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### Somerics Castle.

BY THE REV. H. FOWLER, M.A.

A few remarks on the ancient associations of this parish may perhaps be suitable as an introduction to our subject.

It appears that the earliest notice of Luton is that in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle under the date 571. In that year, it states, Cuthwulf, who was brother of Ceawlin, King of the West Saxons, fought against the Britons at Bedcanford (*i.e.*, Bedford), and took from them four towns; one of these was Ægelsburig, or Aylesbury, and another Ligeanburg. Ligeanburg has been considered to be the same locality as Lygetune, mentioned in a charter of King Offa; and this is, undoubtedly, Luton. *Ligeanburg* or *Lygetune* means the town on the *Lygea*, the river now called the Lea. There is a hamlet, formerly called Lygebury, now Limbury; this perpetuates the name of the British town; it is on the Lea, about two miles north-west of the modern Luton. The British town itself I take to be a large circular earthwork existing in Leagrave Marsh, about three-quarters of a mile east from Limbury (I am quoting the description in Davis' History of Luton). Its area is about thirty acres, and it is close to the Ickniel-d-way. We may, I think, call this the British Luton. (Davis, however, supposes it to be a Roman camp.) The

fighting which preceded its capture, seems to have taken place along a branch of Watling Street, passing through Toddington, Chalgrave, and Chalton. All along this line up to Leagrave Marsh, Saxon weapons and ornaments, bosses of shields, and bones have been found.\* The earliest Saxon settlement seems to have been on the east side of the Lea about a mile from the modern town, on the old road to Barton, as indicated by Saxon pottery and other vestiges of occupation dug up there. I may here mention with regard to the Roman occupation, that a hoard of 800 Roman coins was unearthed in Luton Hoo Park in December, 1862. These were all of the third century, silver and brass, from Caracalla to Claudius II. They have been described by Dr. John Evans, President of Soc. Antiquaries, in the Numismatic Chronicle.

When the parishes came into being, Luton was laid to the Hundred of Flitt: this is named after a small stream, the Flitt, a tributary of the Irvell in the extreme north of the Hundred. The lordship of the Hundred has always been attached to the manor of Luton, perhaps because it was at first a Royal vill: it is called the "King's land" in the Domesday Survey. We may infer that it was part of the patrimony of the Kings of Mercia.

Before referring to Offa, I may notice that the north-east corner of the parish was the scene of a battle with the Danes, to which I referred last year in connection with *Danes'-street*. In the hamlet of Great Bramingham, three miles north of Luton, by the Icknield-way (I am taking my information from Davis) are remarkable lines of earthworks, commonly called "Gray's Ditches," these extend to Wardun Hill, where fragments of iron weapons and bones have been found. The name *Wardun* (perhaps from A.S., *Wærdian*—to defend, and *dun*—a hill), may commemorate the fight, of which the Anglo-Saxon chronicle says:—"In the year 914 a Danish host made a raid against Legtune (Luton); the local militia were on the alert, and put them to utter rout, taking from them all their spoil." This was when the famous Æthelfleda was Lady of the Mercians.

To return to King Offa. By his charter (Matt. Paris, Add., VI. 5), dated at Beranford, supposed to be Burford in Oxfordshire, A.D. 795, he gives, as a part of the

\* See History of Luton, by F. Davis, 1855.

endowment of his monastery of S. Alban, five manses or estates in Lygetune (Luton). One of these was Dollow, or Dallows, marked now by a farm, about a mile west of the town. Farley has been supposed to be another, but I can find no mention of this in the St. Albans documents. Bissopescote (Biscot) has a better claim. This is named as a distinct manor in *Domesday*. It was granted (or re-granted) to S. Albans Abbey by Henry I. in 1116. These manses had been made over to Offa by Abbot Alhmund, the head of an unknown monastery, as a composition for certain feudal services. They appear to have been alienated before the Conquest, for in the Domesday Survey there is no notice of the Abbot's land.

