

ART. VIII. – *House Building in Carlisle in the Middle Ages.*

By B. C. JONES, M.A.

AMONG Aglionby family deeds recently deposited in the County Record Office at Carlisle is a contract for building a house in English Street, Carlisle, dated 24 August 1392. The contract is for work to be done by the carpenter only, so it does not give a complete picture of the construction of the house, but it is in sufficient detail to reveal its main features. Its survival is a welcome addition to the small amount of information at present available on the size and structure of domestic buildings in Carlisle in the Middle Ages. As the document is in French and presents some difficulties in translation because of its use of English dialect words, the French text and English translation are given in the appendix.¹

The carpenter, Robert Wright, agreed to build for William of Aglionby, at his residence in Carlisle, a new hall, pantry and buttery, measuring forty-three feet in length and twenty feet in width, within the walls. Above the pantry and buttery he was to make a chamber called a blindloft. In addition he promised to take down the old hall and to use the timbers to make a kitchen for the new house. Possibly the old hall had been damaged in Carlisle's disastrous fire of 1391, but apart from a reference in the contract to the house of Alan of Blennerhasset which appears to have been a model for William's house and which was known to have been rebuilt after the fire, there is no other evidence that this was so. Like Alan's house, William's was perhaps in some respects a more substantial building than was usual in Carlisle at the time. In 1394, Alan and his brother Robert had to defend themselves in a lawsuit against their neighbour's complaints of damage from rain water being cast upon his house by the height of their new hall in Castle Street². William's contract however, makes it plain that the chamber above the pantry and buttery was incorporated in the height of the hall; no provision was made for an internal staircase. The timbers of William's house were to be similar in thickness and so in strength to those used in Alan's house and were to be tied in the same way. The "jowel" or "perke" in the middle of the hall was to be as good as the one in Castle Street. If the meaning of "jowel" is an arch, as in the arch of a bridge, then the reference here may be to the central pair of cruck timbers supporting the roof. The preoccupation of the document with ventilation by louveres and especially the requirement for two louveres in the hall for smoke, suggests a central hearth; the absence of any mention of a chimney, the provision of a box louvre in the hall and of a louvre in the loft, reinforces this impression. Two other kinds of openings are mentioned; firstly, folding and sliding shutters or "fenestres", four: that is two of each kind in the hall, two in the loft and two in the kitchen, (in addition to a louvre); secondly, "leusses", perhaps window lights, one at the dais, one in the hall, two in the pantry and buttery, one in the loft and one in the kitchen. No reference is made to doorways. To keep off draughts, three screens or "halandes" were to be provided in the hall, one at the dais and two at the "leusses". Although a large house, constructed of particularly massive timbers, the general impression given by the contract is one of simplicity of structure. There can be no doubt however that it was intended to be William of Aglionby's principal residence in Carlisle.

