

The Star Hotel, Great Yarmouth.

COMMUNICATED BY

C. J. PALMER, ESQ., F.S.A.

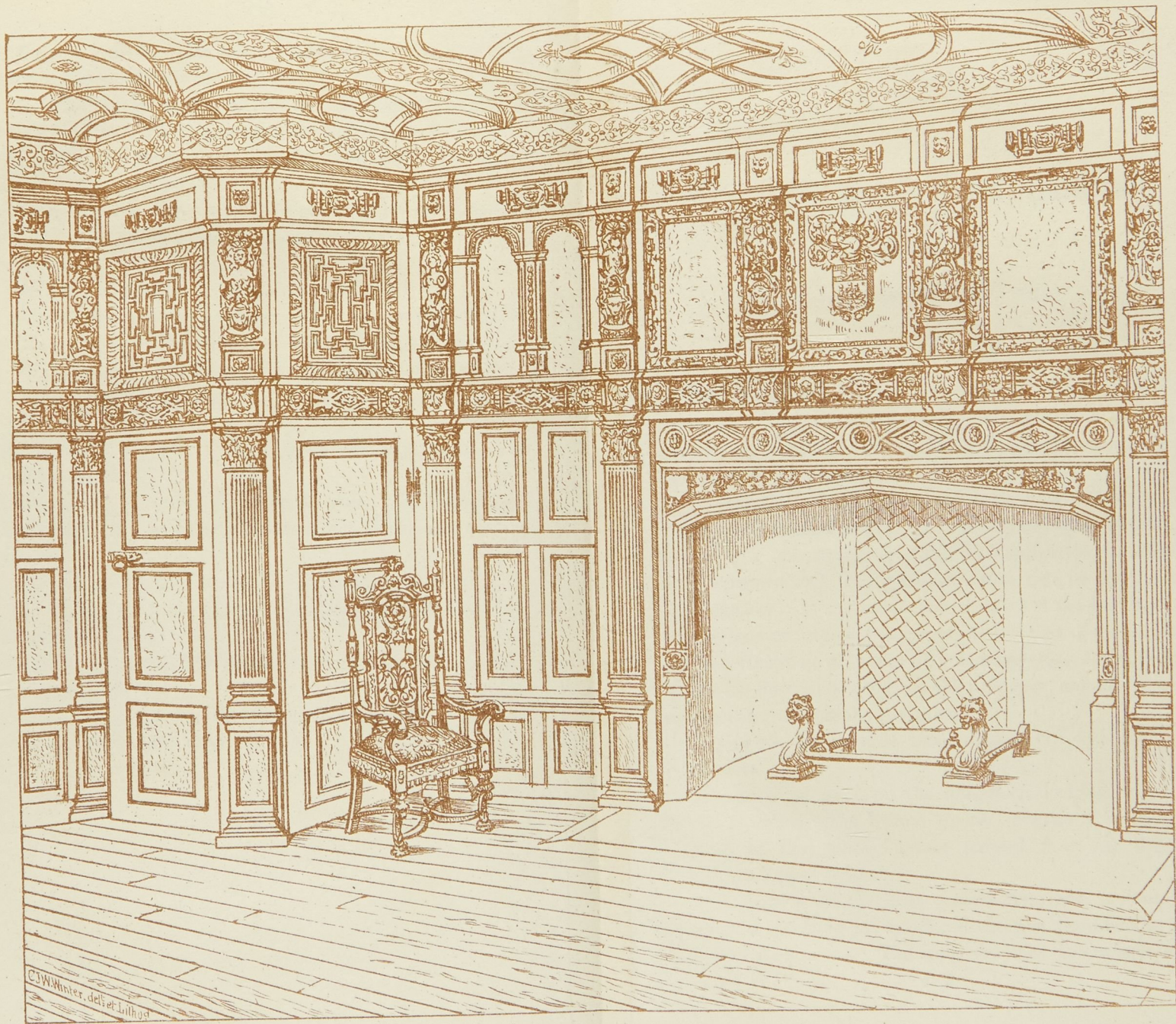
THE Star Hotel, situate on the Quay at Great Yarmouth, bears abundant evidence of having been erected in the latter part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and affords us a good specimen of the residence of a wealthy burgess at that period.

