

VII.—GLEANINGS FROM THE RECORDS OF THE PARISH OF TYNEMOUTH.

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[Read on the 23rd December, 1896.]

When the priory at Tynemouth was dissolved in 1539 by king Henry VIII., the western portion of the ecclesiastical buildings was used as the parish church. It had been the parish church from about 1200, after the beautiful eastern portion of the priory church was built. Whether the chartulary of the priory, which is in the possession of the duke of Northumberland, contains any information about the parish church I know not. When the county history deals with Tynemouth, we may discover something of interest. From the dissolution of the priory until the beginning of the records of the parish church, in the vestry of Christ church, in 1631, we know little of the parish church except the extraordinary proposal of sir Henry Percy, governor of the castle, in 1566, that it should be removed.

From 1631 until the restoration of monarchy in 1660, the records of the parish are in a mutilated condition. During the Commonwealth, there are no entries for several years.

When the records begin, there were four churchwardens, whose names were John Cramlington, Umphrey Johnson, Thomas Otway, and Richard Hodghan. The accounts of the churchwardens for the year 1630-31 are set out in the vestry-book, and the disbursements of each churchwarden are separately detailed. The disbursements of John Cramlington contain, among other items, the following:—

- Imprimis. To the Glasier for 6 Stone of Iron for the great window.
- „ To the Smith for making the barrs.
- „ To the plumer for the Lead.
- „ To the Masons for banking the stones.

The great window referred to in the account was the large perpendicular window over the deeply recessed Early English doorway at the west end of the church, of which only the outline now remains.

The disbursements of the other churchwardens were of an ordinary character. The page of the book which contains the entries is so

worn away that the sums paid are indistinguishable. In the earliest parish records the four and twenty are mentioned as forming part of the vestrý. From time to time they exercised important functions; they, with the minister, made rates, appointed churchwardens, examined the churchwardens' accounts, and generally appear to have controlled the parish officers. For what purpose, and when, this body was first created I have not been able to discover; I believe it is a north country institution.

In the year 1638 is a copy of the cessment made in that year, amounting to £30, which was made up thus:—

	£	s.	d.
Cessment of 4/- per farm—55 farms	11	00	00
Sault pannes 30 at 4/-	06	00	00
Taverns 04 at 4/-	00	16	00
Coubles 10 at 2/-	01	00	00
Wherrys 20 at 2/-	02	00	00
Alhouses 100 at 2/-	10	00	00
Of every mill	00	04	00
Deduct for the outshire farm, for each 1/3 rd pt. of their cesse, being 18 farms for a whole cess, 24/-.			

In this assessment the large number of farms in the parish is a striking feature, and so is the number of salt-pans. Of the latter only one remains, which is at the Low Lights, North Shields, and was for many years carried on by the late Mr. Joseph Ogilvie.

In 1640, two of the churchwardens were elected for the country and two for Shields. This mode of election was continued until 1840, when one of the churchwardens was appointed by the vicar, and the others were elected by the parishioners. From 1843 to the present time one churchwarden has been elected by the vicar and three by the parishioners, without any distinction as to the country and the Shields portions of the parish.

In 1638, and for many years afterwards, four assistants for the churchwardens were elected.

From Easter Monday, 1641, to the 29th of July, 1645, there are no entries in the records. During these years the country was in a most unsettled state, and Tynemouth castle was alternately in the possession of the Scottish army on behalf of the parliament, and of the Royalist forces. In the latter year is the first list of the four and twenty, but it is incomplete; it contains the following names:—

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Sir Nicholas Tempest, knight. | 10. John Hills. |
| 2. Ralph Reede. | 11. Thomas Hall. |
| 3. George Milburne. | 12. John Rutherfordood. |
| 4. George Ottway. | 13. John Bowe. |
| 5. Michael Spearman. | 14. Pereth Robinson. |
| 6. John Morton. | 15. William Gray. |
| 7. Thomas Dove. | 16. John Hudleston. |
| 8. John Cramlington. | 17. John Shelton. |
| 9. Thomas Mills. | |

Among these names are some men of note in their day. Sir Nicholas Tempest was high sheriff in 1632. Ralph Reede and George Milburne lived at Chirton, and a daughter of the former was married to Ralph Gardner, the great river reformer. The Spearman¹ of Preston were a well known family, and the Hudlestons were associated with Cullercoats. In an entry under date the 29th July, 1645, we obtain an idea of the unsettled state of the times:—

Memoranda it is agreed by the Minister and 24 of the Parish of Tinemouth that there shalbe a Cessment laid on the whole parish for prosecuting of the business concerning a place for preaching and house & maintenance for our minister to be given to him by reason of his great distresse at this time.

