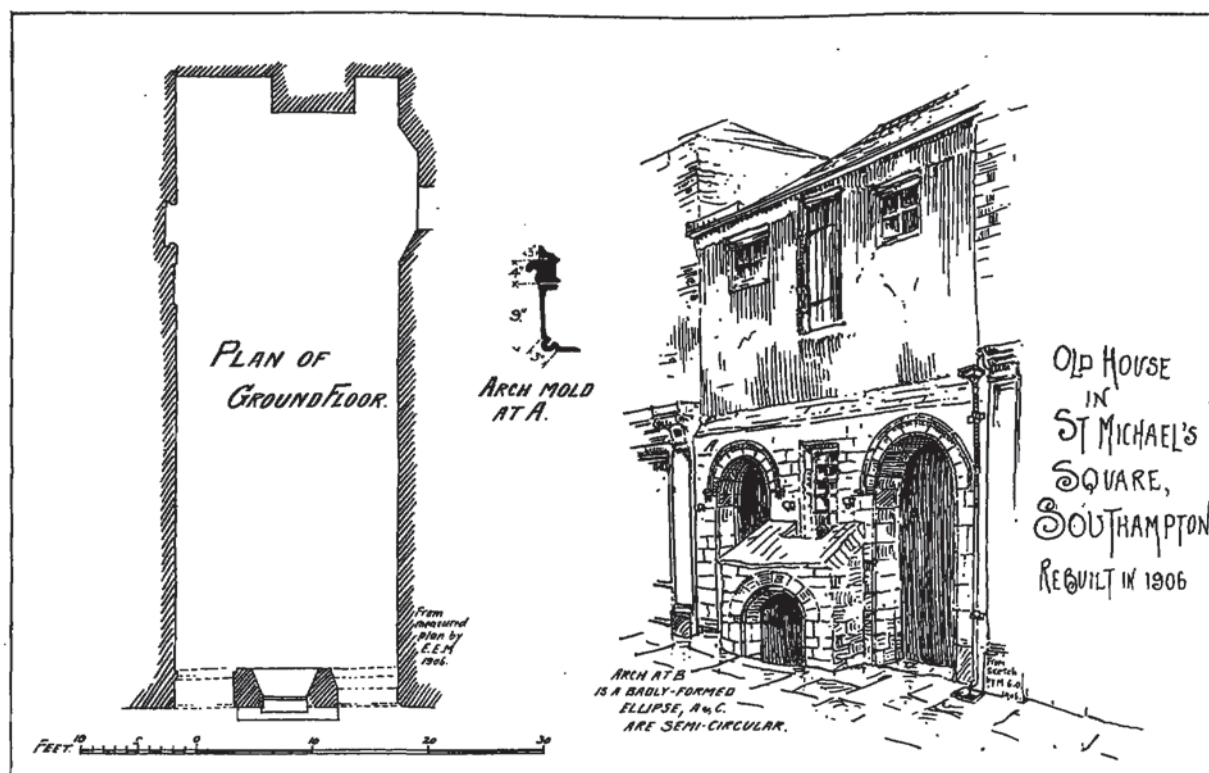
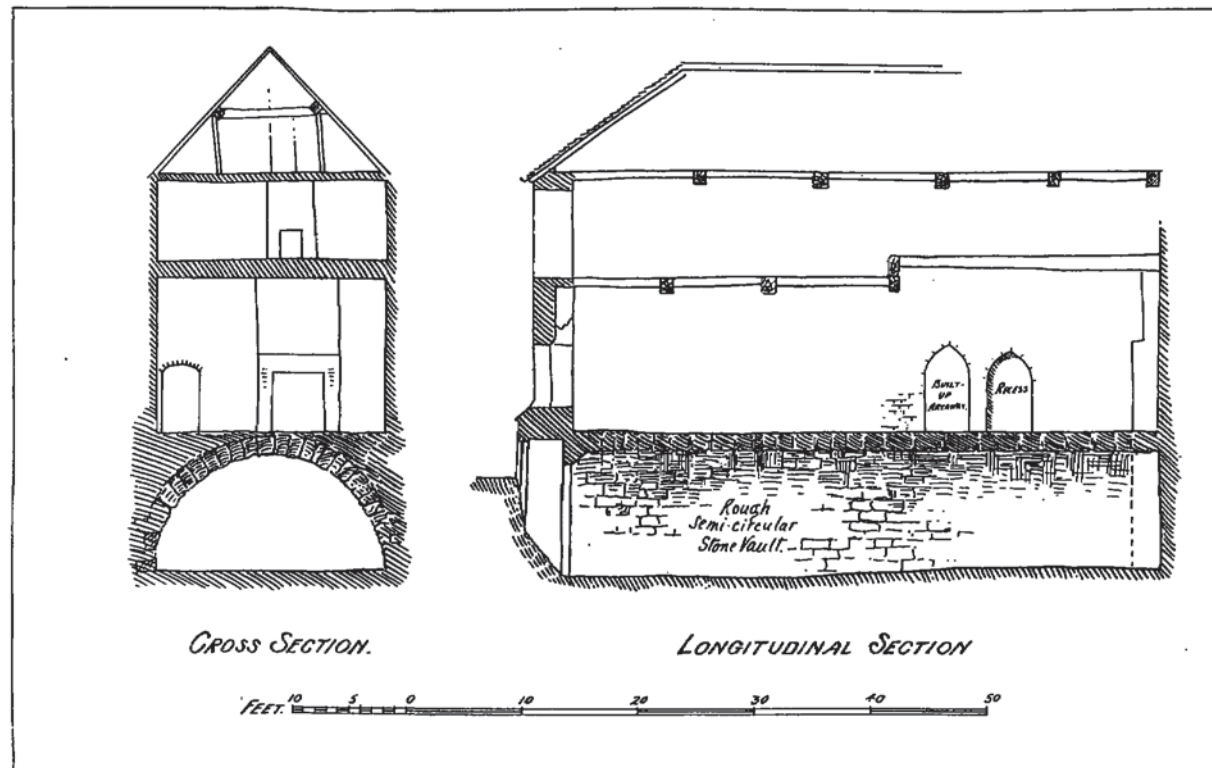




