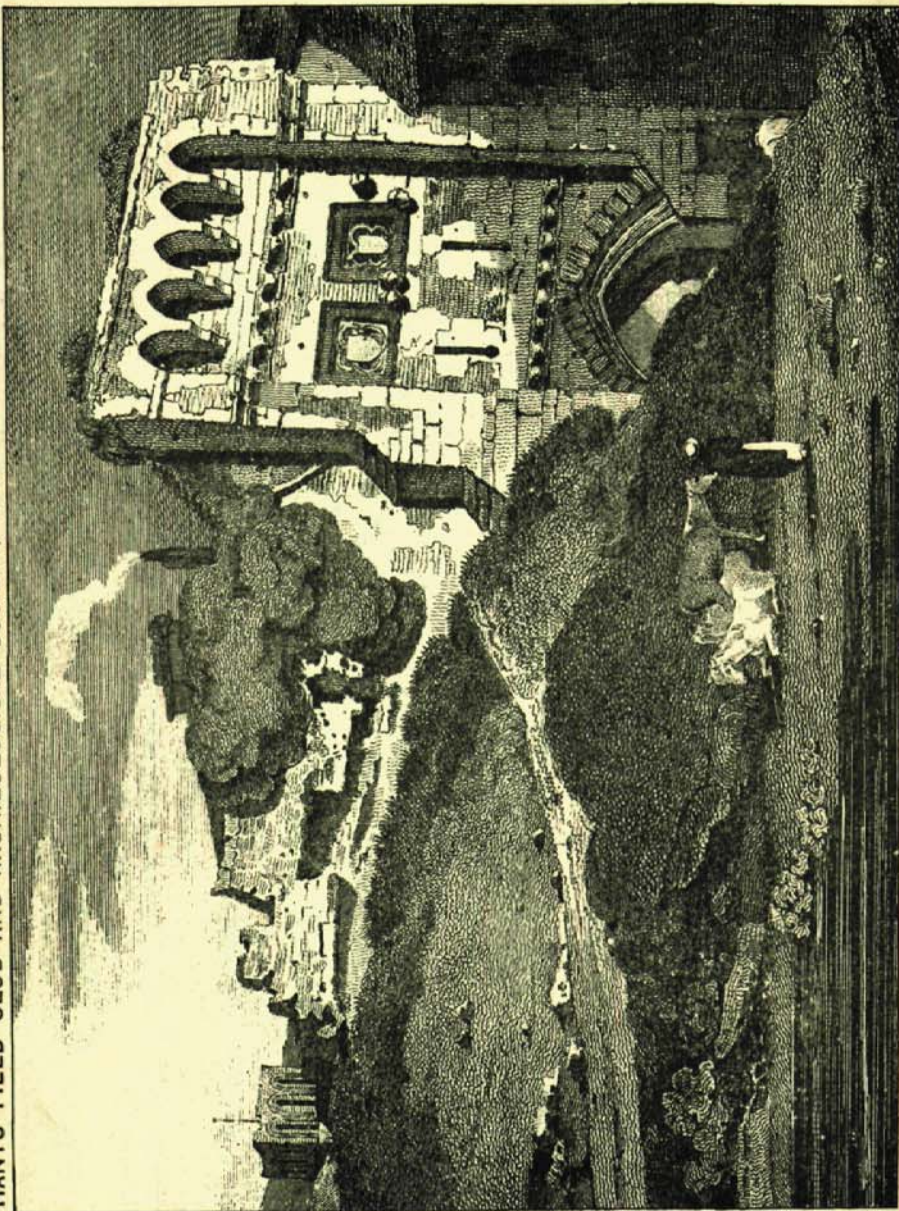


PLATE I.

HANTS FIELD CLUB AND ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY, 1898.



WEST GATE, WINCHESTER, FROM A DRAWING BY S. PROUT, 1810.

## THE WEST GATE OF WINCHESTER.

BY W. H. JACOB.