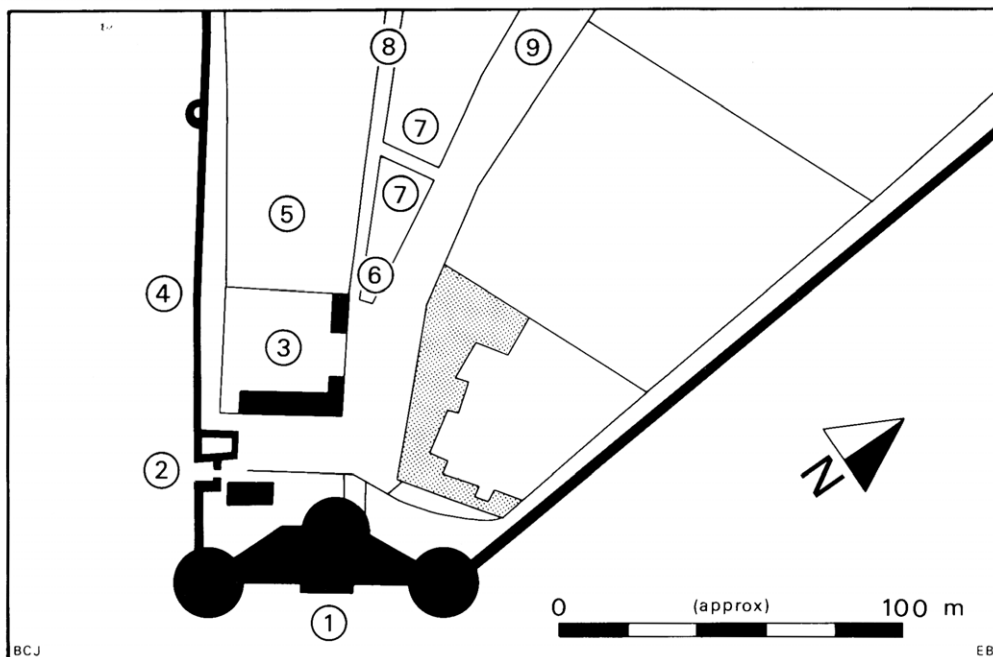


FIG. 1. – Sketch map showing the location of places referred to in the text c. 1749.

KEY

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| 1. Citadel. | 4. West Walls. | 7. Bush Hotel. |
| 2. English gate. | 5. Gardens. | 8. Blackfriars Street |
| 3. Gaol and gaol yard. | 6. Pineapple Inn and City
Vaults or Gaol Tap. | 9. English Street. |

As to the precise location of the house in English Street, the surviving family deeds give some help but the information they provide is not sufficiently exact to be sure. Almost certainly, however, the new house of 1392 was on the site of the two adjacent burgages which were included in William of Aglionby's marriage settlement on his marriage to Marion, daughter of Alan of Blennerhasset, dated 1 May 1373.³ One burgage had belonged to John of Thirlwell and Christiana, his wife and the other to Adam Barker; the first had been conveyed to William's father, Adam of Aglionby on 25 March 1368.⁴ At that time it was said to be bounded by the burgages of Adam Barker and John of Morpeth and so can be identified with the burgage which, in 1342, Thomas of Netherby of Carlisle granted to Richard of Caldcotes, vicar of Brampton, lying in English Street (*in vico Bochardi*), between the land of John of Morpeth on one side and the land of Henry the tanner on the other, one end abutting on the highway and the other towards the wall of Carlisle, (*se habet versus murum Karlioli*). The property was subject to the payment of a yearly rent of 2s. to Thomas Hogge, vicar of Stanwix.⁵ On 20 June 1344, the mayor and commonalty of the city leased to Lady Christiana de Lucy and Hugh of Swinburn, chaplain, for their joint lives, a piece of waste ground, fenced in by palisades, in front of the same tenement, paying a penny annually to the city on condition that they would not build on the site without permission.⁶ From the boundaries given above it is clear that Adam Barker's burgage was on the site of the land of Henry the tanner.

Further, on 2 February 1329/30, Richard son and heir of Hugh the carpenter granted to Henry son of Robert son of Juliana his tenement in English Street, lying between a tenement of Thomas of Netherby on one side and a tenement of John of Stapleton on the other, and on 9 July 1335, John of Stapleton granted his tenement to William son of William le Engleys, bounded by tenements of Alan Legate and Henry the tanner, who, presumably, was the Henry son of Robert of the earlier deed.⁷ William's daughter and heiress married Nicholas of Harrington to whom the tenement descended as a half burgage paying a penny rent to the Crown.⁸ When John of Aglionby made his will on 1 May 1477 he referred to the house in which he was living as one which stretched from the highway to the walls of the town and which lay between a waste tenement formerly belonging to Sir Thomas of Harrington, Nicholas' grandson, and a tenement of the prior of Wetheral.⁹

The Harrington connection may also explain how Thomas Stanley, Lord Mounteagle, came to occupy the garden in Carlisle which in 1531, he granted to Edward Aglionby. The Harrington pedigree given by Daniel Fleming of Rydal in his book of pedigrees called *Liber A*, shows that the two daughters of Sir John Harrington, who was slain at Wakefield in 1460, were both married into the Stanley family; Anne to Sir Edward Stanley, Lord Mounteagle, who died without issue, and Elizabeth, to Thomas Stanley.¹⁰ From the boundaries given in the deed of 1531 we are told that the garden lay between tenements of Edward Aglionby on the north and of Richard Brisco, then in the holding of Isabella Barker, widow, on the south, the city wall on the west and the highway on the east. An endorsement of a later date adds "within Carlell nye new yate", the name given to the new English gate after the building of the Citadel.¹¹ Moreover, the garden site can be identified with the site of the Aglionby house and garden which in 1688 was bought by the County magistrates for a gaol and house of correction.¹² The width of the garden given in 1531 as ten perches, perhaps 155 or 160 feet, agrees almost exactly with the distance between the north and south boundaries of the County gaol as marked on early 18th century maps.¹³ The gaol yard was further extended later in the century by the addition of the garden of Bernard Barton.¹⁴

