EDLINGHAM CASTLE, NORTHUMBERLAND

by Graham Fairclough

An interim account of excavations, 1978-82

Part I

1. Introduction: historical and regional background

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Northumberland became a land of fortified houses. A list compiled in 1415 recorded, apart from the major castles with royal or baronial origins in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, about one hundred fortified domestic sites (Bates 1891 pp.11-20). The majority of these were simple stone towers, many still surviving in the countryside. The remainder were described as *fortalicia,* fortified places or small castles. Edlingham Castle was one of the latter.

One of the principal causes of this late medieval profusion of fortified houses (and many more were raised during the fifteenth century), was the proximity of the border with Scotland. At an earlier period, a similar situation in the Welsh marches had given rise to large numbers of small earthen castles. In the later middle ages, the normal tension between neighbouring kingdoms was raised in the north to a state of almost constant hostility, and frequently of open warfare, by the long-lived repercussions of Edward I's failure to gain in Scotland the political and military domination that he had won in Wales. The turbulence of the three centuries after 1296 is well-known (e.g. Nicolson 1965, Tuck 1971). One result was that at a period when in southern England even the major nobility were beginning to build their castles and manor houses in a less military style, almost every minor lord, and some members of the Church, in northern England felt impelled to add to their houses a strong stone tower or a curtain wall, or even to build new fortified houses (see, e.g. Allen Brown 1967 pp.128-131). Before c. 1300, the Northumbrian gentry had been content, and safe, within relatively undefended enclosures, perhaps moated at most. After c. 1330 (when the reality of the new situation was unavoidable, and when a period of English victories allowed a brief respite from damaging Scottish incursions) they began to build stone houses in considerable numbers. This change, and the continued evolution of military architecture at this relatively low social level, is one of the principal themes displayed within the ruins of Edlingham Castle. The other principal theme, one fundamental to the whole history of medieval castellar architecture, is that, however strong became the walls and towers of Edlingham, the

castle remained above all a domestic residence; a fortified manor house first, a castle second. It is a distinction emphasised by its topographical location, within the manorial enclosure of a small village.

2. The local context

Edlingham is presently a small hamlet, a mere handful of houses occupying the valley of the Edlingham Burn, a tributary of the River Aln. It stands, however, upon a much larger settlement nucleus of considerable antiquity. Eighth century documentary evidence of a *vill,* as well as the eleventh and twelfth century fabric in the church and the early place-name, testify to its pre-conquest history (NCH VII p. 14, p. 143). Only the castle, the church, and earthworks of deserted crofts surrounded by ridged fields survive of the extensive later medieval village.

The castle is situated at the east end of the village site. It occupies a small hillock of clay in low-lying ground next to the small burn. Apart from possibly some form of caretaker or squatter occupation, it has been abandoned since the middle of the seventeenth century, and decades of collapse and deliberate stone-removal had by the beginning of this century left little above ground. The walls of its enclosure and some of its buildings were visible as earthworks, and some fragments of masonry stood to considerable heights, but only the mid-late fourteenth century tower retained any architectural integrity. This tower, despite the almost complete collapse of its east and south walls and even in its spectacularly broken state, has attracted frequent historical and antiquarian notice, mainly because the unusual richness of its interior fittings, including caryatid sculpture, singles it our amongst the many Northumbrian towers (Wood 1965 p. 168, 264; Pevsner 1967 p. 44, p. 143-4). The singular importance of this tower, and the clearly well-preserved below-ground remains of the rest of the castle, were the justifications for its entry in 1973 into the guardianship of the Department of the Environment.

3. The excavation

Five seasons of excavation, from 1978, have been carried out, with considerable local support, by the Department's Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments. The excavation had as its first aim the display and consolidation of the complete plan (fig. 1) of a small northern castle of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While excavation of the earliest deposits was restricted by the decision to avoid disturbance of the remains of the latest periods, it was also possible to examine the castle's development from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, with particular reference to its distinctive regional context. Finally, the role and

Edlingham Castle: A general view from the north taken in 1981

An aerial view of Edlingham Castle taken in 1979

function of the tower itself, and its relation to other northern towers, was investigated. Too often these towers have been grouped generically as "pele-towers" (a term with no justification, deriving only from antiquarian distortion in the nineteenth century of the medieval term "pilum", a fenced or palisaded earthwork enclosure), with scant regard for the many nuances of function, date, and social status which they contain. The study of the later medieval domestic tower is particularly rewarding at Edlingham, where the tower has a firm architectural and domestic context, and stands adjacent to a contrasting earlier house-type, the Hall-house.

The excavation, and the detailed and continuing analysis of the structures and artefacts revealed, have demonstrated a long and complex history of rebuilding, modernisation, and fortification. The individual buildings (the Hall-house, the solar tower, a multi-period gatehouse, and various domestic offices), do not, apart from the tower and one turret of the Hall-house, stand above ground floor level, though the degree of preservation of their remains (and the evidence from the demolition layers) allows in many cases very extensive extrapolation and reconstruction. These buildings will be discussed below. First, a general account of the historical and social background, linked as far as it is at present possible to architectural development, will be presented. This, and particularly the building sequence, is a provisional account which further study is likely to refine or revise. It is however a more accurate picture of the castle's development than that provided in the earlier published interim account (Fairclough 1982).

4. Historical and architectural development

Although the village has pre-Conquest, and, as a settlement focus, probably prehistoric origins, a discussion of the historical background of the castle can begin in the twelfth century. The manor was then held as part of the serjeanty of Beanley by the earls of Dunbar and March, descendants of Gospatric, earl of Northumberland. The existence of such families, a genuinely Anglo-Scottish nobility, was one of the characteristics of the thirteenth century which the onset of war between the two countries rapidly altered (Barrow 1969, Tuck 1971 pp. 22-27). During the thirteenth century junior members of the family of Gospatric established themselvs on the different constituent manors or estates of the serjeanty. One such cadet line, taking the village name for themselves, came to Edlingham, some time before the middle of the century (NCH VII pp. 95-6). The capital messuage of John de Edlingham (floruit 1230-70) and his descendants probably consisted simply of a moated enclosure using the Burn on its south, and protecting buildings of timber.

