

Photo. by Dr. Haswell.

CLIFTON HALL.

TO FACE P. 135.

ART. XV.—*Clifton Hall and its Owners.* By EDWIN JACKSON.

Read at Clifton Hall, July 14th, 1911.

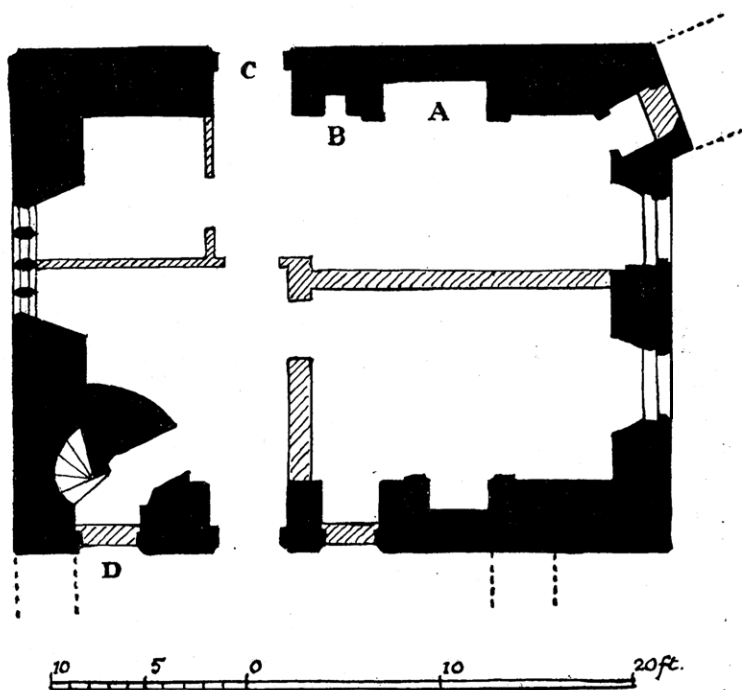
THIS small pele tower, when compared with the numerous peles in the two counties, reveals some distinctive features. Its outward appearance does not suggest the strength and massiveness so necessary to the security of its inmates, which is characteristic of the older peles. Yanwath Hall, which is just across the meadows, is a fine type of early fifteenth century work, and this structure cannot compete with it in those essentials which are always present in fourteenth and early fifteenth-century building in this district. Neither does it resemble Little Strickland Hall, not far away, in which we have an excellent example of the Tudor manor house, built probably about the same time, but in the erection of which the builder has broken away from the traditional style of the earlier time, and produced a comfortable and commodious dwelling house. Clifton Hall is of late date, probably sixteenth century, erected some little time subsequent to Flodden fight, when the prospect of a long period of peace upon the Border permitted the builder to turn his attention to elements of comfort rather than solely as heretofore to security against attack. The fashion and design of the pele, however, remained popular long after the necessity for the original massiveness had passed away. It is the distinctive style which adds an interest to this building which is peculiar to itself.

Having regard to the important family of the Engaynes, who owned the manor and lands in the time of Henry II., the fine site for defence on the highway from Carlisle to

Kendal and the south, commanding the fords of the Lowther and within easy striking distance of the ford of the river Eamont, would not remain unfortified, and it is but reasonable to assume that a much stronger building once occupied the site of the present one.

The late Dr. Taylor, a former vice-president of this Society, who had made a special study of these old halls, assigns to Clifton Hall a comparatively modern date, and as little has been added to our knowledge since his time (1879), I am, in describing the building, making use of his very careful observations of 32 years ago. In the present example of the pele tower, we find that the strong ground floor, with its stone-vaulted roof, and narrow, widely-splayed slits in the wall, characteristic of earlier work, has given place to nearly square window openings and roofs of wood for the lower chambers. The walls rise perpendicularly from the ground, without the aid of splays as at Askham, nor with an ogee moulding as at Yanwath. The dimensions of the tower are 33 feet 6 inches by 26 feet 6 inches, and the height of the parapet is 37 feet ; it contains two stories above the ground floor ; an open roof, with battlements and a small crenellated turret at the south-west angle, surmounts the whole. The upper rooms and roof are reached by a newel stair leading from the doorway on the ground level, in the south-west angle of the building, which appears to have been the only stairway. In the older peles the newel stair is almost invariably found in the north-east corner. At the present time the doorway is walled up, but behind the walling, iron crooks which fitted the hinges of the oaken door may still be seen in their original position. This doorway has a four-centred arch, very depressed, which is not regarded by experts as good form of work, but it is original. The other two doorways are close together and have segmental arches cut in the single stones which are applied as lintels, and are insertions of

a later date to give access to an attached building, of which the weathering line of the roof remains, clearly indicating that it has been joined to this south face of the tower. There is also evidence of additions in the north face, and at the north-east angle, where a door at



CLIFTON HALL, GROUND FLOOR.

