

THE MISSING HISTORY OF WARTON, BY
JOHN LUCAS.

By W. O. Roper, Esq.

(Read 1st April, 1886.)

“ I RODE over Lune toward Warton, a six miles of, where
“ Mr. Kitson was borne. A two mile from Lancaster the
“ Cunteri began to be stoney and a litle to wax montainus.

“ Warton is a preti Streat for a Village.

“ The ground beyond Warton and about is veri Hilly and
“ marvelous Rokky on to Bythom, a v miles of. In the Rokkes
“ I saw Herdes of Gotes.”

Thus wrote Leland, the itinerant antiquary of Henry VIII.'s time. Though no doubt the surface of the land has slightly changed since the description was written, and the herds of goats have entirely disappeared, still Warton is the pretty street for a village, and the ground is as “ marvelous Rokky ” as it was more than three centuries ago.

High above the surrounding lowlands rise the limestone ramparts of Warton Crag, and close at its foot stands the ancient School of Warton, and its still more ancient Church.

This Church consists of chancel, nave with aisles and western tower. The architecture is perpendicular, and the greater part of the structure seems to have been rebuilt on an earlier foundation, about the middle of the sixteenth century. The tower and the windows and pillars of the south aisle are nearly a hundred years older.

The interior of the Church, owing perhaps to its flat white-washed ceiling, presents rather a bare appearance. The east window of the chancel is a modern insertion. The nave is divided from each of its aisles by six plain pointed arches,

resting on octagonal pillars. The windows of the north aisle are perfectly plain: those of the south aisle are the original windows of the perpendicular period, one or two perhaps of an earlier date than the rest. At the east end of the south aisle was the Chantry Chapel, the sedilia of which still remain. And in front of the site of the chantry altar a very fine cross tombstone still exists.

Above the village stands the Grammar School, founded in 1594, by Matthew Hutton, then Bishop of Durham, and afterwards Archbishop of York.

Of this Church and School, and Parish of Warton, a laborious history was written nearly a century and a half ago. The compiler was John Lucas, a native of Warton, and educated at the Grammar School. From that place he went to Leeds, and was chosen by the Committee of Pious Uses for the parish of Leeds to be master of the Free School of St. Mary Magdalen at Bridge End in Leeds. Afterward in 1726, he became master of St. John's Charity School at Leeds. He was very intimate with Ralph Thoresby the antiquary, and assisted him in various compilations. He died, June 26, 1750, and was interred in St. John's Chapel Yard at Leeds.

Lucas himself compiled several works. One was entitled "Collections relating to the Civil, Ecclesiastical, and Natural History of Lancashire, with the pedigrees of the Gentry," &c.; another bore the title "The English, Scotch, and Irish Historical Register." But the one more particularly under our consideration is his History of Warton. This MS. was in the hands of Dr. Whitaker when he compiled his *History of Richmondshire*, and he made good use of it in describing the country round Warton. Mr. Baines also quotes it in his *History of Lancashire*, but for many years the MS., notwithstanding diligent enquiries, has entirely disappeared. In the early part of 1880 a MS., which purported to be the missing history or a copy of it, or at any rate of a portion of it, was anonymously sent to the Vicar of Warton. It is this MS. which I propose (with the kind permission of the Vicar of Warton) to describe to you to-night. The MS. is

beautifully written in a large quarto volume, with elaborate foot-notes. The volume is entitled:—

THE
ANTIQUITIES AND HISTORY
OF THE PARISH AND PARISH CHURCH
OF
WARTON
IN
LANCASHIRE;
BY JOHN LUCAS A NATIVE OF WARTON
AND SCHOOLMASTER AT LEEDES IN THE
COUNTY OF YORK.

