ART. IX.—*The town and castle of Appleby: a morphological study.* By W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON, D.Litt., F.S.A.

Communicated at Appleby, September 1st, 1948.

THE town and castle of Appleby (fig. 1) occupy a most remarkable position in a great northward loop of the river Eden, here a considerable stream, about 90 or 100 feet in width, rapid and deep, so as to provide the town with a formidable defence on three fronts, west, north and east. In the south or open end of the loop, and occupying the highest ground, stands the castle, magnificently situated on the crest of a steep bank, over a hundred feet in height above the water. From the castle the town extends down a fairly steep slope into the apex of the loop. Thus the castle both dominates the town and controls the access to it from its hinterland to the south and south-west. From the outer gate of the castle park the broad and ample market place, known as the Boroughgate, bisects the length of the town, like the midrib of a leaf, and at its lower end terminates in the burghal church of St. Lawrence. The whole group—castle, town, market place and borough church—forms a singularly perfect and deeply interesting example of medieval town planning. It is a purposeful transplantation of European urbanism into the " Celtic fringe " of eleventh-century England. In almost every particular the Appleby lay-out recalls that of Warkworth — where also, incidentally, the burghal church is under the invocation of St. Lawrence.

Three types of medieval market town may be distinguished, and all three are admirably illustrated in Westmorland.

The first type is the street market pure and simple. This type has originated through the setting down of traders' booths or stock-pens at some convenient point upon an arterial road. That is to say, it begins through the voluntary association of merchants among themselves, guaranteeing by their own regulations the peace of their market. When such a haphazard development becomes regularised, by local agreement or through the interference of manorial or other authority, the resultant street market takes the simple form of a long expansion of the road, like an elongated bubble blown on a glass tube. In a former paper contributed to these *Transactions*,[1] I have called attention to a couple of instances of this street market type of town in Westmorland, namely Askham and Market Brough. It may be described as the product of free enterprise, subsequently regularised. In it, the two ends of the long market expansion are equivalent: there is, so to speak, no polarisation of the market.

The second type is the product of controlled development. A feudal motive intervenes at the outset. So the two ends of the market are now no longer equivalent, but one is polarised upon the castle of the feudal lord or superior of the borough. The castle, that is to say, forms the nucleus of the scheme, and the town thereafter is laid out in dependence on it. In place of the voluntary market peace exemplified in the pure street market, the lord of the castle takes it upon him to answer for the peace of the market; and the castle gate at its upper end was often the place at which infringements of market regulations, or disputes among the traders, were dealt with by the lord's bailiff. Certain passages in Holy Writ remind us how ancient and widespread is such a dispensation, of the King or

[1] CW2 xlvi 7-10.

his officer sitting in the gate for the ministry of justice: for example, when Zedekiah the King, " sitting in the gate of Benjamin," put Jeremiah into the dungeon; or when Amos exhorts Israel to " establish judgment in the gate "; or when Zechariah, in similar vein, calls upon them to " execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates "; or again, when Daniel, having been made ruler over the whole province of Babylon, is described as " sitting in the gate of the King."

Probably the finest example in Europe of such a street market, polarised upon a castle, is Marienburg in Old Prussia, the capital of the Teutonic Order. Another excellent example is seen at Osterode, also an *Ordensstadt*. Here the relationship of castle, street market, and town church is identical with that at Appbley.

The third type of market town is the *bastide* or *villeneuve*. This may be considered as the product of deliberate town-planning *ab initio*. Castle and town are laid out simultaneously as parts of one predetermined scheme. It is classically illustrated in Britain by the Edwardian boroughs of Snowdonia. The characteristic of this third type is the central plan. The town is laid out round a nuclear market place, with a regular gridiron of streets and *insulae*. In my paper already cited I have pointed out that at Church Brough we have the outline sketch of such a *bastide* plan, never filled in.

