



NOTES ON SOME OF THE PLACES,
TRADITIONS, AND FOLK-LORE OF
THE DOUGLAS VALLEY.

By William Frederick Price.

Read 2nd February, 1899.

“And in the four wild battles by the shore
Of Douglas.”—*Lancelot and Elaine*, TENNYSON.

THE River Douglas finds its source among the hills east of Blackrod, and flows through Wigan, where it takes a sharp curve westward. At Gathurst the country becomes closely wooded, and is very picturesque. After passing through the narrow valley between Parbold and Ashhurst Hills, the river continues its course over a vast plain, until it reaches the Ribble estuary at Hesketh Bank. Camden aptly writes: “Duglesse a riveret, “creepeth and stealeth along quietly by this place “ [Wigan], neere unto which our noble Arthur, as “ Ninnius writeth, put the Saxons to flight in a “ memorable battaile.”

It has been a matter of some controversy whether our Lancashire river Douglas is the “Dulas” or “Douglas” of the Arthurian legend. The subject has been fully discussed by various county historians, Hollingworth, Dr. Whitaker, Rev. J. Whitaker, D. H. Haigh,¹ Dr. James Fergusson,² and others,

¹ *Conquest of the Britons by the Saxons*, D. H. Haigh.

² *Ruic Stone Monuments*, Dr. James Fergusson.

and to the works of these writers I would refer the reader; the evidence on both sides being very carefully dealt with by Mr. Charles Hardwick, in his interesting book, *Ancient Battlefields in Lancashire*.

There are undoubtedly very persistent traditions in the Douglas valley of local conflicts at some remote period, but there is at present little reliable evidence as to the date when these battles took place, or who were the combatants. Briton and Roman, Saxon and Norseman, Cavalier and Roundhead, probably in turn fought their battles within sight of this river, for the Roman road to the North crosses the Douglas at Wigan, Saxon and Norseman have left indications of their presence in place-names scattered over the valley, and Cavalier and Roundhead crossed and recrossed the river at the time of the Siege of Lathom.³ A local historian⁴ has suggested that the Douglas was probably "a physical and tribal boundary in the time of the Britons." It is still a line of demarcation between the hundred of West Derby and the hundred of Leyland; on the estuary, about a mile south-west of Hesketh Bank, is a place called Hundred End.

Some portion of the waters of the Douglas on its lower reaches, below Tarleton or thereabouts, is locally known as Asland. An Act was passed in 1719, for making "the River Douglas, *alias* Asland," navigable from the River Ribble to Wigan, "the undertakers, William Squire, Esq., and Thomas Steeves, Gentleman, both of Liverpool, being empowered as undertakers to levy a rate of 2s. 6d. per ton on all merchandizes between the River Ribble and Miry Lane End, Wigan."

³ It is recorded that at the second siege of Lathom the besiegers had some skirmishes with the enemy at Gillibrand House, Parbold, situated on the north bank of the Douglas.—See *A discourse of the Warr in Lancashire*, Chetham Society series, vol. lxii.

⁴ *Pendle Hill in History and Literature*, James McKay.

In the *Lancashire Church Surveys*, 1650, the Douglas is mentioned as "a great river called "Astlan, over which the inhabitants of the said "towns of Tarleton, Holmes, Sollom and Hesketh, "and Beconsall cannot pass without a boat." At a still earlier date, 7 Henry III (1223), a most interesting reference to the waters of the Douglas may be found in vol. xxxix, pp. 43-4, of the Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society's series: one "Robert de Viliers and his heirs shall have power "to break up a portion of the pasture lying between "the water of *Ascalon* and la onisse for the "improvement of the Manor of Holes" (Much Hoole on the east bank of the Douglas).

In these extracts we have the names "Ascalon," "Astlan," and "Asland" applied to some portion of the waters of the Douglas estuary, the prefix "As" being common to all. The Rev. Isaac Taylor⁵ gives "Æs=water" as the derivation of East in Eastbourne; might not this be equally true of As in Asland, *i.e.*, the water-land. This would aptly describe the marshy swamps and flooded lands at the estuary of the Douglas, for it must be remembered that on the western shore of the Douglas the great lake known as Martin Mere existed until late in the seventeenth century. This lake is said to have been twenty miles in circuit, and contained three islands within its shores. These three islands are marked in Saxton's Map of Lancashire. In *Liverpool District Place-Names* (glossary, p. 17), Mr. Harrison gives Anglo-Saxon As-t=East. The "Manor of Holes," mentioned in connection with the water of Ascalon, is on the *east* side of the river.

Two little tributaries, the Tawd and Yarrow, join the Douglas on its course seawards. Both

⁵ *Words and Places*, p. 156.

names would appear to be of Celtic origin. The word Tawd is given in an old Welsh dictionary as meaning "spreading, distending"; and Taw "quiet, silent." Yarrow is from the Welsh word "garw" = rough.⁶

CYMRO STONE FIELD.

From an historical point of view, perhaps the two most interesting place-names in the Douglas valley occur on the western shore of the stream, in Cymro Stone Field and Battle Holmes. Strange to say, both these names seem to have almost entirely escaped the attention of local historians and etymologists. They may be found marked on the old Ordnance Survey maps of 1843. "The names which still remain upon our maps are able to supply us with traces of the history of nations that have left us no other memorials."⁷ Cymro Stone Field is about half-a-mile north-east of Scarisbrick Hall, and in the occurrence of such a place-name as this we seem to have a very interesting memorial.

A Welsh scholar reads Cymro stone "The stone of the Welshman." This stone, whatever significance it may have had, either commemorative of some conflict or as a boundary stone, has disappeared. Mr. W. E. Gregson and I visited the site some two years ago, and made a search. We failed to gather any information further than the fact that the local wheelwright readily pointed out the field, and told us he had heard the "old folks speak of the Koomri stoän."

Professor Rhys says:⁸ "The word Kymry merely means fellow-countrymen, Cymbro or compatriot, the native of the country and rightful

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 142 and 27.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 142 and 27.

“owner of the soil, in distinction to All-fro, whom
 “the Cymri called the Saxon invader. The district
 “called Tyrnllwg, described by Welsh tradition as
 “reaching from the Dee to the forests of Cumber-
 “land, the tract consisting of the level part of
 “Cheshire and South-west Lancashire, must have
 “been taken from the Cymry soon after the Battle
 “of Chester. The loss of the plains of Tyrnllwg
 “cut their state in two. How late the Welsh
 “language lingered between the Mersey and Clyde
 “we have, however, no means of discovering; but
 “to judge from a passage in the Welsh Triads it
 “may be surmised to have been spoken as late as
 “the fourteenth century.”

A very interesting and able paper, bearing upon the early history of the land between the Ribble and the Mersey, may be found in *Trans. Hist. Soc. of Lanc. and Chesh.*, vol. xxxix, p. 36, “Domesday Record of the land between Ribble and Mersey,” by Rev. A. E. P. Gray.

The Cymro Stone may perchance yet be discovered, built into the wall of the adjacent farm, or turned up by some disturbance of the soil.

BATTLE HOLMES

lies one mile to the eastward of Cymro Stone Field. The ground is slightly elevated. This name suggests the site of one of those long-forgotten battles assigned by local tradition to have taken place between Dane and Saxon on the banks of the River Douglas. Here we seem to be on the track of the Norseman. “Rivers were the inlets
 “by which the northern pirates everywhere made
 “their way into the heart of Europe.”⁹ Battle Holmes is on the verge of what was once the great

⁸ *Notes on Celtic Britain*, p. 139.

⁹ *Green's History of the English People*, vol. i, p. 22.

lake called Martin Mere. The Rev. W. T. Bulpit, Rector of Crossens, says that at the village of Holmes, about a mile further north-east, there are evidences of intrenchments.

Many other battle sites in England have been similarly preserved by place-names. At a place called Assingdon is Battlebridge, close to which are twenty ancient barrows; at Chelsham, in Surrey, there is a Roman camp crowning the summit of a knoll called Battle Hill. There is a place called Battle Flats, north of Bosworth, and Battle in Sussex, where Harold was slain.

Holm is a Norse test word, and means an island, almost always an island in a lake or river; and in connection with the occurrence of Battle Holmes as a place-name, the following is, I think, of some interest. "One nickname in the *Landnáma Bók* "reminds us of a very curious custom in Iceland. "There are three men spoken of there whose "nicknames are Hólmgöngu Starri, Hólmgöngu "Mani, and Hólmgöngu Rafu. They were so "named because they had fought in the Holmgang. "This Holmgang was the Icelandic wager of "battle. The combatants went alone to a holm "or island, and fought until one of them was "wounded or dead. The Holmgang was therefore "a kind of court of final appeal or ordeal, and "wherever a Thing or Parliament was assembled, "an islet or holm was appointed near to it as the "place for the Holmgang or wager of battle."¹⁰

The word Meanygate occurs several times on the west bank of the Douglas. On Tarleton Moss there is Middle Meanygate, Johnson's Meanygate, Bolton's Meanygate, Dandy's Meanygate, Sword Meanygate, Taylor's Meanygate; and on Martin

¹⁰ *The Landnama Book of Iceland*, by the Rev. T. Ellwood, M.A., Rector of Torver, Coniston, *Trans. Cumb. and West. Arch. Soc.*, vol. xii, p. 283.