This title is written on the inside of the back of the volume. But a much fuller title is set forth on the next page.* The MS. is there described as—

A TOPOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION
OF THE PARISH OF
WARTON
AND SOME PARTS ADJACENT IN
THE
COUNTY PALATINE OF LANCASTER
AND
DIOCES OF CHESTER,
INTERSPERSED WITH GREAT VARIETY OF OBSERVATIONS FROM
HISTORY,
ECCLESIASTICAL, CIVIL AND NATURAL,
EXTRACTED FROM
ORIGINAL RECORDS, MANUSCRIPTS, PEDIGREES, &C.,
AND
MANY RARE ANTIEN T AND MODERN PRINTED
BOOKS,
BY JOHN LUCAS, SCHOOLMASTER,
BEGUN ABOUT AN^o 1710, AND ENDED IN 1743.

* This second title is written upon a leaf which seems to have been fastened in to this Volume. Various accounts state that there were two folio volumes, and it is possible that the shorter title may have belonged originally to the first volume, the fuller title either belonging to the second volume, or having been added to the first. From the extracts given by Dr. Whitaker, the description of the Parish of Warton and the adjacent townships seems to have been more ample in the MS. from which his extracts were taken than in the MS. before us. Other circumstances—the difference in the number of pages, &c.—point to the conclusion that there were two MSS. one being a History of the Parish and Parish Church of Warton, the other (for which the second and longer title was drawn) being a History not merely of Warton, but of the parts adjacent, and in which the various places and institutions were treated at much greater length.

In many respects this second title is a much truer description of the work than the first. The second title describes the book as a topographical description of Warton, interspersed with "a great variety of observations," &c. And certainly the observations are great, both in number and variety. At every possible opportunity, Lucas glides away from his more immediate subject, and discourses at inordinate length upon topics which only by a stretch of imagination can be said to be in the remotest degree connected with the Parish of Warton. Theology, Heraldry, Ancient History, Geology, Latin, and Greek authors,—all alike are laid under contribution, and to no slight extent. So much indeed is this the case, that it is only with great difficulty that the few grains of gold are extracted from the vast mass of useless erudition in which they are hidden.

The first MS. opens with a statement that—"All Mankind are "endued with a Natural and unavoidable Inclination Dutifully "and with Pleasure to remember those Places where they first "drew Breath." In support of this statement, Lucas deems it necessary to quote from various poets, and at the bottom of the closely-written page he states that—"Before I begin to speak of "this Parish in particular, it may be convenient to speak of "Parishes in general," and accordingly the next page is devoted to "parishes in general." The subject of parishes leads him on naturally to the clergy, and the next eight pages are devoted to a treatise on the revenues of the clergy, citing the payment of tithes by Abraham to Melchisedec (Gen. xiv. 20), and tracing his subject down through Saxon to mediæval times. Then Mr. Lucas arrives at "Appropriations," and accordingly at the foot of page 10 we find the first direct historical statement relating to the parish.

"The Tithes and Advowson of this Parish of Warton were "settled on the Dean and Chapter of Worcester Cathedral" by Edward VI. in 1547, in lieu of certain manors and advowsons in Worcester and Gloucester.

Accordingly, the historian, having at last reached his subject, heads his eleventh page, "Parish of Warton: its Antiquities,"

and commences—"If the Origin of the more learned Nations, "Greeks and Romans, be uncertain, as my very Ingenious Friend "Mr. Ralph Thoresby F.R.S. hath observed, much more are "those of these remote Western Parts, and, if National Anti- "quities be Obscure, Parochial must be more uncertain. All "therefore that can be affirmed with safety is that at the time "of the Britains Government this tract was inhabited by the "Brigantes, a brave, hardy and warlike People, and very "numerous."