Townsend, Exeter

OLD HOUSE IN ST. MICHAEL'S SQUARE PASSAGE. SOUTHAMPTON.



Tomlinson, Esq.

OLD HOUSE IN ST. MICHAEL'S SQUARE PASSAGE, SOUTHAMPTON.

RELICS OF OLD SOUTHAMPTON.

BY REV. G. W. MINNS, LL.B., F.S.A.

"Visions of old that we vainly cherish,
Dim and faint are your forms to-day!
Ancient memories fade and perish,
Ancient houses decay."

C. L. GRAVES.

Our member, Mr. R. Macdonald Lucas, F.R.I.B.A., whose talented pencil has on many occasions furnished illustrations for our papers, some time ago placed at the disposal of the writer the accompanying drawings of some architectural remains of old Southampton of great interest, which are here reproduced.

The first which we proceed to describe shows the front of an ancient building which existed on the South side of St. Michael's church in the narrow passage which runs from the square into French Street. It consisted of two semi-circular arches, reminding one of the Jew's House at Lincoln, but of a much later period. The arch moulding, with its deep hollow, points to the thirteenth century. Between these arches at a lower level was another arch, forming the descent to an underground, semi-circular stone vault of considerable extent (50 feet by 20 feet). The front elevation had none of the features of a dwelling-house, but apparently formed the entrance to a hall, having two entrances with a vaulted store beneath. Sir Henry Englefield suggests with some probability that this frontage was a part of the ancient Wool Hall which extended from this point quite to Bugle Street.¹ This seems confirmed by the fact that the houses erected on its site were called in the terrier of the town the

¹ "A Walk Through Southampton," Ed. 1841, p. 39.

Woollen Hall, and originally formed one large mansion. This hall must not be confounded with the fine old building at the South-east corner of Bugle Street, sometimes called the Wool-house. The latter was anciently the "Wey-house"; when the export of wool was forbidden, the old use of the building passed away, and it was devoted to the custody of French and Spanish prisoners, whence it came to be called the "Spanish Prison."

