

ART. IX.—*Penrith Castle*. Some suggestions and notes from the Patent Rolls as an addition to Dr. Haswell's description, contained in these *Transactions*, N.S., vii. By JOHN F. CURWEN, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.

Read at Penrith Castle, September 7th, 1917.

I.—HISTORICAL.

ONE would like to know a little more of the William Strickland who founded this castle. In early life he married Isabel the daughter of Thomas de Warcopp and had a daughter named Margaret. Mr. Ragg suggests* that if Strickland lost his wife with the birth of this daughter, it would be quite natural for him to enter Holy Orders. He places the date of Margaret's birth at about 1364, and we find Strickland rector of Ousby in 1366 and parson of Rothbury, Northumberland, in 1380.

Two years earlier (1378), Richard II granted to John de Dreux, "the Valiant," and his wife Joan, sister to the king, considerable possessions in England, including the manor of Penrith, which was held under the Honour of Richmond, in consideration of the castle of Brest being delivered up to him.† Bearing the titles of Duke of Brittany, Earl of Montford, and Earl of Richmond, John served the king in his wars with France until he went over to the enemy and thus suffered forfeiture of all his English possessions in 1382.‡ During those four years, however, he granted a perpetual lease to William de Stirkeland of thirty-two acres of waste land in Penrith,

* These *Transactions*, N.S., xvi, 130.

† *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1377-81, p. 284, September 14, 1378.

‡ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1381-85, p. 98, February 28, 1382.

Sowerby and Scotby,* with the right to construct a fortalice within the town of Penrith, in which the duke would have the right to stay unhindered when in those parts. This was but a limited grant, as the duke had no power to alienate any part of the estate from the Honour.

The great plague had just visited Penrith and Strickland must have come to take possession of his "waste land" soon afterward, but in what religious capacity we do not know. However, to supply the town with cleansing water he at once set himself the task of engineering a waterway from the Petteril, through the town and out into the Eamont.† The cut is now known as Thacka Beck, but few stop to think how in those early days Strickland obtained the levels along the four mile course. He was only allowed to take such water as would flow through the eye of a millstone, and his difficulty must have been how he could secure sufficient velocity to scour the waterway.

With his advent into the Carlisle Diocese this energetic man quickly became chaplain to the bishop, Thomas de Appleby, and received from him, in 1388, the rectory of Horncastle; indeed by 1396 he was elected to fill the episcopal chair vacant by the bishop's death, but the Pope refused to ratify the selection.

The next year we find Strickland applying to the king for permission to fortify his pele-house within the town of Penrith,‡ and two years later applying for a further licence to "dig stone in Penrith Felles within the Forest of Inglewode in order to complete the fortalice." § A

* *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1385-89, p. 237, November 21, 1386.

† "Ther cummeth at Ingmer Medow owt of Peterel a Gut to Penrith, and at Carlton half a Myle of yt runneth ynto Emot, alias Æymont. Strickland Bishop of Cairluel did the cost to dig it." Leland, vij, folio 72.

‡ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1396-99, p. 66, February 12, 1397.

§ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1396-99, p. 480, February 10, 1399.

further licence was granted to him to surround his dwelling with a fortified curtain-wall.*

There is an interesting passage in this last licence which should not be overlooked, viz.:—"To crenellate the aforesaid mantlet and to hold it thus crenellated for himself and his heirs for ever, as a guard and protection for the before mentioned town and the adjacent country." This points to the curious conclusion that although fifty years earlier the good men of Penrith received a licence to erect a wall of stone and lime around their town †; although they received a grant of murage for seven years at the same time to provide the wherewithal ‡; although two years later a commission was issued to certain persons to inform themselves of the metes and bounds of the town and in what places it was expedient that a wall be made §; although on the 10th of December following another commission was issued reciting that "inasmuch as the King's tenants have caused their town to be enclosed in part and purpose to enclose the remainder, they make petition that the town may be a free borough," etc. ||; and although in 1391 they received a further grant of murage for keeping the town's walls in repair for six years, ¶ yet notwithstanding it would almost appear as if the town was never so defended, other than by a dyke toward the north. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that no traces of a wall have ever been discovered, nor is there any reference to one in any other record.

Curiously, we know next to nothing of Strickland's religious work, and, although he became Bishop of Carlisle soon after he built his pele-tower, it is still as an

* *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1396-99, p. 524, April 2, 1399.

† *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1345-48, p. 69, April 10, 1346.

‡ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1345-48, p. 66.

§ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1348-50, p. 175, August 6, 1348.

|| *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1348-50, p. 248.

