



ENTRANCE GATES—GOSFORTH HALL.

Photo. by Miss A. E. Brickhill.

TO FACE P. 227.

ART. XIV.—*Gosforth Hall*. By C. A. PARKER, F.S.A., Scot., and J. F. CURWEN, F.R.I.B.A.

Read at Gosforth, June 12th, 1902.

PART I.—HISTORICAL. By DR. PARKER.

GOSFORTH, Bolton, Santon, and Haile cannot have been given by William de Meschines, as Denton and the county histories state, to Thomas de Multon, of Gilsland, because de Multon was born some eighty years after the death of William. They may have been granted by William Fitz Duncan to Hubert de Vaux or de Vallibus, first baron of Gilsland, who granted to St. Bees fifty acres of land in Gosford about 1160.* From him they would descend to Thomas de Multon the Second, who married Maud de Vallibus, and thus became “of Gilsland;” but in some way the manor of Gosforth has become re-united with the original barony of Egremont, and is in the hands of Lord Leconfield.

The earliest known local owners were a family who adopted the name “de Gosford,” which family ended about 1215 in an heiress Grace or Græcia de Gosford,† a lady whose name coincides with that of the wife of Hubert de Vallibus. Grace married Geoffry the Falconer, who adopted her name, so that for three generations the family was styled “le Falconer de Gosford.” In 1316 or thereabouts the property was divided amongst the co-heiresses, one of whom, Elena, was the twenty-five years old widow of William de Kirkby. Twelve years later, John, the son of her elder sister, Agnes de Estholme, was in possession of three-fifths of the estate; and in 1610 the whole was in the hands of Kirkby, Pennington, and Senhouse.‡ About

* St. Bees Chartulary.

† St. Bees Chartulary.

‡ John Denton, ed. R. S. Ferguson, Tract Series of this Society, No. 2, p. 21.

1650 the descendants of the "de Gosforths" vanish, unless William Caddie, who was lord of part of Gosforth in 1649,* was a descendant of Mariota, daughter of Robert de Gosford, who married Alan Cadde. The receipt for the fine is witnessed by William Tubman. William Caddie was a member of the still existing family of Caddy of Rougholme, Waberthwaite. The property passed into the hands of the Copleys, and we get into touch with the old houses Gosforth Hall and Gosforth Gate, whose history is so intermixed.

Gosforth Gate occurs in the parish register in 1597 as the residence of Nicholas and Janet Cadye, both of whom died of the plague. In the next year it was occupied by Edward Tubman, a member of a family once widespread in the parish, seven of them dying during the two plague years. In 1599, at the adjoining tenement, Beck Place, a William Tubman was born, who succeeded to Beck Place, and was evidently a man of substance and education. He lost his wife Ann in 1637, and was left with one daughter, Isabella, apparently an only child. Robert Copley now appears.

This Robert Copley, chief bailiff of Copeland Forest, under the Earl of Northumberland, was probably a lawyer, as his son certainly was, and very likely a relative of Alvary Copley, of Batley, Yorks, whose daughter Isabel married, as her second husband, Joseph Pennington, of Muncaster, Esq., who died, according to Dugdale, in 1659. Copley was appointed steward to Pennington's little son William (baptized at Muncaster in 1655) during the 17 years of his minority, and purchased, about 1650, Kirkby's part of Gosforth. In 1652 he married Isabella Tubman, and in March, 1653, appeared with his wife before Joseph Pennington,† and they were admitted to the tenements of Beck Place, Walk Mill, and a parcel of ground called Syke. Neither Henry Ben, "register," nor John Robinson,

* Gosforth MS.

† Muncaster Court Rolls.

“preacher at Gosforth,”* during the Commonwealth, who in 1653 owed twenty shillings to “Thomas Curwen, of Sellowparke,” troubled themselves to make any entries in the register, nor is the marriage in the note-book of William Thompson, the zealous J.P. of Thornflatt; but when, a few months later, William Tubman died someone cared. He received a burial befitting his circumstances, and in a fair and clerkly hand, probably Copley’s own, is the interpolated entry:—†

Mr William Tubman, of Gosforth, buried in ye chancell there, ye 26th day of October, 1653.