It may be assumed that when Ranulf de Meschines threw up the first or early Norman castle at Appleby, he laid out the town very soon thereafter, and peopled it with " Norman " immigrants —`no doubt including the usual complement of Flemings. The native inhabitants of the area—a mixed population, we may suppose, of Celts, Angles and Danes—and those who might afterwards gather to the spot for the shelter of the castle and the advantages of the borough, were segregated in a special quarter outside the town and

across the river, to the south-east of the castle. This quarter, straggling along the Stainmore Road, became known as the Bondgate, or *vicus villanorum*. In due course a special church was built for these dependents—St. Michael Bongate. Although the existing structure, like that of St. Lawrence, is now mainly of late medieval date, an early Norman doorway, which may well be of the eleventh century, still remains, and both St. Michael's and St. Lawrence's are mentioned in one of Ranulf's charters. Indeed it seems certain that there had been a settlement at Bongate before the Norman Conquest: for the place is referred to, in a charter of 1265, as *vetus Apilbi ubi villani manent*;[2] while the tympanum of the Norman doorway is formed by a hog-backed stone which must date from about 1000. It is also not without significance that in the early Appleby charters St. Michael's has precedence over St. Lawrence's. It may thus fairly claim to be the mother church of Appleby.

This pre-Conquest settlement at what afterwards became the Bondgate of Norman Appleby must have owed its origin, we may guess, to the ford which crossed the Eden above the present Jubilee Bridge. To this ford a branch, still in use, gave access from the Roman Stainmore Road, which passes about a mile east of Appleby, being mostly still in use as a by-road under the name of High Street. The great divergence which the modern main road here makes from its Roman predecessor is obviously later than the Norman borough, and must be due to its attraction. And it is equally obvious that the Norman town planner chose his site, abandoning the line of the Roman military way, because of the defensive possibilities offered by the Eden loop. Trade follows arterial routes, which in the nature

[2] Nicolson & Burn, i 314.

of things avoid areas of strong relief. A town devised for purely commercial purposes would inevitably have been planted on the Roman road. But in the mind of Ranulf de Meschines military conditions predominated, so he chose the defensive site on the other side of Eden and within the natural moat provided by its loop. On such a site of strong relief, the requirements of defence and of commerce inevitably come into conflict: the military criterion is difficulty of access, whereas the commercial criterion is smoothness of ground and easy approaches. The military element being dominant in the foundation of Appleby, it was the commercial function of the borough that had to suffer. The castle was placed on the loftiest part of the terrain, in the manner of an acropolis. The town stretched down into the river loop, with the result that the lower end of its street market, which should have been the main inlet of trade, is hemmed in by the loop of the river. A solution of this dilemma was found in the building of the medieval bridge. But in the burghal lay-out room had also to be found for the parish church and cemetery, and on this constricted site these could be placed nowhere else but in the apex of the loop. No other place indeed could be found if the church and churchyard were not to compete for the valuable frontages on the market street. Out of such complex conditions arose the remarkable right-angled approach from the market place to the town bridge, which is one of the most interesting features in the morphology of Appleby.

The medieval market square or street had a function purely commercial. It was not until the Renaissance that the old classical conception of the city square as a means of showing off monumental public buildings again caught the imagination of town planners. In the absence of such public buildings, the valuable space round the market street came to be close packed with

tenements, and to give as many burgesses as possible a share of the coveted frontage, the tenements were set end on to the street. Traces of this characteristic medieval arrangement are still visible in the current plan of Appleby, and of course, much more so in the survey of 1754.[3] And these same two conditions—the absence of any sense of the scenic opportunities offered by the market frontages, plus their extreme value for commercial purposes—have led to the wholly inorganic dumping down of the Moot Hall in the midst of the market place, which strikes so curiously every visitor to the town.

Where a castle and a town occupy what may be called an acropolis site, as at Appleby, the castle being placed on the summit and the town extending down the smooth slope below, the articulation of town and castle becomes a matter of some delicacy. It is usually achieved by means of a forecourt, which links castle and town together and at the same time provides a *glaçis* to the former. In spur sites such as Appleby, the most convenient arrangement is to place the castle at the point of the spur, where it is screened by the town. The expanding triangular or wedge-shaped plan of such sites also best suits this lay-out, as its progressive widening successively accommodates castle, forecourt and town. But at Appleby the acropolis, so to speak, is at the outer or open and therefore widest end of the spur, so that the plan has had to be reversed. The forecourt had thus to be adjusted to meet this special problem. It was solved by carrying a formidable ditch from the eastern corner of the forecourt across the remaining part of the excess width of the site, until it runs out upon the

[3] In old Scottish burghs, where the same phenomenon appears, it seems also that defence played its part in these narrow frontages. The house presents a blind gable to the street, with, at most, one or two tiny garret windows, high up. The door is placed in the side of the house, approached by a narrow vennel or lane, which can easily be barred by a gate on the street: while the vennel itself does not afford room to swing a beam against the door.

slope of the Eden. Thus the security of the castle was preserved *vis-à-vis* the town; while in its turn the castle affords complete protection to the town against any attack down the left bank of the river. On the other or western side of the castle, an outer ditch was carried from the river escarpment right round the exterior of the castle defences, so as to link up with the bank and ditch which protected the western flank of the borough. The consummate skill with which all these Norman earthworks have been devised must strike every student of the morphology of Appleby. Of course the site has conditioned the plan; none the less, the plan is clearly master of the site.[4] Ordered forethought has clearly been applied to the whole area before ever a ditch of castle or town was dug.

