

DETAIL OF SPANDEL OF PORCH, SHOWING CARVED PORTRAIT OF A BEARDED MAN.



R. Garraway Rice, F.S.A., Photo.

EAST SIDE OF COURTYARD SINCE EXECUTION OF RECENT REPAIRS,

COWDRAY, MIDHURST.

THE PORCH AT COWDRAY, WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF ITS BUILDER.

By W. V. CRAKE.

IN the year 1902 I visited Cowdray House, when this ancient building was in its lowest state of dilapidation and decay. So bad was the outlook that nothing short of a general subscription seemed capable of rescuing the building.

Things are changed, thanks to the recent action of Sir Weetman Pearson, now Lord Cowdray, the present owner, and Cowdray House now may remain for generations one of the Tudor houses which will be studied for its striking beauties and its romantic history.

Cowdray was often visited in the eighteenth century, first of all by Horace Walpole, 1749 (see his letter to George Montague, August 26th), when it was being repaired after much neglect. Sir Joseph Ayloffe, Bart., visited it in 1773, and described his visit in much detail in *Archæologia*, Vol. III., p. 239. Also in Vol. VI., "Observations on Ancient Castles." Grimm's pictures of Cowdray, inside and out, in minute detail, are a complete record of the appearance of the building before the fire, in 1780, also in *Archæologia* in 1785—both inside and out.

Professor Freeman in *English Towns*, p. 373, gives expression to the general opinion of the position of Cowdray House: "One of the greatest houses of the best house building time of the stateliest architecture, the growth of our own soil, whose associations are those of our own history, surpassed by no other nation in splendour, consistency and in practical convenience." It

was burnt in 1793. After the fire it was described in our *Collections*¹ and copiously by Mrs. C. Roundell.²

Much remains yet to be written on this subject, but I have limited myself to notes on the porch and its origin, and some reflections on the Montague Book of Rules.

The author of the building, as it is to-day, was William Fitzwilliam, younger son of Sir Thomas Fitzwilliam, of Aldwarke, West Riding, Yorkshire, his mother being Lucy, daughter and co-heir of John Neville, Marquis of Montacute. He had been brought up from 10 years old with King Henry VIII., and knew all his ways and habits; a fluent speaker of French and a sportsman; cup bearer to King Henry VIII., 1509; in 1513 one of the chief commanders against the French.

Holinshead says he was sore wounded with a quarrell (*i.e.*, crossbow bolt) and knighted at the siege of Tournay; he was made Vice-Admiral in 1518, and in the same year Wolsey's treasurer.³

He married, in 1513, Mabel, daughter of Henry, first Earl of Cumberland; this lady died in 1535 without issue.

1521 Wolsey sent him to the Court of the French King, Francis I.,⁴ who made friends with him and talked of sport. When war with France broke out in 1522, as Vice-Admiral his duty was to protect the merchant shipping against the French. He was in all the important Embassies to France, especially in 1520, with Wolsey and Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, the King's brother-in-law.

He was Comptroller of the King's household and Knight of the Garter at the time of the trial of Anne Boleyn, being a member of the Court which condemned her. He was always on the King's side when any great legal proceedings were in progress, equally in the case of Wolsey and Cromwell.

¹ Vols. V., VII., XV.

² Mrs. C. Roundell, *Cowdray—History of a great English House*.

³ Herbert's *Henry VIII.*, p. 123.

⁴ Herbert's *Henry VIII.*, p. 123.

In 1536 he was made Lord High Admiral; in 1537 treasurer of the King's household, and a peer of the realm as Lord Southampton.⁵ The arrest and custody at Cowdray of Margaret Plantagenet,⁶ Countess of Salisbury, is part of general history.

Lord Southampton and his half-brother, Sir Anthony Browne, who acted as proxy for the King, played important parts in the unlucky proceedings which took place prior to the landing of Anne of Cleves in England, and the following episode may be quoted from the State Papers of the time:—

“On December 11th, 1539, Anne of Cleves and her suite arrived at eight o'clock in the morning at the English pale (Calais) and were received by an English deputation including the Earl of Southampton Lord Admiral of England dressed in a coat of purple velvet cut on cloth of gold and tied with great aiglettes and trefoils (his cognizance) of gold . . . and baldrick-wise he wore a chain at which hung a whistle of gold (our modern boatswain's whistle) set with rich stones of great value. In this company were 30 gentlemen of the King's household very richly apparelled with great and massy chains . . . in blue velvet and crimson satin; the mariners of his ship wore satin of Bruges. The Lord Admiral with a low obeisance welcomed Anne of Cleves and brought her into Calais by the lantern—where the ships lay in the haven garnished with their banners pennants and flags pleasant to behold, and at her entrance was shot such a peal of guns that all her retinue was astonished. The town echoed the royal salute with a peal of ordnance along the coast. When she entered the lantern gate she stayed to view the Kings ships called the *Lyon* and *Sweepstakes*

⁵ The great officers of State of Henry VIII. were the Lord Chancellor and Lord Treasurer and President of Council and Privy Seal, Lord Chamberlain, Lord High Constable, Lord Marshall, the Lord High Admiral of England: this last was the rank of Lord Southampton.

