

NOTES ON THE ANCIENT PARISH OF
BIDSTON.

By Wm. Fergusson Irvine.

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THE Ancient Parish of Bidston comprised the townships of Bidston, Moreton, Saughall-Massie, and Claughton. It was bounded, roughly speaking, by a line drawn from where Christ Church, Claughton, now stands to the Halfpenny Bridge, over the Great Float; from thence, through Leasowe Lighthouse to Great Meols Station on the Hoylake Line, and back to Christ Church; enclosing in all about 4400 acres. Bidston township included the hamlets of Ford and Flaybrick; Moreton, those of Pastureside and Lingham (or Lingholme); Saughall, that of the Carrhouses; and Claughton, Grange and Woolton.

The population in 1801, that is, before any extension from Liverpool had taken place, was 574.

The names of the four townships appear to be of English origin, though the Norse invaders of the ninth century have left manifest traces of their presence in many of the field-names, as well as in one or two of the hamlets.

SAUGHALL, the Hall of the Willows; from *sealh*, a willow, and *heal*, a stone house.¹

MORETON, the village on the lake; from *mere*, a lake, and *ton*, an enclosure.

CLAUGHTON, probably the clay town; from *claeg*, clay, and *ton*, an enclosure.

BIDSTON. There has been considerable debate as to the meaning of this name. Father Dallow, in a paper which he recently read before the Chester Archæological Society,² suggests that the monumental stone, bearing a Runic inscription, found in 1887 at Upton, is responsible for the origin of the name. The inscription has been deciphered by Professor Browne, of Cambridge, as follows:—

FOLC(AE) ARAERDON BECUN

BIDDATH FORE ÆTHELMUND

(The people raised a memorial. Pray for
Æthelmund.)

“Here,” says Father Dallow, “we have an ancient ‘Bidding stone,’ or ‘Bid-stone,’ asking a prayer of the passer-by for the soul of some Saxon warrior or priest who lay interred beneath. . . . That it was in its day (seventh century) an important though rude monument, marking the last resting place of some great Saxon, there can be but little doubt; and it would, indeed, be curious, if it gave its name to the chief hill in the neighbourhood, Bidston Hill, from whose quarries, likely enough, the materials came for building Overchurch.”

For my own part, however, I would prefer to derive it simply from *Beda's-* or *Bidda's-ton*, the

¹ The *l* in *sealh* is preserved in the Domesday spelling of the name, *Salhale*, as well as in the usual mediæval one, *Saighall*. *Saugh*, or *sauch*, is still used in the South of Scotland to denote a willow.

² “Notes on the Overchurch Runic Stone,” by the Rev. Father Wilfrid Dallow, M.R.S.A. (Ireland). Vol. iii, n.s.

village or settlement of Beda, possibly one of the early Northumbrian colonists.

THE MANOR OF BIDSTON.

In spite of Ormerod's statement to the contrary, I venture to see in the SALHALE of the Domesday Record, Saughall-Massie, and included therein the dependant manors of Bidston, Moreton, Claughton, and Birkenhead.

Ormerod apportsions Salhale to Little Saughall, near Chester, though in doing so he allots to almost *the smallest township* in Wirral the *third largest* Domesday Manor; or, in other words, he credits a miserable little village, the *total area* of which is only 400 acres, with a manor that in 1086 was rated at *six* hides, and the lands of which amounted to six carucates. In omitting Saughall-Massie and its dependant manors, he leaves unaccounted for a tract of some 5000 acres,³ which we know from other sources had long been cultivated, and which it is almost certain was at that time a manor. It is further worthy of notice that Salhale is grouped with the manors of Landican, Oxtan (or Upton), Thingwall, and Knocktorum, which are, of course, contiguous with Saughall-Massie.

The Domesday report on Salhale is as follows:—

“The same William [Malbedeng] holds SALHALE. Leuing held it and was a free man. There are vi hides rateable to the gelt. The land is six carucates. One and a half carucate are in the demesne, and [there are] i serf and vii villan and i radman and iv bordarii with iii carucates and a half, there is a fishery. In King Edward's time it was worth xx shillings and afterwards xxii, now xlv shillings.”

³ To illustrate the disproportion, it may be pointed out that Wallasey, a parish of 3276 acres, is credited in Domesday with lands amounting to four carucates. So that if 3276 acres equal four carucates, it is considerably more probable that the 5000 acres of Saughall-Massey would equal six carucates than that the 400 acres of Little Saughall would do so. Great Saughall is admittedly accounted for in the Domesday manor *Salhare*.

The fishery alluded to here probably was in either Tranmere or Wallasey Pool, though it may have been on the shore at Leasowe.

For what length of time the powerful Barons of Nantwich (of whom the William mentioned in Domesday was the founder) continued to hold Bidston is not certain, but about the middle of the twelfth century we find it forming part of the extensive barony of Dunham-Massey.

According to Sir Peter Leycester (p. 240), Hamon de Massey the third gave unto John Massey, his brother, all the lands of Moreton which Matthew de Moreton held, with *housebote* and *haybote*⁴ in his demain-wood of Bidston, in exchange for the land of Podington [Puddington] which Robert de Massey, his uncle, held; doing service for half a knight's fee.⁵

From this John Massey were descended the Masseys of Bidston, who either died out about 1350 or became absorbed in the Masseys of Backford and Timperley, and who left, as the only monument to their existence, their name, to distinguish the Saughall in Bidston parish from the Saughalls near Chester.⁶

The descent of the manor at this point becomes rather obscure, but the following is probably what happened.⁷ Hamon de Massey the sixth, finding

⁴ *Housebote*, the right to cut timber for house-building and repairing purposes. *Haybote*, the right to cut wood for fence-making, &c.

⁵ Sir Peter adds—"about the time of Henry II. or Ric. I." [say 1180-90].

⁶ Memorial of Perambulation made in the 56th year [1271-2] of King Henry, father of the Lord Edward, before Hugh de Hatton, then sheriff, by Bertram de Meles, between the vill of Knoctyrum the manor of the Abbot of Chester, and the vill of Bideston the manor of Dame Cecilia de Massey. *Chesh. Doms. Roll, Eaton Hall MSS.*

Plea Rolls, 12 Edward III [1338]. Pardon to Hamon de Massey and Joan his wife, for assarting [digging up] without licence six acres of wood and three acres of heath within the cover of their wood of Bedeston, in the forest of Wyrehale, &c.

⁷ Authorities—*Leycester*, p. 240; *Ormerod (Helstby)*, vol. i, p. 529 *et seq.*, and vol. ii, p. 467; *Plea Rolls, Chester*; *Recognizance Rolls, Chester (Deputy Keeper's Reports)*; *Inqs. Post Mort., Record Office.*

himself without heirs, and without prospect of any, divided his barony into moieties, one of which, including Bidston, he sold during his life to Sir Oliver Ingham, who was Justice of Chester several times during the reigns of Edward II and Edward III.

On Sir Oliver's death without male issue (between 1340 and 1350), his estates passed to his two daughters, one of whom, Joan, had married Sir Roger Le Strange, fourth Lord of Knokyn. Dame Joan was not permitted, however, to possess her father's estates in peace, for on his death her right to them was contested by some of the co-heirs of Sir Hamon the sixth, to whom had descended the *other* moiety mentioned above. At this point (1345), Henry, then Earl, and afterwards Duke of Lancaster (surnamed the Good, grandfather of King Henry IV) bought out the interests of, apparently, both parties, and settled the estates on himself during his life, with remainder in fee to Sir Roger Le Strange, fifth Lord of Knokyn, son of Joan, the daughter of Sir Oliver Ingham. Dame Joan died in 1349.

In 1361 the good Duke died, and Sir Roger entered into peaceable possession of "Budeston and Salghan and divers lands in Moreton in Wyrle, &c." He married Alina, or Alice, daughter of Edmund, tenth Earl of Arundel, and had amongst other children a son John, who, in 1379, at the age of 24, succeeded his father in the Bidston estates, which were valued at £20 per annum. Sir John married Maude, daughter and co-heir of John, last Lord Mohun of Dunster.

It appears from an *Inquisitio post mortem*, dated 1400-1,⁸ that Sir John had, on the 24th June, 1397; sold to Sir John Stanley, Knight, the fee simple of

⁸ Ormerod (*Helsby*), vol. ii, p. 467.

his Bidston estates; which, as already stated, comprised the other townships in the parish, with the exception of certain small freeholds in Moreton and the possessions of the Priory of Birkenhead.

The manor thus passed by sale into the hands of a family of which we of the Palatinate Counties have just cause to be proud. The main historical interest attached to Bidston centres round the name of Stanley.

Almost immediately on coming into possession of this property Sir John Stanley seems to have vested it in feoffees-to-uses, as in 1407 Mathew de Litherland, John de Leylond, chaplain, and Thomas de More of Lyverpole petitioned to be allowed "to enclose and make a park of 80 acres of their desmesne adjacent to their manor of Budston and within the lordship of the same, etc., and to have free warren therein." In answer to this, on the 8th April in the following year, they (or rather Litherland and Leylond, More having died) received due licence "to empark with palings, wall, ditch, or hedge at their pleasure 80 acres, etc., and to stock the same with game and other wild beasts; and also to have free warren therein for ever."

It was just about this time that Sir John obtained a licence to embattle his castle of Liverpool, and it may be that he availed himself of the device of getting three friends to apply for the other licence to empark Bidston, so that his name might not appear as asking the king for too many favours at one time. However this may have been, the estate still vested in the Stanleys, and they enjoyed the benefit of the licence to park and free warren.

The property remained in the hands of the Stanleys, who shortly after this became Earls of

Derby,⁹ until the disastrous times of the Commonwealth.

As we are at present considering the question of the descent of the manor, I shall defer alluding to the residence, or non-residence, of the various earls at Bidston Hall, until later.

In 1649 when James, the seventh Earl of Derby, withdrew to the Isle of Man, all his vast English estates, including, of course, Bidston, were forfeited to the Parliament. For two years nothing appears to have been done with the Bidston property, the hands of the government, no doubt, being fully occupied with more important matters. August of 1651, however, saw the advance of Charles the Second from Scotland, and Lord Derby hastened at once to join him. The story of the Earl's progress through Lancashire from Lathom to Preston, the desperate fight in Wigan Lane, and his death at Bolton, are too well known to need recounting.

Perhaps the main reason why we hear nothing of petitions to the Parliament about the Derby estates, before 1652, is, that James was a man of the proudest temper, and would sooner have lost all than utter one word which sounded like submission to those whom he held as base usurpers. His famous reply to Cromwell's offer of the restoration of half his estates, if he would submit, and give up the Isle of Man, addressed to Ireton, will bear repeating.

"Sir," he wrote, "I received your letter with indignation and scorn, and return you this answer, that I cannot but wonder whence you should gather any hopes from me that I should,

⁹ Thomas the second Earl left an annuity of £50 per annum for life to his brother, James Stanley. Esq., to be paid out of the manor or lordship of Bydston, Co. Cestr.—*House of Stanley, Seacome.*

"like you, prove treacherous to my sovereign. . .
 "I scorn your proffers, disdain your favour, and
 "abhor your treason; and am so far from delivering
 "up this island to your advantage that I will keep
 "it to the utmost of my power and your destruction.
 "Take this for your final answer, and forbear any
 "further solicitations; for if you trouble me with
 "any more messages on this occasion I will burn
 "the paper and hang the bearer. This is the
 "immutable resolution, and shall be the undoubted
 "practice of him who accounts it his chiefest glory
 "to be His Majesty's most loyal and obedient
 "servant.—DERBY."¹⁰

With the Earl's death, however, his heroic Countess and her children were reduced to the most terrible straits, and so commences a series of interesting petitions addressed to the "Committee for Compounding with Delinquents," still preserved at the Record Office, among what are called *The Royalist Composition Papers*.

