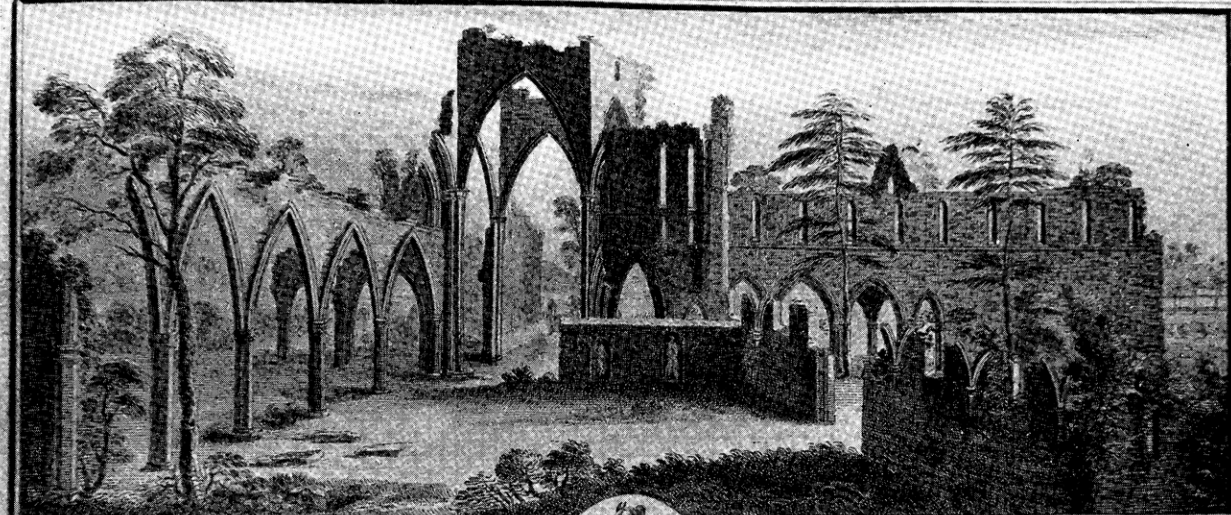


THE WEST VIEW OF CALDER-ABBY, IN THE COUNTY OF CUMBERLAND.



To John Tiffin Esq. Proprietor of this Abby.

The Prospect is humbly Inscribed by
his much obliged Servants
Sam. & Nath. Pouch



This Abby of Calder was founded A.D. 1134 by
Ranulph de Mescham Lord of Chester & was endowed by him and
several other Benefactors with diverse lands & possessions all which
were conferred to this Abby & Monks by R. Hen. II.

Sam. & Nath. Pouch Esq. & Sons

Printed by A. Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne, according to Act of the Honourable Society of the Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne.

PLATE I.—BUCK'S VIEW OF CALDER ABBEY, 1736.

This sketch of Calder Abbey is of importance as showing details now lost. The picture shows the south wall of the church, with a doorway into the cloister garth from the nave, and the south side of the pulpitum still standing, with niches containing figures, to one of which may belong the beautifully carved little head of a monk found some fifty years ago. Low down, in deep shadow, in the right bottom corner, the end of the cellarium building with a window can be seen, and a doorway from the cellarium leading into the west end of the nave of the church.

ART. VIII.—*Calder Abbey*. By M. C. FAIR, with survey and plans by W. K. CALVERT, F.R.G.S., and H. PECK.

Read at Kendal, September 2nd, 1953.

IN preparing the following account of Calder Abbey I have received endless help and hospitality, which I acknowledge with grateful thanks, from Mrs Rymer and Mrs Williams of The Abbey, whom I must also thank for permission to gather the materials for this Article. Mr Marlow, of the Abbey Estate, has given me constant assistance, and it was he who first noted the position of the buried foundations of the Infirmary. I owe to Professor Knowles the placing of the apartment above the Chapter House, and I have to thank H.M. Inspectors of Ancient Monuments for many helpful suggestions. Miss A. M. Armstrong, Mr T. Gray and Mr Robert Hogg have provided a number of useful comments; and without the patient work of my colleagues, Mr W. K. Calvert and Mr H. Peck, the project could not have been undertaken. The pioneer study of the Abbey was well and truly done by Canon Loftie and Dr C. A. Parker; all subsequent research must be based upon their labours. I am indebted to Miss E. M. Ward for the loan of Buck's engraving of 1739, here reproduced as pl. I, and to the Rev. W. S. Sherwen and Miss Sherwen for much valuable aid. Thanks are also offered to the Rev. C. M. L. Bouch, F.S.A., for his patience, courtesy and ever-ready help in his capacity as Editor.

