

# WINCHESTER HOUSE, SOUTHWARK

BY

SIDNEY TOY, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.

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IN the course of a visit to Southwark paid by the Surrey Archaeological Society in the Summer of 1943 the attention of the writer was called particularly to the remains of Winchester House, the Town house of the Bishops of Winchester from the beginning of the 12th century to the middle of the 17th century. In view of the present condition and uncertain future of these remains it appeared eminently desirable that an accurate record of them should be made while the opportunity of doing so existed. The rose window in the gable had not been opened up for a hundred and twenty years, and although fairly good drawings of it were made and published shortly after the fire of 1814, nothing was known of its present condition, nor was it even certain that it still existed behind the brick infilling of the circular stone framework.

In January, 1944, with the consent of the authorities concerned and under the direction of the writer, the brick infilling of the rose window was cut away in three places and after careful measurements had been made and photographs taken was closed up again. Subsequently a thorough survey of the remaining mediæval walls was made, and the object of this paper is to put on record the results of that survey; the history of the House, amply dealt with elsewhere, is given in brief outline only.

The site, slightly to the north-west of Southwark Cathedral, was acquired from Bermondsey Abbey by William Giffard, Bishop of Winchester 1100-35, who built an episcopal palace there. Among other incidents recorded as occurring in this first house is the visit of the citizens of London to interview Peter de Roches, Bishop of Winchester 1204-38, relative to their quarrel with Henry III. During the vacancy following Peter de Roches's death in 1238 the King lent the house to Simon de Montfort.

About 1280 the house was largely rebuilt. The outer walls of the great hall and of the domestic offices to the west of the great hall were probably retained in substance during these alterations, but the windows and doorways in them were entirely reformed and the interiors completely remodelled; all the existing details are of about 1280. As reformed, the house consisted of ranges built round a rectangular courtyard with the main gateway on the south and the great hall in the north range; a wide terrace facing the Thames on the north side of the hall. The great hall (Fig. 1) rose to the full height of the range and was covered by an open timber roof; it was lighted on either side and on the east by tall

traciated windows and on the west by a magnificent rose window, placed high up in the west gable. The main entrance doorway, at the south-west, was probably approached through a porch, itself reached by steps up from the courtyard, and gave admittance to the "screens." A group of three doorways in the west wall gave access, that in the middle to the kitchen, the others respectively to the larder and pantry. There was a cellar beneath the whole of this north range.

It is not possible, through want of sufficient data, to describe the house in any further detail, but as reconstructed in the 13th century it was clearly a structure of considerable elegance and became the scene of many brilliant events. Bishop William of Wykeham lived here in 1376-77. In 1408 Henry Beaufort, Bishop

