

ART. IX.—*Walney Chapel*. By the late HARPER GAYTHORPE, F.S.A.Scot.\*

*Communicated at Grange-over-Sands, June 17th, 1919.*

# I.—HISTORY.

WALNEY in ancient times was part of the great parish of Dalton-in-Furness, in the archdeaconry of Richmond and in the diocese of York. From 1537 the archdeaconry was assigned to the diocese of Chester until 1856, when Furness was transferred to the see of Carlisle. The chapel on the island is shown on its present site in Saxton's map of Lancashire (1577), which also gives the earliest record of the chapels at Woodland, Blawith and Lowick, with a chapel at Graythwaite since moved to Satterthwaite. The chapels of Coniston and Seathwaite were consecrated soon afterwards. The whole group appears to have been a result of the Royal Commission of 1563, appointed to enforce the Act of Uniformity in the diocese of Chester; for that commission found the church accommodation in certain districts insufficient, on account of the distance to be travelled by persons attending their parish churches. In 1568 Queen Elizabeth urged the Bishop of Chester, William Downham (1561-1577), to take measures to remedy these difficulties, and two years later she summoned him to Hampton Court to explain his inaction. We may infer that Walney chapel was one of those founded at that time in consequence of this movement.

The chapel was probably built at the cost of the land-owners. They still had to pay the church-rate to Dalton

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\* This article in its present form is the substance of a paper prepared by our member Mr. Paul V. Kelly from materials left by Mr. Gaythorpe, with some additions by Mr. W. B. Kendall, C.E., whose death on August 28th, 1919, is greatly regretted by all who are interested in the history of Furness.

and small tithes to the Lay rector, and their Reader—though perhaps he also had “whittlegate” or free board at different houses in the neighbourhood, and whatever he earned as schoolmaster—received only 6s. 6d. a year. This we learn from a Parliamentary inquisition at Lancaster in 1650, at which the inhabitants of the island “prayed that their said chapel of Wana might be made parochial.” Next year the Committee of “Plundered Ministers” found that there were 400 communicants (including, no doubt, many from the mainland) and ordered £50 a year to be paid from the inappropriate rectory of Poulton to the Walney minister. The minister then was Mr. Soutwerke, a Presbyterian (1649-1657). He was the man to whom in 1652 George Fox the Quaker spoke “after service was done, but he got away, and would not be seen at his house.”

At the Restoration the payment out of Poulton tithes ceased, and Thomas Thomson was appointed at the old stipend in 1661. But the landowners soon pledged themselves to pay 4s. 5d. per tenement yearly as Chapel wage or Priest wage; and as there were 44 tenements on the island this brought in about £10. Three halfpence a year per tenement was also allowed for the clerk's wage.

Mr. Thomson, after holding the curacy for 47½ years, died in April, 1709, and in that year Mr. Houghley became curate. In 1712 Mr. Lodge received the chapel wage. In 1741 the Rev. Samuel Hunter was appointed, and held the office for 61 years. To him, in 1750, the first benefaction under Queen Anne's Bounty was made; £200 being invested by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in an estate at Cocken for the Walney chapelry. Mr. Hunter assisted in 1770 in the laying out and allotment of the common fields; and in 1780 replied to the Bishop's “No Popery” circular in these terms:—

My Lord, this may serve to acknowledge the receipt of your L<sup>d</sup>ship's letter of the 30th ult. and also to inform you

that we have neither Masshouse, popish school, convert to Popery, nor more than one person professing the Popish Religion within the Chapelry of Walney. I am my L<sup>d</sup> &c.

S. Hunter, Curate of Walney.

His only Roman Catholic was a customs officer stationed on the island.

The curates next following were:—Samuel Richard Hartley, 1802-1805; John Troughton, 1805-1839; T. M. Postlethwaite, 1840, resigned 1846; and John Park, 1846-1875. Mr. Troughton was an ardent sportsman; he always acted as judge and master of all the ceremonies at the athletic contests frequently held on the island, and indeed it is popularly said that the Walney clergyman used to preside at the annual cockfights in his gown and bands. After his death the Rev. William Slater, curate of Dalton, officiated for a time, teaching in the school and sleeping in a hammock in the schoolroom. "Poor Parson Slater" was drowned at the stepping-stones at Christy Pool in returning from a wedding-feast at Biggar.

In 1847 the deanery of Furness was assigned to Carlisle, but the transfer did not take effect until the death of Bishop Percy in 1856. The chapel is then first spoken of as a church, and in 1876 it is first named "St. Mary's, Walney." From 1875 the incumbents have been:—H. M. Burgess, resigned 1894; Nigel Buchanan, 1894-1898; R. Hindle, 1898-1903; C. Lacy Hulbert, 1903-1907; and G. S. Smith, 1907-1910; the present vicar being the Rev. S. Liberty, M.A. The living is a vicarage; its patron the vicar of Dalton. In 1883 it was worth £180 per annum, and is now valued at £221 nett.