The West Gate, which forms a handsome termination to the picturesque High Street, Winchester, is the only one left of the gates of the Royal city, save that called Kingsgate, which has been saved from destruction by the little church of St. Swithun resting on its arches. For many years the interior has been an unknown place, to visitors it was a forbidden sight, and but few people have ever seen it. From the middle of the 18th century, its ancient features have been hidden by whitewash, lath and plaster, deal cupboards, and shelves. For some years in this century it was used as a muniment room, where also was stored an enormous mass of waste paper of the late Victorian age. This vast accumulation Mr. Stopher and the writer were allowed to examine. Having made selection of valuable matter, the rubbish was relegated to a paper mill, after which a couple of years were spent in an inquisition of a great variety of ancient records, the result being a fine collection of court records, chamberlain's and hospital rolls, coffer, ordinance, and other books, ranging over several centuries. This labour, added to previous efforts of Mr. F. J. Baigent, leaves but little more to do beyond the provision of a fit receptacle for the collection.

Before proceeding to speak of West Gate, its history in the past and present condition, we would allude to the accusation against the Pavement Commissioners made by Dr. Milner in his History of Winchester, wherein he charges that body with having pulled down the ancient gates except the West Gate. The fact is that not only the North, South, East, but also Durngate, a postern, were in a ruinous condition, as is proved by the frequent expenditure in repairs from

the time of Philip and Mary, and the repetition of these charges down to a period antecedent to the *régime* of the Commissioners. Eastgate was demolished by order of the Corporation in 1768. Northgate and the room over it, once a chapel dedicated to the B.V. Mary, but long ago desecrated, was let as a lodging to humble people. An old magazine describes its condition and consequent accident, in 1756 :—

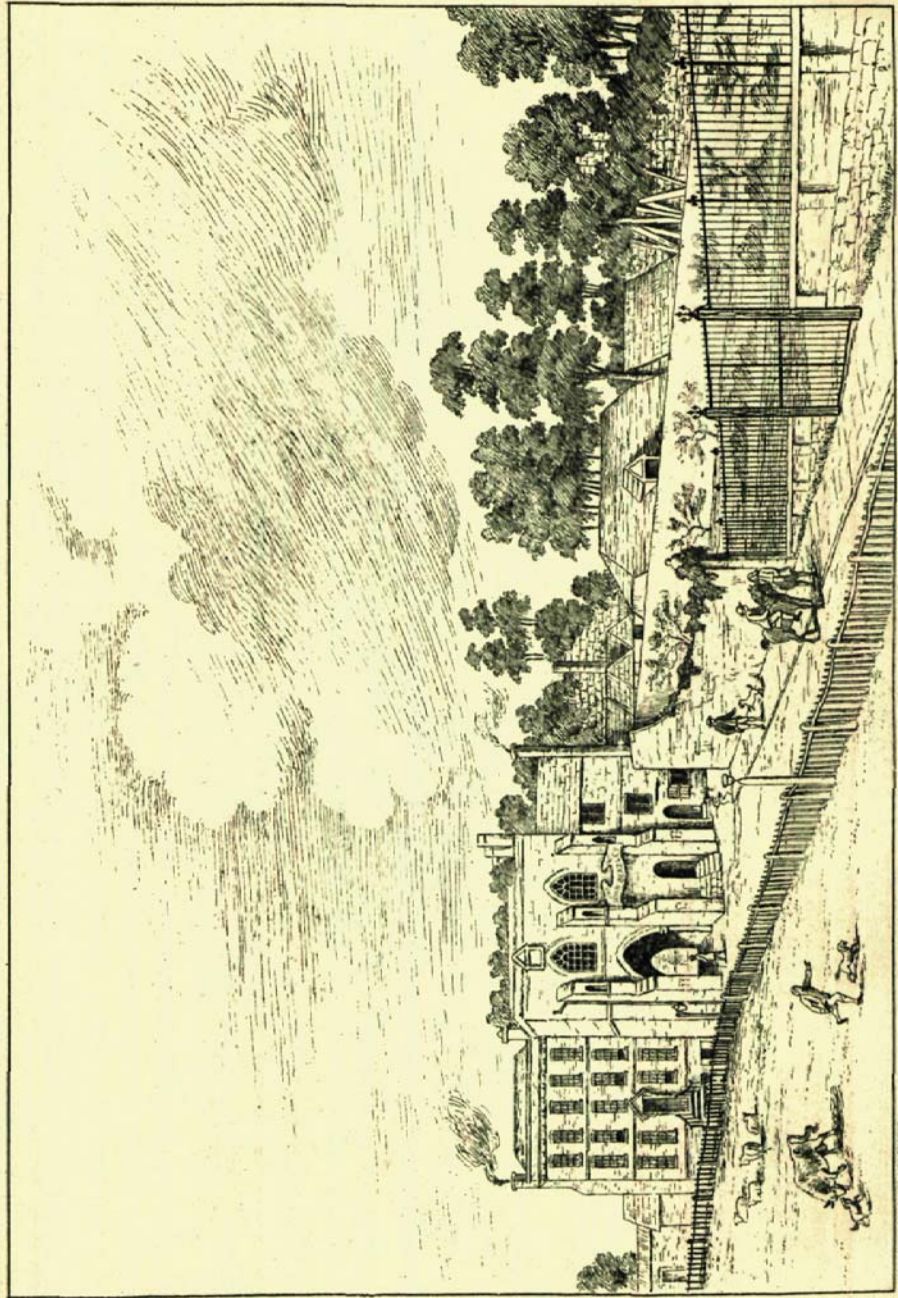
"A poor family who lived in the Northgate of Winchester having got their friends together at a christening, the floor of the room in which they had been dancing suddenly gave way, by which accident the whole company, to the number of twenty-six persons, were crushed in a most terrible manner, some to death, others more lamentably, the little infant being the only one uninjured."

