

ART. XIV.—*Meaburn Hall*. By R. MORTON RIGG,
L.R.I.B.A.

Read on the site, September 11th, 1931.

THE original manor was Meburn or Medburn. Nicolson and Burn tell us that Hugh de Morville forfeited the estate, inherited from his father Roger, as a punishment for his participation in the assassination of Thomas a'Beckett. It was divided into two parts, one was retained by the king, and so we get King's Meaburn, and the other was granted to Maud, sister of Hugh de Morville, who had married William de Veteripont, and so took the name of Maud Meburn or Maulds Meaburn as we know it to-day.

The ancient Manor House seems to have been where the present Hall stands. From the 2nd year of the reign of Philip and Mary until the 12th year of James 1st there does not appear to be any further account. In the latter year it came into the Lowthers' possession, and a settlement in favour of John Lowther of Lowther and Eleanor his wife, a daughter of William Fleming of Rydal, was made. Meaburn Hall thus became the residence of this branch of the Lowther family and continued so for 140 years, until Sir James Lowther of Meaburn succeeded to the Lowther estates in 1750.

Dr. Taylor in his *Old Manorial Halls*, tells us that the hall had a deer park, terraced walks, pleasure gardens and fine avenues. These have now disappeared, and though the hall survives as a farm house, it still has an interest. The house is very similar in plan to Newby Hall, which we will visit shortly, having two projecting wings and a central building which contains the hall.

Originally it was 36 feet long, but has been shortened by the present entrance hall and modern stairs. The roof was much higher than at present, as can be seen by the built-up doorway on the south inner gable and the projecting stones on the front wall. The hall was open to the roof and had a wooden gangway across to connect the drawing room in the upper story of the south wing and the sleeping apartments in the old wing on the north side.

A stone ledge, covered with boards to serve as a bench for seats, runs along the east side of the hall. On the right of the hall is the kitchen, the door of which is formed with tooled and splayed masonry and there is one original window-opening with a narrow light, very widely splayed and round-headed on the inside, and a large fireplace 10 feet wide. The stone spiral stairs lead from the kitchen to the upper floor. The windows are generally low and oblong and those with square heads and heavy mullions and transoms are of the Tudor period.

Though poor in character, the building presents a fair example of a Manorial Hall of this period. The southern wing is evidently of the date of James Ist and probably built by Christopher Lowther when he came into possession in 1607. The date over the garden door is 1610 in bas relief.

It is interesting to note that this date has been altered to 1676, by incising a top to the 1, and making it 7 and a top to the 0 making it 6. What these alterations refer to is difficult to state, but they may have reference to some later changes. The arms of Lowther are carved on the shield over the main entrance door. The black oak staircase in the south wing, with well-turned balusters and heavy hand-rail, and the newel posts with large balls surmounting the moulded caps is worth your inspection, it is typical of the Elizabethan period.

The entrance gate pillars are of freestone with moulded caps and ball terminals (now covered with ivy), and though much higher than those at Newby are similar in character.

Sir John Lowther died in 1637 and his widow lived here until her death in 1659. Richard Lowther inherited the property and made many extensions to the Hall and outbuildings. The oldest of the latter is a well built block and contains a square tablet with the initials R.L. (Richard Lowther) 1693. He was member of Parliament for Appleby in 1688 and 1690. In 1704 he was succeeded by his son Robert. It was Robert's intention to re-build the hall on a new site and he began to pull down the central portion, to which I have already referred, but his schemes were stopped by his death in 1745. He was buried in the Threlkelds' tomb in Crosby Church.

It is not necessary for me to trace any further this history, though there are some legends and stories about this place. One refers to the quarrel of two brothers of the Lowther family taking place in the green room, and their determination never to see each other again; they went abroad, but before their departure the doors of this room were blocked up and sealed. Tradition tells us they remained so for many years, and if it is of any interest to you, the seals can be seen on door and frame.

You are at liberty, by the kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. Park, to see what little there is left to assist your imagination, of the life, which existed in this typical Manor House a few centuries ago.