

VIII.—THE BASTLE HOUSE AT DODDINGTON, NORTHUMBERLAND.

By W. H. KNOWLES, F.S.A.

[Read on the 30th November, 1898.]

The village of Doddington is pleasantly situated on the east or right side of the river Till (which here flows in a northerly direction until it joins the Tweed below Norham), and is protected on the north and east by heather-clad hills. The view from the village in a south-westerly direction is extensive, and includes the high lands of Dod Law with its numerous camps, and in the farther distance the peaked heights of the Cheviot range. Seven miles to the north-west is the site of the battle of Flodden, which recalls the fact that it was in the district about Doddington and Wooler that the earl of Surrey, in the year 1513, assembled the English army before proceeding against the Scottish invaders encamped on Flodden field, which encounter resulted so disastrously for Scotland's king and nobility.

Surrounded by the thatched cottages in which the Doddington lairds (of local fame) once dwelt, the bastle house or tower is a striking and prominent object. It was erected in 1584 by sir Thomas Grey of Chillingham, the head of the important family, who have during many centuries possessed extensive estates in Northumberland, including Heton and the barony of Wark. They were allied to the chief nobility of England, and frequently engaged in the service of their country.

Sir Thomas Gray was the eldest son and heir to sir Ralph Gray. He married Katherine lady Nevill, daughter of Charles earl of Westmorland, of whom apparently there was no issue, as on sir Thomas's death, 9th April, 1590, he was succeeded by his brother, sir Ralph Grey of Horton.

The marriage was privately solemnized in a room in the manor house of Battersby, in Yorkshire, on the 7th day of November, 1585, 'betwixt the houres of six and nyne of the clock in the fore noone . . . by Sr Thomas Middleton, clerke, curat of Morpeth.'¹ It is

¹ *Deposit. and Eccles. Proc.* (21 Surt. Soc. Publ.) p. 323.