See Furnival, *Harrison's England in Shakespeare's Youth*, p. 138. Book II.

⁶ S.A.C., Vol. XXI., p. 83. She was moved from Cowdray to the Tower 12th May, 1539; executed on Tower Hill May, 1541.

which were decked with over a hundred banners of silk and gold.”⁷

A correspondence exists in the Record Office from Lord Southampton to Henry VIII., describing how the weather compelled the delay of Anne of Cleves at Calais. Anne of Cleves wished for society to amuse her, and invited Lord Southampton to come to supper with her, “and to bring some noble folks” . . . “to sit with her” . . . “for this one night” . . . “to see the manner and fashion of Englishmen sitting at their meat.” . . . Southampton consented and begs for pardon if he has done amiss. . . . It is also stated elsewhere that Southampton helped to beguile her time by teaching the princess cards.⁸

The Lord High Admiral joined the northern expedition 1542, leading the van under the command of the Duke of Norfolk. Lord Southampton died at Newcastle. In honour to his memory his standard was carried in the “forward” throughout the whole expedition which ended in the English victory of Solway Moss.

Cowdray had formed part of the Midhurst property of the De Bohun family. In 1397 a De Bohun represented Midhurst in Parliament. In 1499 John de Bohun (pronounced and often written Boon) died without heir. The estate passed to Sir Daniel Owen, natural brother of Henry VII., a great personage at Court. The estate was sold to Sir William Fitzwilliam, 1528, and permission was obtained from the King to enlarge the park and build a castle.

There is evidence of an ancient fortified Manor House on the site, with its gate-house, moat, hexagon towers now occupied by the kitchen and northern hexagon tower, which has a fine vaulted crypt.

The chapel occupies the position of an older chapel, as is evident from the number of tiles found below the floor with large patterns running over four tiles with inset decorations of the thirteenth century. The age of

⁷ State Paper MS., 31 Henry VIII.

⁸ Record Office, Ellis Letters, First Series, Vol. II., p. 121.

the original building may be guessed by the finding amongst the *débris* the cap of a twelfth century column, and a catapult stone lately unearthed.

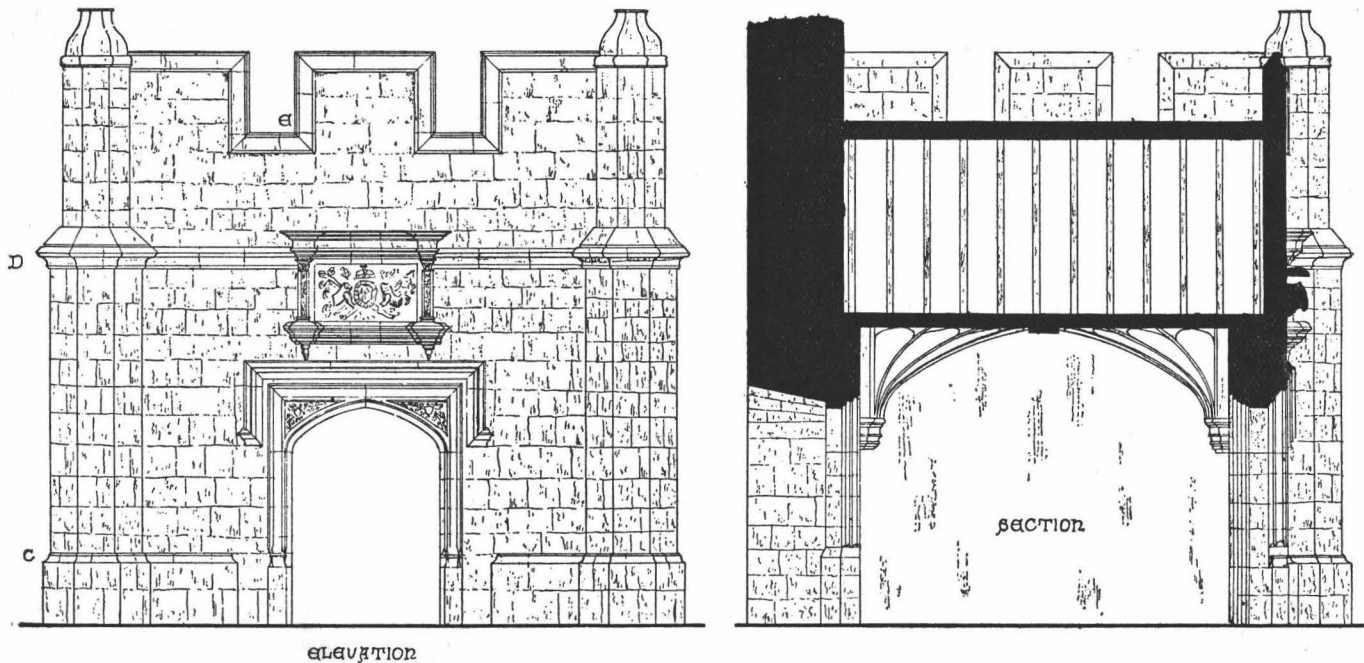
The porch which approaches the great hall from the principal or fountain court acts as an entrance to the building opening on the south side of the screen with the kitchens, butteries and serving rooms on the right hand, which were also approached by the Base Court; above this passage and over the screen was a minstrel's gallery with its own stair approach.⁹ The porch, like the rest of the hall, is made of limestone ashlar and has a bold battlemented decoration with octagon turrets at the angles with tapering finials at the top, terminated formerly with heraldic pennons emblazoned and gilded. The door is the usual depressed Tudor arch with a dripstone returned at the ends. The decoration over the door consists of a classic panel, with elegant flat panelled pilasters, with ornamented caps. Within the panel are the Tudor royal arms with griffin and lion supporters in a garter with the motto "Honi soit qui mal y pense." There is an arabesque in the panel of each pilaster, consisting of a simple upright stem, with right and left leaves issuing therefrom, with a two-winged cherub at the centre point. The crown which surmounts the royal arms is the imperial crown, supported by a helmet very much defaced; the arms and supporters are slung in a wreath from rings carved in the wall (an unusual way of heraldic attachment). The carving of the fruit forming the wreath is very bold. To understand the groining turn to the drawings (see folded Plate and Fig. i.).¹⁰

