

ART. XIII.—*Newbiggin Hall, Westmorland*. By the
Rev. C. M. L. BOUCH, F.S.A.

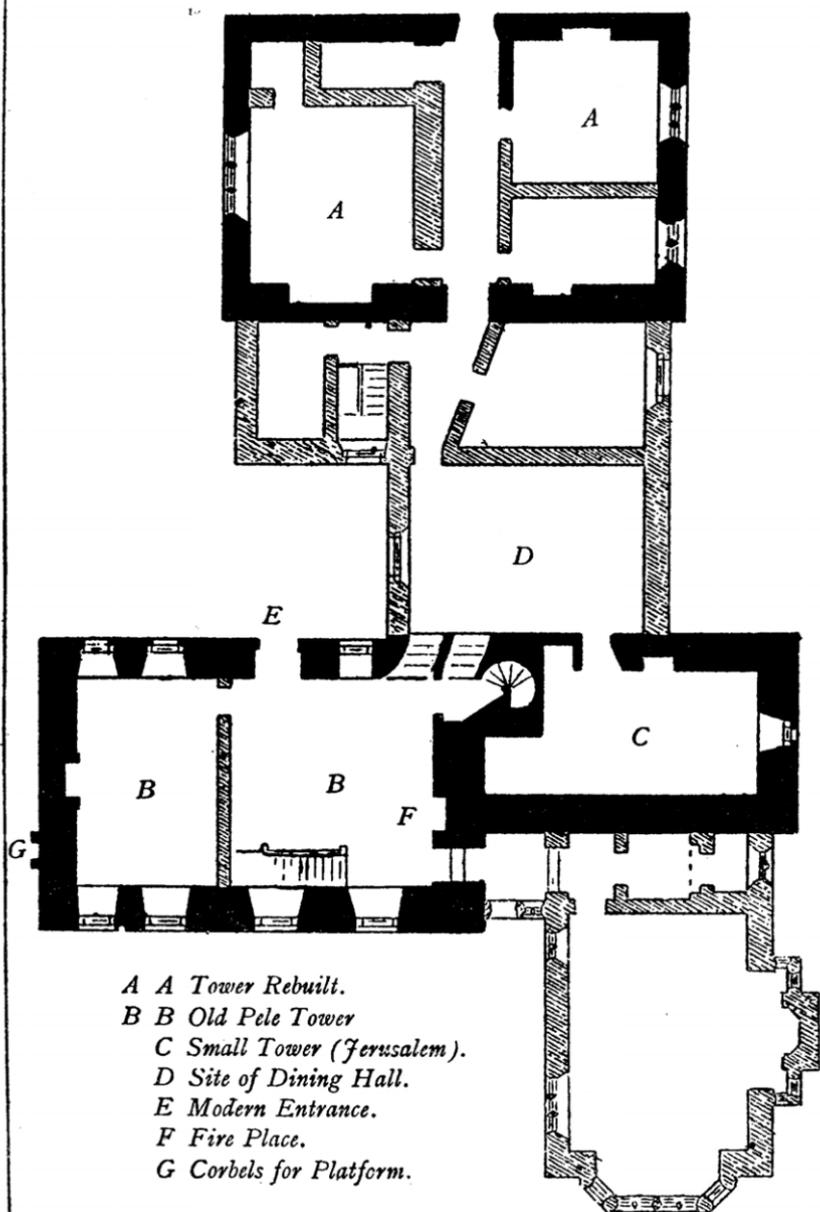
Read at the site, September 14th, 1954.

THERE are already two excellent accounts of this building in our *Transactions*, namely those by Dr M. W. Taylor (CW1 xii 33-41, reprinted in his *Old Manorial Halls*=this Society's Extra Series viii, 1892, 147-54, with the plan here reproduced) and by J. H. Martindale (CW2 xxii 158-61); it might be thought, therefore, that a further article upon it would be unnecessary. But it seems clear that there are several important details on which new light remains to be thrown.

Mr Martindale suggested that the east or pele-tower replaced an earlier structure, and dated it "about 1460, after the Wars of the Roses." But the decisive battle in those wars was at Towton, in 1461, when two of the Crackenthorpes were killed fighting on the Lancastrian side. The family would therefore have been out of favour with the new king, Edward IV. John Machell, of another local Lancastrian family, did not receive a royal pardon until 1466, but that was the year in which the squire of Newbiggin died, leaving a son and heir aged 24. It therefore seems unlikely that either the old squire or his son would have been in a position to start rebuilding so soon as Mr Martindale believed, and indeed it is possible that the family was impoverished at that time (CW2 xxxiii 57). A clue to the true date of rebuilding may perhaps be found in the legacy of 40 marks left by Thomas Langton, bishop of Winchester, in 1501 to John Crackenthorpe, towards the building of his house (CW2 xxvi 164).

