The Antiquities of Wallingford.

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I.—PLAN OF THE TOWN.

WHATEVER may be the true account of the origin of Wallingford, its name proves that it had become a well-established passage of the river at the time of the Saxon conquest. It was known as the Ford of the Wallingas, or sons of the Welsh, that is, of the Britons; and the Roman relics that have been discovered here, including an unusually large number of coins, show that it was occupied in Roman times. The primitive plan, also, of a Roman town remains almost unchanged. Its rectangular enclosure has three sides fortified with embankments, all remaining more or less complete, while on the east the River Thames protects its fourth side. A brook having its wells at Brightwell and Sotwell was diverted at right angles northward and southward under the west front of the earthworks, and then carried again at right angles round their north-western and south-western corners, so as to form a moat beneath the three sides of the enclosure. In order to supply an additional stream of water a cut is made from the next brook, now called Bradford's Brook, which flows from Hagbourne and Moreton, a short distance further on the south-west, and has its outflow a quarter-of-a-mile below the other, dividing the borough from Winterbrook in the parish of Cholsey. The name of Winterbrook seems to suggest that this watercourse only flowed with a full stream in winter, the whole of its waters being diverted in summer to supply the moat of the town. The sluice by which the two brooks are connected is still under the control of the authorities of the town, and the southern half of the town moat still forms the outflow of the water. For the northern half of the moat the water was formerly supplied by a sluice at the point of divergence beneath the Kine Croft banks; but several parts of it have now been filled in. It survives in the form of a stagnant ditch along the north-western angle of the town, and

again in the form of a well-marked trench across the castle grounds, which now enclose it within their extension northward. Finally, the channel which formed its outflow across the meadow to the river is preserved as an approach to a boathouse at the corner of the castle grounds.

The main thoroughfare of the town from east to west, the present High Street, ascended from the middle-point of the river-side, having on the left hand the swampy ground through which the original course of the brook evidently flowed; for the character of this ground was well revealed by the recent drainage operations.

From north to south the town appears to have been traversed by a broad open space, which is now represented by the Market Place, the Upper Green (now called St. Leonard's Square), and the Lower Green—this last outside the enclosing boundary. Along this space the houses and buildings have been erected, not merely upon each side, as in the High Street, but also upon the middle, leaving a narrow thoroughfare on each side, except in the northern portion, where Castle Street is now the only thoroughfare. St. Martin's Street, the continuation of Castle Street, was the only carriage-way into the Market Place from the north until recent times, the parallel line of St. Mary's Street (the old Fish Street) having been only a footway. On the other hand, south of the Market Place the line of St. Mary's Street, the more eastern of the parallel thoroughfares, has superseded the other, which is blocked entirely on the south of St. Leonard's Square. But the Lovers' Lane in front of St. John's, though now superseded by the road in front of the Alms' House, was formerly the principal approach to the town from the south;* and they are described alike as "the lanes going to Winterbrook" in the statement of quit-rents due to the Borough in 1584†; for both probably continued to be mere lanes until the high road from Reading to Streatley was carried on into Wallingford in the closing years of the last century. Some old masonry, which may possibly have been part of the abutment of a former bridge, appears on the edge of the Mill Brook, a few yards above the present bridge. All this goes to show that the main thoroughfare from north to south was the line of Castle Street, St. Martin's Street, and Lovers' Lane; while the line of St. Mary's Street was a minor thoroughfare parallel

* My authority for this was the late Mr. W. R. Davies, who quoted a statement of his father to the effect that when he first knew Wallingford this lane was the approach from Reading.

† Hedges' History of Wallingford, II., 427.

to it, and doubtless extending northward also along the western verge of the castle moat; both these thoroughfares being originally the outer edges of a single broad line of open ground, of which the middle has been built over or otherwise occupied. Bearing this in mind, we shall be the better able to understand the manner in which the town has grown.

By the two principal thoroughfares which have been thus described the enclosure is divided into four nearly equal parts. To complete the ordinary plan of a Roman town we have the line of Wood Street and the George Inn yard on the one side, and the line of Goldsmiths' Lane on the other side, parallel with the main street from south to north; while we have also some traces which seem to represent the other cross-ways parallel with the High Street, on the one side in Hart Street (formerly extending along the south side of St. Mary's Churchyard) and St. Mary's Lane, leading to the Kine Croft, and on the other side in the western entrance to the Castle or in the lane which crosses the Castle grounds just beyond that point. In addition to these there was necessarily a thoroughfare making the complete circuit within the enclosing defences, the most important part of this being the track-way above the river-bank, which is now represented by Thames Street and its continuation southward and for a few yards northward. But in the northern half of the town the primitive plan which is preserved elsewhere was absorbed by the two great Institutions which followed the coming of the Normans, the Castle and its precincts on the one side and the Priory of the Holy Trinity on the other.

II.—THE CASTLE.

