

## II.—CASTLES OF NORTHUMBERLAND FROM THE AIR.

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The ten photographs, here published, illustrate a wide range of castle architecture. Elsdon, Harbottle, Mitford, Norham, Warkworth, Alnwick and probably Bamburgh, were all in their earliest form Norman earth and timber forts; but whereas at Elsdon, Harbottle and Warkworth, the earthworks have survived but little altered to the present day, the remainder were demolished or refashioned when stone castles were built on the same sites. Dunstanburgh was a foundation of the fourteenth century, constructed in stone from the first, while Chillingham and Ford are examples of manor-houses converted to castles.

Air photographs reveal the character of these great castles and their immediate surroundings in a fashion unattainable at similarly close quarters on the ground. The views, for example, of Warkworth, Bamburgh or Norham, disclose in detail features significant of their long and complicated structural development. The advantages afforded by natural defences are illustrated by Bamburgh, perched upon a high crag between sea and fen, by Warkworth, astride the neck of a river-meander, and by Mitford, built upon an isolated mound almost surrounded by river and marsh.

The notes which accompany these photographs have been compiled simply to explain the plates. They draw attention to some of the main features of the history or development of each site. The photographs were all taken in the last two years. They are oblique views from a height of about 1,000 feet.

## 1. ELSDON.

The earthwork known as the "Mote Hills", Elsdon, is an excellent example of an early Norman motte and bailey castle, unaltered by subsequent building. Constructed by Robert of Umfraville about 1080, on the east side of the Elsdon Burn, on an easy route between the valleys of Coquet and Rede, it was replaced about three-quarters of a century later by the castle at Harbottle, seven miles to the north, a more strategic centre from which to control the Middle March. The photograph (plate II, fig. 1) which faces south, shows the great circular mound, almost surrounded by a ditch. The bailey, on the north, nearly half an acre in area, is defended by a broad ditch and massive rampart on east and north; on the west, the steep slope of the ground may have been considered a sufficient defence. Originally there would have been access to the mound by a wooden bridge spanning the ditch between it and the bailey, while excavation might reveal the foundations of a stockade which is known from contemporary illustrations to have crowned the earthen defences of forts such as this.

## 2. HARBOTTLE.

The situation of the castle is high up Coquetdale, near the point where the river emerges from its narrow valley through the hills and is joined by its tributary the Alwin. Hereabouts, too, is the south end of Clennel Street, one of the easy crossings of the Cheviots, and an important route in prehistoric and medieval times, while a little further downstream, established routes lead from Hepple and Holystone south-west respectively to Lower and Upper Redesdale. The point where these lines of communication meet was of critical importance for the control of the Middle March, and here, at Harbottle, a castle was built on royal orders, about 1157, by Odinel of Umfraville, lord of the liberty of Redesdale. The exact site, an isolated high mound, surrounded



FIG. 2. HARBOTTLE.



FIG. 1. ELSDON.



at a little distance on three sides by the river, is well adapted for defence.

As may be seen from the photograph (plate II, fig. 2), which was taken from the east, the sides of the mound have been steepened, and the summit levelled, while in the middle of the south side a circular motte has been thrown up, partly carved out of the mound, with which it is connected by a solid causeway on its west side. Few remains of this first castle or of two subsequent reconstructions in stone, about the beginning and end of the thirteenth century, now remain above ground. After withstanding more than one Scottish siege, it was ordered to be destroyed in 1321, under terms made with Robert Bruce. It was probably rebuilt towards the end of the fourteenth century, and about 1432 the defences were refashioned; most of the surviving walls are of these periods. The mound was divided by a cross-wall of which substantial remains exist, and the wall was continued westwards round the top of the slope, to surround a (reduced) bailey. This enclosure was entered by a gatehouse at the south end of the cross-wall, while towers protected its north and west angles. The massive stone wall, of which fragments can be seen crowning the motte, is probably also of early fifteenth-century date. The castle seems to have remained habitable for another century, for here in 1515 was born Margaret Tudor, grandmother of James VI of Scotland and I of England. The military needs that had led to the building of the castle had now passed, and its subsequent history seems to have been one of gradual decay in spite of efforts at repairs by wardens of the Middle March.

