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The Gatehouse of Morpeth Castle, Northumberland

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THE RUINS OF Morpeth Castle stand on the southern of a pair of narrow ridges running parallel to the main Wansbeck valley, c. 200 m south of the medieval bridge over the river. The narrower northern ridge ends in the Ha' Hill, thought to be the site of the first Norman castle. The underlying geology is sandstones and shales of the Coal Measures, capped by alluvial sands and gravels.

The first castle was probably built in the late 11th century by William de Merlay, first Baron of Morpeth, who had fought with the Conqueror at Hastings. As a result of the de Merlays backing Robert de Mowbray, the rebel Earl of Northumberland, the castle was taken by William Rufus in 1095, although it was later returned to the de Merlays. In 1216 the castle was burned by King John on his campaign against the rebellious Northern barons; the de Merlay estates were confiscated, but returned to the family in 1218. The de Merlays are thought to have rebuilt their castle on the present site. Their estates passed by marriage to the Greystoke family in 1271.¹ It was never one of the largest castles in the area, being referred to in 1310 as a "turriolum" and in 1343 as a "turellus".² William ("the Good Baron") Greystoke (1342–59) is recorded as having built the "turris de Morpath", usually identified as the present gatehouse.³ Although Lord Dacre of Gisland is known to have resided in the castle in the early 16th century, by 1596 it was described as "mightily decayed". In 1644, although described as "a ruinous hole, not tenable by nature or art", it was held for Parliament by a garrison of 500 Scots under Lieut-Colonel Somerville, who had been appointed governor, against a Royalist force of 2,700 led by General Montrose. A detailed

account of the siege survives;⁴ it ended after 20 days when the garrison, who had lost 23 men in contrast to the besiegers 191, surrendered and were allowed to march out with their arms.

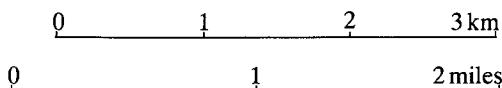
The castle buildings suffered badly in the siege, and large parts of the fabric seem to have been demolished soon afterwards, including the great tower or keep shown on a 1604 map of Morpeth.⁵ A 1741 plan in the Earl of Carlisle's papers⁶ shows the site very much as it is today, with only the curtain wall and the gatehouse surviving. In the late 18th century a cottage (shown on several engravings of the period, and on an 1825 plan)⁷ was built against the external face of the curtain wall immediately south of the gatehouse, which was in a ruinous condition. In 1852 the Earl of Carlisle carried out some excavations, and is said to have uncovered "the basements of several apartments, about 3 or 4 feet high" "immediately on the left on entering the gateway, on a level with the sill";⁸ these are no longer visible.

The gatehouse, which, apart from the curtain wall of the inner bailey and a fragment of that of the outer, is the only remaining part of the castle, has had a chequered history over the last 130 years. It was apparently in a more or less ruinous condition when the Earl of Carlisle restored it (1858–60) as a residence for his agent. Unfortunately no architect's name or drawings for this work have been traced; the estate cash book⁹ records a payment of £1-2s-8d (April 4, 1860) for "taking down an old building"—presumably the late-18th century cottage on its south side. In 1872 plans were prepared by the architect Robert Johnson¹⁰ for a new lodgings block adjoining the gatehouse to the north-east but this was never con-



Fig. 1 Area Map

- 1. Morpeth Castle
- 2. The Ha' Hill
- 3. Parish Church
- 4. Newminster Abbey
- Approximate limits of built-up area



structed. In 1916 the Castle was sold by the Earl to Charles Alderson (a Morpeth solicitor) for £2,400, who commissioned the local architect C. Franklin Murphy to make plans, which appear to relate to a re-ordering of the attic floor.¹¹ At some date after 1922 Mr. Alderson added a flat-roofed domestic wing to the south-west of the gatehouse, originally consisting of an entrance hall and later extended to include a kitchen. Following the 1946 sale of the castle to Morpeth Borough Council it was occupied by a series of tenants, one of whom carried out quite considerable internal alterations (in the 1960s?) resulting in the destruction of medieval fabric and features. Later the building was left uninhabited, and virtually gutted by vandals.

In 1989–90 the gatehouse was repaired and remodelled internally by the Landmark Trust with grant aid from English Heritage, the 20th century additions being cleared away; architects for the project were Steward Tod & Partners of Edinburgh. The account of the

gatehouse below is based upon archaeological recording carried out during these works, again with the support of English Heritage.

Description of the Castle

Morpeth Castle consists of an irregular enclosure or bailey ("The Curtain" on the 1741 map) most easily regarded as a rectangle c. 70 m north–south by 63 m east–west, with its south-west corner canted to fit onto the ridge-top. The gatehouse stands at the north-east corner of the enclosure, facing eastwards. There is a deep ditch (now occupied by an approach drive) on the west; a further ditch cutting the ridge c. 70 m further west is said to be part of the 1644 siegeworks. No ditch is now apparent on the east, although the curtain south of the gatehouse stands on a raised scarp. The largely-natural scarps of the end of the ridge define the eastern enclosure shown on the 1604 map, and a narrower platform at a



Fig. 2 Morpeth Gatehouse from a sketch by Luke Clennell, c 1810

slightly lower level to its north-east, shown on the 1741 map as "Castle Yard" and "Bowling Green" respectively.

The circuit of the curtain wall is relatively complete, except for a gap at the south end of the west side. Much of the walling stands to a reasonable height, but its facing stones have mostly been robbed away, and few architectural or structural features are visible.

A short length of wall, with remains of two large external buttresses, remains on the east side of the "Castle Yard"; this has been identified (on what grounds it is not quite clear) as part of a barn that figures in the records of the 1644 siege. It seems more likely to be part of an

outer curtain wall, although it may well have been incorporated in a later barn.