The groined roof is on the same plan as in the Anne Boleyn Gate at Hampton Court; it is of a white chalky limestone, and has stood till to-day, but latterly the water was coming through the roof, and to Lord Cowdray we owe its preservation. Thinking the future of the porch was precarious in 1903, I persuaded my friend

⁹ The fine white stone is probably Caen stone, as at Hampton Court. Binstead stone and in the rubble work Petworth sandstone are also used in the building; also brick.

¹⁰ A part of the groining in 1906 had already fallen where the drawing is represented blank.

Fig. 1.



COWDRAY, MIDHURST.
THE PORCH.

W. E. Ginner, jun., del.

Mr. Ginner to spend a short holiday in making the drawings which he has carried out so well, and which are now the property of Lord Cowdray, and we are indebted to his kindness for permission to reproduce these drawings.

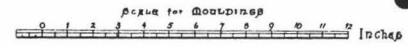
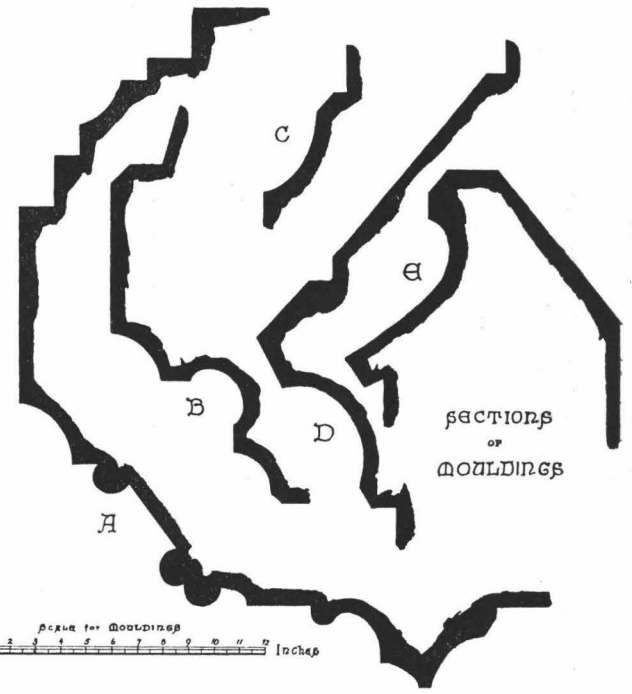
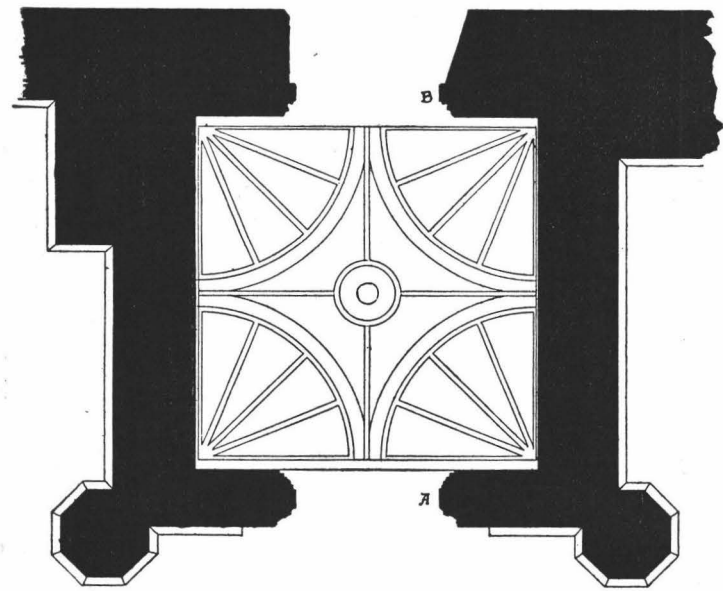
The date of the porch may be obtained from the emblems which occur there, namely, the Admiral's Anchor, the Prince of Wales' Plumes and the letters W.S.¹¹ Sir William Fitzwilliam, Vice-Admiral, was made Lord High Admiral in 1536; Treasurer of the Household of King Henry VIII. in 1537 and Earl of Southampton. In 1537 the Prince of Wales was born. This fixes the date at the earliest at 1537.