The north-eastern quarter of the town-enclosure was occupied by the great castle of Robert D'Oilgi, which he built in obedience to the King's bidding immediately after the Norman Conquest, and completed in 1071. There had previously been a Saxon fortress, though probably of small dimensions, but of sufficient importance to possess a mint as early as the tenth century, and coins of Athelstan and the succeeding Kings were struck here down to the reign of Henry III. In the reign of Edward the Confessor it was occupied by a body of huscarles, or military retainers of the King, and was held at the time of the Conquest by Wigod, a Saxon Thane, whose daughter D'Oilgi married; but eight *hagae*, or

tenements, were appropriated, and their houses destroyed, for its extension. The Saxon castle in its turn may very probably have succeeded a fortified post of the Romans, some portions of which may have survived the Saxon invasion of the district in the sixth century, and the burning of the town by the Danes in 1006; for the old antiquaries, Gough and Whitaker, speak confidently of part of the outworks of their day being evidently Roman, more particularly a portion of wall on the right of the entrance from the High Street*; which seems to indicate that the Norman castle was practically a new building erected to the north of its predecessor. The older fortress, again, may have had its origin in a primitive fortification raised by the earliest settlers to guard the ford. If this be the case, it is possible that the great mound of the keep is an enlargement of the primitive earthwork, though doubtless in its present vast size it was the achievement of D'Oilgi. It is now stripped of every fragment of masonry except in the massive foundations built to protect its base from the water of the moat, which was carried round the larger part of its circle. But the deep well still exists beneath the trees on its northern bank; and on the south there is a subterranean passage, which may perhaps be a sewer, measuring four feet in height by two in width, and thought to be of Roman workmanship.

Of the actual walls of the Norman castle only two fragments remain. One is a small portion of wall on the north side. The other is an ivy-covered ruin with the opening of a large window, overlooking the meadow beside the river, and known as the Queen's Tower, forming the central part of the east wall. An urn of the Roman period or earlier, filled with charcoal and small bones, and encased in a recess of thin red tiles, was found at this spot in 1859.†

From the river-bank before the Queen's Tower it is easy to distinguish the line of the eastern front, with the sites of its projecting bastions and the outlet of the moat at either end. A ditch, which must have been originally the western most of the broken channels of the river, represents the eastern moat of the castle. The meadow between this ditch and the river is known as the Queen's Arbour; and a hollow which crosses this meadow diagonally is a relic of the stream which worked the castle mills. Traces of the

* Hedges' History of Wallingford, I., 150.

† Hedges' History of Wallingford, I., 149.

lock which kept back the water for this stream have been quite lately visible, and in 1891 an ancient key was taken from the river-bed which may have belonged to a door giving access to this lock.

Before the fragment of the north wall a triple line of moat may still be distinctly traced. The innermost line is the moat of the castle itself; the intermediate one is that of the precincts; and the outermost is the town moat already described. On the south of the castle the inner moat passes immediately outside the great mound; while a portion of the second is well preserved at the back of the gardens of some of the houses in the High Street; and another portion on the west, parallel with Castle Street, is in the grounds of Mr. Hedges. Upon the intermediate space between the two moats, we have, on the south, the ruins of the Collegiate Church of St. Nicholas, which Milo Crispin is said to have founded*; and on the west, near the northern end, a spot is pointed out as the site of the famous dungeon called Cloere Brien, or Brian's Close, where heavy rings fastened to some masonry are known to have existed during the present century, though it seems uncertain whether these were anything more formidable than relics of a blacksmith's workshop which had occupied the site. If this is correctly identified with Brian's Close, and if the tradition of the foundation of the Church is true, it is interesting to note that after D'Oilgi had built the castle itself, his two successors, who in turn married his daughter and heiress, carried on the work within the precincts; first Crispin making provision for the performance of divine worship on a scale of grandeur corresponding with his abode, and then Brian Fitzcount building the additional dungeon which was required for the prisoners in the civil war, when he defended the castle for the Empress Maud against King Stephen. Midway between Crispin's Church and the supposed site of Fitzcount's dungeon stands the modern dwelling-house, at the south-west angle of the precincts with the slope of the second moat included in an ornamental lawn in front of it.

This second moat appears to have been supplied with water from the outer moat of the town on the west side by means of a ditch cut across the croft of the priory; for in the recent excavations for drainage along Castle Street the section of an ancient ditch was shown a little beyond the western gate of the castle and close to the entrance of the public lane which traverses the castle grounds.

* Lyson's Berkshire.

Several pieces of stone were thrown out, among the bones and blackened soil, which may well have been the fragments of a bridge carrying the line of Castle Street over the ditch.

It remains to add that after playing a prominent, though perhaps subordinate, part both in the Barons' Wars and in the Wars of the Roses, the Castle came forward again, in the struggle between King Charles and the Parliament, into the foremost place which it had occupied in the civil wars of Stephen's reign. It held out for the King after every other fortress in central England had yielded. The Keep, however, and the adjoining gate-house had previously been dismantled, together with the Church of St. Nicholas, in the time of Edward VI., and in the reigns of his sisters large quantities of the materials were carried off for works that were in progress at Windsor. After the close of the Civil War an order was issued for the demolition of the remaining buildings, and by the time of the Restoration of Charles II. the Castle was gone.

There is no doubt that the present entrances to the castle represent those of ancient times; the one in Castle Street at about the centre of the western side of the grounds, the other at the foot of High Street, near the bridge. At the latter point one of the last relics of the old buildings appears to have survived till the early part of the present century, for old prints of that date show a lofty embattled gateway standing here. A fragment which is said to have belonged to this gateway may still be seen across the street, built into the eastern gable of the house at the entrance of Thames Street. It is an heraldic figure in stone, apparently the lion rampant of Richard, Earl of Cornwall,* but does not seem to be of so great antiquity as the thirteenth century.

Half-a-century after the demolition of the Castle the grounds were leased by the Crown to Thomas Renda, M.P. for the Borough, and in 1817 they passed into private possession. The house was taken down and rebuilt on a larger scale by the father of Mr. Hedges, the present occupant, whose labours in the field of Wallingford History mark him as a fitting possessor of what was once the Castle, and a worthy custodian of its ancient memories.

* Hedges, II., 37.

(To be continued.)