

**INTEGRATIVE CHAPTER  
IN SUPPORT OF THE AWARD OF A  
PhD BY PUBLICATIONS**

**JANE GRENVILLE MA (Cantab)**

**DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY,  
UNIVERSITY OF YORK**

**February 2005**

## CONTENTS

List of publications submitted for consideration	i
1. Introduction	1
2. The archaeological study of buildings	5
3. The future – in theory. An integrative approach.	21
Bibliography	29
Appendix 1 – Citations	
Appendix 2 – Reviews of ‘Medieval Housing’	
Followed by offprints of all publications except <i>Medieval Housing</i> submitted separately	

## List of publications submitted for consideration

This application asks for the following publications to be taken into consideration:

- 1990 'The Rows of Chester: some thoughts on the results of recent research', *World Archaeology*, 21(3): 446-60.
- 1992 with Richard Morris 'Archaeological approaches to the recording of buildings', *The Field Archaeologist*, 16: 300-1.
- 1993 'Curation overview' in J Hunter and I Ralston (eds) *Archaeological Resource Management in the UK*. Stroud: Alan Sutton, 125-33.
- 1994 'Research strategies and priorities: an afterthought – the Chester Rows' in J Wood *et al* (eds) *Buildings Archaeology: applications in practice*. *Oxbow Monograph* 43. Oxford, 97-107.
- 1997 *Medieval Housing*. London: Leicester University Press. Copies available in J B Morrell Library of the University of York, shelved at P42 GRE
- 1998 'Timber framing in the York region' in D D Andrews and D F Stenning (eds) *Regional Variations in Timber-framed Buildings in England and Wales down to 1540*. Chelmsford: Essex County Council: Planning Department, 130-34.
- 1999 'Archaeology or architecture?' in K Clark (ed) *Conservation Plans in Actions*, London: English Heritage, 91-93.
- 2000 'Houses and households in late medieval England: an archaeological perspective' in J Wogan Browne *et al* (eds) *Medieval Women: texts and contexts in late medieval Britain*. Turnhout: Brepols, 309-28.
- 2000 'Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the medieval household - The Urban Household Project at York and its archaeological implications' in G Eriksdottir, S Larsson and V Londahl (eds) *Att Tolka Stratigrafia: det tredje nordiska stratigrafimötet Åland 1999*. Mariehamn: Ålands högskola, 225-36.

- 2001 'Out of the shunting yards – one academic's approach to recording small buildings' in S Pearson and R Meeson (eds) *Vernacular buildings in a changing world: understanding, recording and conservation*. CBA Research Report 126. York: Council for British Archaeology, 11-26.
- 2003 'The material household: preface' in C Beattie, A Maslakovic and S Rees Jones (eds) *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850-c.1550: managing power, wealth and the body*. Turnhout: Brepols, 309-13.
- 2003 (with Maria da Conceição Falcão Ferreira) 'Urban vernacular housing in medieval northern Portugal and the usefulness of typologies' in C Beattie, A Maslakovic and S Rees Jones (eds) *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850-c.1550: managing power, wealth and the body*. Turnhout: Brepols, 359-89.
- 2004 'The archaeology of the late and post-medieval workshop – a review and proposal for a research agenda' in P S Barnwell, M Palmer and M Airs (eds) *The Vernacular Workshop: from craft to industry, 1400-1900*. CBA Research Report 140. York: Council for British Archaeology, 28-37.
- 2005 (with Ian Ritchie) 'Archaeological deposits and value' in C Mathers, T Darvill and B J Little (eds) *Heritage of Value, Archaeology of Renown: reshaping archaeological assessment and significance*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 211-26.
- In press, due 2005  
 'The curator's egg: a new overview' in J Hunter and I Ralston (eds) *Archaeological Resource Management in the UK*, fully revised edition. Stroud: Sutton.

## 1. Introduction

My published work, in the archaeology of medieval buildings and in conservation studies/heritage management, is concerned with the role of buildings in the life of societies. This integrative chapter reviews this work to date with material written in the past eight years forming the major part of it, but including earlier publications to set the context. In the final section, it seeks to provide a very preliminary integrative theoretical framework. The theoretical question at the heart of my work addresses the way in which space articulates social action and vice versa. Working across a range of periods and locations, I have become interested in trying to explain the reasons for the perceptible differences between societies, both geographically and temporally: British society is not the same as Japanese society, and modern societies do not equate with medieval societies. Yet there must be an underlying abstract concept or series of concepts that can help us to understand these differences. Unpublished material on Japanese buildings amplifies and provides a foil for my thinking and will be discussed here.

In 1984, I abandoned a PhD at Cambridge on the development of churches and the parish system in northwest Lincolnshire. I worked for three years on the listed buildings resurvey for Yorkshire and Humberside, gaining a broad foundation in architectural history and some understanding of the planning system in England as it applied to the protection of the historic environment. For eighteen months in 1987-8, I was the researcher on the Chester Rows Research Project, recording and analysing the galleried medieval and post-medieval buildings of the town centre. Thereafter I was the Historic Buildings Officer for the Council for British Archaeology for three years, in which post I fully developed my understanding of the planning system and developed arguments, with Richard Morris, then the Research Officer, to support knowledge-based conservation through excellence in recording and analysis of historic fabric. In 1991, I returned to academia to run the MA in Archaeological Heritage Management at the University of York. I set up the MA in the Archaeology of Buildings in 1992 and began

research in the Centre for Medieval Studies with interdisciplinary colleagues, also travelling on two occasions to Japan to research comparative material there. Latterly, I have returned energetically to my interests in spatial planning and the historic environment as a Commissioner of English Heritage and as Director of Studies for the MA in Conservation Studies, inherited by the Archaeology Department from the defunct Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies in 1997.

My work on the archaeology of medieval and post-medieval buildings embraces empirical, methodological and theoretical approaches. For archaeologists, my intention has been to show that that medieval archaeology need not, in its concern to cut loose from the 'handmaid of history' tag, abandon the evidence that our colleagues in History, Literature and History of Art departments have to offer us. For my fellow medievalists in those allied disciplines, I have demonstrated the potential of archaeological studies to do far more than merely illustrate and describe, in terms both of the material addressed and the intellectual approaches taken. In other words, the explanatory value of archaeology is exploited in its fullest measure when deployed in an interdisciplinary context. My specific area of study has been the domestic and the commercial spheres of medieval life, rather than the public and political realm. I have published on houses, both high and low status, and on shops, markets, workshops and urban topography in an attempt to understand the articulation of what would now be referred to as the 'work/life balance' in terms of the use of social space. To that end, I have insisted that recording methodologies should be tailored to answer specific questions asked about social organisation in the buildings under study. I have applied structuration theory, environment-behaviour research and access analysis within my work.

Conservation has been an important second strand in my thinking. In my professional life (before I returned to academia in 1991 and since 2001 as a Commissioner of English Heritage) and in my teaching within the MA programmes of Archaeological Heritage Management and the

latterly in Conservation Studies, I have been particularly concerned with the fate of those historic buildings in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In particular, my research and teaching since the early and mid '90s has addressed the rationale of the conservation movement as it developed in the UK in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and how those philosophies worked their way into the British legislative system that we now operate in order to protect our historic building stock. I have tended to accept the 'dominant groups' theory, namely that authority was vested in the specific expertise of articulate and knowledgeable interest groups. Thus the ideas and approaches of such early archaeological pioneers as Pitt-Rivers and Lubbock became those of the establishment in the passing of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act of 1882. More controversially, perhaps, the argument between 'restorers' and 'preservers', fought out very publicly in the letters pages of the Times newspaper and elsewhere, was won by the persuasive and determined founders of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Morris and Webb, under the influence of Ruskin. The deeper implications of that intellectual battle are still felt today in every decision made about the future of a listed building. Pragmatically, in my political role as a Commissioner of English Heritage, I have come to recognise such power play as central to the operation of public life on whatever level, and have been deeply disappointed by my observations. Out of that experience and the concomitant conviction that there must be a better way of achieving the common good, has come a re-thinking of my theoretical stance.

Over the course of the past four years, I have been developing this alternative theoretical stance which I shall articulate in print for the first time in Section 3 of this paper. This approach is driven by my disagreement with the widely held view that all theoretical explanation must rest at a political and/or economic level and that all social interaction hinges ultimately on the exercise of power. In different guises, this macro-paradigm dominates both my fields of study. I shall argue that archaeological academia, in accepting and developing this view of the political jungle, actively supports a bankrupt system - and the

conservation lobby fails in some cases to notice it or in others to present an alternative that does not simply privilege an alternative power lobby. I shall challenge both here by suggesting that there are other, perhaps emotional, needs that must be satisfied in a healthy society and that we can investigate both current and medieval society in the light of those needs, identifying the causes of social cohesion and dissent. My particular interest is in understanding exactly how far our physical surroundings contribute or detract from stability and unrest, but obviously the paradigm has a much broader sweep. At the heart of this thinking is the notion, adopted by R D Laing in clinical psychology and by Giddens in sociology, of ontological security (Laing 1961; Giddens 1984, 1990, 1991).

I shall return to these ideas towards the end of this paper, as they demonstrate how my publications form a coherent body of knowledge. First, however, I shall review the aims, objectives, methods and conclusions of the titles offered for consideration towards the degree of PhD by publications.



## 2. The archaeological study of buildings

In the late 1980s and early 1990s a turf war broke out between architectural historians and archaeologists. The subject was the 'proper' study of buildings. The argument signalled my first entry into the lists of academic debate, through my papers (1992, 1994) arguing for a critical but thorough approach to recording. I have summarised the debate in *Medieval Housing* (pp2-5). Very briefly, it centred on the appropriateness or otherwise of archaeological recording methods, advocated by H.M.Taylor (1972) and given a field archaeologist's spin by Ian Ferris (1989), criticised by the architectural historians for tending away from questioned contextual studies (Ferne 1988, Cooper 1991), and by other archaeologists for suggesting that recording can ever be a value-free activity (Wrathmell 1990, Grenville and Morris 1992).

This debate was of central importance to the development of the field in which I have specialised, and much of my thinking in the 1990s was conditioned by it. Ferris had argued for a systematic approach to the recording of buildings rooted in the bureaucracies of excavation site recording, where a consciousness that excavation is by its very nature destructive had led to an over-riding imperative for accurate recording. My concern in this was that accuracy and objectivity had been erroneously conflated in the minds of field practitioners. At the heart of this confusion lies the dichotomy between the inductive and the deductive approach to evidence, elegantly summarised by Carver (1990: 255-8). He pits the inductive school of Philip Barker 'I am becoming more and more convinced that the only valid questions to ask of a site are "what is there?" "what is the whole sequence of events on this site from the beginning of human activity to the present day?"' (Barker 1977,4) against the deductivists, in whose camp he firmly stands: "There is no point going into the field without research objectives; research objectives always include the creation and testing of descriptive models of the past and they always presuppose analysis of some kind' (Carver 1990: 299).

The position I took up in the early '90s, and continue to hold, attempts a course between the Scylla of induction in which I was trained, and the Charybdis of deduction, which is intellectually far more satisfying, but fraught with epistemological traps. In my training in buildings recording, which had largely been delivered on site by H.M. Taylor at Repton and by Warwick Rodwell at Barton-on-Humber, I had been drilled in the inductivist school. The former was an early advocate of the application of archaeological methodologies to the study of historic buildings, the

'detailed examination of the standing fabric so as to recognise sequences which depend on the ways in which individual parts are related to each other. The name structural criticism was proposed for these methods in order to distinguish them from those of archaeological excavation ... but the logical principles are the same in both cases: namely to search for evidence which proves from first principles that one part must have been put in place before another' (Taylor 1977, 746).

Taylor was the consummate amateur; in his professional life he was an academic nuclear mathematician of very high standing so it is unsurprising, given his locus in the post-war generation of logical positivists, that in his approach to building recording, he should assume that 'logic' was an unproblematic term. Rodwell was, and remains, an unreconstructed inductivist:

'If Sherlock Holmes were ever to be canonised he should be adopted as the patron saint of church archaeology. His investigational techniques must be possessed by every archaeologist: an enquiring mind, a capacity for clear and logical thought, a cautiously sceptical approach to the obvious, a meticulous interest in seemingly trivial detail, and a determination to solve problems' (Rodwell 1989, 62).

It is difficult to throw off such early conditioning and I remain wary of research agendas that lure the archaeologist into self-fulfilling circular arguments.

Nevertheless, by the early '90s, I was sufficiently sensitised to the view of the researcher as recursively engaged in the research project to be able to write that

'every line on a drawing, and every word on a context sheet, reflects a choice on the part of the recorder. On this basis, the recording of a large building is a process involving thousands of individual decisions. Each of these decisions is coloured – by what the recorder selects as significant; by the light; by what they recognise. Even experienced archaeologists frequently miss small but crucial details in the recording of buildings, while making meticulous records of other features, just as art and architectural historians may stare down a hole and see nothing but undifferentiated brown soil' (Grenville and Morris 1992, 300).

I was sufficiently conversant with architectural history, from three years working on the re-survey of listed buildings under the tutelage of architectural historians such as Jill Kerr and Judy Cligman, to be able to recognise that: 'conversely, the successful recording of detail does not automatically deliver the wider understanding of a building which to an experienced architectural historian may be immediately self-evident' (ibid). The ideas that Morris and I articulated in that early paper laid the foundations for further thought and refinement within the context of the CBA's historic buildings casework load. Returning to academia in 1991, I passed the baton of that task on to Kate Clark, but have remained intimately engaged, as Chair of the Casework Panel and constant advisor to Kate and her successors, Carol Pyrah and Lynn Walker. The dialogue with Kate continued through both our subsequent careers and led, ultimately, to the seminal publication of *Informed Conservation* (Clark 2001) in which several of our conversations find written expression, a debt she cheerfully acknowledges as 'the apostolic succession' (Clark pers. comm.).

The questions that Richard Morris and I framed at the end of our paper (which is an abbreviated version of a longer presentation to the IFA conference) today seem somewhat diffuse: 'how did they build it?' (i.e. technology, materials, social organisation and logistics of construction)

and ‘why did they build it like that?’ (i.e. plan form, intended and actual use of the building, social organisation of the users, status, style, change through time)’ (Grenville and Morris 1992, 301) and already by 1994 I was attempting to tackle that problem. The writing of ‘Research Strategies and Priorities: an afterthought – the Chester Rows’ (1994) followed on from an interim report on the project which I had published in *World Archaeology* in 1990 and was something of a turning point in my thinking, forcing me to a more reflective approach to a specific project. This was an important paper, which is often quoted, in which I begin to explore the question that has absorbed the last ten years of my intellectual life, in both medieval studies and conservation/heritage management: how should we explore the potential of buildings to help us to understand the function of socially defined space? To answer this requires a two-pronged investigation. First we have to have some abstract theoretical construct that offers insights into the relationships between human behaviour and the environment that contains it. Furthermore, we require a mode of understanding the collective behaviour that groups exhibit and which define them as ‘societies’, in other words, we need to recognise culturally acquired sets of social rules. These self-evidently vary from society to society, or else there would be no such concept as ‘culture shock’ when moving from one milieu to another, and yet we need to be able to *explain* this phenomenon as well as identify it. The matter is complicated still further for the archaeologist by the need to identify and explain it in the past, using necessarily limited evidence. And so secondly we have to develop methodological procedures that will allow us both to frame and to answer these questions. The 1994 paper identifies (at p101) Hillier and Hanson’s access analysis as one way into this problem and Rapoport’s work on environment-behaviour research as another (Hillier and Hanson 1984; Rapoport 1990). Although I would now identify both very much within the methodological rather than theoretical area of my endeavour, but at least I was beginning to think about theorising the problem.

My contribution was paralleled by those of my friends Roberta Gilchrist and Matthew Johnson who were also engaging with this body of evidence and associated theory in their PhDs, and, perhaps more diffusely in terms of case studies and the level of detail accorded to them, by the contributors to Samson (1990) and Locock (1994). Gilchrist and Johnson both developed the relatively narrow fields of their PhD case studies (respectively medieval nunneries (Gilchrist 1994) and Suffolk vernacular housing of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Johnson 1993)) in the light of current theoretical thinking. Gilchrist looked at gender relations and Johnson at household dynamics (between servants and masters as well as parents and children), and both used their subjects to provide an exegesis of the broader thesis, emanating from the post-processualist stable whose chief message was that ‘material culture is *active* in social relations. Far from merely *reflecting* society, material culture can be seen to construct, maintain, control and transform social identities and relations’ (Gilchrist 1994, 15). For Gilchrist, the methodology for articulating this understanding came from the notion of *habitus*, as defined by Pierre Bourdieu – a practical logic and sense of order that is culturally transmitted and varies from culture to culture. Johnson, meanwhile, took a more rigorously structuralist view, applying the semiotic approaches developed initially by Saussure and applied in the realm of vernacular architecture to Virginian houses by Henry Glassie. Both books began with a comprehensive theoretical statement, couched in the vocabulary that is generally associated with such work – to the non-academic reader off-putting at best and actively exclusionist at worst, but both expressing ideas to which I broadly subscribed, and which I felt would raise the intellectual stakes in the study of medieval buildings and help us to frame some more rewarding research agendas.

The notion that the study of medieval architecture could rise above the merely typological ordering of vernacular house plans and carpentry styles or the stylistic analysis of high-status structures such as palaces and churches, and provide insights into the way in which medieval society organised space, and the way in which the organisation of that space in its turn influenced social structures seemed an exciting goal and it was these

aims that I had in mind when writing both the *World Archaeology* paper and the contribution to *Buildings Archaeology*. My important contribution in these two early works was to set the new intellectual agenda in the context of a major piece of applied field recording and to present the work in accessible vocabulary that would engage the 'theory-phobic' mainstream of professional, as opposed to academic, archaeology.

Within this intellectual milieu, I set to work on *Medieval Housing*, which is my principal submission for this exercise. It was clear that of the three 'young Turks', I was the one with the widest and deepest empirical knowledge of the field of medieval buildings. Furthermore, given that this was a commissioned volume, rather than the publication of a PhD, it was not required by the publishers to contain the opening theoretical salvo that characterised both Gilchrist's and Johnson's books. Instead, the idea for the book arose out of my sense of frustration with the exclusive nature of the Vernacular Architecture Group, a group of very well-informed amateurs who dominated (and continue to dominate) the study of medieval buildings. They, too, had an idiom all of their own. My first encounter with the VAG was at a conference to which I had taken myself as a research student in the early '80s, in search of assistance in understanding the vernacular architecture of the north Lincolnshire villages I was then studying. There the buzz was all about a house in Essex with a newly discovered crown post roof. I had no idea of the significance or, indeed, of the particular characteristics of such a roof: they might as well have been talking about nuclear physics. My attempts to find more in the literature led me to Margaret Wood's *The English Medieval House* (1965) and Eric Mercer's *English Vernacular Houses* (1975) and to the various writings of J T Smith (1955, 1958, 1965, 1970), none of which were easy for the tyro to grasp. I experienced a similar problem a few years later in Chester, when I tried absorb the published material on medieval house planning with particular reference to townhouses (Faulkner 1958, 1966; Pantin 1947, 1962-3; RCHME 1972, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1981). The difficulty was that there seemed a wealth of evidence, but it was highly dispersed in the pages of *Vernacular Architecture*, *Medieval*

*Archaeology* and the county journals. Among the various authorities there seemed to be an accepted but ill-defined level of synthetic knowledge and within that framework the arguments took place, sometimes in footnotes and sometimes not articulated at all in print. The field of discourse largely excluded the novice and the only way into this was to read it all, synthesise it for myself and attend VAG conferences. Gradually I came to realise that, while the *evidence* was fairly freely available to the persistent student, the *arguments* were articulated informally at conferences and on field visits. To understand what was really going on, one had to stand around in a medieval attic with luminaries of the VAG and listen to them debate with one another. What was needed was not just a major critical synthesis, but one that was also theoretically informed.

My strategic decision was, therefore, to address both these audiences. Academic archaeology needed to have an accessible and comprehensive outline of the state of knowledge in the 1990s and the doyens of vernacular architecture needed to be woken up to the fact that there are far more interesting and worthwhile questions to ask of the built environment than whether a scarf joint is edge- or face-halved. If buildings archaeology were to be taken seriously in academic archaeology, a primer outlining the data was essential and if it could delineate the main areas of disagreement and interpretation, so much the better. And that is what Chapters 2-6 of *Medieval Housing* essentially constitute: I strove to avoid a string of empirical pearls but rather to address explicitly the issues raised in seminars with Gilchrist and Johnson regarding the embeddedness of social meaning in structures (largely ignored by the empirically minded Vernacular Architecture Group) at the same time as providing a reliable and accurate outline of our state of knowledge about medieval domestic buildings, which was not, at that time, available to the academic community. Chapter 1 is a call to arms, a gloss on the lively early 1990s debate about methods and levels of recording (pp2-13) and a theoretical overview (pp13-22). This overview noted that buildings are far more than physical structures and set the scene for the exegesis of various debates that had taken place since Mercer and Wood had

published their syntheses. So, for example, I noted the importance of understanding the symbolic implications of the different carpentry schools in my discussion of material and competences in Chapter 2, picked up the major debate about the function of 'first-floor' halls in Chapter 3, queried the accepted notion of the decline of the hall in Chapter 4, noted the revelatory impact of comparing excavated and standing evidence for peasant buildings in Chapter 5, thereby giving the lie to the generally accepted theory of the temporary nature of rural vernacular building in the medieval period, and noted the importance of understanding the relationship between domestic, industrial and commercial uses of space in urban buildings in Chapter 6. These were all major points of debate: *Medieval Housing* provided a single point of access for both archaeologists and vernacular architecture specialists, providing a wide dataset against which to rehearse the thinking I had been developing during my early career and thus offering a theoretically informed archaeology of medieval buildings that had, to date, been absent.

To that extent the book did what it set out to do, providing an up-to-date and theoretically aware outline of the state of knowledge at that time which has found its way on to the reading lists of all undergraduate, postgraduate and adult education departments that profess the study of standing buildings. More importantly, it provided a springboard for much further work and I am gratified to note that it is widely cited, appearing in every relevant case study article printed in *Medieval Archaeology* since its publication, as well as being noted in major overviews (see Appendix 1 for a list of citations, which is probably not comprehensive). It even attracted a mention from the doyen of theoretical archaeology, Ian Hodder! Perhaps most gratifyingly, it finds its way into the select bibliography of the medieval volume of the *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*.

Around the time that I finished writing the book in 1996, I became a founder member of the York Households Group which has been seminal in the development of my thinking. This interdisciplinary group was



formed in the Centre for Medieval Studies where I had been teaching for some years, and was populated by staff, research students and taught masters students. Felicity Riddy (English), Sarah Rees-Jones (History), Jeremy Goldberg (History) and myself were the driving forces behind it and in a series of stunningly interesting debates, we carved out a distinctively interdisciplinary approach to the study of families in medieval times. I was determined that my archaeological contribution would not be as the handmaid of history and began to think more carefully about the role of 'agency' in the production of the built environment and the active role of material culture in structuring the social world that had been such a central part of archaeological thinking in the UK since the advent of Hodder's post-processual school in Cambridge in the 1980s, during my period there as a PhD student.

I now tackled some of the theoretical issues I had raised in *Medieval Housing* with more vigour in a series of papers which all arose as a result of a rash of invitations to speak at conferences on the back of its publication: my contribution to a VAG-inspired volume arising from a conference held at Cressing Temple in Essex, 'Timber framing in the York region' (1998); my keynote speech to the Third Nordic Stratigraphy Conference on the island of Åland in the Baltic, 'Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the medieval household' (2000) and a paper that was one of a suite of contributions from members of the York Households Group, given by invitation to an EU-funded conference on domesticity and spirituality at Seefeld in Austria, later published as 'Houses and households in late medieval England: an archaeological perspective' (2000).

The Cressing paper addressed the issue of craft competence and the significance of style in material culture. Taking my cue from Sackett's (1990) formulation of 'isochrestic variation' in style (which argued that stylistic differences that have no functional explanation must be understood to confer a sense of identity on its maker/user) I outlined the variations to be found in carpentry techniques in the York region and

argued that we should be using these isochrestic categories of difference to understand and explain the typologies that students of vernacular architecture are so fond of constructing and yet so uninterested in analysing for the meanings they may contain. Instead of simply noting that York's timber framing tradition differs markedly from that of its hinterland, we should be seeking to characterise narrowly and *explain* those differences, suggesting that an interdisciplinary approach to craft organisation and patronage in the medieval city might provide some answers. Off the confines of the printed page, I had been advocating a purely political explanation: York identified itself in the fourteenth century very strongly as the second city of the country but in this respect it had competitors, not least Norwich. I had argued in Households Group seminars that the peculiar and isolated form of York framing deliberately mimicked that of the southern and eastern school of carpentry in order to support York's claim to political, if not geographical, proximity to London. The Londoner arriving for a parliamentary session in York would be greeted by the sight of somewhat familiar buildings. The Yorkshire peasant, arriving from the West Riding, would enter visually 'foreign' territory, thus emphasising the high status that York retained.

What I was moving towards was expressed more forcefully and explicitly in the paper based on my contribution to the Seefeld conference, which was published as 'Houses and households in late medieval England: an archaeological perspective' in a festschrift to celebrate Felicity Riddy's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. In this paper, much mutilated by the editors of the volume, I originally proposed a long theoretical introduction in which I noted Giddens' structuration theory with particular reference to the importance he gives to time and place in his formulation (Giddens 1984). In brief, Giddens attempts to marry the oppositional sociological schools of explanation (structural vs social action), by arguing that structures do indeed exist at a supra-individual level, but that individual actions are not only conditioned by them but also reflexively act upon them through the media of intended and unintended consequences. This seems to me to

be a logical and useful way of looking at the relationship between individual action and social norms, consonant with the reflexive view of material culture and agency expressed by the archaeological post-processualists, but my particular interest in the Riddy festschrift paper was to look at how the material surroundings of the house itself impact upon the behaviour of the household. Here I introduced the notion of ontological security and explained its significance for my field of study through an anecdote that was, to my dismay, removed from its pride of place as the opening salvo of the paper and relegated to a butchered footnote on page 310. I reinstate it here in full as I do not think I've ever bettered it:

*On a recent trip to Japan, I was struck by the social consequences of a failure to understand the instructions regarding appropriate behaviour that were implied by the architecture. I made two terrible faux pas. The first was the omission to observe the significance of the low step in the hallway of a university guest house. The signal here is to remove your shoes and put on a pair of plastic slippers provided by the management. I knew this, of course, and in the company of others had performed this small ritual many times, yet left entirely to myself, I forgot it entirely and marched up to my room in my own shoes - the equivalent, perhaps, of trailing through an English house in muddy boots. I was met on the landing by the housekeeper who gave me a very cool stare. My second and much more disastrous error was made at a hot springs spa in the Japanese Alps. I was taken by my Japanese hostess for a bathe and although I had read in travel guides and been repeatedly warned by my ex-pat brother and my Japanese friends that there is a very specific etiquette, somehow the knowledge had seeped out of my brain and faced with what looked to me like a small swimming pool, my own cultural conditioning took over completely and I leapt in. The look of anguished horror on my minder's face made me realise instantly what I had done - you should never get into a Japanese bath or hot springs pool without showering very thoroughly first. The clear water is for soaking and rinsing clean bodies, and emphatically not to be sullied by dirty ones. The heinous nature of my action was comparable to defecating in an English swimming pool. I suffered unutterable embarrassment on both these occasions (particularly the second, when, as in one of those lurid recurring nightmares of adolescence, I was stark naked) but it forced me to think hard about social practice.*

*As an archaeologist with a particular interest in the interpretation of the settings of social practice in later medieval England, these embarrassing experiences led me in a very immediate way to reconsider the cultural embeddedness of material cues. Cross-cultural comparisons can be useful in framing general theoretical problems. A low step in contemporary Japan means 'take your shoes off'. A similar step in a medieval hall means 'this is the dais - only the lord, his family, chosen guests and servants have a right to step beyond here'. In appearance the two steps are the same. Theoretically, the fact that both are providing cues for social behaviour renders them identical in purpose as well as appearance - but their position both physically within the building and conceptually, within a culturally specific vocabulary of social practice, are different. We are therefore seeking to problematise these issues of space and social practice at two different levels; first by proposing a theoretical understanding of the role of material culture in social practice, and second in the interpretation of specific uses of social space in specific societies.*

I invoked the work of Amos Rapoport, (whose clearest statement amongst many is *The Meaning of the Built Environment* (1990)) to support my view that the form, layout and contents of buildings all carry cultural messages which may be misinterpreted at one's peril, and which, as my Japanese disaster had tellingly demonstrated, are by no means cross-cultural. Rapoport's apparatus for understanding meaning in the built environment offers an interesting and empirically useful tripartite analytical structure: the notion of fixed, semi-fixed and non-fixed features. Fixed features are those elements of the environment which, he argues, do not change without major intervention: the walls, floors and roofs of houses, and the topography of towns and villages. I will return in my section on conservation issues to the implications of such major interventions. Semi-fixed features are the furniture and its layout, decorative elements and fittings. Rapoport argues that there is more room here for personalisation, that semi-fixed features can and do change quickly and easily. Furniture and its layout can alter the 'meaning' of a room, may be changed at different times of the year, week or day and can mean different things in different societies. To the medieval

archaeologist, furniture is available for study, but only indirectly. That which has survived has been 'curated', in a museum its original position is lost and even if it is in its original location, its relationships with other furniture and with the society that used it is uncertain, either mediated through the curatorial ministrations of the National Trust, and similar bodies, or absorbed into the 21<sup>st</sup> century social practice of a private household. The assistance of art historians and historians with their critical knowledge and source criticism of pictures and inventories is crucial to a clear understanding of these elements. Finally, non-fixed features 'are related to the human occupants or inhabitants of settings, their shifting spatial relationships (proxemics), their body positions and postures (kinesics)...and many other nonverbal behaviours' (Rapoport 1990, 96). Again, the collegiality of the Households Group has been important here in alerting me to the importance of the documentary record, as I have drawn their attention to the centrality of the physical locale of social action. Jeremy Goldberg's work on depositions to the consistory court of York has shed interesting light on importance of cues such as location and time of day as instruments of social control: 'Despite this promise he had again found the said John Waryngton alone with the said Margaret in a suspicious place, that is in an upper room of his aforesaid home where hay lies. He believed that John had known Margaret carnally in that place' (Goldberg 1995, 110). Jeremy and I agree that a hayloft cannot of itself be 'a suspicious place'; what makes it suspicious is the fact that two 'non-fixed features' are in there together, without anyone else present, at the 'wrong' time of day – all of it enough to provide sufficient circumstantial evidence for the master of the house to 'believe' that they had had illicit sex. The important matter here is that, through interdisciplinary approaches, I have been able to demonstrate that the deposition shows that the cues are all working in the way that Rapoport suggests and it really does not matter whether the accusation was true or false for our purposes; what is important is that the domestic environment had meaning clear enough to be used in testimony in a court of law and that new theoretical approaches elucidate this fact.

The theoretical framework I have here developed opens the way to a thoughtful and consistent use of interdisciplinary evidence. I would strongly contest Rapoport's views that non-verbal communication can be universally understood, so much so that I would query whether the attempts of the phenomenological fraternity in prehistory can ever hope to understand the embodied social messages of the Neolithic landscape. Far from being the antiquarian pariah, I am now confident to argue that language and cultural knowledge hold the key and these can never be accessed in the absence of either documents or living subjects or both. Prehistory as social archaeology, for me, is dead.

Lastly, in the Riddy festschrift paper which is my most complete theoretical statement to date, I note that I too have travelled the well-worn path of access analysis, as devised by Hillier and Hanson (1984). It is a useful methodology in that it requires the observer to 'read' the building in another, not immediately apparent, way. But it is a methodology, not a theory, and without the support of additional cultural information, the patterns recognised cannot be ascribed social meaning, as they have no cross-cultural validity.

The paper I gave at Åland covered much of the same ground as the Riddy festschrift paper, but concentrated more, given the nature of the conference to which it was addressed, on the methodological issues of capturing reliable data at an appropriate level for the job in hand. This was an issue I returned to in more detail in 'Out of the shunting yards – one academic's approach to recording small buildings' (2001). This again, arose from a conference paper, given in Oxford at the behest of the VAG main committee, in which I returned to some of the themes I had explored in the joint Grenville/Morris paper to the IFA conference in 1991 (see above). By now I was regarded as the VAG's tame theoretician, one whom they could trust to present a level of empirical rigour in recording and interpretation to support an abstract explanation, rather than a grand theory loosely supported by some highly questionable evidence. Bearing in mind its audience, 'Out of the shunting yards'

contains less high theory than 'Houses and households in late medieval England' but is more rigorous in its application of practice to theory. It considers the importance of research in a contemporary context and its relevance for answering bigger questions than simply those about medieval social life. This is an area I have yet to explore fully and to which I will return in the final section. What particularly pleases me about both these major papers, and about which I can boast freely, since the work is not in its execution my own, whatever my influence on its generation and final appearance, is the very high standard of detailed and accurate recording that is now displayed by students in this field. It is very gratifying to see such a concrete result of the debate I was so involved with in the early 1990s. The contribution of the York MA in the Archaeology of Buildings, which I devised in the early 1990s and directed until 2001, has been critical to the development of this important field of research in archaeology and interdisciplinary studies and I regard its students as my 'output' just as much as my own publications.

No further major publications have appeared in this field since 'Out of the Shunting Yards', a reflection, perhaps of my changed academic status (I took over as Head of Department in September 2001, just before the ship was comprehensively holed below the water line by the RAE result the following December). I undertook to act as midwife to a chapter on Portuguese material which had been offered as a paper in a session I chaired at the Leeds International Medieval Congress in 2001, which has subsequently appeared in a volume edited by York Households Group members (Beattie, Maslakovic and Rees Jones 2003). The material was immensely intractable and the language more so – even with two native Portuguese speakers to help me, it was almost impossible to render into comprehensible English. My own contributions are buried within the introduction and the conclusion and amount to little. Within the same volume, however, I would draw attention to a succinct and carefully thought out preface to the section (pp309-13), in which I drew together some of my thinking on the battles between medieval history and archaeology, and of which I am quietly proud. A recent paper (in

Barnwell, Palmer and Airs (eds) 2004) setting out a research agenda for the study of the medieval and post-medieval workshop represents a useful position paper following on from 'Out of the Shunting Yards' by taking a specific class of structure and considering its archaeological potential against the threat to its survival, thus addressing some of the conservation questions that were once again seizing my attention in the early years of the decade (see Section 3).

In conclusion to this section, my contribution to the archaeology of buildings and to its application to the study of the medieval period has been sustained and internationally recognised since the early 1990s. My reputation is for work that is empirically reliable, theoretically grounded, wide ranging and thoroughly researched. A quiet period for the Households Group is coming to an end – we are off in strength to the USA in March 2005 as keynote speakers at a conference on medieval domesticity at Fordham and a seminar on the same subject at Penn State and the papers arising from those contributions will form my next publications.



### 3. The future – in theory

I have for many years been following two trains of thought: the first is the nature of the relationship between societies and their buildings in the past and how we can begin to unravel it (as discussed in the previous section); the second, which has exercised me in committee work as well as in my teaching, is that of contemporary societies and the decisions that they make about their historical buildings in the present. Recently, I have come to the conclusion that the same theoretical stance can be useful in dissolving both problems and what follows represents my first attempt to articulate this position, as a means of drawing together my two fields of study and sketching out my future research agenda.

Within my list of publications for consideration appears a small group that I have yet to comment upon. These are my 1999 paper ‘Archaeology or architecture?’ in Kate Clark’s edited volume *Conservation Plans in Actions*, which arose out of a major conference in Oxford in March 1998 at which the concept of the Conservation Plan was launched upon the architectural profession; two overviews of the state of British curatorial archaeology in the 1993 first edition and the imminent second edition of *Archaeological Resource Management in the UK* (edited by John Hunter and Ian Ralston); and a paper written as long ago as 1999 which has appeared very recently in a volume published in America (Mathers, Darvill and Little 2005).

I wrote these pieces as commentaries on current policies and practice rather than analytical explanations of the situation as I encountered and understood it. Papers such as these date very quickly by their nature; in the most recent, ‘The curator’s egg’, which is my contribution to the second edition of *Archaeological Resource Management in the UK*, I provide a well-informed discussion written with the benefit of inside observation of the workings of the state heritage agency for England. In it, I note the impact of the political changes of the 1980s and 1990s on the delivery of archaeological research and on the protection of the historic environment above and below ground. I raise some interesting questions about the

philosophical underpinnings of the designation of what constitutes that historic environment, how its curation is paid for and the role of regulation in its protection. Underlying these matters are two issues that repay closer analysis than I was able to afford them in the original text.

### *Designation*

The first concerns the identification of those parts of the physical environment that are deemed to be worthy of retention for their historic, archaeological or architectural importance. As noted in the introduction to this integrative chapter, I have been teaching for over a decade that the intellectual constitution of the historic environment arises out of the intellectual and political circumstances of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The dominant philosophy, as articulated by Lubbock in parliamentary terms and by Ruskin and Morris in campaigning literature, privileges the material evidence of the past over all other manifestations. And that material evidence has been assessed with relatively little serious controversy, within a canon of architectural history that itself has, until recently, been rarely contested. There are two reasons why this process has been so infrequently challenged. The first is the acceptance of 'expertise' within modern society: 'Doctor knows best' has tended to extend, as a cultural norm, to PhDs as well as to the medical profession. The unpublished *Instructions to Investigators for the Listing of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest under Section 42 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944* were written by the then Chief Investigator, the Ministry architect, Richard Garton (apparently heavily influenced by Sir John Summerson (Saint 1996, 129 and n42)). The *Instructions* take this intellectual confidence absolutely for granted: 'the first and clearest case is that of a building which is a work of art, the product of a distinct and an outstanding creative mind (Ministry of Town and Country Planning 1946, 9)' and the categories listed thereafter exude a similar confidence of expression: 'the great bulk and staple of the work will deal with clear and undoubted examples of fine buildings' (ibid, 16). Anyway, if the investigator on the ground is not certain of his [*sic*] ability to adjudge a building on this or any of the other criteria adumbrated in the document,

there will always be a higher authority whose word can be trusted as final: 'so long as a building has special interest from any of the following points of view it can be properly listed or at least submitted for listing, since the lists put in by investigators will undergo a certain degree of censorship at Headquarters' (ibid, 9). The popularity and iconic status of Nikolaus Pevsner's *Buildings of England* series and the decisive, even arrogant, tone of his assessments of the value of buildings again reflect this modernist certainty. And secondly, in a system that has relied heavily on secrecy to prevent pre-emptive demolition, the mystique of the listing branch has been strong and this is a subject I discuss in more detail in 'The Curator's Egg'.

In a post-modern society, neither of these positions seems to be acceptable. First, a public voracious for conservation would rather vote for their favourite buildings in *Restoration* than be *Civilised* by Sir Kenneth Clark and while the old guard shudder at the attendant vulgarity of the proceedings, the *avant-garde* academic community embraces public participation with enthusiasm as proof of popular engagement with its cause. (Incidentally, a prescient passage in the 1946 *Instructions* foreshadows this development: 'the sentimental interest is more elusive and yet sentiment is probably the strongest single thread in our interest in the past'. (Ministry of Town and County Planning 1946, 14)). Secondly, a principal plank of the proposed new heritage designation system is an open and consultative system (again discussed in more detail in 'The Curator's Egg'). Decisions made about the selection of those elements of the historic environment to be protected must now be as transparent and defensible as any other public actions. If the specialist can no longer appeal to an uncontested canon, or attempt to extend the canon to include 'unpopular' buildings such as the relics of the largely unsuccessful social housing experiments of the 1950s and '60s without challenge and cannot operate in secrecy but rather must constantly submit to the scrutiny of the taxpayer, a new rationale for the definition, identification and protection of the heritage must be found.

### *Theorising the heritage*

My second issue arises out of the first and relates to the importance of the exercise of power as an explanation for actions in the past and the present. 'Heritage' is often seen by modernists and post-modernists alike as a product of the conditions of modernity: to condense a long series of discussions, most commentators agree that in a rational, science-based society the industrialised, alienated population of a nation-state requires the invention of tradition to provide the cultural reference points that neither personal experience or depersonalised social institutions offer in a non-traditional society (see, for example, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Lowenthal 1985, Kohl and Fawcett 1995). In this formulation, heritage must necessarily be either the product of the dominant political class or a weapon against that social order in a conscious struggle by subaltern groups to reposition themselves with greater autonomy (see Smith 2004). Within this broad paradigm all explanation resides at some level in conflict perspectives, whether Marxist or associated with Conflict Theory or any number of post-modernist positions. Whilst I shall not argue for a consensus view, the point I wish to take issue with is the assumption that ultimately it is *power* that determines which view will prevail.

My disenchantment with this theoretical stance arises from two observations. First, I simply do not consider that the desire for power is the prime mover in human affairs; rather I view the assumption of power as but one way to overcome the existential anxieties that motivate social behaviour, and it is a solution that brings its own problems: all power corrupts. Secondly, I have noted in my activities on behalf of English Heritage that where decisions have been unduly influenced by motives of power-seeking they tend to be poor decisions, whose ultimate consequences have been detrimental to the historic environment. My reflections on these matters have, inevitably, intertwined with my thinking on the social use space in the past as outlined in Section 2, and I am beginning to formulate an overarching theoretical approach that welds the two fields together to form a single explanatory engine for both the

archaeological study of buildings and for the role of historic buildings in decision-making in spatial planning.

The over-riding concept that seems to provide explanations for the different ways in which societies behave in different times or in different geographical locations and helps us to find acceptable compromises in forward planning is that of *ontological security* (Giddens 1990, Chapter 3; 1991, *passim* but see especially Chapter 2). The idea of ontological security as formulated in psychology concerns the specific process of successful socialisation of infants. It addresses matters of presence and absence of carers in the lives of very young children and the success with which the child manages to break free and form a self-identity. This I shall take as read but it is important to note that part of ontological security inheres in routines. These routines are anchored in space and in repetitive actions (hence, in a cyclical way, also in time). This has implications for the disruption of space. Furthermore, central to the idea of ontological security is the view that, if successfully inculcated, it allows the child to calculate and accept risk. This in turn is connected to the essentials of creativity, the ability to accept and initiate change, without which individuals become neurotically absorbed in repetitive routines. Ability to accept change is therefore a measure of ontological security.

My project is to find a convincing way of showing that ontological security is not merely a function of socialised individuals, but by extension of social groups and that the environment (built and landscapes) forms part of its formulation to the extent both that it stays the same and that it changes. Different societies encode their surroundings in different ways, hence the sense of ontological insecurity that one experiences in a strange country, and the difficulty of understanding precisely what is going on in the past in these terms. In medieval and post-medieval buildings, we can understand far more about their meanings if we accept that an interdisciplinary approach will yield culturally specific clues to the cues embedded in the use and form of architecture and space. In the absence of pan-cultural meanings it is not

possible to do this for prehistoric societies but with the documents and representations in tandem with the buildings and topography, we can say far more than we thought we could about medieval society.

In contemporary planning, we may be able use the concept of ontological security to understand and measure the health of a community as a whole by observing its attitudes to conservation and we might even be able to use it to broker solutions. Different segments of communities have different interests and these naturally lead to different and often conflicting ideas about what to do with a given development opportunity. Levels of trust are important here: we could perhaps open a very formal dialogue in which trust between communities with different degrees of ontological security founded on different cultural givens, could proceed to the stage where either side could contemplate taking risks. Overt use of power, either coercive or subversive, tends to reduce levels of trust, so I shall be arguing for an understanding which sees power mongering, and theorising based only on this aspect of behaviour, as unhelpful and in the case of the academics, as positively bolstering an unsatisfactory mode of social negotiation.

Change in the public realm may depend upon levels of public confidence or lack of it. So the sweeping urban redevelopments of the 1950s and '60s could be seen as a confident wave of modernism, but equally might be considered in a more negative light to reflect a disenchantment with the outcomes of pre-war politics, which, in conditions of post-war reconstruction, could be given major material expression. Yet, as we have noted above, major and sudden change brings in its wake a sense of ontological insecurity, bringing with it a 'sentimental' desire to retain the familiar and hence the ineluctable rise of conservation in the 1960s and '70s. This in turn can lead to notions of heritage conservation as being concerned only to 'pickle in aspic' and to retard economic progress, thus engendering a situation of inevitable conflict in which power games can provide the only answers.

If, however, we were to redefine conservation, and indeed, spatial planning in general, as the art of balancing the ontological securities of a familiar environment against the necessary ontological insecurities of risk-taking that are the central plank of the development of a confident and independent individual (and by extension, society), then it may be possible to reach some more nuanced solutions. In an environment dominated by fear of risk, conservation can easily slide into politically right-wing and exclusionist policies – but if larger communities could recognise and feel secure in their own broad self-identities, they might be better able to tolerate change and difference in the subaltern communities in their midst, thus avoiding a monocultural ‘Merrie Englande’, without lapsing into bitter asides about ‘political correctness’. As noted above, ability to accept change is an indicator of ontological security.

I am arguing that social institutions other than formal or informal power can help to combat these anxieties and if we understand that, it may be possible to find an alternative way of understanding the relationship of society to its built environment and its landscapes. Such an understanding would act not only to provide explanations for actions in the past, thus being applicable to my work in medieval archaeology, but also to aid decision-making in the present. Thus the same theoretical stance can be employed in both my fields to provide strong explanatory models. There is much work to be done on this approach and I have barely scratched the surface, but it is not my intention to do more than this here. Future publications will address the issue in detail.

My publications cover a wide field, which might, indeed, be considered to be two separate areas of intellectual endeavour. I hope that this final section has indicated ways in which the two are but alternative formulations of the same problem, namely that of the impact of the built environment on social behaviour in the past and the present, which forms the core of my intellectual project. To date, I have established myself as a clear voice in the field. Future work will, I hope, provide some crucial changes to the way in which the past is understood and the

way in which we engage in spatial planning: the heritage is not merely a visitor attraction to be exploited as a tourist asset, but is a central plank of a healthy society. Government, clearly, still requires persuading of that matter.



## Bibliography

- Barker P (1977) *Techniques of archaeological excavation*. London: Batsford.
- Carver M O H (1990) *Digging for data: principles and procedures for evaluation, excavation and post-excavation in towns*, reprinted in Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, *Theory and practice of archaeological research, Volume II: acquisition of field data at multi-strata sites*. Warsaw: Polish Academy of Sciences.
- Clark K 2001 *Informed conservation*. London: English Heritage.
- Cooper N (1991) 'Architectural records: recording evidence and recording facts', in Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), *Recording historic buildings: a symposium*. London: RCHME, 1-9.
- Faulkner P A (1958) 'Domestic planning from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries', *Archaeological Journal* 118: 188-98.
- Faulkner P A (1966) 'Medieval undercrofts and town houses', *Archaeological Journal* 123: 120-35.
- Fernie E C (1988) 'Contrasts in the methodology and interpretation of medieval ecclesiastical architecture', *Archaeological Journal* 145: 344-64.
- Ferris I M (1989) 'The archaeological investigation of standing buildings', *Vernacular Architecture*, 20:12-17.
- Giddens A (1984) *The constitution of society*. London: Polity Press.
- Giddens A (1990) *The consequences of modernity*. London: Polity Press.
- Giddens A (1991) *Modernity and self-identity*. London: Polity Press.
- Gilchrist R L (1994) *Gender and material culture: an archaeology of religious women*. London: Routledge.
- Goldberg P J P (ed)(1995) *Women in England c.1275-1525*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Hillier B and Hanson J (1984) *The social logic of space*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobsbawm E and Ranger T (eds) (1983) *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson M H (1993) *Housing culture: traditional architecture in an English landscape*. London: UCL Press.

