

A structural history of Preston Tower

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Introduction

This structural history was commissioned by Groves-Raines Architects on behalf of East Lothian Council in March 2021. The report is based on onsite observations and background research that was carried out by the author for Bob Marshall who was commissioned to produce interpretative reconstructions on Preston Tower.

Two main structural phases can be identified from the ruins of Preston Tower, East Lothian, dating to the 15th and early-17th century respectively. The original construction is attributed to Sir Robert Hamilton of Fingalton and Salt Preston who was in possession of the lordship of Salt Preston by 1460 and the second phase is attributed to Sir John Hamilton who raised the building by two floors to create the tower so familiar to us today in the 1620s. Although there were two documented burnings of the tower in 1544 and 1650 respectively, they cannot be not directly related to changes in the structure. The first may have been the occasion for subsequent changes to the entrance arrangements, but the second is unmarked on the structure. A possible third burning event in 1663, not mentioned until 1796, cannot be corroborated and there is a noticeable lack of traces of burning in the superstructure. The tower itself continued in use, if not occupation, until the mid-18th century, becoming ruinous by the end of the century (see below Historical Note for documentary details).

The first phase comprises the primary L-shaped tower, with the main north-south wing subdivided into four floors: a vaulted basement with entresol, vaulted first floor, a second floor with stairs rising to a wall walk and possibly a garret and cap house. The west wing is sub-divided into five floors: a pit prison, an upper prison, a guard/ante room, a possible kitchen and a private chamber. This basic construction provides a framework for all subsequent changes. Of particular architectural interest at this tower are the elaborate entrance arrangements with the use of timber hoardings to provide covered stairs up to the first floor entrances that were added to the tower (see below Modifications to the primary structure).

Tower houses of L-shaped plan with similar provision of accommodation may be seen at Cessford (Roxburghshire), Duns (Berwickshire), and Neidpath (Peeblesshire) in the Scottish Borders and Lennoxlove and Stoneypath in East Lothian. Preston is at the smaller end of the range (Table 1), but its attributes are typical of the group which date mainly to the 15th century and indicate the relative status of the Hamiltons of Salt Preston in comparison with the Hays of Locherworth (Borthwick) or the Kers of Cessford. These towers and those that built them were not magnates of first rank, but they do reflect their jurisdictional and lordly status.

Tower	Length (ft)	Breadth (ft)	Family of Occupants	Date of construction
Preston	39	34	Hamilton of Fingalton and Salt Preston	15th century
Stoneypath	50	43	Lyell of Stanepeth	15th century
Cessford	67	65	Ker of Cessford	15th century
Neidpath	62	60	Hay of Locherworth	Late 14th century
Duns	65	50	Home of Ayton	15th century
Lennoxlove	60	55	Maitland of Lethington	15th century

Table 1 Comparative table of some L-shaped towers from Lothian and the Borders - units in feet

The second phase dates to the early 17th century and encompassed major changes to the superstructure with the addition of two floors to the top of the 15th century tower, providing a considerable increase in domestic accommodation. Architecturally the raised tower includes typical features of the later 16th and early 17th centuries, particularly the pediments over the windows. These are usually applied to dormer windows rising above the eaves of a sloping roof. Here they are formed within the wall, and the top of the walls relieved, uniquely, with semi-circular hollows on all faces in mimicry, perhaps, of crenellations or as neoclassical references (Figure 3). This level of display reflects the continued importance of the Hamiltons as barons of Preston and the newly acquired burgh status of 1617.

Finally it is worth considering the landscape context of the tower. It is set back to the north of the main, east-west street of Prestonpans and it seems it was part of a large manorial enclosure with Hamilton House at its southwest corner. Apart from the 17th century dovecot at the northeast of the enclosure no other building from the 17th century or earlier has survived. A roofed building in the correct location which may be the tower is depicted set back from the street front buildings in an enclosure on the north-east of the village by General Roy's surveyors (Roy's Military Survey 1747-55).¹ When the tower was in occupation in late medieval period it is to be expected that there were other buildings, including stables, barns, a bake houses and kilns for drying or malting corn as well as a hall range and kitchens to serve it. The tower was essentially a chamber for private family occupation and its kitchen was too small for lavish entertainment. These other buildings have not survived and there is no evidence of any buildings attached to the tower, only the stub of a yard wall at the southeast corner. For an analogy, Crichton Castle from the same period comprises a tower at one corner of a courtyard including a great hall and kitchens amongst other buildings and also has a stable block at a short distance southwest of the castle enclosure. Further archaeological investigation in the adjacent properties previously part of the Hamilton's manorial enclosure may yet reveal traces of related buildings.

