

**SKETCH PLAN OF  
TAUNTON CASTLE**

I, CONSTABLE'S TOWER. 2, ROUND TOWER.



## PART II—PAPERS, ETC.

### Materials for the History of Taunton Castle

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#### (a) INTRODUCTION

NEAR the centre of the modern town of Taunton the general level of the Tone valley is broken by a stretch of rising ground, so low that it is scarcely noticeable now, but before the town existed and before the surrounding marshes were drained, affording a site of some defensive value. It was above flood-level and was protected on the north by the river and on the west and south-west by the swamps on either side of the stream, later known as the Potwater or Sherford Brook. The natural escarpment on the east was capable of conversion into a rampart. Almost the whole site was occupied throughout the middle ages by a large and strongly fortified castle of the bishops of Winchester, only a part of which still remains.

The object of these notes is to gather together and co-ordinate certain materials not used in any paper on Taunton Castle published in the *Proceedings* of the Somerset Archaeological Society, and most of which have only become available in recent years. Many theories regarding the site and buildings that have been accepted in the past now require reconsideration. Some of the views expressed here are tentative, and on several important points it is feared that no positive conclusion can ever be reached owing to the destruction of the relevant data. There are, however, surviving records of the see of Winchester at the Public Record Office and elsewhere which, no doubt, contain valuable evidence concerning the erection of the later buildings. Few of these records have been transcribed.

The fortified area was of about six acres in extent and consisted of a large bailey surrounded by a moat, and of an inner ward protected by a second moat. The inner ward occupied the northern portion of the enclosure.

There were two main gates to the bailey—the Castle Bow, approximately in the centre of the eastern rampart, and the West Gate immediately opposite. If the street which now passes through the Castle Bow, and leaves the enceinte at the site of the West Gate, is on the line of an ancient road, as has been generally assumed, the Castle possessed the unusual feature of a bailey traversed by a thoroughfare; and it is thought that one of the Norman bishops of Winchester may have utilized and improved the fortifications of the Saxon township, adding the whole site to the precincts of an already existing bishop's hall situated within the ramparts, and converting the fortified area into a castle, without, however, diverting the road by which the township had been bisected.

The suggestion has often been made that the fortifications were constructed originally by king Ine soon after A.D. 700, and it is true that the plan bears some resemblance to that of other earthworks believed to be of Saxon origin, such as those at Wareham and Wallingford, but defences of this type are now considered to belong to the period of the Danish invasions and not to the time of the Saxon conquest.

It is assumed that the first grants of land in Taunton Dene were made to the bishops of Winchester (apart from religious motives) to enable them to garrison a bulwark against the Brito-Welsh in Devon. Such grants seem generally to have been valid only for the life of the reigning king,<sup>1</sup> and a probable reason for their continuance and extension here was to enlist the military aid of the bishops against the incursions of the Danes.

The view has long been held that queen Frethogyth founded the connection between Taunton and the see of Winchester. She was wife of king Ethelheard,<sup>2</sup> the immediate successor of

<sup>1</sup> G. B. Grundy, *Saxon Charters of Somerset*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 'Fritheswitha Regina, mater Sanctae Frethelwithae Virginis, dedit E.Wint. manerium de Tauntone in qua requiescit humata.' Quoted by Cassan, *Bishops of Winchester*, i, 17, from *Annal. Wint.*

W. G. Searle, *Anglo-Saxon Bishops, Kings and Nobles*, p. 338.



Ine who had abdicated in A.D. 726. For a time she seems to have reigned independently. In A.D. 737 she went on a pilgrimage to Rome accompanied by the bishop of Sherborne.<sup>3</sup> The grant associated with her name included the greater part of the later manor. A charter of doubtful authenticity attributed to king Ethelheard and bearing the date A.D. 737, purports to be a confirmation of her gift.<sup>4</sup>

There are two charters relating to the episcopal estate of Taunton which bear the reputed date, A.D. 854.<sup>5</sup> Although the date may not be correct, they are certainly of the time of Ethelwulf, father of Alfred the Great. Ethelwulf had been defeated by the Danes in A.D. 842, but had routed the invaders ten years later. In one of these charters<sup>6</sup> it is stated in the body of the document that the grant was made by Ethelwulf, king of the West Saxons, to Ealhstan,<sup>7</sup> bishop of Winchester, and that it was in augmentation of a grant made by queen Frethogyth in former times. It must, however, be remembered that the mention of Frethogyth may have been a medieval interpolation.

Much 'history' has been written on the strength of a meagre reference to Taunton in the Saxon Chronicle under the year A.D. 722, and less reliable information given by Henry of Huntingdon,<sup>8</sup> but there seems to be no evidence that the place referred to was the same as the later Taunton, although it may be inferred safely that Ine built a township in the valley of the Tone. The entry in the Saxon Chronicle is translated, 'This year queen Ethelburga overthrew Taunton which Ine had before built'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

<sup>4</sup> W. de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ch. 158, p. 228.

<sup>5</sup> Grundy, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Birch, ch. 476; Kemble, ch. 1052.

<sup>7</sup> Ealhstan and others gained a victory over the Danes at the mouth of the Parret, A.D. 845 (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*).

<sup>8</sup> Henry of Huntingdon, 'History of the English', *Chron. & Mem.*, 74, p. 112.

<sup>9</sup> Professor Sir Charles Oman refers to the circumstances somewhat flippantly in *Castles*, p. 57, published 1926. 'This was not, apparently, a gratuitous "breaking up of a happy home"', but a recapture by the royal lady, who was on the best terms with her husband, of a stronghold which had fallen into the hand of rebels, for the Etheling Ealdberht was, at the moment, vexing Ine with insurrections.'

No Saxon remains are known to have been found at Taunton either within or without the Castle with the exception of a set of three bone gaming-pieces.<sup>10</sup> This is very surprising, for the town was certainly of some importance for a considerable period before the Norman conquest, even if the site was not occupied as early as the eighth century. Coins of Cnut, Edward the Confessor, and Harold II, as well as of William I, were struck here.<sup>11</sup>

It is possible that Ine may have used the already existing earthworks at Norton Fitzwarren, but when trial-excavations were undertaken there in 1908, although traces of Romano-British occupation were discovered, no finds were made which could be assigned to the Saxon period.<sup>12</sup> A distich, formerly well known in the neighbourhood, has been thought to preserve a tradition that the early Saxon settlement in the valley of the Tone was at Norton Fitzwarren :<sup>13</sup> it runs,

When Taunton was a furzy down,  
Norton was a market town.

The lines can hardly be of great antiquity in their present form.

<sup>10</sup> The three flat bone counters or draughtsmen were found in the Castle excavations, 1924-29, and two of them are figured in Plate III. Their technique resembles that of many bone objects of the pre-Norman centuries; but they are quite distinct from the smaller turned bone counters frequently uncovered with Roman remains.

The Taunton specimens approach 2 in. in diameter, and are decorated on the upper surface by incised concentric circles and enriched with a ring of the 'dot-and-circle' pattern. A precisely similar specimen, with one ring of dots-and-circles, was found in 1929 on the site of the new Town Hall at Glastonbury (exhibited in Museum there). Examples have been found in excavations at the Norman castle-mounds at Warrington and Rûg, near Corwen (Brit. Mus.); they are commonly found in London and there are over forty specimens in the London Museum. (*Lond. Mus. Cat.*, no. 1, 'London, and the Vikings', 1927, fig. 26, nos. 4-6, where it is stated that they are believed to have been used for backgammon or some similar game).

A bone draughtsman, similar to those found at Taunton and decorated with two concentric circles without rings of dots-and-circles, is exhibited in Reading Museum, and was found in a cemetery on the north side of King's Road, Reading, in 1890, associated with finds of the Saxon period, notably two large cruciform fibulae.

<sup>11</sup> Specimens may be seen in the Somerset County Museum.

<sup>12</sup> H. St. George Gray, 'Excavations at Norton Camp, near Taunton', *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, liv, ii, 131-143.

<sup>13</sup> The legend of Norton Camp may be connected with a Saxon occupation



The bishop's hall at Taunton is unlikely to have been sufficiently fortified to have deserved the title of a castle, but it is not known whether Walchelin, who was nominated as bishop of Winchester by William I in 1070, developed the site. There is a tradition that bishop William Giffard, who held the see from 1100 to 1129, 'built the castle': possibly he strengthened the defences of the bishop's hall or built a small keep here. His interest in the well-being of the manor was marked by the endowment of the Priory. Henry I was at Taunton at any rate on one occasion in bishop William's time.<sup>13a</sup>

Taunton Castle was at the zenith of its importance as a military stronghold in the time of Stephen, when the great keep, the remains of which are described later in these notes (Plate I), is believed to have been erected by the king's brother. Again, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it is evident that the Castle was regarded as essential to the scheme of the national defences. Although many English castles were nominally the property of private owners in the Angevin period, for military purposes they were under royal control except on those rare occasions when the barons who held them defied the central government. Yet again, in the Wars of the Roses, and before the destruction of the Spanish Armada, and in the reign of Charles I, the ancient defences of Taunton Castle became of military value.

During the thirteenth century the Castle was in the hands of the king on several occasions.

After the death of bishop Peter des Roches in 1238 there was a prolonged and violent struggle between Henry III and the monks of Winchester regarding the election to the bishopric. Taunton Castle was transferred to the keeping of the king's nominee.

1238. June 11.

Writ to the tenants of the honor of Tanton, in favour of Peter de Wakering of the same honor, whom the king has

of the site (A. W. Vivian-Neal, 'The Dragon of Wessex', *Som. & Dor. N. & Q.*, xxii, 244). The Norton of the distich was possibly North Town (the part of Taunton lying to the north of the river).

A similar rhyme, however, to that about Norton and Taunton occurs elsewhere, e.g. in connexion with Exeter and Kirton (Crediton).

