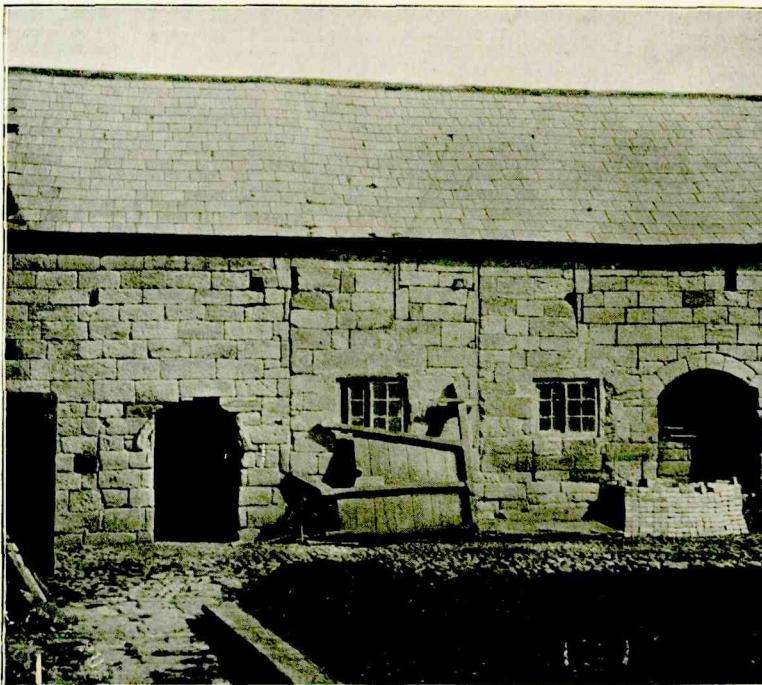


STOKETON HALL (NORTH WEST)



STOKETON HALL—EAST WALL OF GREAT HALL (INTERIOR)

THE ANTIQUITIES OF STORETON, IN WIRRAL.

By Edward W. Cox.

Read 28th January, 1897.

STORETON is one of the four townships—Tranmere, Higher Bebington, and Spital being the others—that formerly constituted the large parish of Bebington, and lies at the north-western side of the old parish, which thus stretched from the western shore of the Mersey to about a couple of miles from the central line of the peninsula of Wirral. The natural formation of Wirral in its northern half is somewhat peculiar: the land rises from the banks of the river Mersey and those of Wallasey Pool into a range of hills stretching from Bidston southwards, and dying gradually into a plateau after passing Bromborough, while a similar range skirts the shores of the Dee, and falls to level ground near Shotwick. A middle ridge, of somewhat lower elevation, divides the intermediate valley longitudinally, so as to form two minor valleys.

From the highest crest of Storeton Hill, which is part of the eastern range, the township stretches westwards: crossing the first and narrower valley, it overlaps the lower central range, terminating westwards at the bottom of the second valley, in which flows northwards the small river Fender, which, curving round the northern end of the range

below Bidston Hill, joins the Birket, and turning sharply eastwards formed the estuary of Wallasey Pool, now the Great Float of Birkenhead Docks. From the same range, which is the watershed of this part of Wirral, issue several other small brooks, which flow southward and south-east to Bromborough Pool.

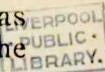
POSITION : TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL.

The geological formation in this township is of peculiar interest, and inasmuch as it is connected with the antiquities of the place, it is well to notice it shortly. Storeton Hill, which lies on its western side, has been formed by some great convulsion, which has faulted the overlying strata of new red sandstone, and has forced up from the lower and earlier sandstone a long ridge of fine white stone, forming the rocky summit ridge, in which are excavated the great quarries of Storeton. The waters and ice of the glacial period have eroded the rocks, and have spread the whiter sandy soil over the lower levels ; thus the soil of Storeton, for the most part, differs from that of the greater part of Wirral, which is chiefly a strong clay. The antiquarian consideration connected with these formations is, that the stone from Storeton is of a character differing from any other in the district, and therefore distinguishable in works of antiquity, and also that the light and easily-worked soil seems, from indications to be noticed, to have attracted, in very primitive times, a settlement of early cultivators, who have left slight but unmistakeable traces in the township.

Another feature, which has given to Storeton a special character, is its commanding site, and its post upon the landward routes that connect the Mersey and the Dee. From the hill, the chief part of the estuary of the Mersey is in full view ; to the

south, the castles of Beeston and Halton ; to the north, the coast of Wirral and the distant horizon of the Irish Sea ; west and south-west, the range of hills guarding the Vale of Clwyd, and the nearer and lower ranges of Flintshire ; and in the extreme distance, the summits of the Snowdonian range. Wirral lies, a detached strip, between the sea coasts of the great Saxon kingdom of Mercia and the marches of Wales : the last refuge of the Britons, who, though often overrun by invasions, have till our own time maintained the identity of their race. From Storeton we can see the Bwlch Agrikle over which Julius Agricola marched his legions to subjugate Anglesea ; also that pass below the entrenched Moel Fenlli, from which Germanus drove back the Pictish invasion by the " Hallelujah " victory ; and the passes over which King Edwin marched his Saxons to harry the Britons, and Flint ; whence Edward I began his invasion of Wales. Yet Wirral, standing detached between its two estuaries, has been the scene of no great events ; Chester, the fortress, controlled it so completely, that the tides of war and invasion have passed it by, and the masters of Chester have held Wirral comparatively secure and free, even though exposed on all sides to invasion from the sea.