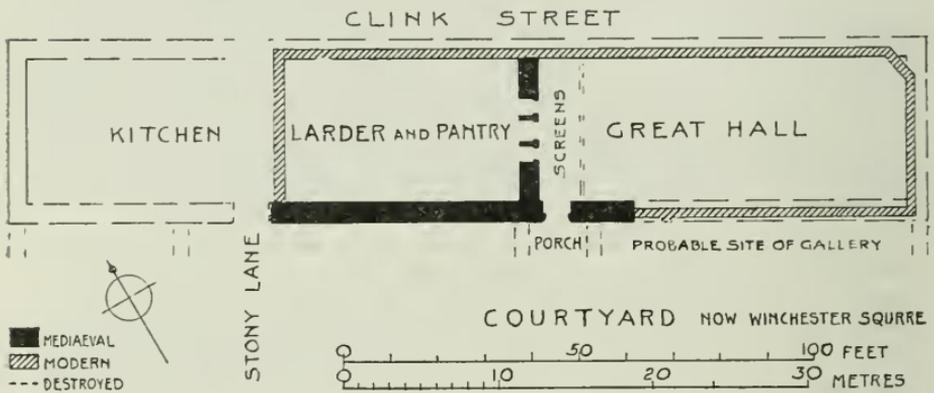
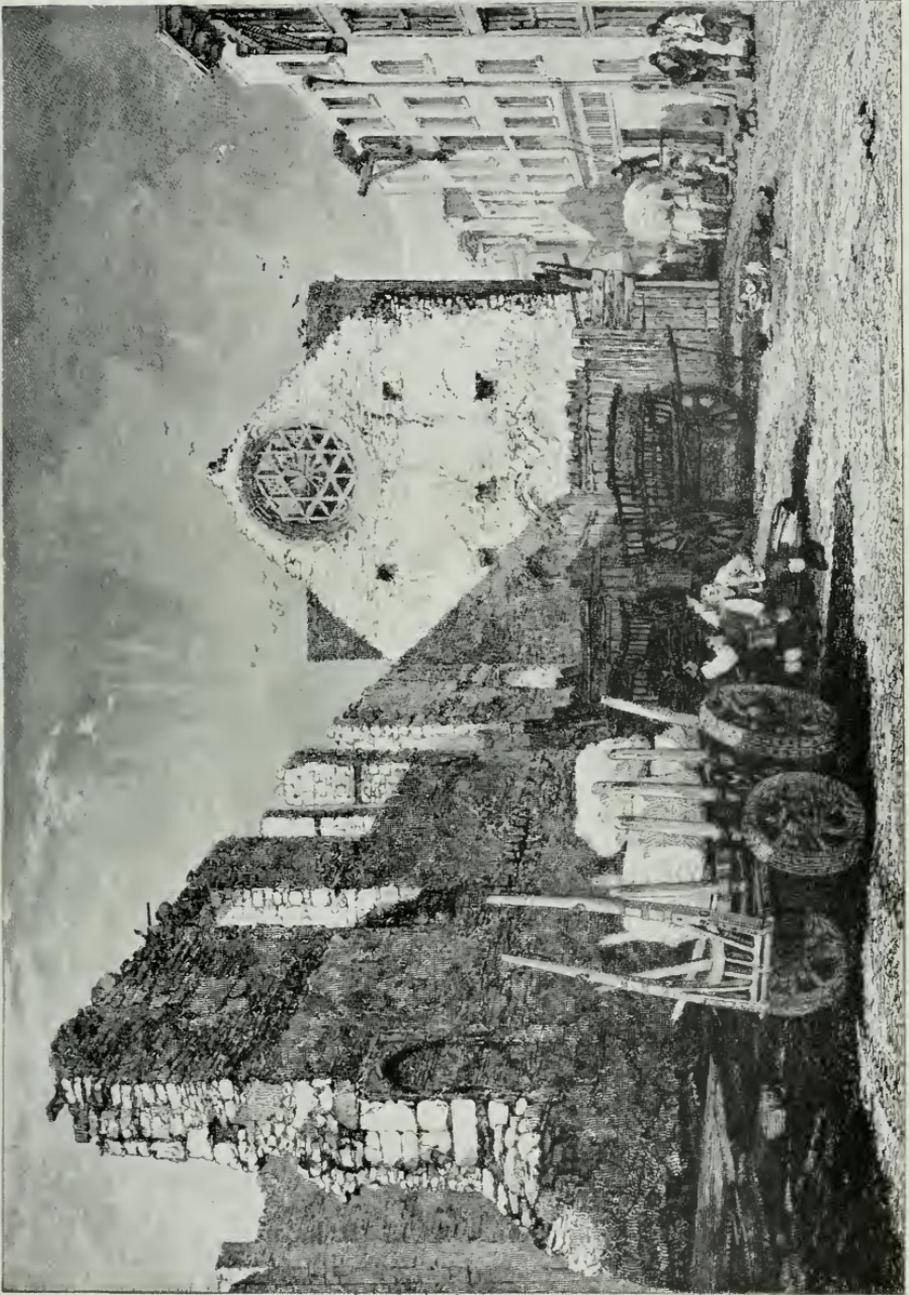


FIG. 1.—WINCHESTER HOUSE, SOUTHWARK: PLAN OF GREAT HALL, KITCHEN AND OFFICES.  
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of Winchester, and afterwards Cardinal, entertained Henry IV here, and in 1424 the house was chosen for the marriage feast of James I of Scotland with Beaufort's niece Joan. In 1451, during the episcopacy of William of Waynflete, reference is made to an apartment in the house called the Paynted Chamber.

