

The Romans left Britain in AD 410. For the last quarter of the fourth century they had been training tribal leaders north of the Wall to protect the territory between it and the former Antonine Wall.[1] This policy led to the setting up in that area of the two kingdoms of Strathclyde in the west (based on Dumbarton Rock) and Manau Gododdin in the east (based possibly on Edinburgh). When the Romans left Papcastle the civilians who had worked for the occupying forces, indeed made the occupation feasible, found that everything was theirs.

No more taxes, but no longer the demand of the military for their products or for the service of their sons in the army. They naturally stayed on, for this was their home and it was pointless to move elsewhere.

Eric Birley (Professor of Roman History at Durham University) wrote

“.. the late occupation of Papcastle need not have been specifically military; we cannot exclude the possibility that here, as elsewhere, a paramilitary or purely civilian population maintained itself for many years after the withdrawal of a regular garrison. How long the site remained occupied, there is no direct evidence to show, but significant continuity of occupation seems excluded in view of the Place-Name Society’s verdict that the first element in the modern name can hardly be other than Old Norse *papi*, ‘hermit’; that seems a clear enough indication that when Norse settlers first penetrated into the district there was only a solitary hermit living among the ruins of the Roman fort. By the same token, it also serves to discredit the popular tradition that Papcastle takes its name from Gilbert Pipard. Yet it is noteworthy that the Normans chose Papcastle, perhaps because of its plentiful supply of Roman stone, as the *caput* of the barony of Allerdale, only moving the lord’s residence to Cockermouth when troubled times made it necessary for them to build a castle on a more easily defensible site.”[2]

Of the drift of events after this first period of freedom R.G. Collingwood says:

“descendants of Romanised Britons lingered on, impoverished by Pictish and Scotie raids, deprived of their larger settlements and richer lands, not by conquest but by devastation, sinking lower in the scale of civilisation, ... keenly conscious of their pedigree, nursing in song and legend the tradition of a greatness that had long passed away”.[3]

For hundreds of years following the departure of the Romans there are no written records specifically relating to our part of Cumbria. Not until the Normans came and the various rolls and monastic records began to be kept was there any contemporary written history. In this respect the Derwent and Cocker valleys were indeed in the Dark Ages.

Yet this was not a time of inactivity. The area around present-day Cockermouth was frequently changed from one political grouping to another, from one overlord to another, in a most confusing manner. We will give only an outline of the complex of strife, invasions and alliances of this period.

When the Romans left it is likely that many of the soldiers were just abandoned, rather than the authorities incur the expense of organising their return to their country of origin, even if they had

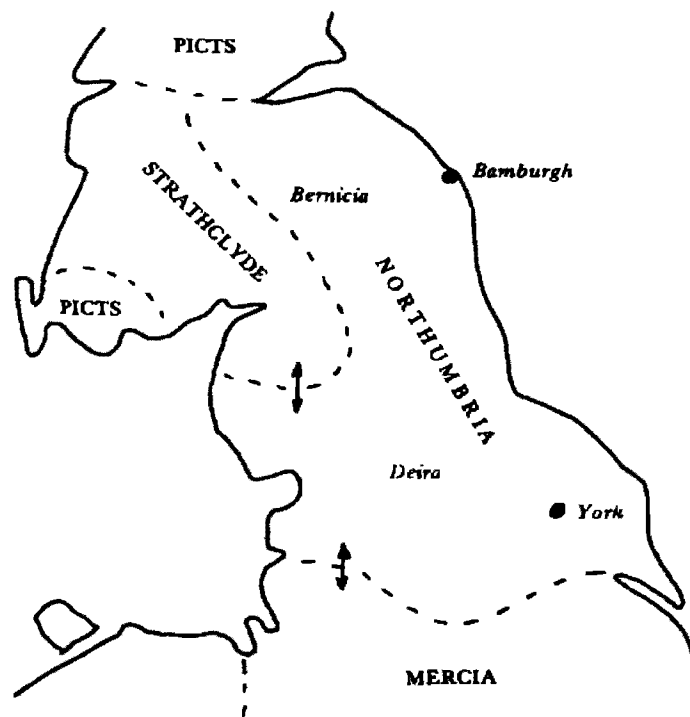


Fig 20. Early divisions in the Dark Ages. (All boundaries were very fluid)

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wanted to go. [4] Many would settle down to family life, supporting themselves from the land or by some trade. It seems natural that Papcastle would have continued to be the centre of the economic and social life for the people around and that the vicus remained a settlement, extended now into the abandoned buildings of the fort.

At the height of the Roman demand for farm produce some of the hitherto neglected northern slopes and poorer marginal land were brought under cultivation and after the loss of the military market these were the first to be abandoned in the inevitable contraction of farming.

The peace of this period of rundown would be shattered periodically by raids of Scots landing on the coast or Picts coming from the north, plundering the area for cattle and probably taking slaves, but penetration and settlement by the Jutes, Angles and Saxons of northern Europe was slow. Judging from the names left in

Roman record there were no occupation forces from this part of the continent, so the invaders found no friends here, only the resistant British, aided by dense forests. Gradually, after battles and spasmodic advances, they drew nearer to Cumbria, then part of the British Kingdom of Rheged which in the 5th century spanned both sides of the Solway. By AD 560 they had set up the kingdom of Deira, consisting of much of Yorkshire and Humberside, with its capital at York, and some ten years earlier the kingdom of Bernicia stretching from the Tyne to the lowlands of Scotland and based on Bamburgh. The latter eventually extended westwards to the Cumbrian coast.

In the north-west evolved the powerful British kingdom of Strathclyde, including Rheged and other minor states, extending southwards from the Clyde, sometimes to the Solway only, at others possibly as far as the Dee. Deira and Bernicia fused into Northumbria in AD 604. Cumbria was sometimes in Strathclyde, sometimes in Northumbria, and the latter's hold over the west was strengthened when the brother of Oswald, king of Northumbria, married a great-granddaughter of Urien, one of Strathclyde's greatest leaders. Northumbria remained in the early ninth century very important until the centre of political power shifted to Wessex. The Cumbrian British would be little affected by the various wars being waged, but they were affected by the coming of the Angles from the east. First a large area round Carlisle was taken into Northumbria, then the Angles spread into the Cumbrian plain and the wider valleys, not only conquering but occupying the land by planting colonies of people from elsewhere. The kingdoms of Strathclyde and Rheged sank into oblivion for a time, but in some of the mountainous areas the British almost certainly held out. They were surrounded by Anglian settlement by AD 685, but isolated communities probably remained until the Anglo-Saxons were themselves threatened by the Norse-Irish invasion at the end of the ninth century.

The early inhabitants of southern Scotland, Cumbria, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany were of common origin and it was only when the Anglo-Saxons drove wedges between them in the Chester and Severn areas that their close connection was affected. 'Cumbria' and 'Cymru' (Wales) are of common Celtic origin and many river names are Celtic or pre-Celtic, including in West Cumbria Cocker, Derwent, Ehen, Esk, Irt and Mite. The 'pen' in Torpenhow, Penrith, etc., is Welsh, as are 'blaen' for summit or peak in Blencathra; 'glen' for wooded valley in Lamplugh (once Glanplough), Glenderamakin, etc.; and 'cil' for chapel in Gilcrux. (see Appendix 21)

While under the Anglo-Saxons eastern Northumbria became the foremost centre of learning in Europe, farming continued quietly in Cumbria. Then came new invaders. At the end of the 8th century the Vikings landed on many of the coasts and islands of western Europe, first raiding for

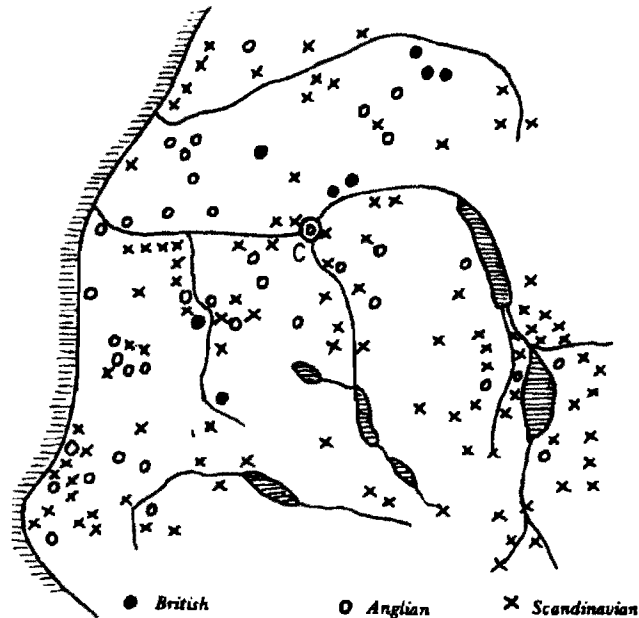


Fig 21. The distribution of place names around Cocker mouth (based on W. Rollinson - Place Names of Cumberland)

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plunder in the summer but becoming progressively more permanent - it has been suggested AD 787-855 for plundering, 855-954 for settling and 980-1016 for political conquest. [7] Danes predominated in the east, the Norse in the Scottish islands, with roughly equal numbers in Ireland. It was from Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man that they mostly entered Cumbria, from about AD 910. By then there had already been a fusion of Norse culture and race with those of the Irish, so that the invaders were really Norse-Irish.

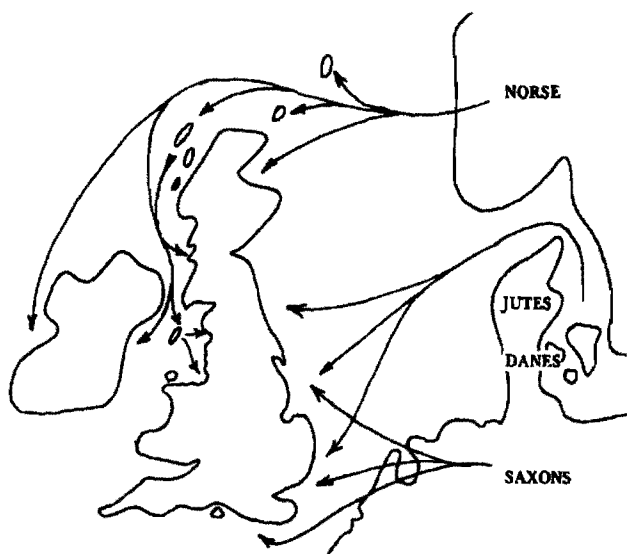


Fig 22. A greatly simplified map of invasion routes

Evidence for this is seen in church dedication at this time to Celtic saints Patrick, Bridget, Columba; in the Celtic practice of inverting place-names - Aspatria, Patrick's ashtree; in a Celtic element in sculptures; and in language, such as the use of the Norse suffix -erg derived from the Gaelic -airge for a summer pasture.

