

DERBYSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

Bolsover Castle.

BY P. H. CURREY.

AT what period in history the site of Bolsover Castle first became a stronghold it is now impossible to say. The Rev. J. Hamilton Gray, in his handbook *Bolsover Castle*, conjectures that it has been occupied from prehistoric times, though admitting that he has no proof of this. Probably most of those who know the place will agree with this supposition. The precipitous western face of the great limestone ridge which overhangs the valley of the Doe Lea from Hardwick to Clowne has many points suitable for defensive positions, but none more so than the bold promontory on which the castle now stands : needing little artificial defence except on the side which faces the town, it seems unlikely that such a position would not be seized upon for occupation from the most remote periods.

At the time of Domesday Survey the manor of Bolsover was held by Robert, under William Peverell,¹ but there is no mention of a castle then existing.² William Peverell most probably erected a castle, which however, remained

¹ Lysons, p. 49.

² Gray, p. 13.

in the family for two generations only, for William the younger, being accused of poisoning Ranulf, Earl of Chester, in 1153, fled to the Priory of Lenton. On King Henry I. passing Lenton on his way to York, Peverell was forced to escape; and his castles of Nottingham, Bolsover, and the Peak were seized by the crown.¹

Though little or nothing of the actual Norman work is now to be seen, the form and extent of Peverell's castle is still apparent, for by a singular freak the Stuart house was built in the shape of the original Keep Tower, probably on its actual foundations, and very possibly in its lower story retaining parts of the original walls, while the Bailey was also retained and turned into a formal garden, its massive walls, though largely refaced, still preserving its irregular outline. Of the outer works nothing remains, but it may be fairly safely assumed that the outer ward comprised the space occupied by the present buildings and the open ground around them, the gate-house standing somewhere about the site now occupied by the school. Assuming that the size of the keep is represented by the present house, it must have been, though not so large as that built (or begun) by Henry de Ferrers at Duffield, among the largest of the early Norman fortresses, measuring about 65 ft. by 52 ft.

In 1215, Bolsover was in possession of the rebellious barons, but was taken by assault by William de Ferrers for the King. Ferrers was appointed Governor, but shortly afterwards replaced by Bryan de Lisle, who in 1216, received orders to fortify the castle against the barons, or if he found it untenable, to demolish it.² Does this indicate that the castle was then in a dilapidated condition, or that the sympathies of the neighbourhood were on the side of the barons?

Bolsover remained in the hands of the crown, except

¹ Gray p. 14.

² Lysons, p. 50.

for short periods, until the reign of Edward VI. Considerable sums were spent, as shown by the Pipe Rolls, on its upkeep. In 2 John, the large sum of £302 was paid for enclosing the Park; In 5 and 13 John, £7 13s. 4d. and £19 10s. od. was expended on works on the "Turris."¹ In 20 Henry II., £100 os. 3d. was paid for works at Bolsover and Peak.²

The castle seems to have had its own chapel, for William de Ferrers settled an annual rent charge of a mark of silver upon the chaplain.

The ambitious building schemes of the 17th century have, however, obliterated all traces of work of this period, excepting perhaps some small pieces of masonry in the walls of the bailey. But no one could spend an hour in Bolsover without perceiving that he is in a mediæval town. The improvement made by the County Council in the road from Chesterfield has altered the features of the approach, but in the town itself the lay-out of the streets from the Market Place and the Church to the castle gate shows that apparently unintentional, but invariably charming picturesqueness of treatment which is characteristic of all the work of the middle ages, which the ostentatious modern "Hotels" cannot altogether destroy, and which is doubly pleasing in contrast with the modern suburbs and surrounding mining villages.

The town itself is protected by a deep ditch and earthen rampart, forming a segment of a circle round its eastern side, the only side on which it is approachable. This earthwork is in some parts still remarkably perfect. Mr. Hamilton Gray considers it to be Saxon or Danish work, but it seems more likely that it was thrown up in the time of the Parliamentary Wars, or at anyrate strengthened at that period; the banks could hardly have retained their present angle for 1,000 years. Mr.

¹ Gray p. 16.

² D. A. & N. H. S. *Journal*, viii., 134.

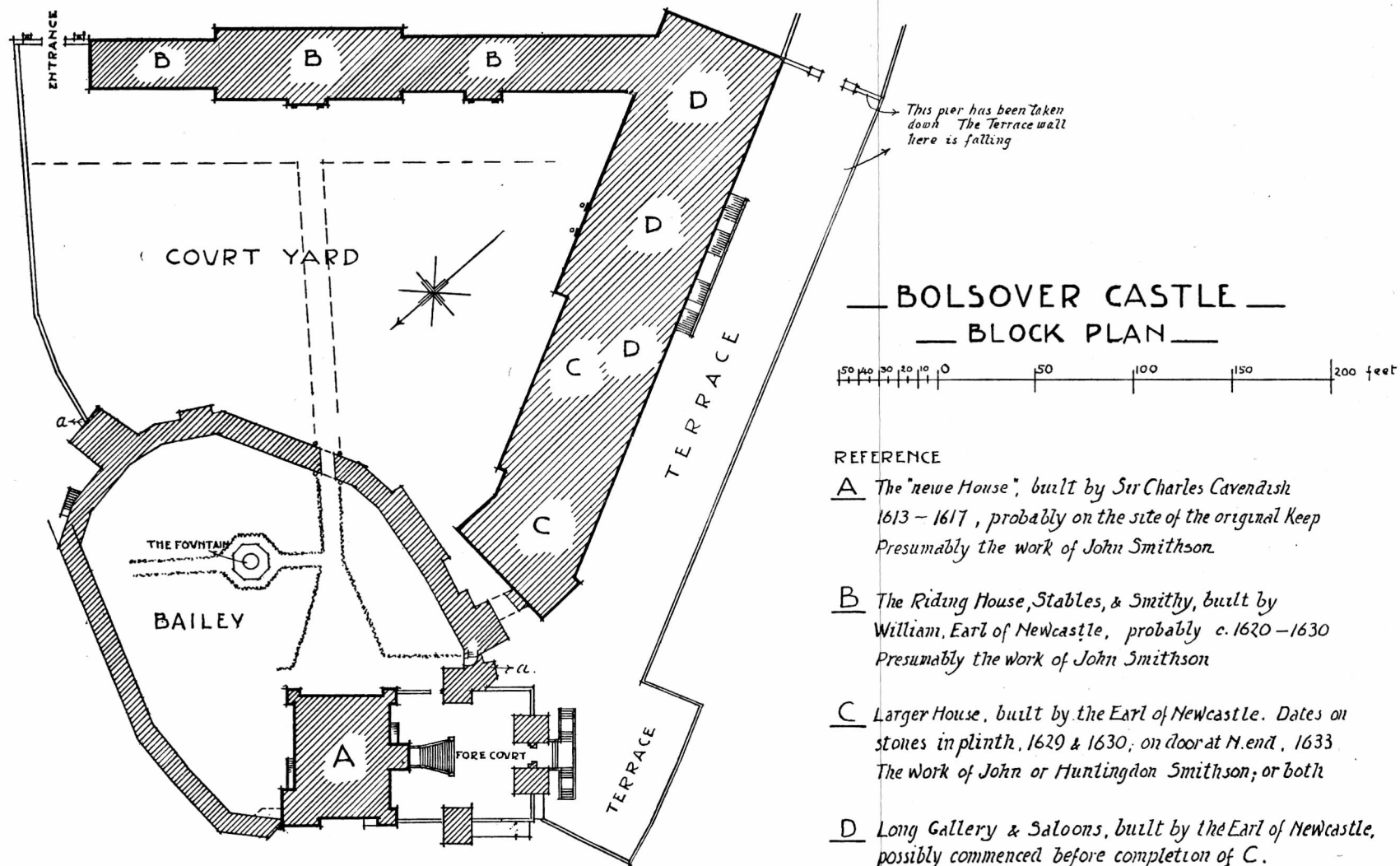
Gray also states (p. 17) "It is certain that the high bank or precipice on which the town stands was crowned with strong walls, where the walls of the gardens now stand which overlook the valley of Scarsdale, and those walls must have been fortified at given intervals with watch towers." He does not however state on what grounds his conviction is based, and I can find no traces of ancient work in the present garden walls.

