

ART. XII.—*Millrigg*. By DANIEL SCOTT.

*Read at the site, September 17th, 1926.*

THIS is the first occasion, I believe, on which the society has visited Millrigg, though we were near by, at Acorn Bank, in September, 1908. Millrigg seems to have been completely ignored by all writers on local history and topography. That Dr. Taylor did not include the house in his "Manorial Halls," is accounted for by the simple fact that this never was a hall, nor yet a manor house of the smaller type, though it has some interesting features and associations, along with Acorn Bank. The latter is in Temple Sowerby parish, and so in Westmorland; while Millrigg, little more than half a mile distant, is on the opposite side of the Crowdundle Beck, and consequently in Cumberland.

The Dalstons came to live in Westmorland about 1544, having purchased Acorn Bank from the Crown, and two years later the owner, Thomas Dalston, who died in 1550, settled it on his third son. This son, Christopher, the first of the Temple Sowerby branch, married Mabel, daughter of Sir John Lowther, and was a man of importance in the two counties, being Sheriff of Cumberland in 1597. This brings us into touch with Millrigg, because, as you will notice, it is the year shown on the stone above the entrance, flanked by the letters "J. D." or "I. D." and with the Dalston coat of arms above. On the top of the entrance gable (not now to be seen because of the thick ivy), is a stone with the inscription: <sup>B.</sup> H. B. These <sup>1597.</sup> initials are supposed to represent Henry Birkbeck and his wife. Though I have not been able to satisfy myself on the

point after a study of the Birkbeck and Dalston pedigrees of 1664, as given in Foster's book—because it is not possible to trace such a couple living here in 1597—there is no reason to doubt the attribution. It was Henry Birkbeck, of Millrigg, who sold the estate to John Dalston, but Henry did not die until the end of 1668, or 71 years after the date of the inscription. However, I am only concerned with the “J. D.” which is on the former of the two tablets. That the author (if the word may be used) was a Dalston may be shown by the use, above the tower door, of the arms of that family—a chevron engrailed between three daws' heads. The inference, therefore, is that the letters refer to Jane, daughter of James Phillip, of Brignall, Yorkshire, who in 1580 married Thomas Dalston.

Then you will notice on the tower the date 1669 below the Dalston arms tablet I have already mentioned. This we must assume was inserted by Christopher, born 1638, who in December, 1663, married Bridget, daughter of Sir Henry Fletcher of Hutton. In the Account Book of Daniel Fleming of Rydal, there is this entry:—

December 30 (1663)—Lost at cards & disbursed by myselfe & wife att Cockermouth, Hutton, Accornbank & Yanewith (being at my sister Bridget's Marriage, Dec. 22) betwixt Dec. 7 and Jan. 8, ye sum of £4 15s.

Christopher Dalston became Governor of Carlisle Castle, and died, while holding that position, in 1697. Bridget was the younger sister of Barbara Fleming, Daniel Fleming's wife—hence his reference to her as “my sister,” she being his sister-in-law. Another quaint entry in the accounts comes on October 20th, 1664:—

Given at Acornebanck (at ye christenning of John my Brother Dalston's eldest son) unto ye midwife 2s. 6d. nurse 2s. 6d., my sister's maid 2s. and a Fancy [an ornamental bunch of ribbons and tags] to ye Butler 2s.—in all 9s.

In the three volumes of Dr. Magrath's “The Flemings in Oxford” there are about 25 references to Bridget Dalston.

There are still some interesting features about the house—the short staircase, the massive walls, more than 3 feet thick, pierced with slits which would be used for shooting in times of danger. There are many masons' marks on the stones. In the dining room is the large arch of the old fireplace, about 7 feet across. I am informed by Miss Huntingdon, sister of the tenants, that what is now the corridor in which is the dated slab (1597) was until recent times part of the dining room. The oak panelling, now nearly black, was previously doubled, and some years ago was differently arranged, in the form you see, but otherwise preserved as before. In the drawing room the stone mantelpiece, with its ornamental centre, was heavily painted or varnished; it has now been restored to its original condition.

The old chest which stands in the hall does not belong to Millrigg, but has an interesting history. It has been in the possession of the Huntingdon family at Langwathby Hall for several generations, and the father of the present owners had been told by his grandfather that it was the receptacle for the family's valuables, and for safety was buried when the rebels had reached Carlisle in 1745.

