NOTES ON ALTCAR PARISH.

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VILLAGE communities date back in documentary evidence to the sixth century, but by the aid of comparative custom we can look back much further still. When a primitive community became a village, a stone was set up.[1] This stone was the meeting-place of the early "folkmoot," or village parliament, which was presided over by the head of the little clan or tribe. Hereditary at first, this office became elective. The assembly over which he presided proclaimed their will by shouting "Yea, yea," or "Nay, nay," to the subject upon which they were called to decide. They decided how many sheep, &c., should be pastured by the different burgesses (*i.e.*, all who had a burgage or tenement in the village) upon the common pasture ground, and all other matters relating to individual rights of the villagers. These folkmoots were the origin of a number of customs and superstitions that have been handed down to us.

There is evidence that when the Celts invaded this country they found it already inhabited. The pre-Aryan race they found in possession worshipped

1 Gomme's *Village Community*, p. 218.

ancestral spirits, of which the hearthplace was essentially the shrine and the altar.[2] The fire was never allowed to go out; the ritual attendant upon birth, marriage, and burial centred round the sacred fire; and offerings to the ancestral god at the hearth were made from the food of the household.[3] "Christianity has rooted out the old "hearth religion from its place, and has set it "floating amidst popular superstitions, which the "people have preserved wherever Christianity has "not deeply penetrated."[4] Thus, from this ancient hearth cult, with its ever-burning fire, has come down the superstition, held in some places, that it is unlucky to allow the fire to go out on the last night of the year, or to give a light from the fire to one not of the household on New Year's Day, or for the New Year to be "brought in" by anyone having red hair.

When the Celts established themselves in this country their superstitious fears led them to dread the anger of the local spirits,[5] and this enabled the non-Aryan priests, who were already in the land, to continue their religious leadership, for it has been shown that Druidism was the survival of the old hearth-worship of the pre-historic and non-Aryan aborigines.

The meetings of the old village folkmoots were held in the open air, as the result of a superstition which came down from the times when "household

2 *Ibid*, p. 129.

3 Dr. Hearn, as quoted in Gomme's *Folklore Relics of Early Village Life*, gives the following description of this ancient religion:—"The primitive "religion was domestic. This domestic religion was composed of two closely "related parts,—the worship of deceased ancestors and the worship of the "hearth. The deceased ancestor, or his ashes, was either actually buried or "assumed to be buried beneath the hearth. Here the spirit was supposed to "dwell, and here it received the daily offerings, which were its rightful dues, "and which were essential to its happiness."

4 Gomme's *Folklore Relics of Early Village Life.*

5 Gomme's *Village Community*, p. 103.

"gods occupied the place of Christianity, and "superstitious fears the place of morality." Beda tells us why Ethelbert of Kent met Augustine and his companions in the open air. "He had taken "the precaution that they should not come to him "in any house, lest, according to an ancient "superstition, they practised magical arts upon "him, and so got the better of him."

From the old folkmoots has descended the custom of choosing a mock mayor, at such times as the rushbearing, in the Altcar history of some years ago.

The stone marking the site of the newly established village was usually planted under some tree, or by some river side, and to it the head man of the village made an offering once a year.[6] Much later on, when the Saxons had established themselves, and had become Christians, the cross took the place of the rude unchiselled stone, and although in Altcar all trace of the original stone has been lost in the distant prehistoric past, we still have the base of the old cross; round which, possibly, the Altcar folkmoots of centuries ago used to meet, whence all village proclamations were made, and beneath which the clergy from the monasteries held their open-air services before parishes were in existence.

The Roman occupation of England had little effect upon the village life of such places as Altcar. Saxon clans came over after the Romans left, and drove away or exterminated the Celts, and made their clearings in the woods of this neighbourhood;

6 London stone is still preserved. Holinshed tells us that when Cade, in 1450, forced his way into London, he first of all proceeded to the London stone, and having struck his sword upon it, said, "Now is Mortimer (*i.e.*, Cade) "lord of the city." When the old village stone gave way to the cross, we find a custom that explains this. On the mayor's day at Bovey Tracy the mayor used to ride round the stone cross, and strike it with a stick. This significant action proclaimed the authority of the mayor of Bovey.—Gomme's *Village Community*, p. 218.

and these forest clearings they called fields, from "feld," where trees have been felled. Then came the Danes, establishing other villages, and constantly at feud with the neighbouring Saxon villages, and forcing their way into them when needing room for growth; and the feuds between the fishermen of Formby and the agriculturists of Altcar, to which I shall hereafter allude, were the survival of these feuds—locality having taken the place of clanship, for old customs die hard.

It was a common feature of English lands[7] that little odds and ends of unused lands were left, and known as "No-man's-land," "Any-man's-land," "Jack's Land," or the "Gudeman's Croft." These portions were left, when the land was first settled, as a refuge for the sylvan deities whom the clearing might have disturbed. Afterwards, like Cloutie's Croft, in Scotland, they were regarded as portions set aside as a propitiatory gift to the Devil, and it was considered highly dangerous to break up such land for tillage. The fear of his satanic majesty gradually became dim, the villagers becoming bolder, because it was found that the presumed owner made no visible efforts to maintain his rights.

Each country district supplied its own food, and in many cases its own clothing, even to the latter part of last century. "Coarse flax sown in the "ground was manufactured into shirts and other "linens by the farmers' wives and daughters during "the long winter evenings, and the farmer himself "was clothed from the fleece of his own flock." We have a relic of this kind of industry in the four fields called "Hemp Yard" in Altcar. We have also several "Salt Fields," where the sea-water probably overflowed the land at high tide, and

7 Gomme's *Village Community*, p. 114.

whence salt was obtained by evaporation for the supply of the village.

Every village, again, being isolated and self-dependent, had its various tradesmen, to whom were assigned portions of land.[8] Of this we are reminded by "Smithy Brow Meadow," "Joins (probably Joiner's) Land," "Cobbler's Acre," "Clerk's Meadow," "Farrer's Marsh," "Doctor's Yard," and "Doctor's Lane." Then some of the names of the fields in Altcar have come down to us from the ancient land tenure.[9] We have "Long Acre," one of those long arable strips of land into which the cultivated lands of the early village community were divided. The plough was driven a furlong *(furrowlong)* in a straight line, and then returned, four of these furrows making an acre. Long Acre, in London, no doubt received its name from its early Teutonic settlers, when the land was as yet unbuilt upon.

We have evidence of the care for the poor in "Great Poor Acre." As legacies from the monks of Merivale, who obtained possession of the township in the early part of the thirteenth century, we have "Great Priest Carr," "Little Priest Carr," two "Priest Meadows," one "Parson's Meadow," and no less than nineteen "Monk's Carrs," besides a "Monk's Carr Lane" and a "Lady Carr Lane." We have also a small plot called "God's Croft." My first impression was that this might have been an ancient Danish burial ground, as it is near the church; and the early Saxons and Danes, when christianized, erected their crosses and afterwards built their churches near their old heathen burial grounds. I have had a trench, however, dug across it, but have not been able to discover any

8 Ditchfield's *English Villages*, p. 42.

9 Gomme's *Village Community*, p. 227, also Ditchfield's *English Villages* p. 81.

indication of a burial ground. Reminding us of the time when swineherds' cottages dotted the marshy ground in the neighbourhood of the once extensive Altcar forests, we have "Swine Croft," "Swine Park," "Cowards' (cowherds') Field," and "Hogshill." Telling us of the time when the words "carucate" and "ploughgate" came into existence, and when each man was expected to keep one or more oxen towards the team of eight required to draw the village plough, we have "Oxen-house Field," and two "Ox Leasowes"; and showing how abundant were once the rushes for the rushbearings, we have no less than eleven Rushy Fields, Carrs, Heys, or Lanes.

While speaking of fields, I may add that although so high an authority as Baines derives the name of Altcar from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning "the turn," thus meaning the village at the curve of the river Alt, there seems to be a more probable etymology. There is no curve of the Alt which was likely to give rise to the name. The low districts of the parish, however, which have been for centuries and still are subject to floods, are called "the carrs." The word "carr" occurs in the names of fields and roads 162 times. From Bailey's *Dictionary* (1742, tenth edition), we learn that "carre" meant "woody, moist, or boggy "ground, or a wood in a boggy place," which would be a good description of the extensive carrs. These carrs have probably given the parish its name.

The names of the fields, again, as we might expect, bear testimony to the very muddy state of the land in the past, for there are seven fields bearing the names of "Slutch Croft," "Slutch Hey," and "Slutch Ground," and the old parish accounts have much to say about the carting of slutch. And bearing testimony to the quantity of

land that for centuries lay uncultivated, we have no less than 209 pieces called "doles," *i.e.*, void spaces left in tillage. The name of one of the old occupation roads also indicates where stood the old manor house, and it is where we should have expected it to be. The road is called, "Road to the demesne carrs," and leads to the lowlands called carrs from the old Hill House. Some parts of the farm house are very ancient, with heavy oak beams, wide walls, and a disregard of the economy of space which suggests a manor house. The demesne was the "manor house and lands "near, which the lord kept in his own hands for "his own purposes." The demesne carrs were the lowlands he kept as part of the demesne. And considering the once marshy nature of most of the ground in the township, the elevated position of Hill House would seem a very desirable site for the manor house. On the oldest part of the building is the inscription—

$$E\ \overset{F}{1673}\ M$$

but there is little doubt that the building erected in 1673 was placed upon the site of a manor house built some centuries earlier.

From the Croxteth muniments we learn that "In the 22nd Elizabeth (1580) Richard Molyneux "of Sefton let for the term of their natural lives to "Richard Radcliffe of the parish of Altcar, co. "Lanc., gent., and to Richard Radcliffe, his son, "begotten upon the body of Bridget, late wife "unto the said Richard Radcliffe, and sometime "wife of William Molyneux, Esq., dec^{d} father unto "the said Richard Molyneux, all his messuage &c. "called the Woodhouse in Altcar." There is little doubt that the Woodhouse here mentioned was Hill House, and that it was the manor house which was supplanted by the present building in 1673.

