

ART. XXIX.—*Pigeon Houses in Cumberland.* By The
 WORSHIPFUL CHANCELLOR FERGUSON, F.S.A.
Read at Kirkby Stephen, July 7th, 1887.

IN the Autum of 1886, shortly after the Chester Meeting of the Royal Archæological Institute, one of the Council, Mr. H. Hutchings, was staying at Hutton-in-the Forest in Cumberland, the seat of Sir Henry Vane, Bart. In the course of his ramblings about the precincts, he came upon an almost forgotten dovecot or “culverhouse” as such are called in the south, which proved on examination to still retain the greater part of the wooden *potence* or revolving ladder by which the attendant got at the nest holes in the walls. To this interesting building Mr. Hutchings directed my attention and suggested that I should bring the general subject of pigeonhouses under the notice of the Institute.

The following extract from M. Viollet-le-Duc’s *Dictionnaire de L’architecture* lays down the law and practice of the middle ages as to pigeonhouses so well that I cannot do better than cite it. It will be found under the title *Colombier* :

Pendant le moyen age, la construction d’un colombier était un privilege reservé à la féodalité. Le paysan ne pouvait avoir son four ; il fallait qu’il apportât son pain au four banal du château ou de l’abbaye, et qu’il payât une redevance pour le cuire. Il ne lui était pas permis non plus d’avoir un pigeonnier à lui appartenant. Il en était des pigeons comme des troupeaux de bêtes à cornes et à laine, ils appartenaient au seigneur qui seul en pouvait tirer un produit. Les troupes de pigeons étant un rapport, ceux qui avaient le privilege de les entretenir cherchaient tous les moyens propres à en rendre l’exploitation productive. Tous les châteaux possédaient un ou plusieurs pigeonniers ; les manoirs, demeures des chevaliers peùs châteaux sans tours ni donjons, pouvaient encore posséder un pigeonnier. Il

Reprinted, with additions, from the *Archæological Journal*, vol. xliv. p. 105.

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n'est pas besoin de dire que les abbés, qui étaient tous seigneurs féodaux, et qui possédaient les établissements agricoles les mieux exploités pendant le moyen âge, avaient des pigeonnières dans les cours des abbayes, dans les fermes qui en dépendaient, les prieurés et les obédiences. Les propriétaires de trente-six arpents avaient le droit de joindre à leurs habitations, non un columbier construit en maçonnerie, mais un pigeonnier en bois de seize pieds de hauteur et pouvant contenir seulement de soixante à cent vingt boulins. On entend par *boulins* (du grec Βῶλος) les trous pratiqués dans les columbiers et destinés à la ponte des œufs de pigeons.

The swarms of hungry birds which issued from the *colombiers* of the great French nobles and precipitated themselves on the crops of the helpless peasants were one of the causes that promoted the French Revolution.

Similar rights once existed in England ; it was formerly held that only the lord of the manor or the parson might erect a pigeonhouse, but those rights have long ago become obsolete, and the pigeonhouses themselves have disappeared. We have now-a-days very little idea of the numbers of dovecots, pigeonhouses, or culverhouses that once existed in England, or of the number of birds that were reared in them ; the following passage, extracted from that fine standard work, *Daniels on Rural Sports*, may therefore be usefully cited here. The author says :—

Corn is much destroyed by Pigeons, and the greatest number of them kept in England is about Retford in Nottinghamshire. Hartbil in the *Legacy of husbandry* calculates that there were in his time 26,000 pigeonhouses in England, and allowing 500 pair to each devecot, and four bushels yearly to be consumed by each pair, it makes the whole of the corn lost to be no less than thirteen millions of bushels annually.

The reason why in the middle ages such large numbers of these destructive birds were kept is not far to seek. Fresh meat could only be procured during the summer ; turnips, mangel wurzells, and other green crops were unknown ; hence oxen and sheep could not be fattened during the winter ; indeed they could be barely kept alive ;
large

large numbers of them were therefore slaughtered and salted down at the beginning of winter, so much so that the old German name for November was *Slagtmonat*, or slaughtermonth, and the Anglo-Saxon name was *Blodmonath* or bloodmonth. The characteristic occupations of the various months of the year are sculptured on the late fourteenth century capitals in the choir of the cathedral at Carlisle, and December is represented by a man with a pole axe, slaying an ox.* Lord Macaulay points out that it appears from the Northumberland Household Book that

In the reign of Henry the Seventh, fresh meat was never eaten even by the gentlemen attendant on a great earl, except during the short interval between Midsummer and Michaelmas.†

Those, who were too poor to afford salt meat, subsisted upon rye bread and salt fish, and one of their winter occupations was to tend their stores of it. Thus Tusser in his "Decembers husbandrie" advises

Both saltfish and lingfish (if any ye haue)
through shifting and drieng from rotting go saue
Lest winter with moistnes doo make it relent,
and put it in hazard before it be spent.‡

Such being the prevalent diet from Michaelmas to Midsummer, it was no wonder that many leper houses testify to this day of the ravages of leprosy in England; anything that could vary or palliate such diet was eagerly cultivated; hence we have the fishponds and stews, in which carp and tench were assiduously fattened for the table, and hence the value attached to warrens of conies, while "the large round dove cot arose in the immediate

* See a paper *On the sculptured Capitals in the Choir of the Cathedral at Carlisle*. By James Fowler, F.S.A. Transactions this Society, vol. iv., pp. 280, 290.

† *History of England* vol. i., p. 326.

‡ Tusser's *Five hundred points of Good Husbandrie*. English Dialect Society's Edition, 1878, p. 63.

neighbourhood

neighbourhood of the abodes of the great and wealthy, of the castle, the convent and the manor house. ”*

Their frequency is attested by the occurrence in lists of field names of dovecot, pigeonhouse and culverhouse fields, where now are no such buildings; and by the occurrence in old forms of general words for use in conveyances of land of the term “dovecots.” Instances of every class could easily be selected either at home or abroad, for they were as common, or more so, in France and Italy as in England and Scotland. Every traveller in Egypt will recollect the swarms of pigeons in the villages there, and the bonny little brown hawks that prey on them. To take a few instances nearer home; in the case of a castle, liable to be besieged, a detached dovecot would be useless, except in time of peace; accordingly we frequently find provision made on a small scale in the castle itself; thus, at Rochester, there are in the inner face of the north wall, above the gutter, two rows of pigeon holes, probably original, and even now accommodating a few birds.† Pigeon holes also exist in the keep of Brough Castle in Westmorland, and at Conisborough Castle.‡ A survey taken of Kendal Castle in 1572 describes a “dovecot in good repair” as being “in the south side” thereof, and I have indicated elsewhere the position of this in the existing ruins of Kendal Castle.§

The priory of Lewes possessed a dovecot of cruciform shape, much like a church. It is engraved in *Archæologia* vol. 31, p. 431, and is thus described in a communication to the Society of Antiquarians, dated Dec., 1845.—

* *Sussex Archaeological Colls.*, vol. xi. p. 1. Until the railways put an end to them, the large posting houses on the north road kept numbers of pigeons in their stable yards; they afforded a ready viand for the sudden traveller. The hostler and people in these yards were quite up to the use of “saltcats” and other lures for enticing away their neighbour’s pigeons, as the writer can testify.

† Clark’s *Mediæval Architecture*, vol. ii., p. 417.

‡ *Ibid.* vol. i., pp. 292, 445, 446. *Journal British Archaeological Association*, vol. xxx, p. 21.

§ *Kendal Castle* by R. S. Ferguson, F.S.A.