Considerable alterations were carried out in the 16th century, probably by Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester 1531-55, the work including the complete remodelling of the domestic quarters west of the great hall, apparently raising them to about the same height as the hall and thereby covering over the west side of the rose window. During Gardiner's suspension, in the reign of Edward VI, the house was in the possession of the Marquis of Northampton, who built the gallery. On his restoration under Mary, Gardiner gave a sumptuous dinner here to the Spanish ambassadors and the members of the Queen's Council. Between 1559 and 1560 John, Duke of Finland, ambassador of the King of Sweden, resided at Winchester House, which was then said to have

PLATE III



WINCHESTER HOUSE, SOUTHWARK: THE GREAT HALL, LOOKING WEST.  
*Engraving by George Cooke after a Drawing by John Sell Cotman, 1828.*

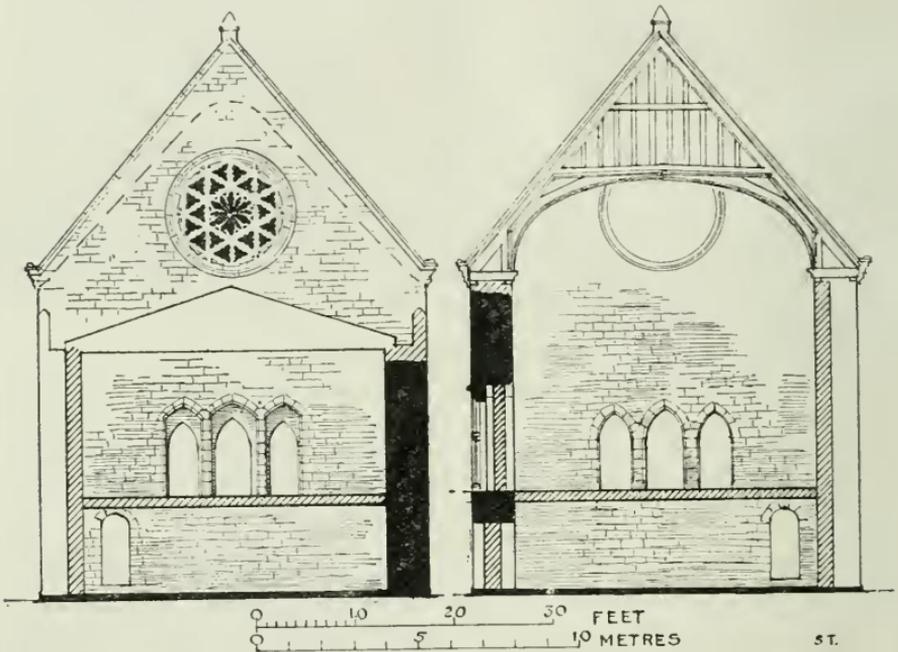
its walls hung with rich cloth of Arras, worked with gold, silver and silk. Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester 1619-26, used the house and died there.

In 1642, by Order of Parliament, the house was converted into a prison, and in 1649 it was sold for £4,380 8s. 3d. It was restored to the See in 1600, but in the meantime had become so unserviceable, part of it having been leased out in sections and the rest pulled down, that the bishops transferred their residence to Chelsea. Soon the site was covered over with small tenements and warehouses, though these buildings still incorporated the north range of the old house, including the great hall. In a deed between the Bishop of Winchester and Edward Brent, dated 1730, the property is described as "one house containing one cellar and eight upper rooms." Another deed, dated 1777, describes it as "the property formerly one house with eight upper rooms now converted into a warehouse." The rent was twenty shillings per annum and one good fat and sweet capon or three shillings in lieu thereof. There is a sequence of deeds between 1730 and 1855 and the good fat and sweet capon occurs in all of them. The deed of 1855 contains a plan of the premises bounded on the west and south by the old walls of Winchester House.

On the 13th June, 1813, measured drawings of what remained of the old palace were made by assistants from the office of Mr. George Gwilt, architect, and subsequently published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 30th May, 1814. It was most fortunate that this work was done then, for in the following year, 28th August, 1814, a fire reduced the whole block to ruins, consuming the modern walls, floors and partitions, entirely destroying the roof, and leaving exposed the old and more substantial walls (Plates III, IV). One great advantage of the survey of 1813 is that it provides a record of the roof of the great hall, of which at least one truss remained before the fire; the drawing of the truss, as published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, has been copied and is incorporated in Fig. 2. The roof appears to have been constructed in the latter part of the 14th century. It is clear that long before the fire the whole of the north wall of the range had been rebuilt on a much thinner scale and, further, that the thin wall lined with the inner face of the old wall, as does the existing wall, and not with the outer face, as suggested by Gwilt. If it lined with the outer face then the gable, rose window, and the roof truss would all be thrown out of centre and all are shown in centre on a further drawing by George Gwilt.

