

## THE WORK OF WILLIAM THACKERAY AND JAMES SWINGLER AT FLATT HALL (WHITEHAVEN CASTLE) AND OTHER CUMBRIAN BUILDINGS, 1676-1684

by Blake Tyson

In volume 27 of these *Transactions* the influence of William Thackeray of Torpenhow on 17th century architecture in Cumbria was discussed with regard to the rebuilding of Rose Castle chapel, near Carlisle between 1673 and 1675. As gentry visited Bishop Edward Rainbow there on church or social business they would have seen Thackeray's work and, to judge from Samuel Buck's view of 1739, might have been impressed by his use of classical architecture. This may help to explain his later involvement with several important Cumbrian houses but, for the majority, no records survive.

The exception is a remarkable series of over 1800 letters exchanged between Sir John Lowther (1642-Jan. 1706), who lived at Sockbridge Hall near Penrith<sup>1</sup> before becoming M.P. for Cumberland from 1664 to 1700, and Thomas Tickell, his Whitehaven estate steward from 1666 until his death in December 1692.<sup>2</sup> Amongst a mass of colliery, shipping and other business and political information,<sup>3</sup> the letters contain many scattered references to building work at The Flatt (later called Whitehaven Castle), a mansion bought for £1000 on 1st October 1675<sup>4</sup> by Sir John Lowther from Sir George Fletcher of Hutton-in-the-Forest near Penrith. Thackeray was then employed to refashion it but, as he was also working at other houses, he was elusive and the letters mention his whereabouts usually in hopes of persuading him to continue his work at Whitehaven. References to James Swingler are similar but brief and, as well as outlining part of his career, they help to reinforce some less certain aspects of Thackeray's work. Tickell's comments also provide evidence for the supply of materials, the problems and modifications during construction, the details of finish and the influence of Dublin on building in West Cumberland. However, as references to the structure are not as clear as one might wish, later work must be examined first to appreciate the extent of Thackeray's alterations.

Whitehaven Castle dominates the view from Lowther Street near the town centre (Fig. 1). It became a general (now geriatric) hospital in 1924 but the attendant alterations have not destroyed the main characteristics created when the house was altered for Sir James Lowther<sup>5</sup> in the 18th century. The accounts for that work<sup>6</sup> are most disappointing, merely providing lists of workmen's names with wages paid for cutting and carting stone, together with payments made to other tradesmen. However, they do show



Fig. 1.

Whitehaven Castle from the south-west in 1982. The wing built by William Thackeray in 1676-8 forms the recessed middle portion but it is entirely subjugated by the work designed by Robert Adam in 1766.

that Daniel Benn was paid £105 "for Superintending the work at the Castle from 1766 to 1775 Both Inclusive".

In the Lonsdale manuscripts at the Record Office in Carlisle Castle, there is a set of six carefully presented drawings of ground, first, second and garret floor plans, a section and the roof arrangement.<sup>7</sup> All are signed "Robt Adam Archt 1766" and, except for part of the roof plan, they compare closely with the surviving structure. Clearly distinguished on the plans are "Those parts shaded dark shews what is new and those of a lighter colour is what remains of the old Building" which formed a block about 73 feet square with a kitchen wing projecting southwards. The first floor plan forms the basis for figure 2. Adam's roof plan includes an extension to the east and south-east which balances his composition, but it is drawn only lightly on the ground floor plan as if his idea was soon abandoned. The wing would have obstructed the stable yard behind the house, would not have added to the grandeur of the house when viewed from the town and would have increased the expense. John Howard's detailed plan of Whitehaven dated 1790<sup>8</sup> shows a much reduced substitute on the east side.

Older undated plans<sup>9</sup> include two unexecuted schemes illustrated in figure 3. Of these, the longer gangling design appears to have been drawn by Sir John Lowther himself for the labelling and a room schedule are in his handwriting. He noted

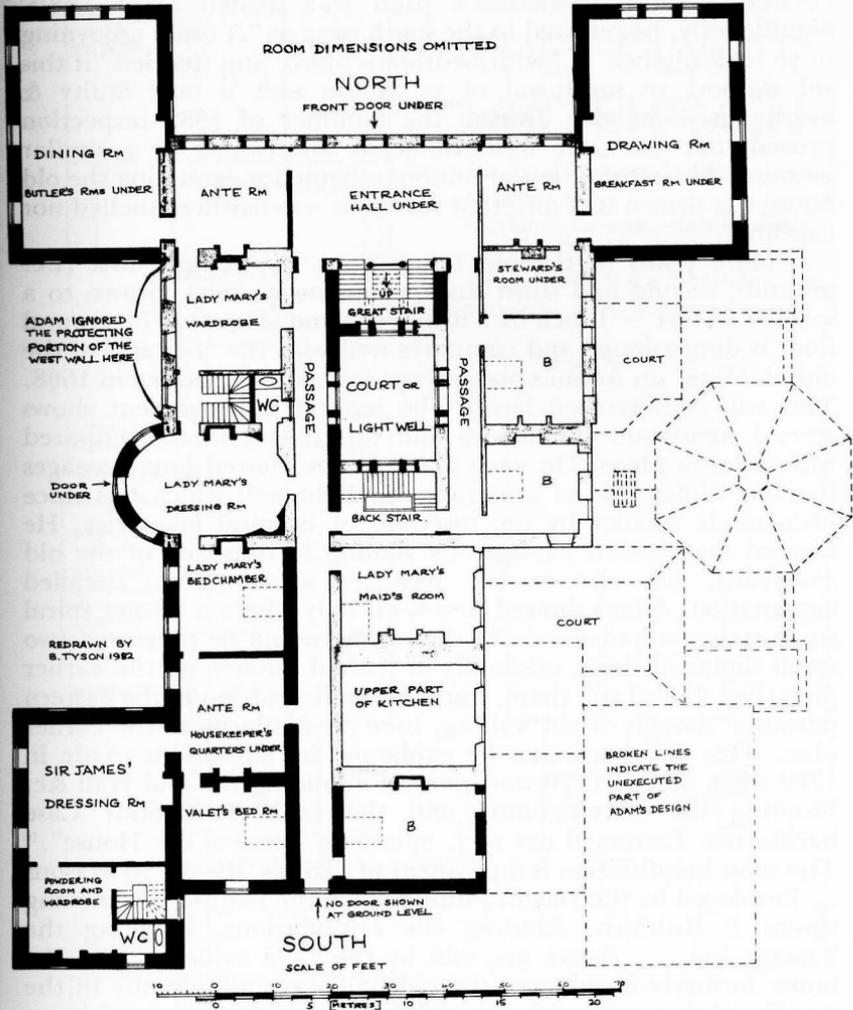


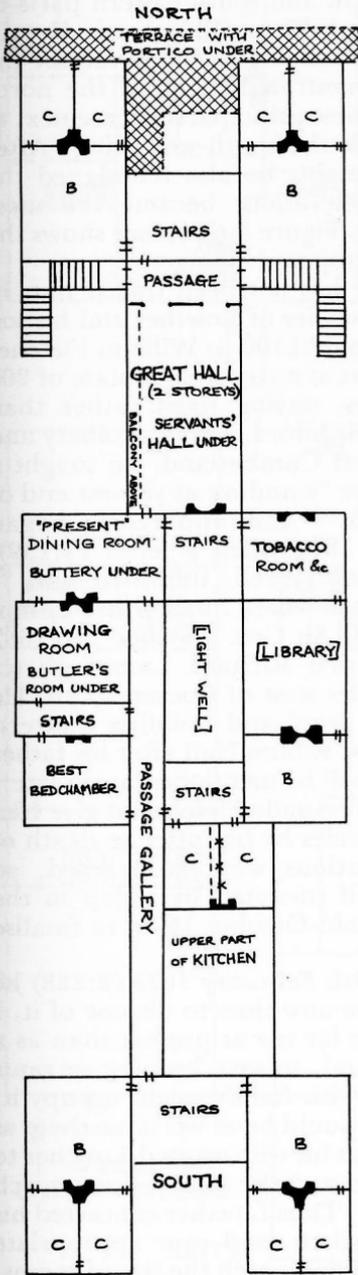
Fig. 2.

First floor plan of Whitehaven Castle re-drawn from Robert Adam's plans dated 1766. The parts shown in black were added to the old building shown in grey. The eastern portion which balanced his design was not built. (Source: C.R.O., D/Lons/L. 11/8).

the position of "Staires to ye three Cellars of ye Old House" on the west side of the central block. However an inventory of 1675 (see note 13) listed "ye Butterie Cellar and pantry" as if there was only one cellar (see note 23), presumably under the buttery at the NW corner. Perhaps Lowther's plan was drawn after 1680. Significantly, he referred to the south wing as "A room adjoining to ye [old] kitchen ..." with bedrooms above and queried "if this wil support ye south-wal of ye House wch is now faulty & overhangs 6 inches". During the Summer of 1982 inspection proved that the same wall still leans southwards by a similar amount. The second, less ambitious scheme for extending the old house was drawn to a different scale but was neither labelled nor executed.

More plans of the old house show the cellars, first (i.e. ground), second and third storeys (but no garrets), drawn to a scale of 20 feet = 1 inch by a different hand (Fig. 4). The ground floor is dimensioned and compares well with the "remains of the old building" on Adam's plan except for a kitchen added in 1698. This will be discussed later. The internal arrangement shows several significant similarities and differences when compared with Adam's plans. On each floor Adam showed long passages flanking either side of a rectangular light-well which has since been made smaller by the insertion of hospital lavatories. He created the western passages by walling in that side of the old courtyard, but the eastern passages need more detailed explanation. Adam showed new walls only where a former spiral stone staircase had stood. At the southern end he preserved two small flights of steps, originally in the old kitchen on the earlier plan (Fig. 4) and still there, but the middle portion of the eastern passages, though of old walling, bore no similarity to the earlier plan. This difference can be explained by alterations made in 1720 when almost £770 was spent "Rebuilding the Old Hall &c, Fronting the Green Court and the Larders & Stair Case backwards. Extracted out of J. Spedding's acct of the House".<sup>10</sup> The most helpful item is a payment of £28. 2s. 8½d. "to Masons ... Employed by the Day in Pulling down the Ho[use], Removing stones & Rubbish, Ridding the Foundations, Flagging the Passage &c...". As we are told by the 1698 evidence that the house formerly faced east, the old hall was undoubtedly in the middle of that side with the old kitchen to the south of it, as already mentioned, and a parlour (mentioned in 1720) to the north. The work of 1720 also helps to explain the differences in detail of the courtyard and backstairs on Adam's plans compared with the earlier plans. The latter also show fireplaces on the north wall where Adam showed windows as part of a symmetrical arrangement in old walls.

