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THE HALL OF OAKHAM.

WITH the exception of the grants made by King Edward the Confessor to his wife, and to the monastery of St. Peter at Westminster, the earliest information relating to the town of Oakham, upon which dependance may be placed, is that contained in the Conqueror's Survey. It is indeed doubtful whether any traditionary accounts are recorded in other sources, at all events such have eluded research in the present enquiry, and we are not unwillingly compelled to commence a history of the castle of Oakham at a period when there are accredited evidences of its actual state. Considering the very meagre notices which occur during successive reigns, we are fortunate in finding in Domesday any notice whatever of the county of Rutland. For it is a remarkable fact that in the national documents which follow next in succession to this invaluable Survey, the county at an early period is almost entirely unmentioned, and instead of finding the expenses of the shrievalty written on the great roll of the Pipe, like other counties, on a rotulet by themselves, they come in usually appended to Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, or Derbyshire. The mere mention of the county is unfrequent, and the facts detailed are of a nature of no particular interest to the object before us. Such however as have the least relevancy to the history of the town and castle of Oakham shall be exhibited in chronological series. They may not serve to throw much light on a subject that must possess considerable interest in itself, but their deficiency in this respect will probably be compensated by the information of another kind which is incidentally to be gleaned; such for instance as the testimony they afford to the rights of the crown, to the custom of passing its lands by fine, and of making inquisition, at the decease of the tenants, into the right of succession, to the mode of ascertaining the value of royal property, and to the methods adopted for redressing complaints and expediting justice. It may be enough to state these as some of the inferences which may be drawn from what must otherwise appear a dry and unmeaning col-

lection of facts. To the genealogist and the topographer they may be more inviting, and like other local history possess attractions for them which the general enquirer will not be able to discover.

It may however be remarked that manorial history, which is what we have now chiefly to deal with, is one of the tributary streams of that vast expanse of national history which England more than any other country can boast of having preserved. And every fact, whether genealogical, manorial, statistical, antiquarian, or architectural, though simple and trivial when viewed alone, helps to augment this mass of knowledge, as well as to give fresh insight into the thoughts and condition of our ancestors. It does even more than confer these benefits, for it is by a careful observation of things minute in themselves, that we are able to unravel what is complicated and obscure; an acquaintance with details gives us the power of induction, and the means of generalizing with accuracy, where those who are unschooled in the process can perceive solely a dull and profitless investigation. As the painter can only become a master of his art by a perfect knowledge of the anatomy and expression of the human figure, (and Sir Joshua has insisted very strongly upon the importance of studying detail in one of his lectures,) or as the architect cannot plan with correctness, or design with taste, unless he has studied the proportions of good models, and the contour of the mouldings of the style he has selected, so on the other hand it would be a futile attempt to philosophize on the spirit of history until its facts were clearly established. The collection and study of these, therefore, can never be considered by thoughtful men an unprofitable employment; a science which brings into actual view what was remote and dim, which gives a definite outline to what was uncertain and indistinct, can never be regarded with indifference. People, for want of a better term to denote their derision, have called these enquiries 'antiquarianism,' and it is only within the last few years that the progressive advancement of mental culture has dispelled what was intended to be a title of ridicule, and every branch of archæological research has begun to take its proper place among those pursuits which improve and refine the human intellect. Indeed it seems now fairly established by common consent, that in proportion as enquiries in the respective branches of knowledge approach or recede from

this standard of minute investigation, they are entitled to confidence or disregard. The remote pedigree, the antique weapon, the ruinous pile, the grass o'ergrown entrenchment, the verdant tumulus, the cairn and the cromlech silvered with the lichens of ages, worthless though they may seem to eyes which are content to judge from the mere passing and outward appearance of things, are to the more highly gifted powerful excitements to reflection, and they become efficacious materials of thought; they cement the present with the past, and speak with the voice of prophecy respecting the future; they are the homely looking harbingers of a brilliant procession of ideas, grouping together all nations of mankind, raising into view races which have become extinct, bringing into notice the attributes of language, habits, and destiny, and throwing a flash of abiding light on points of darkness, which the mental eye has hitherto been unable to pierce. The names of Camden and of Usher, of Spelman, Prynne, and Dugdale, who have explained with such varied learning the primitive institutions of their country, will be held in veneration as long as there exists any feeling for the blessings enjoyed under the British constitution. Nor setting these authorities aside, can it be asserted with any semblance of justice, that these pursuits tend to narrow the conceptions or restrict the ideas in their search after truth. Whilst indeed they teach us how most properly to value our own dynamical polity, they are also the means of shewing us upon what a solid but yet expansive foundation all the public rights and social relations of Englishmen are based. And we have been worse than inattentive observers of recent occurrences, if they have not elicited from our own hearts a holier feeling of acknowledgment, than the bare confession of our superiority in these respects over the other civilized nations of the world.

To return, however, to the immediate object of this narrative, which has been interrupted by what I have endeavoured to persuade myself is an apology for the harsh outline I am about to sketch; it appears that Oakham at the time of the Conqueror's survey was set down in the wapentake of Martinslei. This is not a very usual title of local jurisdiction, though when resolved into its primitive meaning it indicates much the same as the division into hundreds. By this title Alfred ordained that a particular division should furnish a hundred men at arms for his wars, or a hundred men of

sworn allegiance; the other is best explained in the laws of King Edward the Confessor, where it is said that what other counties call hundreds, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicester and Northamptonshire call wapentakes. Though Edith his wife is mentioned in Domesday as having possessed Oakham, the county was so inconsiderable that it was not enumerated amongst those which were thus divided. And this little incidental omission will serve to shew the deficiency of information respecting Rutlandshire, at the period we are naturally most anxious to know something about its history. It has just been remarked that there exists a similarity in the signification of these two jurisdictional divisions, and the proof of this is gathered from the explanation of the term afforded us by the laws themselves, which set forth that the title is not without reason, for when any one received the præfecture of the wapentage, upon a set day all the elders were accustomed to assemble in the usual place, and the præfect dismounting from his horse, all rose up before him, when he stretched forth his lance on high, and all touched it with their own, and thus they ratified their union; and from the arms, because they are called wæpons, (*wappa*,) and *tacca*, which is to confirm.