Appleby, new founded in a territory just won for the expanding Anglo-Norman realm, is in the strictest sense a colonial town. Its soldier-burgesses were expected not only to promote civilisation amid the natives of a wild border district, but to defend it against the strong, aggressive kings of the Canmore dynasty. It belongs to the group of new Norman towns which were founded in the latter part of the eleventh century and throughout the twelfth, to which Professor Tout has called attention in his well-known essay on *Medieval Town Planning*.

[4] Cf. John Leighly, *The Towns of Medieval Livonia*, p. 261:—" If a settlement yields effortlessly to the exigencies of its site, it is difficult to recognise the formal motives in its plan. ' The medium is master ' as the expression goes concerning a beginner in the practice of an art, in contrast to the capable craftsman, who is first and last, whatever his other qualities, master of his medium. The yielding of a community to the site of a town, without sufficient effective defiance of topographic difficulties or modification of the natural topography in the direction of a formal ideal to leave a record in the plan of a town, is evidence either of economic or technologic weakness or of scanty appreciation of aesthetic qualities that may be realised in the settlement to be founded . . . Weakness or laxness of aesthetic judgment are the only reasons to be appealed to in exploration of the failure of the community to give its settlement a form that approximates a recognisible ideal, in spite of the handicaps imposed by a refractory site."

It is astonishing that so great a scholar should have remarked of these towns that " few of the Norman foundations of this type attained much success, and none, so far as I know, give evidence of medieval town planning." On the contrary, Ludlow on the Welsh March, and Appleby on the Western March of Scotland, are, each in its own way, two of the most perfect specimens of medieval town-planning that twelfth-century Western Europe can show.

The castle of Appleby (fig. 2) began as a mount-and-bailey stronghold of timbered earthwork, and its mighty banks and ditches survive as one of the most impressive examples of Norman military engineering in this country. Later the *motte* was cut down and on its truncated summit was built the fine stone tower which ever since has been the dominant feature of the castle (fig. 3). Whether this keep was in existence before the capture of Appleby by William the Lion in 1174, or was built thereafter, may be doubted. Decidedly, I think the latter, for the reasons set forth in my discussion of the tower at Brough.[5] The description of the Appleby keep provided by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments[6] leaves nothing to be added: but, as in the case of Brough, I do not think it necessary to hold that the upper part is later than the lower. The slight improvement of masonry is probably to be explained, as at Brough, on the supposition that the lower part was built out of " top rock," while the upper part had the benefit of the finer stone obtained from the deeper levels of the quarry. The embrasure soles of the Norman parapet are still visible, sealed up, like fossils in a stratum, beneath the existing battlements, which are of Edwardian date: with their broad pierced

[5] CW2 xlvi 4.
[6] *RCHM Westmorland* 8-9.

merlons and narrow embrasures, they recall the wall-heads of the castles in North Wales. Internally, the most remarkable original feature of the keep is the unfinished corbel mask in the south wall at the second floor. Its under part, showing the grinning mouth with its formidable teeth and protruded tongue, is forcibly carved in strong relief; but the upper part, on the front of the corbel, remains a mason's draft, in which eyes and nose are merely incised on the stone.