Their conquest of the Anglo-Saxons was probably easy, for the latter had settled down from being invaders to the peaceful role of farmers. 'Conquest' may hardly have been necessary, for the frequent proximity of Norse-Irish settlements to those of the Anglo-Saxons, which were not destroyed, suggests that they lived amicably. The invasion may have been a peaceful infiltration of farmers. The very name 'Viking' may mean the place of the people or people of the farms, although it seems more likely to have come from 'vik', the Norse for creek or inlet.

The arrival was not entirely peaceful for Carlisle was badly damaged about AD 915 by forces sailing up the Solway. It had suffered earlier destruction late in the previous century by the Dane Healfdene who had devastated Northumbria and was interested in the wealth of the monasteries and churches further west. It was Healfdene who set off the monks of Carlisle on their travels through Cumbria carrying the remains of St. Cuthbert. Names suggest they rested at ten (possibly 13) places, including Embleton and Lorton. [8] The invasion of east Cumbria via Stainmore and the Tyne-Irthing gap is attested by Danish names and by the rectangular greens of villages.

During the tenth century the Norse settled in the valleys, right up into the mountains. They cleared much of the forest from the low land and the lower hill sides, established new farms and brought to the fells something of the bare look now regarded mistakenly as the true lakeland landscape. They introduced better ploughs and harrows. They intermarried and added yet another strain to the Cumbrian race.

Norse remains are few, but place-names very numerous. Beck (Norse bekk), dale (N dair), fell (N fjoll), fitz (N fit -river meadows), force (N foss), gate (N gata -way, path), how (N heugr -mound or hillock), knot (N knottr -rocky outcrop), ness (N nes -nose, promontory), scale (N skali -hut, shelter), side, seat and satter (N saetr -high grazing ground), slack (N slakki -depression between two hills), tarn (N tjorn), wath (N vath -ford), wyke (N vik -creek, inlet) and others are all slight adaptations of the Norse and are liberally spread throughout the Cockerthwaite area, as are the actual Norse words thwaite (clearing), gill (ravine), garth (enclosure), rigg (long, steep-sided hill), both (booth or temporary shelter), etc. The villages and locations, including some street names still used, are too numerous to list, but a few of particular interest may be noted.

Bassenthwaite (Middle English Bastenethwaite or Bastingwait) uses the Icelandic bast of which ropes and baskets are made. (Alternatively it may be from an Anglo-French surname, as a spelling of 1220 suggests -Basrunwater, the lake of Basrun. There are often two or more possible derivations of a name, as again in Buttermere, given above as Celtic for scree, but possibly from the Norse both).

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Mosser is the shieling or pasture on the moss; Ullock (ME Ulvelayk or Ullayk) uses the Norse leikr (to play or be idle, cf the Yorkshire laikin) and ulfa (wolf) and is a place frequented by wolves; Rowrah has the Norse rug (rye) with Norse vra (remote corner of land); Bridekirk is eleventh or twelfth century Scandinavian for the church of St. Bride; Setmurthy (Satmerdoc in 1250) is the seat of Murdoch; Stanger the Norse stong-ra (a boundary post); and Warnscale at the head of the Buttermere valley is probably Norse varna (protect) with scale (a safe shelter or hiding place).

Allerdale (Alnerdale c 1060) combines the Norse possessive -ar with a British river name, to describe the dale of the River Ellen.

Many mountain names also contain Norse, showing that the new settlers penetrated right to the heart of the district. Scafell, for example, uses skalli, meaning bald.

As with the Angles, some Norse terms were absorbed into the Cumbrian vocabulary and continued to be used, so that they tend to lose their value for dating.

The first farm in a valley was often the 'thwaite' at the entrance, [9] then later outlying booths and huts originally used in summer would be permanently settled as farms. Most dales had a pannage area for pigs, i.e. a wood where pigs could forage, so we get Swinside incorporating the Norse svine (swine) and Grisdale, etc., using griss (pig). Incidentally, pollen analysis shows that at this time the pigs' liking for oak and beech mast prevented full regeneration of these trees, coupled of course with the clearing that was done.

The Danish -by for a farm or village occurs along an arc from Appleby to Allonby then down the coast (Moresby, etc.) - about 60 examples in the old counties of Cumberland and Westmorland. This again was used later by the Normans and others, so precise dating is difficult. A modern use is in by-law, i.e. a town law.

Some farming terms are common to West Cumbria and Iceland. Twinter for a two year old sheep and trinter for a three year-old are examples. The Cumbrian for a female lamb, gimmer-lamb, is equivalent to the Icelandic lamb-gymber and the Danish gimmerlam. The identification mark cut on a sheep's ear, the lug-mark, is in Iceland the logg-mark, log meaning law. [10]

Norman Nicholson refers to the lasting impression which the Norwegian language left on the Cumbrian dialect, with its "clicking, cracking, harshly melodious tune" [11]

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the whole political set-up was very confused. Dating, even of specific events, is often difficult. The successive invasions stretched over considerable periods and it is impossible to clearly divide what was Celtic, Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian. The various cultures lived on side-by-side or mingled with each other, leaving their evidence in place-names and in the type of settlement - the dispersed hamlets of the Celts; the villages of the Anglo-Saxons, often around large rectangular greens; and the small units of colonisation by the Vikings. By the end of the eleventh century Cumbria had a population descended from British, Romans and other south and west Europeans, Anglo-Saxons, Irish, Norse and Danes. Similarly the language of England from the mid eleventh century to the end of the fourteenth, Middle English, was a fusion of many basic elements.

Scotland was always keen to possess Cumbria. From the late ninth century Strathclyde began to rise from its period of minor importance. About AD 880 a Strathclyde prince became King of Scotland. Cumbria too was becoming more important in its own right.

Cumbria's importance lay in its position between the Norse of Ireland and Galloway and the Danes of Northumbria. In AD 945 the Cumbrian king Dunmail had displeased Saxon Aethelstan's successor, Eadmund, who according to the Saxon chronicle

"harried all Cumberland, and gave it to Malcolm I, King of Scots, and successor to Constantine, on condition that he should become his midwyrhta (ally) by land and sea" against the Danes. R. S. Ferguson comments, that since the land was given to Malcolm as tenure for military service, it became

"a feudal benefice in the strictest sense. Cumbria thus became a fief of the Crown of England, but not a fief held within the kingdom of England. Cumbria was not an integral part of England; it was without (outside) that kingdom, and had always been so."

Cumbria was now in effect part of Scotland, held by the king of Scotland or one of his family. In the year 1000 Athelred asked for tribute from the Scots for this area and when it was refused he marched from York through Appleby into Cumberland "and ravaged it well nigh all".

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Around AD 1000 the border was along the Duddon to Stainmore line. It was shortened about 1032 as the result of a deal between King Cnut and Malcolm II of Scotland, under which the Plain of Lothian north of the Tweed which had been English was exchanged for most of Cumbria. [12] At various times the River Derwent formed the boundary between the two countries, so that the town side was in one country, the Gote and Papcastle area in the other.

Christianity was spreading in western Europe during the later part of Roman rule. Deira and Bernicia became officially Christian in AD 627. The faith reached West Cumbria about the middle of the seventh century, from Ireland and Iona. No churches survive, probably because they were wooden, but a number of stone crosses are to be found, on some 21 sites where the Angles had settled in the lowlands and along the fringes of the hills. [13] At Brigham, which included Cockermouth in its parish, there are six cross fragments in the eleventh century church and a cross-head at the vicarage, all of them of the ninth to eleventh centuries.

Crosses are also found at ancient road intersections, fords, etc., or marking important points on routes. They may survive in name only - Dean Cross, Crossgate, etc. Both Brigham and Clifton churches are near river crossings.

There are in Cumbria a number of hog-back grave-stones in the shape of Norse wooden huts, the nearest to Cockermouth being at Bridekirk, Crosscanonby and Plumbland. In 1864-5 a Viking-type bronze ring-headed pin was found in the foundations of Brigham church tower, probably from a burial in the churchyard. [15] Graves with swords have been found at Aspatria, Seaton and other places, including Eaglesfield. In 1877 William Dickinson wrote of "the limestone bluffs at Thornberry and Tendley, where six skeletons and a sword were found" [16] Was this a cemetery? A hoard of Viking coins was discovered at Dean.

The Norse-Irish probably took over such natural hill forts as Castle How and they greatly developed the British site at the foot of Scale Beck. (Fig. 8).

Some of the settlements of the Vikings were used for many centuries. Probably in Cumbria, as happened in the Isle of Man and north-west Scotland, sites were sometimes used until the end of the eighteenth century, shepherds using the shielings - originally a small hut of low dry-stone walling, thatch roofed, with bracken on the floor, big enough to sleep three or four; possibly with an enclosure for cattle and a hut where cheeses could be made by those looking after the stock. The accommodation may have changed little during the long period of use. The Scale Beck site, with its many ruins of huts and enclosures, is a good example of successive occupation in both Celtic and Norse times.

According to Dr. Thurnam the Norse left their mark in other ways than on the language and the pattern of settlement. He wrote that in the population of Cumberland are

"unequivocal signs of a Scandinavian strain. a tall, light-complexioned, long-faced, handsome, and, in every sense, powerful people, whether they claim Danish or Norse descent - most probably the latter. The Cumberland peasantry are remarkable for their stature ...(Men average 5 feet 9 inches, women 5 feet 5 inches., bones large, the skeleton strong, and the limbs decidedly long.) They are not a very bulky people, nor yet very fleshy; still they are athletic, and they are free in their movements.... The countenance is fair and handsome; the face is long and orthogonous; the forehead of good height and breadth., the hair is generally of a light shade of brown, or fair, very seldom red, rarely dark, the body is marked by an inferior degree of hairiness, grey and blue eyes preponderate, an acute, shrewd people; active, industrious, vigorous, enterprising, trustworthy Everything about them is clean and respectable, not squalid, mean or paltry. In all these elements they are most unlike the Celtic races." [17]

Thurnam then tempers this praise with the following additional comment:

"Countenance not very expressive, intellect shrewd and wary, but rather slow, not bright but safe, true and persevering, long in maturing. The mathematical sciences have often been efficiently cultivated. Little communicative, not very excitable. Of great integrity and honesty of purpose, but not very candid or open; far-seeing and acquisitive, but at the same time warm-hearted, kind and 'clannish'. In the enjoyment of fun, they may be rude, but are not cruel....."[18]

The political set-up in the north of England around the time of the Norman invasion was fluctuating and involved. Serious historians give irreconcilable accounts and dates and we must be content here with a general idea of what was happening, recognising that there maybe some inaccuracies.

