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The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

THE MOURHOLME MAGAZINE

OF LOCAL HISTORY

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The Mourholme Magazine of Local History is issued by the Mourholme Local History Society for the study of the history of the ancient Parish of Warton and its seven constituent townships Borwick Carnforth Priest Hutton, Silverdale, Warton with Lindeth, Yealand Convers and Yealand Redmayne

The Society is named after the Manor of Mourholme, the home of the mediaeval Lords of Varton Their seat Mourholme Castle, stood on the site now covered by Dock Acres

* * *

The Yearly subscription of £2 50 includes evening lectures and field trips, the Mourholme Magazine and access to the Society's archival material

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Contributions of articles, notes and queries.

letters etc., are invited and should be sent to the secretary Mrs. J Clarke, 55 Silverdale Road, Yealand Redmayne, LAS 9TB Tel Burton 781363

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A FUNEREAL TOPIC

John Lucas, Villiam Stout and the Confirmation of an Ancient Custom.

J.D. Marshall

Students of Warton history are well aware how fortunate they are in having such a local recorder as the remarkable John Lucas. Professor W.G. Hoskins in his 1966 inaugural lecture at the University of Leicester, had this to say about Lucas. (1)

in the eighteenth century, tended to be written by parsons and to be mostly concerned with the squire and his relations. There were of course notable exceptions to these generalisations, but they stand out because they are so rare, like John Lucas's Ristory of Warton in Lancashire, which was compiled between 1710 and 1740 but not published until 1931. Lucas was a schoolmaster and therefore had a wider range of interests and sympathies than the squires and the parsons.'

So there we have it - the <u>History</u> ranges so widely because Lucas had taught school, and was, of course, a man of much learning and even more curiosity. Members of the Mourholme Society will have an advantage over Professor Hoskins in that some, at least, will be conversant with the much longer MS of the <u>History</u> which has not so far been published.

In this short article, I am quoting from the Ford and Fuller-Maitland published and edited version, and am concerned with Lucas's comments on Funeral Rites as given on page 23-4 of the 1931 edition, and on fols.260 and following of the original manuscript. Lucas's description of funeral customs is as detailed and graphic as we are likely to find in any local or

antiquarian source, and there is ground for supposing that the customs relate to a much wider area of North Lancashire and Cumbria. However, the actual customs may have varied notably from place to place. Mrs Marjorie Rowlings's The Folklore of the Lake District (1976) describes them as follows: (2)

"A bidder was...sent round to invite people to funerals... It was an affront to both living and dead to refuse. He also recalls that a small table with a white cloth was placed outside the door of the deceased on the day of the funeral. It held a vase or basin with sprigs of box or yew in it. Mourners took a sprig to drop on the coffin after it had been lowered into the grave Old people can remember arvai bread or biscuits being given to those who attended a funeral Some think the word arval means 'inheritance' while others that it derives from an ancient Scandinavian word for funerals. It is still the custom in Cumbria for the deceased's next of kin to invite relatives and all who have attended the funeral from a distance to join in a meal or refreshments, after the ceremony."

Lucas is especially interesting on this very point -and the author of The Folklore of the Lake District did not quote him, or the the other authorities who are mentioned in this article. Lucas wrote:

The heir of the Deceased plentifully furnishes One, two or more Tables, according to his Ability, of which the whole Company partake, every one according to his liking. And afterwards there is distributed to every one a Penny Wheaten loaf, and a large Shive of Cheese (which they take away with them), and also a Drink of Ale. If the Heir be poor he had no feast, and I think I have heard that of late Years, some have omitted the Cheese...

I shall return to this last sentence. Meanwhile, Lucas goes on to give a description of the further custom whereby 'Relations and dear Friends help to carry the Dead, especially out of the Church to the Grave.' Afterwards, 'Friends and Relations are desired to go to the Alehouse in the Town (which be names)...where every one had a Penny Loaf and Ale allowed, according to the Ability of the Deceased; and this they call an Arval. People afterwards 'look into the Grave, and throw in the laurels, Rosemary & c. they have in their Hands', the evergreens being seen as a symbol of the Resurrection.

