

A NOTE ON WINGFIELD MANOR HOUSE.

By W. H. HANBURY, F.G.S.

THE Manor of Wingfield (or Winfield) was granted by William the Conqueror to William Peverel.

After passing through several families it came into possession of Ralph Lord Cromwell in 1440, who, in 1443 was appointed Treasurer of the Exchequer by Henry VI, and a year later was made Master of the Royal Hounds and Falcons, Constable of the King's Castle of Nottingham, and Keeper of the Forest of Sherwood.

Cromwell began to build the Manor House of Wingfield between 1440 and 1445. He died in 1455, when the manor passed into possession of John Talbot 2nd Earl of Shrewsbury, who had purchased it from Cromwell during his lifetime.

Considering the time work had been in progress, the house must have been nearly, if not quite, finished when the Earl of Shrewsbury came into possession. There are, however, in the Talbot Archives, accounts for lime, and other building material, used at Wingfield, which show that building was carried on there during 1456-8. The work must have been finished in 1458, as the Earl was in residence before the end of that year.

This Note is an attempt to account for the building which took place after the Earl of Shrewsbury came into possession.

Some years ago an eminent authority on Archæology

and Architecture expressed the opinion that — “ it is possible that the first kitchen buildings may have been planned at the dais end of the hall, . . . whether this was the original arrangement or not, the kitchen block west of the great chamber was an addition made probably a few years after the original building of the house.”¹

Prolonged and careful consideration of this problem leads me to suggest that the kitchen has always occupied its present position. There were, however, alterations and additions made later.

The kitchen is in the position in relation to the rest of the house usually assigned to it at the time that the house was built.

The great fire-place is an integral part of the original outer wall of the house.

Between the kitchen and the rest of the building further east, there appears to have been an open court, or kitchen-yard, on which windows looked out, as shown in the photograph. These windows would be rendered useless when the supplementary kitchen was built.

There is clear evidence that the walls left unshaded on the plan were inserted after the original building was finished. All have straight joints, that is, they are not bonded in to the original walls. The upper part of the north wall of the supplementary kitchen had to be splayed so as to miss the top window.

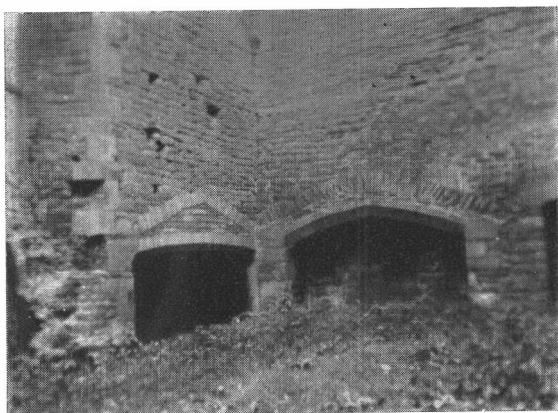
The additional walls were not only carelessly set out, they are of inferior workmanship. This is noticeable, for instance, in the perfunctory manner in which the relieving arch is inserted above the doorway which was broken through the kitchen wall to give access to the “ service room.”

It is obvious that the additional work was hurriedly carried out, and several features suggest that the builders were other than those employed by Cromwell.

¹ *Military Architecture in England during the Middle Ages* p. 351.

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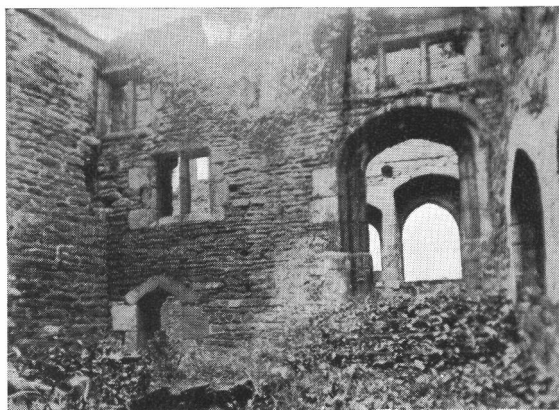
PLATE II.



I



2



3

It is suggested that when the house came into possession of the Earl of Shrewsbury he found that the kitchen accommodation was inadequate to serve the needs of his family and retainers.

To provide additional accommodation two large ovens, 8 ft. 6 in. in diameter, were built at the north end of the kitchen (A on the plan). The wall containing the ovens was most inconveniently placed, as it restricted access to the great fire-place. Moreover, for no apparent reason, it is not parallel with the north wall of the kitchen.

