

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Cartington Castle at Cartington Farm

PARISH: CARTINGTON

DISTRICT: ALNWICK

COUNTY: NORTHUMBERLAND

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 20903

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): NU03910452

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes a medieval castle of complex form and associated remains situated on the northern end of a ridge orientated north-south. The ground on either side of the ridge shelves gently down to the Spout Burn on the east and to the Coquet valley on the south and west. The remains are visible as a 14th century walled courtyard measuring 25m east-west by 18m north-south within curtain walls 0.7m thick. At the south-east and north-east corners of the courtyard there are the remains of two turrets; the north-east one remained unfinished and survives only several courses high; the better preserved south-east turret has a garderobe attached to its south-west side. At the south-west corner of the courtyard a strong tower was constructed; this was destroyed in the Civil War siege of 1648 and only very slight traces of the foundations of its west wall remain. At the northern side of the courtyard there is a range of buildings in a ruinous condition. They comprise a second massive 14th century tower at the north-east corner and a hall and chambers; the tower was tunnel-vaulted and has a fine well preserved stair turret in its south-west corner. It measures 6m by 11m within walls 2.2m thick but does not survive above first floor level, except at the south-west corner. It is believed that this tower was originally intended to stand alone at one end of the courtyard, but soon after its construction a hall and chambers were added to its western side completing the range of buildings, although now only parts of the eastern end survive above first floor level. This block was not completed until the early 15th century. Licence to crenellate was granted in 1441. The tower house was altered in the early 17th century by, amongst other things, the addition of Tudor windows in the great tower and first floor of the hall block. In the late 17th century further alterations resulted in the courtyard being filled in up to first floor level. In 1887, when the tower house was in a state of dilapidation, it was excavated and restored by Lord Armstrong. During these excavations finds, including a small 15th century wooden cross, coins of Charles II and George I and some sandstone carvings of a religious nature, were recovered; the latter had almost certainly been in the castle chapel. Earlier, in 1824, other artefacts of a religious nature were discovered to the south of the complex by the then occupier, Mr Robson. The tower house was last occupied in the mid-19th century, since when its condition has deteriorated rapidly. Ten metres north of the tower house there are traces of a medieval wall and a large terrace, the remains of a garden feature associated with the tower house. To the east and south-east rectangular enclosures are visible, surviving as low earthworks, and a large terrace feature is very prominent;

early documents testify to the existence of other houses and enclosures, orchards and gardens forming part of the castle complex. The fence lines and field walls are excluded from the scheduling but the ground beneath is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Tower houses are a type of defensible house particularly characteristic of the borderlands of England and Scotland. Virtually every parish had at least one of these buildings. At many sites the tower comprised only one element of a larger house, with at least one wing being attached to it. These wings provided further domestic accommodation, frequently including a large hall. If it was incorporated within a larger domestic residence, the tower itself could retain its defensible qualities and could be shut off from the rest of the house in times of trouble. Tower houses were being constructed and used from at least the 13th century to the end of the 16th century. They provided prestigious defended houses permanently occupied by the wealthier or aristocratic members of society. As such they were important centres of medieval life. The need for such secure buildings relates to the unsettled and frequently war-like conditions which prevailed in the Borders throughout much of the medieval period. Around 200 examples of tower houses have been identified of which over half were elements of larger houses. All surviving tower houses retaining significant medieval remains will normally be identified as nationally important.

The ruins of the castle at Cartington survive well and display several stages of building and re-building. In its original form it was intended to be a walled enclosure with four corner towers or turrets. The building of this early castle was interrupted and subsequently the north-east turret was replaced by the tower-house. This formed the heart of the castle throughout the medieval period, although additional buildings were appended to it in the 15th century.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 26th November 1932 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Northumberland 66

NAME: Cartington Castle

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 20903

NAME: Cartington Castle at Cartington Farm

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 06th October 1993