

NO. I. LACOCK ABBEY. WINDOWS IN THE BROWN GALLERY,
FORMERLY THE FRATER,



NO. 2.

LACOCK ABBEY. BLOCKED DOORWAY TO CLOISTER ROOF.

SIR WILLIAM SHARINGTON'S WORK AT LACOCK,
SUDELEY AND DUDLEY.¹

By the Rev. W. G. CLARK-MAXWELL, M.A. F.S.A.

It has long been recognised that the buildings erected by Sir William Sharington at the dissolved monastery of Lacock present certain characteristic features, which are of great value and interest to the student of the early renaissance architecture of England, and illustrate the transition to this from the Gothic of the Tudor period. It may be therefore of interest to record the occurrence of these features in two other buildings, with the erection of which, as we know from documentary sources, Sharington was concerned; namely Sudeley and Dudley castles.

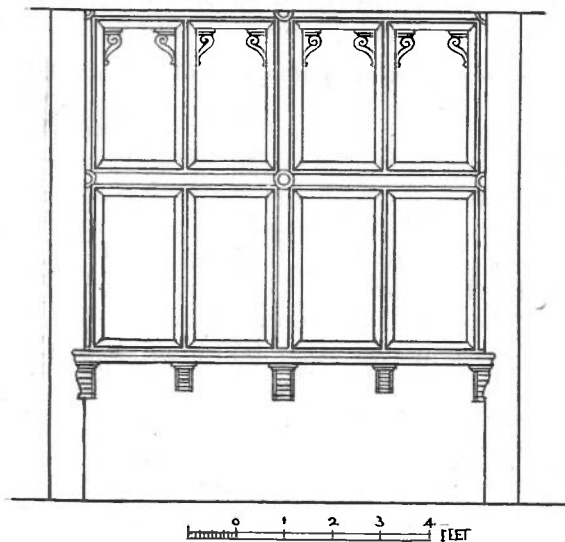
When in 1540 Sharington obtained possession of Lacock abbey, he probably found one portion, the abbess's lodging on the west side of the cloister, ready for occupation as it stood; and here he seems at the first to have taken up his abode and gradually to have altered the buildings to suit his requirements, beginning with the southern range next the wall of the destroyed abbey church. We know that this process had begun before, probably considerably before, August, 1548, as a survey of that date preserved at Lacock mentions the mansion-house as being then "anewe buyldyng" (i.e. being built anew); and as we shall see later, he had at least one stone-carver in his employ at the time of his death in July, 1553.

In his work in this, the first portion of his alterations (up to and including the present library), Sharington shews scarcely any distinctively classical features, and a much more pronounced Gothic element than in his subsequent work, which from this point onwards is almost wholly of renaissance character.² One might be tempted to conclude that the change in style corresponds with the

¹ Read before the Institute, 2nd April, 1913.

² See *Journal of British Archaeological Association*, n.s. xi, pp. 195-201.

Lacock Abbey.



WINDOWS OF STONE GALLERY. (RESTORED)

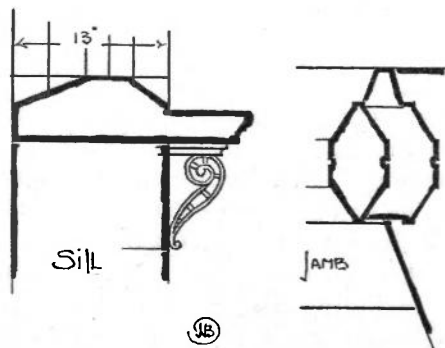
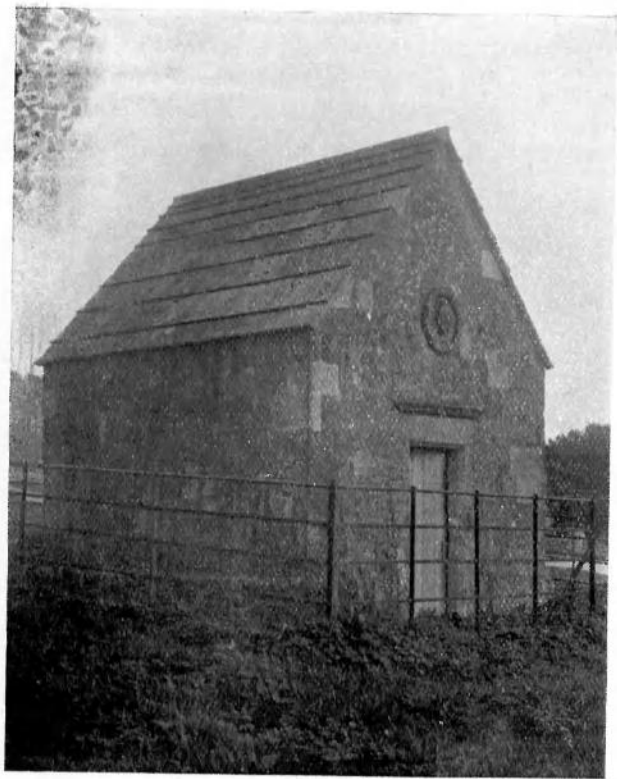


