

SOME NOTES ON AUGHTON

By the Rev. W. A. Wickham

Read 26th November 1908

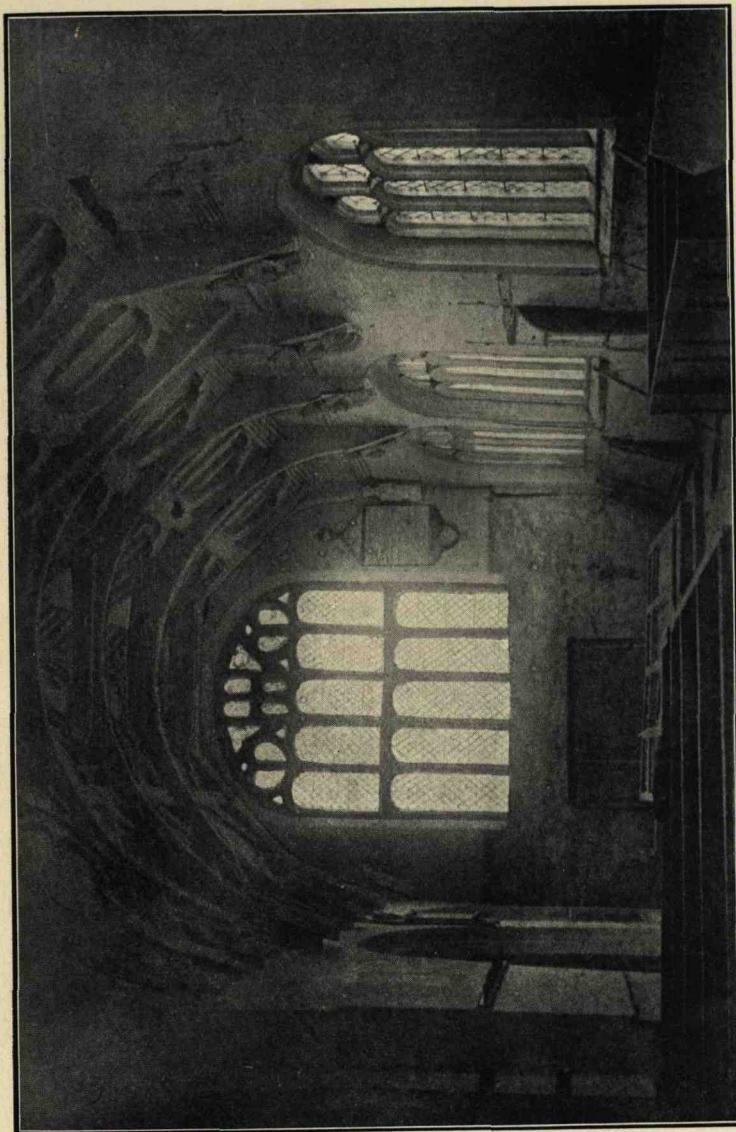
THE parish of Aughton is the smallest of the ancient parishes of the diocese of Liverpool. It is not mentioned in the *Taxatio* of Pope Nicholas IV. (1291), because it was then too poor to bear taxing. But the name occurs as "Acheton" in *Domesday Book*, and probably means "the Oak homestead."¹ It has since been spelt in various ways, and the local pronunciation of it is "Aff'n."²

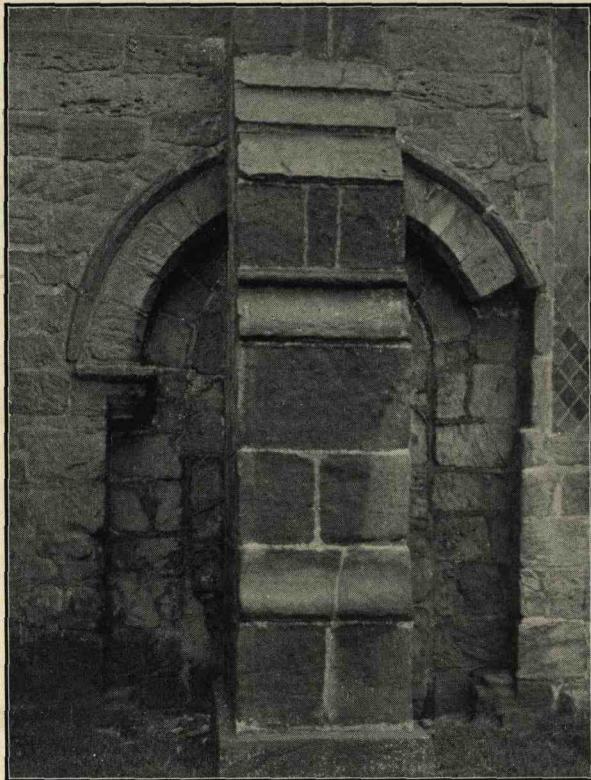
Aughton is divided from Ormskirk by a narrow brook, which scarcely interrupts the continuity of the long street in which Ormskirk ends and Aughton begins. After leaving Ormskirk the great road from the north leads up Holburn Hill for some distance until the summit is reached, and here, close by a disused windmill, stands the modern Christ Church, with its wide prospect, its trim, well-kept churchyard, and its school-house. On the other side of the way is the inevitable public-house. For some twenty minutes the road now descends the south-western side of the hill (past the site of the old race-course, which was situated about as far below Christ Church as the now destroyed windmill was above it), and, just where it breaks into the level stretch of country which ends in the Mersey and

¹ Cf. Harrison's *Liverpool District Place Names*, p. 36.

² Victoria History of Lancashire.

AUGHTON CHANCEL BEFORE REBUILDING
From an old Photograph





NORMAN DOORWAY

Liverpool, there stands the quaint old parish church of Aughton. The country round is flat and fruitful, but to the south-west on a clear day the distant view of the Welsh mountains comes in, like a strain of Tennyson in a page of excellent prose.