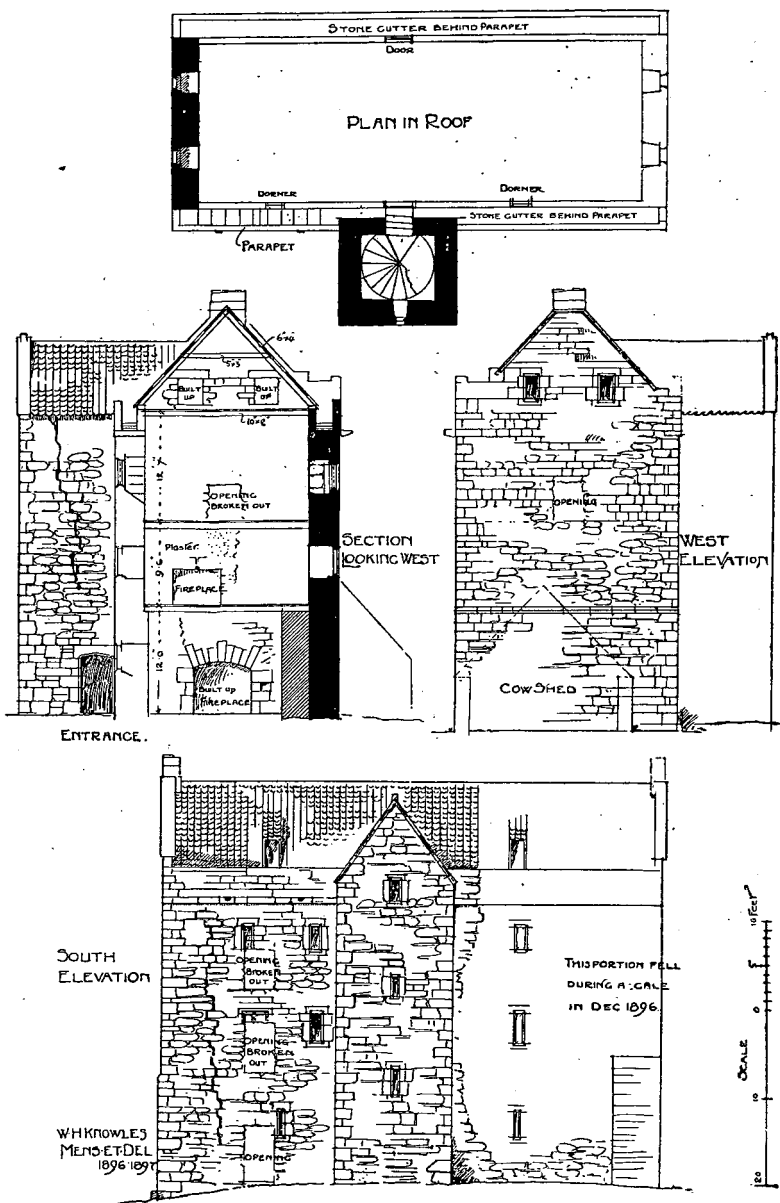


FIG. 1.

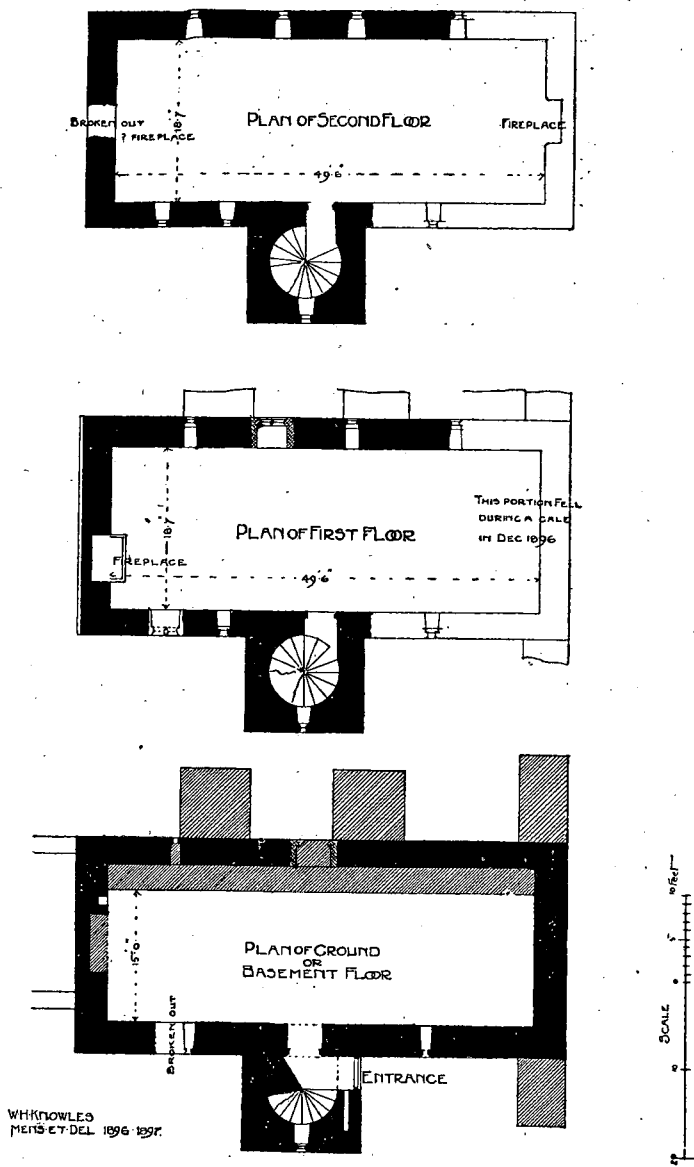


FIG. 2

curious to observe an attempt to conceal the accomplished fact in a letter written by sir Thomas Grey on the 12th of May following to secretary sir Francis Walsingham, in which he announces his intended marriage with lady Katherine Neville, one of the daughters of the late earl of Westmorland, and to request his favour and furtherance in the matter.² Whilst sir John Forster two days before had addressed secretary Walsingham informing him that 'I understand by Sir Thomas Gray that there is a contract of marriage between him and lady Katherine Nevill, one of the daughters of the late Earl of Westmoreland, and I perceive that he has had such a good liking of her, and she of him, that they have made such a contract between themselves that they cannot go back again, but are man and wife before God. If the matter come in question before Her majestie or the council, pray stand his friend; he is as true and obedient a subject as any of his degree.'³

