

THE TOWER OF LONDON

The Reconstruction of the Inmost Ward during the reign of Charles II

GEOFFREY PARNELL

When, in 1532–3, Henry VIII ordered extensive repairs and alterations to the lodgings and apartments of the Inmost Ward,¹ he became the last English monarch to attempt to renovate and improve the old medieval palace at the Tower of London. In fact, throughout the late fifteenth and sixteenth century the Tower became less and less a royal residence and more, as Holinshed put it, ‘an armorie and house of munitiō . . . a place for the safekeeping of offenders’. By the end of the sixteenth century the buildings within the inner sanctum had been allowed to fall into such a state of disrepair that a survey of 1597 presented the great hall as roofless and ‘decay’d’ (Plate 1). No doubt the condition of the palace continued to deteriorate during the first half of the seventeenth century and much of it was gradually acquired and utilised by the various official departments operating within the Tower. As early as 1562 the Mint had established a refinery inside the Inmost or ‘Coldharbour’ Ward, while the Board of Ordnance had stores in the ‘Quenes chamber within her graces lodging’.² By 1599 the Ordnance had established an official ‘storehouse in Coldharbour’.³ This piecemeal acquisition of the dilapidated Coldharbour buildings probably continued until just after the Restoration in 1660.

For the Board of Ordnance, the Restoration in fact marked the beginning of a period of rapid expansion; its functions were increased and it now assumed responsibility for fortifications throughout the realm. Inside the Tower the Ordnance began to assert control over additional areas and in 1663–4, in response to expanding needs, constructed the first of its new storehouses—the present New Armouries.⁴ This was built against the inner curtain just south of the Broad Arrow Tower, opposite the Wardrobe Tower and the main palace complex (Fig. 1), the area where much of the Board’s later expansion was to be directed.

In March 1666, a report containing measures for safeguarding the Powder Magazine in the White Tower, along with proposals for improving access to it, was presented to Charles II.⁵ Consequently, in a royal warrant dated 21st March, the king appointed the prominent Ordnance officials who had prepared the report Commissioners to order and supervise the necessary work.⁶ The Commissioners’ warrant reciting that ‘Wee thinke fitt . . . That you forthwith sett on worke employe such and soe many Workemen, and Labourers as shalbe found necessary’ with the ‘diligence and expidicōn that is requisite in a thinge of soe great concernment’ was duly issued on 15th November 1666.⁷ In summary, instructions were given to demolish any building ‘neare or about’ the White

moat a 'Bridge made to that end, according to such forme and Moddell as Sir Bernard de Gomme his Majesties Principall Engineer shall design'. Four houses belonging to William Tilly, Christopher Comport, William Norton and William Harmen which impeded the route were ordered to be pulled down.

The position of the new bridge and the line of the passage are not easy to determine. That the work was actually carried out is supported by a warrant issued 16th April 1667, authorising an allowance of £40.0.0 by way of imprest to James Lyod, mason, to enable him to 'performe his said Contract' for the 'makeing and Working of a New Gate' on the south side of the Tower.⁸ This reference is corroborated by a later entry in the Bill Books dated 14th July 1669, which records payment of £372.10.7½ to Thomas Casse, master carpenter to the Board, for 'makeinge a new draw Bridge where the new passage into the Tower was designed by order of the Right Honorable the Commissioners'.⁹ The account stipulates that work was carried out between 22nd December 1666 and 15th June 1667. The most likely position of this ill-documented feature was perhaps some 70 feet east of St. Thomas's Tower on the site of the present Middle Draw Bridge (Fig. 1). The extant structure is a purely nineteenth-century affair and certainly no gate stood here in the eighteenth century. However, a proposed or constructed bridge over the moat is shown here on two seventeenth-century plans. The plans themselves, one dated February 1666, the other marginally earlier, in fact pre-date the construction of the crossing, but the bridge illustrations are clearly later additions (Plate 4). Moreover, in the Board of Works accounts for March 1669, appears an entry for conveying earth over a certain 'Traytors bridge'.¹⁰ Whilst the exact position of this bridge is not given, its name clearly indicates a nearness to the famous gate beneath St. Thomas's Tower. The 1667 draw-bridge does not appear on the 1681/2 Tower plan (Plate 2); its life, therefore, must have been a short one i.e. *circa* 1667–1681/2. In this respect it is interesting to note that in March 1671 the same carpenter who erected the bridge received a further payment for 'pullinge down the drawe bridge at Tower wharfe'.¹¹ There was, however, at least one other wharf draw-bridge operating at the Byward barbican; thus a clear association with the 1667 bridge cannot be established. Nevertheless, demolition must have occurred close to this date, and almost certainly by the mid-1670's when the rebuilding of Coldharbour was complete. It may be supposed that the passage, which the bridge served, was abandoned during the period of reconstruction work and the ground used for building purposes. In this event, the draw-bridge may well have become obsolete and dispensable.

