

VI Cresswell Tower

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SUMMARY

Cresswell Tower is the well-preserved but roofless shell of a tower of probably fifteenth-century date. The tower is described in detail, and its original function and relation to contemporary and later attached houses analysed; it would appear to have functioned as a defensible retreat rather than have been a self-contained manorial residence. An ornate twelfth-century voussoir found during repair work may come from a former chapel that stood nearby.

THE SITE AND ITS DOCUMENTED HISTORY

Cresswell Tower stands on gently rising ground about 300 m inland from the sea at the southern end of Druridge Bay, 12 km north-east of Morpeth. Although only *c.* 15 m above sea level, it commands an extensive prospect northward along the coast. A large eighteenth-century house formerly adjoined the north end of the tower, but was demolished in the mid-nineteenth century. The central doorway of its east front survives, incorporated in situ into the wall which encloses the grounds of the former Cresswell Hall, a country house built in the 1820s but itself demolished little over a century later.

The tower is the only extant structure of the medieval seat of the Cresswell family. Although the family pedigree has been traced back to a Robert de Cresswell mentioned in 1293,¹ there appears to be no documentary evidence relating to the Tower or any associated structures prior to Armstrong's 1769 map which shows 'Cresswell Hall' and its attached park. A house adjoining the tower, commonly known as the

'mansion house' is said by Hodgson to have been constructed by the third William Cresswell, resident in 1749, but was being let to tenants in 1772; the manorial family seem to have moved to Woodhorn.² A marginal annotation in a copy of Hodgson's *History of Northumberland* in the library of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle³ notes that the Duke of Gloucester resided in the house 'when in command of the troops encamped in the neighbouring wood to resist the threatened invasion of the French in 1796'.

A major reversal in the declining fortunes of the Cresswells came when Addison John (born 1778) married Elizabeth Mary Reed, who inherited a fortune from her cousin John Baker (of Gloucestershire); this financed the building in 1821–5 of the new Cresswell Hall 0.5 km to the west of the old tower; in 1840 the family added the name and arms of Baker to their own, becoming the Baker-Cresswells.

Around 1840 the old Mansion House was demolished,⁴ but the medieval tower was retained and restored, becoming a feature in the extensive landscaped grounds around the new Hall; a carriage drive ran past the tower, with a mounting platform so that visitors could disembark and view the old building.

The twentieth century saw a dramatic decline in the fortunes of the Cresswell Estate, which the Baker-Cresswells sold to Northumberland County Council in 1924. Plans to use the Hall as a school or mental hospital never came to fruition, and the house was sold on to the Ashington Coal Company and demolished during the 1930s.⁵ The tower was maintained for some time, and occasionally used for functions such as children's parties (pers. comm. B. Harbottle) but after World War II its history has

primarily been one of neglect, apart from sporadic attempts to ward off the ever-continuing assaults by vandals.

Various legends and traditions seem to have grown up around the buildings. Several writers⁶ relate the tale of a daughter of the family falling in love with a Danish prince, and starving herself to death after he was killed by her brothers. There is also a local tradition that a ruinous nineteenth-century outbuilding to the north of the Tower (see 'Environ's' section) is a medieval chapel.

An archaeological survey of the Tower was carried out in early 2000, prior to a scheme of repair and conservation; the following paper records the results of that work.

DESCRIPTION

Note: The reference numbers of each feature (A1, A2, etc.) are marked on figs 1–9, which cover:

- fig. 1 plans of all floors*
- fig. 2 external elevation of north wall*
- fig. 3 internal elevation of north wall*
- fig. 4 external elevation of east wall*
- fig. 5 internal elevation of east wall*
- fig. 6 external elevation of south wall*
- fig. 7 internal elevation of south wall*
- fig. 8 external elevation of west wall*
- fig. 9 internal elevation of west wall*

Features A1–A12 are on the north wall; features B1–B7 are on the east wall; features C1–C7 are on the south wall; and features D1–D6 are on the east wall. Features E1–E6 are internal features which do not relate directly to the external elevations of the building.

The tower is a rectangular structure 12.5 by 8.5 m externally, its long axis running north-east to south-west (hereafter referred to as east-west); it is three storeys high, with an embattled parapet c. 9 m above ground level, and a taller turret at the north-east corner. The structure is largely built of coursed and squared sandstone; the parapet and battlements are of rather better-quality close-jointed stonework. There are various patches, usually discernible by a change in

mortar colour. Some of these relate to blocked openings, whilst others, near ground level, are repairs made after the attempts of local youths (deterred by the blocking of all accessible openings) to quarry their way into the building.

The Basement

The entrance doorway of the tower (A1) is situated towards the east end of the north side; it has a shallow segmental-pointed head and a surround of two narrow chamfers with a step between. This was re-opened and restored in the mid-nineteenth century, replacing a previous doorway (A2) a little further west. This latter doorway seems to have been an eighteenth-century insertion, and is now only traceable with difficulty. Most, or all, of the external dressings of the present opening relate to this restoration; there is a clear structural break between them and the side walls of the entrance passage behind, and they bear no signs of any security measures (e.g. drawbar tunnels) earlier than a nineteenth-century iron gate. This doorway was walled up in the 1960s in an attempt to protect the structure against vandals, only being unblocked in early 2000.

The doorway opens into the barrel-vaulted basement, rectangular in plan except for the square projection of the stair well at its north-east corner. The basement was lit by square-headed loops in both east (B1) and west (D1) walls, set as high in the wall as possible. Both have been blocked in recent years; that at the east end (B1) has had four iron bars (the central two partly cut away) just within the line of the blocking. At the west end of the north wall is a cavity (A13), at the level of the springing of the vault, opening into what seems to be a flue (presumably contemporary with the wall) that rises at least 3.0 m. It seems to have communicated with a peculiar opening (D2), now blocked, in the west face of a large quoin at the north-west corner; this has the appearance of having been a small window of two lancet-arched lights, its mullion knocked out, re-used upside-down. There was evidence of some sort of brick structure at this corner of the basement, which may relate to a post-medieval oven