The Gatehouse

The gatehouse consists of a rectangular block 13.2 m north-south by 8.8 m east-west. The external elevations of the building are constructed of squared and coursed sandstone blocks; on the east (front) elevation the masonry is of near-ashlar quality, and more irregular on the west. Attached to the north-west corner of the gatehouse, and extending for some distance to the west, is a range of late 19th century single-storey outbuildings.

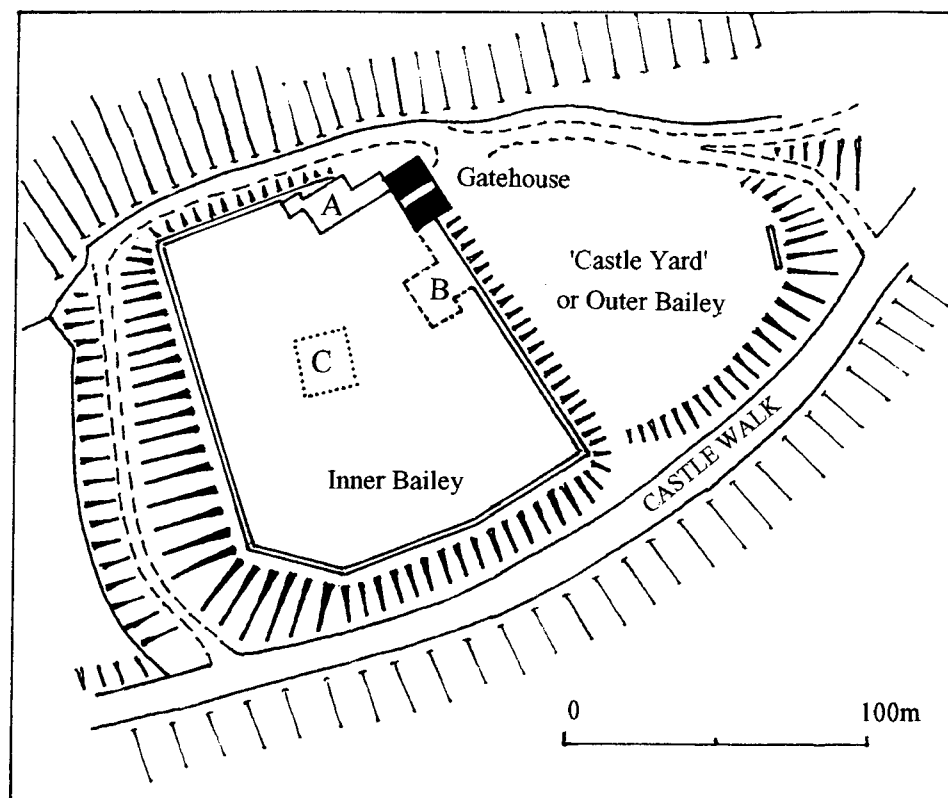


Fig. 3

MORPETH CASTLE: SITE PLAN

Key

- A: Late C19 outbuilding range
- B: Post-1922 wing demolished 1990
- C: Approximate site of Keep shown on 1604 map

EXTERIOR

East Elevation

The east elevation has a stepped and moulded plinth, interrupted by a central archway with a flattened four-centred head. The arch is of two orders; on the jambs these are simply chamfered, but on the head the inner order has a double wave moulding and the outer a hollow chamfer; in addition there is a hollow-

chamfered hoodmould. To the south of the archway is a small window with a trefoil-arched head; at some stage its sill and the masonry below have been cut away (a doorway is shown here in the 1785 engraving by Thornton)¹² and replaced by later stonework still pre-dating the c. 1860 restoration. To the north of the arch, and set a little higher in the wall, is a square-headed chamfered loop; the stonework of this seems to have been wholly renewed in the 19th-century restoration.

At first floor level are a pair of two-light

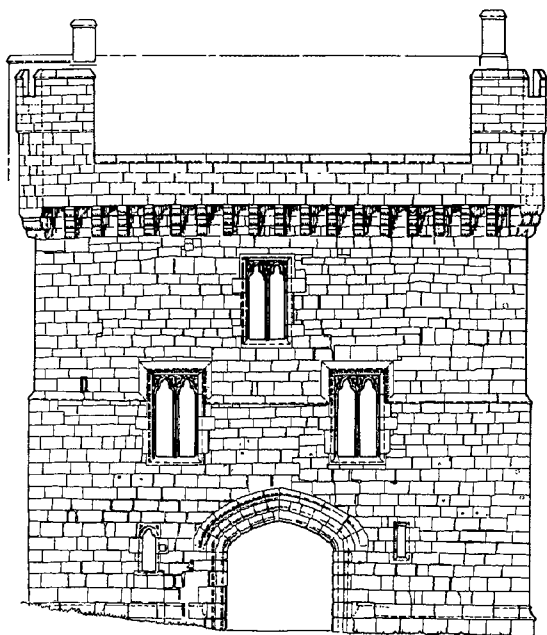


Fig. 4 East elevation

windows, with steeply-pointed trefoiled arches to the lights, under square heads. A chamfered set-back runs round the building at this level, and is stepped up over the window heads. At second floor level is another similar window, set centrally. All the stonework of these windows is of c. 1860; all three replace earlier openings in approximately the same positions. Although there are a number of pre-restoration illustrations of this face of the gatehouse, unfortunately they do not make the original detail of these windows very clear. The chamfered set-back was stepped up over the first floor openings as it is now, but their sills seem to have been at a rather higher level; the openings seem to have contained post-medieval casements. A pre-restoration photograph of c. 1860¹³ shows the upper window as retaining its original head of two arched lights with sinkings in the spandrels; the upper part of the opening was blocked, and the lower, which had lost its mullion, had its sill set