This old building in St. Michael's passage was long used as a store for the adjoining shop, but in 1897 the stone front with its arches was removed to make room for a modern shop, while the large vault beneath still remains. The details of this interesting example of ancient architecture must now be added to the list of relics of the past.

The second subject of our notice, the Undercroft of the ancient Simnel Street, happily remains.



THE SIMNEL STREET VAULT.

The above illustration gives a general view of this remarkable chamber, which was long used as a wine vault. Its total destruction was threatened a few years ago by the

scheme for the sanitary improvement of the locality, which involved the removal of many old landmarks and ancient buildings in St. Michael's parish. Some practical suggestions for its restoration, made by Mr. St. John Hope, were submitted to the Corporation, who were led to preserve this interesting building. The vaulted chamber, as will be seen by the accompanying plan, is approached on the South by a descent of twelve steps. At the East end is a hooded fireplace, not unlike that at Netley Abbey, having on the North side a bracket terminated with a ball-flower ornament. This detail gives a clue to the date, namely, the latter part of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth. The floor of the chamber is seven or eight feet below the surface of the street. The accumulation of road material during centuries had obscured the two windows on the South side which lighted the chamber.

In olden time it is probable that a substantial upper storey of half-timber or wattle and daub rose above this structure, but the nature of the materials prevented its survival. The length of the chamber is about 33 feet 6 inches, its breadth 21 feet, the extreme height of the vault from the floor 13 feet. It consists of two bays, the groins of which spring from sculptured corbels, that at C. (see Plan) the head of a mailed knight and at the opposite corner, G. the head of a lady wearing a wimple. At the inter-section of the Easternmost bay is a head with flowing hair and beard, not unlike Edward III. from his monument in Westminster Abbey, which would support the conjectured date of the fourteenth century. Other sculptures represent heads or floriated ornaments, more or less mutilated. It is clear that this chamber was an apartment of importance, and various opinions as to its use have been suggested, *e.g.*, that it was part of a hostel for the accommodation of the crowds of pilgrims on their way to foreign shrines or others from abroad to English shrines at Winchester and Canterbury, or as a lodging for ecclesiastics travelling between foreign abbeys and their dependent English houses. It was more probably the residence of an important

personage connected with the Castle (which was close by), and the water-side houses of the early Plantagenet Kings. In early times forty-eight houses were held in the town free of tax by various barons, officials of the Royal household, and others, including those held by the Norman Abbots of Lire and Corneilles. The Abbot of Beaulieu had also a house in this quarter of the town.

John Leland, whose "perambulation" began about 1538, and lasted six or seven years, notes some of the fine houses which existed on the occasion of his visit to Southampton. He says: (*Itinerary*, Vol. III., p. 108.)

"There be many very fair Marchauntes Houses in *Hampton*: But the cheifest is the House that *Huttoft*, late Customer of *Hampton*, buildid in the West Side of the Town.

The House that Master *Lightster*, Chief Bane of the Kinges Eschequer, dwellith yn is very fair.

The House that Master *Mylles* the Recorder dwellith yn is fair.

And so be the Houses of *Nicoline* and *Guidote* Italianes."¹

It is probable, therefore, that the vaulted chamber formed part of the residence of some lay or clerical personage of importance, or it may have been the hall of some guild or civic body.

Another relic of old Southampton is shown in the accompanying view of the South-eastern side of God's House Tower from a photograph taken by Mr. Max-Mills

¹ Huttoft's house, the "Tudor House," in St. Michael's Square, was happily acquired by our member, Mr. W. F. G. Spranger, and by him surrendered to the Corporation of Southampton on generous terms for the purpose of a Municipal Museum. The house of Master, afterwards Sir John Lister, Chief Baron of the Exchequer, was in Bugle Street. He was buried in St. Michael's Church, where there is a much mutilated monument to his memory. John Mille was Recorder of Southampton, 37 Henry VIII., 1547. Merchant strangers were restrained from buying wool, wool-fells, or cloth, except in the markets of London, Hampton, and Sandwich. Southampton, therefore, became the residence of several wealthy Italians for the purposes of trade.

