

THE REPARATION OF ROCHESTER CASTLE.

BY GEORGE PAYNE, F.L.S., F.S.A.

Soon after taking up my residence in Rochester I became acquainted with the absolute need of prompt action being taken to arrest the progress of the decay of its magnificent Norman Castle. I communicated my views to Mr. Franklin Homan, who went over the keep with me and realized at once that my opinion of its condition was founded upon facts. At his suggestion I wrote a letter to the Corporation upon the subject, which resulted in my being asked to draw up a report as to what I considered it was necessary to do in order to preserve the fabric from further decay. This having been done, a committee was appointed to consider the report. Subsequently it was estimated that what was therein set forth would cost about a thousand pounds, and the Corporation thereupon arranged that this sum should be spent at the rate of about one hundred pounds per annum, and I was asked to superintend the operations.

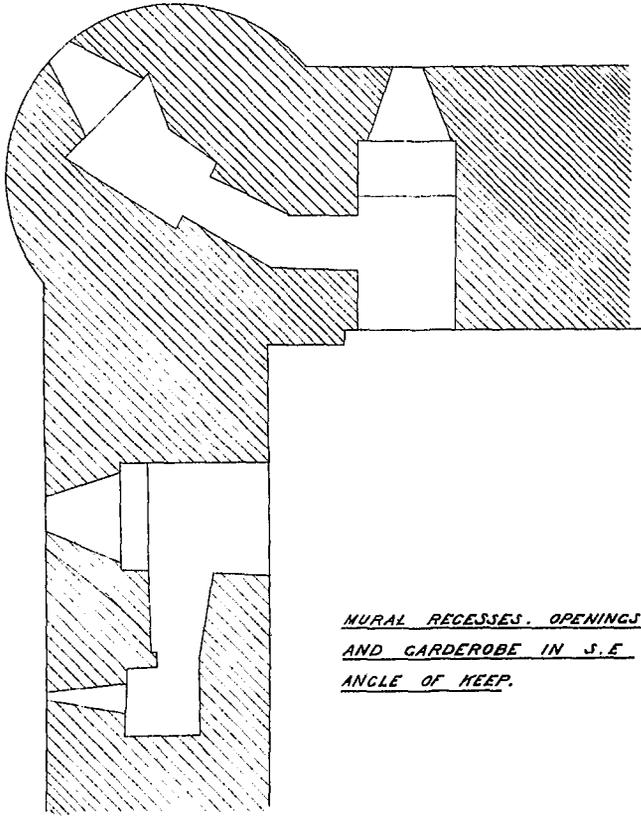
I had originally intended to record the story of the repairs to the Castle after the entire work had been accomplished, but as that will not be the case for at least four years hence, I deemed it wiser to issue this Part, which treats of our labours to the end of 1904.

The first work of any importance taken in hand in the year 1896 was the general reparation of the mural gallery on the northern and western sides of the keep. The piers carrying the arches throughout (especially on the western side) had been reduced by decay and wanton destruction to about half their original size, rendering all very unsafe. These piers were carried up square to the springing of the arches, but we did not deem it necessary to renew the voussoirs of the latter, leaving that for posterity to do should further mischief arise. Most of the windows in the outer face of the keep, from sheer neglect and indifference on the part

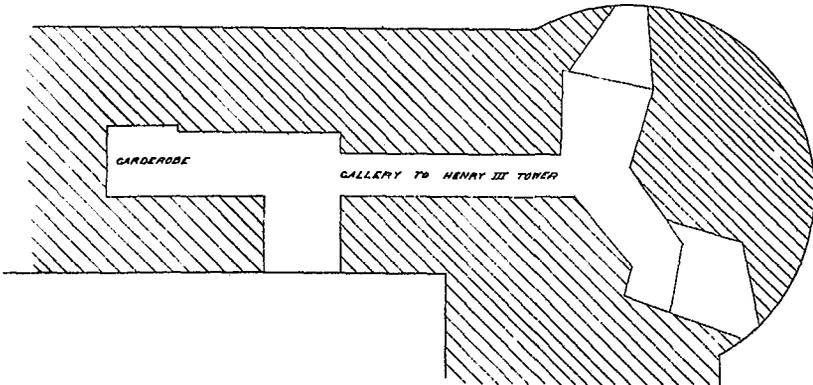
of those who possessed the Castle before it was acquired by the Corporation, have lost their moulded heads and supporting columns ; but those still remaining were thoroughly strengthened and their missing portions renewed, so that they will probably resist the action of the elements for centuries to come if a careful watch be kept over them.

