

At the dawn of the nineteenth century an imposter made his appearance in Newtown. He called himself "Sir John Pryce" and claimed to be the lawful heir of the Newtown Hall estates, which had been inhabited from one of the ancient five royal tribes of Wales. The inhabitants of the town and the members of the county families received him with every mark of respect. For six months he was the idol of the place, and considerable sums of money were placed at his disposal. When his numerous creditors became clamorous he thought it advisable to decamp. This "Roger Tichborne" was ultimately apprehended and for the debts contracted during his baronetcy he was imprisoned in Chester Castle, and thus ended his romantic career as "claimant" to a large estate.

ALBERT A. BIRCHENOUGH.



Lymm Cross and Rushbearing.

To those who care for the ancient architectural remains of a county, or for its records and traditions, an interesting question may arise as to the possible or probable age of Lymm Cross. That there had been a cross at a much earlier date seems tolerably certain, for the slightly raised triangular eminence on which the present cross stands would naturally suggest itself to those living at the time as a good site for the cross.

It is thought by Mr Ardern—whose kind permission has been given to quote from his interesting and complete work—"Lymm and District"—that the first stand or nucleus of this ancient village dates so far back as the Roman invasion. This opinion is founded on the fact that there is a part of Lymm, which still bears the name of "Eagle's Brow," and one of the inns still carries the well known sign, the "Spread Eagle." The Romans may have planted their standards at Lymm, and used it as a convenient halting place between the two great camps—Chester and Mancunium. It is also notified by Mr Ardern that a former rector of Lymm used to assert that St. Paul had preached from the steps of Lymm Cross. This may seem somewhat far-fetched, but Mr Lane, in his book on Church History, says that the great Apostle when in pursuance of his ministry was known to travel to the "furthest limits of the far west," a phrase in those days of Roman phraseology understood to include Great Britain.

One writer has described Lymm Cross as an ancient fabric ornamented with niches and tracery; another as a cross supported by four pillars, and identified as a Gothic cross. The cross, however, according to

another writer bore no resemblance whatever to Gothic architecture. The ancient crosses of England have been divided into five classes, viz., Memorial, Market, Boundary, Preaching and Weeping crosses. Rimmer, in his account of these, said of a similar design and type to the one at Lymm, that it is somewhat difficult to name this sort under any of the heads given. They are approached by tall flights

old crosses of England as "illustrative teaching." In early times, he speaks of the church as having no greater friends than the peasantry who had shown a sincere affection for the revelation and the light which the Missionaries had brought to them. It was only natural that the heads should generally stay near the princes to advise them how a Christian State should be administered, but there were never



of steps from which it is not improbable that ecclesiastics may have addressed the rustics. These crosses are called by local authorities fourteenth century crosses, but there is nothing in their style of work to indicate with any precision, the age of them, but again there is no reason to suppose the date to be incorrect. History, strange to say, is nearly silent on them. Again, the Rev A. B. Lane in his Church history, regards the

wanting large numbers of self-denying men to go out into the valleys and hills and teach the people. There were then few books, and still fewer persons outside the monasteries who could read; some other way had to be found to arrest and maintain the attention than those which we enjoy by means of the printing press. A language which is still universal was adopted, men's hearts being appealed to through their

eyes. Pictures and sculptures were freely used. The Christian symbol of the Cross was set up in each place where it would be thought there would be gatherings of the people simply in remembrance of the Cross of Christ. Many of these crosses erected in the churchyards and public places are still to be found throughout England and Wales, some showing elaborate workmanship. There is one of unusual height to be seen in the picturesque little churchyard of Nevern, some ten miles from the town of Cardigan, and where the ponderous perpendicular stone is completely covered by the hieroglyphical language only intelligible to those understanding the same. These crosses in those days seem to have been the text books of the times, as various scenes of historic interest were carved on them by the Monks, and these were explained by the missionaries, just as children in these days have illustrated story books read to them before they can read for themselves, and will remember what has been told them of each picture when they again turn over the book by themselves. And thus it must have been with the rough untutored minds of the Anglo Saxon peasantry, who would realise by the same means when the missionaries had gone back to the monasteries how great things had been done for them.