Previous Surveys

McGibbon and Ross were the first to publish a measured survey in their seminal book on castles in 1887 (McGibbon and Ross 1887, 319), with plans of all the main floors to parapet level and an east-west section. They correctly observed the corbels and joists as evidence of hoarding on the southeast, but missed the blocked south entrance and argued the stair must have been lowered into place from the hoarding. They also did not recognise that the steps down to the upper prison from

¹ <https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=15&lat=55.95833&lon=-2.97096&layers=4&b=1>

the passage to the guard room in the west wing at first floor level were secondary (see below The primary structure), making it a unique feature of castle architecture. A measured survey of the tower in 1888 by architect, Walter Lyon, for *The Builder* is notable for illustrating how the features in the walls on the southeast corner might have supported a timber hoarding that provided access to the tower at the first floor, but interpreted the blocked south entrance as later (Figure 1). The plan of the Ground Floor usefully shows the exit of the garderobe chute at the base of the west wall and the slops chute/garderobe in the pit prison feeding into it. It also presents details of the two 17th century floors in the elevations and sections, but omits plans of the second floor upwards. The Royal Commission Inventory record also omits details of these later floors in their drawings of the tower (Figure 2) and confusingly records the wrong floor plan for the second floor chamber in the west wing of the tower, applying the mezzanine at first floor level instead, as does that of McGibbon and Ross. The Commission article does recognise that the hoarding will have interfered with the defensive machicolations at the wall top on the east without resolving the issue. The blocked south entrance passage was missed and its opening on the inside was interpreted as a mural-wall chamber demolished when it was converted to an entrance to the staircase (RCAHMS 1924, 100-103). The recent Historic Buildings Survey by CFA Archaeology recognised the blocked south entrance and the changes to the external wooden stairs as being interrelated (CFA Archaeology 2021, 68). Mike Cressey of CFA Archaeology provided a graphic interpretation of what the hoarding may have looked like and supplied photographic evidence (Cressey 2021a and b). This is a much more comprehensive survey of the building that includes the upper floors. However, the 3D Model of the tower by AOC available on Sketchfab provides an immensely powerful and comprehensive addition to the record of the tower and its structural history that is also accessible online (AOC 3D Model 2022).