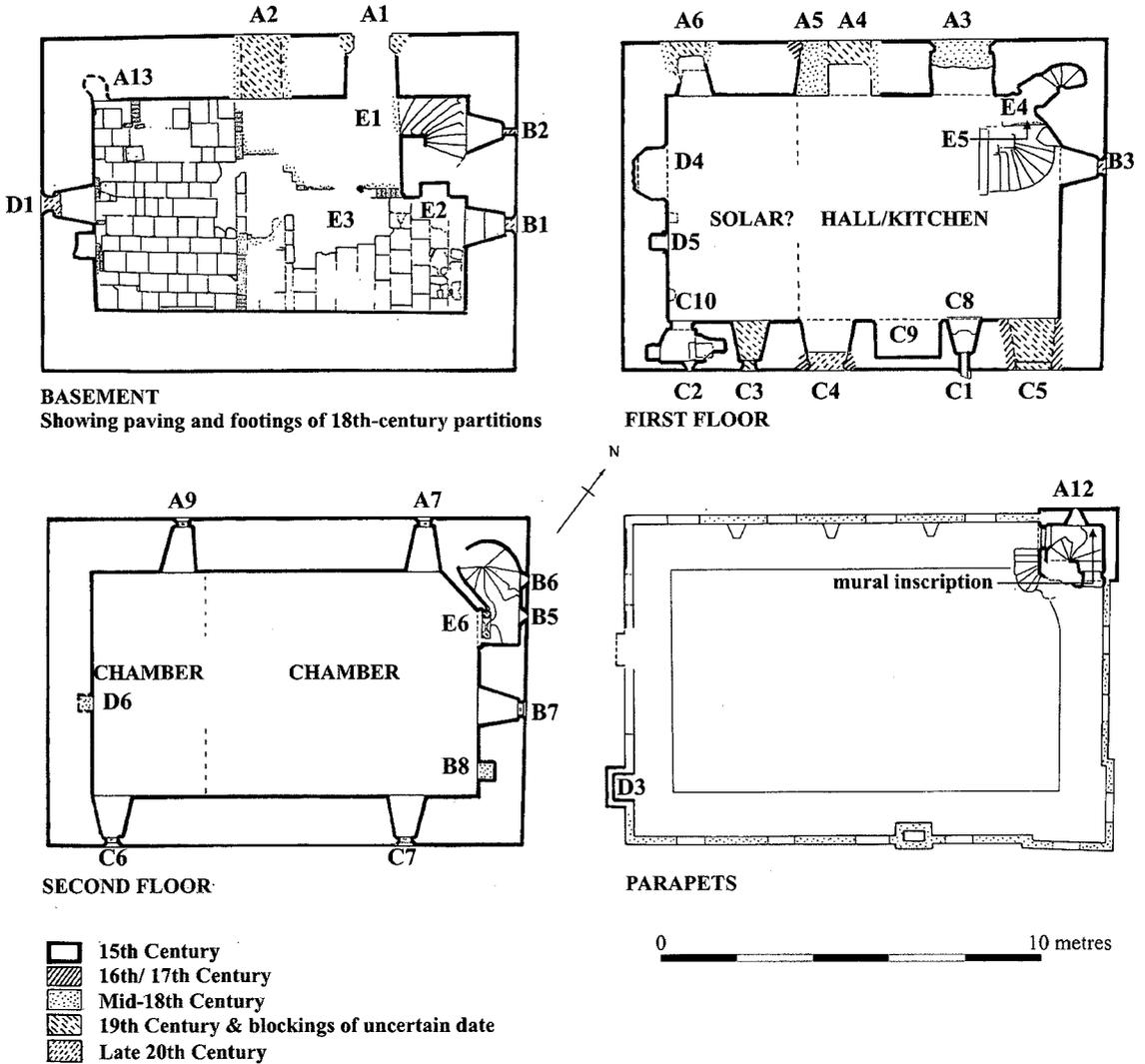


Fig. 1 Phased floor plans (scale 1:200).

or brazier; it is possible that the original shaft was simply used for ventilation purposes. Looking up the flue one can now see a blockage of rubble and brick which is probably associated with the inserted doorway at first-floor level above.

Evidence of various secondary partitions, mostly apparently of eighteenth-century date, could be traced both in the footings of brick walls, flag flooring and brick paving (exposed

when the floor was cleared in June 2000) and also in various sockets and cuts in the basement walls and vault. The blocked doorway (A2), which originally communicated with the southernmost ground-floor room in the adjacent eighteenth-century house, formerly opened into a north-south passage. On the west was a single room, and on the east two rooms. The northern, brick-paved, gave access to the tower stair and a recess formed by the original

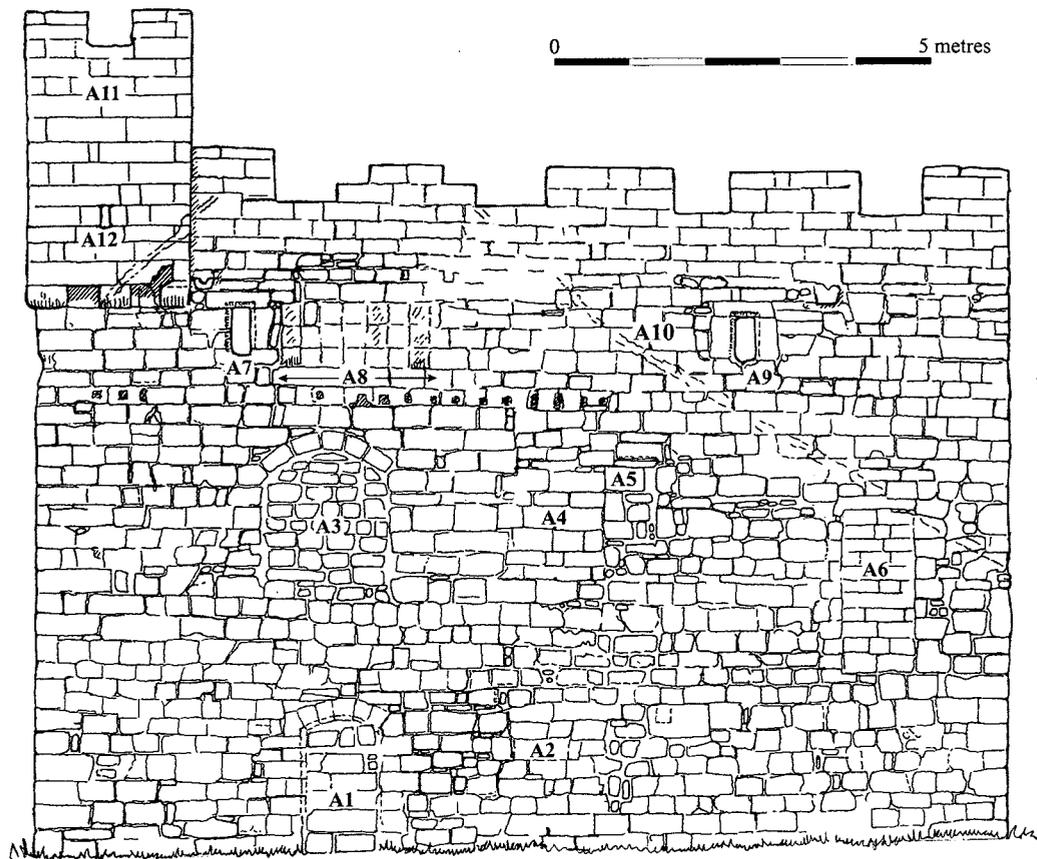


Fig. 2 External elevation of north wall (scale 1:100).

entrance doorway (at this stage blocked), whilst the larger southern one was stone-paved.

The stair projection at the north-east corner of the basement has its internal angle (E3) neatly chamfered; low in its south wall is a rough square-headed recess or wall cupboard (E2). A plain square-headed opening (E1) on the west of the present entrance gives access to the stone newel stair, which rather unusually is set within a square well; it is lit by a deeply-splayed window (B2) on the east. Until recently this window had an external opening in the form of a slab pierced by an oval or vesica-shaped loop, but since it was blocked this is no longer evident; it is not clear whether the original outer slab now survives.

The First Floor

The stair now emerges through a quadrant-plan opening in the first-floor. An 1849 drawing (fig. 13) shows this as being bounded on north and south by low stone walls, but these are no longer evident; the uppermost course of the well walls, at first-floor level, is of large blocks of tooled-and-margined ashlar, of nineteenth-century character. The floor itself is of stone slabs (robbed in places), with some repair and brick patching which are presumably of the same period. Beam sockets in the side walls, and two corbels which must have carried a beam or plate against the west wall, show that the ceilings must have been relatively low, *c.* 1.75 m.

