

Major-General
Sir Archibald E. Harbord-Anson.

Southfield.

Silverhill.

St. Leonards-on-Sea.

Buck Schoolhouse,
Rusholme, M/c'

Nov. 2 - 1910

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The History of Birch-in-Rusholme

“Footprints on the Sands of Time.”—*Longfellow*.

The History OF Birch-in-Rusholme

Being an Account of the Birch, Dickenson and
Anson Families ;
The History of Birch Chapel and Church, etc.

Illustrated with Sixteen Photographs.

BY
J. S. BUCKLEY

LONDON :
SHERRATT & HUGHES
Manchester: 34 Cross Street
1910

THIS BOOKLET
IS DEDICATED, BY KIND PERMISSION,
TO
MRS. GEORGE HENRY GREVILLE ANSON,
OF AMBLESIDE,
WITH HAPPY MEMORIES
OF HERSELF, AND HER HUSBAND,
THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON ANSON.

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PREFACE.

THE idea of writing this booklet arose out of a request to write a short history of the Church for the Bazaar Book of 1910. It occurred to me that I might make use of my long experience at Birch, by writing a longer account of Birch, and its associations. The proceeds, if I dare hope for any, are to be given to the objects of the Bazaar, to be held in November next. It is with this purpose, and also in the hope that I may help the reader to while away an idle hour, that I take up my pen.

Mr. William Royle, in his "Rusholme Past and Present," has treated of the district more at large, and I take this opportunity of eulogising his admirable work. My object will be to confine my remarks strictly and rigidly to the parish of Birch, and to avoid the ground covered by Mr. Royle, except, of course, where our accounts slightly overlap. My thanks are due to Sir W. R. Anson and Mrs. G. H. G. Anson, of Ambleside, for their valuable assistance; to the Rector for permission to inspect the Church Records and for revising the book; to Mr. W. Royle for many photographs; to Mr. I. Taylor for hints on architecture; also a host of others, whom I have more or less consulted. In the following pages I have tried as much as

possible to exclude the personal element—I mean the names of those who have given of their time and money. One is naturally afraid of invidious distinctions. So I send this modest booklet on its mission, wishing “God speed” to our beloved Church and Parish.

J. S. BUCKLEY.

Birch Schoolhouse,
Rusholme,
September 21st, 1910.

MEMORIES OF BIRCH.

ITS OWNERS
AND
ITS ANCIENT CHAPEL.

BY
HERBERT BIRCH

[Reprinted, with additions, from the *Manchester City News* of July 4, 1896.]

1896.

DEDICATED
(by permission)

TO

THE VENERABLE GEORGE HENRY GREVILLE ANSON, M.A.,
RECTOR OF BIRCH,
HONORARY CANON OF MANCHESTER,
AND ARCHDEACON,

*In remembrance of his fifty years' residence at Birch, during forty of which he
was a valued friend of the writer's father.*

"And they declared their pedigrees, after their families."—NUM. I. 18.

MEMORIES OF BIRCH.

ITS OWNERS, AND ITS ANCIENT CHAPEL.

During the present week* there is being celebrated at Birch, in Rusholme, a festival of considerable interest, to commemorate the Jubilee of the present church of St. James, and that of its venerable and venerated rector, George Henry Greville Anson; and also the Tercentenary of the ancient chapel of Birch, around which many memories, closely associated with Old Manchester, gather themselves.

Rather more than six hundred years ago, the hamlet of Birch, then called Hyndley Birches, was conveyed by the Hathersages, lords of the manor, to Matthew de Birches, "with right of pasturage (or feeding swine) in the lord's woods, and grinding corn hopper free (or without toll) at any of the lord's mills within the manor." How different was the value of money then, may be supposed, when the consideration, or acknowledgment, for such conveyance, was "Eighteenpence at the Feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, and eighteenpence at the Feast of St. Michael" in each year!

In the hands of the Birches these lands remained from father to son, for some twenty generations, though, until the Commonwealth, but little is known of them, except that William del Birches fought at the battle of Poitiers in 1356, afterwards receiving for his military services a grant of arms, namely, three fleurs-de-lis ("the lilies of France") surmounted with a fleur-de-lis, entwined by a serpent, as crest (tradition says that he assisted in capturing the French King: hence the emblem); and that in 1415 Ralph Birche then, heir, accompanied his neighbour, Sir Nicholas de Longford, of Withington, to France, and was present at the battle of Agincourt; and that another, William, was Warden of "the College of Christ in Manchester" for a short period during the reign of Elizabeth. He was ordained by Bishop Ridley, the Martyr, and appears to have been a zealous Divine

** July 1st to 8th, 1896.*

during the two previous reigns, and Edward the Sixth appointed him one of his four Royal Preachers to proclaim the doctrines of the Reformers throughout England. During the reign of Queen Mary, William Birch lost his Cambridge Fellowship, but afterwards, in Elizabeth's reign, received the rectory of Gateshead, and subsequently the Wardenship of Manchester. This post he only held for one year, as he gave offence to the "powers that be," owing to his refusal to allow certain Court favourites to alienate college lands and revenues, and, in consequence, he surrendered his office to the University of Cambridge—a most wise and tactical step, preferring to lose his dignity and its emoluments, rather than do violence to his conscience, and he retired to his rectory at Stanhope, where he died. His deep affection for his birthplace and home, was shown by bequests to the following, amongst others, in his will,—“to twenty poor widows, or decayed artificers, in Manchester and Sawford,”—“to twenty poor maidens in Manchester toward their marriage,”—“to twenty poor scholars in Latin, in Manchester School,”—“to the poorest in Risshum, Withington and Didsbury,”—“to needful Brigs, or highways, within three miles of Byrch.” It may be remarked, that amongst the Fellows of the College, were Robert Birch, his nephew, and John Birch, his great-nephew, the latter of whom had little sympathy with Nonconformists, as Newcome charges him with “forwardness against them.”

It was not, however, until the Civil War broke out, that we find any member of the family becoming a “leader of men.” Then it was that Thomas Birch, at the age of thirty-six, who had succeeded to the family estates (which had been considerably extended, from time to time, owing to advantageous marriages), offered his sword to the Parliamentarians, and received a commission as Captain, in that Army. In 1643 he, then Major, took a vigorous part in the assault on Preston, and its capture, and Lancaster surrendered to him, for which services he was, a few months after, appointed Colonel of a foot regiment. In June, 1644, he was appointed Governor of Liverpool, after assisting to recapture it, and as such evidently commended himself, for, five years later, he was elected member of Parliament for that place, and represented it until the Restoration. His connection with Manchester

appears to have been less smooth. He was one of the Sequestrators of the College lands, and when Humphrey Chetham first made his benevolent proposal to purchase the College (at Hunt's Bank) for educational purposes, Colonel Birch alone amongst the Sequestrators (notwithstanding that his great-grandmother was a Chetham) refused his assent, until some undertaking was given that the College would be so applied. Such undue caution offended Mr. Chetham, and caused delay in carrying out the great scheme, of which he is affectionately styled "The Founder," and led to some caustic comments being inscribed on the minutes of the feoffees. One of Colonel Birch's principal acts, was his storming (with his relative, Colonel Dukenfield) the Castle of Rushen, in the Isle of Man, and receiving the surrender of that Island from the great Countess of Derby. We also find him actively associated with Colonel Henry Bradshawe (elder brother of the Lord-President), Colonel Alex. Rigby of Wigan, and other leaders, in various affairs, but his public life appears to have terminated with the Commonwealth.

About the same period, another member of the same family, Colonel John Birch of Ardwick, descended from a branch settled in Openshaw, whose descent was admitted at the Visitation in 1664, also came to the front as a Parliamentary officer. He became member for Leominster in 1646, and during the ten years he represented that place, he exhibited an independent and sagacious mind. His military services were considerable: he took responsible command of the siege of Bristol, and in conjunction with another officer captured Hereford by assault and stratagem, of which city he was made governor by the House of Commons. He afterwards stormed and took Bridgwater, and Ludlow Castle surrendered to him; and for his services he more than once received the thanks of Parliament. At the same time, Colonel John Birch was opposed to the extreme policy which led to the death of Charles the First, and with other moderate Presbyterians was imprisoned for standing by his opinions. After his release he was re-elected for Leominster, but growing suspicious of Cromwell, he appears to have not concealed his opinions, and his successor in the governorship of Hereford (in which county Colonel John Birch had acquired property), doubtless

with the view of ingratiating himself with the Protector, took him prisoner, having "sent a party to possess his moated house—which, he says, 'I find is very strong with drawbridges: it is also well provided'—lest it might be manned against Cromwell, and be a great scourge to this country." He was, however, again released, and after the Restoration sat as member for Penryn during the Long Parliament, and subsequently as member for Weobley, where he had acquired an estate. He took an active part in the rebuilding of London after the great fire of 1666, and his plan for that work was considered by Pepys, Evelyn, and others, to have been much superior to the one adopted. Practical and energetic, "honest Birch" (as Macaulay styles him) continued to serve his country in Parliament and in civil offices, until his death in 1691; his kinsman Colonel Thomas Birch, having died thirteen years previously. Soon after the Restoration the public services of the family appear to have ended, though one of Colonel Thomas Birch's younger sons, Peter (who with his twin brother Andrew, a doctor in medicine, took the oath as a "foreign" burgess at the Preston Guild of 1682, at which period the Rev. Thomas Birch, brother of Colonel John Birch, was vicar of Preston), became Prebend of Westminster and Chaplain to the House of Commons. Subsequent owners of Birch were, however, content to dwell at home, taking their share in county and local affairs.

The inhabitants of Rusholme were, previous to the seventeenth century, few in number, consisting of less than forty families, and the old chapel, doubtless built of wood, close by Birch Hall, was originally erected in Queen Elizabeth's reign as a domestic chapel by that family, for the use of themselves and their dependants and neighbours. During the Commonwealth the Rev. Robert Birch was minister of this chapel. He was the third son* of William Birch of Grindlowe, who inherited from his mother, the wife of George Birch of Birch, and daughter and heiress of John Bamford of the Holt in Withington, and Bamford in Rochdale, certain lands called "The Forty Acres in Gorton," in which township Grindlowe is situated.

*Baptised at the Coll. Church, 12th May, 1622.

Where Robert Birch was educated, is not known, but in 1655 he was married at Prestwich to Mary Hammond of Bury, by his kinsman, the Rev. Thomas Birch, Vicar of Preston (brother to Colonel John Birch), and received his preferment, probably about 1651, as minister of Birch Chapel, from his first cousin Colonel Thomas Birch of Birch. For some years, matters at this chapel had been somewhat unsettled. In 1646 the Rev. Thomas Wigan came from Gorton, where his views were not acceptable, and caused considerable annoyance to his brethren in orders, by trying to introduce Independent or Congregational views at Birch, where they met with more favour; and in this he undoubtedly had the full sympathy of his patron, Colonel Thomas Birch, who held Independent views in church matters. Mr. Wigan was a ministerial free-lance, and went afterwards to Manchester, and turned a barn at the College into a meeting-house, "where he preached doctrines diametrically opposite to the ministers' persuasion, under their very nose." He eventually exchanged from the church militant into the army, rising to the rank of major.

With the Restoration came that ecclesiastical upheaval occasioned by the "Act of Uniformity," and amongst the sturdy company of Divines who refused to conform, we find the name of Robert Birch. After a period of enforced silence, he was licensed to preach at Wilmslow in 1672, but subsequently retired to his patrimony at Grindlowe, and practised as physician and surgeon until his death in 1692, when his body was buried in the garden attached to his house at Grindlowe, his wife being interred beside him two years later. As Dr. Birch made his wife executrix, and left her full discretion as to the manner of his burial, this singular choice of sepulture, which gave rise to ghostly traditions in that locality, may have originated with her! He had four children: one a son, Eliezer, whom he educated for the Nonconformist ministry; and three daughters, one of whom married, in 1679,* Samuel Dickenson of Ardwick, and was the mother to John Dickenson, whose great-great-grandson has now ministered for fifty years on the same

*At Gorton Chapel, on Dec. 29th, 1679.

spot as his ejected ancestor, and is the central figure of interest in the present Festival. The desire of John Dickenson, who had gained a position of wealth and prominence, to acquire the home and land of his mother's family, was natural; and when, in the middle of the last century, the Birch estates passed from brother to brother thrice over, all dying unmarried, and having reverted to their cousin were then sold (the entail having been cut), he eventually secured them; and it is pleasant to know that the present owner, Sir William Reynell Anson, Bart., D.C.L. (nephew of the Archdeacon), is, through the female line, descended from the old stock, who took their name from the place more than six centuries ago.

Eliezer Birch, son of the Rev. Robert (afterwards Dr.) Birch, was educated at Dr. Frankland's notable Academy, and on entering the ministry became pastor to the numerous body of Nonconformists in the parish of Wilmslow (probably as successor to his father), and during his ministry the quaint chapel at Dean Row was built. Eliezer Birch remained at Dean Row twenty years, and married a member of the Barton family of Woodford, but his connection with that neighbourhood apparently began in his boyhood, during his father's short residence at Wilmslow. He afterwards went to Norwich, but returned in 1712 to minister at the old Cross Street Presbyterian Chapel in Manchester, then, as later, closely associated with so many of his family, and his death in 1717, called forth wide expressions of regret, for he appears to have been a preacher of exceptional ability, as well as a devoted pastor. Eliezer Birch was a witness to his father's will, and one of the executors of that of his brother-in-law Samuel Dickenson.* One of his nieces (Mary Dickenson) married the Rev. Renald Tetlaw, of Rainford, whose quaint and interesting will, disposing of a considerable library, is given in volume 3 of the new series of the Chetham Society.

The Rev. Eliezer Birch left two sons; the elder, John, of St. Mary Aldermary, London, who was a Doctor of Medicine, and died in 1729; the younger, Robert, who became an extensive merchant, and married a sister of John Lees (who inherited from his stepmother the Platt

**The wills of these three are preserved at Chester.*

estates, and took the name of Worsley), and died at Longsight Hall (formerly Grindlow), leaving a numerous family. One of these, Eliezer, met with an interesting adventure in the Pretender's camp in 1745, being arrested for a spy—a part he was in truth playing on behalf of the Hanoverians, and was immured in the house in Full Street, Derby, occupied by Prince Charles Stuart. However, his Lancashire grit stood him in stead, and he dropped out of a window and swam the river Derwent, narrowly escaping capture, and eventually reached the Duke of Cumberland's head-quarters at Stafford, with such information as he had gained. A graphic account of this is given by himself in a long letter to a friend, which was printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1817 (vol. lxxxvii. p. 404). For this service he received the Collectorship of Customs in Northumberland, a post which, while agreeable and profitable, would hardly stimulate ambition. Another of Robert Birch's sons, Jonathan, was killed a year after his marriage, by a fall from his horse, and left an only child, Robert, who married and settled at Holme Hall, Bakewell, leaving a numerous family, now represented in the male line by the present Rector of Brancaster, and in the female line by several ~~Norfolk~~ families, both in Australia and in this country.

The parent stock of the old family is also represented by the Wyrley-Birches of Norfolk, the Birch-Reynardsons of Lincolnshire, the Nowell-Birches of Oxfordshire, and the Birches of Clare Park, Hampshire.