Mere, Long Meanygate. This word had puzzled me for a long time, and I failed to get any explanation of it, till Mr. Mathwin, of Birkdale, in a letter to a local paper, gave the following solution: "The word undoubtedly means common way, and is about equivalent to 'occupation road.' Gate, of course, means a way, as 'cow-gate' in some parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire is used for the way or lane by which the cattle go to their pasture. This word is an extremely interesting one, found, I believe, in no other part of England."

BOARS DEN.

Ascending Parbold Hill and proceeding eastwards in the direction of Standish, a slight descent is made into a ravine called Sprodley Wood, locally known as Fairy Glen, and along this wood runs Sprodley Brook. Shortly after passing over Sprodley Brook, in a field on the left may be seen a grass-covered mound, which from time immemorial seems to have been called Boars Den. It is so marked in the Ordnance map of 1843, and in the more recent map of 1894 the word "tumulus" is added. Boars Den is about three miles west of the Roman road which passes through Wigan and Standish; the elevation is about 320 feet above sea level. From this plateau a magnificent view presents itself at every point of the compass. Northwards, beyond the silver streak of the Ribble estuary, rise the Cumberland Hills; nearer, and trending eastwards, may be seen Pendle Hill, Bleasdale Moors, Longridge Fells, Rivington Pike, and Anglesark Moors; southwards, Standish, Billinge Beacon, and Ashhurst; and westward stretches a vast plain, with the Welsh Mountains faintly outlined across the Mersey estuary. Few sites in Lancashire could rival this in its command

of the ancient landmarks and beacons of the county, and the estuaries of the Ribble, Mersey, and Dee.

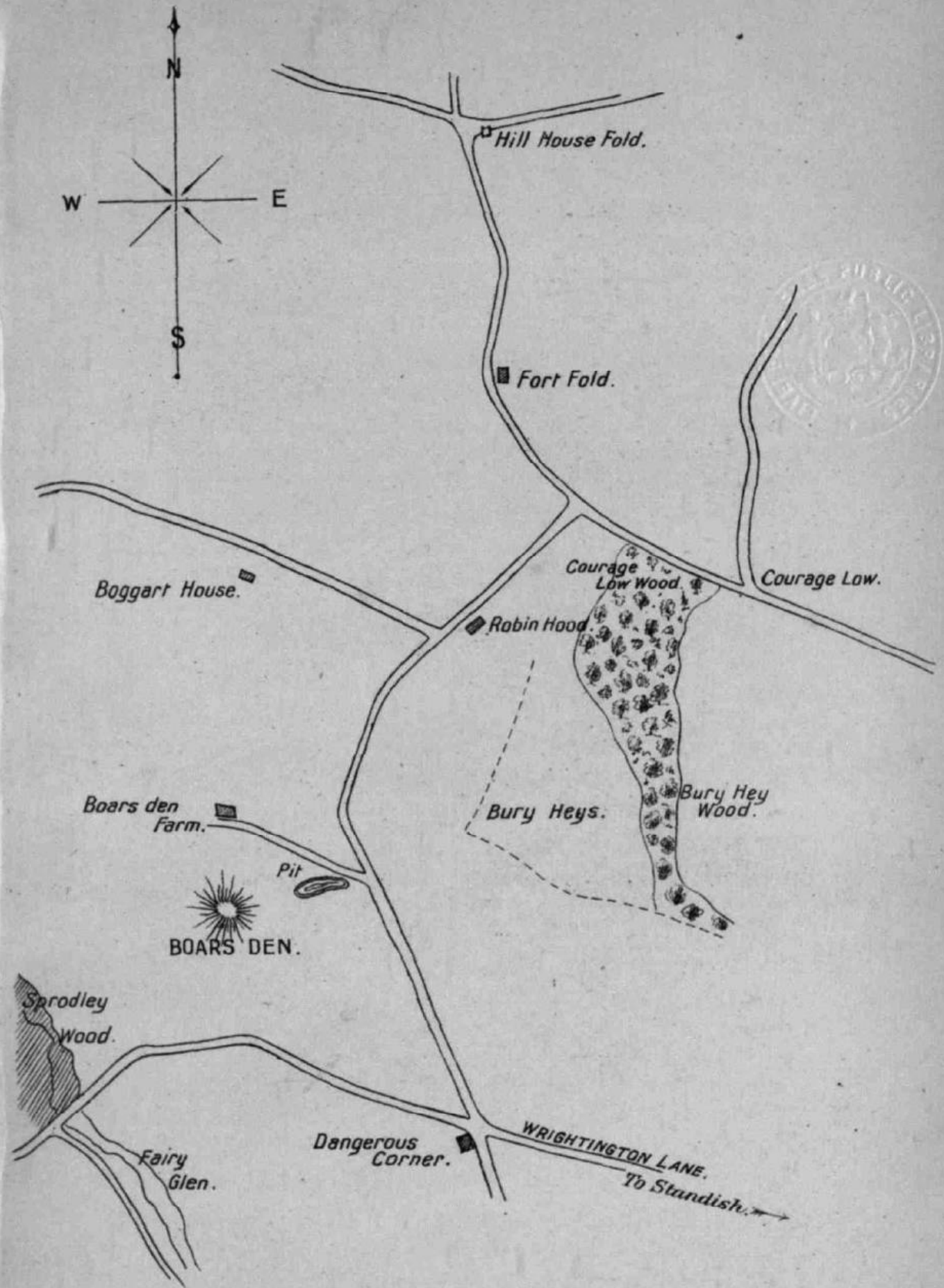
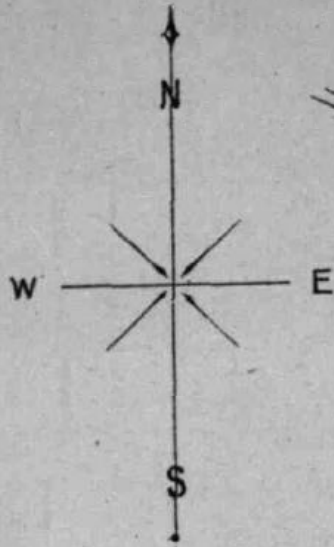
I have roughly measured Boars Den, and found the circumference at the base of the mound to be about 160 yards, and I should take the height to be about 15 feet. It is very symmetrical in shape, taking the form of a round barrow. There is little, if any, depression at the summit; but the surface may have been to some extent disturbed, and the contour altered, by centuries of tillage.

The farm labourer who ploughed the field in which Boars Den stands, told me that he found nothing unusual about the surface of the mound, nor had he ever heard of any relics being turned up by the plough. On the east side the ground gradually rises, and in the adjoining field a large amount of earth has at some time been removed, leaving an elongated pit, now full of water. Was the earth removed from this excavation used to form the mound or tumulus? or is it a marl pit?

The name Boars Den is a puzzle which I will not attempt to solve, it is unusual and striking. A place with a name of very similar sound is found in Borsden and Borsden Brook, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the east of Wigan. This is pronounced locally Bozdane. Near Ince Old Hall, to the south of Wigan, there is Boars House.

Near the course of the river Douglas, and not far from Boars House, a large number of bones of men and horses, and "an amazing quantity" of horse-shoes were found whilst excavating the ground for the making of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

It may not be out of place here to mention that the boar or boar's head was a favourite helmet-crest or totem among our Teutonic ancestors, both Scandinavian and German. This animal was



MAP SHEWING POSITION OF BOARS DEN.

Scale. 6 inches to One Statute.Mile.

sacred to the goddess Friga or Freya, the mother of gods. She was propitiated by the warriors in order to secure her protection in battle.

It yet remains to be proved that Boars Den is a tumulus, and suggestions have been made that it is a natural mound, due to geological agency. Expert opinion on this point would be most valuable; at the same time, I would point out that, be this mound natural or artificial, there yet remain to be accounted for the significant and curious place-names which surround it, and the traditions, superstitions, and folk-lore which are so persistently associated with it. With these place-names, traditions, and folk-lore I propose briefly to deal.

PLACE NAMES.