FIG. I. FROM A DRAWING BY MR. HAROLD BRAKSPEAR, F.S.A.



NO. I. LACOCK. CONDUIT-HOUSE ON BOWDEN HILL.



[W. Slatter, phot.]

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break in the work which must have been caused by his arrest in January, 1549; but the inference would be incorrect, for, as we shall see, the work at Sudeley, which belongs entirely to the developed "Sharingtonian" style, must have been carried out before 1549.

The special features characterising this later style, which we may for convenience call "Sharingtonian," are the following :

(1) A peculiar profile of gable-coping, combined with consoles or brackets, at the base of the gable, and with a dentilled blocking-course under the eaves.

(2) Square-headed doorways with sunk chamfers in the jambs, a peculiar variety of stop-chamfer, and a classical entablature, supported by consoles at either side.

(3) A characteristic window of four (in one instance three) lights, with a transom at mid-height, and consoles in the heads of the upper lights. The central mullion is wider than the others, and its intersection with the transom is marked by a circle; there are half-circles at the upper end of this mullion and at the ends of the transom, and quarter-circles in the upper corners of the window. Below, internally, is a shelf supported on five consoles, alternately broad and narrow, to correspond with the mullions above. By the kindness of Mr. H. Brakspear, F.S.A. I am enabled to reproduce here a measured drawing (fig. 1), showing what these windows must have been, as originally set up. This is perhaps the most characteristic feature of Sharington's work at Lacock, though no absolutely untouched example of the recessed four-light transomed window still survives there. The nearest existing representatives may be found in the windows inserted by Sharington in the south wall of the frater, an outside view of which is shewn in plate 1, no. 1, though these, being high above the floor-level, have sills deeply splayed, instead of the usual shelf, for the better lighting of the passage below.

So far as I know, no precisely similar windows are found anywhere else, with the exception of those to be mentioned later; the nearest approach known to me is at Layer Marney in Essex, where the windows have consoles in the heads, taking the form of dolphins on the interior face.

