

ART. II.—*The Original Name of Hayes Castle.* By the  
REV. JAMES WILSON, M.A., Litt.D., B.D.

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THE Ordnance Map (lxj. north-east, south-east) depicts the site of "Hayes Castle (Remains of) Moat" in Old English letters to denote a place of considerable antiquity and shows the relative positions of its feudal adjuncts, the Castle Mill, Mill Race, Hayescastle Farm, and, a little southward towards Moresby, a hamlet called Castlerigg with a disused pit of the same name. The ancient site is quite close to the road which leads from Distington to Moresby near the south end of the former village. To anybody unacquainted with the site itself, the description on the map would be enough to indicate its historical importance. A visit to the place would only confirm the suggestions of the map. And yet, strange to say, little is known of its history. Nothing has been added to our knowledge of its antiquity since Camden made his observations at the close of the sixteenth century. More recent discussions start from the statement of the famous antiquary. John Denton, his contemporary, does not mention the site, and Thomas Denton, two generations later, simply reproduced Camden's account and cited him as his authority. Our best plan, therefore, as a preliminary is to explore Camden's literary environment.

In the editions of the *Britannia* accessible to me, the first mention of the site occurs in that of 1600: it is not noticed in the edition of 1586. In the later edition (p. 692), however, after describing Moresby the antiquary says:—

Nec tacendum quod hic in proximo vidimus Haycastle sua sane antiquitate suspiciendum quod ad nobiles de Moresby et Distinton dictos olim spectasse retulerunt incolae.

The translation of this passage by Philemon Holland, published in 1610 (p. 766), is as follows :—

Neither is Hay-Castle, which I saw hard by, to be passed over with silence, a place verily to be regarded for antiquity sake, which by report of the inhabitants belonged successively in elder time to gentlemen surnamed Moresby and Distinton.

It will be admitted that the statement, whether in Camden's Latin or Holland's English, is the description of an intelligent man. He visited the site and saw that it was ancient. Nothing was known to him of its history, but he learned from the *incolae* of the neighbourhood two things: first, that the name by which it was known among them was Haycastle, or Haicastle as he prints it in the margin, and second, that it formerly belonged to distinguished local families of the name of Moresby and Distinton. Relying on these traditions, the insertion was made in the next edition of his book.

Bearing the date in mind, either 1600 or some previous year near it, we may refer to the early maps. Christopher Saxton, who made his map of Cumberland in 1576, does not give the site. Its first appearance on a map, so far as I have seen, is on that of Speed in 1610, the year in which Holland's translation of the *Britannia* was published. Speed had somehow got hold of the name, for he not only places it on his map but he mentions it as one of the twenty-five castles\* with which Cumberland was strengthened when that county "stood in the front of assaults" and was "preserved, as then was thought, with the prayers of the votaries in the houses erected at Carlile, Lenecost, Wetherall, Holme, Daker and St. Bees." It would appear, therefore, that Speed was indebted to

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\* *Hist. of Great Britain*, p. 87.

Camden for the form of the name as Camden himself was to local tradition. The pleasing thing about Camden's description is its accuracy: he put down what he had gleaned from the lips of the people. There is evidence of this very soon after he wrote. The site changed hands in 1608 and Haycastle is the name it receives in the deed of conveyance.\* No mention of this form of the name has been found by me earlier than Camden. But the antiquary saw, and it is still easy to see, that the site is of very early origin.

Though my sole object is the search for a name, we shall have to go back a long distance and take a glance at the territorial history of Distington in which Haycastle is situated. A few general statements will only be made to clear the ground. At the dawn of recorded history, Distington was a manor held of the castle of Egremont and it was in possession of Gilbert son of Serlo, a magnate of some consequence in the middle of the twelfth century. The advowson of the church, which was an appurtenant of the manor, was given by him to the canons of Lanercost, and the gift was afterwards confirmed by Pope Alexander III. in 1181 and by Pope Lucius III. in 1184.† Though the grant was ineffectual, it does not touch our present purpose. Towards the end of that century Hugh de Moresby, lord of the neighbouring manor of Moresby, was an owner of land in the manor of Distington and the contemporary of Gilbert's son, Gilbert, better known as Gilbert de Dunderif or Gilbert of Dundraw. For instance, Gilbert son of Gilbert gave to the monks of Holmcultram 25 acres of land in the territory of Distington within these boundaries, viz. : from the sike (*sica*) which comes from Gillegarran across to the little moss under Stodefald and thence as the brook (*rivulus*) falls to the head of Ruckecroft and thence as the great

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\* Feet of Fines (Cumberland), 6 James I. Michaelmas.