I have secured abstracts of all those documents which refer to Bidston, and so have been enabled to clear up somewhat the mist which has hitherto lain on the question of the descent of the manor during the next few years.

The first of these is a petition, dated 27th January, 1652 [N.S.], from Charlotte, relict of James, late Earl of Derby, in which she asks for the restoration of certain estates which had been sequestrated on account of her late husband's delinquency. She specifies eight manors in Lancashire, four in Yorkshire, and Bidston, Macclesfield, and Wildborclough in Cheshire, which, with divers other lands, bought with the £24,000 which formed her dowry, were assured to her for life as

¹⁰ "James, seventh Earl of Derby," by F. J. Leslie, F.R.G.S., *Trans. Hist. Soc. of Lanc. and Chesh.*, vol. xli.

her jointure. The petition is marked as reserved for consideration and enquiry.

The next document states that on enquiry it was found that by an instrument dated 4th July, 1626, at the Hague, drawn between James, then Lord Strange (the late Earl of Derby), and Lady Charlotte, and her mother the Duchess de la Tremouille, in the presence of the King and Queen of Bohemia, it was agreed that the Lady Charlotte's dowry was to be spent in buying lands, &c. ; which lands, on Lord Strange's death, were to become wholly the property of his wife, to descend to her children by the said Lord Strange. The trustees were William, Earl of Pembroke, Philip, Earl of Montgomery, Sir Randolph Crewe, and Sir Thomas Posthumous Hobby. On the death of the Earl of Pembroke, the Earl of Holland was made trustee.

Further, that on the 1st June, 4 Charles I [1628], a tripartite indenture was drawn up, and enrolled in Chancery on the 30th July following, "between William, Earl of Derby, James, Lord Strange, and the Lady Charlotte, his wife, of the first part; Sir Edward Coke and Sir Randle Crewe, of the second part; Sir Thomas P. Hobby and Sir Henry Vane, of the third part." * * * "The said Wm., Earl of Derby, in consideration of the marriage then solemnized betwixt Lord Strange and the Lady Charlotte and for providing a jointure for her for preferment of their children and the establishing of the manors hereafter mentioned in the blood of the said Earls of Derby, etc." assured the said manors—Bidston being one of them—to Charlotte as her jointure.¹¹

It was also found that Lord Derby's lands were "forfeited to the Commonwealth and appointed to be sold saving the right of others in law and

¹¹ The advowson of the church of Bidston is included in the dowry, which is rather curious, as it was at this time the property of the Bishops of Chester.

“equity that shall have their claims allowed by the
“Commission for Obstructions, etc.”

On the 5th of February, after a lengthy debate, in which Lord Chief Justice Hollis and many of the leading lawyers of the Parliament took part, the Commissioners decided to allow the Countess's claims, and on the 17th of June in the same year an order was made in Committee for the sequestration to be respited, and on her finding security for £6,000 to be permitted to receive the rents.

The success of her petition emboldened the Countess a month later to beg that she might enjoy the arrears of her property as well as the “growing profits.” Upon her finding security of £2,000 more she was allowed to collect arrears since the 27th of January.

The Countess appears, however, to have enjoyed her estates for a short time only, as in March of the following year (1653) she is once more before the Committee, and is this time herself adjudged a delinquent for her own acts during the time of the war. Her evil genius seems to have been a certain Robert Massey, a mercer of Warrington, who frequently petitioned Parliament both against the Earl during his life and after his death against his widow. He pursued his cruel course with the greatest persistence until he had attained his end, which was to have the Countess's estates confiscated and himself awarded the sum of £1,000 as compensation for injuries which he stated had been done to him by the Earl and his wife.¹²

¹² What even his fellow-Roundheads thought of Massey is shown by the fact that the County Committee for Lancashire refused to act with him when he was appointed a Commissioner, because, they said, he “had sought the place.” Among the Composition Papers is a letter from the Committee for Compounding to the acting Commissioners for Lancashire dated 3 June, 1651, expressing surprise that they should have refused to act with Robert Massey; and stating that he had not “sought the place,” but on “his coming to inform us about the Countess of Derby, we hearing of his fidelity and suffering for the Parliament” appointed him Commissioner.

On the 13 August, 1650, Massey had written to the Committee stating that the Countess of Derby was very lately in the Isle of Man with the Earl her husband, and that he had taken a ship called the "Mary," of Liverpool, and made a prize of the goods therein for the King of Scotland and disposed thereof within the said island, and that the Countess is gone into Scotland to attend the Scotch King.

The following are abstracts of the depositions which Massey procured in support of his charges.

"The Informacōn of George Sayre, servant to "Robte Massey of Warrington, in co. Lanc: Mercer, "taken upon oath before Col. Thomas Birch, "Governor of Liverpoole, etc., 13 Aug. 1650."

On the 30th June last this informer was aboard a ship, called the "Mary," of Liverpool, with certain "merchantable" goods to the value of £327 6s. 3d., which said goods his master Robert Massey had intended for Carrickfergus in Ireland to sell there. But upon that said day Capt. George Bradshaw, with a long boat from the Isle of Man, manned with sixteen oars, wherein were two guns, one "murderer" and several muskets, seized the said ship within three or four leagues of Ireland, with all the passengers and goods which were therein and brought them to the said Island, accounting them to be a lawful prize. After several petitions to the said Earl of Derby, not only for their enlargement being prisoners, but also for the restitution of the said ship, goods, etc., his answer was that he took a 15th part for the King, a 10th for himself, and the remainder for the taker of the prize. When the goods from the said ship were brought ashore, George Browne, the Earl's secretary, surveyed them, and afterwards some of the said goods, viz., "taffatyes" and silks, and most of the stuffs of the said Robert Massey were disposed of in the Earl's own house and made up

into several garments for the Commander's gentlewomen and others.

Immediately afterwards the Countess went towards the King into Scotland, and thereupon command was given that nobody in the ship should be released until they heard of the safe landing of the said Countess in Scotland, to prevent the bringing of intelligence into England.

(Signed) GEORGE SAYER.

On the 9th September, the depositions of one Wm. Stealfox, of High Leigh, were taken before Sir George Booth at Dunham.

The said Wm. Stealfox having read the information of George Sayers, says he knows it is all true, as he was with him when they were taken prisoners and kept in the Isle of Man for about five weeks. He further deposed that he saw 23 "telors" at work in the house or castle where the Earl of Derby lives and keeps his court, making garments for the Earl's household out of the silks, stuffs, &c., of the said Robert Massey. Some of the Earl's officers—viz., Mr. George Browne, Major Whalley, John Picke, and others—said that the fifteenth part of the said goods belonged to the King, a tenth part to the said Earl, and the rest to the Captain and takers, as a lawful prize coming from and to rebels, and that the Lady Derby was much displeased that the said Captain, George Bradshaw, had not cast this informer and all the rest of the passengers into the sea as rebels and traitors, and that the said Bradshaw affirmed, "it repented him he had not so done." The informer heard the same John Picke and others acknowledge that the said ship and goods were "better worth" than £700. The said John Picke would have had the said passengers either cast overboard or hanged in the said island. (Signed) WILL: STELFOX.

A further letter, dated March 2, 1652, states that the Countess was in the Isle of Man in 1649 and 1651, when it was in actual rebellion, and that she herself sent out men-of-war to seize Parliamentary merchant-vessels; that she was cruel to the prisoners brought to the island and bade the seamen tie those Parliamentary rogues and villains back to back and cast them into the sea and not save their lives. She also threatened to have them hanged. The letter further states that in 1651 she held the Island against the Parliament and kept the castle, for the surrender of which she, as one of the chief commanders, treated in person with the Parliamentary officers.

Under date 10 July, 1652, is information that one Philip Moore, of Douglas, can testify, amongst other things, that when the Earl of Derby came from England the Countess bade him "pull off the breeches, and she would put them on and then lead them on" against the rebels.

All these charges were considered very serious indeed, and a commission was sent over in 1653 to the Isle of Man to enquire into the case and report to the Parliament.

Much delay followed, and the case dragged on for several months, during which time all revenue from the Countess's estates, with the exception of a small allowance, were enjoyed by Parliament; and it was not until October (1653) that by an Act of Parliament she was permitted to compound by paying a fine of about £8,000. By the first of November she had paid half of this fine and found security for the rest.

What a terrible drain this heavy fine must have been on the Countess's resources is shown by the fact that she was driven in the following July (1654) to ask a favour of Cromwell himself.

“To his Highness the Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

“The humble petition of Charlotte, Countess of Derby, sheweth that your petitioner was sequestred for a delinquencie supposed to bee committed during the life of her husband and as shee conceives is the only woeman that ever was sequestred for acting on that side to which her husband adhered.

“That even those who judged her a delinquent thought fitt to recommend her case to the last Parliament, who ordered that shee should pay three yeares purchase for an estate for life and 5 yeares for inheritance, and should further pay 500^{li} to one Massy, the prosecutor against her.

“That according to these proportions all her estate (except the Rectorie of Ormskirke and about 40^{li} per ann. more) being but for her life, her composition at Haberdashers Hall came to 7200^{li}, whereupon your petitioner to take off her sequestra^on was forced to pay downe the one moyety, being 3600^{li}, besides 500^{li} to the said Massy, and to give security for the second moyety.

“That she was also forced to put in security for the profitts by her received whiles her case was under examination, which were not sufficient for the necessarie maintenance of her selfe and children.

“Your petitioner humbly offers that if there bee noe other motives to compassion, that shee is a stranger borne, and a Protestant and a widowe and a mother of 5 fatherlesse children who have nothing to maintayne them but what can bee saved out of her revenue which is but for her life, that yett your Highnesse in your clemency will nott thinke fitt that there should be more severity used against her than others. And that most of the compositions of those who have been highest in delinquencie hath been but two yeares purchase for inheritance, whereas hers is 3 yeares purchase for her crazie life.

“Shee therefore most humbly implores your Highnesse clemency in the remitting the other payments and orderinge that her securities may bee given upp.

“And shee and hers shall be ever bounden to pray for your Highness,” &c.

(Signed) C. DERBY.

That this touching appeal was not without a certain measure of success is shown by the fact that the letter is endorsed “Countess of Derby’s Petition, presented by the Lord President, as especially recommended to the Council by His Highness,” and that on the 19th December following, certain abatements in the fine were made.

Though by this time, as will be seen shortly, the Countess's connection with Bidston had ceased, it may be of interest to follow her career to its close, to see that at heart she remained recklessly loyal to the end, and that in her old age she had once more to suffer sequestration of her remaining property for complicity in Sir George Booth's rising of 1659. It is no little pleasure, however, to learn that this heroic lady, after so many years of persecution and suffering, lived to see the Restoration of the Monarchy, and probably to enjoy the return of, at all events, a portion of her dowry. She died at Knowsley on the 21st of March, 1664.

But to follow now the history of the Manor of Bidston. The first applicant to the Committee appears as early as 1650, in the person of one Lancelot Granger, who on the 6th December petitioned the Committee for leave to be tenant for 7 years of the Manors of Bidston and Upton, etc., "now in the hands of the State" owing to the delinquency of the Earl of Derby. The petition is endorsed, "To be let according to instructions." What was the fate of this tenant does not appear, but in July, 1653, we find George Steele of Sandbach, probably a relative of William Steele, the subsequent purchaser, petitioning for a lease of the manor for 7 years, "which is under sequestration owing to the delinquency of the Countess of Derby."

