

ART. XII.—*Rose Castle*. By Canon C. M. L. BOUCH,
F.S.A.

Read on the site, September 14th, 1955.

THE manor and barony of Dalston, which had been an escheat in the king's hands since Hervey Fitz Maurice had been dispossessed for felony in 1186, were granted to Bishop Mauclerk of Carlisle in 1230. Within two months of the royal grant, one of the bishop's servants is named Geoffrey de la Rose, which suggests that the manor house already had that name. It is certain that Bishop Vipont was in residence there in 1255, when he granted a charter "apud la Rose".¹

The origin and meaning of the name, for long a matter of dispute, may be considered to be settled by the statement of the authors of the Place-Name Society's *Cumberland* volume that

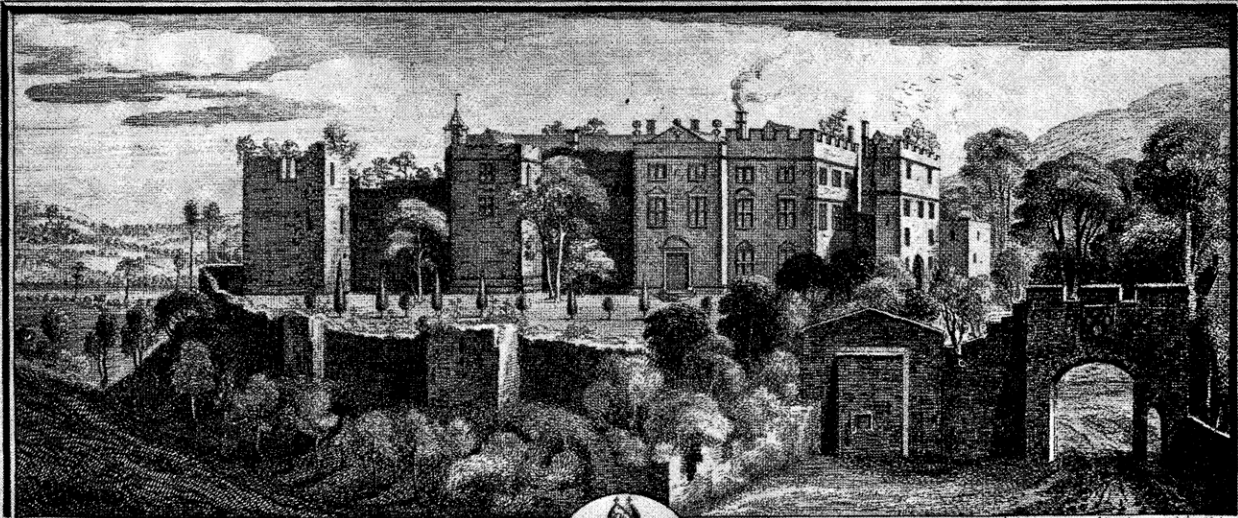
"It is in every way probable that the application of the name Rose to this site was a deliberate piece of place-giving, expressing the beauty of the bishop's residence by comparing it to the rose, the most beautiful of all flowers. Conceits of this kind were familiar in the Middle Ages."²

It is probable that the earliest manor house was of the mote and baily type: with the mote lying opposite to where Kite's Tower now is, and the baily covering the area in which the medieval castle was subsequently built. When this happened is unknown; it is generally believed that the earliest stone buildings date from Bishop Kirkby's time and that previously timber was used and that it was in a building of this type that Edward I, his queen and court, were entertained in September 1300, and in which Edward Brus, brother of Robert, stayed for three days,

¹ *Rose Castle*, James Wilson, 31-2, 202.

² Part I, 134-5.

