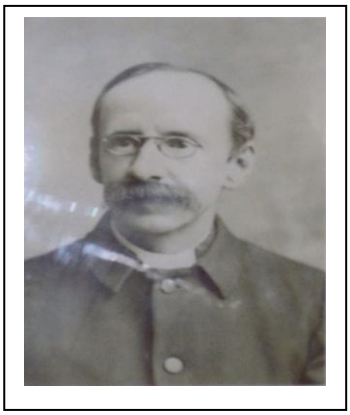
Ossik Coots and Collared Doves



The story of an amazing community and its church – from the beginning.

By Reverend Colin R Honour. M.Ed.

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to all the ‘characters’ who
have made this church and
parish what it is.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank our special friends at Urswick for introducing me to its remarkable past and sharing a vision for its future, and to the original Hidden Light Project Group for all we shared together in good times and bad.
To Steve Dickinson, local archaeologist, for firing my imagination in the early days, and for permission to reproduce his line drawings of the inscribed stones in the church's north wall from 'Beacon on the Bay', and photographs of the 'threshold stone' between tower and nave exposed in 2003.
To Sir Roy Strong for introducing the 'wider picture' in a way we can all understand, and for allowing me to quote from his little gem, 'A Little History Of The English Country Church'.

Thanks go to the patient Archivist and Staff at the Barrow Central Library Local Resources Section, and also at Kendal Library, for their willingness to go the extra mile for me. Thanks, too, to John Imlach and Graham Perry at the church for unearthing additional information and providing local contacts, to Ray Wilson, for his love of Urswick and care in nurturing its historical heritage.

And to all those people, known and unknown, who over the many generations have kept, and are keeping, this beautiful church at the heart of their community, shared it, shaped it, securing its fabric and its story for future generations to enjoy.

Colin R Honour

Heversham November 2011

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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

If only the stones could speak!

The roots of this book lie in eight years of parochial ministry spent in this beautiful corner of North-West England where the remoteness and isolation of the Low Furness Peninsula has left so much of its early history undisturbed.
So here's a timely reminder of an exceptional community whose earliest footprint can still be seen and experienced in and through its local parish church and surrounding landscape.

The very structure and the fabric of this amazing church of St. Mary and St. Michael, Great Urswick can still show us much of the local colour as it has evolved over more than 1500 years but, of course, it's the people who give it it's lasting character.

Urswick is certainly not short of character!!

To be a true 'Ossik Coot' one would have to have been born and bred in the village and in the light of its long and distinguished history that particular heritage perhaps explains both their fierce village loyalty and their characteristic 'directness'.

Father Thomas West, writing in the late 1700's, graciously described the folk of Furness as being 'civil and well-behaved to strangers, hospitable and humane'.
He continued: 'This universal civility and good manners is the characteristic of furness, and distinguishes it from those parts of the kingdom where as importunate curiosity degenerates into rudeness and barbarism, so flagrant and offensive amongst those of the lower stations. At church and market their appearance is decent, and sobriety is a general virtue. Quarrels and affrays are seldom heard of at fairs and public meetings. The modesty of the female sex and sobriety of the men prevent irregularities before marriage, and secure conjugal love and affection through life. The women are handsome, the men in general robust.
As the air of Furness is salubrious, so the inhabitants of Furness are very healthy'.

A little piece of heaven, then.

There are those 'collared doves' who, like Reverend George Humphriss, have over the years portrayed some of the folk in a less rosy light and dared to suggest a degree of intolerance, stubbornness, and the love of an argument. A clergyman's lot is not always what it seems..... as we shall discover.

Sometimes fact is stranger than fiction- sometimes it ***is*** fiction woven into the fabric!

Here we shall explore both myth and legend, and tap seriously into the truth.

Let the journey begin.....

CHAPTER ONE

In the Beginning.... shifting sands

Before the boundary revisions of 1974 the Furness Peninsula was part of 'Lancashire north of the Sands', in other words on the northern edge of the extensive and expansive Morecambe Bay. In fact, its most accessible route from the south (if not the safest) in earliest days, was across the shifting tidal route 'over Sands'.

In more recent years the area has been dominated by the growth of Barrow-in-Furness and its ship-building industry, and the number of smaller 'villages' on the Peninsula like Great Urswick and Little Urswick have increasingly become 'commuter villages' for those working away from the area or working in BAE Systems at Barrow or up the west coast at the nuclear energy plant at Sellafield. Whilst farming continues at some level many of the houses have become retirement homes for the growing numbers of older persons seeking the 'peace and quiet' of the countryside. There is, however, a strong local identity and fierce pride in its heritage by many whose families can be traced back for a number of generations, a feature and in some ways a benefit of having being somewhat insulated from the rest of the country for most of its history. It is because of this isolation that much of its historic past has been overlooked and ignored and it is only in recent years, particularly with the new interest in 'Celtic spirituality', that the area has begun to attract closer attention and its historical 'treasures' unearthed and placed in context.

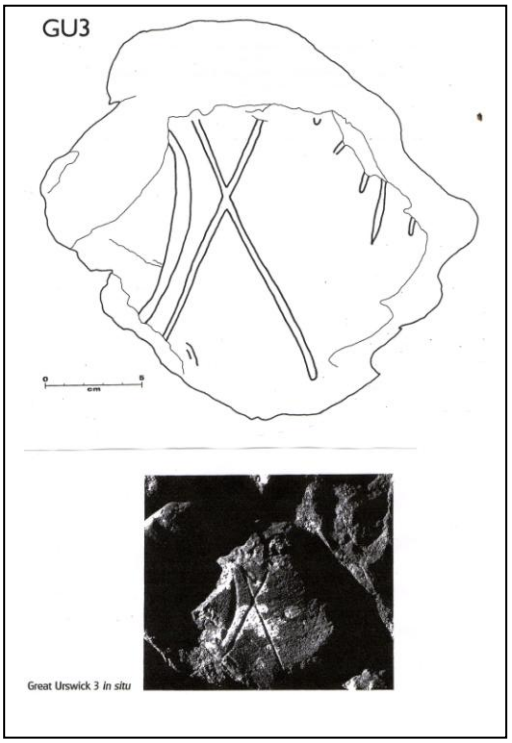
Amazingly, much of this historic footprint can still be seen in the fabric and the landscape of the church of St. Mary and St. Michael, Great Urswick, and no doubt there is much yet to be discovered and added to this fascinating journey.

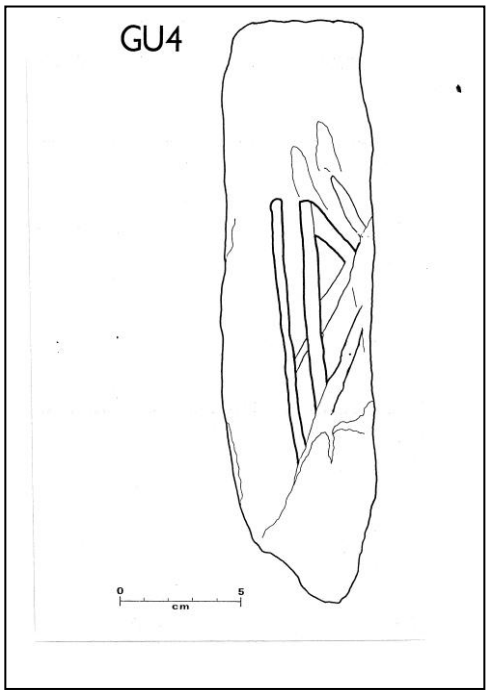
Steve Dickinson, a local archaeologist of whom more later, wrote: 'Examination of the landscape around the church, and the church itself, allows a presentation of new and emerging archaeological evidence for a major late and/or sub-Romano-British church and monastic foundation; subsequently influenced by Irish and Anglo-Saxon activity.' (The Beacon on the Bay, 2002)

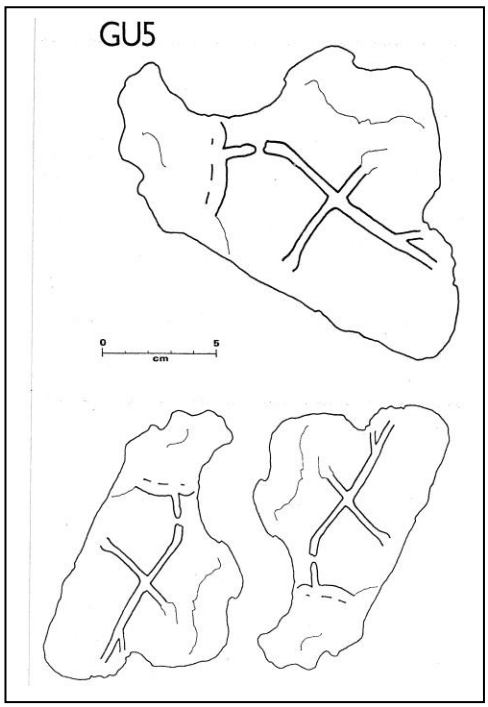
Not all of his conclusions and 'inferences' have found universal acceptance, not least by other archaeologists, and there is a lack of follow-up 'evidence' to date to support some of his most far-reaching claims. However, he has opened up for us an extremely helpful and lively debate which will continue. Sadly, some important discoveries made by Mr. Dickinson in his initial survey have gone unacknowledged and have become lost in later disputes and difficulties, and it is with this particular piece of 'evidence' that the 'story in stone' at Urswick begins.

I refer to three fragments of 'early Christian inscribed stones' built into the outer north wall of the nave which are possibly part of a late or sub-Roman church dedication slab.

Line Drawings reproduced with permission from 'Beacon on the Bay' (2002) by Steve Dickinson.







Dickinson states that further fragments of early Christian inscribed stones can be seen elsewhere in the same wall. It is suggested that these stones incorporating cross symbols were deliberately chosen as a suitably Christian deterrent on the north side of the church.

Readers might be interested to note that during Anglo-Saxon and Norman times, and probably even later than that, burials tended to be made to the south of the church because there was a tradition that the devil haunted the north side in order to take wandering souls off to hell!

In a later publication about the church at Great Urswick and its landscape called 'By water, by stone' produced in 2004, Dickinson refers to three other 'inscribed and/or sculpted stones in the church'.

The first of these is a slab of pale gritstone that forms the threshold between the nave and the belfry. This was revealed in 2003 when re-wiring and work to the heating system was being undertaken. He claims that the 'letter forms revealed through flash photography on its underside.... is considered to display part of a rare 5th-8th century AD memorial dedication'. Unfortunately this stone is currently inaccessible.

The second stone is fastened to the sill of the tall nave window closest to the church porch door. It was actually discovered in 1911 being used as a lintel in another south nave window, hence its peculiar shape, having been cut and re-used. It is part of an Anglo-Saxon sandstone cross, originally some 3 metres high. This is the most significant, and most disputed, relic and requires detailed exploration.

The third sculpted Christian stone fragment relates to the Viking/ Norse-Irish immigration of the 10th century and underlines the continuity of the Christian faith on the Furness Peninsula. This, too, was discovered during renovations made to the chancel in 1911.

It is probably best to provide a wider context for Great Urswick at this point before we return to examine those two visible 'stone witnesses' in detail because the geographical location and strategic position of Furness is significant to our story. We also have to explore a broad historical 'footprint' because our journey embraces more than one period of 'immigration' over a huge expanse of time. I hesitate to refer to 'conquest' favouring instead the term 'settlement' in relation to the area because it is the nature of the Furness Peninsula that whilst it was occupied and settled by various groups and parties its folk remain as free and independent as ever!

We are reminded that from earliest times up to the 18th century Furness was largely an island.

When the tides were out, leaving huge plains of shallow water and open sands, they provided the well-used, if dangerous 'cross-sands' routes into Furness. These routes have

great significance in terms of trade and travel over the centuries from Roman times to the coming of the railways in the early 19th century.

Fred Barnes, former Librarian for Barrow Borough and a popular local historian in his book 'Barrow and District' published in 1968 sketches the developments in Furness from Prehistory to the coming of the Angles in one helpful chapter and his particular themes of migration, refuge and settlement are extremely important to the development of the Church in Furness. He begins by stating that 'man and human culture reached Britain from the Continent in a series of waves beginning with Old Stone Age man about 30,000 years ago. In most cases the invasion began from south-east England or Cornwall and always the newcomers pushed back the races they found there to the highlands of the north and west.' (page 7). He suggests that being an isolated and remote area made Furness 'peculiarly ideal for the sheltering of superseded civilisations'. New Stone Age man pushed out Old Stone Age man from about 2500 BC only to be evicted in turn by Bronze Age man after about 1900 BC. The men of the Iron Age began to expel the Bronze Age peoples about 500 BC. 'So', states Barnes, ''since to this secluded promontory would come in turn as refugees Neolithic and Bronze Age men and later Early Iron Age men (Celts) one is not surprised to find a considerable mixing of cultures' so there would be groups still living a hunting, food-gathering life while other groups had taken up farming and reached a relatively high standard of civilisation. He points to significant 'field evidence' in the area. Bronze Age burials- round barrows, cists and urn-fields- are common and some of their contents have survived.

The 'concentric' stone circle on Birkrigg Common, about 2 kilometres from Urswick, known locally as the 'Druids Temple' was dated to the Late Bronze Age. Other burial sites around Urswick, eg. Heaning Wood, and the 'Burial Chamber' recorded on the Ordnance Survey map are further evidence of Bronze Age activity.

Barnes states that the habitation sites of the earliest inhabitants of Furness have been totally obliterated, but the more substantial stone-built settlements of the period around the Roman Conquest- those of the 'Ancient Britons'- have survived. He cites Urswick Stone Walls, Appleby Slack and Foulna near Holme Bank together with the hill-fort at Skelmore Heads, Urswick, as the best examples. These settlements suggest small tribal or family units of perhaps fifty individuals engaged in crude cultivation and possessing livestock.

Adding to the sense of antiquity with the Urswicks at the centre, Nikolaus Pevsner in his inventory of the buildings of England (1969) refers to a further enclosure on the north-east slope of Birkrigg Common, pear-shaped in plan and delimited by a rubble bank ten feet wide; a single entrance occurred on the east side but there were no surface traces of internal structures. The other one, marked as 'Homestead' on the current Ordnance Survey map, was a further enclosure one mile east south-east of Little Urswick. He described the site as being 'polygonal in plan and defined by a massive rubble bank revetted with large stone slabs'. The foundations of two circular huts were visible in the interior and although at

the time the settlement remained unexcavated it was probably Iron Age or native Romano-British.

Urswick Stone Walls has attracted particular attention because of its size; consisting of the foundations of a 70 x 100 metre sub-oval settlement incorporating the remains of at least five roundhouses. Dickinson suggests that this development demonstrates that the local environment would have been an increasing patchwork of fields and pastures with woodland pock-marked by clearance for timber and fuel as the local community increased in size. It also shows signs of further, later development. Whilst the oval camp is dated at approximately 200 BC, the second, four-sided enclosure is a later addition, its shape showing the influence of the normal Roman camp plan (Barnes) and thought to date from the period of Roman occupation (Dickinson). Gaythorpe writing in 1882 decided that the oval enclosure seemed 'without doubt' to have been an ancient British fortress, probably constructed of increased strength during the early Iron period 'with a view to securing command of the veins of haematite ore known to exist in the fissures of the limestone in the immediate neighbourhood'. He concluded that there were no indications of the enclosures having been occupied by either Anglian or Norse settlers.

Dickinson suggested 'good evidence' for later prehistoric and Roman period iron smelting. He goes one huge step further in that he sees in the developments at Skelmore Heads a rampart which together with the size of the site, as being 'typical of a post-Roman or early historic period royal site' and states that 'in the field walls in the surrounding landscape, evidence from worked sandstone is accumulating for a long-lost major Roman military site.'

What can be stated with confidence is that Urswick and its Tarn seem to have been a significant focus over hundreds, probably thousands of years; this is supported by Barnes' reference to the ancient road across Furness 'used from time immemorial'. It links up with the oversands route from Cartmel at Conishead (Barnes says this was the only practical route up from the sands until the mosses were drained). From Conishead the track winds round the shoulders of the hills across Furness to Ireleth, always crossing the valleys at the narrowest point; it goes by way of Urswick to Dalton across the Goldmire Valley to Ireleth, where it links with the oversands route across the Duddon estuary to Millom.

James Stockdale in his 'Annals of Cartmel' describes how in 79 AD in the reign of Emperor Vespatian, Agricola, the Roman General, in his second campaign 'contended with the bravest and most powerful of the British tribes- the Brigantes- drove them through their thick woods and morasses, till at length he reached the southern shores of the great Bay of Morecambe; and, having with difficulty passed over the then low-lying sand-banks and quicksands of the estuary, for the first time led the Roman legions into Cartmel.'

Barnes could find no evidence for Roman occupation or settlement in Furness and supposed that the chain of forts along the roads, combined with the operation of the Roman fleet, completely isolated the Britons around Millom, Furness and Lonsdale. He would expect a

small naval station to be sited on Piel Island or the South End of Walney Island for use by the fleet in emergencies but suggested that any Roman 'finds' would be associated with passing trade and that 'probably the natives traded with the Romans, perhaps Roman tax collectors or punitive expeditions penetrated Furness'. We know from history that in 138 AD the Romans suppressed a revolt in the Lake District and that after 220 AD there were continual raids into the area by pirates from Ireland and Scotland until Roman authority was fully restored towards the end of the third century. These raids were repeated during the later years of the fourth century and of course the Romans withdrew altogether in about 410 AD. The Romans were known to have used the 'over sands' routes regularly when travelling north from Lancaster. A large hoard of Roman coins has very recently been found at Arnside.

John Dobson, Master of the Grammar School in Little Urswick from 1876 until 1920, wrote that 'although it is much disputed whether the Romans during their four centuries occupation of Southern Britain had much connection with Furness, yet Urswick can put us in touch even with that conquering, civilizing, Christianity-spreading race. Mr. Close figures a silver coin of the emperor Otho found at Little Urswick in 1798, and only a few years ago a copper coin of Constantine the Great was unearthed in the vicarage garden at Little Urswick and is now in the possession of the Rev. T. N. Postlethwaite.'
He referred to the supposed 'Roman road which passed along the northern boundary of the parish' (which was proven not to be such) and stated that 'it would not cause any very great surprise if a Roman milestone or even a Roman Altar were to be discovered within our boundaries'.

Dickinson holds out greater hope for a significant Roman presence in Furness. He claims with confidence that 'we can begin to see a local post-Roman power centre here in the landscape around the Urswick villages'. He goes on to state that his 'landscape survey, besides revealing tantalising glimpses of Roman Urswick settlement origins, has also demonstrated evidence for both the inner and outer boundaries of a massive, previously unidentified, early Christian monastery; the buildings of which, with the exception of the church, have disappeared'.

Writing in 2007, Daniel Elsworth of Greenlane Archaeology in Ulverston, re-opened the debate about evidence for the Roman presence in Low Furness. He concluded that 'a re-examination of the documentary sources, combined with evidence from aerial photographs and more recent discoveries, shows that the original claims still have considerable validity and that they actually indicate a greater degree of Roman activity in the area than previously thought.'

Continuing the sequence of habitation and migration Barnes tells us that in the readjustment following the withdrawal of the Romans from Britain the Celtic inhabitants of Furness were absorbed by the Kingdom of Strathclyde which then covered the west side of Britain from the Mersey to the rock of Dumbarton on the Clyde. He states with absolute

confidence that 'Christianity had already been brought to Cumbria by St. Ninian about 397 AD, but soon the Christian Celts had to face the inroads of heathen teutonic invaders.'

Stockdale, again in flowery tones tells us that on the departure of the last Roman legion from the north-west part of Britain-'particularly Cumberland, Westmorland, and the adjacent districts of Cartmel and Furness, containing several Romano-British colonial towns and posts-were at once invaded and overrun by hordes of barbarians, Scots, Picts, and Saxon Pirates, who ravaged the whole country with fire and sword, destroying all traces of Roman civilisation.'

Angles conquered and occupied the territory to the east of Cumbria about the middle of the sixth century and founded the powerful kingdom of Northumbria; again, Barnes states that 'Furness would receive its share of Celtic refugees'. He also tells us that Lancashire south of the Ribble was wrested from Strathclyde by the English in 613 AD and then for 70 years there was a series of struggles between the English of Northumbria and the Britons of Strathclyde.

He makes the point once more that West Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness were never *conquered,* yet the multiplicity of Anglian place names in Low Furness proves that there must have been considerable *colonisation.* He also shows that names like Roose and Walton tell us that the Britons remained among the Angles. He suggests that Furness was penetrated by small groups of Angles who settled on empty land; they possessed heavier ploughs than the Celts which could turn the heavier rich soils, whereas the Celts had been forced to settle on easier worked uplands or gravel patches on river banks. In time there would be intermarriage and only those Britons deep in the remote fells could remain racially pure. The Celtic population, hemmed in by 7th century invaders, seems to have gradually dwindled in numbers and the early isolated Anglian settlements showed little tendency to expand- and 'thus matters stood for 200 years' says Barnes... until the coming of the next wave of immigrants, this time of Scandinavian origin during the 9th and 10th centuries.

Readers will recall that Dickinson claims to have identified the outline of an early 'estate' and the inner precincts of an early Christian monastery with the current church building of St. Mary and St. Michael near the centre. He states that the layout is similar to that on Iona and at Lindisfarne (Holy Island) and this element of the site suggests an 'Irish template' of the 6th-7th century AD.

If we can accept that there is a sub-Roman dedication slab built into the fabric of the nave of the church and the possibility of the area being evangelised by St. Ninian and his monks around the end of the 4th century, then perhaps the most we dare suggest is that the later inhabitants of the 7th century may have built more permanently on the early monastic site and extended its boundaries along the lines of the 'Iona template' most familiar to them. The period 'in between' has to remain subject to much speculation as to who might have evangelised Low Furness or even re-introduced Christianity to the area because history tells

us that the battle between Christianity and paganism was not a one-off battle! Interestingly, M. A. Gordon, (1963) an author from Kentmere, seems to believe that Ninian and his monks were active as far south as Ninezergh at Levens (he also claims that the great St.Columba himself landed at Heysham and then 'passed on his way up into Scotland, working and teaching as he went' (page 19) He says that 'it is thought that much of what St. Ninian taught and many of the churches he built had been destroyed in the general depredations made by successive invasions of Scots and Northumbrians'.

King Ecgfrith of Northumbria gave Cartmel 'and all the Britons in it', no doubt including Furness, to Cuthbert on his becoming Bishop in 685 AD.

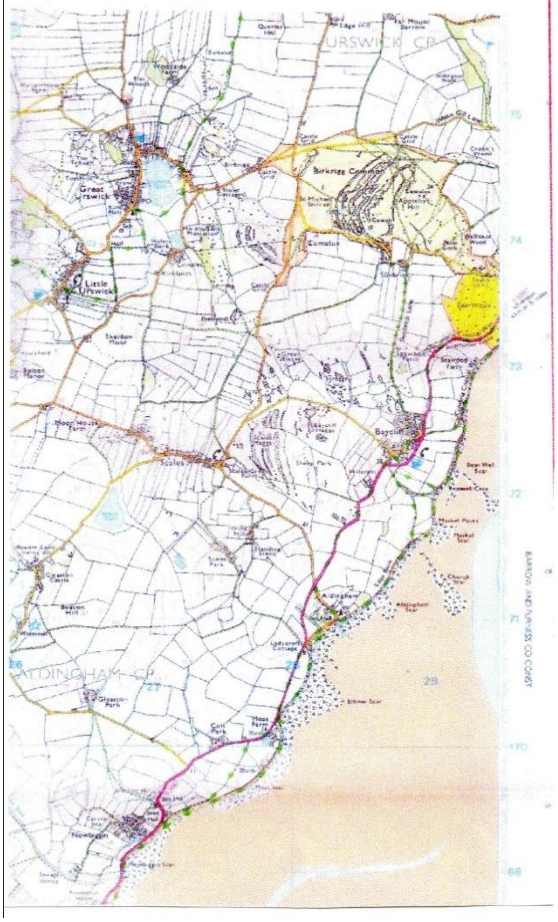
Furness would have been a prime site for a very early Christian foundation at the northern end of the critically important western seaways with their links to early foundations in Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, Gaul, Spain and the Mediterranean. We know from archaeological evidence that strong trading links were established between Europe, Ireland and Britain. We should include the Isle of Man in the picture, again because of its strategic position between Britain and Ireland and we know it provided a 'safe haven' for Christian monks. However, we also know it as a scene of conflict between the Irish Scots and the Irish and that it was actually abandoned by the Irish in the late 6th or early 7th century.

We also know of significant Christian missionary work in Lancashire by monks associated with St. Patrick, in particular from an established settlement at Heysham where St. Patrick's Chapel can still be seen. It is now known that a number of Irish Culdee monks evangelised south of Heysham as far as the River Ribble and north of Lancaster as well and into Lonsdale and Furness.

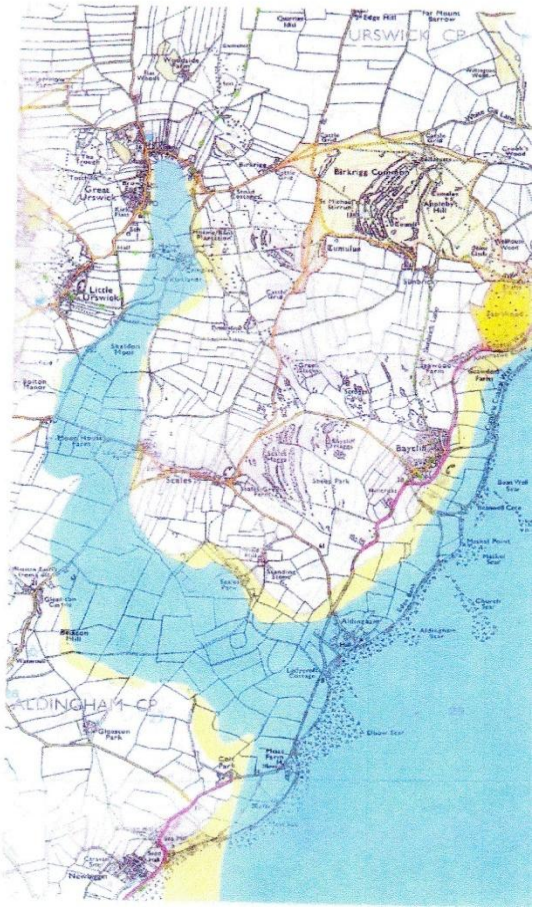
It was of course from Ireland that St. Columba established his monastic dynasty based on Iona, and this became the spiritual power house for the evangelisation of Northumbria by St. Aidan and his monks in the early 7th century. Bede records that when Aidan began his mission many other Irish monks followed and evangelised the whole of Northumbria. It is presumed that they all came from Iona but of course some could just as easily have come directly from Irish monasteries to the west coast of Lancashire and the Furness Peninsula.

In 2010 Cameron Butland, Vicar of Rydal and Grasmere, a keen student of Celtic Spirituality, introduced a day workshop in Furness with a map comparing the present landscape of Low Furness with that of the eighth century, based on a survey and research undertaken by the British Geological Society. The eighth century 'projection' shows an inlet of Morecambe Bay stretching right up to Great Urswick and its tarn. This, if accurate, would clarify many issues about access to Urswick by sea and could strengthen the case for an Irish Celtic monastic community there and for Urswick as a 'safe haven' and trade 'hub' for a much wider area. The map is reproduced below with permission:

Present Landscape



Eighth Century Landscape



CHAPTER TWO

Witnesses in Stone

The question, then, is this: does our main ‘witness in stone’ provide evidence for who established the Christian church at Urswick?
That depends, of course, on how one is able to interpret what is there but the most reliable ‘witness’ to that is probably still hidden from us; it is most likely, from what has already been stated, that the ‘Tunwine Cross’ would have been set up in the context of an earlier established Christian presence in the area.

The cross fragment was discovered in the church in 1911 and was found ‘in stripping the plaster from the walls’. Collingwood reported that ‘we saw the stone in its place as lintel to the easternmost window in the south wall of the nave, high over the Gale pew, and as it carried no weight and was of no importance to the structure we had it taken down in the presence of the vicar, his churchwarden, clerk, and others, and tried to clean and read it.’

He noted that it was made of red Furness Abbey sandstone and would originally have been a cross ‘somewhat over six feet high- quite a large enough stone to be won at that period and carried four or five miles from the nearest outcrop of Permian.’ In the carvings he saw

several ‘late Anglian’ features similar to other carved crosses. Of the rear of the cross he states that ‘the irregular scroll is more distorted than any such work I know in the North of England, but it is obviously derived from such late Anglian work as the cross-base at Rastrick.’ He is absolutely sure that ‘there is no Scandinavian ornament on this cross and it must be pre-Viking’.

He is somewhat dismissive (and mystified) by the carved figures; of the two main characters on the front section he suggests that ‘perhaps the runes on the figures are intended to explain them’.

On the reverse side- let’s use Collingwood’s own words to describe it: ‘there are two persons in the boughs of a tree, one sitting; above them are two birds, the tail of a third suggests the restoration; below them are beasts, indeterminable as to species but not dragons, and the paw of a third again suggests the restoration. Adam and Eve in the Garden are sometimes found on early Christian monuments, but usually with the serpent; and if these are intended (as some indications suggest) for semi-nude figures, the drawing is unbelievably infantile. At the same time the design is effective, well proportioned, and

adapted to the space; the tradition of decorative art in decadent schools outlasts the power of naturalistic drawing.'

He then turns his attention to the inscription which he interprets as:

'This cross Tunwini erected in memory of Torhtred, a monument to his lord. Pray for the (his) soul'

He suggests that that the name 'Tunwini' was recently found (as 'Tundwini') on a cross at Hexham and that 'Torhtred' (meaning 'bright counsel') is a possible Anglian name. The last line, written on the figures of the two men, could be read as 'Lyl this waes' meaning 'This was 'Lyl' or 'Lul'. He says that Lull (us), the Anglian bishop of Mainz, and Lilla, the 'minister' of King Eadwine, may suggest parallels for the name; but the subject of the picture is still obscure'.

Collingwood concludes that the cross is distinctly Anglian, though very late, and he sees a Celtic influence in the figures and possible links with Ireland. However, he comes down on a link with Yorkshire:
'But the ornament and formula of this cross connect it very strongly with the West Riding, and suggest that Furness and Craven were one county, part of the decaying kingdom of Deira under Osberht and Aella; for the date of this monument to Torhtred, lord of Urswick, must be about 850-870 AD or shortly before the Viking invasion which stamped upon Furness the Scandinavian character it bore until the time of Gamel's tympanum at Pennington, three hundred years later'

Richard Bailey and Rosemary Cramp undertook a detailed study of the Tunwine Cross and reported for the British Academy in 1988. Of the runic inscriptions they state that whilst they were intended to fill the framed panel on the face 'the rune-master miscalculated. The five lines of runes, the last smaller and more cramped than the other four, fail to complete the text, which over-runs three of the quadrants of the relief cross in the panel beneath'. The figures and the decoration on both front and back are described in great technical detail but it is in their conclusions that the real interest lies for our purposes. They state that for dating of the cross 'there are three significant features which, however, do not point in the same direction' but they conclude that 'on the whole the Urswick inscriptions look happiest in the eighth or ninth centuries, though it must be stressed that we know little of the precise development of north-western Old English'.

They continue by saying that the cross poses problems both iconographically and stylistically. They found it difficult to decide how many of the idiosyncrasies of the piece were to be explained by lack of comparable material and how much by the incompetence of the artist! The name of the carver and the language and script attest that he was English, but save to note that this is the only inscription which defines the relationship of the donor and subject.

Of the 'Adam and Eve' scene on the rear Bailey suggested that this could represent the ascent of the great cosmic tree which is both cross and ladder to heaven. The birds 'would then represent the souls of the blessed, and perhaps their rather strange appearance could be explained in the light of their heavenly role'. The creatures were similar to the types of Northumbrian beasts on the corner of the Franks casket.

They turned their attention to the other figural scene and found this 'less unusual' since there were other examples from Lancaster, Burton in Kendal, and at Kirkby Wharfe in Yorkshire. They struggled, however, to interpret the scene and state that **'it seems possible that we have here some narrative of a saint's life or a conversion scene.'** In terms of the rather unusual dress of the figures they note that 'from the mid ninth century onwards Northumbrian carvers eschew Classical dress even on biblical figures. It is therefore only if one considers that this cross is before that date that the significance of the dress must be explained.'

There would seem to be considerable agreement between these findings and Collingwood's earlier conclusions, particularly in terms of the suggested dating to the latter half of the ninth century and 'definitely pre-Viking'. So basically we have a hint of Irish Northumbrian influence and an agreed dedication by **Tunwini** to **Torhtred**. The only real difference- and to me a vital one- is that Bailey and Cramp interpret the second inscription over the figures as **'Lyl made this'** whereas Collingwood perhaps favours an alternative which says '**This was Lyl'**, referring to the figure on the left and not necessarily the craftsman who carved the stone. By 1927 Collingwood has reverted to reading the inscription as **'Lyl this w(rought)'** although there was still some uncertainty about this.

As we shall shortly see, Steve Dickinson offered a completely different interpretation, but a large part of his claim for an earlier dating of the cross relies on trying to identify the two men depicted in this panel. If we apply the same approach to the above conclusions, is it possible to identify these persons from other sources and to suggest a possible late ninth century explanation?

A trawl of historical sources soon identifies **Torhtred** as being martyred by Danish Vikings in about 870AD at Thorney about 5 miles from Medeshamstede abbey (modern day Peterborough).
The occupation and colonisation of East Anglia, the eastern half of Mercia and southern Northumbria by armies of heathen Danes had a catastrophic effect on the life of local churches and the wider administration and pastoral oversight was severely disrupted. We are told that in the region beyond the Tees, the sees of Hexham and Whithorn ceased to exist altogether and to the south York was reduced to an impoverished ruinous state.

We now turn towards Lindisfarne in Northumbria in about 875 AD when the monks fled the monastery in the face of this new wave of Viking raids, taking with them the body of St. Cuthbert and other relics together with the Lindisfarne Gospels. Their journeys over several years have been well documented elsewhere, including their passage through the Furness area, setting up crosses and in some places dedicating churches as they went, possibly including St. Cuthbert's church at Kirkby Ireleth. The party was led by Bishop Ecgred of Lindisfarne; also in the party **was Eadred Lulise, abbot of the monastery at Carlisle (Caer-Luel**). It is not suggested that he was with the party when it set out from Lindisfarne but joined it when they reached Cumbria. Whilst one cannot identify a definite link between

Torhtred and Lulise (Luel) it was not uncommon for monks to serve in one monastery before being invited to take charge of a different one elsewhere.
Could the two figures then be the abbot of Caer-Luel on the left and the martyred Torhtred on the right? That might then suggest that Torhtred was the local Urswick person being acknowledged by Tunwine who arranged to have the cross set up in his memory.

Could the inscription after all really be: Tunwine put up this cross in memory of his son Torhtred. Pray for the soul. 'That could also account for its somewhat 'rustic' nature!

Let us return to Steve Dickinson and his detailed re-analysis of the cross and his very different conclusions. His basic argument is that the runes had been 'over cut', meaning that there were demonstrably later additions to an original text and that attempts had been made to alter the earlier text. Instead of the Tunwine interpretation above, which he terms a 'phase ii reading', his phase i interpretation reads:

Luibe put up (this cross) in memory of Torotheo. Luigne...

His re-construction of the text of the figure runes reads: **'L*u*l this wa(s)'** and he states clearly that we could regard ***L*u*l*** as being the person on the left 'engaged in discussion with a bishop or archbishop on the right'. In his view this is a 'portrait of a real ecclesiastical event; created to be seen and read as an intimate part of the text above it' and states that 'this is not a stylised picture drawn from the gospel books available to some cack-handed provincial Anglo-Saxon sculptor'. We should, he suggests, be able to find these individuals, and identify that event (or propose it as a new element), in the early historic period and proceeds to interpret the landscape around Great Urswick and Little Urswick to find an appropriate setting for the cross.

Dickinson concludes that 'there are many indications in the limestone-outcrop and drumlin-dominated landscape around Great and Little Urswick of the outer boundaries and core enclosure (inner precinct), of a large monastic complex.' The area enclosed by these outer boundaries is 'inferred' as approximately 180-200 hectares. The core enclosure (inner precinct) is roughly rectangular, is some 8 hectares in extent and 'appears as a distinctive feature on the 1850 Ordnance Survey map'. He suggests that whilst it would be unwise to attempt to unravel the complexities of what is patently a large, multi-phased site, 'there is sufficient archaeological evidence present to permit comparisons of aspects of the core of the site to other key Northern British monastic foundations' (he provides diagrams of the inferred boundaries of Iona and of Lindisfarne alongside that of Great Urswick). He then states, importantly in the interests of dating the origins of the site that 'the position of the early church, near the centre of each enclosure should be noted, (that at Great Urswick, east of centre, implies an earlier foundation, which, with topographical restrictions, affected what we might describe as an Iona-inspired inner precinct layout)' (page 26).

Returning to the dedication on the cross and the figures depicted together with the 'names' Dickinson identifies Tunwini with **'Trumwin/i(e)', bishop of Abercorn and the Picts** from 681-5 AD who died in 704 AD. He was consecrated by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, **Theodore of Tarsus** (602-690 AD) who had been sent to Britain to try to unify the Roman and Celtic Churches. Dickinson suggests that this is in fact our **'Torotheo'** and a prime candidate for the figure on the right of the panel. For the other figure, 'Luibe' he can find no trace but suggests that both **'Luighbe'** and **'Luigne'** appear in Adomnan's Life of St. Columba, he states, 'more correctly, they seemingly appear as two pairs of kinsmen'. Luigne was the prior of a monastery in his old age 'in the island of Elen. **It is suggested that Luigne and L*u*l are one and the same person!**

He therefore concludes (or suggests strongly the scenario) that the original cross and its memorial inscription were commissioned by Luigne in anticipation of his and Theodore's deaths. It was presumably only part-finished when Luigne died, and Trumwini, evicted by the Picts from Abercorn, arrived and arranged for its completion in 690 AD, or shortly thereafter' (page 40).