HANTS FIELD CLUB AND ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

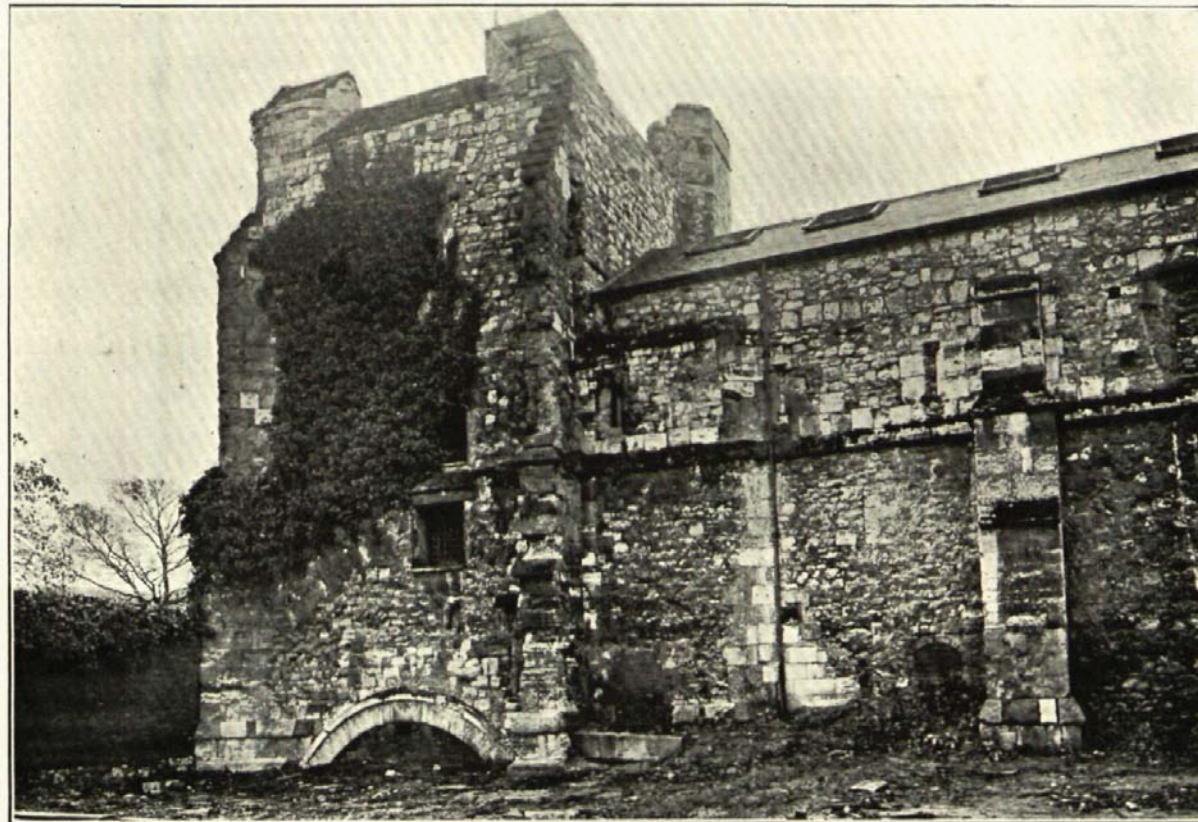


Photo by]

