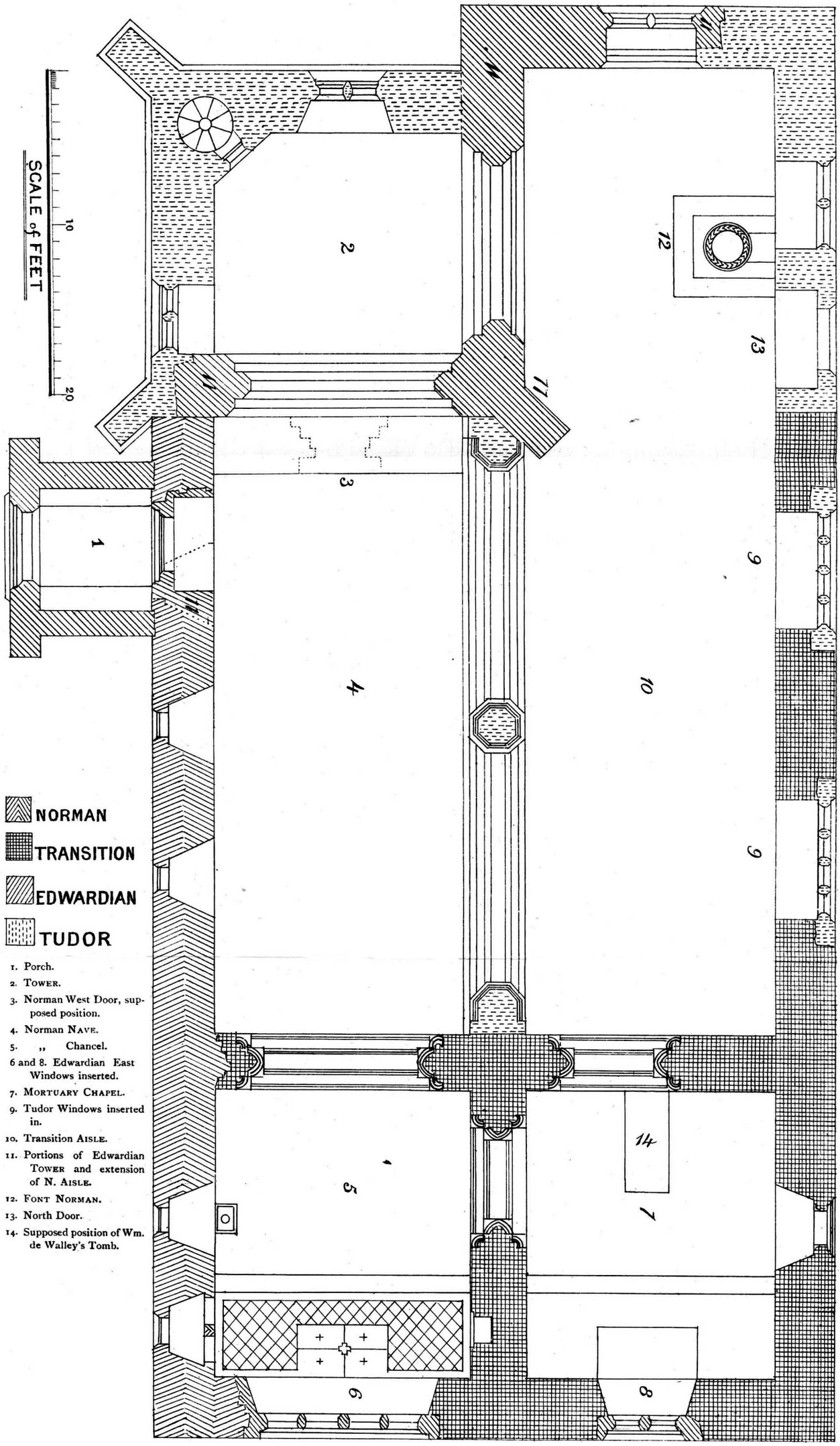

GROUND PLAN OF THE OLD WALLASEY CHURCH.

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF WALLASEY CHURCH.

BY EDWARD W. COX.

IN treating of the antiquities of the parish of Wallasey, I shall have to restrict myself chiefly to those particular portions of history and tradition which relate to its church and its many rebuildings. Not that there is not more of very great interest to speak of, but that this very wide subject could not be comprised in any one paper. If, however, I must omit so much, perhaps I can tell you something of a history to which, at present, I alone hold the master key; for I only have taken the trouble to classify the remains of the ancient churches of Wallasey. I recently saw in the *Liverpool Albion* a paper on Wallasey, in which this church was traced back to the fourteenth century. I think I can, with certainty, place it nearly three hundred years earlier than that, and, possibly, bring some evidence of its existence at a very much earlier time.

Of the early history of the parish of Wallasey, previous to *Doomsday Book*, I have been able to find no written trace, distinct from that general history of the county which is so fully and admirably given by Lysons, Ormerod, and Mortimer; nor do the Itineraries of Leland or Camden, nor King's *Vale Royal*, published in 1656, pass beyond

the date of the great Norman survey. Still, I think something more than surmises and conjectures may be recovered; partly from traditions that still linger about this yet somewhat primitive place, partly from place-names and field-names in the neighbourhood, and from the singular dedication of its ancient church.

The isolation of this parish was, within my own memory, almost complete. The north-eastern angle of Wirrall, before the building of Birkenhead docks, was almost cut off from the rest of the peninsula by Wallasey Pool, by Bidston Marsh, and the rivers Birket and Fender. That it was ever wholly an island surrounded by the sea, during our epoch, I think is not only doubtful, but such tradition and semi-geological evidence as exists would argue the reverse. They show that the church-crowned hill of Wallasey stood far away from the sea, in the rear of a vast plain covered with woods stretching for many miles to seaward of the present shore line. Many of the local histories speak of a large bed of mussel shells, below Wallasey rectory, as a proof that the sea once flowed round this hill. To my mind they tell quite a different history, as I will try to show.