As one result of the fire the full extent of the remains of the old palace stood revealed, unencumbered with later buildings, and were shown to consist of practically the whole of the south wall of the north range as well as the gabled cross wall, with the windows and doorways they contained. The modern north wall had been destroyed. In the great hall, on the west were the existing rose window and group of three doorways, and on the south two doorways

and the remains of three tall windows. The doorway at the east end of the south wall was a Tudor structure ; it was said to have borne the arms of Stephen Gardiner and probably gave entrance to the Gallery. In the cellar below were two doorways and a fire-place on the south and at least one doorway on the west. The south wall of the buildings west of the great hall contained a row of tall windows and, near the middle, a wide rough archway through which Stony Lane passed.



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FIG. 2.—WINCHESTER HOUSE, SOUTHWARK: SECTIONS.

Section through kitchen offices, looking east. All openings now blocked and gable destroyed above dotted line.

Section through Great Hall, looking west. All openings are now blocked.

The warehouses were rebuilt after the fire and the whole structure is described in a surveyor's report of 1860 as consisting of two strongly built warehouses four stories in height being divided in the middle by an ancient wall reputed to be part of the Bishop's Palace of Southwark. That is much the condition in which it stands to-day, except that, through enemy action during the late war, the archway across Stony Lane and the remaining piece of the old wall west of it were destroyed and part of the warehouses east of the old gable was gutted.

At present the remains of the old palace (Plan, Fig. 1) consist of the gable wall with its rose window, group of three doorways,

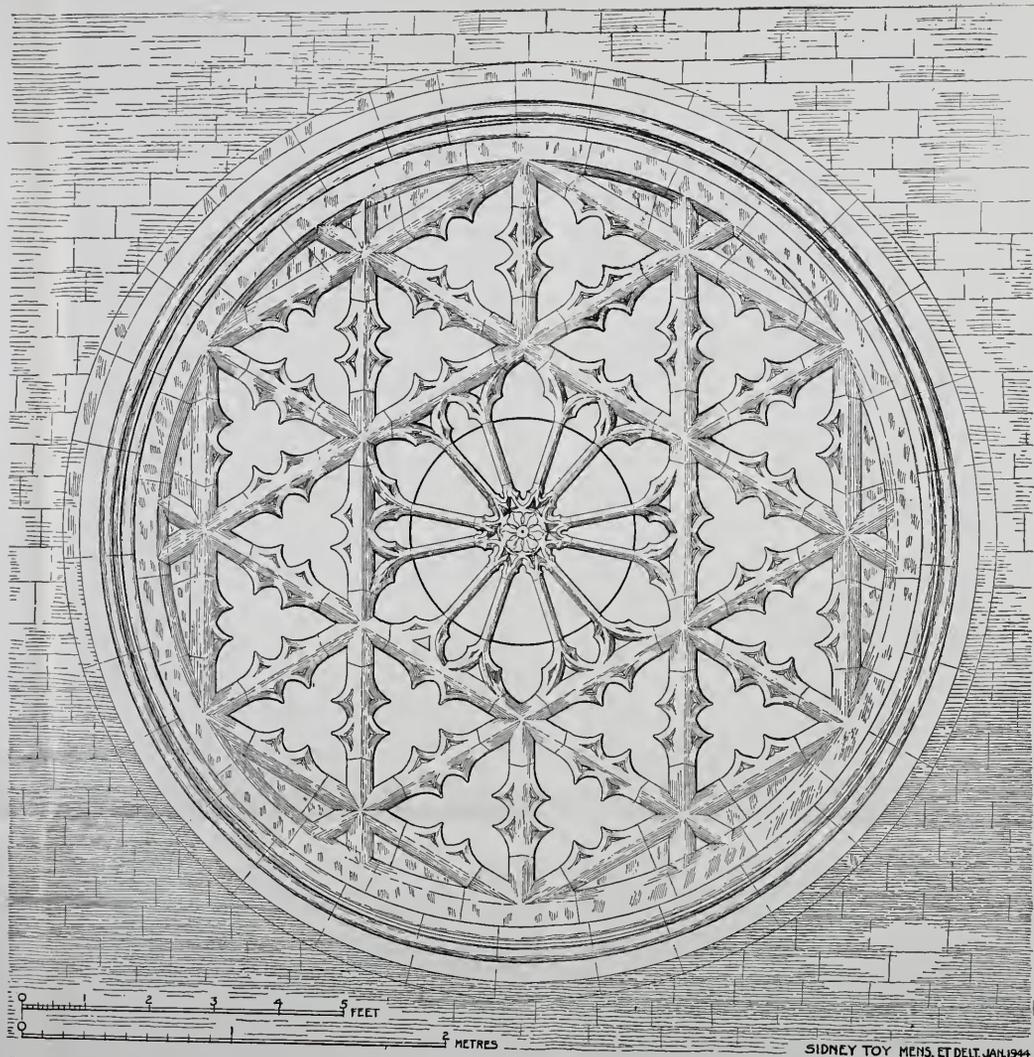


FIG. 3.—WINCHESTER HOUSE, SOUTHWARK: ROSE WINDOW (RESTORED) IN GREAT HALL.