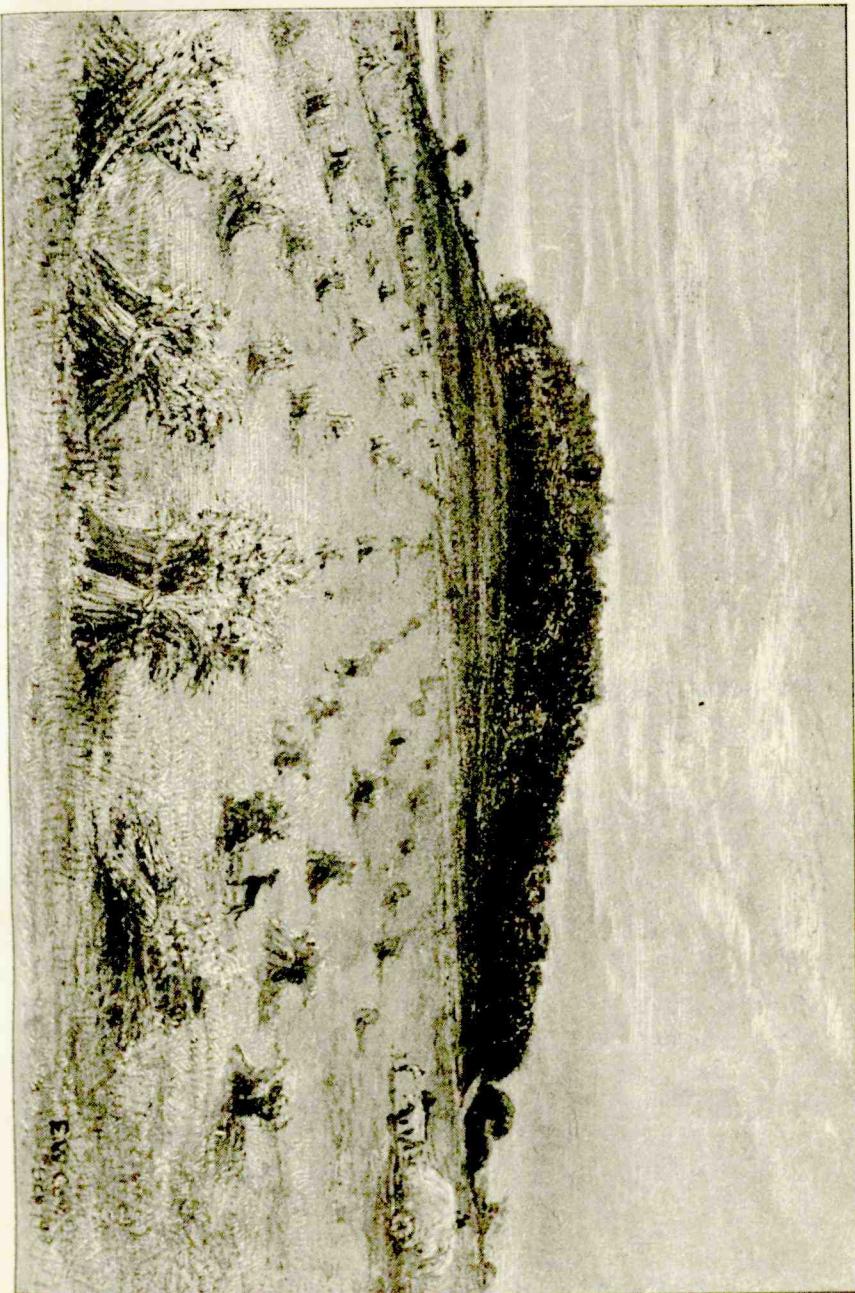
On the high lands Storeton stands like a watch-tower ; and quiet and secluded as it now is in its rural solitude, this lofty position has determined its history and influenced its antiquities. Danger of invasion of Wirral was only to be feared from the sea, and the wise choice usually shown in the selection of ancient sites is apparent here. While the high ground overlooks widely every approach from the coast, it is sufficiently withdrawn from the sea and rivers to admit of safe inland roads across the peninsula, and to give time for withdrawal towards the fortress of Chester in times of urgent peril.



Wirral, therefore, has no trace of important defences, the only considerable ones being the Norman castle of Shotwick, and a burgh at Thurstanston, earlier traces being few and uncertain. The triple line of entrenched hills along the Welsh coast and valleys were the true bulwark that checked the wave of Pictish and Saxon invasions ; and within sight from Storeton are the lands where began the great lines of demarcation between Saxon and Briton, defined by Offa's dyke and Watt's dyke, with their intermediate neutral ground.

ANCIENT ROADS.

From Storeton, therefore, radiates a great network of ancient roads; not only across the peninsula between the ferry of Birkenhead to the ancient point of embarkation at Hoylake, but to every surrounding village there still is an old road of communication, and others now closed or neglected are still to be traced. Many of these are now mere field-tracks or pathways, some of them, notably that to Prenton Hall and a fragment of one called Kirkup Lane, leading originally from Storeton to Bebington and Bromborough Pool, still show the central rib made of large blocks of stone, laid in the Roman manner, as a trackway for pack-horses. To these roads a Roman origin has been attributed by Mr. Thompson Watkin and others, but they are almost certainly mediæval, as the roads themselves have no indication of the solid and permanent construction seen in Roman work. Other roads have had a narrow central track of cobble-stone pavement, now chiefly broken up or covered, the width being too small for any modern vehicle ; these have formed pack-horse roads of later work. Examples are to be seen in an ancient fragment leading from Spital, and in others that pass by Thingwall and Landican and Frankby, from the western side of the township.



TERRACED HILL NORTH STORETON

Up to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Storeton contained several inns for the entertainment of wayfarers. In the rear of one cottage, lately rebuilt, was to be found the capacious arched cellar cut in the rock, and by another, the ranges of stabling for pack-horses, now ruinous and disused. Many of the roads seem to date from an extreme antiquity, and there are few villages which can show so many fragments of them in their primitive condition, though now overgrown with thickets of willow and briar, rose, bramble, and gorse, the haunt of gipsies and the delight of artists.

Their value, as evidences of the importance of Storeton as a strategic, if not a defensive centre, is however rather to be dwelt upon in the study of Storeton's antiquities. It will be shewn that the Romans had access to Storeton, but among these many ancient routes none can be certainly distinguished as of their construction. It can only be suggested that faint traces running below the south-western crest of the hill, and in many places now obliterated, seem to connect, by their fragments, the point at Oxton, in Arno vale, where Roman coins were found, with other traces that tend, in a fairly straight direction, towards Willaston and Chester, their traces being lost chiefly in the lower grounds in modern roads beyond that point.

EARLIEST OCCUPANTS.

But earlier occupation than the Roman is discernible in the township. On the western, southern, and parts of the eastern slopes of the eastern hill, are to be seen long terrace-like ridges, now mostly ploughed down by modern cultivation to mere horizontal undulations, which stretch below both sides, beneath the quarried crest, and coil round the southern end where it falls into the plateau. On this latter side four such terraces, and possibly a

fifth, are easily distinguished ; on the west side, three ; and just without the township, in Higher Bebington, are four more, but much broken by the houses and crofts of the village. These lines are not natural formations, but the remnants of primeval tillage of remote antiquity. They have no relation to the present enclosures of the land, and little with the roads ; even the older ones cross and intersect them, in a manner that indicates the later origin of the roads ; while the long level lines pass through field and road, around the hill sides, reaching beyond the township to the neighbouring hill of Prenton, where also some rude flint implements have been found, which may partly indicate the ancient settlements. These terraced lines are best seen on a clear day, towards sunset, when their course is most strongly marked through the fields by the lights and shadows of the undulations.

That these lines are of artificial origin has also been ascertained by sections cut across them, in cuttings made in the course of building at Higher Bebington. In these, the ploughing down of the soil into terraced strips was plainly evident, the hollow formed on the higher part of the slope by ploughing, and the raised vallum on the lower side from the earth worked down the incline, being quite apparent, as well as the rounding down of these terraces by later culture. These steep terrace banks are called lynes, and the divisions on the terraces, where the plough turned at the end of each strip of ploughland, are named balks, and of these latter divisions also faint traces here and there remain.

The origin of this communal cultivation stretches far beyond the reach of history, and marks the first introduction of agriculture by tribes or village communities, each village holding and cultivating the land in common possession, ruled by its own tribal

laws and officers. To each family was divided every season by lot their share of ploughlands, and provision was made for the rotation of crops and fallow, by the communal rules. Each family usually had allotted to them a number of the narrow strips of ploughland, each of about half an acre to an acre, the total of which usually amounted to thirty acres ; but inasmuch as these were distributed by lot, the strips as often as not did not lie together. It is remarkable that on the south-west of the eastern or quarry hill, where these terraces are well marked, there was, within living memory, an enclosure of barely an acre, which bore the name of the "Thirty Acre Field," almost the last remnant of the ancient distribution of strips of land whose name has survived to give the tradition of its use.