The squared-off eastern end of the bailey indicates that the hall was always here, as at Brough. At first it was doubtless of timber, but it seems in late Norman times to have been replaced by a monumental hall of stone, of which a considerable portion of the eastern or outer wall, in deep red St. Bees stone, remains in the existing structure. This Norman splicing includes a gate which obviously represents the outer end of a through passage traversing the screens end of the hall, after a fashion that become common in the later castles of the Border-land — for example, at Yanwath. We may imagine that the main entrance to the castle has always been where it is today, at the waist of the bailey towards the town. But this eastern gate is much more than a postern. It is a major feature of the Norman lay-out, designed upon a monumental scale. The round-arched entrance measures 5 feet $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth and 6 feet 10 inches in height, and is set in a tall recess, likewise round-arched, fully 16 feet in height, reckoned from the threshold. The jambs of this outer arch are slotted for a portcullis, which rose as high as the imposts, while in the soffit is a hole for the chain or cable by which the portcullis was raised. The whole feature is set in a splayed projection of some 13 feet 6 inches frontal span. Clearly this is no mere postern or side-gate. The castle, it is obvious, has been provided with an independent entrance from the open

country. In other words, its freedom of action is secured against disaffection in the town.

Red St. Bees stones appear fairly freely, though sporadically, in the keep, which in the main is built in greyish-green Lazonby stone, a material which has been chiefly used in all the later ashlar work of the castle.[7] This fact suggests that the keep is later than the Norman hall, and that the St Bees stone in the former has been re-used from some older building. It is not therefore impossible that there may have been an earlier stone keep, as at Brough. At all events, the Norman hall and postern would seem to be older than the existing keep. Possibly an earlier keep was destroyed, as at Brough, in 1174. Fantosme's account of the capture of Appleby then specifies *le chastel e la tur,* but no indication is forthcoming as to whether the latter feature was of stone or timber.

Considerable Norman ashlar work still surviving in the wall which encloses both mount and bailey shows that the replacing of the timber defences by stone was completed before the end of the twelfth century. The next stage in the development of the castle was the strengthening of these curtain walls by hemicylindrical towers in the new fashion that came in during the next century. A round tower has a double advantage over a square one. It possesses no angles, against the quoin stones of which the battering ram or miner's pick can operate with deadly effect. And those same angles, the weak points in the rectangular scheme, can be commanded only with difficulty, and imperfectly, by the defender on the wall-head, who must expose himself unduly to shoot down at a pioneer " attached " (as the military phrase goes) to the angle below: whereas

[7] At Brougham Castle also the use of Lazonby stone is subsequent to the St. Bees stone.

the whole circumference of the round tower is equally commanded both from its own parapet and from the adjoining curtains. At Appleby there were at least three of these new-fashioned round towers. Two were on the south side, where their doors from the courtyard remain, with part of the curving wall of the western tower; both towers are depicted on the plan of 1754. The third tower is still in excellent preservation on the northern side, and is an admirable example of early thirteenth-century military construction. Its plain battering base of three flush courses should be contrasted with the multiple base of Clifford's Tower at Brough Castle, which, as I have shown elsewhere,[8] dates from the end of the thirteenth century.

How the castle fared in the Scotch wars we do not know. Appleby town was burned in 1314 and again in 1388; but there is no evidence that the castle was captured, or even attempted, by the raiders in either foray.

The eighties of the fourteenth century were a decade of great strain and alarm in England. Plantagenet imperialism had already committed the realm to a war on two fronts; and now the policy of the Black Prince in supporting Pedro the Cruel in Spain, followed as it was by John of Gaunt's dynastic venture in that country, added the naval power of Castile to the hostile array. The resultant alliance of Valois, Stewart and Trastamara all but brought the weak government of Richard II to its knees. The Franco-Castilian fleet swept the channel and occupied the Isle of Wight. English ports from Hastings to Scarborough were given to the flames. In the north, in 1385 a French fleet arrived in the Forth and landed troops to take a hand in the Scotch invasion which, almost every year despite the truce of 1369, had

[8] CW2 xlvi 40-1.

scourged the miserable northern counties. These invasions culminated in 1388, the year of Otterburn and of the sack of Appleby. Under such conditions of peril, the English government embarked on a comprehensive programme of strengthening and reconditioning the existing Border fortresses and building new ones.[9] Such is the national background to an order issued on 3 December 1383, to the Sheriffs of Cumberland and Westmorland, directing each of them

" to take stonecutters, masons and other labourers for the repair of certain castles and fortlets of Roger de Clifford, knight, in the said county near the march of Scotland, which are useful as a refuge for the King's subjects, at the wages of the said Roger."[10]

Elsewhere I have shown that these injunctions were followed by a drastic programme of rebuilding and reorganisation at the castles of Brougham and Brough.[11] At Appleby likewise, I am persuaded that to this period we should ascribe the great eastern consolidation which partly survives in the existing mansion of the late seventeenth century. This work has hitherto been assigned to the year 1454, when, according to the Lady Anne's Diary, Thomas, Lord Clifford " built the chiefest part of the castle towards the east, as the hall, the chapel and the great chamber, which were then fallen into great decay."[12] But this language makes it clear that what was then done was simply the rebuilding of existing edifices, not the erection of new ones on a fresh scheme. I have no doubt that the oldest surviving work in the eastern range, after the Norman remnants, belongs to

[9] I have discussed all this more fully in my " Further Notes on Dunstanburgh Castle ", AA4 xxvii 1-25.