<sup>13a</sup> *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, iv, 422.

appointed, during pleasure, to the custody of the same honour.

Mandate to the constable of Taunton to deliver the castle to him to keep during the king's pleasure. (*Patent Rolls*, 1232-1247, p. 224 ; also p. 436, under 1244).

(Peter de Wakering became Controller of the Household and Clerk of the Works to Prince Edward).

In 1250 Henry III succeeded in obtaining the election of his half-brother Aymer de Valence, but in 1258, after political disturbances, the bishop's property was seized by the king.

1258. Dec. 24.

Appointment, during pleasure, by the counsel of the magnates of the council, of Nicholas de Haudlou to keep the bishopric of Winchester with its castles and other appurtenances ; with mandate to the tenants to be intendant to him.

Mandate to Gerard de la Grue and Walter de la Croce to deliver to him the said bishopric and the castles of Wlveseye, Farnham and Thanton and all other things belonging to the bishopric. (*Patent Rolls*, 1258-1266, p. 7).

Aymer died in Paris, 1261.

1261. Oct. 24.

Appointment, during pleasure, of Robert de Briwes to keep the castle of Taunton, in the king's hands by reason of the voidance of the bishopric of Winchester.

Mandate of Walter de Burges and [Adam] son of Payn, guardians of that bishopric, to deliver the castle to him. (*Patent Rolls*, 1258-1266, p. 180 ; see also p. 193).

The next bishop of Winchester, John of Exeter, joined the barons against the king, and after the Battle of Evesham (1265) retired to Rome, where he died in 1268.

1267. June 23.

Because William de Wintreshull has mainperned before the king to keep safely the castle of Taunton so that no harm come to the king or the bishop of Winchester ; the king has committed the same to him to keep during pleasure, and commands Oliver Dynaunt keeper thereof, to deliver it to him without delay. (*Patent Rolls*, 1266-1272, p. 77).

Even after Simon de Montfort was slain at Evesham, the barons continued their opposition to Henry III until 1268, and Prince Edward took the precaution of securing Taunton Castle. The relative entry in the *Patent Rolls* is unusually illuminating.



1267. April 2.

Whereas because of the instant disturbance of the realm, it is necessary that the castle of Taunton be in the king's hands, and that as well that castle as other castles in Somerset and Dorset be munitioned with men and victuals more than usual without delay; the king has appointed Robert Waleraund<sup>14</sup> to receive the said castle from Ralph de Burton, constable of Taunton and keeper of that manor, and to munition it and the other said castles out of the issues of the manor of Taunton as may seem expedient for the defence and security of those parts; and commands the said Ralph, considering that the great necessity and evident utility in this behalf does not permit the king to spare anyone in these days, to deliver the said castle to the said Robert without delay, and to permit him to munition the said castles out of the issues of the said manor; and when the king knows how much the said Robert has taken for the said munition to answer thereof to the superiors of the said Ralph, he will have a care to keep the said Ralph harmless about this.

Commitment during pleasure to Oliver de Dynaunt<sup>14</sup> of the castle of Taunton in the form made between Robert Walerand, who by order of the king took the said castle into the king's hands, and him; so that Robert may have his store and place of retreat in it.

Mandate to the said Robert to receive the castle of Taunton as above, and to munition it and the other castles as above. (*Patent Rolls*, 1266-1272, p. 143).

1268. March 12.

Mandate to William de Wyntreshull to deliver to Walter de Burges and Nicholas de Rumese the castles of Taunton, Wlveseye and Farnaham, which the king has committed to them during pleasure, so that they answer for the issues thereof at the Exchequer. (*Patent Rolls*, 1266-1272, p. 204).

On the death of John of Exeter, the Pope appointed Nicholas of Ely, who only held the see until 1280.

1280. March 3.

Appointment, during pleasure, of Nicholas de Clere, king's clerk, to the custody of the manor and castle of Taunton, co. Somerset, late of N[icholas], late bishop of Winchester, deceased, which are in the king's hands by reason of the voidance of the bishopric, and he is to answer for the issues to William de Hamelton, king's clerk, to whom the custody of the bishopric is committed.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Walerand, Hutchins's *Dorset*, iv, 69; Oliver de Dynaunt or de Dinham of Buckland Dinham was summoned to Parliament as a baron, 1295.



Edward I commandeered the Castle to provide a prison for his cousin Almeric de Montfort.<sup>15</sup>

1280. November 8.

Mandate to William de Sancto-Claro and William de Hamelton, keepers of the bishopric of Winchester, to deliver the corpus of the castle of Taunton, which belongs to that bishopric, to John de Somerset, king's serjeant, for him to keep therein Almaric de Monte Forti. (*Patent Rolls*, 1272-1281, p. 403).

In 1360 a council was held at Taunton, doubtless in the Castle, regarding the part to be played by the western counties in the levying of a fifteenth and a tenth against the danger of invasion from France.<sup>16</sup>

1360. February 10.

Commission to the bishop of Worcester, the abbot of Evesham, Richard, earl of Arundel, and William de Shareshull, reciting that, whereas of late both before and after the king's crossing to France it was ordained by the king and council that there should be an array of men at arms and archers made in every county in case the king's enemies should invade the realm and whereas the peril grows daily and there will have to be great outlay of money over the leading of the said men from their parts to resist the invaders, whereof it is expedient to deliberate with the assent and counsel of the commonalty of the realm, the king for the speedy furtherance of the business in so urgent necessity . . . (*Patent Rolls*, 1358-1361, p. 404).

Little of outstanding interest appears to be known of the history of the Castle between the holding of the Council of 1360 and the appointment of Thomas Chaucer as constable on 14 February 1408 by bishop Henry Beaufort.<sup>17</sup> Thomas Chaucer was presumably son of the poet, and his mother is believed to have been a daughter of Sir Paon Roet, and sister of Catherine Swinford, mother of the bishop.

The story that the Castle was besieged during the Wars of the Roses is founded on a passage in William of Worcester's *Annales Rerum Anglicanum*, here quoted *verbatim*,<sup>18</sup> occurring after a reference to the Parliament of 1450-51.

<sup>15</sup> See further reference to the imprisonment of Almeric in ensuing notes on the Chapel of St. Peter. 'Amaury' is regarded as the correct form of this name.

<sup>16</sup> *Patent Rolls*, 1358-1361, p. 345; *Close Rolls*, 1360, p. 96.

<sup>17</sup> *Patent Rolls*, 1405-1408, p. 406.

<sup>18</sup> Hearne's edition, ii, 475. See also 'The Fight at Clyst in 1455', by Mrs. G. H. Radford, *Trans. Devon Assoc.*, xliv, 252-265.



Et non longe post facta est maxima perturbacio in occidentali parte Angliae quia comes Devon obsedit dominum Bouvyley in castro de Tawntone, ubi supervenere dux Eboraci, et dominus de Moleyns, et Willelmus Herberd, et alii. Et reddidit se Bouvile duci Eboraci.

In the west of England the struggle manifested itself in a personal conflict between the earl of Devon and his neighbour lord Bonvile.

The luckless queen, Margaret of Anjou, and her son, Edward, Prince of Wales, are stated by Holinshed<sup>19</sup> to have passed through Taunton in 1471 shortly before the fatal Battle of Tewkesbury, but it does not appear whether they rested at the Castle.

Preparations were made in the western counties to resist a Spanish invasion several years before the Armada set sail in 1588.

May 1578.

Warrant to pay to Sir Hugh Paulett 100£ yearly, out of the casualties growing within the lordship of Taunton, until the sum of 300£ be paid, for the repair of the Castle of Taunton. (*State Papers, Domestic, 1547-1580, p. 590*).

It is not within the scope of this paper to describe the stirring events which took place at Taunton Castle during its brief occupation by Perkin Warbeck in 1497,<sup>20</sup> or in the heroic defence of the town by Robert Blake in 1644-45,<sup>20a</sup> or at the Assizes<sup>21</sup> after the Battle of Sedgemoor in 1685. These historic occasions have been amply dealt with elsewhere.

Public meetings were held occasionally in the Great Hall in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century, and it was here, during the period of bitter controversy before the passing of the Reform Bill, that on 11 October 1831, Sydney Smith, who was then rector of Combe Florey, made the famous speech that broke the tension throughout England. Mr. Smith said,<sup>21a</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Holinshed's *Chronicles*, edit. 1808, xii, 316.

<sup>20</sup> *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, xxv, ii, 49.

<sup>20a</sup> *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, xxv, ii, 33-48.

<sup>21</sup> *Vict. Co. Hist., Som.*, ii, 228-230.

<sup>21a</sup> Chambers' *Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, iii, 157.



I do not mean to be disrespectful, but the attempt of the Lords to stop the progress of reform reminds me very forcibly of the great storm of Sidmouth, and of the conduct of the excellent Mrs Partington on that occasion. In the winter of 1824 there set in a great flood upon that town—the tide rose to an incredible height—the waves rushed in upon the houses—and everything was threatened with destruction. In the midst of this sublime storm, Dame Partington, who lived upon the beach, was seen at the door of her house with mop and pattens, trundling her mop, and squeezing out the sea-water, and vigorously pushing away the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic was roused; Mrs Partington's spirit was up; but I need not tell you that the contest was unequal. The Atlantic Ocean beat Mrs Partington. She was excellent at a slop or a puddle, but she should not have meddled with a tempest.

In April 1835, Disraeli stood as a candidate for the Borough of Taunton, contesting Labouchere's re-election, and held some of his meetings in the Great Hall. He dated letters to his sister, Miss Disraeli, from the Castle Inn.<sup>21b</sup>

#### (b) THE DEFENCES

The outer moat of Taunton Castle was wide and deep. It has been completely obliterated, and may have been partly filled in after the issue of an Order made by the Commissioners acting in the matter, dated 4 October 1662.<sup>22</sup> King Charles II had directed that the defences should be destroyed.<sup>23</sup>

In the medieval period the Sherford Brook was diverted to supply water to the outer moat. The brook entered the fosse at its south-western angle,<sup>24</sup> near the chief entrance of the present Gaumont Cinema. Here it was divided into two streams: the left stream flowing through the moat on the western and northern side of the Castle: the right stream,

<sup>21b</sup> *Som. & Dor. N. & Q.*, x, 289–292.