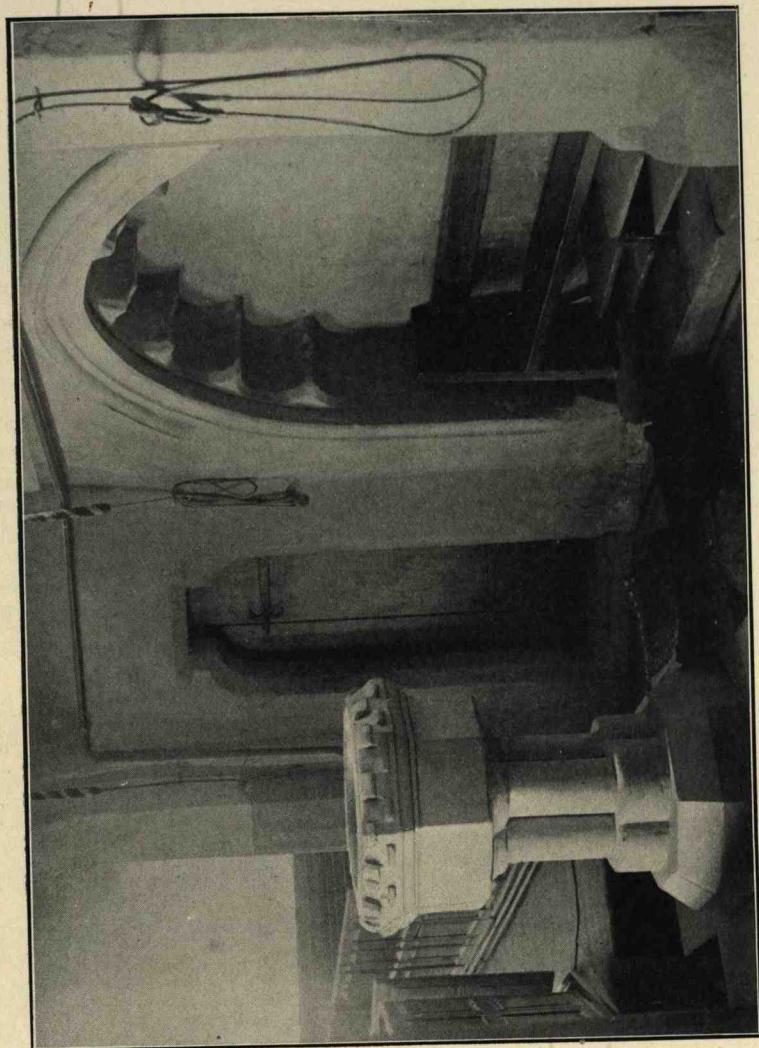
About the middle of the twelfth century Aughton Church probably consisted of a small nave, a smaller chancel, and a south porch. Of this church and of a rebuilding of a century later there still remain some portions of walling on the south side. There is also one precious doorway, of which the arch is nearly perfect. One scalloped capital remains, and the two bases, but the nook shafts are gone. The doorway has long been walled up, and right against the middle of it is a large Perpendicular buttress. A small window of the thirteenth century (*Vict. Hist.*) appears to have been hidden behind the buttress to the west of the porch. The fourteenth-century tower stands on the north side between the nave and chancel aisles. For some 45 feet it is square on plan. Then with a bold splay or battering from each angle it becomes an octagon, pierced on four sides with a two-light Decorated window, and finished with a moulded parapet, from inside of which springs an octagon spire, which reaches the height of 100 feet. The base of the tower is well moulded. There are similar, but later, towers at Halsall and Ormskirk, and also at Standish (rebuilt and altered). In each case the spire has been more or less rebuilt. In the interior, on the east, south, and west sides, the walls of the tower are pierced by three arches, plain chamfered and without capitals. The eastern arch is very acute. In the north-west corner is a doorway leading to the tower stairs. This has a flattened trefoil head, and much resembles the one in the south turret at Halsall and others in the towers at Winwick and Ormskirk. In the north wall of the tower is a recess 5 feet 6 inches long and

18 inches deep. Above it is a rich hood mould with characteristic Decorated members. On the soffit within are eight foliations. The cusps are set back 4 inches in from the face of the wall, and are continued solid to the back of the recess. The recess is very simple but very effective. It is probably sepulchral.¹ In the centre of the tower floor now stands the ancient Decorated font of graceful outline. The bowl is an octagon with a double broken parapet at the top, the sides being plain. The leg is a quatrefoil on plan. The font was placed here in 1886. It used to stand in the north aisle. To the east of the tower is the chancel aisle. The expert who wrote the account of Aughton Church in the Victoria *History of Lancashire* considers that this aisle was lengthened towards the east after it was built, and gives his reasons, which seem good ones.² In this aisle are some Jacobean oak benches, noteworthy for their great simplicity, strength, and discomfort.

To the west of the tower is the nave aisle, which is wider than the tower. It has a doorway in the north wall, which was closed up more than fifty years ago. The aisle is separated from the nave by an arcade of four arches, of two orders and plain chamfered, borne upon three octagonal pillars. In eight out of the twelve ancient churches of the diocese of Liverpool the pillars are plain octagons, and in nine churches there are plain chamfered arches. Moulded arches occur only in four, and

¹ From Mr. W. G. Taylor, for many years churchwarden of Aughton, I learn that, when in 1886 the font was placed where it now is, the water drain was taken through the tower wall by the recess. A stone coffin without a lid was found, not more than 18 to 24 inches below the raised flags. It had apparently never been used. It is there still.

² At the north-east corner of the chancel is the clear trace of a buttress, with its plinth (at a different level from the plinth of the chancel aisle) projecting to the north from the chancel wall, clearly proving that the chancel aisle was formerly shorter than it is now.



FONT AND RECESS IN TOWER

moulded pillars only in three. Therefore we have only the capitals to guide us as to the date of the Aughton arcade. These are very indeterminate, and might be either rude Decorated or rude Perpendicular. Sir Stephen R. Glynne¹ considered the whole church, with the exception of the Norman work and the tower, "late Lancashire Perpendicular." The west window of the nave is altogether new, though it replaced an older window shown in the sketch in Gregson's *Fragments* (1817) (see p. 82), which shows also a round window in the gable, now closed up. The tracery of the west window of the north aisle is also new (1876), but the jambs and arch of the window are for the most part ancient, and exactly resemble those of the four windows in the north wall of the aisle. These contain a quantity of old green glass and some fragments of painted glass,² and exactly resemble the large windows in the tower of Ormskirk Church, and also those in the clerestory of Sefton. The mullions are carried through on a curve to the head of the window, intersecting each other. There are examples of this form in late Early English work, and it was continued for long after.

But in all probability the present aisle at Aughton was added in the time of Rector Brian Moorcroft (1528-47). In the *Annals of Aughton* (p. 48) an inventory is given,³ which was made in 1552, and from this it appears that at an earlier date ("ijj yers befoare the first Invetoire was made,")⁴ "ij other chalices and a coape were by the

¹ *Notes on the Churches of Lancashire*, Chetham Society, N.S., No. 27.

² The initials L. E. occur in the glass, and L. O. (twice). Baines (*Lancashire*, iv. 227) mentions initials L. G., and the date 1623. Both of these have disappeared. Baines may possibly have taken the L. O. for L. G.

³ See *The Inventories of Church Goods*, Chetham Society, vol. cxiii. p. 110.

⁴ I learn from the Record Office that the first Commission to take Inventories of Church Goods and Ornaments was issued in the

consent of the holle pische lade to pledge to Sr Bryan Morecroft decessid . . . and the money bestowed upon the building of the Ile in the body of ye same church." This is most important evidence, though, curiously enough, Mr. Newstead overlooked the significance of it. Apparently it establishes the date of the building of a north aisle about 1545. Was it the present one?

It will be noticed that the word used in the Inventory is "building," not "re-building," though I do not lay too much stress on this. In his paper on "Masons' Marks" (*Lanc. and Chesh. Hist. Soc.*, N.S. 7 and 8) Mr. W. H. Rylands speaks of the present north aisle as "probably post-Reformation,"¹ and he gives as his authority the name of the late Mr. Ed. W. Cox. Any opinion from Mr. Cox must be received with respect. But I venture to think that he may be mistaken here. There is, as we have seen, documentary evidence of the building of a north aisle between 1528 and 1547. There is no record, so far as I am aware, of any building of a later date. The presumption, therefore, is that the present north aisle was built by rector Bryan Moorcroft. He was aged fifty-seven in 1542, and had formerly been chaplain to rector

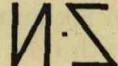
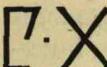
second year of Edward VI. 1548-49. Very few of the returns to this Commission are, however, extant, and apparently none for Lancashire.

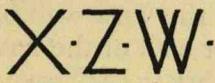
The Inventory of 1552 states further that "one of the ij chalices conteyned in the laste Invetorie was pledgit to Pet^r Stanley for X/^s aboute one yere last paste, and the money bestowed upon the repaçon of the same Church, as the Wardens do alledge, which is watyng." Only one chalice was left in 1552; at Sefton there were two. In 1527 John Starkey of Aughton left money for the reparation of the Church. "Itēm, do et lego dēe ecctie de Aghton sex solidos et octo denarios [6s. 8d. about £4 of present value] p. ejusdem reparatioñbus" (*Piccope's Wills, Chetham Soc.*, xxxiii.).

