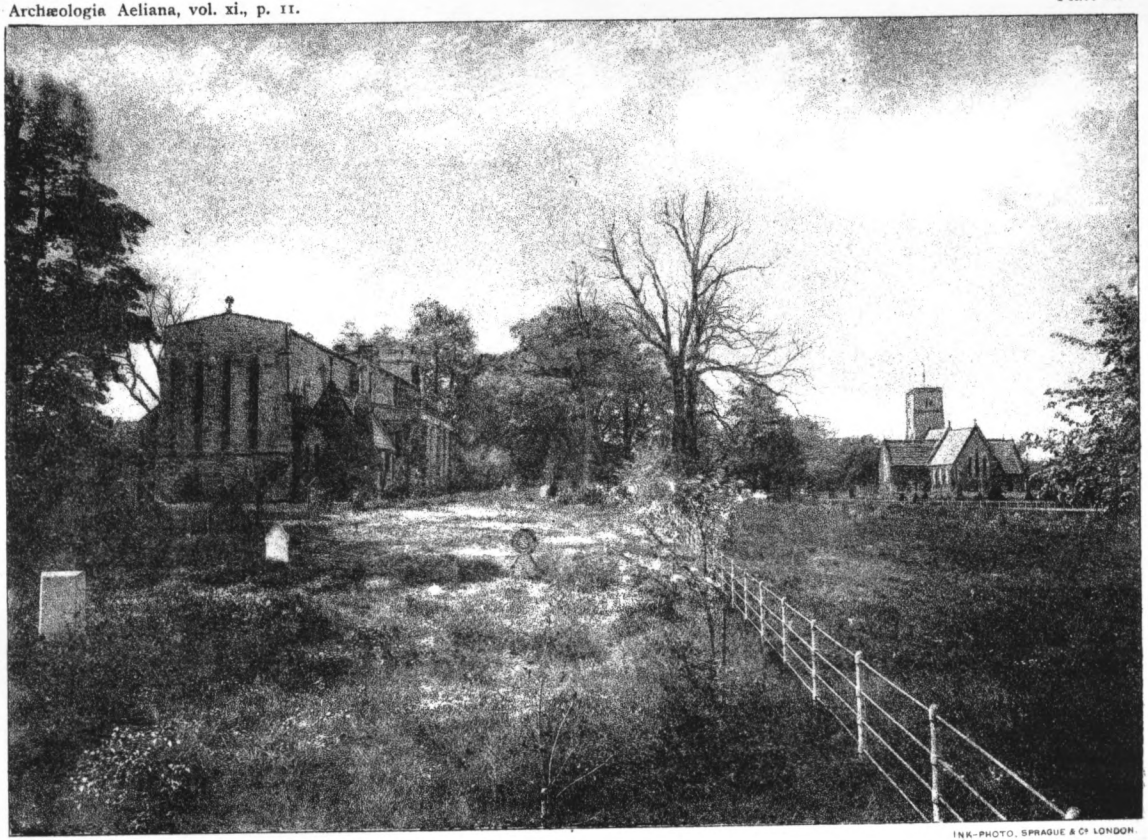

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THE CHURCHES AT BYWELL.

II.—NOTES ON BYWELL, A.D. 803–1884.

COMMUNICATED BY CANON DWARRIS, M.A., VICAR OF BYWELL ST. PETER.

[Read at Bywell, August 12th, 1884.]

THOUGH neither archæologist nor ecclesiologist, I venture to offer some brief notices of Bywell and its churches—such as, during my forty years incumbency, have, from one source or other, come to my knowledge, in hope that they may help to indicate points of interest, and may elicit observations and corrections from our learned and distinguished visitors.*

You have before you, almost without a village, the two churches of Bywell—Bywell St. Andrew with the tall tower in the open, Bywell St. Peter with the low tower among the trees. (See plate opposite.)

An official report of the date of Queen Elizabeth (survey by Sir W. Homberston, H.M. Commissioner, March 18, 1569) describes a long street then existing at Bywell, closed at either end by a gate; the residents, it tells us, were workers in metal—forgers and manufacturers of armour and of arms, of bits, spurs, and horse gear.