If the 17th century house was on the site of the later County gaol, where was the earlier house? Given that it was on the west side of English Street and that it stretched from the street to the city wall, a strong candidate must be the Aglionby tenement on the northern boundary of the 1531 garden. In 1461 however, all the land in this area as far as Bush Brow was lying waste when John Aglionby began to acquire it. Five deeds recording a series of transactions between 1461 and 1464 refer to two plots both extending from the highway to the city wall, one being 24 ells or 90 feet wide and the other 60 feet. The deeds concerning the first plot are:

1. 22 March 1460/1. Quitclaim by John Denton of Cardew to his uncle, Thomas Denton of Carlisle of his interest in as waste place lying between a tenement which had once belonged to Thomas Aglionby and a tenement of William Beaulieu.

2. 25 March 1461. Grant of the same place by Thomas Denton of Carlisle to John Aglionby. An endorsement notes that the property had once belonged to Sir John Skelton.

And the second plot:

1. 30 June 1462. Grant by Gilbert Wharton of Stainmore to John Aglionby of Carlisle

of a waste place formerly belonging to William Bewley, between a tenement of John Denton and a tenement of the prior of Wetheral.

2. 30 June 1462. Letter of attorney empowering Richard Coledale, mayor of Carlisle, to deliver seisin of the same plot to John Aglionby.

3. 1 May 1464. Grant by John Aglionby to Henry Aglionby, chaplain, of the same plot between a tenement of John Denton and a tenement once belonging to the prior of Wetheral.¹⁵

Two grants of the waste places of the city which survive among the City's records are of interest here. The first is the counterpart of a grant by the mayor and citizens to John Atkinson, smith, at an annual rent of 2s., of a waste tenement opposite the tenement of the prior of Wetheral, measuring thirty-two feet in width, dated 30 November 1433. The second grant, which is dated 29 March 1436, gives more precise boundaries; it was made to Alan Aglionby and was of a waste place of the same width and paying the same rent, lying opposite a tenement of William Bewley at the back, bounded by John Atkinson's tenement on one side and another waste place on the other; at the front it faced the highway and measured twenty feet in length to the vennel or lane leading to the Friars Preacher or Blackfriars. These boundaries appear to correspond to the site of buildings, now demolished, opposite the County gaol on which the Gaol Tap, formerly the Pineapple Inn and City Vaults, once stood.¹⁶

The deeds of the Gaol Tap begin with a customary conveyance by John Aglionby of Carlisle esquire, to John Wilkinson, formerly of Legburthwaite, yeoman, of his burgage house in Botchergate within the city of Carlisle, once in the occupation of John Salkeld of Carlisle, mason, subject to the payment of an annual customary rent of 7s. at his manor court of Aglionby. The boundaries are given as, "the house of Robert Collyer on the North, the Kinges High streete on the South East and the Kinges streete on the West." Wilkinson, having moved to Wicklow in Ireland, quitclaimed his interest in the property in favour of Edward Lowry of Carlisle, merchant on 16 July 1681. Thereafter the house stayed in the possession of the Lowry family until Anne, grand-daughter of Edward Lowry, sold to Christopher Rawson of Halifax on 21 January 1780. The boundaries were then said to be, English Street on the north east, Friars Street on the west, the houses of Peter Thirlwell on the north and the head of English Street on the south.¹⁷ On 27 May 1793, Peter Thirlwell sold his burgage or dwelling houses, shops and rooms in English Street to James Fairbairn of Carlisle, mail coach contractor and later the owner of the Bush Hotel, and on 1 June 1795, the Crown rent of one shilling a year on the property which had been payable by William Tate and later by Peter Thirlwell, was redeemed.¹⁸

City freeholders lists for 1636 and 1645 give John Wilson for this property, but the heirs of Edward Aglionby in 1660 and Simon Tate, "late Collier" in 1673. For the purpose of the freeholders list the property unit appears to have included all the buildings north of Aglionby's burgage to the Bush Hotel entry. In the 1673 list the names of both Aglionby and Tate appear under the heading of Cullery tenants as well as in the freehold list, presumably for their properties which were later part of the Gaol yard, and so it looks as if Tate's and earlier Collier's house marks the southern limit of the freeholds on the west side of English Steet.¹⁹