In the meantime, however (1652), John Manley, a citizen and skinner of London, had contracted with the Committee for the purchase of the manor, though for some reason he did not desire to complete the bargain, and so assigned his right to William Steele, of Gray's Inn, in the county of Middlesex, Esquire, who in June of 1653 paid the purchase-money to the Committee and entered into possession of the property. His right was not yet

absolute, however, since in October of the same year the Countess, as we have seen above, was permitted to compound, and so she, and her son who was heir-apparent to the estate, had now to be dealt with. They were probably, however, only too pleased to be able to convert some of their land into money, and would not be anxious to drive too hard a bargain, if indeed it were in their power to do so; we therefore find, a month or two later, the Dowager Countess joining with her son Charles the 8th Earl, and Dorothea Helena de Ruppá his wife, in the sale of Bidston to William Steele.

Steele was a lawyer of considerable distinction during the Commonwealth, being appointed successively Recorder of London (1649), Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer (1655), and Lord Chancellor of Ireland (1656).¹³ He was born at Sandbach in 1610. He first attracted attention by his ability in prosecuting Captain Bailey for an abortive attempt to rescue Charles I from the Isle of Wight in 1647, and was shortly after appointed Attorney General for the Commonwealth. He was also chosen as one of the four counsel for the Parliament in the trial of Charles I, but, fortunately for himself, on the day the trial came on was laid up "in his Bed very sick, and by reason thereof not like to attend." His place was accordingly taken by Cooke, the solicitor-general, who at the Restoration paid for the distinction with his life.

On the accession of Charles II, Steele is said to have retired to Holland for a time, but to have returned ultimately to England or Ireland. He married twice, and by his first wife had a son Richard, who, it has been conjectured, may possibly

¹³ For an account of Steele and a pedigree of the family, see "The History of Sandbach," by J. P. Earwaker, M.A., F.S.A.

be identified with Richard Steele of Dublin, the father of the celebrated Sir Richard Steele the author. William Steele died in 1680.

It is not at all likely that Steele ever lived at Bidston Hall, the farm probably being worked by a steward, so that it would not be with much pain that he resold the property in 1662, when the wheel of fortune brought back the Monarchy, and prominent Parliamentarians found it advisable to have their worldly possessions in a more portable medium than land. The buyer of the estate was an Irish peer, John, Lord Kingston of Rockingham, Co. Roscommon, the date of the sale being the 29th April, 1662.¹⁴

Lord Kingston, though an active Cromwellian, had been raised to the peerage by Charles II, for the zeal he showed in restoring the monarchy; the patent was dated 4th September, 1660. He married Catherine, daughter of Sir Richard Fenton, of Mitchelstown, Co. Cork. Lord Kingston died in 1676, when the property passed to his son Robert, who died in 1693; the title becoming extinct in 1761, on the death of James, fourth Lord Kingston, son of John, third Lord, who had succeeded to his brother Robert's title and estates in 1693.

Lord Kingston appears not to have had sufficient money at hand to complete the purchase, so that he was obliged to mortgage the property at the outset. The story of the next twenty years (from 1662) is one in which loans, mortgages, and judgments play their usual parts; until, by negotiations commenced in 1680 by Sir Robert Vyner, the great London banker, and completed by his nephew some years later, the property passed by purchase into the

¹⁴ In a list published in the *Cheshire Sheaf* (vol. ii, March, 1881, p. 257), of the absentees from the Royalist rendezvous at Knutsford, on the 10th Dec., 1660, appears, "Wm. Steele, formerly Lord Chancellor, for his lands at "Bidston."

Vyner family, in which it has remained until to-day, the present proprietor being Robert Charles De Grey Vyner, of Fairfield House, Skelton, Yorkshire, esquire.

THE CHURCH.

The details of the history of the church are very meagre, as, at the suppression of the monasteries, the living was found to be appropriated to the Priory of Birkenhead, and had doubtless been so from a very early period, consequently no presentations occur in the Lichfield Registers.¹⁵ As the original charter of the founding of Birkenhead Priory is not known to be in existence, it is only by inference that we can conclude there was a church at Bidston in the middle of the 12th century. The earliest definite mention of it is in Pope Nicholas' Taxation, drawn up between the years 1288 and 91, in which it is called "Ecc'lia de "Bedeston," and valued at £5 6s. 8d. I am indebted to Mr. E. W. Cox for the information that prior to the rebuilding of the nave and chancel in 1856, there were some good examples of Early English work (1190-1270) to be seen.

¹⁵ In his *Account of Iffley*, the Rev. E. Marshall gives in a few sentences a clear account of the intricate subject of monastic appropriations. (I quote from a note in R. W. Dixon's *History of the Church of England*, vol. i, p. 316.) "To make an appropriation, by which the tithes of a parish were transferred to a spiritual corporation, was a practice of early date. The monastic institutions were eager to obtain such a transference, as it was a source of considerable revenue. To effect it, they were in the habit of obtaining the patronage of such churches as they were able, as a necessary step. But in order to the appropriation of these the permission of the Pope, as well as the license of the King and Bishop, who both had an interest in the church in case of lapse, was required, and who were supposed to be the best guardians of the general advantages of the parish. The consent of the patron was also implied. As an appropriation was originally made to a spiritual corporation alone, this provided the services of an officiating minister, who acted as capellare and was removable at will. But afterwards, as there arose many abuses from such a provision, the legislature interfered by statutes of 15 R. ii, 6, and 4 H. iv, 12. The former of these secured a proper maintenance for the minister and his permanence, and the latter ensured that he should be one of the secular clergy." P. 60.

At the suppression, the living was valued at £13 6s. 4d. in the King's books, and was granted in 1541 by Henry to assist in the endowment of the new see of Chester. On the 21st of March, 1545,¹⁶ however, the Bishop (John Bird) leased the rectorial tithes to Edward Plankenay, of the city of Chester, gentleman, for 80 years, through whose daughter and heiress Mary (by marriage with William Glegg), they passed into the hands of the Gleggs of Gayton, who continued patrons of the living for upwards of two centuries. The lease was renewed in 1619 by Edward Glegg of Gayton, for the term of three lives, paying £13 6s. 8d. therefor to the Bishop, and "£6 13s. 4d. towards "the maintenance of the minister."¹⁷ In a subsequent lease this amount was increased to £20 per annum, at which magnificent sum the stipend remained until the end of the last century, the result being that most of the incumbents were obliged to combine spiritual and temporal work, and eke out their living by following agricultural pursuits. Archdeacon Travis,¹⁸ who was Vicar of Eastham from 1766 to 1797, used to say that, so poor was that living, that all the vicars of Eastham, within the memory of man, "had lived all their "lives on charity and died insolvent." The remark might with equal justice have been made of Bidston.

It is rather curious that the only two chapels in the deanery of Wirral should both have been in Bidston parish. Birkenhead Chapel seems to have been used for service about the beginning of the seventeenth century, as the curate of Birkenhead

¹⁶ Bishop Bridgeman's Ledger, MS. at the Bishop's Registry, Chester, p. 108 (147).

¹⁷ Bishop Bridgeman's Ledger, p. 201; also *Commonwealth Church Survey*, *Rec. Soc. Pub.* vol. i, p. 216.

¹⁸ *Wirral Notes and Queries*, vol i. p. 21.

is mentioned as paying ship-money in 1635. In Sir Peter Leycester's time (1660-70) it had fallen into disuse, as he describes it as "ruinous" in his history. It was again revived, however, about 1712, by Mr. Clieveland, of Liverpool, and continued to supply the spiritual needs of the few farmers and labourers in Birkenhead and Claughton until the building of St. Mary's Church.

Of Moreton Chapel still less is known, the very site of it not being quite certain, though it probably stood in the position assigned to it in the Ordnance Survey. In the list of Church goods in 1550,¹⁹ it is credited with "one chales and one bell," and it is probable that the chapel continued to be used until about 1600. In 1598, Robert Wade, William Hancock, and William Pemberton, all of Moreton in Bidston parish, were charged before the Consistory Court, at Chester,²⁰ because they "doe utterlie "refuse to contribute" to the support of Moreton Chapel; and it is probable that their refusal to contribute was due to the fact that services were not regularly kept up, since, in 1601, we find the patrons presented to the Consistory Court because "they wante a curate at Moreton Chappell." Bishop Gastrell, in his *Notitia Cestriensis*, says—"Moreton.—A chapel in Bidston Parish in Sir P. Leycester's time. Demolished 30 years ago. No "settled endowment, as certified by the Minister "of Bidston, 1719."

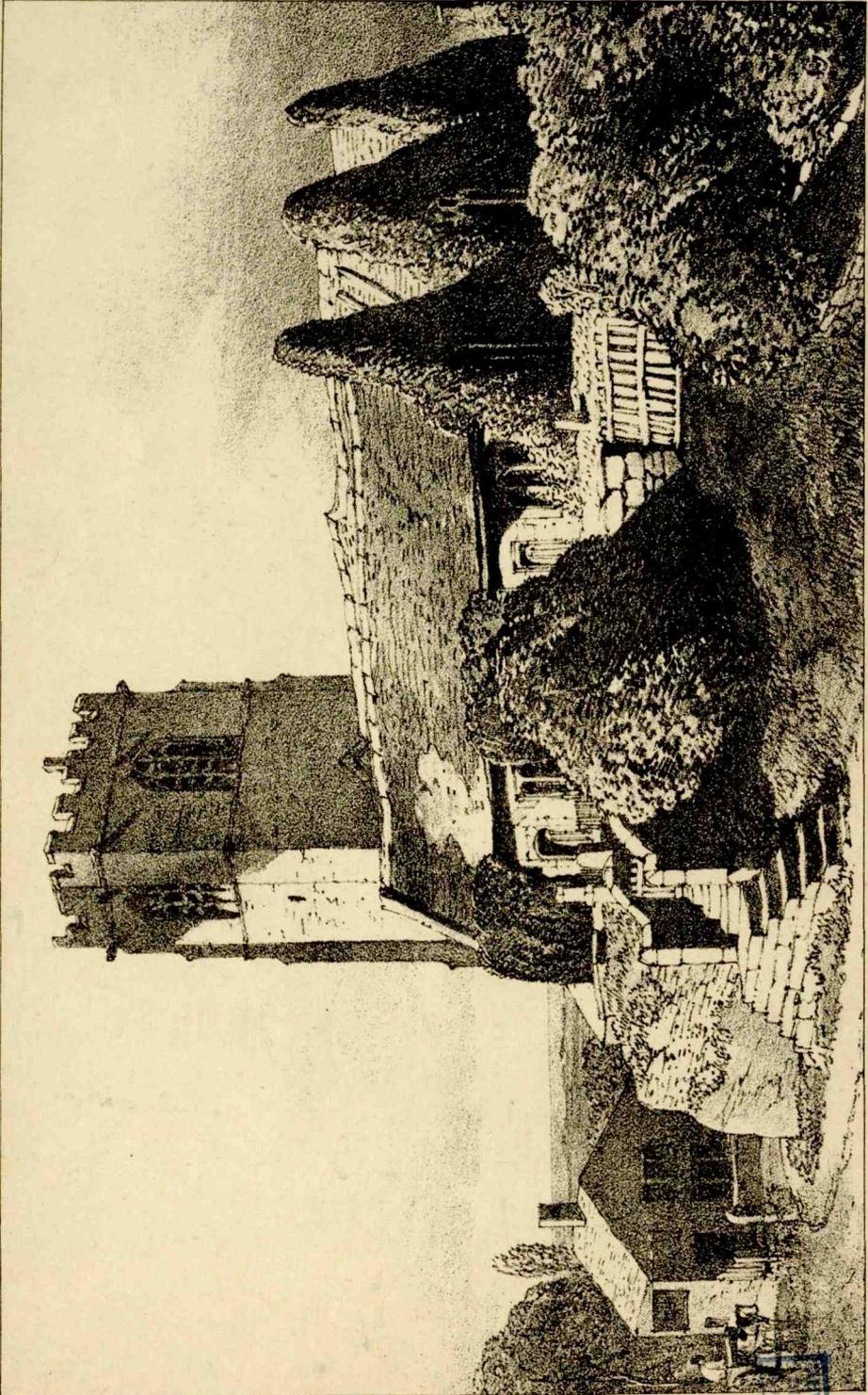
The living of Bidston is now a rectory, and is valued in the *Clergy List* at £210 per annum.