The old village organisation, and village independence of thought and action, were gradually lost in the higher organisations leading on to the nation. The villages were absorbed into the various portions of the Saxon Heptarchy, and these small kingdoms were at length consolidated into the English nation.

In very early Saxon times, but at what date is now not ascertainable, Lancashire, as well as other portions of the country, was divided into hundreds or wapentakes, and these again into townships.[10] Each hundred consisted of one hundred families, from which were chosen one hundred warriors, to uphold the rights of the district. On a fixed day the warriors met their chief, usually under some tree, or near some river's brink, for the purpose of trying criminals, settling disputes, or concluding sales, taking the place of the more ancient folkmoot. At a later period, when the Saxons had become Christians, and had learned to write, the transactions of the hundred court were registered in the chartularies of abbeys, or the registers of bishops. The township, tithing, or tenship was a tenth of the hundred.

The inhabitants of each hundred or tithing were collectively responsible for the conduct of individuals, and had to make up for any theft committed, to the person who had been robbed. So effectual was this system in the reign of Alfred the Great, that it is said a pair of golden bracelets might be exposed upon the highway, or in the most populous part of our cities, without any danger of being stolen.

At a very early age parishes were formed, usually consisting of several townships, and each had a parish church.[11] At the time of the Domesday

[10] Ditchfield's *English Villages*, p. 33.

[11] Baines and Fairbairn's *Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. i, p. 305.

survey many parish churches existed, and at this time there were between 200 or 300 vills or villages in the counties of Chester and Lancaster whose names indicate that they had been founded by the Angles and Saxons. A great part of the sea-coast of Lancashire, however, was named by the Danes. The Danish termination for town or place was "by," and the West Derby hundred, in which Altcar was situated, was evidently over-run by the Danes. The following names are of Danish origin—Formby, Crosby, Kirkby, Kirkdale, Roby, Ormskirk, Thingwall, Garston, and Widnes. The word Derby itself is from the Danish, "dyr," a wild beast, and "by," a town. The names of Danish chiefs are preserved in Agmunderness, Ormskirk, and Garston.

The Danes at first made summer excursions to the coasts of Lancashire and Cheshire,[12] carrying back with them their plunder to Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, but it is not probable that they wintered here before the year 840.

William the Conqueror met with strong and bitter opposition to his dominion in the North of England.[13] The soldiers who were sent to subdue Lancashire, ancient historians represent as looking with dismay from the ancient hill-tops at the forests and heaths and swamps around. The work of subjugation, however, was commenced, and carried on with unmitigated cruelty. Such was the havoc they caused that for nine years the land lay uncultivated, while the inhabitants, in their extremity, ate dogs, cats, horses, and even human flesh. In the end the entire districts of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Durham were almost depopulated, and few human habitations were left standing.

In order to obtain a reliable account of the conquered lands, William caused the survey to be

12 *Ibid*, p. 308. 13 Baines' *History of Liverpool*, p. 3.

made which is known as *Domesday Book*. It was commenced in 1080, and finished in 1086. So searching was the enquiry, that neither oxen nor cows nor swine were omitted.[14] The desolation caused by William's army in Yorkshire and Lancashire was so complete, that a number of townships are described as waste, having few houses or inhabitants. Altcar was one of these townships. The following are the brief but pregnant sentences which describe Altcar:—"Uctred held Acrer "(Altcar). There is half a carucate of land. It "was waste." The few inhabitants had probably either been killed, or had fled, or had perished by famine, and their stone and mud cottages were in ruins.

A carucate, or ploughgate was as much land as a yoke of four oxen could keep in cultivation.[15] The quantity of land would be different in various districts, according to the nature of the soil and the strength of the cattle. It was 180 acres on land suited for three years' rotation of crops, and 160 acres on other soils. It was usually divided into three parts, of 60 acres each. One part was sown with wheat, the second with spring corn, and the third was allowed to lie fallow. As Altcar, at the time of the Domesday survey, contained only half a carucate of land, there were only 90 acres of the present 4083 acres in the parish, which had been placed under cultivation; and, if a third lay fallow, only 60 acres actually yielding a harvest year by year. The chief wealth of this period, however, consisted of cattle and swine, which were tended by swineherds, the swine being driven about the woods in search of acorns. The cattle and swine, however, were absent when the Domesday survey was made.

14 Baines' *Lancashire*, vol. i, p. 89.

15 Baines and Fairbairn's *Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. i, p. 523.

Uctred was a powerful and wealthy thane, and, in addition to Altcar, he held the manors of Lathom, Knowsley, Skelmersdale, Kirkdale, Roby, Allerton, Kirkby, Speke, Great Crosby, Aughton, Maghull, Litherland, Walton, Halsall, Dalton, Merton, Lydiate, and probably Ormskirk.

The value of all the land between the Ribble and the Mersey,[16] that is, all South Lancashire, at the time of the Domesday survey was £120, or, allowing for the difference of money value, about £13,200,[17] while the population of Lancashire and Cheshire together did not exceed 13,000. It is difficult for us to realise that there are as many inhabitants in Ormskirk to-day as there were in all South Lancashire eight hundred years ago.

At the time of the Domesday survey, there was no part of England where the population was more scanty, or the land so neglected, as in Lancashire and Cheshire. And after this, internal dissensions, wars, famines, and disease followed each other in succession.[18] In addition, all males between 15 and 60 years of age were trained to the use of arms, and were at any time liable to be called upon to leave their agricultural labours for military service. So frequent were these calls during the two hundred years after the Norman Conquest, that every two or three years some quarrel arose which left the land neglected and decimated the population, for purposes of which the people often knew little and cared less. Every man was required to have in his house, ready for use, arms according to his station. By the statute of Winton, passed 13 Edward I, a person having land of the value of £15 a year was to be provided with a horse, breastplate of iron, a sword, and a

16 Baines' *Lancashire*, vol. i, p, 113.

17 Baines and Fairbairn's *Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. i, p. 565.

18 *Ibid*, vol. i, p, 569.

knife and dagger, while the poorest were required to have bows and arrows. In the reign of Edward IV, shortly after the middle of the fifteenth century, "a law was passed that every Englishman "should have a bow of his own height, and that "butts for the practice of archery should be set up "in every village; and every man was obliged to "shoot up and down on every feast day, or be fined "one halfpenny."[19] We have no field in Altcar called "The Butts," but we have a plot called "Score Ground," which may have been the archery ground.

During the period from the accession of William I to the expulsion of James II (*i.e.*, from 1066 to 1688), the progress of Lancashire was slower than that of any other part of the kingdom.[20] Even in 1700, there was not a single town in Lancashire and Cheshire with more than 10,000 inhabitants.[21] Liverpool at that time had probably about 7,000, and Altcar not 150. Up to the middle of the seventeenth century, the Lancashire people remained upon their lands, with little disposition to wander, except that country people began to be attracted to the small towns in their neighbourhood, which were just then rising, and their number was not increased by the immigration of strangers. They married and intermarried, and the same family names were, no doubt, repeated in the registers (if there were any) with unbroken monotony. But the Great Plague and Fire of London (1666) led to a considerable number of people removing to Liverpool and South Lancashire generally.[22] To get beyond all trace of the plague, the people secluded themselves in the most rural

19 Ditchfield's *English Villages*, p. 83.
20 Baines and Fairbairn's *Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. i, p. 320.
21 *Ibid*, vol. ii, p. 3.
22 *Ibid*, p. 54.

districts, whose roads, or want of them, cut them off from the outside world. Thus we find the following entry among the Altcar baptisms for 1689:—"Anne, daughter of Charles Richards, of "London, baptized August 24th day." The plague broke out at intervals in various parts of Lancashire to the end of the seventeenth century, when, by slow degrees, it died out.[23]

In the fenny and marshy districts of Lancashire, malignant and intermittent fevers were frequent. Dr. Leigh, in 1700, gives a full account of pestilential fever which raged in Lancashire from 1693 to 1696.[24] From some such visitation Altcar suffered in 1728. In that year, nearly, if not whole families were swept away, the number of deaths being 47 out of a population of probably not 150. We get an idea in Dr. Leigh's work of some of the strange remedies then used to cope with these malignant diseases. Reptiles, such as vipers and adders, were then common in the Lancashire mosses, and he tells us that from the viper was extracted "a wine singular in consumptive, leprous, "and scorbutic cases, likewise a valuable salt, the "most generous cordial in nature." He tells us that "the flesh of the toad supplies one of the "richest cordials," and that this cordial was the means by which many were cured during the pestilential fevers.

As early as the reign of William I, encouragement was given to the country people to remove to the towns. He passed a law that if any bondmen should remove to a town and remain unchallenged for a year and a day, he should be free. Villeins and bondmen are not mentioned in Liverpool after King John's charter, but for 200 years after they are mentioned in the surrounding townships. The chief privilege of a Liverpool freeman was freedom

[23] *Ibid*, vol. i, p. 699. [24] *Ibid*, vol. ii, p. 62.

from "theolonium." "This theolonium was market "toll paid by strangers, that is to say non-"burgesses, from which the burgesses themselves "were free by the charter of Henry III." This privilege is still possessed by the farmers of Altcar.

The Romans made good main roads, in suitable positions, but after they left, the roads became more and more neglected. A pack-horse track was the means of conveying much of the produce from one district to another.[25] Even up to the end of the seventeenth century, a paved horse-track, four feet wide, was the best road to be found in country districts. The four-feet paved track was for quick travellers, the rest of the road was used by broad-wheeled waggons, and the ruts formed were filled with material from the neighbouring ditches. The four-feet track is mentioned in most of the Altcar accounts as the "calcey" or "causey," but "calcey stubs" (probably bundles of faggots) were the substitutes for paving setts.

In 1688, a special order was issued by the magistrates of the district of West Derby for the repair of the roads.[26] The calceys, or paved horse tracks, were to be thoroughly repaired and soughed, so that it might be safe for a horseman to pass over them by day or night. In the first part of the eighteenth century it required twenty horses to remove twenty tons of goods any considerable distance in most parts of South Lancashire, but the roads of Altcar must have been worse still, for within living memory it needed three horses to draw a ton of hay to Liverpool, whereas one horse now draws 1½ tons; that is, one horse can perform the work that required 4½ horses in the earlier part of this century.