Lucas's commentary is especially valuable as fixing these customs in a given period. But we can go earlier for further evidence. William Stout, in his Autobiography, and writing of the year 1692, (from what were evidently prepared notes used on a later occasion), writes that 'At this time we sould much cheese to funeralls in the country(side) from therty to one hundred pound weight as the deceased was of ability, which was shived into 2 or 3 slices in the pound, and one, with a penny manchet given to all the attendants'. He adds that Maples biscuits were also given to attenders. So, then, the arval custom was certainly used in the seventeenth century. As for the eighteenth, the Browne MSS (at the Kendal Record Office) reveal that at the funeral of George Browne of Troutbeck (1702), payment was made for 'Bread 16 doz. at 14 to the dozen dealt whole loaves, 16s. Mr. Robert Vilson arvall cheese 78 lbs...' This gives an idea of the number of people who might be catered for in the case of a deceased person who was well known in the community, about 200 in the case of George Browne. It should be added that the dialect word shive for a slice is still used in the Lancaster area, and that manchet means a small loaf.

So, Lucas was describing a funeral custom which was

not peculiar to Varton, and he fixes it safely in a given time. Mrs. Rowling, in The Folklora of the Lake District, in the preparation of which she used some oral questioning of old people, makes quite clear that this custom lasted into the lifetime of people who were alive in this century: 'Old people can remember arval bread or biscuits being given to those who attended a funeral'. Accordingly we should not be surprised that yet another diarist or commentator, this time from the early nineteenth century, also comments on the arval custom. This is Villiam Fleming of Pennington, about whom members of the Mourholme Society have already heard; and on January 20th, 1812, Villiam entered the following in his Journal and Commonplace Book:

'This morning I attended the funeral of Henry Fell. There was first brought into the Room a Cup of Chocolate and Biscuit or Dry Toast for each Person and immediately after these were removed each Person was served with a Glass of Wine and Sweet Biscuits'.

Earlier, however, he had stated in one of his 1806 entries, that:

'It is a singular Custom, still followed at Dalton by the more respected Inhabitants at Funerals, to Divide the people who attend the Interment into three Classes: the First Class consists of the richest and nearest Relations who have a warm Dinner provided. The Second consists of the Poorest and more distant Relations, together with their richer Acquaintances or Friends, who partake of a cold Dinner, and the third, of the Farmers and people in the Town, who are not Relations. who have Bread and Cheese'. (Vol. 4, fol. 1063; a microfilm of this source is held in the University of Lancaster Library).

We learn from these entries that the customs could vary with the social position and wealth of the deceased, and as for the 'third Class', John Lucas had hinted that there was some social segregation in Warton when he explained, in the passage quoted, that:

'Nor are the Poor forgotten, but all that come (and great numbers I have seen upon this Occasion, many whereof would rather go " or 8 Miles to a Penny-Dole, than earn Six Pence in the Time by more Laudable Industry) are put into some large Barn or Yard, and as they come out receive every one a Penny or more according to the Charity or Circumstance of the Giver...'

No wonder that funerals were well attended! Was such expenditure connected with the deeply-founded feeling that a man or woman might hope to fare better after death when the person concerned had performed acts of charity? ('Fire Insurance', as we know, is the unkind expression for this state of mind). Or was it simply a matter of the fairness of the family name? For after all, the relict and survivors in the family circle had to make all the arrangements and do all the 'bidding' or inviting, and they had to spend a very large sum of money.

It is possible to find how much was spent in literally thousands of cases, by looking at the lists of items in probate inventories. Many copies of these have been made, as regards the Warton district, and it should be possible to estimate the average spending on funerals at different times in different social groups. Indeed, I actually did such a calculation for the parish of Hawkshead, with the following results:

1691-1720			
Group	No in	Gross inv *	Kean
had macon one; "see	Group	Total	Funeral
	laloba	(mean)	Expenses
1726" , 56100)			dxa ad gan
Professions	4	£ 52 19	£6.06
Upper Peasantry	33	211 45	6.41
Middle Peasantry	31	61 73	4 65
Lower peasantry	44	22.78	3 20
Crafts without land	7	78.74	3.43
1721-1750			
Professions	3	2655 43	
Upper Peasantry	47	286.77	8.39
Middle Peasantry	22	69.38	4 85
Lower Peasantry	51	22.85	4 01
Crafts without land	13	69.62	5.03

John Lucas's comment, written in the second of these periods, was 'I think I have heard of late Years. some have pmitted the Cheese' In point of fact, there is no evidence at all that people were spending less on funerals, and even the Lower Peasantry who were often very humbly placed, might spend a sixth or more of the value of their total assets on a reet good do' where the funeral expenses were concerned Some of these average funeral figures represent something of the order of £1000 in current values and this thought suggests that the changes have not been very great, for many of us will have faced catering and other bills of that size However, we have been looking at a society which was much poorer in the first place, and this makes the expenditure all the more remarkable.