### 3. MITFORD.

The castle lies two miles upstream from Morpeth, at an easy crossing of Wansbeck, between the existing channel of the river on the north, and an older abandoned channel, now occupied by a small stream, on the south and east. The mound so enclosed, seen in the photograph (plate III, fig. 1)

from the north-west, carries on its crest the main castle-wall. Below this wall, the slopes have been artificially steepened, while broad ditches form an additional defence to the south-east and west. The western ditch is clearly marked by a growth of dark vegetation.

Mitford castle was first held by the Bertrams. The motte, originally thrown up early in the twelfth century, can be seen above the steep slope in the foreground: it was the highest part of the enclosed area. No traces of the original defences (in wood) now survive, but they may have occupied much the same line as the existing stone curtain-wall which had been completed by 1138. Of this, the best preserved portion is that forming the west side of the inner ward. The wall round the bailey, probably built later in the same century, is more ruined, and at the south end of the mound it has been entirely destroyed by quarrying. Within the inner ward, the lower part of the walls of the pentagonal stone keep can be seen. This replaced in the early thirteenth century whatever structures had formerly stood upon the motte, but no trace of other internal buildings are now visible. More than once, Mitford was the headquarters from which rebel bands plundered the surrounding country, but by 1321, after a siege, the castle had become a ruin and was never restored, being subsequently used as a quarry for dressed stone. The ruins passed in 1666 to the Mitford family in whose possession they remain.

#### 4. NORHAM.

The castle at Norham occupies a strong position on the south bank of Tweed at a ford of the river seven miles from the castle at Berwick and eight from Wark. Originally constructed as an earth and timber castle in 1121 by Flam-bard, bishop of Durham, to protect the northern territory of his see, it was captured and destroyed by the Scots in 1138, only to be rebuilt in stone in 1153-95 by bishop Puiset. Thenceforward it was a key site in the long history of



FIG. 2. NORHAM.



FIG. 1. MITFORD.





Border warfare between England and Scotland; often besieged and occasionally captured it was continually being strengthened and repaired and was very seldom out of commission, until it was allowed to decay after the middle of the sixteenth century.

The photograph (plate III, fig. 2), which is taken from the west, shows the whole of the inner and outer wards; the main entrance to the outer ward was by "Marmion's Gate" at the north-west corner, just above the bend in the modern road. The core of this gate, the much damaged barbican gate directly behind giving access to the inner ward, the lower storeys of the keep, and the curtain-wall on the east side, are all twelfth-century work. The inner ward is surrounded by a deep ditch, originally crossed by a drawbridge, on the site of the present wooden bridge. To the left of this was the castle chapel: the walls of its undercroft, which was later converted into a stable, can be seen spanning the ditch.

In the inner ward, to the left of the gateway, lay the kitchen and butteries, then the hall and great chamber, beyond which were smaller rooms; all in their present form sixteenth-century building.

The square keep, which still stands to nearly 90 feet and forms so striking a feature of the ruins of Norham from whatever direction they are viewed on the ground, is rather dwarfed in the air photograph. The foundations of a narrow garderobe tower project from the south wall of the keep, and at a little distance along the berm of the inner ditch is the base of "Clapham's Tower", built in the early sixteenth century as a quadrangular bastion for artillery. A number of similar bastions with gun-ports were refashioned at the same time out of thirteenth-century turrets in the south wall of the outer ward. These are hidden by a belt of trees.

## 5. BAMBURGH.

The castle at Bamburgh stands upon an isolated ridge of basalt rising high above coastal sand-dunes, surrounded by

sea and marsh. This was the site of the capital of Ida, king of Northumbria in 547-59; a "burgh" which withstood attack by the Danes in 912 when both Lindisfarne, five miles to the north-west, and Tynemouth were destroyed. Here, a Norman fort, probably of earth and timber, was built in the years following the Conquest. This fort capitulated after a siege to William II in 1095. The castle was surrendered by the Scots to Henry II in 1157 and a few years later the great Norman keep and doubtless much of the curtain-wall had been built, converting the earth fort into a walled stronghold, which became of great importance in the long history of wars with Scotland. In the Wars of the Roses it remained a strongly held Lancastrian base, surrendering like its neighbour Dunstanburgh to Edward IV, but only after a siege and bombardment. There are records of repairs in the sixteenth century. In 1704 it was purchased by Lord Crewe, bishop of Durham, and left by him to trustees to use for charitable purposes.