By 1658 Copley had commenced to build “a large, handsome house, with orchards and gardens suitable,” which has ever since borne the name of Gosforth Hall.

He had four children—Ann, married to John Ponsonby, of Hale Hall, Esq.; Barbara, John, and William. Barbara I had the pleasure of identifying for our President as the “B.C.” so tenderly referred to in the “Diary of Bishop Nicolson,” and it was perhaps partly on her account that during the happier days of the unsuccessful courtship he once or twice refers to the parish as “Gosforth.” John Copley, attorney-at-law, married in 1684 Beatrix, widow of Samuel Sandys, of Graithwaite, and daughter of Daniel Nicholson, of Hawkshead, by which marriage he became possessed of Hawkshead Hall, where he lived and died.

Mr. John F. Curwen points out, from Darcy Curwen’s journal, that “M^r Robert Copley was buried ye 16th of August, 1675,” no doubt at Gosforth; but the years 1674-77 are missing from the register. His wife Isabel was buried there ten years later.

1685, June 24.—Isabella Copley, of Gosforth, gentlewoman, was buried in linnen; a fine was payed by her administrators, according to law, for being buried in linnen.

* Curwen MSS.

† Gosforth Register.

William Copley succeeded to Gosforth Hall, and married 17th October, 1685, only four months after his mother's death, a lady whom Darcy Curwen calls "Coson Isabell Copley," probably a Stanley or a Curwen. By her he had Robert, born August 3rd, 1636, and Stanley, born August 10th, 1687, after which the poor mother "dyed in childbed the 9th day of September, 1687, and (was buried in Pon) sonby Church."

Apparently the baby did not long survive her, but this was not the end of William Copley's misfortunes. About 1692 he left Gosforth Hall, and in 1708 mortgaged his lands in Gosforth to Jane Hudson, became a defaulter in 1712, and in 1723 was a prisoner for debt in Carlisle Gaol. By 1723 his son Stanley was dead, and Robert Copley, "only son and heir," then sold and confirmed Gosforth Hall to Anthony Benn, of Hensingham. In 1732 John Benn, gentleman, sold the Hall to James Steel, of Wray, Hensingham, gentleman. Five years later, in 1738, James Steel, "of Hollins, St. Bees," sold it to Isaac Powle, of Blackhow, Gosforth,* yeoman. At this point we must return to Gosforth Gate.

In 1688 Christopher Denton, B.A., of Magdalen College, Cambridge, was presented to the rectory of Gosforth, at the early age of 21, by the last John Senhouse, of Seascale. He was the son of the Rev. Thomas Denton, rector of Crosby Garrett, and is said to have been one of the first resident clergymen in this district who had received a University education. Although he was 50 years rector, his name is not given in some of the county histories, and is wrongly dated in others.

Some 56 years before this event, in 1628, John and Margaret Shearwen had cleared away the old tenement called Gosforth Gate, and reared the mansion which still stands there in picturesque decay, and on which their names are easily to be read. The owners of such a house

* Gosforth Hall deeds.



GOSFORTH GATE

Photo. by Miss A. F. Brickhill.

(Now known as Denton Hall).
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must have been well to do. They had two sons, John and William. John, the eldest, "born and baptised 13th March, 1635," succeeded to Gosforth Gate, and had four sons and two daughters. The sons all died young, the eldest last of all.

1683. October 15, John, son of Mr. J. Sherwen, was buried in linnen. His father paid a fine, according to the late law, for burying in woollen.*

Mrs. Copley and John Sherwen are the only two instances of burial in linen that occur in the Gosforth Register. The fine was a heavy one, and we may well believe this special honour was prompted by the father's grief and affection. The two girls were left co-heiresses. Margaret married in 1687 Anthony Benn, of Hensingham, and to Isabel the rector came a-wooing.

