

LETTER TO DAWSON TURNER, ESQ., V.P.

ON

THE RUINED LODGE AT DRAYTON.

BY

HENRY HARROD, ESQ.

Honorary Secretary.

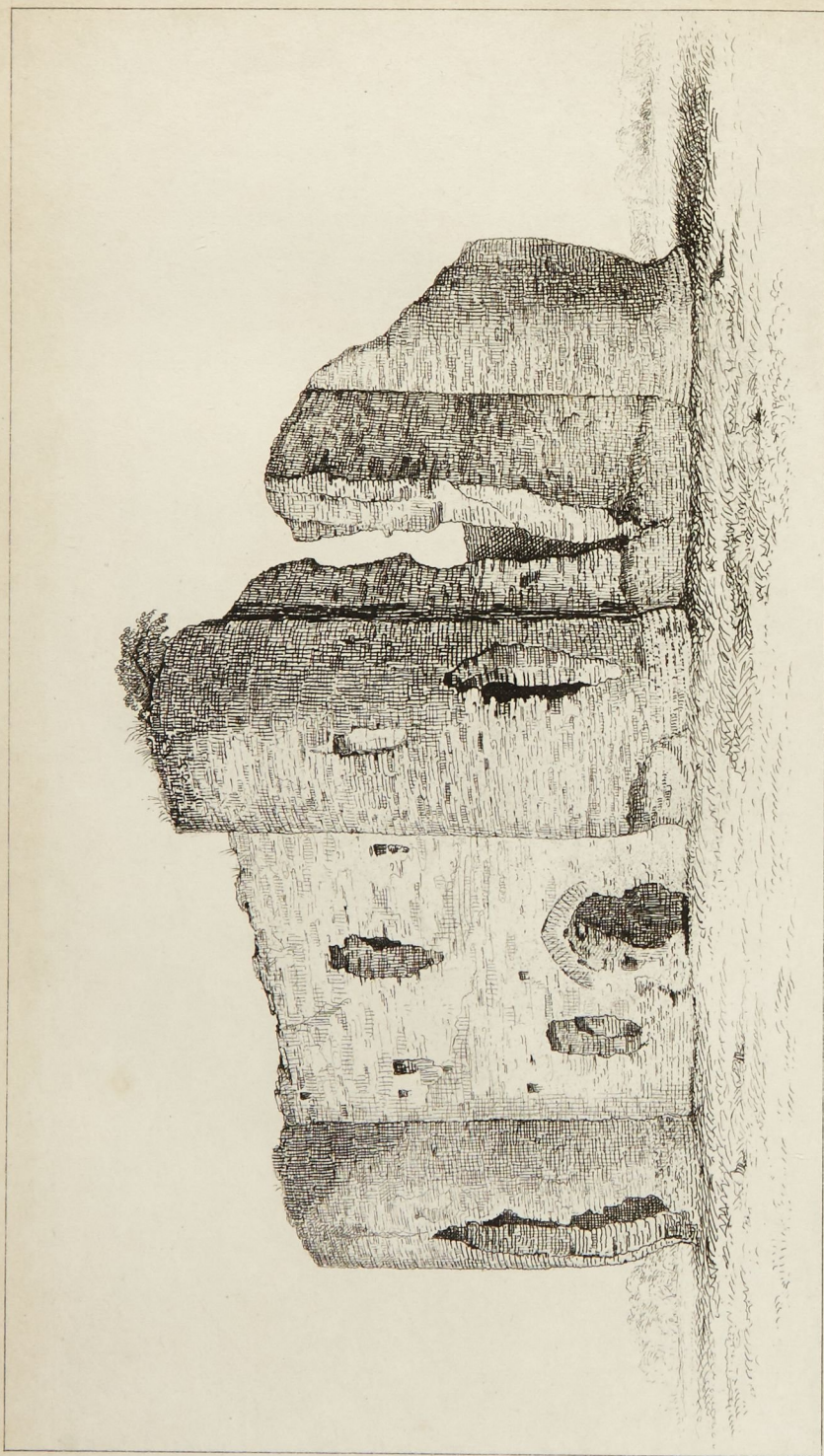
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“SOMETIMES [William Taylor] extended his walk to the adjacent village of Drayton, where, on a gentle eminence, stood the mouldering walls of an ancient structure, on whose origin even tradition has no fable, and which is now only known by the name of Drayton Lodge. These ruins suggested to him the following imitation of an Italian sonnet:—

