

ART. XXI.—*The farmhouses of South-West Cumberland: a preliminary survey.* By W. M. WILLIAMS, M.A.

Read at Penrith, September 14th, 1954.

I N recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the farmhouse—as distinct from the large country house or manor house on the one hand, and the cottage on the other—as a means of adding to our knowledge of social and economic history. For the most part, investigation has been confined to individual houses: local and regional surveys are still relatively uncommon, probably because of the difficulties inherent in a detailed examination of this type. One regional survey has, however, been made in one part of these counties,¹ and this paper is an attempt at a preliminary classification of farmhouse types in South-West Cumberland. The material for the classification is derived from detailed field-work in one parish, Gosforth, and from a necessarily brief survey of the parishes surrounding it. For this reason the conclusions and generalisations presented below are tentative, and await further research in other parts of the countryside.²

Almost all the farmhouses in the Gosforth area are built of red sandstone, or “freestone”, obtained from local quarries. They are very substantially built and it is not uncommon to find walls three feet thick or more. The common building material harmonizes with the surrounding landscape and gives an uniformity of appearance that is interrupted only occasionally by plastering

¹ R. W. Brunskill “The development of the small house in the Eden Valley from 1650 to 1840”, CW2 liii 160-189.

² It need hardly be said that this study is based on the assumption that the farmhouses of the Gosforth area differ in no significant way from those of West Cumberland as a whole.



PL. I.—Row.

Photo: W. M. Williams.

BROOM

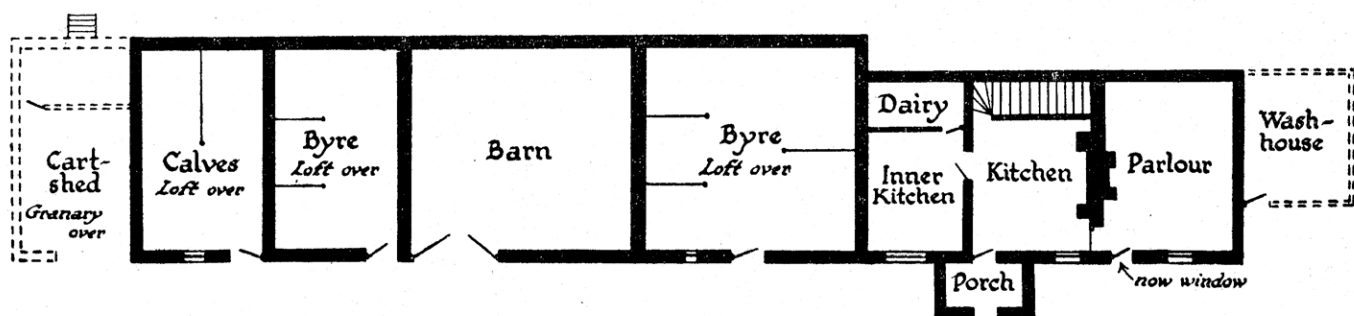


FIG. 1.

or some other form of surface treatment. The few farmhouses not built of sandstone stand out as landmarks in the area.

Most of the present farmhouses were built in the period 1700-1900. There are comparatively few houses older than the first of these dates, and by the beginning of the present century most of the local sandstone quarries had closed down. The farmhouses vary greatly in size, age and ground-plan, and although two predominant types may be distinguished, it is somewhat rare to find houses that are exactly the same. They were built at different periods by masons whose methods of construction were elastic enough to allow for any changes that might result from the nature of the site or the idiosyncrasies of the owner.

The first type is that of the "oblong" house. This is characterized by a lateral arrangement of rooms, most of which stretch from the front wall to the back wall of the building without interruption. Broom Farm in Gosforth is an example of this type (fig. 1). It is divided into three main parts, roughly equal in size, the section on the left of the porch containing a partition of fairly recent origin, which further divides this part into a dairy (or pantry) and a scullery. The fireplace in the kitchen was originally the only one in the house, but another has been added in the sitting-room, using the same chimney. The only outside door leads directly into the kitchen through a small porch, but originally there was another door into the sitting-room, evidence of which is still clearly visible in the wall. Unlike most houses of this type, it has no back door. The stairs, which are boarded off from the kitchen by a wooden partition, lead straight into a bedroom, and, as on the ground floor, the remaining rooms on either side of it are entered directly from it. The timber work of the house is of axe-trimmed oak, now concealed for the most part by false ceilings put in by the present occupant.

Row Farm, Gosforth (fig. 2 and pl. I) is another "oblong" house. Row resembles Broom in its division into three sections, in the position of the fireplace and of the front door, which opens directly into the central room alongside its left-hand wall. In this house, the central room, which is now the sitting-room, was originally the kitchen; what is now the kitchen was the parlour, and the present dairy was formerly the "back-kitchen". In effect, therefore, the arrangement of rooms is essentially similar to that of Broom, in that the "lower-end" (that is the kitchen end) and the "upper end" (the parlour end) are situated in the same positions relative to the central room and its fireplace. However, in Row the "upper end" is divided in two by a stone wall, and each division has two doors, one of which leads from the present back-kitchen into the cart-shed. The latter is a one-storey lean-to which functioned as a back-kitchen when the present back-kitchen was the dairy. In addition, the fireplace joins the front wall of the house and not the rear wall as in Broom. The fireplace in Row, which is about 15 feet long and 6 feet wide, is one of the few remaining examples of an "inglenook" in Gosforth, and displays craftsmanship of a high order. It is also particularly interesting in that within the actual masonry of the fireplace there is a small concealed windowless "room" above the inglenook, which was reached by a small flight of stairs just large enough for a man to ascend.³

³ This is now completely walled up and no trace of it remains. The information was supplied by a former occupier who came across it by accident when the fireplace was being repaired about thirty years ago. It is not known what type of entrance originally led to the stairs, since before the repairs were begun they were concealed by a solid stone wall. From measurements taken upstairs the hidden "room" cannot be much larger than 6 feet by 6 feet.

According to S. O. Addy (*The Evolution of the English House*, revised edition, London 1933, 128-9), constructions of this kind were not intended as rooms, but his examples have no stairs as at Row. Moreover, the "room" at Row contained some pottery when discovered, suggesting it was at one time more than just a functional appendage of the chimney. Since it would be warm and dry, it might well have served as a store-room.