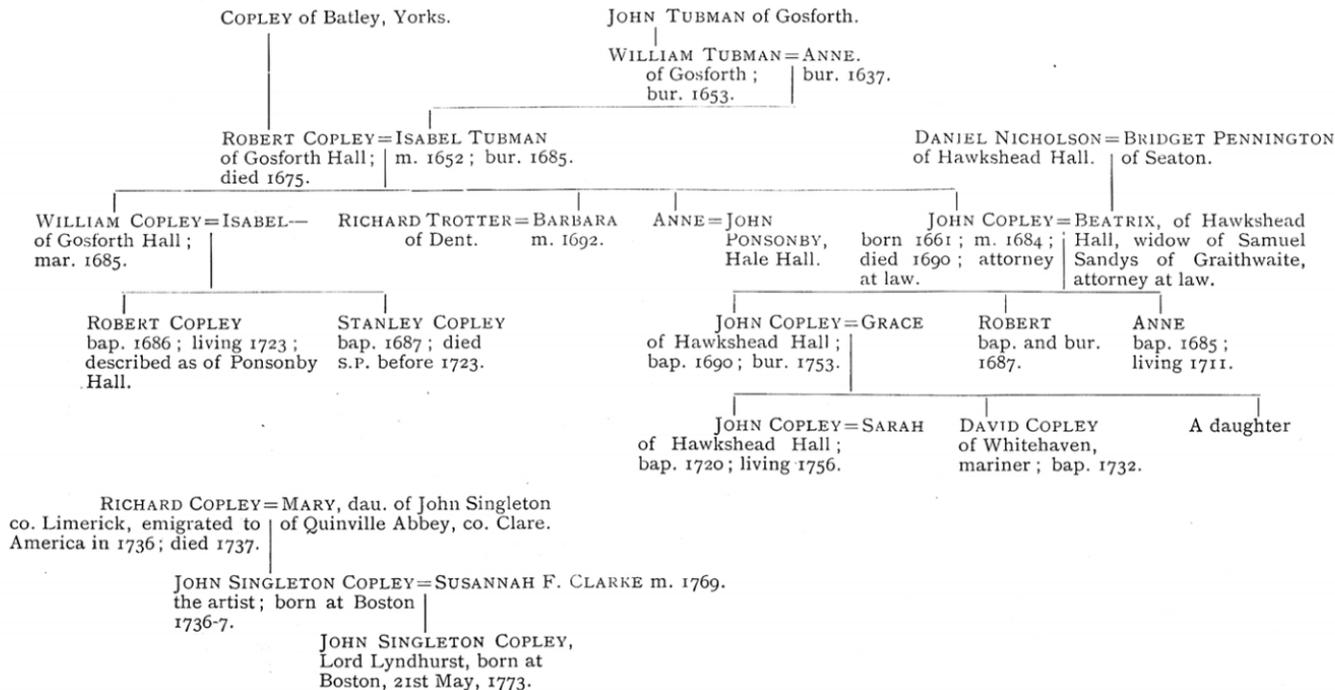
Christo. Denton, Rector, and Mrs. Isabel Sherwen, marryed in ye Parish Church of Gosforth, the 21st January, Anno Dni, 1696-7.

By this marriage Christopher got Gosforth Gate and good lands, and instead of taking his wife home went home with her, for it was a better house than the Rectory. He enjoyed this good fortune for forty-two years, the old name was forgotten, and the house is to this day called after him—Denton Hill. Of their five children, Thomas, the only son, is said to have died at college; Katharine married John Steele, and Margratt married John Benson, both men of Egremont; Elizabeth died unmarried.*

Isabel, the third daughter, had a slice of the worldly wisdom of her father, and was forty years of age when she married "Thomas Poole, of Egremont, gentleman," brother to the childless Isaac and Sarah Poole, of Gosforth Hall. Thirty-two years later Thomas succeeded his brother and Isabel reigned at the Hall, as her father had done at Denton Hill. She lived to be 95, and must have

* Gosforth Register.