## DOMESDAY SURVEY.

I have here a copy of the Survey for Loitone (*i.e.*, Luton). I will extract from it a few facts. The great extent of the parish—it is rated at 30 hides (it is said to be 34 miles in circuit). It is all the King's Demesne. There are 80 ploughlands. Forest enough to maintain a stock of 2,000 hogs. There are six mills (*i.e.*, water-mills). A market, the dues of which amounted to 100 shillings. The home or demesne farm was 4 carucates. Total annual value, £30. There are due to the Queen 4 oz. of gold; and then occurs this entry—"De Sumario et aliis consuetudinibus septuaginta solidos"—which means, "For a *sumpter horse* and other customary services the dues are 70s." I call attention to this expression *de Sumario*, because I think it probable that this locality received its name from being the piece of land chargeable with these dues. *Somerics* may mean the *Sumpter-horse land*; from the Latin *Somarius*, intermediately through the French *Somaire*. The "Domesday" for Northamptonshire, shows that some estates in that shire were similarly charged with providing a *pack-horse* for the king. The tenants here also paid dues for the king's hounds—£6 10s.

The church was amply endowed with five hides of land; some of this was by the river, for a water-mill belonged to it. William the Chamberlain was the Rector; he was a layman. In King Edward's time the priest Morcar had held it. The patronage was with the king.

With regard to the Saxon church, all we know is

that it was on a different site from the Norman structure which existed in King Stephen's time. (Gest. Abb. I. 119).

The demesne or home farm (which was four ploughlands) would lie round about the lord's dwelling; this at the time of the Survey was perhaps the castle, the site of which may be found close to Castle-street, in Luton, on the north side. The modern residence is called "The Hollies." I should conjecture this to have been erected in Saxon times. The Bury (now a farmhouse) has a claim from its appellation to be the earliest manorial residence. This lies a little to the north of the town, close to the moor.

Park-street may indicate the lord's park.

The Langley mansion-house, which existed on the south of Castle-street, and nearer to the church, was probably the seat of a subordinate manor of later times. In the 15th century and later the guild of the Holy Trinity appears to have held its meetings here.

In a field adjoining the churchyard, on the south, were the banks and moat of a square mansion, described by Gough as the court-house, this has been taken to be the site of a castle. I should conjecture it to be the manor-house of the rectory glebe in the time of the Abbots.

In this large parish we are not surprised to hear of wayside chapels—one dedicated to St. Anne stood on St. Anne's-hill, about a mile to the north-west from here. The foundations of another have been discovered at Round Wood, adjoining Chapel-field, near Falconer's Hall. Near this, in Spittlesey Wood, was an ancient hospital, enclosed by a ditch; another existed at Farley. At Farley was also a hermitage, which in 1431 was robbed of its reputed relics of S. Luke.—[Amund. An. I. 59.]

#### THE MANOR OF LUTON.

Before I can reach my subject, I must give an account of the descent of the Manor up to a certain period. My authority is Lysons. King William gave Luton to Geoffrey, Earl of Perch. It reverted to the Crown; and Henry I. bestowed it on Robert, Earl of Gloucester. Matt. Paris states that his son William gave it to Earl Gilbert de Clare. King Stephen dispossessed him, and gave it to his supporter, Robert de

Waudari. By this time a Norman church had been built.\* The rectory was acquired by Abbot Robert de Gorham, in the year 1154; from this time the patronage was with the Abbots of S. Albans, who established the vicarage in 1219.— Gest. Abb. I. 277.] I must pass over the long story of Matt. Paris relating to these matters, it belongs rather to the province of Mr. Clarkson. King Richard I. conferred the Manor of Luton on Baldwin de Betun, Earl of Albemarle, who granted to Abbot John de Cella a fair to be held on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15th.— [Regist. J. Wheathampstead I. 429.] † The honour then came by marriage to William Marshall, the famous Earl of Pembroke. On his death in 1219, his son, William Marshall, inherited it, and soon after bestowed it on Fawkes, the son of Warin de Breauté. This baron held castles on the marches of Wales, and had assisted Earl William in a border warfare against Llewellyn. Fawkes had been one of the sturdiest supporters of King John. He was a man after his own heart, and in 1216 John had given him the strong castle of Bedford in reward for its capture. In 1221, when Fawkes was lord of the manor here, the Dunstable chronicle tells us, “a castle was built at Luton, to the great peril of all the surrounding district.” “Apud Loitone” (at Luton) may mean simply, in the manor of Luton.

