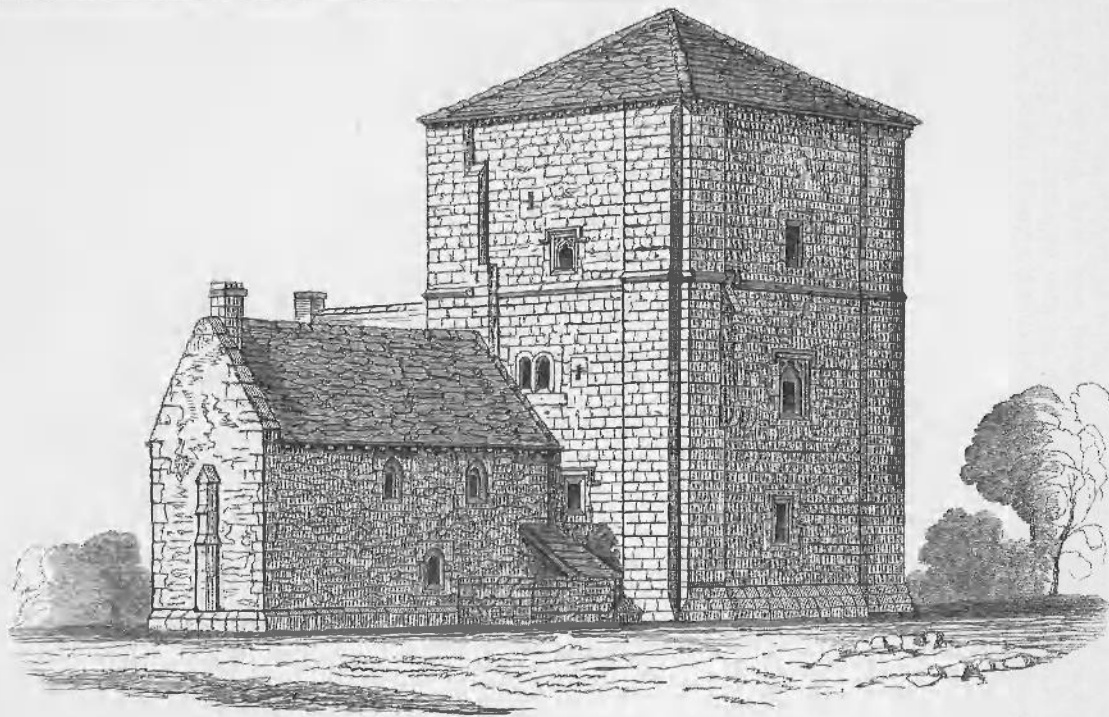


WATTLESBOROUGH TOWER, SHROPSHIRE.



View taken from the South-West. From a drawing by Edward Blore, Esq., F.S.A.

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### WATTLESBOROUGH TOWER, SHROPSHIRE.

By EDWARD BLORE, Esq., D.C.L., F.S.A.

WATTLESBOROUGH TOWER stands on elevated ground in the parish of Cardiston, on the property of Sir Baldwin Leighton, Bart., and about 9 miles west of Shrewsbury. Though now reduced to the humble condition of a farmhouse, it evidently forms a portion of what was originally a very early and interesting fortified mansion.

With the exception of the Tower, nothing now remains of the original buildings, except a small attached projection on one side, of considerable antiquity, but not coeval with the Tower, though probably little later, nor of sufficient architectural character to fix the date with certainty.