In the year 1897 the important work of repairing the turrets at the angles of the keep was commenced. When their roofs were demolished many years ago, the wall-plates were torn out as well as the rafters, leaving a wide and deep gap, which weathered deeper as time went on, until the support to the battlements was reduced to six or eight inches. These cavities we filled in with masonry flush with the inner face, hence the battlements for the first time for about two centuries rest on a solid foundation. The latter were found to be in such an advanced state of decay that the stones for three or four courses deep were lying loose, the mortar having been almost entirely removed by centuries of whirling winds and other destructive agencies. Before work could be commenced these stones were lifted out of their bed by the hands of the workmen, no tools being needed. The battlements were most carefully dealt with, all crumbling Caen coigns being replaced by new ones of Kentish rag, after which the interior of each merlon was by degrees built up until it became a compact whole, every portion being bonded together, which, in my opinion, is preferable to pouring in concrete. All the merlons were slightly rounded off at the top so that rain could not lodge upon them in future. It is interesting to relate that when the keep was built (A.D. 1126—39) provision was made for a vast number of pigeon-holes in the turrets above the level of the parapet. These penetrated the walls about eighteen inches, and as many of them were immediately beneath the battlements their stability was affected. I caused them to be filled up ; many others we blocked to about four inches of their openings, simply to shew them. These holes for pigeons was a wise arrangement of the Norman builder, as in time of siege when food was scarce the garrison could fall back upon the birds, which in those days probably numbered thousands. As the sequel will shew, it may easily be understood what havoc these birds can do in the course of centuries, and yet they are still retained.

After the turrets had been completed, their junction with the flanking walls on the interior face of the keep was proceeded with ; this was a much-needed work, as all four angles had fallen away to



MURAL RECESSES, OPENINGS
AND GARDEROBE IN S.E.
ANGLE OF KEEP.



such an extent that at least four cart-loads of stone were used in making good each angle. Subsequently the summits of the four walls engaged our attention. These were covered with tons of accumulated earth and grass, on the removal of which a garden hose fixed to a water-pipe below was brought to bear upon the rugged masonry, thus washing out every particle of earth prior to the work of reparation. The roof line on the southern side was so weathered away that the crowns of two of the arches beneath had collapsed in consequence of the soakage of rain. Instead of restoring them we threw relieving arches over them, leaving the old work as it was to tell its own tale. Where the great fissure was between the Norman work and that of Henry III. we were obliged to remove the arch, as it was rent in twain, and rebuild it entirely, thus enabling us to fill up the fissure and bond the two sides together right back over the vault of the gallery, which had dropped at this part a couple of inches. In order to prevent the rain soaking into the walls in future, we carried up the face of all four walls to one level, thoroughly grouting them at the top with a slight fall inwards. As the northern wall had over the roof-line two rows of pigeon-holes, one row above the other, we had to re-front them so that the wall could be carried up straight above. The bonding of all this masonry with that previously done at the inner angles of the turrets, as already described, made a compact whole, no portion of which is likely to give way for centuries, especially as the mortar used is far superior to that of Norman date.

The beautiful fireplaces were re-pointed and the decayed hearths made sound, also the joist holes of the floors beneath them.

When referring to the rise in the eastern gallery Clark says: "It rises at the south-west angle to accommodate itself to the staircase, and in the centre of the east front to clear the vaults of the garderobes below, and possibly to meet the thrust of the arch in the cross wall."*

The presence of our scaffolding enabled us to enter every opening in the eastern wall of the keep and to prove that no garderobe shafts exist in it. We herewith give a plan of the garderobe beneath the gallery in question, the roof of which does not rise above the level of the gallery floor; the plan also shews the relation of the chamber to that existing in the turret erected by Henry III. There is no shaft connected with this garderobe, nor to that which is

* *Military Mediæval Architecture*, vol. ii., p. 414.

adjacent to the apartment used by the governor ; there is a wide stone shoot, however, in each which discharged outwards, between the keep and the curtain wall. The only garderobe shafts are those which have been broken into at their bases in the southern and western walls, and the miniature one in the upper dungeon. Taking these facts into consideration, therefore, we are disposed to think that the before-mentioned abrupt rise in the steps in the eastern gallery is due to the wall beneath them having been made solid, to take the thrust of the arcade across the centre of the hall, as Clark implies. When dealing with the summit of these walls we discovered opposite the brattice holes, which exist at the base of the battlements where the timbers relating to them had been embedded across the walls of the keep. Upon these timbers the brattice beams were placed and made fast ; these latter extended outwards sufficiently far to admit of a platform being fixed upon them, similar to a scaffold. This was for fighting purposes and from which sundry missiles could be dropped upon the heads of the besiegers. Clark refers to the brattice holes, but he makes no allusion to the approaches to them. These exist in the centre of the battlements on all sides, except the southern, which was destroyed during some repair in modern times, as well as the southern jamb of that on the eastern side. These openings are now blocked, but the jambs still remain, shewing that they were nearly three feet in width.

The little chamber in the north-eastern angle of the first floor, which communicated with the tower of the principal entrance, and where the sentry in charge of it was lodged, was in a bad state of repair, having been used as a roosting place by pigeons for centuries. The walls were so riddled by them that it was possible in some places to get one's arm in between the courses up to the elbow. Instead of merely filling in these gaps with mortar only, we rammed in slices of stone with it, so as to give these destructive birds little chance of doing damage in that obscure hiding place in future. The chamber is very neat, having a vaulted roof and a fireplace. The doorway which led into the tower is now blocked, as may be seen from the outside.