On the left of the fireplace a freestone partition projects for some four feet beyond the front of the inglenook. This was a device to keep out draught, and it is known to be of considerable antiquity in Great Britain. See Addy, *op. cit.*, 69 and E. E. Evans, *Irish Heritage*, Dundalk 1942, 72-73.

It is, however, the only example in Gosforth, and the alternative practice

ROW FARM

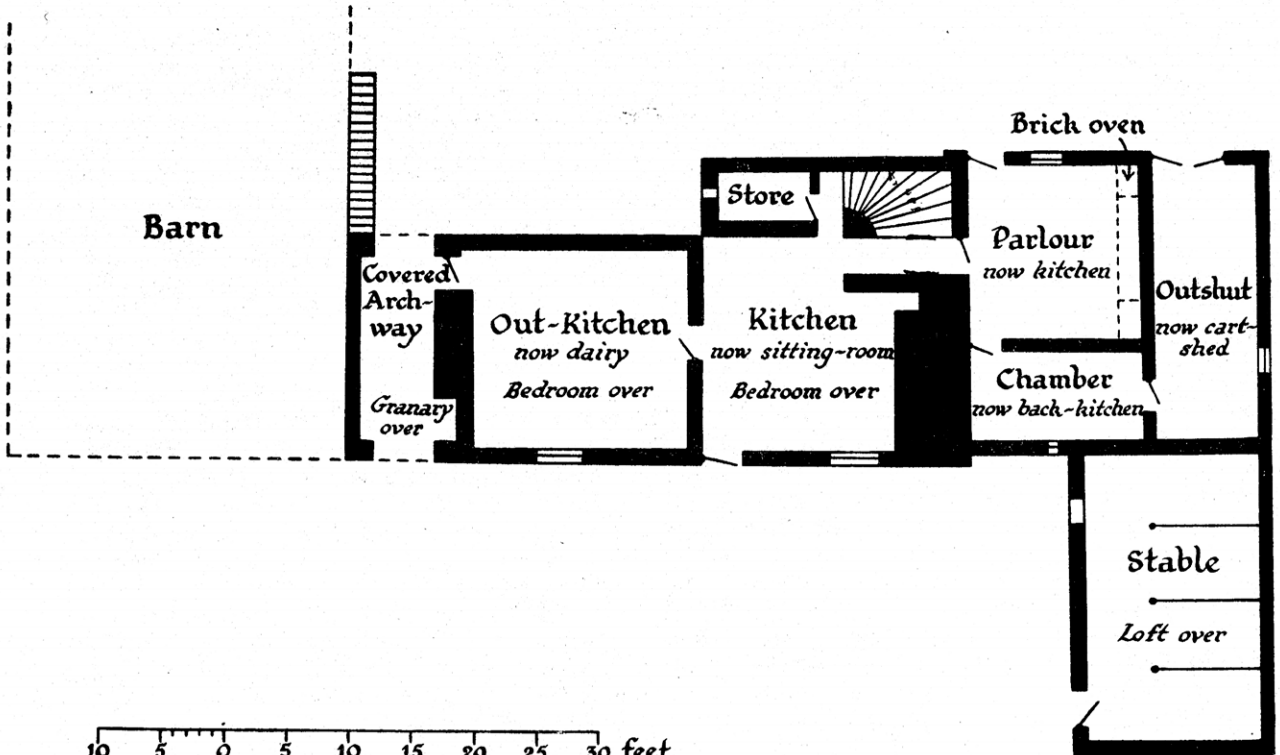


FIG. 2.

Other features of this house which distinguish it from Broom, and from the other houses in the area which are otherwise very similar in plan, are the newel staircase of sandstone and the former one-storey out-house which is now a bath-room. In the other houses of this type the staircase is straight and there is no outhouse. The kitchen, formerly the parlour, was originally built without a fireplace, but in the course of time a large range with oven and boiler was installed, and this in turn has been removed and replaced by a modern grate set in the original wall. This sequence is typical of most of the farmhouses of this type and reflects a change in social practice and domestic routine.

It will also be noticed that in Broom the outbuildings are attached to the dwelling-house under one roof, although there is no means of internal communication between them. In Row, on the other hand, some of the outbuildings are attached at right-angles to the dwelling-house, while the remainder (not shown) are placed on the far side of the cobbled yard at the back of the house. Broom is, in this respect, typical of nearly all the houses of the "oblong" type in the Gosforth area.

Andrew Ground in Gosforth (fig. 3), originally the homestead of a small holding, appears to be a small-scale variant of the "oblong" house. It is no longer occupied and is now used for storing bracken and potatoes by the farmer on whose land it lies. The building is divided into three main parts, but, unlike the "oblong" type of farmhouse, the fireplace is at the end of the building, in the only room of the building which has an outside door. This presumably served as a living-room or kitchen, the room beyond it being a pantry, dairy and back-kitchen combined, with the central portion as the parlour. In one corner of the back-kitchen there is a stone partition

of using a wooden settle or "screen" in front of the fire seems to be unknown. These settles are, of course, well known in other parts of Cumberland. See, for example, J. Sargisson, *Joe Scoap's Jurneh through Three Warâles*, Whitehaven 1881 — "It had a bit of a skemmel eh t'back just t'seam as oor oald kitchin screen".

enclosing the "sconce", while from this room a stone newel staircase rises to the two bedrooms which lie over the kitchen and back-kitchen, forming the upper storey of the building. The "parlour" (?) differs from the rest of the rooms in having plastered walls; remarkably, none of its existing walls show any evidence of a window. From this room there was a doorway into the barn, which formed the third section of the building, through a wall made of "wattle and daub". The dividing wall between the kitchen and back-kitchen (which continues to the roof and separates the two bedrooms) is also made of this material. Adjoining the back-kitchen are the ruins of a single storey building which might possibly have been a pig-hull or calf-box.

Unfortunately there is little evidence as to the age of Broom or Row. Andrew Ground was built in the last quarter of the 18th century.⁴ Other farmhouses of the "oblong" type in the area which can be given a definite date were built in the period 1697 (Low Bridge Petton, Gosforth) to 1795 (High House, Gosforth).