25 The pack-horse bridge on the way from Altcar to Formby was taken down a few years ago.

26 Baines and Fairbairn's *Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. ii, p. 48.

The progress of Altcar seems to have been greater, in proportion, in the sixteenth century than that of the neighbouring districts.[27] In the military muster of Queen Mary, in 1553, Altcar occupies an important position. The parish of Ormskirk furnished 28 soldiers, of which 3 came from Ormskirk, 3 from Burscough, 7 from Lathom, 4 from Bickerstaffe, 4 from Skelmersdale, and 7 from Scarisbrick. The parish of North Meols supplied 9, the parish of Aughton 12, and the parish of Altcar 9. The parish of Halsall supplied 28, of which 7 came from Halsall, 4 from Male, 7 from Melling and Cunscough, 5 from Downholland, and 5 from Lydiate. The parish of Sefton supplied 30 soldiers, 7 from Sefton township, 6 from Ince Blundell, 2 from Aintree, 4 from Much Crosby, 4 from Little Crosby, 4 from Litherland, and 4 from Thornton. The parish of Walton supplied 36, of which 7 came from Walton with Fazakerley, 4 from Liverpool, 4 from Formby, 2 from Kirkdale, 5 from Kirkby, 11 from West Derby, and 3 from Bootle and Linacre. It will be seen that Altcar supplied three times as many soldiers as the *township* of Ormskirk, more than twice as many as Formby, three times as many as Bootle and Linacre, and more than twice as many as Liverpool. It is to be remarked, however, that Liverpool about this time "was now falling into ruins." In 1540 it was nearly depopulated by a plague, and after that, in 1551, the "sweating sickness" broke out, and extended by degrees more or less all over the kingdom. In 1660 Liverpool had 138 householders, or about 800 inhabitants. It is remarkable that in this year there was not a single marriage or burial in the town.

An impetus was given to the prosperity of Altcar at this time by the introduction of the potato.

27 Baines' *Lancashire*, vol. i, p. 505.

The cause of its introduction was rather a melancholy one. An Irish vessel, part of its cargo being potatoes, was wrecked in 1565 near North Meols. These were gathered from the sands and some of them planted in Altcar, and from that time to the present the growth of potatoes has been an important element in the Altcar husbandry.

In a county rate levied in 1716, we see that Altcar kept up its relative importance, so far as the neighbouring townships were concerned.[28] "Alker "Parish is but one township and doth always bear "and pay as much as Aughton Parish, or as "North Meols do pay." Aughton, North Meols (with Crofton and Birkdale), and Altcar each paid £2 1s. 8d., while Formby paid 18s. 6½d., Bootle with Linacre 6s. 11¼d., and Liverpool £1 17s. 0½d.

But Altcar not only contributed men to the army, and helped to make English bowmen, pikemen, and billmen the dread of the Continent, but when the English navy was rising to its present supremacy, Altcar was not found wanting. Thus, in 1795 we find the item, "To part of cash to rais "a man for the navy £5 5s. 0d.," and in the next year, "To Ballance in proportion for a Navey "man £5 12s. 1½d."

As time has progressed, more and more land has been brought under cultivation, while the drainage has improved.[29] Many years ago stone walls and earthbanks were formed on the shore at Ince Blundell, and floodgates were erected near Grange. The farmhouse and outbuildings of the Grange estate were built above the high-water level, and many acres of land have been gained from the shore by the planting of star grass.

Although Alt Grange is situated on the south bank of the river Alt, in Ince Blundell, it is closely connected with Altcar, being owned by Lord

[28] Gregson's *Fragments*, p. 16. [29] Boult's *Altmouth*.

Sefton, and the tenants having a recognized place in the pews of Altcar Church.

The repair of the floodgates of the Alt, and the cost of drainage, are defrayed by a rate levied upon the owners and occupiers of the land, in pursuance of an Act of Parliament passed in 1779. In the early part of the year 1821, great damage was done to the floodgates, and a large area flooded by a high tide. New floodgates were erected in 1831, and a new water engine, for the drainage of the land, was put up by the Earl of Sefton, over fifty years ago.[30] The village of Altmouth, which seems to have stood on the south bank of the river, was probably destroyed by an inroad of the sea. It is marked on Tunnicliffe's map of Lancashire in 1789, but does not appear in Cary's of 1793, four years later, and therefore it may be presumed that it was overwhelmed about that time.

During the last year or two the levels of the watercourses have been lowered, and the ditches widened; so that there is every probability that, ere long, even the moss lands and carrs of the parish will cease to be flooded in the winter, the pumping engine being able to keep the water under control. As a result of these improvements, hedges are now taking the place of the numerous ditches, so that at no distant date the aspect of the neighbourhood will have greatly changed.

Until a comparatively recent date Altcar was, to a great extent, cut off from connection with the outer world. In the days of stage coaches it was out of the track, even had its roads been inviting. The stage coach from Liverpool to Preston passed through Aintree and Maghull, and we find that at the present time the stable accommodation is, here and there, in excess of modern requirements. One of the first steps towards breaking up the isolation

[30] A powerful new pump has just been installed by Lord Sefton.

of Altcar was the formation of a railroad from Liverpool *viâ* Formby to Southport, in 1848. But even Formby station by the road was 2½ miles from the village of Great Altcar, although the field-path, which is now being made into a serviceable road, is much shorter.

The bridge over the river Alt, known as Baines' Bridge, connecting Ince Blundell with Altcar, became so dilapidated that a few years ago it was taken down. This bridge, centuries ago, was the way the Ince people went to Lydiate Abbey. An effort is now being made to have the bridge rebuilt.

The eastern end of the parish remained a long way from railway accommodation even when the line through Maghull was opened, and it was not until the year 1884 that the Cheshire Lines Extension Railway brought the inhabitants of that district within easier access of the outer world. But even yet the older inhabitants are essentially a stay-at-home people, having little change, and apparently not desiring it. The oldest inhabitants, although living within view of the sandhills, have seldom seen the sea, and a visit to Southport is an unusual event. Altcar is still the world to many of its inhabitants, and political or other changes are small things if they do not touch the "price of "wuts, wheat and potatoes."

The monotony of the year is broken by the shooting and coursing. Pheasants are bred in large numbers, and the hares are preserved. The Earl of Sefton and his friends have their shooting seasons, and the "Waterloo Coursing Meeting" brings numerous visitors to the parish.

Part of the parish by the shore, at the mouth of the Alt, is used as a rifle-range, and during the summer months soldiers, militia, and volunteers in turn make it their camping ground.

ECCLESIASTICAL.

It is impossible to say when the first church was built in Altcar. At the time of the Domesday Survey, in 1086, there were not more than 60 acres in cultivation from year to year, and it is not probable that there were many cottages in the entire district. It was, however, a township in the West Derby hundred. Walton Church was one of the five churches mentioned in this hundred, and possibly the township of Altcar was included in the parish of Walton. From the *Domesday Book* it appears that a priest had a carucate of land at Boltelai (Bootle) belonging to the church at Waletone (Walton). The parish of Walton included Liverpool, but a fearful plague, in 1361, led to the formation of the S. Nicholas' Cemetery, Liverpool. The people "had neither strength nor "heart to take them to the parish churchyard "at Walton."

Henry III, early in the thirteenth century, made a grant of the Royal estates between the Ribble and the Mersey to Ranulf, Earl of Chester, which included "the town of West Derby, with the "wapentake, and all the appurtenances." The Earl of Chester dying without issue, the estate between the Mersey and the Ribble passed to his sister Agnes, who was married to William de fferrers, the sixth Earl of Derby. In the Royal Order arranging the succession, the castle and town of West Derby, with its appurtenances, are specially mentioned. It was arranged that William de fferrers, Earl of Derby, and Agnes, his wife, should pay yearly to the king a falcon *(asturca)* or forty shillings for the land between the Ribble and the Mersey. Nothing is on record with regard to the management of the Lancashire estates, except that they granted a portion of the manor of Altcar,

at the mouth of the Alt, to the Abbey of Miraval, in Warwickshire.

Merivale, or Miravale, was a Cistercian Abbey,[31] founded by Robert fferrers, second Earl of Derby, *temp.* Stephen, as a filiation from Bordesley Abbey, in Worcestershire. He endowed it with lands in that county and in Leicestershire, and was buried there. On the dissolution of the monastery, in the reign of Henry VIII, these lands were granted to his descendant, Sir W. Devereux, Lord fferrers of Chartley, afterwards created Lord Hereford.