Before we treat of the work done to the fore-building it will be useful to call attention to what Clark has written concerning the chapel or kitchen in that part of the keep. In vol. i., p. 131 of his work on *Mediæval Military Architecture* he says : " At Rochester the chapel seems to have been in the fore-building, *high up, beneath the kitchen* " ; and at p. 133, " There is a kitchen in the fore-building



Window Discovered in Rochester Castle,
1809.

at Rochester, *high up*." He states further, at p. 134, "The kitchen when it was in a distinct chamber was *at the level of the Hall*, or even above it." In vol. ii., p. 418, in describing the same apartment as the *chapel*, he says, "There are two east windows and a large stone drain, which has led to the notion that this room was the kitchen, and no doubt it would have made a very good one." He does not refer to his statement in the first volume, as to the kitchen having been in the fore-building, hence these conflicting accounts tend to shew that he was in doubt about the matter. As the sequel will shew, the surmise that the Norman chapel was in the south-eastern portion of the upper chamber of the keep is probably correct. Under these circumstances we have ventured to call the chamber in the fore-building the kitchen, in the account which follows.

In the year 1899 the reparation of the fore-building was taken in hand and completed. The battlements were found to be in a very ruinous state and a source of danger to the safety of the public, due chiefly to the faulty way in which they had been repaired at some distant period. In every direction vegetation had taken possession of the joints of the masonry; this was traced to its source and carefully eradicated before the new work was bonded into the original masonry.

The eastern end of the great hearth of the kitchen had become literally honeycombed by weather and the ceaseless worrying by pigeons, so much so that its two windows would soon have collapsed. The jambs and voussoirs of the recesses in which the windows were placed had disappeared; the former were made good up to the springing of the arches to give strength to all, but to avoid *restoration* new voussoirs were not introduced. The semi-dome of the smoke shaft of the hearth had long since given way, but what remained of it was grouted and fixed to arrest further decay. The great arch of the hearth had lost several feet of its centre; this was replaced in order to save the remaining voussoirs from dropping out.

During the repairs to the roof-line of the kitchen an interesting two-light window was discovered in the south wall, *i.e.*, the north wall of the keep. This was blocked up and plastered over on the gallery side of the keep. The whole has now been opened out as shewn in the annexed Plate. Through this window anyone passing along the north gallery could see what was going on upon the roof of the fore-building, and communicate with those defending the stronghold

in the hour of need. Subsequently the roof was raised about six feet, and it was then that the window was closed and plastered over, thus obliterating all traces of its existence on the gallery side. Both roof-lines were carefully preserved during our operations, but the upper line not wholly so, as on the north side it had become so furrowed out by the elements and other causes that it was deemed necessary to fill in the cavity to give support to the battlements.

The so-called "vestibule" beneath the kitchen needed but little repair, what remained of the windows being rendered safe and the bases of their recesses made good.

In the upper dungeon one of its two air-shafts, which had been blocked, was opened, also the shaft leading from the garderobe to the dungeon beneath. This shaft must have been filled up when the late G. T. Clark was writing upon the Keep, as he describes that which we have discovered to be a garderobe as "a recess, perhaps a doorway, perhaps a cupboard, has been opened in the east wall, and fitted with a Tudor door-case" (vol. ii., p. 417). The shaft is 8 feet in depth, 1 foot 5 inches wide, and 1 foot 8 inches from front to rear. The recess, as its arch plainly shews, was originally a narrow Norman one, widened in later times. The face of the base of the shaft, where it entered the lower dungeon, was bricked up; when the bricks were removed the rubbish which had been used to fill up the shaft suddenly rattled out upon the astonished workman.

