

THE PRECEPTORY OF THE HOSPITALERS AT CHIBBURN,
NORTHUMBERLAND; WITH SOME NOTICES OF TEMPLE
THORNTON IN THE SAME COUNTY.

By WILLIAM WOODMAN, F.S.A., Newcastle, Town Clerk of Morpeth.

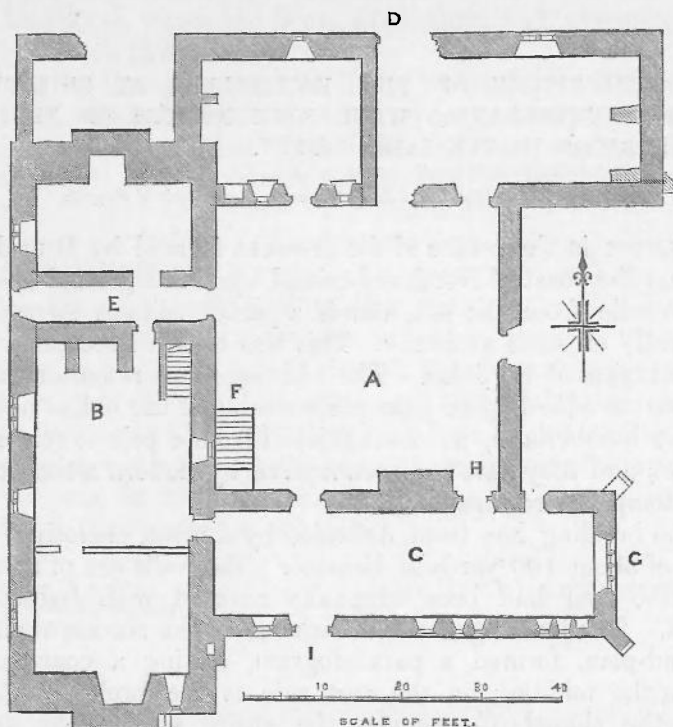
ALMOST in the centre of the crescent formed by Druridge Bay on the coast of Northumberland, upon flat ground about half a mile from the sea, stands a partly ruinous structure evidently of some antiquity. This was once a Preceptory of the Knights of St. John. The buildings now remaining are curious, as affording an example probably of the oldest house in Northumberland, as distinguished from a pele-tower or a castle; and they have not been injured by modern alterations or attempts at restoration.¹

The building has been defended by a moat, enclosing an area of about 100 yards in diameter; the walls are of stone, and the roof had been originally covered with freestone slates. The buildings, as will be seen in the accompanying ground-plan, formed a parallelogram, having a courtyard (A) in the middle; on the west side is the dwelling-house (B); the chapel (C) occupies the entire south side, and various offices have been on the north and east. The principal entrance was by an arched gateway (D) into the court on the north side. The dwelling house (B) is of two stories, and has been divided into three apartments on each floor. On the ground floor is a passage (E) with a low

¹ A short account of this interesting building has been given in Mr. J. H. Parker's *Domestic Architecture in England*, vol. ii., *Fourteenth Century*, p. 197, with a ground-plan of the buildings and a view of the chapel. The author, whose authority in subjects of this nature few will fail to recognise, speaks of the Preceptory of Chibburn as "now existing almost as it was left by the brethren," and from the mouldings, &c., he concludes that the buildings, which were reported in 1338 to be in bad condition, were rebuilt at the end of the fourteenth century. A somewhat different opinion

has, however, been advanced in a paper read before the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle, whilst the Memoir given above was in the press. It is alleged that great part of the buildings are later than the Reformation, and that the curious arrangement of the upper chamber in the chapel, noticed by Mr. Parker, and described in the account here given, is altogether a secondary adaptation, in no manner connected with the original arrangements of the chapel. This communication will probably appear in the *Archæologia Æliana*.

arched doorway, and there are four mullioned windows, two of three lights and the others of two lights each ; the stairs leading to the upper floor are constructed of solid blocks of



Ground Plan of the Preceptory of the Hospitalers at Chibburn.

wood ; the ceiling of the ground floor is formed merely by the oak joists and boards of the floors of the apartments above, both joists and boards having a reed run along their angles, and the under surface of the boards was planed smooth, and left without any plaster. The windows of the upper floor opening towards the west are now flush with the wall, being of comparatively modern construction, but originally they appear to have rested on corbels projecting about twelve inches, and this arrangement may have served, it is supposed, for some purpose of defence.²

