

ART. XVI.—*Newbiggin Hall, Westmörland*. By J. H. MARTINDALE, F.R.I.B.A.

*Read at the site, July 8th, 1921.*

WE have here an ancient manor house, and although it cannot show, in its masonry, the same length of time in years as Brougham Castle, still it has a long and interesting history. Its owner takes his place with those "ancient stocks which have so long withstood the waves and weather of time," and claims unbroken descent and inheritance from the reign of King Stephen, more than seven centuries ago, as proved by the charter of Alan, son of Roland, Lord of Galloway, and Constable of Scotland, to John de Newbiggin, dated 1199, which is of the many interesting documents to be seen in the Hall.

Further, during the whole of this long period, the family has taken its share in the duties of citizenship, and as Members of the House of Commons, were up to 20th century ideas; for I see that John de Crackenthorpe, who was knight of the shire for Westmorland in 1382, was paid for his attendance at Parliament in the reigns of Richard II. and Henry IV.

The oldest existing part of the building is the Eastern or Pele Tower, which Mr. Crackenthorpe thinks replaces an earlier structure and dates about 1460, after the Wars of the Roses, when John de Crackenthorpe, who had fought for the Lancastrians, received a free pardon from Edward IV., which is preserved here. This John was a descendant of the M.P. mentioned above. There were four Johns in succession, and the former was the first; this one was the third. The late Dr. Taylor also came to the same conclusion (in these *Transactions*, o.s. xii., 36) that this tower, in all probability, replaced the earlier

fortalice, but the vaulted cellars, which may have been part of an earlier structure, were filled up at the time the floor was lowered. Tradition says the earlier structure dated back to the reign of Edward I.

Several discoveries have been made in this tower, since our last visit, and illustrate well the alterations made during the 400 years of its existence. Its external dimensions are some 45 feet by 30 feet; the walls are about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet thick, and are well built of the local red sandstone, in coursed masonry. There are now only two storeys, but originally there were three, and, I rather think, some old gypsum floors in some of the upper rooms.

There are no plinths, strings or external projections, below a moulding at the over-sail of the parapet, which is embattled and has angle turrets. These turrets are not quite similar; the north-eastern and south-eastern simply have the projection given by the oversailing course of the parapet; the south-western has fine bold corbels, and the north-western is the stair-turret carried up; all are embattled. These parapets and turrets are rather Scottish in character, though not bartizans. The stone figures are almost unique in Westmorland though common in Northumberland and the border counties of Scotland; Brackanhill is the only example in Cumberland, and there are similar figures at Dalton-in-Furness.

The present window and door openings, and the floor levels, are insertions of a later date, say about 1680, but a very interesting discovery has been made by Mr. Crackenthorpe of a square-headed window, in the east wall of the hall. It is not improbably the well of an old newel stair, which formerly led down from the first floor to the basement. There is a deep indentation on one of the jambs which looks as if weapons had been sharpened on it, possibly arrows; and Mr. Crackenthorpe points out that a defender, concealed here, would be in an excellent position for defending the old main entrance, if it was in

the position indicated by the two corbels on the south front at the original first-floor level ; but this is not very clear.

Originally, the main room in this tower would be on the first floor, occupying the whole span, internally 37 feet by 22 feet, with a stair turret projecting at the north-west angle, and the great fireplace would be in this north wall, which is a little thicker than the others. You can see the remains of the old stone oven some six feet above the present floor, and the old flue can be seen by opening a cupboard in the small bedroom on the first floor, which again indicates the original first-floor level, and confirms the theory about the corbels.

There are some Tudor door heads visible, and Mr. Crackenthorpe thinks that the window head, which I have referred to, may be older than Tudor.

Attached to the north-side of this tower, and covering the stair-turret, is a smaller tower, known by the name of "Jerusalem." It is later in date, but externally is treated and finished in a similar manner to the main tower. The west tower, according to Duckett, is said to have been built by the Henry Crackenthorpe, who had four wives and lived *temp.* Elizabeth. It was entirely rebuilt during the last century, Dr. Taylor says, "on old lines," but it is now impossible to say the original exact position of this tower, and consequently, the size or arrangement of the central block, or hall ; but this central space, now containing the dining-room, between the east and west towers, was occupied, I believe in the 18th century, by a hall, with complete wall panelling round it, and was possibly two storeys high. The famous inscribed stone refers to this block, and was originally somewhere on it, probably over the entrance door in the centre. It is not now *in situ*, but has been recently placed on the main tower ; it is otherwise perfect, and except for the shield of arms, is very similar to the one at Askham.

There are remains of very good Elizabethan panelling in some of the rooms, and over the fireplace in the hall are panels containing ten coats of arms, giving some of the various alliances of the family. The top row, left to right, Threlkeld, Blencowe, Sandford, Musgrave, Bellingham; bottom row, Vaux, Wharton, Crackenthorpe, Dalston, Featherstonehaugh.

The plan of this house has been said to be similar to that of Howgill Castle, but I do not quite agree with this, except so far that both have a kind of H plan, that is, two towers and central block between, but the construction and arrangement of the towers is totally different.