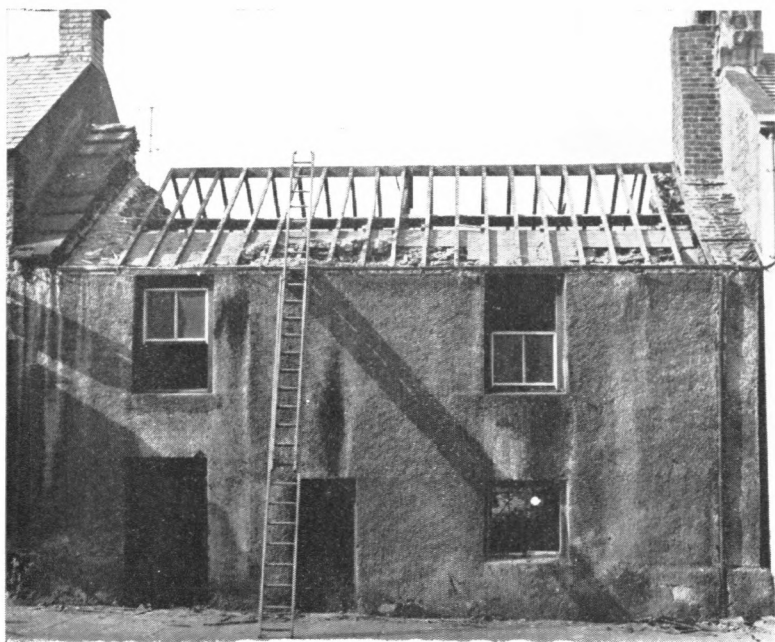


1. Castle Hill from the South



2. Castle Hill: the turret from the South West



1. Main Street from the South



2. Main Street: the roof truss from the East

VI.—TWO FORTIFIED HOUSES IN HALTWHISTLE

*Peter Campbell and Philip Dixon**

According to Archdeacon Singleton "Haltwhistle is full of uncouth but curious old houses which betoken the state of constant insecurity and of dubious defence, in which the inhabitants of the Border were so long accustomed to live."¹ Two of these "curious old houses", which used to stand on Castle Hill and in Main Street, Haltwhistle, have recently been demolished. They were both examples of those fortified houses, smaller than towers, which are still numerous in the Border counties, and have been known since the sixteenth century as pelehouses, bastles, or stonehouses.² The recent tendency to call all such houses "bastles" or "bastle houses"³ although it avoids the misused term "pele", properly used of a stockaded enclosure,⁴ confuses two distinct types of houses. The name "bastle" is appropriate for the large, well built houses, confined to the lowlands, such as Doddington Bastle or Hebburn Bastle in Northumberland or Queen Mary's House in Jedburgh. A smaller and rougher type of house was built in the uplands, and is hereafter referred to as a pelehouse.⁵ Bastles and pelehouses were

* Our thanks are due to Miss R. B. Harbottle for her comments and for supplying additional photographs of Castle Hill, and to Mrs. P. W. Dixon for criticisms and suggestions.

¹ Visitation of 1828, quoted in *AA*² XVII (1895), p. 261n.

² At least 135 of these houses still survive, and there are records of over 100 more, now destroyed.

³ For example, T. L. Jones, C. W. Field, "The Melkridge Bastle", *AA*⁴ XXXIV (1956), pp. 138-141; *NCH* XV, p. 271; compare H. G. Ramm, R. W. McDowell, E. Mercer, *Sheilings and Bastles* (HMSO, forthcoming); this covers only the small fortified houses, calling them "bastles", and entirely excludes the large fortified houses.

⁴ See G. Neilson, *Peel: Its Meaning and Derivation* (Glasgow, 1893) passim.

⁵ Compare RCHM, *Roxburgh* (HMSO, 1956), pp. 44-5 and 483-5 for discussion of this distinction.

being built during the first half of the sixteenth century,⁶ most of the surviving houses seem, from documentary evidence,⁷ datestones⁸ and details of construction,⁹ to date from the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The purpose of these fortified houses was "the saiffing of men thare gudis and gere,"¹⁰ and the valley of the South Tyne was no less vulnerable to raiders than were the more unruly uplands.¹¹ When William Camden visited the North in 1599 he avoided that stretch of the Roman Wall from Greatchesters eastwards, to the North of Haltwhistle, "for fear of the moss troopers."¹² Haltwhistle itself suffered from a memorab'le raid in May 1601, during which "one ... of the Ridleys that was in a strong stone house ... made a shot out amongst them, and it was his good hap to kill an Arm-strong, one of the sons of the chiefest outlaw."¹³ By the end of the sixteenth century the town was well protected. Only one tower stood here in 1415¹⁴ and in 1541, when it was in the hands of Sir William Musgrave.¹⁵ This tower has been identified with the pelehouse on Castle Hill, Haltwhistle,¹⁶ but two towers and "other houses ... partially fortified" survived about 1840;¹⁷ one of these towers, which