Fifty years since, there remained . . . together with a dovecote or pigeon house built in the form of a cross, the cells or recesses of which were ingeniously constructed of hewn chalk. The pigeon holes were formed in a similar manner to those described in the notice of the dovecote of Garway, given in the present volume of the *Archæologia*; they were in number between three and four thousand, and were arranged in parallel rows, extending over the interior face of each building. The entrances for the pigeons were four in number, one under the roof at each extremity of the cross, as may be seen in the representation here given. The building measured in length, from east to west ninety feet; from north to south the same; the height of the walls to the roof was thirty feet. This structure was pulled down within my memory for the sake of the materials.*

In the *Sussex Archæ. Coll.* vol. xi., p. 5, the number of cells in this dovecot is given at 2,500.

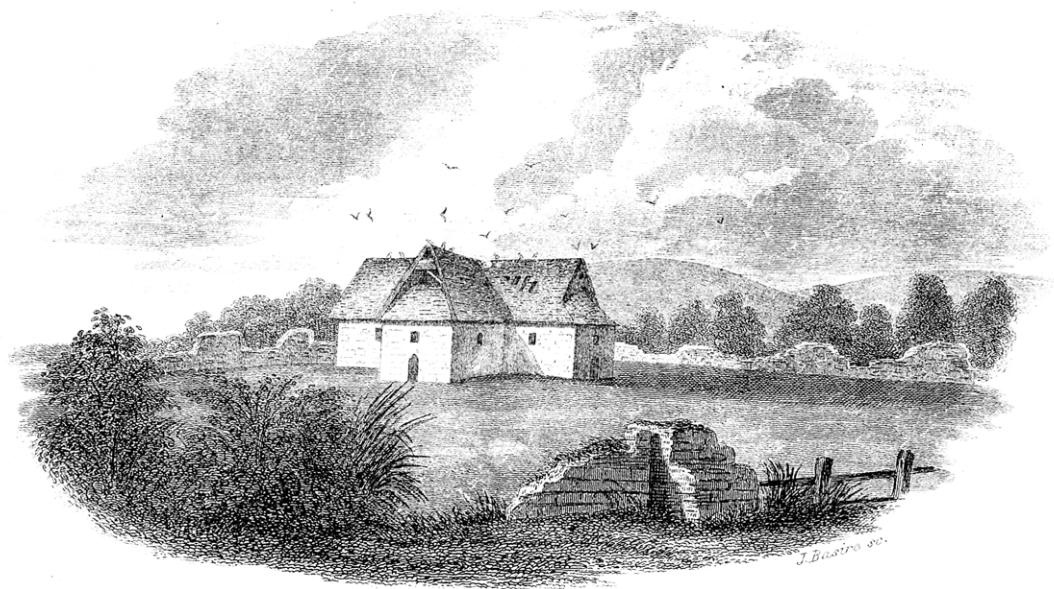
The dovecot at Garway, just mentioned, belonged to the preceptory of the Templers at Garway, in the county of Hereford, and, according to the inscription on it, was built in the year 1326, by "brother Richard." It is circular in shape, and contains 666 cells, or nests, or *boulins* for the birds; it is 17 feet 3 inches in diameter in the clear of walls, and 16 feet in height to the spring of the arch.†

The *boulins* are described as having apertures varying from 6½ to 7 inches in the entrance, and about 17 inches in depth, being countersunk in the walls, one course of holes inclining to the right and another alternately to the left.

There was a large pigeon house at Breadsall Priory, near Derby, octagonal in shape, which is figured in Blore's *Breadsall*. There was a round one at Hurley Priory, Berks; another at Monkbretton in Yorkshire; a square one at Penman Priory in Anglesey, with a stone pillar in the middle, from which flat stonees projected, and wound

* *Archæologia* vol. xxxi, pp. 431, 432, in a communication by G. S. Mantell, F.R.S.

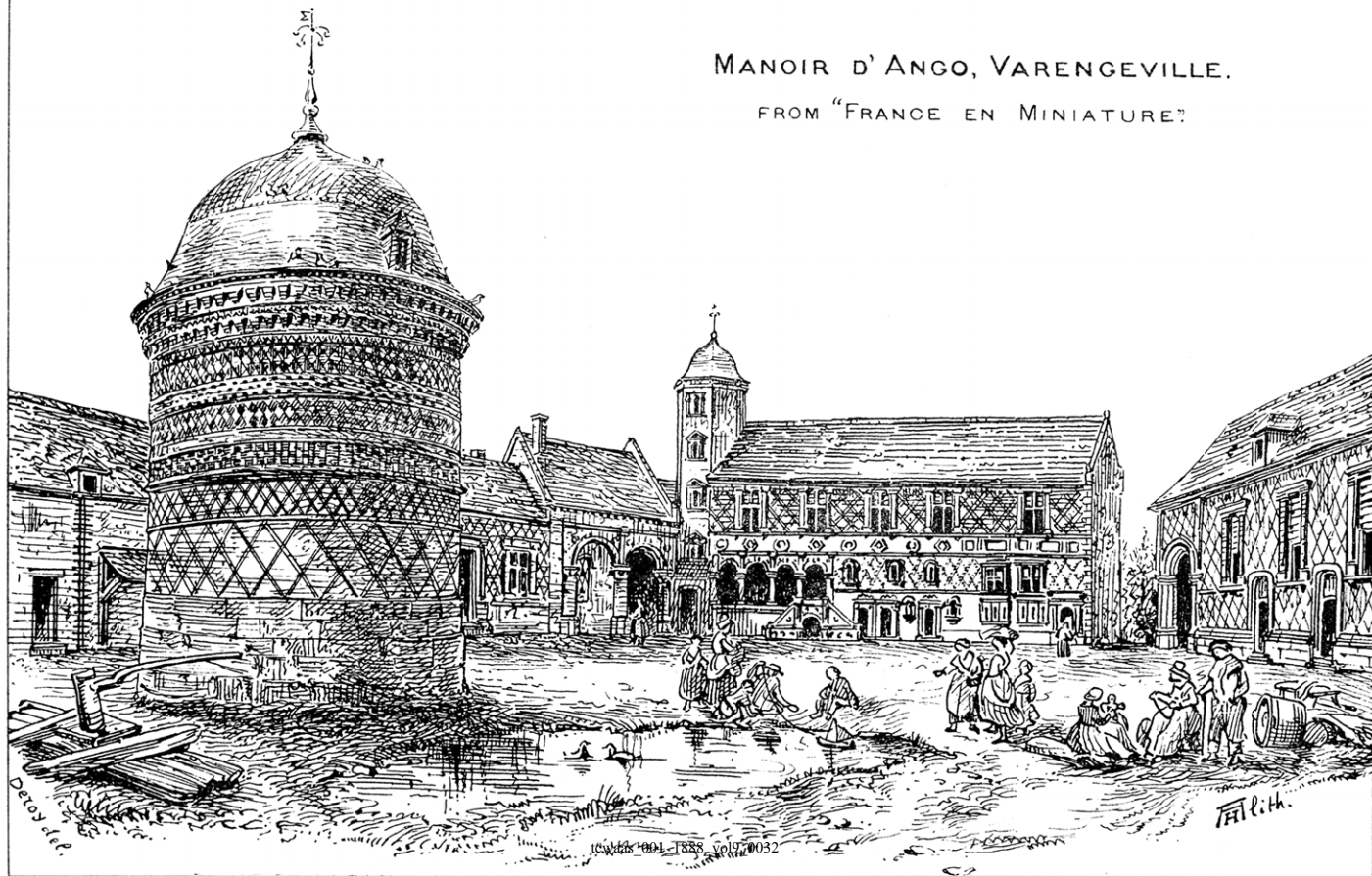
† *Archæologia*, vol. xxxi, pp. 190, 194.



Ancient Dove-cote of Lewes Priory.