The exterior, fronting the Quay, built of smoothed squared flints, with stone dressings, has undergone little alteration. There is a balcony to the first floor supported on pillars. The entrance and the rooms on either side on the ground floor are low. It was a common practice at the period when this house was erected, to appropriate this part of the building for the reception of goods and merchandise; the principal rooms for the family being on the first floor, and at the back where there was usually a garden.

The oaken staircase is broad and fleet, with a heavy balustrade.

The principal room on the first floor, looking upon the Quay, is called "The Nelson Room," because it contains a portrait of that great Captain painted from the life, by *Keymer*, a native artist.

This room is in excellent preservation, and presents an admirable specimen of interior decoration prevalent at the period of its erection. The walls are lined throughout with



C. J. Winter, del. et lithog.

wainscot, now black with age. They are panelled to the height of five feet, divided at regular intervals by fluted pilasters which support pedestals with terminal figures, alternately male and female, between which there is a series of ornamental panels with flat arches richly carved. Between the panelling and the ceiling there is a fine moulded border or cornice. The ceiling is divided by flat bands like the cornice into six compartments, which are adorned with ribbed mouldings and pendant fruit and flowers. The door at the north-east corner opens from a small lobby cut out of the room.¹

Over the fire-place are carved upon a panel in high relief, the arms of the Company of Merchant Adventurers of England, which was incorporated early in the sixteenth century, and designed to supersede the Silyard Company of Foreign Merchants, whose exclusive privileges were subsequently withdrawn.

These arms are, *az.* in base a sea with a dolphin's head appearing in the water, all *prop.* On the sea a ship with three masts in full sail *or.* the sails and rigging *ar.* on each sail a cross *gu.* in the dexter chief point the luce in splendour, and in the sinister chief point an etoile *or.* On a chief *ar.* a cross *gu.* charged with the lion of England. For a crest, on a wreath two arms embowed issuing out of clouds, all *prop.* holding a globe *or.* For supporters, two sea horses *ar.* fumed *or.* The arms in this house are not emblazoned, the globe has been taken from the crest, and the supporters, if they ever were there, are gone.²

¹ There is a similar arrangement in an Elizabethan room at Thame Court, Oxfordshire; also in the gallery at Rockingham Castle.

² The same coat is carved in a room at No. 4, South Quay, Great Yarmouth; and it is met with in houses of the same class and period at other sea-ports. The form of oath taken on admission to "The Freedom of the Fellowship of Merchant Adventurers of England" is given in "A Booke of the Foundation and Antiquity of the Towne of Greate Yermurthe," edited by Mr. C. J. Palmer, in 1847 (p. 138.)

The open fire-place in this room had been filled up and boarded over (except a small space in which a modern stove had been inserted) until very recently, when, upon removing the modern wood-work, the original stone chimney-piece was discovered. The Dutch tiles with which the open fire-place is now lined were taken from an old house in Row No. 83. On the south side of this room there is another apartment into which there is a small door through the wainscot, not easily perceived. There is a pendant ceiling in this room; and there are also similar ceilings in the front chambers on the second floor.