There is also access to this floor by stone stairs (F) from the court. In each apartment is a spacious fireplace

² Mr. Parker alludes to this feature, observing that the corbels were possibly introduced for the purpose of attacking

assailants who were beneath. This is however questionable.

deeply recessed, having the lintel formed of a very large stone, with a relieving arch above. In one of the upper chambers an old partition remains, consisting of oak planks set in grooves at the top and bottom. The edges of the planks are reeded on the face; they measure about five inches broad and three inches thick, and are placed four inches apart, the intervening spaces being filled up with clay and straw.

The southern or external wall of the chapel (c) had probably undergone many alterations before it ceased to be used as a place of worship. The external details are shown in the accompanying sketch of the elevation. At the east end (a), which some have supposed more modern than the rest, is a pointed window of four lights (see section of jamb,

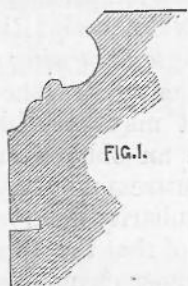


Fig. 1. Jamb of East Window.

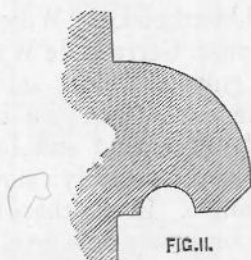


Fig. 2. String-course, South side of the Chapel.

fig. 1); on the south side were two large square-headed windows, possibly more modern than the western part of the building; and at about mid-height there is a string-course (see section, fig. 2), which rose over the large windows and fell at the doorway. There have apparently been two

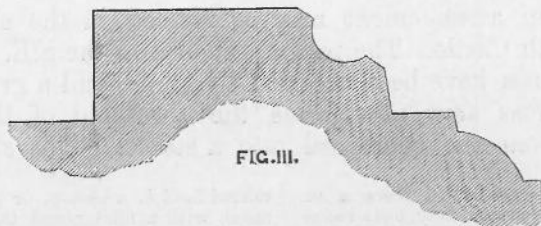


Fig. 3. Jamb of Chapel Door.

entrances, one on the north side (H) by a pointed arch with mouldings (see section of door jamb, fig. 3), and the other

on the south (1), a plain pointed doorway with a dripstone. On each side of the latter door there is an ogee window widely splayed and square-headed in the inside ; above and

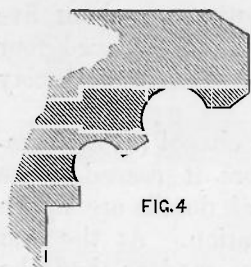


FIG. 4

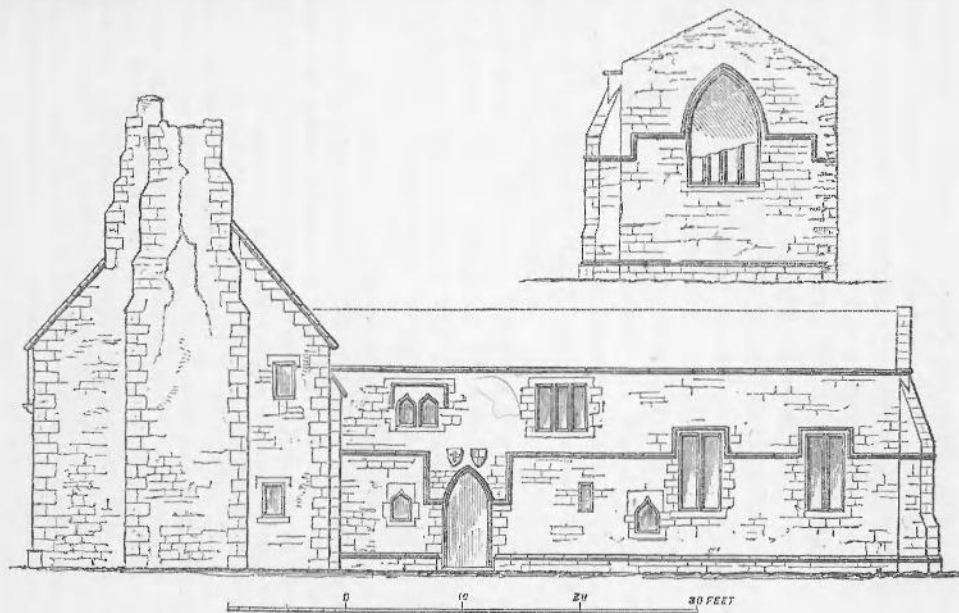
a little to the west of the doorway is a double ogee window with dripstone above ; a cornice ran along beneath the roof. (See section, fig. 4). Immediately over the arch of the south doorway there are two escutcheons ; the charges are nearly obliterated, but traces of a cross patée, doubtless for the Knights of St. John, may be seen on one, and a quarterly coat on the other. It is not improbable that