The later history of Bolsover may be read in Dr. Pegge's *Bolsover and Peak Castles*, 1785; the Rev. D. P. Davies' *View of Derbyshire*, 1811; Lysons' *Derbyshire*, 1817; the Rev. G. Hall's *History of Chesterfield*, 1822, and the Rev. J. Hamilton Gray's *Bolsover Castle*, 1894. In the later works the matter seems to have been to a great extent copied from Dr. Pegge, though amplified with many interesting details.

The substantial facts may be shortly summarized as follows. In 1514, Henry VIII. granted Bolsover and Hareston (Horsley Castle) to Thomas Howard, first Duke of Norfolk, but on the attainder of his son they reverted to the crown. In 1552, Edward VI. granted a lease of the manor of Bolsover to Sir John Byron for 50 years, and in 1553 granted the fee to George Lord Talbot and his heirs. This nobleman, who succeeded to the earldom of Shrewsbury in 1560, married, in the reign of Queen Mary, the celebrated "Bess of Hardwick," becoming her fourth husband.

In 1608, Gilbert, Earl of Shrewsbury granted a lease of the manor for 1,000 years to Sir Charles Cavendish, the third son of Elizabeth Hardwick, by her second husband, William Cavendish of Chatsworth, and in 1613, sold the manor to Sir Charles.

On the death of Sir Charles Cavendish in 1617, Bolsover passed to his son William, known as "the loyal Duke of Newcastle," the noble supporter of the house of Stewart, who was created Baron Ogle and Viscount Mansfield in



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mens. & del. July, 1915.

1620, Baron Cavendish of Bolsover and Earl of Newcastle in 1628, Baron of Bothal and Hepple and Marquis of Newcastle in 1644, and Earl of Ogle and Duke of Newcastle in 1665. In 1633, King Charles I. was entertained with lavish magnificence at Welbeck and Bolsover, and again in 1634, on which occasion a masque arranged by Ben Johnson was performed. These are matters outside the scope of the present article, but the reader may be strongly recommended to study the interesting account of them in Hall's *History of Chesterfield*, which is now in our society's library. Bolsover was shortly to witness very different scenes: on the outbreak of the civil war the Marquis of Newcastle garrisoned Bolsover on behalf of the Royalist party, but in August, 1644, it was taken by Major-General Crawford, subsequently sold by the parliament, and partly pulled down. To save it from utter destruction, Sir Charles Cavendish, younger brother of the marquis, succeeded in raising funds for its re-purchase, and on the restoration of the monarchy the marquis repaired the buildings. Henry, the second Duke of Newcastle died at Bolsover without male issue and Bolsover passed, through his daughter Margaret, to James Holles, Earl of Clare, created Duke of Newcastle in 1649, from whom it passed again, through his daughter Henrietta, to Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford. Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, heiress of the Earl of Oxford, brought the estate to William Duke of Portland, with whose family it now remains.¹

Such, put very briefly, is the history of this ancient site, but if we try, from either Mr. Hall's or Mr. Hamilton Gray's writings, to trace a connected story of the erection of the extraordinary mass of buildings which now occupy it we find ourselves in inextricable confusion. After the Wars of the Roses, the mediæval castle seems to have been allowed to fall into decay; Leland, in the time of Henry VIII. describes it as "a great Building of an olde

¹ Lysons p. 53.

Castelle."¹ At the time of its purchase by Sir Charles Cavendish it is said to have been in ruins ; an old Almanack of 1613, contains a MS. note saying " Foundation of the newe house at Bolsover begune to be layde."² Mr. Hall, copied by Mr. Gray, suggests that, judging from the slight mention that is made of the works at Bolsover in the Duchess of Newcastle's life of her husband, the whole of the buildings except the riding school and stables were erected by Sir Charles Cavendish. As Sir Charles died in 1617, and as moreover we are told that the architect was sent to Italy to make studies for the work, this would signify a method of operation that might well account for the poverty of the architecture, but which would not discredit the ambitions of the most up-to-date Trans-atlantic contractors.

Mr. Hall also states " It is understood that he (Huntingdon Smithson, the architect) furnished the designs for Bolsover Castle, but did not live to witness its erection," but Huntingdon Smithson died in 1648, 31 years after the death of Sir Charles Cavendish.

It seems, however, that Mr. Hall has overlooked the fact that the writer of the life of the Duke of Newcastle was his second wife, who, being herself a maid of honour to Queen Henrietta, was wedded to the Duke when he was an exile at Paris, after the fall of the monarchy, and had no personal concern with his earlier building undertakings.

Dr. Pegge, writing in 1785, notes the failure of the duchess to speak of her husband's building operations in her memoirs (and probably suggested the idea to the later writers), but draws the conclusion that the great buildings were erected after the Restoration. He writes, " After the restoration of Charles II. to his throne, and himself to his shattered and broken fortunes ; and after

¹ R. W. Goulding " Bolsover Castle."

² G. Hall, p. 470.

spending some time in regulating, recovering, and recruiting his estate; duke William began a noble fabric on a very magnificent plan, he never finished it.”¹ “The conclusion is that the date of the fabric must be brought down to the reign of Charles II. after the demise of the duchess, A.D. 1673.”² Pilkington is still more dogmatic. He states, “The present castle, or rather house at Bolsover was built about the middle of the reign of James I. The foundations were laid in the month of March, 1613, and the building was finished about two years afterwards.”³ “The Earl of Newcastle *after his return*, for the better accommodation of the old house, built to the east a gallery with a suit of handsome apartments. He erected also, at the same time large stables, a riding house, and a smithy.”⁴

Some work was certainly done after the Restoration, as the following passages show. “His two Houses, Welbeck and Bolsover, he found much out of repair, and this later half pull’d down, no furniture or any necessary Goods were left in them, but some few Hangings and Pictures.”⁵ “Thus though his Lawsuits and other unavoidable expenses were very chargeable to him, yet he order’d his affairs so prudently, that by degrees he stock’d and manur’d those Lands he keeps for his own use, and in part repaired his Manor-houses, Welbeck and Bolsover, to which latter he made some additional building.”⁶ It is hardly likely that in his then impoverished condition, he would have commenced such an ambitious scheme, especially as the great wish of his later years was to rebuild the castle at Nottingham. Lysons, however, finally disposes of this theory⁷ by reference to

¹ Dr. Pegge’s “Bolsover Castle,” p. 10.

² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

³ Pilkington’s *Derbyshire*, p. 356.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

⁵ *Life of William Cavendish*, p. 91.

⁶ *Life of William Cavendish*, p. 93.

⁷ Lysons’ *Derbyshire*, p. 54.

Diepenbeck's view of Bolsover in 1652, which shows the whole of the present buildings. And when we refer to the duchess' memoirs we find that the "cursory manner" in which she speaks of the building operations is comprised in the following sentence, referring to the time before the fall of the monarchy and exile of the duke—"notwithstanding his Hospitality and noble House-keeping his charges of building came to about 31000l." If the reference is slight, the sum expended was certainly not so, and goes to prove quite the opposite of the deductions which have been drawn from it.

