

WILLIMOTESWYKE.

THE ancient stronghold of Willimoteswyke occupies a charming situation on the right bank of the South Tyne, about a mile above Bardon Mill railway-station. The irregular court-yard, about 56 yards long by 33 yards wide, is entered through a gate-tower of comparatively late work at the north-east angle. A very characteristic range of old byres and stables closes the court in on the east side, and at the south end, towards which the ground rises, is a manor-house overlooking the romantic dene formed by the Black-cleugh burn, and attached at the



WILLIMOTESWYKE FROM THE EAST, 1860.

east end to a very early building, standing north and south, between two narrow towers. Little is left of the curtain-wall of the west side, except part of a curious doorway, owing to the erection of modern farm-buildings.

The gate-tower, which is the first of the three distinct fortified houses to meet the eyes of a traveller, though it is the latest of them in point of actual construction, is a rectangle of rough masonry 39 feet long by 22 feet deep. The south end is occupied by a roadway

10 feet 4 inches wide, under a flat arch formed by long dressed stones, over the east face of which a recessed panel for a coat of arms is now vacant. The upper hinges of the gates remain, and the hole for the sliding bar measuring $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. On the north side of the passage are two doorways. The first leads into a basement chamber, with a small loop in each of the walls near the north-east corner, and an inserted shed and fire-place on the north side. The second doorway is that of the wheel-stair, which has been built inside the tower, and ascends to the battlements in about 43 steps, 3 feet wide with 8 inches rise.

The first floor might almost be reckoned an *entresol*, as it is very low and extends only over the northern portion of the tower. It has a labelled window of two lights in the east wall, and a fire-place and a loop in the west. The second floor has contained two rooms, both entered off the stair, though there is no trace left of the partition wall between them. The northern of these has a flat-headed fire-place under a relieving arch in the north wall, with a large loop near it in the west wall, and a window in the east wall protected by iron bars, the verticals being passed through squares in the horizontals. The southern room, 14 feet wide, is over the entrance archway, and has a headless fire-place in the south wall, a window of two lights to the west, and one very low down in the east wall. The similar room on the third floor has a plain-chamfered fire-place in the south wall and windows to the east and west, the latter blocked up; while the room adjoining it on the north has a fire-place with a chimney over it in the west wall, and a barred window to the east. There are two chimnies near the centres of the north and south walls. All of them rise from the inner face of the walls so as to be free of the battlements; the thin coping stones are cut into little square billets on their undersides. The rubble battlements project on three courses of close corbelling. The two embrasures on the south side are nearly perfect; and in the wall of the parapet below them are three spouts, the two western ones annulated in imitation of cannon. The northern of the two spouts on the west side is solid, and was meant, therefore, only for ornament.

The old manor-house of the Ridleys has been much pulled about and altered in order to suit the requirements of successive farm-



J. P. GIBSON, PHOTO.

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WILLIMOTESWICK (TOWER AND MANOR HOUSE FROM THE N.)

1884.

THIS PLATE PRESENTED TO THE SOCIETY BY SIR MATTHEW W. RIDLEY, BART.





tenants. Many of the walls are very thick, and the great fire-place has been spared. An interesting gothic doorway on the south side has been blocked up.

The two towers at either end of the cross-building attached to the manor-house on the east are most curious relics of the defensive architecture of Northumberland. They are about 17 feet wide by only 7 feet 6 inches wide measured externally at the base, and they gradually taper towards the top, so that there is only just room for a narrow stair inside them. Three corbels, and some of the moulded string-course of the battlement, is left on the south side of the north tower. The south tower has still a spout at its south end, and there is a latrine appended to its east side. The top of the door that led into this tower from the first floor of the cross-building can be seen above the lower modern roof of the latter.

The name of Willimoteswyke is, no doubt, derived from some early English settler called Willimot, who fixed on this site for his 'wyke,' or fortified manor-house. As usual, there was a family bearing the local name, and we meet with an Odard de Willimoteswick in the time of Henry II.¹ In 1279, Willimoteswyke was held of a Nicholas de Rydeley by Hugh de Ferewithescheles.² Little seems recorded of it again until John de Belasis and Alice his wife obtained a licence from Cardinal Langley, bishop of Durham, on the 2nd of October, 1423, to have mass said by one or more fit priests, in their chapel of Willimoteswyke, in the parish of Haltwhistle.³

At the close of the Wars of the Roses, Willimoteswyke was in the possession of Nicholas Ridley, who, in 1484, was one of the Commissioners for assuring the truce with Scotland. He was probably father of Sir Nicholas Ridley, 'the Broad Knight,' and grandfather of Nicholas Ridley, bishop of London, who was burnt at Oxford in 1555. Dr. Turner, dean of Wells, a friend of the bishop, says:—'He was 'born in mine own Northumberland, and descended from the noble

¹ Hodgson, *Northumberland*, II. ii. p. 322, referring to *Lansd. MS.* 326, fo. 115.

² *Proc. Arch. Inst.* 1852, ii. App. lviii. Less fortunate than Willimoteswyke, the neighbouring Ferewithes-shields is now miserably corrupted into Farrow Shields.