It is suggested by Mr. Dickinson that as part of his mission to unify the Church after the disaster of the Synod of Whitby in 664 AD, Theodore 'visited every part of the island where the English people lived' (Bede), that he met with Luigne, then probably around 75-80 years old. He states that 'we can guess that the two men had much to talk about. Their meeting and discussion is arguably the event commemorated on the Great Urswick cross, commissioned by Luigne in memory of Theodore; and the artist has given them both Irish tonsures. This graphic statement underscores the fact that feelings were still running high some six or seven years after the meeting.' (page 42)

Before we turn to our second 'witness in stone' it might be worth drawing on the conclusions made by J. Michael Green in 1993 in his book 'The Forgotten Celtic Saints'. He suggests that Chad, Bishop of York from 664 AD and later of Lichfield from 669 AD, spent those years between in the main re-tracing the missionary steps of St. Aiden and St. Oswald, starting from Whalley abbey in Lancashire where Bishop Tuda of Lindisfarne, his Iona contemporary, was buried having succumbed to the plague. Green describes Chad's journey with companion monks from Lancaster northwards in about 668 and across to Furness. He states that 'on the peninsula of Furness, churches were established at Broughton-in-Furness (Borch), Bolton chapel at Bolton Heads (Bodettun) located to the south of Great Urswick and the areas of Marton (Meretun) near Ireleth, and Newton (near the site of the Furness Abbey of the future)'. He goes on to suggest that 'it is possible that other churches on Furness were established at this time, the most likely being Ulverston, Great Urswick, Aldingham and Kirkby Ireleth, the last two being dedicated to St. Cuthbert when he was given the area of Cartmel (Chercebi) together with 'all the Britons in it' by King Egfrid of Northumbria in 675'. It is perhaps a little surprising that this important event was not recorded in stone at the time!

One other concept worthy of mention here in relation to actual church buildings, is that of the church's dedication as St. Mary in the Field. One of Archbishop Theodore's boldest concessions was to give permission for clergy to celebrate the sacraments 'in the field', that is in places where there was a growing local community but as yet no church building, perhaps a standing cross as the focus and gathering point for the worshippers in the meantime.
Could that have been the case at Urswick?

Whilst there was clearly a Christian presence at Urswick and across Low Furness in the late 7th and early 8th century it is still possible that the church building, especially the permanent stone building, came later. We shall need to look at the fabric of the church with Mr. Dickinson and others to look for Anglo-Saxon features (we are unlikely to find Celtic features because they weren't the slightest bit interested in permanent buildings or artefacts which could be considered idolatrous). All writers, including Bulmer writing in about 1910, agree that the church 'is of very ancient origin, and was in existence in 1127'; he continues that 'local tradition asserts that the body of the church was built about the year 900.'

When Collingwood reported on the discovery of 'a pre-Norman Cross-shaft from Urswick' in 1909 he stated that until quite recently no distinctive relics of the Viking age had been found in Furness. In 1902 attention had been drawn to the Pennington tympanum with its 12th century runes and then early in 1902 the 'Rampside Sword' had been discovered in the church yard. This cross-shaft fragment with 'ornament of Anglo-Scandinavian type' was the first of its kind found in Lancashire North-of-the-Sands. It had been discovered in the north chancel wall when a space was being made for a recess for the organ; it had been used as a 'through' and unfortunately split to fit.

However, the piece was made of rather soft, red St. Bees sandstone and was part of the upper part of the shaft and neck of a wheel-headed cross; it provided sufficient size and shape to allow Collingwood to work out the approximate shape and size of the head. He suggested that the ornamentation of the upper member of the front panel was a well-known Scandinavian ring-knot 'characteristic of tenth century crosses' a style of execution often seen in crosses of the Danish or Norse period. He continued by stating that the thickness and height of the shaft were suggested by the fragment of pattern still seen on one edge and this gave a "Stafford knot" in its simplest arrangement. His conclusion was that 'a cross of this type, with a wheel-head and interlacing partly composed of rings, and executed with the pick as well as the chisel, belongs to a series well known throughout the north of England, and dated in Yorkshire to about the middle part of the tenth century', but, he suggested, since the Stafford knot pattern connects this example with West Cumberland, and especially with the Beckermet St. John's crosses, 'we may perhaps place the Urswick stone in the later half of the tenth century'.

He said that it was obvious that there was ‘already at that time a church at Urswick (the Tunwini cross fragment hadn’t been discovered by this time), and we may be tempted to make a further inference’. He felt that the Urswick stone is akin more to the West Cumberland than to the Lancashire crosses. This suggested that the christianised Viking colony in Furness in the second half of the tenth century was a little closer in touch with Cumberland than with the people across the Sands.

He also reported that other carved stones were found in the course of the work at the church, including large fragments of one or more grave slabs; ‘but none of these bear pre-Norman ornament’.

Collingwood produced a full-sized illustration of the cross which still hangs at the back of the church next to the font. Bailey and Cramp in 1988 dated this cross fragment as being ‘tenth to eleventh century’.

Dickinson comments helpfully that this was a period of settlement rather than raiding, and that most of these settlers would have come from Ireland, the Isle of Man and Western Scotland and were generally called Norse-Irish, second or third generation Scandinavians.

Revd. T.N. Postlethwaite, Vicar of Urswick, in an address to a group of local Antiquarians in 1923, told them that traditionally it was believed that the church was already two or three hundred years old when the monks moved to begin work on Furness Abbey in 1127 AD and that 'the fragments of the pre-Norman crosses show that in this case it is not misleading'. He said that in all probability Urswick and Dalton church (which had been rebuilt) were the only places of worship in the neighbourhood at the time. It was quite possible that there was no other church nearer than Kirkby.

David Hill in his 'Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England' shows only Kirkby Ireleth as serving the whole of Low Furness as a 'minster church', that is with a group of clergy (or possibly monks) being dispatched across the area; Urswick is identified as a place with a stone cross and sculpture but not necessarily with its own church (although all else seems to suggest at least a small 'local' church there). It says something about the rise and fall of churches as a result of invasion and migrations over the years and we know for a fact that the Danish invasions across the country caused massive dislocation of the ecclesiastical and administrative system for a long time. Postlethwaite writes that the 'Northmen' came to this particular district in considerable numbers, 'and there is little trace of Christianity before the

Norman Conquest in 1066'. Yet at Urswick, as we know there was clear evidence of a continued Christian focus.

Stockdale informs us that Halfden, a Danish chief, having conquered the kingdom of Northumberland, which then extended over Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham, bestowed the lands on his followers, 'and very probably granted Cartmel, which Egfrid had given to St. Cuthbert, to one of them'.
That the Danes held Cartmel district in 876, he says, was pretty clear from the number of Danish coins found at Castlehead; one of these with the inscription HAFDE REX on the front and MONNE on the reverse was in his possession at the time of writing. This suggests occupation from the east and settlement from the west over a period of time.

In 1033 AD the second Jarl (Earl) Ulfr, a commander, chief governor and land owner in North Lonsdale, had letters patent granted to him by King Canute. His jurisdiction extended in the north over the original honor of Egremont and the ancient lordships of Cartmel and Furness. Stockdale says there could be little doubt that *Ulverstone* took its name from the first Jarl (Earl) Ulfr- Ulf or Ulfr being a Scandinavian proper name meaning the Wolf. Ulverston is therefore Ulf's Town- Ulfr's Town- or 'as pillars or stones anciently were set up to show boundaries and to mark possessions, it may be Ulf's-stone or Ulfr-stone.'
Urswick's Norse Cross could well date from this period.

Continuing the clues given by place names Bulmer says of 'Urswick' that it probably came from 'Urse-wick' (the village of Urse), a Saxon or Norse proper name. Canon Ayre in his 'History of Urswick and its Church' published in 1897 refers to Dr. Barber's 'Furness and Cartmel Notes' in which it was suggested that Urswick could have derived from the Norse *Hgjostr,* meaning a barren place, or from the Frisian *Hoerst,* a wild rough place near a bush or a swamp, with the addition of vic, a village or town. Without wishing to rush ahead it's better to continue this thought a little longer because in the Domesday Book the name Chiluestrevic is thought to represent it and again Dr. Barber suggests that this is a contraction of Mikill-hrjostr-vik and that then becomes the modern designation of Mickle, or Much, Urswick.

I came across an extremely helpful and timely little book called 'A Little History Of The English Country Church' by Roy Strong, first published in 2007. In it he reminds us that early Christian worship centred on a shared communal meal, the *agape,* which would be followed by the Eucharist (from the Greek for thanksgiving), the symbolic re-enactment of the Last Supper
By the fourth century two main rites for the Mass had emerged, the Roman and the Gallican, both of course conducted in Latin. Strong states that 'the Roman rite was originally relatively simple and austere, while the Gallican rite was more sensuous, symbolic and dramatic, celebrated with splendid ceremonial and an abundance of incense and prayers'.
What little we know of the rite of the Celtic church stemmed from the Gallican rite, albeit

with local variations, but in the aftermath of the Synod of Whitby it was the Roman rite which prevailed in England.

Part of Archbishop Theodore's brief when he arrived in 668 AD was to reconcile the Celtic and Roman groups following the Synod of Whitby. In the case of the liturgy he made concessions to the Celtic followers by accepting some of their liturgical practices and integrating them into the Roman rite. Strong tells us that from the Celtic tradition came many of the dramatic and symbolic ceremonies that punctuated the liturgical year. The result was a mixed rite to which was added during the eleventh century the recitation of the Creed and the offertory, or the bidding prayers, which were said in the vernacular. He concluded by saying that 'what eventually prevailed in the English country church became known as the 'Sarum rite' which 'brought together all these different elements and became the standard throughout most of England. Its sense of drama and splendour differed greatly from the simpler Roman rite and was to penetrate even the humblest of parish churches.'

The concept of the 'local' church was very much the focus of the beginning of the second millennium and heralded what was termed the 'Great Rebuilding' when during the period between 1050 and 1150 considerable numbers of churches were built and the concept of church as a fixed building was clearly established. The earlier Anglo-Saxon 'minster model' in which kings founded churches (or monasteries) that accommodated communities of monks, nuns or priests who served an extensive outlying area, interestingly survived both the Viking and the Norman invasions, but then as Strong puts it 'went into eclipse as local churches multiplied in response to the emergence of both self-contained manors presided over by thegns and by the village as a new rural social unit' (page 20). We shall come back to that shortly.

So let us return to our 'local church' and take a closer look at the fabric of the building before the coming of the Normans and the Conquest in 1066.

One of the strongest pieces of evidence for the existence of the church building before the coming of the Normans is that there is **no evidence** of any Norman architecture in the building! Reverend Postlethwaite suggested, however, that the Porch could be of 'very early Norman work'.

Local history owes a great date to 'Parson' T.N. Postlethwaite not only for the reordering and refurbishments of the church building during his term of office at Urswick in the early part of the twentieth century but also for the written material he left behind. In his address to the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquities and Archaeological Society on September 5th 1923 he stated:

'I think - I will not say the original- but a very early church covered the area that now forms the nave. Outside can be seen in both the N. And S. Walls a series of arch-holes at about two thirds the height of the present walls. I am inclined to think that they supported light

timbers which carried a steep-possibly reed- roof. Later the walls were heightened at presumably two different periods and windows inserted. The masonry below the arch-holes is of a very rude character. The walls of the chancel and porch are not bonded into the nave, thus postulating additions'.

Dickinson was rather dismissive of Postlethwaite's description of the 'arch-holes' and their assumed function and stated instead that 'the regularity of these holes, both in terms of their height above the ground, and the distance between them, led to a suspicion that Postlethwaite's use of the term arch-holes had more to it than a mere description of timber supports. Careful examination in conditions of sharply angled evening and early morning sunlight revealed that the majority of the putlog holes were inserted into the blocking masonry of preceding, small round-headed windows.

He suggested that preliminary sketches of the fabric revealed clear sequences of built-lines below, up to, and including, the in-filled round-headed windows. 'These sketches', he continued, 'also indicate the potential positions of access points to an earlier structure or structures.' The nave has a north door 'sited in a singularly unusual location around the mid-point', with traces of an in-filled door head above it. He declared that 'we could state that the nave's in-filled small, round-headed windows are similar to complete examples from Anglo-Saxon churches elsewhere. But, at this stage, this doesn't actually help us in our understanding of the complex evolution of the nave and chancel arch wall fabric'.

Further close examination by Dickinson of the wall above the present chancel arch revealed a 'fascinating study in the evolution of what we may suggest are the earliest churches at Urswick.' There are two previous chancel arches and indications that the nave north wall had been shifted northwards. 'Perhaps most interesting of all is the extremely steep roof pitch indicated between the masonry of phases 1a and 2a'.

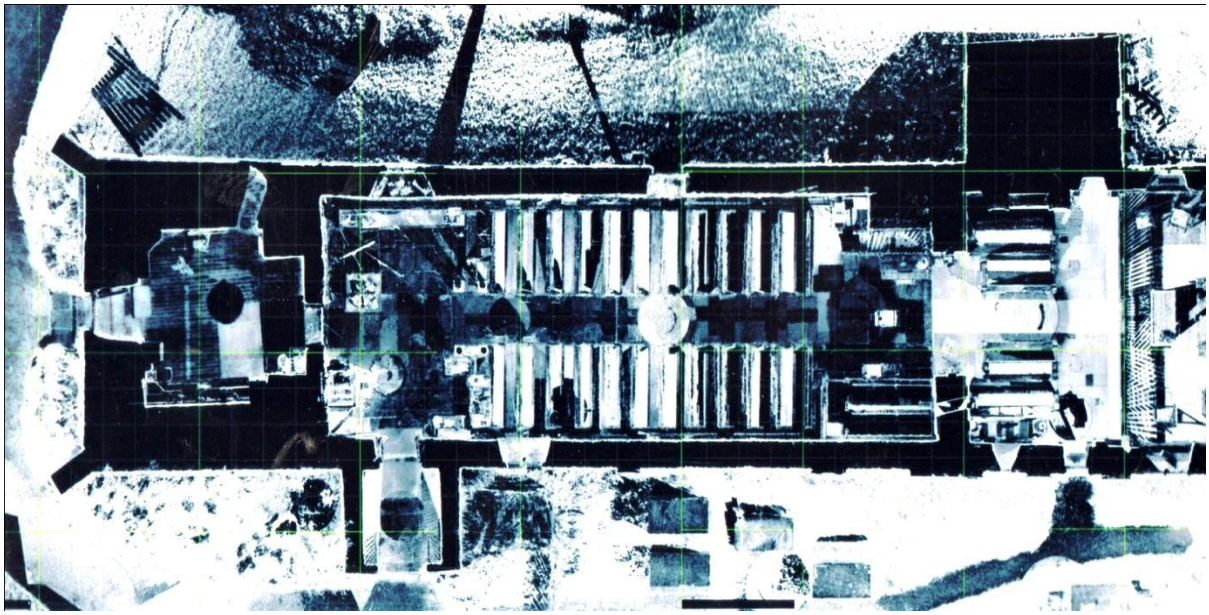
Turning to examine the fabric of the wall separating the nave from the tower indicated that there had been substantial alterations in that area. In relation to the western tower itself Dickinson agreed with Postlethwaite's statement in 1923 that it was an addition and originally low and 'saddle-backed'. In his booklet 'Some Notes On Urswick Church and Parish' published in 1906 Postlethwaite stated that there was 'little reason to doubt that its four main walls and the lower portion of the tower are part of the original building'; by 1923 he had had conversations with Collingwood and others having discovered the cross fragments and undertaken other work within the church and had obviously modified his view on the sequence of building development.

His final comment in relation to 'indications that the chancel arch was pierced in an existing wall or heightened from an existing apse' provides a further clue to the suspicion that the 'first' church building was rectangular and simply made (it is more than likely that an even earlier wooden, single-cell church could be under the floor of the nave if the early foundation has any truth in it).

Roy Strong tells us that Northumbrian churches built in the Celtic tradition had standing crosses outside and inside the building itself a narrow nave and small square chancel with a single arch. If there is evidence, as both Postlethwaite and Dickinson suggest, of the chancel arch being pierced in an existing wall or heightened from an existing apse then perhaps we should consider either the basilica-type of church introduced by Augustine and widely adopted in early stone church buildings (the basilica consisted of a rectangular nave, which accommodated the congregation, and a semi-circular apse, or chancel, for the altar) or the later ninth or early tenth century Romanesque style of building in which the apse disappeared in favour of a rectangular chancel with a large east window; chances are we are seeing the development from one style to the other at Urswick. During the period of 'Great Rebuilding' many of the churches were built in the Romanesque style but by then towers became widespread, too.

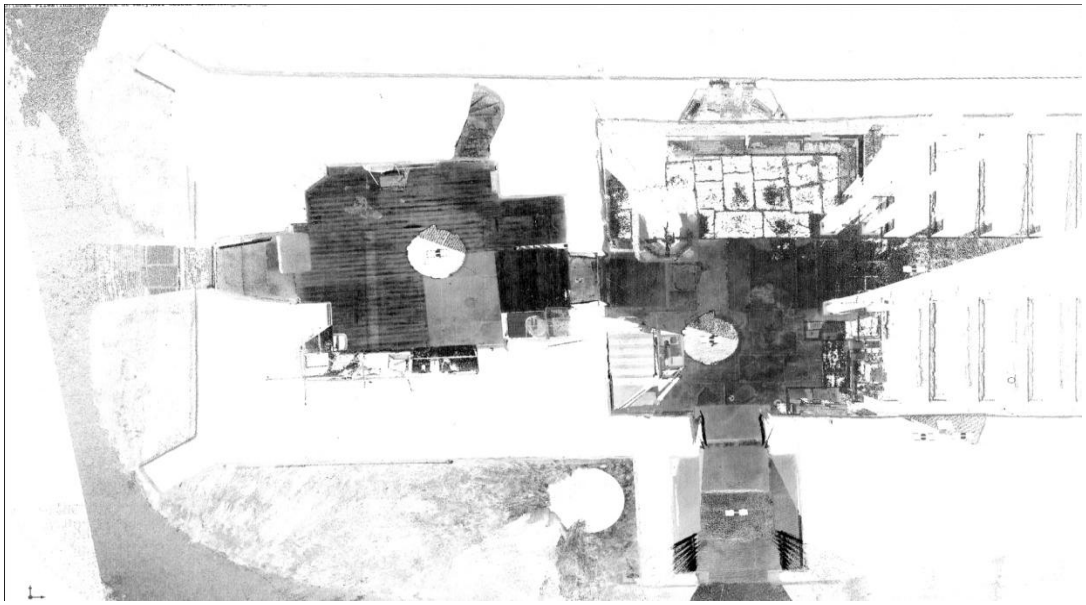
Readers will recall Dickinson's observation that the nave had been extended to the north; Pevsner commented that the 'nave and chancel is one and the tower as broad as both' which suggests that the tower at the west end was not part of the original build (Pevsner suggested that it 'gives the impression of belonging to the 13th century, except for the Perp upper stage'). Mr Pollitt, the church's PCC Secretary, in his guide to 'The Parish Church Of St. Mary and St. Michael' produced in 1977 said of the Tower that it was 'probably an addition to the original church; the lower part is probably pre-Norman and initially it would be low and squat and it may have been saddle-backed. The tower walls are very thick and it has been suggested that it may have been a form of Pele tower used to protect the local settlers and their animals from marauders'.
Could the Anglo-Saxon windows have been filled in at the same time?

During the period 2007-2009 Paul Casson and his partner undertook a detailed digital survey of the church of St. Mary and St. Michael, Urswick and produced some truly spectacular results. Paul is an architect with a particular interest in 'old' buildings. His colleague, a local archaeologist, was going to interpret the outcomes, but the project, being of a voluntary nature, foundered and was not completed. Some examples of the 'computer models' are shown below for perusal and individual interpretation; again, perhaps they will encourage someone to 'run with them' at a future date:

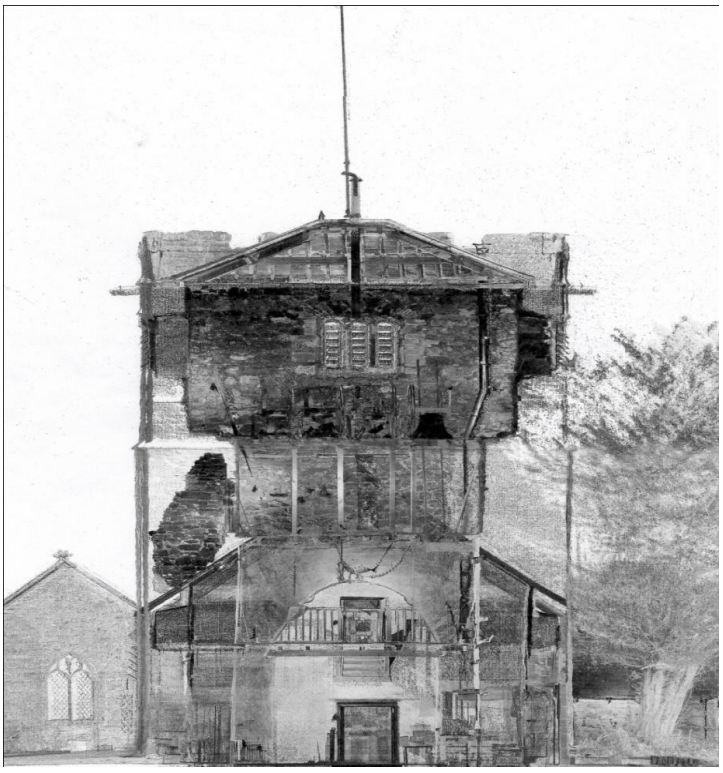


Plan View showing the Tower and main body of the church

Of particular significance is the position of the Tower in relation to the rest of the building; it was discovered to be at least 8 degrees out of line but the exterior walls had been 'tidied up' to produce a definite east-west orientation overall. The thickness of the walls is clearly seen. It was suggested that a strong case could be made for the north western wall of the nave being the south wall of another building perhaps earlier that the current church. This would suggest an earlier build under the present nave but only a further geo-physical examination could clarify that. The door in the north wall of the nave is clearly seen; this had been covered up for a long time.



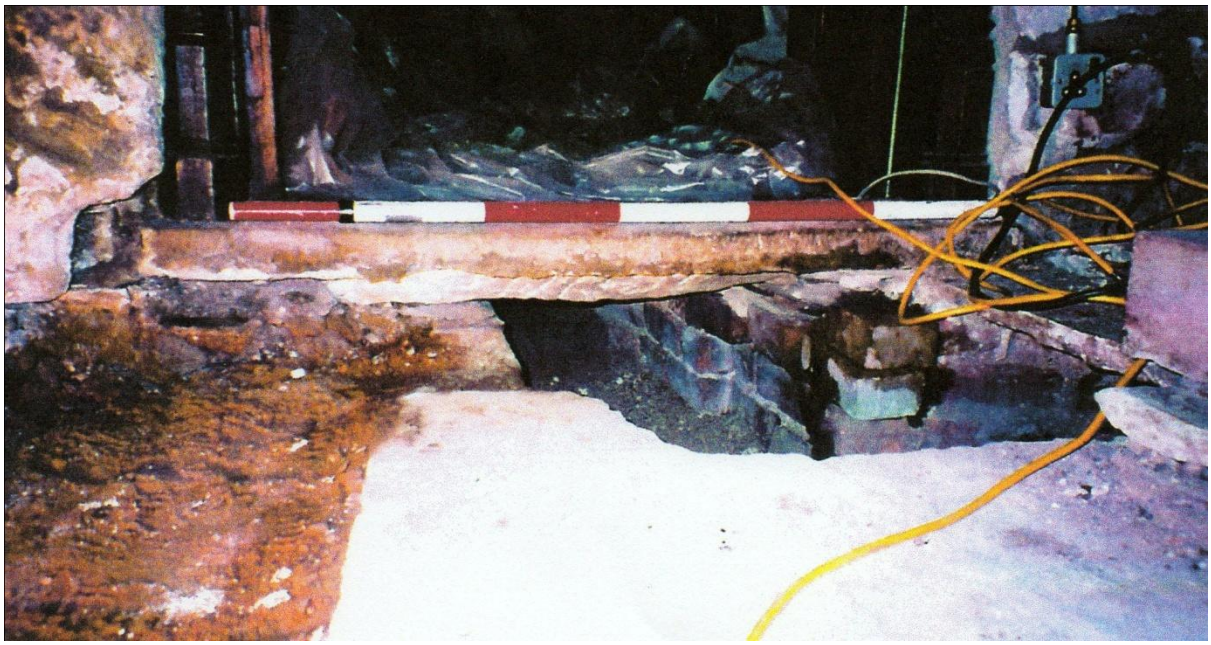
Above: Digital picture of the Tower and rear of the Nave (Plan View)



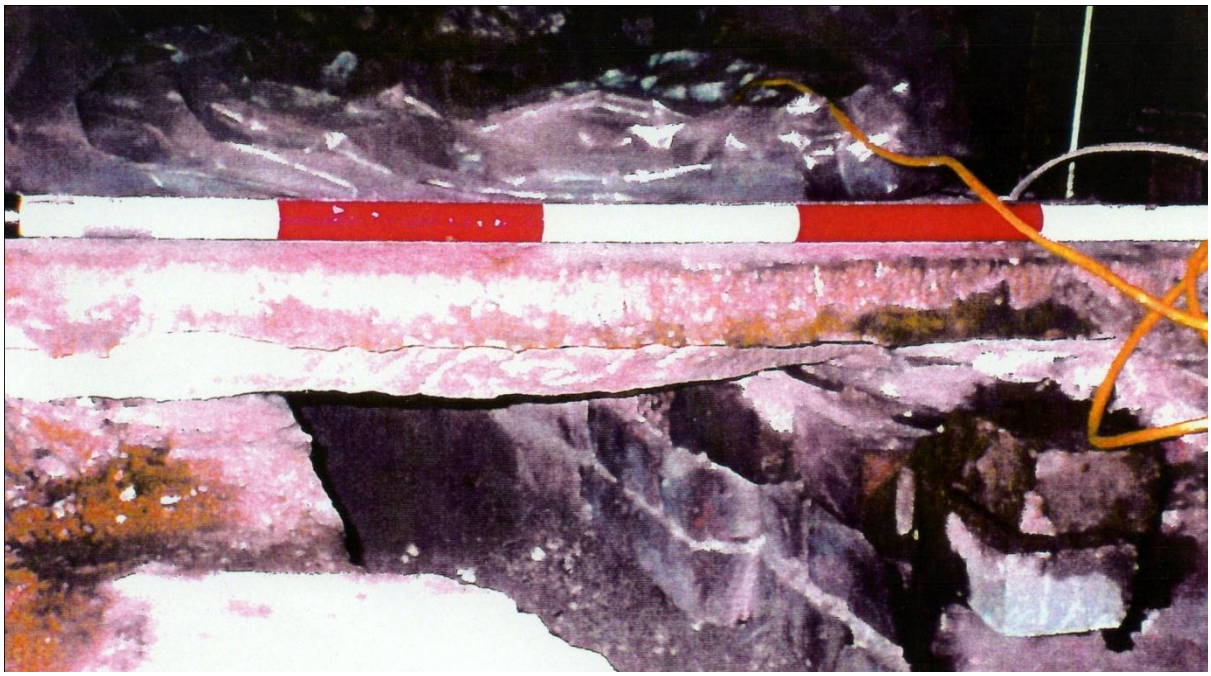
Bell Tower Construction

The ‘threshold stone’ which has taken on huge significance as the debate surrounding the church’s origins has continued can be clearly picked out from the above (between the inner tower entrance and the rear of the nave).

Steve Dickinson produced a detailed report which he entitled ‘A Watching Brief on an Archaeological Intervention within the Church of SS Mary and Michael, Great Urswick, Cumbria: 10 March 2003.’ The Report is dated 1st June 2003. In the Report he describes the circumstances of the Intervention and his ‘Finds’ of which a **‘Buff sandstone slab: GU03/03/3: Urswick 6’** is the most significant. He recorded that through flash photography the ‘photograph clearly reveals part of an inscription cut into the undulating lower surface of the slab; covering an estimated (minimum) area of 0.6- 0.7m x 0.2-0.35m. He continues to state that ‘elements of distinctive letter forms appear sprawling across the stone. It is not possible at this stage to state unequivocally whether these letters are capitals or lower-case. Nor is it possible to state at this stage what the inscription reveals; as it was not discovered until after the floor was re-laid. However, it is possible from its letter forms to assign it to the early Christian period; and to reasonably assert that it is a memorial dedication. Its date is provisionally assessed as c.450-700 AD.’



Threshold Stone in situ looking into the Tower



Showing the Inscription

Photographs reproduced from 'First Light Archeaological Report 1' with permission (C) Steve Dickinson, 2003

Dickinson writes that 'around 1000 AD the land we now know as Cumbria was populated by folk from Gaelic Scotland and Ireland, Scandinavia, Anglo-Saxons from the south and east, and, last but not least, Cumbrian and Scottish (Strathclyde) Britons' and it would appear that largely they managed to co-exist. Things were soon to change again.....

CHAPTER THREE

The Norman Revolution

Whilst the monastic reform movement of the tenth century was highly significant in the development of the Church and state, and to some extent in the inclination of the pagan Vikings to embrace the Christian faith, it was confined largely to the southern half of England. By 1017 it had not penetrated further north than Burton in Staffordshire and Crowland in south Lincolnshire. 'Yet', states Kenneth Hylson-Smith, 'those who wish to champion the persistent good effects of the reform movement up to the times of the Norman Conquest can point to the flowering of vernacular literature and art; the outstanding characters and achievements of the statesmanlike Archbishop Wulfstan and the saintly bishop Wulfstan of Worcester; and the invigorating example of the monasteries of the Severn valley in sending helpers to the north, soon after the Conquest, who revived Northumbrian monasticism and eventually re-founded Durham, with immense and beneficial consequences for the future' (page 263).

Our area of Lonsdale and Furness, together with much of Cumberland and Westmorland, had other concerns!

Even in 1066 the area north of the Ribble was debatable land, 'shuttlecocked between England and Scotland' (Rollinson), complicated further not only by the Norse-Irish colonisation but also by the resurgence of the British Kingdom of Strathclyde. In 1032 King Cnut exchanged Lothian for Cumbria, but by 1068 all the lands north of the Derwent and the Eamont had been seized by the Scots under Malcolm III, and the boundary of Scotland lay across the dome of the Lake District (hence the whole of Cumberland and most of Westmorland does not appear in the Domesday survey of 1086). Bagley shows how the areas later known as Lonsdale, Kendal, Cartmel and Furness were included in 'the king's land in Eurvicscire (Yorkshire)' and prior to 1066 had belonged to Earl Tostig, the rebellious brother of King Harold whom Harold defeated at the Battle of Stamford Bridge that year. 'Within five years', states Bagley, 'this northern area had suffered two ruthless invasions, the one in 1065-6 by Tostig's English enemies, and the other in 1069 when the Normans "harried the north" as a punishment for revolt' leaving Lonsdale a 'stricken and impoverished land'. Richard Newman saw this as in part explaining the de-population of Lancashire north of the Ribble before 1086 'perhaps as a result of Malcolm III's invasion of 1061 or because of the deliberate wasting of the region by the Normans either to quell resistance or to discourage invasion from the sea'.

Barnes noted forcibly that 'it is known that anarchy prevailed in Northern England from 1066 to 1087'; large tracts of land were depopulated and much of the country lay waste and uncultivated. Many 'vills' disappeared not by the inroads of the sea as presumed, but abandoned and never repopulated. Coastal communities were abandoned and the population concentrated on Dalton which could be defended from hit and run pirate raids,

etc. 'Thus we find at the beginning of the 12th century Dalton was the most important place in Furness challenged only by Urswick and Ulverston'.

If not already done, this would have been a prime time for constructing (or strengthening) the tower at Urswick church as a place of refuge for the local population. Baines in his 1870 History of Lancashire tells us that in 1138 'a terrible irruption from the north laid the whole peninsula desolate' and it was as a refuge from such incursions that the Pile of Foudrey was built, commonly believed to be in 1328 but from the evidence of a deed in Beck's Annals it must have been during the time of Stephen, around 1135-1154.

We know that William the Conquerer gave the lands between the Ribble and the Mersey, Lonsdale, Cartmel and Furness to Roger of Poitou as reward for his support. Roger chose Lancaster as the site for the castle from which he could administer and defend his estates. This was the beginning of the county of Lancaster, and, in conjunction with the routes over the Sands, explains why Furness and Cartmel, which geographically form a unit with Cumberland and Westmorland, were included within the borders of Lancashire right up to 1974. This was also a wise strategic decision since the main invasion route from Scotland came round the west coast of Cumberland and across the sands of Morecambe Bay. By 1092 Roger's forces controlled the border country around the Solway Firth and had begun to build Carlisle castle. After a failed rebellion against Henry 1 in 1102 all of Roger's English estates were confiscated and the Honour of Lancaster given to Stephen of Blois, grandson of the Conquerer.

Just to complete the 'scene setting' for further local exploration, in 1139 David of Scotland wrung from Stephen, now King, the promise to invest his son, Henry, with the earldom of Northumbria. Henry conveniently interpreted this to mean the old Saxon kingdom of Northumbria and promptly brought his Scottish troops as far south as the Ribble! In 1157 the Scots were forced to surrender 'Northumbria'. In 1168 under Henry II the county was given administrative unity and the area we now know as Lancashire was officially described as the county of Lancaster, and that which is called Lonsdale north of the Sands was referred to as Furness wapentake or elsewhere the Dalton wapentake.

Let's turn our attention back to 'Hougon Manor' (or Low Furness Manor) which included Borch (Birkrigg) and which almost embraced Great Urswick and Berret-Seige (Bardsea) at the time when the lands were granted to Michael le Fleming somewhere between 1107 and 1111. He was granted the lands lying eastwards of Abbey Beck and southwards of the moors of Birkrigg and Swarthmoor, and this became the new manor of Aldingham, later called Michael's land or Muchland. The rest of the 'forest of Furness and Walney' was granted by Henry to his nephew Stephen, Count of Bolougne and Mortain, afterwards king of England. Michael le Fleming built his motte and bailey castle on Mote Hill, Aldingham, overlooking the Bay and according to William Urswick 'made grants of land to his neighbours on such terms as enabled them speedily to rise to a position of affluence'. He built the present church dedicated to St. Cuthbert at Aldingham, probably building on or over the existing

earlier church there. It is likely that further attention would have been given to the church at Urswick at the same time.
Canon Ayre writing in 1897, made reference to a document contained within the Coucher Book of Furness Abbey about the *inferred* foundation of the church building, which shows that in a statement made by William, Earl of Boulogne, the second son of Stephen the founder of the abbey, he declared that his predecessors built it. The endowment, it was generally thought, was largely provided by Michael le Fleming or some member of that family. This ties in to some extent with the suggestion by William Urswick that the building was not in good repair at the time or could suggest that Michael le Fleming build over and/or around the former church building, although we have already discovered that no Norman features exist in the building; so the picture remains obscure.

The most significant development in the area (over and above the construction of churches at Dalton, Ulverston and Pennington and the restoration of St. Cuthbert's church at Kirkby Ireleth) was clearly the founding of Furness Abbey by the Charter awarded to it by Stephen, Earl of Bolougne, in July 1127. He bestowed all his possessions in Furness on the Abbey with the exception of those lands owned by Michael le Fleming. Again, it's Baines who clarifies the position for us in that Stephen first gave the estates to the Order of Savigny but another grant of the same date gives it to 'God, St. Mary of Furness, and the abbot of this new foundation' (Page 630). It was established by a group of thirteen monks with Ewan de Albrincis, the first abbot, as their leader. He states that 'the holy brotherhood were the fourth offshoot from the Benedictine order of Savigny, so named from their monastery of Savigny, in Normandy, founded in 1112. On their arrival in England in 1124, they seated themselves for a time in the centre of the county of Lancaster, in a monastic erection, already established, at Tulketh, near Preston. The abbot, however, with the sagacious eye of a monk, fixed upon a site for the erection of his new house where all the materials were at hand, and in a situation where the monastic authorities could reign monarchs of the district. Here in Furness, stone, timber, iron and lead all presented themselves in abundance; and the patronage of Stephen, earl of Boulougne, afterwards king of England, furnished the means of erecting such a sanctuary as might almost defy the corroding hand of time itself.' (Page 630).

We are also told that this charter of Stephen, by which the abbot claimed almost regal power, was confirmed successively by Henry I and II, Richard I, John, and Henry III. As we shall see, this power was exercised frequently. It is worth 'spelling out' something of the extent of the abbot's power here because it also illustrates the powerful position and huge accumulated wealth of the Abbey in the north.
Again, to quote Baines:
'The abbot, by virtue of the foundation-charter, claimed to have and exercise, among other privileges, sheriff's tourn, assize of bread and beer, wreck of the sea, weyf, infangene thereof, and free chase in Dalton, Kyrkby, Irelygh, Penyngton, Ulverston, Aldingham, Legh (Leece?) and Ursewyk in Furneys; to be free from fines and amercements, and from service

to the county and wapentake, for himself and men in these vills: and to have a market, fair, and gallows in Dalton in Furneys, and to make summons and attachments, by his bailiff, in Furneys' (page 630).

By these charters the Abbot became possessed of the entire lordship of Furness, including Dalton, Ulverston and Walney, besides property in other places. The rest of Furness was held by Michael le Fleming.

We are told that within a few years the course of aggrandisement began by the gifts of the various proprietors within the influence of Furness which 'gradually rendered this abbey one of the richest ecclesiastical corporations in the country'.

For his part le Fleming gave to the abbot two coastal villages, Ros (or Roos) and Criveltron, in exchange for the manors of Bardsea and Urswick. The church at Urswick was not included in this transaction as we said, because the Abbot of Furness (John de Caunusfield) had already bestowed it upon Michael's own son, Daniel, 'clerk in alins, with a caracute and half of land for the term of six years'. Daniel is listed as the first incumbent at Urswick in 1160 but Baines has Daniel as being 'the clerk, parsona de Urswick' from 1181-5.

Michael le Fleming made a further gift by a second charter in 1153, this time when 'Fordeboc with all its appurtenances' were assigned to the Abbey.