¶ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1388-92, November 16, 1391.

architect that we know him best. He restored the chapel and lord's chamber at Bewley; he financed the building of shops facing the Strand in the courtyard of his London residence; he built the tower and the north transept wall, and fitted the choir-stalls at Carlisle cathedral; and finally he built Strickland tower at Rose.

The bishop died in 1419, and the fortalice passed to the Crown. Mr. Ragg thinks that very probably Henry IV, appreciating the value of it as a defence against the Scots, tried to resume possession by right of his father as also by right of his second wife, but feeling his claim to be not sufficiently strong to disturb such a prominent man as the bishop, allowed the matter to rest for the time being. On the death of the bishop, however, Henry V quietly took possession and apparently alienated it from the Honour.

Here for the moment the history of the fortalice is merged into the history of the manor, which briefly put is as follows:—Upon the Duke of Brittany's forfeiture, Richard appointed William de Lancastre, during pleasure, as steward of the king's manors of Penrith and Sowerby*; and in 1386 levied a fine of 13s. 4d. upon William de Stirkeland for acquiring these lands in fee from the duke and for entering thereon without a licence.† In 1396 Richard granted the manor to Ralph and Joan de Nevill, together with Sowerby, and the hamlets of Langwathby, Scotby and Carleton, to the value of £62 os. 4d. a year, as they had been held by the Duke of Brittany, without rendering anything for them.‡ This grant was made for the term of their lives, but in the following year it was surrendered for a grant in tail male,§ a concession which was confirmed by Henry IV in 1400.|| And yet

* *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1381-85, p. 98, February 28, 1382.

† *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1385-89, p. 237, November 21, 1386.

‡ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1396-99, p. 39, November 29, 1396.

§ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1396-99, p. 267, October 7, 1397.

|| *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1399-1401, p. 331, May 25, 1400.

with the death of Joan her possessions did not naturally pass to her eldest son Richard de Nevill, for we find that Henry VI in 1442 appointed Richard "to the Keeping of all the lands etc. which came into the king's hands by the death of the King's kinswoman, Joan, Countess of Westmorland." * The same year Richard married Alice, heiress of Thomas, Earl of Salisbury, and was himself created Earl of Salisbury (1442). It was three years however, before he and Alice received a *grant* of the manor for the term of their lives, † a grant which was surrendered four years later for one in tail male. ‡ But with the execution of Richard after the battle of Wakefield, all his possessions became forfeit to the Crown, when Henry VI appointed William Bloder, rector of the parish church of Bolton in Allerdale, as receiver-general of them. || Within the week the king granted to "the Blackfaced" John de Clifford for life, in consideration of the good service which he had rendered against Richard, Duke of York, Richard, Earl of Warwick, Richard, Earl of Salisbury, and their accomplices, the offices of constable of Penrith Castle, and steward of the manor of Penrith, together with a grant of £40 a year from the issues of the lordship, rendered vacant by the rebellion of the Earl of Salisbury. § Almost immediately, however, a mandate was issued to Clifford to remove "from Penrith Castle all the evil doers who hold the same and issue thence, lying in wait, beating, maiming, plundering and slaying, and to cause the castle to be delivered to Richard, 2nd Earl of Salisbury." ¶ At the same time a commission was issued to Henry Fitz-Hugh and John Nevill "to arrest and commit to prison all persons guilty of unlawful gatherings, etc., and to

* *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1441-46, p. 44, February 10, 1442.

† *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1441-46, p. 429, November 25, 1445.

‡ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1445-52, p. 281, April 3, 1449.

|| *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1452-61, p. 526, December 13, 1459.

§ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1452-61, p. 537, December 19, 1459.

¶ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1452-61, p. 649, October 8, 1460.

expel the evil doers in the castles of Pountfret, Wreshill and Penreth, and if the castles hold out, to make proclamation that the occupants withdraw under pain of forfeiture, and if they still retain the castles, to call together all lieges of Yorkshire and other counties adjacent, to storm the same." *

* Richard Nevill, Earl of Warwick and Salisbury, or better known as "The King Maker," thus received the grant of the castle and manor, which he held until he was slain at the battle of Barnet, in 1471, when Edward IV granted them to his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester.†

There can be but little doubt that each successive owner of the castle added to it as the need presented itself, but it is to the duke that we owe the chief transformation of the building into a royal residence. For although he was also governor of Carlisle Castle, he mostly resided at Penrith in order to keep in restraint the neighbouring Cliffords and the strongly Lancastrian district. As lord warden of the Western Marches also, the duke would have to entertain and lodge a considerable number of people; therefore we find that he added another tower, a banquetting hall, kitchens, a porter's lodge, stables and many other buildings. On the accession of Richard to the throne of England in 1483, the following servants were appointed in turn to the office of porter:—

1484. John Clapham.‡

1485. Robert Lancaster.§

1488. Richard Fulbery, groom of the chamber. ||

In 1488 John Fligh, yeoman of the wardrobe, was granted for life the office of constable of Penrith Castle, ¶

* *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1452-61, p. 651, October 15, 1460.