The agreement between Cnut and Malcolm was apparently not honoured and we hear of William I arranging a peace with Malcolm on condition that he did homage for Cumberland, an arrangement possibly designed to give the Normans time to settle the more southerly parts of England.

Gospatric, nephew of Duncan once king of Scotland, was responsible for Cumberland and in 1067 he either bought from William the Conqueror the Earldom of Northumberland or William appointed him to it This made him an influential and powerful figure in the north. In about 1069 the Scots invaded Cumberland and held it by force. Gospatric attacked them from the east and the Normans then arrived to end the struggle for supremacy.

Gospatric was deprived of the Earldom of Northumberland, including Cumberland, and fled to Scotland, where Malcolm created him Earl of Dunbar. Malcolm III agreed to act as viceroy and feudal tenant of Cumberland for the King of England and arranged to do this through Dolfin, son of Gospatric, whom he appointed vice-regent of the land of Carlisle, and through his brother Waldeof (also known as Waltheof or Waldeve), who became vice-regent of Allerdale. This is one of a number of instances in the centuries following the Norman invasion when a person deposed in disgrace was replaced by another member of the same family.

The situation apparently continued very unsettled for the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle relates that

“King William marched north to Carlisle with a large army and re-established the fortress and built the castle and drove out Dolfin who had previously ruled the land there and garrisoned the castle with his men and afterwards returned to the south and sent thither many English peasants with wives and stock to dwell there and till the ground.” [1]

This would be William II (Rufus) and the date probably 1092. He thus annexed the area south of the Solway and received homage from Malcolm III.

Because of its unsettled nature and the Scottish domination of much of the area Cumberland, was not included in William I’s 1086 survey of his lands, the Domesday Book.

Not only did the Normans settle people from the south in this region, but they placed its control in the hands of powerful barons. At the beginning of the twelfth century Henry I gave to Ranulf (Ranulph) de Meschines, one of the Norman adventurers who had come over with William I, the Earldom of Carleol or Carlisle, probably comprising the whole of Cumberland. (There were at least six variations on ‘Meschines’ and he was also known as de Briquessart or de Brichsard.) Ranulf married the daughter of Yvo Talboise, who had the Barony of Kendal (from the Lune to Windermere), so this land also came to him. His possessions were very extensive. The Denton Manuscript states

“King William the Conqueror, about the latter end of his reign, gave the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland to Ranulph, or Randolph de Meschines, sister’s son to Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester, and left him men and munition to defend the country from all hostility...Randolph de Meschines being quietly possessed of every part of Cumberland, presently surveyed the whole country, and gave all the frontiers bordering on Scotland, on Northumberland, and along the sea-coasts, to his friends and followers, retaining still to himself the middle part, between the east and west mountains, a goodly great forest full of woods, red and fallow deer, wild swine, and all manner of wild beasts, called the forests of Englewood, . . . Randolph, gave to his brother William Meschines, the great barony of Caupland or Kopeland (from the Norse kaupaland, meaning bought land), which lies between the rivers Dudden, Darwent and the sea, and so much of the same as lies between the rivers Cockar and Darwent. The said William granted over to one Waldeof, the son of Gospatrick, Earl of Dunbar in Scotland, together with the five towns about Cockar, that is to say, Brigham, Eaglesfield, Dean with Branthwaite, Crayksothen, and Clifton, with the hamlets thereof, Little Clifton and Stainburn. This Waldeof was Lord of Allerdale-beneath-Darwent.” [2]

The above version of events is that Ranulf divided Cumberland into baronies, usually given as eleven, keeping Inglewood and possibly other areas for himself. [3] Another version is that Henry I formed the baronies and gave William de Meschines Gilsland, which he found difficult to hold and subsequently exchanged for Copeland. [4]. In either case William gave Waldeof the ‘five towns’ which thus for the first time appear in the Honour of Cockermouth and become a manor of

The arrival of the Normans

Cockermouth.

It appears that William de Meschines held the Barony of Coupland 'enfeoffed' by the king, the caput baroniae being Egremont which eventually led to the barony being known as that of Egremont rather than Copeland. Allerdale, the barony below or north of the Derwent, was held by Waldeof enfeoffed by Ranulf, the caput baroniae being at Papcastle. Waldeof did not merge his new manor of Cockermouth in his barony of Allerdale because it was held by a distinct title and was dependant on Copeland, as is shown by the fact that when Waldeof granted to the Church of the Holy Mother of God and St. Bega, at Stainburn, a parcel (a part) of the five towns the gift was confirmed by William de Meschines of Copeland.

In 1120 or soon after, Ranulf's nephew, the Earl of Chester, was drowned and Ranulf succeeded him. The Earldom of Chester was second only to the Crown in importance and a more attractive barony than Cumberland. Ranulf surrendered his northern possessions to the Crown. Some think that it was now that Henry divided the country into baronies, others that he hesitated to appoint a new overlord, as the great earls were becoming difficult to control, and that the two counties of Westmaireland and Carliol or Cumberland (from the Solway to the Duddon plus Alston) were formed, with sheriffs directly responsible to the king.

Ranulf asked Henry if his immediate feoffees in the lands he was vacating might become tenants in capite of the Crown. The Sheriff's return shows that this was done. Waldeof continued to hold the Barony of Allerdale and the Honour of Cockermouth (the five towns), now responsible through the Sheriff to the king as superior lord. The Waver to Wampool area was later separated as the Barony of Wigton, granted to Odard de Logis, but as he had no heir it came back into the Barony of Allerdale.

We now have the following arrangement. William de Meschines as Baron of Copeland, with his residence at Egremont. His title later became Baron of Egremont and his lands which stretched from the southern boundary of the five towns to the Duddon, were referred to as Allerdale-above-Derwent. The five towns, now known as the Honour of Cockermouth, and Allerdale-below-Derwent were Waldeof's, with his caput first at Papcastle and then at Cockermouth.

The Saxons had divided society into the ealdremen (governors, hence our 'aldermen') next in importance to the king; the thanes, with a property qualification of about 600 acres; the churls (or ceoris, freemen) and villeins (labourers in the service of a particular person, but not strictly slaves), who were under the protection of the thanes and for whom they had to do service. The land was divided into Boc-land, which carried a title to it recorded in a deed, and Folc-land, the land of the folk, either portioned out for a term or held in common. The former, the freehold land, had certain charges for defence, repair of forts and bridges, etc.

The Normans took over this feudal system and strengthened it, retaining many of the Saxon laws and customs. (They probably also took over the Saxon land units as a basis for their baronies.) In 1215 King John invested the grantee of Cockermouth manor with all liberties and free customs, and through the sheriff undertook to maintain and defend his men, things, lands and possessions.

The early inhabitants of Cockermouth were very much under the hand of the castle. The lord of the manor had the power of life and death and the right to a gallows. He also had the right to confiscate for himself the goods and chattels of felons; to assize of bread, and to deodants, that is living and dead things that caused the death of a person.

The chief tenants of the lord repeated much of the structure at a lower level, keeping demesne land to cultivate themselves and letting the rest in return for military service, which they had to provide for their overlord. This was true feudalism.

The holders of the honour and Castle of Cockermouth

We have seen that, when Gospatric was expelled from the Earldom of Northumberland, Allerdale passed to his third son Waldeof. Waldeof had also received from William de Meschines the whole territory in

“Kokyr et Derwent” of the five towns of “Brigham, Eaglesfield, Dene, Greyssothen, Bramthwayt et duo Clifton et Stainburn”. [1]

This was the new Honour of Cockermouth, but de Meschines remained superior lord of this strip of land. Waldeof is reported to have brought from Jerusalem a bone of St. Paul, a bone of John the Baptist, two stones of Christ’s sepulchre and a piece of the Holy Cross. [2] These relics he gave to the Priory of Carlisle, which he had already liberally endowed. Initially he lived at and administered his lands from Papcastle, but before the end of his life he probably built Cockermouth Castle and moved there.

The succession here is rather uncertain. In the next fifty years or so the barony probably passed first to Waldeof’s son Alan, one of the founders of Holmcultram Abbey. It is interesting that Alan made a gift from Cockermouth to the monks of St. Bees, which suggests that he was living there, but Wigton was still doing suit at the court of Papcastle in the 1280s. [3] As Alan apparently had no issue, the barony passed to his aunt Ethreda (Octreda), sister of Waldeof. Her husband had been Duncan II, King of Scotland, and from Ethreda the estate went to their son William Fitz Duncan, nephew of the reigning King of Scotland. (At that time the prefix ‘fitz’ meant ‘son of’ and did not imply illegitimacy as in later times.)

Meanwhile William de Meschines and his wife Cecilia (Cecily) de Rumelli, lady of Skipton in Yorkshire, had the barony of Coupland which eventually passed to their daughter Alicia (Alice). Alice married William fitz Duncan so the two baronies were joined, making William a very powerful lord.

William and Alice had two sons - first Gospatric who died in infancy, then William - followed by three daughters. Young William, always known as the Boy of Egremont, succeeded to these large estates. Not only was he closely connected with the King of Scotland but he was also second cousin to Henry II of England, so that if he had lived a holder of the Honour of Cockermouth might have gained a throne. Unfortunately he was drowned in the Strid, trying to jump this gorge in the River Wharfe, which, while only about four feet wide, is in places thirty feet deep. [4]

The three girls were still very young and Henry II appears to have assumed legal possession of the barony until they were of age to inherit. Their mother Alice presumably continued to live in Cockermouth and it may have been after her death that Henry granted the baronies of Allerdale and Coupland and other lands to the three sisters and their husbands as co-parceners. To the eldest Cecilia, given in marriage by Henry to William de Blois, Earl of Albemarle (known as ‘le Gros’), went the Barony of Skipton. Amabel (Amabilla, Annabel), wife of Richard de Lucy, inherited Coupland and Richard built Egremont Castle. Allerdale-below-Derwent and the five towns (the Honour) passed to the youngest sister Alicia (Alice) and her husband.

