

CAWMIRE HALL.
(The 17th Century front.)

PLATE I. (TO FACE P. 119.)

ART. IX.—*Cawmire or Comer Hall*. By H. S. COWPER,
F.S.A.

Read at Cawmire, Sept. 19th, 1900.

WHEN in May last I paid a first visit to Cawmire Hall I saw at once that I had stumbled across a late example of a Westmorland Pele. Accordingly, when I turned to our late vice-president's work on the *Manorial Halls of Cumberland and Westmorland*, I felt some surprise at finding no mention of it.

A detailed search in local literature materially increased my surprise, by producing no earlier mention of the place than the commencement of the seventeenth century. A careful examination of the building, however, and the scanty scraps of history I have obtained, are, I think, sufficient to explain the absence of early records. Cawmire is probably the latest of the Westmorland Peles so far noticed, and does not occupy the site of an older fortalice. Its situation on the very verge of the county in a remote valley must afford the only reason for its total neglect by recent writers.

The history of the house may be disposed of in a few words. It was owned by a family called Briggs, who seem to have lived there at the end of the sixteenth century, and probably built the tower. They entered a pedigree of two generations in the 1615 Visitation of Westmorland, but as the family ended in daughters, Briggs of Cawmire is heard of no more. The evidences I have been able to find of them are relegated to an Appendix, but where they sprang from and who they were, I am not able to say.

After Briggs of Cawmire, there is a gap which I have not been able to fill. Possibly it was sold at once by the

heiresses; possibly it was occupied by relatives or let to tenants. Anyhow in 1675 we find that a family of Newby or Nuby, (a name, by the bye, of old standing in Carke and Cartmel Fell), was located at Cawmire.*

From the Newbys it passed to the Rydal Flemings. Richard, the seventh son of the notable Sir Daniel, Knight, married Isabel, the only daughter of William Newby of Cawmire, "a Westmorland gentlewoman and a considerable heiress," as West informs us. This Richard, however, had only one son (who died childless) and four daughters; and Cawmire seems to have passed to the issue of his younger brother, Roger Fleming, vicar of Brigham, from whom it descended to Sir Daniel Fleming of Hill Top, Crosthwaite, and its present proprietor, Mr. John Burrow of the same place.

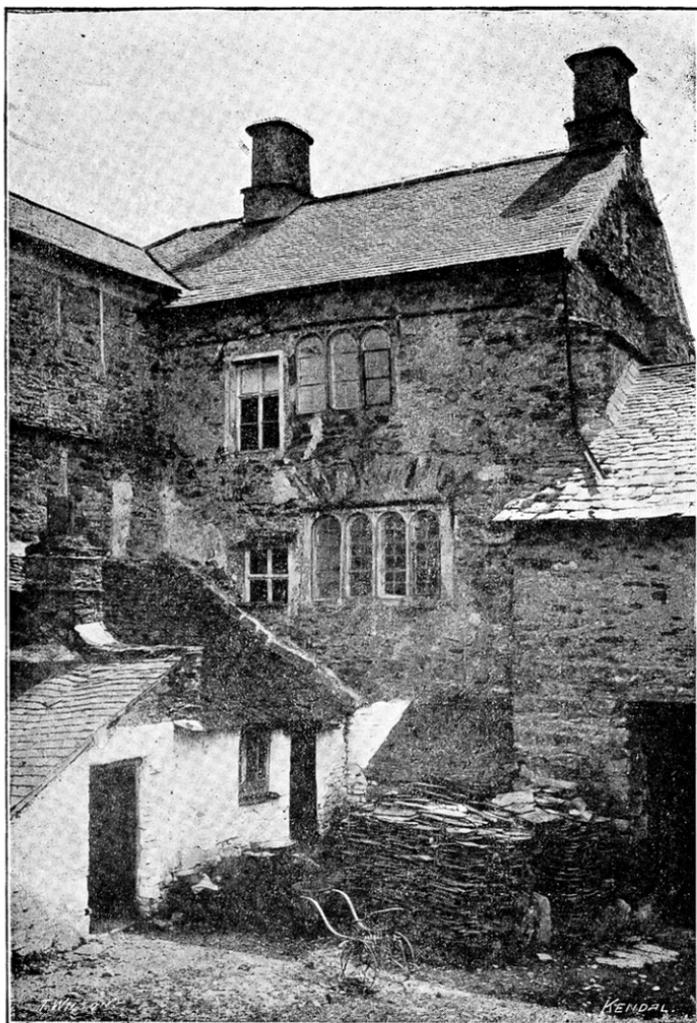
Before describing the building, a word or two as to the name. The general spelling now is Cowmire, but the pronunciation is Co'mer, the sound of the first syllable being identical with the local sounding of the first syllable of Calgarth—"Co'garth." Moreover, the earliest spelling I can quote is Calmire (1615), so that I think we may take it that it comes from an old form like Kalvmyre (or reduced to proper Scandinavian *Kálfa-myrr*) from which the *v* has dropped.† Whether it was simply *myrr*, a wet pasture, or a real "mere" is questionable, for north of the hall lie some level meadows which may well have contained a tarn.

