

MILLOM CASTLE

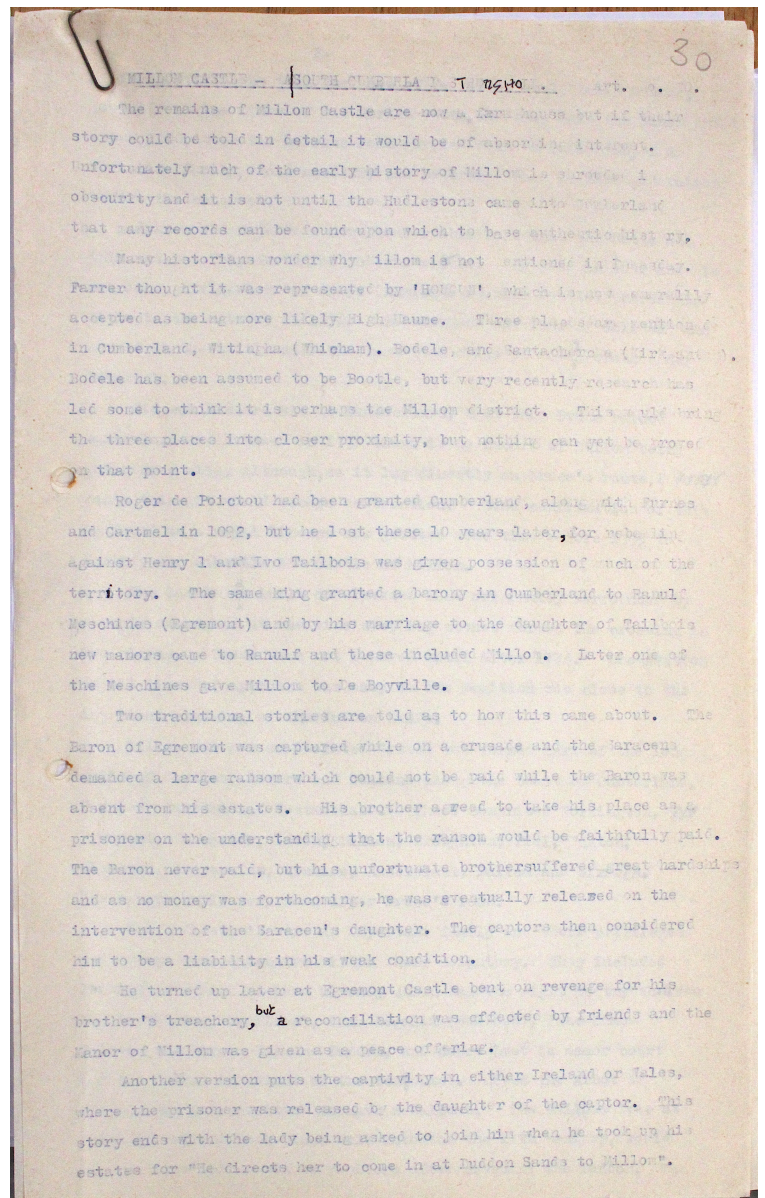
The remains of Millom Castle are now a farm house but if their story could be told in detail it would be of absorbing interest. Unfortunately much of the early history of Millom is shrouded in obscurity and it is not until the Hudlestons came into Cumberland that any records can be found upon which to base authentic history.

Many historians ponder why Millom is not mentioned in Domesday. Farrer thought it was represented 'Hougun' which is not really accepted as being more likely High Haume. Three places are mentioned in Cumberland, Whitham (Whicham). Bodele and Sancta church (Kirksanton). Bodele has been assumed to be Bootle, but very recently research has led some to think it is perhaps the Millom district. This would bring the three places into closer proximity, but nothing can yet be proved on that point.

Roger de Poitou had been granted Cumberland, along with Furness and Cartmel in 1092, but he lost these 10 years later, for rebelling against Henry 1 and Ivo Taillebois was given possession of much of the territory. The same king granted a barony in Cumberland to Ranulf Meschines (Egremont) and by his marriage to the daughter of Taillebois new manors came to Ranulf and these included Millom. Later one of the Meschines gave Millom to De Boyville.