A castle was erected in the same year at Eaton Bray in the county of Beds—certainly one of the smaller castles.

## SOMERIES CASTLE.

I must now direct your attention to this site. We see nothing but earthworks, all buildings having been cleared away. I suppose that bank on the east has been levelled for the purpose of carting away the materials. I will describe the site briefly with the help of this rough plan.‡ The outer defence is a rampart about 16ft. wide. The longest side, from east to west, extends about 275ft., by a rough estimate. The shorter side is

\* The only vestiges of this church appear to be an *impost* and *stop* existing at the east end of the south aisle of the present structure, as pointed out by Mr. S. Flint Clarkson.

† This probably would be the parochial festival, the church being dedicated to S. Mary the Virgin.

‡ See annexed Plan.

about 212ft. The enclosure is rectangular. Outside the rampart is a rather narrow ditch. On the east side this has disappeared, the ground having been lowered probably to form a better site for that mansion. The inner fortified enclosure is an oblong, measuring 160ft. by 125ft.; its area is about half an acre. It is surrounded by a moat, now dry, about 26ft. wide on three sides. On the east side where, I suppose, the entrance was, opposite this breach, it is twice that width (52ft.) The area of the entire site, with the outer ditch, is nearly two acres. The moats would have once been much deeper, having been partly filled in with rubbish.

The site is on high ground. The work is too important for a fortified manor-house. Tradition calls it a castle; and I can see nothing against the supposition that it is the site of one of the smaller baronial fortresses of early mediæval times. The area is as large as that of some existing ruined castles.

At Donnington Castle, Berks, the fortress is an oblong of 85ft. by 120ft. (according to Boswell). The whole area of Hastings Castle, with its outworks, is said to be only one acre and a fifth. The rampart here corresponds with the arrangement of some of the smaller castles, which have no outer bailey, as Sandford Castle in Dorsetshire.

The central plateau is large enough to contain eight such houses as the ruined edifice we see before us. There is ample space for the lodgings of a small garrison, enclosed by a strong wall; the buildings being arranged round an inner court or bailey, we may suppose. On the earth rampart there was probably a curtain wall. The fortified gate-house, I think, would be on the east side. The outer gate or barbican would be where the breach has been made in the rampart; the foundations of this have probably been rooted out. A bridge would connect this with the gate of the inner work. It is likely that there are some foundations under the turf. I take it for granted that this work must have been erected by a lord of the chief manor of Luton. There is no history of it. It has been vaguely ascribed to the Somery family; but the Somerys were never lords of this manor, as far as we can learn. The suggestion which I have to submit to you is, that it is the castle erected by Fawkes de Breauté in 1221.





## FAWKES DE BREAUDE.

I must now say a few words about him. Matt. Paris tells us he deprived 32 of the free-men of Luton of their tenements, and appropriated the common lands. It was perhaps a recommendation of this site that it was removed from the observation of the townsmen. The monastic chronicles are full of the oppressive deeds of this robber-baron. In 1216 (Dunstable Chronicle) by way of settling a dispute with the monks of Wardon, he had thirty of the brethren dragged through the mud, and shut up in his castle of Bedford. At a later time he made a raid upon St. Albans, slew the Abbot's cook, Robert May, in the church, extorted 100lbs. of silver from Abbot Trumpington; looted the town, and carried off many prisoners for the sake of their ransom. He and his accomplices then withdrew to the neighbouring castles, "which," says the chronicler, "were dens of thieves." After this we are not surprised to hear that Fawkes had a horrible dream. He dreamt that a great stone dropped, like a thunderbolt, from the top of the Abbey tower, and crushed him to atoms. He told the dream to his wife, Margaret de Redvers, a discreet woman. She said he must at once go and do penance to God and his martyr, S. Alban, for his wicked sacrilege. Matt. Paris says he was afraid to offend his wife, (this at least was a redeeming point in his character), and so he went. He very humbly submitted to a scourging in the chapter house. "Yes," says the chronicler, "but, for all that, he never restored the plunder." At length, in 1224, he was called to account by the king's justices Itinerant, and as he refused to appear, he was fined 3,000 marks. In his rage he sent an armed force to Northampton under the command of his brother, who carried off the judge, Henry de Braibroc, and kept him a close prisoner in Bedford castle. The king's forces were then set in motion to avenge the outrage. The castle was besieged, and captured at the third assault. William de Breauté, with eighty of the garrison, were hanged. Fawkes, who had withdrawn to Chester, then gave himself up; he was brought to the king at Bedford, and compelled to surrender all his castles and his plunder. After a short captivity in London, strange to say, he received a pardon on the ground that he was pledged to a crusade. He afterwards went to Rome,

and after a vain attempt to recover his possessions by mediation of the Pope, he died miserably at St. Ciriac in 1226.

