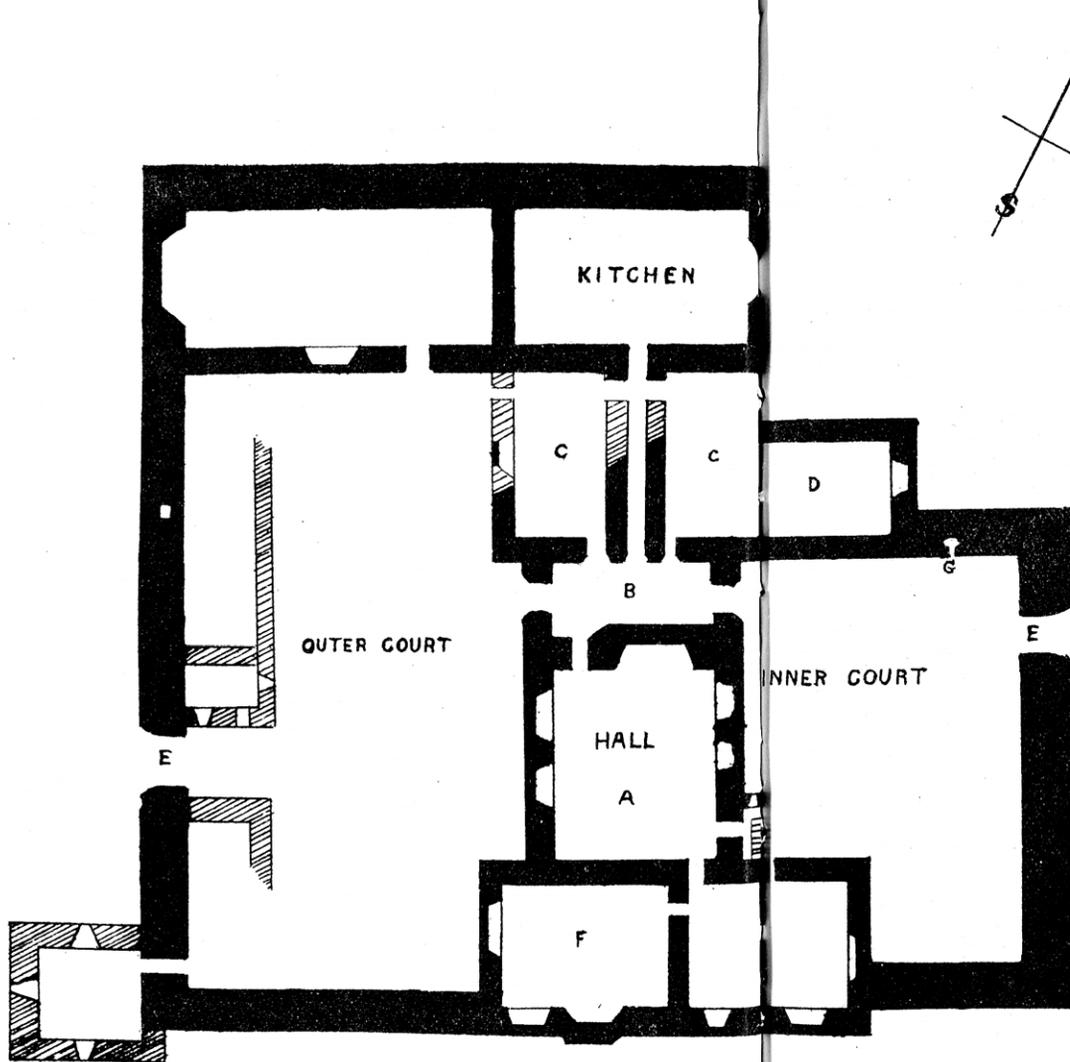


ART. IX.—*On Middleton Hall.* By MICHAEL W. TAYLOR, M.D., F.S.A. (Scot).

*Read at that place, June 27th, 1883.*

THE name of Middleton as the name of a place or parish is of frequent occurrence in the north of England. There is a Middleton in Northumberland, in Durham, and in Lancashire; there is a Middleton in Teesdale, and the old Hall which is the subject of this paper, is in the parish of Middleton in Lonsdale or Lunesdale. This like many of the neighbouring manors was apportioned to the barony of Kendal, and it seems to have been granted by the Tailbois, first to the Prestons, and from the Prestons it passed to the family of Kennet. It is probable that one of these possessors, as was not unusual, took the name of the place. We find from documentary history that there was a Thomas Middleton settled at Middleton Hall in the reign of Edward III.; and that the possession continued in this name and family in the direct male line for ten generations, until about the year 1644, when the inheritance descended to daughters. As might have been anticipated, from this continuous run of possession for three hundred years of a considerable estate, the family from time to time contracted alliances with people of consequence in the north. Thus on referring to the genealogy of the family, we find marriages with the Musgraves of Wharton Castle, Bellinghams of Burneshead, Lowthers of Lowther, Lancasters of Sockbridge, Tunstalls of Thurland Castle, &c. But in the troublous times of the civil war, the family suffered both in person and property, from the disasters of national strife, for like many of the gentry of the north country, they espoused the losing side. John Middleton the lord in the early part of the reign of Charles I.,



