

II.

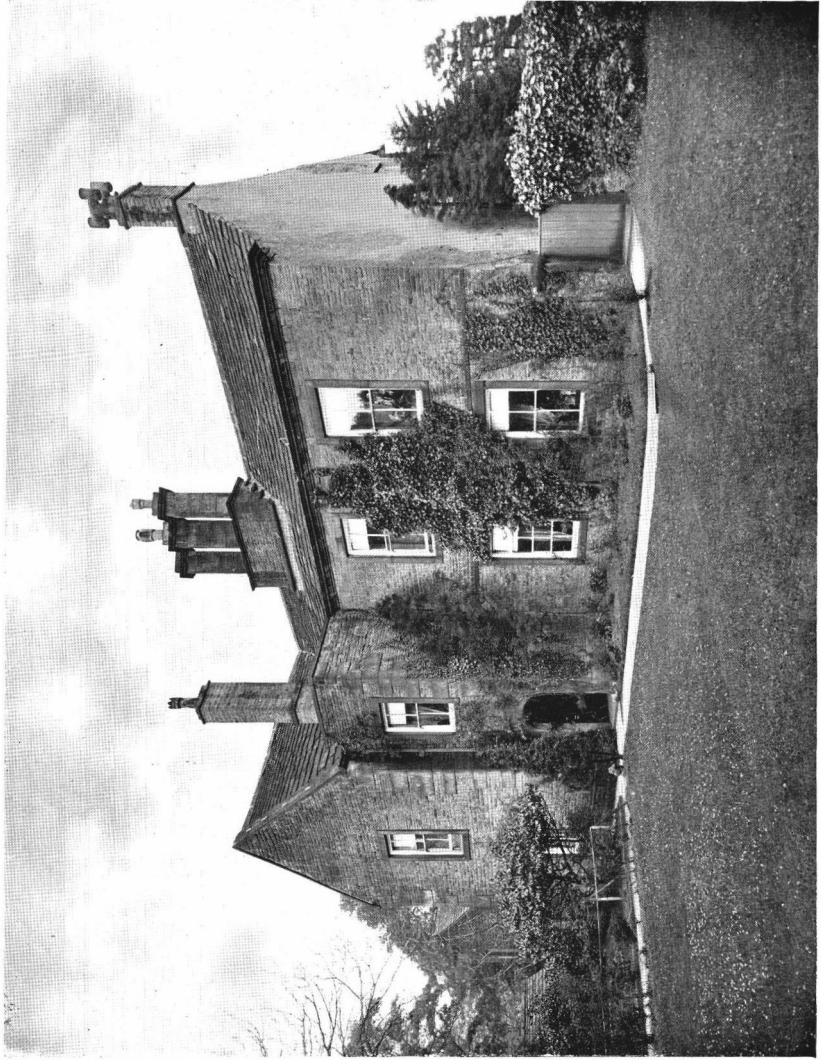
YEARDSLEY HALL, FURNESS VALE.

 By ERNEST GUNSON.



YEARDSLEY, which also belongs to Colonel Cotton-Jodrell, is the time-honoured estate of the Jodrells from mediæval days. The Hall stands on the slope of the hills overlooking Furness Vale, a little more than two miles to the north of Shallcross, and, like it, is approached by an ancient by-way from the same road running from Buxton to Manchester, which has been mentioned under the account of that hall.

The main part of the building, which is of stone, has been converted to its present form in the sixteenth century, but for some unfortunate reason most of the Tudor windows have been replaced by modern sashes. The extent of the damage will be apparent when one examines the window of the room now used as a dairy, which may be taken as an example of the one or two only which now remain in their former state. This window, which is of perfect proportions, is constructed entirely of oak, the lintel or beam carrying the wall over the window opening being of that material, as well as the mullions and transoms and the window sill. This is very unusual where stone is the building material, and is probably a compromise between the stone structures of Derbyshire and the half-timbered buildings of Cheshire, standing as the hall does on the borders of the two counties. It is quite possible that the decay of the oak lintels is really responsible for much of the repair and modernization that has from time to time occurred.

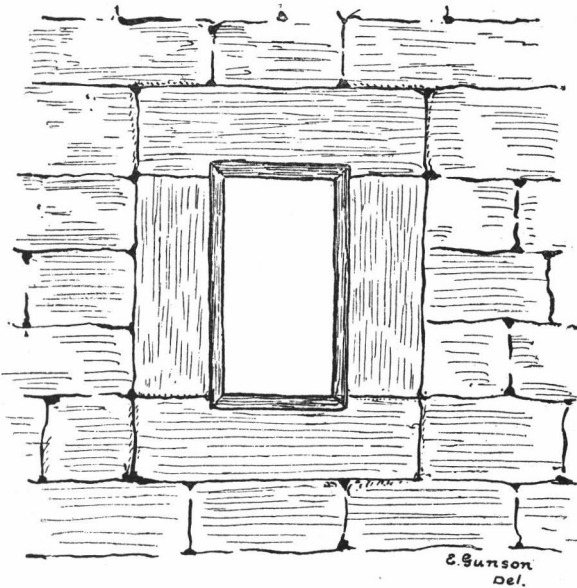


YEARDSLEY HALL. THE NORTH FRONT.