† *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1467-77, p. 260, June 29, 1471; also p. 266, July 14, 1471; also Part II, February 20, 1475.

‡ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1476-85, p. 425, March 27, 1484.

§ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1476-85, p. 487, November 29, 1485.

|| *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1485-1494, p. 255, November 18, 1488.

¶ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1485-1494, p. 257, August 27, 1488.

a position which he held until his death in 1504 when William Edwardys, page of the wardrobe, succeeded to it.* We next hear of Leonard Musgrave as constable, at whose death in 1534 Edward Aglionby, gentleman usher of the chamber, was granted the office.†

In 1491 a grant was made for life to Edward Stephenson, chaplain, of such salary and costs for bread, wine and wax, for the celebration of Mass and other divine services in the castle of Penrith, as other priests have had there, and payable out of the lordship of Penrith.‡ Again in 1516 a grant was made to William Idle for the same purposes.§ He seems to have remained the priest of this private chapel during the transference of the lease of the castle to Henry Clifford, first Earl of Cumberland, in 1525 ||; to William Lord Dacre in 1527 ¶; and again to the earl in 1534.** For we find that in 1544 Percival Wharton was appointed chaplain in place of William Idle, deceased.††

With these items the history of Penrith Castle, as a residence for only some 140 years, practically comes to an end, and we find that unlike Brougham Castle, it was never really fortified for military purposes. Stones were led away in large quantities by the year 1547, and the three surveys of 1565, 1572 and 1580 ‡‡ tell the pitiable tale of its ruination.

	Size.	Surveys of	
		1565.	1572.
White Tower ...	... 6½ yds. sq. ...	In repair.	... In repair, but fell betw'en 1739-78.

* *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1494-1509, part II, March 2, 1504.

† Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, 1534, November 17, 1534.

‡ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1485-95, p. 364, September 2, 1491.

§ Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, 1515-16, February 4, 1516.

|| Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, 1524-26, October 14, 1525.

¶ Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, 1524-26, November 26, 1527.

** Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, 1534, July 31, 1534.

†† Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, 1544, January 21, 1544.

‡‡ *Transactions*, N.S., vii, pp. 289-291; *Castles and Towers*, pp. 220-221.

	Size.	Surveys of 1565.	1572.
Red Tower (Gloucester) ...	...	Roof in danger of falling in.	In repair.
Small chamber betwe'n the White Tower and the kitchens ...	6 yds. sq.	In repair.	In repair.
Great chamber ...	10 x 9 yds.	Decayed.	In utter ruin.
Chapel, with chamber under it ...	14 x 9 yds.	Decayed.	In utter ruin.
Private chamber ...	16 x 9 yds.	Decayed.	...
Banqueting Hall ...	16 x 9 yds.	Decayed.	In utter ruin.
Great kitchens ...	9 x 7 yds.	Decayed, with inner walls fallen.	In utter ruin.
Private kitchens and two pasteries ...	13 yds. long.	Decayed.	In utter ruin.
Outer gatehouse ...	...	Fallen.	In utter ruin.
Two stables ...	25 x 7 yds.	In repair.	In ruins.
Bakehouse, brewhouse, and one chamber, all under one roof ...	23 x 11½ yds.	In repair.	In repair.
Prison ...	...	...	In ruins.

NOTE.—A good wall might be made from the bakehouse to the corner of the wall next to the White Tower. (1572)

In 1648 Major General Lambert found sufficient cover for his staff to make their headquarters here for a month, but even that portion was dismantled immediately. Fifty years after, (1696), William III granted the site to his favourite Hans William Bentinck, who came over from the Netherlands with him. The third Duke of Portland passed the estate to the Devonshire family in 1787; by whom it was sold to the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway Co. at the construction of the line, and so remained until it was acquired by the Penrith Urban District Council who have since placed the ruins under the care of H.M. Commission for the protection of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings.

