

III.—THE WARKWORTH DONJON AND ITS ARCHITECT.

BY W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON.

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In my paper on *Warkworth, a Castle of Livery and Maintenance*, read before the society in May, 1937,¹ I showed that the mighty donjon which is the outstanding feature of this most remarkable castle is not, as it has often been held to be, an unintelligent reversion to an obsolete idea, nor can it be explained away as "the finest tribute to the memory of the ancient keeps": but that, on the contrary, for the special needs of the time it is the most up-to-date and apposite thing that its builder could have devised. That paper was primarily concerned with the *meaning* of the Warkworth donjon. As to its *form*, I then wrote as follows:

"This appears to be unique; and we can only guess at the considerations that prompted the master mason to devise so extraordinary a plan. In so far as the tower-house can be inscribed within a circle, it is well adapted for its situation on top of the *motte*; while the numerous wall planes in all directions permit the maximum amount of lighting. Considerations such as these may have governed the choice of plan, and the internal dispositions, as we have seen, are a model of compact convenience. There seems little doubt that the building must be regarded as a *tour-de-force* on the part of a master mason of exceptional resource and skill. Whoever he was, he deserves, for this work alone, to be numbered among the greatest of medieval architects."

It is the purpose of the present paper further to investigate the affinities and the evolution of the Warkworth

¹ *Arch. Ael.* xv, 115-36.

tower-house, and to suggest what I may perhaps describe as a probable guess at the identity of its master-mason.

In the fourteenth century, the development of the English castle lay away from placing emphasis on any single department of the structure. Two centuries before, the feature on which most stress was laid had been the donjon, a large square or circular tower, usually placed at the rear or one side of the *enceinte*, as far away as possible from the entrance, which always in the Middle Ages was regarded as the weak point in a fortification. But the purely passive nature of the defence that could be offered by the donjon, and its inability, in many cases, effectively to command the rest of the castle and to co-ordinate its resistance as a whole, led to the discontinuance of this feature; and from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards it is rarely found in newly built castles. Instead, emphasis now came to be concentrated on the gatehouse, which was developed into a kind of combination of a donjon and a fortified house of entry—a keep-gatehouse, as it may be called, where the lord or constable had his own private suite of apartments, having the entrance under his own direct control. The frontal massing of the weight of the castle, thus involved, substituted an aggressive for a merely passive attitude of defence, and greatly facilitated the co-ordination of the movements of the garrison. Examples of this keep-gatehouse type of castle are the concentric fortresses erected by the English in Wales—Caerphilly, Kidwelly, Harlech and Beaumaris—as well as such simpler structures as Llanstephan or Donnington, and, in our own district, Dunstanburgh, Bothal, Bywell and Hilton.²

In France and in her "auld ally," Scotland, this type of castle was developed until the frontal gatehouse consolidation reached vast and complex forms, as at Pierrefonds and Doune.³ But in England it soon passed out of

² For all this see my paper on "Castles of Livery and Maintenance" in *Journal Brit. Archæol. Association*³ iv, 39-54.

³ See my paper on Doune castle in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, lxxii, 73-83.

favour. Evidence exists, as I have pointed out in discussing Dunstanburgh,⁴ that the reason for this was the practical difficulty of combining the lord's or governor's residence with a gatehouse—in which at least one whole storey, and that usually the principal one, had to be set aside as a fighting-deck, from which all the complicated tackle of the drawbridge and portcullises was worked. Thus it comes about that in the later fourteenth century an English castle, when new-built on a virgin site, tends to lose any special emphasis on any one of its component parts, and assumes the form of a quadrilateral building enclosing a courtyard, around which the domestic apartments are symmetrically grouped. At the angles are towers, and in the middle of one side is the gatehouse—but this is not now the lord's residence, and wholly lacks the over-dominant emphasis and structural elaboration of its Edwardian predecessor.

The perfect example of this type of castle is Bodiam in Sussex, erected, on an unoccupied site, pursuant to a royal licence issued in 1386. The plan is simplicity itself. A rectangular area is enclosed by lofty and massive curtain walls, having stout drum towers at the four angles, a square tower on each of two sides, and a gatehouse and a postern tower in front and rear respectively. Around the court inside were compactly arranged the domestic buildings—hall and kitchen on the south side, state-rooms and chapel on the east, retainers' quarters and offices on the west and north. The same general scheme, in a less fully articulated way, is seen at Maxstoke castle in Warwickshire, licensed in 1346.

