

## EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Aydon Castle medieval hall, fortified manor and eighteenth century farm buildings

PARISH: CORBRIDGE

DISTRICT: TYNEDALE

COUNTY: NORTHUMBERLAND

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 23226

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): NZ00146631

### DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument known as Aydon Castle, or sometimes Aydon Hall, is a medieval fortified manor whose elements include a variety of upstanding domestic, ancillary and defensive buildings arranged within three courtyards surrounded by a curtain wall. Also included, due to the manor's conversion to a farmhouse in the 17th century, is an orchard and a range of 18th century farm buildings along the west side of the middle courtyard. The medieval defensive ditch outside the north-west curtain wall is also included within the scheduling, together with the buried remains of a timber-framed hall which preceded the construction of the fortified house.

Medieval documents indicate that a timber hall existed on the site prior to c.1300. A number of structural anomalies in the chamber block of the later residence show that it was located in roughly the same area as the adjacent late 13th century hall and that part of it may still have been in use for a time after the chamber block was built. Its location has been partially confirmed by an excavation carried out within the latter which uncovered the footings of a wall beneath the floor of the building, which belonged to an earlier structure on a slightly different alignment. The chamber block housed the private apartments of the later house and it is likely that it was built to replace the demolished building. The latter is likely, therefore, to have been the solar or private rooms of the earlier hall. Further remains of this structure and other contemporary buildings will survive beneath the later hall and service ranges.

The later manor house was not originally intended to be fortified. Its construction began in the last quarter of the 13th century, prior to the Border wars that characterised the 14th century. Aydon, however, was in one of the first areas to be raided from Scotland and, by 1305, when most of the buildings were already completed, Edward I had granted its owner licence to crenellate; that is, fortify his house. The earliest stone buildings are the hall, chamber block and the garderobe or latrine wing which projects from the east side of the chamber block. The chamber block was built first, but all these structures are datable to the period between c.1280 and c.1300. Between 1300 and 1305, battlemented walls were built to the north, enclosing the buildings within their own inner courtyard. The west wall formed one side of a building range which, on the first floor, contained service rooms and a kitchen and, on the ground floor, store-rooms. This range projects northward from the west end of the hall range which has three storeys containing a

store-room on the ground floor, a service room in the middle and a chamber on the top floor. The east end of the hall is two-storeyed and consists of a spacious room on the first floor and a less comfortable room of similar size below. The latter room, the lower hall, contains a fireplace and connects with the store-rooms of the manor, showing it to have been a servants' hall. The upper room, lit at the east end by tall windows equipped with seats, was the lords' hall or public chamber and had access, behind the high table, to the upper floor of the chamber block. This contains an original fireplace, moved from the east wall to the west wall in the 16th century, and opens onto the upper storey of the garderobe wing. The ground-floor of the chamber block contains an elaborate carved fireplace which suggests that this chamber also originally served as a private room, though, later, it seems to have functioned as a hall for the lords' personal attendants.

Following the king's licence, parapets were added to the domestic buildings and the inner courtyard wall. The construction of the outer courtyard was also begun and was complete by 1315. It is not known precisely when the vaulted D-shaped tower at the north corner of the site was built but, owing to differences in the method of construction, it is believed to be later than the curtain wall and probably dates to the mid-14th century. The curtain wall appears never to have been a strong defensive line, heavier reliance being placed on the sheer slopes which encircle the manor on the south, west and east sides. The remaining north-west side was enclosed by a ditch that measures up to 15m wide and 5m deep. However, because there was no gatehouse at the castle entrance, merely a simple entrance arch apparently without drawbridge or portcullis, even this could not have satisfactorily protected the manor; a factor which may have contributed to its being rapidly surrendered to the Scots in 1315.