[10] *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1381-5 p. 344.

[11] CW2 xlii 179, xlvi 43-50.

[12] J. F. Curwen, *Castles and Fortified Towers*, p. 77. The chapel of Appleby Castle is mentioned in 1251: in the fourteenth century it became a chantry. See Nicolson & Burn, i, 323-4.

the later fourteenth century, and was erected pursuant to the injunction of 1383. Its large ashlar masonry, high in the course and finely fitted, is of good fourteenth-century character, and shows the neat use of " closers " characteristic of that period. It is much more masterly and monumental facework than that of the gatehouse block, which can be dated to *ante* 1422. The shouldered lintels still to be seen in the south-east tower likewise betoken the fourteenth century.

This fourteenth-century building is designed as a hall-house upon the traditional lines, with a central hall, having at its southern or lower end the kitchen with offices, and at its upper end the chapel and great chamber. The Norman side-gate continued in use as a through passage behind the screen. The hall is set between massive square towers, after the fashion prevalent in the later fourteenth century in the north country. The whole range much resembles one of the " quarters " of Bolton Castle in Wensleydale, built by Lord Scrope under a royal licence issued in 1379. Scrope's architect at Bolton was the great Durham master-mason, John Lewyn. We know that Lewyn was extensively employed on the northern border defences, in east and west, at this very time;[13] and I am inclined to suspect that he was the designer of this work at Appleby. It is magnificently monumental alike in conception and in execution, and well worthy of so great a master of design as John Lewyn. Seen from the Jubilee Bridge below, this eastern front of Appleby Castle has an effect truly imposing, heightened by its commanding situation and by the lofty outer arch of the Norman portal in its midst.

A short length of the southern curtain wall, adjoining this building, is carried out in large ashlars and has

[13] AA4 xix 93-103.

a tall window with stepped sole and shouldered lintel. This work must also be assigned to the fourteenth century. Similar masonry is found in a stretch of curtain to the west of the estate office, terminated by a massive buttress.

It has been noted that the fourteenth-century hall-house follows traditional lines, and occupies the position of its Norman predecessor. The frontal consolidation, so characteristic of that century, which I have analysed at Brougham and Brough, had not yet been achieved. We may imagine that this was brought about at Appleby through the erection of the great gatehouse by John, Lord Clifford, before 1422. Unhappily this gatehouse survives only in a massive fragment on the west side of the modern entrance. But Lady Anne's language—" that strong and fine artificial gatehouse all arched with stone, and decorated with the arms of the Veteriponts, Cliffords and Percies " — makes it reasonably certain that the gatehouse was a dominant feature in the castle. We can hardly doubt that, after the fashion of its time, it contained a suite of apartments for the lord or castellan. If we may judge from its surviving fragment, it was built of squared rubble, or wide jointed rough ashlar not always breaking bond—work markedly inferior to the fine ashlar of the fourteenth century eastern range. The destruction of this gatehouse—probably in the Civil War—is much to be regretted. Had it survived, Appleby Castle today would have illustrated, within one cincture, the three chief variant theses in the medieval castle-plan—the hall-house, the tower-house and the gatehouse. The illustration would have been the more instructive because in the latest reconstruction of all (1686-95), the oldest thesis, that of the hall-house, still predominated.