<sup>22</sup> W. G. Willis Watson, *Calendar of Customs*, p. 378.

<sup>23</sup> The town had been held during the sieges of the Civil War without the aid either of walls or moat. (Gardiner's *History of the Civil War*, ii, 98; *Shaftesbury Papers*, ii, 46).

<sup>24</sup> As late as 1853 a large mass of masonry was still in existence close to this angle of the moat, in what was then Mr. Channon's garden: it was, possibly, part of a tower originally flanked by curtain walls. (*Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, iv, ii, 32).



which we will now call the Potwater—the name by which it was best known in Taunton—through that on the southern and eastern sides.

THE WESTERN AND NORTHERN MOAT. From the south-western angle the line northward was straight as far as the West Gate.<sup>25</sup> It seems then to have curved eastward, following the curtain which may still be traced in the arc of the outer walling of buildings behind the Winchester Hotel<sup>26</sup> and of the n.w. wall of the interesting late seventeenth-century house called Castle Lodge.<sup>27</sup>

From the Constable's Tower,<sup>28</sup> the line eastward seems to have been parallel with and almost immediately outside the Great Hall.<sup>29</sup> From the eastern end of the Hall no evidence for the line has been discovered, and it would be most difficult to make any excavations in this position. The suggestion may be hazarded that the western and northern moat formed the watercourse of the early medieval millstream. If the Fons George, now known as the Gaol Stream, joined the Sherford Brook at Wilton, the resulting flow of water would have been sufficient to drive a large mill.

<sup>25</sup> When excavations were being made for the foundation of the Cinema, a part of the fosse was uncovered.

<sup>26</sup> A channel, of which the outlet still exists, formerly connected the moat and the mill-stream to the north-west of the West Gate. This channel was either an overflow from the moat, or was constructed when the northern portion of the moat was filled in.

<sup>27</sup> The curtain may have been continued from what is now the northern corner of Castle Lodge to the adjacent corner of the Constable's Tower, thus cutting off the inner from the outer moat. If free access was left between the moats at this point the defences of the Castle would have been seriously weakened. The normal arrangement in such a case would have been that the moats were only connected by low arches, constructed in the base of the curtain and fitted with sluice-gates. Near the junction of these waterways an excavation was made into the inner moat in November 1940, and a depth of 8½ ft. was reached. Here dark silt was met with and water.

<sup>28</sup> This newly-named tower is at the north-west corner of the building, and was formerly, but wrongly, called the Norman Keep.

<sup>29</sup> To put this statement to the test three holes were dug in October 1940 at points far apart and at an average distance of 20 ft. from the wall of the Great Hall. The average depth reached was 6¾ ft.; in the higher levels made ground was met with, and at the bottom silt, presumably of the moat. Owing to the presence of water a greater depth could not be reached. Nothing was found, but modern shards, some animal bones and charcoal.



**THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MOAT.** The course eastward from the s.w. angle was almost straight and followed the line of what is now Corporation Street as far as the Meat and Produce Market. Here the moat was carried northward, and the course was again approximately straight as far as its junction with the existing channel below the Town Mill. The channel carried the Potwater into the Tone.

It must be remembered that water was usually sustained in such moats as this by transverse weirs, and it is clear in this case that, without weirs, the Castle fosse would soon have become what is known locally as a 'goyle'.

The Meat and Produce Market, a part of the Castle Hotel and the premises behind the shops on the west side of North Street were built on the site of the eastern moat.

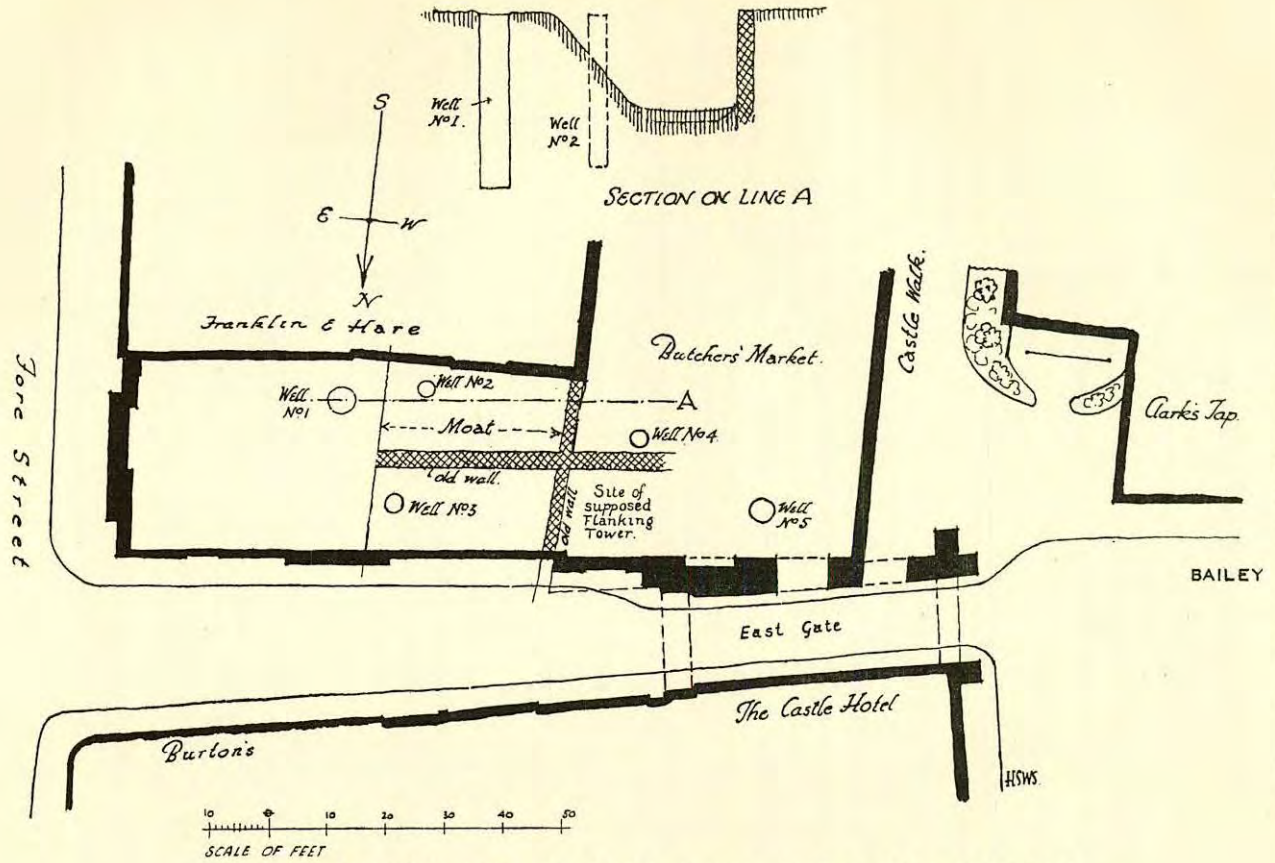
In the summer of 1937 the Corn Exchange in Fore Street, facing the Parade, was demolished together with the northern half of the Market to provide space for the Corporation's new electric light offices and show-rooms. During these operations a section of the outer moat was exposed in the position indicated in the accompanying plan, page 57, immediately outside the Castle Bow and on the south side of the gate. In the course of the work five wells of circular section were revealed, the position of which is shown in the plan; two of the wells were in the filling of the moat and were of comparatively late date. A carved stone head of the first half of the fifteenth century was found among the debris in one of the wells.<sup>30</sup> Transverse stone walling was also uncovered; it crossed the moat from east to west and was possibly the foundation of a weir. The western bank was shown to have been protected by a retaining-wall, against which the depth of the moat was from  $15\frac{1}{2}$  ft. to  $16\frac{1}{2}$  ft.<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately most of the silted and other material was dug by a mechanical excavator, so a thorough examination of the deposits was impossible. Much of the pottery recovered was newly broken; but several specimens of general interest were found, mostly in the lower levels.

<sup>30</sup> *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, lxxxiv, 44.

<sup>31</sup> Some of the walling, wells and pottery are briefly alluded to in the brochure and programme of the opening of the Electricity Show-rooms on 16 February 1939.





Plan of the East Gate of Taunton Castle, showing position of the Outer Moat



Among the antiquities collected were the following :

Three fragments of a large glazed jug decorated with slip and applied strips of clay, finger-tipped, probably fourteenth century; about sixty shards of seventeenth-eighteenth-century wares, chiefly lead-glazed, including base of a glazed jar decorated with finger impressions; and three fragments of ridge-tiles, glazed and unglazed; seven fragments of leather shoes (soles and uppers); an iron knife with wooden handle (tip missing); pewter table-spoon (broken); four glass bottles, three round, one square  $1\frac{7}{16}$  in. to  $3\frac{1}{8}$  in. high; and a few fragments of later pottery, mostly eighteenth century, including the greater part of a flanged bowl with internal glazing.

When the Public Library was being built in 1904 and the School of Art in 1907, the outer edge of the southern portion of the moat was uncovered, and silt and rubbish from the fosse had to be excavated to a depth of approximately 18 ft. to obtain secure foundations. At the bottom of the fosse below the present front of the Library three pieces of corroded and damaged pewter (plate, dish and tankard) were recovered, all apparently of the seventeenth century, and these specimens are exhibited in the Museum.<sup>32</sup> The Museum also preserves a lead-glazed pottery cup, c. 1600, found in the same place.