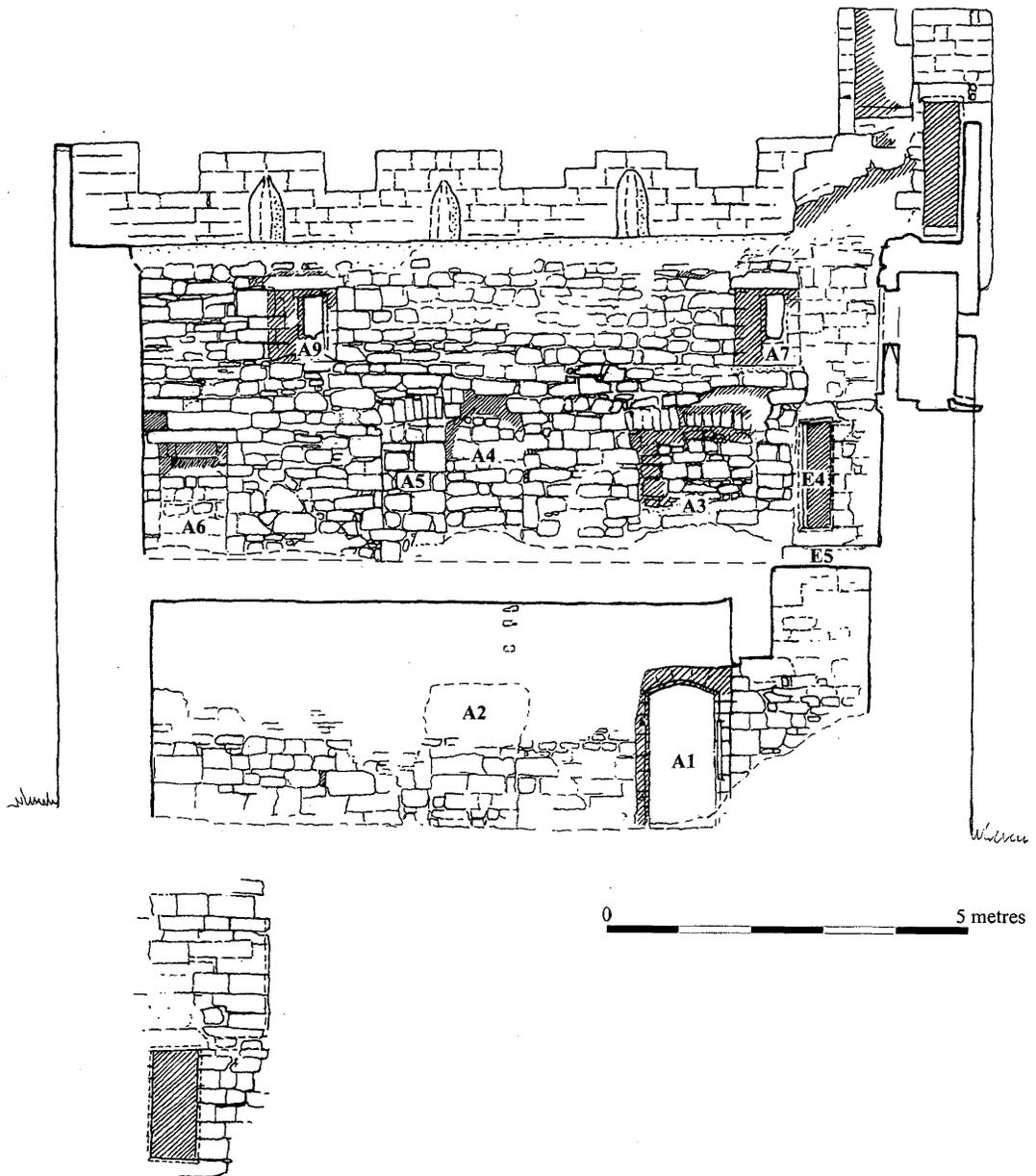


Fig. 3 Internal elevation of north wall (scale 1:100).

The first floor of the tower was divided into two rooms, the eastern 6.5 by 6 m and the western 3.5 by 6 m; they were separated by a stud partition, the only remaining

evidence of which is small cut-outs for a top rail in at the heads of the internal west jambs of the large windows in both north and south walls.

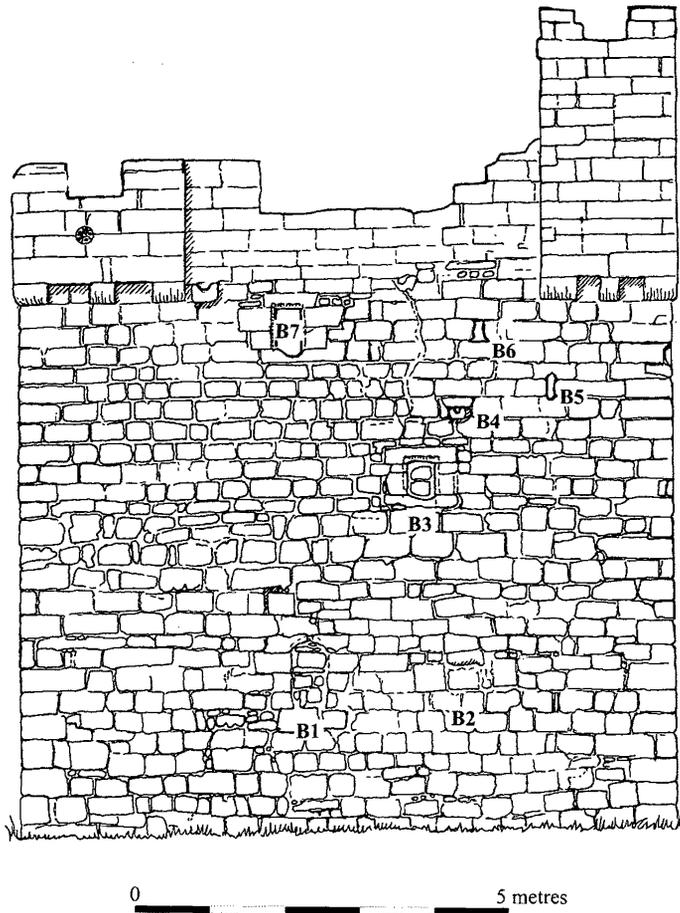


Fig. 4 External elevation of east wall (scale 1:100).

The larger eastern room was also entered by an external doorway (A4), now blocked, at the east end of the north wall, set directly above the entrance door (A1) at basement level. Externally this has a chamfered segmental-pointed head, clearly contemporary with the original fabric; the jambs do not appear to be chamfered, and the position of the sill is not clear. Above the opening are the cut-back stubs of four corbels (A8) which presumably carried a machicolated projection (cf Burradon and Elsdon) protecting the doorway beneath. Internally the jambs of the opening are cut straight through the wall, and its head is an

almost flat arch of the same type as the rear arches of the larger windows at this level.

The larger room was lit by two windows on the south, one on the east (positioned north-of-centre so as to be directly above the stair) and one on the north, to the west of the doorway. The western of the windows in the south wall (C4) was of mullioned-and-transomed form. Only the outer frame now survives, blocked in recent years; its dressings of the outer opening do not course in well with the adjacent fabric,⁷ although the inner opening with its very shallow segmental arch is clearly contemporary with the adjacent wall. Each