It wasn't all 'plain-sailing'. In 1134 the Abbey established a satellite house, Calder Abbey, with twelve monks led by Abbot Gerold; one of their number was Allan de Urswick. Sadly for the Calder Abbey folk, four years later it was laid waste by David and his marauding Scots, and the monks abandoned it and returned to Furness Abbey. According to a later account the monks were reproached by the Abbot of Furness for their cowardice and he refused to receive them back. They took refuge with the archbishop of York who ultimately procured for them a settlement at Bellaland, which became Byland Abbey.

In 1148, the year when the Abbey founded another daughter house at Swinshead near Boston in Lincolnshire, the fourth abbot of Savigne surrendered his house ***with all its dependencies*** into the hands of Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, for the purpose of becoming Cistercians. Peter of York, the fourth abbot of Furness, with his monks, appealed to Pope Eugenius III against the surrender and obtained a confirmation from the Pope that Furness Abbey should remain in its original designation. However, on his return from Rome he was seized by the monks of Savigne, forced to resign his abbey, and become a monk there.

We have acknowledged Allen de Urswick, monk, 'in passing' and have yet to discover his heritage and the basis for the 'de Urswick' title which took greater prominence in later generations. It is recorded elsewhere that 'two vassels of Michael le Fleming- Bernulf and his son, Gilbert, lived in Urswick in the "House by the Tarn" (Melville, 1959). For services rendered to the Baron of Kendal- Gilbert was granted the Manor of Coniston but his son Adam remained at Urswick where he held 56 acres for which he paid 2s 8d a year and he

took the surname ‘Urswick’. The Urswicks lived for many generations in this valley, their home being Urswick Hall the site of which is (or was) shown on the Ordnance Survey map, close to the edge of the tarn (GR: SD271746).

Of the first incumbent of Urswick church in the Norman era, Daniel le Fleming, we know almost nothing other than his incumbency covered the years 1181-5. He is also listed as incumbent at Aldingham from 1180. Perhaps because both families have strong links with the Urswick ‘story’ we should follow them in a little more detail at this point.

Thomas West in his ‘Antiquities’ of 1774 in making reference to Michael le Fleming’s second grant to Furness abbey, says that ‘this probably is the Michael le Fleming whom Baldwin his kinsman, knowing to be a valiant man, sent with some forces to assist the Conquerer in his enterprise against England. After the conquest was completed, and William seated on the throne of England, this valiant knight, with other Norman chiefs, was dispatched into the north to oppose the Scots, and awe the partisans of Edwin and Morcar, two powerful Saxons, who opposed themselves to the Norman yoke, and whose power William dreaded the most. Michael, for his fidelity in several good services, received from his master many noble estates in Furness, Gleaston and the manor of Aldingham, with other lands in Furness.’

Michael le Fleming lived to ‘a great age’ and was interred at the Abbey. In 1199 King John granted to William le Fleming, his son and heir, a court leet and court baron, with all other liberties and privileges commonly granted therewith, except wreck of sea, reserving a rent of ten pounds per annum for his manor of Aldingham. West then indicates that the manor did not remain long in the Le Fleming name because in 1269 Michael le Fleming (son and heir of William) died without issue, his brother William having drowned in Leven water. It descended to his only sister Alice, wife of Richard de Caunsefield in which name it continued until 1293, when William de Caunsfield, dying without issue, it descended to John de Harrington, and in that name it continued until 1457. The de Harringtons figure largely in the life of Urswick church a little later on.

We know that the first Sir Michael le Fleming ‘and his posterity’ were lords of Aldingham, and according to West ‘resided in Gleaston Castle after the sea had swallowed up their seat at Aldingham, with the village, leaving only the church and the east end of the town, and the mote at the west end, that serve to shew what the extent of Aldingham has been.
About the same time, the villages of Crimleton and Ros, which the first Sir Michael exchanged with the monks for Bardsey and Urswick, were also swallowed up.
He goes on to state that although the time of that accident could not be ascertained ‘it may be conjectured, from the nature of the building, that the castle of Gleaston was built on the occasion, and in such haste as obliged them to substitute mud mortar instead of lime, in a site that abounds with lime stone, and by a family so powerful.’

Gleaston castle is considered to have been built in the mid fourteenth century but this suggests the possibility of an earlier date for its construction.

When Michael le Fleming exchanged Ros and Crimelton for Bardsey and Urswick he also gave to 'Adam, son of Bernulf (de Urswick) two bovates in the same vill by charter for 32d per annum (see above). Adam's son and heir was Gilbert de Urswick whose son in turn 'another Adam', had two sons, Adam and John, and a daughter called Elizabeth, 'eventually heiress to her brothers on their death, who married, in the reign of Henry III, Sir Richard le Fleming. By deed, undated, John de Urswick, brother of ELIZABETH, granted to her and her husband, all the land which had belonged to Adam de Urswick in exchange for other lands'. Baines notes that the Urswick family 'long retained a considerable rank in the country'.

Michael le Fleming also gave three carucates of land in Adgarelich (Adgarley) in marriage with his daughter Goditha, and half a carucate in 'Hursewic' in marriage with William, son of Eward or Edward, probably the husband of Goditha.

We should perhaps mention one other family which has some prominence in the future of Urswick church and the area, and that is the Couplands who had possession of the manor of Bolton. During the latter end of the reign of Henry III Robert de Denton, Abbot of Furness Abbey, granted to Sir Richard, son of Sir Alan de Coupland, a chantry in his chapel of Bolton in Urswick. As Baines states, 'the said Sir Richard gave annually four pounds of wax to the mother church of Urswick, on the feast of St. Michael, probably as compensation for any loss the mother church might sustain by the new foundation'.

Canon Ayre notes that in 1260 William de Melberby was presented to the vicarage at Urswick by the Abbot following the death of William de Boyvill. He also comments that these are the only incumbents of Urswick previous to the dissolution whose names survive. Several others are referred to by Pollit who quotes the list provided by Reverend Postlethwaite.

Following William de Melbery he lists Richard de Barnard Castle without dates, followed by William in 1297, John in 1351, John Fisher in 1361, William Normande in 1380 followed by William Walton, in 1445 John Woodhouse and then in 1535 Thomas Harrison, the last vicar presented by the Abbot of Furness Abbey.

It could well be that for at least some of this period the church ministrations were carried out by monks from the Abbey anyway.

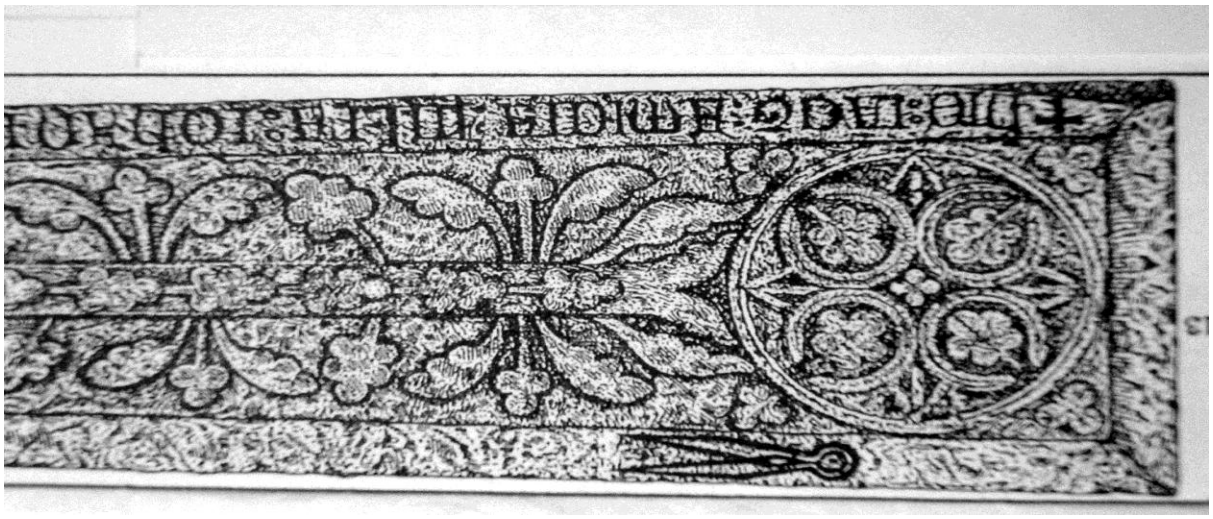
Canon Ayre gives us more information in relation to a document believed to be dated between 1198 and 1205 in which Honorius, archdeacon of Richmond, 'after stating that the churches of Dalton and Urswick from ancient times were known to have belonged to the monastery of Furness, and that Pope Celestine had authorised the brethren dwelling there to convert its endowments to their own use, goes on to say: "We considering the necessity of the aforesaid brethren, which arises chiefly from a lack of grain, grant all the tithes of

every kind of grain belonging to the above-mentioned churches to the aforesaid brethren, to be converted to their own uses", reserving however a small allowance to the vicars incumbent of the said churches.' Pope Celestine had also stipulated that the abbot had the liberty to present to the bishop 'priests qualified to minister in these churches in your name, who shall be responsible to him for the cure of souls, and respect his Episcopal rights according to the custom of the province; but they must both faithfully pay the revenues to you and give security'.

Bardsley writing in 1885 in his commentary on the Coucher Book of Furness Abbey, states that in 1230 Walter Gray, Archbishop of York, confirmed the chapels of Dalton and Urswick to the monks of Furness, and declared the advowments of Ulverston and Pennington to belong to the canons of Conishead'. So, in 1230 the church at Urswick and its lands were in the care of the Abbey of St. Mary of Furness under the ministrations of William de Boyvill.

This does not seem to be the end of the matter because Baines shows that 'the advowson, though claimed by Henry Fitz Henry, as regardant of the manor, belonged to the monks of Furness, to whose use W., archdeacon of Richmond in 1288, confirmed, together with Dalton, the church of Urswick, saving the vicarage of twelve marks, after the decease of William de Boyvill'. This led to further dispute because in the deed the expression 'ecclesias de Dalton et Urswick cum capellis' is seen as proof that Urswick had a chapel or chapels even then. In fact the monks of Furness at the time claimed (unsuccessfully) a right to Ulverston and Pennington as chapels depending on the church of Urswick.

We have identified the 'main movers' in the early development of Urswick and its parish but there is still somewhat of a mystery surrounding the thirteenth century 'Le Franceys' grave slab which currently stands intact next to the 'priest's door' in the chancel of Urswick church. The slab is flat and tapered from head to foot with 'floriated cross elaborately carved in relief, and inscribed along the chamfered edge, in Longobardic characters **+ HIC : JACET : AMICIA : FILIA : JOHANNIS : FRANCESSI** . It also has a pair of sheep shears engraved into the slab which indicates that Amicia died young.



The above was taken from an engraving by H.Gaythorpe,1882, because the original is now too worn to photograph clearly having been walked over for many years

We know from records that John le Franceys witnessed the charter of Roger de Lancaster, baron of Kendal, granted to Ulverston by Edward I in 1284, so can date the slab accurately. Gaythorpe writing for the Barrow Field and Naturalist Club in 1882 had discovered a lease in the Duchy of Lancaster Calendar of Ancient Charters or Grants, a lease dated 1328 for a term of years by John, son of Roger the smith of Bolton, to John Fraunseys of Bolton, of all his lands in the vill of Bolton. He suggests that this John Fraunseys was probably an ancestor of Amicia.

Several references have already been made to the Coucher Book of Furness Abbey written or copied up in the early part of the fifteenth century. It was reproduced for the Chetham Society in 1886, edited by Rev. J. C. Atkinson and J.Brownbill who added helpful notation and several 'correctives'. They describe it as being 'a large folio, sixteen inches in height by ten inches and a half in width, and consisting originally of two hundred and ninety-three folios of ordinary vellum, but many have been torn out.' They add that 'it is to be lamented that at some remote period, many of these illustrations, and in consequence parts of pages have been cut out, the work probably of an antiquarian collector of the time of Queen Elizabeth, as several of the escutcheons which have been recovered and pasted in their proper places are labelled at the back in the writing of that date'. In relation in particular to some of the earliest deeds or other documents written in old French they sense that the copyist did not himself understand the writing he was transcribing.

The Coucher Book consists mainly of a descriptive index of 'Charters, Fines, Pleadings, Papal Bulls, Etc. connected with The Abbey and its lands and other properties'. It also has copies of miscellaneous charters and documents inserted at the beginning of the Coucher Book together with a metrical account of the foundation of the Abbey.
It is an extremely important resource but sadly it has not been translated into English! It is concerned primarily with the Abbey's assets and can tell us very little about what actually happened inside the particular churches. Some of this can be inferred from study of general practices in the church or key national events during the period up to the Dissolution in the sixteenth century, and this is helpful because it can in part explain additional physical changes made to the church during this period.

It's time to consider once more our local 'evidence in stone', this time to look more closely at the porch. We have ascertained that it was built separately from the main body of the church because it was not bonded to the south nave wall. In 1920 a **'Mass Hour Dial'** (or Scratch Dial) was discovered on the outside of the left hand entrance to the porch. Pollit

described it as being ‘well-worn and incomplete but was used, in days gone by, to show, by means of a shadow pointer, the times for Mass and Daily Services’. Dickinson described it as an ‘early Christian sundial with a small ‘gnomon’ or central hole for a pin, the shadow of which marked the time on nearby sectors subdivided to indicate service times’. The *inference* is that it is Anglo-Saxon. The porch is difficult to date *accurately* but when one considers the function of a porch in relation to rites of passage during medieval times then it has to be at least as old as the ‘original’ Norman font which stands at the west end of the nave.

Roy Strong writes that although nowadays the church porch is little more than a repository for notices of times of services or the flower rota, in medieval times it was the setting for major rites of passage, particularly baptism and the ‘churching of women’.

Let’s look briefly at each one of these:

Baptism took place within days of birth (bear in mind the infant mortality rate and the fear of death without baptism); the baby would be brought to the church by the midwife and the godparents where the priest would meet them in the porch. The baptismal party would bring some salt for the first exorcism; some of it was placed in the baby’s mouth and prayers said, after which the infant’s forehead was signed twice with the sign of the cross. Strong goes on to tell us that then after spitting into his left hand the priest would moisten the child’s ears and nostrils in emulation of similar actions by Jesus when healing the deaf and blind man. He then made the sign of the cross on the child’s right hand, declaring ‘May you remain in the Catholic faith and have eternal life forever and ever. Amen.’ Now invited by the priest to ‘Go into the temple of God’ the party would enter the church and gather round the font which was at the west end of the nave.

Churching of Women: The priest would greet the baby’s mother in the porch- forty days after the birth of a boy and eighty days after the birth of a girl- and after prayers and a sprinkling of holy water, he led her and a party of women friends into the church where a monetary offering in thanksgiving was made.

Strong also suggests that the porch was the place where ‘a large part of the medieval marriage ceremony took place’ and makes reference to Chaucer’s Wife of Bath who had had five husbands “all at the church door”. He also pointed out that since at that time fees for marriage were required from both landlord and church, then until the thirteenth century most peasant couples set up home without the benefit of matrimony!

From the later Middle Ages the porch was also the place where oaths were sworn, bargains struck, disputes settled and business transacted. Parson Postlethwaite pointed out that in more recent times it was usual to spend ‘a night or two’ in the porch after a funeral to frustrate the evil designs of “body snatchers”.

Two other features of the Urswick church porch should be noted (although not necessarily from this early period); again it is Mr Postlethwaite who provides the information. He tells us that the parson used to pasture his cow in the churchyard, 'as was his right', but the wardens strongly objected to her using the porch as a "boose" so they slung a chain across the entrance where its remains can still be seen. On the right side of the porch are some vertical grooves and these were allegedly formed by Tudor archers sharpening their arrows prior to target practice. Pollit in his Guide to Urswick Church suggests that they were made by soldiers whilst waiting for morning service.

The Font

Baptism was originally by total immersion. If this was performed inside the church as was the usual practice in the 11th century it would have taken place in large tub in the body of the church. In Norman times this developed into a circular or polygonal container made of stone in which the sanctified water was kept securely locked down! The font in Urswick church is hexagonal in shape, made of local sandstone and standing on a pedestal. For some reason it was actually discarded from the church in 1826 (perhaps we shall discover why later on) but it was re-instated in the 1920's with a heavily carved oak cover, the original having been lost. The securing rings for the lid are clearly visible in the carved stone work.

During the Norman period under discussion the floor of the nave was earthen and there would be no seats or benches, 'so the faithful stood or knelt on the ground'. There would be no heating or lighting- candles on the altar appeared towards the end of the twelfth century. As Strong said, 'churchgoing remained a rigorous experience for several generations'.

The dominant feature in the church would have been the Rood above the chancel arch, depicting Christ on the cross flanked by the Virgin Mary and 'The Beloved Disciple' John and usually made of wood. The Rood in Urswick church is of course modern, having been carved by Alec Miller in the early 1900's, but it gives a good visual impression of what the earlier Rood would have been like in the chancel arch. Pope Gregory the Great who sent Augustine to England in 597 laid down the principle reasons for their use: 'For a picture is introduced into a church so that those who are ignorant of letters may at least read by looking at the walls what they cannot read in books'.

Although not a feature of a simple 'rustic' Celtic church, certainly during the later Anglo-Saxon and early Norman period of developments in stone, etc. the internal decoration of the church became significant. Stories and images from the Bible would have been painted on the walls. It was reported that when renovations were being undertaken at Urswick in about 1910 they found 'some suggestion of coloured mural or design work on part of the nave walls which had been covered up by the plaster'. These were described as being of elaborate character in combinations of green, yellow and black. It was said that these traces of early murals were too fragmentary to be retained. We can have no idea about the actual

dating of these murals, whether others had been painted there before them, etc. or even when the stone walls were first plastered over, but they would seem to fit the template for the church of the 13th and 14th century or earlier. The plastering referred to above, which was removed in 1910, was done during the time when a ceiling was constructed in the nave for insulation purposes in 1751 but that is to rush ahead!

This would seem an appropriate place to consider the **windows**, or more particularly, the glass in the windows, of **the chancel** which attract the eye with the colours of the many heraldic arms and which deserve closer attention. The Lancet Window on the south west side of the chancel contains glass partly made up of fragments taken from the old East window. For some as yet undiscovered reason this window, almost certainly thirteenth century, was removed in 1850 and for many years afterwards the old tracery stood in the garden at Hawkfield. A new east window was given by a Mrs. Ashburner of Holmbank and the glass, the gift of the Revd. Gwillym, incumbent of Ulverston and Rural Dean, was put in in 1855. The Coat of Arms of Furness Abbey are to be seen above those of Citeaux Abbey which was the mother house of the Cistercians. Mr Pollitt, the Secretary of the Parochial Church Council and author of the guide to the church published in 1977, states that this glass, which was reset in 1976, is worthy of study, 'not only for its content, but for the careful way in which the ancient fragments have been put together with the assistance of some modern glass.' Below the Furness Abbey arms are two fragments of yellow stained glass, on one of which is a bird, probably a wheatear or a bunting, and on the other a lion's face, one of the crests of the Harrington family. Below the Citeaux shield within a circle is a greyhound 'courant'.

In the modern Flamboyant style window in the south east of the sanctuary some of the glass is described as 'ancient'. The Eastern light shows the arms of the old Furness families, Coupland and de Kirkby above Curwen, and in the western light can be seen the arms of Pennington and Broughton above le Fleming. This mediaeval glass, according to Pollitt, 'is described by experts as being very good'. The ancient glass composes most of the tinctured glass and those portions of plain or silver glass which show a 'diapered' effect; this is thought to have come from Furness Abbey, but parts of it may have been from Urswick's own building. We are told that in 1855 when the new East Window was glazed Revd. Richard Gwillym 'put the painted glass out of the old East window into the window next to it on the south side of the church, filling it up with other glass.' As well as the coats of arms, the head of a saint in a brown habit (not a Cistercian monk as has often been supposed says Mr. Pollitt) can be seen in the upper part of this window.

The original tracery of the East Window was restored in 1907. This window shows the heraldic shields of ten old families. In the middle of the central light are depicted the Royal Arms of Queen Mary (1554) who was Lady of the Manor of Muchland. Below the Royal arms are the arms of Marshall, William Marshall being the founder of Urswick's Grammar School in the reign of Elizabeth I. The coat of arms of the de Urswick family is on the right of the

Marshall arms. The other eight families whose arms are displayed are Newton, Cancefield, Huddleston, Preston, de Boyville, Stanley, Harrington and Bardsey. Some of these families have been referred to in the above text; others will emerge as we continue with the story.

The windows in the Nave for which Pollitt claims 'little historical significance' are all different shapes and sizes and their positions do not conform to any set pattern. Most of the work on opening them up to their present form is mid-nineteenth century so we shall return to them at the appropriate time; however, Gaythorpe tells us that the earliest specimens of window tracery are in the nave and date from about the middle of the fourteenth century. Possibly these windows were inserted by Sir John de Haryngton, who was lord of Aldingham from 1347-1363/4. He suggests that 'the ancient windows in the chancel and upper stages of the Tower are nearly a century later, and most probably are the work of William de Haryngton, the donor of the bell, who was born in 1392 and died 3rd March 1458.'
He also stated that the 'probable date of the ancient glass is about the middle of the fourteenth century, and it would most likely be inserted when the Decorated window and the piscine with the hexagonal-shaped fluted basin, about seven and a half inches in diameter, were put into the church'. (page 107).

In relation to the **tower** at the west end and which Baines described as being 'large and massive' (Gawthorpe describes it as a 'massive embattled western tower'), we have already noted that the lower section was probably either pre-Norman or built during the period of Scottish incursions in the middle of the twelfth century. Baines relates that in 1316 the Scots under Robert the Bruce 'wasted the northern counties, and Furness 'and only six years later, in 1322, the Scots made another incursion, once again laying the area waste, and causing the monks to either build or restore the Pele or Peel, a strong castle on the neighbouring island of Fouldrey. It is more than likely that this was the period when the church tower at Urswick was enlarged and increased in height. At some point the monks also inserted a sculpture of the *Mater Delorosa or Pieta* (depicting The Virgin Mary nursing the dead body of Jesus in her arms) high up in the west facing wall of the tower. This is made of local red sandstone, probably quarried from Furness Abbey itself. There are in fact two other niches but they remained empty; close investigation proved unfruitful. The buttresses also suggest their origins in the Abbey quarries.

The full impact of the Scottish incursions can be seen through the respective values of the rectories of Aldingham and Urswick. In 1291 Aldingham rectory was valued at £53 6s 8d and after the 1322 raids £10 only. Urswick rectory was valued at £5 6s 8d in 1291 and was reduced to 40s after 1322. Perhaps it is not surprising that it was stated that 'though various ancient remains have been observed, the history of the parish (of Urswick) has been without any very noteworthy incident.' It is abundantly clear that the peninsular was 'ruled over' by the Abbey of Furness in just about every aspect of its life.

Fred Barnes tells us that the Scottish wars of 1316 and 1322 caused a spate of castle building and fortification in the district but, for example, the fact that the building or more likely, rebuilding of Gleaston castle, was never completed suggested that there followed a more settled period after 1322. Dalton Castle seems to have been a Court House and prison rather than a military structure, while Piel Castle must have been of much more use as a strong warehouse for the harbour, rather than a defence against Scottish raids by land.

Barnes also provides an extremely helpful general picture of Furness life at the time of Edward III, Furness' period of maximum prosperity, and suggests that 'under the monks the economy shows that nice balance of rights and duties which characterise the feudal system. The tenants paid rent and also a "fine" (admission fee) of one penny on admittance as tenants; they had to render service such as the carting of 160 loads of peat required by the Abbey every year from Angerton Moss and the provision of a specified number of men duly armed and horsed to serve the King when called upon, against the Scots, or to defend the harbour of Piel. In return for these rents and services the tenants received fixity of tenure in their holdings; a share of 60 barrels of single ale or beer and 30 dozen loaves of coarse wheat bread distributed weekly; free education for their children in the Monastery school; iron for their ploughs; hamlets with access to the sea had "tangle-dales" or liberty to collect sea-weed for use as manure; each tenant had a turbary dale in Angerton Moss for peat, and wood for repairing their houses and implements could be collected from Sowerby Woods.' (page 34)

Although the Abbots possessed almost regal power, they were far from being absolute monarchs; they may have had power to oppress their tenants but they took good care that no one else should presume to do so. The Abbot appointed his own officers and the Sheriff or Sheriff's officers were prohibited from entering the Abbot's territory under any pretext of office whatever; no man was to presume to disturb the Abbot or any of his tenants on pain of forfeiting £10 to the King!

Perhaps the only other accessible event worthy of note before we come to the Dissolution and the Reformation under Henry VIII is the story of Lambert Simnel, pretender to the English throne, who crossed over from Ireland in 1487, landed at Piel with 2,000 men, mainly Flemish troops, under Colonel Martin Swartz, and a further number of Irishmen under Captain Geraldine, a total force of about 8,000 men. The Abbot and all the local gentry excepting Sir Thomas Broughton of Broughton Towers held aloof from the rising. The rebel force was destroyed at Stoke-on-Trent.

CHAPTER FOUR

There's no smoke without fire.

As stated in the previous Chapter we know that the first Sir Michael le Fleming 'and his posterity' were lords of Aldingham, and according to West 'resided in Gleaston Castle after the sea had swallowed up their seat at Aldingham, with the village, leaving only the church and the east end of the town, and the mote at the west end, that serve to show what the extent of Aldingham has been. About the same time, we are told, the villages of Crimleton and Ros, which the first Sir Michael exchanged with the monks for Bardsey and Urswick, were also swallowed up.' He goes on to state that although the time of that *accident* could not be ascertained 'it may be conjectured, from the nature of the building, that the castle of Gleaston was built on the occasion, and in such haste as obliged them to substitute mud mortar instead of lime, in a site that abounds with lime stone, and by a family so powerful.'

It would seem from the various records that this inrushing of water was not the first nor the last occasion when the coast was considerably altered and property lost.

There was also a 'folk memory' of a warren of tunnels and caverns in close proximity to Urswick. We are told the 'the wise men of the village had always been aware that a stream of channelled rainwater suddenly ended its transit by plunging down the nearby sink hole, whose mouth lay in the trough of a narrow depression about 200 yards to the north of Urswick settlement'. It was said to be treacherous in hiding the slipperyness of its bowl-like limestone rim, and they had taught the youngsters to stay clear in wet weather. They also said that there was a giant cavern beneath the roof of which became thinner as the cavern grew in size; they forecast that one day the undermined roof would collapse and its fragments tumble to the bottom of the cavern leaving a large canyon open to the sky, with sheer and treacherous sides for unwary youngsters to fall down. 'Sometimes,' they added, 'the fragments would seal and dam the outflow so that the waters would quickly fill it, to create a natural lake – a tarn!'

The biographer of Nicholas Marshall, Vicar of Urswick between 1620 and 1660, also reports as 'legend' that 'about a millennium ago when the present Parish Church of St. Mary was first opened, the Abbot of Furness commented that the "labouring of the Ossick coots had raised the church again from the ground" for he acknowledged that " where had stood the old church now was the tarn". In thanksgiving he instituted an annual ceremony in which the boys of the parish collected rushes from beside the tarn waters, and carried them to the new church in solemn procession behind the Blessed Sacrament.'

'Each year since', he reported,' round about Michaelmas, the whole parish gets together for a rush-bearing ceremony. The lads of the parish hack rushes from the tarn verges, and make them up into individual crosses, or their own original religious emblems. Then these tokens are blessed, and borne in solemn procession to the high altar of SS Mary & Michael, whilst

‘village maidens’ gather flowers to lay on the graves of their own forebears in the churchyard.’

He tells us of the drowning of the original village and church at some early stage of its history. It’s best to report verbatim so that all the ‘credit’ goes to him:

‘It happened that each day the village was totally deserted- with the men perhaps cutting timber in the woods, or tilling their master’s land; whilst the women were busy in the bottom pastures, perhaps tending sheep and chickens, or planting seed. One day, as usual, as two of the foresters, having brought back a dozen trimmed quarter trunks of timber, were laboriously heaving them nearer to the council fire in readiness to heap them into a fuel pile, they heard what sounded like an echoing drum-roll rising from beneath their feet, every time they threw one of the heavy logs to the ground. Intrigued by the phenomenon, they paused in their task, and deliberately lifted another log, to let it drop. Again there was the same rumbling sound, but this time it was followed by an enormous cracking sound. Feeling the ground tremble beneath their feet, they watched with alarm as a narrow line of soil slowly sank down a visible crack which had appeared only a few feet in front of them!

Believing the devils were coming out of hell to take them, the two labourers ran as fast as their legs would allow, back towards the woods to pass the news. But before they could reach it, a thunderous rumbling, grinding, and snapping was heard for miles around, as cracks appeared all over their settlement, and houses collapsed. From that distance, the men could clearly see the spire of the church toppling, and they watched in amazement as the church itself slowly sank lower, then seemed to steady itself, only to start sinking once more. Then with a roar it was swallowed, and a gigantic pall of grey dust billowed up from the spot, soaring higher and higher towards the clouds. Then, as these clouds of dust were slowly swept away by the breeze, the sound of running water could be heard. As everything finally settled down and the onlookers began to emerge from their dazed shock, they scrambled across to the site where their village had stood only a few hours before- but it had completely disappeared, apparently drowned in the waters of a tarn that was rapidly rising, to occupy the spot where the settlement had been when they had set out for work that morning!’

Could there be a ‘memory’ of an otherwise long- forgotten earthquake?

There is, of course, an alternative legend of the Tarn but this one has the church in its current position and condition, as can be seen. It has appeared in many versions over the years, even in verse written and delivered, I understand, by Parson Postlethwaite at a Christmas gathering!.
I thought I would use the version as recorded in Bulmer’s History and Directory of Furness and Cartmel as told by old Willie Waane (the village oracle) and written by John Bolton, a local geologist of note:

“Urswick was once a market town, called ‘Lile Ooston’, and was older than either Kendal or Lancaster. The inhabitants had everything in plenty with the exception of a beck for their cows to drink from, which obliged them to provide limestone troughs supplied with water from the draw-wells for the cows and sheep. The old women began to grumble sadly at this, as they were an idle, gossiping, worthless set, and at length, declaring they would stand it no longer, they all went to the priest and informed him that if he did not send them a beck of good water for their cows, they would neither come to church nor confession as long as they lived, giving him forty days to perform the task otherwise they would stone him to death, for they knew he could do it if he would. The priest was a man of great sanctity and learning, who had made a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, and to appease them he ordered every woman in Lile Ooston to attend church next day, and meet him in the grave-yard, when he would accede to their demands; but they must agree to do his bidding, or he would not only refuse their request, but take away their wells also. The old women attended according to his request, when the priest ordered them to form a single line, and march in procession three times round the church, while he prayed; but in consequence of each woman in the place wanting to be first, none of them would submit, and they immediately began to wrangle about precedence, the noise and confusion of all talking violently together being so great as to be heard on the top of Birkrigg- indeed, a serious riot occurred amongst them, and it was some time before the priest obtained silence, though not without severe threats. When quiet was at last restored, the priest formed the assembly into a circle, walking blindfold round the ring first one way and then the other, and after turning himself three times, he broke through them, deciding by this trial that the woman on his right should go first, and the one on his left last. Accordingly, they opened out into line, and proceeded as the priest directed, every woman being discontented with the arrangement, except the one who headed the procession, the rest murmuring about the unfairness of the thing, and even insinuating that she who was thus honoured before them all was a favourite of the priest. This bare-footed company started from the north-west corner of the church tower, just under the figure of the virgin and child, walking at a very slow pace the way of the sun, the priest praying all the while with his hands above his head. After the first walk round, there came on a fall of snow, and the old women paused one minute before commencing the second, which was brought to a halt on its completion by a tremendous storm of hailstones, as large as seamew’s eggs. The ancient dames now rested while the holy father walked once round the churchyard alone, and then they all commenced their third journey, which was interrupted, after a few yards, by a dreadful clap of thunder bursting directly over their heads, followed by other peals in rapid succession, until the perambulation was accomplished, when the earth trembled, and a rushing noise was heard in the west. Immediately afterwards they saw a herd of cows fleeing before a flood of water, which, rushing down the hollow, now formed the boundary between the townships of Much Urswick and Little Urswick, swept everything before it, and eventually became what is now known as “The Clerk’s Beck”, or “The Priest’s Beck”. The earth had been shaken by a great convulsion of nature, which raised up a hill near Lindale

Cote, and changed the direction of a stream of water near that place, this has continued to flow ever since towards Much Urswick, and is in fact the present existing “Clerk’s Beck”. The gossips had now abundance of water for their cattle, and were contented for a short while, until one day, after a storm of rain, the water in the new beck became red with iron ore, and although the priest assured them the cows would prefer it before any other, and proved it by trying them with well water unsuccessfully, the female portion of the community disputed the fact, and grumbled more than ever at the priest, before whom they presented themselves, vowing, that unless he gave them clear water in their beck, and plenty of it too, they would never enter the church again. He informed them he could supply their demands but it was a dangerous venture inasmuch as he could not control the quantity, and they might receive more than they liked; but if they persisted, he would give them such an inundation as would satisfy them for a long time, so that they had their choice whether they would be content with Clerk’s Beck, although it was sometimes rather reddened in wet weather, or risk the hazardous provision of clear water he had mentioned. Wonderful to relate, the old women were for once all of one mind, and when the priest hesitated from reluctance to agree to their desire, they taunted him with want of power, and called him a poor helpless, impotent, old pretender, and not a true priest, and they danced and raved, and swore at him, and defied him to his face, one old hag going so far as to say she could make a better priest out of a bit of clay. Being now convinced of their worthlessness and depravity, he made them retire, every one of them to her own house and, after opening all the doors and windows, remain perfectly silent for one hour by the sun-dial in the churchyard, he would them try if he could not satisfy them with water for ever. It was understood between them, that a signal should be displayed on the top of the principal house, so that in case they repented, they should signify the same by striking their colour, but if it remained flying after the hour expired, they must take all he had promised. They all left in great joy, saying they had frightened the priest, and when they had secured the clear water they would have something else. Following their instructions, they displayed the appointed signal, which being perceived by the priest he walked slowly round the church once, and raised his hands on high, when a snow shower came on, but the flag was still floating on the breeze showing the determination of the applicants for more water. The priest rested to give the discontented women an opportunity for changing their minds, but no intimation being given, he lifted up his hands again, and there came on a fearful storm of hail as before. This second warning was unheeded, although the priest rested twice as long, and turned himself twice round to give them time to regret the fatal step they were taking, indeed, so far from retreating, the most turbulent of the women was observed on the house-top beside the flag, defying the power of the priest to his face. At length, turning his back on the town, for he could not bear to look on what would follow, he gently elevated his hands- when an earthquake sank the town in a moment- but even in the midst of this dire calamity the stern old harridan before mentioned was seen standing upon the roof of her house, snapping her fingers at the holy father, and crying aloud for more water. Very soon

all was over, and when the priest gazed in the direction of the town, Lile Ooston had disappeared for ever, and its place was supplied by the tarn of Much Urswick."

As we shall see in a later Chapter, Postlethwaite has ensured that this legend and its focus on the confrontation between the discontented parishioners and the priest 'who was a man of great sanctity and learning' has been carved into the fabric of the church; in this gesture and in other ways he expresses something of his own experiences of the local 'character' during his time as Vicar.

He wrote in his 'Some Notes On Urswick Church And Parish', published in 1906, that 'Urswick Tarn formerly had on its surface patches of broad-leaved water-lilies. It is still the home of water-hens and coots, though these latter are not so numerous as of yore. The facetious tongues of the outside parishes make fine play over the "Ossik Coots", assigning the name to the human as well as the feathered inhabitants of the village'.
Then the sting in the tail!
'Outside the limits of their parish "Ossick-folk" have a certain reserve of tongue – though within their own bounds the reserve altogether disappears. This reserve is sometimes mistaken for thick-headedness, and then jibes fly and the tale of the knife, the solitary one the parish possessed, is apt to be told.
It runs thus:

In days when steel was at a premium the parish owned but one knife, a communal possession. It was kept driven into the bark of a particular and well-known tree in the centre of the parish. Any wanting it sought it there, and should it be absent and in use, he took his station beneath the tree shouting lustily from time to time:- "Whittle here! Whittle here!" One day a dire calamity arose; a good two thirds of the folk were beneath the tree screaming the one against the other for the desired "Whittle". But it came not. Inquiry discovered that it had last been seen in the hands of the village fool, the "loony" of the community. This individual when sought out and questioned owned that he had taken it; when its work was done he was far from the tree and pressed for time, so he hid it in a well-marked spot till the opportunity arose for returning it to the tree. The well-marked spot was where a little cloud made a dark blot on the sun-bathed plough lands!'

'Outsiders', wrote Postlethwaite, 'choose to consider the hider a fair type of the Ossik Coots.'
There is more!

Readers might like to take the time to look up the terms 'Athenians' and 'Boeotians' in the OED before meeting up with Reverend Postlethwaite again in a later Chapter because he employs both terms in his description of his parishioners!

Before we move on this might be the most appropriate place to highlight the 'rush-bearing ceremony' as revived at Urswick by Revd. Postlethwaite in 1905. On the Sunday nearest to

St. Michael's Day in September the men from the village would take horses and carts and cut down rushes from around the Tarn and bring them in to spread on the church's bare earthen floor, the old ones having been removed and the floor swept first. Again, the villagers would come in procession to the church and together celebrate the foundation of the church. Today the congregation, school children and villagers process with the vicar, church officers and choir together with the 'Rush Queen' and her retinue of attendants and 'sword-bearers' around the village led by a local brass band, and hymns are sung at various points and money collected in a large sheet; then the procession enters the church where a service is held, the Rush Queen presented with a white-bound bible and children's posies blessed at the altar. At the end of the service the children place their posies on untended graves and then the members of the congregation are invited to share in refreshments, including traditional home-made gingerbread!

Specially written 'Rush Bearing' Hymns were traditionally learned in school and sung in the church; today they have been somewhat 'diluted' and modern hymns added; Reverend. Postlethwaite composed his own hymn for the day. A few verses taken from the 'processional hymn' will give the reader a 'flavour' of the occasion:

Why come ye in procession long? Why gather here today?
What means this crowd of eager folk? The pageant of display?
What service calls, what feast day falls, to bring this waiting throng?
Triumphant emblems borne aloft, the strains of joyful song;
Green rushes in our trophies, gay flowers of brightest hue
We hold to make our yearly gift, today this gift is due.

