

CARISBROOKE CASTLE.

By CAPTAIN JAMES MARKLAND (Keeper).

The elevation upon which the Castle of Carisbrooke stands has without doubt been held as a place of strength from very early times. It is crowned by a *plateau* about 750 feet long from East to West, by about 400 feet wide at the Eastern, and 350 feet at the Western end.

Around this an early embankment was thrown up from the surface of the hill, traces of this bank are still visible on the Eastern half of the *plateau* which has not since been built upon. In all probability, the Saxon or other occupiers of the site in the 9th or 10th Century, divided the earlier encampment into two nearly equal parts (see Plate 1) by cutting the existing deep trench across from N. to S., using the earth from it partly to form the high bank on its Western side, and partly to form the mound in the N.E. angle of the Western portion, upon which would stand their wooden keep.

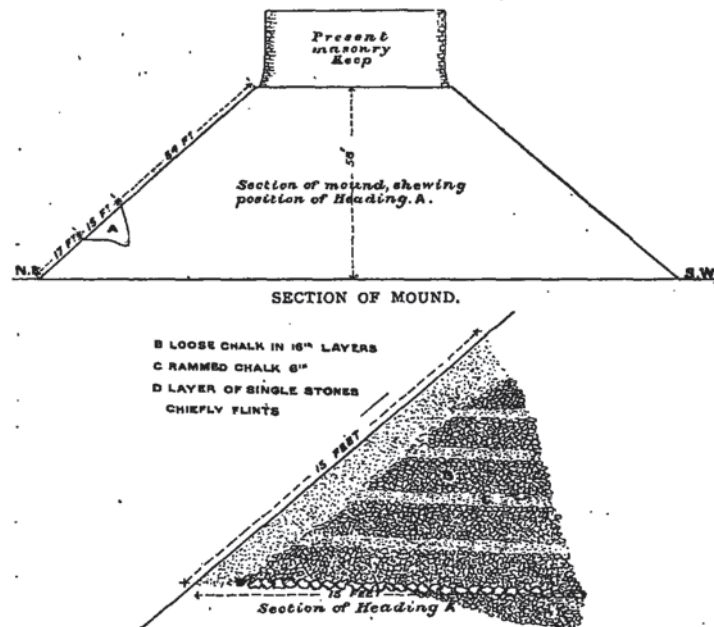
At the same time they would enclose this Western portion with a palisade whose ends would be continued up the sides of the mound and join the keep. The entrance to the enclosure thus formed was probably westward, as at present, and had a ditch before it.

This lessening of the area to be defended was in accordance with their custom at this period when fortifying earlier works of considerable extent.

The late Saxons would require a hall and other domestic buildings, and the most suitable situation for these would be upon the N. side, near the mound, for several reasons. They would form no obstruction to arrows, darts or other missiles aimed from the keep at any portion of the surrounding palisade carried by the assailants. They would afford means of easy retreat to the keep, should they have to be abandoned, and in the event of their being captured they were so immediately below the keep, as to be practically untenable

by an enemy. The Eastern portion of the *plateau* was probably palisaded as a separate enclosure for the protection of flocks and herds in time of war. The well in the Castle yard may be of Saxon origin. It is only lined with masonry for 13 feet down, all below to the depth of 150 feet being simply a boring through the chalk, &c.

Thus far much is necessarily conjectural, as no records exist nor; except the mound and trench, are there any traces of late Saxon work, doubtless owing to the structures having been of wood, a material plentiful and easy to obtain.



The question whether the mound of the keep is a natural or artificial elevation has been settled by recent excavations at the instance of the Hampshire Field Club, and carried on under my direction. A "Heading" was driven into the mound at a point 17 feet from the base, and extending to the height of 15 feet.

This opening revealed evident signs of construction consisting of a layer of stones, chiefly flints, with alternate layers of loose and rammed chalk, as here shewn.

After the Norman Conquest (1066) the lordship of the Isle of Wight was given to the Conqueror's kinsman, William Fitz Osbern—who, on arriving at Carisbrooke, would find the palisaded enclosure and wooden keep, which he probably strengthened as necessary with the same material.

