

ART. XIX.—*Bewcastle*. By JOHN F. CURWEN, F.S.A.

*Read at the site, September 13th, 1921.*

IT is generally agreed that the name "Bewcastle" is derived from Bueth's castle, but we must note that the dale is not known as Bueth's dale or Bewdale: it is Bueth's castle-dale, Bewcastle dale, or the dale overshadowed by the castle. On the contrary, the barony named after Gilles, the son of Bueth,—Gilsland—was not called Gilles' castle-land because his castle was here in the adjoining barony of Burgh. From the territorial importance of these two great Norse landowners we shall naturally look for a fortress of some considerable pretension and strength.

Denton says, "I read of one Beweth a Cumberland man, about the time of the conquest. He builded Bewcastle and was Lord of Buecastle Dale"; and again, "the castle there built by one Bewth.... Antiently it was the seat of the said Beweth."\* Nicolson and Burn (ii, 476) say, Bueth "repaired a Roman castle here and called it after his own name."

We can never tell exactly what he did or how his castle appeared but it seems certain that he took full advantage of the great fosse at the north-eastern angle of the Roman station, and that, at a distance of some 60 yards from either side, he cut two cross-ditches so as to enclose and isolate a squared corner. The excavated earth from the ditches would be thrown up within the area and upon this raised plateau he would erect his buildings of wood—a series of grouped dwellings situated around a central hall. For some 200 years such a timber castle would develop as

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\* John Denton, *Estates and Families*, 1610, pp. 129, 146.

necessity required; frequently it would be attacked, perhaps sometimes burnt but always repaired again to withstand, be it remembered, the *English* enemy.

Then, and in consequence of the development in the art of war, stone defences became necessary. It was obviously impossible to build a massive stone keep upon an artificially raised mound, so here we find, within the palisade, a stone wall built up high enough and strong enough to itself act as a keep—a Shell-Keep. The late Rev. John Maughan said, "there is no date known for the erection of this castle, but the cement shows it to be of ancient construction" (*Arch. Journal*, xi, 126); and the late Chancellor Ferguson thought that it was built by William Rufus to protect his newly acquired district of Carlisle from incursion by the Maiden Way (*Hist. Cumb.* p. 140). Against these two theories we shall have to note that there is no Norman masonry apparent.

The Register of Wetheral and the various Cumberland histories tell how the manor, without any mention of the castle, descended to Sir John de Swynburne, and how he obtained (1279) a license to hold a weekly market and two yearly fairs here (*Cal. Charter Rolls*, 7 Edw. I., 213)—negative information about the castle, but showing that the dale must have been of greater importance in those days than it is possible for the present generation to realize.

By the year 1293 Inglewood Forest and the whole of Cumberland had become a portion of the English kingdom. Three years later (1296) the manor of Bewcastle was seized by King Edward I., because of the attachment which Sir Adam de Swynburne continued to show toward John de Balliol, King of Scots, and because of his sympathy with the Franco-Scottish league against England. From this date the manor continued in the hands of the English Crown.

Now, did Edward I., the great castle-builder, cause

this Shell-Keep to be built, in order to strengthen his flank, as he marched through hostile territory, during the many years of his warfare against the northern kingdom? To my mind this seems to be the most likely period for its erection, but yet I am bound to point out that there are no architectural details of buttress, angle-turret, pointed-arch, loop-hole or mullioned window, remaining of this early date. Indeed, the only architectural features about the place are of Tudor date.

Again, it is a very curious fact that during the hundred years of warfare for Scottish independence, when Gilsland was continually overrun and everything destroyed by Wallace, Robert and Edward Bruce, the Black Douglas and even by King David, we have no history of Bewcastle, neither is the castle, which lay right in their way, even mentioned in the State Papers of either side.

The first mention that I can find is in the year 1401 (September 1) when King Henry IV. wrote to his chancellor as follows:—"As the castle of Bothe belonging to John de Middleton, was lately, from default of good governance, taken by the Scots, and John with Christiana his mother made prisoners, spoiled and robbed by them, but soon after, by the aid of God and their cousins and friends, they regained and now hold the castle, the king has pardoned them, and permits Christiana to hold the castle for life, and John her son after her death, and commands letters accordingly" (*Cal. Doc. Scot.*, iv, 121).

