

A Social Archaeology of the Late Medieval English Peasantry:

Power, Community and Gender

Sally Victoria Smith

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Archaeology

University of Sheffield

May 2006

Volume One

Abstract

This thesis sets out to develop an archaeological approach to the study of the late medieval English peasantry that allows issues of power, resistance, gender and community to be addressed. It is identified at the outset that the aims of the majority of late medieval rural archaeology are those to do with long-term issues of settlement development and determinations of the chronology and function of material culture types. This thesis puts an alternative interpretive emphasis on the material culture and documentary evidence of the period and focuses on the ways in which detailed, contextual studies of medieval settlements facilitate the investigation of more 'social' issues.

A case-study approach is advocated and utilised here, as a central contention of the work is that specific aspects of medieval material culture, such as, for example, regular village plans or lordly insignia on churches, do not have *one* meaning applicable throughout all contexts, and that these contextual meanings only become clear when all the available evidence for a specific settlement is taken into account. The focus is, therefore, on the examination of three Yorkshire villages which contained evidence of peasant settlement, standing buildings, as well as documentary records. In addition, the material culture and documentary evidence of the immediate regions of these villages are investigated in order to further contextualise the suggestions regarding the peasants' experience of power, resistance, community and gender that are put forward. These case studies are followed by a chapter which investigates similar issues as they pertain to four classes of medieval material culture which are dealt with thematically.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of the nature of gendered power among the medieval peasantry. The importance of deconstructing deeply-entrenched ideas about 'public' and 'private' as well as about the nature of power is stressed, and an argument is advanced which suggests that when these concepts are critiqued and the centrality of social practice to discussions of power is acknowledged, it is possible to suggest that medieval peasant women may not have experienced gendered differences as oppressive.

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	i
List of Tables.....	iv
Acknowledgments	v
 Chapter One – Introduction: towards a social archaeology of the late medieval English peasantry	
1.1. Thesis aims	1
1.2 The current state of research: the archaeology of the late medieval English peasantry	
1.2.1 Dominant frameworks.....	2
1.2.2 Alternative approaches.....	9
1.3 Historical approaches to the late medieval English peasantry.....	21
1.4 Archaeology and history.....	28
1.5 Key themes	
1.5.1 Power.....	31
1.5.2 Gender.....	35
1.6 Key concepts	
1.6.1 Agency	40
1.6.2 Case studies: Ways of approaching the past	44
1.6.3 Other influences	46
1.7 Broader objectives	50
1.8 Thesis structure	52
 Chapter Two – Osgodby	
2.1 Introduction	56
2.2 Households at Osgodby	57
2.3 The village	
2.3.1 The village community	64
2.3.2 Lordship and religion in the village	65
2.4 The region	
2.4.1 Lordship and religion in the region.....	69
2.4.2 National and international power relationships.....	76
 Chapter Three – Wawne	
3.1. Houses	
3.1.1 House types A and B	80
3.1.2 House type C	84
3.2 The village	
3.2.1 Lordship	87
3.2.2 Resistance	89
3.2.3 Village community	91
3.2.4 The church	93
3.2.5 Conclusion	97

3.3 The region.....	98
3.3.1 Lordship in the region.....	99
3.3.2 Resistance in the region.....	102
3.3.3 The impact of urbanism.....	104
3.4 Social change.....	112

Chapter Four – Wharram Percy

4.1 Lordship at Wharram Percy.....	119
4.2 Resistance.....	130
4.3 Peasant community	138
4.4 The church.....	151
4.5 Women.....	160

Chapter Five – Peasants and material culture: Thematic considerations

5.1 Introduction	169
5.2 Visual representations of the peasantry	170
5.3 Castles	
5.3.1 Peasants and castles	184
5.3.2. Crayke	195
5.4 Pottery	202
5.5 Dress accessories	
5.5.1 Power and display.....	217
5.5.2 Dress accessories from excavated rural settlement sites	222
5.6 Conclusions	228

Chapter Six – Discussion

6.1 Tenorial status	229
6.2 Dispersed settlement.....	234
6.3 Women and power in the late medieval countryside	241
6.4 Conclusions	
6.4.1 Context and variability	266
6.4.2 Material culture and choice	269
6.4.3 Temporality	270
6.4.4 Future research directions	272
6.4.5 Concluding comments	273

Bibliography.....	276
--------------------------	------------

Figures

Table

List of Figures

- Figure 1 – Location of Osgodby.
- Figure 2 – Site plan of Osgodby village showing features mentioned in text.
- Figure 3 – Cayton church.
- Figure 4 – Interior of St. John the Baptist, Cayton.
- Figure 5 – Phased sketch plan of St. John the Baptist, Cayton.
- Figure 6 – Brass from St. John the Baptist, Cayton.
- Figure 7 – Osgodby and its region.
- Figure 8 – The church of St. Martin, Seamer.
- Figure 9 – Phased plan of the church of St. Martin, Seamer.
- Figure 10 – Interior of St. Martin's, Seamer.
- Figure 11 – North aisle and north chapel of St. Martin's, Seamer.
- Figure 12 – Stairs to rood loft, positioned in nave of church, St. Martin's, Seamer.
- Figure 13 – Location of Wawne.
- Figure 14 – Examples of house types A, B, and C, Wawne.
- Figure 15 – Site plan of the village of Wawne, showing all features discussed in text.
- Figure 16 – Map of dykes in the valley of the River Hull
- Figure 17 – The church of St Peter's, Wawne, showing crenellated nave and clock.
- Figure 18 – Phased floor plan of Wawne church.
- Figure 19 – Interior of Wawne church, looking east towards chancel.
- Figure 20 – St. Peter's, Wawne, nave interior showing four bays and south aisle.
- Figure 21 – St. Peter's, Wawne, north wall of nave showing clerestory.
- Figure 22 – St. Peter's, Wawne, west nave window.

- Figure 23 – Wawne and its region.
- Figure 24 – Location of Wharram Percy.
- Figure 25 – Wharram Percy, showing features mentioned in text.
- Figure 26 – Plans of south manor area.
- Figure 27 – Plan of North Manor.
- Figure 28 – Earthwork plan of the northern part of the west row, Wharram Percy.
- Figure 29 – Wharram Percy and its region.
- Figure 30 – The church of St. Martin, Wharram Percy.
- Figure 31 – Phased plan of church of St. Martin, Wharram Percy.
- Figure 32 – Plan of north aisle and chapel, St. Martin's, Wharram Percy.
- Figure 33 – Chancel arch, St. Martin's, Wharram Percy, showing possible reconstruction of rood features.
- Figure 34 – Tower of St. Martin's, Wharram Percy, showing position of corbel table with carved heads.
- Figure 35 – Drawings of a selection of sculptured heads from the corbel table of the church of St. Martin, Wharram Percy.
- Figure 36 – Statue bracket in shape of female head from church of St. Martin, Wharram Percy.
- Figure 37 – Labours of the Months, Easby Church, North Yorkshire
- Figure 38 – Labours of the Months, Dewsbury Church, West Yorkshire
- Figure 39 – Labours of the Months, Thorpe Salvin Church, South Yorkshire
- Figure 40 – The Labours of Adam, Canterbury Cathedral
- Figure 41 – 'Christ of the Trades', Purton, Wiltshire
- Figure 42 – 'Christ of the Trades', Fingringhoe, Essex
- Figure 43 – Misericords from Worcester Cathedral
- Figure 44 – Caernarfon Castle, the Eagle Tower
- Figure 45 – Location of Crayke

Figure 46 – Crayke Castle

Figure 47 – Trackways, Crayke

Figure 48 – Pottery report from Wharram Percy

Figure 49 – Example of decorative engraving

Figure 50 – Mounts on a medieval belt

Figure 51 – Selection of copper-alloy objects from Area 6, Wharram Percy

Figure 52 – Examples of medieval strap-ends

Figure 53 – Depictions of peasants in the Luttrell Psalter

Figure 54 – Example of a dispersed settlement pattern; ‘ends’ settlement
from Hanbury

List of Tables

Table 1 – Late medieval pottery groups from Bolton, Humberside

Table 2 – Dress accessories from excavated rural settlement sites

Acknowledgements

I firstly wish to thank Dawn Hadley for superb supervision over the course of the PhD. She was consistently supportive for some years prior to the commencement of the research, and has always been the most efficient of readers! Her kind words at strategic points were invaluable in maintaining my enthusiasm, and it would not have been possible to complete the research without her. My thanks also go to John Moreland, my thesis advisor, whose comments and suggestions were always extremely useful.

I also wish to thank Universities UK for an Overseas Research Student Award, and the University of Sheffield which provided both a Fees Bursary and an Incentive Award Scheme grant. I have also received awards from the Sidney Perry Foundation and the Sir Richard Stapely Educational Trust, and a Fellowship from the New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women. I thank all of these institutions for their assistance.

Many people have helped me through the research process, notably the staff at the seven Sites and Monuments Records offices in Yorkshire. I wish to particularly acknowledge Elizabeth Chamberlain from the Humber Archaeology Partnership and Nick Boldrini from North Yorkshire County Council for their efforts over a seemingly-endless series of visits in helping me find my way through the SMRs. Peter Young from York Minster Archives, Phillipa Hoskin and Chris Webb from the Borthwick Institute, Chris Chandler from English Heritage and Helen Walsh from Scarborough Museums and Gallery were also of considerable assistance.

I am indebted to Eileen Ko, whose stimulating conversation and fabulous cooking have been of immeasurable assistance throughout the course of the research. I am especially grateful to my parents and brother for all their support, which enabled me to avoid penury! Finally, I wish to acknowledge those two without whom it would have been impossible to have even embarked upon this research, Bob Trett and Nigel Stirling.

Chapter One

Introduction – towards a social archaeology of the medieval English peasantry

1.1 Thesis aims

The late medieval English peasantry has been studied seriously by archaeologists for approximately 45 years. However, many of the key foci of enquiry continue to be, while far from unimportant, arguably of a preliminary nature. A review of current research presents us with the impression of a discipline endlessly poised in a 'data-gathering' phase in which the determination of the variation, chronology and function of medieval material culture is paramount and in which it is deemed that any interpretation concerned with actual medieval people must await the completion of these prefatory tasks. There is little engagement with many of the topics of modern archaeological theory, such as debates about the relationship between structure and agency, the role of modern ideologies in archaeological production or explorations of experience, meaning, gender and power in the past.

The aim of the present work is to develop an approach to the archaeology of the English peasantry of the later Middle Ages (AD 1100-1500) which enables the exploration of issues concerning the experience of power, resistance, community and gender. It is important for medieval archaeologists to focus on the *people* who occupied the landscape, to explore the complex webs of social relationships in which they operated, and to try to use the material culture of the period to enquire into the practices of living in the medieval settlement and the meanings thus invoked and revoked. The approach developed here is an attempt to focus, not on large-scale developmental processes, but on questions of a

social nature. It is hoped that it can add to the theoretical step forward that medieval rural archaeology needs to take.

1.2 The current state of research: The archaeology of the late medieval English peasantry

1.2.1. Dominant frameworks

Scholars of the late medieval period have tended to adopt a fairly loose and flexible definition of the 'peasantry' such as that employed by anthropologist Daniel Thorner (1971). His definition has been favoured by historians Steve Rigby and Phillip Schofield, among others. Thorner defines a peasant economy by the presence of five major features. Firstly, roughly half of the total population must be agricultural; secondly, more than half of the total population must be engaged in agriculture. Thirdly, there must be in existence state power and a ruling hierarchy which has overtaken kinship and clan order. Fourthly, there must be towns in existence and the presence of a division between them and the countryside that is political, economic, social and cultural, and fifthly, the most typical unit of production must be the family household (Thorner 1971: 203-5; see also Shanin 1971: 14-17 for a similar list of defining peasant traits). The anthropologist Eric Wolf also stresses the key defining trait of a peasant economy as opposed to a 'primitive' one, as being the fact that peasants are "rural cultivators whose surpluses are transferred to a dominant group of rulers that use the surpluses both to underwrite its own standard of living and to distribute the remainder to groups in society that do not farm but must be fed for their specific goods and services in turn" (Wolf 1966: 3-4).

Wolf's emphasis on the appropriation of peasant surplus is echoed by those definitions of the peasantry adopted by medieval historians that emphasise the

class nature of the group. An influential definition was that provided by Rodney Hilton in which he lists the six essential attributes of the peasantry:

“i) They possess, even if they do not own, the means of agricultural production by which they subsist.

ii) They work their holdings essentially as a family unit, primarily with family labour.

iii) They are normally associated in larger units than the family, that is villages or hamlets, with greater or less elements of common property and collective rights according to the character of the economy.

iv) Ancillary workers, such as agricultural labourers, artisans, building workers are derived from their own ranks and are therefore part of the peasantry.

v) They support super-imposed classes and institutions such as landlords, church, state, towns by producing more than is necessary for their own subsistence and economic re-production” (Hilton 1975:13).

Hilton’s definition has been adopted by historians such as Barbara Hanawalt (1986: 5). Christopher Dyer similarly suggests that the medieval peasantry can be defined as a class and that, for all the difficulties, “‘Peasant’ is a convenient, if rather elastic term to describe many types of small-scale cultivators” (Dyer 1989:22). There is a widespread rejection amongst historians of the medieval peasantry of Alan Macfarlane’s attempt to suggest that the economic and familial organisation of medieval England meant that the rural dwellers of this time can not be defined as ‘peasants’ but rather were individualistic beings behaving in a capitalistic fashion (i.e. operating in a developed market economy, enjoying high levels of social and geographical mobility, treating land as a commodity and enjoying full private ownership property), and that this held true from the thirteenth century onwards (Macfarlane 1978: 195, *passim*). The consensus of opinion among historians is now that Macfarlane’s definition can be set aside. As Stephen Rigby (1995:24) notes, “very few, if any, medieval historians have ever based their studies of medieval English

society on this [Macfarlane's] model". Overall, there is a broad agreement on the nature of the group called medieval peasants by scholars of the period.

Prior to the nineteenth century, antiquarian interest in the remains of the late medieval period had been confined to the great monuments of church and state (Gerrard 2003). Archaeological investigation into the medieval peasantry did not commence until the 1840s when a few scattered and small-scale excavations of deserted medieval villages took place. The first large-scale excavation of a deserted medieval settlement was carried out in the foothills of Bodmin Moor, Cornwall, in 1891-2 (*ibid.*: 65), after which there was a hiatus in archaeological exploration of medieval rural settlement. Investigation continued in the 1930s when pioneering work was carried out by Martyn Jope at Great Beere, Devon, and Rupert Bruce-Mitford at Seacourt, Berkshire (Hurst 1971). Other researchers into medieval society at this time were focussed largely on the remains of the wealthier members of medieval society with attention predominantly being focussed on castles, large manorial buildings and abbeys (Austin 1990:26). After the Second World War a few archaeological investigations of deserted medieval villages continued, but both a practical and conceptual break-through occurred in the 1952 with the commencement of excavations at Wharram Percy, North Yorkshire, followed up in the 1960s by work at Upton, Gloucestershire, initiated by Rodney Hilton, at Hound Tor, Devon, carried out by Marie Minter and at Gomeldon, Wiltshire, by John Musty. These investigations were the first to focus not simply on the excavation of single medieval houses but were rather carried out on a much broader scale, incorporating the excavations of several buildings, and the surveying and field-walking of large areas surrounding the settlement. The decade of the 1960s saw a large number of excavations of medieval settlement sites with broad aims, although Wharram remained the only purely research-led investigation, with many others operating, at least partially, within a 'rescue archaeology' paradigm (Clarke 1984:29). Excavations at deserted medieval settlement peaked at 29 in 1968 (Gerrard 2003: 101) before numbers dropped away in the

subsequent decades, although large-scale projects such as the Raunds Area Project and the excavations at West Whelpington, Northumberland, were still occasionally initiated (*ibid.*:140). These years also saw the inclusion of settlement forms such as hamlets into the remit of archaeological investigation of medieval settlement.

From the 1960s to the 1980s this broadening-out of research interests continued, with the application of archaeological material to wider issues becoming standard and in 1984 it was possible for Helen Clarke (1984: 31) to write that “[a] growing interest in social, economic and environmental questions ... has left its mark on medieval village studies in the form of discussions of changing village plans (and even their sites), village economy, climatic influences on village development and so on”. It is my contention, however, that this is where the discipline of medieval rural archaeology has stalled. The research of the last 20 years has continued to be carried out within a framework defined by the assumption of the pre-eminent importance of issues concerning peasant economy and village development. David Austin has observed that these issues became of paramount importance to medieval archaeologists because of their ability to address traditional topics of historical debate such as the differential development of English versus Continental societies, and questions surrounding Marxist hypotheses (Austin 1990: 23-25). He vigorously advances the position that enquiry into these ‘historical’ themes should cease to be central to the practice of medieval archaeology.

That these themes still dominate the archaeological discipline, however, can be ascertained by a review of major articles on the subject as well as reports in the journal *Medieval Archaeology*. The festschrift for the seminal researchers into medieval rural settlements, Maurice Beresford and John Hurst, published in 1989 (Aston, Austin and Dyer), did include, in a rare departure from the usual concerns of medieval archaeology, a paper which investigated initiative in settlement change and a theoretical piece which explored the relationship

between the disciplines of history and archaeology. However, the collection's primary foci were the growth and decline of settlements, descriptions of work on medieval rural settlement organised by region, vernacular architecture and village topography and development. Another major review of medieval rural archaeology, Paul Stamper's chapter in the volume *The Archaeology of Britain* (1999), contends that current major research topics in the field of medieval rural archaeology include the investigation of the plan and form of houses and villages, the origin and operation of open-field systems as well as the processes connected with, and chronology of, the emergence of villages. David Hinton's synthetic view of a millennium's material culture (AD 400-1400) tends towards a concern with the illustration of long-term social developments and discussions of economic factors using archaeological material (Hinton 1990), and his later major work (Hinton 2005) consists of a wide-ranging and comprehensive review of material culture from the Middle Ages, in which the emphasis is primarily on consolidating information than on advancing major interpretive arguments. Production and consumption of goods is a key theme and the significance of material culture as evidence for various types of economic activity is emphasised. Although there are brief mentions of 'social' issues such as lordship in the literature, these are few and far between and are tangential to the broad focus on the long-term development of the English 'economy' and 'society'. Stuart Wrathmell (1994), in his review of medieval rural settlement archaeology, argues that the most interesting current research questions relate to investigation of regional variation in the extent of nucleation and dispersion of medieval settlements and the origins of nucleation. He also mentions the origin of vernacular housing traditions as exemplified by his own work, and the study of the distribution of village plan forms, following the historical geographer Brian Roberts' classification outlined in *The Making of the English Village* (1987), as key themes for the discipline.

Although the major questions for research into the medieval peasantry remain the same, essentially, as those during the 1980s, this is not to say that the

discipline has simply stagnated. For example, the preceding brief review has shown the way that medieval archaeologists have embraced, albeit in a limited fashion, the work of scholars from other disciplines, notably that of historical geography. An example of a large-scale project of this nature is the book *Region and Place: A study of English rural settlement* (Roberts and Wrathmell 2003), which was commissioned by English Heritage partially to help with devising local research strategies. The volume outlines regional differences in settlement types, and many other variables were rigorously mapped and a national framework developed which took into account factors such as physical terrain, tenurial structure and enclosure. A primary argument of the text is that the country is composed of three basic landscapes, and that the discussion of the role of settlements in providing stability and change in regional structures is key to an understanding of the development of the English landscape. Although historical geography can help to answer 'social' questions, for example June Sheppard's 1976 article posits a link between regular village plans and free tenants (Sheppard 1976), it is often an exercise primarily concerned with describing and classifying various formal aspects of medieval settlements. In addition, major interpretative shifts have taken place among medieval archaeologists, notably in thinking about the longevity and robustness of peasant housing. Ideas about the impermanence of peasant housing held wide currency until the early 1980s, until, using documentary evidence as well as vernacular models (i.e. those derived from assessments of extant medieval structures built in the local tradition), it is now accepted that at least some peasants lived in what can be described as 'semi-permanent' buildings (Dyer 1986; Wrathmell 1984; 1989; Grenville 1997: 123-125).

However, when reviewing excavation reports dating from the 1970s through to 2003, it can be seen that the fundamental questions asked of material pertaining to the rural archaeology of the medieval period and the general research goals of the discipline have remained remarkably static and that interest in large-scale processes of development remains pre-eminent. For example, the 'preliminary'

state of an investigation into social aspects of the peasant village utilising archaeological sources can be seen in the reports of major excavations at the villages of Goltho, Lincolnshire and Barton Blount, Derbyshire. The monograph consists of a description of the excavation and finds and then a chapter on climatic change and its possible influence on the development of the villages. In the conclusion, it is stressed that the excavations “provided much information about the ecology and layout of an E. midlands deserted medieval village” (Beresford 1975: 53). These emphases may be considered to be not untypical for the archaeology of the 1970s, but the situation remained fundamentally unchanged when the excavations at the village of Thrislington, County Durham, were published in 1989. In the monograph dealing with these excavations, David Austin observes that because they were carried out in the 1970s, the research paradigm of that era as well as the fact that it was a rescue excavation, precluded the investigation of much that would have been considered to be of interest to scholars working in more recent periods. Some useful contributions to a social archaeology of the peasantry are made, such as comparisons between the use of space in the manor house and the peasant tofts, the importance of display to the elite which can be surmised from the remains of the manor house, and the emphasis on provision for spiritual needs in the presence of the chapel (Austin 1989:180-1, 196). However, social interpretations do not form the interpretive core of the concluding chapter, due, as Austin mentioned, to the nature of the research framework prevalent at the time of excavation. Also written in the 1980s, the reporting on the medieval settlement of Holne Moore on Dartmoor consisted primarily of the history of landuse and cultivation (Fleming and Ralph 1982). Similarly, the history of development is also central in a recent discussion of settlement in Whittlewood Forest (Jones and Page 2003).

As well as a focus on these long-term development issues, the archaeology of the late medieval English peasantry has also traditionally involved an emphasis on the investigation of the remains of medieval villages, and occasionally of

dispersed settlement, as well as of associated field systems. A fully contextual archaeology, which would include other aspects of medieval rural settlement such as churches, manor houses and castles in terms of their relationship to the peasantry, as well as the impact of urban environments on rural dwellers, has not yet appeared. It is only on extremely large-scale excavations such as at Wharram Percy, North Yorkshire, that the analysis of any standing buildings are investigated with as much thoroughness as the below-ground deposits and published as fully. Size itself, however, is no guarantee that these data will be integrated. For example, in the reports on the excavations at Goltho and Barton Blount, the chapel at Goltho is mentioned and a plan is provided, and the hall and church at Barton Blount are mentioned, yet no systematic attempt is made to investigate these buildings or include them in the analysis of the settlements.

These failings are not only to be found in the archaeology of the medieval peasantry, however. It has been noted that medieval archaeology in general has failed to connect with much modern theorising (Gilchrist 1994, 1996; Austin 1990). There are a few exceptions to this general rule, however, which will be outlined below.

1.2.2 Alternative approaches

Roberta Gilchrist is a scholar who has investigated the ways that recent approaches to archaeological theory can help illuminate medieval material culture, particularly those ideas of agency and *habitus*. A particular theme of her work is the use of space, which she argues can help illuminate social relations and can be approached as a form of material culture. Her study of nunneries (1994) investigated medieval monasticism and explored gender identity in relation to material culture. She examined their institutional character and similarities between them, and concluded that nunneries tended to be both physically isolated and economically dependent on institutional structures for cash, labour services and other resources. Male monasteries, on

the other hand tended to be larger, more financially independent, altered their surrounding landscape more and initiated industrial activities more often (*ibid.*: 188). She also drew attention to the nature of differences between the physical layout of monasteries and nunneries. She argued that smaller nunneries in particular resembled manor houses in a way that monasteries did not, for example nunneries did not tend to have fully developed monastic plans and often used moats as precinct boundaries, a feature usually associated with the manor houses of the gentry (*ibid.*:189). The most private and sequestered places in monasteries tended to be chapter houses and sacristies – areas devoted to the business of running the monasteries and for robing before services. In nunneries, on the other hand, it was the dormitories which were most private and the nuns were surrounded by a greater degree of architectural enclosure in general than were monks (*ibid.*: 190). Gilchrist argued that the construction of a gender identity was thus facilitated via ideas of enclosure and chastity, which had links with the ways that gentry women also defined themselves spatially in the manor houses and castle of the time (*ibid.*: 166-169, 192). She further suggested that nunneries were not established to meet the same criteria as monasteries, and in fact, were not intended to be self-sufficient, but instead were sited and endowed in order that their inhabitants could interact widely with the general community. She proposed that these differences meant that the sense of gender identity that monks and nuns fashioned for themselves was differently constructed with respect to factors such as patronage, filiation and class (*ibid.*: 192). She argued that when gender is viewed as a comparative category, previously unconsidered differences between architectural forms can be recognised and that this recognition can, in its turn, inform wider interpretations about the construction of gender in the medieval period.

Gilchrist has also studied medieval castles and utilised a phenomenological approach to the study of gender and space, which is a common approach in work that has been influenced by post-processualism, as Gilchrist's is. She suggests that both 'masculine' and 'feminine' were embodied in the castle

(Gilchrist 1999:145) in that the 'feminine' interior, where women resided was characterised by vivid colours and textures and smells, but was also feminised by courtly etiquette. However, the castle also had had 'masculine' resonances of conflict and war. The fact that both men and women co-habited in the castle and the surrounds, (she notes that women too participated in hunting outside the castle) allows us to "glimpse the complexities of gender" (*ibid.*). She urges us to consider the mutable qualities of medieval gender categories and to historicise concepts such as that of 'seclusion'. She argues that far from seclusion being a sign of inferiority, as is often assumed, in medieval society it was people of high prestige such as kings and monks and nuns who occupied cloistered and separate spaces. She suggests that medieval aristocratic women who occupied secluded spaces in the castle and gardens would have read this as being a marker of their prestige (*ibid.*). The work of Roberta Gilchrist, while invaluable, is concerned with exploring meanings of elite architecture and therefore, while as an approach it is potentially pertinent, it is not clear that its specific conclusions are applicable to the peasantry (Another example of the use of spatial analysis of elite buildings can be found in Richardson 2003).

Another innovative study was undertaken by John Hunt who surveyed the archaeological and documentary sources for the honor of Dudley in the West Midlands (Hunt 1997), explicitly focusing on the influence of 'lordship' over the landscape. Hunt examined the extent to which the unit of the honor provided a framework for the strategies of the aristocracy and the extent to which there was a relationship between the power of lords and the landscape. Documentary sources as Pipe Rolls and Charters, Feet of Fines and Patent rolls were examined. These sources were able to throw light on a variety of aspects of the medieval landscape. For example, the Plea Rolls (documents containing details of legal suits and actions in a law court) were used for establishing activities in the region during the Baron's War of the thirteenth century. Sixteenth-century surveys helped identify the location of parkland and chase, antiquarian writers allowed details of churches to be established and eighteenth-

and nineteenth-century estate maps allows reconstruction of landscape development. Excavated evidence from Dudley Castle, Dudley Priory, Weoley Castle and other manorial sites was utilised as was information gleaned from standing buildings and the earthwork remains of various manorial structures. Hunt concluded that the local influence and control of the unit of the honor was not strong, and that power was based upon personal relationships within the wider locality. He also concluded that lordship was an influencing rather than a determining factor in the use of the landscape, with environmental and social factors being more important. Although this study, like those of Gilchrist's, focuses on lords' activities, it does offer a useful, albeit primarily descriptive, case study of the varieties of ways in which lords impacted on a particular landscape and utilises a good combination of documentary and archaeological sources.

Matthew Johnson has looked further down the social scale to the upper yeomanry and the surviving vernacular buildings associated with them. Johnson concentrates on space and meaning and the changing relationship between them in the transition from the late medieval to the early modern period. In two of his major works published in 1993 and 1996, Johnson describes these periods as being characterised by 'open' and 'closed' cultural forms respectively as evidenced by a study of both houses and fields. His observations of most relevance to the medieval peasantry are related to his theories concerning the congruency of spatial meaning in peasant houses with that of higher social levels. He argues that "open [i.e. medieval] houses were of different status but shared a common spatial, technical and decorative pattern that referred to common structural principles running up and down the social ladder" (Johnson 1993:149). He argued that the meaning of space in the peasant house was the same as the meaning of space within a manor house, and that therefore everyone knew their place, physically and socially, in a variety of settings (*ibid.*:158); that there was a common spatial grammar that was utilised throughout the social hierarchy of the time.

Johnson's handling of gender can be criticised, however. Statements such as "the role of women in brewing, dairying and other activities gave them a considerable degree of independence within the household" (Johnson 1993: 55) are simply inadequate. Far more precision is needed when describing this 'independence'. It cannot be assumed that women's involvement in various kinds of economic activity meant that they experienced independence. And it could be asked - independence from what? And to do what? Similarly, when discussing the ways in which the hall would frame everyday action, his assertion that "at mealtimes, the servant would show deference to the master, the wife to husband" (*ibid.*: 59) is unsupported by any historical evidence. Johnson also fails to take into account situations in which women were heads of households, such as when households were headed by widows, or simply at times when husbands may have been absent. Johnson does, however, alter his stance substantially in his later work. In a 1997 piece on vernacular architecture he writes the "the hall is remarkably silent about relations of gender, between master and wife – in fact, we could suggest that it deliberately fails to acknowledge this aspect of social relations" (Johnson 1997: 146) and even goes so far as to reverse his previous position, writing that "In some sense, though, the house as a whole can be seen as gendered as feminine, as the woman's sphere of legitimate activities" (*ibid.*: 148).

Pamela Graves is a scholar similarly concerned with the built environment. Her study of churches is an example of research influenced by post-processual concerns with the ways in which meaning is constituted by social practice. Graves focuses on an investigation of the experience and effects of medieval religious practice on participants and explores the ways in which authoritative practices operated in the lay-out of many late medieval churches through an analysis of the use of space medieval ecclesiastical buildings as well as the control and manipulation of architectural embellishment therein. She argues that the fabric of the church was a primary locus of display for the medieval

aristocracy and also examines the way in which the physical environment of the church affected peasants' religious experience (Graves 1989; 2000). She discusses, for example, the way the division of churches into chancel and nave would have been experienced by the peasantry, and argues that the clear similarities in both spatial features and the use of accoutrements such as water and linen would have created an experiential similarity between an aristocratic hall and the chancel and altar of the church (Graves 2000:112, 161). In a case-study of Devon churches she suggests that the peasants of this region would have located similarities between the chancel/nave division of space in the church and the division of space in their own living quarters – that between living area and byre. She suggests that the peasantry may have understood their occupation of the nave during church services as equivalent to their animals' occupation of the byre of the longhouse, and thus have interpreted their own social position to have been that of social inferiority. Graves therefore concludes that "For the majority ... the experience of orthodox Christian worship was inseparable from the reproduction of their role in the social and labouring structure of the manor, the household and their relations with the manorial family" (*ibid.*:121).

Mark Douglas has completed somewhat similar research on a selection of Yorkshire churches. Douglas (2003) focussed on the ways in which collective memory impacted upon the architectural development of parish churches in late medieval England. He argues that the manipulation of memory as employed in churches by the wealthy of the parish was a strategy which allowed them to partially compensate for their lack of actual coercive power in the post-Black Death era. Using case studies from Yorkshire, Douglas explores issues of surveillance and the re-use of architectural material in order to offer a closely-contextualised study of the ways in which the parish church was a site of the enactment of power relationships.

The phenomenological aspect of medieval churches in the landscape has been discussed by Nicholas Corcos (2001) in an investigation of the relationship between the two churches of Shapwick and Moorlinch in Somerset. Corcos argues that when Shapwick was taken over by Glastonbury Abbey between the early eighth and early ninth centuries, its low-lying and topographically unimpressive setting was deemed unsuitable for the purposes of displaying the ancient authority of its patron. He suggests that the church at Moorlinch served the purpose of 'deputising' for Shapwick because it was sited on a substantial promontory surrounded by impressive and possibly prehistoric lynchets. The topography of the surrounds of Moorlinch church made it particularly impressive when viewed from the north going south, i.e. when people were travelling from Shapwick to Moorlinch, quite possibly utilising a track directly linking the churches. Corcos argues that the setting of Moorlinch church has strong visual and phenomenological affinities with the ancient site of Glastonbury Tor and that the topography of these churches might represent a 'monumentalising' function.

Perhaps the case study which uses the widest range of material cultural and documentary evidence and which is most deeply concerned with the peasant's experience of space, power and family relationships is that dealing with Okehampton Park, Devon, by David Austin and Julian Thomas (1990). In this study, the scales of the peasants' engagement with space are divided into the areas of the house, the farmyard, the land cultivated by the peasants and the wider landscape, and each treated separately. The authors investigate the ways that these spaces would have been inhabited in terms of the opportunities for social interaction afforded between members of the community and also with those outside it. They discuss the associations that may have clustered around and informed the experience of these spaces. For example they comment on the public and private spaces of the house, and the sharing of space between two households which may suggest an equal sharing of authority. The way in which each of these 'places' may have affected peasant subjectivities is explored by

discussing both the semiotic and functional implications of the evidence. The authors approach the issue of the *habitus* of a specific group of peasants and emphasise their concern with posing and answering *archaeological* questions, in contrast with simply interpreting the data in terms of a framework and terminology derived from historical schema.

Austin and Thomas address the important matter of the ways in which the inhabitation of certain places structured peasant consciousness. However, at some points in their paper this is a subject that is not dealt with adequately. The conclusions they proffer tend to be those which utilise typical structuralist categories. For example they write that “As in many discussions of social discourse, we are finding expression through opposition: upper/lower, private/public, human/animal, inside/outside” (Austin and Thomas 1990: 59). Alternatively, they offer interpretations that take explanatory leaps and ascribe meanings which are not supported by specific evidence. An example is their suggestion that a separate room in a house may have been for the older generation, serving to keep them near to the house/hearth but necessarily away from decision-making. This sort of explanation may stem from modern attitudes towards the elderly and is not supported by any specific evidence from the site in question. Similarly, they posit inhabitants’ ‘frustration’ at their supposed inter-dependence with respect to arable production. Terms such as ‘inter-dependence’ and ‘frustration’ are loaded and complex ones and therefore need more specific evidence to support their use in a historical context. Other conclusions are very general in nature, such as the fact that people would have interacted in the church and the marketplace and when taking their stock to pasture. These shortcomings constrain the use of this work as a model approach to medieval settlement sites. The paper is, nonetheless, useful as an introduction to a variety of conceptual tools, particularly with regard to highlighting possible differences between houses and the types of conclusions that could be drawn from these, and in its general (and unusual) insistence on concentrating on peasant experience. It must be noted, however, that David Austin later rejected

the notion of public and private which he outlined in this paper, and embarked on an investigation into the genealogy of these concepts (Austin 1998). In this later work he suggests that notions of public and private are inextricably intertwined with the state of modern capitalism and that we must look, instead, at the way medieval people used these words before uncritically using them in historical writing. This approach, he suggests, helps us avoid inserting terms loaded with modern meaning into work on the past. In this later study, he traces the history of the meanings of the words 'public' and 'private', and concludes that the use of the word 'public' as meaning a state in opposition to the private, only came into use in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Spatial relationships in medieval society and the linkages between space and social power have also been investigated by Tom Saunders (1990; 2000). Saunders takes an explicitly Marxist approach, and investigates the way that space was active in constructing the class relationships of feudal society. He argues that the rigorous organisation and definition of space in the medieval village was an expression of feudal authority which allowed the lords to survey and thereby control their subjects. Saunders stresses that both in village and town the movement towards bounded settlement morphology was significant in expression of lordly feudal identity on both an inter- and intra-class basis, and that one of the strategies which augmented this was the sharing of space between manorial buildings and churches. However, he also observes that "feudal strategies of surveillance could always be circumvented in the day-to-day management of production" (Saunders 2000: 222) and draws attention to the way that nucleated villages brought together populations of people into village communities which could potentially place limits on the powers of lordship. Similarly, in the process of urbanisation and particularly in the expansion of towns, new and unplanned social identities could develop to counter those imposed by the lords.