THE NORTH-WEST VIEW OF ROSE-CASTLE, IN THE COUNTY OF CUMBERLAND



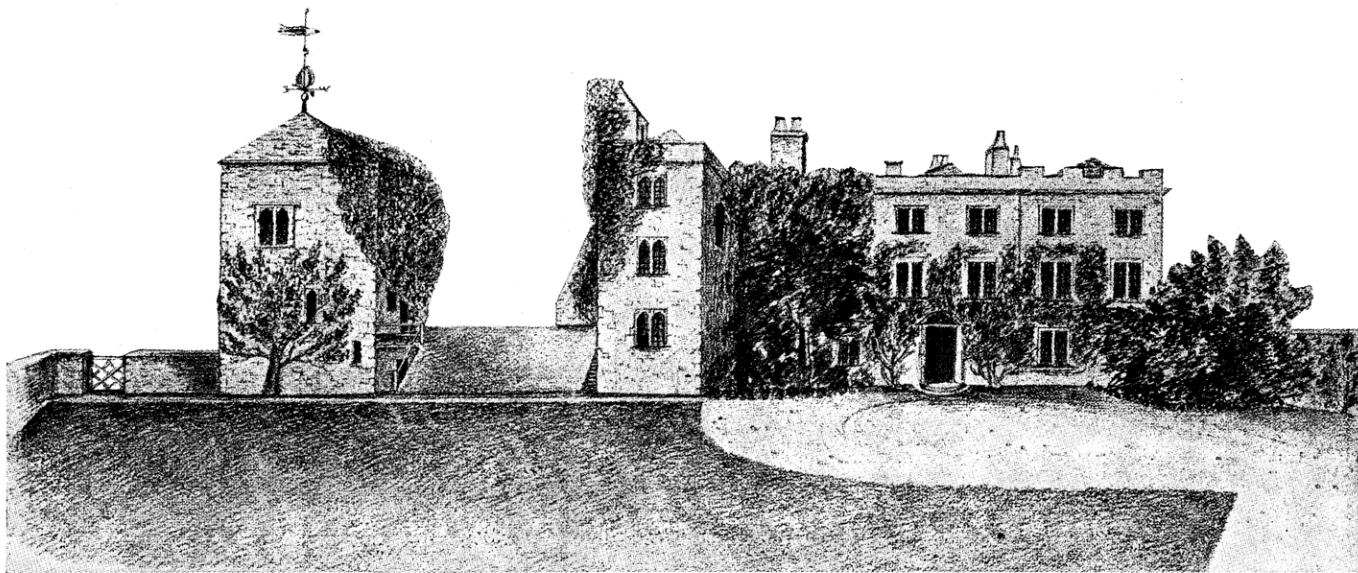
To the Right Rev. Father in G.O.D.
S^t. George Fleming Baronet,
Lord Bishop of Carlisle
This Engraving is humbly Inscribed by his Lordships most Obedt. &
Dutiful Servants,
Sam^l. & Nath^l. Buck



THIS Castle has all its present appearance, as it is, since the time of the late Bishop of Carlisle, who has been the greatest benefactor to it, and has been the cause of its being repaired and enlarged in several parts. It is situated on a hill, and is surrounded by a wall of stone, which is in several places broken down, and the towers are in a ruinous state. The castle is now used as a residence for the Bishop of Carlisle, and is a very beautiful and spacious building. It is situated in the county of Cumberland, and is one of the most interesting objects in the county. The castle was built by the late Bishop of Carlisle, and is a very fine specimen of the architecture of the 17th century. It is situated on a hill, and is surrounded by a wall of stone, which is in several places broken down, and the towers are in a ruinous state. The castle is now used as a residence for the Bishop of Carlisle, and is a very beautiful and spacious building. It is situated in the county of Cumberland, and is one of the most interesting objects in the county. The castle was built by the late Bishop of Carlisle, and is a very fine specimen of the architecture of the 17th century.

Pl. I.—Buck's view of the North and East fronts of Rose Castle in 1739.

facing p. 132



PL. II.—The North front of the castle before Bishop Percy's reconstruction.

facing p. 133

without invitation, and subsequently burnt in 1314.³ There is no evidence in support of the assertion⁴ that Bishop Halton built any part of the castle in 1297; Ancient Petitions No. 4071 says nothing of the kind.