In 1470 Edward IV. granted the manor and castle, which had long lain waste, to his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who was then Lord Warden of the Western Marches, and we find that Richard sub-let them to four men, Cuthbert and John Routledge, Robert Elwald and Gerard Nixon, who paid no rent but were to maintain the king's wars and who pertained to the Captains of the Castle under the king (*Cal. St. Papers*, Hen. VIII., xiii, 553; *Trans. N.S.*, xi, 245). From this time forward the castle

was under the governance of Constables and it was maintained as an outpost from Carlisle to guard against forays from Liddesdale.

I hope to append some notes concerning the castle during the 16th century, but let us round off the history now by quoting a paper, dated 1583,—“Beaucastle, her Majesties owne, which hathe bene and should be the chiefe and onlie defence of that border, but that yt is now allmoste brought to ruyn. . . . . by reason of the deadlie feude and grate hatrede betwene the Greimes and the Musgraves” (*Cal. Bord. Papers*, 1560-94, p. 168). In 1603 the garrison was reduced by James I. on his accession to the English Crown, when the *Survey of the Debateable Lands* reports that “The King’s Majesties house, the castle, is in great ruin and decaye in such sorte that there is not anye roome thereof wherein a man maye sytt drye.” During the Covenant revolution in Scotland, Rushworth (ii, 929) says that one hundred men were garrisoned in Bewcastle (1639) to face some 20,000 well equipped troops under Genl. Leslie but that when King Charles yielded to Scottish liberty the garrison was withdrawn to Carlisle and the castle dismantled. But Hutchinson, who is probably not so correct, says:—“the castle was destroyed by the parliament’s forces (1641), by whose fury many of the ancient fortressess were laid in ruins” (*Hist. Cumb.* i, 78).

As I have said, the form of this castle is known as a Shell-Keep, *i.e.* its chief defence consisted of an outer shell wall,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet thick, and 91 feet square, with a rampart and battlements running right round on the top. Within, a range of buildings leant up against it, surrounding a small courtyard open to the sky. From all appearances these lean-to buildings consisted of a low, verandah-like basement with a frontage open to the courtyard, and two storeys above. The first storey might be occupied by the garrison, with windows opening only into the courtyard ;

while the second storey, where we find the remains of fireplaces and windows piercing the outer walls, would be occupied as the Constable's domestic quarters.

When a raid was signalled by the beacon fires, the cattle would be driven into the courtyard and open basements; but after the castle was dismantled, we can well understand how easily the lintels over these basement frontages were removed, and how the upper floors fell without leaving any foundations or cross walls to tell us to-day of their former existence.

The south wall is the best preserved, as it retains most of its facing stones above the boldly splayed plinth. It stands about 30 feet high and, on the outside, at the second floor level, we notice a small set-off with two windows above it. But these windows are of Tudor date.

Between the windows are two fireplaces with short flues sloping backward from the hearthstone and outward to a small hole pierced in the external face of the wall. These are very interesting specimens of a smoke-flue, and I only know of two others in our district—one at Millom castle and one at Piel castle. Of course, the object in sending the smoke through the external face of the wall was to avoid the necessity of taking a chimney-stack up through the rampart walk and thus blocking, to the men-at-arms, the free passage round the walls. It would seem that when flues had to be introduced into castles, it was always a difficult problem how best to dispose of them. At first they were not allowed to be carried higher than the parapet, and at Lincoln, Aslackby and Aydon castles we find them taken up through ornamental turrets that projected from the external face of the wall. Then, with a further development, we find them at Maxstoke and at Yanwath Hall, rising above the parapet, but so cleverly contrived as to be out of the way in the thickness of the battlements.

The very presence of these fireplaces, recessed into the

wall and with chimney-flues arising from them, bespeaks a date not earlier than the beginning of the 15th century—and, if we are to trust Leland, writing a little before the middle of the 16th century, they were not by any means common then. He says the “elegant and commodious tube, now known by the name of a chimney” was first introduced into the castles of Kenilworth, Conway and Bolton, and speaking of the latter castle, he says, “One thinge I muche notyd in the Hauille of Bolton, how Chimeneyes were conveyed by Tunnells made on the Syds of the Wauls bytwixt the Lights in the Hauill; and by this meanes is the Smoke of the Harthe in the Hawle wonder strangly convayed” (*Itinerary*, edit. Hearne, viii, fol. 66b).

The east and north walls have lost both their external and internal faces and unfortunately the whole corner has fallen to the ground. Whether this corner contained the newel staircase connecting the floors together, or whether it was honeycombed with garderobe passages—both necessary features, both now entirely absent and both causing a certain weakness to the structure—we cannot say.