Come ye to deck the house of God, more lovely through your skill
The nimble fingers cunning craft, the spoil of copse and hill,
From rifled tarn, from corn-stocked barn, from orchard's sun-kissed yield,
The bursting praise of meadow-land, the joy of harvest field?
Green rushes in our trophies, gay flowers of rainbow shade
Are but the sign of heartfelt thanks, a grateful service paid.

Come ye because your fathers brought in laden wains of yore,
The winter-warmth of scented rush to ease a trodden floor,
From marsh and rill, from flat and hill, from space of seave and sedge,
The tribute of a manor's wealth, a people's grateful pledge?
Green rushes in our trophies, and flowers of colour gay
For God, for man, these homely gifts, our heartfelt love display.

A double service then you yield with thought of old-time need,
From man you gain the earthly due, from God the heavenly meed.
Then with your gift your voices life in strains of love and praise,
Inspiring emblems held aloft, triumphant paeans raise.

Green rushes in our trophies, gay flowers of brightest hue
We bring to make our yearly gift, today this gift is due.

One suspects that even Henry Barber MD would have approved of this tradition. It seems that he approved of little else! Writing in 1894,of Urswick church, he wrote, 'There is little else (other than the grave slab in memory of 'Amicia Filia Johanis Francissi' referred to earlier) interesting in this church besides an old font, an alms box, and a piscina in the south wall of the chancel; but there is much that is uninteresting- such as the high pen-like pews, and a remarkable private-box-sort-of-thing, somewhere between the floor and the roof- relics of the churchwardenic period- and an ugly pulpit and prayer-desk. It is a good thing that the bell in the tower is hidden or it would crack its sides at the sight of them; for none of these abominations existed in churches in their early days' (Page 332).

Barber's reference above to 'the bell' is probably a slip of the pen because there was more than one bell in the belfry at the time of writing; there were in fact three, two hung in the eighteenth century, the peal to become four in 1953. The oldest bell, known as the Harrington Bell is worthy of mention here and its casting date fits the period before the Dissolution. This bell is the largest and according to Gaythorpe 'in outline it is more graceful and symmetrical' than the others and is 'finely modelled and well proportioned'. The inscription which encircles the bell reads:

maria S + S WILHELMUS DE HARYNGTON DOMINUS DE ALDYNGHAM ET DOMINA MARGARETA UXOR EIUS +

The 'Haryngton' shield of arms is cast on the lower part of the bell below the waist. No founder's mark is visible, but there is a 'cross patonce with the angles diapered immediately under the word 'Maria' and after the word 'Eius' and on either side of the former cross is an elongated **S**-shaped figure'. He states that the perfect form of the letters in this 15th century inscription and the beautiful diapered backgrounds are in striking contrast with the old face Roman letters and incorrect spelling in the inscriptions on the 18th century bells.'

We are told by Postlethwaite that before Bardsea became a separate ecclesiastical parish, the funerals from that village naturally came to Urswick. It was the custom of the mourners when they reached the top of the Hagg, in sight of the church, to begin singing a Psalm, the melody of their chant being accompanied by the tolling of the Harrington bell in the valley below.

Gaythorpe suggests that 'it is not improbable that the 'Haryngton' bell may originally have been given to Conishead Priory by Sir William Haryngton seeing that he had a chapel and was buried there.' There is nothing to suggest that he was particularly interested in Urswick; one would have expected to find the bell perhaps at Aldingham. The bell was most likely purchased by the churchwardens of Urswick after the Dissolution of Conishead Priory in

1536. In the Inventory of church goods at Urswick in 1552 in which the name of a Wylim Harrington occurs as one of the churchwardens there are (among other things to which we shall return) 'two bells.... one hande belle..... and two other bells, being in the steple not meneyonid in the first Inventorie (1547). The churche wardens doo depose that the said pyssheners doo owe for two of the said bells Xii.' Clearly, then, suggests Gaythorpe, if the 'Haryngton Bell' is one of these, the other one (the fourth) is not now in the 'steple', and both the second and third bells, dated 1711 and 1724, may have been re-cast from two older bells'. (Page 101).

Pollit makes reference to the 'story' that the missing bell was moved to Dalton or Kendal in the eighteenth century and speculates that 'perhaps it was a damaged bell with the metal intended for recasting', although this story, 'conjectural or true, does not explain the absence of two bells from the original bells (1552) replaced presumably by the bells acquired in 1711 and 1724.'

This is another example of our being at a considerable loss in our research because a lot of records and documents relating specifically to the church are no longer available to us. Gaythorpe, writing in 1900, comments that 'it is a matter of regret that there are now no Parish Registers at Urswick earlier than 1608. According to a statement by the vicar before the Assistant Commissioner, Arthur Cardew, Barrister-at-Law, at the public enquiry made at Urswick on 13th September 1898, 'there were no deeds whatever when he came to the parish about twenty years ago. There was a mass of parchment at the bottom of the chest which, with the damp, had gone to jelly, and it had to be dug out with a spade. Some of the Parish Registers were mutilated horribly, entries having been bodily cut out here and there' (page 107).

Our only other major source for the medieval history of Furness is the Coucher Book of Furness Abbey referred to earlier. This was compiled in 1412 at the instruction of Abbot William Dalton. Richard Esk seemingly composed the introduction and the table of contents, while John Stell acted as scribe.

CHAPTER FIVE

From Columba to Cromwell

Having established as far as one is able that the Christian presence was retained during many years, probably at least from the time of the Celtic evangelism of Aiden and Cuthbert, and that a focus for worship existed at Urswick from early days, possibly out of doors around a standing cross, it might be helpful to some of our readers at least if we pause to consider firstly what the Columban monastic Church was like in its beliefs and practices and then to look briefly at how that changed after the Synod of Whitby in 664 AD bearing in mind that the change from one to the other didn't happen over night! It was more than 100 years before Iona finally adopted the 'Roman' Easter and practices.

What was the Columban church and community like?

Columba's 'rule' (in both senses of the word) continued for well over 100 years after his death, in fact considerably longer than that because it was not really overtaken fully until the Benedictines took ascendancy in the 12th century. We must remember also that King Oswald of Northumbria had been educated and converted at Iona and brought Iona's influence to Lindisfarne/ Northumbria via St. Aidan when he regained his kingdom. Egfrith, King of Northumbria, at the time of St.Cuthbert also had earlier links with Iona.

Imagine if you will a community of considerable numbers who lived, worked, prayed and slept in a collection of wooden huts and wattle and daub shelters. The church would probably be of wood also, although at Urswick there is a possibility that it 'bucked the trend' and had a stone church from earlier times; that would be unusual and very significant. The community would be surrounded by a rectangular vallum for protection (also indicating a spiritual boundary). Some monks would live alone whilst others would live communally in dormitories or similar. Around the central church would be the guest house, kitchen/ refectory, library/ scriptorium, barns for storing grain, and the smithy and workshops. Beyond the vallum would be large areas of fields where the community farmed, kept cattle and sheep, grew crops and hewed wood.

The community would have been divided into three main groups: seniores who would be largely responsible for the services in church; working brothers who would do most of the manual labour in the workshops and fields, and the juniores who were novices under instruction. In addition to the resident community there would be students, pilgrims and a steady flow of visitors, including other monks on pilgrimage and penitents seeking atonement.

In common with the inmates of most Irish monasteries the monks would have followed a lifestyle that was a good deal more strict and austere than that pursued by those founded by St.Benedict and his followers - by no means the whimsical and romantic picture of the Celtic Church often depicted today!

There would be an emphasis upon study.
A further significant feature would be the prominence of the abbot as 'ruler' even over any bishops who were living in community.

Columba's 'rule' prescribed three daily labours; reading, work and prayer.
The rule divides work into three parts also : 'thine own work, and the work of thy place as regards its real wants; secondly, thy share of the brethren's work; and lastly, to help thy neighbours, viz. by instruction, or writing, or sewing garments or whatever they may be in want of'.
The third daily work, of prayer and devotion, occupied the largest part of the 'rule'.

Prayer, both individual and corporate, was at the heart of the community's life; the monks would spend long spells in solitary prayer in their cells; at set times during the day and night the bell would summon them to church to recite Divine Office.
The Psalms played a large part in the devotional life of the Columban Church- chanted, recited, copied, studied and used heavily in prayer and poetry- and in its missionary work and evangelism.

There were five canonical hours during the day- prime, terce, sext, nones and vespers and at night there were three separate services- Ad initium noctis (at nightfall), Ad medium noctis (at midnight) and Ad matutinam (very early in the morning towards daybreak). Mass was celebrated on Sundays and Feast Days at sext, the midday service.

The main weekly celebration of the Eucharist would have happened in the church and other services probably around the high crosses dotted around the community.

The Columban Church exemplified the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi*- a worshipping community which believed that God was to be found through prayer and contemplation rather than through debating societies and arguments. Their church was clearly centred on worship and the *felt* presence of God among them.

There was an emphasis upon pastoral care and practising the presence of God by their availability to others, in a ministry of healing and reconciliation, of hospitality and welcome. This pastoral care would have extended to the local community, another distinctive feature of Columba's monasteries and general to Irish monasticism.
As recorded earlier there was a strong and apparently harsh penitential discipline because penitence was linked to a substantial healing and wholeness ministry.

A final point to be made (and very important to understand) is that although they would have practised the real presence of God they were not a fixed or static community, rather a Church 'on the move' in outreach, in journeying, in *peregrinate* and pilgrimage to find that 'place of resurrection'.
The Columban Church had no interest in buildings as monuments or in leaving their mark behind them; they were content to worship God wherever and whenever.

How things had changed!

Roy Strong describes the medieval clergy as being an 'uneven bunch'- which might equally be said of clergy at any time- and fell into two distinct groups: prosperous rectors and poor vicars. The parish priest typically lived in an isolated community, largely cut off from other priests or people with similar education and interests. 'Without any means of transport except a horse, with no post, no newspapers and very few books', says Hylson-Smith, 'the country clergyman was left almost entirely on his own to cope with his daily round, and with the struggle against loneliness, heightened by celibacy, secularism, and probably a small but disheartening amount of indifference and indolence among the local people for whom he was responsible.'

We are reminded that the lot of the so-called 'inferior clergy' was pretty desperate around the twelfth century with the appropriation of parochial endowments by the religious houses, as happened of course at Urswick when Furness Abbey held sway. Rectories disappeared and very poorly paid vicars were substituted, as we have seen.
Their condition was improved and their living somewhat more secure after the Lateran Council of 1215 although still extremely poor.

We are told that there was also an improvement in the educational level of the clergy as the thirteenth century progressed. Hylson-Smith quoted Shinners and Dohar who stated that the village parson was not, as so frequently portrayed, 'a barely literate, barely celibate, barely sober bumpkin, more at home in a tavern or in flagrante delicto than at an altar or a prie-dieu.'

Every priest was expected or required to know the ten commandments, the seven deadly sins, the seven sacraments and the creed as the basic matters of belief. And then in Bishop Grosseteste's 'Constitutions' they were reminded of their duties and what conduct was expected of them.
It makes sobering reading:

No woman should be allowed in his house whose presence might cause suspicion of evil; he should not frequent taverns, engage in merchandise, or act as a bailiff. He should not profit from the goods entrusted to him, attend plays, game with dice, or carry arms. He should ensure that the cemetery was enclosed, that no markets, games or lawsuits were permitted in holy places, clandestine marriages should be forbidden, and no layman, with the possible exception of the patron, should be in the chancel with the clerks during divine service.

Of the pastoral aids, the tract by Archbishop Pecham called **Ignorantia sacerdotum** (or 'The Ignorance of Priests) was most widely circulated and used. It was issued in 1281 and outlined the fundamental theology with which every priest was expected to be familiar. Hylson-Smith states that it conformed to the well-established, and much favoured mediaeval practice of assembling all the sevens: the seven sacraments, the seven deadly

sins, the seven virtues, the seven works of mercy. It concisely rehearsed the Ten Commandments, and it succinctly summarized the articles of faith.

By now everyone over the age of fourteen was bound by law to take Communion once a year, at Easter; they had to prepare for the sacrament by an act of penance or confession. Whilst this could be a brusque affair with the priest reeling off to the kneeling penitent the 'Seven Deadly Sins, the Five Senses and the Seven Works of Mercy', 'through confession the priest was often able to settle disputes within the village community and enforce morality on his flock.'

As we have seen, the climax of the Liturgical Year was Easter, but throughout the year all the great feasts were marked by processions in which everyone took part.
Rogationtide, the solemn beating of the parish bounds on 25th April, could last for several days depending on the size of the parish. This was a ceremony designed to drive out evil spirits, invoke God's blessing on the coming harvest and, at the same time, define the village community.
As Strong pointed out 'all these ceremonies of the Christian year brought constant animation to the church building and reflected a faith with a strong sense of theatre. Through them both individual piety and collective identity found their expression and permeated everyday life'.
In fact, the many rituals and 'rites of passage' that took place in the parish church impinged on every single person 'from cradle to grave'.

It is tempting to continue with the account of the events and the covert activities during the four years which led up to the dissolution of Furness Abbey in 1537, but the key event was the arrival of the Receiver, Robert Southwell, on 23rd June 1537, who came to dismiss the monks and to realise the effects of the Abbey. First the monks and then the lay brethren and servants were dealt with, about 140 in all, and as Barnes points out, importantly, 'as it was a time of scarcity and agricultural depression, they must have found the coming winter very trying'. 120 poor boys in the cloister school were given a holiday and told not to return and 13 poor almsmen lodged in the monastery were given one mark each and sent out to beg for their living. All of the effects of the monastery were sold off and the charters and documents sent to London on three pack-horses!

When Southwell left, most of the Abbey was reduced to roofless ruined walls and the only buildings spared were those a farmer would need. The gardens and orchards were likewise spared for the farmer's use. In 1540 the possessions of the late monastery of Furness were by Act of Parliament annexed to the Duchy of Lancaster.

We are told that 'though the monks were so shabbily treated, the Steward, the Bailiff of Dalton and the other bailiffs and officers of the Liberty received appointments under the

Crown for life. For example, Roger Pele was granted, in lieu of 100 marks, the rectory of Dalton consisting of the corn tithes of Lindal and Marton, and the small tithes and Easter dues of the Parish, yet in less than two months he was being harried by a King's servant who had a lease on the parsonage! He appealed to Thomas Cromwell 'not forgetting to enclose a gift of 20/- in gold and a promise of £4 more from the Easter offerings' and was allowed to enjoy his living in peace until he died at Dalton in the spring of 1541.

But what about Urswick?

We know that it would have come under the Duchy of Lancaster in 1540. We also know that **Thomas Harteley** was presented to the vicarage of Urswick by the Abbot of Furness Abbey in 1535 and that on his death in 1544 William Sawrey was presented by Hugh and Walter Askue 'for this time only, on grant of Roger, late abbot of Furness.'

If the destruction of Furness Abbey had only marginal impact on the life of the local church, then the Reformation which began to speed up in the latter years of the reign of Henry VIII and took root in the reign of Edward, who acceded to the throne at the age of nine years old in 1547, was to have almost immediate and far-reaching impact.

Suddenly in 1536 all feasts between 1st July and 29th September were abolished 'apparently for interfering with the gathering of the harvest'. So were all those feasts which fell in the Westminster law terms 'for they hindered government administration'. The exceptions were the feast of the Apostles, the Virgin, Ascension Day, the nativity of John the Baptist, All Saints and Candlemas.
Strong states that 'the abolition of the holy days triggered off some unrest but, for the most part, it appears that the directive was simply ignored; most parishes went on celebrating their local saints as they always had.'

In the same year the first doctrinal statement of the new Church of England was issued. The 'Ten Articles' were an indication of what was to follow. Only three of the seven sacraments were upheld- baptism, penitence and the Eucharist. The intercession of the saints could still be sought but clergy were instructed to warn their congregations of the danger of worshipping images, 'censing them, and kneeling and offering unto them.'

A series of injunctions issued in August of 1536 by Thomas Cromwell were far more severe. Clerics were told to encourage parishioners to read the Bible in Latin and English and to preach on the Ten Articles.
Fathers and landlords were to catechise their families and households on the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments.
In 1538 saints were largely excised from the liturgy, the use of the rosary condemned and the ringing of the angelus bell forbidden. The faithful were exhorted not to 'offer money, candles or tapers to images or relics, or kissing or licking the same', and then any 'feigned images' which evoked such a response were ordered to be taken down; this went hand in

hand with the abolition of 'candles, tapers or images of wax.... before any image or picture'. This single injunction set in train the destruction of church interiors, which were gradually dismantled over the next thirty years. Perhaps it was then that the two trefoil-headed 'niches' either side of the chancel arch at Urswick were vacated!

One positive injunction from those declared in 1536 was that 'the curate of every parish church shall keep one book or register, which book shall, every Sunday take forth and in the presence of the churchwardens or one of them, write and record in the same all the weddings, christenings and burials made the whole week before.' The register was to be kept in a locked chest within the church. This is a huge asset in identifying particular families and moreso as there are little 'additions' here and there which give us a glimpse of life at the time.
As we shall see, though, it was not well kept and there are considerable gaps.

The records of the Manorial Court are also fascinating reading and tell us much about life in general at the time. For example, in 1545 'the jurors put a penalty that none within the lordship (of Muchland) shall keep no cards in his house under a penalty of 6s 8d nor suffer a man servant to play at cards but in crysmis within their house under a penalty of 20 Shillings and he that playeth to loose 13s 4d.' In 1561 the Court ordered that 'no man shall keep no carding in his house nor codying nor peny prike nor nottrakes playing for bread nor nayles under a penalty of 20s. Those that play and he that kepys the cards and hosts 40s.'

One would expect the local vicar to set a good example but sad to say that in 1574 William Sawrey, vicar of Urswick, was in court 'for gaming and playing at cards and dice in his own house upon the Sabbath day in the time of divine service and that he had there accompanied him as well Leonard Corker, Edward Jackson and divers others'. The case was adjourned for a time for consideration.
We also note that in 1596 William Lindow, vicar of Urswick, was 'presented for saying that Edward Cooke is a forger of men's wills to be in fine unless he can prove him so to be at the next court'. It would seem that this arose because one of the parson's perquisites was to draw up wills for the parishioners.

The death of Henry VIII in 1547 and the earlier fall from grace of Thomas Cromwell in 1539 did not stop the process of reformation. In 1547, within weeks of Edward's accession, a new set of injunctions were issued to alter every church in the kingdom and what happened inside them. All images were to be destroyed, all processions were to cease, instead the cleric was bidden to kneel and read the litany, an English version of which had been introduced by Archbishop Thomas Cramner in 1544. There was to be no holy water or holy bread, and the use of votive candles forbidden. Money which had been raised for these by various chantries, guilds and fraternities was to go into the poor box.

In December 1547, before the above institutions could offer significant resistance, they too were suppressed, with the Crown confiscating their goods, lands and income. This had a

significant effect on some parishes because they had taken on major responsibilities for running the church, raising money for expansions or repairs. This ceased.

Suppression continued and in the following year a licence to preach was introduced, intended to give state control over what was said in the pulpit. Should the incumbent not have a licence he was to read instead one of the approved homilies to his congregation. By the Autumn of 1548 sermons were banned altogether!

The Prayer Book of 1549 swept away any variant celebrations of the Mass, replacing it with a ceremony in English that was stripped of all the traditional externals such as holy bread and water, 'bidding the beads' and the elevation of the Host. The service was still non-participatory except that the Communion was now to be taken in both bread and wine. The Prayer Book also reduced the traditional liturgical year to Christmas, Easter, Whitsun and a handful of saint's days.

The year 1552 has particular significance and brings us back to the situation at Urswick. In that year the second Prayer Book made a complete break with the past. It introduced a communion service in which both cleric and congregation participated together. Vestments were forbidden. The Holy Table, which replaced the altar, was to be moved into the body of the chancel and placed in the north-south position for communion. Any notion that the Eucharist represented the sacrifice of Christ on the cross disappeared and the communion service was purely commemorative. Consecrated bread and wine left over was to be taken home and consumed by the cleric.

Roy Strong says that 'when Edward VI had come to the throne in 1547 churches had been filled with devotional objects and items essential for the performance of the liturgy. The church had been a compartmented space filled with nooks and corners partitioned off for a variety of altars or fraternities. The eye was held and guided by the presence of flickering lights illuminating numerous images. By the close of 1552 the church had become one large, empty, whitewashed enclosure. Colour, which had been everywhere, on the walls, the polychrome statues, the vestments and the altar dressings, had vanished; so had the smell of incense. All that the church was left with was a surplice, two tablecloths for the Holy Table, a communion cup and a bell to ring before the sermon.

When traces of murals were uncovered on the walls of the nave at Urswick it was apparent that the whitewashing which finally obliterated the murals had been carried out in stages, the first of which included decorations in Indian red of elementary Tudor roses.

As part of the general visitation of 1552 planned by the Priory Council and carried out by the Commissioners, the names of the church wardens at Urswick church are given together with an inventory of its goods. The church wardens were: John Marshall, Robert Garner, John Wylkinson (Wilkinson), Ric(hard) Byrdesey (Bardsey), Rycherde (Richard) Johnson, and William Harrington. The inventory included, apart from the two bells referred to earlier,

‘one chasuble of.... two old vestments of yelowe and grene sylke, one albe, one cope of blacke chamlett, one hande belle, one altar clothe of rede, two other bells being in the steple not mencyonid in the first Inventorie’.

At the time of the visitation the vicarage was held by **William Sawrey** who had been appointed on the death of Thomas Hartley in 1544. It is not known whether Sawrey resigned his living on the re-introduction (briefly) of the Roman ritual on the accession of Queen Mary in 1553. Henry Woodbury was presented to the living in 1554 by Queen Mary as was her entitlement under the Duchy of Lancaster and he died in 1558, to be followed by Thomas Dobson presented by Philip and Mary in that year.

According to the list of vicars produced by Postlethwaite and Pollit, Thomas Dobson was succeeded in 1562 by William Sawrey, the son of the gentleman who had resigned his office in 1554. He was to be succeeded in 1580 by James Saier (Sayer) presented by Queen Elizabeth. Of these worthy gentlemen we know virtually nothing, but we have some insight into the ‘state of the nation’ especially during the Marian period and the accession of Elizabeth in 1558.
Having been forced to destroy or dispose of much from their churches and their practices, suddenly they were issued new Injunctions in 1556 which began by ‘bidding parishioners to go once more to church, there to hear Divine service, not in jangling or talking or walking commonly up and down, especially at mass time, but occupying themselves, according to the time and place, in godly meditation and prayer, either with beads or books of prayer allowed and appointed.‘ (Strong, page 78).

The clergy were required to reinstate ‘all godly ceremonies of the Church, as holy bread, holy water, bearing of palms, creeping to the cross, standing at the gospel, and going on procession.
Strong comments that because of the previous destruction a great deal had to be improvised ‘on the cheap’.

Of course, it all changed again in November 1558 when Elizabeth came to the throne and in 1559 the ‘Act of Uniformity’ was passed followed by a series of royal injunctions. The Act was aimed at standardising the service, but this did not happen uniformly across the country, certainly in the early years of her reign; however, the early visitations to the parishes in 1559 and throughout the early 1560’s were thorough and quite brutal. The Commissioners were ‘hell bent’ on destroying any artefact used in Catholic ritual, including seeking out and destroying any items held in private hands, but as Strong suggests, importantly, as the vast majority of priests remained in post, many external Catholic rituals would have continued within the framework of the Prayer Book service.

The troubled years after the Dissolution and the upheaval of the local way of life caused by the demise of Furness Abbey and the ‘carving up’ of the lands formerly occupied by the Monastery had some interesting outcomes in the Duchy Court.

For example, the following extract taken from Postlethwaite's 'Some Notes on Urswick Church and Parish' published in 1906 makes interesting reading:

"William Sawry Vicar of Urswick, in the County of Lancaster, complained that when he and Henry Bromthwate Chaplain, & servant to plaintiff were in God's peace & the King's, one Anthony Rigge & Cuthbert Rigge & six other persons to plaintiff unknown, on St .Stephen's day last (1548), about nine o'clock at night, assembled at Hawkesyde in the county of Lancaster with force & arms, to wit, with swords, bucklers, staves, bills, clubs, daggers & other weapons defensive, & assaulted the said Henry Bromthwate in the house of Miles Rigg, where the said Henry is tabled, & would have murdered him if he had not fled into a chamber but the inhabitants of the town came and with greyt payn and busyness Interupted the said evill disposed persons of theyr devellysshe purpose. Not content with this, the said Cuthbert & Anthony Rigg, Robert Sandes, and other riotous & light persons to the number of twenty assembled in manner of a tumult or insurreccion at Hawkesed the 15 of January last about twelve o'clock at night, and assaulted the house of Gyles Kendall in Hawksed wherein plaintiff then lodged, broke open the outer gate of the house & would have forced the inner gate but that it & the walls were too strong. When defendants saw they could not get into the house they called upon plaintiff to come out of it for they would have ---------- one of his arms or legs before going away. They stayed there threatening him until the next day, when the country round about heard of the said riot and met together to rescue plaintiff from defendants who then withdrew. Moreover, before the said 15th day of January & since, defendants have often assembled to try to murder plaintiff who in consequence has often been in danger of his life.
Plaintiff prays that the King's dred letter of Privy Seal may be directed to the said Cuthbert Rigg & others to appear to answer the present."

We do not know the cause of the riot and the threat to the life of William Sawrey in 1548 and whether it was about religious differences, but we do know that he had several landed interests in the Hawkshead area. In 1559 he also purchased part of the Urswick estate. The Robert Sandes (Sandys) referred to above was probably cousin to William Sandys who was killed in an affray at Conishead in 1558, and to Edwin Sandys, Archbishop of York.

The 'murder' of William Sandys has a link to Urswick via Nicholas Bardsey who was strongly implicated. It seems that whilst 'patrons' of Urswick church they were a pretty argumentative and unruly bunch! Christopher's grandfather, Christopher had abused his relationship with the Abbot of Furness. The citation goes that 'The Abbot, trusting to the honour of a 'gentleman born' had given him the Tithe Barn of Bardsea with the tithes deriving from it, for his lifetime at the low sum of £4. And "that he would be beneficial to the said monastery and always ready to give advice" he should retain 13/4d out of this £4 for his advice. He had also lent Christopher, when in need, the sum of money amounting to £20 (this could have been £200- the manuscript is unclear) for the payment of which the latter was bound in a "Statute marchaunt". According to the Abbot's letter of complaint

Christopher took the tithes, used the barn, but returned neither the £4 nor any sound advice, and, when the Abbot was in difficulty the gentleman "embezzled the statute". Alexander, in an attempt to recover his property sent his monks to take possession of the tithe barn and gather the grain from the fields. Christopher with a company of 30 armed men arrested Edmund Curwen, the plaintiff's assistant, and having beaten him, imprisoned him in his house. The monks, unaccustomed to such scenes of violence, fled in panic to their monastery for sanctuary, leaving behind them horse, cart and tithes.' It was said that there was no point in the Abbot bringing action against Christopher Bardsey because he was the under steward of "myche lands" in Furness, to the Earl of Derby. In fact the Abbot and his monks were charged at Lancaster before Sir Hymphrey Conyngsby and found guilty of riotous behaviour!

Christopher Bardsey was also involved as part of a large mob in a brawl at Kirkby Ireleth church during the mass. It was so bad that the priest 'fearing a murder would there take place, did "unrevesse himself" and would not say Mass. When he died Christopher instructed that his body be buried 'within the Priory of our Blessed lady of Coyished (Conishead) with all my mortuaries due to my parish of Urswick'**.** Christopher was succeeded by William his second son because his eldest son John had been 'murdered with great barbarity' on 18th July 1533, allegedly at the instigation of Thomas Lord, the last Prior of Conishead.

William Bardsey was the owner of Bardsey Hall at the time of the murder of William Sandys in 1558. The dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 had roused the worst passions; whatever the religious background of the Reformation, the change in the ownership of Church lands inspired fierce hatreds. As we have seen, William Bardsey and his family had for generations received tithes from Furness Abbey and 'it caused him no small resentment to lose this advantage and see William Sandys of Esthwaite, who was Receiver General of the Lordship of Furness, after the Dissolution, growing rich at his expense.' When William Sandys, Edwin Sandys' brother purchased Conishead from the Crown in 1548, and held tithes on Gleaston Flat which was part of the estate in Bardsey, resentment went even deeper.

At the enquiry in 1559 following the murder of William Sandys, "John Rawlinson of Furness Fells said that William Sandys was murdered on account of certain tithes, which were in his possession and which the sons and servants of William Bardsey, Esq. attempted to carry away. The sons were Nicholas and Robert and the name of the servant was Trog(b)eton but it was unknown who struck the mortal blow." Another witness said that 50 men and women took part in the murder, and that William Bardsey harboured a grudge against William Sandys, because the latter had delivered to him a privy seal for concealing a piece of land from the Queen. In revenge his son Nicholas committed a "certain heinous crime" and then fled to Scotland, and remained there in his hideout until he was certain of the Queen's pardon.

Nicholas Bardsey inherited on the death of his father. We are told that he was an adherent of the 'old faith' and kept secret contact with Rome which brought him into conflict with the Government. In his will Nicholas left £2 a year to his kinsman, Richard Bardsey, for life. This Richard Bardsey was a church warden at Urswick in 1552 at the time of the visitation. It's interesting to note that four years after Nicholas' death in 1586 the ministers of Elizabeth I learned that "there is a Richard Bardsey, an old man, who is kept about Furness. He came lately from the Pope and is seminary priest very thought, he was brother to one ould Bardsey of Furness, who was a great papist". Nicholas Bardsey was one of the governors of Urswick Grammar School when it was established in 1585. Nicholas declared in his will that he should be "buryed in my parishe Churche of Urswick, nihe to the place where the body of Anne Bardsey, my wife was laid".
He was in fact buried at Aldingham on 11th July 1586.

Urswick church has an important artefact still in regular use in memory of Edwin Sandys ,Archbishop of York, probably the brother of William Sandys who was murdered at Conishead in 1558; in fact the silver chalice and cover could well have been given in his memory.

Edwin Sandys was Archbishop of York from 1576 until his death in 1588. He was previously Bishop of Worcester in 1559 and then Bishop of London in 1570.
We know that he was born at Hawkshead in 1519 and his father was called William Sandys of Esthwaite. Edwin, we are told, was an 'early confessor of the protestant faith' and he

opposed vestments and making the sign of the cross.
We also know that it was he who ordered the destruction of the standing stone cross at Kirkby Ireleth. It is therefore not unlikely that he would also order the breaking up of the Tunwinni Cross and perhaps the Norse Cross at Urswick during the same visitation!

It was during this period that Protestant militia detachments applied lime-wash to church interiors to obliterate images and 'every trace of colour and Catholic identity. The biographer of the Marshall family suggests, however, that these militias didn't come this far north and that 'fortunately, in this area, the inexorable destruction of the fine woods of the church furnishings was avoided, as was the lime that disintegrated the delicate pigments of the sacred paintings'.

To return to the mystery of the silver chalice and cover, we have an inscription of its maker on the base of the vessel, **A.K (linked)**. The initials **W.S.** and the date **1571** are inscribed on the knob of the cover. Edwin's father, William, died in 1548 and Edwin's brother, William Sandys of Estwaite and Conishead Priory, died in 1558 'in an affray' at Conishead as we have seen. The lettering could suggest that the chalice was made in London and given in memory of WS, probably his brother.

Edwin Sandys took an active interest in the affairs in Carlisle diocese because in 1559 when the Bishop of Carlisle, Bishop Oglethorpe, was deprived of his 'see', Sandys recommended Bernard Gilpin, a kinsman, to succeed him but Gilpin declined, it is believed because the family were too well known in the county!
Edwin had earlier supported the cause of Lady Jane Grey in 1553 against Mary, had been jailed as a result, but reinstated by Queen Elizabeth.

Locally one or two 'snippits' give us some idea of what else was going on in Furness; for example, in about 1568 Walney Chapel was founded when, to assist the spread of the Reformation, Elizabeth pressured the Bishop of Chester to enforce church attendance. Walney was too great a distance from Dalton Parish Church and gave the inhabitants a good excuse for not attending. Barnes tells us that the period between the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 and the outbreak of the Civil War was a period of peace in Furness, hinting that there was a sort of sentimental attachment for the monarchy even though Furness had become distinctly protestant, puritans were numerous in the area and the High Anglican party that existed among the gentry was looked upon as crypto-romanist. Since the Duchy of Lancaster owned most of the estates, the rents on the manors were low, the customs not burdensome and relations between lord and tenant amicable, there was little cause for discontent to arise.

Barnes suggests, however, that any unrest and apprehension that there was in Furness had a religious rather than a political origin. There was somewhat of a 'stir' around the time of the Spanish Armada in 1558 in terms of a suspected plot, or rather a rumour, to invade the area through Piel, involving Cardinal Allen, leader of the Jesuit missions to England who had

been a native of Fleetwood.
Their fears proved groundless.
'In fact', says Barnes, 'there is no evidence that either the inhabitants of Furness in general or Preston (Thomas Preston) in particular ever had any rebellious or traitorous intentions whatever at this time.'
Thomas Preston was deputy steward of Piel Castle and was labelled as 'a Papist atheist'.

As for the church itself the 'Elizabethan Book of Homilies' included one 'for repairing and keeping clean, and comely adorning of churches.'
This stated that 'To it (the church) the parish should resort to hear God's words and know his will, to receive the sacraments, and here, together, the whole multitude of God's people in the Parish should pray, give thanks to God and bestow alms.'
Like any dwelling house it should maintain 'all things in good order, and all corners clean and sweet'.
There should be 'places convenient to sit on', a pulpit and the Lord's Table for 'his holy supper' and a font for baptism.
And of course seating continued to be fixed according to social status and habitation, with the lower classes and the young consigned to benches at the west end.

The religious and social upheavals of the seventeenth century and their impact on Furness are worthy of a Chapter of their own, but let us conclude this one by considering the local struggles with plague or epidemic as the century closed. The most documented and the most graphic account is that of the Dalton Plague of 1631, but this was the last of a series of plague years.
There is evidence that 1597 was a 'plague year' in Dalton, and again in 1623 when the record shows 154 burials in Dalton church yard and 54 in 1624.
It is interesting to note that in the Urswick Register for 1608-1695 whereas the average annual number of burials is in the low teens, in 1623 there were 54 and in 1624, 29. The highest instance of burials was the period between December 1623 and March 1624.
Cause of death is not recorded but at Urswick there is not one outstanding group of deaths, there being 26 men, 28 women and 27 sons and daughters during that period.

The plague of 1631 in Dalton raged for seven months and killed 360 inhabitants in all out of a total population of 612. We know it spread as far as Walney where 120 people died, again, half the population.
Sadly there are no entries for this period in the Urswick Register but it must have had an impact there, not least in restrictions on travel and stock movement, etc.

At Dalton the vicar, Reverend A Tomlinson, ''also fled in fear and left the holy thresholds of the church'.

CHAPTER SIX

Of Collared Doves and Scandalous Lives

On the death of Nicholas Bardsey in 1586 the estate was divided between his two daughters, Dorothy, who married James Anderton, and Elizabeth, who married Lancelot Salkeld of Whitehall in Cumberland. Dorothy and James Anderton inherited Bardsea. In 1591 James obtained a grant of the important Stewardship of the Royal Manor of Muchland, with the keepership of Seawood Park and the custody of Gleaston castle for life. We are led to believe that in the light of his lordship of Bardsey, in right of his wife, and his offices of Muchland and Receiver of Furness Abbey lands, must have rendered him one of the leading men in Furness. In maintaining his wife's rights as landowner, Anderton found himself in constant conflict with the times; his history is mostly taken up with accounts of law-suits with those who challenged the old order of things. He is charged, as Steward of Muchland, with unfair dealing by the tenants and later as Justice of the Peace with bullying the Clerk. It was said that he inspired the ready loyalty of his friends, and something akin to hatred among his enemies. His position was rendered difficult and ambiguous by a clash of interests: on the one hand he was a faithful adherent of the Roman Church, on the other he sought the favour of the Protestant monarchy so that he might satisfy his ambition for high office under the Crown.

Presentation to the living at Urswick was made by William Chaderton, the Bishop of Chester, **in 1585, when William Lindow(e) was made vicar** but James Anderton was the most important man in the Parish.

In **1598 the church at Urswick was re-roofed** probably replacing a thatched roof. An oak beam across the easternmost part of the nave, exposed during alterations made during the time of T.E.Postelthwaite, bears a series of carved initials of all those who were interested in re-roofing the church in that year with the date also carved prominently among them.

The date is followed by the initials **W.L.V (**William Lindow, Vicar). Postlethwaite suggests that the two other initials following, **W.H.** probably indicate an assistant priest. On the next line come the initials of the leading men of the parish, starting with **'J.A.Esquire'** (James Anderton) husband of Dorothy of Bardsey Hall. Alongside James Anderton's initials can be clearly seen **J.S, J.G, C.G,** and **T.F.** Their positioning would suggest that these are probably the initials of some of those listed as 'freeholders' in 1600, namely John Sawrey, John Garner, Christopher Garner and Thomas Fell, probably also churchwardens. Walter Curwen was also a freeholder at the time- perhaps his name is there also.

The vicar, William Lindow, was described in 1610 as ‘a preacher’ which suggests his protestant persuasion; his name was also misspelt as ‘Lindall’ but I could find no further references under this spelling. He was buried at Urswick on 24th January 1620 having served as vicar for 35 years.

Furness was not to escape the conflict between the Royalists and the Roundheads, but in 1641 they had much else to focus the mind! In November of that year the news reached England of an Irish rebellion accompanied by the massacre of English and Scottish colonists; as Barnes tells us, rumour magnified the horrors and hundreds of refugees who fled to Lancashire spread the tales. A report was circulated that the butchery had been ordered by the kIng at the instigation of his Catholic Queen. News came to Furness that a large army of wild Irish had assembled at Carrickfergus destined to invade England through Piel, ‘and thus protestants would be the first to experience the papist fury.’ There was this background of apprehension and religious exacerbation in Furness when the Civil War broke out in 1642. Barnes gives a superb account of the Civil War in Furness; sufficient here to quote Thomas Park, High Constable at the time: ‘Sorely as Furness was plundered the inhabitants were surprised that no protestant throats had been cut nor any personal violence offered by the Royalists.’