Here then in the wapentake of Martinslei, there was Kir-kesset (Cherchesoch) for Oakham, or a church payment or contribution of the fruits of the soil rendered on the day of St. Martin to the mother church; a right enforced under heavy penalties by the laws of King Ina, Edgar, Ethelred, and Henry I. It does not seem improbable that a devotion to this saint, who in records is often called St. Martin in the Winter, (St. Martin in Yeme, Esch. 3 Hen. VI. No. 16. 4 Edw. I. Fæd. vol. i. p. 537,) might have influenced the earlier inhabitants of the district in giving the wapentake its name, as the villages of Martinthorp and Tinwell would in like manner derive their appellations.

The entry in Domesday goes on to say that at Oakham, with its five hamlets, Queen Edith had four carucates of land, that is, as much arable as four ploughs with their horses could plough in a year, paying geld. There were altogether sixteen carucates of arable. The king had two for the hall, four were capable of being brought into cultivation. There were a hundred and thirty-eight villans, that is, people in a condition of absolute servitude, who with their wives and

families, together with their effects, belonged, like the rest of the property upon it, to the lord of the soil. There were nineteen borderers, a class somewhat better circumstanced, corresponding in some degree with cottagers holding small allotments. These held thirty-seven carucates and eighty acres of meadow. There was a priest and a church, to which was assigned four bovates of this land. Feeding in a wood a league long and half a league wide. In the time of the Confessor these possessions were worth forty pounds a year.

Let us compare this state of the population with what it was in the commencement of the reign of Edw. II., when the county first sent members to Parliament. The original writs for that assembled at Northampton, 1 Edw. II., are lost. When William de Basigge, knt., and Simon de Lyndon were returned in 1309, no manucaptors or sureties could be produced; and when in 1311 a Parliament was summoned to Westminster, the sheriff returned that there were no knights resident in the county, and that therefore he was compelled to substitute in their place two other persons, '*de discretioribus et ad laborandum potentioribus.*' These facts shew an infant state of things, and indicate that two centuries after the Conquest the population of Rutlandshire was extremely small; that there was such a paucity of the upper classes that a difficulty existed in finding proper persons to nominate as representatives.

In the preceding entry from Domesday book mention is made of the hall of Oakham, which requires more than a mere passing notice. There is no doubt this was a royal hall which the Conqueror had then taken into his own hands, since Edward the Confessor had bequeathed the demesne in this county to his wife, conditionally that after her death it should descend to the monastery of St. Peter at Westminster, which donation was confirmed a short time afterwards by a charter dated in 1064^a. This shews at once the early ecclesiastical dependence of several of the Rutlandshire parishes upon the church of Westminster. A hall was the usual appendage to a manor, and different in its architectural character, as well as its nature, from a castle. There are several mentioned in the Conqueror's Survey; for example in Nottinghamshire, Elmer, Eluui, Osbern, Grim, Edric, and Ste-nulf had each their hall. There was one at Pihteslea (Pyth-

^a Dugd. Monast., vol. i. pp. 292. 294.

ley) in Northamptonshire belonging to the fee of the monks of Lincoln; there was one at Winchester, and another at Porchester. A fixed payment for the hall of Harold, as belonging to Meon in Hampshire, is constantly mentioned in the Pipe rolls during the reign of Henry II. These buildings answer to the manor-houses of a later period, and in the Conqueror's record they are denominated *caput manerii*, thus marking the intimate connection betwixt the demesne and the residence of the feudal chief before he had received the king's licence to build an embattled dwelling. When we come to examine the architectural features of the hall of Oakham we shall see what degree of conformity it bears to coeval structures of this description still in existence. At present the attention must rather be invited to the history of its different proprietors.

"Would you know," says an ancient roll given by John Brompton in the French language, "what are the names of the great men who crossed the sea with the Conqueror? Here are their surnames as we find them written, but without their baptismal names, which are often wanting or are changed; they are

Maundevely et Daundevely
 Ounfravyle et Downfrevyle
 Mare et Mautravers
 Fernz et *Ferers*."

All the other names are placed by rhyme or alliteration in like manner, both in this as well as in another roll given by Leland. For instance, in the latter they run thus:

Soucheville Coudrey et Colleville.
Fererers et Foleville.

It was upon the descendant of the Ferrers mentioned in these couplets that Hen. II. bestowed the manor of Oakham. Robert Ferrers was settled in Derbyshire, and in the 3rd of Stephen (1137) created the first earl. His son Walchelin de Ferrers, by Margaret, daughter of William Peverel, held in the 12th Hen. II. (1161) the barony of Oakham by tenure of the service of a knight's fee and a half. It is to him that the erection of the hall still existing has been attributed, and upon evidence which there seems no reasonable grounds for disputing. The style of architecture alone affords the strongest presumption that the building was erected to-

wards the extreme close of the twelfth century. A precise date ought not to be expected, but if it ranges from 1180 to 1190 this may be considered as a fair approximation to that of the structure, the architectural and documentary evidence concurring to place its erection between these years.

