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LANGLEY



CASTLE

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THE HISTORY OF

Langley Castle

The imposing fortress seen from the main road between Haydon Bridge and Alston, was in its heyday, the heart of a barony of some 13,000 acres. It formed a rough square bounded on the north by Stanegate, on the east by a line running south from Allerwash, on the south by Allendale Common and Staward Woods, and on the west by the Allen River and Whitechapel Burn. Additionally isolated pockets contained the manors of Fourstones and Warden to the east and Blenkinsopp and Featherstone to the west.

## Twelfth Century

The documented history of the barony of Langley starts some two hundred years before the castle itself was built, when the land was owned by the de Tindal family. It is recorded that in 1165 Adam de Tindal paid one mark in lieu of his feudal fee of one knight, and that in later life he used his wealth generously to help Hexham, both the town and priory. He died in 1191 and his son, another Adam, inherited the barony.

## Thirteenth Century

The de Tindal line ended early in the thirteenth century when the younger Adam's son, Walter, predeceased his father and Philippa, Adam's daughter, became the heir. She married Nicholas de Boltby of Ravensthorpe, near Thirsk in Yorkshire. A tax return of 1235 stated that Nicholas was then the Baron of Langley.

The Boltby's held the property for just two generations, as Nicholas' son, Adam, had two daughters but no sons. The elder daughter, Isobella, married Thomas de Moulton, of Moulton near Spalding in Lincolnshire. Her father leased Langley to the couple in 1280 for an annual rent of a pair of gilt spurs, and when he died they inherited the property.

For some undisclosed reason Thomas did not like his surname (could it have been because of its similarity to "mutton", sheep's flesh in the language of Normans?) so he changed it to his mother's maiden name, de Lucy. Isobella died before 1294 and her husband followed 11 years later. Their son, Sir Thomas de Lucy, inherited the barony at the age of 24 but he died only three years later, under somewhat mysterious circumstances.

## Fourteenth Century Langley Construction

Thomas' brother Anthony succeeded him and held Langley for thirty-five years, during which time he did much to benefit the locality, including procuring a charter for the weekly market and annual fair to be held in Haydon Bridge. When he passed away in 1343 his son Thomas became the new baron of Langley.

At this time the de Lucys lived in a manor house which was probably built on the site of the castle. The manor was not fortified and, from 1316, the family had relied on Staward Pele, over two miles to the south-west, to keep the Scots away. Anthony de Lucy had garrisoned the fortification with fifteen of his men-at-arms and forty light cavalry, so the inhabitants of the barony were protected from the Cumbrian and Tyne Valley directions. In 1326, King Edward III bought Staward Pele and began a rebuilding programme. The de Lucy men were withdrawn and Anthony had little confidence in their replacements; he became even more unhappy when, in 1337, Staward was given by Edward III to his wife.

Anthony's fears were justified dramatically three years after his death. In 1346 David Bruce, certain that all Englishmen except "Sutlers, Skinners and Merchants" were fighting for their king in France, invaded England and began what he thought would be an unimpeded march to London. He crossed the border at Lanercost after taking Liddel Tower, then marched by Naworth, Redpath and Langley to Hexham, where he burned the church and rested for three days. He then followed Dene Street to his defeat at Neville's Cross. He did little damage to Hexham and Corbridge, which he hoped to use as supply depots, but he devastated the surrounding countryside. This included the complete destruction of Langley Manor House.

Anthony's heir and the new Baron of Langley, yet another Sir Thomas de Lucy, was one of the king's most reliable captains and had distinguished himself at Crecy. Ironically, he commanded the victorious army at Neville's Cross, giving him the double pleasure of frustrating his king's enemy and taking vengeance on the man responsible for the destruction of his own property.

Since he had to rebuild his home at Langley anyway, Sir Thomas decided to invest in a fortification which would be capable of keeping the Scots (and any other unwanted visitors) at bay. He had funds enough to do a lavish job, having brought home a lot of French plunder to supplement the compensation he received from the Royal Exchequer for the damage David Bruce had inflicted. Thus, in 1350, he began to build Langley Castle.

