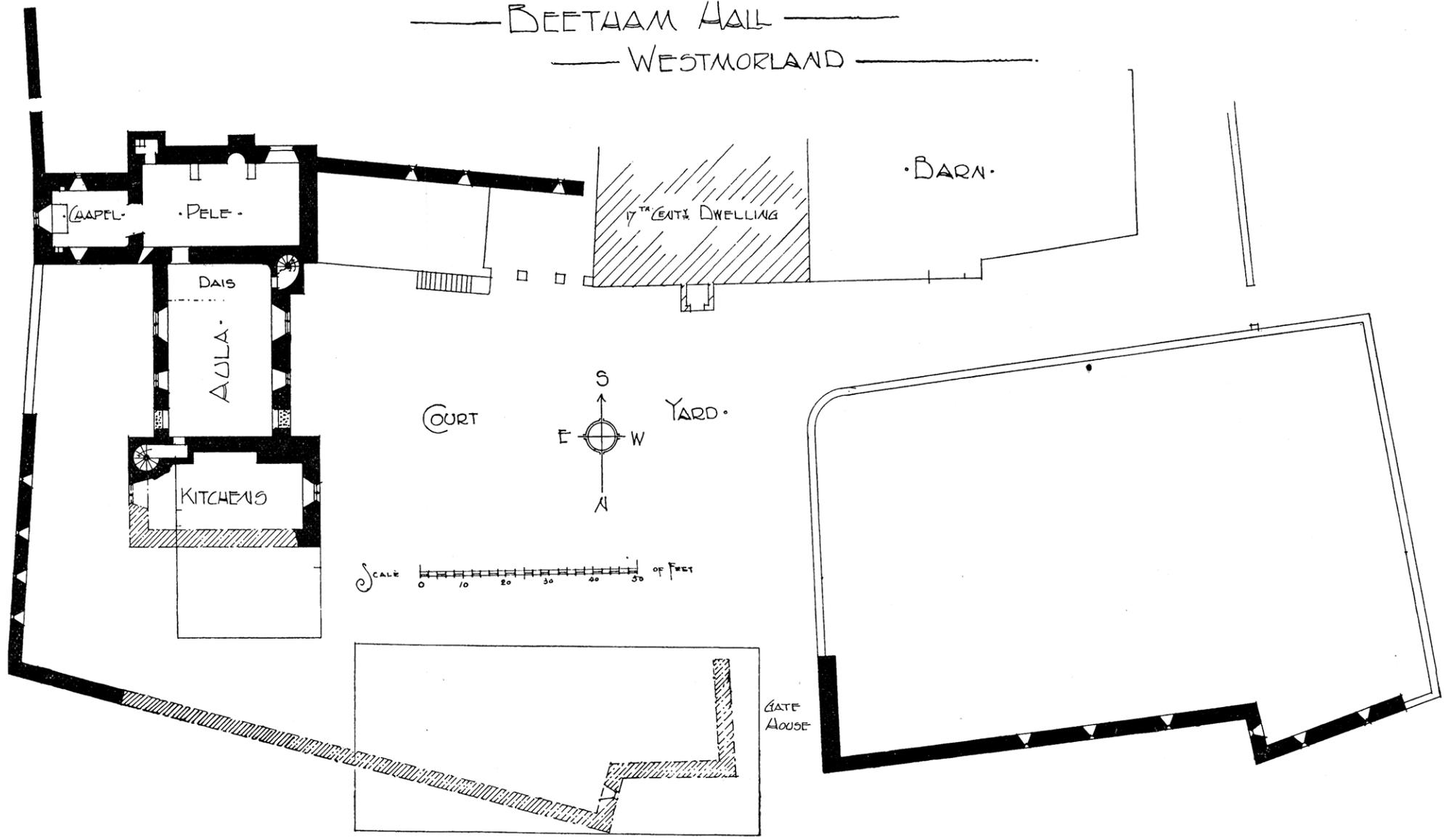


— BEETHAM HALL —
— WESTMORLAND —



MEASURED AND DRAWN BY J. F. CURWEN.
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ART. XVII. — *Beetham Hall*. By J. F. CURWEN,
F.R.I.B.A.

