

XXV. *Some Account of the ancient Date at Colchester; and of the Bottoms of Escutcheons or Shields, as they partake of the prevalent Forms of Arches in their respective Periods. By John Adey Repton, Esq. F. A. S. Communicated by Craven Ord, Esq. V. P. F. R. S.*

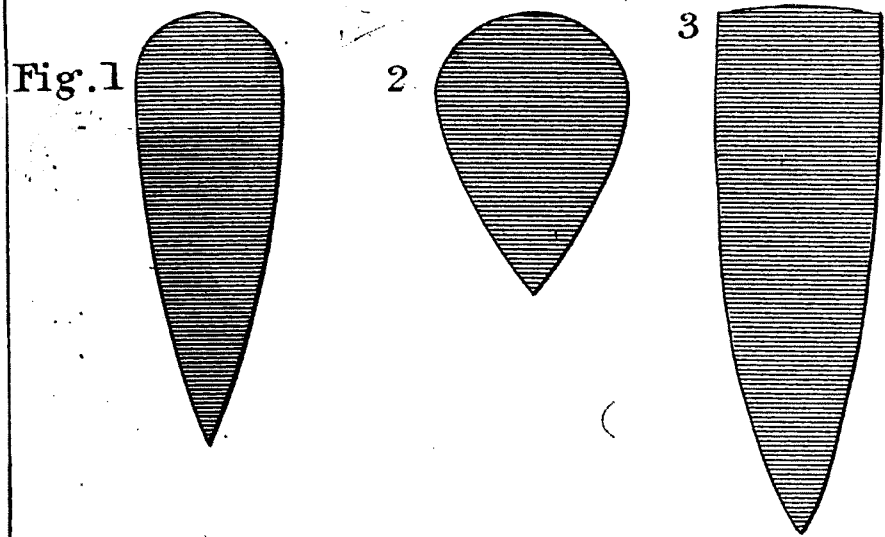
Read 3d March, 1808.

DURING a tour I have lately made to collect drawings of curious specimens of old timber-houses, which I shall hope very soon to have the honour of submitting to the Society of Antiquaries, I was led to examine the Date at Colchester, which had engaged the attention of the two ingenious Antiquaries, Messrs. *Morant* and *Gough*, and which, from the character of the figures being *Church Text*, is evidently 1490, and not 1090.

It is not always safe to pronounce the æra of a building from the date affixed to it, because it sometimes happens that the date of a repair is inserted, instead of the date of the original construction; and sometimes the original date of the foundation is affixed when it is rebuilt.

Mr. Gough, in his inquiry, has engraved the numerical figures in Plate XXXV. of his valuable work, but omitted to observe, that the date is placed on a shield or escutcheon; and when I first saw it, from the tablet (which the date is carved upon) not being exactly in the centre of the shield, I supposed it might be carved on a separate piece of wood; but, after a minute examination, I found it was cut out of the same block with the shield, of which the form serves to confirm the date, as will appear by the following sketches and observations concerning the forms of shields at different periods. See Plate XV.

Shields 11 & 12th Century



Escutcheons from 1250 to 1450.