The collateral branches of Openshaw and Ardwick are represented by the Webb-Peploes of Garnstone (a son of Bishop Peploe, of Chester, having married a niece of Colonel John Birch, the Parliamentary); and by the descendants of Josiah Birch of Failsworth Lodge (grandson of Thomas Birche of Openshaw), one of whose grandsons* ministered for more than thirty years at St. Saviour's Church, erected by his father, Scholes Birch, in what was formerly known as Chorlton Row, not far from Birch; and upon becoming Vicar of Blackburn,

**Edward Birch, afterwards Canon of Manchester, and Archdeacon of Blackburn: died August 9th, 1886.*

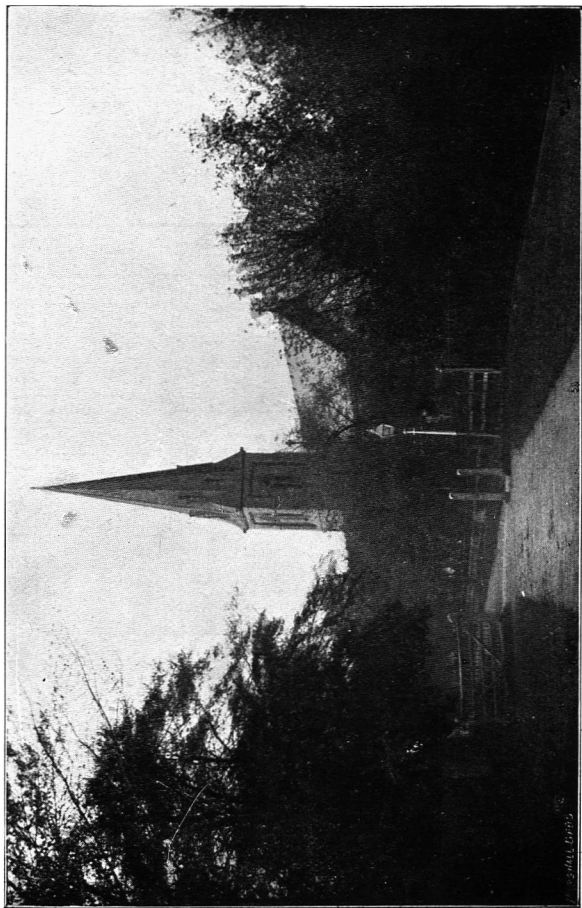
his eldest son succeeded him, thus preserving the old name in the neighbourhood of its old home.

Mr. John Dickenson lived at Birch Hall for thirty-four years, and was a considerable benefactor to the township; and he enlarged and partly rebuilt the old chapel. *He lived to the*
~~and his wife both lived to the great age of ninety, and his~~
 eldest son, John, who succeeded him, and married a daughter of Thomas Chetham of Mellor Hall (a branch of the Crumpsall Chethams), lived to eighty-four; and *his*
 eldest son, John, to eighty-five; ~~the three generations~~
 covering rather more than a century and a half. The last-named John Dickenson left an only child and heiress, who became wife to General Sir William Anson, Bart., K.C.B., and mother to, amongst others, the Archdeacon, who himself inherits the longevity of his forefathers, and, we trust, will exceed it. *He died in 1898.*

Little change took place in the hamlet of Birch until the present reign. In 1714 the whole of Rusholme, including Birch, still numbered forty families, and in 1774 it numbered only sixty-seven, consisting of 350 souls. The growth of Manchester then began to tell on Rusholme, and by 1801 the inhabitants numbered 726, and by 1831 had risen to 1,078. It was not likely, however, that such a pleasant rural spot on the sunny side of Manchester would long remain untouched. In 1841 there were 1,868 inhabitants, which number in the next decade, during which the new church was erected, and Archdeacon Anson began his ministry, *rose to 3,679. in 1846*

Even then, and for another ten years, Birch remained a peaceful retired spot, but the human tide of the great city has steadily risen, and is fast spreading over its fair meadows; and soon the pleasant Birch-Fields, the peaceful God's-Acre, and the beautiful and well-loved Rectory gardens, which have grown up under gentle skill and care, will be left a green oasis, full of memories of past days, amid the hurry and bustle of stirring life.

HERBERT BIRCH.



Birch Church.
Erected 1845-6.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIRCHES AND BIRCH HALL.

“And they declared their pedigrees, after their families.”—*Numbers*, i. 18.

(In this and the following pedigrees, the reader is referred to the genealogical tables annexed.)

THE history of Birch, or as it was first called “Hindley Birches,” takes us back to the reign of King John. Previous to 1281 the Grelles, lords of Manchester, granted the Birch lands to Matthew de Haversage. The Grelles had held the lands from the Earls of Derby, and they from the King. Matthew, son of Matthew de Haversage, conveyed the lands to Matthew, son of Matthew de Birch, for faithful services at the Crusades. The deed of conveyance gives the boundaries:—“From the Great Ditch (Nico Ditch) to Platt; Northward to the Gore Brook; up the Gore Brook to Rushford; thence following ‘le maitre-gate’ to the Great Ditch; and again along the Great Ditch to Platt.” The conveyance contained the right of feeding swine in the woods, grinding corn at any of the mills, etc., the acknowledgment for the conveyance to be 3/- per year. Birch Mill is mentioned in one of the deeds. It would be interesting to

know if any parts of the estate retain their old names—Brode Meadow, Small Meadow, Pyghele, Byrchen Wode, Wheat Croft, Calf Croft, Patriarch Oak. The oaks have nearly disappeared. The accompanying table shows that up to 1700, for eighteen generations there never failed a direct male heir to the Birch estate, in the person of the eldest son. One, Ralphe Birch, fought at Agincourt, and gained for the family a grant of arms, three fleur-de-lis. The various wills are interesting reading. Thomas, who died in 1595, married twice, and made provision for reconciling the bickerings of his wife and children. His youngest brother, William, was ordained by Bishop Ridley, the great Reformer and Martyr, and became Warden of the Collegiate Church, Manchester. Certain Court favourites wished to alienate the College revenues, so he resigned his Wardenship to the University of Cambridge, rather than violate his conscience. He retired from this turmoil to his rectory at Stanhope, Durham, where he died in 1575. He seems to have been a man of saintly character. His will contains forty-one items, and he does not forget the neighbourhood of his youth. He leaves money for mending bridges and highways three miles away from Birch, to twenty poor widows of Manchester and Salford if not unthrifty, to twenty poor maidens on their marriage, and to the poorest of Rusholme, Withington and Didsbury. Mr. Royle and Mrs. Williamson have formed the conclusion that this Thomas Birch founded Birch Chapel; but, although this may be probable, I cannot find any direct evidence.

Coming down to the times of Cromwell, we find

Thomas Birch figuring largely in the Parliamentary Army against King Charles I. Born 1608, he was made Chaplain of a regiment in 1642. At a banquet given in Manchester by the Royalists to Lord Strange, afterwards the Earl of Derby, Captain Birch ordered his regiment to fire on the Royalists. The rain, however, put out their matches, and his regiment was repulsed. Captain Birch hid under a cart, and gained for himself the nickname of "Lord Derby's carter," an offensive epithet which Birch never forgave. In 1643 he took the rank of Major, and successfully attacked Preston and Lancaster, which exploits gained for him the rank of Colonel. In 1644 he took Liverpool from Prince Rupert, where he became governor, and M.P. in 1649. He was appointed sequestrator of lands forfeited to Parliament. Amongst the property sequestrated were certain college lands and buildings in Manchester, which belonged to Lord Derby. Humphrey Chetham wished to buy them, and, at his own cost, use them for the education of poor children. Colonel Birch entertained such suspicions on Humphrey Chetham's motives that Manchester almost lost that munificent gift. However, the project was carried out, and the useful institution of Chetham Hospital remains to this day. After the battle of Worcester, the Earl of Derby fell into the hands of Colonel Birch, who paid off his old grudge by obtaining permission for, and even gloating over, his execution in 1651. Readers of "Peveril of the Peak" will remember that the royalists in the Isle of Man were betrayed to the Parliamentary army by a renegade named

12 The Birches and Birch Hall

Christian. Colonel Birch followed the Countess of Derby to Rushen Castle and Peel, and took her prisoner to Chester, where she died in 1651. A deed of this time enumerates the rooms of Birch Hall. "The garden parlour, little parlour, the white chamber, the middle room, the painted chamber, the dining room, the red chamber, Mrs. Birch's chamber, old Mrs. Birch's chamber, the yellow chamber, and the old wench's chamber." Mention is made in a bequest of "three gardens and two orchards." I know of two old-world gardens, one at Birch Hall, the other at Birch Hall farm, two of the quaintest bits of pretty rusticity to be found in the neighbourhood. Where is the third garden? The distance from Birch Chapel to the Collegiate Church is stated as four miles. From the Chapel to the horsepole $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, to Edge's Fold (that is Birch Fold) $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, to the Brook at Rusholme $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, to the middle of Rusholme Green $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, and so on, down Rusholme Road and Ardwick Green, $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles, which was the way into "town" in those days. The name Rusholme Road still remains. A Captain Edge, of Birch Hall Houses, now Rusholme Lodge, fought in the Parliamentary forces, and is well spoken of in the despatches. Birch Fold Cottage, I suppose, is the oldest building in Rusholme. Birch Hall Houses is at least 300 years old, and I suppose Birch Hall is still older, but there is no record. The two latter have been much modernised. The Edges lived at Birch Hall Houses for many years. With the foregoing exceptions, the Birches and their successors, the Dickensons, seemed to have preferred the quieter life of the country

THE BIRCHES OF BIRCH (important names only inserted).

Matthew de Birch

Matthew de Birch had grant of Hindley Birches from Matthew, son of Matthew de Haversage, about the reign of King John

Here follow 11 direct male heirs

Thomas, died 1595, William, Warden of Manchester, died 1575 and 5 others

George, died 1601 Elizabeth, mar. John Platt of Platt and 5 others

George, died 1611 Wm. Birch, 2nd son

Robert Birch, died 1692 (a curate of Birch Chapel)

Thomas, of Birch Hall, One of the daughters mar. Saml. Dickenson 1679, Colonel in Parl. Army, died 1678 uniting the Birch and Dickenson families

Thomas, died in 1700

Peter Birch, Prebendary of Westminster, died 1710 and 10 other children

George, died 1704 Thomas, died between 1710-18 (unmarried)

Elizabeth, mar. Rev. John Tetlow, Curate of Birch Chapel

6 others

Humphrey Birch, took the name Wyrley, died 1747, and buried Westminister Abbey. Sold the Birch Estate in 1744 to Geo. Croxton, and he sold it to John Dickenson 1745

William, died unmarried

14 The Birches and Birch Hall

gentleman. George Birch mortgaged the Birch Estate to his uncle, Peter Birch, for £1,250, and died unmarried in 1704. His brothers, Thomas and William, also died unmarried, and now the estate passed for the first time out of the direct line, to Humphrey, the son of their uncle, Peter Birch, D.D., Prebendary of Westminster. He took the name of Wyrley, died 1747, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. This Humphrey sold the estate of Birch Hall and 168 acres to George Croxton, merchant, of Manchester, in 1743, for £6,000. He sold it to John Dickenson in 1745.

THE DICKENSONS OF BIRCH.

(LEADING NAMES ONLY INSERTED.)

Samuel Dickenson mar. a dau. of Robert Birch 1679 (see Table p. 13)

John Dickenson,
purchased Birch Hall Estate,
1745.
born 1689, died Jan. 20, 1779,
buried at Birch

mar. Mary a dau. of Thomas Goulborn
buried at Birch Chapel

John Dickenson, died Oct. 26, 1810, age 84, mar. Sarah, dau. of T. Chetham of Mellor, both buried at Birch Chapel	Thomas, Legh both died in Cornwall	Three daughters buried Birch Chapel	Elizabeth mar. Ed. Borron, buried Birch Chapel
			Edward Borron buried at Birch Chapel

John Dickenson, mar. Mary, dau. of Hon. Charles Hamilton & Grand. dau. of Lord Archibald Hamilton, died 1842, aged 83 2/7	Sarah buried Birch Chapel	Frances buried Birch Chapel 1771	Charles buried Birch Chapel 1755	Mary buried Birch Chapel	Elizabeth mar. Chevalier Palombi, Knight of the Order of Malta
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Louisa Frances Mary, mar. 1815, Gen. Sir W. R. Anson, K.C.B.
(only child) created Bart. 1831

(See Family of Anson, p. 18)

CHAPTER II.

THE DICKENSONS OF BIRCH.

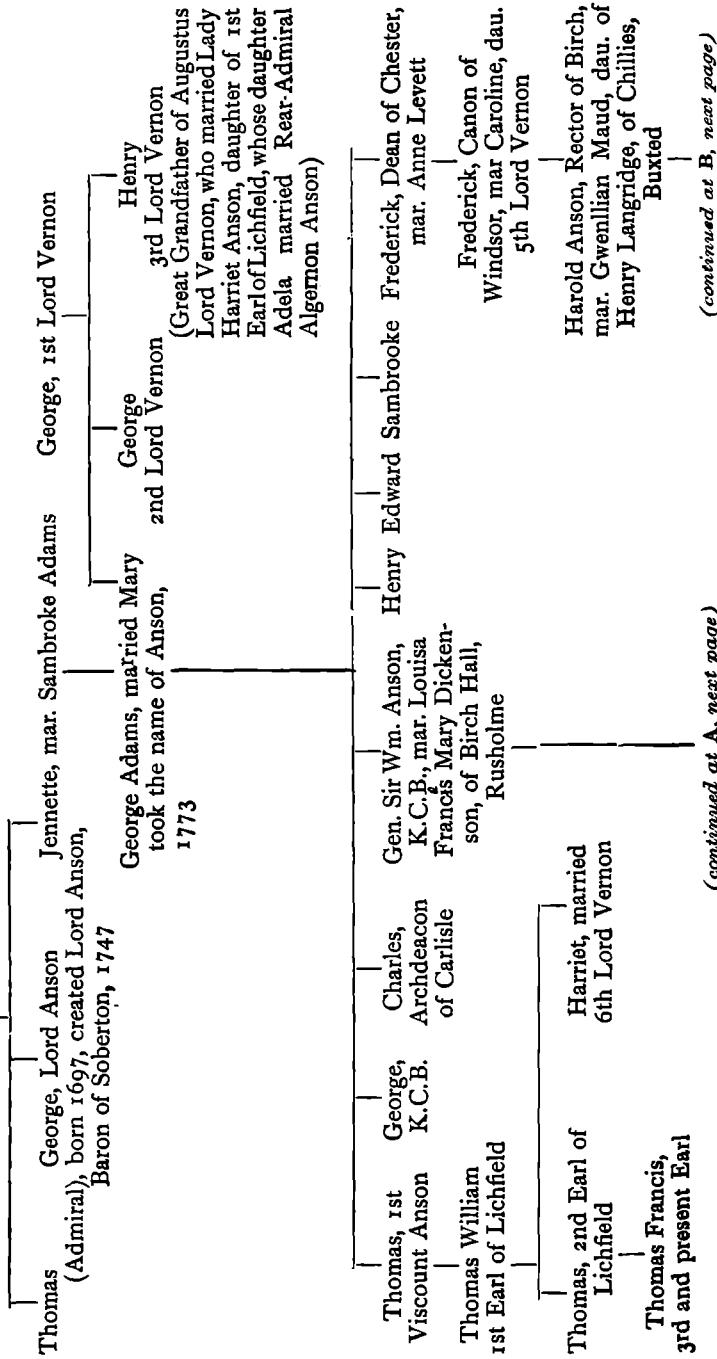
It has been stated that John Dickenson bought the estate in 1745. His father, Samuel Dickenson, married into the Birch family (see the table, p. 15), and doubtless his affection for his mother's home induced him to make the purchase as a country residence. John Dickenson's town house was in Market Street Lane. Here he entertained the Pretender on his visit to Manchester in 1745, and from this circumstance it was named the Palace, afterwards the Palace Inn, and now Palace Buildings. The bed on which the Pretender lay was sold at Birch some years ago by Miss Dickenson. The pocket-handkerchief, which the Pretender left behind him, is still in the possession of Sir W. R. Anson. The fine stone pillars at the entrance to Mr. Dickenson's town house were removed to the Ardwick Polygon, and when building operations began, they were removed to Birch Hallgrounds, where they may now be seen. It will be seen later on that the pedigree of the present owner of the estate, Sir William Anson, goes back to the old Birch family six generations. It was this John Dickenson who enlarged and partly rebuilt the old chapel in 1753. He and his wife lived to the age of 90, and lived together sixty-five years. He died in 1779. His son, John, married Sarah, daughter of Thomas Chetham of Mellor, and died

1810, at the age of 84. The third John Dickenson married Mary, daughter of the Hon. Charles Hamilton, son of Lord Hamilton and grandson of the Duke of Hamilton. He died in 1842, at the age of 85. The Birch air seems to have agreed with the Dickensons. The last-mentioned couple had an only child, Louisa Frances Mary, who was married, in 1815, to General Sir William Anson, Bart., K.C.B., created a Baronet in 1831, the parents of Sir John W. H. Anson, Bart., George H. G. Anson and others (see table, pp. 18, 19). The reader is now referred to the chapter on the Anson family.