Lymm Cross is regarded by some modern authorities as only seventeenth century work, yet all admit that there must have been at a very much earlier date, a cross upon the same spot. The way in which the lower steps of the base, are worn away, shows its great age yet no one doubts but that the cross itself has been altered in structure many times, according to taste and disposition and not to need. With regard to Lymm Cross as a "preaching cross,"

Mr Ardern says it does not stand adjacent to the church on the spot given in Domesday Book. The steps surrounding it appear to have been hewn out of the solid rock in order to form a station where the itinerant missionary of the days when places of worship were few and far apart might gather a congregation. These stations are usually seen to have been marked by the setting up of a cross, and hence the survival of the name. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that from the steps of the present cross Christianity was preached to our forefathers. It has been stated also by competent authorities, that a cross has often a distinct relation to the church near it, and has been preached from long before the church existed. There are the remains of crosses in the graveyards attached to many Cheshire churches. An old cross of granite, lichen stained and weather worn, may be seen near to or in the old burial grounds of some of the Cornish churches.

Whether this particular cross of Lymm in its first setting up, was a preaching cross, a weeping cross or a market cross, is not sufficiently assured to be definite, but most likely it was the former class, for even in later years Lymm cross has had assembled about it on Rusbearing Sundays a goodly number of people for religious services. Near to it, was formerly seen the "stocks," that old institution used as a ready means for inflicting upon a culprit for minor offences a few hours of just punishment.

Stocks were generally speaking, placed near to a church, as at Mobberley, and were so placed that the miscreant was admirably well suited both to "point a moral and adorn a tale."

The stocks at Knutsford, have long since been removed. Formerly they stood at the foot of Church hill, and in due proximity to the church wall. It is related in Mr Payne's book of Knutsford, that a former "wag" of the town, a notorious character, who had been placed in the stocks for some minor offence or indiscretion, was patiently whiling away the time as best he might, when his brother Samuel happened to pass by, and passing in front of the stocks he said in a ruminating yet complacent manner: "Tha looks well ni!" while the other with as ready wit, replied,, "Aye, and so will thee, when tha gets 'tother side church wall!"

The village of Lymm, is about five miles east of the town of Warrington; six from Altrincham, and six or seven or thereabouts north-west from Knutsford. Lymm is said to derive its name from having been placed on the limit of the county of Chester, and has been spelt in different ways, as Lyme, Limme and Lime, (the latter name appears in the Domesday book. The land is generally of a light sandy nature, and is said to yield good hay crops; in the vicinity are several quarries of a good freestone. The scenery is diversified and slopes gradually towards the banks of the Mersey along with the little stream known as the Dane, which passes on its way to the river through a romantic glen, shaded by tall trees, the clear water flowing over rocks, making to itself miniature cascades.

Sir Peter Leicester, in his "Antiquities of Cheshire," 1666, says that Lymm had a church before the Norman Conquest. Domesday Book says Lymm had apportioned to it, "half a church and half a virgate of land." It is difficult to say what was the measure of a virgate of land in Lymm, as it varied in different places. In some it was 15 acres, in some 10, and in

others 20, 25 and 30, or even 40 acres. It was however arable, and therefore cultivated, and as stated by Sir Peter Leicester, "either lord had one half of the church. In 1666, two parsons were presented to Limme, one preaching one Sunday and the other the next Sunday. Warburton of Arley was patron of one moiety of the church and Legh de Westhall in High Legh, patron of the other moiety; one parson has one half of the tythes of Limme, and the other parson the other half of the tythes. Gilbert de Limme released all his right in the advowson of the moiety of Limme Church unto Thomas de Legh de West Hall in 1316, since which time that family have continued their right."