The Tudor rose in the centre is obviously borrowed from Hampton Court; the small five-petal roses, alternated with pomegranates, are treated in the spandrels of the panels of the groining in so purely decorative a way that the pomegranate associated with Catharine of Aragon need only be a dim memory of the artist working unconsciously with materials familiar from constant use.

The portraits which are part of the decoration of the porch roof have yet to be assigned. The man is bearded. Lord Southampton was clean shaved; see his portrait in the Windsor Holbein series of drawings. The lady has the close fitting cap hiding the hair and ears, with a five-petalled flower at the corner of the cap. The slipped trefoil is the cognizance of the Fitzwilliams (see above); it occurs in the groining, and in the right-hand inside spandril of the entrance doorway with the anchor. The letters which accompany this seem to be mutilated, and may easily be the same as the W W which occur in the lead pipes lying in the kitchen wing, which show the anchor and **W W** planted one capital on another, presumably a monogram of William FitzWilliam, the Fitz being treated as the French *De* or German *Von*, and ignored in the abbreviation. In the right-hand spandril outside there is the cognizance of Browne of Betchworth—a griffin's head erased, beaked and eared.

¹¹ The triple ostrich feathers, the emblem of the Prince of Wales, issue from a coronet showing a cross pattee between four fleurs de lis.

Fig. ii.



COWDRAY, MIDHURST.
PLAN AND MOULDINGS OF PORCH.

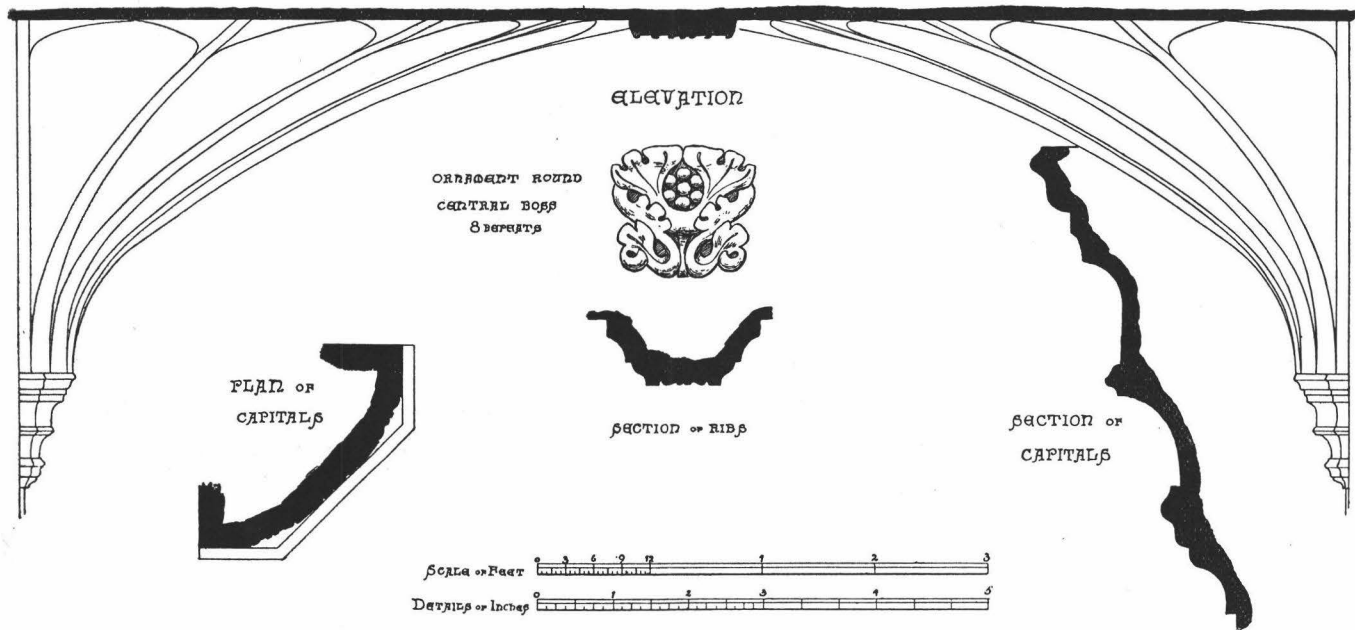
W. E. Ginner, jun., del.