He may have re-modelled the Saxon Hall, but if so, this too must have been chiefly in timber, perhaps upon a platform of masonry. He also doubtless built the first chapel of St. Nicholas, of which mention is made in Domesday Book, but not a vestige of it is at present to be seen. Fitz Osbern died in 1070, and his son Roger, who succeeded him, forfeited the lordship for treason in 1075, there is therefore little likelihood of any other considerable work in masonry having been carried out by either of these lords.

There is no record of anything for the next 26 years, during which the Castle was held by the Crown.

In 1101 the lordship was granted by Henry I. to Richard de Redvers, who on his death (1107) was succeeded by his son Baldwin, who in turn held it, with some interruption till about 1155. To these two de Redvers, the earliest masonry defences may be attributed, namely—

First—the present *curtain*¹ wall about 25 feet high, averaging 8 feet thick at the base, and four feet at the rampart walk, and resting simply upon the earlier earthen bank, with no masonry foundation whatever. Each change of direction in its length, is, or was, marked by a *quoin* of hewn Binstead stone, the intervening portions being of rubble work. The parapet of this period has disappeared having been replaced chiefly in the 14th century. The curtain had apparently six mural towers and portions of three remain. Retaining walls on each side of the entrance gateway which was cut through the bank must have been made at the same time. These were probably carried up high enough to support a wooden *bretesche*² overhanging the gate, but the existing arch is later. The ditch would now be considerably lengthened and deepened, and an outer defence, probably of wood, formed beyond it.

¹ *Curtain* (Fr. *courtine*, Lat. *cortina* murus inter binas turres). In fortification that part of the enclosing rampart or wall which lies between two towers.

² *Bretesche* (Ger. *bret* a plank or board) a wooden shelter or platform erected on the walls.

Secondly—The masonry keep, of exactly the same character as the curtain wall, and built without foundation, simply resting upon the summit of the Saxon mound a few feet within its edge. It is irregular in outline, having 11 angles. The wall is about the same in dimensions as the curtain, but batters outside rather more at the base. On the north side is a shallow buttress, the original entrance has disappeared, the existing one being later of two periods, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The level at the entrance is the proper level of the keep floor throughout, all the earth, &c., now above that level, being an accumulation of *debris*.

Near the north side is a well (oval in shape). It is filled with rubbish up to within 42 feet of the top. The masonry lining, unlike that of the well in the Castle yard, goes down to, and perhaps beyond this level, which rather points to the mound being artificial.

The lordship remained vested in the De Redvers family for 192 years and during the tenure of one of them, William de Vernun (1184 to 1217) the existing arched entrance through the curtain wall was inserted. It has a portcullis groove and was ornamented with a label mould, since hacked away to make room for floor supports in the later gate-house.

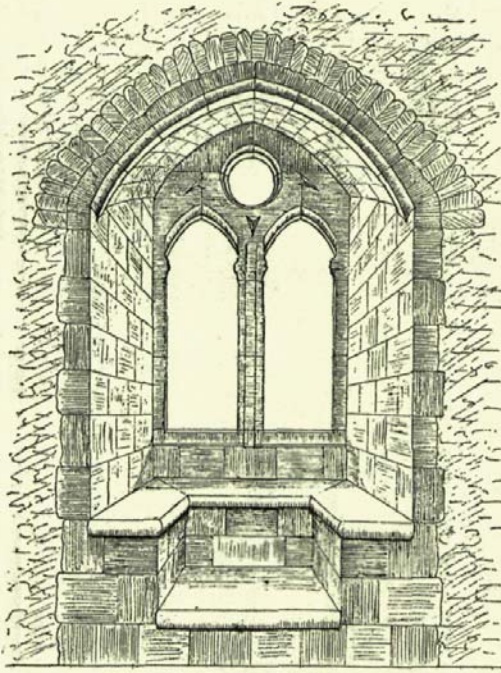
De Vernun is also supposed to have built the Great Hall, the earliest feature in it is a window of his period. It was originally of two lights with a shafted mullion, and having a plain circular piercing in the plate with seats in the splays and one step up from the floor (vide p. 261). Half this window was destroyed to make room for a large chimney piece constructed in the fourteenth century, and the remaining half, that to the right, was at the same time blocked up. This circumstance has preserved a valuable indication by which to fix the date of the building, all the other windows having since been removed.