The point where the passage leading from the bridge passed through the inner curtain wall, was perhaps immediately opposite the suggested bridge site. On the 1681/2 plan, the appearance of two small buildings occupying a narrow strip between the 'Graineery' and main offices of the 'Treasury House' might suggest that they had been 'fitted in' to a pre-existing gap (Plate 2). The only alternative route might have been via a communication known eventually as the 'Majors Passage' which ran down the opposing east side of the 'Graineery' (Fig. 2). However, the restrictions offered by this tenuous alley make it an unlikely choice.

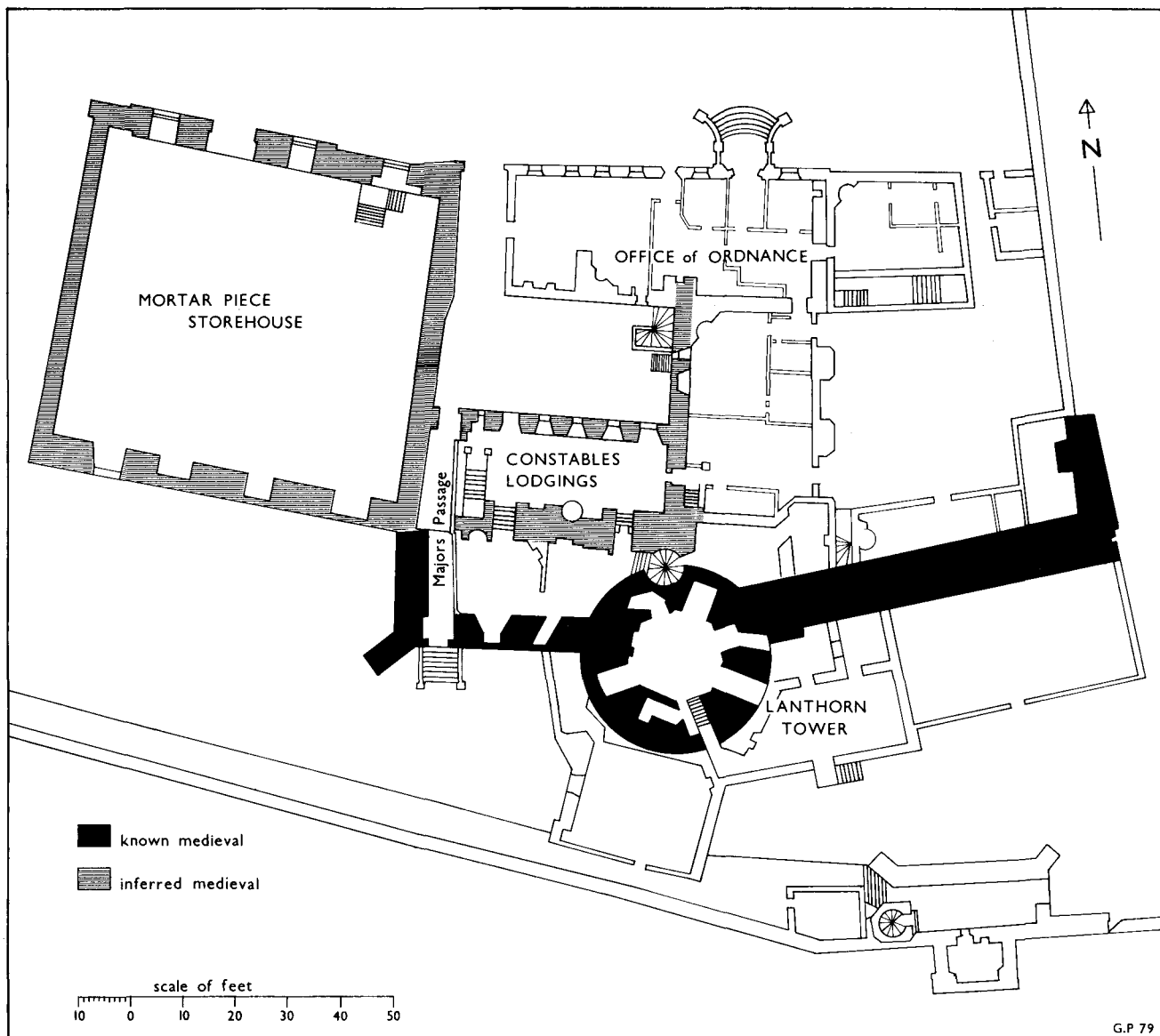


Fig. 2. Tower of London: South-east corner of Inmost Ward showing building lay-out after reconstruction; redrawn from a plan of 1731.

The second passage ordered by the Commissioners was to run from the Magazine to the 'Ordinary Proofs howse' on the east side of the White Tower. Accordingly, 'soe much of the Jewell howse as standeth in the way adjoyneing to or neare the White Tower' was ordered to be demolished. The route of the third passage was to be 'out of Coleharbour through the old hall and garden behinde it into the New Storehowse'. Unfortunately this tantalising reference to the hall is misleading. It can be presumed that the passage, like the other two,

terminated at the Magazine; thus the east-west route to the 'New Storehouse' [New Armouries] would not have passed through the hall, which stood against the south curtain, but a range of buildings called the 'Queens Lodgings' running south from the Wardrobe Tower (Plate 1). Clearly description of the old palace complex had by now become rather confused or all-embracing.