The word Den, as it occurs in Boars Den, appears in a place called Lions Den, near Low Hill House, Darwen. Near this place the late Mr. Charles Hardwick discovered, in the year 1864, nine cremated interments, with urns of early Anglo-Saxon and British type, fragments of burnt bones, and a bronze spear-head.¹¹ These remains were presented to the Mayer Museum. Mr. Hardwick states that a superstitious reverence for the mound in which these relics were found "has descended to the present day. The country people speak of the place as being haunted by boggarts."

Sprodley.—Sprodley Wood and Sprodley Brook are on the west side of Boars Den. Skeat gives "Anglo-Saxon *spreót*, original sense is a sprout, hence a branch from A.S. verb *spreotan*, Danish *spröd*, Icelandic *spretta*—to spurt out water." There is a North-Country word sprottle, meaning

¹¹ For a full and interesting account of these discoveries, with illustrations of relics found, see *Trans. Hist. Soc. of Lanc. and Ches.*, vol. xviii, p. 273.

to struggle, given in Halliwell's and Wright's Dictionaries.

Boggart House is situated a little to the north of Boars Den. Every Lancashire man knows what a "boggart" is.

Fort Fold was a small farmhouse to the north of Boars Den. I cannot find it marked as Fort Fold on any of the maps of the district, and discovered it quite accidentally, by the Wroughtington Estate Office advertising a sale of hay at Fort Fold in a local paper. I went over for the purpose of getting the spot identified, and found the house had recently been pulled down. In a field at the east side of where the house stood there are indications of earthworks.

Bury Heys and Bury Hey Wood are on high ground to the east of Boars Den. The Rev. Canon Taylor (*Words and Places*, p. 172) says, "Fortified camps, whether of British, Roman, Saxon, or Danish construction, are very commonly marked by the suffix Bury."

Courage Low and Courage Low Wood are contiguous to Bury Hey Wood. This place-name is very suggestive. Probably Low is from the Anglo-Saxon *hlaw*, a mound or grave. The tumulus described previously as having been opened by Mr. Hardwick was near *Low Hill House*. There is a local tradition that there are graves in Bury Hey Wood and Courage Low Wood.

The field-names around Boars Den do not present any special feature. There is Boars Den Field, flanked on the west by Black Croft, and on the east by Higher Moor Croft. My father, who was Vicar of the parish, and had known the district from his boyhood, told me that there was a field close to Boars Den called Danes Field; it is not, however, marked on the tithe map, and enquiries on the spot have so far failed to disclose the name;

possibly it is now forgotten. *Dangerous Corner* is the name of four lane ends hard by.

TRADITIONS, ETC.

I have from time to time noted down some traditions, superstitions, and folk-lore as related to me by the inhabitants of the district; these I will condense as much as possible. The traditions and superstitions which have gathered round Boars Den seem to be very similar to those associated generally with tumuli in other parts of the kingdom, the prevailing idea being that the neighbourhood is infested with spirits, boggarts, and fairies. There is a tradition that there was a battle fought at Bury Hey Wood, and another at Courage Low, and that some forty years ago, when the old pasture fields to the north of Boars Den were ploughed up, a number of badges or soldiers' buttons, of metal, were found. These are said to have been relics of a battle fought here with the Scotch.

In a solitary cottage near Boars Den there lives an old man of 85, whose father lived in the same cottage all his life, and died at the age of 90. This old man tells me that in his early days he was employed as a labourer at Bury Hey Wood, in levelling the ground and planting cover for game. During the disturbance of the ground, what he called "some implements of war" were found. He reports that these relics were taken away by Mr. Scarisbrick, of Wrightington, on whose property they were found, and who placed great value on them. My informant was under the impression that they were taken to London.

A road called Robin Hood Lane runs past Boars Den. Between a certain gate and Dangerous Corner, the old man assured me, this road

is haunted by a boggart. His brother had seen it many times, and it "went clankin' round th' field "in chains." Some two years ago, during the sickness of one of the inmates of Boggart House, the visitations of the house ghost became so frequent and terrifying, that the inhabitants finally fled in terror, and the house was empty at the time of my visit.

An old labourer at Boars Den Farm, after relating some blood-curdling details of these recent ghostly visitations to Boggart House, also told me that "sperrits" were frequently seen at Hill House Fold, an adjacent farm on the hill near by.

There is a story connected with Dangerous Corner. A farmer in the neighbourhood, whose wife had died, was "takkin' her to t' buryin'," when the carriers accidentally knocked the coffin against the wall in rounding Dangerous Corner. The corpse came to life again with the sudden shock, and the wife returned alive to her home. Some time after, she again sickened and died; and as the funeral procession approached Dangerous Corner, the husband said, "Now my lads, be "careful you don't knock her ag'in't th' corner "this time." Since hearing this story, I find that one singularly similar in detail is current in Cumberland. It was told to the Rev. T. Ellwood, M.A., Rector of Torver, Coniston, by Will Ritson, of Wasdale Head. The author relates it in his paper on "The Landnama Book of Iceland as it "illustrates the Dialect, Place-Names, and Folk-
"Lore of Cumberland, Westmorland, and North
"Lancashire."¹²

The villas of Southport and Wigan merchants and tradesmen are already creeping perilously near Boars Den, and the next generation may see the

¹² *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, vol. xii, p. 303.

old battlefield studded over with these emblems of peace and prosperity. The pick and spade may then reveal the mysteries of Boars Den.

NEWBURGH.

Two hundred and fifty years ago or more, Newburgh seems to have been one of the most important villages in the Douglas valley. It is in the hundred of West Derby and township of Lathom, situated about one mile east of Lathom Park, on elevated ground, sloping on the north and east down to the River Douglas; on the south, the village is surrounded by gently rising ground to the summit of Ashhurst Hill.

The terminal "burgh" is uncommon in Lancashire, being more extensively found in the north, as Edinburgh, Jedburgh, &c. The local pronunciation of the word takes the Anglian and Norse form, phonetically "Newbruff."

The Newburgh annual cattle fair had, at one time, a great reputation, but it has now lost much of its former prestige and renown. I have not been able to trace the origin of this fair. In the reign of Edward I, a grant was made of a weekly market and an annual fair to the township of Lathom. This grant was made to Robert de Lathom. A search among the Knowsley charters has thrown no light on the matter, and, until further evidence is forthcoming, it can only be suggested that the grant made to Robert de Lathom survives in the annual fair at Newburgh.

In *A Cavalier's Note Book*, pp. 107 and 138, Mr. Blundell makes two entries of transactions at Newburgh Fair. Under date 1664, he says his servant "bought at Newborough fair, five stirks or "twinters, one for £1 5s. 6d., one for £1 19s., "two for £3, one for £1 9s. 6d." On the 11th

January, 1695, he "sold some cattle at Newbrough fair."

The annual fair is now held on the 20th June, but from the above extract, in which Mr. Blundell states he sold cattle at the "fair" on the 11th January, it would appear that the date of holding the fair has been altered, or possibly Mr. Blundell's entry points to a weekly market, since discontinued.

Newburgh Fair is still celebrated with a great ingathering of the country-side, merry-go-rounds, Aunt Sally, toffee stalls, and "fairin' cakes." These cakes are very similar to the well-known Eccles cakes, which it is a custom with the villagers to send as presents to friends at a distance. The fair was made a free one in 1853.

At fair time the stalls and booths are erected on the village green, where, on a little green knoll, once stood the village cross. The remnants of this cross now consist of two tiers of stones, with a large square stone on the top, which is probably wrong side up, and may be the socket of the shaft. A few isolated stones are scattered about the green; these should be gathered together, and an attempt made, under careful supervision, to replace the stones in their original position. The following, written about the date that these old crosses were being destroyed, gives a graphic account of the proceedings which accompanied the destruction. "May 3, 1643. Cheapside Cross was demolished. "A troop of Horse and two companies of Foot "waiting to see it done, and at the fall of the "Top Cross, Drums beat, Trumpets blew, and a "great shout was made; Charing Cross and all "other crosses in and about London were likewise "pulled down about the same time."¹³

¹³ *The Wars in England, Scotland, and Ireland*, by Richard Burton, 1684, p. 106.

Newburgh Cross would, no doubt, be destroyed by the Parliamentary army, about the time of the siege of Lathom, and a similar scene to the above enacted on the village green at Newburgh.

Years ago I found a quarter-shilling of Elizabeth, date 1567, firmly sunk end-on between the stones of the pavement, in the yard of what was then the Wheat Sheaf Inn (now a private house), at Newburgh. The coin is in fairly good preservation. Recently another find was made of a large silver coin of Charles II. This was discovered by a labourer, underneath the pavement of the main road, almost opposite the Eagle and Child Inn.