The west wall is in better preservation and it shows the remains of the same plinth and set off on the second floor level. The main feature of this elevation, however, is the Gatehouse, which is placed up against it. Except for a few stones it is not bonded into the shell and yet the masonry seems to be of the same period and the same deeply splayed plinth surrounds it.

To understand the defence of the entrance we must first of all realize that the moat was of no value unless supported by a palisade, or some sort of cover for the defenders, upon the inner bank. Then from the report of an affray in 1531, when a Musgrave, having killed an Armstrong, fled back to Bewcastle and was only just saved by the quick lifting of the drawbridge (*Cal. Letters*

and *Papers*, Henry VIII., v, 225), we learn that there *was* a drawbridge across the moat. If there was a drawbridge then there must have been also an outer gateway for the working of the drawbridge, opening into the outer court between the palisade and the Keep. The way would then mount by a steep approach to the barbican, the walls of which still project northward from the Gatehouse. There has been no portcullis ; but double gates, 7 feet wide and secured by two drawbeams, sliding in the thickness of the outer wall, effectually closed the entrance. Within, a second gateway pierced the main wall. This also has been 7 feet wide, *i.e.* wide enough to drive cattle through but too wide for purely military defence. Although the arch has now fallen, Dr. Taylor spoke of it as being a flat four-centred arch, which again denotes the Tudor period.

Opposite to it, in the western wall of the gatehouse, there is a mural stairway leading up to a passage in the southern wall and to a garderobe. From the passage two loop-holes overlook the interior for the defence of the outer gate. But I want you to note that the passage does not extend the full length of the southern wall, so that I imagine a newel staircase, mounting to the rooms above, filled the remaining space.

In conclusion, it would seem evident that whatever was the original cause for, and date of, the erection of this stone castle, it has been remodelled very considerably during the 16th century, and at a time when the Musgraves, as Constables of Bewcastle, carried on a deadly feud with the Armstrongs and Grahams of Liddesdale—a feud which lasted from generation to generation.

#### APPENDIX OF ADDITIONAL REFERENCES.

- 1278.—According to Prescott's *Register of Wetherhal*, p. 202, the manor of Buchecastre appears to have been in the hands of Richard de Levington ; after his death it passed to Juliana de Carrig, one of his six sisters ; and her daughters

Matildis and Emma, sold Bothecastre " before the war " to Sir John de Swynburne, c. 1278.

By the year 1296 the manor had passed to Sir Adam de Swynburne, but on account of his attachment to John de Balliol, late King of Scots, the manor was seized by King Edward I. (*Cal. Doc. Scot.* ii, 172).

In 1298 the Scots, after burning Hexham, returned thro' Gilsland devastating the whole country side.

In 1318 Sir Adam held Bewcastle (*Cal. Inq. p.m.* 12 Edw. II., 290) and in 1326 Adam was the tenant of the manor (*Cal. Inq. p.m.* 20 Edw. II., 334).

1327.—Barnaba, dau. and coheiress of the said Sir Adam, tenant-in-chief of the late king, was granted seisin of the manor of Bewcastle (*Cal. Close Rolls*, 1 Edw. III., p. 8).

In 1333 Lord Douglas made great ravages here.

By the year 1338, both Sir Adam and his son Henry were dead, whereupon Barnaba, wife of Sir John de Strivelyn (Stirling) succeeded to Bothecastre. She was living in 1357, when K. Edw. III, on account of the good services of her husband, restored to her all her lands in Cumberland and pardoned her for all felonies committed by her father or ancestors (*Cal. Doc. Scot.*, iv, p. 2).

1346.—The district was again pillaged.

1514, Feb. 18.—Grant in survivorship to Sir John Musgrave and Thomas his son of the offices of Constable of the castle of Bewcastle and chief forester of Nicholforest, with a grant of certain lands lately belonging to Sir John de Middleton, for the repair of the said castle (*Cal. St. Pap.* Henry VIII., i, 746 and ii, 285).

1514, Feb. 27.—William and Christopher Dacre writing to Lord Dacre say—" Jak (Sir John) Musgrave took James Nowble called ' Yellow Hair ' and kept him in Bewcastle two days and let him go at the desire of Clement Nixon " (*Cal. St. Papers*).

1515, Oct. 28.—Grant for Thomas Musgrave to be constable of Bewcastle and chief forester of Nichol forest ; his father probably deceased (*Cal. St. Papers*).

