

LIDDEL MOTE.
General view from the Roman Road.

TO FACE P. 91.

ART. VI.—*Liddel Mote*. By JOHN F. CURWEN, F.S.A.,
F.R.I.B.A.

Read at the site, July 8th, 1909.

I.—HISTORICAL.

SUCH a bold bluff as this—facing northward to the land of the Picts, and situated on the bank of a river which has witnessed, from earliest days, the inveterate hostilities of two nations and, at this point, now forms a boundary between them—is likely to have been fortified in very early times, indeed by each succeeding race. We note, for example, the vestige of a Roman road, the 2nd Iter of Antoninus, that runs past the present entrance, and led through Netherby and Carlisle to the plains of York.

But the earlier camps have given way to gigantic earth-works, of about the tenth century, and as we view this magnificent site to-day, we find clearly a fortress of the "mote and bailey" type, the reconstructed work of the Norman.

Whether, in this debateable land, it was the work of the Normans who settled under the English Crown, or of those who settled under the Scottish Crown, is open to argument.

Dr. Christison* points out that the mote and bailey type of fortification abounds in the south-west lowlands of Scotland, especially along the Solway Firth, where a steady immigration of Normans took place, some time before William Rufus took forcible possession of the land of Carlisle, and brought Cumbria, south of the Solway, under his sway, in the year 1092. So thorough was this

* *Early Fortifications in Scotland.*

immigration that by degrees, as by a silent revolution, all the principal fiefs passed into Norman hands. Baliol, Bruce, Mowbray, Giffard, Ramsay, Fraser, Græme, all of whom were Norman adventurers, became the ancestors of Scottish nobility.

On the other hand there is nothing incongruous in the notion that, after the conquest of Cumbria by the Red King, this mote was thrown up, on the existing earth-work, at the time when Ranulph de Meschines granted the district to Turgis Brundis, otherwise known as Turgis de Russedale, a Fleming, of whom nothing else is known save that he had a son, Guy, and a grandson, Ranulph,* to hold as an advanced outwork to his castle of Carlisle. De Meschines needed not only a fortification that could be defended easily by the few men to whom he could entrust the barony, but also one that could be quickly adapted for their protection whilst living beside the rough and ever hostile Scottish neighbour.

Be this as it may, for some forty years the English remained in possession until Stephen of Blois granted the barony back to David, King of Scotland, as the price of his acquiescence in the usurper's claim to the English throne. Thus Liddel Mote, the *caput baroniæ*, came once again into the possession of the lords of Liddesdale.

We find Ranulph de Soulis, butler, *pincerna regis*, to William the Lion,† in possession when the Scotch King occupied Liddel on his way to the siege of Carlisle in 1174.‡ His name appears in several Cumberland charters.

In August, 1216, Alexander II. passed through on his way to the siege of Carlisle, but in the following year, September 23rd, 1217, Henry III. issued a summons to the "nobleman Alexander," in which he hopes for wiser

* See *Pipe Rolls of Cumberland*, ed. Hodgson, 1847, p. lxi.

† *Registrum de Neubotle*, p. 29, No. 37; p. 30, No. 38.

‡ *Benedictus Abbas (R.S.)*, i., 65; Bain, *Cal. Documents relating to Scotland*, .. 685; Roger de Hoveden.

counsels and commands him, without delay, to deliver up to Robert de Veteripont the castle of Carlisle, all his prisoners in the war, and *all the lands* seized by him.* This he seems to have done, for on December 18th King Henry directs the sheriff of Cumberland to take into the King's hands the castle of Liddel and guard it till further instructions.†

Thus did these contentions for sovereignty continue until the year 1242, when by a compromise they were disposed of for a time. Cumberland became again an English county, and the Scottish King received a grant of certain manors in the forest of Inglewood.

For forty years peace was maintained, during which period we find the family of Wake in possession. Nicholas de Stuteville, after whom Nichol Forest was named, is recorded in the *Testa de Nevile* as the proprietor of the barony during the reign of King John. By one or more heiresses it came to the Wakes. Dugdale‡ says that Johan, the daughter and heir of Nicholas, married Hugh de Wake, the father of Baldwin, but John Denton says that she "married Sir Hugh Bigot, from whom it came to the Lord Baldwyne Wake."