In 1926 Messrs. E. Goodman & Son, when extending their printing-works behind their premises on the west side of North Street, had occasion to excavate silt, etc., to a considerable depth from a portion of the eastern fosse. Much pottery was found including a perfect 'tiger ware' jug of the sixteenth century, height  $7\frac{7}{8}$  in.<sup>33</sup>

The shards were for the most part coarse earthenware of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the types represented include candlesticks, cups and handled pitchers, but bowls and jars predominated. Two vessels are lead-glazed; a much larger number have a salt-glazed surface, generally both internally and externally, in brown, green and yellow; and some vessels are decorated with slip externally (bowls, internally) prior to salt-glazing.<sup>34</sup>

The nature of these finds is a sufficient indication that the

<sup>32</sup> *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, liii, i, 70.

<sup>33</sup> *Op. cit.*, lxxxi, 65. The jug and shards were given to the Museum by Mr. A. E. Goodman in 1926 and 1934.

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, lxxxvi, 19.



outer moat cannot have been entirely filled in when the defences of the Castle were destroyed in compliance with Charles II's order of October 1662.

**THE INNER MOAT.** It is thought that the inner moat was constructed in the late twelfth century, or in the early thirteenth century. The retaining-wall—an apron-wall with a pronounced batter, excavated in 1927, may be dated 1170-1210.<sup>35</sup> This retaining-wall protected the portion of the northern bank of the moat that lies just within the garden now let by the Archæological Society to the Castle Hotel. Immediately to the north of the Castle Bow, the eastern rampart was cut to form a junction between the inner and outer moats. No doubt the curtain-wall was continued across the inner moat at this point. From the eastern rampart to the round tower (now containing the Society's Committee Room) at the south-western corner of the inner ward, the moat was carried in an almost straight line. Thence it extended north-west, skirting the wall of the Constable's Tower, until its junction with the outer moat.

The depth of the inner moat is not known. The portion between the eastern rampart and the gate of the inner ward was in all probability filled-in when the defences were destroyed in or soon after 1662. The remaining portion was levelled by Sir Benjamin Hammet and turned into a garden for the Judge's Lodging in 1785.

The inner fosse appears to have been wider than the outer, but this need cause no surprise, for it was of later construction : as the science of attack developed there was a parallel tendency to make wider moats.

### (c) THE BUILDINGS

It is not intended here to attempt any full description of the buildings, but merely to give a brief account, indicating future lines of enquiry as to their history and purposes.

**THE GATES.** A drawing of the Castle Bow, made in 1814, shows the gateway flanked at the east and west by what

<sup>35</sup> This was exposed during the Society's excavations covering parts of the years 1924-29.



appear to be late Norman towers.<sup>36</sup> Although the drawing cannot be regarded as completely reliable, it is not unlikely that such towers existed. A more careful drawing of almost the same date, now in the collection of the Archæological Society, shows the surviving arches, but with no superstructure. The extension of the Hotel over the Castle Bow was built a few years later. Both drawings show windows of the early Decorated period in the north wall of the gateway. These windows are thought to have lighted a large room in the upper storey, behind the portcullis chamber, which was at the outer end of the gate. The original portcullis groove remains. The surviving arches and the room formerly above them were certainly erected either in the second half of the thirteenth or very early in the fourteenth century.<sup>37</sup> The gatehouse served the purpose of the Porter's Lodge. The Porter of Taunton Castle was an important functionary: appointments to the office continued to be made until the nineteenth century.

Foundations of a barbican were unearthed some years since on the town side of the moat, fronting the Castle Bow.

The large scale of the gate-house, which was at least 50 ft. in length, is an indication of the Castle's importance in the Edwardian epoch.

A retaining wall, about 150 feet in length, still exists against the rampart to the north of the junction of the inner and outer moats, masked by outbuildings behind the shops on the west side of North Street. The lower courses may be original, but the quality of the masonry in the upper courses is indifferent

<sup>36</sup> *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, iv, ii, 27. The original drawing by W. P. Pinchard is in the collection of the Somerset Archæological Society.

The ancient name of the gate is now generally applied to the street which passes through it.

<sup>37</sup> A panel of Ham Hill stone has been built into the wall above the Castle Bow on the western side. It is now completely defaced by weathering, but in 1880 the arms of bishop Langton and the date 1498 could still be traced (*Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, xxv, ii, 63). From what part of the Castle this panel came is not known. The inference that the Castle was under repair when Henry VII visited Taunton in 1497 seems to have been made from the two panels of bishop Langton's arms dated 1495 and 1498.

Another carved panel has been inserted on the eastern side of the gateway. It is still in good condition and bears a mitre with long *infulae* and two plain shields on which arms must originally have been painted.



and they date, perhaps, from the seventeenth or eighteenth century.

Although a small portion of the masonry of the West Gate was *in situ* early in the present century, no architectural features had survived even when Francis Warre wrote his account of the Castle in 1854. A stone bridge crossed the outer moat in front of this gate, but it is not known whether it was medieval. Before 1885, when excavations were being made for a gas-main, the timber foundations of what was thought to have been a barbican were discovered to the west of the bridge.<sup>38</sup>

The gate-house of the inner ward has been reconstructed on more than one occasion, and it is difficult to say at what period it was originally built. The flanking walls may have a Norman core: their present facing of chert cannot be dated, though it has generally been assumed that it was added in the thirteenth century. A flat buttress on the left of the outer arch is perhaps a survival from a previous gate-house, but the building has no architectural feature which can be assigned definitely to an earlier period than the fifteenth century. Possibly there was no Norman or thirteenth-century gate-house on this site; in that case the entrance to the inner ward from the bailey must have been nearer to the Castle Bow and in close proximity to the keep. The outer arch and second arch, forming the framework of the portcullis groove, are purely functional in design.<sup>39</sup> Above the outer arch is a panel of Ham Hill stone on which are carved the arms of bishop Thomas Langton and the date 149(5).<sup>40</sup> The window of the portcullis chamber is of a type common in the neighbourhood, *c.* 1540-50. The gateway is surmounted by another panel of Ham Hill stone on which are the arms and supporters of Henry VII. The two panels of arms and the smaller inscribed panel, which has been inserted, are not in their first position and may have been brought from some other part of the Castle.

<sup>38</sup> C. H. Fox, *Memorials of Taunton Castle*. It is possible that a piece of masonry, now supporting the short path between the pavement and the cottage behind the Winchester Arms, is a fragment of the west gatehouse.

<sup>39</sup> The second arch is of the mid-fifteenth century, but the outer arch was probably rebuilt at a later date.

<sup>40</sup> *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, lxxviii, 130.



The inner arch of the gateway and the tower containing the newel stair leading to the portcullis chamber—later used as the Exchequer of the manor—are of the mid-fifteenth century. The staircase tower was rebuilt in 1885.

There was a second gate to the inner ward at the end of Mill Lane. That it was of some importance may be gathered from two petitions copied by the late Henry Symonds and here given in full. Some remains of the gate were in existence in 1853; their site is now occupied by the ante-chamber of the Wyndham Gallery. Warre described this entrance, which had been demolished before the Archæological Society came into possession: ‘flanked by an enormous mass of ruined masonry, is a way leading at once to the mill-stream, through a doorway having a segmental arch, which may perhaps be as early as the latter part of the thirteenth century, beyond which extends a wall of very great thickness’<sup>41</sup>—the outer wall of the Great Hall.

*Petition no. 1*

Alleges that the complainant was customary tenant of houses, etc., in the bailiwick and castle of Taunton, to which belonged the water-gate used since time out of mind by men and horses as a way into Mill Lane leading into the town, and a plot of ground by the Castle all leading to Mill Lane; the complainant also had a footpath over the bridge there across the Tone and so through Castle Orchard to Bishops Hull church the same being a tithing path. He complains that a mud-wall and outhouses have been built against the castle wall and other outhouses in Mill Lane, whereby the complainant’s right of way and the tithing footpath have been obstructed. Asks advice, which is granted. Undated, but earlier than

*Petition no. 2.*

Dated 1 January 1680–81. Concerning the same subject matter as Petition no. 1. Recites that the Castle had two great gates, one called the South gate or Great gate, and the other called the Water gate. (Then as in no. 1). The complainant also had a stable called the lord’s stable on the western (? northern) end of the castle wall, and a dung pit, and a door there to go into Mill Lane, also a plot of ground by the said wall towards Mill Lane.

One Brooke held a part of the lord’s waste near the water gate between the Town Mill and a plot behind the lord’s stable

<sup>41</sup> *Op. cit.*, iv, ii, 29.



at the western (? northern) end of the Castle. Brooke had erected buildings, etc., and caused obstruction (as in no. 1).

Complainant asks that the previous order may be enforced and a fine levied for non-observance of the order.

**THE KEEP.** The foundations of the Norman Keep were uncovered in a series of excavations made between 1924 and 1929.<sup>42</sup> The site has been let to the Castle Hotel and is now laid out as a garden.

The chief architectural feature discovered was an apron-wall, 60 ft. in length and 10 ft. in height, having eighteen off-sets (Plate II). It is at right angles with the rubble-filled foundation wall, 63 ft. in length at the base and 13 ft. in width, which now, with a later addition, cuts the inner ward in two and which supported the western wall of the keep. The apron-wall has an L-shaped platform at the eastern end—the larger member projecting southward at right angles to the building. They were undoubtedly the foundation of the forebuilding which contained the entrance to the keep. The platform was constructed to carry an exterior stairway. The forebuilding must have resembled closely those at Dover and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The total length of the apron-wall and platform is 80 ft. The southern wall of the keep, against which the forebuilding abutted, was apparently about 100 ft. in length, but it may have been slightly longer if the forebuilding was not carried quite to the south-eastern corner.

The exterior measurements of the keep are presumed therefore to have been 63 ft. by *c.* 100 ft. ; those of the forebuilding, exclusive of the apron, were 80 ft. by *c.* 12 ft. At the north-western corner there were formerly vestiges of an annexe which, perhaps, contained garderobes.

