

SOME HISTORIC CITY GATES AND BARRIERS.

BY GEORGE A. WADE.

AS this article is only intended to deal with celebrated bars and gates which, while still existing in the Kingdom in their original situation, are no longer in use as barriers, and which have survived the ravages of time and the modern spirit of improvement, there can be no doubt as to which English city should have the honour of leading off in regard to its historic bars and gates.

York not only has most of its old bars still existing as they did four centuries ago, but it can boast that they are also in a state of most excellent preservation. There are six of these bars in York, four of which are large and add much to the dignity of the old city, while the remaining couple are smaller



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MONK BAR, YORK.

and of less importance. Decidedly the finest and most interesting of all York's gateways is Micklegate Bar. This originally formed the southern entrance to the city in the stormy days of old, and the part it played in history was a prominent one. The street which it crosses is called by the name of "The Bar," and the road southward from it was in ancient times the direct way to London.

The Bar itself consists of a circular arch surmounted by a lofty tower, square in shape, whose angles have each an embattled turret, while on the top of each turret is a stone figure. The date of the erection of the Bar is unknown; this in itself is evidence of its extreme antiquity. The arch is usually regarded, however, as being of Norman origin. Upon shields in front of the Bar are represented the arms of England and France, dating back to a time when our rule extended beyond the Channel. Up to the year 1826 there was a barbican to this famous gate, and even until more recent times Micklegate Bar boasted a portcullis. In the opinion of many people Micklegate Bar is spoilt by the fact of its having two arches on one side and only one on the other. The two shown on the left side of the photograph were thus erected for the purposes of traffic. Each side of the Bar has steps, which lead up to the celebrated walls of



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MICKLEGATE BAR, YORK.

the city, and on these walls there is a wide promenade which now almost encircles the town.

As to what Micklegate Bar has seen in history, who can say? This was the favourite place for exposing the heads of traitors during the civil wars of old. Towton, Boroughbridge, Wakefield Green could all tell their tales of such heads despatched to York. Probably the most famous head to be fastened there at any time was that of the Duke of York, which, in 1460, swung from the Bar, covered with a paper crown, a memento of Lancastrian mockery. But the Red Rose paid dearly for the joke; for it was by this very gate that Edward IV. entered York after Towton, and so soon as he saw his father's head suspended there he ordered it to be taken down, and had the Earls of Devon and Wiltshire, and three other noblemen, all of whom were his prisoners, executed without trial, and the five heads were placed upon the Bar to show how Edward exacted vengeance on his enemies and insulters.

Almost as imposing in itself as Micklegate Bar, and among the finest surviving gateways of any ancient town, is Monk Bar. This is also one of the loftiest bars now existing. Formerly the Bar went under another name; but when General Monk marched through York at the Restoration and passed under this very Bar, he had such a great reception that its name was altered in compliment to him. The arms of England and France adorn this Bar also, but the battlements are exceptionally decorated by the addition of figures in the act of hurling stones at the advancing enemy. Fortunately the portcullis is still existing here and can be seen; the barbican disappeared somewhere about 1815.

The interior of the Bar, above the arch spanning the roadway, contains two rooms of two storeys. These rooms used to be the prisons to which the freemen of the city were sent when they offended the ruling

powers. The side arches for foot passengers are not really parts of the Bar itself, but are cut from under the actual walls of York.

Walmgate Bar cannot boast of the perfection of Monk Bar so far as its architecture goes; nevertheless it stood the brunt of many historic attacks during the days of long ago. Dating back at least to the period of the first Edward, Walmgate Bar could tell of what it underwent during the troublous reign of his son, and of the barbican which Edward III. built to strengthen it. And it is also fortunate in still retaining that barbican,



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BOOTHAM BAR, YORK.

in addition to the old door, the ancient wickets, and the portcullis. Walmgate Bar was the centre of the attacks of the Roundheads when they besieged York during the Civil Wars, and it suffered much from their cannon.