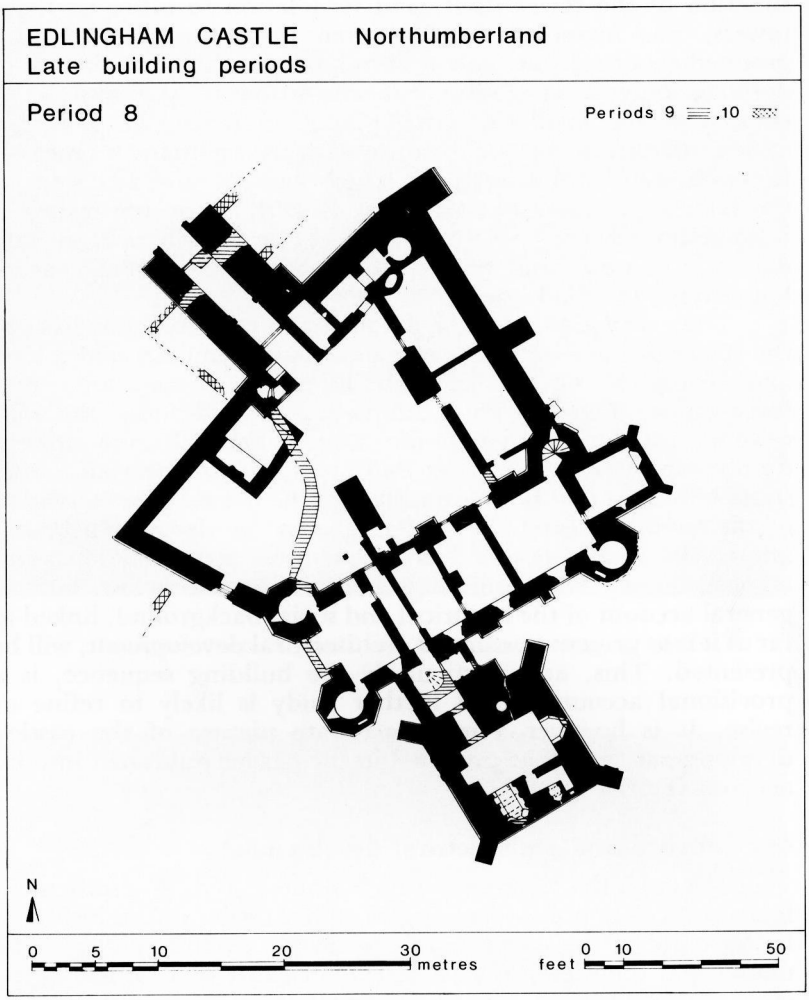


Fig. 1.

Nothing of this period seeems to be visible at the site, but the remains of ditches excavated in 1981-2, and attributed to periods 1 to 3, probably derive from the Edlingham occupation. The remains of a moated site with a similar topographic location survive as earthworks at Caistron, near Rothbury, where a second junior branch of the Gospatrics was established from the mid-thirteenth century (NCH VII p. 39).

The moated enclosure of the mid-late thirteenth century (period 3) is better known from the excavations than the very

tentatively identified earlier phases, as the position of the north side and the north east angle have been recognised, and the east and west sides can be inferred from later evidence. On the south, as probably in the earlier periods, the existing water-course provided part of the sequence. The moat of this period appears to be a northwards enlargement of its predecessor. It was a flat-bottomed ditch probably up to about 7 to 8m wide. The interior was levelled for the construction of the later Hall-house, and it is unlikely that any earlier occupation deposits survive. None were encountered in the small areas excavated below Hall-house construction levels. Nothing is thus known about the buildings within this moat, until the construction of the Hall-house which was associated with a larger enclosure and which probably was the work of the Edlingham's successors, after 1295.

William Felton, a man from a large and well-established family connected with the Lestranges of Litcham, Norfolk and Knockyn, Shropshire (NCH XII pp. 272-4) but personally of obscure origins, came to Edlingham as a relatively young man. It seems that his surname derives from West Felton in Shropshire, but he is first encountered in 1279 as a "husser" of the king's chamber. He rose, through royal service in Gaşcony (1286-89), Scotland (1290) and "divers countries" (1294), to become constable of Beaumaris (1295-1301) and Linlithgow (1302-3), serving at both during, and with some responsibility for, the building operations of James of St. George (NCH VII pp. 108-9). He was in Scotland on most of the military campaigns between 1298 and 1314, and on at least two occasions was responsible for raising, and leading to Carlisle, the Anglesey levies. Finally, through marriage to an heiress, Constance of Pontop, he gained extensive estates around Nafferton and Matfen in the south of Northumberland, and later added to his fortune by securing temporary grants of the lands and marriages of many of those disinherited of their English possessions on account of their Scottish loyalties (NCH VII pp. 107-11). When he came to Edlingham, which he purchased from Thomas de Edlingham, son of his predecessor at Beaumaris (NCH VII pp. 103-6) and perhaps a kinsman of his second wife Eustancia, he was thus well-established in the king's favour and already the holder of substantial Northumbrian lands. The Edlingham estates (including also the adjacent townships of Newtown and Lemmington) were, however, his in his own right. The Matfen lands he held only for his lifetime, with reversion to the daughters of his first wife, and it was thus at Edlingham that Sir William Felton made his principal residence.

