



STONEGARTHSIDE HALL.

Phot. H. R. Hulbert, 1927.

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ART. XXIV.—*Stonegarthside Hall*. By JOHN F. CURWEN
F.S.A.

Read on the site, 14th July, 1927.

IF one looks at the first map of Cumberland, that made by Christopher Saxton, in 1576, or more particularly the map of the Debateable Land made soon after its division in 1552,* one must be struck with the number of fortalices placed on either side of the Border line. The closely linked chain on the English side faces across the waters of Liddle and Sark a similar chain on the Scotch side.

These fortalices are described as “ little stone houses ” and towers, but before the division of the land it would seem that they were formed mostly of wood. For instance, Lord Dacre writing to Wolsey, on 2 April, 1528, refers to the destruction of a strong pele of Ill Will Armstrong’s, built after such a manner that it could not be burnt or destroyed until it was cut down with axes.† Even as late as 2 December, 1541, Sir Robert Bowes describes them as very strong houses whereof the outer walls are made of great square oak trees strongly bound together, so that it would be hard, without great force and labour, to break them down; and the roofs, being covered with turves and earth, could not easily be set on fire.‡

Now if we look at the four most northerly towers on the English side, each of which belonged to the Forster Clan, we shall notice two especially, one is called “ Staingarthsyde ” which is misleading because from its position it is

* A “ platt ” of the Border of Scotland formerly belonging to Lord Burghley and reproduced from *Archæologia*, vol. xxii, p. 161, for Mr. T. H. B. Graham’s paper on the Debateable Land; see these *Transactions*, n.s., vol. xii, p. 49.

† *Letters and Papers*, Henry VIII, Vol. iv, p. 492.

‡ Caligula B., viii, p. 88.

undoubtedly what we now call Stonehaugh Tower, while $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles further up the Liddel there is another marked "Ro.forsters," situated where we are now standing. Moreover, Robert Forster who died in 1598 is described on his tomb stone as of Stonegarthside.*

As then this place at one time formed a link in the chain of English fortalices, we must look for some sort of strength of a type and date earlier than the appearance of the present building. Stonehaugh Tower is a stone-built pele† of the sixteenth century, and I am bold enough to say that this Hall existed as a strength, centuries before the pele was built.

At the Inquisition, held 6th April, 1276, regarding the lands of Johanna de Stuteville, the jury found that she held the Barony of Liddel of the King in *capite* and that among her lands was *an enclosure within a hedge called Standgarthsyde*, worth 72s. 5½d.‡ Now this was in the 13th century and cannot we imagine how the Hall that was built up within the enclosure was further fortified during all that turbulent period of the 14th and 15th centuries, when every landowner along the Border had to protect both his family and his cattle.

The very name Stonegarthside, or as it is locally pronounced Steingarseed, tells us of a dairy farm within a stone-walled enclosure, and to this day we find on the west and north sides of the garth an old enclosing wall still existing, in places 4 to 5 feet high, while on the east

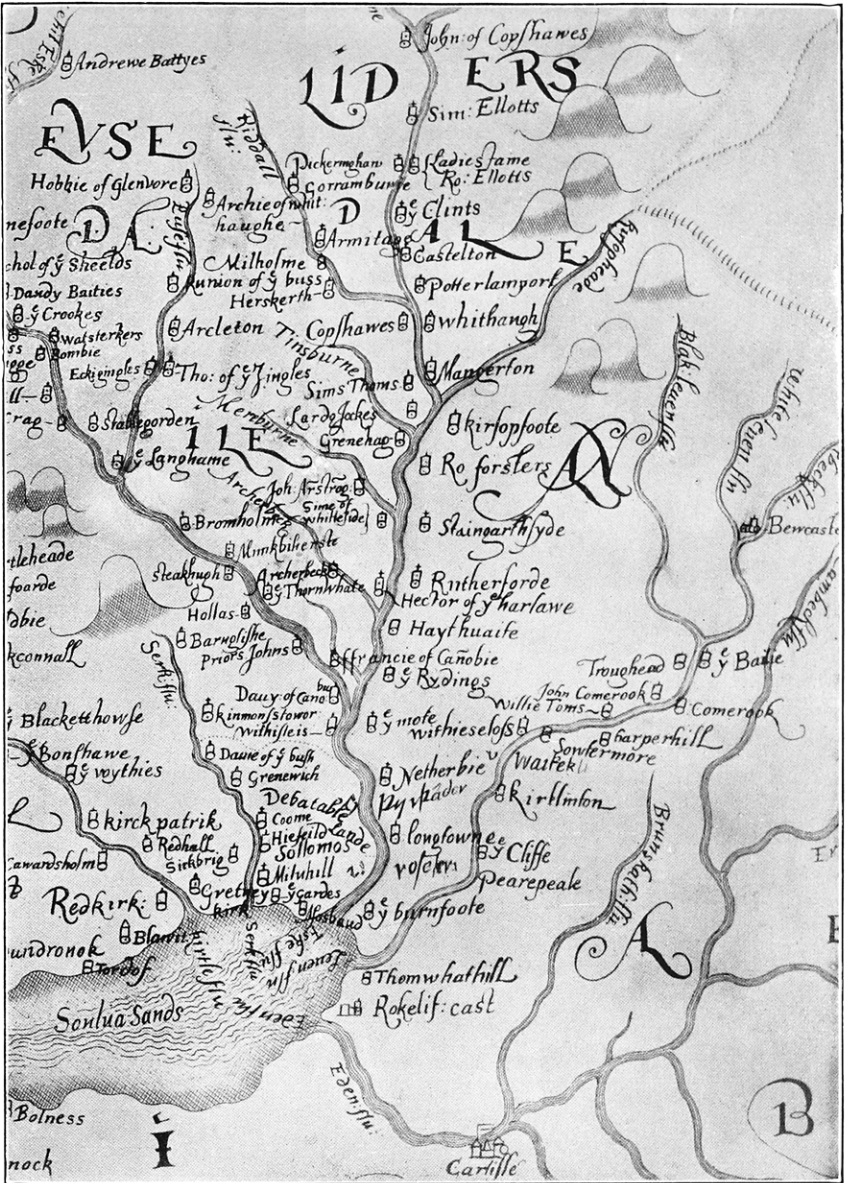
* Hutchinson, *Hist. of Cumberland*, vol. ii, p. 561.