Read at Beetham, September 11th, 1903.

THE River Bela is called in ancient documents the "Betha," and has doubtless given its name to the *ham*, or rather *holme*, which became the head place of the manor of Beetham: spelt Beithum about 1200 (Prescott's *Wetherhal*, p. 338), Bethome in Ivo Taillebois' Charter (*ibid.* p. 402), and Bieðun in Domesday (written in capitals, the D being "crossed" and equivalent to a soft th).

This manor was held for a long time by the de Beethams, a very distinguished race of men under the Barons of Kendal, but which of them commenced to build the ancient hall it is at present impossible to say.

The earliest account we have of the family is of one Ralph de Beetham, who attested the foundation charter of Cockersand Abbey, and for the health of his soul and the soul of Ingaretha, his wife, gave a salt work and two patellæ in Beetham to the Abbey of Furness. In the year 1208, his name appears in a final concord, touching a fishing dispute in the estuary of the Kent, with William, prior of Cartmel. Later, he appears as a witness to a confirmation charter by Gilbert Fitz Reinfred to Roger de Heaton of the hamlet of Torver, and again as a witness, between 1216-1220, to a grant by the same Gilbert to Reiner de Stiveton of the land of Medlar. There was a Bishop of Hereford named Robert de Beetham, who died April 22nd, 1148.

Thomas de Beetham, his son, succeeded, and about the year 1206 married Amice, who, by the way, made fine of 40 marcs for her inheritance from her father, Richard son

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of Roger. In the year 1228, Thomas, with others, perambulated the forest of the lord King in county Lancaster. He must have died soon after the year 1242, leaving issue two sons, Ralph and Roger.

Ralph de Beetham was delivered as a hostage to King John for the future fidelity of Gilbert Fitz Reinfred, after the baron's rebellion in 1215, but he lived subsequently to inherit his father's estates.

Thomas de Beetham, his son, succeeded. He was Knight of the Shire for Westmorland in 1302, 1309, 1311, and 1312, and obtained a charter from King Edward II. in 1311 for a market to be held at Beetham, which has long been obsolete. He died prior to the year 1314, for in that year the reversion of what his widow, Emma, held in dower was settled upon Joan, wife of John le Tours, Lord of Lowick.

Sir Robert de Beetham, his son, succeeded, but we know nothing of him except that he had a son, Thomas de Beetham, who inherited the estates and married, about the year 1320, Parnell, the daughter of Sir Robert de Burton, and left issue two sons, Sir Ralph and John.

Sir Ralph de Beetham had in 1335 a grant of free warren in Beetham, and in 1347 he was ordered to send the prisoners whom he, with Thomas de Ross of Kendal Castle, had confined in their castles to the Tower of London. He was a juror on an inquisition in 1354 and attested a grant in 1370. Robert de Beetham, his son, succeeded, and was in turn succeeded by his son John, who was Knight of the Shire for Westmorland in 1407.

Sir Thomas de Beetham, his son, succeeded, to whom in 1416 a commission of array was issued, by which he was directed to muster all men-at-arms for border duty. In 1424, he was one of the representatives of Westmorland in Parliament, and Sheriff of the County in 1431. He was living in 1442, and at his death left two sons, Sir Edward and Roger, and one daughter, named Elizabeth, who married Sir Richard Musgrave of Hartley Castle.

Sir Edward de Beetham succeeded, but died without issue; consequently the estate went to his brother Roger, who had only one daughter, named Anne. She married about the year 1484 Sir Robert Middleton of Leighton. Roger sided with King Richard III. in the War of the Roses, and after the defeat at the battle of Bosworth Field on the 22nd of August, 1485, the manors of Beetham, Farleton, and Witherslack were forfeited to the Crown, and the name of de Beetham failed for ever. Sir William Stanley deserted King Richard in the hour of his need, and for reward Henry VII. granted to him these fallen family estates. The manor subsequently passed to the de Cliffords, and was finally sold by Lord Clifford in 1767 to Daniel Wilson of Dalham Tower.