Just a word before leaving the Dickensons. In studying the pedigrees I counted at least a dozen Dickensons buried at Birch Chapel. Where are their graves? There are two flat stones on the right as you enter the churchyard, near the Worsley vault. One, the grave of the first John Dickenson, the other, of an Edward Borron, who married a Miss Dickenson. A large flat stone, slightly raised, on the left, close to the lych-gate, has only the initials "J.D." This is a family vault. Reference will be made later on to a Samuel Fletcher. His grave is close to the lych-gate. He was agent to the Birch Estate, and lived and had his office, so I am told, at the cottage at the back of the Hall. This cottage had been previously occupied as the farm house, and when Samuel Dickenson took possession, the present picturesque farmhouse of Mr. C. Ratcliffe was erected.

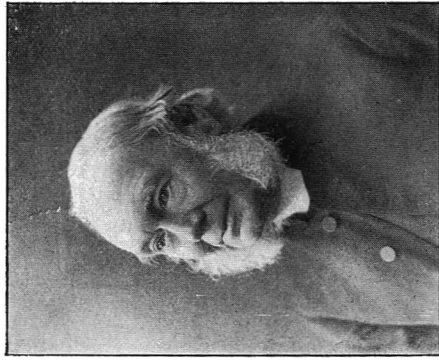
THE FAMILY OF ANSON.

William Anson

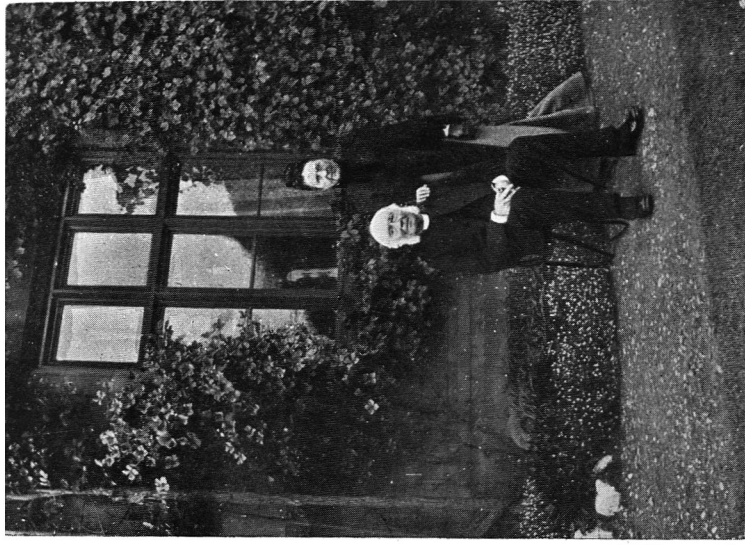


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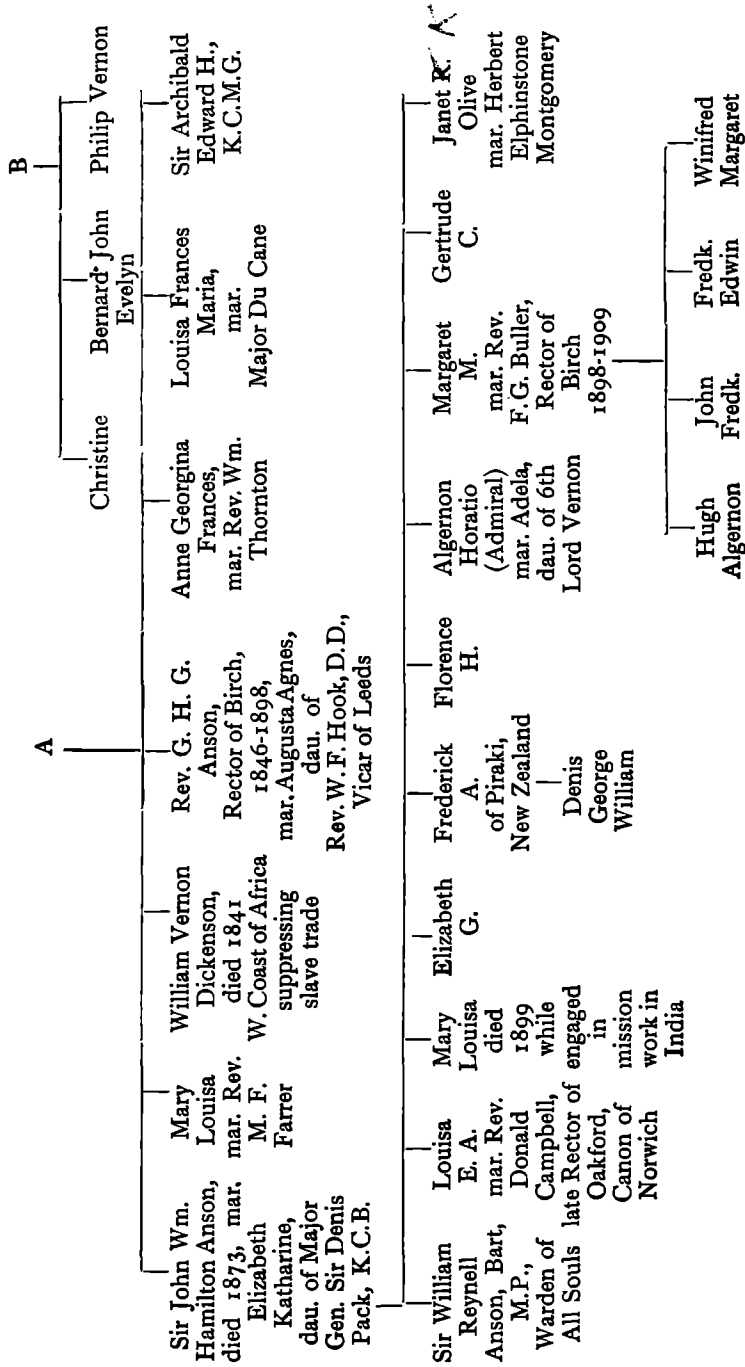
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The Archdeacon.



The Archdeacon and Mrs. Anson in Rectory Garden.



CHAPTER III.

THE FAMILY OF ANSON.

THE members of the Anson family are blood relations of the Dickensons, the Vernons, the Earls of Lichfield, and the Lords Howard of Effingham, through inter-marriage.

George Adams, an Anson through his mother, and who took the name of Anson, married a daughter of the first Lord Vernon, and granddaughter of Lord Howard of Effingham.

The sixth Lord Vernon married a daughter of the first Earl of Lichfield.

Our Rector's father, Frederick Anson, Canon of Windsor, married Caroline, a daughter of the fifth Lord Vernon. His grandfather, Frederick, Dean of Chester, was the youngest brother of General Sir William Anson and the first Viscount Anson.

So that our Rector, the Rev. Harold Anson, is descended from the Vernons and Ansons through his father, and from the Vernons through his mother.

Admiral Algernon H. Anson, better known here as Captain Anson, is uncle of the present Lord Vernon through marriage.

Sir W. R. Anson, Bart., is connected with the Vernons, the Dickensons and the Birches, through his grandfather, General Sir William Anson, who married Louisa, only child of John Dickenson.

George Anson, born 1697, rose to the highest

posts in the Navy. and was made a peer. He was the second to sail round the world, Drake being the first.

Sir Archibald Edward Harbord Anson, K.C.M.G., the younger brother of the Archdeacon distinguished himself in the Army. He entered the Royal Artillery in 1844, won a Crimean War medal, was Inspector-General of Police in the Mauritius 1858-67, Governor of Straits Settlements, and Lieutenant-Governor of Penang.

Sir William R. Anson, Bart., the present patron of the Church, has had a distinguished career. He succeeded to the Birch Estates on the lamented death of his father, who was killed in a railway accident at Wigan 1873. Educated at Eton, he graduated at Balliol, Oxford, D.C.L. 1881, Hon. LL.D. of Cambridge, Edinburgh and Manchester, Fellow and Warden of All Souls, Fellow of Eton, Chancellor of Diocese of Oxford, J.P., Chairman of Quarter Sessions for Oxford, Trustee of National Portrait Gallery, Barrister of the Inner Temple, Bencher, Vinerian Reader in Law at Oxford, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education 1902-5, M.P. for Oxford University. Truly a busy man, and a worthy descendant of the noble family of Anson.

The present heir to the estate is Frederick Anson, of New Zealand, a brother of Sir William, who has one son, Denis George William.

The reader is referred for other members of the family to the table annexed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HISTORY OF BIRCH CHAPEL AND THE
MINISTERS.

“A rural chapel neatly dressed,
In covert like a little nest.”

—*Wordsworth.*

BIRCH Chapel was erected by the Birch family in the reign of Elizabeth, and was consecrated by Bishop Chaderton, at the close of his episcopate, which lasted from 1575 to 1595. In the visitation returns of 1598 it is referred to as “Birche Chapel in Rusholme, latelie erected and voyd of a curate.” It was first used as a private chapel for the Birch family and their immediate dependents. At first, the Chapel was wholly unendowed, and depended for its support on voluntary subscriptions. For instance, in 1636, the Rev. — Bentley’s income was £17. 2s. 7d. It was in 1640 that a subscription fund was started, to form an endowment “to bee laid to the Birch Chapel.” Sixty-seven contributors raised £40. 8s. 8d. Amongst the donors are “ould Mrs. Birche £5, and Raphe Worsley £4, Thomas Shelmerdine £2, Mrs. Siddall of Slade £1. 6s. 8d. With this money two acres of land were bought in Longsight, to which Colonel Birch added an acre of his own land adjoining. The small endowment arising from this investment was augmented by voluntary subscriptions. In 1651 the Rev. John Wigan’s

income is stated as £3. 10s., which was the endowment up to the beginning of the 18th century, to which £9 was added in voluntary subscriptions. This endowment was conveyed to a body of trustees in 1672, George Birch of Birch, Raphe Worsley of Platt, John Siddall of Slade, and Oliver Edge of Birch Hall Fold, being amongst the number. An attempt was made during the Commonwealth to deviate the endowment to the Presbyterian form of worship. The dispute was settled in 1743, when the threatened misapplication was frustrated. The duties of the trustees seem to have been something like those of our churchwardens. They collected and disbursed the weekly collections. For instance, we find in 1679 the Rev. Henry Finch receiving, besides the income from the lands, 10s. a Sunday. At the end of the year there was a surplus of £1. 15s. 2d., "out of wch sume Mr. ffinch had 10s. of a gratuity because he had beene sicke." Mention is made of 8s. 6d., bad and broken money. I hope our morals have improved since then. In 1747 John Dickenson, the patron, gave £230, and in 1780 Miss Mary Dickenson gave £200, both of which were met by grants from Queen Anne's Bounty and invested in lands at Cheadle, and Castleton near Rochdale. In 1850 the annual value is returned as £180. Birch Chapel was built of brick and covered with grey slates. At the east end of the roof was a plain cross, and at the western end a bell-cot. It was filled with oaken pews, accommodating 350 people, none of the sittings being free. In 1753 John Dickenson raised the roof and extended the building at his own cost. In 1803 the Rev. Rowland Blaney

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repaired it at a cost of £200, and in 1811 an organ was added. A small cottage-like structure at the south entrance was known as the Dickenson Chapel. There is no picture to show what was the appearance of the original building before the enlargement. Old scholars tell me there was just room to get between the corner of the Chapel and the brook. I remember the Archdeacon telling me he got up early one summer morning, and, with assistance, took down the cross surmounting the eastern gable. What has become of it? The altar table, of wood, was buried in the yard behind the schoolhouse. A good deal of the oak was taken by the congregation for articles of furniture. Mr. C. Ratcliffe tells me there are some oak beams from the chapel in one of his farm sheds.

“To what base uses we may return, Horatio!”

The following is a list of the ministers as far as they can be traced:—

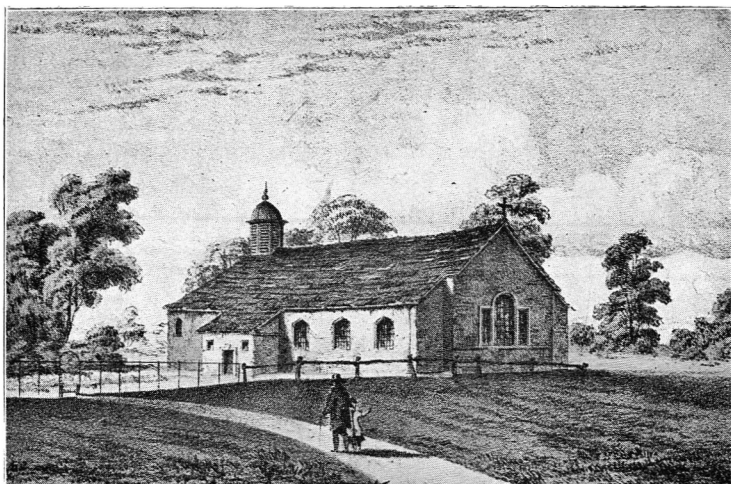
1598.	No Curate.
1622.	Richard Lingard.
1623.	Thomas Norman.
1635—1636.	— Bentley.
1641.	— Hall.
1646—1650.	John Wigan.
1659—1662.	Robert Birch.
1672—1697.	Henry Finch.
1699.	Samuel Taylor.
1707.	No Curate.
1717.	Joseph Dale.
1720—1721.	Thomas Wright.