The job was finished just a year before Sir Thomas passed away, in 1365. The new castle passed to Maud, his daughter, who had married Gilbert, Earl of Angus and the last of the mainstream Umfravilles of Prudhoe. Gilbert died in 1381 and Maud was left a widow with two baronies, Prudhoe and Langley. Such a prize naturally attracted the most eligible widower, and she soon married Henry Percy, the first Earl of Northumberland.

Upon Maud's death in 1398 the Earl added her castles to his own at Alnwick and Warkworth. In practice and in law, the additions were his to enjoy and bequeath upon Hotspur, a son by his previous marriage. However, cadet branches of the Umfraville and de Lucy families lodged immediate claims to Langley. By 1441, when the transfer was finally and legally resolved, both Henry and Hotspur were long deceased.

## Fifteenth Century

### The Destruction of Langley

After their success at Homildon Hill in 1402, the Percys quarrelled with Henry IV about the non-payment of expenses and the disposal of valuable captives. Hotspur joined with the Welsh Rebellion, fought the king at Shrewsbury in 1402 and was killed on the battlefield. In 1405 the Earl joined Archbishop Scrope of York in a rebellion which never quite materialised, and he had to retreat hastily to Scotland when King Henry IV marched upon Northumberland. Percy's titles and estates were forfeited and the king granted most of the latter to his son, Prince John of Lancaster. Warkworth, however, was retained by the Crown and life interest in both the castle and the barony named Langley went to Sir Robert Umfraville, one of the contesters of the previous transfer. Before he took possession, however, it was revealed that Langley Castle had been gutted by fire and was little more than a roofless shell. Though that may have been done by raiders or the Percy family, it was most likely destroyed by Henry IV's own troops, seeking to complete the destruction of all associated with the rebels. The conflict between the Percy family and the king would later provide part of the plot of Shakespeare's play Henry VI.

Ten years later, in 1415, the newly crowned King Henry V restored the full Northumbrian honours and property to another Henry Percy, Hotspur's son. He, the second Earl, was killed at St. Albans while supporting the Lancastrian cause in the War of Roses. His son, the third Earl, suffered the same fate at Towton in 1461. After this battle the usurping king, Edward IV, confiscated all the Percy possessions and bestowed them upon John Neville, Lord Montagu, whom he had created Earl of Northumberland. Langley seems to have ignored the king's instructions,

however, for it was not until after the 1464 Battle of Hexham that the barony surrendered to the Yorkists.

The barony was not long out of the Percy portfolio. Soon Edward IV became uneasy about the influence Montagu and his brother, the Earl of Warwick, were generating about the North. To lessen their power, he reinstated the next Percy to the Earldom of Northumberland, and Montagu had to relinquish his estates in 1469.

## Sixteenth Century

During the next sixty-eight years domestic matters dominated Langley's history. In 1514 Henry VIII gave Percy permission to lease one of the barony's farm to Ralph Fenwick and Sir Edward Radcliffe, both active in the defence of England's Middle March. This record is significant as it mentions a Radcliffe in connection with Langley for the first time.

In 1528 a Constable of Langley, Thomas Errington, gained notoriety. It appears that William Charlton, leader of the North Tyne Reivers (Raiders), attacked Durham and captured the parson of Muggleswick. Kidnapping was common enough, but when he assaulted and robbed three poor men on his way home, something had to be done. The Earl ordered Errington to give chase, and with the aid of a sleuth hound, Charlton was caught and slain.