H.M. Inspector of Ancient Monuments at once commenced his work of preservation* and I am indebted

* 27th July, 1914.

to Mr. Frank Baines, the principal architect, for a report upon the work so far accomplished. The external face being largely covered with ivy of some 40 years growth, their first duty seems to have been to cut the stems, many of them $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, so as to allow the sap to dry out before any attempt was made to remove them. Without this precaution the force required to break the tenacity of the stems might otherwise have injured the masonry. Mr. Baines says that the subsequent examination of the walls proved them to be in a very grave condition; all the top courses were loose with thorn bushes growing in the joints to a depth of two feet, and cavities existed behind the facings in which birds had built their nests. In pulling down the cross walls of the modern sheds abutting on the castle walls, portions were left as buttresses until the security of the fabric was assured. Modern masonry has been removed from the fireplace and window openings, overhanging masonry and lintels have been supported, whilst seven voussoirs of the remaining window arch in the eastern angle of the building have been rebedded, grouted and covered with rough masonry, set back some 6 inches on each face so as to pronounce the restoration more clearly. The internal area has been excavated to a considerable extent in order to uncover the foundations, whilst débris has been removed, both within and without, so as to lower the surface to the original level as fixed by the threshold of the gateway.

II.—DESCRIPTIVE.

The building as we see it to-day forms a parallelogram of roughly 130 feet square, with the "Gloucester" or "Red Tower" projecting (some $27\frac{1}{2}$ feet) at the northern corner. A series of domestic buildings has stood within the surrounding wall, facing and lighted by a small central court.

Now if we disregard for the moment most of these later additions we get a fairly good idea of Strickland's residence—a pele tower standing alone within a high wall, against which could be set a number of timber outbuildings, surrounding a yard. Unfortunately previous writers have taken for granted, because the licence for building the wall was given, in order that it might be a guard and protection for the town and adjacent country, that therefore it was a place to which all the cattle of the neighbourhood might be driven and in which the inhabitants might take refuge in the time of a Scottish raid. But can this be so? for the yard would never have contained the cattle, whilst history shows us that in most raids, the inhabitants were in little personal danger as long as they kept quiet. With one brutal exception, the Scots came to pillage, lift cattle and destroy the harvests, but not to carry off or murder the inhabitants. Therefore it was a place rather in which a small garrison, with their horses, could be maintained for the protection of the valley.

Now where was Strickland's tower situated? The Survey of 1572 speaks of the White or Bishop's Tower, and the Red Tower, whilst Buck's view shows a tower at the western angle and another at the northern angle. Since portions of a red stone tower still remain at the northern, it has unfortunately been laid down that therefore Strickland's Tower was at the western angle. But surely it would be more reasonable to look for the earliest tower somewhere on the northern side of the court, or at the most assailable corner of it, overlooking the town and the road from the north? Again, the Survey of 1565 speaks of the roof of the White Tower as being only some 20 feet square, but no pele tower could have been built so small as this. Furthermore, the very name of the "White Tower" speaks of one built of the White Lazonby stone, a stone which we shall see was frequently

used for the later buildings, and very unlike the stone which we know Strickland received a licence to dig, on the Penrith Fells. Therefore, may I presume to ask you to look upon the White Tower at the western angle, as merely a watch tower of later date, and one to which the name of Strickland was given in commemoration of his pele that had then ceased to exist. The pele towers of Strickland's period were built of such strength that, even when unroofed for centuries, they did not fall, as the White Tower fell; on the other hand they were frequently hewn asunder to make room for later buildings.

Now with each succeeding occupant many additions doubtless would be made until we come to the time when the castle was granted to Richard of Gloucester, who transformed it into a royal residence. We can readily understand that Strickland's early entrance into the yard was not at all suited to the magnificence of the buildings to be erected; therefore, if we follow the white stone, we find that the greater part of the north-east wall was pulled down, to find room for a substantial gateway, with perhaps a shallow forebuilding, and for a gate-house, or tower, to flank it. The threshold, 486 feet above sea level, with some original paving; three courses of stone forming the jambs, rebated and moulded with a simple hollow, and the hinge of the gate on the north side with a bolt-hole on the south side can still be seen. It will be noticed that toward the eastern corner the plinth and some of the lower courses are also of white stone, which would seem to indicate that here the wall was underpinned to renovate some badly weathered sand-stones.

Internally the eastern angle deserves considerable attention, for it undoubtedly forms a portion of the original castle, if not indeed of the original pele tower. On the basement level we at once notice a curious little angular chamber, cut off by a thin partition wall with a doorway in it. The northern jamb having fair faces both

on the main wall and on the partition, proves conclusively that the chamber is coeval with the main fabric. Up in the ceiling will be seen a flue tapering upwards and backwards toward the external face, where the wall has been thickened out upon four corbels to lengthen it. Naturally at first it is taken to be a smoke-flue, but how could such a tiny chamber need a fireplace? May it not be an air-flue, at the mouth of which some poor devil has hourly stood for breath?

