

ART. III.—*Burrow Walls, near Workington.* By WM. DICKINSON, ESQ., of Thorncroft.

Read at Burrow Walls, June 17th, 1880.

THE name this place bears is Burrow Walls, and is undoubtedly corrupted in spelling from Burgh, Brugh, and Borough, all signifying a corporate place, or town, or large village, and occasionally a fortified place. Its early history is buried in obscurity, and few indeed are the records of its later existence. The only reliable data on which an approximate conjecture can be reasonably founded, as to the time of its origin, is the great similarity it bears, in the structure of its walls, to the most ancient portion of the castle of Egremont. The hand of time has had less to do with its dilapidated state than has the hand of the ruthless destroyer — man. Within my recollection the walls were much thicker than you now see them, and were also more extensive in range towards the south-west, and considerably higher. You may observe that these remaining walls have been skinned, as it were, on every side, and their strength so far reduced that they are only fragments of what they once have been.

Sixty years ago, a winding staircase existed within the thickness of the wall. Wall slits, very narrow outside and wide within, and circular bolt holes were in good number, for the purpose of dealing death to outside assailants and protecting the garrison inside. Some of these openings are still discernible. The outside skin was ornamented with rows of feathered or herring-bone work, in the same way as the walls of Egremont Castle still are; and from that circumstance, and from the cement and masonry being of similar kind and construction, we may fairly infer

infer that the dates of erection have not been far asunder.* There is evidence also that the Solway and Burrow Walls were much nearer neighbours at one time, for it is current that a boat or canoe hollowed out of the half of a split oak tree was found imbedded in the swamp at the foot of the slope below us; and looking at the contour of the ground before us, and the evident signs of the sea having receded along the whole coast, or the shore having been elevated, it is easy to believe that the lord of this castle had easy and short access to the sea. An excellent look-out would be on yonder hill on the north, called Oyster Banks, during disturbed times.

There is some reason to believe this castle to have been built on the site of a Roman station, for, in 1852, on some deep drains being cut, an altar stone was dug out, and on one side of it was an illegible inscription. This stone formed part of the foundation of the castle, for it had been built in with the wall. This being so, would carry the date of the first structure on this site probably a thousand years farther back still, unless the stone had been brought from some other place of Roman occupation. The altar was partly broken, but portions of human figures were plainly discernible upon it. It was exhibited at the Royal Archæological Society's Meeting at Carlisle, in 1859, and from thence passed into the hand of the late Earl of Lonsdale, as owner of the property on which it was found.†

The same exploration brought to light other carved stones and a number of bones and horns of large deer, with bones of cattle and other animals, intermingled with oyster shells and ashes, as if that quarter had been the receptacle of refuse and of whatever had been thrown over the walls. Along with these were found the remains of unburied human

* Mr. Jackson, F.S.A. ascribes the origin of Egremont Castle to Reginald de Lucy, husband of Amabel, the second of the three co-heiresses of Alice Fitz-Duncan. See Transactions of this Society, Vol. IV., p. 113. This would give a date late in 12th century.

† It is engraved in the *Lapidarium Septentrionale*, No 905.

skeletons,

skeletons, as if they also had undergone summary punishment and the carcasses had been pitched outside; or they might be the bodies of enemies slain under the walls during some attack on the place.

On hearing that the venerable remains of this interesting ruin were being removed and utilised for other purposes, I petitioned the Earl's then steward to allow the remnant to remain, and he kindly acceded to my request; and I hope what is left and is now before you may stand for ages to come. And now, if any gentleman present can throw more light on its history, it will be very acceptable.