The account I give is from the Dunstable Chronicle (p. 86-89, Rolls Series).

The Manor of Luton, being forfeited to the king, was conferred by him on the Earl of Pembroke, who had so rashly made the grant to Fawkes. It is probable that the outlaw's fortress was demolished and never rebuilt; some ruins perhaps remained to the time of Leland, who says rather ambiguously, "part of the old place standeth yet," *i.e.*, about the date 1540. There is no distinct record of a manorial residence here till we approach the era of Lord Wenlock.

#### THE MANOR OF SOMERIES.

With regard to the ownership of this estate of Someries there is considerable obscurity.

The chief manor was held in dower by the Princess Eleanor, the widow of William Marshall, till her death in 1274. The Dunstable Chronicle states that it was then divided into six shares amongst the co-heirs of William Marshall, but the chief lordship of the Hundred of Flitt came to William de Mohun, Earl of Somerset, supposed to be buried in Luton church. I have searched by means of an index, all the monastic annals published in the Rolls series, for further information as to this manor, but without result. It appears, however, by Dugdale's Baronage that Luton was inherited by Sibyll, fourth daughter of the elder William Marshall. She married William de Ferrars, Earl of Derby; her representatives were six daughters, who all married persons of distinction; hence the six shares. The fifth daughter, Agatha, married Hugh de Mortimer, lord of Chelmersh; and according to Lysons, the greater part at last became vested in their descendants. This share acquired the name of *Luton Mortimer*, and through the failure of male heirs in the fourth generation, came in 1403 to John Cressy, who died in 1408 (Lysons quotes the records of Luton Manor). After this Luton Mortimer became vested in the Crown, and was conferred by Henry IV. on his son John, Duke of Bedford, he died in 1435. Then nothing more is known till it is found to have been possessed by John Lord Wenlock, who, dying in 1471, left it to his heir, Thomas Lawley.

(See Vincent's Visitation of Salop, fo. 597.) It is certain that a member of the Wenlock family had held some manorial rights in Luton at a much earlier date. We shall see in the church on the tomb of William Wenlock, priest, the English inscription which says:—"In this town lordschypes had I"—and the Latin—"Hujus ville dominus vivens fuit ille."

About these lordships I have recently received information from the Rev. H. Cobbe, Rector of Maulden, Beds, who has kindly communicated to me some of the results of his careful researches.

It appears (from the Exchequer Rolls) that in 1373 William de Wenlock, being then a Canon of St. Paul's, London, received from King Edward III. the custody or wardenship of a third part of the manor of Luton Mortimer, that share being the inheritance of William Mortimer, who was an idiot. This probably comprised a share of the Hundred of Flitt.

This, however, throws no light on the ownership of Someries, which there is good reason for supposing was not vested in the Mortimers.

The statement of Lysons in regard to it is, that "as early as 1309 the manor of Great Hampstead was in the baronial family of Somery." [I must here remark that the manor of "Grethamsted" (or Great Hampstead) has been identified with that which is called in a later document (15th century) "Great Hampstead Someries," and, subsequently, simply "Someries."] I have inspected, at the Record Office, Lysons' authority, which is "Inquisitio 2 Edward II., No. 58." The information I derive from it is this. The manor was in 1308 vested in the family of Lucy. [The name is still attached to a hamlet in Luton, formerly called Leagrave.] The document states, that Agnes de Somery, widow of Roger de Somery, at the time of her decease held, conjointly with her son John, a tenement with a capital messuage [the latter being of the annual value of 3s. 4d.] in Grethamsted, Co. Beds., which tenement belonged to the inheritance of Geoffrey de Lucy, who was then a minor, and ward of the King.\*

\* Inquisitio 2 Edward II., No. 58. Record Office.— . . . "Predicta Agnes, et Johannes de Somery filius suus, conjunctim feoffati per Petrum de Hoo, tenuerunt quoddam tenementum in Grethamsted in comitatu predicto (Beds.) de hereditate Galfridi de Lucy infra etatem et in custodia domini Regis . . . in quo tenemento est . . . capitale messagium, quod valet p. an. iiis., iiid."