These are the only old spellings I can quote:—

1615	Heralds Visitation, Pedigree of Briggs	...	Calmire.
"	" " "	Hutton	... Canmyre.
1665	" " "	Stanley	... Cawmire.
1618	Answer of Tenants in Tenant right Dispute		Cawmire.
1675	Rental of Kendal Barony	Cowmire.

* At Barber Green and elsewhere. Probably a Newby had some hand in building Newby Bridge; compare Penny Bridge named from the builder.

† It would be pronounced of course Cawfmer, very close in sound to Co'mer. Our editor calls my attention to the fact that Calgarth was Calvgarth, temp. Ed. III.: and Calder (Thurso) Kálfadalr in the Orkneyinga Saga, though by the thirteenth century the *f* had dropped out.



CAWMIRE HALL.
(North side of Pele Tower.)

PLATE II. (TO FACE P. 121.)

Cawmire Hall is a very simple building to understand. It is a composite structure of two periods, a pele tower which has lost its castellated top, and has been turned into the back premises of a later house erected at the end of the seventeenth century. (Plate II.*)

The dimensions of the pele are 31 feet by 24 feet 9 inches. The basement consists of two vaulted cellars of the usual type, the southern one being one foot wider than the other. The windows are rude openings without any dressed stone, and appear to be in their original state. They are not mere slits, but throughout the house all the windows were fitted with iron grilles or gratings, and probably when this tower was built, these were considered to form sufficient protection. The walls vary slightly in the different sides, the thickest being about 4 feet 7 inches on the south. There is no plinth, and the walls are of coarse rubble. Access to the upper floors is now by the seventeenth century stair leading from the additions, and since no newel or other stair can be traced, it seems probable that before the additions the ascent was at the same corner by means of a newel. It will be noticed that the big window on the first floor on the north side, is not in the centre of the wall, a feature which rather suggests that a passage leading from a newel may have occupied a position here.

The first floor is now occupied by two rooms, but the partition is a modern one, and originally there was but one big chamber, the principal living-room doubtless, of the tower. In the north and south walls we find large four-light windows, with stone mullions and plain round heads. These windows have a width of seven feet, and their openings are protected by strong gratings of one upright crossed by five transverse stanchions in each light. Over these windows project rough slabs of the local upper Silurian rock, to act as dripstones: and it has

* I am indebted to Mr. Herbert Bell of Ambleside for the photographs.

already been noticed that while the south window is central in its wall that in the north wall is not. There are also in the second floor, two three-light windows of similar character to, and placed over, those of the first floor.

The only other point in the plan is the projection (of hardly sufficient depth to call a turret) in the west wall. This contains the shoots from two garderobes, now blocked, on the first floor, and possibly from others above. It apparently never rose higher than the second story.

In spite of the simple and early plan of this tower, it is difficult, looking at the poor character of the masonry, and the style of the windows, which have no appearance of being insertions, to assign to it a date earlier than the latter half of the sixteenth century. It was no doubt the tenement of Thomas Briggs mentioned in a 1582 rental, and was probably built by him.

To this tower late in the seventeenth century was added practically all the rest of the present house; and there seems little doubt that these additions were the work of Richard Fleming, who although a younger son, had secured his "considerable heiress," and would hardly content himself with this meagre tower as a residence.

The new house has a formal frontage of 56 feet, with the entrance in the centre. The windows are uniform in character and of two lights each, with slender oaken mullions and transoms, except the northernmost on the ground floor, which is of three lights. In the upper floors these windows are placed symmetrically over those below, and all have or have had iron gratings. Above each row of windows is a continuous weather label of rough Silurian stones. The front of this block is characteristic of the time of Charles II., and may be compared with the much more elaborate example of Ribton Hall, (built 1670), in Dr. Taylor's work. § (See Plate I.)

§ Pp. 334-5. It may be noticed that the uniformity of style of this period is carried so far, that if we were to place side by side architectural elevations of such a modest structure as Cawmire, and a princely chateau like Croxteth, *without a scale* it would not be easy to tell which was the larger.

At present the new block is divided into three rooms by two partitions, but that in the right-hand of the entrance is modern, and the situation of an original one is indicated on the plan by a dotted line. Thus the new block was divided into three symmetrical rooms, which would have been of equal dimensions, if that on the north had not been diminished by a seven-foot wall at its north end to contain the kitchen chimney and ovens. The central room was the parlour or hall greatly curtailed from the proportions assigned to it in earlier times; and the southern room was the withdrawing-room. (Plate III.)