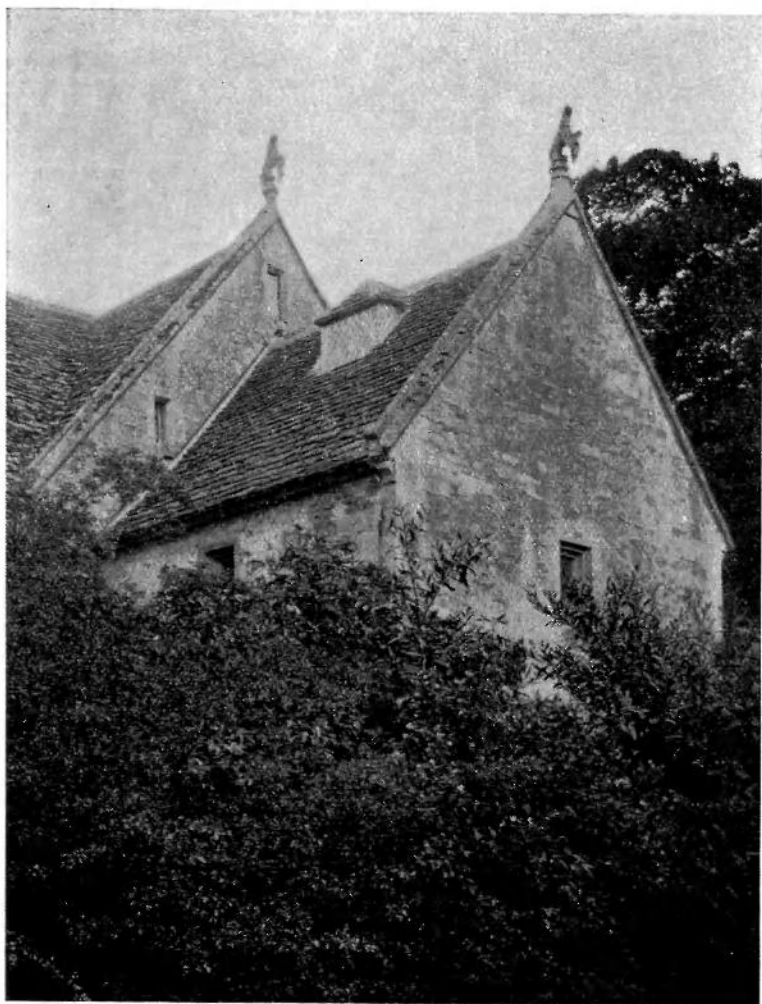
We know that Sir William Sharington was arrested in

January, 1549, for complicity in the treasonable designs of Thomas lord Seymour of Sudeley, lord high admiral, and brother of the protector Somerset.¹ In the statement which he then made,² he alleges that he had laid out large sums of money in furtherance of the building schemes of the admiral at Sudeley and elsewhere. In particular, he mentions that he had laid forth for his buildings at Bromham £1,500, for his buildings at Sudeley £1,100. At Bromham the lord admiral was neighbour to Sharington at Lacock, but there is nothing now extant there that we can connect with this outlay, though it is evident that both at Bromham and at Sudeley Sharington had acted on a very considerable scale on Seymour's behalf. Most of the existing work at Sudeley is either earlier or slightly later than the period 1547-1549, with which we are now concerned; but in the conduit-house, known as St. Kenelm's Well, and situated about three-quarters of a mile from the castle, we have a very interesting and characteristic assemblage of "Sharingtonian" features, as may be seen in plate II, no. 2, reproduced here by kind permission of Mr. W. Slatter of Cheltenham. With the exception of the pedimented niche over the door and the finials to the gables, which are recent alterations,³ every detail of the building may be exactly paralleled at Lacock, though not all in one place. For the general design of the building, Sharington's conduit-house on Bowden Hill, Lacock, should be compared (plate II, no. 1), but it should be noted that this latter has a stone roof supported on transverse arches, whereas the Sudeley example has evidently a wooden roof covered with tiles. For the outline of gable, its coping, the consoles beneath it, and the dentilled blocking-course under the eaves, we may compare the photograph of a projection from the north-east angle of the Lacock stable-yard illustrated in plate III. The plinth, though one which is common enough in late Perpendicular work, is found again in close juxtaposition to classical details in the Bowden Hill conduit-house and the interior of the same stable-yard; the doorway of the Sudeley conduit-house finds its precise counterpart in

¹ See *Wils. Arch. Mag.* xxvii, 159.

² P.R.O. State Papers, Domestic, vol. vi, Edward VI, no. 13.

³ An older view appears in Dent's *Wincombe and Sudeley*, p. 53, shewing these finials as balls, but this was almost certainly not the original design.



LACOCK ABBEY. EXTERNAL VIEW OF NORTH-EAST CORNER OF STABLE-YARD.

the blocked door which gave access to the cloister leads at Lacock (plate 1, no. 2), and the small windows with consoles in the heads may nearly be matched at Lacock by the upper part of a pair of single-light windows, unblocked in 1850, in the south wall of one of the principal bedrooms, and by the small windows in the passage leading to the muniment room in the tower.