I have also found in the Inquisitions, that in 33 Edward I., Geoffry de Lucy and Dederata his wife (presumably parents of the above) held a sixth part of the manor of Luton. The Somerys here named were doubtless of the baronial family, who had some lands in Beds. and in Hertfordshire; but the holding of Agnes de Somery at Grethamsted was of the nature of a feudal tenancy under the lord of the fee.

Clearly the Lucys were the owners and lords of this manor before 1308. Thus the supposition of an early ownership by the Somerys is excluded. The theory put forth by Davys of a castle having been erected here by this baronial family appears to be a misconception, into which he was probably led by the local name. With regard to the latter, I have already given my conjecture that it means "*The Sumpter-horse land*" (as suggested by the Domesday Survey). It is obvious that the conjecture postulates the early existence of the nomenclature. It seems improbable that the manor should have acquired the appellation of Someries after the time of Agnes de Somery from the temporary tenancy. The history of this distinguished Norman family, whose male heirs (according to Nichol's pedigree) came to an end in 1322, is entirely irrelevant here.

The *capital messuage* named in the Inquisition may have been the manor house, a predecessor (on a very humble scale, as it would seem from the valuation) of the residence at Great Hampstead Someries, at which a document was signed in 1463\*. This document Lysons supposed to be a conveyance of the manor to John Lord Wenlock at that date. The Rev. H. Cobbe informs me that on examination it proves to be simply a release of certain claims on the estate; it implies that Lord Wenlock was in full possession before that time. It appears probable that he inherited it from his father,† William Wyvell. In reference to his ancestry there is a pedigree in Vincent's Visitation of Salop, fol. 596, date 1623. (Vincent was Ronge Croix Pursuivant, t. James I.) This I transcribed at the Herald's College. It shows that Johanna, sister and heir of William Wenlock, the ecclesiastic, married Nicholas Wyvell (or Wynnell). Their son, William

\* Communicated by the Rev. H. Cobbe.

† See reference to Mr. Cobbe's information below.

Wyvell, took the name of Wenlock; he was the father of John Wenlock, who became Knight and Baron. His ancestors possessed estates at Wenlock, in Shropshire, whence the name. Their descendants, the Lawleys, still own lands in the "Liberty of Wenlock," once the endowment of the ancient Cluniac Priory there. The name may be derived from Ang. Sax. *wæn* contracted from *wægen*, plu. of *wæg*, signifying a wave or flood, and *locu*, a lock or barrier. It is the appellation of a rocky ridge extending southwards from the Severn, near the town of Much Wenlock, which is thus protected from the inundations of the river. "The Wenlock" would thus mean "the flood barrier."

Walter de Wenlock, who became Abbot of Westminster in 1283 and subsequently High Treasurer of England, may have been of this family. In 1355 there was a Roger de Wenlock, who befriended Thomas de la Mare, Abbot of S. Albans, in some legal business. [Gest. Abb. vol. III. 86.] William de Wenlock, who held lordships here by the interest of the Mortimers of Chelmarsh (Chelmarsh is no great distance from Wenlock), and by royal favour, became Canon of S. Paul's in 1362. Among his many preferments was the Wardenship of the Hospital of Farley (in Luton) given him by Richard II. in 1379. In 1422 Sir Thomas Wenlock was Knight of the Shire for Beds. He was, no doubt, a near kinsman (perhaps an elder brother) of Sir John Wenlock. The family was clearly a very influential one before the fifteenth century. Returning now to the manor of Someries—it appears from what has been said, that this was parcel of that sixth share of the manor of Luton, which in Edward I.'s reign had come to the family of Lucy. It is clear that this was not comprised in Luton Mortimer, for it is named as a manor distinct from the latter in the deed by which Thomas Lawley, Lord Wenlock's heir, conveyed these estates to Bishop Rotheram in 1475. The Rev. H. Cobbe informs me that the manor was in possession of Sir John Wenlock at least as early as 1444, for he is described as "of Sommaries" in the writ constituting him High Sheriff of Bucks. in that year. It had not come to him by a grant of Luton Mortimer: through what channel then had it passed? Mr. Cobbe's researches have supplied a clue. It appears that Sir John Wenlock's father, William Wyvell de Wenlock,

