

THE DATE OF "FOX'S TOWER," FARNHAM CASTLE, SURREY

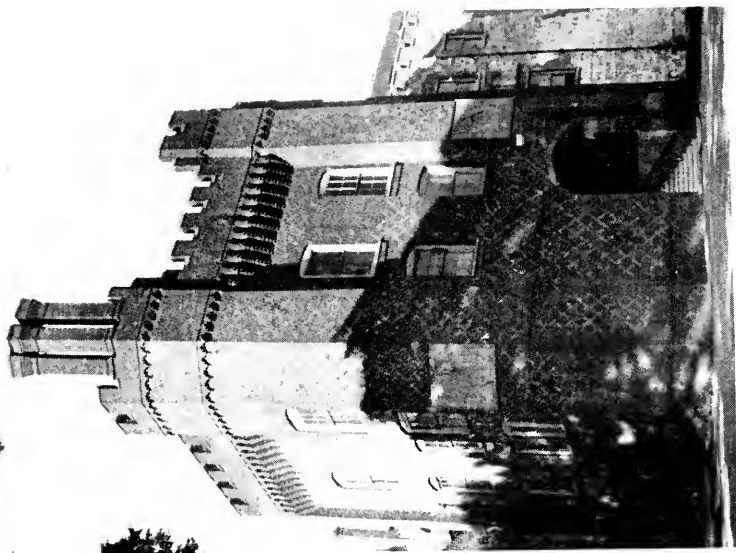
BY

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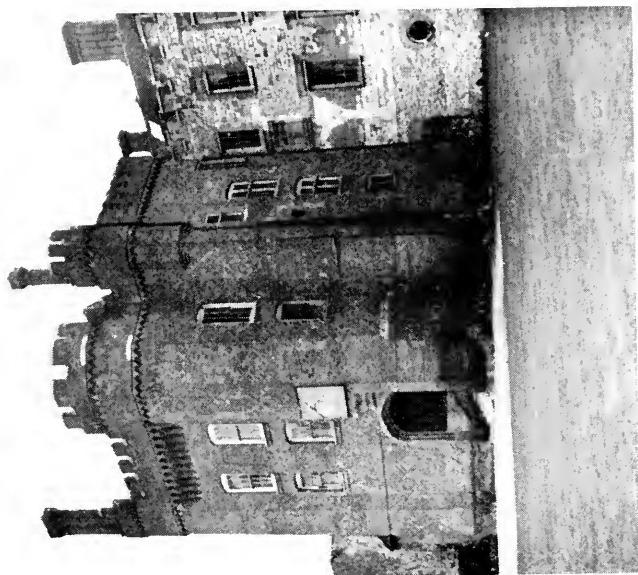
THE inner court of Farnham Castle is entered on the south side through the ground floor of a brick tower known as Fox's Tower, which adjoins the great hall on one side and the kitchen on the other. It is set against an earlier stone wall which forms its back in its lower part. The tower replaced a bridge and earlier gateway to which there are a number of references in the manorial accounts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹ The building is roughly square (34 by 43 feet externally) with semi-octagonal turrets on the south-west and south-east corners and has a rectangular stair turret (10 by 22 feet externally) in the north-east corner. This is evidently an original feature although the staircase inside is later. Above a vaulted basement the ground floor is divided into two. On the east is a porter's room and steps leading through a stone doorway with moulded head to the screens. The room on the west is entered by an aperture cut through the stone wall. There are spacious suites of rooms on the first and second floors, while the attic rooms on the third floor are probably an addition. The chimneys and tops of the crenellations have been rebuilt. Externally there is very elaborate false machicolation in brick between the turrets which is carried round them in a double frieze of cusped brick corbels. Below this, apart from a chamfered brick plinth at 3 feet 6 inches above ground level, the surface of the tower is free from string courses or other projections, perhaps to give full play to the closely set criss-cross diaper work which covers the building. To judge by the interference with the brickwork the position of the original windows did not correspond with the present inserted sash windows. The brick doorway is on one side, and impinges on the south-east turret which is corbelled out above it. It was closed by a portcullis whose slot survives, and has a four-centred head decorated by three rows of gently hollowed chamfers. The blocking of all the original windows and the insertion of sash windows has much softened the appearance of what originally must have been a rather forbidding building (plate VII).