For a detailed account of the history of the Abbey, from its foundation on 4 January 1134¹ until its suppression on 4 February 1536, reference may be made to

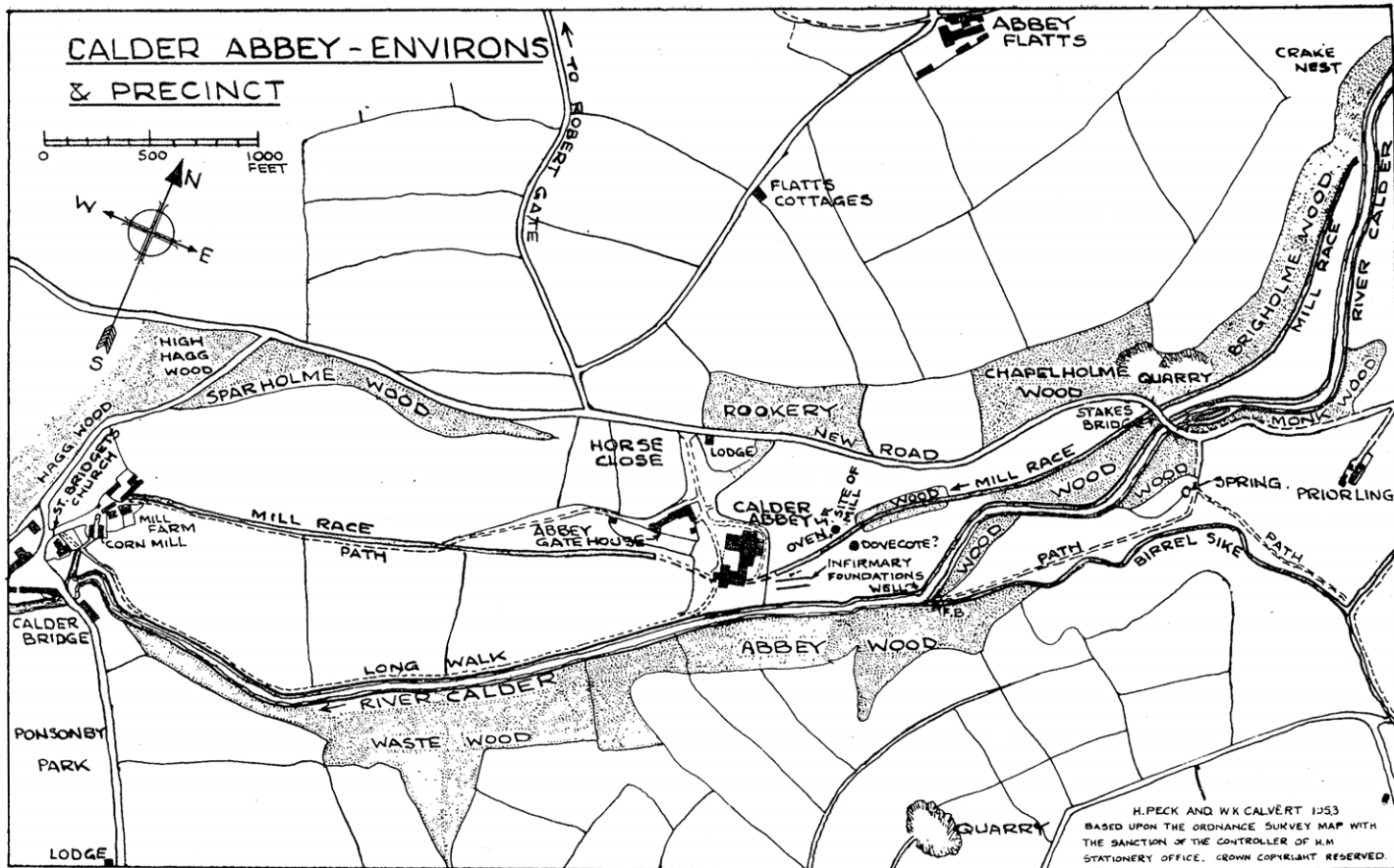
¹ *Furness Coucher Book* I, 11. *V.C.H. Cumberland* II, 174, gives, without quoting any authority, 10 January, 1134.

V.C.H. Cumberland, II 174-8 (1905) and *Medieval Religious Houses*, by Dom David Knowles, 106. The present Article is primarily concerned with the fabric of the Abbey and its plan, taking into account the remains still visible and those which there is reason, of one kind or another, to infer.

I. THE PRECINCT.

The exact extent of the Precinct cannot be stated, so complete has been the wiping away of all traces of its boundary wall; but there are details which suggest that about 30 acres must have been enclosed. The grant of the abbey site and of the property belonging to it, to Dr Leigh in 1538, mentions the precinct of the abbey as containing only 4 acres; but this must surely indicate the abbey itself, with the western gatehouse and guest-house only, leaving out of account the buildings to the east (which must have been within the precinct): the great Infirmary, the gardens, the mill and the great oven, stables, farm buildings and the like, and the eastern gateway and its chapel. The latter can be postulated in the area west of Stake Bridge across the Calder, from its name of Chapel Holme; not far from that was the quarry, of excellent red sandstone, which the monks had used for building their abbey. The Calder would form one boundary of the precinct, and it is probable that the northern wall would run where Captain Irwin made his new road during the 19th century.

The water-supply was obtained by a leat from the river, above Stake Bridge, which served the mill, the infirmary and the other buildings east of the abbey, and then led under the rere dorter and the southern domestic block of monastic buildings, under which it passed through a barrel-vaulted channel (a segment of which was preserved when the stream was diverted by Mr Thomas Rymer). It would serve the cellarium (the western block of buildings), then going to serve the western guest-house,



and finally flowing west to the mill outside the precinct, which still survives at what is now Calder Bridge. North-west of the abbey was a sump or pool, below the present garage and service-yard; it was filled in by Mr Irwin, and again by Mr Thomas Rymer when a tennis-court was made there.