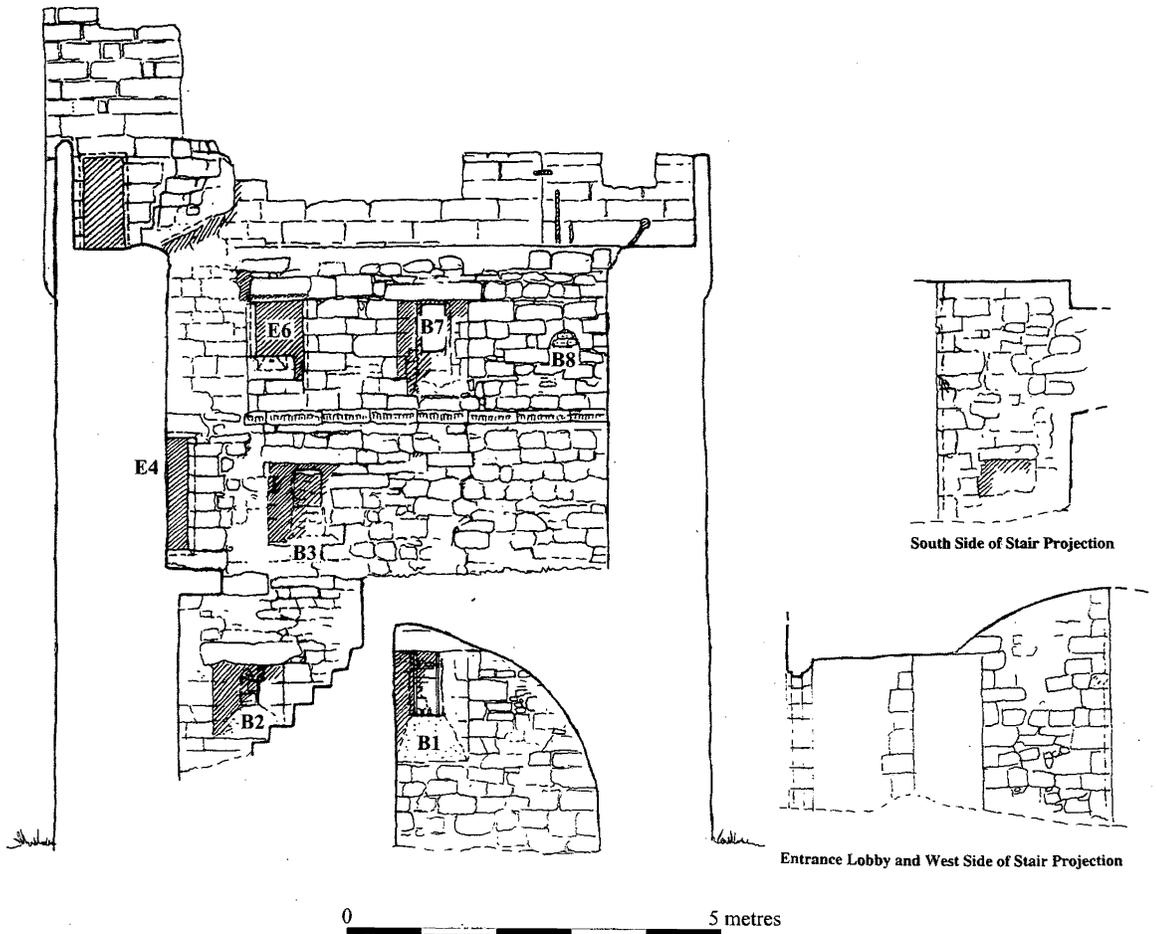


Fig. 5 Internal elevation of east wall (scale 1:100).

light has had a horizontal and a vertical iron bar of square section, whose sockets remain, some broken when the bars were removed. The central mullion has also been secured by an iron bar, whilst the transoms have been socketed into the jambs; some of the stones currently lying in the basement may represent the missing mullion and transom. The eastern window (C5) is now blocked up flush with the faces of the wall and somewhat obscured by heavy mortaring; clearance of vegetation on the external wall face showed it to be a simple opening 0.86 m wide and 0.52 m high, apparently with plain square-section jambs and lintel.

It looks very much like an insertion (perhaps of sixteenth or seventeenth-century date) and may have contained a timber-framed window, probably of two lights.

The window in the north wall (A5) seems to have been of the same type as the western of the two on the south, but only its western half remains, the remainder having been destroyed by a later opening (A4) (probably a doorway into the adjacent eighteenth-century house) having been broken through the wall. Rather puzzlingly, a nineteenth-century survey⁸ shows the earlier window as intact; possibly its restoration was intended. The window in the east

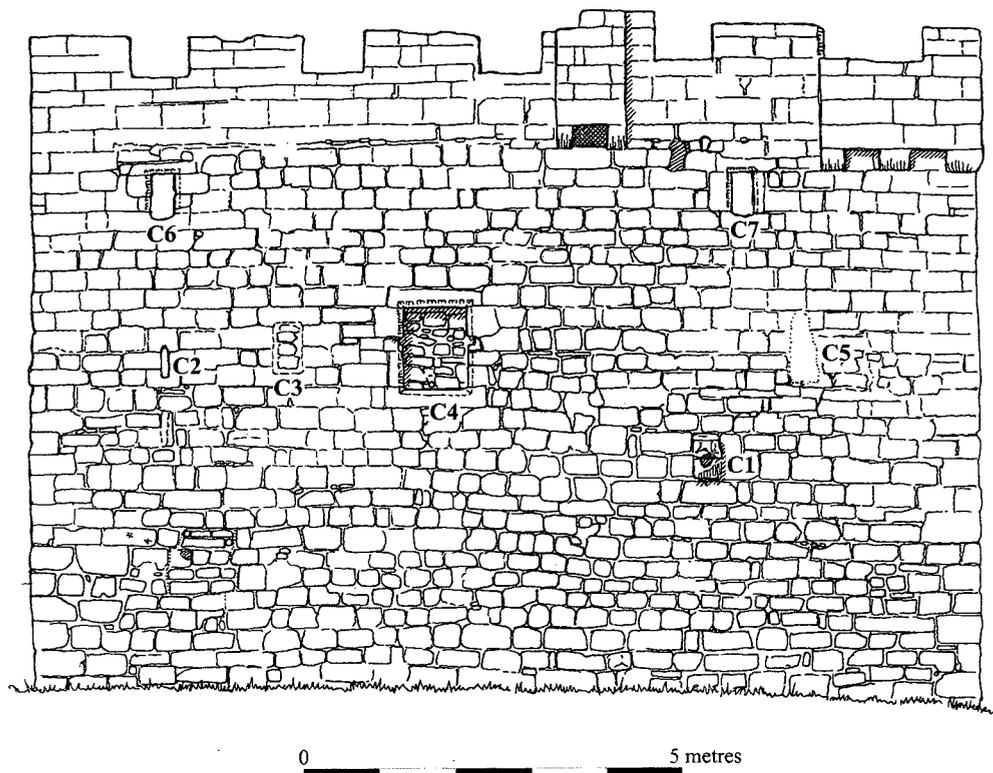


Fig. 6 External elevation of south wall (scale 1:100).

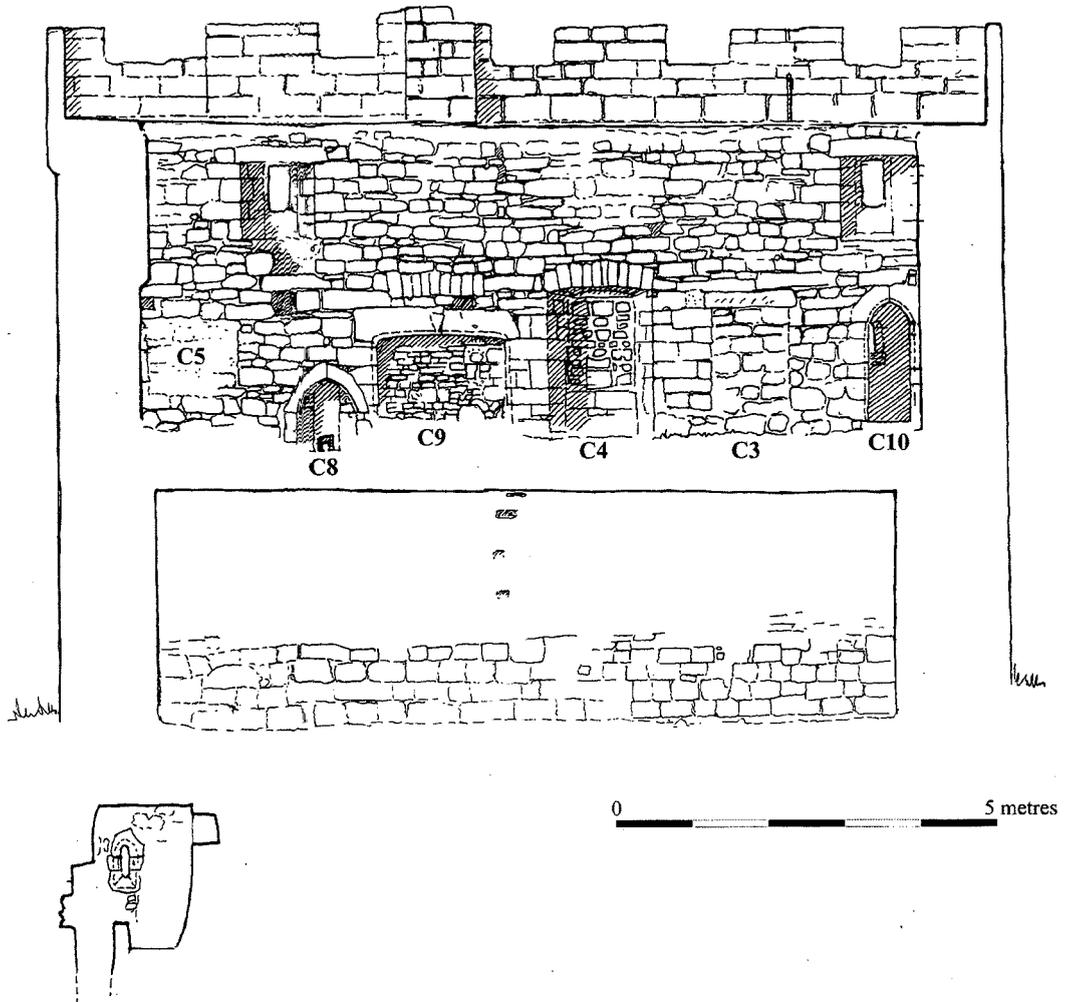
wall (B3) is a smaller single-light opening, with a chamfered surround, and sockets for a central bar; internally the opening is spanned by simple stone lintels.

