

ART. IV.—*Some Notes on Windermere Parish Church.*
By BRUCE LOGAN THOMPSON, M.A.

Read at Carlisle, March 21st, 1933.

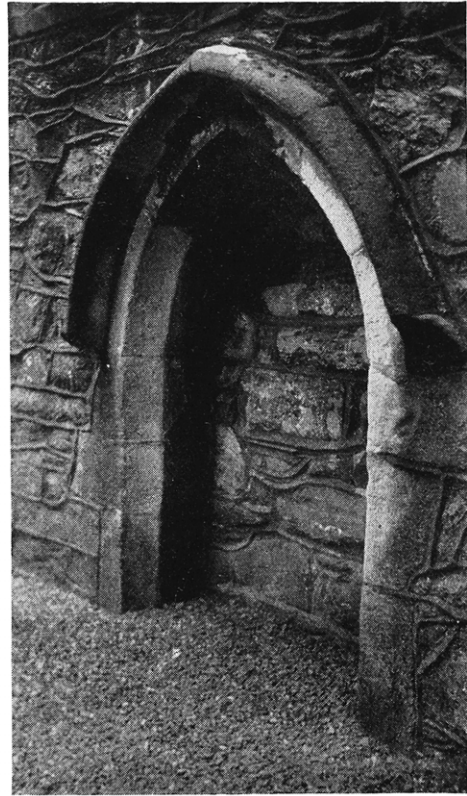
ALTHOUGH certain features of the church at Bowness have been described in former volumes of *Transactions*, a clear and chronological account of its history has yet to be written. Ferguson (O.S. iv) wrote almost entirely on the old glass in the East Window, Browne (N.S. ix) on the post-Reformation rectors and patrons, and Brydson (N.S. xx) on the pre-Reformation clergy of the parish church and the chapel of St. Mary holme. The following notes are meant to be *addenda* to those papers and to the "History of Windermere Parish Church" by the Rev. E. J. Nurse, the present Rector.

Nobody knows when the first church was built; we only know that the earliest mention of a "chapel" is in 1203 and that most of the existing church dates from 1480, its predecessor having been destroyed by fire. The mother churches of Kendal, Heversham, and Kirkby Lonsdale—the only pre-Norman foundations in South Westmorland—all established daughter chapels in their surrounding districts; Windermere and Grasmere were two of the many offshoots from Kendal and were the first to become independent rectories, being described as such in the fourteenth century (Farrer, *Records of Kendale*, ii, 58). But the Rector of Windermere still pays two marks yearly "in token of subjection" to the Vicar of Kendal. There is no reason to suppose that there was a chapel in pre-Norman days; nothing conclusively pre-Norman has ever been found at Bowness.

The most ancient things existing today are the font and the base of the tower. An ancient floor, 5 feet



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WINDERMERE PARISH CHURCH.
Font, 1154. Base of tower.

Photo: B.L.T.

below the present floor, was found in 1870 but covered up again, so that it cannot now be used in evidence.

The font consists of an imperfectly-octagonal block of sandstone (sandstone is not found locally) with sides $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep, tapering from $9\frac{1}{2}$ - $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the top to 6-9 inches at the bottom. The measurements across the top are 27 inches from corner to corner and $25\frac{1}{2}$ inches from side to side and the bowl is $20\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. Human heads are rudely carved at the alternate corners, and in two places there are roughly-cut crosses, sometimes said to be consecration crosses. The font is slightly discoloured, supposedly by fire; the pillar which supports it is modern. Dr. D. H. S. Cranage, seeing a photograph in 1926, wrote "I do not think that the font is Saxon, but it may well be Norman." It is thus possible that the font may mean there was a chapel here round about 1100.

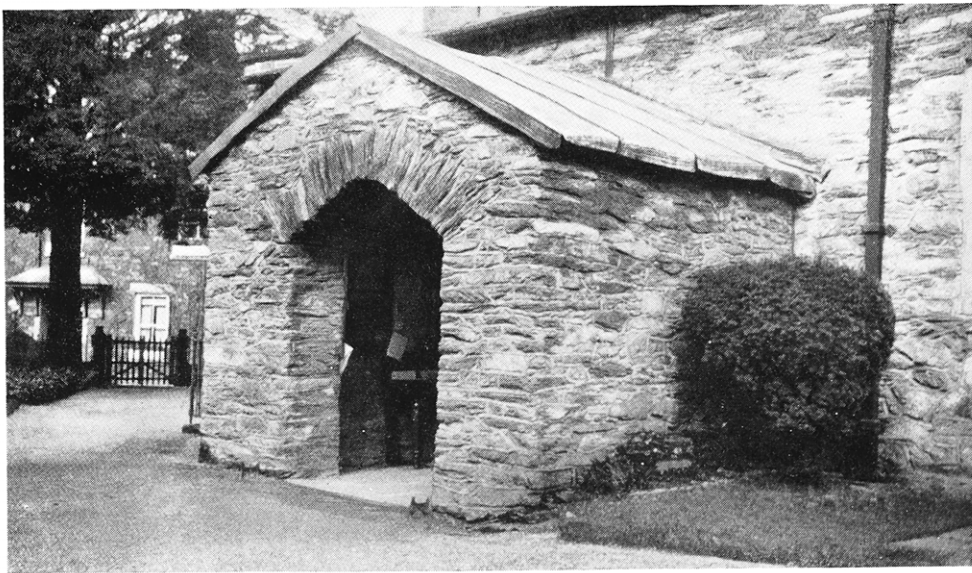
The base of the tower is more significant than appears at first sight. The whole tower was raised, repaired and pointed in 1870, so that it now looks all alike, but, as Brydson pointed out, the blocked-up doorway in its West wall is earlier than 1480 (though probably only about a hundred years earlier), and the fact that the tower is askew with the rest of the church suggests that it is of a different build. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the tower was barricaded off from the nave by a gallery, and the ringers had access to the belfry by this West doorway until the restoration of 1870.