Perhaps the York bar which is least interesting is Bootham Bar, the entrance to York from the north side of the city, just as Micklegate Bar is from the south. Yet it is very old, the arch being Norman. The barbican disappeared in 1832, though the portcullis yet remains.

So much has been said of these fine bars that space permits only the mention of Fishergate Bar and the Victoria Bar, the latter as modern as 1838. Fishergate Bar, with its renowned Postern Gate, is well worth seeing and is remarkable owing to the fact that, from the days of Henry VII., it was walled up until 1827, and was only then opened to give access to the market for cattle!

Probably the finest existing specimen of an old bar in our English towns, after those of York, is the famous one in the High Street at Southampton. There were in ancient days no less than seven gates in the walls of the great southern seaport, but of these only two now remain, and the Bar Gate, as it is called, is the more notable.

The Bar Gate was the old North Gate of Southampton, and that it was of Norman erection is clearly seen from a view of the interior of the archway itself. This Bar possesses one particular feature, that makes it almost unique amongst English bars, in that its architecture on the north side is quite different from that on the south. On the north side there are two towers, semicircular in build, and between them is a shapely projection which represents three sides of a fine octagonal figure. This addition to the original building is supposed to have been



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WEST GATE, SOUTHAMPTON.



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OLD BAR, HIGH STREET, SOUTHAMPTON.

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made about the reign of the second Richard. The present lions, which stand like sentinels on each side, have done duty there for some century and a half, though before their time there were lions of wood which had stood for over two and a half centuries, at least. The postern gates on each side are comparatively modern, being cut out of the two flanking towers for the convenience of pedestrians.

On the southern side of the Bar Gate several striking features attract one's attention. There is an imposing statue in the centre of the front, which repre-



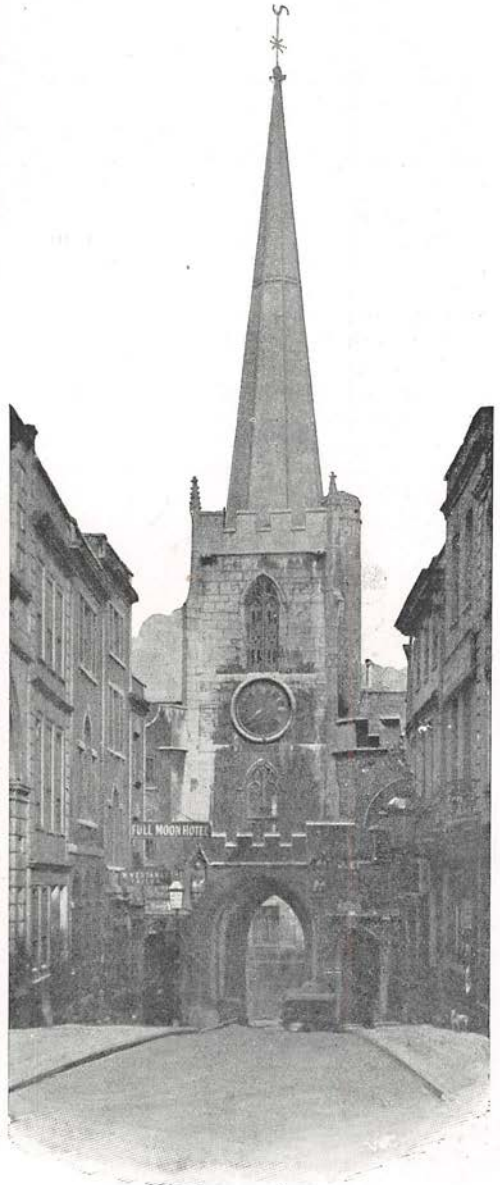
ST. JOHN'S GATE, CLERKENWELL.

sents King George III., and was placed there in 1809; a fine old bell dated 1605; and a sundial which has been over the statue since 1705. An arched doorway stands on the right side of the Bar, which admits to a stone stair leading to the interior of the Gate itself. This room over the Gate in the High Street is the Guildhall of Southampton. Its length is about 52 feet, whilst its breadth is 40 feet. There are four windows of stained glass on its southern aspect, and several narrow windows on its north side, whilst a large skylight also aids in the lighting of the room.