The cemetery lay round the east end of the abbey church; here a garden was made in post-Dissolution days, as may be seen in a picture dated 1710, preserved at the Abbey.

2. THE ABBEY BUILDINGS.

The abbey has suffered much from its post-Dissolution owners, particularly in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The buildings burnt in William Fitzduncan's raid were not, of course, the permanent stone ones, but only temporary wooden structures erected while the permanent ones were being built. I do not think that the Scottish raids of the 14th century are really responsible for the great destruction wrought there; it is nowhere mentioned that Calder Abbey in particular suffered from those raids, and the abbot may well have bought immunity from the raiders, as did the abbot of Furness. The inexpert patching and rough rebuilding, visible today, are not such as the abbey masons would have produced in repairs after structural injury caused by raids; they are the rough and ready work of the people who used the south transept as a cow-byre, and drove a cart-road through the church, completely destroying the east end of the presbytery. During the four centuries of its existence, no doubt a certain amount of routine repair-work and alterations would be done at Calder, as is recorded of other abbeys, but there is no sign of such rebuilding as has sometimes been suggested, and the remains left to us are almost entirely of the 13th century.

The Gatehouse is to the right of the present carriage-drive as you enter it; it still retains its 13th century entry arches, though they are now built up; it had two portals, and a passage between them. The upper storey has been completely altered, with a roof of much lower pitch and a new floor at a much lower level than the original one, put in to make it serve as a hay-loft; the mullioned windows and fireplace are also of relatively recent date. The chapel and guest-house, which would adjoin the gatehouse, have completely disappeared; but the adjoining range of stables, coach-houses, etc., is largely built of abbey stones, and the top step of the staircase leading to the former coachman's quarters is a very large corbel.

During the deep trenching which was done in the kitchen-garden near by, a few years ago, remains of paved foundations and some carved stones were found. After deep trenching not far away, unusual plants germinated (such as horned poppy and a very large variety of spurge), which suggests that the monks had their herb-garden hereabouts.

The Abbey. The oldest surviving remnant is the west doorway of the church, assignable to *circa* 1180. It is a round-headed doorway of three orders, 4 ft. 3 in. wide. The original step into the church remains. A certain amount of repair-work, to preserve this doorway, was most skilfully executed for Mr Thomas Rymer (who purchased the Abbey Estate in 1885); but for his care, lavished so generously upon the ruins, little of them would now remain. The stone employed for his work was from the original masonry, and so skilfully has it been done that it is now difficult to distinguish it from the ancient masonry.

Of the interior of the church, the north and south walls and the south arcade of the nave have completely disappeared, leaving only the five bays of the north arcade; these can be dated to between 1215 and 1240, for Denton, the 17th century historian, records that Thomas de Multon

of Egremont, who died in the latter year, "finished the works and established a greater convent of monks there". This dating is confirmed by the bases of the arcade pillars, which are excellent examples of the "water-holding type". The third capital of the arcade pillars is decorated with zig-zag leaf-moulding, which also occurs on the hood-moulding of one of the windows of the great hall of Egremont Castle, built by Thomas de Multon, and it also figures on a stone preserved in the Book-Closet with many other fragments of carved masonry, tomb-slabs and the like.

In Buck's view of the abbey, made in 1739, the outer south wall of the nave is shown with narrow windows, and the vaulting corbels still complete. Built against this south wall, in the ambulatory of the cloister garth, would be the *carrels* or cubicles where the monks studied books from the book-closet.

The foundation of the *pulpitum* or screen can be seen adjoining the second pier from the east, the northern portion of it remaining above ground. In Buck's view, the now vanished south portion of the screen is shown entire, with a central doorway and two niches occupied by figures. There is preserved in the Abbey House the most beautifully carved little head of a monk, found near the northern foundation of the pulpitum, which may perhaps have come from one of the figures in the niches.

In the north transept there is a beautiful Early English doorway with very deeply undercut mouldings; it is of two orders and retains the original steps, two in number, still in place.

Much of the original level of the cloister garth, and within the transepts and presbytery, is under an accumulation of soil, some three feet deep, put there by a former owner who turfed it down for a lawn. If this filling could be cleared away, features now hidden might be revealed, and remnants of masonry recovered; witness the work done by Canon Loftie and Dr. Parker, who

excavated the bases of the columns of the north arcade, the doorway of the north transept, the pulpitum, the doorway of the chapter-house, and below the sedilia in the presbytery. They also obtained the length of the foundations of the walls at the east end of the presbytery, showing that the church was 147 ft. long altogether.