In the Chancery records for the year 1281-2, there is an Inquisition post-mortem giving the extent of the manor of Liddel in Cumberland, of which Baldwin Wake was seised in demesne, "as of fee at the death, with its members Stubhille and Arthuret, made on Wednesday next after the feast of St. Gregory, Pope, at Lydel in King Edward I.'s tenth year, before Master Henry de Bray, by oath of Sir Geoffry de Tylliole, Sir William de Mulcastre, and others, who say that there is at 'Lydel' the site of a castle containing these 'domiciles,' viz., a wooden hall with two solars, cellars, and a chapel, also a kitchen, a byre, a grange, and a wooden granary which threatens

* Patent Rolls, 1 Henry III., m. 6.

† Close Rolls, 2 Henry III., p. 2, m. 13.

‡ *Baronage*, 456.

ruin, but might now be repaired for five marks. Not extended, as they need more yearly keeping up than they can be let for. Total extent, £295 16s. 2d."*

This Baldwin Wake married Hawise, daughter and coheir of Robert de Quinci, and was succeeded by his son, John Wake, who was summoned to Parliament as a baron, on the 1st of October, 1295. He was engaged by Edward I. to see to the fortifications of the castles against Scotland and guarding of the Marches. He died in 1300, and under date July 7th, 1300, there is another Inquisition post-mortem which says that the goods, animals, and value were taken by the sub-escheator of Cumberland into the King's hands, at the instance of Sir Henry de Bosco, bailiff of the said Sir John Wake, to save them, as they were much wasted and in great part removed by Sir Simon de Lindesi (of Arthuret), keeper of Liddel.†

On October 30th, 1300, we find that Simon de Lindesaye was "gardein des fortelesces de Lydel et del Eremitage Soules."‡ In an indenture, dated November 10th, 1300, King Edward I. granted to Sir Simon de Lyndesey

the keeping of the castle of Hermitage, the Mote of Lydel, and the lands in the valley belonging to the late Sir John Wake, saving to his widow, Johanna, her dower, which lands are in the King's hand through the nonage of Sir John's son and heir; to hold until the feast of All Saints next to come: Sir Simon laying out in repair of the walls and houses in the said castle £20, also repairing the Mote and the fosses around it, strengthening and redressing the same, and the *pele and the palisades*, and making lodges within the mote if necessary for the safety of the men-at-arms of the garrison; and to remain in defence of the place and country, and that the same be kept without detriment, and the people, tenants and dwellers on the lands be maintained in their rights. §

Here we find Sir Symon de Lyndsey ordered to repair

* Chancery Records, 10 Edward I., No. 26; Bain, ii., 208.

† Chancery Miscellaneous Portfolios, No. 4½.

‡ Palgrave's *Documents*, 249.

§ Carlisle, Exchequer Q.R. Miscellanea. Army, No. 2½; Bain, ii., 1173.

and strengthen the pele and palisades; hence it is easy to understand why it is referred to, about 1310, as the "Piel of Ledel,"* and in 1319 as the "Pele of Lidell."† Various chroniclers give it the same name in their narratives of the event of 1346—the chief fact in its history. For instance, the Lanercost Chronicle‡ calls it "the fortalice—*fortalitium*—of Lidelle," a name which is preserved in its modern name of Liddel Strength; Packington§ calls it "the Pyle of Lidelle;" Scalacronica,|| "the pile of Lidel;" Wyntoun¶ calls it "Peel off Lyddale" and "Pelle." Most important of all, however, and conclusive as to the geographical identity of this peel with the old castle of the Stutevilles and the Wakes, is, according to Mr. George Neilson, the testimony of Galfridus le Baker,** who calls it "a manor place" (*quoddam manerium dominæ de Wake vocatum Ludedell*) of the lady of Wake. Again, in the pages of Bower,†† it bears the interesting name *municipium de Lidallis*.

In order, however, to realize the events which led up to the savage incident which forms the chief fact in the Mote's history, it will be necessary to go back a few years. After the death of Alexander III. and of Margaret, the "Maiden of Norway," another question arose in regard to the succession to the Scottish crown. Disputes followed between Baliol and Edward I., border raids and ravaging of the district recommenced, and finally war broke out between the two kingdoms in the year 1296, a war which lasted on and off until the second half of the fourteenth century. During all this dismal period both sides of the border suffered, and it is almost impossible to realize what

* Bain, iii., 219.

† Bain, iii., 675.

‡ P. 345.

§ Ap. Leland, i., p. 470.

|| Leland's translation, 301.

¶ VIII., 6140-45.