- Kohl P L and Fawcett C (1995) *Nationalism, politics and the practice of archaeology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Laing R D (1960) *The divided self*. London : Tavistock Publications.
- Locock M (1994) *Meaningful architecture: social interpretations of buildings*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Lowenthal D (1985) *The past is a foreign country*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Mercer E (1975) *English Vernacular Houses*. London: HMSO.
- Ministry of Town and Country Planning 1946 *Instructions to Investigators for the Listing of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest under Section 42 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944*, unpublished typescript.
- Pantin W A (1947) 'The development of domestic architecture in Oxford', *Antiquaries Journal* 27: 120-50.
- Pantin W A (1962-3) 'Medieval English town-house plans', *Medieval Archaeology* 6-7:202-39.
- Rapoport A (1990) *The meaning of the built environment: a nonverbal communication approach*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) (1972), *The city of York: iii. South-west of the Ouse*. London:HMSO.
- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) (1975), *The city of York: iv. Outside the city walls, east of the Ouse*. London:HMSO.
- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) (1977), *The town of Stamford*. London:HMSO.
- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) (1980), *The city of Salisbury: i*. London:HMSO.
- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) (1981), *The city of York: v. The central area*. London:HMSO.
- Rickman, T (1817) *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of Architecture in England from the Conquest to the Reformation*. London: J.H.Parker.
- Rodwell W J (1989) *Church Archaeology*. London: English Heritage and Batsford
- Sackett J (1990) 'Style and ethnicity in archaeology: the case for isochresticism', in M Conkey and C Hastorf (eds) *The uses of style in archaeology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Saint A (1996) 'How listing happened', in M Hunter (ed) *Preserving the Past: the rise of heritage in modern Britain*. Stroud: Alan Sutton.
- Samson R (1990) *The social archaeology of houses*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Smith J T (1955) 'Medieval aisled halls and their derivatives', *Archaeological Journal* 112: 76-94.
- Smith J T (1958) 'Medieval roofs: a classification', *Archaeological Journal* 115:111-49.
- Smith J T (1965) 'Timber-framed building in England: its development and regional differences', *Archaeological Journal* 122:133-58.
- Smith J T (1970) 'The reliability of typological dating of medieval English roofs', in R Berger (ed) *Scientific methods in medieval archaeology*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 239-69.
- Smith L (2004) *Archaeological theory and politics of cultural heritage*. London: Routledge.
- Taylor H. M (1972) 'Structural criticism: a plea for more systematic study of Anglo-Saxon buildings' *Anglo-Saxon England*, 1: 259-72.
- Taylor H. M (1977) *Anglo-Saxon Architecture, Volume 3*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Willis R (1972) *Architectural History of Some English Cathedrals* (collective reprint). Newport Pagnell: Paul P.B. Minet.
- Wood M (1965) *The English Medieval House*. London: Dent.
- Wrathmell S (1990) 'Why the archaeologist cannot be a camera', *Scottish Archaeological Review* 7: 37-40.

## **Appendix 1**

Appendix 1 – Citations of Medieval Housing

Author	Date	Chapter/article title	Book/periodical title	Place of Publication	Publisher	Citation page
Alcock, Nat	2003	'The medieval peasant at home: England, 1250-1550'	<i>The Medieval Household in Christian Europe c850- c1550</i> , eds Cordelia Beattie, Anna Maslakovic, Sarah Rees Jones, 449-68	Turnhout	Brepols	455
Clark, Kate	2001		<i>Informed Conservation</i>	London	English Heritage	117
Dyer, Christopher	2002		<i>Making a living in the Middle Ages</i>	New Haven and London	Yale University Press	377, 386
Dyer, Christopher	2003	'The archaeology of small medieval towns'	<i>Med Arch</i> 47, 85-114			99
Gardiner, Mark	2000	'Vernacular buildings and the development of the later medieval domestic plan in England'	<i>Med Arch</i> 44; 159-80			164
Gerrard, Christopher	2003		<i>Medieval archaeology: understanding traditions and contemporary approaches</i>	London	Routledge	201-2, 225
Giles, Katherine	2000		<i>An archaeology of social identity: guildhalls in York, c 1350-1630</i>	Oxford	British Archaeological Reports 315	1
Impey, Edward	1999	'The seigneurial residence in Normandy, 1125-1225: an Anglo-Norman tradition?'	<i>Med Arch</i> 43; 45-73			46
James, Tom Beaumont and Roberts, Edward	2000	'Winchester and late medieval urban development: from palace to pentice'	<i>Med Arch</i> 44; 181-200			190 + acknowledgements
Johnson, Matthew	2002		<i>Behind the castle gate</i>	London	Routledge	114
King, Christopher	2003	'The organisation of social space in late medieval manor houses: an East Anglian study'	<i>Archaeological Journal</i> , 160, 104-124.			<i>passim</i>

Leech, Roger	2000	'The symbolic hall: historical context and merchant culture in the early modern city'	<i>Vernacular Architecture</i> 31, 1-10				1
Lilley, Keith	2002		<i>Urban life in the Middle Ages 1000-1450</i>	Basingstoke	Palgrave		193, 209, 229
Martin, David	2003	'The configuration of inner rooms and chambers in the transitional houses of Eastern Sussex'	<i>Vernacular Architecture</i> 34, 37-51				37-8 + acknowledgements
Meeson, Bob	2001	'Archaeological evidence and analysis: a case study from Staffordshire'	<i>Vernacular Architecture</i> 32, 1-15				1
Palliser, David (ed)	2000		<i>The Cambridge Urban History of Britain. Volume 1: 600-1540</i>	Cambridge	Cambridge University Press		In select bibliography
Pearson, Sarah	2003	'Houses, shops and storage: building evidence from two Kentish Ports'	<i>The Medieval Household in Christian Europe c850- c1550</i> , eds Cordelia Beattie, Anna Maslakovic, Sarah Rees Jones, 409-31	Turnhout	Brepols		425
Richardson, Amanda	2003	'Gender and space in English Royal Palaces c1160-c1547: a study in access analysis and imagery'	<i>Med Arch</i> 47, 131-65				131, 164
Salter, Elisabeth	2003	'Some differences in the cultural production of household consumption in three North Kent communities, c.1450-1550'	<i>The Medieval Household in Christian Europe c850- c1550</i> , eds Cordelia Beattie, Anna Maslakovic, Sarah Rees Jones, 391-407	Turnhout	Brepols		393
Walker, John	1999	'Late-twelfth and early-thirteenth-century aisled buildings: a comparison'	<i>Vernacular Architecture</i> 30, 21-53				27

## **Appendix 2**

JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION VOL 151 1998

*Medieval Housing*. By JANE GRENVILLE. London, Leicester University Press, 1997. 230 pp., numerous illus. ISBN 0 7185 1478 5. £59.95.

*Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales 1300-1500. Vol. 1 Northern England*. By ANTHONY EMERY. Cambridge University Press, 1996. 435 pp., 104 figs, 210 pls. ISBN 0 521 49723 x. £80.00.

*Medieval Housing* is an excellent survey, fair but undogmatic, regularly addressing theory and with constant references to current literature; like others in the 'Archaeology of Medieval Britain' series it provides a clear summary of an expanding area, with stimulating thoughts on where to

go next. It makes a good case for the archaeological study of buildings, and its only fault is to place too little emphasis on the historical sources that are still poorly understood by some practitioners. For example, the currently fashionable interest in the use of space can be considered from room plans and access diagrams, but can also be illuminated by records of coroner's inquests, surveyors of nuisances, domestic inventories and legal disputes. The numerous if stylised medieval paintings of interiors, and even more the post-medieval genre paintings of domestic scenes are worth investigating to appreciate the sparsity of domestic furnishing. But Grenville does not get carried away by theory, and rightly reminds us that 'we should never dismiss the work of earlier writers as atheoretical simply because they did not use the same vocabulary as later scholars' (p. 17).

The background chapter on the 'practicalities of medieval building' is a good introduction, mostly to timber framing (which rightly emphasises the importance of London developments seen in excavated remains); in dealing with stonework reference is rightly made to the continuing value of Margaret Wood's study, but it might be worth a backward glance at the huge Victorian literature on the subject, of which so few people seem now to be aware. Two chapters on post-Conquest and later medieval halls serve as an outline narrative of domestic planning through the whole period, include much new work and literature as well as old favourites; the summation of the 'first-floor hall' debate is neatly used to discuss the use or misuse of historical and archaeological material by each discipline.

It is of course the chapter on 'peasant housing' that can most effectively bring together current fieldwork above and below ground with the current historical debates, and here Grenville gives an informative and stimulating guide to the developing literature; her example shows a methodology for deconstructing archaeological reports, and promotes an awareness of interpretive mood-swings dependent on current fashion. By contrast, 'urban housing' has missed out on the marxist tidal wave that engulfed peasant studies (its study originated in Oxford rather than Birmingham), and is perhaps left rather less sparkling now the tide has gone out. However, as Grenville rightly remarks, the subject holds 'an enduring fascination', and interesting discoveries continue to be made. but here one might add, if nowhere else, there has to be more work on documentary sources, for aspects such as the 12th-century stone house, and the origins of the inn can only be understood by study of contemporary sources, and there may be a danger in relying too much on the splendid visual evidence from post-medieval London sources. On the other hand, as is recognised here, urban housing continues to be threatened by partial and wholesale destruction, and controlled rescue recording is still a significant contributor to knowledge, as it has been since Pantin started work in the 1930s. Two trivial points: the inhabitants of Farnham in Surrey will be distressed to learn that Westminster Hall was made at the seaside in Hampshire, and some text is missing on p. 60.

*Greater Medieval Houses* is the first of three volumes offering a modern version of Turner & Parker, this one for Northern England. The project must be welcomed for the elegant and judicious summary of the history of almost 200 dwellings, ranging from pele towers to large castles, and rectories to country houses. The scope is a gentle reminder that a generation of study at the vernacular level has not altogether replaced the significance of larger houses (and that urban and peasant housing are large and separate fields of study).

Each property has been visited within the last decade, and the text takes the form of a gazetteer with an 'individual appraisal' of each house, that is an illustrated summary description, with bibliography. The aim is to produce 'a source book on the greater houses of late-medieval England and Wales' with a view to stimulating further study. In this it succeeds, and there is much concentrated wisdom in the text, and unsuspecting wit lurking in footnotes. There are also discursive county bibliographies, lists of licences to crenellate, and county commentaries which



# THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

VOL 156 1999

MEDIEVAL HOUSING. By JANE GRENVILLE. Pp. x and 230, Illus. 87. Leicester University Press, 1997. Price: £65.00. ISBN 0 7185 1478 5.

Jane Grenville's book aims to give a general survey of the current state of medieval building archaeology in England. She sets herself the task of examining the range of approaches taken to standing and excavated buildings by medieval archaeologists, and of producing a balanced, reasonably detailed survey of our current state of knowledge. *Medieval Housing* largely succeeds in these aims. As such, the text stands as a fairly accurate reflection of medieval buildings archaeology in this country.

*Medieval Housing* is arranged in a straightforward manner. Grenville starts by discussing the range of current approaches to buildings archaeology. Different techniques such as photogrammetry and rectified photography are reviewed before Grenville moves on to consider different theoretical approaches to the study of buildings. She steers a finely judged course through recent controversies over 'stratigraphic' approaches, and the coverage of traditional versus 'social' interpretation is well balanced.

A chapter on 'Materials and Competence' reviews timber-framing techniques clearly: Grenville goes on to consider post-Conquest and late medieval halls before chapters on peasant and urban housing. The style of all these substantive chapters is one of tight synthesis; existing interpretations are reviewed and occasionally some startlingly original points made. For example, Grenville demonstrates that on present evidence halls did *not* decline in size towards the end of the Middle Ages, and dares to say interesting things about carpentry techniques.

One senses a tension in Grenville's text: is the intention simply to summarize existing work, or to put forward new insights? This tension is my sole source of dissatisfaction with the book. There is, for example, no discussion of brick and stone to go alongside that of timber framing, on the grounds that such material has been covered by other authors; but Grenville's careful discussion of timber framing suggests she would have useful things to say on these other subjects also, and I would prefer in any case to hear her thoughts over the authors she defers to as authorities. Again, careful reviews of the evidence on the origins of the hall are precisely that; they cover existing ground well, but have few new suggestions to make.

This timidity is surprising given that elsewhere in the text Grenville endorses new 'social' approaches emphatically. But the implications of these new approaches are often not followed through. Some recently published but more conservative books on medieval housing that richly deserve critique are treated with kid gloves, and as a result the novel and innovative aspects of Grenville's work are understated.

These are minor quibbles, and in any case are criticisms that are not central to the author's brief. As a standard text on medieval housing, Grenville's book is second to none. It is the book I would give to my students first, and one I am already using as a standard work of reference. It will become a standard text on its subject, and remain so for many years to come.

MATTHEW JOHNSON

# MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY

VOL 42 1998

*Medieval Housing* (The Archaeology of Medieval Britain). By Jane Grenville. 17 x 24 cm. ix + 230 pp., 84 figs. London: Leicester University Press, 1997. ISBN 0-7185-1478-5. Price: £59.95 hb.

Although this book touches on the Anglo-Saxon period and has much to say on some aspects of aristocratic housing, its main focus is vernacular houses from c. 1100 to c. 1600. It is a field of study in which major works of synthesis were written several decades ago, since when, an outpouring of articles in national and local journals has brought forward fresh evidence and raised new questions for debate. Jane Grenville has undertaken the daunting task of digesting these multifarious publications and has produced an invaluable, up-to-date survey which points the way for future research.

Grenville outlines the way in which academic disciplines tend to develop from data collection and classification towards the emergence of different, and sometimes conflicting, theoretical propositions from which new research takes its direction. Her book is ample testimony to the fact that her field of study is now reaching this mature stage. While acknowledging the pioneering work that has already been done in the classification of building materials, roof-types and carpentry techniques, she does not seek to give an exhaustive account of these topics. Instead, she constantly selects appropriate material to give a clear and balanced view of rival positions, drawing on wide-ranging evidence from excavation, standing buildings and documentary sources. Should we explain changes in house plans largely in terms of technical improvements or of social/symbolic trends? Are the earliest surviving peasant buildings evidence for the date of the first durable structures or of the first houses adaptable to subsequent needs? Is the widely accepted view that the hall diminished in importance in the late middle ages really sustainable? Are medieval town houses simply an adaptation of rural forms to a restricted street frontage, or do they also reflect the diversity of urban trades? These, and many more questions, are discussed in a lively and stimulating way. All in all, it is a book bursting with ideas that should be quoted, discussed and challenged for years to come.

A disappointment, however, is the high price for a fairly slim volume and the quality of the printing of the photographs which varies from adequate to frankly poor. The publishers should at least be persuaded to bring out a much less expensive paperback edition so that this book gets the wide readership it deserves.

EDWARD ROBERTS

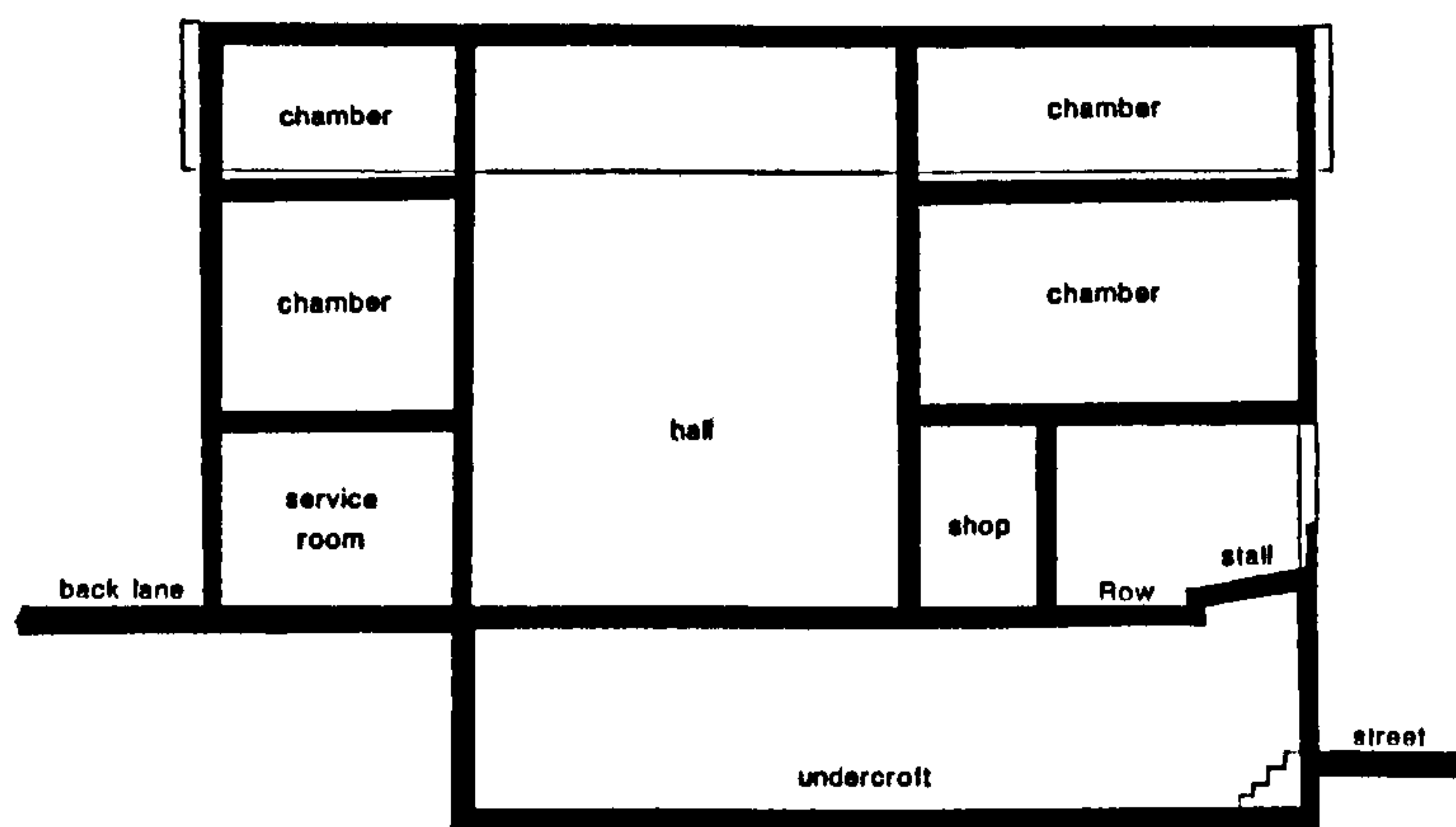
1990 'The Rows of Chester: some thoughts on the results of recent research' *World Archaeology*, 21(3): 446-60.

# The Rows of Chester: some thoughts on the results of recent research

Jane Grenville

This paper seeks to describe a group of buildings which is certainly unique in Britain, to discuss the results of recent research and to offer some thoughts on the origin of the building type. The Rows extend along the four main streets of the city of Chester which lies on the River Dee, approximately eight miles short of the northernmost point of the English-Welsh border and so close to that border that its modern western suburbs lie within Wales. The nucleus of the town stands on a low ridge, skirted to the south and west by the river, at the northern end of the rich agricultural land of the Cheshire Plain. The strategic importance of the site was recognized by the Romans during their campaign against the Ordovices of north Wales; a fort was established in the 50s AD and a permanent legionary fortress was begun in the 70s AD. Named 'Deva' after the river on whose banks it was situated, a civilian settlement flourished around the legionary fortress (Petch 1987). The post-Roman history of the site is obscure, but an entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 893 suggests that the city was occupied by a Danish army, while Aethelflaed, daughter of King Alfred the Great, is credited with the restoration of Chester's defences in 907 (Thacker 1987). Domesday Book records a flourishing late Saxon town in 1066, with 500 houses, 7 moneyers and a court known as the Hundred. After the Conquest, Chester grew in importance and became the centre of a quasi-independent earldom forming a buffer zone between England and an often hostile Wales: 'In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there certainly seems to have been a distinction in contemporaries' minds between Cheshire, England and Wales' (Harris 1979). As well as an important strategic and administrative centre, the city also developed as a port, with foreign connections with Ireland, Gascony, Italy and Spain (Hewitt 1967) and a more local market serving a very wide hinterland.

Medieval Chester, though still small in size, was a city of considerable strategic and economic importance. Its significance in terms of architectural innovation lies in the survival of a form of building known as 'The Rows'. The Rows consist of a series of buildings on the frontages of the city's four main streets with covered galleries at first-floor level. These galleries run continuously, parallel to the street, through properties of various dates and architectural styles. Figure 1 shows a section through a typical Rows building. It is important to note a peculiarity of the topography of Chester, that levels rise between main streets and back lanes so that while the Row storey is at first-floor level at the front of the building, it is at ground-floor level to the rear. To avoid confusion, this has led to the



*Figure 1* Chester: section through a typical Rows building.

abandonment of the terms 'ground, first and second floor' in favour of 'street level, Row level and Row + 1 level'. Street-level units are often reached down a short flight of steps. They are not undercrofts in the strictest sense of the term since they are semi-subterranean and are vaulted only in a minority of cases, but the nomenclature readily distinguishes them from the Row-level elements above, which correspond in form to street-level elements in the more typical medieval townhouses. Above, the Row walkway is normally set back from the street frontage behind the Row stall, a raised sloping board providing the headroom needed for the steps down to the undercroft beneath. Opening off the Row are further units, typically a shop and further accommodation to the rear. In some cases an open hall survives to the rear at Row level. More often it has been ceiled or rebuilt to provide additional accommodation at Row + 1 and Row + 2 levels.

As early as the late sixteenth century, the existence of the Rows was perceived as a peculiarity. William Smith, writing in 1584, was at pains to emphasize their uniqueness:

The Buildings of the City are very ancient; and the Houses builded in such sort, that a man may go dry, from one place of the City to another, and never come in the street; but go as it were in Galleries which they call the Roes, which have shops on both sides, and underneath, with divers fair staires to go up or down into the street. Which manner of building I have not heard of in any place of Christendome. Some will say that the like is at Padua in Italy but that is not so. For the houses at Padua are builded as the Suburbs of this city be, that is, on the ground upon Posts, that a man may go dry underneath them; like as they are at Billingsgate in London, but nothing like to the Roes. (King 1656: Part I, 40).

Smith's description notes that the Rows had shops on both sides, an arrangement which is well documented, but now only exists for two short sections.

Speculation and debate about the origins of the Rows has continued, albeit with some hiatuses, to the present day. A popular early explanation for this particular form of building was defence; William Webb, writing in the 1620s, remarked that 'because their conflicts with Enemies continued long time, it was needful for them to leave a space before the doors of those their upper buildings, upon which they might stand in safety from the violence of their Enemies horses, and withal defend their houses from spoyl' (King 1656: Part II, 19–20). In the eighteenth century Stukeley and Pennant argued for the direct

imitation of Roman colonnaded streets and several descriptions compare the Rows with Italian piazzas (Palliser 1980). The debate gained momentum in the late nineteenth century when a number of papers appeared in the *Journal of Chester Archaeological Society*, and Canon R. H. Morris published *Chester in the Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns* (1894). Arguments included the deliberate opening up of the Rows through private property; the lowering of the street level, either deliberately through excavation of the main thoroughfares by Roman legionnaires, or gradually through erosion of the soft underlying sandstone by traffic; and the building of houses on Roman debris on either side of the streets and the subsequent excavation of the undercrofts. Morris, who was able to identify from his researches in the city records that the earliest documentary reference to a Row dates to 1331, largely followed this last theory which places strong emphasis on the survival of Roman debris. In 1958 P. H. Lawson and J. T. Smith produced a seminal article on the Rows. After discussing the evidence provided by the surviving stone undercrofts, they offered different theories of origin. Following Morris, Lawson argued for gradual, piecemeal development dictated by the pre-existing topography. Smith, by contrast, postulated a deliberate act of town planning after a major fire in 1278: 'the Rows were devised immediately after 1278 as part of a plan for a fireproof town to terminate the succession of disasters which had several times ravaged the city since the Conquest'. In conclusion, both authors urged a systematic survey of the surviving buildings before they were further damaged in rebuilding and repairs.

By 1984 when the Chester Archaeological Society held a one-day conference on the subject (Harris 1984), no further work had taken place specifically on the Rows, although Faulkner (1966) had touched tangentially on the problem (see below) and Dodgson (1968) had offered a new theory based on place-name evidence. At the conference, Strickland was able to demonstrate the considerable influence of the topography of the Roman town upon its medieval successor, implying a high degree of survival of Roman remains (1984). Ward offered a post-Conquest date, perhaps in the twelfth century, for the redivision of land in the city centre into long narrow plots and pointed out that when the Rows appear for the first time in the records it is as public thoroughfares (1984).

Systematic archaeological investigation of all the buildings within the Rows has been undertaken by the personnel of the Rows Research Project since 1985 and is continuing. An interim report has been published elsewhere (Brown, Grenville and Turner 1986), but a summary of the major findings will be useful here. Although much of the fabric surviving today is of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century origin, the degree to which medieval fabric survives within later buildings is surprising. In Watergate Street nearly every undercroft contains either fragments or substantial remains of early masonry and the uniformity of layout has led us to suggest the possibility of deliberate planning, or at least some control by bye-laws. At Row level, W. E. Pantin had identified examples of open halls both at right angles and parallel to the street (1963). These have now been studied in detail, reconstructions postulated and further examples discovered. In each case, the Row element appears to be integral to the early fabric. Early techniques of building with timber have been identified (Turner 1988). Perhaps the most exciting data have been provided by dendrochronology, which give a cluster of dates for early structures in Watergate Street of AD 1280–1325. Not all the tree-ring results have been conclusive: a number of buildings have produced no firm dates since there was no correspondence between samples from the

same building or any significant matching with other chronologies. The implication is that the timber was drawn from quickly grown and different stands of trees. A reliable earlier set of dates, 1160–1180, has been established at 6 Lower Bridge Street, the Falcon Inn, but it should be noted that these were derived from timbers in the undercroft which were clearly re-used. A reconstruction has suggested, most convincingly, that they were originally elements of a crown post roof, but their original location cannot be established beyond doubt.

Recent research, then, combined with the work of earlier investigators, suggests a set of buildings incorporating an integral continuous gallery. Stylistic analysis by Margaret Wood (1965) suggested a mean date of c. 1280 for those undercrofts with dateable features, though such arguments can often be circular. A review of this work is currently underway as part of the Rows Research Project programme. Dendrochronological results from reliable contexts extend into the early fourteenth century. An explanation must be sought for a phenomenon which apparently has a dateable point of origin, and it is best to begin, therefore, by examining the historical context.

For a time at the end of the thirteenth century Chester held a position of national strategic importance. Edward I mounted two massive campaigns to subdue the Welsh, the first in 1277 and the second in 1282–3 with Chester as the main military mustering point on both occasions. Michael Prestwich in his biography of Edward (1988) describes the massive build-up of men and equipment: the Earl of Warwick's force was billeted at Chester from January to July 1277 at a huge cost of £1,094 in wages, implying a sizeable troop. They were joined in July by the main muster from Worcester. In February an order was sent to Ireland for 600 quarters of wheat and 1,000 quarters of oats to be shipped to Chester. The 26 ships of the fleet of the Cinque Ports arrived in July. Strong forward bases were established at Flint and Rhuddlan, and for the purposes of castle-building, quantities of timber were brought from the Wirral via Chester and picks, axes and other equipment were purchased in the city. The second campaign was sparked by a Welsh rebellion in March 1282. It was a far greater undertaking, aimed at achieving the total submission of the Welsh. Again, Chester served as a mustering point, and again as a major market for the needs of war: in August the building of a pontoon bridge to facilitate the invasion of the island of Anglesey demanded the purchase of ships from the port. The organisation of supplies to the immense army (up to 8,000 foot at any one time and 276 heavy cavalry appearing on the main pay roll alone) for over a year was effected from 'a great central victualling depot at Chester under William de Perton' (Prestwich 1988: 199). By the summer of 1283 the power of the Princes of Gwynedd had been destroyed, but Edward was determined to maintain his advantage. A massive programme of castle building was initiated.

The ring of English castles which surrounds Snowdonia today is a monument to Edward I and to his military architects, James of St George and Richard the Engineer being the chief among them. Their construction is potentially of significance to the development of Chester. After its years as a military base the city found itself playing host to an equally impressive army of skilled workmen and labourers from across the country. The details of the composition of this workforce have been compiled and published in the *History of the King's Works* (Colvin 1963) and a map, reproduced here (Fig. 2), offers a graphic illustration of the scale of the impressment, which involved 6,530 woodcutters, 1,100

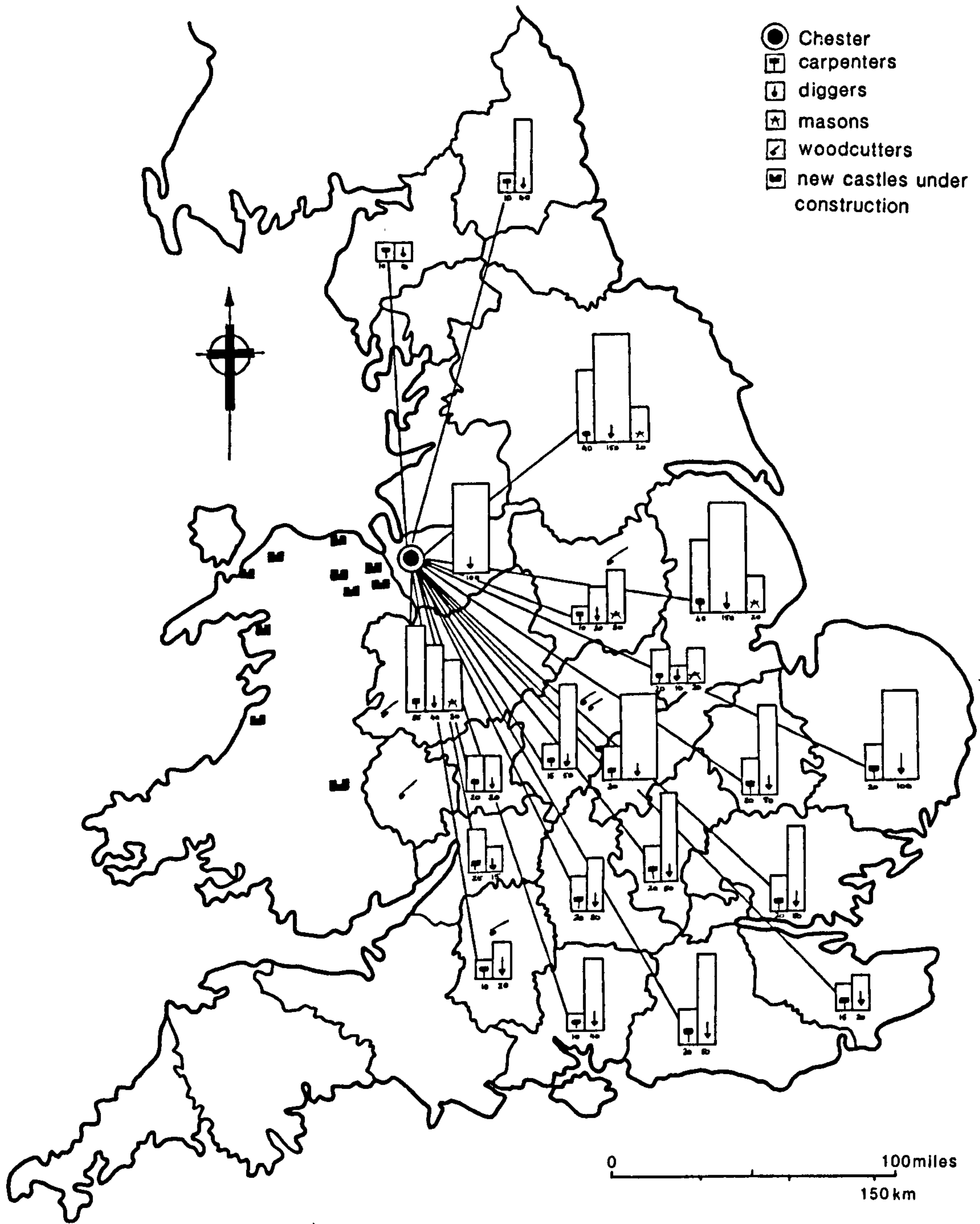


Figure 2 Movement of labour 1282-3.

diggers, 410 carpenters and 115 masons. Building campaigns were vigorous throughout the 1280s and further work took place after an unsuccessful rebellion in 1294 to complete Caernarvon, Conwy and Harlech Castles, with Beaumaris started in 1295. With the building season by and large restricted to the summer, many of the craftsmen for whom the journey home was impractical would spend the winter months in Chester.



Chester in the 1280s and 1290s and to a certain extent in the early years of the fourteenth century must have experienced a considerable economic boom. Soldiers, craftsmen and labourers, paid in cash for their services, flooded into the town, doubtless boosting trade. Major supplies ordered by the King and his authorities were purchased from Chester merchants such as William of Doncaster, who developed interests nationwide (Hewitt 1967). Whether or not archaeological evidence for a fire in 1278 is forthcoming, other factors provided an ideal context for major rebuilding; the money was available, and so was skilled labour. Richard the Engineer had a fifty year association with the city and owned a house in Lower Bridge Street (Harvey 1987). James of St George and others must have regularly passed through. Archaeologically, a major phase of new building, incorporating Rows, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries together with the historical context support the thesis that this is the period of the creation of the Rows system.

The search for comparative material for the distinctive morphological form of the Rows has thrown up a number of interesting ideas about potential sources for the type. One possibility is that the form was once a common one, of which the Rows are the only examples remaining. This has been argued by Faulkner, who touches tangentially on the problem of the Rows when he asks 'are the Rows only exceptional in their survival?' (1966: 130). Alternatively, it might be that the form is a peculiarity within the general run of medieval townhouse types, but a peculiarity whose evolution may nevertheless be logically traced. These propositions must be examined within the context of medieval English townhouse studies to show how the Chester buildings conform to or differ from the general pattern of merchant house plan types. This class of medieval townhouse plan represents the adaptation of the almost universal rural tripartite types of open hall and service wing (separated by a screens passage) and solar, or private quarters. In the adaptation of the rural plan to the urban situation, the chief constraint derived from the principal function of the town as a market. Hardly surprisingly, a universal aim was to gain a foothold on the commercial thoroughfare. Originally wide plot divisions were divided and subdivided in town after town to maximise the number of tenements with direct access to the trading frontage. The resulting pattern was one of narrow, but deep plots, often with a depth/width ratio of 6:1 or greater. In some towns (Ludlow, Colchester) it has been possible to establish original standard plot widths and show the processes by which they have been subdivided (Platt 1976). No standard plot widths have been identified in Chester, but none the less the general principle holds and long narrow plots line the narrow streets. The tripartite plan was adapted to fit this situation in two ways, identified and illustrated in an article by Pantin, which has yet to be superseded as the basis for classification of townhouse plans (1963). Houses were built either at right angles with the solar above the shop or parallel to the street, often in a compact form with the solar above the service rooms. Such a categorisation clearly must reflect material wealth; a building at right angles occupies one plot only, while a parallel hall must either spread across a number of plots or occupy a single wide property. The street frontage was characteristically occupied by a fourth element, the shop or workshop. To this general pattern may be added a less universal fifth element, the undercroft. Absent in some medieval towns, (e.g. York, King's Lynn, Hull, Salisbury) they were numerous in others (e.g. Colchester, Gloucester, Norwich, Coventry, and Chester).

Halls at right angles to the street survive to a greater or lesser degree at several locations in Chester, including No. 11 Bridge Street Row, No. 49 Bridge Street and Nos 28–34 Watergate Street, but perhaps the best preserved example is the Leche House at 17 Watergate Street, dated stylistically to the fifteenth century (Fig. 3). Here the open hall survives behind a single-storey shop unit with solar above. The position of the screens passage can be reconstructed and beyond is a parlour with chambers above. A side passage introduced in the seventeenth century offered independent access, now blocked, to the hall, and a gallery running above it provides communication between the front and rear rooms at first-floor level. Documentary sources record a kitchen, free-standing to

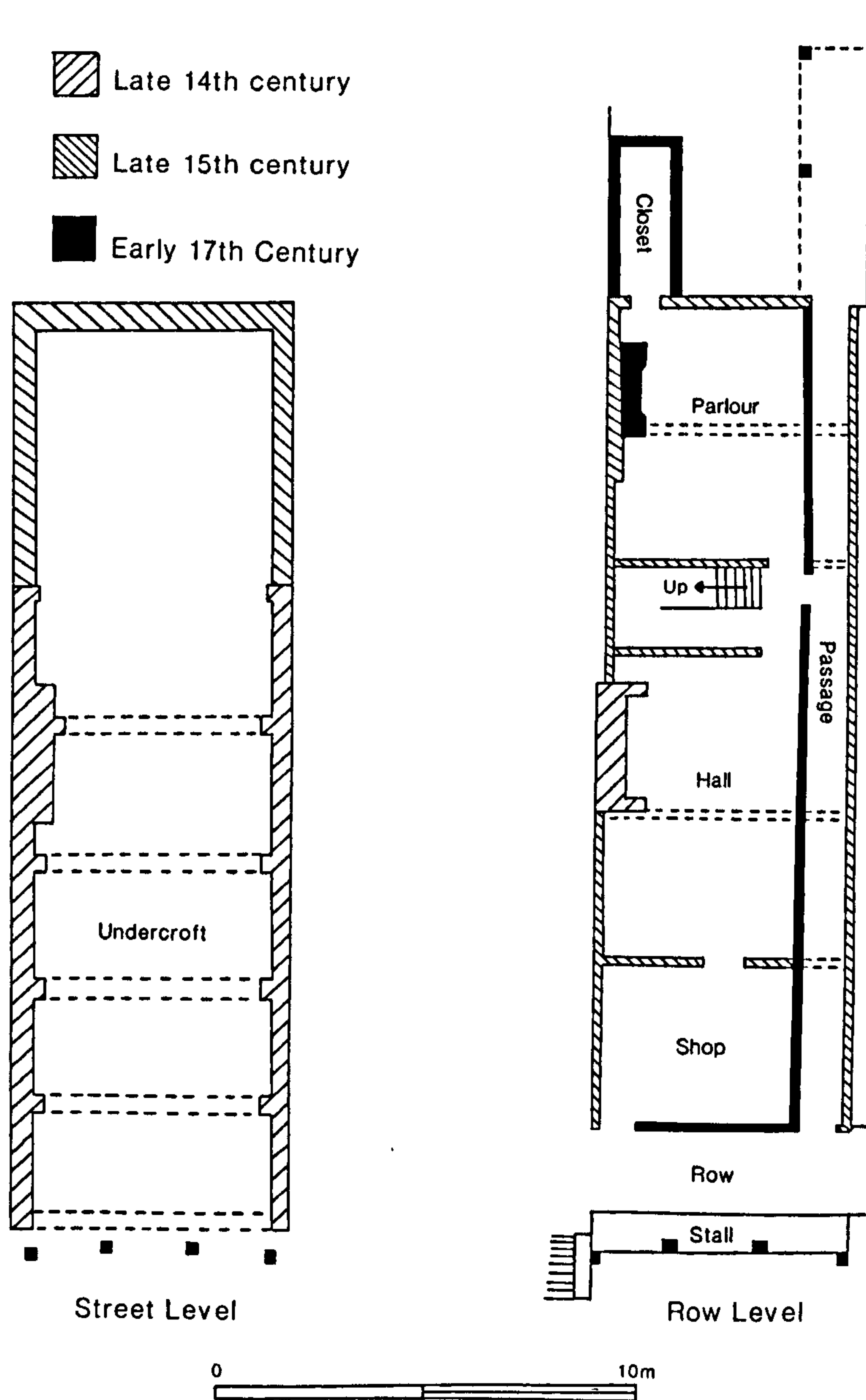


Figure 3 Chester: the Leche House (reconstructed plan).

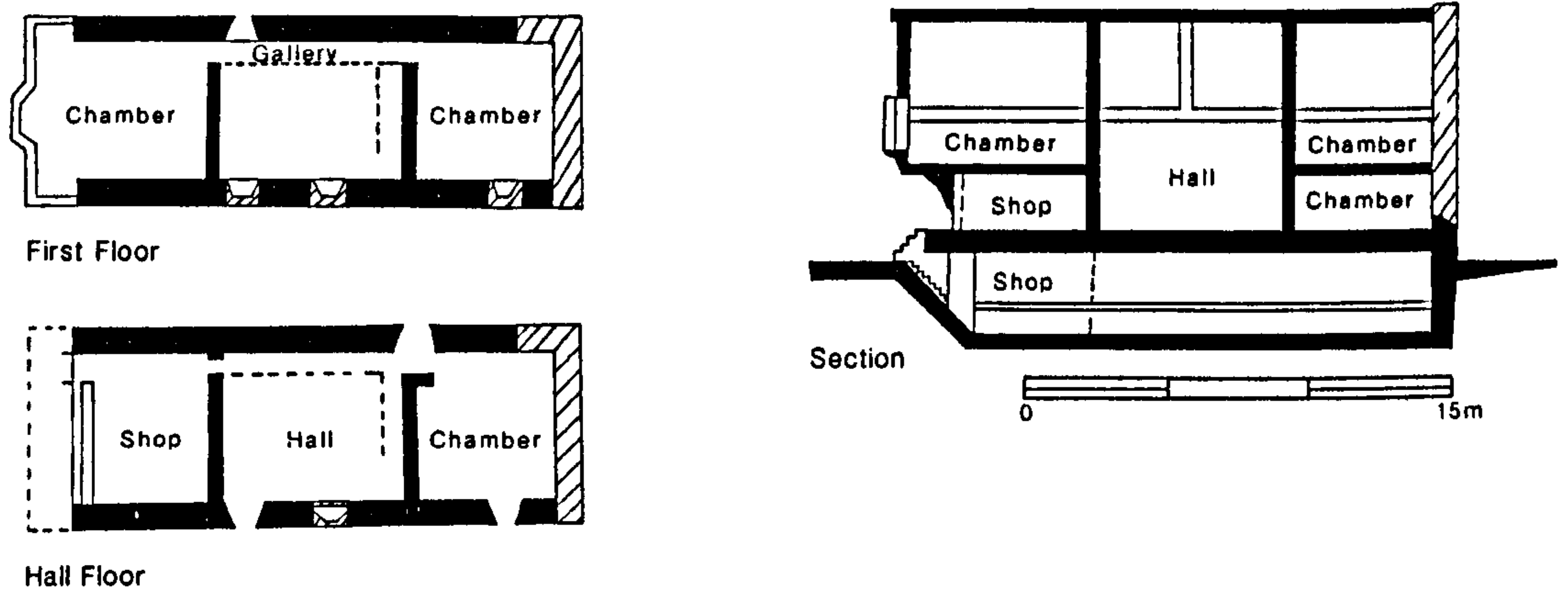
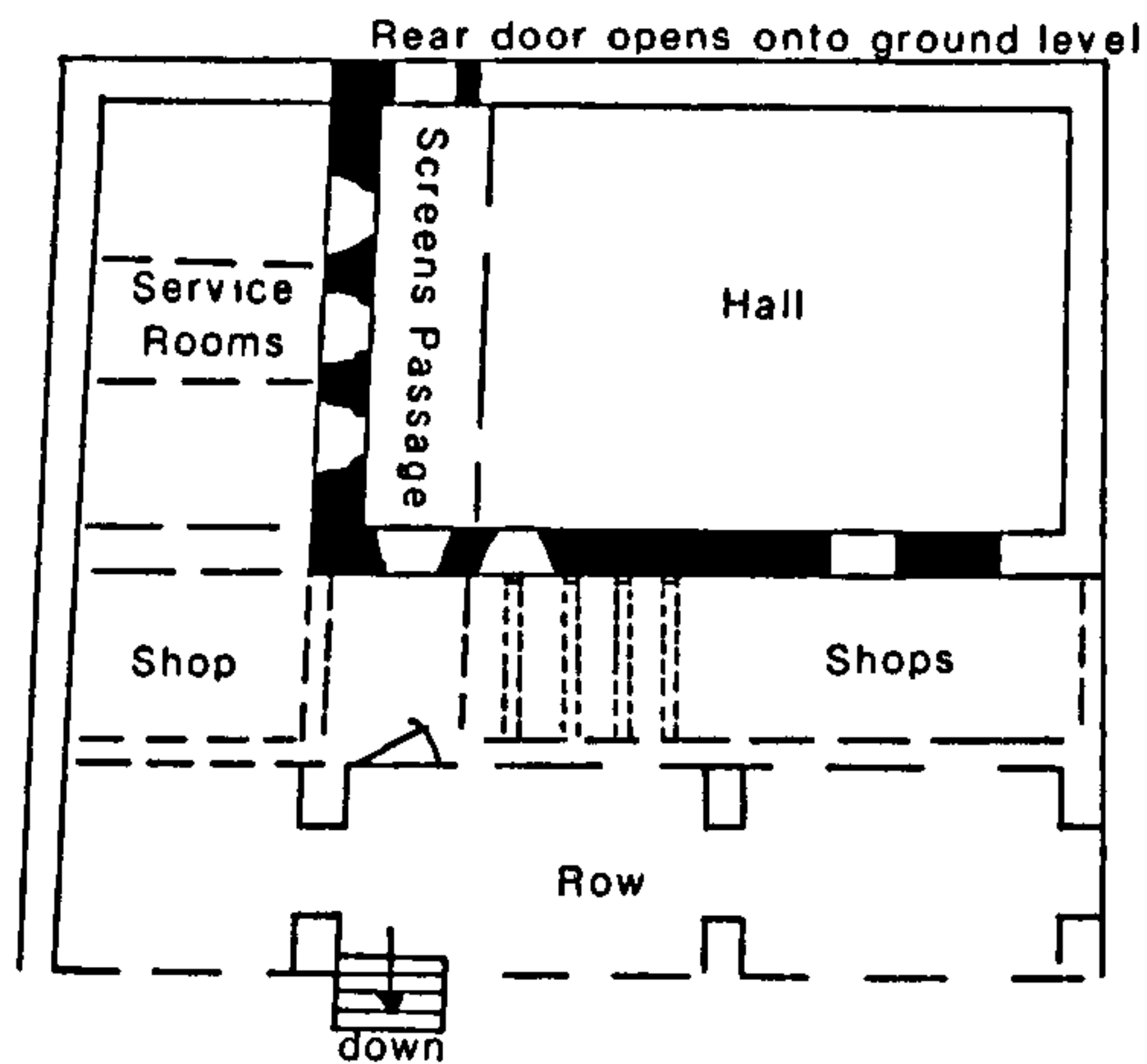


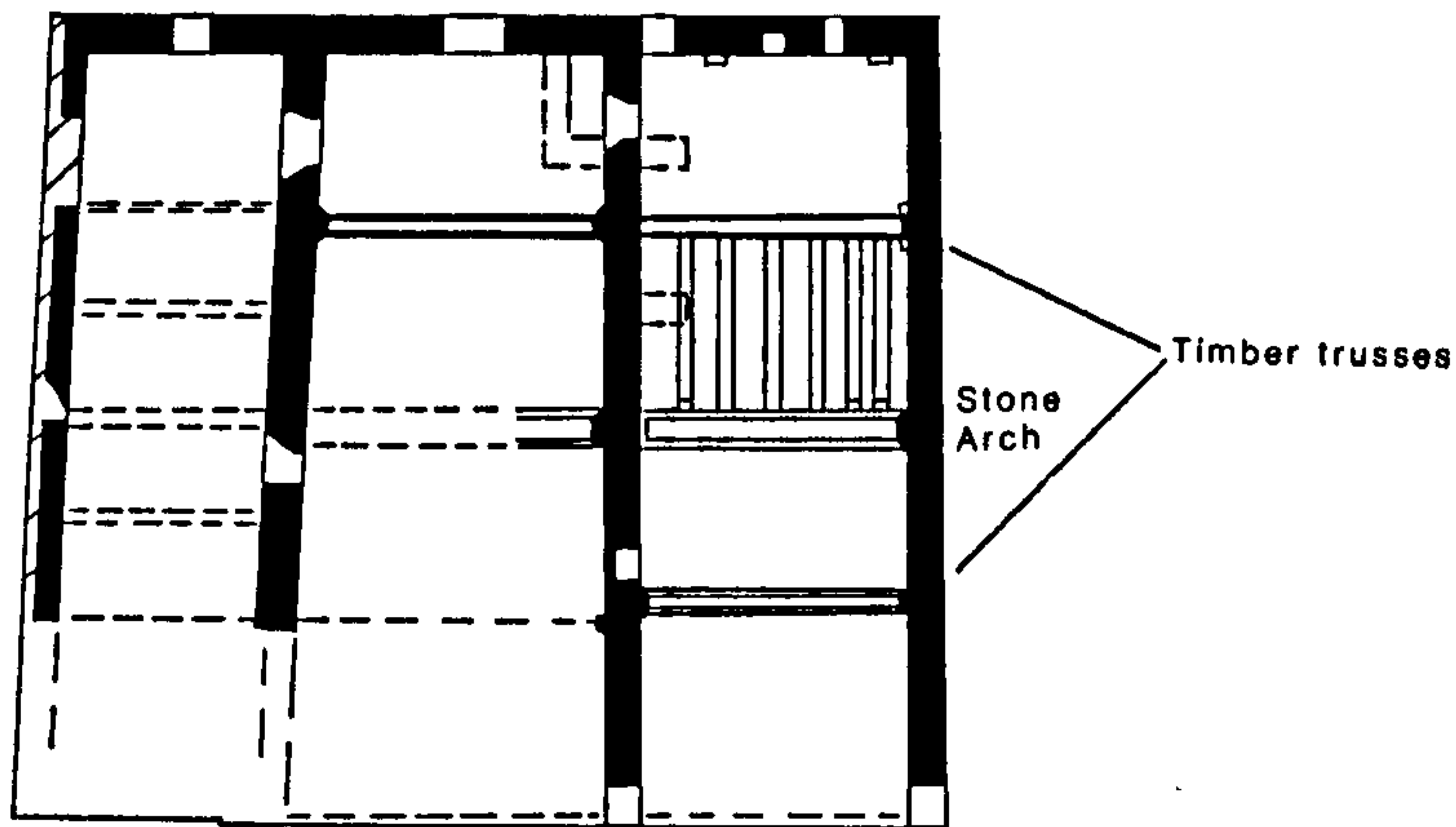
Figure 4 Southampton: 58 French Street.

minimise the fire risk, at the rear of the plot. Parallels for this type may be drawn from several locations; particularly interesting are those with undercrofts. The Red Lion in the High Street at Southampton has a shop with chamber above fronting an open hall with chambers beyond. Access to the undercroft is gained from the hall, implying a storage use only (Platt 1976: 61). A more telling comparison may be made with 58 French Street, Southampton (Fig. 4). Here the same arrangement of shop, hall and chambers obtained, but the undercroft was also used as a shop and could therefore be entered directly from the street. It was not entirely subterranean, and to allow adequate headroom the floor level of the hall was raised above ground level and the upper shop was reached via a flight of steps. Recent archaeological evidence has revealed the former existence of a gallery in front of the shop (Coppack, pers. comm.). Another instance where a side passage offers access to the hall totally independently from the shop, occurs at 36 North Street, Exeter, which also has a separate kitchen (Faulkner 1966: 125).