Thomas Lord Clifford's reconstruction of the eastern range in 1454 is still recognisable in the masonry of its

upper part, which is later than that below. In the south-east tower, the fifteenth-century work seems to include everything above the second floor. On its south side the dividing line is marked by a stringcourse, now cut away, ranging with that still uninjured on the garderobe turret, and stepped up towards the south-east angle, as it is on the opposite side of the turret. Above this the masonry is less massive, and different in colour from the lower work; while the south-east quoin has an accented intake in this upper portion. On the east front, the string course is not in evidence, but the change in the masonry is none the less clear. Both the upper and the lower walling continue northward until they abut on rubble work, whose later date is shown by the way in which some of the ashlars are stubbed off. This later rubble, which may be the work of the Countess Anne, carries on until it butts against the Norman gateway. North of the latter, and beyond the red Norman walling, the fourteenth-century ashlar reappears, and again includes the second storey, above which the fifteenth-century work is imposed. The great north-eastern buttress is an impressive piece of fourteenth-century construction, and extends upwards about five feet in front of the fifteenth-century walling. On the north front, the two periods of work are again distinct. A fifteenth-century doorway, evidently re-set, appears in the canted angle of the south-west wing.

The castle is described by Leland as ruinous in 1539, and the Countess of Pembroke tells us that its roofs were taken down during the northern rebellion of 1569, leaving "no one chamber habitable."[14] In 1651-3 she restored the castle. Of her work we may still identify the mid-wall in the keep, the four turret heads thereon, the former brew-house range west of the entrance,

[14] Curwen, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

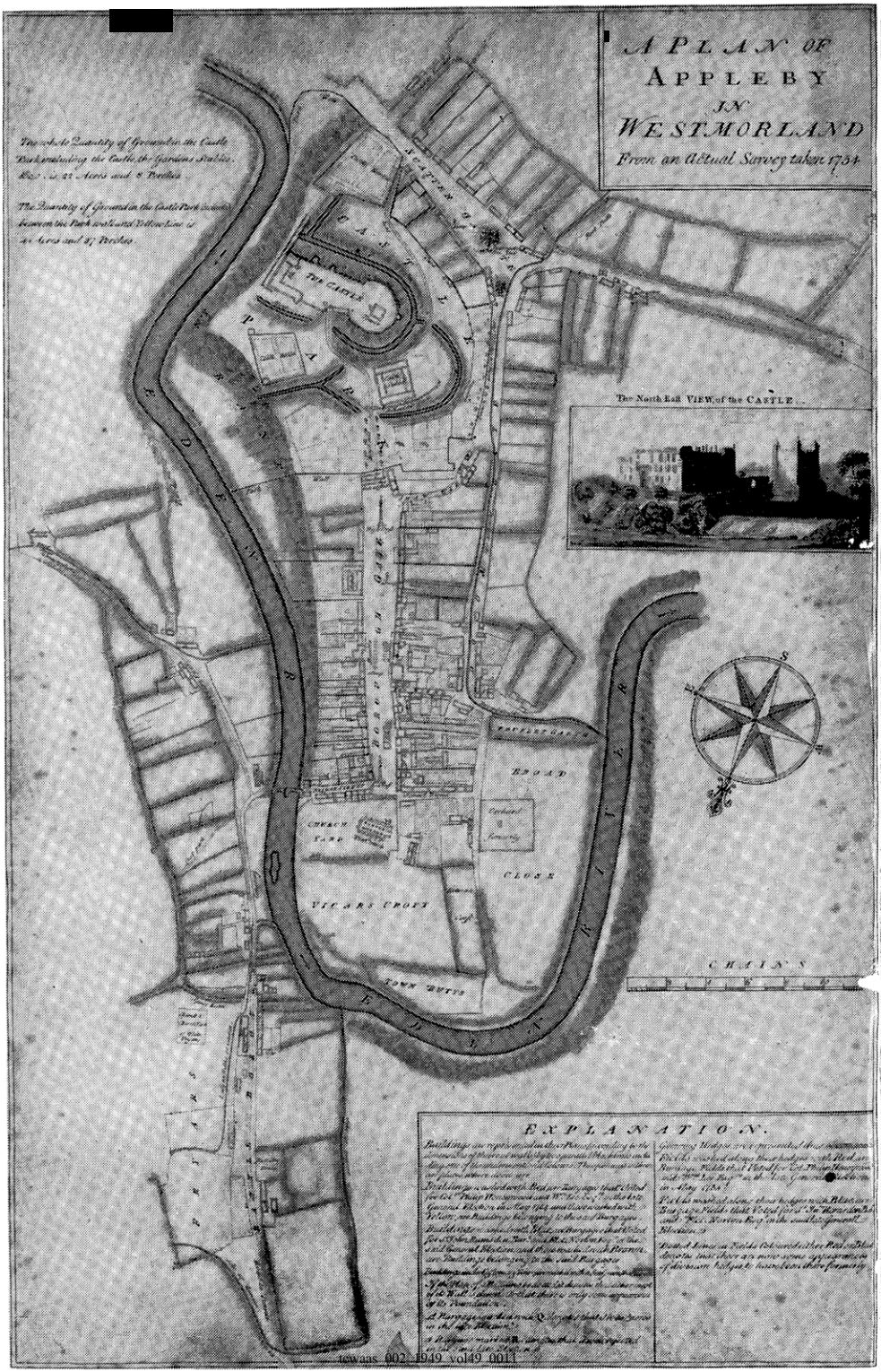

FIG. 1.

facing p. 133.