** Ed. Giles, p. 170; see also Bain, i., 1557.

†† II., 340.

must have been the utter desolation of this district, lying as it does on the direct line of march between the two contending forces. Robert Bruce and his brother Edward seem never to have tired of raiding as far south as possible—plundering on all sides, and destroying with fire and sword all that lay in their way. Neither can we realize the awful sacrifices and heroic deeds that must have formed the almost daily existence of the small garrison stationed here. In the year 1346 David II., the ill-starred son of Robert the Bruce, after crossing the border, previous to the battle of Nevil's Cross, invested this stronghold. The defence was conducted by Sir Walter Selby and his garrison of 200 men-at-arms, with such gallantry that it was not until the fourth day that an assault could be undertaken. During the night the Scots had filled up the great ditch with wood, fascines and earth. By daybreak they advanced to the attack, and, covered by their shields, at last took by storm the stubborn peel. So far, however, from receiving that mercy which has at all times distinguished the brave, the two sons of Sir Walter were seized and strangled in their father's presence,* after which the knight was himself loaded with chains and beheaded.† Leland, writing of this incident,‡ says "Lithel was a moted Place of a Gentilman cawled Syr Water Seleby, the which was killyd there and the Place destroyed yn King Edward the thyrde, when the Scottes whent to Dyraham." Packington also says:—"David, King of Scottes, caused the noble knight, Walter Selby, *capitayne of the Pyle* of Lydelle, to be slayne afore his owne face, not suffering him so much as to be confessed."

Two years later we find, on July 3rd, 1348, a licence for "Sir Thomas Wake of Lydell to enfeof his kinsman, Thomas Wake, of the castle of Lydell in county Cumberland, with the knights' fees and advowsons of churches

* Bain, iii., 1670.

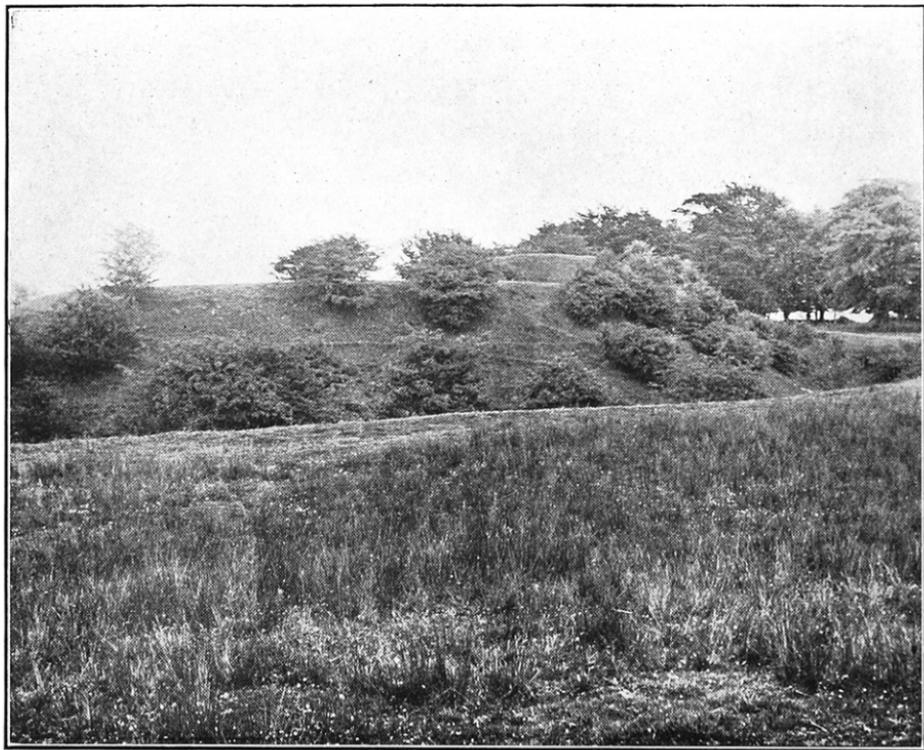
† Holinshed's *Chronicle*, v., 383.

‡ Vol. vii., fol. 69.



LIDDEL MOTE
from the inner ward.

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LIDDEL MOTE

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from the outer ward, showing the main ditch, rampart, and mote beyond.

pertaining thereto, and for the latter to regrant the same to him for life." *

After the destruction of the mote referred to by Leland, it is probable that Sir Thomas erected a stone tower which afterwards was enlarged into a dwelling by a branch of the family of Græme. Stow † mentions the foundation of a square building as being "perhaps the Prætorium," and Hutchinson, writing in the year 1794, ‡ speaks of "a square tower of excellent masonry." Probably they both refer to the foundations of this dwelling house, the remains of a portion of which are still visible to the north-west of the mote.