Three examples of houses with parallel halls are 38–42 Watergate Street, 48–50 Bridge Street and 52–56 Lower Bridge Street (Gamul House). Of these, Gamul House was a purely domestic complex at Row level. The hall opens directly on to a raised walkway (not a true Row as it is not covered). The open hall and service wing survive, and the positions of the screens passage and solar can be reconstructed. At street level below, three undercrofts run at right angles to the road, but no original fabric is visible. At 38–42 Watergate Street (Fig. 5) three undercrofts run back at right angles to the street following the line of the narrow tenement plots. These may have functioned entirely independently from the building above as no evidence for rear access has been found. Above these undercrofts a range of three or four small shops opened off the Row, with accommodation above. The hall and service rooms lay behind the shops with access from the Row along a short passage between the shops (Brown, Howes and Turner 1985). A parallel without an undercroft occurs at 28–32 Coppergate, York (RCHME 1981). Although this building has lost two bays to the north, analysis has shown conclusively that the same general layout existed, albeit with the hall/shops complex situated at street level. An example with an undercroft at Tackley's Inn, Oxford (Fig. 6), has been discussed by both Pantin and Faulkner. Five shops above an undercroft parallel to the street fronted a hall with a screens passage with a chamber to one end. The position of the service rooms is not clear. Pantin's



Row Level Plan



Street Level Plan

Figure 5 Chester: 38-42  
Watergate Street.

initial interpretation shows all these elements, but his reconstruction of the frontage offers no means of access to the three central shops. Faulkner's revision repeats Pantin's arrangement of stairs at either end, but he shows a gallery before the shops, roofed by the jetty of the chambers above and clearly identical in form to a Chester Row.

Faulkner concludes that 'the evidence given above suggests that, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries high density town areas may have had two-level shopping with shallow shops above and "great shops" below' and goes on to raise the possibility that Chester's Rows may represent the result of differential survival. Although known parallels certainly conform to type it may be that they are too few, too widespread and too isolated within their individual contexts to argue convincingly for the existence of Rows more generally in England during the period. If systems like the Rows were common, it seems surprising that of many examples only Chester survives, when the advantages of the system are self-evident in doubling the commercial return of a single tenement plot. Certainly their commercial success in the mercantile town centre must have contributed to their survival to the present day. Indeed in the later years of the twentieth century, the type has

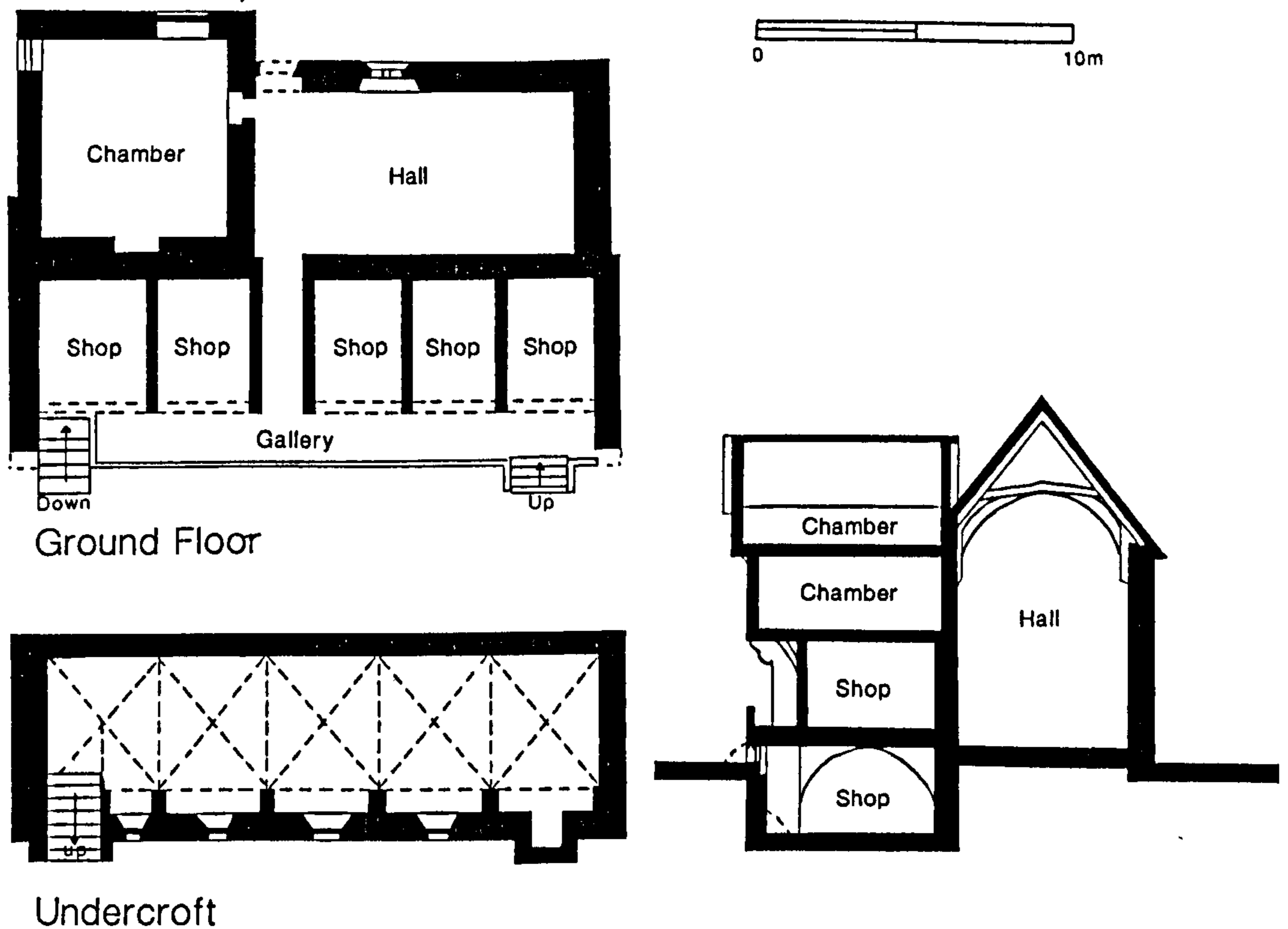


Figure 6 Oxford: Tackley's Inn.

been reinvented and two-storey shopping malls, connected by escalators which medieval Cestrians would doubtless envy, are becoming commonplace. It seems unlikely that other cities, having once had Rows, should destroy them.

If Faulkner's argument seems weak in terms of comparative material, we might perhaps modify it. If we accept that two-level shops were a known, if not common, type, the peculiarity of Chester might lie in its great concentration of examples. Certainly the historical circumstances were favourable: the peculiar topography of Chester was predisposed to accommodate the system; masons and carpenters from all over the country, who were likely to be familiar with the type, were present in numbers in the town; a catastrophic fire in 1278 may have provided the impetus for a total rebuild. Whatever the case, large numbers of merchants, wealthy from the profits of Chester as a military base, could well have been expressing their new-found status in the highly visible symbol of new architecture. Once a series of galleried shops had been built the commercial advantages of connecting the galleries would soon be perceived and the system might quickly become part of the 'common soil'. Certainly our documentary research is showing that the maintenance of the open walkway was vigorously upheld by the city authorities in both the medieval and post-medieval periods.

So far, all the arguments put forward have centred on the Rows as a practical, functional, purely commercial system. It must not be forgotten that the buildings were also domestic, and we are perhaps taking too narrow a theoretical approach. If the view is

taken that architecture implies not only the functional but also the symbolic use of space, creating boundaries and subdividing areas within which social and ritual actions as well as functional activities take place, then the form of the Rows buildings may be perceived as highly complex. To illustrate this, consideration must be given to the conceptual difference between the terms 'house' and 'home'. In terms of the specific object to which they relate they may be interchangeable; whether I refer to my property as my house or my home it remains the same property. But the expression 'in the house' generally denotes a functional state, 'inside, sheltered from the weather'. 'In the home', by contrast, denotes a social state, 'inside, within one's own family group, set apart from society outside'. In Faulkner's isolated examples, the gallery is quite clearly 'inside' in all senses, physically, functionally, and socially in that it is exclusive to the building which it serves. Even at Tackley's Inn where the gallery serves five shops, the layout of the property makes it quite clear that they were all originally under one ownership, even if let to different tenants. What is remarkable about Chester is that the gallery is inside physically and functionally (hence the stress laid by early commentators on the convenience of passing dryshod through the city) but outside and thoroughly in the public domain socially: an internal unit of each private property in a densely-populated and highly-exploited area of land has been released as a public right of way. This argues not only for commercial pressure, present in many other medieval market centres, but for some additional ideological factor. The inception of a system, which while commercially viable was, within its cultural context, socially incoherent, suggests external coercion, that is to say a high degree of town planning.

One possible model for such a town plan, and a motive for its imposition, is presented here as a hypothesis. This model returns in some ways to the eighteenth-century speculations of Stukeley and Pennant, and looks to a classical antecedent. The English parallels we have looked at offer isolated examples of galleries before shops; the concept of the continuous gallery seems peculiar to Chester. English medieval townhouses, with their mixture of commercial and domestic accommodation, are part of a wider European tradition. The same mixture can be found in all the great medieval Italian cities, the Hanseatic ports and great Flemish market towns (Girouard 1985). Yet if the geographical net is spread even wider, a description of late Classical Constantinople suggests striking similarities.

Comme des villes de soleil, Byzance était la ville des portiques. D'après Manuel Chrysoloras, on pouvait parcourir en tous sens l'immense cité complètement à l'abri. . . . Les portiques en question étaient à deux étages, l'étage supérieur formant promenoir était dallé en marbre. . . . Zosime, de son côté, fait allusion à ces portiques à deux étages. De distance en distance, un escalier, *scala, ascensus*, donnait accès à l'étage supérieur, réservé exclusivement à la circulation. L'étage inférieur était occupé et souvent encombré par les comptoirs et boutiques des marchands. (Guilland 1969)

Could the Chester Rows represent an act of town planning based deliberately on the Byzantine example? The evidence must be examined in a number of ways. Were the Byzantine colonnades, as described, still extant in the late thirteenth century? If so, were there eyewitnesses who might return with a description to England? What motive might

there be for such a dramatic yet obscure reference to the imperial city and are there any other examples of the same process at work?

The original construction of the colonnades is credited to Constantine I, emperor of Rome AD 306–37, who transferred his seat of government to Byzantium in 330 (Krautheimer 1982). The greater part of the description given above derives from Zosimus, a fifth-century scholar, but it is telling that Manuel Chrysoloras, who provides the information, so reminiscent of sixteenth-century descriptions of Chester, that one might traverse the entire city completely under shelter, was a Greek scholar who taught at the University of Florence in the fourteenth century. By this date Constantinople had suffered many vicissitudes, including its sacking during the Fourth Crusade in 1204 which was followed by a period of western rule. It was restored to the Greeks under Michael VII Palaeologue in 1268, apparently with no great struggle: 'the prize fell into the hands of the Byzantines like ripe fruit' (Ostrogorsky 1968: 451). It is significant that a century later, Chrysoloras describes the colonnades as still intact. This eyewitness account from Italy in the fourteenth century shows that the colonnades existed at that late date; were there English travellers who might have visited Constantinople and returned with the information? Edward I himself had certainly travelled to the Near East when he led a Crusade to the Holy Land in 1270–3. After an inconclusive campaign based at Acre, he travelled home, not through Turkey, but via Italy visiting Orvieto, Reggio, Parma and Milan, and thence to Savoy, where he undoubtedly made the acquaintance of Master James of St George who was to play such an important role in the Welsh castle building operations in the following two decades. Thus, while Edward was personally interested in architecture, we cannot ascribe an eyewitness account of Constantinople to him or any of his immediate entourage. One clear reference to a visit to Constantinople by an Englishman occurs in the embassy headed by Geoffrey de Langley to the Il-Khan of Persia in 1292. Harvey (1971) notes that the expedition included Robertus sculptor 'who may well have been another artist equipped with a sketchbook'. None of this establishes an unequivocal link, but it suggests that foreign travel and consequent east–west exchange of ideas were not unknown.

This argument is vigorously taken up by A. J. Taylor who argues most convincingly for Byzantine parallels in one of the greatest architectural achievements of Edward's reign: Caernarvon Castle (Colvin 1963). The castle was begun in 1283 immediately after the subjugation of the Welsh. Edward's aims were more far reaching than the neutralisation of Welsh military power: he embarked upon a programme of colonisation. The castles and the planted towns represented symbolic as well as practical power. A crucial propaganda weapon at this stage was reference to the imperial power of the Roman Empire. Caernarvon was the capital of Wales and the centre of Welsh resistance; it also claimed foundation by Magnus Maximus, father of Constantine I, who was adopted by the Celts as a folk hero. In 1283 Edward appropriated the legend for his own purposes, exhuming and reburying a body popularly believed to be that of Magnus Maximus and building a castle whose principal features included polygonal towers and dark stone bands reminiscent of the fifth-century Theodosian walls of the imperial city. Taylor writes

the resemblance seems too striking to be fortuitous, and argues for the presence in Edward's circle of one who was not merely familiar with Villehardouin's famous

description, but who had seen the defences of the eastern capital with his own eyes and could instruct the architect as to the characteristics to be reproduced.

Taylor identifies Sir William de Cicon, constable at Flint and Conway as the possible eyewitness. A protégé of Otto de Grandson, one of Edward's most trusted friends, he had arrived in England in 1276 following the fall of the Cicon fief of Karystos in Euboea which had been established during the brief Latin supremacy of the Empire of Constantinople (1204–68). Taylor presses the imperial argument one stage further:

Caernarvon's distinctive treatment is thus seen to have had its origin in royal policy and in the same way that policy may be seen to have directed the choice of the city of emperors to be the birthplace of the first royal child to be born in Wales since the death of the last two princes of Wales.

If a Byzantine connection can be accepted for the architecture of Caernarvon, we would argue that the same principle may have been at work in Chester.

The use of architectural styles and symbols picked up by individuals on crusade or pilgrimage is perhaps more common than imagined in the Middle Ages. The Herefordshire school of carving, most famously represented at Kilpeck Church, probably derived from the cathedral at Santiago di Compostella, whilst the round churches of England take their cue from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. A problem with the hypothesis presented for Chester is that nearly all the façades of the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries have been lost during centuries of encroachment and rebuilding. Two survive: the stone piers in 6 Lower Bridge Street (the Falcon Inn), and the three chamfered segmental arches at 48–50 Bridge Street. These and the Row walkway itself may be all that is left of the original vision, but after four centuries of searching, it may be that a true parallel for the Rows has now been found in Constantinople.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks are due to the project's many sponsors: Cheshire County Council, Chester City Council, the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments, English Heritage and Chester Civic Society. Several individuals have been involved in the project and the results and ideas outlined here are the product of many minds. Rick Turner, formerly Cheshire County Archaeologist, and now with CADW, and Andrew Brown, formerly Chester City Conservation Officer, steered the project through its early years and their continuing involvement is invaluable. Thanks are due to them both for their detailed comments on this paper at its draft stage. Credit for the origin of the 'Constantinople idea' rests with Rick Turner. Invaluable work on the available documentary resources continues to be undertaken by Jane Laughton and comments on this aspect of the work from Dr Alan Thacker, of the Victoria County History of Cheshire, have been most helpful. Thanks are due to Dr Pat Leggett and Eric McEvoy for undertaking the dendrochronological work. Early work by the project's first investigators, Brian Howes and Mike Smith, and recent results from the current investigator, Roland Harris, have also contributed to this paper.



Paul Miller redrew the illustrations for publication. The author gratefully acknowledges all the help and support that members of the project have afforded her.

14.viii.89

Council for British Archaeology  
York

## References

- Brown, A. N., Grenville, J. C. and Turner, R. C. 1986. Watergate Street: an interim report of the Chester Rows Research Project. *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* 69: 115–45.
- Brown, A. N., Howes, B. and Turner, R. C. 1985. A medieval stone town house in Chester. *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* 68: 143–53.
- Colvin, H. M. 1963. *The History of the King's Works, Volume I: The Middle Ages*. London: HMSO.
- Dodgson, J. McN. 1968. Place-names and street-names at Chester. *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* 55: 29–62.
- Faulkner, P. A. 1966. Medieval undercrofts and town houses. *Archaeological Journal* 123: 120–35.
- Girouard, M. 1985. *Cities and People*. London: Yale University Press.
- Guilland, R. 1969. Études de topographie de Constantinople Byzance. *Berliner Byzant. Arbeiten* 37.
- Harris, B. E. 1979. *Chester*. Edinburgh: Bartholomew.
- Harris, B. E. (ed.) 1984. Galleries which they call the Rows. *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* 67.
- Harris, B. E. (ed.) 1987. *The Victoria County History of Cheshire, Volume I*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, J. H. 1971. *The Master Builders: Architecture in the Middle Ages*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Harvey, J. H. 1987. *English Medieval Architects: a Bibliographical Dictionary*. 2nd edn. Gloucester: Sutton.
- Hewitt, H. J. 1967. *Cheshire under the Three Edwards*. Chester: Cheshire Community Council.
- King, D. 1656. *The Vale Royall of England*. London.
- Krautheimer, R. 1982. *Three Christian Capitals*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lawson, P. H. and Smith, J. T. 1958. The Rows of Chester – two interpretations. *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* 46: 1–42.
- Morris, R. H. 1894. *Chester in the Tudor and Plantagenet Reigns*. Chester: published privately.
- Ostrogorsky, G. 1968. *History of the Byzantine State*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Palliser, D. M. 1980. *Chester – Contemporary Descriptions by Visitors and Residents*. Chester.
- Pantin, W. A. 1963. Medieval English town-house plans. *Medieval Archaeology* 7: 202–39.
- Petch, D. F. 1987. The Roman period. In *The Victoria County History of Cheshire, Volume I* (ed. B. E. Harris). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Platt, C. 1976. *The English Medieval Town*. London: Secker & Warburg.
- Prestwich, M. 1988. *Edward I*. London: Methuen.
- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (RCHM) (England). 1981. *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments of the City of York, Volume V: The Central Area*. London: HMSO.

Strickland, T. J. 1984. The Roman heritage of Chester. *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* 67: 17–36.

Thacker, A. J. 1987. The Anglo-Saxon period. In *The Victoria County History of Cheshire, Volume I* (ed. B. E. Harris). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Turner, R. C. 1988. Early carpentry in the Rows of Chester. *Vernacular Architecture* 19: 34–41.

Ward, S. 1984. The Rows: the evidence from archaeology. *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* 67: 37–46.

Wood, M. E. 1965. *The English Medieval House*. London: Phoenix.

## Abstract

*Grenville, Jane*

### **The Rows of Chester: some thoughts on the results of recent research**

The City of Chester in the northwest of England is remarkable for an architectural phenomenon known as the Rows. In the centre of the city are four streets with shops at both street and first floor levels. The upper shops are interconnected by a series of galleries or 'Rows'. These buildings undoubtedly have their origin in the medieval period, and their curious form has long been a subject of speculation. Recent research has produced interesting results, including firm dendrochronological dates. New theories for their origin are emerging and some of these are discussed in this paper upon which comments are most welcome.

1992 with Richard Morris 'Archaeological approaches to the recording of buildings', *The Field Archaeologist*, 16: 300-1.

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE RECORDING OF BUILDINGS

## — Jane Grenville and Richard Morris

Excavation often reveals buildings, but these are almost always reduced to two-dimensions (Evans and Keevill *qv*). The third-dimension offered by standing buildings opens up to the archaeologist possibilities for the investigation of the use and arrangements of upper floors; social graduation in the use of space and so forth. These aspects, which may be represented in the below-ground record in only the most exiguous way, can be studied in a standing building in detail, sometimes non-destructively, and often at a fraction of the cost of excavation. With the relevance of standing buildings studies to archaeology thus established, this paper seeks to address the methodological distinctions between art history, architectural history, and archaeology.

### Record-making

Archaeologists have been criticised for approaching buildings as if they were buried sites, attempting to record all phenomena to

equal standard, in the absence of fore-knowledge of which contexts (for eventual interpretative purposes) may be of greater or lesser significance. Within the profession has arisen the notion of 'preservation by record' which is claimed as 'value free' (Ferne 1988, 357): *ie*, a record wherein the observer seeks to absent him/herself from the process of record-making. We would argue that serious shortcomings and practical difficulties attend this approach: it is supported by a philosophy generally discredited in the 'hard' sciences, where Popperian theory has long acknowledged the participation of the experimenter in the experiment.

In fact, every line on a drawing, and every word on a context sheet, reflects a choice on the part of the recorder. On this basis, the recording of a large building is a process involving thousands of individual decisions. Each of those decisions is coloured — by what the recorder selects as significant; by the light; by what they recognise. Even experienced

archaeologists frequently miss small but crucial details in the recording of buildings, while making meticulous records of other features, just as art and architectural historians may stare down a hole and see nothing but undifferentiated brown soil. Conversely, the successful recording of detail does not automatically deliver the wider understanding of a building which to an experienced architectural historian may be immediately self-evident. If this argument appears to be heading towards a case for archaeological meritocracy, where individual skills and experience outweigh technical methodologies, then this is to some extent inescapable.

We would argue that the archaeological study of buildings is not simply a skill which is transferable directly out of the ground, but a process that calls for appropriate additional training. One aspect of such training should include the extrapolation of stratigraphic principles above the ground, an area in which

2.

some archaeologists display uncertainty. There are still those who visualise the law of superposition as extending up a building, instead of through it, when in certain complicated cases, it is visually self-evident that the oldest work in a structure may be closer to its summit than its base, and that phases centuries apart may be physically in tight embrace. In fact, buildings behave very like conventional sub-surface sites if they are rotated through 90 degrees, and their vertical stratification is considered in the flat. The curious blindness of some excavators to the stratigraphic habits of buildings is one reason why building archaeology is not yet taken as seriously in all quarters.

### Methodological distinctions

So where, at base, lies the distinction between archaeology, art history and architectural history? If it is to be looked for in a word, then it is 'stratification'. Architectural historians have used stratigraphy for centuries, but it is archaeologists who have learned to apply it with uncompromising rigour. Friction between these approaches occurs now (Stocker *qv*), paradoxically, because the typological frameworks originally crystallised by art and architectural historians were based on stratigraphic observation. But that observation was rather crude, some of it was merged with assumption, and it lacked the refinement which modern methods of archaeological recording can now deliver.

In a sense, the art historian is now a guardian of received opinions, while the archaeologist may be an iconoclast, producing evidence which contradicts long-held

nostrums, without necessarily understanding what such iconoclasm may signify. Education for the archaeologist in architectural history is a prerequisite for solving this problem. Furthermore, archaeology differs from art history and architectural history in that it seeks to study parts of buildings which other disciplines ignore or to which they seldom have access. Most obviously these include substructures but they can also include the innards of buildings, considered (if at all) in a haphazard way by the other professions. Mortars within complicated masonry structures are one example; scaffolding-systems, the reuse of materials, and successive schemes of decoration, are others. For the archaeologist, considerations of style are assessed within such frameworks, whereas for the art historian, the framework may either be lacking, or incomplete, or style alone may be the framework itself.

### Conservation and research

The debate between the three disciplines — art history, architectural history, and archaeology — cannot be separated from the daily practical considerations of conservation. Archaeological recording of buildings as part of the process of repair is becoming commonplace, and the profession has to address the problems that this development raises (Wood *qv*). Our records are not made simply for their own sake, but are used as the basis for informed conservation decisions. We are in a position of considerable responsibility and influence in expensive projects, the course of which we may seek to alter at a very late stage. A professional approach to programming is

therefore essential. We need to be involved at an early stage to evaluate buildings before repairs are specified and again before work begins, to provide the architect with accurate information upon which to base initial proposals. We need access during the work if stripping out is proposed, to record new evidence and to guide the direction of the project in the light of it.

On a broader level, how and why we engage in archaeological recording as an aspect of conservation works must, ultimately, come back to considerations of research. Recording is not an end in itself, devoid of any research basis other than may suggest itself by accident. All archaeology is reducible to a research agenda, a set of questions, but these are often implicit, especially in buildings archaeology. Yet theories of spatial analysis and social use of space are well advanced in the fields of sociology, anthropology, geography, and in other fields within our own discipline and we should use them (Fairclough; Schofield *qv*). The research agenda for the study of buildings might be set by the posing of two simple questions — 'how did they build it?' (*ie*, technology, materials, social organisation and logistics of construction); and 'why did they build it like that?' (*ie*, plan form, intended and actual use of the building, social organisation of users, status, style, change through time).

We would argue that, through the construction of a research agenda and a formal grounding in architectural history, archaeological recording may be made 'value rich', rather than 'value free'.

1993 'Curation overview' in J Hunter and I Ralston  
(eds) *Archaeological Resource Management in the  
UK.*

## CHAPTER 12

# CURATION OVERVIEW

*Jane Grenville*

This chapter introduces a degree of critical comment into some of the issues raised in this part of the book and considers some longer-term implications. This might be most clearly approached by asking a series of questions:

- Who identifies and controls the destiny of sites?
- Who excavates them?
- How should they be investigated/how are assessments made?
- How is the money controlled?
- What is the relationship of curation to research?

### WHO IDENTIFIES AND CONTROLS THE DESTINY OF SITES?

Clearly (see Chapters 5 and 8 on the respective legislation for ancient monuments and listed buildings), the answer to this question depends to some extent upon whether the site is above or below ground, and upon the level of protection afforded to it. It is arguable that in all cases the powerful actor is the landowner, in whose hands lie the initiative for change or neglect. It is perhaps interesting to note, in this context, the varying effects of action or neglect upon upstanding and subsurface sites: lack of direct human intervention upon a subsurface site may be benign, but the effects of natural agents such as rabbits, bracken and water erosion cannot be minimized (see also Chapter 22). In a building, the failure to undertake routine interventionist maintenance is usually a major cause of decay, yet neglect may also prevent the worst excesses of 'modernization' and loss of original features. Active conservation measures to prevent natural and artificial acceleration of decay are therefore essential for both subsurface sites and buildings. Having said that, once the decision to seek change has been taken, the destiny of the site lies within the control of external agencies (although the wishes of the owner undoubtedly remain a material consideration to be balanced against other matters in the determination of the case).

Two-track legislation presents some difficulties in disentangling this situation: intervention on a Scheduled Ancient Monument requires Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) and this is determined by appropriate agencies under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (AMAA Act, see Chapter 5). By contrast, intervention in a listed building, whether for purposes of repair or alteration, requires Listed Building Consent (LBC), which is granted by local planning authorities under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It is in advice, rather than legislation, that the two systems seem to be converging. A comprehensive guide to the provisions for listed buildings and conservation areas was issued by the Department of the Environment (DoE) in *Circular 8/87*. Notwithstanding the fact that this relates primarily to historic buildings, it contains, tucked away at Paragraph 52, the advice that 'Ancient monuments, and their settings, whether scheduled or not are *of course* a material consideration in the determination of planning applications' (my italics). The appearance of this advice was of the utmost importance. While it appeared simply to formalize best

practice in the most efficient local authorities, it was by no means a matter of course, as implied, to regard archaeology as a material factor in the planning process, although by the mid-1980s most counties held Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) and the checking of planning applications against this information to look for archaeological significance was becoming more common (see Chapter 10). With the formal blessing of the DoE for this practice, the possibilities for the protection of the archaeological resource seemed to be greatly enhanced.

The introduction of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG 16, DoE 1990a; also Welsh Office 1991; SOEnd 1992a, 1992b) has shifted the balance yet further towards the inclusion of archaeology as a material factor in the planning process. PPG 16 advises that 'archaeological remains should be seen as a finite and non-renewable resource . . . . Appropriate management is therefore essential to make sure that they survive in good condition.' (Paragraph 6). The baseline for this management is clearly set out in Paragraph 8: 'Where nationally important archaeological remains, *whether scheduled or not, and their settings*, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.' We will return to the matter of physical preservation for it has wider implications. The point to note here is that the archaeological resource is being flagged up, in a major document dedicated to that purpose, as a material factor within the planning system: 'developers and local authorities should take into archaeological considerations and deal with them from the beginning of the development control process' (Paragraph 18). The relevant personnel are clearly identified: 'All planning authorities should make full use of the expertise of County Archaeological Officers or their equivalents'. There is no obligation to consult English Heritage in the case of non-scheduled monuments although 'local planning authorities may find it helpful' to do so (Paragraph 23). By contrast, as discussed above, they are required to do so in the case of a proposal likely to affect the site of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Paragraph 23).

Over the last few years then, without any legislative changes, there has been a significant shift in the perception and treatment of the archaeological resource. While the involvement of central government remains mandatory in the case of SMC, the broadening of the net to include non-scheduled sites has brought with it a devolution of powers to the local authorities, hence bringing archaeological planning practice in line with listed buildings.

There are, however, significant differences. Firstly, all 'archaeological' remains may be regarded as material factors, but nowhere does the definition of archaeology suggest that the resource might include listed buildings. PPG 16 might be stretched to include buildings, and indeed comments by English Heritage in its 1991 annual report suggest that it should. Nevertheless, it seems likely that a more traditional definition of archaeology as subsurface sites and ruins will prevail, at least in the near future. This leaves an anomaly between the buried/ruined resource and the historic building stock. Among the former, the historical and archaeological significance of all sites, whether scheduled or not, is a material factor. Among the latter, only those that are listed are singled out for such attention. Secondly, Paragraph 81 of *Circular 8/87* requires local authorities to consult five national bodies (The Council for British Archaeology, the Ancient Monuments Society, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Georgian Group, and the Victorian Society) in the case of application for LBC to demolish or partly demolish listed buildings. There is no parallel mandatory consultation system built in to PPG 16. Paragraph 23 suggests that county archaeologists 'may wish to consult locally based museums and archaeological units and societies', but there is no absolute requirement that they do so. In terms of the original question, 'Who controls the destiny of sites?', this seems to be a very significant difference in the treatment of the two parts of the resource.

It is not difficult to see the historical circumstances that give rise to such an anomaly: at the time that LBC became compulsory (Town and Country Planning Act 1968), there was little expertise within local authorities to assess the historical merits of individual buildings, whose selection for listing had been made not by the authority, but by the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings (then a part of the DoE and now reconstituted as English Heritage). Consultation was introduced at the specific request of the planners. By contrast, at the time of the introduction of PPG 16 in November 1990, every county had an archaeological officer, and the SMRs were, to a large extent, locally generated. The soliciting of friendly advice from interested parties might therefore safely be left to the discretion of individual county archaeologists; whether or not the sometimes less benign policing function of statutory consultation might usefully be extended into the realms of PPG 16 is a matter for debate.

It is arguable that the academic archaeologist plays little part in this process (but see Chapter 2). Rather, it is his or her role as the developer of new research strategies that ought to be important, to the extent that current research interests might logically be expected to affect the perception of what is archaeologically important. Nor is this wishful thinking; the recently published *York Archaeology and Development Study* (hereafter referred to as the *York Study*) bases its definition of archaeological importance very firmly upon the results of a research exercise undertaken by the Department of Archaeology at the University of York, using data collected over twenty years by the York Archaeological Trust (Arup 1991).

Having said that, it appears that collaboration of this kind is the exception rather than the rule. As one who moved from academic research into the world of curation of listed buildings with very little understanding of how that world was structured, then back to mainstream archaeology, albeit in a consultative role at the Council for British Archaeology (CBA), and then finally back into a university, my overall impression is of a profession in which curation and research are largely decoupled, to the very great disadvantage of both. This is an issue that seems to require urgent action, and is one to which I shall return.

## WHO EXCAVATES?

Excavation in the 1970s and 1980s was largely a matter of territoriality (see Chapter 14). Local units were set up to meet the challenge of rescue archaeology. Some were funded by local authorities, others supported by museums or university departments. Yet others formed as independent charitable trusts. Each confined its activities to its home town (e.g. York or Winchester), county (e.g. West Yorkshire), or region (e.g. Wessex). Some university units effectively became regional or county units (Birmingham covering the West Midlands, for instance, or the Institute of Archaeology Field Unit, which concentrated operations in Sussex). The only true 'roving' unit was the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission's Central Excavation Unit, which acted in the capacity of a national flying squad. The 'territorial' norm, however, was sanctioned in the framing of the AMAA Act 1979, for when areas of archaeological importance were to be designated, a local unit was to be named as the investigating body, setting the brief and carrying it out.

The advent of large-scale developer funding at the end of the 1980s led to the adoption in some cases of competitive tendering systems. This is, perhaps, hardly surprising, given that it would not occur to a property developer to use a particular firm of architects or engineers simply because they happened to operate locally. Nevertheless, for a profession like archaeology, which has always regarded itself as fundamentally research-led, the change has proved to be somewhat traumatic. The debate continues over the relative



importance of the need for firmly based local knowledge upon which to build an effective research programme versus technical/financial efficiency (Swain 1991). Suffice it to point out at this juncture that as more and more units take on contracts well away from their 'home' areas, there are implications for research that we would be unwise to ignore, and to which I will return.

It would, however, be misleading to suggest that all excavation is carried out under contract and funded by developers. Units, universities, and amateur societies are still able to undertake research excavations and surveys where funding is available. Such finance may emanate from English Heritage, university research funds, the learned societies and local or county-based amateur societies. Such ventures tend on the whole to be fairly small-scale: it seems doubtful that a private research project on the scale, for example, of Sutton Hoo, would be commissioned in the present recession.

Although concerned with survey rather than excavation, the work of the Royal Commissions should be mentioned at this point, as bodies undertaking major research programmes themselves, and funding and supervising those of others. In recent years, while not abandoning their principal role as bodies of record, the Commissions have altered their strategy by moving away from county-by-county inventories, and concentrating their efforts instead on thematic studies of threatened categories of monuments or landscapes (Chapter 3).

## HOW SHOULD SITES BE INVESTIGATED?

With the squeeze on research funding and the strictures of PPG 16, increasingly intervention is restricted to small-scale evaluations. PPG 16 sets out a clear decision-making route along which planners, advised by archaeologists, should travel. A desk-based assessment of the site (trawl of the SMR, other relevant documentation and geophysical survey) precedes an evaluation, 'normally a rapid and inexpensive operation, involving ground survey and small-scale trial trenching' (DoE 1990a: Paragraph 21). Having established the importance of the archaeological deposits, and hence the weight that should be accorded to them in the planning process, various outcomes are possible:

The archaeology is considered to be of insufficient importance to affect the progress of the planning application.

Mitigation strategies are identified. These include moving the site of the proposed construction or re-designing foundations so as to minimize damage.

If this is not possible and the deposits are of sufficient importance, a large scale excavation precedes construction. This, of course, results in the removal of the deposits, and does not accord with the stated first aim of PPG 16, which is to preserve important archaeological deposits *in situ*. Nevertheless, information about those deposits is recovered. For this reason, the process of comprehensive excavation has been termed 'preservation by record', an expression that has lately come to be regarded with suspicion on the grounds that the phrase stretches the meaning of the word 'preservation' to unacceptable limits.

If the deposits are of such high quality that their retention *in situ* is merited, and there are no engineering solutions to the safe construction of the proposed development, then planning permission may be refused on archaeological grounds.

In the case of the first and last options, no further archaeological work will be undertaken on the site. The same outcome, then, results from diametrically opposed archaeological situations: sites of very high or very low research potential receive no further archaeolo-

gical investigation. Some might perceive a paradox here, while others regard the preservation of the best sites as entirely logical, the conservation of the database being an essential responsibility. This is where the *York Study* and PPG 16 part company, since the former recommends the excavation of sites of high research potential and the preservation of all others whose potential, as currently perceived, is either low or unknown. The practical results of the research bias of the *York Study* are outlined below.

The second option, for the redesign of foundations, follows an archaeological evaluation that has shown the site to be of archaeological significance. A common engineering solution to such a condition is to build on a piling system, which offers minimal disturbance to the ground surface.

This system has been formalized in York as a result of the *York Study*. Within the AMAA Act 1979, archaeological significance is established by means of desk-based survey and field evaluations where necessary, and matched to perceived research priorities. The new York City Council policy states that 'developments which disturb or destroy more than 5 % of the archaeological deposits contained within the boundaries of an application site will normally be refused' (YCC 1992: Policy Statement A2). Where it is impossible to design a project to destroy less than 5 % of the archaeological deposits, two options exist:

- a. planning permission is refused;
- b. the redevelopment may be approved with a requirement for the developer to fund a rescue project and its publication and the deposition of the archive in an approved museum.

Significantly, however, where 'the evaluation indicates that the site has the potential to meet the criteria contained in the Research Framework' (a research agenda generated by the *York Study* and updated by a YCC-convened archaeological forum for the city), 'York City Council will advise the developers that they have the option of offering the site to the archaeological community so that it can attempt to raise the necessary funds to undertake a research excavation' (YCC 1992: Paragraph 8.13). No such opportunity has yet arisen. It will be interesting to see whether developers react favourably when it does.

Setting aside the example of York to return to the more widely implemented provisions of PPG 16, the third option, that of total excavation, is one that is likely to be avoided in future in urban situations, where alternative foundation systems provide a cheaper option for developers. However, in situations where the geology of the site is unsuitable for piling, or in rural cases, where the development may be for gravel or mineral extraction, total excavation remains the only option. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that, by definition, the sites with the greatest archaeological potential will remain uninvestigated, as planning permission for archaeologically destructive development is likely to be refused.

Where, then, might we expect to see the major research excavations of the late 1990s? Will there be any? With the operations of the units and private consultants so dictated by particular planning circumstances, it seems likely that the impetus must come from central government, from the universities or from the learned societies. Funding for such exercises will surely be difficult to secure during recession, yet the potential for research-led excavation, unhampered by the exigencies of development, is attractive.

Alongside this diminution of excavation must be set an increase in archaeological recording of standing buildings. There are both intellectual and practical reasons for this: the perception of historic buildings as archaeological artefacts has sharpened over the past decade, and the rate of attrition of the stock of historic buildings has accelerated. Archaeologists have, in response to this, increasingly turned their attention and technical

know-how to the study of standing fabric. The cynic might also point out that there are certain other advantages to pursuing this study: it is largely non-destructive, thus avoiding some of the ethical problems that have arisen in the excavation of the subsurface resource; and on the whole it is less labour-intensive and therefore less expensive to carry out than excavation.

### HOW IS THE MONEY CONTROLLED?

Other chapters in this volume cover the problems of funding and they should be referred to for a broader discussion (e.g. Chapters 4 and 13). Nevertheless, it is important to allude to them here, for there are implications for the relationship of curation to research.

Developer funding seems, at the moment, to be the accepted form of financing the bulk of archaeological rescue work. As a result, the archaeological field profession has become locked into broader economic cycles more tightly than hitherto. As in the building trade, cyclical boom and bust have severe implications for the retention of a skilled workforce and the dispersal of such a workforce must surely carry implications for the quality of research.

Central funding comes in the form of grants from English Heritage. As the system of developer funding has gained ground, so central government expenditure on rescue archaeology has been systematically reduced over recent years. Against this reduction in the rescue budget, we might compare the increase in grant aid to buildings of outstanding importance (Section 3A grants), and the introduction of a budget ring-fenced for the recording of buildings in advance of such grant work.

Some financial support, particularly for survey work, comes from the Royal Commissions. Their own role as compilers of the database has already been discussed, but it is worth mentioning here that they also grant-aid other archaeological bodies in compiling surveys. Examples include the Chester Rows Research Project (jointly funded by English Heritage) and the East Cheshire Mills Survey. Such surveys enhance research; they also provide a valuable database upon which curatorial decisions may be based.

Funding by the research councils might be regarded as another source of central support for the profession. On the whole, however, grant aid from the Science-Based Archaeology Committee of SERC and from the British Academy tends to support individual projects at doctoral or post-doctoral level. It is the responsibility of the profession to ensure that such work has relevance for the wider research agenda. Mechanisms for the necessary flow of information implied by this exist within the specialist committees of the CBA, among whose stated aims is the active promotion of research. The problem was approached from another direction by the establishment in 1987 of the Forum for the Co-ordination in the Funding of Archaeology (Pollard 1990, 1: 4). Its aim was to be a co-ordinating body for archaeological research by improving the flow of communication between the various funding agencies. A further refinement to this structure might sensibly be to establish formal communication between the Forum and the research community (and the CBA and the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) might be seen as the mouthpiece of the research and field communities, representing as they do archaeologists from all sections of the community: academic, curatorial, contracting and amateur).

### THE RELATIONSHIP OF CURATION TO RESEARCH

The implications of the foregoing summary for the relationship of research to curation are formidable. Various trends have been identified:

- a. The introduction of preservation *in situ* as the preferred option for important archaeological resources;

- b. The formalizing of archaeology as a material consideration within the planning system;
- c. The move away from central funding towards developer funding;
- d. The increase in archaeological attention paid to standing buildings.

Taking these in order, then, let us consider the significance of each for curation and research.

### *Preservation in situ*

PPG 16 is unequivocal in its advice that 'where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their *physical preservation*' (my italics). Called upon to define 'archaeological importance' to the wider world, the profession generally invokes two main criteria: degree of preservation of deposits and their suitability for answering present research questions. With this definition to hand (and it is broadly that used in the *York Study*) a potential clash between the aims of research and curation may be easily identified, for it is precisely those most interesting deposits that are withheld from research by PPG 16.

How has this state of affairs come about? There seem to me to be two chief reasons. Firstly, as research questions were refined and changed through the 1970s and 1980s, archaeologists came increasingly to regret the damage caused to the archaeological resource by, for instance, the single-minded pursuit of urban Roman levels at the expense of the medieval material above. The conclusion was drawn that, if previous generations had destroyed levels we would have wished to investigate, then the onus is upon the present generation not to destroy evidence our successors might wish to study. Rather than second-guessing future research interests, the important parts of the resource should simply be left intact.

Secondly, and again contingent upon the finite nature of the resource, is the argument that future generations will have such vastly improved techniques of data capture, that the more important sections of the record should be left for their investigation.

There are other issues, perhaps more politically sensitive, involved here as well. The failure of some researchers to publish their findings has meant that key sites have been destroyed without record as effectively as if the bulldozers had moved in. There is a justifiable feeling that the rate of excavation should slow down, until the backlog of publication is substantially reduced.

Further, where sites have been published, the quality of the publication has, in some cases, been regarded as inadequate (see also Chapter 19). Where this is contingent upon a poor archive, the situation is yet more dire, as the possibilities offered by returning to the material are severely curtailed (Chapter 21). A response to this problem has been the ever-increasing refinement of data-capture techniques and recording systems, and with them an ever-rising cost of projects. Excavation is now an extremely expensive operation and it is cheaper simply to leave the deposits in the ground undisturbed for future archaeologists.

The logic of all this is fairly clear and yet I would argue that the profession runs the risk of stagnation. If we do not follow up our present research interests, then how can the future research agenda develop? If we do not continue to address the problems of large-scale data capture and analysis, then how will improved techniques be developed? One might draw a parallel here with the issues facing the zoologists over vivisection: how far is it acceptable to maim your research base, the better to understand it? If we take the worn-out cliché of archaeology as the unrepeatable experiment, do we follow that to the conclusion that we should not do it at all?

These are broad questions that the archaeological community should and does address continually. My point in raising them here is simply to emphasize how our present curatorial stance subtly influences the way we answer them (and, of course, vice versa).

### *Archaeology in the planning process*

The arrival of archaeological evaluation as a standard procedure within the planning cycle is undoubtedly welcome. It is to be hoped that fiascos such as the Rose Theatre incident will become things of the past, as the archaeological significance of a site is assessed before construction work begins.

That said, the system of 'rapid and inexpensive' evaluation recommended in PPG 16 could, if not carefully monitored, descend into a purely mechanistic exercise, in which the information gathered may be quickly compared with the existing archive in order to assess its significance, but which is of such an ephemeral nature that it is unlikely to enter the corpus of received knowledge itself. In other words, archaeological endeavour could be reduced to a form of stamp-collecting, in which ever greater mountains of information are excavated, but in which synthesis is scarcely attempted. Field archaeologists would become technicians and the study, as opposed to the practice, of archaeology would stagnate. Only if we take seriously the need for evaluation to state the research context and potential can we hope to avoid this state of affairs.

There seem to be two ways of addressing this problem. The first might be through the process of tendering for contracts. If, rather than tendering for carefully delimited briefs drawn up by the curatorial archaeologist (normally the county archaeologist), bids were always invited for full project design including research objectives, this concern would largely evaporate. English Heritage already demands detailed information on research design before offering funding for archaeological projects, whether rescue or survey; asking contractors to offer such designs rather than accepting the assumptions implicit in a simple specification would ensure that the field profession continued to maintain contact with the realms of pure research. The flip-side is that developers would find themselves facing larger bills, which they might not be prepared to foot.

Secondly, the volume of small-scale evaluations is unlikely to be reduced in the near future. In order to ensure that they do not become 'dead knowledge', funds must be set aside to pay for their exploitation for regional assessment and large-scale research design. This might be a fruitful area of co-operation between the universities and the field units.

### *Developer funding*

Developer funding has been adopted in a political climate that favours the removal of responsibilities from state institutions into the hands of individuals and private companies. This philosophy suggests that, while the heritage itself may be regarded as a common asset, responsibility for damage to it must rest with the agency inflicting that damage. It is mirrored in the principle of 'polluter pays', widely accepted in environmental circles.

This approach is heavily dependent for its logic upon a universal acknowledgement of the value of the archaeological resource. While research may in the past have been hampered by lack of public funding, it is the lack of private and commercial sponsorship that now needs to be addressed and undoubtedly that involves a battle for hearts and minds. Dissemination of results to a broad public is no longer simply a reasonable duty for an archaeologist in receipt of public funds. It has become an absolute economic necessity for a subject increasingly dependent upon a credible image for its survival. While the 'heritage industry' is regarded with healthy suspicion in many quarters of the profession,

archaeologists must accept that the accurate and entertaining dissemination of knowledge at a popular level is essential for the health of the subject.

From a rather different angle, the combination of developer funding and the materiality of archaeology in the planning cycle has very direct effects upon research, one of which I have alluded to above. It is an important point, however, which bears repetition: the sample of sites investigated is skewed towards those upon which major development is being undertaken. The preponderance of excavation is therefore urban or on rural gravel terraces and takes place in areas of relative 20th-century prosperity. Furthermore, non-profit-making organizations or individuals may carry out operations that are highly damaging to the archaeological resource, and may reasonably argue that they are unable to foot the archaeological bill. Without a solution to this problem, a good deal of church archaeology, for example, may be lost as a result of the withdrawal of public funding. Finally, but crucially, on the matter of the skewing of the research agenda by modern circumstances, it should not be forgotten that agricultural and forestry operations are not subject to planning controls: the deep-ploughing of unscheduled sites without archaeological mitigation is currently legitimate.

### *The archaeology of buildings*

It might be argued that it is the pressures associated with the study and curation of the sub-surface resource that have led to the renewal of interest in the archaeology of standing buildings. Churches have always been regarded as legitimate research fodder for archaeologists as much as architectural historians, as the work of H.M. and Joan Taylor (amateurs by definition, if not in approach) on Anglo-Saxon architecture demonstrates. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that academic interest in buildings archaeology, secular as well as religious, is increasing, and that in the field recording projects are multiplying.

There are considerable implications for both research and curation here. Taking research first, it seems that a research agenda that is explicitly archaeological needs to be formulated. This has been an area of concern for the CBA since its foundation in 1944, and one upon which it has turned particular attention since the creation of a post dedicated to historic buildings work in 1988. The recent formation by the IFA of a Special Interest Group for Standing Buildings is an encouraging sign, as is the introduction of specialist courses into some undergraduate and post-graduate degree courses.

In curatorial terms there are difficulties inherent in the two-track legislation. Listed buildings have long been the responsibility of conservation officers or non-specialist planning officers within local authorities. They may not be within the same department as the county archaeologist and they operate within different legal frameworks. There are significant differences in the advice given in PPG 16 and *Circular 8/87* on the place of archaeological recording; the *Circular* advises that LBC may be made conditional on archaeological recording, but the model condition attached as Appendix VII stresses that the expense of the record must not be passed on to the applicant, a direct reversal of the advice of PPG 16. The current rewriting of the *Circular* as a new *Planning Policy Guidance Note* should be seen by the archaeological community at large as a crucial opportunity to set the recording of buildings on a level with that of the buried resource.

