



## Sarah Losh's account of the Church building

This is part of the account of building St Mary's Church transcribed by the Revd. Jackson from a document in Sarah's own hand, a document that has since been lost.

'In the year 1840 the old chapel in Wreay was found to be in a very dilapidated condition, the slate was much broken, the timber of the roof was in a dangerous state of decay and the walls were in many parts mouldy and green from the moisture which trickled down them. Internments had taken place not only close to the walls, but even within them, so that in consequence of these various circumstances, the air of the building had become vitiated as to prove injurious to the health of many of those who remained in it during the time of the service.

A committee having been formed for the restoration of the edifice, it was resolved to apply to the proper authorities, for leave to remove to a fresh spot, where it would be unencumbered by graves. This plan was approved by the bishop and by the chancellor of the Diocese and by the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle Cathedral, who as patrons of the living agreed to give £30 to the Chancel, that being the sum estimated for replacing it exactly as it then stood. With this aid I offered to furnish a new site for the chapel and to defray all the expenses of its re-erection, on condition that I should be left unrestricted as to the mode of building it. The destruction of an ancient structure however necessary, must always afford cause for regret, but the Chapel at Wreay had apparently little claim to respect, either in an antiquarian or an architectural point of view.

The ground was very uneven and had formerly several pools of water, on which, when frozen, the schoolboys skated. On levelling the water gushed up and filled the new-dug foundation so rapidly, that it was necessary to fill with stones, and to commence further to the eastward. To secure the dryness of the chapel floor the flags are raised on dwarf walls, with the exception of the platform at the entrance which is raised on dry stone chippings. In order to dispense with spouts the roof of the chapel projects well over the walls, the emblematic monsters which are placed like gargoyles, being meant for ventilators, or for the emission of smoke. The Dragon which serves for the latter purpose, is not like the others poised properly on the wall; the projecting part being too ponderous, so that it is kept in place mainly by the stones above it.

Some caution will be needed in repairing such of the windows as are made of alabaster which is extremely brittle. The walls of the Chapel have been coated not with plaister but with Roman cement. This is a superior covering if not broken into, but its liability to crack unfits it for any wall designed for the reception of monumental tablets. These I would earnestly hope would not be introduced into this rustic chapel, the simplicity and uniformity of which, would be totally destroyed, by the glaring aspect of black, white or coloured marble, with the usual decorations either heraldic or mortuary.

With regard to the old materials of the fabric, the stones and flags were by agreement used up by the builder, and the only window in tolerable repair was set aside to be employed at the parsonage; the others were used as common stones and some of the timber was laid as sleepers for the seats. The old pews were interspersed behind the slates and the wood ceiling. The bell gable has been placed by the pond at the roadside to remain as a relic of the former chapel.

The unpolished mode of building adhered to in the new chapel, most approximates to early Saxon or modified Lombard, which was preferred to a more improved style, as less expensive and elaborate. In conformity to this primitive manner of building, large windows could not have been made in the absis, but the Bishop fearing a want of light, gave only a conditional assent to the plan as it now stands, desiring that it should be so contrived that larger windows might be opened if found desirable. These, however, he afterwards dispensed with. The alabaster is cut to represent different aspects of the fossil flora chiefly found in Northumberland and Durham.'