In this Guildhall the Quarter Sessions are still held, and here the judges used to sit in olden days, under a large painting of King Solomon giving judgment. There are also rooms for the grand jury and for the magistrates; and in these rooms are kept many relics of the old town, amongst them being two paintings which used to adorn the outside of the Bar Gate itself, showing the adventures of Sir Bevis and Ascapart, from the legend of the Middle Ages which was connected with the traditional rise of Southampton. There is a statue of Queen Anne in the Guildhall, which used to occupy the place now given up to that of George III. on the south side of the exterior.

The other bars still remaining in Southampton are less interesting than the Bar

Gate. The West Gate consists of a tower in three stages, about thirty feet broad, and pierced by a roadway of ten feet width. This West Gate was in bygone days defended by a heavy doorway and two portcullises, and there are yet to be seen the nine holes between the portcullis grooves in the vaulting of the roof which were used for harassing the enemy from above. The West Gate is interesting to the student of English history, since it was through this very Bar that, in



GATE IN THE CITY WALL, BRISTOL.

1346, the troops marched on their way to the immortal field of Crecy; and in 1415 another English army marched through this Bar, bound for the great field of Agincourt.

always attract attention. These are the Norman Gate, at the entrance to College Green, and the gate through the city walls, which stands exactly under St. John's Church. This latter is not the only place in the Kingdom where a church is actually built on the city walls and over the city gate, for Winchester boasts a similar instance at St. Swithin's Church. It is just as wide as the walls themselves. Formerly there were no side-arches for pedestrian traffic; the two here shown are additions belonging to last century. The statues of the city's deities, Brennus and Belinus, still stand on each side of the arch. Though the gate may not have the historical renown of some of those

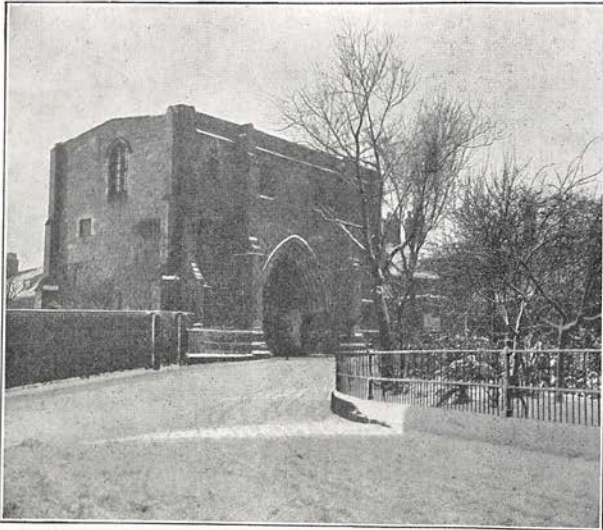


Photo by]

[J. W. Shores, Bridlington Quay.

THE BAYLE GATE, BRIDLINGTON.

The South Gate, Southampton's last surviving bar, has little to arrest attention. It is at an angle in the walls, and consists of an obtuse-shaped arch cut through a tower which has done duty there since about the year 1200. Probably the bar and tower were designed to defend the sluices.

Bridlington is another coast town possessing a gate of singular interest, known as the Bayle Gate. It is on record that at the close of the fourteenth century, while William de Newbold was Prior, "in consequence of the maritime attacks of the pyrates who infested the North Sea, the property of the prior and convent became so insecure that Richard II. granted them license to enclose and fortify the priory with walls and gates." Four of the latter were then erected, and of these the Bayle Gate, the principal entrance to the monastery, still retains the features which distinguished it five hundred years ago. Yet another seaboard town with a great bar or gate is Broadstairs, and in this case the enemy to be excluded was the pirate from over the sea.