These are some of the issues raised for research by the present regime of curation in this country. Principal among them is the fact that, as archaeology takes its place within the planning system, academia and the field profession cannot afford to operate in mutual isolation: such a course would without doubt lead to the terminal stagnation of the discipline.

1994 'Research strategies and priorities: an afterthought  
– the Chester Rows' in J Wood *et al* (eds)  
*Buildings Archaeology: applications in practice.*  
*Oxbow Monograph 43* Oxford, 97-107.

## CHAPTER 8

# Research Strategies and Priorities: An Afterthought – The Chester Rows

*Jane Grenville*

*The Chester Rows Research Project was initiated in 1984 to investigate and record the unique system of galleried shops to be found in the centre of the city of Chester. Earlier work had proved conclusively their medieval origin, yet the precise mechanism for their establishment remained uncertain and little work had been done on cataloguing their subsequent development. Although principally a pure research project, the benefits for the curation and conservation of the resource were considerable.*

### INTRODUCTION

As one of the researchers on the Chester Rows Research Project, I have been asked, in the light of my subsequent experience as a conservation caseworker and a university teacher, and in the light of the strategies and priorities outlined by Robin Thornes (Chapter 7), to reflect upon the research aims of that project. The degree to which these research aims were successfully met will be considered, and alternative strategies which, with hindsight, we might usefully have pursued, will be offered.

The Chester Rows comprise a group of buildings that are unique in Britain and may not have direct parallels in Europe (but see Harris (forthcoming) for an alternative view). The city of Chester, lying on the English-Welsh border, approximately eight miles short of its northernmost point, is an important frontier town occupied more-or-less continuously since the building of the Roman fortress of Deva, probably between AD 76–9. The Rows consist of a series of buildings on the frontages of the city's four main streets (defined by the underlying Roman fortress plan), which have covered galleries at first floor level entirely integral to the structure of the buildings, and yet forming a public thoroughfare parallel to and above the street, offering additional retail space. Documentary evidence suggests that by the fourteenth century the Rows were occupied by identifiable trading and craft groups, for we have references to stretches of Row named, for example, Buttershop Row, Bakers' Row, Fleshmongers' Row, and Ironmongers' Row. Beneath the galleries are undercrofts, at street level or just below; some famous for their



stone vaulting and dated on stylistic grounds by Margaret Wood to the late thirteenth century (Wood 1965, 87–8), although our research suggests that her dating band may have been too narrow. There is evidence that the undercrofts were used for retail, and as taverns and warehouses. An important element of the system is the change in ground level between the front and back of the buildings: the Row is level with the yard or back lane at the rear, but well above the street at the front (Figures 8.1 and 8.2). Archaeological evidence suggests that this is the result of a build-up of occupation debris from the Roman and later phases (Mason 1976) and that this curious topography may have been instrumental in the development of the system.

Following a one day conference on the Chester Rows, organised by the Chester Archaeological Society in July 1984, the Council of the City of Chester, Cheshire County Council, and Chester Civic Trust joined forces to initiate a thoroughgoing research project into this remarkable group of buildings. At the time this was seen as a somewhat belated response to the call-to-arms issued as early as 1958 by P H Lawson and J T Smith in their seminal article 'The Rows of Chester: two interpretations':

'If every building in the four main streets could be examined...the truth about the Rows and about that obscure period between 907 and 1300 would become a good deal clearer. The thoroughness of modern reconstructions destroys the evidence of the past so completely that if the work is not begun soon, it will be too late' (Lawson and Smith 1958, 42).

The three goals of the Chester Rows Research Project at the outset in 1984 were:

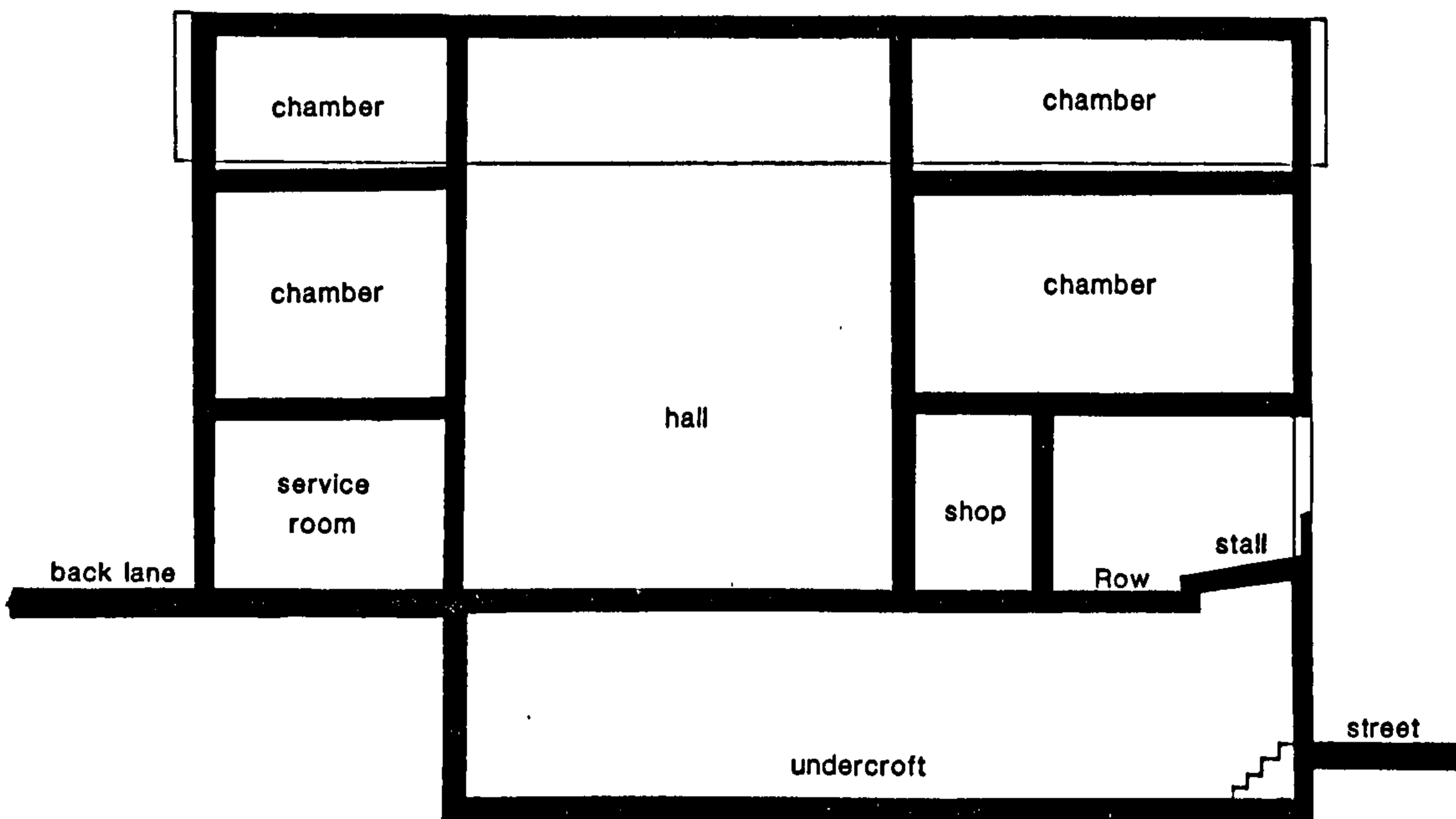
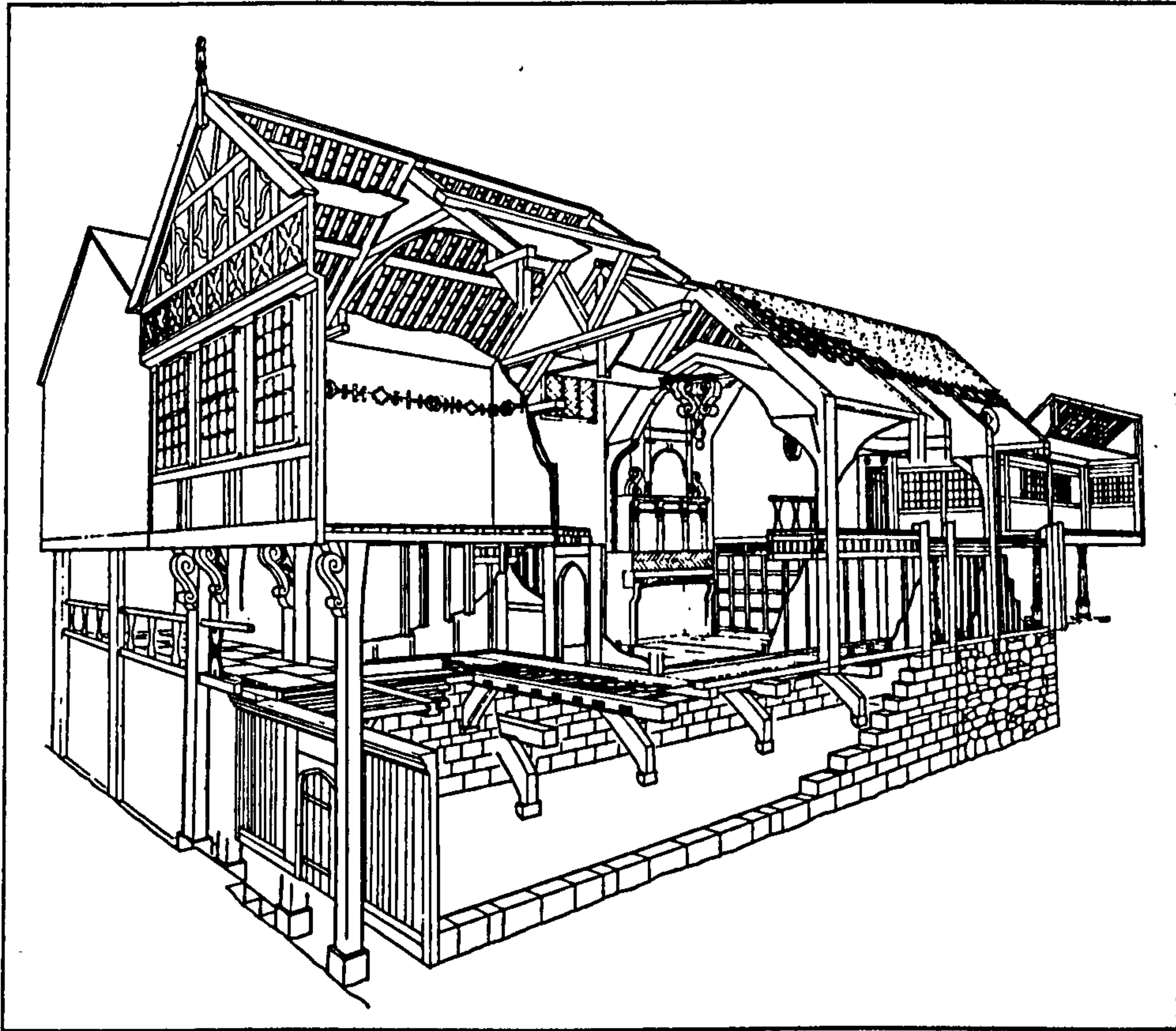


Figure 8.1: A section through a typical Rows building



*Figure 8.2: The fourteenth-century Leche House, part of the Chester Rows, as it may have appeared by the seventeenth-century: a hall of two bays lies behind a single bay shop; a substantial solar occupies the space above the shop and the Row (G Holme)*

- 1 to elucidate the origins of the Rows (Lawson's and Smiths' principal aim)
- 2 to document the Rows, not in advance of any specific threat, but rather to provide as complete a record as possible to act as a basis for future conservation decisions
- 3 to establish the processes of change through which the Rows have passed over the course of their existence.

We might define the first and third as research aims, and the second as a methodological aim. Since it seems to me that methodologies should (but do not always!) spring from research aims, I shall examine the research agenda first. Nevertheless, it is clear that methodological opportunities and limitations necessarily have a reflexive influence on that agenda, so this aspect will also receive consideration.

Thornes addresses the issue of how we prioritise our interests for research, suggesting two mechanisms:

- 1 the monitoring of patterns of threat
- 2 peer discussion and communication.

Lawson's and Smiths' call-to-arms, if analysed, seems to have acknowledged both these motors of research, though pure research seems to take precedence, whilst threat is seen more as an annoying fact of life than an overwhelming incentive. It is perhaps a comment on our own times that a generation later it is the first mechanism – the recognition within the profession of the need to inform the planning system – that is uppermost in our minds. The second, may appear to many to be entirely subject to academic whim, whose *usefulness* is open to question, yet I believe it to be an issue which is of supreme importance for the health of our subject. For this reason, I propose to consider mechanisms of peer communication first, and threat-led research second.

## PEER COMMUNICATION

It seems to me axiomatic that an understanding of the nature of a thing precedes the conferral of value upon it. An example of this process might be the growth of interest in the architecture of the nineteenth century. G M Trevelyan, writing in the middle of this century and secure in his reputation as a eminent historian, remarked:

'Those grandfathers and great-grandfathers of ours, though they compassed sea and land to admire Roman aqueducts and Gothic cathedrals, themselves produced deplorable buildings ... The most refined and educated classes were as bad as any: the monstrosities of architecture erected by order of the Dons of Oxford and Cambridge colleges in the days of William Butterfield and Alfred Waterhouse give daily pain to posterity' (Trevelyan, 1946, 524).

Here was received opinion, the origin of which may be identified in a climate of contemporary excoriation of architecture from about the 1870s onwards (Summerson 1970, 4), an aesthetic climate not dissimilar to that of modern Britain! Very few scholars indeed took an interest in Victorian architecture until twenty years after Trevelyan was writing. Furneaux Johnson, in the preface to his *Victorian architecture* describes Goodhart-Rendel as

'a pioneer of Victorian research at a time when the subject was not only esoteric but beyond the pale' (Furneaux Johnson 1966, 4).

Yet attitudes in the later part of the twentieth century have changed radically. The Victorian Society was founded in 1958, and a glance through the bibliography of Dixon and Muthesius (1978) reveals that most scholarly works date from the 1960s and 1970s onwards. The result of this revival of interest and deeper understanding of Victorian architecture has been a widespread re-evaluation of its *value*. If we take the example of one (in)famous building, St Pancras Station (London), we find that whilst Summerson was able to write in 1970 '[it] has always been the subject of ferocious criticism' (Summerson 1970, 43), in the last few years has been at the centre of a conservation battle in which its own value has never really been questioned. I would argue that the wide acceptance of specific buildings such as these as being of Grade I importance owes much to the endeavours of the academic community in researching the architecture of the Victorian period. Academic interest in a subject 'beyond the pale' has diffused to a wider audience.

My aim in digressing via this example, which may seem to have little to do with the Chester Rows Research Project and its aims, is to make a plea for the continuation of 'pure' research. Let us take as an example the current academic interest in various methods of spatial analysis within buildings, since this is an area of research particularly singled out by Thornes for attention when framing research priorities. I do not propose to review this work here; that job has been admirably done by Graham Fairclough (1992), but it is worth reiterating the underlying assumptions:

- that culture (*ie* social relationships) is the main influence on the use of space
- that such influence is reflexive and spatial layout can affect and dictate social relationships.

These matters are the subject of warm debate within academia, as I discovered in 1988 on meeting Roberta Gilchrist, then working on her DPhil on spatial analysis of medieval nunneries (Gilchrist 1993). Whilst the underlying ideas are logical enough, the detail of some of this work is hard to get to grips with, as those who have tackled *The social logic of space* (Hillier and Hanson 1984) or anything by Amos Rapoport (see Rapoport (1990) for a comprehensive self-referencing exercise) will know. Nevertheless, had we access to those ideas in the mid 1980s (and they were certainly current within the universities at that time), I think the research agenda for the Rows project would have looked rather different. An abstract analysis of use of space, or just one seminar on the subject, might have helped us to stop thinking exclusively about the physical peculiarities of the Rows and to start thinking in a more fruitful way about the way in which they were used, and the way in which those uses have changed over the centuries. Certainly it would have helped us to establish more certain points of contact between the archaeological survey and the parallel documentary research. Rapoport points out, for instance, that

'it is useful to conceptualise the environment as consisting of fixed-feature elements (buildings, floors, walls, *etc*), semi-fixed-feature elements ("furnishings" interior and exterior, of all sorts), and non-fixed-feature elements (people and their activities and settings)' (Rapoport 1990, 13).

With this simple idea in mind, it might have been easier for archaeologist and historian to sit down together and try to relate the fixed-feature elements (the archaeological survey) to the semi-fixed-features (the evidence of inventories) and the non-fixed-features (the evidence of court rolls and City Assembly Books) in a more systematic fashion. Whilst there may be no immediate apparent 'relevance' in this in terms of informing the planning system, there can be no doubt that our understanding of the Rows system would have been enhanced.

Even so, that such abstract understanding can be translated directly into the contemporary planning situation is demonstrated by the modest level of success achieved by the city planners supported by the national amenity societies in modifying a scheme to alter the Dark Row, an anomalous section of the system, whose genesis is more clearly understood now than at the beginning of the project. Here a section of the open stall area between the Row and the street had been occupied by temporary shops which had become permanent in a process akin to the infilling of medieval market places. Generally speaking, this was a process vigorously resisted by a City Assembly sensitive to the

amenity issues of the Rows: shops on both sides impaired the light and aggressive sales pitches from both directions led to complaints of noise and intimidation from shoppers. Yet here in the very centre of the city, at the Cross where the main streets meet, the commercial value outweighed the inconvenience and the extra commercial space was fossilised. An important spatial expression of historical social tensions was under threat. By explaining the significance of the Dark Row to the developers, it was possible to persuade them to amend their plans to retain the layout to a large extent, without sacrificing the undoubted improvements that a modern reuse would bring.

Having considered one way in which 'blue skies' academic research might have influenced our research programme away from its primary agenda as set out above, I would now like to turn to 'Thornes' plea for more interlocking research designs, for broader thematic approaches and for synthesis. With all of these comments I cannot agree too whole-heartedly. The Chester Rows Research Project *has* broadened out into a more thematic investigation of urban building in general (see Harris forthcoming) and of urban retailing (see Brown forthcoming), but both these broader themes have been addressed in detail only after the end of the fieldwork period. Other urban projects were being undertaken at the time, notably in nearby Shrewsbury (Baker *et al*, 1993), yet communications were woeful. There are two clear lessons to be learnt here. The first is that information concerning projects in hand should be more widely available; the second is that early dissemination of results, whether by interim report or conference paper, is essential. A final thought, perhaps a wishful one, is that as a profession we need to develop the confidence to try out our ideas to a wide peer group audience at the formulation stage, without fear of ridicule or intellectual theft.

There is a further implication to be considered here. How are we to find the time to be such paragons of virtue and academic openness? Many projects are hampered by the constraints of an overloaded work schedule, and this applies to ivory-towered academics as much as to harassed field officers. The demands of tight deadlines, administration, teaching of students or training of junior staff apply to us all, and research is the area that inevitably gets squeezed (I write this with some feeling at 8.30pm on a Bank Holiday Monday). The institutional separation of theory and practice between the universities and the field profession is one that is evident for all to see and has been commented upon recently by the doyen of theoreticians, Ian Hodder (1993, 18). In my own private Utopia, there would be greater fluidity between universities and the profession, for teaching forces one to synthesise, and fieldwork demands realistic research goals; to be able to operate in both spheres would surely enhance academic capabilities. In the real world, I can only suggest that we continue to hold regular seminars at which criticism is constructive; that we all continue to teach wherever and whenever the opportunity arises, at all levels; and that full-time teachers continue to carry out their own fieldwork in vacations and write broad syntheses based on current work throughout the profession.

## MONITORING PATTERNS OF THREAT

So much for the value of 'pure' research and peer discussion and communication. Let us now turn to 'Thornes' first mechanism for prioritising research, that of monitoring

patterns of threat. His position within the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) might justifiably be considered as something of a crow's nest from which to view the state of the art in this arena, for RCHME have been forced by circumstance and changing opinions regarding the 'usefulness' of research, to alter their agenda from exhaustive county-by-county inventories to thematic surveys. The Warrant of 1908 charges the Royal Commissions

'to make an inventory of the ancient and historical monuments of England, Scotland, and Wales from the earliest times to the year 1714 ... and to specify those which seem most worthy of preservation.'

RCHME's Warrant of 1992 demonstrates a change of emphasis; the purpose of the record is now

'both to enhance and update the National Monuments Record of England *and also to respond to statutory needs; by providing advice and information relevant to the preservation and conservation of such buildings ... of archaeological, architectural, and historical interest* [italics inserted].'

The change seems to lie not in an abandonment of the terms of the Warrant, but rather in a change of emphasis. Projects are defined through the identification of threats to specific classes of building or monument, and national or regional surveys of these are then carried out. Rather than preservation being a by-product of research, the opposite obtains.

From the point of view of the conservation lobby, this is indeed 'useful' research, and it was undoubtedly one of the aims of the Chester Rows Research Project. It is an aim that was achieved, for in the years following the end of the fieldwork period, the statutory list of buildings of architectural and historic importance for the city of Chester was reviewed, and the archive of the project was extensively used for that purpose. Conservation decisions made in the light of an extensive record are predicated by the conclusions drawn from research: protection always tends to be offered to buildings and monuments which can be defined as 'the earliest', or 'the most typical' or 'the most unusual', and the existence of a wide database from which to choose can only improve the quality of the lists.

This returns me to my original point. Although I would not wish to minimise the importance of such threat-led surveys, I would argue that they should not be allowed entirely to replace academic research into topics which may be entirely the interest of the individual researcher, for it is here that the fortuitous discovery, or the offbeat observation, may change the direction of research across the board or identify new classes of structure for the attention of the statutory machinery.

## THE WIDER PERSPECTIVE

To conclude my thoughts on the research agenda for the Rows project, I would reiterate that a broad context is essential. In a serendipitous way, we achieved such a context for the Rows investigation, but I still boggle sometimes at the sheer luck of it: for instance, we simply 'found' our documentary historian, Jane Laughton, sitting in the City Record

Office one day, researching for her MA dissertation. Rick Turner developed the idea that there might be a direct link between Constantinople and Chester (as A J Taylor had postulated for Caernarfon Castle (in Colvin 1963, 370)) as the result of an entirely chance encounter with Girouard's *Cities and people* (1985), and this was written up as part of an interim statement (Grenville 1990). Further research, discussion, and peer comment suggest that it is not an idea we would necessarily wish to persist with, yet its conception opened our eyes to the political circumstances and their knock-on effect on the economy of late thirteenth-century Chester, a period in which considerable rebuilding seems to have taken place, even if it is not necessarily the date of the origin of the Row system. Our reading has stretched out beyond Chester to the rest of Britain and the continent, beyond published sources to the manuscript evidence, beyond archaeology into political and economic history, anthropology, historical geography, and spatial studies. Such broadly-based investigations are essential if the frontiers of our knowledge are to be significantly moved forward. I would suggest, however, that wider perspectives are built into the initial research design. In the Department of Archaeology at the University of York we hold seminars at the outset of a new research project, in which we all contribute to the research design; perhaps there is a role here for the Institute of Field Archaeologists Buildings Special Interest Group, not to 'vet' new projects, but to arrange for their wide discussion at the planning stage.

#### METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH AIMS

Mention was made at the beginning of this paper of the reflexive nature of methodology on research aims. The stated aims of the Chester Rows Research Project were:

- to produce as full a measured and drawn record of surviving medieval fabric as possible
- to produce a written account of the buildings including post-medieval fabric
- to produce a photographic record in as much detail as possible
- to carry as full a programme of dendrochronological dating as possible
- to back field observation with the evidence of early maps, drawings, and etchings
- to document recent changes to the building as known from City Planning Department records.

The greatest problem we faced was the continuing commercial success of the Rows. It was perhaps a little unfortunate that we were working through the economic boom of the late 1980s. Practically every shop was occupied, both at street and Row level, and trade was brisk. Shopkeepers were patient and interested in what we were doing, but there is a limit to the disruption one can cause and it was not possible to record every building in the detail we would have liked. Problems were compounded in 1988 by the introduction of all-day licensing of bars – all work in the busy city centre pubs now had to be completed by 11.00am.

Wherever possible we produced measured ground plans at street and Row level. These were all produced without instruments, either by offsetting or triangulation (strictly speaking, trilateration) with hand-held tapes. This is a method which can be operated by

a resourceful lone fieldworker (with plenty of drawing pins and patience), although it is easier and quicker with two people. The second operative need not in this case be skilled in any way, simply being relied upon to stand where they are told and hold the tape taut. It is interesting to consider alternative methods we might have used. Offsetting from a pre-established grid is not an option in a busy urban context, but the use of a Total Station Theodolite (TST) might have been a possibility, had we the financial resources to acquire one. It is interesting to speculate on whether this would have been an advantage. On balance, I think not: the difficulties of using a tape measure in a space almost entirely occupied by, for instance, wedding dresses, are not inconsiderable. The disruption caused by the setting up of a TST and the removal of shop displays in order to provide sight lines would have been excessive. A second, skilled fieldworker would have been required for much of the time. Where an instrument survey would have been useful, however, would have been in the tying of the records of one property to its neighbours, for I was never entirely satisfied that the crucial relationships of property-to-property were adequately recorded. In the absence of reliable information of this kind, our conclusions about the setting out of plots in medieval Chester are necessarily vague.

In terms of the debate over levels of recording, then, our system must be seen to be a fairly low level one. Stratigraphic relationships were observed and noted but not systematically recorded on context sheets since they were too sporadic to be standardised in such a way. Rather, reports consisted of free-flow text structured according to a system derived loosely from the list description format. Plans and elevations were drawn wherever possible but often a photograph had to suffice. Generally it was only in properties which were between tenancies or were not in commercial use that detailed stone-by-stone or timber-by-timber record drawings could be made; indeed, in most units, such evidence was in any case plastered over.

Nevertheless, I would argue that in terms of the research agenda, the level of recording was appropriate. Since my doubts about that agenda concern the broader aspects of the project rather than the approach to the buildings themselves, I cannot say that this is an element I would greatly change, were the project to be re-designed with the benefit of hindsight. Extensive surveys should be recognised as such and the practical constraints of contemporary usage have to be respected if we are not to run the risk of losing popular support for what we do. The moment for a more intensive record is when particular questions about a particular building require answers; such questions may well be inspired by the 'blue skies' research findings ('now that we know  $x$  about the Rows, can we establish  $y$  through a detailed survey?') or by an impending threat (such as the refitting of a shop unit, or whole area like the Dark Row).

This has been an idiosyncratic reflection upon the Chester Rows Research Project. I do not suppose that it reflects the views of my erstwhile colleagues in whole or in part although doubtless we would coincide in some respects. My failure to consult them over this paper has been deliberate, so that I can state, unequivocally that these are my views and my colleagues are not implicated. In summary, I would argue that a broadly-based research agenda should be the result of wide consultation within the profession, and that communication, between practitioners in the field and researchers inside and outside academia is the key to this. Threat-led research is, of course, important but we should



allow it to obscure pure research at our peril. Methodologies should be established in the light of both the research agenda and the practicalities on the ground.

Finally, it would be cowardly to end without a consideration of whether the project achieved its stated aims. Certainly we have provided a fuller survey of the Rows which has already been used to support both listing and conservation decisions. Questions regarding the origins of the system remain open, but we have refined the research agenda. The clarion call to future generations from the late twentieth-century team will be more specific and more directed than Lawson's and Smiths', and might include such questions as:

- in terms of use of space, if not precise design, can the Chester Rows be paralleled elsewhere in Europe? Indeed, is the precise form of any significance at all? This is a question of great importance, and one which Harris (forthcoming) has already chosen to pursue in the field of pure research
- as more detailed work is undertaken on other urban buildings in Chester and beyond, can we refine our typological dating sequence, given the patchy results of the dendrochronological survey?
- where dendrochronology has produced dates, can we use these to make chronological generalisations about urban building forms?
- in the absence of conclusive archaeological evidence for origins, would a more exhaustive investigation of the documentary resource prove more productive?
- are questions of origin interesting? If so, to whom and why?

That we failed to answer the central question is, I suspect, partly to do with the intractability of the evidence, partly because of the vagueness of the original terms of reference, and partly because of the practical and managerial problems of running a major project on a shoestring, the principal problem here being lack of continuity between fieldworkers, and a relatively rapid turnover of personnel. Having said that, I feel that the quality of questions we are now able to ask is significantly enhanced, and that our understanding of this remarkable set of buildings is greatly increased. The transmission of that understanding to the worlds of conservation and development, of pure archaeological research, and of the interested general public, from whom I received help, encouragement, and great support, make the project, for this member of the team, a success.

### *Bibliography*

- Baker, N J, Lawson, J B, Maxwell, R, and Smith, J T, 1993, Further work on Pride Hill, Shrewsbury, *Shropshire History and Archaeology*, 68, 3-64
- Brown, A N (ed), forthcoming, *The Chester Rows Research Project*, London
- Colvin, H M (ed), 1963, *The history of the King's works: 1, the Middle Ages*, London
- Dixon, R, and Muthesius, S, 1978, *Victorian architecture*, London
- Fairclough, G, 1992, Meaningful constructions: spatial and functional analysis of medieval buildings, *Antiquity*, 66, 348-66
- Furneaux Johnson, R, 1966, *Victorian architecture*, Harmondsworth
- Gilchrist, R, 1993, *Gender and material culture: the archaeology of religious women*, Cambridge
- Girouard, M, 1985, *Cities and people*, London

- Grenville, J C, 1990, The Rows of Chester: some thoughts on the results of recent research, *World Archaeology*, 21(3), 446–60
- Harris, R, forthcoming, Medieval urban building forms, unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford
- Hillier, B, and Hanson, J, 1984, *The social logic of space*, Cambridge
- Hodder, I, 1993, Changing configurations: the relationships between theory and practice, in *Archaeological resource management in the UK: an introduction*, J Hunter and I Ralston (eds), 11–18, Stroud
- Lawson, P H, and Smith, J T, 1958, The Rows of Chester: two interpretations, *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, 45, 1–42
- Mason, D J P, 1976, Chester: the evolution and adaptation of its landscape, *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, 59, 14–23
- Rapoport, A, 1990, Systems of activity and systems of settings, in *Domestic architecture and the use of space*, S Kent (ed), 9–20, Cambridge
- Summerson, J, 1970, *Victorian architecture in England: four studies in evaluation*, New York
- Trevelyan, G M, 1946, *English social history*, 3rd edition, London

1998 'Timber framing in the York region' in D D  
Andrews and D F Stenning (eds) *Regional  
Variations in Timber-framed Buildings in  
England and  
Wales down to 1540*. Chelmsford: Essex County  
Council: Planning Department, 130-34.

# VARIATION IN TIMBER-FRAMING TECHNIQUES AROUND YORK: PROBLEMS OF INTERPRETATION

by Jane Grenville

## INTRODUCTION

The geographical area covered by this paper extends for about a 30 to 40 mile radius around the city of York (Fig. 139). It is topographically diverse. The central Vale of York, forming the floodplain of the Ouse river system, was extensively afforested in the medieval period, especially to the north and east (Forest of Galtres). The city itself lies at the confluence of the Ouse and the Foss, at a point where a terminal moraine forms a natural causeway across the floodplain. To the west are the limestone Pennines; northwards lie the sandstone and limestone North York Moors, whilst to the east the chalk belt of south-east England reaches its culmination in the Yorkshire Wolds. The low sandstone range of the Howardian Hills form a barrier between the Vale of York and the Vale of Pickering to the north-east.

The literature on timber framing in and around York is fairly extensive: there exist syntheses for the county (Harrison and Hutton 1984; Hayes and Rutter 1972; Hutton 1973; Giles 1986; RCHM 1987; Ryder 1979, 1987 and this volume), and for the city (RCHM York 1972, 1975 & 1981). The situation around York is not unlike that described by Ryder; the variety of timber-framing traditions visible within an hour's motoring from the city make it an excellent location for the instruction of students. This paper will summarise briefly the different types. It will go on to consider the significance of these types and their distribution, in an attempt to raise, rather than answer, questions about the

understanding of 'type' by the carpenters who built the houses and the mechanism of transmission of different techniques.

## THE CITY OF YORK

York is notable for its concentration of about fifty crown-post roofs, but the RCHM noted a few examples of other methods of framing roofs, which would in Essex be regarded as earlier than these. Three passing-brace roofs (2 College Street, 2 Minster Court and 127 Coney Street) were recorded (RCHM York 1981, lxviii). No dendrochronological dates are available but analogy with dated roofs in the Minster (north transept, c.1250, and the Chapter House, c.1280) suggests that they are indeed chronologically earlier than the earliest datable domestic crown post, which is in Lady Row, Goodramgate (dated by documentary evidence to 1316). The development of crown-post roofs in York has been nicely demonstrated by the Royal Commission (Fig. 140), showing straight crown posts of slight scantling in the early to mid 14th century being replaced by increasingly chunky examples, which, by the 15th century, had acquired pronounced jowling to their heads. York crown posts are always braced downwards to the tie-beam, and upwards, longitudinally, to the collar purlin. Many York crown-post roofs carry side purlins, clasped between raking struts and common rafters: the earliest example of this is at 12-15 Newgate, dated by documentary means to 1337. The reasons

for the dominance of the crown-post tradition in York have yet to be satisfactorily elucidated. Ryder (this volume) points out other reasonably local examples and links these to an 'urban merchant group', yet there are isolated rural examples, such as Foulbridge and Canon's Garth, Helmsley (RCHM Yorks. 1987, 203), in the North Riding, and Sharlston, and Manston Old Hall, Austhorpe in the West Riding (Giles 1986, 20-21). Unlike the urban examples, some of which are no more than basic tenements, the rural buildings are all of high status. The nature of the connection, if any, between them, and the significance of the roof type to both carpenters and their patrons, must surely be high on the research agenda.

Ultimately, in the 16th century, crown posts disappear altogether. In itself, this is not an unusual development and it is one that may be observed in many other areas of the country. What is perhaps surprising is the variety of positioning of the side purlins in a context where one might expect to find a tradition dominated exclusively by clasped

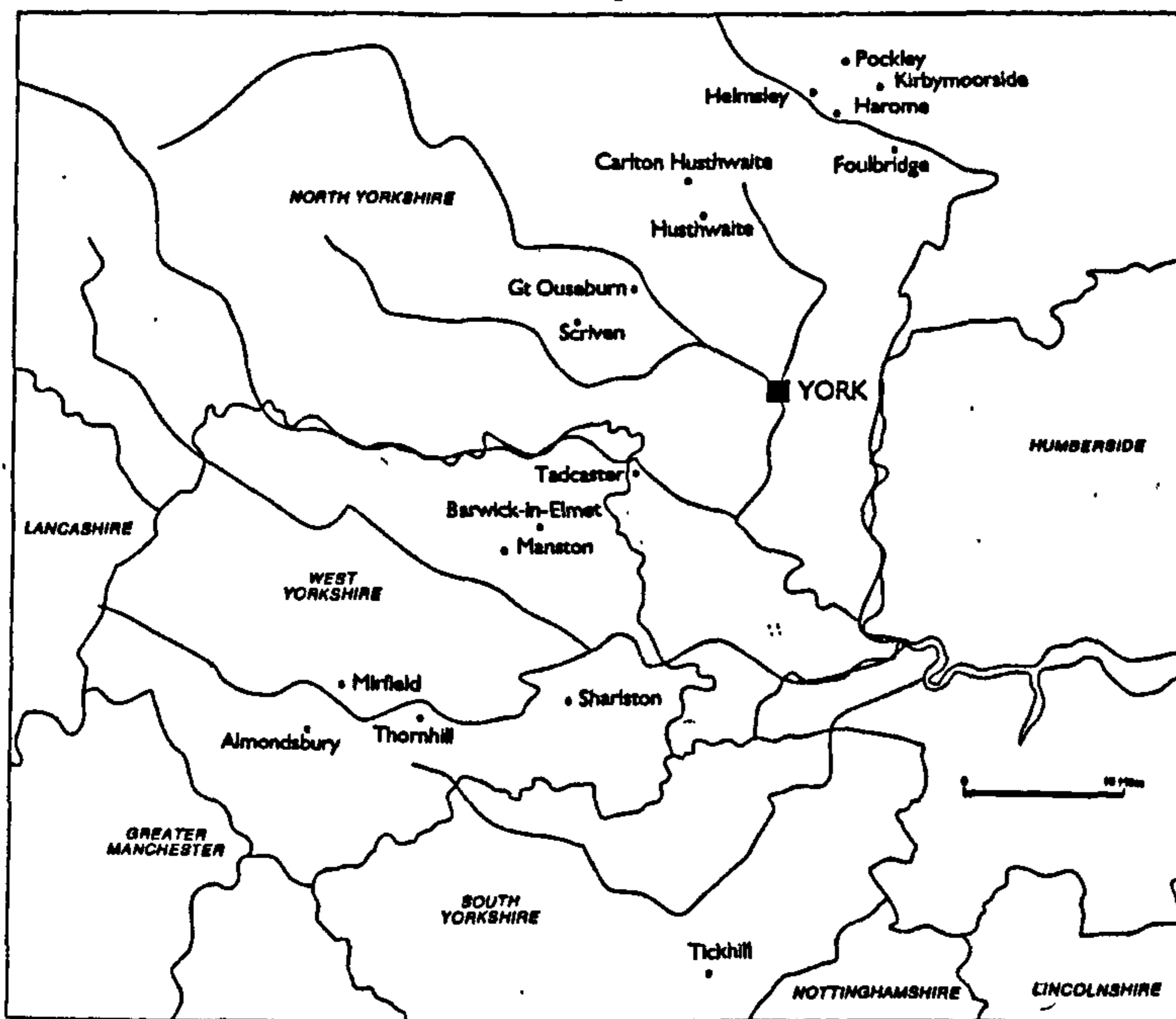


Fig. 139 Location of places and the environs of York mentioned in the text.

purlins. There are examples of trenched purlins at 79 Low Petergate, 23 Stonegate, the rear of 75-77 Low Petergate, and 49 Stonegate (the latter with short principals); of threaded purlins at 5-6 and 53-54 Fossgate; and of purlins clasped not between raking struts and rafters, but between short spurs from queen struts to common rafters (the King's Arms public house, King's Staithe). The significance of such a diversity of types which, under J. T. Smith's scheme, one might expect to be geographically distinct, has not been adequately explored. Does it represent a merging of traditions, a breakdown in regional identities amongst carpenters, a functional approach to individual problems, or should we be looking more closely at the context of each building to establish significant correlations of status, size or use? Is this lack of pattern repeated in other towns where crown posts had dominated in the Middle Ages (for instance, Tickhill)?

Wall-framing in York shows similar variation. Posts are usually jowled, in an angular fashion in earlier buildings, but developing into a smooth profile by the end of the timber-framing period. Wall studs generally rise through a whole storey, the exceptions being St. William's College (a high status institutional building of the later 15th century) and a late domestic range (probably 16th century) at King's Court. Wall bracing displays considerable variety. The Royal Commission suggests that the choice of upward or downward bracing rests largely on position within the structure, with down-braces generally associated with jettied walls and up-braces with unjettied walls (RCHM York 1981, 1xiii). The earliest examples are straight and thin, as are the very latest. In between, from the late 14th to the early 16th centuries, broad curved braces are usual, whilst later 16th-century examples are short and ogee-shaped. Often the precise choice of the number and disposition of braces seems to be dictated by aesthetic considerations, as for example at the Bedern Hall (mid 14th century), 76 Low Petergate (15th century), and 41-45 Goodramgate (early 16th century). The significance of these aesthetic choices remains to be assessed, but is an area which deserves more consideration (see Stenning, this volume).

### TO THE WEST OF YORK

Whilst a small market town like Tickhill may present some similarities with York in terms of framing, a much closer neighbour, Tadcaster, presents a different picture altogether, and is perhaps the nearest representative of a West Riding king-post tradition. Giles (1986) has suggested an exclusively post-1450 date for the adoption of the king post as the most common roof type. The Ark in Tadcaster is an easterly survivor and displays many of the traits associated with the type: timber of wide scantling, herringbone framing in the gable end and close studding.

As in York, wall framing generally took the form of storey-high posts and studs, but for visual impact the West Riding carpenter depended more upon the disposition of studs than braces. Herringbone infill, both in wall frames and gable ends, may be observed in many West Riding houses: Lees Hall, Thornhill, the Old Rectory, Mirfield and

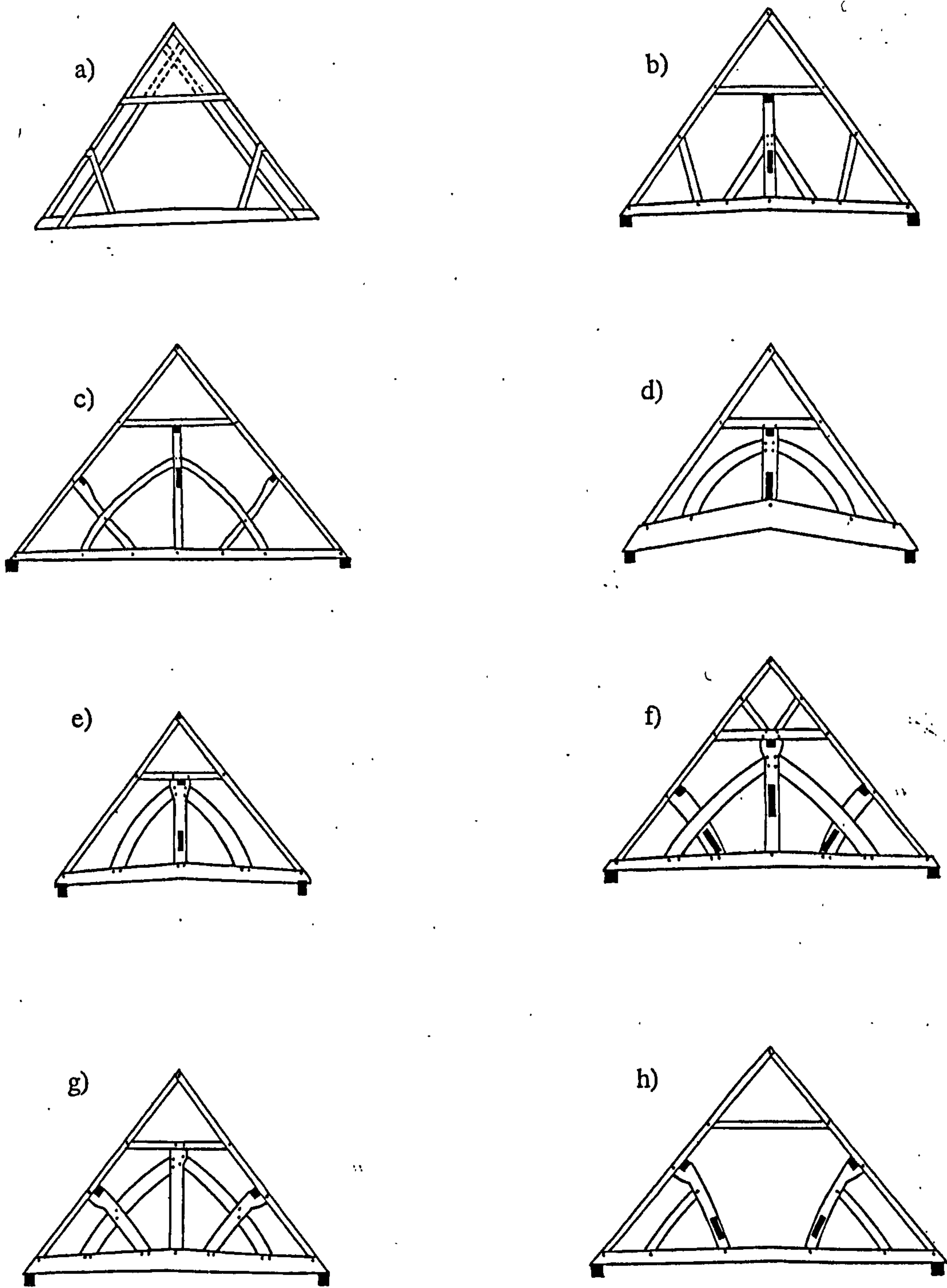
Wormald's Hall, Almondbury will serve as examples (Giles 1986). Close studding, too, formed an important part of the repertoire (Lees Hall, Thornhill again, and the now demolished Kiddal Hall, Barwick-in-Elmet). Two houses display elements of square-panelled decorative framing more usually associated with Lancashire and Cheshire in the later 16th and 17th centuries; they are Charlston Hall, where the porch of 1574 has curved quadrant braces, and Fennay Hall, Almondbury. All these examples lie well to the west of York. Some interesting outliers occur in Helmsley, some 25 miles to the north of York. Rectory House, now part of the Black Swan Hotel complex, but built around 1580-90 as the dwelling of the Duke of Rutland's agent, has herringbone infill to the all panelling and curved quadrants to the gable end. The Old Manor House is close studded with a diamond pattern to the gable end. At Canons Garth (now, and perhaps originally, the vicarage) the gable end has a herringbone motif, echoed a few miles away in Kirkbymoorside at High Hall (RCHM Yorks. 1987). Whether these northern examples represent survivors of a once more plentiful group is uncertain. What is clear is that all are high status; where lower status timber-framing survives on the North York Moors, it is invariably cruck-framed (RCHM Yorks. 1987, Hayes and Rutter 1972).

### CRUCK-FRAMED BUILDINGS OF THE NORTH YORK MOORS

All the surviving timber-framed buildings on the North York Moors (other than the high status structures on the fringes mentioned above) are cruck-framed. Their form is simple, with curved blades rising to a saddle which carries the ridge-piece (Alcock's type C), and there is evidence, in the form of surviving buildings, re-used cruck blades, and documentary sources, for at least 220 examples (RCHM Yorks. 1987, 197). Surviving examples are of fairly modest social status, with the greatest concentration, in the villages of Pockley and Harome, near Helmsley, being tenants' dwellings which a reactionary estate management regime failed to modernise in the 19th century. Harome Manor House (now reconstructed at the Ryedale Folk Museum in Hutton-le-Hole) is exceptional in terms of size, craftsmanship and social status.

The dating of these buildings remains problematical. No dendrochronological work has been carried out and it is arguable that the timbers are of insufficient quality to produce results. There are documentary references to forks or siles around the moor-edge market town of Pickering in the last years of the 15th century (RCHM Yorks. 1987), but apart from that there is little to go on. In the absence of good documentary or archaeological evidence, the RCHM has proposed that of the standing buildings 'the majority are probably of the 17th century, but some may have been erected in the later part of the 16th.' More certain is their identification of the abandonment of the type in the mid 17th century, with the introduction of first floors. Cruck frames were eminently unsuitable in such structures, since the curved blades restricted headroom upstairs.

If the dating is somewhat uncertain, there can be little



*Fig. 140 Medieval roof trusses in York (after RCHM York 1981). a) No. 2 College Street. Early 14th century. b) Nos. 60-72 Goodramgate. 1316. c) Nos. 12-15 Newgate. 1337. d) Red Lion public house, Merchantgate. 15th century. e) Nos. 16-22 Coney Street. 15th century. f) No. 44 Stonegate. 15th century. g) Nos. 41 & 43 Low Petergate. Early 16th century. h) Nos. 16-20 Ogleforth. 16th century.*

doubt that cruck framing was predominant in the late and sub-medieval periods. The surviving examples on the Moors, coupled with the documentary evidence for their former existence on the Yorkshire Wolds and in parts of the lowland Vale of Mowbray (see Harrison and Hutton 1984, 6-7 for a discussion of the cruck boundary in North Yorkshire), provide a strong indication of their relative importance as elements within the building stock. It is worth noting in passing, therefore, the argument put forward by Stuart Wrathmell for the use of cruck construction at the deserted medieval village of Wharram Percy (Wrathmell 1989) in the 13th and 14th centuries. Basing his reasoning on the disposition of padstones within a cruck structure, and arguing backwards from the known tradition of the post-medieval period, he has re-interpreted the peasant farmsteads at Wharram as being 'semi-permanent, rather than the flimsy structures with which we are so familiar in the literature on deserted medieval villages.' His conclusions are not without problems, as he notes himself, yet the paper is an interesting and useful experiment in hypothesis testing. Such inductive methods are perhaps somewhat alien to the study of vernacular architecture, yet it may be that this approach could signal a way forward from the empirical approaches we are used to.

### VALE OF YORK TIMBER FRAMING

The timber-framing tradition of the Vale of York has been extensively discussed elsewhere (Hutton 1973, Harrison and Hutton 1984, 123-5). It is characterised by the use of the interrupted sill, a technique seen by Smith as typically northern. One good example is Well Farm, Great Ouseburn. Another more extreme case is Black Bull Cottage, Husthwaite, where only the first floor is framed, the ground floor being underbuilt in brick (possibly an original feature) yet the posts reach down to ground level.