MANOIR D'ANGO, VARENCEVILLE.

FROM "FRANCE EN MINIATURE".



up as a ladder, thus giving an attendant access to the cells. Almost every religious house must have had one, and we need not multiply instances. Churches were also utilised for the keeping of pigeons: it is not unfrequent to find the lower stage of church towers, immediately below the bells, to have been originally built for a *columbarium*, as at Collingham in Wiltshire. In Bishop Nicolson's *Account of his Diocese of Carlisle** we find pigeons breeding in the very churches of Warwick and Skelton in Cumberland, and Morland in Westmorland, and no doubt the incumbents of these livings profited thereby. At Aspatria in Cumberland the vicar has a regular built pigeon house, capable of holding a large number of nests.

We will just mention a couple of foreign examples because they are figured in English publications. The *Spring Gardens Sketch Book*, vol. VI, plate 54, contains a very beautiful example of a pigeon house, combined with a well, at Veules, in France, of the date 1776. In the ninth volume of the *Archæological journal* are sketches and details of brickwork by Mr. Petit, of a pigeon house at Boos near Rouen; of it M. Viollet-le-Duc writes as follows:—

Il existe encore pres Rouen—a Saint Jacques, un tres beau colombier bâti en briques de diverses couleurs, et qui appartient au commencement du XVI siecle. Trois lucarnes en bois s'ouvrent dans le comble. Ses dispositions rappellent le colombier de Nesle. Cependant l'étage supérieur est porté en encorbellement sur le soubassement, ce qui donne à cette construction une certain grace.

Mr. Hartshorne has been kind enough to send me, from his father's collection, a picture of the "Manoir D'Ango à Varengeville pres Dieppe," a charming old house of the famous French merchant and friend of Francis I; it gives so good an instance of a manorial pigeon house standing among the other buildings of the manor that it is reproduced with this paper.

* *Miscellany Accounts of the Diocese of Carlisle*, 1703 and 1704, by W. Nicolson, Bishop of Carlisle, published by this Society, 1877.

Let us turn now to Cambridge: in that magnificent work, *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge*, by Willis and Clark* it is stated that a pigeon house [columbarium] is first mentioned in 1414-5, when a regular heading "expenses of the dovehouse" makes its appearance in the accounts of King's Hall: the expenses of construction are not recorded, but the purchase of four dozen pigeons in this year indicates its stocking.

Item pro remuneracione portatorum columbarum ad columbare iiij dussen iiijdob. It pro una salcath v^d ob.

The salt-cat was a lure for keeping one's own pigeons at home, and enticing one's neighbours; it will be dealt with presently.

Messrs. Willis and Clark give† the following account of the pigeon houses at Cambridge.

It may be gathered from the collegiate histories that a pigeon house once existed at every college except Clare Hall, Magdalene, and Sidney Sussex; and it is possible that there may have been one at these colleges also, for the early accounts of the two first mentioned have not been preserved, and those of the last have not been examined in detail. In the 15th and 16th centuries a pigeon house was evidently regarded as a necessity to be built soon after the foundation of the college. At King's Hall the pigeon house was built in 1414-5; at King's College in 1449; and at Queen's College in 1505-6. At Peterhouse the date of the erection has not been discovered, but the building is frequently mentioned in the early account rolls; at Pembroke College it is shewn standing in the orchard in Lyne's map, dated 1574; it was built at Gonville Hall in 1536, as recorded by Dr. Caius; at Corpus Christi, in 1547, by Matthew Parker, a work thought worthy of special commendation by his panegyrist Josselin; at Jesus' College in 1574, and at St. John's College in 1622, but the work then done was evidently only a rebuilding of an older structure. Some of these pigeon houses must have been of considerable size; that at St. John's College cost £109 17s. 2½d., and those at Queen's College and at Jesus' College

* Vol. ii, p. 441.

† Vol. iii, p. 592.

had windows, for at the former in 1537-8, 'Thirteen feet of glass for the windows of the pigeon house' are paid for; and at the latter in 1575-6, we find 'for glassing ye doue howsse conteynninge xliiij feet of glasse xxij^s.' In the course of the 17th century the practice of keeping pigeons fell gradually into disuse. At Jesus' College the pigeon house was let on lease in 1633, and at Peterhouse in 1675. By the end of the century nearly all had been pulled down, for Loggan's accurate views shew a pigeon house at three colleges only, viz., at Trinity Hall, at Queen's College and at Christ's College; and in the latter the building is in the Master's garden and therefore not the public property of the college. At Trinity Hall, however, the pigeon house was still in use in 1730.

We must not omit to mention that Corpus College, Cambridge, built their pigeon house in 1547, and defrayed the cost by sale of certain pieces of church plate, which had gone out of fashion.* The Cambridge houses appear to have all been quadrangular ones.

I have no information as to pigeon houses at Oxford; but the Rev. the Provost of Queen's College, Oxford, tells me that at one or more of the farms belonging to that college are large pigeon houses of the quadrangular kind.

Many examples of manorial pigeon houses still exist, though generally converted into something else, cattle sheds, pig styes, potatoe houses, stores of all kinds, blacksmiths shops and even schools and cottages. When the Royal Archæological Institute visited Bedford in 1881, we saw at Willington a most interesting and picturesque pigeon house, quadrangular in shape, whose details our guide, the late Mr. Parker, C.B., said would be well worth careful reproduction.† At Ashby St. Legers in Northamptonshire, Mr. H. P. Senhouse has two quadrangular pigeon houses, one of which has 2,292 cells, and the other 1,560, or 3,852 in all; an enormous number for one manor;

* Willis and Clark, vol. i., p. 261.

† The stone details of this pigeon house have the appearance of having formed part of an earlier structure, and to the re-use of these stones may be partly attributed the very quaint and unusual form which the gable presents Probably Gostwick pulled down the old manor house and re-used the materials. *Archæological Journal*, vol. 38, p. 453.

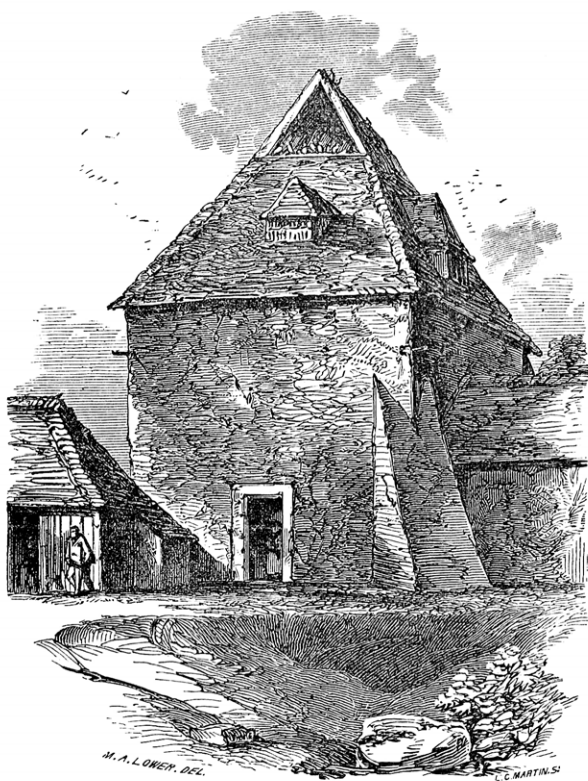
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there are yet a few birds in these houses, but the rats and jackdaws have also got possession and steal the eggs. At Manorbeer Castle near Tenby, there is a circular one in the *enceinte* of the castle. We reproduce a sketch of this from the pencil of Mr. Hartshorne.