(From Dr. M. W. Taylor.)

A, kitchen fireplace. B, locker. C, original north doorway.
D, original doorway on south front to newel stair.

one time existed to give access to the kitchen. Another doorway may also be found in the north face which is supposed to have been the original entrance to the tower. It seems probable that at some time the tower was supported by additions to its northern and southern faces and that it then formed the central and highest portion of a pile of buildings of some importance, which would

contain a dining hall and other rooms commensurate with the position of the family who owned this hall in the Tudor period. Traces of these supplementary buildings are still visible, but as the demolition of the buildings themselves is complete, it is probable that they were destroyed by fire, and the massive walls of the present farm buildings and orchard suggest a reason for the disappearance of the stones. The three corbel stones projecting from the face of the south wall are each pierced horizontally with a hole, and their use has puzzled those who have examined this structure; they could not have been used to support the roof of the supplementary building, as one of them is outside the line of roof, and they do not suggest a gallery for defensive purposes, nor a portcullis arrangement to drop over the doors beneath, and so far I have not found a convincing explanation. The original windows are square headed, some are small of one light, and others mullioned with several lights, and it may be noticed that some of the designs of the mouldings have been reproduced in the windows of the large farm building adjoining. The eighteenth-century windows on the east were no doubt inserted to make the place correspond to modern ideas, when the last generation or two of the family resided there.

The interior is in a state of progressive ruin. When this Society met there in 1879 there was a carved oaken sixteenth-century door to the locker on the left of the fireplace of the largest room on the ground floor, which has since disappeared. This ground floor is divided into three rooms, one of which was evidently the kitchen, and from which the door at the north-east angle gave access to the domestic buildings in connexion with the kitchen. The wooden ceiling is of the Tudor period. The north doorway, now walled up, was regarded as the original entrance to the lower rooms. Dr. Taylor finds evidence of late work in the steps of the newel stairway; he says:—

There is a peculiarity in the steps of the newel staircase which marks a late date . . . the edge of the narrow ends of the winders, as they approach the central pillar, is coved back in cavetto to the line of step; this treatment holds for the first flight, higher up the heads are plain and without moulding. The first and second stories are divided by partitions into small apartments . . . and the roof is hipped and slated, with an alure around it within the parapet (these *Transactions*, o.s., iv., p. 391).

And what of the families who have resided on this interesting old estate? From the time of Henry II. up to the present there have been but two, the Engaynes and the Wyberghs. By an undated deed in the reign of Henry II., Sir Hugh de Morville granted the manor and village of Clifton to a Gilbert Engayne, and in the time of Edward III. a Gilbert Engayne was the last male of the name in the direct line. Gilbert had only one child, a daughter, Eleanor, who married 38 Edward III., William de Wybergh of St. Bees; she died between the years 1400 and 1412 (Henry IV.) and was buried in the north aisle of the church close by, where in a painted glass may be seen her name and arms. The arms of Engayne and Wybergh are given, but I think not quite accurately, and as for the lady's effigy attention may be drawn to the nimbus round her head, so that she must either have been canonized, or a picture of the Virgin Mary or of some saint has been adapted to represent the last of the Engaynes; below is HELYNOR ENGAYNE and the arms of Wybergh impaling Engayne. It appears that this memorial has been removed from its original position, as Nicolson and Burn refer to three little windows at the east end of Clifton Church. In the middle window was a crucifix and in the other the effigy described above, and they relate that in Machel's time (*circa* 1700) the third window contained the figure (on glass) of a man leaning his cheek on his right hand and holding a book in his left, and above, the arms of Fallowfield of Great Strickland. These windows were removed, it is believed, at the restoration of

the chancel when the new Decorated window was erected, and the Engayne and Fallowfield windows displaced. The Rev. J. Whiteside relates in his article on "Swindale Chapel" how it is supposed that at the time of the restoration of Clifton Church this sacred memorial of the Fallowfields disappeared, and how it was found years afterwards in a mass of rubbish belonging to a Clifton solicitor, and rescued from destruction by the Rev. Joseph Brunskill to adorn the little felldale chapel at Swindale.