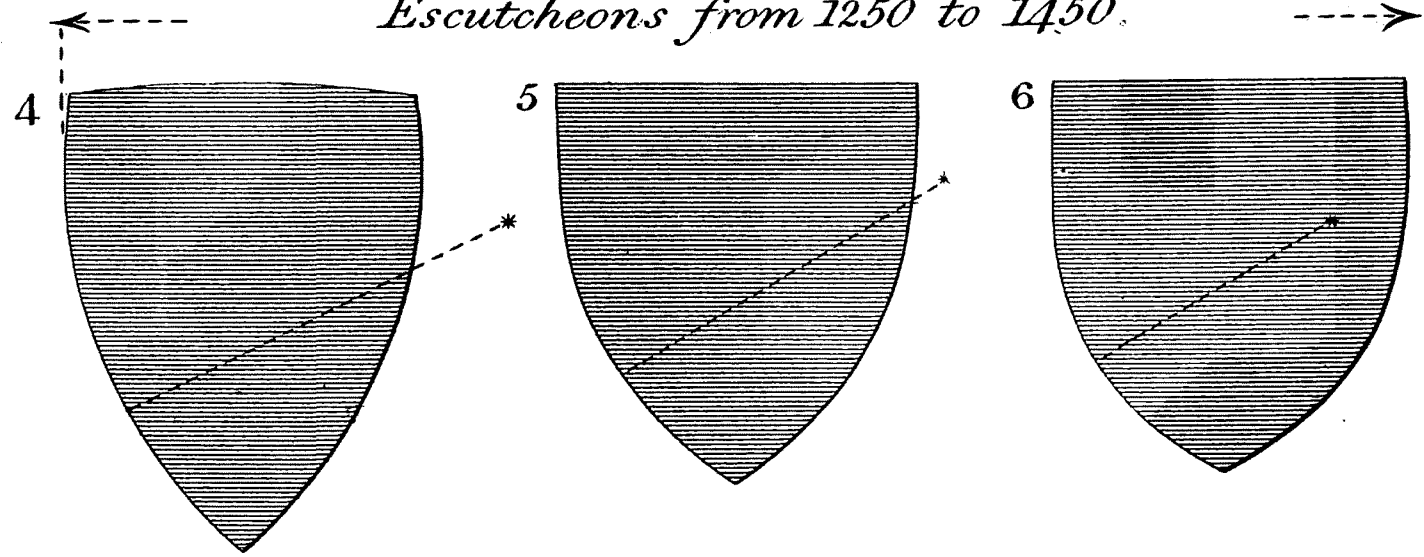


Fig. 7 to 19. Escutcheons from Henry VI to Henry VIII.