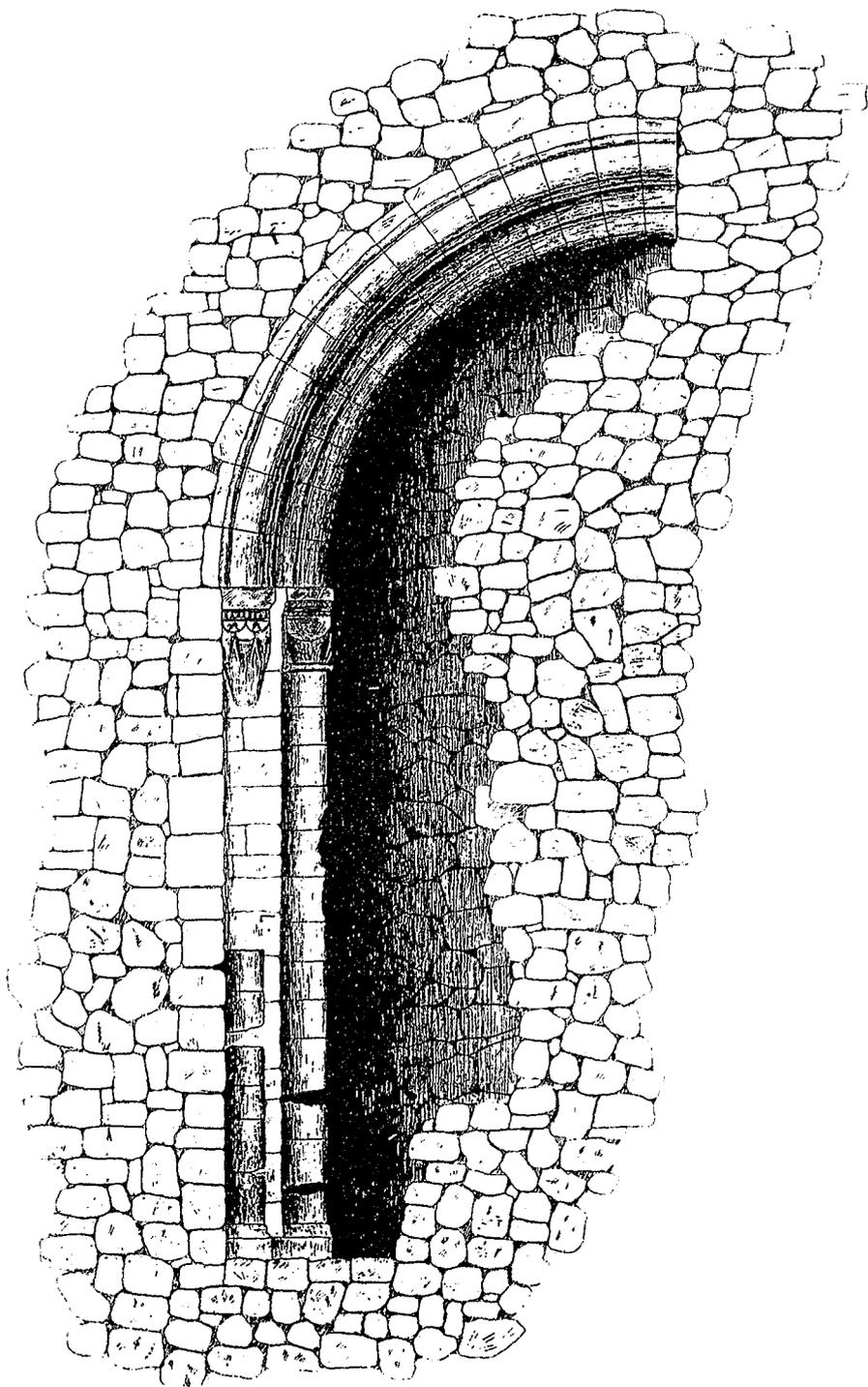
The operations for the years 1900-1 consisted of the general reparation of the southern interior half of the keep down to the floor level of the hall: also the gallery on that side, and the central divisional wall. The gallery beneath the walk was first dealt with, the roof of which was cracked in all directions, especially where the great fissure occurs at the junction of the original Norman work and the repairs to the south-east angle in the thirteenth century. A large amount of the damage everywhere present in this gallery was due, as in all accessible parts of the keep, to wanton destruction of arches and jambs for the sake of the square stones and voussoirs. These supports having been removed, it was absolutely necessary for the stability of the fabric to replace them. This was done with Kentish rag, a stone we have used throughout the building for coigns, jambs, and arches, so that it may descend to posterity as a distinctive mark of the repairs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The slight restoration of this portion of the gallery brings out more clearly the fact that Henry III.'s masonry

was thicker than the original Norman, as shewn in Clark's Plan (vol. ii., p. 412).

When repairing the eastern wall of the upper floor of the keep the presence of the scaffolding enabled a close examination to be made of the half of a large arch turned with Caen stone, which has always been visible there. On detecting the carved capital of one of the columns supporting what remained of the arch, additional interest was aroused, and permission was readily given for a complete research to be made, resulting in the discovery of the columns intact from bases to caps.

When the south-eastern turret of the keep was undermined in the great siege of King John's reign, the turret fell, together with a portion of the flanking walls on either side, carrying with it the corresponding half-arch to that which now remains. When Henry III. rebuilt the angle the arch was not considered, and what remained of it, as well as the recess to which it related, was filled in. I caused a portion of this filling-in to be removed (as shewn in the Illustration) sufficiently to shew the columns, and then refaced the thirteenth-century work. The question now arises—to what did this bold arch relate? Clark, as we have already said, refers to it as belonging to the Chapel. If this be so, the altar stood in a recess of which this was the frontal arch. If the Norman chapel was in the south-eastern angle of the keep, there is nothing now remaining to shew where it was after the repairs by Henry III. The central wall dividing the keep was next taken in hand; the upper portion, which time and weather had reduced by several feet, was cleared of earth and plants and strongly grouted in such a way that rain could not in future remain upon the top. As we descended with our work to the magnificent arches beneath, we found the largest arch in a most unsafe condition, the key-stone having dropped an inch, and all the voussoirs in the lower order of the western half of it had cracked. The three central voussoirs of the arch were taken out and re-set, and all cracks and fissures most carefully stopped; the rest of the arches were in a fairly good state and only required stopping.

Beneath the great columns of the arcade, where the joist holes of the floor existed, we found that the pigeons had made a home in them for centuries and wrought much havoc. All these orifices were filled in with masonry to within about three inches of the outlet, thus giving greater support to the columns, and at the same time shewing where the joists had been inserted. During our work



*ARCH OF NORMAN RECESS IN EASTERN WALL OF UPPER
CHAMBER IN SOUTHERN HALF OF THE CASTLE KEEP
ROCHESTER.*

upon this central wall we saw abundant evidence that the building had suffered from the ravages of fire: down the wall, on both sides, drips of molten lead (from the roof) appeared everywhere, and there was a thick layer of that metal upon the capitals of the columns; this, of course, ran down from the roof and gutters during a conflagration. Other evidence of fire is also shewn by the redness of the Caen stone at various places in the keep.