¹ Baines's *Lancashire*, iv. 227 [repeated verbatim by Harland (1870) and Croston (1893)], says that an earlier date than the seventeenth century cannot be assigned to this aisle, but the value of this opinion is lessened by the fact that he gives the fifteenth century as the date of the tower, which is evidently fourteenth-century work.

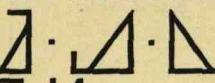
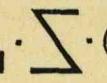
Edward Molineux of Sefton. He died in 1547, and was buried at Aughton.

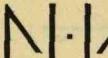
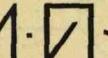
There are masons' marks upon the Aughton aisle like some found upon Lydiate Abbey,

, which is supposed to date from about 1486, though the jambs of the windows and details of the base mouldings and buttresses are exactly like those of Sefton south aisle, which may be dated about the earlier part of the sixteenth century (say 1530), on which the marks  (Aughton) also occur.

There is also some resemblance between some of the Aughton marks and some found on the Great Tower of Ormskirk,

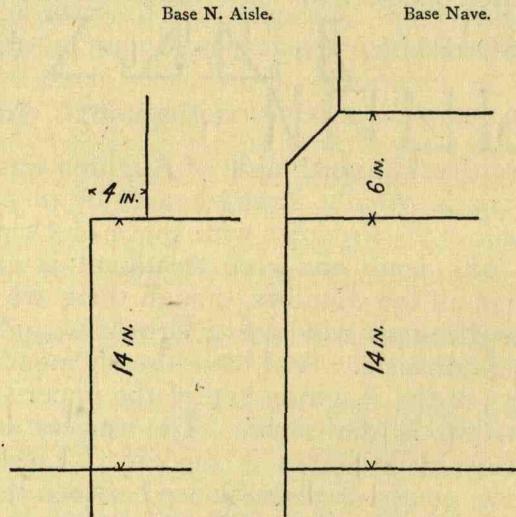
(Ormskirk),  

(Aughton). Indeed, my theory that the north aisle of Aughton was built about 1545 is greatly strengthened by a careful comparison of its windows with those of Ormskirk tower. The jamb and arch treatment is exactly the same in all the windows, though there are hood moulds to the upper windows at Ormskirk, and none at the Aughton aisle. As I have already mentioned, the tracery of the Aughton and of the upper Ormskirk windows is the same. The tracery in the lower Ormskirk windows is modern. There are thus strong points of resemblance between the two works, and the date of the Ormskirk tower is from 1540-50. In 1542 John Bochard, clerk, bequeathed £60 towards the building of it (*Vict. History*).

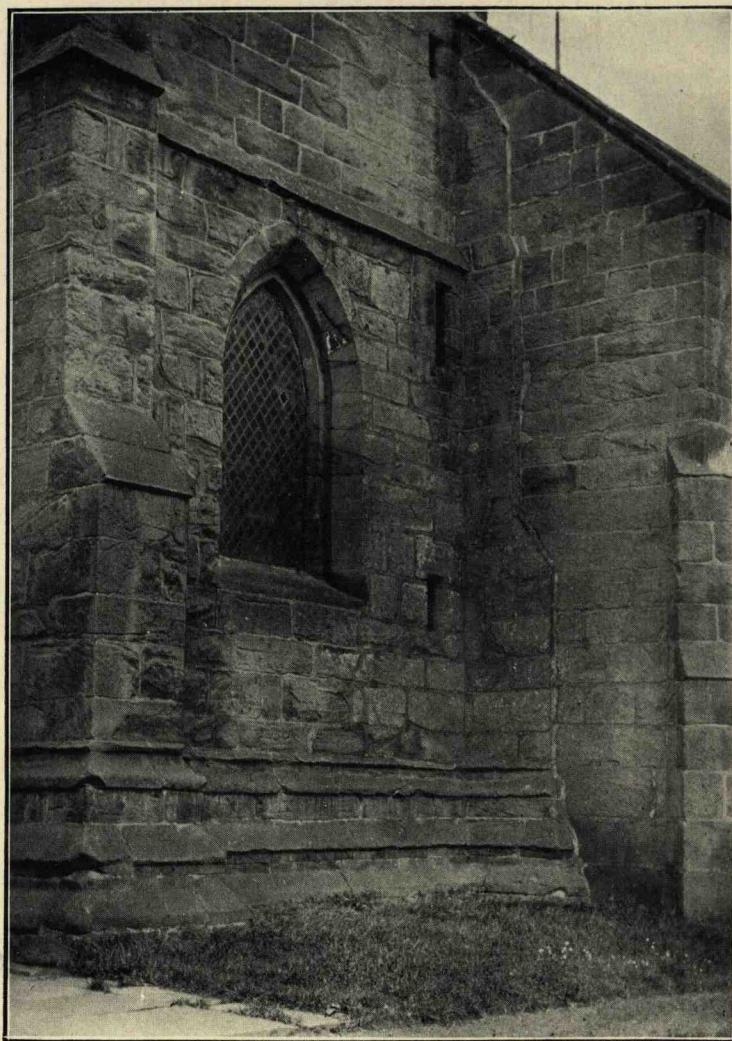
With regard to this nave aisle, I submitted my notes to the architectural editor of the *Victoria History*, Mr. C. R. Peers, M.A., F.S.A. He was

kind enough to say "the notes are very good, and establish the date of the present north aisle beyond any reasonable doubt. . . . After reading Mr. Wickham's notes, I have inserted his conclusions, with due acknowledgment, in the proofs."

I feel but little doubt as to the age of the present north aisle, but when we come to consider the question of the previous or original treatment of the north side of the nave I find some difficulties. There are some things about which I can feel certain. (1) As I look at the west façade of the church I can be quite sure that the west wall of the north aisle is later than the west wall of the nave. The comparison of the ashlar work in each case, and of the position and treatment of the plinths, is quite convincing.



So too, more especially, is the fact of the two buttresses between nave and aisle, the northern of which has been partly built into the west wall of the aisle. Above the buttresses the line of the original north-west corner of the nave is still visible.



JUNCTION OF TOWER AND NORTH AISLE

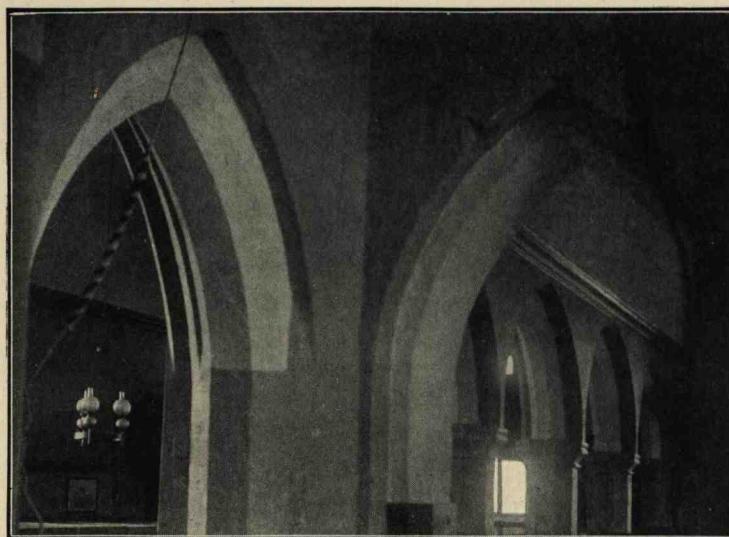
Hence I am quite sure that when the present nave was built the north aisle, if one existed, was shorter than the present one. (2) Again, looking inside the church at the nave arcade I can see nothing to incline me to think that it was at any time lengthened towards the west. Hence it seems practically certain (unless there is something hidden by the yellow wash) that it was built after the buttresses at the west end. (3) Again, looking carefully at the angle buttresses at either end of the north aisle, I notice exact similarity of treatment. I notice also that there is nothing to suggest that the north-west buttress was built subsequently to the adjoining west wall. The plinth or base treatment of the west and north walls is the same, and the rest of the masonry of both walls (and also of the east wall), and especially the jambs and arches of the windows (without hood moulds), is sufficiently alike to warrant the opinion that both walls were built at the same time, though more pains was, perhaps, taken with the west wall than with the north.¹ What the original tracery of the west window was I cannot certainly say. Gregson, in his sketch, shows a simple Perpendicular window with a transom.² (4) Another certain thing is that the north-west buttress of the tower has been built into the east wall of the north aisle. This is quite evident both inside and out.