Hanshall's history states that Gilbert Venables, Baron of Kinderton held a moiety of this little town, which had formerly been held by one called Ulvist; the other moiety by Osbern Fitz Terron. Each of these owners presented to the church. The moiety of the manor held by Osbern was given to John Lacy, the Constable of Chester, who gave it to Adam de Dutton, the ancestor of the Warburtons, who held a Court Baron. The moiety held by the Limmes, descendants of the Barons of Halton, passed by settlement to Robert Domville who married a granddaughter of Thomas Legh. In 1539 this settlement was confirmed. In 1697 these Domvilles bequeathed the estates to John Halstead of Manchester, son and heir of Eleanor Halstead, (an elder sister), and to William Massey, of Sale, son of Ursula, a younger sister. Both dying without issue, the Halstead share descended to Domville Halstead, who took the name of Poole; and his executors put it up in sale by parcels when the chief portion was conveyed to James Wyldes Esq., in 1796. The other share and a fourth of the manor became the property

of Robert Taylor, Esq., great grandson of Anne Taylor,, sister and co-heiress of Wm. Mascie, with the remainder to his brother, the Rev Mascie Domville Taylor, resident in Cheshire.

The history of Lymm Church goes far back as before stated. There seems to have been a church at Lymm at the time of the Norman Conquest, but it would be impossible to say when it was taken down to make place for a second church. The earliest structure is supposed to be in the Anglo Saxon style of architecture, and is thought to be of considerable antiquity.

Sir Peter Leicester has the following entry in his "Antiquities of Cheshire":—

"I find, says he, by a writing with date 1666, now in possession of Dumbill of Limme, that Sir Piers Legh, Sir John Warburton, Sir George Holford, and others, together with the parish priest of the same church, do desire a charitable contribution of all pious persons towards a steeple of stone there in building for Limme Church."

The second church appears to have been in the Norman style, and, as Mr Ardern, the local historian, writes:—"All of the Anglo-Saxon churches were about that period either wholly taken down and rebuilt or otherwise extensively altered to that style of architecture introduced by the Conqueror. The second church was replaced by a structure designed in one of the earlier pointed styles, and the character of building shows that it was probably built towards the beginning of the fourteenth century, so that the second church must have been standing for more than 300 years. It is interesting to know that at a considerable depth below the floor level of the present church, in preparing to underpin a portion of the western wall, which is, in fact, a part of the wall of the

third church, the masons came across a moulded base of deep red sandstone, which could have formed no part of that church, but which was probably a relic of the first or second structure. The carved head inserted in the south wall of the chancel, near the outer door of the vestry, is said to have been dug out of the foundations of the third church, and is also most likely a relic of the second church, if not the one of that standing at the time of the Conqueror. The third church, of which there still remains a portion in the form of an arch in the south wall of the decorated period of architecture, viz., about 1320, probably the monument of some parishioner of importance, seems to have undergone much alteration from time to time, and in the end consisted of a tower, nave, aisles, chancel, and two chantry chapels. Of these latter, that on the north side was appropriated by the lords of the Domville moiety of the manor, and that on the south side to the patron of the moiety of the advowson anciently attached to the same share of the manor. In the north chapel were fixed the interesting hatchments of the Domville and Limme families. Over the door leading into the chancel there was placed an angel bearing the shield containing the arms of the Baron of Halton, or of Limme of Limme, which is now to be seen over the Domville chapel.

Associated with Lymm, have been many County families. In the year 1592 the windows of Lymm Church contained the arms of Warburton of Arley, Limme of Limme, and Grosvenor of Eaton, as well as Hockenshull and others. It is stated in "King's Vale Royal," that the first Gilbert de Lymm lived at about King John's time till that of Edward III. "His male issue then failing, the seniority of the moiety hath belonged to Warburton of Arley, how-

beit that at this date 1666 hath not above six or eight tenements in possession there." It is on record that in 1521 a new steeple was added to the church. Whether there had been one formerly is a matter of uncertainty, still there is a collection of money for a new steeple of stone mentioned, and at the same time three priests of Limme Stathum and another outstanding district, were to pray for the souls of the benefactors."