By Ordinance of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament on August 23rd 1645, the use of the “Directory for the Public Worship of God” was made compulsory and the use of the Book of Common Prayer made illegal. As Barnes states, throughout Furness in all churches and chapels, the Directory was at once brought into use and the Prayer Books sent away to the Committee of Parliament as directed. All the ministers had sided against the King, and one or two at least seem to have been zealous Parliamentarians. This change is public worship was part of the price paid to Presbyterian prejudice for the support of the Scottish army against the King. In 1646 the title of Bishop was abolished and church

government in Furness became chaotic for a while until Lancashire was divided into nine classical presbyteries of which the ninth comprised the parishes north of the Sands. Its members were five ministers and eleven laymen, the majority being from Furness Fells and headed by Thomas Fell of Swarthmoor Hall, M.P. for Lancashire since 1645.

It is of particular interest to the Urswick story that **Nicholas Marshall who was inducted as Vicar of Urswick in 1620** managed to survive all of these changes and much, much more before his departure in 1660 and it is with him that our story continues. All of the 'usual' local resources refer to Nicholas Marshall being 'scandalous in his life and negligent in both his callings' (as vicar of Urswick and as Master of the Grammar School) but this needs putting into the context of the times. As Reverend Postlethwaite comments, 'I am inclined to think that Mr. Marshall's real fault in the eyes of the Parliamentarians was that he refused to comply with their narrow creed.' We see from the Registers that children from many of the neighbouring parishes were brought to him for Baptism.

The Parish Register for 1608-1695 notes:

'Nicholaus Marshall inducitur in Vicaria de Vrswick 2nd die Februarij 1620
p Gulielmum Collier de Dalton'

He was presented by Robert Curwen, Christopher Gardner, Thomas Fell and Thomas Marshall, all described as '(Gents)'.

On 4th December 1646 the Committee for Plundered Ministers made report on Mr. Marshall as follows:
"Vpon complaint made that Nicholas Marshall, from whome the Rectorie of Urswick in the Countie of Lancaster is sequestered by the Committee of the said Countie, contynueth in the possession of the said vicarage and officiateth there, it is ordered that the Committee of parliament for the said Countie doe, and they are hereby desired to, remove the said Mr. Marshall out of the said vicarage and Church and the possession there-of. And it is further ordered that vpon the petitioners producing a Certificate, vnder the hands of the godlie Ministers of the Neighbourhood, of Mr. Millington this Committee will then referre him to the Assemblie of divines to examine his fitnesse to officiate the said Cure to the end he may be settled in the said Church and Viccarage there of."

Clearly Mr. Marshall survived the enquiry because in a survey held in 1650 it is reported:
"There is belonging to the said Viccaridge A house in decay and about 2 acres of Gleab Land And that there belongeth to the Viccaridge Wool lamb pig goose hay hemp flax & small Tithes through the whole parish & that the value of the profits issued out of the Viccaridge and belonging to the Vicar Amounts to £20 per ann. And further, that the vicar officiating the Cure of the Church is Mr. Nicholas Marshall, both Vicar of the Church and maister of a free Scoole, but that he is scandalous in his life and negligent in both his callings."

Postlethwaite also comments that Nicholas Marshall was shrewd enough to get his own Clerk appointed Register in accordance with the Act of November 8th 1653.' The entry in the Register reads: 'Edward Fleminge Elected & Aproued Register for the Parishe of Vswicke Toucheinge Marriages Birthths (sic) & Burials of all Sorts of people by a late Acte Novembr the 8th 1653'

Nicholas was described as being 'a typical Englishman of his classe, being of kindly and mildly pious disposure; subtly ironical, but decorous with scholarship and culture, and slow to exert himself'. He is said to have regarded his living like a seat in a college fellowship, 'as a mere piece of patronage, awarded as a favour, and enjoyed as a privilege.'

It is said that his sermons, carefully composed, were delivered from the pulpit 'as literary exercises', meant to flatter and appeal to the taste of the elegant young people who customarily sat in the high pew around the slumbering Squire, but too abstract and impersonal to move the emotions of the patient rustic audience in the body of the church.

He was, however, a popular local figure. His kindly disposition was often shown by his visits to the stocks in the village when an offender was being pelted with dung, rotten eggs or bad fruit. It is said that because of his exalted position the local peasantry would desist and stand reverentially to one side at his approach, and would good-humouredly disperse at his command, thus offering some temporary respite to the suffering man. Usually he would be accompanied by his verger carrying a water-skin, and, after giving the victim a drink from a cup, he would douse him to remove the stinking mess that clung to him! Although it didn't prevent his tormentors returning when the Vicar had left, it was much appreciated.

He was rather less well liked by the agents of Parliament and their Roundhead escorts! His biographer claims that whilst visiting friends in 'Preston Town' he was identified as a High Anglican Minister by a group of Roundhead soldiers who threatened him with personal violence; it appears that he was an accomplished swordsman, 'sticking two of them before managing to escape'. Thereafter, allegedly, he always went about armed with two pistols. His 'greatest problem', however, were 'the interfering and sanctimonious fundamentalist preachers who descended on them with official warrants and state authorizations that appeared to give them carte-blanche.
Let me quote verbatim:
'In their determination to reorganise the administration of the Parish, and reduce his high Anglican liturgy to a Presbyterian and anti-clerical model, the fundamentalist often arrived under the armed protection of a truculent Roundhead officer, perhaps with a small platoon of nervous musketmen in tow. Then, in the market square, or at Sunday service, he would attempt to elbow out the appointed Vicar, and take over the normal proceedings in order to engage in a long and tedious tirade against the alleged satanically inspired tendencies allowed there. Despite resentment at his gross methods, it was difficult to silence the man, who felt secure and safe in his belief that the populace would not dare take revenge for fear of a retaliatory strike later by a detachment of puritan soldiers.'

‘Unfortunately,’ he continues, ‘for most of these Brownist preachers, unfamiliar with that part of England since their origins tended to be in more southerly counties, the tolerance level of the Furness congregation was often very much lower than they had previously experienced. Consequently, with their bodyguard rendered impotent in the face of overwhelming universal anger, it was not unusual for his sermonizing to be abruptly terminated as he gasped for breath in the village pond’.

It is only right for the sake of a true record that the official accusations made against Nicholas Marshall should be made clear. William Gardner of Urswick made two official complaints to the Bishops about him as follows:
‘William Gardner c Nicholas Marshall clerk, schoolmaster for neglect of school, drinking in Hawkshead, Dalton and Urswick; for beating Samuel Harrison preacher of God’s word, also for adultery and fornication’. (ED C5 12)

‘Wm.Gardner c Nicholas Marshall vicar and schoolmaster for neglect of school, keeping a youth to act as master, being only fit to teach petties, not training scholars for the University according to founder’s endowment of £10, playing at cards, also dice and losing heavily, being beastly drunk in Urswick, Hawkshead, Dalton and Harburroide and fighting’ (ED C5 16)

There’s a little ‘aside’ here.
We are informed by Marshall’s biographer that from about the time of the Cromwellian Protectorate, ‘waves of hellfire preachers brought to Urswick tales of strange happenings in the other regions of Lancashire which they had visited. Some souls, they asserted, had actually been witnessed by the justified few to be carried up to the realms of glory, whilst others, despairing in their sinful condition, had deliberately sought the company of Satan and his damned.’

The tales took on greater credibility in the telling, to become the basis for a further piece of Urswick folk lore:
After dark on St. Mark’s Eve each year, 24th April, the old men of the parish who had turned 60 kept a vigil at the church porch between the hours of 11pm and 1am, so, it was said, they could be forewarned as to who would die during the coming year. It was said that recognizable vaporous grey phantoms of villagers destined to die would drift by the watchers, calling out to them by name. Then the spirits would swirl towards the ground, as if to be sucked by some irresistible force into the very soil of the churchyard. This was the terrifying moment of salvation or damnation, when some of the disembodied forms would rise, growing brighter and brighter, until they were absorbed by a bright hovering cloud. Others would grow dark, and sink, deeper and deeper, until they disappeared into the earth, on their way to the Underworld of lost souls.

We are told, further, that there were timid individuals who quaked in terror at the mere thought of having to take part, and were reluctant to attend – but a powerful threat left them little choice. The legend warned them that the phantom of any absentee would

appear before the assembled group and having defied the supernatural power, would immediately descend to the torments of hell!

Many years later it was customary for mourners to spend a night or two in the porch after a funeral to frustrate the evil designs of 'body snatchers'.

Let us now return to the publication of the 'Directory of Public Worship' in 1645 and to Sir Roy Strong's account of this extremely disruptive period where we can perhaps find a more objective view of the situation described so colourfully by the Marshall family biographer. The Directory was published in April 1645, three months after the Prayer Book was officially banned by Parliament; all copies were to be confiscated and those who continued to use it were to be imprisoned. Roy Strong describes the Directory as being 'a guide to what in effect were a series of virtually improvised services devoid of formal structure'. It advised on appropriate topics for prayers but provided no wordings; even the basic formularies, such as the Creeds, were not included.

Along with the publication of the Directory of Public Worship came the imposition of the Puritan Sabbath. Sunday was to be a day spent quietly in self-examination, meditation and prayer, 'all worldly business or our ordinary callings laid aside, as they may be impediments to the due sanctifying of the day when it comes'. This was to be a 'holy cessation..... not only from all sports and pastimes, but also from all worldly words and thoughts'.

Bouch (1948) gives us some examples from the 'Visitation and Correction Books of the Bishops of Carlisle and York in relation to 'Sabbath Breaking: 'spreading manure' (1663); entertaining drinkers' (1668); for leading corne on ye Sunday after Sunsett' (1633); Walter Preston of Dalton 'for loitering in ye church yard in service time and being admonished by ye churchwardens wold neither go in nor out' (1633); 'scolding the wife of James Grame' (1668).
Games playing on the Sabbath was of course also forbidden; here are a few examples of those in trouble: 'shooting at the Butts' (1664); for playing at nine pins' (1672); 'for suffering cards to be plaid in his house' (1663); for fishing in time of Divine Service' (1672); 'for prophaining the Lord's day by playing att football' (1686); 'for playing at shovel board'; 'for bowling upon ye Sabaoth day in ye afternone'; for plating at pigles' (pitch and toss); 'for gardinge in time of Divine service in ye afternoone'; for drinking and takeing tobacco in ye house of Jo.Warin, Clarke, in evening prair time'.

It was of course almost impossible to enforce the disposal of the Prayer Book and the celebration of major Feasts in every single parish and the Prayer Book took on an almost mystical status, services using it were often conducted in secret behind closed doors. However, these proposed reforms created a significant break with the past and ended what one might call the 'single congregation'.
Until the 1640's the only members of the community not embraced by the ministrations of the local parish priest had been the recusant Catholics, but now with the dissolution of the

old ecclesiastical structures numerous ‘sectarian’ groups emerged.
The Separists had no place for the parish church and moved away to form congregations of like-minded believers from other parishes**.** As Roy Strong states, importantly, ‘this marked the end of a single Christian community congregating in a single corporate building; in a sense the great age of the country parish church ended here in the middle years of the seventeenth century’.

Additionally, further social disruption occurred when baptisms, marriages, the churching of women and burial, all significant milestones in the life of the ordinary villager, were either banned or altered beyond recognition (hence the blank years in the Register at Urswick between 1634 and 1653).
In 1644 fonts were ordered to be demolished and in the 1645 Directory baptism was no longer given any set ceremony and the minister was advised to ‘use his own liberty and godly wisdom’; it only stipulated that water should be sprinkled on the child’s face from a basin. The radical departure led to a steady rise in private baptisms where the old form could be used in secret.
The Directory abolished the ‘churching’ of women altogether.
It also gave short shrift to funerals and burials and prayers for the dead and for that matter, any belief that the living could do anything to aid the departed were wiped out at the Reformation.
This was clearly hardest on the bereaved themselves and as Strong puts it, ‘most of the reassuring ritual was abrogated and replaced by what amounted to a brutal burial’.

Marriage was the most important rite of passage in any parishioner’s life and although marriage was no longer recognised or celebrated as a sacrament, it was in some ways enhanced by the Reformation. Readers will recall from earlier times that the medieval rite was governed by a strong sense of hierarchy, gentry being married below the chancel whilst for lesser mortals it was conducted at the church porch. The ceremony progressed as follows:
The service took place amidst a gathering of family, friends and neighbours.
After the banns had been read three times, the bride was ‘given away’ by her father to the groom or by an adult friend. The couple held hands; each took a pledge with the priest acting as mediator. The groom then laid a ring along with a money offering on a dish or on the Bible. After the priest had sprinkled ‘holy water’ on the ring and blessed it, the groom placed the ring on successive fingers of the bride’s left hand- on the thumb in the name of the Father, on the first finger in the name of the Son, and on the second finger in the name of the Holy Spirit, and finally on the third finger where it came to rest with the word ‘Amen’. The couple then entered the church for the nuptial mass and blessing.

At the Reformation the core of the ceremony was retained but now it was conducted for everyone inside the church in the presence of the congregation. In the 1653 Marriage and Registration Act, there being no scriptural authority for a minister to marry people, this

statute denied the Church the right to celebrate marriages and substituted instead civil ceremonies conducted by a Justice of the Peace. The Act also stipulated that clerics had no authority to keep records, parish registers, or, indeed even to bury the dead, hence the comments that Nicholas Marshall at Urswick appointed his own 'Clerke' who also maintained the Register for our perusal!

Bouch reports several instances of clandestime marriages taking place; for example in 1663 Thos. Askam of Kirkby Ireleth was accused of 'marryinge of a couple without licence about eight of clock in ye night in an unlawful place'.
There were records of several illegal burials in open fields!

Holy Communion didn't escape the attention of the Puritans either; the Directory turned the communion service into a purely commemorative event to which only the elect could be admitted. Those who wanted to receive communion were first examined by the minister and two church elders and only if thought 'fit' were admitted to The Lord's Supper, so that it became divisive and the cause of great hurt within the small rural communities.

After the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658 the continued uncertainty and instability in the country created a longing for the return of the old order pre-Civil War and the beloved, apparently indestructible Prayer Book. Strong comments that with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 the Prayer Book with its mid-sixteenth century English language, was already archaic but it had become untouchable.

All was not to be plain sailing however!

Back in rural Furness the colourful George Fox, founder of the Quakers, was meeting both opposition and success, as we shall see; there were other non-conformists in the area as well as the Quakers, the Anabaptists and the Fifth Monarchy men. The handful of Roman Catholics was left largely undisturbed until the time of the 'Popish Plot' in 1678; ministry to them was maintained by priests sheltered in the houses of some of the local gentry. Bardsea Hall, for example, had a Catholic family living there until 1732.

George Fox arrived in Furness from Cartmel in 1652. According to the Marshall family biographer he made two visits in the same year. He notes that Fox 'felt it expedient to avoid Urswick, where some of the more fiery justices of the peace had warned Nicholas (Marshall) of the dire consequences to the man, if he (Fox) had the temerity to show his face there.' He did, however, speak at Aldingham and at Rampside and at Dendron 'which was built but never Priest had preached in it'.
He was opposed by William Lampitt, the priest at Ulverston, and by Justice Sawrey but 'speedily convicted Margaret Fell at Swarthmoor Hall in the absence of Judge Fell on circuit'. On his return Judge Fell received a lurid account of Fox's 'indocrination' of Margaret Fell and the family; Judge Fell was first incensed but after meeting with George Fox became sympathetic and allowed the 'Friends' to meet at Swarthmoor Hall thereafter.

On his second visit Fox went to Walney where he was beaten up by an angry mob at the instigation of the wife of James Lancaster 'for the people had persuaded James Lancaster's wife that I had bewitched her husband' (Fox's Journal). He was thrown out of the village and had to walk the three miles to Rampside where he was cared for until Margaret Fell sent a horse for him to return to Swarthmoor Hall.
On his arrival he found that once again Justice Sawrey, this time with the support of Justice Thompson, had intended to serve a warrant against him but Justice Fell would not support it; instead he sent out warrants to Walney 'to apprehend all those riotous persons' who had waylaid George Fox.
Many of them fled the country.

Whilst there clearly was some sympathy for George Fox and his 'Friends' his somewhat intemperate language and attitude didn't help his cause. For instance, he began a letter to Parson Lampitt at Ulverston like this:

"The Word of the Lord to thee, O Lampitt! who art a Deceiver, surfeited and drunk with the Earthly Spirit, rambling up and down in the Scriptures, and blending the Spirit amongst the Saints Conditions, who hadst a Prophesy, as they Father Balaam had, but art erred from it". He concludes by saying "And when thou art in Torment (though now thou swellest in thy Vanity, and livest in wickedness) remember thou wast warned in thy Life-time, when the Eternal Condemnation is stretched over thee, thou shalt witness this to be the Word of the Lord unto thee." (Barnes)

I noted that William Marshall was one of those who laid charges against George Fox in 1652 before the Justices for Lonsdale; they begin "wee thought good to signifie to your worpps. yt one George Fox hath beene lately in these parts and hath uttered severall blasphemies...." Henry Birkett in his 'The Story of Ulverston, (1949), tells us that these allegations were thought to be insufficient and the Justices asked for further particulars.

Michael Altham from Over Kellet swore against George Fox that:

"He did affirme that he had the divinitie essentially in him.

That both Baptisme and the lords supper were unlawful.

He did dissuade men from reading the Scripture telling them that it was carnall."Two warrants were made against him as a result.

William Smyth and Nathanael Atkinson swore that Fox claimed:

"that he was equall with god.

That god taught deceit.

That Scriptures were Antichrist.

That he was the Judge of the world.

That he was as upright as Christ."

The Justices agreed to 'make 2 warrants against him.'

It is also recorded in 'Footsteps in Furness' that 'on the 24th January 1660 at Swarthmoor, forty-three persons were taken, some out of their houses, others from the market and some from their labours, by a party of horsemen and without any warrant or examination before a magistrate, committed to Lancaster Castle'.
The forty-three were 'guilty' of being Quakers.
They held meetings which were then against the law, and refused to pay tithes to the church.
Margaret Fell was herself imprisoned in 1663, eventually being released four and a half years later through the intervention of friends of the King.

A foretaste of things to come!

Margaret Fell was widowed in 1658 and married George Fox in 1669.

The Act of Uniformity of 1662 imposed on all parishes a 'slightly revised' Book of Common Prayer and every incumbent was required to take an oath of loyalty both to the Prayer Book and to the monarchy.
We are told that two thousand refused to swear the oaths and were ejected from their livings.

This was followed in 1665 by the Five Mile Act which forbade ejected clergy to come within five miles of their former living. As we have already seen, these years were a time of persecution for Nonconformists and Dissenters, but it was the lingering fear of a Catholic revival which hung heavily over the nation.
This had its roots in Elizabethan England with the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the Gunpowder Plot which became part of a Protestant national mythology, and now of course both Charles II who reigned from 1660-85 and his successor James II who reigned from 1685-88 were known to be sympathetic to the Catholic faith if not actually active within it.

The only way that Charles and James could obtain toleration for the Catholics was to also guarantee toleration for Dissenters of all persuasions. Charles issued a Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 'by which Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists would be able to apply for licenses to practise their faiths publicly at specified locations, and Catholics were allowed to worship in private.' Parliament was outraged and Charles was forced to withdraw his Declaration in 1673. James went further in 1687 when he issued a Declaration of Indulgence suspending all penal laws against Noncomformists. He set out to repeal the Test Act of 1673 and began to appoint both Dissenters and Catholics to official positions,

leading to a revolution in 1688 which brought William III and Mary, James' daughter, to the throne.
James went into exile and in fact converted to Rome.

Finally, the Toleration Act of 1689 officially recognised Dissenters who were allowed their own meeting houses, but the discriminatory conditions of the Test Act returned and Catholics continued to be excluded.

In Furness Catholic priests were ministering in private, residing for example at the Abbey. Father Clement Smith was residing at Bardsea Hall until 1688 when it was beset by a mob of 300 local people and he was forced to take refuge elsewhere in Furness for the next eleven years until he died in 1695. Rampside Hall was also a refuge for missionary priests.

Farrer and Brownbill in their 'A History of Lancashire',(1920) made reference to a letter dated 24th June 1664 that shows the discontentment of the Nonconformists; their churches had had a meeting in Furness and were resolved to meet again 'otherwise (they) would have no means of coming together without suspicion.' They were in touch with the Fifth Monarchy men, the Anabaptists and the Quakers.

There is a footnote about a note written to Roger Kenyon by William KIrkby of Kirkby Ireleth in 1684 in which he described his efforts to repress the Dissenters by using the laws against absentees from church and 'frequenters of conventicles'.
He was pleased that 'several, both Quakers and other Dissenters are (upon our putting the law into execution) become conformists to the Church; and those who are most obstinate and disaffected to the government is by these methods plainly pointed out. But', he continues, 'while we thus struggle amongst our neighbours, with loyalty and all integrity to serve our gracious king and our country, here is some of our neighbouring justices, who you well know, Mr. Rawlinson, and Mr. Knipe, who refuse to join with us in this good service'.

Roy Strong gives a helpful summary of the state of the country parishes as we enter the so-called 'long eighteenth century'. It was marked by the manifest alliance between the returning royalist gentry classes and the Established Church. The gentry supported the parish church and in return the clergy helped maintain the existing social and political order. He says that the village as a living community 'was an essay in reciprocity'. At the top came the gentry, substantial landowners who exercised authority within the locality, and who as JPs and MPs represented its interests. As impropriators and patrons of advowsons, the gentry 'owned' the parish church more than at any other period in its history. The officiating cleric would have owed his position to the 'owner' and everyone else, tenant farmers and estate workers owed their livelihood to him.

The gentry also dominated the space within the church, its walls increasingly adorned with plaques commemorating members of the leading families, and their family pews taking

precedence over any other seating, as we shall observe so clearly when the 'Gale Pew' is considered in more detail a little later on. Another example is that of significant burials within the church itself.

By way of example, there are **two brass memorials in the chancel** for the latter years of the seventeenth century, the chancel being the most significant place for burials of 'important' people from the parish. The first is inscribed: 'Here lyeth the Body of Dorothy daughter of Alexander and Dorothy Butler of Toderstaff, who died at Bardsea Hall in the sixth yeare of her age. September 26th, 1687'.The second tablet in brass in memory of James Barwick who died at Bardsea Hall in 1695 is set into the floor bearing the following description:

Fool man, why art thou such a sot
To dote on that which soon is not?
Leave thy sinful lusts and pleasure,
Which thou delight'st in above measure,
Repent in time before too late,
And think upon approaching fate,
Thou must ere long be brought down low
And rest in dust as I do now
Hopeing to rise again and be

JACOBUS BARWICK obit
Decimo die Novembris
1695 Anno aetatis Trigessimo Secundo.

Virtus post funera Vivit.

As we move into the eighteenth century the clergy start to emerge as a distinct social and professional group. Incomes varied enormously and in 1704 a fund named the 'Queen Anne's Bounty' was created with the purpose of augmenting the livings of the poorer Anglican clergy; *pluralism*, the holding of several livings by the same cleric, was another solution to the problem of poorly endowed parishes, but this led to the employment of curates and in the growing non-residence of the incumbent. Throughout the eighteenth century, even during the latter quarter when the industrial revolution was causing 'massive urbanisation', the distribution of both clergy and churches remained hugely uneven and essentially medieval. The tithe was regarded as essential to supplement the clergy's income and was often the source of disputes and poor relations between cleric and some parishioners, especially Dissenters!

Most clergy lived at the level of the yeoman farmer but many were more wealthy and began to sit on the bench or act as JPs and this naturally increased the distance between them and the congregations they served. Let Roy Strong's words illustrate the situation:

‘The eighteenth century ushered in the era of the ‘squarson’, an incumbent who was less a cleric than a country gentleman, living a life of cultural leisure and country sports, whose flock were treated rather like dependants on a great estate. Although in theory a clerical career was open to all, increasingly the richer benefices became so desirable that the aristocracy and gentry, who held many of the rights of presentation to livings, began to colonise them for their younger sons.’ (page 179)

To be ordained, clerics required a degree from one of the two universities; few clerics specialised in divinity, sermons were often read out from a book written by some well-known divine. As Strong states, ‘in short, Georgian clerics were untrained in theology and in the elements of the spiritual life. The result was the virtual absence of what we know as pastoral ministry’.

What the average parishioner experienced on Sunday seems hardly inspiring. Challenged first by Dissident and then by Methodism, the clergy became increasingly defensive, determined to maintain a hold over the liturgy and regarding the services of the Prayer Book as sacrosanct. After the years of the Civil War and Interregnum they were deeply resistant to any kind of lay participation and suspicious of any spirituality expressing itself outside the walls of the parish church, hence the conflict with the Wesleys in the 1730s onwards which finally led to Methodism becoming a separate denomination in 1784 when John Wesley began ordaining his own ministers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate!

Having made his fortune as a Captain in the East India Company's service, Christopher Wilson returned to England and purchased Bardsey Manor on March 25th 1732. He had married Margaret, daughter of John Bradyll of Conishead Priory in 1727. Local patronage reflects the fact **that Christopher Wilson became a significant benefactor and patron at Urswick.**
It could have been so different because although patronage of Urswick 'came with the territory' initially Christopher Wilson attended Aldingham church until he fell out with the Rector!

Christopher Wilson gave to Urswick Church a **silver Communion Plate** in 1741.
At the bottom is a circular elevation on which is engraved the donor's Coat of Arms, and underneath 'Christopher Wilson, 1741 is inscribed. In the 1778 Terrier it is described as a 'patten for bread given by the late Chr. Wilson of Bardsea Hall Esq. Weight is marked on the same (viz 15 oz 12 dwt.)'.

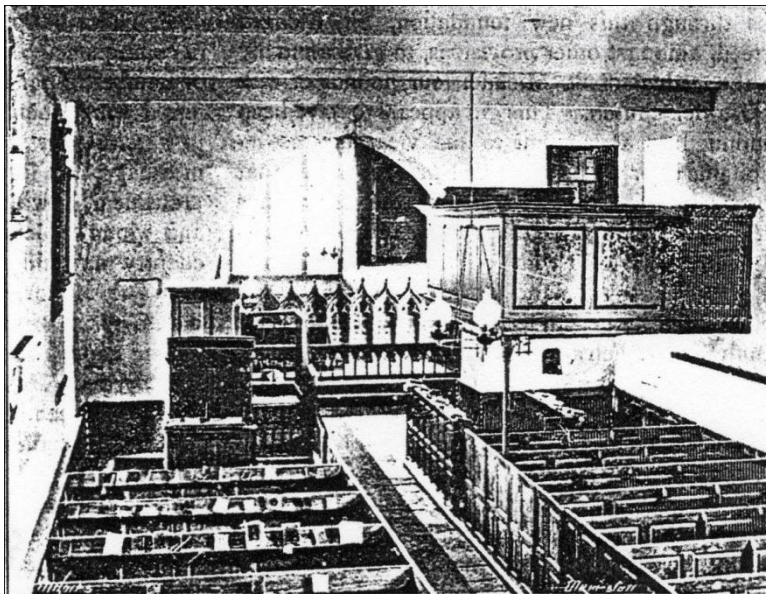
In 1747 John Addison was presented by 'Christopher Wilson and other inhabitants' **to the Vicarage of Urswick**, on the death of Henry Holme. A Graduate of St. John's College, Oxford University in 1732, Addison had been Master of Urswick Grammar School for several years prior to becoming Vicar.

Christopher Wilson Esquire was by now beginning to make his patronage 'felt' and it was to him that a faculty was granted in 1759 to erect a gallery pew (since referred to as the 'Gale

Pew') at Urswick and additional works were undertaken at the time, not without some local opposition.

A Vestry Meeting was held on 7th August 1751 to discuss the placing of a ceiling in the Nave; there was obviously some disagreement and a vote taken. Votes FOR were 12, including Christopher Wilson, and AGAINST were 29. The ceiling was erected in due course and in the next few years the walls were heightened and a new roof laid. **Christopher Wilson's 'gallery pew' was erected in 1759** in the south east corner of the nave.
Gaythorpe gives a wonderful description of this so-called 'Gale Pew' in his notes of 1882:

'Perhaps the most noticeable feature within the sacred edifice is an object resembling a large water tank, elevated above the south-east corner of the nave and supported at the north-west corner by a pillar, but on inquiry it turned out to be a gallery appriopriated to the Gale family, and erected in 1759. It is approached by a wooden stair-case from the priest's door in the chancel, and is divided into two compartments; the larger has seats on the north, west, and south sides for about twelve or fourteen persons, and the smaller (for the servants), adjoining the chancel arch, has seats for four or five persons on the east and north sides; but is is (sic) almost impossible for anyone seated in either of the pews to see the clergyman during service on account of the height of the oak panelling. Perhaps it may have been pews of this kind that gave rise to the prohibition of talking in church during service for fear of disturbing the rest of the congregation.'



The Gale Pew was considered unsafe in 1907 and was brought down to ground level.

Reference is also made to the **three decker pulpit** which may also date from this time, ie. 1759; this 'now almost obsolete type of pulpit' according to Gaythorpe still 'adorns' the

church, then standing well out into the chancel arch. According to Pollitt in 1973 this pulpit originally stood centrally against the South wall of the Nave.

Christopher Wilson died in 1773 and befitting his 'status' he was buried in a vault beneath the chancel of Urswick church; his widow Margaret (formerly Braddyll) was interred there in 1781.
There is a tablet affixed to the chancel wall which is inscribed with their names and also that of their daughter, Sarah and her husband, John Gale.
There is an entry in the Urswick Register's Marriages Section for 1752 which reads **'John Gale, Whitehaven, gentleman, and Sarah Wilson Bardsea Hall.** Sarah died less than a year after her father and was also buried at Urswick. John and Sarah Wilson Gale's eldest son was named **Wilson Gale and he adopted the name and arms of Braddyll** by Royal Sign Manual and became the owner of Conishead Priory, having inherited the estate from his cousin, Thomas Braddyll, who died without issue in 1776.

It might be as well to report the full inscription on the tablet because it seems to go to some length to establish the 'pedigree' of the family members and of course could prove helpful for anyone undertaking family research in the future:

'To the Memory of CHRISTOPHER WILSON, Esq. who departed this life the 15th Nov 1773. Aged 84 years.

Also of SARAH his Daughter Wife of JOHN GALE of Whitehaven Esq. who died the 10th Oct. 1774. Aged 46 years.

Also Margaret Wife of the above named CHRISTOPHER WILSON daughter of JOHN BRADDYLL, of Braddyll, Breck Hall, Pertfield, Salmesbury Hall and Conishead Priory in this County, Esquire, who died April 1781, Aged 85 years.

Also JOHN GALE of Highhead Castle and Cleater Hall,County of Cumberland, Burnyside Hall, County of Westmorland and Hallswell, County of Durham, Esquire. (Husband of the above mentioned SARAH) who died 19th October 1814. Aged 87 years.'

It was those who came immediately below the gentry in rank, the major tenant farmers and smaller land owners, who held office as churchwardens; they saw that the church was kept in good repair, managed the finances and were responsible for making presentations at visitations. Office was usually held for a period of two to three years, so that in the longer term most influential families in the local community took a part in running the church. Postlethwaite in his 'Some Notes on Urswick Church and Parish', published in 1906, gives details of churchwardens in an unbroken sequence from 1711 until 1818.

Perhaps this is the appropriate place to consider briefly the issue of **'poor provision'** in the Parish because this was clearly one of the many duties of the 'Vestry' and the

Churchwardens and 'fund raising' would have had a profound effect on the on-going condition of the church itself. From early days the Churchwardens were in charge of the poor relief, a task devolved to them after the Dissolution of the smaller monasteries who had given significant help and support to the poor, etc.
The 'Vestry' generally was made up of 'twenty-four sidesmen, oligarthic and self-electing'. Marshall quotes the words of Sidney and Beatrice Webb who said that they "had no organic connection with the inhabitants at large, but- together with the Incumbent and the usual parish officers- acted in all respects in their name and on their behalf". Membership seems to have been based on the ownership or occupation of the land.

Let me quote Marshall's description:
'Although the duties of the "Four and Twenties" were in the first instance church-centred being concerned with the appointment and wages of clerks and sextons and the rotation of churchwardenships- they were, like the church itself, intimately bound up in many aspects of town and rural life. The Four and Twenties from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries became responsible for the administration of public endowments; through their appointment of curate-school- masters and supervision of schools, public education came under their purview; and they were responsible for the care of the poor. They took action against certain public abuses, and by the imposition of church rates and cesses of all kinds, they reached into the pockets as well as the consciences of parishioners. ' (page 127)

Clearly, changes in eighteenth century Furness brought a widening of the range of employments available to local people and probably led to an increase in the population; what is clear is that there was an increase in pauperism as well. It's only as they are recorded in Burial Records that we can gauge their numbers, and of course sums of money spent on their relief by individual parishes. Urswick does not seem to have any records in existence in relation to provision for the poor, etc. until the middle of the eighteenth century- poor law pensioners 1755-1774 and a list of apprentices 1769-1781 some or all of whom could be from 'poor families'. They also retained details of travel accounts for officers of the parish for 1769 and 1792. The following extracts for this period will give the reader some idea of how poor families were dealt with by the 'Vestry':

20 Augt. 1769
Then agreed at a Meeting of the Sidesmen, Churchwardens and Overseers not to grant any Parish Allowance to any poor Persons who have Children proper to put out Parish Apprentices but they shall be put out as they shall arrive at a proper Age

23 Aug. 1769
Margaret Waller Daughter of Fras. Waller of Bardsea plac'd Apprentice to Thos.Fell of Little Urswick Apprentice aged 11 Years or thereabouts.

23 Augt. 1769
Richard Waller Son of the sd. F. Waller, aged 8 Years or thereabouts, to Chr. Wilson of Bardsea Esqr.

23 Augt. 1769
William Waller Son of the sd. F. Waller, aged 13 Years or thereabouts to Wm. Ashburner of G. Urswick.

23 Augt. 1769
Jane Blackburne Daughter of Chr. Blackburne aged 7 Years or thereabouts to Mr. Tho: Petty for Wellhouse

20 Feb: 1771
Ruth Blackburne Daughter of Chr. Blackburne aged eight Yrs. To G. Ashburner of Holmbank who paid £10 Fine.

21 Feb: 1771
The said Ruth Blackburne to Wm. Thompson of Bardsea

27 Apl. 1772
Peggy Blackburne Dr. of ye sd. Chr Blackburne aged 7 Years to Chr: Ashburner of Aldgarley, who paid £10 Fine

28 Apl. 1772
The said Peggy Blackburne to Jas. Cranke of L. Urswick

From the same records Postlethwaite indicates that 'Vagrant poor were discouraged'; we come across the following weighty resolution:-
'We whose names are hereunto subscrib'd being ye Minister, Sidesmen & other Inhabitants of ye Parish of Urswick do hereby unanimously agree, not to give any Thing for ye future to any Vagrant Poor, as we do not apprehend that such Kind of Relief can properly be deem'd an Act of Charity, but rather an Encouragement to Laziness & Vice: And we further agree to prevent, as far as is in our Power, the Poor of our own Parish to ask Relief in any other Parish. In Witness whereof, we have hereunto set our Hands this 11th Day of March 1753.'

(signed by John Addison Vicr. Of Urswick and all of the Sidesmen and Inhabitants.

Care was taken too that no paupers should obtain a settlement in the parish:

'Parish of Urswick 5th Novr. 1782
Whereas an Inclosed Field called Turncar consisting of about an Acre, together with a little mean old House; thereunto adjoining was, about eighty Years ago, given to the Church of Urswick- the House thatched- the Length about 9 Yards- Breadth about six Yards- and Depth of Side Wall little above seven Feet- an Earthen Floor- three small Ground Rooms- 4 little

Windows- No Stair Case nor upper Room- No Sort of Outhouse, Garden nor Orchard belonging to it. The Value of it by Estimation less than Five Pounds- never inhabited by any but the very poorest Persons. And whereas the Field is separated from the Common all round by a Hedge, which being generally plundered by the poor Tenants for Firing, the Repairs thereof & the Damage the Inclosures suffers by the Trespass of Cattle appears to be three Times more than the clear Rent of the House. For the above Reasons We the Vicar & Principal Inhabitants of the Parish, being convinced that it will be not only for the Benefit of the Church, but also of the Parish do hereby consent that the said House be taken down, and that the Stones thereof be apply'd to the Repairs of the Fence round the Field, and to enlarge it by inclosing a Piece of Ground on the Front of the House by raising a Wall running in a straight Line from the End of the House to make it square with the Fence next to the Hollow Lane. And whatever Money may remain, after the Expence of the Repairs of the Fence and erecting of the said Wall, it shall be lodged in the Sidesmen's Hands, and the Interest thereof apply'd to the use of the Vicar.'

John Addison, Vicar.

Geo: Ashburner. Tho. Postlethwaite. William Thompson. Thos. Ashburner. Wm. Ashburner Junr. William Gardner. Wm.Ashburner Sen. Eward Ashburner. Tho. Petty. William Wane. Malachi Cranke. Thos.Danson. James Hall. John Thompson. Robert Settle. John Kendall. John Wilkinson. James Deason. Churchwarden.'

Let us conclude this little section by quoting some 'bad news-good news' from Fred Barnes. He reminds us that each community was responsible for the poor relief of its own people, even when they had moved and become destitute elsewhere. Hence the following letter addressed to "The Overseer of the Poor of Urswick near Ulverstone, " from James York, who had moved from Urswick to the village of Hornby Castle near Catterick in Yorkshire, and had since become unemployed:

"Sir, I ham sory to have to wright so often to you concerning my Rent and think it very strange that nither me nor the overseer of our township as not recd. any answer to his letter before this time. I have six children and 4 out of the six laying ill in the Hooping Cough, we have not had ither the fire or candle out for this last six weeks and our Rent not payed yet, and I can insure you Gentlemen that it is impossible for me to get them that support that they stand in need of at present and as to paying my rent it is impossible. But I will thank you to have the goodness to give me an answer one way or the other. I am Sir your humble servant Jas. York. P.S. I don't think the youngest child can live more than a day or two."

