

Carlton, R. J. & Ryder, P.F., 2002, St. Mary's Chantry, Alnwick: Structural Record and Historical Survey.

***The Archaeological Practice Research Paper No. 53.***  
Newcastle Upon Tyne



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## ST. MARY'S CHANTRY, ALNWICK

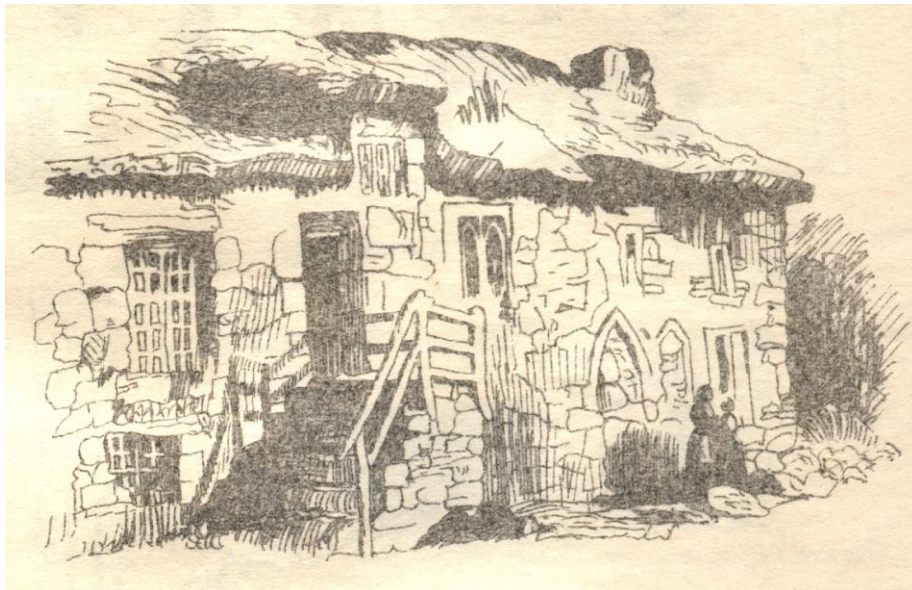
(NGR NZ 1848 1378)

## STRUCTURAL RECORD AND HISTORICAL SURVEY

March 2002

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PREPARED BY  
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# ST. MARY'S CHANTRY HOUSE, ALNWICK

An Archaeological & Historical Survey

*Prepared by*

The Archaeological Practice



*Frontispiece: View of Alnwick Chantry House, North side*

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## SUMMARY

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*In 2001 and 2002 a programme of structural recording, backed-up with a documentary survey of historical sources, was undertaken for Northumberland Estates by the Archaeological Practice, Department of Archaeology, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, to inform and contextualise a structural consolidation project undertaken by Robin Kent, Architecture and Conservation. The results of this work are presented in this report which, accordingly, contains a ground plan and elevation drawings of the structure, backed up with a written description and representative photographs, together with a historical description covering the period from its foundation in c.1448 to the present. In addition, copies of the text and illustrations contained in the report are presented in digital form on a CD together with an archive of photographs taken during the course of structural recording works up to December 2001.*

*The structural survey shows that the building was much altered over the course of almost four centuries of use. Initially it served as a schoolhouse and schoolmaster's residence associated with the Chantry of St Mary in St Michael's church, to which it was directly connected by a narrow lane. By the early seventeenth century it had become a private residence and was later subdivided into tenements to provide low-quality accommodation in what was by then a run-down part of the town. Although still thatched and occupied up to at least the second quarter of the nineteenth century, its condition had deteriorated by the middle of that century to such a degree that it was abandoned. Thereafter it was saved from demolition by the desire of the estate to preserve it, and because Walkergate became increasingly peripheral in the process of urban expansion that developed from Alnwick's medieval core and transformed other fringe areas of the town.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1. Background

This historical survey of St Mary's Chantry House, Alnwick, prepared by the Archaeological Practice, Department of Archaeology, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, has been commissioned by *Robin Kent, Architecture and Conservation*, as part of recording work being carried out on the building, and is based on a project outline prepared by The Archaeological Practice (2000).

### 1.3 Site Definition and Location

St Mary's Chantry House is a ruined building on the north side of Walkergate, north-west Alnwick, where it stands detached within a row of houses, the back plots of which run downslope to the banks of the Aln. The building is rectangular in plan, measuring c. 17.8 by 6.2 metres externally, with no apparent trace of attached structures or features.

### 1.4 Recent land-use

The building has been ruinous for 150 years or more,<sup>1</sup> during which time it appears to have served no designated function, other than providing occasional shelter for vagrants and recreational opportunities for adolescents.

### 1.5. Methodology of Assessment

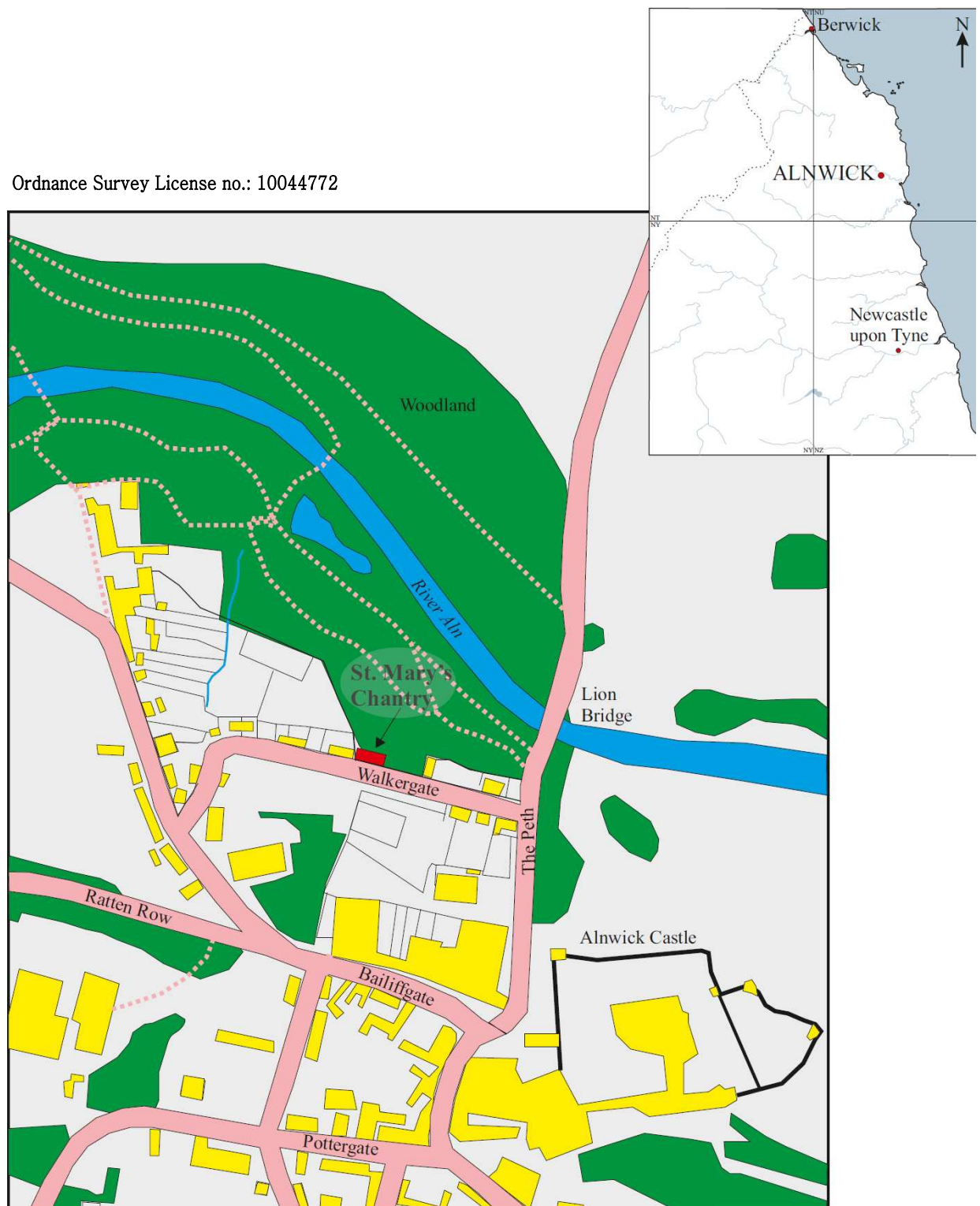
The present document reports on historical survey work and an archaeological recording exercise carried out by the Archaeological Practice in 2001. The report will:

- Define the principal sources of information available for historical research (Section 2);
- Provide a structural/archaeological analysis of the building (Section 3) based on a survey of its ground plan and wall elevations;
- Provide an historical synthesis derived from primary and published sources (Section 4)

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<sup>1</sup> It was probably abandoned soon after 1826 when a sketch shows it still occupied, but in dilapidated condition. By the middle of the century other sketches show that it was ruinous.

Ordnance Survey License no.: 10044772



**Figure 1:** Location of Alnwick Chantry in Walkergate, Alnwick



## 2. SOURCES FOR ASSESSMENT

### 2.1 Archival Material and Secondary Sources

The following sources of documentary, cartographic and photographic evidence were consulted:

- *Northumberland County Records Office, Melton Park, Gosforth (NRO)*
- *Northumberland SMR, Planning Department (Conservation Team), Northumberland*
- *County Council (SMR)*
- *Morpeth Library, Local Studies Section (ML)*
- *The Public Records Office, Kew (PRO)*
- *The Duke of Northumberland's Archives, Alnwick Castle (DNA)*
- *Department of Archaeology Records Room, University of Newcastle upon Tyne (DA)*

### 2.2 Types of Information

#### 2.2.1 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The Scheduling of a site by the Secretary of State denotes it is of at least national significance and provides statutory protection over the defined area of the monument. St Mary's Chantry is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (no. 59). It is also associated with another monument in this class, Alnwick Castle, some 500 metres south-west of the Walkergate site.

#### 2.2.2 Listed Buildings

Listing of structures by the Secretary of State denotes historical or architectural interest but does not necessarily include all buildings of significance or local importance. St Mary's Chantry is a Listed Building (Grade II\*) and several other listed buildings lie in close proximity, the nearest being number 14 Walkergate (North side) a late eighteenth or early nineteenth grade II listed house structure some 50m west of the Chantry House, numbers 24 & 26 Walkergate (North side) early nineteenth century grade II listed houses some 100m to the east, and grade II listed retaining walls along Walkergate (South side) opposite the Chantry House.