In February 1850, decided steps were taken to enlarge or rebuild the church altogether for, after so long a period as five centuries the place was considered in a dilapidated condition and not adequate to the altered state of the parish. Yet there have been frequent instances where these old churches might have been saved had well considered restoration been applied in good time, a bolt here and a bar there. As was said of old Bowdon Church at the time of that much lamented so-called "restoration" which meant a clearing away of the old historic building, and an entire re-building of the old place; yet it was said so firmly fixed together were the lower parts of the south walls that gunpowder had to be resorted to in order to shake the stones loose. Likewise it was said of Lymm Church, that the old tower of 1521 had stood so firmly up to the time of the re-building of the present church that it would in all probability have lasted for many years longer had not the tower been weighted with further masonry in order to raise it, which weight caused the final destruction of the tower altogether.

Surely the various counties of England and Wales might in the years gone by have saved to a considerable extent these fine old monuments of a country—the ancient manor houses, the crosses and the parish churches.

From the head of the "Glen" at Lymm,

may be seen the high grey tower of Lymm Church, with the waters of the extensive mill dam, large enough in all appearance to take the name of a lake. Lymm has been called a fine old village, and certainly in descriptive scenery it varies much in character from the surrounding country. This may be to some extent due to the situation, as across the north part of Cheshire there lies a ridge or terrace of new red sandstone, of which according to geologists the Cheshire strata is composed. There is a special interest in the stone quarries at Lymm, on account of the footprints of the curious fish lizard or ichthyosaurus, a creature apparently adapted to live on the earth's surface, and to breathe its moist atmosphere when presumably the soft marshy nature of the earth's crust was not ready far more advanced life.

The ancient custom of "Rushbearing" seems to have been associated with Lymm almost up to the present time, and the same may be said of the church of the Forest of Macclesfield, which situated on the high lands of Cheshire is at an elevation of something like fourteen hundred feet above the sea level. Traditions asserts that there was a sanctuary at this point at or before the Norman conquest which may have constituted one of those ancient chantries, which seem to have been erected by pious persons, so that masses might be chanted for the welfare of their souls. One of these was not long since to be seen in the vicinity of Arderne House, near Tarporley, belonging to the Earl of Haddington,

Rushbearing was in the olden times a religious ceremony, and observed as such. In ancient times it is well known that the floors in rooms of great houses were strewn with rushes and sweet smelling herbs. The practice is on record as belonging to the social manners of the early days of Queen

Elizabeth's reign. The theatre stages of Shakespere's days are said also to have been spread with rushes, as also the lanes and tracts along which any notable procession was expected to pass.

But the "Rushbearing" of a religious festival was fixed, and the rushes carried to the Parish Church each August previous to the date which has since been known as "Rushbearing Sunday." Mr Arden praises "this venerable institution, the advent of which at Lymm was a sort of re-union by which old associations, old friendships, and old memories were awakened, whereas the sad tendency of the present day is to break away old ties and claims, and this should be counteracted."

Ormerod, in describing Rushbearing, says "that the rushes intended to be strewn on the clay floor under the benches are piled neatly up on a cart and a person constantly attends to pare the edges with a hay knife, if disordered in progress. The cart and the horse are carefully selected from the village teams and decorated with flowers and ribands, and on the rushes sit persons holding garlands intended to ornament the church for the ensuing year. These are composed of hoops slung round a pole connected by cross strings which are concealed by artificial means, and covered with ornamentations. One is placed in the Rector's or principal chancel, and others in the subordinate ones belonging to the several manor houses of the parish. They are frequently ornamented by the young ladies of the respective mansions. The cart goes round to the neighbouring hamlets preceded by male and female Morris Dancers, who perform a peculiar dance at each house, and are attended by a man in female attire, (something between a fool and a Maid Marian), who jingles a bell to a tune, and holds out a large wooden ladle for

money. As night approaches the cart with its attendants returns to the place where the church is situated, and the garlands are fixed whilst a peal is rung on the bells and a concourse of village revellers is attracted to view the spectacle."