The old school-house, situated at the west end of the village, is worthy of notice. It was built in the year 1714, by the Rev. Thomas Crane, a native of Newburgh, "who endowed it with £15 per annum, so that all children of the name of Crane, or whose mother's name was Crane, should be exempt from paying for their education. There was a freehold estate at Dalton, consisting of 16a. 2r. 25p. statute measure, and the income was put to the funds of the schools."¹⁴

Fixed upon the wall inside the school there is a small brass tablet, with the following inscription¹⁵:—"T. K. Crane A.D. antiqua & honesta ortus prosapia atq hac Villa natus imprimis Dei honoris ergo, nec non ob innatum nativi loci amorem Ludum hunc Literarium prop dolor dui desideratum tandem fabricavit, Eumque Libris p^r annum Quindecim donavit: ast amplius aliorum pietate stipendium ei in posterum speratur esse accessurum."

Translation.—"Thomas Crane, D.A., descended from an honourable and ancient family, and born

¹⁴ From evidence given at the Charity Commissioners' investigation, 1898.

¹⁵ My thanks are due to the Rev. W. Hearle, Vicar of Newburgh, who kindly sent me this copy and translation of the inscription.

“ in this village, out of a pious zeal for the honour
 “ of God and the good of his native place and
 “ country, did in the year 1714 erect this school,
 “ endowing the same with a salary of £15 per
 “ annum, which the charitable contributions of
 “ others will, as 'tis hoped, hereafter much
 “ augment.”

The Cranes seem to have been associated with the neighbourhood long previous to the founding of the school-house. Thomas and Ralph Crane were both witnesses to a deed, in connection with some proceedings at the Consistory Court at Chester, relative to a pew in Douglas Chapel in 1667;¹⁶ and a deed recently in my possession, dated 28th December, 1686, recites that one John Crane of Dalton had several parcels of land in Dalton, especially “ one swyne coat and the ffould wherein
 “ the same standeth, and a close of ground called
 “ the Beetle Close.”¹⁷ This deed has a red wax seal, depicting a crane, with head bent down.

It would appear that Thomas Crane died a short time after founding Newburgh School, as the will of “ Thomas Crane, Newbrough, clerk,” was proved at Chester in 1717.¹⁸

A Court Leet is still held at the “ Red Lion,” Newburgh. The twelve members of the Court are elected every seven years, including an ale-taster and window-looker. Each member is entitled on election to two sixpennyworths of brandy. The ancient office of ale-taster or ale-founder requires a man with a pigskin stomach and iron constitution. He is entitled, at any time he thinks fit, to call for and drink samples of ale, and to lodge a complaint at “ court ” if the quality is found to be

¹⁶ See “ Historical Notes on Douglas Chapel,” *Trans. Hist. Soc. of Lanc. and Chesh.*, vol. ii, n.s., p. 223.

¹⁷ This refers to the Beacon Close. Ashhurst Beacon is still locally known as “ the Beetle.”

¹⁸ *Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. xx, p. 51.

inferior. It is related that the last of the ale-tasters of Rossendale, Dick Taylor by name, was occasionally brought up before the magistrate for being drunk and disorderly. Dick on these occasions would declare that it was his legs only and not his head that was drunk, and he would also roundly assert that, like a barrel, he was easily upset when only partially filled, but when full to the bung and end-up he was steady as a rock.¹⁹

The duty of the window-looker was formerly to see that those who were sufficiently luxurious as to have glass windows, paid the window tax.

A Mock Corporation once held its meetings at the Red Lion Inn, Newburgh. The last minute book of this corporation, dating from 1827 to 1832, is still in existence. The custom was for the villagers to assemble annually round the village cross, and elect a new mayor; and tradition says that the drinking of ale formed a very important part of the day's proceedings.

There is an old house opposite the Red Lion Inn, with a little stone panel inserted in the brickwork. This panel bears the initials and date ^{ES}₁₆₉₁. It is weathering, and the date will soon be difficult to decipher, so it is perhaps worth recording.

One hundred years ago Newburgh stood first in the county in the industry of cheese-making. In the year 1793 the Board of Agriculture instructed a Mr. Holt, of Walton, near Liverpool, to make a survey and report upon the state of agriculture in the county. His report was published in the year 1800, and in it he says "the best cheese is made at Leigh and Newburgh. Mixed farming was being practised, but land was rapidly being laid down to grass. The yeoman farmer was disappearing."²⁰

¹⁹ *Lancashire Characters and Places*, by Thomas Newbigging, p. 21.

²⁰ *Ormskirk Advertiser*, 7th June, 1900.

At one time there seems to have been a local pottery, the site of the kiln being indicated by a dwelling called Mug House, just outside the village. I have never met with any specimens of Newburgh pottery, and from the little information I have gleaned, I conclude it was only of coarse quality, such as mugs, &c., for dairy use.

The fame of Newburgh may have waned, but its fairs and markets, mock corporation and attendant masquerades, country sports and court leet, must have provided its inhabitants with a fair share of jollity and merriment in the "good old days."

PARBOLD.

Proceeding eastwards through Newburgh, the township of Parbold is entered on crossing Douglas Three Bridge, which spans the River Douglas and a small tributary beck. The river here divides the Hundreds, Parbold being in the Hundred of Leyland and ecclesiastical district of Douglas.

The present Douglas Three Bridge, recently rebuilt with iron girders, replaced an old stone one of more graceful and picturesque lines. On taking down the old stone bridge, it was found to have been supported on wooden piles. In 1369, Thomas de Lathom left "II marks ad pont de Doggles"; and in 1401, "Alexander Pyk gave two acres of land in Dalton by Doggles-brigge to William del Skoles for life, and after his death toward the repair of the bridge of Doggles for ever." As Douglas Three Bridge carries the main road between Ormskirk and Wigan, and is therefore the most important bridge in the district, it may be the one referred to in these deeds.

On the north side of this bridge there were, 25 years ago, the ruins of an old water-mill. All traces of this mill have now been removed. It was

a stone structure. The remains of the weir may still be traced. The "oldest inhabitant" has no recollection of this mill, except as a ruin; and it was probably superseded by the windmill, now in its turn dismantled, seared, and sailless. There are interesting records of some of the old water-mills, which were in existence on the Douglas River five hundred years ago,²¹ especially on the upper reaches of the stream, at Worthington, Haigh, Shevington, &c. A reference to the early Ordnance Survey maps will show the sites of these old mills.

Parbold was held by Robert de Lathom in the reign of Richard I; and Sir Thomas de Lathom gave the manor of Parbold to his son Edward, in 39 Edward III, from whom sprang a Parbold branch of the Lathom family.²² The Parbold Lathoms entered a pedigree at Dugdale's Visitation in 1664-5, but it seems to be a somewhat imperfect one. They were "founders and patrons" of the Chapel of our Blessed Ladye, Parbold, better known locally as "Duggas Chapel."

About 1730 the Parbold Lathoms appear to have died out, and the manor was purchased by Thomas Crisp, Esq. By the end of the century the Parbold estate had become the property of William Dicconson, Esq., of Wrightington.

At the foot of Parbold Hill, in a sequestered and woody dell, there is a farmhouse marked on the Ordnance maps as Damstead Wood Farm, locally called Manor House Farm. Over the door there is a broken stone panel, the upper portion bearing the letters HL; the lower portion, now broken off, probably bore the date. Above this, in the gable, is another panel of oblong shape, with the initials

TL
1686.

These initials on the old Manor House Farm

²¹ *Standish Charters and Deeds*, edited by J. P. Earwaker, M.A., F.S.A.

²² *Genealogical Essays*, p. 12, George Ormerod, F.S.A.

may be those of some of the Parbold Lathoms, but until the Lathom and Wrightington deeds become accessible, much valuable historical information relative to this district must remain in obscurity.