The Commissioners of Pavement entered on the paving and lighting duties in 1770, and must therefore stand acquitted of the vandalism alleged against them by Dr. Milner. Their inclinations were doubtless destructive, but a mansion on the south side and the room over the West Gate, which was used by the inn on the north, prevailed as financial and structural impediments. This Hanoverian brick mansion now forms part of the buildings occupied by the County Council, and contrasts with the ancient Gate and the handsome structure in the Tudor style by their architect, the late Mr. Robinson, C.E. The inn, it is interesting to observe, was in part the old porter's lodge, and known as such in a long series of leases, which contain a proviso that on every Rogation Day, when the city lands were surveyed at the *Saturnalia*, known as "beating the bounds," the lessee had to provide the Corporation as refreshment a forequarter of lamb, and drink to the extent of 5s. This custom ceased with the enfranchisement and the lapse of the annual survey.

Winchester, like all Roman or Romano-British towns, had its square form of mural defences, with an entrance at each of the cardinal points marked by a gate named thereafter. The West Gate had, doubtless, its Roman precursor, but all traces of this structure above ground have vanished, Saxon, Norman, Plantagenet erections and changes having swept them away. A few years ago a beautiful *Aureus* of Honorius was found within a few yards of the old Gate, and it is remarkable that during the long years that the modern *fossor* has been at work for all sorts of foundations and improve-

HANTS FIELD CLUB AND ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY, 1898.

PLATE II.



WEST GATE (EAST FRONT), FROM A PAINTING IN THE GUILDHALL, WINCHESTER. ELLEN STEVENS, DELT.

ments, not a single legionary tablet, or inscription, nor even evidence of auxiliary cohorts, has ever been found in this locality.

After this digression let the story of West Gate be told so far as possible from sources and illustrations which are extant. There are no drawings or engravings of the Gates of Winchester, the King's and West Gate excepted. With the former at present we have nothing to do. Of the West Gate, from its architectural merits and surroundings, there are many representations. "The Antiquarian and Topographical Cabinet (1807)" gives a view by J. Greig, after a drawing by G. Shepherd, of the west front, with the ruined arch of the Norman Chapel of St. Mary in the Fosse and a corbel table over it. Fragments of this chapel have been found worked up in 18th century walling. There is also an engraving of the west front by Miss Hawksworth, after a sketch by S. Prout, 1810 (Plate I.). It is valuable as showing the steep descent into Winchester, ere the coaching traffic lowered the gradient, also the ruined wall running northward, and the chimneys of porter's lodge, and a pool of water, possible a part of the *fosse*, which at this point was long known as the "King's stew," or fish pond. A most interesting oil painting of the east front of the Gate has lately been presented to the Corporation by Mr. W. H. Deverell, of Bossington, and is here engraved, by the kind permission of the Mayor, A. Bowker, Esq., for the first time (Plate II.). Here we see the approach to the Castle Hall bounded on the east by an open field and garden, the fence of the mansion of Mr. Townshend, long since destroyed, and also on the north a doorway in the gate, approached by two steps, and over it a grated window. This door and window, and whatever there was beyond it, have given place to the footway. There is also a woodcut giving very nearly the same view. The grand stretch of wall from the West Gate to Hermit's Tower, now occupied by a turreted summer house, was demolished about eighty years ago, and its loss was bewailed in the "Hampshire Chronicle" by the poetasters of the period. Whatever the errors of past civic bodies may have been, the present corporation is now keenly alive to preserving every relic of antiquity, and the year of Mayoralty