In the year 1553 "Fergus Græme of the Mote of Lydysdale in the Countie of Cumberland" had a grant of arms, as a reward for his true and faithful services done in the reigns of King Henry VIII. and Edward VI. Thomas Musgrave, writing to Lord Burghley in 1583, mentions the river "Lydall at the Mote Skore, where Fargus Grayme his howse standes.§"

II.—DESCRIPTIVE.

This stronghold, occupying some four acres of ground and commanding a vast extent of view, owes its strength, in the first place, to the natural protection afforded by the steepness of the lofty clay cliff on the north and north-east sides. It rises 160 feet sheer up from the river Liddel. On the remaining sides, the inner ward|| has been entrenched by excavating a semicircular ditch some 25 feet below the surface and by throwing up the earth on the inside, so as to form an enormous rampart rising 35 feet above it.

* Cal. Patent Rolls, 1348-50, p. 111.

† *Chronicle*, 243.

‡ *History of Cumberland*, vol. 2, p. 529.

§ *These Transactions*, N.S., viii., 62.

|| The inner ward measures 48 yards north and south by 38 yards east and west.

Upon the south-east corner of this gigantic earthwork, and forming a part of the surrounding line of defence, stands the base of the mote, called by Dr. Skene* a "magnificent hill-fort." The platform on the top, at the present time, measures only 34 by 24 feet, but there is distinct evidence that on the north-east side a considerable landslip has taken place bearing a portion of the mote with it. We can then assume the top to have been a circle of some 34 feet in diameter, or perhaps smaller still, as a certain portion of the top must have crumbled away through successive centuries. Therefore this mote differs from the larger examples in that it would have no tower upon the top, and would chiefly be used as a place of last retreat, when the defenders were few in number—a small circle of stout palisading which but a handful of resolute men could hold. The lord's "pele" probably was situated in the centre of the inner ward, where, in later years, the hall and chapel stood.

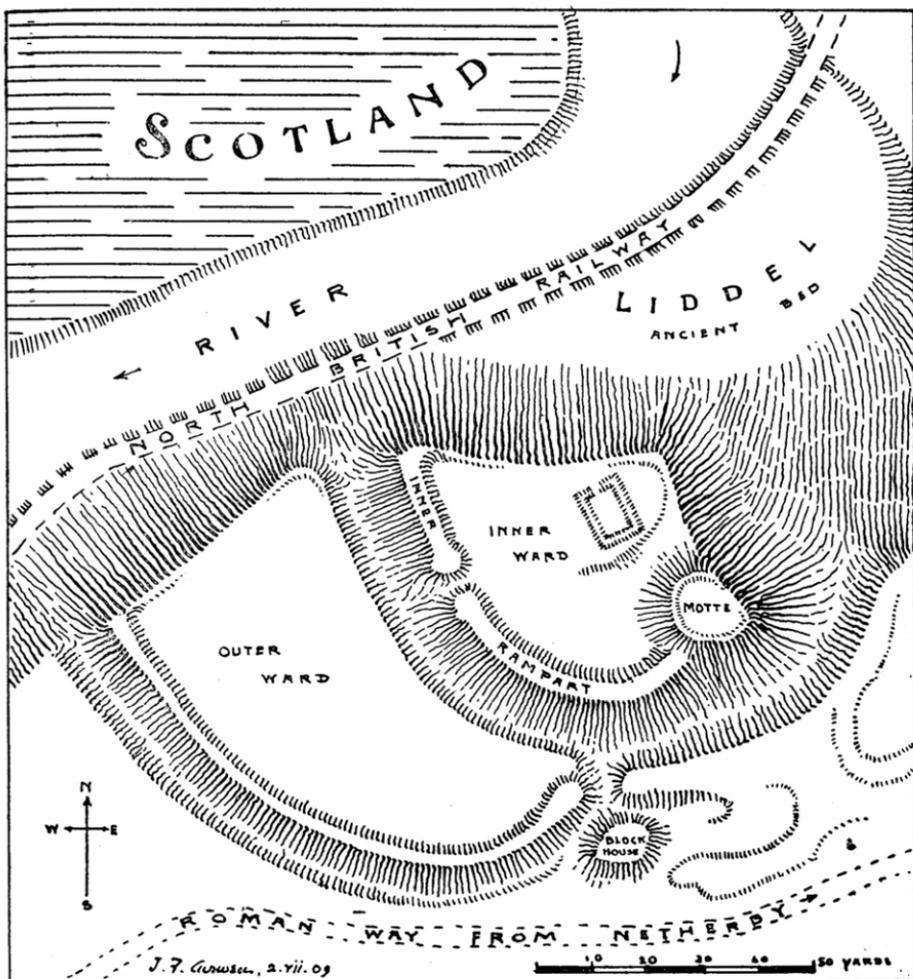
On a plan of this stronghold, given in General Roy's *Military Antiquities of the Romans in Britain*, there is a spur of land shewn which extends out over the cliff at the north-east angle. If this existed as a narrow rampart, it would form an additional outwork for enfilading the face of the cliff.