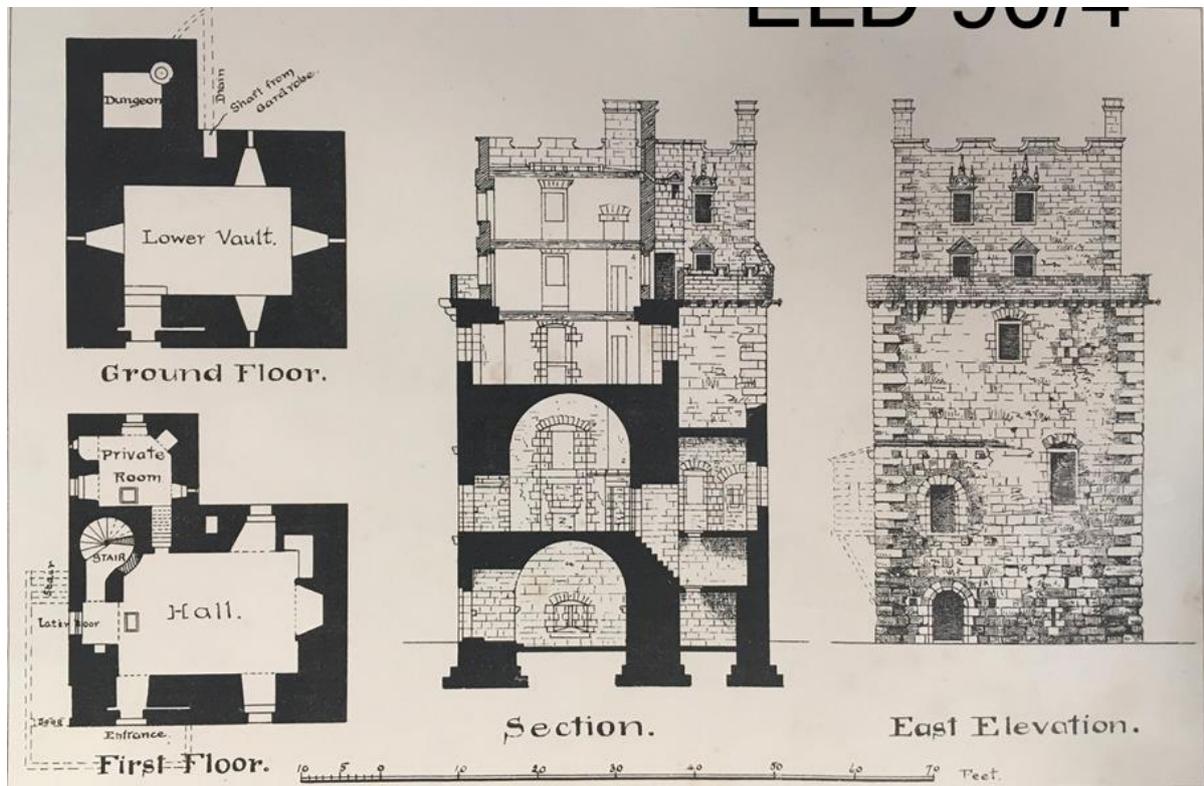


Figure 1 Plan of Preston Tower in 1888 showing the timber stairs to the first floor (Crown Copyright Historic Environment Scotland ELD 90/4)

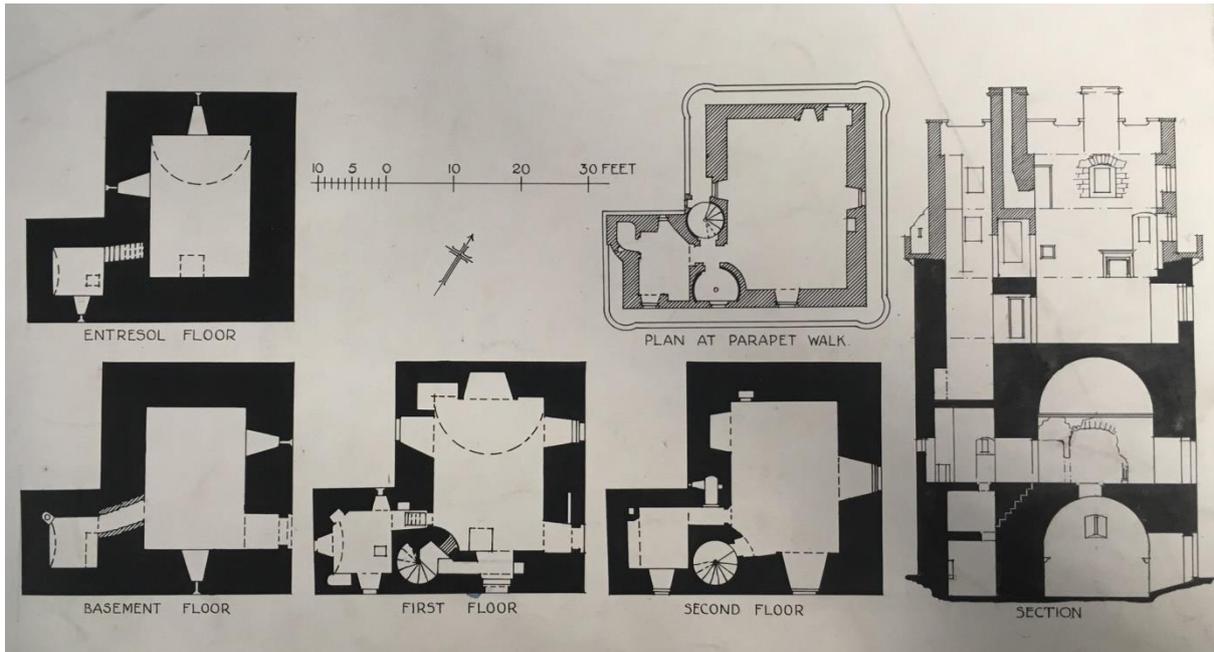


Figure 2 Plan of Preston Tower (Crown Copyright Historic Environment Scotland ELD 90/5)



Figure 3 Preston Tower photographed from southeast in 1937. Note the scalloped parapet on the top of the 17th century addition, relieving the horizontal line. Crown Copyright HES SC2138045

Structural Description

The tower is described in terms of how it was accessed and used. Reference is made in the text to the 3D Model (AOC 3D Model 2022), using the annotation numbers to focus on details described in the text.² The sandstone has weathered badly in places, especially on the south elevation below the water spouts. There have been some repairs to the window jambs, to masonry below the water spouts and the reuse of a stone with a joist hole as the lintel of the south window of the basement. Some conservation of the masonry of the parapet and wall tops is also evident. The parapet, for example, is uneven, without any original coping suggesting it has been repaired in modern times.