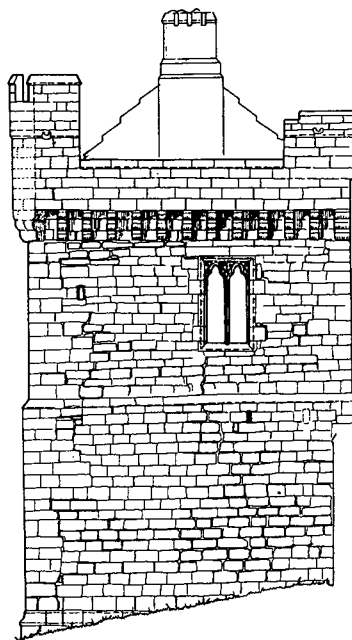


Fig. 5 North elevation

considerably higher than that of its successor. Some of the old illustrations appear to show two separate windows here, as if the medieval opening had been sub-divided so as to light both 2nd and attic floors.

The parapet, with taller bartizans at the angles, is carried on a range of boldly-projecting triple-stepped corbels (most of which are original); those at the corners of the building are broader and set diagonally. The present embattled tops to the bartizans are of c. 1860, although their lower parts are medieval; the parapet between them (now with a flat coping) is all restoration; all the old illustrations show it as having fallen.

North Elevation

The north elevation of the gatehouse is relatively plain; there are a number of breaks in the coursing that are difficult to explain. Near

the west end of the wall and immediately below the chamfered set-back are two small chamfered loops lighting the first-floor garderobe. At second floor level is a two-light window, set slightly west of centre, dating to the mid-19th century restoration and precisely similar to the three on the east front; to its east a tiny loop lights a garderobe. Sopwith's early 19th century drawing¹⁴ shows a plain square window to the second floor and a smaller but similar window above interrupting the line of the parapet corbels; most of the present corbels here are restoration, as is the parapet and the north-east corner bartizan.

South Elevation

The south wall of the gatehouse has a projecting rectangular stair turret set somewhat west of centre, to which the east curtain wall is attached. The chamfered set-back only extends along the section of wall outside the curtain; immediately above it is a small chamfered loop lighting the first-floor garderobe, whilst further

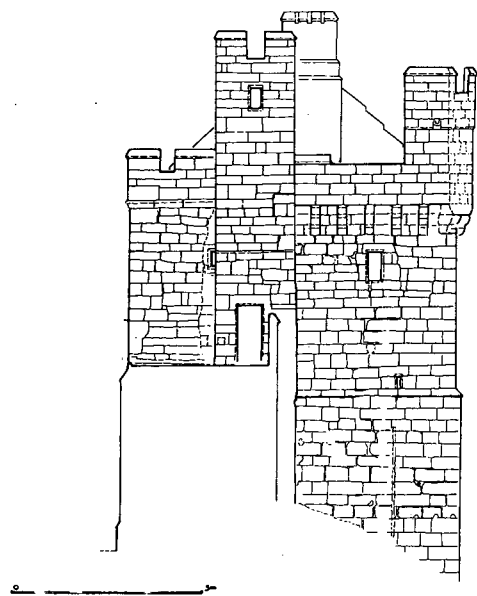


Fig. 6 *South elevation*

up the wall is a larger chamfered square-headed window to the second floor. As with the set-back, the parapet corbelling only extends as far as the stair turret, which rises considerably above the parapet (although this top section is entirely of c. 1860; old illustrations show it as ruined down to the main parapet level).

The lower section of the turret and of the wall to the west were covered by the 20th century domestic wing, now removed. The west part of the wall contains what appears to have always been the only entrance to the upper floors of the gatehouse, although in its present form (a chamfered shouldered arch with angular rather than curved shoulders) is clearly mid-19th century. The c. 1860 photograph shows a large ragged hole in the wall in this position. Access to this opening was formerly by a flight of stairs starting outside the castle and rising through a gap in the curtain between the gatehouse and a late-18th century cottage (cf. Hearne's drawing of 1784).¹⁵ Above and to the east of the doorway, the south-west angle of the stair turret is carried on a stepped corbel which seems to be medieval, at least in part.

At a higher level a square-headed doorway, 19th-century work in its present form, provided an external access to the turret stair from the wall walk of the curtain. The c. 1860 photograph seems to show a blocked feature in approximately this position. The re-entrant angle between the turret and the west part of the wall is bridged by oversailing masonry containing a small loop lighting the newel stair within, a rather rough-and-ready arrangement perhaps necessitated by a planning error.

West Elevation

The west (internal) elevation of the gatehouse has a simple chamfered plinth which steps up five courses half-way between the central archway and the south-west corner; the plinth continued along the wall of the domestic range beyond (the lower part of which has been retained), suggesting that older masonry may

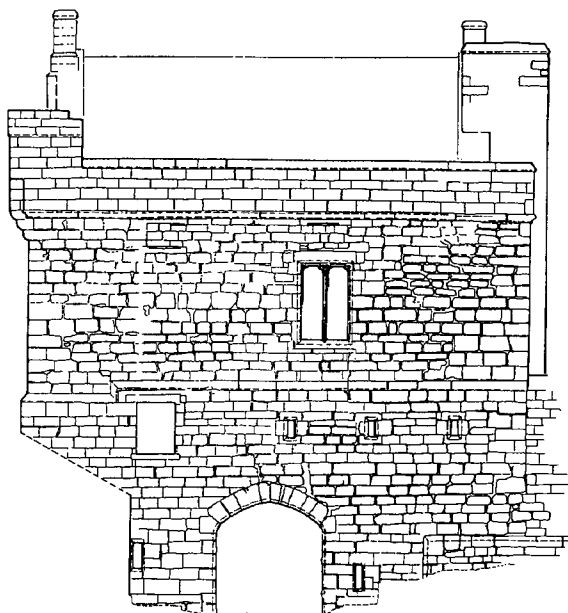


Fig. 7 West elevation

be incorporated in this structure; another related structural puzzle here is that the angle quoins of the gatehouse only commence three courses above plinth level. The face of the northern section of the lower part of the wall is hidden by a range of mid-19th century out-buildings, and is covered by plaster; this is particularly unfortunate as the plaster conceals any evidences for the former junction with the curtain wall here implied by the 1761 map.

