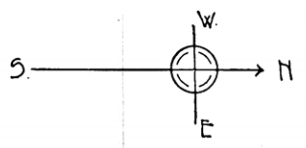
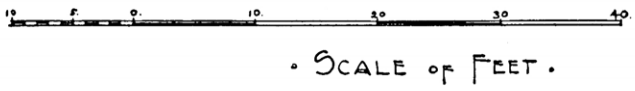


MAULDS MEABURN HALL

• WESTMORLAND •



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ART. VII.—*Maulds Meaburn Hall*. By JOHN F. CURWEN, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.

Read at Maulds Meaburn, July 11th, 1907.

KING'S Meaburn and Maud's Manor were anciently one manor, and continued undivided until the time of Sir Hugh de Morville, lord of Kirkoswald, who appears to have given this portion of the manor to his sister, or daughter, Maud. After the forfeiture of Sir Hugh, for assisting with three others in the assassination of Thomas à Becket, the other portion of the manor, which he had retained, was escheated to the Crown, and hence took the name of King's Meaburn. Maud married William de Vipont,* whom she survived; and it is said that in the time of the Countess of Pembroke "there were ruins of her house still to be seen," consisting of "foundations and cellars."

Their great grandson, Robert de Vipont, granted a great portion of Maud's possessions to the Hospital of St. Leonard in York, and in the year 1242 gave the manor of Maud's Meaburn to John le Fraunceis, son of Hugo, to hold to him and his heirs, of the said Robert, by the payment of one pound of cummin yearly for all services (see *Coram Rege Rolls*, 27 Henry III., m. 21; *Abbrev. Placit.*, p. 120a).

There are several records of this family at Meaburn, the last that I can find being the inquisition after the death of Robert de Clifford in 8 Edward II. (1314). This inquisition finds that Richard le Fraunceis held of the

* The name Vipont, Vipond, or Vipound in English, de Veteri Ponte in Latin, and Vieuxpont and Vezpont in French, belongs to a family supposed to have had its origin in the arrondissement of Lisieux (Ferguson's *History of Westmorland*, p. 97).

said Robert, on the day on which he died, the manor of Meaburn Maud and Whale, by homage and fealty and the cornage of 33s., and that the wardship thereof, when it should happen, was worth 40s.

The male issue seems to have failed in the early part of the fourteenth century, and the manor to have passed by marriage to the Vernon family, for we find that in the 15 Edward III. (1314) one Isabella de Vernon held Meaburn, and her descendants may be traced as holding the same until the reign of Philip and Mary (1553-1558). Whether or not they had their residence upon this site, or indeed laid the foundations of this manor house, it is impossible for me to say.

The oldest dated stone is inserted over the garden entrance door, giving the year 1610, and it is said to have been erected by Sir Christopher Lowther soon after he succeeded to the property in 1602 or 1607. It would seem that in the year 1614 the manor, which had become greatly reduced by the various grants to religious houses, was settled upon John Lowther, Esq., of Lowther, and Elianor his wife. The hall then became the residence of this junior branch, and continued so for a period of one hundred and forty years, unto the fourth generation, when Sir James, *alias* Jemmy, succeeded to the main Lowther estates upon the death without issue of Henry, Viscount Lonsdale, in the year 1750; as also to the Whitehaven estates upon the death of Sir William Lowther in 1756.

On studying the plan and elevations of this interesting building it will be clearly seen that the oldest portion is the three storied block to the north of the front door, a block which has all the appearance of having once stood alone, built perhaps in imitation of the pele towers. We notice first a double-splayed plinth resting direct upon the foundations; the masonry above is of good stones, square-coursed and jointed; there is no attempt at any offset or stringcourse; and, lastly, there are flat square buttresses on either side of the southern gable. (Plate I.)



PLATE I.—MAULD'S MEABURN HALL.

Photo. by J. F. Curwen.

showing general block
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The living room, with an internal measurement of 23 by 20 feet, is entered by a Tudor arched doorway at the back or north-west corner; upon the front or eastern face there is a narrow loophole widely splayed within, and in the north-east angle there is a circular newel staircase leading up to the apartments above.

The solar, on the first floor, is a fine apartment, lighted by Tudor windows, one of three lights and one of two lights, square headed, with heavy mullions and transomes beneath labels. The walls are wainscotted with small panels in oak to the ceiling. The iron hinges on the doors and the oak boards of the flooring are worthy of particular notice. The south-western corner of the room is partitioned off with wainscot, and was perhaps used as a small oratory. The third story, which is lighted by a dormer window, has that curious kind of Italian floor which we noticed last year at Greenthwaite Hall; instead of the usual boards, there is a kind of cement plaster laid on a bed of laths. Truly a very sensible material, in those days, for servants' quarters.