- 1746. Robert Twyford.
- 1746—1752. William Twyford.
- 1752—1762. Thomas Aynscough.
- 1762—1769. Miles Lonsdale.
- 1769—1795. Henry Ainsworth.
- 1795—1838. Rowland Blaney.
- 1838—1839. Francis Philips Hulme.
- 1839—1840. Geo. Gardner Harter.
- 1840—1841. Oliver Ormerod.
- 1841—1846. George Dugard.
- 1846—1898. George Henry Greville Anson.
- 1898—1909. Frederick George Buller.
- 1910. Harold Anson.

It will be noticed that there are many gaps between the dates in the above list. Sometimes the Chapel was "voyd of a curate" through lack of income, sometimes, as will be seen presently, owing to the religious dissensions of the time. A few remarks on some of the above names will show the religious turmoil Birch has passed through. Nonconformity seems to have been rife during the Commonwealth and the years that followed. The Birches and their neighbours the Worsleys were stout opponents of Episcopalianism. The Rev. John Wigan succeeded in introducing Congregationalism into the Chapel in 1646. He is described as "a painfull godly preaching minister," but owing to a falling off in the maintenance, he resigned in 1650. Nine years elapsed, when Robert Birch was appointed by his relative. The Dickensons are descended from him (see table, p. 13). He refused to conform on the passing of the "Act of Uniformity, and resigned in 1662. And now we have another blank of ten

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years. I suppose Colonel Birch would not appoint a Churchman, and the authorities would not allow a Nonconformist. It appears that during this interval Nonconformist services were held by stealth, either at Birch Chapel or Birch Hall. The Conventicle Act was passed in 1664, forbidding any person above 16 years of age to be present at a religious service in a place (other than a consecrated building) where there were more than five persons besides the household. On Sunday, November 16, 1666, Colonel Birch held services in Birch Hall. Two wandering German ministers held forth from nine to three, and singing hymns vociferously, one of which was, "Hark! how the trumpet sounds!" Several persons were heavily fined, including Colonel Birch and Deborah Worsley, of Platt, whose grave may be seen on the right as you enter the churchyard. In 1672 the Rev. Henry Finch was appointed. His tact kept him employed when many of his brethren were silenced. On the passing of the Toleration Act in 1689 he claimed Birch Chapel as a place in which to preach opinions dissenting from the Church of England. The Warden and Fellows of the Collegiate Church claimed Birch as one of their consecrated chapels. Mr. Finch continued his ministrations until 1697, when George Birch, the succeeding patron, dismissed him and appointed the Rev. Samuel Taylor, M.A., "to serve in my domestick Chappell of Birch." Mr. Finch seems to have been very popular, and had a large number of supporters, who built for him Platt Chapel, opposite the end of the present Old Hall Lane, since rebuilt. Two



Birch Chapel.

Erected about 1596; Enlarged 1753; Demolished 1846.



1640-41.

1661-62.

Communion Chalices.

(Originally in use at Birch Chapel, now in use at Platt Chapel).

handsome communion chalices were removed from Birch to Platt Chapel. To whom do they rightly belong? Thus Mr. Finch was the founder of Nonconformity in Rusholme. He was by no means an extreme man, of great tenderness, lived according to his profession, and was beloved by all who knew him. Samuel Taylor continued but a short time. Ten years elapsed without a curate. "Chorlton and Birch have no settled curates . . . Birch having only £3. 10s. attached to it," writes Warden Wroe. In 1721, the Rev. John Tetlow was appointed. He married Elizabeth, a sister of the patron. The Rev. John Twyford was the first appointment by John Dickenson in 1746. The Rev. Henry Ainsworth was appointed in 1769. His grave is on the left close to the lych-gate, with an epitaph in Latin. The Rev. Rowland Blaney served forty-three years, from 1795—1838, the next in duration to the Archdeacon's incumbency. I remember conversing with an old Birch lady, who remembered him. Towards the end he became very infirm, and falling down on one occasion as he was ascending the pulpit, cried out, "O, Lord, how long?" The Rev. Francis Hulme was buried at Birch, 1839. His grave may be seen on the right near the churchyard wall—a raised flat tombstone. The Revs. G. Harter, O. Ormerod and George Dugard each held their positions "in commendam," under promise of resignation in favour of either of the patron's grandsons, G. H. G. Anson or Archibald E. H. Anson. The Rev. George Dugard was Curate of St. Ann's, Manchester, of Prestwich, and incumbent of St. Andrews, Manchester. He vacated Birch

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Chapel in 1846 in favour of the Rev. G. H. G. Anson. Mr. Dugard was appointed to the incumbency of Barnard Castle, and became Hon. Canon of Durham. And now we pass on to the laying of the foundation stone, consecration, and history of our own beloved Church. Before doing so, the following lists of names may be of interest:—

A Divition of ye fformes in the Birche Chapel, 1640.

(It is strange that the family from the Hall is not included in the seatholders.)

1 Mr. Siddall ...	13s. 4d	1 Raphe Worsley
2 John Hobson		2 Thomas Shelmerdine Thomas Hartley William Shelmerdine
3 Tho. Traviss Robt. Bamford James Redich Thomas Fletcher Widow Bordman		3 Geo. Siddall William Nicholson Richard Traviss Widow Bradshaw
4 John Wilkinson, jun. Edmund Smith William Bradshaw John Halle		4 Thomas Wolwercke Richard Johnson Widow Bradshaw Widow Edge
5 John Shelmerdine Thomas Timperley John Hobson, carier John Smith		5 John Wilkinson John Barlow Charles Worsley Widow Williamson John Dikonson people
6 Isock Halle Robert Bowker Thomas Janney		6 Henry Hughes Renould Perkinson Abednego Ridinges Tho. Birch, blackamith
7 Edward Baguley Joseph Kenion John Hunt Thomas Persivall		7 Widow Blomiley Edward Worsley Henry Reade John Hoult

8 Edmund Knowles	8 Edmund Whitticar
Steven Sholcrosse	Alexander Birch
Richard Persivall	Broome daughters
John Persivall	
9 Geo. Aspinwall	9 Geo. Prescott
Tho. Bamford	James Wosencroft
Robt. Bradshaw	Henry Broome
Mary Davie	
10 Robert Tailor family	10 John Birche
Nicholas Baley	Widow Dickonson
Thomas Bamford, junior	Tho. Traviss, houson grene
	Geo. Pomfret
	11 William Birche

The following is a list of the supporters of the ministrations in Birch Chapel, 1636:—

Birch and Birch Hall Houses: Mrs. Anne Birche 25s., Mr. Thomas Birche 20s., Oliver Edge 25s., Thomas Greaves 4s., John Ridinges 2s., Thos. Birch, blacksmith, 2s., Henry Hughes 4s., Edmund Whitticar 2s.

Slade and Rushford: Mr. Kinsey 6s. 8d., Mr. Siddall 13s. 4d., Jos. Kernon 6s., Abram Kernon 4s., Mrs. Adkinson 4s.

Grindlow and Chorlton: Thos. Wolwerke 2s., John Bradshaw 4s., Geo. Pomfret, 2s., Thos. Percivall 4s., John Hunt 2s., Edmond Knowles 2s., Widow Williamson 3s. 4d., James Boden 2s., Robt. Radcliffe 2s., Adam Hulme, Wm. Streete, William Jobson, Jacob Taylor 4s.

Levenshulme: Widow Percival 5s., John and Robt. Dickonson 4s., Allexander Birch 2s. 6d., Isack Halle 3s. 4d., Richard Johnson 5s., John Shelmerdine 4s., Robt. Broome, Thos. Timperley 3s., William Mellor, William

30 The History of Birch Chapel

Nicholson 6s., Nicholas Baylie 2s., Widow Taylor 2s., Robt. Taylor 1s., Raphe Glossop 4s., Richard Smith, Thomas Hobson 3s., Edward Gorton 2s., John Hobson, junr., Widow Bouker 1s., John Birch 2s., James Bouker 2s., John Percivall 4s., Richard Percivall 2s., Nicholas Wimbell 4s., Roger Beswicke, 2s. 8d., Raphe Melor, Joseph Stoppard 3s., Thos. Smith 1s.

Rushulme: Raphe Worsley 28s., Thos. Shelmerdine 13s. 4d., Charles Worsley 4s., Wm. Shelmerdine 8s., Thamas Travis 10s., John Davie of Manchester, 4s., Thomas Shelmerdine, sen., 3s. 4d., Marie Davie 1s. 4d., Adam Sidall 2s. 4d., John Wilkinson, whelewright, 4s., Robt. Bouker 3s. 4d., Richard Travisse 6s. 8d., Renould Parkinson 3s., Margret Dickonson 1s. 4d., Thom Janney 4s., John Davie 2s. 8d., Edward Baguley 3s. 4d., William Birch 1s. 4d., Thomas Bamford 2s., Edward Worsley 2s., Thomas Hartley, Moss Side, 4s., Matthew Barlow, Heaton Edmund Smith 3s.

ffallowfeild, Ladie Barne, &c.: Robert Bamford 4s., Thomas ffletcher 4s., Widow Bordman 3s., Richard Bordman 2s., Geo. Sidall 6s., James Redich 4s., Rob. Bradshaw 6s., Elizabeth Blomiley 2s., John Barlow 4s., Geo. Blomiley 2s., John Smith *alias* England 1s. 4d.

Withington and Housend: Rob. Brook 2s., Nicholas Langford 1s. 4d., Alice Baguley 2s. 8d., Wm. Langford 3s., John Wood 2s., ffancis Wood 2s., Randle Seden 1s. 4d., Wm. Blomiley 2s., Deaffe Margret 2s.

MEMORIAL WINDOW
to
THE REV.G.DUGARD.

In St Mary's Church, Barnard Castle, there is a four light window, "To the glory of God, and in memory of The Rev.G. Dugard, M.A., Hon.Canon of Durham, and Incumbent of this Parish from 1847, until his death in July, 1865."

In the centre of each light is one of the following:

The Good Samaritan.

The Pharisee and the Publican.

Our Lord and St Peter, " Feed my Lambs."

The Garden of Gethsemane.

Above these, in each light, are small figures, with angels below them.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE OF BIRCH CHURCH.

“As a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation.”—1 Cor. iii. 10.

ADVERTISEMENT in the *Manchester Courier* of May 9th, 1845:—

“New Church at Birch, Rusholme. The first stone of the New Church will be laid on Whit-Tuesday, the 13th inst., at half-past one o’clock.

“GEORGE DUGARD, M.A.,

“Chairman of the Building Committee.

“May 9, 1845.”

The foundation stone was laid on Whit-Tuesday, 1845, in the presence of a vast concourse of people. Amongst them were the Archdeacon of Manchester, Canon Wray, Canon Parkinson, Rev. G. H. G. Anson, Rev. G. Dugard, Messrs. R. Ogden, J. Marsland, W. J. Tate, W. Vernon, T. Lucas, Lieutenant Archibald Anson, Royal Artillery, and many other leading clergy and laity. The stone was laid under the altar. The children of the schools, with their teachers, arrived in procession, followed by the clergy in their canonicals, and the gentry. After singing the 100th Psalm, and prayers being said by the Rev. G. Dugard, Canon Parkinson presented John W. H. Anson, Esq., with a trowel. He spoke of the vitality of the Church, of which this occasion was a specimen. He eulogised the generosity of the donors, and

32 Laying of the Foundation Stone

emphasised the fact that out of 700 sittings, 400, in the best part of the Church, would be free. Receiving the trowel, J. W. H. Anson, Esq., then went through the usual formalities of laying the stone. Kneeling down upon the stone, he struck it three times with the mallet, pronouncing very audibly, "Thus do I lay the foundation stone of St. James's Church at Birch, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The coins of the realm were then placed in a cavity and sealed up. The Rev. G. H. G. Anson (whom we shall from this point refer to as the Archdeacon), standing upon the stone, addressed the assembly. He directed his hearers to look beyond the stone, to the temple now to be built, and beyond that, to "the temple not made with hands." "Buildings are rising around us," he said, "and shall we not build for God?" He quoted the words of Keble:—

"Is it a time to plant and build,
Add house to house, and field to field;
When round our walls the battle lowers,
When mines are hid beneath our towers,
And watchful foes are stealing round,
To search and spoil the holy ground?"

Is it a time: For fancy with her shadowy toys,
Aerial hopes, and pensive joys;
When souls are wandering far and wide,
And curses swarm on every side?"

(Christian Year, 11th S. after Trinity.)

He spoke of the true Corner Stone, Christ Jesus, who was to unite them together in one brother-

hood. He exhorted them to join earnestly in the prayers which were to follow, that, realising their brotherhood as Christians, they might help one another to the immortal temple eternal in the heavens. The Rev. G. Dugard offered up prayer, and the ceremony concluded by singing the National Anthem. The Committee and others then adjourned to the schoolroom, where a handsome luncheon was provided, at which nearly 100 people sat down. Mr. J. W. H. Anson presided. The Chairman proposed "The Queen," and then "The Bishop and Clergy." The Archdeacon of Manchester responded, and then proposed "Prosperity to the Structure." The Rev. G. Dugard responded. He spoke of the necessity of providing a larger building for the increasing population. The Sunday Scholars could not all be taken to Church for want of room. He spoke very warmly of his successor, who had been looking forward to the incumbency from his youth upwards. He alluded to the fact that the Rev. G. H. G. Anson had contributed £2,000 for providing accommodation for the poor for ever. He concluded by proposing the health of the Rev. G. H. G. Anson.

In replying, the Rev. G. H. G. Anson spoke of the many years his future parish had engaged his most earnest thoughts and prayers. He thanked the Rev. G. Dugard for the kind and considerate manner in which he had spoken of him. He hoped that the principles of love and charity would be the keynote of all their actions, as it would be his, and concluded by thanking all who had assisted in the work.

The Chairman then proposed the Dean and

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Canons, to which Canon Wray responded, congratulating the parishioners on their spacious schoolroom, and concluded by proposing the health of the Chairman. The Chairman expressed his delight at being allowed to take part, and then proposed "The Manchester and Eccles Church Building Society," to which the Rev. G. Dugard replied, as one of the Secretaries. The healths of the Incumbent and Building Committee, Mr. Derick, the Architect, and the Ladies came next, to the last of which the Rev. J. Wilson, B.D., of the Grammar School, responded; after which the company broke up, agreeably impressed and highly edified.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSECRATION.

“For the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.”—2 Chron. v. 14.

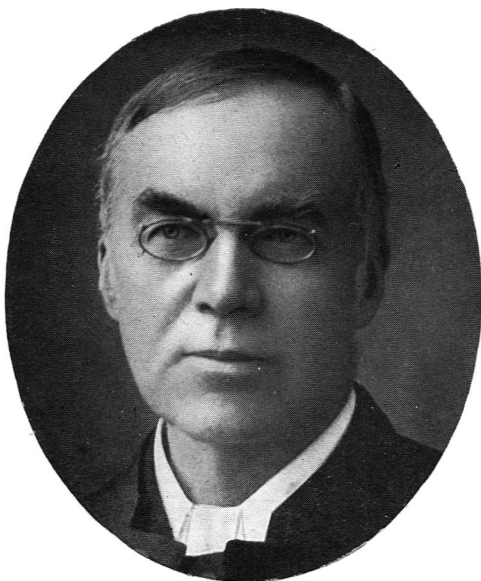
ADVERTISEMENT in the *Manchester Courier*, of Saturday, June 27, 1846:—

“St. James’s Church, Birch, Rusholme, will be consecrated on Wednesday, 1st July. Divine service will commence in the morning at half-past ten; in the afternoon at half-past three. The Lord Bishop will preach in the morning, and there will be a collection in aid of the Building Fund. Attendance will be given on Saturday, June 27th, and Monday, June 29, at the Church, for the purpose of letting pews.”