First, then, what does the name of Wallasey teach us? Wallas Ea, or Wealas Eye, is the Island of the Welsh, and the meaning of Weala is foreigner, or stranger. That gallant little nation whom we call Welsh, do not accept that name themselves. In their own language they are the Cymri, part of that Celtic kingdom of Cumbria, by the Romans called Cimbri, that so long withstood the Saxon invaders—a nation whom we still call Welsh, or Wealas, strangers. Coote, in his *Romans in Britain*, tells us that as the Saxons gradually extended their conquests over our island, they did not, as is commonly supposed, utterly exterminate the Romanised Britons, as Professor Freeman

alleges, for whilst it is true that their towns were sacked, their civilisation uprooted, and themselves slaughtered and enslaved, yet here and there, oppressed and impoverished, the old inhabitants were left, miserable enough, but with existence spared to them. The Saxon was not a dweller in towns, he was not a builder of castles and cities, he despised them, he was a herdsman or a cultivator of the ground, and it came to pass that here and there a remnant of the Romanised Britons were left among the ruins of their cities,[1] or were driven into remote corners of the land for refuge; and there, when they resisted no longer, were suffered to remain. These remnants of the older population the Saxon invaders called Wealas, strangers. How effective a fastness this more than half isolated tract of country would form, and how little worth it would be for the Saxon to overrun it, we may well judge to-day from its bare rocky hill, and tracts of marshes and sandhills, and, except for the loss of its woods, is nearly as wild as it could have been in Saxon times. We gather, therefore, from this name, given it by the Saxons, that they left this desolate tract to the fugitives, and as Cymry became to the Saxons Wales, this corner of Wirrall became Wall*ea*, or the Wealas Island. You will find in Wirral also the name of Willaston, which, I believe, may have the same derivation. The nomenclature of Wirral is chiefly Saxon, with some survival of British. I may speak further on of such combinations, but I would draw your attention to what may be, perhaps, a curious confirmation, if it be a confirmation at all, of this condition of things between Saxon and Briton which we have elicited from the name of Wallasey. In that *Doomsday Book*, where every house and landholder is supposed to be catalogued, we find in Wirral seven

[1] Chester itself was re-occupied by them after its capture by the Saxons.

foreigners, who may possibly have been seven Wealas. These men held land and servants, and are ranked with the higher classes.[1]

Among other British place-names bearing on the pre-Saxon occupation, as well as the ancient topography of Wallasey, is the Fender, one of the small boundary rivers that run into the Wallasey Pool. This is Fen Dwr, "the water or stream of the Fen." I think this name disproves the idea that this tract was isolated by an arm of the sea. The stream is Fen Dwr, now "the stream of the Fen;" it was the same then.[2] Among the fields given to the glebe two bore British names, the Ton Crook hey and the Nar Crook hey. These names are partially Saxon, but the word crook, I believe, signifies carreg or rock, and is British. These fields are the Town rock, and the near rock field. These fields, William de Walleia, in the reign of Henry II., by a deed existing till the seventeenth century, gave to the church, in consideration of the grant of a burial place in the chancel of the church. Now the Ton or town itself (not the village), I believe, in British times, occupied the present churchyard, and was entrenched; the position is exactly the most defensible one in the whole parish, and the roads that surround it, deeply cut into the rock, strongly suggest an entrenched British post. Just below the rectory is the deposit I spoke of, of a deep bed of mussel shells. These are too high for any littoral deposit, and most likely show the refuse from the camp of the Britons, who were driven into this waste corner, and

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[1] I have not yet examined *Doomsday Book* in its original Latin, and I am not certain that these foreigners were not Norman overseers of the estates; it is said by some they were so, and that the word "Francigenae," translated Frenchmen or foreigners, would indicate rather the new occupiers than the older ones.

[2] The isolation is more likely to have been by fresh water lagoons and marshes.

who subsisted largely on the shell-fish from the shore. Unable to keep flocks, or conduct tillage, they sought their poor subsistence from the shore and the woods about them.[1]

I come now to discuss the significance of the dedication of this church, which is to St. Hilary of Poictiers. There are only three churches dedicated to St. Hilary in this kingdom, and it is noticeable that of the two others, one is in Cornwall and the other in Anglesea, places that long and persistently remained distinctly British. St. Hilary lived in the year 367, and distinguished himself by his strong opposition to heresy, and he is symbolically represented as standing on an island and surrounded by serpents; referring to his firm stand on the Island of the Church, amid a sea of troubles, and victorious over wickedness and unbelief. We have now to seek some connecting link between the Gallican St. Hilary of Poictiers and the church of Wallasey. Such evidence as we possess shows that a church existed before the ninth or tenth century. We must again turn to the name borne by Wallasey at that date for our record. *Doomsday Book* calls it Wallea only; but it bore previously and till the thirteenth century the name of Kirkbye in Wallea. "Kirk" and "by"—"church" and "village"—are Danish names. They are added to the old title of Weallas Eye, because in the ninth or tenth century the Danes landed at Meols, built there a stockaded fort, and marched to attack Chester. Thence they were driven out, after two years' fighting, and sailed away to return no more. Again, in 981, the whole coast was ravaged by pirates. This Wallea they doubtless occupied, and found there a church, because they called the place in their own tongue "Kirk-by" (church-village). That they did not build it

[1] Similar piles of sea shells, limpets, and mussels are found on Grange Hill, and many of the British forts on the Welsh coast.