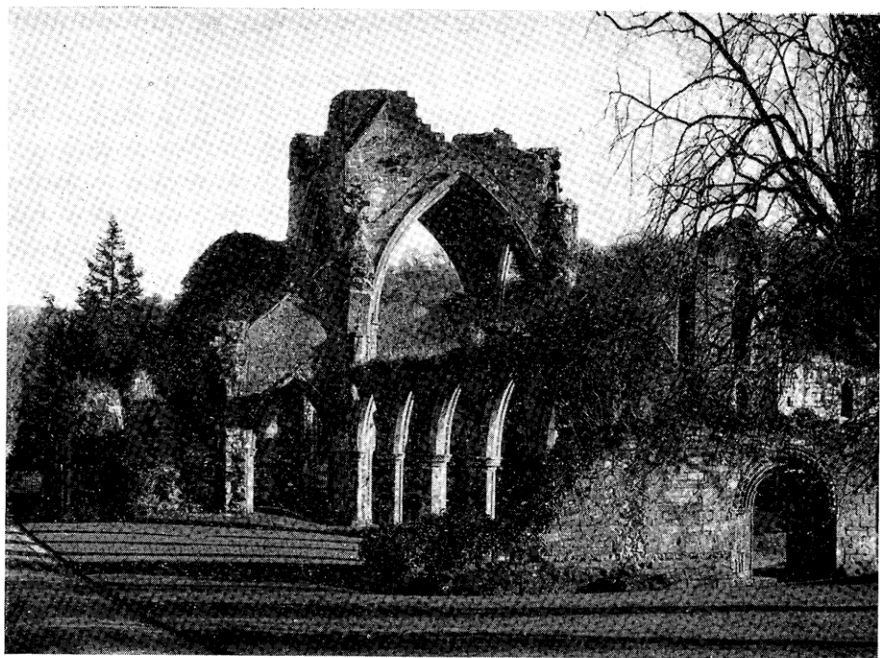
Dead monks were carried out for burial in the cemetery through the Early English doorway of the north transept. Benefactors of the abbey were interred within it, the abbots sometimes in the chapter-house, where one still lies in his stone coffin. In the presbytery were buried three knights, whose battered effigies were pieced together, as far as possible, by Mr Rymer's care, and placed on tombs. That on the north, facing west, can be identified by his shield, which still retains the six lioncelles, three, two and one, of the de Leyburne family: he was Robert de Leyburne, who played a considerable part in local history in his day, early in the 14th century. He was constable of Cockermouth and of Egremont, and he owned land at Gosforth; his wife was Sara, sister of Sir Andrew de Harcla, that brave and honest knight who was executed as a traitor by Edward II. The other two effigies have shields so worn that identification is impossible, but in all probability they are Sir John and Sir Richard le Fleming of Beckermeth, who were great benefactors of the abbey. A bust of a knight, in a canopy, is preserved on the wall, but he cannot be identified.

The *sedilia* remains in the south wall of the presbytery; above it semi-circular arch mouldings are repeated over each of the three seat-spaces. The moulding continues over what may have been a small doorway into the south transept; this doorway might have given access to the sacristy, as there is a large cupboard in the north wall of the transept, with a groove for the door or shutter which once closed it.

The south transept was 31 ft. 3 in. long, with two bays of pointed arches supported on a central moulded and

fluted pillar, with a plain capital. Each bay has, in the east, a double lancet window, and there are two such windows high up in the west wall. In the south wall of this transept, about 9 ft. from the ground, there is a pointed doorway which, by a flight probably of wooden steps, gave access to and from the dorter passage, and to a turret with a vice. This turret-stair led to the higher level of the triforium passage, to which a narrow door, just at the head of the night-stair to the dorter passage, gave access. The stair once went higher still, but is now ruined and not accessible; within the turret it was lighted by loopholes. There was a narrow passage through the thickness of the south gable wall, leading by a narrow opening into the chamber above the chapter-house; Professor Knowles informs us that this chamber was at first probably the abbot's sleeping-quarters; later, when he was provided with separate accommodation, it became the sleeping- and office-quarters of the sacristan, who was responsible for the care of the church, and whose duty it was to sound the bell which summoned the monks down to the church for the night services. For the latter purpose there would be a bell upon the tower, with its rope coming down to the sacristan's apartment, so that he could ring the summons to the monks in their dormitory. Higher up still, in the north gable-end of the dorter wall, there is another doorway, suggesting access to attics above the dorter. In later times a fireplace was inserted in the sacristan's room, with its flue going out through the window. Outside the north end of the room was a small squint-lookout (now blocked up), so that he could look down into the transept, to see that all was in order there. On many of the stones of the stairs there is a mason's mark, an unusual Cross-crosslet.

The transept itself has suffered terribly from its use as a cow-byre, and a doorway has been broken through into the chapter-house; there is much rough patching to be seen hereabouts.



PL. II, FIG. 1.—Calder Abbey from the North-West.



PL. II, FIG. 2.—From the West (the site of the vanished Cellarium).

facing p. 88.



PL. III, FIG. 1.—Book Closet, Chapter House, doorway and window.
c. mid. 13th century.



PL. III, FIG. 2.—The Millstream and Great Oven. This stream
formed the water supply for the Abbey.

Photographs: M. C. Fair.

facing p. 89.

Outside was the *cloister garth*, round which all the buildings of the abbey were grouped. It was enclosed by the ambulatory, with massive wooden roof, and stone arcading, identified by fragments of small twin-column bases found amongst the relics now preserved in the book-closet.

The first doorway, next to the south transept, is a most beautiful one, finely carved with nail-head motif; Ruskin, who saw it, said that it had been carved by a loving hand. It dates from the 13th century. This doorway gives access to the *book-closet*, the groined roof of which is still intact. Within it are preserved, among many other fragments of masonry, the tomb-slabs of two abbots, Robert de Willoughby and Richard de Gra — de Kendale. There is also a cresset-stone (for lighting purposes), a rectangular slab of red freestone with sixteen cavities for oil.