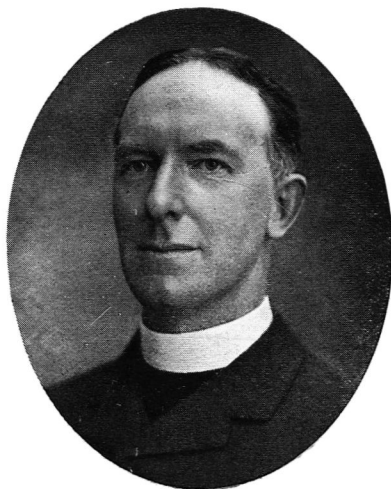
The Bishop of Chester consecrated the Church on the 1st of July, 1844, his Lordship not being at liberty for St. James’s Day, the 25th. The consecration service began at 10-30 a.m., the church being quite filled, and the school children neatly dressed. The Right Rev. Prelate preached from the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. ix. vv. 3, 4, 5. The collection amounted to £70. After service the clergy and their friends partook of luncheon in one of the schoolrooms. In the afternoon the parents of the school children partook of a treat provided for them in the other schoolroom. At 3-30 Divine Service was held,

and an excellent discourse preached by the Rev. G. H. G. Anson.

The organ, built by Mr. Bishop, of London, was opened on this occasion by Mr. W. Barlow, organist of St. Ann's, Manchester. There were many professional singers, who rendered in an excellent manner an anthem from the 96th Psalm. Amongst the clergy present were Canon Wray, Canon Clifton, Dr. Hook, Vicar of Leeds, Rev. G. H. G. Anson, Rev. Wm. Thornton, incumbent of Dodford, Northamptonshire, Rev. A. Casselles, Vicar of Batley, Rev. N. W. Gibson, incumbent of St. Thomas's, Ardwick, Rev. J. Dobie, incumbent of St. John's, Longsight, Rev. E. Birch, incumbent of St. Saviour's, C.-on-M., Rev. T. Corser, of Stand, Rev. W. Hutchinson, of Newton Heath, Rev. T. Todd, of Holy Trinity, Rev. W. J. Kidd, of Didsbury, Rev. C. Burton, LL.D., of All Saints, Rev. W. B. Marsland, Rev. W. Whitelegge, of St. George's, Hulme, Rev. T. R. Bentley, of St. Matthew's, Rev. Mr. Smith, and Rev. Mr. Vance.



Rev. F. G. Buller, M.A.



Rev. Harold Anson, M.A.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HISTORY OF BIRCH CHURCH.

“ But let my due feet never fail
 To walk the studious cloister’s pale,
 And love the high embowèd roof
 With antique pillars massy proof.”
 —Milton’s “*Il Penseroso*.”

THE rapid growth of the population rendered increased accommodation necessary. The population of Rusholme in 1714 was 200; in 1841, 1,868; in 1851, 3,679. The present Church was built in 1845–6, about twenty yards to the east of the old Chapel. It is an exceedingly beautiful specimen of church architecture, built from designs furnished by Mr. James Derick, of Oxford. The Archdeacon had noticed a fine work of his, “*The Martyr’s Memorial*,” at Oxford. The style is that known as lancet or Early English, a style which prevailed during the earlier part of the thirteenth century. The Church is remarkable for simplicity, exhibiting externally an almost entire absence of ornament; the architect’s design being to show what could be done by attention to massiveness, and at the same time to the due proportion of its several parts. The Church has been admired as one of the best specimens of its style; the proportions are well balanced, and the interior is in keeping with the exterior. The chancel arch has always been a subject for admiration. The height

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from the ground to the apex of the spire is 128 feet. The tower is of three storeys, and from the upper one rises an octagonal spire. It was intended to fill in the four larger niches of the spire with figures of the four evangelists. I remember the Archdeacon had an idea of having a clock fixed in the tower, but on consulting Mr. Derick, he was advised to do nothing to interfere with the massive beauty and simplicity of the tower walls. It was intended to have a gallery at the west end, but this idea was not carried out. The doorway in the tower may still be seen. Provision is made for a west gallery, carved corbels being placed in the piers for the support of the front beam. The Church was built to accommodate 700 people, 400 sittings being free in the best part of the Church. The Archdeacon contributed £2,000; John W. H. Anson, Esq., £200 and the land; the Manchester and Eccles Church Building Society £500; the remainder by voluntary subscriptions, the total cost being £4,300. On consulting the book of accounts, a book with golden pages, I find that the Archdeacon and his brother seemed to be always putting their hands into their pockets for something.

The Church was consecrated on July 1st, 1846; St. John's, Longsight, and Holy Trinity, Platt, in the same year, on June 26th. The Church Records go back to 1752. There is just one entry before that date: "Ralph Worsley, Platt Hall, baptized Feb. 13, 1647." The Baptismal Register contains the names of Sarah Venables and William Edward Ryder, our bell-ringer, both christened July 5, 1846, the first baptisms in the new Church.

The parish was constituted a distinct Chapelry in 1850 (the income then being £180), and a Rectory in 1854. In 1850 the old parsonage in Longsight (a house between the Church Inn and Kirkmanshulme Lane) was sold for £75, and a portion of the land for £1,999. 10s., and with the proceeds the present Rectory was built. I remember the Archdeacon, in one of his lectures, alluding to his being taken, as a boy, to see old Mr. Blaney, the Curate of Birch Chapel, who resided at the old parsonage, and making a little joke about his port wine. The tower was built for a peal of eight bells, but these were not added until 1863, July 25th (see Chapter VII. (i)). They were supplied by Messrs. Mears and Stainbank, London. The first peal was rung on St. James's Day, July 25, 1863. I have a distinct recollection of the event, as a chorister. It was on a fine Saturday afternoon. We had an augmented choir (there was a Voluntary Choir Association in those days). The clergy and choir, after robing in the schoolroom, went in procession to the Church. It was a glad day for Birch. The Archdeacon preached from the text "Holiness to the Lord," the inscription on the Tenor Bell. Mr. W. E. Ryder, who became a ringer within a few months of the ringing of the first peal, still takes his part in the belfry. They were re-hung in 1900.

The Vestry was enlarged in 1892.

The Organ has been twice enlarged and rearranged, the last time in 1900, at a cost of £574.

But perhaps the most important addition to the Church was the erection of the Anson Chapel by Sir W. R. Anson at the south-east end of the

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Church, in 1907. The furnishing was contributed by the congregation. The Chapel is a splendid piece of design and workmanship. The architect has evidently caught up the spirit of the whole structure; for every part of it, both external and internal, is in beautiful harmony with the other parts of the building. The iron railings are of exquisite workmanship. The raising of the sanctuary floor was done at the same time. The last addition was a font cover and mural inscription, as a memento of the Rev. F. G. Buller's incumbency. The congregation also presented a lectern to St. Peter's, Oakford, the Rev. F. G. Buller's new sphere of work. The lych-gate is much admired. The design, its setting under a beautiful natural canopy of foliage, and indeed the whole conception, are much admired. Probably more photographs have been taken of it than of any other part of the Church. The words on the arches arrest our attention by their appropriateness, "The wages of sin is death, the sting of death is sin." "The gift of God is eternal life." The reredos, choir stalls, reading desks, brass lectern, fald-stool, iron organ screen and communion rail are all work subsequent to 1846. I should mention the building of the Parish Room in 1897, in commemoration of the jubilee of the Church, and its enlargement in 1903. Sir W. R. Anson, Bart., gave the ground. It has proved a most useful factor in the social and spiritual life of Birch. A striking characteristic of Birch has always been the number of daughter churches that have sprung from and around her. Birch Parish has been unique in this respect.

“And the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedar trees.”

(1) The foundation stone of the Holy Innocents', Fallowfield, was laid on June 4, 1870, with masonic honours; the Church was consecrated December 28, 1872. The Rev. J. J. Twist was its first rector. I believe he began work by gathering together a few people in a cottage at Ladybarn. His first young men's class was held in a stable.

(2) The foundation stone of St. Chrysostom's was laid by Bishop Fraser on September 21, 1874, and the Church consecrated October 13, 1877. The building was destroyed by fire on the night of October 1, 1904; but a new Church soon arose, phoenix-like, from the ruins, and was consecrated October 1, 1906. St. Chrysostom's Church is built a little to the west of another projected church. The Victoria Park Tontine was started in 1836, with a capital of £750,000. The shareholders started a church on commercial lines, as a paying concern, for the inhabitants. The walls had risen a few feet above the ground when the shareholders fell out amongst themselves, and the project, begun on radically false principles, deservedly fell through. I remember, as a boy, playing amongst the foundations. This projected plan gave an impetus to the idea of building St. James's, Birch. The first rector was the Rev. W. Marsden.

(3) St. Margaret's, Burnage, was consecrated in 1875, the Rev. E. A. Brown being its first rector; but no part of the parish was ever part of Birch.

(4) St. Agnes', Slade, had its beginnings in a

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small Sunday School held in a cottage in 1880. Schools were built and licensed for public worship in 1881. The foundation stone of the new Church was laid in 1884, and the Church consecrated in 1885, being enlarged in 1895. The first and present rector is the Rev. H. Norburn.

(5) St. Chad's, Ladybarn, was constituted a parish in 1900, the services being conducted in a temporary iron building. The foundation stone of the present Church was laid on September 8, 1906, and the spacious and handsome building was consecrated December 18, 1907. The Rev. E. B. Ward is the first and present rector.

(6) St. Werburgh's, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, was constituted a parish and built in 1902, being carved partly out of Holy Innocents'. The Rev. G. J. Lovett, first rector.

In every case the rector appointed was at the time curate of St. James's, Birch, *except* (6).

St. Margaret's, Burnage, was nursed a good deal by clergy from Birch, but was not in our parish.

St. Chad's, Ladybarn, and St. Werburgh's, Chorlton, might be more correctly designated grand-daughter churches.

The Jubilee of Birch Church was kept on July 1st, 1896, the services being continued for the octave. The Archdeacon claimed it to be the ter-centenary of the first building of Birch Chapel. The following were the preachers:—The Ven. Archdeacon Anson, Rev. C. Primrose Ford, Rev. W. R. W. Stephens, afterwards Dean of Winchester, the Archbishop of York, Rev. J. J. Twist, Bishop Adelbert Anson, Rev. Cecil Hook, now Bishop of Kingston-on-

Thames, Bishop Walsham How, and the Bishop of Manchester.

Many people will still remember the three Church Missions. They were times of great soul-awakening. The first, in 1877, was conducted by the Rev. C. J. Ridgway, now Bishop of Chichester; the second, in 1888, by the Rev. R. Catterall; and the third, in 1893, conducted by the Revs. W. Foxley-Norris, Walshaw How, and C. Primrose Ford.

The annual visits of Dr. Hook, Vicar of Leeds, afterwards Dean of Chichester, were great epochs in the life of the Church, when the building was packed in every part. Many of us have an affectionate recollection of his venerable and stately presence and eloquent addresses. I have a distinct recollection of the first Manchester Church Congress, when Dr. Hook and the Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Wilberforce, officiated at Birch. Dr. Hook preached the Congress sermon at the Cathedral on October 13th, 1863. Those were indeed stirring times in the spiritual life of Birch.

If I were to recount bygone worshippers in the Church where should I stop? I mean those who have helped with their time and their substance. How I long to mention names which occur to me just now, of those still here or gone before. Look round the Church for their memorials. It were invidious to begin mentioning names, either of those living or departed, so I wisely refrain.

“The saints on earth and those above
But one communion make.”

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(a) MINISTERS—REMINISCENCES.

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.”

—Philip i. 3.

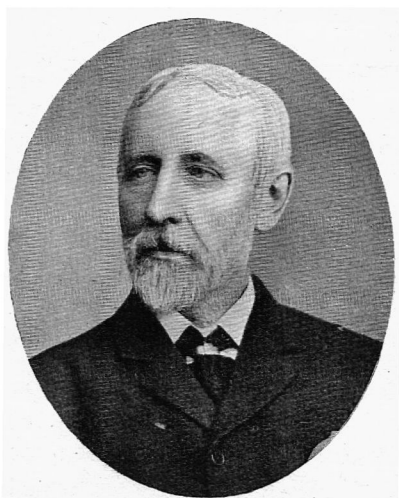
The following is a list of the assistant curates :
The Revs. John Menet, 1848; F. H. Cope, 1852;
John Owen, 1855; E. A. Lang, 1856; T. Jeffcoatt,
1857; John James Twist, 1862; E. A. Brown, 1872;
H. A. Crosbie, 1875; H. Norburn, 1876; H.
Beaumont Jones, 1877; W. Bentley, 1882; J.
Sorby, 1885; J. Eales, 1888; J. H. Oldroyd, 1891;
J. H. Rees, 1895; E. B. Ward, 1896; A. E. Jones,
1898; S. B. Berry, 1908; P. F. L. Cautley, 1910.
Just a word about the Rev. J. J. Twist. I spent
my youth and early manhood under his influence.
Bishop Moorhouse said of him, “He reflected in a
high degree the pureness and earnestness of his
Divine Master.” He lost his wife on February 8,
1871, and this bereavement overshadowed his life.
Doubtless this loss brought out those powers of
sympathy, so conspicuous in his life, but the
remembrance of her never left him for a day.
His ministry at Birch was singularly beneficent.

The Rev. Cecil Hook, now Bishop of Kingston-on-Thames, was, I believe, Curate for a short time. He married Edith, a daughter of Mrs. Turner, of Rusholme. She has become a distinguished church worker and help to her husband. Indeed Mrs. Turner’s family took great practical interest in the Schools and Church. The present Bishop of Lincoln was an occasional helper to the Archdeacon, with others one would like to mention.

George Henry Greville Anson, Rector 1846—



Mrs. Juliana Lane.



