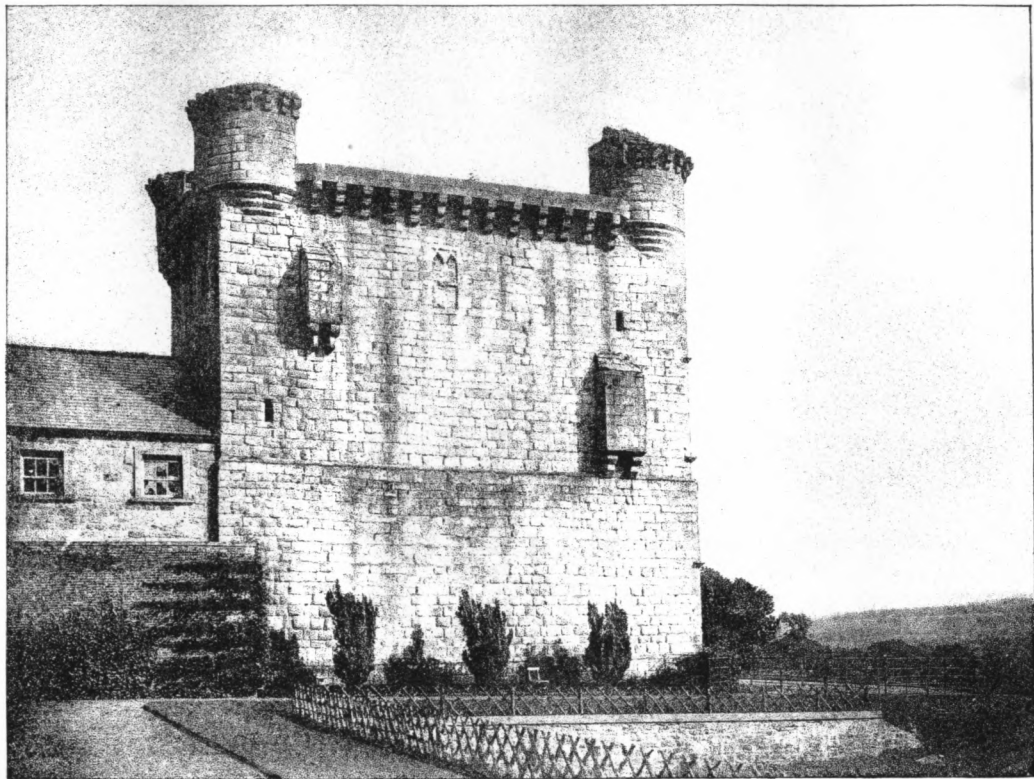


CHIPCHASE CASTLE.

THE old tower of Chipchase stands in a charming park overlooking some of the finest scenery on the North Tyne. Although unoccupied for many generations the building is in a good state of preservation, thanks to a modern hipped roof of grey stone slates. The plan is a simple parallelogram, measuring externally at the base 52 feet 6 inches from north to south, by 37 feet 8 inches from east to west. The height to the eaves of the roof is 51 feet 6 inches, and the heavy corner bartizans rise some 12 feet higher. The entrance is near the south end of the east face under an archway that joins the later manor-house to the tower without there being any internal communication between them. The plastered frame-work of the floor of a small room in the entresol of the house comes down below this archway and cuts off the upper portion of the entrance doorway, thus preventing a proper view being obtained of its fine proportions. The pointed arch of the doorway is very flat. In front of the door itself are the grooves of the famous oak portcullis,¹ about 6 feet wide, that has become imbedded in the masonry above. Two strong sliding bars, the upper one 7 inches square and the lower somewhat stouter, secured the door on the inside. The basement is occupied by a vault 34 feet 3 inches long and 15 feet 9 inches broad, with a rather flat barrel roof rising to the height of about 13 feet, the north end of which is pierced by a manhole. This vault is entered by a large square-headed door, 3 feet 10 inches wide and 6 feet 4 inches high, immediately opposite the main entrance. The passage between them is covered with immense stone flags, the use of which in this way is one of the especial features of the tower, the whole masonry of which is of magnificent proportions. On the left, high up in the wall, is a semi-circular recess, while on the right a wheel-stair with $8\frac{1}{2}$ inch risers ascends to the roof in a 6 feet 6 inch well, communicating directly with the first, second, and third

¹ The portcullis, similarly imbedded, above the postern gate at Alnwick Castle does not pretend to be authentic. Mr. Hartshorne vouches for the genuineness of the Chipchase example.—*Proc. Arch. Inst. Newcastle*, 1852, ii. p. 75.