On the south, between the two windows, the room was provided with a fireplace (C9), 1.7 m wide, with a flattened four-centred head, and a simple chamfered surround; there is old brick in the fire back and a simple almost flat relieving arch above. This fireplace appears to be contemporary with the wall, and is certainly of late medieval, perhaps fifteenth-century, character. Immediately to the east is an interesting opening (C8) set at floor level, *c.* 0.80 m high and wide, with a two-centred arch cut from two inclined blocks. It is floored by a single slab, with a raised and rounded front edge. The opening is of tapering plan, closing to a drain which runs out through the wall to an elaborate spout (C1), now somewhat damaged, which

may have been shaped like an animal's head. This must be some sort of elaborate sink or slop-stone, calling to mind those in the kitchen at Aydon Castle.

Access to the upper parts of the tower is by means of a newel stair, entered by a square-headed chamfered doorway (E4) set in a short diagonal length of wall in the north-east corner of the eastern room. In front of this, and set parallel to the north wall is a step with a stopped length of chamfer (E5), as if for the threshold of another doorway; it is difficult to see how this relates to the present arrangements, and it may simply be a re-used threshold or lintel from elsewhere.

The second, smaller room to the west was lit by windows in the centre of its south (C3), and at the west end of its north walls. The former seems to have been a single-light window like that at the east end (and those at second-floor



**Internal Elevation of
South Wall of Garderobe**

Fig. 7 Internal elevation of south wall (scale 1:100).

level) but has been blocked up flush with both wall faces. The latter was enlarged in the eighteenth century to form a doorway (A6) communicating with the first floor of the outshut of the eighteenth-century house. This was set at a lower level than the main first floor of both house and tower, so that the sill of its external opening is around a metre below the level of the tower first floor, showing that there

must have been steps within the thickness of the wall. The opening is now blocked, except for its upper portion which formed a wall cupboard, within which parts of the splayed dressed-stone jambs of the original window remain visible. This western room was heated by a fireplace (D4) set north-of-centre in the west wall, almost identical to that in the eastern room, except that it is a little narrower (1.4 m)

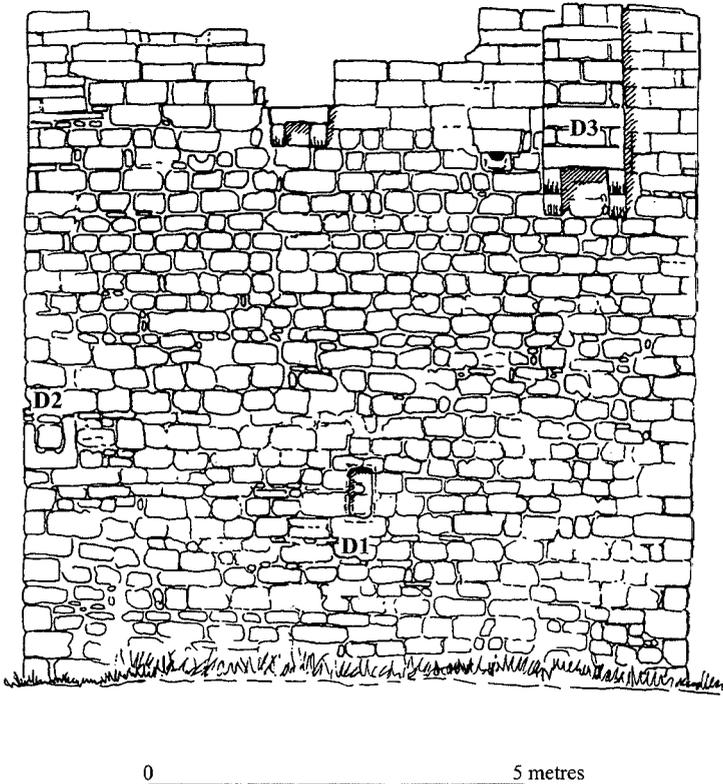


Fig. 8 External elevation of west wall (scale 1:100).

and does not have a relieving arch. To the south of it is a square-headed wall-locker (D5) with a surround rebated for a door.

At the extreme west end of the south wall is a narrow doorway (C10), its sill raised one step above the main floor, into a mural garderobe. This has a two-centred arched head of typically 'medieval' character, and a narrow chamfer to its surround. The garderobe chamber is well preserved. Lit by a tiny arched loop in the south wall (C2), it has a locker (or lamp recess?) high in the west wall, with the garderobe itself at the east end; the seat has gone but its front slab survives. The shaft drops within the wall thickness; any evidence of its exit point seems to have been erased by a substantial repair, which was necessitated in 1995 when vandals had broken into the lower section of the shaft from the external face of the wall.

The Second Floor

The stair from first to second floors rises as a conventional circular newel; at second-floor level a slab-roofed lobby opens off it to the south, accommodated by the upper section of the east wall being slightly thickened, its over-sailing inner face carried on a chamfered course at the level of the first floor ceiling. The stair below the lobby and the lobby itself both have small loops in the east wall (B5 and B6). Below the loop lighting the lobby there is a stone bowl at floor level draining through the wall to an external spout (B4). From the lobby a square-headed doorway (E5), rebated on the lobby side, gave access to the second floor. At some stage this has been partly blocked, the blocking material includes what seems to be the sill of a small window, and a length of stone mullion

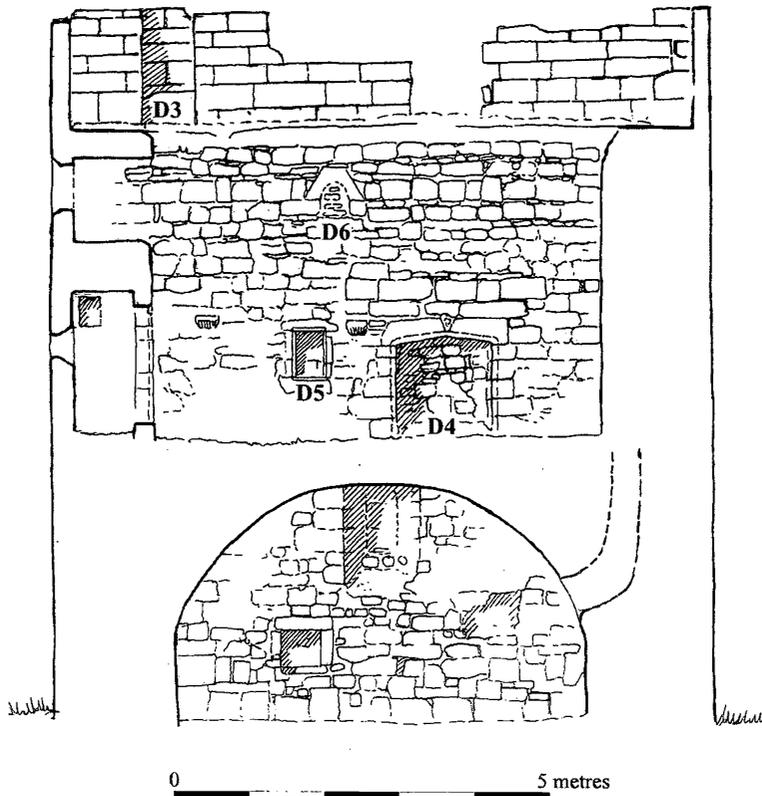


Fig. 9 Internal elevation of west wall (scale 1:100).

that appears to have been inserted as a prop after the north end of the original lintel of the doorway was broken.