The tower was clearly one of the larger Norman Keeps of which there are any records.

A square well, apparently of contemporary date, was found within the keep, 10 ft. from the interior of the western wall.

<sup>42</sup> The Taunton Castle excavations were carried out on behalf of the Society at intervals from November 1924 to October 1929 under the general supervision of Mr. H. St. George Gray. No work was done in the year 1926.

The upper course of the south wall of the forebuilding was unearthed by the late L. St. George Gray in a trial excavation in 1916.



This well was of finely built ashlar work, 3 ft. 10 in. square internally, diminishing near the bottom to 3 ft. 6 in. ; the top of the walling, in its broken down condition, was 4 ft. below the then surface at the time of its discovery. The bottom of the well, cut into the marlstone, was reached at a depth of 23 ft. Water was found at a depth of about 19 ft., the level coinciding with that of the water in the mill-stream.

At the bottom of the well were found a corbel of Norman date in the form of a somewhat grotesque human head with large rolled mustachios ; the remains of at least two wooden stave-built buckets ; and some fragments of Norman pottery (probably of one vessel) having a typical ornament consisting of impressions of diamond shape (others being oblong or almost square) and similar to fragments found at Castle Neroche.<sup>43</sup>

The corbel and the pottery are figured and described in the *Antiquaries Journal*, xxi, Jan. 1941.

In digging on the east side of the square-shaped well, in made earth, in 1928, at a depth of about 5 ft., the spoon figured in Plate III,  $\frac{3}{4}$ -scale linear, was found.<sup>44</sup>

This spoon, which is composed of base silver, is  $8\frac{1.5}{16}$  in. in length following the convexity, or  $8\frac{1}{8}$  in. if measured in a straight line. Connecting the handle with the bowl is a grotesque animal head of archaic style treated as if grasping the bowl of the spoon. A further design, which appears to be derived from the palmette, is chased near the base of the bowl on the inside. Another head is represented near the end of the handle. The upper end of the handle is ornamented with an incised zigzag pattern and in the middle is a small panel containing an interlaced pattern of Celtic design. Its weight is 28.32 grammes. It is not far removed in date from 1200.

In general type this rare spoon is similar to the 'Coronation spoon' (length 10 in.). But there is a much closer similarity between the Taunton spoon and the four found together in the Nunnery at Iona in 1922, when the Office of Works was doing repair-work there.<sup>45</sup>

Another interesting 'find' was the hone of schist of early medieval date and much worn, of a type which has been found in Britain on several sites south of a line drawn from the Wash to the Severn. It is figured in Plate III.<sup>46</sup>

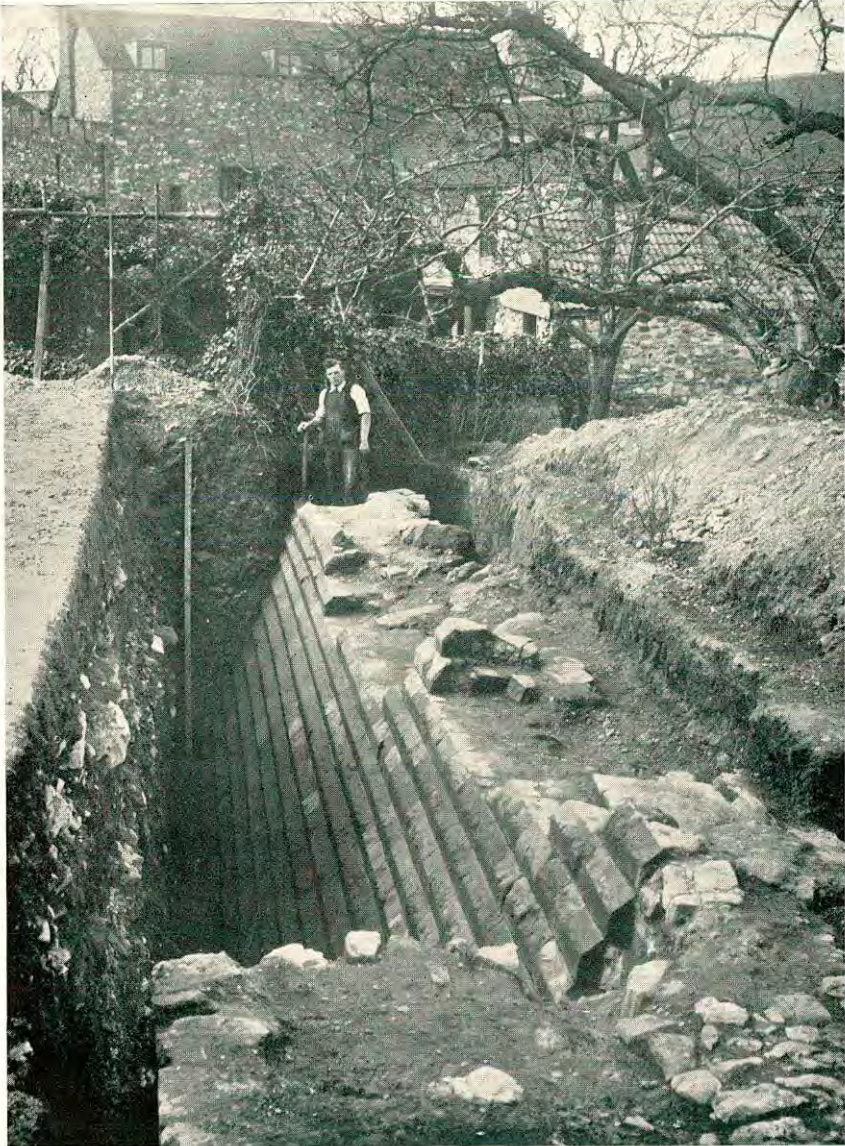
<sup>43</sup> *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, xlix, ii, 36, and Plate III, fig. 9.

<sup>44</sup> It was figured,  $\frac{1}{2}$ -linear, in the *Antiq. Journ.*, x (1930), 157.

<sup>45</sup> *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, lviii, 102-111. The Coronation spoon (3 views, full size) is figured in *Archæologia*, liii, plate v.

<sup>46</sup> This specimen is also illustrated with other examples in 'Twelfth-century Middens in the Isle of Wight', by H. F. Poole and G. C. Dunning. (*Proc. I. of Wight N.H. and A. Soc.*, vol. ii, 1937, pt. 8).





TAUNTON CASTLE  
Forebuilding of Keep, looking West

*From a Photograph by Mr. H. St. George Gray, F.S.A.*



A description of other specimens, including a cabasset (c. 1500), and of the pottery found in the Taunton Castle excavations may well afford material for a future paper.

Had the whole area been excavated some remains of the foundations of the northern and eastern walls would perhaps have been discovered, but this is by no means certain, for the Normans frequently erected buildings of immense strength and solidity with what would later have been considered totally inadequate foundations below ground-level. When the keep was demolished, the foundations of these walls would have been torn out without difficulty. It is thought that the trench, a section of which was uncovered during the excavations, may have been made when the lower courses of the northern wall were removed. The existing portion of the western wall and the apron-wall of the forebuilding were retaining walls, constructed to make a level basement storey. No such retaining walls were required on the north and east.

Henry de Blois, grandson of the Conqueror, became bishop of Winchester in 1129. Shortly after he had obtained the crown for his brother, Stephen, in 1135, he built or strengthened castles at Taunton, Wolvesey, Farnham and elsewhere,<sup>47</sup> in order that the full military support of which the see was capable might be marshalled in the cause of the new king against the Empress Maud. It is presumed that we have here the remains of a great tower-keep, built by bishop Henry.

Taunton Castle was of importance during the anarchy of Stephen. Except for a short period in 1141, bishop Henry fought continuously in support of his brother; whereas de Mohun at Dunster, Lovel at Castle Cary and de Courci at Nether Stowey were on the side of the Empress.

We have no evidence showing when the keep was demolished, but we assume that it survived at any rate until the destruction of the defences in 1662. A soldier, passing through Taunton in 1635 noted that the town was<sup>48</sup>

fortify'd with a defensible Castle built by a Saxon King now much ruined, especially the great Tower.

The phrase 'the great Tower' could not have been applied to

<sup>47</sup> Cassan, *Bishops of Winchester*, i, 148.

<sup>48</sup> *Som. & Dor. N. & Q.*, xix, 269; xxii, 84.



any other building in the Castle than the keep. Again, if it had been destroyed before the second half of the seventeenth century, it is most improbable that the site, which was on comparatively high ground and therefore of defensive value, would have been left vacant. No trace was found of later buildings having been superimposed on the foundations. Many tobacco-pipes of the Stuart period were discovered among the debris.

The keep certainly dominated the whole of the later medieval Castle and indeed the town itself. Such towers were often preserved for purely military purposes, long after more comfortable domestic buildings had been added to Norman castles.

The courtyard to the south of the forebuilding seems small and cramped, but when the curtain was built to improve the defences of the inner ward (until then the keep itself was the sole portion of the Castle capable of withstanding an intensive siege) the exigencies of the site prevented the later builders from preserving or making a spacious and dignified approach, even if they had been interested in a refinement of this description.

There seem to have been comparatively wide rampart walks on the northern and eastern sides of the keep, and at the point where they met at the north-eastern angle of the ward, there are still remains of a tower, with a simple arch of late Norman construction at the base, giving into a bastion, more clearly defined in 1853 than it is to-day, and which now forms the garden of Ina Cottage.

An embankment of puddled red marl, 90 ft. in length, extending along the site of the eastern rampart walk, was excavated in 1924. As the associated finds were of various dates, but not later than the seventeenth century, it is regarded as possible that it was constructed as a gun emplacement or defensive work during one of the sieges of 1644-45.