Much more common in Gosforth and throughout South-West Cumberland is the type of building we shall term the "square" house. This type, which is much more recent than the "oblong" house, seems to have been built for the first time on a large scale in the Gosforth area during the decade 1750-60, when the increased prosperity of the yeomen resulted in the demolition of many of the existing thatched farmhouses and the building of slated stone houses in their place. Another period of intensive building occurred in the years 1780-1800, when the same type of house was erected. From the date-stones fixed in the walls of many houses it is estimated that at least a third of the farmhouses in the Gosforth area were built during these three decades.

Thornbank (fig. 4), built in 1795, is an example of a "square" farmhouse, and may be taken as representative

⁴ Andrew Ground is not listed in the Glebe Terrier of 1778 and first appears in local records at the beginning of the 19th century.

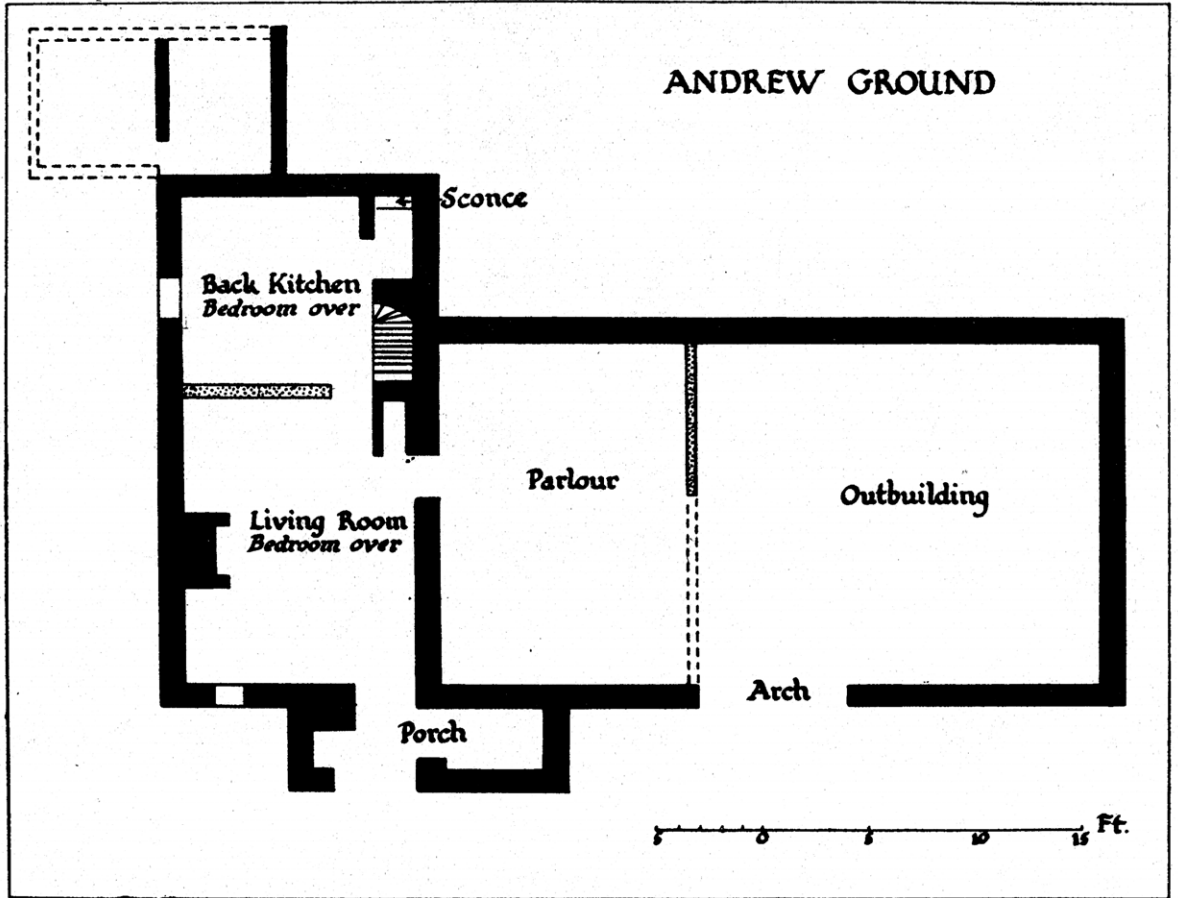


FIG. 3.