The second floor appears to have been divided into two rooms in the same manner as that below, although the only evidence of this now visible is the manner in which the western of two single-light windows in the north wall (A9) has its internal splay skewed, as if to clear a partition on the same line as that below.

All five windows at this level are of precisely the same type, chamfered square-headed openings with sockets for central iron bars with a chamfered surround, with internal lintels rather than rear arches. Three of them, (A7) on the north, (B7) on the east and (C7) on the south, lit the large eastern room, whose only other surviving feature is a round-arched recess (B8) near the south end of the east wall. The removal

of a brick during re-pointing allowed this to be briefly inspected (although not emptied) and showed that its round-arched opening is backed by a recess 0.44 m deep with a flat slabbed top. Although its form suggests a piscina or lavabo, there seems to be no evidence of any drain associated with it, and its function remains uncertain. It may simply have been a wall locker, blocked up, to judge by the brick employed, during the mid-eighteenth century changes.

The smaller western room had windows on north (A9) and south (C6); its only other feature is another arched recess (D6), rather smaller than that in the eastern room, in the centre of the west wall. Its head has a pointed arch, and is cut into a single trapezoidal block.

Nineteenth-century restoration of the wall tops, and the fall of some masonry from the

inner wall-head, have combined to erase any evidence of the original roof structure, although it is clear that the second-floor rooms can originally have had little more headroom than those below.

The Turret and Parapets

The newel stair terminates at this level in a small chamber within a corbelled-out turret (A11), from which square-headed doorways on west and south give access to the wall walk behind the parapets. The turret chamber is lit by a small loop (A12) in the north wall. Incised on blocks in the internal wall face around this loop are three lines of inscription once reputed to read 'William Cresswell brave hero'. Hodgson¹, the first of several antiquarian sources to

describe this, dates it to around 1700 as he considered 'it resembles the rude funereal inscriptions of that time' but the style of lettering is much more of late medieval character (pers. comm. G. McCombie) (fig. 10).

The upper works of the tower, i.e. the parapets and the upper part of the turret, appear to have been remodelled at some post-medieval date; the earliest illustrations of the tower (1820s) appear to show them in their present condition. Parts of the turret – the wall face with the inscription, and the doorways to the parapet walks – appear to be genuine medieval work, as may be the awkwardly overhanging external stair that winds from the northern parapet walk up round the south-west corner of the turret to its top look-out. Discontinuities in the coursing in the external face of

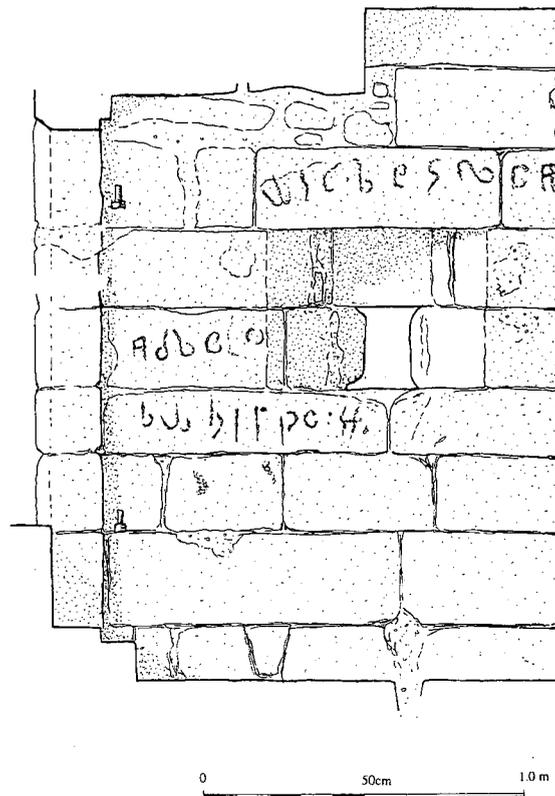


Fig. 10 North wall of lobby at head of stair, with incised inscription.

the east wall of the turret point to its upper part being reconstructed, whilst, inside, a roughly-finished slab that cuts down below the level of the lintel of the doorway to the east parapet walk is clearly secondary.

The southern parapet appears to have been completely rebuilt; below it are the weathered remains of a moulded string course that would seem to have formed the base of its predecessor. The course of blocks above the string has small lozenge-shaped cut-outs in their lower angles (and in the joint below them) which presumably relate to scaffolding at the time of the repair works. Some medieval masonry seems to be retained in the western parapet, where the garderobe at the level of the wall-walk (D3) is presumably an original feature, although in its original form one would imagine that it was roofed over in some way. On the north the section of parapet within the roof-line of the eighteenth-century house (A10) is set flush with the wall below, whilst that outside the roof-line is set slightly back. This, along with the absence of any feature correlating to the machicolated projection evidenced by the cut-back corbels below (A8), would suggest that the reconstruction took place at the time of the building of the eighteenth-century house. Another indicator pointing to this date is seen in the similarity between the square 'bartizan' at the south-east corner, set on very shallow corbels, and features at the angles of the eighteenth-century dovecote in nearby Ellington village.

During the repairs in 2000, several worked stones were found re-used in the internal wall faces at the level of, or just below, the wall walk. On the south, a short distance from the east end of the south wall, was a stone with remnants of mouldings (not enough to make a useful record) and on the east, 3.60 m north from the internal face of the southern parapet, was what appeared to be the re-used sill of a small window. However 1.3 m to the south of this at the same level was a loose stone (now removed) of greater interest. This is a block of buff sandstone, 0.27 by 0.23 by 0.18 m, which once formed a voussoir from a sizeable arch, carved on both face and soffit (fig. 11). The face has a projection with a roll-moulded lower

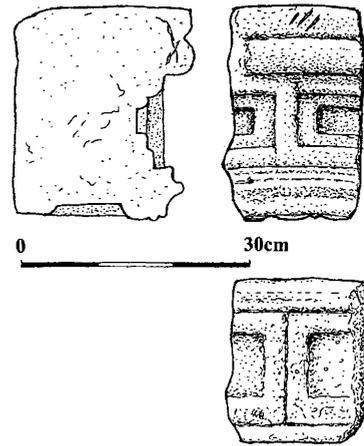


Fig. 11 Re-used Romanesque voussoir (scale 1:10).

angle above a series of sunk boxes, recessed in two levels; the angle between face and soffit has a quadrant moulding and the soffit a simpler series of boxes recessed at one level only. The ornament is very typically Romanesque, and probably of mid-twelfth century date.

THE STRUCTURAL HISTORY OF THE TOWER

A Detached Tower within a Manorial Complex

Medieval towers in Northumberland, often grouped under the unhelpful traditional term of 'Pele Towers', fall into several categories.⁹ A small group are true tower-houses, which stood more or less alone (possibly with an enclosing wall or stockade) and were full-time residences in their own right. The Vicar's Pele at Corbridge is a good example; others, including several examples in the north of the county, are of sixteenth-century date (e.g., Coupland and Duddo) and show links to the much commoner tower houses of Scotland.

Most Northumberland towers however seem to have formed part of a larger medieval house, and these fall into two types. In the first the tower was physically linked to the main domestic quarters, generally forming a solar at one end of a hall, as at Low Hall at Corbridge, Shortflatt, Welton and probably Belsay. In the

second type it stood a short distance clear of the main buildings to form a more-readily defensible retreat in time of need, examples being Chipchase, Halton and the tower attached to the monastic cell on Coquet Island.