Coincidentally with the dropping of the keep-gatehouse, and the growing desire for compactness and symmetry in plan, the fourteenth century saw, in a number of English castles, a marked tendency to reduce the courtyard area, until the castle becomes a kind of cluster of residential towers grouped round a narrow close. This type of castle was especially liable to arise on the confined site of an earlier

⁴ *Arch. Ael.*⁴ xvi, 31-42.

motte. Alnwick⁵ and Skipton⁶ may be cited as fourteenth century examples in the north country. An earlier case of a clustered building on a *motte*, dating from the beginning of the thirteenth century, may be seen at Clifford castle, Herefordshire,⁷ where a small courtyard, with a hall, is enclosed by a shell wall having five close-set towers. Treago castle,⁸ in the same shire, erected in the fifteenth century on a virgin site, is a compact square building, enclosing a court measuring only 26 feet either way, with round towers at the four outer corners. In Scotland, the thirteenth century castle of Dirleton⁹ was a building of the same kind.

Probably this reduction of the courtyard area was partly due to the new conditions of warfare in the fourteenth century, when castles were held by small garrisons of picked and trained professionals, rather than by feudal levies.

With this development in our minds, let us turn back now to our donjon at Warkworth.

If we conceive its central lantern enlarged into a courtyard, then the accommodation provided, and its arrangement, very much resemble the contemporary castle at Bodiam—the offices and kitchen being on the west and south, the hall, private rooms and chapel following on along the south and east sides. Thus Clarkson's description of the Warkworth donjon, in 1567, would serve equally as a description of Bodiam: "in the same conteyned aswell a fare hall kytchinge and all other houses of offices verie fare and aptely placed, as also great chambre chapell and lodgings for the lorde and his treyne."¹⁰ The semi-octagonal projections of Warkworth answer, in terms of accommodation, more or less to the towers of Bodiam.

Hence the Warkworth tower-house plan is seen, in principle, to be nothing exotic nor without a pedigree, but

⁵ See plan in G. T. Clark, *Medieval Military Architecture*, I, 185.

⁶ Plan in H. A. Tipping, *English Homes*, Period II, I, 60.

⁷ *Anc. Mon. Com., Hereford*, I, 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁹ See my papers on this castle in *Trans. Glasg. Archæol. Soc.*, N.S., VIII, 1-31; *Trans. East Lothian Antiq. and Field Nat. Soc.*, III, 1-18.

¹⁰ *Northumb. County Hist.* v, 62.

a normal English plan of the late fourteenth century. The question therefore arises, whether the Warkworth conception should not be considered a clever adaptation of the courtyard castle idea, rather than as a true tower-house. If so, it may be thought of as evolving from the shell wall round the *motte*, with domestic buildings inside, like the round castles of Cornwall.¹¹ Skipton and Alnwick, with their compact array of hall, *camera* and residential towers clustered round a reduced courtyard, appear to represent an earlier and less extreme variant of the same thesis. The effort to provide the accommodation of Maxstoke and Bodiam within the limits of a *motte* inevitably led, through Skipton and Alnwick, to such a *tour-de-force* as Warkworth, where the so-called lantern is in reality an atrophied courtyard.

A valuable link in the evolution of the Warkworth plan from the fourteenth century courtyard castle is Danby castle in the North Riding.¹² Here the plan is rectangular, enclosing a small courtyard, and at each external corner a short rectilinear wing is set out diagonally. The accommodation resembles that of Warkworth, and included, apparently, a chapel with an oriel.

The plan of Queenborough castle,¹³ built by Edward III in 1361-77; shows a circular building enclosing a small central court; attached are six towers, each with its stair. In principle these arrangements seem not unlike Warkworth.

The same conception recurs in Elizabethan times at Barlborough Hall, Derbyshire,¹⁴ built in 1583, in which the hall, great chamber and other rooms are grouped round an atrophied courtyard, quite like the arrangement at Warkworth.¹⁴ An unnamed plan in John Thorpe's album also shows the same thesis.¹⁵

¹¹ See *Archæologia*, lxxxiii, 203-26.

¹² Plan in *Vict. County Hist., York, N. Riding*, II, 335.

¹³ See Sidney Toy, *Castles*, 166.

¹⁴ See J. A. Gotch, *Early Renaissance Architecture in England*, 67-8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, figs. 217-18.

Who designed the Warkworth donjon, and whence came the inspiration? In seeking to answer these questions, our eyes are inevitably attracted to the great donjon that crowns the *motte* of Durham. What we now see there is a modern reconstruction, and for the ancient building we are dependent on Hutchinson's description, published in 1787.¹⁶ It is as follows:

"Durham Tower, an ill-formed octagon of irregular sides; some of the fronts exceeding others in breadth several feet; the angles are supported by buttresses, and a parapet has run round the summit of the whole building, with a breast wall and embrasure; the diameter of this tower in the widest part is 63 ft. 6 in. and in the narrowest 61 ft.; it has contained four stories or tiers of apartments, exclusive of the vaults; the great entrance is on the west side; there is nothing now left of this edifice but the mount, vaults, and outside shell; which latter, from its noble appearance, and the great ornament it is to the city, has been an object of attention of many of the prelates. . . . Indeed from the whole mode of architecture, the roses which ornament the summits of the buttresses and the form of the windows, we are led to conceive that the present shell was the work of Bishop Hatfield, and repaired and kept standing by his successors. The tower was only lined round the outward wall with apartments, so as to leave an inner area or well from top to bottom, by which the engines of war and necessaries in time of danger and attack were drawn up and distributed to the several parts of the building; those apartments have been approached by five different staircases or turnpikes in the angles, the remains of which are yet visible, so that the parapet could be mounted, the galleries lined with armed men, and the apartments guarded in a very short time, and equally as quick the garrison could descend and be ready for a sally."