THORNBANK

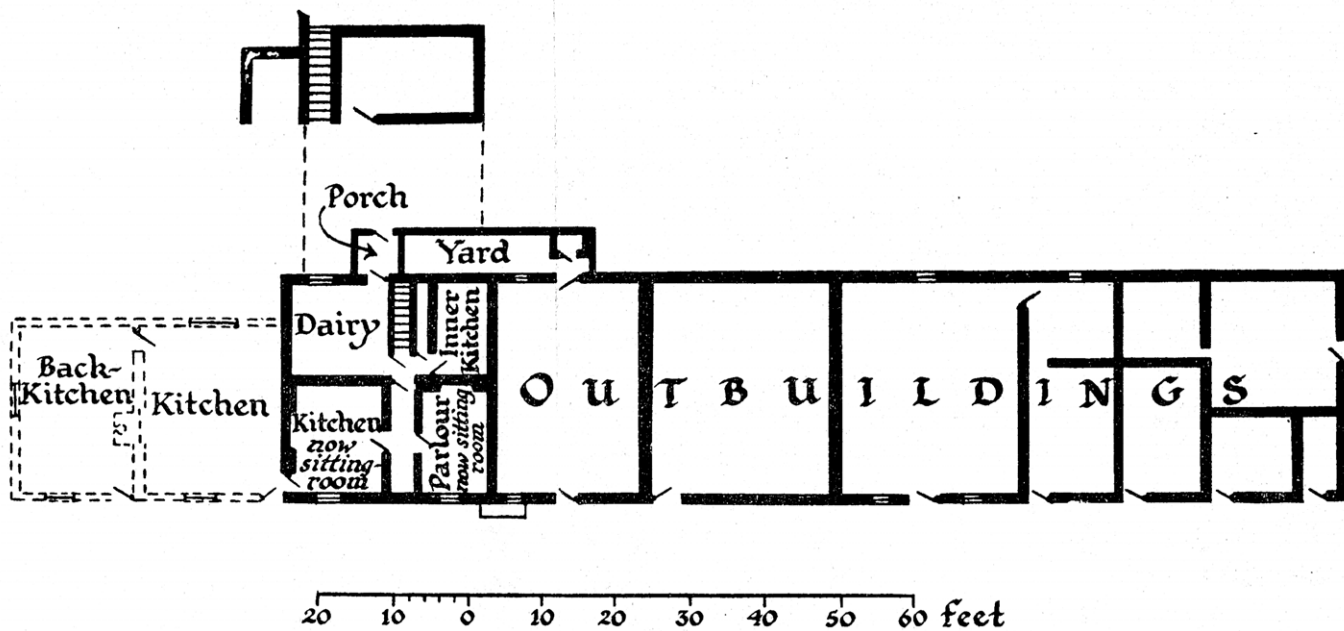


FIG. 4.

of most of the houses of this type in the Gosforth area, since they differ very little from one to another. When built this house consisted of four rooms on the ground floor, a kitchen and parlour in front and a back-kitchen and pantry or dairy behind. The front door opened into a passage which separated the kitchen and parlour, at the end of which, and leading directly from it, stood the staircase. A door led from the dairy into a yard at the back of the house. In 1892 the present kitchen and back-kitchen (both single-storey) were added, and doors were built leading from the new kitchen into what are now the pantry and sitting-room. The front door was sealed up and one wall of the passage was knocked down to make the sitting-room larger.

Modifications of this kind were very common during the last decade of the 19th century in the "square" type of farmhouse, and reflect both an increase in prosperity and an accompanying change in social values.

Wind Hall in Gosforth (fig. 5) appears to be very similar in plan to Thornbank, but according to the plaque above the front door this house was built in 1694. Another plaque in the barn gives the date 1705. If the present house was built in either of these years then this is the earliest example of the "square" type of house I have been able to find in the district. It should, however, be noted that the dated wall-plaque is not always reliable evidence, since it has been the practice in the past to incorporate date-stones from a previous house in the wall of the new one built on the site. Several houses have as many as three plaques of different date set in the same wall.⁵

The occupier of Wind Hall stated that the partitioned store-room next to the present kitchen was originally the kitchen of the house, and that the kitchen, which has two bedrooms above it, was formerly a stable. This information has apparently been transmitted orally from one

⁵ On the other hand, the wall-plaque — since it marks the building or re-building of a house — would seem to be reliable evidence for use in statistical generalizations of the type given on page 249 above.

tenant to another, and there is no evidence now of the alteration or of the date at which it took place. (If this tradition is true, then the main entrance was into the parlour, which was the largest room in the house. The kitchen, on the other hand, which was presumably the most frequented room in the house, was much smaller and could only be entered from the parlour—a most unlikely arrangement.) Great care has been taken to ensure that the new kitchen corresponds in detail to the older part of the house. In this respect Wind Hall is typical of many of the farmhouses which have been modified since they were built; indeed it is often very difficult to tell the recent additions from the original building.

The remaining farmhouses of the "square" type in the area are essentially similar in plan to Thornbank and Wind Hall. Any differences are minor in character, and normally the outcome of modifications. In addition there are in the district a few farmhouses which do not correspond to either of the types so far discussed. The most interesting of these is Gosforth Hall (pl. II) which has already been described in *Transactions*.⁶ In ground plan this house appears to bear little relation to the "oblong" or "square" types. Built on a larger scale than most of the farmhouses in the district, it is also distinguished by the enormous size of the oak principals that support the roof. Unlike any other house examined during the survey, these principals are curved and strongly resemble the top half of a pair of "crucks", a type of timbering that is rare, if not non-existent, in West Cumberland.⁷

From the houses described above and many others in the area it is possible to establish an approximate history of the farmhouse in the south-western portion of the county. When Gosforth Gate was built in 1628 by John Sherwen, a very prosperous yeoman, it must have been

⁶ C. A. Parker and J. F. Curwen, CW2 iii 227-39, with accompanying plan and illustrations, and in C. A. Parker, *The Gosforth District*, new ed., revised by W. G. Collingwood—this Society's *Extra Series* xv, 1926, 39-43.

⁷ For cruck construction see C. F. Innocent, *The Development of English Building Construction*, London 1916, 23-67 and CW2 liii 157, 177 f., 222.