We may safely conclude that the Terrace buildings were the work of "the Loyal Duke," were carried out in the early years of King Charles I., and were duly finished and occupied. It seems strange that the story of so important a building should, at the time when Dr. Pegge studied it, not much more than 150 years after its erection, have got into such a fog of uncertainty.

A study of the actual buildings, which is the purpose of this article, will however probably give us a truer view of their successive erection, than can be gathered from the speculations of the writers. Approaching Bolsover from the Midland Station, or viewing it from the road to Shuttlewood across the deep valley which separates the headland from the main ridge, the castle presents a bold and impressive appearance, the massive Keep Tower and the curtain wall of the Bailey rising abruptly from the steep hill side and towering above the surrounding trees. But it must be confessed that a closer view leads to disappointment, when it is found that the "Keep" is what might almost be described as a freak of a somewhat artificial age, and that the whole range of buildings consists of a series of houses of ambitious and ostentatious character, erected in rapid succession on a disjointed and ill-considered plan. It is usually the case, though contrary to popular belief, that poverty of architectural

conception and inconvenient and uncomfortable planning run together. Though in the Tower House at Bolsover there is a distinct picturesqueness of outline the details are poor and clumsy: the Reformation had broken down tradition in architecture as in many other things, and the age of individuality had not succeeded, it has not yet succeeded, in finding anything to serve in its place. In the interior arrangement of the house, the attempt to force the comforts of a seventeenth century house into the form of a Norman castle, led, as such attempts always do lead, to many absurdities. The criticism of the Rev. D. P. Davies¹ that "on the whole, it is an ill-contrived, and very inconvenient domestic residence," though quaint and perhaps characteristic of its period, 1811, is not altogether undeserved. Bray, writing in 1777 says, "The present building is nothing more than a house, as ill-contrived and inconvenient as ever was formed."

This, the oldest part of the group of buildings, is probably the "newe house," the foundation of which was begun by Sir Charles Cavendish in 1613. Its size and form would be controlled by the foundations of the original Keep on which it seems to have been built, but I imagine that fancy rather than necessity dictated its plan and that the building is in fact a sham castle; it is even finished with battlements instead of the pierced parapets which had become so popular in Elizabethan buildings, as at Hardwick and Wollaton.² The destruction of the Trade Guilds at the Reformation had thrown architecture into the melting pot, and liberty here as elsewhere was descending into licence, waiting for the hands of a master such as Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren to bring it under control.

The traditional plan, based upon and grouped round the

¹ Davies' *Derbyshire*, p. 545.

² Barlborough, like Bolsover, is battlemented. It is also like Bolsover built in the form of a Tower.

Hall, Kitchen and Solar, having become obsolete, the exuberant spirit of the Elizabethan period expressed itself in a fertile ingenuity of planning, as is shown in the drawings still preserved by John Thorpe and the Smithsons, and we find houses of the period built in all kinds of shapes. Whether the castellated form of Bolsover was a whim of Sir Charles Cavendish, or the fancy of his architect, it is of course impossible to say.

It should be mentioned that there is a popular story that Bolsover Castle was begun by the Countess of Shrewsbury, who died at a time when the building operations were stopped by frosty weather.¹ If there is any truth in the legend it is possible that Sir Charles Cavendish finished the work, and that the new house, begun in 1613, was that at the northern end of the Terrace buildings. But though its eccentric planning accords perhaps with one's idea of what might have been done by this self-willed lady, there seems no evidence that "Bess of Hardwick" did any building at Bolsover, and her monument in All Saint's Church, Derby, mentions only Chatsworth, Hardwick, and Oldcotes.

The visitor to Bolsover now approaches it by the eastern end of the stable block and round the Bailey wall, but the state approach was clearly intended to be along the Terrace, from which a double flight of steps, the balustrade of which has been destroyed, leads up to an enclosed fore-court, treated in the formal manner of the period, and not wanting in dignity in its conception though poor in detail. In the walls of this fore-court are four little lodges, to which it is difficult to assign a use. They are provided with fireplaces which, though simple in detail, are of similar character to those in the house. A long flight of steps leads to the principal entrance which, as in the Norman Castles, and the stately houses of the later Renaissance period is on the first floor. Immediately on

¹ Hamilton Gray, p. 25.

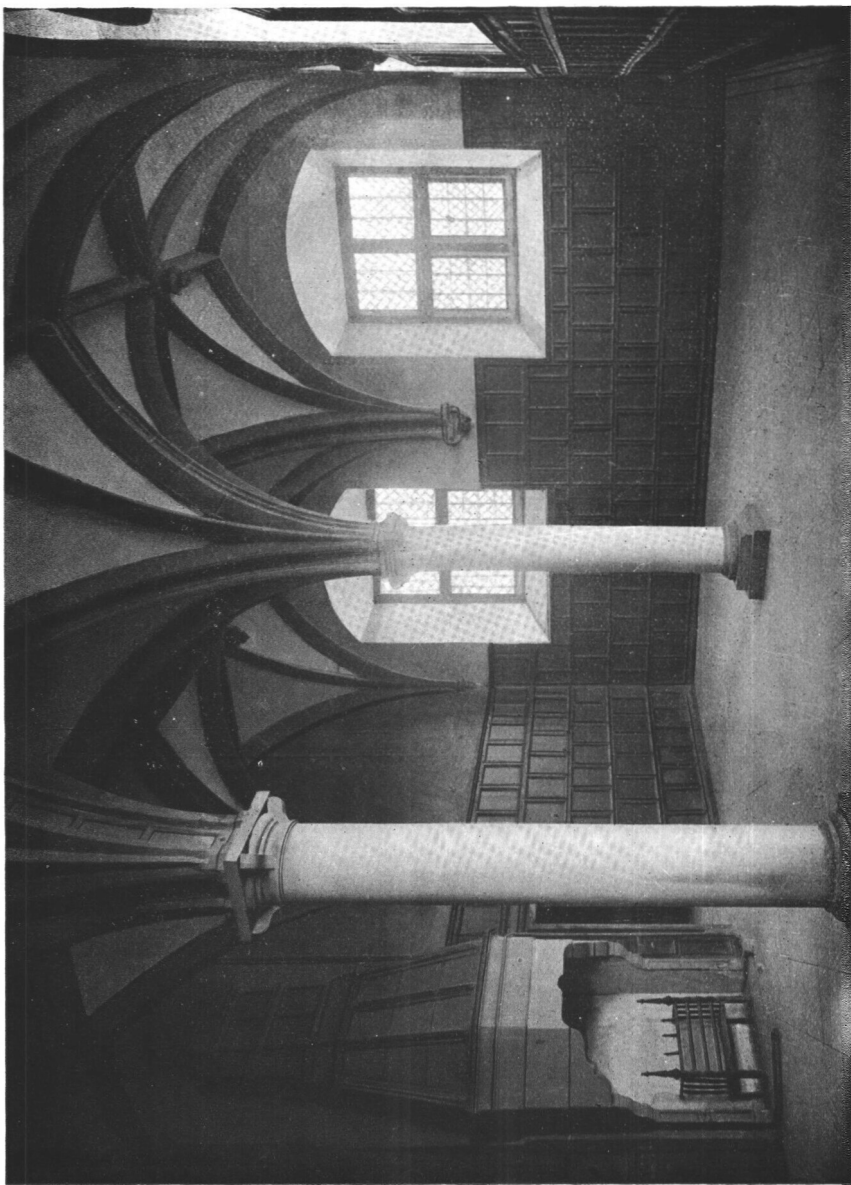


Photo. by G. H. Widdows.