## II.—FABRIC.

The Elizabethan chapel, which probably measured some 25 by 18 feet inside, was rebuilt about the end of the 17th century, being extended 8 feet westward, and

the tower was added about 1744. This second chapel was built of cobblestones, roughcast outside and white-washed within and without. The roof was thatched and the floor was of earth, bedded with bent-grass from the sandhills. There were three windows in the south side, two in the north and one at the east end, all square and with wooden frames. The tower projected from the west end and served as porch and as belfry for the one bell; it rose a few feet above the roof, its four corners being carried up a little higher. The interior of the chapel measured 33 by 18 feet. In the north-east corner was the box pew for the North End tenant and in the south-east corner a corresponding pew for South End. The Communion Table stood between them. In the south side were four box pews of 12 sittings each for the Biggar tenants, three sittings to each tenement, and one single pew next the singers, unappropriated. In the north-west corner were four benches, rising towards the end wall, unappropriated, and occupied generally by farm servants. The three-decker pulpit stood in the middle of the north wall, and the rest of that side was filled with pews for the North Scale tenants—east of the pulpit a box pew for the three tenants of the Great Holding, four sittings each; west of the pulpit a box pew for the three tenants of the Low Holding, three sittings each, with three odd sittings for the three holders of the sub-divided No. 2 tenement. There were also four single pews with six sittings each, two on the east and two on the west, facing the pulpit. In the box pews the bench ran round the pew, so that many worshippers sat with their backs to the altar; but, as an old clerk said, "They didn't go there to worship the furniture!" There was no vestry; the clerk helped the minister in and out of his surplice in the porch. Nor was there an organ. Two pitchpipes are preserved: one of brass,  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches long by 2 inches wide and 2 inches thick, with a mahogany slide and handle

7 inches long, marked with the notes and stamped " E. DEASON 1816 " ; the other, used later, is of reddish brown wood,  $13\frac{1}{4}$  inches long when closed and  $1\frac{5}{8}$  inches in diameter, apparently made by a local turner.

From the time of Queen Anne a " chapel cess " had been levied yearly for repairs of chapel and school. In 1811 a cess of 3s. 6d. and in 1822 one of 3s. 3d. failed to put the chapel into satisfactory condition, and the bishop intervened. The landowners in July, 1823, agreed to a cess of 16s. 6d., realizing £36 6s. od., which was spent on flagging the floor (the aisle had already been flagged by that time), repairing the pews, seats and Communion Table, putting a new bottom to the great window, raising the pulpit, painting the woodwork a plain oak-colour, roughcasting and whitewashing. In 1832 a cess of £1 10s. od. was laid ; £47 5s. od. was spent that year and more next year on further repairs. Notwithstanding this, one side-wall was in danger of falling, and had to be supported by three wooden props ; continual repair was needed and the cess was never lower than 2s. 1d., and sometimes reached 3s. 1d., up to 1850, when a vestry meeting decided on rebuilding. As the subscriptions were insufficient, in March, 1851, the inhabitants met and laid a tax on the landowners and occupiers at £3 10s. od. per tenement, which produced £154. This was made up by subscriptions to £500, and boonwork in carting, etc. was given. The demolition of the old chapel was begun on June 15, 1852, and the new one, to seat 185, was opened on February 27, 1853.

Between 1852 and 1865 the chapel rate varied from  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 1d. ; in 1866 it was  $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. ; in 1867 at 1d. it produced £10 7s. 8d. In 1868 this chapel rate, with the church rate paid to Dalton, ceased, being abolished by Act of Parliament : and upkeep was provided by collections, or offertories as they were termed after 1891. In 1879 a painted window was inserted at the east end

and the fabric was restored and re-decorated for the last time. For with the creation of Vickerstown and an increase of population from 474 in 1891 to about 5,000 in 1903 a larger church was needed. Through the energy of the Rev. C. L. Hulbert funds were raised; a site adjoining the old churchyard was given by Messrs. Vickers, Ltd., and the design for a new church was entrusted to Messrs. Paley and Austin. The foundation stone was laid on October 11, 1907, by the Archbishop of York, and on October 3, 1908, the Bishop of Carlisle dedicated the present building—a portion of the greater church intended when the full scheme can be realized.

### III.—REGISTERS AND RECORDS.

The Registers of Baptisms and Burials begin in 1744. The licence for marriages was given on June 6, 1837, but marriages had been solemnized in Walney chapel under the commonwealth, and apparently later, though none are recorded between 1744 and 1837. On the first page of Baptisms are mentioned the twin sons of John Romney of High Cocken, brothers of George Romney the artist. The Burials refer frequently to shipwrecks on the dreaded "Back o' Wana." One of the worst disasters was the wreck of the brig "Druid" of Amlwch at North End on Jan. 18, 1789; the captain, five passengers and six seamen were buried "as they were severally cast on shore" many days afterwards. The following is curious :—

The body of a man was found thrown up by the Tide upon this coast near North End, and not far from it was found a coffin, in which the body was deposited and interred at Walney Chapel, 15th October, 1799.

