

## Lumley Castle

Lumley Castle, in spite of later remodeling is one of the finest examples of a fully developed quadrangular castle with ranges of buildings on all sides. Bolton Castle is the best-known Northern example and Lumley resembles it quite closely. It has the same oblong corner towers, each one a tower house in its own right, and the same attention to defense within the courtyard as well as outside. But whereas Bolton is largely a ruin, Lumley has come down to us intact and is merely disfigured by some eighteenth-century alterations.

The castle stands a mile east of Chester-le-Street on high ground, which suddenly drops to the stream known as Lumley Beck. Ralph, Lord Lumley, obtained permission to crenellate his house here in 1389, the bishop's permit being reinforced by a royal license three years later. Diagonal buttresses clasp the angles of the towers - a feature rarely found in military architecture, though common enough in other buildings of the period - and a dainty machicolated turret caps each buttress.

The original entrance to the castle is in the middle of the east front, overlooking the stream and with its back to the present approach. It is not a gatehouse exactly, rather a gate passage in the middle of the range. A broad machicolation overhangs the outer arch and the wall above is adorned with a display of six heraldic shields and helms. The shields depict prominent local families such as the Nevilles and Percys in addition to the Lumleys themselves, but pride of place is given to the arms of Richard II. Beneath one of the square turrets flanking the gateway is a tiny prison cell reached only by a trapdoor. In typical Northern fashion the ground floors of the towers and connecting ranges are divided into a series of barrel-vaulted store rooms.