

ART. XIV.—*Shank Castle, Cumberland.* By S. E. RIGOLD, M.A.

PREVIOUS accounts of Shank Castle have been published by M. W. Taylor (1892),<sup>1</sup> T. H. B. Graham (1909),<sup>2</sup> J. F. Curwen (1913)<sup>3</sup> and W. T. McIntire (1922).<sup>4</sup> Curwen had not visited it himself, but published excellent photographs by the Rev. G. J. Goodman. The present account must be the last one, since the castle has recently (1951-2) been demolished. A proposal to dismantle it as dangerous to the personnel and livestock of the adjoining farm was submitted to the Ministry of Works. This condition was confirmed after a thorough examination, and the Ancient Monuments Board, after an offer of assistance in repair had been refused, reluctantly allowed its demolition on condition that a survey was made. The findings of the survey are the basis of this account.

All previous writers knew the evidence about its erection, derived from Thomas Denton's report to Lord William Howard, stating that it was built by Sir William Hutton for his own habitation, when steward to George, earl of Cumberland, and that he dwelt there to subdue the moss-troopers. Nevertheless, Curwen hazarded the guess that it was a pele-tower of earlier date, adapted by Sir William, and McIntire sought to demonstrate this by alleged differences in the measurements of the walls. But neither the plan nor any structural details suggested that this was so, either to the writer or to Mr F. C. Vickery, who made the survey before the demolition. There is, moreover, no known mention of the castle before the 17th century.

<sup>1</sup> *Old Manorial Halls of Westmorland and Cumberland*, 351 f.

<sup>2</sup> "Six extinct Cumberland Castles", CW2 ix 217 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Castles and Fortified Towers of Cumberland and Westmorland*, 395 f.

<sup>4</sup> CW2 xxii 162 f., with a summary of Howard v. Hutton, and references.

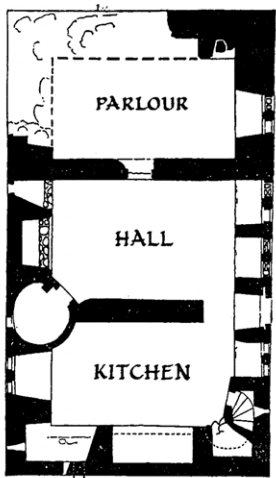
Sir William Hutton appears in a sinister light in the Household Books of Lord William Howard. Even if we make allowances for the personal feud between Howard and Hutton, the latter appears to have reverted to the barbarous type of border chieftain, although he had once begun a respectable civil career. When Lord William wrote his final self-righteous indictment of him in 1622, Sir William appears more worthy of pity than disgust. He was an old man who had completely lost his grip on his family and his public responsibilities and retired to his remote castle. But this still leaves unexplained why he left his ancestral Hutton Hall, near Penrith, to which his descendants returned, and lived at Shank for some twenty years, in morose seclusion, while his servants and children came to "sticky ends". In "subduing" the moss troopers, he almost became one of them. Yet he had been high sheriff of Cumberland in 1603, and again in 1610, after his knighthood. As one of the Commissioners of the Border he had contributed to the fund for the "extirpation" of the Grahams in 1606. But evidently before this he had built himself Shank Castle, as his master, George, earl of Cumberland, the "privateer earl", who paid little attention to his Northern estates, died in 1605. Hutton was still living at Shank between 1617 and 1622, when Howard poured his wrath on him.

How soon the castle declined into a farmhouse and was finally deserted for the adjoining smaller house is not known. It was dismissed as a ruin by Lysons in 1816,<sup>5</sup> but the blocking of several openings shows that it was long used as a storehouse, and remained so till recently.