Old Bristol can show two gates which

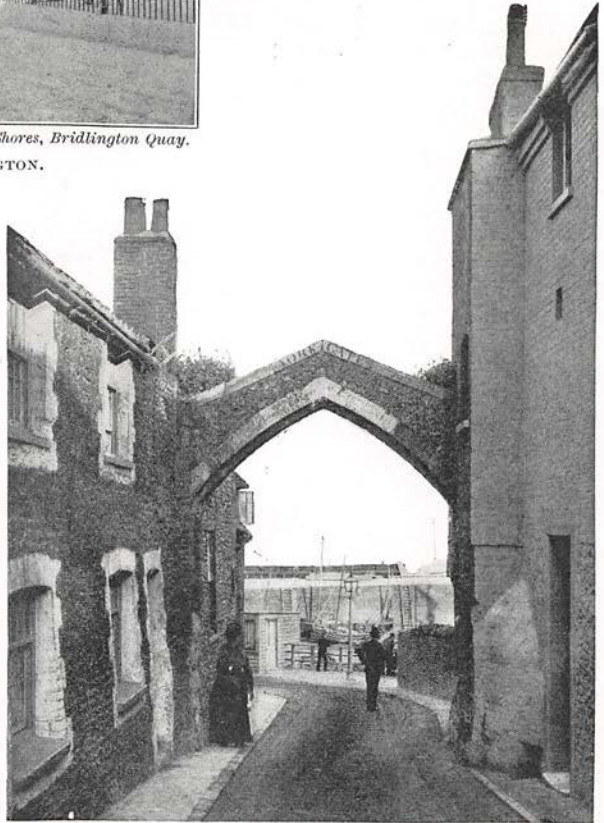


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THE YORK GATE, BROADSTAIRS.

mentioned in this article, it can, at any rate, claim to be as striking in its aspect as any of them. The other Bristol gateway, the Norman Gate, was not used for defence in olden

days, but as the entrance to the Cathedral Close. It is mentioned here as being probably one of the finest existing Norman arches in this country.

We mentioned above the King's Gate, at Winchester, on which stands a church, and we must also say a word or two about West Gate, the other and more famous of Winchester's old gates. It is of the reign of Edward I. and is in excellent preservation. There is a large room above it, which used to be let, till 1753, for smoking!

The only surviving bar at Portsmouth is of special literary interest, having been introduced by Sir Walter Besant (himself a native of that town) into his novel, "By Celia's Arbour." This arch formed the main entrance to the town until the fortifications were demolished. It is close to the Grammar School, and now, instead of serving as the chief way into Portsmouth town, it is the gate to the recreation-ground.

Chester still retains its four principal

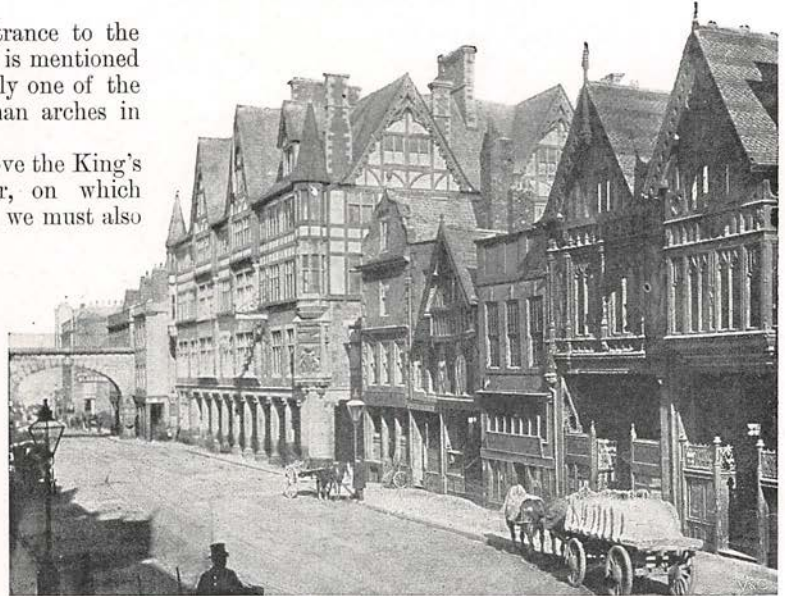


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EASTGATE STREET, CHESTER.