³ Hodgson, *Northumberland*, II. ii. p. 322, on the authority of Langley's *Register*, 289.

'stock of the Ridleys. . . . The village in which he was born is called 'Wilowmontiswik.'⁴

The Border Survey of 1541 tells us:—'At Willymounteswyke ys 'a good toure and a stone house ioyninge thereunto of the Inheryt- 'aunce of Nycolas Rydley kepte in good reparacions.'⁵ This Nicholas Ridley, the eldest son of Sir Hugh Ridley, the bishop's nephew, was sheriff of Northumberland in 1585; and in that year, on the 16th of June, he died, leaving no issue. His household furniture, according to the inventory taken on the 7th of March following, comprised:—

In the Inner Chamber.—A feather bed, a mattress, a pair of blankets, two coverlets, a covering, a bolster, a pillow, and a cupboard.

In the Great Chamber.—Two feather beds, a mattress, two pair of blankets, four coverlets, two coverings, two bolsters, two pillows, and two pair of 'hingers' for beds.

In the Vault Chamber.—Three old feather beds, three pair of blankets, six old coverlets, three bolsters, and two pillows.

In the Chamber above the Stairhead.—Two home-made feather beds, two pair of blankets, four coverlets, and two bolsters.

Bedding for Servants in other Chambers.—Fourteen blankets, ten 'happings,' four bolsters, and a mattress.

In the Parlour.—Twenty pair of double linen sheets, ten pair of 'strakinge' sheets, ten pair of 'harne' sheets, six 'wishons,' six 'worset wishons,' six candlesticks, a new cupboard, a 'hurle' bed, a new 'presser,' seven chests, two 'carping' cloths, two cupboard cloths, four new sacks, the 'Booke of Marters,' and a Bible.

In the Buttery.—Six linen cloths, six coarser board cloths, four dozen napkins, eight towels, a silver salt, eight silver spoons, four tin spoons, a dozen of 'plait' trenchers, a basin and a ewer, glasses, pots, and other small things, six little barrels and six stands.

In the Hall.—Two tables, a long form and six short forms, and a pair of tables.

⁴ 'Is erat in Northumbria mea natus, et e nobili Ridleiorum prosapia progenatus . . . Vicus in quo natus erat Wilowmontiswik appellatur.'—*Hart. M.S.* 416, fo. 132; *Works of Bishop Ridley*, Parker Society, p. 488.

⁵ See above, p. 48.

In the Kitchen.—A ‘garnishe’ and a half of pewter vessels, one brass pot, one cauldron, two kettles, three pans, two little brass pots, two little ‘posnett’ pots, two cressets, one frying pan, and bowls and certain other wooden vessels.⁶

Nicholas Ridley was succeeded by his next brother William; but his widow Margaret, daughter of Thomas Forster of Ederston, continued to live at Willimoteswyke. We are apt to forget how formerly several different establishments belonging to members of the same family were clustered together in close proximity to each other. Possibly at Willimoteswyke the widow made the gate-tower her dower-house, while her brother-in-law took up his abode at the manor, or *vice versâ*. The inventory taken on William Ridley’s death in 1599 shows generally a marked increase in comfort over that made fourteen years previously. The small portion that relates to the furniture of each separate room is as follows:—

In the Red Chamber.—One bedstead, a table, a chair, and three buffet stools.

In the Inner Chamber.—One bedstead, a trundle bed, two chairs, and two buffet stools.

In the Hall.—Three long table-cloths, a chair, two long buffet stools, and two buffet forms.

In Mr. Ridley’s Chamber.—One bedstead with a pair of hangings, two chests, a Flanders coffer, two little chairs, and two buffet stools.

In the next Chamber.—Two chairs and one chest.

In the Kitchen.—A cupboard.

In the Larder-House.—A long chest.

In the Cross Chamber.—A bedstead.⁷

By 1620, William Ridley’s son and heir of the same name appears to have run through his patrimony, and to have been lodged in prison for debt. He had married a daughter of Sir Richard Musgrave of Norton, and had in vain expected some help from his brother-in-law Sir Thomas Musgrave. In despair he addressed the following appeal to his uncle’s widow, which has been curiously preserved owing to the

⁶ *Durham Wills and Inventories*, II. Surt. Soc. Publ. 38, p. 121.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 335.

fact that paper being scarce at Willimoteswyke in those days, the scanty inventory of that lady's effects was written on the back of it six years afterwards:—

'To the wor^{li} and my worthy Good Anntt m^{rs} Margrett Ridley
'att willamondswike these:—

'Good Anntt,

'excuse me, thatt I am enforced to be thus troublesome, I
'have long expected my libertye and have relyed upon my Brother
'in law Sr Thomas musgrave this twelfe month, thatt he would have
'furnished me wth fivety or three score pound to have taken of my
'executions of me And now by his delay Sr Allen Apsley doeth now
'sew me, If he do nott speedyly send unto me thatt I may have mony
'to take of my executions, I shall for want of meanes be forced in
'this place to condissend to those things thatt boeth he and my frends
'will be martaylus much offendid wth me for, besyds I shall for ever
'repentt, Thearefore Good Anntt lett me intreatt you to be pleased to
'send unto him and acquaintt him wth the busines thatt he may send
'unto me, otherwise upon my faith I shall be compelled I feare to doe
'those things thatt afterwards I shall be hartly sorry for, thus ever
'beseeching god to attend you wth all health happynes and contentt I
'tak my leave and rest