**THE CONSTABLE'S TOWER AND THE GREAT HALL.** At the north-west corner of the inner ward stands the most interesting building in the whole area that has survived in a comparatively good state of preservation. It is here called 'The Constable's Tower' because it seems a reasonable supposition that it was occupied by the constable and his family, even if it was at first



intended for the use of the bishop when he visited the manor. The relation of the buildings of the inner ward to each other should be studied in conjunction with the plans of the palace at Wells and of the episcopal castle at Durham.

The Constable's Tower is of the transitional period and may perhaps be attributed to the episcopate of Richard of Ilchester, who was bishop Henry's immediate successor, or to that of the succeeding bishop, Godfrey de Lucy, who held the see from 1189 to 1204. At Winchester Cathedral the early English style was fully developed in the time of the latter bishop, as also more locally at Wells. In domestic architecture, however, there was sometimes a conservative tendency, and it has been tempting to attribute this tower and the original Great Hall to the early years of the episcopate of bishop Peter des Roches, the friend of king John. Extensive building operations were undertaken at Taunton Castle by bishop Peter in the first decade of the thirteenth century, as may be gathered from the following translation from his Pipe Roll for 1207-8:<sup>49</sup>

In expenses of the constable and household who were boarded from the 28th of September to the 20th of December inclusive, viz. for 12 weeks, £5 14s. 10½d. In allowance to the constable from the 21st of December to the 28th of September inclusive, viz. for 282 days, £14 2s. 0d. In allowance to William the cook, W. de Ferham, N. de Hattingelega, William de Swofham for the same period, £9 8s. 0d. In allowance to N. the porter, for the same period, £1 3s. 6d. In allowance to R. the porter from the 15th of November to the 28th of September inclusive, viz. for 318 days, £1 6s. 6d. In allowance to a watchman from 21st of December to the 10th [of May] inclusive, viz. for 20 weeks, 10s. In money to a watchman for half a year, 2s. 6d. In allowance to Hugh Bissop for threshing corn at Poundisford for 28 days, 2s. 4d. In fur for Wm. de Ferham, N. de Hattingelega, and Wm. of Swofham, 12s. In money to the two porters, annual, 20s. Total, £34 1s. 8½d.

In expenses of the constable and Wm. the cook and Thomas de Fluri at Bristol against Christmas, *half a mark*. In messengers sent to the lord bishop regarding the protection of his woods and in others from the lord to forbid the sale of his oats, 9½d. In a punt bought for the fishpond, 10s. Total 17s. 5½d.

<sup>49</sup> The Pipe Rolls of Winchester, extending from 1207 to 1455, 'with numerous gaps for the earlier part', are at the Public Record Office. Only the roll for 1207-8 has been published. (*Pipe Rolls of the Bishopric of Winchester*, London School of Economics and Political Science, 1903).



In expenses of the lord bishop's household against the coming of the lord king and the lord bishop for 3 days, 18s. 6½*d.*<sup>50</sup> In expenses of Robert de Turneham<sup>51</sup> when he came from Poitiers and in hire of horses for his use, 13s. 2*d.* In expenses of Richard Marsh and Wm. de Sancto Maxentio for 2 days, 4s. 4*d.* In entertainment of the sheriff of Somerset for 1 night, 18s. In allowance to him for the custom of the hundred, 40s. In 100 pikes brought from Wales and in messengers sent there twice for the same, 2s. 6*d.* In salting and drying the lord king's venison sent from Bridgwater to Taunton, 1s. In 2 tuns of wine bought at Exeter and in wedging, binding and hauling the same to Taunton, £4 4s. 0*d.* In bran for weapons, 1s. Total, £9 2s. 6½*d.*

In completing the new wall. In masons for 10 weeks, £3 16s. 6*d.* In workmen making cement and helping the masons for 10 weeks in the same work, £3 2s. 3*d.* In hauling 182 measures of small stone for the same, £3 0s. 8*d.* In making a lime-kiln this year on Quantock and in removing the lime-stone and raising it from two cuttings, £2 12s. 2½*d.* In hauling 281 quarters of lime, £1 12s. 3½*d.* In a cart bound with iron together with harness and 3 pair of cart-wheels bound with iron, bought in Bristol for this work, £1 18s. 8*d.* In ironwork for 2 carts and in shoeing horses, 2s. 1½*d.* In saddles, swingle-trees (larger and smaller), cart-clouts, links, fitting axles to carts and grease for the same, and binding 3 shovels with iron, 3s. 9*d.* In money to a carter, by the year, and to another for 12 weeks at the work, 4s. 9*d.* In purchase of a horse for a cart [a cart-horse] for the work, 12s. In clearing 7 acres, £3 11s. 2½*d.* In renovating the bridge at Bishop's Hull, 3s. 4½*d.* Total, £20 19s. 5½*d.*

In felling and trimming timber for the new bridge and in cutting planks, in purchase of iron and grease, and in making iron ties for the same, £1 13s. 6½*d.* In carpenters for making the new bridge, by piece-work, £3. In 2 sawyers for 5 weeks and a day and a half, who cut planks for the bridge, 14s. 10½*d.* In covering the new wall and the press, 4s. 11½*d.* In repairing

<sup>50</sup> King John was at Taunton, 1208, 21–23 Sept. (*Rot. Litt. Pat.*, i, pt. 1, published 1835).

The only Plantaganet coin found in the excavations at Taunton Castle in 1927 was a silver penny of John—York mint; moneyer, Everard. (H. A. Grueber, *Handbook of Coins of Great Britain*, 1899, no. 237, and Pl. vii).

Queen Isabella, widow of king John, was at Taunton on 'the kalends of March, 1 Henry III'. (*Calendar of Charter Rolls*, iii, 400).

<sup>51</sup> Robert de Turneham was evidently one of the king's household; he was a witness of king John's charter to William Briwer, making Bridgwater a borough, 1200.



the gaol with a new door, completing the stable doors, repairing the dove-cot, with nails for the same, 10s. 9½*d.* In hinges and nails, and making two locks for the new door, in coals for the same; in hinges and locks for the gaol; for repairing other doors of the castle with hinges and nails for the same, £1 15s. 0*d.* In making 24 irons for lances, 8 mattocks, 2 hoes, and beams for the new ditch, and mending others; and making 15 hoes and mattocks for clearing land and repairing them, 17s. 6*d.* In the new ditch made in front of the new wall and the stew, and repairing the ditch between the mole and the mill; and in miners for 17 weeks, £16 4s. 11½*d.* In workmen carrying earth up from the ditch in hods; and they were working there with the miners for 17 weeks, £22 4s. 3½*d.* Total, £47 5s. 9*d.*<sup>52</sup>

The exterior measurements of the Constable's Tower are *c.* 50 ft. by 33 ft. The building material is chiefly chert which could be obtained within the manor by surface quarrying on the Blackdown Hills. Ham Hill stone was used for the flat pilaster-like buttresses which are carried from the level of the string-course, 3¾ ft. above the present level of the ground to the first storey, and also for the mouldings of the windows. The ground floor is occupied by a large vaulted undercroft, now having four entrances, but of these two are of modern construction. That leading into the Great Hall has an archway of the Edwardian period in the outer face of the wall. The greater part of the large archway at the southern end is original. It forms a doorway of extremely simple type which might well have given into a cellar, but can hardly have been intended for the chief entrance of the tower. This was almost certainly on the upper floor, leading directly into the Great Chamber. When the partitions and fittings, which had been inserted in the Great Chamber, were removed it was found that the embrasures of the two lancet windows at the northern end and the doorway by their side were in almost perfect preservation. The three arches are of early transitional type and almost circular. One of the lancets had been built up, the other had been cut out to make space for an eighteenth-century window; both have been restored. On examination of the embrasures and the door, it is obvious that they were essential to the original design of the tower. Before they were discovered, it had been sup-

<sup>52</sup> We are indebted to Mr. T. Bruce Dilks for this translation.



posed that the surviving lancet was an insertion and that the tower was of the Norman period.<sup>53</sup>

The Great Hall must be considered in conjunction with the Constable's Tower. The northern wall has similar pilaster-like buttresses, but the outer surface of the wall is chiefly of a grey sandstone. A portion of an early transitional archway has been exposed in the thickness of the wall, just within the entrance from the undercroft of the tower, and therefore it may be inferred that the hall is almost of the same date as the tower.

A square Edwardian turret containing a newel stair of Ham Hill stone, the treads of which are in a remarkable state of preservation, was inserted at the north-east corner of the Constable's Tower, but the entrance is at the adjacent corner of the Hall. The stair gives access to the Great Chamber through the transitional doorway already mentioned. An Edwardian doorway from the stair gave access to the battlements which surrounded the high-pitched roof of the Hall, and crowned the outer wall of the Castle on the northern side. The line of an early roof, which was at a lower level than that of the present roof, has been exposed within the Hall on the eastern wall of the tower.

The interior measurements of the Hall are now 120 ft. by 31 ft., but the building has been reconstructed so frequently that it is impossible to say whether they correspond exactly to the original measurements.

A Ham Hill stone panel, now much weathered, was formerly on the front of the eighteenth-century Grand Jury Room, which occupied the site of the building given to the Society by Mr. William Wyndham in 1931.<sup>54</sup> The arms of bishop Horne of Winchester and the date 1577 were carved on the panel, and apparently account for the story that the Great Hall was built by this bishop. Two of the large transomed windows with square-headed lights that were inserted in the north wall in the latter half of the sixteenth century and which are still unaltered, may be of his time, but the remainder of the large

<sup>53</sup> G. T. Clark, *Med. Military Architecture*, ii, 488-492.

<sup>54</sup> The Grand Jury Room is figured in *Blake*, by C. D. Curtis (1934), plate facing p. 42.



windows have mouldings of later date and would seem to be of the following century.