It should further be noted that all these features are of the developed renaissance type of Sharrington's work at Lacock; and since there can be practically no doubt that the conduit-house represents part of the building on which Sharrington had laid out money for the admiral, the conclusion follows that he must have reached this point of development before his arrest in January, 1549; and he seems not to have varied subsequently from it.

The documentary evidence of Sharrington's connexion with Dudley castle is to be found in a letter addressed by him on 25th June, 1553, about a fortnight before his death, to Sir J. Thynne, of Longleat.¹ In this letter he excuses himself for not sending Thynne one of his workmen, named Chapman; he would willingly do so, but Chapman had been sent for by the duke of Northumberland to Dudley; and though he had not yet started, he had sent on his working tools in the waggons that had left with the chimney that he had been so long working at. Meanwhile Sharrington proposes to send a measure and a pattern of the pedestal on which Thynne intends to set his "beast" (a carved stone animal, of which two may be seen in plate III) "that may be both agreeable to your poynen table² and to the beast."

This shews that Sharrington had, up to the time of his death, at least one skilful carver, and perhaps more, whom he occasionally lent to his friends for the execution of elaborate chimneypieces, and such stone animals as those of which a good many still exist at Lacock.

An examination of the remaining buildings at Dudley castle fails to reveal any chimneypiece of Bath stone, such as Chapman would presumably work at Lacock, but the existence of "Sharringtonian" features in much of North-

¹ Published by Mr. C. H. Talbot in the *Wilts. Arch. Mag.* vol. xxvi, p. 50.

² i.e. gable-coping.

umberland's work there is unmistakable, although the decayed condition of the stonework makes it difficult to see in some cases, and in others it is obscured by recent repairs. Mr. Brakspear and I spent a day at Dudley castle during the summer of 1912; and an examination of the existing remains of the domestic buildings makes it practically