Cresswell seems most likely to fall into the second of these types. The machicolations above the entrance (A8), as at Burradon and Elsdon, show that the tower stood physically clear of adjacent structures. The restricted headroom on the upper floors, however, argues against them ever having served as the principal domestic quarters of a moneyed family, so this is unlikely to have been a tower house proper, but rather a tower standing in proximity to a separate hall block. Hodgson¹⁰ records that the Mansion House built *c.* 1750 replaced an earlier house with an attached chapel 'on the same site'; this which was presumably the medieval hall associated with the tower, which had probably been enlarged and modernised in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The seventeenth-century lintel, now re-set in the south wall of the 'Old Monks' Chapel' outbuilding north-west of the tower (see pp. 89–90), may be its only relic.

Access to the upper doorway of the tower may have been by means of an external stair or, perhaps more likely, by a bridge from the adjacent medieval building, as seems to have been the case at Cocklaw.

The Date and Internal Arrangements of the Tower

The tower is substantial and well-built, but its architectural features are plain and functional, presenting little in the way of dating evidence, although the flattened four-centred arches of the first-floor fireplaces (C9) and (D4) seem unlikely to be any earlier than the fifteenth century.

A number of secondary alterations to the structure are also very difficult to date. Some, such as the insertion of the eastern first-floor window in the south wall (E5), may be of sixteenth or seventeenth century date; it is possible that the outer openings of the two larger first-floor windows (A5) and (C4) were

remodelled to a simple mullion-and-transom cross form at this time as well.

As built, the basement of the tower was doubtless given over to storage, whilst the first-floor rooms provided tenable domestic quarters, the larger as a hall-cum-kitchen (the large floor-level drain must imply some kitchen function) and the smaller as a solar. The unheated and low chambers above were doubtless bedrooms. There are also a number of rather unusual minor features, some of uncertain function, such as the flue (A13) at the north-west corner of the basement, the sink/drain (C1–2) beside the principal first-floor fireplace, the slopstone/drain from the second-floor lobby (B4), and the little arched recesses (B8) and (D6) in the second-floor chambers. The mural inscription in the top chamber in the turret is also a rarity.

The Mid-Eighteenth Century House

Hodgson records that the 'Mansion House' was constructed by the third William Cresswell, who was resident in 1749. This house, unlike its predecessor, was physically linked to the tower. A number of changes to the fabric of the tower may correlate with its construction. One is the replacement of both the original ground (A1) and first-floor (A3) doorways by the new ones (A2) and (A4), set further west to clear the axial stack at the south end of the house; other changes that probably took place at the same time are the partitioning of the basement, and the reconstruction of the parapets. There was no attempt to disguise the old tower as part of the new house;¹¹ on the contrary its parapet was reconstructed either to retain or perhaps to regain its 'medieval' appearance, and the openings in its external walls were left entirely alone.

Our knowledge of the appearance of the Mansion House is based on Hodgson's brief descriptions, and two drawings – an early nineteenth-century print reproduced by Hodgson (fig. 12), and an unpublished pencil sketch dated 1836 sketch by Richardson¹² – and the surviving front doorway, retained as part of the boundary wall.

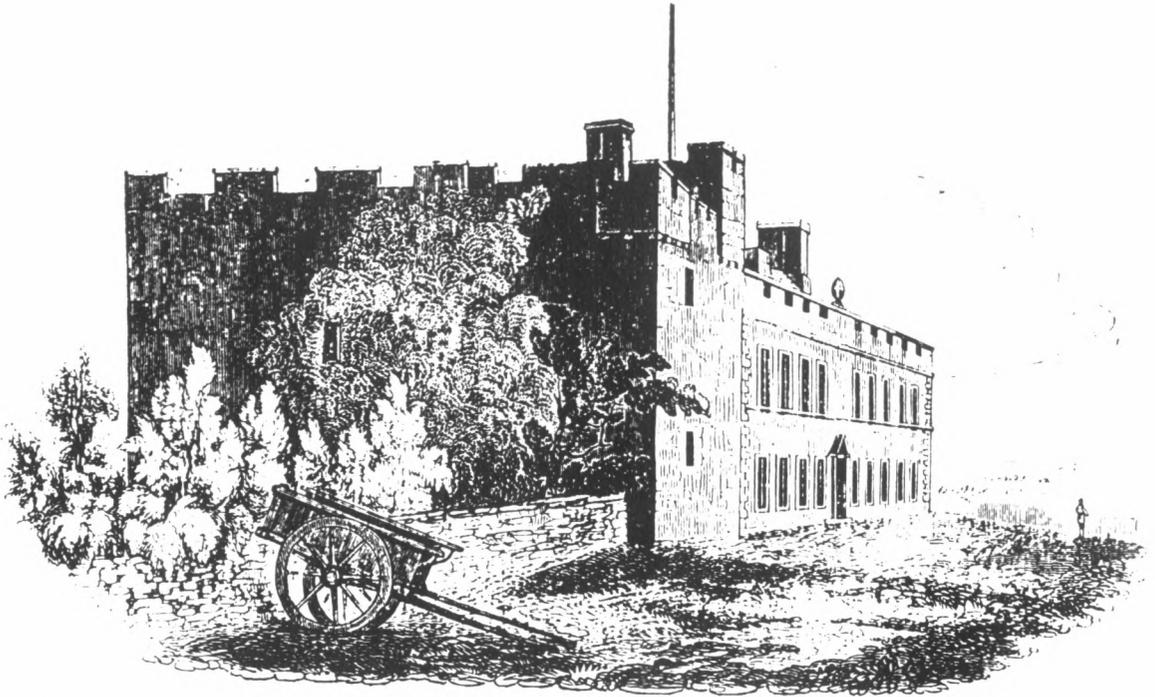


Fig. 12 Hodgson's engraving (c. 1830).

The drawings show an elongate two-storied range with its openings divided into four, three and then two bays; between each section are surprisingly long unpierced sections of wall. There was a band forming the sills of the first-floor windows, and another at the base of the parapet, which had what appeared to be a short section of open balustrade above the openings of each bay. There are some significant discrepancies between the two illustrations. Hodgson shows the doorway as between fourth and fifth bays, whilst Richardson shows it as the lower opening in the fifth bay; Richardson shows all the openings as having triangular pediments, whereas Hodgson records only the doorway with one. Richardson shows three ridge stacks whilst Hodgson includes a fourth at the south end, and also includes some sort of finial or ornament on the parapet above the doorway.

The surviving roof weathering on the tower (A10) shows that the eighteenth-century house had a rear outshut with a roof at a slightly lesser pitch; this may not have extended the full length of the building, as Richardson's sketch seems to show the north end as a symmetrical gable, although a window in it seems to be set between the first and second floor levels.

All that remains of this house today is the front doorway, now forming part of the boundary wall to the north of the tower. The door (blocked) has a lugged architrave and a triangular pediment above; on either side is a stub of walling, made up of cut sandstone blocks, with a plinth and a ground-floor sill band (not shown on either drawing!), terminating in the remains of window architraves at either side. This suggests that, as regards the overall arrangement of openings, Hodgson's print was the more accurate.

