

ART. XII.—*Drumburgh Castle*. By W. T. McINTIRE,
F.S.A. SCOT.

Read at the Site, July 6th, 1928.

IT is a task of some difficulty to give more than a very inadequate description of Drumburgh Castle. The documentary evidence as to its history is somewhat meagre; while the many alterations in both its external and its internal structure render it hard to picture this ancient border stronghold as it appeared when it was first built. And yet the very nature of the site, and the place which the castle must have filled in the system of border defence, combine to make it an interesting subject of study.

Drumburgh Castle formed a unit in the long line of English strongholds which guarded the Scottish border. Mr. J. F. Curwen in his paper on Stonegarthside Hall,* drew attention to the existence of this line of castles along the valleys of the Esk and Sark, and the chain continued round the head of what we now know as the Solway and along its shore; the links of the chain being the castles of Rockcliffe, Burgh, Drumburgh, Bowness and Wolstey.

That these castles were considered as a continuous line of defence is evidenced by a "Memorandum on the Borders" of 1580, in which "Drumbeugh,"† along with its neighbours "Bownes towre" and Wolstey Castle, is mentioned as a fortress "upon the ring of the border between Wolstey and Rowecliffe."‡

* *Transactions*, N.S., Vol. xxviii, Art. xxiii.

† For the different spelling of the name Drumburgh, see *Transactions*, O.S., Vol. xvi., pp. 100-103.

‡ *Cal. Border Papers*, p. 32.

The chief task, therefore, which devolved upon Drumburgh was that of dealing with any body of Scottish raiders that attempted to cross the fords of the Solway at low water.

The site of the castle is one admirably adapted for the purpose. Of the ancient fords over the Solway the Annan ford or "Stoniewath"* is four miles to the west, the Dornock ford or Sandiewath only a short distance to the west, and the famous Sulewath, over the Esk, and Rockcliffe fords about $5\frac{1}{2}$ and 6 miles, respectively, to the east.

Thus Drumburgh Castle stood nearly opposite one of these fords, and not too far away from Bowness Tower and Burgh Castle, which defended the others, to be able to reinforce them if they were hard pressed by the Scots.

The site of the castle is upon the south-east slope of a gentle eminence which rises to the height of some sixty feet above the surrounding marsh, and from the platform of the roof—unfortunately not accessible at present—an extensive view may be enjoyed to the north, east and south.

The verdict and presentment of the Jury of Survey on the attainder of Leonard Dacre in 1589 bears the following interesting testimony as to the services rendered by Drumburgh Castle.

"Drombrughe. Also we do p'sente that there is a stone house behealded at Drumburgh within the said manner commonly called Drumbrughe Castell the whiche is in greate decay of Rep'ations and it is a house of very good strength for the reliefe of the inhabitants their aboute both for themselves and for there goods if the Scottes should happen to make any sudden rode or forroo (as when the sea ebbeth they may easily do) before other reliefe can come unto them and the same is situate within one mylle of Scottelande but the water of eaden there

* For the medieval fords over the Solway see Neilson's *Annals of the Solway*, p. 16.

called Sowleway wherein the sea doth flowe is betwixt the same and Scottelande.”*

Much the same evidence is supplied by Christopher Dacre's Survey† of 1580 and by Alexander King, Auditor of the Exchequer's report of 1593.

The first castle upon this site seems to have been a stronghold of the le Brun family.‡ In 1306 Robert le Brun was lord of Beaumont, but removed his residence from the “Motte” Castle of his family at that place to Drumburgh, and, on 24th August, 1307, received licence to crenellate “his dwelling place of Drombogh in the Marches of Scotland.”§

No vestige of this early pele tower exists, as far as I can ascertain; unless the remains of a ditch to be noticed to the west and south of the present building belong to that period.

During most of the remainder of the fourteenth century, the castle continued to be occupied as *caput manerii* by members of the family of le Brun, but upon the extinction of the male line|| the manor of Bowness-on-Solway, and with it Drumburgh Castle fell into the hands of the chief lord, the Baron of Burgh.

The builder of the castle of which the shell, after suffering grievous alterations, still remains was the famous Thomas, Lord Dacre, the leader of the left wing of the English host at Flodden field. In his day the fortunes of the house of Dacre may be said to have culminated; he was a great builder, and Askerton Castle, and the enlargement and adornment of Kirkoswald Castle were his work.

* See *Transactions*, n.s. Vol. xx, Art. xvii, p. 221.

† *Cal. St. Pap.*, Dom. Add., 1580, Vol. 27, No. 44.

‡ For an account of this family and the kindred family surnamed de Feritate, see Mr. T. H. B. Graham's article “Bowness on Solway,” *Transactions* n.s., Vol. xxviii, Art. xv, p. 167.

§ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1307-13, p. 11.

|| The co-heiresses married Curwen, Harrington and Bowett (The Lysons, p. 30.)