TUMULUS.

On the southern end of the same hill, facing the west, and still within the circuit of the terraced lines, we find another significant name, "Humlison's" or "Umlison's Field." No such personal name is known to exist ; but the same name is attached to a series of ancient earthworks in Herefordshire ; and Humbledown, the site of a fortified early British settlement in Scotland, is possibly derived from the same source.¹

Within the fir wood that crowns this part of the hill, and near its highest ridge, stands a pile of sandy soil, about 100 feet long by 80 wide, in the form of a tumulus, and this lies on the edge of the field. Popular tradition in the neighbourhood says that this mound was brought here as a fox-earth,

¹ At Humbleton, near Wooler, in Northumberland, is an ancient entrenchment, with a large cairn ; and the names of Hamble (Southampton), Hambleden (Bucks), Hambledon (Southampton and Surrey), Hambleton (Lancashire, Rutland, and Yorkshire), Humber (Hereford), Humbershoe (Bedford), Humberston (Lincoln), Humberstone (Leicester), Humberton (York), Humbleton (York), Humby (Lincoln), Humshaugh (Northumberland), occur in Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of England*. [ED.]

by the Stanleys of Hooton ; but the natural sandy soil is sufficient for such a purpose without building such a mound. Moreover, to the south of the mound are traces of artificial refuges, made of rough stones in modern times, which do not touch this mound ; also, among the soil thrown out from the holes of the rabbits that burrow among the fir trees' roots, have been found small weapons of flint, possibly indicating an ancient site. This suggestion may perhaps find support in the name of the field.

This mound lies a quarter of a mile beyond the end of the quarry, on natural surface, and is not the result of any quarry operations. Beside it runs the trace of an ancient trackway, in the direction of Chester, and another ancient and almost disused road leads directly towards it from Bebington, ending in what was once common land, probably the higher pasture land attached to the old communal community, but which is now enclosed. A thickly-grown fir wood shrouds this part of the hill. The township is delineated in many places by boundary stones, chiefly roughly-hewn modern posts ; but those on the boundary in Prenton wood are grooved stones, that may be, but are not certainly, of great antiquity.² In the adjacent district of Higher Bebington was also found the rude stone grain crusher described in the same notes ; there is, therefore, other evidence to connect this neighbourhood with pre-historic occupation.

MYTHOLOGY.

Borlase, in his work on *Irish Dolmens*, tells us that the name of Humal, Humelus or Humblus, and Adhumbla, is associated with many pre-historic remains in Ireland, and chiefly with earthworks,

² These are described and illustrated in "Leaves from an Antiquary's Note Book," *Trans. Hist. Soc. of Lanc. and Chesh.*, vol. xii. (N.S.)

rather than with the stone raths, though some of the Dolmens are also associated with this name. "Jardanes places at the head of his Gothic genealogy, Gapt (*Norse, Gaut*), whose son, the ancestor "of the Royal Gothic line, is Humal." From these names we cannot dissever that of Humber, called, in the letter of King Edward to Pope Boniface, "Rex Hynorum," the traditional ancestor and leader of the Picts, who came, it was said, from Scythia to Britain, and from whom, since he was drowned in the river, the Humber took its name.

While there is no need that we should give credence to fictitious genealogies—nor did their authors intend we should—in respect to the persons therein recorded being living men, they agree in disclosing to us the fact that in this name Humal we have the name of a Baltic deity, in whom the several peoples of the Teutonic stock, who dwelt round that inland sea, recognised a mighty progenitor of their race, who may, as in the case of the Chinese Tien, have been Himmel, or Heaven itself. A southern extension of the name, applied to a tribe and district, is found in that of the Humelinck and Humelings, who occupied a tract of moor and morass on the right bank of the Ems, north of Osnabruck. Virchou shows they were closely connected with the Frisians.

Now as the name of this great ancestor of the Baltic nations, Humal, stands in this curious position, that on the one hand we may regard it as the German Himmel, Heaven, on the other we cannot but compare it with a name as nearly as possible identical with it, that is to say, Jumalu, the sky-god of the Esthonians, after whom the oak tree was called Pan Jumalon, and worshipped. Into the meaning of this word, which became, and still is, the name of the Supreme God from Hungary to Lapland, I do not mean to go further.

Mullenhoff suggests "that the name Adhumbla "was connected with Humal and Humbli, and "derived from the same source. We have the "curious fact before us, that the Scandinavian cow "(Adhumbla) was a sky-goddess, like the Glas "Gaulen, the sky-coloured cow of the Irish, who "performed her round of the island once in twenty- "four hours."

Mr. Borlase proceeds to work out this analogy between the mythic cow of the Irish legend, which was a myth of the sun, and the god Humli; but he omits to notice that, in some districts of North Britain, the mountain cattle bear the name of "Humlies."

It may be thought that the thread of evidence for the pre-historic traces in Storeton is a slender one, but it is from the knitting together, in the right direction, of such small strands that we get the strong cord that vouches for lost history. Here we have together the indications of pre-historic terrace cultivation, the association of the name of the thirty acres with them, an unrecognised earthwork or tumulus, which, although said to be modern, is associated, as in Ireland, with the field bearing the name of a Finnish deity, and finally, the few small worked flints found in it, that combine to mark a pre-historic site.

STONE QUARRIES.

The noted quarries of Storeton may next claim our attention, especially as they bring us to the period of Roman Britain. The great gorge trenches out along the ridge of the hill for nearly half-a-mile in length, and from 50 to 200 yards in width, and with a depth in some places of more than 150 feet, follows the line of the older upthrust of strata that has raised this hill, and is one of the most picturesque features of Wirral; the deep solid beds of

cream-white stone weathered to a silvery colour, like hoar-frost on an old pasture, and the long close fir wood that clothes the low summit has overrun the cliffs and hollows of the older part of the quarry and mingled with heather and gorse, till the greater part of it resembles a natural rocky gorge. Even some of its more modern features have an historic interest. Through the great cutting runs an abandoned and overgrown tramway, and the rails upon the old line are of a pattern used when the first railways in England were laid down : they were employed by Stephenson, and were the invention of J. Birkinshaw, who took out a patent for them in 1820. They are of what is called the "fishbellied" form, being deeper in the centre than at the ends near the sleepers. Of this make of rail, now obsolete, scarcely any examples remain ; and these Storeton rails have been thought of such interest, that I was requested to assist in obtaining a specimen to place in the Civil Engineers' Museum.

To return to the earlier antiquities of the quarry we must again resort to archaeology, since of history there is little or none. Probably it was originally the common property of the township or the parish of Bebington, since the general use of its stone in ancient work is limited to a comparatively small area, the red local stone being used in other neighbourhoods. The Romans, we know, used the quarry ; among the inscribed and sculptured stones in Chester Museum are several that are undoubtedly from Storeton, among others the inscribed tomb of a centurion, with the following inscription :—

PVB. > LEG. V. MACED. ET.
VIII. AVG. ET. II. AVG. ET. XX. V.V.
VIXIT. ANNIS. LXI. ARISTIO
LIB. H.F.C.