The passage which follows this is a fair specimen of Lucas's style :—"This Parish is in circuit about Thirteen or Fourteen "Miles, representing as it were the Land of Canaan, a Land "of Hills and Dales, and consequently both pleasant and fruitful, "for we observe that an orderly Vicissitude of things doth "much more gratifie the contemplative property in Man, and "a Land distinguished with Mountains, Vallies and Plains is not "only far more beautiful and pleasant to behold, but also most "convenient for the entertainment of various sorts of Animals "which God hath created, some whereof delight in cold, some "in Hot, some in moist and watery, some in dry and upland "places, and some of them could neither feed nor gather their "proper food in different Regions. The Inhabitants of this "Parish may truly with comfort say that they have within their "own Limits all those Good things (Wine and Oyl excepted) which "Jesus the son of Syrach reckons the chief and principal things "for the whole Use of Mans life, as Water, Fire, Iron, Salt, Bread, "Flour of Wheat, Honey, Clothing and an House to cover "Shame. . . . But to be more particular as to the enjoyment "of the Four Elements—the only proof of the Origin of Fire "is from heat contracted by moist Combustible matter."— And so on, for Lucas has mounted his hobby, and he must ride it to the death before we arrive at anything relating to the Parish of Warton.

A few pages further on Lucas has turned to the advantages Warton offers for a healthy living, and he therefore extracts some statistics from the Parish Registers. The usual proportion

of males to females, on the authority quoted by Lucas, was 14 males to 13 females. The Registers of Warton shewed that for 34 years from 1653 there were 399 males and 398 females baptized, but for the next period of 36 years 776 males had been baptized and only 720 females. On the other hand, the burials for the same 70 years were 819 males and 884 females, the births therefore exceeding the burials by 356 males and 234 females, which, according to Lucas, "shews the improvement of this Parish in inhabitants and consequently in Wealth."

The land in the Parish is next reviewed:—"There are some Fields in this Parish that appear to be nothing else but a gathering of Pebbles, insomuch that the earth cannot be easily discerned among them, yet they yield an abundance of good Corn, especially Oates, Barley and Pease. . . . The Plows that they use here are generally the same with those of the Neighbouring Parishes, which they draw both with Oxen and Horses in Pairs. . . . They do rather plow with Oxen (six whereof I have often seen draw a Plow without an Horse before them). . . . The Grain is here used in making of Malt . . . which is brought to as great Perfection in this County as even at Derby itself by the Skill and Industry (*absit invidia*) of my Brother Ri. Lucas."

Then comes the Topographical Survey of Warton, commencing with the Church, thus giving Lucas the opportunity to trace the origin of Churches from places in Eden set apart by Adam, through Noah and Moses, and so on for three pages more. Following this comes an account of the consecration of Churches and feasts of Dedication, which after a long discourse leads at length to something more interesting—to wit, a description of the Ancient Ceremony of Rushbearing as carried out at Warton.

"The Church of Warton was consecrated or dedicated," writes Lucas, "to the Honour and pious Memory of King Oswald, and the Feast of Dedication being removed from the 5 August is now Annually observed on the Sunday nearest to the First of August, and the vain Custom of Dancing, excessive Drinking

“&c on that day being for many Years laid aside the Inhabitants
“and Strangers duly spend the Day in attending the service of
“the Church and preparing good Cheer within the Rules of
“Sobriety in private Houses. They spend the next Day in
“several kinds of Diversions, the chiefest of which is a Rush-
“bearing which is performed on this manner: They cut hard
“Rushes from the Marsh which they make up into long Bundles
“and then Dress them in fine Linen, Ribons, Silk, Flowers &c ;
“afterwards the Young Women take the Burdens upon their
“Heads and begin the Procession (precedence being always given
“to the Churchwardens Bundle) which is attended with a great
“multitude of People with Musick, Drums, Ringing the Bells
“and all other Demonstrations of Joy they are able to express.
“When they arrive at the Church they go in at the West End
“(the only publick Use that ever I saw that Door put to) and,
“setting down their Bundles in the Church, they strip them off
“their ornaments leaving Crowns or Garlands placed over the
“Cancelli. Then they return to the Town and Cheerfully par-
“take of a plentiful Collation provided for that purpose, and
“spend the rest of the Day and evening in Dancing about a
“May Pole adorned with Greens, Flowers &c or else in some
“other convenient Place.”