There remain a number of other items for by ef mention. People really did make an outlay 'according to ability' (to use an expression employed by both Lucas and Stout), but, as the Hawkshead figures show. the poorly off 'lashed out' relatively greater sums than did the better off. This suggests that community pressure was quite heavy, and that people were frightened by the tongues of the neighbours, or were at least very prudent in keeping up appearances. It is also a very common human failing to wish to look at least as well as one's neighbour, even if one pays heavily for the effort.

As to the origin of the word arval, the Oxford English Dictionary is somewhat cautious on the subject, but tentatively relates it to the Old Morse, erfical, 'funeral feast', although a later form suggests that the meaning was 'inheritance banquet'. The custom is certainly a very old one, but, as the great mediaevalist G.C. Coulton remarked in another context, 'we do not know, we only suppose'. Meanwhile we can give thanks to John Lucas for the graphic information he supplies on this subject, while at the same time refusing to rest content with what he says. It is always necessary to look outside one's own corner for further enlightenment.

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^{*} The average value of the probate inventories in the group including credits but not taking debts into account.

¹⁾ W.G. Hoskins, English Local History; the

Past and the Future

(Leicester University Press 1966) pp.5-6

²⁾ Readers will also find Dr. W. Rollinson' Lite and Tradition in the Lake District. especially p.53, interesting on this point

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

It is with real pleasure that I put my chairman's hat on to write to you, all the members and friends of the Mourholme Local History Society, to mark this special celebration. "The Mourholme" has reached its 10th anniversary year and here, reflecting the continuing vigour of its members, is the re-emergence of the Mourholme Magazine.

Amongst our members are those who will remember sitting on the steering committee, over cups of coffee, working out our basic aims and the details of our constitution. Were we really sure then that, out of our local history classes, a full fledged history society would become viable? Certainly the Warton History Group had been "going strong" for years. The "rolling stones" set off by Dr Bill Robinson's and Mr Paul Booth's classes have never stopped long enough to be in danger of gathering mose! We owe Dr Rollinson and Mr Booth a debt of gratitude for our very existence as a society, and for their encouragement, in our early days especially.

One of the sad things about our anniversary year is the news that, in the near future, Liverpool University is to cease offering Continuing Education Courses to rural areas such as ours' - a great loss. Another disappointment is the apparent decline in interest in research within the society just now - I say apparent as I know many of you are engaged in your own lines of historical enquiry - but how good it would be to see active research groups working together again. The raw material is there. Dr John Findlater has been organising our archives, a large and growing collection of books, maps, articles and other sources, all waiting to be delved into.

The ten years have seen full programmes of speakers and outings. Our very first lecture, in

October 1980, was from Dr John Marshall - an auspicious beginning! Since then we have learned of ancient field patterns, local diarists, vernacular architecture and date stones, the Bronze age site at Borwick, Lancashire school days in the early twentieth century, local ice houses, old Arnside and Milnthorpe, local quarries and quarrymen, the Lady Anne, and so very much more. We have been given challenges: were Pele towers "defensive castles" or just the trendy architecture of the day? And why is each of our local canal bridges marked by a group of larches? The places we have visited make a list of happy reminiscences. And, as a happy background, to allow winter meetings, is the warmth of welcome from the sisters at Hyning.

We have also had our sad times. This year has seen the passing of Mr Edgar Pye, an honorary vice-president and behind the scenes supporter. We also remember with gratitude the contributions made to the foundation and research work of the society by Mrs Anne Morley, Mr David Peter and Mr MacRae. And we still miss the enthusiasms of Mrs Margaret Clarke and Mrs Mancy Thomas who have left our area.