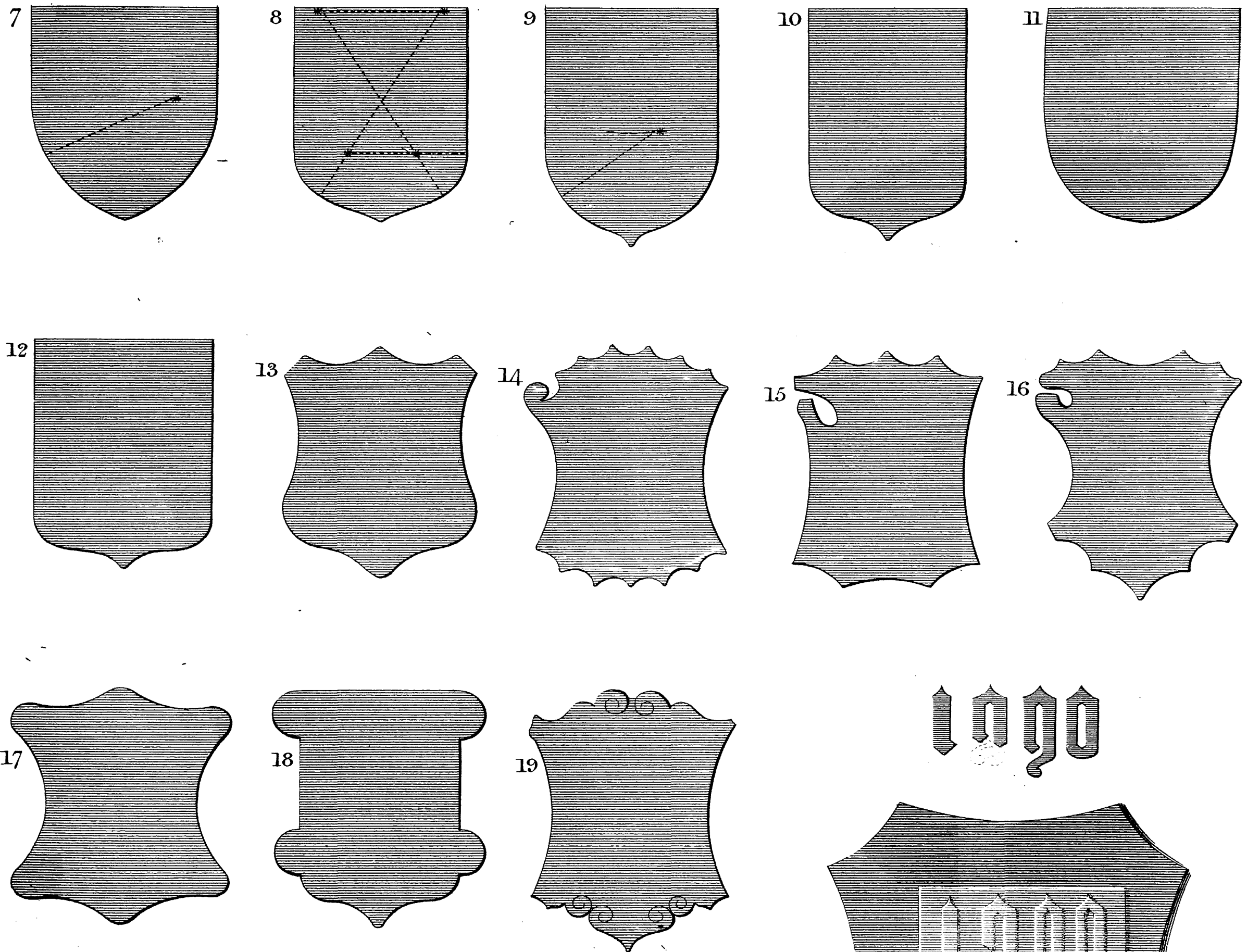
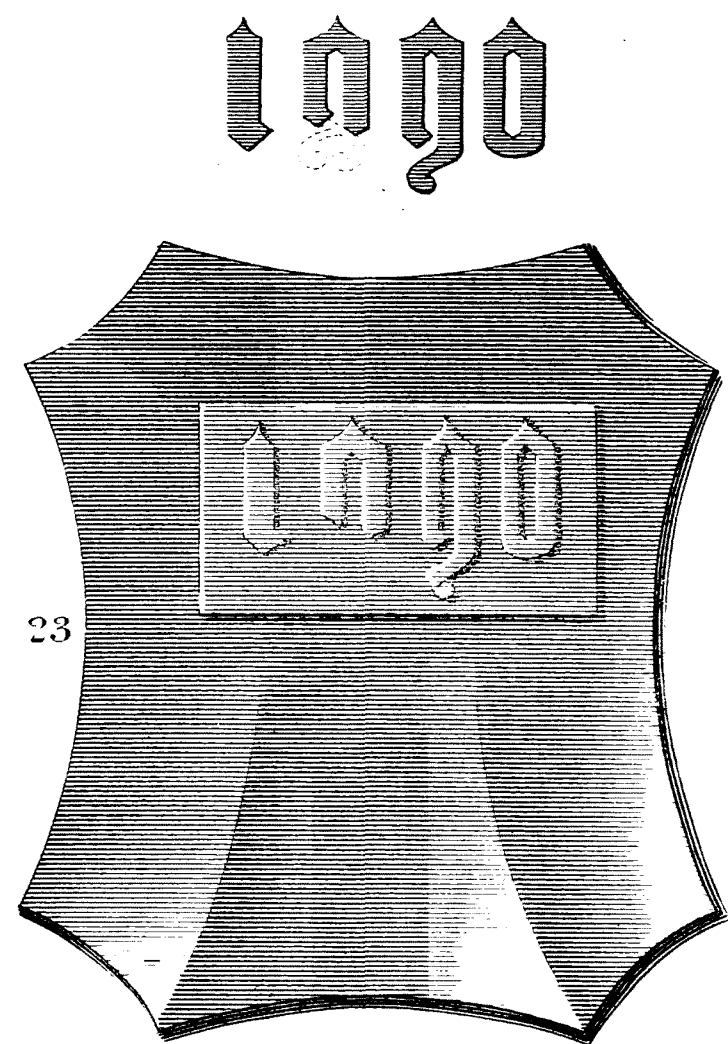
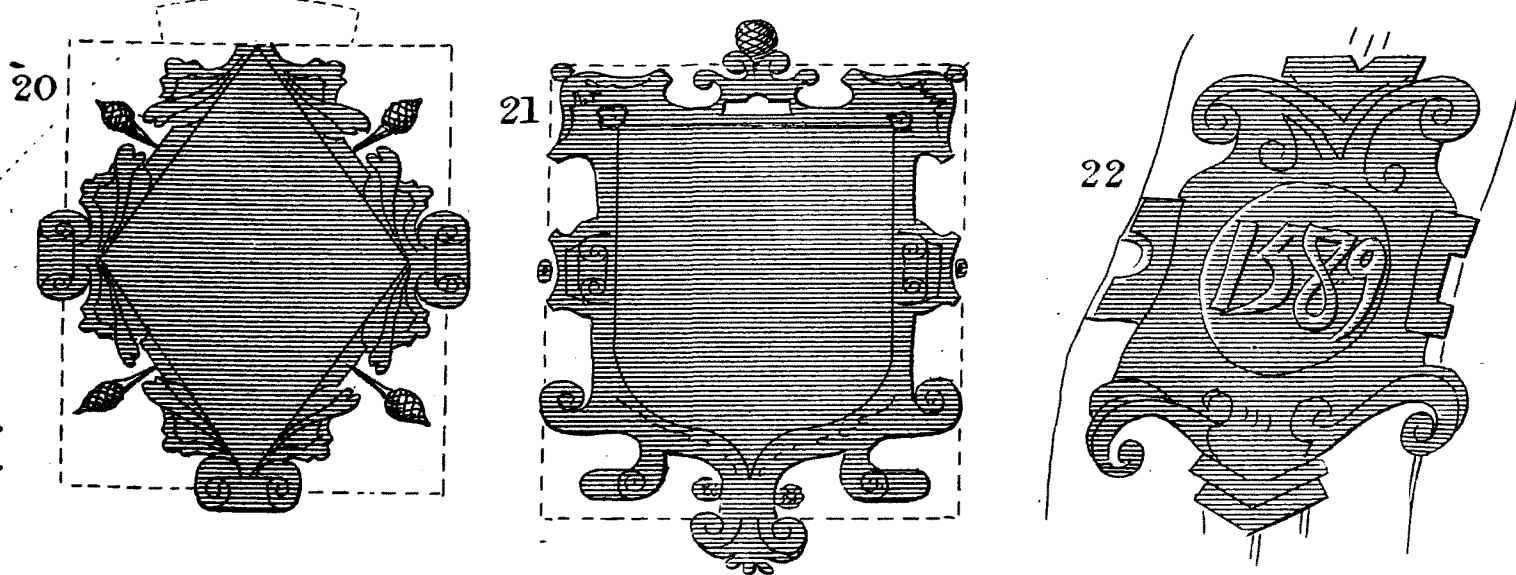


Fig. 20, 21, 22. Escutcheons in the reign of Elizabeth.