† Register of Lanercost, MS., viii. 17, 18.

way (*magna via*) goes under Frothou towards Dene. At a subsequent date Hugh de Morisceby supplemented his neighbour's gift to the monks by a grant of six acres in the territory of Distington by bounds which show that his land lay alongside that already bestowed on them by Gilbert. By another deed Hugh conveyed to the said monks four acres near their land at Frothou towards the east, those four acres, forsooth, which he had received in exchange from Gilbert son of Gilbert de Drumdrayf for his land of Frotheouflatte.\* These transactions give us some early place-names in Distington and disclose the lord of the manor and one of his principal tenants. The place-names will be mentioned again.

As the family of the original lord declined in influence, that of the principal tenant rose in its place. Gilbert's descendants came to an end in the male line in 1230, when the family possessions were divided between four daughters† who in time alienated their respective portions: the alienations of three of them at least are recorded. In 1256 and 1258 the lord of Egremont acquired the portions of two of the heiresses, while in 1278 Thomas de Moresby purchased the portion of another heiress.‡ Accordingly, it is found that the Moresby tenement in Distington in 1341 was reckoned as the fourth part of the manor.§ But in 1355 it was still further augmented when Christopher de Moriceby acquired another moiety from Thomas de Lucy,|| lord of Egremont, probably one or both of the portions purchased by his predecessor a century before. This digression, though rather dry, was necessary in order to shew an early settlement of the Moresby family with a gradual extension of its possessions in that manor.

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\* Register of Holmcultram, MS. ff. 65-6.

† Feet of Fines (Cumberland), 15 Hen. III., No. 12.

‡ *Ibid.* 40 Hen III. No. 62; 42 Hen. III. No. 73; 6 Edw. I. No. 9.

§ *Ibid.* 15 Edw. III. No 30.

|| *Cal. of Pat. Rolls*, 1354-8, p. 171.

We may now inquire for the places in Distington in possession of the family of Moresby and we may possibly find them occupying a residential seat there. Nor shall we be disappointed. In 1295, John, son of Nicholas de Moriceby, made a grant of land and tenements "in le Keldlandes," perhaps now called Spring Hill (O.M. lxj., south-east), which is dated at Distinton,\* a transaction which does not help us much: it may or may not suggest a residence. Early, however, in 1322 we have Castlerig held by Hugh de Moriceby by service of sixpence yearly †: the place appears again under the same name, in the same ownership and with the same service in 1334 and 1338.‡ Though I do not say that the place may be identified with Haycastle, the name of Castlerig has a suspicious sound as if it was near a fortress or strange site of some sort. The only thing insisted on is that the two sites are contiguous and related to each other.

We may travel on till we get a more detailed enumeration of the possessions of this family in Distington. This occurs in 1337 when Hugh de Moriceby obtained a grant of free warren§ in his demesne lands of Morisby, Aykhurst, Gilgarran, Brakanthwaite and elsewhere of no interest to us at present. There is no mention of Castlerig: the only two places in Distington to which the grant applied were Aykhurst and Gilgarran. In which of the two places was Castlerig included? As Gilgarran lies on the opposite side of the manor, it may be left out of reckoning. Castlerig must be either another name for Aykhurst or an adjunct of it. If an adjunct, as I believe it was, it would not come within the terms of a licence of free warren. On the other hand if it was a feudal unit, then it had no demesne lands, but the matter is of no

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\* *Reg. of St. Bees* (Surtees Soc.), pp. 101-2.

† *Inq. p.m.*, 15 Edw. II., No. 45.

‡ *Ibid.* 8 Edw. III., 1st Nos. 73; *Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1337-9, p. 478.

§ *Cal. of Chart. Rolls* (R.S.), iv. 389.

importance to our purpose. Our inquiry will be narrowed if we refer to a deed among the muniments of Cockermonth Castle which brings us nearer home. It is dated at Aykhirst on St. Mary Magdalen's Day, 1337, the year of the grant of free warren, and given by Agnes de Moriceby in renunciation of certain rights to Hugh de Moriceby her father. From this transaction it may be fairly assumed that Aykhirst was a residential seat of the family in Distington. The place is again mentioned with Gilgarran under the name of Aykehirste in the "extent" of the lands of Hugh de Moriceby\* at his death in 1348.