COPLEY OF GOSFORTH HALL.



been a grand old lady. Isabel, however, only reigned conditionally, as Isaac left several rooms in the house to his widow. (See Part II.) Thomas Poole's heirs sold Gosforth Hall to John Sharpe, of Sellafield, yeoman, who in 1804 sold it to Samuel Rogers the younger, of Kirkland, Irton, yeoman. He left it to his wife Elizabeth in 1819, and her heirs sold it to Rear-Admiral Francis Scott, of Harecroft, Gosforth. Admiral Scott's widow sold it in 1877 to Mr. John Tyson, of Hazel Bank, Gosforth, who sold it to the present possessor, J. S. Ainsworth, Esq., of Harecroft.

Mr. J. S. Ainsworth drew my attention to the fact that the name of Lord Lyndhurst, Chancellor of England, was John Singleton Copley, and suggested that he might be descended from the Gosforth Hall family. Since then we have tried hard to make out the connection, but we can add nothing to the statement of Lord Campbell in his *Lives of the Chancellors* (kindly communicated by Canon Bower and J. S. Ainsworth) that Richard Copley's pedigree is unknown.

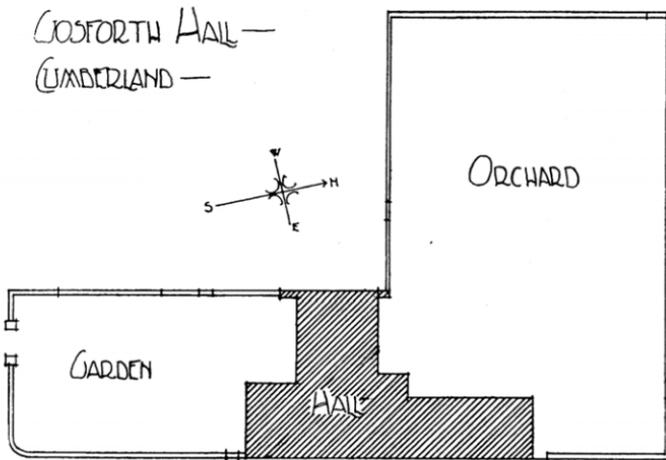
PART II.—DESCRIPTIVE. By J. F. CURWEN.

All that we can learn about the hall from the various histories of Cumberland is a fact which each historian seems to have borrowed in turn from Thomas Denton's manuscript—viz., that Robert Copley, who was steward to Joseph Pennington's little son William (baptised at Muncaster, 1655) during the seventeen years of his minority, and also chief bailiff of Copeland Forest under the Earl of Northumberland, purchased part of the manor of Gosforth, and "built a large handsome house, with orchards and gardens suitable."

There is to-day, built into the wall of an outbuilding, an old red sandstone door lintel, which bears in raised letters the initials "R.C.," with the date 1658. In every particular, we find in this hall an interesting example of