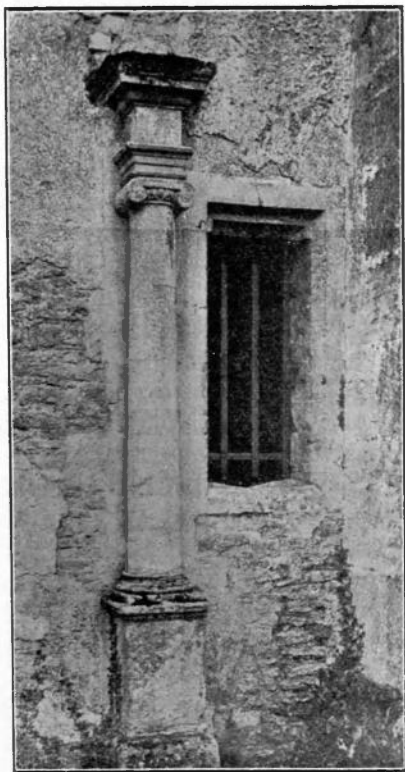


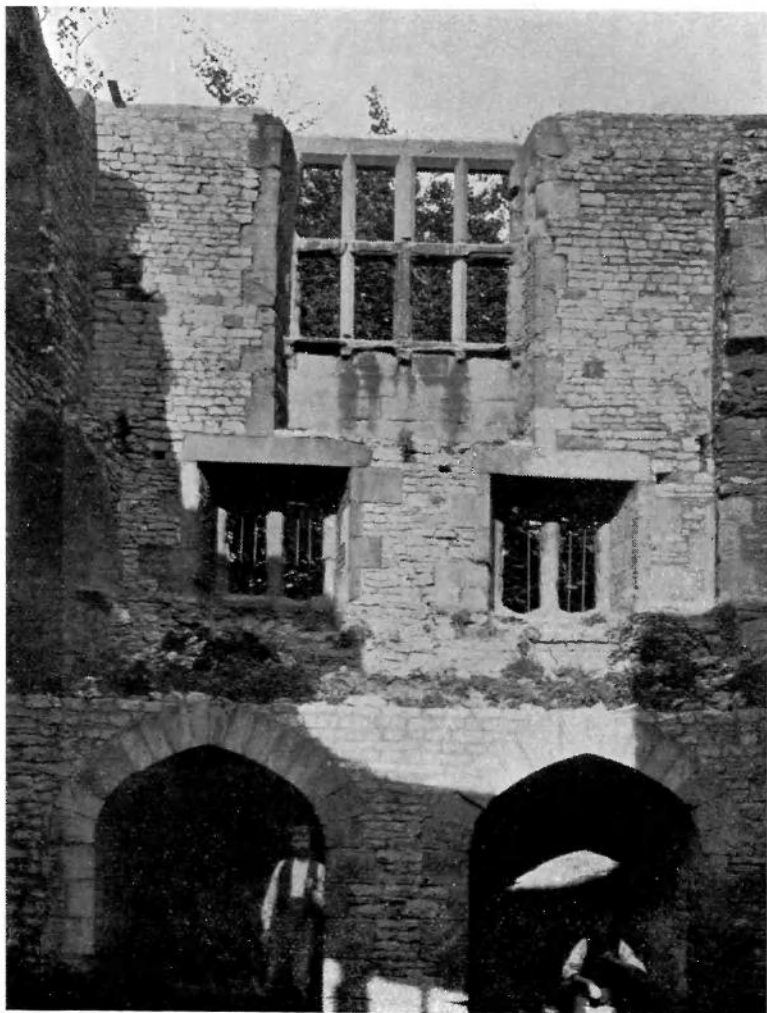
FIG. 2. LACOCK ABBEY. PILLAR IN COURTYARD.

certain that Sharrington must have remodelled, or built anew, the whole of the range northwards from the chapel and great chamber adjoining. This would comprise, (1) the hall with its appurtenant buildings, (2) the kitchens with bedrooms over, (3) a further block of service buildings, (4) the northern gate or postern. Northumberland's



[Harold Brakspear, phot.]

DUDLEY CASTLE. NORTH DOORWAY OF COLONNADE.



[*E. Blocksidge, phot.*

DUDLEY CASTLE. UPPER-STORY WINDOWS, LOOKING EAST.

attainder in 1553, following shortly on the death of Sharrington in July of that year, probably arrested the work before completion, and it is doubtful whether the chimney-piece mentioned above was ever actually set up.

There appear to be "Sharringtonian" doorways at each end of the open colonnade which connected the two wings of Northumberland's great hall on the first floor level (plate iv). The stonework is badly decayed, but the general resemblance between these doorways and that shewn in plate 1, no. 2, is too marked to be accidental. The way, too, in which the attached column is combined with the stonework of the adjoining window is strongly reminiscent of Sharrington's treatment of a similar column (the only one remaining) in the courtyard at Lacock (fig. 2). This column supported the beginning of a timber-built gallery or bridge which gave access to some buildings, now destroyed, in the courtyard.

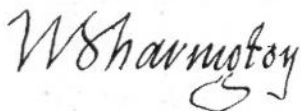


FIG. 3. SIGNATURE OF SIR WILLIAM SHARRINGTON.