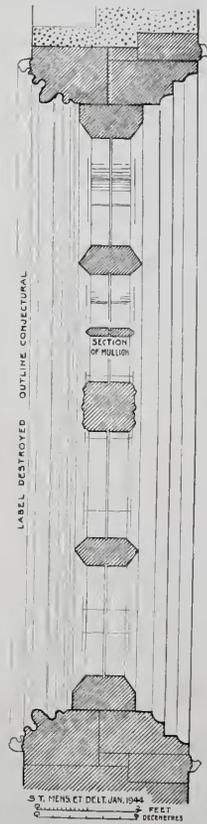
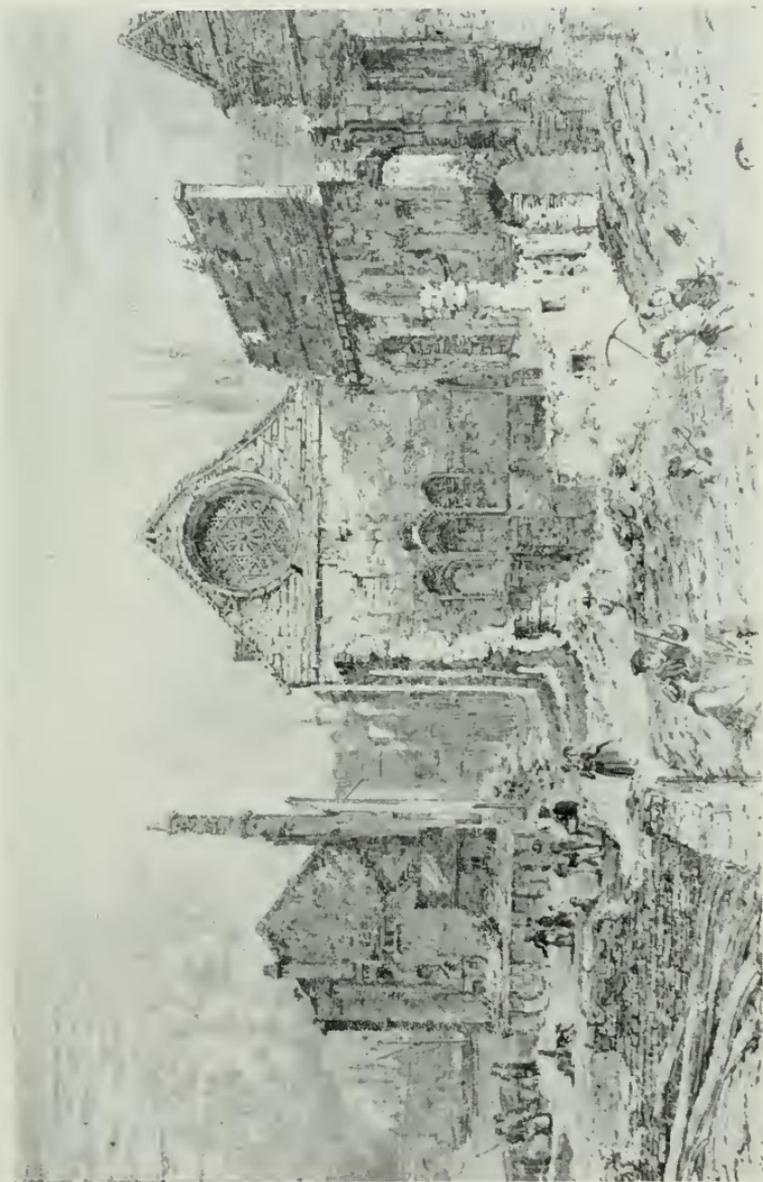


FIG. 4.—SECTION THROUGH ROSE WINDOW, LOOKING SOUTH.

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WINCHESTER HOUSE, SOUTHWARK: LOOKING EAST FROM THE KITCHEN.