This evidence suggests that William Thackeray did not alter



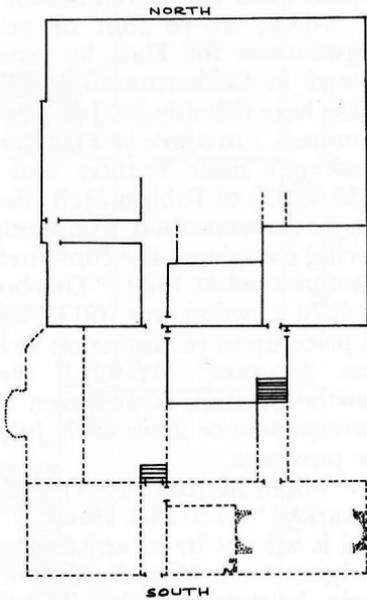
UNEXECUTED SCHEMES  
(POST 1675) FOR EXTENDING  
**THE FLATT  
WHITEHAVEN**

← Sir John Lowther's Drawing



SOURCE: CARLISLE R.O., D/Lons/W, Wk. 79.  
REDRAWN BY BLAKE TYSON 1982

↓ AUTHORSHIP UNKNOWN



SOUTH

↑ PLAN OF GROUND FLOOR  
(NO LABELLING)

← PLAN OF PRINCIPAL STOREY  
B = BEDROOM C = CLOSET

Fig. 3.

Two unexecuted designs for extending Sir John Lowther's old house at Flatt, Whitehaven. He provided a list of rooms for the less compact scheme.

the arrangement of the older eastern and south-eastern parts of the house, where Tickell lived from 1676 until his death. Details from the letters will show, however, that Thackeray rebuilt the north-west part of the house, refenestrated much of the north elevation (see note 52), erected the new principal staircase next to the old stone spiral stairs and built the south-west wing. After raising the garrets to full-storey height, he also redesigned the roof. Thus the north and west elevations became the most important with views over the town. Figure 4 therefore shows the pre-1675 layout together with the proposed changes.

The early history of the house has not been traced but, in 1636 to settle a dispute, Sir John Lowther of Lowther and his son Christopher (our Sir John's father) paid £100 to William Fletcher and his son Lancelot to confirm Flatt as a customary estate of 200 acres in the Lordship of St. Bees, paying fixed rather than arbitrary fines (see note 4). As our Sir John Lowther's colliery and shipping interests prospered in West Cumberland, he sought a replacement for his old manor house "standing at ye west end of ye Town, at ye foot of ye rock"<sup>11</sup> and apparently began negotiations for Flatt by January 1672 when a letter (1;139), posted in Cockermouth by Thomas Tickell, informed him "I came here this day [10 Jan.] by Ribton where I had yr bro Lampl Promise ... to agree ye Flat Rent with Sir Geo. Fletcher". In 1667 Lowther's sister Frances had married Richard Lamplugh (c. 1633-1705) of Ribton Hall, five miles west of Cockermouth. He was to be consulted frequently on legal and building matters, having completed the construction of Ribton Hall after his father Thomas died in 1670.<sup>12</sup> This house will be mentioned again later. In 1674 Lowther was still trying to persuade Fletcher to give him "a price upon ye Reversion wch he saies he has after ye death of Mrs. Johnson" (1;199).<sup>13</sup> Negotiations were protracted, so Lowther visited Whitehaven himself (denoted by a gap in the correspondence from early July to mid-October 1675) to finalise the purchase.

When he wrote to Tickell on 5th February 1676 (2;238) he remarked "As to Flat House it wil be now time to dispose of it. I find it wil not be of any further use for me at present than as a Lodging for a Moneth or two..." and, to save keeping servants there, he suggested that Tickell and his family might occupy it, for "any business of mine yt you doe would be as wel done there as where you are". The agent agreed but his wife wanted Lowther to "send furniture for yr owne chamber and the dining Roome wch she will carefully preserve for yr use". Thus Lowther contacted his "cousin Teasdel" at Sockbridge Hall to send over appropriate furnishings<sup>14</sup> but, as his hangings did not match the size of rooms, he thought the latter should be panelled (2;240). By 23rd March 1675/6 he was in Doncaster travelling again to Whitehaven to

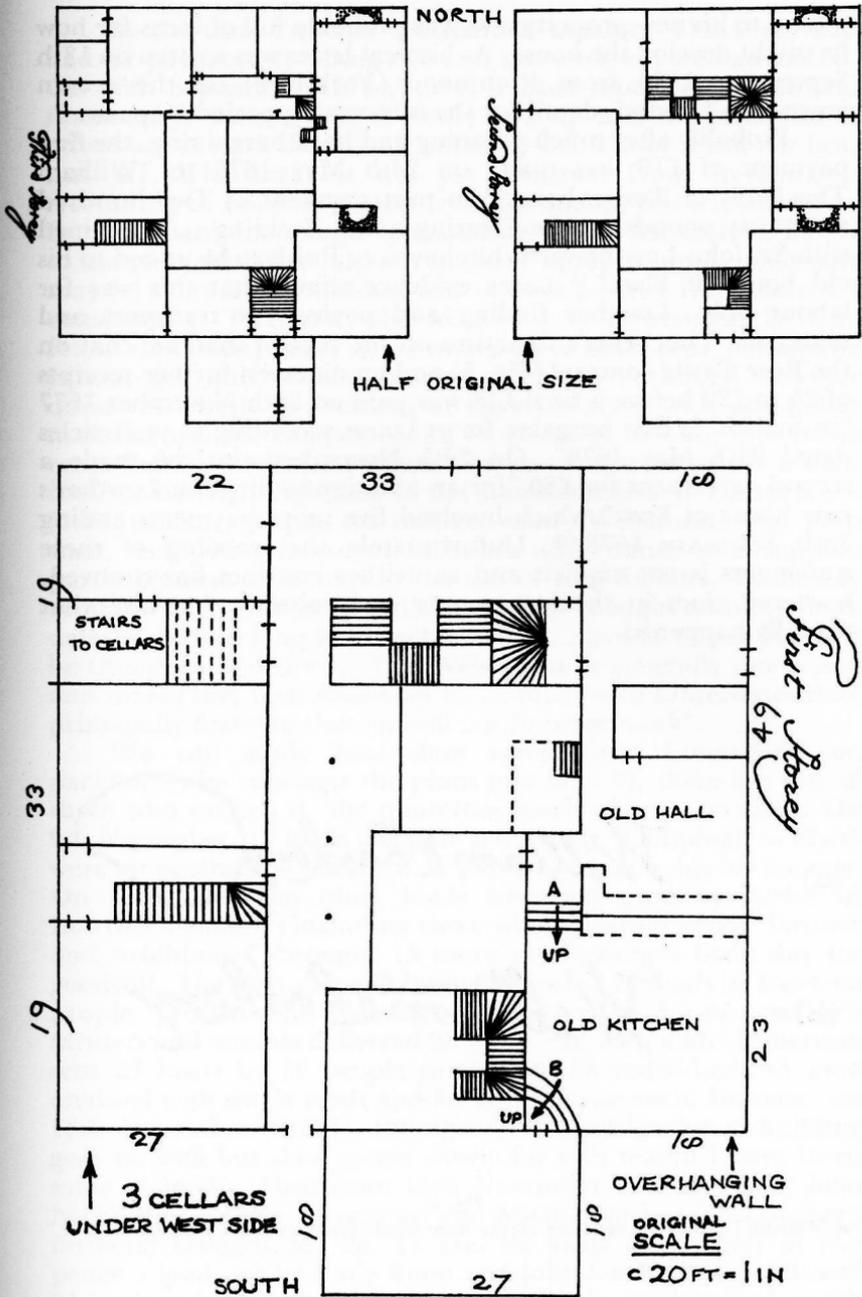


Fig. 4.

Plan of the Flatt, Whitehaven (c. 1676), showing the oldest part of the house on the east side with its staircase and extensions. Thackeray built the SW wing and refashioned the north and NW parts. The dimensioned ground floor plan is slightly smaller than the original.

attend to his new property and was probably full of ideas for how he might develop the house. As his next letter was written on 13th September 1676 from Richmond (Yorkshire) on the return journey to London, detail for the intervening period is sparse.

Probably after much planning and hard bargaining, the first payment of £10 was made on 24th May 1676 to "William Thackeray of Torpenhow ... in part payment of Two hundred and thirty pounds for the Erecting a new Building ... bargained with Sr. John Lowther of Whitehaven to finish to be added to his old house at Flatt".<sup>15</sup> Later evidence shows that this was for labour only, Lowther finding and paying for transport and materials. Thackeray's signature on the receipt matches that on the Rose Castle contract (Fig. 5) and on nineteen further receipts of £5 to £20 before a final £15 was paid on 20th November 1677 "in full for ye first bargaine for yt house according to ye Articles dated 24th May 1676". On 20th November also, he made a second agreement for £60 "for an addition to Sir John Lowther's new house at Flatt" which involved five more payments ending 26th February 1678/9. Unfortunately the wording of these statements is not explicit and as neither contract has survived, scattered clues in the letters must be probed to explain what actually happened.

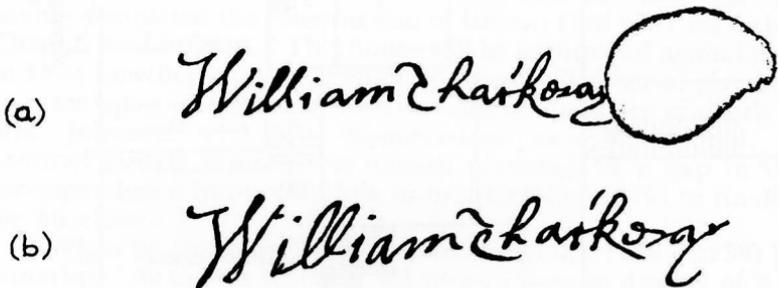


Fig. 5.

(a) William Thackeray's signature on the Rose Castle contract dated 9th July 1673.

(b) The first of his 25 signatures acknowledging payments for work done at the Flatt, Whitehaven, from 24th May 1676.