¹ Mr. Ferguson, mason, of Aughton, has made the valuable suggestion that the ashlar work of the present north aisle wall may possibly be that of the older north nave wall, taken away when the arcade was built, and reused to the best advantage. The neater and more regular ashlar work of the west wall of the aisle may have been built of new stone. All the stone was from local quarries. The angle buttresses are carefully tied to the walls on either side. There is no tie between the middle buttresses and the walls.

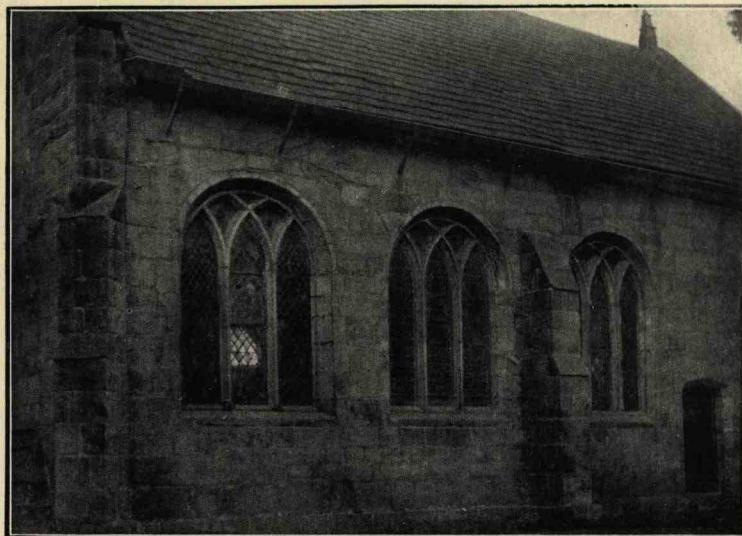
² In the west gable, which is thinner than the wall below, an older stone with sunk tracery has been built in. There is a similar one on the ground in the churchyard. Similar stones, again, will be noticed near the base at Lydiate Hall (probably c. 1470), and at the base of the choir stalls at Sefton Church (probably c. 1520-35, Caroe, *Sefton*, p. 14).

(5) Another thing seems all but certain, viz. that the western arch of the tower was an afterthought. It is a very poor production in every way, and altogether different from the tower arches on the east and south, which open, respectively, into the chancel aisle and chancel. These are very massive and well shaped, semi-hexagonal on plan below the spring of the arch (no capitals), and divided into two plain chamfered orders above it. The eastern arch is a very striking lofty lancet. But the present western arch opposite to it is certainly no higher than the arch to the south. Moreover, its section is wholly different from that of the others, and without any apparent reason. It has every appearance of having been cut through the solid west wall of the tower by not very skilful masons. This impression, made on looking at its eastern side, is confirmed when we look at it from the west. What looks like the west buttress of the tower projects, though cut away at the bottom, into the north aisle. To the south of this buttress there is something (see A. Elevation), buried in plaster and the yellow wash which, unfortunately, disfigures the church, which looks very much like the old base mouldings of the west side of the tower, and this (whatever it may be) is continued on the south side of the arch. It is splayed back on either side of the arch, and if it is not the old tower base, it is very difficult to account for it. A little careful investigation, made possible by the stripping from it of the thick covering of plaster and yellow wash, might soon clear up this point. It is much to be wished that this could be undertaken, and that at the same time the same thing could be done with the whole of the western tower arch and wall. The operation would be neither long nor costly, and the result, whatever it might be, would be very interesting.

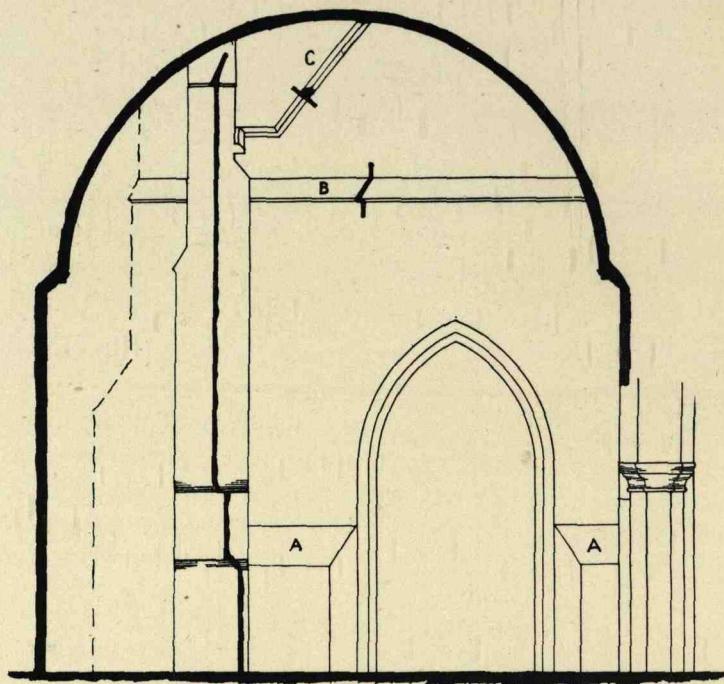
Now all this put together inclines me to think



SOUTH AND WEST TOWER ARCHES

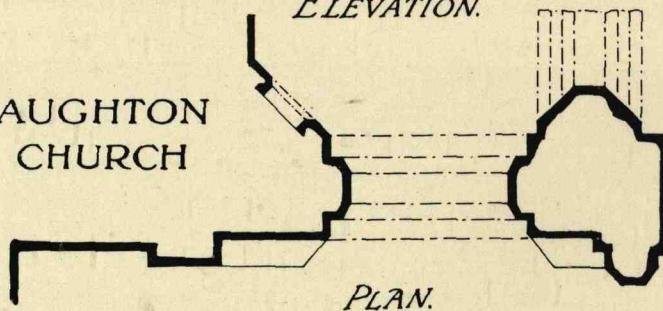


NORTH AISLE FROM NORTH-EAST



ELEVATION.

AUGHTON
CHURCH



PLAN.

EAST WALL OF NORTH AISLE

Measured and drawn by Mr. F. H. CHEETHAM

that the arch, the aisle, and probably the arcade are of the same date, say *c.* 1545. If this be so, the aisle is of peculiar interest as having been built on the very eve of the Reformation. The arch may be even later.