BOLSOVER CASTLE.—THE HALL.

entering the building one is faced with the extraordinary confusion of ideas which have prevailed in its design. The details of the doorway and the balcony and window above it are entirely Renaissance in character, while the mouldings of the inner doorways are such as were usual in early Tudor work. But the most remarkable feature is that the porch itself is roofed with a pointed ribbed vault. This vaulting is one of the most noticeable features of the house, the chief rooms of the first floor being treated with ribbed vaulting, while the lower rooms are roofed with simple barrel or groined vaults. It seems as if the architect and masons were distracted between their traditional methods of working and the more popular Italian details which they might obtain from pattern books ; or perhaps that the owner, though not desiring altogether to abandon the new fashion, wished to make his house as much like a mediæval fortress as that fashion would allow. A tendency to return to Gothic ideas is often noticeable in church work of the early Stuart period, possibly as a protest against advancing puritanism, but one seldom sees it in domestic work.

Allowing that the architect was confined in his work to the outlines of the old keep, it must be admitted that he has contrived his planning with the greatest skill and ingenuity. Immediately on the right of the entrance is the dining hall, with a ribbed vault in six compartments; carried by two circular pillars in the centre of the room and carved stone corbels on the walls. The vaulted roof is boldly treated and very effective, but, as is inevitable in work that is a copy of past ages, is wanting in spontaneity and is more suggestive of the architect's office, than of the free handling of craft masonry. This room is certainly one of the best features of the house ; it is finely proportioned, and the lighting, by deeply recessed windows placed high above the floor is most effective. It is ornamented by one of those highly elaborate but

architecturally unsatisfactory fireplaces which form such a notable feature at Bolsover, and which in this room still retains its original wrought iron basket grate. The room is wainscoted all round to the height of the springing of the vaults, the framing having raised mouldings, mitred at the angles, and suggesting a rather later date than that of the building. The spandrels of the vaulting are filled with paintings representing the labours of Hercules. At one end of the hall is a serving room, with recesses for shelves or cupboards, and a staircase leading direct to the offices below: the door to the hall is hung in two sections for convenience in passing dishes. The architect has endeavoured to overcome the inconveniences of his plan by providing no less than three staircases from the principal floor to the offices.

On the left of the entrance is a small ante-room, leading to a large square room, sometimes called the dining room, though probably not intended as such, but more usually known as the Pillar room. The ante-room is covered with a plain groined vault on which ribs have been painted with rather singular effect; the windows are fitted with shutters, to receive which the stone mullions are rebated on the inside; the walls are panelled as in the hall, though there is a small piece of earlier panelling below one of the windows. The spandrels of the vaulting are filled with paintings of very crude character, with figures in the costume of the period.

The Pillar room is surely one of the most extraordinary in existence. A central stone pillar supports the rib vaulting of the roof, which is of like character to that in the hall, except that the arches are circular and that the pendants at the intersections of the ribs are more delicately carved. The fireplace is of stone, alabaster, and grey marble, elaborately carved, the projecting hood being supported by marble columns standing clear of the walls; on the hood is a coat of arms supported by cherubs. Of

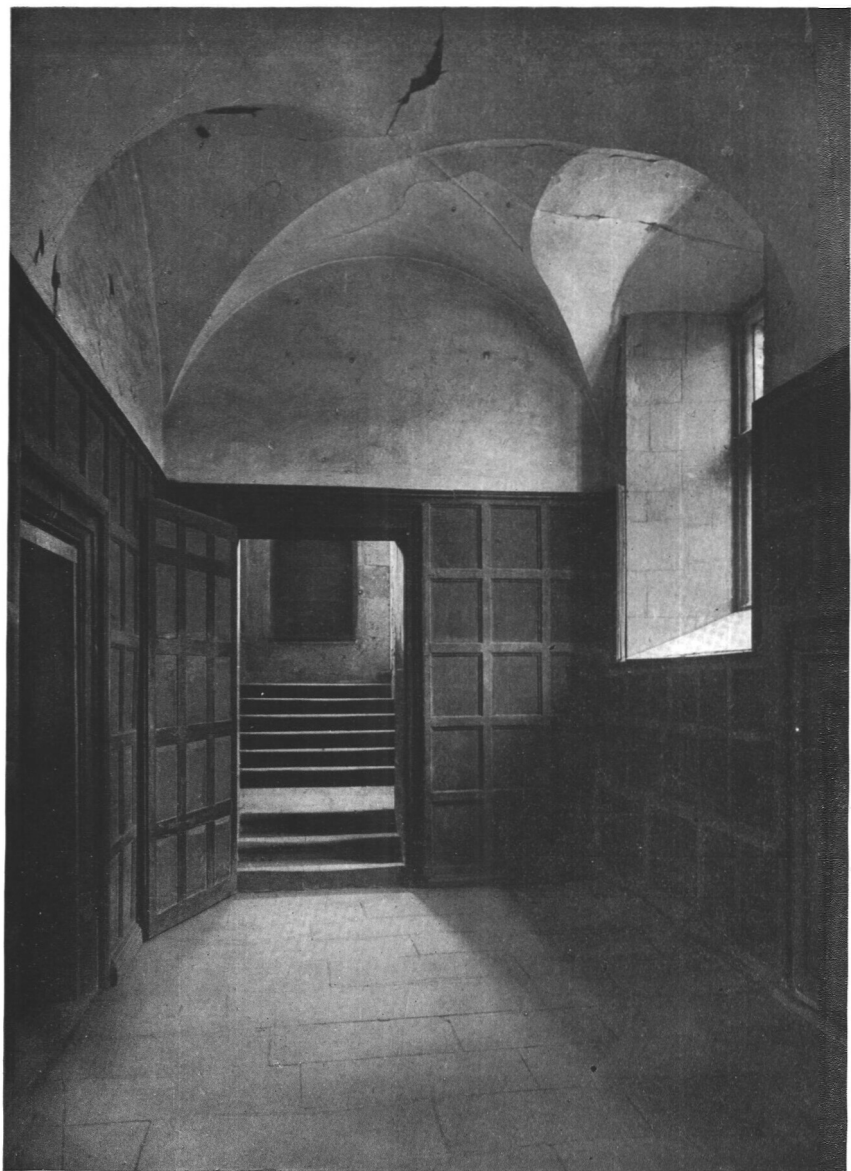


Photo. by G. H. Widdows.

TO FACE P. 13.

BOLSOVER CASTLE.—ENTRANCE TO PRINCIPAL STAIRCASE.

this Mr. Goulding writes, "The arms are those of Sir William Cavendish and his wife, Elizabeth Basset of Blore." Below are the mottoes of Cavendish, "Cavendo Tutus," and of Basset, "En esperance d'avoyr." The latter is mutilated. The crests on the side of the fireplace (Cavendish and Basset) are each surmounted by the coronet of a viscount, indicating that the title Viscount Mansfield had been conferred before the fireplace was complete."¹ Incidentally this proves that the interior of the house at any rate was not finished by Sir Charles Cavendish. The walls are lined from floor to roof with panelling of eccentric design, rendered still more bizarre by gilding and varnish. In small semi-circular spandrels are paintings illustrating the five senses, now somewhat obliterated. The appearance of the room has been rendered still more strange by the insertion of large sash windows filled with a quatrefoil design. Bray says of this room, "In the centre of it is a pillar supporting an arched roof, in the manner of that at Christ Church in Oxford, but much less light. Round this pillar is a plain circular table, used to dine on."² The table has now disappeared.

A small ante-room, simple and picturesque in its treatment, connects the pillar room and the hall with the principal staircase.