Two traditional stories are told as to how this came about. The Baron of Egremont was captured while on a crusade and the Saracens demanded a large ransom which could not be paid while the Baron was absent from his estates. His brother agreed to take his place as a prisoner on the understanding that the ransom would be faithfully paid. The Baron never paid, but his unfortunate brother suffered direst hardships and as no money was forthcoming, he was eventually released on the intervention of the Saracen's daughter. The captors then considered him to be a liability in his weak condition.

He turned up later at Egremont Castle bent on revenge for his brother's treachery, but a reconciliation was effected by friends and the Manor of Millom was given as a peace offering. Another version puts the captivity in either Ireland or Wales, where the prisoner was released by the daughter of the captor. This story ends with the lady being asked to join him when he took up his estates for "He directs her to come in at Duddon Sands to Millom."



The Boyvills who took over the name of De Millom would build a home, probably on the lines of the Norman Motte, and they held the Manor until about 1250, when the heiress Joan Married John de Hudleston, of a Yorkshire family, whose ancestry can be traced back to five generations before the conquest.

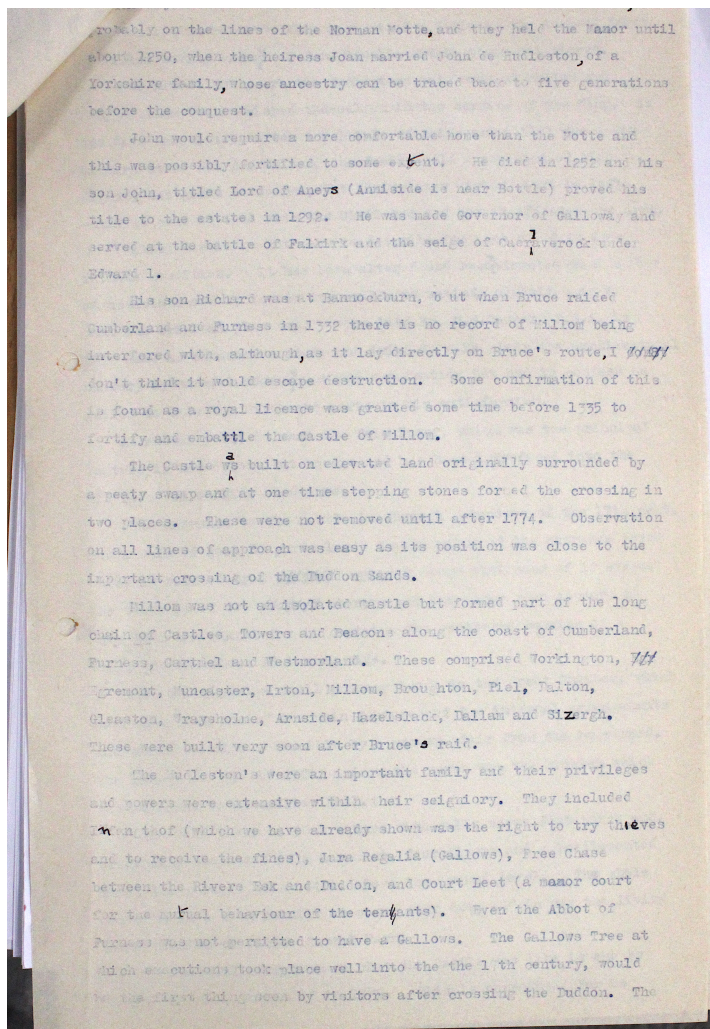
John would require a more comfortable home than the Motte and this was possibly fortified to some extent. He died in 1252 and his son John titled Lord of Aneya (Annside is near Bottle) proved his title to the estate in 1292. He was made governor of Galloway and served at the battle of Falkirk and the siege of Caerlaverock under Edward 1.

His son Richard was at Bannockburn but when Bruce raided Cumberland and Furness in 1332 there is no record of Millom being interfered with, although as it lay directly on Bruce's route, I don't think it would have escaped destruction. Some confirmation of this is found as a royal licence was granted some time before 1335 to fortify and embattle the Castle of Millom.