But there are two difficulties, which make me cautious rather than quite positive. Behind the royal arms (1714), on the east wall of the aisle, about 4 feet 6 inches above the point of the arch, is a broad weathering (see B. Elevation) exactly like that above the window on the outside of the tower to the north. This squares very well with the theory that the wall was originally external, with no building attached to it. But, on the other hand, well above this weathering, there is a roof weathering (see C. Elevation), apparently coeval with the wall (though it *might* be a later insertion), of which only the north side is now visible, the apex and south side being hidden by the plaster barrel roof of the aisle. Its apex might very well have been over the centre of an aisle 6 feet less in width than the present one, and it finishes in, and at right angles to, what I have above called the west buttress of the tower, which, however, is some 4 inches wider than the buttresses outside, and has some curious features not very easy to explain. This finish seems to tell of a gutter of over a foot in width, though in a doubtful place; it, again, would seem to imply a parapet. What we have taken to be the west buttress might have been the beginning of the north wall of the aisle, though, again, there are difficulties. At any rate this roof weathering requires explanation, and it would be explained if an earlier building had preceded the present aisle. In that case the nave arcade, or some of it, was earlier than I have suggested. But everything is so covered up with thick colour wash that it is impossible to be dogmatic without further explora-

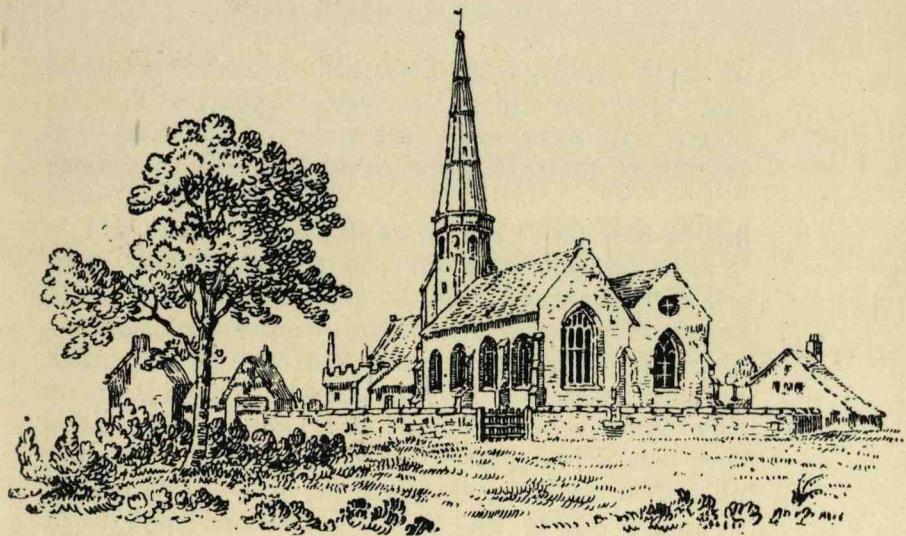
tion. One can only feel sure that the present aisle was an afterthought, as was probably also the earlier aisle, if such existed.

On the outer face of the east side of the tower is a former roof weathering, which, together with the acutely-pointed arch below it, clearly shows that the north chancel aisle (the "little chancel" as it was sometimes called, or the "Plumbe Chapel") had formerly a high pitched roof and a steep gable. This seems to be shown in the sketch in Gregson's *Fragments* (1817), which I reproduce.¹ This also shows the battlemented parapet of the vestry returned on the west side (and not as at present), and also the charnel house, built in 1739, at a cost of £3, 6s. od., and 1s. for drink, but now gone. The Victoria *History* says that the vestry, which stands to the north of the chancel aisle, "seems to be of seventeenth-century date." I am inclined to think it might be earlier and coeval with the north nave aisle or thereabouts. Recently a new "Norman" doorway has been made into the chancel aisle, which seems to me unfortunate, because misleading, since there was not originally any work of that date in that part of the church.

I earnestly hope that if any further "Restoration" is undertaken, it may be as conservative as possible, and that no more "Norman" work may be permitted. The yellow wash should be carefully removed, but nothing further should be done in a hurry. Much of the interest of this interesting church has already been "restored" away. The ancient chancel gave place to the present one in 1876. Its windows were without cusps. There was a transom in the east window. From a letter

¹ There are several evident errors in this drawing:—

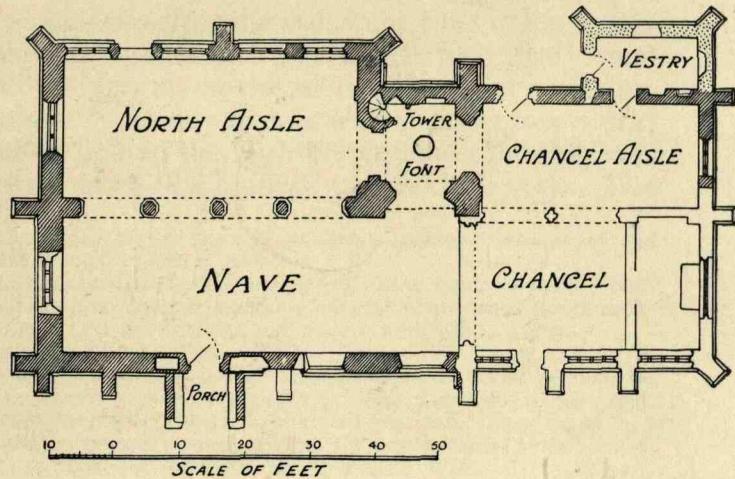
1. A buttress is shown in the place of the north doorway.
2. Windows are shown on every side of the tower octagon.
3. The tower buttresses are wrongly drawn, and the battering where the square breaks into the octagon is not shown.



THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MICHAEL, AUGHTON, FROM THE N.W.

From Gregson's *Fragments*, A.D. 1817 (Edition Harland, 1869)

AUGHTON CHURCH



PLAN OF CHURCH

of the architects to Rector Boulton, dated May 16, 1874, I learn that it was 10 inches narrower than the present one, but its walls were that much thicker. The architects were Messrs. W. & P. Hay of Liverpool.¹

The two larger windows on the south side of the nave retain scarcely any trace of original work;² but in the interior splay of the easternmost window—a curious position—are the remains of a canopied niche (early sixteenth century), in which formerly stood a figure, which has evidently been roughly knocked off. This may have been connected with the south nave altar (*Vict. Hist.*), which was possibly dedicated to St. Nicholas, before which, in 1526, John Starkie, the then lord of the manor of Aughton (by his will) desired to be buried (*Vict. Hist.*).³ But it must be pointed out that the niche, which is thickly coated with yellow wash, is now quite perpendicular, whereas the wall itself is much out of plumb. This *seems* to point to a placing of the niche here after the wall went over to the south, whenever that was. There are also two small windows high up on the south side of the nave, one of which (probably of late sixteenth-century work) formerly lighted the high pulpit,⁴ and the other was inserted when the gallery was built (1735). The

¹ The width of the nave is 21 feet 2 inches, and that of the original chancel 19 feet 10 inches.

² Baines says that in his time (1836) these windows were "each divided into four compartments by circular chipstones," which probably means that the mullions and tracery were still in place.

³ In p^rmis do et lego aīā meā Deo Oipotenti bē Marie mat̄ sue et oībus sc̄is ejus corpusque meū ad sepeliendū in ecclia pōchiali de Aughton coram altare Sancti Nicolai ēpi. Item do et lego meū optimū aīal rectori eccie de Aughton noīe p'ncipali. Item do et lego decē solidos [probably equal to about £6 present value] p uno trentali missār dist̄buendos int̄ sac̄dotes (*Piccope's Wills*, Chetham Soc., xxxiii.).

⁴ In 1759 "Mr. Arsnip took demensions to make a casmt for the Pulpit Window." In 1754 "Pd Edward Southwork for painting the Gallery window and finding hair, 6d" (*Churchwardens' Accounts*). The initials G. H. may be seen on either side of this window.

south wall may soon have to be attended to, though it has been leaning for a long time. If any additional space has to be added to the church, the difficulty will be to do it so as to reconcile the claims of the incumbent and the antiquary. For as Mr. Thomas Hardy recently pointed out: "To the incumbent the church was a workshop or laboratory; to the antiquary it was a relic; to the parish a utility; to the outsider a luxury. All that could be done to unite those incompatibles was in the nature of a compromise."¹ Compromises are seldom quite satisfactory.