The present hall, which adjoins the southern face of this block, stands upon the site of an earlier hall, which, if not coeval, must have been built soon after. Fortunately there is at the back a small portion of the wall still standing some five feet high, showing the same kind of square coursed masonry. On the front face, at the south-east corner, there still remain about ten lineal feet of the double-splayed plinth, again resting directly upon the foundation stones; whilst inside the original thickness of the wall projects some eleven inches into the hall, about 1 foot 8 inches high, which has misled Dr. Taylor into calling it "a stone bench." The hall measured internally 36 by 20 feet, and must have had an open timber roof much higher than the existing one. Over the present front door is built in what probably was the lintel to the original entrance. It consists of a deep stone with its face so cut away as to leave in relief a label mold with a

vase on either turned-up end, and in the centre a shield bearing the six annulets of Lowther within a Jacobean mantle. Unfortunately there is no date (Fig. I.).

The present partition and staircase are, of course, quite modern additions, and the doorway that now leads to the southern wing was once a two-light mullioned window; the lintel retained to form the doorhead can still be seen in the staircase lobby. (Plate II.)

That the southern and northern wings are subsequent additions is proved by the vertical joints at their junction with the centre block, and I am rather inclined to hazard the suggestion that they were erected some sixty-six years later. I would support my argument by pointing to the lintel over the present garden entrance on the east face of the southern wing (Fig. II.). The lintel has clearly been designed for a double-light mullioned window, and over the arches there is a shield, divided horizontally, with the date 1610 raised in relief on the lower panel. Now on looking closely at the date it will be seen that someone has tried to turn the third figure into a seven and the fourth into a six by the means of incision lines. May not this then have been done in the year 1676 when the window head was removed from a former position and re-erected here as a doorhead to the new wing?

This garden entrance leads direct into a sitting room, which is beautifully panelled in oak some eight feet high, whilst the room above is panelled to the ceiling with the long wide panels of the Jacobean period. On one side of the room there is an empty space, in which may have been fitted a piece of tapestry, or a picture, as is seen at Crackenthorpe Hall. The passage leading to the last room is lighted by borrowed light from the adjoining bedroom by means of an open balustrade forming the upper part of the dividing partition. The windows to this southern wing are all low and square headed, beneath labels, with one or two mullions and transomed.