**Her Son :
Councillor William Fitzmaurice Lane-Scott, J.P.**

1898, was educated at Eton, Christ's Hospital and Exeter College, Oxford. Sir W. R. Anson tells me he was christened at Walberton, in Sussex, by the Archdeacon, and he believes that was the first baptism at which the Archdeacon officiated. The font was to have been sent to Birch, but in the meantime the present font was given by Mrs. Trafford Leigh, of Cheadle, and is executed after a model published by the Camden Society. The Archdeacon was at Oxford in exciting times, and took a great interest in the Tractarian movement, headed by Newman, Keble and Pusey. He was ordained as Curate of Leeds Parish Church under Dr. Hook, the greatest parish priest of the century. Here he married Augusta Agnes, daughter of Dr. Hook. It was under his influence that he imbibed those principles to which he adhered throughout his life. The Oxford Movement was a matter of principles rather than ritual. Ritual was perhaps a natural outcome of the movement, but was by no means a part of it. The Archdeacon, for instance, in matters of ritual, remained consistent. The main changes which I remember were the discarding of evening communion and the adoption of the eastward position. No one could help being struck with his intense reverence for the sanctuary and the services. I can see him now, always uncovering before his feet touched the steps of the porch. A little anecdote will illustrate this. I was with him one Saturday morning in the study towards the end of his life. He was feeble, and the weather being cold and wet, he was advised not to go out to matins. These are his words: "If Miss Cleworth comes to

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prayers I will not disappoint her; otherwise I will not go." She arrived, and we joined in Divine service. On returning to his study he exclaimed: "Oh, how refreshed I am!" We choirmen remember well how the chattering in the vestry used to trouble him. A democrat in theory, but an aristocrat in practice, nevertheless the feeling of "noblesse oblige" dominated his character. A Home Ruler, a Liberal, and yet (in Church matters at least) the most Conservative of men. No one could for a moment doubt the sincerity of his opinions. No man was better known in the diocese. He was Examining Chaplain to the Bishop for 25 years; honorary Canon for 23 years; residentiary Canon from 1882 to 1884, which office he resigned rather than leave his own parish. He was Archdeacon of Manchester from 1870 to 1890. I remember him attending six meetings a day, and doing a little parish visiting on his way home. At a junior clergy missionary meeting, where he and Canon Birley were conspicuous figures, somebody enquired, "If these are the junior clergy where are the seniors?" His church extension and improvements in the Parish Church and Schools are mentioned incidentally elsewhere. One of the pleasures of his life was to show his garden and collection of ferns. Before the rectory was built he lived at a house where St. Mary's Home now stands, and it was here that he brought Mrs. Anson as a bride. For the sake of health they removed to a house in Moon Grove, number 4, the second house on the right, until the present rectory was provided. He once related a story which will bear repeating. A fire broke out in

one of the rooms, and it was some time before it was extinguished. He had two maids; we will call them Sarah and Jane. Sarah had rather a good voice, and was fond of singing "Vital spark of heavenly flame." He asked Jane what was the cause of the fire. "I really can't say, sir," she replied, "unless it was Sarah's vital spark." Another story has been told before, but as I was an ear-witness I will repeat it. We had opened the Mission Room over a stable in Basil Street. The Salvation Army had set up new quarters in Rusholme, and asked the Archdeacon if they might hold a service. He consented, and was present himself. The singing and the instruments were both lusty and strong. The Archdeacon was asked if he would like to say a few words. "Yes," he replied, in his quiet tone of voice, "and I will take for my text, 'And after the earthquake a still small voice.'" Mrs. Anson was a splendid helpmeet for her husband. Her work in our parish and schools was beyond praise. Many of my fellow choirmen will remember the pleasant chats over breakfast, on occasion, after an early week-day choral celebration. A splendid conversationalist, she spoke from a full mind. They are amongst the many pleasant memories. May the evening of her life be bright in her quiet home at Ambleside! The Archdeacon passed quietly away at the house of his brother-in-law, Dean Stephens, at the Deanery, Winchester, February 8, 1898, and was buried at Birch, the resting-place of many Manchester clergymen, in the "parcel of ground" which he had marked out for himself just opposite the east window.

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On the Rev. F. G. Buller and the Rev. Harold Anson we cannot pass any criticism. Long may they live! Suffice it to say they both maintain the best traditions of Birch. The Rev. F. G. Buller left his memorials behind him in the Anson Chapel, the enlargement of the Parish Room, re-hanging of the bells, repairs to the roof, enlargement of organ, and many other useful works.

Our present Rector is following in their footsteps. Before the end of the first year of his incumbency we hope to raise £1,000 for necessary and desirable objects. Perhaps it will not be out of place to state the objects and proceeds of the last two efforts of the kind:—

(1) Sale of work in Parish Room, May, 1904,
for the completion of the Parish Room.
Proceeds £260 12 4

(2) Bazaar, held in October, 1900, to
Enlarge and re-arrange the organ £574
Repair roof of Church 340
Part of cost, re-hanging bells 30
Painting Church and repairs 80

Net proceeds £1,024

May these successes stimulate us to a gigantic effort in November, 1910, to raise £1,000!

(b) MOSAICS.

“And the organ rings, and the sweet choir sings,
Along the emblazoned wall.”

—Mrs. Alexander.

North wall of the Sanctuary. The first panel depicts the aged Simeon. The second our Lord as the Good Shepherd, guiding a wandering sheep with His crook. Underneath both panels are the words: "To the Glory of God, and in loving memory of George Henry Greville Anson, Rector of this parish, 1846—1898." The third panel represents the aged Anna, and underneath are the words: "To the glory of God, and in loving memory of Jane Turner, who entered into her rest January 27, 1898. Placed here by her son and daughters." Over the three panels runs the text, "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." The remainder of the wall is filled in with an ornamental design in mosaic, of exquisite workmanship. With the exception of the third panel these mosaics were inserted by the congregation.

Over the vestry door is portrayed the Resurrection. Our Lord appears to Mary in the Garden, and two angels in white are sitting. The inscription runs: "To the Glory of God, and in memory of Bishop Fraser, 1870—1885. This work was placed here by G. H. G. Anson, Rector, 1896."

The Anson Chapel. The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is kneeling and listening to the message of the angel, who appears with a conventional lily, an emblem of purity. The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove is shedding his rays on Mary, emblematic of the words of the angel, "The power of the Highest shall overshadow Thee." The inscription runs: "In memory of Mary, widow of the Rev. Wm. Hutton, M.A.,

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Vicar of Beltham, and formerly widow of Sam. Fletcher; born 2 March, 1810, died 12 September, 1892. Erected by her nephews and nieces."

Over the porch doors. Inside. The Disciples St. James and St. John are represented. The former with a staff and cruse and scallop shell, the latter with the eagle, chalice and serpent, emblematic of Our Lord bruising the serpent. Over the whole are the words: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The Agnus Dei forms the central figure.

Over the porch door. Outside. On the left, an angel swinging a censer, and on the right another angel blowing a trumpet, emblematic of Prayer and Praise. Between the two run the words: "Praise the Lord," and "Pray without ceasing." To the Glory of God, and in memory of E. J. and A. Lucas.

(c) WINDOWS AND BRASSES.

"And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light."

—Milton's "Il Penseroso."

East Window. This is a triplet window. The subjects of the Birth, Baptism, Crucifixion and Resurrection are portrayed. The Apostles St. Peter with the keys, St. James and the Scallop Shell, St. Paul with the Sword and Bible, "The Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Our Lord is the central figure, surrounded by emblems of the four Evangelists, and underneath is St. John the Baptist. In the upper of two windows are the Pelican and the Phoenix, emblems

of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The following initials indicate who inserted the windows:—J.W.H.A., M.L.A., G.H.G.A., A.C.F.A., A.C.H.A., L.F.M.A. (see gen. table, p. 19.) “In Honorem Dei, 1846. Matrem dilectam disiderantes, hanc fenestram inserendam curaverunt,” which may be translated, “To the honour of God, 1846. They, mourning the loss of a beloved mother, caused this window to be inserted.” Over the triplet window is a beautiful wheel-window of twelve lights radiating from the centre, where is placed in a separate panel the Agnus Dei.

North of the Sanctuary. The Angel and Chalice with the words, ‘The Gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ The mosaic underneath contains the words: “In memory of of our mother, Elizabeth Catharine Anson, 1821—1903” (see gen. table, p. 19).

South of the Sanctuary. This most beautiful window contains an angel bearing aloft a lighted torch, and the texts: “Glad tidings of great joy”; “That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations”; “To be a light to them that sit in darkness.” Underneath are the words: “To the Glory of God, and in loving memory of Mary Louisa Anson, second daughter of Sir John W. H. Anson, Bart., and Elizabeth his wife. Born 4th June, 1848; died 11th Feb, 1899, at Kolhapur, India, where she had given the best years of her life to mission work. This window is dedicated by her sisters, Louisa, Elizabeth, Florence, Margaret, Gertrude and Janet.” (See gen. table, p. 19).

In the Anson Chapel are three windows. The

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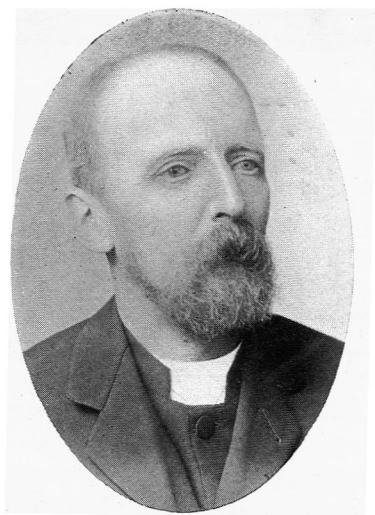
first, Christ asleep before calming the storm and the words, "They that go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters, these men see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep." "So when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble He delivereth them out of their distress." A brass tablet bears the following: "This window is erected by his six surviving brothers and sisters in memory of William Vernon Dickenson Anson, Lieutenant R.N., second son of General Sir W. Anson, Bart., K.C.B. He died of fever in the zealous execution of his duties in the suppression of the slave trade on board H.M.S. 'Iris' off the Coast of Africa, 4th November, 1841, aged 21, and was buried on the island of St. Thomas." (See gen. table, p. 19).

The second window portrays the Purification, and contains the figures of Mary, Our Lord, Simeon and Anna, with the words: "Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace." "She gave thanks likewise unto the Lord."

The next window depicts the Raising of Lazarus, and contains the words: "He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.'" "'I am the Resurrection and the life.'" On a brass tablet are the words: "These windows were placed here by Mary Fletcher in memory of her mother, Elizabeth Hodgson, who died 4th April, 1855, and her husband, Samuel Fletcher, who died 28th September, 1858."

South Aisle, beginning at the north end. The windows are in pairs.

(1) The first represents the Raising of Jairus' daughter, with the words: "He took her by the



Rev. J. J. Twist, M.A.



Birch Fold Cottage
(Oldest House in Rusholme).

hand, and the maid arose." The second, the healing of the woman with an issue of blood, and the words: "Be of good comfort, thy faith has made thee whole." A brass tablet contains the words: "To the Glory of God, and in memory of Catharine, wife of the Rev. J. J. Twist, who entered into her rest February 8, 1871," and the text: "Them also that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him."

(2) The first contains three angels, one sowing, another reaping, and a third gathering in the corn. Its companion window represents the same angels, hand in hand, rejoicing together, with a fourth angel kneeling before the throne. The appropriate words run thus: "One soweth, another reapeth, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." A tablet bears the following inscription: "In memory of Joseph Greenwood, sometime Principal of Owens College, who entered into rest 25th September, 1894, and Elizabeth, his wife, who entered into rest Dec. 27, 1865."

(3) One window represents the Healing of the deaf man; the other the Healing of the sick of the palsy, and the words: "He was restored, and saw every man clearly." "Arise, take up thy bed and go into thine house." "To the Glory of God, and in memory of C.P., died 24th Nov., 1869."

(4) A brass tablet is dedicated "To the Glory of God, and in memory of Edward Webber, sometime Churchwarden of this Church, died March 18th, 1899, aged 83; also Mary Bartlett, his wife, died January 22, 1891, aged 77; also their daughter, Mary Cole Webber, died Sept. 4, 1866, aged 17,

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by the surviving children, Arthur C. Webber, Eliza L. Dodd, Bertha A. Holdom, 1900."

(5) Christ makes little children an example: "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." A brass tablet bears the following inscription: "In memory of Wm. Clowes Tate, son of Wm. James and Elizabeth Tate, died at Plymouth 11th May, 1860; also in memory of Elizabeth Tate, died Feb. 21, 1853, by her son." Its companion window represents Christ amongst the doctors at 12 years of age: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" "To the Glory of God, and in memory of Elizabeth Tate, who entered into her rest Feb. 21, 1853, and in token of her children's undying love, this window is erected by her son."

North Aisle. (1) These windows pourtray, one, the Parable of the Lost Sheep, "When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing"; the other, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, "I will arise and go to my Father." "Dedicated to the Glory of God, and in memory."

(2) The first depicts the Sower sowing the seed, "The sower soweth the seed"; the second the Angel reaping the harvest, "The harvest is the end of the world." A brass tablet states that they were erected by James and Mary Mottershead, in memory of their two only daughters, May 8, 1877.

(3) The first represents the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The priest and the Levite have passed by into the distance. There is the beast and the inn, and the Samaritan pouring in oil and wine, and the words: "He that showed mercy on him."

The second contains a picture of Our Lord rescuing a lost sheep: "Go and do thou likewise." "In affectionate remembrance of her father, James Turner, this window was placed here by E.S., June 5, 1863."

West Window. These two windows are a copy of similar windows in Stone Church, Kent. On one is depicted the Agony in the Garden, with the three Disciples sleeping, with the words, "Watch unto prayer"; on the other, Christ carrying His Cross, and the words, "Pray without ceasing." The remainder of the windows is filled in with a beautiful ornamental design. In the space above is a quatre-foil window containing the four beasts, representing the four Evangelists. A brass tablet underneath bears the inscription: "This western window erected to the memory of John Dickenson, of Birch Hall, died 11th Jan., 1842, aged 85, by the six surviving children of the only daughter, Louisa Mary, wife of General Sir William Anson, Bart., K.C.B." It will be noticed that the east window was inserted by the same six children, the Archdeacon being one. (See gen. table, pages 15, 19.)

(d) THE BEATITUDES.

On the walls of the north and south aisles, just underneath the pitch of the roof, runs a narrow course of texts. Before each text will be seen a painted design symbolical of the words following, and which is likely to be missed by the unobservant eye. The appropriateness of the symbols is self-evident:—

(1) A broken reed: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

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(2) The Cross and Crown: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

(3) The Agnus Dei (Lamb of God): "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

(4) The chalice and paten: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

(5) The pelican feeding her young from her bleeding breast: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

(5) A lily: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

(6) Dove and Olive Branch: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

(7) A Scourge and Crown: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake."

(8) A bunch of corn: "Blessed are they which hear the Word of God and keep it."

(9) יהוה A Hebrew word for "Jehovah": "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven is perfect."

(10) Three fishes in the form of a Δ : "If ye love me keep my Commandments." The letters of the Greek word *ἰχθύς*, a fish, are the initials of the Greek words for: "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour." The triangle is an emblem of the Trinity.

(e) THE FOUR EVANGELISTS.

These occur in no less than six places. St. Matthew is represented by a man's face, St. Mark by a lion, St. Luke by an ox, St. John by an eagle. In Rev. iv. 7 the four living creatures are supposed

to represent the four Evangelists: "And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had the face as of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle." They are found over the west window, the carving at the four ends of the choir stalls, in the tiles of the sanctuary floor, in the middle east window, and on the four corbels in the chancel. The projections at the four corners of the tower represent the four living creatures.

(f) THE AGNUS DEI.
(Lamb of God.)

The lamb and banner are emblematic of "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The symbol is found over the doorway near the font in mosaic; in front of the pulpit and in the centre of the wheel-window at the east end.

(g) THE SCALLOP SHELL.

"And how should I know your true love
From many another one?
Oh, by his scallop shell and hat,
And by his sandal shoon."

