

## PRESTON TOWER.

THE Tower of Preston, on high ground, about a mile to the south-east of Ellingham, is first mentioned in the List of Fortalices of 1415. It was then held by Robert Harbottle, who probably built it. There had been a local family of Pressens, or Prestons, two of them knights of the shire for Northumberland in the parliaments of Edward III.,<sup>1</sup> but the manor of Preston, held of the barony of Alnwick, seems to have descended in the families of Bataill, Strivelyn, and Middleton. Harbottle's interest in the place appears to have had its humble beginning in a lease granted to him there on the 8th of October, 1399, by Alice, daughter and heir of William Clerk of Eglingham, of all her land at Preston in Bamburghshire for seven years, at the annual rent of one penny,<sup>2</sup> and for several years later we find him forming a patchwork estate out of grants and leases of fields and cottages. He must have been high in favour with Henry IV., for in 1408 he was sheriff of Northumberland, and in the following year was re-appointed constable of Dunstanburgh. Yet even in 1417 we find him leasing at that castle thirty-six acres in the field of Preston from Robert Preston for a sum of money paid in hand.<sup>3</sup> He married Isabel de Monboucher, widow of Sir Henry Heton of Chillingham, and died in about 1419. Five years later Dame Isabel Harbottle entered into a covenant that her son Robert Harbottle should marry Margerie, daughter of Sir Robert Ogle. In this document the Harbottle lands were of course duly settled, while the marriage was to be celebrated

<sup>1</sup> Michael de Pressen was enfeoffed of the manor of Ellingham as a trustee to effect the entail of it in the Clifford family, by licence of Edward I., 3rd May, 1276.—*Dodsworth MS.* 32, f. 110, dors. 8 in the Bodleian Library. A licence was granted by Edward III. in 1330 to enable Nicholas de Pressen to act in a similar capacity, *Originaria*, 4 Ed. iii. ro. 43, and in 1335 that king bestowed on him the manor of Middleton, near Belford, that had been forfeited by the attainer of David le Mareschal, *Patent Roll*, 9 Ed. iii. mem. 18. The List of Fortalices in 1415 assigns the tower of Barmoor to John Preston, no doubt the same 'Johannes de Pressen armiger' who in that year gives a power of attorney to Richard de Wetwang and John Charlton of North Charlton for delivering seisin of his cottage at Preston to Robert Harbottle.—*Dods. MS.* 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* It appears from other deeds that Preston was then included in Bamburghshire.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