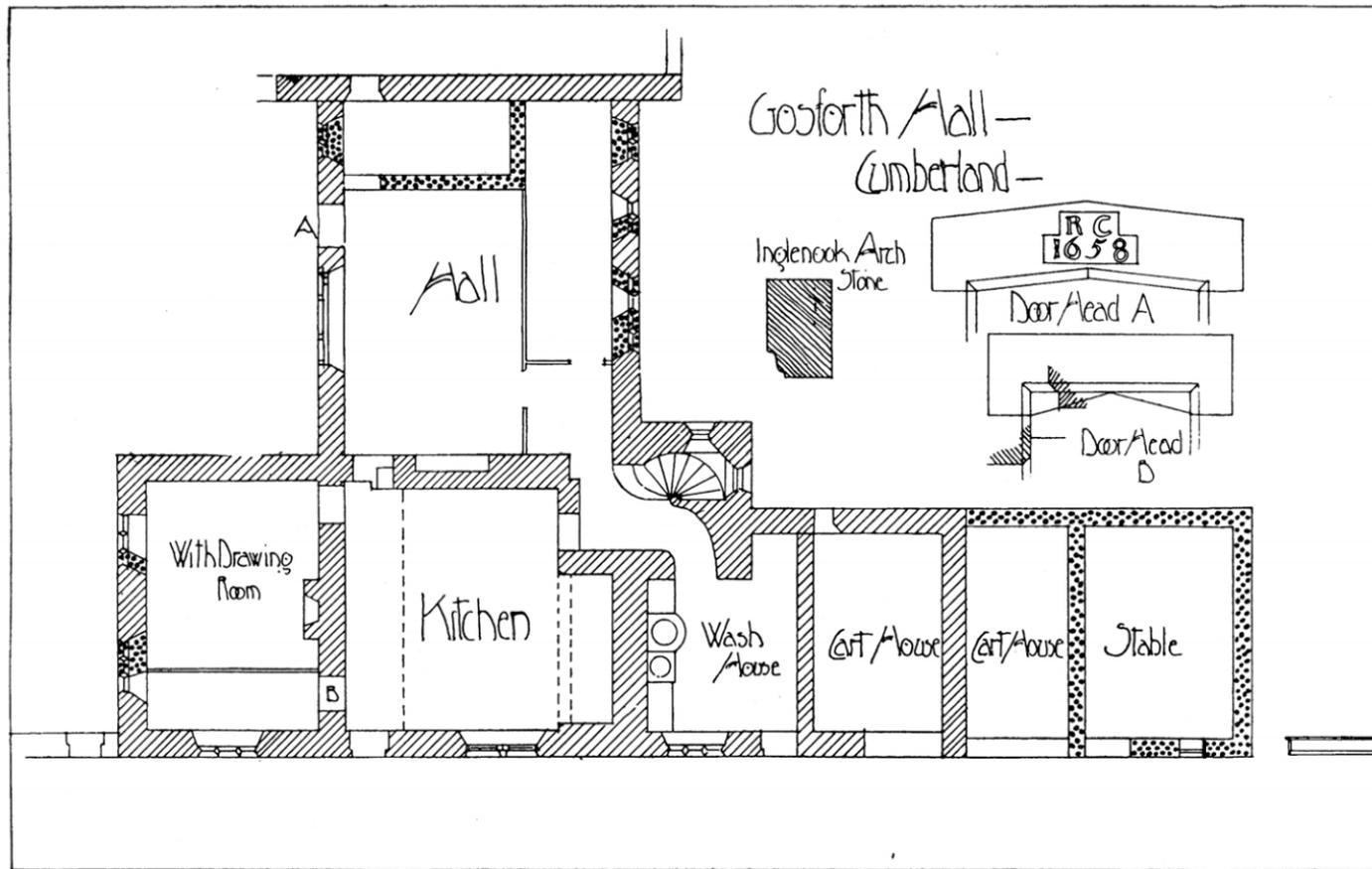
a seventeenth-century building, and such a one as a prosperous man would have built for himself.

Leaving the road opposite the church, you enter the small garden between two most refined Early Renaissance gateposts, which at once speak of the former elegance of the building. But, unfortunately, no sooner than you are within the gates, facing the southern wall of the hall, you are brought face to face with the ruthless spirit of



improvement of the nineteenth century. It is true that the delightful string courses still remain, for they being guileless could do no one any harm; but the old Tudor-arched doorway, with its initialed headstone, perhaps by being considered too low, has made way for an ordinary villa door; the broad four-lighted mullion window has been converted into a treble sash, whilst the two-lighted dais window on the left-hand side of the door has been blocked up altogether, with many another on the floors above.