There is much printed evidence that Bishop Nicolson, both when archdeacon of Carlisle and resident at Great Salkeld, where he was rector, and also during the years he was bishop of the diocese, was on terms of close friendship with different members of the Dalston family. He visited at Acorn Bank—the branch at Temple Sowerby were comparatively near neighbours when he lived at Great Salkeld. He seems to have generally made his long and tedious journeys to and from London by way of Kirkby Thore, and so would find Millrigg or Acorn Bank a convenient temporary halting place. In his Diary for May, 1702, immediately after he had been elected Bishop of Carlisle, he says:

May 22. I began my Southern journey. Br. [Brother] Nevinson, Mr. Wickens [Rector of Kirkby Thore], and Mr. Ward

with me to Brough, and Mr. Fisher [Vicar of Brough, who was appointed Archdeacon, and Rector of Great Salkeld when Nicolson became Bishop] to Stainmore.

On his second London journey in the same year, the Bishop wrote:

Nov. 3. I set out, making ye first Halt at Millrigg. Thence (in company of Mr. Sherif Crackanthorpe [Richard, of Newbiggin, High Sheriff of Cumberland], Mr. Dalston, Br. Nevinson, Br. John, Cous. Archer Chambers, Mr. Smalwood, &c.), to Mr. Wickins's [at Kirkby Thore].

Again in 1705 he writes on October 15th:

Munday. I set out from Rose (accompany'd w'th Mr. A. D. [Archdeacon] Fleming, Mr. Benson, Mr. R. Aglionby, Br. John, Br. Carlile, &c.), for London. Some of ye Company leaving us at Hudfit [Udford] I call'd at Millrigg, where I found Mr. Dalston and his bride treating y<sup>r</sup> friends (S<sup>r</sup> R. Sandford, Mr. Vane, Mr. Sandford of Askham, &c.), very sumptuously. By Kirkby Thore to Appleby.

There is reason to believe that Bishop Nicolson was a visitor at Millrigg on other occasions, though his Diary leaves tantalizing gaps which prevent proof. One, however, is of interest. John Dalston, of Acorn Bank, had had a feud of long standing with Edmund Wickens, or Wickins, Rector of Kirkby Thore (1699-1722) about supposed conflicting rights in Kirkby Thore Church—the mother church of the parish. These were not composed until on March 15th, 1705/6, the Bishop wrote of his return over Stainmore in a storm:

We all met together at Appleby, where welcomed by the Bells & a generous treat from ye Corporation. Making short visits at Long Marton, Kirkby Thore, and Millrigg, I got safe to Rose. (I found Mr. Dalston and Mr. Wickins well reconciled, by the help of y<sup>r</sup> good humor'd wives). Glory to God !

The final pious exclamation was not in gratitude for the reconciliation, but for the safe ending of his long journey !

During some recent extensions of the farm buildings at Millrigg the ancient pigeon house which stood on the south-west side of the house, was demolished, having

become useless for its original purpose. And, by the way, only a lord of a manor could legally have a columbarium. The stones of the old pigeon house were used in the erection of a long range of byres, and over the centre door was placed a large stone on which is carved, in script letters, "Lucy Dalston, 1715." She was the only daughter of James Cooke, of Stockton-on-Tees, and about September 20th ("the fourth year of Queen Anne," according to the marriage agreement), became the wife of John Dalston, of Acorn Bank, just mentioned (1664-1707). The married life of John and Lucy was brief—less than a couple of years. They had two sons, Christopher, the younger, dying about two months before his father. John served as Sheriff of Cumberland in 1729, at the age of 23—a young man for such an important position—and he was twice elected a Member of Parliament for Westmorland—from 1747 to 1759—having for the last five years his kinsman, Sir George Dalston, as his colleague. In June, 1759, he died at Bath unmarried, and was brought to Temple Sowerby for burial, Robert Lowther taking his place as M.P.

Lucy Dalston, who under the marriage settlement was left an annuity of £300—a considerable sum in those days—was appointed a trustee on behalf of her elder son, and as he would not be entitled to possession of the estates until he attained his majority, the mother no doubt continued to live at Acorn Bank for twenty years after her husband's death. It is probable, however, that Millrigg was kept in reserve as a dower house—and indeed may in later years have been so used. This association would account for Lucy's interest in the structure, and for the placing of her name on the pigeon house.

At Acorn Bank is a quaint sundial, which the late Mr. H. Howard Batten, a member of this society, the then tenant of Acorn Bank, told me more than twenty years ago, came from Millrigg. Later he incorporated the

statement in a paper which he read to this society (N.S. ix, 164). It consists of an oval stone table, above which is a square stone, and on this stands the stone bearing the dial. On two sides are the arms of Dalston and Fallowfield, with the initials, " J.D." and " H.F." On the west side the Dial says:

"Staie, Passenger, tell me my name and thy nature,"  
to which the Passenger replies,

"Thy name is Die-all, I a mortal creature."

On the east side the Dial speaks again:

"Sinse my name and thy nature soe agree,  
Think of thyself when thou looks upon me."

These were apparently favourite quotations with the owners and makers of sundials; they are to be found in many parts of the country.

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