seems pretty certain; they were invaders, possibly heathen. That they ravaged and destroyed it is likely, for *Doomsday Book* gives no record of a priest there. Therefore, the church was there before the coming of the Danes, who destroyed it. The Saxons had been christianised, partly from Rome, chiefly by the Scots under St. Aidan; but they had no such close communion with the Gallican Church as to make a dedication to a Gallican saint probable. The Britons, on the contrary, had such a connection. St. Augustine himself writes to Pope Gregory to ask his advice as to the differences of ritual, which he finds between the Britons, who were Christians at his coming, following the Gallican rule, and the ritual of Rome. If, therefore, this dedication is not Norman, it is most likely British. Have we any trace in history that might account for such a dedication? I think we have. Bede tells us that in the year 429 the Pelagian heresy prevailed in Britain and the Gallican bishops consulted whom they should send to contend with it. They chose Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, at whose coming there was a great revival of the faith. The British were already falling into that dark time of confusion, that ensued on the withdrawal of the Romans, when Germanus came, and that he taught not many miles from this place seems certain. On the battle-field itself he was present and baptised great numbers. A great bloodless victory was won by the newly-baptised soldiers, who formed an ambush, and rushed upon the foe with shouts of Hallelujah! before which the enemy fled in terror. This is called the Hallelujah victory, and it is said to have occurred near Mold, at a place called still Maes Garmon, the field of Germanus. This bishop seems to have returned in A.D. 446 and to have kept an oversight of the British Church, and during his time there seems to have been a brief season of quiet. Mold is not very far from Chester, and if there

was in these years a revival of the Church, due to the man who came to suppress its errors and heresies, who is more likely to have dedicated a church to the great foe of heresies, St. Hilary, than the Gallican Bishop Germanus? I can refer you to no written history for the connection of Wallasey with him. My suggestions may be the merest surmise; even the fact of the Hallelujah victory is questioned; but surely when we find a lingering tradition in the vicinity where Germanus is known to have taught, attributing the foundation to monks of Poictiers,—when we find that a church existed, and therefore some dedication of a church, before the ninth or tenth century, so far as it can be found in a place-name, and that the only other two dedications to St. Hilary are British, there is a possible and reasonable place in history into which such a theory will fit. It is at least worth raising the suggestion for investigation.

Of the British or Saxon church there has been found no existing trace. We must infer from its absence from the record in *Doomsday Book* that both church and priest had been swept away by the Danish and other piratical inroads. The whole town contained but six male inhabitants, or it may be families, and of these the foreigner, perhaps the Weala of whom we spoke before, is the more important man, he has under him two herdsmen, one radman, one cottager. The whole history that comes down to us of the Saxon occupation in this record is the history of dispossession, in five curt words—words so often and so significantly repeated in this terrible tale of conquest and rapine. Uctred, a freeman, had it. The whole history of Uctred left to us, together with his Saxon forefathers in this parish, tells only of their disappearance. To Wallasey they have bequeathed only the *name* that tells us how they in their day hunted the Briton to this wind-swept marsh and hill, and left him there with such a contempt as the Nor-

man in his turn shows for Uctred and his kin. We find the Norman Baron, Robert de Avranches, called de Rodelent, *i.e.*, Robert of Rhyddlan in Flintshire (where he built its noted castle, also that of Diganwy), owning this and a vast number of other confiscated estates. In Wirrall alone he holds ten parishes, beside his possessions in Flintshire.

Although no historical record tells us that Robert built the Norman church of Wallasey, the discovery of some of its remains in 1856 makes it nearly certain that he did so; he is, moreover, described as both a valiant and pious man. He gave to the Norman abbey of Uttica the church of West Kirby, and, what our Blue Ribbon friends would consider a less creditable gift, his cellar of beer. He was slain in 1088 in endeavouring to repulse an incursion of the Welsh, against whom he rashly rushed attended by a single soldier, and though for his known valour they dare not even then approach him, he fell beneath a shower of arrows, and was buried in the abbey of St. Werburgh. He is spoken of as valiant, active, eloquent, liberal, and virtuous. The few remnants found of his church are almost certainly very distinctly early Norman in character, and though direct history is silent, I think we may reasonably claim him as the first rebuilder of the church of St. Hilary. That this was one of the great periods of church building in the district is evidenced by the fact that St. Anselm, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury and rebuilder of its cathedral, was brought in 1092 to assist in the rebuilding of St. Werburgh's Abbey (now Chester Cathedral).

It is scarcely likely that during the fifty stormy years that followed this time there was much church building. Between the incursions of the Welsh into Wirral, and the struggles of the Norman soldiers with the dispossessed Saxons, who had become freebooters, and the wasting of

the farms so that they might afford no sustenance to the invader, all Wirral fell into a miserable condition. At last, in 1120—1123, Randal, the fourth Earl of Chester, caused all the farms to be destroyed, the boundaries of property to be removed, and Wirral afforested. Nor was it again disafforested till the reign of Edward III. In the troublesome reign of King Stephen, under Randal, fifth Earl of Chester, 1128, troops were withdrawn for the war; and this was followed by a Welsh invasion. Henry, of Huntingdon, says they made great store of spoil and devastation, and they ravaged the country as far as Nantwich. At this time Randal's church must have fallen into ruin, possibly by fire,[1] for again we fall in with an old tradition that Wallasey Church was thrice burnt, and has been twice a church without a tower, and once a tower without a church, and I think I can show from the restorations that this legend has some truth.

Having hitherto tried to trace the history of Wallasey church through those periods during which we have no direct written history, we come at last to definite and clear records. In the reign of Henry II., William de Walleia gives to the high altar of St. Hilary's church, and to the priest, for ever, those two fields with British names, the Ton Crook Hey and the Nar Crook Hey, in exchange for a burial place in the chancel of this church. The deed existed late in the seventeenth or early in the eighteenth century, but recent search has failed to find it. A schoolmaster, named Robinson, who wrote a history of Wallasey, still existing in manuscript, and from which Bishop Gastrell made extracts in 1718, saw this deed. The remains found prove that William de Walleia did more

[1] The *Norman* stones taken out of the wall were burned almost to dust, as though they had suffered a previous burning.

than make this gift. He must have rebuilt the chancel and a mortuary chapel for himself, which stood till the seventeenth century. He also gave one mediety of the advowson to the abbey of St. Werburgh, Chester, and it is now held by the Dean and Chapter of Chester Cathedral. The priory of Birkenhead, founded in 1150 by Hamon de Masci (Ormerod erroneously says 1250), held the other mediety; and tradition and Robinson speak of a second chapel served by this priory in North Liscard, called Lees Kirk, and of a third chapel, once standing on land now covered by the sea at Leasowe, but of these all historical traces are most obscure. We will rather trace that history which gives us either definite records or remains.