Another scholar who discusses the identities produced by medieval landscapes is Karin Altenberg, who has endeavoured to “develop theories concerning the experience of the landscape and to assess how aspects of gender, status and regional and local identity were manifested in the landscape during the Middle Ages” (Altenberg 2003: i). Altenberg is concerned with applying modern archaeological theorising to medieval archaeology using specific case studies, and she concentrates not on nucleated villages which are so often the focus of medieval landscape studies, but on ‘marginal’, dispersed settlement. Altenberg utilises a novel approach to her data in presenting them on three levels: the perspective from the inside, the outside and from the point of view of the modern scholar. A comprehensive range of material culture from the case studies of Bodmin Moor, Dartmoor and the Romele Ridge, Sweden, is dealt with, and a wide array of issues considered. She discusses the concept of marginality in a highly original manner and presents a particularly impressive interpretation of the phenomenological experience of ecclesiastical structures of Bodmin Moor and Dartmoor. She argues that on Dartmoor chapels were located in liminal zones in order to protect the civilised world from the unknown world, but that on Bodmin Moor these structures were located in the centre of the moor in order to civilise the people who lived on it and to incorporate them into ecclesiastical parishes (*ibid.*: 111).

Some aspects of Altenberg’s study, however, are slightly problematic. Some of her conclusions are strictly functionalist: for example, she writes that “one can assume that the prehistoric and medieval settlers chose the same position for their settlements on a functional basis” (*ibid.*: 150) without considering any others reasons – social, or spiritual for example – for the siting of particular settlements. She also states that we “need to be careful not to overstate the value of power, ritual and hierarchy when studying a specific medieval context because ... men and women on the moor probably were more influenced by functional and cultural factors” (*ibid.*: 262). This statement betrays a lack of appreciation of the ‘cultural’ nature of what is considered to be functional in

any given society and appears to separate 'function and culture' from power, ritual and hierarchy, failing to consider the ways in which all these concepts interpenetrate each other in individuals' and societies' use of land.

Altenberg also attacks the phenomenological conclusions about landscape proposed by prehistorian Chris Tilley for being, among other things, too subjective and not amenable to replication (Altenberg 2003: 27), as well as the explanations in Austin and Thomas' paper for using supporting material from historical contexts outside those under discussion (*ibid.*: 57-8). However, she too uses an assortment of evidence from a variety of temporal and geographical contexts. For example, at the end of a discussion on mobility in her study area, she mentions, presumably as an argument regarding the experience of landscape, that, as illustrated in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the forest was portrayed as an image of fear and disorder "in medieval thinking" (*ibid.*: 94). In order to avoid anachronism the use of examples such as these need to be closely tied in with the context under study. For these written sources to be relevant to her interpretations she would need to demonstrate that individuals in the medieval landscape of Bodmin Moor or Dartmoor would have been aware of this play, written by a Venetian and finished in 1321, explain how she had established the existence of this awareness, and outline its social, spatial and temporal reach, or at least demonstrate that Dante's perspective was widely adhered to in medieval society by providing further examples of its social currency. Similarly, in her treatment of the relationship between food and gender on the moors she draws on the suggestion of Christine Hastorf, an archaeologist who studies pre-Hispanic Andean cultures, that when male dominance is threatened, the exercising of power in gender relationships may be connected to food. She also mentions Henrietta Moore's work, based on ethnographic study of the Marakwet of Kenya, on the relationship between gender and food and the way the provision of food is related to control over sexuality (*ibid.*: 261). Again, it is not intrinsically problematic that these

sources are used, but their validity for her specific context must be demonstrated; linkages must be made and not merely assumed.

There are also instances in Altenberg's work in which it would have been useful for more evidence to have been provided in support of some assertions. For example, she argues that "in the countryside, identity and status seem to have been controlled by the community" (*ibid.*: 20). However, no evidence is offered to support this statement nor mechanisms suggested whereby this control was exerted. Similarly, she states that that "the good of the community was more important than the success of the individual" (*ibid.*), but provides no evidence in support of this. She also writes that "a person's spatial referents are, to some extent, formed according to group identity and socio-spatial structures are therefore usually regionally specific" (*ibid.*: 21). This begs several questions, including whether the only 'groups' which form spatial references are regional ones. Members of different gender, age and status groups within the moors settlements will have experienced and read the spatial references differently according to factors associated with their own taskscape (defined as "an array of related activities; Ingold 1993:8). These differences problematise her notion of a solid 'group-identity' which needs to be more nuanced in its exposition.

On the whole, however, Karin Altenberg's work is a valuable start to the project of understanding the range of ways in which the landscape could be experienced by medieval people, particularly because it deals with non-nucleated settlement. It utilises a range of theoretical tools and deals with a comprehensive range of issues although, at times, the theoretical promise of the work is not thoroughly carried through in its exposition. It can be seen, in sum, that only limited attempts have been made to address 'social' questions in the archaeology of the medieval peasantry, and some of those that have are marred by, at times not inconsiderable, flaws.

1.3 Historical approaches to the late medieval peasantry.

In contrast to the limited attention paid by archaeologists, issues of power and resistance, gender, agency and community in the late medieval English community have been dealt with extensively by historians of the period. There are many examples of historians using the documentary record to explore these and other facets of peasant life, often with illuminating results.

Gender differences have been addressed by medieval historians. Women's work, and evidence for changes throughout the life-course in terms of economic opportunity, have been analysed by, among others, Judith Bennett. Her study of the manor of Brigstock, Northamptonshire, in the early fourteenth century investigated the relationship between the sexes and how this varied throughout a lifecourse using the evidence of manor court rolls. She argues that it was the conjugal nature of households which largely structured relations between the sexes and that it was household position – whether a person was head of a household or a dependent – which largely determined individual experience. She points out that these positions in a household were very often gendered but that it was the position a person occupied rather than their gender which necessarily mattered. She also argued that lower-ranked women exercised slightly expanded social opportunities, such as attending court, vis-à-vis those of higher rank, but that this was fairly minimal. In contradiction to many authors, including Jeremy Goldberg, she also argued that, given the model provided by her work in Brigstock which suggests that changes in women's 'status' did not improve with a general improvement in the economy, the changes wrought by the Black Death in the fourteenth century are unlikely to have substantially altered medieval peasant women's position (Bennett 1987).

Judith Bennett (1996) also completed a study on women's participation in the brewing industry between 1300 and 1600. This study utilised a large range of

sources but especially ale-tasters' presentments and records of the Brewers guild in fifteenth-century London as well as literary and artistic evidence. She emphasised the continuities in women's involvement in this trade throughout the profound changes over these 300 years and argued that, although there were changes in the structures of the industry, there was no transformation in the status of the work women did insofar as it remained low status, low skilled, poorly paid and was accommodated around family tasks. She discusses the commercial changes which took place, such as the professionalisation of ale production owing to the increased market which came about from improved living standards after the Black Death. Organisational change also occurred, with guild regulation becoming common. Technological change which led to beer, rather than ale, being brewed and regulatory changes such as various schemes to licence brewers all affected the trade. All these changes are discussed in terms of their impact on brewsters. She also considered the ideological factors which affected the representation and therefore social perceptions of brewsters and female victuallers. She argues that these changes, insofar as they eventually forced women out of ale and beer production, affected single women and widows before they did married women.

Another prominent historian of medieval peasant women is Barbara Hanawalt. She published a seminal work on the medieval English peasant family in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with a focus on the investigation into changes wrought to this unit by the upheavals of this period (Hanawalt 1986). Her fundamental thesis is that there was a considerable amount of continuity in the medieval family because of its inherent flexibility. She discusses economy and household size as well as the affective relationships between members of the household. The sources for the study were mainly coroners' records from accidental-death inquests from Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Wiltshire but Hanawalt also consulted wills, manor court rolls and literary sources. She also, rarely for a medieval historian, used the evidence of archaeological material, to discuss, for example,

village replanning, and used earthwork evidence to discuss the layout of tofts and crofts (Hanawalt 1986:25, 43). She also utilised ceramic and faunal evidence in her discussion of peasant standards of living (*ibid.*: 46, 52). Hanawalt also published a collection of essays on the importance of reputation in establishing and maintaining social order in the Middle Ages (1998), some of which touched on these issues as they related to the peasantry. Of key importance in these essays was an emphasis, using a variety of documentary and literary sources, on spatial boundaries and their gendered connotations in a variety of spheres in the Middle Ages. For example, she discusses the ambiguous spaces of medieval taverns and the semi-public role the women who worked there occupied and that this aroused hostility and suspicion. She also investigates ways in which women were exhorted to behave in public spaces, using the advice of advice books and sermons, and discusses women who appeared to transgress these norms, such as Beguines and prostitutes.

Gender and social control has also been the topic of enquiry of Karen Jones and Michael Zell (1998) who, using the court records of the Kent borough of Fordwich, looked at evidence for social concern with personal morals and noted a marked increase in this concern at the end of the fifteenth century. Even work which is descriptive of, rather than analytical about, the various roles played by medieval peasant women is important and much has been carried out by Jeremy Goldberg. He has drawn on evidence for the variety of tasks medieval peasant women were engaged in, changes throughout the lifecourse, women's recreational activities and so on (Goldberg 1992a). Masculine identities in the Middle Ages among have also been discussed by in terms of recreational practice by historian Jeremy Goldberg (1999).

Peasant marriage has been much discussed by medieval historians. Jacqueline Murray (1998) has discussed the implication of the church's doctrine of consensual marriage for the gender regime of the period. Using manor court rolls she has argued that seigneurial control over choice of marriage partner was

limited. For example, the court roll evidence from a manor in Norfolk between 1284 and 1290 indicates that pressure to marry particular people exerted by the lord of the manor was actively and successfully resisted, thereby indicating that the power of the lord was weak in this respect. Shannon McSheffrey (1998) has examined court depositions to discuss gendered strategies in marriage arrangements, for example women's use of the ploy of needing consent of friends or kin as a reason not to marry; issues also dealt with by Martin Ingram (1981) in his work on various ecclesiastical courts.

Other issues discussed by medieval historians of the period include peasant agency in the use of the courts, and the evidence for the clear political strategies which emerge has been studied by Goheen (1991). Peasant perceptions of time have been examined by John Bedell (1999). He uses proof of age records, which were documents produced by the hearings which were held to determine whether a ward of a lord had yet come of age, to discuss issues such as relationships between peasants. He notes, for example, the emotion used in descriptions of friendship. He also analyses which events were considered to be of importance to the peasantry, interpreted as such because they were the ones predominantly remembered by them. For example, mothers' purification rituals after the birth of siblings was frequently referred to by the jurors as well as the deaths of brothers and fathers. Gender solidarity can be inferred from these conclusions, as it was male relatives whose deaths were more frequently remembered by the male jurors than that of female relatives. Similarly, the birth of sons was remembered by the jurors more frequently than their own weddings, although the weddings of female relatives were referred to more than those of males, possibly because it was the jurors themselves who were responsible for arranging these events. Bedell notes that it was family and village events which were remembered most, whereas events of national political importance such as wars and treaties hardly ever figured in these recollections.

The operation of power in the medieval village has been widely discussed in the historical literature. A major debate has been the ability of aristocrats to influence spatial organisation, and this is a key theme for those wishing to discuss the peasant's experience of power in the late Middle Ages. One of the main participants in this debate is Christopher Dyer. He emphasises the unity of the peasantry and suggests that the lords had neither the power nor the inclination to exercise complete domination (Dyer 1985). He also argues, among other things, that the lack of similarity in settlement form between different estates of the same lord (and estates of the same type of lord), and the lack of coincidence between manor and township as well as between the distribution of nucleated villages and lordship type, provides us with evidence that settlement form in this period was dictated more by the nature of the settlement type prevalent in the region rather than by direct intervention from the landlord (Lewis, Mitchell-Fox and Dyer 1997). Historians who, in contrast, have argued that the power of the lord over the lives and physical surroundings of the peasantry was much stronger include Christopher Taylor (1983) and P.D.A. Harvey (1989). Taylor suggests that large numbers of all medieval villages (and possibly also of dispersed settlements) were planned while Harvey, although accepting that lords could be very respectful of local custom on a day-to-day level and uninterested in the internal organisation of the vill, considers that they were often extremely dictatorial when it came to matters dealing with the village as a whole. He argues that this situation was not in fact contradictory, and that the lords' dictatorial powers were themselves an aspect of custom. These conclusions, Harvey suggests, help to make sense of the fact that historians often conclude that medieval lords moved gingerly and carefully around peasant customs whereas archaeologists are confronted with evidence for lordly initiative having caused sweeping changes to the landscape (*ibid.*:35). Although Harvey states that he is positing seigneurial power as only a *possible* source of initiative in settlement change, he argues forcefully throughout that in situations in which lordly will is not obviously the pre-eminent driving force, it

can be seen that what was at stake in these situations had simply been judged to be unimportant for the advancement of the lord's interests.

Christopher Dyer has explored many other issues connected with seigneurial power and peasant community. In a number of publications, he has used an array of documentary sources to outline the specific practices through which both the power of lordship and community were enacted (Dyer 1980; 1991; 1994a; 1998). He has outlined the role of village officials and the manor court in mediating this relationship using specific case studies such as that of the Bishopric of Worcester. Using fourteenth-century court rolls from this manor, he drew attention to the way that orders made by manorial courts were not always obeyed and deduced from this that there is evidence for administrators being somewhat lax in pressing the lords' interests. Many other historians have also tackled these issues. Phillip Schofield discusses the role of the manor court in the lord/tenant relationship as well as such issues as the power of kinship in the lives of the peasantry. He argues that the strength of family networks varied and was dependent on the existence of opportunities for family members to continue to live together and that a wealth divide was probably a feature of the strength of kinship. He argues that poorer peasants were more independent of both their immediate and extended kin as their families tended to be smaller than those of wealthier peasants. The smaller landholdings of these poorer peasants also meant that it was less likely that the children of these peasants would inherit a piece of land of adequate size to subsist on, and that this led to poorer people migrating to other settlements, away from their kin, in search of economic opportunity (Schofield 2003). Miriam Müller (2001, 2003) also writes about peasant experience of seigneurial power, emphasising the importance of personal freedom to the peasantry (although this is a debated topic and will be dealt with in Chapter Six). Martin Pimsler (1977) uses manor court evidence from Elton in Huntingdonshire to discuss the nature of solidarity in the medieval village. He argues that the limited amount of reciprocal pledging in this village suggests a lack of close ties among the peasantry and

that officials were used for this purpose because neighbours did not have close relationships with each other. Another historian to investigate interpersonal ties in the medieval village is Elaine Clark. Clark (1994) investigated evidence for “social welfare”; the ways in which peasant communities looked after the most vulnerable amongst them. Using literary sources, handbooks of pastoral care, and cartularies from monasteries she investigated treatment of orphans, the ill, the old, labourers and vagrants and concluded that “the parish formed a world where generosity counted and fellowship prevailed” (*ibid.*: 404).

The classic study by Edward Britton (1977) also stands as a testament to the way that the use of documentary evidence by many historians can tell us about “how the village actually lived” (*ibid.*: 167). His study covered the period from 1288 to 1340 and focussed on the manor of Broughton in Huntingdonshire. The study dealt with issues such as the internal structure of families, and viewed the village in terms of the community as a whole rather than focussing on manorial history. Britton primarily used court rolls, but also account rolls and rentals. His intention was to “give form and meaning to the lives of the villagers” (*ibid.*: 6). Families were reconstructed from the court rolls and the role of village officials was investigated, and it was found that social status and economic position tended to be related to the holding of an official post in the village. The hierarchy of the village was examined and co-operation in the form of personal pledging and concords (out of court settlements) investigated. Land exchanges and debt deals were also examined to determine the nature of peasant co-operation and it was concluded that the behaviour of wealthier families was different from those of the less wealthy families. Friction, in terms of criminal behaviour as well in terms of cases of defamation and false claims was considered, and it was apparent that it was between members of the lower and highest groups that most conflict occurred rather than between villagers of similar status. Social mobility was also explored and it was found that although the people and families could move in and out of various social grades, the structure and nature of these grades themselves remained relatively stable. In

essence, it was the study of the village *community* that was at the heart of this work, along with exploration of the practices which sustained or undermined this community, both within the village itself and in the immediate region.

An aspect of peasant community dealt with by Britton, as well as other historians, is that of social differentiation within the village and the roles played by wealth, and the occupation of the role of the village officials among other factors. Marjorie McIntosh (1986) wrote extensively about the difference between cottagers and ploughmen, the use of the manor court and the position of women in her study of the manor of Havering, Essex. Rodney Hilton was an influential Marxist historian who was interested in the class nature of medieval society. He discussed both solidarity between members of the class as well as differences within it (e.g. Hilton 1975). His analysis of peasant women is a classic example of Marxist thinking on gender inequalities, in that he interprets the position of medieval peasant women as relatively favourable due to the improving conditions for all members of this class after the middle of the fourteenth century rather than as due to any social conditions which affected them specifically because of their sex (*ibid.*).

1.4 Archaeology and history

From this necessarily brief review, it can be seen that it is historians rather than archaeologists who have been most interested in, and who have most successfully investigated, questions of gender, power and experience in the late medieval English village. But archaeologists should not abandon the study of these issues to historians, assuming that archaeology cannot address them and that it is best to confine ourselves to issues many steps removed from actual medieval people. The debate surrounding the relationship between history and archaeology as disciplines, their source materials and the appropriate questions

to ask of these provides is a useful prelude to explaining the approach to be taken in this thesis.

Some scholars have argued for the importance of archaeology in investigations of the past on the grounds that documents were written for the elite and that therefore their use only allows us to see the rest of the population through their eyes (e.g. Dyer 1988; Austin 1990: 12). It has also been claimed that historical records may tend towards the official record of dominant groups (Miller 1989: 76), so that “archaeology itself therefore becomes an instrument of the limits of dominance by recovering that history which time itself was expected to repress in favour of the state chronicler” (*ibid.*). John Moreland, however (1991; 2001), has refuted this view and has stressed that both documentary and archaeological objects are conscious productions. Further, he has noted that archaeology is not uniquely capable of writing the history of non-elite groups, and draws attention to the work carried out by a variety of radical historians such as Martin Hall who has written on the last two millennia of South Africa’s history and who draws attention to the biases and suppositions inherent in the reading and writing of historical narratives.

Documents have often been considered to be of limited use by archaeologists because of their “particularistic” view of the past (Austin 1990:35) and because they are best able to tell us about events rather than, as with archaeological material, give us information about processes (Tabaczyński 1993). It can be argued, however, that the outcome of research into archaeological and historical data is very much a product of the way they are interpreted and is not inherent to data sources themselves. Depending on the approach adopted, an excavated pilgrim badge, for example, can tell us simply about an event in the life of a single peasant. Yet it can also tell us about the development of lay piety in the late medieval religious sphere, including the popularity of particular shrines, what was considered to be the most ‘powerful’ features of the shrine in terms of the features which are recorded on the badge, and so on. Similarly, manor court

rolls can tell us about individual events in the lives of the specific people mentioned or, if evidence for unpaid fines, uncompleted labour services and non-attendance at court were investigated over a protracted period, for example, they can be read for evidence of long-term processes such as relations between lords and peasants.

In fact, it may be a measure of medieval archaeology's insecurity that there is an apparent need to state the reasons for the inadequacy of the documentary record and *thereby* stress the importance of archaeological data. Yet it simply needs to be acknowledged that material culture and documents are both data types whose production and consumption always were implicated in social processes in which power was integral. Neither is 'innocent' of these effects and the interpretation of both needs to be made with care and thought.

Historical archaeologists as well as historians of the medieval period need to be aware that "there was no archaeology, no history, no architectural history in the Middle Ages. There were total systems of communication" (Moreland 1998: 94). Essentially, we need to be aware that in the lived lives of the peasantry, both writing (for example, in the context of the manor court), and material culture played a part, that they were experienced 'at once', as it were. Both sources need to be utilised by practitioners of both disciplines and it needs to be recognised that both writing and material culture were oppressive of, as well as being co-opted and negotiated by, the peasantry.

It is important that historical archaeology rejects the role of 'handmaiden' to history, and therefore the present research has placed primacy on the possible meanings produced by peasant encounters with material culture. Documentary sources and concepts derived from them expounded by historians have certainly been used in this thesis, as these concepts would have structured the lives of the peasants themselves. But it is not the case that a 'historical' example needs to be found to 'prove' a suggestion made via an investigation of the material

culture. These evidence types need to sit side-by-side one another, and one should have no more explanatory force than the other.

1.5 Key themes

1.5.1 Power

A central part of the current research is an investigation into the operation of power among the inhabitants of the late medieval English village. The notion of 'power' has been thought about in many different ways and conceived of from different angles by a variety of thinkers. The classic and influential Weberian conception of power is one in which institutions or people hold power and gain legitimacy from their position within the structures of society (see particularly Weber's discussion of political communities (Weber 1968: 926-40)). This has meant that the state and other government institutions are usually seen as the foci of struggles for social power (Paynter and McGuire 1991:6).

More recent theorising about the nature of social power, however, has viewed it as a force which is not possessed by institutions but exercised by people, one that is present in all social situations and one that is both enabling and constraining, which both shuts down and opens up possibilities (see Lukes 1986). Michel Foucault has been a particularly influential thinker in this 'second-stream' of power research. He conceived of power as something which is not essentially oppressive, but which is, in fact, productive of social phenomena. The present work has been influenced by several of Foucault's concepts of power, particularly the notion of the linkage between power and the production of knowledge. He writes that "there is no ... knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault 1977: 27). Foucault's concept of 'force relations' is also important in understanding these ideas about power in that it allows us to conceive of power

as existing in all relations and not as being 'held' by particular institutions. Foucault (1978: 92) writes that "power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation", and that "it is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power" (*ibid.*:93). Similarly, his notion of power as an effect rather than as a property allows us to talk about it as being pervasive in all social situations: "Relations of power are ... the immediate effects of ... divisions, inequalities and disequilibriums" (*ibid.*:94).

Archaeologists have not been slow to consider the implications of this type of theorising for their own work. Daniel Miller and Christopher Tilley have utilised the distinction between 'power-to' and 'power-over' in their discussions (Miller and Tilley 1984). This is a useful way to conceive of power, which prevents it from being seen merely as repressive. Many feminist archaeologists have also embraced these new formulations of the theory of power (although it must be noted that there are significant tensions in the social science literature between much Foucauldian thought and feminist concerns; see papers in Ramazonglu 1993). For example, Tracy Sweely rejects large-scale institutional, top-down ideas of power and writes that "power as a generative source is produced not through authoritative discourse which is ... unquestionable and therefore static, but in the interactions among individuals in which its meanings and terms are continually created" (Sweely 1999:3). She also adopts recent theorising about the nature of power by acknowledging the role that personal, rather than institutional, factors can play. She writes that archaeologists should start "including theories of interpersonal relations in models of power relations based on archaeological data" (Sweely 1997:394) and argues that "given that individuals' interpretations of ideological frameworks develop first in interpersonal contexts, the power that is associated with these contexts for shaping, first, individuals, then the larger society through the actions and interactions of those individuals, needs to be

acknowledged” (*ibid.*: 396). Similarly, Alison Wylie (1992: 51) writes that “a crucial insight of what has come to be known as ‘post-processualism’ is most simply that power is a central dimension of all social relations” and, importantly for the present work, she draws attention to the suggestion that the “historically specific politico-jural form of authority that evolved in the west appears to have come, by itself, to signify the total concept of ‘legitimate authority’” (March and Taqqu 1986 cited in Wylie 1992:57). This point will be taken up in Chapter Six and allows us to re-conceive the nature of what ‘power’ might mean in different times and places, without always referring back to our own views of the loci of its operation.

Resistance to power is also a key theme of the present work and one which has received sustained attention by various theorists, including archaeologists. For example, Daniel Miller writes that power should be seen as “a force establishing a domain of possibilities incorporating within itself the generation of both domination and the modes of its resistance” (Miller 1989:64). This leads us to *expect* resistance to power and to look for it in all contexts; to assume its appearance. It can be argued that it is the *lack* of resistance, rather than its presence, that should be explained. Scholars have started to stress the need to look not just at obvious, major episodes of public resistance (for example, the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381), but to see resistance in many low-level, everyday activities. James Scott (1990) has brilliantly outlined the many and varied ways in which those in a ‘subaltern’ position resist power, and urges us not to accept the ‘official transcript’ of a society, but to look beneath it to the reality of struggle. Many of the ideas outlined in his book are able to inform our interpretations of archaeological material culture. Particularly relevant is his notion of ‘infra-politics’, defined as “the circumspect struggle waged by subordinate groups” (*ibid.*:183), an “unobtrusive realm of political struggle” (*ibid.*), in which subordinate groups take part in “veiled cultural struggle and political expression” (*ibid.*: 184). Scott’s approach allows us to view social phenomena in a new light. For example, in his discussion of the nature of

gossip, instead of viewing the practice merely as a means of deploying social control between a group of equals, he illustrates – drawing on a variety of conceptual tools as well as an empirical anthropological study of modern Andalusian villages (*ibid.*: 143) – the way gossip works to maintain conformity within a group, and thus a united front against dominant others. This concept of infra-politics has been used extensively in the present study and it is argued that, while not ‘invisible’, the infra-political activities of medieval peasants was often either covert or extremely subtle.

Archaeological approaches to resistance have also been developed by Robert Paynter and Randall McGuire (1991). These authors have encouraged archaeologists to look for everyday forms of resistance and suggest that villages, for example, may be a vital locus of resistance in some societies as they were distant from dominant architectural symbols. It can be argued that this is an overly-simplistic suggestion and one that fails to recognise both that rural locations have their own forms of dominant architecture and that power effects are produced in a myriad of ways. However, it is a useful beginning in conceptualising the role that material culture can play in the deployment of resistance to power. Similarly, Bill Frazer discusses possible archaeological evidence for resistance. He argues that “resistance is often manifest in efforts to “maintain” or refashion a *perceived* continuity of secure, familiar daily existence. This sort of resistance is often related to proximate spatial relations – the sharing of lived experiences – as well, and thus involves the creation or maintenance of localized collective identities” (Frazer 1999:7).

Central to discussions of power and resistance, then, is the idea of *practice*. What physically occurred, what possibilities and meanings were evoked by the material culture that we study is key to understanding archaeological material as evidence for the exercising of power and for resistance to it. Medieval peasant studies, whether based on documentary or archaeological evidence, tend still to conceive of power as emanating from institutions, and people’s

power as being solely related to their access to these institutions. This stance has particular implications for discussions of gendered power and is elaborated on extensively in the final chapter. Medieval archaeologists must attempt to read space, buildings and artefacts in terms of what they can tell us about peasant practice and what meanings of power and resistance would have been evoked thereby.

1.5.2 Gender

The archaeology of gender is practiced according to two, relatively discrete, programmatic strands. Both Roberta Gilchrist (1994) and Marie Louise Sørensen (2002) dichotomise gender archaeology in terms of a feminist/American practice and a non-feminist (apolitical) /European practice. This dichotomy is further elaborated with the inclusion of a posited difference between an interest in individual subjectivities (European) and a focus on the division of labour and sex roles (American) in which the former approach is seen to address issues of hierarchy and oppression while the latter does not. A range of other ideas cluster around either side of this dichotomy, perhaps the most important of which is the argument that the 'Americanist' approach universalises the experience of all women and fails to appreciate the way age, sexuality and class interacts with it.

A sub-text of these discussions is one that can be seen to be involved with historical veracity. Many authors take an embarrassed step away from second-wave feminism's role in initiating the study of gender in archaeology and argue that the interest in questions about a division of labour and related issues is simply a reflection of present political concerns and does not provide an adequate framework for discussion of past societies. Their plea to investigate difference rather than dominance, however (e.g. Gilchrist 1999:53; Meskell 2001:195), inspired by the works of queer theorists and theorists of ethnicity,

can be seen to be *equally* bound up with modern political frameworks, deriving from post-modern emphasis on the politics of representation.

What this should make clear, once again, is the way our archaeological practice is inescapably embedded in political frameworks. The writing of explicitly feminist archaeology, which may include discussions of ‘phallogentricity’ or ‘patriarchy’ (e.g. Baker 2000), is *logically* no more ‘biased’ than the work of archaeologists who discuss embodied subjectivities. This is due to the fact that those discussions tend to be forced to rely, at some stage, on data which has been collected or analysed using a positivist empirical framework, frameworks which have themselves been shown to be products of very specific cultural and political contexts. The notion of value-free research is, in any case, a chimera.

In some respects, the ‘American’ and ‘European’ types of research are displaying only differences in scale and categorisation. My research is focussed on specific villages and the relationships embedded therein (which could be seen as an example of the ‘European’ approach), rather than, for example, women’s exclusion from guilds or medieval legal attitudes to rape (which could be seen as more explicitly ‘feminist’ in orientation and therefore more typical of an American approach). This is only because I am interested in exploring the contextualised experience of power rather than particular categories in which power operated. The merits of this contextual approach can certainly be argued for and are outlined below (see pp. 44-46), but it cannot be suggested that these approaches allow us to produce archaeologies which are safely neutral in terms of present political concerns.

Within the debate about the various ways to approach an archaeology of gender, various concepts have been both bundled together and separated in a way that, it can be suggested, is unsatisfactory. The concepts placed on either side of the dichotomy are as follows:

Gender groups/rights/sex roles/gender as an effect/ feminist archaeology

As opposed to

Individuals/subjectivities/discursive existence/gender as experience/non-political archaeology

These concerns can be seen to be, *in practice*, ultimately connected. This connected-ness is related to ideas about knowledgeable agents. One has both an experience of sex roles, and a knowledge that one is fulfilling them as part of various institutions connected to the exercise of power. Part of our subjectivity can be constituted of our rights or lack of them and knowledge of that position. There is nothing intrinsic about either approach to rule out, or insist upon, a discussion of domination or patriarchy. In fact it can be seen that contextualising gender, which is one of the often-stated goals of the 'European' school (e.g. Boyd 1997), is a fundamental first step in any political discussion of gender as only this process has the power to de-naturalise current unequal gender relations and, as these are often bolstered by appeals to their 'naturalness', de-legitimise them.

However, there is a certain type of gender archaeology which is problematic and examples of this can come from practitioners on either side of the Atlantic and is exemplified by a paper by Joan Gero (2000). In this paper, Gero argues that recent discussions of agency are inherently 'masculinist' as they focus on things such as decisiveness and assertiveness rather than traits such as empathy which she implicitly suggests are female. Gero's writing embraces as essentially female, traits such as the ability to sustain caring relationships which can be seen to have been ascribed to women by patriarchal institutions for their own ends. These traits may well reflect women's experience in many situations, and there is therefore certainly a place for the discussion of these characteristics and their linkages with women in specific historical situations. However, to position these features as so absolutely *essential* to women that theories which apparently leave them out are accused of being fundamentally

flawed and essentially sexist, as Gero does, is to valorise characteristics that have been 'allowed' to women by institutions which have always treated them unequally, which can only serve to re-engage them. In addition, it could be argued that this apparent focus on decisiveness, assertiveness, leadership and so on is as much related to class as it is to gender. It is not possible at this stage to assert either that some essential femininity exists or, if it does, what it consists of. The type of opinion that Gero expounded can equally be found in much radical feminist theorising (see Tong 1989) and is deeply problematic.

There has also been significant discussion in the literature of the social sciences in general, as well as within archaeology, about the possible diversity of 'genders'. The work of archaeologists such as Nordbladh and Yates are exemplars of a certain type of research which argues, from current advances in biology, that sex is as much constructed as gender. They write that "the gender archaeologists present us with this vision: we will always have been labouring under the tyranny of genital difference, which will always have been resolved on the basis of the presence or absence of particular anatomical differences, on to which have been grafted secondarily, the cultural apparatus of gender" (Nordbladh and Yates 1990: 223). They go on to demonstrate that people have a variety of chromosomal characteristics and that there are more combinations than the usually-recognised XX and XY. Roberta Gilchrist (1999: 57-8) similarly stresses the existence of third sexes and hermaphrodites in various historical contexts. These types of arguments can be seen to be tied in to broader post-structuralist feminist debates in which various writers, notably Judith Butler, have, as an attempt to demonstrate the constructed nature of our categories and the mutable nature of sex, been led to deny the real existence, in any sense, of the presence of two sexes, and this in fact, leads them to deconstruct materiality altogether (see Butler 1993: 9-10). However, in order to de-naturalise our writing of socio-sexual arrangements in the past, which is presumably the goal of writers such as Nordbladh and Yates, it is not necessary to focus on the body and to insist that third sexes and so on are involved (see

Moi 1999). Obviously, we must be sensitive to the possibility of more than two genders, but, as Sørensen (2002) points out, societies do react to perceived differences between the categories 'men' and 'women' and therefore it is not inappropriate for archaeologists to focus on these categories. In any given context, it must be established, insofar as it is possible, whether these two categories were the way in which gender was perceived by members of the society in question. Once this has been established, it is hardly a 'tyranny' to pursue analyses based on the assumption. It is only tyrannical if this dualism is unquestionably accepted. The purpose of such focus on chromosomes, hormones and the like is to make us think about denaturalising categories. However, it is biologically deterministic to equate socio-sexual arrangements with the body only. There are other ways to make us reconsider gender arrangements which are not based on denying biological differences between the sexes, and this is, in fact, attempted in Chapter Six. In addition, we must question the validity of arguments based on new conceptions of human biology for societies in which the relevant medical technology necessary to enable these facts to be ascertained was not present.

Archaeologies of gender should seek to uncover the ways in which gender was socially constructed in the past in a particular context and how material culture was involved in this (Sørensen 2002: 71). They should seek to investigate the ways in which people became gendered and what this gendering involved in practice. Material culture is productive of gender differences (Moore 1994 reprinted in Thomas 2000: 317-28; Gilchrist 1994: 15); particularly, it is suggested in this study, through practices which tended either to be gender-specific or which were carried out routinely in a shared spatial and temporal context. Familiarity with a similar range of material culture produces shared identities and shared *habitus* which strengthens the sense of similarity between those who share it (Miller 1987: 104). This familiarity is especially implicated in the construction of gender as it has been argued that gender identity in particular is connected with a cumulative identification with a repertoire of

forms and social practices (Sofaer-Derevenski 1998, cited in Chapman 2000: 173). This aspect of gender identity and solidarity – with the implications of a shared familiarity with certain types of material culture – is an important part of the concerns of the present research.

An archaeological discussion of gender also needs to take into account the kind of micro-politics referred to in the previous section, defined as small-scale, localised actions and practices which have power effects, as it has been suggested that it is particularly useful to analyse sexual differences in these terms (Gatens 1992). An analysis of these practices can tell us much about the ways that gender ideologies which were propounded on a society-wide scale could be undercut by practical behaviour in the actions of everyday life (Gero and Scattolin 2002).