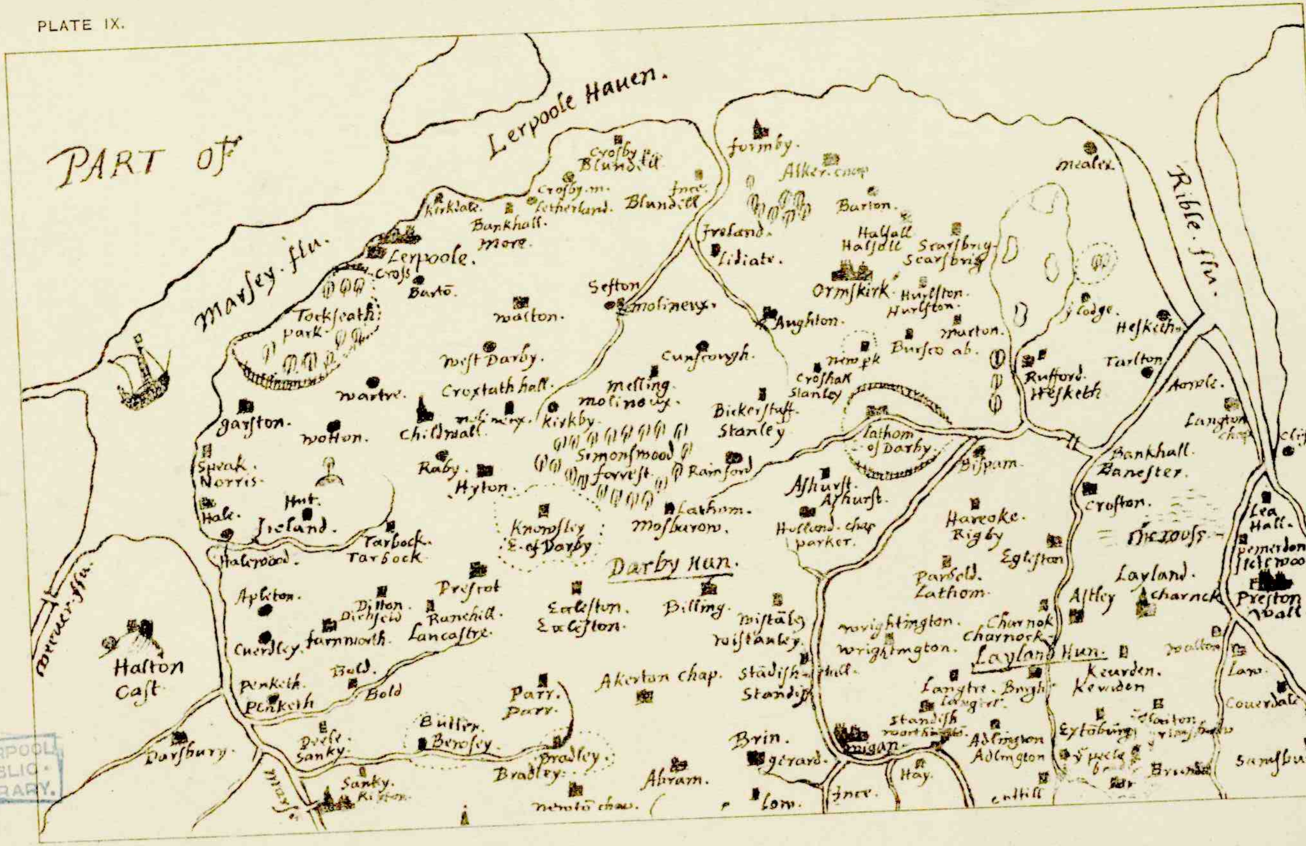
In the Valor of Pope Nicholas IV, 1292, St. Michael's, Altcar, is mentioned as a curacy to an impropriation, value nothing; it may, therefore, be inferred that it was not then a parish, but was still included in a neighbouring parish.

In 21 Edward I, a trial took place between Edward I and the Abbot of Mira Vallis (Miraval or Merivale) as to the ownership of a carucate of land in Altcar.[32] The Abbot based his claim upon the gift of William de fferrers, and Agnes, his wife, and appears to have been successful, for the abbots of Merivale held the manor of "Alker" until the dissolution of the religious houses. In the year 1553 Altcar is spoken of as a parish. In the year 1558 the manor of Altcar, and probably the advowson of the church, passed to Sir Richard Mullyners, Knight, and they have remained in the possession of the Molyneux family since.[33] A lease for 10,000 years of the tithe of the parish was probably granted at the same time; the tithe, however, was merged in 1849.

Although it is impossible to say when the first "Alker Chappell" was erected, there was one in 1598, in the reign of Elizabeth. I have had a

31 *Coucher Book, Abbey of Whalley*, vol. ii, p. 519.
32 Baines' *Lancashire*, vol. iv, p. 231.
33 Baines' *Lancashire*, Appendix, p. 815.

PLATE IX.



MAP FROM HARLEIAN MANUSCRIPT NO. 6159.

photograph taken of the Harleian MS. No. 6159, at the British Museum, one of the oldest and most important maps of Lancashire extant. Gregson, in his *Fragments*, gives a copy of it which is not quite correct. There is no getting behind a photograph. It will be noticed that the names of the landowners have been subsequently inserted. In this old manuscript map there is possibly a rude attempt at the actual representation of the churches, as notice Ormskirk and Childwall. If so, "Alker Chappell" had a square tower, while Formby Chapel had a spire. The map states :—"In this "Countie is xv market towns, and 36 Parish "Churches, besides Chapels in great number." There is a tradition that the "Alker Chappell" represented in this map, or at any rate the chapel of which the church of 1747 took the place, was burnt down.

In one part of the reign of Charles I, the Presbyterians for a time obtained the upper hand, and Presbyterian ministers occupied the churches.[34] In 1646 Mr. Robert Seddon was the minister of Altcar. In the troublous times that followed, up to the restoration of Charles II, in 1660, if any registers had been kept, they were destroyed or lost, but in 1664 the oldest register we have was commenced. This register is in a very dilapidated condition, and contains no account of the reason why it was commenced. The Halsall register, however, commenced in 1662, contains a memorandum that it was commenced in 1662, "by the "command of the Archbishop of York, in the first "year of his Grace's visitation in Lancashire," and probably to the same authority the Altcar register owed its origin in 1664.

In Baines' *History of Lancashire*, it is incorrectly stated that "The marriages and burials are not

34 Baines' *Lancashire*, vol. ii, p. 39.

"entered until 1693." Really the first page, dated 1664, is occupied with burials. The second page records four births and two christenings. In 1680 the first two marriages are entered.

In the reign of Charles II, the jealousies between the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics were intense, and this continued until the Revolution of 1688, when William of Orange ascended the throne. The Revolution of 1688 was signalized at Altcar by the presentation to the church of a heavy pewter flagon. It is not improbable that it was the result of a public subscription. It has engraved upon it the initials of the churchwardens—R G (Robert Gore), R K (Robert Kenyon)—and the date. Twenty years later, in 1708, the anti-popish feeling peeps out in the register, where "bad Thorpe, y^e^ Popish priest," is evidently regarded as a very undesirable and meddlesome person.

The oldest gravestone inscriptions decipherable are the following:—E G 1671, A R 1678, J L 1680, R T E 1689, Katharine Vose 1696, Tho^s^ Sephton 1742. There is a remarkable absence of poetical inscriptions in the churchyard. Out of about four, in each of which local bards seem to have been trying their wings, I give the following, on a Gore:—

> "The tender Husband and his wife
> Lived happy consorts in this life,
> Fifty-three years, ere death did sever
> This just pair to live for ever."

A plan of the graveyard given in the parish book incorrectly states that the last church was built in 1742, the date over the porch having been misread. It was built in 1746, and in 1747 the Bishop of Chester (Bishop Peploe) came to consecrate, and the parish accounts inform us that one shilling was spent upon repairing the roads, so

COMMUNION VESSELS. ALTCAR CHURCH, LANCASHIRE.

FONTS. ALTCAR CHURCH, LANCASHIRE.

that the bishop's carriage might reach the church in safety.

A new font, of sandstone, was then provided, with the initials of the churchwardens inscribed, and the date, 1747. In the ecclesiastical period, when whitewash was supposed to improve the appearance of chiselled stone, this font was not forgotten. The churchwardens in 1747, up to Easter of that year, were James Watkinson and Thomas Aspinwall. What is possibly the font of the still older church lies alongside the one of 1747, in the churchyard. It is a round sandstone cup, without carving or date.

There is an old superstition that the first child baptized in a new font is sure to die early.[35] The Rev. Baring Gould tells a story in connection with the new church of Dalton, in Yorkshire. A blacksmith had seven daughters, and a son was born a few days before the consecration of the new church. He came to ask Mr. Gould to baptize the boy in the old font. "Why, Joseph," said I, "if you will "only wait till Thursday, the boy can be baptized "in the new font, at the opening of the new church." "Thank you, sir," said the blacksmith, with a wriggle, "but you see it's a lad, and we should be "very sorry if he were to dee; na, if 't had been "a lass instead, why then you were welcome, for "'twouldn't ha' mattered a ha'penny. Lasses are "ower many, and lads ower few wi' us."

Mr. Gomme believes this to be a superstitious relic of the time of the ancient hearth cult. When a tent or building was erected, it was thought necessary for the safety of the building to offer a "foundation sacrifice." At the bottom of the hole to receive the chief tent-pole a slave was placed, to be crushed by the descending pole. He quotes[36]

35 Gomme's *Folklore Relics of Early Village Life*, p. 36.
36 *Ibid.*

the partly Norman church of Brownsover, in Warwickshire, which stands upon the site of an early British settlement. Not very long ago it was found necessary to lower the original foundations, and two skeletons, with Danish skulls, were found in spaces cut out of the solid clay, and covered with carpenters' benches, which must have been designedly placed there before the church was built. "Christian priests had often to compromise "between Christian doctrines and pagan customs, "to obtain a hearing for their new and civilizing "creeds." To the mind of primitive man every locality was the home of, and was protected by, its special deities, and every building or temple was consecrated by slaying some animal to appease the spirit of the place. An old legend connected with Clegg Hall, Lancashire, seems to point to this superstition. It is recorded that a pious monk, wishing to lay two ghosts that haunted the place, came to a parley with them, when they demanded, as a condition of future quiet, a body and a soul. The cunning monk substituted the body of a cock and the sole of a shoe.

From this ancient belief in the necessity for a "foundation sacrifice," we have, no doubt, derived the superstition that the first child baptized in a new church is almost sure to be called away at an early age. As we look at the two fonts in the churchyard and the one in the church, we wonder whether the superstition had root here, and, if so, what were the names of parents who ran the risk, and whether the children were lads or lasses.

A silver chalice and paten were presented to the church consecrated in 1747, by Jane Plumbe, widow, of Downholland. In 1730, John Plumbe, Esq., of Downholland, had given £10 to the church of Halsall, to buy "a silver flaggon and patten." An ancestor of Colonel Tempest, of Tong Hall,

Yorkshire, bought part of the Moore estate in Liverpool, about 1695, and from his family Plumbe Street in Liverpool derived its name. From the Altcar parish accounts we learn that the supervisors for the Town Row division in 1764 were, "Mr. "Rich[d] Goore for Rev. Thos. Plumb, and Jas. "Rigby for chantrels." In "A true List of "Freeholders of Altcar, which is to serve as "Jewryers at the Quarter Sessions of the peace "and County Assizes taken this 17[th] day of "September, 1771," we have the name of Mr. John Plumbe, of Aughton. One striking thing in this list is that to the name of every Roman Catholic is added the word "papist." The Rev. Thomas Plumb became Rector of Aughton in 1734, and the Rev. William Plumb in 1769; and the advowson of Aughton, and considerable property in Aughton parish, is still in the possession of a representative of the Plumbe-Tempest family.