- A. HALL,
- B. SCREENS.
- C. CELLAR BUTTERIES,
- D. CHAPEL.
- E. OUTER GATEWAYS,
- F. LORDS CHAMBER,
- G. WELL,

GROUND PLAN  
MIDDLETON HALL



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I., had four sons in the king's service, of whom three were slain fighting in the royal cause. In the second generation after this period, the line ended in two daughters. Somewhile after, the estates came into the possession of the Cumberland family of the Askews, with whom they continued up until a comparatively recent date.

The ancient structure is extremely valuable to us, as an instructive remnant of the domestic architecture of the 15th century, and as it differs in some material features from what we have found elsewhere, within the sphere-ground of the work of the Society, it is well worthy of a critical examination.

The hall stands in the vale of Lune, on the left bank, on a gentle elevation sloping down to the river, which is about half a mile distant. The site cannot be considered as a strong or peculiarly defensive position in a military sense, although the shallow ghyll which bounds it on the north side, through which flows a fell beck, (which appears to have driven at one time the lord's corn mill just in front of the gateway), may have afforded some protection in that direction. There is not however, any evidence of the place having ever been moated like the neighbouring halls of Burneshead and Sizergh, or the more important adjoining defensive position, Thurland Castle.

The battlemented wall and gateway bounding the inclosure may have afforded fairly strong provisions against mounted men engaged in marauding incursions, but could not have stood against any serious or planned assault. In point of fact, the place was not within the ordinary march of Scottish depredation; it is situated fully sixty miles from the Border, and the untractable wilds and fells of Shap and Tebay would interpose obstacles to the quick-heeled Border rievvers extending their *outrodes* so far down the vale of Lune.

To understand the arrangement of this very typical  
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manor house, it would be well to direct our attention to the ground plan of the structure shewing its original state. You will see that the place consists of an inclosure, and within, two courts, an outer and an inner court instead of one court, which is the type prevailing in houses of these dimensions near the Border. The front of the *enciente* which contains the main gateway, and which for convenience, we will call the west front, though it is not really west but a few points to south of west, is formed by a high defensive wall, which returns at the south angle and joins the main block of the inhabited buildings, which constitute the south front; the inner court on the east is also closed by a wall of defence, and the north side is composed of buildings which were formerly occupied by kitchens and offices. The two courts are separated from each other by that which is the most valuable feature in the structure, the old hall. We can now enter into the details of the separate parts. First as to the outer walls. The wall is 5 ft. thick at the base, and batters upwards, it is about 25 ft. in height up to the line at which a parapet is projected on a closely arranged series of corbel stones, which form false machicolations; the parapet was probably crenellated, but the top courses of stones are gone. There has been a walk behind the parapet for the defenders. The extent of the front is about forty yards; at the south angle there was probably a projecting tower to flank the gateway. The gateway is an arched opening, twelve feet wide, over which there are two windows, square headed of one light with trefoils and cusps. There have been chambers here over the gateway, the fireplace of one of which is still remaining. Within the wall is the outer court, which is about 32 yards by 17 yards, and directly in front, you have the very interesting specimen of the mediæval dining hall of a manor house of some importance.

I have told you that this house differs from many we have been accustomed to inspect, and it differs in this way.

way. Nearer the Border the 14th and 15th century houses always assume the Pele tower arrangement; the tower often appears originally to have been the whole house, and when enlargements were made, the tower formed the centre round which the latter buildings turned. But here at Middleton Hall there has never been an earlier keep or tower, and the evidence points to the whole place having been built at one time, and in pursuance of one original design. It is an exception to our north country examples, and follows the type of the 15th century manor-houses of the middle and southern districts of England.

