



P. Aughton fecit 1803

MEOLS CHURCH

COMMUNICATIONS

NORTH MEOLS CHURCH

By F. H. Cheetham.

IN the autumn of 1911 I picked up in a second-hand furniture shop in Southport a small wash drawing of North Meols Parish Church (here reproduced), which is of more than usual interest. The drawing is done with a brush in light Indian ink, and is inscribed below "Meols Church"; and in the left-hand bottom corner "P. Aughton Fecit 1803." It measures $6\frac{1}{8}$ inches by $4\frac{5}{8}$ inches, with a slight margin all round the paper, which bears the watermark of H. & W., and measures $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches by 6 inches. The drawing is in a small glazed wooden frame, which, when purchased, was covered with ornamental tinfoil very much the worse for wear. Its great interest lies in the fact that it gives a correct representation of St. Cuthbert's Church before the rebuilding of 1860, and is thus, as far as I know, unique. The view is taken from the north-east, and shows the old north transept referred to by Baines (1836). The drawing of the church from the south-east in Bland's *Annals of Southport*, p. 45, which purports to show the building as it was in 1739, is an imaginary sketch, and is therefore of no real value. The draughtsman has there shown the transept too far to the east as a vestry on the north side of the chancel so as to get it into the picture, and puts the door in the east wall instead of at the

north end, as indicated in Aughton's sketch. Baines described the church as

a small building, without side aisles, disposed in a body, chancel, north transept, and a tower and vane thirty-five yards high. . . . The north wing and wall are brick. The interior is plain, the ceiling flat, and the wing or transept on the north is divided from the body by a wide massive arch.

Aughton's drawing is also interesting as showing the old boulder boundary wall on the north and east sides of the churchyard. This has long disappeared on these two sides, the graveyard having been extended in 1813. The gap in the north wall shows an entrance to the churchyard from a path across the fields on that side, which has long disappeared. The gate posts in the left of the picture are somewhat out of perspective, but are presumably those still standing opposite the south doorway.

The church of North Meols was almost entirely rebuilt, except the tower and spire, in 1860, and again in 1908. The old "Venetian" east window has been inserted in the north wall of the nave. In the rebuilding of 1908 various fragments of the early structure were found imbedded in the walls, mostly portions of sixteenth-century window heads and other shaped stones of the same period. The diagonal buttress at the south-west angle of the nave and the masonry immediately adjoining it is perhaps the only portion of this earlier building now remaining. The tower and spire were left untouched in 1908, and stand to-day as shown in Aughton's drawing. The clock is dated 1739, and this has made Mr. Bland in his *Annals* state that the tower was an addition nine years after the rebuilding of 1730. The sixteenth-century building, however, had a tower, as is shown by the Inventory of 1552, where two bells in the steeple are mentioned. The

illustration of the church in Mr. Farrer's *History of North Meols* shows the building subsequent to the reconstruction of 1860.

Peter Aughton was master of the Grammar School, and had a local reputation as an astronomer.