It is therefore to Felton, and to the period around 1295-1300, that the balance of probability attributes the Hall-house of period 4. This is not inconsistent with the dates of the

building's nearest parallels, which span the mid-to-late thirteenth century, generally in les well-developed forms. Nor was it a period when such a relatively unfortified house would not be built, despite the English military intervention in Scotland (which only hindsight reveals as the start of decades of political instability and uncertainty—not until 1311 did Northumberland begin to experience severely damaging Scottish raids, Scammel 1958). Felton built his new house in the middle of the existing moat, though the preliminary site clearance largely destroyed the old moat and necessitated its re-digging on a slightly larger circuit, in places apparently partly revetted with stone. In the house itself can be seen a statement of William Felton's status and pretensions. It was a lordly Hall-house, of a building type which looked back in time to earlier medieval palatial *aulae,* but was in other ways in the mainstream of contemporary design. In particular, it boasted a first-floor hall, with a by-then archaic central hearth invoking notions of lordship; but these features were part of a carefully conceived integrated group of rooms within a predetermined plan whose octagonal corner turrets perhaps owe something to Felton's experience of royal building of the period.

This moated house passed in c. 1328 to Felton's son, the second Sir William Felton. It was by then more obvious to the Northumbrian gentry that the Anglo-Scottish peace of the thirteenth century was but a memory of their grandparents, and it must have been clear that improved domestic defences were necessary. From about that date, a brief respite for Northern England was given by the Treaty of Northampton and, in the 1330s, when the young Edward III seized the military initiative in Scotland and came closest to achieving the solution sought by his grandfather (Nicolson 1965). This was the period when Northumberland, temporarily freed of the enormous financial burden of the Scottish raids of 1311-28 (Scammel 1958), was able to turn toward the task of fortification. At Edlingham, this period coincided with the ownership of the second William Felton and, probably, with the fortification of the manor here designated as period 5. (fig. 2, top)

The younger William Felton followed a career similar to his father's (NCH VII pp. 113-116). He preserved his father's estates by purchasing from his half-sisters most of the Nafferton and Matfen lands, and again benefitted financially at the expense of "delinquent" Anglo-Scottish nobles. He extended the Edlingham demesne by securing the grant of tenements still held by the earl of March. He even attempted his father's tactic of a rich marriage (though Scalachronica tells a different tale of romantic love for his ward) when he married (without gaining the title) Isabel, the

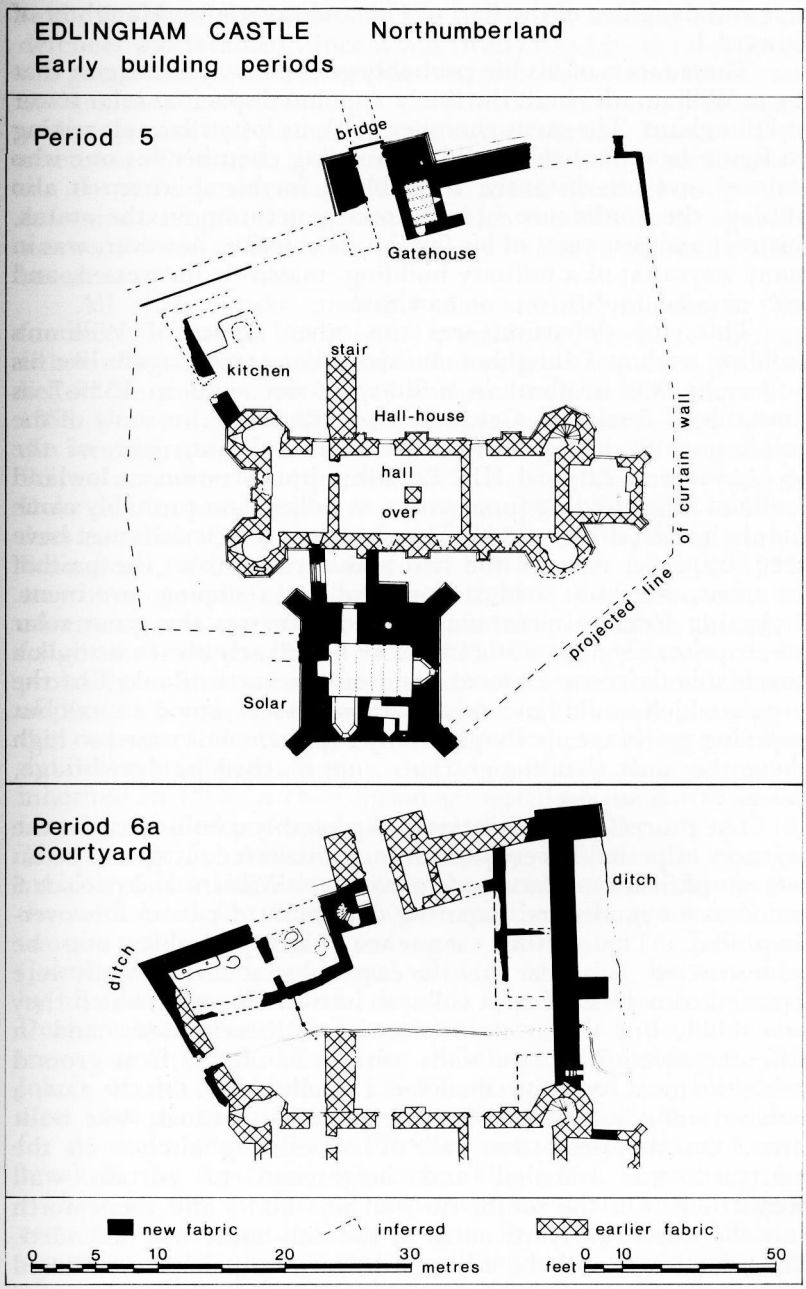

EDLINGHAM CASTLE Northumberland
Early building periods
Period 5
bridge
Gatehouse
kitchen
stair
Hall-house
hall
over
of curtain wall
projected line
Solar
Period 6a
courtyard
ditch
ditch
new fabric
inferred
earlier fabric
0 5 10 20 30 metres
0 10 50 feet

Fig. 2.

heir and daughter of the Earl of Fife and great granddaughter of Edward I.