That the present staircase lobby was not erected at this

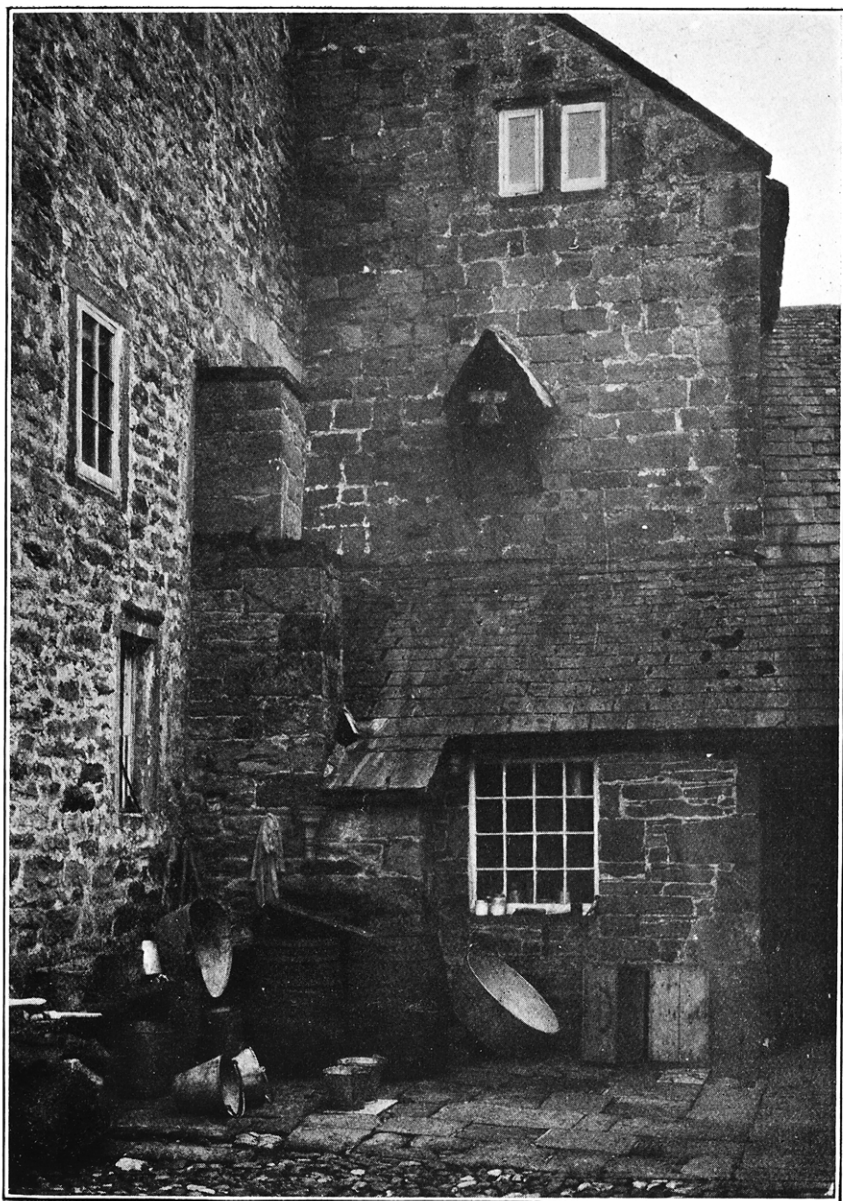


PLATE II.—MAULD'S MEABURN HALL.
shewing end gable of central block.

Photo. by J. F. Curwen.

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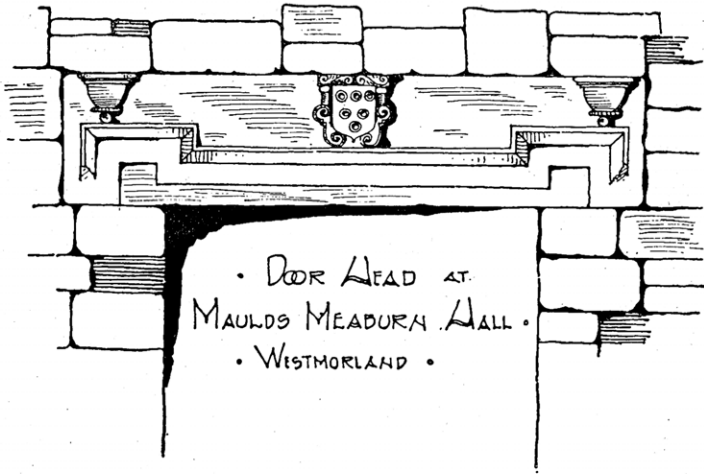


FIG. I.

time is evidenced from the fact that the foundation blocks on the western face of the wing can be seen projecting out above the paving of the lobby. Therefore to gain access to the upper rooms of this southern wing it became necessary to carry a gallery along the eastern face of the great hall, so that they could be thus reached from the



Fig. II.

circular newel stair. In the bedroom passage can be seen the now partially blocked-up doorway to this gallery; on the hall side traces of it can be seen in the plaster, and at the other end a very wide and beautiful oak door opens directly into the solar.

Circular stairways, however, under the best of conditions are not very accommodating to a lady's dress, so at last we come to the last addition—the square staircase hall. The black oak carved newel-posts surmounted by very massive balls, the well-turned circular balusters, and the panelled front of the risers are worthy of attention.

The manor house had attached to it a deer park, terraced walks, pleasure gardens and fine avenues, which, although somewhat lost by farm occupation, can be at least witnessed to by the elegance of the entrance piers. Notice the curious scroll-work ornamentation carved on the bottom of each pier. (Plate III.)

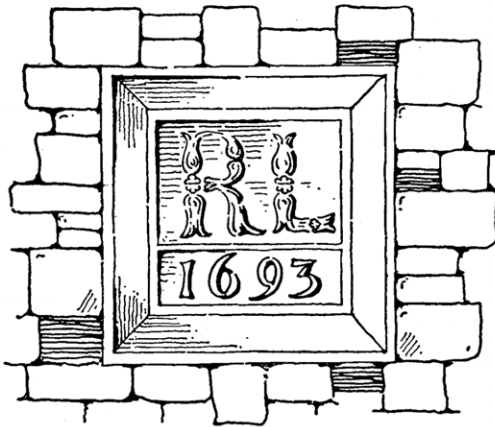


Fig. III.