By the time Lowther returned to London, Thackeray had had six payments totalling £60 and the work was well advanced. On 26th September 1676 (2;244) Tickell reported "the second floore of yr house heere is newly laid up and more masons & others are at work this faire weather by wch I hope it will rise fast, but Mr. Thackeray is not yet returned from Ireland...". According to Lowther's letter from Richmond this trip resulted from Richard Lamplugh "perswading both Thackeray & me ... to use ye Welsh Slate [already in stock<sup>16</sup> and] to supply what ours may fal short from Dublin & also to have a Slater from thence. I consented yt Thackeray should goe ... to Loweswater & if he found that [slate] heavy ... we would try ye other [but] perhaps he cannot get quit of his contract there...". Although Lowther questioned both the wisdom of experimenting with unfamiliar material and the competence of local slaters to work with it, he remarked "I would be at some charge extraordinary for a light roof ... tis onely lightness & not handsomeness yt I respect..." (2;243). Thus, despite the indirect route, Welsh slate was, even then, competing in coastal locations with coarser local supplies partly because of savings in the size of roof timbers. Thackeray returned from Dublin on 3rd October but "bought nothing there, dales of 10 foot long & 14 inches broad ... are at £8 per 100 wch he thought too deare ... The Welsh slate is generally there used and makes very neat roofes yet he ... inclines to Loweswater slate principally feareing that yrs will not finish ye work".

We can study how slate came from Loweswater on packhorses for amongst the plans (see note 9), there are lists of those who carried it, the quantities involved and the dates. On 9th November, 19 loads of "Slate sent by Mr. Lamplugh to Flatt" were set against the names of 17 persons, presumably his tenants. On 14th, fourteen more loads were delivered by twelve of Lowther's tenants (including three widows) whilst seven "farmers and neighbours" brought 13 more as if giving a boon day for goodwill. The next day one Isaac Steele sent 23 loads by fourteen people, probably his tenants, and another twelve of Lowther's farmers and tenants delivered 22 more. On 17th a Mr. Robertson sent 27 loads by 16 people so that, of 86 individuals 45 were credited with single loads and 34 brought two each. However, on 13th November (2;254), the agent reported "yr house building goes on well but slate comes slowly for wch reason I have hired some at load". Thus from 15th November, Simon Tison, John Nicholson, George Brownrigg and Michael Fisher (all Lowther's farmers) brought 33, 28, 12 and 22 loads respectively at five pence a load, whilst Lady Benn and John Steele brought 20 and 21 loads at four pence. The last of 283 loads was delivered on 6th December 1676. This should have been enough to cover a building nearly 72 feet square if a load was two hundredweight, if

a ton covered 23 square yards<sup>17</sup> and the roof pitch was 30°, but by 27th May 1677 progress was again threatened by a shortage of slate (2;291).

Returning to 3rd October (2;245), Lowther asked his agent to "deliver ye inclosed to Thackeray & take a Copy of ye Instructions [so] yt you & Br L[amplugh] may better know how to call upon him if anything be amiss" and, a week later, "Pray see that Thackeray understand this draught & all my letters to him". Although such direct communication between client and builder has reduced the amount of evidence available, Tickell's letters outline progress. On 13th October (2;246) he reported that workmen were "now ready to lay another floore at ye north end" but they disliked "yr design of placeing ye next windowes so low". Like Lamplugh they considered that raising the garret walls by three or four feet would greatly improve the new accommodation "and though higher yn this old house yet it would be a better object from ye towne". On 24th October (2;249) Lowther agreed to this change asking that "ye Principals be al footed in Dormants" to make the rooms eight feet high like "ye Dineing room of ye old building" and added that "if ye Garret Windows be not already made ... ye Window Mullions & Jawms should be [heightened] ... about three foot...". This had repercussions on other parts of the roof for, a week later, he wrote again: "I am indifferent whether he raise ye Roof over ye Drawing room, I mean so far as ye projection is on ye West side in yt manner was intended ... or leave it plain al alike. If it be raised [as a central pediment], a Cornish must cross it equal with ye Eves of ye Slate on each side, but I incline to have no break at al unless a very little money wil do it".

On 13th November, Tickell reported the "south end of yr house is at ye full height and ye other goes on very well. Mr. Thackeray has inclosed ... his letter to wch I refer you. These high rooms will be the best for prospect in all yr house and I hope to yr full satisfaction, the windows being ye height of ye Low story windows...". On 21st Lowther replied "Tell Thackeray I approve of his letter as to ye Cross roof wch he thinks convenient to lay aside as also of ye Garrets within ye slate..." and then four days later (2;258): "I like all yt Thackeray has done abt ye House onely he is slow ... In joining ye New & Old House take care there be but one Gutter...". Thus, by raising the garret walls to either side of the central section, Thackeray introduced economy by making a plain roof run the full length of the west side.

Bad weather interrupted progress however. On 27th November the agent reported "last weeke ye wallers went off by frosty weather. This weeke they came againe haveing not above 2 dayes work heere for want of Roofe timber wch Thackeray sayes shall some of it, the beames at least, be placed this weeke over ye

sellers [i.e. the west side] especially". News on 2nd December that "This rainy weather hath hindered his rayseing ye timber" for the roof, caused Lowther to complain impatiently on 9th (2;261): "let Thackeray know I much wonder yt ye House is not yet Covered. 'Tis true by ye Articles he had time til Whit, but then ye Intention was to carry it no higher this Winter than ye second story to let it settle; afterwards when it was not thought needful to let it stand at ye 2nd story he promised to have it covered by Mart. [11 Nov.]" Our knowledge of the slate delivery dates suggests that this promise could not have been intended seriously. By 14th December "Mr. Thackeray paid off his men yesterday & goes hence this morning not being able to raise the timber this frost", but he promised to return as soon as the weather improved after Christmas. Two days later Tickell reported "Thackeray is gone ... I have already paid him £140 and £32. 18s. 1½d. for stones leading [but] the timber & dales I cannot well difference from ye [coal] pitts acco[unt]". It took until 10th March for the agent to reveal that "Mr. Thackeray is now heere raising ye Roofe" (2;285) and on 28th March he paid him £6. 10s., his first money since mid-December.



Fig. 6.

Flatt Hall in 1738, enlarged from Mattias Read's panorama of Whitehaven. Reproduced from a copy in the Record Office at Carlisle. Lowther Street lies between the two walled gardens to the right of the house.

Thus, although the slaters (Peter Bragg, his son Peter and Robert Walker) had been paid £5 on 8th November 1676, it was 25th April 1677 (2;289) before they were "dressing ye slate & Mr. Lampl[ugh] desyres to heare ... whether you will have any Lead laid upon ye Coins of ye hipps".<sup>18</sup> Mattias Read's view of Whitehaven (1738),<sup>19</sup> part of which is enlarged as figure 6, shows hips on all four corners of the main block. On 30th April the slaters were "to cover ye house ye beginning of next weeke..." and on 20th May were doing "their work very well [but] with moss wch lasts not nor agreeable to this [salty] aire. I propounded haire & lime according to ye example of Dublin ... but not regarded by Thackeray or ye slaters...". Apparently tradition was stronger than Dublin's influence in this instance. A week later we read "...ye slaters want slate by wch ye new house is [again] delayed ... I purpose to send for slate this weeke & hope to bring it downe as they raise it" (2;291). Eventually these workmen received £3 on 14th August and £4. 5s. more "in full" on 14th September 1677 for their efforts.

These delays in raising the roof and making it weather-tight generated valuable remarks about Thackeray's work at other houses. His visits to Flatt were usually brief. Only ten days after his return from Ireland, he was expected "here this day or tomorrow" but, by 17th October, Tickell commented testily: "Thackeray is not yet come heere wch is my great wonder that he is so negligent". Before he finished writing, however, he noted in the margin "since then Thackeray is come". The builder did not stay long for, on 6th November, the agent disclosed "I expect Thackeray heere this day and have better hopes that he may now putt on this rooffe this winter because his men are returned out of Westmorland and did nothing at Mr. Crackenthorps house of Newbiggin wch was intended ... to be uncovered to amend the timber & imediatly againe covered". Richard Crackenthorp, had inherited Newbiggin Hall (NY 629 286) in 1669,<sup>20</sup> but the work is not explained. Again, on 2nd December 1676, Tickell reported that Thackeray "...goes this day to Mr. Aglionbys to set some men to finish there". John Aglionby (1642-1718) was Recorder of Carlisle from 1679 until his death. He rebuilt Drawdykes Castle (NY 419 586) 2 miles NE of Carlisle in 1676, placing the date and his coat of arms on the north front above the top middle window. Pevsner describes it as "A complete pele tower ... with a three-storey, three-bay front. The ground-floor and first-floor windows have pediments, alternately segmental and triangular, and all starting and ending with a little of straight entablature [like Rose Castle]. The doorway has a heavily moulded surround. Parapet with two inept busts...". One might add that there are signs of structural weaknesses, prolonged neglect and considerable weathering of the stone work. The remainder "of the old fortress

was pulled down to make room for a farmhouse" about 1764.<sup>21</sup> There seems little doubt therefore that the details illustrated in figure 7 are Thackeray's unaltered work.

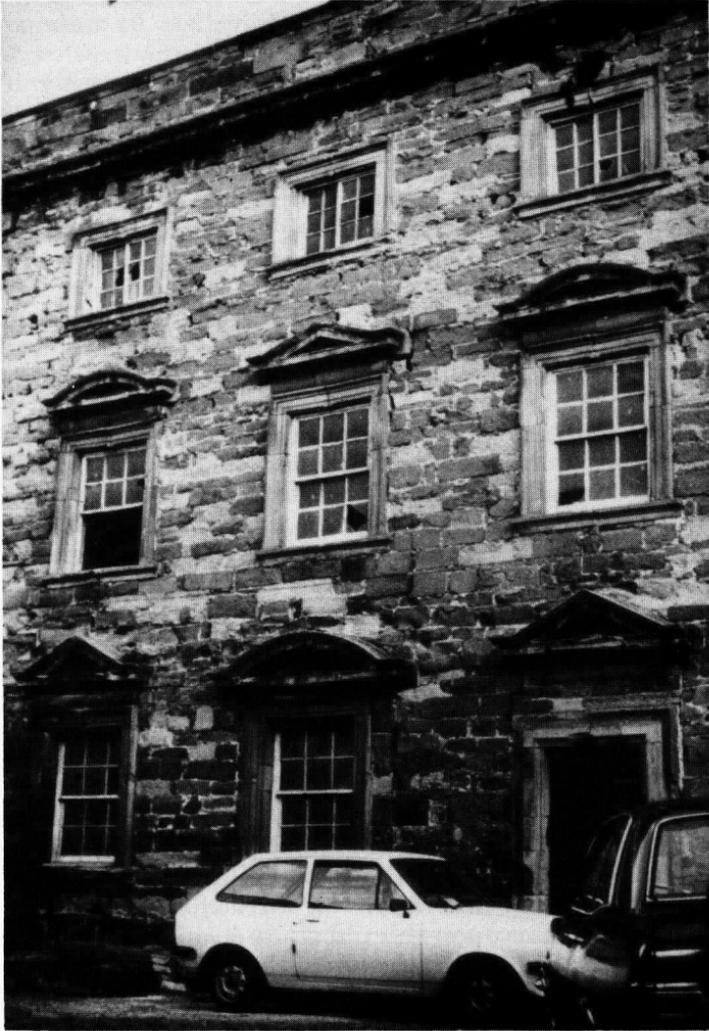


Fig. 7.