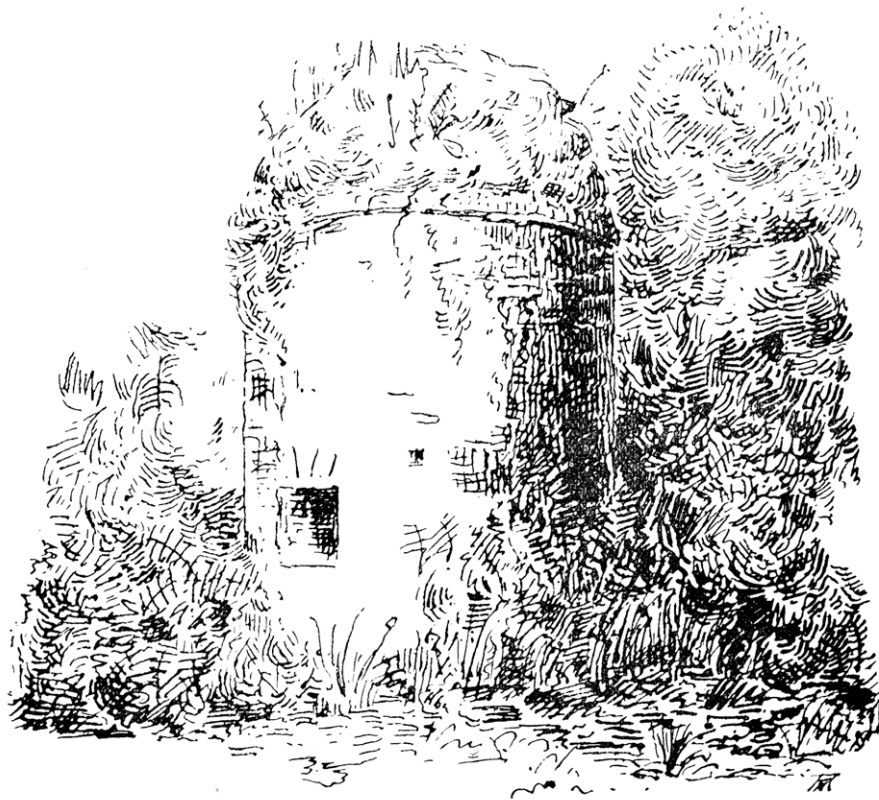
There is a good square brick pigeon house at Delaford Park, Iver. Mr. W. Oldham Chambers, F.L.S., the present occupier kindly sends the following note :—

This Culver House is alluded to in the writings of the property as "the Falconry." It is built in red brickwork, with diagonal patterns in black headers on the outside facings. The House is 17 feet square, and 17 feet 6 inches high; the walls are 2 feet 3 inches thick. There are indications of the walls being originally higher than at the present period. There were 572 holes contained in thirteen rows on each side, but the three lower rows are now blocked up. The lowest started 15 inches from the ground, this level has probably been made up. The original door was on the south side; this has been blocked up and a new one cut in on the north side. The House remained open for a considerable period, the present roof being a comparatively modern structure.

At Trimmers near Paxhill, the seat of the Wyatts in Sussex, is a square one with 700 cells. At Berwick in the same county is a square one, of which, by the kindness of the Sussex Archæological Society, we give a view; this was let in 1622 for £5 per annum, and was tithed, as no doubt were others. There is, or was, a quaint wooden one at Burton Mill, near Petworth; and a fine one of brick with a conical top at Rochford Hall, Essex. At Daglington, Gloucestershire, is a circular one of stone; the ancient pivoted central post with perches for the birds and ascending ladders for the attendant remains, or did until lately. The list might be easily extended; there are several in our own county of Cumberland, viz. at Hutton-i'-th'-Forest, Rose Castle, Highhead Castle, Corby Castle, Barrock Park, Hutton-John, Penrith, Edenhall, Great Blencowe, Crookdake Hall, Wreay Hall, Aspatria Vicarage, Bunker's Hill, Plumbland Vicarage, etc., while others
formerly



PIGEON HOUSE AT BERWICK, SUSSEX.



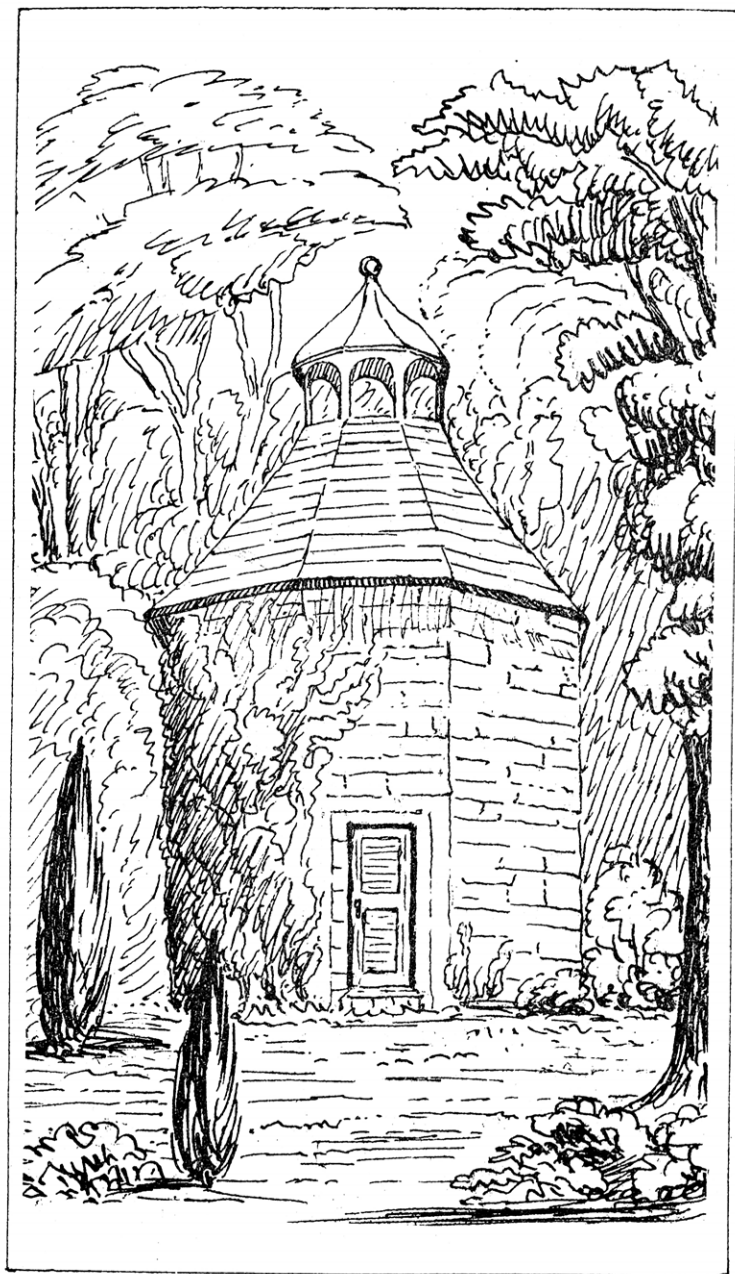
PIGEON HOUSE, MANORBIER CASTLE. AUGUST, 1861.

formerly existed at Tallentire, Netherhall, Naworth Castle, Crofton Hall, and Bowness and Bootle Rectories.