It was agreed to ask the governor of Tynemouth castle to assist in performing the orders for the good of the church. The minister at this time was James Hume. In the following year the name of Ralph De Laval appears in the list of the four and twenty, and also that of Ralph Gardner in the place of George Milbourne. On the 19th April, 1647, the vestry passed a resolution that prophaners of the Lord's day, or being absent from the church, drinking in time of preaching, being drunken and swearing, were to be severely punished, according to the penalty laid on by the minister and churchwardens, acquainting the twenty-four with it.

From the 19th April, 1647, to the 22nd January, 1651, there are no entries in the book. No pages appear to have been torn out; and I think the circumstance of there being no entries is owing to the continued unsettled state of the times.

In 1651, the name of Ralph Gardner appears at the head of the list of the twenty-four. He was churchwarden in the following year.

¹ John Spearman, of the city of Durham, gentleman and under sheriff of the county of Durham, by his will dated about 1703, bequeathed to the parish of Tynemouth, in which he was born, a silver flagon for the Communion service there for ever. It is still in use.

In the year 1653 the four and twenty petitioned parliament for means to buy a piece of ground, and for a church, by reason that their church was for many years, and was then, converted to the use of the state in the castle of Tynemouth, by which the parish was wholly debarred by reason of the late troubles. In the paper which I read last year on 'Tynemouth Castle after the dissolution of the Monastery,' I gave an account of the disturbed state of the times. A kill or malting-house at Chirton was rented of Ralph Gardner, at £8 a year, for Mr. Dearsley to preach in on the Lord's day. At this time the parishioners despaired of being able to build a church to supply the loss they had sustained by being deprived of their beautiful church in the castle. In the Oliverian survey of church livings, made in 1652, it is stated that the earl of Northumberland, and Ralph Delaval, esq., had the presentation in course, and that the parish church of Tynemouth was quite ruined; and it was recommended that a parish church should be built at North Shields, and the towns of Tynemouth, Preston, East and Middle Chirton, Whitley, and Morton (Murton) annexed to it. Earsdon was then a chapelry in the parish of Tynemouth, and it was recommended to be made a parish church. The ecclesiastical parish of Tynemouth then comprised the townships of Tynemouth, North Shields, Chirton, Preston, Cullercoats, Monkseaton, Whitley, Murton, Earsdon, and Backworth, with some outlying portions of Holywell. It consisted of the eight first-named townships, until 1860, when it was divided, and it has since been further divided.

In the year 1652, the commissioners who were appointed for propagating the gospel in the four northern counties of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, and Durham, appointed a Mr. Francis Gibson, minister of Tynemouth, with a stipend of £97, including £20 from Bywell Andrew and Slaley. These commissioners were appointed by parliament.

In the vestry book are receipts, signed by Ralph Gardner and Katherine his wife, for the rent of the preaching place at Chirton, which was paid to them by the churchwardens. I am not aware that the name of Ralph Gardner appears in any other book.

On the 8th December, 1658, is the following entry :—

Whereas Mr. Frederick Simpson, preacher of God's Word, was invited from London, and presented by Ralph Gardner, Esq., to be Minister of the parish of Tynmouth, in the County of Northumberland, where he did for severall Lord's

days preach wholsom orthodox devinitie; but, for want of a laudable people, through the indisposition of his body, they are desirous to chuse another.

Early in the following year a Mr. John Paye, was selected as minister, and Mr. Ralph Fenwick, Mr. John Blackiston, Mr. Edward Hodgson, Mr. Richard Walker, and Mr. William Taylor, were selected to take him to Newcastle before the commissioners for propagating the gospel. He was examined before Mr. Samuel Hammond, Mr. William Durant, and Mr. Thomas Weld, three of the commissioners, in several matters touching the history of the Bible, and other things relating to the ministerial functions, and was found very weak and ignorant, and altogether unfit to preach or exercise in the work of the ministry. He was accordingly discharged by the four and twenty, and notice was given to the house in which he lodged that he should be no longer there upon the parish account.