Over an archway in the farmyard there is an inscribed stone framed within a square label giving the initials "R. L.," for Richard Lowther, in flroid characters, and below the date 1693 (Fig. III.).

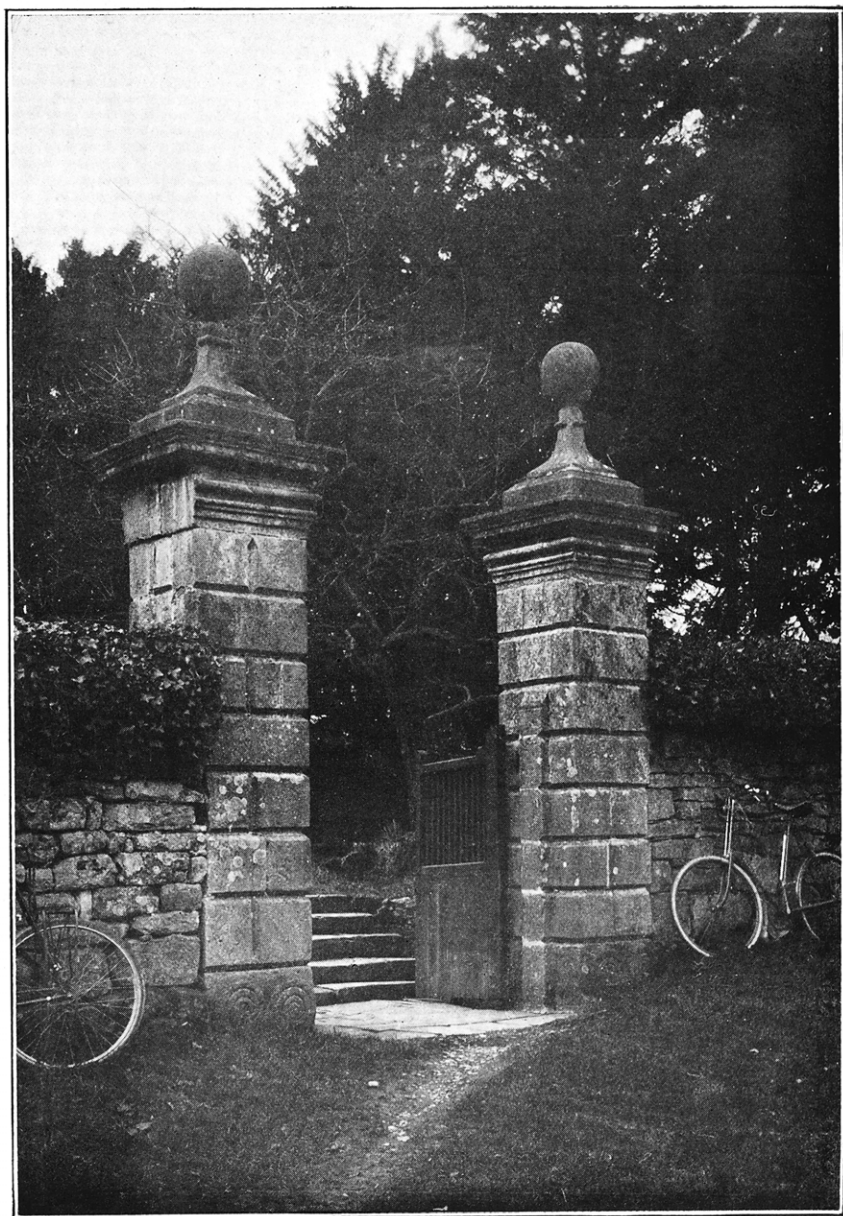


PLATE III.—MAULD'S MEABURN HALL.
shewing spiral markings on entrance gate piers.

Photo. by J. F. Curwen.

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Finally we must mention the two picturesque turrets on the southern side of the hall, some forty yards distant and the same measurement apart. They were built for earth-closets, and although it was in the Tudor period a frequent way of placing them at such a distance from the house, I only know of one other hall in this district where they can still be seen standing.

Our thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. Winder for their courtesy in allowing me to examine every part of the hall, and for their accommodation on this visit.

NOTE BY MISS NOBLE.—“If I remember my grandmother's account aright, the hall was only roofed over whilst they were there (about 1807-1818). The pleasure grounds, six acres, were then in good order. My great-grandparents were succeeded by the Salkelds, and they also kept up the gardens. In their time the hall was put into the state we now see it, probably subsequent to 1820.”