A further letter says that if the overseers of Urswick do not help he would have to apply to the overseers of Hornby Castle and they had already warned him that they would then

immediately remove him from Hornby. The overseers were responsible for destitute families, orphans, illegitimate children, and the insane, and funds at their disposal were limited, hence the apparent reluctance to hand out money.
Travelling beggars got short shrift, as the following copy of a document dated 1750 shows:

Warrant to whip Vagrant out of the County County of Lancr to wit
To the Constables of the Division of
Broughton in the Psh of Kirkby Ireleth
in the sd. County and to every or any of them.

Whereas J:M a vagrant & R.Y. ; whom he calls his wife and A:J & H their Children were brought before me Jas Machel Esqr one of his Majesties Justices of the Peace and Quorum in and for the sd. County by you the sd Constables they having been found in your said Division wandering and begging as vagrants. These are therefore to require you the sd Constables or some of you to strip the sd J:M naked from the middle and openly to whip him until his body be bloody & you are afterwards to see that he & the sd R Y & their Children do pass out of the sd County in the next road leading towards N Britain where the sd JM says he has long dwell and belongs to

Given &c

There is almost nothing recorded about the general life of the village during the Stuart period. Birkett comments, rightly, that there is little doubt that the century following the Dissolution and the dispersal of the monks was a hard one in Furness. Their industry, their business acumen as well as their philanthropy were greatly missed. Of the ordinary villager he wrote that 'their lives were undistinguished, they did their work, attended church, drank at the inns and enjoyed an occasional national celebration.'

'But one must not get too grim a picture; life offered pleasures which were enjoyed all the more for being homespun and seasonal; pace-egging, harvest, rush-bearing, hunts such as the Dalton Rout with their associated balls, and fairs, all provided conversation for weeks before and after the events; weddings and funerals, itinerant salesmen and entertainers, provided breaks in the daily routine, and of course churches were places where you met your friends and exchanged the current news as well as places for spiritual solace'.

During medieval times local life had had three main ingredients, namely: war, agriculture and industry, and during the Stuart period 1603-1747 there was a gradual elimination of war, constancy of agriculture and the development, slowly at first but more quickly as the years pass by of industry. Birkett noted that in the 17th century Cumberland and Westmorland were the two poorest counties in England 'probably the cause of the apparent poverty was the smallness of the population as compared with the acreage of the counties'.

He also commented that in agriculture new ideas which had been introduced into other parts of England in the 17th century did not affect these counties (including Furness) till the next one! 'The same crops were sown and the same kind of stock kept as in the past'. As an example he shows that turnips first introduced to England in 1645 were introduced to Furness in 1755, similarly clover (1752) and wheat. Winter feed for cattle meant that it was no longer necessary to slaughter most of the stock each year. By the end of the 18th century potatoes were grown by almost every farmer both for home use and to sell at the Market. Oats, barley, the most important cereals, provided bread for the inhabitants.

Marshall, writing in 1958, suggests that 'agriculture seems to have been generally backward' so much so that Thomas Pennant, visiting the district in 1772 remarked that the inhabitants had "but recently applied themselves to husbandry", going on to say that "till within these twenty years even the use of dung was scarcely known to them." W.B. Kendall wrote that in the first half of the eighteenth century "the land was neither drained, cleared, or manured", the breeds of sheep, horses, and longhorn cattle were alike poor, and oats was the main cereal cultivated. Marshall goes on to show that farming in Low Furness was still comparatively backward during the second half of the eighteenth century, but there had been a revival of the cultivation of wheat.

By this time farmers were beginning to live above a merely subsistence level; they had something over to sell at the Market, from which they obtained money needed to buy the furniture they owned. Most villages now had their own brewery, flour mill, saw mill and bobbin mill, a local lime kiln, or access to same. In the early years of the 18th century almost every cottage had its hand looms with all the family participating in the work. An analysis of Urswick's Parish Register from 1695- 1837 shows clearly how the countryside was changing and the closer links with the Market Town of Ulverston developed through changes in variety of employment.

The following analysis is taken from the Marriages where the status of the man is recorded:

1723- 1747

Husbandman = 43 Mariner = 20 Blacksmith/Smith = 9 Yeoman = 6 Weaver = 5
Taylor = 3 Shoemaker = 3 Ships Carpenter = 2 Carpenter = 2 House Carpenter = 2
Waller = 2 followed by 1 of Tanner, Gardener, Block Maker, Bailiff, Currier.

1748-1773

Husbandman = 52 Mariner = 23 Gentleman = 4 Cordwainer = 4 Black Smith/Smith = 4
Yeoman = 3 Merchant = 2 Taylor = 2 followed by 1 of Ship's Carpenter, House Carpenter,
Vicar, Mantua Maker, Cabinet Maker, Weaver, Cooper, Labourer, School Master

1774-1800

Husbandman = 49 Mariner = 15 House Carpenter = 7 Labourer = 7 Yeoman = 6 Cordwainer = 3 Gentleman = 2 Miller = 2 Weaver = 2 followed by 1 of Shoe Maker, Mercer, Taylor, Sail Maker, Slate Merchant, Grocer, Waller, Gardener, Merchant's Clerk, White Smith, Wine Merchant, Black Smith

1801-1826

Husbandman = 41 Cordwainer = 5 Weaver = 4 Labourer = 4 Miller = 3 Servant = 3 Mariner = 2 Carrier = 2 Shoe Maker = 2 School Master = 2 Solicitor = 2 Flax Dresser = 2 followed by 1 of Chair Maker, Shop Keeper, Manufacturer, Maltster, Butcher, Carpenter, House Carpenter, Confectioner, Merchant, Huntsman, Gentleman, Clogger, Vicar, Accountant, Stone Mason, Joiner.

1827-37

Husbandman = 21 Miner = 2 Tailor = 2 School Master = 2 Farmer = 2 Labourer = 2 House Carpenter = 2 followed by 1 of Shoe Maker, Currier, Maltster, Wine Merchant, Joiner, Hooper, Coachman, Butcher, Clerk/Curate, Carpenter

There is an almost complete silence on happenings in Urswick during this period but changes in the area and the rapid developments within the iron ore and the shipbuilding industries will have had their effects, drawing some into alternative employment and others into capital investment. Some of the changes can be inferred from the entries noted earlier in the Marriage Register of the time. It is important to remind ourselves, however, how relatively small each settlement was with an equally small and largely settled rustic population focused on the 'manor' or 'big house'.

Birkett states that although Ulverston had never been officially recognised as a port, in 1737 there were 231 ships anchored within the Liberty of Furness. He cites William White who showed that in the middle of the eighteenth century exports from Greenodd alone were' minerals and merchandise worth from £150,000 to £200,000 annually'. By 1774 Ulverston had won recognition as a port and seventy ships were registered as belonging to it. The Ulverston Canal was completed in 1796.
He writes that 'it is significant of the time that a familiar sight was the long procession of carts loaded with red hemaetite ore to the canal, a development of an age-long business in Furness and destined to play a great part in the district in later years. Mining, weaving, spinning and tanning employed more and more people, and agriculture drew many young people from the town. Then, and for many a year, the parents of large families of the working-class almost invariably sent their children to farm service,' (page 81).

It is worth taking note here that the 'war years' of 1793-1815 were a time of rapidly rising population and of urbanisation, which according to Marshall meant an increased demand

for farm produce; when that could not be easily imported from abroad it also meant high prices. It was a rise in prices consequent on the American War which brought about a renewal in wheat cultivation, including in parts of Low Furness. The process of the Enclosures Acts caused some cottagers to quit the countryside 'and the uncommon progress of manufactories which induced multitudes to engage their children therein'. The 'boom' was followed by 'bust' with the agricultural depression following Waterloo and the marked fall in prices after 1820. It was noted that at this time 'in Furness and Cartmel, outside of the town of Ulverston, paupers formed about 10.8% of the population'. (Page 290)

There was also a change in farm ownership with many farms being tenanted or leased. Marshall stated that these tenanted farms employed the majority of farm servants 'for many of the yeomen, it is believed, managed their holdings with little or no labour except that provided by their own families.' The farm servants and labourers consisted partly of married men living in cottages near the farm and partly of single men and women living under the farmer's roof. At this time, that is, about 1830, farm servants with their families constituted two-thirds or three quarters of the rural population; the other portion not directly engaged in agriculture contained many who were indirectly concerned, such as blacksmith, carpenter, wheelwright, miller and millwright, saddler, grocer and other shop keepers, the clogger, shoemaker and country tailor.

There seems to have been a greater interest in providing education on a wider basis although even by 1820 according to Marshall 'only a small proportion of the juvenile population attended them'. He suggested that it was more to the point to enquire what means of tuition were available to the sons of the yeomen or tradesmen in some villages at a distance from the main schools.

Urswick was more fortunate in having its own Grammar School.
Of the vicar at Urswick at the time, William Ponsonby, it is said that 'he takes all children, boys or girls, in the parish or neighbourhood without any demand; but they generally pay him a trifling gratuity at Shrovetide, called a Cockpenny. He has now about 40 scholars, whom he instructs in reading, writing and arithmetic. Ten of them are also learning Latin, and one is advanced in Greek.'

Canon Ayre writes that a tombstone in the churchyard bears an inscription commemorating **James Cranke**, 'an eminent artist' who was born in the parish in 1709. According to Ayre 'he early evinced a taste for painting, and when he was a young man, he went to London for the purpose of improving himself in that art. Here his talents were appreciated and he acquired both fame and wealth as a portrait painter. But owing to his health suffering through the incessant application which he gave to his profession, he returned to his native place and built a house at Little Urswick; and here for thirty years he successfully pursued his occupation among the inhabitants of the surrounding district. The inscription on his tombstone is in Latin, and may be translated as follows:
"Here near his parents lies James Cranke, painter, a very excellent artist, and a very

excellent man who being, under God, the author of his own fortune happily raised himself from a humble position to fame and celebrity, by his skill in the art which he diligently cultivated, and by the eminent uprightness of his morals. The age of 72 years having been completed with the highest praise, overcome by old age but by religion strong, he departed from this to a more blessed life, on the 28th day of October A.D. 1781".

There are **two original oil paintings in the church,** a painting of the 'Last Supper' which was mounted on the reredos during the Chancel renovations in the early years of the twentieth century; this painting is attributed to James Cranke, 1709-1781. The second painting, on the East Nave wall (covering the infill where the entrance to the Gale Pew had been) is said to be the work of James Cranke the Younger, 1746-1826.

'Adoration of the Shepherds' (copy of a Corregio) painted by James Cranke (Younger)

There is a further record of a John Cranke son of James Cranke whose dates, 1746-1816 suggest that he was twin to James the Younger. John was admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1767, obtained his BA in 1771, his MA in 1774 and later obtained a Bachelor in Divinity degree in 1792. . He was for some of the time a tutor at Trinity College, and thereafter served as a clergyman in Cambridgeshire parishes. Pollitt notes that 'different members of the family at different times became guardians of important items of church property at a time when they might well have been irretrievably lost.' These items include the old font and the tracery from the East Window removed in the nineteenth century and

discussed later. The lists of Churchwardens give the names of several generations of the Cranke family, including Nick in 1734, Malachi in 1778, William in 1818 and another William in 1834-46 and M.J. from 1879-1906.

William Cranke, grandson of James Cranke the Elder, is credited with introducing the Shorthorn cattle into Furness and recognised for 'his adoption of modern improvements in the management of tilled land' writes John Dobson. Dobson's observations on the landscape around Urswick, written in about 1920, are interesting. He writes that 'the reversed S curve of the hedges in many of our modern fields tells us of the enclosure of the old communal plough lands this reversed S curve being caused by the man leading the foremost pair of an eight ox team very naturally pulling off to the right some distance before he reached the end of the furrow in order to make the turning with his unwieldy team and plough.' He continued to demonstrate that 'the ploughlands of the different owners lay side by side in acre or half acre strips separated by a narrow strip of grass which in the course of generations took the reversed S curve of the furrows and when the time came that the various owners settled among themselves to enclose their shares of the communal fields what more natural than that they should plant their fencing shrubs along these re curved grassy strips'.

His later comments help in interpreting the landscape further where he writes that 'here and there you still find a field with a grassy hillside laid in long strips or terraces. That you may safely say has not been ploughed for over 200 years for with our modern team and iron implement we plough up and down hill whereas in old times with oxen and a rude wooden plough they turned up the soil in strips one above another along the hill side'.

Sometimes, it seems, even the clergy entered whole-heartedly into local life.
John Bolton, another 'famous son' of Urswick, the eminent geologist, wrote in tribute to William Ashburner, Vicar from 1788 to 1800, as follows:

"The Ancient Free School where Rev. William Ashburner, vicar of Urswick presided. Our parson was a kind & good master, & at the annual 'barring out' quietly submitted to have a little dirty water thrown over him when he attempted to storm our barricade, and as he never could succeed, being always forced to retreat, it was not with frowns and threatening for another time, but with a good-natured smile at his defeat. We were then free to choose our Captains and clerks for the annual foot-ball match, who were also our commanders for the cock-fights on Shrove-Tuesday, at the ancient cock-pit ring, on the upper side of the green in the centre of the village. In the holy & humane pastime carried on at this ring, on Shrove-Tuesday, of the years 1796-98, the vicar presided in gown and bands, and might be seen running round the ring, being then a strong and active man, but instead of preaching a sermon, or reciting passages of Scripture to his unruly parishioners to keep them quiet, he used a more persuasive and irresistible argument, - a nice little two handed cudgel.
We are not to presume from the above sketch, that the Rev. Vicar was a bad Man, on the

contrary, from our own Knowledge he was a Kind-hearted Christian minister, a scholar and a gentleman, beloved by his pupils and generally by his parishioners. But times are altered, 70 years have made many changes, and although cock-fighting is now abolished by Act of Parliament, a portion of the cock-pit ring still remains on Urswick Green."

CHAPTER EIGHT

New Broom- Same Problems

A Memorial Tablet in memory of Reverend William Ponsonby is sited on the north wall of the Nave. Its dedication and warm tribute reads as follows:

'Sacred to the memory of the Rev. William Ponsonby late vicar of this church who died on the 8th day of July 1841 in the 64th year of his age and 37th of his incumbency.
His meek and Christian disposition, benevolence of heart, and integrity of conduct, as well as the plain but earnest manner in which he inculcated the fundamental doctrines of the gospel endeared him to his parishioners and friends who have caused this tablet to be erected as a tribute of their affection, and to perpetuate his name whose ministry was one of peace and goodwill to all mankind.'

It wasn't always so!
As any Vicar will tell you, you are never as good as the last one – or the next one for that matter.....

By the 1820s the national Church was in crisis.

The Dissenters objected strongly to having to pay the church rate to maintain a church they no longer belonged to. In 1828 the Test and Corporation Act abolished legal penalties for Dissenters. 1829 saw the Catholic Emancipation Act which marked the end of the Church of England's monopoly of public office and the universities.
There was conflict within the Church itself between those who supported the Oxford Movement, whose members wanted to reinstate the emphasis on the sacramental life of the Church and to reassert its catholicity, and the strong evangelical wing of the Church with its focus on Scripture and personal salvation.

This was the signal for more changes to many church interiors and the conduct of liturgy, and perhaps the changes Reverend Ponsonby and his supporters wanted to make at Urswick should be set against this development.

We have already seen how the rural community was changing and the emergence of distinct classes of landowner, tenant farmer and landless labourers. Strong suggests that the divisions sharpened as both landowners and farmers, in response to an increased sense of social hierarchy and class status, withdrew from the communal life of the village. However, it was still usually the landowner who held the advowson and therefore could control the choice of incumbent and influence what went on inside the church itself.
Again, this would seem to be a significant factor to consider when we look at the furore surrounding the appointment of a successor to Matthias Forrest in 1861.

There was a sustained drive to eradicate non-resident clergy who only rode out to their parishes on Sunday. The Pluralities Act of 1838 laid down that no cleric could hold more than two benefices and that they should not be more than ten miles apart. In 1850 the distance was narrowed down to three miles.
Parsonages had to be built or acquired for the incumbent to be resident, as we saw with the purchase of the parsonage at Urswick in about 1843. Most were grand residences with room for indoor servants and often accommodation for gardeners and the like.

Strong stated that 'in the Victorian age, some clergy finally achieved their dream of becoming gentlemen, riding out to the hounds, playing cards and cricket, and gardening', but that wasn't perhaps so obvious in the smaller rural benefices.
Clergy income improved considerably, making their income in the top 10 to 15 percent of the national average; some income came by way of fees as well as what could be earned from teaching. Tithes were finally abolished nationally in 1868 in favour of a voluntary contribution. Glebe land could be farmed, of course, but the agricultural depression of the 1870's reduced some clergy income significantly.

Special training for the ordained ministry was being given to some, for example, by the founding of training colleges at Chichester and Wells in 1840 and Cuddesdon in 1854. It was not the norm until about 1880.
One of the most significant outcomes of the reform of clerical 'conditions of service' was the recovery of pastoral ministry now that the cleric lived among his flock.

Interestingly, although the Victorian era is still viewed as the great age of churchgoing, the reverse is true; the 1851 census showed that the vast majority of the population never attended church and those who did came from the upper and middle classes. And yet, this period between 1840 and 1880 saw the restoration of some 7,000 churches across England and the building of many new ones.
Strong points out that 'this was not a grass-roots expression of rural spirituality, it could be described as an aspect of estate management during the agricultural golden age between 1850 and 1875'.

He writes that: 'The transformation that often followed- depending on the commitment and views of the local landowner and the cleric-must have come as an enormous shock to many congregations, where previously there had been a whitewashed shell filled with family pews and a three-decker pulpit obscuring the chancel, there now arrived pews in serried ranks facing an altar adorned with a cross, candlesticks and brass vases filled with flowers. One by one the windows would be filled with newly commissioned stained glass and the altar would be vested with the changing colours of the liturgical seasons.'

The **Reverend William Ponsonly took up office as Vicar of Urswick in 1805** following the resignation of John Baile.
In some ways it was a 'home coming' since the Ponsonby family had roots in Great Urswick

from at least the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Parish Register shows that in 1734 Jane, daughter of Wm. Punsunby' of Much Urswick, was baptised; in 1736 another child, John, was baptised and in 1738 Mary, a further daughter of 'Wm. Punsonby', was baptised. Ann Ponsonby, presumably William's sister or aunt, died a spinster in 1731.

As noted above Reverend Ponsonby was also appointed Master of the Grammar School. A busy life was helped by the presence of curates at least for a period. The Diocesan Parish Papers for the time indicate that **Robert Warriner was curate at Urswick in 1811** and **William Sandwith in 1812** with a stipend of £45 per annum. There is a note from Reverend Ponsonby to the effect that he could not increase the stipend of his curate because 'the vicarage is only worth £45 per annum'!

The Parish Registers for April 13th 1819 shows that 'Wm.Ponsonby, Vicar, ba & Agnes Ashburner, sp.' were 'married at St. Mary's, Carlisle, lic, by the Rev.R.I. Hartley, M.A.' witnessed by Eliza Ashburner of Midtown, Urswick and Richard Fleming, late of the same parish.

Sadly and tragically, it was a short marriage.

The Burial Register entry for March 24th 1820 records 'Agnes Ponsonby, Huntide, aged 28', and for May 14th 1820, 'William Ponsonby, Huntide, infant.'

The Baptism Register for March 12th 1820 reads:

'Isabella d. William & Agnes Ponsonby, Huntide.

William s. William & Agnes *Ponsonby, Huntide.*

The above are twins'.

Clearly Agnes died shortly after giving birth to twins, followed a few weeks later by baby William. Reverend Ponsonby was left with a baby daughter to care for probably with the support of his wife's family.

We have Reverend Matthias Forrest to thank for further information where he writes:
"For the information of my successors.
The Vicarage House was purchased about 1843 for 500£ of which sum £200 was got from Queen Ann's Bounty (a Benefaction); 276£ raised by voluntary contributions: and the remaining sum, conveyance and other expenses, were paid out of Queen Ann's Bounty money belonging to the Church.
The Paddock adjoining was brought at the same time from the same owner (Miss Ponsonby, daughter of the late Vicar) for £100 paid entirely from Q. Ann's Bounty money belonging to the Church. M.Forrest."

Tragedy seems to have continued because according to a local source Isabella Ponsonby married James Malachi Cranke, but 'sadly she died young and before having children thus

denying the village of the continuity of a family line which has been such an asset to the community over several generations'.

In 1826 William Ponsonby applied for a Faculty to 'erect a Gallery & make several other alterations and Improvements in the church.'
This was contested by John Cranke on behalf of himself and others and the Consistory Court was convened at Richmond to examine the objections. Details have proved hard to come by but Postlethewaite noted that the old Norman font was removed from the church in about 1826. Fortunately it was 'piously preserved at Hawkfield by the late Mr. Wm. Cranke' and restored to the church in 1904. It was recorded elsewhere that it had been used as a 'flower bed'!
The Norman font was replaced by a **'modern Gothic font dating from 1827'**; it still stands at the back of the church under the gallery!

The above would seem to vary 'in detail' from the original proposals put to the Meeting of the 'Inhabitants of the Parish' in January, 1826. This is reported at length by Reverend Ponsonby as Chairman of the Vestry Committee in the back of the Vestry Minute Book for 1825-1945 (again, there are some gaps).
It is worth reproducing much of the entry here because it provides what information there is and could suggest perhaps why John Cranke later objected (William Cranke, Churchwarden in 1818, was part of the Committee who made the initial recommendations with Thomas Postlethwaite, Robert Geldart and Richard Smith of Bankfield); one presumes that these were the Churchwardens at the time although of course this is the period when names are missing (1819-1841).

The Vestry Committee's original proposals read as follows (written by Reverend Ponsonby as Chairman and Vicar):

'The Committee have examined the state of the Church and lay before you a plan of its interior which contains thirty-three pews all of which are free and capable of containing 240 Persons, a greater number than usually attend divine Services there. A great proportion of these pews require repairing, but the committee are of opinion that the old Materials used be found very generally available. The Committee is recommending that their repair be substantially made, are enabled to submit to you a Plan for altering the arrangements of the Pews and increasing their numbers, without resorting to any rate upon the Inhabitants.

With this view they have rec'd offers of subscriptions for 14 Individuals, Proprieters of dwelling houses within the Parish, to the amount of £140 which somewhat exceeds the Estimates now laid before you for the expense of accomplishing the work. This sum is proposed to be laid out, in erecting a Gallery at the West End of the Church to contain nine Pews and in making five other Pews in the body of the Church, amounting together to 14 Pews, which are to be appropriated for the private use of the Individuals above mentioned and also in completing the other improvements as delineated in the Plan and which are as

follows, viz in making one Pew for the Churchwardens Overseers of the Poor and Elders of the Parish to contain 14 Persons, another Pew for the Choristers or Singers to contain 20 Persons and thirty three free Pews to contain 210 Persons, altogether affording recommendation to 344 Persons.

In effecting that arrangement it will be necessary to remove the Reading Desk and Pulpit to the East End of the Church an alteration which the Committee do not doubt will meet your approbation, as the minister will then front the Congregation'

No mention here about removing the Norman font, etc. but perhaps therein lies the source of the later objections.

Canon Ayre wrote that 'in the year 1826 a faculty was obtained for re-pewing the church and making some other alterations, the cost of the whole amounting to £137. The pulpit, which stood at the centre of the south wall, was removed to the east end of the north side of the nave, and a gallery was built across the west end, blocking up the obtusely-pointed arch which divides the nave from the tower.'
The old irregular oak seats were replaced by uniform pews of painted deal which according to Pollitt lasted for well over one hundred years before they were replaced.

Reverend Postlethwaite provides one of the 'lighter moments' during the incumbency of William Ponsonby.
He tells the story of Old Tom Turner, one of the Turner family, to be Parish Clerk. Old Tom had two sons, Tom and William, commonly known as Billy who in turn became Parish Clerk. Billy was a blacksmith and had a smithy opposite the (present) Derby Arms where the old village cross once stood. Old Tom Turner was very poor when appointed clerk. He had his fees and a payment of 4d per house if kept by a married couple, or 2d if by a widow or widower. To keep him off the parish £5 a year was given to him from the Rates.
He was very keen over his fees; he used to say he "did not funerals.keer who wha deed, or whar they deed, so as they came to Ossik to be buried."
He allegedly shocked people with his roughness and irreverence over

It would seem that his 'irreverence' went further.

Postlethwaite tells us that Tom Turner was once in difficulty in setting the key on the pitch-pipe (for congregational singing) for the psalm before the sermon. Mr. Ponsonby was preaching. 'After a third ineffectual attempt on the choristers' part, the vicar interrupted with a deep voiced "Let us pray". But Turner was not so easily obliterated; in audible tones he exclaimed "---------- thy praying, t' psalm cums afore t' Sarmon."

The author of the church's 'millenium publication' of 1977, states that 'from 1828 to 1840 further drastic renovation was done.

The chancel was at that time in a very bad state, and after long correspondence with the Lord of the Manor, was repaired by public subscription'.
He goes on to note that 'at the same time the original East Window was removed. Windows were opened up in the nave and the roof slated. A reredos of tiles was made against the east wall, and the Vestry added.' (Page 12).

The Vestry Minute Book for 1825-1945 simply records a Meeting convened on 21st July 1847 'for the purpose of considering what steps should be taken for putting the Chancel of this Church into proper repair.'
'It was proposed by Mr. Wm Cranke that the matter should stand over till next Spring and that proportions should be made in the meantime.' It was also proposed that Mr. E. Petty, Mr. Wm. Cranke and Mr. W. Fell be requested to make a Plan & Estimate of the proposed Alterations as soon as possible.' (Signed by Matthias Forrest, Vicar)

There are no further entries in this Minute Book until 1877.

Gaythorpe, as we noted earlier, bemoaned the removal of the East Window and its replacement 'with execrable taste' by modern windows; however, all was not lost because the tracery of the original windows was preserved in the garden at Hawkfield. **The work in the chancel also included rebuilding the top portion of the walls and 'cheap deal timber put in the roof.' The chancel floor was re-laid using Hutton Roof flags.**

In about 1850 the vestry, which was probably added on to the chancel in the early seventeenth century, was rebuilt. An entry in one of the Church Books notes that "About the year 1850, the Chancel & Vestry of Urswick Church were rebuilt, at a cost of £173-7-3. This sum was raised by Voluntary Contributions. List of Contributors lost."

A number of observations have been made about the **unusual windows** in the church in that no two were alike!

Pollitt wrote that 'It is interesting to see that all are different in shape and size and that their positions do not conform to a set plan.' He also states that most of the work on 'opening them up' to their present form is mid-nineteenth century and some of the glass is quite modern.
Gaythorpe writing in 1882 describes the windows as follows:
'the arrangement of the windows is, to say the least, eccentric. On the north side (of the nave) is a lofty, square-headed window, with remains of broken tracery; another of two obtusely-pointed lights, and a third of modern date differing from both the others. On the south side of the nave is a narrow-pointed single light, an Early English window, and a square one of two lights without any pretensions to architecture; whilst the fourth, a circular window, concludes the series.'

It is interesting to note that when Canon Ayre wrote about the same windows 15 years later there were now *five windows* in the south side of the nave! The addition is described as a 'modern pointed window, with two lights'. The middle window on the north side was, according to Ayre, 'erected to the memory of Isabella Ashburner in 1822'.

Gaythorpe adds that 'the earliest specimens of window tracery are in the nave, and date from about the middle of the 14th century. Possibly these windows were inserted by Sir John de Haryngton, who was lord of Aldingham from 1347 to 1363-4. The ancient windows in the chancel and upper stages of the tower are nearly a century later, and most probably are the work of William de Haryngton, the donor of the bell, who was born 1392 and died 3rd March 1458.'

Now the water gets a little 'murky' and rivalries begin to emerge within landowners and patrons of the church.

On the death of William Ponsonby in **1841 the Reverend Matthias Forrest, Bachelor of Arts, was appointed Vicar at Urswick**; clearly his was but the latest of 'local' appointments since we know from the records that his mother was interred at Colton church in August 1850 aged 75 years and the family came from Bouth.
One of his forebears was the vicar at Blawith from 1764-1786, the patron of that living being the Braddyll family from Conishead.

There is no record that Matthias Forrest was married. He died, aged 48 years, on 7th January 1861. In 1851 the School was being run by Mr. William Hodgson so perhaps by then it was not the 'usual practice' for the Vicar to be also Headmaster.
We have noted that Matthias Forrest kept accurate records and provided helpful information for his successors, but both the way in which his appointment and that of his successor were made suggests that all was not well within the Parish or at least among the major land owners!

Early in March 1861 the Churchwardens were asked to convene a Vestry Meeting to discuss the successor to the Reverend Matthias Forrest, but there was obviously some issue regarding voting protocol and rights of presentation.
A declaration was made by Matthew Sharp of Stainton, Sarah Hunter of Huntide, and others that following the death of Matthias Forrest they agreed 'to appoint Henry Smith of Bankfield to act on their behalf to vote in the election of the Reverend John Park of Rampside to fill the vacancy'.
This document was dated 27th March, 1861.

However, in a detailed document dated March 18th 1861 lodged at the Records Office entitled 'Dispute over Patronage- Opinion by H. J. Holland' the issues become clearer and perhaps explain the cynical reason for the 'lost book' referred to by Matthias Forrest.

I quote from the document:
'The evidence of the Persons present at a meeting in 1841 must be very carefully taken and their affidavit made to the facts they can speak to. They should be asked whether they had notice of the meeting, from whom and why they attended and where- whether they attended at the first as well as at the adjourned meeting. Was Mr. Forrest elected at the meeting- and when was the presentation paper signed. In short all particulars that can be obtained from them of the meeting should be obtained. Application should be made by the parishioners who are approving the steps that have been taken to inspect the Vestry books to see if there are any entries of the meeting in 1841 or at the prior presentation. Or to avoid any question as to the parishioners' rights to see the books, the two churchwardens who take the said view as Mr. Smith can inspect the books without any application. All entries as to the prior presentation should be examined'

He then goes on to state 'I think that a distinct refusal to convene a meeting should be obtained from the two churchwardens unless it has been obtained already as a distinct refusal is necessary before applying for a mandan.....'.

The churchwardens, who seemed to be split over the issue, were William Battersby, John Bentham, Adam Woodburn and William Butler.

Of course, the missing book which would have been in the possession of the churchwardens during the vacancy also contains the names of the four churchwardens at the time Mr. Forrest was appointed!

Perhaps a scrap of paper among the 1975 'Notes on 1,000 years of Urswick Church' held in the Records Office could deepen the mystery or raise a further one!
Two brief entries in relation to 'the Society' from a 'Minute Book' for 1822-41:

'Mr Jackson purposes to treat here if Mrs. W Cranke does not bear a Child in the course of twelve months', and, secondly, that
'Mr. Geldart purposes with Mr Jackson that if John Coward is married the first of any of the members of this Society he will treat with a Bottle of Spirits, if not Mr Jackson will do so.'

Both entries were made in December 1841 as 'the final entries in the Book'.

There is no formal record of such a Minute Book among the official archives. John Coward, Yeoman, of Windhill and William Cranke, Yeoman, of Hawkfield are both listed in the Directory for 1825.

Was this one of the two Societies from which the clergy were 'excluded' for some mysterious reason?
Reverend George Humphriss made a 'pained' reference to local hostility and being excluded over 100 years later.

In a note written by R.F.Yarker dated 28th March 1861 Malachi Cranke was informed that Mr. Yarker had received a memo signed by Mrs. Petty and Mrs.Thackeray;
he wrote:

'I hear today that the other side don't now contend that there was a Vestry Meeting strictly so called when Mr. Forrest was elected. They say that the Voters were convened in vestry to receive nominations, and that the votes were collected at the Voters Houses, and the Deed of Presentation was signed afterwards and they propose to be going to work now, exactly as then....'

Clearly there had been an expectation that Reverend Park would be elected because the Presentation Document which had been produced for Matthias Forrest had been pencilled over showing Mr. Park's name!

However the dispute was resolved, the fact remains that Reverend Park was *not* elected and **the Reverend James Gale was elected as Vicar of Urswick.** He served from 1861 until 1877.

It is interesting to discover that the Reverend John Park was a non-graduate who had trained for the ordained ministry at St. Bees Theological College in 1828, the early date suggesting that this must have been one of the first Training Colleges in the country.

Born in 1834 at Lavenham in Suffolk, **James Gale** was the youngest son of William Gale (of Bardsea Hall), brother of Henry Richmond Hoghton Gale, Esquire, who became Captain in the Light Infantry, referred to earlier. He studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, matriculating in 1853 and obtaining his BA in 1857. He resigned his office in 1877 and history records that he died at Norwood in Surrey 12th May 1911.

Robert Burland Billinge was presented by the 'Freeholders' as Vicar of Urswick on 2nd April 1878.

We have scant information about the ministry of Robert Billinge or his background, but we do have an important 'snap shot' of church and parish life at Urswick during the year 1889 because during that year Reverend Billinge produced and distributed the first monthly editions of '**Urswick Parish Magazine'** for which subscribers paid the sum of one penny per month. As Mr Billinge explained, it was not a magazine published totally by the parish but 'a certain magazine is what is called 'localised'. i.e., local matter of interest is printed in addition to the 'central sheets'.
He chose to 'localise' a magazine entitled 'The Church Monthly' which he described as 'an excellent one, contains good articles on various topics, has a serial story, puzzles, acrostics, &c., and in addition we shall have our parish information.'

The local information he proposed to publish was 'information as to Church Services, Magic Lantern Entertainments, Concerts, Temperance and other Meetings. The Baptisms,

Marriages and Burials, the Parish Accounts, the Report of the School Examinations and other matters of interest will find their place from time to time.'
He hoped that 'in order that the magazine should do its proper work it is necessary that it should be taken in every house and taken regularly.'

The first print run was of 75 copies, which were 'sold immediately' and there were 110 subscribers for the February edition. In the February edition the vicar declared himself 'glad to receive communications of matter of interest to the Parish' for publication, but warned that **'nothing of a controversial character will be printed'**!

He reported that he had been received with kindness and courtesy 'wherever I go in the parish'. He had been out collecting money to pay the salary of the caretaker of the Churchyard and whilst stressing the responsibility of parishioners for the upkeep of 'God's Acre', 'I have the hope that interest in the Churchyard may lead to greater interest in the Church and the Services held there.'
He also reported on a very successful Sixth Annual Temperance Tea Party enjoyed by between 80 and 90 people. The 'after entertainment' included 'an admirable address by the Rev. J.Haythornthwaite' and 'songs, duetts, and readings furnished an enjoyable evening's amusement'.
Mrs. Billinge had been one of those who provided a 'tray' of refreshments for the event.

In March he reported back on a successful 'annual entertainment to Church Workers' in the Day School.
He wrote that 'upwards of forty partook of a substantial tea, and afterwards spent what seemed to be a pleasant evening in singing, playing at various games, &c.' Whilst he was thankful for all of the help in Church work already given, 'I am like Oliver Twist, and must "ask for more".'
He desperately needed teachers in the Sunday School, 'especially in the morning'. He felt that there were many in the parish who had the ability and the time to devote to this work and implored them to come forward!

Subscriptions were now up to 120 per month.

Reference has been made earlier to the gradual introduction of regular services of Holy Communion.
The Easter Services illustrate this development well. 'On Good Friday there will be Morning Service and an Administration of the Holy Communion at 10.30; Evening Service at 7. The Vicar will preach at both Services. On Easter Day the Holy Communion will be celebrated at 8 a.m., and again after the 10.30 Service; Evening Service at 6.30. Midweek Services with visiting preachers had been held during the Lenten period.

Mr.Billinge was Honorary. Secretary of the Association of Church Choirs for the Archdeaconry of Furness; he made an appeal for more members of the choir at Urswick,

'particularly basses and tenors' and asked 'Are there not some men in the parish who can sing, and will sing?'

An important social commentary comes out from the May magazine where Mr. Billinge reports on the parish's 'Easter Egg' contribution; the children, aided by their grown up friends, had given 'no less than 355 fresh eggs'. Of this number 284 had been sent to Liverpool, with some flowers, to the Children's Infirmary, with the remainder going to the Cottage Hospital in Ulverston.
The Vicar reported that during the year 1888 12,159 people had died in Liverpool, 'and of this number no less than 5,515 were Children under 10 years; of these, 2981 died under one year and 2,089 between one and three years of age.' He stated that this was a very serious fact, 'and the Children's Infirmary does what it can to check this great mortality among the little ones.' 'Last year', he continued, 'there were 1,168 indoor patients of which 626 were quite cured, 369 were relieved and only 70 died, while there were 11,469 out-patients who received medical assistance and relief. *I do not think I need say more to prove that any help given to such an Institution is well bestowed.'*

Just to remind us that much of the civil administration of the Parish was still the responsibility of the Church, Mr. BIllinge reported that at the Vestry Meeting held on March 25th Overseers of the Poor were appointed as follows: for Much Urswick Mr. J.P. Brockbank, Little Urswick, Mr. W. Butler, Aldgarley and Stainton, Mr.W.Cranke, Bardsea, Mr.J.R.Dunn. Mr.R.Neale and Mr.I.Taylor, were re-elected Surveyors of the Highways. On April 20th, a Vestry Meeting was held, when a rate of 8d. in the £ for the relief of the Poor and other purposes was laid, and Mr. John Bowerbank, was re-appointed Assistant Overseer.

The Easter Vestry Meeting had been held on April 26th for the election of Churchwardens and Messrs. M.J. Cranke and G. Butler were nominated as Vicar's Wardens and Messrs. R. Neale and F. Rawlinson were elected Parishioners' Wardens. Messrs. H. Gordon-Smith and R.Neale were elected Lay Representatives to attend the Ruri-decanal Conference.

The Accounts showed that £58 14s 6d had been collected during the year for Church Expenses, compared with £44 19s 0d the previous year. The major expenditure had been £12. 18.0 for repairs to the wall round the churchyard. Of the Vicar's Offertory Accounts, from an income of £20 8s 11d, £10 16s 6d had been distributed in the Parish.