Phase 1

The basic L-shaped tower constructed in Old Red Sandstone with four floors, two of them vaulted did not change during this phase. Minor modifications relating mainly to the entrance arrangements created the hoarding referred to by previous authorities. These changes created a separate private access to the upper floors of the tower and a new public access to the hall from the east.

The primary structure

In its primary phase, the tower was entered via a door at first floor level from the south (now blocked) with a separate basement entrance on the east (42 on 3D Model). Machicolated corbels provided defensive protection over the basement entrance, but no trace of any similar defensive measure is visible in the surviving masonry over the primary entrance in the south wall. A similar wall-top machicolation may be seen at Hoddum, Dumfriesshire (RCAHMS 1920).

The vaulted basement provided storage space for the occupants of the tower and needed to be securely defended. The entrance is round arched and opens into the south-east corner of the basement (14, 15 on 3D Model). The entrance jambs are rebated inside and out for secure doors. It is likely that the floor of the basement was lower than at present since the corbels on which the timber entresol floor sat are only 1.5m above the present ground floor (3 on 3D Model)., Although the Royal Commission section shows a sloping floor in the entrance passage (Figure 2), this has since been concreted level. The corbels supported the wooden beams on which floor planks were laid. The basement was lit by internally splayed slit windows on the south and east and the entresol by slit windows on the north and west (1 and 2 on 3D Model), decorated with simple chamfer mouldings. There was a trap door through the barrel vaulted ceiling at the south end providing direct access from the mezzanine store to the first floor hall (13 on 3D Model). Internal wooden ladders or steps may be inferred.

In the west wing at these levels there are two prisons, a pit prison at ground floor level with no lighting (5 on 3D Model) – the present passage is modern (4 on 3D Model) – and at mezzanine level an upper prison, called a Guard Room by AOC, (6 on Model). Access to both prisons was controlled from the square hatch in the ante/guard room at first floor level. Ventilation and daylight to the pit prison were provided by a square hole in the vaulting on the south side, which rises to the window breast in the prison room above as well as a second hole in the vault in the north-west. In the north-west corner there is a corbeled cubbyhole with a slop sink/garderobe chute. The function of a

² <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/preston-tower-15th-century-tower-house-dc641742bc9e416e997c96cce75489dc>

projecting stone high in the west wall is unknown, but may have held an oil lamp. A square hatch in the vault was the only means of access. The room above which was also a prison was lit by a splayed slit window in the south wall and was accessed by a square hatch in the vault (8 on 3D Model). The present stone stairs up to the first floor from the upper prison at the north-east corner is a later insertion which is confirmed by the change in the stonework to more irregular masonry (7 on 3D Model). A hole cut into the stone in either side of the stairs at first floor level took a timber beam for a trap door.

The first floor of the tower was originally entered from the south through an entrance that was blocked, probably in Phase 2. Only the jambs for the west side of the entrance in yellow sandstone remain from this original entrance (42 on 3D Model). Inside, the blocking can still be seen as an opening at the south end of the hall, where 'a small section of the eastern arch springer survives' (Carruthers and Cressey 2021, 33), and there is an aumbry on the east side of the entrance passage (10 on 3D Model). It is most likely external access was via a simple wooden stair to a platform immediately outside the entrance, which probably ascended alongside the tower wall (Bob Marshall's reconstruction c.1460).

The first floor was the main public space or hall with a large fireplace at the north end and two large window lights to east and west and one over the entrance on the south (10 on 3D Model). There are no signs of any window seats, which may be due to the openings being modified in the 17th century. Indeed, the plasterwork on the walls may be presumed to be late in the occupation of the tower and would benefit from further scientific analysis. The splay of the west window is wider than the others on the south, but its north was limited to the perpendicular by a large salt cellar in the north-west corner. The large lintel over the fireplace has been broken off and the relieving arch now takes the weight above (11 on 3D Model). The decorated fireplace pillar shaft on the east side is edged with quirked roll mouldings with a semi-circular hollow in between over a fluted pedestal. The opening of the fireplace is arched and plastered, with what appear to be seats for warming on either side of the hearth. The large squared recess was cut in the walls beside the fireplace (1.5m in length and 1m in depth), also lined with plaster, with two holes for a wooden structure in line with the west wall. In the west side of the hall at the south end another entrance led via a passage to an ante-room in the west wing (8 on 3D Model). This room was well lit on the south, west and north with a fireplace in the north-west corner and a press in the south-west corner, giving a well-lit heated environment suitable for receiving visitors in a private capacity. It also contained the hatch controlling access to the prisons below and therefore served as a guardroom too.