this may have been the coat of Widdrington, an ancient family in the neighbourhood. In Willement's Roll, *temp.* Richard II., we find "Monsr. Gerrard de Wythryngton" bearing quarterly argent and gules a bendlet sable. Considering the perished state of the escutcheon the bendlet may very likely have disappeared. The east end (G) has an oblique buttress at the S.E. angle, and possibly a similar buttress may have existed at its other angle. In the chapel a peculiarity deserves notice ; there is a floor nearly on a level with of that the upper rooms and communicating with them ; the upper chamber so formed had a fireplace in a massive chimney which is built from the ground, projecting on the outside near the entrance door (H).³ The floor does not extend to the east window, but about two-thirds of the entire length from the west end. This chamber probably opened at the east end into the chapel, and was doubtless used by the principal inmates of the house at the time of divine service. Another example of such an arrangement may be noticed in the chapel in Warkworth Castle. The piscina remains in the S.E. angle ;⁴ human bones have been occasionally found, and a grave-slab with a cross flory now forms the threshold of the door leading from the courtyard into a stable. This slab is of

³ It is remarkable that there is no fireplace on the ground floor, but a recess or closet is cut out of the solid base of the chimney within the room, apparently in recent times. There is no flue.

⁴ There remains in the chapel a corbel or truss rudely carved in oak, which may have been intended to represent the

mitred head of a bishop, or possibly an angel, with a fillet round the forehead ornamented in front with a cross. Of the roof, now wholly fallen, a few strong oak rafters remained in 1853, supporting thatch. The original roof may have been of higher pitch.



Preceptory of the Hospitalers at Chibburn, Northumberland.

Elevations of the South and East sides of the Chapel. The Cornice and Mouldings appear to be of Transition-decorated character. The string-course and larger windows are here restored.

greater width at the head than at the foot ; the head of the cross carved upon it is pierced in the centre with a large curvilinear lozenge. In one of the windows the upper portion of a stone coffin may be seen, placed in a cavity in the wall.

Such being the character of the ancient remains still existing at Chibburn, curiosity is excited to learn some details of their history. No evidence has been found to show at what period or by whom the establishment was originally founded, possibly by the Fitzwilliams, the tenants *in capite* under the crown, or by the Widdringtons, who held under them in the twelfth century. The defaced escutcheon, before noticed, existing over the principal doorway into the chapel, might indeed give some colour to the supposition that the family last named were the founders.

The earliest mention of the house of Chibburn which has been discovered is contained in the Return made to the following mandate to inquire into the goods of the Hospitalers, in the year 1313, and preserved in the Register of Bishop Kellaw, at Durham. It was issued in pursuance of letters from the Nuncio, Arnaldo, Cardinal of St. Prisca, sent by Clement V. to reconcile Edward II. to the barons, and persuade him to grant the Templars' lands to the knights of St. John : to this the Return of the Bishop is subjoined.

AD INQUIRENDUM DE BONIS HOSPITALARIORUM.

Petrus de Dene, canonicus Eboracensis, venerabilis patris domini Willielmi, Dei gratia Eboracensis Archiepiscopi, Anglie Primatis, ipso extra suam agente diocesim vicarius generalis, et Johannes de Nassington officialis curie Eboracensis ejusdem ecclesie canonicus, venerabili in Christo patri domino Ricardo, Dei gratia Dunelmensi Episcopo, salutem cum reverencia et honore debitis tanto patri.