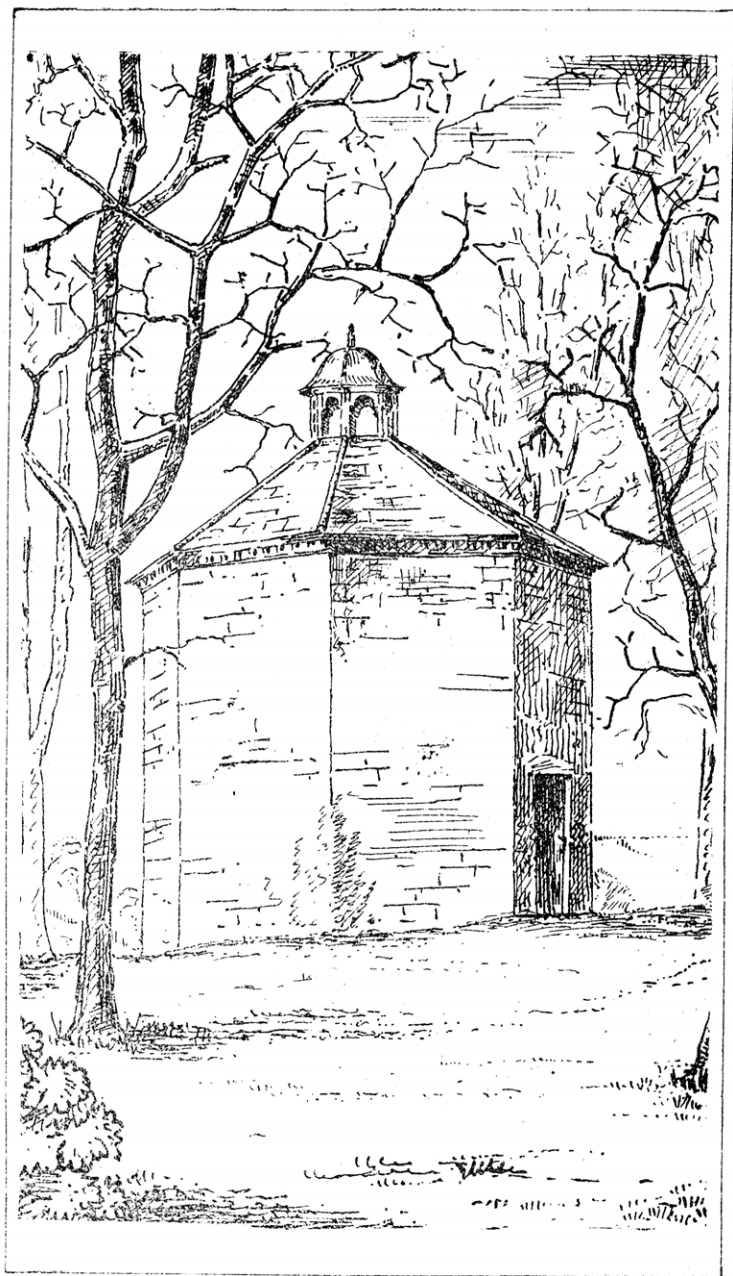
Pigeon houses in plan may be divided into two kinds, quadrangular and circular, for the cruciform one at Lewes may be taken as an eccentricity; and the sexagonal, octagonal, &c., as approximations to the circular shape. In the quadrangular the attendant gets at the nests by climbing along the ledges in front of them, and holding on with his hands; to this there were exceptions, and we have already mentioned one at Penmon Priory in Anglesey, where the flat projecting stones wound, ladder-wise, round a stone pillar in the centre. We shall presently mention another at Corby Castle. But the circular ones were provided with a revolving machine, called a *potence*, by which all the nests could be conveniently got at in turn. This is admirably described and beautifully illustrated by M. Viollet-le-Duc in the article to which I have already referred: the whole article is most interesting, and worth transcription, but it refers to circular *colombiers* on a larger scale than any I know of in this country: ones that have a lower story for cattle or sheep. It would be difficult to understand without the illustrations, which again apply to a more complicated *potence* than any I have seen in England. I must therefore be as clear as I can without pictures. The *potence* consist of a stout upright post, *un arbre vertical muni de deux pivots en fer a chacune de ses extremités*; one of these pivots works in a socket in the centre of the floor of the pigeon house, and the other in a socket in the centre of the rafters of the roof. This upright post carries two or three arms at right angles to it [*potences*, hence the name *potence*] which carry at their extremities a ladder: the arms are not in the same plane with one another, but so arranged as to give the ladder a convenient slope. A person on the ladder can ascend to any required tier of nests he may wish, and can make the *potence* revolve under him so that
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he can reach any nest he pleases. Convenient as the *potence* is, or was, when a pigeon house was put to its original purpose, it is highly in the way, when other uses are found for the building: hence it is generally destroyed, or else mutilated. In the larger French *colombiers* the *potence* carried two ladders, one on either side, the supporting arms running right through from side to side of the house. This is the case in the instance of the pigeon house at Corby Castle.

The pigeonhouse, dovecot, or culverhouse (though I doubt if that name was ever used in Cumberland) at Hutton-i'-th'-Forest is situated in a plantation near to Sir Henry Vane's beautiful mansion of Hutton-i'-th'-Forest. The site is near to where the old farm buildings once stood, and would be bare of trees, when the pigeon house was occupied by its proper inhabitants, who will not resort to a pigeon house in a wood. It is octagonal, of dressed stone; the sides of the octagon being, in the interior of the building, about 5 feet 4 inches. It has twelve rows of nests; the lowest row is four feet from the floor, and has a ledge of flag 6 inches broad projecting in front of it, thus interposing an effectual bar to any climbing or jumping rat that may have intruded; all the other rows have similar ledges of half the breadth. The nesting cells or *boulins*, are 9 inches in height, L shaped, the short limb or entrance being 5 inches broad by 9 inches long, and the long limb 10 inches long, with the same breadth of five inches. There are about 40 nests in each row, or in all, taking off for the door, about 450. The roof is octagonal, on which is an octagonal turret, or *glover*, as it is technically called, with holes for the pigeons to pass in and out. The existence of this pigeon house had been almost forgotten, when Mr. Hutchings came across it in his fumigatory strolls; it was lumbered up with an inserted second floor, and had been used as a kennel, so that its odours were certainly not those of Araby*the blest.



PIGEON HOUSE AT HUTTON-ITH-FOREST.



PIGEON HOUSE AT WREAY HALL.

blest. Mr. Hutchings, however, was not to be denied ; armed with a cigar, he explored the interior, and was rewarded by finding that the upright of the *potence* and the upper arm were in existence, and perfect. Sir Henry and Lady Vane's interest was aroused ; the place was cleared out, and the second floor knocked out ; in a neighbouring shed the ladder of the *potence* was found, and reinstated in position ; and the "pigeon house" now forms one of the sights of one of the most charming places in Cumberland. The ashlar work of the pigeon house is identical with the ashlar work of that part of the mansion house, which was built by Sir George Fletcher, M.P. for Cumberland, with one or two intermissions, from 1661 to 1697 ; his architect was Inigo Jones. The Society is indebted to Lady Vane for the sketch of the Hutton-i'-th'-Forest pigeon house given with this paper.

At Barrock, also in the Forest, is another pigeon house, also octagonal, measuring on the exterior along one side of the octagon 9 feet 4 inches ; on the inside 7 feet 4 inches ; it has a potatoe house below it. It seems to be an inferior imitation of the one at Hutton-i'-th'-Forest, fatter and squatter ; it was so lumbered up with flower-pots, a modern second floor, the ruins of a church organ, and a family of owls, that much investigation into the interior was impossible, but it seemed everyway a poor copy of the last. It was probably built by the Grahams, who, shortly after 1768, purchased Barrock from the Duke of Portland, and converted it from a farm house into a gentlemen's residence. This pigeon house has had a *potence*, which has totally disappeared, but I found the upper pivot hole.

The pigeon house at Wreay Hall, a place about five miles south of Carlisle, much resembles that of Hutton-i'-th'-Forest ; it is octagonal, of dressed ashlar work, and has fourteen rows of nesting cells, or *boulins*, or about 530 in all ; the lowest row is only two feet from the ground.