This may be translated :—" Pub. Centurio

" Legionis V Macedonicæ et VII Augustæ, et II
" Augustæ, et XX Valericæ Victricis vixit annis
" LXI. Aristio libertus heres faciendum curavit."

This is given by Mr. Thompson Watkin, who also translated it thus:—“A centurion of the fifth legion
“ [surnamed] Macedonica, and of the eighth [sur-
“ named] Augusta, and of the second [surnamed]
“ Augusta, and of the twentieth [surnamed] Valeria
“ Victrix, he lived sixty-one years. Aristio [his]
“ freedman [and] heir caused this to be made.”

The second legion, Augusta, the twentieth legion, and a vexillation of the eighth legion were in Britain A.D. 44, under the Emperor Claudius, and from continental inscriptions it would almost appear that a vexillation of the fifth legion, also named Macedonica, was also here. Mr. Watkin thought that the word PVB would indicate one of this centurion's official titles, such as CVRAT OP PVB, “Curator Operum Publicorum.” And this veteran, who had served in four legions, was an important man in Deva. By means of this stone the use of Storeton quarry would appear to be dated as far back as 44 A.D.

In the centre of a large oblong stone is sunk a cavity, to receive the urn containing the ashes of the veteran who had served in four legions; and upon a second upright stone, also of Storeton stone, is cut the centurion's figure. In addition to the tombstones, fragments of a circular mausoleum were taken out of the city wall, also several Storeton stone metopes, sculptured with the legend of Actæon devoured by his dogs. These appear to have formed part of the frieze of a large building, possibly a temple. The stone was brought to Chester for constructional purposes, and by means of it we are enabled to date the use of Storeton quarry back to the Roman occupation.

By similar means we are able to ascertain that

the Saxons, who entered Cheshire early in the seventh century, also used this quarry. A sculptured Saxon cross at Neston, with the figure of an ecclesiastic and Saxon knotwork, also some pieces of Saxon crosses, probably of the tenth century, from the stones of the destroyed church, and the traces of Saxon foundations at Bebington Church, are all of this stone.

Of Norman work we have the south nave arcade of Bebington Church; and of thirteenth and fourteenth century buildings the nave and tower of Bebington Church, and much of the fine sculptured work at Birkenhead Priory, and some windows of domestic work noted in vol. xii (N.S.) of the *Transactions of the Historic Society*, are all of Storeton stone. Storeton Hall, of the late fourteenth century, is naturally built from this quarry. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth century the stone was freely used in the church and the neighbourhood of Bebington, at the destroyed hall of Tranmere, built by Randle Holme, dated 1614, and as far south as Willaston. From the seventeenth to the eighteenth century nearly all the houses, barns, and fences of this parish and adjacent ones were built of this stone. We may, therefore, conclude with certainty that the Storeton quarries have been in continuous use for over 1700 years. In modern times large supplies of stone have been furnished to Liverpool and elsewhere from the same source; but even the length of time they have been in use, and the fact that roads and fences have been largely made from them, hardly suffice to account for the enormous mass of material that must have been obtained from these great excavations.

Another feature of great interest connected with these quarries is to be seen in the peculiar manner of working this stone. If the tooling of the Roman

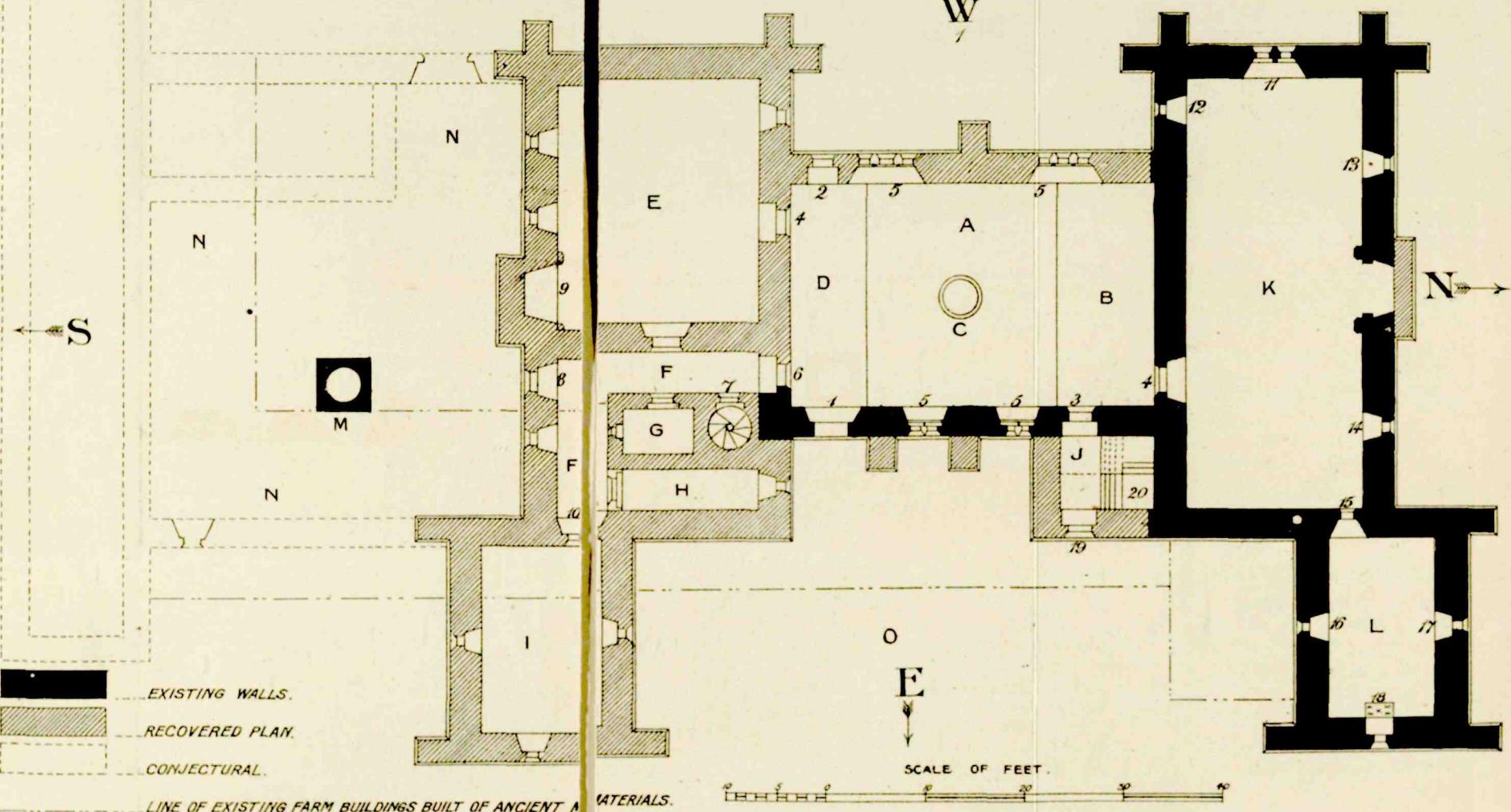
and mediæval fragments is examined, it will be found almost identical with that which survived till the first half of this century, and which has unfortunately of late been displaced by modern methods. The herring-bone and cross-hatched tooling of Roman character is to be seen in numerous buildings of the last century and at all earlier intermediate dates; and so marked is this characteristic, that it has been alleged as conclusive evidence of Roman date in the walls of Chester, by noted antiquaries who were not familiar with our local fashions of work.