gates, which are called the North Gate, the South Gate, the East Gate, and the West Gate, for obvious reasons. Of these, the East and the North Gates are the most interesting. So far as their general appearance goes, the Gates of Chester admit of no comparison with Monk Bar at York or the Bar Gate at Southampton. But their charm and interest lie in their associations. Here at the East Gate ended one of the most

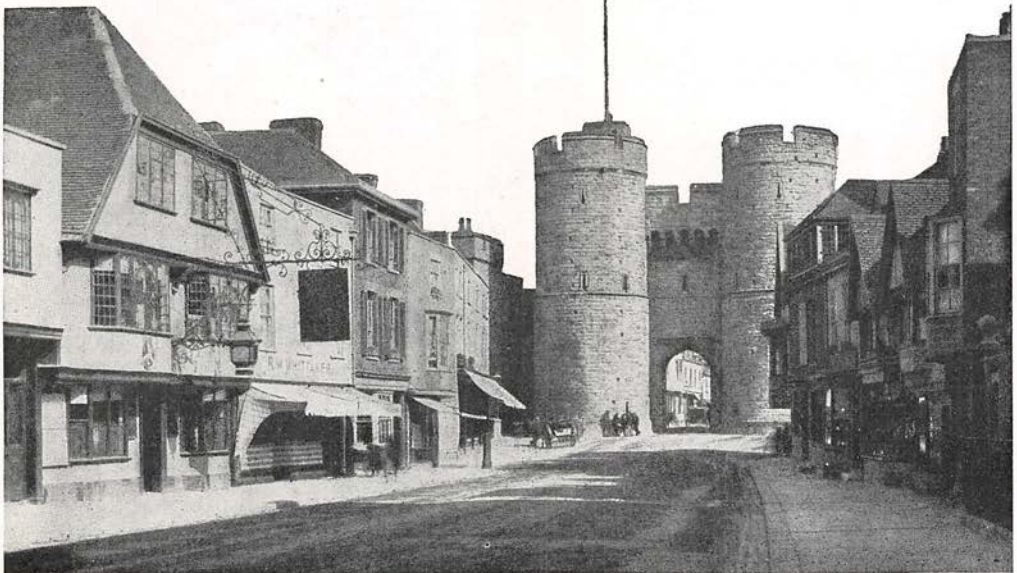


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THE WEST GATE, CANTERBURY.



[Photo by]

[W. Harvey Barton, Bristol.]

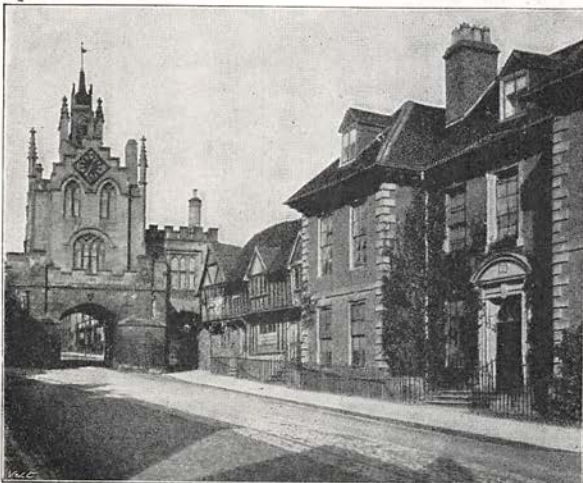
THE WEST GATE, AND LORD LEICESTER'S HOSPITAL, WARWICK.

famous streets of any age—Watling Street, the old Roman road which ran from London to Chester. Its successor is still there in the Eastgate Street of to-day. This road, which Roman soldiers planned and made, has been in existence for nearly twenty centuries, and is to-day the chief street of Chester. Beside Eastgate Street, the Strand and Cheapside are quite modern.