But it is worth noting that Bishop Lyttelton, who was a scholar and President of the Society of Antiquaries, in his account of the castle written before Bishop Percy's renovation stated

“that the two old walls, now standing between Strickland and Bell Towers and the new building leading to the hall appear, by the small ornamental arched work on the outside, to be the remains of Bp. Malclerk's edifice; this kind of ornament, with its small narrow windows, being the style that prevailed about Hen. 3 time.”

The date and locality of the earliest tower is a subject of difference between writers on the castle: Charles Ferguson in 1874, who mentioned other authorities as agreeing with him, believed it to have been “either built or rebuilt on an earlier plan” by Bishop Halton.⁵ Canon James Wilson, in 1912, strongly denied this and believed that if Rose “ever had a stone peel”, it was on the site occupied to-day by Kite's Tower.⁶ But J. F. Curwen, in 1913, disagreed with him and supported Charles Ferguson: “the tower at the north-east angle is mentioned in 1481 as the Lord's Tower and was built, if not rebuilt, on the site of the original pele by Bp. Strickland.”⁷

In the light of this disagreement between these eminent authorities, may another theory be put forward as to the place and date of the earliest stone tower—that it was the tower on the north front called on the old plans Contable's Tower. We know that in 1336 Bishop Kirkby had a royal licence to crenellate (fortify) his dwelling at Rose.

³ CW1 ii, 156-7; CW2 xxviii, 398.

⁴ Made in *Castles and Towers of Cumberland and Westmorland*, J. F. Curwen, 227; I am indebted to our member Dr R. L. Storey for checking this point.

⁵ CW1 ii 156-7.

⁶ *Rose Castle*, 69-78.

⁷ *Castles and Towers*, 229.

It is difficult to believe that so vigorous and warlike a prelate did not do something substantial after this licence but the writers on Rose only assign to him the two pieces of wall on each side of the present entrance, which, incidentally, Bishop Lyttelton dates to Bishop Mauclerk's time. But no one has given any date to Constable's Tower, which, with the portcullis adjoining, is shewn in Thomas Machell's plan of the castle (Plan I) as occupying the place of, but extending northwards beyond, the present main entrance. The plan shews that the north and much of the east side of this tower were so severely damaged in the siege of 1648 that they were pulled down; later, in 1829-31, the south wall was also destroyed by Bishop Percy in his renovation. So nothing now remains by which this theory can be tested. But it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that this tower, guarding the portcullis gateway, was the first to be built and that Bishop Kirkby was the builder. This theory does explain, which the alternative ones do not, what he did with his licence.

Then in 1355 Bishop Welton had a further licence to crenellate. He may have erected Pottinger's Tower, at the south-west corner, traditionally so called because one of that name is said to have hanged himself in it. Between 1400 and 1419 Bishop Strickland built the tower still called after him, and in 1488 Bishop Bell built another, midway between Strickland and Constable's Towers. Finally, in 1522-4, Bishop Kite erected a fifth tower on the west side of the castle, which still bears his name.⁸ These towers must not be thought of as mainly defensive work; they are much more likely to have been built to provide additional amenities and above all privacy within the crowded castle walls. They were the medieval equivalent of a New York skyscraper.

Bishop Welton is said also to have built the great hall

⁸ Unless otherwise stated all dates and evidence quoted in this article are taken from Canon J. Wilson's *Rose Castle*, *passim*.

and Bishop Bell was certainly the builder of the chapel on its present site in 1486-9. This must have been a replacement since an ordination in "the chapel of Rose" is entered in Bishop Halton's register as taking place on Easter Eve, 1314.⁹

Nothing more is known of the dating of the castle buildings, but much more as to their lay-out than in Canon Wilson's time. This is due to the preservation, in a manuscript history of the castle compiled by Bishop Lyttelton in 1767, of "a circumstantial description of it as it was in the year 1640 from a paper of Bishop Rainbow's handwriting among the evidences at Rose". This adds very considerably to our knowledge of the lay-out of the castle, and probably also of similar local castles, in the middle ages. It is indeed a most valuable "find".