⁶ Two at least before 1522; in 1541 only 22 such houses, three in course of construction, are recorded in a survey including much of the upland area: see C. J. Bates, *Border Holds* (Newcastle, 1891), pp. 29-49.

⁷ Seven houses dated: after 1567, c. 1580, before 1584 and 1607.

⁸ Existing datestones: 1584, 1594, 1604, and 1608.

⁹ At least four pelehouses have doorways with lintels cut to a triangle on the soffit [one dated 1594] and four more have rough doorheads of a derived form; these have local parallels among unfortified houses, including houses bearing datestones of 1567, 1638, 1675, and two of 1680.

¹⁰ *Acts Parl. Scot.* ii 1424-1567, p. 346.

¹¹ See generally D. Charlesworth, "The Raid on Haydon Bridge, 1587", *AA*⁴ XXV (1957), pp. 72-7.

¹² *Britannia* (ed. 1600), p. 718b: "per praedones vero limitaneos perlustrare tuto non licuit."

¹³ *Memoirs of Robert Carey, 1st Earl of Monmouth* (ed. 1808), pp. 98-100. Not 1598 (J. Hodgson, *History of Northumberland*, ii III p. 120n), for compare *Cal. Bord. Pap.* II no. 1378. (1 June, 1601).

¹⁴ Bates, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁶ For example, C. E. Adamson, "History of the Manor and Church of Haltwhistle", *AA*² XVI (1893-4) pp. 162ff [also printed as a pamphlet (Haltwhistle 1893)]; RCHM, *Monuments Threatened and Destroyed* (HMSO, 1963), p. 52.

¹⁷ Hodgson, *HN*, ii III p. 120.

forms part of the Red Lion Hotel in Main Street, bears the date 1415 and is presumably the "Turris de Hawtwisill" listed in that year. The other tower and the fortified houses were probably all built after the survey of 1541.¹⁸ According to Hodgson one of these houses bore a datestone of 1607,¹⁹ and a similar date is likely for the two pelehouses recently demolished: the house on Castle Hill was probably built between 1607 and 1611;²⁰ that in Main Street, however, can be dated only generally to the period between 1541 and the early seventeenth century.

CASTLE HILL, HALTWHISTLE (NY 71236423)

The pelehouse, with associated buildings, which stood on the North side of Castle Hill, overlooking the steep bank of the Haltwhistle burn, was demolished in September 1963. The original house, an irregularly set out building of three storeys, measured 26' 2" from East to West along the South front and 21' 4" from North to South over walls which varied in thickness from 3' 6" to 5' and stood about 21' high to the wallhead. The masonry was of uncoursed local rubble, except for the dressings of the openings, turret, and skew tables.

The ground floor was entered by a doorway in the South front, with a door originally secured by a pair of drawbars. There were no original lights at this level and, while this is not unusual in pelehouses, it is possible that the later openings to the South and East have obliterated traces of early loops. The ground floor may have been at least partially used for storage. A newel staircase of nine risers, immediately to the right on entering, led to the room on the first floor. This, the principal room in the house, was heated by a large fireplace, whose lintel was supported on

¹⁸ A burgage called the Stonehouse mentioned on 5 August, 1467 (AA⁴ XXXII (1954), p. 162) may not have been fortified and nothing further is known of it.

¹⁹ Hodgson, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ See below, page 175.

corbels of slight projection, one of them bearing the inscription ALBA[NY].²¹ The room was lit by two splayed windows, secured with iron bars in the South front; that to the East bore a mason's mark.²² A loop in the East gable lit the head of the stair, and three aumbries were set in the walls to the North and South. The floor covering was of stone slabs, about 2" thick, carried on roughly dressed oak beams, two of them forked, of an average scantling of 10" by 8".