Two troupes of Morris Dancers paraded the village streets each Rushbearing Saturday until a few years ago, the Lymm troupe led by a well known Lymm fustian cutter, better known as "Dossey Brooks," and the Outrington dancers by a man named Holt, both now dead; but of late years only the Outrington troupe has turned out at the annual wakes. Up to about 1881, a rush cart paraded the streets.

Along with Lymm's annals, may be mentioned a remote association of the noted preacher John Wesley, which turns upon the pivot, even of so small a matter as an old "teapot." Yet a teapot truly is a sign of the times, and the beverage it holds is as sage and comforting a restorer to the tired and much exercised minds of the British public as when first brought over for their delectation!

The anecdote is related in this way. It seems that an old resident of Lymm had in his possession and in careful preservation, a small teapot said to have been left behind by Wesley on one of his missions to Lymm. This can be well understood, as in those days of laboured and irregular travelling, materials for a nondescript meal by the wayside, could easily be carried attached to the girth of the saddle or by saddle bags; and it is well known of this indefatigable preacher that on remote journeyings he was glad to stay the cravings of hunger by eating blackberries from the hedgerows.

Referring again to the ancient custom of Rushbearing, certain persons recently living at Lymm can remember rushes being taken into church in the month of August

in order to help to keep the feet warm of persons attending the services.

Rushes, at different times, have been used for various useful purposes. At one time they made a distinct feature in the domestic economy of households. When Gilbert White wrote his "Natural History of Selborne," rushes were gathered and dried, skilfully peeled by the women so as to leave a narrow even rib from top to bottom to support the pith, and when ready for the process about six pounds of grease at fourpence a pound would dip a pound of rushes, and a good rush measuring two feet four and a half inches had been timed to burn only three minutes short of an hour.

The word "Wakes," which, interpreted, means a "vigil" viz., a keeping awake at night for religious purposes seemed gradually to fall away from its first intention, and to become instead, the exercise of much eating and drinking. As the years went by there was much that was unseemly mixed with the ancient custom of Rushbearing. Refreshments for those assembled were sold close to the church, which gave rise to much boisterous revelry among those buyers and sellers, and as times advance necessarily the custom is less and less observed.

The tower of the present Lymm Church is in the early decorated style, and contains a clock and eight bells, the tenor bell being the heaviest in Cheshire except one at Chester Cathedral. The living, is a Rectory average tithe rent of £193 gross yearly, value about £310 net; £265 with 30 acres of glebe and residence in the gift of W. A. Dechurst, of Oughtrington.

A story is told in connection with Lymm Church, of an old crone in times gone by who used to get her water from the church spout, and although having privilege given her to get water from another source she

still persisted in getting it from the church spout, till one morning, so the story goes, when holding the pail as usual under the hoary leaden spout, she received a sudden shock! for lo! a skeleton hand and arm shot forth and drew the pail upwards through the narrow pipe, and as the poet of the time put forth in verse:

"Ne'er was the pail or hand I ween,
By mortal eye again e'er seen."

Of Lymm Hall—this was in former days the home of the Domville family, was an old grey mansion surrounded by a moat. Opposite to the entrance gate was to be seen the base or steps of an old cross. Whether a market, a weeping or a preaching cross cannot be said.

The latest and very complete restoration of Lymm Cross took place at the time of the Queen Victoria Jubilee, when the defective stones in the masonry were taken out and the base shafts were replaced by new stones to match the old. A panel of the N.E. side holds an inscription to state that the Cross had been restored by public donations in 1897. The other three panels have sun dials with a motto, viz., "Save Time," "Think of the Last," "We are a Shadow."

Regarding "Rushes," a remarkable passage is to be found in Green's Menophon 1589, viz., this: "'Twas a good world when such simphitie was used sayes the olde women of our time, when a ring of a Rush would tye as much love together as a Gimmon of Gold."

SARAH CASH.

Delamere.