of A. Bowker, Esq. (1898), will be memorable for the conversion of the West Gate into a museum open to visitors, its ancient features, long hidden, being now displayed to the joy of all lovers of antiquity.

The western front, by which the city was approached, remains intact, with machicolations, and beneath these a string-course, much weather worn, with a pair of quatrefoiled panels enclosing shields charged with the Royal and City Arms, flanked by bold sculptured heads, pierced with openings through which worked the chains of the drawbridge.<sup>1</sup> Beneath are two *oilets* or loop holes, and then another string-course, in which the badge of Richard the second (1377-1399) may be observed. The whole design, inclusive of arch and buttresses, may therefore be assigned with great probability to the period if not to the genius of Wykeham. The portcullis groove is evident, the base of the same being filled up with flints. It is perhaps not hazardous to say that indications of the Norman builders still remain in patches of rough flint work inside and out. Fine beams of oak are seen in the archway, and in the face of the wall of the southern side a narrow opening commanding the passage has been opened, its half arch splayed from the interior. The socket for the grating and hinges for a shutter have also been found. Over this opening, some devout soldier, or, it may be, prisoner, has carved a cross. The space thus grated confirms the assertion, made in a complaint to the Corporation in 1726, by Joseph Shelley, clockmaker, imprisoned here, that he begged alms from this opening, and it was so narrow that he could not get a quart bottle through. Entering the doorway, the visitor finds himself on a steep flight of stone steps, and on his left, at the base of the stairs is the site of the old black hole, where drunkards and other offenders were detained. On one occasion a lame soldier and four drunken women shared the straw, the meagre diet, and foul air of the place.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. T. Stopher's observations during the progress of the sewerage works tend to make the idea of a drawbridge untenable. He states that the excavations down Romsey road to and under the arch of the gateway were cut through the virgin chalk, and that no sign of a fosse or ditch was found.

Ascending the stairs on the right is the recently opened slit, and on the left a larger one, which formerly gave a view of the Norman Castle and Hall, &c. The top of the stairway has a groined ceiling, and the entrance to the large area—or hall over the gateway, now cleared of all excrescences and revealing arch, *oillots*, with portcullis grooves, on the west side—two windows on the east overlooking the City. The archway behind, in which the portcullis worked, is Perpendicular, and built wholly of chalk from the quarry in St. Giles' Hill, which has been worked from the Saxon times for inner construction, and is abundantly used in the Cathedral and neighbouring parish churches. The softness of the material has enabled prisoners and others to inscribe names and devices, of various kinds, all over the surfaces. High up in the wall are the iron loops for pullies connected with the portcullis. The splays, pillars, and injured arches of the time of Henry III., on the east side of the chamber, are now free from plaster, and recall Elias de Dereham, the great architect of Salisbury Cathedral, who also converted our Castle Hall and no doubt had a hand in repairing the gate. Here we see the damage done by the Vandals, who, in order to have a smooth surface for plaster, remorselessly cut away capitals and bases. The pillars are covered with names, crosses, hearts, and here and there remembrances of citizens recorded in the civic annals. There is a handsome Tudor mantel piece and an oaken iron bound coffer of very large dimensions. It is secured by three locks and a bar, and was the common chest of the city, serving as a receptacle for deeds and money, and pledges for loans with which the old corporation "accommodated" its freemen. This area or hall was no doubt the common room of the prisoners, and they were fed by the occupant of the porter's lodge at a profit. One such porter, Andrew Stone, is immortalised by Mr. Froude in his novel "The Chiefs of Dunboy," whose descendants became, one a sub-tutor to George III., when Prince of Wales, another Archbishop of Armagh, and from his good looks nicknamed the "Beauty of Holiness." A third was secretary to Duke of Newcastle. The Stones founded one of the oldest banks in London, and

its history is recorded in J. B. Martin's "Under the Grasshopper." Other interesting details might be given about the use of the gate and inmates of the prison from 1558 down to the middle of the 18th century, but space prevents.