Mandatum dicti venerabilis patris Archiepiscopi Eboracensis recepimus in hec verba ; Willielmus, permissione divina Eboracensis Archiepiscopus, Anglie Primas, dilectis filiis Magistris Petro de Dene, nobis extra nostram diocesim agentibus vicario nostro generali, et Johanni de Nassington officiali nostro Eboracensi, salutem, gratiam, et benedictionem. Literam quamdam venerabilis patris, domini Arnaldi, Dei gratia titulorum (?) Sancte Prisce presbiteri Cardinalis, una cum quibusdam aliis suis literis, recepimus, tenorem qui sequitur continentem ; si temporalitas Hospitalarium civitatum diocesios et provincie vestre in prestatione decime cujusque reperiatur apud vos, officiales vestros, vel eorum officiales estimata et taxata, quod diligenter ex causa volumus per vos perquiri eam ; vel, si non reperiatur, valorem et existimacionem communem reddituum et proventuum ipsius temporalitatis singillatim, prout Prior generalis et singuli preceptores habent et tenent in singulis civitatibus diocesios (et ?) vestre provincie, per vos, alium, vel alios, informacione, prout vobis videbitur, caucius et secrecius

facienda, nobis per latorem presencium vel alium, quam cicius poteritis, transmittatis. Datum London, ij. Kalendis Julii. Super contentis igitur in litera domini Cardinalis predicta inquiratis, absque more dispendio, cum omni qua poteritis diligentia, veritatem certificantes nos indilate super hiis que inveneritis in premissis per vestras clausas literas harum seriem continentes. Valete. Datum apud Walmesford, vj. Nonis Julii, Anno gratie M^o. ccc^o. xiiij^o. Quocirca reverende paternitati vestre, cum ea reverencia qua decet, auctoritate nobis in hac parte demandata injungimus et mandamus, quatenus dictum mandatum, juxta vim, formam, et effectum ejusdem per vestras civitatem et diocesim secrecius et caucius quo poteritis executioni celeri demandetis; et quod feceritis et inveneritis in premissis nos, quamcicius commode poteritis, reddatis plenius certiores per vestras clausas literas harum seriem continentes. Datum apud Eboracum, sub sigillo officialitatis curie Eboracensis quo ambo utimur in hac parte, Nonis Julii, Anno gratie M^o. ccc^o. tercio decimo.

Nos igitur, de bonis temporalibus predictorum Hospitalariorum inquiri diligencius et caucius quo potuimus facientes, per remissa nobis certificatoria invenimus, quod dicti Hospitalarii habent in Archidiaconatu Northumbrie domum de Chipburn; que cum minutis ad eam pertinentibus ad decem libras annis communibus estimatur. Conservet vos altissimus et semper dirigat in honorem. Datum apud Stoketon, xxx. die Julii.

At this time, when the Hospitalers had not acquired the lands of the Templars, it appears by the foregoing document that Chibburn belonged to the Knights of St. John, therefore it must have been originally granted to them.

We occasionally find a Preceptor of Chibburn appearing as a witness to some ancient deed.⁵ A recent discovery at Malta has thrown light upon the history of this place. A few years since alterations were making at the house of the Knights of St. John in that island, and on removing some plaster a place of deposit in the wall was found containing a considerable number of documents relating to the order. Among these was a volume thus entitled—"Extenta terrarum et tenementorum Hospitalis sancti Johannis Jerusalem in Anglia, facta per Phillippum de Thame, ejusdem Hospitalis in Anglia Priorem, anno domini millesimo trescentescimo tricesimo octavo." The volume is bound in parchment, and on the cover, in the handwriting of the sixteenth century, is inscribed,—"*Liber in quo per minutum exprimuntur redditus Prioratus Hospitalis Sancti Johannis Hierosolimitani in Anglia*

⁵ In the Treasury at Durham is preserved a grant to the monks of Holy Island by Robert Grosthette formerly Master and keeper of the House of the hospital of St. John at Chibburn. It is witnessed by Brother John de Crauinne, the Preceptor of Chibburn, Alan and

Robert, clerks, of the same place, and others. The smaller houses of the Hospitalers were usually denominated Commanderies, and their heads Commanders, but they used the designation Preceptories and Preceptors in like manner as the knights of the Temple.

et omnium ipsius Comendarum, secundum valorem currentem anno 1338, eodemque modo exprimuntur aliqua bona ordinis Templariorum que ordini Sancti Johannis Hierosolimitani post extinctionem dicti ordinis Templariorum fuerunt adjudicata. Qui liber confectus ex ordinatione fratris Phillippi Thame tunc temporis ipsius Prioratus Anglie Prioris."