These facets of his life probably go some way to suggest that it was William who built the finely-appointed spacious solar tower at Edlingham. The great chamber, with its lofty rib-vault resting on figure-head corbels, would be a fitting chamber for one who claimed, even so distantly, royal blood for his children. It also displays the confidence of a second generation in the status, fortune, and prospects of his family. Its exterior, however, was in many ways that of a military building, massively buttressed, and with circular roof-turrets or bartizans.

This, the defensive, was the other aspect of William's building work at Edlingham. In his earlier career, again like his father, he was involved in military service, and in 1335-7 as constable of Roxburgh Castle he was responsible for some of the building work intended to turn Roxburgh into one of the cornerstones of Edward III's English administration in lowland Scotland. His building programme at Edlingham probably came later in his life, after c. 1340. The change at this period must have been dramatic. Around the hall-house, rising from the base of the moat, was built a high stone wall on a sloping revetment. Projecting from this curtain on the south was the great solar tower, primarily a domestic structure but clearly also in its bulk a formidable defensive element. And on the north, flanked by the curtain which would have risen to about 25 feet, stood a small but imposing gatehouse, perhaps of only two floors but raised so high above the moat that the entrance, approached by drawbridge, was at first floor level.

The process of fortification was probably continuous, for the defences of period 5 were not for long unaltered. It would be an over-simplification to attribute period 5 to William and periods 6 and 7 to his successors. Even the definition of period 6 is over-simplified. The actual sequence can probably not be reconstructed. It is clear that the east and west curtain walls were replaced, due to structural collapse into the moat in which they were built, but they were replaced at different dates and in different styles. The new walls were built on the firm ground inside the moat, and thus enclosed a smaller area. On the east, a massive wall, buttressed over the period 1-3 moat, was built anew. On the west, the wall of an existing kitchen in the courtyard was widened and heightened to curtain wall proportions. On the south, no wall was built, and thenceforth only the small courtyard north of the hall-house was defended. The solar tower and the adjacent burn were pehaps considered adequate defence. This is probably the period when all external doors were blocked unless they opened into the smaller walled courtyard even though this necessitated very extensive alterations

to the fabric of the house. On the north, the existing line of the defences was retained, since it was firmly fixed by the location of the gate-tower. The wall on the west was, however, rebuilt, and at the same time a stair turret was added to the gate, presumably adding yet another pinnacle to the castle's skyline. It was with the extension of the gate to the north, almost doubling the length of the entrance passageway, that the tower attained its greatest defensive strength. The extent to which this defensive capability was considered to be seriously military in intent will be discussed latter.

All these works probably date to the middle or late fourteenth century, but it is not possible at present to attribute either absolute dates or even a full relative sequence. William Felton the younger was buried in the church at Edlingham in c. 1358. His son, a third William, was occupied overseas for most of the remaining ten years of his life, holding office as seneschal of Poitou and then of Aquitaine before dying in battle with the Duke of Lancaster's expedition in Spain (NCH VII pp. 116-17). It does not seem likely that he carried out much building work at Edlingham, although his heir, his half-brother John (d. 1396), may have occupied the castle prior to 1368. John followed a less adventuresome career than his half-brother or father, though he fought at Otterburn (NCH VI pp. 118-19), but it was nevertheless probably he who commissioned much of the work on the defences of periods 6 and 7, and to whom the first full-scale planning of the courtyard (including the laying of the existing cobbling) should be attributed. It may also be significant that whereas he inherited in 1368 "a chief messuage worth £4 pa"(i.e. leased or farmed), he died possessed of "a castle" (NCH VII p.117, p. 119). The change in definition may simply indicate the changed outlook of Northumbrian society, but could equally denote that the additional fortifications (perhaps the enlarged gatehouse) constituted in his neighbours' eyes a new order. As John's son (John) died a minor, and royal ward, in 1402 and was succeeded by his half-sister Elizabeth, the wife of a Yorkshire and County Durham landowner, Sir Edmund Hastings, it is probable that there was a period of inactivity at Edlingham following the first John's death (NCH VII p. 119-20). It is indeed very likely that after 1396 the castle ceased to be a principal residence other than for short periods, and the fifteenth century appears to form a break in the structural sequence. This break is probably less evident in the artefactual sequence, however, and it almost certainly does not indicate a gap in occupation. What is suggested is that no new major building works were undertaken after c. 1422 (the date of Elizabeth Felton's death, after which date Edmund Hastings personal involvement with Edlingham seems to end) and probably after the 1390s.

With the purchase of Edlingham in 1514 by the constable of Prudhoe Castle, George Swinburne, (a cousin of the larger family of Swinburnes with estates in the south of Northumberland, who had already acquired the old Nafferton lands of the original Felton estate) the castle again became a principal residence of its owners (NCH VII pp. 129-32). To the sixteenth century Swinburne periods belongs the final re-ordering of the house and its defences, in periods 8 and 9. A length of the north curtain wall, probably dilapidated through subsidence, was rebuilt (as part of the reconstruction of the kitchen block), and the north ditch was refurbished and revetted in clay. It would appear that the other defences of the castle were not restored, an indication perhaps that Swinburne was most interested in the façade of military strength rather than the reality. The remainder of the works of this period were concerned with the modernisation of the house. In the courtyard, a new kitchen was built in the ruins of the fourteenth century west range, and an entirely new, enlarged range of lodgings was built along the east curtain wall. Later in the century, probably during the tenancy of Sir Thomas Swinburne, since the Inquisition Post Mortem Inventory of his possessions in 1572 describes the castle in its latest form (NCH VII p. 131-2), a final reconstruction took place. Extensive alterations were made to the Hall-house and tower, amounting to a complete re-design of the building's plan. In particular, the ground floor kitchen was improved and its fireplace enlarged, presumably to correspond with the reduction, and later the demolition, of the west range kitchen. The area occupied by the residential areas to the castle was at this time much reduced, several of the rooms being converted to farm-buildings to shelter animals.