Visitors will remark two great supports of oak under the beams on the west side of the hall. These were kindly given by the present Dean (Stephens) of Winchester from the old timbers of the Norman roof of the Cathedral, with the happy remark:—"I am glad to give a piece out of the old church to support the old gate."<sup>1</sup> One more feature must be mentioned ere we proceed to the battlements. In removing the floor on the north side of the hall a large space was discovered ranging from wall to wall, west to east. At the latter point was found a blocked-up window, shown in old pictures, and now re-opened. Its chalk splay bears the record of some devout prisoner, who has rudely sculptured the form of the crucified Saviour and other pious emblems. The lath and plaster ceiling of the passage beneath when removed will reveal the great beams extending from wall to wall.

The battlements are reached by another flight of steps, with an opening commanding the curtain wall now blocked by buildings, and we emerge on what was the fighting platform and the rampart walk, from whence missiles of offence could be discharged on the enemy below. To enable visitors to enjoy the view, steps have been made to the rampart and a platform on the city side, whence can be seen the high downs, and the historic buildings of the old city. After enjoying the panorama of great beauty and interest, the visitor, having descended into the street, will notice three handsome buttresses, with niches in their upper tier; also a panel once filled, in Edward VI.'s reign, with the arms of the Protector Somerset. A stone or metal tablet might well be placed somewhere in the gate to commemorate Mr. A. Bowker's interest in the good work done here during his auspicious year of office. Long may the city standard and the "arms of our Lady the Queen," and her successors, be displayed from these ancient battlements.

<sup>1</sup> In the year 1266 in an indenture between the Prior and Convent of St. Swithun and Simon le Draper, the former oblige themselves to repair the South and West Gates.

The following extracts from the Corporation records may be of interest :—

1558—All freemen hereafter committed to Ward shall be imprisoned in St. John's House, in the great hall, as they were previously at Westgate.

There are amongst the fragmentary papers of the Elizabethan age the deposition of three men examined by Mr. John White, who were committed to the Westgate for an evident desire to turn their musical talents to some profitable account, a statute of some sort or other notwithstanding. Their depositions are quaint and amusing, and we can almost fancy we see the harp, base violl and violett (violin) coming across the ancient bridge from the Soke to discourse sweet music, and their owners being carried away to durance vile by the constables by order of the Maior, John Purdue, senior, The intention of Noble to marry a lass at Stockbridge is amusing. But here are the depositions :—

The indorsement of the document is as follows :—

*The xamination of Robt. ffurnesse, Thos. Monday, Willm. Noble, Musicians. Taken in Winchestre and Committed to the Westgate by Mr. John White, one of the Justices of the city where they remained 2 days and then enlarged by the Maior and the said John White 24 ffeb. 1598.*

23 february 1598—The xamination of Robert ffurness of Tichfield Taylor he also plesseth to be a musician upon a harpe and saith that on friday last he came to Bisshops Waltham and lodged at the house of Richard Dyer and accompanied Thomas Monday there who is skilful upon the base violl and William Noble of Portsmouth mett they there who playeth upon the violett and there they continued from friday last until Wednesday last and they came to the Soke of Winchester and there lodged and had no other errand there but to use their minstrelsy and make merry and get somewhat for their use. But said that they played not in Winchester with their instruments only at their Lodgings. The morning they tuned their instruments and soe they brought them upp into the cittie intending to play amongst their friends but did not play for he says they were apprehended before it. He saith he was acquainted with Thomas Monday these XX years past and with Noble about one month past.