The second floor, of modern boarding 1" thick, was supported on modern joists of 7" by 3" scantling, and was reached by a ladder through a hatch in the North East corner. The room on this floor was lit by two small windows in the South front, similar to those on the floor below. Traces of what may have been a jamb of a third opening lighting the hatch in the floor were visible at the North end of the East gable. An aumbry was set at the South end of this wall. From the South West corner of the room a doorway led into a small closet or turret measuring inside 4' by 5', and lit by loops splayed internally and externally, which commanded the western and southern approaches to the house.²³ This turret was carried on two courses of over-sailing corbelling, supported on the South face by a single large corbel. A shallow trough in the South East corner of the turret drained to a spout projecting boldly from the South face. The turret roof formed an extension of the main roof, which rested upon a single original truss, with

²¹ See below, page 175.

²² Both inscribed stones are now in the possession of P.H.C. The mason's mark, which resembles a pair of opposed and interlocking "V"s, is found on the font of Haltwhistle Parish Church, recut in 1676, but also on an arch in the North aisle [Early English]; similar marks may be seen on the stairs of the Keep at Newcastle [1170's] (Bates, *op. cit.*, facing p. 11) at Warkworth [c. 1400] (*NCH V*, appendix III, *passim*), and in other buildings of varying dates.

²³ Turrets are found in large fortified houses, for example Drumburgh in Cumberland and Low Hirst in Northumberland, but are rare in pelehouses. Both Haltwhistle and Melkridge, however, contained turreted houses, all now destroyed (Hodgson, *op. cit.*, pp. 120, 325). For the last survivor at Melkridge see Jones and Field, *op. cit.*, note 3 above. Compare *NCH VI*, p. 174.

principals about 18" deep tapering to about 11" at the apex, where they were notched together. The principals had seatings for two pairs of purlins and for a ridge piece, and their feet rested on a chamfered tie beam, measuring 10" deep by 12" wide, whose ends were supported on the wallheads.

In the second period of building an irregular wing of two storeys and an attic formed above the wallheads was built against the East gable of the pelehouse. This, the East wing, measured 28' by 21', over rough rubble walls which varied from 2' 9" to 3' 5" in thickness. Originally, it appears, the wing did not communicate with the pelehouse, and was entered by doors in the South face of the ground and first floors, the upper door presumably reached by a ladder. Each floor was lit by a window in the East gable, and the first floor had, in addition, a small window immediately to the East of the upper door. A stone stack was built into the East gable of the pelehouse; this firebreast extended no lower than the peak of the ridge of the wing, and it is probable that the lower portion of the breast was built of timber and clay.²⁴ The ground floor of the wing was probably intended for animals, with two storeys of accommodation above. The roof and floors had disappeared before demolition, but, on the evidence of a postcard of c. 1907, the roof covering was then of red tiles. The first floor window in the East gable of the pelehouse was now internal and was filled in; the wing also obscured the probable opening on the second floor, and a small rough opening at the East end of the North wall of the pelehouse was cut to light the hatch.

About 1680 the house was again rebuilt. The fireplace on the first floor of the pelehouse was partially blocked and a large fireplace was inserted into the West gable of the ground floor. The ground floor of the East wing was subdivided by a rough wall and an opening was made into the ground floor of the pelehouse. The purpose of this

²⁴ Compare Spittal on Rule: RCHM, *Roxburgh*, fig. 46 and p. 101.

alteration seems to have been to turn the ground floor of the pelehouse into a kitchen, with an adjoining pantry in the East wing, and the first floor into a parlour. A well dressed doorway with chamfered and rebated jambs and lintel was inserted between the first floors of the pelehouse and the wing. On a block of sandstone in the South jamb of this doorway was an inscription which dated this third phase of construction, FEATHE/RSTON/HAUH/DODSO/N 1680, surmounted by a representation of a mason's square and compasses. During the insertion of this doorway the North East corner of the pelehouse was rebuilt in small rough masonry, incorporating a loop angled to avoid the roof of the wing, and lighting the hatch in the second floor. At this period rough windows, one to light the new pantry, and a wide ground floor doorway, all with wooden lintels, were inserted into the South face of the wing, and a large window, also with a wooden lintel, was inserted to light the kitchen.

About 1870 the old roof of the pelehouse "of flags laid on heavy oaken beams and fastened thereto with sheep shank bones" was removed,²⁵ and was replaced by blue slates. The original truss and purlins were left, but new common rafters, 4½" by 4" at 12" centres, and a 5" by 4" ridge piece were added. A drawing of the house, first published in 1883, but undated,²⁶ apparently shows the original stone slated roof; if this is so, the barn to the West of the pelehouse, also shown in the drawing, was added before the renewal of the roof. At about this time an iron kitchen range was inserted into the ground floor fireplace of the pelehouse.