A black-letter Elizabethan New Testament is now in the possession of Mrs. Thomas, widow of the late Vicar of Altcar, picked up by her husband at a farmhouse in Altcar, with an inscription on the back of the title-page, from which it would appear that a Thomas Plumb was born in this neighbourhood in 1643, in the reign of Charles I, twenty-one years before the Altcar registers commence, and three years before the Presbyterian "Mr. Robert Seddon," became minister of Altcar. We have here, probably, his signature at fifty years of age. He died in 1724, in his eighty-second year. This leaf informs us that Jane Plumb died in March, 1760, but from the Halsall registers I find it was March, 1750, and therefore three years after presenting the paten and chalice to "Alker Chappel." The chronicle stops short when about to record the age of Jane Plumb. We have further evidence of the connection of the Plumbe

family in "Plumb's Moss," and "Lane to Plumb's Moss."

Upon the walls of the last Altcar Church was a list of benefactors (which is lost), and a marble tablet in memory of the Rev. E. Heyes, A.B., who died in 1839. The name Heyes occurs frequently in the registers, and members of the family served as officials in the parish again and again. Robert Heyes was married at Altcar in 1695, in the last church but one, probably a wood and plaster one, and the one represented in the Harleian map previously given. When the last church was pulled down, in 1878, the representatives of the family removed the tablet before-mentioned, and placed it, with other mural records, within iron palisadings upon the site of the family burial ground, which was inside the church.

In Picton's *History of Liverpool*, Heyes is mentioned as of the original Everton families. One of the Everton houses bore the inscription—"Thos. Heyes, 1734." It is possible that this was a branch of the Altcar family, for several Liverpool and Altcar families seem to have been closely connected in the middle of the eighteenth century, as is seen by the Altcar list of freeholders in 1771, which includes "Edward Heyes of Altcar."

The oldest and most prominent name in the registers is that of Goore. It occurs on the first page of the register, in 1664. This family gave the name to one of the divisions of the parish—the Goore House Division. The oldest gravestone (marked E G 1671) was that of a Goore. One of the churchwardens in 1688 was Robert Gore. In the 1771 list of jurors we have Richard Goore, of Liverpool, merchant, and James Goore of Ince Blundell. The name appears again and again in the parish accounts, and usually has the prefix "Mr.," which is never used for any other person,

unless it be a clergyman, and in that case both Rev. and Mr. are used, as in the 1726 account, which is headed, "An Acct. of Richard "Goore, for ye Reverend Mr. William Clayton," where the ecclesiastic, for whom Richard Goore acts, swallows up the Mr., and leaves plain Richard Goore.

In looking over the old churchwardens' accounts, we are reminded of Coleridge's lines—

> "The wedding guest here beat his breast,
> For he heard the loud bassoon."

Every year there appears an item for "reeds for bassoon," "letter about bassoon," "repair of bassoon," "gamut for bassoon," or "a new bassoon," but no other instruments are mentioned. Clarionet, cornet, violin, and violoncello were more or less used, but the instrument *par excellence* was the bassoon. The tunes were marked air, counter, tenor, and bass, and abounded in fugues, rests, solos, and duets, which it would puzzle many a modern choir to execute, even with the aid of an organ.

In the year 1879 the present church was consecrated. Like the previous churches, it was dedicated to St. Michael. It was built from plans by Mr. Douglas, of Chester, at the sole expense of Lord Sefton, who generously made a gift of it to the parish. A good organ was also provided. The churchyard was enlarged, a new wall built, trees planted, and a new road made; and there are few country churches which surpass that of Altcar in architectural beauty and neatly arranged surroundings. To the deep and continuous interest in the plans and building of the church exercised by Colonel Wyatt, a great deal of the success is due.

The present church is probably a return to the style of architecture which was exemplified in the

earliest Altcar church. It is not built upon the site of the previous one, but somewhat to the north of it, and at the corners of the quadrangle which formed the site of the old church poplar trees have been planted. It has a lich-gate, *i.e.*, a corpse-gate (A.S., *lych*, a dead body), so called because the body rests there while the funeral procession is formed. Over the lich-gate is inscribed, "Grant, "O Lord, that through the grave and gate of "death we may pass to our joyful Resurrection," and the inscriptions in all parts of the church have been exceedingly well chosen.

Some years ago the Vicar of Altcar's stipend was very small, but Lord Sefton has given £100 a year rent-charge and the vicarage house, which gifts have been supplemented by Queen Anne's Bounty and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, so that at present the living of Altcar is worth about £240 a year and a vicarage house.

With regard to the incumbents of Altcar, neither the episcopal nor the parish registers lead us further back than 1724. In that year the Rev. William Clayton became incumbent. His successor seems to have been the Rev. William Naylor, who for fifty years was master of the Ormskirk Grammar School. In 1774 he was incumbent of Altcar, but the churchwardens' account-book before that date has been lost, and there is no evidence as to the time when he became incumbent. He died in 1823, but in 1821 the Rev. T. Garrett had been ordained as stipendiary curate, and on the death of Mr. Naylor he succeeded to the incumbency. Mr. Garrett resided at Burscough, and came over on Saturdays, to be ready for the Sunday duty. He left in 1827, and was succeeded by the Rev. C. Forshaw, B.A., who, like Mr. Naylor, was master of Ormskirk Grammar School. His incumbency lasted from 1827 to 1856, when he was succeeded

by the Rev. J. Pearson, M.A. During the first part of Mr. Pearson's incumbency he resided out of the parish; but before he left, a vicarage was built by Lord Sefton, in 1858. Mr. Pearson had charge of Altcar from 1856 to 1862, when he exchanged livings with the Rev. John Thomas. For the long period of twenty-seven years, from 1862 to 1879, Mr. Thomas held the Vicariate of Altcar, and ministered in the last two churches, the present church being built eleven years before he was called away. He was interred near the porch of the new church. The present Vicar, and the writer of these notes, was appointed by Lord Sefton in 1889.

THE PEOPLE.

Up to recent years, when arrangements were made by Lord Sefton for pumping the water out of the ditches and small water-courses, the inhabitants, especially in winter, were subjected to many inconveniences. At hay-time the grass had often to be conveyed from the lower to the higher levels to be dried, and barn doors were utilized as barges. At one farmhouse a small boat was attached to the door-latch, and when milking-time arrived, the milker paddled in this boat across the inundated fields to the shippon, to milk the cows. It is also stated that occasionally people proceeded to church in boats, and that, on one occasion, the water was so high that the boat was actually floated over the churchyard wall. In the winter skating was possible from Altcar to Sefton meadows, and, during the absence of frost, water was so abundant that stepping stones were needed to enable the villagers to pass from one cottage to another; and the dragging of children out of the water, whose eyes and limbs had not become accustomed to this amphibious life, was not an unfrequent occurrence.

The story is told of an Ormskirk ginger-bread vendor, known as "Nut Harry," who found the ice during the frosty weather an assistance to locomotion. Having called at one cottage, he had only to place his tin box on the ice, and slide it before him to the next cottage where he hoped to effect a sale.

People who long for the "good old times," had better ponder some of the stories current in the neighbourhood, and, perhaps, they may be the more disposed to be content with such things as they have. I am informed, by one who speaks from experience, that the allowance for five persons at one farm was ½lb. of coffee, ¼lb. of tea, and 2lb. of sugar per week. One wonders, with the infinitesimal quantity of coffee or tea that would fall to each individual's meal, whether they would be able to catch the flavour and know the difference between the two; and as to sweetness, it must have been an unknown quantity, or the palate must have been more sensitive to sweetness than modern palates are. Rye dumpling began the Sunday dinner, and a very small portion of meat followed. We are told, by those who tasted them, of potato pies made on the Monday to last till the Monday following. The crust before the end of the week was hard, and the potatoes sour, and when the crust was lifted the potatoes followed in "a rope." "But did you eat that?" "Yoigh; "there was nowt else, and yo' mun 'a' that, or go "wi'out dinner."

In one house there was an old-style mangle, and the roof of the mangle-house was hung with imperfectly cured hams and bacon. As the farm labourers lay in the bedroom above, they could hear the thud of the maggots as they fell upon the mangle, with the consolation that the said bacon was maturing for the purpose of supplying them

with dainty dinners, when, with aristocratic appetites, they could feast on that which was "high."

A Lancashire woman, speaking in my hearing of the food of the working classes in her earlier years, said, "They know nowt in these days. We "used to eat green sauce [sorrel] dumplings, and "*no suet in 'em.* Yo' met 'a' kickt 'em o'er fielt, "and they wudden 'a' brocken." Speaking to an old inhabitant of Altcar of this, he said, "Aye, an' "it were rye flour too, and as black as that "chimbley." A labouring man from Ormskirk used to come and assist at one of the farms on special occasions. Dinner-time arriving on one of his visits, he began sniffing, and asked a fellow-labourer, "Han yo' tainted meyt again?" He replied, "Aye, we seldom an owt else." The meat being passed round, the visitor said, "Aw connod "manidge this"; and called to a labourer across the room, who sat near a drawer containing paper, "Here, gi'e me some papper. Aw'l lap this up, "and tak' it to ower Jimmy." Poor Jimmy! Those were hard times, and one wonders that such fare should have been able to mature such good constitutions and healthy physiques as we have in Altcar.