The connection between Sir W. Fitzwilliam as treasurer of Wolsey's household at Hampton Court, and also as treasurer of the household of Henry VIII., compels one to look for some similarity in the styles of the two buildings. In *Vetusta Monumenta*, Vol. III., p. 37, the louvre in the great hall with its pennons and heraldic beasts, the position in the roof is the same in the hall as in the hall at Hampton Court, destroyed in the eighteenth century. The following are the measurements of the hall and great chamber: Hall, 60-ft. by 28-ft.; great chamber, 41-ft. by 21-ft.,; height from ground level to joists, 14-ft.; 11-ft. to top of panelling. Mr. Ernest Law, the historian of Hampton Court, on reading these notes, observes, "the analogies with Hampton Court are too striking to be accidental." Some dates are useful for reference. Wolsey left Hampton Court 1530. Henry and Catherine entered immediately. During 1531-2-3 additions and embellishments took place at Hampton Court; the great hall was built. Anne Boleyn crowned 1533. The great hall window at Cowdray and Hampton Court are similar in plan; the great watching chamber and the great chamber at Cowdray are similar in position. 1537 is the date of Queen Jane Seymour's lying in¹² and death at Hampton Court. See Lord Southampton's letter informing Cromwell of the former event.

The artist who carved the groining at Cowdray may be considered as a designer of originality and refinement, and he has left behind him a monument of singular beauty.

The happy survival of the porch preserves evidence of sumptuous architectural beauty in domestic architecture, and a skilled handling of Gothic construction which cannot be equalled even at Hampton Court. The designer seems to have thoroughly assimilated the new decorative ideas of Italy, but has left the porch still

¹² A letter to Cromwell from the Earl of Southampton states that she took to her chamber September 16th, 1537, with all ceremonies appertaining to the retirement of an English Queen in her situation.—*Record Office State Papers*, Vol. I., p. 565.



COWDRAY, MIDHURST.

DETAILS OF PORCH.

W. E. Ginner, jun., del.

constructionally Gothic. If you compare it with the Bishop Fox chantry at Winchester or the Margaret Salisbury Plantagenet chantry at Christ Church, Hampshire, the true Gothic of the groining will be understood.

The decorative features which play so pleasant a part in the flowing lines, the treatment of the acanthus leaf, both as engaged leaves and in the large bosses, suggest classical ideas assimilated by a craftsman brought up in a school where Gothic principles dominated. The working in of the oak leaf in many fanciful ways with the pomegranate as a centre, shows the old craftsman who has worked for many years under Catharine of Aragon. The most original feature of the porch is the use of the brattishing, which, without injuring general effect, has a double inverted scroll, a Renaissance feature which in time killed all the flowing lines of Gothic architecture. The amorini are of the simplest form of cherub, and seemed to have been put in as a mere fashionable decoration, and may be ignored in the general effect.¹³ As Freeman suggests, the style is a natural and not an exotic growth.

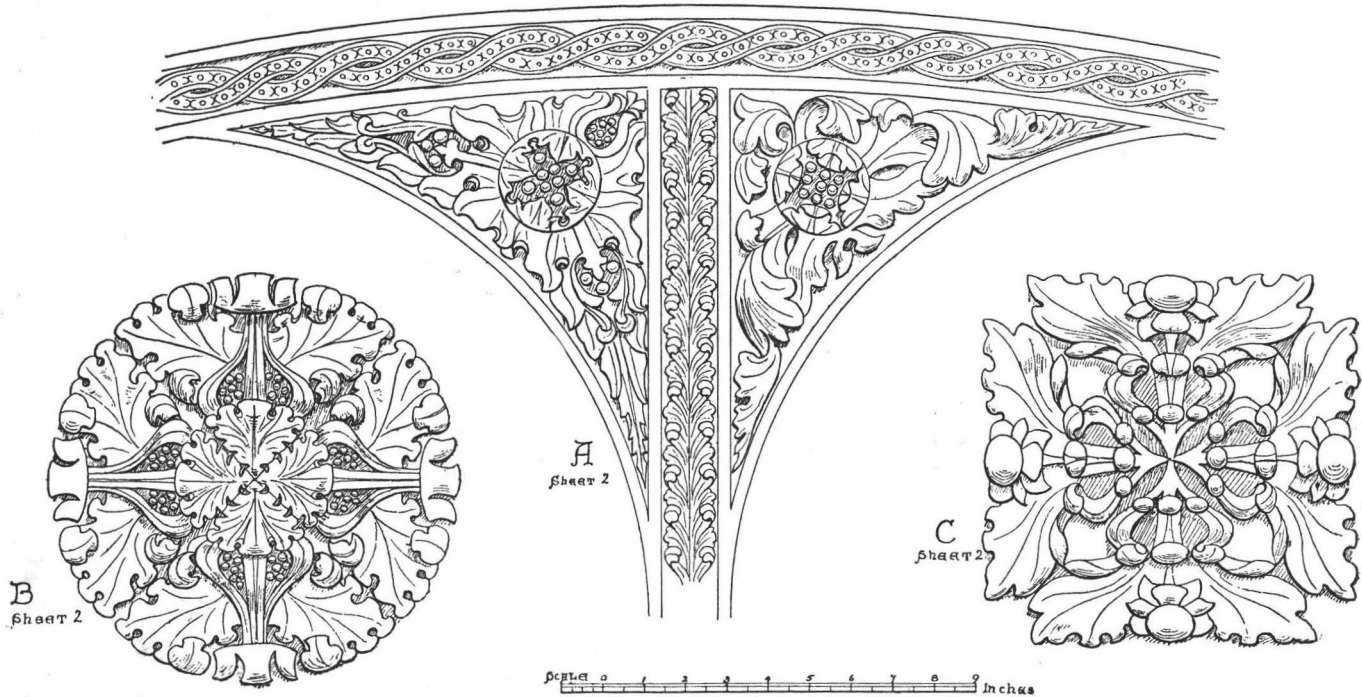
The general plan of the fan vaulting of the two gateways of the first court at Hampton Court is similar, but with the exception of the central boss (the tudor rose) the decorations are different.¹⁴