The view (plate IV, fig. 1) is taken from the north-west, looking along the length of the ridge. The original entrance was at this end, giving access to the outermost ward, and thence to the higher east ward, beyond which stands the square keep. Behind the keep, the domestic buildings of the castle are clustered along the west curtain, forming one side of the inner ward. On the opposite side, at the highest point of the rock, stood the chapel; its foundations are just visible. To the east of this again, and at a considerably lower level, is the barbican gateway, at the head of a winding approach.

## 6. DUNSTANBURGH.

One and a quarter miles north of Craster the whin sill runs out to the sea, and here, in an exposed position, a castle was built by Thomas of Lancaster in 1313. The site, viewed in plate IV, fig. 2, from the south-west, is indeed a strong one. On the west the curtain-wall is carried on the crest of the whin sill; and ends on top of a cliff with a drop of over

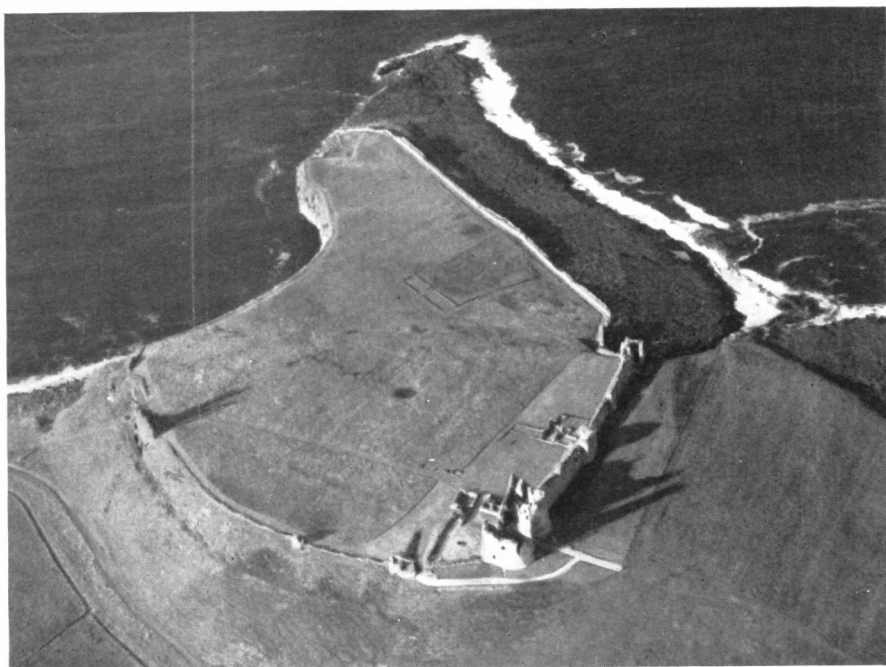


FIG. 2. DUNSTANBURGH.



FIG. 1. BAMBURGH.



100 feet to the sea. On the east, the castle-wall stands just above the rocky foreshore, while on the south a ditch has been cut through the whin. Considerable repairs and rebuilding were carried out by John of Gaunt in 1380. The gate-house and the buildings round it were converted into a "keep", and a new gate was constructed in the west front. Under Henry IV, Dunstanburgh became a royal castle, and considerable work was undertaken there in the fifteenth century. It remained a Lancastrian stronghold almost to the end of the Wars of the Roses, surrendering to Edward IV in 1464, and then changing hands twice before it was finally occupied by royal forces. After 1470 it gradually fell into decay, being doubtless considered too far from any main route to Scotland to be important in Border warfare.

The photograph (plate iv, fig. 2) shows the extensive walled enclosure (1½ acres), with the buildings that form the castle proper clustered at its southern corner. Principal among them is the original early fourteenth-century gateway, probably the finest of the Edwardian gate-houses. It still stands to a considerable height, as may be seen from the long shadows cast by a low western sun. Behind the gate-house, the outline of John of Gaunt's inner ward may be seen, with his new gateway at its west angle. The west curtain is in ruins, apart from the square Lilburn tower, near the north end, which stands to its full height. The south wall is well preserved with two further square towers, one at the east end, guarding a postern, the other at the centre. Immediately behind the latter the foundations of the constable's house can be seen.

## 7. WARKWORTH.

The castle stands at the south side of the small town of Warkworth at the narrowest point of the neck of a loop of the Coquet, which almost surrounds the town. It is well placed on high ground, from which it can control traffic to

the lowest bridge across the river. Tactically the position is a good one; to the north, the ground falls away in the direction of the main street of the town, to the east it slopes to the river, to the south it is level, while on the west, the direction from which the photograph is taken, the castle wall stands on top of the steep river scarp (plate V, fig. 1).