THE FABRIC.

The present building was erected in 1856, with the exception of the tower, which, as we shall see

¹⁹ *Wirral Notes and Queries*, vol. ii, p. 6.

²⁰ *Ibid*, vol. ii, p. 80.



BIDSTON CHURCH
(PREVIOUS TO REBUILDING IN 1856.)

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presently, probably dates from 1520, and the chancel, which was built in 1882. The architects followed, in the main, the plan of the old building, of which a fairly good representation, from Mason and Hunt's "Birkenhead Priory," is to be seen on the opposite page.

Ormerod, who appears to have visited the church in 1812, describes it as "an antient respectable fabric," "consisting of a nave, and chancel with tower and side aisles. The nave is divided into three bays and separated from the aisles on each side by three arches of the plain chamfered orders, resting on circular pillars with caps and bases of pure Early English form. The east elevation presents three gables, the centre one wider and higher than the others. No vestige of the chancel arch remains, but there are portions of the work which evidently belong to an older church erected about the middle of the 13th century."

One of the Randle Holmes visited Bidston in 1666, but by this time the Puritan ravages, to which Mr. Glegg alludes in his depositions (*vide infra.*, p. 60), had taken place, and the only records left by Randle Holme are of a few unimportant gravestones. If only Chaloner or one of the other Chester antiquaries had visited Bidston Church as he did those of Eastham and Bebington in Elizabeth's reign, what interesting notes of heraldic and other glass might have come down to us. One would give a great deal to know what the subject was, that caused the ebullition of Puritan zeal for which Mr. Glegg had to pay six shillings!

The tower, the only old portion left, has many points of resemblance to the towers of Shotwick, Backford, and Wallasey churches. The date of its building must have been very late, probably about

1520. The only guides we have in trying to discover its age, are, the style of architecture, and the armorial bearings over the door on its western side. The style is Late Perpendicular, and the shield which helps us to a date is the fourth from the right, and is what is heraldically termed *a maunch*. This coat doubtless refers to Anne, the wife of Thomas 2nd Earl of Derby, who was daughter of Lord Hastings of Hungerford, the Hastings arms being—*or, a maunch gules*. Lord Derby came into the property in 1504 and died in 1521, so that the building of the tower, since the shields and doorway have every appearance of being contemporaneous with the rest, must have taken place between these dates. In addition to this, we have the very close resemblance to be noticed in Wallasey tower, which we know to have been built in 1530.

The five carved shields to be seen over the western door are both interesting and puzzling. Puzzling both by what is omitted and what is included. Of the omissions, the greatest puzzle is the complete absence of the arms of the Birkenhead priory; it is also curious that the Derby coat is not found. True, there is the famous Derby quartering, the arms of Man, and the Lathom badge, but the Stanley coat—*arg., on a bend az. three stags' heads, cabossed or*—is missing. Those, the presence of which is difficult of explanation, are No. 1 and No. 5.

Nos. 2, 3, and 4 are, respectively—the Lathom badge, *an eagle's claw erect and erased*; the arms of the Kingdom of Man; and, as already stated, the bearings of Anne, Countess of Derby, *or, a maunch gules*. It will be observed that these three shields are smaller than the other two, and are enclosed within an ornamental border, whereas the remaining two are large, and have no ornament round them.

No. 5 is evidently *quarterly, in the first quarter a fleur-de-lys*; a coat, according to Papworth, borne only by two or three families, who can in no way be connected with this neighbourhood. I would venture to suggest, however, that we have here the coat of the long-extinct Masseys of Bidston, though I have been hitherto unable to find any example of their armorial bearings. My reasons for this suggestion are as follows.

The original Masseys of Dunham, bore as their coat—*quarterly, in the first quarter a lion passant*. The Masseys of Puddington, Coddington, Broxton, Egerley, and Deynfield all bore—*quarterly, in the first and third quarters three fleurs-de-lys*, with various marks of cadency. The Masseys of Backford at an early date, according to an engraving of a seal in Ormerod, bore—*quarterly, in the second quarter one fleur-de-lys, over all a bendlet*.

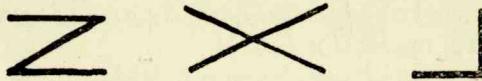
Now in this last we have our Bidston coat, except that the fleur-de-lys is in the wrong quarter and there is a bendlet present. The presence of the bendlet, however, accounts for the charge being in such an unusual quarter, for the very good reason that had the fleur-de-lys been left in the first quarter, it would have been obscured by the bendlet. Now a bendlet is frequently a mark of difference, and a coat differentiated presupposes a coat from which it is differenced; therefore, remove the bendlet, replace the fleur-de-lys in the first quarter, and you have our Bidston coat, and why not that of the Masseys of Bidston, the original owners of the manor?

No. 1 is even more obscure, and I would merely suggest that it is possibly meant for Strange—the lords of the manor after the Masseys—who bore *two lions passant*. It is noticeable that this rather ill-cut animal is placed high up in the shield, and it may be that the carver, evidently not a very

skilful man,²¹ had intended to carve two lions, but, when he had finished the first, found that he had not allowed enough space for a second, and so just left it as it was.

Should these explanations of the shields be correct, this west door forms a kind of pictorial history of the descent of the manor.

The only thing that remains to be said is to point out that only three masons appear to have been employed in the building of the tower, and they have left their well-defined marks in many places both externally and internally, though naturally the outside marks have mostly perished from exposure to the weather. All three marks are about three inches by two and a half, and fairly deeply cut into the stone.



Masons' Marks on Tower.

In the churchyard, on the south side, near the porch, stands the sun-dial, doubtless on the site of the cross.

On the metal is the inscription:—

JOHN RATHBORN.

CH. WAD. 1730.

T. P.

On the four sides of the stone shaft are—1733—T.S.—E.N.—C.W., which stand for Thos. Stanford and Edward Newby, Churchwardens.

Built into the porch over the south door is a stone bearing date 1593 (*not* 1595, as erroneously stated by Ormerod), which came from the old building, where it was doubtless the date of some

²¹ Though the 16th century sculptor may have been clumsy and inaccurate, his work was certainly superior to the crudity of some pseudo-heraldic devices on the south exterior wall of the new chancel, work, which, in addition to its careless inaccuracy, has absolutely no *raison-d'être*.

repair. It is said to have come from a position over the old south doorway.

In the returns of church goods made in 1550 Bidston is stated to be possessed of a ring of three bells. Until within the last few years the same number existed, but in 1856 they were taken down and replaced by a peal of five, cast by Mears of Whitechapel.

The following inscriptions were on the three old bells :—

SANCTI OSWALDI. C. W. J. W. W. W.

CANTATE DOMINO CANTICUM NOVUM 1615.

LAUDATE DOMINUM IN SANCTO EJUS 1673.

A curious tradition is said to exist in the village that the first bell—"Sancti Oswaldi," &c.—was brought from Hilbre Island at the suppression, and before that from St. Oswald's, Chester. The fact that Hilbre Island was ecclesiastically in the parish of St. Oswald's, Chester, certainly gives some colour to the story.

When the new church was consecrated in 1882, an effort was made to discover the original dedication, but nothing could be found either at Chester or Lichfield, and so relying on the information on this bell, the church was consecrated to St. Oswald. This tradition would seem, therefore, to impair somewhat the value of the inscription as evidence.

There is no church plate of any antiquity, and the present building contains nothing of interest, except a fine reproduction in mosaic by Salviati of Da Vinci's Last Supper, as a reredos.

The registers commence in 1679, though there are transcripts at the Bishop's Registry in Chester beginning in 1581, bridging the gap to 1679 fairly well. I have recently printed the Register down to 1700. The earliest churchwarden's book begins in 1767.

INCUMBENTS.

The following is as complete a list of the Perpetual Curates and Rectors as I have, so far, been able to make:—

<i>ante</i> 1549 to <i>post</i> 1556	Arthur Swift. ²²
<i>ante</i> 1581 to 1610	John Martin. ²³
1610 to 1625	Evan Piers.
1625 to 1630	Richard Runcorn. ²⁴
1630 to 1647	Gabriel Bordman, M.A. ²⁵
—	William Glegg, M.A. ²⁶
—	— Wright. ²⁷
1662 [?] to 1673	Hugh Burches.
1673 to 1675	John Knowles, B.A.
1675 to 1696	John Eaton, B.A.
1696 to 1698	William Williams.
1698 to 1730	John Barker, B.A.
1730 to 1740	Richard Jebb.
1742 to 1743	Edward Moore, LL.B.
1744 to 1746	Edward Parr, B.A.
1746 to 1749	Living served by Rev. John Crookhall, Rev. John Hodson, Rev. Robt. Washington, local clergy, for about six months each.
1749 to 1774	William Hughes.
1774 to 1792	Bryan King.
1792 to 1819	William Shewell.
1819 to 1851	Joseph Gate.
1851 to 1881	Christopher A. Graham, B.A., the first Rector.
1881	Rev. John Findlay Buckler, M.A., the present Rector.

²² The Rev. Arthur Swift had a curate in 1554, the Rev. Willm. Bymson.

²³ Mr. Martin had a curate, the Rev. Robert Urmston, from *ante* 1581 to *post* 1592, who died at Wallasey in 1603-4.

²⁴ This is conjecture; it is not *positively* certain, though very nearly so, that he was Curate of Bidston at this time.

²⁵ Ejected by the Committee for Plundered Ministers.

²⁶ This is only on the strength of a statement made in certain depositions of Wm. Glegg, of Gayton, Esq., before the Commissioners for Compounding with Delinquents in 1649, where he states that on Gabriel Bordman's imprisonment, some parishioners from Bidston came to him to ask for someone to serve in the cure of Bidston, and he (Wm. Glegg) offered them his son Wm., and they accepted the offer. There is no evidence, however, of his having filled the office.

²⁷ Mr. Wright is given on the authority of Calamy, who says that "Mr. Wright was ejected from Bidston [in 1662], but afterwards conformed."

None of the early incumbents can lay claim to having risen to any great distinction, so far as I have been able to discover. Most of them are merely names, and those of whom we do know anything have been rather notorious than famous. The Rev. John Martin, for instance, in 1598, was presented to the Chancellor, because he hath been "absente from the church two holidiaies and loveth "to keepe companie in alehouses," and though he protested in defence that "he doth nott use "alehouses inconvenientlie," we find him, three years later, presented once more, because he "absenteth himself from evening praier sometymes "by overmuch drinking, and a swearer."

The Rev. Gabriel Bordman was a still more undesirable person. We find him, in 1634, shortly after his ordination and induction to the living of Bidston, actually brawling in the neighbouring church of Thurstaston, and trying to prevent the poor blind rector from reading prayers.²⁸ It is not, therefore, with feelings of compassion that we find him ejected by the austere Parliamentarians from the living of Bidston, in 1647, for "being a "common frequenter of alehouses and oftentimes "drunk, and a singer of lewd and idle songs."²⁹ In 1649 Bordman—according to Mr. Glegg, of Gayton³⁰—perjured himself in endeavouring to compass Mr. Glegg's ruin. Bordman, it appears from Mr. Glegg's sworn replies to the charges, went to London, and there laid information against his patron, charging him with having been a Commissioner of Array for the King in the Hundred of Wirral; with having robbed him (Mr.

²⁸ From a full and most interesting account of the Rectors of Thurstaston, by the Rev. R. B. Rackham, in *Wirral Notes and Queries*, vol. ii.

²⁹ *Proceedings of the Com. for Plundered Ministers*. Additional. MSS. 15671. British Museum.