As in other country districts, there were little jealousies and rivalries between adjacent villages. When Formby was chiefly a fishing village, and Altcar, as now, an agricultural district, the brawny fishermen and the stalwart agriculturists used to meet at the Fleam Bridge, and challenge each other to combat, when, by chosen representatives or in a general melee, they decided the question of physical strength, the championship sometimes resting with Formby and at other times with Altcar. These conflicts, which formerly were so common between adjacent villages, Mr. Gomme

considers to be a survival of the old tribal conflicts between Celt and Saxon and Dane in the earliest settlements of English villages. The habit has remained after the tribes have been fused.

One thing that strikes us in looking over the parish accounts, is the liberal allowance, at the parish cost, of ale. The oldest parish accounts preserved commence in the year 1714. The parish consisted of three divisions, Town Row, Goore Houses, and Little Altcar. In 1726 it was thought desirable to have refreshment over the arduous task, and the last item is, "Spent on making these "accounts 1s. 6d." After this the sum of 1s. 6d. is the usual allowance to those making the accounts. The following are some items :—"1749. Paid to "William Arnold for drink 7s. 6d." "1754. Paid "Pease Neile for ale 3s. 4d." "1757. Paid to "Thomas Watkinson for drink about y^e^ highways "5s." The account for 1758 for the Town Row Division is a curiosity. Out of a ley or tax of £1 2s. 3d., the sum of 14s. 8d. was spent in ale. There seems to have been this year no urgent call for expenditure upon roads and bridges, and the temptation to extract a little enjoyment from the superfluous fund was too great to be resisted. The wages of spademen in this year, according to the Altcar accounts, were eightpence a day, so that the amount expended in ale, for the Town Row Division alone, equalled twenty-two days' wages of a working-man.

As illustrating the difference between the purchasing power of money at different times, I may remark that four centuries earlier than this (1354) the Government regulation price of ale in the country was three gallons for a penny. It is probable that the purchasing power of money in 1758 would be about five times what it is at present. Not much spirit was in ordinary use at

this time, but ale was considered such a desirable and needful beverage that about thirty years later (1787) Dorning Rasbotham, as quoted in Baines' *Lancashire*, writes of Chowbent: "The wages of "a common labourer are from 18d. to 20d. a day, "and he expects to have a cup of ale twice a day." In Liverpool, in the middle of the fourteenth century, for selling bread, meat, or ale above the Government-regulated price the offenders were put in the pillory, or ridden round the town on a tumbril, or a dung-cart; and similar offences in the country would probably be summarily dealt with.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, bachelors in Liverpool were not allowed to be out after nine o'clock, unless they had lawful business; but whether the bachelors in the country were more leniently dealt with, it is difficult to say. One part of the business of the church clerk in Liverpool was to "ring the curfew at 8, and be diligent in "whipping dogs out of the church." Both of these duties probably devolved upon the Altcar parish clerk. We find in the account for 1775, "A whip for the dog whiper 3d."

There was usually a third duty devolved upon the dog whipper, viz.: that of sluggard waker.[37] In those early times when hedges and fences were scarce, the farmers from the outlying districts travelled miles to church, and combined business and devotion by taking with them their sheep dogs to control their flocks and herds by the way. The dogs were kept out of the church by the dog whipper. The origin of chancel rails, it is said, was to keep dogs out of the chancel. The dog whipper also acted as sluggard waker. His business was not only to quiet the dogs, but to keep the worshippers awake. In one church, the

37 Andrews' *Curiosities of the Church*, p. 173.

sluggard waker had a long staff with a fox's brush on one end and a knob on the other. If a lady fell asleep he tickled her face with the brush, but if a man fell asleep the knobbed end was used with wonderful effect. In some parishes a small portion of land was set aside for the use of the poor men who acted as dog whipper and sluggard waker, and it is possible that God's Croft in this parish was set aside for that purpose.

From the parish accounts we learn that a liberal supply of ale was allowed by the parish on various occasions.

(1) It was somewhat common for the choirs of the neighbouring churches to be invited to Altcar to swell the harmony, and they were not sent empty away. Thus, in 1774, "Spent on Halsall singers "and parson, 8/3." 1805, "Ale to singers from "Halsall, 15/." Same year, "Ale to singers, "£1 3 0." 1817, "Singers from Maghull, 15/"; "singers from Formby, 10/"; "singers from Mag- "hull, 15/;" "singers from Formby, 10/." The parish must this year have been suffering from a musical fever. The mode of conveyance of the the singers seems to have been the brewer's cart.

(2) Ale was allowed at rushbearings, and on the 5th of November. 1774, "Spent on rushburrying, "2/6." In subsequent years nothing seems to have been allowed at rushbearings.

In 1776 one shilling was allowed for powder on 5th of November; in 1782 2/ was spent on "a "load of turf for bonfires"; in 1792 2/6 was added for ale. In 1825, "To turf for bonfire, and ale for "the boys who attended it, 5/6."

In 1838, however, we find this mem.—"Unani- "mously resolved, that the custom of making bon- "fires on the 5th of November in every year, and "the allowances of any kind whatsoever, which "have heretofore existed for a great number of

"years in commemoration of Gunpowder Plot, "shall in future be discontinued in the township "of Altcar. As witness our hands this 17th day "of April, 1838." Signed by the Rev. Charles Forshaw, and seven others.

In 1849 an allowance of ale was made to the singers "when the churchwardens were footed," a common expression in Lancashire, meaning admitted to office.

We are reminded of the picture that Tennyson gives of the last illness of the "Northern Farmer." The doctor comes and forbids his ale, and he is represented as saying—

"Doctors, they knaws nowt, fur a says what's nawways true;
Naw soort o' koind o' use to saäy the things that a do:
I've 'ed my point o' aäle ivry noight sin' I beän 'ere,
An' I've 'ed my quart ivry market-noight for foorty year."

His daughter seems unwilling to disobey the doctor's orders, and he exclaims impatiently—

"What atta stannin' theer fur, an' doesn bring ma the aäle?
Doctor's a 'toättler, lass, and a's hallus i' the owd taäle;
I weänt breäk rules fur doctor, a knows naw moor nor a floy;
Git ma my aäle I tell thee, and if I mun doy I mun doy."

And although the picture which Tennyson gives of the intelligence of the farmer would, perhaps, scarcely apply to to-day, we need not look back very many years to a time when it was only too true.

"An' I hallus coom'd to 's chooch afoor moy Sally wur deäd,
An' 'eär'd 'um a bummin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock ower my 'eäd,
An' I never knaw'd what a meän'd, but I thowt a 'ad summat to saäy,
An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said, an' I coom'd awaäy."

But while we have evidence of the liberality of the parish to singers and others in ale, we find wine provided for the church on the same liberal scale. For many years the parish allowed four gallons

of wine for church use, when the Holy Communion was celebrated only quarterly. A later clergyman used to tell how the clerk, soon after he came, followed him to the pulpit, saying "Please, sir, you "have forgotten your wine."

All this is changed. At the desire, as is usually understood, of Lady Sefton, where public houses are not absolutely needed they are being banished from Lord Sefton's estates; and the four public houses which, until a somewhat recent period, existed in Altcar are now no more, much to the moral benefit of the parish.

The great improvement in sobriety which has taken place of late years was forcibly set forth by Dr. Barron, one of the leading magistrates of Southport, at the Birkdale Brewster Sessions, August 24th, 1893. Speaking of the annual report of the superintendent of police, he said—"It was "a very pleasant matter for him to be able to point "out to them that during the whole of the ten "years alluded to in the statement drawn up by "Superintendent Jervis, Altcar occupied the premier "position. There had been only 14 convictions "during that period. It was also another singular "fact that there had not been a single woman from "Altcar convicted for drunkenness during the ten "years. This was a circumstance, he considered, "which bore strongly upon the morality of the "inhabitants of that particular parish. Banks used "to occupy the premier position, but that place "was now taken by Altcar, which was one of the "most sober districts in the whole petty-sessional "division."

I am afraid the Church has been far from guiltless in the past with regard to the intemperate habits of the country districts John Aubrey, the antiquary—who was born in 1626 and died in 1700—tells us: "There were no rates for the poor in

"my grandfather's day; the Church Ale of Whit-
"suntide did the business."

[38] The churchwardens bought and received presents of a large quantity of malt, which they brewed into ale, and sold to the company. Hence these feasts were called "Church Ales." They were held on the feast of the dedication of the church, the proceeds being devoted to the maintenance of the poor. Sometimes they were held at Whitsuntide also, sometimes four times a year, and sometimes as often as money was wanted, or a feast desired. An arbour of boughs was, in some cases, erected in the churchyard, called "Robin
"Hood's Bower," which the young women of the parish used as a bar for dispensing the liquor, and receiving the money. Drinking habits were thus encouraged, and consciences were quieted by the knowledge that the money went for a good cause, until increasing scandals caused the Church Ales to be prohibited. These Church Ales were generally held on a Sunday, and we are told that the services were better attended on these days than on others. The only relics of these old customs I can find floating in the memories of the people, are connected with Mid-Lent Sunday, known in some places as Simnel Sunday, and All Souls' Day.

Mid-Lent Sunday was known in Altcar as Braggot Sunday. A specially concocted drink was prepared for this Sunday, which was of a non-intoxicating character, and was called braggot. As the older generation passed away, the secret of its manufacture seems to have been lost, and its place was taken by mulled ale. The publicans, in later days, provided small cakes for the occasion. Every labourer expected four eggs from his

[38] Ditchfield's *English Villages*, p. 89; and Andrews' *Curiosities of the Church*, p. 39.

employer, with which he repaired to the ale-house, where the eggs, with spices, were drunk in hot ale. This custom died with the closing of the public-houses. Mid-Lent Sunday was also known as "Mothering Sunday."[39] On that day, it was the pleasing custom for servants and apprentices to carry cakes or furmety, as presents to their mother, and to receive from her a cake with her blessing. This was called "going a-mothering." The old poet Herrick alludes to this custom, in Gloucestershire, in these words:—

> "I'll to thee a simnell bring,
> 'Gainst thou go'st a-mothering,
> So that when she blesseth thee,
> Half that blessing thou'lt give me."