The central archway has a four-centred arch like that on the east, but this time with only a single chamfer to the jambs and head. To each side is a square-headed chamfered loop lighting the basement chambers. At first floor level are three chamfered rectangular loops, and at the same level further north a larger square-headed window of c. 1960, replacing another chamfered loop (shown on the 1916 architect's drawings) that was set rather higher in the wall than the other three. Above these loops is a chamfered set-back which steps down to a lower level beyond the northernmost window.

At second-floor level is a single large square-

headed window with two shoulder-arched lights; all its stonework is mid-19th century work, except for the lower two-thirds of its chamfered south jamb which must survive (or have been re-set) from an earlier opening. At a higher level, immediately below the moulded string-course which runs below the parapet, is a low square-headed window, blocked since at least the mid-19th century but re-opened in 1990, lighting the attic or third floor; the opening may have originally formed the upper part of a tall second-floor window (prior to the insertion of the attic floor). Further north is a second recently reopened third-floor or attic window, a low square-headed opening formerly of two lights.

Whilst parts of the moulded string-course appear genuine medieval work, the flat-coped parapet above is wholly restoration. The gatehouse has a pitched roof carried by gables (each with a chimney stack) set back from the parapet of the north and south walls, so as to allow a parapet walk which passes through low square-headed doorways in the bartizans and is only interrupted by the stair turret. All the external stonework of this superstructure, including the small windows in the gables which light the present attic, and the chimney stacks, seems to date from the c. 1860 restoration, although following the general form of the previous attic/roof or "caphouse". Pre-restoration illustrations show that at least the southern of the old end-stacks was of brick.

INTERIOR

Basement

The gateway passage is roofed by a plain vault which follows the same four-centred form as the archways at either end; there are no signs of any openings in the vault, or of any portcullis slot. Similar but rather more steeply-pointed vaults cover the two guard chambers which flank and run parallel to the passage.

The southern chamber is entered from the east end of the passage by a doorway with a