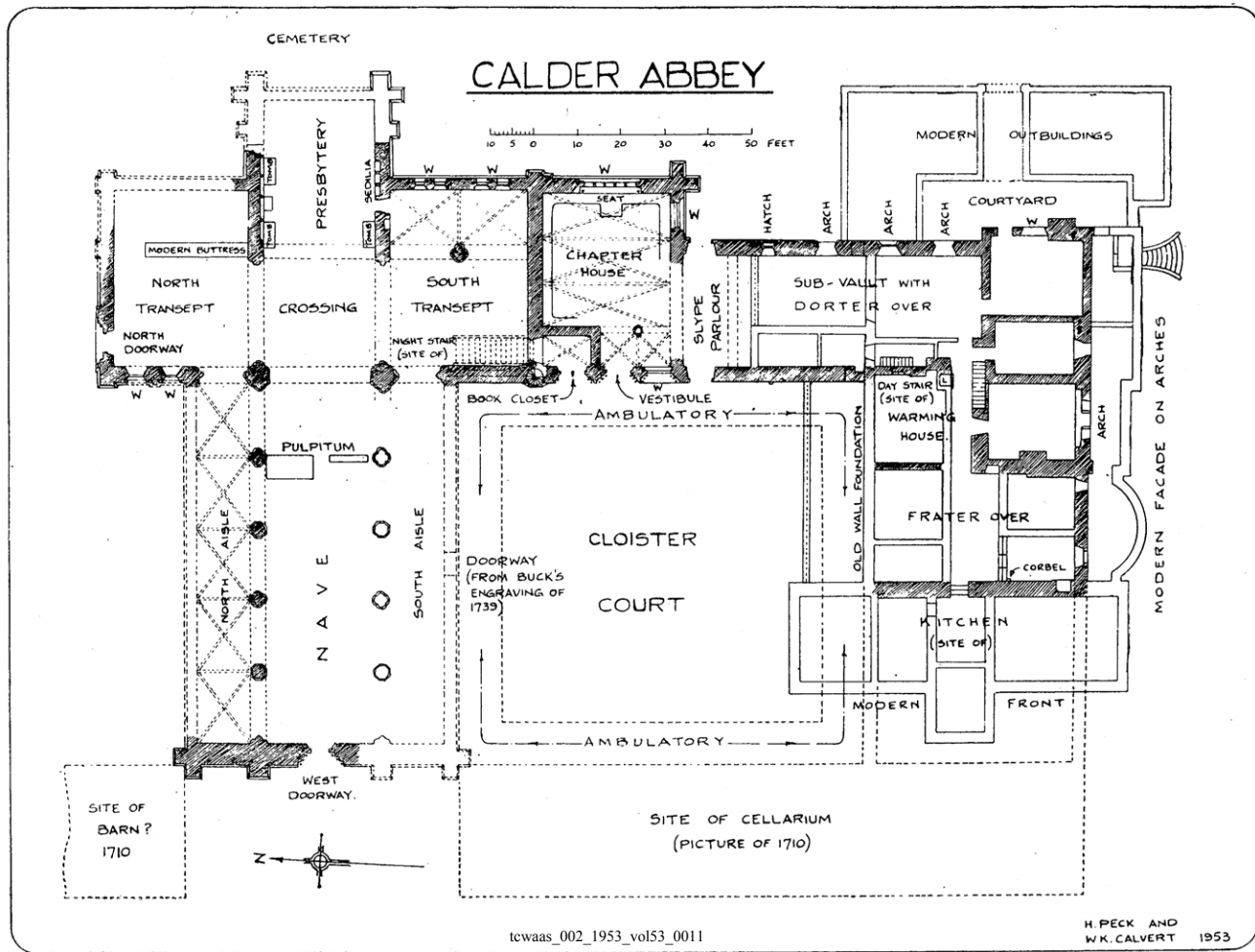
Next to the book-closet are the doorway and west window of the *chapter-house*, a structure of the same period as the book-closet. The doorway opens into the vestibule, few traces of which now remain. One bay of the groined roof of the chapter-house still survives, saved from collapse by the care of Mr. Thomas Rymer, who had it repaired and cemented. Under the débris of centuries on this floor, fragments of stained glass were recovered; they have been carefully preserved, and Mrs Rymer entrusted them to me for examination; she has also allowed me to have, for report, a box of mediæval pottery sherds which I noticed in the book-closet.

The chapter-house suggests enlargement at some period, possibly during the work of Thomas de Multon. The great east window is not quite central; almost all its tracery has gone. The smaller south window suggests a somewhat later type. All the doors and windows, and the two doorways of the adjoining slype, were built up by earlier owners, and unblocked by Mr Rymer; it is wonderful that so much has survived. Remains of the

stone seats, which went under the east window and round each side except the west, remain; here the abbot and his monks met for the community's daily chapter meeting. Under the stone slab which covers his coffin, an abbot still lies buried here. The roof was supported by one pillar, the base of which still survives.