Before leaving the subject of the quarries it may be well to note that on a thin shaly upper bed of white argillaceous stone are found numerous foot-tracks of gigantic reptiles, of large and small wading birds, and minor reptiles. These have been impressed on a moist shore, covered in many places with ripple marks, and with the markings of rain, and have been overlaid by another thin layer of white silt, in very quiet and shallow water, so that the counter impressions are quite perfect. The great footmarks resemble a large human hand with a recurved thumb, and are considered to have been made by an extinct and—before their discovery—an unknown bactracian animal, of toad-like form.

It was my good fortune to accompany, about 63 years ago, two then eminent geologists when this curious discovery was first brought to scientific notice, and to see some very perfect examples *in situ*.

The quality of the best beds of Storeton stone is very good. It is worked very easily when new, but being a very pure and clean quartz, it has the property of hardening by exposure. The inferior beds, which are now used freely, are liable to disintegrate quickly by weather.

GROUND PLAN, STORETON HALL.



REFERENCE.

- A Great Hall.
- B Dais.
- C Hearth.
- D Screen.
- E Kitchen.
- F Passages.
- G Buttery.
- H Pantry.
- I Guard Room.
- J Porch to Dais, and Stairs to Solar.
- K Drawing Room. Chamber over.
- L Chapel. Chamber over.
- M Well.
- N Kitchen Court and Outbuildings.
- O Forecourt. Probably walled.
- Dormitories over E F G H I.



DETAILS.

- 1 Door of Great Hall.
- 2 Second Ditto.
- 3 Door to Dais.
- 4 Door to withdrawing Room.
- 4a Buttery Hatch.
- 5 Windows of Hall.
- 6 Door to Domestic Wing.
- 7 Stairs to Upper Floor.
- 8 Door to Kitchen Court.
- 9 Kitchen Hearth.
- 10 Door to Guard Room.
- 11 Window to Solar.
- 12, 13, 14 Windows to withdrawing Room.
- 15 Door to Chapel.
- 16, 17, 18 Windows to Chapel.
- 18 Altar.
- 19 Porch Door of Dais.
- 20 Staircase to Solar.

THE VILLAGE.

On the south end of the quarry hill formerly stood the manor mill, now destroyed and almost forgotten. Some of the older inhabitants have heard of it as a wooden post mill, built of oak timber, whose precise site there is now nothing to indicate.

Three roads from the quarry hill lead westwards, crossing the woods and the valley, and ascend the western hill to the now small hamlet of Storeton. The houses in the secluded village of Great Storeton hardly number over a score, and in Little Storeton, about a quarter of a mile to the north, there are about the same number. The chief part of these are cottages and farms, and until a few years ago, when many of them were rebuilt, they were for the most part of respectable antiquity. The chief building was formerly the Hall, the ruins of which have been converted into the outbuildings of a large farm. Not only was this building of importance, but it occupied a most commanding site. Although the village hill is lower than the quarry crag, which screens its lands from the east wind, the central position of this rise between the valleys gives it a much wider outlook, west, north, and south. From the windows of the hall solar the view embraces all the net-work of roads that radiate from Storeton.

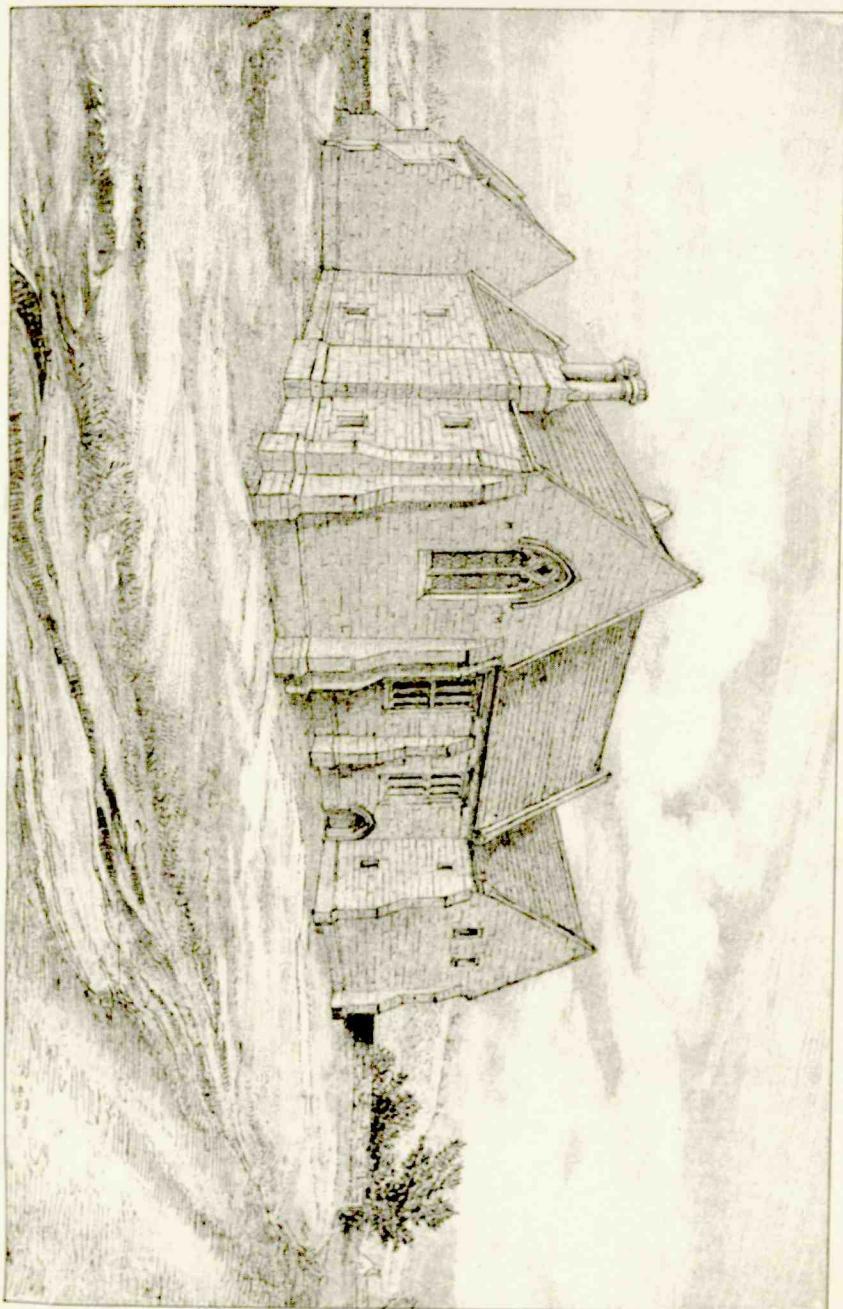
The long rounded grassy hill on which the hall and village stand is smooth and easily accessible, but the rock is close to the surface, and the hall stands on the outcropping rock, which is also bare in much of the village street. The soil of the hall and some of the cottage orchards and gardens must have been carried up to the ridge, as it stands in many cases high above the general surface and roads, banked up with retaining walls of stone;

while the old sloping pastures, free from wood that might obstruct the view, surround the village.