WIND HALL

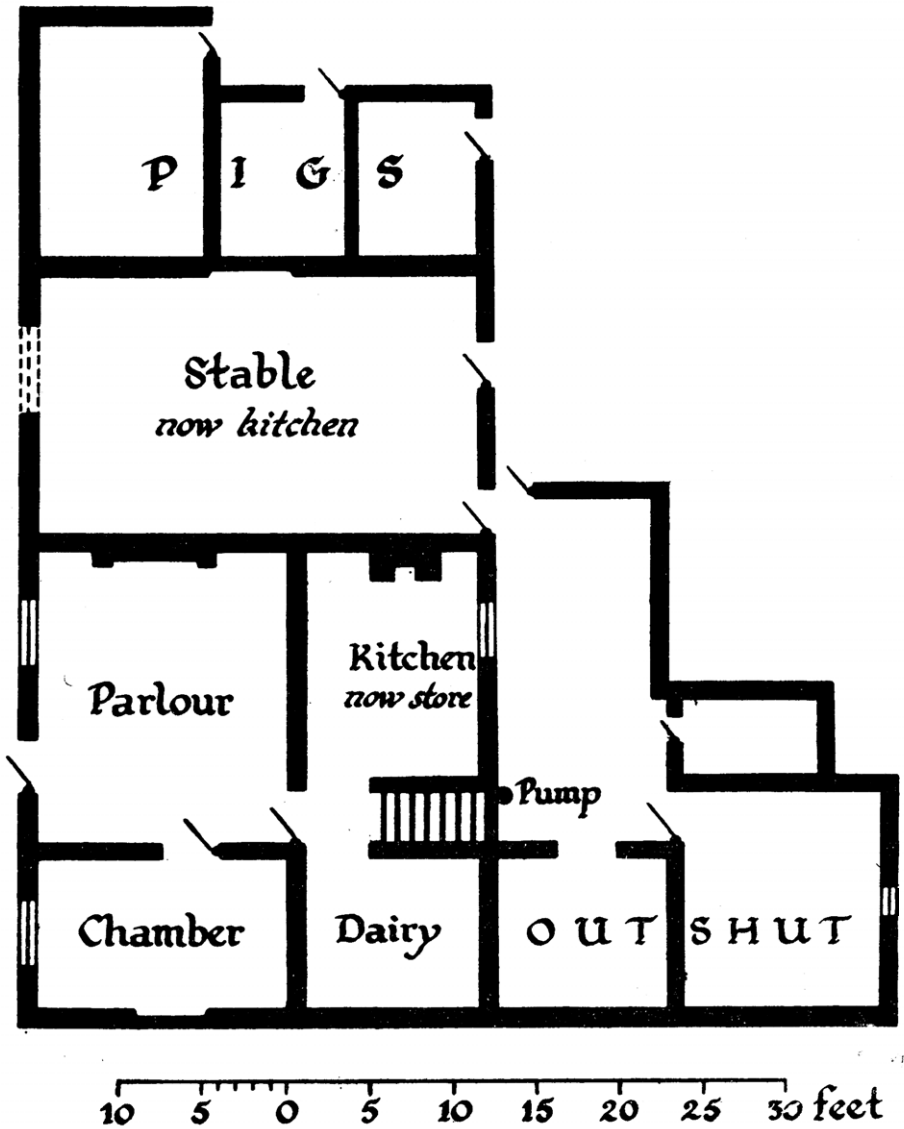
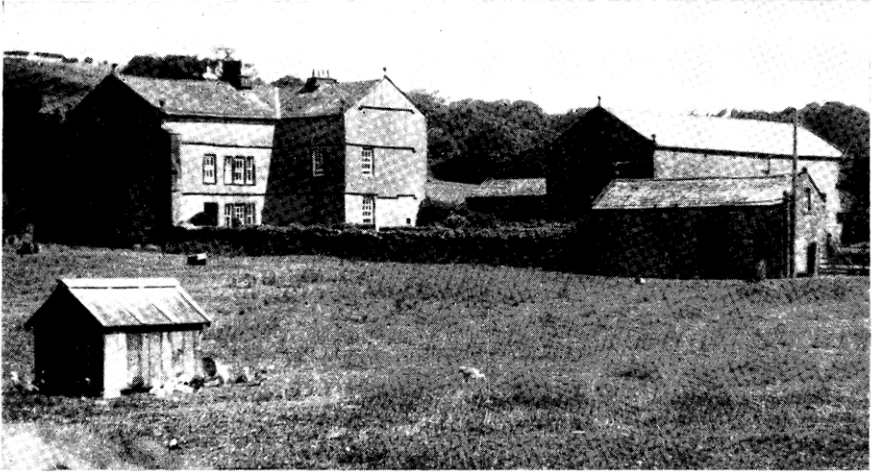


FIG. 5.



Pl. II.—Gosforth Hall

Photo : W. M. Williams.

facing p. 255

one of the most imposing houses in the locality, since its owner was wealthy and influential (see fig. 7 and Appendix I). Most of the other farmhouses in the surrounding area were almost certainly "clay daubins", when Sherwen built his house, i.e. thatched buildings, the walls of which were constructed by applying mud to a wattle framework and allowing it to dry. Some evidence of this method of building has survived until today. The interior walls of Andrew Ground are excellent examples of this work, and in Low Bridge Petton, Gosforth, a farmhouse of the "oblong" type, part of one of the main walls of the dwelling-house, about two feet in thickness, and bearing the inscription "R A F 1697", has been constructed by this means.

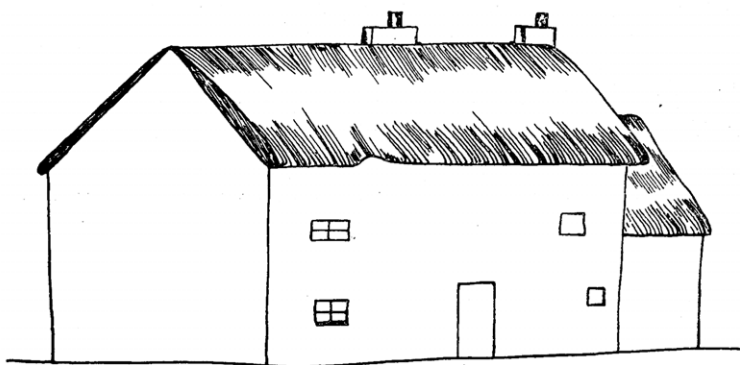


FIG. 6.—The clay daubin at Hall Senna, from a sketch made before 1882.

A thatched "clay daubin" survived at Hall Senna until 1882, when it was demolished to make way for the stone building which now stands on the site. A somewhat crude painting of the former farmhouse shows a whitewashed two-storey building with a door situated two-thirds along its length (fig. 6). There are two windows on each floor, placed one above the other on either side of the door and near to the ends of the house,

while the outline of a single-storey outshut (also with a thatched roof) can be seen projecting from one end. There are two chimneys, one in the centre of the roof and the other at that end of the main building from which the outshut projects. The positions of the central chimney and the door suggest that this was a form of "oblong" house, with a central room containing a fireplace (as at Row and Broom) and probably with a fireplace in the parlour at the upper end. The outshut might have been a similar building to the lean-to "back-kitchen" found at Row. The chimney in the centre of the roof makes it highly improbable that the plan was of the "square" type, since in that kind of house the fireplaces are invariably set in the main walls.

As further evidence, the "court cupboards", most of which date between 1670-1690, and which are still quite common in many farmhouses in the south-western area, show clear signs on the sides and back of having been fixed in wattle and daub walls. It was the practice during the 17th century to set these cupboards in the walls as part of the house itself, before the mud had dried.