1.6 Key concepts

1.6.1 Agency

Ideas of ‘agency’ have gained currency in recent archaeological theorising and the present thesis has this concept firmly embedded within it. As opposed to meta-theories which see human beings as merely subjects determined by environmental or economic forces or by over-arching social structures, the concept of agency refers to the capability inherent in human beings for purposeful action (see Hodder *et al.* 1995: 232). In many respects, the adoption of this concept in archaeology was a reaction to the types of work that are still prevalent in the investigation of the medieval period – archaeologies which deal only with long-term processes of development. It was also a reaction to structuralist interpretive frameworks in which interpretation of cultural contexts was often made in terms of universalising dichotomies. Agency theory is an attempt to put the people back into archaeology; to demonstrate that history is

made by people and that we need to attempt explanation on the level of people rather than of broad processes which provide only abstract interpretations which, at times, explain very little (see papers in Dobres and Robb 2000; Barrett 2001).

The concept of agency has, however, been critiqued as being problematically intertwined with notions of individualism and in positing an 'agent' too similar to the archetypal rational subject of the humanist tradition, and also as capitalistic and masculinist due to its focus on drive and power. Joan Gero (2000:35) writes that "Subtly or blatantly, conscious or implicitly, most "agents" of social theory – and the values they act upon – are gendered male." She bases this claim on her interpretation of current agency theory as valorising 'masculine' attributes such as decisiveness and assertiveness. Gero's paper has been critiqued above and, as well as re-encaging women in old stereotypes, it can be suggested that arguments like this fundamentally misunderstand what most agency theorists advocate, which is simply a re-focussing of analysis back on practices and processes of change that are not functionalist or structuralist. Gero suggests that we are merely replacing these overarching categories with a similarly universalising one like 'agency' which, she suggest, produces a monolithic 'person' 'acting' in monolithic ways "untethered to time and space" (*ibid.*:38). Although no examples are given, it can be argued that if work like this is actually produced by archaeologists, it would simply be the result of a failure to practice contextual archaeology sufficiently skilfully rather than being due to a conceptual flaw in the idea of agency as she suggests. In terms of the supposed masculine-bias of the concept of agency, the contention seems to be that a focus on characteristics that women have traditionally been denied the ability to exercise (drive, power and so on) is yet another exclusion of them from history. However, it can be argued that no-one is every wholly oppressed, that humans in most situations have power always to resist in some way and that it is not the concept of agency itself which is problematic but rather some uses of it. Gero's claim about the masculinist nature of agency

theory is similar to other writers' claims that a focus on power itself is masculinist (Meskell 2001; Sweely 1999). It can be suggested, on the contrary, that it is fundamentally important that power is theorised *particularly* when there is a focus on a subordinate group (or groups which have been traditionally conceived of as subordinate).

Although presumably some writers could use the concept of agency to write a free, unencumbered, competitive individual into their archaeologies, there is nothing inherent in the concept which means that these types of writing will necessarily be the outcome of its application. A variety of writers have stressed that agency is best thought of as referring to action, not individuality (e.g. Bender, cited in Last 1995:149), and that the key to agency is how people effect change, which necessarily involves all members of a society (Last 1995). As George Cowgill (2000) has pointed out, it may be best to think of 'agents' rather than 'agency', which helps focus on the fact that all humans have some measure of agency and can employ it to affect their situation, albeit sometimes minimally.

Writers who emphasise the importance of people rather than structures can also appear to give a very consensual view of society with their emphasis on knowledgeable agents maintaining the structures of their culture, in their focus on the individual, and in their privileging of the 'moment of interaction' as the site of all meaning-creation. For example, Meskell (2001: 196) writes that "identities are not coherent or prior to the interactions through which they are constituted" and Hodder writes that "in the practice of the lived moment it is impossible for all the abstractions and constraints of systems and structures to be present except in the simplest of terms and most provisional of way" (Hodder 2000: 26). These writers appear to give very little weight to supra-individual structures – in Meskell's case implying that one makes oneself anew in each interaction and thereby failing to take into account the generative nature of *habitus* (which both constitutes and is constituted by structures). Similarly,

Hodder's formulation assumes the existence of some *a priori* human behavioural template which people employ 'behind the back' of structures.

Other writers, however, do address agency in a way that allows the theorising of power that is so vital to an understanding of the perpetuation of long-term inequality and the reality of oppression and which does so without resorting to the reification of structure. For example, Barrett (2000: 66) insists that agency is not the study of individuals *per se* and places resources at the centre of his thesis, also noting that actors are specifically and therefore differently enabled with not all having the same resources at their disposal. He argues that it is only in terms of structure that agency becomes intelligible. Similarly, Judith Butler writes that "construction is not opposed to agency, it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible" (cited in Hekman 1995: 203). These ideas are linked into this thesis insofar as it is assumed that the actions of the medieval peasantry were not determined by overarching 'structures', but were consciously carried out in the furtherance of various strategies.

A final point to be made concerns the relationship between Foucauldian theory and concepts of agency. It was mentioned above that aspects of Foucauldian theory have been found useful in this research as have concepts of historical agents. It can be argued, however, that these two concepts cannot sit easily together and that Foucault's discourse theory – which outlines the regulated conventions and rules which govern the constitution of knowledge – allows no space for subjects. For example, John Ransom (1993:133) observes that, for Foucault, discourse "is identifiable without reference to subjective experience, intentionality or personal aspiration". However, agency is not necessarily precluded in Foucauldian analysis. His later writings tended towards discussion of the ways human beings turned themselves into subjects and did write that local resistance is able to effect social change (Foucault 1982: 211-212; see Preston 2000). Although it is true that his work often discuss power and

insubordination as forces opposing each other with the people seemingly left out, it is clear that individual agents are implicated in his thinking. For example, he writes that:

Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse compartments may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains. (In this case it is a question of a physical relationship of constraint) (Foucault 1982: 221).

It can be argued, therefore, that there is no contradiction between the use of Foucauldian concepts and the consideration of historical agency.

1.6.2 Case studies: Ways of approaching the past

The bulk of the present thesis is comprised of three major case studies of Yorkshire villages: Osgodby, Wawne and Wharram Percy. The approach taken is of a detailed investigation of three settlements and their immediate surroundings in order to elucidate the particular workings of power, community and gender in specific situations. It is only by taking this approach that it is possible to contextualise fully the operation of power and to avoid the discussion of isolated aspects of past people's lives which become dis-embedded from the totality of their lived environment. This is an approach that has been advocated by a variety of writers. Stine (1992: 104) notes that "we cannot understand issues of social inequality without looking at the inter-relationships of variables, moving away from isolated studies of a single component" and Gilchrist (1999) argues that many lines of evidence are best as they may allow us to see possible areas of contestation. Bill Frazer writes that "for archaeology ... we need more specific empirical studies that examine the

minutiae of local relations of power but contextualise them within a broader social field” (Frazer 1999:6). Anthropologists have similarly argued that “it is in the kind of material produced by ... fine-comb ... studies in confined contexts that mega-concepts can be given the sort of sensible actuality that makes it possible to think not only realistically and concretely *about* them, but, what is more important, creatively and imaginatively *with* them” (Geertz 1973: 23). Similarly, with regard to gender, Toril Moi (1999: 76) has written that “concrete study of specific cases will tell us exactly what it means to be a woman in a given context”.

Colin Renfrew has commented, however, that “the significance of most case studies is clearly often felt to reside in their wider applicability and relevance” (Renfrew 2001:125) and that they mostly are “based upon concealed generalizations” (*ibid.*: 124). He stresses that this point needs to be analysed carefully as it “hints at a lacuna in many theories of interpretive and postprocessual archaeologies” (*ibid.*: 125). I do agree that case studies are usually written to comment on more than their immediate subject. My own work is a case in point. It is not the intention to comment only about the three villages under consideration, but rather to elucidate an approach to the study of the medieval peasantry which allows a consideration of the diversity of experience of power and gender in late medieval contexts. There are also examples of ‘generalisation’. It cannot be expected that there will be *direct* evidence for how the fields at the village of Osgodby were used, for example, but very safe assumptions can be made based on our extensive knowledge of medieval field systems built up from a raft of evidence from other examples. It can, in fact, be suggested that these characteristics of case-study approaches do not, on the face of it, ‘hint at a lacuna’ in post-structuralist thought (the nature of which is not explained, in any case, by Renfrew). The basis of Renfrew’s objection seems to be that “one of the legitimate objectives of archaeology ... is the explanation of long-term change” (*ibid.*: 125) which must “deal with a range of factors some of which operate beyond the individual and the local”.

This certainly is a legitimate goal, among others, and the pertinent factors do operate beyond the individual and the local. It can be suggested that case studies are concerned with investigating the specific, 'on the ground' operation of these large-scale processes. Such studies are, it is true, related to a specific locality but they do allow us to think about the possibilities of diversity within the broader historical context under consideration. It can be argued that the usefulness of case studies is most pronounced when they accrete, with one layering upon another, in order to provide a variety of 'local' views of various processes and allow us to move towards investigating the diversity of these processes; what appears unchanging between different contexts and so on. It can be suggested that long-term change is explained this way more satisfactorily than by the invocation of forces and processes which appear to require no human intervention.

This thesis attempts the contextual archaeology of the medieval peasantry, and in order to contextualise the experience of these people satisfactorily, it was necessary to deal with all of the information it was possible to obtain about particular contexts, in this case, three medieval villages. Instead of isolating one form of evidence, perhaps a church, or a village lay-out, in order to try to discuss the experience of the villages, it was felt necessary to deal with all of these sources as all would have been part of the lives of the villagers. It is only through doing so that a truly contextual archaeology can be achieved.

1.6.3 Other influences

The use of 'thick description' as a part of archaeological writing has been advocated by archaeologists such as Matthew Johnson and John Moreland. Clifford Geertz, its most well-known proponent, has stated that it involves the investigation of "piled-up structures of inference and implication" (Geertz 1973:7) ; a consideration of all the meanings an action may have and a drawing-together of "densely textured facts" (*ibid.*: 28). Geertz gives an

example, following Gilbert Ryle, of the differences between a 'thin' and a 'thick' description of an event, in this case, the act of winking. In a 'thin' description, this action would be described as "rapidly contracting his right eyelid" (*ibid.*: 7). The 'thick' version draws attention to the fact that a wink is communication of a particular kind which is deliberate, to something in particular, which imparts a particular message according to a socially-established code and which ignores others in the group (*ibid.*: 6). Geertz then goes on to describe other actions, such as parodying an observed wink, the thin description of which might be the same as in the first instance but of which the social meaning varies considerably and is explicable to the participants.

Matthew Johnson (2002:70) argues that employing 'thick description' is a way of developing a "multi-layered and deep understanding of some of the meanings and allusions that a particular ... feature might have had to observers" and John Moreland (2001:117) calls for an "attentiveness to all ... voices, achieved through the kind of close-grained analysis of texts and objects which produces a Geertzian thick description". A problem with the utilisation of this approach is that it can result in writing which appears merely to list all the various associations any object or piece of material culture might have had in a particular time and place without any particular rigour appearing in the making of these linkages. For example, Matthew Johnson, when discussing the meaning of medieval castle gates and their characteristic opening and closing, draws on an example of a seventeenth-century siege of Derry, Ireland, which is not obviously relevant to the meanings which might pertain to gates in a medieval English context (Johnson 2002: 71). He also suggests that some of the possible meanings of gates were sexual, but only offers in support of his argument the example of the thirteenth-century poem *Diu Crone*, which reads "a knight attempting to rape a lady began to search for the castle, pressing forward with great force so he could throw down as much of it as we wished ... the bars with which the gate was secured could not be broken by his battering ram" (*ibid.*: 72). Johnson does not make explicit linkages about how well-

known this poem was and, if so, by whom, within what time-frame and so on. If this type of problem is avoided, however, there is much promise in applying this method to archaeological writing. It is linked with the idea of 'tracing connections' (Shanks 2001:296); the thinking about possible referents, experiences of and actions enabled by material culture. This approach acknowledges that we will not be able to produce a *definitive* description of what a particular piece of material culture means to a particular group of people, but nevertheless attempts to suggest *some* possible meanings it may have carried. The present research attempts to make connections and posit conjunctions (Shanks and Hodder 1995); to explore the various contextually-derived meanings that medieval material culture may have evoked for members of the peasantry.

Phenomenology is another method which archaeologists have proposed to aid understanding and description of culture in the past as it was "experienced by a subject", and thus make room for a discussion of the past which is not solely concerned with societal structures (Tilley 1994). This approach has furnished archaeology with a number of extremely useful ways to conceptualise space. Particularly important among them is the insight that place is fundamental to the establishment of person and group identities. Another valuable product of this type of approach is the insight that space is comprised of various different types: These are somatic space, which refers to the physicality of the body which imposes schema on space such as left/right, and up/down; perceptual space which is the space encountered and perceived by individuals in the course of their daily practice; existential space which can be thought of as 'group space' and is socially meaningful; architectural space which is deliberately created; and cognitive space which is the site of reflection and analysis (*ibid.*). Concerns expressed about the utilisation of a phenomenological approach include the claim that it universalises bodily experience as if there was only one way that all people experience the same space, thereby eliding differences created by individual or group past experiences, as well as specific cultural

beliefs about the perception and use of space (see Fleming 1999). Similarly, positioning the body as the primary source of meaning not only privileges the individual as the main locus of meaning-generation, it ignores the active nature of material culture, that is, the ability of material culture to produce meanings. Despite potential pitfalls, however, both ‘thick description’ and phenomenological theorising have had a considerable, if indirect, influence on the way this thesis has been approached.

A key focus of the present research is the positing of possible experiences, by which is meant an exploration of the way in which individuals were *constituted* by experience rather than people *having* experiences (Scott 1991). Marie Louise Sørensen, however, has argued that archaeological studies of gender (but other factors could equally apply) will be concerned with gender as an effect and a process “rather than as an experience or as a state of being” (Sørensen 2002: 74). She argues that this is because archaeology is best based on analysis “of how gender is *expressed through* and with objects and actions” (*ibid.* emphasis added). Her conception of gender being expressed through objects, however, implies that there is a pre-existing gender to be expressed, which fails to take into account the fact that the object itself will affect gender. This ‘idealist’ framework is what prohibits Sørensen from allowing material culture to be interpreted as affecting the experience of gender. It can be argued that gender is experienced partly through objects which already have meaning or are part of actions which have prior meaning which then affects the experience of the object and of gender. Objects are not simply expressions or reflections of gender. The interpretations offered in this thesis, with their substantial emphasis on experience, are, it will be seen, ‘inventive’ in some sense (see Shanks and Hodder 1995). The interpretations are offering *an* interpretation, *an* understanding (Graves 2000: 15 provides a précis of relevant aspects of Gadamer’s hermeneutics) and have no pretensions to being the only possible ways of understanding the meanings this material may have had. However, it is hoped that the interpretations suggested are rigorously contextually bound and

that therefore they, at the very least, provide an adequate starting-point for a discussion of peasant experience.

1.7 Broader objectives

The aims of this research are to develop an archaeological approach to the study of the medieval peasantry in a way which looks holistically at the evidence available and which allows interpretations of power, community and gender relations, of meaning and experience to be made. More broadly, it attempts to contribute to a project outlined by Shanks and Tilley (1992; Tilley 1995). These authors argue that we must use “the past as a basis for strategic intervention in the present” (Tilley 1995:111) and that our studies must have “critical, transformative intent” (*ibid.*: 115). It must be recognised that archaeology is a micro-political practice, and therefore inherently embedded in contemporary political discourse. The writing of any history can be one which “creates pain, limits desire, mediates and bounds ... practice” (Shanks and Tilley 1992: 252) or one which is a “locus of political action” (Wylie 1989: 95). The importance of archaeology in efforts to critique and transform current social relations, however, should not be overstated. It does, however, have the unique ability to de-naturalise these current arrangements by demonstrating their historical contingency (Wylie 1992, 1995). Alison Wylie mainly comments on the potential of archaeology to denaturalise gender arrangements, a call taken up by many other gender archaeologists (e.g. Baker 2000), but it can also do so for other forms of power relationships. Frazer writes that “archaeologies that address resistance are, potentially, not just writing power and agency into a neglected past, but, in a small way at least, are also about writing power and agency into a neglected present, and about writing hope into a future” (Frazer 1999: 8).

The present research hopes to describe the specific processes whereby power was deployed, resisted or acquiesced to in the medieval period. It is an account of how peasants were both united and divided by their use of material culture, how its deployment both bolstered and undercut seigneurial power, and how its use was implicated in the negotiation of gender relationships. Demonstrating differences between members of the peasantry as well as highlighting the *specific* ways in which peasants resisted or complied undercuts the model of monolithic seigneurial authority oppressing a monolithic, toiling mass of peasants that is often constitutive of the images of the popular imagination of this period. It is particularly important that new interpretations are presented to the wider public, as confining them to an academic audience alone negates the possibility that they can be used in wider social transformation. When current interpretations of the medieval peasantry are problematised, it is usually by the use of historical records, thereby rendering material culture of secondary importance in the playing-out of these relationships. A history which presents medieval power relationships as active and contested offers a history of resistance which is valuable in encouraging the possibility of questioning our own society. Problematising and undercutting monolithic ideas of masculine control is also important; it should be a significant project for scholars of this period and is expanded on in the final chapter.

The Middle Ages are a particularly important locus for this type of ‘critical, transformative’ work. As many writers have noted, they “have been rendered a point of origin in metanarratives of history” (Cohen and Wheeler 1997: xi). The European Middle Ages is often a period of “example, metaphor and myth” in the construction of modern social and political theory (Austin 1990: 14). The medieval period of English history is one which is often harked back to as a vital origin of English culture. Arthurian legends, romantic castles, knightly honour are key concepts in the public’s consumption of the medieval past. Images of the peasantry are of the ‘Baldrick’ type, dirty, plague-ridden, humorous bumpkins. Because of these images and the place of ideas of the

Middle Ages as being of foundational importance for the English notion of ‘the past’, it can be seen to be very important to write about resistance to power and the contingent processes whereby it was exercised in this period. This sort of writing can emphasise the specificity of power relationships in the Middle Ages and can help to avoid the co-option of the history of this period to support a teleological narrative of domination in which societal and gender divisions are forever the same and are therefore natural and unalterable. To be sure, the archaeology of gender and power of Iron Age Kenya, for example, would be equally fascinating but the position that Europe holds as coloniser, able to impose its history and values on so many, and make its history dominant over so many others makes it particularly critical to demonstrate the contingency and negotiation in the power relationships at this time, in order to encourage a consideration of the contingency of those in operation in our own time.

1.8 Thesis structure

As mentioned above, the bulk of the thesis consists of three case-studies, and the reasons for this have been outlined. These three chapters are followed by Chapter Five which is a study of various forms of material culture in a thematic rather than case-study context. The reasons for this approach are explained at the beginning of that chapter. The process whereby the case-studies were chosen will now be outlined.

It was decided to concentrate on selecting settlements with substantial peasant habitation remains as well as evidence of other types – manor houses, churches, castles, field systems, documentary evidence – in the area that comprised the three Ridings of Yorkshire before the boundary changes of 1974. Yorkshire was chosen as the area from which case studies were to be drawn due to the relatively large selection of excavated sites it was possible to choose from, as well as to the existence of many churches with medieval fabric including wall

paintings, and to the fact that a good corpus of medieval documentary records, (notably court rolls) from the county are available. The decision to concentrate on Yorkshire also hinged around the site of Wharram Percy, located in the Yorkshire Wolds. Given that this work is developing an approach to the social archaeology of the medieval peasantry, ensuring that it could be applied to the most well-excavated medieval peasant village in the country was a priority.

The first step in the selection of the case studies was to research all published sources of this type of work. Therefore, all volumes of the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* were consulted; all annual reports from the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group, Medieval Village Research Group and Medieval Settlement Research Group were referred to as were as a number of gazetteers and published surveys of excavated medieval rural settlements, of which the following were the most informative. Maurice Beresford's "The Lost Villages of Yorkshire Parts II to IV" published in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* in 1955 listed all deserted villages in the three Ridings of Yorkshire which had been identified from maps, documentary sources such as subsidy rolls, and surveys as well as air photographs and field survey. The updated list of these deserted villages along with a gazetteer of all excavation at medieval house and village sites in the county from Beresford and Hurst's (1971) volume *Deserted Medieval Villages: Studies* was also consulted. The three volumes of *West Yorkshire: An Archaeology Survey to AD 1500* were also read (Faull and Moorhouse 1981). These included the use of detailed archaeological, place-name and documentary evidence which enabled the identification of all archaeological sites in this county. The survey also set out a list of all known artefacts and sites so a full picture of archaeological remains for this county was able to be achieved. In addition, *Archaeology in Eastern Yorkshire: Essays in Honour of TCM Brewster* was consulted (Manby 1988). This volume included various articles on the archaeology of this county and a useful gazetteer of medieval research carried out by T.C.M. Brewster on deserted medieval

settlements in the county, among other important articles on the medieval archaeology of the area.

This preliminary research based on published sources provided a list of Yorkshire sites in which there was known medieval rural settlement remains. The unpublished corpus was then investigated. Six Sites and Monuments Records Offices - Humber SMR, North York Moors National Park SMR, North Yorkshire SMR, South Yorkshire SMR, West Yorkshire SMR, and York City SMR and UAD - were initially visited between October and December 2003. The Yorkshire Dales National Park SMR was corresponded with by post between December 2003 and January 2004. At these SMRs, a print-out, computer database or other list of all medieval rural settlement records for the relevant area was consulted. Each entry on these lists was investigated and the type of information held on each recorded. All entries pertaining to the archaeology of peasant settlement was explored further and, if necessary, the information contained therein followed up by obtaining information from English Heritage and the National Monuments Record. At all of the SMRs it was also requested that a print-out be produced or any information available be provided for sites which had been identified through the published corpus, to enable as much information as possible for these sites to be consulted

Once these data were compiled, the case study selections were made and numerous follow-up visits were made to Humber SMR and North Yorkshire SMR throughout 2004 and into the beginning of 2005, primarily to investigate medieval evidence for the immediate region of the villages. Three case study villages were chosen because, firstly, they contained sufficient quantities of both peasant-related material as well as that from the other data types required. They were also selected because each offered different amounts of archaeological data, and it was important that the approach to be developed was able to be applied to villages in which archaeological investigations of various scope had taken place. These were the villages of Osgodby, Wawne and

Wharram Percy. At each of these places, the macro-scale processes of siegneorial power and community impacted on the peasantry in variable ways, and the holistic consideration of the material and documentary evidence enabled productive insights into these specific experiences to be achieved.

Chapter Two

Osgodby

2.1 Introduction

The medieval village of Osgodby in the former North Riding of Yorkshire is now a heavily-populated suburb of Scarborough (Fig. 1) and the only extant signs of the settlement are a very small amount of ridge and furrow and one house platform; all other traces have been totally subsumed by modern development. The Scarborough and District Archaeological Society carried out four excavations on the site of the village in 1956, 1963, 1964 and 1965 initiated by the finding, in the spring of 1956 of a quantity of medieval material. A limited amount of excavation was undertaken at this time in both Fields 1 and 2 (Fig. 2). In 1963 a complete survey of Field 1 was completed, and trial pits and two buildings were partially excavated. Another small excavation took place in 1964 and a final and major series of excavations on Field 1 occurred in 1965. The results of these investigations have been published in two reports, the first reporting on the 1963 excavation only, and the second dealing with the remainder of the material (Farmer 1965; 1968). The pottery recovered had earlier been published in a Research Report in 1961 (Rutter 1961) as had a review of all documentary evidence relevant to the village (Rimington 1961a). In 1990, further fieldwalking and geophysical survey were carried out by the Society in what would have been the western side of the north-south row (Pearson 1991). There have also been numerous small-scale investigations carried out by commercial units prior to various phases of development work (Upson-Smith and Hall 1997; On Site 1998a; 1998b; Martinez 1998; MAP 2000a; MAP 2000b; MAP 2001a; MAP 2001b) and two larger reports were also commissioned prior to road building which was to have affected Osgodby (BHWP 1996; Dennison 2002).

The following summary of the medieval material is drawn from all of the various investigations into the medieval settlement mentioned above. In the southern section of the east-west road pits with faunal remains were recovered. These pits were associated with pottery of the thirteenth century as well as a cobbled floor of the fourteenth century. On the north side of this road, a number of enclosures were excavated. Each appeared to contain one building all of which dated to the fourteenth century. In Enclosures A, B and D there was evidence of thirteenth-century occupation followed by that of the fourteenth century. Enclosure D contained a complete building of fourteenth-century date, the wall between Enclosures C and D contained thirteenth-century pottery, and Enclosure F contained the remains of a fourteenth-century dwelling. The evidence indicated that, although some pottery and pits dating to the twelfth century and thirteenth centuries were recovered from the village site, no complete buildings of these centuries were found; all substantial structural remains were dated to the fourteenth century. In addition, there were no noteworthy finds of pottery or structural evidence recovered datable to the fifteenth century.

No complete medieval standing building remained at the time of the primary investigations in the 1960s, however the north and west walls of the fourteenth-century chantry chapel were still standing at this time. A report on the chapel, which utilised both documentary and architectural evidence was published in 1960 (Rimington 1960).

2.2 Households at Osgodby

The available evidence for an investigation of households at Osgodby is, as outlined above, fairly thin, as not only were the excavators interested solely in the remains of buildings and medieval pottery, many of the remains themselves had been affected by post-medieval disturbance. In addition, it has not been possible to utilise any artefactual or faunal evidence as only a very small amount has been published and even that lacked information about provenance or date. It appears that this information, if ever recorded,

has been lost as the excavation archive in the Scarborough Museum contains no trace of it. The household evidence at Osgodby consists, then, of the excavated remains of five house enclosures from a row of six of which only three had any significant information about the medieval structures therein. However, despite the limitations of the evidence, we can still attempt an investigation into the possible experiential aspects of the peasantry's encounter with the material culture of the households of Osgodby and, as all of the structures date to the fourteenth century, this investigation will take the form of a synchronic analysis.

It must be pointed out at this stage that, although it is often difficult to differentiate domestic from agricultural buildings in medieval peasant contexts, there seems sufficient evidence to argue that at least two of the excavated buildings at Osgodby were domestic buildings of the fourteenth century; these are the building in Enclosure E which contained a significant area of burning, and the structure in Enclosure D which had a hearth. The first point that can be made about the households of the village is that there was a considerable definition and separation of household enclosures. Each was separated by a bank at least one metre wide, and in one case almost four metres wide (Farmer 1965). Not only were the enclosures clearly separate units as confirmed by both excavation and survey work, there is no evidence that any alteration of these units occurred at any time in the fourteenth century. As Sørensen (2002: 160) has commented, "Architecture ... provides a physical form to which categories and meaning can be attached", and it can accordingly be suggested that these clearly-defined units of space also defined a categorical unit. This unit – the household – can therefore be posited as a distinct experiential and conceptual entity which remained unchanged in its architectural manifestation over the course of the fourteenth century.

A second significant feature of the household evidence at Osgodby is that there is no indication of any internal divisions to any of the buildings excavated; the buildings all appear to be single-roomed (Farmer 1968). There are, for example, no discontinuous areas of stone walling which are

typical of separate bays in buildings (see Wrathmell 1989a: 7), or internal masonry which would enable us to suggest the existence of a cross-passage, or slots in the floor which would allow us to surmise the existence of a partition made of material other than stone. There is also none of the usual evidence for a long-house structure either, such as byre stone or different types of flooring surface (the latter, for example, was a feature of the medieval houses in the village of Wawne, see Chapter Three). Farmer himself writes that all the buildings were single-roomed, with the exception of the building in Enclosure D, which he states was “almost certainly a four-bay cruck cottage” (Farmer 1968: 59) a claim recently repeated by Dennison (2002). However, Farmer confusingly writes earlier in the 1968 article about the building in Enclosure D that “as there was only some six feet between [the] flat stones and those of the southern wall did not match those of the northern wall, the usual cruck-type cottage seems to be ruled out” (Farmer 1968: 54). Indeed, upon detailed examination of the illustrations, it seems clear that the ‘padstones’ do not line up but Wrathmell (1989a) has alerted us to the fact that the absence of padstones does not preclude the existence of cruck construction. Regardless of the construction method, the size of the building in Enclosure D rules out the possibility that it was a longhouse or, indeed, multi-roomed. It was only five and a half metres long, the same length as the other house for which we have this information at Osgodby, that in Enclosure B. These lengths certainly preclude the possibility that the buildings were longhouses. In comparison, at Wharram Percy, longhouses ranged between approximately 12 and 27.5 metres in length (Andrews and Milne 1979; Wrathmell 1989a) and Type C longhouses at Wawne were no shorter than 10 metres (Hayfield 1984). The Osgodby buildings, therefore, do not seem to have been long enough to have housed both humans and animals, nor to have been multi-roomed. There are other excavated examples of non-partitioned peasant houses, for example House One in Site II at Boulby, Cleveland (Aberg and Smith 1988,) and House Three in Hatterboard, near Scarborough, dated to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, (Rimington 1961b), the period 2 House 5 in Croft A in Goltho, Lincolnshire dated to the thirteenth century and House 22

in Croft C at Barton Blount, Derbyshire dated to the fourteenth century (Beresford 1975).

The internal arrangement of space of the houses of Osgodby is not known in detail. The only building for which we can be certain of the placement of the hearth was that in Enclosure D. In this structure, a fireplace had been constructed of sandstone blocks with a hearth made of narrow limestone slabs in an 'inglenook' arrangement. This was located at the west end of the building, indicating that cooking and other activities were not located in a central part of the house. The information from this house, therefore, does not accord with Matthew Johnson's assessment that the late medieval house was focussed upon a central room which formed the second part of his postulated tripartite design which included a chamber, a hall and a service end (Johnson 1993). Other examples of medieval single-roomed houses are known from Yorkshire, such as from the excavated house on the 'farm' site of Great Close on Malham Moor in the Yorkshire Dales (Raistrick and Holmes 1962) in which a charcoal area, presumably used for cooking, was located against the wall of the building, not at the centre. Although it is certainly possible that areas of the houses at Osgodby were differentiated from each other by various non-architectural and archaeologically invisible means, Parker-Pearson and Richards (1994: 24) stress the reflexivity of the relationship between the physical and the conceptual. This allows us to suggest that, at the very least, houses in which there were architectural divisions would have been the site of more profound conceptual and activity-based differentiation than those without.

The information we have for the houses at Osgodby, in their lack of internal division and absence of central hearths (in those cases for which the hearth position is known), contradicts one of the most prevalent assumptions about medieval peasant housing. That peasant houses were divided into separate areas of space, which mostly took the form of a tripartite division into a byre/storage area, central living area with hearth and a third area, possibly for sleeping, tends to be assumed by most writers (see Grenville 1997: 121-56). When single-roomed houses are noted they are either interpreted as

being examples of an earlier building tradition (*ibid.*: 134-5) or as examples of the housing of poorer members of society (e.g. Beresford 1975: 23, 28; Clarke 1984: 33). However, the argument that single-roomed houses were in existence earlier in the Middle Ages than were longhouses does not hold. The example from Hatterboard, North Yorkshire, was dated to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, House 5 at Goltho was occupied in the thirteenth century, and House 22 at Barton Blount was dated to the fourteenth century. However, it is possible that single-roomed houses were occupied by the village poor and that the wealthier peasants built and lived in longhouses and, later, courtyard farms. At Osgodby, as the excavated houses were positioned together along one side of the east-west road, it is possible that the houses represented an area in which the houses of the village poor were spatially concentrated. However, the likelihood of this being the case is weakened by the evidence we have for the presence of relatively 'high-status' items on some enclosures (see below p. 64).

The presence of these single-roomed houses in Osgodby also challenges many of the more general arguments made about the organisation of domestic space in the Middle Ages. Amongst those who have discussed the organisation of space in the peasant house is Matthew Johnson. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Johnson argues that the meanings of space within the peasant house were congruent with the meanings of space within a manorial seat, and that the division of the house into a hall with rooms coming off it was present even in humble peasant houses (Johnson 2002: 169). Johnson believes that the occurrence of a uniform tripartite design throughout all medieval houses reflected common principles of medieval patriarchy (Johnson 1993; 1997; 2002). He claims that this arrangement meant that everyone knew their place, physically and socially, in a variety of settings (Johnson 1993:158). David Hinton similarly argues that "by the end of the thirteenth century there was an underlying unity in the concept of what a house should provide" and that the "similarity of internal space suggests a cultural unity" (Hinton 1990:163), a view echoed by Mark Gardiner who writes (2000: 159) that the "key features of the domestic form were to be found at all social levels." These assertions need

to be problematised. Certainly, it appears that it was more *common* for medieval peasants to live in longhouses or buildings divided in some way. However, the thrust of these arguments is the contention that the presence of these spatial divisions was *uniform* throughout the various strata of medieval society. The data from Osgodby, and from the other sites mentioned, show that this uniformity did not exist. If only *some*, not *all*, peasants lived in houses divided up this way, it can be seen that this spatial code was not universally recognised throughout the Middle Ages, and that the arguments for shared social knowledge and cultural unity therefore do not apply to all social contexts of the period. In some settlements at some times, this uniformity between social groups may have been apparent and Johnson's conclusions thereby substantiated, but it can be seen that they are not universally applicable, and that in villages like fourteenth-century Osgodby, space in peasant houses was deployed differently from the way it was in most aristocratic residences.

There is also only sparse evidence for the presence of paths on the tofts at Osgodby. On two of the enclosures (A and F) there is evidence for the presence of more than one structure, and a pathway flagged with cobblestones was found running between the two in Enclosure A. The existence of more than one building suggests a separating-out of activities within the toft and ideas of the 'proper placement' of different types of material culture. But as we have absolutely no evidence to suggest the functions of these buildings it would be imprudent to speculate further.

Finally, it must be noted that during the course of the 1966 excavations, one coin was found. It was an Edward II (1307-27) silver penny from the Canterbury mint (Farmer 1968). There is no mention of its context so it is of course possible that it was dropped by the lord of the manor or a visitor to the village. However, we do know that peasants themselves made extensive use of coinage for a variety of purposes in the late medieval period (Dyer 1997). These included for the payment of rent, and the purchasing of goods at local fairs which, in the case of Osgodby, would have included the fair at

Scarborough (which lasted for an extraordinarily long period of 45 days a year at this time (Rowntree 1931)).

The presence of the coin alerts us to the range of relationships which the peasants of Osgodby were engaging in both within the village and more widely. It also draws attention to the extent of the 'monetisation' of peasant consciousness in this period. I do not intend to engage with the arguments about the economic system of medieval England as a whole; the extent to which it was already capitalist (e.g. MacFarlane 1978; Hoyle 1995; Snell 1989) and so on, but rather to emphasise a significant aspect of peasant *mentalités*. It is not suggested here that the value of goods and land did not have a deep and symbolic resonance for the members of the peasantry, particularly in the case of land – this is inevitable given the generations-long periods for which families occupied a particular plot. Nor is it suggested that the lay-out and use of land was not intensely symbolic as Matthew Johnson argues (Johnson 1996). It must be understood, however, that this symbolic component did not operate in opposition to ideas of monetary value. In many settlements in this period there was an active land market, for example. Moreover, peasants had an acute sense of monetary value as can be seen by a glance at any set of manorial court rolls from the period - values in shilling and pence are routinely placed on all sorts of losses, be the offences crimes against property or against the person. For example, in the session of the manor of Wakefield from the 13 May 1332, "an inquisition finds that John Milverson beat the wife of Robert de Ourum to her damage 4d. Therefore he is to make satisfaction to her for the 4d" (Walker 1983: 70). Peasants at this time, including those of Osgodby, engaged in a variety of extra-familial relationships which had money as a medium, and they did conceive of many of the resources which they utilised in terms of their monetary value.

