the tower was walled up until 1850. The window at the north-west side is modern and was substituted for either one or two square headed ones (1850). The next window is ancient, the coloured glass having been inserted many years after 1822, the date of the death of the lady in whose memory it was placed. There were fragments of ancient coloured glass formerly in this window, including, it is believed, an ancient coat of arms. (Mrs. Satterthwaite and Miss Neale give me this information).

The window by the pulpit has been lengthened with a view to the parson's failing eyesight and difficulty in interpreting his MS. The tracery of the window in the north sanctuary is ancient, the glass comparatively modern. In the interior of the church may be noted the ancient piscina; also a curious floor brass, and a smaller one (on the wall) to a child who died at Bardsea Hall when that property was in the hands of the female representa-

tives of the de Berdsey family. An interesting flat tombstone is at the west end. It was found under the floor when the chancel alterations were made *circa* 1850. The inscription on the tombstone reads "Hic jačt Amicia filia Johańis Francissi." The design is a floriated cross with a pair of shears on one edge. John le Franceys witnessed a charter granted to Ulverston 1284.

The carved stone base of the alms box was found at the same time and same place. I cannot tell its original purpose. The old font was removed in 1827 and was preserved by the piety of the late Mr. Wm. Cranke; it has recently been given back to the church by Lord Derby.

I am inclined to think that the old font stood in the south-west of the church where the gallery stairs now are.* I can find no faculty for its removal, but a somewhat comprehensive faculty for re-pewing the church may have been made to cover this. The Gale pew, a gallery pew at the south-east of the nave, was erected by a faculty granted to Christ^r Wilson, Esq., of Bardsea Hall in 1759. It was erected to enable him and his "to hear Divine Service and Sermons." I understand (from Mrs. Satterthwaite) he had hitherto attended Aldingham Church, but that he had some disagreement with the rector there. I am suggesting that a hagnoscope was then partially blocked up. A sounding of the wall round the present opening indicates a plaster, lath, and slate filling-up of space. In 1751 we have minutes of a meeting when the proposal to put up a ceiling was defeated. I imagine that the ceiling was however put up in that year, as one of the beams in the roof bears the initials and date I.R. 1751; they would hardly have occurred there unless work was going on in the roof. Above the ceiling is a fine timbered roof; the beams are joined by wooden pegs and bear the mark of the axe or adze. The ceiling was put up partly

* Plan on faculty, 1826.

for warmth (there was no heating arrangement) and partly for acoustic purposes. The pulpit previously on the south side had to be provided with a sounding board (Mr. Cranke). On the wall, within the roof, dividing the nave from the chancel are the remains of various mural decorations, the earliest being a palm leaf design of, I believe, pre-Reformation date. Irregularities in the walls by the pulpit and the porch suggest the former existence of mural monuments, and there is a small niche in the chancel arch that presumably contained an image. With the more modern mural tablets I will not trouble you.

In the vestry is preserved the old pitch-pipe. It has been stript of some of its bands. The choristers in older times were accustomed to leave their seats for the singing and congregate round the clerk in the chancel. Up till 1827 the choristers' seat was a large square one at the west end partly under the present gallery. A former clerk, Tom Turner, once was in difficulty in setting the key for the psalm before the sermon. The preacher was the late Rev. W. Ponsonby, vicar of Uрсwick. After the third ineffectual attempt on the choristers' part the rector interrupted with a deep voiced "Let us pray," but Turner informed him in language ecclesiastically inappropriate that the psalm would undoubtedly precede the sermon. Another or possibly the same clerk used to amuse the younger part of the congregation by always rendering the words "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation" as "audeous long &c." After morning service the clerk used to call the sales.* He went out of the porch a few steps in the churchyard and cried "Draw near! draw near!" and then gave out his notices. They largely consisted of stick-wood sales. Once he gave a warning against trespassing in a particular wood (Stoads Wood) and ended with the terrible intimation that if any persisted in going into the wood "they mud tak what they wud git." The

* Probably by a sundial now non-existent.

people took his words literally, either wittingly or unwittingly. They did go into the wood and they *did* take what they could get (this is one of the late Mr. Stables' stories, also Mr. Cranke's).