For most of this period, the Swinburnes were one of the leading recusant families in the county. Thomas's son, John, in 1615 disinherited his own protestant son, and despite law and litigation the estate passed to his daughter Margaret, the wife of William Swinburne of Capheaton, and probably from the 1630's the castle at Edlingham again ceased to be a principal residence. By 1661 it had become a convenient quarry for building materials, when in August of that year sums of money were paid for stone and "pulling down timber" at Edlingham Castle for use at Newtown (NRO-ZSW Swinburne 227). Some form of occupation continued (NHC VII p. 140). The gatehouse passage was converted to pedestrian use at about this period, and buildings were erected against the gatehouse and the west curtain wall. These changes probably date to the early eighteenth century, when a map of 1737 (NRO Swinburne Add. map 3) shows groups of cottages in the castle field, a late relic of the medieval village. But this was also the period of the establishment of elder trees on the castle's tumbled walls, and apart from

sheltering cattle and visiting antiquarians, the castle remained undisturbed until the 1970s.

Part II

1. The gatehouse and the castle's defences

The present approach to the castle, from the west, gives little indication of the strength and nature of the fourteenth century defences. A fourteenth century visitor would arrive at the castle, probably through an outer, agricultural, court, from the north, and would be faced by a wide ditch revetted on its inner side by high walls on a splayed base. In the centre of the facade a tall gate-tower protected the principal entrance, reached by drawbridge high above the base of the ditch. A generation later, the gatehouse in its enlarged form must have been a much more imposing building. In contrast, the other sides of the castle, particularly in the later periods of its history, presented a much less military aspect, particularly on the south where the wall of the solar tower, pierced at first floor level by wide traceried windows, faced only the small burn and the countryside beyond.

The difference between the entrance façade and the other sides of the castle suggests that more than defensive considerations were involved in the design of the castle's entrance. The relatively modest curtain walls of both period 5 and 6, protected by ditches (in period 6 with a berm between wall and ditch), were probably adequate defences for a manor house of the size of Edlingham, comparable to the defences erected at, for example, Aydon Castle. The addition of the gatehouse, especially in its enlarged form, and the military style chosen for the solar tower, ought probably to be attributed to other intentions than merely defence. Foremost among these must have been the Feltons' determination to build on a scale to match their social rank or pretension. A gatehouse was more than an indication of its builder's military power. It also defined the limits of lordship, both territorially and socially, and was frequently regarded as a symbol for lordship itself. A formal gatehouse was a *sine qua non* of castle architecture and the little that is known about the second William Felton suggests that he would build a castle, rather than more simply fortify his father's house. The overwhelming importance of display in castellar architecture is a frequent element of contemporary accounts, as, for instance, in the description of the first sight of Sir Bertilak's castle in the alliterative Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight (lines 764-821).

The first gatehouse at Edlingham, far more modest within than without, was as simple as was consistent with its intended dignity. On the exterior it could sustain its associations of power,

a tall tower with drawbridge, portcullis within, and wooden doors closing the passage. It was nevertheless a small building. The ground floor chamber, once vaulted, did not fully control the passage, though a window may have opened from it onto the entrance way. A first floor does not survive, but it must be inferred from the garderobe shaft arrangements and the requirements of bridge and portcullis winching. It was probably a well-equipped chamber with at least one subsidiary mural chamber for the garderobe, but it was small, and probably given over to use by a senior household servant or a less important member of the family, perhaps a younger child.

The gatehouse, however, must be seen in the context of the building programme of which it was a part, alongside the contemporary stone curtain and the massive solar tower. While the solar tower was pre-eminently a residential block of the highest order, it at the same time fulfilled a military role. This role found expression in the external architecture of the building: the small circular turrets, or bartizans, corbelled out at the corners, the evidence for a wall-walk and parapet, and the afterthought of its stair turret standing higher than the main building. All these features, although their intent is partly belied by the priority given (in the siting of windows and structurally-weakening mural chambers) to domestic considerations, place the tower in the mainstream of fourteenth century northern military design. Indeed, in its synthesis of the domestic with the military, Felton's solar tower encapsulated the very essence of castle design.

In its enlargement towards the end of the fourteenth century, the gatehouse became a considerably more substantial structure. The first stage was the improvement of first floor access, probably originally by external stair, by the addition of a newel stair in a projecting turret at the south-west angle. The turret also provided stone benches in a recess opening off the entrance passage to allow the gate-keeper greater control over entry to the castle (even though by this period a subsidiary, only lightly fortified, door existed through the west curtain wall). The second stage was the major extension to the north, doubling the length of the entrance passage and providing a second outer drawbridge, but in no other way strengthening the defences. Indeed, the new passage walls were pierced by two large window embrasures which (even if perched high over an adjacent moat) suggest that defence was again not the only consideration. It seems more probable that the intention was to improve the first floor accommodation and to even more dramatically emphasise the castle owners' view of their rank. A large stone shield found in the adjacent field, though now undecorated, was probably originally part of a painted display of heradry on this facade of

the gate. Such displays are common in Northumberland, and underline the important symbolism of the gatehouse. The improved accommodation perhaps consisted of a single larger chamber, but more probably allowed the addition of an inner chamber to the existing room. One context, for instance, for such an upgrading of accommodation might be the period c. 1398 to 1422, when John Felton's widow Elizabeth held a third part of the manor (which might have included part of the castle as well as the Newtown tower) in dower. Another, earlier, context could be the absence in the 1360s of William Felton, when apartments for a constable might have been provided.