The Rev. Lambert B. Larking, during a visit to Malta in 1839, copied this record, and kindly sent me an extract of so much of it as relates to Chibburn. In this remarkable document, being the Report of the Prior to the Grand Master Elyan de Villanova, we have a survey prepared by the Hospitalers themselves, in all probability that the Grand Master of the Order might have a complete account of their lands recently acquired, as well as those they had previously possessed. The entire record has subsequently been printed by the Camden Society, under the editorial care of Mr. Larking, with a most valuable historical introduction by the late Mr. Kemble.⁶

From this account we learn that in 1338 three of the Hospitalers resided at Chibburn, viz., brother John de Bilton the Preceptor, brother John Daconibe the Chaplain, and brother Simon Dengayne. It must not be supposed, however, that these were the sole occupants of the Preceptory, as they would have a numerous train of servants. The gross income amounted to 23*l.* 18*s.* 8*d.*, and was derived from various sources. The manor-house (*manerium*) was ruinous, but the herbage was worth 6*s.*; 190 acres of land, at 4*d.* per acre, were worth 63*s.* 4*d.*; 8 acres of meadow, at 2*s.* per acre, 16*s.* The rents of assise in times of peace amounted to 20 marks, or 13*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*, but at that time on account of the war with the Scots 110*s.* could scarce be collected. The annual collection (*fraria*)⁷ made in the churches *ad voluntatem*, by reason of the war yielded only 12½ marks and not more, because the bailiwick (*bajulia*) was in the march of Scotland. The profits of the courts were 10*s.* per annum. The pasture of cows and sheep of two years old (*identes*)

⁶ The Knights Hospitalers in England: edited by the Rev. L. B. Larking. Printed for the Camden Society. 1857. The portion relating to the "Bajulia de Chiburn," will be found at pp. 52, 53.

⁷ See Mr. Kemble's explanation of this item of income, called also *Confraria*, or

Collecta, Introduction to the Hospitalers in England, pub. Camden Soc., p. xxx. It was a voluntary contribution, collected from the neighbourhood, in the various churches, originally levied, probably, by virtue of some papal bull for a particular purpose.

was worth 40s.; and lastly for rents (*firmis*) and mills 66s. 8d. a year was received.

Of this income the expenses (*reprise*) of the house, namely, for the Preceptor, two brothers, with others of the household, and for those who came there for hospitality, were, for bread for a year 25 quarters, at 3s. per quarter, 75s.; malt for ale, 28 quarters, at 2s. per quarter, 56s.; for expenses of the kitchen, as for flesh, fish, and other things, 1s. 6d. per week, 78s.; for robes, mantles, and other necessities for the Preceptor and one of his brethren (*confratris sui*), 3l. 9s. 4d.⁸ The stipend of the Chaplain⁹ was 15s. per annum. The chamberlain (*camerarius*) had 10s. a year; the head stableman (*palefridarius*) 5s. a year, and a helper (*pagettus*) 3s.; the salary of the laundress was 12d.; a certain seneschal or steward had 6s. 8d. a year (*defendendo negotia domus*), and a clerk for collecting the *confraria*, 13s. 4d. In addition to these payments, William de Wyrkelee, a pensioner, received 20s. a year for his life, according to a deed of the chapter. All the expenses and payments amounted to 17l. 13s. 4d., and a balance of 6l. 6s. 8d. remained to be paid to the treasurer for defraying the common charges (*pro oneribus supportandis*), and no more, because the land was destroyed and often plundered in consequence of the war with Scotland.

From this we learn the great injury sustained by the wars with Scotland, which will readily be believed when it is considered that the date of the survey is in the reign of Edward III. after the battle of Hallidon hill, and before the battle of Neville's cross.¹

We learn from this account that the gross income of the

⁸ The Preceptor and brethren had a yearly allowance for dress, and this appears invariable throughout the Preceptories. It consisted of 1l. for a robe, 6s. 8d. for a mantle, 8s. for other necessities; amounting in all to 1l. 14s. 8d. The allowance at Chibburn was, therefore, for two persons only.