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Great part of the *potence* is remaining, and it has on its central axis a sort of shelve, or ledge, the use of which I do not quite see, but it resembles the top of a music stand. The date of this pigeon house is probably the same as that at Hutton-i'-th'-Forest, to which its details are similar, except the shelf on the *potence*; this pigeon house is now filled with farm implements and lumber. The farm, on which it stands, has long been the property of a branch of the Fletcher family, who were formerly at Hutton-i'-th'-Forest, and from whom Sir Henry Vane is descended. The sketch, given herewith, of this pigeon house is by Mr. C. J. Ferguson, F.S.A.

An octagonal pigeon house of similar type exists at Highhead Castle: it is roofless, and every fragment of woodwork has disappeared, with the exception of a decaying door lintel. It is of rubble, with dressed quoins, and an overhanging cornice, much of which has now fallen. The sides of the octagon measure 7ft. 4in. on the outside of the building, and 5ft. 6in. on the inside: there are 520 nesting cells or *boulins*, in eleven rows, and the lowest row is 3 feet from the ground, with a very massive flag projecting six inches in front; the *boulins* are of brick, and of the usual L shape. The date of this pigeon house seems to be early in the last century.

There is a circular pigeon house at Bunkers Hill, Carlisle, concerning which the proprietor, Mr. Barnes, of Bunker's Hill, writes me as follows:

16th April, 1887.

Dear Sir,

I observe in the Carlisle papers, that you inquire for the places in Cumb^d where large pigeon houses exist, & write to inform you that there is one at Bunkers Hill; it is built of cobbles, & is round like a tower, & can be seen at a great distance; I can see it at Rockliff from the Railway; it has a number of holes, tier upon tier, & will hold five or six hundred nests; the frame or loft was removed about 30 years ago, having gone to decay, & not replaced;
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the lower part is used for cattle and horses. I do not know when it was built, or by whom. I have known it upwards of 40 years, but never knew any pigeons in it. The field in which it stands has always been known as the Pigeon Cote field.

This house is of large dimensions, 16 feet in internal diameter, and of considerable height: the lowest row of *boulins* is 7ft. 2in. from the ground, and there are 14 rows of them, each containing about 40 *boulins* made of brick in the usual L shape. It has a *glover* on the roof.

Coming to quadrangular pigeon houses, there is one at Rose Castle, which is described in a survey taken in the time of the Commonwealth as :

The dove-cot, built with hewn stone.*

This of course is fatal to the tradition which makes the munificent Bishop Smith (1684-1702), the original builder, but the date 1700 on the door shows that he must have repaired, or rebuilt it. The pigeon house at Rose is square, 18 feet 9 inches external measurement, and is 12 feet in height to a cornice four or five inches thick, which runs continuously round the building: the two ends are gabled above the cornice. There are 13 rows of *boulins* on each side, 15 in a row, of the usual L shape, with projecting ledges in front, or in all, allowing for the door, about 800. The lowest row of nests is 9 inches from the ground, which is much worn away by cattle, as this pigeon house now does duty as a cattle shed. An attempt was recently made to keep pigeons here, but boys and rats frustrated it.

The pigeon house at Plumland stands upon Parsonby Green, near the church, and belongs to the vicar: it is most substantially built of large hewn stones, and stands 10 feet in height from the ground externally to the lower side of the eaves, the upper part has been at some time or other rebuilt. It is nearly a square, 17 ft. 6 in. by 16 ft.

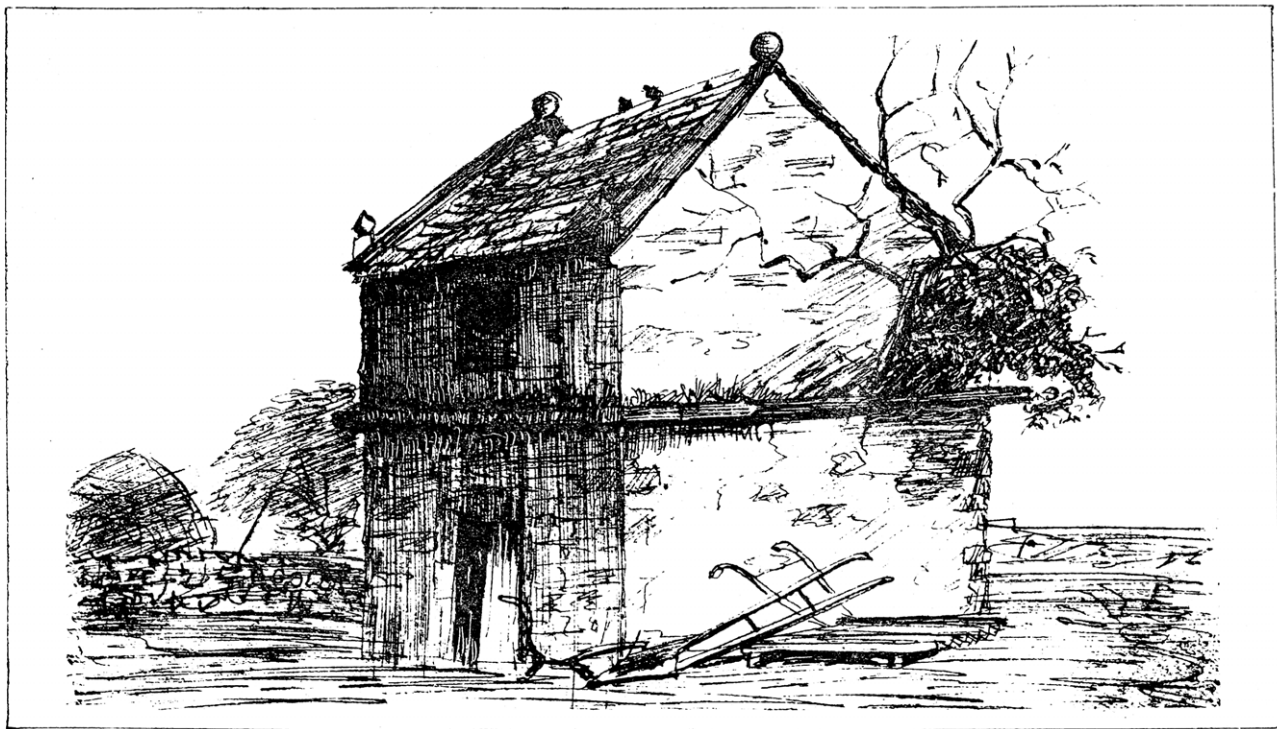
* Hutchinson's Cumberland, vol. ii., p. 436.

6 in. and the original square headed door remains in the south side, but is built up ; it measures 4 ft. 3 in. in height by 1 ft. 9½ inches wide : the sill and lintel are each of a single stone, and a broad chamfer runs round the jambs, sill, and lintel. The building has now been turned into a gig-house, and an enormous doorway cut through the north side, which has been totally rebuilt for that purpose. The roof is modern and flimsy. The interior is very singular : the *boulins* are built of blocks of hewn stone about 14 inches square, and 6 thick : a row of these is laid down with intervals of 6 inches between the stones : on this row another is placed, the stones of the upper row bridging the spaces between those of the lower ; the whole of the sides have been thus built up : the cells so formed are about 6 inches square by 14 deep, they are not L shaped in plan, like those heretofore described, but are simple recesses. The lowest row of nests is almost on the ground : the east and west sides have 20 rows of 8 each, and the building has contained about 600. There are no ledges in front of the rows of *boulins*, as in the houses already described, except that on the east and west sides a ledge, projecting three inches, is placed 4 ft. 6 in. from the ground. One would imagine that this method of constructing the nest holes was very costly ; the labour of hewing some 700 of these stone blocks must have been considerable. We are inclined to consider this pigeon house to be early 16th century.