2.3 The Village

2.3.1 The village community

One of the most immediately noticeable features of the archaeological evidence at Osgodby on the village-wide scale is the extent of the variability evidenced in buildings of the same period. For example, the buildings in Enclosures E and F were positioned much closer to the road than were the buildings in the remaining enclosures. There was a considerably wider bank (of approximately six metres) between Enclosures C and D than between any of the others. Similarly, the enclosure baulks “varied in height and width” (Farmer 1968). It is also quite possible that the building in Enclosure B was made entirely of stone as the walls were much thicker than those of the other buildings and were capable of supporting a single-storey stone building and there was, in addition, no evidence (e.g. post-holes) for timber construction. There was evidence of external paving in Enclosure E but nowhere else. And while it seems likely that the buildings in Enclosures D and B were thatched as no roofing material was found, that in Enclosure A not only produced evidence for ridge tiles but also a high percentage of glazed pottery. The building in Enclosure F had predominantly glazed pottery associated with it and also green-glazed roofing tiles (*ibid.*).

It can be seen that the variation between the buildings in these enclosures was quite considerable and would have been apparent to the medieval inhabitants. This has implications for the way we approach a discussion of the peasantry’s self-image as a community in this context. Two points can be made here. Firstly, the evidence does not support David Hinton’s argument that peasants wanted their houses to be similar to others in the same social position to bolster the corporate sense of community (Hinton 1990). Secondly, this evidence challenges the deductions of a number of authors who have argued that the lay-out of many medieval villages is evidence for a particular kind of peasant self-image. For example, Andrew

Fleming argues in his analysis of settlements in Swaledale, Yorkshire, that houses which lie together along the same axis represent a “close-knit community” (Fleming 1988: 110). Matthew Johnson has also argued that the lay-out of the medieval village reflected the cohesion and self-image of the population (Johnson 1996). Although there clearly is a regular arrangement of tofts at Osgodby, the available archaeological evidence does not present us with a picture of fundamental similarity in house appearance and construction. It seems clear that more than the arrangement of similar-size enclosures side-by-side along a road needs to be considered before deductions about peasant community are made. What the observed variation does imply, however, is villagers’ power to alter and affect the structure of their household. It is clear that the inhabitants of this village in the fourteenth century (at least those in the archaeologically-visible buildings) had the resources needed to erect very different sorts of houses both in terms of freedom from seigneurial constraints and, for some at least, financial resources. It is equally clear that these resources or the intentions of the actors varied between them.

2.3.2 Lordship and religion in the village

It has been suggested that Osgodby was, at least in part, a planned medieval village of possibly two phases (Dennison 2002: 14). Dennison considers that an assessment of the earthworks implies that, instead of the dog-leg morphology of the road that we see in the excavated village (and which in fact is still in place today), the main road may have originally been located considerably to the west of the present main road, positioning the earthworks in Field 4 to the east of this road. The hall complex would therefore, at this stage, have been positioned at the northern edge of the village. He suggests that the east-west aligned road, which the excavated enclosures are on the north side of (and one house platform has also been excavated on the south side of this road), may have been a planned extension to the village carried out by the Bard family possibly in the early fourteenth century at which time they held the entire manor. (*ibid.*: 7, 14-15). He makes this argument based on earthworks to the west of Field 4

which he believes indicates that the initial north-south road ran along this trajectory. The existing north-south road, he believes, was a back lane and the east-west road, along which the excavated house plots lie, is then interpreted as a planned extension, an interpretation strengthened, he argues, by the regularity of the lay-out of these house plots.

Yet, despite the scholarly attention routinely paid to the regularity of medieval villages as evidence for lordly planning, it is arguable that, in terms of assessing the peasant *experience* of these settlements, these issues of planning are of less significance than they may at first appear. A grid-like 'planned' structure would have been familiar to fourteenth-century residents of Osgodby from other contexts, most notably the town of Scarborough which was only two and a half miles away from Osgodby (Pearson 1987). The villagers, therefore, would have experienced a lay-out similar to that of their own village in a situation in which the seigneurial situation was different from their own. Thus, in conjunction with the evidence about the variety in material culture discussed above and the implications for the lack of seigneurial constraints this evidence may denote, it would be difficult to argue that the possibly-planned nature of Osgodby was one experienced and 'read' by its inhabitants predominantly in terms of lordly power. Although people may not choose the form of some of the structural features of their lives, the initial intention or author of these conditions can quickly become redundant in the lived experience and co-option of them. It is therefore possible that for the villagers of Osgodby in the fourteenth century, it was wholly irrelevant whether or not the lord had originally laid out their plots.

The topographical setting of lordship in the village is also of interest. Although the full extent and lay-out of the medieval village is not known, the presence of ridge and furrow, banks and fish-ponds in various areas around the settlement clearly show the limits of occupation (On Site 1998a; 1998b; MAP 2000; MAP 2001a; 2001b, Martinez 1998.). The hall was, thus, always a focal point of the village and was positioned to the west of the enclosures in which the excavated buildings lay. In one sense, the inhabitants of the excavated enclosures were in very great proximity to the

lord, as the field in which their enclosures were placed was partially enclosed by a substantial bank and was probably demesne land (Farmer 1968: 61). If this is correct, the villagers were living *on* the lord's land; at the very least, the villagers who lived in the excavated buildings resided in close proximity to their lord. However, this proximity was undercut by the physical dividing mechanisms surrounding the hall complex and related fields. Firstly, the western bank between Enclosure A and the hall complex was very substantial and had obviously supported a wall of some size; it was partly necessary as a retaining bank for the pond. Secondly, although there was evidence for a road running along the southern edge of Field 1, this was separated from the peasant enclosures by a bank and there was no evidence of any entrances leading from the enclosures to this road (Farmer 1968: 41-2). This suggests that the back lane was not used by the peasants to access their houses, which they presumably could do only from the front. Park Hill to the west of the hall complex also had evidence of a clear boundary around it and was also interpreted as part of the demesne (Farmer 1968: 60). The physical manifestations of lordship at Osgodby, therefore, was characterised by separation from the tenantry.

The lords of Osgodby also had a chantry chapel dedicated to St. Leonard built within their hall enclosure. The chapel was a building 18 metres long by 7 metres wide. The earliest references to it is an entry in the Kirkby Inquest (an inquiry of 1284-5, in some ways similar to Domesday Book), in which the chaplain is identified as the second wealthiest person in the village (Rimington 1960). That the lords worshipped in a separate space from the villagers would have affected the peasants' perceptions both of lordship and of the religious sphere itself. Doubtless for the peasants, it would have added to the sense of their lords' power as a force concerned with separation and exclusivity. This perception of the lords' desire for separation from the religious practices of their tenants would have been accentuated further by the 1308 license to William Bard (the lord of Osgodby) for an oratory. This suggests the existence of *two* religious spaces exclusively for the lords' use within the manorial enclosure of this relatively small village. It would also have had an impact on the chapel which the

villagers used to worship located in the nearby township of Cayton (Figs. 3-5). This chapel was a dependency of the parish church in the village of Seamer which was some distance further away from the village (Rimington 1960). It may well also have served the settlements of Deepdale, Killerby as well as Cayton and Osgodby as these are the settlements that formed the parish of Cayton in 1801 (it is of course possible, however, that parish boundaries altered between the medieval period and the nineteenth century). From the point of view of the peasants of Osgodby, the fact that the Bards concentrated their devotional attentions on their own manor house precinct would have rendered the experience of the chapel at Cayton one of relative freedom from the presence of their lords (which is similar to the situation at Wawne, as will be discussed in the next chapter). Moreover, although the lords at Osgodby were often buried at Cayton, there is only one brass from the period in the church there and it is not clear who it commemorated as only the first name, 'John', remains legible (Russell 1923a: 433) (Fig. 6). Even if this was commemorating a lord of Osgodby, the surviving evidence indicates that their permanent physical presence here was negligible.

Throughout the fourteenth century, the Bard family held the whole manor of Osgodby (Dennison 2002: 7). It seems likely that the Bards would have permanently resided at Osgodby as there is no evidence that they controlled any other manors, although they did own parcels of lands in adjoining townships (*ibid.*). There is also evidence of the presence of a manorial mill in the southern part of the village; on the 1846 Tithe Award Map, on which one of the fields to the south of the village is marked 'Mill Field', suggesting that a mill may have been positioned here (Farmer 1968: 61). It is likely, given the permanency of the residence of the lords at Osgodby, that this was a manorial mill, with the proceeds going to the lords of the manor. The significance of the exaction of multure (a fee for grinding corn at the mill, which the tenants were obliged to do), was considerable in this period and was a much-resented and -resisted seigneurial prerogative (Holt 1988). With the positioning of the mill to the south of the village, and the permanently-occupied, bounded-off manorial buildings as a focal point of it, the architecture of lordship at Osgodby had a significant experiential impact.

In attempting an interpretation of the Osgodby evidence, however, it must be noted that, although there was a great deal that separated the lords and the villagers and there was a significant visual impact made by lordship in the settlement, there were also times when the villagers would have experienced occasions of both the limits of the lord's authority and solidarity with him. Although the examples of this took the form of discrete events, it is likely that they would have remained a part of village lore throughout the century and thereby affected perceptions of lordship throughout it. For example, in 1308 the Archbishop of York closed the chapel of St. Leonard and suspended its priest (Rimington 1961a). It is known that this suspension was relaxed on September 26 of 1308 and may well have been in effect only since the previous July (*ibid.*), but this dramatic example of the operation of power superior to that of their lord would have complicated the peasants' experience and perception of him. Equally, both lords and peasants experienced similar disputes with the officials of the Forest of Pickering and were both fined for poaching and encroaching on the resources of neighbouring villages (*ibid.*). In 1325, when the local men who had been delivered as hostages to Robert the Bruce to ensure the safety of the communities of the Vale of Pickering had been gone three years, it was John Bard, lord of Osgodby who made enquiries into their position (*ibid.*: 10). The peasants of the village did not, it can be suggested, experience the operation of seigneurial authority as one of simple monolithic oppression. It can be seen, then, that the lords of Osgodby did occasionally in ways which were advantageous to their tenants.

2.4 The Region

2.4.1 Lordship and religion in the region

Barbara Hanawalt has suggested that peasants' daily round included a radius of five miles around their settlement (Hanawalt 1986:21), and it is therefore a radius of this size that has been investigated in considering the extra-

village experiences of the peasantry for the three villages under consideration (Fig. 7).

I will firstly turn to the clear linkages between lordly and ecclesiastical domains that existed in the region around Osgodby in the fourteenth century. These similarities were common throughout the medieval period and have been widely commented upon. Charles Coulson has remarked that “spiritual lustre was converted by architectural symbols of world power” and an “association with the metaphysics of authority” into power for the ecclesiastical authorities (Coulson 1982: 91). Matthew Johnson (2002: 169) writes that the religious use of crenellation acted as a system of cultural cross-referencing. The desirability of these associations flowed both ways, with lordly identity often being expressed through the patronage of churches among other activities.

Within the immediate region around Osgodby, the linkages between seigneurial and ecclesiastical domains operated in a variety of ways, one of which was via architectural similarity and the deployment of lordly insignia on ecclesiastical structures. For example, Hunmanby church had an embattled parapet (Allison 1974a: 242), St. Nicholas at Ganton carries the Willesthorpe arms over the entrance of its south porch although the dating of this feature is uncertain (Purdy 1974: 215) and the church of St. John the Baptist at Folkton has stained glass fragments of the Greystoke arms (Pevsner 1966). Linkages between ecclesiastical and seigneurial spheres were also apparent in the spatial proximity of churches and lordly residences in the region around Osgodby. For example, at Scarborough the parish church was located right beside the castle (Rowntree 1931). Links were also in evidence in such things as the presence of the chantry endowed by Richard of Ganton in the chapel at Staxton (Allison 1974b: 338), the presence of the chapel in the manor house in Newbiggin which was licensed in 1308 (Allison 1974c: 139), as well as the probable presence of a chapel at Ayton castle (Rimington and Rutter 1967). This latter aspect of the relationship between lordly and religious authority would have been particularly familiar to residents of Osgodby as their lords had both a

chantry chapel and an oratory within the hall enclosure, as previously discussed (Rimington 1968).

From the point of view of the peasantry, the sharing of architectural space and codes between ecclesiastical and lordly groups would have effected a perception of unity between members of these groups. Other practices are likely to have further bolstered this perception of unity, such as the deployment of the practices associated with literacy. Villagers would have experienced and viewed the use of rentals, and manorial accounts on the one hand, and bibles and other books in the church on the other (Swanson 1989). However, this is not to suggest that literacy was a purely oppressive practice of the peasantry. Indeed, written sources could sometimes be used by villagers, such as court rolls and customals which could record the rights of the peasantry over that of the lords and which could also be used to enforce these. For example, in the court rolls of 1469-70 from the manor of Minchinhampton in the Cotswolds, the woodward was amerced for carrying out his duties for the lord. The entry reads “they present that Robert Kynne [the woodward] entered the wood called Custom Wood and knocked down there deadwood for burning contrary to the ancient custom, as it is said. Therefore be it investigated from the custumal whether he owes therefore or not. There he is in mercy 12 d.” (Watson 1932: 362). It is merely my intention here to draw attention to the *contexts* of the deployment of literacy, i.e. in the church and the manor, which would have created the perception of linkages between them.

Although the evidence outlined above demonstrates that the ecclesiastical sphere was a locus for the deployment of lordly power in the region of Osgodby, it would be wrong to suggest that the experience of religious life by the Osgodby residents was entirely permeated by this power. It has already been mentioned that the chapel at Cayton was not a space in which the iconography of lordship was displayed. Lordly influence on the parish church of St. Martin’s at Seamer, which Osgodby residents would have attended for major feasts was also negligible in the late medieval period (Figs. 8-10). The lords of Seamer in the fourteenth-century were the Percys

and, although their coats of arms appear in Seamer church alongside those of the Bards (Collier and Lawrance 1920) and their manor house grounds were fenced on the east by the boundary wall of the church, St. Martin's was not a locus of attention for them. Seamer was one of the Percy's principal Yorkshire seats; their main house always contained its own chapel and they had granted St. Martin's to the abbey of Whitby in the mid-twelfth century. In 1329 two perpetual chantries were endowed in the manor house chapel with a large amount of land attached, and the chaplains were appointed not by the abbey but by the Percys themselves (Crouch n.d.). In 1439 the chapel was rebuilt, and in 1533 Leland described it as 'well-built' (*ibid.*). It was still served by two salaried priests of the Percys in the 1540s. No tombs or monuments attributable to the Percys are found in St. Martin's which emphasises their relative lack of interest in the church.

I have argued that both the Bards and the Percys primarily stressed separation from the peasants' religious experience; rather than intrusion into it. In contrast, on a regional scale there were links between temporal and spiritual lordship, the evidence for which has been outlined above. It can be suggested that the affect of this contrast would have meant that the villagers were exposed to a variety of different types of lordship. That strategies of lordship differed between the Bards and Percys and other lords in the region would have been noticeable to the peasantry and would have spoken to them of differences in the strategies of between different lordly families, the variety of choices that were open to noble people and so on. Most of all, it would have demonstrated the *contingency* of the values that these strategies hoped to convey. Lordly intrusion into the religious sphere would not have been able to naturalise the linkages between temporal and spiritual lordship as was hoped, because, for the parishioners from Osgodby, this was not a linkage they experienced in St. John the Baptist's at Cayton or St. Martin's at Seamer. Variability and choice in lordly practices could, therefore, undermine their effectiveness.

The body of St. Martin's had considerable alterations made to its Norman fabric in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. A north chapel ¹ and north aisle were completed in 1480 (Fig. 11) (Russell 1923b: 487-488), and the rood screen and stair can be dated to the same period (*ibid.*: 487) (Fig. 12). Whitby Abbey, which had been given the church in the twelfth century, was already in debt in the early fourteenth century so it seems unlikely that it would have been able or willing to pay for major structural work on this church, and it has been mentioned above that the Percys were expending their energies on the chapel in their manor house. It seems likely, therefore, that it was the parishioners who were responsible for this work. If this was the case, it seems that it was a deliberate and large alteration to their familiar ecclesiastical structure and quite a major break with the past. The work of Pamela Graves has drawn attention to the effects of this type of building work on medieval church-goers, and she notes that "any addition of chapels and aisles affected the way in which people were able to carry out their religious practice" (Graves 1989:307), particularly insofar as the addition of a chapel would have altered any processional routes through the church which people would have been accustomed to follow as part of church ritual. Given that the latter part of the fourteenth century was a time of relative wealth and independence for the peasantry, it can be suggested that these changes were indicative of a strong desire to put their stamp on a church which had been, until this point, architecturally unchanged since the Percys took control over it. Perhaps in building the chapel, they were attempting to create a space in which they could get closest to the holiest end of the church. In addition, it is particularly notable that the rood loft door is at the north-east corner of the nave. It is therefore likely that the parishioners were responsible for the array of saints which would have stood upon the screen, built at the same time as the rest of the modifications were made. This would have had the effect of rendering the prime focus of the church not the priest who celebrated at the high altar but devotional images which the peasants themselves had chosen (Graves 2000).

¹ It is unclear what role this chapel played in the life of the church; there is no indication that it functioned as a chantry chapel.

Because Seamer was a large parish, with the villagers of many townships worshipping at St. Martin's, it can be seen that the experiences of planning, funding and supervising the completion of the work on the church would have led to important aspects of identity-formation occurring, for the villagers of Osgodby, outside of the context of the village. The alterations to the church have had to be agreed on more or less communally, as would the organisation of church maintenance. These co-operative actions, undertaken with the involvement of all parties, are likely to have led to feelings of communal solidarity between the peasants and a sense, on the individual level, of ownership of the church. This in turn, connected with events like tithe collection and other parish-based groups, would have created linkages and activated groupings of a supra-village nature, making the village itself less potent as the sole source of community than would have been the case in settlements such as Wharram Percy (see Chapter Four).

There were a variety of other relationships at work in the medieval church which will be considered here, firstly, those related to the parish priest. It must be noted that priests held an ambiguous position in relation to structures of power. As individuals, they were powerful intercessors between God and parishioners; they deployed spiritual resources which would have exerted a profound influence over both individuals (in terms of the absolution of sin) and families (in terms of the baptism of children, the administering of various sacraments and the making of decisions about rights to burial in sanctified ground). At one point in the late medieval period, however, the priest at Seamer seems to have been particularly close to his parishioners. In the negotiation with Robert the Bruce previously mentioned, although a member of the elite Bard family was involved three years later, the participants in the negotiations were not initially representatives of the main towns of the area or from the noble families of the district but were the priest of Seamer, John of Wykeham and William Wyvern, all three ordinary men (Rimington and Rutter 1967). The primary contact that the villagers of Osgodby had with institutionalised religion, therefore, was a figure who occupied many different political positions in their lives.

It is important to mention the gendered experiences of medieval church-going. Church services were one of the only occasions in a medieval person's life when men and women were co-present but segregated. This sense of gender solidarity in a religious context would have been emphasised for women by the memory and experience of the 'churching' ceremony. This ritual, which occurred approximately 40 days after childbirth prior to which the woman had not attended church, has been analysed recently by Gail McMurray Gibson (McMurray Gibson 1996). She suggests that this ceremony can be read not as a shameful acknowledgement of women's corporeal impurity, but rather as a female prerogative which was much desired by women. She sees it as a time of an "empowering of the female body" and as a poignant occasion of female solidarity (*ibid.*: 151). The new mother was accompanied by midwives, godmothers, female relatives and neighbours to the church and, after she had been blessed by the priest at the end of the church, they processed with her to the altar. Gibson writes that the "late medieval churching of women ... acknowledged female corporate identity and power and, in the person of midwives, even gave the extraordinary privilege of the sacrament of Baptism, the power to save from eternal death" (*ibid.*: 150). The memory of this empowering and potent ritual would surely have been an important part of female religious experience for the vast majority of women either as mothers or participants. It is likely that this would have been augmented by the gender group identity gained from the fact that seating in church was gender-segregated throughout the medieval period (Aston 1990) as well as the fact that many parish organisations involved gendered groups (see Duffy 2001).

The final set of power relationships which took place within the church was that which occurred between an individual and God. During the prayers and the sermons, particularly during the latter part of the century when the Black Death was ravaging the countryside, this must have been a particularly intense relationship for many people. Prayers for ailing children and other relatives and friends, the panic to find a priest (as this was not always easy during the plague years when religious men were falling victim to the

disease as frequently as lay people (Horrox 1994)), the funerals of loved ones - these must have meant that church services, when they occurred, would have often have been times of intense emotion.

The church of St. Martin's at Seamer and the chapel of St. John at Cayton were sites of the exercise of many different power relationships for those who worshipped within them. They spoke to the peasants of variations in lordly strategies, constructed extra-village community relationships, and facilitated practices conducive to the formation of gender solidarity. These buildings clearly had a vital part to play in the experiences of social power and community for the villagers of fourteenth-century Osgodby.

2.4.2 National and international power relationships

The encounters that Osgodby residents might have had with relationships of power that were operating on a national and international level will now be discussed. Only two and half miles away was the town of Scarborough, the presence of which enabled the peasants of Osgodby to experience types of power which worked at a national level more acutely than those in parts of the country which were located in places removed from events related to royal or other national processes. It is likely that the villagers of Osgodby would have gone to Scarborough, as much of the pottery excavated in the village was of the Scarborough type (Farmer 1968), and, while it is possible that travelling chapmen sold these wares to the peasantry, it is likely that the villages would have visited such a large town not only for its markets but for employment and other purposes (see p. 104). Another link to Scarborough may be evidenced by the high level of fish remains from Osgodby. Oyster, winkle and limpet shells and various fish bones associated with late thirteenth- to fourteenth-century pottery were in found in Enclosure A and in the enclosure excavated on the southern side of the east-west row in much greater quantity than other faunal remains (*ibid.*). It is quite likely that this fish was purchased from the markets at Scarborough at it was the largest market in close proximity to the village. It is likely, then,

that the villagers of Osgodby would have been aware of events centred on the town.

Scarborough suffered from the Scottish attacks of the early fourteenth century during the various wars with France which occurred throughout that century (Rowntree 1931; Pearson 1999; Russell 1923c: 550). These events were connected to 'national' power relationships, and national differences would have been underscored by the presence of numerous traders from a variety of countries who operated in Scarborough. We know that Scarborough was visited by Continental merchants, mainly from the Low Countries, from the twelfth century, and had some share of the trade between England and Iceland in the fourteenth and fifteenth century (Rowntree 1931). Although, in general, Scarborough rarely took part in the export trade (Childs 2001), Scarborough Ware has been found along of North Sea coasts of Europe and Scandinavia (Pearson 1987). The regular appearance of people from different countries would have reinforced the experience of nationally-meaningful distinctions. International conflicts centred on Scarborough would have added a 'national' dimension to the identity of the villagers of Osgodby, which are likely to have been different from that of people who inhabited settlements which did not experience events of these sorts. Communities experience memories of themselves in opposition to other groups particularly acutely (Fentress and Wickham 1992), and in the absence of a group of people from another nation attacking them, peasants from more isolated settlements would have experienced fewer stimuli for the creation of a 'national' component to their identity which may therefore have been 'fuzzier'.

The effects of Scottish raids on the north in 1314-15 and 1322 (as well as an attack on Scarborough castle in 1378) left visible marks on the castles at Ayton (Hurst 1963), Scarborough and Pickering, while entire towns such as Ripon were virtually annihilated (Thompson 1958). As mentioned previously, these raids were the springboard for collective (and essentially non-elite) action on the part of residents of this area. Scarborough castle was also besieged in 1312 and later in the century came under numerous

attacks from the French (Pearson 1999). It is not known whether, but it is quite possible that, the men of Osgodby were conscripted to the king's army at this stage. It is known that both royal garrisons and groups of Scarborough burgesses were in the habit of committing robberies and exacting arbitrary tolls at Seamer on people who were trying to enter Scarborough (Rowntree 1931: 112).

Many other types of conflict centred on the town. There was considerable dissent between burgesses and royal authority throughout the late medieval period. For example, in 1273, burgesses assaulted the constable of the castle which led to the town being taken into the king's hands and only restored to the burgesses in 1276 (VCH 1923: 550). The town was once again taken into the king's hands in 1312 and not returned to the burgesses until 1327, despite furious protests which included assaulting the king's servants, an event which was subject to an inquiry in 1313-1314 (*ibid.*). Scarborough was one of the few areas outside of the south and the southern midlands to take part in the 1381 revolts. A mob of 500 townsmen besieged the prominent citizens of the town (the poll tax collector and the bailiff were particularly targeted), took them to prison and refused to release them until they had sworn an oath to the "Commons of England". The 'mob' was, in fact, very well organised having both a common livery and a common oath among themselves (Rowntree 1931; Dobson 1983: 290; Dobson 1984: 136). The uprising was apparently ineffective as the names of the prominent citizens remained the same into the next century. It must be understood, however, that we cannot assume where peasant sympathies lay. It is known that the king was often perceived as a hero to the peasantry (Müller 2003) and they may have been supportive of him rather than of the burgesses.

From the point of view of the villagers of Osgodby, these various disturbances would not have been experienced as one type or even as similar types of occurrence. The 1312 besieging of Piers Gaveston, one of the favourites of Edward II, in Scarborough Castle and the behaviour of the royal garrison may have complicated ideas of royal authority; the Scottish invasions and war with France may have strengthened ideas of national

unity; and the 1381 revolt may have suggested new ideas about political organisation or may have been viewed as the bizarre behaviour of a few merchants. Each event is likely to have been discussed with neighbours and each one would have had specific implications for the villagers of each generation. This century, with its wars, famines, raids, revolts and, most importantly, massive mortality from the plague, is likely to have engendered a feeling of impending apocalypse. The Black Death came to Yorkshire in 1349 but records of its effect on the region are slim. It is known however, that one hamlet within Osgodby's five mile radius, that of Flotmanby had its entire tax quota of 1354 remitted and was eventually entirely depopulated by the plague (Beresford 1954:163). As Rosemary Horrox (1994) has written, the plague fitted in to medieval people's ideas of the chronology of the Last Days and it is possible that with so much upheaval occurring so close to their village, the inhabitants of Osgodby may have felt this, and a concomitant total powerlessness, particularly acutely.

This chapter has outlined some of the experiences of household, power, and community undergone by the fourteenth-century peasants of Osgodby. It has focussed on an investigation of the peasantry's encounter with material culture as a means for exploring these experiences, and has attempted to delineate some of the numerous networks and relationships that these encounters suggest, as well as the possible meanings that may have been evoked thereby. The next case study allows us to consider these meanings in a social context in which the peasantry experienced a quite different seigneurial presence, as well as a closer relationship with medieval urbanism.

Chapter Three

Wawne

The village of Wawne is situated near the east bank of the River Hull, in the former East Riding of Yorkshire (Fig. 13). It is positioned approximately four miles north of the centre of the city of Hull and about two miles to the south-east of Beverley. In 1961, a group of earthworks to the south-east of the present village nucleus in a field called 'Crofts Garth' was due to be bulldozed. Accordingly, the pupils of Wawne school, under the direction of their headmaster, commenced a programme of rescue excavation of these earthworks which was combined with archaeological survey of various parts of the village. In 1984 Colin Hayfield published a detailed post-excavation report of this work, combined with the results of extensive historical research (Hayfield 1984). This report provided the basis for my investigation of Wawne and its surrounds, particularly of the house and village.

3.1 Houses

During the course of the 1961 excavations, three types of building foundation that could be dated to the medieval period were identified and described in the subsequent report as Types A, B and C (Fig.14). The discussion of the houses will deal with the evidence in two separate groups, the first of which will address house types A and B and the second of which will focus on the remains of house Type C. It must be noted that, similarly to the previous case study, the evidence for the houses is extremely thin. For example, the pottery was not analysed in Hayfield's report in such a way as to enable any comparison between different houses or even house types and attempts to access the ceramic archive were unsuccessful. However, it is

possible to utilise the remaining evidence to posit some conclusions about the experience of the villagers of medieval Wawne.

3.1.1 House types A and B

The Type A structures were arranged randomly within a space defined by a number of roads (Figure 15). The remains of the five Type A buildings were extremely ephemeral and consisted only of soil stains, indicating that they had been constructed entirely of timber. They were interpreted as having been of wattle and daub construction. The pottery from these houses ranged in date from the second half of the twelfth century through to the fourteenth century (Hayfield 1984). The Type B houses (of which there were five possible examples) were also sited in the area defined by the roads and were placed on either side of the road which defined the northern boundary of this space. Again, the remains predominantly consisted of soil stains, but these houses also had padstones at each corner. The five buildings had identical dimensions and were interpreted as wooden-framed houses on stylobate blocks which had been built as a small planned unit. Pottery from these houses was dated within a range that ran from the thirteenth century through to the fifteenth (*ibid.*). There were no croft boundaries in evidence in association with either the Type A or the Type B houses.

The inhabitants of house types A and B appear to have encroached onto a pre-existing green. The green area was interpreted as such due to an examination of the earthworks, aerial photographs and a map of 1773. These aerial photographs suggest an original road lay-out in which one road would have led directly to the green area. The map shows a block of land which is bounded by a series of roads and is north of the church, called 'Greens', which "almost certainly represents an area of infilled green" (Hayfield 1984: 63). Hayfield suggests that this encroachment may have occurred in the late twelfth century; a time at which population pressures throughout the country were intense. Hayfield mentions the possibility that the area only became a green after House type A and B were moved from it, but concludes that it is more likely that the green was pre-existing. He bases this

argument on the small size of the houses, their ephemeral remains and the fact that their random positions are more likely to represent encroachments than original, permanent areas of the village (*ibid.*: 64). The pottery evidence from the green area also seems to support this hypothesis, as its date in the late twelfth century correlates with the earliest pottery from subsequently-abandoned marginal areas of the village. Hayfield argues that this suggests that the settlement was reaching its maximum proportions at this time and therefore “contemporary encroachment onto an existing large ... green would seem appropriate” (*ibid.*). The re-planning and construction of the Type C houses, he suggests, occurred along with “a deliberate clearance of the surviving building type A and B encroachments and a restitution of the green function” (*ibid.*).

Although it could be argued that it was the wealthy of the village who were able to encroach on this communal space, the evidence suggests, in fact, that it is more probable that the occupants of house types A and B were among the village poor. At the very least, it seems likely that they were in the lower levels of what we know was a divided society which contained substantial land-holders, people holding only one or two acres, cottagers on the brink of subsistence and a number of people in between (Hilton 1975; Goldberg 1992b; Hinton 1990). Greens were a very important communal resource. In times of high population in the twelfth century particularly, greens were valued as common grazing (Wade-Martins 1980: 88) and coroners’ records too support this interpretation of the public importance of village greens; Barbara Hanawalt (1986: 26) has written that when greens were present, records from coroners’ inquests showed that they were an important part of village life as locations for dances and drinking. Public space in general was highly valued in the Middle Ages and encroachment upon it was vigorously censured and could attract fines and other forms of social discipline. Manorial court records, for example, are full of complaints about people encroaching, blocking roads, and enclosing common land, such as in the manor of Wakefield (Walker 1983). It is clear that people had a very specific idea of what land belonged to all and felt that it was unacceptable for individuals to usurp this. It seems unlikely, therefore, that it would have

been the wealthy of the village who would have found it necessary to subject themselves to social censure by encroaching on the green. Similarly, we know that privacy was highly valued at this time (Hanawalt 1986; Hilton 1975) and it is clear that the people in these houses on the green would have been physically exposed as the green would still have been the space in which recreational activities took place; where people met and walked together. At a time in which gossiping, night prowling and otherwise taking an undue interest in others' affairs was frowned upon, the placement of these houses would have meant that their inhabitants were unable to maintain the privacy which was so socially valued. Indeed, in some areas of England at this time there was even a separate offence, called 'hamsok', which involved the unacceptable impingement on another's private space (Müller 2001).

In addition to the social disadvantage the occupants of these houses would have experienced, the fact that the buildings did not have a croft area indicates that they probably did not own any animals and had nowhere on which to grow the fruits or vegetables which formed an important part of the peasant diet (Dyer 1994b). It seems likely, therefore, that it was the village poor who were living in Houses A and B. Indeed, there are parallels for the village poor being the people who were forced on to the green, albeit from later periods. For example, at Sibton Green, East Suffolk, we know that a "poor man" set up his house on the edge of the green with the consent of the other tenants in 1655 (Warner 1987:7).

This sense of physical exposure and marginality experienced by the inhabitants of these houses may have been accentuated by a remoteness from other facets of medieval life. It is known that many of the church sacraments in which "medieval people found the key to the meaning and purpose of their lives" (Graves 2000: 7) had to be paid for (Schofield 2003; Mason 1976). The taking of the mass, which was absolutely central to the religiosity of the period and was necessary in order to obtain salvation after death, could not be taken unless tithes had been paid as dictated by, for example, the Statute of the Synod of Canterbury I. This stipulation may,

therefore, have rendered the taking of communion out of reach of the village poor (Rubin 1991: 149). It can be suggested, then, that the space in which the occupants of these houses lived, in combination with their presumed lack of resources, would have led to feelings of both precariousness and marginality. The occupants would have been living on formerly common land which may have been disapproved of by their fellow villagers or at least have been reliant on their goodwill. They would have been unable to experience any privacy, which was highly valued at this time and may have been unable to participate in church sacraments and thus have been denied the community involvement which these events fostered. In addition, if they were indeed unable to take mass, they would have been outside the pale of Christendom. The experience of the inhabitants of these houses, therefore, would have added a divisive facet to the peasant experience of community, a facet which will be expanded on in the final part of this section.

However, the fact that the Type B houses seem to have been part of a minor planned settlement problematises these conclusions somewhat. Did the occupants themselves decide to organise together to build them in a demonstration of corporate agency or did the villagers as a group do so, implying at least a tolerance of the necessity of using the green in this way? It is possible that the B-types, strung along the road as they were, are evidence of a further gradation in the village. The A-types - flimsier and placed at random on the green (house A4, for example, is right in the middle of this space) - may have experienced a greater degree of marginality still.

3.1.2 House Type C

The Type C houses were a series of very similar buildings, 16 out of the 18 of which were aligned along the southern side of the south road which had defined the area in which the types A and B houses had been sited. They were larger than the other two types and all were of longhouse form, with the area interpreted as the byre end lying to the west and the domestic room to the east in all examples. Detailed sketches were produced for only three of these structures; it must, therefore, be borne in mind that any

interpretations made concerning the structural details of these buildings rest on a relatively small sample. The ceramic evidence indicated that the buildings were occupied from the middle of the fourteenth century into the post-medieval period. A quantity of residual pottery from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was found in 14 of the houses, which was interpreted by Hayfield as indicating that these houses had been built on the sites of previous occupation, which had probably consisted of buildings of types A and B. However, although the evidence does allow us to propose that houses of similar *date* to Types A and B may have occupied these sites, there is no evidence whatsoever for the form that these houses took.

Hayfield interpreted the Type C longhouses as examples of a fourteenth-century re-planning of the village after the ravages of the Black Death had led to population contraction which provided an opportunity for re-building throughout the village. Both Barbara Hanawalt (1986: 25) and Jean Chapelot and Robert Fossier (1985: 211) have interpreted the emergence of the Type C houses at Wawne as evidence of replanning and, moreover, as a “seigneurial initiative”. The arguments for and against the idea of lordly initiative in village planning have been rehearsed previously (see Chapter One). These debates alert us to the need for care in attributing any evidence of regularity to seigneurial planning and such planning can be seen to be particularly unlikely at Wawne given the inward-focussed and communal nature of the morphology of the village which is discussed below. It is, moreover, worth stressing that meaning is created in the lived moment of interaction and, as at Osgodby, the villagers’ inhabitations of the space may have superseded in importance the identity of the original planner, as mentioned in the previous chapter. There are other areas in the village which Hayfield suggested may have provided further evidence for replanning, particularly in the north of the village where a regular series of crofts can be discerned. However, no ceramic evidence was found here and therefore no date can be attributed to these features.