THE HALL.

Storeton Hall was the seat of the ancient family of the Sylvesters, who held the office of Foresters of the Royal Forest of Wirral under the Earls of Chester, and from their office most likely derived their family name; and it seems to explain the choice of Storeton as their seat. From the Sylvesters the hall passed by marriage, first to the Storetons, then to the Bamvilles, and finally to the Stanleys. If not specially strong as a military position, it is one of wide command of both land and sea coast; and from this central position the great web of ancient trackways gave easy access in every direction to all parts of the hundred. It is also most probable that these ways were established chiefly in mediæval times, as the hundred was not afforested until about the year 1120 A.D.

When, in September, 1282, Sir William Stanley, of Stoneleigh, co. Stafford, married at Astbury Church, Cheshire, Joan, eldest of the three daughters and co-heirs of Sir John Bamville, he became, in her right, owner of one-third of Storeton and Master Forester of Wirral, which, with the remaining two-thirds of Storeton, subsequently acquired, continued in his descendants until the year 1848, when Sir William Stanley-Massey-Stanley, Bart., sold the property to Mr. Brocklebank, of Liverpool. The title to the tenure of their lands was the horn of the foresters, which in 1816 was at Hooton, and is probably now in the possession of the heirs of the late Sir John Massey Stanley, Bart., who died childless in 1893. Fourth in descent from William and Joan was Sir William de Stanley, who married



WEST FRONT STORETON HALL (RESTORED)

Margery, only daughter and heir of William de Hoton (Hooton), and died before 6 Henry VI (1427-8). Another Sir William de Stanley, great grandson of the latter couple, born about 1440, built a mansion house at Hooton, in 3 and 4 Henry VII (1487-89), after which event it is conjectured that Storeton ceased to be the principal seat of the family. Judging from the remains of the hall, its style indicates that it was probably rebuilt about the year 1360, and enough remains of it to show that it was a strong and stately building, well adapted for its uses.

The structure nearly faces the cardinal points, and has consisted of a central hall on the west side, with north and south wings slightly projecting westward, but lengthened out towards the east, so as to form three sides of a courtyard. Whether a fourth side existed towards the east, with a gatehouse, is uncertain. This side forms the rickyard of the present farm, and the site being rock, there are no remaining foundations, nor any excavations for them. The house would form a complete mansion of a well-known local type without such eastern side.

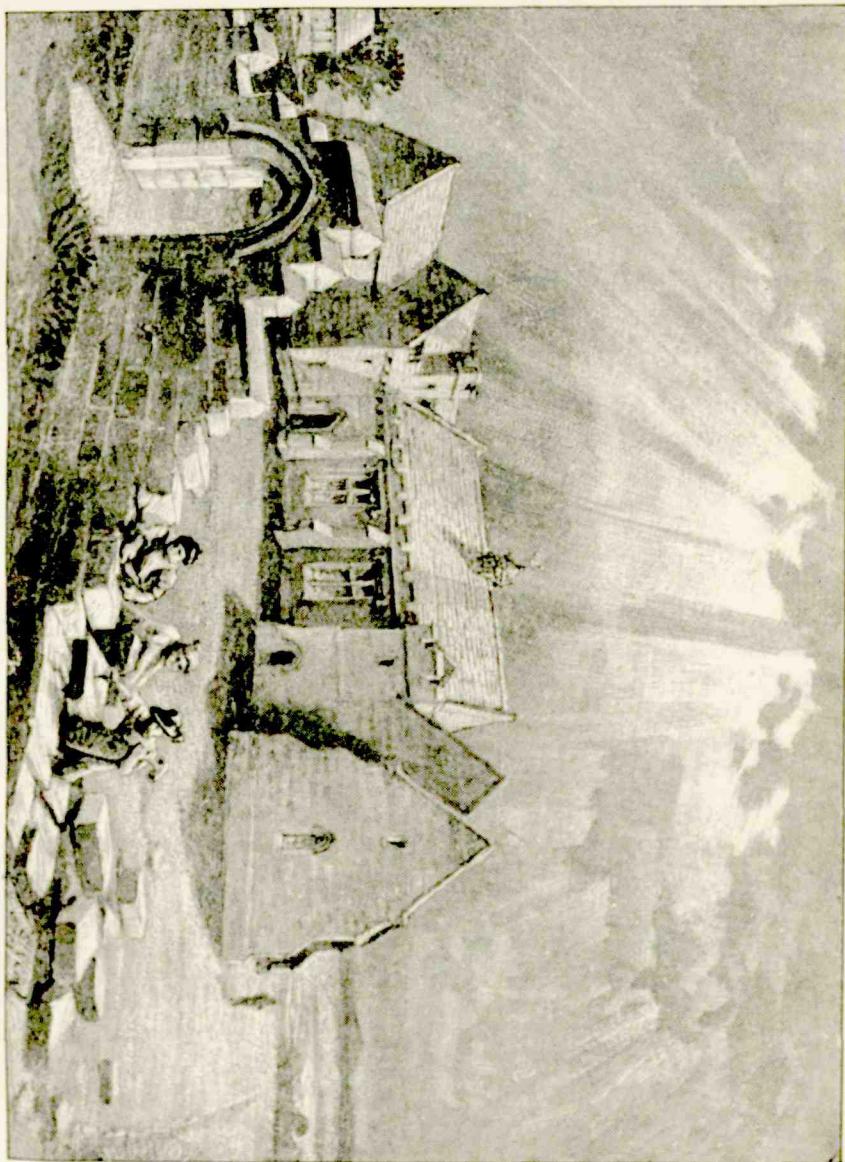
Of the great hall only the eastern wall remains, as high as the heads of the two great square-headed windows that lighted it. They are now walled-up. The hall was 44 feet in length, and 22 feet in breadth, measured, as in mediæval fashion, to the centre of the walls. The walls are admirably built, of well cut and well chosen Storeton stone, and are four feet in thickness. At the south end of the hall the great entrance door remains; it has a pointed arch with hood, and is chamfered. The deep rear arch is a segmental circular one. Its outer face is now covered by the range of stabling built to the east of it, probably in the seventeenth

century, with the ancient stones of the western wall of the hall.

The two tall windows of the hall in the eastern wall, although built up, show, in the more modern openings that have been made through them, sufficient of the ancient mullions and transoms within the stable, and enough of their splays on the west side, to restore them with some accuracy. Between them stood a buttress, now cut down level with the wall, that was formerly external. At the lower end of the hall there is no trace of a minstrel gallery or screen, which latter may have been framed as a roof principal, with oak pillars reaching to the floor. The central buttress suggests that there was a central hearth, with a louvre over it in the roof, and carried by a principal which this buttress would support.