In order to secure the Powder Magazine it was directed that 'all the Chimneys of the howse belonging to the Surveyour of the Workes and those of the Lodging in Cole Harbour Gate, and those in the White Tower adjoyning to the Staires Case goeing upp to the old Chappell as likewise those of that part of the Jewell howse which shall bee left standing and the howse of William Masters Wardour . . . bee demollished, and noe from hereafter made therein'. This direction was given subsequent precedence on 27th February 1667, when the king (in Council at Whitehall) ordered that 'they [Commissioners] are hereby required to meet with all Convenient speed and to give immediate order for pulling downe and demolishing all houses and buildings within such distance of the White Tower . . . as they . . . may any waies Conceive to endanger His Majesties Magazine of powder there'.¹²

By early 1667, the Board of Ordnance appears to have assumed control of most of the Coldharbour enclosure. A warrant dated 22nd April read:

'Whereas wee have found fitt some time since . . . to authorise and direct severall demollishments and alteraçons to bee made in and about our Tower of London, which hath allready in some measure been put in execution . . . Wee have thought fitt suitable to those our first Intentions and directions, to signify Our further new pleasure . . . that forthwith you give order for the demollishing altering and new building all that grownde and ould building in the Tower called Cold Harbour.'¹³

Concerning its general reconstruction it was ordered that there 'bee erected such [a] new store-house and buildings . . . as you shall judge most convenient and usefull for Our service and according to such designe and modell as wee have or shall approve and direct'. These were to be built with 'Leade, timber, bricke and stone' taken from the old buildings cleared in advance of construction. Additional material was to be obtained from the 'houses and buildings . . . called the ould store house and Office' located on the 'hill' behind the White Tower. A delineation of the reconstruction area was also given which, although brief, affords useful information about some of the remaining medieval structures:

'Included by the walls passing from the White Tower, to the Bowers Tower, and soe to the Mote on the west side, and by the way leading from the Hill by the new store house [New Armouries] downe to the Lower Garden [Privy Garden] on the east side (excepting one pile or Tower nearc to Cold Harbour Gate, with the staire Case reserved for the Jewell house)'.

The previously undocumented 'Bowers Tower', close to the White Tower, evidently relates to 'Nunn's Bower', listed in a curious inventory of about 1641 as the 'prisons over Coleharbour Gate'.¹⁴ In March 1669, the Board of Works, who retained responsibility for the maintenance of the lodgings within the gate, were engaged in 'making cleane the Leads over the Nunns Bower'¹⁵ and during

the following November were obliged to dismantle the top of the 'Tower going into Coleharbour' after the 'ffall of the Stones from Nunns Bower'.¹⁶ It can be assumed, therefore, that 'Bowers Tower' was one of the twin flanking towers protecting the gate.¹⁷ The reference to the 'Mote' on the west side of the aforesaid tower is perhaps surprising, since it indicates that the dilapidated gate was still surrounded by its medieval ditch. That this remained a considerable feature is evidenced by an order in the same warrant for 'making a bridge and passage over the Mote'. Finally there is reference to a tower connected with the Jewel House. Presumably this equates with the slender tower attached to the west end of the Jewel House on the 1597 survey, an enigmatic structure which H. M. Colvin has indicated was the 'Ludwyktoure' mentioned in an account of 1339.¹⁸ In 1663 it was referred to as the 'brick Tower'¹⁹ and like the remains of the Jewel House its maintenance remained the responsibility of the Board of Works for a number of years following the start of the Ordnance rebuilding.

Almost a year after the Coldharbour reconstruction began, the Ordnance jurisdiction over a small part of the enclosure was challenged by William Prynne, celebrated pamphleteer and Keeper of the Records in the Tower. On 20th December 1667, Prynne petitioned the King for the return of a building called the 'Record Office' which stood against the east side of the Wakefield Tower and which, by this time, was occupied by Captain George Wharton, Treasurer and Paymaster to the Board in the Tower.²⁰ The result of Prynne's claim is seen in a number of the Board's building accounts which record the cost of providing Captain Wharton with 'new Roomes at the pay Howse'²¹ in 'lieu of those taken from him by William Pryn'.²² The collection of buildings known as the 'pay House' or 'Treasury House' occupied ground to the north and east of the Record Office (Plate 2). Captain Wharton's new abode was apparently on the north side—one end of the building resting against the Office,²³ the other backing onto a contemporary storehouse which, as it will be shortly argued, stood against the curtain wall south of the Coldharbour Gate. Work on Captain Wharton's new quarters began shortly after the Board approved an order for the bricklayer in September 1668.²⁴ The carpenter and his team were active for most of the time between October 1668 and December 1669,²⁵ and by the end of this period the majority of the work seems to have been complete.