On the lower floor are the offices, kitchen, bakehouse, larders, &c., and a large room, corresponding to the hall above, which one would take to be a servant's hall, but the drains in the floor and the absence of any fireplace point to its use as a store room. These rooms being more simply treated are architecturally more satisfactory than those above. They are roofed with plain groined stone vaults, supported by pillars which, except in the sections of the mouldings, are entirely Gothic in character.

Two staircases lead from the principal floor to the top

¹ *Bolsover Castle*, Goulding, p. 11.

² *Tour in Derbyshire and Yorkshire*, p. 344.

of the house, the chief of which, in the north-west tower, is continued up to the roof. On the second floor there is one large room, over the pillar room, intended either as a drawing room or for the state bedroom, and commanding a fine view northward over the valley of the Rother. The ceiling is of plaster decorated with interlacing mouldings, the only example in the house of the then fashionable plasterwork, but the mouldings are coarse and the design uninteresting. It is coloured a deep blue with gold stars, from which the title of the Star chamber has been given to the room; the crudity of this colouring is no doubt in part responsible for the poor effect of the plasterer's work; the panelling with which the walls have been lined is made up of various fragments. On the elaborate ornamented chimney piece are the arms of the Talbots, with the motto "Prest d'acomplir." This Great chamber is on the whole a fine dignified room, the effect of the large and deeply recessed windows being distinctly good. The panelling is decorated with painted figures, representing apparently Aaron and other Biblical personages; on the frieze are twelve paintings of Roman Emperors and Empresses, which hung in the hall at Welbeck in 1695.¹ Adjoining this room is a nicely proportioned little boudoir, the floor paved with lozenges of black and white marble, and ceiled with rib vaulting which is also constructed, or faced, with marble. Another small room on this floor has the ceiling painted, to represent the Ascension of our Lord, surrounded by cherub figures playing on musical instruments, while the frieze is decorated also with cherubs bearing the emblems of the Passion, the whole strange and fantastic in conception and treatment. A third room is similarly painted, but in this case with representations of heathen gods and goddesses. Very characteristic of the Renaissance period is this odd jumble of paganism and christian symbolism.

¹ R. W. Goulding, p. 12.

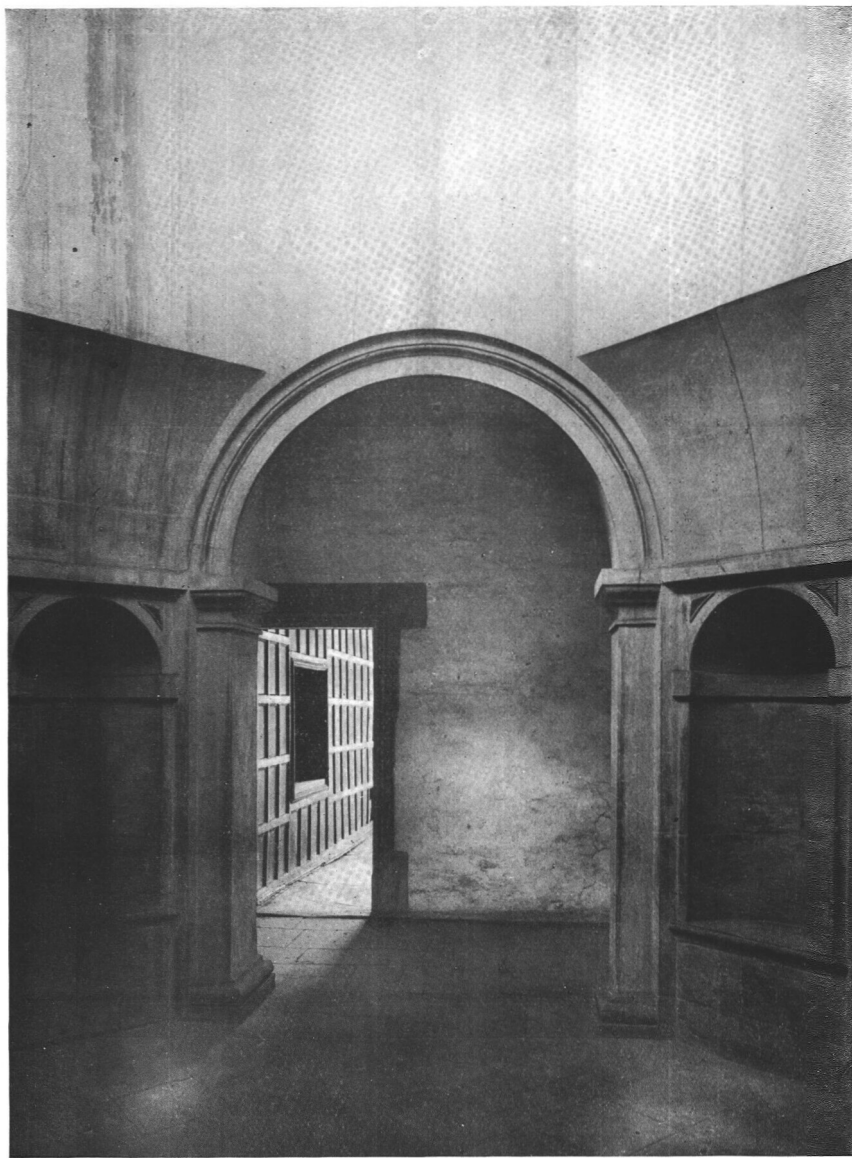


Photo. by G. H. Widdows.

TO FACE P. 15.

BOLSOVER CASTLE.—THE OCTAGON.

On the top floor the rooms contain fireplaces of the same highly decorated character as those below, but most of the panelling and other fittings have been removed. On this floor, however, is one of the most striking features of the house, a central octagonal landing, out of which the various rooms open, supporting a glazed lantern with traceried windows, finished with a domed roof. It is this lantern which has controlled the planning of the whole house, the great block of masonry necessary for its support having to be carried up from the basement. The architects of the seventeenth century could not get round little difficulties of this sort by the use of steel joists or reinforced concrete. Here again we see the same confusion of ideas, the arches of the octagon, and the semi-circular niches being quite classic, while the doors of the rooms have the same Tudor moulding as is seen below.

It seems clear, from a study of the place, that however much of the building may have been done in the lifetime of Sir Charles Cavendish, the interior was either finished or modified by his successor. Many classes of craftsmen have evidently been employed, and it would be interesting to find the place of origin of the notable fireplaces. Were they the result of Smithson's studies in Italy, were they designed and carried out by foreigners, or were they produced by the marble workers of Nottingham or Chellaston?

A doorway in the principal staircase, fitted with a heavily moulded oak door, leads out to the top of the old Bailey wall, which forms a broad walk round the garden. The top of the wall is now asphalted and the battlement which the drawings show has been removed. The bailey has been laid out as a garden, treated formally so far as its irregular outline would permit, with beech hedges and an octagonal fountain, in the centre of which is a pedestal of the curious circular rusticated columns which appear so often in the later buildings, and carrying a figure of

Venus rising from the bath. The wall of the fountain finishes with a battlemented coping, another of Smithson's idiosyncrasies. A doorway has been formed in the wall to give a direct axial line from the centre of the house to the great door of the Riding school, but owing to the wall at this point not being parallel to the house the doorway is cut on the skew, with very peculiar effect. The wall itself has been refaced, and recesses for seats have been cut into it in several places ; on the south side a summer house has been formed, with three vaulted rooms fitted with fireplaces. A lodge built against the outside of the wall at its northern end is clearly contemporary with the gabled portion of the terrace buildings, referred to below, but whether this was earlier or later than the other features of the garden treatment is most difficult to determine. From the south-west end of the wall an approach is carried by a pointed arch across to the later terrace building. The formation of the walls at this spot is suggestive of mediæval work, though the arch itself, if it is a survival of the old castle, appears to have been reconstructed. There is, however, a distinct piece of ancient walling, which may be seen in the photograph of the house and lodges. Another small fragment may be found outside the walls against the little lodge on the north side of the bailey.