*From a sketch by J. Nash in Sir Edward Coate's Collection; now in the possession of the Corporation of Wardens of St. Saviour.*

and cellar doorway, all now blocked ; a length of 22 feet, measuring from the centre of the gable wall, of the south wall of the great hall, containing the main entrance to the hall and a doorway below it to the cellar, both also blocked ; and a length of 55 feet of the south wall west of the gable in which no mediæval details are now discernible.

The rose window (Plate V, Figs. 3, 4) had been bricked up on both sides and when opened out was found to be in a dilapidated condition, blackened and cracked by fire and lacking many pieces of its tracery ; like the other remaining dressings of the hall it is of Reigate stone. In some places the stonework was sound but in others in a very friable condition, particularly about the central boss. The central part of the window must have been in a very decayed and delicate state when the window was bricked in more than a hundred years ago, for the boss was found supported on cross brickwork joining the two infilling walls and many pieces of the shafts radiating from it were missing.

The central portion of the window is hexagonal with ribs radiating from a solid boss, carved with leaf ornament ; a circular iron band, still in position, being carried round on the springing line of the cusps. The outer portion consists of a geometrical pattern of cusped triangles, formed by the intersection of straight ribs. The outer edges of the tracery are rounded off and the segments near the circumference are filled in solid. The enclosing outer ring on the hall side is richly moulded, with a keel roll in the middle, but that of the exposed face on the west is decorated with hollow chamfers only ; the labels on both sides have been destroyed. It is a rose window of unusual and particularly fine design and when in its former condition and filled with painted glass must have been one of great brilliance. Many fragments of the painted glass still remained at the time of the fire.

The groups of three doorways below the rose window had acute pointed heads towards the hall and opened out towards the kitchen offices (Fig. 2). At present, on the hall side, they are blocked flush with the wall and plastered over ; one stone, however, with a chamfered edge, is exposed and it is probable that much of the dressing still remains beneath the plaster. On the side towards the kitchen the doorways appear as three recesses with two-centred heads and chamfered jambs. The doorway through this wall in the cellar is blocked flush with the wall face and has been despoiled of whatever dressings it had. There is a second doorway shown on an old drawing, but if it exists it is now obscured.

In the remaining portion of the south wall of the great hall are a richly moulded doorway, which was the main entrance to the hall, and, below it, a doorway to the cellar ; the latter having a two-centred head and plain chamfered jambs. Both doorways are blocked. There are now no traces of windows. The main doorway (Plate VI, Fig. 5) has been mutilated and is now cut across in front by a warehouse floor, but even in its dilapidated state