Alice had married Gilbert Pipard, being first his ward and then his wife. Gilbert was an itinerant justice of Henry II, Sheriff of Lancaster and holder of various important public offices. There is a record that in 1192 he held the forest of Allerdale from the Crown at a rent of three marks a year and he is also mentioned in the pipe roll of Richard I for 1193, probably the year of his death. Alice later married Robert de Courtenai, who took a turn as Sheriff of Cumberland. She outlived Robert (he died in 1209) and was childless from both marriages. After Robert’s death she paid King John £100, ten palfreys and ten oxen for the liberty of her inheritance, so that she had sufficient income from the estates of both husbands to make it unnecessary for her to marry again.

When Henry II assigned to Alice the five towns, as a royal gift they ceased to be a part of the Barony of Egremont and this land became an honour in its own right.

The Sheriffs return for 1212 records that “Alice de Rumilly holds her land in Alredale of the king by rendering annually of cornage of £15-13s-4d.”

She must have died about 1215, for in that year King John delivered the estates of Cockermouth and Allerdale to her great-nephew William de Fortibus II pending the division of the property between the descendants of Alice’s two elder sisters.

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The eldest of the three sisters, Cecily, had a daughter Harwise (Harwisia, Helewise) who married three times. By her first and third husbands she had no children, but by her second William de Fortibus to whom she was given in marriage by the king in 1195, she had a son - the William de Fortibus II just mentioned

He succeeded as the Earl of Albemarle (from his grandfather) and to the Skipton estate, and married Avelina, daughter and coheir of Richard de Montfichet.

The Allerdale lands which William II was holding were divided in 1224 into two shares of equal value. To him as senior parcener (and incidentally one of the signatories of Magna Carta) went the manor of Cockermouth and the manor house of Papcastle, where the tenants of Allerdale still attended to do suit. The other portion passed to Thomas de Multon, guardian of the infant daughters Amabilla and Alicia of Richard de Lucy, lord of Coupland. By his second marriage he was stepfather to the girls and they married the two sons he already had, Lambert and Alan, and from these marriages came the Multons of Egremont and the Lucies of Cockermouth.

In 1216 Henry III came to the throne and after his coronation made a tour of the country to ascertain the state and custody of the royal castles and probably to find if any had been newly erected or crenellated without his permission. (He introduced licencing for crenellation.) William II opposed this inspection and refused to open the castle at Rockingham, on the border of Northamptonshire and in the de Fortibus Lincolnshire estates.

Later William rebelled more openly. The degree of Henry's displeasure was shown by the command he sent to the Sheriff of Westmorland in 1221 that

"without any delay he should summon the earls, barons, knights and freeholders of his bailiwick, and that they should hasten to Cockermouth to besiege the castle there, and when they had taken the same, should destroy it, to its very foundations." [5]

Richard de Umfraville of Prudhoe Castle, and of a family to have connections with Cockermouth later, was summoned with other barons to assist in the siege.

There is no record of the instructions being fully carried out, but the western tower of the castle has 14th century superstructure on early 13th century foundations. The original building on these foundations may have been destroyed under Henry's orders or may have been purposely demolished in the course of rebuilding.

Developments in the next few years are confused. In the same year as the above order, 1221, Henry III granted to William a charter to hold a market. If this was before the order to besiege, then William would still be lord of the manor. That he may have been deprived of his position is suggested by the following note of 1241, the year of his death -

"Mandate to Henry de Neketon, Escheator beyond Trent, the King having taken homage of William, son of William de Fortibus, sometime Earl of Albemarle, for all the lands, tenements and castles which the earl held in chief, to deliver to him the castles of Cockermue, Skipton in Craven and Skipse in Holderness." [6]

This was William III, son of William II and Avelina.

A flaw in the argument that the inheritance was held by the king until William II died, is that in 1222 he gave permission for the Cockermouth market to be held on Mondays instead of Saturdays, and this order was addressed to William. Was William II then still acting as lord of the manor? Finding circumstances were against him, did he relent and decide to obey Henry? There is a suggestion that the Archbishop of York interceded on his behalf. If this is the course that events took, then the mandate to de Neketon must have been merely for his information that the inheritance of the barony by William III was approved and confirmed.

William III married Isabel, heiress of Baldwin de Redvers, Earl of Devon, and when William died in 1260 she received a share of Cockermouth and Allerdale as her dower. Isabel lived until 1293, but in the Record of Pleas for 1268 there is an account of an interesting incident. Isabel made

"complaint against Roger de Lancaster, Richard de Fleming and others, that, vi et armis, they had come to her castle at Cockermouth, and seized and carried away a goshawk, three doves, and consumed her goods to the amount of forty marks."

Were Lancaster and Fleming and their friends just taking advantage of a widow and 'throwing their weight about'? There was a sequel. Isabel and William III had first three sons, all of whom died in infancy, then two daughters, the elder of whom was Aveline.

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In 1269, the year after the above incident, Aveline was given in marriage by Henry III to Edmund - and Edmund was Edmund Plantagenet, Earl of Lancaster! In 1273 Edward I made an order for Aveline and Edmund (who was his brother) to have seisin of her inheritance as she was now old enough to receive what had been in the king's keeping during her minority.

She died soon afterwards, probably in 1274, without having children. Her younger sister must have already died, for Aveline's part of Allerdale-below-Derwent escheated to the Crown for thirty years.

The first half of the 14th century saw continuous efforts by Edwards I, II and III to find tenants for the castle. Sometimes it was granted as a reward for loyalty to the crown, sometimes in payment of a debt. Frequently it was awarded for life, but either the tenant died soon afterwards or for some reason surrendered it to the king - Edward II's worthless favourite Piers Gavestone received it in July 1309 and gave it back in August! There were long periods when Cockermouth escheated to the crown and a constable was appointed to manage the estates for the king, who periodically issued orders for the castle to be repaired and well maintained, as when Edward II told the constable to "safely and securely keep and defend the castle of Cockermouth so that no damage or danger happen to the same, for the greater security and tranquillity of his people" [7] while he was abroad.

In 1275, 1307 and 1316 claims were made to the Cockermouth estates by claimants arguing their descent from earlier owners [8] the last of the three being Anthony de Lucy. He eventually acquired them as a reward. In 1318 Andrew de Harcia, Earl of Carlisle, was made governor of Cockermouth Castle for life, in return for defeating the Earl of Lancaster at Boroughbridge. He was either too ambitious or very concerned to quieten down the northern counties, for he made an alliance with Robert Bruce which led to his downfall.

De Lucy visited de Harcia in Carlisle Castle, to all appearances a friendly call. His retinue had arms hidden under their cloaks and at each defended point of Anthony's entry he left some of his men to chat to the guards. At a given time all were overpowered, Anthony and his last companion taking de Harcia himself. De Harcia was tried and hung, drawn and quartered. With a callousness characteristic of the times his remains were displayed at Carlisle, Newcastle, York and Shrewsbury before being handed over to his sister.

So we find in 16 Edward II(1323) a Royal Charter of Anthony's reward for services rendered:

"King to Anthony de Lucie: castle and honour of Cockermouthe, and manor of Papcaster in Allerdale said to be appurtenant thereto, with knight's fees, advowsons of churches, fairs, markets, free chases, warrens and all other royal liberties in castle, honour and manor, and return of royal writs in the honour; for service of one knight's fees: witness William Archbishop of York [and several others] given at Bishopthorpe"

Thus Anthony gained Cockermouth.

There hangs in Cockermouth Castle a document bearing a large seal depicting a knight on horseback, the caption to which reads:

Letters Patent
4 June 16 Edward II (1323)
Grant to Anthony Lord Lucy of the Castle and Honour of Cockermouth
and the Manor of Papcastle.

The Lucy Cartulary, which contains the charter quoted on the previous page, also has an entry for 1324 recording a marriage settlement because

"Thomas de Lucy had agreed at the King's request to marry the King's kinswoman, Agnes."

This would presumably be Anthony's son, the only Thomas alive at that time. Anthony not only gained Cockermouth, but he was also made Sheriff of Cumberland and Warden of Carlisle Castle - he stepped into de Harcia's place.

On his death in 1343 Cockermouth passed to the Thomas mentioned above and in 1365 to the next generation, Anthony again. Anthony died in the Holy Land three years later and his sister Maud (or Matilda) inherited. This was the end of the Lucy owners. One writer stated his opinion that

"As far as I can learn, the nobilist house of the Lucies were they of Cokermuth, yn Cumbreland; and these Lucies were also Lordes of Wreschil Castel, about the mouth of Darwent river, in Yorkshire. "[9]

Maud brought two well known names into the history of the castle.

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Her first husband was Gilbert de Umfraville, Earl of Angus, who died in 1381, and her second, whom she married four years later, was Henry Percy, first Earl of Northumberland.

William Percy came from Normandy with William the Conqueror, when he received an estate and a Saxon heiress. He was a great Yorkshire baron by the time he died in 1096. His descendants were primarily soldiers, though on occasion they were also good statesmen.

Maud

“did by a ffine levied in the year 1384, settle this town and castle upon the said husband and his heirs upon condition that they shall bear the arms of Lucy.”

The son of Maud and Gilbert died before his father and she had no children by Henry. After Maud's death in 1398 Henry married Margaret Neville. His son and heir, Henry (Hotspur), was killed in the Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403, five years before his father lost his life in the Battle of Bramham Moor. By this time he had already forfeited his estates to the Crown. The Percies were a great power in the north and were frequently involved in treasonable plots. This father and son had visions of dethroning Henry IV and holding England north of the Trent for themselves - they already had great possessions in Cumberland, Northumberland, Yorkshire and the Isle of Man.

The estates were restored to the second earl, son of Hotspur and again “Henry”, in 1416. When he was killed at St. Albans in 1455 the title passed to his son, yet another Henry, who died in the Battle of Towton in 1461. Neither of these holders of the title saw much of Cockermouth, living mostly in Northumberland and Yorkshire.

The Crown took possession of the Percy estates because of the activities of the family and the honour was granted in 1465 to Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, known as the King-maker. Since the Percies had been actively engaged in working for and against claimants for the throne, Cockermouth thus had two families of king-makers within a few years. On Neville's death the estates were returned (in 1471) to the Percy family, to Henry the 4th earl, who was murdered at Cock Lodge on his Yorkshire estates. They passed to Henry “the magnificent”, who was the first Percy owner to die a natural death. Again these two owners spent little time at Cockermouth.

Meanwhile Agnes de Percy, a daughter of the fourth earl, had married Jocelyn, Lord of Petworth and constable of Arundel Castle, and so formed the link between the Petworth and Cockermouth estates which still exists today.