Close studding without midrails, a south-eastern feature, is common in the Vale of York, although some structures are remarkable for having very large wattled panels without any studs at all, the Thatched Cottage, Carlton Husthwaite, and Home Farm Scriven being the prime examples (Harrison and Hutton 1984, 123-4). Upwards bracing, which Smith would identify as predominantly western, is the other diagnostic feature of the walls of this group of buildings. Roofs are typically of common-rafter type. A small group of sixteen have no longitudinal strengthening at all, whilst others have clasped purlins, or purlins supported by curved struts (for distribution map see Harrison and Hutton 1984, fig. 8.14).

Taking all these characteristics into account, one might define the Vale of York group as truly hybrid, if the attributes of the various schools of carpentry have been correctly identified. A consideration of this proposition must be contingent upon a discussion of classification and typology in a broader theoretical framework, and it is to this problem that I wish to address the final section of this paper.

### DISCUSSION

The early history of any discipline is characterised by the

attempt to create order out of an apparently chaotic set of data. Biologists set up taxa, geologists defined geological series, historians identified periods. The study of vernacular architecture has followed the same intellectual trajectory, as has archaeology in a more general sense. We have identified certain variables within groups of artefacts or buildings, sought similarities and differences between them, and constructed series of types on that basis. Some typologies are easier to explain and justify than others - they 'work' better, and seem to make more sense in the context of the society that produced them. It is arguable that this is because the categories that we have isolated are close to those that the original craftsmen recognised; in other words we have created a structure that means something, or meant something. The fact that J.T. Smith's typology for carpentry schools remains a platform for useful and reasonable discussion, thirty years on, suggests that he may well have identified meaningful categories. In order to refine those categories, it seems to me that we should not, at this stage, simply be adding more and more information to our collection, but rather investigating precisely what those categories do mean. It is in seeking to explain the typology that we may well find that we are able to refine its parameters.

During the conference, far more was said about variability than similarity, and one of the problems may be that of resolution. By what criteria are we to recognise 'schools'? Whilst some characteristics, such as the crown-post roofs, are easy to recognise, their significance is less certain. An example of this is the absence of crown posts in the immediate vicinity of the city of York, and their eccentric distribution - why Tickhill but not Tadcaster, for instance, and why some high status rural buildings yet not others? And why does the appearance of homogeneity break down completely in the post-medieval period?

Explanation in archaeology is the discipline's most critical and yet most daunting task. The temptation always remains, especially when dealing with a highly complex set of data such as the variations in timber-framing techniques, to argue that the information is too incomplete and that we must gather more before we can reach a reasoned conclusion. To that extent, it is perhaps not surprising that much of the conference was taken up with the comparison of data, rather than its explanation. Yet two interesting general propositions were advanced, one concerning craft organisation and the other a restatement of Mercer's 1975 theoretical position regarding the adoption or abandonment of innovation in building.

Richard Bond, in discussing the timber-framing techniques he has meticulously recorded in London and its outliers, stressed the importance of building regulations and the carpenters' guild. The significance of formal regulation may well be an aspect of timber-framing that we tend to overlook. York is well-served for both surviving buildings and documentary evidence for the guild organisation of the high middle ages. The latter has been studied in some detail by Heather Swanson (1980). The relationship between the carpenter and his guild, and the differences in this respect, if

any, between urban and rural craftsmen, may well hold the key to the explanation of some of the differences observable in type distributions. I would suggest this as one important area of the research agenda to be addressed.

Peter Smith restated Eric Mercer's 1975 proposition that innovation in its first stages tends to be geographically widespread, and that regional differences occur when one area takes up a new form as another discards it. The distribution of crown posts in the York area might be seen to support this view, with a fairly widespread, if light, distribution before 1450, and the form thereafter confined to the urban merchant communities. This is an interesting idea that seems to accord with known temporal and geographical distributions: what it fails to do is to provide us with an explanation, a real understanding, of the mechanism that produced those distributions.

Both of these propositions are rather specific. In searching for a more abstract way to formulate my thoughts about this problem, I came across the useful concept of 'isochrestic variation', developed in Palaeolithic studies by an American archaeologist named James Sackett. The terminology may be daunting, but as Sackett himself explains, the idea is simple: 'the term is a neologism from the Greek which literally translates as "equivalent in use" and which connotes in essence that there is more than one way to skin a cat' (Sackett 1990, 33). Sackett's basic thesis, as I understand it, is that 'style' (by which we may understand the non-functional aspects of artefacts) has a particular 'function', that of conferring a sense of identity on its user. To take an example from the evidence under examination, upwards bracing and downwards bracing are equivalent in use, but, according to Smith, the choice of which to use is dependent upon a cultural self-identification, on the part of the craftsman, with a particular school of carpentry. What dictates choice is not simply a functional decision, but also a wish to conform (or not to conform!) to a perceived norm. Stylistic and functional variation cannot, therefore, be seen in isolation from one another, but must be investigated simultaneously. We may find ourselves re-organising categories in a way that I can best describe as leaving our existing typologies in place, whilst cross-cutting them with other analyses which may suggest to us isochrestic variation in style.

It seems to me that this is the process which J. T. Smith was pursuing, even though he may not agree with me in my characterisation of his work. The danger lies in allowing his typology to become fossilised as a thing in itself, to be accepted or rejected as we amass more and more detailed evidence. Conversely, the potential of setting up a more abstract theoretical framework in which to operate is that it will encourage us to be alert to other aspects of framing that display isochrestic variation, and force us to try to explain that variation in terms of wider social contexts. Thus Bond's discussion of the influence of guilds takes on a more pointed significance, whilst Peter Smith's assertion that innovation is widespread, and only later do its attributes become geographically distinct, becomes a proposition which

demands further serious testing against the available evidence.

I should stress that I am not making major statements about our methodological approaches, but rather trying to encourage greater clarity of thought, in the hope that specific changes in the way we work will follow. I am arguing that the notion of isochrestic variation may sharpen our reasoning in at least two areas of study. One is that we consciously extend and refine the search for stylistic variables to other aspects of timber-framing, and here I might suggest, but it is only an initial suggestion, the investigation of different tooling and motor habits amongst carpenters, and specific joinery details, rather than concentrating only on the grosser elements of the frame such as the major members and their inter-relationships. We might also consider variations in plan type in this context. Above all we must be more precise in our thinking about which variables we are considering at any given time. Secondly, I would argue that we must be constantly ready to revise our opinions about what these isochrestic categories mean. Amongst prehistoric archaeologists, there has been a tendency to equate style with ethnic identity, as in my favourite characters from my undergraduate studies, the Protruding Foot Beaker People who romped about Europe in the Early Bronze Age. As medievalists, we have access to more extensive categories of information about our subjects, and the absolute imperative to prosecute inter-disciplinary studies has always seemed essential to me. The study of guild structure in relation to isochrestic variation in the surviving evidence of buildings seems a good place to start. The influence of patronage may be another interesting area, as might the difference between the domestic and the commercial domains, if it existed in a way we can recognise in the archaeological record.

To summarise my argument, then, I would call upon those who study vernacular timber-framed buildings to keep before them two constant questions: what is the nature of the variation we are observing in our material? And more importantly, if a typology works, why does it work? How may we explain it? At the moment we are overloaded with detail that we cannot explain. I would argue then, that we should be taking a high-risk approach to the study of vernacular timber-framing. The time has come to set hypotheses, in the way that Wrathmell has for the excavated buildings of Wharram Percy, and then to test those hypotheses in the light of the existing data. This will almost certainly result in further, and more focused fieldwork. Even if we make some wrong assumptions to begin with, the process of making mistakes is a fruitful one. We are more likely to gain answers from our material if we ask it questions, than if we expect mute timbers to speak. We run the risk of imposing 20th-century meanings on a medieval and post-medieval social context, but that is a risk that all historians face.



1999 'Archaeology or architecture?' in K Clark (ed)  
*Conservation Plans in Action*. London: English  
Heritage, 91-3.

## **Archaeology or Architecture?**

*Jane Grenville, Department of Archaeology (incorporating the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies), University of York*

There has long been a debate over who is the best person to understand a site — an architect or an archaeologist. The importance of archaeological research in the conservation of historic buildings is a battleground that is beginning to resemble, metaphorically, one of those notorious salients in the First World War — a minute area agonisingly fought over time and time again, the intellectual victory changing hands each time, but the protagonists so exhausted and battered that in the end the purpose of the conflict is lost and it becomes an end in itself. It is a battle of which I am particularly weary myself, since the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at the University of York has recently been merged with the Department of Archaeology of which I am a member. The resulting crisis of identity amongst a body of international students to whom association with an archaeology department sent out all the wrong messages to their home countries or sponsoring organisations has generated much heat and, in my mind at least, a certain amount of light, as I hope to show. Before that, however, I would like to comment upon two specifically archaeological contributions to building conservation.

The first is that of technique. Archaeologists trained in the unravelling of stratigraphic sequence in excavation have developed certain ways of looking at buildings and of untangling complicated building sequences. Often this has involved minute recording, and the specification of stone-

by-stone drawings is not unusual. These techniques are now widely accepted, as is the view that archaeology is concerned not only with sub-surface deposits and artefacts, but also with the visible material culture of all periods, above and below ground. The building itself must always form the starting point for the drafting of a Conservation Plan, for it is in the fabric that a record of day-to-day decisions taken on site by earlier builders resides. Nevertheless, I suggest that the profession has painted itself into a corner by allowing itself to be identified only in terms of these technical approaches. For, as Paul Drury has noted, and J T Smith argued nearly 10 years ago (Smith 1989), knowledge advances not by the accumulation of more and more facts, but by the posing of better and better questions. I am less concerned, then, with the stale and fruitless debate of whether archaeology or architecture is 'better', than with how interdisciplinary approaches can help us to frame more interesting questions. How, for instance, were those daily decisions of earlier builders made? They were influenced not only by practical factors, but also by social and ideological conditions, which, by patient and careful analysis of the building and its historical context, we may be able to comment upon.

Secondly, archaeologists are particularly at home with the notion of rapid assessment and evaluation of historic significance. The routine of desk-top assessment and field evaluation for sub-surface archaeology was introduced in 1990 by PPG 16, and has bred a generation of professionals who are used to the rapid appraisal of the nature and potential of archaeological remains, by recourse to documentary sources (original documentation and the records of earlier investigations) and to site survey of all types (observation, geophysics, trial trenching). Some of these techniques (most particularly the desk-top documentary trawl) are directly transferable to the study of buildings. Perhaps more critical, however, is the transfer of a mindset: archaeologists are entirely at home with the concept of assessing significance in advance of carrying out conservation works. It is perhaps not surprising that Conservation Plans have been pushed in this country by the archaeological arm of English Heritage. It is not a particular quirk of disciplinary difference that enables archaeologists to see themselves as somehow more competent than architects, architectural historians or conservationists, but simply the result of a habit of mind inculcated by current professional practice, whose genesis I have discussed elsewhere (Grenville 1993), which demands an assessment of significance prior to full-scale work.

This brings me back to the issue of significance, which is central to the process of evaluation, a word at whose very heart lies the concept of value. It is here that an interdisciplinary approach seems to me to be essential, yet as far as I know it is largely within the sphere of academic archaeology that any serious debate about the attribution of value has taken place. Perhaps this is because archaeology, rather like the arts, has tended to be seen as a luxury rather than a necessity in economically straitened times. Archaeologists are therefore accustomed to arguing for the significance of their work for the wider audience. In a paper that has influenced me profoundly, Bill Lipe, a prominent American archaeologist, provided an analytical framework to aid in the assignment of value to the archaeological resource (Lipe 1984). He proposes four categories of value for cultural items: associational, informational, aesthetic, and economic. Associational value is that which a community places on its past for whatever reason — nationalistic, regional identity (or regional chauvinism), local pride, sentimentality, nostalgia. Informational value is that research value that the professional historian (using that term in its broadest sense to embrace all those who study the past) seeks to elucidate, and which has been championed energetically by Martin Carver (Carver

1996). Aesthetic value speaks for itself, yet we remain constantly aware of its subjective and changeable nature. Economic value is represented by the earning power of the cultural item. A historic building may be valuable in its own right as a magnet for cultural tourism (in other words, it may be possible to make money by exploiting the three previous values), but more frequently, it is an unrelated activity contained in the building or the site itself that is economically critical. How many of us have heard a developer dismiss a case for conservation with the words 'it simply doesn't stack up economically'? It is essential that we should be alive to the unspoken assumption here, that in the end all value is subordinate to economic value — conservationists beware!

In working more closely with architectural conservators, as I have done over the last 18 months, I have become more and more convinced of the interdisciplinary nature of this value debate. As an archaeologist trained in the positivist scientific tradition of the 1970s, I have consciously resisted arguments of aesthetic value, yet it is clear that these are critical in any conservation project. Associational value is highly trendy in the contemporary post-modernist theoretical climate of academic archaeology, but it is a matter upon which planners and local architects may be far better placed to comment than archaeologists. Given the techniques of investigation alluded to above, the gathering of informational value may seem to be the most obvious niche for the archaeologist in an interdisciplinary team, but I would argue that the assessment of the significance of information for a wide audience (a critical stage in the development of a Conservation Plan) is a matter for an interdisciplinary team in consultation with the users of the building. Economic value will be well understood by developers, owners, and tenants — it is the job of the Conservation Plan, as I see it, to make the case for associational, informational, and aesthetic value and this can, or at least should, be done only in an interdisciplinary climate. It is not a question of 'Archaeology or Architecture', but rather of 'Archaeology and Architecture'. The contribution of archaeology lies in the technical business of elucidating the constructional history and historical significance of the building, in bringing to that job a professional approach to the business of evaluation, and finally, but no less significantly, in opening the intellectual debate about the definition of *value*.

2000 'Houses and households in late medieval England: an archaeological perspective' in J Wogan Browne *et al* (eds) *Medieval Women: texts and contexts in late medieval Britain*. Turnhout: Brepols, 309-28.

# Houses and Households in Late Medieval England: An Archaeological Perspective

JANE GRENVILLE

We may think we can understand the operation of the medieval household from documentary sources alone, and it is true that court depositions, wills, inventories, tales of domestic circumstance, books of etiquette and didactic poems all have much to say about the workings of the medieval *familia*. However, my principal contention in this paper is that until we begin to comprehend the material framing of social practice, we cannot really speak of 'women's place' in the household (or, for that matter, anyone else's).

I do not wish to dwell on a discussion of the definition of the term 'household' in a medieval urban context. It is a subject that has received much consideration, both in print and in informal discussion.<sup>1</sup> David Herlihy asserts that the late medieval 'household is a co-residential group with parents and children—the primary biological descent group—at its core'.<sup>2</sup> I take a broader view: cross-culturally the related terms 'household', 'family', 'housegroup' all usually denote the smallest unit of social reproduction in spite of the fact that they may have very different

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, *Household and Family in Past Time*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Families in Former Times*, translated from the French by Richard Southern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Barbara Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), and the forthcoming volumes from the York Urban Households Research Group series.

<sup>2</sup> Herlihy, p. 132.

meanings in terms of consanguinity (members of a household are not necessarily related, whereas those of a family generally are, through blood or affinity). This essay, however, concerns households in terms of space and social practice. Having outlined a theoretical approach to the role of space in social practice and a methodology for its study, I will illustrate the potential of that methodology in understanding social space in medieval York. The results presented here represent some of the first applications of this type of analysis to the urban domestic buildings of medieval England: work in progress under the aegis of the Medieval Urban Household Research Group, based at the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York promises further insights in the future.

#### I. FINDING A THEORETICAL BASELINE AND DEVELOPING A METHODOLOGY

Archaeologists have always been interested in the configuration of space. The relative positions of finds and of excavated features have been carefully recorded since scientific excavation began and as standing buildings were drawn into the archaeological repertoire, a similar rigour was applied. Theoretical positions have changed. Early work sought to classify material into typologies. A desire to understand behaviour in the past led to work within the positivist school of 'New Archaeology' in the 1960s and '70s, which saw finds distributions as essentially illustrative of economic systems and social relationships—material culture was recognized as a *passive* reflection of social action. More recently, the role of spatial relationships in the regulation of social action has attracted the attention of the social sciences more generally and archaeology, within the broad church of 'post-processual' archaeology, has taken its cue from sociologists, geographers, architects, and anthropologists to consider the *active* role of material culture and its spatial relationships in the construction of social identity and social behaviour.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Not only my professional formation as an archaeologist but personal experience has forced me to confront the immediacy of the agency of the material setting in social action. During a recent trip to Japan, I was taken by my hostess for a bathe at a hot springs spa. Although I had read in travel guides that there is a very specific etiquette in such situations, my response followed my own, culturally specific, reading of the surroundings: faced with what looked to me like a small swimming pool, I leapt in. The look of anguished horror on my minder's face made me realize instantly what I had done—you should never get into a Japanese bath or hot springs pool without soaping and showering

Methodologically, even in these more dynamic conceptualizations of space, the identification of specific aspects of the material record with exclusive gender patterns is difficult. Straightforward equations between material culture and social status are notoriously unreliable: one-to-one attributions of 'female space' or 'male space' are simplistic and open to challenge, on both theoretical and methodological grounds. The social use of space is more nuanced and subtle than a simple male/female dichotomy allows. Roberta Gilchrist's ground-breaking studies of gendered space wisely focus on the higher status arena of castles where we might expect the separation of the relatively few women in residence (the Earl of Northumberland's household in the fifteenth century contained one hundred and sixty six men and nine women), and on nunneries, culturally encoded as distinctively female spaces (initially constructed as such by *male* interests and certainly inclusive of domains and activities gendered masculine, such as the eucharistic rites of priests and the spiritual direction of confessors).<sup>4</sup> In the busy, crowded context of the medieval town, female and male routines surely coincided physically daily, hourly and minute by minute. While questions of where men or women carried out separate social activities are interesting and important, so too are those of how they interacted in the household, and how gender-specific or mixed activities can be related to the social construction of the household. In looking for exclusively female space, we may be ignoring by far the greater part of women's lives.

How is the archaeologist, whose principal (but by no means sole) category of evidence is material culture, to make a culture-specific identification of social space and hence of the role of buildings and their contents in the construction, reproduction, and subversion of social structure? The problem is not a new one: the relationship between social units and the space that they occupied has frequently been examined in

---

very thoroughly first. The clear water of the pool is for soaking and rinsing clean bodies, and emphatically not for washing dirty ones. The heinous nature of my action was comparable to defecating in an English swimming pool. My embarrassment was made more acute by the fact that, as in one of those lurid recurring nightmares of adolescence, I was actually stark naked. (If it is easy to make such a mistake in one's own life, how much easier to overlook the material conditions of a relatively well-documented past period and to miss a number of important cues and interrelations.)

<sup>4</sup> Roberta Gilchrist, 'Medieval Bodies in the Material World: Gender, Stigma and the Body', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 43-61.



prehistoric and ethnographic contexts.<sup>5</sup> Archaeologists have addressed the problem with varying levels of success.<sup>6</sup> Throughout this essay, the term 'social space' will be used to indicate this relationship between space and behaviour. 'Material culture' refers to the things that people put into their buildings and to the physical structure of the buildings themselves.

## II. METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS FOR INVESTIGATING MEDIEVAL HOUSEHOLDS

Three bodies of work provide particularly helpful tools here: a sociologist's account of the relationship between individual action and social structure, and two new archaeological categories of investigation. Anthony Giddens has proposed a powerful model of the reflexive nature of the relationship between individual action and social structure in his 'theory of structuration'.<sup>7</sup> He argues that actions take place within the preconditions set by social structures, which he defines as 'rule-resource sets, involved in the institutional articulation of social systems'. The results (intended and unintended) of those actions in turn have an impact

---

<sup>5</sup> See for example J. Carsten and S. Hugh-Jones, *About the House: Lévi-Strauss and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Linda Donley-Reid 'A Structuring Structure: The Swahili House', in *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space*, ed. by Susan Kent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 114–26; Donald Sanders, 'Behavioural Conventions and Archaeology: Methods for the Analysis of Ancient Architecture', in *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space*, pp. 43–72; Ruth E. Tringham 'Households with Faces: The Challenge of Gender in Prehistoric Architectural Remains', in *Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory*, ed. by Joan M. Gero and Margaret W. Conkey (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 93–131.

<sup>6</sup> There are three notable volumes of collected papers containing case studies, mainly dealing with excavated remains, and some zanier than others: *The Social Archaeology of Houses*, ed. by Ross Samson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990); *Architecture and Order: Approaches to Social Space*, ed. by Michael Parker Pearson and Colin Richards (London: Routledge, 1994); *Meaningful Architecture: Social Interpretations of Buildings*, ed. by Martin Locock (Aldershot: Avebury, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method: a Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies* (London: Hutchinson, 1976); *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1979); *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984); J. B. Thompson, 'The Theory of Structuration', in *Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and his Critics*, ed. by David Held and J. B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

on social structure, reinforcing it, weakening it, or deliberately challenging it. (A social gaffe, for instance, reinforces accepted etiquette in that the offender is unlikely to repeat the mistake). Structures are thus reproduced or modified by actions, and actions are defined and delimited by structures, even in situations where those structures are being challenged. 'Structuration' is the *process* of this loop. It is not, in itself, anything to do with physical structures, although one often hears it erroneously used in that sense in informal discussion. The implications for the issue of space were articulated by Giddens in his 1979 recension of the theory of structuration:

Most forms of social theory have failed to take seriously enough *not only the temporality of social conduct but also its spatial attributes*. At first sight, nothing seems more banal and uninformative than to assert that social activity occurs in time and space. But neither time nor space have been incorporated into the centre of social theory; rather, they are ordinarily treated more as 'environments' in which social action is enacted.<sup>8</sup>

In *The Constitution of Society* Giddens further argues for the importance of space, in the form of specific 'locales' as an active component, complete with physical cues, in social encounters. Familiarity with the locale induces 'ontological security', by which he means a solidly-based knowledge of 'how to go about' one's daily business (we have all experienced the ontological insecurity of an unfamiliar place).<sup>9</sup> Giddens suggests that 'locales' may be distinguished from simple 'places' by their zoning, both physical and temporal. As an example he takes the subdivisions of the contemporary house, with its various function-specific rooms such as bedrooms and bathrooms, noting that their use changes depending upon the time of day.<sup>10</sup>

Archaeologists have eagerly used Giddens's theory in seeking to identify within the physical remains of the past (both structures and artefacts) those elements of meaning which might lead us to a clearer understanding of the societies that created them as dynamic rather than static. There remain problems in the application of the theory of

---

<sup>8</sup> *Central Problems*, p. 202, original italics.

<sup>9</sup> If one considers how much more frightening a new school is to a small child than a new office to an adult worker, then one begins to understand the importance of structuration in fostering feelings of competence and confidence in social actors—adults have had longer to learn the rules, but every situation brings its own familiarities and fears.

<sup>10</sup> *Constitution*, p. 119.

structuration in that a 'place' may seem identifiable to the stranger, but its significance as a 'locale' may be quite other than that which one expects. It can be difficult to recognize the significance of locales in their function at a given time in the past while they continue to exist today as physical places but with mutated meanings. (There are, for instance, obvious problems of contemporary cultural overlay when it comes to interpreting medieval buildings in which one works or shops daily and reconstructing the meanings they held for their original users). Nevertheless, archaeologists are continuing to explore the structuring of material conditions in which medieval people lived and the kinds of power relations which material culture was used to reproduce, and much attention has been paid to the identification of locales and their associated social meanings in the archaeological record.<sup>11</sup>

My own approach in the York Household Project develops from Giddens's fundamental insight on the interactive nature of social action and social structuring of space. I use a combination of detailed stratigraphic analysis of buildings (by which I mean the use of close observation of the relative chronology of elements within the structure) with the study of buildings as the locale for the interplay of social relations. This methodology has been successfully applied to other categories of building within medieval York to illuminate the dynamics of social networks at the levels of neighbourhood, parish, guild, and city networks,<sup>12</sup> and is currently being developed for households.

---

<sup>11</sup> In medieval archaeology we are fortunate to have two trail-blazing full-length studies, one on nunneries (Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London: Routledge, 1994)) and the other on late medieval domestic halls (Matthew Johnson, *Housing Culture: Traditional Architecture in an English Landscape* (London: University College London Press, 1993)) both dealing in an extensive fashion with large groups of buildings. More recently, Katherine Giles has moved the study forward significantly with her very detailed consideration of the precise relationship between locale and social action in a highly specific context, that of three urban guildhalls. Her work goes a long way to answering some of the methodological problems raised in this paper, and I am indebted to her for many fruitful conversations on the matter: see Katherine Giles, 'The Familiar Fraternity: Guildhalls and Social Identity in Late Medieval and Early Modern York', in *The Familiar Past? Archaeologies of Late-Historical Britain*, ed. by Sarah Tarlow and Susie West (London: Routledge, 1999); Katherine Giles, 'Guildhalls and Social Identity in York, c. 1350–1630' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance Katherine Giles 'The Familiar Fraternity'; also Alex Woodcock 'Social and Symbolic Space in the Late Medieval Parish Church: an Archaeology of All Saints North Street, York' (unpublished master's thesis, University of York, 1996).

In order to understand the recursive nature of social action and social structure, however, we must observe not only the original construction and the more major incidents of alteration but also minor adjustments to internal space and the use of particular construction techniques as visual cues to social actors. Here the ideas of Amos Rapoport are particularly useful for providing clear categories of evidence to consider.<sup>13</sup> He identifies three kinds of element within buildings: fixed features, semi-fixed features and moveable objects. By fixed features, he means the structural elements of a building—its walls, floors, ceilings, and roofs. Semi-fixed fixtures include furnishings, decorations, and moveable partitions. Non-fixed features are the people, their behaviour, and activities. Within the physical structure of the building we may make observations at two of Rapoport's three levels—those of fixed and semi-fixed features. As I will argue below à propos the timber frame of 7 Shambles, choices made in the construction of fixed features (such as roof type and patterns of wall-bracing, for instance), carry more than simply functional meaning. Semi-fixed features, such as temporary partitions, which may be identified in evidence as ephemeral as a line of empty nail-holes, have often been overlooked in past studies, but can raise many important issues.<sup>14</sup> Detailed recording can lead to an understanding of when, within the relative chronology of the house, a given partition was inserted and when it was removed. When seeking an understanding of the structure of the household, such information becomes critical: the question becomes not only *when* but *why* such changes were made. Are we observing changes in household size, family dynamics, commercial operations, or a combination of these and other factors? The detailed stratigraphic observation of the structure feeds back into the theoretical research agenda.

For me, Rapoport's categories have provided a strikingly useful, simple and elegant framework within which to work, for they constantly remind me to consider carefully the relationships between the fixed and semi-

---

<sup>13</sup> Amos Rapoport, 'Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings', in *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space*, ed. by Susan Kent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 9–20 (p. 9).

<sup>14</sup> Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) (RCHME), *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York Volume 111: South-West of the Ouse* (London: HMSO, 1972); *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York Volume IV: Outside the City Walls East of the Ouse* (London: HMSO, 1975); *Volume V: The Central Area* (London: HMSO, 1981).

fixed features (which make up most of the evidence from which I work) and the people who used them, who are the real subject of my study. Rapoport does not offer any quick solutions, but he does provide some caveats. One must beware of the temptation to assume that there is a direct relationship between architecture and behaviour. He notes that it is unsafe to assume that architecture 'encloses behaviour and does so tightly' and hence that 'inferences from architecture to activities ... become much more difficult'.<sup>15</sup> This is because the same space can change its nature by the re-organisation of semi-fixed features and the various activities of its occupants. In commenting on the relevance of this to the study of past societies, he notes that 'the inevitable absence of people makes inference from environment to activities much more difficult. *It also makes analysis of semi-fixed cues critical*'.<sup>16</sup> Further, he insists that single settings are not adequate units of analysis and that a single action can only be understood in the context of a series of activities or as part of daily, weekly, or seasonal behaviour patterns. It follows that single houses, or even groups of houses, are not sufficient units of analysis, but that the spaces in between must also be understood—neighbourhood and urban space become central in an understanding of the function of the urban house. Tucked away in his argument, but of crucial importance for the York project, is the comment that: 'the distinction commonly made between 'function' and 'meaning' is incorrect; meaning is not only part of function but *it is often the most important function*'.<sup>17</sup>

The third of my methodological tools is a way of looking at buildings developed at the Bartlett School of Architecture by Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson.<sup>18</sup> Access analysis at its simplest is a method of mapping movements through buildings. It is an exercise to allow the comparison of one building with another by identifying the elements and relations which make up the character of its social space. By defining relationships through an understanding of the relationship between spaces, rather than the specific size and status properties of individual rooms, a configura-

---

<sup>15</sup> Rapoport, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Rapoport, p. 13, original italics.

<sup>17</sup> Rapoport, p. 12, original italics.

<sup>18</sup> Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Julienne Hanson, *Decoding Homes and Houses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

tional analysis is possible. Put simply, the resulting illustration shows not the plan of the building, but a series of circles, representing rooms, and lines representing access between them (for example, see the access analysis demonstrated in fig. 2 below). Since access in European buildings is normally through doorways, effectively the method is allowing an objective analysis of the degree of control and privacy indicated by the relative position of a room within a house. Thus a room which is immediately reached from the street might be seen as one that is essentially a public space (such as a shop) or a room given over to hospitality (a medieval hall) or a servants' area (a kitchen). It is unlikely to be understood as a private apartment, to which access is limited to selected members of the household. Such spaces might occur more 'deeply' within the access diagram. It is easy to see how such an analytical device privileges the understanding of insider-outsider relationships and underplays the importance of semi-fixed and moveable features in the understanding of the meanings attached to a space. Nevertheless, as a means of sensitizing the investigator to the less immediately apparent implications of the disposition of rooms within a building, it remains a useful tool. As will be seen in the examples, it is therefore important that it is used in conjunction with other observations.

### III. IMPLEMENTING THE METHODOLOGY—TWO MEDIEVAL TOWNHOUSES IN YORK

The later medieval townhouses of York constitute a remarkably well-preserved group, despite the depredations of continuous commercial use over five or six hundred years. Their potential for analysis along the methodological lines discussed above will be briefly illustrated here from two examples, though it must be stressed that these are preliminary results and a great deal of work remains to be done in developing and applying the combination of stratigraphical analysis and attention to locale.<sup>19</sup>

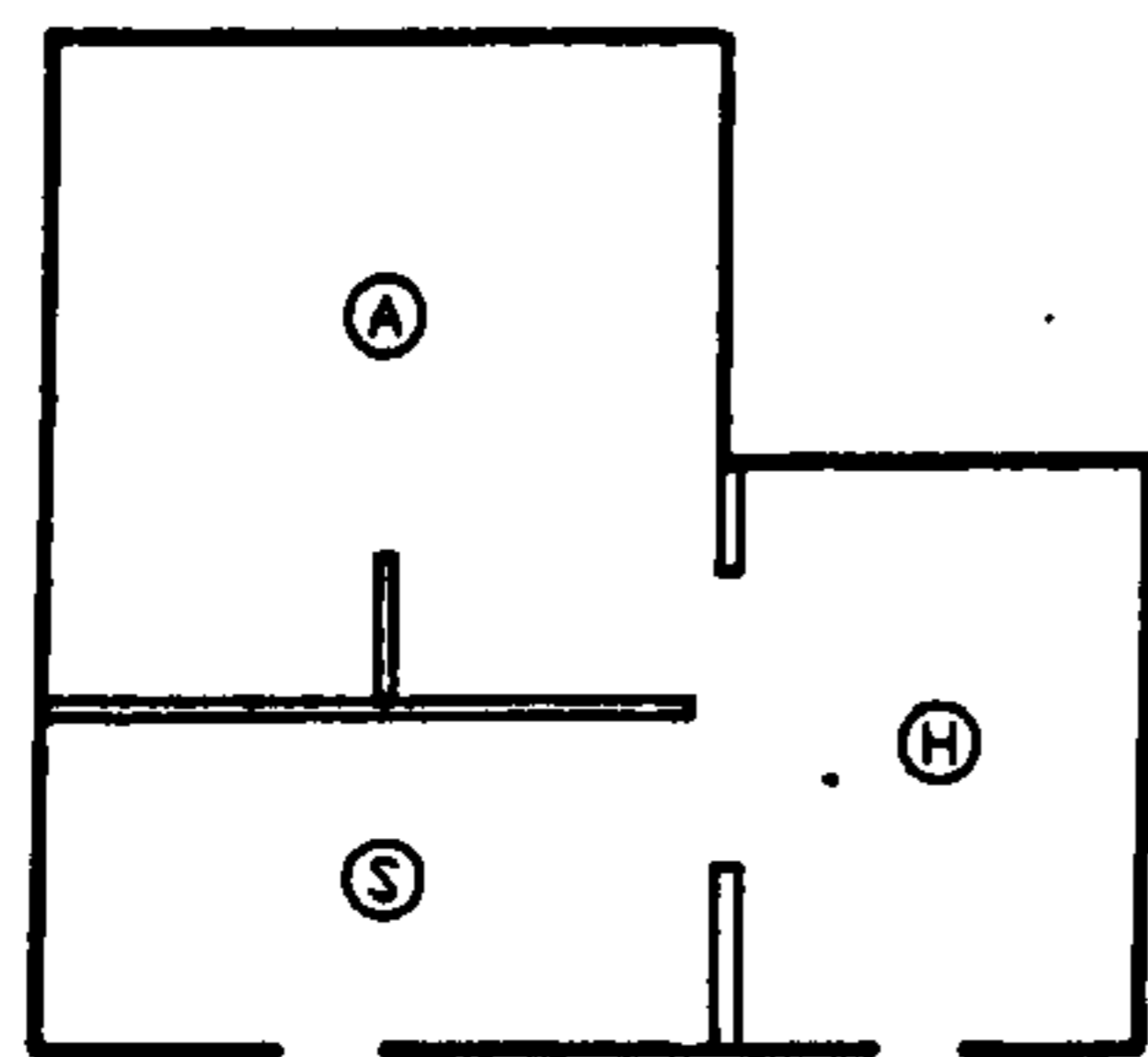
My first example of this kind of recording is work at Bowes Morrell House (111 Walmgate), a fifteenth-century house close to Walmgate Bar, one of the main city gates (fig. 1). The building has been examined both by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

---

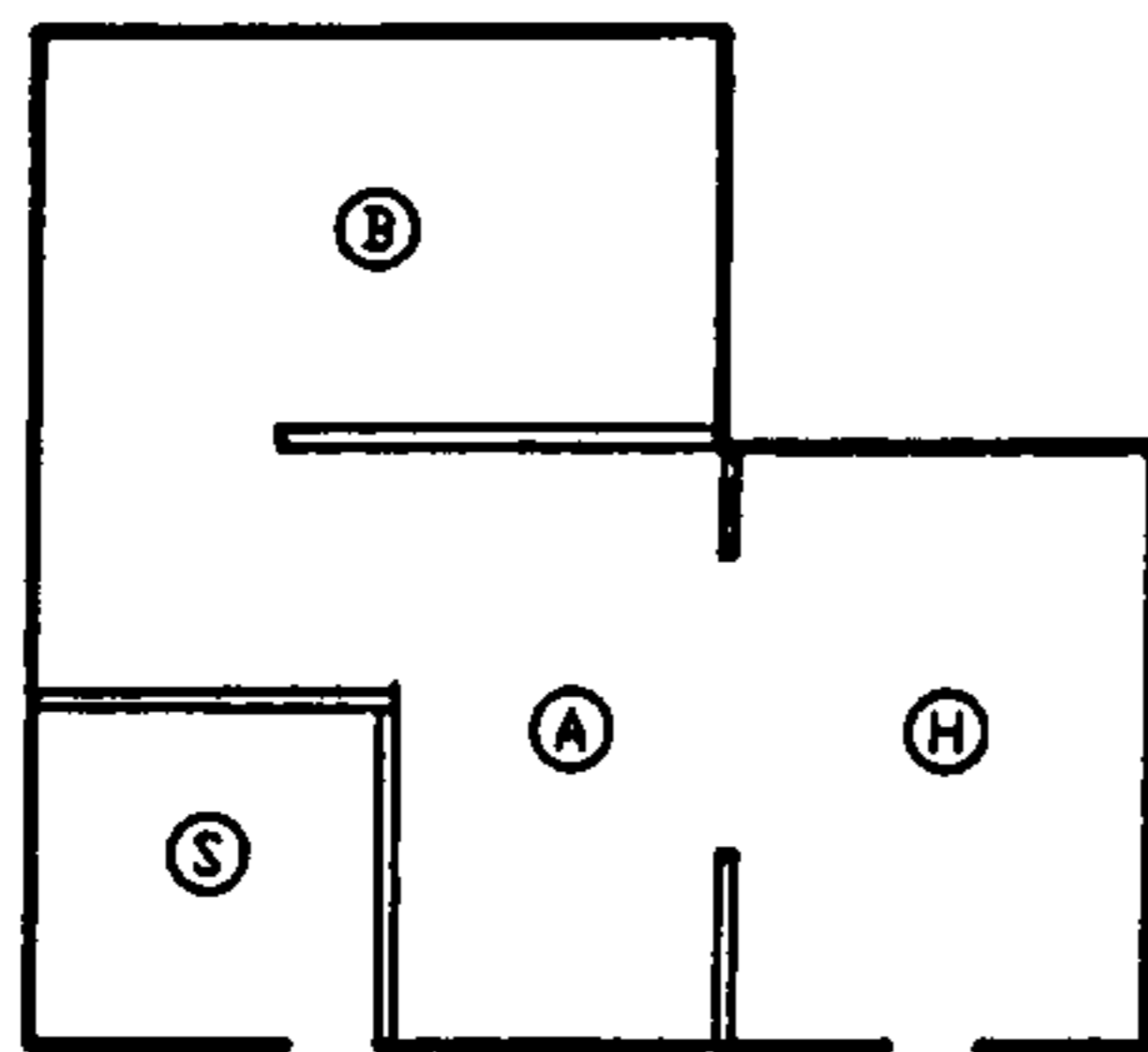
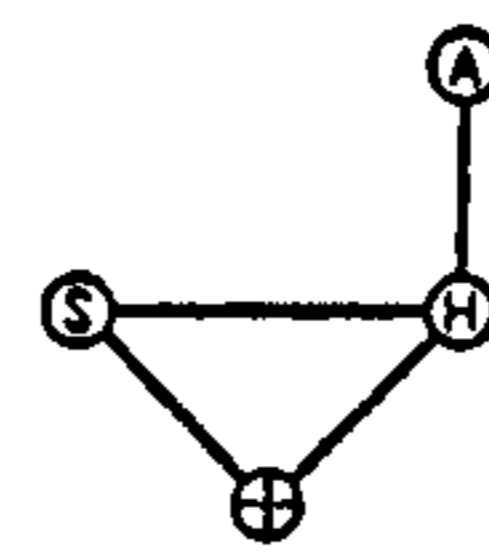
<sup>19</sup> I am grateful to my former students for permission to discuss the results of their fieldwork here.



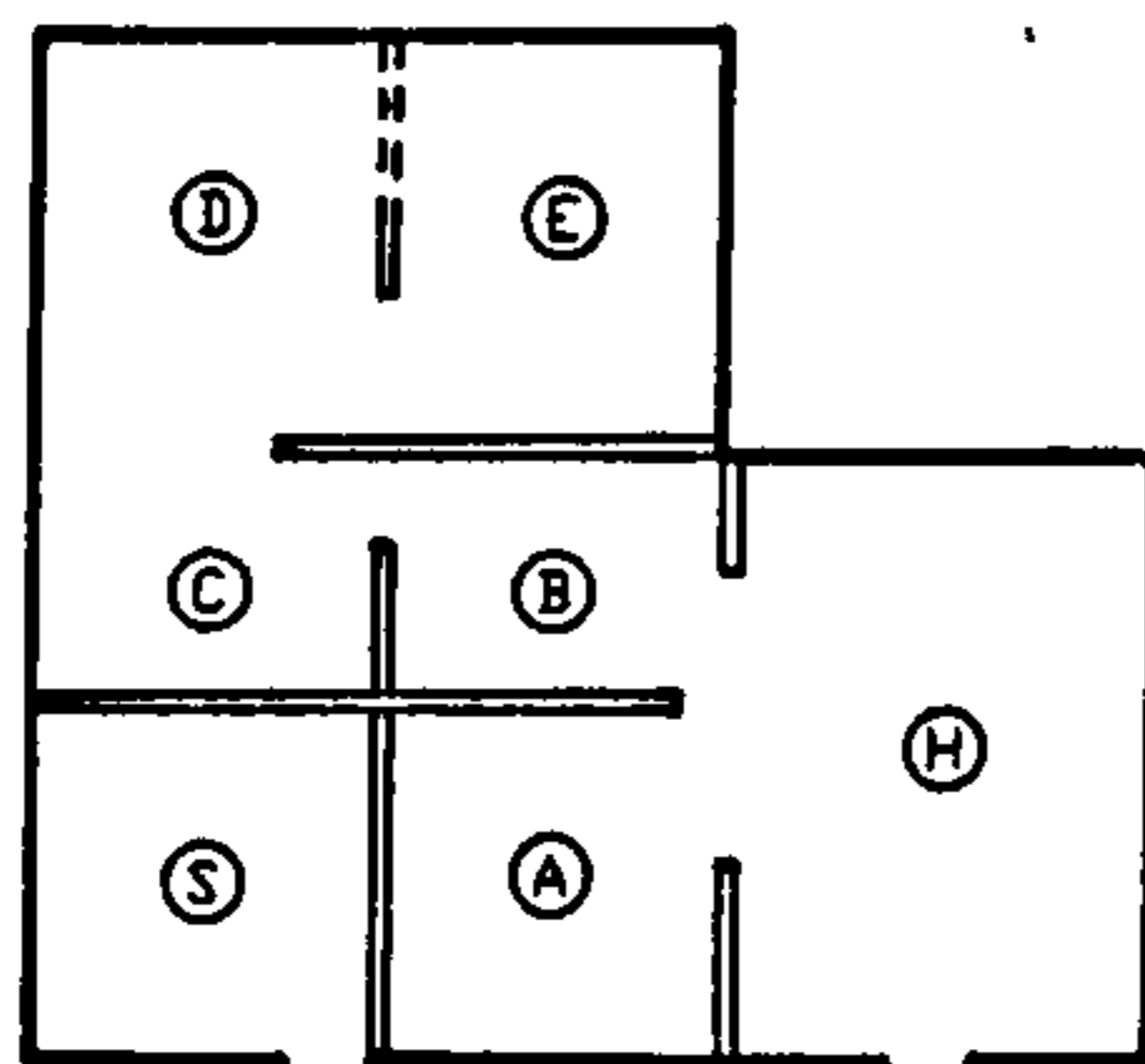
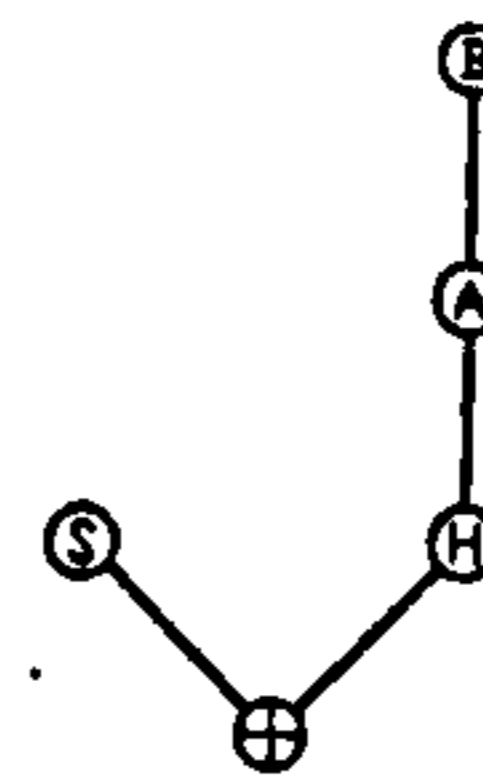
*Figure 1. General view of Bowes Morrell House. Photo courtesy of the author.*



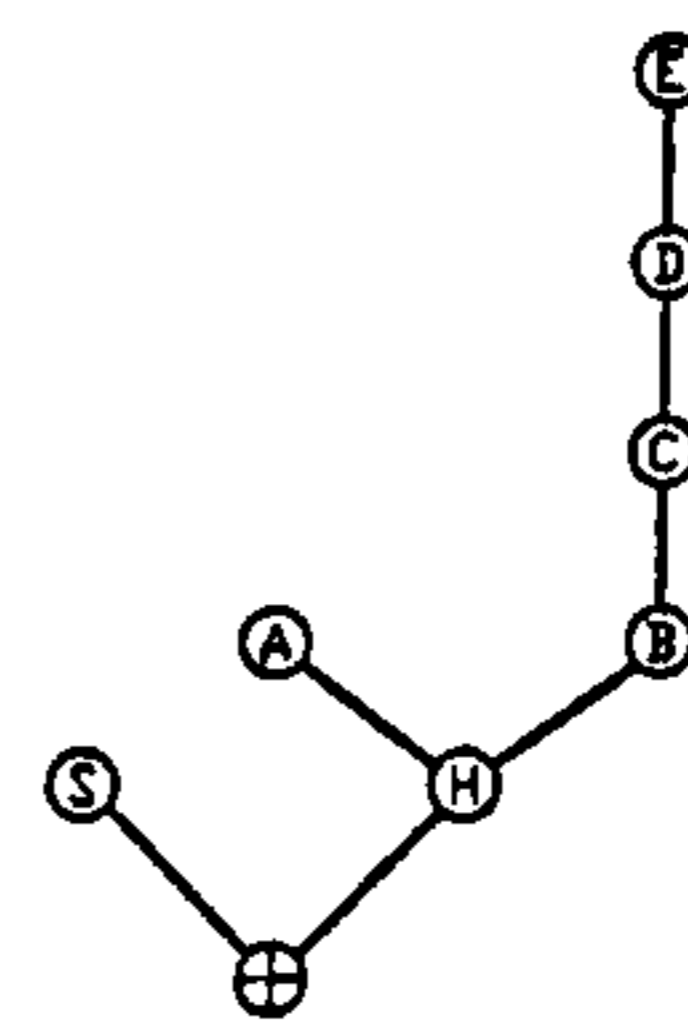
Phase 1



Phase 2



Phase 3



LEGEND  
 ⊕ External space  
 H Hall  
 S Shop  
 A-E Other rooms

Figure 2. Access analysis diagram of Bowes Morrell House.



(RCHME) and within my project by Nicolette Froud.<sup>20</sup> Originally built around 1400, the house was L-shaped, containing a hall parallel to the street frontage in its shorter wing, with a shop unit beside it to the front of a larger wing also running back from the street at right angles. Both Froud and the RCHME note that the shop unit was originally accessible from the hall (figure 2, Phase I, shows this, both as a true plan and as an access diagram), but only Froud goes on to document its sealing off, not only from the open hall, but from the main range of which, structurally, it forms a part (see Phase 2 of figure 2, where the horizontal access line between the shop and the hall is removed in the access diagram). Furthermore, within the right-angled range, detailed recording of ephemeral features such as nail holes and paint traces demonstrates increasing subdivision between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries (Phase 3 of figure 2 shows how this process produced a much 'deeper' access pattern, with five stages instead of the two illustrated in the Phase 1 access diagram). The open hall itself was subdivided by an inserted floor in the post-medieval period. I would argue that what we see here are the material mechanisms by which social (and possibly gender) relations within the household are being structured. Access analysis reveals an increasingly complicated situation through the later medieval period. Space to the rear of the building is progressively subdivided and commercial activities, formerly central to the daily life of the household, are clearly and consciously removed, visually and in terms of access, from the rest of the space.

If power structures are not merely reflected but actively structured in material settings, then we are able to observe here changing attitudes towards commerce, changing economic circumstance and a concomitant change in attitudes towards family relations, hospitality towards non-family members and the oversight of domestic labour. As social space is altered, so too is social experience. Archaeology is thus demonstrating here the material mechanisms by which household dynamics *changed* and a diachronic picture is built up. Such an interpretation of material conditions as an *active* agent in the construction of social relations rather than simply a mirror of them, raises further questions concerning the nature of the change: whether changing economic circumstances led to the subletting of the shop unit as an independent business, or whether changing social attitudes demanded the separation of domestic and

---

<sup>20</sup> Nicolette N. Z. Froud, 'Bowes Morrell House, 111 Walmgate; An Archaeological Case Study on Aspects of Private and Public Use of Space in a Timber-Framed Town House' (unpublished master's thesis, University of York, 1995). RCHME Vol. 5 (see note 14), p. 241.