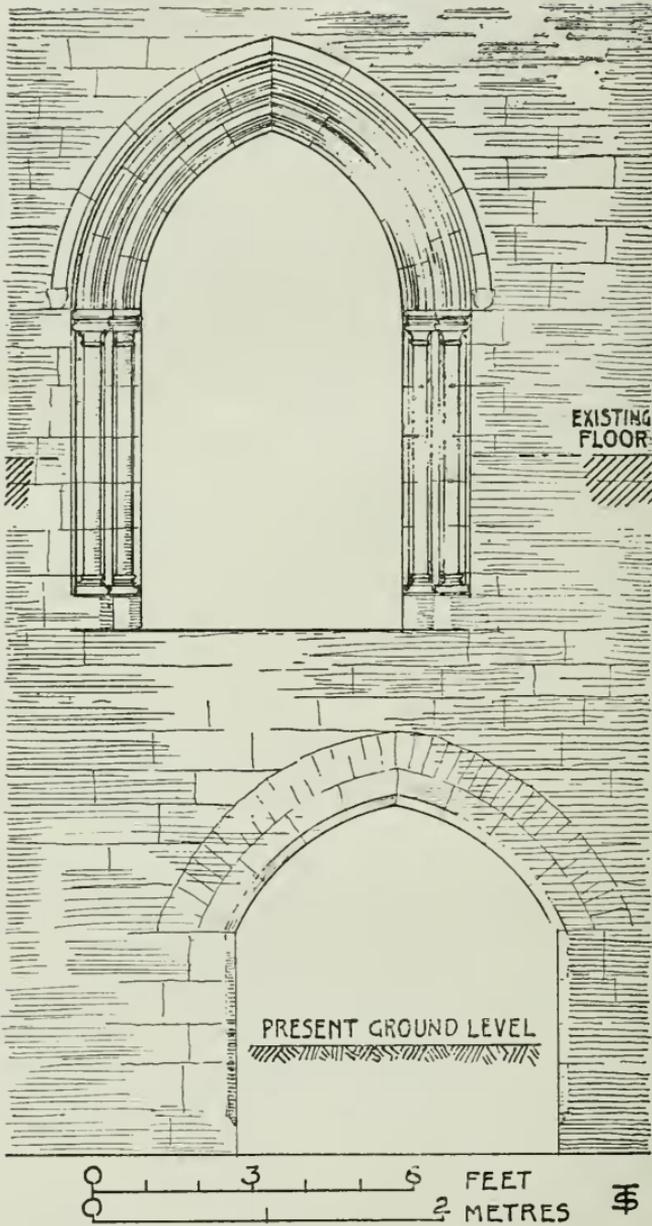
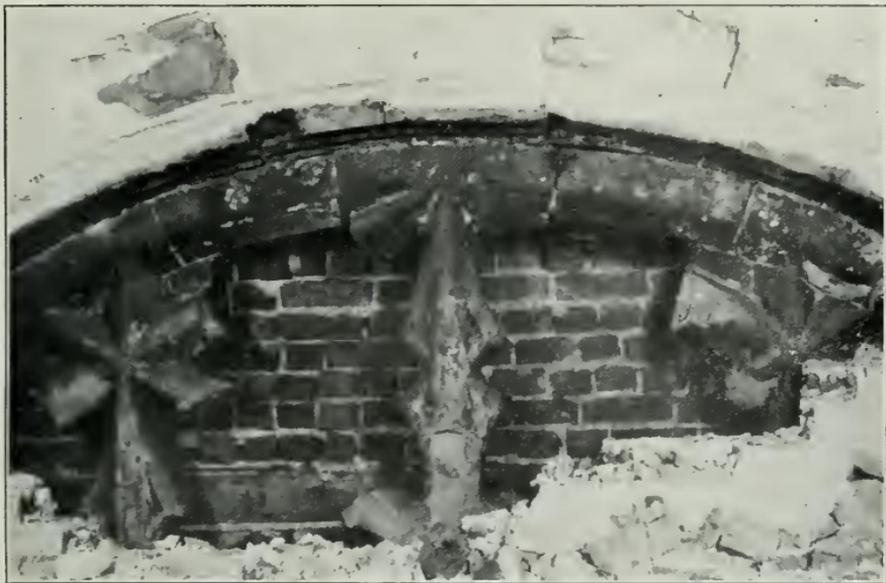
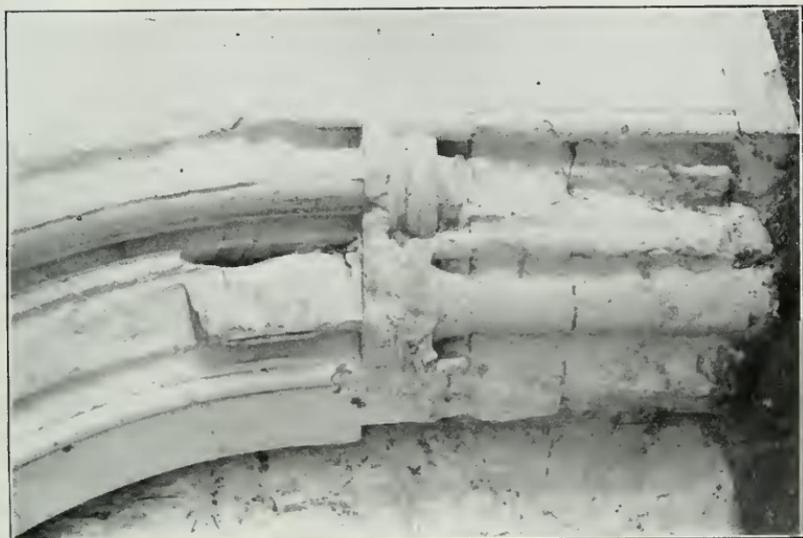