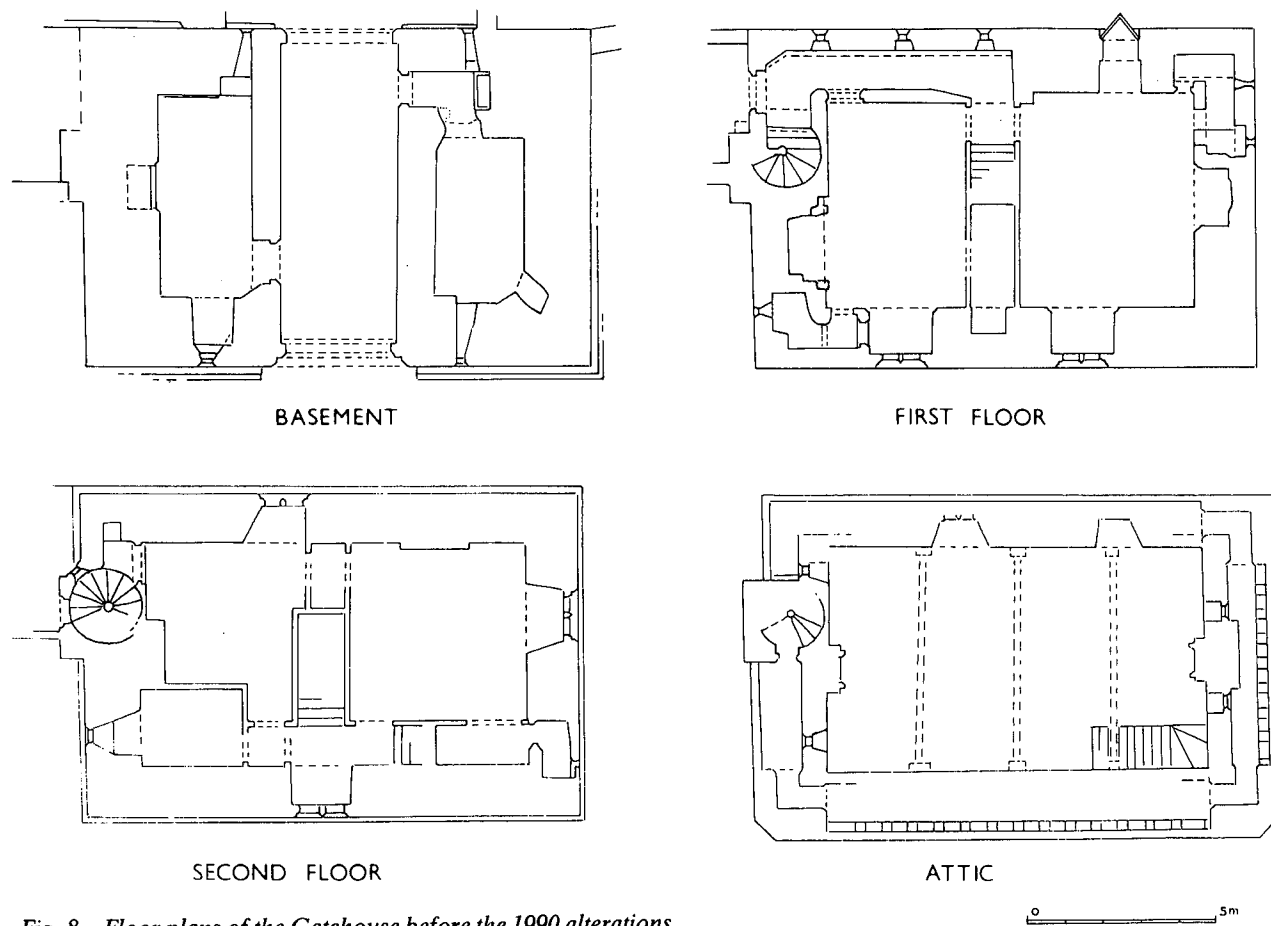


Fig. 8 Floor plans of the Gatehouse before the 1990 alterations

four-centred arch having a continuous hollow chamfer to its head and jambs. In the centre of the south wall is a small fireplace that appears to be medieval; its jambs are chamfered, but its lintel has suffered too much damage to ascertain its original form. On the west and western part of the south walls a small off-set 0.09 m above the present cement floor may indicate the original floor level. At the west end of the north wall is a projecting block 0.56 m above the present floor, of uncertain function. A former loft beneath the vault is indicated by a series of joist holes in the west wall 1.83 m above floor level; these may be secondary, although lofts of this type do occur in the basements of some medieval buildings (e.g. East Kyo Tower).

The northern chamber is entered by an L-plan passage opening from the west end of the gateway passage by a doorway similar to that of the southern chamber; a second similar doorway from the passage into the chamber has been partly cut away. At the angle in the passage, facing the first doorway, is a recess containing a stone trough that is clearly an insertion. The chamber itself is 1.0 m shorter than its southern counterpart, leaving a block of masonry 2.8 m square at the north-west corner which might conceivably have contained some feature (garderobe?) no longer evident. Other features whose purpose is not immediately apparent are a short diagonal passage at the north-east corner of the chamber and a rectangular projection at the south-east corner.

First Floor

As already mentioned, the only entrance to the first floor of the gatehouse is the restored doorway at the west end of the south wall. This opens into a lobby with on the east the foot of a fairly commodious newel stair (diameter 1.9 m) to the second floor (the foot of the stair had been closed by a 19th century doorway but was originally open) and on the north a mural passage running half the length of the west wall; the width of the passage necessitates an

internal thickening of this section of wall. Both lobby and passage have stone slab roofs, that of the passage being carried on the west by an oversailing chamfered course.

The mural passage has two separate doorways giving access to the first floor of the gatehouse. The first, close to the entrance lobby, has a chamfered surround and a square head; the second, at the north end of the passage, has been destroyed by the rebuilding (in the 19th century?) of the northern section of the wall between the passage and first floor room. Only the "ghost" of its cut-away north jamb survives; the extent to which the wall has been rebuilt above the present timber lintel spanning the opening hints that this doorway may have had a taller and more elaborate arch than that further south. The passage is lit by the three small rectangular loops.

In its 19th century form the first floor of the gatehouse was divided into two equal-sized rooms, divided by a central stair rising eastwards from a lobby entered from the enlarged opening at the north end of the mural passage. Doorways from this lobby gave access to both rooms; the first doorway in the passage was also retained, although its medieval character was concealed by a Victorian wooden architrave. The Victorian stair has now been removed, and the chamber is now divided into two rooms by a screen.

Plaster stripping revealed no evidence of any medieval structural division or partition at this level, despite the provision of the two separate doorways. The internal wall faces are of coursed and well-squared sandstone; as in the external wall faces, the occasional break in jointing and L-shaped block does not appear to have any structural significance. The chamber had been lit by the two two-light windows on the east, which retain their original elliptical-headed rear arches, with a continuous chamfer of head and jambs. Midway between these windows is a square-headed recess or cupboard 1 m high and wide, 0.67 m deep, and 0.8 m above floor level. On the west was a smaller window (enlarged in the 1960s) which retains its original shouldered rear arch.