The south wall of the Hall is thought to have been partly rebuilt by Sir Benjamin Hammet. He was responsible for the lunettes which were introduced to light a gallery and which are more successful than most of the architectural features connected with his restoration.<sup>55</sup>

THE ROUND TOWER AND THE ADJACENT BUILDINGS. The round tower which has the Society's Committee room in its lower storey has walls of great thickness, except on the inner side, but here, when the modern staircase was inserted, it was found that the wall had been reduced, and it was inferred that originally it was of consistent width throughout its circuit.<sup>56</sup> No architectural features survive by which this tower can be dated even approximately. On the whole it is thought probable that it was erected in the thirteenth century. The building connecting the round tower with the Constable's Tower on one side and with the gateway of the inner ward on the other, as well as that on the further side of the gateway, both erected against the curtain-wall, are also of uncertain date. The latter range of building now contains the living-rooms of the Curator's house. They still have moulded timber roofs of the second half of the fifteenth century, concealed by later ceilings.<sup>57</sup> The remaining portion of the Curator's house seems to have been erected in the late seventeenth century from materials collected when other parts of the Castle were demolished.

The semicircular shell tower, abutting on the south-eastern corner of the house, may mark the site of a second round tower which corresponded to that described above. On the other hand, if the pre-fifteenth century entrance to the inner ward

<sup>55</sup> Sir Benjamin Hammet, one of the Members for the Borough, had obtained the office of Keeper of the Castle and bailiff in 1785 in order that he might restore the building which was then in so bad a condition that the town was in danger of losing the Assizes. The bishops of Winchester had ceased to keep the building in a good state of repair. The interior decoration of the rooms, restored for the Judge's Lodging, was successful, as may be seen from the Judge's Drawing-room, now called 'The Adam Library'; but on the exterior the alterations necessitated were disastrous from an architectural point-of-view. The design of the windows inserted was poor and incongruous.

<sup>56</sup> *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, lvi, ii, 39.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, lvi, ii, 46.



was further east than the existing gatehouse, the shell tower may have been built to give symmetry to the façade, the foundation of the earlier gatehouse, which may well have projected from the line of the curtain, being used to support it. Excavations made in 1911, when the floor was renewed in the adjoining room, showed that the eastern as well as the south-eastern walls of the house were built on medieval foundations of great width.<sup>58</sup>

Chief among the many purposes served by the buildings of Taunton Castle have been those connected with the administration of one of the largest and richest manors in England, the unique privileges of which gave it almost the status of a palatinate;<sup>59</sup> and with the loan of the Great Hall as an Assize Court until the Shire Hall was opened in 1858. Gerard, writing in 1633, explains the position about the use of the Castle for the Assizes as follows :

Within the Castle is the Bishopp's prison for the whole denery, exempted from the Sheriff's jurisdiction, and yet in this Castle most commonly are the summer assisses for this Countye kept but that's by tolleracōn and for the benefit of the towne.<sup>60</sup>

#### (d) THE CHAPEL OF ST. PETER

‘ Between the years 1174 and 1185 Stephen prior of Taunton and his canons conceded to Reginald, bishop of Bath, that all their Churches and Chapels should respond to him and his successors and officials in all episcopal customs after the manner of the other Churches in his diocese, except, among others, the Chapel of St. Peter of the Castle ’—*Sancti petri de castello*—‘ which the aforesaid bishop had permitted to be exempt.’<sup>61</sup>

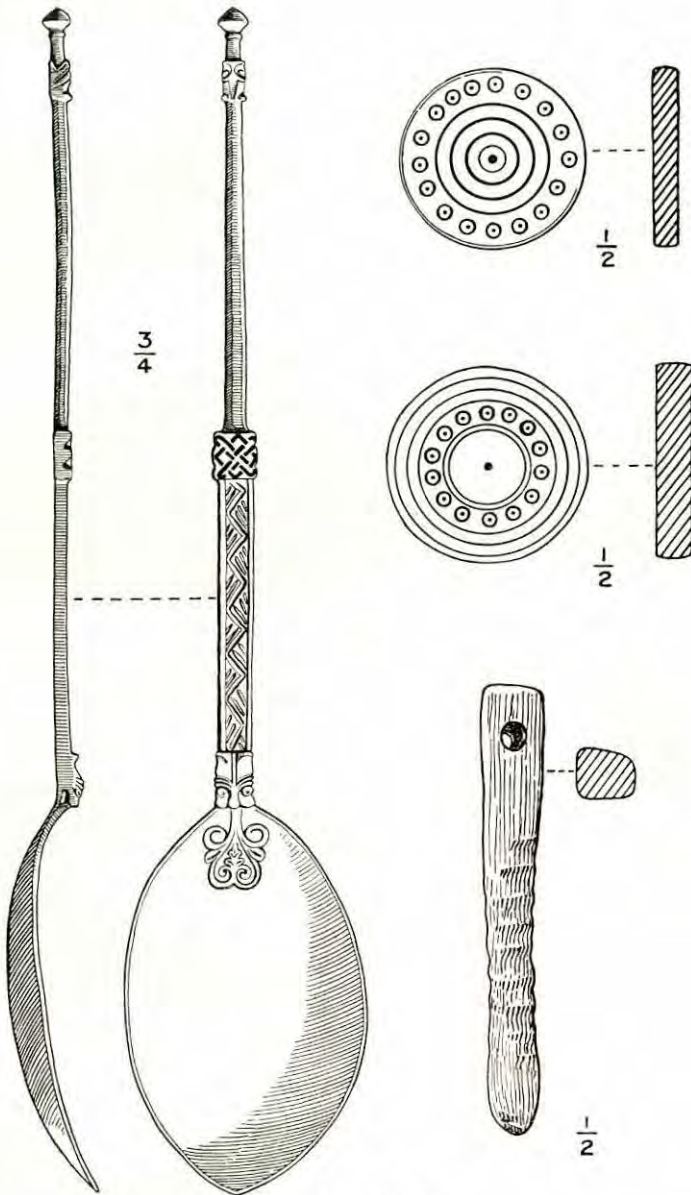
<sup>58</sup> Addendum, *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, lvi, xii.

<sup>59</sup> The customs of the manor have been the subject of various works. The manorial courts have been dealt with in *The Courts of Taunton*, by Dr. R. G. Hedworth-Whitty. A little known activity of the manorial administration in the second half of the seventeenth century is described in the following quotation from Yarranton's *England's Improvement by Sea and Land*, 1677, given in *The History of Taunton*, ed. 1822, p. 373: ‘ At any time, he, that hath 100 pounds a year in the manor of Taunton, may go to the castle and take up 2000 pounds upon his lands, and buy stuffs with the money, and go to London and sell stuffs, and return down his moneys, and pay but five pounds in the hundred for his moneys, and discharge his lands.’

<sup>60</sup> *Som. Rec. Soc.*, xv, 57.

<sup>61</sup> Hugo's MSS., Taunton Castle; *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, xviii, ii, 132.





ANTIQUITIES  
FROM THE TAUNTON CASTLE EXCAVATIONS



The site of the chapel is not known. It can scarcely be doubted that there was an oratory or chapel in an upper storey of the keep, but the chapel of St. Peter may have been in the bailey. If the pre-Norman township was within the enceinte, the site of the Saxon church there is likely to have been occupied by a later chapel. Human bones in large quantities have been found in the portion of the bailey occupied until recent years by the pens of the sheep and cattle markets, and may indicate the position of a burial ground.

An interesting reference to 'the church of the Castle' is found in connection with the imprisonment at Taunton of Almeric, son of Simon de Montfort. Before Almeric was released by Edward I in 1282, 'the bishop of Winchester asserted that on a visit to the prison he had made enquiry of the gaolers, and that all "lifting their hands to Heaven and stretching them out towards the church of the castle" had sworn that Amaury's words had never been abusive or menacing to the King'.<sup>62</sup>

When the chapel of St. Mary Magdalene was made a vicarage in 1308, it was ordained that the vicar and his successors should cause certain chapels to be served, among them that of the Castle.<sup>63</sup>

In 1418, a certain William was chaplain of the Castle. This perhaps implies that the constable at that time kept a chaplain, either to serve his own oratory, or in order not to be dependant on the vicar or curate of St. Mary's for serving the chapel. As Hugo expresses it, William 'is the subject of most honorable mention as interceding for his friend, Thomas Nicholas, chaplain of Hull Bishop's, then adjudged to a severe penance'.<sup>64</sup>

The unfortunate Thomas Nicholas was guilty of the heinous offence of suing one Philip Peyntor of Hull Bishop's before William Boyton, constable of Taunton Castle, for non-payment of tithes. Nicholas Bubwith, bishop of Bath and Wells, held that the case should have been brought before an ecclesiastical court and not before a lay official. That the official in question had been appointed by the bishop of another diocese cannot have mitigated the offence, although that bishop was no less a personage than Henry Beaufort. Thomas appeared before

<sup>62</sup> *Som. & Dor. N. & Q.*, xx, 64.

<sup>63</sup> Hugo's MSS., Taunton Castle.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*; *Som. Rec. Soc.*, xxx, 353.



the bishop (Bubwith) and his Commissary on 13 March 1418 in the parish Church of Banwell, and submitted that what he had done was 'by the custom of the country and not in violation of the law of the Church'. He was adjudged to have incurred the penalty of the greater excommunication. He begged for absolution, which was granted on condition that he accepted the sentence of the Commissary, viz. to pay costs, estimated at xijs., and to be scourged three times through the Church of Hull and three times through the market place of Taunton, holding in his hand each time a wax candle of the weight of half a pound. Later, at Thomas' urgent request, the Commissary remitted two of the scourgings through the market and one through the church. On 17 March, Thomas personally appeared before the bishop, sitting in a small oratory between his chapel and his great principal chamber in the palace at Banwell, accompanied by one William, clerk of the Castle of Taunton, both of whom made insistent supplication to the said Rev. Father that out of respect for the lord bishop of Winchester, and for William Boyton, constable of Taunton, he would deign to remit the penance, or change it to another and lighter. 'Moved to some pity by these entreaties, and on account of the respect due to the bishop of Winchester and the constable and clerk aforesaid, the bishop entirely remitted one scourging in the church, and of his special grace granted to the said Thomas that he might undergo the scourging enjoined on him round the market at Taunton in his shoes.' The sequel is unknown.