The great rolls of the Pipe supply a few particulars regarding Walchelin de Ferrars, which are deserving notice. They tell us for example that in the 22nd Hen. II. (1176) he was fined a hundred marcs for trespassing in the king's forests. In the 27th Hen. II. (1181) he paid a hundred shillings for a pardon. In the 33rd Hen. II. he answered thirty shillings for one knight's fee and a half upon the collection of the scutage of Galweye^b. In the 34th Hen. II. (1188) the sheriff returns him on the great Norman roll as amerced in a hundred pounds, because of a duel upon a robbery which was ill kept in his court. From an ancient charter in the Tower, tested at Moreton on the 11th of April, 1 Rich. I., (1190,) we learn that Richard granted and confirmed to Walkeline de Ferrieres and his heirs after him acquittance of eighty acres of essarts (that is, land reclaimed from the forest and reduced to cultivation) in the forest of Rutland, namely, in the plain of Oakham fifty-five acres, in the plain of Braunceston twenty acres, in the plain of Broc five acres, so that he should not render the dues or acknowledgments he was accustomed to make. Matthew Paris says he was at the siege of Acre in the Holy Land with the English king in the third year of his reign (1191.) By an entry on the roll of the Norman exchequer it appears that in the 7th Rich. I. (1195) he rendered an account of £140, which he had received from the treasury of Caen, to carry to the king in Germany, and for which he had acquittance by the king's writ. Also of £89. 8s. which he had from the focage of his land, £104 by the verdict of a jury against him, and £10 for keeping his retainers. The whole sum he was indebted was £343. 8s.: of this £100 was paid into the treasury, £140 was pardoned him by the king's writ, and he still owed £168. In the 8th Rich. I. (1196) the great roll of the English exchequer returns Walkelin de Ferrars as rendering an account of 40s. for his scutage of lands held in the county of Rutland. The Chancellor's roll of the 3rd John (1201) also returns him as paying this sum

^b Rot. Pip. 33 Hen. II. Rotel. (1187.)

^c Chartæ Antiquæ, No. 37.

for his scutage^d. During this year he died, and was succeeded by his son Hugh, who in the 9th Rich. I. (1198) gave a fine of 300 marcs to the king for permission to marry the daughter and heir of Hugh de Say, of Richard's Castle. He gave Broc to the canons of Kenilworth, which thenceforth became a cell to that monastery. The Clause rolls inform us that all the lands he held in Herefordshire by right of his wife, as also those in Worcestershire, were granted by John to William de Cantilupe^e. Dying without issue, Isabella his only sister, wife of Roger Lord Mortimer, became his heir, and this ended the connexion of the Ferrars family with the town of Oakham.

I have deemed it advisable to collect together every fact which would in the least degree serve to illustrate their history, because there is a peculiar custom existing in this place which has been generally considered to trace its origin to their privileges, with what amount of credibility we will examine at a later stage in the narrative. It has also been considered prudent to disentangle the subject at once from any connexion it may be supposed to have with the numerous collateral branches of this noble family, who as barons of Chartley, of Groby, of Tamworth, and of Wem, occupy so much notice in the English peerage; and also to leave at this point the impression distinctly upon the mind, that Walke-line de Ferrars and his son Hugh, who died in or about the year 1204, are the only individuals of that name and family who possessed the manor of Oakham.

In the 8th of John (1207) the Fine rolls state that Roger de Mortimer and his wife Isabella, gave 700 marcs and seven palfreys for the manor of Oakham and its appurtenances, and the sheriff was ordered to admit them to plenary seisin. On this occasion several of the nobility were taken as pledges to the amount of 100 marcs each^f. This custom of offering palfreys together with a sum of money was very common during the reign. Besides her fine, Isabella had presented a charger for the lands in Gloucestershire on a former occasion, and boroughs frequently made donations of horses in addition to fines for enjoyment of their privileges^g.

^d Rot. Cancel. In the 5th of John the county of Rutland and Rockingham castle were granted to Isabella, wife of John. Rot. Chart. 149. Regranted 17 John. Rot. Chart. 213.

^e Rot. Claus. 6 John, p. 5. In the

seventh of John the Herefordshire possessions were granted to Thomas de Galweye.

^f Rot. de Fin. 9 John.

^g Rot. Oblat. 6 John.

Roger de Mortimer had several children by his first wife Melisent, who was also a Ferrars, daughter of the earl of Derby, but the manor of Oakham descended to his second son Robert, by Isabella, who bequeathed it to his wife Margaret de Say. She was in possession 3 Hen. III. (1219^b.) After her decease, some of her estates fell to her husband, William de Stuteville, and in the 43rd Hen. III. they came to her son, Hugh de Mortimer, (1259.) It does not appear that Oakham was amongst the number, for in 36 Hen. III. (1252) it was granted to Richard, earl of Cornwall, King John's second son, in part payment of £500 due to him on the dower of Sanchia his wifeⁱ. In the same year he received permission to enclose the wood of Fliteris. Their son Edmund, earl of Cornwall, succeeded to the inheritance in 55 Hen. III. (1271^j.) In the 56th Hen. III. (1272) he had a grant of the castle of Oakham, to hold it in fee with the shrievalty of Rutland^k. He died at Ashridge, 28 Edw. I. (1300), without issue.

In the Parliament held at Lincoln the same year, at the urgent request of the barons there assembled, the king allowed Margaret the widow £500 per annum, to be secured to her as well as from other sources, so also from the castle and manor of Oakham, the wapentake of Martinslei, and the hundreds of Alnestow and East Hundred; from the hamlet of Egilton and part of the manor of Langham, also from certain issues of the court leets and sheriffs' aids in Ketton, Preston, Oakham, Hameldon, and various other places in the county of Rutland. After the decease of Margaret, who had been divorced from her husband and married to Piers de Gaveston, and subsequently to Hugh de Audley, earl of Gloucester, the manor of Oakham reverted to the crown^l.