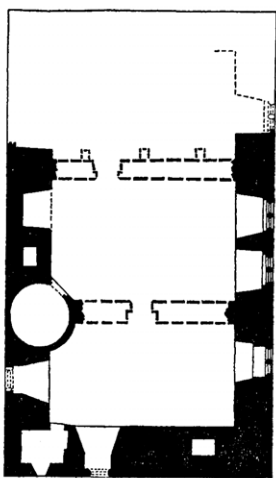
#### *Description.*

Shank Castle was a rectangular tower, 52 ft. long by 29 ft. 6 in. wide and about 37 ft. high to the top of the

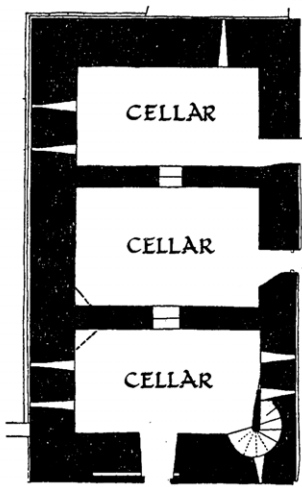
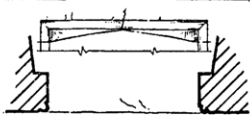
<sup>5</sup> *Magna Britannia*, iv 159.



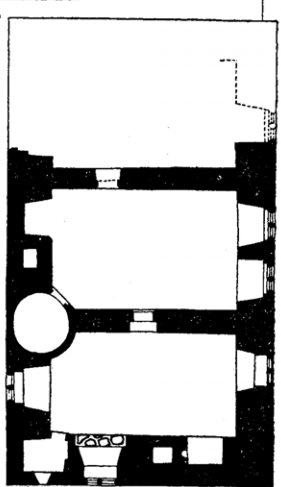
FIRST FLOOR



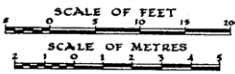
THIRD FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



# SHANK CASTLE

FIG. 1. (Crown copyright reserved.)

parapet. The longer axis lay NE-SW. It apparently stood in isolation, as there were no signs of a bawn or enclosure having been bonded into any of the walls. Except for a collapse at the North corner, the shell was largely intact until demolition was taken in hand.

The main lighting and the principal entrance were from the south-east and the wall on this side was thinner (4 ft.) than those on the others (5 ft. 6 in.) which carried chimneys in their thickness. It was divided by partition walls into three chambers on all floors, the central chamber being about 13 ft. 9 in. NE-SW, the end ones each about 11 ft. 6 in. Hereinafter, the south-west chamber is referred to as the "first", and so on. The partition walls were not properly bonded into the outer shell and each was only about 2 ft. 9 in. thick, not as reported by McIntire, who claimed a thickness of 3 ft. 10 in. and 4 ft. 6 in. respectively. This and the insufficient bonding dispose of the idea that the second partition wall represented the north-east outer wall of an earlier tower.

The core and partition walls were of irregular rubble, the outer face of wide-jointed and roughly squared and coursed rubble, galletted in places with smaller stones and degenerating into thinner stones towards the middle of the SW face. The courses set by the quoins were not always evenly maintained. The dressings were of large sandstone ashlar, and long monolithic lintels, with relieving arches over them, were characteristic of the castle.

The tower had four storeys, none of them vaulted. They were floored on joists about 1 ft. 6 in. apart, parallel with the longer axis of the building, the ends embedded in the walls, in the second, and perhaps the third storey, but not the two lower storeys; the ceilings were further secured by corbels. The structure of the original roof is unknown, but some sort of roof had been re-set over the south-west section. No trace remained of the external staircase to the main entrance, which was presumably of wood.

The ground floor was entirely devoted to cellarage and contained no fire-places. It was entered by a square-headed doorway in the middle of the south-west wall. The outer surround of the door had a simple roll-moulding. Within this surround the jambs were slightly splayed and behind the lintel was a low, segmental rubble arch. A draw-bar, drawn from right to left, secured the door. A second ground-floor entrance, preserving one splayed interior jamb and a plain monolithic lintel, leading into the third compartment from the south-east, may have been original. Another, on the same side, into the central bay, was certainly an insertion. The doors between the compartments were designed to face the south-west entrance in the centre of the partition walls. The only lighting on this floor was provided by a series of vents that could also have been used for musketry-loops. On the north-west side the two end compartments had each two pairs of vents, one above the other, separated by a single stone; there may have been a single vertical pair on the same side in the central chamber. On the south-east side there were two single vents in the first room and perhaps originally the same in the third, which had another single vent, perhaps originally two, in the north-east wall. From the south corner of the first room a spiral staircase, also with a vent, led to the kitchen above.