Thomas Bekynton, bishop of Bath and Wells, granted a licence, 13 January 1460-1, for Humphrey Stafford Esquire and Isabel, his wife, to have divine service celebrated in their presence in the chapel, oratory, or other suitable chamber in the castle of Taunton, and in any other places in the diocese set apart for divine worship.<sup>65</sup>

A sixteenth-century reference to the chapel chamber is quoted by Dr. Hedworth-Whitty from the presentment of the Grand Jury of Taunton, Turn of St. Martin, 29 September 1581 :

<sup>65</sup> *Som. Rec. Soc.*, xlix, 355 ; *Somerset M.P.'s*, Miss Bates Harbin, 103.

It is probable that Sir Humphrey Stafford was constable of Taunton Castle. He was sheriff of Somerset while he was in residence there. Later, his conscience was troubled about 'those who were wrongfully hurt' during his shrivalty, and in his will, dated 1463—a morbid document of extraordinary human interest—he directed that they should be recompensed (*S.R.S.*, xvi, 196-201). Three months after he had been created earl of Devon he was beheaded at Bridgwater, 17 August 1469. (Vicary Gibbs, *Complete Peerage*).



There is a place in the Chapple Chamber that may turne the Lord's ten(an)ts to great hinderaunce for that the Records of the Chequare maie be taken owte by meanes of the said decayed chamber.

(e) BISHOP FOX'S SCHOOL

There is little doubt that a school existed within the precincts of the Castle long before the time of bishop Richard Fox. Little, however, can at present be added to the history of the Free Grammar School of Taunton written by the late Chancellor Scott Holmes.<sup>66</sup>

The earliest reference to a school at Taunton given by Scott Holmes is for the year 1293, but there was a school there in 1286.

B. 172. Release by Bartholomew, clerk of the Castle of Lanceveton' (Launceston), son of Gilbert de Aqua, late scholar of Tanton, to William Welond, of Tanton, from an action for assault at Christmas 1286, for half a mark. Witnesses:—Sir Robert de Tymbercombe, vicar of Tanton, Master Walter de Tolre, master of the schools at Tanton, and others (named). (*Cat. of Ancient Deeds*, i, 232).

It is possible that the school in question was in the Castle and was provided by the see of Winchester for the tenants of the manor.

The interesting late gothic hall and master's house, erected on the southern rampart of the bailey, and which it is more probable were restored rather than newly built by bishop Fox, were purchased by the Corporation of Taunton in 1886, and now form part of the Municipal Buildings.

(f) THE DEER PARK

The chief deer park of the manor was situated at Poundisford in the parish of Pitminster at a distance of about 2½ miles from the Castle. It was surrounded by a bank which is still easily traced in existing hedgerows throughout a circuit of over 3 miles. The area of the park is believed to have been 443 acres.

On the southern side, towards the village of Pitminster, the bank now has an average height of 3-4 ft., and an average

<sup>66</sup> *V.C.H., Som.*, ii, 444.

breadth of 20–22 ft. On the northern side, not far from Canonsgrove, a length of ditch, *c.* 30 ft. in width at the surface, and having a depth of *c.* 10 ft., skirts the exterior of the bank, which here has a breadth of only 3–4 ft. It has not been ascertained whether a ditch of similar scale was continued around the whole enclosure, but it seems likely that, between the hamlet of Poundisford and the village of Pitminster, the lane has always followed the outer edge of the bank too closely to afford room for any fosse; elsewhere, however, the surface of the ground suggests in many fields that a ditch may have been filled in. The Potwater flows through the park.

The first game-enclosure or ‘pound’ on the site was probably of Saxon origin; other game-enclosures in the immediate neighbourhood of Pitminster are referred to in a charter of A.D. 938,<sup>67</sup> and in 1205, ‘Poundesford’ had already given its name to one of the hundreds or sub-manors of the great manor of Taunton; but the construction of the bank and fosse has generally been attributed to bishop Henry de Blois. It is, however, stated that ‘Hugh de Neville rendered account of 1000 marks of the fine he made with the king’ (Henry III) ‘because he permitted the bishop of Winchester (? bishop Peter) to enclose the park of Taunton without warrant’.<sup>68</sup> In the Winchester Pipe Roll, 1210–11, there is a reference to deer sent from Hereford by order of king John to replenish the bishop’s depleted herd at Taunton.<sup>69</sup> When Henry III was in possession of the manor after the death of bishop Peter des Roches, he made good use of the fallow deer in the park there, sometimes apparently bestowing bucks or does as presents and sometimes having them killed to provide venison for the royal table.<sup>70</sup> It is not certain that all the references quoted above refer to the park at Poundisford: in 1317 the bishop of Winchester had a park at Norton Fitzwarren.<sup>71</sup>

Whenever Henry III controlled the manor he did not forget the bishop’s vivary or fish-stew, the name of which is perpetuated in the present Vivary Park. For instance in 1250, he

<sup>67</sup> G. B. Grundy, *The Saxon Charters of Somerset*, 30–33.

<sup>68</sup> *Patent Rolls*, 1225–1232, p. 247. (A.D. 1229).

<sup>69</sup> Greswell, *Forests and Deer Parks of Somerset*, 9, 38.

<sup>70</sup> *Close Rolls*.

<sup>71</sup> *Patent Rolls*, 1317–1321, p. 86. (12 Sept. 1317).



ordered forty fresh-water bream and ten pike to be sent from Taunton for his Christmas feast at Winchester. On the same occasion, he ordered Gerard la Grue to despatch pheasants, partridges, 'witecocks', plovers, larks, and all other kinds of game 'as much as he could' from Taunton to Winchester, and also four cranes. Further directions were given that the bream, pike and cranes were to be delivered at Winchester on Thursday next before Christmas. The cranes, apparently, were to be purchased. [There is no reason to suppose that these birds were what are now called heron. The true crane, *Grus grus grus* (L.), was comparatively common in England in the middle ages and was esteemed as a special delicacy.]<sup>72</sup>

The Cathedral Register books at Winchester record grants of the office of park-keeper of 'Poundsford'.

Grant of the office of park-keeper of Poundsford to a certain J. Dated Monday after the Nativity of the B.V.M., 1412. Vol. i, f. 35.

A similar grant to John Bishop, 1444. *Ib.*, f. 64b.

A similar grant to William Bodyll,<sup>73</sup> 1478. *Ib.*, f. 101.

A similar grant to Edmund and Henry Willes, *temp.* Henry VII.

They were to be paid two pence per diem four times annually, viz. at Easter, St. John Baptist, St. Michael and Christmas at the hands of the receiver of the bishop's manor of Taunton. Vol. ii, f. 8.

Similar grant to Edmund Mylle. In chapter at Winton, 20 Feb., 19 Hen. VII, 1505. Rent sixty shillings and ten pence good and lawful money of England, at the feasts of the Annunciation of the B.V.M. and St. Michael. To be paid by the receiver as above. *Ib.*, f. 36.<sup>74</sup>

It is said that when Peter Courtenay became bishop of Winchester in 1487, he made a grant of the mastership of Poundisford Park to his nephew, Sir Hugh Luttrell.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> *Close Rolls*, 1247-1251, pp. 381, 385, 387.

<sup>73</sup> He was also appointed steward and bailiff of the franchises of Taunton, the same year. (*Hist. of Taunton*, ed. 1874, p. 267).

<sup>74</sup> We are indebted to Canon Goodman, Librarian of Winchester Cathedral, for the above references.

<sup>75</sup> The authority for this statement is a 'History of Poundisford Park', by G. Cave, 1854. The history has remained in manuscript. The writer implies that he had seen the original grant, or a record of the grant, at Dunster Castle, and gives the following digest: 'The bishop of Winchester, Peter

The keeper's lodge is thought to have been within the confines of the park, and may possibly be incorporated in the existing Poundisford Lodge.

In 1534 bishop Stephen Gardiner leased the park as two agricultural holdings to Roger Hill<sup>76</sup> and John Soper, merchants of Taunton; a deer park was not, apparently, considered necessary any longer as an appendage of the Castle.

The manor of Taunton was sold by the see of Winchester in 1822.<sup>77</sup> When the inner ward of the Castle was again offered for sale in 1873, there appeared to be grave danger that it would be used as a building-site, and it was purchased by the Somerset Archaeological Society in order to save the ancient buildings from destruction. If the Society had not been public-spirited enough to undertake the responsibility of ownership, there seems little doubt that few vestiges of the medieval castle would have survived to the present day.<sup>78</sup>

Courtney, to Sir Hugh Luttrell, who for his great affection to his near kinsman grants to him the Mastership of his Park of Poundisford within the manor of Taunton Dean with the herbage thereof for the term of his life rendering the rent of 60 shillings per year and 10 pounds per year annually for his life out of the manor of Taunton and Poundisford; dated, Southwark, 4 December 1487.

<sup>76</sup> In 1647, Roger Hill, Baron of the Exchequer, a descendant of Roger Hill mentioned above, purchased the manor of Taunton which had been sequestered, and thus became owner of Taunton Castle. The trustees for the purchase were John Hill and Baron Hill's father-in-law, Brampton Gurdon of Assington, co. Suffolk. The manor was restored to the see of Winchester in 1660. Baron Hill was of 'Hill's Poundisford', a house built c. 1546 and now called Poundisford Park.

<sup>77</sup> Certain rights were reserved. The purchaser was Thomas Southwood of Leigh House, Pitminster. Mrs. Byard Sheppard is the present lord of the manor.

<sup>78</sup> Professor A. Hamilton Thompson, C.B.E., has been kind enough to read this paper before publication.