

ART. XVIII.—*The Denton Manuscripts.*

By the PRESIDENT.

Communicated at Arnside, September 25th, 1893.

WHEN the Royal Archæological Institute visited Carlisle in 1859, the late Mr. Hodgson-Hinde read a valuable paper in the historical section *On the Early History of Cumberland*. In it he dealt with the inaccuracies and misstatements which abound in the generally received accounts. Alluding to these inaccuracies and misstatements, he said :—

Many of them originate with the *Chronicon Cumbriæ*, but these are amplified and augmented by succeeding compilers, *especially by two persons of the name of Denton*, whose manuscript collections have been the main source from whence the modern historians of the county have derived their information as to the early descent of property, and the genealogy of its possessors. The contents of these storehouses of errors must be discarded by the future topographer, or used only to compare with more authentic documents.—Hodgson Hinde, *Archæological Journal*, vol. xvi, pp. 217, 234-5.

The two persons of the name of Denton are John Denton, who wrote an account of Cumberland about the year 1610, and Thomas Denton, who wrote an account in 1687-8. Of the John Denton MS. several copies, or rather editions exist, for many persons edited and brought up John Denton's original MS. to their own dates, until we come to the edition known as the Milbourne-Gilpin edition, being an edition made in 1749 by William Milbourne, Recorder of Carlisle, from an edition made in 1687 by Richard Gilpin, of Scaleby Castle, Deputy Recorder of Carlisle. This edition is now my property, and was published in 1887 by the Society, as No. 2 of their Tract Series, with an introduction in which I enumerated all the known copies of John Denton's MS.

In

In that introduction, I went on to deal with the Thomas Denton MS., and said :

Of the Thomas Denton MS. history of Cumberland, no copy is known to exist, unless one be in the muniment room in Lowther Castle: Messrs. Lyson's, in their history of Cumberland, p. 2, positively state that it was lent to them by the Earl of Lonsdale. They state that it was "written in the years 1687 and 1688 by Thomas Denton, Esq., barrister-at-law, recorder of Carlisle, and lord of the manor of Warnell Hall in Sebergham." But in those years John Aglionby was recorder of Carlisle, and William Gilpin deputy recorder,* and in 1687 Mr. Deputy Recorder William Gilpin re-arranged John Denton's MS. history of Cumberland and produced No. 4, the Gilpin or Scaleby Denton MS. Thomas Denton had been recorder of Carlisle prior to Aglionby, but had retired in 1679;† he died in 1695; his portrait and that of his wife Letitia Vachell are in the Town Hall at Carlisle. The precise account given by Messrs. Lyson's of the MS. history of Cumberland, which they attribute to Thomas Denton, forbids the conjecture that they have accidentally substituted Mr. Recorder Denton for Mr. Recorder Aglionby, but it is a curious coincidence that in 1687, Mr. Ex-Recorder Denton, and Mr. Deputy Recorder Aglionby, and Dr. Todd should have all compiled histories of Cumberland based on that of John Denton.

Messrs. Lyson's also state that the Earl of Lonsdale lent them a copy of John Denton's MS. Repeated searches in the muniment rooms at Lowther and Whitehaven Castles have failed to bring to light any copy of either John or Thomas Denton's MS. But in 1892 the late Mr. Alleyne Robinson, principal agent to Lord Lonsdale, found in his lordship's house in Carlton Gardens two vellum bound folios containing MS. accounts of the County of Cumberland. Knowing my interest in such matters, Mr. Robinson informed me of the find and obtained Lord Lonsdale's permission to entrust the two folios to me for examination, so soon as a box could be made for their safe custody. Mr. Robinson's sudden and

* Municipal Records of the City of Carlisle, pp. 312, 314, 315, 322.

† *Ibid*, p. 314, 315.

lamented

lamented death prevented this from being carried out. After waiting for some time, I wrote to Lord Lonsdale, and he at once had the two folios sent to me. I immediately recognised them as the John and Thomas Denton's MS. histories of Cumberland. It is then quite clear (see Lysons' Cumberland, p. 2) that these two MS. volumes found in Carlton Gardens are the copies of John and Thomas Denton's MSS. lent by the then Earl of Lonsdale to Messrs. Lysons for the purposes of their history of Cumberland,* and that they were returned to Carlton Gardens, and have remained there, overlooked and forgotten, until the late Mr. R. Alleyne Robinson came upon them in 1892, and thus brought to light Thomas Denton's MS., which had for the last seventy years totally disappeared.