The sixth Earl, who had given this order, bore the well earned nickname "The Unthrifty". His chronic shortage of money led him to fall under the influence of two conniving brothers, Sir Reynold and Thomas Carnaby, described as "Gentlemen of the Chamber" to the Earl. So effective was their persuasion that they won from Percy 99-year leases on many of his estates, including one beginning in 1532 for the lands, mill and park attached to Langley Castle. Thomas Percy, heir apparent to his brother, objected strongly when he saw his inheritance being whittled away. He tried to frustrate the Carnabys, first by posting guards around the properties and then by appealing to Secretary Thomas Cromwell, but to no avail. Because of this opposition, the Earl became so estranged from his brothers and their families that he decided to rob them of any inheritances. He had no sons of his own, so in 1535, he sold his estates to the Crown in return for a personal life annuity. Thomas Cromwell himself negotiated the agreement which made the king heir apparent while safeguarding the Carnaby leases. This setback suffered by Sir Thomas Percy may have been one of the reasons he joined the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536. He was hanged in Tyburn in 1537.

Up to this point, no owner of Langley had thought to repair the castle that had been gutted in 1405. In their survey of 1542, Sir Robert Bowes and Sir Ralph Ellerker described it as “a ruined castle with only walls standing, but situated in a very convenient place for the defence against the Scots of Liddesdale and the thieves of Tynedale”. When this hint was not taken, Bowes recommended eight years later that the castle be repaired and used by the Keeper of Tynedale, who had no castle of his own. Again, nothing happened.

In 1551 the Crown granted Langley to Thomas Percy, a nephew of the sixth Earl, for an annual rent of £5 19s. 2d. He paid the rent until 1557 when Queen Mary restored him to the Northumbrian honour as the seventh Earl. She also appointed him General Warden of the Marches. He was well respected in that position, but he had to resign when Elizabeth took the throne. In 1568 he joined the Earl of Westmorland and other prominent northern countrymen in the pro-Catholic rebellion, the Rising of the North. Eventually he was caught and executed, and all his estates, including Langley, reverted to the Crown.

## Seventeenth Century

John Carnaby, then the head of his family, was named as a fellow rebel but was released with a fine. The lease on Langley taken out by his father could have run until 1631, but the fine made keeping the lease impossible. In 1619 he found it necessary to transfer his interest to John Murray, first Earl of Annandale. Six years later Murray would purchase the whole of the Barony of Langley from the Crown.

The Percy connection with Langley had finally been severed. Indeed, the connection between the Percys and the country had begun to wear thin, although the family did continue to supply the Earls, and later the Dukes, of Northumberland. The ninth Earl was imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1605 for his alleged complicity in the Gunpowder Plot. His involvement, if any, has never been proven, and upon his release fifteen years later, he made his home in the south.

Sir Edward Radcliffe, the great-great-grandson of the Sir Edward who shared the 1514 lease on one of Langley's farms, bought the Langley barony from the Earl of Annandale in 1631. He was baron of nearby Dilton, and after his inheritance in 1622, he busied himself buying properties – including the lucrative Alston lead mines – so that he could don the Earl's discarded mantle as top aristocrat in Northumberland. Unfortunately for his ambitions, he sided with the king in the Civil War and all his property was impounded. Parliament could only sell the life interests on the confiscations, however, and on those terms George Hurd, a Londoner, bought the Langley barony in 1653. Sir Francis Radcliffe, Edward's son, quickly raised ten thousand pounds by mortgaging his

mother's manors in Yorkshire, and he was thus able to redeem all his father's properties.

Sir Francis was elevated in 1687 to the Earl of Derwentwater, Viscount Radcliffe and Langley, and Baron Tynedale. He actually cared little about Langley, and in fact let the ruined castle and the lands to it in the west in 1671 to Humphrey Little and Robert Hudspeth for an annual rent of just thirty pounds.