In one of our steering committee meetings Mr Paul Booth expressed his view that at the inaugural Meeting we could see 80-100 attending, but that thereafter numbers would drop to 40 or 50. I am glad to report, Paul, that we always have at least 50 at every meeting, and often so many that we are currently concerned about seating everyone, and that our membership has remained steady at 90-100. In fact, all the signs are good for another ten splendid years!

Happy birthday to us!

Jean Chatterley.

3.12.89

A LINCOLESHIRE FARKER (Part One)

"H.J." knew Morecambe when the trans on the front were horse-drawn, and he retired to this area over a quarter of a century ago. But his origins and main career were in farming in Lincolnshire. He recalls in this first article aspects of his childhood and family and village life and of farming in the Fens in the early part of this century

"I was born in Sempringham Fen in 1903 and baptised at Sempringham Priory My father was a farmer and moved to Rippingale at that period. My parents were happy, hard-working people, and my father was a churchwarden for many years. When he was first married, he had a mill and baking business at Pymore in Cambridgeshire. Before going cut with the bread he would fill the mill with corn and leave the brake on. If the wind got up, my mother could let the brake off and the mill would start grinding. He said that as he went on his round it made him very happy to look across the flat fields and see the old mill going.

When working for a Mr Pocklington near Sleaford at the turn of the century he had to go to Boston to fetch the five-ton "cross" on which the sails of Heckington mill turned. His two-horse cart was bogged to the axles in mud, but he hired another horse with the shilling he always carried. The cross had to be lifted inside the tower by block and tackle and father had to climb the tower and fix the sails Heckington remains the only eight-sailed mill in the country. This was one of the stories we children made father tell over and over, in the candle-light, there wasn't much reading then.

I went to school when I was three, leaving at twelve. At seven I had whooping cough, and remember the

doctor arriving in his carriage and horses, and his top hat, from Billingborough, five miles off. The milk had to be delivered before school, and my father bought me a four-guinea cycle when I was ten. We three boys also had to fetch the cattle after school from a mile away. It was a communal field; and, when turned out, the cows found their own way to their farms.

The school yard was gravel, and there weren't any rubber balls then The schoolmistress would make us a stocking ball filled with bits of stuff, and we would kick it to pieces quite soon. We had two or three outings a year The Sunday school went to Skegness by train. The village school drove in farmers' wagons over to Grimsthorpe Castle for tea, a riding school and sports. We had another holiday when the horses and hounds came by train to hunt the fox: our schoolmaster liked riding, and so we got that day off, too. In 1913 I and others were posted outside the school to give warning of the approach of B. C. Hooks flying over in his aeroplane, a thing none of us had seen. Mext year. at the start of the war, we ran the best part of a mile to see the strange sight of a convoy of army lorries. In the middle of the war, after an air-raid alarm at a dance, we saw the first Zeppelin brought down over

In 1915 I left school and worked on my father's farm, under the head waggoner's orders. We learnt ploughing, harrowing, drilling and, later, stacking and thatching. Those were happy days, particularly when working with the horses. Ploughing was very, very pleasant. I had kept up my sport and had a professional offer when I was eighteen, but I wanted to farm.

As I grew up, I took to carrying a gun, and to poaching; a rabbit-netting party was great fun. I was courting a farmer's daughter at the time, and a neighbour was seeing another of the girls. Meeting at the gate one night, we thought we saw a pheasant in a

tree; so we shot it with my friend's gun. Then we found it was the farm's bantie cockerel, and threw it over the wall. One of the girls afterwards said a fox had got their bantie cockerel; but we never let on.

When I was still a boy we had to go and tempt the pigs on to the stubble, a miserable job that had to be done after harvest. My mother's turkeys - she had about sixty - had to be driven from the farmhouse up to the field to feed on the stubble as well. At Christmas they were to be sold, and mother used to kill them all. Then all the men had to stay at home and pull the birds. That was a rotten job, too, but we'd nit to do else at that time.

Our pigs were about 35 stones, with good wide backs and quite a bit of fat; they were fed on barley meal. After the killing, the pigs were left to drain - and the smell of blood upset the horses when they came in, and they would quickly crowd into their stable. The pig was left all night on the cratch, a narrow table about five feet long. The bristles were scraped off with a sharp instrument which looked like a candle-holder. Then the chines were cut; the large ones, after salting, were kept a year or two and then stuffed.