A sobering entry in the Parish Register:

BAPTISM
May 19- Barbara Eleanor, daughter of Charles and Eleanor Nixon, Much Urswick.

BURIAL
May 15- Eleanor Nixon, Much Urswick, aged 29 years.

July and August being ‘quiet months’ were given over to a summary about the origins of the Grammar School in Urswick.

In the September Magazine Mr. Billinge reported on separate Sunday School treats for Stainton and Urswick. About 40 Stainton children had had ‘a good afternoon’s romp in a field near the Mission Room’ followed by a substantial tea ‘which went the way it was intended to go, evidently giving satisfaction in its journey.’ The Urswick Sunday School children had a Service in the Parish Church at 2 o’clock ‘ and afterwards a dripping procession of some 140 children hurried to the Day School’ where ‘with the cheerful help of the teachers and some friends (names too numerous to mention) a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon and evening was spent. Our old friend, Robert Maudsley, rigged up some swings, skipping rope contests were indulged in, step-dancing practised, and a variety of other amusements caused time to fly so rapidly that all were quite surprised when darkness put an end to the day’s pleasure.’ He concluded that ‘More cake and buns and tea went the way of all cake than in any previous year, and I had almost forgotten to say that each child received a present (both here and at Stainton) of some toy- battledors and shuttlecocks, skipping ropes, balls, marbles, tops, &c., being distributed.’

The forthcoming **Harvest Thanksgiving Service** was to be held on Sunday 22nd September and the Collection would, as usual, be in aid of the Sunday Schools, for which the usual amount of £10 is required.
Mr.Billinge invited parishioners to provide gifts of fruit, flowers, corn, &c, as usual, for the purpose of decorating the Church, and to help in its decoration.
Reporting back on the Urswick Harvest Thanksgiving, Mr.Billinge writes that the ‘I am glad to say that the Thanksgiving Services held on Sunday were successful from every point. True the rain and storm of Friday and Saturday rather spoilt the brightness of the flowers, but there were plenty; liberal offerings of wheat, oats, barley, fruit and vegetables were sent, and there was ample ready and skilful help forthcoming to make our old Church look very bright and beautiful with God’s gifts.’
The Church was ‘well filled’ in the morning.
During the afternoon the Church was full to hear the children attending the Sunday Schools sing a ‘Service of Song’ entitled ‘Harvest Home’.
At night the Church was ‘crammed’ and ‘the singing not only of the choir (who, let me say, chanted the Psalms excellently), but of the congregation was hearty and good.’

The programme for the coming winter months was to include monthly Temperance Meetings ‘with an address’, and others with ‘Services of Song’, etc.; an appeal was made for ‘singers, readers, or reciters, who are willing to help in the entertainment’. The Magic Lantern was to be employed to ‘try to make a few of the dark evenings pass pleasantly’, the first to be a Service of Song, illustrated by Lantern pictures called “Eva, or Uncle Tom’s Cabin”.

There were now 126 subscriptions to the Parish Magazine.

In relation to changes in the range of church services and the **wider use of music**, one notes that 'A Service of Song' seemed to feature regularly at this time; one presumes this to be an early version of 'Songs of Praise'.

Pollitt writes that 'the harmonium, which had been given to the church in 1864 from public subscription was replaced by the present Organ, a two manual *electric* pipe organ by Wilkinson's of Kendal' but he doesn't give a date.
In the 1973 millennium publication the author includes the provision of the organ '**with its very fine organ case'** in the gift of Miss Petty. There is a little confusion here in terms of dating and perhaps the development of the organ itself because in the Churchwardens Accounts, for example in 1882, a sum of £3 is paid to the **organ blower** for a period of 2 years; from 1883 an annual salary is being paid to the Deputy Organist and in 1886 the sum of £4 7s 6d was paid for Tuning the Organ.

It is clear that Miss Petty provided the organ casing because this is totally in keeping with all of the wonderful wood work in oak in the chancel which dates from the early years of the twentieth century (the casing is dated and 'signed' by Alec Miller '1910) but what evidence there is suggests a significant upgrade to the existing organ at the time. Having said that, there is nothing to confirm who might have donated the original organ so perhaps Miss Petty *did* provide it on an earlier occasion!

The 'electrification' of the organ would have occurred in more recent times since Geoffrey Elleray recalls operating the blower in the 1940's.

Two more pieces of helpful information for us to ponder: in the November edition the Vicar reported that 'everyone knows of the complaints made of the Church being so cold in winter' and now thankfully Mr. Gordon-Smith had 'with his customary liberality' provided £25 towards the cost of a new 'handsome slow-combustion stove, which the Churchwardens purpose placing in the Church.' He also indicated that 'We, the Churchwardens and I, would like to place another stove at the Tower end of the Church, in fact we purpose doing so' and concluded that whilst he could not say how much it would cost, he hoped that 'this notice will prepare you for the duty of putting your hands in your pockets and bringing something out of them. I am sure all will be ready to help in making the Church more dry and warm.'

In the December edition Mr. Billinge reported that the Diocesan Inspectors had examined the scholars at the Day School in Religious Knowledge 'and I'm glad to say that the report received, which is countersigned by the Bishop of Carlisle, is a very satisfactory one'.
Their General Comment read as follows:
'The Managers and Teachers are to be congratulated on the very satisfactory state of Religious Knowledge in the School. The work has been steady and conscientious, and the children answered brightly and with interest. The hymns were sung sweetly, especially in the higher class, and great attention had been given to the Prayer Book among the elder

children.'
Urswick School- On the Books, 220 children; Average Attendance, 173; Present, 184.

Having gleaned a little of the life of the church, perhaps we can pick up something of the development of the villages through the freehold occupants listed in the **1882 Directory of Furness and Cartmel** published by P, Mannex & Company.

For example in LIttle Urswick:
Post Office
Grocer
Victualer (Swan)
Shoemaker
Shopkeeper
Branch of Co-operative Society
Butcher
Mine Manager

For Much Urswick:
Blacksmith
Shopkeeper
Tailor
Beer House (Derby Arms)
Victualer (General Burgoyne)
Joiner/Millwright
Shoemaker
Dressmaker
Mason
Mine Manager
Shopkeeper

At least 12 farmers were listed in an around the villages. There was even a Gunpowder Manufacturer at Holm Bank!

Evening classes in various subjects were now being offered as well.
For example the local paper in October, 1900, reported that the **Technical Instruction Classes at Urswick** 'opened on Monday with a fair attendance'. It went on to state that 'a preliminary meeting was held in the Workingmen's Club room at Stainton for the forming of an ambulance class' and that 'the wood carving class, under Mr. Russell, of Barrow, begins on Thursday night'.

The nature of rural society was changing, and so was the administration of the parish.
In 1800 the parish was still the principal agency of local government; the vestry, chaired by

the vicar, and consisting of the major landowners and rate payers, was responsible for poor relief, apprenticeship schemes, schools, roads, and public health.
The vestry also maintained the church and was entitled to raise money for its upkeep from the parishioners.
By 1900 all these responsibilities except caring for the church building had been taken away by the Local Government Act of 1894.

As central legislation was imposed, the village ceased to be isolated and 'national newspapers and other cheap printed matter now penetrated even the remotest hamlet, breaking down traditional, inward-looking communities.'

We have noted how **Bardsea** became a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1853, but under its deed of consecration the inhabitants retained all their rights as parishioners of Urswick . Bulmer in 1910 reviewed its more recent history.
He reminds us that the incomplete church building was purchased at auction in London by Reverend T. E.Petty, who became its first curate-in-charge. He completed the building and endowed it with a farm on Walney Island which was sold in 1899 to Vickers, Maxim & Co as a site for their model workmen's cottages.
The living was a vicarage worth £258 in the gift of T.E. Hockin, Esq. of Wellwood.
The other principal landowner was R. H. Gale, Esq. JP.

Near to the church was a school, erected in 1852, and endowed by Mrs. Petty; at the time it had 42 children in attendance.
Baines noted in 1870 that Bardsea had a 'good school and master's house adjoining'.
He also commented that 'regular steam communication at one time took place between Bardsea and Fleetwood, but was not supported, and now the last remains of the jetty have disappeared.'

The other Township in Urswick Parish was of course **Stainton and Adgarley** into which Baines included the *Manor* of Bolton-with-Adgarley.
We noted at the outset that Bolton was awarded its own chantry during the reign of Henry III and Urswick church was awarded 'compensation' by an annual payment of four pounds of wax.
Bulmer included it in the Township of Little Urswick.

Stainton and Adgarley consists of 'two scattered villages'. Baines wrote in 1870 that the principal mineral production of this parish was iron ore. In 1835 it had been recorded that 'the mines of Stainton and Adgarley were esteemed the richest in the lordship of Furness' but he stated that 'there never was much iron-ore at either of these places'.
Canon Ayre said that the marble yielded by the Stainton Quarries was known as Ulverston marble; 'it admits of a fine polish, and is used for mantle-pieces, table-tops, and other

ornamental purposes.' He also said that since the opening of a branch of the Furness line of railway from Dalton to Stainton, 'vast quantities of limestone rock have been carried away to the smelting furnaces at Barrow, to be used as a flux.'
Bulmer in 1910 reported that 'a band of limestone passed through the township, cropping above the surface in several places, and forming the entire substance of the hills.'
Two large limestone quarries were being worked by the Barrow Hematite Iron and Steel Company at Stainton and between 500 and 600 tons turned out daily at each. The Crown Quarry, as its name implies, was the property of the Crown and the other one belonged to the Duke of Devonshire.

In the millennium publication of 1973 the author writes that 'like Little Urswick, this too was a tight knit community of farmers and farm workers, with quarry workers, both of whom had their own inn, The Farmers Arms and The Miners Arms'.
He also wrote that 'standing at the lower part of Adgarley is the former Infants School, now a Mission Church to St. Mary and St. Michael. Up the road is the former Congregational Church built in 1902, a fine dressed limestone building faced on the frontage with sandstone'.
This was a replacement for the old chapel dating from 1873.
The cost of the new church was between £400 and £500. The stone was the gift of the Barrow Hematite Iron and Steel Company, and much of the labour, such as carting, was done gratuitously.

We observed earlier from Reverend Billinge's Magazine entries that the mother church at Urswick had a substantial work in Stainton through its School and Sunday School.
It wasn't just the public houses which divided the villagers!

In March 1889 Mr.Billinge reported that a new harmonium had been provided for 'Stainton Church Mission Room' at a cost, including carriage, of £7 10s, paid for by subscription.

It was noted earlier that Stainton and Urswick had their own separate Sunday School Treats and separate celebrations of the Harvest Festival. The Stainton Harvest had been successful and 'an ample supply of corn, fruit, and flowers was sent as a thanks offering for the plenteous harvest, and a ready, energetic band of workers decorated the Mission Room very tastefully indeed'. Mr. Dobson preached in the morning, the Vicar in the afternoon, and in the evening a Service of Song, "Harvest Home", was sung by the Children attending the Sunday School held in the Mission Room.
The number of scholars was steadily increasing and Mr. Billinge appealed yet again for more helpers.

Stainton obviously had its own Choir because in the December Magazine the Vicar was able to report that the 'Service of song "Christie's old Organ" was very nicely sung by members'.

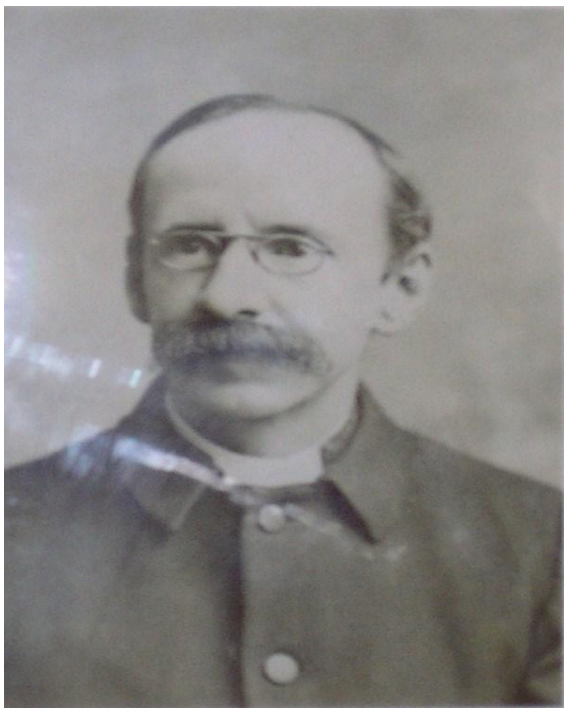
An interesting social mobility factor again appears in this Magazine where Mr. Billinge advertised a forthcoming Magic Lantern Exhibition of South Africa and commented that ‘So many have gone from this district to South Africa that I hope we shall have a “full house” again, as the subject should be interesting.’

CHAPTER NINE

Postlethwaite's Passion

The twentieth century was the 'century of preservation' and that the roots of the appreciation of old buildings lie in eighteenth-century antiquarianism and in the emerging tourism during the Napoleonic Wars when, cut off from the continent, the English embarked on exploring their own country, and churches began to appear in guide-books as objects of aesthetic, antiquarian and anecdotal interest.
The rise of the preservation movement at the close of the Victorian period also affected the country church. The process began in 1877 with the foundation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings- 'directly precipitated by the ruthless 'restoration' of medieval churches'- and the passing of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act in 1882. Later came the Georgian Society and then the Victorian Society followed in more recent times by the Historic Buildings Council and its successors, English Heritage and the Council for the Care of Churches.

Then came T. N. Postlethwaite!



Changes were afoot at Urswick and a Vestry Meeting was called for 1st October 1902 to make arrangements to find a successor to Reverend Robert Burland Billinge who had vacated the living.

Here we are indebted to John Dobson, Headmaster at Urswick Grammar School from 1876 to 1920 and churchwarden during the early years of the twentieth century (and his descendents who retained his collection) because not only did he write his own paper on the 'History of Urswick' but he also kept diaries and notes together with a collection of newspaper cuttings from which much of the key detail in this Chapter is gleaned.

The Vestry Meeting dated 1st October 1902 was attended by 18 landowners and 10 patrons who met to consider applications for the vacancy.
The Minutes of the Meeting of the Resident Landowners shows that the committee chosen to select the new incumbent had 'reduced the number of candidates to be considered from over 190 to seven'. It was then noted that the 'patrons proceeded by ballot to further reduce the number to four with the result that Revd. Thomas Norton Postlethwaite, John Swalwell, Walter Sturdy Gardner and Thomas Clark Gawith were left for a final selection'.

The meeting decided to ask the last three 'to take each a Sunday duty in the Parish Church of Urswick and adjourned until the 6th or 13th December'. The Reverend Postlethwaite had already taken the duty in the parish 'on several Sundays'. The three other applicants subsequently withdrew, thus leaving the way clear for them to vote by 17 votes to 4 in favour of **Thomas Norton Postlethwaite**, BA (Trinity College, Cambridge) who was elected on 21st January 1903 and was to remain Vicar of Urswick until 1926.

Thomas Norton Postlethwaite was born at Hitchin, Hertfordshire; his father, Thomas, came from London and his mother, Mary Jane, from Derby. In 1871 the family were living at Hazel Mount, Thwaites, near Millom, Cumberland where Thomas senior was occupied as a 'Slate Merchant'. Thomas junior was one of six children, the eldest son but his sister Emily was older by two years. The family were obviously wealthy, employing a Governess to teach the children and employing resident cook, nurse and housemaid.

We know that Thomas Norton Postlethwaite attended Trinity College, Cambridge where he gained his BA Degree. The Census of 1881 places him, now aged 24, living at Heatherly House, Sandhurst in Berkshire with Reverend and Mrs Sprusling and employed as an Assistant School Master. In 1891 he could be found in St. John's Park, Greenwich, London, in a house providing accommodation and care for several young boarders; it would appear that they were children of British colonials serving overseas (one was born in Japan, one in Ireland, another in India, another in the USA, and three from the UK, all British citizens). Both he and the co-leasee were listed as 'School Master'.

There is no detail of 'what happened next' to bring him back to the north of England, but on June 12th 1895 Thomas Norton Postlethwaite, BA., now Curate of St. John's Barrow, was ordained priest by the Bishop of Carlisle at Carlisle Cathedral, and in 1901, aged 43 years, he is found to be living alone at 17, Canal Foot, Ulverston as a 'clerk in holy orders', clergyman, which presumably means as a curate at St. Mary's, Ulverston from where one assumes he was despatched from time to time to 'cover' services at Urswick during the interregnum.

His Institution and Induction to the living at Urswick were reported in the local paper on 5th March 1903 and it makes interesting reading:

'At the conclusion of this part of the service the Bishop of Carlisle's Mandate having been read, the new vicar was conducted out into the churchyard to the "Priests Door" at which upon his knocking the Archdeacon proceeded to admit him by means of the huge and heavy ancient key which has been used on so many similar occasions to admit his predecessors. The new vicar was next conducted to the belfry and bidden to toll the bell. This was done and in due course the mellow sound of the ancient "Harrington" bell rolled out along the quiet valley.
The Archdeacon explained the difference between the institution of their new vicar by the Lord Bishop which was a spiritual proceeding, and his induction by the Archdeacon, which was a temporal ceremony placing the vicar in possession of the rights and privileges of the benefice. He pointed out the distinction between the spiritual and temporal side of a clergyman's life, and how apart from his great spiritual duty of ministering the word of God and prayer, he was called upon to do a hundred things of a worldly character in connection with that parochial organisation, the repairs of the church, the training of the choir, trips and treats, and so forth.
He must be careful, however, to see that these temporal distractions did not draw him away too much from his strictly spiritual duties. Many clergymen liked to take everything on their shoulders, thus robbing the laity of their share of the work they might do for God.'
The Archdeacon 'asked them not only to pray for God's blessing on him, but to help him to "mind his own business".

The same newspaper edition reported on the great storm 'which passed over the district during the early hours of Friday morning last,(which) though one of the most severe within living memory did comparatively little damage. The slates were blown off from a large patch on the south side of the roof of the Parish Church (in Urswick), trees were uprooted and part of the churchyard wall blown down'.

At the Annual Vestry Meeting on 3rd April 1904 the Churchwardens' accounts for the year were read out by John Dobson. They showed that 'whilst £25 6s 2d had been subscribed during the year for church expenses the wardens had been called upon to spend £35 11s 1d, leaving an adverse balance of £10 4s 11d. This, it was explained, was mainly due to the comparatively large amount spent for the repair of damage done to the windows, roof and churchyard wall by the storm of the 27th February 1903, and to the fact that the interior of

the church had been coloured and specially cleaned during the year, and many needful repairs, long delayed, had been attended to'. The meeting was of opinion that a special appeal to landowners and residents should be made to clear off the debt.

Two 'snap shots' of parish life in 1905 are recorded, the first being a very successful Friday night dance organised by the young men of the parish, held in the day school in Little Urswick. The report stated that 'the dancing was kept up until far on in Saturday morning' and noted that 'it is understood that any surplus proceeds will be handed over to **the choir and organ fund.'** The M.C.'s were 'R.E.A.Uren and Jno. Wood.'
This dance coincided with the Harvest Festival held on the Sunday; note that 'in the afternoon the children's service took the form of a rushbearing, being a revival in a symbolic form of the ancient custom of the parish, discontinued 80 years ago'; this, the first of a new era, has continued up to the present day.

It was a very popular reintroduction and parish event. The reporter wrote that 'following the procession into the church, a crowd of parishioners and visitors filled the building to its utmost capacity, and many were turned away unable to find even standing room. The Rev. T. N. Postlethwaite, vicar of Urswick, addressed a brief discourse to the assembled congregation dwelling on the utility of the ancient custom of rushbearing, the symbolism of its modern form, and the lessons to be drawn from both.'
It was also reported that 'a service in continuation of the festival was held on Wednesday evening when a good congregation assembled.' By 1907, just two years later, rush bearing was once again regarded as an annual tradition and Revd. Postlethwaite had written additional material for the service.

Reverend Postlethwaite writing in 1906 commented that 'it is a somewhat curious fact that most of the land in the parish of Urswick is farmed from homesteads within the village- a remnant of earlier and unsettled times when men were wont to congregate for the sake of company and protection. These village farms create much of the life and picturesqueness of the place. There is the string of cows on their twice-a-day journey to the milking byre, there are the horses returning from plough or other labour in the fields, the sheep pattering on the road as they are brought to the farm-buildings for salving or dipping. The varied occupations of the farm, in byegone days - the churning, the cheese-pressing, the thud of the flail, the sorting of roots, killed the monotony of the constant rattle of the looms, the tap-tap of the cordwainer's shop or the heavier clang from the smithy. For in those bye-gone days village industries were fostered. Home-spun flax and wool were home-woven in the village. Boots and shoes and clogs were constructed at the village workshop. They cost rather more than the present town-bought foot gear, and lasted ten times as long. House-wives made their own preserves, instead of selling their garden produce for a few pence, and buying ready-made jam, the skilfully concealed concoction of turnips and carrots for the winter's need.

Now-a-days, failing the mines there is nothing left but Emigration or the Workhouse. Most of the village industries are dead, slain because people refuse to spend their money in their own community.'

John Marsh and John Garbutt, who produced a photographic journal in 1994 entitled **'The Lake Counties of one hundred years ago'** provide for us a clear summary of the 'rural scene' at the turn of the century in a period of economic depression.
They wrote that 'the lot of the farm labourer, poor and exploited in the main, changed when the towns of the district offered an alternative in the new factories, shipyards, steelworks and mines. The poverty and exploitation varied only slightly, but the working-class communities of Furness and the Cumberland West Coast and Carlisle possibly offered a safer haven than the weather and landowner.
During the depressed years of the turn of the century the Christian Church in its divided form offered succour to most communities in many differing ways.....'

They went on to say that 'the church (or more often the chapel) was the centre of social as well as spiritual life for many families, with groups such as church youth groups occupying the young in a way to be followed by the Scouts early in the twentieth century.
The Temperance Movement, born out of the wretched alcohol abuse in the early nineteenth century, was strong in all parts of the Counties.'

The Quaker movement which in the eighteenth century had provided a source of support in difficult times, had changed substantially by the late nineteenth century with many owners of original Quaker enterprises no longer supporting them but adopting Methodism or the 'new' Church of England. The workers who worked for the industries owned by these Christian industrialists were fortunate in that the communal care associated with them led to greatly different conditions from the exploitation offered by many of the others.

It is worth noting here once again that many of these rural communities were somewhat isolated from the rest of the area even at the time of the First World War when motor cars were still relatively unknown.
Stanley Finch from Barrow, writing in 1972 about this period in his little book entitled '**Rememberable Things: A Farm Youth of Yester-Year'**, suggests that for most people the quickest form of transport, apart from the railway, was the horse.
Having said that, he describes the isolated nature of the local farming community and the conditions under which the 'hired labour' lived and worked.
Of his stay at Middle Foulshaw on the Kent Estuary he wrote that it 'seemed to be a world of its own, isolated and remote from the great world.
There was, of course, no radio in those days, and I have no recollection of daily newspapers, so there was little contact with the world outside, and only meagre scraps of news came through, or so it seemed to me.'

Of his next employer he wrote that 'I was contracted to work whatever hours John Shuttleworth chose. The hours were long, starting in the early morning, and seldom finishing before six o'clock in evening, except on Sunday when I just managed to get to Egton-cum-Newland church for evensong.
Needless to say, there was no half day off.'

Many of those working on the farms around Urswick and Low Furness would have fared no better.
Perhaps the nearest in description to Urswick was Quernmore near Lancaster in 1924 of which he wrote 'in those days motor cars were seldom seen.... and although Lancaster was only three miles away, so remote seemed the valley, and so deep its solitude, that it might have been twenty. It seemed a little world of its own, far removed from the noise and hurry and bustle of the town.'
The other factor was the centrality of the church/chapel in the life of the people: 'here, from farms and cottages on the hill-side and in the valley, they came Sunday by Sunday to thank God for the mercies of the past week, and to seek His strength for the week ahead.'
Sunday morning and Sunday evening and for Stanley Finch and many like him, leading groups of youngsters in the Sunday School during the afternoon.

In **July 1906** a Vestry Meeting was held at Urswick to discuss the 'Enlargement of the Church'- that was the headline in the paper on 21st July but the Meeting was intended primarily to consider a scheme for ***the enlargement of the churchyard***.
'The vicar having announced that an opportunity had occurred of purchasing for a very reasonable sum a piece of land extending from the west end of the churchyard through the highway towards Little Urswick, and that the owner of a right-of-way had kindly consented to its diversion. It was unanimously agreed.....that the scheme as outlined by the vicar be approved by the vestry, and that the vicar and churchwardens be appointed an executive committee to collect funds and forward the work'.

It was also reported that 'they also hoped at the same time to be able to raise sufficient funds to enable the churchwardens to remove the crumbling reredos and replace it with one of panelled oak of native growth, to restore and replace the old east window with its beautiful and unique flamboyant tracery, preserved so long by the Messrs. Cranke, at Hawkfield, and recently given back to the Church by the Earl of Derby, who had purchased the Hawkfield estate, and to effect other repairs and restorations without destroying the characteristic appearance of the ancient building. These matters, however, will come before the vestry at a later meeting should it be found possible to carry them forward.'

This was the beginning a hugely significant programme of **repairs and restorations** which would draw considerable attention to the church in unexpected ways; reading through the various details one senses a determined effort to focus on **restorations** rather than the

'improvements' suggested and introduced by Reverend Ponsonby some one hundred years earlier and the 'repairs' of the 1840's.

By mid-September of that year (1906) the newspaper was able to report that the work of extending the churchyard was making rapid progress 'thanks to the voluntary work put in by large numbers of the workingmen of the parish, backed up by the farmers with horses and carts'.
A week later it was reported that the work had been 'taken in hand by working men of the parish, many of whom have very sensibly decided to give part at least of their subscription in labour, clearing out old fences, taking up old and making new roads, and quarrying stone for walling, while the farmers promise to do the necessary carting.'

By mid-October it was making 'fairly satisfactory progress', that there was 'no lack of gratuitous labour but the rains have hindered the wallers.'
The Stainton quarrymen who lived in Little Urswick were 'engaged getting stone for the work from the quarry at the entrance to Little Urswick'. Mr. Myles Sleigh, the owner of the quarry, had given the stone 'and the workmen are getting it free of cost for labour,'

At the end of December, whilst reporting on the efficiency of the **'newly-installed heating apparatus'** in the church, used for the first time the previous Sunday, it was also 'hoped to have everything in order by Sunday the 30th when the Bishop of Carlisle is expected to consecrate the enlargement of the churchyard.'

In February 1907 the newspaper was able to report that 'the newly-acquired portion of the Churchyard has now assumed a neat and orderly appearance, the boundary walls being bordered with shrubs of various kinds, while choice ivies and cotoneaster are planted against the walls themselves. Memorial yews have been placed in fitting positions by some of the leading inhabitants, and the surface has been neatly levelled and bulbs planted in the turf'.

The same edition also reported that a 'special meeting was held in the vestry of the Parish Church on Friday morning to empower the vicar and wardens to apply for a faculty to enable them to carry out a number of **improvements and additions** to the ancient structure. The necessary authority was readily granted.'

A long report on the 'DEDICATION SERVICE BY THE ARCHDEACON OF FURNESS' printed on **23rd November 1907** adds considerable important detail to many of the items and developments already mentioned earlier. It is worthy of extensive reproduction here:

'The afternoon service was specially held for the purpose of dedicating the various gifts and restorations which have been made during the last twelve months. The ceremony of dedication was most impressively performed by the Archdeacon of Furness in the presence of a crowded congregation.
The **reredos**, the gift of Miss Petty, of Stockbridge, Ulverston, is a beautiful work of art from

a design by Mr. J.D. Brundrit of the firm of Settle and Brundrit, architects, Ulverston. It is constructed of panelled oak put together without nails or screws, wooden pegs supplying their place as in the best ancient work.
The oak used was grown in the parish, and the panelling and moulding and all the work of construction was carried out in the village workshop of Mr. R. Dobson and his able assistant, Mr. R. Jackson.
In the centre, and just behind the holy table, is fitted in **a painting of the Last Supper**, by one of the Crankes, probably James, the elder, great-grandfather of Mr. M.J. Cranke, of Midtown, Great Urswick, who for many years has filled, and still fills, the office of church-warden in his native parish.
On the left of this altar piece is a beautifully carved figure of the Virgin Mary with the Infant Saviour in her arms, while on the right appears the figure of the archangel, St. Michael, with his foot on the neck of the slain dragon.
On the heavy oak moulding above the picture are carved cherubs heads, and relieving the plainness of the panelling to left and right are carved strings of fruit and flowers, after the style of Grindling Gibbons.
This carved work which very powerfully done, was executed by the Guild of Handicraft of Chipping Campden, Gloucester.
On the side wings above the panelling is cut the following inscription:-

"To the glory of God and in pious memory of the ancient family of Petty, of Urswick, Sarah Jane Petty, of Stockbridge, makes this offering."

After solemnly dedicating this reredos at the request of Mr. J. D. Brundrit (acting on behalf of Miss Petty), the Archdeacon proceeded to the belfry to dedicate, at the request of the ringers, the work performed in connection with **the bells, one of which has been recast and the whole peal rehung** at the expense of Mrs. A. B. Pickthall, widow of Capt. John William Pickthall, formerly of Holmebank, Urswick, in memory of the said John William Pickthall, her late husband.
Here also was unveiled the mural brass placed on the north wall of the church, and inscribed:-

"That they might sound forth God's praise and bid folk to His house Alice Bateson Pickthall caused the bells to be hung and restored in memory of her husband, John William Pickthall."

Among other work of **restoration recently completed the east window** deserves more than passing mention.
Some fifty years ago, when certain alterations were made in the chancel, an ancient window with flamboyant tracery, almost unique in England, was replaced by a window of more modern design. Owing partly to faulty construction this new window was found to be in danger of falling to pieces, and the tracery of the old window having been preserved by the care and piety of the late William Cranke, of Hawkfield, and his sons now living, it was determined to replace the old stonework which had been given back to the vicar and

churchwardens by the present Lord Derby, who had meanwhile bought Hawkfield.
Under the watchful eyes of Mr. J.D. Brundrit and the Rev. T. N. Postlethwaite, vicar of Urswick, the work was most successfully carried out by Messrs. T. F.Tyson, builders, Ulverston.
The stonework of the newer window, redressed, was used as much as possible; where fresh material was needed and where the ancient work was crumbling it was very cleverly restored and repaired by Messrs. Tyson's workmen.

Much of the ancient glass had been lost, although some is was still preserved in the narrow lancet window west of the priest's door, it was decided to **fill the restored window with clear glass** in oblong and square, panes, and **enrich it by adding the arms of various *ancient families closely connected with the parish,*** thus supplementing the heraldic memorials preserved in the two windows on the south side of the chancel.
Accordingly there appear in two of the small lights in the head of the window, blazoned in proper heraldic colours by Messrs. Seward of Lancaster, the shields of Westby and Chancefield, while in the three principal lights reading from left to right and from above downwards are those of Le Fleming, Stanley, Earls of Derby, Harryngton; Preston, Queen Mary (at the suggestion of his present Majesty); De Boiville, Marshall, Urswick.'

In April 1909 the Archdeacon once again attended a special service of dedication at Urswick, this time to dedicate 'certain gifts and offerings recently made for the adornment of the interesting old Parish Church of Urswick, and for use in its services.'
The gifts included a 'very **beautiful embroidered altar cloth'** given by Miss Bowskill of Bardsea; it was designed and embroidered by the sisters of St. Peter's Home in Kilburn.
A further gift of embroidered **collection bags** designed and made by the sisters was also dedicated. Miss Postlethwaite, the vicar's sister, had donated a **'fair linen cloth'** embroidered by the Bedfordshire straw plaiting girls.
Perhaps of greater significance was the gift of '**a massive silver cross**, given by Mrs. A. Satterthwaite and Miss E. Neale, with **silver flower vases** from the girls of the parish.' The cross and vases were designed by Mr. D.J. Brundrit(t) and the work carried out by the Guild of Handicraftsmen 'who did the beautiful carving of the oak reredos given by Miss Petty and dedicated over a year ago.'
The reported stated that 'other work, either in progress or completion, will add greatly to the beauty and dignity of this fine, old church.'

A further brief note published a week later flagged up 'an addition to the alterations and improvements in the chancel of this ancient Parish Church, now being carried out at the expense of Miss Petty, Stockbridge House, Ulverston, it is pleasing to chronicle the offer by Myles Atkinson Sleigh of Eversley, Darley Dale, of a ***pair of substantial oak doors*** to replace those of painted pinewood, by which at present admission is gained from the south porch to the body of the church.'

The organ was replaced (the vicar acknowledged a gift of £300 towards the cost) by the present organ, a two manual electric pipe organ by Wilkinson's of Kendal.
It has always been assumed that Miss Petty also paid for this not least because the organ case, described by Pollitt as carrying 'some very fine carvings (cherub faces and musicians) of David's pipes and Cecilia's organ.' The Petty coat of arms is also carved on the organ case and higher up are the arms of the Abbot of Furness.
In his leaflet about Urswick church Reverend Humphriss wrote that **'In 1910 Miss Petty completed the restoration of the Chancel with Altar Rails, New Organ and Case, Choir Stalls and the stone work of the floor and walls'.**

The extent and the quality of the wood carvings, the work of Alec Miller of the Guild of Handicrafts, continues to amaze with carvings depicting musical instruments on the ends of the choir stalls; there is 'something of the humour of the misericord about the Barrel Organ and Monkey depicted.
'Folklore, or fact, has it', says Pollitt, 'that the vicar jokingly suggested to the carver who had exhausted his own ideas for musical instruments,'

Miller's carvings include the Magnificat (the Song of Mary) depicted on the vestry door and St. Mary and St. Michael on the main doors.
Across the Chancel arch is a **Rood Beam** in oak, with the rood, a cross bearing a dove supported by angels, again beautifully carved by Alec Miller.
On the north side of the arch is a carved figure of a Pilgrim, assumed to be that of St. James of Compostela and on the south side, a figure of John the Baptist.
Pollitt states that 'it is not clear why these particular persons are portrayed but the carving is very fine and the designs have been made with care to make them true to type and period.'
The Scallop shell motif appears on much of the carving; it also appears on the back of the more modern pews in the Nave.
St. James is depicted wearing a scallop shell and is portrayed wearing a pilgrim's gown, staff, bottle and scrip or bag.
The **'sounding board'** above the pulpit is also carved in the shape of a large scallop shell held by two carved figures of children. Dated 1912 it is inscribed 'Wm. Frederick Nelson'.

It was said of Alec Miller that 'he has always remained in the position of the student and the disciple' and clearly his craftsmanship exudes a 'labour of love' as well as a high degree of professionalism.

Alec Miller was born in Glasgow in 1879. His father was a cabinet maker and as a 'dissenter' held strictly to the Sabbath Day observances.
Alec left school aged 12 and was apprenticed for seven years to a Miss Anstruther (later Mrs. Mackay) who had a studio for teaching woodcarving. He was a good student and by the age of 14 he was 'becoming useful at very elementary bench work' (Wilgress, 1987).

Around this time he and his brother Will joined an evening Drawing Class, followed by wood carving classes conducted by the Kyrle Society.
In 1896 he became a student in evening Art classes in Glasgow High School under a Mr. William Paddock and 'it was here that the young apprentice became the young artist'.
In 1898 Alec was promoted to journeyman status and was taken on a visit to London for the first time and was introduced to the writings of John Ruskin and William Morris and both he and Mrs. Mackay shared an interest in the writing of C.R. Ashbee, and his Guild of Handicrafts.
In 1902 he was introduced to Mr. Ashbee and this led to an offer of work which he took up shortly after the Guild left London and set up in Chipping Campden.
This was to be his home for 37 years, although the Guild ceased to exist after 1909.

The combination of Ashbee as designer in wood and Miller as carver proved very successful and much sought after.

His daughter, Jane Wilgress, in her book on Alec's life entitled 'Alec Miller: Guildsman and Sculptor in Chipping Campden' published in 1987, states that 'In the years of the First World War Alec did a lot of work for the church and Town Hall at Ulverston', but this is inaccurate because as we know most of his work was undertaken on behalf of Miss Petty for Urswick Church.

During the 1920's Alec made several successful visits to America.
In 1930 he was once more in America, carving, writing and lecturing on the West Coast of America, and many offers of work and commissions followed and he moved to California with his wife. He published books on 'Stone and Marble Carving' (1948) and 'Tradition in Sculpture' (1949) and was still working out of his Santa Barbara studio in his 80's.

Alec Miller died in 1961 having returned home to visit Janet Ashbee, but she died before he could see her. He is buried at St. Nicholas' Church, Wade.

We have examined earlier in some depth the discoveries made when the restoration work was undertaken, ie. the removal of the ceiling and exposure of the old cross beam, the faded murals on the nave and chancel arch, the now famous cross fragments, and so on.
An additional discovery, so far not satisfactorily explained, was **the doorway on the north side of the nave**; this is an unusual feature in a small church.
Pollitt writes that 'presumably the present nearly square opening with a raised step to this door had been filled in before plastering.
There is no obvious change in the form of the external arch as seen from the North side of the churchyard but this must have been filled in as well'.

Writing in 1924, Reverend Postlethwaite stated in his paper to the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society that 'a certain amount of absolutely necessary restoration has been undertaken. Some of the work, personally, I sometimes regret.'
He then reported that 'a gallery pew fixed against the S.W. wall of the chancel has been removed. It had been erected by Christopher Wilson Esq. of Bardsea Hall about 1753. It was considered an eyesore, but at the same time it was curious and very typical of the period. However, it became more or less unsafe owing to a fire, and it seemed best to remove it.'

Of the chancel flooring he stated that 'as in the case of some old churches there was no chancel step, but a gradual slope towards the west. After some hesitation the floor has been recently levelled and a step constructed. Although this step, ritually, is a great convenience, I sometimes regret its presence,'

He also noted that 'quite recently General Gale has caused the font to be reinstated, and, with his family, has provided it with a carved oak cover.'