Under de Vernun's hall was a large basement chamber with a flat ceiling, the floor above being supported by beams in the walls with struts resting on corbels, one of which is now to be seen in position. The level of the ground on the west

side of the building formerly ran down about four feet lower than at present, thus bringing the lights of this basement chamber well above ground. This was not filled in until the eighteenth century. The original entry to the basement exists on the east side.

The roof of the hall is believed by Mr. Percy Stone¹ to have been supported by timbers springing from caps of engaged columns in the walls.

The floriated cap here figured which he believes is one of these, I found built into the upper portion of the south gable, it having been placed there when



WINDOW IN DE VERNUN'S HALL.



the early roof was taken off and the building raised a story in the sixteenth century.

To the last of the De Redver's family the Lady Isabella de Fortibus (1262-1293) many important works are clearly

¹ Architectural Antiquities of the Isle of Wight, by Percy G. Stone, F.R.I.B.A., part iv., p. 97.

traceable, notably the lengthening northwards of De Vernun's Hall (but not the chamber below, which remains of its original length). I have recently exposed the mutilated remains of two doorways in this added portion.



WINDOW OF ISABELLA DE FORTIBUS.

The domestic chapel dedicated to St. Peter, to the S.E. of, and accessible from the hall, was undoubtedly the work of this lady. From the scanty remains, Mr. Percy Stone ¹ has made a restoration drawing of it, which no doubt well represents what it was in the thirteenth century.

Chambers under the north curtain wall described as chambers of the Countess, and supposed to be on the site of

¹ Architectural Antiquities of the Isle of Wight, Pl. cxxiv.

the earlier hall, were built at this period. One highly interesting trace of them remains in the window of which an illustration is given on p. 262. This I was so fortunate as to discover and open it in 1891, having been blocked up since 1350.

Portions of the jambs and mullion of this window were found built in the filling, and have, as far as possible been used in its restoration. The seats and steps were but little injured.

Considerable additions to the masonry defences of the gate were now made, they being carried forward to the extremity of the retaining walls, where an outer archway was built. Inside this arch I have partly opened a groove for a portcullis, which was drawn up into a chamber constructed over the entrance way. In this room there is one good trace of the period, a two-light pointed window on the South side which had been partly blocked up, and converted into a small square light, in the sixteenth century. It was opened about three years ago without disturbing the stone frame of the smaller window.

Mr. Stone thinks, and I entirely agree with his opinion, that Isabella carried a wing wall on either side about 10 feet still further west, upon which a *bretesche* would rest overhanging the entrance.

The keep entrance was dealt with at the same time, the existing ribbed inner portion, replacing the Norman entrance which has entirely disappeared.

At this period I believe the stone steps running up the mound, stopped about 8 feet short of the keep doorway; access to which was only obtainable by means of a small drawbridge, or a removable step ladder, between two low side walls and possibly over a pit. Such an arrangement with an overhanging *bretesche*, as is known to have existed, would render this an extremely warm corner for its assailants.

The lady Isabella appears to have been mindful of all the requirements of her large establishment, for she built a "large kitchen, salting house, and dresser" now long since disappeared, but whose foundations I traced in 1891, and found to agree accurately with the dimensions given in the Minister's Account in the Public Record Office, for 1287-8, procured by Mr. Stone.

On her death bed in 1293, Isabella being without direct heirs, sold her rights in the Island to King Edward I. and the care of the castle devolved upon wardens.

From that time until the reign of Edward III, little appears to have been done, but upon the appointment of John de Langford to the wardenship (1334) many important works were undertaken; notably, the immediate repair of the castle bridge "by command of the king for fear of invasion of the Island this year."¹ The gate house was reconstructed, the round towers built as high as their second stage, a portcullis chamber placed between them over a vaulted entrance, and buildings before the bridge constructed, the western barbican probably being then formed in masonry for the first time.

At this period the parapet and upper portion of most of the curtain wall was rebuilt, the keep wall similarly treated, and its entrance furnished with a vaulted advanced tower and portcullis. This tower is a most skilful work, being built actually on the steep slope of the mound, the earlier work here having occupied the summit. It is strengthened by two huge buttresses built upon large flat stones, stepped into the surface of the slope. The vaulting and masonry generally is excellent.