From the church I naturally pass (though it can be only in a very cursory way) to the clergy who have served it. The late Mr. Newstead² said that the earliest mention of any parson is in 1362—Henry le Walsh. But the new and splendid Victoria *History of Lancashire* gives five earlier names—Robert Blundell, *d.* 1246; Henry [le Waleys], *d.* 1292; Thomas le Waleys, ins. June 26, 1303; Gilbert le Waleys, *d.* 1317; John le Waleys, ins. 20th January 1318–19. He was followed by Henry le Waleys, ins. 3rd November 1337; he by John le Walsh, ins. 27th September 1369; and he by John le Bradshagh, ins. 17th November 1382. It is interesting to note³ that three of these early

¹ *Times*, weekly edition, June 23, 1906.

² *Annals of Aughton*, p. 45.

³ This seems to have been not unusual. In the Episcopal Rolls of Hugh of Wells (Bishop of Lincoln, 1209–35), recently published by the Canterbury and York Society, there occur many institutions to benefices of men, who were not in priests' orders. Some were deacons; others plain laymen. Others again were styled "Clericus." These "Clerici" may have received minor orders (*cf.* Dr. Jessopp "Village Life" in the *Coming of the Friars*, pp. 80–84). But in all these cases the institution to the benefice was subject to the condition that the person instituted was ordained priest as soon as might be. Sometimes a dispensation or leave of absence was given for a time (as it was to one of those Aughton rectors, John de Bradshagh), in order that the person might study in the schools, as *e.g.* at Paris or elsewhere. There was a further proviso that he should appoint a suitable curate, who understood

parsons were not ordained even sub-deacon until after their institution, at which time they were only laymen, or, at the most, in minor orders. One was ordained sub-deacon in the April, deacon in the June, and priest in the October of the year after his institution. Another had to wait nearly three years for his priest's orders.

In 1575 the advowson passed into the hands of Bartholomew Hesketh, the lord of the manor, a Roman Catholic. His wife was "a busy recusant," and the hostess from Easter to Whitsunday 1580 of the notorious Edmund Campion (*Vict. Hist.*). It has been well said that "the history of the Rectory during the seventeenth century is a very disgraceful one. The patrons were Roman Catholics, and appear to have thought they might as well make an 'honest penny' out of a right, which was of no other interest to them." Several of the rectors were soon deprived for simony. Here is an instance: "According to Oliver Heywood (*Diaries*, ii. 265) Mr. Hesketh, a papist and profligate gentleman, lost the presentation at cards to Mr. Banastre of Bank. The relatives of 'young Baguley' (B.A. Oxon 1672, presented 1674) obtained it by giving £100 to Mr. Banastre, hoping to evade the law of simony by calling this sum the price of a horse they bought. The Bishop refusing to institute except on a presentation by the true patron [? Hesketh], the latter was induced to agree to a present of 20 guinea pieces; 'at last Mr. Brownsword's son sued them at the assizes for simony' . . . and Brownsword hath gotten possession, but there's no choice, he living as ill as the other" (*Vict. Hist.*).

All this is terribly sordid. It is a relief to turn

the Vulgar Tongue, to hear confessions and administer sacraments. Occasionally the institution was subject to the passing of an examination at a set time in singing or in literature, *alioquin* (a favourite word!)-deprivation.

back even to Rector Nutter, appointed in 1577 by Queen Elizabeth—her “Golden Ass” (*d.* 1602). He was rector not only of Aughton, but as well of the rich benefices of Sefton, Bebington, and Barrow. Then, as a kind of bonne bouche on the top of all this, Queen Elizabeth made him Dean of Chester, and he held the deanery about thirteen years. He finished his earthly career by dying suddenly during supper-time at Sefton, which seems to have been his chief place of residence, and there he was buried. He was a great pluralist and an active persecutor of recusants. The Bible in the church at Aughton was defective in 1582; the first tome of the *Homilies* and Jewell's *Apology* and *Reply* were lacking; there were no perambulations and no collectors for the poor; but there were 500 communicants, whatever that was worth then.

In the early part of the eighteenth century Parson Hindley set an abiding mark upon the parish. He was instituted in January 6, 1700–1, just after he had proceeded M.A. at Cambridge (Jesus College), and he was buried in Aughton church on November 12, 1720. The first good deed by which he is remembered is the erection of a school-house upon the glebe, which, however, was not endowed. It stood at the south-west corner of the churchyard, then much smaller than at present. It may be seen in Gregson's drawing of the church. It was replaced in 1836 by the older part of the present school-house, which bears that date. Parson Hindley's second good work was the rebuilding of the rectory. At the time of the Commonwealth survey (A.D. 1650) there was “a psonage house with barnes and outbuildings thereunto belonging as alsoe about Three acres of glebe land” in hand. Its size may be guessed from the fact that Rector Stansnought paid taxes on six hearths in 1666. To this house Parson Hindley succeeded. But we learn

from an old Terrier (*qu.* Newstead, p. 56): "The old parsonage being extreamly ruinous and upon inspection found incapable of tolerarable Repaires was by ye Bsp. of Chester's (Dawes) lycence taken down in ye year 1711, and a fair commodious house, but at ye sole and only expence and by ye pious generosity of ye psent Rect^r, was built a little eastward from the former foundation, consisting of 17 usefull Rooms for Reception, Lodging, offices, and Garrets, with one good staircase, the whole in length from North to South not exceeding 14 yards, and in breadth from East to West not exceeding 12 yards. To which is added a new stable consisting of 2 small Bays 2 garners and a Back Kitchen built by ye afs^d Rector ye Rev^d Mr. Hindley now Incumb." This house still remains, though it has been altered and added to, after doing good service for close upon two centuries. The "one good staircase" is there, with its wealth of beautiful old oak, and it winds, equally good all the way, from the ground floor to the "Garrets," with their clay or cement floors. One of the roof beams is very massive, and its moulded lower edges seem to tell of a former existence. There is a great range of cellars, and some of these may very possibly have belonged to the earlier parsonage.

Parson Hindley was evidently in residence in 1711, for on April 3 of that year Nicholas Blundell records in his *Diary* (p. 90) that after the race on Oughton Moss he went to the "Signe of Queens Head" in Ormskirk, and there "drunk wine with S^r Tho: Standley . . . Parson Hindley of Oughton," &c. &c. Towards the end of his life he may have been non-resident, or an invalid, for he kept a curate, who would otherwise scarcely have been required, for the population then was (Bishop Gastrell, *Notitia*) only 153 families, and 13 of these were Papist and 7 Dissenting (4 Presbyterians and 3 Quakers). But

the curate was there in 1716,¹ for in that year a new oak altar table was provided for the church. It is a very good specimen of its period, and is now in the vestry. It bears two oval brass plates: upon one of them is the inscription: "Robert Hindley, Rector, Nicholas Loxdale, Curate, 1716"; on the other are the words: "Thomas Bickersteth, Gentleman, Richard Ashcroft, Yeoman, Churchwardens, 1716." This curate, Nicholas Loxdale, seems to have been one of the many clerical friends of the Papist, Nicholas Blundell, for in his *Diary* of April 11, 1719, we read: "I went to Mr. Hindley's, the Parson of Aughton; his curate Mr. Loxdale showed me several od sorts of Flowers; he went with me to the Aile House,² where we smoked a Pipe." On May 6, 1720, Parson Loxley (*sic*) gave him some flower roots from Parson Hindley's garden, which the squire set next day. Again, on August 25, 1720, he "called at Parson Hindley's" and "walked with Parson Loxley (*sic*) into his Flower Garden." The curate Loxdale was there still on May 5, 1721, for on that day Nicholas Blundell "went to Oughton where I Light of Parson Loxdale at the Claks, and smoaked a Pipe there." Parson Hindley was buried, as we have seen, on November 12, 1720, and his successor was not instituted till July 13, 1721. Parson Loxdale was evidently *locum tenens* during the interregnum. The diarist does not mention Rector Atherton, who succeeded Parson Hindley.