2. The courtyard: domestic offices and lodgings

A small courtyard lay between the gate and the Hall-house from period 6, the later fourteenth century. This courtyard was a reduction from the larger area enclosed by moat and later wall in periods 4 and 5. The dispositions of buildings within the earlier courtyard is not very well known from the 1978-82 excavations. There was a building, a kitchen, in the west part of the area, and rubbish pits in the north-east corner, and the yard surface itself was apparently earth and pebble, but most of the deposits of this period are either hidden beneath the cobbling of the later courtyard, or were removed by scarping after the construction of the shorter curtain walls. The kitchen building's remains survive partly re-used as courtyard pavings (the bases of a hearth and an oven) and partly incorporated within the later west curtain wall.

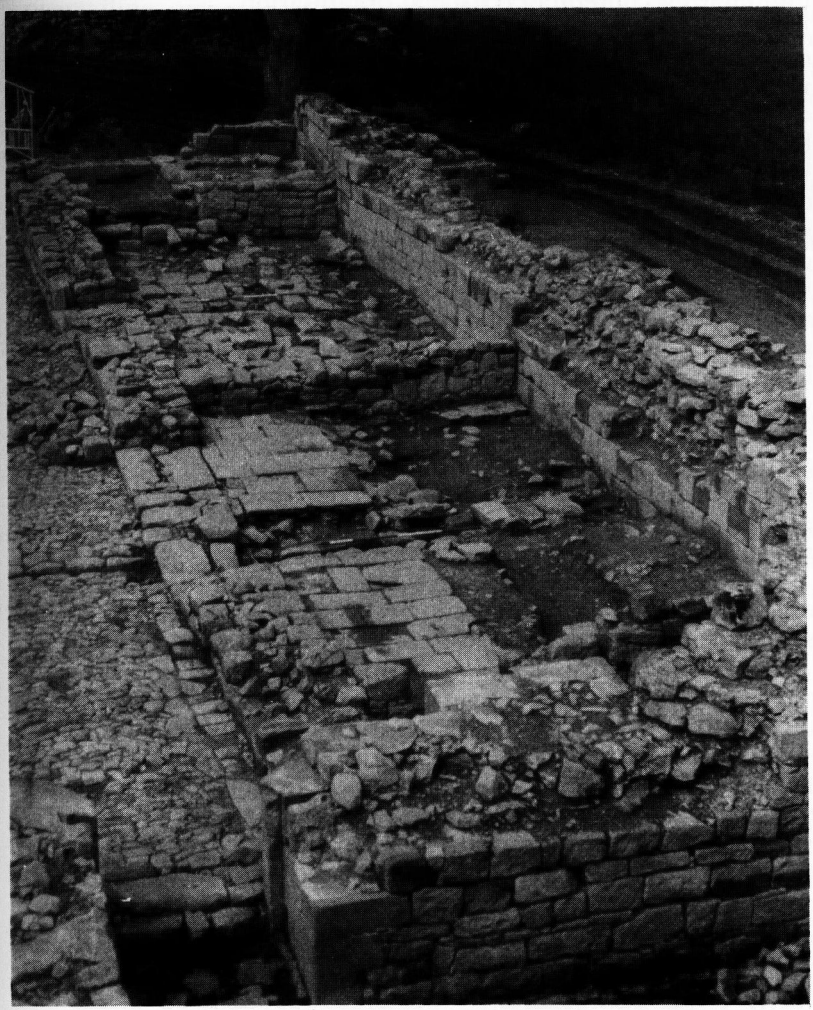
The location of this early kitchen, next to, and in communication with, the service end of the Hall-house, shows that the planning of the courtyard in its later phases has an early origin. When the courtyard was laid out in its present form, within the period 6 curtain walls in the second half of the fourteenth century, it was divided into two unequal parts, separated by the Hall-house external stair, a timber fence or gallery, and the west range gable. This division, of course, mirrored exactly the division between hall-and-chambers and service rooms in the Hall-house. The larger, eastern, area contained the entrances to the great hall and to private chambers in both Hall-house and gatehouse, and a separate block of lodgings with associated garderobe building against the east curtain wall. The smaller western area included the entrances to the Hall-house ground floor kitchens and had access to the external stair and thus the first floor service rooms, while against the north curtain wall was built a new kitchen block.

Two separate phase-plans can be produced of this smaller courtyard, a simplification of the several overlapping phases of its individual parts: the later fourteenth plan, the period of the laying of the existing finely-cobbled surface; and the

arrangements belonging to the sixteenth century Swinburne reconstruction.

The first of these (period 6) consisted of two identical buildings on opposite sides of the new cobbled courtyard (fig. 2, bottom). Both buildings were probably mainly timber-framed structures (though the west range, the kitchen, had at least a stone partition), and their structural remains are slight. They both consisted of two linked unequally-sized rooms. The east range is interpreted as lodgings, because of its location in the courtyard, the more easily-identified function of its successor, and its proximity to a small garderobe building (now revealed only by its external garderobe shaft) against the east curtain wall. The west range, occupying part of the site of the early kitchen, was evidently a kitchen as well. Extensive remains were excavated of many periods of hearths, cooking areas, and baking ovens, and the patterns of burning on the adjacent curtain walls suggest that many further periods of kitchen structures did not survive in the stratigraphic record. The relationship with the Hall-house was retained from the earlier period, though at a greater distance, and a row of very deep post-sockets in the courtyard indicate either a sheltering screen or possibly a covered way or pentice to allow cooked food to be carried to the Hall-house stairs. The smaller Hall-house kitchen (at this date its fireplace not yet enlarged to its present size) will have supplemented the main external kitchens; those activities such as roasting or baking with most risk of fire being carried on in the courtyard range, while lighter work (for instance the preparation of hot sauces and gravies particularly important to a meal which was served across an open courtyard) would be conducted within the Hall-house.