The present North Gate is not the original

structure, the old archway having been replaced in 1808. The former erection was a poor affair, though it was not without much interest that the present Gate lacks. The space above it, below it, and around it formed the old prison of the city. Here was the place of execution for the condemned people of the county, and here was the torture-chamber, too, with its "Little Ease" and "Dead Man's Room."

We have little space left, but no article on this subject would be complete which made no mention of Lincoln's four celebrated bars or gates. Without being singled out for special historical renown, like some of the others already dealt with, the fine Stone Bow, or South City Gate, in Lincoln, has seen some stirring times when that city was the centre of life and bustle in East England; when "Hugh of Lincoln" was a living reality; and when each King deemed it essential as soon as possible after his coronation to make a pilgrimage to the East Anglian capital. Even to-day this noble Gate, with the many chambers above it and its side-arches, is an important feature in the city's life and work. In addition to this there is the Potter Gate. This stands by the



[Photo by]

[W. Harvey Barton, Bristol.]

EAST GATE, WARWICK.

Cathedral, projecting out from the old walls of the city and blocking half the roadway, which has had to be widened for the traffic since the good old times when Potter Gate embraced the whole width of it.

East Gate, in Lincoln, is also part of the ancient walls, which it pierces, with two side-arches for pedestrians. These smaller gates are much older than the majority of side-gates of our famous English bars. It will be seen at a glance that East Gate was not intended to act as a defender of the Fen capital, but was from the earliest days simply an outlet for the traffic of the town.

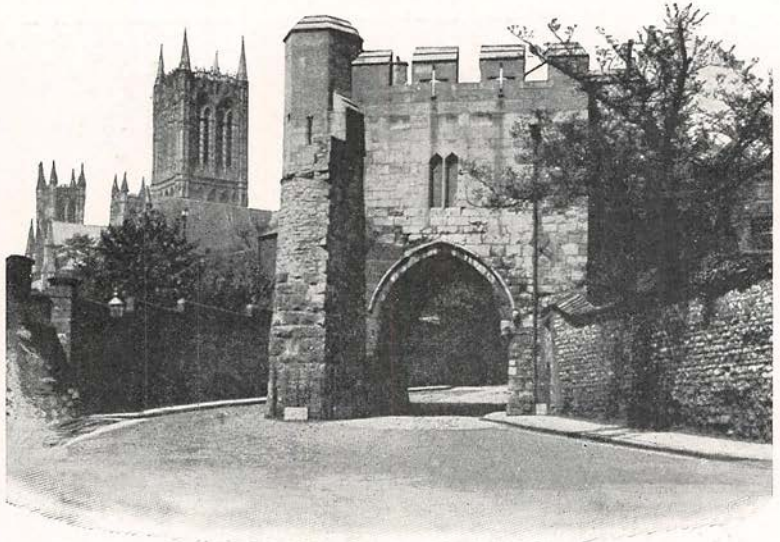


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POTTER GATE, LINCOLN.

Let us not forget Canterbury's famous West Gate, the only surviving one of the six great ancient gates of the archiepiscopal city. It dates back to about 1390, and has a most massive appearance, standing between two lofty towers, one of which is actually erected in the river on the east side. A passage over the gate goes to what used to be a debtors' prison, but is now the police-station of Canterbury. Warwick also contains interesting East and West Gates; while the Monnow Gate at Monmouth cannot fail to attract attention as a fine and picturesque specimen of mediæval work.

Had the most famous of English city gateways, Temple Bar, remained on its original site until to-day, it would, of course, have had to hold the place of honour in such an article as this. But as it was removed some years ago, and ultimately purchased by Sir H. Meux and re-erected at the entrance to his grounds at Cheshunt, the claims of London must rest on what is yet one of the most interesting and well known of all English gates, though it was never a bar or gate intended



Photo by]

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THE STONE BOW, OR SOUTH CITY GATE, LINCOLN.

to defend the City—*viz.*, St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell.