Although in 1768 4s. was paid by the churchwardens for "taking the names of Papists," in 1783 the Roman bishop confirmed 94 persons at Aughton, at which time their communicants numbered

¹ As the registers are not signed, I cannot ascertain from them the date of Mr. Loxdale's coming to the parish, nor that of his leaving it.

² Possibly the Ring o' Bells, which used to stand on the north side of the church, on what is now the churchyard. It may be seen in Gregson's sketch (see p. 82).

260.¹ At that time Church children were taken to Liverpool for confirmation, for in 1774 4s. was paid by the churchwardens for "Horsehire and loss of time."

I can only add that Rectors Vanburgh (1786-1834) and Boulton (1834-85), whose united incumbencies amounted to close upon a century, seem to have taken a much higher view of their duty than many of their predecessors. During the incumbency of the latter the chancel was rebuilt, a well-intended if unfortunate deed,² and also the daughter "Christ Church" was built. It "stands as a lasting monument to his generosity." Its foundation-stone was laid in 1867, and it was consecrated (after a trying delay) in 1877.

In the interesting *Annals of Aughton* copious extracts are given from the Parish Registers (which date from 1541), the Brief Books (1701-27), Churchwardens' Accounts (1737, &c.), Overseers' Accounts (1758, &c.), Constables Accounts (1739, &c.), and Waywardens' Accounts (1737, &c.) From these we gather much interesting information, of which in my short space I can only give a little; regrettably passing by much besides. The Registers need not detain us.

The Brief Book (1701-1727) is interesting. What was a "Brief"? In the Rubric which follows the Nicene Creed provision is made for

¹ *Trans. Hist. Soc., N.S., xiii. 156-57.*

² Mr. W. G. Taylor informs me that Rector Boulton desired to have the chancel restored only. But upon examination the south wall was found to be 13 inches out of the perpendicular. The wall plate was also found to be in short lengths fitted in between the principal rafters, instead of being continuous, with the rafters footed on it. The oak roof timbers were so much decayed that some parts dropped to pieces on being moved. So the chancel was replaced by a new one, with a pitch pine roof. With regard to the leaning of the south wall, I find that the nave wall underneath the cill of the "Pulpit Window" is at present no less than 11 inches out of the perpendicular in its height of 10 feet.

Long may it remain so!

the reading of Briefs. This is not to be found in the First or Second Books of Edward. Briefs "were letters patent granted by the sovereign directing the collection of alms for the special objects named in them. They were granted for building and repairing churches, and for many benevolent purposes. . . . Great abuses arose out of Briefs, and a Statute was passed to regulate them in Qⁿ Anne's reign. The abuses still continued. . . . An attempt was made again to reform the system in 1821, but with so little success that Briefs were abolished in 1828." The idea upon which the Brief system was based was thoroughly good and Christian, and it tended to counteract the parochialism, which is so often deplored at the present day. The "brief" necessarily obliged the parishioners to realise that there were other parishes besides their own for which they were bound to care. It helped to foster the sense of Brotherhood in Christ. In days before church newspapers had been invented, and when other newspapers were rare, the needs of far-away parishes were brought before the congregation. The north helped the south, and the east the west, and north, south, east, and west each realised that it was only part of a greater whole. But abuses came in of which an instance is to be found in *Burn's Ecclesiastical Law*. The charges of collecting £641, 12s. 9d. for the rebuilding of a church in Westmorland amounted to £330, 16s. 6d., leaving, therefore, only a clear collection of £310, 16s. 3d. The greater part of the money collected went to officials. Then, moreover, the briefs were, apparently, so freely issued as to become burdensome, especially to poorer parishes. In the registers of St. Lawrence, Reading, in the eighteenth century, it is no uncommon thing to find six or eight collections for other parishes during the year. At Aughton this was even more pronounced.

There were apparently twelve in 1713, ten in 1714, twelve in 1715, and so on. The amount of the collections varied according to interest taken in the object. In 1701 £1, 8s. 2d. was collected after a brief for the repairs of Chester Cathedral, and this was quite unusually good. The brief for the "Protestants of Fra-(nce)" brought in only 2½d., whilst after the "Bottisham" brief (loss by fire) another collection literally fell to zero, for it came to "o:o:o"! The average amount of the twelve collections in 1713 was 3s. 0½d., and of the ten in 1714 only 1s. 6½d. The people were evidently as tired of "the trade of Briefs" as Mr. Pepys, who resolved "to give no more." However, in 1715 the average had gone up to 2s. 4½d. Rector Hindley, who had, as we have seen, spent his own money freely on the parish, had probably been talking plainly to his flock.

In the Churchwardens' Accounts we read of a new Bier Cloth and of the mending of the old one (there were two in 1787); of the Bone House to west of Vestry; of the Sundial; of John Martin, who "tent'd" the Clock for two years; of a Looking-Glass; of the Clerk's "Sallary" and the Ringers'; of sundry "Quarts" and "½ dozens" of ale; of a Whip, 2½d.; of "Singers and the Dogwhipper" (why connected?); of the Altar-piece, which was cleaned, oiled, and varnished by the Clerk for 1s. (1756), with materials purchased for 4s. from "Doctor Plumbe," the Surgeon, who doctored the "Aughton poor" in 1773 for the modest sum of two guineas. [At Wallasey, in 1693, the Parish Doctor was more liberally treated, for he got £2 for only "dressing and cleansing Catty Johnes her Legg a full year." In the west country the Parish Doctor did even better, for at Widicombe (Devonshire), about 1700, Dr. Ball received as much as £8 "for curing of Dorothy ffrench's legg and keeping

the same sound from any more costs and charges." Though, poor man, he had afterwards to return £4 "because he did not p'fect and continue the cure according to his promise." So that at Aughton Dr. Plumbe was at any rate not overpaid.] But at least no imputation is made on his professional skill, and so he was more fortunate than Dr. Ball, or than "Doctor Davies" at Aughton, who in 1742 indeed got his guinea, but goes down to posterity in the pages of the Overseers' book as the man who only "pretended to cure Thos. Roberts." We read of Candles for Singers, and of "painting Boards lettering and Figuring Psalms" for them (there were twenty Boards figured for Singers and a Pitch Pipe in 1787); of the Gallery, which was erected for the Singers in 1735 (this was partly paid for by letting their old seats on the ground floor to "such persons that will give the best price for them"); of the cast iron Pillar under this Gallery (1812); of the letting of three Pews on the north side of the Gallery (1797); of the Singing Master hired for one Quarter to "teach the youth of the Parish to sing Psalmody, but no Instruments" on Saturday and Sunday nights. We read (1800) of "a new Bassoon" and its "reeds," "a Hautboy," "a new Bass Vial," and "a Claronet." James Pye was paid (1792) "for writing Anthems" and for "playing music."¹ They also paid "for 43 Dinners for Ann Monk the Singer, 28s." They spent 2s. "on ye Singers wch came from Asheley" (1738), and as much "on the Leverpoole Singers" (1744), "on Halsall Singers" (1752), on "Melling Singers." But in 1758 the "Rainford Singers" got only 1s.

¹ The records of Hindley Chappell about this time mention that 5s. "was expended on the Chapel Wardens and Singers in waiting of His Lordship the Bishop of Chester in Petitioning to Sing Anthems." Five shillings was also more than once paid for a license to do this. £1, 1s. was paid "to the Singers towards Buying Dr. Green's Vol. of Anthems," and 13s. was spent on "Handel's and Purcel's Tedeum."