In 1658 the four and twenty were divided into two portions—twelve for the country and twelve for Shields. In the country list appear the names of captain John Topping, governor of Tynemouth castle, and Ralph Gardner. In the Shields list is the name of captain William Collinson, one of the officers at the castle, also the name of William Collingwood.

In the month of January, 1658, £2 14s. 3d. was collected for the distressed Protestants in Poland, and other families banished out of Bohemia.

On the 4th April, 1659, Mr. Alexander Gordon was chosen as minister, on the recommendation of the commissioners, and remained until the restoration, when he was ejected for nonconformity.

From 1658 until 1668, the building of Christ church, North Shields, to take the place of the church in the castle, was in progress.

In the list of the four and twenty in the year 1659, is the name of Ralph Gardner, and opposite to it is a memorandum that he had 'removed to London.' After his removal thither we lose all trace of him.

From the 22nd April, 1659, to the 24th October, 1662, there are no entries in the vestry book; but on the latter date there was a meeting, and there is the following entry:—

Whereas in these late times ye Bookes, Vestments, furniture, and Ornaments belonging to our Church have either been plundered, purloyned, imbezzled, or

made away, so that none of them (of any consequence) are remaining to be found for ye performance of divine officis there; and Whereas John, by divine providence Lord Bishop of Durham, hath ordered that all such things be provided and had in the Church as formerly. A rate was made for providing the Articles which were required.

After the restoration of monarchy, and during the building of Christ church, the parishioners appear to have returned to their old parish church within the castle, and continued to use it for divine service until the consecration of Christ church on the 5th of July, 1668. Of the struggles to raise funds to complete the church the records give ample evidence, and read much like what we know so much of in the present day, with the exception that there is no mention of questionable variety entertainments. Robert Trowlop raised the roof and plastered the walls inside for £90. The masters of ships resorting to the harbour, who had largely contributed, were asked to give more. The justices of the peace at Hexham granted a certificate to the king for his letters patent for a contribution or collection in some of his majesty's counties for carrying on and finishing the church; but they were refused, as the sum necessary to finish the church was not mentioned in the certificate. The consecration of the church took place on Sunday, the 5th of July, 1668, and the following is the entry in the records:—'The New Church. (afores^d) was Consecrated by ye Right Reverend Father in God John Lord Bpp of Durham, and named Christ's Church.'

The church was consecrated by bishop Cosin. In the *Calendar of State Papers* is an account of the ceremony. In a letter written by John Fitzherbert to secretary Williamson he says:—

The Bishop of Durham, being at Newcastle on his visitation, went to Tynemouth, and with the assistance of Dr [Isaac] Basire, Archdeacon of Northumberland, and half a dozen more of the Clergy, consecrated a new church, erected there upon a piece of ground given by the Earl of Northumberland. Mr. Clarke, the Earl's Officer, delivered up possession of the edifice and land in the name of his Master to the Bishop, who dedicated it Christ Church, and at the offering gave £5 towards the better beautifying and adorning the Church. Dr [Thomas] Dockwray held the first service; Dr Basire and [Rich.] Wrench, a prebendary of Durham, the second. Mr [George] Davenport,² the Bishop's Chaplain, preached the consecration sermon.

² He was rector of Houghton-le-Spring. He refused any additional preferment, saying that he had more preferment, and a better worldly estate, than he could show good husbandry, and he feared to die with any of the church's goods in his hands.

There is a further account from Richard Forster of Newcastle to secretary Williamson, in which he says the bishop, with his chancellor, archdeacon, and chaplains, entered by the south door.

It has been stated that the church was built of bricks, but I believe there is not the slightest foundation for the statement. The original ground plan of the church is in my possession, and from it I gather that the church was built in the puritan romanesque style. It was slightly cruciform. There were north and south doors and also a west door. Entering by the west door on the south side of the nave was the font, and a short distance beyond it were the pulpit, reading place, clerk's desk, and the parson's pew. Then came the north and south passages. There is no trace of an altar or communion table. At the east end of the church were the pews of the duke of Somerset³ and sir Ralph Delaval, with pews for their servants. There were pews for the officers at Tynemouth castle, viz., captain Thomas Love, captain Airey, and captain Collinson. The pew system—that prolific source of parish strife—was then in full operation. Two days after the consecration of the church there was a meeting at Chirton, at which it was agreed that those persons who had been most forward, active, careful, and diligent in promoting the building of the church by payment, subscriptions, pains, or otherwise, should have their choice of seats according to their disbursements, care, and pains. A square seat was allotted to Mr. John Gray of London, a good benefactor to the church. In the following year there were differences about the seats. The system of buying and transferring pews in the church was rife until the year 1849, when the practice was stopped by the late vicar, the reverend Christopher Reed, and the register of pews, commenced in 1793, was closed, but not without a certain amount of heartburning. I have in my possession several assignments of pews. The pews were dealt with like shares in a company, and were either transferred by deed or left by will.