There seems to be general agreement that the cottages of the 16th and 17th centuries were "clay daubins". In addition to such well known sources as Anderson, Hutchinson, etc., may be cited the note by C. A. Parker in the Gosforth Parish Magazine for December 1917, which states that, in 1595, Church Stile (in the parish) consisted of three clay daubins, together forming a "long thack", and the first page of the Gosforth Parish Register on which appears an appeal by Thomas Sherwen of Field End "to his neighbours and well-disposed Christian people" to help him rebuild his dwelling-house, destroyed by fire.⁸

On the other hand, majority opinion seems to be that

⁸ Cf. the well known passage in Anderson's *Ballads in the Cumberland Dialect*. For a review of the documentary sources see C. M. L. Bouch's "Historical Introduction" to "Lamonby Farm: a clay house at Burgh-by-Sands", CW2 liii 149-55.

the farmhouses of the same period were built of stone; this is probably based on such sources as Housman's Notes to Hutchinson, 1794, who wrote of Gosforth (i 585) that "the buildings in general are good" and on the (untested) assumption that houses were generally built of stone in areas where it was readily available. As far as the Gosforth area is concerned (and probably indeed the whole of Coupland) the evidence given above suggests that only the farmsteads of the more prosperous yeomen were in fact stone built. (This may, of course, not be the case in other parts of the county.) Although red sandstone was readily available in the area, it was presumably much more expensive to use than wattle and daub, and it seems reasonable to suppose that expense was the deciding factor in a region noted for its backwardness and poverty during the period under review. If this were the case, it helps to explain why John Sherwen's original house measured only 30 feet by 16 feet,⁹ why even as late as 1778 the rectory is specifically described in the Gosforth Glebe Terrier¹⁰ as "a dwelling house . . . all built with stone and slated", and why the thatched farmhouse survived so long at Hall Senna.

Wattle and daub, then, was a common (if not the predominant) method of construction during the 17th century, and was still in use to some degree a hundred years later, for example in Andrew Ground.¹¹ Unfortunately little can be said with complete certainty concerning the ground-plan during the early period. The only houses in Gosforth known to date from the 17th century are Gosforth Gate and Gosforth Hall, both of which must be considered as exceptional, since they were built for prominent members of the community. Row and Broom may have

⁹ See Appendix, below.

¹⁰ See, however, W. E. Tate's comment on glebe terriers in *The Parish Chest*, Cambridge 1951, 126 for a different view.

¹¹ It is worthy of note that French geographers, who have for some years devoted a great deal of attention to the study of rural house form, are well aware of the fallacy of supposing that houses are invariably built of the most readily available material. See, for example, Albert Dauzat, *Le Village et le Paysan de France*, Paris 1949, *passim*.

been built during this period, since—like Low Bridge Petton—they clearly belong to the earlier tradition of house form, and they may therefore be regarded as equivalents in stone of the thatched clay farmhouse at Hall Senna. Row is in plan strongly reminiscent of the medieval manor house, with its three divisions of central hall, lower end of kitchen and buttery, and upper end of parlour and solar,¹² an arrangement known to be of great antiquity in England and elsewhere.¹³ In the 18th century, as we have seen, the “oblong” house continued to be built, even as late as 1795, but by the latter half of the century the “square” house had become firmly established.

The changes in house form do not, therefore, coincide exactly with changes in building materials, and furthermore changes in methods of construction appear to involve a third chronological sequence. The curved roof principals of Gosforth Hall, for example, are a form of timbering common in Northern England during the 16th century.¹⁴ This type of construction was a modified form of cruck building, effected by shortening the base of the crucks and embedding them in the top of the house walls, instead of into the ground. In West Cumberland, crucks, or “siles” as they were known,¹⁵ ceased to be the most common form of timbering during the early part of the 17th century, when the yeomen began the building of solid stone houses, and their use in Gosforth Hall is “late” in the chronology of timber construction in this part of the county.¹⁶ Gosforth Gate, although erected

¹² See, for example, the plans of Penshurst Place, Kent (c. 1341) and Cothay Manor (c. 1480) in N. Lloyd, *A History of the English House*, London 1931, fig. 80, p. 187 and figs. 97 and 98, p. 196.

¹³ See Addy, *op. cit.*, 81-82; A. Bertram, *The House, A Machine for Living In*, London 1935, 16-17; V. Gudmundsson, *Privatboligen paa Island i sagatiden, samt delvis i det ovriga Norden*, Copenhagen 1889, 76-77.

¹⁴ Innocent, *op. cit.*, 63-65.

¹⁵ “Siles” are mentioned as early as the beginning of the 14th century in documents relating to Northern England. See, for example, *Halmota Prioratus Dunelmensis* (1296-1384), Surtees Society LXXXII, 1889, I, 111: “Reparabit unam grangiam de uno pare de siles et duobus gavilforcks”.

¹⁶ In Monmouthshire some houses with “upper crucks” were built as early as 1580. See Cyril Fox and Lord Raglan, *Monmouthshire Houses I: Medieval*, Cardiff 1951, 67-72. See also J. Walton, “The development of cruck framework”, *Antiquity*, Dec. 1948, 179-189.

earlier than Gosforth Hall, is timbered by the method of using a tie-beam resting on the house walls, with straight principals rising from it to support the purlins. Very probably the last remaining crucks in this area were destroyed in the spate of building and reconstruction that marked the closing decades of the Victorian era.

Slate roofs co-existed with those made of thatch in the 17th century, and many of the outbuildings and several of the farmhouses today are slated by the old method of using wooden pegs. The slates are much bigger and heavier than those common in most parts of England and Wales, being approximately two feet long and a foot wide, or more, and weighing several pounds. They are roughly trimmed, with rounded corners, and are held on the roof by their weight: that is, the retaining pegs rest on the roof timbers instead of being fixed into them.

The history of the farmhouse in the Gosforth area is therefore one of a change in building materials from wattle and daub to stone, and from thatch to slate; a change from cruck construction to tie-beam construction, possibly passing through the intermediate stage of using "upper" crucks;¹⁷ and a change in ground plan from the "oblong" to the "square" type.