The bishop's account can be divided into two parts: (a) a description of the castle before it was damaged in the civil war, and (b) an account of the state it was in when he succeeded to the see in 1664. The reader will be able to follow his account of the state of the medieval castle more easily if the plan (Plan II on the opposite page) is consulted first, and if it is understood that the chief entrance to the castle was by a gate near the present front door or by the portcullis just to the west of it; and that a visitor, after passing through one of these, would find himself in a passage, roughly corresponding to the present hall, while from there by a door, where the garden door is to-day, he would reach the inner court of the castle—corresponding to the present lawn—and would then, by a path running diagonally across it, reach the steps leading up to the long gallery, from which access would be obtained into the great hall, with its kitchen on its south side and the bishop's dining-room on its north; and from thence into *paradise*, or the bishop's chamber, with the chapel adjoining; there was also a way from

⁹ *The Episcopal Registers of Carlisle*, by W. N. Thompson (this Society's Record Series ii) part III, 91.

paradise into Strickland Tower, where the bishop had his private apartments. Doubtless his lordship had a more direct way into his own suite. There was also a way into the chapel from the entrance passage. Within the courtyard, the other sides were used for domestic and farm buildings, with a separate entrance, which can be seen in Buck's engraving (Plate I). There were also, as Bishop Rainbow's description shews, a large number of outbuildings of various kinds without the courtyard, but within the mantle walls, of the castle.

The bishop's description of the castle before the civil war is as follows:

"The House consisted of several buildings in form of a Quadrangle with five Towers and other Turrets, incompass'd also with a mantle Wall which had several little Turrets or Rooms in it.

The North side contained the Constable's Tower with three rooms in it; the chapel with three chambers under it; Bell Tower at the back of the chapel with two rooms in it, besides the clock house; next to the chapel, the Bishop's chamber and another chamber under it; a large chamber called the Council chamber and one chamber under it called great Paradise; Strickland's Tower which had three chambers in it, besides the vault; in all Seventeen rooms.

The East side contained the great Dining room with a cellar underneath; a large hall and a Buttery, with a cellar under each; a Turret and one chamber near it; a large kitchen with two chimneys and a place for a caldron or boiler; a Lodging below for the cook; and also an arched cellar or vault; in all Ten rooms.

The South side contained a long gallery leading to the Hall; a storehouse and larder and a little Turret or two near it; over it a Granary for Rye and Wheat, under it a vault or Wood house; a Brewhouse, a Bakehouse and offices, over these another Granary; in all Ten rooms.

The West side contained Pottinger's Tower in which were three Lodging rooms and a vault; a Wash house and Dairy, one chamber below and three above; adjoining to these, Kite's Tower with two chambers; in all Twelve rooms.

Total 49.

There were with these: several Closets, woodhouses and necessary rooms.

In the midst of the Court, a Fountain, which conveyed water to all the offices in the House.

Rooms without: in the Turret upon the Mantle Wall, one Turret called the Porter's lodge, containing one room below and one above. Betwixt the Porter's Lodge and the Stables, a chamber for the Grooms. One other Turret over against Kite's Tower in the wall containing one lodging room. One other Turret (where now the Summer house stands) containing formerly one Chamber below and one above; One Watch Tower by the said Summer house containing one room; in all seven.

Barns and outhouses belonging to Rose Castle:

Within the Walls: the Wheat Barn and double stable.

Without the Walls: a slaughter house, a large cow house, an Haybarn and 5 or 6 Hogs styes—in the Hoggard.

Without the Walls: A Watch Tower, now a Dove house, a water-mill, a kiln and a malt house, a smith's Forge, an ox and cowhouse near the great Barn, one Haybarn there, a Great Barn with a wash-house at the end of it—in the other outyard.

Such was the state of the castle just before the civil war."

During the Royalists' rising of 1648 the castle was garrisoned by a party of them but soon fell to a detachment of General Lambert's Parliamentary Army who, after occupying the place for a short while, set fire to it: by which, according to Bishop Lyttelton, 41 out of its 49 rooms were destroyed. Some of the damage, especially on the west side, was repaired by William Heveningham who leased the castle during the Commonwealth.