#### 2.2.3 Sites Appearing on Northumberland County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)

Cumbria County Council SMR has been accessed for entries within and in close proximity to the survey site to enable better evaluation of its archaeological and historical context. Other than the Chantry building itself (SMR no. 4498) and listed buildings (above), there are no specific monuments or features listed on the County Sites and Monuments Record in close proximity to the site. However, an area of derelict land opposite the Chantry House, between the Walkergate (South side) retaining walls and the back of the modern school and St Michael's church, was subject to an archaeological assessment in 1999 (*SMR* archive) which concluded that it may once have been built over as part of the medieval town.

#### 2.2.4 Primary and archival documentary sources

*PRO E 178/3265      Alnwick: Certificate by James, Bishop of Durham, on the state of the school. 12 Elisabeth (AD 1569/70)*



**PRO C 143/452/25**     *Henry earl of Northumberland, Thomas Hunter, clerk, and Emma Asplan, widow, to grant messuages in Alnwick, Warkworth and Ellington to the chaplains of the chantry of St Mary, Alnwick, retaining messuages in Alnwick, Northumberland.*

**PRO SC 6/Hen VIII/7364-71**     *Possessions of dissolved religious houses, etc., of Alnwick, etc.*

### **2.2.5 Previous Archaeological Investigations**

There have been no previous archaeological investigations within the boundaries of the site, the nearest fieldwork having been carried out on the south side of Walkergate (see below).

### **2.2.6 Secondary and Published Information**

The most thorough historical account of St Mary's Chantry is provided by Tate (1864, 69-104), whose account is derived largely from records of the freemen of Alnwick. Other accounts, including those by Davison (1822, 186), Tomlinson (1968, 376), Graham (1973, 24), and Pevsner *et. al.* (1992, 143) are generally more brief and largely restricted to descriptions of the original features and present condition of the building.

An archaeological assessment of land adjacent on the south side of Walkergate (**SMR** 1999 – see above) concluded that there may have been medieval settlement in this area, as well as on the street frontages of Walkergate itself. An assessment of the documentary sources pertaining to Walkergate held in the Duke of Northumberland's archive at Alnwick Castle (**DNA**) provides additional data and historical summaries for the period from the end of the fifteenth to early seventeenth centuries (Shrimpton n.d.).

### **2.2.7 Map Evidence**

Alnwick is well provided with map evidence from the early sixteenth century. Those consulted during the present investigation include the following:

**DNA**     *Parte of the Plan of Alnewick in Northumberland being y inheritence of the right ho<sup>ble</sup> the Earle of Northumberland containing Alnwick Town and Castle and the ground to them adjoyneing*, R Norton, 1624 (Figures 2 & 3).

**DNA**     *A Plan of the Town and the Castle of Alnwick and of the Demesnes, with divers other Lands near the said Town in the County of Northumberland*, I Thompson 1760

**NRO**     Map of the County of Northumberland (sheet 9), Armstrong 1769.

**DNA**     *A Plan of the Town and Castle of Alnwick with the Demesnes and other lands there, belonging to his Grace the Duke of Northumberland*, C J, Sauthier 1788 (Figure 4).

**NRO**     Andrew Armstrong's *Plan of Alnwick*, 1792 (Figure 5).

*Plan of the town and Borough of Alnwick*, J Wood 1827 (Figure 7)

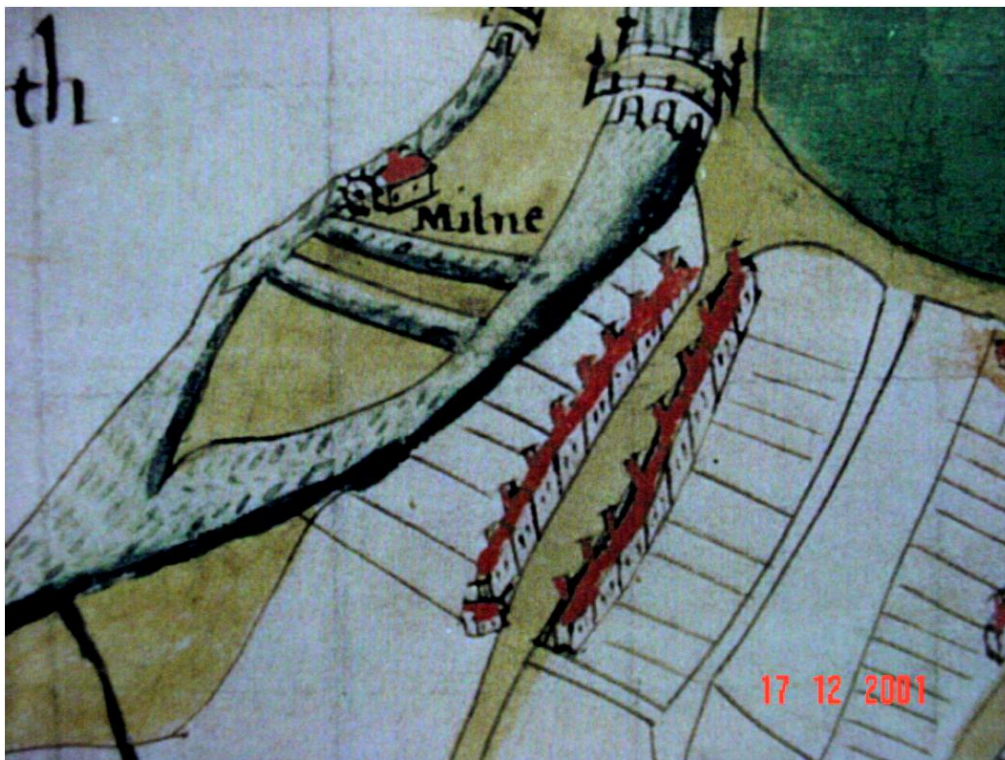
**NRO**     *First Edition Ordnance Survey plan, Northumberland Sheet LXXXVIII*, 1863 (Figure 13)

**NRO**     *Second Edition Ordnance Survey plan, Northumberland Sheet LXXXVIII*, 1898 (Figure 14)

**NRO**     *Third Edition Ordnance Survey plan, Northumberland Sheet LXXXVI*, 1920

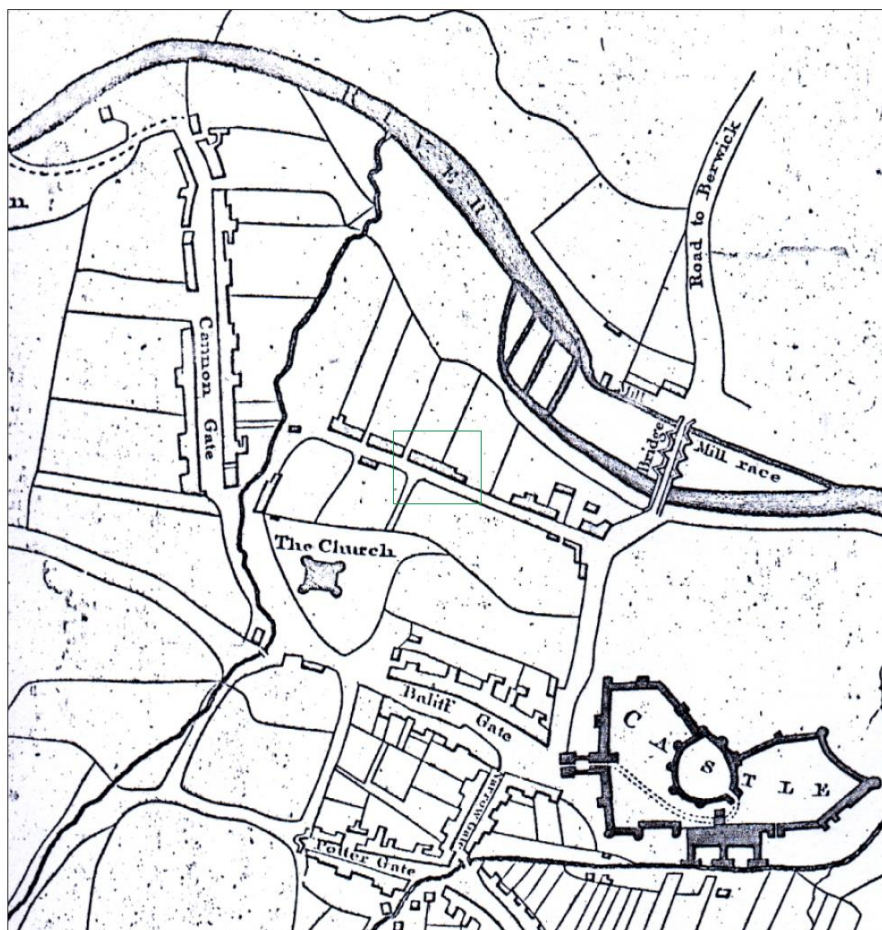


*Figure 2: Norton's Plan of Alnwick, 1624  
(boundaries of Figure 3 highlighted)*



*Figure 3: Extract from Norton's Plan of Alnwick, focussing on Walkergate and the river Aln water mill*