The slight remains of colour at Cowdray Porch are the same as in the colour scheme of Wolsey's closet at Hampton Court, still existing, namely, red, gold and bice (blue). The Hampton Court colour scheme is rich in the extreme and like nothing else to be seen in any other surviving building. It was referred to by

¹³ Here is an example of the fully-developed Renaissance art from the directions for Queen Jane Seymour's monument at Windsor, quoted by Speed and Horace Walpole; the designer was an Italian, Benedetto de Robezzano: "Children were to sit at the corners of the tomb having baskets of roses, red and white, which they shall show to take in their hands and cast them down. The figure to be represented not as in death, but as sweetly sleeping."

¹⁴ There is a small panelled monument of Renaissance character in the fifth bay of the south aisle of Chichester Cathedral, very much mutilated and without date, and there are arabesques of naked boys and endorsed fish, and a boy playing a guitar, with the slipped trefoil of the Fitzwilliams with the I.H.S. figured upon it. There seems a connection between this monument and Cowdray.

Fig. iv.



A
sheet 2

B
sheet 2

C
sheet 2

Scale 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Inches

COWDRAY, MIDHURST.
DETAILS OF CEILING.

W. E. Ginner, jun., del.

Cavendish, in his history of Wolsey: "My buildings sumptuous, the roofs with gold and byse shone like the sun in mid-day sphere."

The period which succeeded the death of the Lord High Admiral, Lord Southampton, covered the five years of his half-brother, Sir Anthony Browne's, occupation of Cowdray; the occupation by his son Anthony—Lord Montague—followed, during which periods the gate-house and two long galleries of the court were completed, Lord Montague placing his arms with sixteen quarterings on the gate-house. This short paper cannot treat with the visits of Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth in great state to Cowdray. I must refer to Vols. V. and VII. of our *Collections* for a detailed description of these events.

The son of Sir Anthony Browne,¹⁵ the first Lord Montague, who died in 1592, having survived his eldest son only a few months, was succeeded by his grandson, Anthony Mary Browne, Viscount Montague, who came of age in 1595. This youth has put his name to a book of orders and rules, entitled, "For the better Direction of my Household," a book still extant, and referred to by Horace Walpole as "A collection of forms and ceremonies by Lord Montague to be used about his person."¹⁶

It might be suggested that, as the circulation of manuscript books was common in the sixteenth century, the probability was that Anthony Mary Lord Montague set his name to a book which he found in manuscript, inserting such passages as: "My comptroller,"¹⁷ "I being a Viscount," and the lists of his household. He also refers to the "lower baye window chamber at Cowdray

¹⁵ Sir Anthony Browne, half-brother of Lord Southampton, was the first lay owner of Battle Abbey, and succeeded his half-brother at Cowdray.

¹⁶ Horace Walpole: *A ridiculous mimicry of Royal ceremony.*

¹⁷ To-day every royal prince and great nobleman has his comptroller, a high official who is always of gentle birth. Here he is described as: "A comptroller is a principal officer belonging to me as I am a Viscount." He also has to wear a gown, and attend at table with a white wand.