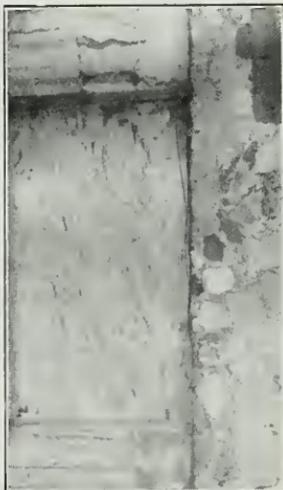
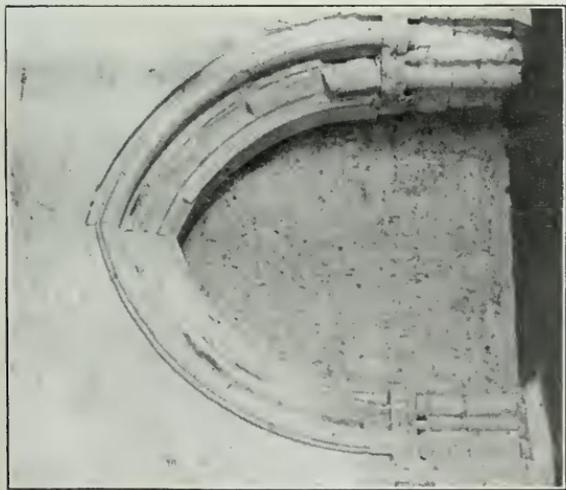
FIG. 5.—WINCHESTER HOUSE, SOUTHWARK: MAIN ENTRANCE DOORWAY TO GREAT HALL AND DOORWAY TO CELLAR.





WINCHESTER HOUSE, SOUTHWARK :  
MAIN DOORWAY.

Detail of Doorway near the western end of the south wall of the Hall (from the south side).



WINCHESTER HOUSE, SOUTHWARK :  
MAIN DOORWAY.

*Above*—Upper portion of Doorway near the western end of the south wall of the Hall (from the south side). L.H. view.  
*Below*—Lower portion of Doorway near the western end of the south wall of the Hall (from the south side).

it still retains much of its former beauty ; part of it is now to be seen from above and part from below the modern floor. It is of two orders, having attached shafts, with moulded capitals and bases, which support large filleted rolls in the arch ; the orders are separated by a small roll, continuous both in jambs and arch (Fig. 6). The rear arch is two-centred and retains on its eastern half mouldings of a similar character but of one order only ; the western half has been roughly rebuilt with no mouldings.

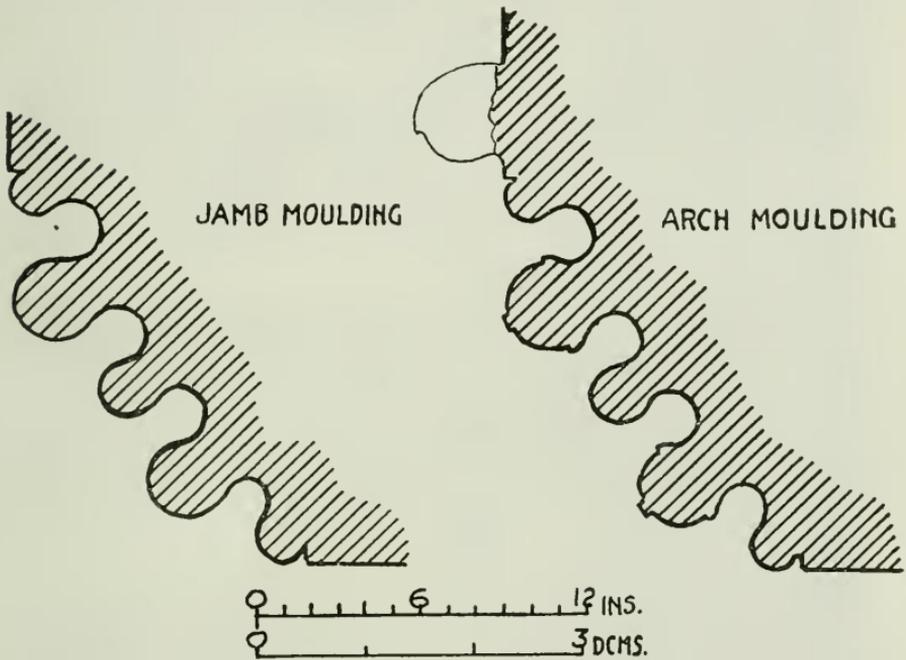


FIG. 6.—WINCHESTER HOUSE, SOUTHWARK : MOULDINGS OF MAIN DOORWAY.

The writer wishes to express his thanks to the officers of the Ecclesiastical Commission for the supply of copies of old deeds ; to the leaseholders of the properties concerned for their help and courtesy ; to Canon T. P. Stevens for valuable assistance ; and especially to Mr. Charles Sexton, who has taken all the photographs and has been indefatigable in going again and again to the site on those occasions when the warehouse stores were removed from the walls they obscured.