The light is slow to break on the site, but it comes in a blaze before the fourteenth century closes. On the death of Margaret, widow of Hugh de Moriceby, which took place in 1374, the forcelet of Aykerist, held of the manor of Distington, assigned to her in dower on the decease of her husband, passed to Christopher de Moriceby her grandson.† Nor is this all, for when Christopher died in 1392, among his possessions is mentioned a moiety of the vill of Distington, in which moiety there was a certain castle greatly ruined, held in chief by service of one-twenty-fourth part of a knight's fee.‡ Investigation need scarcely be carried further. It does not seem hazardous to suggest that the original name of Haycastle was Aykhurst, Aykerist or one of its medieval variants.

Our difficulties, however, are not yet at an end. The identification of Aykhurst troubled the pundits of the Public Record Office, and it is no reflection on their incomparable work that it led them astray. When the name came before them in the public records, the hamlet of Aikhead near Oulton, in the parish of Wigton, was the identification suggested. As attention is now directed to the true site, an endeavour must be made to account for

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\* Inq. p.m., 22 Edw. III., 1st Nos. 32.

† *Ibid.* 48 Edw. III., 1st Nos. 49.

‡ *Ibid.* 15 Ric. II., part 1, No. 45.

the military survivals about it. The ancient character of these remains will be more easily comprehended by reference to some former description when several of the old features were still in existence. The description of Hutchinson, published in 1794, is the fullest that I have seen : it was the description that first aroused my curiosity after a visit to the site. This old mansion, he wrote,\* by the appearance of its present remains, seems to be of antiquity equal to the time of Gilbert de Dundraw : a gloomy old tower on an artificial mount, surrounded with an outward or curtain wall, supported by many heavy buttresses and strengthened with a moat. If Hutchinson's description be accepted as accurate, the site naturally falls into line with similar fortified sites in Cumberland. It indicates at least three epochs in the evolution of the medieval castle : the earthen mound or mote with its annex of bank and ditch, a characteristic of the stronghold of the twelfth century potentate : the wall of stone and lime erected on the encircling banks, a later development : and a stone tower or peel built subsequently on the crown of the artificial mount. The potentialities of Hutchinson's description are immense, but they lie altogether outside the scope of this inquiry. For the present we must be content with the historical as distinguished from the archæological features. Is there any evidence to account for the wall of stone and lime, a characteristic feature of the middle period in the history of the castle? Was leave ever given to crenellate Aykhurst? The answer to both questions is in the affirmative. It is on record that a licence was issued on 13th March, 1322, to Robert de Leyburn to strengthen with a wall of stone and lime his dwelling house of Aykhurst† in the county of Cumberland. This licence

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\* *Hist. of Cumberland*, ii. 98.

† Pat. Rolls, 15 Edw. II., pt. 2, m. 25. This licence has been printed *in extenso* by Mr. John F. Curwen in his *Castles and Towers of Cumberland and Westmorland*, p. 188.

drags its military secret from the site and places the other features in their proper perspective.

The intrusion of Robert de Leyburn on our discussion is a little disconcerting in view of what has been said about the ownership of Distington, though it does not impair the main contention. Let us see how far it can be explained. A person or persons of this name attracted much attention in Cumberland and the neighbouring counties during the reign of Edward II. Anybody acquainted with the sources can see how often the name turns up in different capacities. We have no concern with this ubiquitous personage except so far as he intrudes on our inquiry. What brought him into this part of Cumberland? It is well known that the Honor of Cockermouth was the occasion of a great lawsuit at the beginning of the fourteenth century and was in consequence for a time in the king's hand pending the declaration of the rightful heir. I believe that the custody of the Honor,\* which Leyburn received in 1311, was the cause or one of the causes of his presence in West Cumberland. But how did he get a hold on Aykhurst in the manor of Distington, which was an appurtenant of the fee of Egremont and not of Cockermouth? He may be tracked to Egremont also. When Thomas de Multon died in the early months of 1322, the fortress of Egremont, with the lands of Coupland, escheated to the Crown and was committed to the custody of Robert de Leyburn during the minority of the heir.† The custodian, therefore, held Distington in 1322 as an appurtenant of the fee of Egremont.