Early in the twelfth century there was constructed here a motte and bailey castle of which the earthworks in large part remain. In interest, however, they are eclipsed by the stone castle, in its final form an elaborate and complicated building of many periods. Parts of the east and west curtain-walls are of twelfth-century date. The great gateway, the Carrickfergus tower at the south-west angle, and the domestic buildings that range along the west wall were constructed in the years 1191-1214. Twice besieged by the Scots in 1327, the castle became for a short while a royal fortress, until it was granted in 1332 to the second Lord Percy of Alnwick. Its subsequent history is bound up with that of the house of Percy. There were important periods of building in the early fourteenth century, when the gate-house was heightened, and an interval-tower was erected half-way along the east front, and in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, when an elaborate tower-house was built replacing an earlier keep. A Collegiate Church was laid out across the west end of the bailey about this date. The tower-house, which is so prominent a feature in any view of Warkworth, from the air or on the ground, has a somewhat deceptive appearance of strength. At many points in its design there is a compromise between the needs of defence, and domestic considerations. The square tower at the south-east angle of the bailey in its present form dates from the late fifteenth century.

#### 8. ALNWICK.

An earth and timber castle was constructed at Alnwick

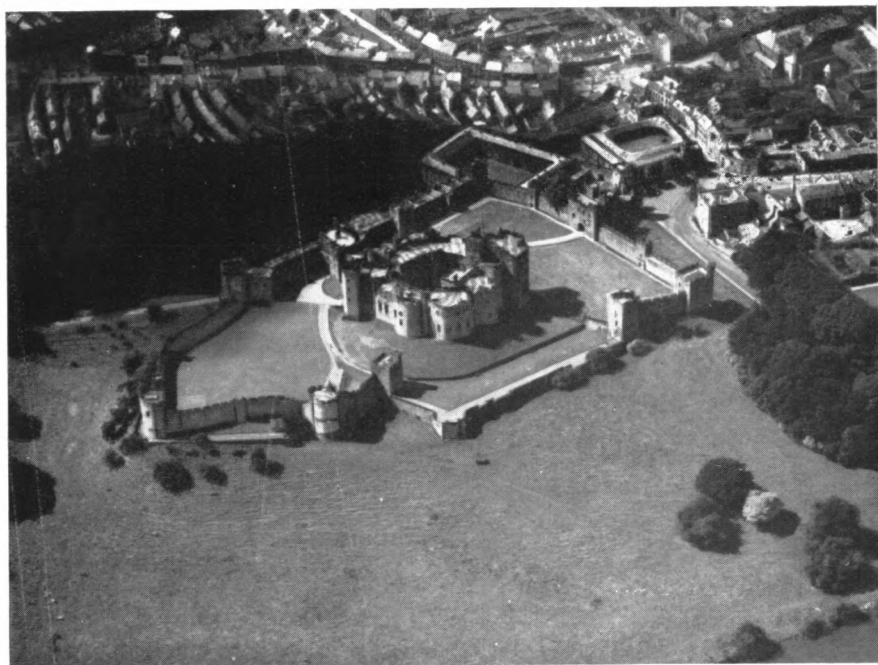


FIG. 2. ALNWICK.