The salting troughs were wooden, about five by three and a half feet, and lined with pitch. The flitches were salted and turned weekly for a month. The hams were first rubbed with brown sugar and a little saltpetre round the knuckle. After a month they were hung on the bacon hooks which were in all kitchens in those days. They dripped a bit of salt for a week and were then dry: it was piten a year or two before they were eaten. My mother cut the small chittings ready for sausage skins, soaking them in salt water, turning them inside out and scraping them with the side of a wooden spoon. The lard was obtained by cutting the fat into chip-sized pieces and rendering it down. (It was a treat to eat the scraps on toast.) The red smat was

minced for sausages, and the white meat was made into pork pies and taken down to the baker's for baking. There would be about twenty of them: they were delicious. Then, apart from the haslet (oddments wrapped in the "apron") and brawn (boned, stewed and put in basins), there were the "fries". These were odd bits of pork meat, with liver, heart and kidneys. We children used to take the fries round to the elderly people — and we'd get a penny each, which supplemented our weekly pocket money of a penny.

My father bought me a farm when I was twenty-two. in the nineteen-twenties, it was a bad time. We didn't lose money, but it was quite a few years before we made much. I had two cows. One was a hard milker: the other was easy, but kicked the bucket over when you'd finished. That's where I think I got the rest of my education. For, as I sat there milking these cows and looking at a whitewashed wall, I got to thinking I wasn't very clever if I was going to do that all my life. So I got someone in to do the milking and spent more time in the office. This farm was in Rippingale, and I rented another four miles away in Hawthorpe (which the owner sold to me after a row about draining). By the 1950s I was farming 1000 acres, and also managing 1500 acres for a friend who was in a nursing home with T.B. for a year."

VARTON VILLAGE HALL:

History in the making.

S.P. Hilling

OFFICIALLY OPENED 6TH SEPTEMBER 1980. THIS HALL WAS EXTENSIVELY RENOVATED THROUGH THE GENEROSITY OF VILLAGERS, FRIENDS AND GRANTS FROM VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS.

The story behind this simple inscription on a brass plate inside Warton Village Hall is one of hard work and dedication by a number of Warton village residents to restore to working condition a very dilapidated old building.

Marked on an 1846 Tithe map of Warton is a Walt House. It is sited on Back Lane. This lane itself was very important both as a cattle route through to the pastures behind the Village and as a way to Senset Well. It was also used by parishioners as a way to Warton Church.

Shortly after the 1914-18 war the residents of Warton village purchased the Mait Kiln for £300, and renamed it "The Parish Room". These rooms were their only village meeting place until 1937 when a hall was built next to St. Oswald's Church. Unfortunately meetings and business shifted to the more modern Church Hall and the Parish Room fell on bad days. From 1952-1970 Lancashire County Council leased it during the week as a dining room for the old Archbishop Hutton School until this too was cancelled because of the new school being built. It's main source of income was withdrawn, it was poverty stricken and without deeds.

In August 1970 the committee of the Parish Room appointed Niss A Morley, Niss M. Smalley and Niss M Newman to act as their trustees. In 1973 a solicitor was engaged to search for the deeds, without

success and they were replaced in February 1975 by a Statutory Declaration. The building was then registered as a charity under the name of "Varton Village Hall".

At the start £1000 was given by the Harold Bridge's trust and the work began, under the guiding hand of the trustees and with helpful advice from the Community Council of Lancashire, to transform and extend and to raise money to meet the cost. This, at approximately £44,000, would no doubt have horrified the original purchasers of the Malt Kiln.

Well wishers quickly gathered round the committee, and under the guidance of Misses Morley and Smalley, worked with enthusiasm to raise money for the ambitious improvement scheme. In February of 1977, after many coffee evenings, jumble sales, dances, a weekly draw and a hundred club, the sum raised was approaching £1,500. By April 1977, with the addition of a £3000 interest free loan, they were able to submit to the Community Council an application for a 75% grant for the year 1978-9, contident that by the time the villagers proportion of 25% was due, the money would be raised.

The grant was received, but the lowest tender for building alone was £45,000. By severe cuts and hard bargaining this was reduced to £35,000. Work began in October 1978 and was completed by August 1979. Another £12,000 was needed to pay the architect's fees, and to supply furnishing and equipment for the hall. The Lancaster District Council most generously donated £4,000 and £5,000 from their lottery fund. An interest free scheme was launched which produced over £1,000 and the "Friends of Warton Village Hall" transferred £5,000 to the management's account. The contractor and architect were paid and Warton Village Hall started life free from debt.