The scale of the castle evidently did not accord with the ambitions of Sir William Cavendish, and very soon after he came into the property he set about building an entirely new house on a much more spacious plan. This was the block now forming the northern end of the great terrace building. Though extensive in its planning it is very simply treated externally, with deeply recessed mullioned windows, and the curved and pedimented gables that were so popular a feature in the early Stuart period. Near the ground on the east side, on small projecting stones about 7 ins. square, are cut

M.G., MW,
1629 1630

and ^{EL}₁₆₃₀, and on similar stones on the west are ^{H S}₁₆₂₉ and

^{C D.}₁₆₂₉ The initials H.S. have been assumed to be those of the architect, Huntingdon Smithson, and Mr. Goulding suggests that the others are those of masons employed on the work; from their haphazard and insignificant positions they could hardly allude to any members of the owner's family. The walls at this part are sprinkled with these little stones, which give a suggestion of having been inserted to fill the putlog holes, though why they should project from the face of the wall is hard to say. It may be noted that in the Riding house block the putlog holes, as was frequently the case in mediæval work, have never been filled in.

In the basement of this building are kitchens and offices, with a pillar of similar design to those in the older house, though in most of the details a considerable departure from the previous treatment is noticeable. But throughout the whole of the work at Bolsover the architect appears to have lacked definite ideals, and there appears a general want of cohesion, not only in the different portions of the building, but also in the details of the several parts, though certain characteristic features, as is almost inevitable, run through the whole.

The principal room on the ground floor is a very large hall, lighted from one side with mullioned windows, with a large fireplace in the opposite wall decorated with the exaggerated rustications of which Smithson seems at this time to have become enamoured.

Dr. Pegge assigns a room in this building as a chapel. On his plan, which shows the basement floor, he gives no name to the two rooms at the north end, but states, "over these was the chapel with a door to the terrace." The position seems quite a likely one for this purpose, but there is nothing in either the external or internal treatment to suggest that it was built with that intention.

On the western side of this block, facing the terrace, it seems clear that considerable modifications must have been made in the design when the Long Gallery was commenced.

The Earl of Newcastle was an enthusiastic horseman, and while occupied with his own house he erected on the south east side of the court-yard a great block of buildings comprising stables, smithy, and riding house. This is architecturally the most pleasing portion of the whole group. The long range of dormer windows, and the eaves carried on boldly projecting corbels are effectively treated, though the great doorways are crude and coarse in detail, with huge rusticated blocks, projecting some 5 ins. from the face of the wall. The sandstone in which the decorative features are carried out is in some places badly perished, as elsewhere in the buildings, but the Bolsover limestone of which the walls are built is as good as on the day when it was worked, and its treatment, possibly unintentional, in broad and thin courses very pleasant, while the roof of Derbyshire "grey slate" completes a delightful harmony of colouring.

The Riding school is a fine hall, measuring 90 ft. 6 ins. by 30 ft. 6 ins., and of a dignified height, with an open timber roof of almost mediæval appearance, showing the persistence of traditional design and construction. A triple opening, now blocked up, in the northern end suggests a gallery for spectators to view the feats of horsemanship.

The house was completed by the erection of the great range of buildings along the terrace. These are now so ruinous that it is difficult to reconstruct their internal arrangements. Their scale is so vast, and their arrangements apparently so unsuited for family life that one is tempted to suppose that their object was rather to provide for the sumptuous entertainments which were given to the royal master who conferred such a shower of titles upon their owner. A huge doorway leads from the court-

yard directly into a large room, called by Dr. Pegge the saloon, connected with which are two drawing rooms. In rear of these, and facing the terrace, with a glorious view over the vale of Scarsdale, is the Long Gallery, the dominant feature, and evidently the *raison d'être* of the whole scheme. This gallery measures 214 ft. by 22 ft. 9 ins and had it been better designed it would have been, when suitably furnished, a truly regal apartment. Though level with the saloon and the courtyard on the eastern side, it is a considerable height above the terrace, from which it is approached by a double flight of steps. The architecture is of the most amazing description. To what extent the state rooms, and the buildings at their northern end were carried out together it is difficult now to say, but it seems clear that they were not designed as a whole. The character of the work is well seen in the reproduction of Mr. Widdow's excellent photograph. The pilasters, formed of half columns, heavily rusticated, with weird looking volutes at the top, and beginning and ending in nothing, are perhaps its most peculiar feature, and the general effect must have been even more eccentric when the battlemented parapets, which are shown both in Buck's and in Dr. Pegge's views, and of which parts still remain, were in perfect condition.

Concerning the pilasters, Dr. Pegge states that their intention was to represent cannon, and urges this as further proof that the building was erected after the Parliamentary Wars. The theory is ingenious, and the resemblance undeniable, but the idea seems too fanciful to be worth serious consideration, and the same motif occurs in the gate piers, fountain, &c.

The state rooms are of such lofty proportions that they occupy the whole height of the building, which was finished with a flat roof. A doorway formed in one of the gables of the first portion of the house appears to have given access to this roof, which was probably intended to be used as a promenade.

The great doorway leading into the courtyard may well have been one of the additions made after the Restoration ; it is flanked by Corinthian columns in a less ponderous style than the other parts of the work, which columns, however, support nothing but their own entablatures ; above is a broken pediment with a coat of arms and supporters, now much defaced, bearing a ducal coronet (the marquis was created Duke of Newcastle in 1665) and the family motto "Cavendo Tutus."

We learn from Mr. Goulding's book that "much furniture (including 27 bedsteads) was in the castle in 1717, when an Inventory was taken after the death of Margaret Duchess of Newcastle, which had occurred in 1716, but about 1740-1750, in the time of the Countess of Oxford, the furniture and pictures were removed to Welbeck, the buildings on the terrace were dismantled and unroofed, and the lead was taken to Welbeck to cover the 'Oxford Wing' which the countess was engaged in erecting."

From a point near the castle gate a public footpath traverses the steep western face of the hill a few feet below its summit, circling the town, and joining the main road close to the commencement of the town ditch. On this path are four little buildings usually known, and marked on the ordnance survey as Watch Towers. These are built entirely of stone, and are about 4 ft. square internally, with walls 18 ins. thick, finished with steeply pitched roofs carried by barrel vaults, with moulded copings and kneelers. They are entered by low doors, about 1 ft 8 ins. by 4 ft., on the town side, and have small windows overlooking the valley and over the doorheads.