Accompanying the building of Captain Wharton's apartments was the construction of the 'new-storehouse' detailed in the April warrant of 1667. The storehouse stood against a stretch of old curtain wall²⁶ with, as we have already seen, one end of it backing onto Captain Wharton's new residence. This indicates adjacency to either the north or east of the Treasury House and thus provides two candidates—the 'Little Storehouse' lying to the north or the much larger 'Mortar Piece Storehouse' to the east (see Plate 5). Surviving building accounts indicate that the new building was relatively modest. For instance the brick work employed in the main body of the structure 'amounting to by measure the Doorways and windowes deducted' came to only '34 Rodds 232 ffoott' with an additional '88 ffoott' for 'Arching over the Doores and windowes'.²⁷ The size of this bill and others²⁸ appears insufficient with the needs and cost of constructing a large structure like the Mortar Piece and it is

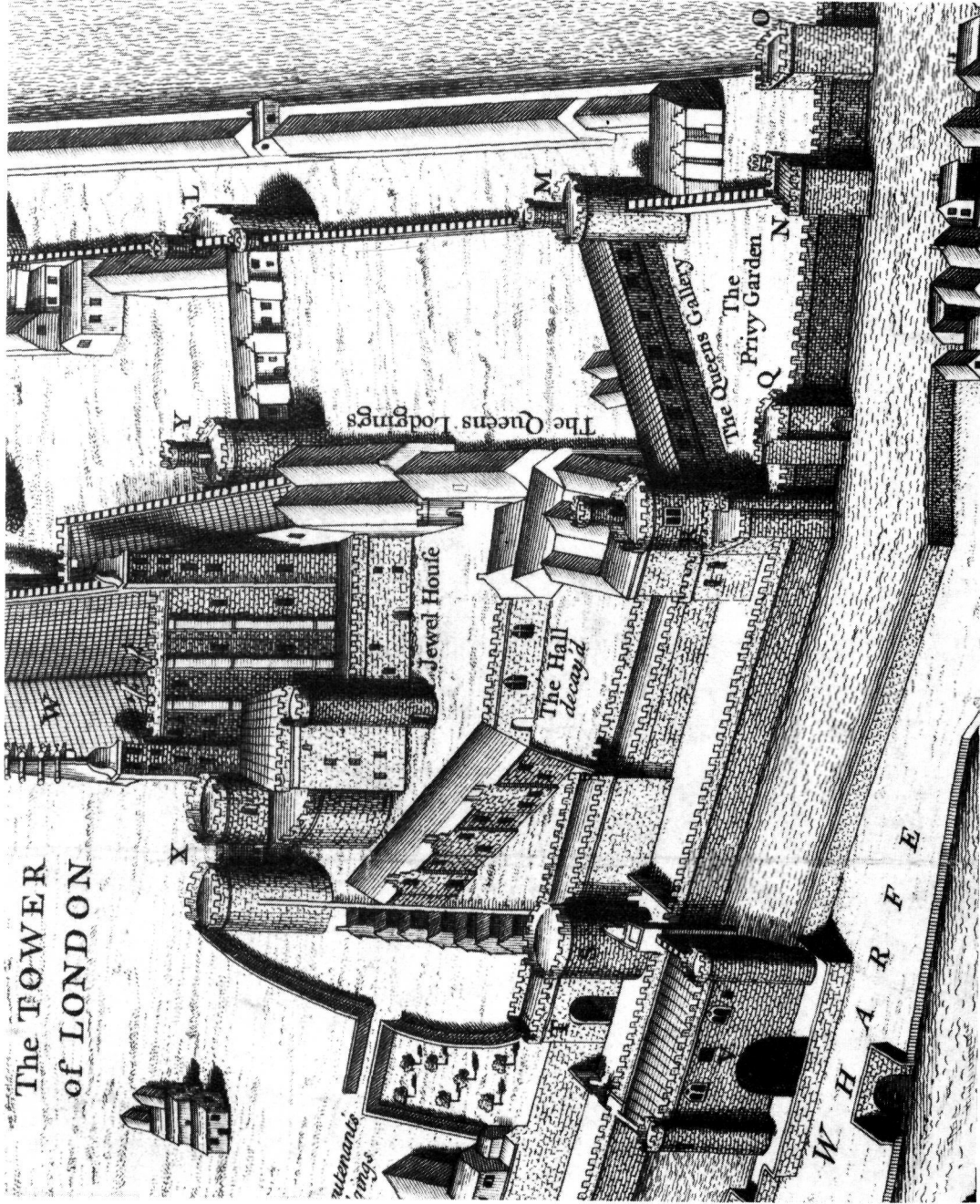


Plate 1. Tower of London: Part of the Haiward and Gascoyne survey of 1597 showing south-east corner of the Tower and palace complex.