The buildings are arranged somewhat in the H-shaped form, the central portion consisting of the hall and its adjuncts, dividing the two quadrangles. The hall itself is in good preservation, and, being in a fairly original condition, presents us with a valuable and interesting specimen well worthy of notice. It is of one storey, and like the rest of structure, it is built in rubble of the slaty Silurian rock of the country roughly trimmed, and the dressed stones of the quoins and openings are rough grained sandstone or millstone grit. There is an entrance from both courts to a straight passage six feet wide, at the lower end of the hall. This passage, which is the usual arrangement, is called the "*Screens*." To the front court, there is a good pointed arched doorway, recessed with round and hollow mouldings, surmounted with an arched drip-stone terminating in heads; at the opposite end there is a pointed arch, with a plain chamfer, leading to the inner court. Within the screens there are three doorways with pointed arches also plainly chamfered, which deserve particular attention. In most of the manor-houses in the north, it is usual to have but one doorway leading to the kitchen and offices. But here we have three original doorways. The purposes of these are evident, although the block behind them is in ruins. The middle entrance led by a straight passage to the kitchen, and the side openings were to the buttery  
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and to the cellar. This tripartite arrangement of doorways from the screens, assimilates Middleton Hall with the plan displayed in southern manor-houses. The same design is carried out in Haddon Hall, Berkeley Castle, Penshurst in Kent, Norborough in Northamptonshire, and many other places. The kitchen stood where the long barn has been rebuilt. Mr. Bownass, whose family have occupied the place for three generations, tells me he remembers the old building with the huge fireplace existing in the east gable. The position of the music gallery, looking into the hall, would be here over the screens, and if a search were made the evidence of it would probably be found, as was the case at Yanwath; but the upper portion of the wall and the timbers of the old hall are now concealed by a flat plaster ceiling. You enter the hall through an elliptic headed doorway. The door itself is worth notice; it is doubly transversely planked in oak, studded with iron; the top is elliptic in form and moulded; two strips of moulding divide the inner face into three panels. The apartment is 28 feet by 24 feet. The fireplace, now covered, was deeply recessed in the thickness of the wall, at the end next the screens, and spanned with a flattish segmental arch of 12 feet 10 inches. There are four windows, two on each side, that to the right hand of the daïs being higher in the wall than the others. The date of the building may be determined in a great measure by the character of these windows. They are original and of similar style. They are about four feet wide, divided below by a mullion into two lights, arched, trefoiled and cusped. The mullion is continued up to the architrave, and the upper part of the window is filled with four foliated arches, produced by perpendicular mullions being carried up from the points of the sub-arches. So that here we have an example of that transitional stage, when the flowing tracery of the decorated was giving way to the rigid lines of the perpendicular period.

period. The doorways still have retained the decorated arch and mouldings, and the windows, although preserving some of the earlier style, show the predominating features of the perpendicular. This change of style was in progress towards the end of the 14th century, so that if we assign the date of this hall to about the time of Richard II., or about the beginning of the 15th century, it is a safe presumption. Two small doorways lead from the daïs end of the hall, one to a straight stair to the upper apartments of the adjoining block, and the other to the withdrawing room behind the hall. These doorways have the flat corbelled lintel or Carnarvon arch, a form of opening in very early use, but perpetuated frequently to a much later period. In the small lights of the upper part of the window to the left of the daïs, there are four pieces of painted glass, seemingly in their original position, one of which represents the letters A<sup>M</sup>R. arranged as a monogram, and another the sacred I.H.S inclosed in a circle.

The ancient furniture of the hall is represented by two massive oak tables which are probably 16th century. The withdrawing room is a square low ceiled apartment, with two mullioned windows of three lights with square labels. It is panelled in Elizabethan wainscot, with a characteristic pattern of the lozenge and circle carried on narrow horizontal panels under the cornice. The bold carved work of the mantelpiece is not in its place, it has been the head of a bedstead, apparently. There is incised in a panel over the door this pious sentiment:—“VENTVRVM EXHORESCO DIEM”—“I dread the coming day.” The spelling is bad in “exhorresco,” with one “r” instead of two. The room above corresponding to this, was the “*Lady's Chamber*,” and it presents early Elizabethan decoration; on the jambs of the chimney piece are carved the arms of Middleton, a saltier engrailed, and the “three combs” of Tunstal of Thurland Castle.

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When Machel visited the place about the year 1691, carved coats of arms existed in the Hall, though considerably effaced, and he refers to them in his MSS.\*—Middleton impaling Lowther; Tunstal, three small combs; Threlkeld, a maunch; also Middleton impaling a quarterly coat, 1 and 4, three escallops, 2 and 3, a dancette and nine billets. He also gives a drawing of a shield.

A chapel of course must have existed in a house of this importance, but I can discover no special traces of it; the probable position is marked on the plan.

The remains of the curtain wall on the east side for the protection of the inner court are well seen; the wall is not so high as that protecting the front, but it also has had a parapet corbelled out, with a walk upon it for the warder, and has been pierced by a gateway.

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\* Machel MSS. Vol. II, p. 241.