In the replanning of the courtyard in period 8, in the sixteenth century, the broad outlines of the court's arrangement was unaltered (fig. 1). The kitchen remained in the west range, though (despite a new large fireplace) eventually reduced to only one, subdivided, room. To compensate for this shrinkage, the fireplace in the internal Hall-house kitchen was substantially enlarged. The east range was conversely entirely rebuilt in a much larger, and stone-built, form. The new building was wider and longer, and of two floors. It initially consisted of four identically-sized rooms (two on the first floor reached by external stair), an arrangement suggestive of a group of lodgings of equal status rather than a hierarchical suite of chambers. At the south end it incorporated the site of the earlier garderobe block, though arrangements for access are unclear. In this building, too, changes in function were later made, notably the conversion of most of the lower floor to animal sheds, and the introduction into the north end of a large boiling emplacement with adjacent oven, probably the brew-house listed in the 1572 Inventory.



The east range of the courtyard (period 8) looking north

3. Hall-house and solar tower: domestic planning

All the structures so far described existed to defend or serve the Hall-house built by the first Sir William Felton. This major building, and specifically the hall itself on the first floor, was the focus of activity in the castle for most of its lifetime, a long period which saw many social changes which are to some extent reflected in the structural history of the house. At least three distinct domestic arrangements can be recognised in the Hall-house, each

illuminating contemporary social organisation.

The Hall-house is a long rectangular block with octagonal corner turrets. There is a narrower projection from the east end, which, though of the primary fabric, is probably an afterthought of design, or perhaps an on-site modification deriving from the balance between Felton's domestic requirements and the original symmetrical design. The western end gives a better appreciation of the original intention, forming a facade of two close-set symmetrically-octagonal turrets framing an originally buttressed gable. Later alterations have damaged the full effect of what, facing to the village, must have ben intended as a principal display facade. The other set-piece elevation will have been the south wall, now poorly preserved except where concealed by the later solar tower, but originally probably with one or two tiers of wide upper-floor windows, articulated by buttresses and the turrets, overlooking the stream, open countryside, and, perhaps gardens in the space between hall and stream. On the north ws the entrance front, flanked by a courtyard, and dominated probably by the stairs to the first floor hall door and the ground floor east end main chamber entrance.

This Hall-house must have been among the major purely domestic buildings of contemporary Northumberland. It has several close parallels in the thirteenth century, for instance in the Tynedale Hall-houses of Dally, Tarset, and Haughton, but none of the earlier buildings fully display the symmetry or the careful interior planning of Edlingham. The building was at first self-contained. The first floor hall (reached as at Aydon by external stair) was served from the west by ground floor kitchen and store-room and by first floor serving room (perhaps already through screens). To the east it supported sets of private chambers on two or three levels, with the probability also of additional chambers over the service end (Fairclough 1982 figs. 3, 5). Two main suites can be identified: a principal group of three rooms most intimately linked to the hall; and a single room at ground floor level in the projection, distinguished by its own fireplace and, particularly, by the independence afforded by a separate entrance. At least the south-eastern turret was of three floors, and it is probable that second floors existed to either end of the main double-storey hall, in mezzanine relationship to the hall and thus providing two further isolated chambers.

This complexity of internal planning was integrated within a single building of semi-fortified character, and again a conflation of the domestic with the military can be recognised. There were a few concessions to security (for instance, the ground floor windows were mere slits, and the doors, all with drawbars, were concentrated along a single front, presumably palisaded within its moat), and the buttresses may have carried a machicolated or

oversailing parapet. The upper floor plan, while carrying implications of lordship and status, was also an easy method of achieving some degree of security; and it is difficult to regard a tall building so buttressed and turreted as anything other than semi-fortified.

This ambivalence is much less evident in the solar tower (fig. 3) added in the middle of the fourteenth century. This building in its plan and elevation was first and foremost a defended tower. The extent to which this purpose conflicted with its residential role has already been discussed. In domestic terms the tower replaced in function the east end of the Hall-house, specifically the principal chamber-suite and a secondary chamber, probably that in the east projection. The existing chambers in the Hall-house survived, however, and the new tower therefore represents an expansion and a duplication of the private apartments of the castle. As mentioned above, one or more chambers were at this time also added in the gatehouse, and lodgings were built in the courtyard. This multiplication may not have been stimulated purely by increased population, but also by changes in the uses of private chambers. As some chambers, for example, came to take over some of the hall's public or semi-public functions, extra rooms were required to maintain privacy. This might particularly apply to the first floor room in the tower which in some ways was probably a subsidiary hall rather than a new great chamber. It may also be possible that space was reserved for additional autonomous households within the castle, for example for younger siblings or as dower-houses.

If the first floor chamber in the tower was indeed a semi-public room, perhaps a precursor of the late medieval parlour, this would partly explain the exceptional ostentation of its decoration. The sculptured heads, perhaps portraits, which supported the lofty rib-vaulting and the fireplace's intricately joggled lintel (NCH VII facing p. 126) are clearly designed for the maximum display possible. The absence of any garderobe at this level, but the existence of a well within the north wall, are more consistent with a Hall-type rather than a chamber, function, as perhaps is the extensive double-level fenestration. The upper floor of the tower was probably the principal chamber, with garderobe and fireplace (less elaborately decorated). Below the first floor chamber was a separate room, with its own antechamber, furnished with garderobe chamber, fireplace, and stone window-benches. Like the easternmost room in the Hall-house, or the chamber over the gatehouse, this lower room possessed a separate entrance. In contrast, the upper chamber was reached only through the first floor room, to which it was thus functionally related as part of the castle's main set of apartments.