* The writer wishes to record his gratitude for several valuable suggestions made by Mr. J. H. Harvey, F.S.A., Mr. A. J. Taylor, F.S.A., and Mr. R. Gilyard-Beer, F.S.A.

¹ E. Robo, *Medieval Farnham*, 1936, p. 133-34.



a. FOX'S TOWER, FARNHAM CASTLE FROM SOUTH
(p. 85)



b. FOX'S TOWER, FARNHAM CASTLE FROM S.E.

Sir Charles Peers accepted the attribution of this building to Bishop Richard Fox (1501–28) and said that the Bishop's initials (R.W.) had once been on the tower,¹ while Nathaniel Lloyd suggested a date of 1508 or 1510 for its erection.² Brayley in the mid-nineteenth century said that Fox when blind in his old age spent much time in the castle (for which the present author does not know the source) and that his initials were "traceable among the ruins of the keep."³ The initials are still to be seen in the spandrels of one of the fireplaces above the gateway of the keep: the W is clear, the R is now indecipherable. Brayley evidently did not know Fox's Tower by that name. Lewis (1849), Grose (1775) and Aubrey (late seventeenth century) mention Morley's work on the south front and either omit reference to Fox's Tower or attribute it to Morley. Manning and Bray (1814) evidently examined the tower and describe it as of "the mode of brickwork brought into use in Edward the Fourth's time."⁴ The tower was drawn for an engraving in this work, so that it is surprising that Fox's initials were missed, if indeed they were ever on the tower. It is clear that there is no continuous tradition from Fox's time to associate his name with the tower, and it is doubtful whether the attribution is older than the second half of the nineteenth century.

The manorial accounts of the manors of the bishops of Winchester were copied out annually at Wolvesey for enrolment up to 1454 and for sewing up into books from 1457. With many gaps the series has survived from the reign of King John to that of Queen Anne, and has been deposited by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners at the Public Record Office. The accounts run from Michaelmas to Michaelmas, and in this paper the date used refers to the Michaelmas at the end of the accounting year. One of the items in the annual account for Farnham is expenditure on the buildings in the castle. For the episcopate of Bishop Fox (1501–28) the only years missing are 1503, 1506, 1513, 1519 and 1522.⁵ As Fox's Tower must have taken several years to build the loss of the accounts for single years is not serious. The rent books include brief entries in many years for small maintenance work, but in one case £80, and in another £89 on the buildings in the keep.⁶ However there is no mention of the tower nor of any expenditure that might be associated with its construction. It is known from the earlier accounts that in a large work of this

¹ V.C.H., Surrey, II, 500.

² *A History of English Brickwork*, 1925.

³ *Brayley (B. & W.)*, v, 269.

⁴ *M. & B.* III, 134–7. Apart from a few lines, this account of the castle is the same as that by an anonymous "Architect" in *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1802, 1113.

⁵ P.R.O. reference; *Eccl.* 2,5/155851 to 9/155872.

⁶ In 1521, "iiii^{to} ix li. v d. pro diversas reparaciones hoc anno factas super diversas cameras, aulam, coquinam et alias domus infra le doungeoun Castri." The older title of "magna" or "alta turris" was superseded by "le Dongion" in about 1425 and remained its title throughout the rest of the century. The hall in the keep was built in 1351–3; for further information see Robo, *op. cit.*, 144–53.

kind a separate account was kept, and the accounts of Fox's episcopate always say that details of work are recorded elsewhere. The cost of the carriage of a large number of bricks to the castle in 1512 for an unspecified purpose is indeed a warning against placing complete reliance on negative evidence of this kind. Nevertheless, while the absence of any reference to the tower in the rent books is not proof that Fox did not build the tower, it may well raise serious doubts about the attribution.

