

ART. IV. *Early Owners of Ewanrigg, Cumberland, and 14th Century Mural Remains.* By JOSEPH SKELTON.

EWANRIGG HALL is an ancient Manor House that has always aroused a strange interest amongst local people.

In common with most old halls, Ewanrigg possesses a traditional charm that unmistakably compels one to know more of its past.

Ewanrigg has been a township with Alneburgh (Ellenborough) from soon after the Norman Conquest.

Traditional evidence favours the site as having been an important one during the later Saxon period.

It may not be mere conjecture to associate Ewanrigg with the last great Cumbro-British leader, King Owain, 920-937, nephew of King Constantine III, of Scotland, and the son of Donal, King of Strathclyde.

The name in old Cumbrian was Eugein with the "g" unvoiced, when spoken by the Scotch. Strathclyde being under the jurisdiction of the Scottish kings, the language of the people of that nation would largely dominate, and the name became "Eo(g)han," with the "g" unvoiced as before, and in Cymric, Owain or Owen.*

It would be rather an adventure to say that the original owner was King Owain, and there is just a possibility he was personally identified with the manor. The suggestion cannot be ignored as unimportant.

It may be that the earliest owner was a Strathclyde Cumbrian or Galloway warrior whose name was Owain.

* With regard to the origin of the place-name Ewanrigg, it is to be noticed that Professor Ekwall in his *Dictionary of English Place-Names*, suggests a derivation from O.E. *eowena hrycg*, a ridge where ewes were grazed. Professor Sedgfield in his *Place-Names of Cumberland and Westmorland* suggests a personal name, *Eowine*, cited by Searle as the first word element.—Ed.

The County historians, Nicolson and Burn, 1777, inform us that it was "an old house built castle-wise and was so called from one Ewan who was a Scotch King or Chieftain." Edmund Sandford, perhaps not always exact in his conclusions, writing on County matters about 1675, supports the above view, at any rate, when he confirms the building as "an ancient squire's tower house."

An early owner of importance would build his house castle-wise, as he would need to, and the place would be known as Ewan's Castle. Evidently our historians considered the traditional evidence worthy of their support.

The similarity of the name Ewan's Castle with that of Castle Ewaine, near Penrith, must not be altogether discarded, where, according to the well-known legend lived, as a recluse, a renowned warrior and knight-errant, Sir Ewan Cæsarius, who has been traditionally identified as King Owain, and who after being considered as slain in the battle against King Athelstan, in 937, escaped from the field to live in disguise and to uphold, in name only, the famous "Cæsarian" line of warrior monarchs.

These are traditional points of importance that may be regarded as "marks of cadency," to use heraldic language, which bring Ewanrigg within the sphere of identity with a renowned warrior or chieftain of pre-Norman times.

A Strathclyde Cumbrian would speak of Ewanrigg as Eohanridge, or Eohanrigg, and in the Cymric as Owainrigg or Ewainrigg. With the Norman occupation the name is found in various forms as "Wenrigg," "Unerigg," Ouenrigg to finally become Ewanrigg.

A Holm Cultram Charter of 1174, gives the name in its Cymric form, "Ouenrigg," and in another charter of a century later from the same monastic records, in 1276, "Wenrygg" is the name given.

A Pipe Roll of King Richard I, 1189, informs us that William de Lindesia (Lindsay), was owing forty marks for



ORATORY DOORWAY AT EWANRIGG HALL.
Outside View, taken early 20th Century.

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having right in the King's Court to sue Henry, parson of Appelbi, the Countess of Albemarle and Nicholas de Stutevill of "Uckmannebie" (Uckmanby), "Blender-seta" (Blennerhasset) and "Wnering" (Ewanrigg).

For the same "Offerings of Court," but at later dates, 1190-91-92 and 1193, the name is given as "Oneric," a vill in the parish of Dearham.

In the reign of Edward III, 1327-1377, a family is in possession who took their name from the place and are known as "De Ewanrigg." One Robert* de Ewanrigg appears as witness to several deeds. A Subsidy Roll† of the 6th year of Edward III, 1333, for the vill of Alenburgh, includes a "William de Ouenrigg" as the second largest landowner in the locality.