The de Beethams took the arms of Lathom, viz., Argent, a chief indented, azure; surmounted by a helmet, and for a crest an eagle's head.

The abode of these mesne lords of Beetham was doubtless erected at first as a simple pele, and as wealth increased under successive owners, developed into little less than a fortified castle of great pretensions. Both Camden, the historian, and Leland, the chaplain to King Henry VIII., who visited the dwelling in the time of its 16th century glory, expressly describe it as a castle and one of the principal feudal places in the district.

Truly, there are no particular defensive advantages in the level site beside the river, but the lord overcame this by building a very large girt enclosing wall, which to the greater part of its length is still visible. The area thus enclosed measures about 70 yards long by 45 yards wide. The wall, $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick, stood from 10 to 15 feet high up to the ramparts, at which level a row of corbels carried a projecting parapet $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet higher. The lower portion is pierced at regular intervals with deeply-splayed loop-holes for the archers. There is a square bastion at the north-west angle, where Dr. Taylor in his *Manorial Halls* says he found the remains of a stone staircase, all trace of

which has now disappeared. Along the north side there has evidently been a row of low buildings within the courtyard, about 100 feet long, which were doubtless used for the lodgement of the retainers. The greater portion of the southern wall is now enveloped in the more modern seventeenth century hall and farm buildings.

The gateway stood near the centre of the north wall, but when the buildings connected with it disappeared I do not know. The Rev. William Hutton compiled a MS. history of his parish about the year 1762, in which he says, "By an easy ascent from the river we come to a gateway, being the grand entrance into the castle yard."

Of the castle itself, the remains now standing occupy the south-east corner of the quadrangle, and comprise a block containing the ancient hall, at either end of which are two flanking wings running at right angles to it, giving an eastern frontage of 92 feet. The hall measures $39\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 25 feet, or, by way of comparison, it is about the same length as both Sizergh and Levens, but 5 feet wider than the former and 3 feet wider than the latter. In superficial area it is only excelled by the halls of Wharton, Askham, Isel, and Yanwath. The walls are 4 feet thick, and there are still to be seen the stone corbels on which rested the feet of the oaken and open timbered roof.

On examining such a hall it at once becomes necessary to determine which was the upper or dais end, and here I am sorry to say I entirely disagree with the opinion of Dr. Taylor, who, so far as I am aware, is the only other person who has written a critical description of the building. In his *Manorial Halls* he points to the southern wing as comprising the kitchens and offices, doubtless mistaking some modern piers for the fireplace jambs, and consequently places the dais at the northern end. Now, the joist holes for the various floors are plainly visible in this wing, shewing that each ceiling was very low, and who has heard of a kitchen to such a pretentious castle as



BEETHAM HALL : EAST FRONT.

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this one having a ceiling only some 8 feet in height? If Dr. Taylor had wormed himself into the cow stalls now existing in the northern wing he would have discovered the early segmental arch and jambs of the ancient kitchen fireside. Again, the hall is lighted by four windows, two on either side, and the two at the southern end are very long, reaching from the roof nearly to the ground, whilst the northern pair are short and placed high up in the wall, proving to my mind that the two main windows lighted the dais at the southern end of the hall, and that the northern windows were placed high so as to admit of a music gallery projecting below their cills. Finally, at the northern end there are still to be seen two large doorways, one on either side, for the entrance of the retainers, which could not possibly have been at the dais end.