At the southern end of the hall the jamb and spring of a rear arch, at right angles to the east wall, shew the line of the north end of the hall, with the doorway leading to the kitchen and butteries in the south wing, this being the only remnant of the wing, but a very useful one by which to determine its character. A little further south, on the lengthened line of barns that have been added in the seventeenth century, is a well, cut in the rock, and still containing water, which may mark the southern limit of the wing, as it is in the place where the kitchen court should stand.

At the north end of the hall a shattered arched doorway, now the stable entrance, led into a staircase tower, projecting eastwards. This, like the buttress, is hewn level with the wall, but there are indications of where the steps have been hewn off, and where the entrance to the upper rooms of the north wing had formerly been. It seems likely also that the tower formed a porch of entrance to the dais and staircase from the east.



EAST FRONT STORETON HALL (RESTORED).

The only means by which the site of the west wall of the hall can be ascertained is the mark on the wall of the north wing, where it has been cut away, and the return weathering of its plinth, which stops at what has been its external face, and does not appear upon the internal walls. There is no corbel in the existing hall walls for roof timbers nor any sockets ; it may therefore be assumed that the hall roof was of cradle form, of the early type, constructed with many trusses of medium scantling rather than with the large principals, fewer in number, of the later roofs. For such a roof the thick walls are eminently calculated.

The buildings at the northern end of the hall are by far the best preserved, their stonework being, with the exception of the lowering of the gables, the destruction of the chimneys, and some modern mutilations in the shape of doors and windows, strong and in good condition. These consist of the great chamber, leading from the dais of the hall by a mutilated arch ; the solar above it ; and reaching eastwards, and set out of line towards the north, the chapel, with a room over it. The great chamber or withdrawing room and solar have been very fine apartments ; the former, now divided into modern offices, had a very massive timber ceiling, carried on heavy cross-beams, for which the large and strong corbels in the walls still partially remain. Similar timbers ran longitudinally, dividing the ceiling into deep square panels ; and the chapel was similarly timbered. A wall plate was probably carried on these corbels, into which the joists were mortised, as at Ince Manor.

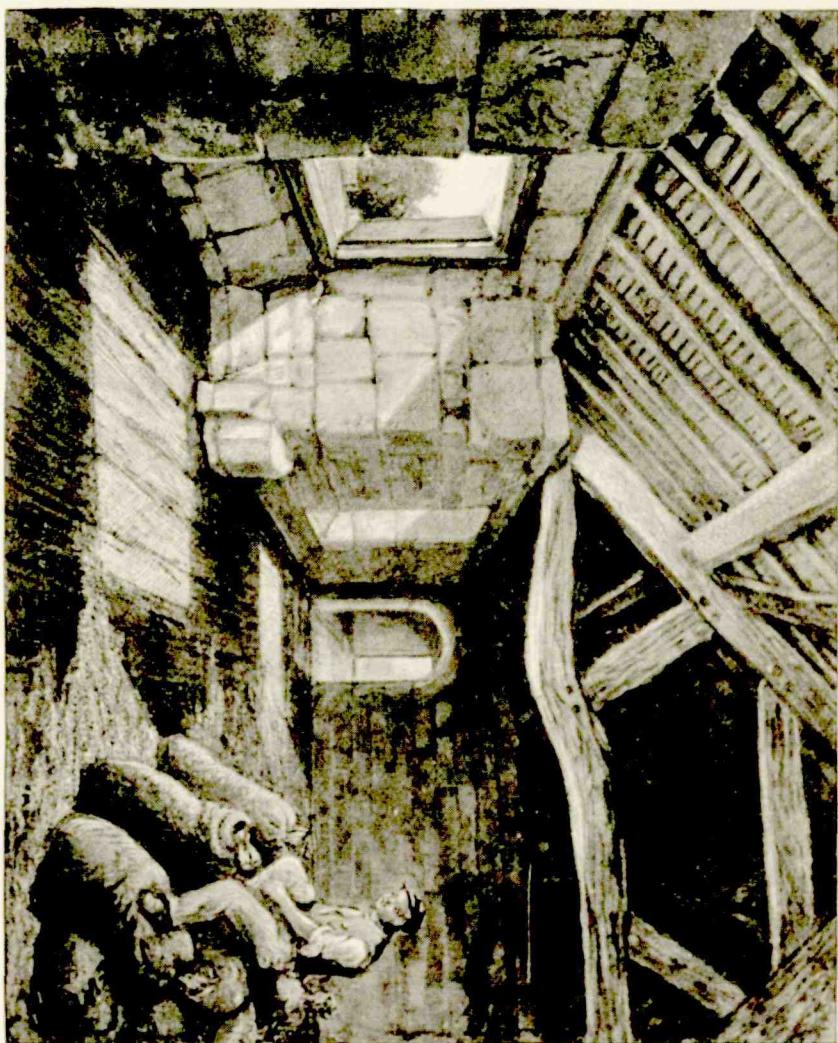
The solar and chapel were covered with high-pitched roofs. The springing of the gables remains. There are, as in the hall, no corbels, and the roof has, no doubt, been of similar character. The

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lowness of the side walls of these upper apartments—about six feet—also seems to necessitate a roof framing of the construction suggested. It may always be predicated that the proportions of ancient buildings are most carefully calculated for the relation of the constructive details to each other. The present roofs have been lowered in pitch, and probably date from the seventeenth century. They are of rough timber, almost unwrought.

The withdrawing room is lighted by only three small oblong windows, which externally are not much wider than loop-holes, but widely splayed within. They have been heavily grated, and the glass was inserted in wooden frames. The lights in the great hall windows were similarly barred and glazed. The solar has three similar windows over those of the chamber, but in addition to these a fine and lofty pointed gable window in the solar opened to the west. This has been of two lights, with a traceried head, but mullions and tracery are gone, and the window is walled up. The entrance to this room is now by a small door from the chapel, with a depressed pointed arch and a shouldered rear arch. The former entrance was from the staircase tower at the S.E. corner; the ruinous aperture is now roughly walled off.

Both the chamber and the solar have had fireplaces in the centre of the north side, and the destroyed chimney seems to have projected externally. Of the lower fireplace only faint traces remain, just sufficient to show that it resembled the upper one. The semi-octagonal projecting jambs of the latter are still partly distinguishable, and on the wall can be traced the outline of a massive moulded projecting hood, now hacked off. A coach-house door has been cut through the lower, and a window through the upper fireplace,



STORETON HALL:— THE SOLAR.

practically destroying both. The large stone on which stood the chimney shaft has been used in building external steps to the room above the chapel, by which the solar is also now reached.

The chapel is a small room, set northwards of the eastern line of the north wing. Its entrance is from the north-east corner of the chamber, through a small door with obtuse arch, and a shouldered rear arch towards the chapel. The ceiling timbers have been very massive, and formed into square panels. On the north and south sides have been small oblong windows, corresponding with those in the north wing, and at the east an obtuse pointed rear arch. The external facings and tracery, if it had any, are destroyed, and the window blocked by the external stair of seventeenth century date before referred to. If any aumbry or piscina existed in the broken walls, it is not now to be distinguished. The room above the chapel has been lighted similarly to the chapel, but a modern door is broken through the east end and the gable rebuilt in brick.