had acquired certain "lands in the vill and soke of Luton" in 1397. There arises a strong probability that Great Hampstead Someries was among these lands, which would thus have come to Sir John Wenlock as an inheritance from his father. Unfortunately the estates are not described by name in the document, so the evidence is at present incomplete.

It is probable that Sir John Wenlock occasionally resided at the manor house of Someries as early as 1433, when he was elected Knight of the Shire for Beds. The baronial mansion, which superseded it, was not commenced till near the close of his remarkable career. This I will now briefly summarise, chiefly on the authority of Stowe. He was a courtier, of brilliant parts. He early ingratiated himself with King Henry VI., and was appointed Usher of the Chamber to Queen Margaret. He was a wealthy man, and lent the King money. It is supposed that he acquired Luton Mortimer by a royal grant, after 1435.\* In 1453 he was made Knight of the Garter,† and Constable of Bamborough Castle. Between this date and 1461 he refounded, in memory of his wife, Elizabeth Drayton, the Chantry Chapel, named after his family, in Luton Church.‡ In the Wars of the Roses he exhibited bravery,§ but by no means the stability of a true knight. In the first battle of S. Albans (A.D. 1455) he fought for the King's cause, and was severely wounded. A few months afterwards he had changed his views, and was elected Speaker of a Parliament held in the Yorkist interests.|| In 1459 he was attainted of treason. When Edward IV. obtained the crown, he was restored to honours, and fought in his cause at the battle of

\* The record of this is not extant.

† See Anstey's "Register of the Order of the Garter."

‡ The Rev. H. Cobbe has kindly sent me a sketch of a sculptured device existing in this chapel, in connexion with the heraldic shields. This, if I have interpreted it correctly, is of considerable interest in relation to our subject. The sculpture represents a lady crowned with flowers, holding a posie in one hand and a flowery wreath in the other, standing in a wattled bower bordered with blossoms (six petalled) and canopied by a fruit tree (pear?). She is taking her *ease* in a *summer* bower, surrounded by *summer* fruits and *summer* flowers. I read it *summer ease*—a Rebus on "Someries." It informs us that Sir John Wenlock, whose shield of arms is here displayed, was *lord of Someries*.

§ This motto (as seen in the chapel) was *Hola!*—apparently a knightly challenge.

|| I am indebted for this information to the Rev. H. Cobbe.

Towton. After this his promotion at the Yorkist court was rapid. In 1461 he was created Baron of Wenlock, made a Privy Councillor; then Chief Butler of England, and Steward of the Royal Castle of Berkhamstead, the residence of the King's mother. In 1463, as we have seen, the deed relating to the manor of Great Hampstead Someries was executed at his manorial residence. It seems likely that the clearing of his title by this instrument was a preliminary of his design of laying out large sums in building on the property, and that the mansion, the ruins of which we see, was commenced shortly after this date. However that may be, it was never completed. In May, 1470, Lord Wenlock, having proved his administrative ability, was appointed Lieutenant of the Town and Marches of Calais,\* a post of the highest trust. In the political crisis he at first acted an ambiguous part; then shortly he went over to the confederacy of the Earl of Warwick. His career was closed at the battle of Tewkesbury, where he fought on the Lancastrian side, May, 1471. According to Stowe, Lord Wenlock, being in command of the middle ward of the Queen's army, refused to support the advance of the van led by the Duke of Somerset—the van was sacrificed in consequence: on his return to the camp Somerset upbraided Wenlock as a traitor and felled him with his battle-axe. Both the manner of his death and the motives from which he acted have been debated. Tradition says that he was buried at Tewkesbury Abbey. He had, no doubt, intended to be interred in his chantry at Luton.

#### THE MANSION.

This has the look of a Tudor mansion, but on the authority of Leland, I think we must accept it as Lord Wenlock's house, and so not later in date than 1471.