Next to the chapter-house is the *slype* or passage, with a doorway at either end, which gives access to the buildings east of the abbey; adjoining it came the *parlour*, the only place where the monks were allowed to converse, and then only on business connected with the abbey. In the east wall of the parlour was a hatch, which can be seen in the outside wall; its inner face has been very roughly and unskillfully blocked up with broken fragments of masonry. Beyond this, extending to the full length southwards of the eastern block of buildings, was the *dorter sub-vault*; the arches in the walls still remain; a modern doorway has been inserted in one place. The south end of this sub-vault was in some instances used as quarters for the novices, sometimes for stores. It extends into the great kitchen of the modern house, where are two of the archways (one of them occupied by a large and hideous Victorian kitchen-range). Into the dorter, above, modern bedrooms have been inserted. Adjoining it, to the west, was the *warming-house*, now occupied by yet another kitchen and a larder. Built up in the north wall of the passage now adjoining the large kitchen there is a staircase, the day-stair leading to the dorter.

The whole of the north wall of the south range of monastic buildings was swept away, as unsafe, by Captain Irwin; but much of the southern portion remains in the basement of the modern house, including the sub-vault of the frater, part of which is incorporated in the great dining-room upstairs, which has very thick walls. Just inside the modern entrance was a wall of 1770, and adjoining it must have been the *kitchen*, serving both



the frater and the *cellarium*, the western block (now entirely gone). This at first housed the *Conversi* and the Cellarer; the latter was one of the abbey's most important officials, with charge over their business dealings with the outside world, including the management of their granges and other possessions; he was also in charge of the *conversi*. These disappeared about the middle of the 14th century, their place being taken by hired servants. This western block is shown as still standing in the picture of 1710.

The *rere dorter* (latrines) must have been on the site now occupied by the service offices of the modern house—coal and wood stores, and so on; the known course of the water-channel, diverted early in the present century, clearly endorses this assumption, for it must have run directly under the *rere dorter*.

The *infirmary* was situated east of the abbey, with the water-channel running close beside it. Its position was unknown until the long drought in the summer of 1947, when Mr Marlow, of the Abbey Estate, noticed the brown lines of buried foundations in the green turf, and dug trial-pits to ascertain what the character of the foundations might be. He found bases of walls, constructed of freestone slabs and masonry rubble, 2 ft. 6 in. to 3 ft. wide, suggesting a dwarf wall of masonry, designed to carry a superstructure of timber. There were no end walls at either end, but there were cross-walls, and a doorway was located towards the east end. The full length was about 120 ft. and the width about 30 ft.; towards the east end, a wall ran out at an angle, in the direction of the stream. These foundations were later confirmed by air-photographs taken by our member Dr Kenneth St Joseph, F.S.A., showing up clearly as white lines in the grass.

North-east of this building, across the stream, are the remains of a great domed oven, or possibly a kiln for drying the corn to be ground in the abbey mill within

the precincts; the mill is known to have been adjacent to this oven, but it has now disappeared. During the drought, Mr Marlow and I noted a depression in the turf, possibly the spill-over sump of the mill, and at the other side of the stream we saw a round foundation, possibly that of the dovecote.

From a mound in the field known as Chapel Holme, already referred to, the rabbits scratched out a fragment of a 13th century decorated encaustic tile, the only fragment of tile from the site known to me.

3. THE GREAT TOWER OF THE CHURCH.

The remnant of the great tower still retains all the four arches of the crossing. On the north wall of the presbytery is a shouldered doorway, which gave access to the massive wooden platform below the bells; the great corbels which once supported the platform still remain. The narrow upper passage and the stairway leading up above the dorter and the room above the chapter-house, gave access to another doorway to the tower.

The pitch of the roof over the nave of the church has been altered, as may be seen against the tower walls. We suggest that, as elsewhere, the roof over the nave was at first steeply pitched and roofed with slates or stone slabs; at a later date, the pitch was lowered and the roof was covered with lead, one of the first valuables torn off by Henry VIII's commissioners.

Many abbeys had a *lay infirmary* outside the precinct, often some distance away. There is no record of such an infirmary at Calder, but across the river (to the south) there is an ancient tenement known as *Farmery*, and we suggest that it may occupy the site of the lay infirmary.

Calder abbey had no grant of privilege of sanctuary. The only religious houses in Cumberland having this privilege were Wetheral priory and Armathwaite nunnery; the charter produced by the latter purported to give this privilege, but it seems possible that it was a forgery.

During the centuries following the Dissolution, the ruined abbey has been a quarry for people seeking dressed stone for neighbouring premises; this practice has been the cause of immense loss, not to speak of wreckage of the remains by owners of the site. Mrs Rymer tells me that, when she first knew the abbey, soon after its purchase by Mr Thomas Rymer, carts used to come and carry off stones from the ruins, till Mr Rymer put an immediate stop to such depredations. Stones from the abbey are to be seen in very many of the homesteads in the neighbourhood.

4. THE STAINED GLASS.

Under the heaped rubbish on the floor of the room above the chapter-house, when Canon Loftie and Mr Rymer made a clearance for the repair of the latter building's roof, there were recovered some fragments of ancient stained glass; these were carefully preserved in parcels for many years, and they were lately entrusted to me for examination by Mrs Rymer. The fragments are badly perished and quite opaque; some of them are so fragile that they hardly bear the gentlest handling. No coherent design can be pieced together, but on the grisaille glass of the 13th century motives can be made out and recorded; they have been painted on the glass in red oxide of iron and black paint, which was then burnt into the glass in a muffle furnace, and so incorporated in the substance of the glass. Other fragments represent coloured glass of 14th century type. I am indebted to the Victoria and Albert Museum and to Miss Mary-Eily de Putron for assistance with the dating and description of this material.