The interior surface of the south-east wall shows no sign of any cross walls, so that it is now impossible to locate the different rooms, but it will be seen that the first floor appears to be well supplied with large fireplaces and drainage ducts through the wall. Possibly the banquetting hall occupied the eastern end and the kitchens extended toward the southern corner. The main windows would be to the courtyard and fragments remain on the ground to show trefoil-headed lights below a square label. The second floor may have contained the sleeping apartments lighted in the same way, but with the addition of small slit windows placed high up in the exterior wall. Above would be the lead roof with an overhanging parapet-walk supported on a double row of corbels, that still tail into the wall for almost its full thickness. At the eastern corner remnants of an octagonal turret can be seen; half way along the wall a buttress rises to support a look-out post, enlarged at the battlements; whilst at the southern corner a ramp in the parapet, presumably with steps on the inner surface, led up to another watch-turret supported on a massive buttress at the angle.

At a later period the eastern end of this wall, i.e. from the corner to the central buttress, was again reconstructed. The parapet and upper row of corbels apparently were removed to make way for a third storey, overhanging on the lower row of corbels. Here the windows are found very wide, beneath segmental heads, and presumably they lighted a new chapel.

The excavations have revealed a number of very interesting foundation walls within the southern angle. The older footings running down the south-east side of the court are of red sandstone; they have no plinth and many mason's marks are found upon the stones: the later footings, running parallel to the south-west side, are of white stone and set at a lower level; the walls are thicker in construction and ornamented with a large hollow-moulded plinth. The two sets do not bond together at their junction. For the sake of maintaining a roadway the excavations have not been continued far enough to show the junction of these walls with the tower at the western corner. Personally I am rather impatiently waiting for the exploration, to see if we shall not learn more about the tower. So far as we can see at present it was a building measuring some 56 by 27 feet, with its axis parallel to the north-west face. The basement was vaulted and entered from the courtyard at its eastern corner. Against this entrance another thick wall has been erected at a later date; and a passage-way leads through it to an outer door. Adjoining the tower is a quite small chamber with two fireplaces within it, and which has a moulded plinth of red sandstone, similar to the buildings on the south-west side of the court.

Until the present work was taken in hand a bank of earth obscured the external face of the north-west wall; but with its removal three small chambers were discovered, which, by being situated without the wall, must be erections of the latest period.

We now come to what is popularly called the Red Tower at the northern angle. It has been a square building of 32 feet each way, with a plain barrel-vaulted basement, and of which the plinths are the only remaining features of interest. In the first place it will be noticed that the deep splayed plinth which starts near the ground level at the eastern angle of the castle, passes the Great

Gate and surrounds the Guard House, continues on at the same level to this northern corner to surround and finish where the tower dies back again on the main curtain wall. Below this plinth the earth has only been removed from the north-western face of the tower, but here we find the wall carried down to a considerable depth and strengthened by three extra plinth projections, as if the moat, which is 70 feet away on the north-eastern side, here comes in close beneath the tower walls. Mr. Baines points out to me that the stones are badly pitted and explains the fact by the supposition that the wall was used as a target before the advent of the railway.

Buck's view, which plainly shows the great hall adjoining the tower, tells us that it was a lofty apartment, open to the roof and lighted by three large round-headed windows, pierced through the external wall—the pier between two of which still remains standing. It is likely that at least two similar windows looked out upon the court and that a flight of stone steps led down into it from a doorway at the lower end of the hall. Considering the distance it is away from the kitchens it would not be wise to look upon it as the banquetting hall referred to in the Surveys.

And so we come again to the gateway and to the tower which protected it. Curiously enough this tower, or what was called in the Survey of 1565 "the utter gate-house," was the first part of the castle to fall into ruin. All that is left of it to-day is the vaulted basement, with walls 7 feet in thickness and with steps leading down to it from *within* the curtain. For the sake of preservation a new crown has been put to the vaulting, but the stonework has been set back from the original face of the soffit, so as to proclaim its restoration.

Tucked away in the outer north-west angle a small addition has been made which appears very much as if it had been intended for a garderobe turret to the gate-

house. It covers the plinth of the main wall, and has a plinth of its own at a higher level. In clearing away the ground from this chamber an ancient sword and a hammer head were discovered.

Without the castle was a broad terrace, and beyond this a dry ditch about 50 feet broad, and in some places even now 20 feet in depth, but this has already been described by previous writers.