Leland, writing about 70 years after Lord Wenlock's death, describes it as "a faire place withyn the parochie of Luton, called Somerys, the whiche house was somptuously begon by Lord Wenlock; but not finished." He says: "The gate-house of brick is very large and faire. Part of the new foundations be yet seen." The new foundations perhaps belonged to the western wing, which I have marked on this rough plan. They have now nearly disappeared. The ruin is especially in-

\* Anstey's "Register of the Order of the Garter."

teresting as a dated specimen of early brick architecture. It is only a fragment of a large design. What we see constitutes a gate-house and a chapel. The approach is on the north. The gate-hall, which seems to have been vaulted in brick, is flanked by two chambers, which were carried up to form towers. Their projection in front is a half octagon or something like it. In one of these a postern door is contrived in a picturesque manner; this is the entrance to the porter's lodging. The most striking feature is the bold corbel-table over the gate-arch. This is worth sketching.

Gough's remark on the building is: "The portico, all that was finished, now remains complete" (he writes about 1780) "in a wood near Luton" (the wood seems to have disappeared). "It is the most beautiful specimen, in brick, of the Florid Gothic that I remember."

There certainly are finer specimens. Wolterton Manor House, at East Barsham in Norfolk, is one, but that is of later date.\*

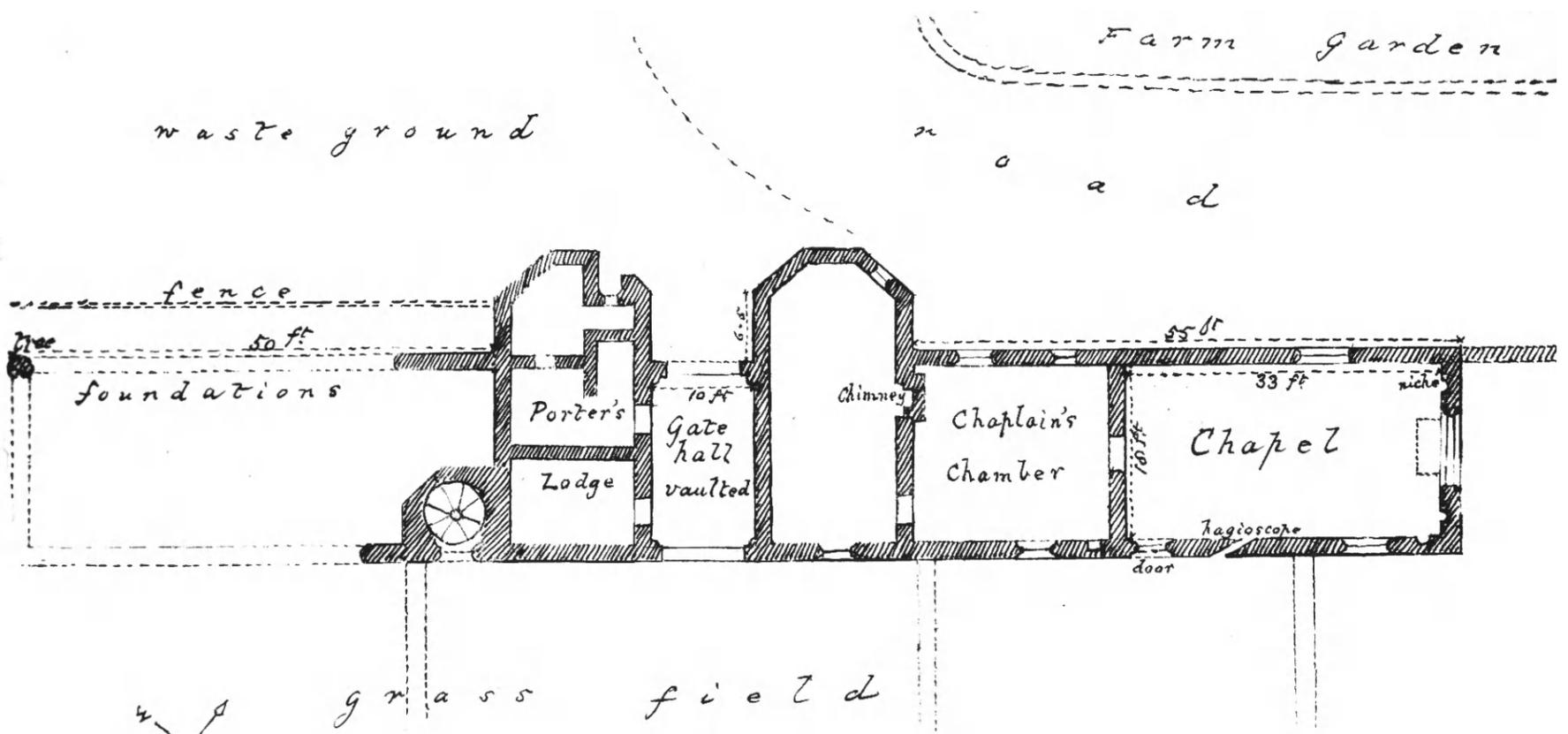
We shall see some good corbelling at the east end of the chapel. All the mouldings here are in brick, except the gate-arch, which is *clunch*.