Now the five rebuildings of Wallasey Church seem all to have taken place at marked periods, during which this waste corner of Cheshire has been the scene of great military movements, which doubtless helped to bring into prominence this otherwise remote district. The first we have noticed at the Conquest, the second is that of the invasion of Ireland by Henry II., whose troops were shipped via Chester and Meols; the third in the reign of Edward I. and II., when Wales was overcome, and the invaders passed through Chester. The fourth building succeeded the time of Henry VII., in whose wars the Welsh took so prominent a part, and the fifth was not far removed from the expedition to Ireland by William III., who embarked at Hoylake.

It is not my intention to detain you by details belonging to the general history of these expeditions. There is only one record of the occupation of this place by the army of the Parliament, and it is found in the manuscript history of Robinson. He tells us that Cromwell's soldiers made the churchyard cross a target for their musket practice, and we thus learn from this same record that there was a

churchyard cross, four yards high, on steps. It was finally broken by William III.'s men of the Charles galley (was this one of William's transport ships?), and then used to build the churchyard steps, and a man called Cotton was he who "hewed off the curious cutting upon it."

It was about the time of William III. that the fifth rebuilding of the church took place; the exact year is unknown. All the structure, with its rebuildings from 1080 to 1530, except the tower and the western end of the north aisle, was taken down; and on the old foundations was built the plain edifice some of us remember; it was plain even to ugliness; yet a certain respect was shown to the ancient remains of the former churches. The sculptured and moulded stones were not all chopped down, but their wrought faces were turned inwards, and so they all escaped serious damage. The whitewash remained on many, and rude pickings out of architectural lines in red.

I have been blamed by a noted antiquary for placing any dependence on this MS. history of Robinson's. His knowledge of ancient history is quite untrustworthy and ludicrous. But I hold that if a man be ever so ignorant, if he will but record with exactness the occurrences coming to his knowledge, in his own neighbourhood, and tell such things as he himself has seen and known, he may well count in a few generations as having added his quota to history. Take only one instance: Robinson, who doubtless saw the old church, says it was in two bays, and had a notable chancel arch different from the rest. Before I knew anything of his history I worked out a church of two bays, with a wonderfully beautiful chancel arch, from the old stones and measurements; also a south door inserted in the Norman wall, which he also mentions. Again, to him the rising of Sir G. Booth in 1659, and the doings of Cromwell's soldiers were recent history, and it is for us to

search the legends handed down by him to find whether they contain some germ of truth, or give us a clue to any historical event. Take this instance: Randle Holme gives the arms of William de Walleia, a bend or, mascled; he omits the colour of the field. Robinson says these arms were in the south window in *red* glass; he knows nothing of heraldry, but gives us the colour of the missing field, enabling us to complete the coat of arms.

This MS. contains interesting records of the rectors of Wallasey, from 1301 downwards. We can only glance at one or two. In 1368 protection is granted to R. Kely, who went in the service of King Edward III. in Scotland, in the train of Hugh Leagrove, treasurer of England. We know what sort of service King Edward III. wanted there, it was plenty of hard fighting, though in the year Kely marched there was little fighting. Then we have the smart business man Dr. Snell, who rebuilt the rectory (1632), and who made so much out of the dilapidation claims on the former one, which was thatched, as to enable him to build a new one. The same Dr. Snell, who was archdeacon of Chester, was a Royalist and he had to compound for his estate during the Commonwealth. We have also Edward Harrison, who was put in by the Commonwealth, and who was "frighted into his grave" by the premature rising of Sir G. Booth, in favour of the king.

We have something, too, of the character of the parishioners, especially of one iconoclastic, James Ball, who cut the copy of W. de Walley's deed out of the register, and who broke up one of the parish boundary stones with a sledge-hammer. Something we have, also, of the old custom of beating the bounds, and the places where they halted to sing the service and read epistle and gospel, though how the bounds were traversed, being for the most part below tide mark and through the centre of Wallasey

Pool, does not appear. The process seems to have consisted of going in procession to various fixed points in the parish during three days, and there performing portions of the church service, and afterwards feasting at certain houses.