The Type C buildings were probably built in the middle of the fourteenth century (Hayfield 1984). Although it is not, as previously mentioned, clear

what type of houses they replaced, it is fairly certain that they replaced buildings of some sort given the finding of ceramic evidence from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in these houses. This replacement in itself would have been quite a disjunction in the experience of the villagers, as the evidence from the house types A and B show no evidence for more than one phase of building, and this, coupled with ceramic evidence for several centuries of occupation at these house types, leads to the conclusion that they were very stable in their form over a long period of time (*ibid.*: 50).

The Type C houses were all longhouses with a domestic end and a byre end, thought to have been for accommodating cattle. There are detailed plans for only three of these houses, only one of which (C7) presents clear evidence for the presence of a drain. It is therefore possible that the houses without these did not, in fact, have a 'byre' end at all, but that this space was used for some other purpose (English and Miller 1991). There are substantial problems with ascribing function to medieval peasant buildings. The cleanliness of peasant houses and resulting lack of floor levels hinders the making of positive functional attributions as does the fact that most pottery types remain the same over long periods of time. Similarly, buildings could swap functions over the course of their lifetimes, and significant features such as byres and hearths could have their stone robbed out. Unfortunately, as we have no more detailed evidence for the other 15 Type C buildings (other than the fact that they were all separated into two areas), we do not know how representative the proportion of houses with drains to those without were for the village as a whole. However, it remains plausible to concur with Hayfield's suggestion that at least some of the Type C buildings in Wawne were longhouses with byres at one end. The fact that animals and humans were living together at Wawne is likely to have had conceptual effects. Many authors, among them Marie Louise Sørensen (2000), have drawn attention to the ways in which architectural and other boundaries give social categories meaning; the absence of boundaries can therefore imply a lack of categorical separation. With respect to animal and human relationships in the Middle Ages, Michael Camille (1998) has remarked on the way in which there was free intermixing of animal and human forms in

the art of the period, and Julian Thomas has commented that “in premodern Europe, no great ontological gulf was recognised between human beings and the rest of creation. All things were the products of God’s handiwork” (Thomas 2001:167). These ideas are supported by the evidence from Wawne, where the knowledges created by the encounter with the house would have been ones of unity rather than of the division between people and animal. This unity also has links with various aspects of church iconography in this period also. In Wawne church, as in many during this period, there is much imagery depicting various aspects of ‘nature’. For example, there is carving depicting foliage in the nave, traces of rosette paintwork and three- and four-leaved patterns. This type of iconography is likely to have similarly evoked meanings of the unity of God’s creation for the villagers at Wawne.

3.2 The Village

3.2.1 Lordship

A discussion of power in the village-wide field of Wawne must necessarily begin with an analysis of the place that the Cistercian Meaux Abbey and its inhabitants occupied. The Abbey was sited about one and a half miles north of Wawne village and, as a result of a variety of gifts of land from various tenants and previous lords of Wawne, had gained full control of its resources by 1250, and by 1316 the abbot of Meaux was considered to be lord of the parish (Kent 2002a: 189).

The monks and lay brothers would have been very visible figures in the village throughout the period. The abbey centred its activities at Wawne on two areas (Foster 1993). One was a grange which occupied a substantial moated site about half a mile to the west of the village (*ibid.*; Platt 1969) and the other was just outside the open fields to the north where there was a large, stone-built, lead-roofed woollen manufactory (Foster 1993). Wawne was a home farm for the monks and was important for the supply of their

food (Platt 1969) and both monks and lay brothers would have staffed them (Foster 1993). The abbey also ran a fishery in the south-west corner of Wawne's open fields (Lewis 1996) and had a court at Wawne (Kent 2002a: 198). The tenants of Wawne would have been reliant on the abbey's mills as there is no mention of mills at Wawne itself (*ibid.*: 196-197). The monks were fully aware of the control they had in this regard, with one of the abbey's chroniclers writing that a particular site had been chosen for the mill "so that we might enjoy richer rewards from the custom of our tenants in Wawne" (cited in Lewis 1996:171).

The dykes that the monks built were of considerable importance in the medieval landscape. The monks diverted watercourses such as the local Lambwath stream which had had its course altered in the early thirteenth century (Kent 2002a: 182). The dykes also formed many boundaries within the landscape, for example Ashdyke was made in order to give the monks a navigable link to the River Hull and formed the northern boundary of the township (Fig. 16) (Hayfield 1984). A dyke also marked the boundary between Wawne and the neighbouring township of Sutton (Sheppard 1958: 3-4). In the immediate area, township boundaries were defined almost entirely by watercourses which (apart from the River Hull itself), the monks had built (on one occasion in conjunction with other major landowners) (Lewis 1996). The monks thereby controlled the villagers' perceptual sense of category as well as their movement around the landscape, and may even have appropriated their labour in the construction of these features.

In terms of direct seigneurial control, the demesne at Wawne was tilled with the help of the abbey's bond-tenants (Kent 2002a: 196) until it was let out to the inhabitants of Wawne to be farmed at the end of the fourteenth century (Hayfield 1984: 44). However in 1396, most tenants still owed weeding, reaping and carting services at the grange and some had further obligations to cart hay to the abbey (Kent 2002a: 196). The evidence suggests that through the monks' constant presence, and their control of the landscape and resources and their extraction of labour, the abbey's inhabitants were

heavily present lords whose power would have been experienced to a great extent and both directly and indirectly by the tenants of Wawne.

3.2.2 Resistance

This exertion of power was, however, countered in two ways by the inhabitants of Wawne in the medieval period. One was by resisting it, both directly and indirectly and the other was by a repeated display of assertions of group identity through a variety of practices. Firstly, throughout the medieval period there were a number of complaints directed by the tenants of Wawne against many of the abbey's works. In the thirteenth century, for example, the abbey was accused of causing flooding in one of the township's pastures and in a meadow near its mills and in the middle of this century, too, movement of the abbey's animals along the roads in the parish were cited as a nuisance (Kent 2002a: 196). In 1367, Monkdikey to the east of the village was said to have been hindered by water being taken in from the river for one of the abbey's mills and in 1436 the villagers complained of the abbey's neglect of drains in the parish which was supposedly causing flooding (*ibid.*: 183). These complaints against the abbey were wide-spread throughout the peasantry at the time, as is indicated by the fact that in the late thirteenth century a tenant from neighbouring Benningholme also "vigorously prosecuted" the monks over flooding which had apparently been caused by the abbey's dikes (Lewis 1996:171).

An example of less direct resistance to the monks' authority can be found in the episode known as the 'Cellarer dispute'. This comprised a series of events which lasted from 1356 until 1361 and involved three cousins - John, Richard and Thomas Cellarer - prosecuting a protracted legal suit in an attempt to prove that they were royal villeins rather than the abbot's. This is not the same as the claim, quite common at this time, of the privileges of ancient demesne, which involved a bid for absolute freedom. Nonetheless, the achievement of royal villein status would still have involved absolute freedom from the claims of the abbot (Kennedy 1976). These two types of free status (privilege of ancient demesne and that of royal villain) were

similar in the sense that the king was perceived as a benign and just lord (Müller 2003) and, indeed, the three Cellarer cousins repeatedly appealed to him directly. The dispute was extremely lengthy and involved a number of complicated legal manoeuvres, but the point of importance here involves the assistance given to the cousins by their fellow villagers and the abbey's reaction to the dispute in general. The monks did not seem to respond to it as if to an isolated incident only. On the contrary, the abbey's chronicler wrote that the incident made it look as though the monks had been "worsted by villains" (Horrox 1994:332) and it is clear that they were worried about the impact the serfs' rebellion might have had on other villagers, writing that the incident could "serve as a model for the unbridled malice of the others" (*ibid.*). The dispute was seen, therefore, as a source of potential power, the outcome of which was of utmost importance. It was also one of the events which would have added to the sense of fundamental change and breakdown of the old order which occurred in the wake of the Black Death. This is dealt with in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

This sense that the dispute was not merely isolated to one, reasonably privileged, family (the father of the Cellarers had paid the third greatest amount in the subsidy list of 1296-7) can be seen in the complicity of the other villagers. After the second inquisition had been held, which found in favour of the abbey, John and Thomas were rounded up by the bailiff of the Liberty of Holderness and handed over to the abbot, but Richard could not be found (Horrox 1994). John and Thomas were subsequently released to the king's escheator and they once again appealed to the Crown. The abbot bribed the chancellor to allow him to present his case *in absentia* and his lawyers managed to get the serfs back under the abbot's jurisdiction while this hearing was proceeding; they were promptly imprisoned. John escaped by climbing down a latrine and appealed, with another cousin, to the sheriff of York to be put under his protection.

On the occasion of escape and of Richard's disappearance, it can be seen that a certain amount of complicity must have been forthcoming from the other tenants of Wawne. Richard must have been actively hidden by

someone in the village, at least for a short period of time. Even if he was concealed by his immediate family members, it would be likely that the knowledge of his whereabouts would have been more widespread than this, yet there is no evidence that this was ever reported to the abbey's officials. A similar situation must have obtained with the subsequent escape of John. This lack of co-operation with the abbey's authority implies that there was no sense of identification with the lords as has been suggested occasionally occurred in the medieval period (Dyer 1985) and can be read, in fact, as examples of silent resistance to them. This type of resistance may have been very important to the sense of community at Wawne and therefore its effect extended beyond its immediate temporal context. As James Fentress and Chris Wickham (1992: 114) have written:

Perhaps the most powerful element ... is the memory of the community in opposition to the outside world, for this is one of the most effective recourses any social group has to reinforce its own social identity in opposition to that of others, and it is a memory everyone can participate in through personal memories and family traditions.

3.2.3 Village community

In addition to these examples of resistance to the power of their manorial lords, there is evidence in Wawne during this period for activities and uses of material culture which can be interpreted as evoking meanings of collectivism, and which imply the active formation of group identity. Aspects of the material culture of the village discussed below suggest that the practices they made possible would have created knowledges of unity, much more so, it can be suggested, than we see in the first case-study of Osgodby.

One of the practices that brought the villagers together was that of the intercommoning of stock. It is known that there were extensive tracts of marshland to the east and north of the village which were intercommoned

widely before the thirteenth century when disputes arose between Meaux abbey and Swine priory. Although the resolution of these disputes left much of the land divided between these two institutions, the middle of the marsh was still left in common (Kent 2002a: 194). This location must have facilitated negotiations, conversations between villagers and experiences of a communal nature in a location removed from the spaces in which their lords would have been present (see Austin and Thomas 1990: 72 for a discussion into the ways in which common pastures in medieval Devon were experienced by the peasantry).

The morphology of the village itself also served to evoke meanings of cohesion. Although the monks and lay brothers would have been constantly active in the village, the permanent physical markers of their presence were peripheral to it. The moated grange site was to the east of the village and the woollen manufactory to the north. In contrast, the village itself was clustered around two greens¹ and the church, which the abbey had tried unsuccessfully to appropriate (Kent 2002a: 199). The monks may therefore have been frequent (and possibly unwelcome) visitors to the village, but both areas of the village itself were inward-focussed. It is also relevant to note here that it is unlikely that the monks of Meaux would have entered the village to purchase any supplies, as there is no record of a market in the village. Rather, it is more likely that they would have visited the major markets at Hull and Beverley, or the local minor ones at Cottingham and Leconfield. As the greens would have been sites of recreational and various other gatherings, it can be seen that the space of the village as a whole facilitated and framed action and evoked meanings which were of a communal nature.

It can also be argued that the morphology of the village would have facilitated particularly *female* feelings of neighbourliness. As Pamela Graves (2000: 15) has written, in past societies, and “from the perspective of a life organised by physical existence ... subjective consciousness is

¹ Wawne was a polyfocal village and each section had its own green. See below p. 97.

understood as an epiphenomenon of body” which involves “barriers and distances and gestures” and therefore these barriers and distances must be taken into account when attempting to understand the experiences of past people. Moreover, meanings are evoked primarily through practice and if we look at the type of practices that the lay-out of the houses (here Type C houses are being referred to which are the only houses for which we have evidence of their plans) enabled, we can see that in their daily round of activity, women would have interacted with each other on a very regular basis. We know from documentary sources such as coroner’s records that women’s taskscape included the space of the house and surrounds more than men’s and that women tended to be physically present in the houses of their neighbours more than men (Hanawalt 1986: 145). Accordingly, we can conclude that this space was used more by women than by men. Connected to the 18 Type C houses were only 10 fold-yards and there is also no evidence that boundaries delineated the crofts (Hayfield 1984); thus it is therefore reasonable to surmise that these spaces were shared by the inhabitants of some of these houses. At Wawne, as the household enclosures in Croft’s Garth appear not to be separated, it can be proposed that women’s interactions would have been even closer and more frequent here than in villages such as Osgodby and Wharram Percy where clear toft boundaries are in evidence.

It can be seen, then, that a number of features of the medieval village of Wawne allow us to discuss the collective and social nature of many of the practices which would have been carried out therein, and the ways in which these would have been instrumental in the creation of a group identity.

3.2.4 The church

Hannah Arendt (1959) has argued that groups acquire identity and purpose and that this may allow them to act in concert in a way which makes it possible to attribute power to them. This proposition can be explored through a consideration of the fabric of Wawne church, which allows us to investigate this type of action in the context of the medieval peasant village.

It is apparent that it was the space of the nave rather than that of the chancel which was the focus for elaboration in the church of St. Peter's at Wawne (Figs. 17-19). The nave (which was rebuilt in the early thirteenth century) is of four bays and is aisled and it is the west windows of the nave which are of five lights and are "spectacular" (Pevsner 1972:362), implying the input of a high level of resources (Figs. 20-22). Similarly, it is the nave aisles which carry a crenellated parapet (Department of the Environment description 1987, Humber SMR ref 580). This suggests that the villagers had co-opted lordly architectural features and deployed them for their own prestige. Michel de Certeau has written extensively on this phenomenon; the use made by subaltern groups of the techniques of dominance and the ways in which these tools are reappropriated by the weaker group. He writes (de Certeau 1984: xiii) that subordinated groups subvert and alter dominant modes of representation "not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the [dominant] system". In contrast to the finery of the nave, the chancel has only two bays, is lower than the nave, and the sedilia and piscina are "austerely simply" (*ibid.*).

Pamela Graves (2000:97) has argued that "the nave of a church may be seen as comparable to land over which the laity had common rights" and that "the laity started claiming the space of the nave for themselves and effectively excluded the clergy and chancel from that space" (*ibid.*: 161). She reads the space of the nave as one controlled by the parishioners and the fabric of the church of St. Peter shows quite clearly that it was the space of the parishioners that was most elaborate and impressive. Importantly, it was also higher. In medieval ontology the right, the front and the higher were the privileged sides of their couplets (Graves 2000). There is also a clerestory which is dated to the very end of the period under discussion (Kent 2002a: 201) on the upper storey of the nave walls of the church. Graves argues that clerestories were a further example of lay control as they altered the focus of the church from a horizontal one (which emphasises the importance of the priest at its end) to a vertical one which instead emphasises the individual relationship with God and the saints. It is also possible that the inclusion of a clock on the second stage of the north-west tower further functioned to

emphasise the importance of the laity (Gurevich 1972 refers to this process in an urban context). This could have evoked meanings of the imposition of secular time upon the site where religious time (in the form of the church clocks) had heretofore ruled. However, the tolling of bells and control of time was polysemous in this period, as burgesses in nearby Hull and Beverley were using them to call each other to the guildhall and to start the day's trading. Similarly, markets and fairs were often held on religious days so that the meaning of the religious calendar was already intersected by strong secular meanings.

It can be seen that it was the nave, and therefore the space of the laity rather than the clergy, which was the locus for architectural elaboration at medieval Wawne. It can also be suggested that the laity responsible for this elaboration were the peasants of Wawne rather than any member of the lordly class. The lords of Wawne, the abbots of Meaux, worshipped in the church of the abbey and therefore are unlikely to have been interested in expending resources on the fabric of St. Peter's. Although the church also served the neighbouring township of Sutton, it also appears unlikely that the lords of Sutton were responsible for the elaboration of the nave because, throughout the Middle Ages, Sutton was gradually becoming a separate parish, and its chapel growing independent of the mother church at Wawne (Kent 2002a: 199). From at least 1246 Sutton had its own incumbent and it was regarded as a rectory by 1291 (Ingram 1969: 306). This separation was the cause of a series of long-standing and bitter disputes between the vicar of Wawne and the master and chaplains of the college at Sutton (in 1346 the chapel at Sutton had been appropriated to fund the college of by John de Sutton, lord of the manor (*ibid.*) A medieval college was a community of priests who lived together under a superior. Colleges were formed for a variety of reasons including to provide prayers or masses for an individual or group). Some time subsequent to the drafting of a new constitution for the college in 1380, the rights of the church at Wawne began to be infringed. This led to a series of disputes which did not end until 1464, and which included an appeal to Rome. It seems likely that this dispute did not just affect the clergy, but also would have affected the perceptions of the

Sutton tenants of the church at Wawne. It seems clear that the only religious observance made at the church at Wawne by the villagers of Sutton were those to do with burial (Lutgens 1976: 179), but that they were still responsible for a third of the cost of maintaining the nave (Kent 2002a: 201) and for finding a chaplain for the mother church; indeed, if they did not, the parishioners of Sutton themselves had to pay the parishioners of Wawne one pound per annum until they did so (*ibid.*: 200). It seems likely, therefore, that the tenants at Sutton did not feel fondly towards the church of St. Peter, and rather saw it as an unfair burden on their financial resources, and therefore would have been unlikely to have troubled about the details of the fabric. It is also clear that the lords of Sutton would have been focussing their religious energies on the chapel in their township; an observation which is supported by the lack of any heraldic or other lordly devices in St. Peter's itself. In comparison, the church at Sutton was re-built after the foundation of the college by Sir John de Sutton in 1347, with the nave apparently built by Sir John himself (Ingram 1969:308). A table tomb in the church at Sutton which was positioned in the middle of the chancel in the medieval period is of de Sutton and its base bears the arms of his friends and associates (*ibid.*: 309; Pevsner and Neave 1995: 566). It is clear, then, that during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – the period from which we have evidence for the two churches – the parishioners of Sutton had relatively little to do with the church at Wawne, aside from burdensome obligations and that the lord of this manor was concentrating his religious efforts on the church in the township. Therefore, it can be seen that the fabric of St. Peter's at Wawne is mostly likely to be the result of decisions made by the peasants of this village.

It can be seen that it was the space of the laity, rather than the clergy, that was emphasised in the fabric of St. Peter's and that the laity responsible for this was most likely the members of the peasantry from the village of Wawne itself. The fabric of the church can be seen to stress the community of the villagers, the importance of the space which they occupied during worship, and was produced by (and itself produced) powerful communal endeavour. It is noticeable in this church that there are no badges or other

personal insignia on the fabric. The church of St. Peter was therefore different from, for example, the church in the village of Haccombe, Devon, in which “for the majority ... the experience of orthodox Christian worship was inseparable from the reproduction of their role in the social and labouring structure of the manor ... and their relations with the manorial family” (Graves 2000:121). In Wawne, the laity had agency with which to create their own religious environment, the form of which emphasised their importance as a group and therefore, following Arendt, we can say that this group exercised power.

3.2.5 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has outlined various ways in which the group identity of the villagers of Wawne was evoked and maintained through the material culture of the village. It is possible that these factors were related to the considerable presence of the lordly power of the monks of Meaux. However, the villagers of Wawne lived in a society in which there were also strong divisions between villagers. The sense of unity at Wawne described above would have been far from complete. For the material culture gives us evidence not just for that sense of group unity but also for divisions which intersected this.

Firstly, Wawne was a polyfocal village, consisting of two areas, each with its own green and divided by an area of ridge-and-furrow (Hayfield 1984: 60-63). Besides this physical separation, there were also social divisions. The reeves of the village, for example, were selected from “a small group of holders of certain tofts” from at least 1396 (Kennedy 1976:115). Similarly, an arrangement was made between the ‘freeholders’ of Wawne and Meaux Abbey in the division of carr land (Kent 2002a:194). The probable presence of the village poor in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries has already been alluded to. Similarly, in 1396 we know that there were not inconsiderable differences in the amount of land that tenants held. For example, of 116 holdings only 25 included open-field land, of which five had half a bovate each, eighteen had one bovate each, one holding included

one and a half bovates, and the largest holder of open-field land had two bovates (*ibid.*: 196). In addition, the church of St. Peter had a guild of the Virgin Mary by 1462 (*ibid.*: 201). Guilds were often passively divisive organisations; members had to pay to join and they often involve separate ceremonies and clothing or a dress code which drew attention to lines within the community (McRee 1994).

Therefore, there were certainly differences between the villagers of Wawne, and they occupied different positions in the village hierarchy and in their amount of wealth. It is possible, of course, that actions of a divisive nature may have flowed from the occupation of these different positions (and the division of the carr land and the presence of the guild seem to be examples of this). It can be seen that social power was not just a force which was deployed between groups but within groups also; the boundaries between the two groups, that of the monks and villagers, were not entirely solid and interaction did occur of a non-confrontational nature. However, the evidence for social power in the village does seem to be primarily that of strong lordship exercised through a variety of media, resistance to this deployed through a similar variety of means, and a strong emphasis on the creation of community.

3.3 The Region

When the scale of analysis is moved outwards once again to that of the region, we can see that a number of different and sometimes contradictory power relations were at work. In this section, the landscape of lordship in the region, along with the evidence we have for resistance to it will initially be discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the importance of the two major towns in Wawne's vicinity - Hull and Beverley - where it can be seen that the visiting villagers would have encountered very different discourses of power. Finally, the aftermath of the Black Death is addressed, alongside the ways in which much of the exercise of power in this period was affected.

An attempt at the outline of a theory delineating the processes whereby social change after the Black Death occurred is also offered.

3.3.1 Lordship in the region

One feature of lordship in the immediate region of Wawne (again, taking a radius of five miles around the village (Fig. 23)) in the medieval period was shared architectural codes between various members of this group, effecting an experience, at least on some perceptual levels, of unity between different lords. An example of the deployment of similar architectural features by lords can be seen in their adoption of moats. Moats were a feature of Swine Priory, Meaux Abbey and Haltemprice Priory as well as of nearby Leconfield Castle (le Patourel 1973), Woodhall Manor near Beverley which was in use from 1250-1350 (Varley 1975), and Baynard Castle in nearby Cottingham to the south-west of Wawne across the River Hull, which was reported as producing fish in 1364 (English Heritage scheduling document 2001, Humber SMR, reference number 816).

It can also be seen that in the immediate vicinity of Wawne, in a similar way to that of the village itself, the physical presence of lordship was extensive. This can most clearly be seen in the very high number of deer parks in the region. Deer parks were tracts of land in which the lord had sole prerogative to hunt. Peasants could pay for the privilege of gathering in them, but ran the risk of severe punishment - even death - if caught poaching and forest officials, in particular, created a profound element of fear (Birrell 1996; Marvin 1999). In the period before the Black Death, these sources of protein which could have helped to feed the peasants' families that kept aside for the sole use of the lordly class, are likely to have been a focus for resentment. That this is likely is supported by the evidence we have for the demands of the peasants in the 1381 uprisings which included the ability to poach (see p. 135-136). Even in the post-plague era, the sheer size of many of the parks and the way in which they bounded off the landscape and restricted movement would have made them, at the very least, a clear sign of seigneurial privilege.

In the immediate region of Wawne, there were six deer parks. In neighbouring Swine, Robert of Hilton had a park in the late thirteenth century which was disparked by the mid-fifteenth century (Kent 2002b: 111). In the settlement of Cottingham the deer park stretched from the village to the northern boundary of the parish. It was described as being “well-enclosed” in 1282, covering four leagues in circuit and having sufficient pasture to support 500 deer (Allison 1979a: 72). It was still extant in 1369 when the Black Prince appointed his clerk to hunt there (Whiteing 1949). The township of Leconfield, which was a principal seat of the Percy family at this time, contained a deer park which was first mentioned in 1314 (Kent 1979: 127). The township of Rise also had a park, mentioned in 1304 (Kent 2002c: 331). In the hamlet of Bentley, Richard de Bentley claimed the right to keep his wood enclosed in 1280 (Allison 1979b: 149). This was possibly emparked as it was referred to as a park in the sixteenth century (*ibid.*: 150) and at that time was said to encompass 44 acres (Neave 1991). Finally, in Beverley, the archbishops kept a hunting estate called Beverley Parks a short distance to the south of the town (Allison 1989: 271). Within a relatively small area, therefore, there were a large number of parks, comprising a significant amount of space which the villagers of Wawne would have been excluded from.

Another striking example of lordly prerogative in the region in the medieval period was the depopulation of two settlements carried out by Meaux Abbey. As the chroniclers of the abbey wrote “where the village of Meaux was sited there is now our grange which is called North Grange” (cited in Waites 1962:651n). Similarly, and more controversially, some time after 1200 they converted the hamlet of Myton into a grange (Allison 1969: 11). In the process, they destroyed a chapel, an event which the rector of Hesse - Guisborough Priory - had complained about (*ibid.*: 12). Although this was a very early event, it was undoubtedly a scandalous one. While it is difficult to judge how long memory of this event would have been sustained, it is certain that it would have been remembered for many years. With regards to the vill of Meaux, it was so close to Wawne that any remnants left of it

would have been visible. Quite possibly the displaced inhabitants and their offspring would have lived nearby and recalled the depopulation. The Cellarer case provides a clear example of the capacity of people to trace the descent of their families through four or five generations, and these actions carried out by the monks of Meaux are unlikely to have disappeared from the community memory for some considerable time (Kennedy 1970).

The links between lordly strategies in the region were also evidenced in the deployment of material culture in the churches of the region. The links between secular lordship and the ecclesiastical spheres were as common for the region around Wawne as those described for Osgodby's region, and are similarly evidenced in a variety of ways. In Sutton, in Wawne parish, the church incumbent was usually the relative of the manorial patrons for most of this period (Ingram 1969: 306). As mentioned above, the lord of Sutton founded a college in 1346 (Lutgens 1976) and, as the owners would not usually have been resident at Sutton, the masters and chaplains of this college would have been the people of most importance in this village (Blashill 1894). The buildings of the church and lordly residences in the region were often proximate to each other. For example, in Cottingham, the manorial and abbey mills were close together (Allison 1979a: 76), and in Long Riston the Hildyards' chief house was likely to have been positioned to the south-east of the church (Allison 2002: 344). There were also the usual lordly devices present in externally visible places in the churches of the region. These include "a fine display of heraldic glass" in the church of Cottingham (Whiteing 1949:232), a device of the Percy family in the window of St. Catherine's at Leconfield (Kent 1979: 130), while the arms of the Skirlaw family appear throughout the church of St. Augustine in Skirlaugh including the dripstones which terminate in shields bearing their arms (Department of the Environment Description 1987, Humber SMR reference number 7052). It must be noted that for the villagers of Wawne, as for the villagers of Osgodby, these linkages between the ecclesiastical sphere and that of secular lordship did not occur within the context of their own settlements. I have commented that, at Osgodby, the absence of these linkages would have led to a sense of the contingency of the values that the

linkages between lordly and ecclesiastical sphere was attempting to display. This may not have been the sole effect for the villagers at Wawne, as their lords were monks and had their own church within the abbey, and would not have been expected necessarily to worship in the same church as they did. However, it would surely have been compared with their relative freedom with respect to the fabric of St. Peter's, and emphasised it as a particular site of agency for them.

3.3.2 Resistance in the region

As at Wawne village itself, the lords of the region, whether secular or ecclesiastical, imposed a good deal of control over the landscape. They also presented a united face in terms of their deployment of certain aspects of material culture – an example of a mechanism of ‘systemic integration’ (Barrett 2001: 158, 161). This concept has been described by John Barrett as involving the “transference and transformation of resources between fields, where the resources could be conceived of as forms of “capital” accumulated in one field of practice and reinvested in another” (*ibid*: 161). It is a useful way of defining factors which linked different social fields together, and emphasises the role that power plays in this integration. However, he stresses the way these linkages produce vertical integration, and this can be complemented by a consideration of the ways that horizontal linkages, such as between ecclesiastical and secular lords in the medieval period, added to the maintenance of hierarchical systems in general in the Middle Ages. In Foucauldian terms, it is likely that the effects of these forces would have been ‘capillary’ – that is, that they worked through a multitude of small channels, in a similar fashion to the way power operated at Wawne itself. And so too did the peasantry act in a ‘capillary’ fashion in their forms of resistance. We have seen how the inhabitants of Wawne complained about aspects of the monks’ management of the dykes and waterways, as, indeed, did a tenant in neighbouring Benningholme. These complaints were echoed by those villagers of Arnold who, around the turn of the thirteenth century attempted to prevent the monks of Meaux commoning sheep in 260 acres of pasture and from using six acres of other

land for cattle (Donkin 1978). A chapel called the North Crouch situated in the north transept of the church at Swine was also the site of resistance when, in around 1300, the parishioners made good their claim to it after a dispute with the prioress of Swine (Kent 2002b: 117).

The Cellarer dispute of 1356-1361 as mentioned above, is another example of this quiet mode of resistance. As previously discussed, the villagers of Wawne were passively complicit in the Cellarers' rebellion, but the peasants of Easington were actively involved. At the very beginning of the matter, the escheator held an inquiry among the serfs of Easington, all of whom swore that the Cellarers were indeed the king's serfs and that were from Easington and had moved to Wawne only 20 years previously (Horrox 1994). Marjorie Kennedy, who has undertaken a detailed analysis of this case, argues that this claim cannot possibly be correct. She made a close study of the relevant documents and reconstructed the Cellarer family tree and found that the Easington toft was given up and the relevant ancestor moved to Meaux in the mid to late thirteenth century which was obviously much further in the past than the preceding two decades (Kennedy 1976). There therefore seems to have been a concerted attempt by the Easington serfs to thwart the abbey. It seems likely that this solidarity was recognised by the abbey for the chronicler of the abbey wrote that, in the petition against the escheator's findings, the abbey was requesting a new inquiry "made up of men of some standing rather than villeins as previously" (cited in Horrox 1994:33). Another example of such solidarity can be found within the course of the Cottingham conspiracy (which will be discussed below). This comprised not just villeins of Cottingham but also people from Hessle, Dunswell, Newland, Skidby and Hullbank who came together to challenge the authority of various officials (Sayles 1971).

It can be seen, thus, that the ever-present power of the lords was countered by resistance throughout the region around Wawne. I would now like to move on to a discussion of the towns of Hull and Beverley which will be dealt with separately as very different force relations were at work here.

3.3.3 The impact of urbanism

The villagers of Wawne would have had strong links with the two urban centres in their close vicinity. At Beverley they would have visited St. John's shrine, the Corpus Christi plays, the markets and possibly the Cross Monday Rogationtide procession - there are many examples of people from a town's hinterland flooding in to watch Corpus Christi events (Rubin 1991). All the finewares from the high medieval period from the excavations at Wawne probably came from Beverley so there is good evidence that Wawne villagers would have been familiar with the town (Hayfield 1984). The markets at Hull are likely to have been visited too. Links between town and country in this period were strong, due to the pull of employment and markets (Hilton 1975). The lure of employment could work both ways as townspeople could often turn out to work during the harvest (Hanawalt 1986). Jeremy Goldberg has researched migration using the York cause papers, and has shown that most migration consisted of people going to town from the rural hinterland (Goldberg 1992a). Therefore, visiting of friends and family members would have been another link between urban and rural contexts. Even in villages remote from major towns such as at Wharram Percy there is documentary and skeletal evidence of strong links between rural and urban spheres (see p. 167). So for a village like Wawne, in close proximity to two towns, it is fairly unproblematic to postulate villagers' familiarity with them.

Hull and Beverley were arguably sites where the feudal discourse with which the villagers of Wawne would have been familiar from their own village as well as from the rural surrounds, broke down. The types of lordly power and the sites of its exercise were similar in the village and region, as argued above. However, these types and sites of power did not obtain in the towns where there were substantially different loci of power. This is certainly not an original argument as it is quite obvious that, as most towns had no manorial lords as such and tended to have solid arrangements for self-rule, the exercise of feudal power outside their walls was quite different from the types of power operating within them. However, I would here like

to outline in a more detailed fashion and with respect to Hull and Beverley specifically, the way that these power relations worked, particularly in terms of the differences that the villagers of Wawne would have perceived.

The towns were, firstly, physically distinct and bounded off from the rest of the landscape. A villager of Wawne walking in to either of them would have experienced very different architectural and other features from the ones she or he would have been accustomed to; features which would have clearly relayed messages that a separate administrative category was being encountered. Upon entering Beverley, although there were no town walls, the visitor would have passed by two sets of sanctuary crosses as well as the gallows if they were coming from the north. In addition, the leper hospitals were in the suburbs of the town (Miller *et al.* 1982), and Roberta Gilchrist (1996) has highlighted the way that the siting of hospitals on the periphery of towns “heightened the distinction between urban and rural and fostered a sense of urban identity” (*ibid.*: 47). Approaching Hull, the massive walls and the gallows again would have proclaimed the presence of a separate, bounded entity. Maurice Bloch (1962) has argued that terminologically, it was the presence of burghers which distinguished towns; that it was the presence of a special type of person (one with specific rights) which was recognised very early on in medieval Europe. The villagers from Wawne, therefore, would have been both perceptually and conceptually aware that the space they were entering was quite a different *sort* of space from elsewhere in their landscape.

Perhaps one of the most telling features in the working of lordship from the perspective of the Wawne villager was in the extent of lay control over the churches. In Beverley, this control may be particularly significant insofar as the town was in fact dominated by a church – that of Beverley Minster. This building was probably quite strongly identified with lordly power as it was immediately proximate to the archbishop’s residential precinct which included a gaol, a manor court and other buildings instrumental in the exercise of seigneurial privilege (Miller *et al.* 1982). Moreover, inside the Minster, the relics of St. John which were its focal point were adjoined to

the massive and elaborate Percy shrine (*ibid.*). However, during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the laity funded the building of three churches in Beverley including St. Mary's which quickly became "the town's church" and the focus of lay devotion and investment (Kermode 1998). Of the people for whom there is information, 58 per cent chose to be buried in St. Mary's over St. John's (the Minster) between 1370 and 1420. There are many indications in the fabric of St. Mary's that the parishioners were concentrating their building efforts on an elaboration of the shared space of the nave, but it is unlikely that the villagers of Wawne would have been aware of these as they would have had no reason to enter this church. Linked to this creation of a religious space which was separate from the lords of the borough, was the manner in which the town developed topographically. Its centre of gravity and the focus of building gradually edged north away from the Minster, with the market in the northern area superseding the one near the Minster in terms of importance (Miller *et al.* 1982). This shift may have had limited effects on the peasants of Wawne, however, and been confined to specific generations who witnessed physical developments and changes in the topography of the town.

