

ART. XII.—*The Castle Rock of St. John's Vale.* By W. G.  
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THIS Castle Rock is described in Hutchinson's *Excursion* (1776) as a "massive bulwark" of "an awful, rude and Gothic appearance," resembling a castle, but so bewitched that it turns into a mere pile of rocks when you examine it. Sir Walter Scott in *The Bridal of Triermain* versified Hutchinson's reputed legend—I doubt if it was genuine tradition—and since then nobody seems to have regarded the Castle Rock as anything but a natural feature. The purpose of this short paper is to bewitch it back into a real castle.

After our excursion to Alston in 1914, our member Mr. Wm. Thompson kindly showed me an old notebook which appears to contain information collected in 1824 as to boundaries in dispute between Greenwich Hospital and the Lord Lonsdale of that day. This, and other papers lent by Mr. Thompson, are worth printing when our *Transactions* have space for them; but one document therein translated bears on the present subject. To quote only the parts required:—

This writing witnesseth that in . . . 1278 . . . whereas . . . disputes were mov'd between Lord Thomas of Derwentwater, knight . . . and William of Threlkeld . . . about common of pasture . . . Thomas of Derwentwater granted . . . to the said William . . . common in wood & Herbage . . . between the rivulet of Birkhend beck as it descends into Glenermakan and from Glenermakan into Greta and by ascending from Greta up to Castelindow Beck and by ascending up to the head of Castelyndolf Beck and so ascending up to the head of Mosedale Beck, and from Mosedale Beck up to Calfhow, and from Calfhow to Stibinet, & from Stibinet to the head of Birkhend Beck.

Later on in the same document Castelyndolf is written as Casteliadolf. Now Birkhend is apparently a mistranscription for Birkhead (Birkett), and the original might show whether Castelyndolf or Casteliadolf is right, or perhaps Casteliudolf, which might be read as either. But the sketch maps and other papers in this collection show that the boundaries were certainly Birkett beck, Glenderamackin river, the Greta, Bure or St. John's beck, and what is now known as Mill gill, but in 1278 was called Castel Lindolf or Liadolf beck, which runs close under the Castle Rock. The Castle Rock, therefore, seems to have been known as Castel Lindolf or Liadolf (or Liudolf). As Castel Ewain means the castle of Ewain, so this is the castle of Lindolf.

The name Liudolf represents the Old Norse personal name *Ljótólfr*, which became Ludolf and Liolf or Lyulph : and this name is not unknown in these parts. Fornside, the next ancient site to the Castle Rock, was in 1302 Fornesate, in which the vowel after Forn was probably not silent, but represented the termination of Forna, genitive of Forni, a common personal name among Norse-speaking peoples and found in Iceland in the twelfth century (*Sturlungasaga*, i, 129, etc.)—Forna-setr being Forni's seat or farm. Now Forne son of Liulf (or some read Sigulf) obtained the barony of Greystoke about 1120 (Prescott, *Wetherhal*, 5n, 238n) and the connection of Forni's seat and Liolf's castle here is too curious to pass unnoticed. But there were several Fornis and several Liolfs, no doubt, up to and after the Norman settlement. All we can say is that the Castle Rock, by its old title, seems to have been the stronghold of some descendant of the Vikings, dimly remembered in the thirteenth century, but entirely forgotten in the eighteenth.

Is there anything on the spot to justify this belief ? The shape of the name, Lindolf or Liudolf, and not Liolf, suggests a pre-Norman date for the crystallizing of the

place-name ; and we must look for a very rude and early fort, not a "massive Gothic castle" with towers and battlements.

At first sight there does not seem to be space on the rock for any habitation, even as a refuge. On the summit, over 1,000 feet above sea, there is a splendid look-out station, admirably defensible, but no traces of building except modern fences. The highest shelves of the crag are too narrow and sloping. But about halfway up the whole mass, at the height of nearly 800 feet above the sea, there is a considerable lap in the fell, walled and hidden from the valley by an outstanding buttress-crag, and exposed to falling stones from the rocks above. And yet there are the remains of a building there, which shows, at least, that the spot was once habitable, though the scree and falling rock must have made it unsafe ; and being found unsafe and undesirable as a residence it was abandoned.

Close up against the buttress-rock, and as far as possible from the screes, there is a little oblong ruin of rude and fairly massive drystone walling. One chamber that remains measures internally 14 feet by 7 feet 6 inches, with walls 2 feet 6 inches to 3 feet thick. The northern end has been at some time built up with smaller stones and perhaps rather different work into a gable, now standing 6 feet high ; but the older ruin stands only 3 feet high where it is tallest. The door is to the east, looking up the screes to the crag. At the south end, the building was continued ; one more chamber at least can be traced, but a new fence-wall crosses the site and obliterates it.

Rude buildings like this cannot be dated without exploration and "finds" ; but this shows that building of some sort could stand on the Castle Rock.

We may go a little further and say that, if a descendant of the Vikings had any sort of house, it is likely to have been of this type. Such remains are found at historic

sites of the tenth and eleventh centuries in Iceland ; rectangular chambers, separate but contiguous, with dwarf stone walls meant to be heightened with turf or wood and covered with a roof of thatch or sods (Dr. Valtyr Gudmundsson, *Den Islandske Bolig* ; Thorsteinn Erlingsson, *Ruins of the Saga-time* ; etc.) and such a house on a defensible rock would have been a *borg* or castle before the times of the Norman *motte*. That the people of the age, though not given to military architecture, did sometimes place their rude houses on or beside a defensible rock, and call the place a *borg*, is shown by the famous Borgarvirki, by Egil's Borg, and other such places in Iceland, where the sites remain almost untouched to this day.

This little ruin has some analogies near at hand. On Armbeth fell the late Wm. Wilson pointed out certain similar buildings (*Transactions Cumb. and West. Association*, ix, 62) ; I described them more than twenty years ago, and still think they may be moorland dwellings of tenth and eleventh century type. Mr. Wilson noted the continuous series of chambers, running to 9 or 10 yards altogether in length, and 3½ or 4 yards in breadth over all, with walls 2 to 3 feet in height, and doors in the side walls ; and after saying that they had been supposed to be peat-sheds or sheepfolds, he continued :—

Knowing all about cutting and storing peat on the fell, I am certain from the situations in which we find them, that they cannot have been of any use to those who procured peats from the fell : and anyone who has had experience among sheep must know them to be utterly useless as sheepfolds.

I would instance the ruin on the top of Cockrigg crag as a good example of this unsuitability, and recommend a visit to the Castle Rock in confirmation of Mr. Wilson's opinion. The place could be inhabited, though the falling stones made it insecure : the building is of a type possible

in pre-Norman times—say, in the eleventh century ; the form of the name Castel Lindolf or Liadolf agrees with these indications. All these reasons suggest—and I believe for the first time—that we have in the Castle Rock of St. John's something more than a castle in the air.

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