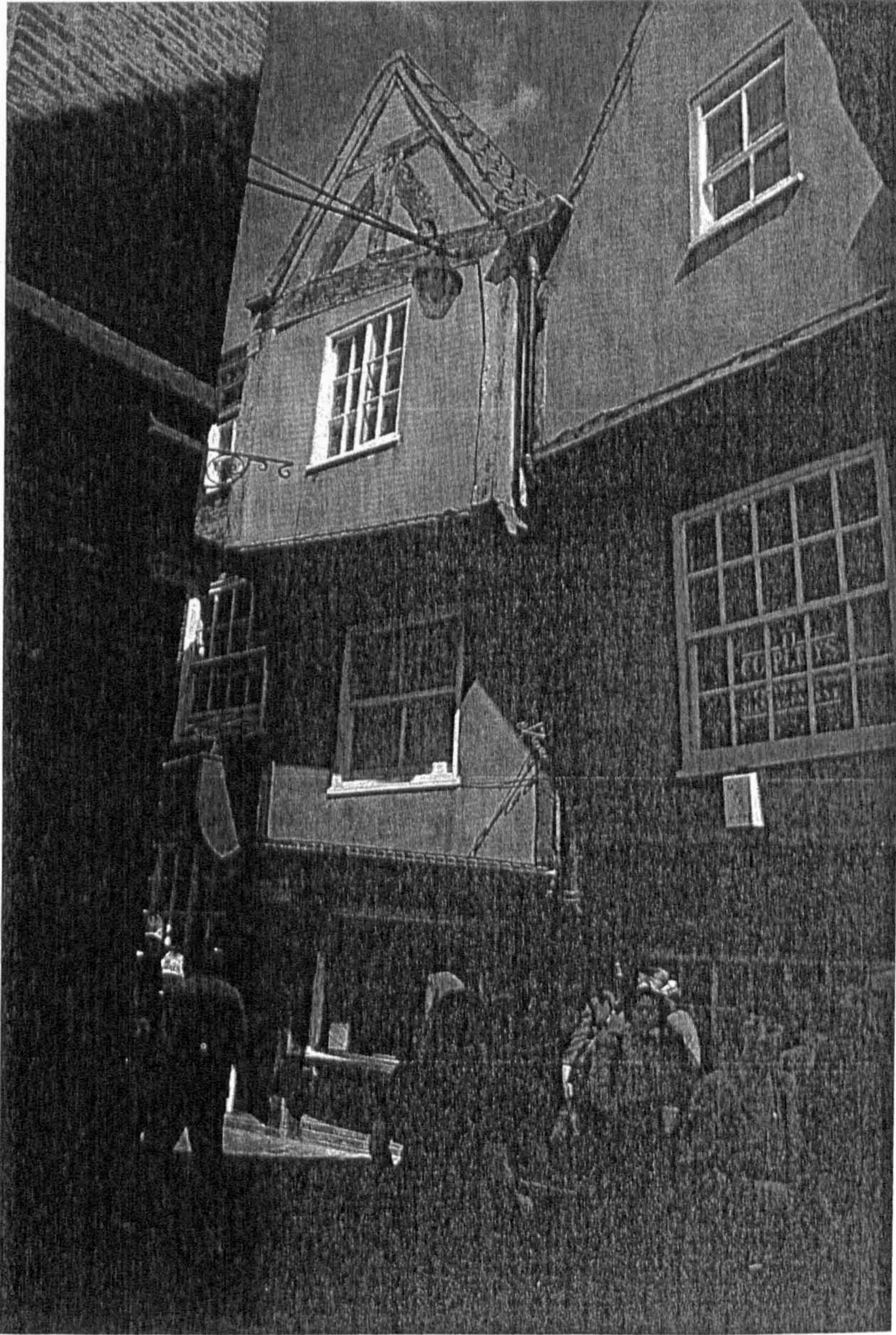
commercial space. Can we look at other types of building, such as parish churches or guildhalls, or open spaces such as market places and streets to explore this theme? How far can we find these concerns reflected in the work of colleagues in other disciplines? We may well be observing an increasing tendency to accommodate servants separately towards the end of the fifteenth century,<sup>21</sup> but the archaeology suggests that we could look more closely at the material record for an understanding, rather than a simple description, of such processes, and the comparison of a series of observations in different houses or different types of building may lead us to revise our understanding of the documentary record. Is Bowes Morrell House typical of its period? Or are we looking at more specific localized issues such as the economic and social conditions in the Walmgate area of the medieval city? By offering a chronological indicator and the opportunity to make topographical comparisons, archaeology is providing the opportunity to understand social change through the mechanism of its material context.

To find such comparisons, we can look at my second example, the fifteenth-century house at 7 The Shambles, York where Rosemary Hayden has shown that we may be able to infer some social meanings embedded in fixed features (fig. 3).<sup>22</sup> Here a careful observation of former internal subdivisions and the recording of the structure of the external walls suggests that circulation around the building was cued by the orientation of the braces (triangular strengthening timbers between the main posts and beams) in the side walls (fig. 4). On the ground and uppermost floor, the braces faced to the south-west, but on the middle floor they pointed north-east. This corresponded with the lines of access through the house, which were deliberately set to run along alternate sides of the building. The very construction of the house is here used to reinforce the sense of ontological security in its inhabitants, to signal appropriate behaviour, and the same phenomenon can be observed in the carpenters' treatment of the roof. Access analysis (fig. 5) reveals a simple use of space, compared to the intricacies of Bowes Morrell House. The only major subdivision occurs at the top of the house, where the attic storey was subdivided and there was no access between the front and the back rooms, which were approached via separate staircases or ladders. These rooms were differentiated structurally by the use of different types

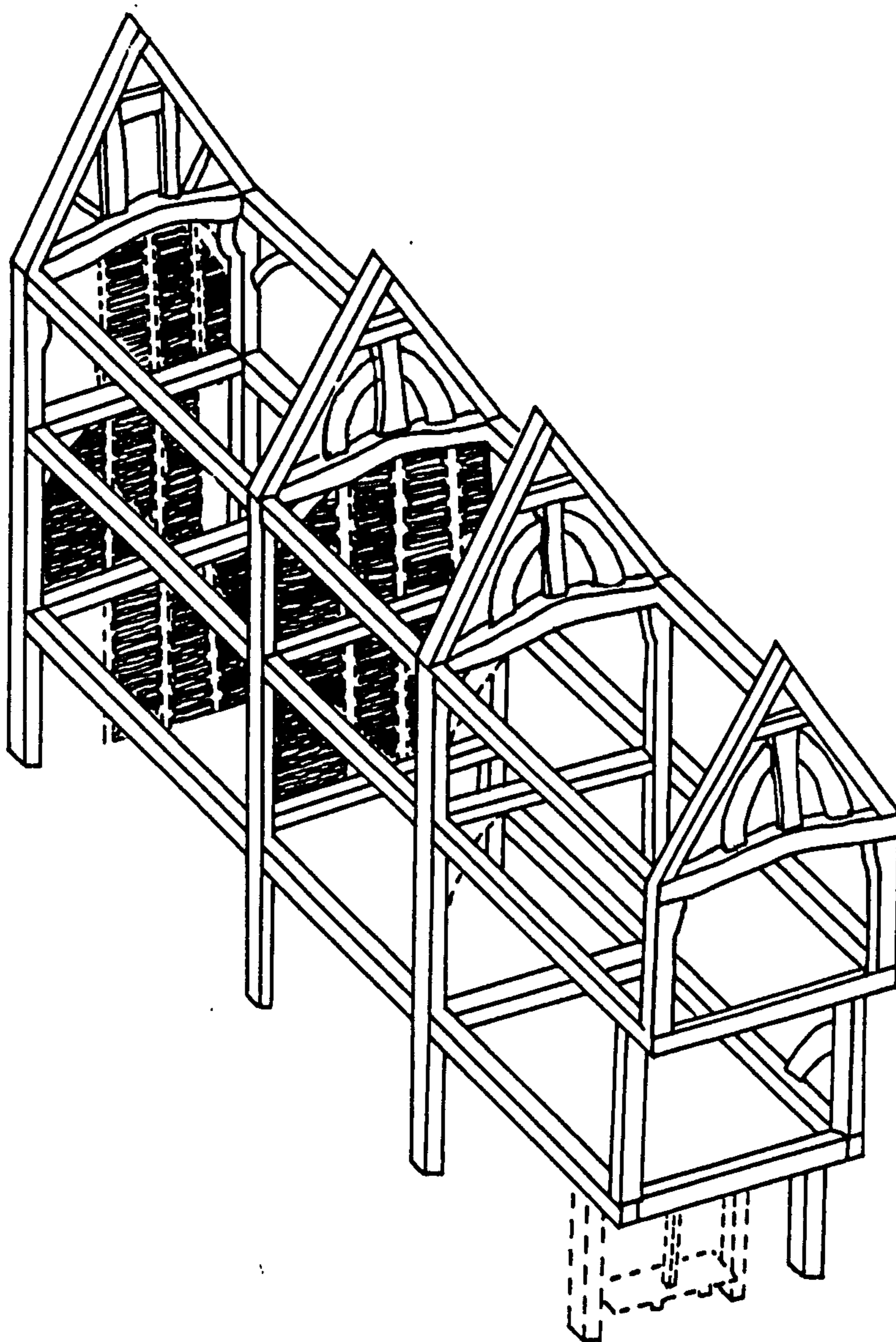
---

<sup>21</sup> P. J. P. Goldberg, personal communication.

<sup>22</sup> Rosemary Hayden, 'Living and Trading Conditions in the Shambles, 1300 to 1600' (unpublished master's thesis, University of York, 1995).



*Figure 3. General view of 7 Shambles. Photo courtesy of the author.*



*Figure 4. The timber frame at 7 Shambles.*

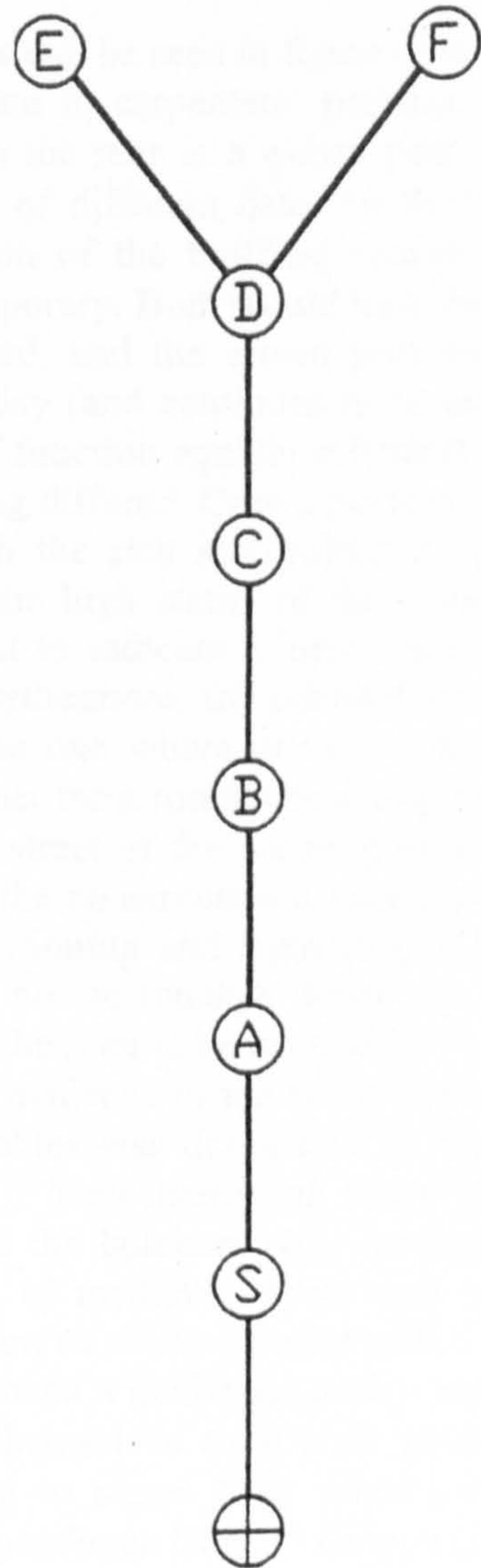


Figure 5. Access analysis of 7 Shambles.

of roof truss. These can be seen in figure 4: the construction at the front is clearly different and in carpenters' parlance is known as a crown post roof, while that to the rear is a queen post roof. Often these types are regarded as being of different dates (with crown posts earlier) but the detailed observation of the building sequence here shows clearly that these were contemporary. Both would have been visible inside within the rooms they spanned, and the crown post on the front gable is visible externally to this day (and continues to be admired by passing tourists). Both types of roof function equally efficiently, so what seems clear here is that their meaning differed. Crown posts, a construction type associated most strongly with the rich and politically powerful south-east of the country, indicate the high status of the front room, whilst queen posts (previously thought to indicate a later construction technique) denote a servants' room. Furthermore, the oft-held view that a relatively inaccessible room must be one where privacy was a principal requirement is gainsaid by the upper front room whose importance was reinforced by the visibility from the street of the crown post gable. In this respect, 7 The Shambles reflects the constructional syntax of Bowes Morrell House. It seems that the positioning and signalling of the 'inner sanctum' of the household reflects not so much a desire for privacy on the part of the owner, as a wish to be *seen* to be exclusive.

If we relate this evidence to the social practice of those inhabiting the building (the Shambles was dominated by butchers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries)<sup>23</sup> then interesting issues arise. Heather Swanson has noted that although the butchers were amongst the wealthiest and most successful citizens of medieval York, they were nonetheless discriminated against in terms of access to civic office.<sup>24</sup> Katherine Giles suggests that this may have been a deliberate policy and that the butchers actively chose to distance themselves from civic government.<sup>25</sup> How far are the butchers attempting to signal their membership of civic society or to establish their independence from it? Compared to Bowes Morrell House, the shop area of 7 Shambles remains relatively open visually, and accessible physically, from the rear of the building. Side passages provide access for beasts to the slaughter yards behind the houses, but the use of

---

<sup>23</sup> P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire c. 1300–1520* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 66.

<sup>24</sup> H. C. Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: an Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>25</sup> Pers. comm.

bracing patterns to signal routes around the house, at ground-floor level as well as above, suggest that use of internal spaces for access was common. There is no differentiation of space within the building until one reaches the top floor, where separate accommodation for masters and servants is clearly indicated. This house, by the later fifteenth century, then, is very differently articulated from Bowes Morrell House. Instead of a series of private spaces, we see here areas of common access with clear cues to enable not only the family, but the entire household and possibly also outsiders, to move appropriately around the building. While attempts have been made to infer a sense of social exclusion among the butchers from documentary records, the material construction of their household relations indicates a more nuanced support for the hypothesis. If just two studies can produce such revealing differences, and raise such interesting new questions, then the potential offered by a more extensive study is very great indeed.

In so far as the identification of specifically *female* activity within the household is concerned (that is, within household spaces as conceived in the dynamic and interactive terms outlined above, rather than in essentialized notions of female space), it is within the moveable and semi-fixed features of Rapoport's schema that evidence may begin to emerge. Within this category one might include furnishings, fittings, and household goods, which, unlike room partitions, might be routinely moved about in order to adapt social space to different activities at different times of the day, month, or year. In excavation, archaeologists routinely expect to find items of domestic equipment on house sites. Analyses of their distributions may allow conclusions to be drawn concerning specialist work areas, kitchens, animal accommodation and so forth, but since most domestic artefacts are thrown away or lost, rather than simply left for the archaeologist to find in the position in which they were used, distributions from excavation are far more likely to represent patterns of discard rather than patterns of use.

Thus the authors of the Museum of London's catalogue of medieval household finds are pessimistic regarding their fascinating and extensive material because of its provenance in the dumps along the Thames foreshore: 'the ideal of retrieving assemblages that accurately reflect individual households has not yet been realised in London and may prove too elusive ever to be achieved'.<sup>26</sup> This, however, seems to me to be an

---

<sup>26</sup> Geoff Egan, *Medieval Finds from Excavations in London 6: The Medieval Household, Daily Living c. 1150–c. 1450* (London: Stationery Office, 1998), p. 5.

unduly negative view of the potential for increasing our understanding of household dynamics through a study of its portable furnishings and everyday objects. No single discipline in isolation can lay claim to the potential to provide an understanding of the construction of the household as a social entity, but as with the consideration of the standing buildings themselves, I would argue that what is really required is a detailed interdisciplinary survey of household items from survivals, artistic representations, and documentary and literary references.<sup>27</sup> The purpose of such an investigation is not the accumulation of empirical evidence for the materiality of the medieval household for its own sake, but rather as the raw material for an analysis of the structuration processes of medieval society, and particularly to further our understanding of the role of the locale in that process. Thus a methodologically refined analysis of household finds, even from dumps, may lead us to helpful conclusions. David Gaimster of the British Museum has recently attempted just such an exercise, using national distribution patterns from excavation coupled with the evidence of sacred art (and particularly representations of the Annunciation) to suggest that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century majolica and stonewares may have held particular significance in the context of household piety.<sup>28</sup> Such observations accord closely with Amos Rapoport's contention that 'the fixed-feature elements can be taken as invariant yet, by changing the arrangement of furniture, profound changes ... are expressed and different activities take place.... The semi-fixed features change more easily and co-vary with activities, both guiding and reflecting them'.<sup>29</sup> The potential for detailed work in this area is very great indeed.

---

<sup>27</sup> John P. Allen, *Medieval and Post-medieval Finds from Exeter, 1971-1980* (Exeter: Exeter City Council, 1984); Martin Biddle, *Object and Economy from Medieval Winchester*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Sue Margeson, *Norwich Households: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Finds from Norwich Survey Excavations, 1971-1978* (Norwich: Norwich Survey et al., 1993).

<sup>28</sup> David Gaimster, 'Distant Voices, Still-lives: Late Medieval Religious Panel Painting as a Context for Archaeological Ceramics', in *Medieval Europe: Brugge 1997, Volume 10: Method and Theory in Historical Archaeology*, ed. by G. De Boe and F. Verhaeghe, IAP Rapporten (Zellik: Instituut voor het Archeologisch Patrimonium, 1997), pp. 37-46.

<sup>29</sup> Rapoport, p. 13.



## IV. CONCLUSION

An understanding of the recursive role of material culture in social practice is critical. Giddens's structuration theory acts as a useful 'sensitizing device' and the methodological tools provided by the notion of fixed, semi-fixed, and moveable features and the use of access analysis help us conceptualize and investigate past social spaces. In interpreting the specific uses of social space, an explicitly contextual view must be taken and it is here that interdisciplinary studies become not a luxury, but an absolute necessity. I have here suggested some ways in which archaeological recording and observation may be refined to deliver more telling analyses of buildings and their multiple uses, not by seeking to make simple attributions of gender or function to certain areas, but by applying particular theoretical constructs to the analysis of the evidence and contextualizing the conclusions within the framework provided by interdisciplinary projects. By refining and challenging one another's assumptions and results, we may be able to provide a more subtle picture of the medieval household. But there is plenty more work to be done before we can begin to answer the presently unanswerable question recently asked of me by a doctoral student in the Centre for Medieval Studies: 'What kind of houses *did* single women live in?'

- 2000 'Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the medieval household - The Urban Household Project at York and its archaeological implications' in G Eriksdottir, S Larsson and V Londahl (eds) *Att Tolka Stratigrafia: det tredje nordiska stratigrafimötet Åland 1999*. Mariehamn: Ålands högskola, 225-36.

# The Urban Household Project at York and its archaeological implications

JANE GRENVILLE

## *Abstract*

This paper discusses the York Household Project and how it works interdisciplinary, including history, literature and history of art as well as archaeology. An illustration of how a stratigraphic approach to the study of timber-framed building can help to answer (or re-frame) the questions we are asking, particularly those concerned with the change over time, are also a raised issue.

*Jane Grenville, Department of Archaeology and Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York, United Kingdom. E-mail: jcg2@york.ac.uk*

Stratigraphic approaches to the study of buildings are, to some extent, in their infancy (Eriksdotter 1997). This paper seeks to consider their application and usefulness in a particular type of structure, the medieval English timber-framed house and to address two main issues. The first is the appropriateness or otherwise of stratigraphic analysis for the study of timber-framed structures, which are not "deposited" in the same way as sub-surface archaeological strata. The second is the necessity to understand stratigraphic analysis as a means to an end, not an end in itself. The goal I shall describe is a contribution to an interdisciplinary project concerning the social structure of households in medieval York. In considering this case study, I shall discuss the issues that dictate the choice of the appropriate level of stratigraphic recording and the potential and limitations of the method.

## *Archaeology and the Urban Household Project*

As a medieval archaeologist at the University of York, I am involved in teaching in an interdisciplinary postgraduate programme in the Centre for Medieval Studies. Team teaching with historians, literature specialists and art historians at postgraduate level is exhilarating and intellectually challenging. It has had a research dividend, too, in that it has highlighted a coincidence of interest amongst several of us in issues of domesticity, *familia*, neighbourliness and their part in the construction of urban and civic identity in the later medieval city. My own current research is concerned with the use of space in medieval townhouses in York. I am attempting not simply to reconstruct the original disposition of space and to identify the changes that have taken place in subsequent phases, but also to consider the social significance of such changes and it is in this last objective that the work

of my colleagues dovetails in most interesting and thought-provoking ways. In order to exploit our divergent approaches to the understanding of social structures and mechanisms in medieval households, we have formed The Urban Household Group 1350-1550, and are currently involved in the production of collectively-authored volumes on the nature of the household and on neighbourliness. As a group we find that rather than trying to answer one another's questions directly, we are modifying and recasting them. One colleague, a historian who studies the living and working conditions of single women in the fifteenth century, asked me 'What kinds of houses did single women live in?' and I had to reply that this was a question beyond the scope of archaeological investigation. But if we modify that to the question that another historian posed, namely 'Is there evidence from the archaeological study of the townhouses of medieval York to suggest that segregation of servants began in the later fifteenth century?' then we may be able to get somewhere, and by extension of the question (since many servants were single women), we may be able to place some of our spinsters within larger households. But my role is more than the simple illustration of hypotheses developed within the discipline of history. Rather, by introducing certain theoretical postulates concerning the social use of physical space, I hope to modify and qualify historical approaches. We are, therefore, concerned as a group to gain a fuller understanding, based on both written and material evidence, of living and working conditions in the medieval city and that understanding derives as much from the dissonances between our categories of evidence as the coincidences. After all, what people do and what they say can be very different, and understanding motives often depends upon understanding that disjunction. So I have two main functions within the Group: one is to define domestic and commercial space physically and the other is to engage in the wider theoretical debate. I wish to turn now to the methodological aspects of the first of these, for it is here that issues of stratigraphic analysis are raised.

### *Timber-framing and application of stratigraphy*

English timber-framing operates by different structural principles to that of the North-European Plain, but both are prefabricated. In English box framing, the structure stands free of the ground surface, on a dwarf wall or with the posts standing on individual padstones. This avoids the problem of rotting created by the repeated wetting and drying of earthfast posts, but the absence of a foundation deprives the building of a certain degree of stability (Grenville 1997, Harris 1978). To counter this, timbers are jointed together very carefully and joints vary in complexity from simple lap joints (in positions where the structure is under little stress) to more complicated mortise and tenon joints (which, when pegged can resist a considerable degree of tension) to the highly intricate lap dovetail tie beam assembly (fig 1). These joints are complex, yet the stability of the structure depends upon their efficacy, so they must be accurately cut. The obvious corollary of this is that timber-framed buildings are pre-fabricated, that is, they are constructed in workshops on the ground (figs 2 & 3) and then reassembled on site. This poses a problem for the stratigrapher, since one could easily argue that the whole structure, as built, represents a single stratigraphic unit. Despite the fact that the frame is composed of many separate members, the 'event' of its construction could be taken as a single operation since it

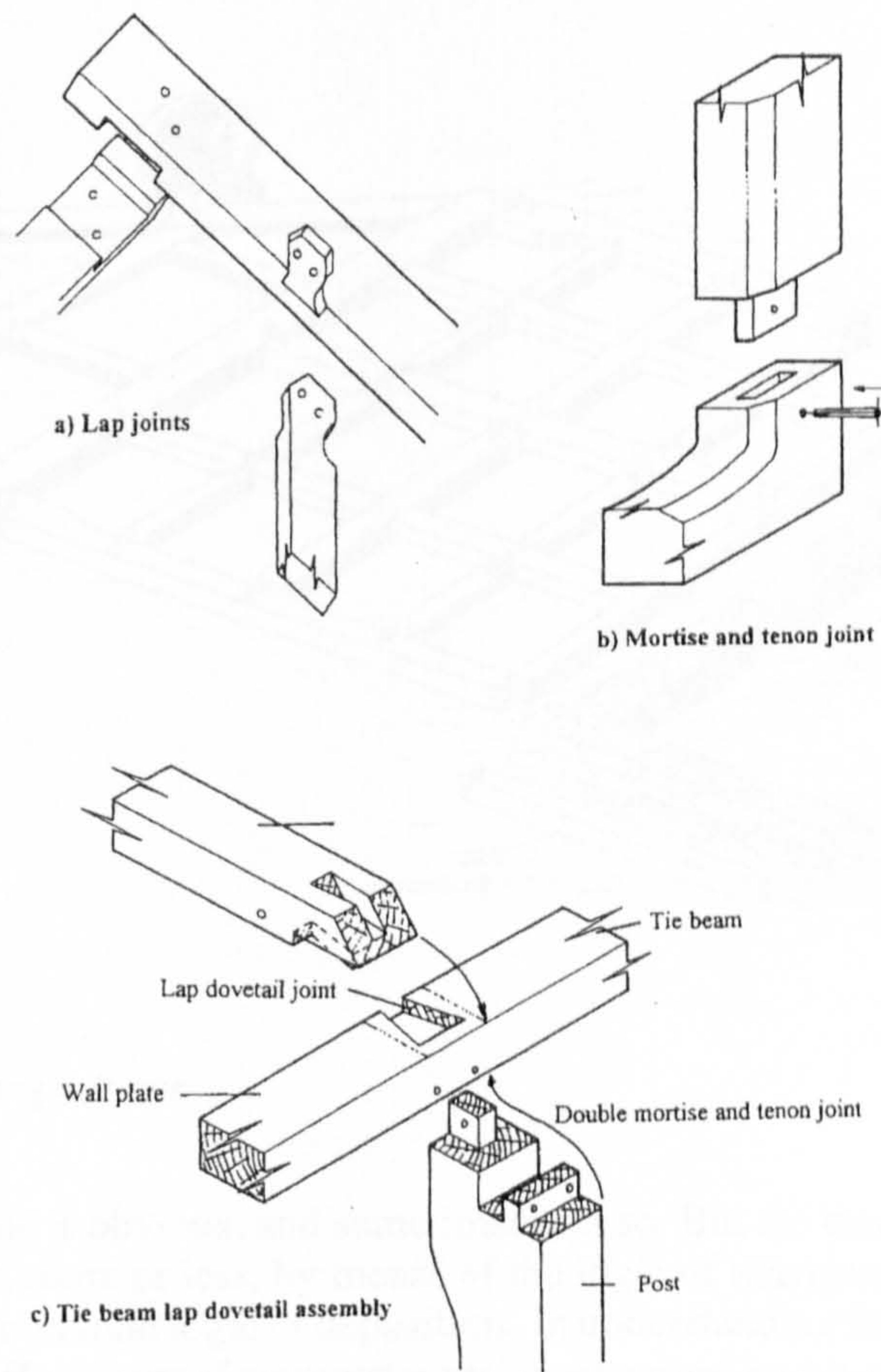


Figure 1. Basic joint types in English timber framing

consists simply of the assembly of prefabricated pieces. A close investigation of a complete frame might enable us to establish the order in which the subframes were put together, but this would tell us about the craft competence of the carpenters rather than illuminate any socially significant sequence of events. For such developments, we are required to study the subsequent changes, and these inhere in the alterations, additions and extraction of timbers within the frame. Thus a single timber may show all or any of the following signs of later adaptation: empty mortises and peg holes, cuts and patches, additional joining timbers, nails for fixtures and fittings, and finally paint and other surface treatments. Each of these represent later events in the life of the building - the insertion and removal of partitions, the internal decorative treatment of the room, the position of fixtures and fittings - and subsequent alterations to all these. It is the chronological relationships one to another of these later elements that enable us to analyse the later history of the structure. Can they be characterised as stratigraphic units?

This question raises a critical semantic issue and an important methodological point. To take the semantics first: we are not looking here at strata laid down and modified by human actions. In excavation, it is up to the excavator to establish where the limits of the stratum

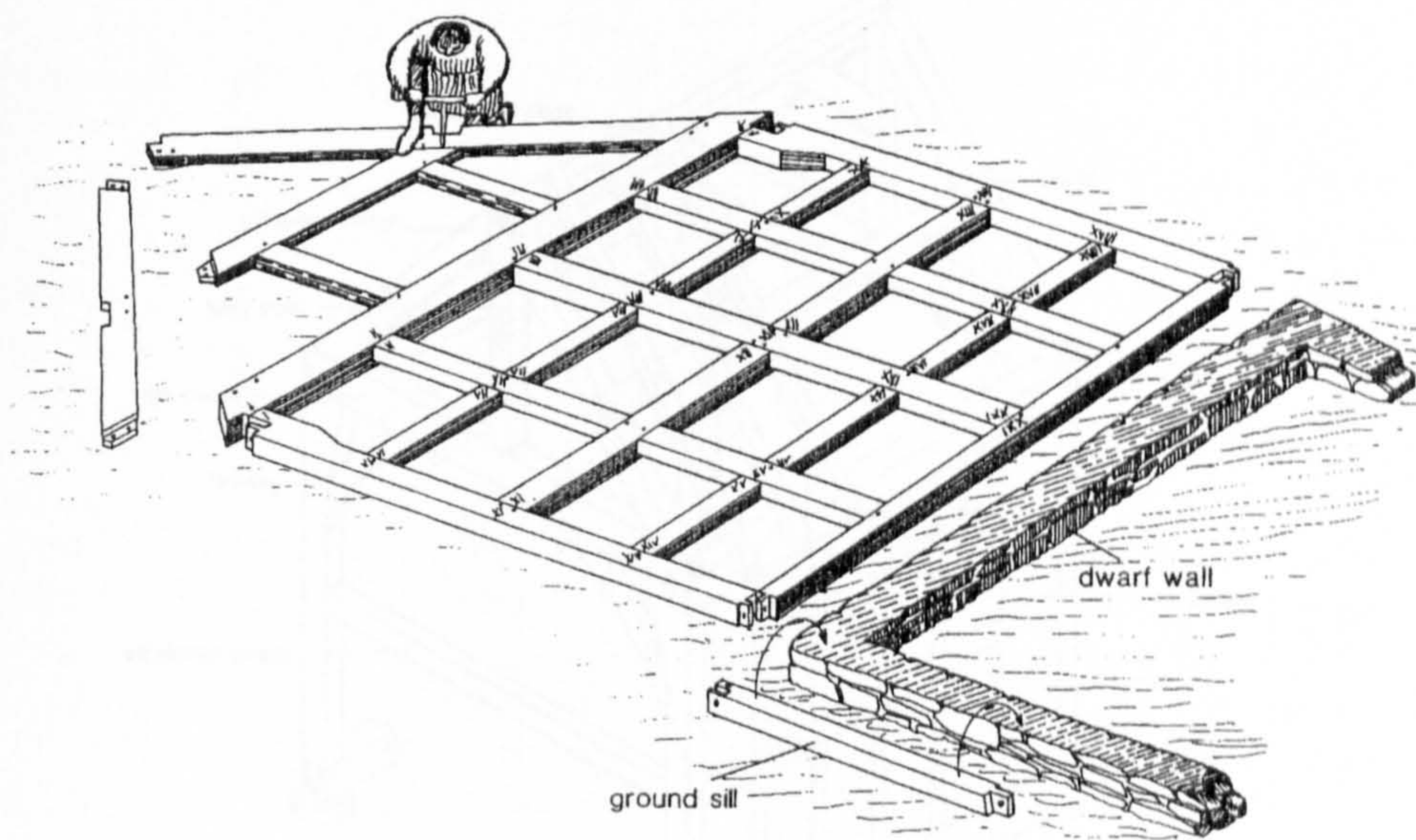


Figure 2. Assembling a frame

lie -sometimes this is obvious, and sometimes less so. But the business of relating one to another proceeds, more or less, by means of the logic of stratigraphic succession, which is derived from a common logic of deposition. In understanding timber-framed buildings, we are facing a different set of circumstances. Here we are looking at elements which may be more readily identifiable - a timber, an empty joint, a layer of paint - but whose concatenation must be understood, not as an inevitable logical series of events, but as the result of a series of human choices within a craft tradition. The way in which an English frame fits together is different to the way in which a north German frame works, and to understand those differences is to comprehend a specific craft competence. What we observe is not a *stratigraphic sequence*, -whose logic is inexorable, but rather a *constructional sequence*, which is bounded by certain -constraints of what is physically possible, but within those constraints is the result of deliberate choice. So the word 'stratigraphy' in this case may be misleading.

Having said that, we are faced with a methodological problem. If we have no *strata* as such, -then are we justified in using the paraphernalia of stratigraphic analysis to unravel timber-framed structures? The answer, in my view, is yes. What a stratigraphic mindset provides for the buildings archaeologist is a disciplined and methodical approach to the consideration of *all* -important physical and chronological relationships within a building. If we record and analyse not simply the most clearly observable, but also those which may not be initially apparent, then eventually the whole sequence may be worked out right across the structure. In just the same way, stratigraphic analysis of buried deposits can be used to tie up deposits in different areas and trenches within an excavation. But when we assign numbers to elements in timber-framed buildings and construct matrices to characterise their relationships, we should not be fooled into imagining that we are carrying out a normal stratigraphic analysis. Rather, we are using a methodology developed in the field

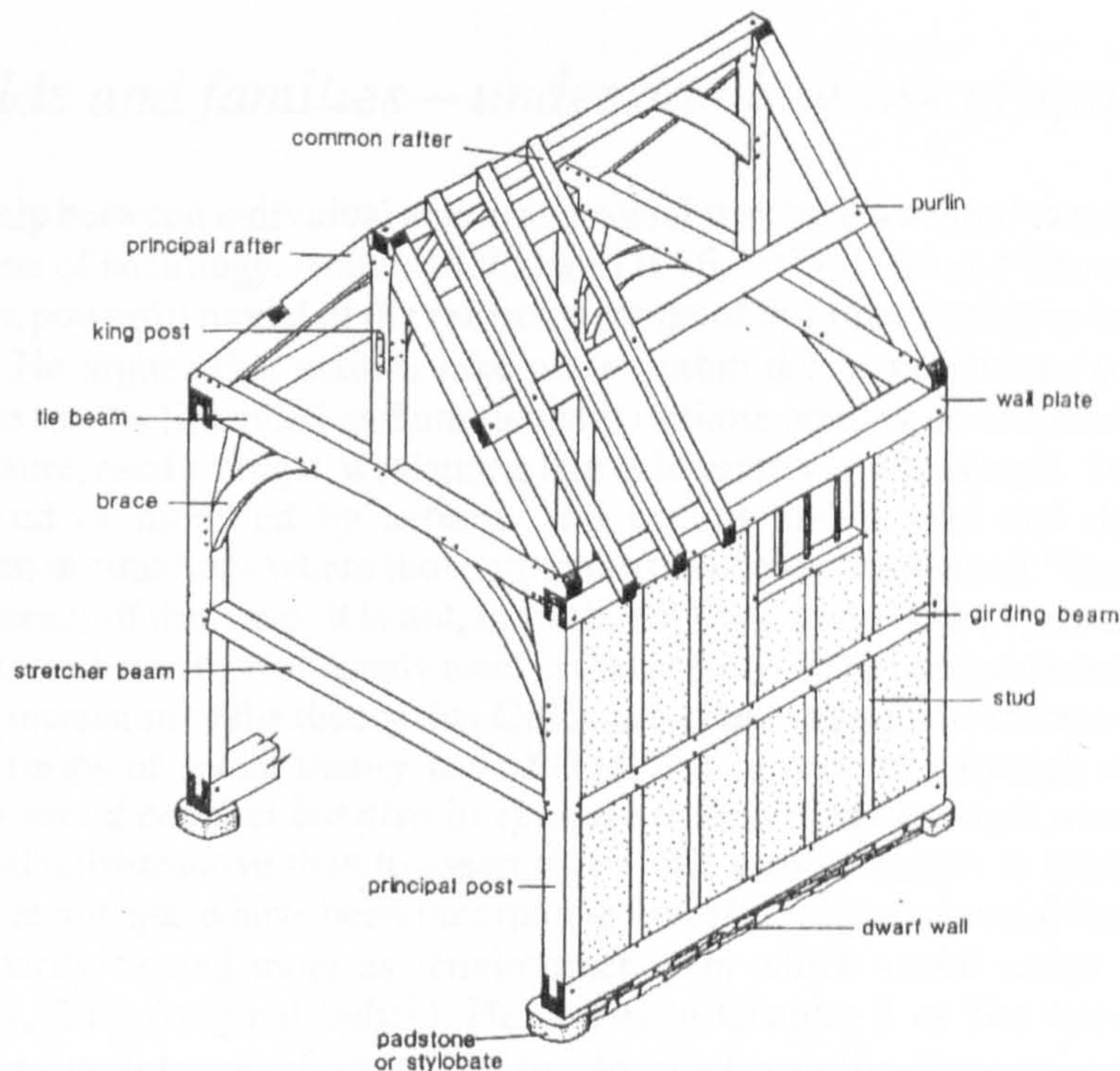


Figure 3. The frame assembled

of excavation to draw out the sequence of craft decisions and subsequent human choices regarding the construction and adaptation of the building. The rules by which the analysis proceeds are different and concern the decision-making process in antiquity, rather than physical deposition and the unintended effects of human action.

How, then, do we identify significant units for analysis? It will be clear that on one level we can indeed see the whole of the original frame as a single unit (almost in the way that a dirt archaeologist might see 'natural' as the starting point from which all stratigraphic analysis proceeds). Or we might, quite simply, choose as units of stratigraphy those elements which we easily recognise: a single timber is an obvious example. And yet, an important event in the life of the building may be indicated by a row of nails within that timber, indicating the position of a former fabric partition. Does this row of nails receive a separate context number? Answers to questions like this can be established only when the research agenda has established an appropriate level of analysis (Jones 1997). In the following sections, I shall set out the specific research agendas and the wider theoretical debates that I have been pursuing within the broad remit of the Urban Households Project, before returning, at the very end of the paper, to their implications for the 'stratigraphic' analysis of timber-framed buildings.

## *Households and families – understanding use of space*

The relationship between individual action and social structure is central to much thinking in the discipline of sociology. Anthony Giddens (1976, 1979, 1984 and Thompson 1989) has proposed a powerful model of the reflexive nature of this relationship in his 'theory of structuration'. He argues that actions take place within the preconditions set by social structures. The results (intended and unintended) of those actions, in turn have an impact on social structure, reinforcing it, weakening it or deliberately challenging it. Structures are thus reproduced or modified by actions, and actions are defined and delimited by structures, even in situations where those structures are being challenged. 'Structuration', then, is the *process* of this loop. It is not, in itself, anything to do with physical structures, although one often hears it erroneously used in that sense in informal discussion. It was not until his 1979 recension of the theory that Giddens began explicitly to address the issue of space: 'Most forms of social theory have failed to take seriously enough *not only the temporality of social conduct but also its spatial attributes*. At first sight, nothing seems more banal and uninformative than to assert that social activity occurs in time and space. But neither time nor space have been incorporated into the centre of social theory; rather, they are ordinarily treated more as 'environments' in which social action is enacted' (Giddens 1979, 202) (original italics). He argues in Chapter 3 of *The Constitution of Society* for the importance of space, in the form of specific 'locales' as an active component, complete with physical cues, in social encounters. Familiarity with the locale induces 'ontological security', a solidly-based knowledge of 'how to go about' one's daily business. He suggests that these 'locales' may be distinguished from simple 'places' by their zoning, both physical and temporal. As an example he takes the subdivisions of the contemporary house, with its various function specific rooms such as bedrooms and bathrooms, and noting that their use changes depending upon the time of day (Giddens 1984, 119). If all this seems rather obvious, he notes in a later discussion: 'Consider in this respect, for example, the work of historians on the emergence of privacy in the post-medieval era. Forms of privacy are clearly connected both to psychological dimensions of personality, and to major aspects of social life, such as the relation between the 'domestic' and the 'public'. This work shows how mutations in privacy shaped, and were shaped by, the changing architectural form of dwellings, whereby certain types of activities are regularly hidden from view' (Giddens 1989, 281). Archaeologists have eagerly taken up Giddens' theory in seeking to identify within the physical remains of the past (both structures and artefacts) those elements of meaning which might lead us to a clearer understanding of past societies as dynamic rather than static. There remain problems in the application of the theory of structuration in that a 'place' may seem identifiable to the stranger, but its significance as a 'locale' may be quite other than that which one expects. It can be difficult to recognise the significance of locales in their function at a given time in the past while they continue to exist today as physical places but with mutated meanings. There are, for instance, obvious problems of contemporary cultural overlay when it comes to interpreting medieval buildings in which one works or shops daily and reconstructing the meanings they held for their original users. The importance of reconstructing both original and subsequent internal arrangements within buildings thus becomes doubly compelling since we must strip the 'place' of our own contemporary understanding of its function as a modern 'locale'. While the basic frame of the building may be intact, an



understanding of changing locales depends upon a clear view of the changing internal arrangements over the centuries. An appropriate methodology, aided by a stratigraphic approach, is essential before we can proceed to this more complex level of social analysis.

### *Developing a Methodology – Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings*

How, then, might we develop a methodology for the identification of locales and their associated social meaning in the archaeological record? This is not a new problem: Samson (1990), Parker Pearson and Richards (1994) and Locock (1994) all contain case studies, mainly dealing with excavated remains. In medieval archaeology we are fortunate to have two trailblazing full-length studies, one on nunneries (Gilchrist 1994) and the other on late medieval domestic halls (Johnson 1993), both dealing in an extensive fashion with large groups of buildings. More recently, Kate Giles (1999a and 1999b) has moved the study forward significantly with her very detailed consideration of the precise relationship between locale and social action in a highly specific context, that of three urban guildhalls. Her work goes a long way to answering some of the methodological problems raised by this paper.

In trying to identify a workable methodology, I have found the work of Amos Rapoport particularly useful for providing clear categories of evidence to consider. One aspect of his thinking is succinctly summarised in his 1990 article 'Systems of activities and systems of settings', which provides an analytical framework for the consideration of space within and between buildings: 'what is proposed is a particular way of addressing an important question regarding environment-behaviour interaction: *who does what, where, when, including or excluding whom* (and why)?' (Rapoport 1990, 9, original italics). In discussing the nature of the link between environment and behaviour, Rapoport conceptualises some of the problems that Giddens addresses in his consideration of locales: 'A setting is ... a milieu which defines a situation, reminds occupants of the appropriate rules and hence of the ongoing behaviours appropriate to the situation defined by the setting, thereby making co-action possible. The setting frequently provides the appropriate props for these behaviours and activities...Note that people are able effortlessly to interpret these cues in settings many times every day and to change their behaviour appropriately; they are even able to predict behavior [sic], for example by dressing appropriately before they enter the setting. This works however, only if people can decode the cues.' (Rapoport 1990, 12-3)

Rapoport identifies three categories of element within buildings: fixed features, semi-fixed features and moveable objects. By fixed features, he means the structural elements of a building - its non-moveable walls, floors, ceilings and roofs. Semi-fixtures include furnishings, decorations and, crucially for the study of medieval buildings, moveable partitions. Non-fixed features are the people, their behaviour and activities. This has been, for me, a strikingly useful, simple and elegant framework within which to work, for it constantly reminds me to consider carefully the relationships between the fixed and semi-fixed features, which make up most of the evidence from which I work, and the people who

used them, who are the real subject of my study. Rapoport does not offer any quick solutions to the discovering the nature of those relationships, but he does provide some caveats. One must beware of the temptation to assume that there is a direct relationship between architecture and behaviour. He notes that the implicit assumption that architecture, by which he means the basic plan of a building, 'encloses behaviour and does so tightly' is unsafe and hence 'inferences from architecture to activities ... become much more difficult' (Rapoport 1990, 11). This is because the same space can change its nature by the re-organisation of semi-fixed features and the various activities of its occupants. In commenting on the relevance of this to the study of past societies, he notes that 'the inevitable absence of people makes inference from environment to activities much more difficult. *It also makes analysis of semi-fixed cues critical*' (Rapoport 1990, 13, original italics). Further, he insists that single settings are not adequate units of analysis and that a single action can be understood only in the context of a series of activities or as part of daily, weekly or seasonal behaviour patterns. It follows that single houses, or even groups of houses are not sufficient units of analysis, but that the spaces in between must also be understood - neighbourhood and urban space become critical in an understanding of the function of the urban house. Tucked away in his argument, but of crucial importance for this study, is the comment that: 'the distinction between commonly made between 'function' and 'meaning' is incorrect; meaning is not only part of function but *it is often the most important function*' (Rapoport 1990, 12, original italics).

### *Implementing the Methodology – Medieval Townhouses in York*

Within Rapoport's schema, the physical structure of a building constitutes its fixed features, which, in the case of late medieval townhouses in York, is the timber frame. The detail of the construction may be recorded at different levels, from the use of a camera and notebook to the detailed scale recording of individual features and it is axiomatic that the choice of recording method should be appropriate to the questions asked. Since in this case we are concerned with the identification and interpretation of locales, a detailed approach is required. Individual timbers and the way in which they fit together are carefully recorded, with each timber assigned its own context number. In addition, evidence for the way in which the frame has been altered, such as the removal of members indicated by empty mortise holes, require attention and so while one context number may be given to the timber itself and its original joints, a second one may be assigned to the element of the disused joint. So we are contexting at a conceptual, rather than a physical level - some joints may be given individual numbers, where they provide evidence for secondary events, while others, still performing their initial functions, share a number with the timber to which they belong (fig 4).

Such recording of fixed features at the fifteenth century Bowes Morrell House (111 Walmgate) has clearly demonstrated the successive phases of subdivision of the ground floor of the building (Froud 1995). At this resolution of recording, it is possible to apply more responsive methodologies to draw out an understanding of the meaning of the

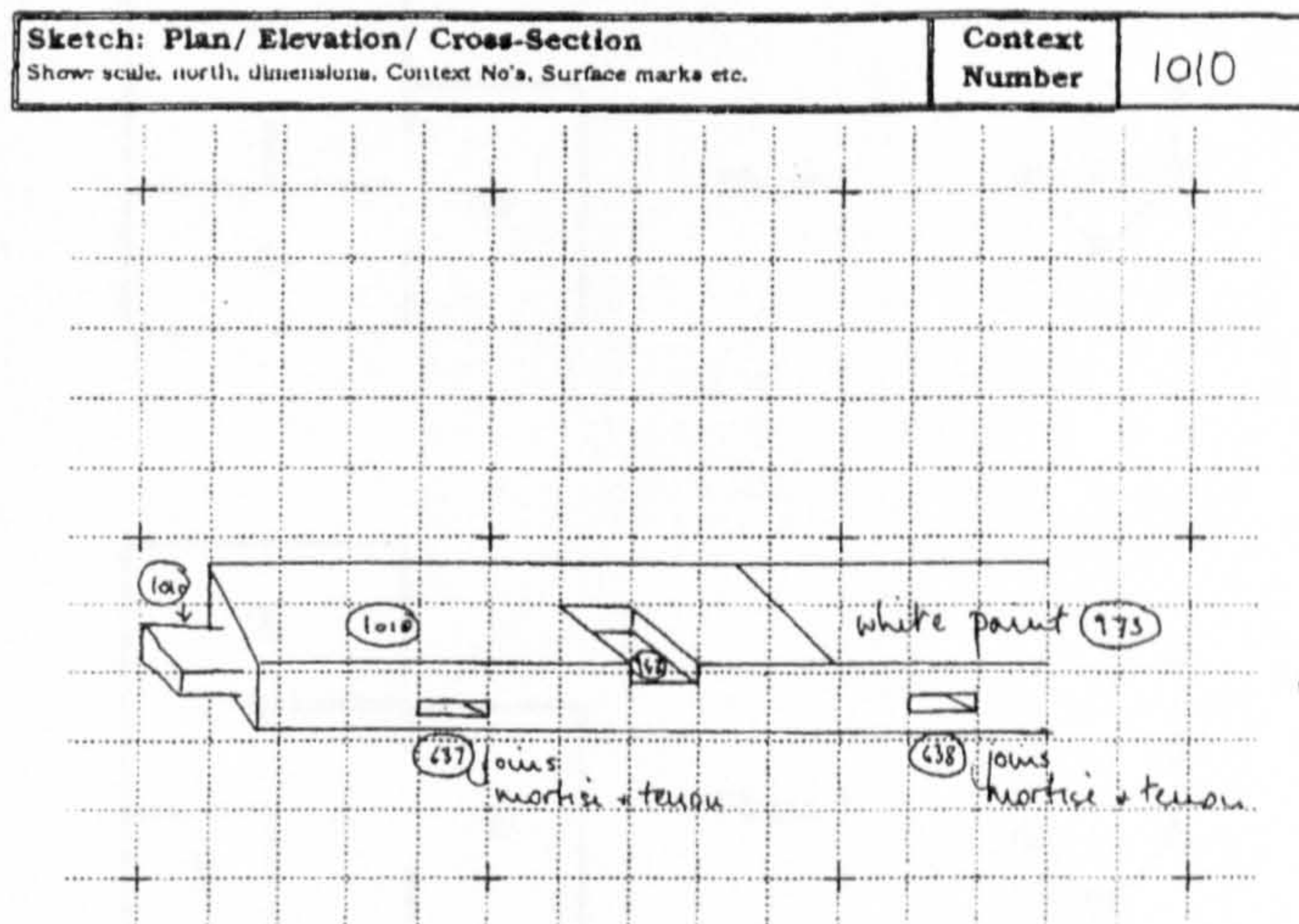


Figure 4. Sketch from a context sheet

reconstructed spaces to their users, that is their functions as locales. Amongst these is the methodology of access analysis (Hillier and Hanson 1984, Hanson 1998) has been adapted to the study of archaeological and historic structures in all periods (e.g. Gilchrist 1994 for a medieval case study and Markus (1993) for a fascinating discussion of a later period). Put very briefly, access analysis redraws the floor plan of a building to reflect not the spatial layout of rooms, their relative positions and sizes, but rather an abstract conception of the means of access through a building. This results in a diagram that bears no physical relation to the building at all, but that does tell us something about the openness or exclusiveness of a given plan. This in itself does not offer a simple reflection of social relationships, as we shall see, but it does provide an alternative means of understanding a building, and one that might well help to develop deeper insights into its social use. At 111 Walmgate, the results of access analysis (fig 5) have highlighted the fact that the shop, originally physically connected to the rest of the house, became separated at some stage, probably in the sixteenth century, while at the same time the area to the rear of the building was increasingly subdivided to provide a series of separate, smaller rooms with limited access. Clearly there are functional changes occurring here and we may be looking at the physical expression of the segregation of servants in the later fifteenth century, as discussed above. But if, as Rapoport has suggested, it is unwise to separate function and meaning into different categories, then we are left with an unresolved problem of the way in which the occupants of the house 'read' the social cues that the changing locale provided. I am not suggesting that this is a problem that yet has been resolved in this domestic context - more work on the integration of the analysis of semi-fixed and moveable features is necessary. But Kate Giles has shown that such integration is possible, in her convincing analysis of the reflexive relationship between a changing urban élite and the public use of the guildhall in the late medieval and early modern period.