At the south end of the hall, to the west of the blocked entrance passage, there are two blocked doors, the first of which was cut back to enlarge access to the stairs via a passage in the 17th century (16 on 3D Model and see below) so that only half an original blocked door is now visible. The second opening in the southwest angle is also blocked and has partly collapsed. These two openings provided service access at the back of the hall to a passage that led directly to the spiral stairs up to the second floor and to a chamber in a mezzanine floor between the first and second floors of the west wing (18 on 3D Model). This room contained a broad fireplace in the west wall under a shallow arch (19 on 3D Model) that may have provided kitchen services. Although the lack of a slop chute makes this less likely, the room may have provided finishing space for food prepared externally. It is just possible the slop drain may have been removed at a later stage from below the window where there is roughly finished masonry.

The stairs are well lit by broad squared window at the start of the stair at first floor level (17 on 3D Model) and three further slit windows – all decorated with chamfered mouldings – at each turn of the stair up to the top at parapet level, where it gives access to the wall walk via an opening to the north. Here an additional three steps lead up to the level of the wall walk, the lowest step of which may be original (25 on 3D Model) and at the top of the stair another three steps led up to a platform, possibly giving access to the wall walk on the south. Whether there was a cap-head room is not clear, nor whether there was access to a garret. The wall walk is floored with stone slabs laid alternately up and down, with an open drain between it and the parapet wall. Holes for drainage open from it along each side with stone spouts projecting beyond the parapet (30 on 3D Model) – the best preserved spout is that on the east side towards the north end which is grooved on top and narrows to a point. The parapet has been substantially rebuilt but enough remains to indicate its form (34 on 3D Model). At the corners the parapet wall projects slightly to form a round turret and the top of the parapet wall was finished, where it still survives on the north-west corner of the west wing under later stonework, with crenellations, the merlons of which are finished with steeply sloping coping stones with a filleted rim. The parapet sits on decorated corbels that project beyond it, and may indicate a complete rebuild, when the machicolation over the basement entrance became redundant (see below).

The second floor of the tower provided private chambers, comprising a large room in the main part (21-24 on 3D Model) and a small chamber in the west wing. It is notable that it is at this level that there is a garderobe in the thickness of the west wall, accessed from the north side of the passage to the small chamber (22 on 3D Model). It is lit by a slit window and the chute now blocked from it empties out at the foot of the wall in the return between the two wings of the tower (41 on 3D Model). The main room has two window lights on the east and south and a fireplace in the west wall with a small squared opening or salt box adjacent to it in the north wall, which although eroded appears to have been rebated for a door. Both windows have been enlarged and widened in later phases with no trace of window seats in the openings (see Phase 2 below). Once again the lintel slab of the fireplace has been ripped out leaving the relieving arch supported by the wall. A shallow hollow cut in the north wall immediately east of the salt box, c.1m wide, looks like the back of a chimney, suggesting a wooden lum. However, it is unlikely there were two fireplaces in use at one time, and is clearly a secondary feature. The slop chute under the east window is presumed to be secondary, the stonework looks to have been disturbed and it is unusual to have kitchens in the private chambers of a tower house (see Phase 2 below). There is also a shallow recess in the south wall between the entrance from the stairs and the splayed south window opening, with a relieving arch over suggesting a press. The small chamber in the west wing is also heated with a fireplace in the west wall and a press in the south wall for secure storage next to a slit window.

Modifications to the primary structure

The main modification of the first phase of the tower is the insertion of an additional entrance at first-floor level in the east wall at the southeast corner (14, 15 on 3D Model). The north side of the entrance passage is splayed which may indicate an earlier window, but the south side is perpendicular to the east wall and slightly recessed from the face of the south wall to make the passage wide enough. Externally the opening is round arched like the basement entrance and rebated inside and out with a slot for a draw bar. However, it is not aligned with the machicolation, being offset slightly to the south (42 on 3D Model), indicating it is not original. Like the primary entrance, the new one required a timber external stairs to provide access. However, instead of a

separate timber stairs leading directly to the entrance a covered balcony which also led around the southeast corner to the south entrance was created with covered stairs descending from the east entrance. This took the form of a wooden hoarding in front of both entrances that is evident in the joist holes and corbels to support it and the raggles cut for the roof (Carruthers and Cressey 2021, 33; Cressey 2021a and b). That this hoarding is secondary is clear from the corbel set in a square hole cut in a quoin on the south face of the southeast corner. The roofed hoarding must also have been accompanied by a change in the parapet since the machicolation was now redundant as defensive feature since the hoarding was in direct line of anything dropped from above.