Another apartment, at the back of the house, raised above the ground floor, but not on a level with the first floor, although divided and much mutilated, presents some remarkable features of its former magnificence. An original window still remains entire; its oaken frame elaborately carved externally. It has fourteen lights in two tiers, the three centre lights both above and below being larger than the others. What remains of the ceiling is very fine; the pendants being of unusual size and beauty: it is profusely adorned with fruits and flowers.³

Beyond this room, to the east, was another apartment; and again, beyond the latter, was what was called the Banqueting House, a name frequently applied to an apartment opening into a garden; and here probably there was a small garden extending to Middle or Blind Middle Street, now called Howard Street. Of this Banqueting House nothing now remains. It was entirely destroyed in 1740, and a malt-house erected on the site. When this house ceased to be a private residence and became a tavern, the malt-house was converted into stables and coach-houses. These, with

³ This apartment was for many years used as a kitchen to the hotel. The stone chimney-piece now in this room was found in fragments in an upper chamber, and has since been inserted by the present proprietor. Over this room there is a chamber in which a many-lighted original window still remains

the adjoining apartment to the west, were all pulled down by the present proprietor, and a spacious dining-room and a billiard-room erected on the site. When this demolition took place some curious discoveries were made.

Next the apartment with the beautiful ceiling already mentioned, were found the jambs of a stone mantle-piece, seven feet wide; and imbedded in some of the adjacent walls were found several corbel heads, and fragments of string courses, mouldings, and other ornaments, all of an ecclesiastical character.⁴ There may still be seen in an external wall adjoining the South Row, a small fragment of an elegant stone screen; and in the wall next the North Row there are the remains of an ancient window arched and faced with stone; and the adjoining wall is partly constructed of stone rubble evidently obtained from some other building.

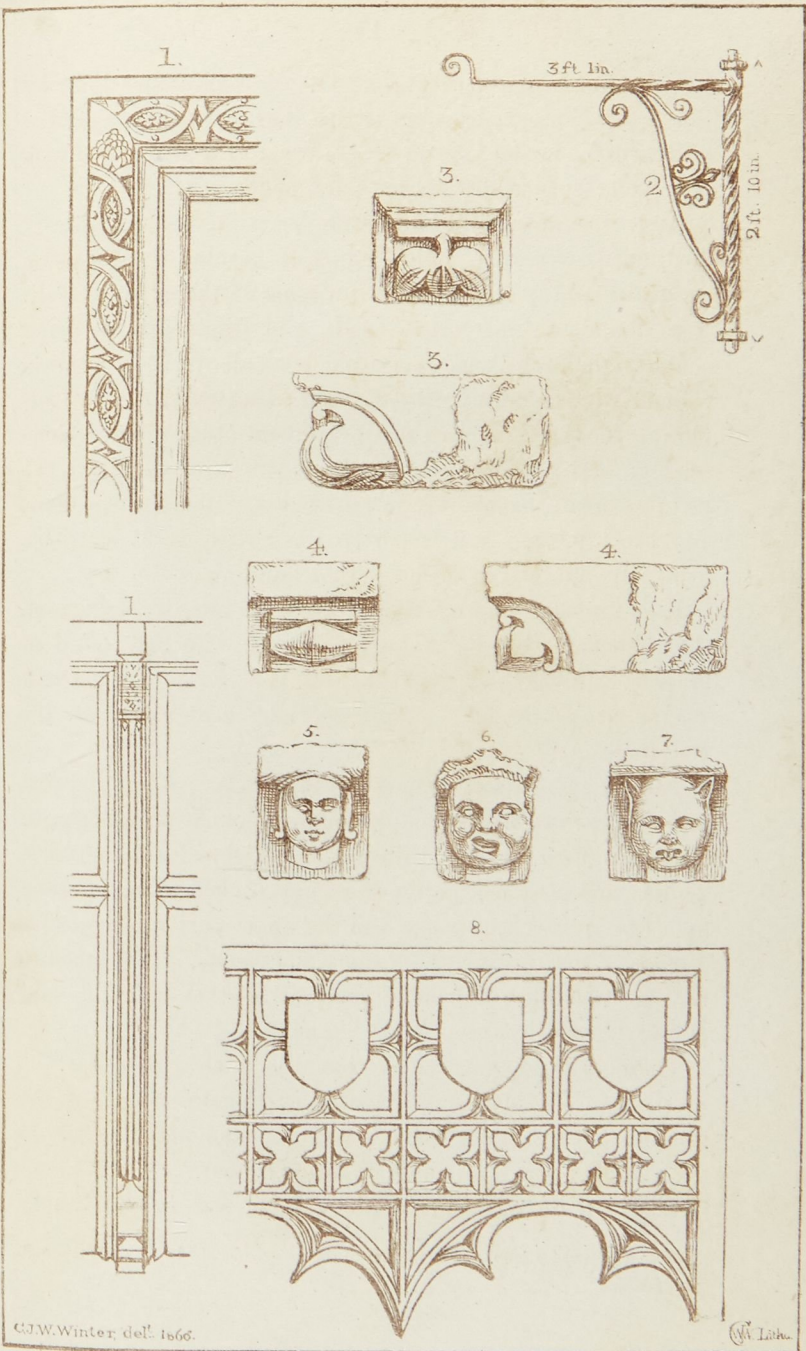
It is probable that all these fragments were brought from the possessions of the Augustine Friars, who had a cell or branch establishment at Yarmouth, belonging to the Great Priory at Gorleston; suppressed and demolished at the Reformation.