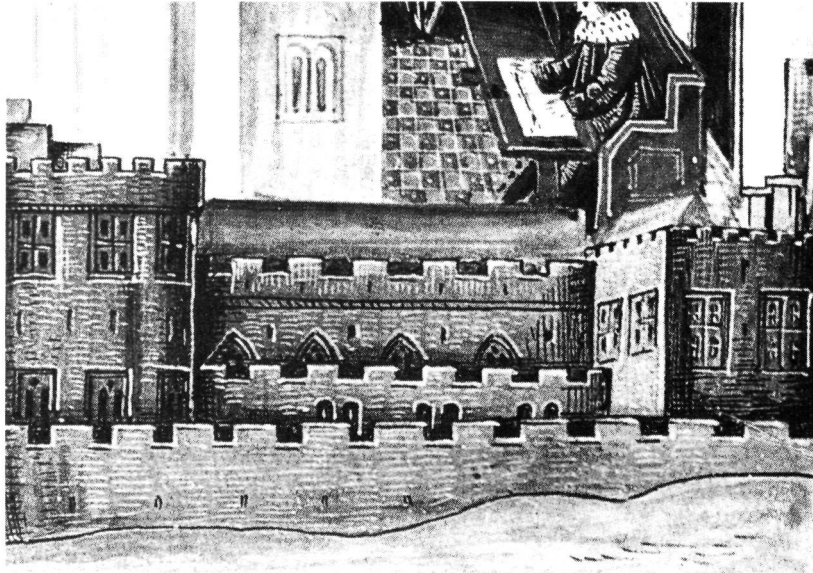


Plate 3. Tower of London: Part of late 15th-century miniature showing the hall and its south fenestration rising above the battlements of the inner curtain.

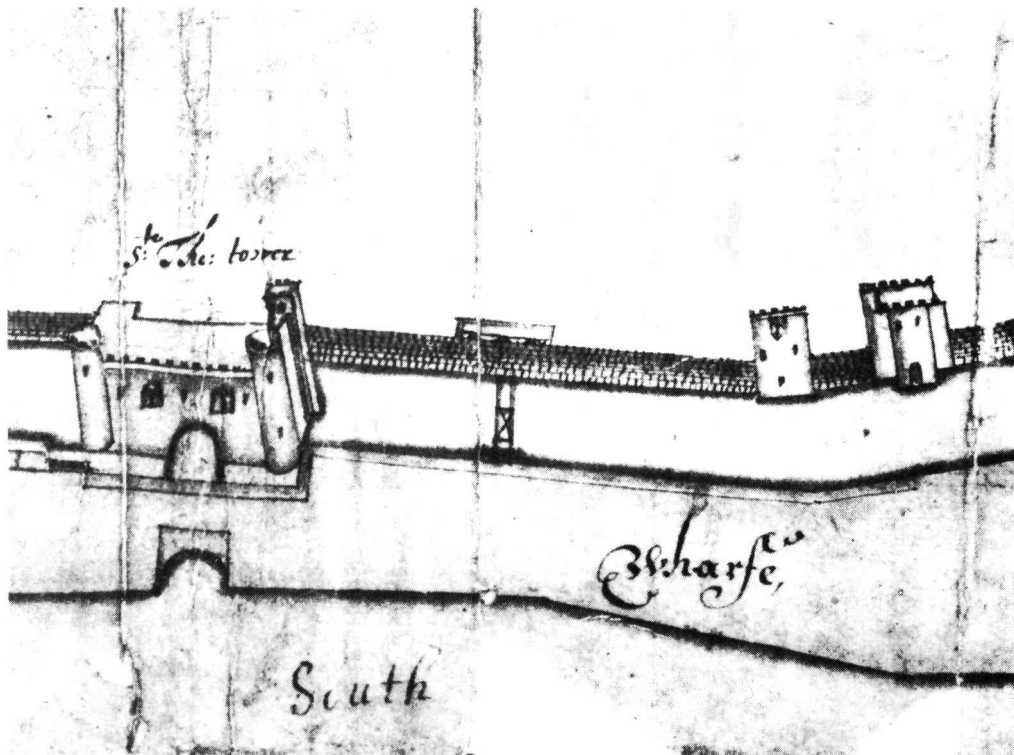


Plate 4. Tower of London: part of an outline plan of the Tower, dated 1666 or a little earlier, showing later bridge site east of St. Thomas's Tower.