The first-floor chamber had been provided

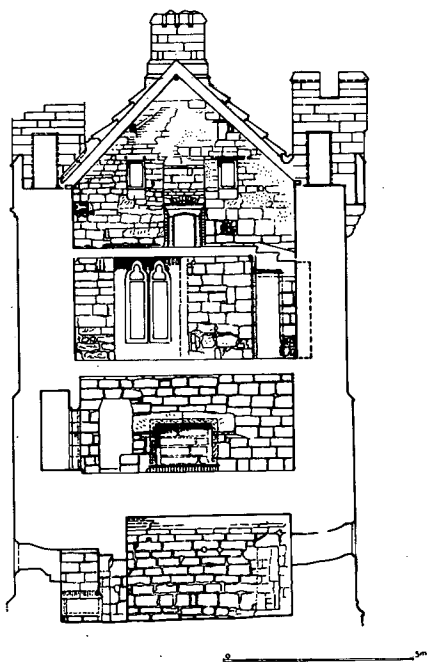


Fig. 9 Internal elevation of North wall

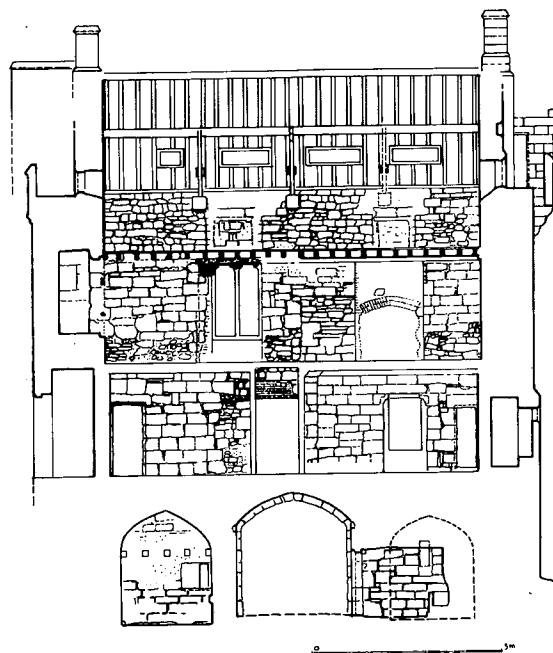


Fig. 10 Internal elevation of West wall

with fireplaces in both north and south walls. The northern fireplace retains its original opening, although this was so heavily re-cut in the 1960s that traces of the original mouldings are only visible on the west jamb. The opening is now square-headed; in its original form it may have had an elliptical or four-centred arch. The southern fireplace is now just a ragged hole in the wall; only the walling of its flue suggests that it is an original feature. The remains of a 19th or 20th century successor were removed by vandals in 1989.

In the south jamb of the southern window a blocked square-headed and chamfered doorway, its sill 0.75 m above the present floor level, gave access to an L-plan garderobe in the south-east corner of the tower. In its medieval form the window sill was stepped up 0.75 m above the general floor level, and it was from this sill that the garderobe opened. At some more recent date the garderobe floor level had been reduced to that of the main floor,

although its original function had been retained (admittedly with up-dated sanitary arrangements) and a new doorway had been cut through the east wall of the room at its south end; the original doorway and floor level have now been reinstated.

A second garderobe is situated in the opposite north-west corner of the tower. This was originally entered by a similar doorway at the north end of the west wall, although in this case there was no discrepancy in floor level; this doorway had been blocked in the 19th century (or earlier?) and the garderobe opened up again in the 1960s by the breaking of a large and rather shapeless hole through the north wall; this hole has now been blocked again, and the original access to the garderobe restored.

The medieval second-floor level was c. 1.0 m higher than at present. Evidence for the flooring arrangements has been complicated by the fact that there was an internal set-back on all

four wall faces at second-floor level, and when the floor level was lowered the resulting step at the foot of the second-floor walls was cut back flush with the wall-face above; accordingly the lower 0.8 m of each wall face is now largely rubble (and brick) patching of the exposed wall-core. Mid-way along the west wall there is a feature at this level defined by a pair of straight joints 0.3 m apart; this may have been a socket for a transverse beam. Removal of a couple of stones here disclosed a small cavity to the south, apparently heavily sooted, which may extend above the slabs roofing the first-floor mural passage; its purpose is obscure. A corresponding socket on the east, may be indicated by a cavity in the internal north jamb of the window there, infilled by a 19th-century block of timber. There are less certain traces of further beam sockets at this level in the east wall south of the window (a straight joint) and in the south wall below the north jamb of the doorway from the newel stair to the 2nd floor (a shallow cavity infilled with bricks).

Second Floor

The medieval access to the second floor was by a doorway opening from a small recess or lobby on the west of the newel stair. The lobby has a square-headed recess, probably for a lamp, on its west side; the doorway has a hollow-chamfered four-centred arch of the same type as those in the gateway passage. As it opened 0.9 m above the later second-floor level, it had been blocked up, probably in the mid-19th century, but it has now been re-opened, and gives access to the floor via a small platform.

The internal stonework of the newel stair provides many good examples of mason's marks. A stone built into the wall 0.7 m above the end of the fifth step below the lobby seems to bear the remains of an incised pattern of some sort.

As on the floor below, the internal divisions at second-floor level had been re-planned in the mid-19th century, and the medieval arrangements are difficult to reconstruct. The

two-light windows in both east and west walls appear to occupy old openings, although considerably altered. The internal north jamb of the window on the west is cut straight through the wall, rather than splayed. This would appear to be a medieval feature (by contrast, the stonework of the splayed south jamb is much more roughly hacked) and would imply an internal division at this point.

At the east end of the north wall is a small garderobe, entered by a chamfered square-headed doorway (now of somewhat abnormal proportions due to the lowering of the floor level). The single-light window near the east end of the south wall is set in a recess extending the full height of the wall, and has a well-preserved stone sink or slopstone forming its internal sill; this drains to a small hole immediately below the window.

On the west side of what is now the northern room is a shallow brick projection with a 19th-century fireplace. Immediately south of this is what appears to be an infilled square-headed opening with its head 1.7 m above the present floor level. Its south jamb is immediately adjacent to the possible infilled