³⁰ *State Papers (Dom.)*, *Interregnum*, vol. A 133, pp. 94-96 (MS. at Rec. Off.)

Bordman) of a library of books ; and having threatened to " lay some in Bidston Parish by the " heeles in Chester, then in the power of the kinges " partie, for pulling down pictures in Bidston Church " windowes according to ordinance in Parliam't." Mr. Bordman further charged Mr. Glegg with being the occasion of his imprisonment, so that he might put his own son into the Bidston living, and that Mr. Glegg offered 40s. to some soldiers at Birkenhead to kill him (Mr. Bordman).

Mr. Glegg's replies to all these charges are very full and interesting. As to his having been a " Commissioner of a Rea," [*sic*] it is, he says, " most " scandalose and untrue " ; that it must be known to the Sequestrators, to whom his replies are addressed, how he had " suffered his children to " hazard their lives in the service of the Parlia- " ment " ; and how badly he himself had been used by the " Cavaliers of Chester." How he had been twice imprisoned in Chester Castle, and had almost despaired of his life ; and how, on his enlargement after his second imprisonment, he had scarcely lain any night in his bed, for fear of being again arrested ; and how, when a troupe of the king's horse came to seize him for the third time, he " leapit oute of bed," took his clothes in his hand, " ran out and lay down in a corne field," and so " skaped ther hands." " So you may see," he concludes, " what a Commissioner of a Rea " " I am."

As to the other charges, he denies robbing Bordman of his books, or of knowing anything about his imprisonment, and adds, " I never threatened " to laye some of the people of Bidston by the " heeles for breaking the windows in Bidston " Church, but, beinge at Bidston, William Teliar " asked me to pay for the windowe that was broken " in the chancell. I told him that those who broke

“ it oughte to pay therfor, and that if anything in
“ the windowe gave offence, it should be taken oute
“ and not the whole windowe broken. I gave him
“ no money for it, but I told my servant, William
“ Prison, to speak to the glazier and to pay him
“ him his due, so he gave him 6s.”

As to the charge of his having offered 40s. to
“ some Popish souldiers at Birkett ” to kill Gabriel
Bordman, he dismisses it with—“ I hope there is
“ none so much unchristian as to have such a
“ thought against me. I appeale to you what a
“ senseless thinge it is that any should go aboute
“ to kille him, his own lude carrage hath made him
“ ridiculous to all good men, and these informers
“ may easily be judged what speret possesses them.”
He finally concludes with the statement, “ The
“ whole country will witness how falsely I am
“ accused by these men, and Mr. Bouráman’s credit
“ is recorded what a blasphemous fellow he is, and
“ that his being in prison doth make it manifest.”

The Sequestrators, in their report on the case,
observe:—“ We know, as Glegg relates, that he
“ was several times imprisoned and plundered and
“ released by Sir Wm. Brereton in exchange for
Sir Nicholas Byron, an eminent prisoner, and that
“ he had 3 sons in the Parliament’s service, whereof
“ 2 went to Ireland and one was slain there. We
“ cannot find that he was ever nominated Commis-
“ sioner of Array, and are jealous that the informers
“ have some private interest in the case.”

What ultimately became of Gabriel Bordman
I have been unable to discover. The latest mention
of him that I can find is quite in accord with what
we have seen of his character. In the will of Jane
Willcocke, of Bidston, dated 1649, is a legacy to
one John Whiteside, of Bidston, “ of a bond for
£8, which “ Mr. Gabriel Boardman is due unto mee
“ long since, if the same can be got in.”

The Rev. Richard Jebb was another remarkable if not exemplary character. In addition to being Curate of Bidston he was also Grammar Schoolmaster at Caldy, and it is from the records of this school we learn most about him.³¹ It appears that he had been appointed to the schoolmastership by Mr. Glegg in opposition to the wishes of the churchwardens, who complained that he was unable to teach grammar, was ignorant of Latin, and was really a mercer or tradesman from Wem in Shropshire and not brought up a scholar. The churchwardens further complained that he had become curate of a neighbouring parish (Bidston) and had not come near the school three times in as many years. That several of the boys were obliged to walk as far as Storeton to learn Latin. That Jebb lived at Greasby, several miles from the school, and did not see the children were brought to church on holy days, and that he was "immoderately fond of the diversion of hunting."

THE PARISH SCHOOL.

The earliest mention of the school that I have met with is in the will of William Fells, yeoman, of Bidston, dated 1603, in which he leaves £5 to the parish of Bidston, towards the maintenance of their school. A few years later the Rev. John Martin, in his will (1610), alludes to Mr. Fletcher, the schoolmaster, who, it appears, is in his debt to the extent of 2s.

According to Bishop Gastrell, a schoolhouse is said to have been built in 1636, upon a piece of waste ground given by James, then Lord Strange, and an endowment fund of £200 was raised by

³¹ For further particulars see *Wirral Notes and Queries*, vol. ii., p. 10.

subscription—£45 of which had been lost in 1719, £75 more by 1722 and so on, until to-day only about £15 of the original endowment remains. The old school is still standing, now occupied by a farmer, at the Moss end of School Lane. The date, 1636, is clearly legible over what was once the door.

Of the charities of the parish, there are none of either great value or historical interest. The Thomas Gleave, of London, who gave so liberally to the poor of several of our Wirral parishes, in 1646, included Bidston in his benefactions to the extent of £50, the interest of which was to be spent on white-bread doles to the poor. A curious legacy is mentioned by Bishop Gastrell. He says—"Interest on £3 left by 3 persons "unknown to be spent in Bread and Drink upon "persons y^t walk y^e Bounds of the Parish." In going through the early wills of the various people in the parish for the annotating of the parish registers, which I edited last year, I came across last two bequests of a pound each for this purpose, one from John Penkett of Birkenhead, in 1605, and the other from his widow Jane, in 1609. The bequests are rather quaintly worded. The following is one of them: "Item, it is my will that xx^s be delivered to "my brother-in-lawe William Heare of Claughton "and that ye sayde William Heare do sett hitt forthe "yearlie att ii shyllinges the yeare, and [with] the "sayde ij^s upon the Monday in Rogation weeke, "the sayde William shall p'vyde drinke with hit "for the Curat of Bidston and the parishioners "that com with him & that the drinke be drunken "on the Grene in Claughton, when they come thither as their accustome is, & that the sayde W^m. Heare shall see it so done yearlie, as my truste is "in hym, during his lyffe, and after that, he take

“such order that hit may so be used yearlie for
“ever.”³²

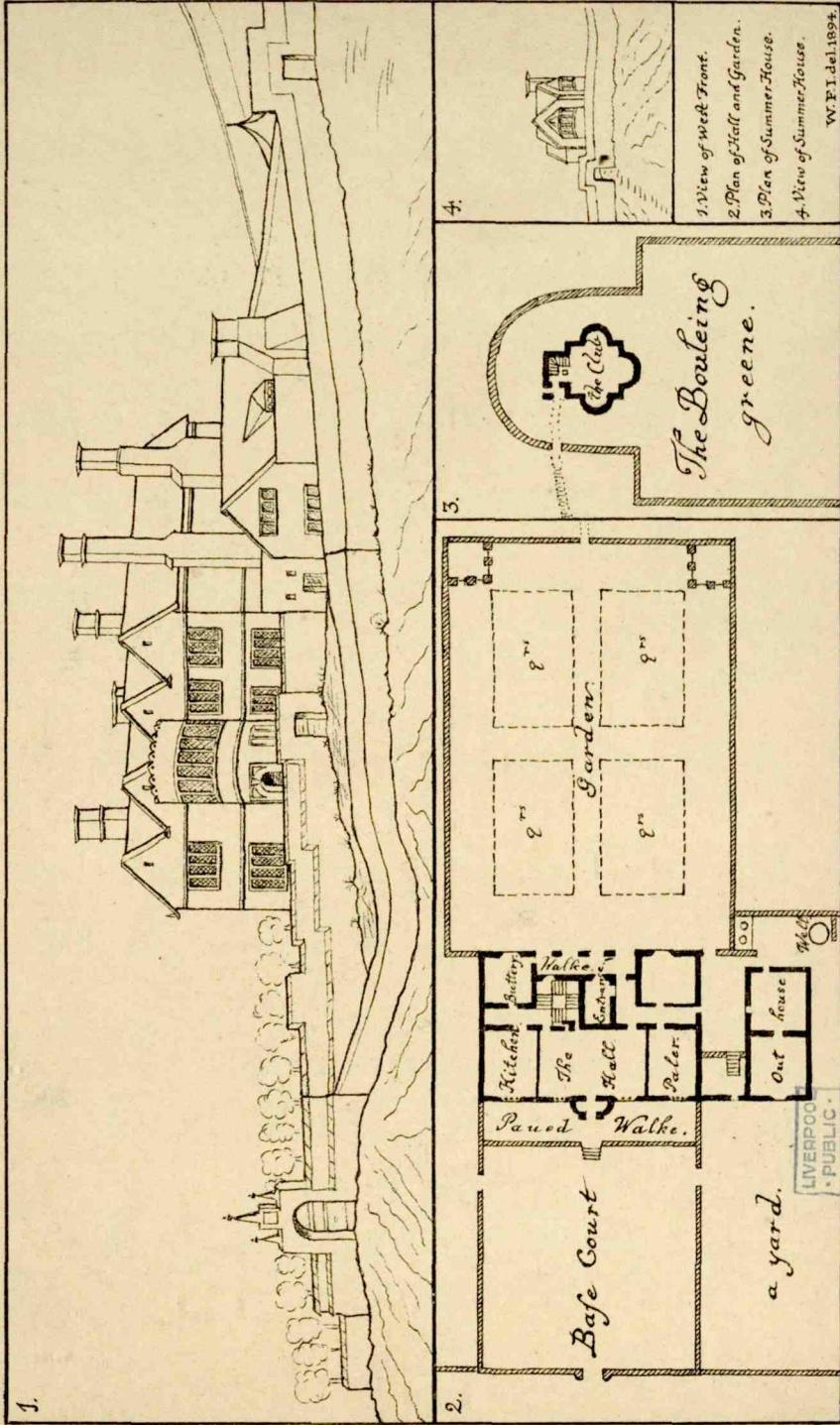
Rogation week was the usual time for “beating” or perambulating the bounds of the parishes all over England. A very interesting account of the Rogation Procession at Wallasey is to be seen in Mr. Pritt’s paper on that parish published last year. Claughton Green, like the “breade and drinke,” has long since disappeared, the centre of it being now occupied by the large lamp at Cannon Mount, where the tramway turns out of Palm Grove into Park Road South.

THE HALL AND VILLAGE.

To all lovers of the picturesque in our neighbourhood, Bidston Village, with its grey, gabled houses nestling between the Church and the old Hall, is too well known to need describing. There are surely few spots in England lying so near a great city, that have retained their rustic beauty as completely as Bidston has done. Every house is a picture, and the whole taken together forms a scene of quaint restfulness that it would be difficult to equal. And it is comforting to think that, at all events so long as the present squire reigns, there is nothing to fear from the desolating hand of the speculative builder; and may those who succeed him be imbued with the same spirit that has prompted the insertion, in the deed conveying Bidston Hill to the Corporation, of the clause that preserves the rugged wildness of nature from being marred by the gravel paths and oyster-shell trimmed flowerbeds of the landscape gardener.

The old Hall stands to-day, with very little change, as it left the hands of its builder, nearly

³² I am informed by the Rector of Bidston, that this bequest is not now “so used yearlie.”



BIDSTON HALL IN 1665.

FROM A CONTEMPORARY OUTLINE DRAWING.

1. View of west front.
2. Plan of Hall and Garden.
3. Plan of Summer House.
4. View of Summer House.

W.F.I. del. 1894.