**Figure 4:** Extract from Andrew Armstrong's Plan of Alnwick, 1769



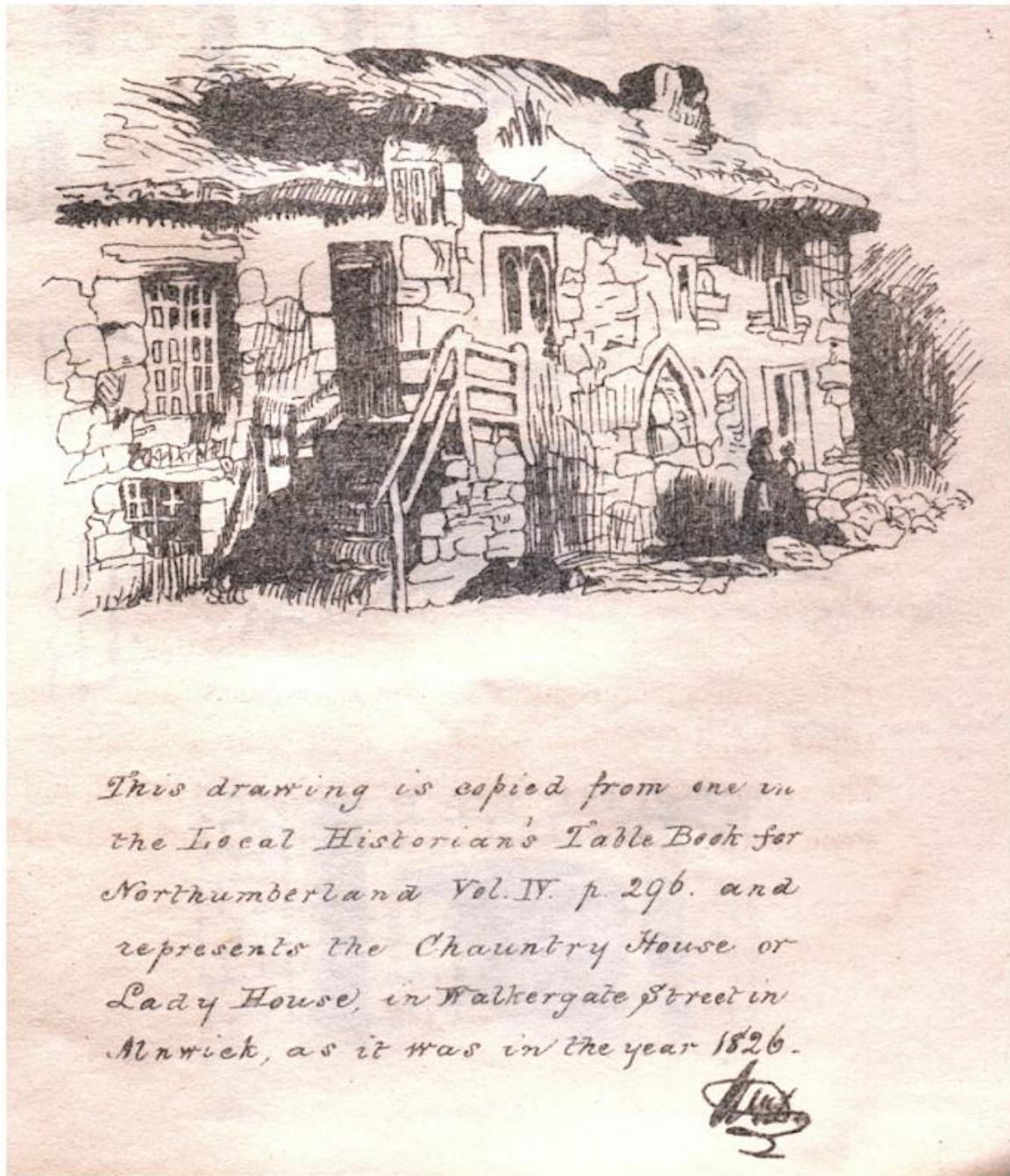
**Figure 5:** Extract from Sauthier's Plan of the Town and Castle of Alnwick, 1788

### 2.2.8 Visual Records

The most important visual records traced during the present investigation include sketches of the building from 1826 (Dickson 1852, facing 10), 1852 (*ibid.*), 1864 (Tate 1864, Plate VII) and Brown (1946, 40).

The sketch of 1826 is the most important (*Figure 6*), showing the building with a dilapidated thatched roof and a stone stairway giving access to the building via a first story doorway which is virtually unrecognisable as such in the surviving fabric of the building. A dormer window, all traces of which have disappeared, projects from the sloping roof above the doorway, suggesting a living space in the roof. West of the first story door is a large first floor window, also barely traceable in the surviving external masonry. The 1852 sketch shows the structure roofless (*Figure 9*), indicating that sometime in the period after 1826 it had been abandoned and become ruinous. Also included with this sketch are a plan of the building and details of both internal fireplaces. The later sketches of Tate (*Figure 12*) and, a century later, Brown (*Figures 15 & 16*), show that the condition of the Walkergate frontage of the building degraded very slowly and was not subject to intensive stone robbing after its abandonment. Most of this degradation, particularly to the upper stone courses, can be put down to the unchecked growth of ivy which is visible on Brown's sketch spilling over from the interior of the building.

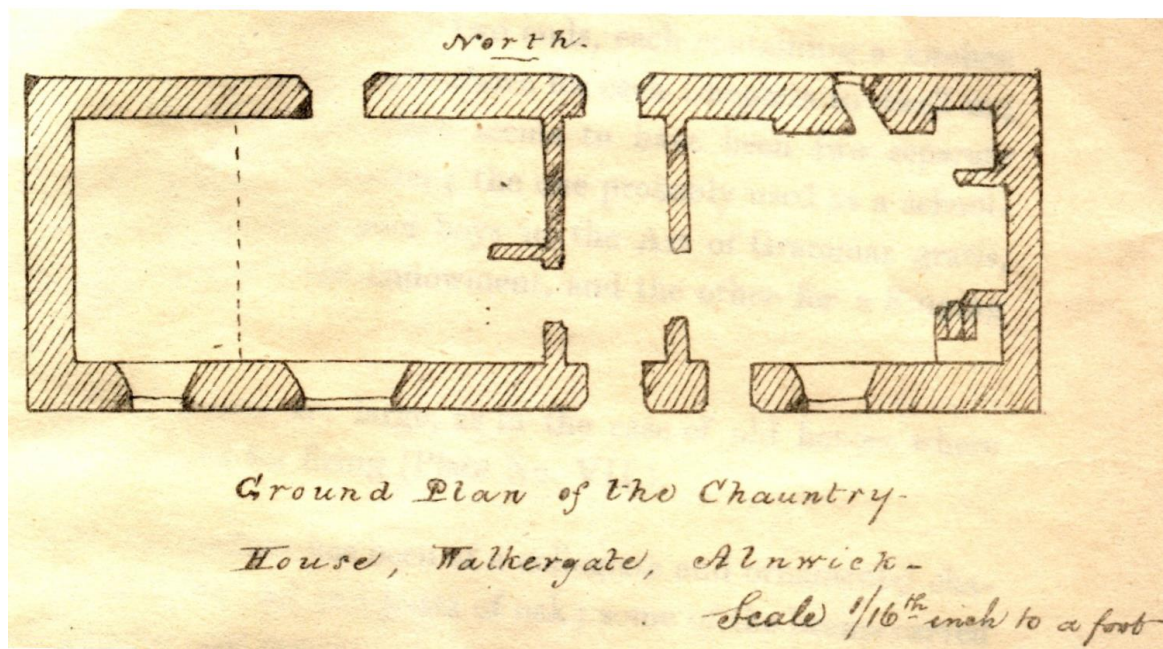




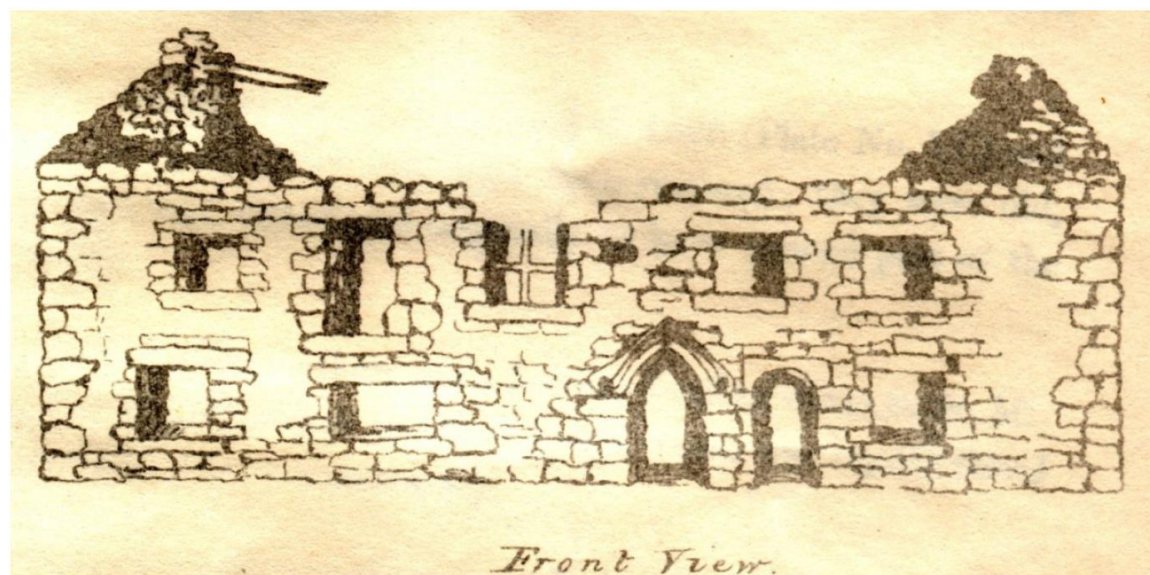
*This drawing is copied from one in  
the Local Historian's Table Book for  
Northumberland Vol. IV. p. 296. and  
represents the Chantry House or  
Lady House, in Walkergate Street in  
Alnwick, as it was in the year 1826.*