A. Victor Haslam.

Looking at this window, it is not difficult to picture to oneself what the old hall was like before the modern windows were inserted, and to feel sorry that it was not left in its original state. There is also a small stone window of the same period, of which a sketch is given.

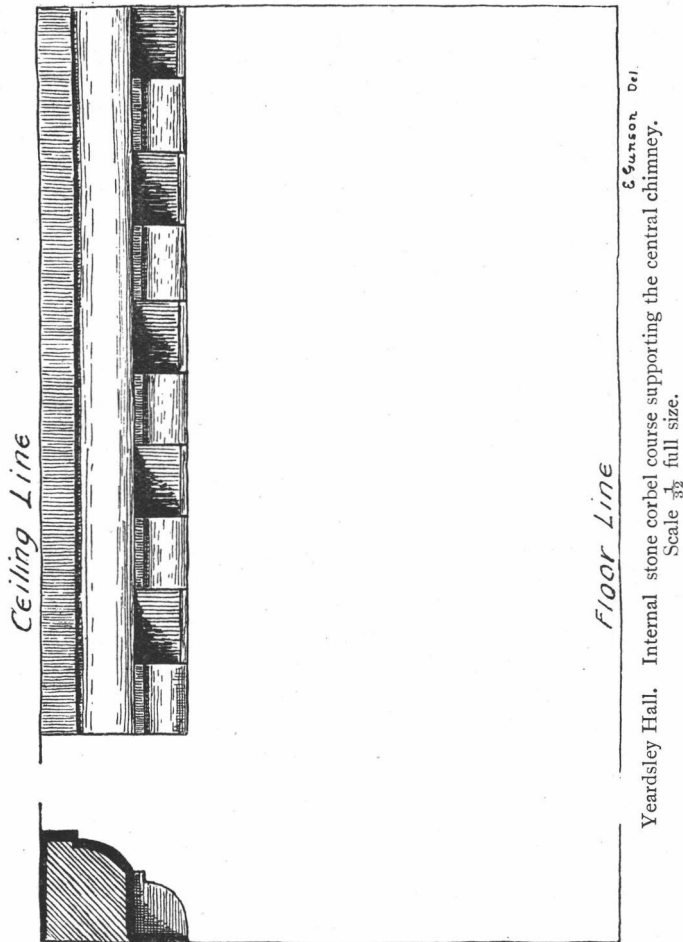
The Hall, since it ceased to be the family residence many years ago, has been divided into two buildings, but we will attempt to reconstruct the interior as it probably existed about



Yeardsley Hall. Early stone window. Scale $\frac{1}{16}$ full size.

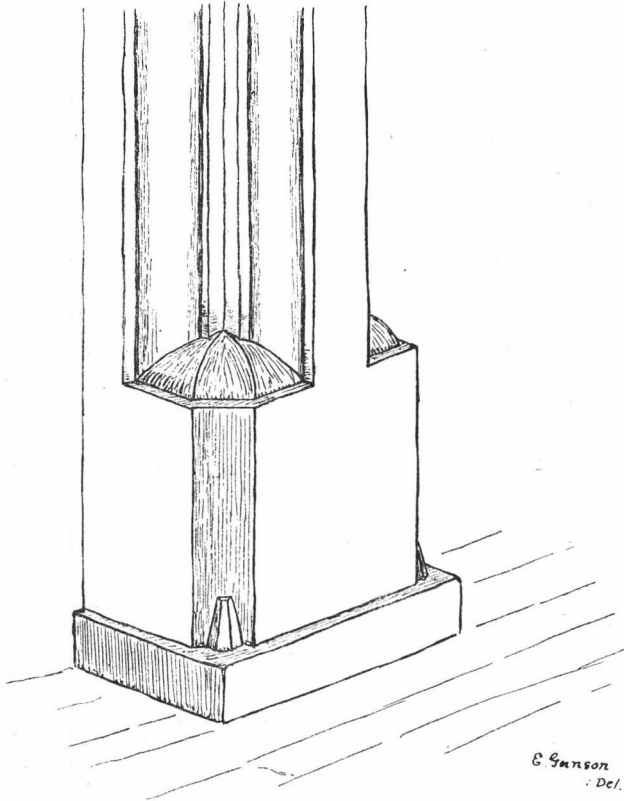
the beginning of the seventeenth century. Before doing so, however, we must call attention to the unusually huge central chimney breast, which is $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick on the ground floor and 9 feet on the upper floor, the extra 18 inches being gained by means of a large stone corbel course, which, as shown on the sketch, extends a distance of 10 feet along the entrance corridor. So massive a corbel course is unusual in the interior of a house, for anything of the kind is usually external, as,

for example, a very similar piece of work at Dinkley Hall, an ancient building in the Ribble Valley, where the chimney is supported outside the wall by the same number of corbels.