This pigeon house differs from the local ones previously described in the *boulins* being simple recesses, and in the absence of ledges in front of them ; thus agreeing with the large circular one at West Camel Vicarage, in Dorsetshire. These differences occur in the two next examples.

There is a quadrangular pigeon house at Crookdake Hall, the property of Mrs. Dykes, about which I have the following letter in answer to enquiries made by me in the local papers :

Dear Sir,



PIGEON HOUSE AT CROOKDAKE.

Dear Sir,

There is a pigeon house, such as you inquire about in the Journal, at Crookdake Hall in the parish of Bromfield,—property belonging to the Dykes family: it is a square building with holes round the four sides, about five or six hundred in number: above the door is the inscription—

Sr I B. A B. 1686.

Sir John Ballantyne & Anne Ballantyne. During the present century it has been used as a school house & a fire place has been placed in it; George Moore is said to have gone here to school. There is no revolving ladder, the old man who showed me the place, saying, they simply climbed up the holes: it is at present used for pigeons, but the people only keep a very few.

Yours faithfully,

M. SIDNEY DONALD.

This pigeon house is of rubble work, with dressed quoins, and is nearly square, 18ft. by 18ft. 6in., the shorter being the north and south: the door is in the north side: on the outside, about 1ft. above the door sill, a broad ledge of thin flag runs all round the building, affording a place for the birds to parade on and sun their plumage, a feature not existing in the examples previously cited; the building rises some five feet higher, and the access for the birds was by two oval apertures, one in the north, the other in the east side, and midway between this ledge and the eaves: the east and west ends are gabled, and each surmounted by a ball of stone: a sort of urn-like ornament stands at each angle of the building: the roof, of red tiles, is new, the building having recently been roofless. The interior contained some 700 *boulins*, each 15 inches deep, and about 10 inches high, by 9 broad: they are simple recesses, not L shaped, and the rows have no ledges in front of them: they are formed of thick flags, and the *boulins* in one row are vertically over those in the row below; they start from the ground. Evidence of
the

the use of the building as a school is afforded by the inserted modern window in the south side, and by a fireplace and chimney on the east side.

Mrs. Dykes, who also wrote to tell me of the existence of this pigeon house, says :

A tradition in the family says it was put up by Sir John Ballantyne, of Corhaus, when he married the heiress of Crookdake, Anne Musgrave, and came to live there.

This is not quite correct ; Sir John Ballantine married Anne daughter and heiress of Sir William Musgrave, of Crookdake and Ireby, in 1663,* while the date on the pigeon house is 1686.

The following passage from Smile's Life of George Moore, p. 32, proves that Moore's schoolmaster was well suited to his school house.

To return to George Moore's early education. After leaving Blackbird Wilson's school at Bolton gate, for which his father paid six shillings and sixpence a quarter, he was sent to Pedler Thommy's school at Crookdyke near Leegate. Thommy had been a pedler, as his name indicated. Though he had broken down as a pedler, he was thought good enough to be a schoolmaster. He was not a good teacher, though he was much less cruel and drunken than the Blackbird.

The stop on the door lintel between S^r I. B. and A. B. is a small heart : the same stop occurs on a similar inscription on an oak board in a pew in Bromfield Church, but with the date 1664, the year after the marriage.

The vicar of Aspatria has a quadrangular pigeon house at the back of the new vicarage ; it is of rubble, rough-cast and measures 12 ft. by 11 ft. 6 in. A ledge, similar to that of Crookdake, runs round the exterior at about 6 feet from the ground. The door on the east side, has been enlarged to admit cattle. The *boulins* in the inside are

* Whelan's Cumberland, pp. 292.

much dilapidated: they are formed of flags and rough blocks of stone, and are vertically over one another: they are not L shaped, and are about 8 in. square and a foot deep; they commence from the ground and have no projecting ledges in front. The roof is original, and resembles that on the Berwick pigeon house (see the illustration) but without the little dormer shown there.

The following letter was also received in answer to enquiries in the local papers:

Blencowe, Penrith, Aug. 22/87.

Dear Sir,

Having read with great interest and pleasure your paper on "Local Dovecotes," may I take the liberty of informing you of the existence of a very fine one at Great Blencowe Farm, in the village of Great Blencowe, the property of H. Riley, Esq., of Ennim.

Often in my younger days have I played in this place tho' its interest did not then strike me; but when I saw your paper, I thought that its existence should no longer remain a local secret.

With this determination I set off this evening (Monday) on an exploring expedition, the results of which follow.

The building—a stone one—stands at the west corner of the farm-yard, is about 18 feet high, that is to the eaves, and is ornamented above by a roof, in the form of a four-sided prism. The S.E. wall is pierced by 4 apertures, the highest (opening into the dove cote proper) being semicircular in form, and serving the purpose of advent and event for the birds, the three lower apertures are on the same level, the two outer being ovoid in form, the middle being a door, and of course, of the usual shape; the two outer both admitted light, and poultry—for it seems probable that this building, which is two-storied, was designed for ground and winged game, viz.: poultry and pigeons, the poultry naturally occupying the lower of the two stories. Above the door are the letters W.T. with the date 1789 *sunk* in the stone, or, in other words, cut out—evidently the initials of William Troutbeck, a former inhabitant of this farm, for I know it to have been the residence of Mr. Ewan Troutbeck. The prismatic roof is surmounted by a spherical stone, which bears an iron spike. So much for external characters.

Internal Characters.—Firstly, it is divided into two by a horizontal partition, which serves the purpose of floor for the dove cote, and roof for the poultry (?) house. This partition has been recently put in, tho' it takes the place of an older and more dilapidated one, and

and in making it, I notice that the joiner has, intentionally or not, omitted to leave a hole of communication between the dove cote and the poultry house. There, however, remains a door of entrance in the N. wall, which doubtless has, at one time, been furnished with a staircase, unless they used some ladder as means of access.

The interior of the Dove cote.—The walls are occupied by recesses, small, but large enough for their purpose, viz., that of holding nests. They, the walls, are about ten feet high, and the same broad; hence the interior may be said to be 10 by 10 feet.

The walls are intact on the W. and S. sides, but the N. side is pierced by a doorway in the N.E. corner. The W. wall is pierced by the window-like opening before described as semicircular in shape. This has been carefully plastered all round. The recesses for nests are arranged in rows, and have been formed by placing bricks one above the other in a vertical row, only broken in continuity by the interposition of slabs of sandstone which divide that necessarily long grove which would intervene between the vertical rows of bricks, into numerous recesses. The number of these recesses differ on the four walls. In the W. wall, which is intact, there are the greatest number, viz., 88, made up of 11 horizontal parallel rows of eight each. In the S. wall, also intact, there are 66 recesses, 11 rows of six each. In the E. wall (pierced by opening) 62. In the N. wall (pierced by doorway) 52.

I may say that the new flooring has been made at a higher level than the old, half concealing the lowest row of recesses. The new roof and floor were put on in 1884.

The Poultry house, on the lower of the two stories. This is semicircular in the interior, and in its walls there are several recesses, of the shape of half a cone, arranged in two rows, that is, a cone of vertical section; one row is placed about three feet from the ground, and is of a size to accommodate an ordinary number of barn-door poultry, e.g. a hen; the lower of the two rows of recesses is on a larger scale, and, from the size of the recesses, would suggest geese, turkeys, and the like. At present the occupant of this is a calf; the dove cote being unoccupied.