This later history helps to throw light upon a grant by the mayor and citizens of Carlisle to Randle Dacre dated 25 September 1503 which is difficult to interpret. The

grant was for a term of 101 years at an annual rent of sixpence, of a plot of waste ground abutting upon the highway, measuring sixty-three feet by forty feet lying between two tenements of Thomas Aglionby, one of which was in the tenure of John Nixon and the other, presumably, in the hands of Thomas Aglionby himself, although the document does not say as much, together with a piece of land which was part of the highway, on which Randle Dacre had built a large window next to the principal dwelling house or manor of Thomas Aglionby.²⁰ As the grant is endorsed, "lease of William Collier's house", and as William Collier was a progenitor of the later Robert, it is at least possible that the waste plot lay to the west of Blackfriars Street, that the land on which the window was built was on English Street and that Aglionby's house, at this time, was either on the site of the Gaol Tap or to the north of Thirlwell's house on the site of the Bush Hotel, south of the entry. The garden behind this property, on the west side of Blackfriars Street was part of the gaol yard in 1797 when the Bush was sold, but had been in the ownership of Henry Aglionby previously.²¹ In either case the location is not easily reconciled with the boundaries of the 14th or 15th century houses.

The conclusion must be that the 14th and 15th century houses were both on the gardens on the west side of Blackfriars Street and in all probability on the garden to the south of the Gaol Tap. The evidence for the area near the south gate of the city seems to point to a development first of all in the early 14th century. Thomas of Netherby's grant of 1342 refers to a burgage and buildings flanked on either side by the lands of John of Morpeth and Henry the tanner; by 1368 burgages had been built on both sites.²² The picture is complicated further by the building on the waste ground between English Street and Blackfriars Street in the early 15th century and by the wasting or destruction of property near the gate, perhaps by the forces of Queen Margaret when they besieged the city in 1461.²³ The late development of this part of English Street may perhaps be explained by the extension of the walled town southwards in the early 13th century to enclose what once lay in fields. The removal of the Blackfriars' house from outside to inside the walls between 1234 and 1237 seems to point to this, although there seems no doubt that the 14th century gate stood in the middle of the curtain wall of the Citadel where an 18th century water-colour shows a blocked up gateway²⁴. The Aglionby garden near Bush Brow marks the southern boundary of the Blackfriars' precinct within the walls. The 16th century map of Carlisle in the British Library shows a roadway here although on later maps it is not marked; nor is it mentioned in the description of the boundaries of William Tate's garden immediately to the north of the gaol conveyed in 1797 on the sale of the Bush Hotel. The origin of the modern road must date from sometime after 1797 and before 1840 when, on the plan of another conveyance of the Bush, it is marked as "Road taken from the Gaol yard".²⁵

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank His Honour Judge Francis Aglionby for permission to transcribe the contract of 1392 and Professor W. Rothwell for invaluable help and advice with the French translation. I am also indebted to Edgar Bolton for drawing the sketch map, based upon the Board of Ordnance map of Carlisle, 1747.