Nearly opposite this corbelling there are two archways, one leading to the stairs and the other, now to a small pantry, but formerly it was the way to the culinary wing. The jambs

of each archway are of massive oak, deeply and beautifully moulded, as will be seen from the sketch; the central division being formed of a solid pillar of oak.



*E. Gimson
Del.*



Yeardsley Hall. Oak pillar supporting the archways.
Section scale $\frac{1}{4}$ full size.

A reference to the plan will show that the building closely corresponds with the ancient halls of the fifteenth century. At the end of what was originally the great hall, but which is now divided into two sitting-rooms, there is a through passage with an external door at either end. This passage is usually separated from the hall by an oak screen, but in this case the



YEARDSLEY HALL. -- GROUND FLOOR PLAN --
Scale 20 feet to 1 inch.

huge chimney breast acts in place of the screen, and a massive arch cut out of solid oak provides the opening for the fireplace within. On the other side of the through passage, and in the almost invariable position, are the archways leading to the kitchen and butteries and other domestic quarters, as previously mentioned. Over the through passage in the earlier halls was

generally the minstrel gallery, but if this ever existed here it would be done away with when the before-mentioned chimney breast was built and the rooms formed over the hall. The staircase leads up from one of the archways to the bedrooms, and is probably in its original position, and the other archway was formerly the entrance to the kitchens. It is, however, probable that there was a third archway leading into the parlour on the left of the entrance, as this was the usual form of construction in those days, and it is not unlikely that its jamb and arch are merely hidden by the plaster work.

In any case, it seems quite clear that the existing house was reconstructed, if not practically rebuilt, upon the foundations of the ancient hall, seeing that the present building has the same lines exactly as the early halls, and in all probability it represents what, but a few years ago, would have been termed a "restoration," rather than a rebuilding. On the easterly side this seems certainly to have been the case, as it can be plainly seen where the old foundations end and the later walling begins, for the latter is in places set back in a very irregular line to lessen the thickness of the older wall.

A second staircase has been formed in modern times *within* what was originally the great flue of the kitchen chimney, the "gathering" of which can still be seen overhead. So early in character is this massive work that, taken with other similar features, there seems every indication that much of the mediæval hall was embodied in the subsequent rebuilding. Indeed, the lavish display in the size of the domestic wing, its fireplace and oven, or brewhouse, is only consistent with the necessities of a feudal, rather than a Tudor, retinue. Compare the butteries, kitchens, brewhouse and bakery in the early fifteenth century hall of the De la Warrs, now the Chetham's College, Manchester, and we have exactly the same arrangements, even to the position and size of the chimney and the plan of the two doorways leading from the through passage in the great hall.

In the plan there will be seen the method of carrying the upper floor by means of moulded beams, which are arranged in such a way that the whole of the ground floor on either side

of the through passage can be used as single apartments or divided by screens as required, and this seems to point to a very early date, much earlier than the general exterior of the hall would lead one to think.

It will be noticed also that at the extreme end of what would formerly have been the great hall, the beam carrying the upper floor is close against the end wall, which suggests that perhaps the hall, and certainly the building, was originally longer than at present, because if that wall had been the end of the building, the construction of the beams would have been similar to that shown in the portion now occupied as a kitchen, where the end is signified by the short beam at right angles to the main beams. Externally also, although the wall is now covered with plaster, there are indications that the building did not end here, for as will be seen from the plate, there are, for instance, no coign stones at the corners, and the whole has a very unfinished appearance. But imagine another wing abutting upon the front to match the other end, and we have what was probably the ancient Yeardsley Hall complete.

The old entrance door, which may be even earlier than the reign of Elizabeth, is still doing duty in its original state, and looks likely to continue to do so for a long time to come. Cellars are known to exist, and, as at Bradshaw, various attempts have been made to find them, but without success, the entrance to them having been so well covered up that all traces have been lost. It is curious that this should occur in two halls so near in locality, and one hesitates to speculate upon the reason. A simple explanation, however, may be, that in each case the cellars were below the portion of the building which is believed to have been destroyed. The whole of the upper floors are in the original oak, and are in very good condition.

Altogether, judging by the hall and its surroundings, one can safely say that although much of its ancient character has been modernized, Yeardsley Hall is still well worth a careful study, as a difficult problem in defining the curious adaptation of a typical mediæval hall to the requirements of the best period of Renaissance architecture.