Some of the old villagers remember the wooden stocks which stood, 40 or 50 years ago, opposite what is still called "Stocks Tavern." Near by Stocks Tavern was the shop where a coarse brown bread, commonly known as "jannock," was formerly sold. Parbold "jannock" had a reputation, especially among the canal barge folk. The Leeds and Liverpool Canal passes through Parbold, and in the days of the "fly boats" there was no doubt a considerable passenger traffic between Liverpool and Wigan and the intervening hamlets bordering on this canal. The "fly boats," drawn by three horses with postillions, left Liverpool daily at 8 a.m., and arrived at Wigan at 5 p.m., the fares to Owlery Lane (Alder Lane), Parbold, were—Front cabin, 3s. 6d. ; Back cabin, 2s. 4d.²³

Parbold is marked in Saxton's map as "Parbot," the local pronunciation varying between Perbot and Parbot. I well remember some Parbot men of the good old-fashioned type, "fawse" long-headed old chaps, full of wit and humour. One wizen-faced old man, considered to be the village genius, was a maker and mender of clocks, and a deft hand at killing pigs and curing bacon ; he was, in fact, the local authority on pork and clocks. He sold the weekly papers, the *Wigan Examiner* and *Wigan Observer*, and would ask, "Which papper dun yo want? t'*Eggsaminer* or t'*Observer*? If yo want t'*eggsamin* th' Wiggin folk yo mun get t'*Eggsaminer*, and if you want t'observe 'um yo mun get t'*Observer*." Another character was familiarly

²³ Gore's *Liverpool Directory*, 1807.

known as "Owd John." Owd John had a florid complexion, clean-shaved face, a merry blue eye, and a large nondescript wobbly nose. A thick crown of silvery hair, which he had a habit of stroking down over his forehead, completes the portrait. "One man in his time plays many parts," and of no man could this be more truly said than of Owd John. In his work-a-day white smock he looked every inch a typical Lancashire drayman. But it was on Sunday that John shone as a man of many parts. He was sexton at "Duggas Chapel"; gave out the hymns, finished up each prayer with a sonorous Amen, rang the church bell, and when sermon time came, left his clerk's desk and, with set and stern face, took up a position among the Sunday school boys. When among "th'lads," John armed himself with a magic wand, which he applied vigorously to the ill-behaved and refractory scholars. Many amusing scenes occurred between John and his "lads," usually terminating by the refractory one being hauled out by his hair, and marched up the aisle to stand in front of the pulpit till the termination of the service. On one occasion John was troubled with "tooth warch," and adopted the following drastic measure for the removal of the offending molar:—"Betty and me "had gone to bed one neet, and th' tooth started "a wortchin worse nor ever, so aw geet up and "went down steers into th' kitchen. After aw'd "getten th' tooth eawt, aw went up to bed again, "and eawr Betty says, 'John, eaws thi 'tooth "'na?' 'Well,' I says, 'Betty, if tha wants to "'know tha mun go an ax it, th' tooths on't "'kitchen dresser, I hove it eawt wi' a three- "'pronged fork.'"

Whilst in the performance of his daily duty, John met a sad and sudden end. Coming home from Upholland he fell off his lorry, and was

mortally injured. Good Owd John! may he rest in peace!

THE CHAPEL OF OUR BLESSED LADY, PARBOLD.

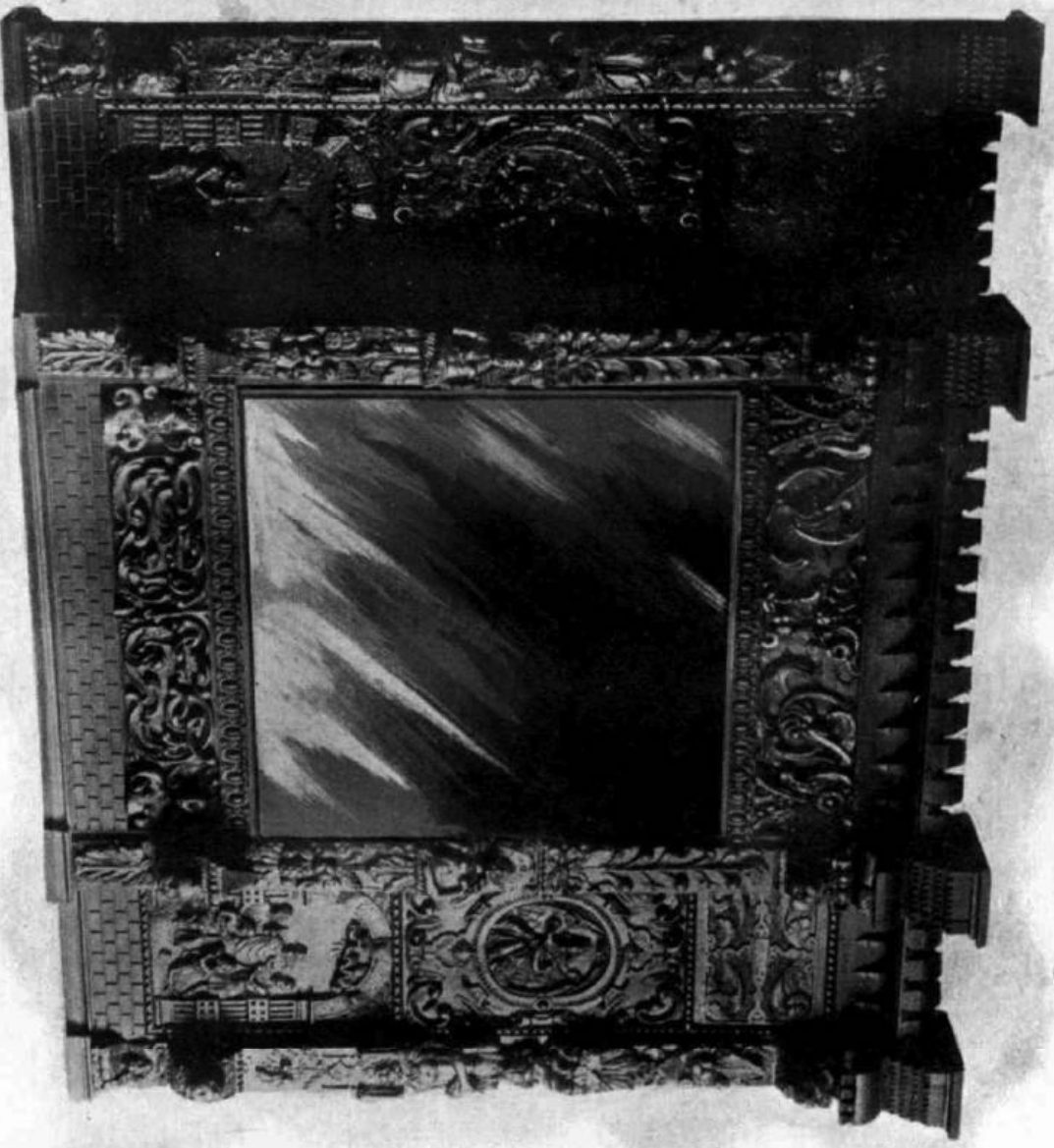
Since my notes on this subject appeared in these *Transactions* (vol. ii, n.s., page 207), another interesting relic of the old chapel of Douglas has been brought before my notice, Mr. Ashton, of Wigan, being the first to draw my attention to its existence. It is a carved oak triptych or re-table, and is now in the possession of Mr. Ball, Greenbank, Gathurst.

I have not been able to gather much of its past history; Mr. George Gilroy bought it some thirty years ago (where, I cannot ascertain), and his son Mr. G. N. Gilroy, solicitor, Leigh, says the tradition associated with this piece of carving is that it came out of Old Douglas Chapel. At Mr. George Gilroy's death, it was sold by auction and purchased by its present owner, through whose courtesy I have been able to get it photographed. Possibly some further evidence may yet be forthcoming to prove more conclusively that this triptych originally belonged to Douglas Chapel.

Each link of fact I have so far been able to gather regarding the history of this chapel point to its having been for many centuries something in the nature of a private chapel of the Lathoms of Parbold, and therefore we might expect to find its furniture in accordance with the rank and dignity of this ancient and noble family. We know that the windows all contained stained glass in 1621; the carved oak pulpit, dated 1648, is still in existence to testify to its beauty, and the carved triptych would be in keeping with these adornments.

It is a tradition that the interior of the chapel was wrecked by the besiegers of Lathom, who

PLATE XIII.



TRYPTICH, FORMERLY IN DOUGLAS CHAPEL

H. S. OF L. AND G.

were skirmishing in the neighbourhood at Gillibrand House, only a quarter of a mile north-east of the chapel.²⁴

The missing centre panel of the triptych (containing probably a representation of the Crucifixion), looks as if the destroyers wilfully mutilated this offending portion and cast the whole piece of carving out of the chapel. It would be interesting to know its history during those succeeding eventful years. Probably during the 250 years it has never been very far away, and it turns up again after that lapse of time only two miles from the old chapel!

Some members of the Lathom family were Benedictines of St. Gregory's, Douay:²⁵ whether any of them became chantry priests at the Chapel of Our Blessed Ladye, Parbold, we know not, but it is more than probable. However that may be, the triptych bears, I think, very marked Flemish influence and characteristics, and may have been brought by one of these Lathom Benedictines from Douay.