By an Inquisition held 28 Edw. I., (1300,) it appears that at the decease of Edmund, earl of Cornwall, as far as the issues of the castle itself were concerned, it was profitless. Without the enclosure there was a garden, the fruit and herbage of which was worth 8s. a year, also stews, a wind-mill and a water-mill, worth £8 per annum. There was a

^b Rot. Claus. 3 Henry III. p. 395.

ⁱ Rot. Pat. 36 Hen. III. m. 4. In the 39th Hen. III. Gilbert de Preston was appointed justice of gaol delivery at Oakham. Rot. Pat. 39 Hen. III. m. 15. dorso. The county of Rutland had been granted to Richard, earl of Cornwall, 11 Hen. III.

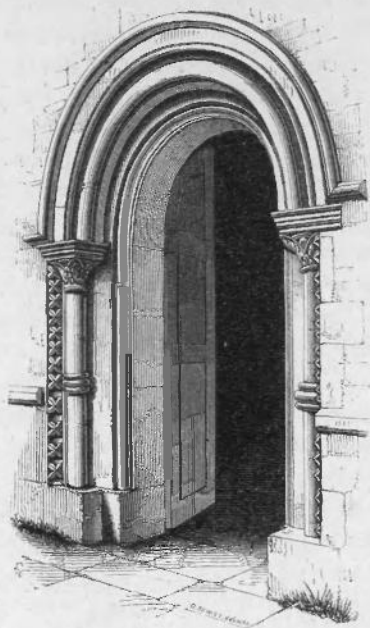
Rot. Claus. sub anno m. 3.

^j 9 Edw. I. the king has the forest of Rutland and inquisition upon offenders found therein. Inquis. post mortem.

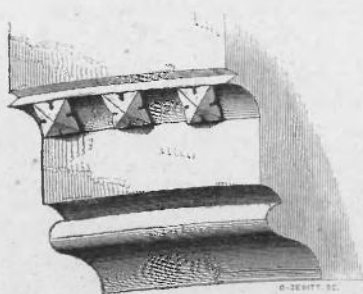
^k Rot. Fin. m. 13.

^l Inquis. 16 Edw. III.

OAKHAM CASTLE.



PRINCIPAL ENTRANCE



SECTION OF ARCHES

little park called Flytters, of which the pasture was worth £5 per annum, the underwood, pannage, and nuts, of the value of 5*s.*; and another park called the Little Park, the herbage of which was of the yearly value of 13*s.* 4*d.*^m An entry on the Clause rolls, 29 Edw. I., (1301,) states the worth of the castle and manor of Oakham with their appurtenances, when assigned in dower to Margaret, widow of the late earl, (Edmond,) to have been £112. 18*s.* 11*d.*ⁿ

^o In the 15th Edw. II. (1321) the king conferred the manor and castle of Oakham for good service upon his brother Edmond, earl of Kent^p. He held them until his execution at Winchester in 1330, when they again reverted to the crown. The Charter rolls assign them next to Hugh d'Audley for his life, and in the 11th Edw. III. (1336) for his life, to William de Bohun, earl of Northampton, and his heirs^q. By an Inquisition taken the 14th Edw. III. (1340,) it appears that the fees pertaining to the castle were the manors of Pykeworth and Kelpsham, Belton, Knossington, Wardele, Thorp, Twiford, two carucates of land at Braunston, and the advowsons of Manton and North Luffenham^r. On the death of William de Bohun, 34 Edw. III., (1360^s,) these possessions passed according to the patent of 15 Edw. III., to his son Humphrey, and upon his marriage with Joanna, daughter of Richard, earl of Arundel, they were assigned to her as dower for 140 marcs, and to be held subject to the annual payment of 40 marcs, until the rightful heir attained his full age. In this hope, however, Joanna de Bohun was disappointed, as she was left with only two daughters, one of whom, Eleanor, became the wife of Thomas of Woodstock, sixth son of

^m Inquis. 28 Edw. I. No. 44. Margaret wife of Piers de Gaveston, held Rutland 10 Edw. II. See also Magn. Rot. Pip. 10 Edw. II.

ⁿ Rot. Claus. 29 Edw. I. m. 14. v. Inquis. post mortem, 31 Edw. I.

^o Theobald and Cecilia his wife have bailiwick of the king's forest. Inquis. post mortem, 10 Edw. II.

^p Abbrev. Rot. Orig.

^q Rot. Chart. 11 Edw. III. No. 48. Gilbert de Holm had custody of the castle of Oakham with the hundreds of Martinslei, Alnestowe, and East Hundred. Abbrev. Rot. Orig. 12 Edw. II. v. 1. p. 241. John de Whittlebury had custody of the castle formerly held by Hugo d'Audele, 14 Edw.

II. Abbrev. Rot. v. i. p. 255. William Howard had custody of castle and county, 20 Edw. II. ib. p. 298.

^r Inquis. 14 Edw. III. 2nd. Nos., No. 67. In the 16th Edw. III., (1342,) the castle and manor of Oakham by inquisition were found to have belonged to Margaret, wife of Hugh de Audley, earl of Gloucester, formerly married to Peter de Gaveston. Abbrev. Rot. Orig. v. ii. p. 98. In the 21st Edw. III., (1347,) the castle of Oakham and county of Rutland were found to have belonged to Hugh de Audley, earl of Gloucester, by descent from Margaret his wife.—Ib.

^s Inquis. 34 Edw. III.

Edward III., and the other, Mary, wife to Henry, earl of Derby, (son of John of Gaunt,) afterwards King Henry IV.

These possessions therefore returned again to the crown, and in 46 Edw. III., (1372,) Simon de Warde was appointed to hold them in the king's name. This temporary reversion was immediately followed by an Inquisition into the actual state of the royal fief. From which enquiry it appears that William Flore of Oakham was allowed £10 per annum for the repairs of the houses, edifices, and walls of the castle, during the king's pleasure; 100s. for the lodges within the royal park of Oakham, and for the palisades of 160 acres enclosed within the park of Flyterys, of materials belonging to the king within the forest of Rutland^t.