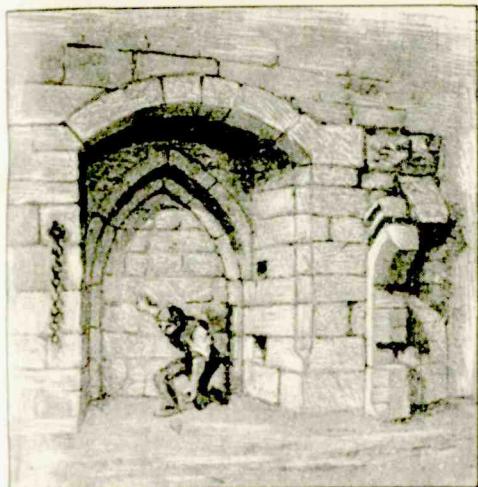
The external angles of the north wing and chapel are buttressed. The buttresses of two stages are set square, those at the west end of the wing are duplicated. The work is plain throughout, but very good. All the openings have plain chamfers, the only moulded work being the hood moulds of the doors and west window, and a little on the gables of the factable or coping of the solar. The overlap of this coping seems to indicate that the original high pitched roof was of heavy stone slab.

The eastern court, into which the hall door and windows once opened, is now partly covered by the great seventeenth century stable and barn, built from the ruins of the great hall and the south wing. The re-use of these materials might mislead the

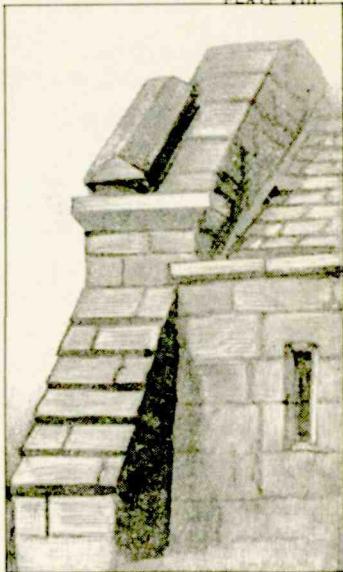
uninitiated to take it for original work. In it are worked up the old plinths and several small square window heads, showing that the old work was of the same character as that still existing. If on the east side any gatehouse existed, there is now no trace of it. In the plan given, with conjectural restorations of the lost buildings, a symmetrical design, corresponding with the north wing, will give all the usual offices and dormitories for the servants' wing, and will complete a conventional plan of the period. The rock on the southern end has been levelled, and it seems likely that a second court of domestic and farm buildings may have stood on this side: not a fragment now remains. One side is occupied with a range of pig-styes and cattle-sheds, and the site of the great hall is the straw-yard of the farm.

On the north of the ancient hall stands the modern farmhouse and garden. One wall and gable, with a blocked-up window of Jacobean date, indicate that this house may mark the date of abandonment of the ancient mansion of the Stanleys as a residence, and its conversion into farm buildings. Local tradition says that a deputy forester resided here until the estates passed from the Stanleys of Hooton. The house shows now no indication of an enclosing wall or moat, nor are the existing remains crenelated. The great strength of the walls, and the disposition of the small loophole-like windows, the strongly defended doors, in the jambs of which the sockets for strong sliding bars still remain, would make it capable of a stout defence.

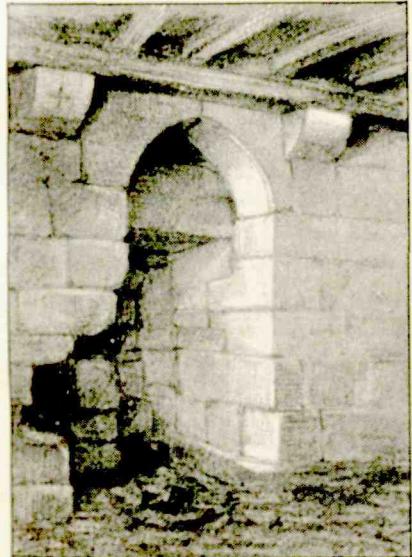
From the Hall northwards the ancient road to Little Storeton, a quarter of a mile distant, now dwindled to a stile path, was thirty years ago furnished with a mid-rib of stone, after the manner of the smaller vicinal ways; and this road con-



DOOR OF HALL & KITCHEN
STORETON HALL



S.W. ANGLE OF SOLAR



EAST WINDOW CHAPEL
STORETON HALL



DOOR OF SOLAR
STORETON HALL

tinued to Prenton Hall and thence to Woodchurch. Although much modernised of late years, some remains of the stone rib for pack-horses are still visible. A few years ago all the cottages of the village were either of stone or timber framing, and thatched ; they have lately been mostly rebuilt, and slated or tiled.

A little south of the Hall, on the same side, there existed in one cottage a large and very well-built stone oven. To the interior of the house the face of the oven had a well-made semi-circular arch of two orders, and a stone shelf below it, supported by ogee-shaped stone corbels. The work was very picturesque, and the house, though otherwise small, must have been in the seventeenth century an important bakery. In restoring this house, the shelf and corbels were hewn off, and the arch blocked up to make a level wall, and plastered over ; though by so doing a convenient adjunct to the house was destroyed. Fortunately, I made a drawing of this oven the day before it was destroyed.

On the opposite side of the road is the house with a capacious cellar under the garden. This house also has been restored, but retains two ancient moulded stone mantel-pieces. Still further south, at the junction of the Brimstage path and Bebington road, stood a very ancient timber cottage, built with massive oak roof timbers and thatched. Adjoining this is a large seventeenth-century barn of stone, showing excellent examples of the survival of the ancient methods of stone work. The cottage has been replaced with a red brick shop, which, with the barn, are now covered with brilliant red tiles, that show on the hill-top on a sunny day like a bonfire.

In Little Storeton still remain two thatched cottages, built in the ancient manner on timber crooks, and a third has lately fallen into ruins. Close to

the eastern edge of the township, in the adjacent one of Higher Bebington, are five cottages of the ancient type, built on the arched timbers called crooks. One of these, adjoining Mill Lane, is probably as early in date as the fifteenth century, and still shows its speere by the side of the great open hearth, with an elliptic opening whence to inspect those who entered, also with the original stone seats by the chimney corner, the secret room above the chimney breast, and the ancient hanging pegs of cows' horns and deers' antlers fixed in the wall.

Much as Storeton has changed of late, it still retains some of its rural quiet, and the memorials of the first seat in Cheshire of the house of Stanley, and the simpler life of the past, are still apparent in its ancient Hall, its farms and primitive cottages, with their well-kept orchards and gardens. Long may it remain, unspoiled by the ruthless improving hands of modern Local Boards, and the meanness and squalor of urban luxury, upon its hill overlooking the wide scenes of ancient and half-forgotten conflicts, where now reigns the world-wide influence of England's peace.