The fifth earl was followed for a short time by another Henry, who died in poverty in Hackney about 1537. He had assigned some of his property and revenues to Sir Thomas Wharton, comptroller of his household, in 1530 and in the following year gave to the Crown the rest of his Cumberland estates. The nickname of “the unthrifty” given to this sixth earl was the result of his inability to manage his financial affairs, but circumstances were often against him. The Tudor policy of centralisation affected estates in the north and in other ways he had an unfortunate life. Attached to Wolsey's household, he fell in love with Ann Boleyn. Wolsey and the King were always jealous of him, forced him into a marriage although the attraction of Ann lasted throughout his life, and constantly interfered in his household and in his work as warden of the Scottish borders, a post which he fulfilled well. Although he had been disgraced and arrested by Wolsey, Henry refused to join his brothers in the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536-7, a rising in the north against Henry VIII's treatment of the church and others of his actions, even though he was head of the Roman Catholics in the north of the country. His estates were restored to him shortly before his death, but it was not until 1739 that the Wharton estates were regained.

The sixth earl had no son and his brother and heir had already been attainted for his part in the Pilgrimage of Grace, so once again the estates passed to the Crown. Twelve years later Philip and Mary restored them to Henry's nephew Thomas, “the simpleton”. He became earl in 1557 and when he was beheaded in 1571 for taking part in the Rising of the North three years earlier the estates passed back to the Crown, to go to brother Henry in 1572.

The eighth earl, who gained the nickname ‘Cruel Henry’, was another absentee lord, but it was he who was responsible for the great 1577-8 survey of his Cumberland estates. The Percies were frequently in trouble with the Tudors because of their Catholic sympathies and it was royal policy to keep them in the south, at Petworth or Syon, where a watchful eye could be kept on their activities.

When they did travel north it was usually to Leconfield, Wreschil or Alnwick and not to

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Cockermouth. This earl was imprisoned in the Tower for his alleged part in plots supporting Mary Stuart and in 1585 he died mysteriously from a pistol shot while still imprisoned.

The ninth earl, Henry, was a mixture of heroism and shrewdness, of simplicity and learning. At his own expense he equipped several vessels (the family fortunes had apparently revived) and personally helped in the destruction of the Armada. Although a soldier and sailor, he was also a man of science and a patron of learning. Nicknamed the 'Wizard Earl' because of his interest in alchemy and scientific experiments, he also built up a fine library. He had friends in learned circles, being praised for example by Bacon, but was unhappily married to Dorothy Devereux. Shortly after his marriage he found a mistress in London and openly flaunted his 'affair' before the Court. It was he who built 'Percy House' near Cocker Bridge, which has in an upstairs room a decorated plaster ceiling which includes the Percy motto 'Esperiance en Dieu' (Hope in God). Henry was allegedly involved in the gunpowder plot and consequently imprisoned in the Tower from 1605 to 1621, when he was released on paying a huge fine of £11,000. His wife remained true to him and frequently visited him in prison until her death in 1619. Henry died a natural death in 1632.

Henry Percy's son Algernon succeeded. Some say he hated the Stuarts because of their treatment of his father and as a result Cockermouth Castle was garrisoned for Parliament in the Civil War. Others maintain that he was respected by both sides in the War and that Parliament gave the children of Charles I into his keeping, to whom he was very kind. [11]

The 11th and last Earl of Northumberland, for only two years, was Algernon's son Joscelyn. He died in 1670 when 26, one of the four earls not killed. His sole heiress was daughter Elizabeth who, thanks to her mother's efforts, was married three times before she was 16 - when only 13 to Harry, Lord Ogle, heir to the Earl of Newcastle, who died a year later; to Thomas Thynne of Longleat, killed by her lover in 1682; and thirdly the unhappy girl married Charles Seymour, the sixth Duke of Somerset. When she came of age in 1688 she brought him the vast Percy estates which had been taken by the Crown on Joscelyn's death.

Charles, the 'Proud Duke', agreed on his marriage to take the name Percy but refused when he came of age. He bought back the Wharton lands on 18th January 1738-9 for £13,300, gave large endowments to Cambridge and founded the University Press in 1696. He retired from public life in 1716 and lived until 1748. His outstanding characteristic was his pride in his rank and birth, which according to Macaulay "amounted almost to a disease". He is reputed to have cut one daughter out of his will because he awoke to find her sitting in his presence, a relaxation forbidden to his children.

The estates passed to Algernon, son of Charles. In addition to being the seventh Duke of Somerset he was created the first Earl of Egremont and received also the revived Earldom of Northumberland. Charles's second daughter, Lady Catherine Seymour, married Sir William Wyndham of Orchard-Wyndham in Somerset. When Algernon died without male issue in 1750 Petworth, Cockermouth and the Earldom of Egremont passed to his nephew Charles Wyndham, the eldest son of Catherine and William. The rest of the estates, including Alwick and the Earldom of Northumberland, went to Algernon's son-in-law Sir Hugh Smithson, later created the first Duke of Northumberland. This Charles was a prominent politician, succeeding Pitt as Secretary of State for the Southern Department in 1761-3, and through him the Cockermouth estates came to the present family, the Wyndhams.

After a period during which the owners showed little interest and rarely if ever visited Cockermouth, the family now began to regard it as one of their homes. The third Earl of Egremont, George O'Brien Wyndham, son of Charles, inherited also the estates of the Duke of Thomond and took the family name of O'Brien.

He served on the Board of Agriculture and was interested in progressive farming methods, but is remembered most for his patronage of the arts and his hospitality. A cultured man, he was a close friend of Turner and other painters and men of letters and entertained some of them at Cockermouth.

Turner was a guest in 1809 and his oil painting of Cockermouth Castle hangs in the Turner Room at Petworth. When George died in 1837 he was survived by only illegitimate children. A nephew, George Francis Wyndham, became the fourth Earl of Egremont and on his death in 1845 the title became extinct. Some of the possessions passed in 1837 to the third Earl's adopted heir, his eldest natural son George, but his second son General Sir Henry Wyndham was given a life interest in the Cumberland estates and was responsible for Cockermouth from 1837 to 1860. This George was

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created the first Baron Leconfield in 1859.

Sir Henry had been an ADC to the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular Campaign and was remembered for his success with four other young officers in closing the door of the Chateau of Hougoumont after it had been forced by French troops. Years later one of his nieces stayed with him in Cockermouth Castle, where, seated in an icy draught, she was heard to remark that no Wyndham had ever closed a door since Hougoumont!

When Sir Henry died Cockermouth went to George, the first Lord Leconfield, and on his death it passed successively to his son Henry (1869), this Henry's son Charles Henry (1901), Charles's brother Hugh Archibald Wyndham (1952) and then the nephew of Charles and Hugh (1963). This sixth Baron Leconfield, John Edward Reginald Wyndham, was created the first Baron Egremont, a title revived in 1963.

At the beginning of the century the castle was "frequently visited by the present owner" [12] then for many years it was little used except during the grouse shooting season. The family resided at Petworth, given by Charles Henry to the National Trust in 1947 with a large endowment and the Wyndhams continuing to live in a part of the building. The same Lord gave the Scafell area of the Cumberland estate to the Trust about 1920.

His nephew and successor, John, was for many years private secretary to Harold Macmillan, following him to the Ministry of Supply in 1940, the Colonial Office, Allied HQ in Algiers and then the Air Ministry. He became head of the economic section of the Conservative Research Department while the party was out of office, then returned to Macmillan in 1955 when he became first Foreign Secretary and later Prime Minister. It has been written that

"their friendship and collaboration, that of statesman and private secretary, had no counterpart in modern history".

John died in 1972 and his elder son Max became second Baron Egremont and seventh Baron Leconfield. The castle is again regarded as a home, the mother of the present lord spending a considerable amount of time in Cockermouth.

It is interesting to realise how the lords of Cockermouth, a town so often apparently outside the main stream of events, have been involved in royal affairs or held high office in government. Admittedly this was sometimes the result of the owners' more prominent possessions elsewhere and sometimes these other possessions have dragged Cockermouth into a conflict. The Castle has seen action on a number of occasions and this will be the theme of a later chapter.

We have seen that since the lord had other homes there were long periods when he was not resident in Cockermouth. Consequently careful records were kept by the steward, not only for the efficient running of the estates but for examination by the lord if he wished. Estate accounts, leases, farm records. etc., survive from the mid-fifteenth century, letters from the time of Elizabeth I and detailed plans and documents of iron and lead mining from the 1640s. There is a wealth of economic and social history stored in the castle records.

The stewards and other officials who wrote these records were important men in the life of Cockermouth, representing the lord and having power to deal with many matters on his behalf.

Cockermouth Castle was built with two aims in view - the first, like other Norman castles, to overawe the surrounding countryside and subdue the inhabitants to their new Norman overlords; the second, to control one of the invasion routes from the north. The approach from Scotland lay across the wild country of Nichol Forest, avoiding Carlisle Castle on one side and Bewcastle on the other, after which invaders were converged by the Pennines and the Cumbrian mountains into the Lune Gorge, through the Stainmore pass or down the West Cumbrian plain. William II (Rufus, 1087-1100) ordered a chain of castles to be built to obstruct these approaches to the heart of England, Cockermouth and Egremont controlling the way down the coast to the sands crossing of Morecambe Bay.

There is no evidence that the site of the present castle was used before Norman times. If the assumption is correct that Waldeof moved the caput of the barony from Papcastle to the new site then there must have been a building here by the middle of the twelfth century. Some say it was erected in the 1130's, contemporary with Windsor, but evidence is difficult to obtain. Certainly the twelfth century was a period of intense castle building, some 740 being erected in the years 1066 to 1215.

Early Norman castles were of the "motte and bailey" type. Because of the need for speed the buildings were at first of wood, only later replaced by stone, and wooden buildings leave little evidence.

An alternative opinion is that, since there is no specific reference to a castle in King John's restoration of the manor to William de Fortibus II in 1215, it did not then exist. [1] The record refers to "the manor of Cockermua with its appurtenances". If this all-embracing term means there was nothing so important as a castle, then the first Cockermouth building must have been erected in the period 1215-1221, for there was definitely a castle here in 1221 when William de Fortibus was in trouble with the Crown.

The first building would be a typical Norman fortress on the extreme tip of the promontory, 36 feet above river level, defended by a dry ditch and raised, as is the inner bailey at the present time, some six or seven feet higher than the outer bailey. William de Fortibus III, the owner from 1241 to 1259, was probably responsible for the stone-built spherical triangle, its sides some 42 yards long, with the western tower and two circular bastions at the three corners. The outer bailey would be surrounded by a timber palisade.