In the following year, 47 Edw. III., (1373,) William Hac-lut received the stewardship and custody of the royal forests in the county of Rutland, together with that of the manor of Oakham^u. William de Whaplode, valet to the king, was appointed constable of the castle in the 50th of Edw. III.^x, (1376;) this was granted him for life; and upon the occasion of his first appointment, a commission was issued to John de Multon de Manton and John atte Hyde de Egelton, constituting them conjointly and separately overseers of the afore-said houses, edifices, and walls of the castle of Oakham, to the same amount of expenditure authorized in the preceding year^y. It is during the periods when military buildings are in the hands of the crown, that we are most likely to ascertain any facts respecting their condition, as official surveys were made at these particular times, and the results of such enquiries subsequently laid up among the national archives. But when these structures belonged to private individuals, the extents were rarely, most probably never taken, and there exists therefore a paucity of information regarding all those private castles. The direct value therefore of a survey made of a royal fortress during the reign of the Plantagenets, will be apparent when we come shortly to examine such an one relating to Oakham castle at the commencement of the reign we are now leaving.

^t Abbrev. Rot. Orig. v. ii. p. 326.

^u Inquis. 47 Edw. III.

^x Calend. Rot. Pat., p. 193.

^y Rot. Pat. 47 Edw. III. p. 2. m. 22.

⁴ Ric. II. A release from Thomas Holland, earl of Kent, to Ric. II., of the moiety of

an annuity of £100. per annum granted to him by the same king, issuing out of the castle and manor of Oakham, is amongst the records in the chapter-house, Westminster.

To pursue however the history of this royal fee, we find that in the 9th Ric. II., (1385,) it was granted to Robert de Vere, earl of Oxford, with reversion to his heirs male if he outlived the king, but giving offence to the nobility by his proud and insolent behaviour, he was banished the kingdom, and his estates forfeited². Those in Rutlandshire were given in 11 Ric. II. (1387) to Thomas of Woodstock, the duke of Gloucester^a, who as we have seen had married Eleanor, eldest daughter and co-heiress of Humphrey de Bohun. He was de Vere's greatest enemy. He held the grant only for a year, dying without male issue. During the vacancy an Inquisition was made into the state of the castle, 13 Ric. II., (1389,) when it was returned as producing no revenue beyond reprises, or the rent-charges and duties paid to the bailiffs and stewards^b.

The Patent rolls, 5 Hen. IV., (1403,) pass the castle of Oakham with its respective manor and liberties, in special tale, in part satisfaction for 806 marcs a year, to Edward, earl of Rutland, eldest son of Edmond of Langley, the fifth son of Edward III., who being killed at the battle of Agincourt^c, 3 Hen. V., (1415,) it came again to the crown^d. In the 2nd Hen. V. (1414) the king restored the castle, town, demesne, and manor of Oakham, to William de Bourchier and Anne his wife, daughter and heiress of Thomas, late duke of Gloucester, and Anne in general tale. Portions of it were now alienated. Constance, wife of Thomas Lord Despencer, and of Edmond of Langley, had Esingdon with a mill and the village under the castle of Oakham, which she also held, (4 Hen. V.) William le Zouch held the manor of Kylsham (Clipsham) as belonging to the castle, (3 Hen. V. 1415,) and Joan de Bohun held Langham as a parcel and member of Oakham castle, 7 Hen. V. (1419^e).

^a Rot. Pat. 9 Ric. II., p. 1. m. 6.

^b Calend. Rot. Chart. 191.

^c Inquis. 13 Ric. II. No. 164. Castle of Oakham granted to duke of Albemarle. Rot. Pat. 22 Ric. II. p. 1. m. 11.

^d He was buried at Fotheringhay.

^e Rot. Pat. 5 Hen. IV. p. 1. m. 21.

^f The Inquisitions give the following notices of the descent of the manor under the respective years.

In 19 Ric. II., 1395, William le Zouche de Haringworth (Miles) had the castle of Oakham.

In 3 Hen. V., 1415, William le Zouch

(chivaler) the manor of Kylsham, as belonging to the castle of Oakham.

In 4 Hen. V., 1416, Constance, who was the wife of Thomas Lord le Despenser, held Esingden with a mill and the vill, as from the castle of Oakham, and also Oakham castle.

In 7 Hen. V., 1419, Joan de Bohun, late countess of Hereford, held Langham as a parcel and member of Oakham castle.

In 4 Hen. VI., 1425, Oakham was among the extensive possessions of Ralph, earl of Westmoreland.

In 8 Hen. VI., 1429, Margaret Burgh

The escheats of the 38th Hen. VI. (1445) return the castle and manor as having been amongst the extensive possessions of Humphrey Stafford, duke of Buckingham, son of Edmund, earl of Stafford, by Anne, daughter and sole heir of Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester. They were both jointly seised of the castle and manor, with the two parks of Stone and Flyteris, together with the profits of a market and fair. Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, was heir upon the death of Joan, countess of Kent, 21 Hen. VI., (widow of Thomas Holland, earl of Kent^f.) By Inquisition made 38 and 39 Hen. VI., (1459,) on the day on which Humphrey duke of Buckingham died, the castle, manor, and demesne of Oakham, with their members and the presentation of the free chapel within the castle, were worth nothing annually beyond their reprises^g. After his death at the battle of Northampton, 38 Hen. VI., the widow continued in enjoyment of the estate, and 1 Edw. IV. made William Lord Hastings her steward and constable of the castle. She enjoyed it till the 20th Edw. IV., (1480,) when her son Henry, duke of Buckingham, succeeded to the honours, by which family they were held till he was beheaded, 1 Ric. III. (1483.) Henry de Gray, Lord Codnor, obtained the grant from Richard III.^h; dying without issue in the 11th Hen. VII., (1495,) Edward, duke of Buckingham, recovered possession, holding it until he was executed on Tower Hill, 13 Hen. VIII. (1521.)