The house on Castle Hill was among the best built of the surviving pelehouses and seems to have descended with the manor of Haltwhistle. Sir Richard Lowther bought this

²⁵ Adamson, *op. cit.*, p. 164: "some twenty years ago [1893]".

²⁶ W. J. Palmer, *The Tyne and Its Tributaries* (London, 1883), p. 134; drawing republished Adamson, *op. cit.*, p. 164. The earliest published photograph of the house is in *PSAN*² II (1885-6), p. 207.

manor from Sir Simon Musgrave, perhaps c. 1575,²⁷ and when he died in 1607 it passed to his great-grandson Albany Featherstonhaugh II, who sold it in 1611 to Lord William Howard.²⁸ The inscription cut on the corbel of the original fireplace at Castle Hill must refer to this man, Albany Featherstonhaugh II, and not to his son, Albany III, for the manor of Haltwhistle was in the hands of the Featherstonhaughs only between 1607 and 1611, and at the date of sale the younger Albany cannot have been older than 8;²⁹ at this period at least the Featherstonhaughs held no lands in Haltwhistle other than the manor.³⁰ The pelehouse was thus built before 1611, and is likely to have been built between 1607 and 1611; the inscription, of course, may record the acquisition of the house by Albany II, and not its construction.

Lord William Howard held the manor until his death in 1640,³¹ and it is possible that he was responsible for the building of the East wing; the Howard estates were forfeited during the Civil War and passed finally into the hands of George Pearson, who was assessed for Haltwhistle in 1663,³² and in whose family the manor remained until 1714.³³ Whether the pelehouse on Castle Hill was a part of the manor at this date is not clear, but from the building inscription of the third phase of construction it was, in 1680, in the possession of Featherstonhaugh Dodson the elder,³⁴ the son³⁵ of Peter Dodson and of Abigail Featherstonhaugh,

²⁷ Adamson, *loc. cit.*: for the date see Hodgson, *op. cit.*, p. 116n; Musgrave died 1596/7 [Public Record Office, London, Chancery I.P.M., Series II (C 142) 248/14].

²⁸ Adamson, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-5, quoting Lord William Howard's Household Book, *Surtees Society* LXVIII (1878), pp. 4, 5, 16, 17, 62.

²⁹ Born c. 1603 according to Hodgson, *op. cit.*, p. 355, or c. 1606 according to P.R.O., Court of Wards I.P.M. (Wards 7) 79/79.

³⁰ Neither Albany II (died 1628) nor his father Alexander (died 1596) held any lands in Haltwhistle at their deaths: P.R.O., C 142 246/130 and 131, and Wards 7 79/79.

³¹ P.R.O., Wards 7 96/109.

³² Hodgson, *HN*, iii, I, p. 318.

³³ Adamson, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

³⁴ His son also called Featherstonhaugh Dodson, was still under age, 15 July 1687: P.R.O., C 5 78/107, quoted in *CW*² LXI (1961), p. 135.

³⁵ Mr. W. P. Hedley has kindly supplied us with information on this point.

CASTLE HILL HALTWHISTLE



Before 1611



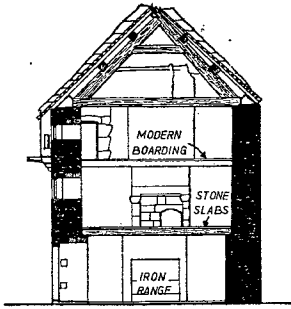
1611 - 1680



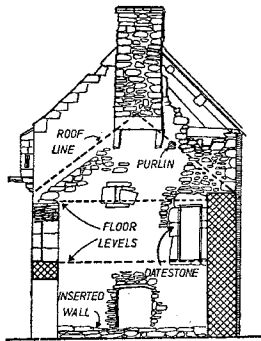
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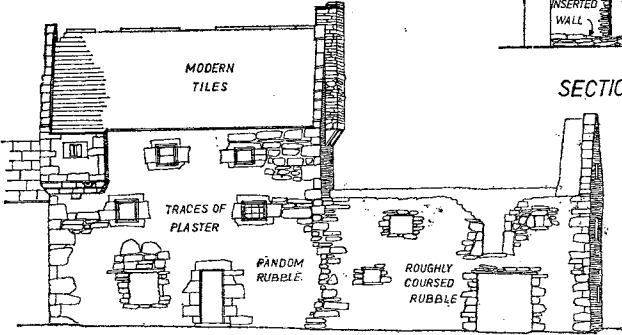
19th century