Remains of this early building are still visible. The round tower in the western apex of the triangle is one of only three round towers in Cumberland. [2] The lower part of this tower, including the archers' seats and the loops for firing through, is original thirteenth century. From such round towers archers could cover about 270° without any blind spots. Also of this building are the bottom fourteen feet of the south curtain wall, the footings of the eastern wall of the present inner bailey and lower parts of the Bell Tower. The present upper walls, such as the top ten feet of the south curtain, are of ashlar added later. The original gate was in the south-east corner, near the Bell Tower, and one of the door jambs may be seen. A postern gave access from the outer bailey to what is now Wyndham Row. Living quarters would probably be of timber, placed along the inside of the curtain walls.

The castle is built mostly of freestone from the quarries at Brigham and Broughton Beck, the source of the stone used for the Roman fort at Papcastle. In the mid-nineteenth century Brigham quarrymen often found the wedge marks of their Roman counterparts, like small harrow teeth. Much of the Papcastle stone was removed to build the present castle, probably dragged along the river (Derwent or Cocker) which is said to have frozen for two or three months in the winters of those days.[3] There are recognisable Roman stones to be seen in the castle.

There is a tradition that the Derwent originally flowed in a straight line from below Woodhall along the foot of Mickle Brow to join the Cocker at Low Gote, it once being the Cocker that flowed behind the town and round Sandair. The diversion was made to further protect the castle.

Thomas de Lucy (in possession 1343-1365) probably built the upper part of the four-storeyed round tower on the early base. Though round outside it is hexagonal inside. Each floor had a single trefoil-headed window and was reached by a newel staircase (stairs spiralling round a central column). On the second floor a door on the northern side opened into a garderobe.

The castle buildings

(There are several of these smaller rooms within the walls of the castle, usually wardrobes or lavatories, but sometimes larger private rooms.) Thomas de Lucy also built about 1360 the range of rooms along the inside of the north wall, notably the great hall 52 feet long and 32 wide. The north wall itself, in which the hall had three windows, would be rebuilt on de Fortibus's foundations. In addition to these early windows three large Tudor windows were later inserted in this wall. Sufficient stone-work remains for their original designs to be appreciated. The three massive external buttresses to the same wall were added much later in the eighteenth century. Only the base of the south side of the hall remains. The shape of the original ridged roof may be traced high on the wall of the kitchen tower. This would be an open timber roof and some of the corbels which supported it remain in the north wall. The cellars below were about ten feet high – the original floor level of the hall may be judged from the floor supports in the north wall and the level of the window seats. The castle well against the south wall of the hall goes down 61 feet, far below river level, to comparatively hard water.

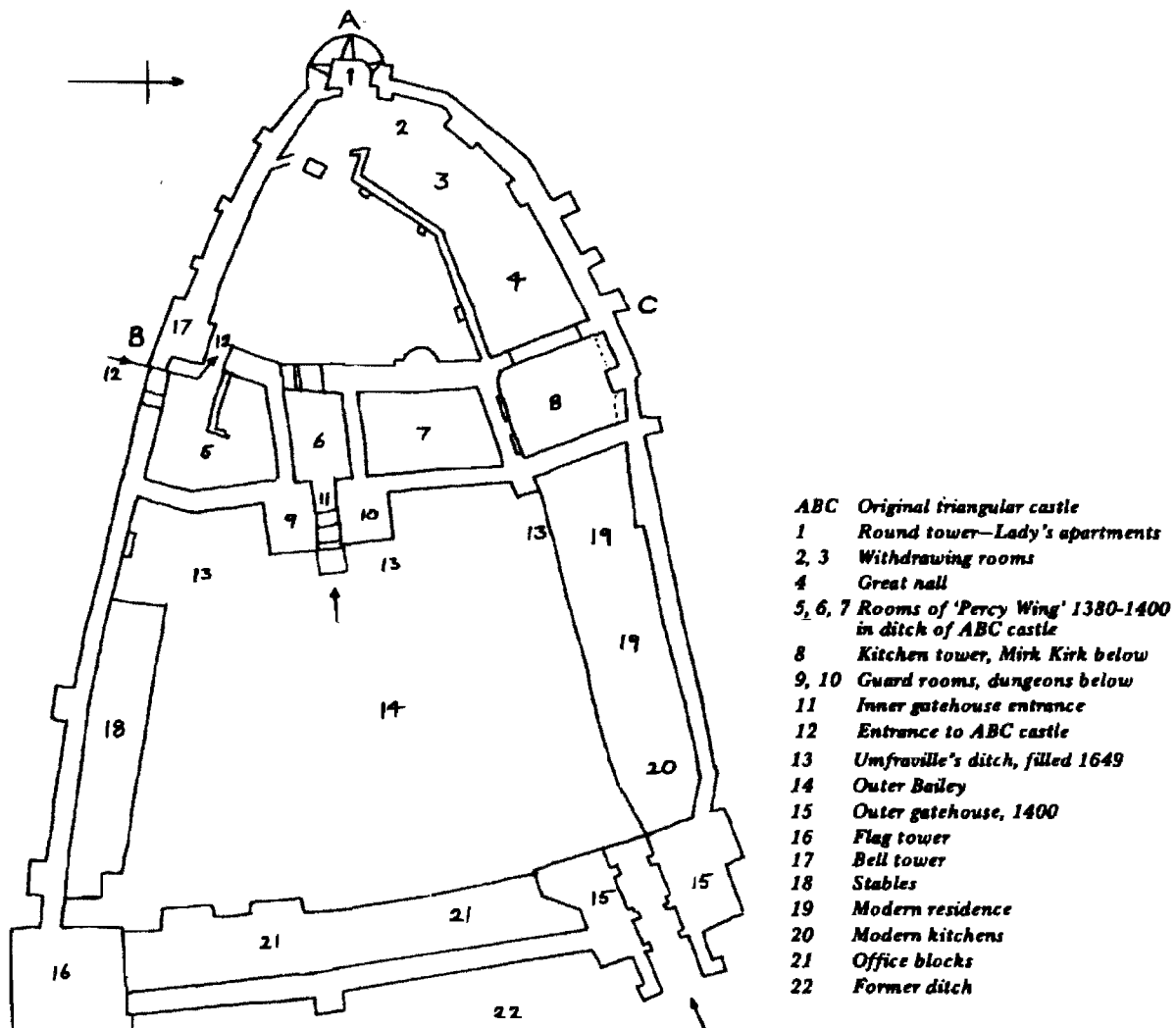


Fig 23. Plan of Cockermouth Castle

The castle buildings

At the western end of the hall would be a dais. Beyond it was a solar or withdrawing room for the lord and lady, then other apartments, linking the hall with the round tower.

The next owner, Anthony de Lucy, had the castle for only three years before his death in Palestine, but he may have inaugurated improvements leading to greater comfort for the occupants. It was his successor Gilbert de Umfraville (1368-1381), husband to Lucy's sister, who really started in earnest. Although the lord would continue to dine with his retainers in the great hall, a need was apparently felt for better accommodation than that provided to the west of the hall or in the cellars beneath - not only better state rooms and bedrooms, but improved cooking facilities.

Gilbert built the foundations of the present range between the two baileys in the eighteen feet deep ditch which de Fortibus had made, replacing this with a ditch further out on the eastern side. (This was filled in level with the outer bailey in 1649.) His unfinished work was completed by his widow's second husband, Henry Percy, the first Earl of Northumberland. The Earl completed the massive inner gatehouse with its many interesting features. It contained a number of rooms, from cellar level upwards, the largest being 29 by 21 feet. Of particular interest are the guard-rooms on either side of the entrance passage and the dungeons below them.

The guard-rooms are entered by narrow doorways on the inner bailey side, the dungeons by trap doors in the floors of these rooms. A prisoner was lowered into the oubliette-type dungeon by a rope tied to a beam resting in holes in the walls of the rooms above, holes which may still be seen. One dungeon is eighteen feet deep, the other appreciably less. Lighting and ventilation were through a slit in the outer wall of each dungeon, as the floor openings would normally be covered. The same slits are sometimes said to have been the means

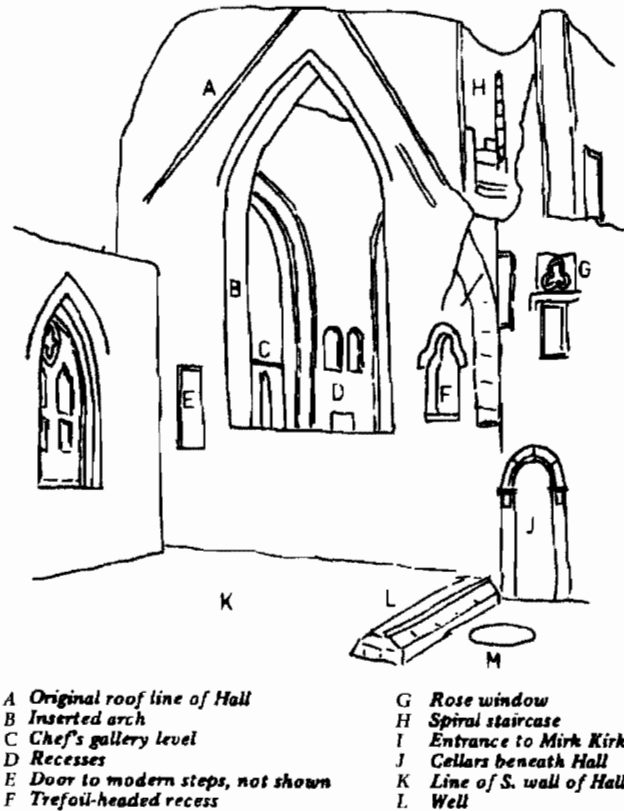


Fig 24. The Great Hall and Kitchen Tower

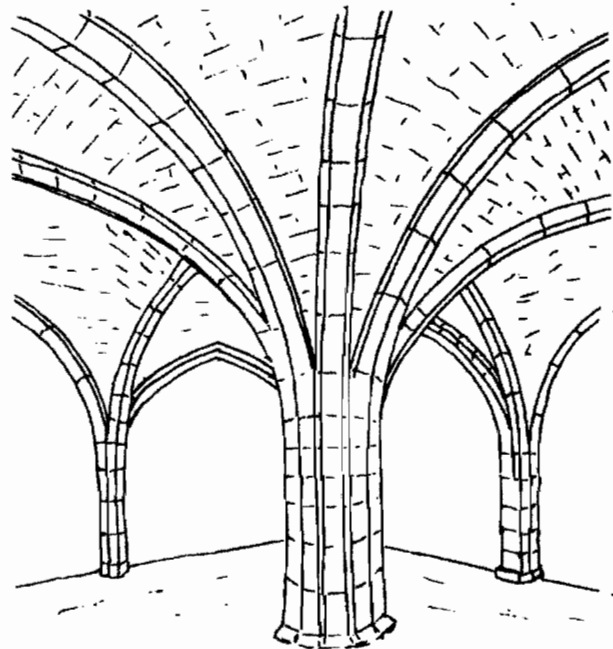


Fig 25. The Mirk Kirk

The castle buildings

by which food was passed to the prisoners, [4] but their narrowness and their height above the level of the outer bailey (even greater when there was a ditch) make this doubtful.