300 years ago, the only difference being, as we shall see later, that at the beginning of the present century the four gables which adorned the west and east of the house were removed; and in place of four roof ridges running east and west, one running north and south was substituted.

I have been at very considerable pains to find out who really was the builder of the Hall as we now have it, and have come to the conclusion that there can be little doubt that William, the 6th Earl, built it in 1620 or 1621: the only possible alternative being that it dates from prior to 1594.

The earliest mention of William as the builder is to be found in Webb's *Itinerary*, published in King's Vale Royal, in 1656. As Ormerod and others merely derive their information from Webb it will not be necessary to deal with them.

The date of Webb's *Itinerary* is variously given as 1600, 1616, and 1640. As this point is distinctly material, I have examined the Survey very carefully, and from internal evidence am able to date it as having taken place between 1620 and 1622.³³ The list of freeholders at the end of the itinerary is obviously of an earlier date.

Bearing in mind, then, the fact that Webb is writing in 1622, we find that he says:—

“And so we come to Bidston, a goodly house demesne and park of the right honourable William Earl of Derby; which, though it is less than many other seats which his honour hath, wherein to make his residences when he is so pleased; yet for the pleasant situation of this, and the

³³ While in the printer's hands, I have fortunately been able to corroborate my surmise as to the date of this survey. The Lysons, in their *Magna Britannia (Cheshire)*, p. 465 [edit. 1810], say that Webb made his *Itinerary* in 1622, and in support of their statement mention that Webb expressly states this himself incidentally in one part of his *Itinerary*, though they do not give the reference.

“variety of noble delight appendant to it, his lordship seems much to affect the same, and *enlargeth the conveniences therein for his pleasure and abode many ways,*” etc.

The italics are mine, and I would point out that Webb writes of these “enlargements of abode” in the present tense, as if the Earl were then engaged in rebuilding.

That the rebuilding did not take place before 1620 I judge from the fact that from 1594 to 1619 we have full³⁴ particulars of the various farmers to whom the Manor Hall and farm were let. It is not at all likely that the Earl would build such a substantial house while under lease to farmers. We learn from the inventory attached to the will of William Fells, one of the lessees of the Hall, dated 1612, that in that year the deer park was actually sown with wheat and rye.³⁵

We know, also, from the Registers at the church, that the widow and family of William Fells left Bidston in 1619, so that the farm would be vacant; and it is most probable that it was at this juncture that the Earl—desirous of having a house in Cheshire, not too far from Chester, as he had become Lord-lieutenant of the county—bethought himself of rebuilding on a substantial scale the Hall at Bidston.

Two small pieces of evidence of the presence of the Earl at Bidston shortly after this are furnished by the Register of Deaths. On the xxij December, 1623, died “Robert Lardge huntsman,” and a few days later “Margeret Fells of Chester” (widow of William Fells, the former tenant of the Hall) was buried “between the vestry & my lords pew.”³⁶

³⁴ *Harl. MSS.*, No. 2095. *Calendar of State Papers*, Jas. I., Addenda (1580-1625), p. 480.

³⁵ *The Parish Registers of Bidston, Cheshire, 1581-1700*, edited by W. F. Irvine, p. 16.

³⁶ *Bidston Registers*, p. 39.

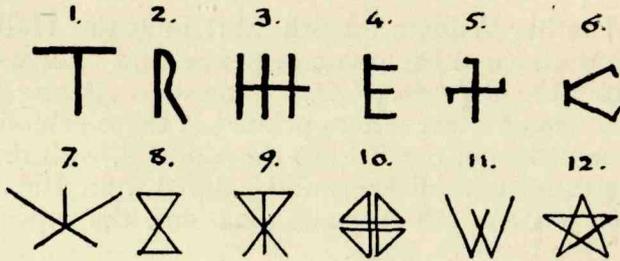
Whether William the 6th Earl built the Hall or not, we have indisputable evidence that he lived in it from the *Calendar of State Papers*.³⁷ Among the abstracts of State letters printed in these calendars occur two from the Earl to the Council, with reference to musters of the militia, dated from Bidston—one on the 9th August, 1622, and the other on the 12th October, 1623.

The only alternative date for the building of the Hall is prior to 1594, and in this case the builder would be Henry the 4th Earl. The grounds for supposing that he built it are somewhat slight. On the external stonework appear, scattered over the face of the masonry, twelve masons' marks, all of which marks re-appear on the Elizabethan portion of Stonyhurst, which was in building from 1588 to about 1596.³⁸ If, as is probable, each of these marks was the signature of one mason, and pertained to that one mason of right, it would appear that the twelve men who worked at Bidston worked also at Stonyhurst, and as we have seen that they cannot have been employed at Bidston between 1594 and 1620, it is vastly more probable that they worked at Bidston prior to 1594 than subsequent to 1620.

The striking coincidence between these two sets of marks is heightened by the fact that each mark appears in relatively the same position on both buildings: for instance—in both cases Nos. 7 to 12 (in my diagram) appear in the finer work, mullions and the like, and are always delicately cut, whereas Nos. 1 to 6 are, in almost every case, deeply chiselled.

³⁷ (*Domestic*) 1619-23, p. 438.

³⁸ See a most admirable paper in *The Stonyhurst Magazine*, from the pen of the Rev. Father Beauclerk, on "The Masons' Marks of Elizabethan "Stonyhurst," December, 1884.



Masons' Marks on Hall.

Another fact which lends some weight to this idea is that Henry the 4th Earl of Derby and Sir Richard Sherborne, the builder of Stonyhurst, were very close friends, as will be seen from even a casual perusal of the second of the Derby Household Books,³⁹ where Sir Richard appears as a constant guest at Knowsley and Lathom between the years 1586 and 1590. From this latter book of household expenses I have collected the following references to Bidston:—

On Tuesday [14 Aug., 1587] my L. rode into Wirrall, . . . & on Saturday my L. returned home.

On Tuesday [15 Oct., 1588] my L. ridde to Bydstone; on Thursday my L. came home.

On Tuesday [1 Sept., 1589] my L. & the reste went to Toxteth p'ke & so forth to Wirrall; . . . Thursdaie Mr W^m my Lo. sonne came; Frydaie he went to my Lo. in Wirrall; Saturday my Lo. came home with Mr Bouthe of Dunhame.

Twesdaie [22 Oct., 1589] my L. wente to Bideston; . . . this Saturday my L. came home with Mr Salesburye & Mr Foxe.

Mondaie [15 March, 1590 (N.S.)] my L. went toward Bidston; . . . this Saturdaie my L. came home.

And from the Egerton Papers⁴⁰ we learn that Thomas Egerton, subsequently Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, while occupying the office of Solicitor-General was appointed 13th August, 25 Eliz. [1583], Master of the Game in the park and ground at Bidston, in Cheshire, to Henry Earl of

³⁹ *Cheetham Soc. Pub.*, vol. xxxi.

⁴⁰ *Cheetham Soc. Pub.*, 1840. (P. 96.)

Derby, with the fee of one buck in summer and one doe in winter, with an annuity of five marks and a power to distrain in case of arrears.

Whoever built the Hall, there can be no doubt that William the 6th Earl lived there a good deal after his wife's death, which occurred in the spring of 1627, when he had handed over the management of his vast estates to his son James Lord Strange,⁴¹ retaining for his own use only a comparatively small annuity.

As we have already seen, the estates passed out of the hands of the Derby family before it was possible for Charles the 8th Earl to spend many years there in seclusion and poverty, in the manner stated so pathetically by Mortimer in his *History of Wirral*.

It is doubtful whether Lord Kingston ever lived at the Hall for any length of time, though he may have paid it occasional passing visits on his way to and from Ireland.

In 1683 we find a substantial yeoman, one Robert Wilson, a strong Nonconformist, occupying the Hall as a tenant and farming the Park lands. Suspicion seems to have fallen on him, after the Duke of Monmouth's progress through Cheshire, since among Lord Kilmorey's MSS., reported upon by the Historical MSS. Commission, is an order dated July 5th, 1683, to Thos. Needham, captain of a troop of horse, etc., to search for arms, etc., in several houses in Wirral, among them at the house of Mr. Robert Wilson, of Bidston Hall. Bidston Hall never recovered its former glory, and is to-day what it has been for the last two hundred years, a substantial well-kept Cheshire farm.

The structure of this house has been but slightly altered since its erection, as will be seen from

⁴¹ *Stanley Legislation (Manx Society)*, p. 38.

the plate on the opposite page, which is a copy from a contemporary water-colour drawing dated 1665, preserved among Mr. Vyner's papers at Great Mollington. In this sketch I have endeavoured as far as possible to reproduce the original drawing line for line, even to the error in perspective and the row of conventional trees.

It will be observed that the four gables on the west front have been removed and the height of the chimneys reduced, an alteration which greatly detracts from the dignity of the house. At the back, also, though it is not shown in the sketch, what used to be an open piazza and which in the plan attached to the original drawing is called "a walke," has been built up and added to the inside passage. These alterations were made, I am told, about the year 1818.

On the summit of the hill at the back of the Hall, on a spot which is now the sweep of the drive at the door of Mr. Vyner's new house, stood until the beginning of the present century a summer house, at the end of a bowling green, built in the shape of an ace of clubs. This will be seen in the sketch, but is more obvious in the plan.

It was no doubt this fantastic shape that gave rise to a strongly implanted tradition among the villagers that the property was lost and won on an ace of clubs.

The Deer Park of Bidston⁴² lay to the south-west of the Hall, and included most of the land between Bidston Village and the Ford Hill, sloping from the ridge of the Hill to within a short distance of the Fender. It has of course been broken up into fields, most of the names of which, however,

⁴² The Keepership of the Game appears to have been an office of some importance. As we have already seen, it was granted in 1583 to Sir Thos. Egerton, then Solicitor-General. A Mr. Dutton is mentioned as Keeper in 1649, in Mr. Glegg's depositions, alluded to above.

preserve the fact of their ancient grandeur. Thus we have Parkfield, Further Parkfield, Further Park (Far Part and Near Part), Plantation in Park and so on; and the cottage occupied by Mr. Vyner before he built his new house is locally known as the Parkhouse.

The old Park wall is still standing in some places, and is of immense size and thickness, being three feet six inches thick at the base and over six feet in height. The earliest distinct reference to it that I have been able to find is in a lease of the Manor Farm, dated 1609.⁴³ In this, "the ston wall, together with all the parke and land called "Bidston Parke," appears. And in most of the subsequent leases a clause is inserted requiring the tenant to provide for the maintenance of the "great stone wall of the Park." In the 1665 survey in Mr. Vyner's possession, the presence of the wall in the position occupied to-day is easily noticeable, and the land enclosed is called "The Deere Parke."

The villagers call it "The Penny-a-day Dyke," and account for the name by the tradition that the builders of the wall earned a wage of one penny a day. If there be any truth in this tradition, and I for one would not wish to discredit it, it would take us back far beyond the earliest mention of the wall (1609)—back probably to the time when the original grant was made to Matthew Litherland and John Leyland, in 1408, to "empark with palings, wall, ditch, or hedge, 80 acres of their demesne adjacent to their Manor of Bidston."⁴⁴ If this date of 1408 be correct, the workmen certainly

⁴³ Vide *Wirral Notes and Queries*, vol. i., section 76.

⁴⁴ It is curious to notice that the area of land enclosed in the Park is between 150 and 160 statute acres. A Cheshire acre is slightly more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ statute acres, so that the size of the park surrounded by this wall corresponds as nearly as possible with the 80 acres in the original grant.

deserved their penny a day ; one wonders how many walls built to-day at eight shillings, instead of a penny, per diem will be standing 500 years hence !