There is little further to notice in these apartments. It is, however, interesting to note that at this date the servants were relegated to the kitchen, and no longer dined with the squire. The big window, which in older days always lit the hall, is here found in the kitchen to light the long table where the servants dined, and of which the bench still remains under the window. The small room at the back of the kitchen seems of contemporary date, but it is covered by a lean-to. It was probably the pantry. It will be noticed that in the craze for symmetry another projection was carried out behind the withdrawing-room, though from the position of the tower windows it was necessarily of less dimensions.

In the central parlour the small size and the stairway leading directly out of it shew that the sense of privacy in home life was now duly appreciated. The fireplace which balances the stair entrance to the left is interesting. It has a stone mantel with a square opening of five feet, round which is a border of running foliage of bunches of grapes and leaves. In the centre is a circular panel with scroll-work, in which is a shield with the Fleming arms differenced by an annulet. This is the mark of Richard, the fifth surviving son.*

* At Thorpensty Hall in Cartmel Fell, the old Hutton seat, is a fireplace of exactly the same work without the arms; no doubt by the same workmen.

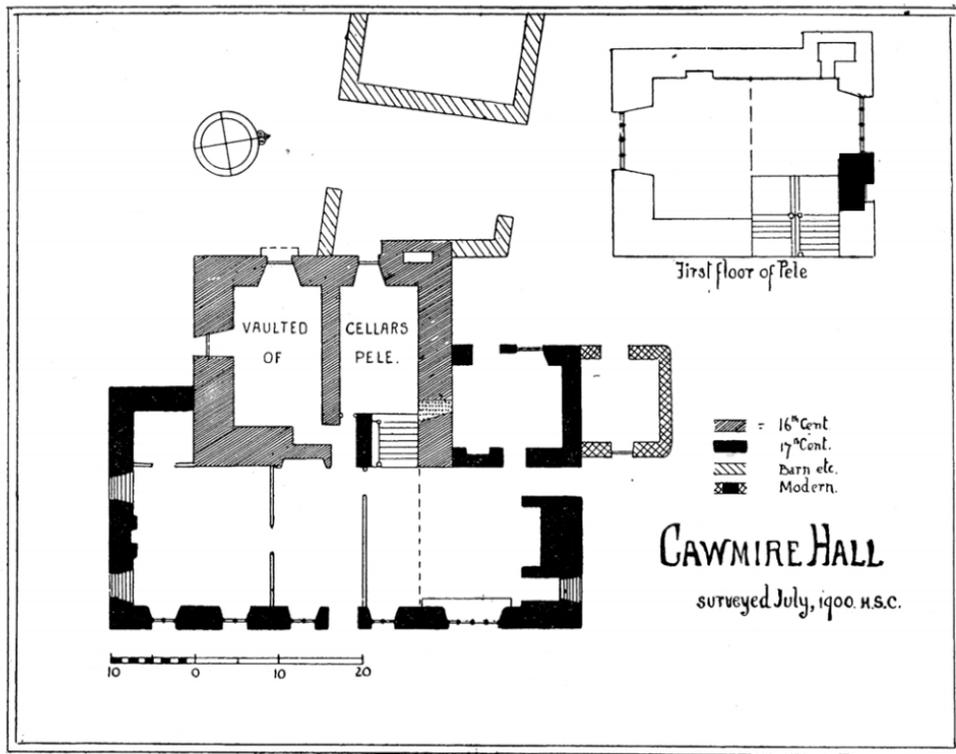


PLATE III.

The staircase is carried up from the parlour in the north-east angle of the tower, which, as stated, may have contained a newel turret which was destroyed at the time of the alterations. The present staircase is no doubt of the date of the additions. It is of short straight flights, with turned oaken balusters and corner posts, terminating in big knobs, above each of which is a large pendant knob from the flight above. The fourth flight terminated at a small oaken door opening into the attic which now occupies the position of the lower roof.

There are a few points we may notice from outside. First, that the chimneys throughout are of the conjoined cylindrical "Lake district" type, and are late examples of a structural form, which, in varying proportions, was long in fashion. There are handsome old gate-posts shewing where the entrance to the garden formerly was, and the big knobs on the pillars are reproductions in stone of those on the staircase. At the southern gable we see that the garden was formerly at a much lower level, for the two blocked windows are now half underground; and Mrs. Carruthers confirms this by telling me that the front door was formerly approached by a short flight of steps. In the rear of the house there is an ancient barn with a covered passage-way under it, past the side of the tower; but from the fact that it is built unsymmetrically with the residence, we may probably regard it as of anterior date to the Fleming additions. The rubble masonry throughout the entire building is rough dashed with lime.