Twenty-five years ago the farm houses and cottages in the neighbourhood of Parbold, Dalton, Shevington, and Wrightington abounded in elaborately carved oak chests, chairs, cupboards, and massive cabinets. I knew many of the good pieces, but do not remember seeing in any of them traces of Flemish design or workmanship such as we find in this triptych. As regards subject and design, it follows the conventional arrangement found in mediæval triptyches, the centre panel usually representing our Lord's Crucifixion, the Blessed Virgin and St. John on each side, and above two or more angels, and on the lateral divisions the donors were

²⁴ See *A Discourse on the Warr in Lancashire, from a manuscript in possession of the Earl of Derby*, p. 62 (Chetham Society).

²⁵ See *Transactions of Historic Society of Lanc. and Chesh.*, vol. viii, n.s., pp. 127 (foot note), 128, 130, 136, 145.

often represented with arms crossed or raised in the attitude of prayer.²⁶

Although in this case the centre panel is missing, I think we may safely assume that it represented some scene in the life of our Saviour, probably the Crucifixion. On the first pilaster to the right of the centre is the figure of St. John, nude to the waist, with beard and moustache, and crown shaven, left arm behind his back and the right forefinger pointing inwards to the centre panel, evidently meant to direct the spectator's attention to the principal, all-important portion of the triptych. The pilaster on the left next to the centre has a female half figure, nude to the waist, probably intended to represent the Blessed Virgin (the face of Flemish type), right arm behind her back, left forefinger pointing to central panel. Both the Blessed Virgin and St. John have a curious Egyptian type of lappet falling over the shoulders.

The upper extremities of these two pilasters terminate with carved heads of beasts, the remaining portion above and below the figures being filled up with very beautiful foliated work of fruit and flowers, the lower portion above the plinth terminating with cherubs' heads.

Immediately under the centre panel, among the scroll work, is a diabolical face with lolling tongue protruding from the mouth, probably symbolical of the Evil One, and on either side are two semi-nude figures, male and female, with arms distorted and curled up like rams' horns; both have a small incised cross on the breast. Do these figures represent our first parents overcome by sin, and redeemed by the Cross?

²⁶ I would refer the reader to a very beautiful Flemish triptych among the Roscoe collection in the Walker Art Gallery, No. 38 in the catalogue; also to catalogue No. 58. In each case the donor is represented kneeling on the right. See also *Mediæval Ivory Carvings*, Mayer Collection, Brown's Museum catalogue, Nos. 32, 33, 45; and *Enamels*, 90, 91, 92.

The lateral portions of the triptych have at the top two carved conventional panels, the centre panels below each having, in an oval design, an angel seated. The lower arcaded panels represent the Annunciation and the Adoration of the Magi; in the latter the Babe, sitting on the Blessed Virgin's knee, has been broken away. The two lateral pilasters have beasts' heads at the top, with leaves and fruit below, and male and female figures, with arms crossed over the breast; each has a loin cloth falling from the back of the head over the shoulders, and under the arms, terminating with two masks and foliated work below. I believe these two figures are portraits of the donor and his wife, probably one of the Lathoms and his lady. The male figure wears a short beard, and looks grim and old. In both figures the muscles of the arms and body are well modelled. At the foot of each of these pilasters are cherubic heads, and below those again two male heads, with beards and moustaches, and lappets falling over the shoulder.

The dimensions of the triptych are—length, 5 feet $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; height, 3 feet 10 inches (without the cornice which is modern); the top side panels are $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches \times $9\frac{1}{2}$; middle panels, 1 foot $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches \times $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The pilasters dividing the triptych are $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches broad, the two centre pilasters project 3 inches forward beyond the side panels; the wood is very dark and rich in colour, and I can find no traces of paint or gilding. By way of adapting this piece of carving to modern use the central panel has been fitted with a circular mirror, and it forms the back of a mahogany marble-topped sideboard.

OLD HOUSES.

There are many interesting dated houses scattered about the Douglas valley. Of these, some

were the homes of the lesser gentry, others of the yeoman farmers, and most are of the 17th or early 18th century date. Hidden away in secluded nooks and corners, and little known, they possess many attractions to the architect, artist, and archæologist. Year by year some entirely disappear, or lose their original characteristics owing to necessary repairs or rebuilding.

Within the limits of this paper it would not be possible to describe all the old houses worthy of notice, and these notes will therefore deal only with a few around Gathurst, Appley Bridge, and Ashhurst.

ACKHURST HALL.

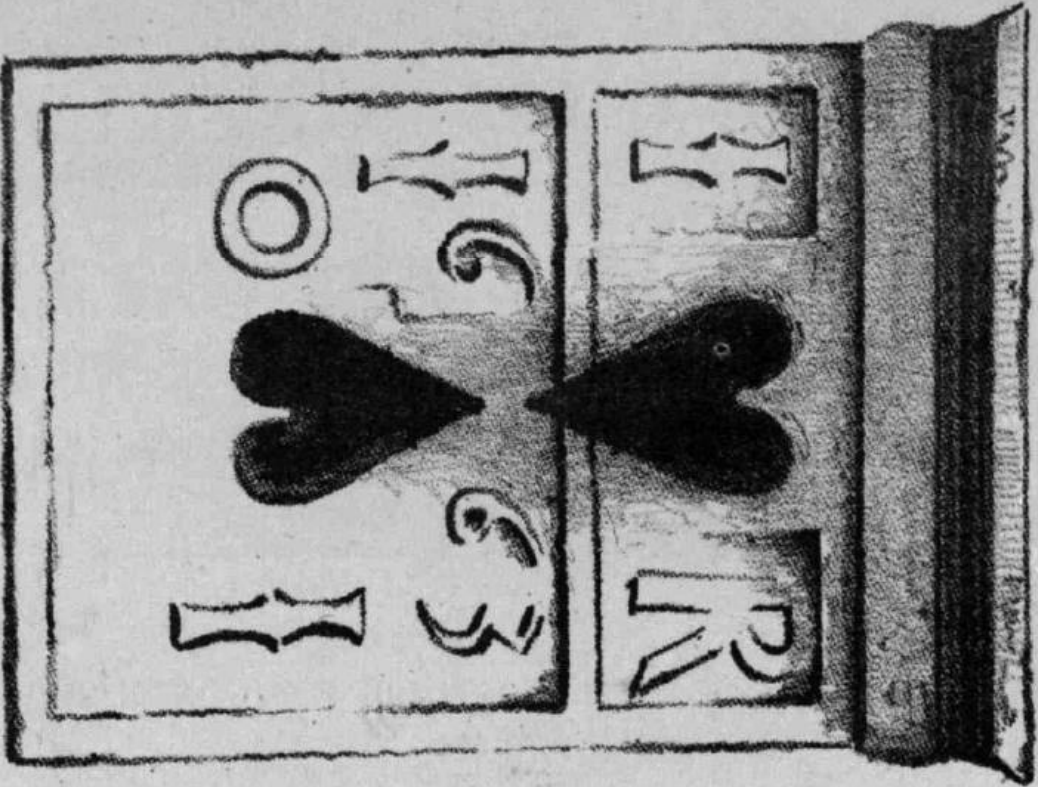
Situated on elevated ground, about three-quarters of a mile south of Gathurst station. It is now used as a farm-house, but has probably seen better days; evidently retains much of its original character, is built of stone, and has a well-proportioned stone porch, dated 1686. There is a fine row of old beech trees on the west side of the house; these are now rapidly decaying, from the effects of smoke from the neighbouring mills and collieries.

Ackhurst was an endowment of Wigan Grammar School, under the will of John Bulloch.²⁷

GATHURST FOLD.

Gathurst Fold is on the south bank of the river Douglas, five minutes' walk from Gathurst station. Situated on high ground above the river, it has an extensive view of the valley. The house, built of local stone and roofed with flags, is of simple design, having two gabled wings; the south front has six long, low, five-light mullioned windows, with a small two-light window above the door.

²⁷ See *History of Wigan*, by David Sinclair.



TABLET ON ASPINALL HOUSE,
APPLEY BRIDGE.

W.F. Rice. Del.



BISHOP DICCONSON'S ARMORIAL TABLET,
ON FINCH HOUSE.

The exterior has probably suffered very little from alteration since it was built, and is an interesting type of early eighteenth century work. On the western gable there is a very quaintly-designed stone tablet with a weather moulding: the initials and date are—

I . B

G . B

1708

The interior of the house is now divided into two dwellings; the one at the west end contains a small oak staircase.

FINCH HOUSE.

Appley Bridge station (on the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway) is an excellent centre from which to explore. Within sight from the station platform, and five minutes' walk eastward, is Finch House, a large three-gabled brick and stone built building. The entrance on the north side of the house is approached by a flight of stone steps through an arched stone doorway. A good bit of original lead work may be seen on the spout and spout-head on the north side: the spout-head bears the initials $I^F M$, supported on either side by two birds (finches?), having in their beaks a trefoil leaf; below the initials is the date 1722. The bands of the spout are decorated with various devices—a lion, swan, six-pointed star, fleur-de-lis, and Tudor rose.