The xamination of Thomas Monday of Bisshops Waltham Shoemaker he saith he hath skill to play on a Base Violl and come in company with Robert Ffurnesse and William Noble to Winchester on Wednesday night last and lodged at William Warrens in the Soke but saith they played not on their instruments either in the Soke or in the town. They came this time to see their friends and to gett somewhat for their charges.

The xamination of William Noble Sailor. He also saith that he is a musician lately from the sea and fell acquainted with . . . Turks of Stockbridge who he intendeth to take to his wife and is purposed

to go to sea again as soon as the Rose Lion can be made ready. He came on Wednesday night last to Winchester in the company of Ffurnesse and Monday who also are musicians and they brought their instruments with them intending to gett some money by their minstrelsy to help bear their charges but this disponent saith that they did not use or exercise their instruments in this city or any place because they were apprehended before by the officers. He pretendeth that he was at sea when the statute on this behalf was made and being now advertised thereof he promises that henceforth he will not offend against the same.

Dec. 24, 1742.—Ordered that the note of hand given by Mr. Thomas Waghorne Low, bailiff to the assignees of Mr. James King, for £8 3s. od., for compounding Charles White's debt, who broke out of Westgate prison, shall be paid out of the coffer of the city, the reason for this being that Westgate was greatly out of repair and not fit to keep a prisoner in.

The following Petition shows the prison discipline and condition of prisoners at the beginning of the last century:—

1727.—To this honorable bench. The humble petition of Joseph Shelley, clockmaker, now prisoner in the city gate of Westgate, humbly begs leave to lay before your worships the misery and hardships that he now undergoes and have endured for above two months past. Humbly sheweth that your petitioner has nothing left in the world to support him, nor a friend that is able to help him. Your petitioner has sold that small matter which he had to support him, all but two peaces of clockwork unfinished. I humbly begg that your worships will be pleased to grant me liberty to have my tools broate into the gate that I may finish them and raise the money I am now confined for. Your petitioner humbly begs you will consider the hardships I labour under. I have no bed to lay on, nor has my clothes been off my back for 59 nites, and what is yet worse I have neither money nor vittels to eat, nor can I get a drop of water but what I am forced to begg of someboddy that passes by. I have not seen any of the Sergeants this 5 weekes, nor can I get so much as a quart bottel into the prison. This I begg you will be pleased to consider, for without some timely releaf I must of nessity perish, and in duty bound, shall ever pray for you.