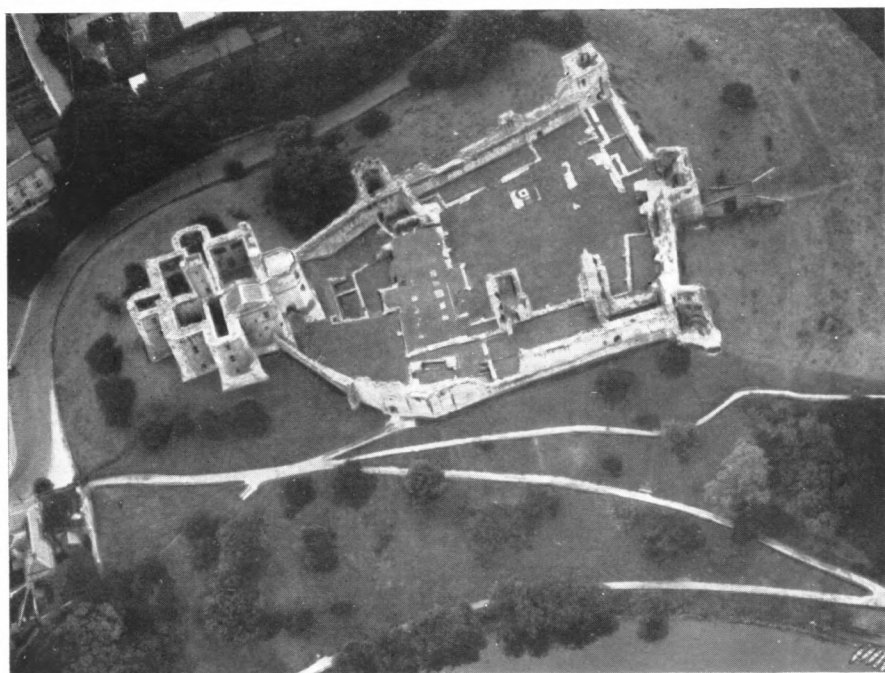


FIG. 1. WARKWORTH.





in the early twelfth century. Its plan, a mound dividing an outer enclosure into an east and west ward, determined the design of the castle throughout its history. Later in the twelfth century the enclosure was walled, and the mound largely levelled to carry a centrally placed group of domestic buildings. The castle was rebuilt in the fourteenth century by the second Lord Percy, but fell into disrepair when the family seat was transferred to Warkworth. The existing buildings are a reconstruction of the late eighteenth century by the first Duke of Northumberland. The photograph, taken from the east, shows the curtain-wall, with its many towers, enclosing an irregular area, in the centre of which, on the remains of the twelfth-century mound, the domestic buildings form a group of clustered towers, surrounding an inner courtyard (plate v, fig. 2).

Alnwick is thus a fine example of a complete medieval castle, but the plan and certain parts of the walls are Norman.

#### 9. CHILLINGHAM.

A manor-house had been built at Chillingham before the middle of the thirteenth century, and to judge from the fact that English kings stayed there on more than one occasion, it seems to have been a place of some pretensions. A century later, in 1344-8, this house was transformed into a castle, of which existing buildings preserve the general character though with many alterations and additions (plate vi, fig. 1). The castle stands in a wooded park, near the bottom of the slope below Roscastle, in the Till valley: in the plate, it is seen from the west. Like other fourteenth-century castles at Bolton, Raby, and Lumley, the plan is a rectangle, the buildings being grouped around the four sides of an open courtyard, their outer sides forming a curtain-wall, with a square tower at each corner of the structure. The photograph conveys well the angular appearance of the buildings and the rather constricted inner court. The castle was besieged

and damaged by rebels during the Pilgrimage of Grace. Great alterations were made at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when a walled fore-court was constructed on the north side. Again, about 1753 and in the nineteenth century, there were further alterations to both buildings and grounds. On the last occasion a new service-wing was added on the east side, the eighteenth-century fore-court was swept away, and the ornamental garden, part of which is seen at the bottom of the photograph, was laid out.

#### 10. FORD.

Seven miles south of Norham, in the parish of Ford, a crenellated manor-house was built about 1338 by one William Heron. Soon afterwards it was embattled and strengthened, becoming one of the recognized units in Border defence, guarding an easy route southwards along the valley of the Till. As then planned, the castle was in the form of a walled rectangular courtyard, with a square tower at each angle.

At times in ruins, at times repaired, it suffered in the rough give-and-take of Border warfare. It was never of great size, and by 1509 could accommodate 50 men. The castle came into prominence as the centre of the campaign culminating in Flodden. The Scottish king made it his headquarters, and burnt down the building before going to fight at Flodden,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the west. The castle was never restored to its former strength, and after it had withstood a siege and bombardment in 1549, little but the north-west tower remained intact.

The buildings, which are viewed in plate VI, fig. 2 from the south-west, are seen now to be set in a park amongst trees and lawns. Of the fourteenth-century castle the principal portions that remain are the massive north-west tower and parts of the curtain-wall along the north and west fronts. The great hall and its offices probably lay to the north of the courtyard. Successive reconstructions by the Heron and



FIG. 2. FORD.



FIG. 1. CHILLINGHAM.



Carr families, to whom the castle belonged, gradually converted the place from a fortress to a mansion.

The present appearance of the castle is due to two further periods of reconstruction; the first in 1761, and the second a century later. The embattled wall and towers, enclosing a large area, is modern.