Notes and References

- ¹ Cumbria Record Office (Carlisle), hereafter, C.R.O. D/AY 92. There are two main sources for deeds of the properties of the Aglionby family, both in the C.R.O. D/AY for deeds in the family archive and D/Mh2 for strays from the archive at present in the possession of Mr Giles Mounsey Heysham of Castletown, Rockliffe.
- ² Public Record Office, hereafter, P.R.O. Just. 1/1500 m 38. 20 August 1394. I wish to thank Dr Henry Summerson, historian of the Carlisle Archaeological Unit for this reference and for reference 8 below. Probably identical to Alan of Blennerhasset, William of Aglionby's father-in-law. See reference 3 below.
- ³ C.R.O. D/Mh 2/60.
- ⁴ C.R.O. D/Mh 2/59.
- ⁵ C.R.O. D/AY 35. On 25 April 1344 Richard of Caldcotes granted this tenement to Lady Christiana de Lucy and Hugh of Swinburn, chaplain. D/AY 36.
- ⁶ C.R.O. D/AY 37.
- ⁷ C.R.O. D/Mh 2/54 and D/Mus. E. 133.
- ⁸ P.R.O. E 368/170 L.T.R. Mem. 21 Ric. 2. 1397/8.
- ⁹ C.R.O. D/Mh 2/71 and D/Lons. L. 12/2/1.
- ¹⁰ C.R.O. D/Lons. L. 12/2/1.
- ¹¹ C.R.O. D/AY 196. The tenement in the holding of Richard Brisco may have been the tenement of the Skelton chantry pulled down by "the devyser of the Kinges Workes". CW2, lx, 76.
- ¹² CW2, lxxviii, 131. D. R. Perriam, "The dating of the County Gaol".
- ¹³ C.R.O. DX 452. Photograph of the Board of Ordnance map of Carlisle, 1747 from an original in the P.R.O.
- ¹⁴ C.R.O. Ca 4/140 and 176. The County paid a cullery rent to the City of 2s. 2d. for the house and garden conveyed in 1688 to which was added a further shilling for the garden of Bernard Barton. Ca 3/3/30. Bernard Barton was successor in title of Anne Tate who complained to the county magistrates in 1688 about the damage she had suffered by the fence falling down between her garden and the ground "lately purchased for building the new Gaol". D. R. Perriam, CW2, lxxviii, 131. Eventually the gaol yard was extended to Bush Brow by the inclusion of the garden of Henry Aglionby to the north of Barton's. The 2d. in the rent of 2s. 2d. was probably an ancient house gavel rent which the city was entitled to collect, although originally a Crown rent. Deeds of the Bush Hotel Ca 5/2/51 and B. C. Jones, "The topography of Medieval Carlisle". CW2, lxxvi, 77ff.
- ¹⁵ C.R.O. D/AY 135, 136, 139, 140, 145.
- ¹⁶ C.R.O. First and second edition Ordnance Survey maps 1/500 1865 and 1900, and Ca 5/1/22 and 25.
- ¹⁷ C.R.O. Ca/C3/448.
- ¹⁸ C.R.O. Ca5/2/51.
- ¹⁹ C.R.O. Ca 3/3/1, and 10 and Ca 3/3/29.
- ²⁰ C.R.O. Ca 5/1/32.
- ²¹ C.R.O. Ca 5/2/51.
- ²² As for 5 above.
- ²³ CW2, lxxii, 74. C. R. Davey, "The Carlisle Tithe Barn".
- ²⁴ CW2, lxxvi, 86-7. B. C. Jones as for 14 above. Carlisle Art Gallery, water-colour by Robert Carlyle c. 1792.
- ²⁵ Lyson's *Britannia* vol. iv. *Cumberland*. (London, 1816), 58. Board of Ordnance map 1747 as for 13 above and C.R.O. Hodkinson and Donald. Map of Cumberland, inset map of Carlisle 1774 and map of Carlisle in Hutchinson 1794. Also deeds of the Bush Hotel, Ca 5/2/51.

Appendix

Contract for building a new house in Carlisle, 1392

Cest endenture fait par entre William de Aglyunby, fitz Adam de Aglyunby dune parte et Robert Wryght, son tenaunt, dautre parte tesmoigne que ceux sont lez covenantez taillez par entre eux, Cest assavoir que le dit Robert ferra une nouvelle sale ouesque une pantery et une butery et une chaumber appelle une blindeloft deseus lez ditez pantery et buteri a son place en Bochardgat de deinz la Cite de Kardoill de quater iowels,¹ Cest assavoir que le dit sale serra de vinte pees en leyour de deinz lez parrais et de xxx deux pees en longour, et lez ditz panteri et bouteri serront oncce pees en longour et si leyz come le sale le suffist et que le dit sale, panteri et bouteri et loft serront de si large mesrime et mesme la maner liez come est la sale de Alayn de Blenerhayset, et en le myleu del dit sale si beal une iowell ou une perke² come est en la sale le dit Alayn, et en la dit sale serront treis halandes,³ une al dees, deux a lez leussez,⁴ et quater fenestres,⁵ deux schotte et deux fauldin, et treis louers, deux pur stauve⁶ et une chage louer,⁷ et seize leussez, une al dees, un pur le sale, deux pur lez panteri et Bouteri, une pur le cusyn une pur le loft et qen le dit loft serront deux fenestres et une louer, et le dit robert prendra a valle le anxint sale et le ionnera sur la fine de nouell sale pur une cusyn et auera tout le mesrime soufisaunt et necessare pur fer le dit meson, et si aucune mesrime default le dit robert, le trouera soufisaunt et acordant al dit meson, et si aucune mesrime default le dit robert, le trouera soufisaunt et acordant al dit meson, et en cell' meson ferra deux fenestres et deux louers. Et le dit William paiera pur lez amercyementz en le boys et pur cariage et pur ferour et dit robert ferra tout le mesrime avant dit si leger pur carier com bonement poet estre. Et tout cest ouereigne ferra devant la fest de pentecost prochein enseuant la date du cestez et toutez chosez ferra al ditez sale, panteri et bouteri, chaumbre et cusyn qappent a carpenter a faier. Et le dit William al dit Robert pur son trauaille paiera ix marcez, cest assavoir, quarant south'al commencement del ouereigne et quarant south'al myleu del ouereigne et quarant south'al fyne del ouereigne. En tesmoignuace de quel chose lez parties auantditez entrechaungablement on mys lour seals Done a Kardoill en le fest de seynt Bertilmew, lan du reigne le Roy Richard, second puis le conquest, seysime.