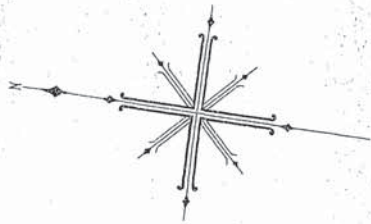
In the upper portion into which the portcullis was raised, are two admirable specimens of loops for the cross-bow, I believe it too carried a *bretesche*, as there are holes in suitable positions to receive its timber supports. The accompanying bird's-eye view (Pl. 2) gives an idea of the probable appearance of the Castle at this period (temp Edward III.)

In 1336 the French invaded the Island, but appear not to have approached the Castle.

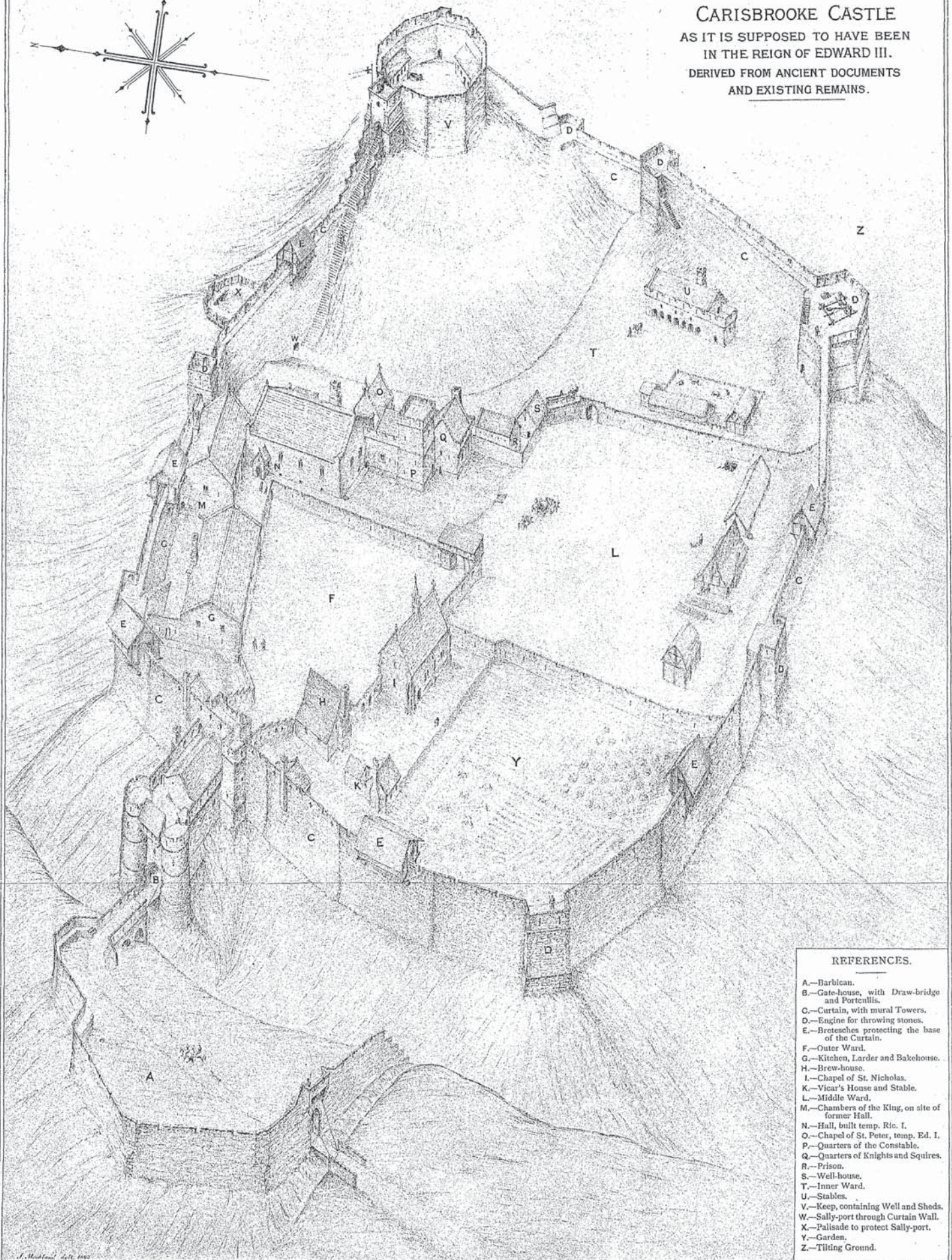
In 1337 the Castle, then under the wardenship of Sir Hugh Tyrrel, was invested by the French, but according to Sir John Oglander² their commander whilst reconnoitering was slain by a bolt fired from a cross-bow, and the invaders surprised by a *sortie* from the garrison, and much cut up, betook themselves to the South Coast of England, where they burned and laid waste many defenceless places.