## Eighteenth Century

When Francis Radcliffe died in 1696 the inheritance passed to his son Edward who, in 1687, had married Lady Mary Tudor, an illegitimate daughter of King Charles II and Mrs. "Moll" Davis. With such a grandfather and a strict upbringing, it is little wonder that his son James, who succeeded to the family honours as Earl of Derwentwater, Viscount Langley, opposed the 1705 Glorious Revolution which unseated the Stuart dynasty. His part as a leader in the Jacobean Rebellion of 1714 led to his capture at Preston and his subsequent execution at the Tower of London. His brother Charles would also be caught and executed for his involvement, some forty years later. A stone cross, situated between Langley Castle and Haydon Bridge, commemorates their deaths. It reads:

*To the memory of James and Charles,  
Viscounts Langley, Earls of Derwentwater,  
beheaded on Tower Hill, London  
24<sup>th</sup> February, 1716, and 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1746  
for Loyalty to their Lawful Sovereign.*



Langley, with the other Radcliffe possessions, was taken by the Crown and, in 1749, was given to the Governors of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich. Their interest in the gift was purely as a source of income from the associated rented farms, lead mines at Alston and smelting mills at Langley, and the castle was again left alone.

## Nineteenth Century

In 1833, Prime Minister Earl Grey persuaded the Governors to appoint a commissioner to oversee their estates in Northumberland and Durham. The man chosen, John Grey, was an expert agriculturalist and a workaholic – and, incidentally, the father of Josephine Butler, the great Victorian social reformer. Grey applied his experience and managerial skills with energy and hard work, to the mutual benefit of his employers and their tenants. When he retired in 1860 he had raised the annual income of the estates from £25,000 to £40,000. It was then that someone first gave Langley Castle more than a passing interest; he made habitable the “extra” tower which nestles against the castle’s east face, and he also did some fundamental work to help preserve the exterior castle walls.

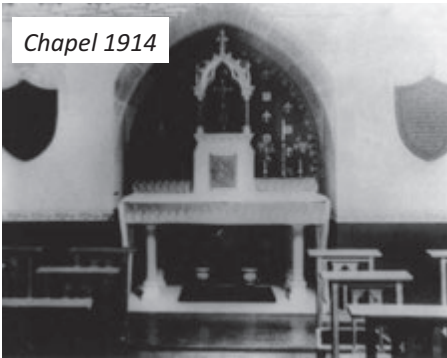
When the Alston lead mines and the Langley smelting mills began to suffer from the foreign competition, the hospital governors were quick to sell. In 1882 they found a buyer in Cadwallader John Bates. Bates was a former Sheriff of Northumberland, a linguist, traveller, antiquarian, local historian of national renown, and author of *History of Northumberland*. He saw in the stark walls of the ruin an embryo of reconstruction which would show his and future generations the true grandeur of the fourteenth century.





# Twentieth Century Langley Restoration

After much planning and research, and after his marriage to Josephine d'Echarvines in 1895, Bates began the monumental task. Tragically, he died 1902, the castle not completed until 1914 under Josephine's direction. Still, the castle bears many reminders of the great man: the integrity of his work (now classified by the Department of the Environment as a Grade One Listed building), the chapel dedicated



*Chapel 1914*



*1909*

to him by his wife at the top of the southeast tower, his gravesite not one hundred yards from the entrance to the castle, and the collection of photographs of the reconstruction on view in the cocktail bar. Thanks to Cadwallader Bates, the castle has had a lively history over the past century, being respectively a girls' school, a hall for medieval banquets, and a private dwelling.

In 1985 Langley Castle was acquired by Professor Stuart Madnick of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States. Now, after careful renovations, it provides a setting befitting a luxury hotel and restaurant bearing the six hundred year old name of Langley Castle.



*1910*

# Castle Architecture

The original 1350 structure must have looked, externally, very much as it does today. Cadwallader Bates explained it thus: "Thanks to its destruction by fire soon after its erection, paradoxical though it may sound, the castle of Sir Thomas de Lucy retains in an almost, if not quite, unique manner of essential outlines of a fortress house in the great days of Crecy and Poitiers. Had it continued to of have been inhabited it would surely have been subjected to all sorts of Perpendicular, Tudor, Elizabethan, Jacobean, Queen Anne, Georgian and Strawberry-Hill Gothic alterations and accretions, at the cost of architectural purity". To this must be added two factors to explain its current pristine condition. Firstly, although it lay in ruin for 500 years it did not suffer greatly from deliberate mischief; it was not vandalised, nor did it dissolve in the creation of homes, farms and walls, in the way many similar ruins had suffered. Secondly, it was rebuilt with great sympathy and understanding by a man who knew his business.