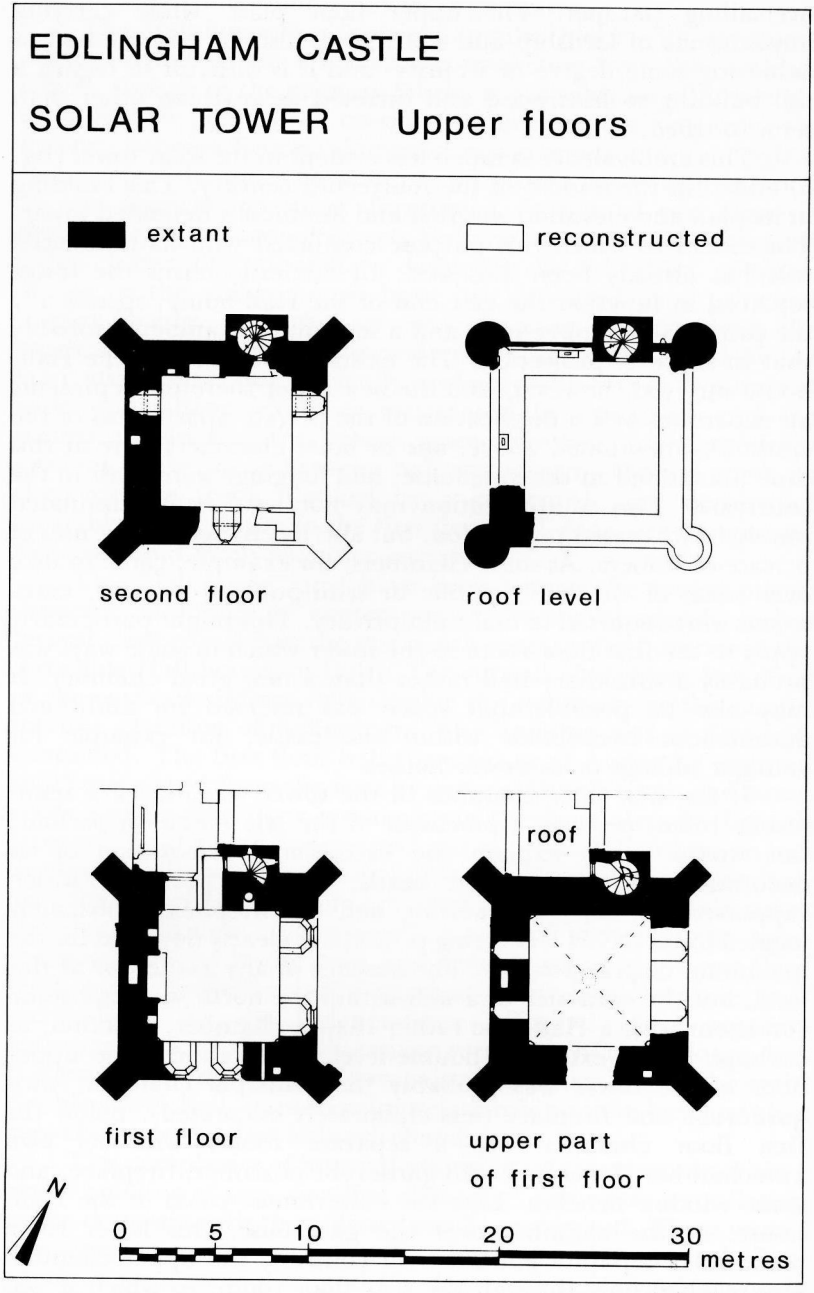
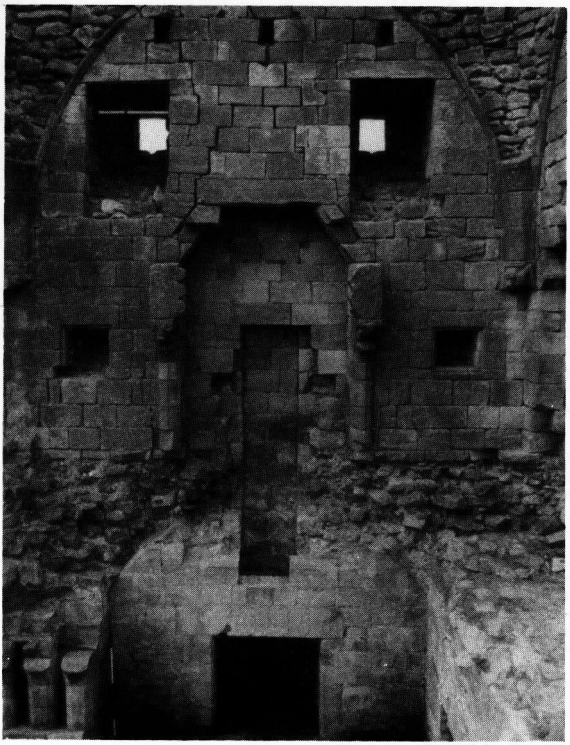

EDLINGHAM CASTLE
SOLAR TOWER Upper floors
extant
reconstructed
second floor
roof level
roof
first floor
upper part
of first floor
N
0 5 10 20 30
metres

Fig. 3.



The interior of the solar tower showing the west wall, ground and first floors

It is thus possible to begin to identify the framework of a social hierarchy in constant change, dependent entirely upon the changing composition of the household from generation to generation. Of the constant alterations to the building which these changes caused, the available archaeological and architectural evidence can only give the broadest of outlines, but the attempt to understand these aspects of social evolution must nevertheless be a major research aim of projects such as the excavation of Edlingham Castle.

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