¹ Arch. Antiq. of I. of W., Part iv., page 77.

² Oglander Memoirs, p. 74



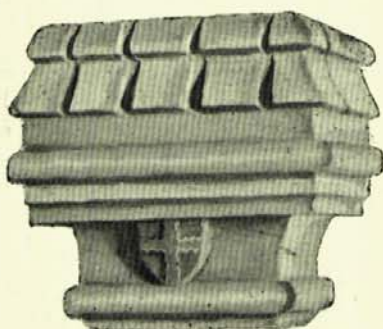
BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF
CARISBROOKE CASTLE
AS IT IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN
IN THE REIGN OF EDWARD III.
DERIVED FROM ANCIENT DOCUMENTS
AND EXISTING REMAINS.



REFERENCES.

- A.—Barbican.
- B.—Gate-house, with Draw-bridge and Portcullis.
- C.—Curtain, with mural Towers.
- D.—Engine for throwing stones.
- E.—Breastworks protecting the base of the Curtain.
- F.—Outer Ward.
- G.—Kitchen, Larder and Bakehouse.
- H.—Brew-house.
- I.—Chapel of St. Nicholas.
- K.—Vicar's House and Stable.
- L.—Middle Ward.
- M.—Chambers of the King, on site of former Hall.
- N.—Hall, built temp. Ric. I.
- O.—Chapel of St. Peter, temp. Ed. I.
- P.—Quarters of the Constable.
- Q.—Quarters of Knights and Squires.
- R.—Prison.
- S.—Well-house.
- T.—Inner Ward.
- U.—Stables.
- V.—Keep, containing Well and Sheds.
- W.—Sally-port through Curtain Wall.
- X.—Palisade to protect Sally-port.
- Y.—Garden.
- Z.—Tilting Ground.

In 1385 William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, became Lord of the Island, and continued so until his death in 1397. Many improvements in the domestic buildings of the Castle are of his time. One especially, the large chimney piece in the great hall is thought to be his, as the cap of one its enclosing columns bears, according to Mr. Percy Stone, the arms of his wife's family, the "Mohuns," viz., *or*, a cross engrailed *sab.*



MOHUN CAP.

Montacute undoubtedly constructed at least two stories of the chambers immediately south of the Chapel of St. Peter. The basement, styled by tradition the justice room (now the kitchen), in which the Island Court was held, contains two large eight-light windows, with moulded lintels bearing shields, to this room a passage-way leads up from the undercroft of the chapel. The upper room has been greatly mutilated by succeeding occupants, but I was so fortunate as to secure in July, 1893, the exposure of parts of a late decorated chimney piece, doubtless of his work. A large buttress at the S.W. angle of a tower believed to have contained the stair for communication between these chambers, bears the arms of Montacute, viz., *ar.* three fusils conjoined in fesse *gules.*

The island was twice again invaded by the French in 1405 and 1408, but they made no attempt upon the Castle.

From 1397 there are no records or traces of work done until the appointment in 1464 of Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales, who undoubtedly raised the whole fore building of the gate-house to its present height, his arms (*gu* six escallops

as three, two, and one) appearing on the *machicoulis*¹ between the round towers; the piercings of the upper stages of these towers, and the doorways giving access to them are all of his period. The old wooden gates in the inner archway are thought to be his, and it is probable that he added the tower containing the existing stone stair to the south of the keeper's house with some of the chambers adjacent.

The buildings in the south-east corner of the Castle yard, a portion of which is believed to have been stabling, were probably remodelled or rebuilt by Lord Scales.

There are masonry traces of a barbican on the east side of the *plateau* which would most likely have been his work, but it has been partly removed and partly incorporated in the outer defences constructed late in the sixteenth century.

In 1545 the French once more landed on the East coast, but were driven off by the Islanders.