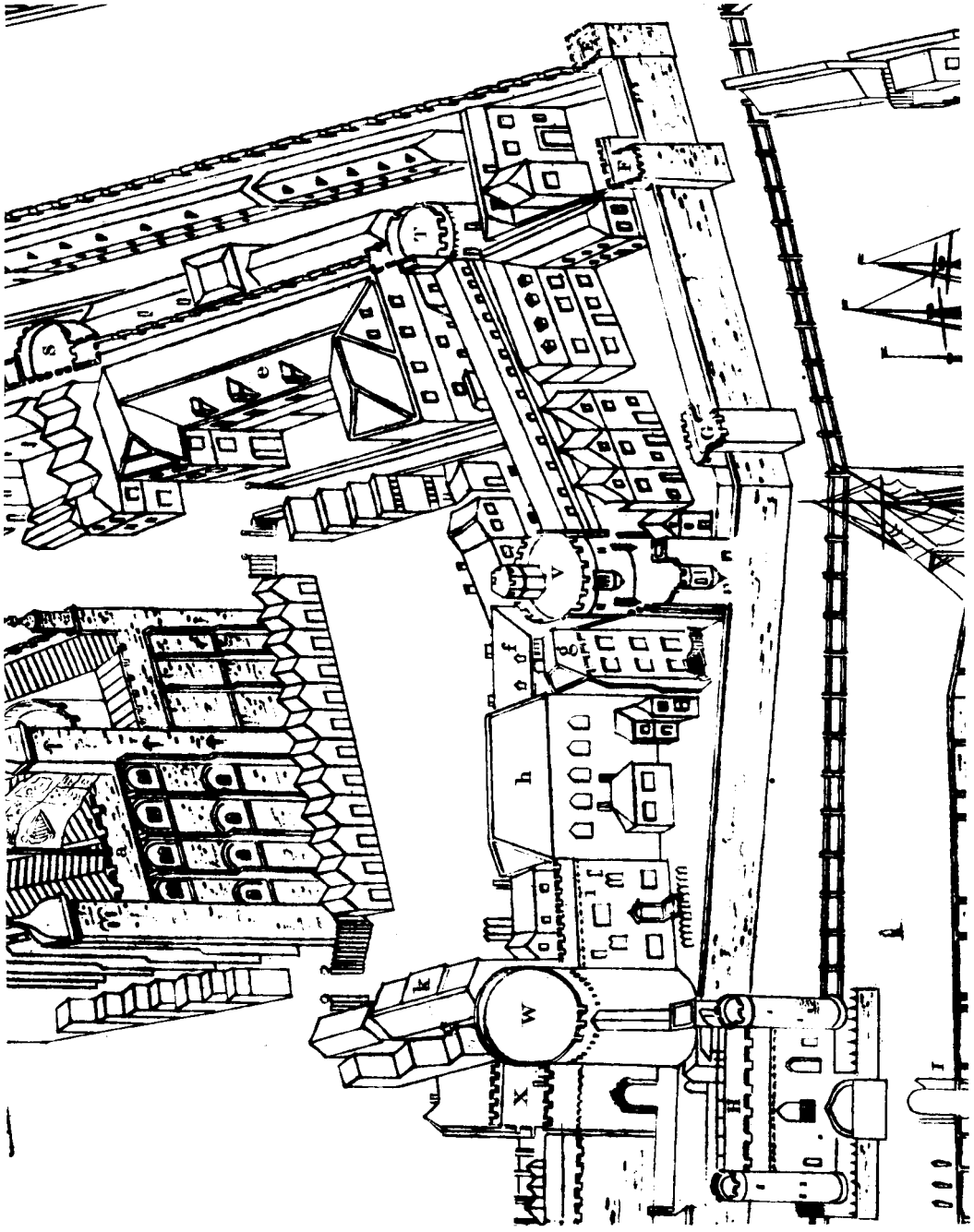


Plate 5. Tower of London: Part of the Lord Dartmouth's bird's-eye view of the Tower which accompanied a report of 1681. f=Office of Ordnance, g=Constable's Lodging, h=Mortar Piece Storehouse, i=Treasury House and k=Little Storehouse in Cold Harbour.

probable, therefore, that the identity of the new building was in fact the 'Little Storehouse'. Moreover, there are separate reasons (presented below) for regarding the Mortar Piece as a building of considerably greater antiquity.

The basic structure of the new two-storey building seems to have been erected by the summer of 1669 and in June an account with the carpenter was settled for the 'hanging up of Holsteres'.²⁹ Some work, however, remained and by the end of the following year the carpenter was still engaged in making window shutters.³⁰ The use of the new building as a storehouse was a short one, for in 1688 it was fitted out with a display of historic armour and immediately opened to the public. Listed amongst the exhibits was the famous 'Line of Kings' and a celebrated collection of trophies known as the 'Spanish Armour'. It was this second collection, claimed to have been taken from the disastrous Armada, which gave the building its new name of 'Spanish Armoury', a title the building retained until its eventual demolition in 1827.