J. P. GIBSON, PHOTO.

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CHIPCHASE CASTLE, FROM THE N.

1884.

This Plate contributed by HUGH TAYLOR, ESQ.



floors. A little below the first floor level a room on the left, measuring 5 feet 6 inches by 7 feet 8 inches, with a semi-circular recess 1 foot 9 inches in diameter in its west wall, leads to the narrow chamber from which the portcullis was worked. The greatest width of this irregularly shaped chamber is only 2 feet 7 inches. It is now 6 feet 6 inches high and 6 feet 10 inches long. Remains of the north side of the portcullis still protrude at the far end. The oak bars that form the grate have been about $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide, with $7\frac{1}{2}$ inch squares left open between them. Rather low down in the wall near the centre of the portcullis is a slit for light, and on either side of it a semi-circular hole 8 inches in diameter at the top and 3 inches in radius to the bottom, sloping and contracting inwards. These holes are 1 foot $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart, and may have been of use in raising the portcullis or sustaining it when raised.

The average length of the room on the first floor is 36 feet, the average width 16 feet 10 inches. The darkness of it was made visible by two small slits in widely splayed recesses in the east and south walls, which are here 8 feet thick. In the north-west corner, at 3 feet 2 inches above the floor level, is a very remarkable recess 2 feet 6 inches deep, 4 feet long, and 1 foot 10 inches high, the two pointed openings of which have a plain round moulding with a keel-like fillet down the centre. It has been suggested that this was an oven, without a flue, heated by charcoal.² The fire-place is near the centre of the west side. The head is of a single stone supported on corbels, and the wall above it bulges out so as to form a hood. Ranges of double corbels have supported beams laid longitudinally along the walls to carry the floor above. The height of this very gloomy room, that possibly served for a kitchen, was about 9 feet.

The hall on the second floor occupied the same floor space as the room below it, but was 3 feet higher. In the east wall, to the left of the entrance off the wheel-stair, is an oblong aumbry, and beyond it a very noble window-recess, the roof being formed by huge flags 4 feet long, supported on four courses of obliquely canted corbelling. The window itself is of two lights with pointed heads. A door in the

² This has been suggested to Mr. Thomas Taylor from the recess being exactly like those still in use in Italy for the purpose. The present detailed description of Chipchase Tower is largely due to the kind assistance of Mr. Taylor and the Rev. G. Rome Hall.

north side of this recess leads into a small oratory 12 feet 2 inches long and 4 feet 6 inches wide in the thickness of the east wall, which is continued at the far end about 4 feet square in the thickness of the north wall of the tower. In front of the small east window, which has single cusping and a groove for glass, a slab about 4 feet long is let into the wall.³ This may have been an altar, though no dedication crosses can now be made out. In the wall to the right of it is a small square hole with what looks like the fragment of a broken piscina, and above this a bracket for an image. To the left is a similar bracket, and another small pointed window in the north wall. An oblong opening 3 feet 7 inches long and 2 feet 1 inch high is set slightly on the skew opposite the altar slab, as if to enable those in the hall better to follow the service in the oratory. In the north-west corner of the hall is a small mural chamber 3 feet 8 inches wide, that continues for 7 feet 4 inches in the west wall. Near the centre of the latter is a square aumbry, and further on the fire-place, now built up. A large window-recess at the south end of the hall communicates with a mural passage, which after turning the south-west corner terminates in a latrine thrown out on corbels. The south-east corner contains a charming little mural chamber about 7 feet 6 inches square, entered by a door only 5 feet high and 18 inches wide. The roof converges on corbelling from all four sides to a space 4 feet square, which is covered with great flags. In the west wall is a plain square fire-place.

The third and uppermost floor is much the highest, and is slightly larger owing to the walls being set back about 3 feet at the ends, and half that at the sides. The rows of single corbels on its side walls have evidently carried posts and struts for the support of the beams of the roof, but instead of there being corbels for this purpose at the angles, a pair of them have been placed along each of the end walls, so that the beams there could rest on the posts alone without struts being necessary. The fire-place in the west wall has, like that on the second floor, been built up. This wall also contains

³ The weather-moulding above this window on the outside terminates in a finial, which no doubt originally consisted of the usual bunch of foliage, but which is now worn down to the shape of a chalice. The tower really fronts the south-east, and it is in regard to this window that the wall in which it is placed is called the east, and not the south wall.