In the course of working through the fifteenth-century accounts the author has come across entries recording the construction of a large brick tower at Farnham Castle in 1470-75 by Bishop William Waynflete (Bishop of Winchester 1447-86), which may refer to the structure now known as "Fox's Tower." Receiver's accounts which include building expenditure survive for Farnham from the years 1470, 1472, 1473, 1475, 1477, 1479, 1483 and 1484.¹ The figures for expenditure on the tower in 1470, 1472, 1473 and 1475 are set out in an appendix. At first sight these figures seem too small to cover the cost of construction of a building of the size of Fox's Tower, or indeed of the building that the accounts themselves describe. These accounts are not concerned with the total cost of the building but only with costs that fell upon the manor itself each year. How much was paid direct from Wolvesey without record here is not known, but it may well have been a large amount. The accounts do however throw some light on the state of the work each year, the early use of brick at the castle, and the nature of the building itself.

There is a back payment for brick-making in 1470 for the preceding year, but the actual work of building seems to have begun in that year. An old wooden structure (*vetus opus meremii ad ostium aule*) was dismantled and excavations were made for the foundations of the new tower. The foundations themselves were of stone (*fundamente novae Turris ad ostium aule cum lapidibus*). 110,000 bricks were laid in the lower part of the tower (*pro posicione de cx ml. brek super novam turrin ad ostium aule*). Unfortunately the rent book for 1471 when work must have been at its height is missing. In 1472 work was still on a large scale, and there are references to scaffolding and roofs, perhaps temporary, over chambers in the tower. 100,000 bricks are recorded as being laid in the tower this year. An old tower was pulled down and the old stone walls dismantled (*prostracio magnorum murorum lapidis ad ostium aule*), or broken through (*fraccio i ostii in dictum murum pro camera ibid*). Window and door fittings were now being purchased for the tower. In 1473 and 1475 work was evidently on a reduced but still considerable scale. In the latter year it was nearing completion, for the roof was being tiled and gutters fitted to the tower and adjoining hall.

¹ P.R.O. reference; *Eccl.* 2,3/155835 to 5/155845. The rent books for 1468-9, 1471, 1476, 1478, 1482, 1485-6 are missing. There are no Receiver's accounts for Farnham in 1474 and 1482. The rent book for 1481 is in a bad state, and has been partly re-copied in Elizabethan times. The entries for Farnham were either never made or have been lost.

In 1477 the tower's staircase (*novus gradus novi Turris*) was tiled, and in this year and 1479 wooden fittings, probably partitions, floors, perhaps panelling and furniture (*lez bording omnium camerarum novae Turris*) were being made. As late as 1484 work was being done on all the tower's windows, but there can be little doubt that the building was substantially complete by 1475.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries stone, either local or from the quarries at Bentley, was the building material used at Farnham Castle. This was used by Wykeham in his extensive work in about 1400 and continued to be used into the fifteenth century. Small purchases of bricks (2,000 and 1,000 bricks) are recorded in 1431 and 1453, but the need for the large scale manufacture of bricks on the manor only arose with the construction of the new tower. In 1470, 240,000 bricks are recorded as having been made at the "brekeplace." In 1470 128,000, in 1472, 100,000, in 1473, 30,000 and in 1475, 88,000 bricks are recorded as being carried from the "brekeplace" to the castle. In the earlier years both the brick-making and brick-laying were done by contract (*conventio*). The contractor for brick-making in 1470 was Brian Brekemason, and for brick-laying in 1470 and 1472-3 was John Cole Brekemason. The entry for 1473 records the use of dressed brick on the tower (*pro lez hewynge et posicione sive settynge de iii ml. hewen Bryke super novam Turrim*).