CEILING OF THE PORCH COMDRAY CASTLE MIDNARST

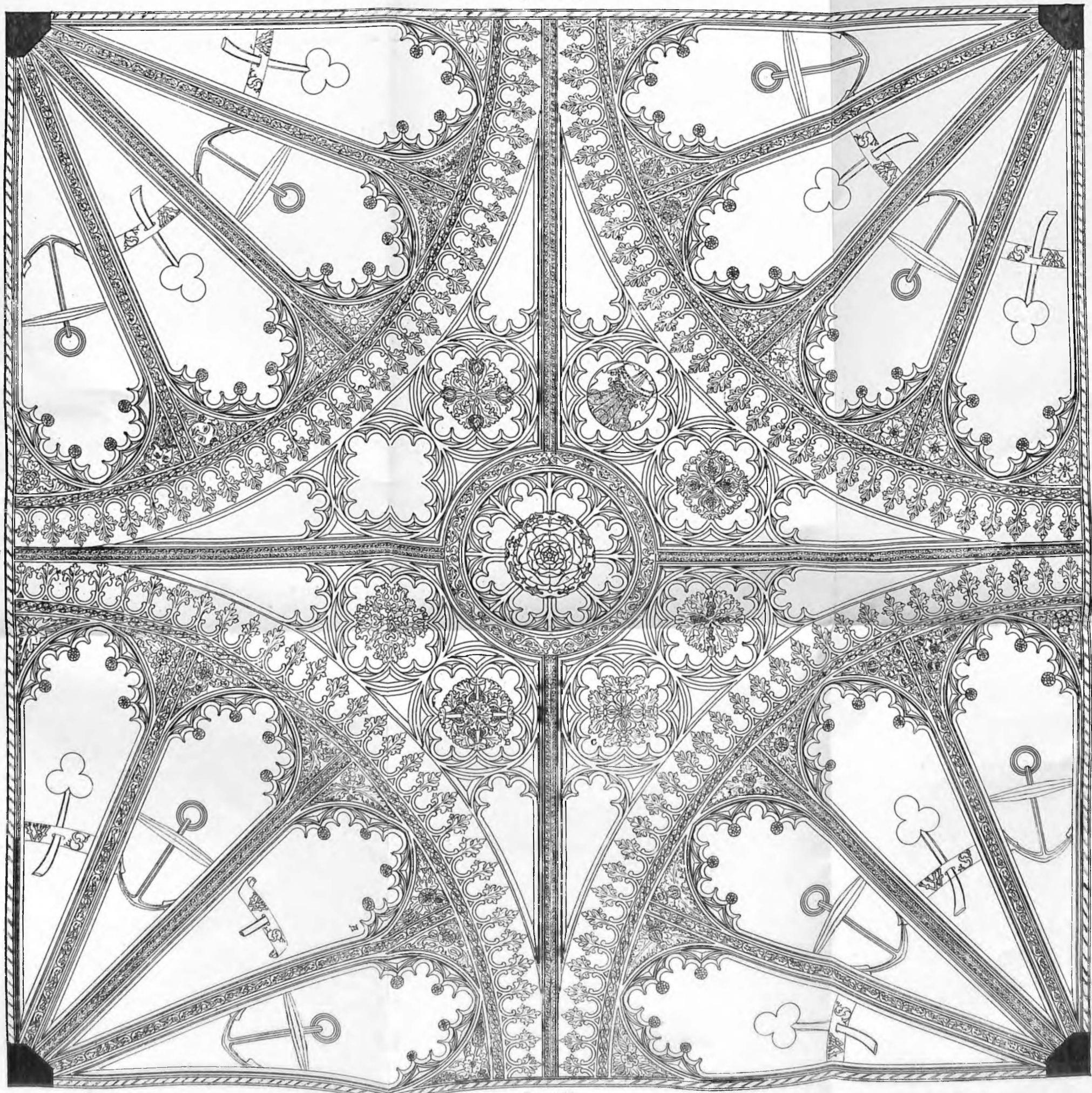
SHEET 2.

SOUTH

WEST

EAST

NORTH



on the right hand of the great gate . . . ” for his steward’s room.¹⁸ That such books existed is certain.

The object stated in the preface is that he may “maintain the Estate of myne house . . . according to my degree.”

There is a book of rules quoted by Sir S. Scott called “Orders for Household Servants,” by John Harington, dated 1566, and renewed by his son. The Northumberland Household book is also well known. It was not difficult for a young man to become deeply impressed with the necessity of order and extraordinary care, and to feel that he ought also to have such a book when his house had seen the visit of two Sovereigns, Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth, and three Privy Councils had sat at Cowdray under Edward VI., add to which that the last of the Plantagenets, Margaret Countess of Salisbury, had been entertained at Cowdray as a prisoner by Sir William Fitzwilliam on her way to the Tower and ultimate execution.

The officers, including the gentleman waiters, were either men of gentle birth or gentlemen by office; the gentlemen waiters’ servants are included with Yeoman servants.

The list is not complete, but there were at least 100 retainers in this household, probably a moderate estimate.

Anthony Mary then possessed Battle Abbey, Byflete House, Surrey, and West Hothly, Surrey. Mention is made of transferring his household to the several houses.

The Earl of Derby, at Stowe, had a family household consisting of 240 servants, while Lord Burghley, being frugal, had only 100. Mr. Ernest Law, in his book on Hampton Court, refers to 500 as a moderate estimate of Wolsey’s household, and 1,000 for Henry VIII.

The late Duchess of Cleveland, who lived at Battle Abbey, and knew the management of such a house as Raby Castle, in her book, *A History of Battle Abbey*, privately printed, speaking of this book of rules of Anthony Mary Browne, Lord Montague says: “The

¹⁸ This lower bay window chamber is seen in the inside of the Fountain Court in the Plate xxxvii., Vol. III., *Vetusta Monumenta*.

gentleman Usher more resembled the groom of the Chambers of the present day than any one else. His duties at Cowdray were: He had to see to the bedding 'so that two goe to a bed, always provided that a gentleman be matcht with a gentleman, and a yeoman with a yeoman.' On journeys he was to usher me or my wife through cities townes, &c., bare-headed, as well on horseback as on foot."