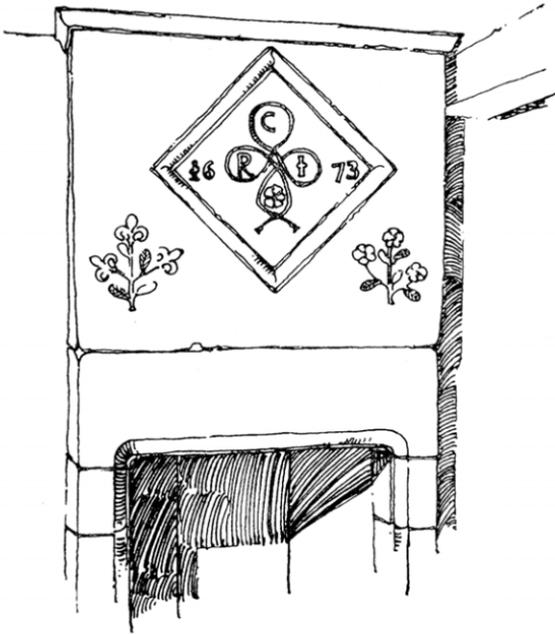
Passing over the threshold you enter the hall, a spacious compartment measuring internally 28 feet by 22 feet. Here again, on the northern wall, the two-lighted



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GROUND PLAN.

J. F. Curwen.

dais window has been completely blocked up, the two-lighted window opposite the entrance partially blocked up, and the broad four-lighted window, corresponding to the one on the southern wall, has been blocked all but one small opening. For when the yeomen left the hall to become occupied by a tenant farmer, such a chamber became too great for him; it had to be sub-divided, and these three beautiful windows of eight lights became too much for his new partitioned-off dairy. There is nothing in the way of oak panneling left to tell us of the fitments of the room.



Passing out from this room there was doubtless at one time a "mell door" in the southern corner of the eastern wall leading into the "heck," partitioned off from the kitchen. By way of this passage entrance would be gained through a delightful red sandstone doorway, now existing,

into the withdrawing room, a comfortable apartment measuring internally 20 feet by 14 feet. This room originally had a three-lighted mullion window facing east and two double-lighted windows facing south. No oak remains here either, but over the fireplace there is to be seen a plaster overmantel, upon which in raised letters are the initials—

C
R I

for Robert and Isabella Copley, and a rose within the four coils of a knot, with the date 1673. The whole is surrounded by a diamond-shaped moulding, having a spray of roses on the right and of lilies on the left hand. Dr. Parker points out that the reason why there is no coat-of-arms is that at Dugdale's Visitation in 1665, Robert Copley refused to pay the fee of 27s. demanded by the herald for the right to bear arms.

Passing again through the screens we come to the kitchen, with its ample fireplace and ingle nook 12 feet wide. A doorway from here leads out to the newel staircase, which is built out as a turret, and to the pantries beyond.

Upstairs there is little now left to comment upon, excepting the old fireplaces in the garrets and the fine specimens of massive oak roof principals very rudely "sett vpp and fframyd," and firmly pinned together by strong wooden pegs or trennels.

Externally, the two buttresses flanking the western wall of the hall are curious features and worthy of attention. On the ground level they have projected some 5 feet 2 inches, and then they seem to have been quickly weathered back to a projection of 3 feet, at which they run up to the roof without any further weatherings.

In 1723 the hall was sold by the Copleys, and in the year 1776 we find it occupied by one Isaac Pool, and the house described as being "much in decay." This Pool



Photo. by Miss A. E. Brickhill.

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ATTIC BEAMS—GOSFORTH HALL.



Photo. by Miss A. E. Brickhill.

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INGLE NOOK—GOSFORTH HALL.

made a will, dated 21st February, 1778, from which I abstract the following :—

In the name of God Amen. I Isaac Pool of Gosforth Hall . . . give unto my said wife Sarah Pool the little orchard on the West side of the Brewhouse, the dining room now divided into two rooms, the loft above the Kitchen, the Loft above the Parlour, half of the Brewhouse, the two furthest Garrets, one half of the Hall, a Mewstead in the Barn and the Peat House at the East End of the said Barn, during my wife's widowhood and in lieu of her widow right. And also upon condition that she my said wife shall not set to farm or allow any to live in the above mentioned rooms excepting my brother Thomas Pool . . . all the rest and residue I give and bequeath unto my said brother Thomas Pool.

We are not told whether this brother was a married man or not, but if he was intended to take up his residence and live in the other half of the hall—say, on the other side of the fireplace—then he had at least a great inducement to ignore the prohibition to marry the deceased brother's wife.