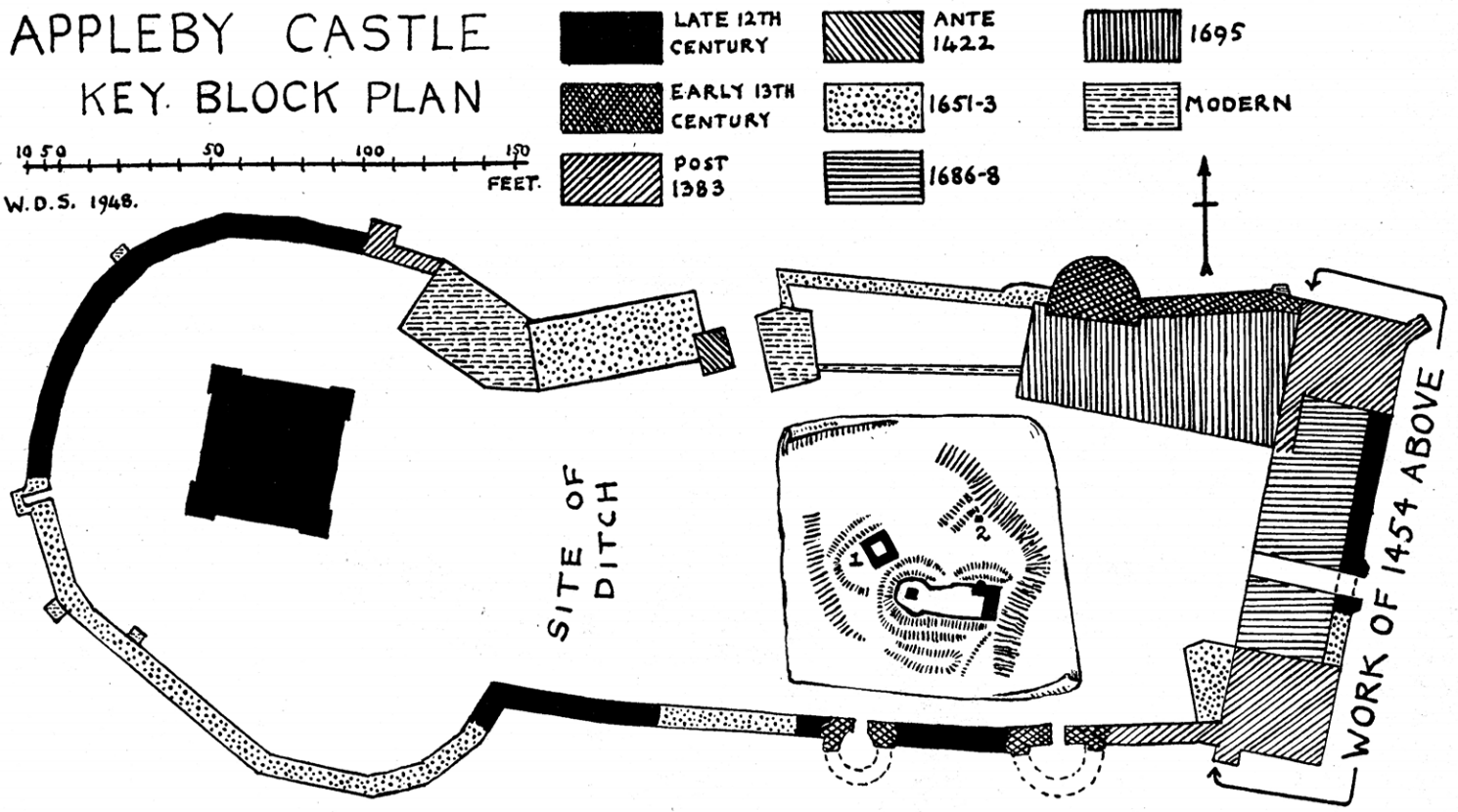

FIG. 2.

tcwaas_002_1949_vol49_0011

fdcing p. 133.