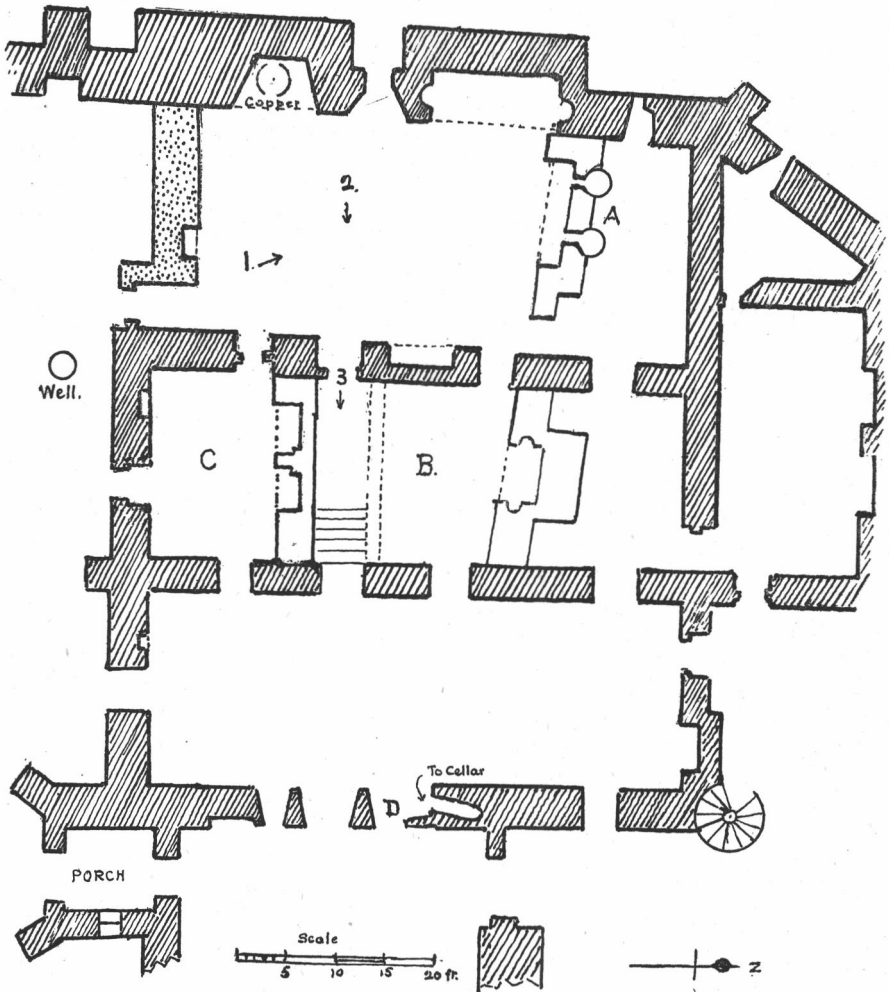
The original kitchen-yard was utilized to build a supplementary kitchen, B, and what was probably a "dishing-up" place, or service-room, C, with two large service-hatches opening on the passage from the kitchen to the hall.

On Ferrey's plan, published in 1870, this room is curiously named "Buttery-Hatch." There is ground for assuming that the buttery was in its usual position next the screens, from which access would be obtained by the door at D. Just inside this doorway is a stair, in the thickness of the wall, leading down to the great cellar beneath the hall, where the stock of wine and beer would be kept, and from which the buttery could be conveniently supplied.

Whatever may have been the function of room C it is improbable that two large hatches would be required solely for the purpose of serving "liquid refreshment."

The alterations in the fabric made by Immanuel Halton in the 17th century are somewhat confusing, but they do not seriously affect the kitchen quarters. It may be, however, that the south wall of the kitchen was re-built by Halton. It is well constructed, but is not bonded in to the original walls of the kitchen.

It is interesting to record that a well has recently been discovered near the entrance to the kitchen from the inner court. There is no record of a well in this position,



H A L L

WINGFIELD MANOR—Plan of Kitchens.

and its existence was unsuspected until a subsidence occurred.

On investigation it was found that the well had long ago been filled in and covered. It has not yet been completely cleared out, but already fragments of coarse 16th century pottery have been recovered.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

1. View from point 1 on the plan, showing the great fireplace, and alcove in front of the ovens.
2. View from point 2 showing original kitchen doorway into the yard, and the passage from the kitchen to the hall, with service hatches on the right.
The recess on the left and the door-way on the right are later additions.
3. View from point 3 showing windows overlooking original kitchen-yard, and the splayed wall in the top left-hand corner.