The story of two sisters (ladies of the manor) building the two churches because they could not agree to worship in the same—though rife in other parts of England, where, similarly, two churches stand side by side, with scarce as many houses for them to serve—is now pretty well exploded. I hope we are in these days nearer the mark in taking, as suggestion of a truer solution, though perhaps still dark, the *soubriquets* of BLACK Church and WHITE Church, which we find in the mouths of the oldest inhabitants, as distinguishing the churches of Bywell St. Peter and Bywell St. Andrew respectively; and with that clue in connecting their double existence with larger monastic establishments elsewhere, or with cells, it may be localized here, of "black" and "white" monks. Certainly, sooner or later, Bywell St. Peter (the "black" church) was connected closely with the Black Benedictine Monastery of Durham, in whose patronage it was until a month ago; and as for Bywell St. Andrew (the "white" church), about which less

* The Royal Archæological Institute.

is told in existing records, it undoubtedly had relations later, if not sooner, with the Præmonstratensian, or White Canons of BLANCHland, a parish which once stood within its own borders, and perhaps yet earlier with the Priory of Hexham, in whose patronage indeed it may be yet said to be, in the person of Mr. W. B. Beaumont, M.P., the lay impropriator of that Priory.

As regards the name of Bywell, for a time I fancied it arose from the Norman pronunciation of Balliol *(Bailleul)*, in whose ancient Barony it stands; but one, whose name is honoured among archæologists, my late parishioner, John Hodgson Hinde, charged me to dismiss this notion, pointing out that the name was in use for this locality three centuries before the Balliols, as appears in the writings of the monk Symeon of Durham.

In his pages we find, I presume, the earliest notice of Bywell. In the year 803, on the 11th day of June (it is just, to be particular, one thousand and eighty-one years, two months, and one day since) a noticeable event, a striking and, probably to those engaged in it, a heart-stirring ceremonial took place in this retired nook of Bywell. The Archbishop of York of that day, and two of his suffragans, with other bishops, met by appointment in Bywell—*Biguell* (was it BY the holy WELL?) for the consecration of the twelfth Bishop of Lindisfarne.

The consecrating Archbishop was EANBALD, a man known as the pupil and correspondent of the famous Alcuin, instructor of Charlemagne. We have it on record that Alcuin had written with freedom to his old friend, this Archbishop, remonstrating with him among other things (for there is nothing new under the sun) on the hunting propensities of the Yorkshire parsons. The bishop here consecrated on that memorable day to the succession (perilous in those Danish times) to the see of Lindisfarne was ECGBERT—as I reckon, the twelfth bishop. The fact that he was consecrated under the remote and quiet shades of Bywell, and only nineteen days after the death of Higbald, his predecessor, seems to bespeak the necessity the times imposed both for secrecy and for hurry. This was A.D. 803.

I have the authority of records* preserved in the Monastery of

* Such documents as I have before me in putting together these notes are to be found in Sydney Gibson's *Tynemouth*, and Hodgson's *Northumberland* having been extracted by my friend and former curate, Rev. A. Johnson, Vicar of Healey, a member of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle. I had a rare opportunity so long ago as in 1845. The Rev. Joseph Stevenson, of the London Record

Durham for most of what I shall further advance; but treading on unfamiliar ground, I throughout speak under correction.

> I cannot tell how the sooth may be,
> I tell the tale as 'twas told to me.

It appears that already before the Conquest the Saxon Earls of Northumberland had conveyed the rectory and rectorial tithes of Bywell to the monastery at Tynemouth.

Bywell St. Peter has been treated somewhat as a shuttlecock from the time of being thus, before the Conquest, made an appanage of Tynemouth, until a certain recent day in July, 1884, when, by the Newcastle Chapter Act, just passed, the patronage of it was transferred from the Dean and Chapter of Durham to the Archdeacon of Northumberland and his successors for ever.

In the year 1074, that is presently after the Rectory of Bywell St. Peter had been given to Tynemouth, it would seem that the Monastery of Tynemouth itself, with all its lands and possessions, was made over by WALTHEOF, Earl of Northumberland, to the monks of St. Cuthbert, who were then sheltering themselves in the Monastery of St. Paul, at Jarrow. Not long after, Jarrow, Wearmouth, and Tynemouth (Bywell withal) were transferred by William de Carilef, the great bishop of that day, to the Monastery of Durham, when he was intruding regular monks into the place of the seculars he had found there.

These transferences of endowments were generally made with much solemnity, by charter, signed and sealed in the presence of high dignitaries (whether Saxon or Norman) in church and state.

A pretty quarrel which, as years passed over, was to wax hotter and hotter, and to be ended only by a formal Papal adjudication, grew out of this latter transfer of Tynemouth to Durham; and in the course of it Bywell St. Peter was more than once bandied backwards and forwards.