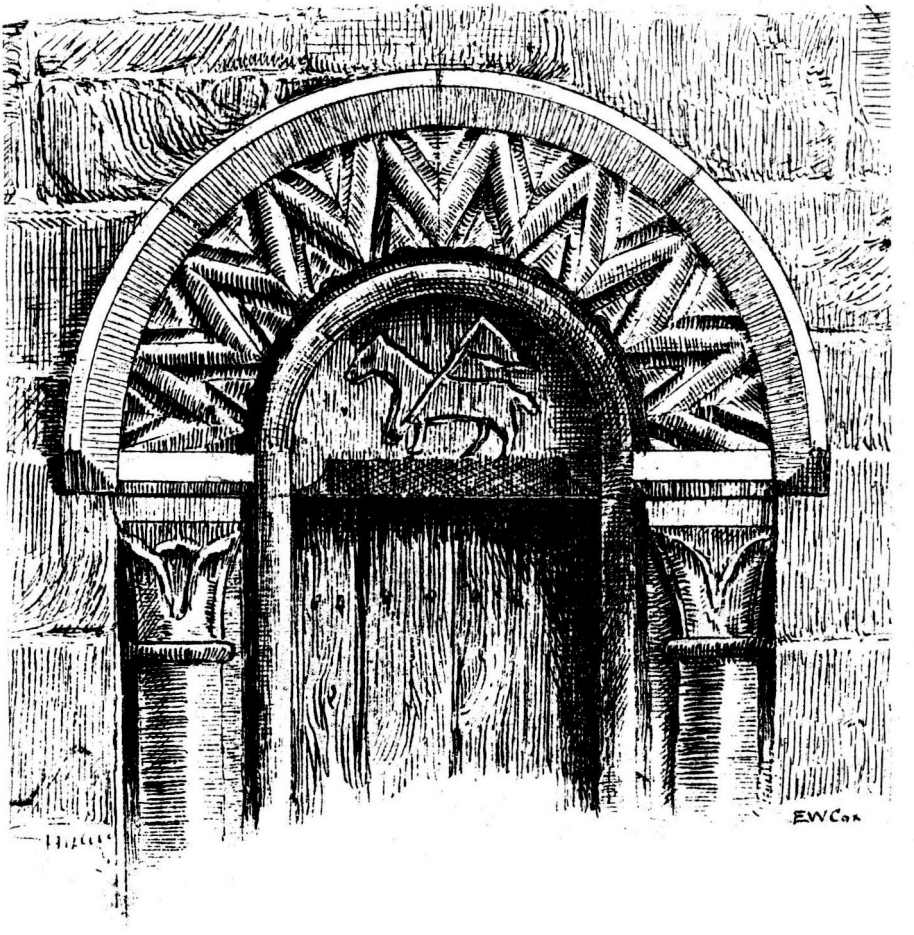
It is now time to speak of the fabric of Wallasey Church. On the first February, 1856, about sunrise, this fifth ancient church of Wallasey, with the transeptal additions made in 1837, was destroyed by fire. Long before the engines could arrive every fragment that would burn was consumed. Nothing but the strong stone walls of the church and tower remained standing, and the bells lay in a heap within the tower. While the ruins were still smoking I went to examine them, and noticed in the interior of the south wall, which the bonfire of high pews and heavy galleries had stripped of every fragment of plaster, a few moulded stones. The late Thomas Bouch, senior, was at that time a churchwarden, and after pointing out these stones to him, I made a request, to which he willingly agreed, that when the ruins were removed, all cut and moulded stones should be put aside for examination. I venture to think that from these remnants I have been able not only to recover most of the traces of at least five separate, partial, or entire rebuildings of the church (those from the eleventh century downwards being very clear), but also to recover a few facts as to the builders of this structure, and some data of this parish, which may possibly assist to bring some of those floating traditions, which are kept alive in so many of our country places, into the region of history. Though such analysis of ancient remains must always be widely open to reconsideration, I have endeavoured to reconcile the existence of these remains with known historic facts and with the leading principles of construction that actuated the minds and lives of our forefathers.

The church as it stood in 1856 consisted of a tower

sixty-five feet high, twenty-one feet wide, and eighteen feet from east to west. The date (1530) was cut upon it and was found on some of the interior timbers. The body of the church was one great oblong room, with a flat ceiling, sixty feet by forty feet, exterior measure. It had an east window of the pattern called Venetian, one round-headed light in the centre, divided from two square flanking lights by round pillars, and three round-headed windows on each side. Chancel there was none, and a heavy gallery ran round three sides. On the north side of the tower was the only remnant of the old church, one bay of the north aisle.

It may justly be said that the building of late seventeenth century date was nearly everything a church should *not* be; that the additions of 1837 were in worse taste than the seventeenth century portions; and that the whole combined, in an eminent degree, the ignorance of the seventeenth with the pretentious meanness of the nineteenth century, and constituted what used to be called in one's boyhood an extremely neat edifice!

The first church, of which any remains were found built into the walls, was an early Norman one, and the fragments consisted of the font, disinterred from the north-west corner of the interior of the church, and now in the rectory garden; the bowl of a small square Norman piscina; one voussoir, or arch-stone of a small doorway, on which was cut a chevron or zigzag moulding; and the tympanum which had filled in the arched portion of this very small doorway, on which was rudely incised the figure of a lamb carrying a banner, of the same peculiar triangular form that we find on the Bayeux tapestry. Only four stones in all, from which to reconstruct the Norman church, but all having a strongly-marked character. What the church was that preceded this Norman structure we can only surmise. From its having disappeared at the time of the conquest it



PRIEST'S DOOR, WALLASEY OLD CHURCH.

(Restored from fragments.)