The NW front of Drawdykes Castle, near Carlisle, built by William Thackeray for John Aglionby in 1676. The form and height of the triangular pediment over the doorway suggests that, originally, it was intended to adorn a window, and the central segmental pediment the doorway. Hence, if the builders changed the plan, they preserved some balance of classical decoration.

Having paid off his workmen in mid-December, the builder did not return to Flatt for nearly six weeks. On 28th January, Tickell reported "Thackeray is now heere and has beene with Sir Wm Pennington [of Muncaster Castle]<sup>22</sup> & bargained there to wainscot at dineing roome &c for £130 to be finished this next summer. He goes hence this day to Drawdikes to make an end there agst Candles [2 Feb.]", but wanted better weather before continuing his work at Whitehaven. With such significant contracts elsewhere it is not surprising that Thackeray's progress at Flatt was slower than his client wished and that he did not raise the roof there until March 1677. With Whitsunday falling on 2nd June and his men running short of slate on 27th May, it seems unlikely that he completed the slating by his original target date and perhaps used the alteration of the garrets and roof as an excuse to avoid penalty.

Because Whitehaven ships normally waited until spring to sail to Norway, a chronic shortage of suitable timber aggravated delays during the first half of 1677. On 20th May, Tickell grumbled "the out doors are not yet made tho in working & not one floor begun nor any preparation; the deals spend fast, the pitts haveing required many for Barraway ... I hope some of your neighbours abroad in Norway viz 6 ships may bring some deals". By 15th July he reported (2;298) "all the dales left here are doubtful to finish ye Lowest floores and I have bought 4 Ct [400] more of such like thin dales at £4 p ct wch were all yt Robt Biglands had and 50 broad dales at 18d. ye peece for Stepps. There are 3000 dales more in towne lately come from Dronten [Trondheim] wch are white firr & thicker ... but they demand £5. 5s. [per 100] ... More thin Bergen Dales are in Mr. Gales hands at £4. 10s. ... Thackeray has seene ym & says they will do better for ye Dineing roome &c on yt storey. There are other 2 stories wth ye garrets wch will require very many deales". Tickell sought instructions. Two months later he reported some progress: "part of ye Cellars here are allready flagged<sup>23</sup> & ye ground [floor] rooms are laid, ye dineing roome & floores in that story will begin to be laid this weeke". Most of the next floor was already laid but gave "full freedom ... to come upon this old staire head" laying the house "open to suffer Robbery". However, the garrets were still to be joisted (and floored if they were "to beare Lumber" (2;310)) and "Thackeray has made no staires as yet nor hung any doores nor made any glas windows, the want of which causeth these floores allready layde to open very much in ye seemes altho ye deales are kildried" (2;307). Perhaps they used a local corn-drying kiln for seasoning wood.<sup>24</sup> The delay in making stairs was partly the owner's idea.

In December 1676 (2;261) Lowther had judged that the new stairs next to the drawing room "need not be considered til next

Summer, a way in ye mean time may be made into all ye high rooms from ye top of ye old Stone [spiral] Stairs"<sup>25</sup> which Lamplugh thought, on 25th September 1677, "might be absolutely taken away, but [Lowther was] incline[d] to let it stand" as it would give access to the upper floors and allow construction of the great staircase to be postponed. He was reluctant to do more than was "absolutely necessary for my Brothers convenience & yours". Lamplugh wanted a place closer to his shipping interests than Ribton Hall but by 7th January, through frustration, seemed "resolved to take Mr. Gales house" in town. As an inducement, Tickell offered "him a stall in this old stable for 2 horses and in ye Byer for 2 Cowes with hay & straw ... in Winter and herbage in Summer wch notion he likes very well purposing to supply himself weekly with all other provisions needful from Ribton".

Presumably it was to hasten this proposed dual occupation of The Flatt that Thackeray's second contract was signed on 20th November 1677. Details of the extra work are not available<sup>26</sup> but on 13th October (2;311) Lowther commented "I can give no directions abt his additional work. You have ye Articles & you see what he has done. He must be Bargained wth as well as you can; my Bro Lampl is well experienced in these things... You two will bring him to reason, for his estimate seems extravagant. You may [remind] him of his neglect of ye work [and] yt he did not even [fulfil] his own Bargain..." and considered that Thackeray would have done the work more efficiently if he had had to supply materials himself. "Even upon his own acct he did not manage well". Despite the contract date, Tickell wrote on 6th December "Thackeray is not to be agreed withall unlesse I will give him what he desyres nor does [he] like anything that Mr. Lampl propounds beareing some grudge agst him abt his house at Ribton".

As the most likely causes of such a grudge would be complaints similar to Lowther's and delayed (or non-) payment for work done, it is reasonable to suppose that Thackeray was responsible for much, if not all, of the construction of Ribton Hall, a task he could have started before Thomas Lamplugh's death in 1670.<sup>27</sup> This is the best evidence found so far by which that house (Fig. 8) might be attributed to a particular craftsman/architect. It is interesting to see that the segmental pediments over the first floor windows have short straight entablatures to either side as at Drawdykes and Rose Castles. If the design of the windows with a plain swelling frieze and double transomes and the heavy rustication of the front elevation is sufficient indication, Thackeray might also have been responsible for the south-east front of Moresby Hall (NY 984 209) (Fig. 9), the home of William Fletcher (1644-1703) who challenged Sir John Lowther's domination of West Cumberland shipping in

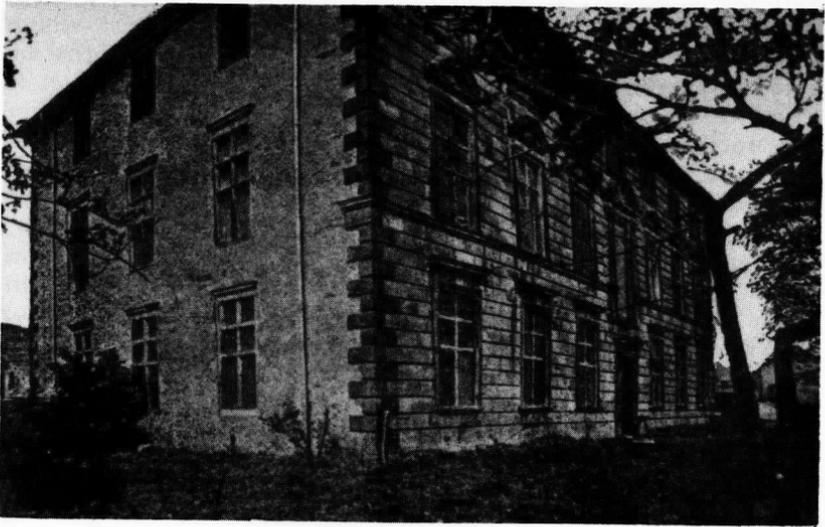


Fig. 8.

Ribton Hall, near Cockermouth, probably built by William Thackeray before 1676, but demolished in 1923. (From M.W. Taylor, *Old Manorial Halls of Westmorland & Cumberland*, C.W.A.A. Soc., Extra Series viii, 1892).



Fig. 9.

The SE front of Moresby Hall, near Whitehaven, bears striking resemblance to Ribton Hall. The older part of the house, now a farmhouse, is at the rear and incorporates a medieval pele tower.

1677 by attempting to build a new quay at Parton. As this scheme drained his financial resources, he must have completed his house beforehand. Significantly, Sir Daniel Fleming's *Description of ... Cumberland* (1671) noted "...ye present owner [of Moresby] is William Fletcher Esq., who hath lately made ye house much more beautiful and convenient". Both houses could therefore have been built by Thackeray before he started at Rose Castle in 1673. It is interesting that the two exposed corners of the new garden walls at Flatt were planned in July 1677 "to be made with hewen stone come Rustick work like ye house... [being] much stronger & hansomer and ... one great gate of same work opposite to ye street gate & near ye new house" (2;300). Roughcast, started by 20th May 1677, covered most of The Flatt's walls (2;291).

From June 1677 there is a great deal of information about the creation of the garden, but lack of space precludes consideration of points other than those which might benefit architectural studies. On 4th June we find that "at least 8 score thousand" bricks were intended to be burnt that summer and that one kiln was to be kindled that week. Judging from the content of the letters, this appears to have been the first instance of using locally made bricks. Brick houses are not mentioned until February 1688 when four, three-storey houses in New Street were estimated to cost £4 more each in brick than in stone, the latter costing £14 for stone work and £8 for woodwork. As the new town of Whitehaven grew, local quarries were able to meet the demand for stone, though with increasing difficulty, and the delay in using brick for houses seems to have stemmed mainly from problems experienced in burning them properly. For example on 8th November 1677 the agent reported "if ye Brick Kilne had beene well burnt yr garden wall had been finished this weeke ... the fault is imputed by ye maker to ye badness of our Coales of which he had a double proportion to those he burnes at Carlisle". Although Lowther attributed the failure to "want of drying at this unseasonable time of year", these Carlisle brickmakers (regrettably not named) were experienced tradesmen. Others who followed them had similar problems and initially produced a product suited only to low quality work.