“I asked of Time,—‘Who reared yon towery hall,  
Which thou art levelling with its native soil?’  
He answered not, but spurned the crumbling wall,  
And sprang on sounding wing to further spoil.  
I asked of Fame,—‘Thou who canst tell of all  
That man achieves by wit, or force or toil:’  
She too stands mute, th’ unpointing fingers fall,  
From the vain search her wandered eyes recoil.  
I entered. In the vault Oblivion stood,  
Stopping with weeds the rifts where sunbeams shine;  
From stone to stone the giant spectre strode.  
‘Canst thou reveal,’ I asked, ‘with what design—’  
A voice of thunder fills the dim abode,—  
‘Whose it has been I care not,—now ’tis mine.’”

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Drawn & Etched by H. Frahm.

DRAYTON LODGE, NORFOLK.



MY DEAR SIR,

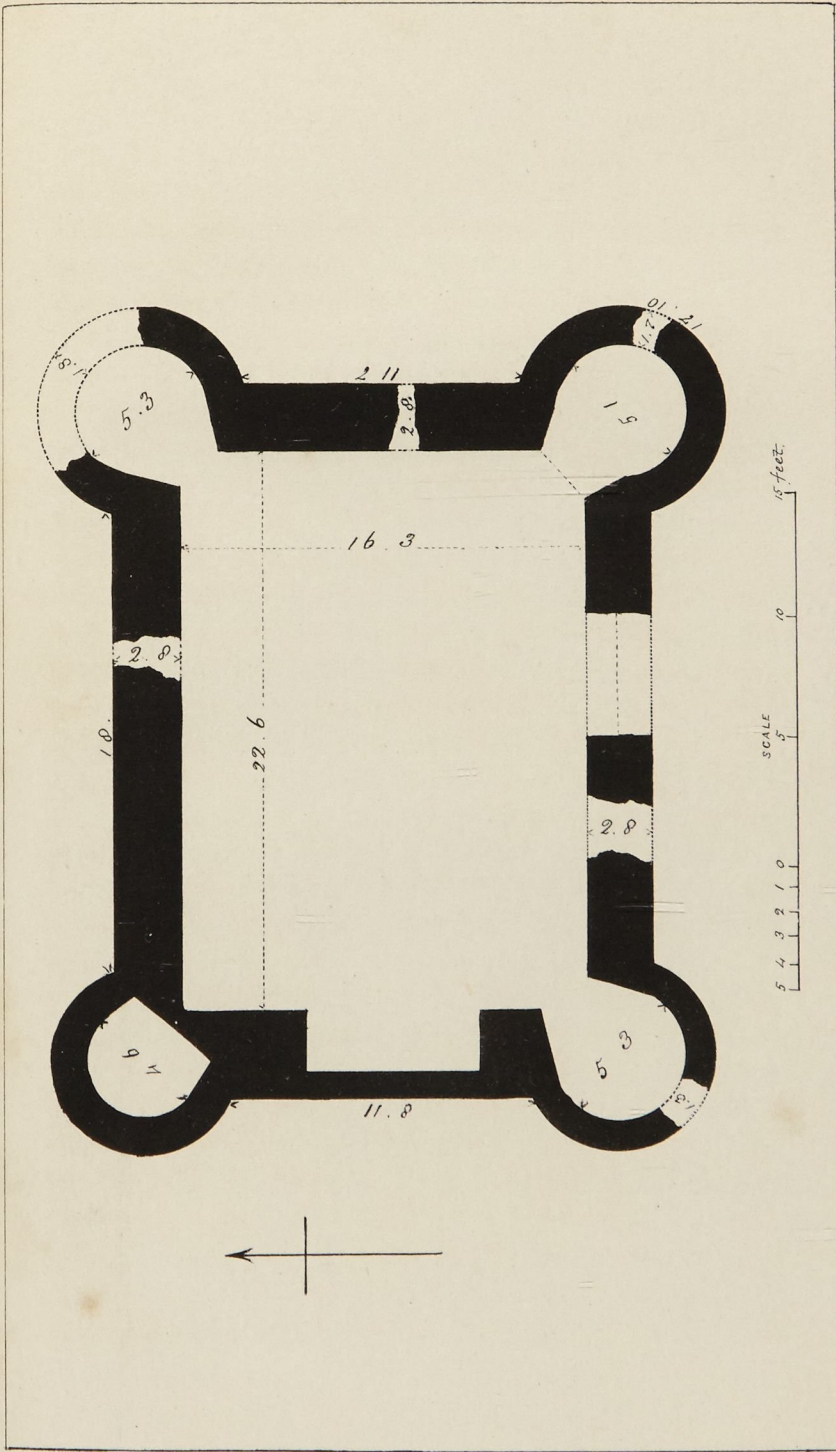
The recent discoveries of Romano-British urns at Drayton having again drawn public attention to the old ruin in the vicinity, I visited it a few days since, in company with some of our Committee, with the view of endeavouring to pierce the mystery which envelopes its history.