At the Restoration, Richard Stern was consecrated bishop in December 1660; he collected £4,000 in fines and in 1664 was translated to York. He was succeeded as bishop of Carlisle by Edward Rainbow, who engaged in a long suit at law, claiming dilapidations against his predecessor. In Bishop Lyttelton's words "at that time the state of the castle and outhouses was as follows—from a paper of Bp. Rainbow's handwriting among the evidences at Rose". (Plans I and II should both be consulted. Plan I shows the state of the various buildings; Plan II gives their names.)

"All the rooms of the ancient dwelling house on the North, East and South sides, and part of the West, beginning at Constable's Tower and taking in Pottinger's Tower, which contained forty one rooms, are either totally demolished or ruined or made useless.

The present dwelling house is only that part of the West side where was the ancient wash-house and dairy, which contains about 60 feet in length and 17 in breadth, and Kite's Tower which contains only 21 feet in length and 12 in breadth, in both which were only eight Rooms, as appears by the Schedule; but now divided into several small rooms, offices and chambers which make up the whole dwelling House.

Rooms without in the Turret upon the Mantle Wall, only the lower part of the Porter's Lodge is used for a chamber, two of the other five are demolished; three of them converted into a Summer house, Coach house and a Privy.

| Remaining. | Demolished. |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| The whole Barns | The slaughter House |
| and double stable | the large cow house |
| a watch Tower, now | the Haybarn and |
| a Dove House | 5 or 6 Hogstyes |
| the Breat Barn with | the Water Miln |
| a wash house at the | a kiln and Malt house |
| end of it | an oxhouse and cow house |
| The Cross Barn with an | One Hay barn |
| Oxhouse at the end | |
| of it | |

Walls demolished or broken after Dr Stern became Bp. of Carlisle:

- (1) The East end of the Chapel.
- (2) The Walls of the Bishop's chamber and another over it.
- (3) The Battlements of Bell Tower and the Clockhouse.
- (4) The Walls of a large chamber called the Council Chamber and one chamber under it called the great Paradise.
- (5) ditto of Strickland's Tower which had three chambers besides a vault.
- (6) ditto of the great Dining room with a cellar underneath.
- (7) ditto of the large Hall with one cellar underneath and one chamber near it.
- (8) ditto of the large kitchen and a cellar or vault.
- (9) ditto of the long Gallery.
- (10) Part of the Brewhouse and Bakehouse.

So that the walls of seventeen or eighteen rooms, which when Archbp. Stern came, were *strong and firm* to the roof or *near it*

and had no such defects but such as might have been repaired at a *small* charge were taken down or broken while his Grace was Bp. of Carlisle.

Additions, alterations or changes made by the A.B. of York during the time he was Bp. of Carlisle.

Not any building was added to the former dwelling house in the outside of the wall of it, but only added a shed ag't the Bakehouse Wall for a Hogstye.

Within the Walls of the former House which yet stand without Roofs.

Set. up a shed for a Bakehouse with Granaries over them, within the walls of the ancient Bakehouse or Brewhouse
a shed for Poultry within the walls of the old Cellar under the Hall

a Hovel for Turves within the walls of the old Storehouse
a roof of stone laid on the old walls of the chapel; Five Buttresses to support the South Wall from the weight of the Roof

Part of the wall of the Backyard for a Garden.

The Coach house, out of an ancient Watch Tower.

Rebuilt: The Cross Barne and Bayard

Altered: The ancient Wash house and Dairie together with Kite's Tower was altered by the said Archbishop to be a dwelling house and he made therein a window and chimney. The chapel was wainscotted, seats remade, and consecrated *from the Ground* thereby taking in the place where two or three chambers had been."

Bishop Rainbow lost his suit against the Archbishop, the Court deciding that the Act of Oblivion freed the latter from all dilapidations except for £400 towards rebuilding the chapel.

"The heavy stone roof he had laid upon it being obliged to be taken down in Feby. 1668 while the suit was depending so as to prevent the whole from falling. With this money Bp. Rainbow almost wholly rebuilt the chapel and the parlours underneath it as they are at this day (1767) also the great staircase and so may justly be reckoned a Benefactor for the whole sum, having expended full as much or more in carrying on the Suit against his ungenerous Predecessor."