A few quotations are necessary to show the incredible number of duties spread over the vast household:— Clerk of the kitchen: Cutting up of the ox; powdering, salting; providing clothes for the boys of the kitchen; nets for the warreners; nets for fishing and stews; looking after cellar, buttery, and alms for the poor.

The dinner has the solemnity of a church function. The table cloth was carried to the table to the dining room with due reverences, that is making two "curtseyseys" (bows) thereto, one about the midst of the chamber, the other when he cometh to the table (although there be no one present).

Then three divisions for special duties:—

- I. The Repayre (or visit) of the Prince.
- II. Marriage of my children.
- III. Christmas.

The youth could scarcely unassisted have projected himself so far into the future as to speak of the marriage of my children; this goes far towards proving the theory that the book was in existence before the days of Anthony Mary, and makes it still more valuable as the picture of a great nobleman's family of the Middle Tudor period.

Might not Shakespeare in his visits with his stage players to noble houses such as Cowdray have thus obtained his knowledge of State and Courts in their smallest detail. There is a passage from the directions for the Cowdray Steward¹⁹:—

I will that in civil sort he does reprehend and correct persons and by his grave admonition reprove privy mutineers carding and dicing at untimely hours, admonishing them whether they be gentlemen or yeomen.

¹⁹ See *S. A. C.*, Vol. VII., p. 185.

Surely this is the very picture of Malvolio. I refer to "Twelfth Night," Act II., Scene 3:—²⁰

Have you no wit . . . or honesty but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night; do ye make an alehouse of my lady's house.

In "Twelfth Night" again, Act II., Scene 3, Maria says of Malvolio, speaking of his knowledge of Rules of State:—

An affectioned (affected) ass that cons state without book (by heart) and utters it by great swarths (*i.e.*, as a mower only swarths of corn).

Shakespeare might have seen such a man as Malvolio studying a Book of Rules and learning it by heart.

In the Booke of Rules there are arrangements for laying beds in the hall and in the withdrawing rooms and laying out pallets in the sitting rooms, to make them clean and sweet with flowers and boughs in season, each attendant (like an Anglo-Indian household) having special duties. Here is an illustration how Shakespeare alludes to the players in a nobleman's house:—

Shakespeare refers to the sweetening of a chamber thus: "Taming of the Shrew," Induction, Scene 1. The players are to be taken into the room where Christopher Sly, the tinker, is brought. The Lord says: "Give them friendly welcome, every one." The Lord has ordered his servant to "carry him (the tinker) gently to my fairest chamber, hang it round with all my wanton pictures, balm his foul head in warm distilled waters . . . and burn sweet wood to make the lodging sweet."²¹

The play shows every waiter has a different duty, one to carry the silver basin, another to bear the ewer, a third the diaper.²²

Take another example. Surely no great hall was ever more suited for "Midsummer Night's Dream" than

²⁰ Earliest date of "Twelfth Night" is 1602; the whole play is full of references to State and household directions. See Act II., Scene 5.

²¹ A play believed to be Shakespeare's was published in 1594 with "Taming of the Shrew," "as acted by the Right Honble. the Earle of Pembroke his Servants," that is the year before the date of the Book of Rules.

²² Harrison's *Description of England in 1577-1587*, p. 135, "Young serving men, old beggars, because service is none heritage, these men are profitable to none, they are enemies to their masters, lead to prodigality and erros, it were verie good that the superfluous heapes of them is diminished."

the hall at Cowdray, with its great oriel window opening on the dais, a natural stage. See Act III., Scene 1:—

Snout : Doth the moon shine that night we play our play ?

Bottom : A calendar ! Look in the almanack ; find out moonshine.

Quince : Yes, it doth shine that night.

Bottom : Why, then may you leave a casement of the Great Chamber window, where we play, open ; and the moon may shine in at the casement.

Can we not imagine such a scene at Cowdray, with the fountain splashing outside.

Those who saw the "Souvenir Normand" play and helped in the preparations at Battle Abbey Hall,²³ know how play and pageant suit these Tudor halls, and can travel in imagination with Shakespeare from hall to manor house and back again to the London small and fair of the days of Elizabeth.

Sir Sibbald Scott has given a very complete account of the Book of Rules in Vol. VII. of our *Collections*, with long extracts ; there are more than 200 pages in the original. This book is truly a searchlight into a forgotten chapter of English history, and should be printed in some publications like the Everyman Series, and placed with such books as Furnival's *England in Shakespeare's Youth*, and on the same shelf with Shakespeare in every library.

²³ I was present in the empty hall at 8 a.m. in the morning, the stage was set up at ten, and the scenery and curtain, and the play took place at 4 p.m. The arrival of the players and the finding of green rooms in odd rooms was a complete revival of the Shakespearian life.