

NOTES ON THE WATER GATE,
THE BRIDEWELL GATE, AND GOD'S
HOUSE TOWER (OR SOUTH CASTLE)
SOUTHAMPTON.

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The following notes record the results of some recent work and discoveries, and are supplementary to the account of the ancient fortifications given by the Rev. J. Sylvester Davies, in his interesting History of Southampton.

THE WATERGATE.

This gate was situated at the southern end of the High Street, and afforded access to the Quay in front of it, hence called "Water Gate Quay." It is now best known by a very excellent etching by T. S. Seed, from a drawing by Stephen Taylor, published in 1814, which shews the structure in a somewhat ruinous condition; the abutting wall, which closed the present entrance to Winkle Street, having been pulled down some years prior to the demolition of the gate itself. The removal of the gate was effected in this manner:—In the first of the Southampton Harbour Acts (43rd George III., cap. 21), it was recited that the ways leading by the walls of the Town to the Quays, as well as the gates called "Water Gate" and "Bridewell Gate" were very narrow and incommodious for trade, and that it would be greatly for the public benefit if the same were taken down and removed. It was therefore enacted that the Harbour Commissioners might take down and remove such parts of the Town Walls and the said Gates, and use the stone and materials for building at the Quays. Being thus authorised, it appears that at a meeting of the Board, held 31st October, 1803, it was resolved that the gate called the Water Gate be advertised for sale by auction.

Recently having had to re-arrange many of the papers belonging to the Board, I was pleased to find an original notice of the sale, by which it appeared that the auction was to take place on the 10th November, 1803, between the hours of twelve and two, at the Globe Inn—Mr. Watts being the auctioneer. On the back of this bill are written the conditions of sale, one of which stipulates that to prevent any damage being done by inexperienced persons throwing down the arch, the purchaser should make good the damage, if any, at his own expense. The biddings to be two pounds advance. This document concludes with an agreement to purchase at the sum of seventy pounds, signed by J. Slater.

GOD'S HOUSE GATE, OR BRIDEWELL GATE.

After the demolition of Water Gate it was doubtless found that ample access to the Quays had been obtained, for it does not appear that any steps were taken to pull down Bridewell Gate, and a roadway being made some years afterwards in front of the Sun Hotel towards the Platform, there was obviously no necessity to remove this gate, and the Harbour Act of 1863 did not re-enact the clause before referred to.

This gatehouse continued to be used as part of the Borough Bridewell or Gaol until about the year 1855, after which it was left wholly neglected until the year 1874, when the Harbour Board leased the premises of the Corporation, and upon taking over the same they re-instated and repaired the ancient timber roof, and restored the three windows over the eastern side of archway in similar design to the ancient one looking westward into Winkle Street. The two circular headed windows looking southward merely required some repairs. A dungeon on the south flank of the archway was utilised as a "dead house," a doorway being opened in the southern wall—there having been previously no exterior access thereto.

THE GALLERY (OR SPUR WORK) AND GOD'S HOUSE TOWER (OR SOUTH CASTLE).

These buildings are of a later date than the gateways and walls, and were erected as an additional defence to a very exposed and imperfectly protected part of the town's

defences. They completely commanded the lower end of the ditch, the sluices of which were undoubtedly within the Tower.

These buildings were also used for gaol purposes (till 1855) and were taken over by the Harbour Board at the same time as the Bridewell Gate. The gallery was then (1874) in the worst condition, merely a ruin. It was roofless, the parapet gone, except a fragment adjoining the South Castle, and the whole of the windows blocked up. Much of this was remedied—the three perpendicular two-light windows in the south front were opened out and the tracery restored, an oilet or loophole opened out, the parapet made good, and the building roofed in. All the buildings were then utilised as stores. The Tower (or South Castle) was not in so dilapidated a state, and but little was then done to it.

So the buildings remained till 1887, when the Harbour Board having resolved to erect a Time Signal for the shipping decided that the South Castle would be the most suitable place for its exhibition.

This decision directed attention to the state of the tower—and the following works of restoration and repair were carried out:—The three hideous iron-grated square gaol windows in the south front were blocked up, and in their place the original two-light perpendicular windows were reinstated, the upper one merely requiring repair, the lower had to be completely renewed, and the two oilets flanking it were opened out. A small rectangular slit lighting the turret stairs leading to the roof was re-instated, and a quantity of stone partially blocking up the interior of the east window in the upper storey cleared out in anticipation of further restorations at some future date.

The middle storey is at present lighted by the window and oilets in the south front; (these latter splay out so much internally as to present the appearance of windows) and also by an oilet looking northward over the ditch. There were also partially opened out an east window and two oilets (or small openings) flanking it—all which are likewise left for future restoration.

In the north-west angle of this room was found a doorway, which had very carefully been blocked up. Upon the stones

being cleared away, a vaulted chamber was discovered, about 12-ft. 6-in. long, 3-ft. wide, and 8-ft. high. This was the ancient garderobe of the Tower, and is immediately over the ditch. It is partly constructed in the thickness of the wall, but projects slightly, as may be seen from the exterior. That it is part of the original building is evident—the string course which runs round the whole of the structure being carried across it. It is lighted by a rectangular slit in the northern wall.

The ground floor of the Tower has had but little work done to it, except clearing away some of the rubble stone work blocking up arches, all of which await future restoration.

For the purposes of the Time Signal an iron mast (30 feet above the roof) was stepped into an iron girder immediately below the floor of the upper storey, in which latter there is placed clock work for automatically winding up the ball for the time signal, which is in electrical communication with Greenwich Observatory and is discharged daily (Sundays and Bank Holidays excepted) at one p.m. G.M.T.

The work of partial restoration, &c., of the South Castle was carried out for the Harbour Board by Messrs. Stevens and Sons, contractors, under the supervision of Messrs. Poole and Son, their architects. The opening out of some of the windows, oillits, and the garderobe, was owing to the personal exertions of Mr. Walter Bowyer, who, with some of the hands of the Board, worked zealously at clearing away the rubble which blocked up some of the most interesting features of the Tower.

The result of the restorations herein described is, that these interesting buildings have not only been rescued from a state of ruin, but have been put to creditable use, and now present (at least as viewed from the southward) a very handsome appearance. It is to be hoped that the Corporation (the owners of the property) may be induced, at an early date, to complete the restoration of these buildings, as has been suggested to them.