One example of a York domestic building where we may be able to infer the social meanings embedded in fixed features is 7, Shambles (Hayden 1995). Here a careful

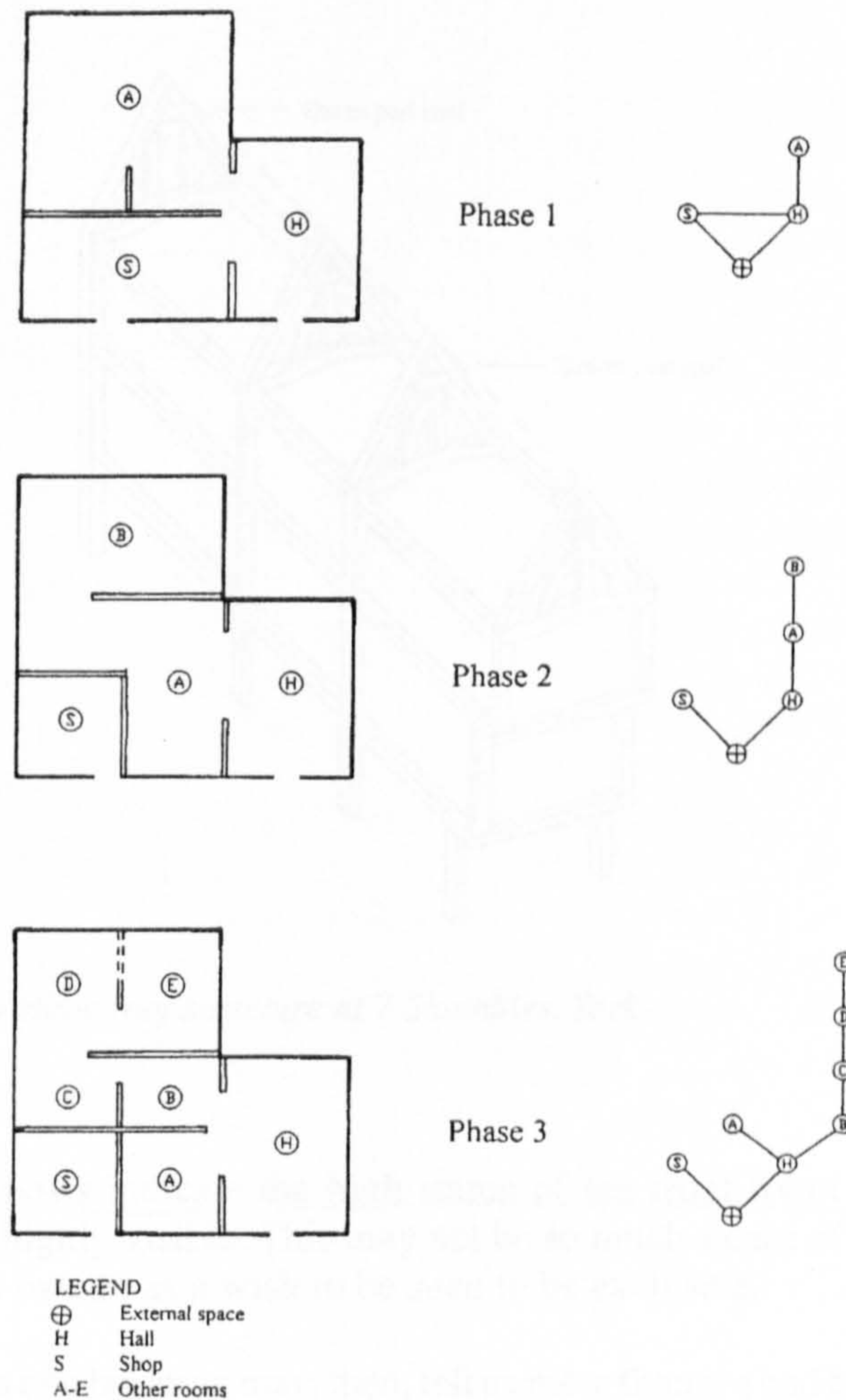


Figure 5. Access analysis at 111 Walmgate, York

observation of former internal subdivisions, combined with access analysis and recording of the structure of the external walls suggests that circulation patterns around the building were cued by the orientation of the braces (triangular strengthening timbers between the main posts and beams) in the side walls. On the ground and uppermost floor, the braces faced to the south-west, on the middle floor they pointed north-east. This corresponded with the lines of access through the house, which were deliberately set to run along alternate sides of the building. Furthermore, two different types of roof structure (crown posts at the front and queen posts to the rear) were recorded, but the detailed observation of the building sequence showed clearly that these were contemporary (fig 6). Both would have been visible within the rooms they spanned, and the two rooms were not interconnected. The crown posts would also have been visible from the street to those looking into the building. Access patterns suggest that the rear room was a lower status sleeping area. Both roof truss types function equally efficiently, so what seems clear here is that their meaning

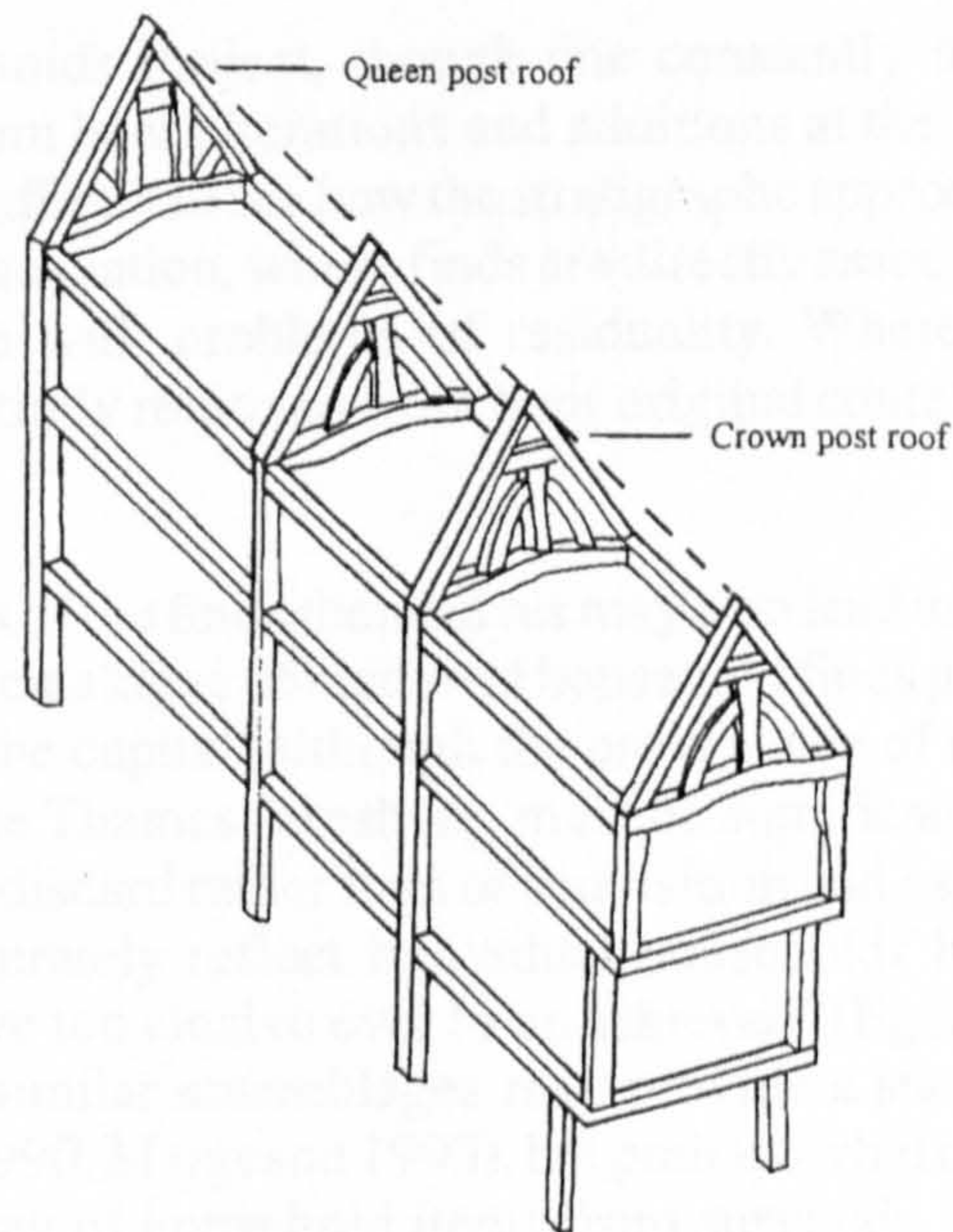


Figure 6. Sketch to show roof structure at 7 Shambles, York

differed. Crown posts indicate the high status of the front room which was relatively inaccessible, yet highly visible. This may not be so much a case of the desire for privacy on the part of the owner, as a wish to be *seen* to be exclusive.

The fixed features of a building may, then, tell us more than we had hoped at first sight. But there remains the danger, noted by Rapoport, of making direct inferences from architecture to activity. Sensitivity to differences in construction methods may be helpful and the changes made to internal layouts over time, analysed through the selective application of stratigraphic methodologies, are crucial to a diachronic understanding of a building. We might even regard such internal alterations under the general heading of 'semi-fixed features', since internal walls were, by their nature, easily removed or inserted. But semi-fixed features also include furnishings, fixtures and fittings. In excavation, archaeologists routinely expect to find domestic equipment on house sites and analyses of the distributions of particular types of find have enabled conclusions to be drawn concerning specialist work areas, kitchens, animal accommodation and so forth. These possibilities are not open to the archaeologist of standing buildings, which have survived precisely because they are still economically viable and therefore full of twentieth century accoutrements. We have to find other ways of reconstructing the urban interior. Excavations on urban sites are obviously helpful in the identification of activity areas - the publication of the work on low status late medieval tenements at Back 'Swinegate' and on the high status hall in Coffee Yard in York (York Archaeological Trust, forthcoming) will be of direct relevance to the interpretations of property in the city, while evidence for the siting of workshops is abundant from sites across the country (Schofield and Vince 1994, 117-23). The integration of this type of evidence with detailed observations of construction in standing buildings remains an aim

of the Urban Households Project, though one constantly thwarted by the removal of evidence resulting from later alterations and additions at the rear of medieval properties. It remains, however, difficult to see how the stratigraphic approach will be useful in this type of analysis. Even in excavation, where finds are directly associated with physical contexts, stratigraphers wrestle with problems of residuality. Where semi-fixed and moveable features have been entirely removed from their original contexts, the issues lie outside the range of stratigraphy.

Nevertheless, analysis of the finds themselves may also lead us to helpful conclusions. The Museum of London's catalogue of medieval household finds provides a fascinating insight into everyday life in the capital, although the provenance of most of the published finds, in the dumps along the Thames foreshore, must be significant in any interpretation since it represents a pattern discard rather than of acquisition and use and 'the ideal of retrieving assemblages that accurately reflect individual households has not yet been realised in London and may prove too elusive ever to be achieved' (Egan 1998, 5). Catalogues from other towns provide similar assemblages may provide a starting point for further study (Allen 1984, Biddle 1990, Margeson 1993), but perhaps what is really required is a detailed interdisciplinary survey of household items from survivals, artistic representations, and documentary and literary references. The purpose of such an investigation is not the accumulation of empirical evidence for the materiality of the medieval household for its own sake, but rather as the raw material for an analysis of the structuration processes of medieval society, and particularly to further our understanding of the role of the locale in that process.

Finally, we must consider the Rapoport's moveable features, the people themselves. All too often, the relationship between archaeology and history has been seen in terms of direct correlation. The matching of individual documents and surviving buildings is an elusive goal and in the end one that may answer only very specific questions, rather than allowing generalisations. More helpful to the archaeologist in her attempt to disentangle the social meanings implicit in the structure of the medieval house is an idea of the way in which medieval men and women thought about their homes. Literature is an obvious source here and the tendency of archaeologists to extrapolate uncritically from Chaucer, the Gawain poet and Langland is well known, and indeed notorious. A more informed and contextualised approach is necessary (Grenville 1997, 107). An attempt to understand the physical setting of medieval poetry in terms of the significance (for its contemporary audience) of the locales described might be a fruitful mode of analysis. It is here that my work overlaps with that of middle English specialists involved in the project, and while the collaboration is a fascinating and fruitful one, the scope of the present paper does not allow for its exegesis.

## *Conclusions: 'Stratigraphic' methodologies and the study of medieval timber-framed-buildings*

This paper has sought to show that the issues facing the interpreter of standing buildings, and particularly of prefabricated standing buildings, are of a different order to those looking at the sequence of events evidenced in sub-surface deposits. To some extent, we have to accept a degree of presupposition based on a knowledge of craft competences, rather than relying upon a purely spatial logic, as does the true stratigrapher. This can lead to criticism from two directions.

First the true stratigrapher may argue that there is an inevitable introduction of circular argument into the analysis of prefabricated frames. If we are making choices, at the point of record, about which joints should be assigned a separate context number and which should not, and similarly about whether a group of nails should be collectively or individually contexted, then we are introducing an element of interpretation into the analysis that, in the view of the purist, is unwarranted and unsafe. My response would be to suggest that in excavation such decisions are routinely made - when is a cobble surface ever given anything other than a single number? One would not consider for a moment giving individual numbers to each stone, although an obvious section of later patching would certainly be identified by a new number. This is interpretation on site and the same process is at work in the identification of contexts in buildings. The difference is that one is reliant upon an understanding of the process of timber-framing and the specific peculiarities of the craft tradition within which one is recording. Archaeologists should guard against circular argument, but in equal measure should apply pre-knowledge of craft competences where that is appropriate.

Secondly, the analyst of standing structures may argue (and it is a debate that has been vigorously fought in Britain (Ferris 1989 & 1991, Meeson 1989, Smith 1989, Wrathmell 1990) that stratigraphic approaches are unnecessarily complex and in any case do not reflect the logic of construction. A descriptive approach is considered adequate by many and the act of assigning context numbers to features that are recognised in common parlance as windows has been seen to be unnecessarily obscurantist. Ferris (1989) suggested that a stratigraphic approach should enable a more methodical, thorough and less subjective approach to building recording. He did not, as he has been characterised, offer the opinion that the analysis of buildings may (or, indeed, should) proceed in the absence of any critical judgement. In a lacerating attack on Ferris, Smith (1989, 20) (an architectural historian) suggested that 'underlying Dr Ferris's paper is the erroneous idea that knowledge automatically advances through the accumulation of facts. It is understandable that archaeologists should think this because they recognise their duty to salvage every scrap of information from the destructive activity of excavation...What is needed ... is not so much better recording as better ideas'. I hope that I have shown in this paper that better ideas and better recording are mutually interdependent in the field of standing buildings recording as in other branches of archaeology and that where better ideas demand more detailed recording, we can rise to the challenge thoughtfully and effectively.

What I have sought to demonstrate is that a careful and abstract approach to the sequencing of such structures, rather than one which relies upon discursive observations and notes, can enable us more effectively to identify the phases in the history of a building. More importantly, however, I argue that this identification is not an end in itself but rather that it is our ultimate goal to understand the structure and quotidian functioning of the societies which we study. In my case of the late medieval household, such an understanding requires the interdisciplinary approach I have described and archaeological stratigraphy remains but one in a battery of appropriate methodologies.

## *Bibliography*

- Allen, J.P. 1984. *Medieval and Post-medieval Finds from Exeter, 1971-1980*, Exeter.
- Biddle, M. 1990. *Object and Economy from Medieval Winchester* Oxford.
- Egan, G. 1998. *Medieval Finds from Excavations in London 6: The Medieval Household, Daily Living c.1150-c.1450*. London.
- Eriksdotter, G. 1997. The Stratigraphy of Buildings. in H.Andersson, P. Carelli and L. Esgård (eds) *Visions of the Past. Trends and Traditions in Swedish Medieval Archaeology*. Riksantikvarieämbetet and the Institute of Archaeology Lund. Stockholm.
- Ferris, I.M. .1989. The archaeological investigation of standing buildings. *Vernacular Architecture* 20.
- Ferris, I. M. 1991. I am not a camera. *Vernacular Architecture* 22.
- Froud, N. 1995. *Bowes Morrell House, 111 Walmgate; An Archaeological Case Study on Aspects of Private and Public Use of Space in a Timber-Framed Town House*, unpublished MA dissertation, University of York.
- Giddens, A. 1976. *New Rules of Sociological Method; a Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies*. London.
- Giddens, A. 1979. *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. London.
- Giddens, A. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge.
- Giddens, A. 1989. A Reply to my Critics. In D. Held and J.B.Thompson (eds) *Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and his Critics*. Cambridge.
- Gilchrist, R. 1993. *Gender and Material Culture*. London.
- Giles, K.1999a. The 'familiar' fraternity: the appropriation and consumption of medieval guildhalls in early modern York. In S. Tarlow and S. West (eds) *The Familiar Past? Archaeologies of Later Historical Britain*. London.
- Giles, K. 1999b. *Guildhalls and Social Identity in York, c.1350-1630*, unpublished DP thesis, University of York.
- Grenville, J. 1997. *Medieval Housing*. London.



- Harris, R. 1978. *Discovering Timber-Framed Buildings*. Princes Risborough.
- Hanson, J. 1998. *Decoding Homes and Houses*. Cambridge.
- Hayden, R. 1995. *Living and Trading Conditions in the Shambles, 1300 to 1600* unpublished MA dissertation, University of York.
- Hillier, B. and Hanson, J. 1984. *The Social Logic of Space*. Cambridge.
- Johnson, M. 1993. *Housing Culture: Traditional Architecture in an English Landscape*. London.
- Jones, M. 1997. unpublished MA thesis - details to come
- Locock, M. (ed) 1994. *Meaningful Architecture: Social Interpretations of Buildings*. Aldershot.
- Margeson, S. 1993. *Norwich Households: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Finds from Norwich Survey Excavations, 1971-1978*. Norwich.
- Markus, T. 1993. *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types*. London.
- Meeson, R. 1989. In defence of selective recording. *Vernacular Architecture* 20.
- Parker Pearson, M. and Richards, C (eds). 1994. *Architecture and Order: Approaches to Social Space*. London.
- Rapoport, A. 1990. Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings. In S. Kent (ed) *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space*. Cambridge.
- Samson, R. (ed) 1990. *The Social Archaeology of Houses*. Edinburgh.
- Schofield, J. and Vince, A. 1994. *Medieval Towns*. London.
- Smith, J.T. 1989. The archaeological investigation of standing buildings: a comment. *Vernacular Architecture* 20.
- Thompson, J.B. 1989. The Theory of Structuration. In D. Held and J.B. Thompson (eds) *Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and his Critics*. Cambridge.
- Wrathmell, S. 1990. Why the archaeologist cannot be a camera. *Scottish Archaeological Review* 7.

**2001** 'Out of the shunting yards – one academic's approach to recording small buildings' in S Pearson and R Meeson (eds) *Vernacular buildings in a changing world: understanding, recording and conservation. CBA Research Report 126*. York: Council for British Archaeology, 11-26.

---

## 2 Out of the shunting yards: one academic's approach to the recording of smaller vernacular buildings *by Jane Grenville*

---

### Introduction

The Scottish poet, Norman MacCaig, wrote a rather bleak little poem called 'An Academic' in which he describes an emotionally desiccated figure obsessively measuring the immeasurable and reducing great literature to 'a do-it-yourself kit/ of semantic gestures'. The third stanza reads:

... Trains  
have to reach their destinations.  
But yours, that should be  
clattering and singing  
through villages and landscapes, never  
gets out of the shunting yards.  
(MacCaig 1969, 61)

I was asked to write about new approaches to the recording of vernacular buildings for this volume. This inevitably led to a massive writer's block, for we all know that there is nothing new under the sun, and I can perform no peculiar magic to transform the field. But MacCaig's image of the academic engine stuck in its shunting yard seemed to describe not only my own despair, but also the impasse that building recording appears to have reached. For many years we have been exhorted that what we need 'is not so much better recording as better ideas' (Smith 1989, 20), to 'cook the cake' of our raw data in order to say 'interesting things about the men, women and children who inhabited the houses we study' (Johnson 1997, 13). Yet somehow, with a few honourable exceptions, the train remains stubbornly stuck in the sidings. Syntheses and explicitly theoretical approaches attract criticism from the recording fraternity for being too broad brush in their approach, too little concerned with the detailed evidence of the buildings themselves. Building reports, by contrast, are criticised by the synthesisers for their tendency to add yet more undigested facts to a rising tide of data. This chapter is an attempt to couple the engine of theory demanded by Smith and Johnson with the long train of existing data and recording techniques so that together they may indeed clatter and sing through villages and landscapes.

What follows owes much to my colleagues at the University of York, both in the Department of Archaeology, where a major research interest is the relationship between archaeological fieldwork, theoretical approaches, analysis of data and final synthesis in a comprehensive and credible report, and in the Centre for Medieval Studies, where interdisciplinary work is the norm and the practical problems it raises are constantly reviewed. The archaeologists Kate

Giles, Steve Roskams, Rochelle Rowell, and historians Jeremy Goldberg and Sarah Rees Jones, will all recognise echoes of conversations we have had, while Martin Carver, the Professor of Archaeology at York, has been very generous with his time and particularly with his ideas, which I have borrowed in abundance for this paper. The tables reproduced later are adapted versions of an original idea of his and I am grateful to him for allowing me to steal his intellectual property so shamelessly. Perhaps the greatest debt goes to those students who have had the courage to put the vision into practice and produced the case studies with which I have illustrated the points I wish to make. The projects I discuss are not concerned exclusively with small vernacular buildings – churches, monastic structures and medieval guildhalls will all make an appearance. That in itself is perhaps a matter of interest. Even now, research interests continue to revolve around higher status structures. But my point is that the kind of recording strategies and analytical paths followed are, or at least could be, equally applied to smaller buildings.

Lastly in this introduction, I wish to consider the different constituencies involved in the recording of smaller historic buildings, for they are disparate. What follows in the body of the chapter is, I hope, of central importance to all, but the different intellectual cultures of each group leads, I fear, to a certain mutual suspicion. The first and largest constituency is probably that of the amateur recorders, working on a voluntary basis, often in groups formed at county level or as a result of adult education classes. While it is, of course, dangerous to generalise, it seems that their interest springs initially from an intellectual hunger for local history, archaeology and what in America would be characterised as folk studies. This is intellectual curiosity at its purest, a simple desire to know more about one's historical and topographical context. The work is interesting and wide-ranging and crucially, much, though by no means all, of it is published and fairly widely accessible through the pages of *Vernacular Architecture*, the county archaeological and local history journals and locally-focused monographs. Often empirical and descriptive, it is not used as much as it might be in broader syntheses and some of the research questions posed in this chapter might form suitable starting points for such work.

The second group is that of the professional recorders, those operating within heritage agencies at national and county level or in archaeological units, and those individuals or small firms who have responded commercially to the requirements of PPG

15 for the adequate recording of buildings in advance of alterations. Normally working in situations equivalent to rescue or commercial evaluation in sub-surface archaeology, the constraints and motivations here are different. Whilst all these people have a genuine and fundamental interest in the past, their immediate preoccupations may be more mundane: an ex-student of mine remarked that although I had spent a year drumming into her that the three most important factors in the design of a recording project were research, research and research, the hard truth out in the commercial world was that they were money, money and time (insofar as it is money). I take the point, but maintain strenuously that the money that society is putting into the recording of buildings (willingly or unwillingly) demands a return in terms of an interesting and demonstrable narrative about the building. Developers and householders genuinely want to know what we have learnt as a result of our researches.

Lastly, there is the tiny group, in which I place myself, of those who are paid to undertake research and who choose the vernacular building stock as the research base. Based mainly in higher education, these few have other more arcane constraints, little understood outside the increasingly bureaucratic world of contemporary academia. Dedicated research funding is available only on a competitive basis from the Arts and Humanities Research Board and projects must have clearly expressed, identifiable and achievable goals which will be of use to the wider research community. Funding is not the only problem: fieldwork opportunities are increasingly squeezed by the constraints of time spent in teaching and administration. So the outlook for major long-term projects is pretty bleak, but it is important to note that the system forces us constantly to reconsider our research input and output. The necessity to do so ensures a continual reevaluation of research aims and agendas. It may well be that this is the new function of academic archaeology: to define and debate research agendas for the use of the wider research community, rather than to carry out that research on a large scale. Time will tell whether this is a sterile navel-gazing exercise or a fruitful means of imposing some intellectual rigour on a drifting empirical project.

### **The past in the present: contemporary matters and the research agenda**

Academics often talk of 'the research agenda', by which is meant the areas of interest that are shared by researchers in a particular area. Bob Meeson (see p 32) alludes to the unfashionableness of research agendas, which perhaps reinforces my point that different constituencies within this broad group of researchers are led by different imperatives. Research agendas, so termed, may be out of favour outside academia but within it, no research agenda

means, quite simply, no research. If one cannot demonstrate a broad question or set of questions that one wishes to answer by undertaking a survey, then one cannot gain financial support or the intellectual backing of one's colleagues. We have to look for the bigger picture. Areas of interest shift from decade to decade, and it has been argued that such shifts reflect only the political, economic and social conditions of the researcher's day. I want to take a few moments to consider this proposition, for it has, in my view, led to some highly questionable intellectual positions.

In vernacular building studies, as Johnson has pointed out (1997, 16), we can use the approaches of earlier writers such as Addy (1898) and Innocent (1916) to identify the preoccupations of the time. Addy, for instance, had a close interest in the cultural affinities between Britain and Germany, a strong relationship in the 19th century, about to be burst asunder in the 20th. Innocent's concerns with craftsmanship and materials are a reaction to the technical developments of his time: 'the old methods of craftsmanship are vanishing with the changed conditions of education and industry, and it is a matter for regret that they cannot be adequately described in writing' (1916, 281).

So how far do wider contemporary social concerns impinge on the research agenda? The first part of Table 2.1, which we use at York to stimulate debate among students regarding the relationship of the present to the study of past, is the result of many classroom conversations. It is endlessly amended and revised. It is easy to see how some issues have translated directly into the academic world – feminist studies, for instance, rose in the humanities in the 1970s and 80s in step with the Women's Movement and the relationship is obvious, as is its modification to 'gender studies' in the 'caring 90s'. Does a current concern in historical research with masculinities reflect the anti-feminist backlash? Not all current economic and political issues impinge so directly upon the choice of research topic, but their influence on the attitudes of the researcher must be acknowledged as Johnson has pointed out: '...this awareness of our own subjectivity is the final element of our loss of innocence: the innocent belief that we can study the past independently of our own world' (1997, 16). The view that the past is capable of independent study is, he avers, 'arrogant'. It is difficult to disagree, although the point is hardly a new one – as long ago as 1961 E H Carr made the case convincingly in his classic textbook of historical method, *What is History?*, and scientists have long been concerned with the 'observer effect' in experiments. Yet it is a view that has recently been taken to its logical extreme with some curious results. A more recent textbook on methodology in history, Keith Jenkins' *Re-thinking History*, takes a post-modern stance and states that 'when we study history we are not studying the past but what historians have constructed about the past. In that sense whether or not the people in the past had the same or different natures to us is not only undecidable but also not at issue. In

Table 2.1 Themes in archaeological research

Contemporary social concerns	Archaeological concerns
Economic systems and fairness Taxation and resource distribution	Is there a factual past?
Nationalism/Devolution/Relations between Britain and Europe Racism Religion/ideology Gender issues Town/countryside divisions	What provokes change or encourages continuity Why are societies and subsets within them different from one another? How does material culture enable us to understand economy, social organisation, power, belief? Does material culture carry meaning as well as function? How might we interpret this?
Fashion/peer group identity	

## Notes

Material culture is a phrase that I shall use repeatedly throughout the rest of this paper – it is entirely familiar to archaeologists, but may not be so widely used in other fields of historical research, including the recording of small buildings. Quite simply it refers to the physical things that a society produces – the objects and buildings that every society surrounds itself with, and which may be functional, or symbolic or both.

that sense the past doesn't enter into it. Our real need is to establish the presuppositions that historians take to the past' (1991, 47). Such a nihilistic and truly arrogant view, that the only subjects worthy of study are ourselves, suggests that we might as well leave our studies there, in the first half of Table 2.1 and abandon all hope of using our evidence to understand the lives of those in the past.

There has, in fact, been much discussion in archaeology over recent years to echo Jenkins' view, and challenge the idea of a factual past. Whether or not the past actually happened has absorbed a good deal of academic archaeological thinking over the last fifteen years or so. This seems to me to be something of a waste of time. For me, there is no doubt that the house in which I am sitting was built and that that event took place at some time in the past. We cannot recapture that event, although we may try to reconstruct it with greater or lesser success. That success depends upon three things: firstly the quality of the evidence of the past event, secondly, the effectiveness with which we frame our questions about the event, and thirdly, to some extent bound up with the previous point, our awareness that our views of the past are mediated by our contemporary condition. Some typical questions asked by archaeologists are suggested in the second part of Table 2.1. What provokes change or encourages continuity? Why are societies and subsets within them different from one another? Are economics the driving force of society? How does material culture enable us to understand economy, social organisation, power, belief? Does material culture carry meaning as well as reflect function? If so, how might we interpret this? Which questions we choose to ask may indeed reflect upon ourselves and our circumstances, but this surely enriches rather than impoverishes the field and we should perhaps not spend too much time ticking one another off for failing to conform to one or other school of thought. What we *do* need to beware of is the collection of data for data's sake. The framing of questions enables us to gather data in a focused and useful way.

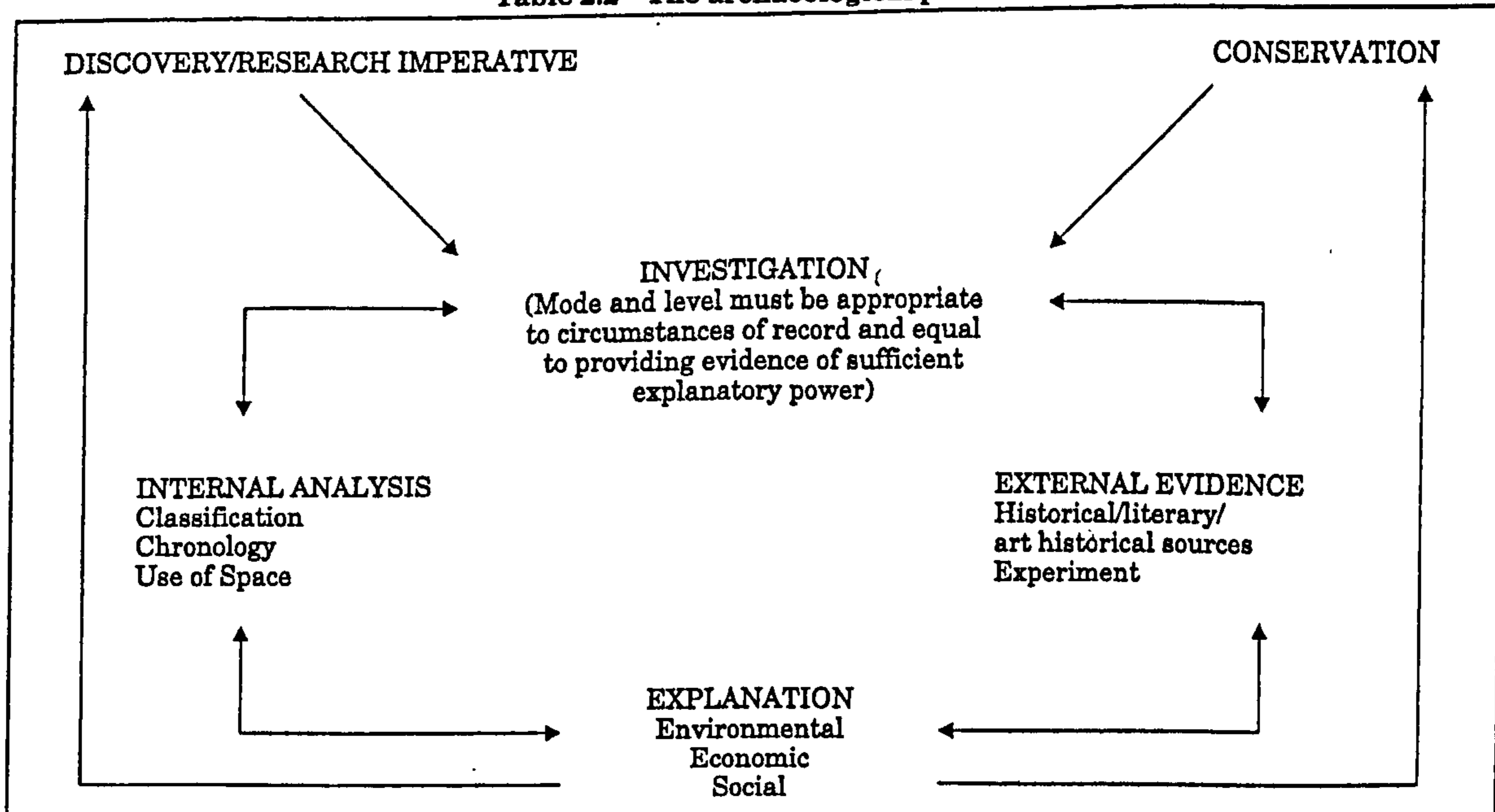
To provide convincing answers, such questions must be matched to evidence of sufficient quality. To say that 'there can be no final single "right" or

"wrong" interpretation' (Johnson 1997, 15) is to stretch a point, for while it would indeed be unrealistic to subscribe to any single explanation, there can be no doubt that some interpretations are, quite simply, wrong – that the evidence to support them is absent or too weak to carry the weight of the argument. The way in which we gather data, transform them into evidence and then provide an explanation (a process sometimes undertaken in reverse order) is the subject of the next section.

### The archaeological process

Table 2.2 illustrates the intellectual processes of archaeology. We are driven to investigate by the imperative of intellectual curiosity or by the requirements of the conservation process. Something new is discovered, for example, a firehood in an ostensibly mid-18th-century polite farmhouse; or the opportunity arises to revisit some of the medieval townhouses of York last inspected by the RCHME in the 1960s, armed with new research on late medieval urbanism, and new questions about the social use of space to answer; or a listed building is to be altered, and recording in advance of the work is specified. The value of an historic building may be recognised principally by the general public as aesthetic or as adding to a sense of place, and only secondly as a source of information about the past. Nevertheless, there is a fairly widespread eagerness to understand more about buildings and their history, as anyone who has taken a party around an historic town centre and counted the number of 'extras' who tag on to the group can attest. A major discovery or extensive survey can usually generate at least a paragraph and a photograph in a local newspaper and the knowledge gained adds to the value that the local population ascribes to its surroundings. By adding to our knowledge, investigation and explanation may have a direct impact in planning terms – a building becomes listed, for instance. Additionally or alternatively, the work may alter perceptions of the building, or its type, or its setting, or the history of those who have used it, and thus feed back into the loop to

Table 2.2 The archaeological process



update research agendas and generate new questions. The process of investigation is not, then, an introspective one, for the benefit of a small but dedicated community of enthusiasts, but one which has an impact upon the appearance of towns, villages and landscapes.

Crucially for this argument, the process may be turned on its head and the relationship between explanation and investigation reversed. A researcher, very often one who is operating within my third grouping of interested parties either as a student or a member of staff within an educational establishment, appears with an explanation, a theory requiring proof, a new way of looking at the past that demands some data to test its efficacy. The theory may be drawn from another discipline, and sociology, anthropology, geography and architecture have all figured prominently over the last decade or so, or it may have been generated internally within archaeology or vernacular buildings studies. What is required is a suitable case study against which to test it. The research agenda, then, is clear. The danger, as has been observed by others before, is the temptation to shoehorn the evidence to fit. Rules of evidence are critical here, and the way in which we analyse or draw parallels from other types of data ought not to transgress those rules (see below).

It is in this division between investigation and explanation that a false dichotomy seems to me to have arisen. A theoretical engine chugging comfortably through an intellectual landscape without a train to pull looks pretty redundant to the majority of trainspotters. Yet for the vocal minority, a set of carriages set out for all to see and identify and name and classify holds no dynamic interest in the absence of an intellectual destination and an engine to pull it

there. The criticisms on either side are fair. The issue, the new approach (if it can be said to be new, which I doubt) is to encourage both sides to think of their enterprise as incomplete without the other. Observations require explanation and that may be sought in many ways (see *Explanation* below), but explanations that lack evidence of a load-bearing nature to support them remain ultimately unconvincing. This chapter will now look in turn at each of these four areas of endeavour – investigation and explanation as the two principal operations and the analysis of built fabric and its comparison with other forms of evidence as the tools with which to couple the two.

### *Investigation*

The process of investigation is dictated to a large extent by the mechanism through which it was commissioned. My ex-student's three imperatives of money, money and time spring to mind, for often funds are limited and time is shorter, as occupants not unreasonably require the use of their sitting room or shop or workshop or whatever. The circumstance of the record is important but it should not be the sole determinant of a recording strategy. Beside investigation in Table 2.2, and linked to it in a dynamic loop, is explanation, for how one interprets a structure depends on the quality of information gathered. The clearer one is before one starts about the questions asked, the more appropriate will be the level of data collection. I would argue that most recorders are aware of this consciously or unconsciously. How else do we make those daily decisions about what to leave out of the record? The reason that information about

scribing on timber frames has so often been overlooked in the past is not that it was not noticed, but that it was not sufficiently understood to be seen to be significant. Now that it is, it is routinely recorded. Builders may remove sections of stone wall that are critical to our understanding of a structure while we are off-site. Their bewilderment at our dismay is genuine – to them it was, after all, just a stretch of old wall, and not a structurally efficient one at that. It is the questions that we wished to ask of it, the research agenda, the pre-selected areas of investigation that make the destroyed evidence so important. That is not to suggest that we should ignore the element of serendipity so often present in recording; it would be foolish to see a research agenda as a straitjacket that rules out of court the chance or inexplicable discovery, but the reflexive relationship between data and explanation should always be maintained quite explicitly in the researcher's mind.

#### Case study; the church of St Helen, Skipwith, Yorkshire

In a field project undertaken for the MA in the Archaeology of Buildings at York, Richard Peats undertook to reconstruct the interior appearance in the 15th century of the parish church of St Helen at Skipwith, just south of York (Peats 1998 and forthcoming). The church is well-known for its Anglo-Saxon tower and its chancel of c1300, declared by Pevsner to be 'one of the most noble . . . of the East Riding' (Pevsner and Neave 1995, 687–9). Peats' interest was not so much in the architectural history of the church as in the understanding of the use of the interior as a space for worship and ritual within the liturgy of the pre-Reformation Catholic church in England. His recording methods were tailored to suit. He produced a plan of the church, analysed and phased it in the traditional way and then turned his attention to specific evidence for former structures, now removed. Rather than drawing entire elevations stone-by-stone, their outlines were produced using a combination of photographic techniques and theodolite survey. They were drawn up in AutoCAD, with the results stored digitally by the computer for reproduction at whatever scale and projection might be required. Within these, where evidence for earlier structures remained as blocking or refacing, detailed stone-by-stone surveys were undertaken by hand and the information digitised and added to outline elevations. These were then elided to provide a three-dimensional model of the church, and the evidence of one elevation matched with those adjoining or opposite to allow a convincing reconstruction of the position of the rood screen, the partitions to the chantry chapels and a possible altar beam in one of the side chapels. Alterations undertaken in the medieval period were identified (for instance, it was possible to see that the position of the altar beam had been changed) and a three-dimensional reconstruction of the interior of the church was produced,

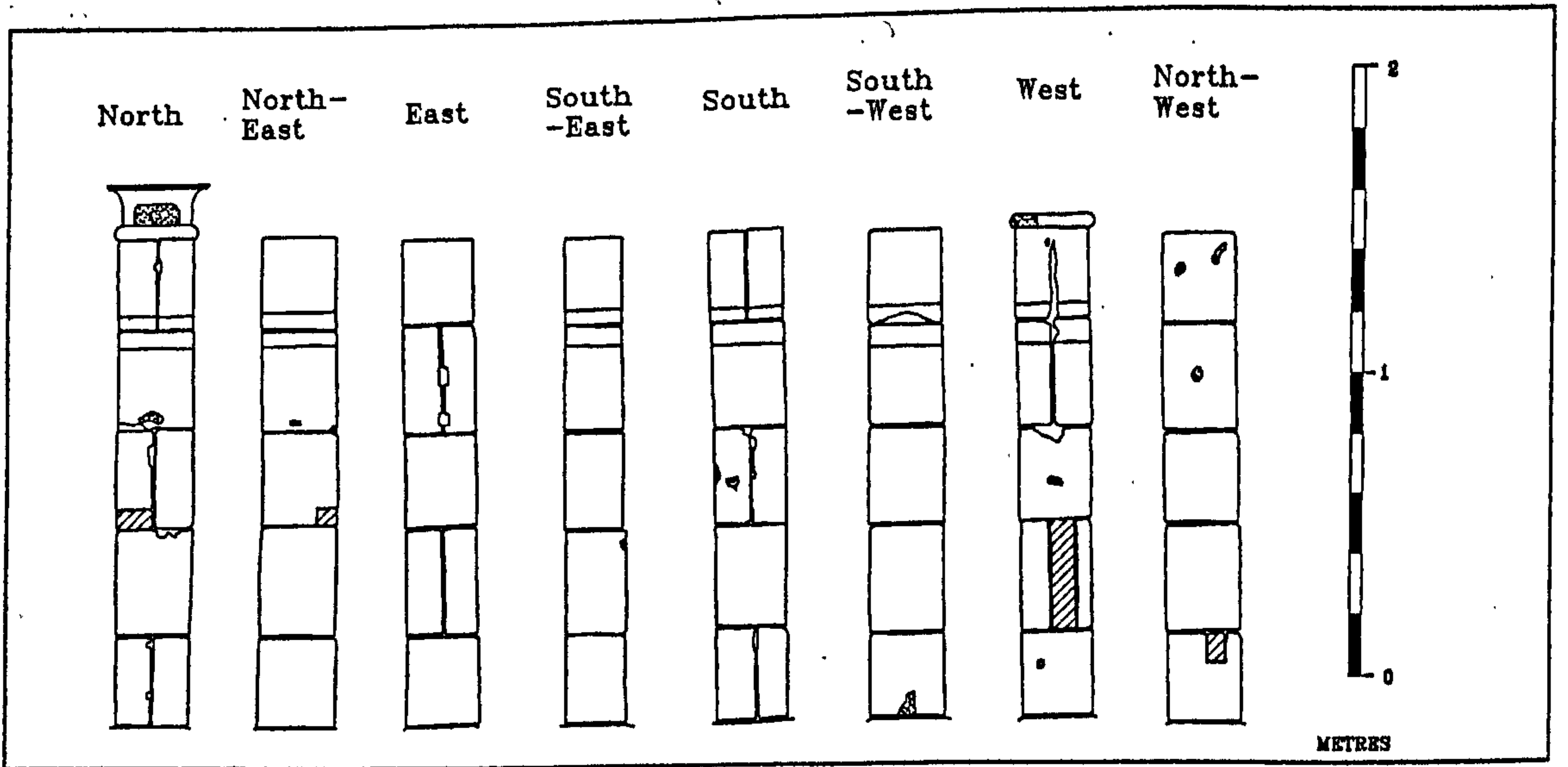
looking from various different angles within the building. The impressive results were clearly presented (see Figs 2.1, 2.2) so that on the strength of the drawings alone, alternative explanations could be proffered.

The project triumphantly showed that a combination of outline and detailed recording, when coupled with a fearless use of the computer to provide the tools for reconstruction, can deliver a real insight not only into the way in which a building has developed, but also into the ways in which it was used and how it appeared to those who used it. Recording strategies were pitched to answer those specific questions, and appropriate computer draughting was used to further the understanding of the results. There is plenty more, of course, that we could ask of Skipwith church, and the potential for further study remains. But within the time- and budget-limited constraints of a summer research project, excellent results were achieved. The lessons learnt are transferable to the study of small vernacular buildings. For instance, if one were interested in the changes to internal domestic space and its use, one could record in detail all evidence for early fireplace positions and removed partitions, leaving other features such as the original timber frame or mass construction wall recorded in plan only. The plan should be sufficiently accurate to allow others, more interested in the initial construction of the building, to return to add the necessary detail, but for the purposes of the questions asked, detailed recording could be limited to immediately relevant features. One does not have to record everything within a building to the same level of resolution, but one does have to know *why* one is recording at any particular level.

#### Explanation

It is the aim of research to uncover new facts, new material, new observations and *explain* them (Phillips and Pugh 2000), and it is the act of explanation that raises research above mere data-gathering. So while it may be interesting to know, for example, the dates of all the early aisled halls in England, it is far more interesting to attempt to explain their form, distribution and chronology. In order to explain we must generalise, test our generalisations against further evidence, refine them and present them. While there are many schools of thought regarding the most appropriate overarching theory into which explanation may be fitted (and most of them end in -ism) it seems to me that there are three major areas into which they may be classified: explanations which ultimately depend upon environmental factors, those which see economics as the prime mover, and those which take social imperatives as the mainspring.