In 1475 direct labour was used both for brick-making and brick-laying. A separate entry entitled "Custus de Brek" records expenditure on dismantling a large kiln, making a small one, selecting good bricks, pasture for the horses of the "brick-masons" and so on. This year the bricklayers are named individually. Cornelius Brekemason and his apprentice, Jacob, worked for 39 weeks (they were still at the castle in 1477), Adrian Brekemason worked for 28 weeks and floraunce Brekemason and his son for 23 weeks. The Christian names are not English, and Cornelius especially suggests a Dutch or Flemish origin. Possibly these foreign bricklayers only came at the end of the work to complete the finer details (machicolations, etc.).

In the entry for 1475 among numerous items bought for the castle is the curious item, "200 pounds of red ochre for colouring the tower" (*cc librae Rede Okyr ad colorand. Turrim*). This was presumably to redden the brickwork of the building, possibly to mix with the mortar to provide a uniform red background for the diaper work.¹ Set between the twelfth-century buildings of white chalk the red tower must have made an impressive spectacle. This purchase is further corroboration that by this date the building was substantially complete.

The use of brick in the castle seems to have been temporary. In the work on the outer curtain in 1483 (*novus murus inter magnam portam exteriorem Castri et Turrim vocatam Riall Tower*) and in 1484 stone was used, and substantial numbers of bricks are not mentioned

¹ I owe this suggestion to Mr. A. R. Dufty, A.R.I.B.A., F.S.A.

again until 1512. It was probably cheaper to use stone in this area until Tudor times.

The entries deal mainly with labour and materials and little information is given about the tower itself. It is simply called "nova turris." From the description "at the door to the hall" (*ad ostium aule*) there can be no doubt about its position. The scale of work and references to internal walls and several rooms imply a large building. In 1473 the hall of the new tower is mentioned, and in 1479 the hall, kitchen and buttery (*aula, coquina, pincerna novae Turris*) are mentioned. Evidently the tower was not an ancillary building but an independent residential unit with its own offices.

The political circumstances at the time of the tower's construction are worth recalling. Waynflete owed his preferment at Eton and Winchester to Henry VI, who in 1470 was a prisoner at the Tower. Waynflete played a conspicuous part in Henry's temporary restoration to the throne later in the year. After Edward IV's return and the murder of Henry VI, Waynflete was pardoned although his relationship with the king must have been delicate. On 4 October 1471 the Bishop appointed Thomas St. Leger as Constable of Farnham Castle.¹ In the entry for the payment of his salary in 1475 he is called "armiger pro corpore Domini Regis," but he was made a Knight of the Bath in January, 1478.² He was the second husband of Anne, Edward IV's sister, who had been divorced from her first husband, Henry Holland, Duke of Exeter, who had fled abroad after the Battle of Barnet.³ He was beheaded in 1483 after Richard III's accession. The Patent Rolls of the period record numerous royal favours and appointments conferred on St. Leger in various parts of the country. It seems unlikely that the Bishop's choice was a free one, and more likely that the King used his influence to secure the appointment, in order to exercise some measure of royal control through St. Leger over the uses to which the castle and tower might be put. The rent books record royal visits by Edward IV in 1477, Richard III in 1483 and Henry VII and his Queen in 1487. In the last year considerable preparations are recorded prior to the arrival of the new Bishop and the baby Prince Arthur, who had been entrusted to his charge.

Bishop Waynflete's real name was William Patten but he adopted the name of his birthplace, Wainfleet in Lincolnshire. He retained connections with his native county throughout his later life. His connections with Tattershall are especially relevant. His arms are displayed on the north and south sides of Tattershall church and he seems to have known Ralph Lord Cromwell personally, by whom he was "enfeoffed" of land, and one of whose three executors he was at Cromwell's death in 1455.⁴ The well-known brick tower at

¹ *M. & B.*, III, 136.

² W. A. Shaw, *The Knights of England*, I, 138.

³ G.E.C., *The Complete Peerage*, v, 215-6, footnotes b and c. See also numerous entries on St. Leger's appointments in *Calendars of Patent Rolls*, 1469-82.