In writing upon the two garderobes in the southern and western walls of the keep, Clark says: "The openings into them are not original, and probably the shafts were sunk a few feet below the floor, and ended either in cesspools or a drain" (vol. ii., p. 410). As the present openings on the ground floor were made probably by treasure-seekers in the hope of finding something of interest or value at the base of the shafts, it was an easy matter to test the correctness of the above suggestion. They terminate about a foot below the surface in a flat bottom, coated with fine hard mortar. As there was neither drain nor cesspool there must have been some arrangement for emptying them from the interior of the keep, through the front walls where they have been destroyed—perhaps a wooden shutter, moveable when necessary. Neither of the shafts had any external opening. On digging down in front of the shafts in the earth forming the present floor of the keep, a remarkable discovery was made. Further and more extended excavation in the south-west angle of the keep shewed the undisturbed face of the wall continuing below ground to a depth of six feet, when a set-off of 18 inches projection was reached; below this the face was followed a few feet deeper. It now became clear that we were digging into a chamber of the keep which had been filled up in quite recent times. On the news being immediately communicated to the Corporation, accompanied by a request to be allowed to continue the research, I was kindly permitted to open two large pits on either side of the central wall of the keep, one in the centre of the southern half, the other in the north-western angle of the northern half. On both sides the stone floor of the chamber was reached at 14 feet, composed of blocks of Kentish rag grouted with strong mortar. On the south side, the floor ended about in line with the western edge of the pilaster of the central wall; beyond it came the natural gravel, some of which was removed, enabling us to ascertain that the floor was 15 inches in thickness and rested on gravel. On the north side, in the angle above stated, the results were more important. The west wall of the keep had a clean face to 14 feet,

at which level was a set-off of 2 feet projection, and just below, the floor. The north wall, with face also perfect, had a set-off at 6 feet of 10 inches projection, very sharp and level; then the wall for the remaining eight feet had a thickly parged face to the floor and set-off. It must be noted that the set-off at 6 feet corresponds in level with that found on the south wall of the keep, as already mentioned, but its projection is 8 inches less.

Following upon these researches, several trenches were dug along the walls all round the interior of the keep, for the purpose of ascertaining at what level the wooden floor existed which formed the roof of this newly discovered apartment, but no joist holes were found. It was clearly demonstrated by these excavations that the newel stairs in the north-eastern turret commenced within about a foot of where the first step is now, thus corresponding with the ascertained level of the two arches which pierce the central wall of the keep. As matters stand at present it would be rash to conjecture anything; all we can do is to wait patiently, in the hope that the Corporation may at some future time order the entire basement to be cleared out, which might throw light upon the purpose of this part of the fabric. Clark says (p. 410): "The basement is at the average level of the ground outside, and there is no underground chamber." But he apparently made no excavations. Following up these discoveries a trial trench was made across the lower dungeon with similar results. The authorities therefore ordered it to be cleared out. The chamber did not appear to have had a floor, as we excavated below the foundations of its walls without finding any trace of it. The depth of this horrible prison was 17 feet 9 inches from the vaulted roof to the base of the walls. The entrance to it from the keep is by a flight of stone steps; but as the lowest step is 10 feet from the bottom, there was probably a wooden ladder used, so that when the unfortunate prisoner was sent below, the ladder was withdrawn, thus preventing any possible chance of escape. A wooden bridge has now been thrown across the dungeon so that visitors may inspect it advantageously. On the eastern side of the dungeon we found the remains of a cross wall, 4 feet 7 inches from the outer one, its length having been originally 9 feet 2 inches, and height 2 feet 4 inches; upon the top of it had been a beam of timber, as the holes existed where it entered the wall at each end. As the garderobe shaft from the dungeon above, already described, emptied itself into this walled-off space, it was evidently the cesspit used for both dungeons, which added to the horrors of the miserable

existence of those who were incarcerated in the lower dungeon. The only ventilation of the latter was through a hole $9\frac{1}{2}$ by $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches, in the north wall immediately under the roof, which is still intact. This vent gradually slants upwards, and opens to the air about 6 feet above the modern entrance to the dungeon.

There are two questions naturally arising from all that we have written concerning the filling-up of the lowest chamber of keep and dungeon, namely, Why, and at what period was it done?