The seven farmhouses which form the village of Bidston are each worthy of study, as every peripatetic photographer knows right well, but so far only one has attained to world-wide notoriety. This one is Mr. Louis Walters' farmhouse across Moss Lane from the Church Tower, to which—when it was a licensed house, known by the sign of the Ring o' Bells—Albert Smith in his wanderings came : a visit which has been immortalized in *Christopher Tadpole*.

“ It was a little quiet grey village—so very grey indeed and venerable and quaint, that no flaunting red brick had dared to show itself and break the uniform tint of its gabled antiquity. The houses were grey and the wall fences were grey and so was the Church Tower. So also was the pedestal of the sun-dial in the churchyard which mutely spoke its lessons on corroding time to all who cared to heed it. And the old Grange with its mulioned windows and its ivy-covered gateway was the greyest of all ; there was scarcely any surmising as to when it had been a green, damp, level young house. None could have given the information but the Church Tower ; and when that spoke it was but of the newly past, the fleeting present, or the call to the future heaven.

“ Hickory led his little companion by the Church and at last they stopped at a small hotel, with which he seemed to be well acquainted. There was yet light enough for the sign to attract Christopher's attention ; it represented a party of industrious individuals, one of whom was as grey as the village, performing certain of those triple bob complications with ropes and bells the achievement of which we at times read in the newspaper. . . . And on the other side was quite a different picture ; there was the Lighthouse they had passed and all the firework poles and the windmill, and two huntsmen going up hill like mad, and one more who was not going to be beaten at any price coming in at the side, and the fox at the top,—all very exciting to behold, but withal calculated to confuse the mind of the casual traveller, as to the exact simple sign to be made out from all this pictorial display. It did not however perplex Hickory.

“ ‘ Whoa ! ’ he cried, as he halted at the door. ‘ Here is the Ring o' Bells at Bidston, and here we will put up for the night ;

and there is the old tree t'other side, not cut down yet ; not a leaf on him, though looks as if he were growing with his roots upwards. Are you tired, Christy ?

“ ‘ I'm very hungry, ’ replied the little boy.

“ ‘ Ah, hunger's the best sauce, ’ observed Hickory. ‘ Look there—can you read what's over the door ? There's just light enough. ’

“ ‘ S—I— Simon Croft, ’ said Christopher, staring at the board.

“ ‘ No, no—the poetry, ’ continued Hickory. ‘ Listen now : Walk in, my friends . . . And taste my beer and liquor ; if your pockets be well stored, you'll find it come the quicker. Very good—now go on from ‘ quicker. ’ ’

“ ‘ But for the want of that, ’ read Christopher, ‘ has c—a—u— ’

“ ‘ Has caused both grief and sorrow, ’ continued Hickory. ‘ Therefore you must pay to-day ; I will trust to-morrow. ’ ”

Further on Albert Smith speaks of the “ scroll-work chalked on the floor. ” This pretty custom of adorning the stone floors of the farmhouses in Bidston is still kept up, but it is not done with chalk, as Smith imagined. The stone is of a light colour, and a pattern is traced on it with elder and dock leaves, which leave a dark green stain, the result being remarkably effective.

Speaking of the stone floors reminds me that though Bidston does not, so far as I know, possess a ghost, there is a stone flag in the dining hall at the Manor House, close by the entrance door, on which at certain periods a damp or dark spot in the shape of a severed limb appears, the tradition being that someone was murdered on this spot, and the said limb (tradition is not clear whether it was a leg or an arm) was hacked from the victim's body.

Mr. Lamb's farmhouse, opposite the Ring o' Bells, is remarkable for having—it is said—thirteen different levels, the floor of no two rooms being on the same level.

Perhaps the most picturesque house in the village is Mrs. Halliwell's, at the east end of the Church, usually, though inaccurately, called “ The “ Old Vicarage. ” It is possible that some of the

incumbents may have rented it in days gone by, but the house was never Church property.⁴⁵ The misapprehension may have been due to the fact that a large tithe-barn stands at the back of the house.

In the garden behind Mr. Royden's house—opposite Mrs. Halliwell's—are two ancient yew-trees, which send one's mind travelling back into the middle ages, when Cheshire archers were England's glory in the plains of France. Over a picturesque little gable window in this house are the initials T. W. H. and the date 1697, referring to a former tenant—Thomas Wilson, of Bidston, and Hannah his wife.⁴⁶

The cottage immediately to the north of the Church is a great favourite with artists, amateur and professional alike; it formed the subject of a picture in the Royal Academy two or three years ago.

Much of the picturesqueness as well as interest in the history of a parish centres in its resident gentry, and there are few parishes in Cheshire that could not boast of at least two or three families of "Visitation rank," whose presence gives colour to the picture as one lingers in imagination over the parochial daily life of the middle ages. Bidston, unfortunately, was woefully deficient in this respect, and suffered for centuries from the misfortune of a non-resident squire. This would not have mattered so much if there had been other landowners in the parish to take his place; but it is a singular fact that, though all the surrounding parishes had resident gentry—the Gleggs of Grange, Meolses of

⁴⁵ The Rev. Bryan King, in his replies to Bishop Porteus, in 1778, says—"No house belonging to this cure, nor any to be rented; so I reside at Tranmere, about 3 miles distant."

⁴⁶ Thos. Wilson married Hannah Langford, daughter of Thos. Langford, of Moreton, one of the Langfords of Tranmere, in 1694. *Bidston Registers*, p. 91.

Wallasey, Hockenhulls of Prenton, Powells of Birket, etc.—no Herald has left us an account of a visit to Bidston. The doubtful honour of a “Disclaimer” has not even fallen to our parish.

Bidston township appears to have always been entirely the property of the Lord of the Manor, but in Moreton and Saughall-Massey, at an early period, we have notices of other freeholders in addition to the squire.

The Bennets of Saughall-Massey were land-owners from the middle of the 14th century until about 1670, but they at no time rose to any position of distinction in the Hundred, hovering mostly on the border-line between yeomen and minor gentry.

The Urmstons were also a wealthy yeoman family, and in the 17th century owned considerable land in Moreton. They were doubtless a branch of the Urmstons of Urmston, in Lancashire, and appear to have migrated to Wirral in the 15th century. A member probably of this family, Robert de Urmston, was Prior of Birkenhead between 1426 and 1435. The family continued in the parish until the present century, though by this time they had parted with most of their property. The last representative was celebrated for the antiqueness of his dress, as he resolutely wore a blue swallow-tail coat, with brass buttons, long after such a garment had gone out of fashion.

The Websters, now of Overchurch and Leasowe, first appear in the Parish Register at the Restoration, and a year or two later (1665) we find them freeholders in Moreton, in which township they still have a large holding.

The names that occur most frequently in the Register from 1581 to 1700, and represent the well-to-do farmers, are Wilson, Urmston, Rathbone, Pemberton, Lee, Kemp, Martin, Gill, Willcock, Hancock, Hiccock, Charnock, etc.

LIGHTHOUSE AND SIGNAL POSTS.

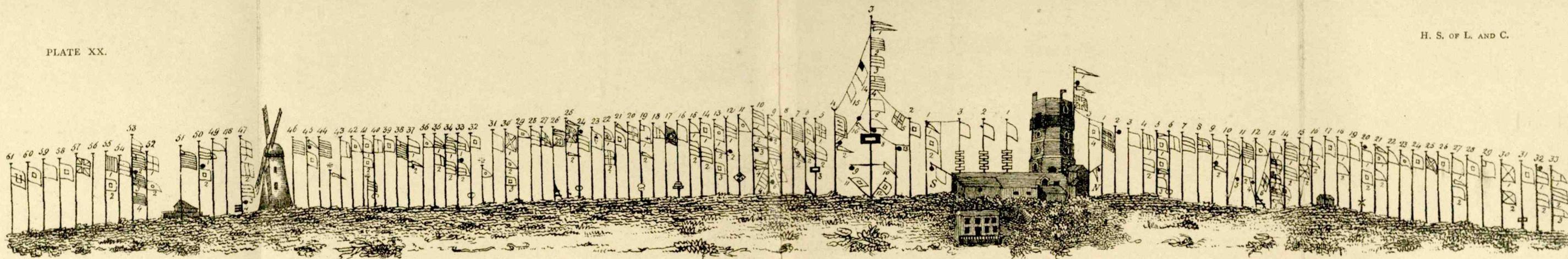
The present lighthouse on Bidston Hill was built in 1872-3, and is on the site of an earlier one erected in 1771 by the Corporation of Liverpool.

The telegraph service, by means of signal poles, the stepping holes of which are still to be seen in the rock on the crest of the hill, was originated at Bidston a few years before the building of the lighthouse, as in the Corporation records we find the following entry :—

“ 1763. May 11. Ordered that a signal house
“ for shipping be built on the rock land in Cheshire,
“ at the expense of the Dock duties, according to
“ the plan now laid before the Council by Mr.
“ Lightoller ; and that Robert Gwyllim, Esquire,
“ be admitted to fit up and have such rooms therein
“ as he shall think proper, during the pleasure of
“ the Council, etc.”

The site of the lighthouse affords extensive views by land and commands the entire sea-view of the approaches to the Mersey and Dee. In 1779, the lighthouse-keeper was instructed “ to give alarm at Bidston lighthouse upon any intelligence of an enemy, and not to keep the lights burning either there or at Hoylake.” Subsequently, the government established a chain of look-out stations, in conjunction with Bidston, extending to Holyhead, communicating with each other by semaphore signals. After the peace of 1815, when the warlike uses of the service lapsed, it was taken over by the trustees of the Liverpool Docks, and in 1858 their successors, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, connected the principal look-out stations by electric telegraph with their Liverpool offices, and consolidated the telegraph and lighthouse service at Bidston in one establishment.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Helsby's *Ormerod*, p. 469.



SIGNALS OF DISTRESS.

For Vessels in Distress or on Shore in the **ROCK CHANNEL**, or about **HOYLE**.—*Coming in*, On the oblique Pole to the Southward of the Light House, for every Ship, a Ball with a Flag half Mast; for every Snow, a Cone broad end up and a Flag half Mast; for every Brig or small Vessel, a Cone small end up and a Flag half Mast.—*Going out*, The same as above, but a broad Pendant instead of a Flag.

In **FORMBY CHANNEL**.—*Coming in*, On the oblique Pole to the Northward of the Light House, for every Ship, a Ball with a Flag half Mast; for every Snow, a Cone broad end up and a Flag half Mast; for every Brig or small Vessel, a Cone small end up, and a Flag half Mast.—*Going out*, The same as above, but a broad Pendant instead of a Flag.

N. B. For Vessels in Distress to the Southward, when on Shore on the main, the Ball or Cone to be put on the outside of the Flag or Pendant, but if on Shore on Hoyle Bank then the Ball or Cone to be put on the inside of the Flag or Pendant. For vessels in Distress to the Northward, the same as above.

FLOATING LIGHT.

A **FLOATING LIGHT** is moored at the North West Spit of East Hoyle Sand Bank, in the entrance into the Port of Liverpool; its bearing is by compass. The N. W. Buoy S. E. one mile distant. The Land Marks on Helbre Island in one, bearing S. $\frac{1}{4}$ E. five miles distant. The Mockbeggar and Bidston Lights a little open to the Southward, bearing S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ E.

The Light is **WHITE**, and is exhibited from each of the *three Masts*, so as to form a triangular appearance, which is thereby distinguishable from the Lights on the shore.

N. B. In the day-time, from sun-rise to sun-set, a blue Flag, with the letters N. W. in White, will be hoisted at the mainmast head, and in thick and foggy weather, either by night or day, a Bell is kept constantly ringing, to prevent vessels from running foul of the Light Vessel.

* Intimations of future Alterations will be thankfully received by the Printer.

(J. LANG, PRINTER, WATER STREET.)

Pole.No.