The north door opens directly into a large square hall, and from this an imposing oak staircase leads to the upper rooms. On the first landing there is a room with a canopied oak doorway; this room was used as a chapel.

Built into the west gable of the barn may be seen a beautifully-cut stone panel, with the initials E. D., a coat of arms, and date 1747. Below the shield is a Bishop's mitre, crozier, and staff. (*See plate.*)

Finch House was the residence of Bishop Edward Dicconson, third son of Hugh Dicconson, of Wrightington, by Agnes, daughter of Roger Kirkby, of Kirkby, in the county of Lancaster. He was born in 1670, educated at Douai, obtained the degree of D.D., and became Vice-President of Douai; was made Vicar-Apostolic in 1740, and Bishop of Malta (*in partibus*) in March, 1741. His brother William, born in 1655, was tried for high treason in 1694.²⁸

Bishop Edward Dicconson died 5th May, 1752, aged 82, and was buried in the Parish Church of St. Wilfred, Standish, where, on the south side of the chancel, there is a tablet to his memory, with the following inscription:—

HINC JUXTA JACIT
 EDWARDUS DICCONSON DE FINCH MILL
 EPIS^{CS} MALLENSIS
 IN PARTIBUS INFIDELIUM
 OBIIT
 DIE XXIV APRILIS
 ANNO DOMINI
 MDCCLII
 ÆTATIS SUÆ LXXXII
 REQUIESCAT IN PACE

SKULL HOUSE.

Skull House is on the north bank of the Douglas, and on the west side of Appley Lane, five minutes' walk from Appley Bridge station. It is now almost hidden and surrounded by new brick villas, which, with their raw colour and cold purple slates, seem to be out of harmony with the landscape in which they are set. In contrast to these villas the neighbouring old farmhouses, built of ochre-coloured local stone, and roofed with richly-tinted flags,

²⁸ See *Manchester Trials*, Chetham Society Publications.

shew how harmoniously local material associates with its natural surroundings.

Skull House has recently been repaired and stuccoed, but still retains its flagged roof and irregular outline, and may easily be distinguished among its modern neighbours.

There used to be several aumbreys in the kitchen wall, and in one of these recesses I have been shewn a human skull, which was kept in a box with a glass front. It was said that any attempt to remove this skull from its resting-place was always futile, as it invariably returned. The skull is supposed to be that of a lady, who, tradition says, was murdered in the house. On a recent visit to Skull House I find that the skull is no longer "on view," the notoriety of the relic having evidently become a nuisance to the inmates.

SOUTH TUNLEY AND TUNLEY FARM.²⁹

South Tunley is in Wrightington, three miles north-east of Appley Bridge. Situated on a little knoll, rising from a romantic and picturesque dell, this old house retains much of its original quaintness and charm. A little stream called Tunley Brook babbles through the green meadows in front of the house; the road is carried across this brook by an old grey stone bridge. In the summer time the house is almost hidden from view by the surrounding foliage. The approach from the road is made by a series of stone steps which lead up to a gateway. Over this gateway there is a loose stone, probably not in its original position, bearing the initials and date

W
T E
1671.

²⁹ See illustration opposite p. 190. vol. xii, n.s., of this Society's *Transactions*.

These are the initials of Thomas and Elizabeth Wilson. The will of Thomas Wilson of Wrightington, gentleman, was proved at Chester in 1703, and that of Elizabeth his wife, "of Tunley, "widow," in 1706.³⁰ Over the entrance there is a stone panel, oblong in shape, with letters and date, painted black.

TW MW
1622

The east wing of the house is a good example of black and white or magpie work; the old brick chimney stacks are relieved by a zig-zag pattern worked in and connecting the chimneys together in lattice fashion. Within the house there are a few pieces of ancient armour and some oak furniture; on the back of an old oak chair the initials I. W. 1728 are carved. South Tunley is the property of Colonel Wilson, of Broughton Hall, Preston.

TUNLEY FARM

is adjacent to South Tunley. It is built above the level of the road, and is approached by a flight of steps, on either side of which are two graceful gate piers, with ball tops; a flagged pathway leads up through the garden to the entrance porch, over which there is a panel, inscribed

H
R • M
1675

I have not been able to identify these initials. The house is built of stone, and retains its old flagged roof, aglow with rich russet tints; the stone mullioned windows were removed some few years ago. Tunley Farm belongs to the Scarisbrick estate.

³⁰ *Lanc. and Chesh. Record Society*, vol. xx, pp. 222, 223.

ASPINALL HOUSE.

There is an interesting group of old houses on the south bank of the Douglas, between Appley Bridge and the summit of Ashhurst Hill. Aspinall House is about half-a-mile south-west of Appley Bridge station. It has evidently suffered much mutilation by the re-building and repair of some portions; its chief interest lies in the series of dated stone tablets, found on the front, west gable, and outbuildings.

On the west gable there are two of these tablets, the uppermost being of very unique design, and serving the purpose of a ventilator to the chimney flue (*see illustration*). In the centre of the tablet are two heart-shaped openings, cut through the stone, and communicating with the flue. The panel is divided into two unequal parts by a horizontal beading; the upper half contains the letters I. R., the lower the date, 1663, and initials, O. I.; it is protected on the top by a small dripstone. In a line below this is the second tablet, of a different character, but, withal, a masterly bit of work. The top and sides are enclosed by a massive moulding, the initials, E_R , and date, 1663, are carefully cut in deep relief.

Over the door on the south side of the house, almost hidden by foliage, is another tablet, which probably gives the date when the house changed hands and was partially rebuilt. The initials and date are

I A
I
1756

There is a fourth panel on the outbuildings of the same design, and with the same initials as the one just described, but a year later in date. Within the house there is an old carved oak

cupboard, occupying a recess on one side of the chimney nook in the kitchen.

I have not succeeded, so far, in identifying the initials on the two earlier tablets; the later ones are probably associated with the Aspinalls, from whom the house seems to have got its name.

FISHER HOUSE.

This is a farm adjacent to Aspinall's, and is only a few paces up the lane, now known as Douglas Bank Farm, but marked on the old ordnance survey map of 1845 as Fisher House. The dwelling-house has a somewhat imposing frontage, having nine mullioned windows: two of five lights, four of four lights, all long and low. There are two gabled wings, the east wing possessing a picturesque feature in its double gables of unequal dimensions. The smaller of these gables has in the upper story an upright mullioned and transomed window of four lights. Beneath this window, and over the doorway, in a deeply-recessed moulding, is a stone tablet bearing the initials,

F
H M
1656

An old lead spout-head on the east wing has the letters,

H F
1715

HALLIWELL'S FARM.

Halliwell's is in close proximity to Fisher House, a little further along the lane. Surrounded by sylvan glades, this is, perhaps, the most romantic spot in the Douglas Valley. The house is said to have covered a much larger area than it does at present. The east wing has two large mullioned

windows, with transoms, the upper window has eight, and the lower ten lights; this wing and the porch are probably much as the builder left them. The porch is built out, and gabled, and has a fine six-light window. Below the window, and over the arched doorway, there is a tablet inscribed,

H
L A
1671.

Local stone has been used in the building of the house, but the porch is faced with a very beautiful sandstone, displaying under an afternoon sun a most brilliant palette of varied colour. An old stone archway, now covered with ivy, leads up to the entrance.

On the outbuildings there is a stone tablet of bold design, cut in relief,

H
L A
1663.

It is not unusual to find the farm buildings in this district older than the dwelling-house.

There seem to have been several families of the name of Halliwell resident in the neighbourhood during the latter half of the 17th, and beginning of the 18th century.

STANE HALL.

A charming woodland road leads from Halliwell's farm, up the eastern slope of Ashhurst, to Stane Hall. This house presents some architectural features rather uncommon in the district, the south door having an ornamental pediment, above which there is a square recess, probably intended to contain a sundial or inscribed panel. In the gable above is an oval window, with square leaded lights; the other four windows on this side of the house have stone transoms and mullions.

The house is built of stone and has a flagged roof, the east and west gables surmounted by finials. There is a long flagged pathway across the green, leading to the front door; the garden wall is unusually substantial, being 20 inches thick.

Built into the north-east corner of the house, about 2 feet above the ground, there is a weathered stone, bearing on its outer surface four circular cuppings and some deep horizontal and vertical incisions: the dimensions of this stone are $21\frac{1}{2}$ inches \times $14\frac{1}{2}$ \times 9. Another cupped stone exists, or did exist, some years ago in Lathom wood, about a mile from Stane Hall; this was called "Cromwell's stone," and there is a tradition that the Parliamentarian army used the cuppings on this stone for the purpose of casting their cannon balls at the time of the siege of Lathom.