Judging from Lowther's letter of 3rd July and the reply (2;298) the garden wall was to go from the north corner of the house and the south corner of the barn "down into ye Croft as low as ye Gate or old Gar[den] wall" to form a square (Fig. 6). It was to be 10 or 12 feet high and 14 inches wide with piers every ten feet and was to be capped by hewn coping stones overhanging 2 inches either side and sloping outwards to throw off rain water. It seemed providential that "a London mason well versed in Bricklaying ... now heere from Dublin whom I have entertained this day ... to Raise 2 chimneys ... in ye new building..." was

available to build the wall. John Coltrop had left his wife and child in Dublin and claimed to have "built several houses in London ... [being] cheife abt 3 yeares ago at Arrundel house & made ye Chimney peece in ye Alcove & also wrought at Summerset house ... & at Essex house & since then built a Key [quay] at Boston 16 foot deep at Low Water & made sluces &c...". However, after two days trial the agent "turned him off, finding him no true labourer of his hands wch made me suspect all his boasts for falsities tho he ... made some mouldings & a draught of ye garden gate, yet not according to art as ... Thackeray observed". Normally Lowther tried hard to encourage fresh workmen and immigrants.

Tickell considered that levelling the garden would be expensive and would bury much of the top soil, so he recommended making the "level walks from north to south with descents by hewen steps ... like those at Sr R. Bradshawes in Lancashire". Incomplete walls caused delay in planting fruit trees so that on 10th September 1678 Lowther wanted them ordered from Dublin for planting that winter. Another job was building a retaining wall four feet thick for "the Mount".<sup>28</sup> It was to curve "from the second window in ye Buttery to the Northwest corner of the Garden" arching northwards seven yards from the garden wall. In addition "a bridge from ye dineing roome doore ... to ye Mount" was to have two straight spans of five yards and a pillar in the middle or an arch spanning four yards with abutments of one yard [*sic*]. The contract for £30 was signed by Edward, Henry and John Gibson and Richard Baxter who were to make the bricks and complete the job by midsummer 1680. The men had already received £11. 10s. on 12th July 1679 towards brickmaking and had the remaining £18. 10s. on 3rd September. This is the only contract to have survived (see note 9). Edward Gibson, who worked at Unerigg Hall in 1684, was already involved in other work at Flatt.

Hastening completion of the house, Tickell noted on 11th November 1678 (2;379) "the mason Ed Gibson has been heere a fortnight & made some hearths ... & chimney peeces for all ... except ye 3 best roomes ... then he will burne Brick and I hope better yn ye last man provided he may lay them...". Lowther's response on 19th approved of this development. He suggested that about 200,000 bricks should be prepared for walling the mount and he intended "on Friday next to send Mouldings in Wood by ye Carrier both for ye swelling mouldings on ye Outside towards ye room & for ye half round within ye Chimney ... as Patterns for ye Marble Chimney peeces...". Gibson returned before the end of January 1679 "working ye stone chimney peeces wch he does very well & ... says he can work & polish marble & knowes of as good a post [stratum] of black marble in this

Country as any in Ireland for yt purpose". In March, Tickell commented "I find him more reasonable yn any that I can yet meet with" and enclosed two of Gibson's proposals for the mount.

To return to Thackeray's affairs, information is sparse during the winter of 1677-8. Following a comment on 27th October that the "work proceeds very slowly for want of severall materials wch Thackeray does not duly provide viz. Casements, stanchers, nailes &c...", the next sign of real progress came in answer to Lowther's request, on 2nd April, that the doors on the "Dining room story" if not already made, should be "single Doors ... now more fashionable than double, about 3ft 4 inches broad, nigh 7 high". He was told on 14th April "all ... are made double doores excepting some few and all hung up ... [but] Thackerays men [are] gone to Muncaster. I expect ye plaisterers heere this weeke" and he noted that the bricklayers had arrived to finish the garden wall using mortar "as hard as Cement being compounded of Broken Brick & lime" to overcome the poor quality of the bricks. Morale cannot have been helped by Lowther reporting the death of his wife on 9th May 1678 "of a Feavour very rife in Town"<sup>29</sup> and by Tickell commenting ambiguously on 11th June "this new addition will never be fitted by Thackeray". Ten days later the agent reported "there is not yet one roome in yr new house fitted to receive any[one]" and noted that Thackeray's contract excluded plastering the garrets, "ye dining roome, ye withdrawing roome & best chamber and ye 2 chambers under those 2 latter". Lowther responded "I would have no longer dependance upon Thackeray by imploy[ing] some other to fit it for my Br. L[amplugh]".

On 8th July, having paid the builder "his full for ye old bargain [and] nigh £30 on this" Tickell resisted paying £10 to the plasterer who "has brought me Thac<sup>s</sup> lr to pay it him ... and I am now preparing more stuffe on yr owne ac[count] for plaistering ... those chambers Mr. L. requires, but there wants hearths, grates, chimney peeces, locks &c ... I am now preparing also jeists for ye garrets floore yt ye roofes and walls of ye ... story under [them] ... may be plaistered...". Eventually, on 19th August 1678, the agent reported "Thackerays men are now here making ye great staircase. I desyre to know whether he is obliged to flagg that floore with dimund flaggs like the old hall floore or not and to make ye breaches & doores ... intended betweene ye houses, there being no mention of ym in ye Articles". Perhaps, therefore, Thackeray's apparent inefficiency or indifference can be attributed partly to poor specification detail within the contracts.<sup>30</sup>

In the first week of December 1678, Thackeray turned up expecting "to have found your patterne heere for ye twist Balisters" for the stairs and wanted them delivered before sending

workmen "about Candlemas [2 Feb.]". He next appeared on 22nd January wanting money which was refused and "his Banister thrower & partner in new undertakings James Zwingler would not stay to worke ym by reason I would not keep his horse at hay—the banisters are a saweing but when he comes to throw ym I know not". By 3rd March 1679 we find "the great staircase is all ready primed once over" which suggests that the supply of information bore an inverse relationship to progress made.

Tickell had continued his previous comments: "They both wonder you should feare ye fireing of ye Dormant [below] yt Roome for Mr. Lampl Kitchen since ye fire is allways to be kept in a grate apprehending no danger in ashes falling". This comment will be considered later. By 9th December 1678 all hearths were in place "except yt desyned for ... [Lamplugh's] Kitchin wch is now thought fittest in ye ground Roome next Barne over the Cellar by reason of that little door next ye Court convenient for water [from the pump]<sup>31</sup> and fuell &c. The great dorment [beam] will be thinned sufficiently ... to escape all danger of fire". In January, Tickell noted that all hearths were level with the floors except in that Kitchen where it was "laid 4 inches above ... [and], wth mortar & bricks under it, above 8 inches from ye dormant". It was to have "Gibbets &c for crookes &c as in ye [old] Kitchen". Lowther responded that he knew of "a Chamber chimney [which] has fired a Dormant through 16 inches of brickwork". These and earlier comments confirm that Lamplugh would occupy the greatly altered northern and new western sides of the house, whereas Tickell had lived through the rebuilding in the undisturbed south-eastern part.

To examine the final episode in this rebuilding of Flatt Hall we must advance more than a year to the summer of 1680. No more is heard of Thackeray for he had received the final £8. 14s. 3d. of his £60 second contract on 26th February 1678/9. Instead, on 18th May 1680, Tickell was hoping that "more of ye furniture might be removed from Sockbridge" and this would be made easier "If Swingler tryed to wainscot one or two of ye high rooms or, if ye Deals were good, ye best Bedchamber". However, on 8th June he reported "James Swingler is now heere but can do nothing for you being so fully employed at Lowther. His errand here was to buy 700 deales for the [new] manufacture house at Lowther for £36. 15s." and, as an alternative, Tickell suggested that "Wm Temple [who] came up lately to London may seeme a convenient person to wainscot yr roomes at his returne hither". On 18th July the agent was told to "order Temple to measure ye 3 rooms on ye Dining room floor & ye 2 bedchambers above ... that I may make a draught of Panells, rails & mouldings so as ye Country workmen cannot mistake", but that seems to have been his only contribution to the house.

The comment about Swingler is most important for it provides the only known evidence for dating and attributing Sir John Lowther's textile manufactory, at Lowther Newtown, which had failed by 1697 and was converted into a school known as The College which in turn closed in 1740. Greatly modernised, it is now the Lowther Estate Office.<sup>32</sup> As Swingler was Thackeray's "partner in new undertakings" in January 1679, the latter could have been the mason there.

On 22nd December 1680 Lowther wanted the panelling of Flatt to proceed and ordered "enquire at Dublin if right wainscot [is] to be had there" but his agent replied (3;157) "from Ireland I despaire to procure either wainscot or workmen" and suggested Richard Hodgson's voyage to Norway as the best possibility for obtaining a supply. Delays continued, so Lowther wrote on 28th June 1681 "here is a Country man, a good Joyner in Town yt ... wld be glad to doe my Wainscot ... if Swingler be difficult ... I will agree with this man". Tickell agreed, saying "I feare Swingler cannot leave Lowther...". On 26th July, Sir John was worried because "Cou Teasdell has several times had their house at Sockbridge attempted. I wish all ye house hold stuff were wth you...". Thus on 12th August "six packs of yr household goods came hither ... everything being somewhat damaged ... especially ... by moths". Other boxes and trunks had not been opened but "unless they are filled wth better goods we are [now] in no danger of robbing".

Eventually, on 31st October 1681, Tickell reported (3;285) "Ja Swingler is at yr bro Lampl[ugh's at Ribton] workeing for him & thereafter will come hither to make yr wainscot ... at 2s. per yard".<sup>33</sup> Three weeks later the agent went to see the "new parlour & ye wainescott ... it looks very well tho not finished" and gave details (3;279): "two crosse beames are in the rooffe & he makes other 2 crosse with firr deal like beames wch turnes that rooffe into six plaines the edges wherof are either to be cornished wth wood or plaister ... the parlour is done with small Bergen deales, but red firr smoothly plained good mouldings well glued &c wch makes Mr. Lampl confidently affirme that he thinks it will be ye best wainscot in England...".

Edward Gibson was there also, plastering several rooms upstairs. On hearing this news Lowther was keen for Swingler to start at Flatt but preferred cheaper plaster cornices for "in Port Towns subject to Rats & Mice wooden Cornishes afford [them] great harbour" and suggested that a trial be made in two bedrooms on the top floor to see what design suited the height of the rooms.