Almost immediately opposite the Hotel yard, on the east side of Howard Street, a large building which once belonged to the Augustine Friars still remains. Below it are extensive vaults, now used as a porter store, approached from the street by a low arched door-way; and the upper part is occupied as a place of meeting for the Society of Friends. It is much to be regretted that the cut-flint front of this building next Howard Street has been white-washed.

There is a popular belief that the Star Hotel was the property or residence of Bradshaw, the President of the Commission by which Charles I. was condemned and sent to the scaffold; but it has no foundation in fact.

Early in the sixteenth century there was in the county

⁴ Some of these fragments are preserved in the garden of the Assembly-rooms, South Beach.



of Suffolk a country house called Crowe's Hall. John Crowe, of Crowe's Hall, married Alice daughter and coheir of Thomas Parker, of Norwich, who bore the same arms as Archbishop Parker. Of Parker Crowe, their eldest son, nothing is known; but John Crowe, another son, settled at Norwich; Eleanor their daughter married, in 1601, Anthony Loveday, of Chediston, in Suffolk; and William Crowe, a younger son, settled in Yarmouth, where he acquired a considerable fortune as a merchant, and served the office of bailiff in 1594, and again in 1606. He it was who erected the house, now known as the Star Hotel, for his own private residence; and being one of the Merchant Adventurers of England he placed the arms of that company in the principal apartment. William Crowe, his son, was born in 1617, and went to London, where he established himself as an upholsterer in Smithfield, then not only one of the principal places of business in London but also a fashionable quarter. Pepys, in his *Diary*, speaks of calling upon "Crowe the Upholsterer on St. Bartholemews."⁵ He appears to have acquired a considerable fortune, and to have added to his business that of a money lender. Among others who sought his assistance was Sir William Paston, of Caister Castle, who appears to have borrowed considerable sums of Crowe, probably for the purpose of building his new and splendid seat at Oxnead.

In 1659 Sir William Paston, having determined to abandon Caister Castle as a residence, sold it to William Crowe, who, having retired from business, passed the rest of his life at Caister Castle when in the country, having for his town residence the house built by his father on Yarmouth Quay. By his will he desired to be buried in Caister church, and to have there a monument erected to his memory. His wishes were complied with: there is in the chancel a mural monu-

⁵ There appears to have been some connection between the two families.

ment, having a long inscription in Latin, recording that he had lived many years in London; above this inscription there is a handsome marble bust of Crowe. The arms of Crowe are carved in white marble—*gu.* a chevron between three cocks *crowing, arg.* He married Jane, daughter of Thomas Bransby, of Great Yarmouth, by Mary his wife, a daughter of Christopher Edmond Crowe, of East Bilney, and appointed his brothers-in-law, Thomas Bransby and Robert Bransby, executors of his will.