In Hull, it was the merchants who had a large amount of control over areas which were usually the preserve of the church or various religious orders. For example, it was merchants who established the medieval hospitals of Hull, not the religious orders (Kermode 1991). They also "hired and fired most of the clergy of the city" (Heath 1984:227). Peter Heath's work on the Hull wills of the fourteenth century suggests that they bear "eloquent witness to the communal pride and personal enthusiasm which were invested in the town's churches" (*ibid.*: 217). In Hull, the laity funded the building of Holy Trinity church (which is the largest parish church in England) which, by 1409 contained 12 chantry priests called 'priests of the table' whose houses were all grouped together near the churchyard (Ingram 1969: 287-288). The formation and running of chantries represents a powerful form of lay control over the ecclesiastical environment. Those living in or visiting Hull, including the villagers of Wawne, may well have been aware of these factors as builders often wore the livery of the people

commissioning the work (Graves 2000) which, in this case, may have been a motif of the common seal of the town. Other details of the arrangements within the church may have been relayed during conversations with townspeople either within Hull itself or throughout the region more broadly when townspeople were employed for harvesting. We know, for instance, that this occurred in Swine, since a rental record records that as many as 410 casual labourers were hired for the 1448 harvest (Kent 2002b: 113), many of whom would have been from the town. Because the inhabitants of the towns were able to exercise control over their religious environment in a way similar to the villagers of Wawne themselves, it can be suggested that it was the operation of more 'traditional' seigneurial lordship in the regional sphere that was thrown into relief for the villagers. Similarly to the villagers of Osgodby, the inhabitants of Wawne were witness to variation in seigneurial power strategies, which would have served to weaken the overall effectiveness of these tactics.

There is, furthermore, direct evidence for resistance to lordly powers within the towns. In Beverley in 1391 it was ordered that the custom of "King of the Fools" must cease, but the general custom of "the fools" was allowed to continue. Moreover, it seems that the town maintained a Lord of the Fools on its own account subsequent to this for we know that in 1502-3 the keepers paid the expenses of a 'lord of Misrule' (Horrox 1989: 62). The figure of the King of Fools is related to ridicule and revenge in its mocking of social superiors and is a practice deeply implicated in subordinate strategies for social change (Scott 1990; Humphrey 1999). Ridicule can be an indirect, although powerful, form of resistance (Paynter and McGuire 1991), although this is not universally acknowledged. Mary Douglas, for example, has argued that jokes are not subversive; that they are simply a liberation from any type of 'form' in general, and that they do not produce alternatives (Douglas cited in Camille 1992). It can be suggested that in this period where many alternatives to traditional forms of power were being raised and struggled for (these will be discussed in the final section), the representation of 'Fools' did constitute resistance, and that their potential was quite clearly understood, leading to authorities' attempts to ban them.

The towns, like Wawne itself, were however, also divided communities. There may have been weak seigneurial authority but there were still hierarchical relations operating in these contexts which often took material form. In Beverley, for example, the rich and the poor clustered separately in different wards of the town (Horrox 1989: 54; Sheeran 1989: 154)). Hull was also spatially differentiated between the rich and the poor, with Hull Street being the wealthiest part of medieval Hull and poorer parts being located towards the western perimeter (Sheeran 1998). Similarly, the town keepers of Beverley tended to be consistently re-elected after their statutory period of ineligibility (Horrox 1989: 22-3). This oligarchical structure also obtained in Hull and was partially expressed by the elite's sponsorship of churches, which can particularly be seen on the church of St. Mary the Virgin which carried the merchant's mark of the donor both within and without. Although the towns were granted a large measure of control over their administration and their inhabitants emphasised this independence in their deployment of material culture therefore, there were still important (non-feudal) divisions within these societies.

The sense of corporate unity and independence of the towns, criss-crossed by numerous divisions, can be seen very clearly in the performance of the Corpus Christi plays of Beverley and the Rogation Day processions of both towns. These events can be read as being concerned with the re-stating of the autonomy of the town and the central importance of civic life in general. Although the Rogationtide ceremony of Beverley involved the relics of St. John from the Minster, the bulk of the event and of the Corpus Christi plays emphasised civic unity and identity and there is no evidence to suggest that the archbishop or the canons of the Minster had any organisational role to play. Miri Rubin has argued that by the late fourteenth century in particular, most urban processions came to be controlled by secular civic authorities (Rubin 1991). The city council of Beverley regarded the plays as extremely important and attempted to regulate all aspects of their performance. The plays were performed at various locations along the town's high street and one station was also sited within the town's suburbs. As the poor lived in the

more peripheral areas, as mentioned above, the staging of the plays were events that embraced the town as a whole and all its inhabitants, and the evidence therefore does not support Katie Normington's suggestion that medieval processions and plays "validated the city centre in opposition to more marginal areas" (Normington 2004: 80). Pamela Graves interprets the marketplaces where the plays would have been held as having resonances for the peasantry of subservience and disempowerment; she stresses their functions as places where the "products the poor made were sold for the profits of their employers" and where the majority were forced to buy goods because of their lack of self-sufficiency (Graves 2000: 64). However, it can be seen that the marketplace was also a site of community gathering, where people sold their goods as well as bought them, and where there were opportunities for interaction and recreational activity. Indeed James Scott, following Bakhtin, argues that the marketplace, with its level of mingling and its atmosphere of equality, was often a particular locus for anti-hegemonic discourse (Scott 1990). It is, of course, possible that the poor felt disenfranchised by the guild structure itself but they surely would have used – and therefore co-opted for themselves and produced their own meanings of – the town's high street. At their heart, both the Corpus Christi plays and the Rogationtide procession were organised by the towns' guilds (and occasionally other groups too), groups which were the product of self-organisation on the part of the town's inhabitants and which expressed identities independent of any feudal obligation and therefore of the autonomy of the towns.

It is likely that the villagers of Wawne would have attended the Corpus Christi celebrations and are likely to have, at least occasionally, attended the Rogationtide procession as it would have been a good opportunity to have witnessed the relics of St. John. When they observed these events they are likely to have come away with a sense of the mutual solidarity of the urban population. However, there has been some work recently on the divisive, rather than the unifying, aspect of guilds and other groupings within medieval towns. It is not clear that all of these arguments are relevant to a discussion of the effect of the plays and processions on outsiders but some

of the factors mentioned would have been noticeable to them. Firstly, the structure of Beverley's play cycle was not fixed - "as crafts merged or separated in response to the vicissitudes of political and economic life, these changes were perforce expressed in the dramatic civic enterprise" (Rubin 1991: 278) which means that each year, a slightly different play cycle may have been observed by the villagers of Wawne. For example, when in 1493 the Mercers and Drapers of Beverley split, they were each given a new play: Black Herod and Pilate's Judgement respectively (*ibid.*:281-2). With respect to the Rogation Day processions, it was only the leading and most established guilds which had a right to erect their temporary 'castles' (*ibid.*). Secondly, the plays did not include every member of the urban community such as servants, children and the poor. Accordingly, they were not representative of the urban community as a whole.

The Beverley play cycle and the Beverly and Hull Rogation days therefore, would have, like other aspects of the town, expressed and produced both a freedom and autonomy from seigneurial power as well as expressing and producing differences between members of the urban community. It is interesting to consider the gendered aspects of these processions. Miri Rubin, the author of a major study of the Corpus Christi play cycles, believes that women would not have participated in these plays (Rubin 1991). However, it seems clear that, throughout the country, women were connected to guilds although these bonds were not as strong as they were for men. Barbara Hanawalt's studies of 500 guilds found that only 1% of them were sex-segregated. Similarly, Judith Bennett, in her study of brewsters, found that women were allowed entry to guilds but not into the full privileges associated with them such as gaining civic enfranchisement through membership or attending all associated events (Bennett 1994). Katie Normington (2004:27) has argued that "women could be admitted to most English guilds, although usually as wives and only occasionally as *femmes soles*" and that widows accounted for between two and five per cent of guild membership (*ibid.*). It seems likely, therefore, that women did have a presence in the processions that the villagers of Wawne would have witnessed. In fact, it is known that women had a presence in one guild in

Beverley; that of the Purification of the Virgin. This guild performed a play which was a representation of the churching ceremony that women underwent subsequent to giving birth. A woman, dressed as the Virgin Mary walked at the head of the guild's column and was followed by two men who played the parts of Joseph and Simeon and two others (who are likely to have been women as we know the guild was started by two women as well as married couples) dressed as angels. When they arrived at the church, Mary handed the child to Simeon at the high altar as in the biblical story of the Purification (Horrox 1989: 48, McRee 1994). It is clear that women were involved in this particular play both in Beverley and there are similar examples from the civic dramas of medieval Aberdeen (McMurray Gibson: 42). Gail McMurray Gibson, who has made a study of the churching ceremony, in fact expressed surprise that *men* were actually involved as churching was such a specifically female ritual (*ibid.*: 1996).

It seems to me that the guild plays would have strengthened the sense of empowerment that women obtained through the practice of the churching ceremony. To have their ritual put in the context of the grander religious story would arguably have prevented it from being interpreted as a shameful necessity and would have imbued it with larger import. It would have augmented the power and sense of gender solidarity that the ritual was already a locus for. The guild plays also further breaks down any idea of a public/private dichotomy in non-elite medieval life. The purification cycle is similar, in this respect, to the other play cycles which included the representation of the Virgin. These included cycles such as 'The Salutation of Elizabeth' which shows Mary in "healthy social interaction" with another woman (Normington 2004:98). Normington (*ibid.*: 99) argues that medieval plays which represented Mary's relationship with Joseph portrayed a marriage of considerable equality. In considering the impact of these plays, it should be noted that medieval society was without such wide-spread institutions of normalisation such as are present in modern society, for example in the form of mass media advertising. The ubiquity and relative homogeneity of the images which institutions such as the media present us with allows these images and their concomitant value systems to colonise

personal imaginings and play a 'normative-ising' role. Their ubiquity and homogeneity also enables variation from the models they present to be easily dismissed. In a society in which such a deep saturation of these images was absent, much greater creative power can be attributed to daily practice. Events and processes that people witnessed had more ability to create meaning, as opposed to today when we can constantly refer what we see to a set of normative ideals. It can be argued, therefore, that the presence of women in this very public ritual of the Corpus Christi plays in the market places and elsewhere in Beverley, where they would have been observed by the villagers of Wawne working most of the week with many other women as there were more women in the towns than men (Goldberg 1992a), would have evoked and enabled ideas of women's ubiquity and of spaces being everywhere available to them. This serves as another refutation of the idea of a public/private dichotomy, further examples of which are provided in Chapter Six.

It has been argued here that a specific set of power relations were exercised in Hull and Beverley. In these towns, there was an absence of many of the elements of the feudal discourse with which the villagers of Wawne would have been most familiar. This would have been observable in the autonomy of the townspeople and their ability to organise their own institutions, in their impact on and authority over the creation of their own religious spaces and in their autonomy enacted through the public processions. Towns would also have helped to augment many of the gendered experiences occurring in the village in terms of women's use of space. However, like the village, there were observable differences between the different groups which made up these urban communities.

3.4 Social change

I would like to now move on to a discussion of the Black Death and its effects within the region. The Black Death reached Yorkshire in early 1349. It is known that there was massive mortality in the region, as there was elsewhere, particularly in Hull. Only 10 monks and lay brothers of the

abbey of Meaux survived out of 50. In one month alone, August 1349, 22 monks and six lay brethren died (Solloway 1913: 148). It is, therefore, likely that the effects of the plague were also severe in the village of Wawne. For three months after the plague, no mass, prayers or praise had been said at the abbey (Aldabella n.d.). In Beverley, the old churchyard had to be extended and a new one consecrated to accommodate the number of dead (Horrox 1989: 55). At the same time, there was particularly bad flooding in the area (Cox 1893) which would have added to the sense of apocalypse and social crisis that would surely have been prevalent.

In the decades after the Black Death there were numerous events - uprisings and revolts in this area which were, both in quantity and quality, quite unlike anything that would have been experienced by the inhabitants of Wawne before. At the abbey itself, there was massive internal discord. In the 1350s, the cellarer tried to depose Abbot Dringhoe who travelled to Rome to arraign the new abbot and finally got the abbacy back in 1367 (Cox 1893). There was, again, an attempt to depose the abbot in 1396. The abbots of Roche and Garendon abbeys came to investigate, but were met by an armed force led by the abbot of Fountains Abbey and members of one of the factions (Solloway 1913: 148). In the 1380s or 1390s an event which was called the 'Cottingham conspiracy' occurred, which has been briefly mentioned above. This involved a number of individuals, who appear to have been of reasonably low status given that the occupations listed for them included 'farmer, and 'former servant'. These men, from a number of townships in the area had, in breach of the Statute of Livery "dressed for the last six years in one livery of a single company by corrupt allegiance and confederacy, each of them maintaining the other in all complaints, true or false" (Sayles 1971:83). They assembled in various parts of the region and disrupted the activities of king's officials. They made up a rhyme which they repeated on various occasions which ran "In the country we heard that wicked men would be coming into our district to see that everything is carried out/ It is true as regards the friars and many more orders, whether they are sleeping or awake/ that each of them will cover up for the other and support him as brother, both in right and wrong/ And we too will maintain

our neighbours through thick and thin with all our might/ Every man may come and go, just as he likes, among us, I tell you for sure/ But we will suffer no mocking, neither of Tom, Dick or Harry, no matter who he be.” This rhyme essentially asserts their loyalty to each other and their objections to the presence of officials (*ibid.*:84)

There were also a number of disturbances in Beverley during these decades. Between 1381 and 1389 there was a clerical strike at Beverley Minster which was the result of a struggle between Archbishop Alexander Neville and the canons and lesser clergy of the Minster. The archbishop claimed that he was a canon of the Minster and attempted to usurp various powers such as the probate of wills and the disposal of goods intestate in the chapter liberty. The archbishop locked out the vicars and, although some canons would have held preferments in other places, the vicars and chantry priests had no other means of subsistence and became vagrants (Leach 1890). The archbishop had to provide others to perform divine service and, throughout the matter, “showed an utter contempt for custom” (*ibid.*: 16). Neville was completely defeated in the dispute with the canons when sentence was given against him in the court of Rome and when, in 1388, he had to flee the country after being impeached and accused of being a traitor. In 1356 in the town there was a riot at the election of the town keepers, during which many people were attacked (Horrox 1989: 23-23). In 1381, as elsewhere in the country, there was serious unrest in Beverley in which an attempt was made to alter fundamentally the way in which the town was run. In part, it was an attack on the monopoly that the most important burgesses held on civil office, and it was also an attack on the ecclesiastical lords of the town as resentment of both the provost and archbishop was linked towards the keepers as many leading burgesses were also the lord’s officials (*ibid.*). The fifteenth century saw further attacks; in 1423 there were disturbances at the elections for which 18 rebels were fined and events similar to this continued into the rest of the century (*ibid.*: 23-24).

Disturbances also occurred in Hull. In 1351 there were riots when ships were demanded from the town by the king for warfare (Gillett and

MacMahon 1980). During the course of these riots, prisoners were set free and the bailiff assaulted (Allison 1969: 22) Again in 1402 there were more disturbances and prisoners were freed from the goal and stocks and the mayor was assaulted to chants of 'down with him!' (*ibid.*: 30). Although these events may not directly be linked to the Black Death itself, these were part of the social milieu of the generations immediately subsequent to it. From the perspective of the Wawne villager, news of these events would have been experienced alongside news of other changes of a similar violent and disruptive nature that were directly linked to the changes following the plague.

The Black Death has often been regarded as a fundamental spur to social change and this change is usually explained in terms of depopulation leading to increased opportunities for peasants which meant that they no longer had to accept certain seigniorial impositions leading to the beginning of the dissolution of feudalism as a system (e.g. Rigby 1995: 124-27). This narrative positions economic variables, such as the increase in the availability of land, in 'prime mover' position and does not discuss the detailed processes whereby the change occurred, and also leaves very little space for human agency. Here, a different perspective will be taken on the ways in which changes occurred at this time.

The importance of changes to daily practice in more wide-spread social change has been noted by various writers. Henrietta Moore has written that "shifts in meaning can result from a reordering of practical activities" (Moore 1994: 325) and that "small changes in procedure can provide new interpretations" (*ibid.*). John Barrett has discussed the ways in which social change occurs "when things did not work" during times of social crisis. (Barrett 2001:154; and see Moi 1999: 278 for a discussion of Bourdieu's observations that it is in moments of crisis that the discussed can become undiscussed and that therefore "self-evidence is destroyed practically"; also Lukes' use of Gramscian theory 1974: 256)). It is clear that during the Black Death, radical changes in procedure were necessitated. We know that there were shocked reports of changes to familiar routines and rituals. For

example, there is documentary evidence for people being buried in pits such as in the Chronicle of Robert of Avesbury who was writing in London in the middle of the fourteenth century. Similarly, the Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker writing in Oxfordshire at the same time, noted that fields were being used for burial. A chronicle from Canterbury which covers the period 1346-1367 laments the shortage of priests and the fact that many churches were left unserved (Horrox 1994:86). Similarly, the *Historia Rottensis*, a chronicle of the cathedral priory of Rochester which covers the period 1314-1350, notes that “churchmen, knights and other worthies have been forced to thresh their corn [and] plough the land” (*ibid.*: 70) and the same source mentions that “there was such a shortage of fish, that men were obliged to eat flesh on Wednesdays” (*ibid.*: 73). John of Reading, a monk at Westminster who died in 1368 or 1369 and whose chronicle covers the decades in the middle of the fourteenth century, noted that crops were rotting in the fields and that sheep and cattle were roaming through them (*ibid.*: 74) and that buildings were falling down in towns and villages were deserted (*ibid.*: 80). It is clear from these sources that there was a significant disruption to many aspects of everyday routine, as well as to religious ritual and also large-scale alteration in the social environment such as in the desertion of villages. Many familiar activities would have ceased to take place; neighbours would have been dying so land and animals were not being tended. Lords were dying so manorial court sessions were not being held, priests were dying so no church services were taking place. In Wawne itself, the presence of the monks would have disappeared, and no bells calling them to service would have been heard; there would have been an extreme disjunction between the everyday experiences of before and after the onset of the plague. Things were indeed ‘failing to work’.

Changes in these types of specific practices would have had wider effects than simply on the specific tasks and activities that they were directly concerned with, as “the effects of a new alignment in a semantic space is inevitably to alter all other concepts that shared this space and that are redefined in relation to it” (Miller 1984: 44). This implies that the whole array of meanings grouped around the burial of the dead, the activities of

priests and lords and so on would have been altered along with the specific events themselves.

Concomitant with these breakdowns in procedure and the effects these would have produced, there was a breakdown in 'systemic integration' (Barrett 2001). The discourses and cohesiveness of this hierarchical society were cracking under the strain of the different practices that were necessitated by the onset of the plague. The survivors of Wawne would have witnessed the spectacle of abbots lining up against each other in confrontation, and the archbishop of York turning fellow clergy out into the street. These factors, it can be argued, led to a situation in which non-elite members of society objectified the material conditions around them and attempted to alter them. The Cottingham conspiracy and the rebellions and riots in Hull and Beverley provide evidence of a desire for *systematic* change; they were not just concerned with specific, small grievances (see Rigby 1995 : 171, 172). The conspirators at Cottingham mentioned "wicked men"; this was not a disagreement with a particular official. At Beverley, a new system of election was introduced by the rebels, not just the replacement of one official by another. In Hull, although individual town leaders were attacked, prisoners were released from gaol at the same time, demonstrating an awareness of and resistance to wider forms of subjection.

It is my contention, therefore, that change after the Black Death was due to the alteration of specific procedures along with a collapse in the systematic integration of the hierarchical system of the time which led to people objectifying their circumstances and struggling for change.

The two foregoing case studies have allowed us to consider peasant experience in two, very different, medieval villages. We have observed the operation of seigneurial power in a village in which the lord was spatially co-present and one in which this was not the case. Different strategies of both lordly power and the creation of peasant community have also been elucidated. Furthermore, these examples have also allowed us to take both a synchronic and a diachronic view of medieval settlements. However,

Osgodby and Wawne were both subject to somewhat limited archaeological investigation, and therefore the third case-study examines the settlement of Wharram Percy, one of the most thoroughly researched medieval villages in the country.

Chapter Four

Wharram Percy

The deserted village of Wharram Percy lies on the Yorkshire Wolds, some 20 miles north-east of York (Fig. 24). It has been the subject of extensive historical and archaeological investigation for over 40 years and, in archaeological circles, it is one of the most famous deserted medieval villages in England. The settlement has undergone a substantial amount of excavation and material dating from the Mesolithic through to the nineteenth century has been investigated, as has all available documentary evidence. The surrounding area has also been thoroughly researched.

This chapter will attempt to outline the experiences of seigneurial power, resistance and community of the peasantry of late-medieval Wharram Percy. Experiential aspects of the church will also be explored, as will some dimensions of the lives of the women who resided in this small village. The analysis is based on the investigation of social practice and on interpretations of the peasantry's encounter with and manipulation of material culture.

4.1 Lordship at Wharram Percy

The excavated and earthwork evidence of the village has revealed two medieval manor sites, one in Area 10 in the west row of the village, and the other forming the large earthwork complex in the northern head row (Fig. 25). There has been some disagreement regarding the dates of occupation of these manor houses and it is unclear whether they were occupied successively or simultaneously. In 1254 a transaction occurred whereby Peter de Percy extinguished rights that Henry the Chamberlain had in Wharram. Some authors are of the opinion that the families of these two men had, prior to this date, both resided in the village with each occupying

one of the manor houses (Bell and Beresford 1987; Hurst 1983). Others simply argue that it is unclear which manor house was the property of which family, and that absolute certainty on this matter is impossible (Stamper and Croft 2000: 3). The most recent publication, however, argues that the Percys' acquisition of the Chamberlain interest in the manor is most likely to be the context for the abandonment of the South Manor area (in Area 10) and the development or redevelopment of the North Manor area¹ (Rahtz and Watts 2004: 2, 295).

Both of the manor houses were located in focal points of the village. The north manor was positioned at the apex of the village, with a steep drop from its site to the hollow-way along which the villagers would have traversed, and which had been the setting for buildings of high status since the Iron Age (Hurst 1984). The south manor, meanwhile, was in a position which afforded uninterrupted views of the entire village (Stamper and Croft 2000). These holdings were, therefore, well placed to facilitate the surveillance functions which were arguably important to the function of lordly power (Saunders 1990). It must be recognised, however, that throughout the 400 years under consideration in this study, the actual operation of any lordly surveillance was very limited indeed. For one thing, it seems unlikely that the Chamberlains ever resided permanently in the village. Not only was the family's main seat elsewhere, but the excavated camera itself shows evidence of only limited use insofar as all the associated features lacked evidence for any repairs, adaptations or refurbishments (Stamper and Croft 2000). Moreover, the threshold stone of the undercroft exhibited no sign of wear and there was, overall, relatively little material of twelfth- or thirteenth-century date. It is true that no evidence of a hall itself was located, but as the excavated remains certainly represent a manorial building, it would still be expected that the camera would have exhibited more signs of use had it been regularly occupied.

¹ NB: When the words 'North Manor' are written with capital letters it is the excavated area named the North Manor Area, which includes the northern hollow way and some peasant contexts to the north of the west row of tofts, that is being referred to. When 'north manor' is used with lower case letters, the manor house and grounds themselves are signified. This system also applies to the south manor.

Similarly, there is no documentary evidence for Wharram Percy being the residence of any Percy lord from 1254-1403. There are no Percy family tombs at Wharram Percy church (Bell and Beresford 1987) and they may never have lived in the village (Hurst 1984). The authors of the latest monograph, however, do believe that Wharram was a principal residence from the 1260s to the 1320s of that branch of the Percy family which bought out the Chamberlains' tenancy. They argue that the likelihood of this is suggested both by the efforts that Peter made to effect this transaction and by those of his son Robert in his attempts to secure the descent of Wharram by entail (Rahtz and Watts 2004). (This was a medieval legal strategy whereby the inheritance of property was restricted to members of the owner's family). That Peter de Percy may have resided at Wharram for at least part of the year was also earlier regarded as a possibility by Maurice Beresford and John Hurst (1990) on the grounds that he was not the head of the main branch of the Percy family and therefore may well have lived separately from them. However, he did have other property in Yorkshire in which he may also have resided at times (Beresford and Hurst 1990: 51). Subsequent to Robert's death, Geoffrey le Scrope bought the guardianship of the heiress who was a minor as well as being allegedly insane. The manor reverted back to the main branch of the Percys in 1367 and was eventually exchanged in 1403 with the Hilton family for property in Northumberland (Rahtz and Watts 2004); it was held by that family into the post-medieval period. The Hilton family were certainly never resident at the village (Hurst 1983; Bell and Beresford 1987).

In the 400 years of its late medieval history, the evidence suggests, Wharram Percy was only ever (and only possibly) permanently occupied by its lords for 60 years. This has profound implications for the study of power in the village, as surveillance plays a key role in the deployment of oppressive power (Saunders 1990). The role of manorial officials will be explored below but it can be suggested that the documentary and archaeological evidence indicates that direct lordly power in this period was a remote, impersonal force for the villagers of Wharram Percy. This did not

necessarily render it inconsequential for them, but it was certainly not a part of their day-to-day experience.

Even in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries when the Percys were possibly in residence in the north manor, there were forces operative both in the village itself and the wider region which would have worked to undercut somewhat the operation of lordship and prevented it from being perceived as monolithic, overarching and inevitable.

Firstly, the famines, plagues and wars of the early and mid-fourteenth century did not leave the manorial powers of Wharram Percy untouched. The survey carried out in 1323 as part of an *inquisition post mortem* revealed that both water corn-mills were derelict and that two thirds of the demesne bovates were worth little “if they could be let” (Andrews and Milne 1979). Clearly, the peasantry were no longer obliged to work on the demesne as part of their labour services and this gave the peasantry considerable independence (Sheppard 1974) and greatly freed up their time (Dyer 1991). Thus, in this period, two key elements of lordly prerogative were not enforceable, that is the ability to levy multure (payment for the use of the mill) and to exact labour services or rent for the demesne. In addition, the lord of the manor (the Percy heiress Eustachia’s husband, Walter) died of the Black Death in September 1349 and it is possible that the vicar’s death in the same month may also have been from the plague (Andrews and Milne 1979: 12). These events – the great famine of 1315-17, the Scottish invasion of 1319 and the Black Death (Beresford and Hurst 1990:27)– probably caused the deaths of many villagers. Although we do not have information from the immediate area around Wharram, it is known that in some villages the famine of 1315-18 killed 10-15 per cent of the peasantry (Dyer 1989: 140). Mortality figures for the Black Death in the north of England are also scarce. North of Worcestershire and south Leicestershire the only evidence for mortality figures exist for the extreme north-east of the country, where there exist reliable figures for 26 townships in County Durham. In these townships, well over 50 per cent of the tenantry died (Benedictow 2004: 366). Throughout the country as a whole, Benedictow

calculates that the mortality of the tenantry was about 55 per cent, with 'supermortality' among the poor meaning that the figure for this group was approximately five per cent higher (*ibid.*). Therefore, the predominant experience of the survivors of these events at Wharram Percy is likely to have been one of personal tragedy. However, their lords were not unscathed by these events and were been weakened by them as were their tenants.

This vulnerability in the sphere of lordship would have been exacerbated by the various events centred on the castle in the market town of Malton, approximately five miles to the north-east of the village. This building, of which only fragmentary remains now exist, was probably one of the largest ever seen by the villagers, and bore the scars of numerous battles between various members of the lordly class. In 1138 the town was burned and the castle wrecked by Archbishop Thurstan because its occupier, Eustace fitz John, was a traitor who had sided with the Scottish king against King Stephen (Pevsner 1966, Hudleston 1962). The castle was again 'destroyed' in 1213 by King John in order to prevent the northern barons cornering its lord, Eustace de Vescy, and making him agree to the Great Charter (I'Anson 1913; Hudleston 1962). Again, it must have been patched up fairly effectively as a royal grant of the castle was made in 1317 to John de Mowbray, but "certain ill-disposed persons" occupied it and refused to admit him (Russell 1914:529). It was used by the Scottish king Robert de Brus as a centre for his depredations of the area in 1322. He wrecked it on retreating northwards in October of that year after being bribed 300 marks by the community of the area to stop harassing the Vale of Pickering (Hudleston 1962). However, the castle must have survived even this, as it is mentioned in both 1487 and 1496 (MAP 1997.).

It can be argued that these events, spectacular as they were, would have been long remembered by the villagers of Wharram Percy and would have been freshly brought to mind on each occasion that the castle at Malton was viewed. As Elisabeth van Houts (1999: 93) has stated, "buildings and sites [are] more durable and they, like objects, [have] stories of their founders or later events attached to them. They... [function] as pegs for collective

memory". Malton is likely to have been regularly visited by most of the villagers, as it was the only market town in the vicinity and therefore the villagers would have visited for fairs, to sell their goods and so on (Hanawalt 1986: 21). The obvious conflict at the top of society, and the ineffectiveness displayed by the members of the lordly class after the deal with Robert de Brus was brokered by ordinary men, coupled with the villagers' relative lack of experience of immediate, personal and everyday lordship would have undercut the universal and natural quality of lordly power which the members of that class attempted to evoke. The aforementioned evidence indicates that this lack of solidity in lordship would have been sensed even in the early fourteenth century when the Percys may have been resident in the village, as they were unable to enforce key lordly prerogatives and were themselves vulnerable to the personal disasters which would doubtless have been inflicted on so many of the inhabitants of Wharram.

In considering the issue of seigneurial power in the village and given that the lord would have so rarely been physically present, it behoves us to investigate the ways in which the village might have been administered. The authors of the report on the South Manor area remark that, although it does not seem likely that the Chamberlains ever permanently resided in the village, "their representatives, installed to collect rents and otherwise administer their tenants may, of course, have occupied manorial buildings" (Stamper and Croft 2000:203). It seems likely, however, that these officials did not enjoy a particularly elevated life-style. For example, the excavations of the undercroft found "very little to indicate the presence of a seigneurial household" (*ibid.*: 202) (Fig. 26). The faunal assemblage from the South Manor Area similarly indicated nothing suggestive of a markedly high-status diet and there was also a lack of luxury plant goods such as imported figs or herbs and spices (*ibid.*: 181, 194). Further evidence of the presence of officials comes from the North Manor area where there is earthwork evidence of a courtyard farm, which has been interpreted as a demesne farm from which the estate was run after the manor house went out of use in the fourteenth century (Hurst 1983) (Fig. 27).

The village of Wharram Percy comprised a single manor from at least 1254 when the Chamberlain interest was extinguished, and quite possibly from well before this time. The resident officials had to be manorial tenants and therefore would have been villagers of Wharram. These officials would have been involved in relationships of negotiation with, rather than unqualified authority over, their neighbours; as they had to live alongside their fellow villagers and would have wanted to do so as harmoniously as possible (see Barnes 1988: 90), their authoritative position was immediately complicated. Occupying the position of official was certainly not considered to have been solely a positive experience in the Middle Ages. Although it does seem clear that, in some manors at least, the occupation of these positions was a mark of status and brought rewards (Müller 2001; Bennett 1988; Hanawalt 1986), it is also one which was positioned ambiguously within the feudal structure as a whole. Officials often worked for the village community as well as for the manor (Raftis 1964; Müller 2003; Britton 1977; McIntosh 1986). Culturally there seems to have been an ambiguity or even a negativity about a role which involved standing in judgement on one's fellows. We can see in Langland's *Piers the Ploughman*, for example that, utopia is described as being a place where "no king or knight or officer or Mayor shall tyrannize over the people, or summon them to service on juries and compel them to take oaths"² (Goodridge 1966: 53). Similarly, one of the benefits of poverty is described as the fact that that poverty rarely entails sitting in judgement on contemporaries: "Poverty seldom sits in a bench of jurymen, and is never asked to be magistrate or mayor or an officer of the king, to judge his fellowmen" (*ibid.*: 175). These sentiments also seem to be supported by documentary evidence. For example, there is evidence from the Wakefield court rolls of people refusing to be graves (stewards, or people placed in charge of property) or paying to be excused from serving in this office, and evidence at Bristol for people deliberately

² William Langland, who lived between c1332 and c1400, was a minor cleric who spent much of his life in London. *Piers the Ploughman* is an allegorical poem which is both a vision of the good Christian life and a social commentary. The A- and B-texts of the poems were probably written during the 1360s and 1370s. The poem is considered to be one of the greatest Middle English poems before Chaucer.

leaving the area for a time in order to avoid working as a village official (Pimsler 1977). The Statute of Winchester of 1285, which tackled problems of law and order, also acknowledged that local people were often unwilling to indict people of their acquaintance or from their region (Holford 2001).

Village officials can be conceived of as ‘power brokers’; people who connect the local system to the larger whole (Frazer 1999: 7 discusses Eric Wolf’s conceptualisation of the term ‘power broker’) and, as such, they occupied a difficult position insofar as they were both answerable to the lord and subject to the coercive influence of their fellow villagers. As Martin Pimsler argues in his discussion of medieval office-holders, “the lives of officials who employed coercion widely would have been made miserable by their fellow villagers” (Pimsler 1977:7). The other inhabitants of the village could exert power over the officials, in that they might over-plough into their selions, or refuse to lend animals or money (it is known how important networks of credit were to medieval village society (Dyer 1997)). Officials who too rigorously imposed the will of the lord might also be unwelcome in the house that acted as the village tavern and which was an important site of local socialising in a fairly isolated village. Litigation shows the way that officials who were overly-assiduous in performing their duties might be censured (Schofield 2003: 43). There are examples of this from the royal manor of Havering, Essex, when, in 1484, John Stainton, the queen’s rent collector was reported by a local jury for killing a deer within the bounds of the royal forest (McIntosh 1986:64). At the same manor in 1491, a jury announced, with some pleasure it might be imagined, that Thomas Dere, collector of rents, had been visiting the wife of Thomas Harryes who was an innkeeper from Romford and had a poor social reputation. The rent collector was ordered to desist from this practice under penalty of a substantial fine (*ibid.*: 65). Records from the manor of Badbury, Wiltshire, even demonstrate that officials could become the focus of resentment culminating in physical violence (Müller 2001). In addition, officials who were given non-customary rights by their lord could be resisted, as at Great Horwood, Buckinghamshire, in 1303 when the lord tried to make his customary tenants give the woodward (the manorial

officials in charge of the lords' woodland), a quota of grain. The villagers resisted and an inquiry was held (Ault 1972:65). As we can see, the coercive power of the group could sanction any official, villager or not, who had to live within the community and who was perceived as significantly breaking rank from the group and its values.

The evidence outlined above for the non-residence of the lords at Wharram Percy, as well as the complicated position of his officials, allows us to suggest that the presence of lordship at the village was, *on the scale of daily practice*, a light one and that it was subject, throughout much of the late medieval period, to events and forces which undercut its hegemonic claims. However, although the day-to-day experience of lordship would have been a distant one, there is still evidence at Wharram Percy for periods when seignuerial power imposed itself suddenly and heavily on the village. One of the most striking examples of the literally large-scale nature of lordly power can be seen in the destruction of the peasant tofts in the north row of the village. Beresford and Hurst (1990: 47) suggest that the row of peasant houses in the northern row appear to have been cleared away when the manors were amalgamated in the mid-thirteenth century, and they argue that it seems likely that the dispossessed peasants were relocated to tofts in Areas 9 and 10. This seems the best explanation for the creation of these tofts in a time of population decline (Hurst 1983). It can be argued that, by relocating the peasants to this area in the west row, the lord was peremptorily reasserting control over that space which he saw as belonging to him because it had housed a manorial building, but which had, in the period since the abandonment of the south manor, slipped out of his control (this point will be expanded on in the section below). There are examples from other sites of peasant houses being replaced by manorial features. For example, at Northolt, Middlesex, a sequence of early and later medieval peasant houses were replaced by a moated manor house at the beginning of the fourteenth century (Hurst 1981), (although it must be remembered that it is possible that there was a period of time between the occupancy of these buildings.) At Milton, Hampshire, peasant buildings stood before being levelled and replaced by a fourteenth-century moated manor house (*ibid.*)

and at Bolton in Humberside, the seigneurial moated site was placed on top of crofts at the south end of the village which was possibly the work of Robert de Boulton who was the lord of the manor at the time (Coppack 1978: 117, 118).