—*Friar of Orders Grey.*

This emblem being that of St. James the Greater, patron saint of our Church, deserves more than a passing notice. Why the shell is connected with the Apostle is wrapped in legend. Herod killed St. James with the sword (Acts xii. 2). He is supposed to have preached the Gospel in Spain, where the Christians took his body. His remains were said to have been discovered at

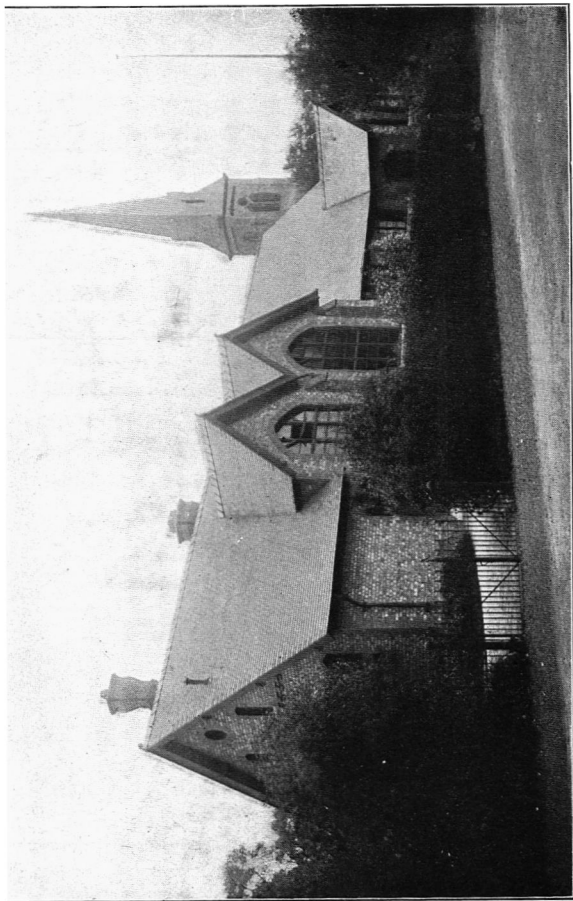
58 The History of Birch Church

Compostella, in Spain, in the eighth century. The shrine of Compostella was resorted to by pilgrims from all parts of Christendom. Erasmus, in his "Pilgrimages," states that St. James presented a pilgrim with a scallop shell at the shrine of Compostella; and he added, "Why a shell of this kind?" "Because the neighbouring seas abound in them." At the battle of Clavigo, 841, between the King of Leon and the Moors, St. James is said to have appeared in the field on a white charger, the harness covered with scallop shells, and having a sword of dazzling splendour. He gained the day for Spain, hence the Spaniards hold him in great veneration. He became their patron saint, and the order of Santiago de Espada was founded. So popular were pilgrimages to Compostella that no less than seventeen English peers and eight baronets carry scallop shells in their arms. The scallop shell may be seen in many parts of the Church, with or without the figure of St. James. The Apostle is often represented with a pilgrim staff and wallet, the shell being either on the wallet or in his hand.

(h) THE CARVINGS.

"Sermons in Stones."—*As You Like It.*

The carvings are worthy of study. Nothing is done haphazard, but everything is symbolical and full of meaning. There is no disappointment on close inspection. To begin with the exterior, I have mentioned the four projecting corbels at the base of the spire representing the four



Birch Parish Room.
Erected 1897, Enlarged 1903.

Evangelists—St. Matthew as the angel, St. Mark the winged lion, St. Luke the ox, St. John the eagle. The water from the upper roof is carried through grotesque gargoyles which are admirably carved. The roofs are pitched unusually high, and at each gable point of the nave and chancel are handsomely designed crosses. I wonder how many of my readers have noticed the crosses carved into the stone over the points of the arches at the south and west entrances. Mr. Menet, the first curate, with his own hand, chiselled the one over the south entrance, and the Archdeacon, not to be beaten, cut another over the west entrance. They are not deeply cut, and unless attention is drawn to them, these Symbols of our Faith may remain unobserved. On the right and left of the arch, at the south entrance, are the Queen and the Archbishop, symbols of the temporal and spiritual powers. Coming to the interior, one is struck with the whole perspective. The chancel arch at once arrests the attention. Notice the unusual height and the vertical nature of the design, so characteristic of the first pointed style. Here again on the right and left we have Queen Victoria and the Archbishop. The carving of the foliage in the capitals of the eastermost pillars is admirable, surrounding birds and a nest. Here comes in a little history. While the Church was in building a pair of wagtails built their nest and reared their young undisturbed. “Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young.” The two corbels between the organ chamber and the chancel represent the hands of a bishop, and of a priest, each holding a

60 The History of Birch Church

bunch of the *herba benedicta*. The reredos is a fine piece of work, representing the Last Supper. On the left are the brothers, St. James with the scallop shell, and St. John writing the Word. On the right the brothers, St. Peter with the keys, and St. Andrew with the loaves. The four corbels in the chancel are worthy of notice representing the four Evangelists. In the sanctuary are the credence table, sedilia and piscina. Near the font, over the marble inscription, is a beautiful carving of Our Lord's Baptism, and on the opposite side of the nave the birds and foliage again appear. The Anson and Buller "coats of arms" in the Anson Chapel are well executed. The Anson motto is "Nil Desperandum," "Nothing is to be despaired of," and the Buller motto, "Aquila non capit muscas," "An eagle does not catch flies." The wood carving of the organ screen will bear inspection. Amongst the heads is a very faithful portraiture of the Archdeacon. The pulpit is of Caen stone. Here again we have the Agnus Dei, and figures of the four Evangelists. Alternating with each of the clerestory windows are fourteen exquisitely carved angels. Some are symbolical of the objective acts of Prayer and Praise, the reading of the Word, etc. Others of the more subjective virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, the cross, the anchor, the heart, etc. They are almost out of sight, but are really beautiful. The tiles are a beautiful feature, the sanctuary tiles being given by Minton, the makers. From whichever point you view the Church, its massiveness, the harmony and proportion of its several parts, impress the eye and leave the mind satisfied.

I N S C R I P T I O N S
O N T H E
Bells of St. James's,
BIRCH-IN-RUSHOLME.

TENOR—From bequest of Alice Fletcher :
“ *Holiness unto the Lord.*”

SEVENTH—A. F. :
“ *Awake thou that sleepest, arise from
the dead.*”

SIXTH—A. F. :
“ *Watch ye ; stand fast in the Faith.*”

FIFTH—Given by the Rector :
“ *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and
weep with them that weep.*”

FOURTH—Given by the Congregation :
“ *Watch and pray.*”

THIRD—Given by Congregation & Parishoners :
“ *Pray one for another.*”

SECOND—Given by Parishoners :
“ *Praise the Lord of Heaven : Praise
Him in the height.*”

FIRST—Given by the Congregation :
“ *Praise Him, all ye Angels of His :
Praise Him, all His Host.*”

The first peal was rung on St. James's Day, July 25th 1863,
commencing at 4 p.m., before Evening Service.

The weight of the Tenor Bell is 13 cwt. 3 qrs.

The bells were cast at the foundry of MESSRS. MEARS & Co.,
Whitechapel.

G. H. G. ANSON, *Rector.*



The Bells of Birch Church.

DEDICATED
TO THE SMALL CHILDREN
OF THE
BIRCH PARISH SCHOOL,
THAT THEY MAY LEARN TO REPEAT SOMETHING
THAT WILL EVER BRING TO THEIR MINDS
THEIR HAPPY CHILDHOOD
SPENT WITHIN SOUND OF THE
MERRY PEAL OF BELLS OF THEIR PARISH CHURCH,
AND WHICH WILL COMMEMORATE THE
INSCRIPTIONS UPON THEM.

A. E. H. ANSON.

The Mauritius,
October, 1863.

THE PEAL OF BELLS, Birch, Rusholme.



THOSE Rusholme bells ! those Rusholme bells !
Merrily peal those Rusholme bells !
Hung above in the tower high
Merrily peals their minstrelsy.

Those Rusholme bells ! those Rusholme bells !
Merrily peal those Rusholme bells !
They bid us watch, they bid us pray,
They bid arise the sleeping clay.

Those Rusholme bells ! those Rusholme bells !
Merrily peal those Rusholme bells !
They bid us with their cheerful voice
Rejoice with them that do rejoice.

Those Rusholme bells ! those Rusholme bells !
Merrily peal those Rusholme bells !
And as their cadence soft does sweep
They bid us weep with those that weep.

Those Rusholme bells ! those Rusholme bells !
Merrily peal those Rusholme bells !
They fill the air with holy sound,
And sprinkle holy thoughts around.

Those Rusholme bells ! those Rusholme bells !
Merrily peal those Rusholme bells !
To call to prayer, to call to praise,
They swelling voices tuneful raise.

(i) THE BELLS.

“Those Rusholme Bells, those Rusholme Bells,
Merrily peal those Rusholme Bells;
They bid us with their cheerful voice,
Rejoice with them that do rejoice;
And as their cadence soft doth sweep,
They bid us weep with them that weep.”

—*Sir A. E. H. Anson.*

Inscriptions on the bells:—

Tenor—From bequest of Alice Fletcher:

“Holiness unto the Lord.”

Seventh—A. F.:

“Awake thou that sleepest, arise from
the dead.”

Sixth—A. F.:

“Watch ye; stand fast in the faith.”

Fifth—Given by the Rector:

“Rejoice with them that rejoice, and
weep with them that weep.”

Fourth—Given by the Congregation:

“Watch and pray.”

Third—Given by the Congregation and
Parishioners:

“Pray one for another.”

Second—Given by the Parishioners:

“Praise the Lord of Heaven: Praise him
in the height.”

First—Given by the Congregation:

“Praise Him, all ye angels of His:
Praise Him, all His Host.”

The first peal was rung on St. James's Day,
July 25th, 1863, commencing at 4 p.m., before

62 The History of Birch Church

evening service. The weight of the tenor bell is 13 cwt. 3 qrs.

I have stated that it was intended to place bells in the tower as soon as the Church was built, but this was delayed to 1863. Meanwhile, a band of ringers was formed, who practised at St. Philips', Hulme. A fatal accident marred the whole proceedings. A beam fell upon Mr. John Venables (the father of the choirman of that name) as he was standing in the south porch, and killed him. He was the gardener at Birch Hall. The ringers intended to meet the bells at the old toll-bar, Moss Lane, on their first arrival; to unhorse the lurry which was carrying them, and draw the bells to the Church. The lamentable circumstance just alluded to constrained the Archdeacon reluctantly to veto this jubilation. It would have been a touching sight, for one sees behind all this the devotion of a noble band of ringers to their sacred work, a feeling which, we are sure, has inspired all their successors. Mr. W. E. Ryder is the oldest active ringer. He has supplied me with the following list of the first ringers:—Messrs. F. Fox, leader, J. Cookson, J. M. Thorpe, Secretary, Wm. Venables, James Venables, Custodian, Wm. Gill, Geo. Handley, and Edward Watson. Mr. Edward Watson is the only survivor. He is in his 89th year, hale and hearty. We wish him a bright and hopeful eventide.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CONVERSATION ON BIRCH CHURCH BY TWO FRIENDS.

"The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel."

—*Hamlet.*

IN the Reference Library, King Street, may be seen a book containing an interesting dialogue between two friends about Birch Church, shortly after its erection. The names of persons and places are fictitious, but the writer vouches for the accuracy of the narrative.

The two wayfarers are living in the neighbourhood in pursuit of health, Douglas and Wilton by name. They meet on the bridge which crosses the brook. They salute each other, and while conversing the church-bell strikes the ear.

Wilton: "Why does the bell ring at this hour?"

Douglas: "To announce to the surrounding population that it is the hour of prayer."

Wilton: "Are there then daily prayers offered up in this country church?"

Douglas: "There are indeed, morning and evening."

The bell ceases, and they pass up the gravelled footpath, enter the church and join in the service. They meet again the next day.

Douglas: "When I cast my eyes to this spot I am always impressed with its beauty, and yet this

64 A Conversation on Birch Church

beautiful church only replaces a small building built before the Reformation."

Wilton: "Do you know the date?"

Douglas: "Not precisely." He then gives an account of the gift of land to Matthew de Birch for the purpose of building a chapel. They then pass into the church in silence, for it is the hour of prayer.

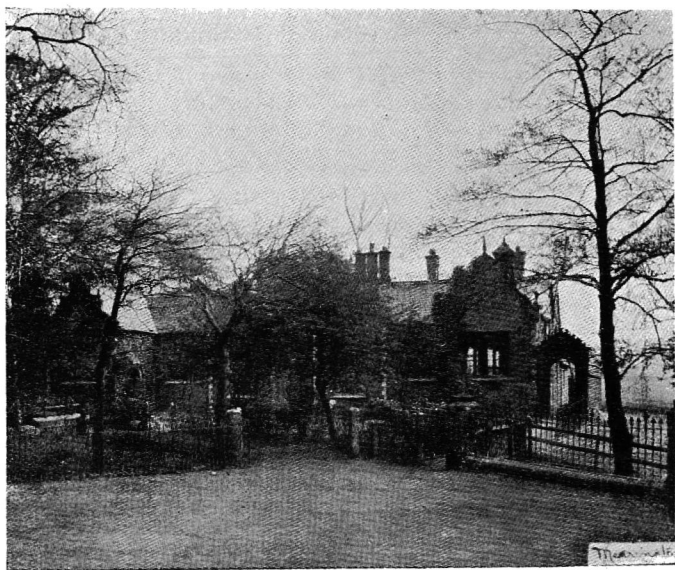
The next morning as they meet a funeral approaches. They go into the church, see the clergyman enter the vestry and return in his priestly vestments. They see from where they sit the procession pass through the west door. They join in the burial service, follow the procession to the grave, and notice the sympathetic grasp of the mourners' hands, by the clergyman. (How like the Archdeacon!).

The next morning Wilton does not appear, being indisposed. So Douglas looks him up at his lodgings, for they had exchanged cards. The house where Wilton stayed is described. Not far from the Church, "Jessamine Lodge," a stone slab over the front door bears the date 1743. At the back is an orchard and vegetable garden; in front a lawn.

The rest of the book is taken up with an account of the doings of the family. Perhaps some of my readers may identify the names and places.



The Author.



The Schools.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BIRCH SCHOOLS.

“Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel,
And shining morning face, creeping like a snail,
Unwillingly to school.”

—*As You Like It.*

A WORD about the founding of the Schools. The first schoolroom was situated at the corner nearest Birch, between the Birch Hall Lane and Dickenson Road, and was called “Chadwick’s School,” from the name of the teacher. I just remember it as a private house, a long, low building with diamond panes. It seems to have been used as a Day and Sunday School. The Sunday scholars were marched in procession down Birch Hall Lane to Birch Chapel. In 1841, as the stone inscription over the schoolhouse proclaims, the Schools at “Big Birch” were built. The style is Elizabethan. A written note of the time speaks of the little garden as neatly kept. They were the only schools for miles around at the time. Chadwick’s School seems to have continued as an Infant Day School. Miss Gartside and Mr. Geo. Ryder both remember being taken by the hand by Miss Rawlinson, the succeeding teacher. Cheery Miss Rawlinson! Her memory is still cherished by many. The Archdeacon conceived the idea of an Infant School in Nelson Street, Rusholme. The population was thickest in that neighbourhood, and Platt Church,

although it had been built, had not been assigned a district, and had no school. A room was rented in a house occupied by a Mrs. Phillips until a school should be built near. I believe the Archdeacon laid a deposit for the purchase of some land. I am told the scholars always had a holiday on the occasion of the pig-killing, when the corpse had to hang in the schoolroom. To make a jest of Byron's words:

“Butchered to make a (Roman) holiday.”