A.D. 1590.....not 1090.

I have not been able to discover any shields introduced as ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS earlier than the thirteenth century. The three forms delineated at Fig. 1, 2, 3, are taken from appendages to warriors in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and the others appear to follow in such regular succession, that the following curious facts may be deduced from them.

First—The bottom of the escutcheons or shields partakes of the prevalent forms of arches in their respective periods. By holding the shields reversed, they give some idea of the different windows. Thus the sharp-pointed form prevailed to the end of the fifteenth century, as from Fig. 1 to 7. The arch gradually became flatter, and at length assumed various shapes, as from Fig. 8 to 12.

Secondly—As the ornaments of architecture became less simple and more enriched, the escutcheons, instead of being plain, were cut in various forms, as Fig. 13 to 18.

And, lastly—In the middle of the sixteenth century, when a false taste for superabundant and mixed ornaments prevailed (temp. Henry the Eighth, and Elizabeth) the scrolls and volutes were introduced as at Fig. 19; and when the forms of the shields or escutcheons became so fanciful, as Fig. 20, 21, and 22, it was necessary to define the precise outline by an inner shield, as there represented.

As the forms of the escutcheons may tend to throw some light on the subject of dates in future, I shall take leave to mention from whence these specimens have been collected; to which a few more might have been added; but as they very rarely occur, I suppose their difference might be attributed to bad workmanship.

Fig. 1 and 2, from a Norman MS. mentioned by Monfaucon in *Les Monumens de la Monarchie Française*, tom. II.

Fig. 2 may be seen on a Font at Wandsford, in Northamptonshire (of which I had the honour to communicate a drawing, with several other Fonts, to the Society of Antiquaries).

Fig. 3, from a Warrior in the Temple Church.

Fig. 4, from the Monument of Queen Eleanor, wife to Edward I. in Westminster Abbey.

Fig. 5, from the Monuments of Edward III. and Richard II. in Westminster Abbey. The escutcheons, nearly of this form, may be seen in St. Stephen's Chapel, and the end of Westminster Hall.

Fig. 6, the new part of St. Peter's in the East, Oxford; All Souls' College, Oxford; Canterbury Cathedral; and many other buildings, from the temp. Henry V. to Henry VII.

Fig. 7, Magdalen College and Baliol College, Oxford; Norwich Cathedral, &c. about the temp. Henry VI. and VII.

Fig. 8, Woollerton Manor House, Norfolk, &c. temp. Henry VIII.

Fig. 9, Aylsham, Norfolk, &c. Henry VII. and VIII.

Fig. 10, from Taunton Castle, with the date 1498.

Fig. 11, an escutcheon round at Bottom (supposed to be badly executed) in wood at Lynn Regis, Henry VI. and in brick at Woollerton Manor House, temp. Henry VIII.

Fig. 12, from Christ Church Gate at Canterbury, with date 1517.

Fig. 13, from Westminster Abbey, with date 1529.

Fig. 14, from the Gate of Lincoln's Inn, 1518, and in Henry VII's Chapel, &c.

Fig. 15, from Oxford, temp. Henry VIII.

Fig. 16 and 17, from Henry VII. Chapel.

Fig. 18, Brazen Nose College, Oxford, temp. Henry VIII.

Fig. 19, from a Timber House at Bury, temp. Henry VIII. or Elizabeth.

Fig. 20, 21, from a Monument in Westminster Abbey, with date 1563.

Fig. 22, Timber House at Norwich, with date 1589: From the end of the reign of Henry VIII. to King James, and Charles I. the escutcheons are round, oval, and of all possible shapes, and loaded with scrolls and ornaments.

Fig. 23, the Colchester Date and Escutcheon, in which the second figure being mutilated, the dotted lines show it restored, as it is supposed to have originally been.

N. B. These observations respecting the Forms of Shields may be also applied to certain other fragments of antiquity, which have excited inquiry concerning dates, viz. the Shield on the Helmdon Mantle Tree, and the Preston-Hall Barn, mentioned in Volume XIII. of the *Archæologia*; to which may be added, that of the Brecknock Date which is accompanied by Angels supporting Shields, a favourite architectural ornament of the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

JOHN ADEY REPTON.