Seigneurial power can also be seen in the transferral of the advowson of the church of Wharram Percy to Haltemprice Priory in the fourteenth century by Eustachia Percy's guardian Geoffrey le Scrope. At approximately the same time, a new stone boundary wall was built on the north side of the church, reducing the area of the churchyard by approximately eight metres (Harding 1996) and effectively rendering the burials north of it outside of this space. Charlotte Harding (*ibid.*: 189) comments that this "may ... reflect different attitudes at this time to the importance (or rather lack of it) of buried human remains" and that it happened to "presumably no local opposition". James Scott (1990), however, has alerted us to the importance of not assuming complacency on the part of a subordinate group simply from an absence of protest apparent in the 'public transcript'. It can be argued that, given the nature of the available sources, we are not in a position to know anything of the peasants' response to these alterations in the space of their churchyard. Furthermore, the action of the new vicars, who had been appointed by the manorial lord, in excluding their ancestors' burials from the church pale is likely to have been a source of considerable resentment for the villagers, particularly given what we know about the medieval belief in the importance of burial in sacred ground. In the Middle Ages "the perimeter of the churchyard was a boundary between the Christian and the non-Christian in death" (Daniell 1997: 100). Many statutes of the thirteenth century, notably the Statutes of Exeter II (1287), stressed that the bodies of the dead should be honoured and treated with reverence (*ibid.*: 113). It can be seen, therefore, that the creation of this wall, probably undertaken by the vicars as it increased the area of their glebe lands (Harding 1996: 188), resulted in the flouting of received norms on the treatment of the dead.

It seems likely that when the advowson was transferred, a new parsonage was built. Good-quality building stone and pottery was found in the south-

east corner of the churchyard which may have been from the original parsonage and the dating of the destruction of this building seems consistent with the documentary record for the erection for the new parsonage (Beresford and Hurst 1990:103). Also at this time, the south mill was being converted to a fishpond. This may also have been undertaken by Haltemprice Priory as it was part of their endowment (Stamper 1983; Beresford and Hurst 1990). The construction of the parsonage and the conversion of the mill would have involved heavy labour services (Hurst 1984). (There are related issues concerned with the church and lordship which will be explored in the fourth section below). It can be seen that the sporadic and – to the peasantry – seemingly arbitrary imposition of manorial authority involving either the extraction of labour services or the effecting of significant change to their environment would have had an impact outside of their immediate temporal context. As Scott argues, the fact that an authority is able to exact a real punishment (or, it can be suggested, heavy obligation), even if it does not happen often, can thoroughly pervade a power relationship; the ever-present knowledge that an exaction of this nature could be required would form part of all interactions between the two parties (Scott 1990).

At Wharram Percy, the evidence indicates that lordship was predominantly a distant and far from monolithic force, but that this was at times shot through by the sudden exercise of significant power on a large scale. This is somewhat similar to P.D.A. Harvey's findings in his study of village custom (Harvey 1989). He argues that lords could be very respectful of custom in terms of the internal running of the manor and gives the example of the lord of the manor of Povington in Dorset, the Abbot of Bec, who, in 1230, "was so nervous of altering established custom that he cited scriptural authority to do so" when he attempting to restrict the size of the sheaves his peasants were accustomed to receiving as boonworks (*ibid.*: 34). At the same time, he draws attention to the ways in which lords would also behave dictatorially in organising larger matters such as when the twelfth-century lord of Eaton Socon in Bedfordshire moved the entire village, including the church, so that he could built a castle on the site (*ibid.*:). It is argued here that the

evidence discussed above reveals that lordship operated at a similar *tempo* in medieval Wharram Percy.

4.2 Resistance

There are a number of areas in which the evidence at Wharram Percy can be read as speaking of the peasantry's resistance to lordly prerogative. This, in itself, can be taken to demonstrate that, even if for the majority of the period the lords did not have a heavy presence in the village, they were not wholly thought of as a benign or irrelevant force; their power was still contested. Lordship obviously did not have to be oppressive on a daily scale to be seen as an imposition and therefore to be resisted.

The first aspect of peasant resistance at Wharram Percy to be considered centres on the practice of stone robbing. On the Wolds, good quality stone was a rare and valuable resource, and at Wharram any freshly-cut blocks would have had to have been brought at least three miles from the nearest quarry (Bell and Beresford 1987). There is evidence that all groups in the village used the stone from the demolished camera in Area 10 and from the remnants of various church rebuilds including elite groups. Trench 82ADG in the North Manor area revealed, in the later medieval layers, evidence for a wall complex which had presumably formed part of the manorial buildings themselves. A feature of these walls was the presence of re-used dressed sandstone including a voussoir, which had possibly originated from the south manor (Rahtz and Watts 2004). Similarly, the church was also used as a quarry with part of a window jamb from one of the aisles being re-used in a churchyard wall gateway and chamfered blocks being used in the later medieval vicarage (Bell and Beresford 1987). Excavations at the pond close site also revealed sandstone tumble identical with the ashlar from the camera, south aisle and apse of the church (Cherry 1978: 187-8).

This re-use of stone from the manor area and from the church also occurred extensively in the peasant contexts³. In the peasant complex south of the North Manor area in Toft 18, a wall was found which incorporated a sandstone door-post socket (Rahtz and Watts 2004). Building 1 in Area 6 used blocks of sandstone, Building 4 in Area 10 also revealed intermittent use of dressed sandstone. Similarly, Building 6 in Area 9 contained one wall which was made entirely of sandstone “derived, presumably, from the manorial buildings” (Wrathmell 1989a:20). In the final period of peasant building, between 12 and 15 per cent of the total stone used was sandstone and therefore would have been derived from the high-status buildings (Andrews and Milne 1979).

When considering this re-use of stone from manorial and church contexts at Wharram Percy, it can be seen that there is not just one, singular meaning attached to this act; a meaning which relates only to the scarcity and value of the stone. In terms of its social context, the act of a lord’s re-incorporation of stone from one manor into another, or of church authorities using old stone from the church in a gate to the churchyard or in their vicarage or pond, are acts of the reallocation of resources which are securely owned by these agents. In contrast, it is quite different for a peasant to use stone from the church or the manor house. As Andrews and Milne (1979:68) write, “it is unlikely that the lord of the manor would have knowingly allowed the villagers to remove such valuable stone for their own buildings” and the same is true of church authorities.

Tim Eaton has carried out an analysis of the re-use of Roman stonework in medieval Britain which places the evidence for the re-use of stone at Wharram in its broader context. He makes the point that re-using stone can be a powerful political tool and that at times “the *act* of re-use was more

³ Tiles from the manorial buildings appear to have also been re-used in peasant contexts. In building 1 in Area 10, a large enough spread of roofing tiles existed to suggest that “tiles may well have been available for use in the post-manorial buildings” (Wrathmell 1989a: 17).

significant than conspicuous display” (Eaton 2000:134).⁴ This is particularly relevant for the Wharram evidence as the re-used stone was placed in the house foundations and therefore would not have been visible. Eaton critiques the model put forward by David Stocker which, using evidence primarily from Lincolnshire, suggests that all reusing of stone can be classified according to a tripartite model: casual re-use, functional re-use or iconic re-use. As Eaton points out, a basic flaw in the use of this model is the conflation of description and interpretation; Stocker is of the opinion that the way the stone was used is enough to explain the reason it was used (*ibid.*:135). However, Eaton’s suggested categories can be seen to be equally problematic. He places the re-use of stone into two categories – of ‘practical’ re-use “where the inspiration was one of economy, convenience, professional preference or technological necessity” (*ibid.*: 135) and of ‘meaningful’ re-use where re-use arose from an appreciation of the material’s age-value or esotericism. This is a problematic separation, denying the possibility that an act with ‘practical’ consequences and outcomes can have any meaning apart from this. The re-used stone from church and manorial contexts (contexts very much linked at Wharram Percy as will be explored further below), would have certainly provided the peasants with valuable stone, but also would have evoked meanings associated with successful and sneaky rule-breaking and therefore of resistance to those very rules.

It can be suggested that the “systematic” robbing of the abandoned Area 10 manor house (Andrews and Milne 1979: 33) was connected with the other activities that occurred there subsequent to the demolition of the building. The area was extensively exploited in this phase as a quarrying site for building stone or chalk (Stamper and Croft 2000: 50). Many individual quarries were uncovered during excavation, providing “dramatic evidence” for the abandonment of this complex (*ibid.*: 47). These quarries appear to have been dug over a short period of time and may all have been filled in in

⁴ Eaton discusses the meaning of the placement of Roman carvings in the foundations of Holy Trinity at Godmanstone, Carlisle Castle and Tebburgh Abbey. He also mentions the possibility that the use of more prosaic stonework such as rubble and facing stones may have evoked the past in an iconic manner.

one operation (connected, it seems likely, with the lord's relocation of the peasants from the east end of the north row as discussed above). The authors of the report on the South Manor area excavation write, "The quarries remain a somewhat problematic feature of the Wharram landscape. Only in this area of the settlement has such large scale quarrying been encountered. It represents a remarkable dereliction of what had been a focal point of the village" (*ibid.*:50). It seems plausible to argue that at least some of these quarries were the work of the Wharram villagers. Firstly, if the quarries were used for chalk for lime burning, it seems unlikely that it would have been the lords who were having the quarries dug because there is evidence from Sites 45 and 60 in the north manor itself for the presence of chalk quarries (Rahtz and Watts 2004: 295). In Phase 5b, which is dated to the later medieval period, these quarries were found in the large area of courtyard to the south of the main manorial earthworks. It is suggested that these would have been used for building and may mark "the inception of manorial construction" (*ibid.*). Thus, given that the lords were quarrying in this area close to the north manor buildings, it seems reasonable to suggest that there would have been little need to use chalk from quite some distance away in Area 10. If the quarries from the South Manor area were being used for building stone, it is of course possible that they were being used for the construction of the North Manor buildings, and therefore, by the lords themselves. However, given the extensive evidence for re-use of manorial sandstone in the peasant houses, it seems clear that at least some of these quarries were the work of the peasants themselves.

Upon abandonment of the South Manor area in about 1254, it can be suggested that the villagers had entered the area, robbed it of valuable stone and substantially quarried it throughout. These activities seem to have been carried out until late in the century or until 1300 (there is some slight disagreement over dates between various authors), lasting, therefore, up to two generations. It has been suggested that the southern manorial buildings, which only stood for about 75 years, were demolished because "it was felt inappropriate to allow such a fine building to pass into the tenancy of a peasant family" (Stamper and Croft 2000:203). When this information is

consolidated, it can be suggested that what we see occurring in the late thirteenth century at Area 10 at Wharram Percy is an example of 'infra-politics' defined as the "circumspect struggle waged by subordinate groups" (Scott 1990:183) and the "'micro' pushing and shoving involved in power relationships" (*ibid.*:197). The destruction of the building was a clear signal from the lords of their prerogative over the materials and space associated with it; in response, the peasants robbed and quarried it as a demonstration of their ability to enter and use this space and material as *they* pleased. The lords then reasserted control by moving the peasants evicted from the north row to this area in the west row.

I would like now to turn to another example of peasant resistance – in the form of evidence for poaching. A land grant from 1320 shows that Peter de Percy quitclaimed to his son Henry, who had been installed as the rector of Wharram Percy church "all his rights in the park there" (Rahtz and Watts 2004: 4). Rahtz and Watts argued that the paddock close to the North Manor complex and the adjacent dale is the most plausible site for the location of this park and that it would have extended over about 15 hectares (*ibid.*). The earthworks of the courtyard farm which was possibly used for the later administration of the manor and have been dated to the fifteenth century (Hurst 1983), occupied some of the area of the former park, so it may have been in existence for only a century. There is some (albeit slight) evidence for poaching, presumably from within the park, from the excavated peasant contexts. Fifty-three deer bone fragments representing two per cent of the overall assemblage were found in Area 10. David Hinton has described the bones at Wharram Percy in conjunction with those at Seacourt and Upton and has suggested that there does not seem to be evidence for poaching at these settlements as the assemblages from these sites "range from nil to three per cent" (Hinton 1990:175). There is obviously a difference between the presence and the absence of deer bones and, in fact, two percent is a considerable frequency for deer, especially from a peasant site (Naomi Sykes, pers. comm.). None of these was found from layers associated with the manorial occupation of Area 10 nor from the sixteenth century (Ryder 1974), very possibly, it can be suggested, because the park was not in

existence at either of these two times. A very small number of deer bones were also found in the excavations in the North Manor area from the late medieval period, but they are not reported according to site, making it impossible to ascribe them to either a manorial or a peasant context.

Further possible evidence for poaching occurs in the form of arrowheads of a type which may have been used for hunting. One was found in a peasant context in Area 6 and two in the North Manor area (although one of these found in Site 603, although south of the boundary wall, may have been dropped by a person from the manor complex. This particular arrowhead may also be from a phase too early to be associated with the park). It must be noted, however, that peasants would have used a variety of methods when hunting. Jean Birrell writes that, for the peasantry, “the most characteristic method of hunting deer ... was the trap or snare” (Birrell 1996:71). Slings would also have been used, in addition to bows and arrows (*ibid.*). Birrell argues that it is likely that there were poachers in all ‘forest’ villages and this assessment can surely be extended to an isolated village particularly considering that the period 1315-17 was one of severe famine. The park is likely to have been built at this time or a few years later. Osteological evidence shows that the children of Wharram Percy experienced quite severe stress throughout the entire period due to poor nutrition and a high disease load, caused by thin soils, a harsh climate and concomitant crop failures (Mays 1995; Mays 1998). It thus seems very unlikely that a good source of meat would have been ignored by the population.

Poaching is an obviously resistant activity and it can be seen as part of a ‘hidden transcript’ of peasant resistance against seigneurial power (Scott 1990). Rosamund Faith (1984: 67) has argued that poaching in the Middle Ages had “a vital ... ideological aspect” and that “poaching, primarily of deer, was a political issue in the late fourteenth century and was seen as such by contemporaries” (*ibid.*). For example, in the 1381 revolt, one of the demands made to the king was that he allow “the poor as well as rich ... [to] take the venison and hunt the hare in the fields”(Almond 1993:151) and this

association of peasant hunting with the revolt remained strong for some time (Marvin 1999: 236). This was, for example, acknowledged by Parliament in a 1390 petition, passed as a Statute of the Realm, which explicitly associated poaching with insurrection (*ibid.*). Similarly, in a Statute of 1389, it was expressly forbidden for any person with land valued at less than 40 shillings a year to own a greyhound or to catch deer, hare or 'Gentlemen's game' (Hunt 1996:305).

It must be remembered that poaching was a gendered activity. Although women were often implicated in the receiving of venison, it was predominantly men who actually poached, and it was men's tithing groups and associated pledging systems which were involved in any legal procedures or inquisitions relating to the illegal taking of deer (Birrell 1987; 1996). This illegal activity would have played a significant part in men's gender-group identity-formation, given the importance of an 'out-group' or 'other' to the stability and power of these types of identity (Fentress and Wickham 1992; for a general discussion on group identities, see Jenkins 2004: 78-93).

Further evidence for resistance can be found in the evidence for hand-milling at Wharram Percy. In Area 10 at Wharram Percy, 109 fragments of quernstone were found in Phase 5b-d which date from the mid-thirteenth to the fifteenth century (Stamper and Croft 2000) and 21 fragments were also found in Area 6.⁵ Many authors who have commented on the quernstones at Wharram have attributed their presence to the supposed lack of a mill. Both north and south mills were decayed and derelict by the time of an extent or survey of 1323 (Andrews and Milne 1979). The north mill was back in use by 1368, however (*ibid.*: 12), and it seems likely that not all the quernstones found relate to this 45-year period when there may, indeed, have been no alternative to hand milling. From the North Manor area excavations, the

⁵ Although no dates are given for those from Area 6, it seems unlikely that they all come from the small window of time in which no mills were operative or, indeed, from Phases I or II which is before the medieval period under discussion. The evidence at this site from these early phases is comprised of only a scatter of Romano-British pottery and a ditch and bank (Andrews and Milne 1979).

southern trenches (from the peasant contexts) revealed nine quernstone fragments from period 5A (which can be dated only to a broad period between AD850 to the eleventh or twelfth century) and 22 from peasant contexts in phase 5b which is dated from the thirteenth century into the post-medieval period. A further nine fragments are listed as only being from 'Site 82' with no trenches being specified. Some of these fragments, therefore, may have originated in manorial contexts. Hand milling was illegal for most of the medieval period in England (Hinton 1990) and even in nearby Malton where the inhabitants could grind corn or malt at whichever mill they wished too, they could still not do so in their own houses (Russell 1914: 531).

It is likely, therefore, that there was substantial hand-milling in the peasant households at Wharram Percy and that it was most probably not concentrated in the few decades in which neither manorial mill was working. It has been argued that hand-milling was not actually necessarily a cheaper option than paying multure (a fee to use the lord's mill) in many areas, yet, as mentioned previously, the mill was primarily regarded "by both its users and its owners as little more than a means of transferring wealth from the former to the latter" (Holt 1988:47). Therefore, even if using the lord's mill was not more expensive than hand-milling, any money given to the lord for this purpose was likely to have been resented and seen as symptomatic of servitude. The symbolic importance of hand-milling as exemplary of seigneurial prerogative in the Middle Ages was demonstrated during the uprising at St. Albans in 1381. The tenants' handmills had been confiscated and the stones placed as paving stones in the abbey's parlour, and during the course of the revolt they were ripped up by the peasants and distributed among their number (Justice 1994: 136). When the revolt subsided, the abbot demanded the return of the stones as a sign of submission, even though they would no longer have been usable as either mill- or paving-stones (*ibid.*: 168). The Wharram Percy tenants were seemingly resistant to the obligation to pay multure and the quernstones show us that there was a desire to mill at home throughout the period. Moreover, the fact that it was mainly women who were engaged in

household tasks puts them firmly within the sphere of resistance to seignuerial authority.

All of the examples of resistance discussed imply some degree of complicity amongst the members of the village. Activities such as stone robbing or poaching cannot have been kept a secret in a village which, at its maximum extent, contained 30 households. Although the example of quarrying could be seen to be a result of the latitude of the lord (until he suddenly evicted some of his tenants and relocated them to Area 10), the same can not be said of the other examples of peasant resistance. That is to say, firstly, the lords were obviously collecting some payment from the north mill in 1368 implying a desire to make a profit from this source, secondly, it is known how vehemently peasant poaching was investigated and punished and, finally, as mentioned above, a building stone like sandstone was a valuable commodity at this time. It is possible that those carrying out these various resistant activities were reported to the lord, but obviously not successfully, as the practices of stone-robbing and the use of handmills in particular, seem to have been extensive. It also appears unlikely that anyone in such a small community would wish to isolate themselves from their neighbours by reporting them to the lord due to the coercive influence the villagers could exercise over each other, which has been outlined above. It is this aspect of peasant life in the village that I will next address - that of evidence for peasant community.

4.3 Peasant community

Just as space was a resource which lords at Wharram Percy utilised in the practice of authority, attempting to evoke meanings for the peasantry of their ultimate control of the landscape, so too, it will be argued, did the peasantry conceive of social relations in spatial terms. The tenants of Wharram Percy utilised space to create and reflect their group solidarity, and the similarities between households' deployment of material culture

seems more significant than the observable differences. The first issue to be addressed is that of the evidence for the general topography of the village.

In many respects, the evidence from Wharram Percy speaks of a village where there was a large amount of planning by manorial lords. The village possesses all the hallmarks of a regular plan. The tofts and crofts would have been laid out in three regular rows with a green in the middle. Each toft and croft unit almost always measured two selions in width - about 18 metres (Hurst 1983). The entire Wolds landscape surrounding the village also appears to have been planned at some time; it consisted of massive selions, some over 1,000 metres in length covering all available space, even sometimes running down slopes and through valleys (Allison 1976) and often ignoring the general topography of the area they covered (Hurst 1984). This indicates the likelihood of the entire plateau having been planned out at some point 'en bloc' rather than having been assarted bit by bit.

It is possible that the field system was also planned by members of the lordly class. Wharram Percy had an open-field organised by the system of 'solskift' which was briefly alluded to above. Robert Dodgshon believes that the practice of open-field farming on a village scale with its communal cropping systems only occurred in areas with strong lordship and the concomitant court systems and habits of communal collective action (Dodgshon 1980). Bruce Campbell also supports this point of view. Using evidence from eastern Norfolk where medieval manorial authority was weak and the field systems were not regulated, he argues that this indicates that where regular and highly systematised fields systems did occur, they must have been imposed from above (Campbell 1981). He presents a plausible case, although his argument for weak manorial authority seems to rest solely on the evidence for the only-rudimentary development of foldcourses (an important seigneurial prerogative) in this region (*ibid.*: 26). He also suggests that the predominantly free and relatively independent peasantry of eastern Norfolk were "patently unwilling" (*ibid.*: 28) to accept a communal system of husbandry without presenting any evidence for the introduction of this form

of husbandry being attempted and rejected by them. Campbell's major conclusion on this point is as follows:

The manorial lord is more likely than the peasant community to have been successful in reconciling the host of individual interests involved and he possessed the authority to carry through and enforce the major reallocation of land which the regularization of holding and field layout would have required (*ibid.*: 28).

He suggests that the lack of strong manorial authority in eastern Norfolk explains the lack of regularised field systems. In order for this linkage to be validated, further comparative examples are required, otherwise we are simply observing the presence of two features which do not necessarily have a causative relationship. Furthermore, Campbell does not offer suggestions as to why manorial lords would have seen an advantage in regularising field systems. Other features once thought of as exemplary examples of medieval lordship, such as the presence of nucleated villages, have, under further investigation, been demonstrated to correlate much less strongly than was hitherto thought (Lewis *et al.*: 208-10). Campbell's suggestions as to why peasants may not have favoured a communal-based system can, in fact, be seen to be embedded in some fairly problematic assumptions. Throughout this paper he paints a picture of free peasants, unencumbered by seigneurial burdens or communal responsibility achieving "exceptional" output per acre using "progressive" techniques (Campbell 1981:21) and he surmises that "the absence of communal controls meant that cultivators were free to innovate ... and thereby raise the intensity and productivity of agriculture" (*ibid.*: 27) and that "the absence of common rules left field systems more adaptable" (*ibid.*: 28). Campbell describes communal systems on the other hand, while admitting that that they could have advantages, as involving "concessions and compromises" (*ibid.*: 22) and, by implication, as being not progressive, inefficient and incapable of innovation. It is presented as hardly surprising that the peasantry were "patently unwilling" to adopt such systems, even though no evidence is presented for this unwillingness. Similarly, no evidence is given for the implied inability of communally-organised systems to innovate. It can be seen that some fairly strong

assumptions, possibly deriving from neo-liberal economic models, are at work here.

It is therefore possible that the lords of Wharram Percy planned the open-fields but it is also feasible that the peasants themselves were responsible for their initial organisation. There is evidence that, in townships with divided lordship, such as Wimeswold, Leicestershire, codes were drawn up for the management of agricultural resources as a unit, despite differences in lordly authority (Ault 1972:75) and Harold Fox has argued, using evidence from the Midlands in the Saxon period that:

... given the *prime* concern of the community of the vill with agricultural matters and given the elements of common management of resources ... is it not possible, probable even, that husbandmen acting in concert were the originators of field systems? (Fox 1992:51)

Regardless of which party initiated the lay-out of the fields at Wharram Percy, of most relevance to the present discussion is that, given the absence of the lords, it is almost certain that the system was maintained by the peasantry. It was argued in a previous case study that the act of lordly authorship of a peasant community's lived environment did not permeate every aspect of the experience of their sense of space, and that it could be quickly 'co-opted' by the lived use of it, so much as to make the original authorship redundant in terms of experience. The field system would have certainly required the peasantry's acceptance of the system in order for it to be maintained throughout the years and there is considerable documentary evidence from other manors for the process of regulation of the field systems being administered via local by-laws, which were solely within the purview of the peasantry (Ault 1972). The longevity and success of this system of agricultural organisation at the village implies that the ordering of space was a powerful mnemonic for social relationships in the village. It was a system which stressed equality and same-ness and which required community cohesion and agreement to maintain, and the same can be said for the other aspects of purported landscape planning.

When we turn to a consideration of differences between members of the village community, the excavated data does provide some evidence for variation in the material culture utilised by the various peasant households. Comparative evidence between households and periods is, however, not plentiful. The dating resolution for many of the buildings is very low, as the predominant pottery wares remain the same over centuries. Similarly, because many buildings were not fully excavated, it is difficult to make comparisons about building size. However, even 'cottages' have been found to have been larger than those of major families in some villages, "so that the relative sizes of houses in an archaeological context will not necessarily indicate the tenurial status of their occupants" (Wrathmell 1989a:9) nor, presumably, their relative wealth or their social standing within the community. Moreover, even if complete buildings were fully excavated, entire tofts would need to be excavated if a true attempt at comparison between households was to be made, as it has been argued that it is the number of bays and perhaps also the range of buildings in a toft which is a more reliable marker of wealth rather than house size. Therefore, all buildings utilised by a household on a particular toft would need to be discovered and their size ascertained (Dyer 1986). As well as being unable to precisely compare dates of occupation, building size and number of buildings which stood on the tofts at Wharram Percy, functional determinations (and therefore comparisons) are also extremely hard to make. This is because buildings could change function over the course of their lifetimes. The high level of cleanliness of the houses and consequent lack of deposits indicative of floor levels, in addition to the many uses to which each pottery form could be put, also hinders the making of functional determinations.

Nonetheless, we can point to some differences between buildings of broadly similar dates. For example, building dimensions did differ as can be seen from the excavation of three fourteenth- and fifteenth-century buildings which were interpreted as residential. Building 1 in Area 6 was approximately 27.5 metres long, Building 5 in Area 5 was 19 metres long by 5.5 metres wide, and Building 2 in Area 10 was 12 metres long by 4 metres

wide. Similarly, the way in which various items of material culture were deployed was not identical in every case. For example, a water-storage pit was found just inside the south wall of Building 9 in Area 7; Building 1 in Area 6 contained a mortar which had been re-used as a chafin and set in the floor, and a pot was also set in the floor and 'second hearths' or possibly oven bases were recovered from both Building 9 in Area 7 and Building 4 in Area 10.⁶ There is also evidence for a particularly wealthy occupant of the amalgamated Area 9/10 enclosure late in the period. The enclosure produced both a chafin dish (a dish designed to keep food warm at the table) and a urinal and, slightly earlier, cess-pits, all of which are uncommon features on peasant sites. Stuart Wrathmell (1989a) suggests that this enclosure could possibly be connected with a 1323 tenant-at-will who paid substantially more for his bovates than most.

It can be seen, therefore, that the suite of material culture employed by the various peasant households of Wharram Percy was not identical and that there is some evidence of variations in wealth. However, there are broader similarities between the houses. Initially, the houses at Wharram Percy were perceived as having been quite variable in their construction techniques. However, with the deployment of vernacular models (i.e. those derived from assessments of extant medieval structures built in the local tradition) in the interpretation of archaeological remains, it is now thought that these remains represent examples of a continuous building tradition which stretched into the post-medieval period (Wrathmell 1989a). This has resulted in the typical medieval house at Wharram being interpreted as being as of cruck construction rather than constructed in a variety of ways such as in fully stone-walled, and stone-silled forms. An interpretation of cruck construction

⁶ This interpretation, however, seems at odds with what we know about the shortage of fuel at Wharram Percy. Ovens are very uneconomic in terms of fuel use, and the Wolds were always very short of good fuel to burn. The shrubby trees grown in valleys and on hillside slopes would have been best used to heat the houses (Rahtz and Watts 2004). Given the presence of querns, however, it is clear that some bread was probably being baked, and that pottage is unlikely to have been the only method of consuming grains. It seems likely, therefore, that flatbread cooked on a bakestone such as was found in the North Manor excavations would have been used and they would have been cooked over the main fire of the house. It would then have been possible to have used lower-quality fuels than ovens require. Pottage could also have been eaten at times.

means that the buildings' load-bearing structures were the large crucks and not the walls, meaning that the constant rebuilding of stretches of walling that is in evidence archaeologically does not signify flimsy impermanent housing, as the walls themselves did not carry any substantial weight (*ibid.*).

Other similarities between the excavated houses at Wharram Percy include the fact that cross passages and opposed entrances are found in many of the buildings (Area 5, Building 5, Area 6, Building 1 and Area 10 Building 2). The pottery assemblages were also very similar between buildings. Many of the houses lasted a century or more because they were constantly and carefully maintained (Beresford and Hurst 1990:39), and it is known that substantial peasant resources went into a household's buildings (Dyer 1986). It has been argued that this longevity of peasant houses – of peasants putting resources into continually reproducing their houses – can be read as a counter-action to the perceived “precariousness of their emplacement by juridical procedures” (Biddick 1993:20). The argument may have relevance to the situation at Wharram Percy where, as mentioned above, despite the relative distance of lordly power, this power did occasionally enforce major structural changes on the village which would have resonated beyond the immediate temporal context. Meanings which both caused and emanated from the deployment of these resources in the maintenance of the houses, such as those relating to the importance and stability of the household unit, may also have been evoked.

Thus far, we have considered evidence for a long-term agreement on a division of land which was characterised by a sense of community decision-making and consensus as evidenced in the solskift system, and in the broad similarities of house lay-out and appearance, although the use of material culture within the home may have varied between households. A further aspect of interest is the suggested change in house alignment that happened later in the period. Stuart Wrathmell has argued that earthwork and aerial photographic evidence from the six tofts in the northern half of the east row of the village reveals a change from each toft containing a building aligned parallel to the toft frontage to a lay-out in which each message

accommodated two buildings separated by a yard with both buildings running at right angles from the toft frontage (Figure 28). He further suggests that the excavated evidence from Area 10 and the evidence of the later phases in Area 6 supports this hypothesis of toft lay-out change. He argues that these latter arrangements represent a layout in which one building was used as a dwelling and the other was some form of outbuilding.

It is very difficult to know why these changes occurred. They cannot have been purely to emulate the lordly class, as manor houses always had many more outbuildings and separation of functions than did peasant holdings; both the south and north manors at Wharram Percy certainly did and the north manor always had areas enclosed by buildings (Beresford and Hurst 1990). Were these changes a response to the “late medieval revival” of the village (Bell and Beresford 1987:204) in which, by 1368, the 18 uncultivated bovates of 1323 were back under cultivation and there were once again 30 recorded households (Andrews and Milne 1979:12). In 1458 there were still 16 inhabited messuages, only two fewer than in 1323 (*ibid.*). It is possible that the tenants could have afforded to build more in this period and may have had more need for storage space, but this still does not explain why this particular form of lay-out was chosen nor, indeed, why the buildings were not laid out with two buildings parallel to the toft frontage with a gap in between.

The later layout of these tofts does not seem to correspond to the common late-medieval ‘courtyard’ form. John Hurst (1981: 43) provides a summary of the form ‘courtyard’ farms usually took in which buildings “were often placed at right angles to each other, not only to emphasise the difference [between living and farming activities] but to provide the nucleus of a courtyard farm. This yard might include a crew or cattle yard”. Examples of this type of layout have been identified at Goltho and Barton Blount (Beresford 1975). The position of these buildings facing each other such as is found at Wharram, therefore, is not the standard ‘courtyard farm’ form. Neither can the presence of the two buildings in the tofts be seen to be

productive of categorical differentiation between living and farming areas, the like of which Hurst alludes to. This can be seen in the arrangement of Area 6, the layout of which Wrathmell interpreted as being repeated in all the tofts in the northern part of the row. Building 1 of this area, along with Building 4 have been interpreted as representing the main components of a farmstead with a house, barn and yard in between (Wrathmell 1989a:33, 44). Significantly, Building 1 is also interpreted as having both a byre and a domestic end (*ibid.*: 28).⁷ Therefore, as there is a longhouse in the area which has been interpreted as being typical of all of the tofts in the eastern row, we cannot posit a categorical separation between farming and living areas as the reason for changing arrangement of buildings in this row.

In any case, the function of the buildings is of slight importance here, as even if it was known, we would still need to explain why the particular form of lay-out was chosen. The important point for our discussion of peasant community is that this change in building layout over the toft seems to have been carried out by the tenants on all tofts for which there is sufficient recorded detail. Whatever caused this significant change in the domestic field at Wharram Percy, the tenants responded in a very similar fashion. Particularly in tofts E, F and G, the earthworks revealing this courtyard arrangement show an almost identical layout in each enclosure.

It seems likely, given the non-residence of the lords at Wharram Percy, that the peasants themselves were the agents responsible for building within the tofts, particularly given Dyer's arguments concerning the potential for peasants to plan villages and run village affairs (Dyer 1985; 1997b). Dyer further articulates reasons for the lack of involvement in the day-to-day running of the villages in terms of aristocratic *mentalité*. He suggests that "estate management was a tedious chore" (Dyer 1985: 28) and that therefore "their influence stopped a long way short of total dictatorial control of daily

⁷That we see longhouses associated with yards seems to preclude their interpretation as crewyards as animals were obviously being housed inside and therefore a yard for this purpose as well would have been unnecessary (Beresford, 1975; Hurst 1981). This may possibly have implications for the interpretation of the yards at Wawne as being crewyards as at least one of the Type-C houses with which they were associated presented evidence for a byre.

life" (*ibid.*: 27), particularly in the case of the many lords who never resided in, nor even saw every village in their vast estates. In contrast, John Hurst suggests that the changes to building layout in the tofts at Wharram Percy may have been due to the lord's decree (Hurst 1971). This argument is based on an idea of a late fourteenth-century decline which is now no longer held to, as outlined above (Beresford and Hurst 1990:27). It is also a reflection of the interpretive paradigm of the 1970s in which peasant agency had little place in interpretations of settlement evidence. In later publications, however, the late fourteenth-century owners were being described by Beresford and Hurst (1990: 51) as exhibiting "indifference" towards the village. Given what we know about the non-residence of the lords, and in conjunction with Dyer's conclusions about the priorities of medieval lords, it seems likely that the shift in alignment was the peasants' choice and it is significant that their agential action was employed to produce startlingly similar results throughout the village.

It is also significant that, throughout the late medieval period at Wharram Percy, toft boundaries stayed fixed (Andrews and Milne 1971:139). This seems to have occurred even when it is likely that the ownership of holdings had been amalgamated, as is indicated by the 1323 valuation in which the average villein tenement had more than four bovates (*ibid.*). The only exception appears to be the amalgamated tofts in Areas 9 and 10. Even in the areas of the village where there is evidence for the abandonment of tofts such as in the east row of the village on the terrace, what we see is decay and reversion to common lands of pasture or green, not amalgamation (Wrathmell 1989a:21; Hurst 1983). Similarly, although there is some evidence of encroachment upon the green on the east side of the west row (such as the second phase building in Area 5, which straddled the boundary, and Building 1 in Area 6 which had its end bay placed outside the property boundary), this is minimal in comparison with what we see in other medieval village contexts such as those that are "carved out of the village green at West Whelpington" (Wrathmell 1989a: 41) and those that were noted at Wawne.