Sir Thomas Grey was high sheriff of Northumberland in 1574, and his importance may be inferred from 'The muster and vew of the freholders and tenauntes dwelling within thesse East Marches of England for anyempst Scotland,' taken on the 10th March, 1579 [-80], where it is recorded that twenty-one villages were owned by him representing three hundred tenants, one hundred and twenty-nine horsed, including 'Dodengtoun, a village of said Sir Thomas, with 24 tenants, 10 horsed.'⁴

A side light is cast on the unsettled state of the country at the time in 'Rules for the Defence of the Borders' in June, 1583 (?), where it is stated that 'the fift and laste places accustomed of defence for soldiers to be in, nexte to Harbotle, is Woller, Newton, Pawston, and Downeham, all in the Easte Marches, which, with the helpe of Sir Thomas Grey and horsemen of Warcke, and other

² *Cal. of State Papers* (Dom.), addenda, 1580-1625, p. 177. ³ *Ibid.* p. 177.

⁴ *Cal. of Border Papers*, vol. i. p. 14. See also

1584, Sept. 1-3. 253. Muster of the East March. Taken by Lord Hunsdon, governor of Berwick, of all the horsemen and footmen between 16 and 60 in the East Marches, on 1st and 3rd September, 1584. Doddington town—horse 2, foot 16, with spear only, 22.—*Cal. of Border Papers*, vol. i. p. 153; and

Sept. 30. 259. Muster of horse in East Marches. Doddington.—*Robert Tomson*, baeyleffe of Doddington, *Thomas Fluke*, *John Walkere*, *William u Foorde*, Edward Robinson, *Henry Fluke*, Andrewe Jacson, *William Browne*, *William Steawarde*, *Petter Shelle*, *John Steaward*, *Stephen Richardson*, *Alexander Nevelson*, *Richard Morton*, *William Wilkenson*, 'one the keill,' *Robert Shelle*, *George Wilkinson*, *William Wilkinson* 'one the knowe,' *George Car*.—*Cal. of Border Papers*, vol. i. p. 157.

of that contrye, are able at all tymes in peace, with one or two bands of the garrison of Barwycke, to keepe in the Yonges, Tates, Pringells, and other the Tividalls, whensoever they begin to radge, and dryve them to forsake their own houses, and whole townes of bothe Yatehams, Heyhope, and Chéretrees, as not longe since yt hathe bene done with litle charges to her Majestie.⁵ Appeals made to secretary sir Francis Walsingham in 1574 show that the Greys were closely associated with sir John Forster, warden of the middle marches. At that time Francis Dacre complains that Forster favours lord William Howard, who, in the presence of Forster, beset Dacre's house at Morpeth with one hundred and twenty men procured by Ralph brother to sir Thomas Grey.⁶ Whilst in the same year lord Ogle, sir John Forster, sir Thomas Grey, and others complain that William Selby of Berwick set on Robert Clavering (sheriff), sir Cuthbert Ogle, etc., on their return from Newcastle, and killed Clavering, whose murderers are still at large.⁷ Further, sir John Forster writing to secretary Walsingham 'protests against information of extreme dealing towards sir Cuthbert Collingwood, and demands an enquiry.⁸ In a postscript he says, 'If you will write Sir Thomas Gray, whose sister [anne] your servant, Thomas Collingwood [of Eslington] has married, I shall either discharge myself or take discredit.' Besides waging feuds against each other several of the gentry were 'suspected to be infected with papistry and practisyng the advancement of their profession and favourably receyved of the Kyng [of Scotland], to the offence and grieffe of many good men.' In this connexion in 1587 a 'note of the gentry on the Borders' recites 'most of those in Northumberland are cruel oppressors of their tenants, and as a great number of the latter are Scots, if there were any need of service, there would be a great want of both horse and foot. The greater part of the gentry are papists or addicted to papistry, as Sir Cuthbert Collingwood, Sir Thomas Gray, and his brother, Ralph Gray, Carr of Ford, Thos. Swineowe of Gosewick, Mr. Haggerstone of Haggerstone, and Mr. Phenicke of Wallington, a suspected priest. Cuthbert Armourer knows and told Sir George Carey how many of these entertained Brierton and other Jesuits. No one in the town

⁵ *Cal. of State Papers* (Dom.), addenda, 1580-1625, p. 103.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 118.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 213.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 268.

or garrison of Berwick can be justly charged with being a papist, anabaptist or undutiful subject.'⁹ These reports prove that ever at issue with each other there was little to distinguish between the gentry of the time.