It is clear that Bishop Lyttelton regrets that the whole medieval fortress was not rebuilt; a regret perhaps shared by the historian and antiquary, who is not responsible for

its upkeep. But the bishops, who have been, may perhaps agree more with Bishop Lyttelton in his statement that Rose "is now in all respects a very commodious and agreeable mansion" and may even have a sneaking feeling of gratitude to the Scots for their work of destruction.

From Bishop Rainbow's time little structural addition has been made to the castle, though almost every bishop seems to have felt it his duty to do something for the house or its outbuildings.¹⁰ An example of this can be seen by a study of Plate I, the castle in 1739, and Plate II, shewing much the same view in about 1829 — in between those two dates Strickland's Tower had been re-roofed by Bishop Lyttelton and the old wall between Bell's Tower and Strickland's in part taken down and a grass bank placed in front of it by Bishop Law.

Thus the castle assumed the plan it retained until the recent alterations, as a result of what happened after the Restoration. A great restoration was carried out by Bishop Percy in 1829-31, whereby, under the direction of the Quaker architect Thomas Rickman, "the incongruous mixture of architectural styles gave way to a uniform plan". The great oak staircase, with the Percy arms on it, the famous Chinese wallpaper and the carved mantle-pieces in the drawing-room, all date from this time; so do the carved panels of the stalls in the chapel, said to have been brought from Lambeth Palace chapel. Despite all this the castle must have been, judged by modern standards, an uncomfortable place to live in. There was no heating apparatus in the days of Percy and not a single curtain throughout the whole house; the upper bedrooms had not even shutters.¹¹

It was nearly a hundred years before modern amenities began to dissipate the austerity. The present writer remembers staying at Rose in January 1922 and dressing by candlelight; a few years later central heating and

¹⁰ Full particulars of the improvements and alterations can be found in Canon Wilson's *Rose Castle*, 97-103, or more briefly in my *Prelates and People*, *passim*.

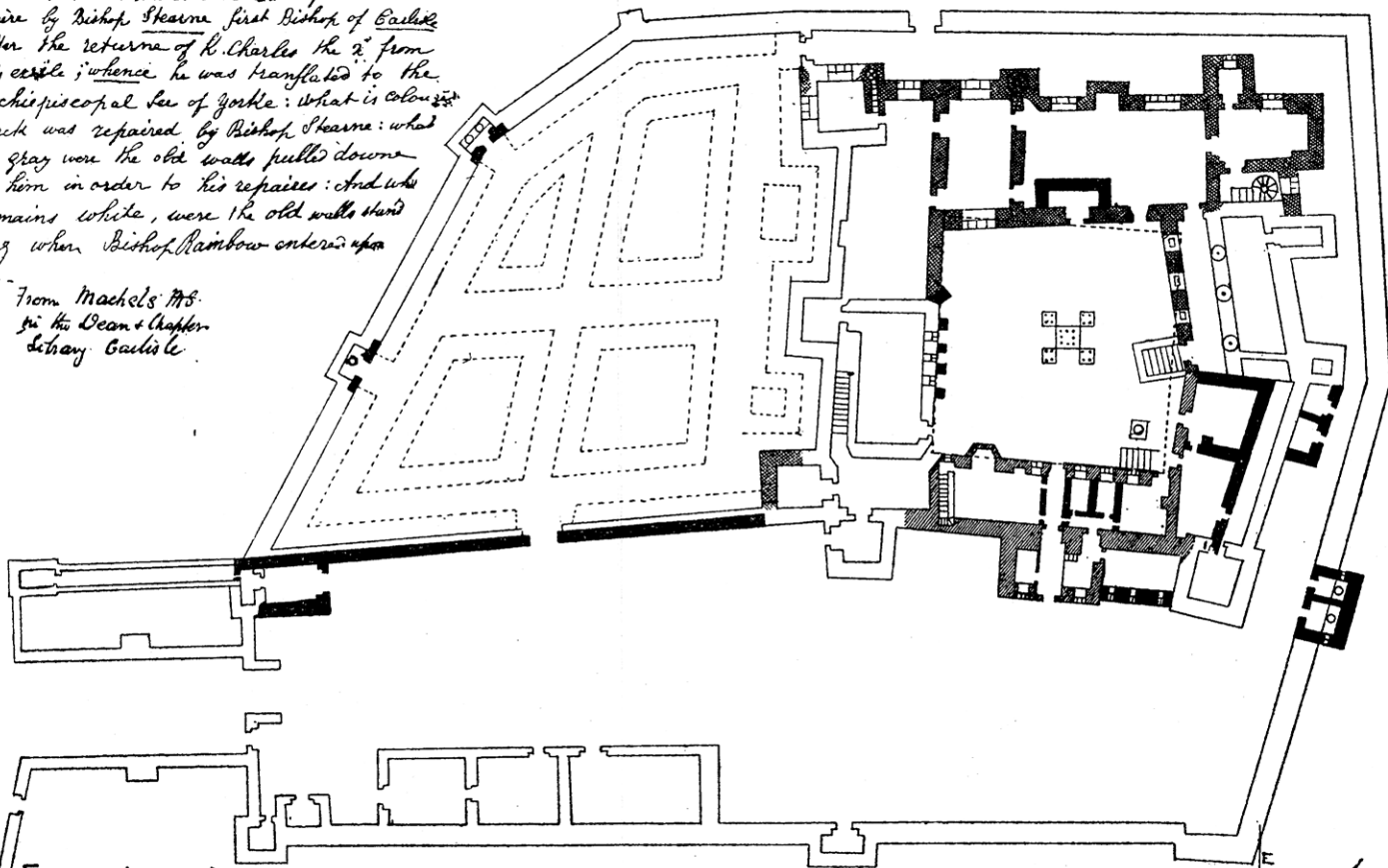
¹¹ *Prelates and People*, 386.