The archaeological evidence at Wharram Percy can be read as revealing a community of people who created an environment in which differences between members of the various households and individual impact on the environment, while present, were negligible in comparison with the evidence for unity. A number of other authors have commented on the use of space by the peasantry. Johnson has argued that the lay-out of the medieval village reflected the cohesion and self-image of the population (Johnson 1996). Hinton argues that peasants wanted their houses to be similar to others in the same social position to bolster the corporate sense of community (Hinton 1990). Unlike at Osgodby, where the picture presented is not one of similar deployment of material culture in the houses of the peasantry, the data from Wharram Percy appear to reflect attitudes such as those suggested by Johnson and Hinton. It must be noted, however, that the general conclusions about peasant cohesion drawn from the data at Osgodby pertaining to the arguments of these authors stands. It is not enough simply to adjudge the occupants of a particular village as having experienced a high level of self-identification as a community based on village topography alone. However, Johnson's argument *is* of relevance to Wharram Percy because many other features of the medieval village speak of the relatively cohesive self-image of the peasant population here. At Osgodby, in contrast, village lay-out is one factor in a context which presents strong evidence of a desire among the villagers to differentiate themselves from one another. In both cases, nonetheless, it can be seen that lay-out itself is insufficient evidence with which to make sweeping statements about the sense of community experience by medieval people.

In order to contextualise these findings, it must be remembered that Wharram Percy was a fairly isolated village. The Wolds landscape is one of deep valleys and high crowns. As mentioned previously, Wharram lords did not have any other manors in the vicinity so there was no regular influx of people to attend the manor court. Moreover, of the four other townships in the parish of Wharram Percy (Fig. 29), three had their own chapels which "gave their inhabitants some relief from regular journeys to church over the Wolds" (Bell and Beresford 1987:6). These chapels would have had the

Mass celebrated in them and the inhabitants of the other townships would therefore have had to attend the parish church only for baptism and burial. It is documented that in 1440 a chaplain was assigned to celebrate in two of these townships, Thixendale and Raisthorpe, so it is almost certain that the parishioners in these villages did not subsequently make the journey into Wharram Percy regularly (Bell and Beresford 1987). There are many examples of settlements which were provided with a chapel in which similar arrangements were in place. For example, the occupants of the village of Welham, very near to Wharram, were only required to attend their parish church at Norton on three feast days each year (Farrer 1916), and the lords of Osgodby also enjoyed such a similar arrangement vis-à-vis their parish church; they could worship in their chantry chapel at all other times.

In terms of the usual *tempo* of daily or weekly life, therefore, the people of Wharram Percy in the late medieval period would have regularly interacted with a very small number of people: the members of the other 30 households (at its maximum) and, weekly, the parishioners of Burdale. Visits to market at Malton would have occurred and the occupants of the other parishes encountered when they came to baptisms and funerals. There was almost certainly even the odd visit to York (the implications of York will be discussed further in the final section). Occasionally, too, inhabitants of surrounding townships would have been seen working in the fields adjacent to Wharram Percy but again, this would not have been on a daily basis. This can be postulated based on the existence of an infield-outfield arrangement on most of the Wolds plateau in which there was “an intensively-cultivated infield with a less used outfield”, the outfields being those closest to Wharram Percy (Beresford and Hurst 1990:96). The normal practices of everyday life, therefore, would have occurred in relative isolation.

There is evidence for communal work at Wharram Percy and not just that instigated by the lords of the manor such as levelling the churchyard as mentioned above. Three or four tofts north of Toft 8 appear, later in the period, to have been abandoned. The house sites were then levelled to form

a westward expansion of the green (Hurst 1983). A similar process may have occurred earlier in the southernmost tofts of the east row (*ibid.*). In the northern portion of the west row, too, at least two crofts (D and H) appear to have later formed accessways (Wrathmell 1989a). What we are seeing here is again evidence of activity that, in the documented absence of a resident lord and the likelihood of an absence of lordly interest in the minutiae of the layout of this small village (Dyer 1985), would have required cooperation and consent from the small number of villagers.

The experiential possibilities suggested by the material cultural evidence at Wharram Percy seem to be those suggestive of unity and co-operation; there is not significant evidence of individual encroachment or amalgamation. This small and relatively isolated group appears to have had a strong culture of valuing a sense of community.

This community culture would have been fostered not just in daily interactions and inter-dependence in the fields, in borrowing equipment and engaging in financial credit arrangements with each other, but also, crucially, in social and informal settings. Ale was an important part of the late medieval peasant diet and it would certainly have been brewed and drunk at Wharram Percy and, indeed, there is evidence for stoneware drinking mugs as well as Humber drinking pots and Cistercian ware cups from peasant contexts in Areas 10 and 6. Other liquids may have been drunk from these vessels, obviously, but it is known that water was considered to be unhealthy and Barbara Hanawalt has pointed out that ale was a staple of the medieval peasant diet (Hanawalt 1986: 55-56). Judith Bennett (1994: 8) also draws attention to the fact that medieval peasants “relied on ale and beer for their basic liquid refreshment” as very little water or milk was drunk, and wine was unaffordable, and Christopher Dyer too writes that substantial amounts of ale would have been drunk in peasant households (Dyer 1983:202, 209). Barbara Hanawalt has investigated the manner in which brewing tended to be accomplished in medieval villages and demonstrated that only some tenants invested in the large leaden vats which were necessary pieces of equipment, and that the houses of those who did

“became both taverns and shops” (Hanawalt 1998: 106). These households, therefore, would have then become a focus for local social interaction (Cumberpatch 1997:147).

A variety of drinking-related activities would have taken place, including dicing. It is known that the playing of dice did occur in the village as a pair was excavated from a deposit dated from 1450-1520 in Area 10. Dicing was one of the most heavily-criticised forms of entertainment in the Middle Ages; it was associated with swearing and blasphemy as people cursed God and the saints when luck was not with them. Through these types of links and through the relationship of dicing with ideas of lot and chance, the activity took on meanings of inverted religious worship and it was frequently prohibited by church decree and secular law (Purdie 2000). Dicing could obviously take place anywhere but it was strongly associated with the tavern which is often a powerful site of ‘subaltern’ culture in which subversive discussion can take place (Scott 1990). At Wharram Percy, it is likely that these communal drinking establishments existed and that dicing and other activities that offered “the spice of the illicit” took place therein (Purdie 2000:184).

It can be seen, therefore, that the peasantry at Wharram was a group which utilised similarities in material culture and the use of space to emphasise group rather than individual identity and that these meanings were further evoked by practices which strengthened this cohesion.

4.4 The Church

Wharram Percy church (Figs. 30, 31) was a site in which a range of power relationships were played out connected with lordly prerogative, community solidarity and gender.

Seigneurial connections with the church of St. Martin at Wharram Percy were strong throughout most of the late medieval period. In 1254 Peter de

Percy held the advowson (the right to present a nominee to an endowed church office), the same date at which he acquired the Chamberlain estate. If the two were obtained as part of the same transaction, it is possible that the linkage between the church and principal landowner may have been in existence since the twelfth century. In any case, “by the thirteenth century it was very unusual for an entire township as well as the patronage of the parish church still to be in the hands of a layman as was the case at Wharram” (Bell and Beresford 1987:206), and this situation continued until 1327 when Geoffrey le Scrope gave the advowson of the church to Haltemprice Priory. Similarly, Henry Percy (son of the lord of the manor) was the rector from 1308-21 as was Stephen le Scrope (a close relative of Sir Geoffrey’s) between 1323 and 1327. It seems, however, that Henry was never resident and no mention of a vicar is made at this time, although presumably there was one throughout most of the period.

The new parsonage built by the priory in the north of the churchyard has already been mentioned. Not only did its erection alter the relationship of many old burials to consecrated space, but it also blocked the track which was the “obvious route through the village to the dam and thence to the road across the valley up to the eastern plateau and the three townships in the south of the parish” (Beresford and Hurst 1990:103). This abandonment of the former vicarage site (which appears to have stood on the demesne (Andrews and Milne 1979)) and alteration of a major causeway is likely to have been carried out by Haltemprice “in cooperation with the lord of the manor, their benefactor” (Beresford and Hurst 1990:104).

In terms of the spatial arrangement of the church itself, there were many aspects which would have evoked meanings of lordship for the peasant worshippers at St. Martin’s. Pamela Graves has argued that the meanings of the lay-out of churches in terms of their division into nave and chancel stood in a recursive relationship to the meanings of other spaces which the peasantry encountered. She argues that the “chancel may be read as a hall with the altar on the dais” (Graves 2000:161) and that the peasants would therefore have felt that they were positioned in the familiar space far away

and separate from the high-status action at the end of the building. Moreover, in terms of the space of a longhouse, the nave occupied a position similar to that of the byre, again reinforcing feelings of lower status (*ibid.*: 130). Both these interpretations and meanings may have held at Wharram Percy insofar as not only were longhouses present, but the hall of the north manor has been interpreted as having a dais (Beresford and Hurst 1990). As this was likely to have been the site of the holding of the manor court, it would have been a familiar spatial layout and therefore could have carried the meanings ascribed to it by Graves.

Links between the church and seigneurial authority can also be postulated on the basis of the actual fabric of the church. It is known that Sir Geoffrey le Scrope endowed a chantry at the church in 1326/7. While the documentary evidence does not mention an associated chapel, it is possible that the north east chapel was constructed for this purpose (Fig.32). Neither Haltemprice nor the parish itself was in a financial position to carry out such a major programme of building (Bell and Beresford 1987: 208) and this was the period when le Scrope was the guardian of the heir to the manor and his relative was the vicar, so his interest in the manor was high. The chapel seems to have been reasonably well-equipped. Two roughly-hewn lumps of stone near the chapel's altar probably formed the base of a sculptured table which acted as a reredos (*ibid.*:82). A deep depression set in the bottom of the inner face of the north wall could have functioned as a drain for a piscina (*ibid.*:82), and a statue in the form of a sculptured bracket was also found (*ibid.*: 83). A priest burial was uncovered in the chapel, possibly that of the chantry priest. Significantly, the only access to the chapel may have been from the chancel. It is possible that an arch may have been inserted to provide access from the aisle, but equally possible that there was no such feature as the appropriate phase of the aisle wall was not fully recorded so the relationships cannot be confirmed. At this time, both the chancel arch and the chancel north wall were rebuilt, which was obviously necessary given that defects in the chancel had been recorded in both 1301 and 1308. For the same reasons mentioned above, it seems likely that le Scrope financed this work. Le Scrope, as acting lord, therefore appears to have

concentrated his building work predominantly on the chancel and, possibly, on a private chapel. Again, the perception of unity between lord and church would have been effected. The Hiltons, too, lords from 1402, may have added the embattled parapet as their coat of arms was attached to it. Although they never resided at Wharram, “their family motif, placed in such a prominent position, may have been intended as a constant reminder that, even if the Percy element in the village name continued to be used, the estate had new owners” (Bell and Beresford 1987:209). Pamela Graves has, in addition, pointed out that lordly insignia positioned high on churches were placed in greater proximity to the deity than the peasant parishioners could achieve (Graves 2000). As was seen in both previous case studies, this use of heraldry was a form of display that was used throughout the region of the village under consideration; the neighbouring churches of Wintringham and Settrington both display heraldic devices. St. Mary’s in Fridaythorpe similarly bears shields on the entrance to the south porch although the dating of this feature is uncertain (Department of the Environment list 1988, Humber SMR reference 1354/4). This church also has parapets on the tower, while parapets and battlements of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century date are also found at St. Nicholas at Wetwang (Pevsner 1972). Another linkage in material culture between these spheres at Wharram Percy was evidenced by the presence of paint. Painted plaster was found in the destruction layers of the north manor house (Rahtz and Watts 2004) and there is evidence for murals and other painted decoration in the church. No such material has been recovered from peasant contexts.

Very strong links between the church and the lords of Wharram Percy can be seen to have existed. Through administrative authority, power over the physical fabric of the church and conceptual links between the suite of material culture employed by the two groups, a close affinity would have been observed by the peasant inhabitants of the village. For the peasantry therefore, one set of experiences of the church may have indeed been a sense of the reproduction of their subservient social role.

This is not the only story that the history of St. Martin tells, however. As remarked in the discussion of the village of Osgodby, priests themselves occupied a multi-valenced position vis-à-vis the peasantry. Although at Wharram they were appointed by Haltemprice, which had links with seigneurial authority as discussed above, the priests at Wharram Percy cannot be seen solely as figures of authority. For example, one of the burials may well have been that of a chantry priest and in 1465 the canon of Haltemprice who was the vicar requested burial in the quire of his parish church (Bell and Beresford 1987). Another priest was buried with chalice and paten in the chancel. This burial evidence suggests the possibility of priestly feelings of community with the village and its parishioners. In comparison, no lords of Wharram Percy were ever buried at the church. Similarly, it is known that the two bovates of the vicarage glebe were scattered throughout the furlongs of the open field according to information from terriers (descriptions of lands owned by a manor) (Andrews and Milne 1979:23; Bell and Beresford 1987:32).⁸ This arrangement mirrored the distribution of the peasants' selions. It is likely that the vicars exploited the land directly, working it personally (Platt 1981). Part of the daily round of the villagers' lives would have been, therefore, the knowledge that the priest was engaged in similar activities, and was subject to similar vagaries of the environment. There would have been conversations between him and the villagers about agricultural matters and so forth. The priest, in his daily practice, therefore problematised the idea of the church as one of merely monolithic authority closed linked with that of the lords.

The church was also an important site of lay agency. It may have been a focal point for the articulation of lordly power which had profound effects on the laity's experience of their religious practice, but it was also a site of community activity - a place in which the villagers invested their resources and, at times, a place where meanings were contested. The parishioners of Wharram Percy did not just give up the church to their lords and allow it to be a place which spoke only of seigneurial power.

⁸ Charlotte Harding has written that the glebe land surrounded the churchyard (Harding 1997) but does not provide any evidence for this.

The dedication of the church will first be touched upon. Dedications to St. Martin belong to one of the earliest set of church dedications in the country and tend not to have been altered on occasions of church re-consecrations (Bell and Beresford 1987: 8-9). However, it is possible that, after the major rebuilding of the early twelfth century, the church at St. Wharram was re-dedicated and that it was only at this date that it became the church of St. Martin. The first documentary evidence we have for the dedication comes from 1320 (*ibid.*). St. Martin of Tours lived in the fourth century AD and is a figure who, it can be argued, falls into the category of an ‘everyday’ rather than ‘heroic’ saint ((Richmond 1999). The author is here discussing fifteenth-century saints but the distinction is still a useful one). St. Martin can be viewed as an ‘everyman’ figure; he was a soldier (a position that some of the parish community may themselves have been forced into in the fourteenth century), he performed miracles which were of a nature likely to appeal to the concerns of ordinary people such as curing lepers and bringing suicides back to life. He was reluctant to become a bishop and one story associated with him revealed his distaste for worldly authority, expressed in some not inconsiderable lack of reverence shown to an Emperor. He did not engage in buying or selling, instead he owned common stock with his disciples (Hoare 1954). In a number of stories related to him, there is, however, considerable emphasis on his conversion of pagans. This may be read as part of the ‘dominant discourse’ that the church was trying to promote through the saint. However, his life and actions can be read as slightly anti-authoritarian, which may have been picked up by the parishioners when stories associated with him were being recounted to them in sermons. It is known that preachers often illustrated their sermons with stories from the lives of saints (Head 2001: xxv; Owst 1966: 123), particularly those to whom a church was dedicated. Throughout the period, services were held on the anniversary of a church’s dedication (Owst 1926: 270), and it seems likely that sermons on these occasions would have pertained to the lives of the saint in question. This sense of kinship with St. Martin may have been strengthened by the affinity medieval people felt towards saints in general. Pamela Graves notes that saints were associated

with particular human concerns or attributed with power to help with ills such as fending off the plague, or helping women through childbirth (Graves 2000: 132). Churchwardens' accounts provide evidence for people adorning statues of the saints with flowers and leaving rosaries to them in their wills, or instructions for jewellery or coin to be melted down to provide items of clothing such as shoes for them. Graves observes that providing clothing for another party was, in the Middle Ages, an act usually carried out for members of the family or for one's helpers (such as lords providing livery for their servants) and she concludes that "saints were regarded by the laity as powerful friends and helpers rather than solely, or even primarily, as the exemplary virgins and martyrs promoted by the church" (*ibid.*). It seems likely, therefore, that the parishioners of Wharram Percy would have had a close relationship with St. Martin and would have picked up on the anti-authoritarian aspects of his life gleaned from the regular sermons about him that they would have heard.

In terms of the development of the fabric of the church as a whole, moreover, it has not been established that seigneurial power accounted for all the church maintenance. It is virtually impossible ever to be absolutely sure of the author of a particular alteration to a church's fabric, but it can be seen that, throughout the history of the church, there were constant, quite minor, alterations and maintenance activities being carried out which were unlikely to have been sufficiently important or large-scale to have attracted the attention of non-resident lords. In the twelfth century, for example, when the Chamberlains were lords (and were probably non-resident), one wall of the church was rebuilt, the tower was altered, the floor level raised and evened and the wall benches and bells acquired. In the fifteenth century when the Hiltons were non-resident lords and Haltemprice Priory was suffering financial difficulties severe enough to render many of its own buildings uninhabitable (English Heritage Scheduling document 2000, Humber SMR reference 810), making it extremely unlikely that resources would have been put into St. Martin's from this quarter, we can see that again small-scale work being carried out. Windows to the south aisle were replaced (Beresford and Bell 1987: 89, 121), the east end was constructed

and the floor was either repaired or totally re-paved (*ibid.*: 89). The church was obviously a place into which the peasantry was, at times, willing to put their limited resources; quite clearly it was not just a resented site of the imposition and practice of ecclesiastical and seigneurial power.

There are some indications that the fifteenth century can be seen as a time of increased lay control over the fabric (and therefore experience) of the church. At this date various grooves and sockets around the responds of the chancel arch mark the position of a rood screen and a rood beam. There is also some, but less good, evidence for the presence of a loft (Fig.33).

Pamela Graves has argued that these features alter the entire focus of the church - away from the horizontal focus on the priest to a vertical focus on the saints, an assembly to whom the laity could directly offer their prayers rather than attend exclusively to the distant priest speaking a foreign language further away in the chancel. She writes that “the rood figures and screen, as foci of lay piety, lend an integrity to the space of the nave independent of the chancel and the sacramental role of the clergy” (Graves 2000:162). This can be read as another appropriation of the space of the church by the peasantry who were, for the reasons given above, the most likely party to have been responsible for work on the church at this time.

I would like to turn now to the corbel table on the tower parapet. This consists of 24 human heads, three of which are clean-shaven, while 10 have various kinds of beards, seven of which are hooded, and four have some other encasing elements around their faces (Figs. 34, 35). The heads may represent the seasons or the four ages of man, but the patterning is not clear. In terms of the party responsible for the placement of these heads, it is possible that it was the Hilton family who was responsible for the fifteenth-century parapet on which the heads are placed. This is because of the presence of their shield on the parapet. While the identity of those who commissioned the heads cannot be known, however, some evidence does point to the possibility of it being the peasants' work. Taking into account the information for the rood features which are also of this date and which can be interpreted as representing parishioner influence within the church, it

can be suggested that this group's interest in and ability to alter the church at this point was high. In addition, Michael Camille has suggested that heads on a church represent peasants as the faces are not stereotypically beautiful as are depictions of saints or other figures. He suggests that "the faces of the monstrous masses have their place" on the body of the church (Camille 1996:165) and that therefore it is more likely that the peasants themselves placed such a representation upon the church (although it is unlikely that they themselves considered the faces to be 'monstrous'!) This interpretation is admittedly speculative, but are we seeing on the parapet of St. Martin another instance of 'infra-politics' with the peasants placing themselves high up, near God, and the Hiltons adding their insignia to equal or counter this assertive peasant act, possibly even hiring the same local masons?

Finally, it must be remembered that the churchyard was a space that was used extensively by the villagers and often for secular purposes. Many of the excavated graves contained a large quantity of domestic rubbish, particularly animal bone. Similarly, the amount of pottery found around the church was far more considerable than the excavators had expected. Large jars with bungholes were found, perhaps signalling the consumption of ale. The sooted cooking pots discovered indicate that food (possibly associated with the animal bone) was cooked in or carried to the churchyard. The unsooted cooking pots found have been interpreted as containers used for carrying tradeable commodities (Bell and Beresford 1987; Harding 1996). Based on this evidence, it can be suggested that at Wharram Percy, the churchyard would have been of crucial importance for the buying and selling and feasting that was part of village life. The village green, separating the two rows of houses, "consisted almost wholly of the steep uncultivated valley side between the plateau and the terrace" (Hurst 1983:11). It is likely to have been used for grazing, growing wood and pannage for pigs. The churchyard would have afforded the only flat, relatively uncluttered outside communal space in the village, and the excavated pottery and faunal evidence demonstrates that it certainly was a site of substantial levels of secular activity.

The church of St. Martin can be seen to have been the site of the exercise of a variety of power relationships. Seigneurial power operated in a way similar to the *tempo* that was observed in the village as a whole - sporadic but sweeping. When the vicarage was moved, the chapel added, and the coats of arms placed on the tower, we see the imposition of this power on an immediate and large-scale, experiential level. The lords had the ability to change profoundly, and quickly, the appearance of the church and its immediate surrounds which would have had an impact long after the immediate temporal context of the event. Peasants also affected the church fabric in this way, possibly particularly in the fifteenth century. Participation in the services, negotiation of the maintenance work that was done on its fabric, all these would have been practices constitutive of community at Wharram Percy. In the routines of village life, also, engaging with the priest in the field, selling and carousing in the churchyard, keeping up with necessary small-scale maintenance of and alterations to the church fabric, the laity claimed a space in the church and made it the site of an experience which spoke of more than brute lordly power.

4.5 Women

Some aspects of gender have already been touched upon in the foregoing discussion. It has been noted how differently-gendered individuals were engaged in different forms of resistance; men specifically in poaching and women in hand milling. Obviously, these activities did not happen in isolation from the members of the gender group not principally involved and many examples of resistance to the lord can be seen to have probably involved all the villagers. The genders of the participants is pertinent insofar as it allows us to further our understanding of the ways in which solidarity between members of the same gender could be forged through various activities in order to add to our understanding of how gender worked in practice in the medieval village. This point is expanded on in Chapter Six. The following discussion will focus on various ways in which understanding women's experience *as women* in late medieval Wharram Percy has been

attempted here. This is not to suggest that masculinity in this context need not be problematised or thought about, but it is not the focus here.

I will begin with the evidence for child-rearing practices. Women at Wharram Percy appear to have shared a framework for making decisions such as when to wean a child. The isotopic evidence from the osteological samples from the village shows that there was a rise in the stable isotope ratio from birth onwards which reflects the incorporation of the isotopic signal of breast milk into the bone collagen. The highest ratio occurred after one year. After two years, the stable isotope evidence indicates that breast milk was no longer making a detectable contribution to the diet. The strong age-related pattern and lack of variation between the 70 infant or juvenile samples used indicates that weaning of infants occurred at very similar ages across households. These findings have been interpreted as indicating that “breast-feeding duration was generally constrained by community-wide cultural factors rather than decisions being made freely according to individual circumstances” (Mays *et al.* 2002: 656). It is likely that it was women’s traditions, discussion and recommendation as a group, which led to the similarity in weaning age that we see here.

The evidence at Wharram Percy provides further and strong support for my argument that women were engaged in a substantial amount of activity outside of the domestic sphere (see Chapter Six). Firstly, the number of locks and keys that were found in the excavations is strongly suggestive, “for if the wife and children were left at home there would surely not be so much need for security” (Beresford and Hurst 1990:44). This sentence, incidentally, is a good example of the way medieval women are most often conceived of and defined solely in their relationship to men. It is interesting to note that keys were very much gendered female in the medieval period; keys, distaffs and purses often acted to signify ‘woman’ (Hanawalt 1986; and see Kerr 1998). Osteological evidence further corroborates this interpretation that women were engaged in agricultural work. A study of vertebral degenerative distributions and plastic changes in vertebral apophyseal facets showed a lack of marked distinctions between the sexes,

and suggested that they shared “broadly similar activities and lifestyles” (Sofaer-Derevenski 2000:18). As I argue in Chapter Six, it is likely that men and women had not so much broadly similar activities as that women could, and did, carry out almost all the tasks that men did but that the opposite did not apply.

The evidence at Wharram Percy also provides us with some hints of the relationship between the peasantry and literacy, some of which may have had gendered connotations. The only purse frame found at Wharram, from a context dated 1450-1520, had both incised leaf and scroll decoration and fragments of an inscription. Although we can obviously not be sure whether the purse was used by a woman, it has potential implications for the bond between peasants, gender and literacy given that women were particularly associated with purses at this time, as mentioned above. Furthermore, a book-clasp of late medieval/early post-medieval date was also found in the South Manor area excavations. Both of the finds come, therefore, from the amalgamated Toft 9/10 enclosure which has been interpreted as ‘high status’, although this can be seen as a problematic ascription when only two toft areas were fully excavated. Obviously, the interpretation was made from knowledge of peasant material from a wider context, but it may not necessarily apply on a village-wide scale. There are also surviving peasant wills, from one person in Wharram-le-Street in the fourteenth century, one from “Wharrom” in the fifteenth century and also in this century a further 14 from Wharram-le-Street (Anon 1907:55). It can be seen that at Wharram, the evidence suggests that peasants did not just encounter texts in ‘disciplinary’ discourses such as those of the church and the manor court but that they were ‘appropriating’ them for use in their own discourses. Even if they used the purse and the book with the clasp in a talismanic way, believing in the “capacity of words and letters to exercise real power in the world” (Moreland 2001:45), this in itself does not render the appropriation any less significant.

The gender implications of some aspects of St. Martin’s church will now be briefly considered. It is possible that, when the south aisle was constructed,

a south east chapel was added to its east end. It is known that expansions and contractions of medieval churches were due mainly to patronage and liturgy rather than purely to changes in population (Hurst 1984; Harding 1996; see Klukas 1983; 1984 for a discussion of the impact that changes in medieval liturgical forms had on the architecture of specific churches). Although, of necessity, any suggestions can only be tentative, it is possible that this chapel may have been a lady chapel, as the cult of the Virgin was very strong in the Middle Ages and these chapels were a feature of many churches of the period (Harper 1991), including Yorkshire churches such as St. Gregory's at Bedale and St. Mary the Virgin Leake as well as the lady chapel at York Minster. If there was a lady chapel at Wharram Percy, it is not certain what, if any, 'gendered' effects of this there would be, as there is a range of scholarly opinion on whether the Virgin was particularly venerated by female parishioners or not. A number of authors have argued that women had no special relationship with the Virgin Mary. Caroline Walker Bynum strongly argues that medieval women's devotion to Mary was not so much to do with the fact that she was a woman, as to do with her role as the bearer of Christ (Walker Bynum 1987:269), although she does admit of some exceptions to this focus, such as the devotion of Margery Kempe. Walker Bynum's sources, it must be recognised, dealt with elite women mystics and writers on spiritual matters and therefore may be of limited use in accessing the piety of medieval laywomen of more modest social standing. Christopher Daniells' analysis of 4,700 wills dated between 1389 and 1475 from the diocesan Exchequer Court of York seems to support Walker Bynum's conclusions, however. He found that no women requested to be buried near an altar dedicated to the Virgin, nor near altars dedicated to St. Anne although he writes that this "may reflect the small number of women in the sample" (Daniell 1997: 97).

In contrast, some writers argue that medieval women's piety did, in fact, have a specific relationship with the figure of the Virgin due to her sex. Marina Warner is a prominent writer on Marian devotion and argues that the Virgin was held up to women as an exemplum of feminine virtue. She presents evidence from the 325 the Council of Nicea which exhorted all

women to follow her example (Warner 2000:68) and writes that in the late medieval period, “the cult of the Virgin mirrored the feminine ideal of the Catholic ethic” (*ibid.*: 185). Warner stresses the fact that the Virgin was praised for qualities that women were exhorted to aspire to and argues that “she is the symbol of the ideal woman and has been held up as an example to women since Tertullian in the third century and John Chrysostom in the fourth lambasted the sex” (*ibid.*: 336). Roberta Gilchrist’s research on ecclesiastical architecture can also be seen to support the idea of a linkage in the medieval *mentalité* between women’s religious devotion and the figure of the Virgin Mary. Gilchrist notes that the northern parts of churches were not just associated with female worship due to seating segregation during services, but also with the iconography of female saints, specifically, images of the Virgin Mary being seated at Christ’s right hand (Gilchrist 1994: 220). She further argues that Mariology was one of a web of characteristics which signalled female piety, although this argument is specifically referring to aristocratic social groups. Gentlewomen are also the focus of A.S.G. Edwards’ work, whose research on fifteenth-century collections of saints’ lives indicates that the gentlewomen who owned these texts seemed particularly interested in Marian narratives, as well as those of other female saints (Edwards 2003). Similarly, Stephen Rigby draws attention to a late medieval or early modern carol which stresses the fact that the sex of the Virgin did link her to other women. The carol, which ran “Our Blessed Lady bereth the name/ of *all* women wher that they go” and argues the Virgin provided acted as both a powerful intercessor as well as model for medieval women (Rigby 1995: 251 emphasis added).

Other writers, however, focus upon the complexities of the relationship between the Virgin Mary and ordinary women, and observe that this relationship altered throughout the course of the Middle Ages. Penny Gold (1985) has argued that while some sources do suggest that she was held up as a model for women to follow, as indicated by the sermons of Abelard, for example, other sources, such as the writings of Anselm of Canterbury, stressed her singularity; her difference from ordinary women. However, Gold concludes that whether comparison or contrast were stressed “Mary is

identified as a woman, with the qualities of a woman” (*ibid.*: 71). Also stressing the complexity of the relationship is Christine Peters who argues that the figure of the Virgin Mary became less ‘gendered’ as the Middle Ages progressed. Marian devotion flowered in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when Mary was primarily portrayed and regarded as mother to the Christ Child which, Peters argues, may have created meanings to do with the sanctity of motherhood and lent the Virgin a greater appeal to women, insofar as the “lactating Virgin offered enormous potential. She enriched female virtues and validated the domestic and familial” (Peters 2003: 93). However, Peters argues that later in the period, predominantly in the fifteenth century, piety became increasingly Christocentric which altered the role that Mary played in the religious devotions of most medieval parishioners. She came to be portrayed as the mother to an adult Christ and, particularly in the *pieta* images, became representative of the grieving and powerless parent, portraying humanity as a whole, rather than as a commanding maternal figure. She suggests that it is this transition which provides an explanation for the fact that there is little evidence for gender distinctions in testamentary acts of piety (*ibid.*: 29-48).

Many of the arguments which outline a thesis of the lack of women’s identification with Mary are based on sources which pertain specifically to the medieval elite as well as on sophisticated theological argumentation. The stronger evidence for this case, I believe, lies in the lack of difference between men and women in their testamentary behaviour when it came to images of the Virgin in parish churches. It is not clear whether this behaviour reflects piety in a simple way, or whether there were other forces at work which could have helped shape the choices that women made when drawing up their wills. It must also be noted that only a small number of peasant women in the very end of the period under consideration made wills. I believe it is not unreasonable to suggest that the fact of Mary’s female-ness would have been experienced by the parishioners of medieval England in gender-specific ways. Whether or not women felt connected to or judged by the figure of the Virgin Mary, because they could not aspire to her greatness, I believe it is unlikely that the fact that the Virgin was a

female would have had no impact on medieval women. As suggested above, arguments that she stood for 'humanity' rather than 'womanhood' are based on complex and sophisticated readings of mainly elite documents; the fact that so many images of a woman and a mother were present in medieval churches and, as may have happened in Wharram Percy, have had a separate devotional space allotted to her, would have meant that women *as women* would have felt included in the various practices of medieval Christianity.

Another representation of gender in the church at Wharram Percy was carved stone human heads. Of those present on the tower, many, due to the presence of facial hair, are obviously masculine and there are some whose gender is indeterminate. There are, however, at least two clear examples in St. Martin's of women's heads being represented. A label stop re-used in the west window in the north nave wall represented a woman with a headdress which is probably stiffened under a veil or wimple. A statue bracket also appears in the form of a head, which is similar in style to the monumental brass of one Joan of Cobham in Kent (Bell and Beresford 1987) (Fig. 36). According to Marie Louise Sørensen, objects are both communication and practice - they both represent and affect gender (Sørensen 2000). These women's heads are not those of virgins or martyrs. They are there simply to represent a person, a woman. In terms of the experience for the parishioners then, the female heads in stone denoted women's absolute inclusion within the pale of humanity with which the church dealt and would have contrasted markedly with the aspects of church-going which would have been disempowering for them. It is known that women were given harsh treatment by medieval preachers and that only occasionally positive mention of the female sex was made by those who occupied the pulpit (Owst 1966: 20, 385; Labarge 1986: 29-36; and see Bloch 1991). The primary traits which women were accused of by medieval preachers were those of foolishness, garrulity, love of wandering and disobedience (Owst 1966: 385-404). Over and above all of these, however, was the prevalence of medieval preachers' denouncement of women's love of finery. John Bromyard, an influential preacher of the fourteenth century, was particularly impassioned by this particular feminine weakness, sermonising that "those who would

lay bare their breast and compress their feet in the tightest of shoes ... destroy their own souls and those of others” (cited in Owst 1966: 396). However, if the medieval church was both a religion and an ideology (Le Goff 1988), we can see that it was not *purely* misogynistic in its message and in the effects it produced. In the church of Wharram Percy, the solid stone presence of representations of women linked with the possible architectural emphasis on the Virgin Mary would have produced a counter-commentary on any discourse emanating from the pulpit.

When considering the operation of gender at Wharram, the importance of the evidence for women’s emigration to York must be stressed. Migration was an important feature of late-medieval rural society, as much as for women as for men, with evidence for many women having migrated to the towns in the medieval period (Goldberg 1992a; Grauer 1991). There were significantly fewer female than male skeletons found in the excavated portion of the graveyard and Simon Mays has argued that this supports the documentary evidence for greater female emigration; in this case, probably to York (Mays 1997; 1998). There are definite links between Wharram Percy and York. There is cause paper evidence for residents of Wharram Percy having dealings with people from York (Smith 2003) and the prevalence of forms of tuberculosis that were spread from human-to-human suggests regular contact with a large urban centre which could have acted as a reservoir for the disease (Mays *et al.* 2001).

In order to embark fully on an adult life, young people of peasant origin in the Middle Ages needed to marry and form their own household. It can be seen that the option of becoming a servant in York would have been of vital importance to particularly young women at Wharram Percy and have had power implications for their ability to control their lives. If marriage prospects seemed bleak in the village itself, a woman could always – with appropriate contacts and recommendations – leave, enabling her to choose from a wider pool of potential husbands. Jeremy Goldberg supports this interpretation, and argues for the greater increase in choice of marriage partner for women living in towns (Goldberg 1992b). The possession of

options and choices, it could be argued, is one of the fundamental prerequisites for the possession of power.

This chapter has attempted to outline the experiences of social power, resistance, community and gender undergone by the villagers of Wharram Percy through an investigation of their encounters with the material culture of the village. We can see that it was a village in which, although seigneurial power was largely distant, it was nonetheless countered by a variety of resistant practices and in which the maintenance of a close-knit community was both reflected in and created by the deployment of material culture.

The three case studies undertaken have outlined the variety of experiences of lordship, community and gender that could occur in the lives of medieval peasants. The case studies have encompassed villages in which lordship was ever-present and those in which it was routinely absent, in which the urban sphere had a profound influence and those in which this influence was more muted, and villages in which material culture was used to create and reflect peasant uniformity and those in which its deployment stressed household difference. The range and wealth of archaeological data has also varied considerably between the villages, allowing the approach outlined to be applicable to a wide variety of medieval settlement. However, some important and informative aspects of medieval material culture were not present at the three villages which were investigated and this may be viewed as a weakness of the case study method. The following chapter, therefore, thematically discusses various data types which have so far not been considered, outlines the meanings they evoked for the peasantry, and the contexts in which these meanings would have been operative.