⁹ At Thornton the Chaplain, who had no board ("non ad mensam") had 62s. a year. The statute 39 Edw. c. 8, enacts that if any secular man in the realm pay any more than five marks to any priest yearly in money or in other things to the value, or if he shall pay to such priest retained to abide at his table above two marks, 1l. 6s. 8d., for his gown and other necessities (his table to be account-

ted 40s.), he shall pay to the king fully as much as he paid to the priest.

¹ Ten years after this the Nova Taxatio represented nearly all the rectories in Northumberland as worthless, being wasted and wholly destroyed. In 1322 the clergy of Durham appealed to the pope against their being taxed according to the old taxation, because, as their proctor represented, the fruits ecclesiastical of the said diocese were so greatly reduced, as well by the hostile incursions, burnings, plunderings, and devastations of the Scots, as by contributions for the common advantage, which were so notorious and manifest as to need no verification.

Preceptory in 1338 was 23*l.* 18*s.* 8*d.* Those who have not been accustomed to consider the changes in the value of money during the last five centuries will be at first disposed to look upon its possessions as contemptible. But the real importance of the Preceptory and the value of property and labour in Northumberland at that period may be advantageously illustrated by an almost contemporaneous record. It must be remembered that the account which we have cited was prepared by the brethren themselves, and presents but a brief report. In the accounts of the Hospitalers' lands, taken by Prior Philip de Thame in 1338, already cited, we have a return of the house at Temple Thornton, in Northumberland, which had formerly belonged to the Templars, and was then in the possession of the Hospitalers ; its revenues amounted only to 16*l.* 5*s.* By the report, however, of the Sheriff of Northumberland, to whom the custody of the Templars' lands appears to have been entrusted, subsequently to their being seized into the king's hands in January, 1308, the income and expenditure of Temple Thornton are shown to have been very considerable. The Sheriff's *compotus*, preserved among the Templars' Rolls, and extending from November, 1308, to March, 1309, not only enables us to appreciate the importance and revenues of that establishment, and the extensive nature of its agricultural operations, but affords much curious and minute information regarding the internal management of the house, and also as to the rate of wages, the prices of provisions, and the husbandry in Northumberland at the commencement of the fourteenth century. This document has not been published, and as it places before us a remarkable illustration of the economy and general condition of establishments such as that at Chibburn, to which this memoir specially relates, it has been thought of sufficient interest to justify our placing before our readers the following detailed abstract of its contents.

It appears in these accounts of the Sheriff, Guychard Charon, that, besides rents of assise in Thornton and many other places in Northumberland and Durham, the rents of mills and breweries, the receipts for days' works due from tenants in summer and autumn, which appear to have been farmed out in lieu of being rendered on their own lands, he had received divers sums of money for the rent of a dove-house, the proceeds from the sale of turves, and

from hens and eggs received as rents of assize ; also for wheat, rye, meslin, barley, barley and oats mixed, and oats, hastily sold for fear of a raid by the Scots ; also for cattle, sheep, goats, and swine sold ; for geese, hides, sheepskins, and wool. The sum total of receipts is 94*l.* 2*s.* 7*d.* As regards the prices of different kinds of live stock here enumerated, it appears that 3 oxen sold for 12*s.* ; 3 cows, 3 calves, and 6 barren cows sold for 76*s.* 8*d.* ; 3 bullocks sold for 27*s.*, and a bull for 10*s.* ; 232 sheep of different kinds sold for 11*l.* 13*s.*, averaging 1*s.* per head ; 88 lambs sold for 1*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*, being 3½*d.* per head ; 8 goats sold for 6*s.* 8*d.* ; and 21 swine for 28*s.* For 71 hens was received 5*s.* 8*d.* ; 580 eggs produced 2*s.* 5*d.*, being at the rate of 20 for a penny ; and 6 geese sold for 1*s.* 6*d.* 184 fleeces, weighing 17 stone 1 lb., produced 4*l.* 5*s.* 5*d.*, being at the rate of 5*s.* per stone. The Scots were not the only occasion of losses, since we find that a murrain must have been very prevalent ; 6 oxen, 170 sheep of different kinds, and 3 pigs appear to have died *in morina*, an expression which is remarkable, as being frequently used without *mortuus* or any equivalent word. Occasionally it is *de morina*. The familiar use of so elliptical a phrase may suggest how very frequent such epidemics must have been among cattle.²