The 'Mortar Piece Storehouse', the second store in Coldharbour was, immediately prior to the building of the 'new storehouse', referred to as the 'Cole Harbour Storehouse'. With the construction of its counterpart it became known as the 'Old Storehouse' or 'Great Storehouse' in Coldharbour. By 1681/2 this had progressed to the 'Graineery' (Plate 2) and the 'Mortar Piece' (Plate 5). There seems little doubt that the main body of this structure comprised the remains of the medieval great hall. As previously stated, the hall was ruinous by 1597, and it is tempting to relate its repair and employment to the reference we have for an official Ordnance storehouse in Coldharbour by 1599. On the 1681/2 plan it can be seen that the 'Graineery' occupied the same site as the hall in the 1597 view. The hall is known to have contained a row of windows along the south face which was altered or repaired in 1443-4;³¹ the top of this fenestration can be seen protruding above the inner defences on the fifteenth-century miniature in the British Museum (Plate 3) and also, as it seems, in a Hollar engraving of about 1647.³² Forty years later, on the 1681 bird's-eye view of the Tower, a line of round-headed windows lighting the south face of the Mortar Piece is once again occupying a similar position (Plate 5).³³ It will also be observed that the curtain wall immediately before the hall/Mortar Piece has gone, a representation which has some archaeological support.³⁴

Quite detailed plans of the Mortar Piece survive from the early eighteenth century. The main body of the structure was approximately 70 feet square with walls up to 7 feet thick occurring at both ground and upper floor levels. The appearance of further walling embedded in the heart of the adjacent 'Constables Lodgeings' and 'Office of Ordnance' suggests affinity with its design and might, therefore, indicate that the hall, or some kind of appendage, had once extended east as far as the Lanthorn Tower (Fig 2). Such an extension might be regarded as having represented the service end of the hall or, alternatively, part of the nearby 'Queens Lodgings' which ran south from the Wardrobe Tower at the south-east corner of the White Tower. Whatever the full extent of the hall and adjoining buildings, it is apparent that in the south-east corner of Coldharbour substantial vestiges of the palace were incorporated in the

replacement Ordnance complex. Thus, having survived for such a remarkable length of time, it is to be regretted that these important remains were finally demolished in the late eighteenth century,³⁵ perhaps only 50 years before their value might have been appreciated by the prominent Tower historians of the early nineteenth century.

During 1669, the Ordnance had a curious wall and 'Pallizadoe' erected around the White Tower (Plate 2).³⁶ The purpose of this fence—set at a short distance from the Tower's base—is not given, though it might be supposed that the constant threat of explosion, from the Magazine in the Tower and the Proof Yard within a building annexed to its east side, resulted in the laying-out of some form of safety corridor. Construction of the pallisade across Coldharbour was delayed for a number of years, and only undertaken in late 1674,³⁷ following demolition of the Jewel House and Kings Lodgings which, until then, had remained contiguous to the White Tower.

In 1672, the Ordnance embarked upon its next major building operation—the construction of a new office to replace their old one behind the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula. The new site was located in the south-east corner of Coldharbour, east of the old hall and north of the Lanthorn Tower and surrounding Constables Lodgings (Plate 2). Throughout 1672–3 the Board's workforce was engaged in pulling down and altering the 'old buildings' in this area.³⁸ Further alterations were carried out in the adjacent 'old storehouse' [hall] and, it must be presumed, the 'Constables Lodgings' which were 'intermixed' with the new office (Fig. 2). The construction and equipping of the office seems to have been completed by September 1673, when the officers and clerks were ordered to 'remove all their Bookes papers and writetinges to the new Office . . . without ffayle'.³⁹ An account settled with John Wilkin, the Board's joiner, on 7 October lists rooms assigned to three prominent Ordnance officials and four named clerks. In addition, there was a general 'Clerkes Roome' and a 'Great Roome' with an 'Anteroome' attached; the former three and a 'passage to Capt Sherburns Roome' were all wainscotted. The 'Great Roome' and 'Anteroome' were noted for having three sash windows each; all the other rooms were fitted out with varying combinations of presses, desks, cupboards, tables and screens.⁴⁰

With their office expeditiously erected, the Board began the task of removing all the remaining old buildings contiguous to the south face of the White Tower. In July 1673 they had already directed that all the stores in these buildings were to be transferred elsewhere.⁴¹ And on 10th March 1674, in a reference almost certainly to the Brick Tower, Sir Jonas Moore, the Board's Surveyor, was instructed to draw up a contract for 'pullinge downe the Tower against the White Tower'.⁴² On 24th March a 'Great Screw for Clearinge downe the Ruinous Walls next the White Tower' was ordered onto the site,⁴³ followed thereafter by timber for staging, tackle and other provisions.⁴⁴ The ensuing operation caused something of a stir on 17th July, when the remains of two small children believed to be those of the 'Little Princes in the Tower' were discovered under a stairway leading from the forebuilding or 'Kings Lodgings' to the Chapel in the White Tower.⁴⁵ Despite publicity, the accounts of those

who saw, or heard about, the incident add little or nothing to the scant description we have of this important part of the palace complex.