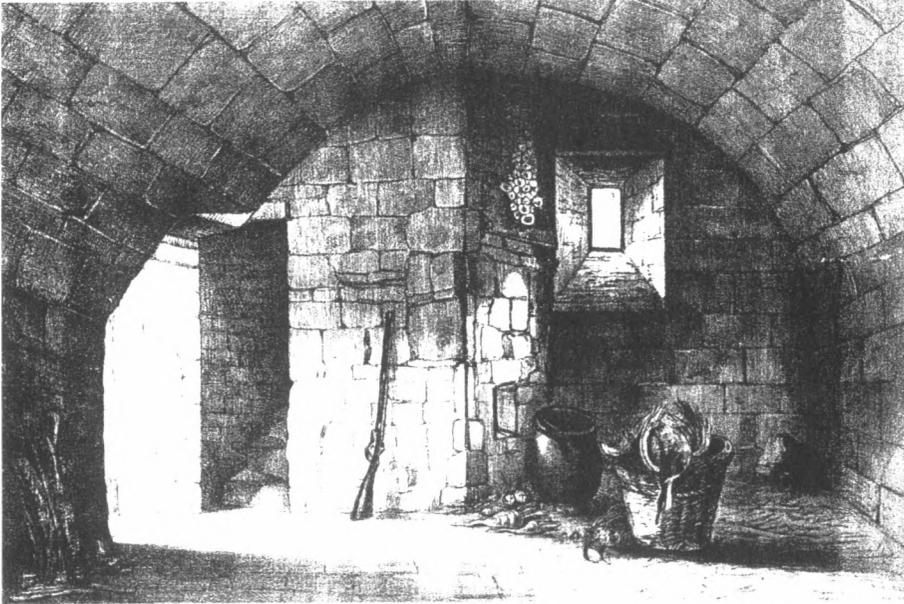


Fig. 13 1849 Drawings of the interior of the tower. These were provided by Mr T. Williamson of 5 South Side, Cresswell, and were probably made soon after the restoration; note that the basement doorway is in the present position. The artist has made several minor errors, e.g. in the type of stonework in the basement vault, etc. Other illustrations in the same series are reported to be held by a branch of the Cresswell family now living in Australia.

The Mid-Nineteenth Century Restoration of the Tower

It seems probable that the demolition of the Mansion House was accompanied by a restoration of the tower; the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle MS survey,¹³ now bound into its copy of Hodgson's *History*, may have been made at this time. The fact that it shows the large first-floor window on the north of the tower (A5) as restored to its original condition, and the blocked ground-floor doorway (A2) in dotted outline (whereas other blocked openings are omitted) rather suggests that it represents a proposal for the restoration, and that the planned works were not carried out in their entirety. The original ground-floor doorway (A1) was restored, the brick partition walls removed from the basement and, apparently, the roof renewed. It would appear that the timbers of the second floor had already been removed by this time; at any rate the floor was not reinstated. The tower became part of the extensive grounds around the new Cresswell Hall, the great mansion built by the Cresswells (later Baker-Cresswells) in 1821–5, and was obviously something of an attraction; one of the hall carriage drives ran past it, with a mounting platform alongside for visitors to dismount and examine the building.

There was evidently some further restoration of the tower in the early twentieth century; Hugill¹⁴ states that the roof was in good condition, 'having been cemented and tiled by the late owner, Mr Wardill'.

The Twentieth Century: Vandalism and Decay

Following the sale of Cresswell Hall to Northumberland County Council in 1924, and its demolition during the 1930s, the condition of the tower's fabric declined sharply. The once well-tended grounds and gardens around the site of the mansion fell into decay, and the tower suffered increasing assaults from vandals. Although a visit by an Ordnance Survey Inspector in 1954¹⁵ noted that the building was still roofed and in excellent repair, by the later 1960s it seems to have been wrecked, and the

basement doorway was walled up to deter entry. Attacks continued, both by assailants climbing into the windows (all basement and first floor windows were eventually walled up in the 1980s) and by ambitious attempts to quarry an entry through the walls. The roof was completely removed, sections of the parapet thrown down, and slab flooring robbed at both basement and first-floor levels. Trees took root in the debris piling up at first-floor level, and their roots occasioned further structural damage.

THE ENVIRONS OF THE TOWER

This is not the place to embark upon a description and analysis of the early- to mid-nineteenth century planned landscape around Cresswell Hall (although this would merit a detailed study in itself); however, it is this that is responsible for the present setting of the tower. It stands on the perimeter of the Hall grounds, with the tall boundary wall running almost in line with its east face, but being stepped out so as to allow a carriage drive to circumnavigate it. This carriage drive, and other footpaths in the grounds around the tower, are shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25 inches to 1 mile map of c. 1860; on the 2nd edition map of 1897 their pattern has been somewhat simplified. 30 m to the east of the tower is a roughly parallel and even taller wall which enclosed the extensive kitchen gardens. Around 50 m north of the tower the two walls are linked by an east-west wall bounding the public road; here the carriage drive that ran from Cresswell Hall, past the tower, exited from the grounds via a segmental-headed archway, its lintel formed by a massive slab 2.9 m long.

Just within the grounds, built into the angle between the north boundary wall and the tall kitchen garden wall, are the ruins of an outbuilding, its roof pent against the taller wall. This, like the walls, is all of early to mid-nineteenth-century date, but is locally known as 'The Old Monks' Chapel'.¹⁶ Its main feature of interest is an earlier lintel of soft ferruginous

sandstone, clearly re-used, which has been re-set over the window in its south wall. The lintel bears what appears to be a series of initials (HBC. . .B. . .BD etc), carved in relief in sunk panels, and a date, of which only '16..' is now visible. Its style is typical of the seventeenth century, and it may be a relic of some alterations to the manor house carried out prior to the mid-eighteenth century rebuilding.

The area to the north of the Tower, where the eighteenth-century Mansion House, and presumably also the earlier manor house and its chapel, stood is now quite heavily wooded; tree roots will have inevitably occasioned some degree of disturbance to buried archaeological remains.

SURVEY NOTE

A detailed study of Cresswell Tower made in January/February 2000 as part of a programme of archaeological recording funded by the owners, Queensborough Holdings was made prior to conservation works. The elevations of the wall faces, both internal and external, are based on a series of rectified photographs. Those of the external face of the north wall were taken by the West Yorkshire Archaeology Service, the others by P. F. Ryder, who carried out the remainder of the survey work, assisted by Megan Ryder and Joanna Willis. Figures 1–9 were prepared for publication by Mark Hoyle.

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NOTES

¹ J. C. Hodgson, *A History of Northumberland*, Part II, 2, Newcastle (1832), 200.

² In the pedigree given by Hodgson mid-eighteenth century members are styled as 'of Woodhorn'.

³ Hodgson, *Northumberland*, Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle library reference copy: Ref. Aj 343, 205

⁴ *ibid.*, marginal note stating that 'additions to the old tower' was taken down in 1840; the 1846 Tithe map (Northumberland Record Office) simply indicates the tower as a small solitary rectangle.

⁵ R. C. Leach, *The History of Cresswell, Ellington, Linton, Lynemouth and Woodhorn* (1986), 2.

⁶ E.g., W. W. Tomlinson, *Comprehensive Guide to the County of Northumberland*, London (1912), 294.

⁷ Its date is unclear; such cross windows can occur in a medieval context (e.g., the fourteenth-century gatehouse of Whorlton Castle, Cleveland) but are more common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

⁸ A series of plans and elevations, in pencil, inserted in the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle Antiquaries' copy of Hodgson's *History*; not dated, but perhaps made c. 1840 prior to restoration works.

⁹ For a discussion see N. Pevsner *et al*, *The Buildings of England: Northumberland*, 2nd ed., Harmondsworth (1992), 61–4.

¹⁰ Hodgson, *Northumberland*, 205.

¹¹ Contrast Chipchase where the tower was given large false windows to match in with the adjacent eighteenth-century facade.

¹² Northumberland County Record Office; ref. ZAN M13/F13, 17.

¹³ See note 8

¹⁴ R. Hugill, *Borderland Castles and Peles* (1939), 77.

¹⁵ Ordnance Survey Record Card; copy in the library of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle.

¹⁶ This may well preserve the memory of the ancient chapel mentioned by Hodgson; it is tempting to correlate the re-used architectural fragments found in the tower, notably the Romanesque voussoir (p. 85) with this. Some years ago a medieval cross slab grave cover was found in Cresswell village, not far to the north of the site, and taken to Woodhorn Church Museum (see P. Ryder, 'Medieval Cross Slab Grave Covers in Northumberland, 2: Newcastle and South East Northumberland', *AA*⁵, 30 (2002), 102, 136).