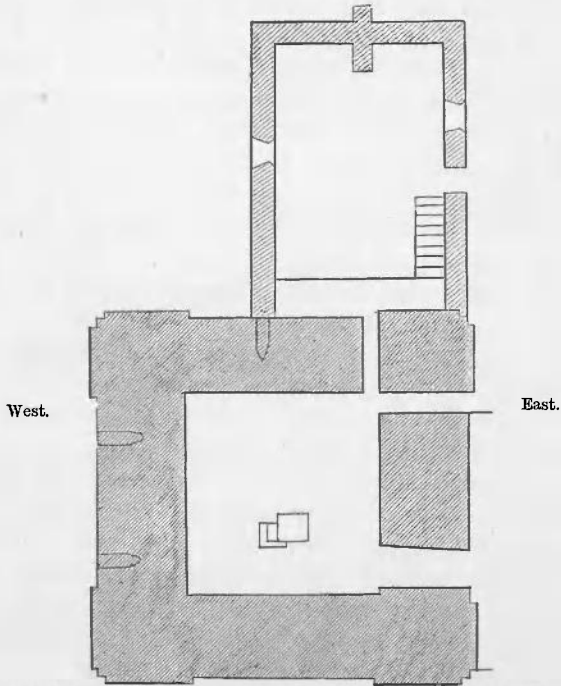
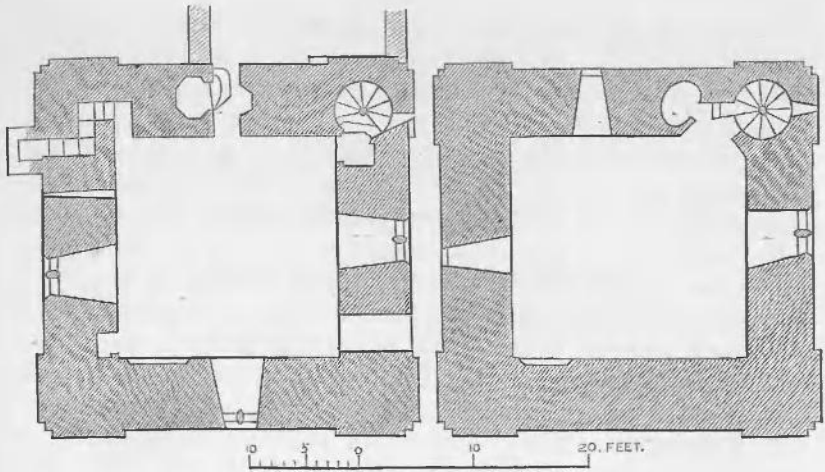
The Tower is quadrangular in plan, and at the present time about 50 ft. high; but, as the original summit has been destroyed, and it is now covered by a modern square roof, it is difficult to say how much higher it may have been, or how finished. The existence, however, of the weather-mouldings of a gable existing on each face of the opposite internal walls immediately below the present roof, and the set-back of the wall at the springing of these gable mouldings on the other two walls, seem to indicate that the original termination was a gable one. If so, the lateral walls must have been raised to the height of the gables, at least, to convert the Tower to its present square form. There is nothing, however, externally in the character of the masonry to indicate this change. Externally the masonry is good, square, well-dressed ashlar, remarkably well built, and exhibiting no symptoms of decay. The walls are 6 ft. thick,

the angles are finished with broad, flat buttresses 6 ft. wide and 10 in. deep.

Including the basement, the Tower is divided into three stories. As far as I am able to judge from the few original windows remaining, they were narrow square loops; but most of them have at subsequent periods been enlarged to let in more light. These alterations have been made about the middle of the fifteenth century. Externally they have little depth; but internally they are bevelled very much, to throw more light into the rooms, and have elliptical arched heads of good execution. In one angle is a circular stone stair, commencing with the first floor and continued to the roof, but having no communication with the basement, nor does there appear ever to have been any. There is, however, on the first floor, a good-sized, circular-headed, double-chamfered door, enclosing a square-headed lintel opening internally, on which side it appears to have been secured by a strong bar, the holes for fixing which remain. The inference that I draw from this, connected with the want of communication between this and the lower floor, is, that this door formed the real and only entrance to the Tower, and, being very much above the level of the outside ground, was approached externally by a flight of stone steps, which no longer exist, as this side of the Tower is now occupied by modern buildings, and all original traces are obliterated. This is not unusual in existing houses of about the same date. Some steps, formed out of the thickness of the wall, lead from the first floor to an external projection, supported on plain corbels; this was evidently the garderobe. It is now a mere ruinous fragment. In each of the upper floors is a fireplace; they are not, however, original, but were probably made when the windows were altered. They are square-headed and plain, the lower one only having a shallow moulding around it. Notwithstanding the strength of the walls, there is no stone vaulting, nor has there ever been any,—a peculiar circumstance in a tower of this age and style, as we generally find the basement and sometimes the upper floors vaulted.

In the basement is a small, pointed doorway, of the earliest style and most simple form, which no doubt communicated with the adjoining buildings, and was easily secured in case of need. There is also standing clear of the walls a large

North.