Internally, the south-west corner of the outer courtyard was divided off to create the middle courtyard which contains, along the south curtain wall, the fragmentary remains of a two-storey range of buildings whose upper floor was lit by windows in the curtain wall and has been interpreted as lodgings for servants or guests, or possibly for men-at-arms. A similar arrangement existed on either side of the gate along the north-west curtain wall, and, in both cases, the unlit ground-floor rooms would have served as barns or shelter for livestock and horses. In the 16th or 17th century, the eastern part of the outer courtyard was divided off to create an orchard, and, also in the 16th century, the lower hall was partitioned to create several smaller rooms while the ground floor of the chamber block was converted into a kitchen; a function it retained into the 20th century. 17th century alterations include the subdivision of the east end of the hall to create new living quarters, and the conversion of the medieval kitchen wing or agricultural purposes. Further modifications were carried out in the 18th and 19th centuries when the manor became a farmhouse on the Matfen estate. These include the construction of a range of farm-buildings in the middle courtyard and the insertion of new windows in the living areas. In addition, the medieval hall was divided to create additional sleeping accommodation. These partitions, however, have since been removed.

During the 10th and 11th centuries, Aydon was part of an important royal manor centred on Corbridge. By the 12th century, however, Corbridge's position had declined due to the rise of Newcastle upon Tyne and, by 1162, Aydon had been granted to the barons de Bolam, the last of whom, Walter fitzGilbert, married Emma de Umfraville. Walter died in 1206 and his estates passed to his widow and two daughters. Emma's portion appears to have been Aydon, and it is likely that the timber hall that predated the fortified manor was her home until her death in c.1235. After her death, her second husband, Peter de Vaux, continued to rent the hall from her daughters and, upon his death in 1256, it passed to Emma's granddaughter Margery. Margery's son, Hugh de Gosbeck, succeeded to it in 1284. The principal de Gosbeck estates lay in Suffolk and, together with the family's remaining share in the fitzGilbert barony, Aydon was sold between 1293 and 1295 to Hugh de Reymes. Because de Gosbeck failed to seek royal

permission for the transfer, the estate was not released until 1296, having been taken into royal custody. By this time, Hugh de Reymes was dead and, instead, it was his son Robert who went north and undertook the construction of Aydon Castle.

Although the de Reymes family remained owners of Aydon till the mid-16th century, during the preceding two hundred years they had declined both socially and financially, and, at some time in the early years of the 15th century, they retired to their seat at Shortflatt, letting the house at Aydon to tenants. A survey of 1450 described the house as being in a ruinous state and there is no sign that any repairs were subsequently carried out. In 1541, Robert Reymes IX exchanged his portion of the manor of Aydon, which included the castle, for lands belonging to Sir Reynold Carnaby of Hexham. Carnaby died in 1543, leaving the house to his brother Cuthbert who made it his home and carried out the alterations dating to that period. The house remained with the Carnabys until 1654 when it was sold to William Collinson. Collinson carried out the 17th century conversions and, together with his son, Henry, was the last owner-occupier. In 1702, Henry Collinson sold the house to William Douglas of Matfen, and it remained an estate farm until 1966 when it passed into State care. The entire monument is now managed by English Heritage and is a Grade I Listed Building.

A number of features within the area are excluded from the scheduling: these are all English Heritage fixtures and fittings, including the ticket office, and the surfaces of the trackways through the monument, but the ground beneath these features is included.

#### ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Fortified manors are the residences of the lesser nobility and richer burgesses and date from the late 12th century and throughout the rest of the Middle Ages. Generally they comprise a hall and residential wing, domestic ranges, and fortifications such as a moat or crenellated wall or both. Aydon Castle is one of the finest examples in England and is exceptionally well preserved, having survived little altered from its original state.

Also important are the remains of the earlier medieval manor which survive as buried features throughout the monument.

#### SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 28th November 1932 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Northumberland 101

NAME: Aydon Castle (uninhabited portions)

Monument placed in Guardianship on 4th November 1966 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Northumberland 101

NAME: Aydon Castle

The reference of this monument is now:

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NAME: Aydon Castle medieval hall, fortified manor and eighteenth century farm buildings

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 19th October 1993