The present Gate was erected after the insurrection of Wat Tyler, at the end of the fourteenth century, for that gentleman's levies took the trouble of burning down the old Gate, which had stood for two centuries before their time. It had been built when St. John's Priory was erected there by the Knights Hospitallers, after the crusade of the first Richard.

The Gate is built of brick and freestone; its walls are quite three feet thick, and its towers were formerly much higher than they now are. These towers are in four storeys, and over the Gateway itself will be noticed a room which is the most famous of all rooms over bars in this country.

For in this upper room Cave set up his press in 1731, and from it issued the first number of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Here came Richard Savage in search of work at the hand of Cave, and here he subsequently spent much time in writing; here laboured for the *Magazine* a greater than either Cave or Savage—one Samuel Johnson, whose fame was later to become immortal. Here the great David Garrick made his *début* in London. Into this room came a jovial wan-

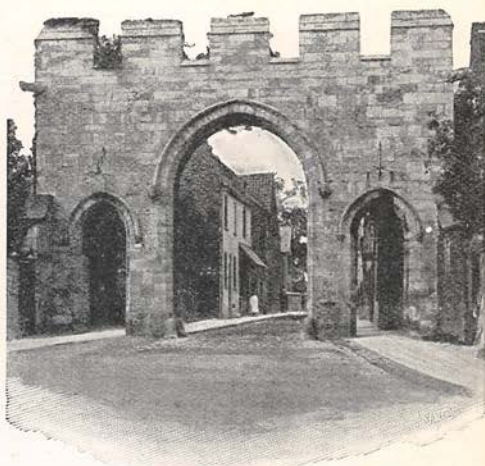


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[Prith & Sons.

EAST GATE, LINCOLN.

dering Irishman, named Oliver Goldsmith, in search of Johnson, and here the two friends often passed many hours in converse. Here flourished later the Urban Club, a literary coterie of considerable reputation in its day. But many years before these men of letters had given a special interest to the place, there had been royal business trans-

sacted in this very chamber; it was here that Richard III. came to tell the Council how cruelly and bitterly his foes lied about his treatment of Lady Anne Neville, his wife. Close by the Gate lodged the Princess Mary, when her brother Edward VI. was on the throne; and here he often visited her. Elizabeth had the Court revels rehearsed in the Gateway chamber before they were performed at her palaces, and the brave old Gate bore no small part in the Sacheverell riots of after days. The room at the base of the west tower was in 1813 a house for the watch; then it was made into a dispensary for the hospital; then it became a coalshed; and later it blossomed out into a bookshop. To-day it is the headquarters of that noble institution, the St. John Ambulance Association.

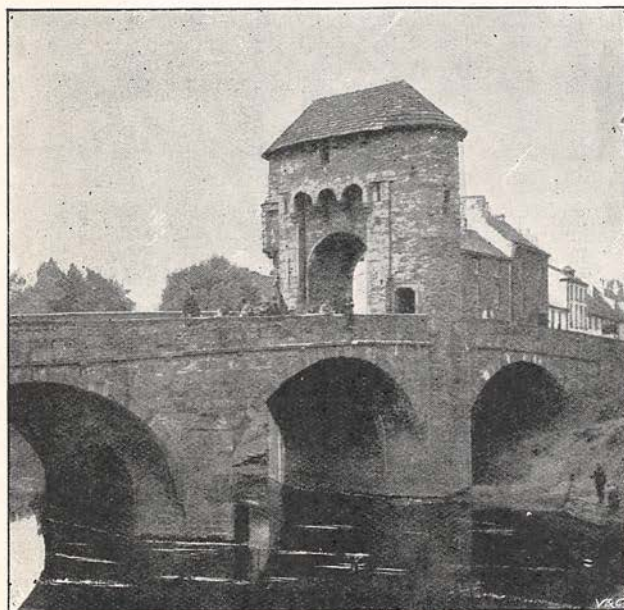


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[R. T. Williams, Monmouth.

THE MONNOW GATE, MONMOUTH.

Dating from 1270.