In the thirty-eighth year of Edward III. we first make the acquaintance of the ancient family of Wybergh, who have retained possession in unbroken male descent of this pele tower through many vicissitudes down to the present time. They played their part in Border warfare and in the affairs of the district in which they lived, marrying into the local families of Lowther, Sandford, Wharton, Lancaster, Irton, Salkeld, Hilton, and others. They rendered their suit and service to the great earls, the Cliffords of Brougham Castle, some dying with their boots off and some with them on. The name crops up frequently in the records of the time. Fortune appears to have dealt fairly evenly with them up to the time of the Civil War; then she deserted them for a long period. Thomas Wybergh, born in 1628, suffered heavily as a Royalist, and was in the list of delinquents whose estates were ordered to be sold by an ordinance of Cromwell's Parliament in 1652. His father, also a Thomas Wybergh, had mortgaged in 1640 the manor of Clifton to Sir John Lowther for seven hundred pounds, and dying in 1646 left the debt unredeemed and a heritage of costly litigation to his successors, which not only demonstrated the glorious uncertainty of the law but did more to strip this family of its estate or inheritance than did the "rough-footed Scots" in all their "hot trod" raids into Cumberland and Westmorland. "Northerner," in the *Penrith Observer* of 31st December, 1906, gives a careful résumé

of this trial from the records of the House of Lords journals of two hundred years ago. Of an estate reputed to be of the value of sixty thousand pounds little remained to the Wyberghs but the hall and demesne lands. How Sir John Lowther was able to establish a good defence and win this case belongs, of course, to another story.

A Thomas Wybergh born in 1663 was taken prisoner in 1715 by the insurgents and was exchanged for Allen Ascough, Esq. Still another Thomas Wybergh, who was born in 1685, married a daughter of Christopher Hilton of Burton and Ormside in Westmorland, and experienced both good and bad fortune. We must regard him as having good luck in the size of his family which numbered twenty-two, and bad luck in that the tide of war enveloped him and did not pass on without doing him grievous damage. It is recorded that "Clifton Hall was plundered 17-18 December 1745 by the insurgents insomuch that this family is supposed to have sustained more loss than any in the country." That the Scots during their short occupation of Clifton village did plunder the houses of the inhabitants we have the testimony of an eye witness, Thomas Savage the Quaker, who lived at what is now Town End Farm, and wrote a most vivid description of the events of that memorable December afternoon. He says:—

The Scots sent off a party of their horse to plunder and burn Lowther Hall and Town and were also plundering our Town (Clifton), leaving nothing they could lay their hands on, breaking locks and making ruinous work even to all our victuals and little children's clothes of all sorts.

It is rather curious that I have found no reference to Clifton Hall and its inmates in any of the records of the actual fighting that I have had access to of this last fight upon English soil; and yet the houses in the village street were seized and held by the Highlanders. This strong dwelling is too conspicuous and important to have escaped

notice by the force, which, fighting a rearguard action, was endeavouring to check the pursuit of the Duke of Cumberland and permit the main body of the prince's army to get clear away to the north from Penrith. In this it was successful; and the duke had many a weary march before he crushed the rebellion at Culloden in the following April. The commissariat officer of the prince, however, had heard of the hall and its owners, for we find on his way south on November 19th, 1745, he demanded of Thomas Wybergh one thousand stones of hay, fifty bushels of oats, and six carts of straw for the use of his Royal "Hyness," to be delivered in "Peereth" immediately under pain of military execution for non-compliance, and again on the retreat north on the 17th December a demand for six hundred stones of hay, two hundred bushels of oats, and eight carts of straw, was made under the same penalty. This Thomas Wybergh was evidently a noticeable man, but the commissariat officer could not fashion his spelling correctly to the name, as the requisitions are quaintly addressed; the first to "Squire *Way-broad* or any of his doers," and the second to "Squire *Waybridge* or any of his doers." Comrie was the name of the officer, and he seems to have been a man who knew his own mind. Thomas appears to have been the favourite Christian name in this family, and a Thomas Wybergh, born in 1788, assumed the surname Lawson on the death of his uncle Sir Wilfrid Lawson in 1806, and dying in 1812, his younger brother Wilfrid also assumed the name of Lawson and was created a baronet in 1832, so that this branch of the family still flourishes in the person of the genial baronet and member for the Cocker-mouth division of Cumberland, Sir Wilfrid Lawson. The owner of this pele tower is Mr. Archibald Wybergh of Borrans Hill.