The Urswick people were notorious stick "laiters." We have amongst the church papers a statement signed by Parson Addison and certain parishioners to the effect that they pulled down a dwelling in one of the glebe fields (Turn Car or Rye-garth) because it was so mean that only the poorest people would live in it and they did more damage to the fences by taking sticks than they paid in rent.

I have spoken about Tom Turner the parish clerk. There were two of this name, father and son and another son William, commonly called Billy Turner, who were in turn clerks; Billy Turner was a blacksmith and had a smithy opposite the Derby Arms where the old village cross stood. Old Tom Turner was notorious for his roughness. He was very poor when appointed clerk, and as there were only the fees and a small yearly payment per house to the clerk, £5 a year was given him to keep him off the parish. This sum was claimed by subsequent clerks as their right. Old Tom Turner was very keen in looking after his fees; he used to say "he did not keer wha deed, or whar they deed, so long as they came to Ossick to be buried." He shocked people by his roughness and irreverance over funerals. The Turners were succeeded by Thos. Pickthall, and Pickthall by Mattha Jackson.

In 1826-27 the pews were re-arranged. Previously they were partly square ones and partly of the present shape. I think that there were then no faculty pews, with the exception of the Gale pew, but certainly there was an appropriation by custom. In a square pew where the pulpit now stands, sat an old Urswick family of Flemings; next to them the owners of Stainton Hall. The re-arrangement of pews caused at the time much heart

burning. In the plan for re-seating was incorporated the erection of the west gallery and the removal of the pulpit from the middle of the south side to its present position. The chancel rails were renewed about 1850; we have portions of the old ones. I think they encircled the Holy Table; they certainly did on the north side. At the same time the present unfortunate terra-cotta reredos and commandment tables were put up, and the altar piece of the Last Supper removed. The old Commandment tables are in the Sunday school.

In the tower hang three bells. The largest and most southerly was given by Sir Wm. Harrington of Agincourt fame; it bears the inscription:—

maria Wilelmus de Haryngton Dominus de Aldyngham
✠ et Domina Margareta Uxor Eius ✠

The next is inscribed:—

I. Fleming, R. Briggs W. Tomson Ch. Wardens 1711.

The last:—

Henry Houlme Vicor, Iames Shaw, Iohn Conskell
Churchwardens 1724.

There is room for a fourth bell, and in Edward VI. reign there were four. Report says a bell from Urswick was given to, or stolen by, the vicar of Dalton.

The custom of passing-bell ringing is this:—For a male, three strokes on each bell beginning with the Harrington bell, and then seven tolls on the Harrington bell. For a female, two tolls on each bell followed by the seven. Formerly an eight o'clock bell was rung every Sunday morning. I can find no trace of a curfew bell.

The carved *Mater Dolorosa*, or *Pietà* as the Romanists now call it, on the west front of the tower deserves notice.

In the communion plate there are two pieces of antiquarian interest. The chalice with cover bearing the

initials W.S. and the date 1571. Report assigns it as a gift from Archbishop Sandys. The patten is a large silver dish given by Chris. Wilson in 1751, with the arms of Wilson impaling Braddyll.

The alms dish of Nuremberg work was given by Mrs. Petty, Wellwood.

The priest's door has a curious old iron key now only used at inductions.

The floor of the church formerly was covered with rushes. The rushbearing took place in the autumn,* the various farmers bringing their contributions. The custom ceased in 1826 when the new pews were put in and the floor probably re-flagged. The late Mr. W. Stables often spoke of it. Mr. Stables was born about 1802. The grandfather of this Mr. Stables, a Mr. Taylor, was the first to own a winnowing machine in the village; it was made by the Deasons, who were wheelwrights and joiners at Hag End. Before the introduction of winnowing machines, the farmers used to take their corn up on Birkrigg and winnow it on the breezy heights. Mr. Stables used to show the spot used, which was called the "winnowing hole."

The earliest vicar named is Daniel le Fleming, given at a date varying from 1150-1180.

Nicholas Marshall was vicar from 1620-1660. Cromwell's commissioners say of him:—

The Vicar officiating the cure of the Church is Mr Nicholas Marshall, both Vicar of the Church and Maister of a free scoole, but he is scandalous in his life and negligent in both his callings.