The earlier Norman Earls of Northumberland appear, indeed, in the first instance to have acquiesced in the arrangement; but not so long after, in 1090, ill-blood had risen between the Norman Northumberland Earl, Robert de Mowbray, and the Prince Bishop of Durham, William de Carilef. The chronicler ascribes the high-

Office, was then engaged for the Dean and Chapter of Durham in sorting their manuscripts in the Treasury of the Cathedral, and he set in one corner for me a budget relating to Bywell, to which I had been recently appointed; but alas! both time and expertness in deciphering old manuscripts failed me, and, as in other cases of yet more serious moment, a golden opportunity slipped away from me, not easily to be recovered.

handed action which followed to the *animus* thus excited. "Propter inimicitias quæ inter episcopum et illum agitabatur," says he, De Mowbray, with a high hand, sent soldiers and drove out the St. Cuthbert monks from Tynemouth, and introduced into that monastery monks from the far southern abbey of St. Albans.

Before railways, one would think it "a far cry" from St. Alban's in Hertfordshire to Bywell in Northumberland, that they should thus shake hands across the Midlands! but

"Misery acquaints a man with strange bed-fellows."

For a time we must suppose Bywell Rectory resting in the hands of St. Albans.

In 1100, however, some ten years later, Richard, the abbot of St. Albans (was it in some generous mood?), compounded with Durham to accept thirty shillings per annum as a sufficient acknowledgment of his title to the lands and other possessions of Tynemouth, reserving only to himself Amble and Coquet Island, with the Rectories of Bywell St. Peter and of Woodhorn. This covenant may have held for a time. But some fifty years later again we find the conflict between Durham and St. Albans for the possession of Tynemouth still aflame; and at last, in A.D. 1174, it was referred to the Pope's arbitration. The Pope (Alexander III., the well-known contemporary of our Thomas Becket) nominated a high commission, consisting of Roger, Bishop of Worcester, Robert, Dean of York, and John, Treasurer of the church of Exeter; and these high commissioners, by their award, ultimately sanctioned a compromise, the effect of which was that the *status quo* instead of being maintained was turned right round, requiring, that is, that the prior and whole convent of Durham "shall give up for ever to the Monastery of St. Alban's the Church of Tynemouth with all its appurtenances;" but on the other hand, that the abbot and brethren of St. Alban's should, "in consideration of the aforesaid renunciation," grant to the Church of Durham, for ever, the Church of "Bywella," saving the right of Salamon, priest, as long as he shall live, and the Church of Edlingham. There is a further reservation, viz., that half the proceeds of the tithes of the said churches (Bywell and Edlingham) shall be dedicated for ever to maintaining the lights always burning at the shrine of St. Cuthbert in Durham.

This compromise and award proved a settlement of that long-standing dispute; and was confirmed by charters from all hands,

notably by Hugh Pudsey, Bishop of Durham, on the church's side, and on the lay side by Eustace de Balliol, and his son, Hugh de Balliol. This adjudication was done at Warwick, in the year of the incarnation of our Lord, 1174, and the day before the Ides of November.

Once more in 1307 the manors of Bywell and Woodhorn, formerly possessions of the Priory of Tynemouth, were granted to John, Earl of Brittany, styled in the record "the king's nephew."

Such later notices as I have seen respecting Bywell St. Peter relate principally to arrangements between the Priors of Durham and the Parsons of Bywell for provision of temporal maintenance for the vicars, and of spiritual ministrations to the people.

In A.D. 1287 an altar of St. John Baptist (with a chaplain thereto) was endowed by one Deacon William, of Bywell. This, I conceive, is to be looked for at the east end of the south aisle of St. Peter's Church, the present organ chamber, not in the elegant fourteenth century chantry chapel on the north side.

In 1290 a chantry, with resident chaplain, was endowed at Newton, in the parish of Bywell St. Peter, by Sir Robert de l'Isle, reserving all rights to the mother church.

In regard to the architectural date of the two churches, I may state that Mr. J. H. Parker, at a meeting here with our friend, Mr. R. J. Johnson, some three years since, was disposed to assign the first twenty years of the eleventh century for the date of the tower of Bywell St. Andrew, and likewise of the most ancient portion of Bywell St. Peter.

At St. Peter's there are two bells, of which Mr. C. J. Bates has supplied the following description:—

"There are two bells in the tower, both about two feet wide at the mouth and the same in height, the eastern one, if anything, the larger. On this eastern bell is the raised inscription, in large Gothic capitals of the Perpendicular period—

+ UTSURGANTGENTESVOCORHORNETCITOJACÊTES.