The copy of John Denton's MS. found at Carlton Gardens is contained in a thin folio stitched in a dingy vellum cover,† the leaves measuring $12\frac{1}{4}$ inches by eight. Some blank leaves at the beginning have been cut out, but sufficient margins are left to show that they have been used for recording some rules of arithmetic with examples: these are in a much more modern handwriting than that in which the history is written: some loose sheets of paper in the book contain in an antique hand copies of various deeds, and also in the same handwriting as the rules of arithmetic, sundry directions for qualifying gaugers, dated 1698.

The John Denton MS. itself presents no unusual features: originally written in 1610, this copy includes in the list of Bishops, Snowdell (Snowden bishop 1616 to 1621). It is prefaced by a title page in a more modern hand thus—

* Published in 1816.

† This vellum cover appears to have originally belonged to some other book.

THIS ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT
OF
THE HISTORY OF THE
COUNTY OF CUMBERLAND
FROM THE CONQUEST
TO THE REIGN OF KING JAMES THE FIRST
WAS FOUND
AMONGST THE ANCIENT TITLE DEEDS
EVIDENCES AND RECORDS
OF THE
MANOR OF HUTTON JOHN
IN THE SAID
COUNTY OF CUMBERLAND
BY A.H.

The following is an extract from a letter in the muni-
ment room at Lowther, kindly furnished me by W. Little,
Esq. :—

“ Sir

Last Monday I paid my Complim^{ts} at Lowther and carried with
me the Ancient Manuscript History of Cumberl^d From the Conquest
to the Beginning of King Ja^s I [Found amongst the Ancient Title
Deeds, Evidences, and Records of the Manor of Hutton John] w^{ch} I
left with Sir Ja^s for his perusal * * * and do not hear wh^r Sir
Ja^s has as yet made any application to Capt Gilpin for his Father's
Copy of Denton's Manuscript (w^{ch} as far as I can remember confirms
mine in every particular)

* * * *

I am Sir,

Your very obliged and obed^t Serv^t

Hutton John

And Hudleston

17 October 1771

The letter is addressed to—

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

ATTORNEY-AT-LAW

COCKERMOUTH.

Within

Within the same vellum cover, but at the end, and not stitched in, are some sheets of folio paper, containing extracts relating to legal proceedings about lands at or near Kendal, and also the directions for qualifying gaugers mentioned before. Two more loose sheets contain extracts from the Dodesworth Collections, viz., copies of a Fleming pedigree and two deeds relating to Skirwith in Cumberland.*

Thomas Denton's MS. is contained in a vellum covered folio, tooled with gold, whose leaves, measuring 12 inches by 8 inches, are gilt edged. The first page contains the dedication :

“To the hon^{ble} S^r John Lowther of Lowther Bart
Custos Rotulorum of the Countie of Westmorland.
Noble Sir,

As the Greatness of the Grecian Heroe's ” etc. etc. etc. From it we learn that the description of the County of Cumberland was undertaken at the request of Sir John Lowther and that, as the description left several blank pages in the book the writer filled them up with an account, which he confesses to be imperfect, of Westmorland, with an appendix on the Border Tenant Right: he also added “A Description of the Isle of Man with its Customes,” and “A Description of Dublin Cittie and of the Province of Ulster.” Altogether, as the writing is small, and the lines close together, the book is packed as full of information as it possibly could be. It contains a map of Cumberland and Westmorland, printed “Amstetodami Apud Joannem Jansonium.”

The title is “A Perambulation of Cumberland and of Westmorland, containing the Description, Hystory, and Customes of these Counties, written in the yeares 1687-88,” by T.D. The words “And of Westmorland ” are a subsequent addition, written above the line, and the words “these Counties ” have been altered from “the Countie.”

* These are now fastened into the cover.

The Perambulation of Cumberland commences with its boundaries, the origin of its name, the history of the early inhabitants, and of its division into baronies, wards, parishes, with an account of the diocese, and a list of 44 bishops. The writer then embarks upon a particular account of each place in the county; taking it by baronies, and following very much the plan of his predecessor John Denton, but being much fuller in detail, and particularly in statistics as to the value of the various manors, fisheries, mines, etc. mentioned, and also as to the number of inhabitants.

At the end of the perambulation of Cumberland, two pages are devoted to an account of the Picts' Wall. The history of Westmorland follows, but is very imperfect, consisting mainly of a detailed account of the several lords of the barony of Appleby, and a long account of the Border tenant right. The accounts of the Isle of Man and of Dublin and Ulster finish the book. It is desirable that the account of Cumberland at any rate should be printed and published, and it is to be hoped that this Society may be able, with Lord Lonsdale's permission, to do the work.