CHIPCHASE CASTLE.



the recess of a square-headed, two-light window of Decorated character, the tracery of which is not pierced. A mural chamber in the south-west corner is approached through the recess for a slit on the other side of the fire-place. Another mural passage turning the north-west corner to a pendent garderobe on the west wall. The mural chamber in the north-east angle should not extend along the east wall so as to be above the altar slab of the oratory on the second floor, if it be really such, for there was a strong objection to any room being above an altar.

The wheel-stair terminates in an isolated square turret. The old stone roof over the tower walls is very perfect. The slabs are about 6 feet long and 20 inches broad, every alternate one being sunk and provided with a rim at the low end so as to collect the water into spouts which project a foot between the corbels of the machicolations. The outside line of the battlements, which were originally almost 6 feet high, is carried out on these corbels 2 feet over the walls. Each corner of the tower had a machicolated turret, but only the tops of the south-east and north-west ones could be reached by external steps. They all contain rectangular guard-rooms, measuring about 7 feet 6 inches by 5 feet. The north-west turret has a latrine.

The manor-house, built by Cuthbert Heron, to the south-east of the tower in 1621, is the finest example of Jacobean architecture in Northumberland. The front has two short wings and a square porch with semi-octagonal windows on the floors above it. Above the entrance is the Heron shield, charged with three herons, and the crest of a heron under an oak tree. In the pediments of the side-shafts are two panels, the one representing a bird, of which it can only be said that it is not a heron, with a palisade or faggot behind it, the other an ostrich-like heron in front of oak branches. On the highest pinnacle of the porch turret is seated a stone bear that seems to have once held a staff or some such thing in its clasped paws. The cornices both of the original wings and of the semi-circular windows thrown out from them at a later date are surmounted by similar beasts holding the shields of various northern families. The proportion of bears among them is so

⁴ Mr. Longstaffe remarks the resemblance of this window to those in the aisles of Darlington church.—*Memoir on Chipchase Castle*, by Rev. G. Rome Hall, F.S.A. (from the *Natural History Transactions of Northumberland and Durham*, vol. v. 1877, p. 5).

large that the motto, *Bewar the Bar*, is all that is wanting to make us believe that we are at the Tully-Veolan of Waverley.⁵ Many of the shields are so weather-worn that their charges are lost. Among those easily made out are the chevron and indented chief of THORNTON,⁶ held by a lion, the six annulets of MUSGRAVE⁷ and the hurts and bars of CARNABY,⁸ both supported by bears, and a shield with three birds, very unlike herons, maintained by a bull.⁹

The windows of the comparatively narrow wing between the front part of the manor-house and the old tower looked at one time into the small courtyard in the centre of the pile. They were first converted into sash windows and then ultimately built up. The present windows all face the Tyne, and in order to add to the symmetry of this, the south-west front, six false sash windows were inserted in the wall of the tower with neo-classical string-courses at each floor level. The lower courses of masonry round the central courtyard have the appearance of medieval work, as though they might possibly be the remains of an earlier manor-house.

Chipchase after the Conquest formed part of the great *enclave* of the Umfreville barony of Prudhoe, that stretched along the left bank of North Tyne, while on the right bank was the franchise of Tynedale, held by the kings of Scotland. Indeed, the Lises, who held Chipchase under the Umfrevilles in the thirteenth century, had to obtain permission from the Scottish kings before they could perfect their mill-dam on the river.

⁵ It is to the presence of this assemblage of bears that 'Sir Reginald,' whose ghost was supposed to haunt the tower in the early part of this century, doubtless owes his modern surname of Fitz-Urse. Though the story of Sir Reginald cannot be regarded as a genuine historical tradition, it would be very interesting if the memory of Sir Reginald Carnaby, the mortal enemy of the Herons, had survived under this form at Chipchase. Any fanciful tampering with our heritage of folk lore is much to be regretted.

⁶ John Heron of Chipchase married Mary daughter of Roger Thornton of Netherwitton, in the reign of Elizabeth.—Hodgson, *Northumberland*, II. i. p. 318.

⁷ John Heron of Chipchase married Margaret daughter of Sir Edward Musgrave, in the last years of Henry VIII.