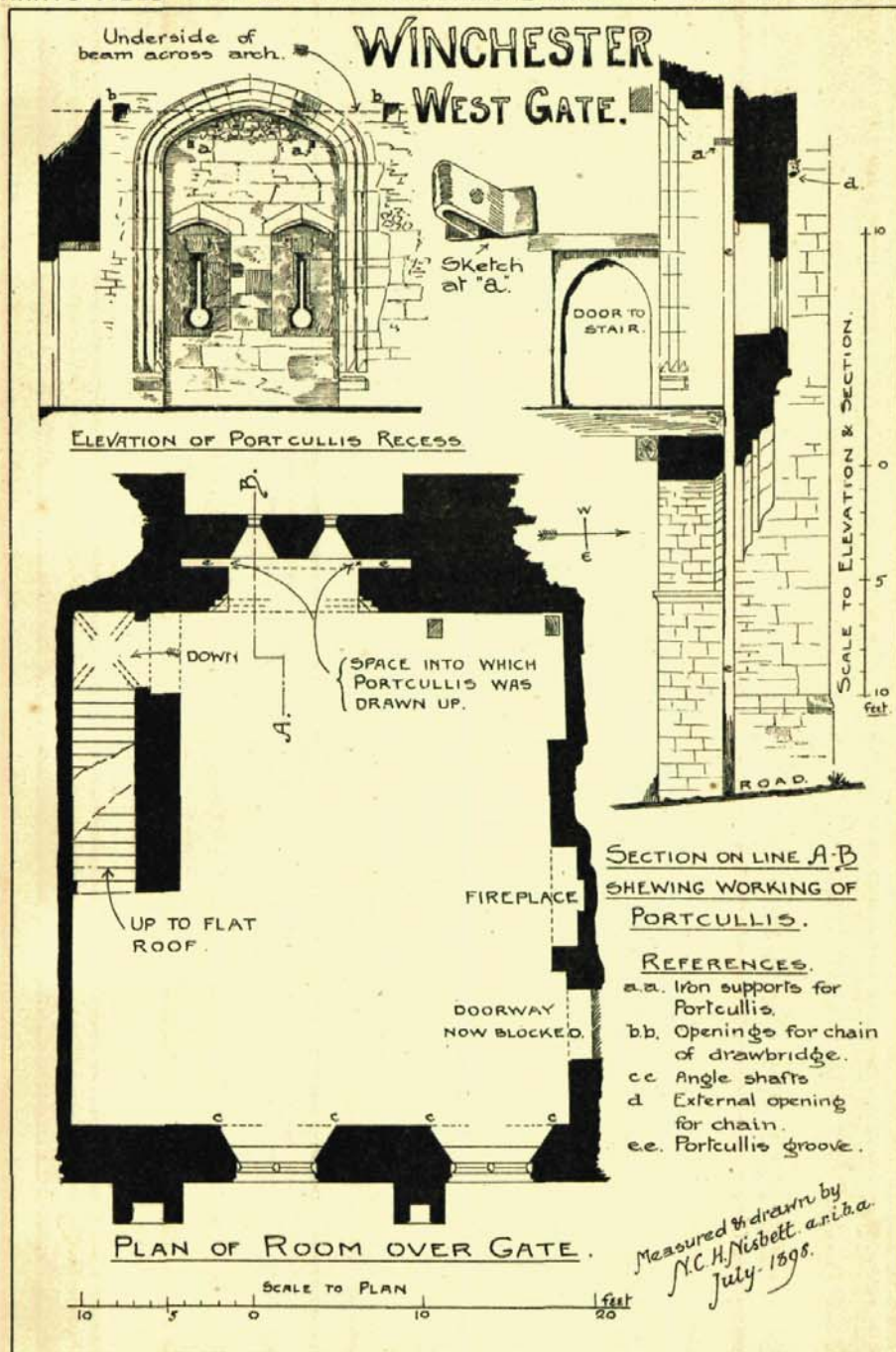
A debt of gratitude is due from the writer and the members of the Club to Mr. Norman C. H. Nisbett for the advantage of his architectural and antiquarian skill and the assistance he has given in measurements and drawings, to which he has appended the following notes:—

#### ARCHITECTURAL NOTES.

By N. C. H. NISBETT, A.R.I.B.A.

In making the necessary measurements for the preparation of the plan to illustrate the above paper, the following points were noted and are here offered as explanatory of the drawings (Plate III.):—

Windows were of course only possible on the east side



WEST GATE, WINCHESTER—ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS.

towards the town. The two openings shewn on the plan appear, from the remains of the angle shafts and their capitals, to belong to the period at which Henry III. (1216-72) carried out extensive repairs and alterations to the neighbouring Castle and Hall. Their internal arches have been altered, or the openings rather clumsily enlarged, by cutting away the stonework. The stone mullions and tracery are missing, the existing ones, of wood, are probably imitations of old stonework in existence at the time of their insertion. If so, their originals were probably fixed about the time of Richard II. (1377-1399), and the enlarging process above referred to may have been connected with the alteration of still earlier windows.

The arch of the portcullis recess belongs to a later date than the angle shafts of the above-mentioned windows, but may probably be assigned to the same period as the alteration of the windows, since the records shew that the Second Richard carried out works at the Castle. William of Wykeham was Bishop at this time. In the year 1359 he was appointed "Supervisor of the King's Castles," and resigned this post in 1362. The masons who had carried out his works at the College and the Cathedral would probably be employed at the Castle and the West Gate, which may account for a certain similarity in the workmanship.

Two iron staples, fixed at "a" "a," one of which is sketched, appear to have been originally some arrangement of the nature of a pulley, over which passed the ropes or chains connected with the portcullis. A "drum," worked by a windlass, was probably used for raising and lowering this protective feature. The beam across the top of the arch shews indications of some fixtures, which now missing may have been connected with this operation. The two upright posts shewn in the plan, on the right hand side of the portcullis recess, are those referred to by Mr. Jacob as having been recently given by Dean Stephens.