When considered in relation to England as a whole it is clear that the "square" house of this part of Cumberland cannot be equated with the equivalent form in the South and Midlands of England. In the latter areas the "square" house evolved from the older "manor house" form with its central hall—by the contraction of the hall to a narrow passage leading to the staircase, and other changes that accompanied it.¹⁸ Since in South-West Cumberland, the "square" house succeeded the "oblong" house, and did not evolve from it, it follows that the former was an importation into the area from elsewhere. This conclusion is strengthened by the general absence

¹⁷ As, for example, in Gosforth Hall.

¹⁸ See Bertram, *op. cit.*, 17-18 and Lloyd, *op. cit.*, 20-54.

of intermediate forms (i.e. between the "oblong" and "square" types) in the Gosforth area.

Moreover, much of Coupland, unlike the remainder of Cumberland and the Border Counties, shows relatively few signs of the "defensive" type of architecture that resulted from the disturbed conditions which prevailed in Northern England until the middle of the 17th century.¹⁹ "Peel towers" are comparatively rare in the area, despite the fact that "moss-trooping" remained a menace well into the decade following 1660.²⁰

The disturbances that were endemic in Cumberland until the final suppression of moss-trooping were, however, important in their effect on house construction in the south-west of the county. Manor houses of the type common in southern England in the Middle Ages were almost unknown in Cumberland until late Elizabethan times, and Coupland was probably later in this respect than the rest of the county. The backwardness of this area has already been referred to, and is too well known to require further elaboration here.

Therefore, by the time the manor house appeared in Coupland, and was copied by the lower levels of society, that is by the middle of the 18th century, it was already the evolved "square" type; this would explain why the change from the "oblong" to the "square" type was much more rapid than elsewhere,²¹ and why intermediate forms are absent.²²

¹⁹ See A. H. Thompson, *The English House*, Historical Association Pamphlet No. 105, 11 and 22.

²⁰ Guards (against moss-trooping) were still maintained in Egremont in 1662. See C. M. L. Bouch, *Prelates and People of the Lake Counties*, Kendal 1948, 270. The only evidence that a peel tower ever existed in Gosforth is the place-name "Peel Place". Moreover, according to W. G. Collingwood's "An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments of Cumberland", CW2 xxiii 252-270, there were only five "pele towers" in the whole of Coupland. In addition, the place-name "Peel" only occurs three times in Coupland (including the Gosforth example), according to *The Place Names of Cumberland*, A. M. Armstrong *et. al.*, Cambridge U.P. 1952, Pt. III, 545.

²¹ This may well be the explanation for the interesting fact that there are no old manor houses in many of the former manors of Coupland. Many of the so-called manor houses or "halls", for example Newton Manor and Bolton Hall in Gosforth, were built during the 19th century.

²² When the farmstead as a whole is considered (i.e. the dwelling-house and the outbuildings) the break in continuity between the "oblong" and "square"

The origins of the "oblong" house, on the other hand, are much more obscure. Brunskill, in his excellent survey, has admirably summarised the problems connected with the development of the house type he terms "the statesman plan", and—since the "oblong" house of the Gosforth area is of the same kind—there is no need to review the evidence here. However, there are a number of important differences between the various versions of the "statesman plan" of the Eden Valley and the "oblong house" of the Gosforth area, and it seems fairly clear that, while both belong to the same tradition, they represent somewhat divergent lines of development. In particular, the arrangement of the fireplace in relation to the front door and the cross-passage is quite different in the two areas, and the Gosforth types seem to have closer parallels with the Welsh "long house" described by Peate²³ than the Eden Valley examples.

Such parallels, however, raise many more problems than they solve; and indeed a comparison of the Eden Valley and Gosforth material makes it clear that much remains to be done within Cumberland itself. The preliminary nature of this survey (particularly when compared with Brunskill's very comprehensive work) makes generalization unusually dangerous, but it would seem that the south-western part of the county has developed differently in respect of house-form from the remainder. Brunskill's work, including the numerous historical references quoted, together with the article on

types appears to be much diminished. As we have seen, the characteristic arrangement in the older type was that of house and outbuildings in one line under the same roof; this arrangement is also found in a great many farmsteads where the house is of the "square" type — Thornbank, for example. In general it seems true to say that most of the earlier "square" houses were attached in this way (but not all — see Wind Hall) and most of the later buildings, especially those built after 1800, were erected some distance away from the outbuildings.

This suggests that part of the older tradition was carried over and adapted to the new type of dwelling-house. Indeed in some cases the cross-passage between the byre and the house, with a door leading off it into the kitchen, is to be found in farmsteads with houses of the "square" type — for example at Rainors in Gosforth.

²³ I. C. Peate, *The Welsh House*, Liverpool 1946, *passim*.

Lamonby farm (in the same volume of these *Transactions*) cited earlier, shows that virtually all of Cumberland north and east of Coupland, and also much of Westmorland, are embraced by two traditions of house form, while the south-west of the county embraces a third. Thus Brunskill's survey and sources cover the Eden Valley, North Lancashire and South Westmorland, and the central Lake District. The clay house type extends over the north-western area bounded largely by Carlisle and Wigton. Much more research needs to be carried out in the coastal plain, between the Duddon and the Derwent, before our knowledge of the house-form of the region can be equated with that for the rest of the county. Indeed, there appears to be a deplorable lack of information on the history of Coupland in general; it is hoped that this preliminary account will be followed by more detailed researches, and that some of the problems suggested in this paper will be resolved in the not too distant future.

The author wishes to acknowledge the help and invaluable advice given by the Rev. C. M. L. Bouch, F.S.A., Miss M. C. Fair of Eskdale, and Mr Will. Wilson of Gosforth. They are, however, in no way responsible for the views put forward in the paper. The people of Gosforth, whose privacy was repeatedly invaded—and always at the most inconvenient time—demonstrated to the full the traditional hospitality of the countryside. The plans were specially re-drawn for this paper, from the author's originals, by Miss Nancy Tuff.

APPENDIX: *Gosforth Gate.*

Gosforth Gate, or Denton Hill as it is now generally known, is the oldest house in Gosforth and therefore of particular interest to antiquaries and social historians. However, apart from a passing reference and an excellent photograph in the paper on Gosforth Hall by Parker and Curwen, cited earlier, no plan or description of the house have been published.