I need hardly tell you, when you look at the accompanying drawing, that there is no connection between this structure and the sepulchral remains lately discovered beyond vicinage; and I have prefaced my letter with the extract from Taylor's *Life*, to which your friend, Mr. Borrow, drew our attention the other day at your house, because it expresses in forcible language the state of public information respecting it.

My curiosity was considerably stimulated by the very different, irreconcilable, conclusions arrived at by those who had seen it; some claiming for it a venerable antiquity, whilst others stoutly maintained that it was a thing of yesterday—a modern antique.

It stands a short distance to the left of the road leading from St. Martin's gates to Fakenham, about three miles and a half from the city, and half a mile from the village of Drayton, on what was, until recently, open heath; and, placed almost at the edge of the hill overlooking the valley of the Wensum, it forms a striking object in the view for a considerable distance.

It is built entirely of a yellowish brick of a rather large size, (10 in. by 5 in., and 2 in. thick) in the Old English mode of a course of "headers" and a course of "stretchers." Its form is oblong, 22 ft. 6 in. by 16 ft. 3 in., with a large round tower of twenty-two feet in circumference, at each corner. The entrance is by a large depressed arch in the South front, to the left of which a small narrow aperture seems



DRAYTON LODGE, NORFOLK.

GROUND PLAN.

H. MINHAM, LITHO.



to have afforded all the light to be had in the lower room, when the door was closed: the South-western tower appears to have had a staircase. Holes remain in the internal walls, in which the beams of an upper floor were inserted. A capacious flue in the West wall shows the position of the fire-place in the lower apartment; whilst the East wall has a similar convenience for the upper room.

Almost all architectural details are destroyed, and not a fragment of stone or timber is to be found. The arch of entrance is so mutilated as to be made out with difficulty; and on a first glance you would be led to believe the brick-work was of so tender a description, that it must have crumbled to pieces. The contrary, however, is the case: the bricks I examined were extremely hard\* and the mortar good; and such care has been exercised in strengthening it in various parts, that the idea of its having been erected for show or pastime will, on a careful examination of it, be at once dispelled.

What then is it?—what its history?

The people in the neighbourhood will tell you it has always been called the “Lodge:” it is shown in Ogilby’s *Book of Roads* as “Drayton Lodge;” and the editors of the *History of Norfolk*, Booth, 1781, say of it, “the Lodge, now ruinous, is a conspicuous object” on the Norwich side of Drayton.

The yellowish tone of the bricks—the springing of arches in the staircase tower, evidently of a depressed form—a massive arch strengthening the North-eastern tower; and a loop in the Western wall—reminded me strongly of portions of the buildings at Caister by Yarmouth.