— ROSE CASTLE —

— GROUND PLAN —

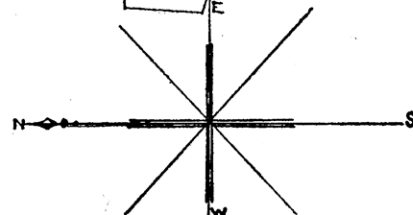
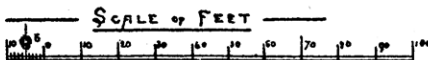
A Platform of Rose Castle in Cumberland wherein, what is coloured red was found in repair by Bishop Stearne first Bishop of Carlisle after the returne of R. Charles the 2^d from his exile; whence he was translated to the Archiepiscopal See of Yorke: what is coloured black was repaired by Bishop Stearne: what is gray was the old walls pulled down by him in order to his repairs: And what remains white, were the old walls standing when Bishop Rainbow ordered upon it.

*From Machel's MS.
in the Dean & Chapter
Library Carlisle.*

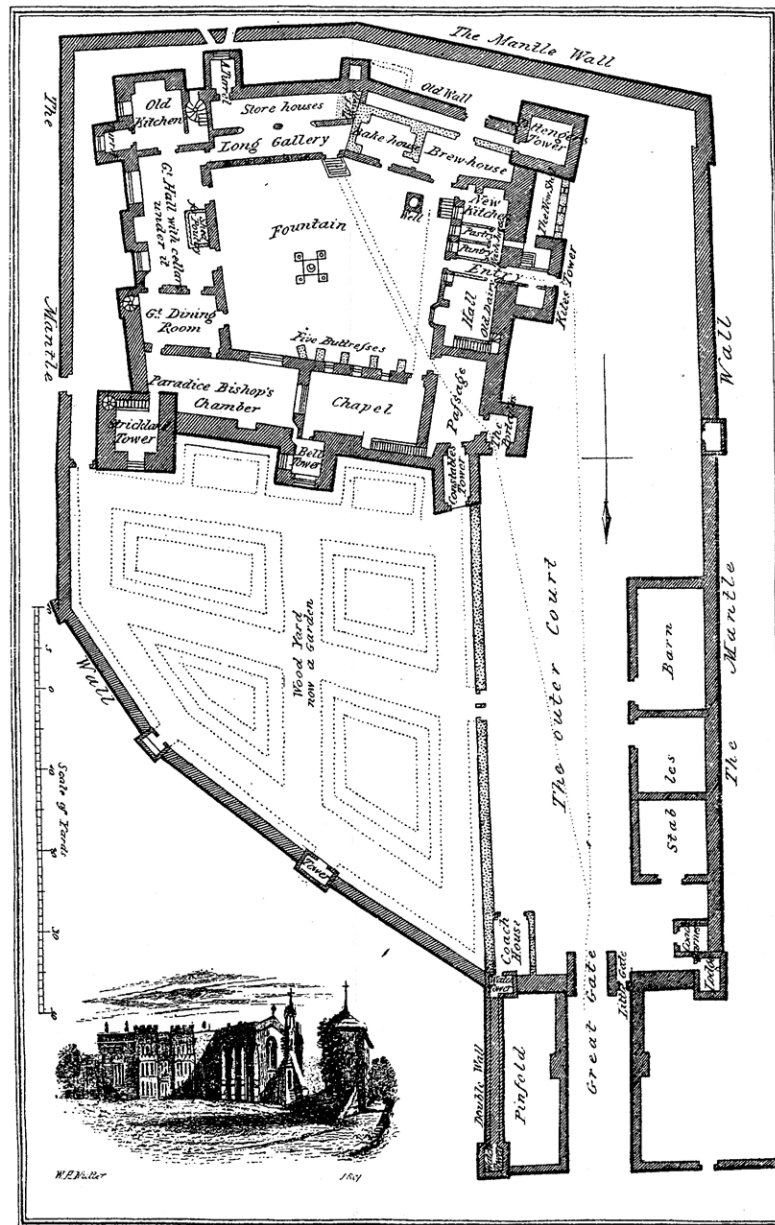


EXPLANATION

- BLACK MARKED ON PLAN
- RED MARKED ON DO.
- GREY MARKED ON DO.
- WHITE MARKED ON DO.



PLAN I



PLAN OF ROSE-CASTLE.

REDUCED FROM A COPY OF A PLAN TAKEN IN 1671. IN THE POSSESSION OF THE BISHOP OF CARLISLE

S. Jefferson, Carlisle; and Whittaker & Co. London

PLAN II

facing p. 140

electric light were installed by Bishop Williams and life in Rose became more comfortable.

Then came the second World War and Bishop Williams retreated to a house in Carlisle. After the war for some years the future of the castle was uncertain—at one time it was even proposed by a diocesan committee to sell it. But weighty protests were made and the bishop made a courageous stand.