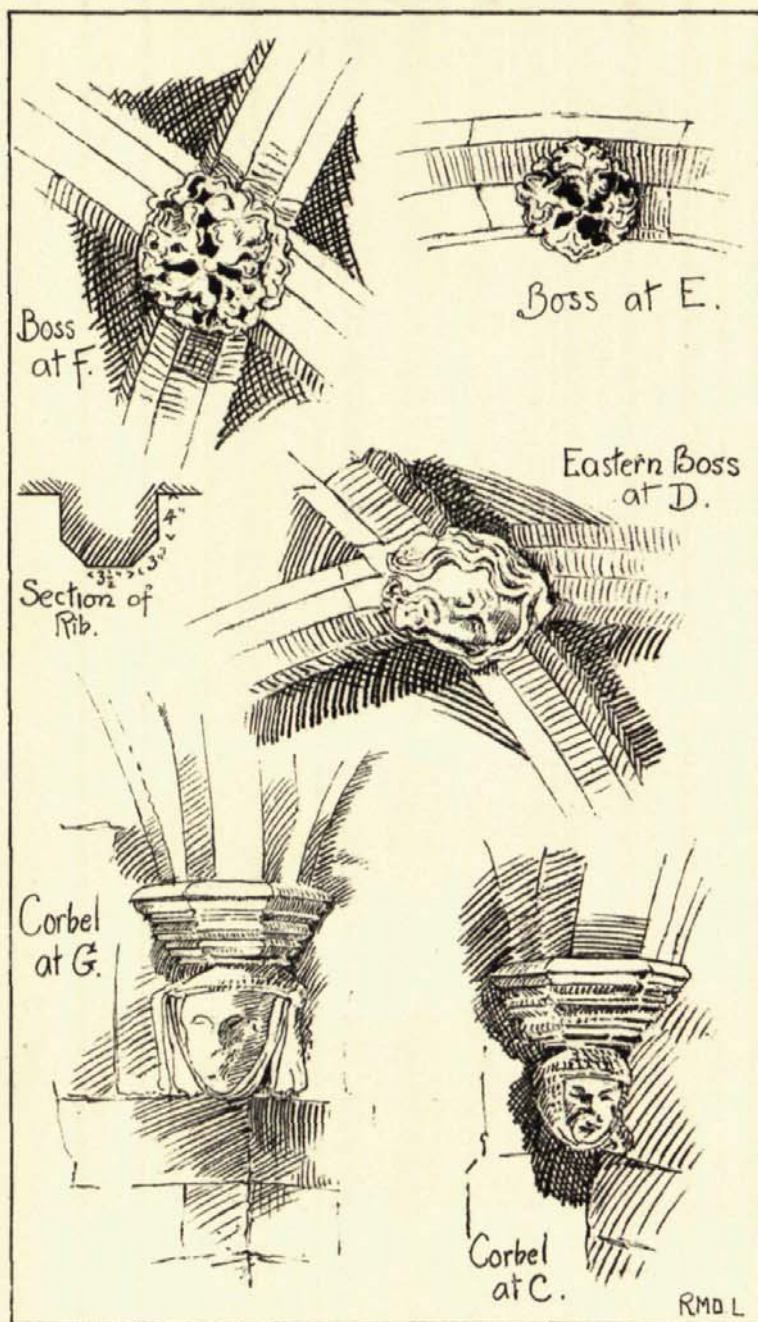
SOUTH-EASTERN SIDE OF GOD'S HOUSE TOWER, SOUTHAMPTON.

[Max-Mills.

at the request of our Secretary, Mr. Dale, when this point of the town defences was brought to light and made accessible. The area adjoining had been long used as a timber yard, and was comparatively unknown to the public, but at the close of the occupation by Messrs. Bovill the property was cleared with a view to a sale of the site. It was offered by auction in 1910 as a freehold site about half-an-acre in extent, suitable for "factory premises, a motor garage or hotel, etc." A sale was not effected, and the site still remains unoccupied. The tower as now seen Mr. Dale considers of later date than the rest of the walls of Southampton, and together with the gallery which connects it with God's House Gate, is a work of the fifteenth century, to protect the sluices of the moat which ran up by the outer wall of the town, a locality which preserves the memory of the defences in the name of the "Ditches." The moat was tidal and the rush of water sufficient to work a mill. The clearance made revealed a charming view of the gallery and a considerable stretch of the East wall as far as the Demi-lune bastion which the Corporation saved and protected some years ago. The crown of the arch is well preserved, and there are the remains of windows blocked in the gallery, out of which the prisoners were able to look.

We hope that this interesting corner of Southampton will not fall into the builder's hands. It has been suggested that the area should be made into a little public garden which would prove a great attraction to visitors. A part of the moat might be cleared and covered with turf in the same way that the moat at Hampton Court has been treated lately. This would still further improve the appearance of the tower and show more of the arch.