With regard to the plan, we see the vestiges of a western wing; this extended about 50 feet, as far as that tree, under which, Mr. Purrett informs me, there are foundations. There was more of the wall remaining in 1812, when Mr. Fisher made a drawing, of which I exhibit a copy. There is the appearance of the junction of walls designed to extend southwards from the face of the building (marked on the plan). Those two doorways would open into this part of the house on the upper floor. Beneath them we may observe a groove or channel made to receive the beams of the floor.

The entrance hall must have been intended to open into a staircase hall. There is no stair in the ruin, except in that turret which has a newel, which leads to the top of the tower. The groove for the hand-rail, which will convey a whisper, has been mistaken for an acoustic contrivance. The walls are all ruined at the top; they may have been finished with a battlement. This is not a fortified house; there is no trace of a

\* Since the date of this excursion the ruined gate-house of Nether Hall, Roydon, dated c. 1470, has been visited by our Society, and its strong resemblance to the work at Someries pointed out by Mr. Wentworth Huyshe. Both mansions might have been designed by the same architect.

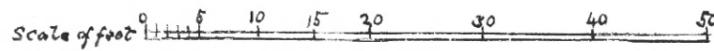




REMAINS OF MANSION OF JOHN LORD WENLOCK. SOMERIES.

GROUND PLAN.

H. del.



moat. We see the site is quite outside the lines of the castle. Mr. Purrett informs us that human remains have been found in that garden. I should guess them to belong to the time of Fawkes de Breauté.

Before we go into the ruin I must rapidly dispatch the remaining history.

Lord Wenlock's heir was his cousin, Thomas Lawley, of Wenlock, descended from a common ancestor, who was a Wyvell. Vincent's Visitation of Salop states that he inherited Luton Mortimer. In 1477 (according to Lysons) he conveyed the manor of Great Hampstead Someries to Thomas Rotheram, Bishop of Lincoln, one of the founders of Lincoln College, Oxford; he became Archbishop of York in 1480, and dying in 1500, devised this manor to his nephew, Thomas Rotheram. Sir John Rotheram, father of this Thomas, was lord of the chief manor of Luton in 1477, and is supposed to have received it from the king; in the same year he was Sheriff of the county. He lived at Farley. Thomas Rotheram could not have lived in this unfinished house; he probably resided at a house called Rotherhamstead within this manor, about a mile to the north. I infer this from the account of the locality in Davis' History of Luton. The house was pulled down, apparently, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, and the name now seems almost forgotten; its successor was the residence called Falconer's Hall. Here the successors of Thomas Rotheram must have resided, till by the marriage of the daughter and heiress of John Rotheram with Sir Francis Crawley some time before 1649, the estate passed to the Crawley family, with whom it still remains. The farm of Somery, however, had before this been severed from the estate, and sold in 1614 to Sir Robert Napier, of Luton Hoo. From this time Someries (*i.e.*, the farm containing the historical site) has always been held by the lords of the chief manor, *i.e.*, successively by the Napiers, Mr. William Herne, John, Earl of Bute, the Marquesses of Bute, and in the present century, since 1844, the family of Leigh, now represented by Madame de Falbe, to whose courtesy we are indebted for permission to hold our meeting at Someries Castle.