- 48 Taylor, Wright & co.
- 49 1 Bland and Challoner
- 50 2 James Battersby & co.
- 51 Cearn, Fish, and Crary
- 52 1 J. Bibby and co. for foreign vessels
- 2 Ditto for Dublin Traders
- 1 Cropper, Benson and co.
- 2 American Packets
- 3 New line of ditto
- 4 American Vessels
- 54 Rathbone Brothers
- 55 1 Cyrus Morrall
- 2 G. B. Brown
- 56 John Nelson Wood
- 57 Heyes, Litherland & co.
- 58 Joseph Curwen
- 59 W. & S. Stokes
- 60 T. & H. Ripley

Pole. No.

- 31 Robert McNeill & co.
- * John Barber
- This Pole is not stationary.
- 32 Charles Turner
- 1 H. Mattheie & Hynde for Glasgow Traders
- 33 2 Hugh Mattheie & son for Foreign Vessels
- 1 C. Horsfall & co. for Brigs
- 34 2 Ditto for Ships
- 1 W. Sharples
- 2 R. F. Breed
- 36 W. M. Duncan and son
- 37 1 James Brotherston & co.
- 2 Mellors and Russell
- 38 Evans & Trokes
- 39 Samuel Brown & son
- 40 Bell, Lewtas and co.
- * Robin and King
- The above Pole is not stationary.
- 41 1 J. Crosthwaite and co.
- N. Waterhouse and Son
- 42 Thomas Holt
- 43 T. & J. Brocklebank.
- * W. Fairclough
- This Pole is not stationary.
- 44 Henderson, Sellar & co
- 45 Acraman and Stitt
- 46 Fletcher, Yates and co
- 1 Thomas Dennison
- 2 Welch and Hudson
- 3 Thomas Murray
- 4 Joseph Jones & co.

Pole. No.

- 14 1 Hardman & co.
- 2 George & John Smith
- 15 1 Gibson and Benson
- 2 J. Corkhill and co.
- 16 John Bolton
- 17 W. and J. Tyrer
- 18 I. & O. Bold
- 19 1 Caleb Fletcher
- 2 Do. for Baltic Vessels
- 20 James Aikin
- 21 Parke and Halls
- 1 John Wright, jun.
- 22 2 Campbell and Mackie
- 23 A. J. Costa & co.
- 24 Ebenezer Rac
- 1 Tinley and Holt
- 25 2 W. Robinson jun. & co.
- 26 Charles Humberston & co.
- 27 C. W. & F. Shand
- 28 T. Tattersall
- 29 C. T. Dunlevie, City of Londonderry Steam Packet
- 30 1 Alex. Macgregor and co.
- 2 Isaac, Low and co.
- 3 A. Parlanc

Pole.No.

- 4 1 T. & W. Earle and co.
- 2 John Sinclair
- 1 W. Barber
- 5 2 William Smith and son
- 3 Ramsden & Booth
- 6 1 Bolton and Ogden
- 2 Thos. & J. D. Thornely
- 1 J. Gladstone and co.
- 7 2 J. Mzury and Latham
- 8 Falkners, Ackers & co.
- 1 H. Lafford
- 2 Robert Williams & co.
- 3 Moffatt, Martin & co.
- 4 John Winder
- 5 A. Dennistoun & Co.
- 6 Alston, Finlay & Co.
- 7 Murray Gladstone
- 8 W. & J. Brown & co.
- 3 Ditto for New York Vessels
- 10 4 Ditto for Philadelphia Packets
- 11 Livingston, Huson & co.
- 12 1 C. Tayleure and co.
- 2 W. Rotheram
- 1 T. Booth and co.
- 13 2 Lance & son
- 3 J. Halket

1 Snows 2 Brigs 3 Ships

- N. B. Each Board on the above Flag Staff signifies one vessel, and for more than four vessels of one kind, a flag on its respective staff.
- 4 Men of War
 - 5 Greenland Ships
 - 1 J. Birch and co.
 - 2 Leece & Drinkwaters
 - 2 Vianna & Jones
 - 1 William W. Mortimer
 - 2 Sandbach, Tinne & co.
 - 3 Carron co.'s Leith Traders
 - 4 H. Dutchman
 - 5 C. Lawrence
 - 6 W. Kempe and co.
 - 7 Thomas Crowder
 - 8 Edward Fleetwood's Isle of Man Packets
 - 9 John O. Johnson & co.
 - 10 W. Rothwell
 - 11 John Leigh
 - 12 George Dancy
 - 13 W. Dowson's Whitehaven Traders
 - 14 Post Office Steam Pckts.
 - 15 Greenock and Isle of Man Steam Packets
 - 16 W. A. Smith

1 For Pilots 2 Anchors & Cables 3 G. Daney, Vessels wanting a Steam Packet

- 4 Sir John Tobin
- 1 James Worrall and co.
- 2 City of Dublin Steam Pkt Co.
- 3 Moss and Hampson
- 4 1 H. Craig's Aberdeen Trad.
- 2 John Watson
- 1 I. & R. Thomson, foreign vessels
- 2 to Dumfries Traders
- 3 Coasters
- 6 Mersey and Clyde Steam Packets
- 7 Holliwel & Highfield
- 8 Barton, Irlam & Higginson
- 9 1 T. and R. Martin
- 2 Ditto for Dee Vessels
- 10 Tennent, Moore & co.
- 1 George Green
- 2 Ravenscroft & Mondell
- 3 G. Thistleton and son
- 4 W. Wellstood

Pole.No.

- 12 J. and H. Cumming
- 1 Dixon, Anderton & co.
- 2 St. George Steam Packet
- 3 Emerald Isle ditto
- 4 Lord Blayney ditto
- 5 St. David ditto
- 6 Bangor Steam Packets
- 7 Lee Steam Packet
- 1 J. Crowther, Newry Trad.
- 2 E. Derby, New Co. Ditto
- 14 1 Richard Addison
- 2 T. & R. Petrie
- 1 London Cheese Ships
- 2 Samuel Richardson
- 17 William Forde & co.
- 1 Jacob Fletcher
- 2 William Appleton
- 19 William Ker
- 1 John Cropper and co.
- 2 Thomas Hatton, jun.
- 1 W. Stewart, Belfast Steam Packets
- 2 Foreign Vessels
- 22 J. M'Crea
- 23 Geo. Barclay & co.

Pole. No.

- 24 Thos. Lee, Haynes & co.
- 25 W. S. Dixon
- 1 William Gibson
- 2 Dixon, Waln & Lace
- 1 Gibson & Brackenridge's Newry Traders
- 2 George IV. Steam Packet
- 28 Collman, Lambert & co.
- 29 J. T. & W. Hornby & co
- 1 Smith and Hutchinson
- 30 2 Joseph Williamson
- 1 William Lockerby
- 1 Enterprise Steam Packet
- 2 M'Nair & Brebner
- 1 W. F. Porter
- 2 John M'Cammou
- 3 Shamrock Steam Packet



OLD LIGHTHOUSE AND SIGNALS ON BIDSTON HILL, 1826.
FROM "HOLDEN'S LIVERPOOL ALMANACK AND TIDE TABLE."

Ormerod, in his account of Bidston, says—
 [The lighthouse] “being situated on an elevated
 “moor opposite the port of Liverpool, and a most
 “conspicuous object, the ground at the sides has
 “been selected for erecting at least eighty private
 “signal poles, for the convenience of the Liverpool
 “merchants, which present a singular appearance
 “to most parts of the surrounding country.”

The following notice of the semaphores, from
Christopher Tadpole, may be of interest:—

“But the sight [of Liverpool] was so riveting
 “that he could not take his eyes from it scarcely,
 “even to notice the lighthouse under whose very
 “walls they passed, with its array of signal-masts
 “that looked as if somebody was either preparing
 “a great display of fireworks, or making ready to
 “set sail and carry the entire hill, lighthouse, tele-
 “graph and all, out to sea upon the first fair wind.
 “‘That’s a curious thing,’ said Hickory as he
 “pointed to the telegraph. ‘I’ve heard there’s
 “‘people can read that gibbet just like a book. I
 “‘never could, not to speak of. I’ve made out a
 “‘F, and a L, and a E without the middle, and
 “‘sometimes they are upsy-down. And once I saw
 “‘it trying uncommon hard to turn itself into a H,
 “‘but it wasn’t much of a go, not to speak of.’”

FIELD NAMES.

Just a word before I close, on a subject that so
 often escapes notice, to wit, “field names.”

A celebrated historian said recently that an un-
 written history of every parish lies in its field names.
 Allowing something for epigram, it can at least be
 said that there is always something to be learnt,
 and often a great deal, from the field names of a
 township.

To take a few examples. Stretching along the side of the Ford Brook, at the foot of Bidston Hill, is a beautiful meadow, some twenty acres in extent, called Lady Meadow; and on the further side of the brook is a field, of similar dimensions, still called James Meadow—two names with nothing very distinctive about them, until we find, from an early deed, that they were once called Our Lady's and St. James' Meadows, and were the property of the Priory of Birkenhead, which was dedicated to Our Lady and St. James.

In Moreton, too, a large pasture, the property of the monastery before the suppression, is still known by the name of the Prior's Field, though none of the farmers who constantly use the name have the slightest idea of its significance. In the same township, a field bearing the name of the Dove House Yard, still marks the spot where the Monks' Columbarium stood.

In Claughton, the now long-forgotten hamlet of Woolton is only recorded in the field names of Far Wooton and Near Wooton Heys, though it is distinctly mentioned as a manor, in a deed relating to the Priory lands, as late as 1536.

As an example of the vitality of field names I may quote an instance from the neighbouring village of Upton, where a field in which the Hall stood, still called Warwick Hey, records the name of a distinguished knightly family who owned Upton and Frankby for a considerable period, but became extinct in 1410.

In Claughton, from a map dated 1823, near what is now the Park station, we find a field containing a singularly shaped pond—a large square, with a square island in the centre, bearing the significant name of the Moat Croft, marking probably the site of some fortified manor house or grange.

The Hop Field, Flax Field and Vineyard,⁴⁸ all remind us of the days when each parish and each county was vastly more dependent on its own resources for the supply of every want than it is to-day. The Old Wood, in Bidston, marks probably the last patch of trees left standing from the time when a grant of housebote in Bidston Wood was a gift to be prized. Chapel Hill, in Moreton, still bears witness to the fact of a Chapel of Ease to Bidston, demolished, as we have seen, in 1680. Holywell Field, in Claughton, at the back of the Grange, doubtless refers to the mediæval worship of wells.

In the hamlet of Ford, we have Wilcox's and Dean's Meadow, though we have to go back to a Subsidy Roll of 1545 to find tenants bearing these names. A family of Bolland have left their name imprinted on a Bidston field, though they had left the parish before the earliest records begin. One might extend these examples to a much greater length, but enough has been said of field names to shew the value of a search into this much neglected storehouse.

I fear that in the foregoing account my readers may complain that too much prominence has been given to unnecessary and uninteresting particulars, but such a state of things has been in some degree unavoidable, since this has merely been an attempt to gather together as large a number of stray facts relating to the parish as possible, not with the intention that they should form a History of Bidston Parish, but rather as Notes which, at some future date, may prove of service to the Parish Historian.

In conclusion, it only remains to thank those who have so kindly helped me in my work. My thanks are due to the Rector of Bidston, the Rev.

⁴⁸ The field on the south side of the Leasowe Lighthouse is called "The Vineyard" in Mr. Vyner's earliest map (1665). A field in Upton township still bears the name.

J. F. Buckler, for his uniform kindness in giving me free access at all times to the church documents, and for many helpful suggestions. To John Culimore, Esq., of Chester, and to John Davies, Esq., of Great Mollington, by whose kindness I have been permitted to make tracings of the interesting early surveys of the parish from Mr. Vyner's muniments.

Where use has been made of printed matter, acknowledgment has in all cases been made in the notes.