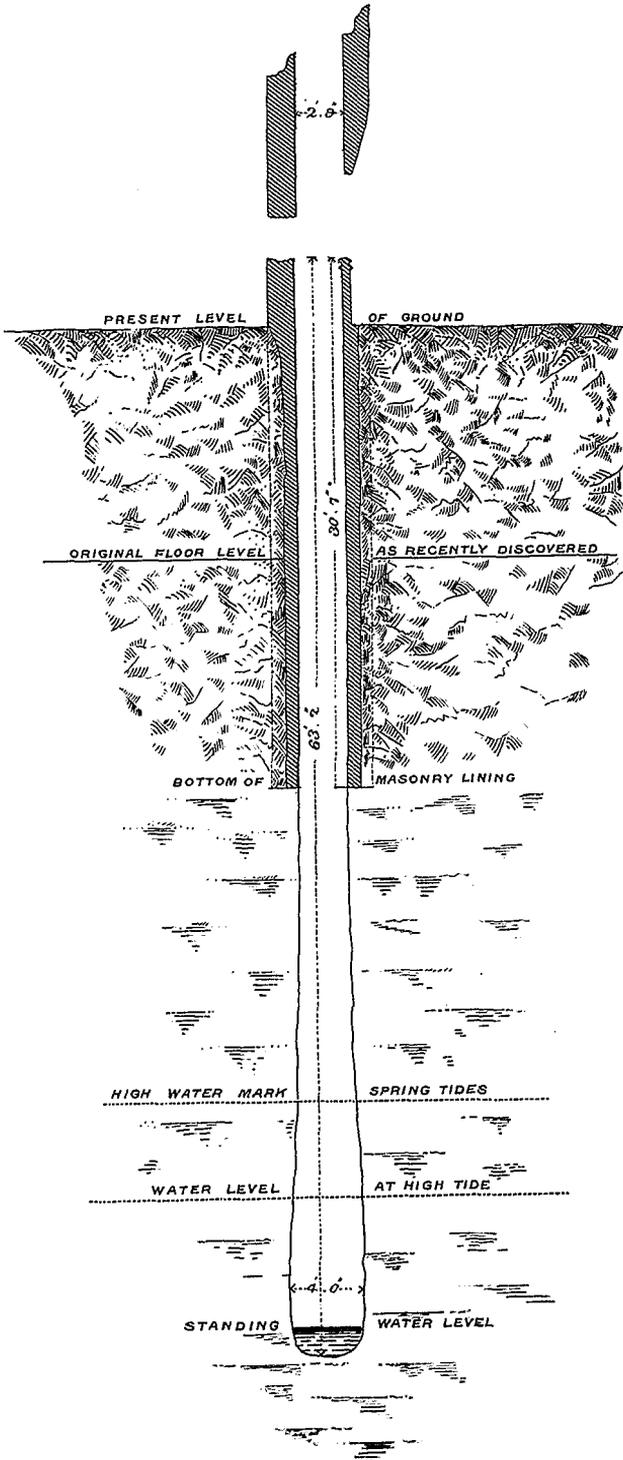
In Fisher's *History of Rochester*, which was published in 1772, occurs the following foot-note at p. 30: "A gentleman informs me that he well remembers the floor timbers of the castle being taken down and sold to one Gimmet, who bought them for the purpose of building a brewhouse on the common." When this was done the basement of the keep presented a dangerous pitfall to those who entered it at the main gate by the drawbridge, in such a state it could not possibly remain for any length of time; we may, therefore, venture to assume that it was filled up for safety of ingress. When this was done, in all probability the two entrances now on a level with the ground outside were cut through the solid walls, the one into the dungeon, the other beneath the drawbridge, as the fragments of pottery, tobacco pipes, scraps of crockery ware, etc., met with during the removal of the earth belonged to the Georgian era, which agrees sufficiently with the date of Fisher's book. During the year 1900 we cleared out the well, of which a section is given in the accompanying Plate. It was disappointing that nothing of interest was found in it, which shewed that it had, in all probability, been emptied at some earlier period.

In the year 1902 the work of making level the floor of the mural gallery of the keep, which has so long been a nuisance to the public, was completed throughout. From the eastern gallery we swept away the unsightly wooden platform existing there. On its removal it was found that the masonry beneath it, including the steps, had been torn away at some period. This we made good, thus bringing it up to its original level at the base of the window inserted in the time of Henry III. in the eastern wall of the keep. As the rise of the missing steps was shewn upon the side walls, we were enabled to replace them in exact position; an extra step, however, was added to make the ascent at this point less abrupt. On filling in the floor of the gallery beyond, into the southern gallery, we saw the traces of another step which had been removed. This was restored, thus rendering this dangerous and dilapidated

ROCHESTER CASTLE.

SECTION THROUGH WELL

1900



walk safe and in perfect condition. During the repairs all the single clumsy wooden rails that had been inserted across the archways opening into the keep from the gallery have been replaced by iron bars, in pairs, which are less obtrusive to the eye, and more efficacious as safeguards to the public.

In the year 1903, as the curtain wall facing the river had become very insecure, we abandoned the keep for the time being and did everything that was possible, in the most careful manner, to save this ancient stretch of masonry from further decay. After the scaffolding was erected we were brought face to face with the ravages which centuries of weathering and the work of birds had wrought upon the wall. It was riddled with holes in every direction, reaching far into the core. In some places the birds had pecked away the mortar to such an extent that, aided by the wind, passages had been made between the face and core.

The section of the wall first dealt with was that opposite the pier. In the upper part of this is a blocked two-light window of the time of Henry III. Having been turned with fire-stone the jambs and arches had almost dissolved away, and in order to preserve its outline on the exterior face it was found necessary to case it with rag-stone to uphold the masonry above, which was liable to fall at any moment. On the interior face we left the fire-stone still exposed to view, as it had not become so worn away and could be easily repaired at any future time. The arch over the recess in which these windows occur was completely gone, and had to be renewed to carry the work above.