In a paper on the "Cup and Ring Cuttings on the Calderstones," Professor Simpson, Vice-president of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, says—"The cup and ring cuttings have been discovered in a variety of relations or positions. I have seen them sculptured on the surfaces of rocks, *in situ*; on large stones placed inside and outside the walls of old British cities and camps; on blocks used in the construction of the olden dwellings and strongholds of archaic living man; on chambered sepulchres and kistvaens of the archaic dead; and repeatedly in Scotland on megalithic or so-called Druid circles. . . . They are old, enigmatical handwritings on the wall which no modern reader has yet deciphered. In our present state of knowledge with regard to them, let us be content with merely collecting and recording the facts in regard to their appearances, relations, localities, etc.; for all early theorising will, in all probability, end only in error."



STANE HALL



SCOT'S FOLD

The cupped and grooved stone, incorporated in the fabric of Stane Hall, suggests the inference that the building derived its name from this incident, but no tradition appears to have survived regarding this interesting stone.

SCOTT'S FOLD.

Following the road through the fold of Stane Hall, and continuing the ascent of the hillside, Scott's Fold is soon reached.

The front elevation has a north aspect, and from it a good view is obtained of Parbold Hill on the opposite side of the valley.

The exterior of the building seems to have retained all its original features, and on that account presents a valuable study of 17th century domestic architecture. It is built of local stone, has a flagged roof, and a porch with arched doorway. The stone tablet over the porch door is inscribed,

S
I M
F S
1683

The moulding which contains this tablet is somewhat unique in character, I have not yet seen one like it elsewhere. One of the quaint features of the building is the east gable with its three irregular windows, the large six-light one being the staircase window. I believe the initials on the tablet to be those of "Joseph Scott, of Dalton, "yeoman," whose will was proved at Chester in 1712. Another panel, with initials and date, may be found on the west gable of the barn,

I S M
1680

Here again the farm buildings antedate the dwelling house.

ASHHURST HALL.

Of the original Ashhurst Hall, situated on the north-western slope of Ashhurst Hill, no authentic description seems to have been handed down. In the diary of Robert Lowe (a Lancashire man), the following brief allusion is made to the hall, under date 5th July, 1663:—"Came to Ashhurst Hall, and Elizabeth took us into the chambers up and down, a most pleasant place and gallant walkes." It is said to have been a "large castellated edifice" in 1640, at the commencement of the great "rebellion."

The existing farmhouse, known as Ashhurst Hall, was probably built from the *debris* of the former ancient hall (which existed in 1640), and presents no feature of special interest.

Still left to us, however, are the old gatehouse and "columbarium," both in a good state of preservation. The gatehouse is an excellent example of a guardhouse of the period. In the upper story is a dormitory, and on the ground floor the guard-rooms flank the passage on either side. The gatehouse is said to have originally led into a large quadrangle in front of the hall. Above the keystone of the arched entrance, a stone panel is inserted in the masonry, bearing the arms of the Ashhursts, quartered with those of Dalton and Orrell. John, son of Robert de Asshurst, who lived in the reign of Henry VII, married Alice, daughter and heiress of John Orrell, of Orrell and Skelmersdale, and this marriage eventually brought considerable estates to the Ashhurst family. Over the shield is an esquire's helmet, with floral mantling, and crest—"A wolf statant proper"; at the base are the initials W.A., and date 1649. The legend on the motto ribbon, "*Vincit qui patitur*," is now almost illegible.



PIGEON HOUSE, ASHHURST



HALLIWELL'S

The top of the gatehouse is now ivy-clad, hiding its architectural details. Twenty-five years ago, before the ivy had reached the top, I made a careful sketch, which shews an ornamentation of three half-round moulded crenellations, a large one in the centre flanked by two smaller ones, they are squared at the top, and probably at one time bore finials.

Opposite the gatehouse is the "columbarium," situated on the edge of the pond. It is built of stone, and its picturesque features are shewn in the accompanying illustration.

The Ashhurst family were settled here at a very early period; a grant of land in Skelmersdale was made by Henry Schelmersdale to Robert de Asshurst under a deed dated 1299. Sir Adam de Asshurst was a distinguished soldier in the reign of Edward III, and was rewarded for conspicuous bravery at the battle of Crécy. The initials over the gatehouse are those of William Ashhurst, son of Henry Ashhurst by Cassandra, daughter of John Bradshaw of Bradshaw. In 1633 Henry Ashhurst, in his capacity as magistrate, committed to prison a piper who was disturbing the congregation of Douglas Chapel. For this he was cited to appear in the Star Chamber, to defend his action in resisting the dispensing power of the King over the law.

William Ashhurst, at one time a strong Puritan, sat as M.P. for Newton in the Long Parliament, 1640. After the execution of Charles I, he went over to the Royalists, and obtaining a commission as major in the King's army, took part in the battle of Worcester. His brother, John Ashhurst, was a captain in the Parliamentarian army, and was present at the surrender of the garrison of Lathom House. He was afterwards appointed lieut.-colonel and governor of Liverpool, 1645-

1646. The following extract from the Liverpool Corporation Records is of interest:—"1645—Concerning the Towne being a Garrison, it was petitioned that the Works might stand as they were, and not be altered; and a true Mapp was drawne of them by Samuell Aspinwall, and certified to y^e cōmittee of Parliam^t by Lt.-Col. Ashurst, Govern^r, who requested the Townes men to bee inlisted; but they refused, and are resolved to be at the Governor's cōmand in case of danger."

John Ashhurst, having, like his brother William, deserted the cause of the Commonwealth, fought on the Royalist side at the battle of Worcester, where both brothers were taken prisoners. A younger brother, Henry Ashhurst, was a successful London merchant, and Master of the Merchant Taylors' Company. He left four sons; the eldest became Sir Henry Ashhurst, Bart., M.P. for Truro. The second son, William, was knighted, and in 1693 was Lord Mayor of London.

The Ashhurst family appear to have been associated with the Borough of Liverpool for some considerable period after Lieut.-Col. John Ashhurst held the town "for King and Parliament." There are a few entries in the Corporation Records relating to the Ashhurst family.

1646. W^{ill}us Ashurst de Ashurst A^r Admiss' est liber burgess gratis. Sworn 31 July, 1646.

1648, 21 June. Also the petition again for demolishing the works and dis-garrison-ing the Towne to be drawn up, and a letter to M^r Ashurst, to further the same.

1671. Tho^s Ashurst Esq^r . . . Admitted free gratis.

1694, 19 Nov. Writ from Thomas Ashurst V.C. for the Election of a Burgess in Parliament.

1695. M^r John Ashurst, organist, is admitted free gratis.

1701. Thomas Ashurst of Ashurst Esq. admitted free gratis and sworn same day.

1723. T. H. Ashurst, Recorder. Resigned Sept 27, 1741.

The Ashhursts sold the Ashhurst Hall estate to Sir Thomas Bootle, from whom it has descended to its present owner, the Earl of Lathom.

PRIOR'S WOOD.

Prior's Wood lies hidden in the surrounding woodland on the south bank of the river Douglas, about half a mile from the site of Old Douglas Chapel. There are evidences of a 16th or early 17th century dwelling, some portions of the present house are probably of that period, considerable alterations and additions having been made during the present century. In front of the house the charms of a sunny old-world garden are enhanced by a little brook which runs through it, and feeds a fish-pond once well stocked with trout.

There is a generally accepted tradition that Prior's Wood was at one time associated in some way with the priory of Upholland, and so derived its name. In the absence of any evidence in confirmation of this tradition, it should not be forgotten that Prior Marsh established his community of St. Lawrence somewhere in Parbold in 1802. A retired and sequestered residence such as Prior's Wood might have been admirably suited to the exigencies of the community of St. Lawrence. In the same year (1802) that the Benedictine community of St. Lawrence established themselves at Parbold, Prior Marsh resigned his office, and in 1804 was keeping a school at Parbold Hall.

HOLLAND HOUSE.

Situated on Holland Lees, Dalton, with a frontage to the road, there is a dwelling known as Holland House, a few minutes' walk from Prior's Wood. It appears to have been the residence of a yeoman family of the name of Holland, possibly a

branch of the Hollands of Upholland. The house is built of stone, but has no attractive features. On the keystone of the south-west doorway there is sculptured a female head. The feature of the house is a large hall, with a fine oak staircase leading to the upper story; on the handrail the initials and date, IH, 1727, are carved. The family seem to have died out or removed about this date, but from wills proved at Chester, I can trace their residence at Dalton back to the 16th century.

To the late Mr. T. N. Morton I am indebted for information respecting the Ashhurst family, and to Mr. Waite for the photographic illustrations which accompany this paper.