It should be noticed that the date of Leyburn's patent as keeper of Egremont is on 25th May, 1322, two months after the licence to crenellate Aykhurst was issued to him. But the chronological discrepancy need not trouble us :

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\* *Cal. of Pat. Rolls*, 1307-13, p. 324.

† *Cal. of Fine Rolls* (R.S.), iii. 132.

it is very probable that the commitment was made some time before it was put on record. In any case Leyburn could not have carried out the work of crenellation, for he was in disgrace in the following year,\* and the keeping of Egremont was bestowed on the indefatigable and warlike Anthony de Lucy of Cockermonth.†

Here arises a point that I do not presume to determine with any confidence. Why should the lord of the fee or his deputy receive licence to crenellate the dwelling place of one of his feudatories? Did the law of crenellation require a tenancy in chief? The custom of crenellation in Cumberland amply shows that mode of tenure did not affect the grant: licences to mesne tenants are as numerous as those to tenants in chief. We are driven, then, to inspect more closely the phraseology of Leyburn's licence. There is nothing singular there: it was his own house (*mansum suum*) of Aykhurst. In view of what has been said of the ownership, this is puzzling. Let us look at the schedule of knights' fees in the hand of Thomas de Multon of Egremont, at his death early in 1322, made less than a month before Leyburn's official appointment to the custody. The tenements in Distington were—Castelrig and a moiety of Gilgarran held by Hugh de Moriceby; a moiety of Distington, by John son of Stephen de Crofton; and Frodhou and Stubscals, by Robert de Leyburn.‡ There is no mention of Aykhurst.

The absence of Aykhurst from the "extent" of the Multon fees would lead to the inference that it must have been either a part of the demesne lands in the hand of the lord, or included in Castelrig, the property of Hugh de Moriceby or in the moiety of Distington belonging to John de Crofton. It is too far away from Feather Knott and Stubsgill (O.M. lxj. north-east) to be included in

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\* *Cal. of Pat. Rolls*, 1321-4, p. 340.

† *Cal. of Fine Rolls*, iii., 212.

‡ *Cal. of Inquisitions (R.S.)*, vi., 200.

Leyburn's tenement. We might well believe that Aykhurst, as the manor house of Distinguon, had remained up to this date unalienated from the descendants of one of the co-heiresses of 1230, as the ownership of John, son of Stephen de Crofton would imply, or that it was included in Castelrig, but in either contingency Leyburn would have been an usurper. The grant to crenellate could only be legitimately received on the supposition that Aykhurst was his own property or that he had it in custody on behalf of the heirs of Egremont. On the whole, judging from the evidence at our disposal, there seems to be no alternative but to infer that Aykhurst in 1322, the year of the licence, was part of the demesne lands of Coupland. It should be remembered that its first appearance in possession of the family of Moresby, so far as we have ascertained, occurs in 1337, the year of the grant of free warren and of the issue of Agnes de Moresby's charter to her father. The point, however, so far as the object of this discussion is concerned, is only of academic interest. It is certain that Aykhurst was the property of Hugh de Moresby before 1337, however he may have acquired it. In my opinion, too, it will be difficult to dispute the conclusion that Camden's Haycastle is identical with the Aykhurst of the foregoing discussion.

It is no part of my purpose to speculate on the transition from one name to the other. The chronological gap between the last mention of the old form and the first mention of the new is too wide to span with the materials at hand. The philologist may attempt it, but it is too adventurous for me. One suggestion, however, may be hazarded for what it is worth. My idea of the process of corruption, if a corruption it be and not a new name, is that the site was known as Aykhurst Castle in accordance with local usage after crenellation and that the second syllable was eliminated in popular speech. It is very doubtful that the *incolae* of Distinguon who imposed the name on

Camden paid much attention to the rules of modern phonology. At any rate, the transition from Ayk Castle to Haycastle is smooth. If this be the true solution or anything like it, the dangers that philology has sometimes to encounter in the analysis of place-names are immeasurable in the absence of an exhaustive apparatus of their traditional forms. Fortunately, the meaning of Aykhurst will cause no dispute: the signification of both elements is obvious. It is the Oak Wood. The first syllable is not unfrequent as a prefix in Cumberland place-names, and as for the second we may say with quaint old Ussher "*hurst* vero lingua Anglo-Saxonica *sylvam* denotat." The etymology of Hayes Castle may be left to others.

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