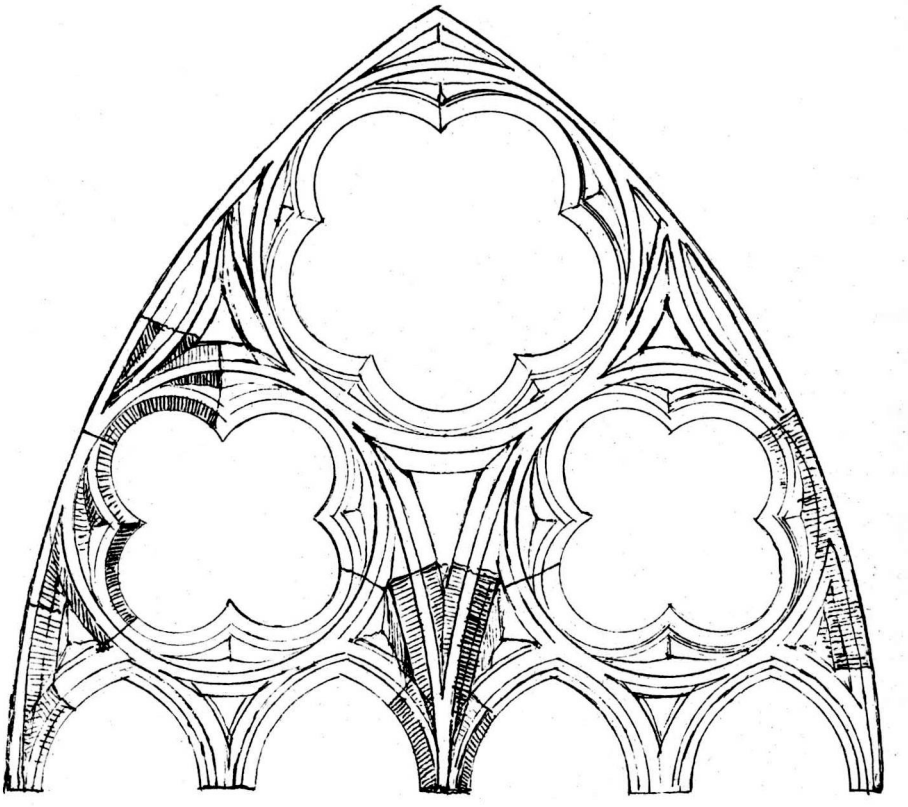
may have been of some perishable material, probably wood. One of the adjacent townships is still called Woodchurch. The church of Germanus, at Llan Armon (*i.e.*, church of Germanus), Bede says, was constructed of wattled boughs. Whatever Wallasey church had been, we are now certain that an early Norman church, of whose building there is no more record than that of any earlier one, stood there. Between the years 1162 to 1182 William de Walley desired a burial place in its chancel; we know, therefore, that it had a chancel.

In order to recover the form and dimensions of this Norman church, it was necessary to make a very careful series of calculations, based on the known practice of mediæval builders of working out their dimensions on symbolical numbers. It was evident from the scanty remains of foundations left on the northern and western sides that the church of the seventeenth century followed the old outer foundation lines. This late church was thrown into one ungainly area of sixty feet by forty feet, external measure. The north aisle was run out past the tower and measured eighty-four feet long. The walls were three feet six inches thick. Now the length sixty feet is a multiple of both three and of five, the breadth a multiple of five, but for a long time the interior measures puzzled me. By taking the church to have been originally a simple oblong, without aisle, of sixty feet by twenty-two feet externally, and comparing these dimensions with fragments of the ancient foundations and by sorting the fragments found in the walls, all the structures have been recovered, and even some of their fittings indicated and the purpose of their builders ascertained.

We thus obtain the Norman building with a chancel of twenty feet by fifteen feet interior, based on the figure five; a nave of fifteen feet by thirty-six feet six inches, whose sym-

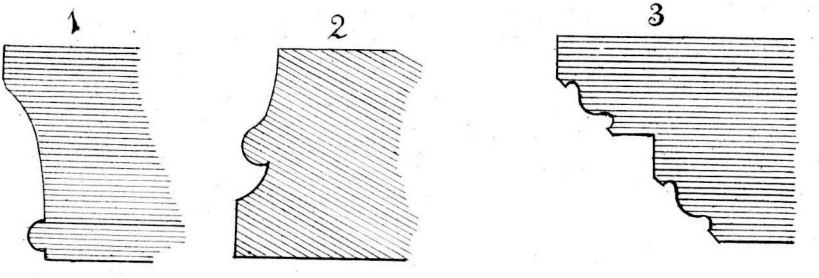
bolical working number is three; and the thickness of two side walls added together, which we know to have been three feet six inches thick, give the other working number of seven. Most likely the dividing wall between chancel and nave was three feet thick, through which opened the original chancel arch carrying a bell-cot. Judging from these proportions and from the height of the side walls of fifteen feet, which we ascertain by the traces of the ancient roof lines on the existing tower, the Norman nave must have had three side windows, the chancel two on each side, repeating thus the numbers three and five, and the door I judge to have been at the west end. That this was the form of the ancient church is almost certain, because late in the thirteenth century a tower was built against the west end of this church, which previously possessed none. The two arches of the first tower still exist, and the arch corbels before the fire showed mouldings of late decorated date older than the rest of the tower, dated 1530, and this thirteenth century tower had never keyed into the masonry of the older wall; it was built up against it, and the west end of the church was taken out to extend its area into the tower, and, together with its Norman door, the materials were built into the new tower, where most likely they still are. This will account for no trace or fragment of the Norman west door being found built in the seventeenth century walls, the thirteenth century tower had already absorbed them, and the very fact of their absence may prove the west door's former existence.[1] Moreover, I did find one stone of a door jamb, with mouldings of the thirteenth century, very little weathered. Now the stones that came out of

[1] The measurements prove this west door still more plainly. The chancel would be twenty feet long to the western side of chancel arch, the nave thirty-six feet to the *outside* of western wall, therefore, it was measured through the opening of the west door, just as the chancel was to the west side of its arch.



TRACERY OF EAST WINDOW.

Shaded parts are the portions found.



MOULDINGS.

1. Capital, Nave. 2. Base, Nave. 3. Jamb of South Door.

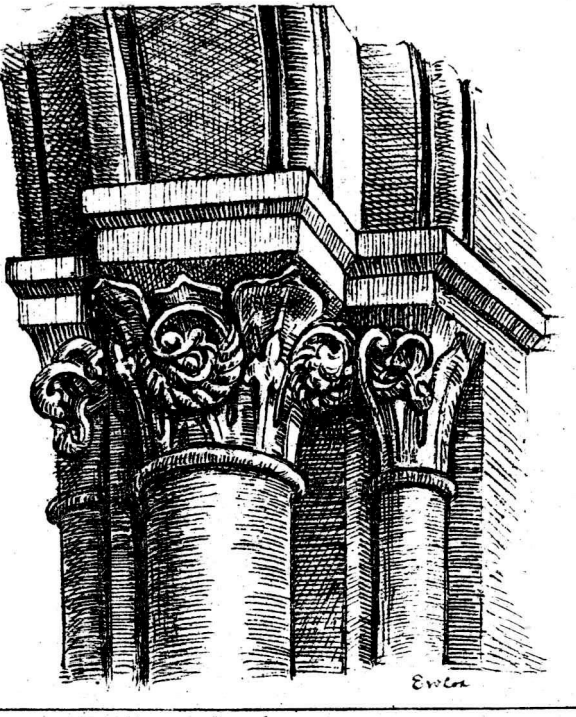
DETAILS: WALLASEY OLD CHURCH.