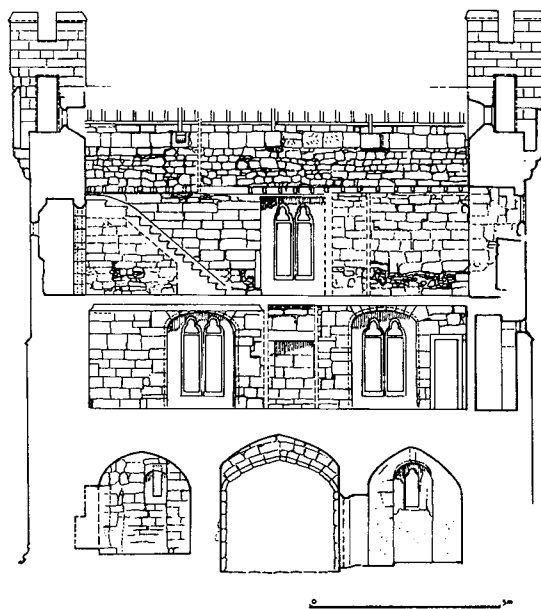


Fig. 11 *Internal elevation of East wall*

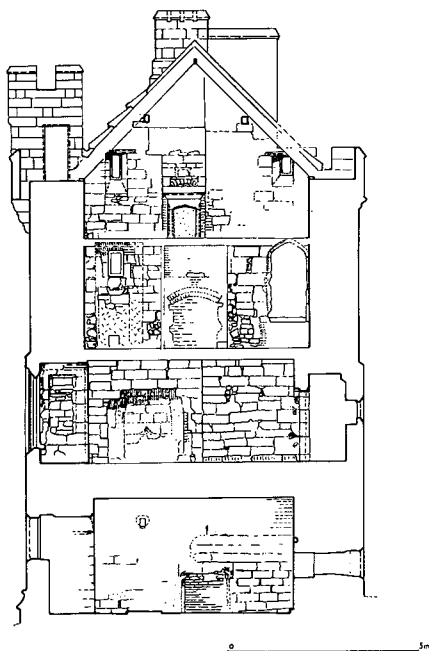


Fig. 12 *Internal elevation of South wall*

beam socket already described, and its north jamb is presumably concealed behind the fireplace projection. The infill of the opening (thinly-coursed rather irregular stone) is very different in character from both the coursed sandstone of the original wall faces and the rubble of the cut-back section. The coursed stonework above the head of the opening (which may have originally had a timber lintel) is also rather dissimilar from the larger and more typical medieval stonework to either side. The position of the opening suggests that it post-dates the change in floor level; beyond this, it is difficult to suggest either its function or date.

The Attic Floor

The stair which until recently rose to the attic from the first-floor stair head lobby was clearly later than the mid-19th century restoration, as the sawn-off stubs of 19th century floor joists were exposed alongside the stair well; the

insertion of this stair was presumably part of the 1916 works. It is not clear what sort of access to the attic there was prior to these alterations; the stair has now been replaced by a new one rising alongside the south wall from the platform in front of the 2nd-floor doorway from the newel stair.

The stoothing partitions which sub-divided the attic may have been of the same date as the stair; they have now been removed. The large squared blocks which make up the majority of the internal wall facing of the floors below only appear in the lower sections of the gable end walls; the upper sections of the walls, and the majority of the side walls, are of much poorer-quality fabric consisting of roughly-squared stones laid in irregular courses. Towards the top of the east wall is a course of large almost square blocks, quite different from anything else seen in the building.

Set against each gable end wall is a projection with a small 19th or early-20th century Gothic-arched fireplace. The small chamfered single-light windows in the gable ends (two on the south, and two with two even smaller ones above, the western bricked up, on the north) all appear 19th century externally, but those on the south have internal splays whilst those on the north are cut straight through the wall. In addition, the original sill of the window at the east end of the south wall can be seen to have been at a lower level originally, suggesting that this at least is a pre-19th century feature. The wall thickness at this end of the attic is irregular (0.78 m at the western window, 0.67 m at the eastern), also suggesting that older masonry has been retained although the wall has been re-faced externally at this level.

In the west wall are the splayed recesses of the two re-opened post-medieval windows, spanned by timber lintels (with dry rot, now removed). Ragged joints in the internal jambs suggest that the stonework of the external frames has been renewed at some time.

The mid-19th century roof structure consists of three raised queen-post trusses; with "short" principals which are carried on large projecting block corbels, except for that over the stair which has a shaped corbel.

THE STRUCTURAL HISTORY OF THE GATEHOUSE

The bulk of the fabric of the gatehouse appears to belong to a single medieval build. The surviving architectural features of the building all tally well with the mid-14th century date usually ascribed; in particular the distinctive corbelling of the parapet is almost identical to that of the Prison (1330–2) and Moot Hall at Hexham. The ruined curtain wall is said to be earlier medieval work; the junctions of this with the gatehouse have suffered too much disturbance to allow any useful comment to be made upon their relationship.

Prior to the recent removal of plaster, the mid-19th century restoration had imposed its character on the 14th century building to such an extent that virtually all evidence of any intermediate structural phases had been concealed. However, the recent removal of plaster, coupled with a consideration of historical evidence, now sheds a little more light on the post-medieval history of the gatehouse.

16th and 17th century references to the castle being in a state of decay, coupled with the sparsity of buildings on the site shown on the 1604 map, suggests that considerable parts of the castle had already been demolished by the end of the medieval period, if indeed it ever consisted of much more than keep, curtain walls and gatehouse. Erosion of the stonework of the internal wall-faces at what is now second-floor level (particularly noticeable alongside the attic stair) suggests that the gatehouse stood as a roofless ruin for some time; it doubtless suffered further damage in the Civil War siege, although its walls would seem to have remained fairly intact. Some degree of reconstruction would seem to have taken place in the late 17th or 18th century, when it was converted into a dwelling house. The attic floor may well have been inserted at this time, cutting across the tall second-floor windows on both east and west walls. The level of the first floor may well have been lowered at this time as well, to judge from the blocked opening in the internal face of the west wall which looks pre-19th century yet seems to relate to the

present rather than the medieval floor level.

The Function of the Gatehouse

The original form of the 14th century gatehouse raises several interesting questions. Unlike other contemporary castle gatehouses in Northumberland, such as Bothal, it is a relatively weak structure; there are no projecting towers or turrets, it has exposed corners which could be susceptible to mining, and the usual appurtenances of portcullis slot and murder holes in the passage vault are conspicuous by their absence. Whatever function its construction served, it was not one of enhancing the military strength of the castle.

A clue to the use of the building may be found in the unusual plan of its first floor. This would appear to have contained a single lofty chamber, entered by two separate doorways; the builders have taken considerable trouble in the construction of the mural passage to ensure that the second doorway entered at some distance beyond the first. This separation of doorways must have been occasioned by some form of custom or ceremony connected with the use of the chamber. It is tempting to see the apartment as a courtroom, bearing in mind the medieval tendency to site such chambers above gateways (cf. Hexham Moot Hall, the Hawkshead Court House (Cumbria), the Bolton Percy Gatehouse (N Yorks) etc.). The way in which the garderobe at the south-east corner is set at a higher level to the main floor suggests that there was an area of raised flooring or dais (presumably of timber) at this end of the chamber.