I cannot help thinking that Cawmire, viewed as a whole, gives us quite an insight into the character of its builders and proprietors. First, we have the pele built at a date when fortification was no longer necessary. The Briggs family, whoever they were, were no feudal seigneurs; but they were well-to-do, and they built their house towerwise in emulation of their aristocratic neighbours at Sizergh or Burneside. The estate dropped into the hands of a younger son of the territorial Flemings,

who in his additions ignored entirely the ancient fashions which he must have known at Coniston and Rydal, the ancient seats of his family. In a word he, a man of ancient lineage, exactly reversed the operations of the new man Briggs of a century before; and erected a house of modest dimensions indeed, but following the latest and most fashionable designs. There are plenty of large farm-houses of the same period in which the old big hall plan of a century earlier was retained. But Fleming's ambitions lay in the direction of modern fashions; while Mr. Briggs had hankerings after feudalism.

APPENDIX.

BRIGGS OF CAWMIRE.

The entry in St. George's (1615) "Visitation of Westmorland" is as follows:—

* THOMAS BRIGGS of Calmire=ISABELL BRATHWAYTE of Ambleside

THOMAS JOHN	} ob.s.p.	AGNES =	ANNE =	FRANCIS =	AMY =
		SIR RIC. HUTTON, Judge.	EDMOND (or EDWARD) STANLEY. s. of Thomas of Dalegarth.	1 JOHN SAWREY. of Plumpton 2 ARTHUR BENSON. of Skelwith.	JOHN SKELTON.

The following entries, kindly sent me by Mr. William Farrer of Marton House, Skipton, are from an old rental of Kendal Barony:—

FRAGMENT OF A CROSTHWAITE RENTAL OF 1582.

"Thomas Brigges holdes of the lord their bie ten^andrighte accordinge to the custome off ye manno^r there, . . . a tenem^t with

* In the above the sisters, Frances and Amy, are not in the Visitation, but are inserted on the authority of Burn and Nicolson II., p. 401, and L. R. A. in *North Lonsdale Magazine* (vol. 3, No. 4, p. 92, December, 1898), and a paragraph by I. T. B. in the *Westmorland Gazette* (1887, January 8th). These last assert that West in his account of the Sawrey family, is in error when he says that John Sawrey married Justice Halton's sister; and that it should read "Justice Hutton's sister-in-law."

an orch'd . . . ground, and payeth therefore y'lie Pentecost and St Martyn equally as in the foot and all other [duties suites and services accustomed] according to the same custome and is to pay for his harriott as fine y'for as appears in the head and a goddes Peny and y'upon is to be admytted ten^{and}.

(in the margin) Modo James Briggs

xvjd besides his rent of Imp'mt hereafte^r sett doune Salvo Jure dni et aleoq cūiūslitb.

(Elsewhere) James Briggess holdes of ye Lord ther att will onely a p'cell of ground being a leek garth conteynyn one fall of ground and is to pay y'for yearely to the Lord öb."

Arms of Briggs of Cawmire—*Barruly Or and Sa. a canton of the first*. This was a Brathwaite impalement formerly at Burneside Hall. [These *Transactions*, vi., 104.] Also as a Stanley quartering at Ponsonby Church. [Whellan's *Cumberland*, 424.]

But a little earlier there was a family of Briggs at Helsfell Hall near Kendal probably closely connected.

* ROBERT BRIGGS, Esq., of Helsfell Hall =
apparently the same as Robert B.,
1st Recorder of Kendal. (See Charter
18 Eliz., 1575, *Boke of Record*, p. 283.)

ELIZABETH = CHRISTOPHER PHILIPSON.
of Calgarth (d. 1566).
Visit Westm. 1615.

ELLEN = WM. PORTER
d. of Robt. of
Briggs. Allwardby.
Visit Cumb. 1615.

Helsfell Hall passed to the Philipsons, who quartered the arms of Briggs of that place. [Barry of ten Or and Sa., a canton of the second.—Burn and Nicolson.] And we find it also mentioned in the Inquisition P.M. of Christopher Philipson, great-grandson of the Christopher who married Elizabeth Briggs. Now Burn and Nicolson conjecture that Colonel [Edward] Briggs, Justice of the Peace, and the well-known Parliamentary leader, was directly descended from Robert of Helsfell; but this appears most doubtful, as the latter seems to have had only two daughters. It was Colonel Briggs who beseiged Robert Philipson on Long Holme, Windermere, and it was the latter (called Robin the Devil) who performed

* Robert Briggs is probably identical with Robert, who with his wife Elizabeth, sold certain lands in Kendal to Archbishop Sandys for the endowment of Hawkshead Grammar School. His name appears also as a signatory to the original statutes. See *Hawkshead, its History, &c.*, 1899, pp. 486, 562-3.

The following from a Rental of Kendal Barony 16 Eliz. also probably refers to him:—"Robert Briggs gent. holds certain lands in Strickland Kettle as of the Castle by a free annual rent." *Westmorland Note Book*, p. 299.