The gatehouse passage was vaulted. It contained two pairs of doors, also a machecoule or bretesche-hole in the ceiling of the passage through which invaders could be attacked by dropping stones, firing arrows, etc. Access from the outer bailey was by a drawbridge over the new ditch end of this range of buildings. Henry Percy also completed the kitchen tower (sometimes mistakenly described as a keep) at the other end of this range of buildings. The kitchen was on the same level as the hall and had an open timber roof, the corbels for which remain. It had two large fireplaces on the south side, windows (including two narrow ones 24 feet high in the east wall) and storage recesses. An interesting feature was a wooden gallery seven and a half feet above floor level along the north wall, from which the chef would supervise activities below. The gallery was reached by a staircase within the wall in the NE corner. Access to the hall from the kitchen was through a door in the original hall. The great pointed arch was made in the nineteenth century to prevent further deterioration of this wall, most of which had already fallen. Near the former door, on the hall side, is a trefoil-headed recess with stones to support a shelf.

The basement of the kitchen tower is known as the Mirk Kirk, the dark church, indicating that this was probably the chapel for the castle community. There is a piscina in one wall. Entered by steps from the inner bailey, it was originally lighter, having two deep splayed openings on the east wall until these were blocked by further building. The structure of this 30 feet square room is attractive, eight vaulting ribs radiating from a central octagonal pillar formed of two stones to each course.

Between the gatehouse and the kitchen tower were apartments, with cellars below. The floor levels, hooded fireplaces and communicating stairs may be clearly traced. There are here a number of passages, staircases and even rooms within the thickness of the walls. Between the new state rooms and the kitchen is a newel stair which gave access to the roof.

(Stairs spiralled in the direction which enabled a defender, descending to meet invaders, to have room to use his sword in his right hand and were sufficiently narrow to prevent people passing, so that invaders were unable to storm up them.) A doorway half way up leads into a room 9½ by 5 feet [2.9 x 1.5 m], beautifully vaulted and with a small rose window. This was probably a small oratory for prayer and meditation, possibly the chantry referred to later.

In the light of the experience of the Scottish raid in 1387 Henry Percy strengthened the outer bailey, building the flag tower, the outer gatehouse and the upper part of the bell tower. The gatehouse was erected in or soon after 1400.

Henry's first wife Maud died in 1398 and the family arms of his second wife, Margaret Neville, appear on the outer wall, so, as he himself died in 1408, the date of the building may be stated within fairly narrow limits. From outside the castle the gatehouse was approached between flanking defensive walls, a barbican (Plate 4). These walls, 18 feet long, 15 high and 7 thick, had protected walks on top, reached by stairs within the walls. The outer ends were square pillars supporting a cross-arch, also protected and useful in defence. The 1790 Universal British Directory says "Approach has been kept by a drawbridge over a deep ditch." This draw bridge, raised by chains and weights, would serve as a door when up and in the walls there are 12 inch recesses into which it fitted. The moat it spanned may have had water in it, filled by a small stream now culverted in the garden to the north-east, but it was probably dry - the 1578 survey refers to it as "a trench or dry ditch". A small door on one side gave access to the foot of the eastern curtain wall, above the moat.

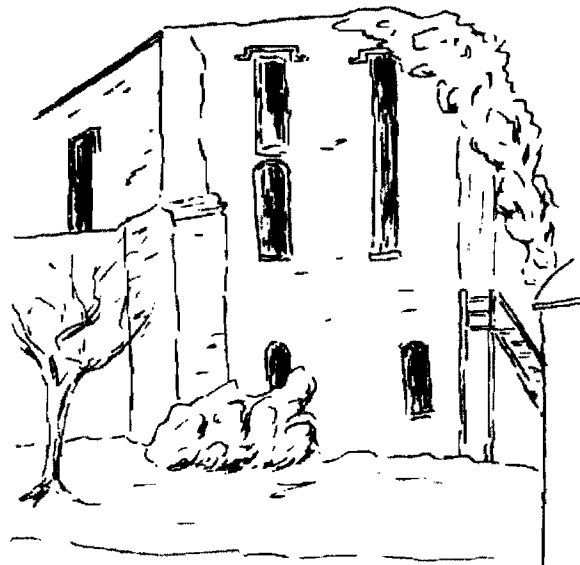


Fig 26. The original east windows of the kitchen tower and mirk kirk (after C. Wyndham)

The castle buildings

The gatehouse measures 52 by 32 feet and has three floors. The passageway through it is vaulted and had three doors, the outside one replacing a portcullis (from the French port-coulis, a sliding door), the groove for which may be seen. The doors were of two leaves, massive wood studded with iron bolts and encased in iron. When closed they were secured by one or two stout oak beams which slid into cavities in the walls. The upper part of the gatehouse has had some rebuilding and the windows have been enlarged.

The flag tower at the SE corner now houses the extensive castle records. The tower has stepping of the kind often seen on Scottish buildings, where French influence was strong. In this tower the steward held his Court of Audit twice a Year and at one time the Quarter Sessions used it. Bulmer in 1777 referred to it as 'the court house'.

The south curtain wall of the outer bailey has been strengthened by two external buttresses. Part of it collapsed early on Good Friday in 1975 but was rebuilt two years later.

Above the entrance to the outer gateway are five coats-of-arms, weathered and without colour but still sufficiently clear for the designs to be seen. In the centre is the shield of the Lucies three silver pikes or lucies on a gold ground, hauriant, that is upright as though they are being drawn out of the water. To the right of centre is first the lion rampant of the Percies - azure on a gold ground; then the silver saltire (St. Andrew's cross) on a blood-red field, the arms of the Nevilles. Left of the centre are the Multon's three silver bars on a red background; and further the cinquefoil and crosses of the Umfraville family.

A door near the gatehouse (Fig 29) gave access to a path below the north wall to a postern in the round tower, the latter secured by a beam resting in slots. Posterns on the least frequented sides of castles were used by messengers during siege.

There are a number of 14th century references to the chapel or chantry of Cockermouth Castle, where priests, paid by the castle owner, said mass for the souls of deceased members of the family. In 1330 there was an agreement regarding the oblations of the chapel and the tithes of a water-mill and in 1395 an inquiry was held in Carlisle regarding a proposal to endow two chantries founded by Henry Percy and his wife Maud with a messuage in Carlisle for the upkeep of a chaplain saying service daily in the chapel of All Saints in Cockermouth Castle. Four years later royal approval was obtained for an endowment of two closes of land and Maud's first husband was now included in the list of those for whom mass was said. By 1446 an annual salary of £6-13s-4d. was being paid from the revenues of the Honour to each of the two chaplains.

In surveys of chantries, churches, etc., made in the 1540s by Henry VIII and Edward VI, there are records of this salary having been paid to William Lamplugh and Peter Hudson for saying service in two chantries. The entries are almost identical in wording. The second one reads:

"Chauunterie within the said kinges majestie castell of Cockermouthe. Sur Peter Hudson, clerk, chaunterie preste saing devyne service within the forsaid castell, receyveth yerlie for his stipende vj ii. xiiij s.iiij d. by thandes of the said Henry Whitreson, the said kinges recyvov, (Total) vj ii. xiiij s- iiij d. "[£6-13s-4d] [5]

After 1547 William Lamplugh, now aged 60, and Peter Hudson, 46 years old, received pensions of £6 per annum. A further entry in the royal survey reads:

"Plaite and ornamenttes apperteining to the said castell of Cokermouth. Furst one chales of sylver parcell gylte (xxvj s. viij d.), one pyxy of sylver (xx d.), one vestemente of grene sylke floured (iiij s. iiij d.), one vestemente tawney sylke (ij s.), one of dornex (xx d.), two corporax with cases (ij s.), iiij alterclothes (xx d.), ii towels (iiij d.), ij messes bookes (ij s.), one graile and one salter (ij s.). (Total) xliij s. iiij d. [43s 4d] [6]

There are references to the salaries of various chaplains in the Castle Muniment Rolls for 1446, 1477 and 1485 and in that for 1477 there are also records of a payment of 21d. to John Thomas for 3 lbs. of wax for wax lights to burn before the images of the Holy Saviour and the Blessed Mary; 2d. for one hair rope for the bell; 6s.8d. to William Hall for making and fixing a new candelabrum and 6s. to William Glazier (note the name) for repairing glass windows in the chapel.

The only work done on the castle premises for the three or four hundred years after the completion about 1400 of the extensions consisted of repairs, maintenance and some slight modifications. We find, for example, that in 1477 the fourth Earl, concerned about the state of the building, paid Thomas Walker for 900 shingles (wooden roofing 'tiles'), at 3s per 100, for re-roofing the kitchen tower.

The castle buildings

Henry Percy inspected the castle in September 1567 and reported that “in dyverse places of the same ther ys some neade of reparacions, as fylleting the leades in the wall and in some places the hie leades to be new cast. And the kytchen being a faire square tower ys in the roofe in utter decay and rewyne. Ten years later the great survey reported “The saide castle is now in great decaie as well in the stoneworke as timberworke thereof” [7] and three years after that a survey found “This house or castle...ptly decayed and for divers good consideracons thought meete to be repayed”. [8]

In 1645 the then Earl did not consider it worth garrisoning, but it must have been repaired almost immediately to be manned for Parliament. In 1669 repairs were made by a mason, William Sherwen, costing £104 - presumably to the gatehouse and flag tower, as these were the only parts left intact by the dismantling after the Civil War. A few years later, 1676, the gatehouse and a small part next to it on the north wall were reported habitable, with four bedrooms, a dining room and a kitchen. At the same date there were stables and a bakehouse in the outer bailey and courts were held periodically in the flag tower. There were small repairs in 1682-3 and it was probably about this date that the octagonal summer-house or gazebo was built in the garden. It has some architectural interest stone quoins at the corners and a broken pediment above the door.