Erected in the year 1584, at a period when the arts during Elizabeth's reign were being actively cultivated elsewhere in England, Doddington bastle-house is typical of the stormy life led on the borders, where raids, theft, and murder were of frequent occurrence, where the roads were well-nigh impassable, many of the castles in a state of ruin, and the country generally in a deplorable condition. Notwithstanding, the bastles of the period, whilst retaining certain defensive features, combined some improvements in their domestic arrangements, beyond the accommodation afforded in the limited area of a square pele.

Only the portion of the structure tinted black on the plans is now in existence, the remainder, shown in outline on the drawings, unfortunately fell during a gale in December, 1896. The following description is based on notes taken before that event, and refers to the building when in its complete state.

Except for the projection on the south side, in which is placed the entrance and staircase, the plan is an oblong, three stories high, and measures on the exterior fifty-seven feet from east to west, by twenty-five feet from north to south, and to the top of the parapet thirty-six feet. On the exterior (see elevations, fig. 1, p. 294) the ends of the parallelogram and the projecting staircase have gables with chamfered water tabling. An embattled parapet crowns the side walls, and the window openings are small and square-headed, chamfered on the exterior, and partly dressed to receive glass and partly for shutters. There is no base course, and only one chamfered set off at the west end. The ashlar to the staircase, to the angle quoins, and to the door and window dressings, is all of good large squared masonry. The walling stones, obtained from the neighbouring hills, have received little attention at the hands of the mason, and the walls are built up with an inner and an outer face, the core being filled in with rough material without adequate bonding stones. It is to this inferior workmanship that the tower owes its decay.

⁹ *Cal. of State Papers (Dom.)*, addenda, 1580-1625, p. 231.

The entrance doorway is on the east side of the staircase projection. (See plan, fig. 2, p. 295.) It has a four-centred arched head in one stone, and chamfered and rebated jambs and sill. The door was secured by a draw bar, the opening for which is in the south jamb. A circular stone staircase eight feet six inches in diameter ascends to the roof level and communicates with the various floors; the treads are roughly dressed and rounded on the underside. To the right of the entrance is a square-headed door with rebated and hollow chamfered jambs. It gives access to the basement, which measures forty-nine feet six inches in length by fifteen feet in width, and before the interior portion of the wall shaded on the plan (fig. 2) was added, it was eighteen feet in width. This floor was lighted by at least three slits six inches wide; other windows may be hidden from view by the buttresses on the north side. At the west end is a large fireplace with a segmental arched head formed of large stones, and in the north jamb of the fireplace is a small recess shown on the section (fig. 1).

Ascending the staircase, which is lighted on the south side, we attain the first floor, an apartment forty-nine feet six inches in length by eighteen feet seven inches in width. The doorway has a four-centred head worked in a single stone, and chamfered and rebated jambs and threshold. The fireplace with square jambs and head and a stone hearth and curb, is in the west gable. The room or rooms was lighted by seven small windows, four on the north and three on the south side, all square-headed, and chamfered and rebated for wood shutters or window frames. In two cases, one on the north and one on the south side, the single light openings have given place at a later period to two light windows with chamfered stone dressings grooved for glass. Pieces of thin plaster yet remain on the walls and window jambs; it is stopped by the door dressings, which project slightly for the purpose. This floor was no doubt subdivided, but all traces of partitions have now disappeared. The floor joists, eight inches square, are placed about two feet apart, and are covered with flooring boards nine inches wide. The junction of the wood floor and the wall plaster was formed by a thin sloping wood skirting.

Ascending the staircase to the second floor, we enter (by a door with stone dressings similar to those already described) a room of the same size as that below, lighted by seven windows with stone dressings

chamfered and grooved for glass. The fireplace at the east end had double chamfered jambs, the outer chamfer being carried square across the head, and the inner one shaped as a four centred arch. A rough opening at the floor level in the west gable is probably the position of another fireplace. The height (twelve feet) of this floor, the fact that it possibly contained two fireplaces, and that the window openings are grooved for glass, suggests that it was occupied by the chief domestic apartments.