Imperfect though this description may be, it is surely evident that the Durham tower, with its central well or lantern, its five separate staircases, and its ornate architecture, has an undoubted connexion with our donjon at Warkworth, and we are scarcely likely to be wrong in regarding it as a trial version of the same thesis. That the tower was the work of Bishop Hatfield (whose dates are 1345-81) we learn from William de Chambre:—

¹⁶ W. Hutchinson, *History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, II, 285-6.

*"Urbem Dunelmensem, licet hanc natura et murus satis munierunt, turre tamen fortiori sumptibus suis in castello constructa esse reddit fortiozem."*¹⁷

Bishop Hatfield's master mason was John Lewyn or Lewen, who was a somewhat noteworthy person in Durham during the pontificate of Bishop Thomas of Hatfield. In the latter part of this paper are assembled all the facts which I have been able to gather together from published sources about the life and work of John Lewyn. I have little doubt that, were the Durham muniments to be searched, a great deal more information could be gleaned. But from the particulars already available, it is clear that John Lewyn was a master mason of the highest professional standing, engaged in important building undertakings for royal, ecclesiastical and baronial clients all over the north country, from Bolton in Wensleydale to Roxburgh on Teviot. He was a leading burgher and a bailiff of Durham, an owner of property, there and elsewhere, and the founder of landed families. Apart from his architectural work, he was employed in various trading, business and legal concerns, and was clearly a man of capacity in affairs, both respected and trusted. If Bishop Hatfield's tomb and episcopal throne in Durham cathedral could properly be identified as his work, then no one would question the greatness of his genius. Bolton castle still remains as a witness to his skill in planning and his love of finely thought out detail. The same qualities are evident in the richly panelled late fourteenth century work at the Captain's tower and Queen Mary's tower of Carlisle castle, for which it is probable that he was responsible. Here again, we see the love of ornament that seems to link together his work at Durham, at Bolton, at Carlisle and at Warkworth. No other master mason, so far as I can find, enjoyed anything like the same professional and public status in northern England during the latter part of the fourteenth century. Bearing in mind

¹⁷ *Hist. Dunelm. Scriptores Tres* (Surtees Soc.), 138.

the connexion that seems clearly to exist between the donjons of Durham and Warkworth, I submit that it is at least more than likely that we should salute in John Lewyn the builder of the mighty tower-house which the first Earl of Northumberland erected on the long derelict *motte* of his predecessors. It is to be noted that in his work at Carlisle Castle in 1383 (see *infra*, nos. 9 and 10) John Lewyn was associated with the earl, who was one of the commission appointed to survey and report on the architect's performance.

Probably the Warkworth donjon was built after the destructive invasions of the Scots in 1383-4, which led to the reconditioning of Bamburgh, to John of Gaunt's alterations at Dunstanburgh, and to the strengthening of Carlisle. It is significant also that Bolton castle was building in 1378. Clearly the northern fortifications were being reorganized about this time.

JOHN LEWYN, MASTER MASON.

1. 1364. John Lewyn, mason, sent from Durham to Coldingham—*Priory of Coldingham* (Surtees Soc.) xlv.
2. 1367-8. John Lewyn, master mason, in charge of important works at Durham Abbey—*Durham Account Rolls* (Surtees Soc.) II, 571-4.
3. 1368, May 21. John Lewyn, "masoun," appointed by the king, along with others, to take carpenters, masons and other workmen in the counties of York and Northumberland for the repair of Bamburgh castle, to provide the necessary materials and transport, and to compel the feudal tenants to discharge their obligations in contributing towards the repairs—*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Edward III, 1367-70, 115. The work then executed seems to be specified in a report dated June 14, 1372, see *N.C.H.* I, 40.
4. 1375, March 9. Commission to make inquisition in the county of Northumberland "touching an information

that John Lewyn, who received at Bamburgh divers sums of the King's money by the hands of the executors of Ralph, Lord of Nevill, deceased, late constable of the castle of Bamburgh, for the repair of the said castle and the houses there, retains the said moneys without having done the repairs"—*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Edward III, 1374-7, 143.