The architectural features of the doorway and window openings give a very good idea of the approximate date of this building. They are of the transitional or late fourteenth century period. The doorways have the exterior arch pointed and surmounted by a hood label, whilst their interior arch is segmental and splayed on to square jambs. The outer arches of the two main windows are likewise pointed with tracery heads and label mould and have in the same way segmental arches within. But the two smaller windows are linteled on the outside with a label mould covering a square tracery head, whilst internally their openings are spanned by carnarvon arches.

One curious feature about the hall is that there appears to have been no fireplace or flue, at least I can find no trace of such, yet it is hard to believe that the hearth stone remained in the centre of the floor down to so late a period as the seventeenth century. If it were so it was certainly the most hospitable position for diffusing heat to the greatest number of those whom the lord entertained and feasted, giving rise to the proverb,

'Tis merry in the hall
When beards wag all.

A newel-stair turret led from the dais up to the first floor of the southern wing, which as I believe contained the dwelling apartments of the family. The basement would be used for storing purposes, but on the first floor was the lord's solar, a very commodious apartment, measuring $36\frac{1}{2}$ by 19 feet. Here is still to be seen the hooded fireplace, the flue from which passes through the wall and is carried upwards by a narrow chimney built up on the outside face of the wall. Above there have been two other storeys with many rooms, each containing a fireplace and square-headed tracery windows looking southward. To the side is a projecting garde-robe turret, but most prominent of all is the adjoining tower on the eastern face, containing the chapel and probably the priest's dwelling. On the ground level there is a single room some 18 feet square, with a fireplace and two small square windows strongly secured with crossbars of iron. On the first floor and adjoining the lord's solar is the chapel, a peculiarly fascinating spot, still clearly shewing the details of its arrangement. One jamb remains of the doorway leading from the solar, and as you enter through you face the eastern wall, where you can easily trace on the plaster the shape of the stone altar. Above is a three-light window with a good tracery head, whilst on each of the side walls there is another small decorated light. Facing the altar, to the right there is still the trefoil-headed piscina and recessed lockers or aumbries on either side. Further, there is a stone spiral staircase in the thickness of the wall of one corner, giving entrance from without, so that the tenants and neighbours might attend the services without passing through the private apartments. Above the chapel are two other storeys, but the whole wing is now floorless and roofless.

The northern wing on the other side of the hall has clearly been devoted to kitchen and domestic offices. As I have already said, the large fireplace opening remains intact although hidden from view, likewise the doorway



THE CHAPEL, BEETHAM HALL.

(The darker shade below the window shows where the Altar stood).

Photo. by Mrs. J. R. Ford.

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into the hall can easily be traced, although now blocked up; and further, there still remains the spiral staircase leading to the rooms above. By a close examination of the western wall next the courtyard, I have been fortunate enough to discover the point where the old wing stopped and where the wall to the modern farm building commenced. We can thus determine at once the original width of this wing, and as a further proof we find that the windows on either end arrange themselves centrally.

Under what circumstances the castle lost its grandeur and became ruined I cannot discover, but Sir Daniel Fleming, writing in the year 1671, describes it as "a fair house, but now much ruined." It is interesting, therefore, to notice that in the courtyard there now stands the present farm house with a dated stone let in over the porch,

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revealing the fact that almost immediately after Sir Daniel visited the castle it was dismantled and a modern building erected in its stead. Of this seventeenth century house I have no need to speak, excepting perhaps to draw attention to the splendidly kept oaken staircase with its turned balusters and ball-capped newels. Of course, the initials on the porch stone do not refer to any of the de Beethams, but to some subsequent owner.

The Rev. Wm. Hutton in his MS. history of Beetham says, "Behind the house was the Park, and in one of the walks there are the remains of a lodge, and near it a spring of good water which Camden says had a petrifying quality, but there is little or no appearance of such quality at present." Again, Whellan in his history speaks of two large fishponds to the south of the hall. Finally, we find that in Queen Catherine's survey of the Richmond Fee, the Earl of Derby is charged with the annual payment of £2 13s. 4d. for Bethom Park.

PEDIGREE OF THE DE BEETHAMS.