At first glance the building resembles a quadrangular castle, a smaller version of Ford or Chillingham, both built about the same time. However, it cannot be so classified as it is solid with no open courtyard in the middle. It is in fact a rectangular fortified hall house with projecting towers rising from the ground at both ends of each long hall. Originally the house had three floors; the towers had four and thus rose above the rest of the building.

There is an interesting feature, a small, pele-like "extra" tower which rises from the ground to the main roof level and clings to the east face of the house and the north wall of the east tower. It contains the original doorway and spiral stairs which give access through an archway to the main block at each floor level, where there is a small vaulted guard-room. It has been established beyond reasonable doubt that this was built after the rest of the castle had been completed, but before the fire. Why it was done in this manner is not known; it is doubtful that the architect had forgotten the entrance and stairs, but Sir Thomas de Lucy may have been dissatisfied by the original arrangements and may have ordered the alteration to suit his own requirements. He was a professional soldier who journeyed away often to fight the French or the Scots, and it is conceivable that he saw little of the work in progress, and his first opportunity to criticise may have been after he was shown the completed building.

Two other features make Langley exceptional. It has no foundations of the conventional type; instead, its walls are built upon huge boulders, a clever idea designed to frustrate a potential besieger who might attempt entry by sapping or under-mining. Also, the castle boasts an abundance of "Garderobes" (a French term for "medieval latrines"). Each floor of the southwest tower had several, as evidenced by the stone "stalls" which survived the fire and the small arched discharge openings at the foot of the tower. The large number of garderobes is unusual for a simple manor house and suggests the defences planned for the castle include a sizeable garrison.

In a few respects Cadwallader Bates deliberately deviated from the original architecture of Langley. He enlarged some windows and installed a new door in the south face. He also had a guess what the original battlements and roof looked like, though certain features of the walls and buttresses gave him clues. In one small detail modern historians accuse him of a deliberate addition; the doorway in the small “extra” tower has a portcullis slot around it, and above is a stone boss with a face carved into it. The hole where the mouth would be is obviously intended for the chain or rope used to raise the portcullis. This kind of defence is rare in Northumberland, where it was usually used for a gatehouse, not as the entrance for a main building. Those who suggested that this is purely Bates’ addition point to the lack of wear and tear which even a few years of use would do. To the east lies the town of Hexham with its magnificent Abbey. The Archbishops of York were Lords of Liberty and Regality of Hexham from 1112 to 1545, and the Manor of Hexham was ruled almost as an independent kingdom, and was the longest such regality in England. The Gate or Moot Hall is the site of the oldest building, some parts dating back to the early twelfth century.

A few miles to the north but eighteen centuries into the past lies the path of Hadrian’s Wall, the barrier built across Britain by Roman Emperor Hadrian, to separate the Romans from the barbarians to the north. Roman soldiers, who were also skilled engineers and craftsmen, began work on the coast-to-coast wall in AD 122. The wall took just over seven years to complete and twenty-seven million cubic feet of stone was used in the process.

On the wall at intervals of 1620 yards (one Roman mile) there were milecastles which held between eight and sixty-four men and had gateways opening north and south to allow traders and families to cross from one side to the other. In addition, there were seventeen forts placed strategically on or near the wall which were managed by specialist troops (archers, swordsmen, etc.) or by cavalry. Altogether the wall garrisoned about 15,000 men.

The surviving remains are quite extensive and very impressive, not only due to their historical value, but also due to their beautiful setting. For example, Chester’s Fort, a garrison for a regiment of Roman cavalry, includes a bath house, the remains of a bridge carrying Hadrian’s Wall across the Tyne River, and a museum full of Roman inscriptions and sculptures, all set in one of the most beautiful valleys of Northumberland.



## LANGLEY CASTLE HOTEL

Langley on Tyne, Hexham, Northumberland NE47 5LU