The evidence for the hoarding is most visible in the four corbels along the south wall and the three along the east wall to support timbers for the pentice roof. A raggel or groove cut to receive the roofline of the pentice roof is still visible just above the corbels. That on the south is cut by the south window which was enlarged latterly when the entrance was blocked. A line of square joist holes below the corbels took timbers which supported the eaves of the pentice roof. This roof was combined with a balcony, the floor of which was supported by joists set in the wall. Four square joists holes for the floor of the passage along the east wall were cut in the stonework and are unfilled, but those on the south wall have been filled in and are less easy to detect without closer examination. A rebate cut in the quoins at the corner on the south face indicates there was a door at the southeast corner that limited access to the south entrance, making it more private. The cover for the stairs may be seen to the north of the east entrance. Below the raggel of the roof line for the balcony there is another deeply cut sloping raggel for a roof. The landings for the stairs is marked by two oblong raggels – one slightly above the other - where a return accessed a passage supported by another four squared joists holes that led over the basement entrance to a last flight of steps (Bob Marshall reconstruction 1560). This was an elaborate timber hoarding and an architecturally impressive enclosed structure. With the addition of the second opening, the public access to the hall was directly from the new entrance and the south entrance was reserved for private access.

Internally this was accompanied by a change in the passage from the south entrance. The opening into the hall was blocked off as suggested by two rough holes in the east side of the passage for a wooden partition just short of its opening into the hall (10 on 3D Model). It is at this stage that the passage within the wall was extended to open into the entrance passage on its west side (Carruthers and Cressey 2021, 33 and 68, Fig 5c). This gave greater control of the private space in the upper floor and it is most likely that the two service doors were blocked at this time. It might also have been the occasion for the stone stairs to the upper prison to be inserted.

Phase 2

The main change from the first phase was the addition of two more floors to the top of the tower to provide more private accommodation. The walls were built with pale grey sandstone and floored with timber. There is little subsequent structural modification to this phase. The only external change is the addition of the initials of Sir Thomas Hamilton and his third wife, Dame Rachel Burnet (D.R.B.), whom he married in 1662, on the east pediments of the upper floor, complementing that of Sir John Hamilton (S. I. H.) and his wife Katherine Howieson (S.I.D.K.H.) respectively on the west and east windows on the south face as recorded by the Royal Commission (RCAHMS 1924; 42 on 3D Model). Only the west pediment on the south and the north pediment on the east still have inscriptions that are legible (41, 42 on 3D Model).

This raising of the top of the tower is a one of two possible solutions to the modernisation of a tower house in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. This can be the addition of a comfortable new wing in the Jacobean style of the period, suiting the more peaceful times after the Union of the Crowns, such as Traquair House, Peeblesshire, and Lennoxlove, East Lothian, or the addition of floors to the top of the tower, as at Hoddom and Spedlins, Dumfriesshire. Round-headed pediments over the top floor windows on the south, east and west are paralleled at Menzies Castle, Perthshire; Stenhouse, Stirlingshire and Falkland Palace, Fife, ranging from the 1540s to the early 17th century. The triangular ones over the lower of the two additional floors and the north windows of the upper floors are perhaps more common, with parallels, for example, at Airth Castle, Stirlingshire, or Castle Menzies, Perthshire, dating to the later 16th century – the latter having both types of pediment. The round pediments at Preston, however, are enlivened by three pyramidal finials in neo-classical style. However, the decorative semi-circular hollows in the parapet of the wall top are unique to this building, either in mimicry of crenellations, or more likely as a neo-classical allusion (42 on 3D Model). The roof line is supported on sloping stonework to either side of the chimney breast in the north wall (37 on 3D Model) and would not have been visible externally. Similar treatment, hiding the roof behind the wall-top, can be seen at George Heriot's Hospital, Edinburgh, built in the mid-17th century. The roofing of the west wing was managed separately with an east-west roof from the surviving sloping stonework beside the chimney breast on its west side (27 on 3D Model). A wooden frame just below the wall tops in the west wing may be a post-occupation attempt at roofing in modern times.

At the same time that the tower was raised in height, the external hoarding was redesigned and rebuilt as a stair exclusively to the first floor entrance on the east. The top of the entrance was recut to make a squared opening at this time and the south entrance blocked. The passage from the hall was reopened and the window above the entrance enlarged at its base to improve lighting the hall, cutting the raggle of the roof line of the former balcony pentice in the process (42 on 3D Model). Access to the upper floors was now from the reopened entrance passage at the south end of the hall that turned west to enter the passage behind the blocked service doors (16 on 3D Model). It is likely that the other windows in the hall were enlarged in height and breadth to match at this time. A cornice which still survives over the fireplace at the north end of the hall and is marked by a series of holes in the stonework on the other sides was inserted to decorate the hall in the latest style (10 on 3D Model).

