



Remarks on Kildwick Parish Church.

[*Reprinted from THE CROSSHILLS ALMANACK OF 1868.*]



THE origin of Kildwick Church is lost in antiquity. Our earliest historical record is the intimation afforded by the Domesday survey, that a church was in existence here in the year 1080, the probability being that it was on the present site, and, unless recently built at the time of the survey, it must have been a Saxon church, and most likely a humble structure. There was certainly a Norman church, for traces of such a structure are still to be seen under the pillars at the west end of the church; the bases of which evidently belonged once to columns of a far more massive character than those they now bear. The church, as it now stands, indicates two distinct styles of Gothic architecture. As far as the well-known Templar's Monument, is the nave, and from thence to the pulpit is the chancel of a church in the decorated

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style, which prevailed in the fourteenth century ; while the remaining portion to the east end is in the Tudor style, or that which was introduced in the reign of Henry VII., and with which the specific character of Gothic architecture may be said to have terminated. The reason of this latter elongation will always afford room for conjecture. Considering the scanty population of those days, it is difficult to assign a very probable cause for making so large an addition. Perhaps it was the aim of our forefathers to produce a *fine* church and in this they succeeded ; for we may safely assert that when the whole had received the finishing touch it was a magnificent place of worship. Its beautiful oak roof ; its uncommon length, about 170 feet ; its font covered with an elegant canopy, standing beneath the finely-proportioned arch in the bell-tower, now walled up and concealed ; its windows in the south-aisle, now mutilated and shorn of their varied tracery ; its coloured-glass and carved-oak stalls, now only known to us by ancient records, having perished long since by misguided zeal on the one hand, and neglect on the other, must, altogether, have presented a combination of beauties which we, who are familiar with the building in its present form, can only imagine. A slight examination of the south side of the church shows that it must once have been different from what it is now. It is evident that, for some purpose or other, the roof has been brought down so low that it has been necessary to adopt the tasteless and unsightly expedient of cutting away the tracery of four of the best windows in the church, and substituting straight covers to bear the wall-plate. No record is left to tell when this unfortunate expedient was adopted. In the year 1779, a sum of money was raised by subscription for a new peal of six bells ; these were cast in London, and hung in the steeple during the same year. There had previously been but three bells. In the year 1709 the clock was erected, and it was the gift of W. Curren, Esq., of Steeton, to whose family many acts of munificence to Kildwick Church are on record. A subscription was raised for a new clock, which was fixed in the present year, 1867.

The Church was restored during the years 1901-3.

Kildwick Parish Six Hundred Years Ago.

[*Reprinted from THE HISTORY OF KILDWICK CHURCH.*]



DURING the three years 1314-15-16, a sore calamity of famine was experienced by our ancestors, the inhabitants of this parish. Such dearth of vituals and utter scarcity of bread was never known to exist in England for so long a time neither before nor since. A scarcity of all things so oppressed the whole land, such murrain in cattle and oxen, that the people were fain to eat horse flesh, dogs, cats, mice, and anything they could get. A quarter of corn and salt advanced in price from 30/- to 40/- from June to September, 1314, and was three times as much in price afterwards; in fact, it could not be purchased for money. The price of corn rose to such an exhorbitant amount that the King had hardly bread for the sustenance of his own household, and what there was of it was in such an unwholesome state that numbers died, so that the quick were not sufficient to bury the dead. The corruption of meats by reason of the unwholesomeness of the ground was so infectious that many died of the flux, many of hot fevers, and divers of the pestilence, and the parish of Kildwick had its share. Many were driven to steal fat dogs and eat them. Some were said in secret corners to eat their own children. Some would steal other men's children, and kill and eat them privily. The year before this extraordinary famine, the English fought against Robert de Bruce at Estriven, where a sanguinary conflict ensued, which resulted in the defeat of the English, and so eagerly were they pursued by the Scots that many English noblemen were slain, amongst others, the Earl of Gloucester, Robert, 1st Lord Clifford of Skipton Castle, and Edmund Maule, with others to the number of 42, and 227 knights and barons, besides men of name who were taken prisoners, and of common soldiers 10,000, or according to Scottish history, 50,000. It has been said that the knight "Lord de Estburn" died of the wounds he received in this battle, along with others of our ancestors in this parish of Kildwick, probably not a few; but, as against this, the date of his death is given on his tomb 1307.