As Thackeray bore a grudge against Lamplugh and as Swingler was his new partner, it would be logical for the former to persuade the latter to finish the panelling at Ribton, even though

he was quite capable of doing it himself as proved by his contract at Muncaster Castle. This reinforces the suggestion that Thackeray probably built Ribton Hall.

On 26th January 1682 (3;379) two of Swingler's men arrived at The Flatt and were grooving and gluing upper panels for the room over the best bedchamber. Lowther was inclined to let them finish the "two Upper Rooms" and leave the better rooms on the floor below, but then, on 13th February another man, having finished at Lowther and lacking instructions, came over to help and on 16th Tickell reported "Swingler is now come from Lancaster where he was engaged in a staircase<sup>34</sup>... He tells me it is needfull to pull downe ye hewen chimneys in all roomes to set ym ... out ... agreeable to ye wainscot... He goes away this weeke to Lowther". The agent stalled by saying he would hire a mason to pick off the plaster to the required depth. On 2nd March Swingler was "setting up wainscot in the uppermost bed chamber", complaining of uneven walls and returned to Lowther again by the 27th. From this time until the buttery walls "from the window soles downwards" were panelled by the end of July 1684, Swingler worked frequently at Flatt to complete all the wainscot.

Chance references about his other affairs are more informative however. For example, on 25th January 1683 (4;18), Tickell wrote "I have Ja Swinglers letter that he cannot come hither before Easter being engaged to build Mr. Sandford a Malt Kill". Lowther expressed no concern at the delay but wanted to know if the "Kiln be after ye manner of that we saw at Newark"<sup>35</sup> so, in mid-February (4;35), the agent was hoping "to meet Swingler in Penrith" to find out. On 23rd April, Tickell wanted "to know whether you will go on with ye Malthouse this summer or not" so that materials could be made ready, but on 7th May noted "Swingler is not yet come nor ... will [he] make Mr. Sandfords Kill which he calls a Store kil at Askham<sup>36</sup> untill Michaelmas" and then on 28th noted that the carpenter had taken on more work at Lowther. A year passed before Sir John wrote (4;157) regarding "ye Malthouse, I am not ready for [it] without further correspondence at Newark, so there seems nothing more ... for Swingler save in ye Buttery wch I wld have made very handsome, having no room good below stairs".

A few other scraps of information are worth noting. In commenting on the design of the panelling in January 1684, Lowther considered that "Mouldings must also be upon ye Door cases but not Architraves such as at Hutton, but small swelling mouldings like ye Marble chimneys ...". This suggests that the new extension at Sir George Fletcher's house at Hutton-in-the-Forest near Penrith was already complete.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps the £1000 paid for Flatt had helped to finance that project. Similarly on

15th April 1684 Tickell reported "Mr. Ewan Christian was heer yesterday, who came to speak with Swingler about some worke for himselfe at Unerigg; he seems to have good judgement in Architecture & found severall faults in ye contrivances [here]" with regard to the position of fireplaces, doors and partitions. Unfortunately we are not told the outcome of the discussion but John Addison did sign articles on 16th July 1684 to supervise the extension of Unerigg where Edward Gibson was one of the masons (see note 50).

Regarding Swingler's private life, more information is available than for Thackeray whose son William was baptised at Torpenhow on 22nd September 1678.<sup>38</sup> When Swingler was panelling at Flatt in November 1683 he needed 3000 spriggs, not available locally, and wanted Lowther to send them from London so "...writ to his uncle Nicholas Swingler [for them and] for a thinn steel saw to slitt these deales & prays you to [pay for them] ... wch he will allow in his worke..." (4;115). Swingler's uncle lived "at ye Golden anchor in little East Cheap" (4;122). Perhaps both were Londoners but the name is more typical of the east Midlands. The Mormon microfiche index for Cumbria lists only one Swingler baptism—that of "Dorcas daughter of Mr. James Swingler & Elizabeth his wife" on 20th December 1694 at St. Andrew's Church, Penrith. On 2nd September 1698 "Mrs. Elizabeth Swingler" was buried there and so too was "Mr. Swingler" on 4th September 1712 being "very sick". His daughter had married William Bewly of Whitehaven at Penrith on 26th December 1710 and was bequeathed all of Swingler's estate. If she died childless it was to go "to my cousin John Swingler the younger of ...Leicester, eldest son of my cousin John Swingler the elder of the same city"<sup>39</sup> or to the latter's other children in turn. James Swingler's baptism has not been found in London or Leicester but he was probably a young man when he first arrived in Whitehaven as William Thackeray's "partner in new undertakings" in 1679.

It is worth digressing briefly to note some of Swingler's later work. Accounts kept for Sir John Lowther's namesake, refer to the later stages of extensive building work at Lowther Hall in 1693-4.<sup>40</sup> Swingler is mentioned several times, usually employing up to four men. In September 1693 he was "making a dower case for the Hale and 3 windows in the north end of the house". By mid-November he was paid for "87 days worke about the windows in the roofe, felling and sawing and frameing the hipes for the roofes of the wing Ends". Throughout December he was "setting up old wainscot" and "framing the roof of one of the lodges". In February 1694 he was "sarking the lodges" and slitting deals. In March he was "putting up the End wing roofe, sarking the same and making a Scaffell for Mr. Adams", the carver, and making

doors for the cellars and pantry. In April he was "making bedsteads & finishing the oake roome in the wing" and "fileting about the ceder and walnot rooms and setting up old wainscot in the side building".<sup>41</sup> In June he was "putting on the Roof of the house of office". The most intriguing payment, however, was £1. 4s. paid on 2nd December 1693 for "My Expences and Swinglers when we went to set out the Ashwood at Egelston Abby" a mile SE of Barnard Castle, but for all these efforts and other unspecified work he received just over £30 during this period. When Lowther drew up "The Charge off Building my Hous. Built 1692 and 1693", totalling £6,460, he recorded £506. 2s. paid "to James Swingler the Carpenter for Hall the Timber Work, lieing the floors and Wainscotingting Severall Rooms". Clearly Swingler had done much more than the accounts suggest and one must wonder, in addition, what proportion he earned of the £18,830 spent by Lowther on building works in the 21 years preceding 1697 when, as 1st Viscount Lonsdale, the latter summarised his expenditure for the benefit of his children.<sup>42</sup> It is worth noting that the Earl of Nottingham wrote to Lowther on 1st January 1694/5 to enlist his help in persuading Swingler to work for him on terms modelled on those used at Lowther.<sup>43</sup> The tone of this letter suggests that Swingler was in considerable demand and that he was not keen to leave his home and baby daughter in Penrith.

Another building with which James Swingler became involved was the Penrith Moot Hall, demolished early in the 19th century.<sup>44</sup> At the Quarter Sessions in October 1702 and 1703, complaints were made that the Moot Hall was out of repair and should be made more convenient for holding the court.<sup>45</sup> Thus, on 30th May 1704, Swingler submitted an estimate for £62. 1s. 9d. for work which included replacing the old stairs by a broader flight with a "battlement to ye out sid", replacing the slate roof and doing 111 yards of walling. Eight new windows (six in the rear wall) fitted with "bares and Shuts" were to cost £14 and making the "head seat with a Compose at ye uper end, with a Rising flower of 3 Stepps up to it and wenscoting above ye seat 3 foot high" was estimated at £5. The walls were to be plastered, a new ceiling inserted and £1 was allowed "for secureing ye Beames and walls under neath". By the following October, £50 had been set aside to pay for it, but a later petition from Penrith's inhabitants complained that only a "paire of Staires & a little prison under them for putting ... Cuttpurses..." in had been completed. If the evidence fails to prove conclusively that Swingler undertook this work, at least the estimate preserves his signature (Fig. 10).

Having examined Thackeray's and Swingler's work at Flatt and elsewhere in Cumbria in detail, lack of space demands that Sir John's later efforts to improve his house should be discussed

Fig. 10.

The signature of James Swingler, taken from his estimate for alterations to the Penrith Moot Hall dated 30th May 1704. (Source: C.R.O., Q/11, 17).

only in so far as they develop points made earlier. Information about the extension to the south wing in 1698 is available in letters exchanged between Sir John Lowther and Thomas Tickell's successor from 1693, William Gilpin.<sup>46</sup> First however it is worth noting an event recorded by Gilpin on 31st May 1697. "The Error in yor Chimney Lentals I had observed long ago. There is another as Dangerous in ye Low SW corner Room [i.e. Lamplugh's former kitchen]. The Beam lyes under the Hearth and was ill defended and (wch is worse) the Timbers of ye Back Stairs [were] laid almost through the wall at the Hight of ye fire... One Night after I was gone to bed [I] order[ed] a fire ... in yt room to be removed and the next day it appeared how seasonable it was... The stairs had taken fire but smothered and upon knocking off ye plaister (for Search) burst out into a flame. If ye fire had not been removed, 'tis like ... it had smothered till ye next night & broke out then". Clearly, Thackeray's construction methods and concern for fire prevention could have been improved upon!<sup>47</sup>

Gilpin first commented on the extension on 21st April 1697: "If you build the South East corner of the House it will be very difficult to get sufficient Hight for a Kitchin. The only way is to sink the floor 2 or 3 foot underground... The 2d Story will afford a good Chamber but I conceive you will find it absolutely necessary to suit it with ye New building, for tho you may give the Chamber an Equal Hight with those of yor new building & yet not exceed the old East Front in Hight (for you may loose ye 3rd Story in yt below) yet you can never make the Windows to Correspond with those of ye old". There are still steps leading down to the ground floor room but, of much more importance, the agent's words provide the best evidence that the house prior to 1676 faced eastwards away from the prevailing wind, and that Lowther re-orientated it to dominate the town which he must even then have been planning to expand. The underlying structural difference

between the eastern and western sides of the house are highlighted by Gilpin's description of the foundations on 7th March 1698: "The Foundation of the old house is very good *viz* 4½ feet below ye floors & supported with large off-sets. That of ye E end of ye Dairy [apparently converted from the old barn which had stood near Lamplugh's kitchen] is scarce half so much without offset & rests upon a loose Black Earth wch seems to have been ye Bosom of a Pond and I suppose is a principal cause of the shrinks, tho' not the only one for there are also some considerable shrinks in ye W side of ye House (tho it be cellared). However we hope by a Buttress where yr further Additions are to be, and by diverting ye descent of ye Water [seeping under the buildings] to support ye S wall of ye Dairy (wch is all yt is hazardous) and for your new Walls I will be responsible".