The addition of two new floors providing domestic accommodation allowed the creation of a new kitchen on the second floor, making use of the fireplace in the west wall, adding a slops drain at the base of the east window and the salt cellar in the north wall. The windows were enlarged and preserve quirked hollow chamfer mouldings that terminate in an arrow point at the foot of the jamb (22 on 3D Model) similar to those on the windows of the additional floors and therefore presumably dating to this phase. The east window in the first floor also has this replacement for the chamfers of the primary phase, but the south window has undressed jambs.

Access to the first additional floor was provided by the existing spiral stair to the wall walk via a passage to the north from which there were doors to left and right opening variously into the two wings (Figure 2 Plan at Parapet Walk and 25 on 3D Model). An additional spiral stair was accessed from the north of the passage which led to the upper floor of the new structure (29 on 3D Model) and also included a door opening on to the wall-walk four steps up from the passage. The spiral stair

continued up to the upper floor, but the steps have not survived, leaving a scar. Access to the upper floor is difficult to determine now due to poor preservation of the stonework and later conservation repairs. What may be a blocked door into the south part of the main wing is marked by a vertical straight edge of dressed stones a short distance south of a shallow return in its west wall. However, an opening from the stair to the south may be inferred from the surviving walls matching that on the third floor. The passages at both third and fourth floors are lit by windows in the south wall.

The third floor in this phase provided two private rooms (32 on 3D Model). That in the main wing of the tower was heated by a fireplace in the middle of the north wall, with a quirked roll moulding surround, badly broken away on the lintel and east jamb. A cornice projects over the top to make it an imposing feature. It is lit by a window in the north wall immediately to its east which has a window seat set in the east wall beside it. Further windows provided light in the middle of the east and west walls and also in the middle of the south wall. The windows are decorated externally with the same moulding as those on the second floor, confirming that they were built at the same time. That in the west was smaller and not decorated as it was recessed externally to allow space for the door opening onto the wall walk. An aumbry was set in the east wall just south of the window which has a shallow round arch over it and a scar in the wall above it to match suggesting some elaborate wood work. This makes a large day room with no sign of any partition. The smaller room in the west wing has a garderobe closet in the north-west angle and is lit by windows to north and south (26 on 3D Model). The closet has a rebate in the stone surround of the entrance for a door and a small slit window in the southwest. A large press has been created between the south window embrasure and the passage between the two wings. As the room was unheated it would not be a room in which to spend much time, but may have served as a secure place for valuable items as well as natural bodily functions.

The fourth floor provided sleeping accommodation (33 on 3D Model). The main wing was divided into two parts by a timber partition inferred from the presence of two fireplaces and a shallow return in the west wall to accommodate the stair from which a timber framed partition might have sprung. A vertical straight edge a short distance from this return suggests a blocked opening may once have provided direct access to the south compartment from the stair. The north room has a garderobe closet in the north-west angle, the opening to which also has an external rebate for a door, and there is a small slit window in the west. The room is lit by windows in the middle of the north wall and in the east wall offset to the north of the inferred line of the partition. A fireplace in the middle of the west wall of the room was decorated by a complete quirked-roll moulding of late 16th or early 17th century date. The fireplace for the south room was in the south wall by the southwest corner, similarly decorated to that in the north room. There were windows in the middle of the south wall and in the east wall to the south of the line of the partition with an aumbry set in the wall immediately to its south. The room in the west wing was well lit by windows to north, south and west and was heated by a fireplace in the west wall to the north of the window (27 on 3D Model). It is presumed both wings were accessed from the passage leading from the spiral stair with doors to left and right like that on the third floor, which as there is no raggle left by the passage walls on the south wall, may have opened next to the south wall.

Historical Note

Like many castles, the earliest documented date is often later than its construction. Preston is no exception. The castle of Preston is not directly referred to until 1544 when it and the town of Preston were burned by the forces of the invading English army under the earl of Hertford. Tradition has it that Sir Robert Hamilton who died in 1489 was responsible for its construction. This is presumed rather than established, as he was the first to be styled Sir Robert Preston of Fingalton and Salt Preston in a grant of saltpans to Melrose abbey in 1460 (Innes 1837, page, No. 556) and stylistically the castle has the character of a castle of the 15th century with no gun loops that become common in the 16th century.