We shall find the expenditure not less interesting than the receipts. The Sheriff accounts for wheat for sowing bought at 6*s.* 8*d.* per quarter, and oats at 2*s.* 6*d.* ; for rye and meslin for livery to the household at 6*s.* 8*d.* per quarter ; also for oats bought for meal for porridge for the servants, for oats bought in the sheaf for oxen (*boves*) and cows, and for oats bought for provender for the oxen (*affri*) in sowing time. He also accounts for ploughs and harrows ; for digging turves to burn in winter ; for ointment for the sheep ; for wages of a man taking care of lambs in the early part of the year at a halfpenny per day ; and for washing and shearing sheep. The rates of wages appear to have been as follows. For weeding 37 acres of wheat and 10½ acres of oats, one halfpenny per acre ; for mowing, making, and carrying 21 acres of hay 13*s.* 1*d.* ; for reaping, gathering, and binding 37 acres of wheat and 101½ acres of oats, at 7*d.* per acre for the wheat,

² The term occurred in the inventory of effects of Roger de Mortimer, at Wigmore Castle, Herefordshire, printed in

this Journal, vol. xv. p. 360, where two peacocks even appear to have died *in morina*.

and 6*d.* for the oats ; for the wages of a man overlooking the reapers, for 30 days, at 2*d.* per day ; for the wages of six ploughmen, one cowherd, one shepherd, and a man keeping house and making porridge, for the whole year, 40*s.*; for the wages of a swineherd for sixteen weeks 12*d.*; and for the wages of two men harrowing in seed time for 31 days, as well in winter as in Lent, 5*s.* 2*d.* For two bushels of salt bought for the porridge of the servants a payment was made of 10*d.* ; for threshing and winnowing 21 quarters of wheat, rye and meslin, 8 quarters of barley, and 44 quarters of oats, 8*s.* 6*d.* ; and for the wages of a man having charge of the Manor during the time of the account, at three halfpence per day, 39*s.* 4½*d.* The total expenses, including costs incurred in respect of the custody of three Templars, and carrying them to York, amounted to 56*l.* 10*s.* 7¾*d.*³

It may be remarked that the account is kept in a very business-like manner, as, in addition to the receipts and expenses, we find a stock account showing how stock had been disposed of, and what remained. The remarkable difference in the productive return in 1308 as compared with the account in 1338 published by Mr. Larking, amounting only to 16*l.* 5*s.*, would seem to show how very variable were prices, owing doubtless to the unsettled state of the Northern Borders ; and, when it is considered that the extent of the Preceptory of Thornton was one-third less than that of Chibburn, the gross income of which was stated at 23*l.* 18*s.* 8*d.* at that period, we may possibly form a more correct notion of the value of Chibburn, at that earlier time.

Great as is the apparent difference between the prices of produce and the rate of wages at the period of the account and in our own times, one cannot but be struck with the similarity of the proportion of the different kinds of produce to each other then and now. We also find that the course of agriculture in an age esteemed rude was not materially different from that at present pursued. The land was ploughed and harrowed, the corn was sown at autumn and spring, it was weeded and bound in sheaves, the hay was harvested, and the sheep were salved to protect them from the cold and wet of winter, washed and shorn, just as at this day. The servants appear to have been fed almost entirely

³ The original of this *compotus* has never been published, and it will be given hereafter, with some additional

notices relating to the possessions of the Hospitalers, &c. in Northumberland.

upon bread and oatmeal, they consumed neither beef nor mutton.