In 1583, upon the advent of Sir George Carey, who was the first to bear the style of Captain and Governor of the Island, the features of the Castle began to undergo great changes. The place was then in a very delapidated condition, especially the domestic buildings, and a plan was made and money granted to make these portions habitable.

The great hall of William de Vernun was raised a story. All its original windows being replaced by others. A *mezzanine*, or intermediate floor, forming a story of small height, was inserted in Montacute's building south of the Chapel, and the Chapel itself was dismantled, raised a storey, and converted into rooms or lobbies affording means of access on both stories throughout the entire range of buildings.

The chambers of Isabella de Fortibas, under the N. curtain wall, were converted into a kitchen, and communicating doors, and a serving hatch constructed between it and the Hall. These latter which had been concealed by eighteenth century improvers, were found by the writer, in 1891, and they are now left exposed.

¹ *Machicoulis* (from *miche* match, combustible matter, and O. Fr. *coulis* flowing) a parapet, or gallery, projecting from the upper part of a wall or fortification, and perforated with apertures through which the besieged may hurl missiles or pour down various burning or melted substances upon the assailants.

Later on during Carey's tenure, and consequent upon the Armada scare, hurried works for strengthening the defences were carried out, a ditch was dug, and some *revetment* wall, a slope faced with stone, was built as an outer line of defence round the Castle. The old curtain wall was repaired, and most of the *ballistraria*, or openings designed for the use of the cross-bow, were altered into square openings so as to admit of two or more men together firing through them with arquebuses.

The keep was repaired, and an apartment constructed in it covered by a wooden platform, perhaps for a light gun or two, and to accommodate some of the garrison. A tread wheel was at the same time provided for the well.

The first Armada made no landing however, but rumours of the formation of another in 1596, led to the immediate employment of Gianibelli¹ under whose guidance the skilfully traced outer walls, bastions, and ditches, embracing the whole of the plateau; and the outer gateway were constructed. The date on the gateway is 1598.

This Armada never came, but the work of completing the plans of Gianibelli was continued after the immediate danger was past, so far as constructing two *cavaliers*,² with embrasures for cannon, one at the S.E., the other at the S.W. corner of the ancient curtain wall. These were built round the earlier mural towers and are dated respectively 1601 and 1602.

In consequence of the increased garrison, quarters for officers were built upon the site of Isabella's great kitchen and larder, then in ruins.

About this time, too, the earthen bank was removed from the base of the eastern curtain wall—the wall under-pinned, and brought down nearly to the level of the keep ditch, and a very rude doorway made through it, giving access to the eastern part of the plateau, which came to be used as a bowling green.

¹ *Gianibelli Federico*, Italian Architect and Military Engineer, b. 1530, Didot Nouvelle Biographie Universelle. He had constructed the fortifications of Antwerp and was summoned to England by Queen Elizabeth at the period of the Armada when he also planned Tilbury Fort.

² *Cavalier* in fortification, a work of extra height overlooking the surrounding parts, as a horseman overlooks foot-soldiers.

Nothing of great importance is known to have occurred from this time until November, 1647, when Charles I. arrived at the Castle. Colonel Robert Hammond, a staunch Parliamentarian, was the Governor of the Island, and received instructions to keep the king safe. For a time His Majesty lived in a certain amount of state, having probably the best rooms at his disposal and, it is said, that a pavilion was erected for his use at the south side of the bowling green. He rode out freely, but was always followed at a respectful distance by a few of Hammond's troopers.