Next, in 1533, John's son (or grandson—see p. 142 f. below) built the hall; it seems clear that his inscription

GROUND PLAN, 20 feet to 1 inch.



- A A Tower Rebuilt.*
- B B Old Pele Tower*
- C Small Tower (Jerusalem).*
- D Site of Dining Hall.*
- E Modern Entrance.*
- F Fire Place.*
- G Corbels for Platform.*

M. W. Taylor's plan of Newbiggin Hall.

refers to a dining-hall and not to a Hall, a whole block of buildings.

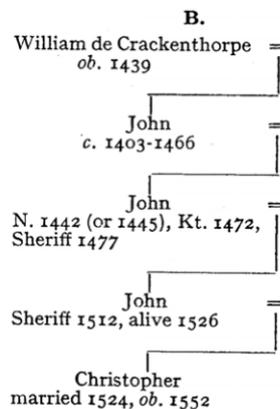
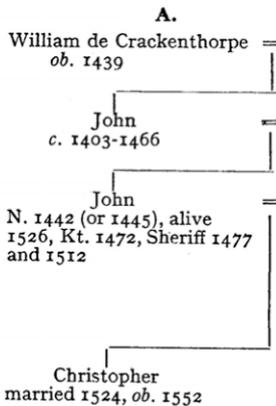
Mr Martindale noted that "the west tower according to Duckett is said to have been built by Henry Crackenthorpe, who had four wives." The real author of this statement was Sir Daniel Fleming in his *Description of Westmorland* (this Society's Tract Series i), p. 24, a first-class authority, so that there is no reason to doubt it. This Henry Crackenthorpe succeeded his father in 1553 and died in 1593, so that the building is securely dated to the second half of the 16th century.

Now we come to the real puzzle of Newbiggin's architectural history. In Mr Martindale's words, "attached to the north side of this tower (*the pele*), and covering the stair turret, is a smaller tower, known by the name of 'Jerusalem'." Dr Taylor assigned no date to Jerusalem; Mr Martindale wrote that "it is later in date, but externally is treated and finished in a similar manner to the main tower." J. F. Curwen, in his *Castles & Towers* (this Society's Extra Series xiii), p. 386, wrote that Henry Crackenthorpe, the builder of the west tower, "from all external evidence" also erected the wing known as Jerusalem; and the Royal Commission's *Westmorland* report, p. 183, also dates Jerusalem to the second half of the 16th century. In view of such a consensus of expert opinion it must seem perilous for the amateur to express a contrary judgment. But if Jerusalem was not in existence in 1533, why did Christopher Crackenthorpe set his new hall back by half its width from the side of the pele? And why did Henry Crackenthorpe want to build this small tower when he had either just built, or already had it in mind to build, the new west tower with its ample additional accommodation?

There is something to be said for the theory that a reasonably intelligent man who lives in an ancient home and loves it, may be a safer guide to its history than the

expert who pays it a fleeting visit. Mr David Crackenthorpe (to whom the present writer is indebted) and his grandfather, the late Dayrell Crackenthorpe, both believe that Jerusalem was built as a small tower of refuge for the family in the troublous days after Towton, when the pele-tower, their original house, was in ruins and when it was dangerous for them, politically, to embark on any extensive rebuilding. In Mr David Crackenthorpe's words, "as to the Jerusalem tower, it has always struck me that the masonry is rougher and the stones larger and more uneven than on the pele"; and Mr J. E. Spence and Mr Eric Birley independently put forward the same point. It is not disputed, of course, that the windows and the parapet have been renewed in a later period; it may be that their character has been the reason for the later dating which has been current hitherto. The earlier dating, here put forward, has the advantage of explaining why the hall of 1533 abutted on only half of the pele, since Jerusalem was already covering the other half (see C. J. Ferguson's plan, here reproduced from CW1 xii, facing p. 36).

Next, a few words on a possible correction to the family pedigree as given by the Rev. C. Moor in CW2 xxxiii 43-97 and shewn in "A".



It is suggested that pedigree B above, with three Johns (and not two) between William and Christopher, fits in better with the dates. For another example of how people with the same christian name can get lost, see my paper on *The origins and early pedigree of the Lowther family* (CW2 xliii 118 ff.); in those days no parish registers were kept, and no wills of the period have survived for this district: if there was no inquisition post-mortem, no proof of death is to be found, so that a father and son of the same name cannot be distinguished from one another with certainty.