Continuing up the staircase, the attic space arranged in the roof is reached. It was entered by a door in the centre of the south side, and opposite to it another door gave on to the north parapet. Two dormers on the south side afforded access to the south parapet. There were windows in both the east and west gables.

The main building, but not the staircase projection, had a parapet three feet high at the lowest point, and a gutter two feet wide formed of overlapping stones the width of the wall, arranged in courses to fall each way from a ridged centre to a lower stone which was dished out to convey the water to projecting spouts or gargoyles (see the section, fig. 1). A stone in the north parapet bore the inscription:—¹⁰

T . G . MILES
 HVJVS STRVC
 TVRE SVPTVM
 FECIT A.D. 1584.

The joists and roof timbers are chiefly of beechwood, repaired in a few places with oak and Scotch fir. The maximum of stone has been used, all the interior lintels of both doors and windows being of that material.

The tower must have shown signs of weakness at an early period of its existence. It was strengthened at different times by huge buttresses against the north and south walls, and by adding to the thickness of the north basement wall (fig. 2). That this north wall was increased in thickness is evident from the fact that an original loop and later door opening which appear on the exterior do not show on the interior.

¹⁰ This stone has been given by lord Tankerville to Mrs. Butler of Ewart park, where it now is.

There is a paper on Doddington full of local interest by the rev. Wm. Procter, jun., in the *Transactions of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, vol. vi. p. 146, and a report on a visit in July, 1870, at p. 111 of the same volume.

Mr. J. C. Hodgson, F.S.A., has kindly given me the following notes:—

‘It [Doddington] is remarkable for its largeness, the badness of its houses and low situation, and, perhaps, for the greatest quantities of geese of any of its neighbourhood, and is distinguished from all the rest in the county, except Branxton, for having the chapel covered with heather and straw. It stands at the distance of a gunshot from the town, and has a very good bell. Here is one of the best and largest springs in the county, which sends out a current sufficient to serve a mill.—Mark, *Survey of Northumberland*, 1734. Hodgson Hinde, *Inedited Contribution to the History of Northumberland*, p. 77.

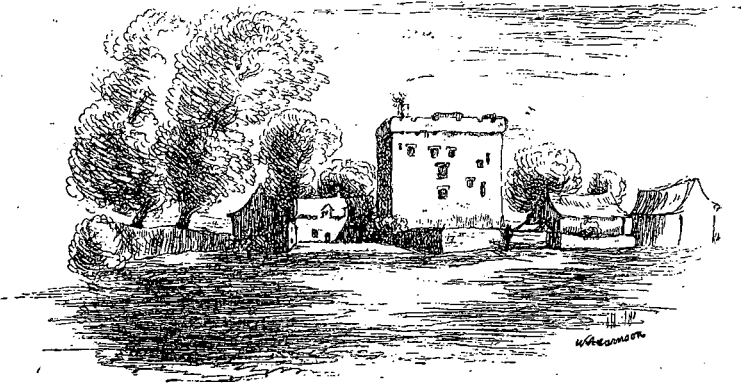
The names of streets in the village of Doddington are preserved in a couplet:—

‘Southgate and Sandgate, and up the Cat Raw,
The Tinkler’s Street, and Byegate Ha.’

When Will Allen, the piper, was on his deathbed he was admonished by his pious neighbours of the awful consequences of dying unprepared with all his sins upon his head. ‘Pshaw,’ quoth he, in a peevish manner, ‘hand me my pipes, and I’ll gie ye “Dorrington lads yet.”’—*The Denham Tracts*, edited by Dr. James Hardy, vol. i. pp. 13, 273.

Is the following couplet a fragment of verses set to an old Northumbrian pipe-tune entitled ‘Dorrington lan. Is yet?’ [Dorrington is an old pronunciation of Doddington.]

‘Dorrington lands is bonny, and Dorrington lads is canny;
And I’ll hae a Dorrington lad, and ride a Dorrington cuddy.



DODDINGTON BASTLE ABOUT 1840.

(Reproduced from a drawing by the late Major W. Adamson.)