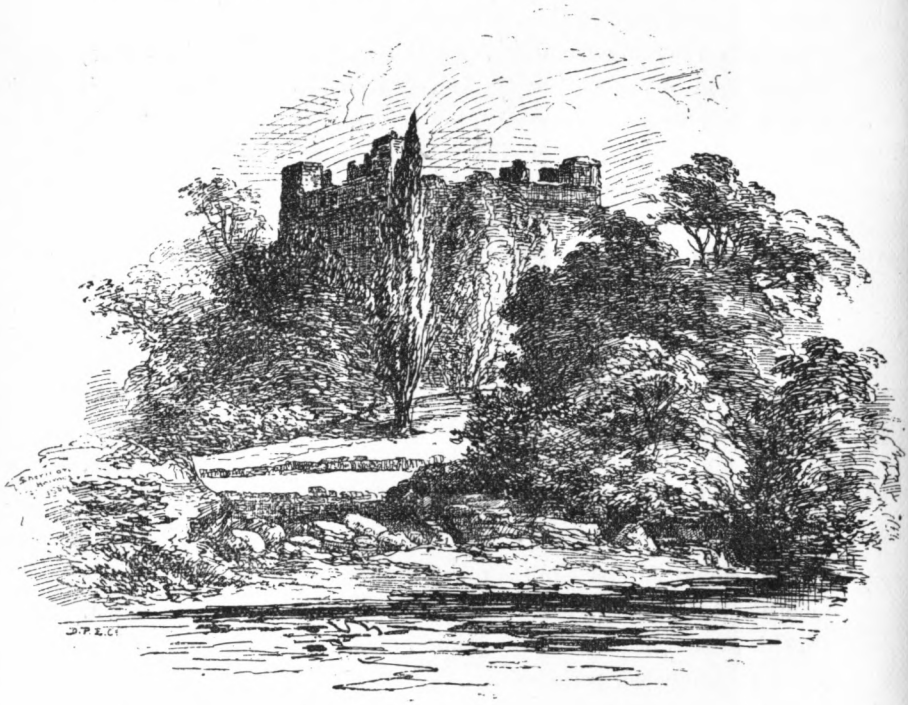
This is evidently a monkish hexameter verse, although there is a false quantity in it, the 'i' in 'cito' being short. It can hardly be meant that the bell was called 'the Hornet' from its faculty of virulently waking up the sluggards of Bywell. Probably the whole legend is faulty, and was to have read 'Ut surgant gentes voco horam et cito jacentes'—(I proclaim the hour for people rising, and summon those

still in bed). This bell then was probably rung at sunrise, and is still rung on Sunday mornings at eight. The western bell bears the words—

+ TU ES: PETRUS +

followed by the letters of the alphabet."

We have a silver chalice of about the year 1680, standing 8 inches high, with "Bywell S^{ti} Petri" cut on it in a cursive hand. The stalk is broken, and the mark WR occurs twice on the bottom. The mark, a well-known one of a Newcastle goldsmith, appears in a larger form on some of the church plate of St. Nicholas's.



Our registers of births, deaths, and marriages date from 1663.

Speaking of the church of Bywell St. Peter, I would invite the attention of archæologists to the so-called "leper window:" to the springers of arches, or of arched buttresses, on the north wall of the chantry chapel: also to the fragment of a village cross.

We have reason to thank God for the preservation of our churches, and of our lives, through the fearful thunderstorm which raged here on

Saturday evening last, and which has, I fear, seriously damaged the venerable ash tree, which, from its size and age, has been a source of pride to the village, and which scarcely spared—inflicting a superficial scratch only—the venerable tower of St. Andrews.

Of Bywell Castle I have only to say that it is described in Camden's *Britannia* as the "fair Castle of Biwell;" that it possibly occupies the site of a more ancient "BALLIOL TOWER;" that the present erection is ascribed to Ralph Nevill, Earl of Westmoreland, in 1480; and that the grated iron doorway frame in it, opening on the spiral staircase by which the tower is ascended, has been made the subject of illustration, and of contrast with the prevailing construction of corresponding defensive *grilles* on the other side of the border, indicating the little intercommunication that existed, in a paper recently read before the Scotch Antiquaries, by Dr. David Christison, F.S.A., Scot. In the Scotch examples the bars interpenetrate one another; in the English, though only just across the border (at Naworth, at Dalston, at Bywell), the uprights are all in the front of the horizontals, rivetted and clasped alternately, and the spaces between the perpendicular bars are filled with oak planks.

The Rev. Thos. Randal, B.A., in his valuable *State of Churches in Northumberland*, mentions a chapel dedicated to St. Helena in one (he knew not which) of our two parishes. Popular tradition points for its site to the field opposite the castle, across the river. To this the old foot-bridge, whose ruined piers were destroyed forty years ago, to make way for the existing bridge, was supposed to have led.