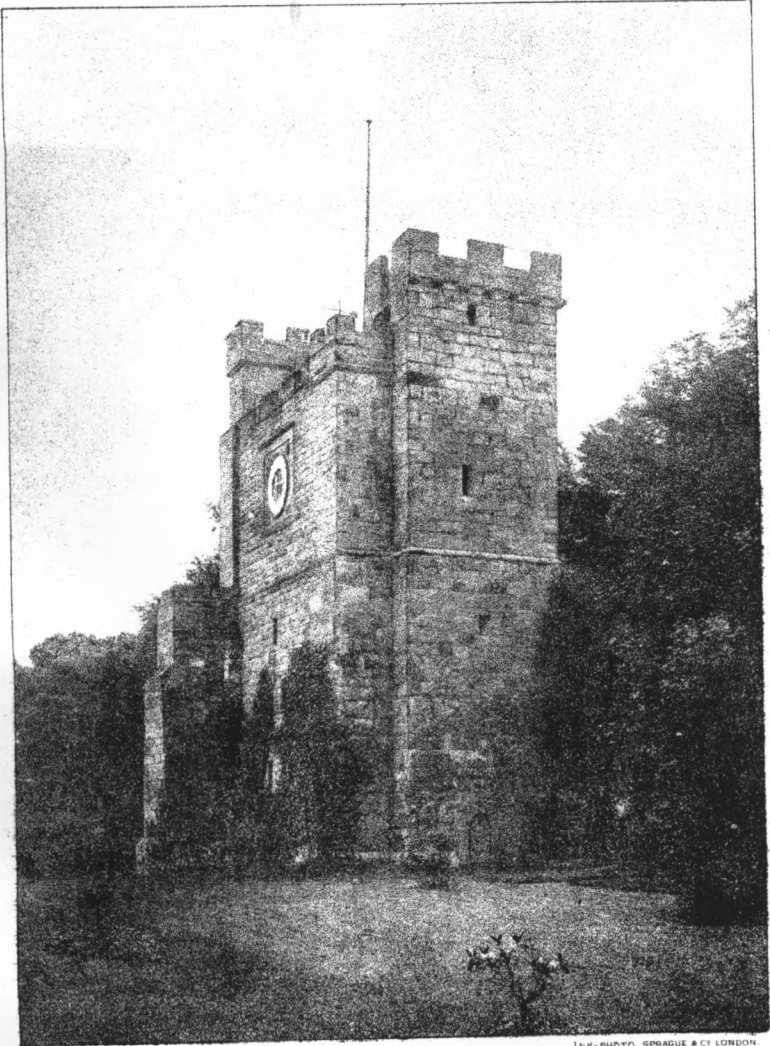
at the cost of the bride's father, who was to convey his estate of Newstead to young Harbottle to be held until the receipts yielded fifty-five marks clear, or until Sir Robert paid him that sum. The rest of the dowry consisted of a piece of land, one acre in length, and three half-acres in width, at the 'netherend' of the 'Doufhyll' in the fields of Ellingham, near the stream by the church, for the purpose of erecting a fulling-mill, together with the right of cutting a watercourse from the Waldenburn through Paynscroft. But the most quaint stipulations were that for two years after the marriage, Sir Robert Ogle was to keep and maintain his daughter and a damsel to wait on her, constantly in his 'hostell,' as also his son-in-law and his valet or other servant, together with their horses, when they came there; while the bride was to find her own 'vesture and attire.'<sup>4</sup>

Sir Robert Harbottle was sheriff of Northumberland in 1439, and on the 18th of October of that year he settled his manor of Preston and 'town' of Walden on his son Bertram, and Jane his wife, daughter of Sir Thomas Lumley.<sup>5</sup> Bertram Harbottle, also sheriff in 1447, is said to have died in 1462, and on the 15th of May, 1477, we find Thomas Lord Lumley solemnly protesting in the presence of John, prior of Gisburne, Thomas Stitnam the sub-prior, and others, at Kilton, that though lawful livery and seisin had been given of Preston to his daughter and her late husband, yet recently their son, 'Raffe Harbotell wrongfully withouten tytle of Ryght but with mastery with-houldeth it from his mother by uncourteous counsell.'<sup>6</sup> On the 12th of May, 1499, Sir Ralph Harbottle granted a lease of the tower, manor, and town of Preston to John Harbottle of Fallodon, gentleman, for the term of thirteen years at the annual rent of £8 13s. 4d. John Harbottle bound himself, at his own cost, 'to set a Roofe upon the said Tower and thack the same with hather flaggs or strawe,'

<sup>4</sup> 'Et auxi le dit Roberte de Ogle auera et tiendra en son Hostell le dit Margerie, et une Damoyzell ad luy continualment, et le dit Roberte fitz, et un vadlet ou autre servaunt ad luy quant'ils veignet, et lez Chiuax a Bouche du court, et la dit Margerie troua tout sa vesture et attire sanz rien prendre pour yeelle par deux anns ensuants les ditz espouselsz celebreez.'—*Dodsw. MS.* 32, f. 114b, Bodl. Libr. (No. 15 of 'Coppes' of sundry deedes given unto me Roger Dodsworthe by my cosen Thomas Stockdale of Bitton Parke nere Knaresburgh in Com. Ebor. 1633, and since lent by me to Hen. Lilly of Little Brittain paynter.) The date of this quaint settlement is fixed by the conveyance in the same collection of the land and easements for the fulling-mill from Sir Robert Ogle to his daughter and her husband, executed on the 20th of August, 1424.

<sup>5</sup> *Dodsworth MS.* 32, f. 124.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* f. 125b.



PRESTON TOWER, FROM THE W.

1884.

This Plate contributed by MISS CRESSWELL.



while Sir Ralph was to find the timber for the roof.<sup>7</sup> Such an inflammable roof would seem to court a Scottish firebrand, though a truce between the two kingdoms was existing at the time.