Having at length, on the thirty-sixth page of his MS., arrived at the Church, Lucas proceeds to give a minute description of the edifice. Its rough-cast walls, with their freestone buttresses, its roof supported by two rows of pillars and covered with lead, its nave, its chancel, and its tower are all passed in review. The dimensions of the Church, 124 ft. in length and 60 feet in breadth, are noted; and mention is made of the freestone quarry, not far from Coat Stones, from which the stone of the buttresses and battlements was obtained, and which a sudden shifting of the course of the river Keer had disclosed to the view of “my learned
“Master, Mr. Robert Lucas and my Father Richard Lucas, who
“both of them told me that they could easily perceive it had
“formerly been wrought and comparing the Stone they found it

“to be of the same sort with that of the Church to their great
“admiration.”

The monuments of the Church are next enumerated. Within the altar rails there were several stones with crosses, some with and some without traces of brasses upon them. A brass plate within the rails commemorated Agnes, the widow of Francis Jackson, Vicar of Warton, who died in 1674; and another brass bore an inscription to the memory of the Rev. Thomas Lawson, Vicar of Warton, who died in 1681. A stone bearing the arms of West still bears an inscription to the memory of Nathaniel West, nephew of Thomas West, Lord De la Warr, who died in 1670; but the brass which on an adjoining stone marked the resting place of Jane West, his wife, who died in 1651, has long since disappeared. This brass bore several verses, but in Lucas's time only the last two lines were legible—

Too good for th' Earth; Now, Reader, if you keep
Your Eyes from Tears the Stone itself will weep.

The vestry stood on the north side of the chancel, and “over
“the Vestry is the Rood-loft, to which they ascend by Stone
“Stairs: by some fragments of Cieling and Painting yet to be
“seen it seems to have been a very beautiful Place, being
“formerly the principal seat for Image Worship among the
“Papists. . . . One of the Bells belonging to this Rood-loft
“were taken down in my Remembrance, and the Place is
“furnished with Seats in 1634.”

One of the Pews bore and still bears the initials of one of the Bindloss family of Borwick, and the date.

I. B. 1571.

Another pew bore the initials of other members of the same family.

R. M. B. 1612.

And on the north side of the nave still stands the pew of the Middletons of Leighton Hall, with its eight escutcheons, bearing the various quarterings of that family.

In Lucas's time there was above Sir Robert Bindloss's pew a
“Picture of the Virgin Mary, and below four persons in the
“habit of Monks kneeling, especially the first and third, which is

“receiving the Bishop’s blessing, and the Archbishop has on his Robes and Mitre ; there was formerly Inscriptions belonging to them but now not legible. The South aisle has been Cielled and Painted under the Roof like the Rood-loft, but no Figures are discernable but the Sun and Moon in several places. The Seats are so ordered that the Men sit by themselves, and the Women by themselves according to primitive usage ; the Seats for the Men have only a Board at the Back, those for the Women have nothing, which prevents any indecent Posture, Sleeping, &c., too common among Country People.”

The font renovated in 1661, the pulpit rebuilt in 1712, the reading desk and the clerk’s desk are each mentioned and it is noted that “Tho. Ward, the present Clerk, is an Husbandman but Parish Clerks were formerly men of Learning.”

The next person mentioned is the Sexton, whose custom it was to go from House to House, the latter end of Harvest, to receive from each Master of a Family, One, Two, Three or more Sheaves of Corn, which he claims as his right by an immemorial Custom for Cleaning the Church.”

“The Steeple” at the West end of the Church next receives attention.

On the north side of the door is a shield bearing the arms of Washington—Argent, two bars Gules, in chief three mullets of the second with a crescent for difference—a family, according to Lucas, “yet credible in this Town” and whose arms are alleged to have, long after Lucas’s day, given rise to the stars and stripes in the flag of the Nation which a member of the Washington family did so much to found.