The Castle was built on elevated land originally surrounded by a peaty swamp and at one time stepping stones formed the crossing in two places. These were not removed until after 1774. Observation on all lines of approach was easy as its position was close to the important crossing of the Duddon Sands.

Millom was not an isolated Castle but formed part of the long chain of Castles and Beacons along the coast of Cumberland, Furness, Cartmel and Westmorland. These comprised Workington, Egremont, Muncaster, Irton, Millom, Broughton, Piel, Dalton, Gleaston, Wrayholme, Arnside, Hazelslack, Dallam and Sizergh. These were built very soon after Bruce's raid.

The Hudlestons were an important family and their privileges and powers were extensive within their seignory. They included infangenthef (which we have already shown was the right to try thieves and to receive the fines), Jura Regalia (Gallows), Free Chase between the Rivers Esk and Duddon, and Court Leet (a manor court for the mutual behaviour of the tenants). Even the Abbot of Furness was not permitted to have a Gallows. The Gallows Tree at which executions took place well into the 18th century, would be the first thing seen by visitors after crossing the Duddon. This was later marked by a red



sandstone slab, erected by a Mr. King. The inscription read "On this spot stood a Gallows, the ancient Lords of Millom having exercised Jura Regalia within their seignory." For almost 500 years the Hudlestons held sway at Millom and many of them distinguished themselves in the service of the King. At one time immediately after the Battle of Agincourt (1514) where Sir Richard stood out for valour, the family held a position of high dignity and great influence, but their later history must be left until we come to deal with the Civil War and how it affected our area.

Millom Castle is not easy to describe for much of it is in a ruinous condition. It has been altered and reconstructed on a number of occasions and it is now impossible to satisfy ourselves as to what the original plan was. The late Mr H.S. Cowper F.S.A. in 1922 made an exhaustive study and tried to make clear the architectural history by careful measurement and examination but had to confess he failed to date the different parts to his satisfaction.

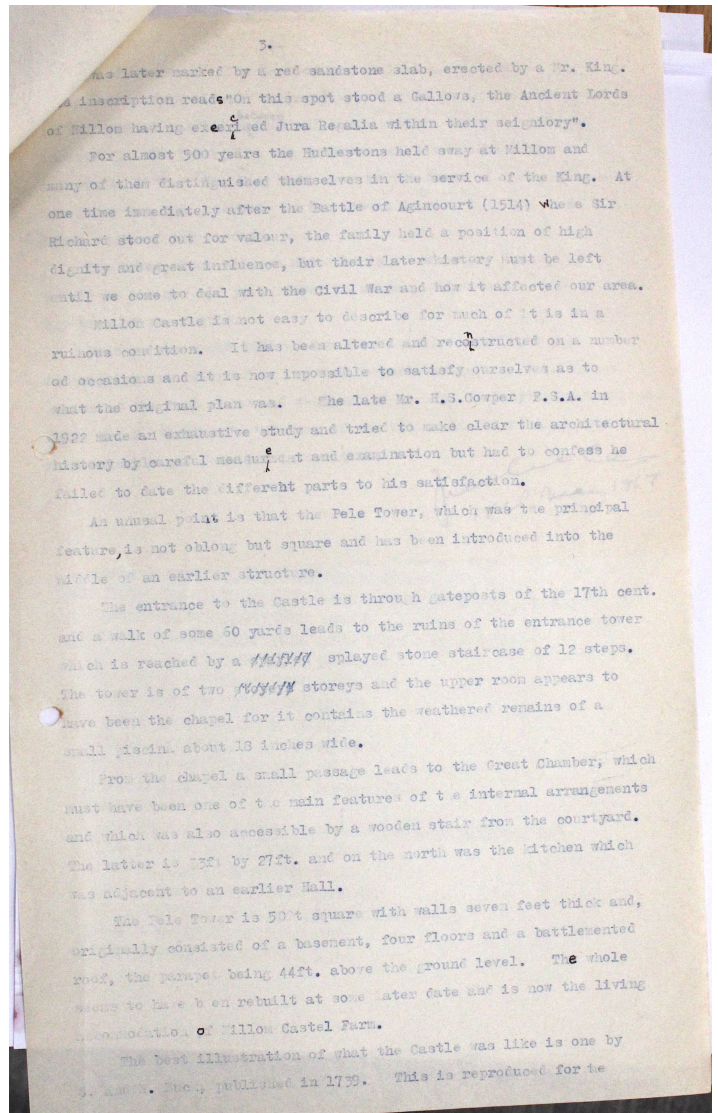
An unusual point is that the Pele Tower, which was the principal feature, is not oblong but square and has to be introduced into the middle of an earlier structure.