⁴ R. Chandler, *The Life of William Waynflete*, 1811, 79-81.

Tattershall is attributed to Cromwell, so that it is likely that the Bishop had an opportunity to study it. Waynflete's own first experience of building in brick was probably at Eton College where he was Fellow and Provost (1440-47) during the construction of Cloister Court. The dressings here are in stone but the use of diaper work, if original, is a very early example of this form of decoration.¹

In his old age between 75 and 90 Waynflete undertook a great deal of building; in stone at Eton, Winchester and Magdalen College, Oxford, and in brick at Farnham and Esher in Surrey and Wainfleet in Lincolnshire. An undated letter to Waynflete on the subject of the school and chapel at Wainfleet and the contract for the carpentry, dated 25 April 1484, have survived and have been published.² From these it is known that the building was erected by Harry Alsbreke of Tattershall who was to "tak hym an example of sum maner house in your nobyl place of Ascher," while for the floor "the flore of the chambyr in the Towre on the gate of the maner of Escher" was to serve as an example. Evidently therefore the gatehouse at Esher had already been built by this date.

In the latter part of the fifteenth century the manors of the Bishop of Winchester were grouped in the rent books on a roughly geographical basis under the main manor of the area; Taunton, Downton, Meon, Waltham, Sutton, Farnham. Besides Farnham itself the eastern manors comprised Bentley, Southwark and Esher. Unfortunately at Esher there was no tradition as at Farnham of entering building expenditure for the Bishop's palace, if indeed one existed before Waynflete's new building there. The author has not found any reference before 1484 to the gatehouse or residential buildings (maintenance work on farm buildings is of course recorded). In that year a garden was being made, and maintenance work is mentioned on a number of buildings including the great tower (*magna Turris*), presumably to be identified with the surviving gatehouse.³ The expenditure for the construction of these buildings had evidently been met from elsewhere, although it is unlikely that much time had elapsed since their erection.

The three buildings are likely then to have been built consecutively; the tower at Farnham 1470-75, the gate tower at Esher perhaps about 1478 and the school at Wainfleet 1483-5.

If "Fox's Tower" at Farnham may be identified with the tower built in 1470-75, as the author suggests, it is then only a few years

¹ R.C.H.M., *Buckinghamshire (South)*, 146-50.

² Chandler, *op. cit.*, 367-70.

³ *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, 2nd Ser., 32, 69-79. See also the prints of Esher displayed in the old parish church at Esher. In the early eighteenth century, perhaps at the time of Kent's alterations, the courtyard was moved from the riverside to the other side of the gatehouse, so that its original outside now became its inside face. Possibly the change was made necessary by river erosion, while the proximity of the river is perhaps a hint that the site was originally moated. None of the buildings shown adjoining the tower in the later prints are original. The excavation showed that it stood on a brick curtain or enclosing wall, while the brick corbelling on the side of the building and the plan of 1606 indicate that it was an isolated structure.

older than Waynflete's Tower at Esher. Practically nothing original is visible in the interior of "Fox's Tower" and the exteriors of both buildings have been considerably altered, so that comparison is difficult. The buildings had different functions, the tower at Esher being a proper gatehouse, that at Farnham providing additional accommodation for the hall in the form of a tower over the hall's door at the lower end. The faces of both buildings are covered with a very close-set criss-cross diaper, and the decorative brick corbelling at Esher recalls that on the turrets of "Fox's Tower," although it is not cusped. Stone dressings and string courses were used at Esher but not at Farnham. The turrets at Esher are much larger on the outer east face and thrust forward on either side of the gateway. The outside staircase in "Fox's Tower" was no doubt intended to give direct internal access from the hall to the upper rooms of the tower. The two features that especially distinguish "Fox's Tower" from the Esher gatehouse and Tudor gatehouses in general are its false machicolation and the position of its doorway. The machicolation recalls that on the tower at Tattershall although stone is used for corbelling there. Perhaps a better comparison is with the tower at Faulkbourne Hall, Essex.¹ Here brick is also used throughout and the smooth surface of the building is unbroken by string courses, as in "Fox's Tower," while brick corbelling is skilfully used for false machicolation and turrets (compare the turret corbelled out on the stair turret of "Fox's Tower"). The exuberant use of brick at Faulkbourne Hall has been attributed to foreign influence. Its date is unfortunately uncertain, but it is generally considered to be pre-Tudor. Doorways in Tudor gatehouses are normally central, and may be objects of considerable display, as in St. John's and Christ's Colleges at Cambridge. The peculiarly cramped and asymmetrical position of the doorway in "Fox's Tower" was no doubt intended to give better access to the great hall, but this indifference to symmetry is more intelligible if the builder's intention was to display the tower itself, the doorway being of secondary interest as in a tower like that at Tattershall.