*J. H.  
1852*

**Figure 6:** Sketch of St Mary's Chantry c.1826 (in Dickson 1852)



**Figure 8:** Plan of St Mary's Chantry c.1852 (in Dickson 1852)

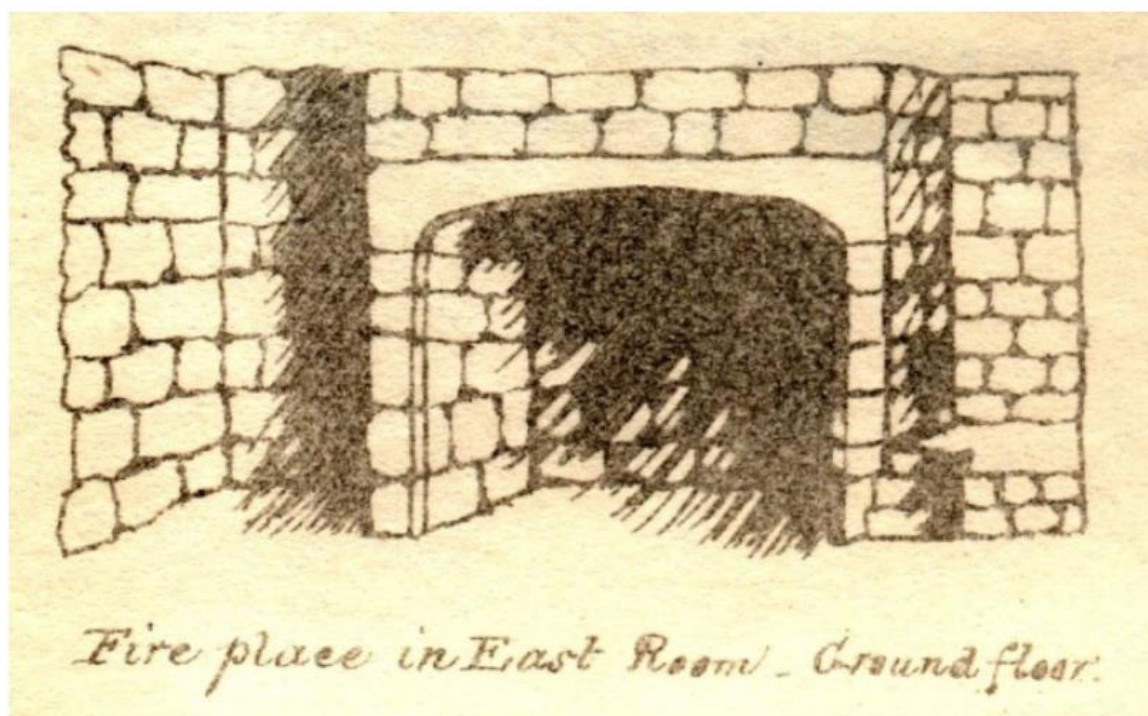


**Figure 9:** Sketch of St Mary's Chantry, Walkergate frontage c.1852 (in Dickson 1852)



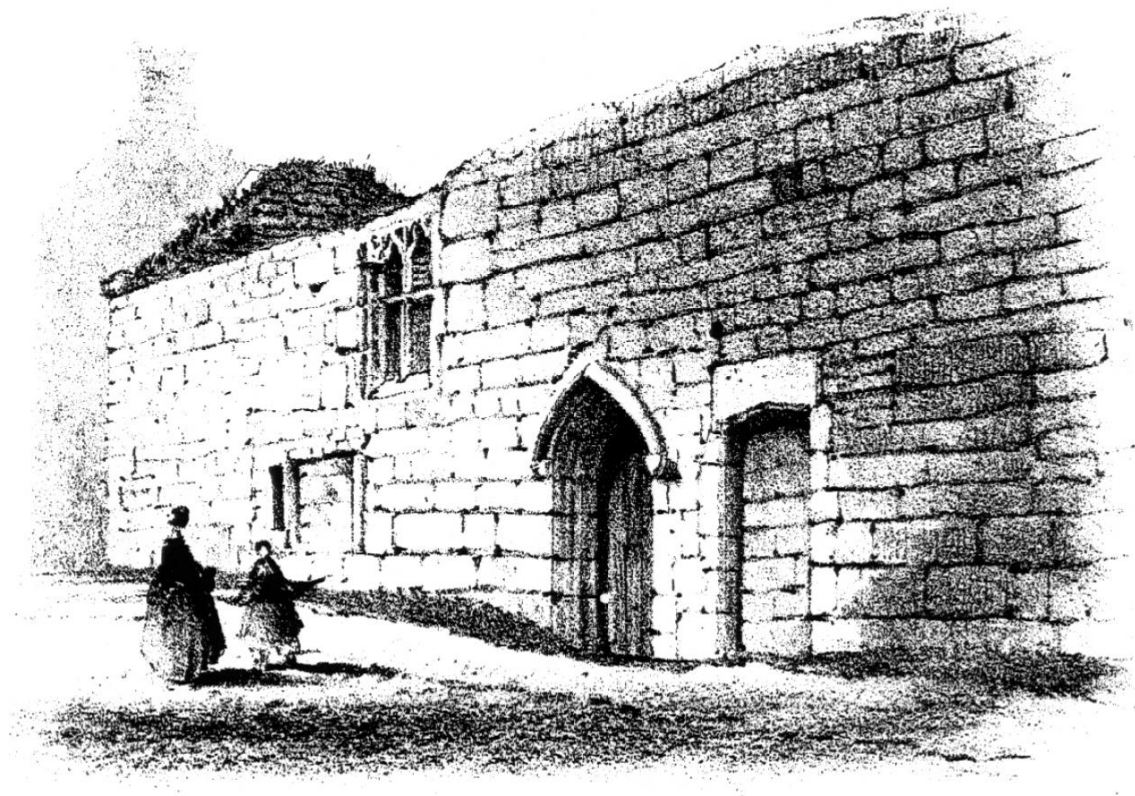


**Figure 10:** Sketch of West internal fireplace and removed cross wall with blocked arch, St Mary's Chantry (in Dickson 1852)



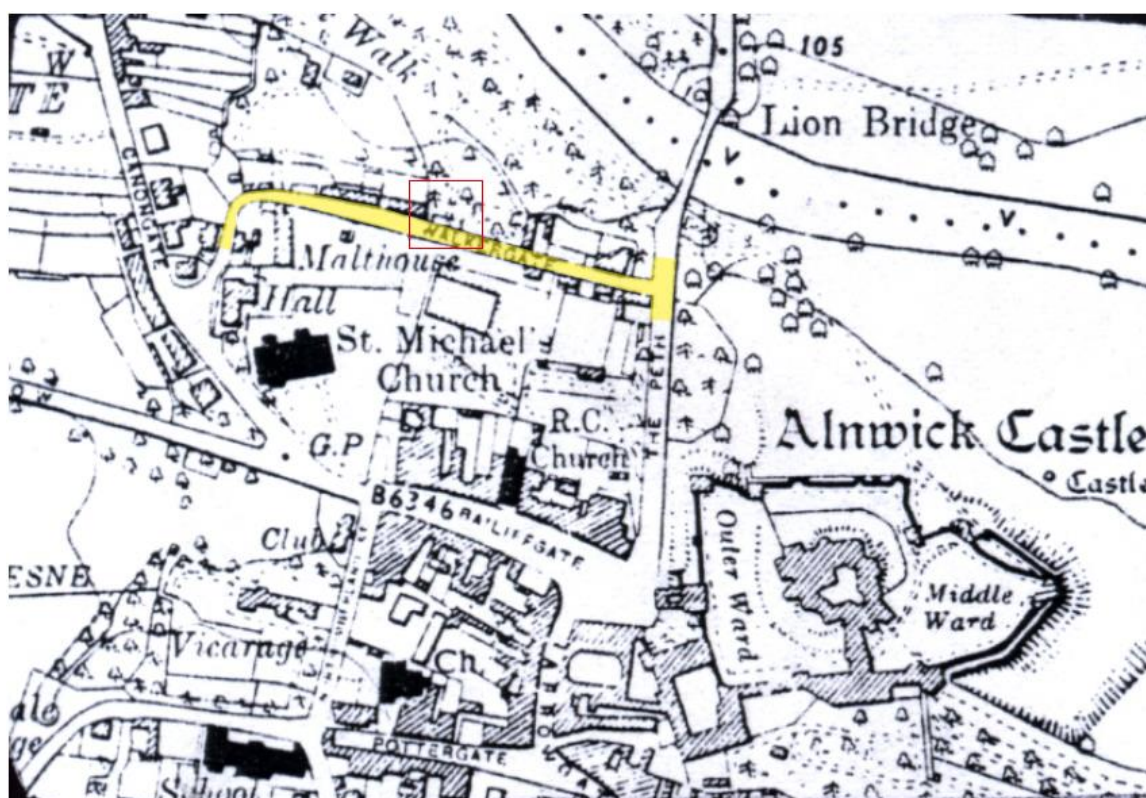
**Figure 11:** Sketch of East internal fireplace, St Mary's Chantry (in Dickson 1852)



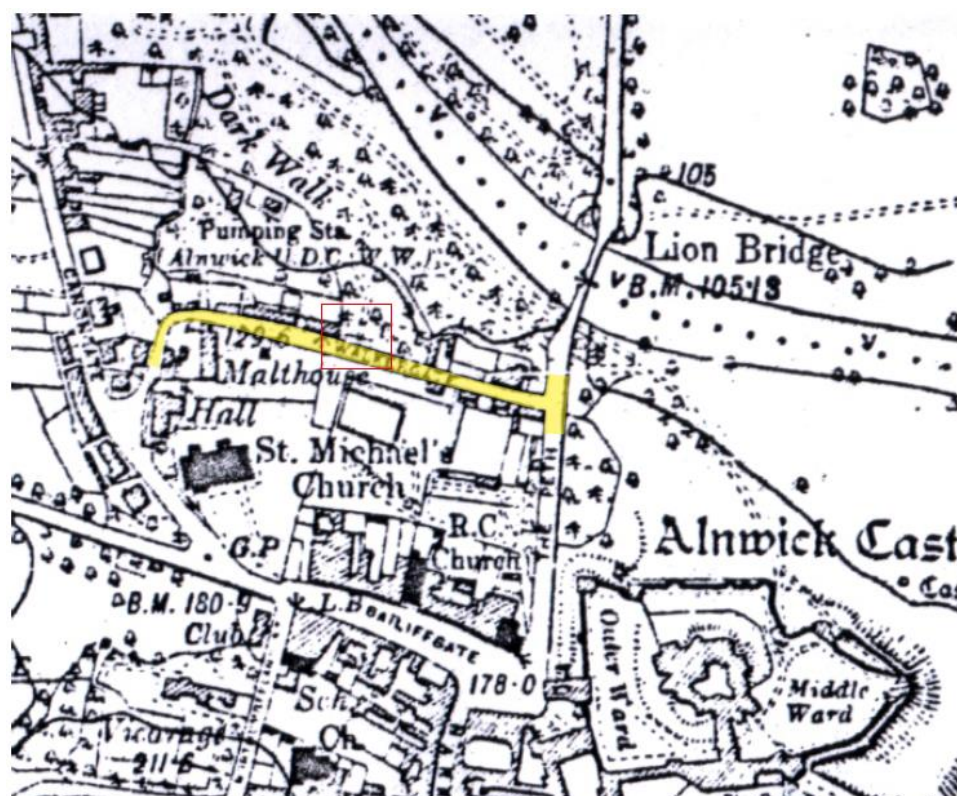


ALNWICK CHAUNTRY HOUSE.

*Figure 12: St Mary's Chantry House c.1864 (in Tate 1864)*

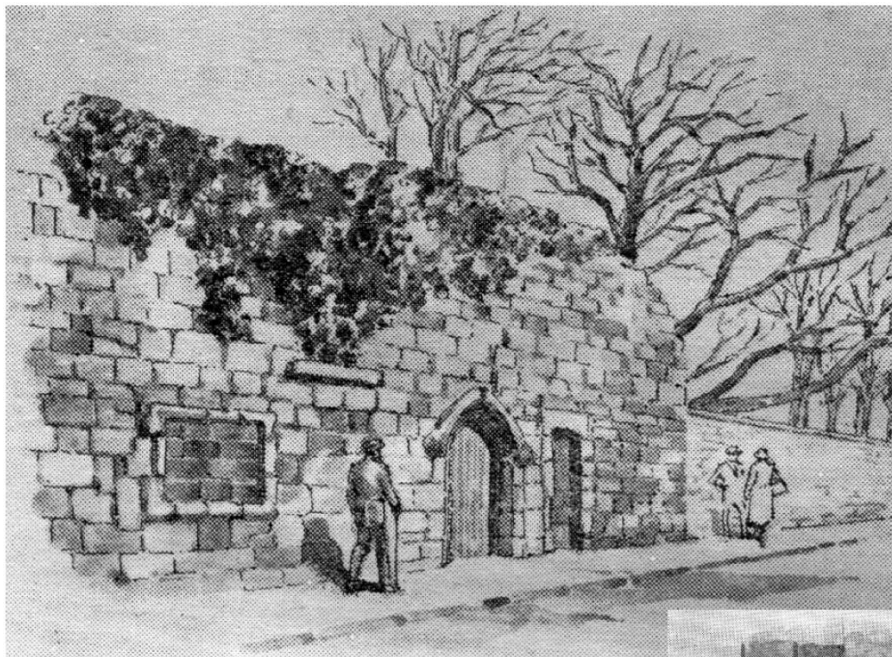


*Figure 13: Extract from first edition Ordnance Survey plan, 1865*



*Figure 14: Extract from second edition Ordnance Survey plan, 1898*





**Figure 15:** *St Mary's Chantry House c.1946  
(in Brown 1946)*



**Figure 16:** *Detail of main doorway,  
St Mary's Chantry House  
(in Brown 1946)*

### 3. MONUMENT DESCRIPTION by Peter Ryder

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#### 3.1 Introduction

In plan the building is a simple rectangle c.17.8 by 6.2 m externally, over walls generally c.0.75 m thick, but with sections of the north wall reaching c. 1.0 m.