The other custom was observed on All Saints' Day, the 1st of November, for All Souls' Day, the 2nd of November. On that day, children, until a few years ago, went from house to house, saying, "For God's sake, a so' loaf" (soul loaf). As gifts for these young visitors, householders had prepared small round cakes, containing a few seeds and impressed with the butter-print of the farm.[40]

The Church also made it its business to provide for the amusement of the parishioners. Near many of the old churches there was a place called the church-house. It was used at fair times as a storehouse for the goods of travelling pedlars. In this building also the parishioners were accustomed to meet round the large open fireplace for gossip and amusement. Aubrey tells us, "It had spits, "crocks, and other utensils for dressing provisions. "Here the housekeepers met. The young people

39 Ditchfield's *English Villages*, p. 107.

40 This is, no doubt, a relic of an old Roman Catholic custom of making small oatcakes, called "soul mass cakes," on All Souls' Day, to give to the poor. On receiving the cake, the recipients repeated—

> "God save your saule,
> "Bairns and all."

"were there too, and had dancing, bowling, "shooting at butts, &c., the ancients (old folks) "sitting gravely by and looking on."

The Altcar church-house is close to the churchyard, and, with its yew trees, was once, no doubt, included in the church ground. Till somewhat recently it was an inn. It is a fair example of the description given of a church-house by the Rev. S. Baring Gould :—

"The church-house was a long building, situated close to the churchyard, consisting of a basement and an upper storey, usually with a single great chimney that had a fireplace below and one above. It consisted of two great rooms, one above the other, and it was intended as a place in which the congregation should stay between morning and afternoon services, and eat their dinner and drink ale, which latter was usually provided by the sexton or clerk. The food they brought with them, but not the liquor. There were stables beside the church house, in which the parishioners put their cobs and horses, on which they had ridden to church, and the stepping blocks whereby the women might mount their pillions are an invariable feature. By degrees there ensued encroachment. The sexton or clerk found it convenient to live in the church-house, so as to keep an eye on his barrels of ale, and the mugs and tankards in which the ale was drawn. Accordingly he moved into it, brought up his family in it, appropriated more of the space to his convenience, accommodated churchgoers with ale after service, kept them supplied till, what with ale inside and water without, it was sometimes convenient to lodge the night with him, and so—there is no saying exactly when—the church-house, which was the hall of assembly belonging to all the parish, into which every parishioner had a right to enter and eat and rest, became the Church-house Inn."

With regard to the rush-bearings, it is almost certain that no rush-cart has been used in Altcar during the present century. An old man of eighty-four years of age, who remembers the Rev. William Naylor, informs the writer that he never saw a rush-cart, and never heard of one. No money was spent on rush-bearing in the churchwardens' accounts after 1774, and probably about that time the rush-carts ceased to be used.

The method of observance in the earlier part of this century was as follows. Preparatory to Rush-bearing Sunday the larders of the villagers were replenished, and friends from a distance were invited to partake of specially prepared dinners. On the Monday following, a number of stalls were erected, not far from the church, for the sale of sweets, Ormskirk gingerbread, &c., and occasionally a travelling show put in an appearance. In the evening the elder people repaired to the public-houses, for drinking and dancing, Altcar Hall being the chief. The first man who succumbed to the intoxicating potions by falling asleep became the mayor-elect. On the Tuesday, dressed in an old hat and old clothes, with face blackened, the mayor was accompanied round the parish by neighbours, who danced round him to fiddle and tambourine and anything that would jingle, and offered him various indignities. They wore extravagant garments, decorated with ribbons, and calling at the various houses they passed, received money or drink. These customs ceased about fifty or sixty years ago.

SCHOOLS AND CHARITIES.

It is very evident from the church registers that the office of "parish clerk and schoolmaster" has been a very ancient and important institution, and that the said official has magnified his office is apparent from the elaborate caligraphy and personal entries found here and there. Bishop Gastrell (1722), who obtained his information from the clergy and churchwardens of the different parishes, remarks, "In Altcar there is a school erected by "the inhabitants, endowed by Richard Whitehead, "and his son John with £30, and by Thomas "Tickle with £32."

Commissioners were appointed in 1828, to

enquire into the charities throughout England, and the following is the report given concerning Altcar charities :—

"There is an entry in a parish book, dated March 31st, 1741, to the following effect :—'There was left by Thomas Tickle of 'Altcar, some time since deceased, the sum of £30, the interest 'to go for the use of the schoolmaster for ever.' The inhabitants of the parish of Altcar, thinking there could be no better security than the said parish, and having occasion to discharge a debt due to the workhouse for money borrowed, the church-wardens and several of the principal inhabitants of the parish agreed, on the day bearing date as above, to pay unto the schoolmaster for ever the interest of the said £30 after the rate of 5 per cent.

"Nothing is now known of this specific bequest, but an annual payment from the rates has been made to the master of the parish school in Altcar from at least the year 1753, which may probably include the interest of the £30 above mentioned. From 1753 to 1782 the schoolmaster received £7 yearly. The payment was afterwards increased to £8, and in 1811 to £24, for which salary he teaches eight poor children free, and also acts as parish clerk. The same person has the profits of a close of about an acre and a half, given, during pleasure, by the Earl of Sefton, for the benefit of the schoolmaster."

WILSON'S CHARITY.

"William Wilson, by his will bearing date 27th December, 1665, gave £20 to be put forth upon use and the interest to the poor of Altcar and Lydiate for ever, equally to be divided among them at the discretion of his executors. A memorandum of this bequest is entered in an old parish book, and the moiety due to the poor of Altcar is noticed in the Parliamentary Returns of 1786. Nothing is now known of this bequest.

"The Incumbent of Altcar has, for upwards of fifty years, received annually from the parish rates the sum of £3 10s., as interest of £70. It is understood that this is not applicable to any charitable purpose, but is the produce of money given heretofore for the use of the Incumbent."

GOORE'S CHARITY.

"Ellen Goore, who died 7th May, 1789, left £40 to the poor of Altcar, the interest to be divided amongst the poor women who should attend the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This bequest appears to have been taken by the parish, as the sum of 40s. yearly is paid out of the poors' rate (? Church Rate) as

interest of Ellen Goore's legacy. The money is distributed among the poor women attending the quarterly communion, 10s. each time. There are generally five or six poor persons between whom it is divided."

The four quarterly instalments of 10s. of Ellen Goore's charity first appear in the churchwardens' account for 1794, and the payments were continued up to 1851, when only one quarter's interest was paid. After this the payment ceased. It is remarkable that in this same year appear the following items:—"Four gallons of wine, £2 16s.," and "To Richard Burgess for dinners and drink for "the year 1849, which had omitted to be entered "in the same year, £2 0s. 1d." The annual vestry meeting was held at the public-house, and (the non-resident clergyman being generally absent) liberal dinners and drinks were allowed to those who attended.

LIPTROT'S CHARITY.

The way in which this charity came into the possession of the parish shows the unselfishness of Samuel Liptrot, of Altcar. I copy the following memorandum from the churchwardens' account book:—

"Be it remembered that on the 23rd day of July, 1841, between the hours of seven and eight o'clock at night, Jane Liptrot, of Altcar, in the county of Lancaster, spinster, delivered the contents of her will, containing the following legacies, and was taken down by James Norris, of Altcar, schoolmaster, in the presence of Ruth Roby, but she died about two o'clock the following morning, being nearly an hour before the said James Norris had written the will, and made it ready for her and the witnesses to sign in the usual form in order to give validity to the will.

"Therefore Samuel Liptrot, of Altcar, aforesaid, being the only brother of the said Jane Liptrot, and sole Heir at Law to all her real and personal property, but as he had no wish or desire whatever to take advantage of the law in respect of the writing purporting to be her last Will and Testament, he therefore ordered, and it appeared to be his anxious request, that the

following legacies should be paid out of his said sister Jane Liptrot's personal Estate and Effects by Christopher Richmond, son of Christopher Richmond of Thornton, in the said County, to the respective parties hereinafter named, as if the said will of his said sister, Jane Liptrot, had been valid to all intents and purposes.

"*Legacies bequeathed by the said Jane Liptrot.*

"1. To the Incumbent and Churchwardens of the Parish Church at Altcar, and to all the successors thereof in perpetuity the sum of Fifty Pounds upon Trust to place the same either out at Interest upon good security, or in the purchase of some premises, or in any way they may devise, so that the said sum of Fifty Pounds may produce a yearly interest, Rent, or Profit, and to pay and apply the said yearly interest, Rent, or Profit yearly, and every year, for the benefit of the Poor of the said Parish for ever, in such manner and at such times as they shall in their discretion think proper.

"2. To the churchwardens and overseers for the time being of the Parish of Altcar the sum of Nineteen Pounds and Nineteen Shillings upon Trust to be by them placed out at Interest upon good security, and the interest thereof to be by them or their successors paid and applied for the benefit of the Schoolmaster thereof of the Day School recently erected, yearly, and every year, and to his successor and successors for ever.

"The two preceding legacies were paid to William Balshaw of Hill House in Altcar by Christopher Richmond Jun^{r} on the eleventh day of March, one thousand eight hundred and forty-two."

At present (1895) £70, the result of this charity, is deposited in the Liverpool Savings Bank, and the yearly interest amounts to £1 15s. Of this sum twelve shillings is annually paid to the schoolmaster, and the rest is placed in the clothing club fund for the poor, which is distributed each Christmas.

PETER DARWIN'S CHARITY.

The following is a copy of the bequest which appears in the will of Peter Darwin, farmer, who died at his residence, Gore House, Altcar, on the 14th of June, 1888:—

"Four Hundred Pounds to the Minister and Churchwardens for the time being of Altcar Church, to be paid out of my ready

money, and by them invested in any Government security or in Liverpool Dock or Corporation Bonds or Annuities, and the interest to be laid out in Bread, Coals, and Clothing, and distributed twice a year among the deserving poor of the Township of Altcar, and to be called 'Peter Darwin's Charity.'"

The above and the following are inscribed in the account book of Peter Darwin's Charity.