South.

Wattlesborough Tower, Shropshire.  
Ground-Plans, Basement, First Floor and Second Floor.  
From measurements by Edward Blore, Esq., F.S.A.

stone, wrought to a shape and firmly fixed in the ground, which I believe to be its original position, but for what purpose placed there I cannot guess. Attached to the outside of the Tower, and close under the roof of the ancient attached building, is a stone fireplace, supported on corbels, having a fiat-pointed, moulded head. This is so placed as to be totally useless for any present purpose, nor was there apparent use for it at any time.

From the almost total absence of architectural detail, it is difficult to judge, with certainty, as to the age of this tower ; but, from the few indications to be relied upon, I think its erection may safely be referred to the close of the twelfth century.

The earthwork, with which the Tower is connected, encloses a space of 56 yards square, and 5 yards wide, at the top, sloping inwardly on one side, and thus forming a sunk area, which appears, during the occupation of the mansion, in recent times, to have been used as an ornamental garden, with a mount at one angle ; on the other side the slope is to the moat. There is no appearance of masonry in any part of this earthwork that I could discover, and it is doubtful whether it formed an outer defence to the mansion or not. I very much suspect that it belongs to an earlier period. Had any Roman remains been found in the place or neighbourhood, I should have suspected that this earthwork belonged to that age ; but I could not discover that any such remains had been found. I have no doubt, however, that this fortified mansion and earthwork formed one of the fortified posts which stretched across the district, of which Alberbury is one ; Wollaston, where there is a large mound, is another, this line of strongholds, probably, included ; The Marsh, Westbury, where there is an ancient moated house with earthworks ; and terminated with Caus Castle, which, from its commanding position and superior magnitude and strength, dominated over the whole surrounding country.

The first historical account that we have of Wattlesborough is in Domesday Book. At the period of the Survey it was held by Roger Fitz Corbet, of the Norman earl. Edric, a Saxon, previously held it, when there were 2 hides geldable ; in demesne, 3 ox-teams. There were also 2 neat-herds, 2 villans, 1 boor, and 1 radman, with 5 oxen, and there might be 2 ox-teams more there.

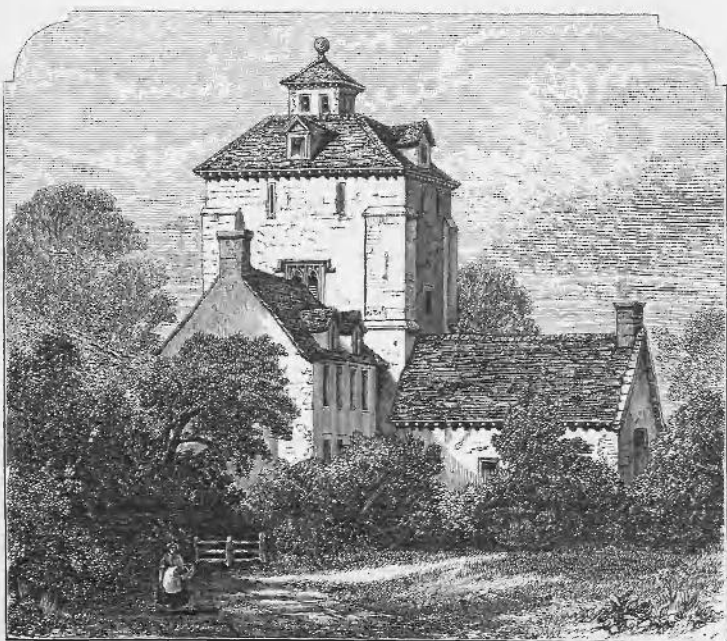
From this time we have no further information as to the descent of the place, until the 26th Hen. II. (1179-1180), when Richard Corbet held it, but in what way it descended to him does not appear, most probably through a succession of Corbets, the offshoot of the main branch at Caus. After this Richard Corbet, the place was inherited by his son and heir, Richard Corbet the second. From him it descended to Robert, his son and heir, a man of great activity and enterprise, who seems to have been engaged in all the bustling local transactions; and, after two more generations, it came into the hands of the De la Poles, by the marriage of the heiress, Elizabeth Corbet, with John de la Pole, lord of Mawddy, Trefgarn Owen, &c., through his mother, daughter of Llewellyn.

