

ART. XXIV.—*Kirkbampton Church*. By J. H. MARTINDALE, F.R.I.B.A.

*Read at the Church, June 27th, 1912.*

THE church of Kirkbampton, dedicated to St. Peter, is a very typical Cumberland church, both in plan and character.

The chancel arch and north door, both being original and *in situ*, fix the dimensions of the early church pretty definitely, and we may be assured the original church consisted of nave and chancel, in all probability as at present.

I have not found any recorded date of the foundation, but we know a church was existing in the twelfth century, for a clergyman of "Banton" is mentioned in a charter (No. 73) in the "Register of Wetheral," which Chancellor Prescott dates *not later* than 1195. The architectural character of the chancel arch and north door is consistent with this date, so we may assume the building to be more than 700 years old.

The present church consists of a nave, 36 feet 6 inches long by 19 feet wide, and chancel, 27 feet long by 12 feet 6 inches wide. The chancel arch is semicircular, 7 feet wide, and has carved capitals to both piers, and the north and south vary.

One of the original narrow round-headed Norman windows remains in the chancel, and one was taken out some 20 years ago to make room for the arch to the organ chamber on the north side, and is now rebuilt in the new gable. There is a small low-side window on the north side of the chancel and a priest's door on the south side.

Over the north entrance door is a sculptured tympanum inside the early arch. It is illustrated and described in



THE CHANCEL ARCH, KIRKBAMPTON.

*Phot. by C. F. Martindale.*

TO FACE P. 252.



THE TYMPANUM, - KIRKHAMPTON CHURCH.

Mr. Calverley's book *Early Sculptured Crosses* and in Mr. C. W. Keyser's *Norman Tympana*. We have only three examples of these tympana in Cumberland, two in Westmorland, and one in Lancashire north of the Sands. The one at Pennington, Lancashire, is now built in the wall of a farm, and has been described by the late Mr. Harper Gaythorpe in these *Transactions*, N.S., iii. The two in Westmorland are both in Longmarton Church, and have been described by the late Mr. Lees in these *Transactions*, O.S., v. Of the three in Cumberland, one is at Bridekirk, now built into a modern church, described by Mr. Calverley, these *Transactions*, O.S., xi.; the second at St. Bees (more a sculptured lintel than a tympanum), figured in *Early Sculptured Crosses*, and this one at Kirkbampton, *in situ*, with its surrounding arch, and probably the most perfect of them all. These tympana are generally dated as between 1050-1200. The subjects were various, taken from both the Old and New Testaments, the most common possible being the Agnus Dei in a Vesica. They were occasionally decorated. They were always placed over the most important entrance to the church, and at this early period there does not seem to have been that objection to a *North* door which we find later. The subject here has been variously described as a Bishop or an Abbot or David with his crook and sling fighting the lion and bear, a favourite subject in early Christian art.\* It has suffered very much from the weather, and is not now easy to decipher, but seems to be a figure and animals.

Bishop Nicolson, in his visitation of 1703, mentions *two* bells, stating that "one is cracked." There are at present two bells, one cast in 1705, two years after the Bishop's visitation, and therefore probably the cracked one recast ;

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\* See J. Romilly Allen, F.S.A., *Christian Symbolism*, pp. 203-208, and *Early Sculptured Crosses in the Diocese of Carlisle*, p. 214, from which the illustration is borrowed.

the other is a modern one. What has become of the second bell (the smaller one) mentioned by Bishop Nicolson? The Rev. H. Whitehead has described the bells in these *Transactions*, O.S., ix.

A Roman stone, 14 inches by  $10\frac{3}{4}$  inches, was found in the walls during the restoration in 1870-71, and is now built into the south wall of the chancel. It bears the following inscription:—VEX. LEG. VI. P.F. FEC. This has no doubt been brought from "The Wall."

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