1517, June 21.—Dacre to Wolsey. He is glad that the King is satisfied with his suggestions for fortifying the borders, rebuilding Wark and removing Bewcastle ; but he desires some office to be provided for Thomas Musgrave that the fee which he now has amounting to £70 p. an. etc. (*Cal. St. Papers*).



- 1527, December.—William, Lord Dacre was made constable and chief forester on the vacation of these offices by Thomas Musgrave (*Cal. St. Pap.*, Henry VIII., iv, p. 1672).
- 1528, April 2.—William, Lord Dacre to Wolsey. He notes that Wolsey had spoken with Thomas Musgrave to deliver Bewcastle to him, but it is in such decay that no man can dwell there for Thomas Musgrave has spoiled it, taken away all the lead and broken the glass windows. He begs Wolsey will get Musgrave to surrender his patent (*Cal. St. Pap.* Henry VIII., iv., pp. 1672 and 1827).
- 1531, April 24.—Grant to Sir William Musgrave of the offices of Constable and Chief forester (*Cal. St. Papers*, Henry VIII., v, 106).
- 1532, October 6.—Lord William Dacre writing to Cromwell says that he has received £500 from Sir George Lawson for works of Carlisle and that he has given £100 of it to Sir William Musgrave for certain repairs at Bewcastle (*Cal. St. Pap.* Henry VIII., v, 596).
- 1536.—Jack Musgrave was deputy to Sir William Musgrave in his office of Captain during the eventful period of the "Pilgrimage of Grace."
- 1537.—The Duke of Norfolk writing to Cromwell says that Sir William Musgrave who had the rule in Bewcastle lives at London and Jack a Musgrave, a bastard, is his deputy, a tall (*i.e.* brave) hardy man but not meet to have the rule of so many ill men (*Cal. St. Pap.* Henry VIII., xii, p<sup>t</sup> 2, page 86).
- 1539.—"Bowe Castel longing to the King x myles est fro Cair-luel" (Leland, vii, fol. 72).
- 1544.—John Musgrave, the King's servant, was appointed constable, with the same rents from Bewcastle dale as Sir John Middleton had (*Cal. St. Papers*, Henry VIII., xix, p<sup>t</sup> 2, 418).
- 1567.—Thomas Musgrave of Plumpton held the office of Captain of Bewcastle. In the same year we find Leonard Musgrave of Cumcatch describing himself as deputy Captain (*Cal. St. Pap. Dom. Add. Eliz.* p. 35).
- 1570.—Sir Simon Musgrave, a younger brother of Sir William, succeeded as constable and he had his own son Thomas as deputy (*Cal. St. Pap. Dom. Add. Eliz.*, p. 429).
- 1580.—Christopher Dacre's survey on the state of the Border says :—"This howse or castel doth belonge to her Ma<sup>ty</sup> Standinge about 3 myles frō Scotl., a place of greate

- defence for y<sup>t</sup> p<sup>te</sup> of y<sup>e</sup> border, if y<sup>e</sup> same were sufficiently repaired. The charges of w<sup>ch</sup> reparaçon is esteamed to ccli beside y<sup>e</sup> new castinge of y<sup>e</sup> moote and an old decayed wall within and about the same, w<sup>ch</sup> is thought may be spared till a greater necessity" (*Cal. St. Pap. Dom. Add.*, 1580; also *Cal. Border Pap.*, 1560-94, p. 32).
- 1583.—John Musgrave and Marmaduke Staveley, gentlemen deputies to Sir Simon Musgrave, constable.
- 1583, Sep. 28.—Scrope writes to Walsingham that "manye and almoste nightlie attemptates have been committed in Bewcastle and elsewhere within this wardenrie, as well by the Liddesdales as also by the west wardenrie of Scotlande, speciallie Kynmonte his sonnes and complices."
- 1584, June 12.—Scrope to Walsingham. "Before your letter to stay Thomas Musgrave's appointment to Bewcastle reached me, his father had placed him there, and his brother is now departed from thence."
- 1586, June 16. —Sir Simon Musgrave to the Council. "I have stayed my son Thomas from executing the office of Bewcastle till your further pleasure..... For my sonne Thomas, yf yt will please your lordships to accepte of hym as officer there, I will pawne both my credytt and livinge for hym, that he shall serve that place, as sufficiently for the service of her Majestie, and be as diligentt to please my Lord Scrope as any officer ther this manye years. I have bene officer ther this xxx<sup>ti</sup> yeares.... nowe I am olde and woulde be at som staye" (*Cal. Border Pap.*, 1560-94, p. 227).
- 1590.—The Queen granted to Sir Simon Musgrave and Thomas his son for the term of their two lives the office of Captains of Bewcastle.
- 1592.—Captain Thomas entertained Bothwell here in 1592 (*Cal. St. Pap. Scotland*, p. 610).
- 1593.—"A place of great defence" (Alex. King's Survey).
- 1595, Nov. 17.—Sir William Bowes is prepared to accept the office of Constable. If her Majesty please "to grace mee with this note of hir favour" by placing me there, I persuaide myself that this bettering my estate, with the good opinion of the lord wardens in the West and Middle Marches, the place so suitable to procure concurrency in their services, and my experience profiting them both, might produce effects to her Majesty's liking and the