the wall were all distinguishable as exterior or interior stones, the latter were coated thickly with whitewash, the others weathered, some more, some less. This stone was external, but little weathered, as if it had stood under a porch. I consider that when the west door was taken away, the inconvenience of a western access from the lower slope of the hill through the new tower was so great that the builders broke a new door through the Norman south wall, and added a porch, evidence of whose existence I will afterwards point out. The small voussoir and tympanum plainly belonged to a small priest's door in the chancel. The font is large and circular, having an arcade of round arches about it, and a chevron above them. This was the Norman church; to this the second rebuilding was added between the years 1162 to 1182 by William de Walley.

Whether or not the Norman church was ruined, the purpose of *this* rebuilding is very clear. It is stated in the deed of gift to be the desire for a burial place in the chancel, though of the building, history is silent. Of this structure, the ruins disclosed two magnificent sculptured capitals, which I allotted to the chancel arch. Fragments of four other capitals, of smaller size, placed as belonging to the mortuary chapel, built by William de Walleia, belong to two arches, one opening into the chancel, one westwards into the north aisle, which he added to the nave. With these were portions of the shafted and moulded piers, in very good condition, and freshly whitewashed, nearly stones enough to have rebuilt the responds. None of these belonged to detached pillars, they were all responds, showing them to have been arches in a wall, not parts of an arcade. There were small fragments of bases, and the chancel capitals and part of the piers of the mortuary were mutilated by cutting places for the insertion of later screens of wood. In working out the restoration of these

piers, and their arches, following the usual proportions, the symbolic numbers, 3, 5, and 7, were very strikingly confirmed. I worked out these three arches from their actual remains, and the proportions fell exactly into the measures I had previously worked out, also they corresponded with the indications of the height of the walls and pitch of the roof, still visible on the tower. William brought his church to an interior breadth of thirty-three feet in two aisles, and sixty feet in length, the separating arcade having a thickness of three feet. These measures are not guess work; they were taken, partly, from the remains left against the tower, and from the then existing foundations. It appeared from the stones of these three arches that the west one leading from the mortuary to the aisle had not stood in the centre, but was drawn in toward the chancel. From this, I at first inferred that the aisle of the 1162 to 1182 rebuilding had a lean-to roof, that the arch was made of the same size as that on the side of the chancel, and unless it were so brought in, the height of the lean-to roof would not admit it. I also thought the tomb of W. de Walley stood under the arch leading into the chancel; this was a very usual position, and nearest the chancel where he wished to lie.

But in making out the enlarged plan for this lecture and still musing upon the possible reasons for this curious gathering together of the piers in the centre of the church, I found good reason to change this view. I noticed as I put in the lines of the plan that this group and the ground plan of the arches formed an almost perfect monumental cross, of which these piers form the centre. The church walls are a plain unbuttressed parallelogram, resembling an ancient gravestone, and upon this the ground plan of the arches forms just such a cross as might be cut upon a gravestone. Now this twelfth century rebuilding of the



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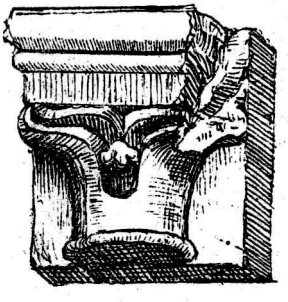

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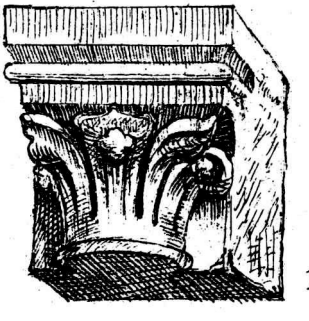

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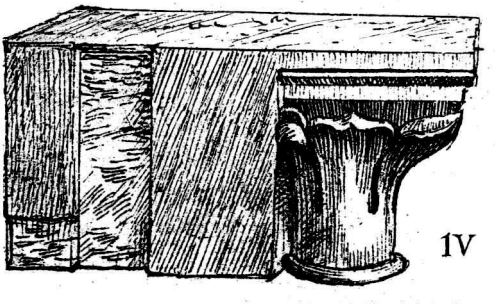

1V

V

I. Capital of Chancel Arch.
II., III., IV. Capital of N. Aisle, E. Arch, and S.E. Arch of Chapel.
V. Small Norman Capital.

DETAILS: WALLASEY OLD CHURCH.

church was to fit it for the burying-place of W. de Walley, and it flashed upon me that this was no accident of the design. Other churches bear the form of a cross in the outline of their outer walls; this one bore the cross enshrined as it were within it. I had placed the tomb of De Walley under the side arch, that being nearest the older chancel where he desired to lie, but with this revelation of the design in my mind I altered its possible place to the centre of the west end of the chapel. I was surprised to find that it fitted exactly to one side of this western arch, which I had worked from measurements only, leaving a sufficient entrance, and not only lying in front of the centre of the altar of the mortuary chapel, but the other arch just permitted the centre of the high altar to be seen from the spot where the head of him who lay there would be placed; and more than this, in that age a cross would always be associated with the figure of our Lord, and were this cross a crucifix the head of the man who slept in a tomb so placed would rest upon the right arm of the Saviour.