By August the operation seems to have been completed and several heaps of stone were ordered off the site⁴⁶ to enable the completion of the pallisade around the White Tower. There now remained only one major undertaking, the removal of the original entrance into the palace ward—the Coldharbour Gate. On 16th September 1675 the lead over the gate house was ordered to be taken off,⁴⁷ and on 18th November a contract drawn up with a team of ten workmen for demolishing the gate.⁴⁸ At the same time ‘pickaxes extraordinary, Great Sledges, Wedges extraordinary, Crowes of Iron’ and other equipment was ordered from the Ordnance stores to facilitate the undertaking.⁴⁹ During the demolition, soft stone and faced rag was specifically retained by the Board, while a large quantity of undressed ragstone was offered for sale, the proceeds going towards the cost of employing the workmen and the building of a ‘barge house upon the Tower wharfe for the lodginge the Office Barge’.⁵⁰ By July 1676 the last remnants of the gate had been dismantled and the stone carted from the site. With the south side of the White Tower free of impediments for the first time in nearly four hundred years, the Board was able to conclude its programme. On 11th July they commanded an estimate for ‘puttinge up and finishing the pallizadoes Round the White Tower’ and a ‘pallizadoe Gate’ on the site of the Coldharbour Gate, like the one ‘att the East syde’ of the White Tower (see Plate 2).⁵¹ Paving was laid along the base of the Tower⁵² and in August a contract signed with the mason for replacing some of the damaged Portland quoins in the buttresses and repairing and repointing the rest of the stonework generally.⁵³ In addition, a new stone stairway was ordered to be made up to the Chapel in the Tower, which by now was being used as a depository for state papers, an appalling risk bearing in mind that the Powder Magazine was accommodated within the same building.

NOTES

1. H. M. Colvin ed. ‘The Royal Castles’ *The History of the Kings Works* III (1975) 264–68.
2. S. Barter ‘The Board of Ordnance’ in *The Tower of London: its Buildings and Institutions* (1978) 108.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.* 110.
5. WO 55/332, 119–120.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.* 130.
9. WO 51/10, folio 99–100.
10. WORK 5/13.
11. WO 51/12, folio 164–168.
12. WO 55/388, 189–190.
13. WO 55/332, 140–141.
14. Britton & Brayley *Memoirs of the Tower of London* (1830) 228.
15. WORK 5/13.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.* November, 1663, note the gate still accommodated its portcullis by this date.
18. H. M. Colvin *op. cit.* in note 1, II (1963) 728.
19. WORK 5/13, October, 1663, ‘Masons Employed in

- working of a window of Oxfordshire and Cane [Caen] 7 foot high and 4 foot ½ wide and setting itt up in the brick Tower in Coleharbor’. The position of the structure is confirmed in a later entry of the same year (*ibid.* December) ‘in making a brick wall by the brick tower goinge to the Chappell’.
20. WO 55/425, folio 215.
 21. WO 51/10, folio 75–76.
 22. *Ibid.* folio 80.
 23. WO 51/12, folio 26–27.
 24. WO 51/10, folio 75–76.
 25. *Ibid.* folio 76–77, 79. WO 51/11, folio 59.
 26. WO 51/12, folio 136.
 27. *Ibid.* folio 52.
 28. Carpenter, WO 51/13, folio 18. Glazier, WO 51/10, folio 125.
 29. WO 51/10, folio 77.
 30. WO 51/13, folio 158.
 31. H. M. Colvin *op. cit.* in note 1, II (1963) 729.
 32. *Castrum Royale Londinense* (British Museum).
 33. I am grateful to Peter Curnow for drawing my attention to this detail.
 34. Excavations in 1976/7 revealed the truncated remains of two probable late seventeenth-century

- cellars cut into the core of the wall at this point.
35. Between 1775–77, the Office of Ordnance, Constables Lodgings and Lanthorn Tower were demolished to make way for a new office building. In 1780, the Mortar Piece Storehouse, now functioning as the 'Cordage Warehouse', was virtually rebuilt. Any surviving medieval work would in turn have been removed nine years later when the entire area was made ready for yet another Office of Ordnance following the fire which destroyed the new one in July 1788.
 36. WO 51/10, folio 124, 127. WO 51/11, folio 57. WO 51/12, folio 18.
 37. WO 47/19B, 11th & 27th August.
 38. WO 51/15, folio 137. WO 51/17, folio 59, 113–114, 117, 149–150, 168.
 39. WO 47/19B, 10th September.
 40. WO 51/17, folio 43.
 41. WO 47/19B, 31st July.
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. *Ibid.* 26th March & 7th April.
 45. E. Turner and W. Wright 'Recent Investigations regarding the Fate of the Princes in the Tower' *Archaeologia* (1933) 1–26.
 46. WO 47/19B, 11th August.
 47. *Ibid.*
 48. *Ibid.*
 49. *Ibid.* 18th November. WO 51/18, folio 99.
 50. WO 47/19B, 14th December 1675, 27th January & 29th February 1676.
 51. *Ibid.* For the painter's account concerning this work see WO 51/20, folio 126.
 52. WO 51/18, folio 228.
 53. WO 47/19B, 17th August, WO 51/19, folio 64.

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