5. THE POTTERY.

When looking over remnants of carved stones found among the ruins, and now preserved in the book-closet, I noticed a box containing sherds of mediæval pottery;

this, too, Mrs Rymer allowed me to borrow for examination. I sent the sherds to Mr T. Gray, at that time (1948) Director of Tullie House, Carlisle, and he discussed them with our member Mr John Charlton, F.S.A., who kindly gave the following provisional report upon them:—

“The green-glazed wares, of which there are some good handles of vessels, are most difficult to date. Three of these pieces probably belong to the 14th century; the remainder, apart from two 16th century pieces, belong to the first half of the 15th century. These 15th century wares are closely allied to those found in Northumberland and Durham, and may come from the same source.”

I am grateful to Mr Gray and Mr Charlton for their kindness in examining and reporting on the sherds, which have now returned to Calder Abbey.

6. THE ABBOTS OF CALDER.

A list of these is given in *V.C.H.*, II 177-8. To this can now be added the name of William de Lobenham, 1347, and two interesting identifications can be suggested. As mentioned above (p. 89) the tomb-slabs of Abbots Robert de Willoughby and Richard de Gra — de Kendale are preserved in the abbey book-closet. Hitherto it has not been possible to assign any dates to them. But a Robert, abbot of Calder, 1351, and a Richard, abbot, 1432, probably supply these.²

7. POST-DISSOLUTION HISTORY.

The abbey was dissolved on 4 February 1536, and on 26 July 1538 it was granted, with its granges, by Henry VIII to Dr Thomas Leigh to hold in chief, with power to him to grant it to Thomas, son and heir of William Leigh of Frizington, his nephew (*Patent Roll*, 30 Henry VIII, 6 part, 1538). Thomas Leigh, the nephew, by

² *P. & P.*, 148, 154.

Fine dated Easter 1553 (*Final Concords*, 7 Edward VI), settled Calder abbey with the granges of Symonde Kelde, Moughton, Scalderscough and Thornholme, 10 messuages, 2 mills, 2,100 acres of land, moor &c., common of pasture in the forest of Copeland, and free fishing in Calder, Ponsonby, St John's, St Brigid's and Hale, upon himself, his wife Frances, and their issue.

In 1586 Calder abbey, in possession of Henry Leigh, was sold by his son or grandson to Sir Richard Hutton, and subsequently it was purchased by Sir Richard Fletcher of Hutton-in-the-Forest (*Papers and Pedigrees &c.*, by William Jackson, i 284 = this Society's Extra Series v 284); the latter's son and heir Henry Fletcher, and Catherine his wife, released the manor of Calder, with the site of the late monastery there situate and lands there, by fine for £320 to Bridget Fletcher, his sister (*Final Concord Cumberland*, Mich. 15 Charles II, 1663). Bridget Fletcher married John Patrickson, whose son Richard Patrickson married Ursula Dodding of Conishead Priory, and on that occasion Calder abbey estate was re-settled by his mother Bridget (*Final Concord Cumberland*, Mich. 17 Charles II, 1665). In 1695, Richard Patrickson and Ursula his wife released to John Aglionby, by way of mortgage, the manor of Calder, a mill, 300 acres of land, 50 acres of meadow, 500 acres of pasture, 2 acres of heath, in Calder, St John's and St Bridget's (*Final Concord Cumberland*, Easter 7 William and Mary). The estate was further mortgaged in 1697 and in 1701 to John Burgh of London; the latter's heirs foreclosed in 1716, and sold the estate in 1730 to Mr John Tiffin of Cockermouth, who bequeathed it to his grandson John Senhouse, with remainder to his granddaughter, Eleanor Senhouse, the wife of Alexander Hoskins of Cockermouth. John Senhouse left the estate to his son Joseph Tiffin Senhouse, whose daughter and heiress Mary married Mr Thomas Irwin; from Mrs Irwin it passed to her sister, Miss Sarah Senhouse, who left it by her will to the Rev.

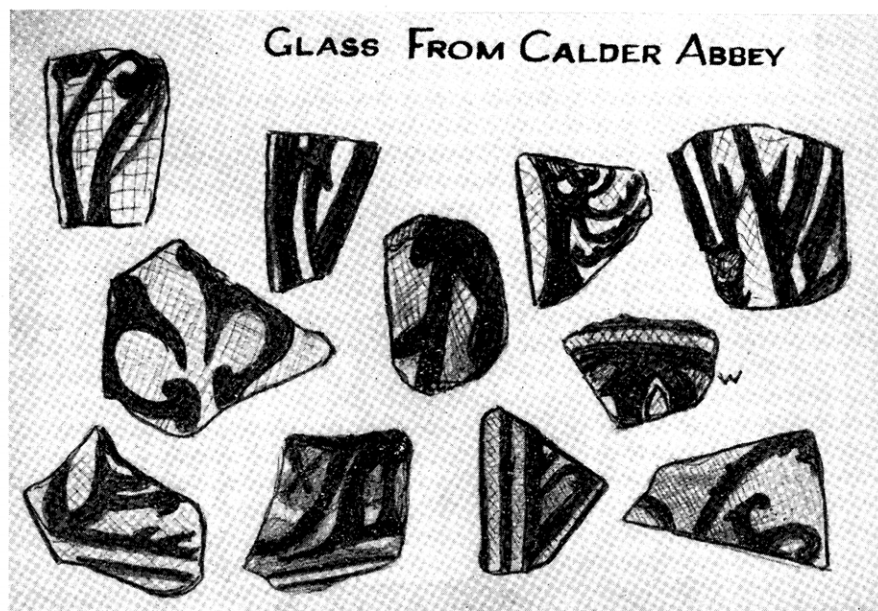


FIG. 1.