Thomas Cromwell, created Baron Cromwell of Wimbledon, some say of Oakham, received the castle and manor 30 Hen. VIII. (1538.) He likewise lost it by his execution 32 Hen. VIII., (1540,) but it went to his heir Gregory Cromwell, to hold of the king in capite by knight's service. Henry Lord Cromwell succeeded him 5 Edw. VI., (1551,) but in the 38th of Elizabeth (1596) obtained a licence to alienate it to Sir John Harrington, and after the death of his widow her son, John Lord Harrington, sold it to George Villiers first duke of Buckingham of that name, who resold it to Daniel, earl of Nottingham, afterwards earl of Winchelsea, from whom it descends to the present estimable possessor, Daniel Finch, Esq., of Burley on the Hill.

held 3rd part of extent of manor of Braunston, as from the castle of Oakham.

In 18 Hen. VI., 1439, Isabella, countess of Warwick, held Esingden with mill, &c.,

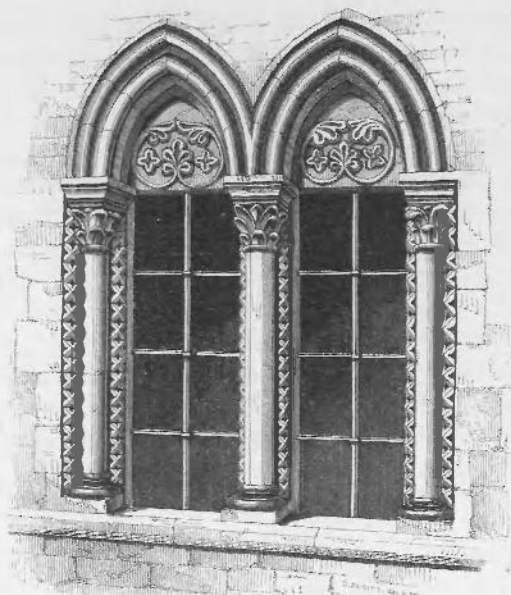
as Constance Despenser.

^f Dug. Bar. 165.

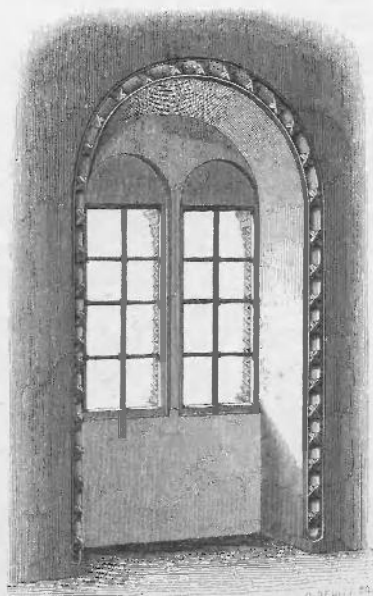
^g Inquis. 38 and 39 Hen. VI. No. 59.

^h Dug. Bar. 712.

OAKHAM CASTLE.



WINDOW, EXTERIOR, SOUTH SIDE



WINDOW, INTERIOR.

Such are the evidences of history, dry it must be confessed, but not unimportant, bearing on the connection of the English monarchs and their barons with the town and castle of Oakham. It remains for me, before offering a few remarks upon the latter, to speak upon a subject connected with both. The peculiar custom existing in this place of compelling every peer of parliament the first time he passes through the town to give a horse-shoe to be nailed upon the castle gate, and if he refuse the bailiff of the manor has power to arrest him in his progress and take one from his horse's foot, is a custom of ancient standing, since it is mentioned by Camden as existing in his time. The power of a horse-shoe nailed against a door to drive away witchcraft is often described in the dramatists; nay, the credulity might lately have been witnessed in Monmouth-street. But this practice, which the author of *Hudibras* speaks of in these lines,

Chase evil spirits away by dint
Of sickle, *horse-shoe*, hollow flint,

is undoubtedly established on the presumption of some early privilege. It has been supposed to have come as a liberty from the Ferrars, who were early lords of the demesne. There seems no other warrant for this conjecture than the fanciful play upon the words *de Ferrariis*. The rolls of parliament in the commencement of the reign of Hen. V. set forth a petition from the mayor of Dover that he may take toll of every horse passing through the town to the amount of a halfpenny, for the purpose of repairing the harbour¹; but there is no trace in the various records that have been consulted that such an allowance was ever accorded to the town of Oakham, or to any of its proprietors. Still the early existence of the custom seems to have established it by prescriptive right. And by an Inquisition found in the Hundred rolls, made at Stamford before twelve jurors of the hundred of Martinsley, in the 3rd Edw. I., (1257,) it seems that something analogous was then in existence. The jurors declare on their oath that it appears to them that the manor of Oakham, with the castle, was formerly in the hands of William the Conqueror, and was worth £100 a year and upwards; that the king gave them to Hugh, to hold from him in chief by fee for half a knight's service, who held that manor from him till Normandy was

¹ Rot. Parl., vol. iv. p. 364.

lost, and the successors of Hugh at that time rebelled against King John, who thereupon granted the manor and castle to Isabella de Mortimer for her life, by the same service, and after her death it came into the hands of Henry father of King Edward, who conveyed it, with the castle, in free dowry, to Senchia, wife of Richard, earl of Cornwall, father of the present Edmund, earl of Cornwall, to hold it from him in chief by the aforesaid service.