- benefit of both countries (*Cal. Border Papers*, 1595—1603, p. 70).
- 1602.—Thomas Musgrave fell out with his neighbour at Askerton, Lancelot Carleton, who charged before the Privy Council that Thomas had offered to deliver the castle to the Scots; that whereas her Majesty doth yearly bestow a great fee upon Thomas as Captain to aid and defend her Majesty's subjects, he hath neglected his duty for that Bewcastle was by him made a den of thieves and a harbour for murderers, felons, etc. Thereupon it was agreed between them to have the controversy openly tried by way of combat in Canonby Holme upon Thursday in Easter week, being the 8th day of April 1602. Probably the combat was prevented by the Queen's illness and death. (See also *Hist. MSS. Com.*, 10th Report, 265).
- Camden speaks of it as a castle "of the King's," and defended by a small garrison, so that the Musgraves held it probably under the Crown, to withstand the incessant invasions of the Armstrongs of Whitehaugh.
- 1603.—The garrison was reduced by James I. on his accession to the English Crown.
- 1604.—"The King's Majesties house, the castle, is in great ruin and decaye in suche sorte that there is not anye roome thereof wherein a man maye sytt drye; so that 300*li* will scarce repair the same in anie reasonable sorte." (*Survey of the Debateable Lands*.)
- 1606, June 28.—Thos. Musgrave was still captain of Bewcastle.
- 1607, June 4.—Thos Musgrave reappointed for life as Constable by James I (*Cal. St. Pap.*, 1603—10, p. 360).
- 1608, Feb. 15.—Grant to William Pinches, in reversion after Thomas Musgrave of the Keeping of Bewcastle (*Cal. St. Pap. Dom.*, 1603—10, p. 405).
- 1614.—James I. leased to Francis Earl of Cumberland for a term of 40 years, the castle and lands of Bewcastle "formerly kept by an officer" (*Cal. St. Pap.*, 1611—18, 242) and thus ended the long connection of the Musgrave family with this ancient border fortress.
- 1629.—Charles I. granted to Sir Richard Graham of Esk the castle of Bewcastle to hold of the King in capite (Nicolson and Burn, ii, 476).
- 1695.—In Bp. Gibson's 1st edition of Camden we read "a castle of the kings, which in those solitary parts is defended by a small garrison." But here the edition could not have been

brought up to date. In the edition of 1725, the Bishop's note reads, "This was the former state; but since the happy union of the two Kingdoms in King James the First, and much more since that under her Majesty Queen Anne, all these Feuds and Quarrels upon the Border are ceased; and one lives there with as much security, as in any other place whatsoever."

## CONSTABLES OF BEWCASTLE.

- 1478.—Cuthbert Routledge, John Routledge, Robert Elwald, Gerard Nixon.  
 1514.—Sir John Musgrave, Thomas his son.  
 1515-27.—Thomas Musgrave.  
 1527.—William, Lord Dacre.  
 1531.—Sir William Musgrave. 1536.—Jack Musgrave, a bastard, deputy to Sir William.  
 1544.—John Musgrave.  
 1567.—Thomas Musgrave of Plumpton. 1567.—Leonard Musgrave of Cumcatch.  
 1570.—Sir Simon Musgrave. 1570.—His son Thomas as deputy.  
 1583.—John Musgrave, Marmaduke Staveley.  
 1590.—Sir Simon Musgrave, Thomas his son.  
 1607.—Thomas Musgrave.  
 1614.—Earl of Cumberland.  
 1629.—Sir Richard Graham.
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