They seem to have recommended a certain Mr. Millington for the benefice, but Marshall managed to retain it. It is worthy of note that although George Fox had much to say about the iniquities of the various neighbouring clergy, at Ulverston, Aldingham, and elsewhere, we hear nothing

* In all probability on or about the Feast of St. Michael.

about Mr. Marshall's. I am inclined to think his negligence and scandalous life were simply political faults and inability to conform to the Independents' bigotry.

John Addison was inducted in 1747; he had previously been the schoolmaster, and then held, as many of his predecessors and some of his successors did, the dual office of master and vicar. He lodged in a cottage in Little Urswick now tenanted by Mr. Thos. Jackson the carrier. He paid 9/- per week for board and lodging, and when his landlady wished to make the charge 11/- per week, he exclaimed against the extortion and declared that sooner than pay such an exorbitant sum he would set up housekeeping; so he stayed on at 9/- (Mr. Cranke).

William Ashburner succeeded him in 1788. It is this vicar that so shocked Bolton the geologist by presiding at the cockpit, on the green opposite the present vicarage. He was probably, for all that, a useful vicar and schoolmaster. He published a Bowdlerised version of the Bible for the benefit of his scholars. Wm. Ponsonby, who came in 1805, used to pasture the churchyard with black cattle. His successor, Matthias Forrest, who arranged the tithe commutation, kept sheep in the churchyard.

The registers start with the year 1608.

LIST OF VICARS.

c. 1150	Daniel le Fleming,
1260	W. de Melmerbi.
c. 1288	William de Boivill.
c. 1381	Willelmus Normande.
c. 1404	Johannes
c. 1530	Thomas Herryson or Harrison.
c. 1535	Thomas Harteley.
1546-7	William Sawrey.
1554	Thomas Dobson.
1580	James Saier or Sayer.
1585	William Lindowe.

1620-1	Nicholas Marshall.	
1660	George Inman.	
1681	Thomas Inman.	
1696	Richard Swainson.	
1714	Alexander Bagot	} rival presentations } Mr Holme remains.
1714	Henry Holme	
1747	John Addison, B.A.	
1788	William Ashburner.	
1800	John Bailes.	
1805	William Ponsonby.	
1841	Matthias Forrest.	
1861	James Gale, B.A.	
1878	Robert Burland Billinge.	
1902	Thomas Norton Postlethwaite, B.A.	

NOTE BY HARPER GAYTHORPE, F.S.A.Scot.

In reply to the point raised on p. 195 about the arms *arg. fretty gules*, Mr. Gaythorpe gives the authorities on which he bases his opinion. "*Arg. a fret gu.* Thomas de Corowen, *E.* Roll circa 1277-87; Harl. MSS. 6137 and 6589.—*Arg. fretty gu.* Thomas de Corowen, *E.* (*ibid.*)—*Gu. fretty arg.* Cerouen, Hodelestone, *K. Caerlaveroc Poem*, 1301; printed in Grose's *Antiq. Repert.*, 1779; ii., 107-284, from Cotton MS. Calig. A, 18; and by Nicolas, 1828, from the same and from another in the College of Arms; Harl. MSS. 6137 and 6589.—*Arg. fretty and a chief az.* Curwen. *Arg. fretty gu. a chief az.* Christofer Cnowene (in pencil Corowen) X. Jenyn's Coll. Harl. MSS. 6589.—Thomas Cospatrick, Weirkington, Y. Jenyn's Ordinary, partly printed by Nicolas, 1829, from MS. in the College of Arms; but of greater length in Harl. MS. 6589.—Curwen, Workington, Cumberland; as descended from Gospatric, Earl of Northumberland; the heiress m. Christian: (all these given in Papworth and Morant, *Ordinary of British Armorial*s, 1874). J. de Curwen was rector of Aldingham c. 1275."

Mr. Gaythorpe also remarks that it is clear from the researches of Mr. W. B. Greenfield that Sir William Haryngton, 5th Baron of Aldingham (d. 1457) who gave the bell (see pp. 195, 200) now at Urswick Church, is not the Sir William Haryngton who fought at Agincourt, but a cousin of the same name. The confusion is the greater as they both married a Margaret, the former Margaret Hulle, daughter of Sir John Hulle, Knight, of Kyton, co. Devon, and the latter Margaret Neville, daughter of Sir Robert Neville of Hornby Castle. (See *Furness Lore*, pp. 95-96).