The bold use of brick at Farnham and Esher may be compared with its timid use in Edward IV's contemporary hall at Eltham Palace (which is largely faced with stone), and its free use slightly later by Henry VII at Richmond Palace. By 1509 Surrey had at least four brick entry-towers; Farnham, Esher, Lambeth Palace (Morton's Tower) and Richmond Palace. The main interest of these buildings is the high social position of their owners compared with the more modest social status of earlier or contemporary builders in brick in the eastern counties. Thomas Wolsey is in some sense the successor of Waynflete, both at Magdalen College and in the long period before his own election to the see of Winchester in 1529. He owed much of his early advancement to Bishop Fox, of which the

¹ Lloyd, *op. cit.*, 112. R.C.H.M., *Essex*, II, 69-71. Cusped brick corbels dated to 1465-85 are found at Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk, and Someries Castle, Bedfordshire.

record of many substantial payments to him in the entries for Farnham in the rent books of Fox's episcopate are a timely reminder. Apart from Whitehall the list of Wolsey's new buildings reads much like those of Waynflete's later life; foundations at Oxford and his birthplace (Ipswich), and a brick palace near Esher, Hampton Court. Fox, it will be recalled, offered Wolsey the use of Esher while Hampton Court was being constructed. It is interesting to compare the isolated gatehouse at Esher with that incorporated into a residential range in the façade of Hampton Court.

Note.—Since this paper was written, the Winchester Pipe Rolls have been transferred from the Public Record Office to the County Record Office at Winchester.

Appendix

Expenditure on the tower normally heads the list of items in the "Custus Castri," but there are often other items dealing with work on the tower intermingled with other work at the castle. Where the figure includes other work not connected with the tower it is marked with an asterisk. Lime-burning for mortar and several minor items have been omitted.

As explained in the text, the figures help to show the state of work but do not represent total expenditure. For example bricks were presumably made in 1472-3, but the cost for this was recorded elsewhere. It is unlikely that the cost of work was really relatively so heavy in 1475 but merely that as against the earlier years a relatively larger part was charged to the manorial account. The really heavy expenditure was likely to have been in 1470-72, but was presumably met from another source.

The blank columns for 1471 and 1474 have been included only to show the gap in the record.

	1470			1471			1472			1473			1474			1475		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Foundations	5	8	—*															
Demolition of old structures at door to hall	11	1	—*				3	19	4 ²									
Bricks { Making and firing	29	13	9 ¹													9	16	4 ³
Carriage to castle	1	12	6				1	5	—	—	7	6				1	2	8
Laying on new tower	12	16	8				9	13	4							30	—	4 ⁴
Dressing or laying dressed brick on tower										2	7	6						
Carpentry							18	6	8*	4	5	10*				24	9	—*
Window and door fittings							10	3	11	9	8	8*						
Roofing (tiles, lead and gutters)																7	2	3*

¹ Includes £2 3s. 4d. for back payment for preceding year.

² Includes scaffolding.

³ "Custus de Brek," includes work only indirectly connected with brick-making.

⁴ Weekly wages to directly employed bricklayers.