The building has been two-storied, and built of coursed sandstone; on the front elevation this is in large well-coursed blocks, but at the ends and rear is sometimes little more than rubble; there has been a considerable amount of patching and re-facing, making the structural sequence hard to unravel in some areas.

#### 3.2 A Structural Inventory

##### 3.2.1 The South Wall (A)

This mostly stands to around its original eaves level. The original fabric is quite large neatly-squared and coursed blocks of yellowish sandstone with a dark weathering crust; below this, for the eastern two-thirds of the wall, are a couple of courses of much smaller roughly-shaped stones, perhaps originally a concealed footing. The masonry in the upper part of wall is in general much lighter in colour. The upper part of the eastern section of the wall has some smaller courses, one at mid-height with two elongate lintel-like blocks; the upper part of the wall is rather reduced at this end.

##### External Face (*Figures 17 & 18*)

**A 1** The doorway, to the cross passage, has a two-centred arched head cut from two large blocks laid diagonally; the mouldings of the arch - apparently two hollow chamfers, and the hood mould, concave below and convex above (which has had either mask or shield stops, now very worn) are all cut from the same blocks. The modern wooden doorframe conceals part of the internal faces of the jambs (which have been patched in brick); it is not clear whether a draw bar tunnel or other evidences of original fittings survive. The internal lintel or rear arch have fallen, together with a section of wall above, but the uppermost stone of each internal jamb projects, rather like a corbel, as if the rear arch was set forward from the wall face.

**A 2** East of the cross-passage doorway is a narrower blocked doorway which is clearly an insertion. It has a narrow chamfered surround, and a Tudor-arched head. Its jambs each have one upright block near the base; the actual chamfered jambs, of darker stone, only start above this. Its infill, set back a little so as to form a shallow recess, is of coursed and well-squared stone. Internally the opening is blocked in neatly squared stone (one stone low down having a socket cut into it) and has an old timber lintel.

**A 3** Above and a little to the east of the main doorway is a large block that projects slightly from the wall.

**A 4** A patch to the east of a vertical break slightly to the east of the apex of the doorway arch, seems to be a small blocked window; also visible internally as a patch of rather larger and more neatly-coursed stone than the rubble to the east.

**A 5** East of A 4 is quite a broad area of neatly coursed stonework with a slightly 'pecked' surface.

**A 6** Below A 4 and A 5, around the head of the doorway A 2, is an area of darker heavily weathered stone, perhaps contemporary with the doorway.

**A 7** The blocking of an opening, presumably a window, to the east of the doorway A 2, made up of another patch of ferruginous sandstone blocks (*cf.* the infill of A 2), with an apparent blue-grey lintel above and a virtual straight joint to the east. Internally it is clear that this is an inserted opening, partially spanned by an old timber lintel; the blocking is again of neatly-coursed blocks which contrast with the internal face of the wall itself which is little more than coursed rubble.

**A 8** West of doorway A 1, above a section of undisturbed phase I walling, is a window of two trefoil-headed lights with a broad transom at mid-height, now blocked in quite old brickwork. There is a broad chamfer to the jambs, but the dressings are all very weathered. The heads of the lights have sunk rather than pierced spandrels, and are recessed within a square sunk frame. The western half of the head of the western light has gone; there seem to be remains of the east end of a hoodmould, of the usual late medieval type with a turned-back end.

Internally the sill of this window slopes down steeply to c 1.5 m above the floor; the slope is of very rough rubble, and might be later infill. Nothing of the lintel or rear arch of the window survive, but its western internal jamb has three large cut blocks of purple roughly- tooled sandstone, contrasting to the buff-coloured sandstone of the east jamb. These, and the adjacent walling, were re-instated during the recent restoration works; the dark colour is probably due to the stone having been buried.

**A 9** Immediately to the west of A 8 and at a lower level is a broad blocked window (perhaps once of three lights?); its very worn lintel retains nothing of its original section but its east jamb seems to have had a double chamfer. The blocking is of neatly-squared coursed blocks, like those blocking openings A2 and A7. Internally the blocked opening A28 c 0.90 m wide, with a timber lintel, seems to correlate with the western half of the window; might this represent a mural locker or recess formed after the window was blocked? Further east what seems to be the eastern internal jamb of this window is visible as a ragged joint A29 below the western internal jamb of the large two-light window A8.

**A 10** Above the lintel of A 9 is a trapezoidal area with some quite large blocks and small packing pieces.

**A 11** Immediately west of A 9 and at the same level is a small upright loop with chamfered surround, also now blocked. Its east jamb has been replaced by west jamb of a larger window immediately adjacent, and its sill partly cut down to the level of that of the larger window. There is no clear indication of its position on the internal face of the wall.

**A 12** Immediately west of the blocked loop A 11 is an apparent joint defining the east edge of an area of large coursed blocks of a ferruginous sandstone. Although similar to the original fabric, the blocks seem slightly smaller, and in addition two L-shaped blocks - one in west jamb of A 11 and one on the east side of the external blocking of window A 13 might suggest that A 12 post-dates both; this remains uncertain.

**A 13** West of A 12 is an area of neatly-squared blocks, similar to the infill of A 2, A 7 and A 9. This seems to be the infill of a blocked window, much clearer on the internal face, where the jambs, of large well-cut blocks, and a timber lintel are exposed.

**A 14** Above A 12 and A 13 at first-floor level is a 3 - 4 m wide area of infill of coursed sandstone blocks, varying in length; one course has several 'upright' members. They have a similar 'pecked' finish (*cf.* area east of A 5). This is the infill of another window that is again much clearer internally, where its jambs are of large well-cut blocks. The infill seems to extend

below the sill of the main first-floor window visible internally, to include the possible lower opening A27.

**A 15** At the top of the west end, a square projecting kneeler or footstone.

**Internal Face** (*Figures 19 & 20*)

**A 16** A rough cavity, perhaps a bressumer? socket, a metre or so from the end of the wall.

**A 17** Possible remains of a back wall of a recess at first-floor level, although this could simply result from the external face of the wall surviving where the internal has fallen; no dressed stone survives.

**A 18** Open socket above the blocked ground-floor window A 7.

**A 19** Open socket immediately above the western jamb of A 7.

**A 20** Open socket directly above the centre of the internal lintel of blocked doorway A 2.

**A 21** Immediately east of the blocked opening A 4 is a panel of wall set at a slight angle, the internal splay of a first-floor doorway in the wall on the west of the cross-passage, of which the chamfered southern jamb remains.

**A 22** A little beyond the jamb A 21 and roughly level with its mid-point is what looks like a large socket.

**A 23** There is another odd socket on the ground floor, c 1.5 m west of the cross-passage doorway, and a similar distance above the floor.

**A 24** A small socket below the internal sill of window A 8

**A 25** A patch of purplish sandstone adjacent to the large blocks of similar stone in the internal west jamb of the large transomed window A 8. It would appear likely that this area was reconstructed during the recent conservation works, using stonework that had been buried, hence the change in colour.

**A 26** A column of disturbed masonry rising the full height of the internal face of the wall immediately to the west of the internal opening of window A 9; this seems likely to be the scar of a removed cross-wall (being opposite feature C 33 on the north). It is not clear how this relates to the blocked loop A 11 visible externally.

**A 27** A socket for a first-floor beam immediately west of A 26.

**A 28** Above the internal opening of the blocked window A 13 and below A 14, what seems to be a low blocked opening.

**A 29** Blocked feature with timber lintel immediately east of presumed cross-wall scar A 26; see A 9

**A 30** Joint below internal west jamb of window A 8; possible internal east jamb of window A 9

### 3.2.2 The West End (B)

The wall is of smaller stone than the front elevation, roughly-coursed and roughly-squared. The lower part of this is partly obscured by an outbuilding.

#### **External Face** (*Figures 17 & 18*)

**B1** An area of recent (2001) reconstruction, in the upper part of the wall just within the northern quoins. Before the recent conservation works the facing here had collapsed.

#### **Internal Face** (*Figures 19 & 20*)

**B2** At south end a possible infilled beam socket c 2 m above floor level.

**B3** At the same level as B2, a little to the north, possible infilled socket of irregular shape.

**B4** Two large blocks, one above the other, may represent the infill of a third beam socket, north of B3

**B5** A fourth possible infilled beam socket at the same level as B2-4, towards the north wall.

**B6** There are two ragged vertical joints c 1 m apart, between and above B4 and B5.

**B7** At first floor level an irregular patch of stonework c 0.80 m across, set more or less centrally, with a roughly arched top.

### 3.2.3 The North Wall (C)

The north wall is generally of coursed roughly-squared stone, varying in size, with much patching; toward the east end some of the wall is of quite large squared stone, almost like the front wall. In the western section of the wall the lower part (below the two corbels C9 and C10) is little better than roughly-coursed large rubble, but the upper section is of better quality elongate squared and coursed blocks.

#### **External Face** (*Figures 17 & 18*)

**C1** The northern doorway of the cross passage is of similar construction to the southern door, with its head formed from two inclined blocks, but is of a single hollow-chamfered order, without any hood. The doorway has a drawbar tunnel in its internal east jamb, and an old door pin, and a drawbar socket and a cut for a lock in its west jamb.

**C2** A little to the east of doorway C1 is a rough straight joint the full height of the wall.

**C3** Further east is a plain almost square window; its west jamb has two large blocks with a chamfer, but the lintel, very eroded, seems to have been of plain square section. The walling above the window, between joints C2 and C4, is of smaller stone. A section of facing, against joint C2, had collapsed, and was reconstructed during the recent conservation works. Its internal jambs are cut virtually square with the wall; the internal lintel is a modern sandstone slab. There are some large but roughly-cut blocks in its internal west jamb.

**C4** A second irregular straight joint extending for virtually the full height of the wall.

**C5** The easternmost opening in the wall is a square-headed window which has had a chamfered surround, now very eroded. It has quite a broad internal splay.