Thus the episcopal home for over seven hundred years was saved for posterity. By a skilful adaptation of the rambling wilderness of kitchens and domestic offices at the south end of the west wing, a very pleasant suite of private apartments was contrived, whereby his lordship can spend most of his time in surroundings suitable to modern conditions. This suite has a private entrance near Kite's Tower, while adjoining it, the old laundry has been turned into cottages for domestic helpers. But the main entrance and the state apartments remain unaltered, and available when occasion requires the traditional hospitality of Rose to be displayed. The well-known gardens remain as heretofore, with the addition of a small lawn, easily accessible from the bishop's private suite, facing south and protected from the west winds. Thus it is hoped that it will be possible for the bishops to continue to live at Rose.

This brief account of the castle only deals with the history of the fabric. For a more general treatment, the reader is referred to Canon Wilson's book and for an account of the bishops and the history of the see to the present writer's *Prelates and People of the Lake Counties*.

I have to thank our member Mr. T. Gray for telling me about the existence of Bishop Lyttelton's MS. (which is among the Mounsey-Heysham collection, the property of Major R. H. Mounsey-Heysham of Castletown, but deposited in the County Record Office, Carlisle) and the Clerk of the County Council (Mr. G. N. C. Swift) and Major Mounsey-Heysham for leave to publish extracts from it.