Thirty-six years later (1369), during the same king's reign, a member of one of the most powerful baronial families, Lady Margaret de Multon, is in possession of the manor.

In that year, a licence was granted by the Bishop, Thomas de Appelby, to John de Thwaites, "to be her domestic chaplain in any convenient oratory within her manor of Ewanrigg."‡

That the Bishop should insert the word "convenient" is perhaps indicative of the Lady's wishes and likewise significant of much sympathy and pious regard in the consideration of those wishes. It must be understood that the Parish Church was situated at Dearham, a village almost three miles distant with almost impassable roads at not always convenient distances from an isolated manor house as Ewanrigg would be in those days. Travellers mainly used the many footpaths and these led across dreary and desolate moorland in most cases. Such conditions afforded very little encouragement to worship and the Bishop, with a wise dispensation of the favours

* Nicolson and Burn, Vol. II, p. 113.

† *Cumberland Lay Subsidy*, Col. J. P. Steele.

‡ Nicolson and Burn, Vol. II, p. 113.

within his power, considered the inconvenience and decided that the lady had an indisputable claim for the erection of a private chapel where, with her servants and tenants, all would assemble in comfort and free from fatigue to observe the sacred rites of Mass. One is led to believe the Lady's remains found their last resting within the sacred precincts of the little chapel.

The building stood immediately behind the hall at the west end. The portion of the estate within which it was situated has long been used as a market garden. Early in this century the writer discovered a doorway of Ecclesiastical design while visiting the garden. The doorway was supported on each side by portions of wall built of gray sandstone and bearing the resemblance of having been repaired in certain parts with brick.

The writer immediately communicated with the owner, the late Mr. J. R. Twentyman, of Kirkby-Misperton Hall, Pickering, Yorkshire, who lost no time in giving instructions for its preservation. A few years later when the market garden portion was sold to the tenant gardener the owner wisely inserted a clause in the deeds to assure continued preservation.

The late distinguished Editor of these *Transactions*, Prof. W. G. Collingwood, was also informed, who advised a paper to be prepared for reading at the Society's meeting. A photograph of the doorway was also sent to the late Mr. Martindale, the Diocesan Architect, who gave his opinion of the work as being 14th century, but the great war put an end to further progress.

While visiting the Hall upon a later occasion, the writer noticed that the foundations of a building were being removed by the gardener's men owing to the stones having been troublesome when digging the garden. These stones proved to be the foundations of the chapel and were in a direct line with the doorway. The stone was a gray sandstone and so far as could be traced by measurement, the wall at the east end of the building

was about thirty-nine feet long and about twelve inches thick, the north wall, facing the hall, was about twenty-four feet long and about eighteen inches thick, the south wall being in proportion.

Since that time the writer has found what appeared as a holy water stoup serving as a drinking vessel for poultry in the farm yard, no doubt a valuable relic that had served the Lady within the same oratory.

The stoup is characteristic of others of the same period but appears to be cut from sandstone, standing about nine and-a-half-inches high from the ground level, the diameter inside at top about eleven inches, depth of cavity about six-and-a-half inches, circumference outside at top, fifty-three inches and inside at top, about thirty-one inches.

The Christian family who succeeded the Thwaites, who had been owners from the time of Lady Margaret de Multon's cessation of ownership, bought the hall and estate somewhere about 1638-40, when the hall was rebuilt a few years later by Ewan Christian, the thirteenth lineal descendant of the Christians of Milntown, Isle of Man. Thomas Denton, the County Historian, writing about 1688, states that Mr. Ewan Christian "hath built a good house out of the shell of an old tower."

The building was a noble Elizabethan structure and remained in much the same state until the beginning of this century, 1908-11, when the Hall was dismantled and more than two storeys removed to provide ordinary farm buildings with a farm house at the west end of the hall which had not been disturbed and still stands as Ewan Christian built it. Probably this portion was originally in use by the servants or the farm bailiff.

Mr. Twentyman regretted the dismantling while he was abroad, in China, and when he confessed this to the present writer, he must have somewhat understood the deeply shocked sentiments of all lovers of antiquity.