Sir Ralph Harbottle married Margaret, daughter of Sir Ralph Percy, who fell on Hedgeley Moor, and their grand-daughter, Eleanor Harbottle, became the wife of Sir Thomas Percy, who was beheaded for the share he took in the Pilgrimage of Grace. Having obtained Preston as co-heiress of her brother, Eleanor Harbottle, under the style of Eleanor Lady Percy, leased her mill at Ellingham on the 20th of May, 1553, to Margaret, wife of Thomas Harbottle of Beamish.<sup>8</sup> On the attainder of her son Thomas, seventh Earl of Northumberland, Preston passed to the Crown, and at the time of Hall and Homberston's Survey in 1570 it was let to Margaret Harbottle at the yearly rent of £4 13s. 4d.<sup>9</sup> It afterwards passed into the possession of the families of Armorer and Craster, and is at present the property of Miss Baker Cresswell.

Preston Tower must originally have been a long building with turrets at the four angles, a sort of Haughton Castle in miniature. All that now remains of it is the south front, with the south-east and south-west corner turrets, and portions of the side walls running north from these. The interior of the main building was 16 feet 7 inches wide and the side walls 6 feet 9 inches thick. The south-west turret, about 13 feet 6 inches square externally, is slightly larger than the south-east turret, though this projects a very little further south. The height of the tower, to the crest of the present battlements, is 49 feet 9 inches. A clock was placed in the tower by Mr. Henry Baker Cresswell in 1864, the face occupying the south front of the second floor.

The only present entrance is by a plain doorway cut through the base of the south front, probably at the end of the 17th century. There was no stair originally in the existing fragment of the building,

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* f. 126.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* No. 24. A bond for 40s. from John Harbottle of Preston to Eleanor Lady Percy, dated 5th Sept. 1538, is preserved at Alnwick Castle.

<sup>9</sup> *Homberston's Survey*, P.R.O. The curious coat of Harbottle, *Azure, three icicles or*, still appears in the achievement of arms of the present Duke of Northumberland at the end of the second volume of *Annals of the House of Percy*. Of this it should have formed the 12th quarter, and have been followed by the Neville coat in the 13th. On the general subject of the Harbottle arms and quarterings, see *Arch. Ael.* N.S. IV. p. 214.

but a wooden staircase was inserted when the ruin was repaired as a clock-tower. The basement of the south-east turret is entered through a pointed door only 4 feet 9 inches high, like most of those in the building, set back in a recess under a half-arch. The rough pointed vaulting rises to the height of 7 feet, and the dimensions are 8 feet 9 inches from east to west, by 4 feet 7 inches from north to south. There is a slit at the east end. The similar vault in the south-west turret springs in the contrary direction, being about 8 feet 6 inches long from north to south and 5 feet 6 inches wide from east to west. The original slit, now blocked up, is here at the south end, while an opening has been made in the west wall, doubtless in connection with the cottages that are shown built up against the tower in Mr. Archer's sketch of it in 1862.<sup>10</sup>

The vaulted turret rooms on the first floor are provided with fire-places. The flat head of the fire-place in the south-east turret is of peculiar construction, being formed of three stones, of which the centre one, though shaped like a key-stone, really rests on the two others. A water-tank now nearly fills the vault in the opposite turret; but there is a good plain fire-place still intact in the east wall.

At the south end of the second floor of the main block is a fine window recess, like some in Warkworth Donjon, 5 feet 2 inches in width and 7 feet in height to the springers of the low arch. This is now filled with the clock face, but is said to have formerly contained a square-headed transomed window of two cusped lights. The fire-places in the turrets on this floor have both fallen away. A moulding has been worked on the east jamb of that in the south-west turret.

The south-east turret ends in a room about 8 feet square inside, with rubble walls, probably of the time of Elizabeth. The similar room on the south-west turret contains the bell on which the clock strikes. The roof of this room was removed for the purpose of obtaining a better view from the battlements.

<sup>10</sup> This water-colour drawing forms one of a series of views of the principal castles and towers of the county, executed for the 4th Duke of Northumberland and preserved in a portfolio at Alnwick Castle.