The information contained in Eyton's History of Shropshire terminates at this point: for a continuation of the descent of the property down to the present time, together with other interesting particulars connected with the history of Wattlesborough, I am indebted to the kindness of Mrs. Edward Childe, of Kinlet, the daughter of Sir Baldwin Leighton, the present owner of the place.

The Tower was probably built by Richard Corbet, about 1280, as a place of defence against the inroads of the Welsh, for as Caus Castle overlooks the Valley of the Rea, so Wattlesborough Castle commands the pass formed by the Long Mountain and the Bredden.

Though not the only residence of its successive owners, this castle appears to have been constantly inhabited, for Elizabeth, the only child and heir of Sir Fulk Corbet, was born there in 1375, and baptized in the neighbouring church of Alberbury. Her son, Fulk de Mawddy, was born there in 1390; and her grandson, Sir John de Burgh, in 1414. The Leightons, who succeeded to Wattlesborough by marriage with a daughter and coheir of Sir John de Burgh, in 1471, made it their chief residence until 1711, when Sir Edward Leighton removed to Loton, a house about a mile distant. Since that time, Wattlesborough has been used as a farmhouse.

In 1584, the Earl of Essex, afterwards the favourite of Elizabeth, visited Sir Edward Leighton at Wattlesborough, remaining there from 24th March till 15th May. He probably came to Shropshire with a view of raising forces for

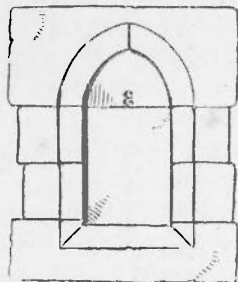


Wattlesborough Tower, Shropshire.

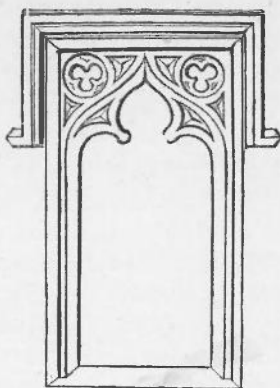
North-East view, taken about 1819.

From a sketch in possession of Sir Baldwin Leighton, Bart., at Loton Park.

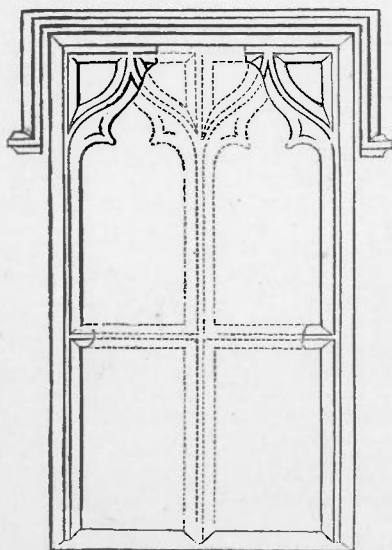
WATTLEBOROUGH TOWER, SHROPSHIRE.



Windows in building N. of the Tower.



Second Floor.



First Floor.

Windows inserted probably about the middle of the fourteenth century.

From drawings by Edward Blore, Esq., F.S.A.



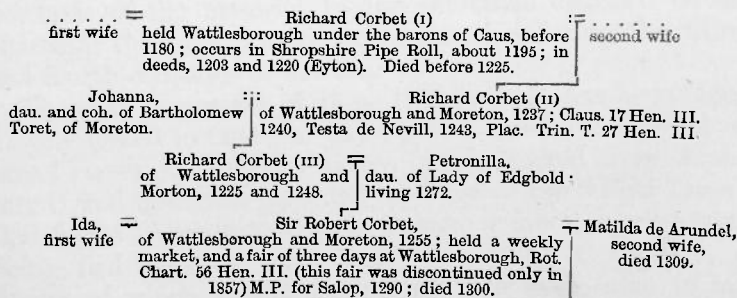
the expedition against Holland (see Blakeway's History of Shrewsbury). The manor and township of Wattlesborough still comprise portions of the parishes of Alberbury and Cardeston, and contain about 2500 acres.