**C6** Around 1 m short of the east end of the wall is a ragged vertical joint to c 1.50 m; an irregular continuation above this may be a structural crack.



**C7** At the head of the wall above C5, only the sill and lower part of the internal east splay remain of a first-floor window

**C 8** A little west of the cross-passage doorway where the wall is reduced to c 1.2 m in height; there is a possible slit just above ground level. Prior to the recent restoration, this section of wall was completely buried by debris; it is not quite clear how much of the masonry has been reconstructed and how much is in situ.

**C 9** A ragged straight joint that terminates the low section of walling, which is of much smaller stone, and may be secondary. As C 9 correlates with the west jamb of fireplace C 24, may this be the infilled opening of the original fireplace which one might assume to have been much deeper than the present recess, and probably had a stack that projected externally.

**C 10** A pair of straight joints, only in the lower courses, that correlate with the internal feature C 31.

**C 11** In the western section of wall, which stands to a greater height, the eastern of two corbels (c.0.45 m wide and 0.30 m projection, set c 2.0 m above the ground), of quadrant section with a step at the top.

**C 12** The western corbel, rather more damaged.

**C 13** Between the corbels are two large blocks which might possibly be further corbels, hacked back.

**C 14** An area of presumed infill, of large squared stone, above the corbels, bounded by a good straight joint on the east above the east face of corbel C12.

**C 15** An area of obvious infill below and to the west of the corbels, bounded by rather irregular breaks.

**C 16** There is a plain square kneeler at the west end of the wall, as on the south.

#### **Internal Face** (*Figures 19 & 20*)

**C 17** At the east end of the wall, in the north-east angle of the building, is a projecting block of masonry rising to first-floor level.

**C 18** Set against this is a narrow recess; the internal face of the wall has gone between this and the first window.

**C 19** At first-floor level, above C 18 is a dressed-stone chamfered jamb.

**C 20** Above the internal lintel of window C5 is a small socket

**C 21** West of window C 6 are the chamfered jambs of what seems to be a fireplace, later blocked, at least in part. It is clear from the position of its west jamb that the wall on the east side of the cross passage was not carried up at first-floor level

**C 22** Eastern of three beam sockets below C 21

**C 23** Central of three beam sockets below C 21

**C 24** Western of three beam sockets below C 21

**C 25** In the low section of ruined wall west of doorway C1 is a wide recess, probably a fireplace; its chamfered west jamb survives, a tree obscuring any remains of the east jamb.

**C 26** In the higher western part of the wall at ground-floor level is a blocked feature, its east side a straight joint (below the west end of the projecting block C 32), its west side more irregular.

**C 27** Low in the blocking of C26, a possible infilled socket.

**C 28** At first-floor level are the jambs of a blocked opening, possibly a garderobe. The west jamb is set square to the wall and extends through its full thickness.

**C 29** A straight joint immediately to the east of the eastern jamb of C 28

**C 30** A rough projecting block below and a little to the east of straight joint C 29

**C 31** Eastern of two rough projecting blocks below C 28.

**C 32** Western of two rough projecting blocks below C 28.

**C 33** A pair of vertical joints 0.60 m apart, set opposite A 25 on the south, and thus almost certainly indicating the position of a removed cross-wall.

#### **3.2.4 The East End (D)**

This is constructed of roughly-coursed and roughly-squared stone, and is much reduced; the centre section only stands to a height of c 1.2 m, although the north end stands almost to full height.

##### **External Face** (*Figures 17 & 18*)

**D1** There appears to be a patch of secondary masonry (of stone with a dark weathering crust) low down towards the north end.

**D2** One of the north-eastern quoins has a neat triangular cut-out on its east face, c 1.8 m above the ground, perhaps for the purlin of some adjacent structure.

##### **Internal Face** (*Figures 19 & 20*)

**D3** The remains of a central fireplace, set forward from the face of the wall, in line with the west face of the rectangular block of masonry C17 in the north-east corner of the building. The remains are largely buried in an earth bank; one chamfered block of each jamb is visible in situ, and a further fallen block of the north jamb. [Subsequent partial clearance of the earthen and rubble bank revealed more structural remains, including stone steps running up the south side of the fireplace.]

#### **3.2.5 Internal Wall on East of Cross Passage (E)**

A thin (0.25 m) wall, standing a few courses high towards its north end, where it butts against the internal face of the north wall.

**E 1** Near its south end only the lowest stone of each jamb of a doorway survives, chamfered externally and rebated internally.

**E 2** Lying against the internal face of the south wall adjacent to the south jamb of E 1 is a square block containing a socket, not necessarily in situ.

### **3.2.6 Internal Wall on West of Cross Passage (F)**

Like the east wall of the passage, a thin wall that stands a few courses high towards its north end, where its junction with the north wall is confused by tree roots; a large tree here was removed during the recent works.

**F 1** Bases of jambs of doorway at the south end of the wall, chamfered externally and rebated internally

**F 2** What appears to be a second narrow (0.63 m) doorway adjacent to F 1, although there only seems to be a rebate on the north.

**F 3** An apparent joint 0.72 m north of F 2; the wall north of this point may be secondary.

### **3.3 Loose Material: a Recommendation**

A number of dressed stones, some clearly sections of architectural features, lie loose within the building; others are probably buried in the debris which remains to some depth, notably at the east end. These merit proper recording and conservation; some may correlate with features such as fireplace C25 and the doorways in the side walls of the cross-passage.

### **3.4 Analysis**

A proper analysis of this building can only be made when the structural evidence is considered alongside that from historical and other sources. However, the main body of the building appears to be of a single build; such architectural detail as remain would correlate with the usually-quoted 1449 date for its construction. It demonstrates the common three-part plan of a medieval house, with a cross passage entry, what one presumes was a service bay at the east end, with a full-height hall west of the passage and beyond that a storied end section, presumably with the solar on the first floor.

The cross passage has doorways with simple Perpendicular style mouldings, their heads each formed from two inclined slabs, a common Northumberland constructional style that extends through the 14th and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The service end of the house has a large fireplace (D3) in the end wall, and probably served as a kitchen; there is no sign of any external door that might have given access to a detached kitchen. Later alterations make the structural history of this section of the building hard to elucidate. It is not clear why part of the north wall is thickened at ground floor level; either this or the block of masonry C17 in the north-east corner might relate to an internal staircase, although the doorway A21 suggests that approach may have been by means of an open staircase within the hall. The first-floor chamber at this end of the building was, despite being at the 'low' end of the hall, of some status; it extended over the cross-passage, and was provided with its own fireplace. It may also have had its own garderobe, as the remains of doorway C19 opening into some sort of recess or mural chamber at the north-east corner suggest.

It is clear from the size and positioning of window A8 that the central hall was originally single storied, and was heated by a large lateral fireplace (C25) on the north, which may have originally been backed by an external stack. One puzzle is that there appear to be two doorways (F1 and F2) from the entry passage into the hall; possibly the smaller F2 may have given access to a stair that rose southwards over the head of A1, to a platform in front of doorway A21 into the first-floor chamber above cross passage and kitchen. The odd manner in which the internal jambs of the cross-passage doorway A 1 are corbelled out may relate to such a platform.

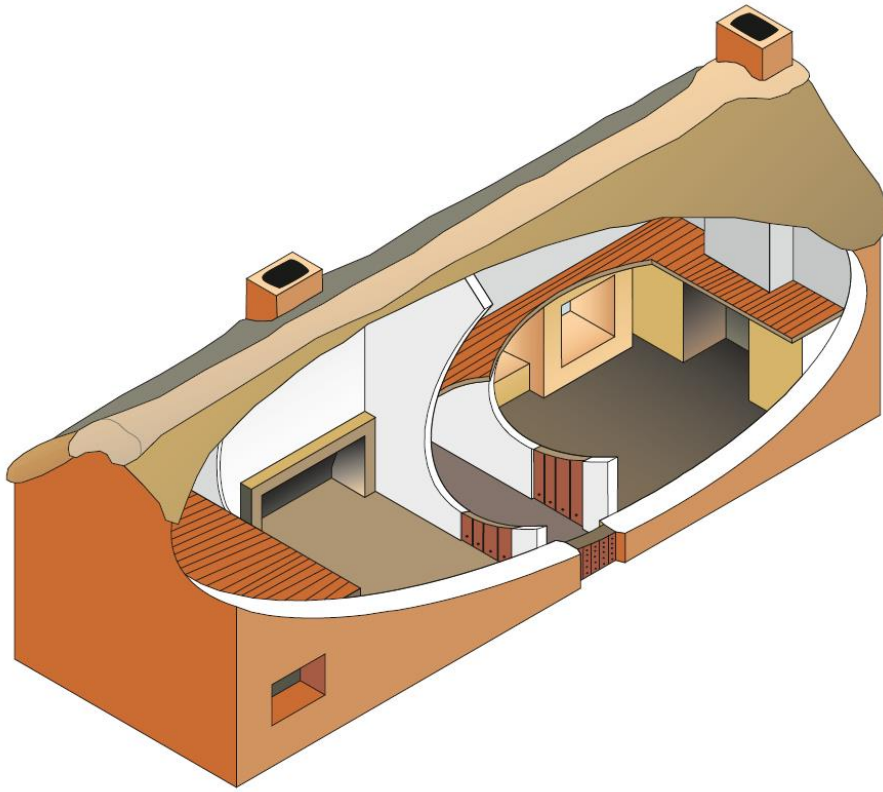
The scars for a removed cross-wall (A27, C33) show that there was a second storied bay at the west end of the building. Once again this has been subject to heavy alteration; the west wall seems to preserve evidence of a series of east-west beams, and both ground floor (parlour?) And upper chamber (solar) were provided with large windows on the south; the upper chamber had what was presumably a garderobe on the north, carried on a pair of large corbels.

Post-medieval alterations have been extensive; some must relate to the recorded use of the building as a school, others perhaps to subdivision into cottages. Few can be dated; the Tudor-arched doorway A2 must be of 16th or 17th century date, as must be the window A9, the position of which implies that the hall was floored over by the time of its insertion. Some changes, such as the blocking of several openings in the south wall, may have taken place after the building became a ruin; there may have been some measure of antiquarian intent to conceal obvious post-medieval features and present a more obviously medieval elevation to the street.