The jurors also found that every bailiff of Richard, earl of Cornwall, took at Oakham, as well in the time of King Henry as now, toll of carriages bought or sold, and of all other things there, to the damage of £10 per annum, by what warrant they know not, and this unjustly. They also said that Peter de Nevill took ten marcs unjustly from the men of Oakham and Langham, by virtue of his office, that they should not have their dogs lawed.

In the following year (1276) the jurors returned that the county of Rutland formerly belonged to the county of Northampton, until Henry III. granted it to the king of Germany, (Richard, earl of Cornwall,) whom they found had right of gallows, assize of bread and ale, pillory and cucking stool. And they said that the bailiffs of Oakham, in the reign of Hen. III. and Edw. I., took toll of carriages, horses bought or sold, and all other merchandise at Oakham, and they distrain men of their property who are not principal merchants nor sureties, they know not by what warrant.

Let it be remembered that the questions proposed to the jurors in both these Inquisitions were of a most searching nature, so that no abuse could possibly elude their vigilance. It is clear that the custom of demanding a horse-shoe is not named, but that of taking toll upon the animals is stated to be without warrant and unjust. The transition to commutation of a shoe for a money payment, or the reverse, is natural and easy to be accounted for; and I think we see by these Inquisitions what was the origin, or at least we gather some insight into the practice which has at various periods been countenanced by English monarchs and the highest judicial functionaries, and endured to the present time^k.

Reasons have already been given for assigning the erection of the great hall still existing to Walkelin de Ferrars, at the

^k Of the existing shoes nailed on the walls of the castle those of Queen Eliza-

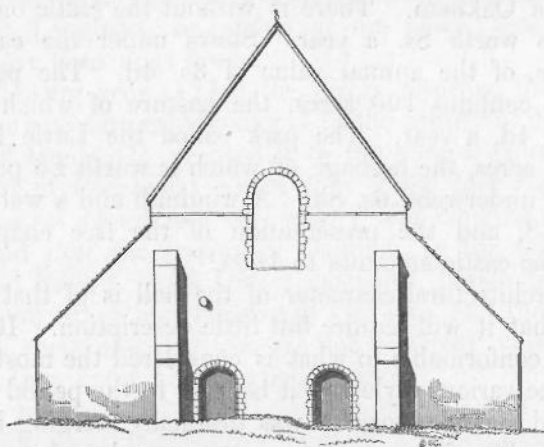
beth and George IV. are the most conspicuous.

end of the twelfth century. It seems to have undergone but a trifling alteration since that period. There is a document of an interesting character still preserved amongst the Inquisitions in the Tower, which minutely details its precise condition in the 14th of Edw. III., (1340,) and by this record we may be enabled to trace out the site of some of the buildings within the enclosure which have since fallen down. "There is," says the Inquisition, "at Oakham a castle well walled, and in that castle there are one hall, four chambers, one kitchen, two stables, one grange for hay, one house for prisoners, one chamber for the porter, one drawbridge with iron chains, and the castle contains within its walls by estimation two acres of land: the aforesaid houses are worth nothing annually beyond reprises. And the same house is similarly called the manor of Oakham. There is without the castle one garden, which is worth 8s. a year. Stews under the castle, with the fosse, of the annual value of 3s. 4d. The park called Fliterich contains 100 acres, the pasture of which is worth £6. 13s. 4d. a year. The park called the Little Park contains 40 acres, the herbage of which is worth £6 per annum, and the underwood 6s. 8d. A windmill and a watermill are worth £8, and the presentation of the free chapel placed within the castle amounts to 100s.¹"

The architectural character of the hall is of that unmixed nature that it will require but little description. It is in all respects conformable to what is considered the most interesting of the various styles, as it belongs to the period when the plain and massive Norman was gradually merging into Early English. The features of this style partake of the peculiarities of both. The example before us is what may be termed pure transitional. This is particularly observable in the pointed lights, which are placed within segmental arches, with dog-tooth ornaments in their jambs; as well as in the comparative massiveness of the buttresses, and the larger size of the stone ashlar where they are used for walling at the top of the building. These features, as well as the flowing and enriched form of the capitals, the square abacus with the angles slightly canted, entirely assimilate with the capitals of the choir on the south side of Canterbury cathedral. Closer resemblance in foliation it would be difficult to adduce. They are moreover analogous to capitals in the cathedrals of Sois-

¹ Inquis. 14 Edw. III., 2nd Nos., No. 67.

sons and Oxford. The chancel-arch of Edith Weston in the immediate neighbourhood helps to connect the local character with these distinguishing marks of the transitional style; a style which may be equally discerned in the interior of the hall, as in the pointed windows without. The stone used for dressing is a fine grained shelly oolite from Clipsham, not so coarse as the Barnack stone, nor so delicate as the Ketton; harder than the latter, and more readily worked than the former. Witness in proof the exquisitely sculptured heads under the brackets which form responds to the arches at either end and on both sides of the hall. The wall of enclosure (*cingulum*) is built of a coarse ferruginous upper member of the oolite, with mortar made without much lime.

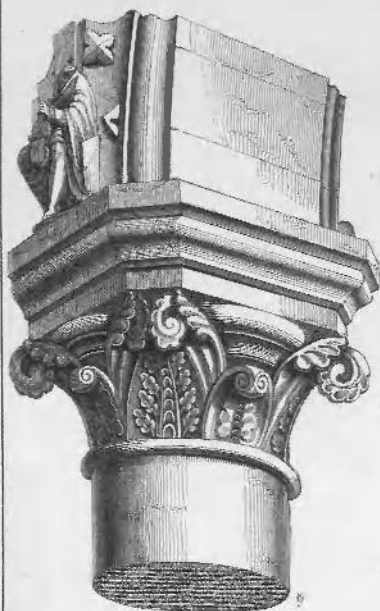


ELEVATION OF THE HALL, EAST END

The hall is divided by three shafts on either side into four bays, like that formerly existing at Barnack; proportionately as Necham, a writer of the twelfth century, says was the rule; it is smaller, though earlier, than the hall at Winchester, but in its various sculptures and points of detail infinitely more beautiful; nothing in fact exceeds the spirit and the gracefulness of the different heads. Those of Henry II. and his wife, Margaret of Guienne, opposite the former door of entrance, as placed in the most prominent part, are peculiarly deserving attention. After this it need scarcely be said that the present position of the door is not the original one. When Buck published his view in 1720, it was at the east end, answering

OAKHAM CASTLE.