⁸ Cuthbert Heron himself married Anne Carnaby of Halton.

⁹ As John Heron of Chipchase married Jane Ridley in 1491, one would have expected the bull, which is especially a Ridley beast, to have held the Ridley arms, *gu. a chevron between three goshawks arg.*, but there is no trace of a chevron. An account of similar single supporters of shields on the façade of Montacute House, removed from Clifton Maybank, may be seen in a paper in the *Transactions of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, N.S. xii. p. 101.

On Thursday, the 11th of September, 1348, Sir Robert de Lisle of Chipchase, sold his rights of being the guardian of Cecily, daughter of John de Lisle, on whom he had entailed the reversion of the manor, and of giving her in marriage, to Sir William Heron of Ford, on condition that her husband should be one of the latter's three sons, William, John, or Walter.¹⁰ Whether Cecily exercised any choice in the matter or not, it was Walter Heron, the youngest of the three, who obtained her hand. On the 11th of the following month Sir Robert de Lisle formally conveyed all his rights in Chipchase to Sir William Heron.¹¹

Chipchase Tower is first mentioned, so far as we know, in the list of 1415, when it was in the possession of Alexander Heron.¹² On the 6th of June, 1428, he assigned the manor, tower, and town of Chipchase to Sir John Bertram and Sir John Widdrington upon trust.¹³ In 1541 Chipchase is described as 'a fair tower and a manor of stonework joined thereunto of the inheritance of John Heron of the same esquire, kept in good reparations.'¹⁴ This clearly shows that there was a manor-house in addition to the tower before that erected in the reign of James I. Sir Robert Bowes and Sir Ralph Ellerker reported that Chipchase and Simondburn were the fittest places for the keeper of Tyndale to live in. Fifty horsemen were to be in constant attendance on him. The house of Chipchase was then in tolerable good repair for the purpose. They recommended also that a bridge should be built over the Tyne 'under the town of Chipchase,' so that the inhabitants of both banks might easily be assembled whenever the keeper had need of their services.¹⁵ The Herons sold Chipchase to the Allgoods at the end of the seventeenth century, and it passed from the latter to the Reeds in 1752. Mr. R. W. Grey of Backworth,¹⁶ for whom it had

¹⁰ *Lansdowne MS.* (Brit. Mus.) 326, fo. 49 d. 'Out of Mr. Heron of Chipches Evidences 25 Aug. 1639'; *Dodsworth MS.* (Bodl. Lib.) XLIX. 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 326, fo. 42, 4.

¹² See above, p. 18.

¹³ *Lansdowne MS.* 326, &c.

¹⁴ See above, p. 47.

¹⁵ Hodgson, *Northumberland*, III. ii. p. 235-236; Sir Robert Bowes mentions in 1551 that as the king had no house for the government of the North Tyne district, George Heron, then Keeper of Tynedale, used his own house of Chipchase for the purpose, which was a very convenient place.—*Ibid.* p. 226.

¹⁶ Two stones with the initials G_M and the date 1615, and the arms of Grey, *barry on a bend a roundle*, with the crest of a coronet and demi-swan, and the motto DE BON VOULOIR SERVIR LE ROI are lying in the tower vault. These probably came from Backworth Old Hall.

been purchased during his minority, sold it in 1861 to Mr. Hugh Taylor, the present owner.

The tower was probably built in the latter half of the fourteenth century, after the general cessation in Northumberland of the licences to crenellate, which give us the dates of foundation of so many earlier towers and castles. The general character of the masonry, the arch of the entrance door, the little east window of the oratory, and the west window of the third floor, are all of them important evidences in favour of this view. The great angle bartizans closely resemble those of Belsay Tower, which there is reason to believe was not built before 1371.¹⁷ The only point brought forward in support of an earlier date for the building of Chipchase is the fact of the arches of the small aumbry or oven on the first floor being pointed, but the day is past for relegating every round arch to the eleventh century and every pointed one to the thirteenth, and the moulding on the arcade in question is not of an early character. The opinion of church architects is of little moment in forming an opinion on the chronology of fortified houses, more especially in northern parts.

A good deal of the old thin plaster still remains on the inner walls. In the principal rooms this has been painted with a rough foliage pattern in dark blue or green. This work is probably not older than the reign of Henry VIII.

¹⁷ The stately tower of Widdrington, pulled down about 1775, also had bartizans of this description.