Presumably Sir David Hamilton, his descendent, was not in occupation of the castle at the time of the burning in 1544, as he survived to be rewarded by the Queen Regent. David Hamilton was raised to the rank of knight banneret and Deputy Marischal of Scotland in 1551 by the Queen Regent (Anderson, 1825, 346). In 1552 the Abbey of Holyrude was granted the combined burgh of barony of Salt Preston and Prestonpans by the Crown in 1552 (Thomson 1886, 160, No. 720), which also refers directly to the tower and fortalice of Salt Prestoun. It is most likely that Sir David Hamilton is responsible for the restoration of the castle after the destruction by Hertford's men, since he will have had access to the resources to do so following his ennoblement and the honour of his rank. He was also a strong supporter of the Reformation, hosting a meeting at Preston in 1559 of the Queen Dowager and the Lords of the Congregation, and was a supporter of the Reformation in the parliament of 1560 (Anderson 1825, 346-7). As a kinsman of the Duke of Chatelherault he served as surety to the Queen to ensure the compliance of the Duke's freedom in 1566 on pain of forfeiture of a large sum (Anderson 1825, *ibid.*). His son, George later inherited, but having been a supporter of the Queen did not obtain preferment to knighthood. He did, however, establish a new parish church and school in the burgh of Preston (Anderson 1825, 348-9).

His son, Sir John (1565-1644), and his wife Joanna Otterburne, were granted the barony in 1617 (Thomson 1892, 610, No. 1676), which 'his father and predecessors possessed', including burgh status for the village. Like his grandfather he was a great supporter of the kirk and stood against both King James and his son's attempts to introduce an episcopalian church to Scotland (Anderson 1825, 350). He may be credited with the addition of the two top stories of Preston Tower as his initials and those of his second wife, Catherine Howieson, who he married in 1620, are emblazoned on the south pediment of the upper story windows. He died in 1644 as did his son and it was his son John who briefly succeeded to the barony. Due to the entail of the estate it passed to Sir Thomas Hamilton in 1647 who was the descendant of George Hamilton (above). His involvement in the war against Cromwell in 1650 saw Preston Tower yet again destroyed by fire, including his charter cist (Anderson 1825, 355). In the Parliament following the restoration he obtained a new charter for his lands of Preston and Fingalton in June 1663 (Anderson 1825, 355). He married three times, of which the third to Dame Rachel Burnet in 1662 is enshrined in the initials, D. R. B. on the pediment over an east window of the top story.

Succeeded in turn by his two sons, Sir William and Sir Robert of whom the latter was a strong Covenanter who was forced into exile after Bothwell Brig, dying 1701 without issue, the estate passed to another branch of the family, another Robert Hamilton, who chose not to take up the estate, which passed by sale to James Oswald of Fingalton, who was already in possession in 1691

when the Hearth tax return was made, having eleven hearths recorded in his residence, while Lady Preston had 20 in her house, presumably what is now called Hamilton House (NRS E69/9/2/11). This Lady Preston may be the wife of Sir William Hamilton, Rachel Nicolson, who he married in 1670.

According to the Statistical Account 'Preston Tower, said to have been built around 1500, is ruinous' (Stat. Acct. 1796, 75). The tower was 'burnt by accident in 1663' and the Hamilton 'old writings of the barony and others perished by the fire' (Stat. Acct. 1799, 251). This may be a garbled account of the charter cist that was destroyed by fire in 1650 by Cromwell's men, requiring Sir Thomas Hamilton to obtain a new charter from Charles II in 1663. Indeed, the tower was reported as a vantage point to view the battle of Prestonpans in 1745 by friends of James Horsbrugh (Horsbrugh of Pittenweem MS), though whether it was inhabited in another matter.

Lord Grange who built Preston House having purchased the Preston estate in the early 18th century, sold it in two parts variously to Watson's Hospital and William Ramsay his factor in 1752 according to the Statistical Account Appendix (Stat. Acct. 1799, *ibid.*). The Statistical Account further reported that Preston House 'is now a hospital'. Preston House and the lands of Preston came into the possession of James Shaw via Dr Ramsay in 1770, and Preston House subsequently became known as Shaw's Hospital.

The barony of Preston came back into Hamilton hands with Sir William Hamilton in 1816 following a court case which he won (Anderson, 1825, 362). He is listed as the proprietor of Preston in 1843 at the time of the New Statistical Account and was Professor of Logic at Edinburgh University (NSA II, 1845, 308).

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