HANTS FIELD CLUB AND ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

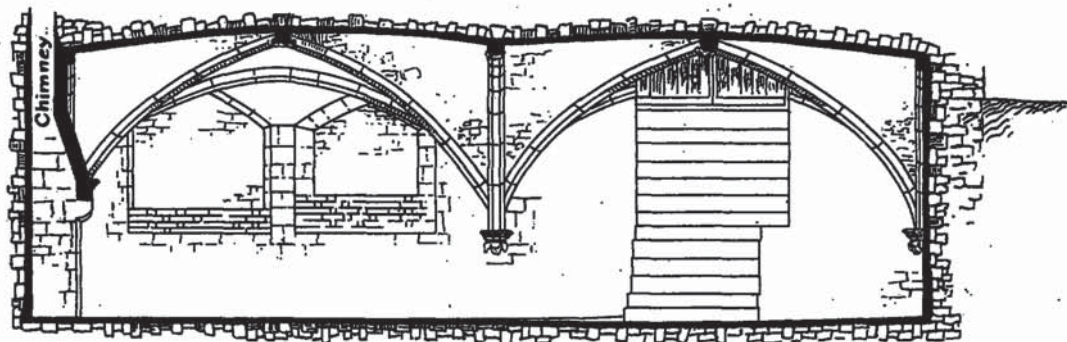


UNDERCROFT, SIMNEL ST., SOUTHAMPTON; DETAILS.

HANTS FIELD CLUB AND ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.



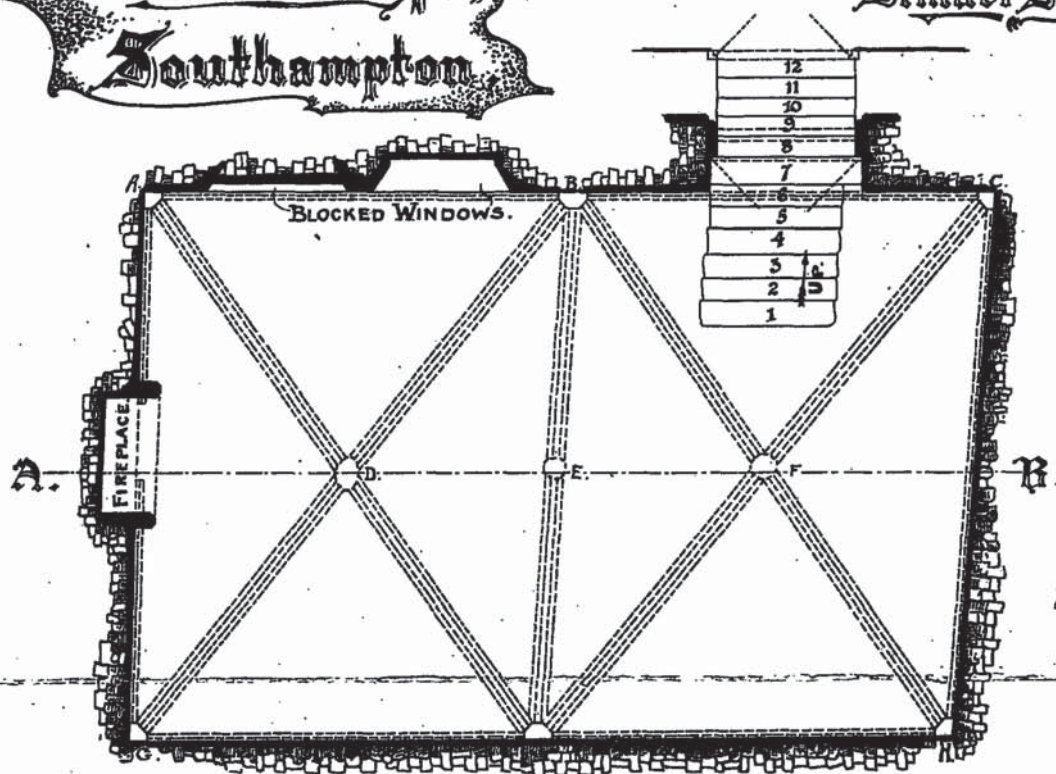
UNDERCROFT, SIMNEL ST., SOUTHAMPTON; DETAILS.



Section A.B.

The Undercroft,
Southampton.

Simuel Street.



Plan.

Scale of feet.



Rich^d M^r Lucas
mens. et del. 1900.

J. TOWNSEND & SON PHOTO LITHO EXETER & LONDON.