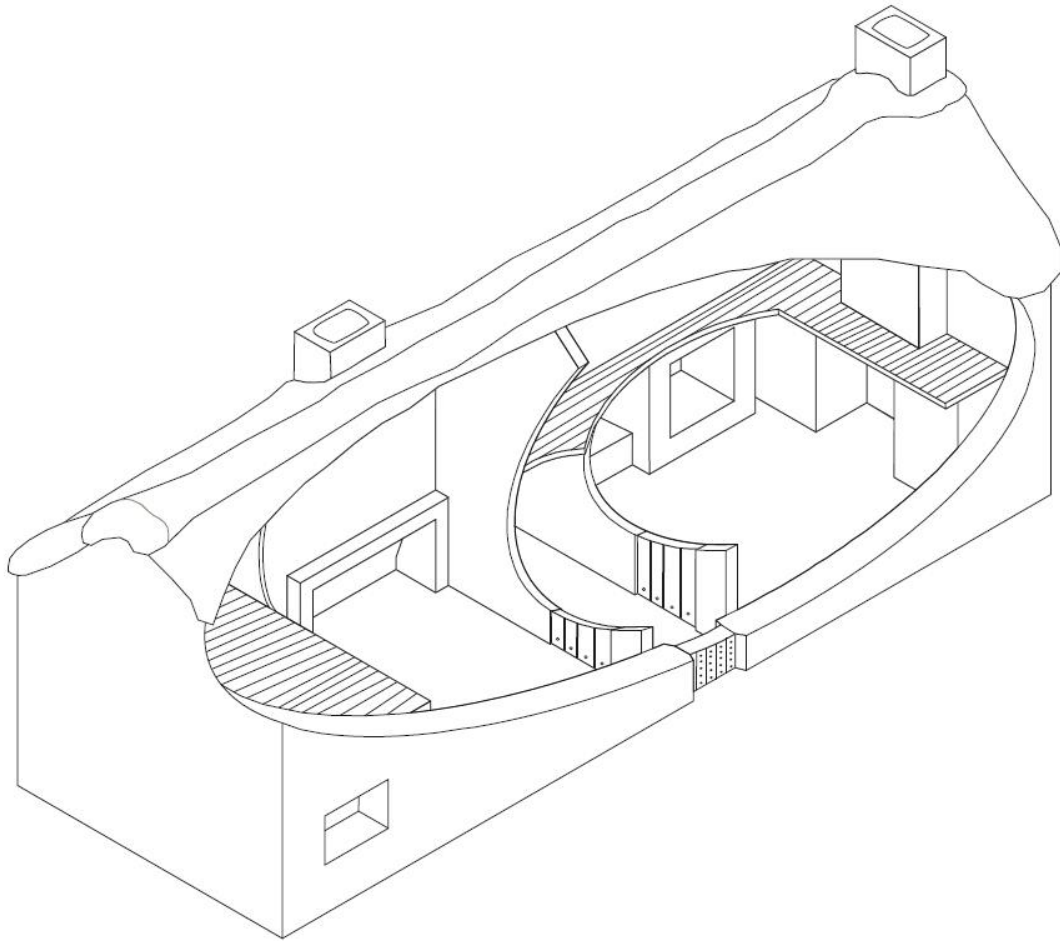
If the interior of the building is excavated, or even cleared of debris, further evidence of these secondary phases may come to light. If this is done, and if documentary material is analysed, more useful comment may be possible.

### **3.5 A Note on the Drawings**

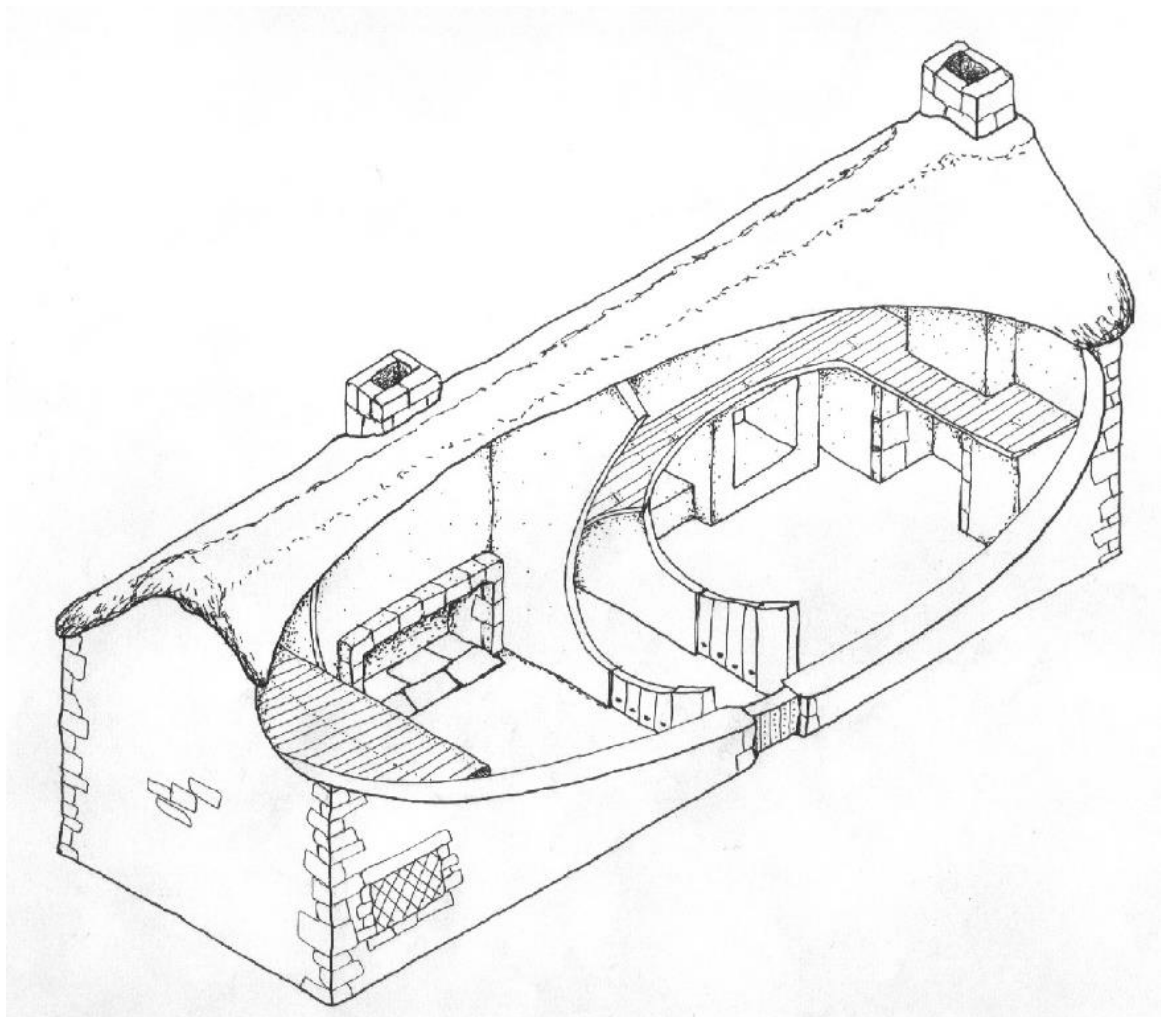
The elevation drawings reproduced here (*Figures 17-20*) were prepared before the recent restoration works and amended following the clearance of debris and vegetation which exposed a considerable amount of additional masonry.



**Figure 21:** Schematic representation of St Mary's Chantry House (colour version)



**Figure 22:** Schematic representation of St Mary's Chantry House (line drawing)



**Figure 23:** *Schematic reconstruction of St Mary's Chantry House*



## 4. HISTORICAL SYNTHESIS

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The site and building known here as St Mary's Chantry House, Alnwick is elsewhere referred to variously as St Mary's Chauntry-house (Tomlinson 1888, 376), St Mary's Chantry (Pevsner *et. al.* 1992, 143), the Lady or Lady's House (Shrimpton n.d. 5; Dickson 1852, 10), Alnwick Chantry, and Alnwick Grammar School (Tate 1864 (II), 69). It is located close to the River Aln on the north side of Walkergate, so named because of its medieval and later associations with 'fullers' or 'walkers', hence its earlier alternative name, Fuller's Street (Tate 1864 (I), 101). Although lying outside the town walls, Walkergate formed an important ward of the borough in the late medieval period because of the residence and activities of the 'Incorporated Company of Walkers or Fullers' in this position near to the river (*op. cit.* 245). Shrimpton notes that the topographical importance of the street in the medieval period lay in its strategic position at the northernmost point of the borough on the route of the main thoroughfare of the town from Bondgate Tower to the main Aln crossing downstream of the present Adam bridge (see Norton's Map of 1624). Both Norton's plan and contemporary documentary records indicate that the Walkergate burgages were small in size and arranged in neat rows on both sides of the street, perhaps indicating that building space was more cramped here than elsewhere in the medieval town.

Medieval Walkergate, named after its principal economic activity, was among the most industrially developed quarters of Alnwick. A riverside location was essential for the fullers of Walkergate both for industrial processes, such as bleaching, and as a source of power. Although the date of its origin in the town is obscure, it continued to be practiced until at least the later eighteenth century, when a fulling mill is recorded on the north bank of the river upstream of the causeway bridge. Also of considerable importance to Walkergate were corn mills situated on the north bank of the Aln either side of the bridge. Since all borough and barony tenants were forced to pay suit of mill, this led to a heightened level of activity on the town side of the bridge end.

Shrimpton conjectures that the ecclesiastical history of Walkergate may have been tied directly to the development of its main economic activity, bleaching, since the Promonstratensian canons at St Mary's Abbey, some 250 metres upstream, needed bleached cloth for their white monastic habits.

The first significant date in the history of the building is 1448 when, on July 6<sup>th</sup> of that year, Henry VI licenced Henry earl of Northumberland, and others,

*to found a chantry, to the praise and glory of God and in divine honour of the most blessed, glorious, and immaculate Virgin Mary, at the altar of the same virgin, within the chapel of St Michael of Alnwick, for two chaplains, who were to sing praises daily there for the good estate of the king and of the founders, and of all who contributed to the sustenance of the chantry while they lived, and of their souls when they had departed from this light. One of the chaplains had to instruct poor boys in the grammatical art gratis, without exacting any money whatsoever, and to do other works of piety according to the regulations of the founders. The chaplains were to be competent in law, by the name of "The Chaplains of the Chantry of the Blessed Mary of Alnewik", to prosecute and defend all actions in courts of law, and to acquire and enjoy lands, tenements, and rents, to the value of forty pounds yearly, as well for the maintenance of the chantry as for the exhibition of poor boys taught grammar there, as aforesaid (Tate 1864 (II), 70).*

The endowment was provided by a grant of 57 messuages in Alnwick, Warkworth and Ellington, 47 of them in Alnwick, amounting to £7 15s 8d annually (**PRO C 143/452/25**) – see above). 20 of those messuages, totalling 66s 8d. in annual revenues, were granted by the Earl of

Northumberland, but the greater share of the revenue, amounting to 69s, was derived from the larger number of messuages granted by the widow, Emma Asplon. The only other recorded contributor was listed as Thomas Hunter, clerk. That the majority of these messuages remained in the possession of St Mary's chantry is suggested by a survey of the barony made in 1624, preserved in Alnwick Castle, which records 44 burgages in Alnwick belonging to the chantry, with a total area of 10 acres, 3 roods and 37 perches. Ten of these messuages, having a combined area of 2 acres and 25 perches, were in Walkergate.