The Bells were and are still but three in number : the inscription on one was not legible, that on the second ran—

R. B. (ROBERT BINDLOSS), ANNO D’NI, 1578—

and that on the third was—

SOLI DEO GLORIA, PAX HOMINIBUS.

FRAN. JACKSON, VICAR.

W. C. FECIT, 1662.

ROBERT BINDLOS, BARRONIT. GEO. MIDDLETON,
KNIGHT & BARRONIT, VICE-COM. NAT. WEST, ESQ.

The first and last bells have disappeared, and in their places are bells bearing the dates 1731 and 1782 respectively.

The clock, the porch, the church yard, the sun dial and the glebe land are all treated at great length, but with little mention of local details.

The ruins of the old building to the east of the Church, and which still exist, are alluded to, and the May pole, the stocks, and the whipping post for the punishment of malefactors are not forgotten.

The Ware, a large pond below the Church, is described as remarkable for breeding abundance of eels. "I have often with pleasure observed how the Young Ducks would squeak and frisk about in a Fright as they swim on the Ware, which is occasioned by the Eeles biting their Feet."!

The house of William Dawson, a captain of train bands, is mentioned; so also a piece of ground formerly given to maintain lights before certain altars, and thus bearing the name of Lamp Light Land, and then Lucas passes to the Free School, founded and endowed by Matthew Hutton, Archbishop of York, and where Roger Dodsworth—the compiler, according to Lucas, of the first two vols. of the *Monasticon*—received part of his education.

"The Hare Stone is a little above the Village, and is so called from the encamping an Army there, and this is the most likely to have been when the Danes invaded this part of the Country; they landed at Coat Stones, where from hence the Saxons might see them land, and observe their motions."

One more quotation relative to a practice almost extinct even in the days of Lucas, more than one hundred and fifty years ago:—"The Butts are two Banks of Earth raised at a convenient distance for the exercise of Shooting with the long Bow, which the Inhabitants of this Town are obliged by an Act of Parliament to keep up and maintain upon Pain of forfeiting Twenty Shillings for every Three months that such Butts are lacking. King Edw. VI. delighted much in Shooting with the

“long Bow between Butts, and the Young Men in this Parish
“use this exercise still upon Holy Days”——

Here the MS. ends. But, as I have said, it is evident from Dr. Whittaker's quotations from a MS. of 901 folio pages that there was either another manuscript History or a second volume. Possibly this particular MS., which extends only to some 56 pages, was a copy of the original, and—either from Lucas's death or some other reason—was never completed. But besides numerous other extracts printed in the second volume of the *Richmondshire*, and not contained in the MS. under consideration, Dr. Whitaker gives the apology of the country schoolmaster for his labour of love:—“For the slips and failures which I may have been guilty of, “no apology is more applicable than that with which the learned “Fitz Herbert closes his description of the University of Oxford— “‘Haec sunt, quae aut ab aliis accipere, aut ipsemet, qui adoles- “‘cens admodum Oxoniam reliqui diuque jam ab illa longeque “‘absum memoria retinere potui.’ For as he left Oxford in his “youth and afterwards lived a great distance from it, so did I “likewise leave Warton parish, and have been about fifty miles “distant from it, not only fifteen years, which Tacitus justly “enough calls ‘grande mortalis aevi spatium’, but almost three “times fifteen.”

This paper, like Dr. Whitaker's extracts, may fitly end with the pathetic but unfulfilled wish with which Lucas concludes the history of his native parish:—“I shall close this short account of “the house which received me into the world with a distich which “I desire may be inscribed on the house wherein my body shall “be lodged at its going out of the world:—

“Carnford me genuit, docuit Wartonam, aluitque
Leedes celebris pannis: Hic lapsi ossa tegit.”