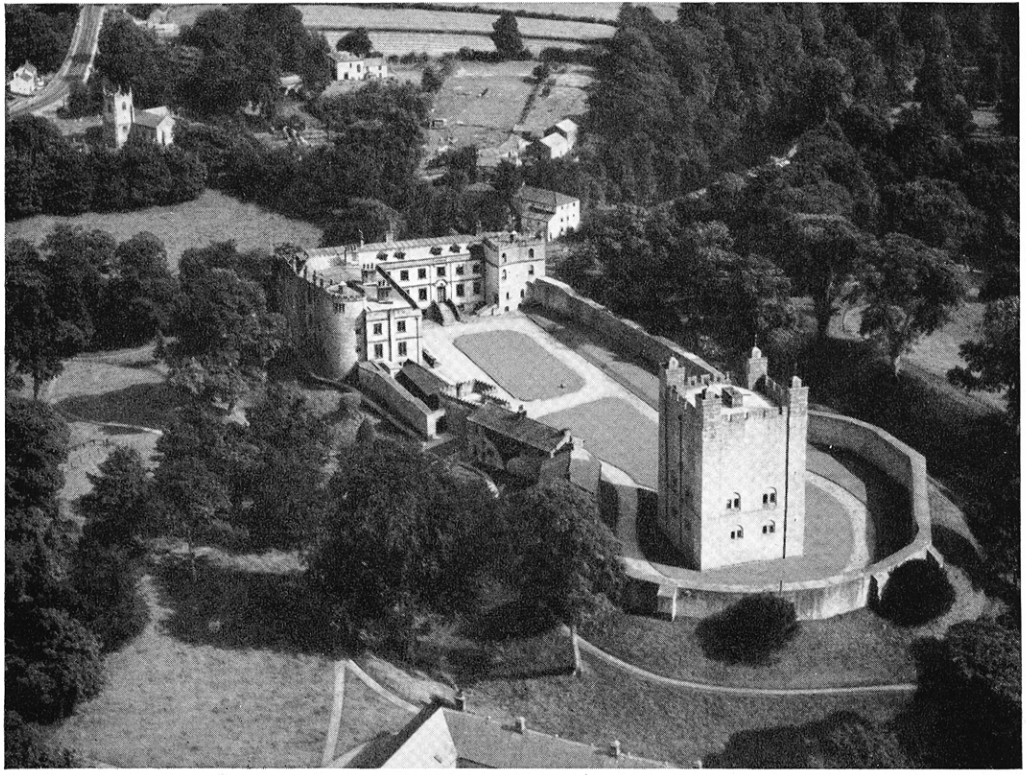

FIG. 3. Appleby Castle: view from the air.
Reproduced by courtesy of *Country Life*.

facing page 133.

extensive patching or rebuilding of the Norman curtain, the remarkable steading in the western bailey, and the bee-house to the north.[15] Quite likely it was the Countess who filled up the ditch between *motte* and bailey. Its profile is still visible outside the south curtain. A re-used window lintel in the canted south-west angle bears her initials, A.P., and the date 1671.

Between 1686 and 1688 the fourth Earl of Thanet built the existing eastern range, embodying the shell of its medieval predecessor: and it would seem that the wing extending westward from this work to the thirteenth-century drum tower was added in 1695. This Restoration house is a fine essay in the pure Classical Renaissance. It is obviously the work of an architect of distinction, probably from southern England. I should much like to know who he was. His design, as I have already observed, remains essentially traditional. It is still based on the ancient thesis of a central great banqueting hall, entered at its lower end. There is no trace here of the atrophy of the dining hall, and its degradation into a mere vestibule — a " hall " in the modern sense—which is so characteristic of English domestic architecture during the Restoration period, and of which I have elsewhere discussed Scottish instances at Hatton House and Keith Hall.[16]

My thanks are due to the Council of this Society for inviting me to undertake this paper, and for meeting the expenses incurred in its preparation; to Lord Hothfield for permission to study the castle; and to his agent, Mr. J. Deakin, for much courteous assistance.

[15] The steading and the bee-house are numbered 1 and 2 on the small inset plan, fig. 2.

[16] PSAScot. lxxix 15-26: *The Earldom of Mar*, p. 141.