5. 1378. John Lewyn of Durham bought certain rents, services and tenements in the *vill* of Broomley, parish of Bywell St. Peter, Northumberland, and on the Sabbath day before the Feast of the Decollation of St. John the Baptist, 1378, gave power of attorney to his son Walter to take possession—*N.C.H.* VI, 146-50: *cf. Visitations of the North* (Surtees Soc.) I, 165.
6. 1378, July 10. Appointment by the king of John Lewyn, mason, to take stone-masons and labourers in the counties of York, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland and in the liberty of Durham (except in the fee of the Church), who are to be put upon the works ordered at the castles of Carlisle and Roxburgh at the king's charges—*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Richard II, 1377-81, 257.
7. 1378, September 14. John Lewyn, mason, contracts with Sir Richard le Scrope to build the eastern and part of the southern range at Bolton castle. This most interesting contract is printed in full, with a translation by the late Sir W. H. St. John Hope, in *Ars Quatuor Coronatarum* x, 70-1. See also *V.C.H., Yorks., N. Riding* I, 272.
8. 1380, October 25. John Lewyn, a mason from Durham, contracts with John of Gaunt to build a mantlet of stone round the great tower of Dunstanburgh castle—*N.C.H.* II, 200.
9. 1383, October 8. Commission to Thomas, bishop of Carlisle, Henry de Percy, earl of Northumberland, Thomas, prior of Drax, and the sheriff of Cumberland to survey a gate and a tower upon it, which John

- Lewyn, "maceon," contracted to build in the king's castle of Carlisle, and to report on any defects therein—*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Richard II, 1381-5, 353.
10. 1387, November 24. Appointment of Henry de Percy, earl of Northumberland, and John de Nevill of Raby, to survey and report upon certain works done within the castles of Carlisle and Roxburgh by John Lewyn, mason—*ibid.*, 1385-9, 367.
 11. 1387. Bishop Fordham leases to John Lewyn, Walter Cokyn, Roger Aspour and Henry Shirburn the borough of Durham with all manner of rents and services, courts and customs, etc. In the fourteenth century the city of Durham was at farm, and "grants of one or other section of the bishop's property are not infrequent. . . . This appears to have been the form of lease which was from time to time renewed to a group of prominent burgesses who doubtless acted for the general body of their brethren, though of this there is no proof. Three of the lessees, John Lewyn, Walter Coken and Roger Aspour, appear in the list of bailiffs at this period"—*V.C.H., Durham*, III, 24, 56.
 12. 1388, July 3. Commitment by the king to William de Fulthorp, "chivaler," by mainprise of Ralph de Lumley, knight, of the county of York, John Le-straunge, knight, of the county of Norfolk, William Elmden, of the county of Northumberland, and John Lewyn of the same county and the bishopric of Durham, of certain lands in the counties of York, Northumberland and Westmorland, and the bishopric of Durham, forfeited by William Fulthorpe's father Roger—*Cal. Fine Rolls* x, 241.
 13. 1388, November 4. Order by the king to the collectors of customs at Newcastle upon Tyne to make John Lewyn, "masoun," allowance of all the custom and subsidy upon wool, hide and woollfells as he may ship overseas up to £398 13s. 9d., over and above 20s. the sack, in payment of sums due by the king to him for

work done at Roxburgh castle—*Cal. Close Rolls*, Richard II, 1385-9, 544.

14. 1391, December 3. Grant to Henry Percy, *le filz*, of 18 sacks and 13 cloves of wool, 68 woolfells and 8 dickers of hides late of John Lewyn of Durham, forfeited to the king because shipped in Newcastle upon Tyne for the staple of Calais and taken to Middleburgh in Zealand contrary to the king's prohibition—*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Richard II, 1388-92, 355.
15. 1395 and 1398. Payment of sums owing to John Lewyn—*Priory of Finchale* (Surtees Soc.) cxii, cxv, cxx.
16. 1398. William Warde takes from the bishop of Durham a piece of waste ground "under the walls of the castle of Durham on the east, viz., in length from Kings Gate to the quarry where John Lowyn digs stones, and in width from the wall of the aforesaid castle to the water of Wear to hold and enclose in severalty"—*V.C.H., Durham*, III, 22.
17. Undated, but *circa* 1382. John Lewyn entered as a free tenant in Newton Cap, Darlington Ward—*Bishop Hatfield's Survey* (Surtees Soc.) 47.
18. Undated, but *post* 1382. Reference to land held by John Lewyn (Johannes de Lewyne) in the parish of Lanchester. He also held certain adjacent lands as executor of Thomas de Coksyd—*Black Book of Hexham* (Surtees Soc.) 59-60; *cf. V.C.H., Durham*, III, 140, 206.

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Addendum to John Lewyn, no. 8.

The documents concerning the agreement between him and John of Gaunt, to do work at Dunstanburgh castle, are printed in *John of Gaunt's Register 1379-83* (Camden Soc.), nos. 410, 566, 624, 723, 922.