"The amount actually handed over to the Trustees by the Executors, after the payment of Duty, &c., was Three hundred and fifty-nine pounds, ten shillings, which sum was invested by the said Trustees in the Funds of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board at Liverpool (Dock Annuities) on the 25th day of January, in the year of our Lord, One thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty-nine, the Annuity arising therefrom being Thirteen Pounds and Eightpence, which is payable half-yearly, on the first day of April and the first day of October."

"Signed WM. WARBURTON, Vicar of Altcar.
JAMES DICKINSON, } Churchwardens.
THOMAS BURGESS, }

"25th March, 1889."

The oldest school remembered by the present inhabitants was a "clam, stave, and daub" building, which was opposite to the entrance of the east road leading to the church. The schoolmaster, who was also parish clerk, was James Norris. The building was taken down, and a new school erected by Lord Sefton in 1840, and this again was supplanted by the present commodious schoolroom and master's house in 1865. These last were built for the educational benefit of the parish by Lord Sefton.

ALTCAR FORESTS.

In very early times, most of the land of Altcar was moss or marsh land, much of which in winter was flooded. The best land is a ridge running longitudinally through the centre, and is rather heavy clay. To the north of this strip is the moss land, and to the south the carr lands. (I am leaving out of consideration Little Altcar, which is sandy,

like Formby.) The moss lands and carr lands, being of little value, were neglected, and the carr lands probably became studded with nature-sown ash, alder, birch, and oak trees. Some of the natural forests of Lancashire were nine or ten miles long at the time of the Domesday Survey. In these woods, wolves, wild boar, and wild cattle abounded.

Forests existed in Altcar, and were more or less cleared before the Roman invasion. We are told that it was from the Roman station of Mancunium (Manchester) that the swampy forests of Lancashire and Cheshire were controlled.

There are many trees and roots buried in the moss lands and carr lands of Altcar. Every now and then a plough comes into contact with one of these long-buried trees—not to the benefit of the plough. I have examined some roots taken from the moss, and a large quantity of roots and trees recently dug out of the carr lands near Lydiate Station by Mr. C. H. Milbourn on the Gore House Farm. They are chiefly oak trees. The trunk of one of them must have been 2ft. 6ins. in diameter, and oaks of considerable size must have been plentiful. There are also some trees of softer wood, which seem to be black poplar. Many of the trees have been cut down; but, in some cases, it would appear that the trees had been torn up by the roots by some storm in the higher grounds, and been floated down the flooded waters of the Alt, to be covered in the course of centuries with alluvial deposit. In cutting the drainage sluices, the horns and bones of wild animals have been found buried with the trees. Much of the timber is sound and undecayed, while some is so soft that it can be cut with a spade. Whatever may have been the case with the carr lands, no oak trees can have grown on the moss lands, and the trees there found

buried must have been introduced from extraneous sources.

[41] The very severe forest laws which proved such a heavy burden, and subsequently filled Sherwood Forest with outlaws, were originated by Canute. By Canute's "Charter of Forest," in 1016, if any man offered violence to one of the "chief men of the forest," "if a freeman, he was to lose his freedom, "and all that he had; and if a villein his right hand "was to be cut off for the first offence, for the second "he suffered death, whether a freeman or a slave. "Offences in the forest were punished according to "the manner and quality of the offender: any "person either casually or wilfully chasing or "hunting a beast of the forest, so that by swiftness "of the course the beast pant for breath, was to "forfeit 10s. to the king; if not a freeman, 20s.; if a "bondman, to lose his skin. Greyhounds were to "have their knees cut, or be kept ten miles from "the bounds of a royal forest. If a royal beast "was bitten by a mad dog, the owner of the dog "was to answer as for the greatest offence of the "forest, namely, with his life."

After the Norman invasion, the Norman and early Plantagenet kings and their families were fond of hunting, and claimed the right to extend the forests, and in Lancashire this pretended right was much abused. So strict were these laws, that farmers were not allowed to drive swine, or to gather honey in the forests on their own land. The killing of a deer was sometimes punished by mutilation or death, and we find the nobility, and even the clergy, severely punished for the breach of the forest laws. We read how—

[42] "Wm Blundell of Ince was presented, for that he, and others, concealed themselves in Maghull wood; and afterwards, with their dogs, took a doe in the water of the Alt, near Ingwath."

[41] Baines' *Lancashire*, vol. i., p. 247.

[42] Baines' and Fairbairn's *Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. i., p. 574.

In the early days of these forests the timbers were carefully preserved, and even the numbers of squirrels prevented from becoming so numerous as to consume the acorns and hinder the multiplication of oaks. The "Charter of Forests," however, granted during the minority of Henry III. (1228), checked the creation of new forests and the extension of old ones. It declared all forests illegal which had been impaled subsequent to 1154. Among the forests declared to have been illegally planted, or impaled, were Croxteth, Altcar, Hale, and Simonswood. Notwithstanding this declaration, Croxteth and Simonswood forests remained unmolested, and were sold to the Molyneux family in the reign of Henry VIII. Altcar it was decided to disafforest, and these are the words of the decree:—

43 "We further say that Altekar was put within pales after the coronation of King Henry, your grandfather, and belongs—a certain part to the vill of Ines (Ince) and to Ramsmelis (Raven meols) and to Formby, and to Holand and Lydgate, and ought to be disafforested."

We see here how the forest of "Altekar" extended to the surrounding townships and overshadowed them by its name.

The Crown, and the earls and dukes of Lancaster after this continued to struggle for the existence, and extension, and acknowledgment of the royal forests, but Altcar forest had not only been doomed, but fell; for in 1337, in the reign of Edward III, the following townships, among others, are mentioned as being in the king's forest, and in the list Altcar is omitted: Parva Crosseby, Magna Crosseby, Thornton, Ins, Sefton, Aghton, Maghul, Mellinge, Lydiate, Downholland, and Formby. Altcar's forest proper seems to have been destroyed; but the outskirts of the large Altcar forest in

43 Baines' and Fairbairn's *Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. i., p. 577.

Lydiate, Downholland, and Formby remained undisturbed. It is possible that some of the trunks of trees that are now occasionally disembedded are trees that were cut down in the reign of Henry III, upwards of 600 years ago.

Mr. C. Potter, who has examined them, thinks that many of the trees belong to a distant age, and as nearly all the buried oak trees lie with their roots to the west, and their trunks pointing eastward, it is not impossible that, many ages ago, some cataclysm from the west has carried them to the places where they now lie.

In connection with the foregoing paper, the Editor adds the following

CHRONOLOGICAL AND OTHER NOTES.

1086. Domesday Survey, wherein it appears that Uctred held Acrer, where was half a carucate of land. It was waste. Soon after this, the land between the Ribble and the Mersey was granted by William the Conqueror to Roger of Poictou, Earl of Lancaster, who rebelled towards the close of William's reign, and went into exile. William Rufus restored to him his lands and honours; but in

1102 he rebelled again, was banished, and his estates forfeited to the Crown.

1229. Lands between Ribble and Mersey, previously granted to his forefathers, were confirmed by Henry III to Ranulph, sixth Earl of Chester.

1232. Death of Ranulph, without issue, when his lands between Ribble and Mersey passed to one of his sisters and co-heirs, Agnes, wife of William de Ferrers, sixth Earl of Derby.

About 1232. Grant, by two separate deeds without date, preserved at Croxteth, by William de Ferrers, Earl of Derby, of the manor or lordship of Alker to the abbot and monks of Miravalle.

1238. Award of the abbots of Roche, Kirkstall, and Salley in a dispute between the abbots and monks of Stanlaw and Miravalle, respecting pasturage on lands adjacent to the River Alt. Original is at Croxteth. (See *Coucher Book of Whalley*, p. 512.)

Before 1243. Grant by John Lea (who died in 1243), owner of Ravensmeols, to the abbot and monks of Miravalle of a right of way from their land, over his, to the king's highway between Ravensmeols and Alt Bridge. The original is at Croxteth.

1246. Death of William, Earl of Derby.

About 1246. Confirmation by Countess Agnes, by deed without date, preserved at Croxteth, of her husband's grant of Alker to the abbot and monks of Miravalle. She is said to have died within a few months of her husband.

1274. Agreement between the abbots and monks of Stanlaw and Miravalle as to imbanking the River Alt, so as to prevent inundations. (See *Coucher Book of Whalley*, p. 513.)

1293. Action brought by King Edward I against the abbot and monks of Miravalle, to recover possession of a messuage and one carucate of land in Altekar. To this we may suppose the abbot made a good defence, as there is no further record of the proceedings, and the community remained in possession until the dissolution of monasteries in King Henry VIII's time.

1310. Grant by Robert de Halsall (original preserved at Croxteth) to the abbot and monks of Miravalle of a right of way over the grantor's

land from Holbeckgate, in Alker, to a road in the village of Lydiate, in consideration of perpetual prayers on the part of the abbot and monks for the souls of him and his ancestors.

1365. Suit in the Consistory Court of Lichfield and Coventry, between the abbot and monks of Miravalle and the rector of Halsall, as to boundaries of Alker and Halsall, of which the contemporary copy record is at Croxteth.

1440. Grant, of which the original is at Croxteth, by Sir Richard Molyneux, to the abbot and monks of Miravalle, of the advowson of Sefton Church and four acres of land, in exchange for the reversion of the manor or lordship of Alker. It was at the same time agreed that the abbot should send a monk to reside at Sefton, and that Sir Richard should find him meat and drink and a chamber to live in.

1530. Suit brought in the Duchy Court by the abbot of Miravalle against Thomas Halsall, lord of the manor of Downholland, concerning the boundaries of, and rights of turbary in, Alker and Downholland. Contemporary copy record of proceedings is at Croxteth.

1539. By Act of Parliament (31 Henry VIII, c. 13), all monasteries in England were dissolved and granted to the king, when Alker, as part of the possessions of the abbot and monks of Miravalle, came into the possession of the Crown.

1558, May 4. Letters patent of King Philip and Queen Mary, granting, for valuable considerations, to Sir Richard Molyneux, Knight, the manor or lordship of Alker, late part of the possessions of the dissolved Abbey of Miravalle. The original is among the Molyneux muniments at Croxteth.