By 9th September 1697 he had already "consulted with Workmen [not named] about the Expençe of Building the SE corner of the House and they have computed the whole charge of the Wall, Hewen Work, Timber, Deals, Wainscoting One Room, Iron Work, Plaistering, Flagging the Low Room, Slating and Glasing 6 windows & a small Light in the Garet at £120. 12s. 4d.". In January Lowther wanted work to start "yt it may be covered this summer ... my Intentions ... were Three Rooms; ye Ground Room a Kitchen & ye two above Bedchambers ye same height as ye SW Corner", and wondered if it could "be carryed a little Eastward beyond ye Old House, in ye Nature of a Wing ... for we are no way to respect ye Old House wch in time will be pulled down". It was pointed out, however, that such a projection would necessitate moving the pump, from which Gilpin wanted to deliver "Water into a small Cistern at a Hight sufficient for Conveyance underground into ye Kitchin" (17th Feb.). By 9th February he had "agreed with a Mason for building ye SE Corner", by mid-April the walls were "up allmost one story" and it was expected to be weather-tight before Lowther's arrival at Flatt on 25th August when this series of letters ends.

Lowther made some interesting comments about internal detail. Although the walls were to be faced with stone and then roughcast, their inner surface was to be brick to reduce condensation especially in the kitchen. In response to the earlier accident he wanted "No Wooden Lentalls ... in any Chimney whatsoever, but all arched with Brick or Stone, supporting ye loose Bricks under ye Arch wth a Bar of Iron". Regarding window design he wrote "in old time they were placed so high as to lean on them wth ones Elbow... Ye alteration now in use is yt [for] ye upper part under ye Window ye Wal is thin & ye lower part thick so as to serve for a Seat to sit on within ye Window". Such a laborious explanation may indicate that Cumbrians were not then familiar with window-seats. In addition Lowther wanted

windows in pairs "on ye East side for no Looking Glass can stand in any Room where there is not a Pier betwixt two Windows... Ye reason ye best Chamber & Dining room had not two Windows to ye west was ye defects of ye Houses at Ribton & Warnell where ye Rain beat in at every Window". A datestone over the doorway at Warnell Hall, Sebergham, bears the Denton arms and is dated 1683.<sup>48</sup> Clearly he wished to learn from his mistakes and those of acquaintances. He wanted the casement windows set so that the glass would not be broken against the roughcast and he thought of "sending down a pattern of a shash-window ... very proper for ... sides of a House as are not too much exposed. East and North would bear them, ye West & South not". He insisted on a marble fireplace above the kitchen, whatever the cost, to encourage workmen to develop their skills and remembered "Ye Black Marble in ye Dining room I had from Ireland" for the same reason and at a cost of about £7. Two others from London, about £1 dearer, "are too little for our great fires, even that in ye Dining room being cracked with the Heat". He had given instructions that all wood was to be well seasoned and from "all ye Deals bought for ye Collieries they should still cull out ye best for this use" on the house, but he wanted "any Shavings or chips within doors ... [to] be taken away before dark every day for fear of fire". It would seem that he was becoming very cautious as he neared retirement from Parliament.

These and earlier remarks indicate that Sir John Lowther had a keen interest in both the practicality and current fashions of building. Certainly, as a Fellow of the Royal Society from 1663,<sup>49</sup> he had access to the latest ideas and techniques in London, including those of Wren with whom he was on the Society's Council in 1674. By seeking well-travelled craftsmen with broad experience and by having patterns for fittings and furniture made in town for the guidance of country workmen, he partly overcame the physical and cultural remoteness of West Cumberland whilst fostering Whitehaven's traditional links with Dublin. As ideas introduced during his visits to the town have to be inferred and as his house was so greatly altered by Robert Adam, Lowther's correspondence provides the best evidence for describing how Flatt Hall was developed between 1676 and 1706 and offers a glimpse of the pre-existing structure.

In addition to obtaining information on the extent of the work, its faltering progress, the management problems and the construction methods, we can gain insight into William Thackeray's ability, character and attitudes and his interaction with the owner and his agent whose salary was doubled to £40 a year on 1st April 1679 (2;419) as a reward for effort. The emergence of craftsmen like the mason Edward Gibson<sup>50</sup> at Flatt, Ribton and Unerigg is as much a bonus as the information on

early brickmaking in Whitehaven and the town's trade in building materials, particularly the importation, seasoning and selection of Norwegian deals. Lowther's ideas about importing Welsh slate from Dublin indicate that he was more interested in economy of design than in traditional practices. Even Dutch pantiles at 44 shillings a thousand, carried as a return cargo to Dublin when a Whitehaven ship had taken 42 tons of lead to Rotterdam in May 1680, were given due consideration (3;109, 133, 307).

In view of Lowther's contacts with London builders and his frequent journeys on the Great North road through Newark, he could have contacted James Swingler at either place. Alternatively, if the carpenter had heard of a surge of building work at several important Cumbrian houses in the 1670s, he might have travelled north on his own initiative or at Thackeray's instigation to take advantage of the opportunity. Arriving in 1679 as Thackeray's bannister thrower and partner, he must have impressed clients on relatively mundane jobs like the textile manufactory at Lowther Newtown in 1680 so that by October 1681 he was judged capable of making "ye best wainscot in England". Certainly he was also in demand in Ribton, Flatt and Unerigg Halls and at Askham and Lancaster between 1681 and 1684. To have satisfied the demands made at a prestigious house like Lowther Hall, including panelling in walnut and cedar, he was undoubtedly a skilled, versatile craftsman who gained relatively secure employment by settling at Penrith. He seems to have earned respect within the community and by 1704 was consulted more as a general builder regarding the Moot Hall repairs. Perhaps the present outline of his last 33 years will lead to other discoveries of his work elsewhere.

William Thackeray's work at Flatt, Muncaster Castle and Newbiggin Hall is no less interesting, but the survival unaltered of his work at Drawdykes, a grade II\* building, deserves special attention and a substantial effort to preserve it before neglect claims another victim. The house shows a simple, straightforward command of classical features which contrast sharply with Edward Addison's style at Hutton-in-the-Forest. If Thackeray did build Ribton and Moresby, one must ask what other significant buildings were erected by him and over what area and time span? One tantalizing clue is the reference to his contract for obtaining slate from Loweswater, 10 miles ENE of Whitehaven, 8 miles SE of Ribton Hall and 12 miles SSW of his home at Torpenhow. Did he enter the contract in order to supply slate to Ribton, and perhaps Moresby? What other buildings in West Cumberland might he have roofed with that slate before 1676 and how far might he have carried it?<sup>51</sup> Another teasing clue survives in Tickell's letter of 20th May 1677 (2;291). He had "told

Thackeray ye number of Casements & their places wch he writ downe & intended to acquaint his smith with this last weeke in Westmorland whither I suppose he is gone ... & he long since sent ye casemt<sup>52</sup> thither for a paterne, but how it fitted here I did not examine...". Unfortunately we are not told where Thackeray's base in Westmorland was but, if it was not at Lowther or perhaps Newbiggin, the possibilities are exciting.

Perhaps further searches will help to answer these and other essential questions. In the meantime, if Lowther's correspondence shows Thackeray as a somewhat tardy, frustrating builder, it also provides some praise and proves that he was in considerable demand and was an important influence on Cumbrian architecture before the arrival of the Revd. Thomas Machell from Oxford in August 1677. In view of the fresh evidence, dates and attributions of several late 17th century houses in Cumbria will need reconsideration, but much more research will be required before (if ever) their full authentication is established and William Thackeray's list of works and own style of architecture is fully recognised and analysed and his biography is written.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During my visit to examine Whitehaven hospital, the staff were most helpful. I wish to thank also the archivists at Carlisle and Kendal, particularly Mr. B.C. Jones, M.A., who drew my attention to Thomas Tickell's letters and then located various documents in the Lonsdale archive from my uncertain enquiries. Without his help and the cooperation of my wife and family, this study would have been impossible.

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. B. Tyson, "Building Work at Sockbridge Hall...", Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society, *Transactions* (1983). He should not be confused with his namesake at Lowther (1655-1700), *op. cit.* (1982), 105.
2. Carlisle Record Office (C.R.O.), D/Lons/W, Tickell Correspondence in 5 boxes. Some box and letter numbers will be included in the text for clarity.
3. Discussed in J.V. Beckett, *Coal & Tobacco*, 1981, *passim*. Daniel Hay, *Whitehaven an Illustrated History*, 1979, gives much useful detail of the town's growth.
4. Some details leading up to this purchase from 1636 are contained in "An Extract of Writings about Flatt Tenement", D/Lons/W, unlisted Whitehaven Harbour papers (see also note 13).
5. He inherited the Whitehaven estates in 1756, was created Earl of Lonsdale in 1784 and died in 1802.
6. C.R.O., D/Lons/W/Accounts/Whitehaven Castle, "Masons and Labourers A/c Book".
7. C.R.O., D/Lons/L, 11/8, 1 - 7.
8. Originally published in William Hutchinson, *History of ... Cumberland*, 1794; see also D. Hay, *op. cit.*, 32.

