

THE WEST GATE, WINCHESTER, 1940.

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THE northern face of the West Gate at Winchester was an unlovely sight after the removal of the modern buildings, which had been built up against it (Fig. 1). Not only was much of it covered with wallpaper, but there was considerable evidence of modern re-facing or patching of the ancient face and of modern openings cut through the wall and subsequently blocked. Moreover, there were three brick chimneys projecting from the parapet line, only one of which was then in use for the fireplace within the gate tower itself.

The removal of modern work necessitated especial care because of the uncertainty as to the stability of the whole structure, which stands upon an inclined chalk dump of very early formation, and also to the fact that the cutting of two modern chimneys had certainly caused many fractures in the north wall. As a precaution, therefore, the whole wall was strongly shored and the space left by cellars of the "Plume of Feathers" was filled with concrete and dry rubble. Thereafter, as soon as possible, two horizontal reinforced concrete beams, 12in. by 9in. in section, were inserted 9in. behind the face across the north wall fractures. They run the full length of the wall and are returned a short distance into the east and west walls of the tower. One is at the level of the first floor of the tower, 33ft. long; the other is below the roof line and is stepped down under the arrow slit. As the wall had been thoroughly grouted by gravity from the other face in 1932, these measures were deemed sufficient to make the structure rigid.

Work thereafter proceeded in the following way :—

The disused chimneys were removed and the one still used for the fireplace on the first floor of the tower was reconstructed with a bend, in an effort to obviate down draught. Its brick top was removed and a low pot was inserted behind the triangular-sectioned coping, with which the wall top is finished. This wall top is not original, but is in keeping with the modern finish of the remainder of the thin parapet at roof level.

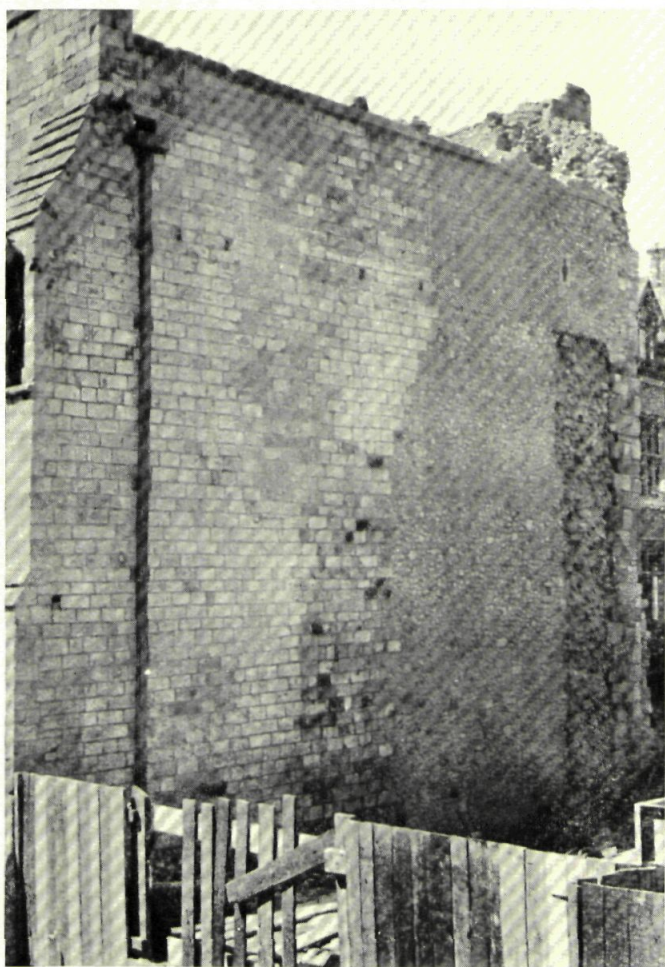
After the removal of the wallpaper it was found that, with certain exceptions to be mentioned later, roughly the eastern half of the wall face was built in fine ashlar, similar to most of the eastern face and the upper part of the southern face of the tower. This ashlar cannot be original work, since it is obviously connected with the comparatively modern pseudo-Gothic arches over the footway through the tower on the northern side of the main gate. Over the eastern arch of the footway this ashlar has been carried



To follow p. 58]

PLATE I.

West Gate, Winchester: The Northern Face before Treatment.



To face Plate I]

PLATE II.

West Gate, Winchester : The Northern Face after Treatment.

across the line of a narrow original light, the embrasure of which can be seen within the tower. Similar ashlar also occurs in the main passage of the gateway and seems to be connected with the work done when the road level was lowered to its present line; the original level is shown by the door in the southern wall of the passage, which gave access to the stair leading to the first floor of the tower, now the Westgate Museum, and to a lobby on the left called Little Ease.¹

The exceptions mentioned above in the ashlar work on the northern face were two modern door openings and two modern fireplaces. The upper doorway showed also in the other side of the wall, *i.e.* in the Museum, but was blocked with modern brick. The doorway itself had a brick head and was obviously modern.² The lower opening was at ground level and led to a cupboard. A small fireplace was at the same level as the upper doorway, but about 8ft. westwards. The other fireplace was at ground level and was built of re-used ashlar with a wide chimney breast of brick; the whole was 8ft. wide.