Mr. Hamilton Gray says that over the door of one appears to have been the date 1622 or 1642. I could not find this date. If 1642 is the correct reading, the year of the outbreak of the parliamentary war, the idea that they were built as watch towers is possible, though one would hardly

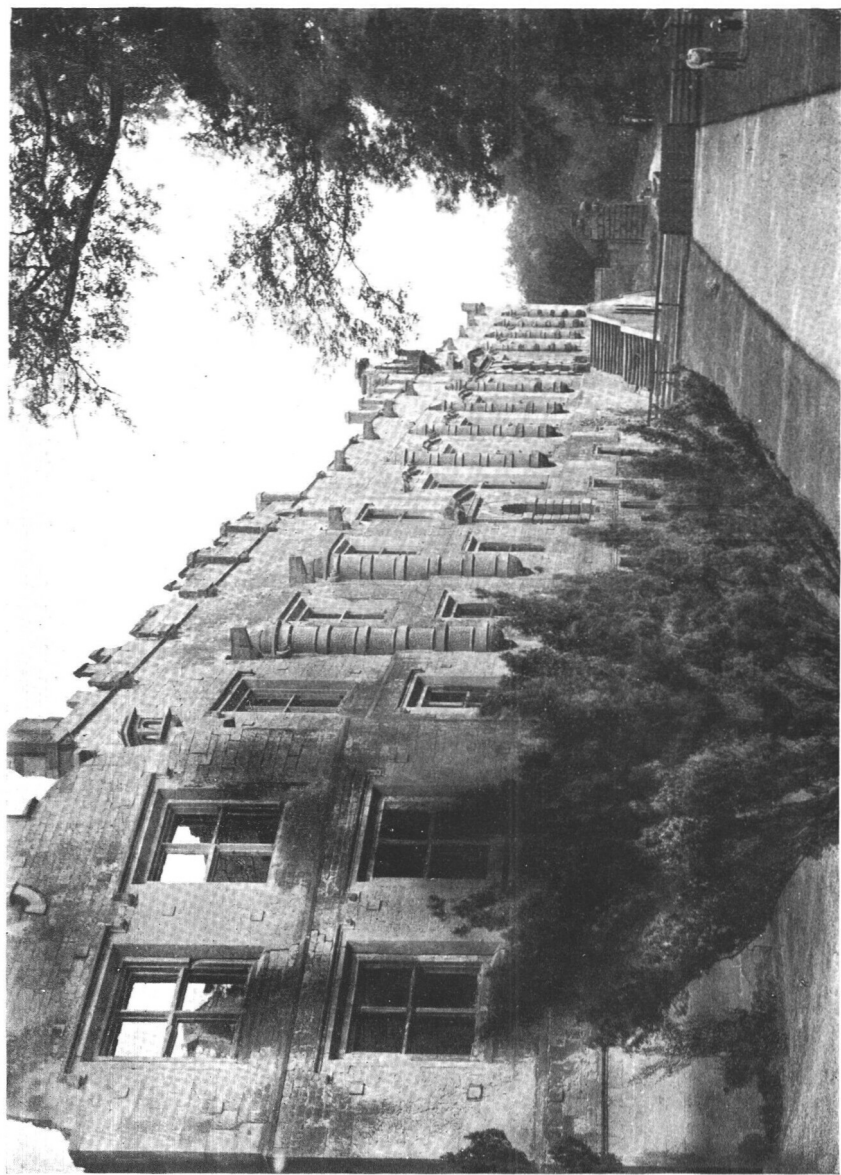


Photo. by G. H. Widdows.

BOLSOVER CASTLE.—THE TERRACE.

expect work of so permanent character for such a purpose at that time. Dr. Pegge says that he was told by an old man that they were conduits to convey water to the castle from a spring at Spital Green and that his father took up some of the lead pipes. Is it possible that they contained cisterns for the use of the towns people? Outlets are cut through the walls near the ground level which might have served as overflows for such cisterns, or might on the other hand be intended merely to drain the floors.

In the centre of each roof is a square opening. Hall, dismissing on account of the small size of the buildings the suggestion that these were chimneys, says that "they were probably for the conveyance of intelligence by signals."¹ The window openings are grooved for glazing.

The *raison d'être* of these little buildings is a puzzle, but the idea that they were conduit houses seems much more likely than that of watch towers.

Our studies of Bolsover would be incomplete without a word concerning the designers of the buildings. It is very rarely that we can find the names of the architects of the noble buildings of the middle ages, and though it is inconceivable that they can have been planned and executed without the control and direction of a master mind, yet probably the work, and the design of most of the details was carried out by the craft guilds, and both masters and operatives were content to leave their memorial only in their works. But with the advance of the age of individualism the architect, as we now know him, became a necessity, and the master craftsmen sink inevitably into a subordinate position. Probably one of the earliest uses of the term architect in this country occurs in John Schute's book "The first and chief groundes of Architecture," published in 1563, in which the author describes himself as "Paynter and Archytecte." Of Bolsover, Dr. Pegge says, "Huntingdon Smithson, living

¹ *History of Chesterfield*, p. 485.

at Bolsover, 1601, was the architect ; and a ground-plan by him of the grand building, different from that which was afterwards executed ; another plan of the offices ; and a third of the *little house* as he calls it, meaning the structure we are speaking of ; are in the hands of the Rev. D'Ewes Coke, of Broke-hill, purchased by him at Lord Byron's sale, 1778 or 1779—to judge from the first of the above plans the grand building must have been intended, and perhaps by Sir Charles, many years before it was begun ; and indeed that was reason sufficient for postponing it till after the Restoration.”¹

A complete list of the Smithson drawings at Brookhill is given by Mr. J. A. Gotch in the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, for November 21st, 1908, from which it appears that unfortunately only one of the Bolsover plans, that of the offices, is still in existence.

Rhodes states, “ Huntingdon Smithson, an architect who has been honoured with notice of Horace Walpole, is understood to have furnished the designs for Bolsover Castle, but did not live to witness its erection. He collected his materials from Italy, where he was sent by the Duke of Newcastle for the purpose,”²

Walpole's reference to Smithson is as follows—“ John Smithson was an architect in the service of the Earls of Newcastle. He built part of Welbeck in 1604, the riding house there in 1623, and the stables in 1625, and when William Cavendish, Earl, and afterwards Duke of Newcastle, proposed to repair and make great additions to Bolsover Castle, Smithson, it is said, was sent to Italy to collect designs. From there I suppose it was that the noble apartments erected by that Duke, and lately pulled down, was completed, Smithson dying in 1648. Many of Smithson's drawings were purchased by the late Lord Byron from his descendants who lived at Bolsover, in the

¹ *History of Bolsover and Peak Castles*, p. 17.

² *Peak Scenery*, p. 357.

chancel of which church Smithson is buried, with this inscription."¹

There appear to have been at least three bearers of the name of Smithson, all engaged as architects or master builders, a fact which has caused some confusion. Robert Smythson, "Architecte to the most noble House of Wollaton" died in 1614 and lies buried at Wollaton Church. Huntingdon Smithson was living at Bolsover in 1601,² and was buried there in 1648, and it seems likely that he superintended, at anyrate, a great part of the works there. Hall refers to stones on the west end, marked H.S. 1629, and G.D. 1629, of which the former, he says, can hardly bear any other interpretation than the initials of the architect. There does not seem to be much ground for Hall's statement that he did not live to see the completion of the work,³ for it is scarcely likely that much work, excepting such additions as may have been made after the Restoration, would be done in the troublous times after 1648. But this might probably be true if the reference was to John Smithson.

Walpole speaks of John Smithson, referring to which Dr. Pegge writes that he is "there by mistake called John." Mr. Gotch however points out that many of the drawings in the Brookhill collection are signed by John Smithson. If this John is the son of Huntingdon, he may have copied the drawings and signed them with his own name as draughtsman; he could hardly have assisted his father in the work as he was only ten years old at the time of the latter's death.

Mr. Goulding however shows that the earlier work at Bolsover, built by Sir Charles Cavendish, was carried out by John Smithson, the father of Huntingdon, who was buried at Bolsover on November 16th, 1634, and considers it probable that he designed the riding school.

¹ Walpoles' *Anecdotes of Painters*.

² Hall's *History of Chesterfield*.

³ *History of Chesterfield*, p. 479.