CAPITALS



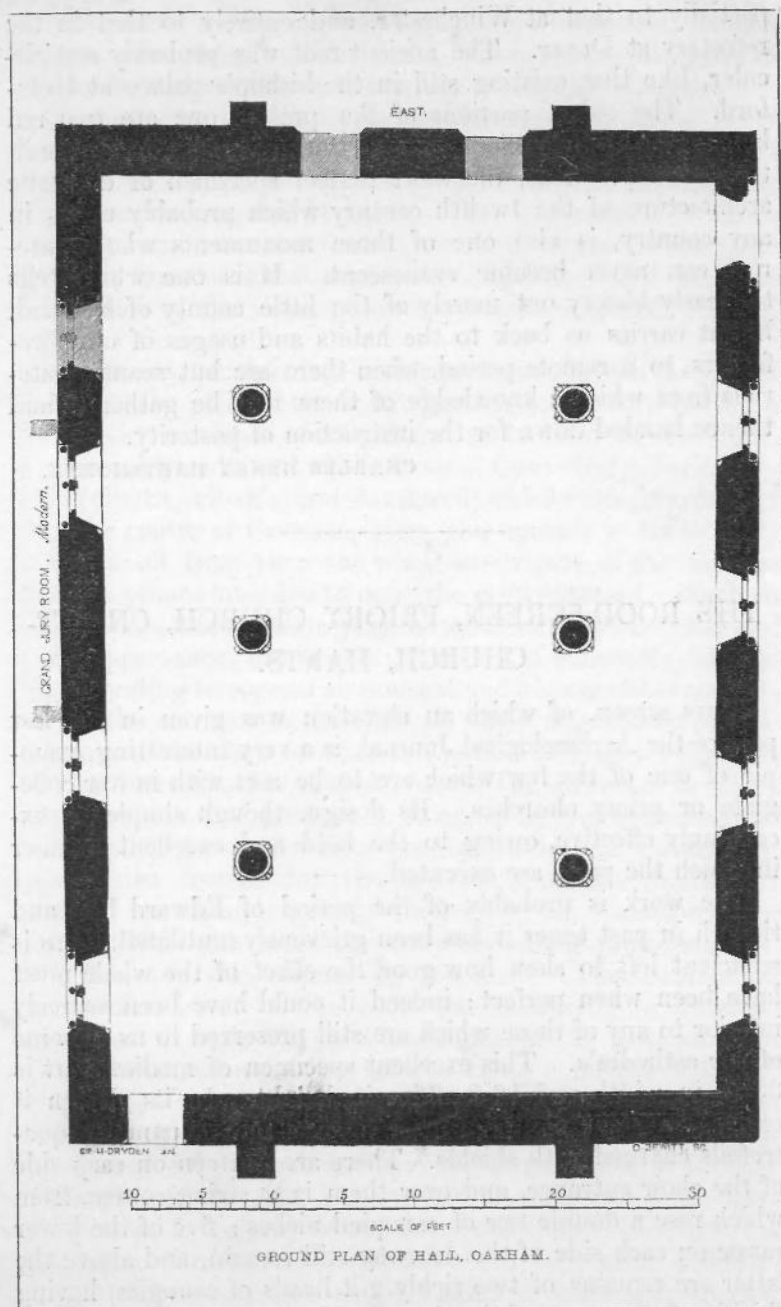
SOUTH-WESTERN.



NORTH CENTRE.



CORBEL, SOUTH-EAST.



partially to that at Winchester, and entirely to that in the refectory at Dover. The ancient roof was probably semicircular, like that existing still in the bishop's palace at Hereford. The oldest portions of the present one are two red beams put up by Villiers duke of Buckingham, who also built the gateway. This, the most perfect specimen of domestic architecture of the twelfth century which probably exists in any country, is also one of those monuments whose interest can never become evanescent. It is one which tells the early history not merely of the little county of Rutland, but it carries us back to the habits and usages of our forefathers, to a remote period, when there are but scanty materials from which a knowledge of them may be gathered, and thence handed down for the instruction of posterity.

CHARLES HENRY HARTSHORNE.

THE ROOD-SCREEN, PRIORY CHURCH, CHRIST-CHURCH, HANTS.

THIS screen, of which an elevation was given in the last part of the *Archæological Journal*, is a very interesting example of one of the few which are to be met with in our collegiate or priory churches. Its design, though simple, is exceedingly effective, owing to the bold and excellent manner in which the parts are executed.

The work is probably of the period of Edward III., and though in past times it has been grievously mutilated, there is sufficient left to shew how good the effect of the whole must have been when perfect; indeed it could have been scarcely inferior to any of those which are still preserved to us in some of our cathedrals. This excellent specimen of mediæval art is 33 ft. in width and 16 ft. 6 in. in height. In its design it exhibits a plain base, surmounted by a row of panelled quatrefoils charged with shields. There are thirteen on each side of the choir entrance, and over them is a string-course, from which rose a double tier of canopied niches; five of the lower range on each side of the doorway still remain, and above the latter are remains of two richly gilt heads of canopies, having shields of arms, now defaced, embedded in foliage.