This completes what we can recover of the second rebuilding, made at a time when Wirrall was the busy scene of Henry II.'s embarcation of troops to Wales and Ireland. I must detain you a moment to tell you a legend connected with it. Robinson, in his manuscript history written early in the eighteenth century, says that the chancel arch was different from the others, that there was a tradition that it was built by a master builder who came with his workmen out of the wood, that he returned, refusing all payment and wages. Who was the master builder? truly a master of his art. Where was the wood? Is there any foundation for the tale? The moment I saw this work I said at once this came from the same hand that built Furness Abbey.

At that period the greater part of North Lancashire

was moor, and moss, and forest, and so remained till the reign of Henry VII. Was this the wood? Only recently I have learned that in a very ancient pedigree of a family at Saughall, in Wirrall, one of the heraldic bearings corresponds very closely with those common among the ancient families near Furness. Can anyone versed in heraldry trace out this clue? For myself the style and manner of handling in such work comes almost as familiarly as the identification of a handwriting to an expert, and I judge that the man who wrought and designed these stones wrought those of Furness as well.

We come now to the third partial rebuilding. In the reign of Edward I., Wirrall was again the scene of expeditions against Wales. The many passengers crossing the Mersey and Wirrall had become so onerous to the priors of Birkenhead, who held the rights of ferry, that in the following reign a license to erect houses of entertainment was granted to the prior. Doubtless Wallasey shared the prosperity caused by this traffic. Birkenhead Priory had the mediety of the advowson of Wallasey. Now came the building of the west tower of which I have spoken, doing away with the old west door, a south door and porch were opened, and the north aisle lengthened westward. This aisle is thrust several feet westward of the tower, in order to give its whole length the symbolic number of eighty-four feet, twelve times seven. At the same time a decorated four-light window was put into the chancel, and a plainer two-light window in the east of the north aisle, of which enough fragments were found to make a restoration. To this aisle, a fine sixteenth century roof, was added in the next rebuilding, and remained till the fire of 1856. An old inhabitant says that in some repairs fifty years ago a blue ground and gold stars were found on it.

This early tower probably had a spire like Bebington, and

was a very solid structure; its eastern and northern arches remain, now closed up, also one north-east buttress, and the masonry to a few courses above the roof ridge of the church of 1162-82. I conclude that the marks of the weathering of the roof left on this tower, and not worked in stone but in mortar, prove that the roof that butted against it was that of the transitional church left standing till the seventeenth century. I can only account for the need for rebuilding of this strong tower in 1530, from its destruction by one of those traditional fires. The present tower was substantially little injured by its burning, but if the fourteenth century tower was capped by a spire, the stone capping would throw any fire strongly through the windows and crack the tower, and the thrust of the spire outwards would throw it down. The rebuilding of this tower as it now stands brings us to the date of the fourth rebuilding in 1530.

At that time the present tower was raised, leaving only two arches of the older one. I found fragments of the base capital, and shafts of the nave arcade, the springing and stones of its low flat four-centred arches, of the same date, 1530, that replaced the early transition arcade of 1180. Also fragments of square three or four-light aisle windows were found, all going to prove that the alterations of 1530 might have been needful if these features of the church had been damaged by the fall of a spire on the north aisle. Of the same late date, also, was the fine oak roof of the north-west aisle panelled in quatrefoils, which remained till 1856. I worked out these fragments of the nave arcade as having formed two nave arches.

The same symbolical measures of three, five, and seven seem to have ruled this fourth repair. I will not weary you with more of this, suffice to say that they were measured and calculated out, and every remnant found, fitted quite natu-

rally into its place. It may be that this fourth re-building, in 1530, arose from the fact that presages of the confiscation of monastic property are known to have induced much building before the suppression of the monasteries, Henry VIII. wanted money, and the rich monasteries feared the appropriation of their funds. In order to prevent this, the monasteries, that they might seem to have little to tempt the plunderer, in the shape of loose cash, freely laid out their funds in buildings and improvements. St. Werburgh's abbey, at Chester, may have done this for Wallasey, in 1530. The abbeys of Bolton-in-Wharfdale, Bath, and Strata Florida, are instances; they were actively building when the Reformation stopped the work. St. Werburgh's abbey, in Chester, was then unfinished. The building of this period is abundant in churches throughout the kingdom. The fifth rebuilding was of that Jacobean church, which, with additions of 1837, lasted till our time, and was the neat structure of our youth.

It remained for our own archæological and enlightened age to disperse and destroy the relics, spared even on the fifth rebuilding, but not till I had carefully sorted them into their places, to the best of my knowledge. Bishop Gastrell (1708—1723), in writing of Wallasey, mentions two churches, one in the churchyard, one supposed to be at Liscard called Lees Kirk; one was ruinous, and the other wanted a priest, so both were taken down and the materials employed to build this fifth church. The want of a priest may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that John Harvey, rector of Wallasey, was among the ejected ministers at the restoration, and he became pastor of a dissenting congregation in Chester, and died 28th November, 1699. The church of Wallasey, judging from its remnants, was not ruinous; that at Liscard may have been. So little is known of this Lees Kirk that its existence is doubted, but it

is suggested that this chapel was served by the Præmonstratensian monks of Birkenhead, who held half the patronage of Wallasey. When this fifth church stood in ruins in 1854, it was plainly observable that the walls to two-thirds of their height were built of old stones of grey sandstone from the ancient church; above this they were of smaller red stones, of a character like that of Liscard, where the Lees Kirk was supposed to have stood in a lane called the Kirkway; these may well have been the relics of Lees Kirk. And with these remarks I must draw these scattered and imperfect notes to a close.

Since the above was written, I have learned that when the sister church of West Kirby was restored, traces of an aisleless Norman church, such as I have attributed to Wallasey, were found. The church at Bruera, which is partly Norman and stands on its original lines, is also a similar structure to the Norman church of Wallasey, and some of its mouldings correspond with those found at Wallasey, but are a little earlier in character than those of William de Walleia's church.