In Johnson and Goodwin's survey of 1604 Stonegarthside is stated to be in the possession of the Forsters who paid no rent but did service in return.

Arms of Forster. *Argent*, a chevron *vert*, between three stringed bugle-horns, *sable*, 2 and 1. (Harl. MSS. n. 1457, f. 231).

† It measures 35 by 24 ft. outside, with walls averaging between $4\frac{1}{2}$ and 5 ft, in thickness. Axis, north and south. The eastern and southern walls alone remain standing some 12 ft. in height, each pierced by a loop-hole some 14 ins. square on the inside with the sides tapering to a mere slit of $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. on the outside face.

‡ Bain, *Cal. Docs. Scot.*, ii, n. 71.



THE DEBATEABLE LAND, 1590.

From Archaeologia, xxii.

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and south sides the foundations of the wall are clearly visible.*

Mr. Logan Mack in his excellent book on *The Border Line*† says that its situation is not commanding nor advantageous for defensive purposes.—But I want to point out to him and to you:—

1. That the hall stands upon a raised knoll.
2. That it was surrounded by a strong stone wall with the usual ditch immediately outside of it.
3. And that beyond the ditch the site is surrounded on three sides by marsh land, while to isolate it from the drier land to the south-west there has been an artificially cut moat, such as we saw at Downhall yesterday.

Indeed, like Downhall, it was a Moated Grange or Garth, at first as the Inquisition says surrounded by a hedge, or fence or palisade, and then at a later date by a stone wall. So too it is probable that the first building was a wooden hall, which later gave way to a stone tower.

How much of that stone tower remains is uncertain as, owing to the illness of the tenant, it has not been possible to make the necessary examination. Yet there are four factors which should be noted:—

1. The external walls are 4 ft. in thickness, a strength totally unnecessary for a late 17th century house.
2. At the back there is a small heart-shaped aperture which Mr. Turnbull, the resident farmer, says is the only light and means of ventilation to a dungeon within. A dungeon erected in a private building long after the Union of the Crowns, is unthinkable.

* Compare the Scottish Act of 12th June, 1535 (C. 22), where every landed man having 100 pound land of new extent, was to build a "Barmkynn" one ell thick and six ells in height for the defence of his tenants and their goods, with a tower in the same for himself, if he thought it expedient. All men of smaller rent and revenue were to build peles and strengths as they pleased for the saving of themselves and tenants. Such buildings were to be completed within two years.

† *The Border Line*, 2nd edition, p. 131.

3. Mr. Mack says that "an examination of the massive stone staircase shows that the topmost story was never completed." Might we not reverse this by saying that the staircase shows that there has been at some time a higher story which has been taken down?

4. There are several remnants and dressed stones of an older building built into the present walls round about.*

From the Renaissance character of the present frontage it is evident that a considerable rebuilding has taken place, and the confirmative date of 1682 appears in two portions upon the ends of the knee-stones of the eastern gables.†

Finally we come to the year 1804, when the building was ruinous. The roof over the whole of the eastern gable had fallen in, while the front rooms of the central block were uninhabitable. Mr. Mack relates that when the proprietor removed the leaden roof that covered these rooms he found the metal to contain so large a proportion of silver that he was able to sell it for a considerable sum of money. The floors have now disappeared and the area has been converted into a small courtyard.

* Also at the back of the stable there is a fragment of an inscribed grave slab.

† A five pointed star and a five petaled rose appear in a similar position on the western gables.