“ A roll of the building charges at Bolsover Castle, extending from November 1612 to March 1614, is in the Duke of Portland's possession, and the handwriting of the marginal notes appears to be the same as that found upon Smithson's Welbeck plans, dated 1622 and 1623, in the collection of the late Col. W. L. Coke, of Brookhill Hall.”¹ This John Smithson designed the riding school at Welbeck in 1623, and Mr. Goulding tells me that there was formerly an inscription on that building “ Jo. Smithson Curatore ” Huntingdon Smithson may probably have been associated with his father in the later stages of the work, and was very likely solely responsible for the long gallery building.

Dr. Pegge however has some justification for the statement that the name of John in Walpole's book is a mistake, for the reference to Smithson in that work concludes with a transcription of the epitaph of Huntingdon. In the edition of Walpole's book by Ralph N. Wornum, published, 1862, is a note as follows “ His son, John Smithson died in 1678, who, it is certain, followed his father's profession.” The date of the death of the younger John Smithson is recorded in Bolsover Church as 1716. If he carried out any work at Bolsover it can only have been that done after the Restoration.

It can scarcely be contended that the Smithsons were architects of refinement or great imagination, nor that they rose to their opportunity ; let us hope that the work satisfied their ambitious patron. On a stone slab, now placed against the south wall of Bolsover Church, the memorial of Huntingdon and that of his son is recorded, in one of those flamboyant epitaphs with which protestantism displaced the humble “ orate pro anima ” of a less self sufficient age.

¹ *Bolsover Castle*, R. W. Goulding, p. 4.

Reader beneath this plaine stone buried ly
 Smithsons remainders of mortality
 Whose skill in architecture did deserve
 A fairer tombe his memry to preserve
 But since his nobler gifts of piety
 To God to men justice and charity
 Are gone to Heaven a building to prepare
 Not made with hands his friends contented are
 He here shall rest in hope till th world shall burne
 And intermingle ashes with his urne

Huntingdon Smithson

Gent.

Obiit IXbris 27, 1648

Here also lies ye body of John Smithson
 son of ye said Huntingdon Smithson
 who died February the 24th, 1716. aged 78 years.

In conclusion a list of the books consulted during the writing of this paper may be of interest.

The Life of the Thrice Noble High and Puissant Prince William Cavendish, Duke, Marquis and Earl of Newcastle, by Margaret Duchess of Newcastle, should be read by all who wish to understand and appraise Bolsover Castle, as a study of the life and character of the man with whose name it will ever be vitally associated, but as previously noticed, it makes scarcely any reference to the buildings; such was not the purpose of the writer.

Bray's *Sketch of a Tour into Derbyshire and Yorkshire*, 1777, appears to be the earliest work containing a history and description of the castle. The buildings at that date seem to have been in much the same condition as we now see them.

Dr. Pegge's *History of Bolsover and Peak Castles*, 1785, is a detailed and careful study of both the history and buildings, and appears to be the foundation on which almost all subsequent writings were based, but the theories which he draws from his studies are of very uncertain

value. The book contains several quaint and most interesting wood-cuts.

Pilkington's *View of the present state of Derbyshire*, 1789., The Rev. D. P. Davies' *Historical and Descriptive view of Derbyshire*, 1811, and the Derbyshire volume of Lysons' *Magna Britannia*, 1817, contain the history and short descriptions of the building.

The Rev. G. Hall's *History of Chesterfield*, first published in 1822, and re-issued in 1839, has an interesting chapter on Bolsover and a good engraving of the castle.

Dugdale's *England and Wales delineated* has a short account and two charming steel engravings.

Rhodes' *Peak Scenery*, 1824, and Glover's *History of the County of Derby* contain accounts of the castle, neither of which contribute any original matter.

The Rev. J. Hamilton Gray's handbook *Bolsover Castle*, gives a useful, if rather gossipy account of the place, but his theories with regard to the building will not accord with his own facts.

By far the most valuable and accurate of the works on Bolsover is a pamphlet by Mr. R. W. Goulding, librarian at Welbeck, 2nd ed., 1914, which also contains reprints of Van Diepenbeke's drawing of the Marquis of Newcastle at Bolsover, 1658, and of Buck's view of the castle, 1727.

Mr. J. A. Gotch's *Early Renaissance Architecture in England*, has a plan and view of the earlier house, and illustrations of two of the fireplaces. A paper by the same author, published in the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* for November, 21st, 1908, contains a review and complete list of the Smithson drawings in the Brookhill collection.

Carefully measured drawings of the castle, with very full details, by Mr. T. W. Gregory, appeared in *The British Architect*, in April, 1903.

Bolsover is now little more than a picturesque ruin. We must all, particularly the members of our Society,

feel grateful to its noble owner for the care with which it is preserved and the freedom with which we are permitted to enjoy it. Seen on a bright spring day the mellow tones of the stonework and the soft greens of the foliage and well-kept turf combine to form many pleasant pictures. To the historian and the student of sociology the spot is one of absorbing interest. Yet, nevertheless, the buildings are full of disappointment, and to lovers of architecture almost depressing. They record in stone the story of one of the most interesting, though most unfortunate periods of English history. While the sympathies of many of us will always incline strongly to the Royalist Party, we cannot fail to see how utterly King Charles and his advisers failed to judge the temper of the people and to realise the changes which were taking place in the ideals of national government. The assumption by the Tudor sovereign of the headship of the Church was leading inevitably to the overthrow of both Church and Crown. The lavish expenditure by the Marquis of Newcastle in 1633, in providing frivolous entertainment for the king and his court must have been a cause of irritation to the growing puritanical and revolutionary party. Yet at the king's own request it was repeated on a still more extravagant scale in the following year. The coarse and licentious paintings which decorate some of the rooms at Bolsover would give some justification to puritan fanaticism.

The architecture of Bolsover seems to reflect the spirit of the time. There was doubtless much coarseness and brutality during the time that the glorious buildings of the middle ages were carried out, but it remained for the culture of the Renaissance to introduce for the first time the element of vulgarity into architecture; recent events seem to show that even brutality is not incompatible with culture. In the Elizabethan times architecture was saved from total degradation by the exuberant vitality of the period, but the apparently instinctive love of beauty

which had prevailed in a more simple age was passing out of the hands of the people (though it lingered long where traditional methods persisted in the rural districts) and architecture was ceasing to be a living art, except when controlled by men of scholarship and refinement, and the buildings and decorations at Bolsover give a true reflection of the conflicting and chaotic aspirations and ideas of the times. An immense sum of money was expended, and much skill and ingenuity on the part of architect and craftsmen went to the building of the house, yet the spirit of the place is that of ostentation rather than dignity, and accords with the temper which would accept the shower of titles which was poured upon its owner. In Pepys' diary we find the following caustic comment on the Duchess of Newcastle's biography, "Thence home, and there in favour to my eyes staid at home reading the ridiculous History of my lord Newcastle, wrote by his wife; which shows her to be a mad, conceited, ridiculous woman, and he an asse to suffer her to write what she writes to him and of him." Samuel Pepys was perhaps apt to be censorious and the trouble with his eyes may have ruffled his temper, but this contemporary criticism of the man of so many titles is not altogether unworthy of consideration when we try to form a true estimate of his building. If one wanted to point a moral, either sociological or architectural, one might find it in the fact that his work was so transitory that less than 150 years after the building of the house its history was so far forgotten that Dr. Pegge came to the conclusion that it had never been finished.

NOTE.—Our thanks are due to Mr. G. H. Widdows for the excellent photographs, which were taken specially for this article. The accompanying plan is intended only to show the relative positions of the various parts of the building and their successive development: the dimensions, though approximately accurate, have not been taken with minute precision.