The year 1825 was particularly fatal. In February three men lost in the sloop "Aurora" of Preston were buried; in September, two unknown men; in November,

two men cast ashore on Walney from the sloop "Lady Endergally" of Campbelltown, lost with all hands near Häverigg, and four from the brig "Susan" of Whitehaven, wrecked on Walney. In 1833 were buried five Manx fishers from the "Margaret and Jane" of Ramsey, lost in the gale of June 11th. In November following, the "London Packet" of Antwerp was driven ashore on the island, and one of the seamen who had been rescued from the wreck was drowned on January 3, while attempting to cross the channel between Barrow Isle and Oak Head. In 1853, in the first week after the new chapel was opened, the master, mate and boy of the schooner "Vigo" of Cardigan, wrecked at North End, were buried. Many beside "Poor Parson Slater" and the Dutch seaman were drowned in crossing the fords over Walney Channel; such entries continue up to July 24, 1857, when records of deaths by drowning come to an end.

The "Walney Chapel Book, purchased in 1805 for the use of the Island by D. Paxton, Chapel Warden" contains various details of interest. It opens with the collection, on the Day of Thanksgiving, Dec. 5, 1805, of £7 10s. 6d. for the widows and orphans of Nelson's men who fell at Trafalgar. The same sum, less sixpence, was raised for a similar object after the battle of Waterloo. The book gives particulars of the chapel cess, already described, and of other sources of income. One of these was an annual sum of 5s. from the wardens of Dalton for the division of Hawcoat "for dinner on Good Friday"—which requires explanation. It had been the custom, and the custom continued until recently, to communicate on Good Friday rather than on Easter Sunday. The Sidesmen's Book at Dalton records that in 1797 it was ordered that the communion service should be held there only four times a year, instead of monthly, because "of the small attendance by reason of the sacrament being

administered four times in the year at the chapels within the parish, which was not the practice until lately." At Walney chapel there were celebrations on Good Friday, Trinity Sunday, a Sunday early in October, and Christmas Day. Between 1805 and 1828, as this book records, the largest number of communicants was 50, on Good Friday, 1809; the average was 40 on Good Fridays, and about half that number on other days. But as some of the communicants had far to travel, a dinner was given them and paid for out of the Dalton Church Rate. This became commuted for a 5s. payment, which continued until the Rate was abolished in 1868.

Another source of income is unusual. In 1846-7-8, C. D. Archibald paid £5 a year to the chapel as "Game Money," for the right to kill game over the whole island.

The annual business-meeting was held, until 1840, in the chapel on the first or second Sunday after Easter; later, on Easter Monday. The attendances were very small—from one or two to six or seven at most. The election of Chapel warden seems to have caused disagreement at one period. Up to 1810 the retiring warden selected his successor, but Mr. Troughton then appears to have taken matters into his own hands. On the page for 1811 the entry has been cut out and a note added—"Jas. Fell appointed to serve the office of Chapel Warden" and from 1812 to 1839 the entry has been altered with the statement "by (or per) the Rev. J. Troughton, Incumbent Minister." Later, the warden was nominated, sometimes by the vicar, sometimes by the parishioners or by the retiring warden; until in 1881 the vicar appointed the "warden" and the parishioners elected two sidesmen and a "Church Master," who in 1885 became the people's churchwarden.

The clerk in 1827 became the "Parish Clerk." In 1820 his salary of 5s. 6d. was raised to 1s. per Sunday, and in 1853 to £3 10s. 0d. a year. After 1883 the cleaner,



bellringer, organist and blower are the only salaried officials.

Other expenses besides ordinary upkeep, doles, treats to school and choir, purchase of books, etc., were the yearly charge of 1s. 6d. for "dining at Ulverston" (at the visitation), raised to 4s. in 1823 and disappearing in 1874; and "Cemecary" (Commissary) fees, 7s. 10d., and "Parreter" (Apparitor) fees, 3s. 6d. or more—the two combined after 1821 as commissary fees, 12s. 10d. and ceasing in 1856. On one occasion it is noted—"Commissary fees for last year 2s. extra, being the Bishop's primary visitation." In 1867 a fee of £3 had to be paid in connexion with a terrier. An annual charge was "going to Dalton for wine," the communion wine supplied by the vicar of Dalton. One more item may be given, as characteristic of the rustic chapel: in 1829 "for a piece of wood for stable door, 3d." This was for the shed, built against the schoolroom by the chapelwarden in 1810 at a cost of about £2 and boon work, and serving those who rode or drove to chapel for stabling their horses during service.

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