After the consecration of Christ church, the church in the castle was abandoned and soon fell into decay. The chapel known as the Lady chapel at the east end of the choir of the priory church

³ As lady Elizabeth Percy was not married to the duke of Somerset until 1682, the plan must have been prepared a few years after the consecration of the church.

was used for baptisms and for reading a portion of the burial service when any of the parishoners were buried in the ancient burial ground. In 1810 the Board of Ordnance having occasion for a depôt for powder until the magazine was put into order, borrowed the chapel, which they filled with powder. They built up the windows and cut away a portion of the vaulting shafts to make more room for the powder casks. In 1850 the parishioners addressed a memorial to the Lords of the Treasury asking that their chapel should be given up to them, and in June of that year it was restored.

The first vicar of Christ church was the reverend Thomas Dockwray, D.D., who was chaplain to the earl of Sandwich, and was slain with him on the 28th May, 1672, in a great naval engagement with the Dutch.

In 1682 the old church bible was lent to John Thomson, churchwarden. It wanted all Genesis, and Exodus to the twenty-first chapter, and all the latter end from Romans the twelfth. It was to be returned upon demand.

The governors of Tynemouth castle took an interest in parish matters. Colonel Henry Villiers, only brother to the earl of Jersey, headed the list of the four and twenty in 1705. The records of the parish from 1717 to 1773 are lost, and it is believed they were burnt. The earliest churchwardens' account book commences in 1733. Some of the entries contained in it are rather quaint.

		£	s.	d.
1733.	To treating Stranger Ministers	01	05	00
	To sack sent to the Church	00	12	06

To these items is a note that they were to be no more allowed for the future.

		£	s.	d.
1734.	Removing 2 Women with Child out of town	00	08	00
	Robert Lidel thaching ye Church Stable,			
	14 days	00	06	04
1735.	Removing several Women and a Saylour			
	out of town	01	12	00
1741.	To the Duck [Duke] Rent Church yard...	00	01	04
1743.	To Money for advertising ye Church robbery	0	02	06

The robbery referred to is probably that mentioned by Brand. It consisted of three surplices, a pulpit cushion of crimson velvet,

with gold tassels, a black silk hood, etc. A new hood was purchased for £1 17s. 6d.

		£	s.	d.
1748.	To burning ye Beef by order	00	05	10
1752.	To Whipping a Vagrant		2	0
1754.	„ putting a Woman in the Stocks ...		2	0
1759.	„ Charges putting 3 Women in the Stocks		4	6

In 1764 an addition was made at the south-east corner of the church, and the pews contained in the added area were disposed of by public sale.⁴ The highest price obtained for a pew was £77 10s. The total amount realized at the sale was £781 12s. Various additions were, from time to time, made to the church.

The churchwardens' accounts for 1769 contain some eccentric spelling—brums (brooms) sweeping ye lum (chimney), redchester (register) book, surpliths (surplices), sellry (salary), gustis (justice), cundy (conduit), Mute hawl (Moot Hall), stoks (stocks), cote (coat).

In 1786 the steeple or tower at the west end of the church was built, and a ring of bells,⁵ the gift of James Storey, esq., Low Lights, was placed in it. The bells were rung for the first time on the 18th January, 1788, in honour of the queen's birthday.

At a meeting of the magistrates at Tynemouth, on the 22nd January, 1788, it was ordered that the churchwardens should see the constables paid one shilling each for every Sunday they were upon duty examining that no barbers nor hair dressers, nor others, follow their occupations on a Sunday, and that no publicans suffer tipping in their houses during the time of divine service.

In 1792 Christ church was largely reconstructed. The north, south, and west galleries were erected. The walls were heightened, a new roof put on, and the east end of the church was terminated by an apse. A pulpit, reading desk, and clerk's desk (usually styled a 'three decker'), were placed in the church. They stood a short distance from the centre of the communion rails. A flight of steps led to the

⁴ The following advertisement appeared in the *Newcastle Courant* of 6th October, 1764:—'To be sold at Mr. Ker's, the sign of the Bee Hive in North Shields, to the highest bidders, the seats or pews, separately as they are numbered, in the newly erected addition to the Parish Church of Tynemouth. The sale to begin at two o'clock in the Afternoon.