9. C.R.O., D/Lons/W, Whitehaven 79.
10. C.R.O., D/Lons, Box 2, "Estate Account Book 1701-1748", pp. 39-45.
11. That is, beside the rapidly growing harbour. Thomas Denton, *Perambulation of ... Cumberland in 1688*, a manuscript in C.R.O., D/Lons/L/12. His comments about Flatt merely state "At ye Southeast end of this Town stands a stately new pile of building lately erected by ... Sr. John Lowther ... which is the new Manor house".
12. C.R. Hudleston & R.S. Boumphrey, *Cumberland Families and Heraldry*, C.W.A.A. Soc., Extra Series xxiii, 1978, 195. (Hereafter *C.F.H.*)
13. The St. Bees burials are missing from 1672 to 1676, but Katherine Johnson's will was made on 6th September 1675 and proved on 26th October at the Archdeaconry of Richmond (Lancs. R.O.). Her husband George Johnson had been admitted customary tenant of Flatt on 1st April 1663 but his will was proved on 24th January 1667. As if expecting death and wishing to provide an income for his widow, he sold Flatt on 18th March 1666 for £1000 to Sir George Fletcher of Hutton who still owed £600 at Johnson's death. On 27th January 1667 the latter's sister Ann and her husband Thomas Davie for £50 confirmed Fletcher's title to Flatt and at Mrs. Johnson's death only £100 was still owing. Thus on 29th September 1675 Ann Davie was formally admitted tenant. Fletcher was then admitted the next day and sold Flatt to Lowther the next day (D/Lons/W unlisted Harbour papers). Mrs. Johnson had lived at Flatt with her son-in-law Robert Bigland and his family (1;220). He was baptised on 14th January 1648/9, married Elizabeth Johnson in November 1672 and became an influential merchant in Whitehaven. If he was evicted from Flatt at Mrs. Johnson's death, that would help to explain his frequent opposition to Lowther's later plans for developments in the town. Mrs. Johnson left to her grandchild Mary Bigland (baptised 1673) a property in Corkicle called the Knotts, to her son Edward £40 out of the £100 owed by Sir George Fletcher, and to her daughters Katherine (Kite) and Elizabeth equal shares in her two salt pans and colliery. The goods in the Green chamber worth £20 were bequeathed to Katherine and those in the Brown chamber worth £10 to Elizabeth. The inventory, totalling £290 less debts of £116, mentioned the following rooms in the house: Hall, Kitchen, Brewhouse, Buttery/Cellar/Pantry [presumably at the north-west corner], Dining Room, Library, Green Chamber, Brown Chamber, Low Cross Room, Her Closet/Maids Chamber and an Upper Chamber.
14. Lowther also wanted to buy some of Mrs. Johnson's furniture including Turkey-work chairs for the dining room (2;240). Being unsuccessful, new backs and seats were made in London, sent to Whitehaven by carrier and then made up in Dublin (3;74).
15. C.R.O., D/Lons/W, Whitehaven 75. "Building Accounts".
16. In September 1677 Tickell considered that this Welsh slate could cover "a shade the length of ... ye East side [of the new garden] ... very comodious to set Carts & c drie & equally hansone" as local slate. Lowther responded that that would "give us some experiment of ye Welsh slate wch is best layd on upon slit deals with Iron Nails one or two in a slate if large & without lime" (2;304 & 307).
17. Based on handbill advertisement for sale of second quality Coniston slate. Kendal R.O., WD/Ry, Box 22.
18. In June 1683 (4;77) Tickell had "workmen ... putting on ye stone rigging and also ye like upon ye hipps" and to lessen storm damage intended "to fill all ye slate on ye inside with lime and haire".
19. Read's full panorama is reproduced in D. Hay, *op. cit.*, 24 and in J.V. Beckett, *op. cit.*, frontispiece.
20. The family had lived there since the 13th century. R.S. Boumphrey, C.R. Hudleston and J. Hughes, *An Armorial for Westmorland...*, C.W.A.A. Soc., 1975, 87. (Hereafter *AWL*)
21. *C.F.H.*, 2.; Nikolaus Pevsner, *Buildings of England (Cumb. & Westm.)*, 1967, 139.; Wm. Hutchinson, *History of ... Cumberland*, 1794, ii, 581.
22. Sir William Pennington (c. 1655-1730) was created Baronet in 1676 and was High Sheriff of Cumberland in 1685. *C.F.H.*, 258.
23. On 16th December 1676 Tickell had reported water in the cellars and commented on 20th May: "yr new cellars will never by drie ... without a draine". On 15th July he wrote: "The flaggers of ye Cellar say they cannot do it untill ye draine be made ... I have agreed [one] ... for £4., 2 foot high & 20 inches broad flagged at ye botton & topp with s[c]abled stones & good Edges and a pit in ye midle to cleanse it" (2;263, 291, 298).

24. In one other reference to seasoning in May 1679, Tickell did not "like Mr. Jacksons deales ... because they have beene so much in salt water .. I feare they will not season well" (2:431).
25. On 8th May 1677 he wanted "ye lesser stair betwixt ye Drawing room & ye best Bed chamber ... made as large as convenient ... because ye rooms above being better than first intended more use wil be [made] of yt stair than was thought of" (2:291). The stone stair seems to have survived until Robert Adam's alterations.
26. Presumably it covered flooring and ceiling the garrets as well as extra work already done such as heightening the garret windows and altering the roof timbers.
27. Perhaps the marriage of Frances Lowther to Richard Lamplugh in 1667 might have helped to bring Thackeray to the notice of Sir John Lowther as a likely builder.
28. Expense caused frequent postponement of plans to level the mount until 5th January 1686 (4:362) when there were "upon ye mount this day 34 men who will ... cast it off ... with their spades as farr as they can, then ... [carry it] with wheelbarrowes and then ... wth coopes [carts]". However, on 8th October 1690 (6:157) Tickell wrote "the next thing to be done is ye removeall of ye mount wch cloudes ye sight of yr house...".
29. He was married at Lowther on 6th March 1660 to Jane Leigh, his uncle's ward.
30. For a study of how contract details developed in 18th century Cumbria see B. Tyson, "Some Traditional Buildings in the Troutbeck Valley...", C.W.A.A. Soc. *Transactions*, 1982, 151-176.
31. The pump stood at the SE corner of the house and had been troublesome. We are told on 20th May 1677 that it was performing badly but "a little pin hole in ye pipe ... filled with tallow helped it to its former speed". Also the axle crank was so worn that it had to be mended by the colliery blacksmith before the pump could deliver a gallon in 20 turns.
32. R.W. Brunskill, "Lowther Village and Robert Adam", A.M.S. *Transactions*, vol. 14, 67; W.A.J. Prevost, "A Journie to Carlyle and Penrith in 1731", C.W.A.A. Soc. *Transactions* lxi, 215; J.V. Beckett, "Lowther College 1697-1740...", *ibid.* lxxix, 103.
33. Tickell's "Cousen Wm Bensons brother an upholsterer in London ... a very good workman" was also working at Ribton and was prepared to make Lowther's "purple cloth & wrought serge furniture for Beds very fashionable at 2s. per day wages besides victuals" as well as other work (3:285).
34. The identity of this property has not been found.
35. This building at Newark has not been identified but the comment reinforces the likelihood that Swingler originally came from the East Midlands where the name is still concentrated.
36. The Sandford family lived at Askham Hall near Lowther from the mid-14th century until 1730. *A.W.L.*, 261-2.
37. Built by Edward Addison. Illustrated in Pevsner, *op. cit.*, plate 47. Earlier evidence that the house was probably complete is suggested by a letter dated 10th November 1682, in which John Adams, the cartographer, asked Sir Daniel Fleming to give instructions to Samuel Moore, a well-known artist of coronations (*D.N.B.*) "how to hitt the way to Hutton in the Forest" after Moore had made drawings of the hall, grotto and scenery at Rydal. Presumably he was to draw the new wing at Hutton for a proud owner in much the same way as he was to have drawn the new town of Whitehaven for Sir John Lowther in October 1684. B. Tyson, "John Adams' Cartographic Correspondence to Sir Daniel Fleming...", *Geographical Journal*, forthcoming.
38. The Torpenhow parish registers are almost illegible and the Bishop's transcripts are defective for this period, so other family events may have been missed.
39. Before 1730 the Mormon microfiche for Leicestershire records only one John Swingler son of John (and Jane), baptised on 17th April 1664 in South Croxton, 7 miles NE of Leicester. James Swingler's will was proved at Carlisle.
40. C.R.O., D/Lons/L, A1/19. "Sir John Lowther's Estate & Household Accounts, 1693-9".
41. Futher detail about the wainscot is preserved in letters from Sir John Lowther to William Atkinson, his steward e.g. 18th October 1692 and 28th April 1694. D/Lons/L.
42. Both accounts are published in H.M. Colvin, J.M. Crook and T. Friedman, *Architectural Drawings from Lowther Castle*, Society of Architectural Historians, 1980, 20-1.

43. H.M.C., 13th Report, App Pt vii *Lonsdale Mss*, 1893, 105.
44. For general details see: J. Walker, *History of Penrith*, 1857, 85-7 and J.E. Horsley, *Old-time Penrith*, 1926, 39 and 42.
45. C.R.O., Q/11. Quarter Sessions petitions Michaelmas 1704, 14-18.
46. C.R.O., D/Lons/W, Correspondence 9, Gilpin to Lowther 1692-8, Lowther to Gilpin January-August 1698.
47. Apparently a similar fault caused Lowther Hall to burn down in two hours in 1718. To clear the soot the steward set fire to the chimneys so that "a funnel ... near to some joysts ... set the whole house in fire". Colvin, Crook and Friedman, *op. cit.*, 12.
48. *C.F.H.*, photograph facing p. 200. A link with Thackeray has not been established.
49. Information from the Society's Librarian and lists of Fellows in the Bodleian Library (Wood 276a, 293-6).
50. "Yr usuall workman Ned Gibson was buried yesterday [7th June, 1690] if when considering his labours & frequent undertakings in Brick as well as stone we have a great loss" (6;133). For his mention at Unerigg see *A.M.S. Transactions* 26, 70.
51. For Rose Castle Chapel, slate was carried 14 miles from Skiddaw in 1674 (*A.M.S. Transactions*, 27, 69). In 1781 slate for Kirkland Hall, east of Penrith, was carried 28 miles from Rydal over Kirkstone Pass and along Ullswater (B. Tyson, 'Skirwith Hall and Wilton Tenement...', *C.W.A.A. Soc., Transactions*, 1981, 98-9). Such an extreme range would have brought all of Cumberland west of the river Eden, including Carlisle, into reach from Loweswater.
52. This casement pattern was dispatched from London by carrier on 13th January 1677 (2;270) after Thackeray had sent dimensions of the dining room window on 2nd December (2;258). Lowther wanted "all ye rest [to] be exactly after yt Patern both as to substance, breadth of ye Frame & ye overlap of ye Runner & Standard" but the lower of two cock-spur catches was wrongly positioned against a cross bar and he had guessed the projection of the hinges—hence the blacksmith's importance. In view of the variations already made to the conditions set out in Thackeray's contract, on 8th May 1677 (2;291) Lowther considered that only the following casements need be installed: "In ye Dining room one at ye West end; in ye Drawing room one in yt window wch makes ye Middle Window of ye House... In ye best Bedchamber one, as also in ye Room above & below [the last two] in all Seven upon ye West side. Upon ye South side ... none at present & for ye North side ... one [each] in ye Buttery ... Dining room ... ye chamber above, as also one at ye Stairhead upon ye Dining room floor, in all four upon ye North side". If any were needed for the new cellars he wished to know.