Thomas Bransby, whose daughter Crowe married as above stated, was the son of Robert Bransby, of Shottesham, in Norfolk; he died in 1641. Thomas Bransby, his eldest son, was High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1681, and resided in the Yarmouth house till his death in 1682. He had an only child, Elizabeth, who inherited this house with other very considerable property, and married Sir Philip Astley, of Melton Constable, Bart.⁶

Lady Astley died in 1738, and Sir Philip in the year following. This house descended to their son Sir Jacob Astley, Bart., who in 1740 sold it to Thomas Dawson, of Great Yarmouth, maltster, to whom we are indebted for the demolition of the Banqueting House. In 1749, Dawson conveyed the property to Robert Wilson, Esq., a wealthy corn merchant in London, who died in 1765, leaving all his estates to his two daughters and coheirs, (*viz.*) Dorothy, who married Anthony Chamier, Esq., and died without issue; and Elizabeth, who married Thomas Bradshaw, Esq., by whom she had four sons, (1) Robert Haldane Bradshaw, Esq.

⁶ She likewise inherited considerable wealth under the will of her uncle Robert Bransby, who died without issue in 1692, including ten messuages in St. Anne's Blackfriars, London, then lately rebuilt by the testator after the great fire of 1666. He appointed his nephew-in-law, Sir Philip Astley, sole executor of his will. A hatchment still remains in the chancel of Yarmouth Church charged with the arms of Bransby: *Ar.* on a bend cotised *sa.* betw. two fleurs de lys *gu.* a lion passant *or.*

of Worsley Hall, Lancashire, and of Runcorn, in Cheshire, ⁷ sometime M.P., for Brackley in Northamptonshire, (a borough disfranchised by the first Reform Act.) (2) Barrington Bradshaw, Esq., who died in the East Indies in 1804. (3) Lawrence Bradshaw, Esq., a Lieut.-Col. in the Life Guards; and (4) Augustus Hill Bradshaw, Esq., of Lower Seymour Street, upon whom the Yarmouth property devolved; and by him in 1806, the Star Hotel was conveyed to Mr. William Woolverton, who in 1824 sold it to Mr. George Bennett, at that time a favourite comic actor attached to the Norwich company of comedians. By him this property was sold to Mr. W. H. Diver, who a few years since conveyed it to Mr. Shales, the present spirited proprietor.⁸

⁷ The Bradshaws of Runcorn claim to be descended from the Bradshaws of Maple Hall, in Leicestershire, of which family "Broad-Brimmed Bradshaw" was a member.

⁸ It may not be uninteresting to record here the descent of Caister Castle. William Crowe devised the Castle to his nephew, Roger Crowe, on whose death without issue it passed to his nephew, Roger Crowe, who was High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1703. On his death in 1725, without issue, Caister Castle devolved upon his nephew, John Bedingfeld, Esq., of Beeston S. Andrew, High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1728, who died in 1787, aged 85, and was buried at Caister. He was the son of William Bedingfeld, Esq., (by Elizabeth his wife, sister of the last-mentioned Roger Crowe,) who was the son of Henry Bedingfeld, Esq., of Sturston, (grandson of Henry Bedingfeld, Esq., fifth son of Sir Henry Bedingfeld of Oxburgh, Knt.) by Anne his wife, daughter of William Crowe, and sister and heir of John Crowe. Judith, the only child and sole heir of the above-named John Bedingfeld, married, in 1749, Sir John Rous, of Henham, Bart., grandfather of the present Earl of Stradbroke, taking with her Caister Castle as part of her dower. By Sir John Rous the Castle was sold to Mr. Lyon, of Gray's Inn, who resold it to Mr. Burton, a timber merchant of Great Yarmouth, by whose descendants it was sold a few years since to the late John Gurney, Esq., (son of the late Samuel Gurney, Esq.,) and it is now the property of his son.