⁵ See full details of the bells, *Proceedings*, iii. p. 21.

pulpit, over which was suspended from the ceiling a huge sounding board which was the terror of nervous clergymen. In front of the pulpit, but at a lower level, was the reading desk, the approach to which was by a flight of steps which moved on a quarter circle. When the clergyman entered the desk he was shut in by the sexton, and remained there until the sexton came to let him out. Below the reading desk was the clerk's desk on the floor level, and in front of it was the font. The font was removed in 1857, and placed near to the west door of the church.

The ground floor of the church was reseatd in 1792-93, and on the 1st July, 1793, a sale of pews took place, and realized £735 6s. Mr. Thomas Tinley purchased two pews for £91, and Mr. Mitcalfe, jun., one for £75.

The church remained as it was rebuilt in 1792-3 until 1869, when a chancel and an organ chamber were built, the old family pews removed, and the ground floor was reseatd.

On 9th April, 1795, a vestry meeting was held to take into consideration the most effectual means of raising men for the township of Tynemouth agreeable to an Act of Parliament made in that year for raising men in the several counties for the navy. It was agreed that the overseers and churchwardens should be allowed to offer a bounty of thirty guineas, or any further sum they might deem necessary for each recruit or volunteer to be raised for the township. From this entry we can judge of the spirit of alarm which was abroad in consequence of the disturbed state of France at that period.

In front of the west gallery, until 1869, were the royal arms. In 1807 there is an entry of £3 8s. as paid to James Cowley for painting the arms.⁶

Before the introduction of railways the four churchwardens drove by coach to Newcastle to attend the archdeacon's visitations. In 1816 there is an item of £12 1s. 3d. for the coach hire and dinner. It must have been a festive day for the churchwardens. For many years it was the custom of the parish to appoint an afternoon lecturer. The last election took place in 1817, when the rev. William Mark was elected. The following was the poll:—

⁶ The custom of placing the royal arms in churches was introduced in the time of king Henry VIII.

The rev. W. Mark	254
„ M. Terrot	173
„ M. Dawson	11
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In 1819 a curious resolution was passed that no wine or spirituous liquors should be charged to the parish except such as should be actually expended at the administration of the sacrament or in the vestry. In the churchwardens' accounts for that year is an item of £19 9s. 4d. for wine, which may account for the resolution being adopted. In the following year we come across an item connected with the Resurrectionists. Henry Gillies, suspected of abstracting bodies from the churchyard, was arrested in Edinburgh, brought to Newcastle, and tried and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. The constable's journey to Edinburgh for Gillies cost the parish £22 8s.

In 1823 there was an appointment of town crier or bellman, and a blue coat with a red cape, and a three-cocked hat with lace were purchased for him. The bellman of to-day is a very insignificant person, compared with his predecessors in office.

In 1794, lord Adam Gordon, governor of Tynemouth castle, set up a claim for fees for erecting head stones in the ancient burial ground within the castle, which was resisted by the parishioners, and it was abandoned. In 1826 another claim was made by general Wemyss, governor of the castle for a fee of ten shillings for permitting the ground to be broken for each interment of a parishioner. A lengthy correspondence ensued, and was continued for nearly six years. The parishioners resisted the claim. The late Mr. John Tinley, vestry clerk, carried on the correspondence on behalf of the parish with great vigour. Efforts were from time to time made to induce the parishioners to abandon their right to bury within the castle, and to accept a piece of ground for burials outside of it; but the parishioners unanimously refused to give up their rights. At last, in December, 1832, the secretary to the Board of Ordnance abandoned the exaction, and it has never been renewed. We must commend the spirit which actuated the parishioners in refusing to give up the burial ground of their forefathers to the control of a Board of Ordnance. We can well understand the spoliation and desecration which would have occurred if the parishioners had relinquished their rights.

As an instance of the longevity of the vicars of Tynemouth, I may mention that in one hundred and forty-two years there have only been four vicars.

40 years—the rev. Emanuel Potter	1749-1789
36 " " Charles Charleton	1789-1825
38 " " Christopher Reed	1830-1868
28 " " Thomas Brutton	1868-1896

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The rev. George Dixon was vicar from 1825 to 1830, but he resigned the living.