A residence was built for the two chaplains in Walkergate within a year or two of 1448 in the ecclesiastical style of that period. Access from the house to St Michael's church, where the chantry of St Mary itself was located, was through a church-way, closed in the nineteenth century by Hugh, Duke of Northumberland. It was within this building, the Chantry House, that the poor scholars of the burgesses received their education.

The Cartington Rental of 1499 records that of Walkergate's 21 burgages, the Chantry of the Blessed Mary held eight, along with two freeholds, out of a total of 11 ecclesiastical holdings. One of the freeholds was the Chantry House itself, known in surveys of 1541 1567, 1586 and 1619 as the 'Lady's House' or 'Ladie House' (Shrimpton n.d., 5, 20 & 22):

[1] "...Agnes Yuskyppe holdeth there a Tenement called the Lady House late in the tenure of Thomas Hunter by the like services And renteth by Yeare at the feasts aforesaid 1d." (Survey of 1586, in Shrimpton n.d. 20).

[7] "Thomas Ynskypp houldeth a Tenement called the Ladie House and late in tenure of Mr Thomas Hunter freeholder conteyning 1 roode 24 perches and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a perche and rented by the yeare" (*op. cit.* 22).

In the 1586 survey it is also recorded that,

"William Grey holdeth there a Wast called the Schoolhouse rigg parcell of the possessions of the late Chantery of Alnewicke late in the tenure of Thomas Grey, etc..." (*ibid.*).

In 1534 the value of the chantry chapel was given by Henry VIII's assessors as £10 0s 6d. Although chantries were saved from dissolution and destruction at the hands of the king by his death in 1547, in the first year of the reign of Edward VI, chantries, chapels and colleges were suppressed and their revenues given to the king by act of Parliament. Despite profuse local objections, and despite the commissioners favourable report on the character of the two schoolmasters then resident, the Alnwick Grammar School was stripped of most of its property. Thomas Thompson, master of the grammar school, continued to teach in the school, however, receiving yearly wages of £4 1s 8d, half the sum certified as the value of the endowment (the importance of the school at this time can be gauged by the statistic that as late as 1578 the two schoolmasters at Alnwick were part of a total of only seven schoolmasters in the entire county of Northumberland). We are informed that by the middle of the sixteenth century, a few years after the suppression of Alnwick Abbey, its Walkergate burgages were in secular hands and described as 'waste'. By 1567 the chantry house had fallen under the castle reeve's authority.

In 1614 there was an increase in payment to the schoolmaster, and the right to attend the school was extended to the children of the commonality as well as of the burgesses (Tate 1864, 82-3), although this situation was not to last long in practice. In 1630 the building of a new school in Pottergate is recorded. It is assumed that this event resulted in the abandonment of the original school as a place of learning, although it may have continued to fulfil a subsidiary role, or perhaps to serve as a residence attached to the new school, during a transitional phase, although this would

almost certainly have ended by the middle of the century when it is recorded that Scottish troops in possession of the town of Alnwick, "*burnt all of Walkergate*" (Tate 1864 (I), 316). Nothing now remains of the second school building in Pottergate which was subsequently replaced by another, presently standing in Howling Lane, a little to the south-west of Pottergate Tower.

Chantry lands continued in the possession of the crown until the time of the commonwealth, when they were sold, those at Alnwick being purchased in 1653 by John Sweeting a London merchant. The trustees who conducted the business appointed certain of the fee farm rents, amounting yearly to £16 18s 0d., for the payment of £12 to the minister and £4 1s 8d. to the schoolmaster of the town; these rents being collected and applied by the bailiff and chamberlains of the borough.

In the latter part of the seventeenth century the Chantry House and upwards of an acre attached to it was in possession of Tate's maternal ancestors, while the eastern part of the house belonged to the Northumberland family. The remainder was sold to the Duke of Northumberland around 1730 (Tate 1864 (II), 76-77):

*"It was then a two storied building, covered with thatch, and let to several tenants, access being to the upper rooms by outer stone stairs...There were two rooms below and two above, and traces of other two separate rooms at the west end. In this house the two masters lived and kept school, one teaching grammar and the other singing. The fire-places in the under rooms were large; and oak beams remaining are ornamented with carving. The style of the building is late perpendicular gothic; about the same age as the south wall of St Michael's Church; the door-way has a pointed arch; the windows were small, with square heads, excepting one which was larger, divided by mullions and transoms, and ornamented with tracery. This chancery house is now (c. 1864) a roofless ruin"* (Tate 1864 (II), 77).

Dickson provides two sketches of the Chantry House, one from 1826 (*Figure 6*),<sup>2</sup> the other from 1852 (*Figures 8-11*). The former shows the building, apparently still occupied, with its thatched roof still intact and a stone stairway providing access to the building from Walkergate via a first story doorway set towards the west end of the building. A dormer window projecting from the sloping roof above and just to the right of the first story doorway suggests that there was additional provision for accommodation in the roof space. West of the first story door is shown a large first floor window which is barely traceable in the surviving external masonry (Ryder's **A14**, above).

The 1852 sketch shows the building roofless and in ruinous condition, but with a similar range of features externally. The main differences are that the dormer window has disappeared above the surviving bricked-up window (**A8**), as has the external doorway towards the west end of the building. The internal plan is shown much as it now appears, with the addition of an internal partition wall dividing into two unequal parts the present, large room west of the through passage. The dividing wall, complete with a blocked stone arch, is shown crossing the building immediately west of the north wall fireplace and forms one of the two internal divisions depicted by Wood in 1827 (*Figure 7*), the other being the surviving through passage.

The 'roofless ruin' (*Figure 12*) described by Tate only a decade after Dickson seems to have been saved from stone robbing by Algernon, Duke of Northumberland and his heirs who,

*"not willing that the building should be entirely swept away, means to preserve it, as far as is practicable, and to convert it to some useful purpose"* (Dickson 1852, 11).

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<sup>2</sup> An attached note informs us that this sketch was copied from the *Local Historian's Table Book for Northumberland*, Vol. IV, p.296.

Thus, it was preserved as a slowly disintegrating ruin until consolidation work was finally undertaken almost 150 years after the intention was first expressed. A certain amount of damage by erosion has occurred over the years by the growth of tree roots and ivy, as seen on a mid-nineteenth century sketch of the structure by Brown (*Figure 15*). The long, slow decline of Walkergate following its late medieval heyday just prior to the Suppression ensured that there was little incentive for development work which might have threatened existing monuments such as St. Mary's Chantry House. The relatively poor state of the north face of the building, however, indicates perhaps that protective measures against stone robbing were more difficult to enforce at rear of the building, or that the will of the estate only extended to the visible, Walkergate frontage.

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**Plate 1:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, South  
frontage, west end*



**Plate 2:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, South  
frontage, doorways*



**Plate 3:** *St Mary's Chantry House, South frontage, east end*





**Plate 4:** *St Mary's Chantry House, North frontage, east end*



**Plate 5:** *St Mary's Chantry House, North frontage, doorway*



**Plate 6:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, North frontage, towards W end*



**Plate 7:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, North-west corner*





**Plate 8:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House,  
east fireplace (a)*



**Plate 9:**  
*St Mary's Chantry  
House, east fireplace (b)*



**Plate 10:**  
*St Mary's Chantry  
House, east fireplace (c)*





**Plate 11:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, East fireplace,  
 north-east detail (a)*



**Plate 12:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, East fireplace,  
 north-east detail (b)*



**Plate 13:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, east  
 fireplace, south-east detail  
 during excavation*



**Plate 14:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, east  
 fireplace, south-east detail after  
 excavation (a)*



**Plate 15:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, east fireplace,  
 south-east detail after excavation (b)*





**Plate 16:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House,  
passage and west wall*



**Plate 17:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House,  
position of west fireplace  
and north door*

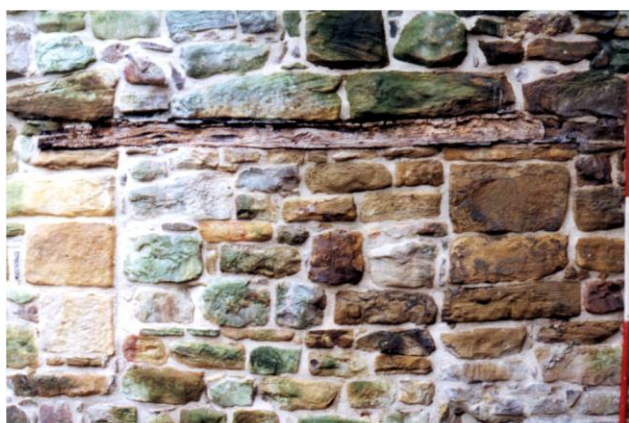


**Plate 18:**  
*St Mary's Chantry  
House, west wall*





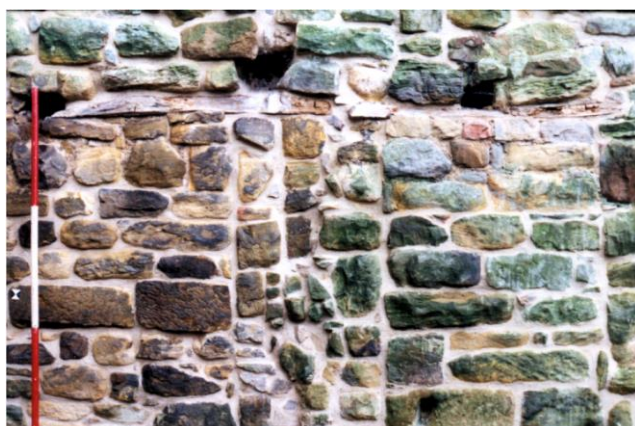
**Plate 19:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, north-east  
interior timber*



**Plate 20:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, internal timber  
south wall (a)*



**Plate 21:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, internal timber  
south wall (b)*



**Plate 22:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, internal timber  
south wall (c)*





**Plate 23:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, work in progress*



**Plate 24:** *St Mary's Chantry House, work completed on south wall window, interior face*





**Plate 25:**  
*Worked stone,  
South wall  
doorway (a)*



**Plate 26:**  
*Worked stone, South wall doorway (b)*



**Plate 27:**  
*Worked stone, South wall  
doorway (c)*





**Plate 28:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, worked stones at north door (a)*



**Plate 29:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, worked stones at north door (b)*



**Plate 30:**  
*St Mary's Chantry House, worked stones at north door (c)*