The body of the present church dates from the fire of 1480 and was re-consecrated in December 1483. In form it was originally a plain rectangle with six bays of rubble pillars separating the aisles from the nave; there was no structural distinction between nave and chancel. The South porch is evidently the oldest addition, of unknown date; the chancel and a vestry were built in 1870, another vestry in 1912; and the vestries were altered and the war memorial chapel built in 1921-2. There are three original doorways into the church, two

in the South aisle and one in the North. The original clerestory windows are all alike, of three lights with square heads. The South aisle windows with one exception have four lights apiece with four-centred heads; the North aisle windows have three lights apiece with varied heads. The East window with its trefoils is modern, the old window had circular-headed lights. Its glass is fully described by Ferguson (*op. cit.*).

Ferguson's conclusions about the Carrier's Arms glass seem to be a little mistaken, because he thought the story in Clarke's *Survey of the Lakes* more credible than the earlier version given in the Machell manuscripts at Carlisle. But Machell must have been right when he sketched three shields, not merely one, and recorded the tradition of "a shere-man a smith [not "or smith"] and a carryer." In fact part of his "coat marked Y" can still be seen, looking rather like a golden fuzz-ball, to the left of the rope, wantey hook and skewers. So part of the Shearman's Arms, as well as the Carrier's Arms, exists; and presumably the Smith's Arms was lost or destroyed some time after 1692. There is nothing questionable about Machell's statement, and Clarke only goes astray because (nearly a hundred years later) he neither saw nor heard as much as Machell had done.

Inscriptions.—The Questions & Answers and the Guy Fawkes inscription have been described by Ferguson, but there is just one point about the latter which needs explanation: if Guy Fawkes Day was on the 5th November 1605 why was the inscription not put up till 1629? Mrs. Brunskill has discovered that on the day of the Plot Christopher Philipson, junior, the author of the inscription was only a year old, having been born in 1604! It was not until he was 25, and something of a man of letters, that he adorned the Church in this way. There is a memorial to his father, Robert Philipson, near the little South doorway; formerly it was in the chancel.



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WINDERMERE PARISH CHURCH.
South Porch.

Photo: B.L.T.

Organ.—Nicolson and Burn say “ anciently there was an organ; but it was demolished in the civil wars in the reign of King Charles the first.” Machell adds that it was “ cutt in pieces . . . by the Roundhead party; this parish being very Loyal to [the] King their Lord and master.” In 1846 there was “ a very handsome new organ ”; this was enlarged in 1870 and renewed in 1922.

Gallery.—Machell, speaking of the organ, says that there was “ formerly ” a gallery. There was another gallery in the eighteenth century, embellished with the Royal Arms and dated 1761. By the time this gallery was done away with, in 1870, it had also accumulated a collection of hatchments of the Flemings of Rayrigg.

Bells.—The existing peal of eight bells was hung in 1870. Before that there were three bells and a saint’s bell. In 1692 Machell copied their inscriptions—mostly initials [which I have been unable to elucidate]—and from him we learn that “ Windermere Great Bell ” was dated 1687, the Little Bell 1666, and the Middle Bell was undated. He also found in the tower “ a clock given by Richard Shaw & Martin Suart of Undermilnbeck.”

Rushbearing.—The last quotation from the Machell MSS. is the most interesting and delightful of all, though alas! it is partly indecipherable:

“ On St James day the young people of the parish use to bring Rushes to straw the church wh. all, in white sheets wh. flores & garlands; and formerly they used sommgs [?] or somd [?] games [?]; since King Charles the 1st came to his Crowne there was a great contest betwix *Aplethwate & Undermilbeck* (two hamletts in this parish) which should outvy one another in garlands & somerods wh. are Long polls like fishing rod Butts in show; there being an 100 or above on each side wh. all sorts of pastime musique & dancing.”

Sidesmen.—Four and twenty freeholders living in the Ancient Parish of Windermere are still chosen by the

Rector as sidesmen, according to old-established custom. There are 8 from Undermillbeck, 8 from Appleshwaite, 5 from Troutbeck and 3 from Ambleside-below-Stock: the appointment is for life. By their attendance at the Easter Vestry Meeting the four and twenty sidesmen recall the time when the Parish Church ministered to the whole neighbourhood from Black Beck to the Stock, and the extreme points of the Parish were Newby Bridge and Kirkstone Top. The boundary included the whole of the lake, all the Troutbeck fells, and Red Screes. The adjoining parishes were Cartmel, Colton, Hawkshead, Grasmere, Barton and Kendal.

Rectors.—The following names should be added to the list of Rectors published by Nurse (*op. cit.*): Francis Magson, 1627, and William Kempe, 1653-1657 (?). Apparently Magson had previously been Master of Hawkshead Grammar School, and Kempe had been minister there, as well as at Grasmere. Particulars are given by Nightingale (*The Ejected of 1662*, ii, pp. 1035 seq.).

I am indebted to the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle for permission to quote from the Machell MSS. in their possession.