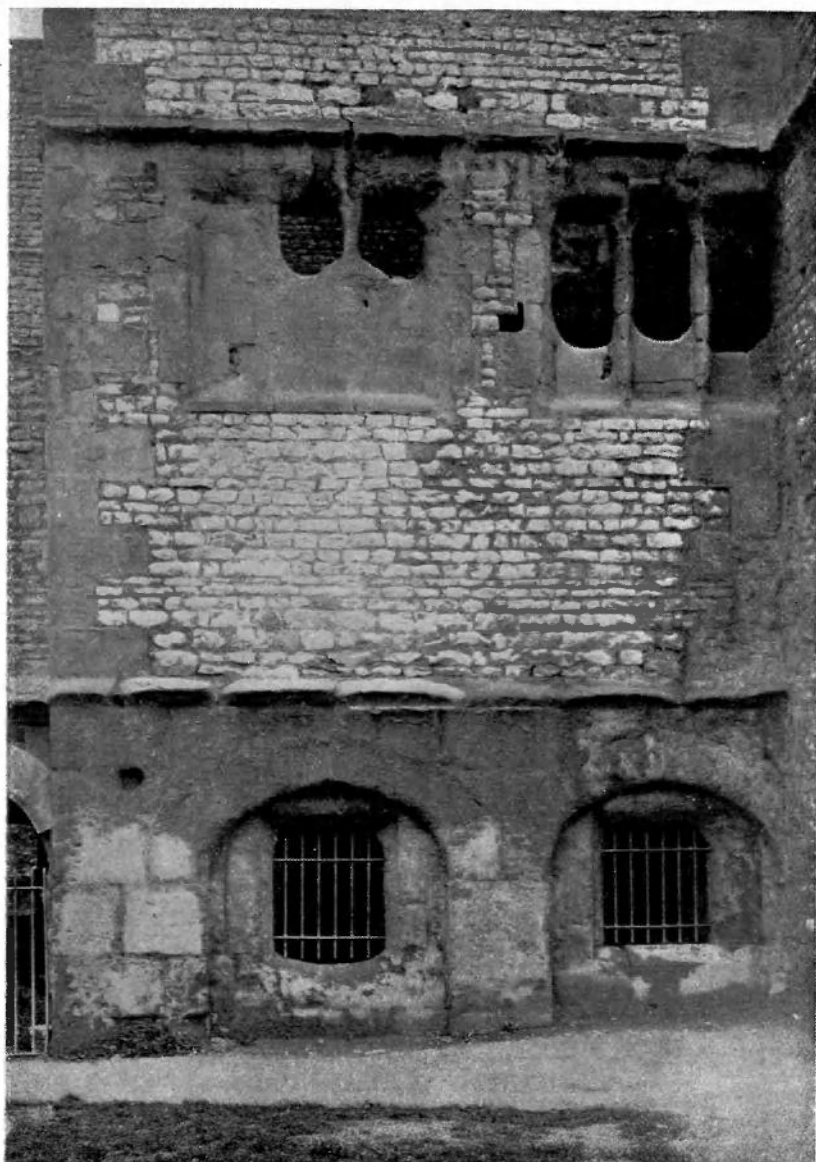
The upper-story windows at Dudley, so far as one could judge from the ground-floor level on the inside, appear to be of "Sharringtonian" pattern, including the shelf with consoles beneath (plate v): if the original heads of these windows were still preserved, it is quite possible that we should be able to trace there also remains at least of the consoles, which are perhaps the most characteristic of all the features which I have called Sharringtonian; since in the small partially-blocked windows flanking the colonnade, and in those on the ground-floor immediately beneath them, these consoles are still to be detected, although in a greatly decayed condition (plate vi). There is, however, no trace, either within or without the castle, of the circles which ornament the windows at Lacock, nor is there any instance of this decoration elsewhere in England, so far as I know.¹

¹ Similar circles occur in the early renaissance work at the château of Blois.

The stone in which the ornamental details at Dudley are executed is unfortunately of a very perishable nature, and ill adapted to resist the corroding influence of the atmosphere of a manufacturing district, such as the neighbourhood has now become; but despite this unfavourable condition, we can recognise the same delicate skill and mastery of proportion as can be seen so clearly at Lacock and Sudeley; and the conclusion is practically inevitable that the same hand was responsible for the design of the work in all three places. It is just possible that this was the hand of Sharington himself; we have seen above that he was able to supply "patterns" of architectural details to his friends, and his signature (fig. 3) shews him to have been thoroughly Italianate in that respect at least¹; but it will be a safer conjecture to attribute the work to some one employed by him, whether the Chapman mentioned above, or some unknown master-mason, Italian, Frenchman, Dutchman, or, more probably, Englishman, trained in the best methods of the early renaissance in England.

¹ The signature is taken from the statement referred to at the beginning of this article (P.R.O. State Papers, Domestic,

vol. vi, Edward VI, no. 13). Each page of the statement is signed by Sharington.



[Harold Brakspear, phot.]

DUDLEY CASTLE. WINDOWS AT SOUTH END OF COLONNADE, LOOKING EAST.