This then concludes my description, and I hope I have made it implicit, and that it may be of service to you,

I am,

Yours faithfully,

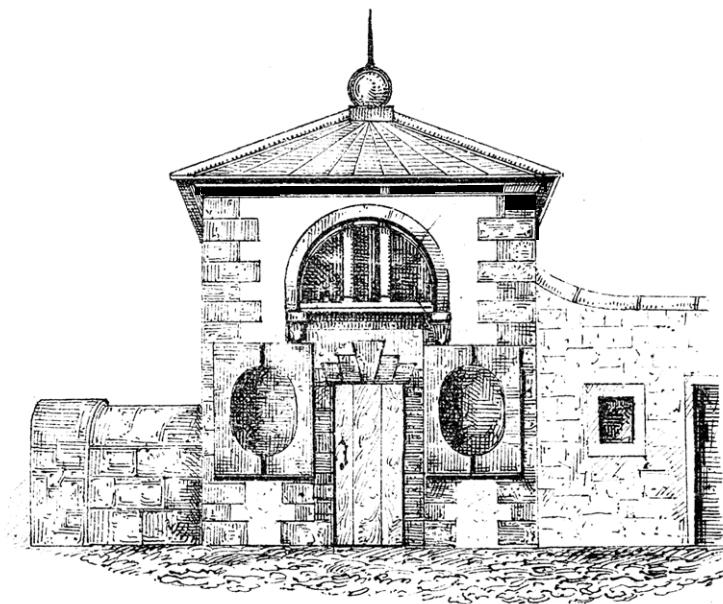
EDWARD FAWCETT.

P.S.

I enclose sketch of exterior. I must apologise for its roughness.

E. F.

We



PIGEON HOUSE AT BLENCOWE.

We reproduce one of Mr. Fawcett's sketches of this pigeon house.

The pigeon house at Corby Castle stands on a sloping eminence to the right front of the castle, and is disguised as a Doric temple, having a classical porch of four columns in front of it. It is nearly square, 21 feet by 22 feet without the porch in front. A projecting ledge runs round three sides of the building, about 10 feet from the ground, but, as its upper edge is chamfered away, pigeons cannot sun themselves on it; it appears a mere useless survival. The building rises some 12 feet above this ledge, being slightly set in. The entrance is by a door opposite to the end at which is the porch. Above this door, and above the projecting ledge, is a window-like recess, in which are small holes for the birds to enter; there are others in the gable of this end of the building. The *boulins* are counter sunk, or L shaped, and have a three inch ledge in front of each row. There are fourteen rows of them, each containing fourteen *boulins*, or allowing for the door, about 750 in all: the lowest row is two feet from the ground. But the feature of the Corby Castle pigeon house is the *potence*, which is a double one, in perfect working order. The *arbre verticale* is a substantial beam, about 20 feet in length, and carries three cross arms, each about 17 feet long; these support at their extremities two ladders, and the middle one also carries an horizontal platform, about six feet square. This pigeon house must date from 1813, when Corby Castle was recased in stone, and converted into a building of the Grecian Doric order, but this pigeon house must have succeeded an older, and probably a circular, or octagonal house, with a double *potence*, a feature which has been continued in the new Doric temple.

A square pigeon house exists at Hutton John, of which Mr. Hudleston has kindly furnished an account and sketches. It is about 18 feet square, and same height to
spring

spring of the roof, which was formerly a foursided pyramid with a *glover* (so it seems from an old sketch) on the top; it is now a two fall, with entrance holes for the birds in the gable ends. It has been converted into a blacksmith's shop. We have no information as to the interior.

A square one formerly existed in Penrith, but was destroyed this year to make way for a new road. So utterly had its use been forgotten, that when it was cut through, and the interior exposed, the neighbours took the *boulins* to be wine binns.

A pigeon house exists at Eden Hall, as to which we have no information.

From the following entry in Lord William Howard's Household Books,*

A salt cat for the dove cote xiiijd.

We learn that a dove cote once existed at Naworth Castle, but it has now disappeared, though its site is known.

Sir Musgrave Brisco tells me that there was once one at Crofton Hall, but, as it became useless, and, standing in front of the house, was considered an eye-sore, it was pulled down. Our member, Mr. Browne, writes me as follows :

Tallantire Hall, Cockermouth,

July 5th, 1887.

I see that you have a paper on Pigeon houses. A field close to this house has for ages had the name of *Dove Cote Close*. As a child I remember playing amongst the stones, of which the Dove cote originally consisted. The small mound upon which it stood may yet be seen, and I can still identify some of its stones. It stood on a very commanding height, and tradition said, was a choice landmark for ships at sea.

Yours very truly,

WILLIAM BROWNE.

* *Surtees Society*, vol. 68, pp. 135.

A.



B.



A. OLD VIEW OF HUTTON JOHN, SHOWING THE PIGEON HOUSE.

B. PIGEON HOUSE AT HUTTON JOHN IN PRESENT STATE.

The name of Dovecote, applied to a piece of ground near Bootle Rectory, records that one once stood there, and probably belonged to the rector; and the rector of Bowness-on-Solway tells me that his predecessors had one in a field opposite to the church.

More must exist in Cumberland, and many more have existed, which have not come to my knowledge, though the local papers kindly drew attention to the subject. I have made no inquiry into them in Westmorland. A study of field names cannot fail to indicate a site of many a forgotten pigeon house; near Dalston, Miss Kuper informs me, a field called Duchet (no doubt a corruption of Dovecote) formerly had one in it.

The domestic economy of these pigeonhouses is curious; they require a deal of attention; the attendant only visited them early in the morning, otherwise the birds would never settle for the night; cleanliness was requisite, and the interior required to be scraped and whitewashed twice a year, in November and February; Messrs. Willis and Clark cite an entry in the accounts of Peterhouse, Cambridge, shewing that in 1546-7 four gallons of wort were brought to wash the nests with, probably to kill the fleas. Birds of prey had to be guarded against, and the same gentlemen cite, from the accounts of Queen's College in 1513-4, the following order for the purchase of bird-lime—

Item X^o die novembris dedi ad jussum Mr. Waham tunc vices vice presidentis gerentis Johanni Fenys ad emendum visum quo caperet aves deuorantes columbas collegii ijd.

Lures of various kinds were much used to attract the birds; the salt cat has already been mentioned, and to Messrs. Willis and Clark we are indebted for the following reference to John Moore's *Columbarium, or the Pigeon House*, first published in 1735, and reprinted by W. B. Tegetmeier, 8vo. London, 1879.

Being

Being thus entered on the head of diet, it necessarily leads us to consider a certain useful composition called by the fanciers a Salt Cat, so named, I suppose, from a certain fabulous oral tradition of baking a cat . . . with cummin seed, and some other ingredients as a decoy for your neighbour's pigeons ; this, though handed down by some authors as the only method for this purpose, is generally laughed at by the gentlemen of the fancy, and never practised.

The right Salt Cat therefore is, or ought to be thus made : take gravel or drift sand, loom such as the brick makers use ; and the rubbish of an old wall, or, for want of this, a less quantity of lime, let there be a gallon of each ; add to this a pound of Cummin seed, a handful of bay salt, or saltpetre, and beat them all up together into a kind of mortar . . . and your pigeons will take a great delight in it

The Cummin seed, which has a strong smell in which pigeons delight, will keep your own pigeons at home, and allure others that are straying abroad, and at a loss to fix upon a habitation.

It is open to conjecture that the cat in saltcat is nothing else but "cates" or "acates," but I am inclined to think that a *bonâ fide* pussy sometimes entered into the composition, for at Jesus' College, in 1651-2, occurs the following entry

For a roasted dog and comin seed 00 : 02 : 00.

The Sportsman's Dictionary, published in 1778, gives two receipts for a lure for pigeons, the chief ingredient in each being a boiled goat's head.