

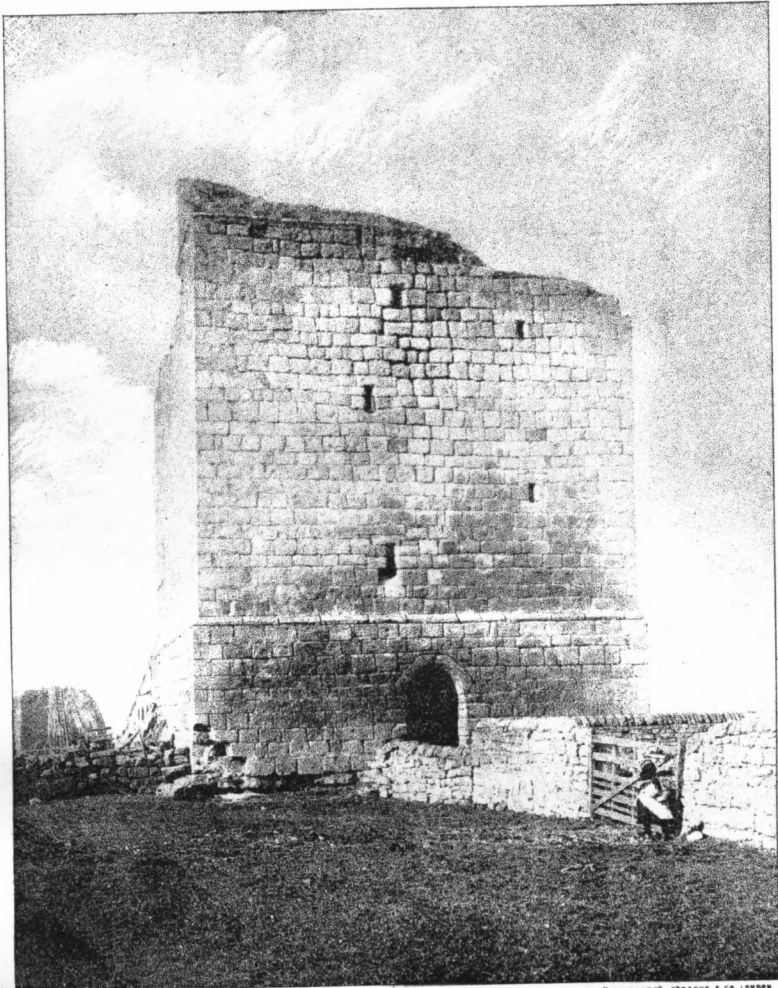
COCKLAW TOWER.

THE tower of West Errington,¹ usually known by the name of Cocklaw, stands near where the Erringburn enters the North Tyne, in the extreme north-west corner of the ancient franchise of Hexham. The view from it is shut in on the south by the high range on which was fought the great battle of Hefenfelth between Oswald and Cadwalla in 634. To the north it takes in the neighbouring village of Chollerton and the woods round Swinburn Castle, and a little more to the west the rocky defile in which Haughton Castle is situated. Cocklaw Tower is plainly seen from the Roman station of CILURNUM.

The entry to the tower is from the south, through a rude doorway, very slightly pointed, that leads into a passage about 10 feet long and 4 feet 6 inches wide, with a steep, pointed vault. The outer door appears, from the holes left in the jambs, to have been secured by a mere fall-bar, 6 inches by $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick. On the right-hand side of the passage is the door of the wheel-stair that occupies the south-east corner of the tower. On the opposite side the wall of the passage is said to have been formerly solid, but it is now broken through into a dungeon, 5 feet wide and 8 feet long, with an opening in its high pointed vault, through which prisoners may have been let down.

At the end of the passage facing the entrance is the door of the vault, which, as usual in a Border tower, occupied the greater part of the basement. The pointed doorway, 6 feet 6 inches high and 3 feet 8 inches wide, is of superior workmanship. It has a concave chamfer on the inside and a fine mason-mark near the base of the eastern jamb. It opened outwards, and may very possibly have been removed from some earlier building. The vault beyond it measures about 32 feet north to south by 20 feet 6 inches east to west, and had a cylindrical roof formed of long-shaped stones. At the north end there seems to have been a slit for admitting some light and air. The northern portion of the vaulting has now fallen away, and the remainder is covered with nettles.

¹ 'Gilberte Errington houldeth . . . freehold certain laundes called West-errington alias Cocklawe in fre soccage and payeth yearlie rent xxiiij s. viij d.'—*Survey*, 1608, in Land Revenue Record Office.



J. P. GIBSON, PHOTO.

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COCKLAW TOWER, FROM THE S.

1884,

This Plate contributed by JOHN CLAYTON, ESQ., V.I.



The first floor is entered off the wheel-stair by a pointed doorway 3 feet in width. There has been a large fire-place in the west wall, and on the right of it is a window, in a round-arched recess, with two trefoil-headed lights and rough stone seats. Near the north-west corner a mural passage leads to a latrine. The north wall is pierced by a small loop. The east wall contains another window of two lights, the trefoiled heads cut out of one stone, and another slit, while between these is a small door, with a rough arch formed like that of the main entrance by two, converging stones. This door, the most remarkable feature of the tower, is set in a flat-headed passage, and probably communicated by a small wooden bridge with the first floor of a building—possibly a chapel—the foundations of which are to be traced to the east of the tower. In the south-west corner of the room, a door, now firmly barred up, led into the small vaulted chamber over the dungeon, that retains its plaster with tracings of blue arabesques, of which, in about 1862, Mr. Archer made an excellent water-colour drawing that is preserved in the portfolio of his sketches at Alnwick Castle.

The principal room on the second floor must have been extremely dark, as it had only two small windows in the east and west walls. As on the floor below, there was a fire-place in the west wall. Two doors in the south wall, the one pointed, the other square-headed, led respectively on to the wheel-stair and into a chamber in the south-west corner of the tower. This chamber could also be entered from the stair direct. It forms at present the highest portion of the whole building, but, judging from analogy, the wheel-stair may have originally terminated in a turret still higher.

There is no reason to suppose that this tower, which must have been built and inhabited by the Errington family, is older than the 15th century. It is not mentioned in the list of towers in 1415, and stood just outside the scope of the View of Bowes and Ellerker in 1541. It is necessary to remember that towers of this class were the work of the country people themselves, and consequently look considerably earlier than they really are, if judged by the standard of ecclesiastical buildings carried out by regular masons under the superintendence of monastic architects.