The width of the newel stair, and the manner in which it rises straight up from the entrance lobby, also suggests that the second-floor apartments were quite prestigious. They may however have been lodgings (cf. the warder's lodgings on the second floor of the Prison at Hexham); the slopstone implies some domestic function.

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APPENDIX: A SMALL EXCAVATION

In May 1990, as restoration of the gatehouse proceeded, part of the timber floor of the 20th-century entrance hall was removed (prior to the demolition of the hall) and an area beneath cleared of debris. Exposed features

were recorded but no structures or deposits were disturbed, as it was understood that there would be no further disturbance.

An area c. 4×2 m was examined, in the angle between the west part of the south wall the gatehouse and the inner face of the curtain wall. Immediately in front of the doorway into the gatehouse proper the footings of two stone steps were revealed; these presumably dated from the c. 1860 restoration, and had been approached by a gently-sloping ramp first surfaced with cobble setts, and later with concrete (this ramp has now been reinstated). To the east of this surface, and overlapped by the concrete, were the footings of the west face of the original curtain wall, 0.8 m in front of the present wall which at this point is a mid-19th century reconstruction considerably thinner than the original.

Adjacent to the gatehouse the medieval footings were cut into by a large rubble-filled cavity, spanned by the reconstructed curtain

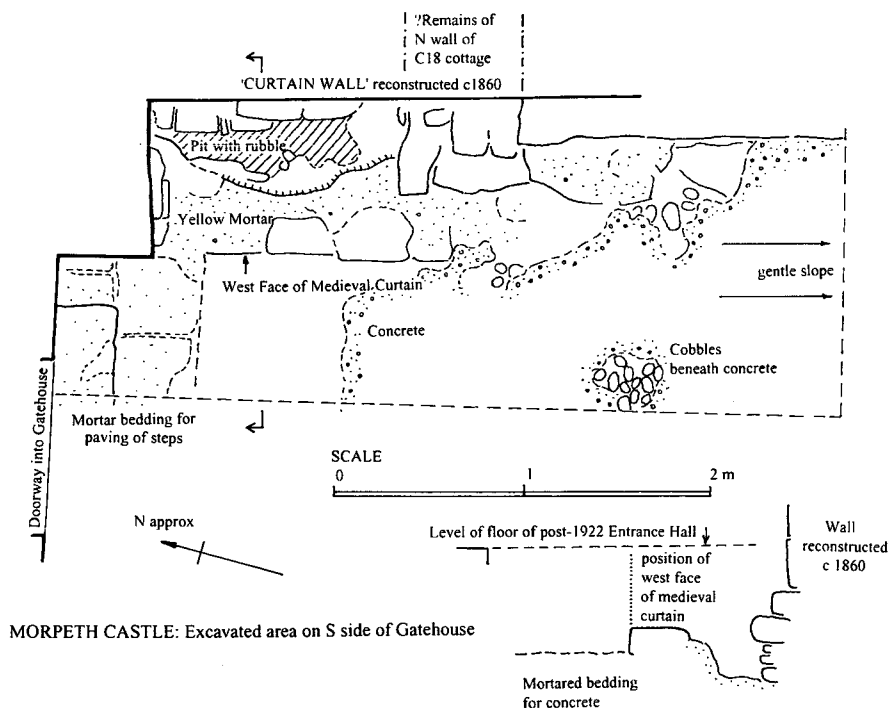


Fig. 13

wall. This feature would appear to relate to the flight of steps shown on early illustrations, rising westwards between the south face of the gatehouse and the north end of the 18th-century cottage. On the south of this gap a few stones aligned east-west may have represented the stub of the north wall of the cottage.

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NOTES

¹ Blair, C. Hunter "The Early Castles of Northumberland" *Archaeologia Aeliana* 4th series XXII (1944) 150-2.

² Bates, C. J. "The Border Holds of Northumberland" *Archaeologia Aeliana* NS XIV (1891) 11 footnote.

³ Hodgson, J. *History of Northumberland* Pt. II Vol. II (1832) 384.

⁴ Ibid. 385-8.

⁵ Map in Howard papers at Naworth. 1844 copy in Dept of Palaeography & Diplomatic, University of

Durham, in Howard of Naworth provisional papers map no. 65.

⁶ "Map of the Castle Farm, 1741". Department of Palaeography & Diplomatic, University of Durham. In 1756 Valuation of Morpeth Castle Lands, M 68a 52/28.

⁷ Bowman's plan of Morpeth Castle & Environs 1825, in Dept of Palaeography & Diplomatic, University of Durham. Howard of Naworth plans, prov. no. 119.

⁸ *Proc Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle* New Series XIV (1889) 108.

⁹ Cash book of Northumberland estate of Lord Carlisle 1854-60. Dept. of Palaeography & Diplomatic, University of Durham. Shelf 18.

¹⁰ Plan of Morpeth Castle additions 1872, in Dept. of Palaeography & Diplomatic, University of Durham, Howard family papers A 68a 100/6.

¹¹ Copy of plan with Castle Morpeth Borough Council, Planning Dept.

¹² MS volume *Morpeth Collectanea* (Northumberland County Record Office Ref. M16 B5, 102). A near-identical print is reproduced in Graham, F. *The Castles of Northumberland* (1976), 240.

¹³ *Morpeth Collectanea*, op. cit. but volume M16 B9, 256.

¹⁴ Hodgson, op. cit. facing p. 384.

¹⁵ Print reproduced in Graham, op. cit. 239.