The broken edge of the wall facing north, which shews in such an interesting and instructive manner the Roman, Norman, and thirteenth-century periods in juxtaposition, had to be cased for some distance down, as the core of the Norman or central portion, being largely composed of chalk, would have weathered away and caused further damage. The lower part was left untouched. Beneath the above-mentioned windows we restored a line of joist holes which were fast decaying past recognition, thus preserving the floor-line of some building which has disappeared from this spot. On the other side of this wall, facing the river, we were enabled, for the first time, to examine carefully the core of the Roman wall which underlies the Norman masonry erected by Gundulf. The core is 8 feet in height, and at its base is the projecting ledge of the underpinning wall that was erected many years ago to prevent the chalk cliff from further decay, and at the same time to form an

additional support to the great weight of walling above. Upon this ledge a thick layer of weeds and plants had grown; on removing it for the purpose of regrouting we were rewarded by finding that two or three courses of the Roman facing-stones remained at places undisturbed, and had been incorporated into the modern work below. When the latter was done the joints of the Roman courses were re-pointed, hence it was not possible to detect them from the esplanade beneath.

This fortunate discovery enabled us to ascertain by means of a plumb-line that the wall, including its face, had lost only 2 feet 7 inches of its thickness since its erection, which testifies to the solidity of the masonry and the marvellous excellence of the mortar.

On continuing our work from the southern end of the Roman core a fine length of Gundulf's wall claimed our attention. This portion was in fairly good condition, owing chiefly to the protection afforded by the trees which have grown up upon the chalk cliff that projects several feet along its line. Nothing was done to it beyond filling up the great holes made by pigeons. Where the wall begins to curve towards the south-west angle we opened out some very interesting remains of the thirteenth-century alterations on the interior face, which had long been overgrown and entirely obscured by ivy. After the total destruction of that destructive plant, three mural recesses were exposed, while a fourth was found to be filled in with masonry, on the removal of which we disclosed an opening cut through the wall and splayed in such a way that a watch might be kept upon the bridge on the Strood side of the river. The two centre recesses also possessed openings, and the fourth or southernmost a two-light opening, all of which had been blocked up. On clearing them out we were able to repair the splays, jambs, and arches, and insert an iron stanchion into each opening in order to prevent children getting through them. As the southernmost double opening was too far decayed to repair, we left it as it was.

The thirteenth century builders, after piercing the Norman wall for these openings, built a wall in front of it recessed as above described. When repairing the top of the wall we were able to shew the Norman work, which is a little higher than that of Henry III. in front of it. From the bases of the recesses to the ground all this section of the wall was in a most unsafe state, the stones having been pulled out even to the core of the Norman wall. So great

was the destruction that twenty-five loads of stone were used in making it good. Upon the sides of each recess we could plainly see where the original base had been; we therefore built up to that level. The removal of the ivy not only disclosed all the above interesting details, but it revealed the indications of a cross wall having at one time existed in the centre of the four recesses. Unfortunately it could not be shewn as we would have wished, so we laid the stones of the new work in an irregular manner over the line of the old for a width of 8 feet, which represents that of the latter. This may have been the wall referred to by Clark, at p. 408, as dividing the "Norman castle into a north and south ward," and which passed just north of the fore-building of the keep. I caused an excavation to be made in the broad footpath in front of the wall, but found no trace of a foundation. I also probed for it beyond, in two or three places, and struck masonry far beneath the surface, but this counts for nothing.

Before clearing up I embraced the opportunity of removing some of the turf of the bank which is at the foot of the wall we have been describing, when, as was anticipated, it was found to cover the Roman wall of the city; in fact, the bank represents its curve at this corner. We also discovered that the stones forming the boundary of the footpath at the base of the grass bank had been laid in mortar and bonded into the Roman core, so that the turn of the path, for a certain distance, actually defines the curve of the ancient wall. This is further proof of the accuracy of the boundary line of Roman Rochester we have already placed on record.

The great work recorded in the foregoing pages was accomplished during the Mayoralties of Alderman Sir W. Webb Hayward, Councillor Franklin G. Homan, Alderman W. J. McLellan, Councillors L. A. Goldie, P. J. Neate, C. Tuff, and F. F. Smith, all of whom, together with every member of the Council, gave the work their fullest support and sympathy, which encouraged me throughout to boldly face so difficult and onerous a task. It gives me much pleasure to acknowledge my great indebtedness to them, as well as to the Town Clerk (Mr. Apsley Kennette) for his invaluable assistance and advice. To Mr. W. Banks, F.S.I., the City Surveyor, I am especially grateful. His professional skill surmounted all structural difficulties, while I am alone responsible for the manner in which the work was carried out. The total cost of the repairs up to the end of 1904 was £788 16s. 7d., and

as a set-off to this expenditure the payments by visitors to the Castle from 1896 to 1904 inclusive was £1,098.