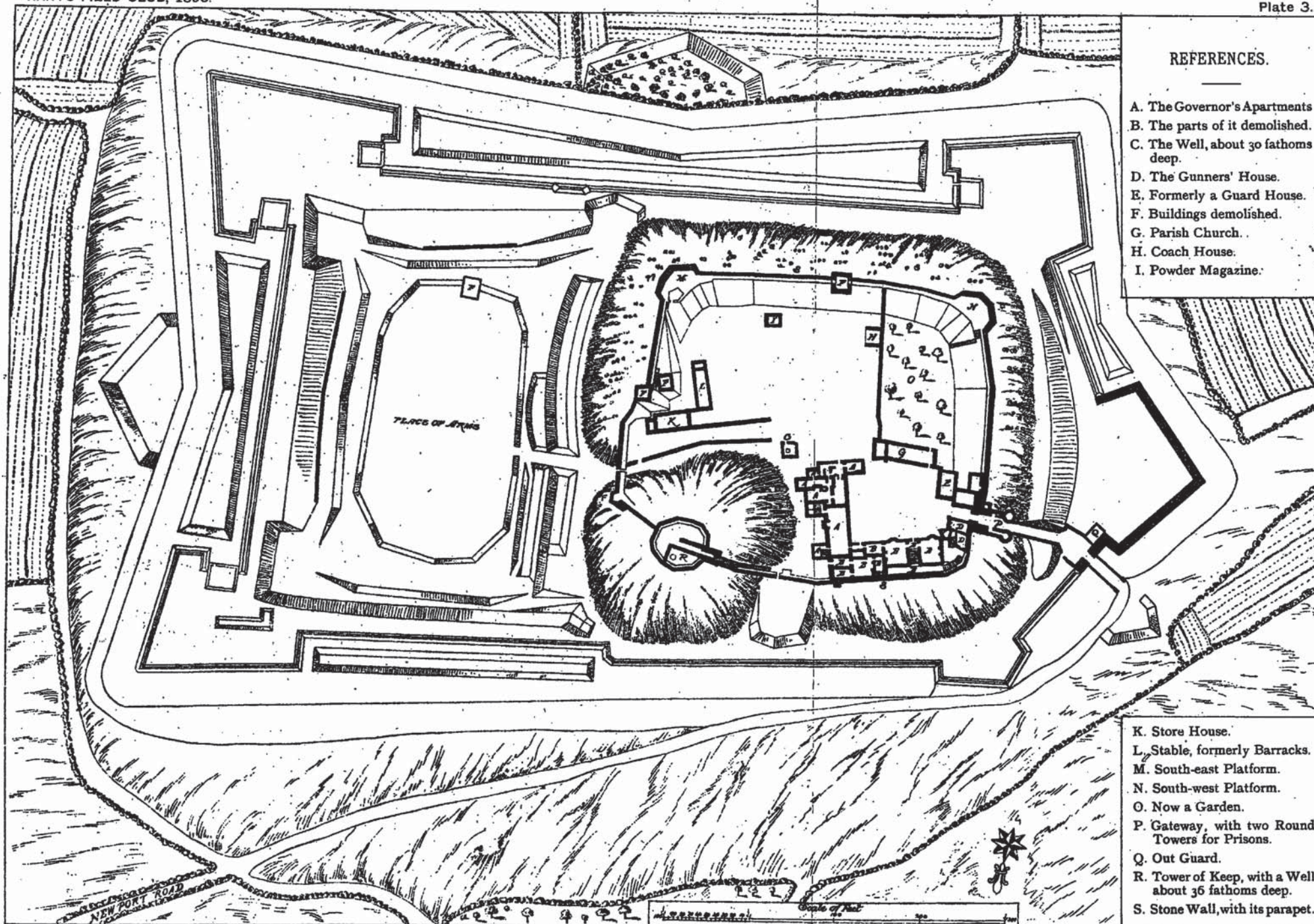
A clumsy attempt on the part of one, Captain Burley, to rescue the king with the assistance of a Newport mob, was defeated, with the result that Burley was hanged, and the liberty of the king greatly curtailed, he being no longer allowed outside the Castle grounds.

In March, 1648,¹ Charles made his first attempt to escape, part of his plan being to lower himself down by night from his bedroom window. The king, however, got jammed between the bars, and had to abandon his design, with difficulty drawing himself back into the bedroom. This bedroom was on the *mezzanine* floor, inserted by Carey in Montacute's building, the floor was removed in 1856.

Hammond becoming aware of this attempt, promptly changed the king's quarters to what was considered a more secure position, which I believe to have been the upper story of the buildings north of the Hall, including the Officers' quarters built by Carey, and to these rooms he was kept a close prisoner.

Here on the 28th of May the king having, after many hours work on previous nights, succeeded in cutting very nearly through one of the bars of a window in the north wall was to make his final attempt at escape. His plot, however, had been discovered, and Major Rolph, the officer in charge of the troops, was ready outside with his men to seize him in the act. On removing the bar and leaning out, the king saw or heard more men than he expected to be awaiting him, and his suspicions being aroused, he gave up the idea. His two friends Osborn and Worsley, waiting near, were seen and fired upon, but managed to escape unhurt.