'Your ever assured louving

'This 8th of June

'Cosen to Comand

'1620

'W Ridley.'⁸

This letter is of itself a sufficient clue to the real causes of the downfall of the Ridley family. Their fortunes seem to have been dissipated and their estates sold to the Nevilles of Chevet, near Wakefield, before the Great Civil War began. The name of Musgrave Ridley of Willimoteswyke was indeed inserted in the bill for sequestrating the estates of active royalists on the 2nd of November, 1652,⁹ but that this was done under misapprehension may be gathered from the remonstrance of the real owner of Willimoteswyke:—

⁸ Original Inventory of Margaret Ridley, taken 14 Nov. 1626, in Probate Office, Durham.

⁹ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vii. p. 204.

'To the Hon^{ble} the Com^{rs} for Compoundinge wth Delinq^{ts}

'The humble Petic'on of ffrancis Nevill esq^r

'Sheweth

'That yo^r Petic'on^r is seised in ffee of y^e Mannor of Willmanswick
'with severall Messuages, ffarmes, lands, Tenem^{ts} & hereditamen^{ts}
'thereunto belonginge lying and being in the County of Northum-
'berland.

'That one Musgrave Ridley beinge Tennant at Will unto yo^r
'Petic'on^r of a ffarme called Whitshields, lying in y^e sayd County, The
'Com^{rs} for Seq^{cons} in the sayd County have seq^{cd} the same for the
'delinq^{cy} of the sayd Ridley, he having noe estate, interest, or tearme
'of yeares in the sayd ffarme, other then Tennant at Will as aforesayd.

'Now in regard yo^r Petic'on^r hath severall witnesses for prooffe of
'the p^rmisses aforesayd who live in Yorkshire,

'He therefore humbly prayes yo^r order tō the Com^{rs} for seques-
'tracons in the County of Yorke to take the examinacon of yo^r
'Petic'on^r and of such witnesses as he shall produce unto them for thē
'prooffe of his Title and interest in the sayd ffarme.

'4^o Nov: 1653

'And he shall pray &c.

'[The Com^{rs} to ex: and certify

'ffran: Nevill.'¹⁰

R.W. R.M.]'

The idea, then, that the Ridleys of Willimoteswyke lost their estates through their attachment to the Royal cause is as fallacious as that which dates the ruin of the Forsters of Bamburgh from their share in the rising of 1715, and the oft-quoted stanzas of Surtees—

'Then fell the Ridley's martial line
Lord William's antient towers,
Fair Ridley on the silver Tyne,
And sweet Thorngrafton's bowers.
All felt the Plunderer's cruel hand,
When legal rapine through the land
Stalked forth with giant stride;
When loyalty successless bled,
And truth and honour vainly sped
Against misfortune's tide,'

are part and parcel of that modern-antique ballad-mongery which has

¹⁰ *Royalist Composition Papers*, Series I. xlvi. p. 755. P.R.O.

done more to obscure the real history of Northumberland than that of any other county.¹¹

After the Restoration the Nevilles of Chevet appear to have sold Willimoteswyke to the Blacketts, and it is at present the property of Sir Edward William Blackett, bart. of Matfen.

¹¹ Hodgson, *Northd.* II. iii. pp. 341, 342, has forsaken history for poetry in his account of the loss of Willimoteswyke by the Riddleys, and is not consistent with himself, since he there brands the Nevilles as 'receivers of republican favours,' while he had previously (*ibid.* II. iii. p. 325) admitted that Sir Francis Neville of Willimoteswyke 'was also a loyalist and heavily fined during the time of the Commonwealth.' The exact nature of the whole transaction can only be ascertained from the title-deeds of the estate.

COCKLE PARK TOWER.

THE tower of Cockle Park stands on high ground in the chapelry of Hebburn, about three miles to the north of Morpeth. The length of the entire building on the west side is about 54 feet, and its width 30 feet at the north end, which projects some 6 feet to the east in a small wing that contains the original newel-stair. On the east face of this wing is a large armorial panel much weather-worn. The whole of the southern portion of the building, now occupied as a farm-house, which is three stories high, has been so much altered first in the Jacobean style, when a stair-turret was added on the west side, and afterwards in the pseudo-gothic, that the only original part left is the so-called North Tower, which has fine moulded corner bartizans and machicolations.

The entrance is in the east wall, close to the re-entering angle of the wing. The remains of the vault in the north end of the basement that was probably continued through the whole building are now partitioned off to form a dairy. To the right of the entrance is the wheel-stair, with steps about 3 feet 7 inches wide and 9 inches high. Ascending this, past two loops, we reach a square-headed doorway, now bricked up, but which communicated with the first floor before this was included in the farm-house. At the level of the thirty-second