Whilst Urswick church was subject to a 'boom' in its re-ordering and its being favoured by local subscriptions, the wider picture was less than rosy.
Birkett cites the end of the Boar Wars in South Africa as being the beginning of a slump. The iron trade 'soon had its inevitable slump, and Furness in 1908, knew a severe depression.'
The stability of the local agricultural interests cushioned Urswick and its surrounding area from its effects. Birkett states that ' the farmer was not prospering anywhere, but the local farmer, who depended chiefly on stock-raising, did not feel the depression as did his fellows in other parts, whose main interest was in grain.'

The First World War saw many people drawn to Barrow for the building of the Dreadnoughts and armaments, and the area remained relatively safe- and increasingly prosperous.
As Birkett said, 'the war, then, meant for most local people more money, higher prices, a few restrictions, and a growing shortage of food'.
Inevitably, after a brief post-war boom, as many of those who had come into the district then left again, there was a general slump first in the iron trade, followed by farming, and then in general business, too.
Villagers mourned their casualties of war, but were otherwise largely unaffected.
We have no direct evidence from Urswick but the following comment is perhaps not untypical of the area:
'The war seems to have had little effect on the village – life went on in the parish much as it had done until world war one. In fact just reading the Parish Council records it seemed as though it had almost never happened' (Witherslack, Meathop and Ulpha).

Reverend Postlethwaite was a prolific writer during his time at Urswick, of which more later. In a handwritten exercise book with the grand title **'Confessions of a Country Parson and notes on Urswick Church and Parish written to my successor-but-one. For his use and benefit',** he begins by making reference to the First World War.
He writes, in 1917, 'We are in the thick of a great war. Some of the village lads have already given their lives for their country.
Arthur Leviston-one of the first-the son and only son of the Blacksmith.
James Pitt Pladdy in a Canadian contingent. Willie Hall was 'missing'- a happy dare-devil lad, from a family of some position, note, landowners and weavers, who let their resources dwindle little by little till they were content with a labourer's lot and a prospective old age provision.
Jack Hird- a village scamp; Joe Remmington, who left a young wife....'

In **October 1921** a service was held at the church to celebrate the **'Unveiling & Dedication of the War Memorial'** by the Rt.Hon. The Lord Richard Cavendish, C.B., C.M.G. and Dedicated by the Rt. Rev. The Lord Bishop of Barrow-in-Furness.
The ceremony included the firing of several volleys by a party of the 4th K.O.B.R. The names of the fallen were listed as follows:

G.Armer	G.Hastings	J.Pittpladdy
G.Barrow	R.Helm	W.Poole
J.Baycliff	J.Hird	J.Procter
J.Churchman	C.S.Jackson	J.Remmington
R.Edmondson	J.P.Jones	J.P.Slater
J.J.Fisher	A.Leviston	T.Smith
A.B.Frost	S.Line	W.Trenouth
W.J.Hall	W.D.Mossop	R.Walker
E.I.Harrison	S.Oliver	J.M.Wilkinson

For the Church in general, **1921** was a significant year because this saw the passing of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1921 Act in succession to the vestries and Vestry Meetings, which required the setting up of elected Church Councils.

For the diocese of Carlisle, 1921 also brought a new Bishop, Dr. Williams, considered by many to be a 'High Churchman' unlike his predecessor, Dr. Diggle, who had by all accounts

‘made himself unpopular by his attacks upon the Anglo-Catholics.’
Dr. Williams wrote in the Diocesan Gazette that ‘one hundred years ago men in England had a great vision vouchsafed to them of the Holy, Catholic Church.....
That movement (the Oxford Movement) begun a hundred years ago, has transformed the outward appearance of our churches; it has added a new dignity to our worship, and generally enriched our corporate life. But you will still seek for the deepest and truest results of that great movement, not so much in outward order as in a fuller realisation of the Church’s sacramental teaching,’

Harper writing in 1966 in his ‘Story Of The Lakeland Diocese 1933-66’ comments that ‘if we are to take one of the Oxford Movement’s effects what, the Bishop describes as “the outward appearance of our churches”, then we may note that the record of faculties granted up till the Second World War shows the frequent introduction of Altar crosses and candlesticks’.

It was said that when Dr. Williams came to the Diocese (1921) it was known as a Low Church Diocese, **possibly the most Low Church diocese in the country**; clearly his elevated view of the Oxford Movement was not universally popular, not least in Urswick!

Postlethwaite’s ‘Confessions of a Country Parson’, introduced above, was completed after he ceased to be Vicar of Urswick, probably in 1927 or even early 1928, as his disparaging comments about his successor (Lynch) show.
In fact, he had difficulties with some of the earlier leadership and had little time for his predecessor (Billinge) either.
He wrote:
‘Most men are jealous of their predecessors. I am not. I pity mine, though he caused me some inconveniences. I pity him because I have to experience some of the trials he had to undergo..... he had an impossible wife and a still more impossible sister-in-law.
The cult of the parish was tea parties, with the school-master’s wife in bib and tucker fluttering about with an inane giggle. He, my predecessor, was hopelessly Mid-Victorian; possibly by time these notes are read, if they will be read, the Mid-Victorian years may be regarded as a Golden Age.
Really they were hopelessly prosaic, I mean hopelessly prosaic in church matters than in anything else. The Harvest Festival- the feast of St. Pumpkin, the local ‘Times’ called it- was the great gathering day of the year.’

He then turned his attention to others in the church leadership:

‘I found the people here, the leaders, when I came, Athenians. They talked. They talked of grandiose plans from Church Restoration to other matters. They talked very sagely. They talked. But they never <u>did.</u>
Meanwhile for all their talk the Church leaked at every seam....
There was one same man in the parish, who did not talk, also he did not, or rather, forcibly,

he did not let other people do.
He was Malachi James Cranke, a man of an older school, of a family... local fame.
He had a mind stored with tradition of the past, and harked back to a period far more austere than the Mid-Victorian. One might almost have called him Jacobean.
"Mr. Cranke will not allow it" was the wail of the Athenians when greeted with the reproach that their talk lead to nothing.'

The following extract illustrates the loneliness and perhaps the mental tiredness of Postlethwaite and is almost certainly written in the latter months of his life:

'I live so much alone that nobody really knows much of my life.
They think they do, that is the Athenians. What they do not know they insert, and they have..... investigations.
To the Boeotians at times I partly reveal myself. But the revelation does not greatly interest them, they are content to accept the obvious.
If my ministry goes down to posterity- and there is no reason why it should- I shall be dismissed with the adjective 'excentric' (sic). I am not particularly 'excentric' not in the way the Athenians employ the term.
There is no excentricity in despising their ham sandwich tea parties, refusing to recognise their superlative merits, or subsuming to their inflated pomposity. I may be excentric in other ways. In fact I am, judging from the world's standard, more or less mad. In any case, this madness has been responsible for the restoration of the Church, as far as it has gone.
My immediate successor has, I know, hated my restrictions.
He has been, I feel sure, an Athenian of the Athenians. He may have spoilt some of them, though I have done the best I could to protect them by 'faculties'.

My 'ideas' have been behind them all.
I wish to give due credit to the architect, Mr. Brundritt, to the meritorious carver, Alec Miller, to the craftsman Robert Jackson, journey-man and head piece in the shop of the immaculate and ale-wise village carpenter, whose belonging will undoubtedly claim for him an increasing shine in the work.
If he outlives me, and it seems more than probable that he will, he will pose in the reign of my successor as the man who restored the Church, but whose design and workmanship were tempered by the Bodleian tests of my humble self.
But in reality he did nothing further than receive the 'brass' and a plenteous supply of that.

But when all due credit is given to the actual workers, I beg most humbly to claim just credit for the ideas, the form or fashion of each piece of work the inspiration. The love for the Church has become with me a passion.'

Note: Athenians were known to be great debaters and philosophers but not known for making decisions or taking action. Boeotians according to the Oxford Dictionary refers to crass or dull persons, f. Boeotia in ancient Greece, proverbial for stupidity of inhabitants.

Postlethwaite then commented on each piece of the restoration work and 'furniture' in some detail and again it is worthy of extensive reporting because it provides additional insights not least into the man himself:

'I am unconventional - I am responsible for the figure of the **'Palmer'** (**pilgrim returning from the Holy Land with palm branch or leaf)**, the erstwhile who brought the Tarn in vengeance - a conventional man would have demanded a Biblical saint.
Here we should reference back to the 'Legend of the Tarn'.
Postlethwaite's 'confession' flies in the face of our 'preferred option' of the figure being that of St. James of Compostella and perhaps even questions the motivation for the figure of John the Baptist on the opposite side- did Postlethwaite see himself as 'someone crying in the wilderness'?

Alec Miller's carving of the 'Palmer' formerly believed to have been St. James of Compostella

He goes on:
'I am responsible for the twin patronal saints on the reredos; the architect suggests "pelicans" as supporters!
I am responsible for the cherubs' hands in heir of 'bosses'. For the little lassie's head and the little lad's head espying the drops- look at the boy's features, he knows nothing cares for nothing. Look at the girl's head, look at her expression. She has an 'live' knowledge of the wickedness of the world, immature but developed significantly to share mother's anxieties.

To be horrored when father comes home drunk on Saturday night with depleted wages, and there is the score at the village grocer's to be settled.
David's sandals on the organ were an infusion and his pan-pipes in heir of the conventional harp.
The youthful aged St. Mary on the Annunciation's door.

I may be satisfied, but what matters it. I am dead, and a live dog is better than a dead lion. In life, I was not even a lion, but a humble individual who showered love on people many of whom were unreceptive of love; they wanted admiration, and this could not honestly be bestowed.'

Postlethwaite continues:
'The new Sanctuary Chair was wrought and provided by Robert Jackson, "my man" of the immaculate and ale-wise village carpenter. Another has been in the Church, the gift of Mrs. Petty of Well house as recorded in the Church books. The other I bought at Malachi Cranke's sale.
It had belonged to a defunct churchwarden Cooper Penny, a man apparently of unsavoury reputation, but possibly as good, or as bad, as the rest of us.
Miss Petty, the bountiful, gave the reredos, the organ and case- the pipes of the old organ were incorporated in the new one. She gave the sand and lime lining for the walls of the Chancel, the oak ceiling, the paving to the floor of Sanctuary and Chancel, the Choir stalls, the Rood beam.
Mr. and Lady Weywell gave the lamps. C.J. Chapman gave the wood for the Litany Desk, we paid for its making.'

He made particular comment about the fact that 'the children gave the **Epiphany Credence Table and the little silver water cruet'** and reflected 'How your predecessor did hate those water babies and water lilies on it. His Athenian soul revolted against the Neo-paganism of it. My Mid- Victorian predecessor once came to inspect the Church. He sniffed, "Not very ecclesiastical".
He had no power to do anything but sniff; your predecessor alas! May have had the power, or may have taken it, and may have used it.'

Another little 'aside': 'I had the candles burning one day when a parson a rabid Protestant of the ultra- Peache-Trust School came down to take a funeral.
Poor man!'

He explained that Miss Petty 'is ancestrally of the parish. Her family burying place is in our Churchyard, and her mother a Fell of Fellmount, Pennington, who of the class of the Fells of Redmayne Hall, Lords of a tiny Manor. Her mother was my grandfather's cousin- work out the relationship. She was nearer a kin to Malachi Cranke. So she came as a benefactor who was no interloper'.

‘By-the-by,’ he continues, ‘the oak of the reredos was grown in the parish, and the trees had actually been transplanted by Malachi Cranke in his younger days.’

He then returns to his list of carvings:
‘In reference to the little figures on the Choir Stalls- the musical cherubs we may call them; a village wise-ache when they were shown him remarked: “I call them nowt but lile Israelites.” Picture the stern disapproval of his Protestant face. Of course the Athenians cheered his judgment to the echo.
It was the parson’s duty to please each and every!
Small chance in such a case ever to restore the Church.
The man is dead now and well-nigh forgotten but his remarks would have been an eagerly grasped excuse to the Athenians for their energies to end in .....talk.

We stripped the walls of their plaster within, and their rough cast without. The plaster was beloved by the immaculate and ale-wise village joiner. Time and again he smeared it with a coat of ‘colour wash’ at a cost to the parish of something like 10£.
We took away the ceiling, or false roof, and unveiled the fine old oak beams. Note the initials and the date on the eastern-most beam, especially the ‘J.A. Esquire’, i.e. James Anderton of Bardsea Hall.
So dry were the beams when the ceiling was down that they sucked up 20 gallons of oil at 5/- a gallon.

Mrs. Pickthall caused the bells to be re-hung and the treble one to be recast in memory of her husband.
Much of the old oak from the beams was utilised in the restoration. The Altar Rails were entirely made from it. Miss Petty bore the cost of construction.
The poor parson gave some old brass candle-sticks for the vestry on All Hallows Eve the Day subsequent to his humble birthday. They replaced two decaying Mid-Victorian, German-made ones.

Myles Sleigh gave the carved oak door, the parson devised the inscription and outline.

A jolly sight too much of the parson in all this you will say, but it cannot be helped. He really figured largely in the restoration- uncomplaining he took the blame, but let him have some post-humus honour.’

Final comments from Postlethwaite:

‘A local lawyer talks of a farmer client:
‘How’s your parson getting on?’
‘Nay, why the man’s clear daft!’
‘What’s he been doing now?’
‘Why, he’s made the Church like a girt Hoghouse.’

A saying also recorded by Postlethwaite:
A local farmer when asked what he was going to make of his son, replied, “If he grows up a nice bright lad I’ll make a farmer of him, but if he continues as dull as he is at present he’ll have to be a parson!”

Postlethwaite’s papers which were held by Kendal & Fisher (Solicitors) of Ulverston were described as having amongst them many in relation to his antiquarian interests rather than his own estate hence their disparate nature.
Many are badly damaged and almost illegible.
The list included a bundle of miscellaneous essays and notes, short stories like ‘How Dick Dobbs made his fortune’ and ‘Love in a Trunk’ and ‘The Adventures of Mr. Lampwick.’
He wrote a novel called ‘Betty’ which was published locally at his own expense; the publisher required £40. Three other book drafts were found, ‘The Madness of the Mainingways’, ‘The Quest of the Golden Bodkin’ and ‘The Shorecliffe Inquest’.
He also left some notes on ‘Lay activity in the Church of England’.

A note amongst those in preparation for the ‘millenium publication’ showed that he had also written two other novels entitled ‘Son of a Strange Woman’ and ‘The Royalist Knight’.

A fitting memorial to Reverend Postlethwaite, a carved oak board bearing the names of former Vicars of Urswick, was placed on the south wall in the Chancel. The inscription reads:-

IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF
THOMAS NORTON POSTLETHWAITE. BA.
VICAR OF URSWICK 1903-1926
THIS LIST OF VICARS OF URSWICK IS ERECTED
IN FULFILMENT OF HIS INTENTION

Postlethwaite was neither the first nor the last to have some difficulty with certain sections of the Urswick community.

CHAPTER TEN

They also serve...

Reverend Alfred Lynch, as Vicar of Urswick, chaired his first Meeting of the Land Owners on 29th **September 1927** when agreement was reached to accept a tender for £350 for the sale of the old Vicarage.

Nationally, calls for a revision of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer had begun before 1914 but when a revised version was presented in 1928 it was rejected by the House of Commons (but still introduced in some churches).
In September 1929 Urswick Parochial Church Council agreed to purchase 50 copies of the Revised Prayer Book for use at Urswick and a further 18 copies for the Stainton Mission, this after the Vicar, Reverend Alfred Lynch, had given a detailed explanation.

During 1927 the Parochial Church Council had met 'to consider the question of a new Vicarage' and agreed to sell the old one. They agreed in conjunction with the Bishop of Barrow to attempt to raise £100 and to seek the required authority 'to obtain if possible authority to erect a Vicarage suitable for present needs.'
The new Vicarage was dedicated by the Bishop of Barrow on 28th September, 1928.

In 1928 the Church Council deferred the question of electric light in the church.

They agreed to the printing and purchase of 1,000 copies of a leaflet about the Church. The previous year they had been persuaded by the 'new' vicar to adopt a Magazine for the Parish and to purchase 160 copies of 'Home Words'; the members of the Church Council would distribute the magazine.

They also 'proposed that the whole of the Diocesan Quota and Church Assembly Fund be paid this year.'

By 1930 the Church Council was taking responsibility for the organisation of 'fund-raising' events and proposed a Whist Drive and Dance to be held on Easter Monday.

A lot of the time spent by the Parochial Church Council at Meetings concerned discussion about repairs and maintenance of the fabric of the building and the care and upkeep of the churchyard, and increasingly, the finances of the parish, in particular the giving by the regular congregation.

Lighter moments are also recorded, for example, the problems the Vicar was having in controlling his Organist!
The Minutes for the meeting of April 1930 recorded that: 'The Parish Church Council deeply deplores the indiscretion of the organist in convening a meeting of Church workers in opposition to the Vicar's wish expressed to him that such a meeting should not be called, and hopes that no such similar action will be taken in future'. The organist obviously

survived the reprimand and in March 1932 obtained an increase in his annual salary from £15 to £17-10-0.
In September 1932 the Church Council resolved that 'a letter should be written to the organist as from the whole Church Council, that observations had been made on his conduct and to ask him to refrain from leaving the church and going into the vestry during the sermon'.

The October 1934 Meeting of the Church Council confirmed the appointment of the **Reverend George Humphriss as Vicar**. The following resolution was proposed:-

'that this Council approves the appointment made by the Patrons of the Revd. G. J. Humphriss to the Benefice of Urswick to be vacated by the Revd. A. Lynch.'

In November they were dealing with the resignation of the organist, Mr. Edmondson, who clearly didn't relish training yet another cleric!

Reverend Humphriss quickly made his priorities known. At his first Council Meeting in December he 'dealt with many topics and especially mentioned the need for loyal co-operation under definite leadership in worship and work'.

In the Parish Magazine of the same month he introduced himself and Mrs. Humphriss, informing parishioners that prior to this appointment 'we have been engaged in very heavy work for some time past in industrial parishes' and then stated, 'I do not know anything about your attendance at Church and the services you are accustomed to have, but I feel very strongly that these matters are of the utmost importance. If you already attend your Parish Church for regular Public Worship, I ask you to continue; if you belong to that body of people which puts in an occasional attendance, then I ask you to think about the matter seriously.'

It was recorded by the Church Secretary that the Chairman (vicar) referred to the paucity of Documents and appealed for help in his endeavour to recover any available documents which should be in his care'.
A note was added to the effect that 'information had come to hand from Mr. J. Dobson for the Vicar, that over 50 years ago a box of moulding documents had been discovered but owing to the extreme condition of the same it had been necessary to have them destroyed'.

By February 1935 the Vicar was encouraged by the slowly increasing church attendance "but I am really disturbed by the poor attendance at Holy Communion."
After Easter he was able to write that 'I have looked back in the records and have failed to find an occasion when there were 132 communicants on Easter Day previously'.

Humphriss was not afraid to express an opinion and in the July Magazine of that year 'addressed a few words to the young people of our parish' and then stated that 'I am greatly concerned by the use of 'bad language' in this district by our young folk.'

At the Church Council Meeting in June he asked if the Church Council had ever considered the question of taking the doors off the pews in the Church. As any regular Anglican could tell you, you can change many things in a church building, but don't suggest removing pews! It was recorded that 'it was the general opinion of the Council that such an action would spoil the appearance of the interior of the church'!

His real interest was in what today one would call 'outreach' and he quickly introduced a number of regular 'social events'.
There was to be an 'American Tea' followed by an Evening Social for the whole family and there would be regular monthly Social Evenings from October to February, these to be 'open socials' with Games, Songs, Dances, etc., for one month and a Whist Drive for the other.
Then there would be the Christmas Party and Concert and the Shrove Tuesday Social. The Women's Fellowship was to be re-started.

At the end of his first year he wrote that 'most of the time has been spent in the study of your ways and outlook. I have found you rather different from the types of people that I have worked amongst hitherto. I expect you have found me different from other vicars who have served in this parish'.

George Humphriss wrote a brief 'visitor's guide' to Urswick Church in which he acknowledged that 'the church owes much of its beauty to the care and skill of the late Vicar, Rev. T. N. Postlethwaite, and to those who, from a monetary point of view, made renewal and restoration possible'. 'It is pleasing to record', he went on, 'that all our useful and beautiful gifts are not of the past alone. The Hymn and Psalm Boards and the Literature Table by local craftsmen, which are so much of a piece in style and beauty with the other oakwork, were given by parishioners in 1927, as were the pulpit Stair Carpet and the antique Oak Book Box. A parishioner and the Grammar School Children added the old Bible and the Literature Rack respectively in 1928.'

And then the appeal:
'May we conclude by referring to a task that lies ahead of us- the re-seating of the church. The seats in the majority of the pews are painfully uncomfortable. The flooring of them consists of loose clattering planks.
Kneeling is an impossibility.
We see a vision of oak seats in keeping.
Perhaps some visitor may be sufficiently blessed with this world's goods and interested enough to help us to realise our vision.'

For the first time there seems to have been an initiative for Evangelism in the Diocese; that was in 1936.
In January's Magazine Mr. Humphriss once again admonished his flock:

‘Many of you who profess to be religious do not set a very good example in the matter of regularity in worship’.

John Dobson, who had been the Headmaster at Urswick Grammar School from 1876 until 1920 and then continued to serve the parish as churchwarden, **died in June 1936**.
An L-shaped bench was placed in the Baptistry as a gift from his family, old scholars and friends in his memory.
Legend has it that requested that he be buried under the Church wall adjacent to the road that leads from Great Urswick to the school ‘so that he could hear the children walking to school’. His daughter was to become Headteacher in the late 1940’s; Geoffrey Ellerey in his book *‘The Life and Times of an Ossick Lad’* published in 2010 described her as having a ‘discoloured, piebald right eye which sometimes became a distraction, especially when you came into face-to-face contact when she was doubting and questioning you.’

In August 1937 it was recorded that ‘in connection with the Bishop’s Appeal the Vicar reported that he intended organising a Study Circle particulars of which he gave and it was agreed that they should be commenced as arranged.’

In September’s Magazine the Vicar wrote that ‘A start has been made with the Study Circle. The attendance was good, but the Officers of the Church were not very much in evidence.

On Saturday 18th March 1939 the local ‘News’ published an article by Revd. Humphriss entitled ‘*The Churches and Critics’*.
In it he wrote that ‘It is true that large sections of the community have granted to God a “holiday without pay”. In fact, we have come near to telling Him that His services can be dispensed with, except on occasions when the business of anxiety demands that we shall recall Him to assist us.’
He continued, ‘It is inconceivable that man has really fallen out with God, but it is a fact that many have fallen out with the expression and performance of the Will of God by His representatives.
Surely this is the first matter which needs immediate attention.
The Churches cannot lead the people into the land of promise, whilst they themselves are content to dwell in the wilderness.’
Whilst it was popular to blame the parson it was also the fault of the critics who were ‘ever ready to assign the blame’.
He called them four-wheel Christians- bassinette at Baptism- motor at marriage- and bier at burial. ‘If only they would take the trouble to understand religion as they do to master their wireless sets, they would very quickly discover that without religion in their lives one of their three valves was not working.’

Urswick had its own Mission from Sunday 26th March until Monday 3rd April 1939 which included special ‘Gospel Services’, ‘Men’s Services’ and a final ‘Mission Service’.
Revd. Humphriss wrote that ‘The Parish of Urswick is not apathetic to the Missionary call,

neither are we deeply interested as we should be', but even this was over-shadowed by the events on the world stage as war loomed once again.

In the October Magazine Mr. Humphriss wrote:
'I must say a word about the Evacuees.
First, a word of welcome to all who have come to our parish. We know that your health will benefit from your stay here. Already I know that you feel that people of the parish have done their best to make you feel welcome.
I need hardly say that we shall be pleased to see you in some place of worship.'

Geoffrey Ellerey wrote that 'The village also had an intake of evacuees from the Salford area of Manchester who were allocated to certain houses and hosts in the village although I only have a vague memory of them. They were accepted into village life and they were involved in the spirit of the village, although there may have been one or two villagers who would not accept them as part of us but they were in the minority.'

Among the papers associated with Urswick at the Barrow Records Office is a type-written poem entitled *'The Ossik Way' written on Urswick Vicarage notepaper* but undated.
The type itself would suggest the period around the 1940's and one wonders if the opening lines might indicate that it could have been written by an evacuee.

It's not particularly good as literature but it is part of the character and story of Urswick and therefore perhaps should be included:

<u>The Ossik Way</u>

All to Ossik we came a crowd,
We dropt to earth from a fleecy cloud,
Some from a-far and some from near,
And we've learnt all the tricks of the people here.

For now we've got into the Ossik way,
We know their work and we know their play,
We can tell folk's doings and what they say,
For we've got into the Ossik way.

This our friend from Barrow town,
A footer captain of great renown,
Played in a scientific style,
With a gentle nod and a pleasing smile.

But now he's got into the Ossik way,
He went off to Bardsea the other day,
And rough it wasn't the word for his play.
He has adopted the Ossik way.

This little lass is a country maid,
She lives on a farm where eggs are laid.
She is famous at making pies,
And also for drooping her lovely eyes.

But now she's got into the Ossik way,
This little lass with eyes of grey,
Only droops one at a time they say,
For she's got into the Ossik way.

Our friend Dandy commenced to churn,
Gave to the barrel many a turn,
Through the air made the handle hum,
But never a whit would the butter come.

It was a joke in the Ossik way,
The morning before had been washing day,
Filled with suds was the churn they say,
Butter won't come in that Ossik way.

Eleanor Jane a shopping went,
Too soon her last penny piece was spent,
Found that she had forgotten to buy,
Her flour, lard and eggs for the Sunday pie.

So she baked her pie in the Ossik way,
Beefsteak and potatoes et cateray,
But never a crust to over it lay,
It was a pie a la Ossik way.

In the December issue the Vicar wrote that 'Even now, as we are told that our country is fighting on a moral issue, the moral life of the Nation is being sapped away by the desecration of the Lord's Day, and by the permitting of much suggestive entertainment in the illustrated papers, and the veiled jokes of some broadcasting comedians.
I am not a narrow-minded kill-joy.
I recognise the need for healthy recreation and entertainment, but if we are still to claim to be a Christian Nation then we must show to the world that our Christianity is no mere cloak of respectability.'

In January 1940 he wrote that 'I must refer to the lapse in Church attendance in our parish' and conceded that 'the revised hour of service may partly be the cause in some cases.'

The February edition made reference to the harsh weather: 'none of us will remember such severe weather, and January 1940 will long be spoken of as the most winterly month for many years'. He wrote that 'we at the vicarage have been perhaps more isolated than those of you who live in the villages, for the road between Great and Little Urswick has been almost impassable.'

All was not well in the parish, though, because in August he had to refer to the issue of who sits where in church and reminded his flock that all pews were now 'free' and anyone could sit wherever they wished:
'I hope that our new friends will feel perfectly free and very much "at-home" in our midst. Further, may I say that it will be my privilege to be of any assistance to those who, through circumstances beyond their control, have come to reside in the parish.
No doubt the "Churchmanship" will differ from that which some are accustomed but I trust that in spite of this it will be possible for our form of Service to be appreciated as a means of Grace'.
There were 'a goodly number of "Visitors" in our midst'.

Reviewing his ministry in the parish having now served for seven years, George Humphriss wrote with feeling that 'I am fully aware of the fact that to some people I am unacceptable; in fact that attitude was adopted by some long before they had seen or spoken to me.
It was a queer expression of what they believed to be Christian charity and which I have never been able to understand.'
He mused, 'I am sure that many of our loyal members are totally unaware that there are difficulties attached to the office of Vicar of Urswick.'

This seemed to a continual drain on him.
In April 1943 he wrote 'I have made a start on cleaning much of the rubbish away in the Churchyard extension, but it is a lonely job being on one's own.'
He seems to have been unable to engage with the wider community and working men in particular.

In May he stated that 'The Parson happens to be the one who has been appointed with authority and responsibility to direct the welfare of the Church in any given parish.
We may not like him as a person, but if he is fulfilling his duties to the best of his abilities, then loyal support should not be withheld.
If differences of opinion should arise, then the right thing to do is to talk matters over with the person; not with the gossipers of the parish.
Perhaps with the best intentions in the world a comment is made in the wrong quarter and before long it has developed into actionable slander.'

Reviewing ten years as Vicar in the parish in December, 1944, once again he commented that 'I cannot say from the attendance in Church, that my work has been crowned with success. It is true that much has been accomplished and much left undone; it is equally true that from some quarters I have received help, and from others hindrance.
But this is not for me to judge.
All that has been done has been intended for the Glory of God, and even if it has been difficult at times to understand the sneers and inhospitality from some quarters, none the less I shall continue to be faithful to my calling whilst I am with you.'

And then the 'sting in the tail':
'Looking back at the records I find that I am in the good company of many of your past Vicars in finding appreciation is not a strong part of the people of this district'!

George Humphriss was increasingly fighting another 'battle', this time with his own deteriorating health. He had actively served throughout the First Great War and as he said, had ministered in some tough urban parishes prior to coming to Urswick.
We do not know the details of his affliction but at a Church Council Meeting arranged for 23rd April, 1945 it was recorded that 'The Vicar reported that the Medical Adviser of the Pensions Board had decided that in view of the medical Report received from the Doctors concerned he was now permanently disabled. In view of this a resignation from the living of Urswick had been tendered to the Bishop of Carlisle to take effect on July 30th, 1945.'

At a Meeting of the Landowners with the Diocesan Guidelines to hand it was moved that 'in view of the changed circumstances of parochial life, and with the fuller consideration of the welfare of the Church in Urswick, it is the decision of the Resident Landowners, being the undoubted Patrons of the living, that the Right of Presentation be transferred to the Parochial Church Council for the time being. This decision to take effect after the present appointment has been made.'
They then proposed the setting up of a Committee comprising of 5 Patrons (elected by ballot) and 4 Churchwardens to begin the search for a suitable candidate. They decided that candidates should be men with the following qualifications:

Married
Not to exceed 45 years of age.
Previously to have held an appointment as Incumbent.
To hold views which were not representative of extreme churchmanship.
To give preference to ex-Chaplains to the Forces who had returned from Active Service.

They requested 2 names to be submitted each from :

Bishop of Carlisle
Rural Dean of Ulverston
Vicar of Urswick.

On 12th November 1945 a Church Council Meeting was arranged to meet the **new Vicar, the Reverend Malcolm Douglas Grieve. MA.**

According to local author Geoffrey Ellerey this appointment was a success and Reverend Grieve became a popular figure in the village.
He writes fondly of the arrival of the Reverend Grieve who initiated the setting up of cubs and scouts in the village, and describes him as someone who was 'also a big contributor to the church school and a lot of associated activities involving the church, the school and village life'. He indicated that Mr. Grieve came to the parish directly after the aftermath of war and had a vision to help the youth. 'Although classed as "high" church he had a sincere interest in the parish and its inhabitants.' He then went on to say that 'The church and its associated activities provided a core base and encompassed the theme of village life for me and many other children. In my early years it was conventional to attend Sunday school...' and then adds 'I didn't attend Sunday school out of choice but more because of parent and peer pressure, but once there it was a good social get-together.'

The village was well suited to social and other activities, having the Sunday school building next to the church, the Recreational Hall built in 1929 on land donated by a local farmer, George Stables, which is between the church and the Grammar School in Little Urswick, and also the 'Reading Room'; this was, says Elleray, for much older people and was used by them for playing cards, crib, and billiards- 'and the playing of the odd gramophone and radio was permitted too.'

Reverend Grieve, in consultation with the villagers, agreed to set up a troop of Sea Scouts and had three patrols of 8 boys aged between 11 and 18, although most were about 14 or 15. One of the proficiency badges worked for was the 'Astronomer' badge, helped no end by the fact that Mr. Grieve had a telescope set up on the Vicarage lawn!

There had to be a 'down side' and again Elleray is helpful where he admits that although he enjoyed being involved in village life even after having gone to school in Ulverston, enjoyed being a server at the church, and attended church on a regular basis, 'I had difficulty in comprehending the sermons and the preaching. The vicar was rather high church and I was lost by his imaginative and rhetorical style. It seemed insincere at times, but to be a good story. I enjoyed the congregation style of singing hymns as well as the organ music.'

In January 1963 the Parochial Church Council offered 'sincere congratulations to the Vicar 'on his honour of an Honorary Canonry of Carlisle Cathedral'.

Geoffrey Ellerey provides a few 'snap shots' of village and church life in the mid-1940's. He writes about the threshing day at the farm opposite the Derby Arms when the thresher,

owned and run by Edward Garnett which visited the farm as he did others around the area; he pictured the noise and the dirt and the dust and the vermin scurrying about. His earlier clear memories were of walking to school with a group of children from the village. 'The road meandered and passed sites of village life, farm entrances usually covered by cow dung, grass and hay seeds, as well as gardens, orchards, a stately home, pubs, the village shop, the church and the tarns. The main tarn is approximately a quarter mile long and an eighth wide. There were two smaller tarns, one in the field opposite the vicarage, called "Scriflates", and the other in the field between the recreation hall and Hooks Lane. Over the years both of these were filled in following accidental deaths but in periods of heavy rainfall water still collects there.'

Elleray writes of Bankfield being converted into a convalescent home for boys from Liverpool and Merseyside in the late 1940's. He relates how Mr. Ratty, who was in charge of the home, would arrange sporting events and football matches with the boys from the village. The records show that after the 1939-45 war the Merseyside Hospitals Council purchased Bankfield and the immediate surrounding grounds for £5,750 for use as a convalescent home for boys, and it was thus used until 1956. 'The isolated situation away from Merseyside, evoked some criticism from the parents of the boys, as visiting was difficult and when the re-assessment was made and the rateable value considerably increased, the board decided to close the house, and put Bankfield up for sale'. It was purchased by Messers Vickers-Armstrong on 1st December, 1956.

Whilst Elleray lived in a house with 'all the current modern facilities' he contrasted this with some who lived in houses without electricity or running water and with earthen toilets at the rear of the house. Water was collected from a communal pump.

In the village he refers to the 'General Burgoyne' as a popular meeting place, also the smithy where Jimmy Newby the blacksmith used to shoe horses on a regular basis. Other tradesmen were mentioned:- Mr. Ashburner, coachbuilder and wheelwright; Ernest Sawery, joiner and undertaker; Harold Wood, butcher with his own slaughter house; John Stephenson, butcher; the Miss Muggletons, two sisters who ran a small wooden shop and Post Office; Len Garnett, joiner; Harry Stables and Mr. Stubbs, both builders.

Whilst Elleray's comments are helpful regarding the local scene, there was a report prepared by the Statistical Unit of the Church Assembly in about 1950 which indicated 'what has been happening to religion and the Church in England' (Harper, 1966). Harper observed that whilst a general survey cannot be wholly typical of the Carlisle Diocese 'it is largely a matter of degree'. He reported on a survey in York by Seeborn Rowntree which showed that 'one man in four and one woman in five held no religious belief'. Of those claiming to be Christians, six per cent went to a place of worship once a week; nine per cent did so less frequently, but regularly; nine per cent attended irregularly. He also chose to 'throw in for good measure, because it sticks in the mind, that Mass Observation reported in 1947 that forty-six per cent of those claiming the label C.of E. did not believe in life after death.'

Harper mused that 'It is hard to believe that those with no vital connection with the Church will for ever go on supporting it, especially as we move into "the third and fourth generation" and its tags "humanist" and "secularist" become more and more acceptable.' However, evangelism was still 'to the fore' in the Diocese and Harper reported that in 1955 missions of various kinds became a feature after something of a lull.'

The publication of Geoffrey Elleray's autobiography in 2010 is a clear reminder that we are now within the realms of 'living memory' and at least some of the characters and personalities he writes about are still very much alive!
A second book by William (Bill) Alty entitled 'Fore and Aft' also published in 2010 makes some reference to Urswick and its church, and again some objectivity- and the benefit of distance in terms of time passing – is perhaps called for before events can fit into a more 'settled' and wider context.

The Church, both the local one, and the wider church, has undergone further significant changes in its organisation in the last 50 years and this too would benefit from a period of reflection before judgments are made.
For example, the ecclesiastical parish of Urswick became 'held in plurality' with Bardsea in 1975 under the Diocesan re-organisation policy. This was not the 'mother/daughter' church relationship of the early Victorian period because there was now a high degree of autonomy enjoyed by both. There were, of course, shared activities and services from time to time and the Vicar became "Vicar of the Parish of St. Mary and St. Michael, Urswick and of the Parish of Holy Trinity, Bardsea" with the Vicarage remaining at Urswick.

This was the first of several 'reorganisations' as a result of reductions in clergy numbers, and other factors.
The present Vicar has responsibility for the four parishes of Aldingham, Dendron, Rampside and Urswick, with Bardsea being linked with Lindal and Pennington. As I write further re-organisation is highly likely, hence the need for a longer-term perspective.

Roy Strong in his book 'A Little History Of The English Country Church' first published in 2007, whilst excellent in tracking the Church up to the beginning of the twentieth century in particular, then begins to question the future direction of the Church in the light of the growth of secularism which he describes as an "overwhelming tide" which has seen the Church of England in steep decline from the 1920's to the point where in 1979 only 11.5 percent of the population attended a church of some kind and by 2000 had declined further to 7.5 per cent. He cites the widening gap between the majority of the population and the Church over several decades and suggests that it was wildly at odds with society over attitudes towards sexual morality and divorce, and further that after the 1960's 'its influence over the young evaporated as it appeared narrow-minded, conservative and hopelessly out of touch.'

The 1960's were in many ways a 'water shed' for the Church because in the midst of the dis-location of society in all sorts of ways, there was something of an evangelical revival which slowly became rooted in many of our mainstream churches but this has also led to sharp divisions within the Church in relation to biblical truth and biblical values in an increasingly multicultural and liberal society, and that debate has still to run its course.....

All of the above has to be set against the changing nature of rural communities and villages over the years since the 1960's, and that too needs a much wider discussion. To do so here would take the focus too far away from the 'parish church' and the Ossik character which lies at the heart of this book.

So here we pause in our journey.

Note from the Author

A more in-depth study of Urswick and its Parish Church, (including a detailed analysis of the debate concerning 'Urswick Origins') entitled **'Faith, Folk And Fabric'** is available as a pdf file from the author.
If you would like a copy for further study or for research purposes please e-mail the author at:

Cnchonour@btinternet.com

Full details of research materials specific to Urswick used in this book, together with a complete Bibliography, follows.

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