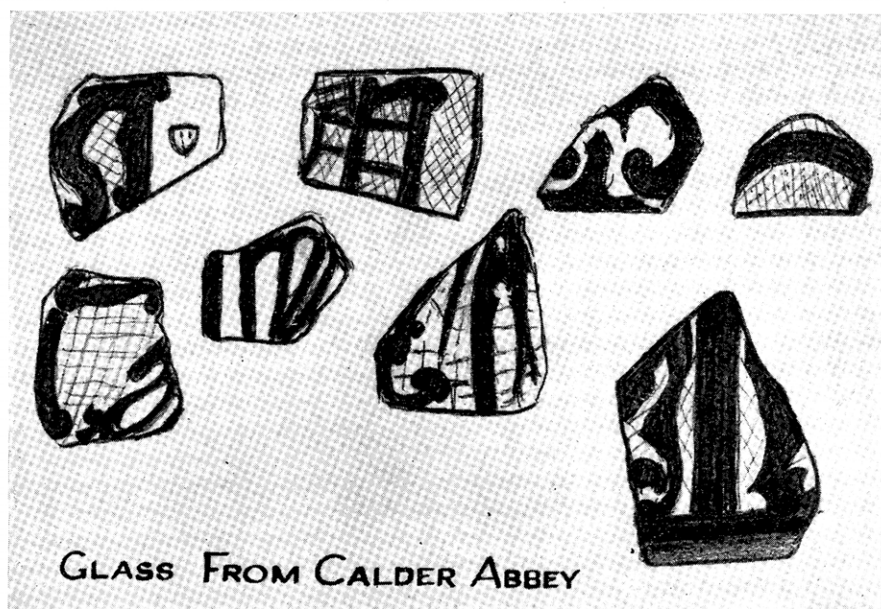
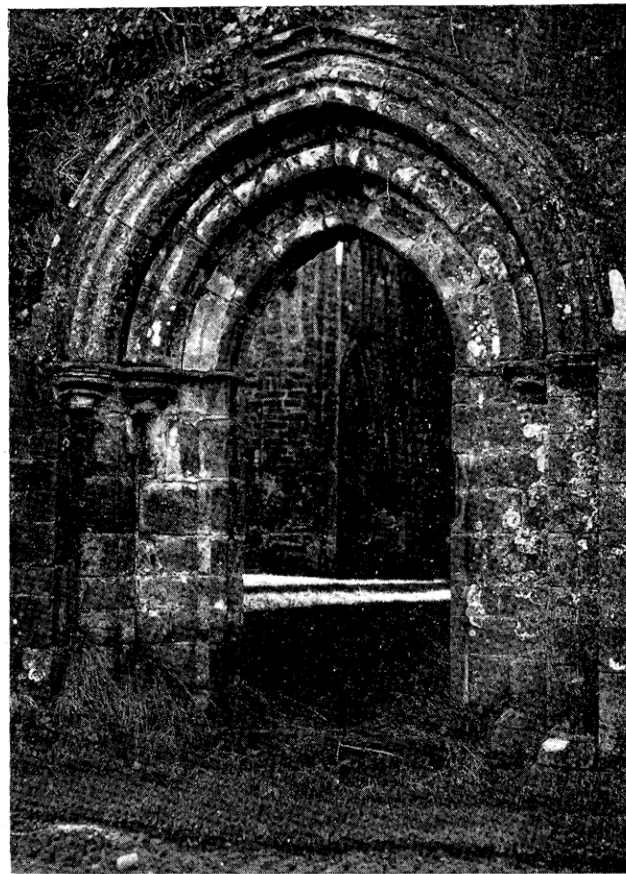


FIG. 2.

facing p. 96.



PL. V, FIG. 1.—Early English N. doorway of N. Transent
facing p. 97.



PL. V, FIG. 2.—Doorway of first stone abbey, c. 1180.

Photographs: M. C. Fair.

S. Minton-Senhouse, who in turn sold it to Mr Thomas Rymer in 1885. It was Mr Rymer who did so much to save the ruined abbey from further destruction, and in whose family the abbey estate still remains.

Note: Sella Park is stated by the county historians to have been the property of Calder abbey, and to have been granted at the Dissolution to Sir Henry Curwen of Workington. But it is nowhere mentioned in any list of the abbey's lands, nor was it granted to Sir Henry Curwen: he purchased it, in 1594, from Thomas Fleming (*The House of Curwen*, John F. Curwen, 123). There is therefore no reason for assuming that it had any connection with Calder abbey.