We find little more of Chibburn until the Dissolution. The possessions of the Hospitalers were surrendered to the Crown in 1540, and from the Ministers' Accounts in the Augmentation Office we learn that in 1550 the manor of Chibburn was worth 4*l.* per annum, besides the stipend of the chaplain performing divine service there.⁴ The value was much less than it had been 200 years earlier, but it must be observed that in the terrier of 1338 all the lands attached to Chibburn were included, while in the Ministers' Accounts the value of Chibburn is set out separately, and other possessions are named in the Ministers' Accounts which were probably held by the Preceptor of Chibburn. There are lands at Ulgham, at North Seaton, Newbiggen, Ellington, Felton, Chevington, and Morwick. In 1553 the manor of Chibburn, described as parcel of the possessions of the preceptory of Mount St. John, in Yorkshire, was granted to Sir John Widdrington and Cuthbert Musgrave.⁵ In 1593, Hector Widdrington, the natural son of Sir John Widdrington, and described as one of the constables of horsemen of Berwick-upon-Tweed, by his will left all his corn at Chibburn to two of his servants, and he must have had a residence there, as in the inventory of his goods we find, besides a long list of chattels, armour, furniture and clothes at Berwick, the following household effects at Chibburn,—“Imprimis, one Flanders chist; Item, in the same chist, iiij. table clothes, &c. Item, one basin and ewer, and iiij. pewter dishes, v. saucers, syx porringers, and three broken candlesticks; Item, one quishinge of arras worke, and two pec.' of nedell worke for quishings; Item, one cros-bowe and a racke.”⁶ The total value of these effects at Chibburn was 4*l.* 9*s.* 2*d.*

⁴ Ministers' Accounts, 4 and 5 Edward VI. amongst the Records of the late Court of Augmentations, now at the Rolls Office. Chibburn and Temple Thornton, it deserves observation, here occur under the head of “*Percella possessionum nuper preceptor' Montis Sancti Johannis Baptiste in comitatu Eboracum.*” This connection with the Preceptory of Mount St. John, in Yorkshire, founded by Algernon Percy in the reign of Henry I., may probably explain the omission of any mention of Chibburn in

the Valor Ecclesiasticus, under Northumberland, but various sums from rents, &c., in that county occur in that record under Yorkshire. See the “*Comanderia Montis Sancti Johannis,*” Valor Eccl., vol. v. p. 94.

⁵ Originalia Roll, 7 Edw. VI. part 2, in the Public Records Office at the Rolls.

⁶ This will is preserved in the Consistory Court of Durham, and is dated 28th April, 1593. The testator sets his mark only, in lieu of a signature. The goods at Berwick were valued at 53*l.* 11*s.* 2*d.*

Before two centuries had passed, the manor of Chibburn was again the property of the Crown by the attainder of William, the fourth Lord Widdrington, for rebellion in 1715. In the survey for the Crown in 1717, the only trace of the former owners is that two fields are called St. John's Flatt meadow and St. John's pasture. The Widdrington estates were sold to the York Building Company, and, on the wreck of that body, they were purchased by Sir George Warren, Bart. In a survey made for him in 1768, it is said,—“The mansion house at Lower Chibburn is the remains of a religious house; the walls and timber are extraordinary good, but the slate is much out of repair; it has never been pointed nor any of the rooms ceiled; the slate ought to be taken off, dressed over, and what it falls short made up with new. The tenants make themselves conveniences for stables, &c., out of what were formerly a chapel and parlours.”

A century has not passed away since the date of the last survey, and several persons descendants of the occupants at that period now reside upon the lands, yet tradition has failed to preserve the least remembrance of the purpose to which the buildings were originally devoted, so much so indeed that the late Mr. Hodgson, the learned historian of Northumberland, doubted whether they had ever been connected with any religious establishment.⁷

The manor of Chibburn is now the property of Lord Vernon, and it were much to be desired that the interesting character of the remains which have been described should be brought under his notice, and that he might be induced to preserve one of the most curious relics of domestic architecture of its class now existing in the North of England.

On a future occasion it is proposed to give, as a sequel to the foregoing account, some of the documents, hitherto unpublished, with such further notices as may be brought to light, relating to the possessions of the Hospitalers and the Templars in Northumberland.

⁷ History of Northumberland, Part II. vol. ii. p. 246. Hodgson thus notices briefly the ancient buildings at Low Chibburn, frequently, as he states, a residence of the dowager ladies, or of junior branches of the Widdrington family. “The old mansion house of Low Chibburn has been defended by a moat and barmkin;

it is a massive old-fashioned stone building, with a chimney like a huge buttress projecting from the South gable. I see no ground to believe that the building now occupied as a barn here was ever a chapel belonging to the established Church, either in Papal times or since the Reformation, as some have supposed.”