In conclusion, it will be a satisfaction to me to state that the repairs which I have been privileged to superintend at Rochester Castle for its present custodians have been conducted with a due regard for the true principles of reparation rather than restoration, with the view of handing down to posterity the noble Castle, not only structurally sound, but with its more prominent and picturesque features rendered safe and secure for centuries.

As an appendix to this report I give copies of two interesting letters relating to the preliminary enquiries that were made in 1780 with a view to the purchase of the Castle by the Government for the purposes of barracks, which were kindly transcribed for me by Captain G. W. Griffith, R.E. :—

LETTER 1.

Chatham, 23 *March*, 1780.

DEAR SIR,

The result of my enquiries concerning Rochester Castle is not yet quite so satisfactory as I could wish. I have learned that the Castle, with the land, etc., appertaining, is now the property of Mr. Child, the banker, in London; of *whom* he purchased it or *what* he gave for it I cannot at present find out, and perhaps it may be difficult to obtain a knowledge of the amount of the purchase-money. I have heard that it was a trifling sum. Part of the land has been let upon a building lease, and houses in and about the town have been built thereon, which, however, do not interfere with, and can be of no use to, any of the purposes for which the Castle may be wanted; the rest of the land is chiefly in gardens and rented upon lease by Mr. Penn, an ironmonger in Rochester, and by him let again to different persons; there is a house also contiguous to the Castle which I understand is let by him to the town carter. I am told that the whole of Mr. Penn's lease is nearly expired, but the exact term remaining I cannot say. The quantity of garden-ground, etc., contiguous to the Castle may amount to three or four acres; perhaps the whole would not be wanted. A piece immediately adjoining the Castle and now in Lucerne might be sufficient, but in this respect (not knowing exactly to what uses it may be desired to be converted) I speak only at random, but at the same time with a view to give you every information in my

power. If my enquiries could have been more open (which I am sensible of the propriety of your cautioning me against) I could, perhaps, have acquired some other particulars. It is, however, very certain that the Castle itself is of very little use or no real value to the proprietor. An attempt was made some years ago to pull it down and convert the stone to other uses, but the goodness of the cement baffled their efforts, at least rendered them so tedious and expensive that they soon abandoned the project. What further information I can collect in the course of my enquiries I shall immediately acquaint you with, and am with much esteem,

Dear Sir,
Your most obedient humble Servant,
GOTHER MANN.

To LIEUT.-COL. DEBBIEG.

LETTER 2.

20 *May*, 1780.

MY LORD AND HONORABLE GENTLEMEN,

In obedience to your Honour's commands directing me to enquire and report upon what terms Mr. Child, the proprietor of Rochester Castle, is willing to part with it to your honours to be converted into barracks, I have conferred with Mr. Palmer, Mr. Child's solicitor (by whose advice I perceive he will be very much governed) on the subject, who informs me that Mr. Child is not in the actual occupation of any part of the premises, unless it be the scite of the castle, of which, on account of the ruinous state it is in, no use at all is at present made, the residue of the premises being let out to 21 different persons for long terms of years, at small yearly rents amounting in the whole to about £40 per annum, whose interests must be purchased (which Mr. Palmer conceives it will be difficult to do) before the board can obtain possession.

That there are other rents, appurtenant and payable to the owner of this Castle, commonly called Castle Guard Rents, issuing out of divers other estates in several counties in England, amounting together to about £20 per annum.

That Mr. Child does not mean, nor indeed can he with propriety, part with the Castle, unless the person who purchases it also purchases those Castle Guard Rents, as those rents are payable to the owner of the Castle.

Mr. Child has no plan whatsoever of the premises, but if your honours, after being acquainted with the difficulties which will attend carrying an agreement thereof into execution and obtaining possession, chuse to treat for a purchase, Mr. Palmer proposes that a plan be taken thereof, which seems absolutely necessary, as part was heretofore sold by Mr. Child's father, other part is claimed by Mr. Brooke, Recorder of Rochester (as Mr. Palmer informs me), and as soon as the plan is taken, and the ground and buildings the property of Mr. Child is ascertained, Mr. Palmer proposes to make your honours an offer; he wishes the plan to be taken by an engineer or overseer of your honours' appointment, whom he will direct. Mr. Child's agent to attend on the spot at Rochester to give the best information he is able of the extent of Mr. Child's property, and when that is done both parties may form a proper judgment of the value, which at present (as the contents are not known) it seems impracticable to do.

I am, my Lord and Hon^{ble} Gentlemen,

Your most obedient humble servant,

LOUGH CARLETON.

To Hon^{ble} Board of Ordnance.

For permission to publish these letters I am indebted to Major-General Sir Reginald C. Hart, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.V.O., Commanding the Thames and Medway Defences, also to Colonel G. R. R. Savage, C.R.E., for his kindly assistance in connection therewith.

When enclosing the above to me, Captain Griffith writes as follows:—

HEAD-QUARTERS, THAMES DISTRICT,
BROMPTON BARRACKS.

Chatham, 7 November, 1903.

MY DEAR MR. PAYNE,

I have looked up the old letter books, and am sending you copies of the two letters I referred to yesterday. I can trace nothing later, from which I infer the matter was dropped, though a survey I fancy was made, but no copy exists in this office.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) G. W. GRIFFITH.