Anyhow, the scheme fell through, and the present Infant School was opened in Dickenson Road, August 5, 1850. Miss Gartside, Annie Downs, Edward Roberts, William Davies, all infants, helped the Archdeacon to lay the foundation stone. Miss Gartside is the only survivor. Being quite a little mite, she had to be lifted up. There are many still alive who remember the event, and Miss Rawlinson, the first teacher. And so “Little Birch” was begun. The foundation stone of the enlargement was laid by Dr. Hook on the 25th July, 1867, assisted by Annie Piggott, Amy Sellars and George Frevillier, all infants, on the twenty-first anniversary of the Church. The following are the names of the head teachers at “Little Birch”:—Miss Rawlinson, Miss Gartside, Miss Watson, Miss Woodhead, four teachers in sixty years. Of “Big Birch,” Mr. Bailey, Mr. Booth, Mr. Thorpe, Mr. Stott, Mr. Buckley, five teachers within a few months of seventy years. Pardon, my reader, a personal reference. The writer was brought to see Mr. Thorpe, the headmaster, after evensong, Sunday, August 3, 1856. We lived

three miles from the School. The Archdeacon was standing by, and (little pigs have big ears) I overheard the remark, "Of course, you'll register him, Mr. Thorpe, but he'll never stop." I was pupil teacher 1860-64, and came back as head teacher April 1st, 1867. And so the Day and Sunday Schools have gone on, plodding the even tenour of their way.

Sometimes an old scholar will pay me a visit, and one is pleased to find that many old pupils have succeeded in life. The failures never come. One of the scholars, Walter Cooper, a chorister boy, being taken ill, was taken to the Rectory, and never left its shelter till he went to College. In the meantime he became a pupil teacher, and in course of time became Vicar of St. Albans, Rochdale. It is an interesting fact that St. Albans' Sunday School and Birch ran each other very closely for the first place, for many years, in the Diocesan Sunday School Examinations.

Two important enlargements of "Big Birch" should be mentioned; an addition to the south-east end, opened by Bishop Fraser, 1880, and another addition at the south-west end in 1905.

Two events stand out. One, the centenary of the founding of Sunday Schools, 1880, when the scholars, old and young, met at Dickenson Road one Sunday afternoon, and having been presented with medals, marched in procession to the Church. We were 500 strong. Mr. "Lane" and myself had compiled a service of song, "Ruth," for the occasion. One teacher I should like to mention, Dr. Greenwood, Principal of the Owens College in Quay Street. He was starting evening classes at

the College, and wished to learn something of young men. He was a classical scholar of repute, particularly in Greek Testament criticism. The Sunday after his death the Archdeacon, in his sermon, made the following epigrammatic remark, "If we would have the spirit in its fulness, we must also have the letter in its exactness."

Birch has always been strong in its senior classes. We always seemed to have solved the problem "How to retain our elder scholars," and, may I add also, "How to gather in our little ones." The reader will recognise many faces on the photograph of the Whitsuntide helpers and "cutters up." The Whitsuntide festivities, not forgetting the Whit-Monday parents' tea-party, have always been a marked feature of Birch, and for many years the Whit-Thursday excursion (a joyous time) was the means of bringing together Birch and her daughter parishes. We have pleasant recollections of Mrs. Gartside, who superintended the tea-makers for so many years. If she was not the "autocrat of the breakfast table," she certainly was of the tea-table. But then she did her work well and was always ready to give a helping hand. Peace to her memory! The writer remembers receiving his first prize one Whit Monday of long ago, at a parents' tea-party. The Bishop of Manchester (Bishop James Prince Lee) had offered a few prizes for the best answers in religious knowledge. I remember well reciting my "piece," standing on a tea-table.

Another prominent event was the Jubilee of the Day Schools, July 4, 1881, which took the form of a reunion of old scholars and teachers. Mr. Bailey, from Barnard Castle, the first Schoolmaster, and

his successor, Mr. Booth, were present. We began with service in Church. The ordinary lesson for the day contained the appropriate words, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Tea was provided in the schoolroom. The Archdeacon took the company round his garden, and a meeting was held in the schoolroom, where addresses were given, songs sung by the old scholars and reminiscences exchanged. Many of the first scholars were present. I may mention that the Day School prayers, compiled by Mr. Menet, the first Curate, are still in use.

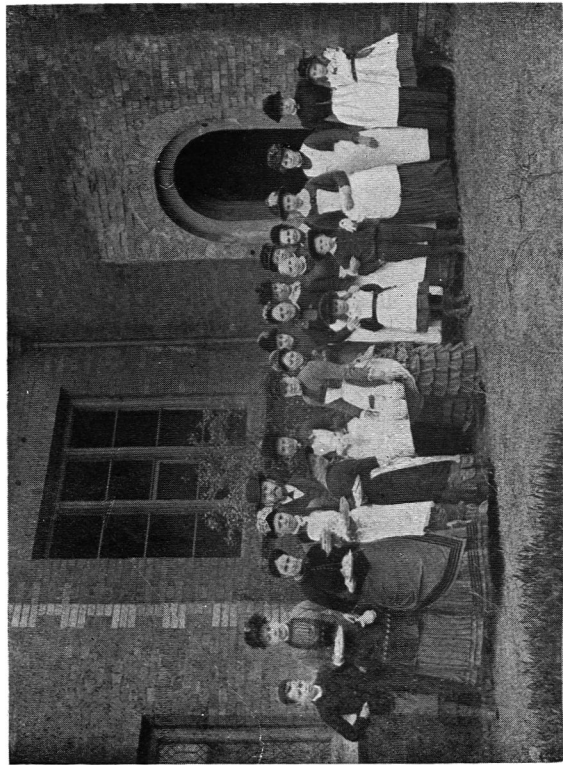
One must record an appreciation of the work of the long line of Sunday School teachers. That "noble army of"—martyrs, I was going to say. I do not know any band of workers more deserving of our gratitude than the Sunday School teachers. Again, I long to mention names, but I desist. As we grow older we look back rather than forward on our work, and regret, perchance, opportunities missed, but there always remains the cheering encouragement of our Divine Teacher, "My Word shall not return unto Me void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it."

CHAPTER X.

BIRCH LITERARY SOCIETY.

“ Knowledge is power.”

It is natural that I should say a few words about a Society of which I was the first Secretary. The Society was founded in 1876, as an outcome of the Manchester Church of England Literary Union, to which we became affiliated. The objects, as stated in the minutes were: “The moral and intellectual improvement of its members by means of lectures, essays and discussions; and the binding together of those either interested or engaged in church work.” The first officers were: President, Ven. Archdeacon Anson; Vice-Presidents, the Revs. H. A. Crosbie and W. Marsden, Messrs. C. J. Pooley and Edward Donner (now Sir Edward); Treasurer, Mr. F. S. Bayley; Hon. Sec., Mr. J. S. Buckley; Committee, Messrs. J. Bridge, T. Clough, H. Craig, W. Frevillier, J. Line, H. Nall. Besides our own members the following gentlemen have lectured for the Society: Canon Kelly, Archdeacon Wilson, Canon Hicks (now Bishop of Lincoln), Professors Schuster, W. Boyd-Dawkins, A. Gamgee, Dr. Roscoe (now Sir Henry), Core, Balfour Stewart, Milnes Marshall, Dixon, and Tout; the Rev. and Hon. A. T. Lyttelton, Mr. Geo. Milner, Sir W. R. Anson, the Rev. W. R. W. Stephens, D.D., Dean of Winchester, Mr. Leo Grindon, Mr. Sam. Brandram (Recitals



Tea Party Helpers.

from Shakespeare). Many of us can remember lively and stirring debates, "Home Rule," for instance. Amongst the members who joined in the first session the following are still living, and some still amongst us: The Revs. H. Norburn and H. A. Crosbie; Messrs. F. S. Bayley, T. Clough, J. Nall, W. Craig, W. E. Ryder, Geo. Ryder, Frank Allen, E. Harley, Jos. Mottershead, Robert Borrowghs, W. F. Lane (now Councillor Lane-Scott), Charles Bird, W. Adkin, S. Adkin, J. S. and R. Renshaw, J. Bridge, and J. S. Buckley (Secretary).

The Archdeacon had often, before the founding of the Society, invited distinguished lecturers. To mention two: John Ruskin gave two in the Rusholme Public Hall entitled, "King's Treasuries," and "Queen's Gardens." The Rev. Walter Hook also gave a famous lecture, in the same place, on "Church Music."

The Society is entering on its thirty-fifth session, and is in full vigour. It has had its ups and downs, but on the whole has been more or less successful. Let us hope that the Society has fulfilled the objects for which it was founded.

CHAPTER XI.

A. COMPARISON.

"Be it a weakness, it deserves some praise,
We love the play-place of our early days."

—*Cowper.*

MRS. G. H. G. ANSON writes from Ambleside: "The first home I had in Rusholme was a little cottage, with nice gardens, where St. Mary's Home now stands. The place is so much altered now that it will be difficult for newcomers to realise what a little country village Rusholme was in those days."

Although Rusholme has altered much, I cannot say that Birch itself has altered so much. To go a long way back, old deeds reveal the fact that the district was an uncultivated morass covered with rushes and turf. Hence the names Rush-holme, Rush-ford, Rush Brook. There is mention of the "Byrchen Wode," where the swine would roam. In the ninth century a bank of earth was thrown up by the Saxons to keep out the Danes. The bank is now discernible, and the trench became a watercourse draining the adjacent lands, and is now termed the Nico Ditch (the "liquor" ditch of our early days). A word as to the origin of the name. Whittaker's derivation, meaning the "Devil's" ditch is fanciful. H. T. Crofton seems to have made the derivation clear. In 1484 a deed gives the name Michewall Diche. Slade was anciently called Milkwall-Slade. The first part of the word is akin to the Scotch muckle, much or great. The word has been traced down until it

takes the form Nico Ditch, meaning the Great Ditch.

Let me recall the appearance of Birch forty years ago. There was a stile near "the ash tree," that old landmark at the corner of Brighton Grove.

"The tree is living yet."

A pleasant field-path led down Brighton Grove. The Brighton Grove project (see the photograph) was never carried out. From Axon's shippon, opposite the "dead" entry to the brook, was a continuous hawthorn hedge. Now there is only

"Yon straggling hedge that skirts the way."

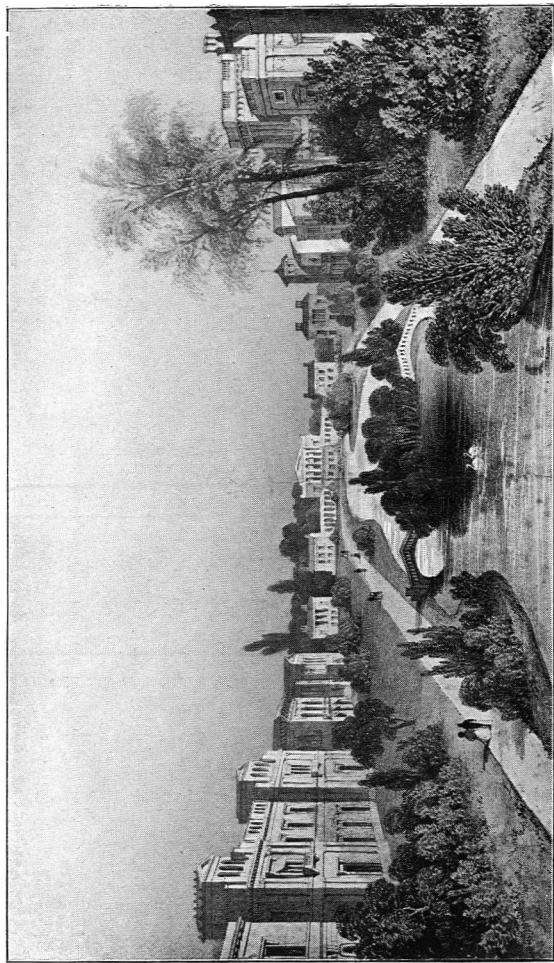
Between Belton Terrace and the brook was the Birch Cricket Field. The Club was one of some repute. There was a pretty walk along the Brookside, from the Church to nearly opposite Anson Road. The brook was deep and clear. Where the Park Lodge now is, stood a weir, which dammed up the water for some distance. A scholar was unfortunately drowned in crossing it. In fact, we boys were able to take a "header" at "the bathing place." A brickcroft, where the tennis-court now is, disfigured the spot. Just before my time there was a brickcroft where the "Exhibition" now stands, and where machine-made bricks were produced. The trade opposed the introduction of machinery, and destroyed the bricks. In a scuffle which ensued a watchman was shot.

Birch was then destitute of Corporation gas and water. The Church was lit by candles. I remember how we chorister boys used to cling together going down the dark lane after choir practice. All the water at Birch was got by

pumping, notwithstanding the fact that the Rectory and Schoolhouse were in close proximity to the churchyard. Still we thrive. On the whole, present times and places compare favourably with "the good old days." We venture to trust that the "Birch" Brook, even if it does not again become a trout stream, may in the dim and distant future regain some of its pristine purity.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

We have the beautiful "Birch Fields Park" close at hand, a large portion of the land being given by Sir W. R. Anson. We have the Parish room and grounds, and the buildings in the vicinity are by no means an "eyesore." Let us take a stroll past the Church, through the Birch Hall, and Birch Fold farms, and we have as charming a rural walk as can be had for miles round, prettier even now than in days of yore. Notice the setting of Birch Hall and Birch Hall farm amongst those noble trees, "those rugged elms," truly a picture of sylvan beauty. Birch still remains a green oasis amidst the inevitable encroachment of buildings. I believe the children are smarter and under better discipline. Their general "get up" has improved. But then, it ought to be so. More is now spent on their education. On the whole, we must surely admit that there is an evolution in things for the better. Our predecessors laboured, and we have entered into their labours. In bidding "farewell" to my readers, may I hope that the perusal of these pages may arouse a greater interest in our Church? If so, the writer's object will not be wholly unaccomplished.



Brighton Grove Scheme of 1834.

THIS CROSS is in memory of my brother George H.G.Anon, who was for 51 years, 1846 - 1898, Rector of Birch, and for 20 years Archdeacon of Manchester. The cross erected at the time of his death was of red sandstone, and became quite destroyed by the weather. I therefore, in 1915, replaced it by the present red granite monument, in entirely similar design.

Archibald E.H,Anson.



THESE TABLETS were originally in the old Chapel, and were removed to the new Church at the time it was built. But they were placed in a most inconspicuous position, behind the door in the tower entrance. In 1915 I had them thoroughly repaired, and placed where they now are.

Archibald E.H. Anson.



THESE TABLETS
 DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
 JOHN H. HARRIS, JR., OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
 WHO DIED AT THE AGE OF 21 YEARS ON JANUARY 10, 1906
 AND THESE TABLETS WERE PLACED HERE JANUARY 10, 1906



