

ART. XVII.—*Deansbiggin near Kirkby Lonsdale.* By Col.  
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*Communicated at Grange-over-Sands, September 18th, 1928.*

A VERY ancient house, called Deansbiggin, exists about a mile and a half N.N.W. of Kirkby Lonsdale Church. The modern name has given rise to a wild legend (given by Burn and Nicolson in their history of Westmorland, i, 247) that it was the official residence of the Deans of Lonsdale; but as it never was church property, and as the Rural Deans, who were beneficed clergy, were not likely to leave their comfortable rectories or vicarages to live in such an out-of-the-way place, and so neglect their flocks, this legend may be dismissed as a mistake.

The main building (to which modern additions have been made) is a simple oblong, 18 yards long by 8 yards wide, with massive walls, four feet thick, evidently built for defence. The old doorway has been covered by a porch of slighter construction, probably erected by Joseph Booth in 1623, when re-edifying the house. Inside, the main feature is a large arched chimney. The elliptical arch resting on small buttresses leaves only a narrow passage between them and the walls of the house. This chimney divides the house into two rooms of slightly unequal length.

On the first floor, which is reached by a winding staircase on the north side, the division of the rooms is by means of this chimney, and there are fireplaces added on to the main chimney but smaller in size and having squared stone lintels, one of which bears the date, 1623.

By the courtesy of Lord Henry C. Bentinck, M.P.,

of Underley Hall, I had permission to inspect the deeds regarding this old building, and so was able to make out some of its history.

The first notice of it is the *inquisitio post mortem* taken on 25 November, 15 Hen. viii. [1523] on the death of Edward Middleton, who long before his death granted the manors of Capylsid [Capleside] and Denysbiggin [Deansbiggin] and all other his lands in Westmorland, Yorks. and Lancashire to feoffees to hold to the use of himself for life, and then to the use of his right heirs forever. . . . The manor of Denysbiggin was held of the Castle of Thurland by fealty and a rent of 2d. yearly for all services and was worth yearly beyond reprises 26s. 8d. Edward Middleton died on 24 September, 15 Hen. viii [1523] and Oliver Middleton was his son and heir, aged 10 years and upwards.\* There is also a Lancashire inquisition taken two years later.

The former inquisition shows that the ancient name was Denysbiggin, and that the modern name of Deansbiggin is a corruption. There is also an Arnoldsbiggin in Yorkshire, from which it is clear that the name in front of the word "biggin" is the christian name of the original builder.

It is also to be noticed that the Tunstalls of Thurland Castle acquired the fourth part of the manor of Kirkby Lonsdale, which formed part of the Richmond fee of the barony of Kendal, prior to the year 1400, and that this estate was part of that quarter of the manor.

The next notice is another inquest held on 16 November, 1605 on Christopher Middleton, which states that he was seised of the manor of Deansbiggin and lands, etc. thereto belonging—the tenure being the same as above. He died on 13 May, 1 James I [1603] and John Middleton was his son and heir, aged 13 years and upwards. This Christopher Middleton was buried at Kirkby Lonsdale

\* *Records of Kendale*, ii, 407.

on 8 May, 1603, as of Deansbiggin. As the I.P.M. was taken two years after the death, the date 13 May is probably a mistake.

Sometime during the next twenty years, the Middletons sold this house and lands to Joseph Booth, a lawyer of Kirkby Lonsdale, who had acted as Escheator for Westmorland in 1621.\* By 1623, he was in possession and proceeded to re-build; he probably added the porch which bears a tablet:—



which appears to represent Booth, Joseph and A. . . . with the date of re-edifying.

Joseph Booth lost his wife in 1636, she being buried on 30 April in that year at Kirkby Lonsdale; but the church register does not give her christian name, merely calling her "Uxor Josephi Booth." Joseph Booth lived to be an old man and retired to Middleton, after handing over his estate at Deansbiggin to his son, Thomas, and was buried at Kirkby Lonsdale on 6th May, 1659, aged 83, as of Middleton. He left the following family, viz:—

- (1) Thomas Booth, baptised 28 Nov., 1619, of whom later.
- (2) Priscilla Booth, bapt. 17 March, 1621-2.
- (3) William Booth, bapt. 28 November, 1624.
- (4) John Booth, bapt. 9 Feb. 1626-7; buried 29 January, 1635-6.
- (5) Robert Booth, bapt. 29 September, 1629. Became a merchant in Bond Court, Wallbrooke, London, where he was living in 1684.
- (6) Ellen Booth, baptised 3 June, 1632.
- (7) Elizabeth Booth, bapt. 4 December, 1634.