The official re-opening took place on Saturday 6th September 1980 and was performed by the then Lord Mayor of Lancaster Cilr. Abbot Bryning accompanied by the Mayoress. The event was followed by a week-end exhibition of Country Crafts.

To-day the Village Hall is host to many activities.
Local Education classes are held, a thriving Leisure
Club exists with Keep-Fit, indoor Bowling, Badminton
and Dancing, an Art Group, Embroidery classes, many
discos are held, Varton Drama group performs and a
school of dancing is held each week.

From its sorry state of 18 years ago, Warton Village Hali's refurbishment has added a new dimension to village life and is a tribute to those people who dedicated their time and effort to its cause.

Notes and Qeries.

THE CASTLE OF MOURHOLME

In 1907 the Rev. J.K. Floyer read a paper (1) to the Society of Antiquaries which contained the first clear evidence that the Castle of Mourholme had been sited in Varton. For the anniversary of our own "Mourholme" the article is here (very briefly) summarised for reference.

In 1215 Gilbert Fitz Reinfred, Baron of Kendal, and Lord of Varton was forced to surrender to King John (against whom he had been in revolt) his two chief seats, named as the castle of Kirby Kendal and the castle of Merhull or Mirhull. The site of Merhull was not specified. The hostages Gilbert had to surrender at the same time all had surnames indicating that they came from the neighbourhood of Varton (e.g Redman, Burton, Bethum) which suggested Varton as a possible

site for Merhull. Unfortunately no such place-name was known in Warton There was however, Mr Floyer thought, a possible site.

He then described land belonging to Dock Acres Farm(now quarried away and flooded). There was an irregular basin to the south of the farm-house, (2) which tended to be filled with water in wet weather A cutting (partly filled in) led from the south east corner to the River Keer. From this an artificial cutting had been made across a neck of land cutting off an 'island' made up of a circular mound (A) and an irregular oval (B) known as Halsteads At (C) there were traces below ground of the foundations of a freestone wall, and in near-by field walls there were lumps of freestone (not to be found naturally nearer than two or three miles away).

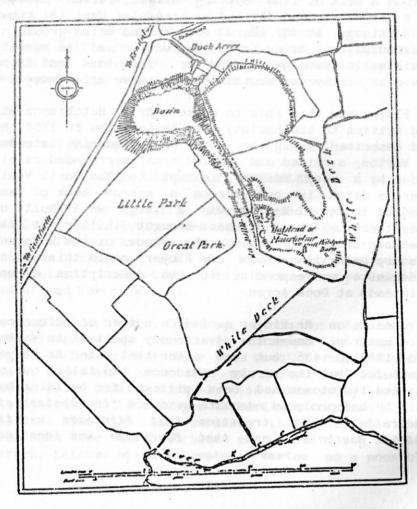
Mr Floyer was then able to quote a Mr V. Hutchinson who had written to the Society of Antiquities in 1788. He had described, among the sites of antiquarian interest in Varton, a raised and walled area, surrounded on all sides by a deep morass ', except to the North Vest, where a ditch is cut across a narrow neck of land leading to it' Hearby was a large wall built of freestone which had been brought thither at the distance of several miles, the stone of the adjacent country being limestone' Mr Floyer could think of no other site corresponding to the description except Halsteads at Dock Acres

In conclusion Mr Floyer quoted a number of references to a manor of Mourholme (variously spelled) in Warton from 1246 to 1435, but none after that date. Mr Floyer concluded that the marshy residence had fallen out of use and its stones had been pillaged for building but felt he had produced adequate evidence 'to substantiate the rather siender tradition that Halsteads was the site of Maurholme, and that Maurholme was identical

with the Castle of Merhull ordered to be surrendered by Gilbert FitzReinfred.....

(1) Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries
April 1907, Vol.XXXI (a photostat is
held in the Mourholme Society archives.)

(2) The long standing tradition that this basin had once been a harbour complicates Mr Floyer's argument which, however, holds without the need to take sides over this.



PLAN OF A SITE CALLED HALSTEADS, IN THE PARISH OF WARTON,