SECTION A-A



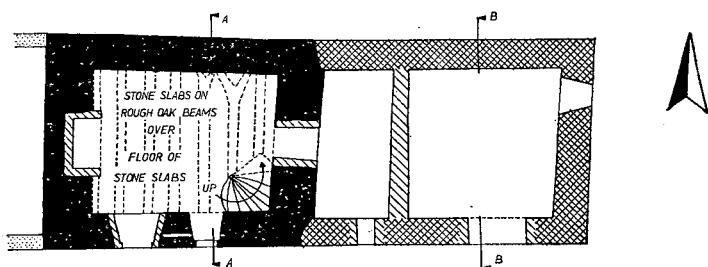
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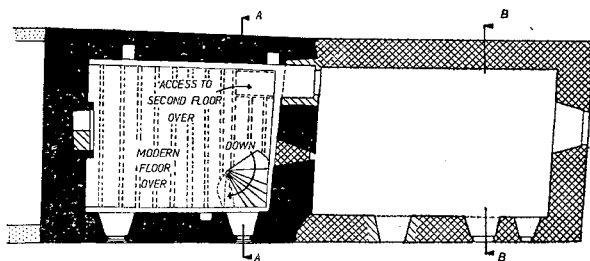
SOUTH ELEVATION

PHC · PWD

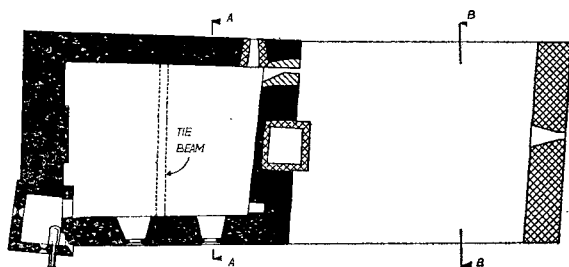
Fig. 1a



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



Fig. 1b

daughter and heiress of Albany Featherstonhaugh III.³⁶ Peter Dodson held the manor of Featherstonhaugh in right of his wife and was dead before 1 August 1662, when Abigail, as his widow, signed a copy of a Court Roll.³⁷ This manor was involved in a settlement of 1674 on the marriage of Featherstonhaugh Dodson the elder.³⁸ How he regained part of his great-grandfather's lands in Haltwhistle is not recorded; after sequestration the Howard Estates were sold in 1652,³⁹ and the Castle Hill house may have been alienated: at all events, Castle Hill was once more in the hands of the lords of the manor in the nineteenth century.⁴⁰

MAIN STREET, HALTWHISTLE (NY 70806412)

The pelehouse which stood on the North side of Main Street, immediately to the West of the Conservative Club and a short distance to the East of the Red Lion Hotel, was demolished at the end of September 1969. It was a simple rectangular building of two storeys, much rebuilt, which measured 31' from East to West along the street, and 20' from North to South, with a small lean-to against its northern side. The walls, which were rendered in modern roughcast on the outside and plastered and papered inside, varied in thickness from 3' 3" to 4' and stood about 15' high to the wallhead.

None of the openings of the first building period survived intact, but a small window in the upper North face, though altered, appeared old, and a large and irregular recess opposite to it in the South face was probably the splay for an original window; the modern roughcast prevented an examination of its exterior. The most important relic of the original pelehouse was the single oak truss of the

³⁶ Hodgson, *HN*, ii, III p. 353.

³⁷ Minutes of Court Baron of Featherstonhaugh, 16 June 1659, in the possession of Mr. L. Elliott Charlton of Hexham.

³⁸ Record Office, Carlisle, D/CU/4/152, calendared *CW*² LXVII (1967), p. 120.