\* *Ibid.*, ii, 321.

The above-named Thomas Booth, baptised on 28 November, 1619, was married at Kirkby Lonsdale Church on 22 December, 1641 to Agnes Wilson. It was probably on the occasion of this marriage, that his father retired to Middleton and left Deansbiggin as a residence for his eldest son and heir, who ultimately had 16 children, all named in the Kirkby Lonsdale church registers. His wife was buried on 3 April, 1666, and he on 31 May, 1676.

Of his large family, the only one which had to do with Deansbiggin was his eldest son, Joseph Booth, baptised at Kirkby Lonsdale on 4 March, 1643-4. He joined his uncle, Robert Booth, in London as a merchant, and sold Deansbiggin, on 29 March, 1680, to John Borrett, a lawyer of the Inner Temple.

This John Borrett was a son of Edward Borrett of Kirkby Lonsdale, mercer, who was the treasurer in the law-suit, brought by the Rev. John Briggs and others *versus* John Girlington of Thurland Castle to recover school and church money advanced to Sir John Girlington before the outbreak of the Civil War.

On the 22 October, 1679, John Borrett was admitted by the Kirkby Lonsdale manor court to certain lands in Kirkby Lonsdale surrendered by his father, Edward. He was one of the prothonotaries of the Court of Common Pleas, and was called an assistant to the bar on 2 July, 1704, an associate of the bench on 12 November, 1704, and a master of the bench on 3 February, 1705-6.\* He had surrendered certain land in Kirkby Lonsdale manor to the use of his will, on 14 October, 1696, and was described as of Shoreham, co. Kent, esquire. He also had a mortgage for £600 on Thurland Castle, and its demesne lands. His will is dated 29 December, 1738 and was proved in P.C.C. on 21 February, 1739-40. His wife, Elizabeth. . . . . had a marriage settlement dated 20 May, 1697, and they had the following sons, viz:—

\* Inderwick, *Calendar of Inner Temple Records*, iii, 379, 380, 385, 395.

- (1) John Borrett, junior, eldest son, admitted to the Inner Temple on 5 May, 1706; called to the bar on 26 June, 1710;\* he had issue, viz:—
  - (a) Elizabeth Borrett, eldest daughter and heir, who on 19 July, 1740 quit-claimed lands at Kirkby Lonsdale to her uncle, Thomas Borrett.
  - (b) Winifred Borrett, named in her grandfather's will in 1738.
- (2) Thomas Borrett, second son, of the Inner Temple, London; admitted to lands by Kirkby Lonsdale manor court on 22 October, 1740; under his father's will, he received Thurland Castle and Deansbiggin and some parcels in Kirkby Lonsdale. He had issue, viz:—
  - (i) Susanna Borrett, eldest daughter and heir who was married to William Evelyn of St. Clere co. Kent, gentleman, was admitted to parcels of land by the Kirkby Lonsdale manor court on 23 October, 1771. She and her husband took Thurland Castle, Deansbiggin and the parcels of land in Kirkby Lonsdale as their share of her father's estate. On 26 November, 1777, Susanna Evelyn and her husband sold Deansbiggin to John Batty of Kirkby Lonsdale, grocer; whilst Thurland Castle was sold to Harry Welch of Leck, esquire.
  - (ii) Martha Borrett, had lands in the south of England.
- (3) Edward Borrett.
- (4) Trevor Borrett.

John Batty, who had purchased Deansbiggin from Susanna Evelyn in 1777, died on 1 April, 1791, aged 62 years, and was succeeded by his son Edward Batty of Kirkby Lonsdale who died on 21 December, 1796, aged 37 years.

\* *Ibid.*, 421.

Under the will of John Batty of Deansbiggin, the property was sold, on 21 February, 1801, by his trustees, to Henry Bickersteth of Kirkby Lonsdale, surgeon, who made his will on 2 October, 1820, and died on 18 May, 1821. Under his will his children sold Deansbiggin to Alexander Nowell of Underley Hall, and so brought this old house and lands into the Underley Estate, subsequently purchased by Alderman William Thompson, and now owned by his great-grand-daughter, Lady Henry C. Bentinck.

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