Although the ashlar refacing is certainly of comparatively recent date, it did not seem feasible to remove it in favour of a core finish or a completely modern imitation of the, probably original, flint and stone facing, such as can be seen on the western face of the tower. It has, therefore, been retained, being merely re-pointed where necessary, and new work of the same character has been carried across the two more modern doorways in it. When the lower large fireplace was removed, it was found that the original flint face, shortly to be described, came only up to its western side. The ashlar facing has, therefore, been rebuilt up to this vertical line. Above the position of this fireplace, however, the line of junction between ashlar and flint face has been retained as it was found, *i.e.* on an irregular, diagonal line.

Along its whole length the ashlar face rests at its base on flint walling, which projects slightly in front of the ashlar, and is nearly vertical, but is not faced. It is probably the remains of an offset or batter at the bottom of the original face, and the fact that the ashlar is built upon it in this peculiar manner is additional evidence of the more recent date of the former. The bottom of the ashlar corresponds roughly with the present level of the road in the gateway, which, as already stated, is not the original level.

West of the ashlar facing a wide strip of wall face from top to bottom of the tower appears to be original, *i.e.* of flint with occasional pieces of stone, as on the undoubtedly original western wall of the tower. This has only been re-pointed except in a few

1. Formerly used by the watch as a lock-up.

2. It gave access from the "Fighting Cocks," later the "Plume of Feathers," to the room over the gate, which was then used as a club room for the inn. This use prevented the demolition of the gate in 1771; see Milner, *History of Winchester*, 3rd edition, II. 210.

places where small patches of modern work occurred. These have been rebuilt to match the original work. One putlog hole was found and retained.

The most difficult problem of this wall proved to be the determination of the point at which the Town Wall joined the tower. The existence of the good flint face and the putlog hole, already described, suggests that the Town Wall did not abut against the middle of the tower. It is unlikely to have abutted against the north-eastern angle, where the ashlar now is, because this would have caused the tower to project far in advance of its line, and there is hardly any provision in the tower for flanking fire along any such line of wall. Consequently, it must have joined the tower west of the good flint face. This probably means that its outer face was in line with the western face of the tower. Certainty is impossible, because the north-western angle of the tower has been rebuilt with ashlar in comparatively modern times. This is shown by the white mortar, which contrasts with the yellow mortar of original work in the tower and is similar to that of the extension of the buttress on the western face of the tower close to this angle. This extension is clearly contemporary with the cutting of the footway in the tower. Moreover, the ashlar quoins of this angle rested upon a single, massive stone, which resembled a foundation block, but was well above the mediaeval ground level. In war time it was not feasible to remove the quoins and to treat the angle in order to indicate the original structural features. They have, therefore, been retained and have been continued to ground level in order to ensure stability of the corner; the massive block has been removed and the bottom five courses of quoins are insertions of 1940. A few broken quoins higher up have also been replaced. The buttress on the western face has been roughly finished in stone core and is only of sufficient width to take the thrust from the arch over the footway; it is hoped that this modern extension of the buttress may be removed, when the footway is abolished after the war.

The presumed site of the abutment of the Town Wall had a very rough flint face, which contrasted with the work to the east and was obviously a modern refacing (Fig. 3). This point confirms the location of the Town Wall in this position. Some 21 feet north of the tower a short piece of flint wall¹ faced only on the eastern side and running north to south for 11 feet was found to rest on the natural surface of the ground. The line of this face, if produced southward, would join the tower precisely at the most likely point for the abutment of the eastern face of the Town Wall. In view of these slight indications the face of the tower between the point last mentioned and the ashlar of the angle has been rendered in flint and stone core to suggest the abutment of the Town Wall (Fig. 4).

1. This wall was at least 4 feet thick, and the remains average 9 to 12 inches in height.



To follow p. 60]

PLATE III.

West Gate, Winchester: Site of the Abutment of the Town Wall,
before Treatment.



To face Plate III]

PLATE IV.

West Gate, Winchester: Site of the Abutment of the Town Wall,
after Treatment.

No tuskers have been inserted, because it was felt that the angles of the abutment may have been turned in ashlar, but that to put new ashlar there would have been to make the evidence appear more definite than it really was. This core abutment has been carried up to below the probable level of the wall-walk, which seems to be indicated by the position of a narrow slit, presumably set to command it. There is certainly no indication that access could be obtained from the wall-walk to the tower.

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The work was undertaken by the Commissioners of H.M. Works on behalf of the Winchester City Council, who are to be congratulated upon continuing the preservation of the Gate, begun in 1930.