To the west is an outer ward also defended† by another stockaded rampart and ditch sweeping round it, but of slighter construction. Here would be situated the barracks for the garrison, together with the kitchens, byre, granary, and other buildings mentioned in Baldwin Wake's *Inquisition post-mortem*.

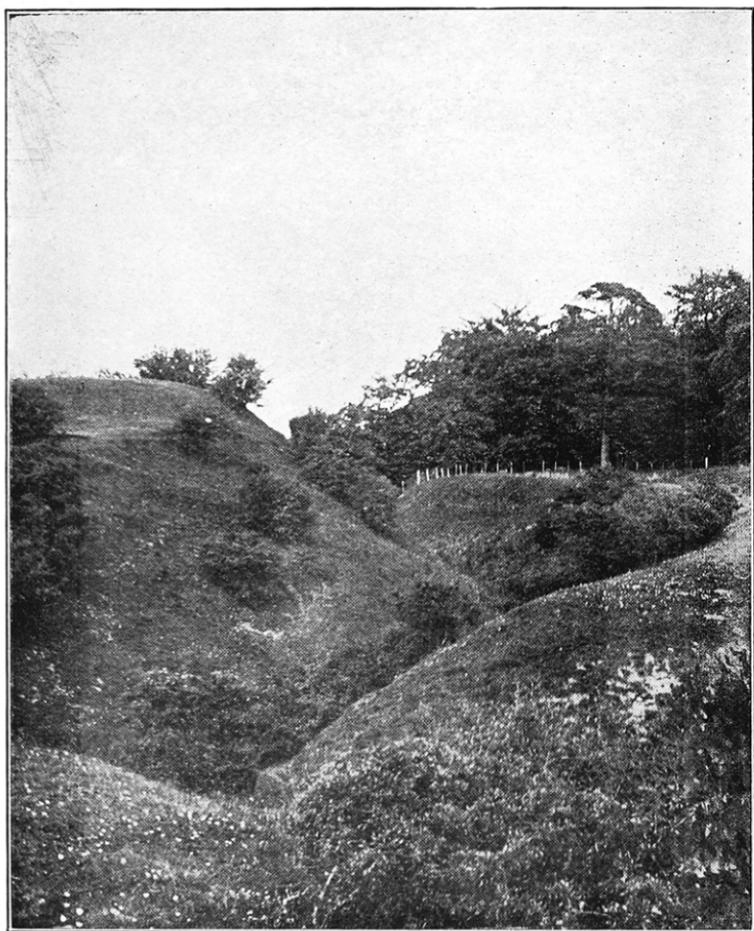
It would seem that the only entrance has been most ingeniously arranged. The way led, first of all, past a block-house, which covered the gateway on the southern side and then through a narrow defile, between the raised

* *Celtic Scotland*, i., 157.

† The outer ward measures some 85 yards north-west to south-east and 35 yards east to west.



PLAN OF LIDDEL MOTE.



LIDDEL MOTE.

Entrance into the ditch, and the mote surmounting the main rampart.

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ends of the outer ramparts, into the broad deep ditch. From here it swept round a quadrant to the west, along the bottom of the ditch and in full view of the defenders, until it passed through another narrow defile, between the raised ends of the inner ramparts, into the central court. The planning of this way round to the west instead of to the east was no mere accident, for it must be remembered that a soldier carried his shield on the left arm and thus the unprotected right side of the incomer would be fully exposed to the defenders.

The strength of the whole encampment and the ability to defend it is evinced when we consider that an enemy would thus have to run the gauntlet of the garrison, and even if he escaped hurt from their missiles whilst in the ditch, he would still have to climb the tortuous ascent of the escarpment and to scramble over the stockade which crowned the ramparts before he could win through to victory. The warfare of starvation inflicted by a prolonged siege, such as the one of 1346, alone could menace it; mere raiding parties could seldom spare the time, and, moreover, help from a neighbouring strength was generally to be relied on.