In 1777 the Vestry agreed to spend no more on "strange singers," though they afterwards changed their minds again. About this time the Church orchestras were in full swing in Lancashire, and the players were evidently "much thought of," or thought much of themselves. [In Rufford Church-yard there stands a tombstone bearing this inscription : "Richard Alty Bassoon one Breadth." This particular bassoon was purchased by the parish in 1816, and is still in existence in the possession of the great-nephews of the Richard Alty who played it, and who placed the word "Bassoon" as a kind of title upon his gravestone!] In 1744 the churchwardens paid 8d. "for a Boss for the pulpit." [A year later the churchwardens of Wallasey paid no less than £2, 11s. 7d. for a new pulpit cushion, but they evidently took a pride in their pulpit at Wallasey, for between 1675 and 1694 they bought no less than four new "Hower" glasses.¹] The Aughton people were guilty of no such extravagance. They did not overpay assistant clergy either.] One shilling seems to have been the usual sum spent on "strange preachers," as, e.g., "Spent on Prescott Parson wⁿ he preacht" (1742), "Sp^t on Mr. Potts wⁿ he preached," "given to a poor clergyman, Mr. Turner." Killers of foxes were much better paid with half-a-crown. We read of a Communion Table Clock (whatever that may be—it cost 12s.) ; of the Ringing of "the 8 and 1 o'clock Bell all the year," on Sundays (*N.B.* only lately disused) ; of the Beadle's Wig (12s.) and Hat (3s.) ; of the "Umbrella for Minister" (1787, 14s.) [still a novelty in England; probably made of leather and whalebone, very heavy, and intended to protect the bareheaded clergyman at funerals] ; of a New Surplice (£2, 15s. od.) ; of a Pully for the Font (telling of a Cover, wanting now) ; of 15s. 4d. given

¹ *Trans. Lanc. and Ches. Hist. Soc.*, N.S., 7 and 8.

(1808) to ninety-two children, who said the Catechism ; of George Green, who lost a pound note in 1820 ; of the Church being broken into in 1822, evidently through a Window [as recently twice at Roby], for the Glazier was paid 3s. 8d. for repairs ; of dinners on Good Friday and Easter Day for "the Clergy, *ourselves*, and the Clerk," though 3s. paid the bill, "liquor" included.

In the Accounts of the Overseers of the Poor we read of £4, 16s. 6d. (including 30s. for a Licence) being spent on compelling a Tarleton Man to marry an Aughton Woman, whom he had wronged (1755) ; of money paid for "Ale to the Gossips¹ at the Christening," and for sack for the Poor at the Workhouse in their illness ; of 6s., the cost of a coffin, with 5s. for Bread and 5s. 6d. for Drink at a pauper funeral ; of 1s. "paid for laying Margaret Spencer straight when dead." We read of money spent on various articles of clothing, such as "bratts" (*i.e.* aprons), "bodices and a stomacher." Ann Barton did well, for in 1753 she got 4s. old. for "Tobacco, a handkerchief, a pair of Stockings and sugar candy." "A poor lad from Wiggan" was kept at the cost of 2s., and 2s. 6d. besides was "given to him in his pocket when I turned him out." The "lunatic woman" from Maghull "who lay in Mawdsley's swine coat all night," including "cash to get rid of her," cost the Overseers (1758) 1s. It cost the

¹ *Gossips*, *i.e.* Sponsors.—"Gossip," or "Gossib" as Chaucer spelt it, is a compound word made up of the name of "God," and of an old English word "sib," which means skin ; they being "sib" who are related to one another. It was supposed in the Middle Ages that those who stood as sponsors to a child contracted spiritual affinity with one another, and so became "sib," or akin, in *God*, and thus "Gossips." It is interesting to trace this word down to its ordinary present use of tittle-tattlers. "Gossips" are, first, the sponsors thus brought into near familiarity with one another ; secondly, these sponsors, who being thus brought together, allow themselves with one another in familiar, and then in trivial and idle talk ; thirdly, they are any who allow themselves in this trivial and idle talk.—*Cf.* Archbishop Trench, *English Past and Present*, p. 276, &c.

same sum (1776) to get “ $\frac{1}{2}$ a Guinea from Wiggan” (which shows that Wiganers then knew how to take care of their money). “Shifting Halewood’s wife to town (?Liverpool) with two carts” cost 3s.; but when in 1795, nearly forty years later, Alice Hall and her two children had to be “removed” to Nottingham, it took “seven days with one Horse Cart” and cost five guineas. Elizabeth Halton (1772) got 2s. “for the cure of the Bite of a Mad Dog,” and John Yates was paid 3s. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in 1745 for “coals at the pit, 17 Baskits” (*N.B.* Baskets or Whiskets were used before coal tubs came in. They are occasionally met with even now). In 1776 “a hat, stockings, knife and Buckles” for Robert Lunt’s apprentice cost 3s. 8d. In 1799 Lawyer Mawdsley was paid 2s. 6d. “for talking.”

The Constables, who were nominated by the Lord of the Manor, paid for the repairing of the ducking stool (1740); they spent considerable sums on the relief of travellers and passes, especially on wounded, disbanded, distressed, and disabled Soldiers, their wives and children, and on distressed Sailors. They paid for the “Bonefire” at the Church Style and for Powder on Guy Faux’s Day, though in 1777 they agreed that in future they would spend nothing in this way. Eight years later they wavered in their resolution and agreed to spend £1, and in future no higher sum. They “Paid to the Window Peepers” in 1742 12s. The Window Tax was first levied in 1695. It was repealed in 1851. In 1801 Rector Vanburgh paid £11, 2s. for his twenty-seven windows. Before the imposition of the Window Tax there was the equally foolish and unpopular Hearth Tax of 2s. on every hearth in all houses subject to Church Rates and Poor Rates. It was first levied in 1663, and was abolished in 1689. In 1666 there were altogether 181 Hearths in Aughton for which this tax was paid. Gabriel Hesketh and Edward Stanley had eight each, Rector Stananought six, and

so on (*Victoria History*). The Constables paid the expenses of the Press Gang in 1745, and 6d. for "Carting Rebels" in 1747. They were apparently soft-hearted men sometimes, for they paid 6d. to "a man distressed by cattle" [neighbour's hens? or cats?], and 8d. to a "man and three children, distressed by thunder." [About the same time their neighbours at Sefton were also soft-hearted but discriminating. They gave 6d. to "a man yt had lost a Dale of Cattle," 9d. to "a man yt had lost a dale by fire," and 1s. to a "man yt had lost all by fire."¹] "Making hue and cry" cost 1s. (1749), but the "expenses concerning ye man that stole the goose" (1755) reached the sum of 5s. 6d., and made the goose a dear one! They erected Finger Posts, and paid for a Lock for Stocks, and mended the handcuffs. They attended the marriage of John Moore, and charged for that and "for throwing to ye Scholars" 1s. 6d. In 1760, after "two days privy search" they took up "8 young lads for Sabbath breaking," and brought them "before Justice." They spent a good deal in "Victory ringings" and for the slaughter of birds. In 1789 as many as 3797 sparrows were killed, besides other singing birds. Sometimes the constables spent money "on the Parishioners" for drink at a time of public rejoicing.

The Waywardens Accounts are more prosaic, but in 1737 they paid 2s. for "3 loads of Gorse laid in the highways." In 1754 they spent 2s. "to level the roads at the funeral of Lawyer Bootle," and in 1766 they spent 10d. "at getting the Roads Cutt with the great Snow." They also "spent on the old officers, when we knowd which way in pocket," which seems to speak of a Balance in Hand, an excellent conclusion for me as well as for them.

I am much indebted to Miss Perry of Aughton for the photographs which illustrate this paper.

¹ Caroe, *Sefton*, p. 119.