“An inventory of the Goods in Cockermouth Castle belonging to his Grace the Duke of Somerset” made about 1689 listed the contents of the living room, three bedchambers, hall, chamber above the hall, kitchen chamber, kitchen, larder, bakehouse, cellar and stable - obviously very limited accommodation. It is significant that there was no harness, etc., in the stable, merely “One Oat barrall Rackes and mangers Lock and Kay”. Space allows mention of the contents of only one room.

“In Mr Brooker Chamber one Standing bedsted with Curtains vallance and head pene (?) and tester one ffeather bed one boulster one pellow 3 blancats one Red Rugg one trundell bed stead one ffeather bed one boulster one pellow to blancats one head Rugg one Chare thre Stoles one tabell one iwon Grate one ffender one ffire Shoull one pear of tongs one poww(!) one Cloce Stoule with pott one lock and kay to the Chamber Dowe.”

In 1751 John Dobinson surveyed the castle and reported that the south wall was in danger of collapse and the north curtain even worse. It was in the following year that the great buttresses on the north wall were erected and three years later there was made “a Water Wear to Prevent the River Derwent from undermining and washing away the Castle Hill”. [9] It may have been now that the north wall of the outer bailey was changed. The upper portion is certainly later than 1739, when Buck’s view shows it lower than at present. (Plate 2)

Undermining was a recurring problem. In 1765 there is record [10] of payment “for the water-works at the Castle Lands to secure the same from the River Derwent” and, undated but by comparing writing probably about 1800, a reference [11] to “cradles” and loads of stone to secure the castle and lands.

In 1755 the Earl of Egremont came to stay in the spring with the intention of winning for his family the two Parliamentary seats in the 1756 election. He tried to buy votes but when the election came lost heavily to the Lowthers. Disgusted, he never paid another visit, but is said to have commented frequently on the intractability and unpleasantness of the inhabitants of Cockermouth! However, his visit left its mark. The outer gatehouse, in which he must have stayed, was reroofed and the rooms repaired - walls replastered, ceilings renewed and windows replaced. He brought with him his bedroom and dining furniture, including twenty “mahogany chairs with Spanish lether bottems”, and presumably took them away again. Furniture transport could have been no easy matter in those days. Whitehaven benefitted too, for the Earl was a great eater and spent large sums on oysters, salmon and lobsters from that port.

Grose wrote in 1775

“the present Earl has caused the outer walls to be newly pointed and the rubbish to be removed from the inner court” [12],

but according to Bulmer the gatehouse was still the only habitable part, with two rooms on each floor, in 1777. Then in 1802 the third earl decided to come up in the late summer every year from his usual residence at Petworth and he had built a new house by the north wall of the outer bailey. [13] It was completed in the spring of 1805. The only portion surviving unaltered is the entrance hall with the staircase. The present stable block was probably built at the same time.

The castle buildings

With more frequent use the castle was better cared for and the Earl's entertainment there of artists and others brought it to the notice of a wider public. With the ruins tidied up and further deterioration halted, for it was probably now that the great arch in the kitchen tower was made, the castle became a feature to be seen by the increasing number of visitors to the Lake District. Wordsworth, who had played amongst the ruins when a young boy, and Turner were both inspired by the grandeur of the ruins and in their work they gave it publicity.

Wordsworth, revisiting in 1833 the scenes of his boyhood, wrote the sonnet:-

"Thou look'st upon me, and dost fondly think
Poet! that, stricken as both are by years,
We, differing once so much, are now Compeers,
Prepared, when each has stood his time, to sink
Into the dust. Erewhile a sterner link
United us; when thou, in boyish play,
Entering my dungeon, didst become a prey
To soul-appalling darkness. Not a blink
Of light was there; and thus did I, thy Tutor,
Make thy young thoughts acquainted with the grave;
While thou wert chasing the wing'd butterfly
Through my green courts; or climbing, a bold suitor,
Up to the flowers whose golden progeny
Still round my shattered brow in beauty wave."

In 1847 Sir Henry Wyndham replaced the 1805 buildings along the north wall, except for the hall and staircase, at the same time filling a gap which had been left to allow light into the Mirk Kirk through windows which now became blocked. The portion filling the gap was a mock baronial hall, open to the roof with bare stone walls on which skins were hung. A later Wyndham inserted an upper floor around 1900.

The extent of the restoration and use of the castle in the middle of 19th century is shown by an inventory of the contents dated 1860.[14] 16 rooms were in use, in addition to the domestic and servants' quarters. There were nine horses, total value £291, and under "Carriages" were entered "Four Horse Drag, Omnibus, Dog Cart, Light Cart and Stable Utensils". Two 4-Horse Whips and two 2 Horse Whips had a value of only £3, but "1 Whip presented to Sir H. Wyndham by the Cabmen of London" was valued at £21. Hip baths, taper stands, wash stands, cases of stuffed birds, stag horns, etc., are a reminder of life 100 years ago. All rooms were liberally furnished and from the list of contents it is possible to imagine their appearance.

We give No. 3 Bed Room as an example:-

Wardrobe and Drawers	Bedstead and Curtains	2 Wash Stands
2 Dressing Tables	2 looking Glasses	1 Large Looking Glass
1 Coat Stand	1 Hip bath	1 Foot bath
1 Shower bath	1 Night Commode	Fender irons and Guard
2 Towel Rails	4 Chairs	2 Sets of Chamber Service
Carpet and Hearth Rug	Large Jug and basin	

Sir Henry was also well provided for. Under 'Wearing Apparel' we have .

22 Coats	27 Vests	21 Scarfs
20 pairs of Trousers	1 Dressing Gown	9 Silk Neck Ties
27 Pocket Handkerchiefs	27 Neck Ties	1 Vest piece
2 Night Caps	2 pairs of Braces	27 pairs of Socks
1 Pair of Silk Stockings	5 pairs of Gloves	1 pair of Muffatees
35 Shirts	22 pairs of Drawers	15 Under Shirts
2 White Vests	4 Hats	15 pairs of Boots
2 pairs of Low Shoes	2 pairs of Slippers	7 Razors and Case
2 Hair Brushes and Comb	2 Tooth brushes	1 Nail brush
Stud Case	Portmanteau	3 Red Shirts
Carpet bag		

The assessor, John Thwaite, who was a licenced auctioneer in Cockermouth, gave the total value of the castle contents as £2028 4s.

The mock baronial hall was changed by the third Lord Leconfield, who lowered the ceiling from the two-storey height and panelled the walls in oak. An interesting feature then introduced is that the room may be enlarged for special occasions by pushing back the complete wall on the kitchen tower side. The whole wall is on rollers and access to the back of it is gained from the roof loft.

The castle buildings

With the erection in 1904 of a further office block on the eastern side of the outer bailey, next to the flag tower, the buildings as we see them today were completed.

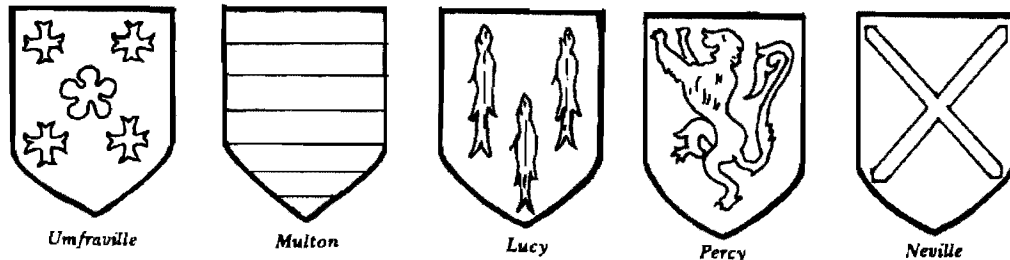


Fig 28. *The coat of arms on the outer gatehouse of Cockermouth Castle*

In front of the outer gateway, across the ditch, stood in 1578 “two barnes and other buildings and also a parcell of land called the greens without the Castell gate” In 1668 the Duke of Somerset made a bowling green on part of this area which was used thereafter by the people of the town, although a later earl complained in 1777 about the uprooting of cabbages and thorns alongside the green. The site is clearly seen inside the main gate. A number of sites in this area were considered for the new office block.

Rumours abound regarding underground passages between the castle, the old hall, the churchyard, the brewery area, etc. There were certainly drains from the castle to the rivers people still living played in them when children. Larger passageways, now blocked, appear to have gone from a property in Wyndham Row under the road to the castle grounds and from 28 Market Place under Castlegate towards the castle, Are there others?

Wordsworth wrote of the ruins and their history, but made the common mistake regarding the Civil War:

Proud old castle, in thy ruined grandeur
 Thou yet doth stand, a record of the past:
 Where Derwent's wave still rippling, doth meander,
 That once a well filled moat around thee cast.

Behold the pile which foreign hands once raised,
 When Norman Will reigned monarch of this land:
 And let the eye regard its walls amazed,
 That works of this rude age so long should stand.

Look on that tower, - behold that deep sunk well,
 Yon roofless hall, and narrow donjon keep;
 Ah, these could each a varied story tell!
 To cause a smile, or make the tearless weep.

Those high stout walls once mocked proud Cromwell's
 power,
 When he his shot against the ramparts hurled;
 But famine, not the iron tempest's shower,
 Left Cromwell's flag upon the walls unfurled

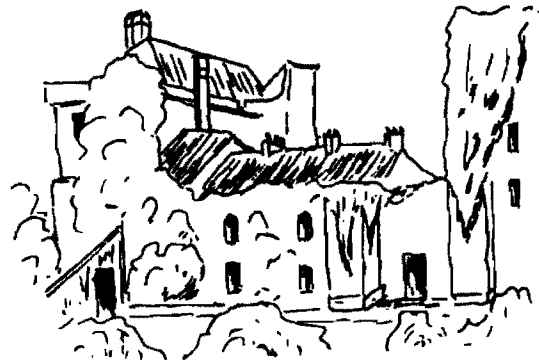


Fig 29. *The north wall between the gatehouse and the kitchen tower with early buildings before General Wyndham's work (after C. Wyndham)*

To appreciate the significance of the ruins amongst which we move on trim lawns it is necessary to make a real effort to picture them as they must once have been. First the buildings walls complete, floors inserted, roofed over, chimneys projecting upwards. Then the life within them. The lord with his family and friends eating in the great hall, a roaring log fire, tapestries on

The castle buildings

the walls, dogs foraging for scraps, and all the related bustle in the kitchen, the cellars and the yard outside. At other times arrows landing from besieging Scots; cannon balls striking from Royalist batteries; sentries patrolling the ramparts. Tenants or petitioners making their way to the flag tower corner. And over all the smell of wood smoke and horses, the shouting of orders and the general background noise of a vigorous, active community.