The entrance to the Castle is through gateposts of the 17th century and a walk of some 60 yards leads to the ruins of the entrance tower which is reached by a splayed stone staircase of 12 steps. The tower is of two storeys and the upper room appears to have been the chapel for it contained the weathered remains of a small piscine about 18 inches wide.

From the chapel a small passage leads to the Great Chamber, which must have been one of the main features of the internal arrangements and which was also accessible by a wooden stair from the courtyard. The latter is 13 ft by 27 ft and on the north was the kitchen which was adjacent to an earlier hall.

The Pele Tower is 50 ft square with walls seven feet thick, and originally consisted of a basement, four floors, and a battlemented roof, the parapet being 44ft above ground level. The whole seems to have been rebuilt at some later date and is now the living accommodation of Millom Castle Farm.

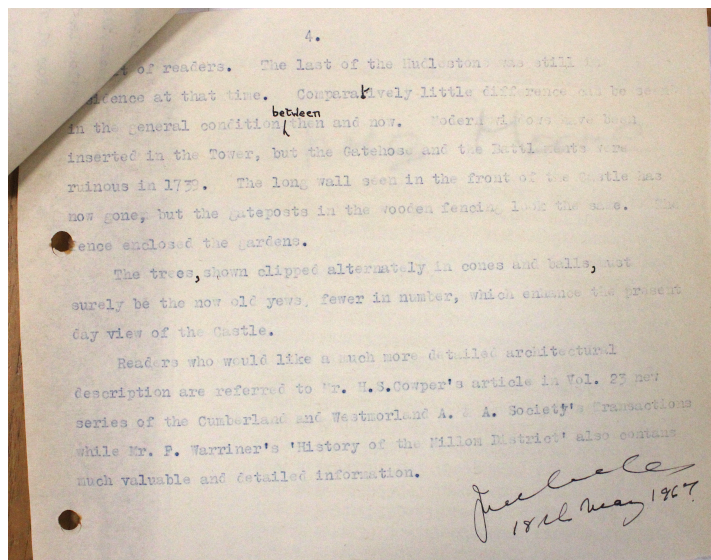
The best illustration of what the Castle was like is one by Buck, published in 1739. This is reproduced for the ... of



readers. The last of the Hudlestons was still in residence at that time. Comparatively little difference can be seen in the general condition between then and now. Modern windows have been inserted in the Tower, but the Gatehouse and the Battlements were ruinous in 1739. The long wall seen in front of the Castle has now gone but the gateposts in the wooden fencing look the same. The fence enclosed the gardens.

The trees, shown clipped alternately in cones and balls, must surely be the now old yews, fewer in number, which enhance the present day view of the Castle.

Readers who would like a more detailed architectural description are referred to Mr W S Cowper's article in Vol 23 new? series of Cumberland & Westmorland A & A Society Transactions. While Mr F Warriner's History of the Millom District also contains much valuable and detailed information. Signature of James Melville 18th May 1967.



BDX 828 - James Melville and Arthur Evans - 20th century

1 - Research papers of James Melville

2 - Newspaper articles written by James Melville (typed copies)

Archive centre	Barrow
Reference	BDX 828/1/2/30
Title	Millom Castle - A South Cumberland Stronghold (Article 30)
Date	26 May 1967
Extent	1 item
Catalogue level	File