It was he who, about the beginning of the 16th century, destroyed the castle of the le Bruns, and built in its stead the present stronghold.*

As Leyland quaintly relates:—

“ At Drumbuygh the Lord Dakers Father builded upon old Ruines a prety Pyle for Defens of the Contery. Drumbuygh is almost in mydway betwyxt Bolnes and Burgh. The Stones of the Pict Wal wer pulled down to build Drumbuygh for the Wal is very near it.”†

Lord Dacre's arms, quartering Multon, Vaux and Morville, having the motto “ Fort in Loyaltie,” and the initials “ T.D.,” the whole surrounded by the garter, may be noted above the present main entrance to the castle, though, perhaps, these arms have been moved from their original position.

Some eighty years after the date of its foundation, we are informed in two of the documents referred to above—Dacre's Survey and King's Report—that the castle stood in urgent need of repair. We learn, also, in the attainder verdict on Leonard Dacre, that—“ theire is belonging to the said Castell one acre of land of the rents of iijs. w^{ch} castell and acre of land John Glaisters balyfe there occupyethe at will and ought to pay yerely the said rents as in the end.”‡

That the castle was needed for the defence of the neighbourhood is shown in a letter from Lord Scrope to Cecil, dated Nov. 29th, 1519.§

In this epistle complaint is made that “ 8 score of Scots and outlaws came to burn our town called Stenton (Stainton), half a mile from Carlisle but were well bett, and some horses killed and hurt; they spoiled some houses at Drumburgh, and then some of the Bishop's tenants at Linstock.”

* T. Denton's MS. pp. 71-72.

† Leyland, Vol. vii, fol. 69.

‡ See Article “ The Glaisters of Scotland and Cumberland,” by Professor John Glaister, M.D., *Transactions*, N.S., Vol. xx, p. 222.

§ *Cal. Border Papers*, Vol. II, p. 811.



DRUMBURGH CASTLE.

Photo. by W. L. Fletcher, 1928.

FACING P. 208.

The lords of the manor seem to have had occasional trouble with the tenants of the castle. On April 13th, 1646, a Mr. Cuthbert Orfeur petitions the House of Lords, praying to be restored to the possession of Drumburgh Castle, Cumberland, which he had held for many years from the Earl of Arundel and Surrey, and from which he had been violently ousted by John Hodgson, agent to Lord Dacre, assisted by Colonel Douglas, Governor of Carlisle.*

In 1678, the castle, then in a ruinous condition, was purchased from the Duke of Norfolk by John Aglionby, Esq., who, as Thomas Denton informs us, did something to put it into a state of repair.

He conveyed it shortly afterwards to Sir John Lowther, in exchange for the Nunnery, and the building has since remained part of the Lowther estate.

It was under Sir John Lowther's regime that the castle underwent, in 1681, a complete repair.

It was then, perhaps, that the original main entrance, the walled-up arch of which may be noticed in the lowest storey of the façade, was superseded by the present doorway with the flight of steps leading up to it. The great wooden lock of this door bears the initials "J.L." and the date, 1681. The windows too were altered. That of the top storey towards the western end of the façade, and now walled-up, seems from its style to belong to Sir John Lowther's period. To him, too, we are probably indebted for the fine oak panelling of the large room on the second floor, and for some of the present internal arrangements of the castle.

The building occupies a rectangular site and faces almost due north. Its external measurements are 75 feet east to west by 27 feet north to south.

The masonry is of stones of remarkably even size, most of which appear, as Leland informs us, to have been derived from the adjacent Roman wall.

* See Appendix to 6th Report of the Royal Commission on Hist. MSS., p. 111.

The thickness of the walls, where I have been able to take measurements, is 4 ft. 2 ins. A plinth, removed in places, runs round the building at the foot of the external walls. The windows have been completely altered with the exception of the one mentioned above. I am informed that one in the second storey was altered only recently to conform with the others. The small arch-headed walled-up window close to the door at the eastern end of the façade may be a survivor of the windows of Lord Thomas Dacre's time.

The original arrangement of the interior has been so completely obscured by modern alterations that it is almost impossible to picture it now. There seems to have been a big hall, with a great fireplace at its eastern end, but it has been cut up into smaller rooms, and its original dimensions cannot now be determined. The western portion of the building, now partitioned off from the rest of the dwelling house and used as an outhouse, seems to have consisted of three storeys. In the north west corner of what was once a room in the topmost storey are the remains of a large fireplace.

At the summit of the western gable is a small platform with a parapet, which seems adapted for a look-out place for a watchman.

I regret that I have not been able to find any old prints or drawings of this interesting old fortified manor house. The sketch of it by Spence reproduced in Collingwood Bruce's Handbook to the Roman Wall seems to indicate a slightly different disposition of the windows fifty years ago. The condemned window near the western porch, for instance, was then in use.

Readers of Sir Walter Scott's "Redgauntlet," need hardly be reminded that Drumburgh Castle is sometimes identified with the "Whiteladies" of that entrancing romance of the Solway.