¹ Charles I. in the Isle of Wight, by, G. Hillier, p. 109.



REFERENCES.

- A. The Governor's Apartments
- B. The parts of it demolished.
- C. The Well, about 30 fathoms deep.
- D. The Gunners' House.
- E. Formerly a Guard House.
- F. Buildings demolished.
- G. Parish Church.
- H. Coach House.
- I. Powder Magazine.

- K. Store House.
- L. Stable, formerly Barracks.
- M. South-east Platform.
- N. South-west Platform.
- O. Now a Garden.
- P. Gateway, with two Round Towers for Prisons.
- Q. Out Guard.
- R. Tower of Keep, with a Well about 36 fathoms deep.
- S. Stone Wall, with its parapet.

PLAN OF CARISBROOKE CASTLE IN 1741, FROM A DRAWING IN THE POSSESSION OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS DEPARTMENT, PORTSMOUTH.

In the following August, 1649, the king, with the consent of the Parliament, removed to the Grammar School, Newport, to treat with Commissioners upon the various points in dispute. This treaty is a matter of history, and two days after its being signed, viz.:— On the 30th November, the king was seized at daybreak by a party of soldiers under Lt.-Colonel Cobbett, and hurried off to Hurst Castle.

In August, 1650, two of the late king's children, Henry Duke of Gloucester, and the Princess Elizabeth were brought to the Castle. A few days afterwards the Princess caught a chill, which aggravating a disease from which she suffered, soon proved fatal. She was found dead in her room, on the 8th September, with her head resting upon an open Bible that had been the gift of her father. The Princess was buried at Newport, and there, in St. Thomas's Church, a very handsome monument, given by Her Majesty the Queen, perpetuates her memory. The young Duke of Gloucester remained at the Castle till 1653, when he was removed to Holland.

Many Royalist gentlemen are said to have been afterwards prisoners here, until the Restoration, in 1660. They doubtless occupied the same rooms under the north wall as had formed the close prison of Charles I., during the latter part of his stay here. As several prints of the middle of the last century represent this portion of the Castle to have been even then in ruins, I am strongly inclined to the belief that they were purposely demolished by the Royalists in the reign of Charles II.

No alterations or addition of importance are traceable from this time until about the beginning of the 18th century, when a sum of £735 is on record as expended in "putting the governor's lodgings in better order." In carrying this out many interesting features of former work were unhappily effaced, nothing being allowed to remain in the way of what were at that period considered improvements.

The floor of De Vernun's Hall was lowered about 20 inches, rendering the magnificent chimney piece and the entrance door useless, as well as all Carey's 16th century windows. These were replaced by a plaster fire-place, large wooden

doorways, and windows conformable to the new floor level. The walls were at the same time covered with quartering and lath and plaster.

The basement of the hall, a fairly lofty room of excellent masonry, was converted into a cellar by the insertion of a rude barrel vault to carry the lowered floor above it.

In the already mutilated chapel of St. Peter, Carey's inserted floor, and most of the vault of the undercroft were removed to make room for the broad staircase still in existence. In short, all evidence of their having been a chapel there at all was either removed or concealed by deal panelling or lath and plaster, and so remained, until the chapel was discovered in 1854, by Mr. Stratton, of Carisbrooke.

Mr. Percy Stone and myself recently exposed portions of the East window, and found built in the filling many pieces of roof-vaulting, window tracery, columns, &c.

Of the early chapel of St. Nicholas little is known beyond the fact, indisputably established by Mr. Stone, that it occupied exactly the same site as the present one. We find that it was given by Baldwin de Redvers (1140) to the newly founded abbey of Quarr. In 1292, mention is made of the house of the Vicar, and of his stable. The salary of the Vicar appears in 1536 to have been £6 13s. 4d., and 2s. 4d. tithe. This chapel was pulled down in 1738, during the governorship of Lord Lymington, and a very plain structure erected which was in turn unroofed in 1856, and converted into an artificial ruin.

I think it necessary to mention that all the windows in the keeper's house above the level of the basement story are modern, having been inserted by Mr. Hardwick, in 1856, during some alterations and repairs carried on about that time.