The windows, as they now exist, obviously of comparatively recent character, may not be without interest. That in the first floor may probably be an insertion of the time of Fulk Corbet, *circa* 1340. The window of debased work, on the east side, and some fireplaces, &c., may be assigned to the sixteenth century, having possibly been added by Sir Edward Leighton, a distinguished person in the reign of Elizabeth. To this time also the garden or *plaisance* beyond the moat probably belongs. The windows have suffered much damage, and some of the details have been so destroyed that there is much difficulty at the present time in ascertaining their precise forms and details, which are shown somewhat imperfectly in the accompanying diagrams.

Appended to this notice is the following pedigree, showing the descent of Wattlesborough, through the successive owners, from the first Richard Corbet, in 1195, to the commencement of the last century.

### DESCENT OF WATTLESBOROUGH

Through the Corbets, from Domesday till A.D. 1382 (Eyton's Hist. Shropshire), Mawddy or Moethe, from A.D. 1382-1414, De Burgh, from A.D. 1414-1471 (Bridgeman's Hist. of the Princes of Upper Powys, *Collectanea Archæologica*, part i.) and Leighton, from 1471 to the early part of the last century.



DESCENT OF WATTLESBOROUGH—*continued.*

Thomas Corbet,  
of Wattlesborough, died 1310, under 50 years of age. . . . .

Sir Robert Corbet, = Elizabeth,  
of Wattlesborough, born 1304, died 1375. | occurs in 1359, living 1376.

Fulk Corbet, = Elizabeth, Roger,  
died 1382. | living in 1382. succeeded to Moreton Corbet.

Elizabeth, = John de la Pole,  
dau. and heiress, born 1375, died before 1403. | lord of Mowddy, died 1403.

Fulk de Mowethe, = Isabella, Elizabeth = Hugh de Burgh  
born at Wattlesborough 1390; m. 2ndly, Richard of Mowddy and Wat- of Wattlesborough;  
died S. P. 1392. | de Peshall; died tlesborough; died | sheriff of Shrop-  
S. P. 1429. | before 1430. | shire; died 1430.

Sir John de Burgh, = Joan.  
lord of Mowddy and Wattlesborough, dau. and coh. of Sir William Clopton,  
born 1414, sheriff 1442, died 1471. | of Radbroke, Knt., died before 1471.

Elizabeth, Isabella, Ankaret, = John Leighton, Elizabeth,  
m. William New- married Sir died before her of Leighton, and Stretton married  
port, of High John Lyngen. father. | in le Dale, 1640; M. P. for Thomas  
Ercall, Salop. | Shropshire, 1468. | Mytton.

Anne, = Sir Thomas Leighton, Elizabeth,  
dau. of . . . Baker. | of Wattlesborough, and dau. of Walter Devereux, lord  
of Stretton in le Dale, born Ferrers of Chartley, and  
1443, sheriff 1495, d. 1519. | relict of Sir Robert Corbet.

Matilda, = John Leighton, Joyce,  
dau. and coh. of of Wattlesborough; M. P. dau. of Edward Sutton, lord Dudley;  
John Harewode, for Shropshire; died 1532. | remarried to Richard Lee of Langley.  
died S. P.

Elizabeth, — Sir Edward Leighton, Knt., = Anne,  
dau. of of Wattlesborough; M. P. dau. of Paul Darrell,  
Rowland Edward sheriff, 1568; died 1593; buried of Lillingstone  
of Shrewsbury. at Alberbury, Salop. | Darrell, Bucks.

Thomas Leighton, = Elizabeth,  
of Wattlesborough, | dau. of Sir W. Gerard, Chancellor of  
died 1600. | Ireland; buried at Alberbury, 1626.

Robert Leighton, = Anne,  
of Wattlesborough, died 1625. | dau. of Sir E. Devereux, of Castle  
Bromwich; buried at Alberbury, 1621.

Edward Leighton, = Abigail,  
of Wattlesborough, died 1636. | dau. and heir of William Stephens of  
Shrewsbury, buried at Alberbury, 1630.

Robert Leighton, = Gertrude,  
of Wattlesborough, M. P. for | dau. of Edward Baldwin of  
Shrewsbury, 1661; died 1689. | Diddlesbury, Salop, died, 1683.

Sir Edward Leighton, Bart., = Dorothy,  
of Wattlesborough, M. P. for | dau. of Sir John Charlton, of Ludford, Salop,  
Shropshire, died 1711. | Chief Justice of Chester; died 1638.