The first floor was approached by the principal door which opened from the south-west, right in front of the partition between the first and second rooms, obviously a defensive arrangement, by which the person entering turned right and exposed his left side, on entering the second room. The first room was clearly the kitchen, the second the hall and the third the parlour, the door being, in a sense, at the "low" end, its proper position. The door was very similar to the south-west ground-floor door, with a roll and monolithic lintel, but the lintel-stone extended down the jambs for a few inches, allowing for two low triangular spandrels between the seating of the

lintel and the head of the door, giving an appearance of a depressed, pointed arch.<sup>6</sup> The head of the door unfortunately bore no date, initials or armorial devices. The double-lighted windows on the first floor all had curious broad slabs for mullions and were without "labels". They were shuttered on the interior, as well as glazed. The kitchen had two such windows, south-east and north-west. The staircase from the cellar ended in a door with an arch out of the lintel and a vent or musketry loop gave on to it just below the level of the first floor cills. Between the staircase and the great fireplace was a chamber in the thickness of the wall. The great fireplace was 9 ft. wide and arched with well-tooled, but not chamfered, voussoirs with a rougher arch above. This fits tightly on to a chamber on the other side; possibly the fireplace had been enlarged and originally had yet another monolithic lintel, which had broken. This second and larger wall-chamber had two vents. An external stone gutter drained its floor, not far to the left of the ground floor entrance. It may have been a scullery; those above it were probably garde-robes.

The hall was lighted by two two-light windows on the south-west, later partly blocked, and a small square window into an arched mural-recess beside the fireplace, to which it fitted tightly. The fireplace was chamfered all round and had a plain monolithic lintel and relieving arch. Later, it and the recess were also blocked. On the other side was the access to a second spiral stairway to the rooms above, in the corner between the hall and kitchen. This door, which was not rebated as that above, might have been altered. A doorway in the second partition wall opened into the parlour, which appears to have had a pair of two-light windows opposite each other, as in the kitchen.

The second floor had windows with ordinary narrow mullions and "label" hoods. Their only ornament was

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Blencow (dated 1590), Curwen, *op. cit.*, 440.

a plain, broad chamfer. They were not shuttered, being considered high enough to be safe. The staircase led to the Chamber over the hall, lighted by two windows on the south-east, with a fireplace similar to that in the hall but smaller and less broadly chamfered, in the wall opposite. The first chamber, south-west of this, had a two-light window in the south-west wall, as well as south-east and north-west windows as in the kitchen. Beside this two-light window, the recess of which was afterwards blocked, there was a (*garde-robe*?) chamber with a vent, in the west corner, and another linteled fireplace, towards the south corner. Of the third chamber little existed except the east corner and the window on the south-east front.

The third floor was evidently much like the second. The windows on the south-east side were identical, but curiously out of true *vis-à-vis* the string-course of the parapet, that in the first chamber touching it with its "label", that in the third a course or two down. The other windows, at least in the first chamber (i.e. SW and NW), were single lights and nearly square, without labels. The parapet projected slightly on its string-course and had drains at intervals, those on the south-east with stone gutters. The form of the parapet is uncertain as it was largely destroyed except on the south-west front. After the west corner battlement, on the south-west front, came a two-stepped pierced merlon and then a plain merlon reaching almost down to the string and giving the appearance of a low turret at the west corner. Thence to the south corner, where the flues emerged, the parapet was shallow. It is clear that this parapet, whatever its form, was not an even series of battlements.



FIG. 1.—Shank Castle from the E.



FIG. 2.—Shank Castle from the S.W.

*Photos: By courtesy of the Deputy Director, The National Buildings Record.*

*facing p. 150.*