I found on my return that Fastolf held Hellesdon and

\* I have been informed, since my visit, that the external brick-work has been a good deal acted upon by the frost: the bricks I examined were probably from the interior.



Drayton in the time of Henry VI., and that the Pastons succeeded him; and this naturally led me to refer to those valuable records, the *Paston Letters*.

From these, it appears that, in 1465, a violent attack had been made by the Duke of Suffolk, with some 300 men, on Hellesdon, where the Pastons then had a residence, and very considerable damage was done by him and his followers. Margaret Paston, writing to her husband, John Paston, Esq., Sunday, 27th October, 1465, says:

“ I was at Hellesdon upon Thursday last past, and saw the place there, [their house,] and in good faith there will no creature think how foully and horribly it is arrayed but if [unless] they saw it; there cometh much people daily to wonder thereupon, both of Norwich and of other places, and they speak shamefully thereof: the Duke had by better than a thousand pound that it had never been done, . . . . and they made your tenants at Hellesdon and Drayton, with other, to help to break down the walls of the Place and *the Lodge* both, God knoweth full evil against their wills, but that they durst none otherwise do for fear. . . . . If it might be, I would some men of worship might be sent from the King, to see how it is, both there *and at the Lodge*, ere than any snows come, that they may make report of the truth, else it shall not more be seen so plainly as it may now. . . . .”

Nothing appears to have been done in accordance with her wishes at that time, and in 1466 her husband died in London, the King (Edward IV.) having shortly before seized his estates.

In 1469 the King was at Norwich; and John Paston the younger, writing to his brother, Sir John Paston, Knight, (who had taken possession of his father's estates in 1466, by a warrant from the King) says:

“ Item, the King rode *through Hellesdon Warren towards Walsingham*; and Thomas Wingfield promised me, that he



would find the means that my Lord of Gloucester and himself both should *shew* the King *the Lodge* that was broken down, and also that they would *tell* him of the breaking down of *the place*. Contrary to these matters, and all the comfort that I had of my Lord Scales, Sir John Wydville, and Thomas Wingfield, my uncle William saith, that the King told him [with] his own mouth, when he had ridden forth *by the Lodge in Hellesdon Warren*, that he supposed as well that it might fall down by the self, as be plucked down; for if it had been plucked down, he said that we might have put in our bills of it, when his judges sat on the Oyer and Determiner in Norwich, he being there:" and the King persisted in leaving the affair to be settled at law, and went on his way.

If it be asked how I can connect the Lodge referred to in the above extracts with Drayton Lodge, I would reply, that the road past this ruin was the *Old Walsingham Way*; and from the city to Drayton, even so late as the last century, the land on each side of the road was one continuous open heath and warren; that no other trace of a ruin is to be found elsewhere on this line of road; that the Paston's *Place* at Hellesdon was in the valley at the foot of the hill on which the ruins stand, and could not be *seen from this road*, but would have been in full view of the King on the Lower or Hellesdon road, had he chosen to take that circuitous and unfrequented route; and on *that road* no "*Lodge*" was to be seen except this; and that the most serious damages are on the North-eastern tower and North wall, and therefore the points most clearly seen from the Walsingham road.

With a residence in a valley, a building like this—at a short distance, of some strength, commanding from its battlements a view of the country in every direction for many miles, within bow-shot too of one of the leading roads to Norwich—was no mean addition to the security and comfort

of the proprietors in the troubled times of Fastolf and the Pastons, to the period of whose possession of the estate I am inclined to assign the erection of the building.

A ruin it probably remained for centuries, until, at some comparatively recent period, it was patched up and made the residence of a warrener: for many years it has however been again abandoned to neglect and decay; and so entirely have all traces of its history faded from the memories of those who have lived around it, that, in the words of Mr. Roberts, "even tradition has no fable of its origin."

I am,  
My dear Sir,  
Yours very faithfully,  
HENRY HARROD.

Bank Street, Norwich,  
Jan. 17th, 1849.

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