Gosforth Gate is now part of the Public Hall in Gosforth, and when the latter was built parts of the outer walls of the old

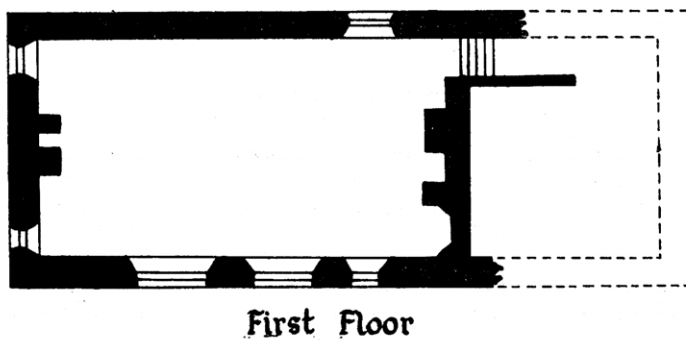
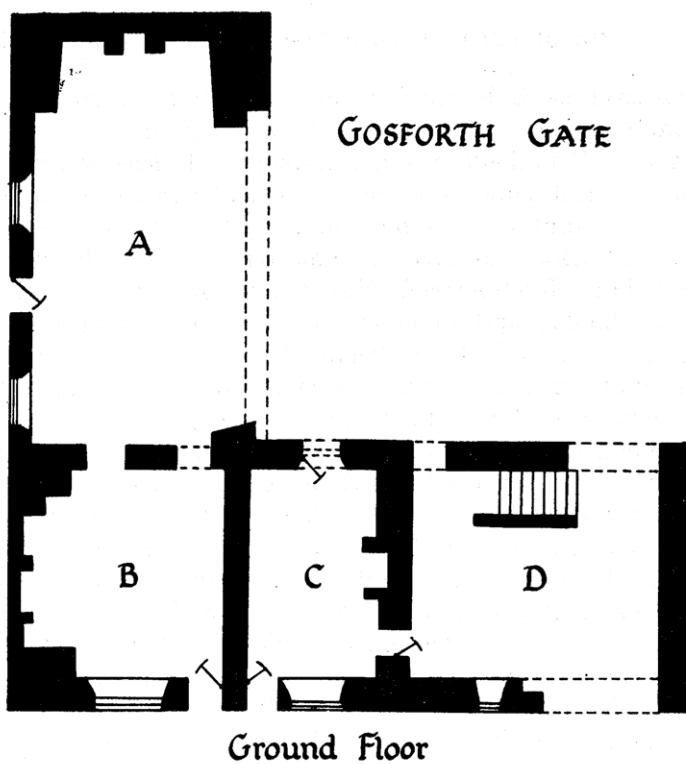


FIG. 7.

house were demolished and extensive modifications were made to the interior. Fortunately a plan was drawn at the time which distinguishes clearly between the old and new constructions. The diagram included here (fig. 7) is based on this plan; the dotted lines are the author's reconstruction of the original house.

It will be immediately clear that the house as given on the plan could not have been the original building erected by John Sherwen. There are, for example, two "front" doors, and there is no means of internal access between rooms B and C; also there is no internal access between the room above A (not shown) and the room above B. An examination of the present fabric gives no clue to the original layout.

Two possible reconstructions of the original house are given here. They depend on two main assumptions, namely (a) that one of the two "front" doors did not exist in the original and (b) that the original house was added to when Christopher Denton moved to Gosforth Gate in 1696-7, following his marriage to Isabella Sherwen.

The first possible reconstruction is that the original house consisted of rooms B, C and D on the ground floor, surmounted by the upper storey shown in the plan. If this were the case, then the present division between A and B would have been an unbroken wall, and the wall between B and C possessed a door. This would then give a typical oblong house, with the characteristic tripartite division of rooms—kitchen, parlour and bedroom—and a fireplace in the usual position. According to local informants, the upper floor consisted of three rooms at the time when the Public Hall was built. There was a partition which divided the larger room in two.

The major objection to this interpretation is that no evidence now exists of a doorway in the wall between B and C. It is, however, arguable that if such a doorway was blocked up when the addition was built, i.e. in 1697 or shortly afterwards, then all traces might well have vanished in the intervening centuries.

The second reconstruction is that the house originally consisted of room A, possibly divided by a partition, and with a ladder or rude staircase to the upper storey. The present division between A and B would then have been either the end of the house or a fireplace with a further room beyond, which was absorbed into the addition when this was built. It appears that there was an inscription above the doorway into room A, now covered with roughcast.

Either reconstruction helps to explain the striking difference in the levels of the respective upper floors above room A on the

one hand and rooms B, C and D on the other.²⁴ The absence of a means of communication between the rooms above A and B might well be explained by assuming that one portion was used by the servants and the other by members of the family.

Two small points in favour of the first reconstruction may be mentioned here. First, the plaque bearing Sherwen's name and the date 1628 appears above the two "front" doors (on the wall leading into B and C), and there is no overt evidence that it was moved from above the door of room A. Moreover, there is another plaque, above this last door. Secondly, one might perhaps expect the house to have faced the main road.

Clearly, however, either reconstruction is possible, and indeed there are several others which might be proposed. The important point is that, in either case, the original house was a comparatively small affair; measuring 18 ft. by 30 ft.²⁵ according to the second interpretation and 16 ft. by about 40 ft. according to the first. This, it has been argued earlier, suggests that not only were stone-built houses too expensive for the small farmer, but also that even the more prosperous yeomen were forced to be content with dwellings of limited size.²⁶

It seems probable that a thorough examination of the house by an architect would reveal evidence hidden to the author. It is hoped that this Appendix will bring about that happy result.

²⁴ This appears very clearly in the photograph accompanying Parker's and Curwen's article on Gosforth Hall.

²⁵ The longer dimension is based on the assumption that the wall between A and B was the gable-end of the house. If, on the other hand, it was a fireplace, then the figure would probably be about 40 feet.

²⁶ Gosforth Hall, built in 1658, is very much larger. However its builder was styled a "gentleman" and was presumably much wealthier and of much superior social status to John Sherwen. Details of Robert Copley, who built Gosforth Hall, are given in the article on the house.