Seal: a hare?, Inscription, fragmentary.

[24 August 1392.]

Cumbria Record Office (Carlisle) Aglionby family deeds. D/AY.92(153).

[1] *jowel* a Lakeland and Yorkshire word to describe the arch or the space between the piers of a bridge, see Wright. *English Dialect Dictionary*.

[2] *perke* *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives "perk" an obsolete form, especially in the north, referring to the supporting pole or timber for a house and presumably in this case the cruck, supporting the roof.

[3] *halande* a Scottish and north country form of "hallan", a partition wall or screen to keep off draughts. Wright E. D. D.

[4] *leusse* meaning uncertain but it is perhaps related to the Old Norse word, *ljós*, meaning light and used here in the sense of window light.

[5] *fenestre* probably a shutter rather than a window, see L. F. Salzman. *Building in England*, 256.

[6] *stauve* meaning uncertain but Wright, E. D. D. gives a Cumberland dialect form, *stwove*, for smoke, quoting the phrase, "Udders wad bar up t'chimley an stwove ivverybody oot".

[7] *chage louer* for cage or box louvre, again uncertain but seems likely from the context.

Translation

This indenture made between William of Aglunby, son of Adam of Aglunby on the one hand and Robert Wryght, his tenant, on the other, witnesses that these are the covenants agreed between them, that is to say that the said Robert will make a new hall with a pantry and a buttery and a chamber called a blindloft above the said pantry and buttery at his house in Botchergate within the City of Carlisle of four bays, That is to say that the said hall will be twenty feet wide within the walls and 32 feet in length, the said pantry and buttery will be eleven feet in length and proportionate in width to the hall and the hall, pantry and buttery will be of timber as thick as the timber in the hall of Alan of Blennerhasset and tied in the same way. In the middle of the hall there shall be a cruck of supporting timber as fine as the one in the hall of the said Alan. In the said hall there will be three screens, one at the dais, two at the lights, four shutters, two sliding and two folding, and three louvres, two for smoke and a box louvre, six lights, one at the dais, one for the hall, two for the pantry and buttery, one for the kitchen and one for the loft. In the said loft will be two lights and a louvre. The said Robert will take down the old hall and join it to the new hall for a kitchen and will have all the timber which is sufficient and necessary for the said building and if the said Robert lacks any timber,

sufficient and suitable timber for the said building will be found for him. In this building he will make two lights and two louvres. The said William will pay for the amercements in the wood and for carriage and ironwork. The said Robert will make all the aforesaid timber as light as he possibly can for carrying, and all this work shall be done and everything that a carpenter should do in making the said hall, pantry, buttery, chamber and kitchen shall be done before the feast of Pentecost next following the date of this indenture. The said William shall pay the said Robert 9 marks for his labour, that is to say forty shillings at the beginning of the work, forty shillings at the middle of the work and forty shillings at the end of the work. In witness of this the aforesaid parties have put their seals interchangeably. Given at Carlisle on the feast of St. Bartholemew in the sixteenth year of the reign of King Richard the second since the conquest.

[24 August 1392.]