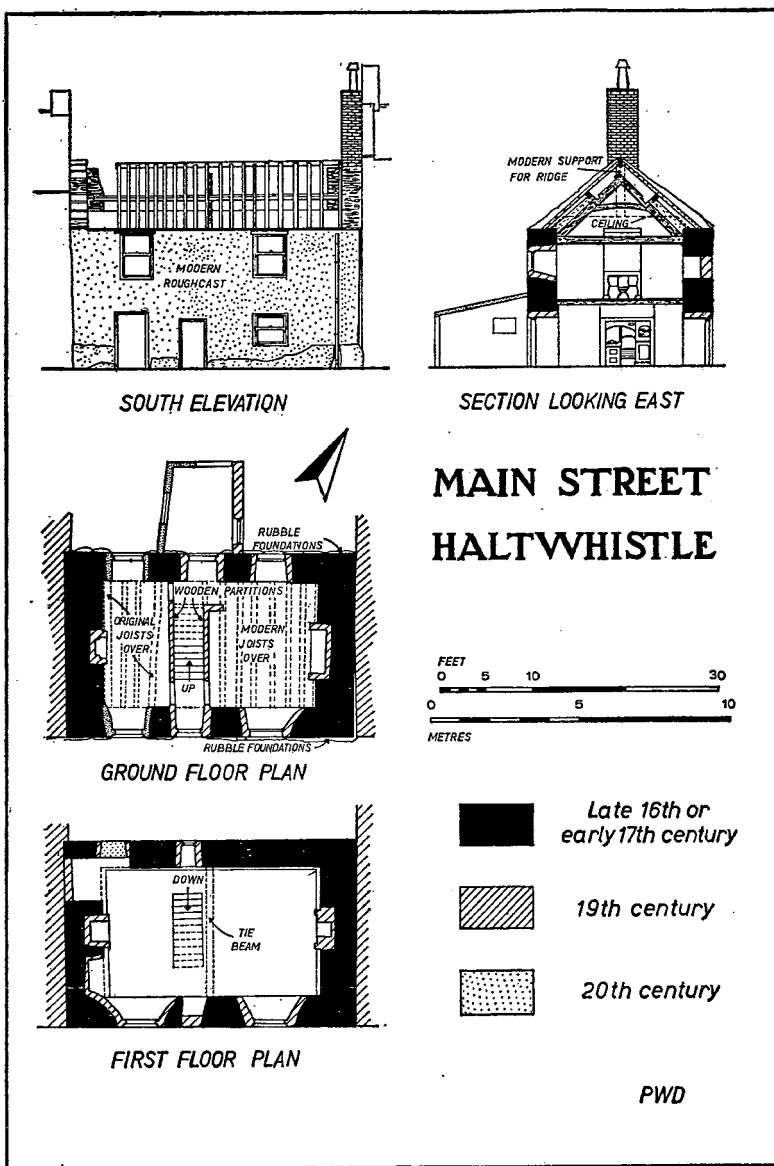
³⁹ Adamson, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 174.

roof. It was similar in construction to the trusses in the pelehouse at Westend Town, Thorngraston (NY 780654), and rested in the side walls, about 2' below the wallhead. All timbers were chamfered on their inside edges; the tie beam, 10" deep and 9" wide, supported the feet of principal rafters 10" deep and 5" wide: these were half-lapped and pegged at the apex probably by four tree-nails, only two of which were visible under modern timbers. About 4' below the apex the principals were joined by a cambered collar. The original ridge piece and the single purlin on each slope had been removed, but notches for their seating remained in the principals. Part of an early roof of stone slabs, fixed by oak pegs, survived against the West gable. The modern ridge and purlins were supported on pieces inserted against the truss. The common rafters were modern, as were most of the joists spanning the ground floor; two of the original rough oak joists survived, measuring on average 9" wide and 7" deep.

At a date probably in the third quarter of the nineteenth century the pelehouse was extensively remodelled. A door almost in the centre of the street front opened to a straight staircase lit by the small window in the upper North face. The staircase separated two rooms on each floor: the lower pair of rooms was probably lit both from the street and from the rear; the eastern upper room was lit from the street alone. The upper room to the West was lit from the street and from the rear by a window, later blocked, within a deep recess, apparently a feature of the original pelehouse, in the North West angle. This was later used as a cupboard; its original purpose is unknown.⁴¹ All four rooms had inserted fireplaces. That in the larger, eastern ground floor room contained an iron range by J. Liddel and Sons of Haltwhistle, and this room was presumably the

⁴¹ There may once have been a door to an adjoining house, as, for example, at 8-9, Abbey Court, Kelso [house described RCHM, *Roxburgh*, pp. 249-50, but doorway, in the South gable of the ground floor, not seen] or Queen Mary's House, Jedburgh [*ibid*, pp. 212-3]. The prevalence of turrets in the pelehouses of this area may, however, be relevant here; see above, note 23.



kitchen, and the other the parlour. At the same time an outhouse was built against the centre of the North wall, with access through a narrow passage at the rear of the staircase. The reconstruction of the roof and floors belong to this rebuilding.

At a later period, probably in the twentieth century, rough doors were broken through the North and South walls of the parlour, which was turned into a passage to the rear of the building; the West wall of the outhouse was rebuilt to allow clearance to this passage, and the rear window of the kitchen was fitted with a metal frame. The other windows retained their nineteenth century sashes.