Environmental explanations were central to the thinking of prehistorians who developed what is known as Systems Theory in the 1960s and 70s. Societies and economic systems were seen as complex



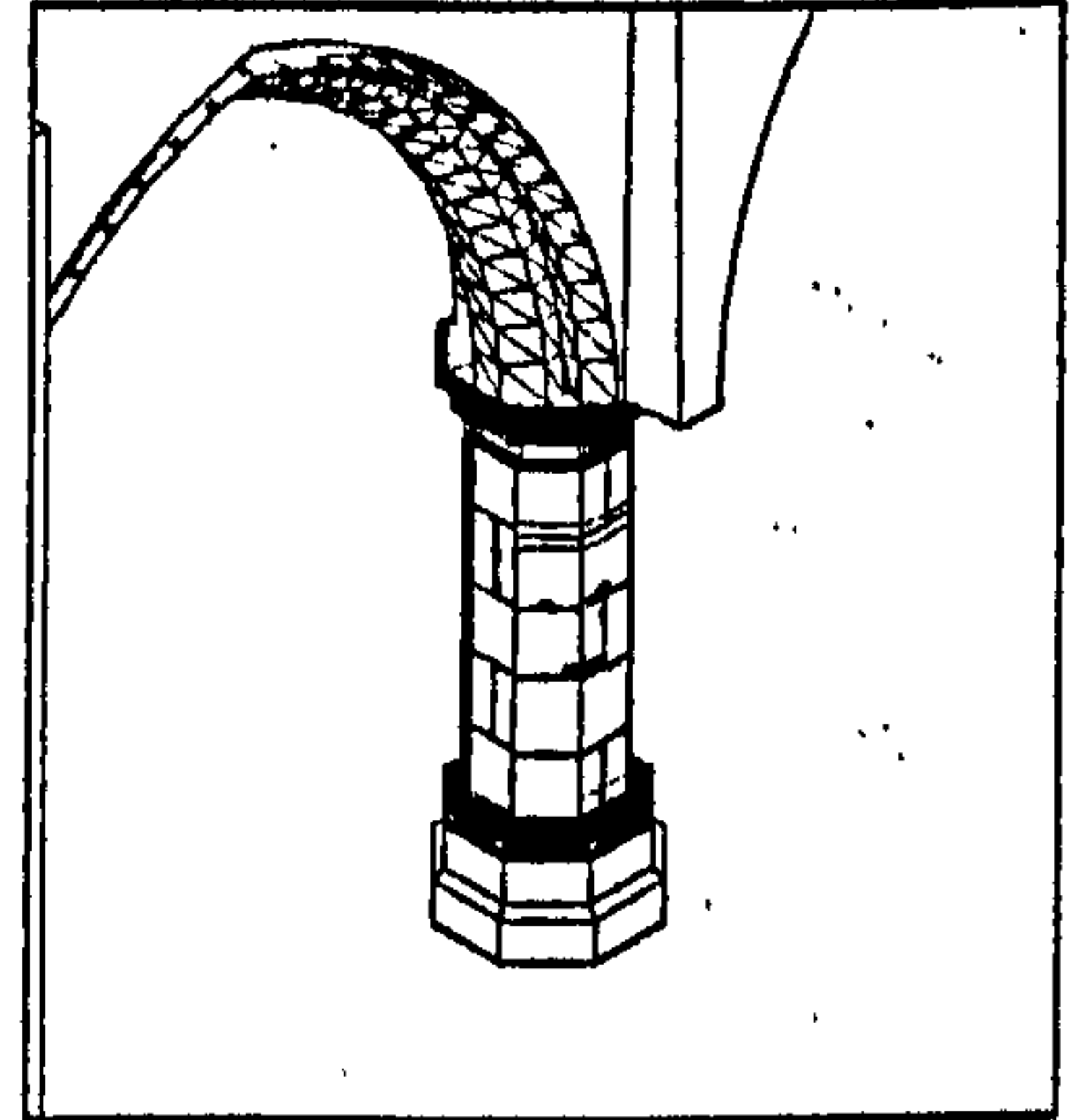
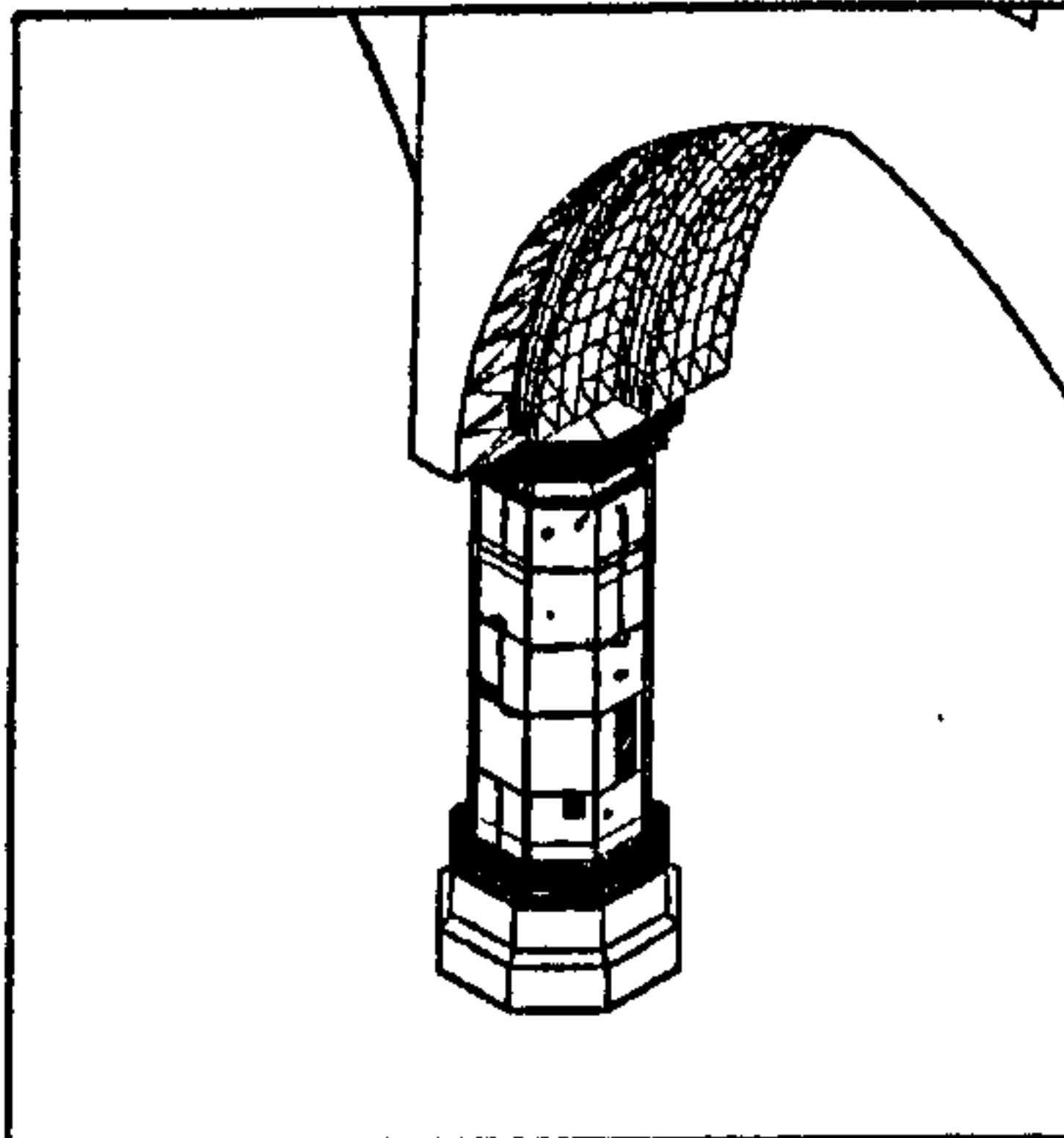
Key:

 Inserted stone

 Chase/scar

Isometric views:

NW NE Scale 1:50



General from the SW

SE

SW

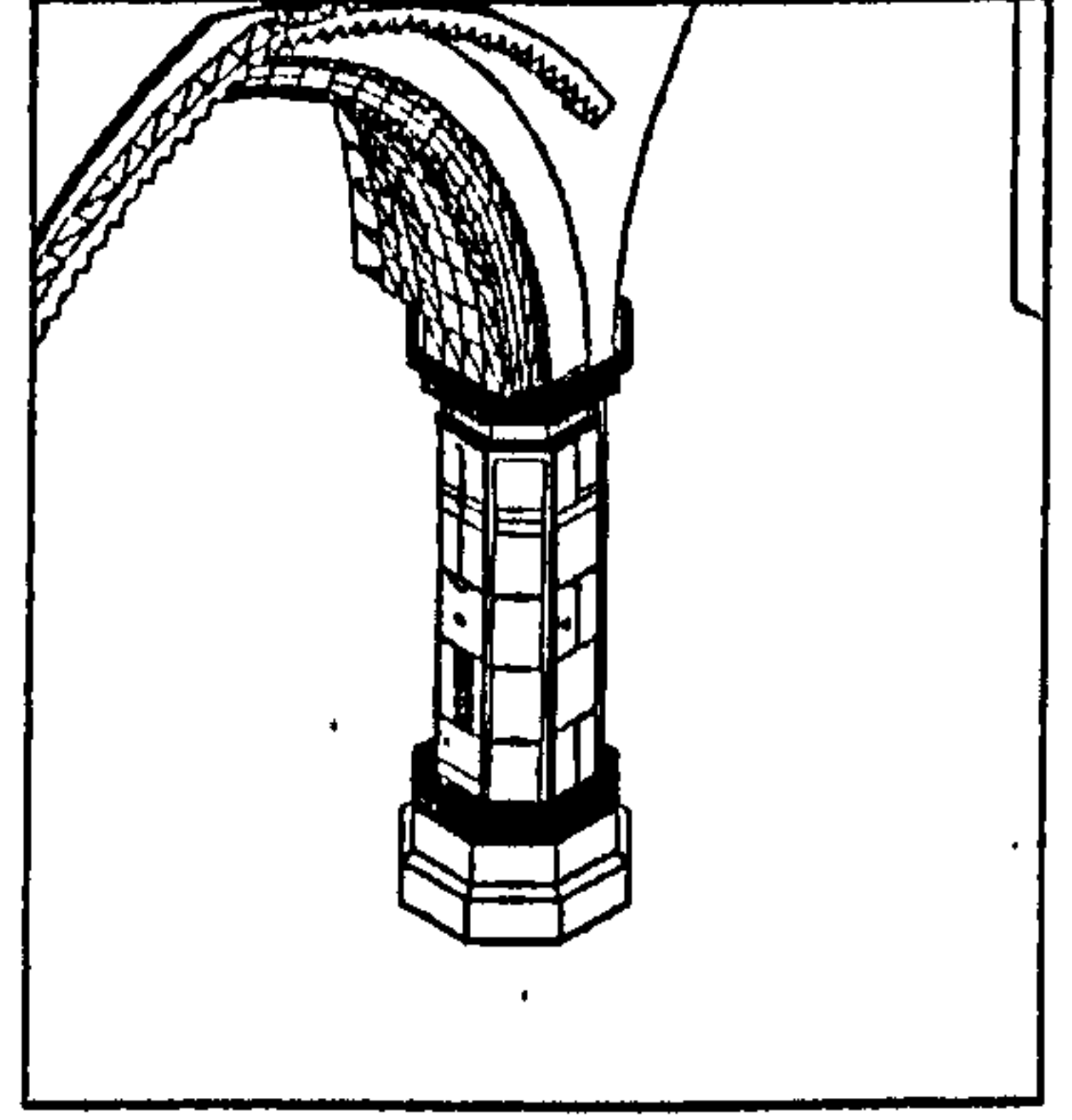
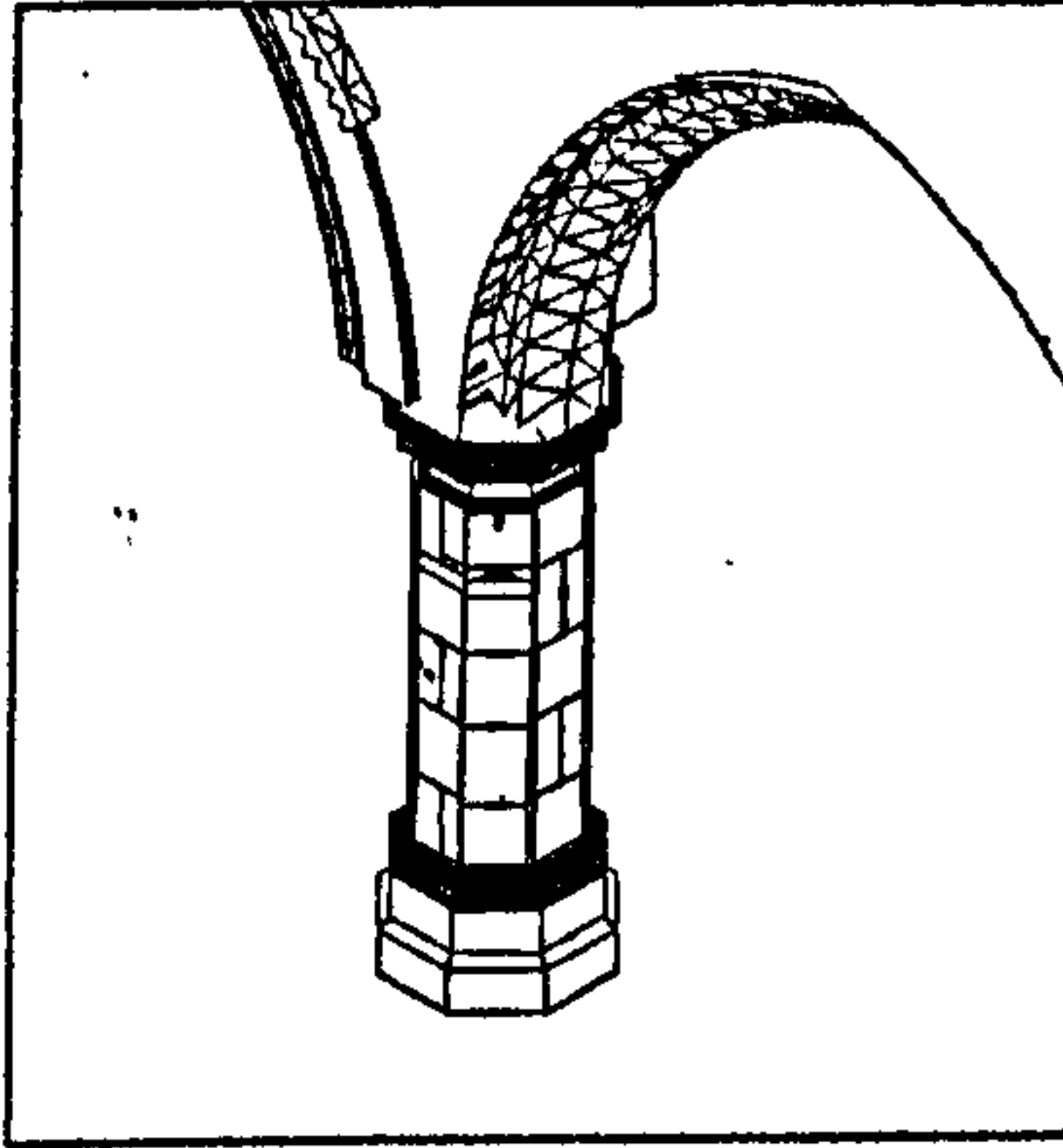
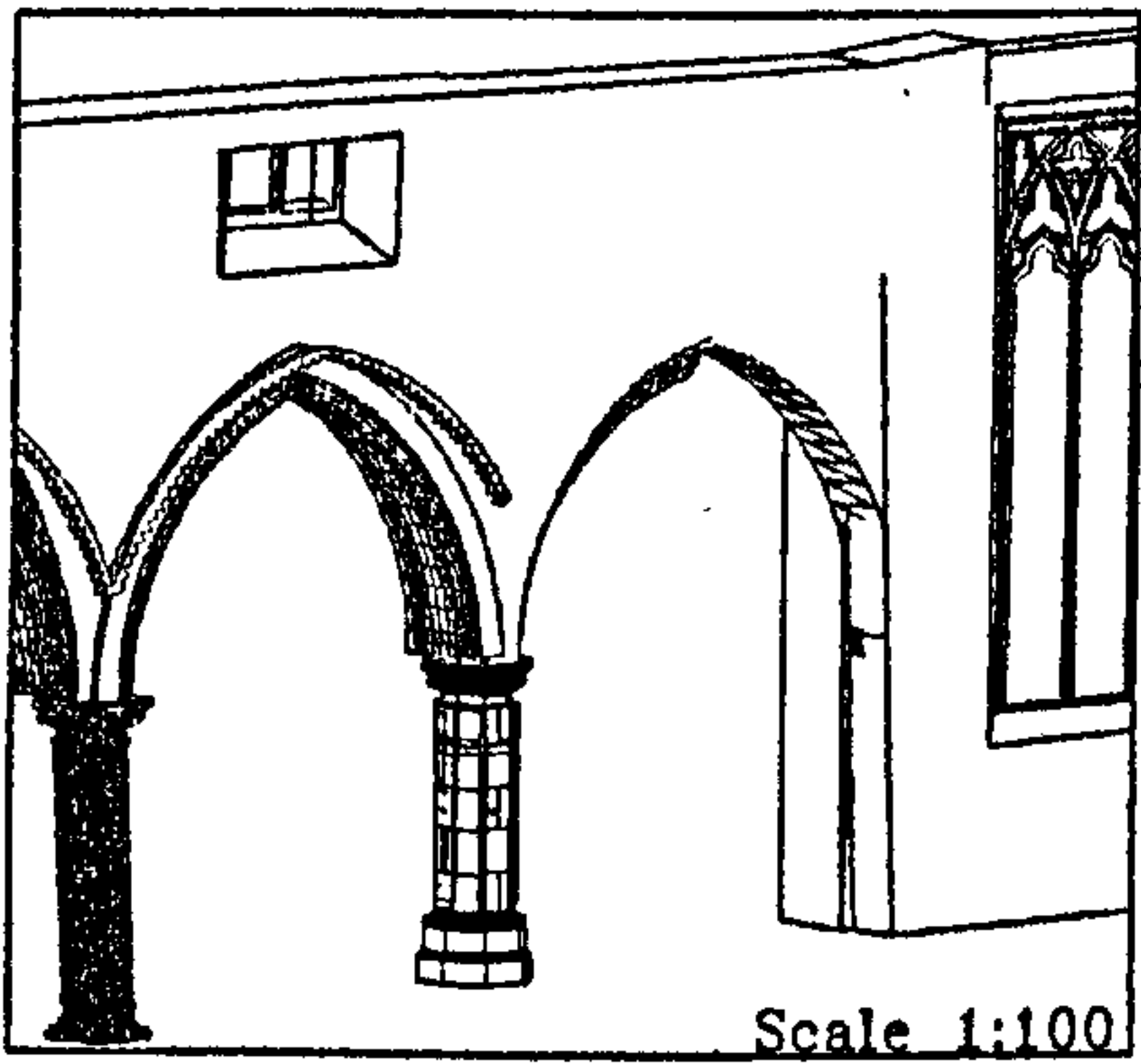


Figure 2.1 St Helen's church, Skipwith: the north-east column: hand recording added to AutoCAD 3-D model (Drawn by Richard Peats)



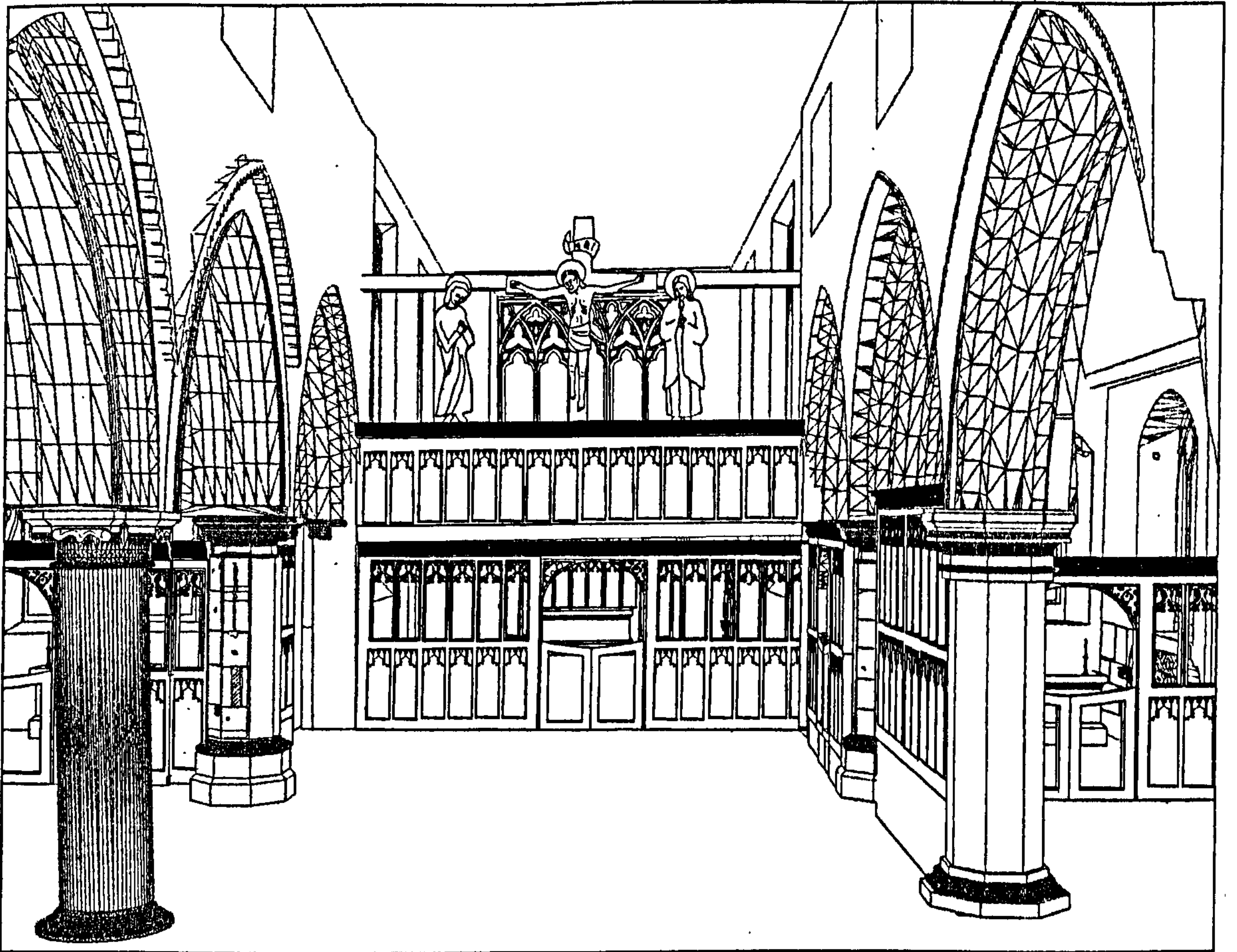


Figure 2.2 *St Helen's church, Skipwith: reconstruction of the nave and chancel based on detailed recording (Drawn by Richard Peats)*

interlinked equilibria, where changes in one area must necessarily lead to adjustments in another, but wholesale change was explained only by factors external to the system, namely climate and its effect on the availability of resources. Many explanations of the disastrous events of the 14th century in Europe rest on such environmental explanations, with worsening weather and poor harvests blamed for famine conditions and a weakened population, and the numerous epidemics of which the Black Death was but the worst. Environmental explanations find their way into the study of historic buildings in providing reasons for the choice of materials, design, roof pitch and so forth. There can be no doubt that an understanding of how buildings stand up and how they combat the climatic conditions of the areas in which they stand, is crucial to an overall comprehension. The criticism of environmental explanation is that external factors can present constraints for builders, but they rarely impose a single solution as we can easily observe by noting different house types and construction within the same community. Sometimes environmental explanations are totally com-

elling – there can be no other reason for the end of Pompeii, for instance – but what they do not tell us is why people lived (and indeed continue to live) on the slopes of live volcanoes.

Economic reasons may bring us nearer to the truth here. If the administration of resources might be seen to lie at the heart of individual and collective action then certainly archaeology and vernacular buildings studies, as the investigation of physical remains, lend themselves to the analysis of material conditions. In a world where house prices and mortgages form a major preoccupation of a large part of the population it is easy to see how an understanding of housing as principally a manifestation of an economic system might predominate. Such a theoretical stance may take a relatively simplistic view – that the perceived quality of housing reflects the economic status of its occupants: castles for the rich and hovels for the poor. Or it might lead the researcher to a more complicated and intricate argument about changing economic conditions over a long period of time, and the relationship of the housing stock to wealth, as for instance in Currie's classic discussion

of rates of attrition in vernacular housing (Currie 1988). Economic constraints may well be among the reasons for occupying marginal zones, such as the slopes of volcanoes or inhospitable uplands, but there are those who find such explanations ultimately unsatisfactory since economics, the conscious organisation of material resources, may be seen as a specifically human and cultural phenomenon.

There is an argument that economic systems are merely subsets of social systems and that ultimately all explanation of human behaviour must rest in the social world, the world created by human invention, the perceived environment. 'Human beings, in contrast to other social animals, do not just live in society, they produce society in order to live' (Godelier 1986, 1). Not only do we produce society: we create societies in boundless variation. How we understand those societies and how we understand material culture and social structure in the light of one another has been a central question in archaeology almost since the birth of the discipline. Within the study of buildings, questions of ethnic identity, nationality, craft competence, family and household relationships and power relationships more generally have all demanded attention and continue to do so. In this mode of explanation, social variation holds the key, if only we could understand it. Furthermore, in much recent work, material culture has been understood not only to reflect social structures and norms of behaviour, but also actively to *structure* them – things and buildings play an active part in maintaining or overthrowing rules and accepted behaviour. For instance, Johnson (1993) has argued that the closure of open halls at the end of the medieval period not only reflected but actively hastened and reinforced social change through the physical as well as social separation of masters and servants. Such an explanation contrasts interestingly with that of Hall (1983, 99–100) who sees rebuilding and the closure of halls in 17th-century south Gloucestershire as a clear response to changing agricultural markets and their fluctuating profits.

These, then, are the three main areas within which I would identify most modes of explanation. Rarely are they mutually exclusive, although often one reads polemics which suggest that they are, with environmental and economic stances being accused of determinism and social explanation being seen as ultimately relative and unprovable. Coupling the engine of explanation to the carriages of data depends on the efficacy of coupling hooks, the methods which we use to translate data into explanation. These take two distinct forms – the analysis of the buildings themselves, which I have referred to as 'internal analysis' and the use of material from related fields, which I call 'external evidence'. Their success depends upon the rigour with which they are applied, the quality of the data and whether they can stand up to the rigorous analysis and the robustness of the explanation provided. It follows that data collection, analysis and explanation are interdependent, not independent, functions.

### *Internal analysis*

How are facts and observations about a building turned into evidence, into planks in an argument about the past? Much intellectual endeavour, whether academic or not, is spent in trying to 'make sense' of things and the first thing we do in the tradition of western Enlightenment thinking is try to classify and to generalise. We have a certain set of implicit intellectual rules about this: like must be classified with like, as much to draw out contrasts as similarities, and the classes themselves must be compatible. So for buildings, we classify fabric, plan form, constructional techniques, architectural style, symbols and so forth. Chronology often acts as a starting point for analysis and in archaeological thinking, the constructional details provide the key here. A thorough understanding of building techniques in both timber and mass wall construction allow us to carry out the equivalent of a stratigraphic analysis in excavation. If we can identify the primary and secondary events (major construction phases and minor alterations), we can isolate at least a relative chronology. Stylistic and typological details can help us to provide approximate dates by analogy with other buildings of known date that display the same features. There is an interesting issue raised here by Meeson in this volume in relation to Handsacre Hall, an aisled hall in the Midlands, which has delivered a late-12th-century tree-ring date for the curved tenon braces. This is regarded by many as an implausible date – it is simply too early for this technology. If we are looking for 'new' approaches, I would argue that in this area there is a good deal to be done. Ian Tyers' work on checking stylistic typologies against newly derived dendrochronological dates is an admirable start and his results make interesting reading, as much for the wide coincidence between the two methods as for the more dramatic instances, such as Little Sompting and Greenstead-juxta-Ongar, where the tree-ring date is significantly removed from the earlier estimate (Pearson 1997, 32–3). But we should remember that dates are simply a framework, an essential tool in the business of writing history – without them we cannot establish causality, progression, development. If we take them as ends in themselves, then we are reduced to a train-spotter mentality and the debate about who has the earliest aisled hall is, as Meeson points out, desperate and sterile. But the possibility that there is an early use of tenoned joints in the context of Handsacre should require us to reconsider our evidence for craft transmission and the development of competences and to look at those things in the context of other evidence, not least the well-preserved timbers from the London waterfront excavations. Our battery of new approaches should include a willingness to confront uncomfortable and difficult evidence and assess it with an open mind, even if that forces us to rethink long-accepted theories of the development of construction. This is not the first time that the advent of an absolute dating

system has ruffled feathers in the archaeological pigeon loft: the celebrated Australian archaeologist Gordon Childe felt that the advent of radiocarbon dating invalidated much of his pre-war work, and the first radiocarbon dates have themselves been revised in the light of calibration against dendrochronological dates.

The importance of chronology, both absolute and relative, lays a particular duty on the recorder to observe and understand the constructional details of the building and to interpret its sequence closely. How this is achieved has been the subject of one of the most vigorous of methodological debates in the field, namely whether or not it is appropriate to apply stratigraphic analysis, as developed in field archaeology, to the interpretation of buildings. In a paper in *Vernacular Architecture*, Ferris (1989) suggested that a stratigraphic approach should enable a more methodical, thorough and less subjective approach to building recording. He did not, as he has been characterised, offer the opinion that the analysis of buildings may (or, indeed, should) proceed in the absence of any critical judgement. Much of the subsequent argument (Meeson 1989, Smith 1989, Wrathmell 1990, Ferris 1991) centred around either specific methodological points or broader matters of interpretation. I argue that stratigraphic analysis is a useful tool, but that like all tools, it is most effective when used appropriately. A careful and abstract approach to the sequencing of buildings, rather than one which relies upon discursive observations and notes, may indeed enable us more effectively to identify the phases in the history of a building. But such phasing should not be seen as an end in itself – it should be specified where research aims demand (and time and money allow) the answering of specific and detailed questions about the building, its use and its comparanda which depend upon a close chronology of its origins and alterations. Stratigraphic analysis may be a new (or perhaps now not-so-new) approach, yet it is not the universal panacea that archaeologists in the 1980s might have hoped. But its effectiveness, when carefully deployed in the pursuit of accurate relative chronology, is undeniable.

#### Case study: Stoneleigh Abbey

Rochelle Rowell, faced with the task of unpicking the chronology of the gatehouse at Stoneleigh Abbey, Warwickshire, as part of her doctoral studies on monastic hospitality, found that a strict stratigraphical approach was the only reliable way to unfold the complexities of this multi-phase stone building (see Figs 2.3, 2.4). Identified in the *Victoria County History* as 17th-century, and by Pevsner and Wedgwood (1966, 408) as partly 14th-century but otherwise Elizabethan, the building is in fact almost entirely medieval with some later alterations to windows and doors. By identifying building breaks, cuts and fills, and by characterising different sections of masonry and providing all these features

with stratigraphic numbers, Rowell has been able to take a logical and thorough approach to the building, identifying phases and linking different areas of the structure together within them. Anomalies arose which had to be resolved, among them the difficulty in assigning a date to the east gable wall – the realisation that this was the *earliest* structure on the site, dating probably from the 1270s, provided the key to the understanding of the rest of the building as 14th century, while stratigraphic analysis of the west end confirmed that the later structure was the result of two building campaigns. Such analysis is a means of imposing rigour and logic on the business of sorting out a three-dimensional puzzle of which several pieces may be missing. It is applicable to mass wall structures both large and small and may be used most fruitfully in the investigation of complicated, much-altered, multi-phase buildings, a description which would fit many a smaller vernacular farmhouse. Whitehough, near Leek, visited by the *Vernacular Architecture Group* during its spring conference in Staffordshire and Cheshire in 2000, represents one such building, which is difficult to understand by eye alone (see Fig 2.5).

One mode of analysis which demands a really close understanding of chronology is that of the use of space. Buildings are a highly sophisticated manipulation of three-dimensional space and an analysis of the disposition of that space can greatly enhance the researcher's understanding of the building and the way in which it is used. There are many forms of spatial analysis, although the term has become almost synonymous with one particular technique, that of justified access analysis, or gamma analysis, as developed in the 1970s at the Bartlett School of Architecture by Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson in connection with contemporary design (Hillier and Hanson 1984). Put very briefly, access analysis redraws the floor plan of a building to reflect not the spatial layout of rooms, their relative positions and sizes, but rather an abstract conception of the means of access through a building. This results in a diagram that bears no physical relation to the building at all, but rather consists of a series of circles (representing rooms) and lines (representing access to them, normally in the form of doorways) that tell us something about access patterns, which may then be interpreted to suggest the openness or exclusiveness of a given plan. This in itself does not offer a simple reflection of social practice but it provides an alternative means of enhancing our understanding of buildings and how they were used. Other types of spatial analysis include Frank Brown's (1990) morphological approach to plan analysis which explores the variations in room disposition and the factors of size, access, aspect and location that constrain the final choice, or the structuralist division of space into representations of binary opposites so favoured by prehistorians and ethnographers (Bourdieu 1973, Waterson 1997, Hingley 1990). Even a fairly unsophisticated exercise such as tabulating the relative sizes and length-width ratios of open halls can

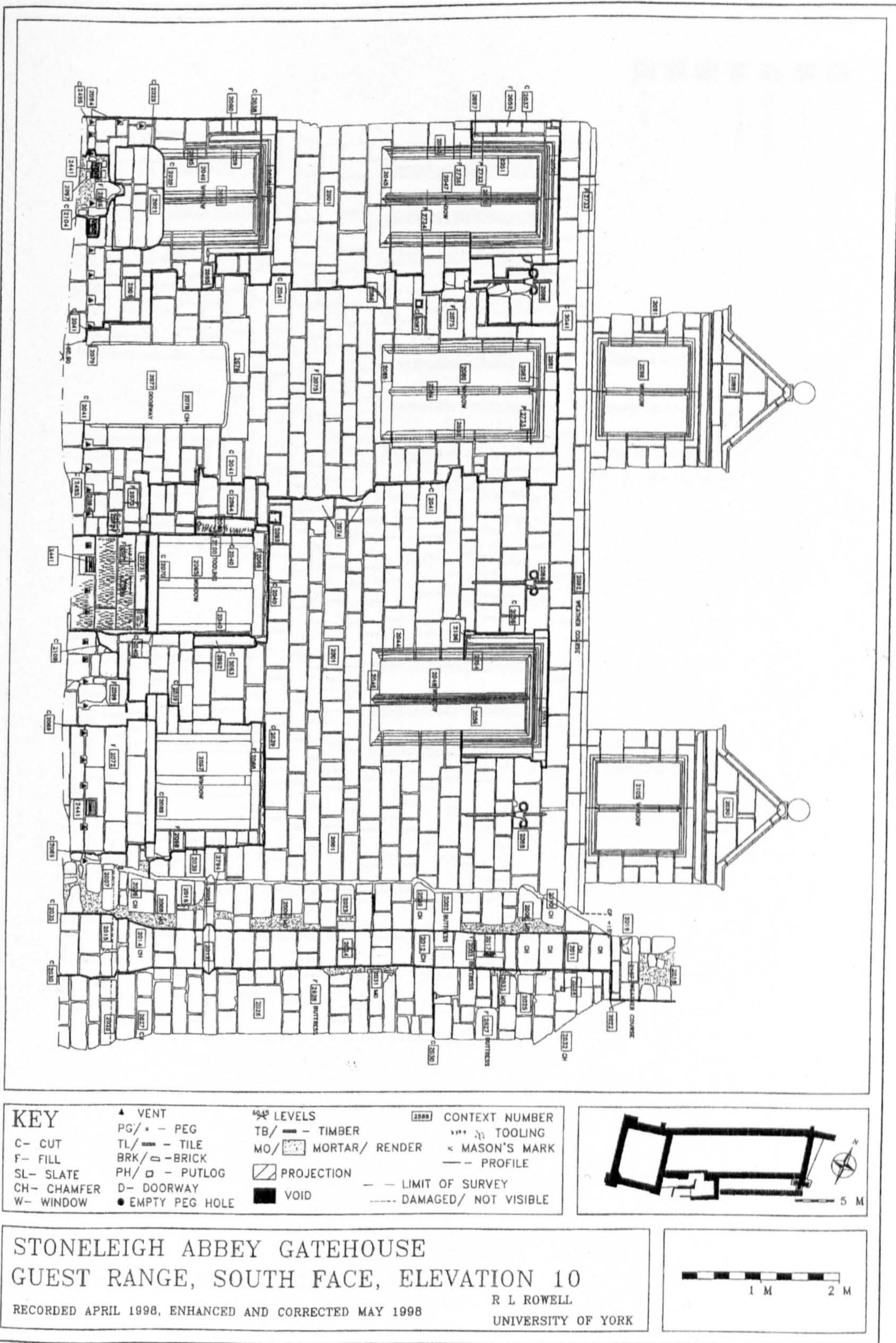


Figure 2.3 Stoneleigh Abbey gatehouse: stratigraphy (Drawn by Rochelle Rowell)

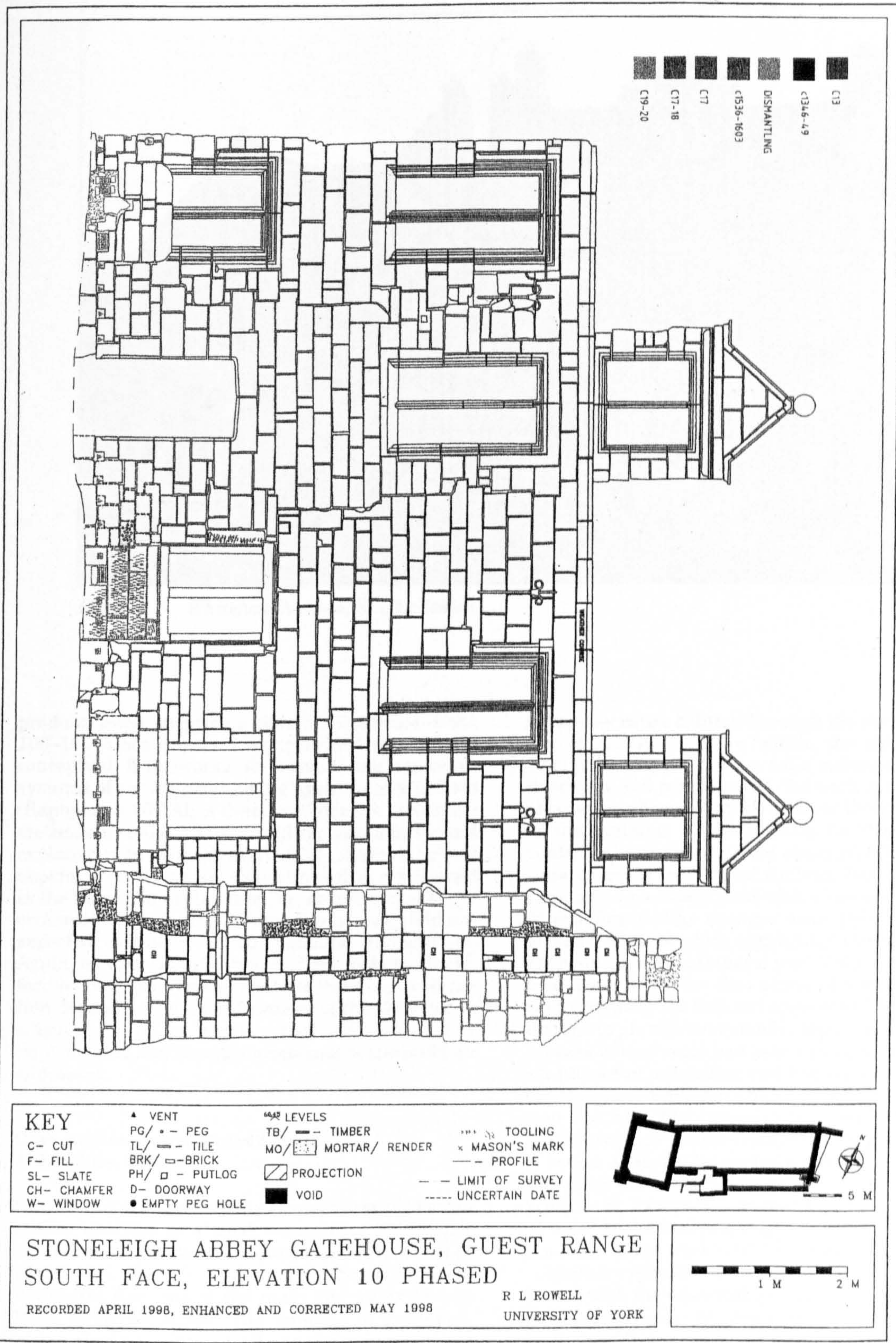


Figure 2.4 Stoneleigh Abbey gatehouse: interpretation (Drawn by Rochelle Rowell)

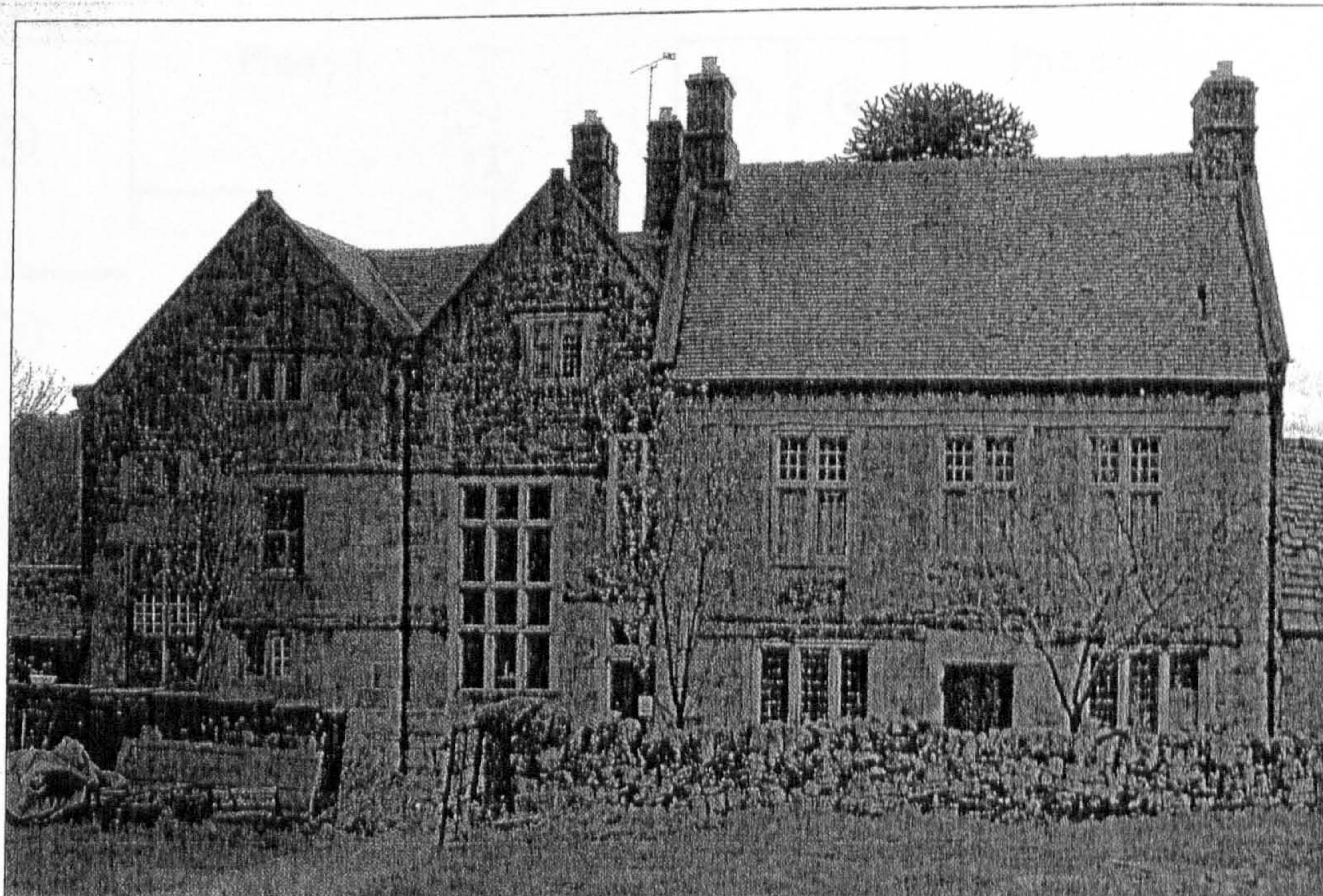


Figure 2.5 *Whitehough, Leek, Staffordshire*

produce some surprising results (Grenville 1997, 106–10). Amos Rapoport has provided some useful conceptual frameworks for considering space as systems of settings containing systems of activities (Rapoport 1990). All of these methods are just that – methods of analysis, tools to aid explanation, and not explanation in themselves. Which to choose may well depend upon the types of questions that are framed in the search for explanation, or, as in the case of my own work on halls, an idle experiment may yield unexpected patterns which demand explanation. Again, as with classification and chronology, the effectiveness of this type of analysis in aiding explanation depends upon the robustness of the evidence to which it is applied, the accuracy with which it is implemented and its appropriateness to the problem addressed.

#### **Case studies: Bowes Morrell House and 7 Shambles, York**

An example of an interesting attempt to apply formal spatial analysis to a small vernacular building is Nicolette Froud's study of Bowes Morrell House (111 Walmgate), York, a 15th-century house close to Walmgate Bar, one of the main city gates (Froud 1995, Grenville 2000). The building is L-shaped, with a single-bay hall parallel to the street, a range containing a shop running at right angles to it, and a

three-bay range behind. Through the careful recording of all the evidence within the timber frame (including empty mortises, nails, subsequent cuts for doorways and paint traces), the work demonstrated successive phases of subdivision of the ground floor of the building. Absolute dates for these changes could not be assigned, in the absence of datable features or newly introduced timbers, but the relative sequence was established with a reasonable degree of confidence. The changes were then mapped as access diagrams which highlighted the fact that the shop, originally an integral part of the complex, had been isolated in the first phase of alterations, and that gradually the hall and cross wing had been subdivided to provide ever smaller separate spaces. This process of enclosure had taken place over a total of six phases of alteration, and had not been a simple progression – walls were removed as well as inserted (see Fig 2.6). The investigation demonstrated the flexibility of the timber-framed building, and the use of access analysis demanded a rigorous approach to the observation of evidence for internal change. Without it, I suspect, a vaguer statement about the 'closure' of the building might have been made and the focus of the work would have been fuzzier.

Another type of formal analysis of structures is concerned with the relationships suggested by carpentry techniques. This is an area that has been considered by Richard Harris in his influential 1989 article on the grammar of carpentry. Here he identified four

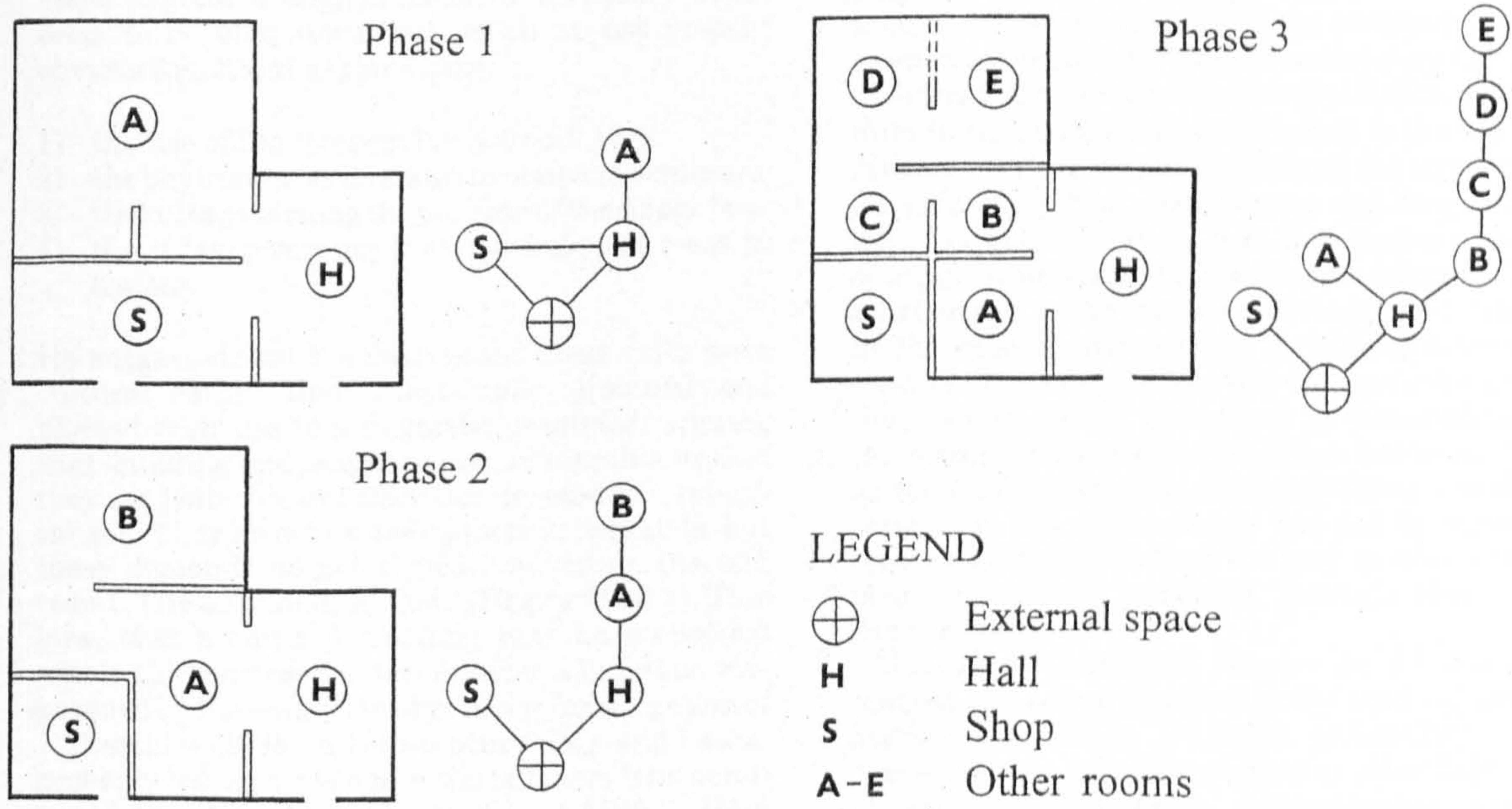


Figure 2.6 Bowes Morrell House, Walmgate, York: phase plans and access (After Nicolette Froud)

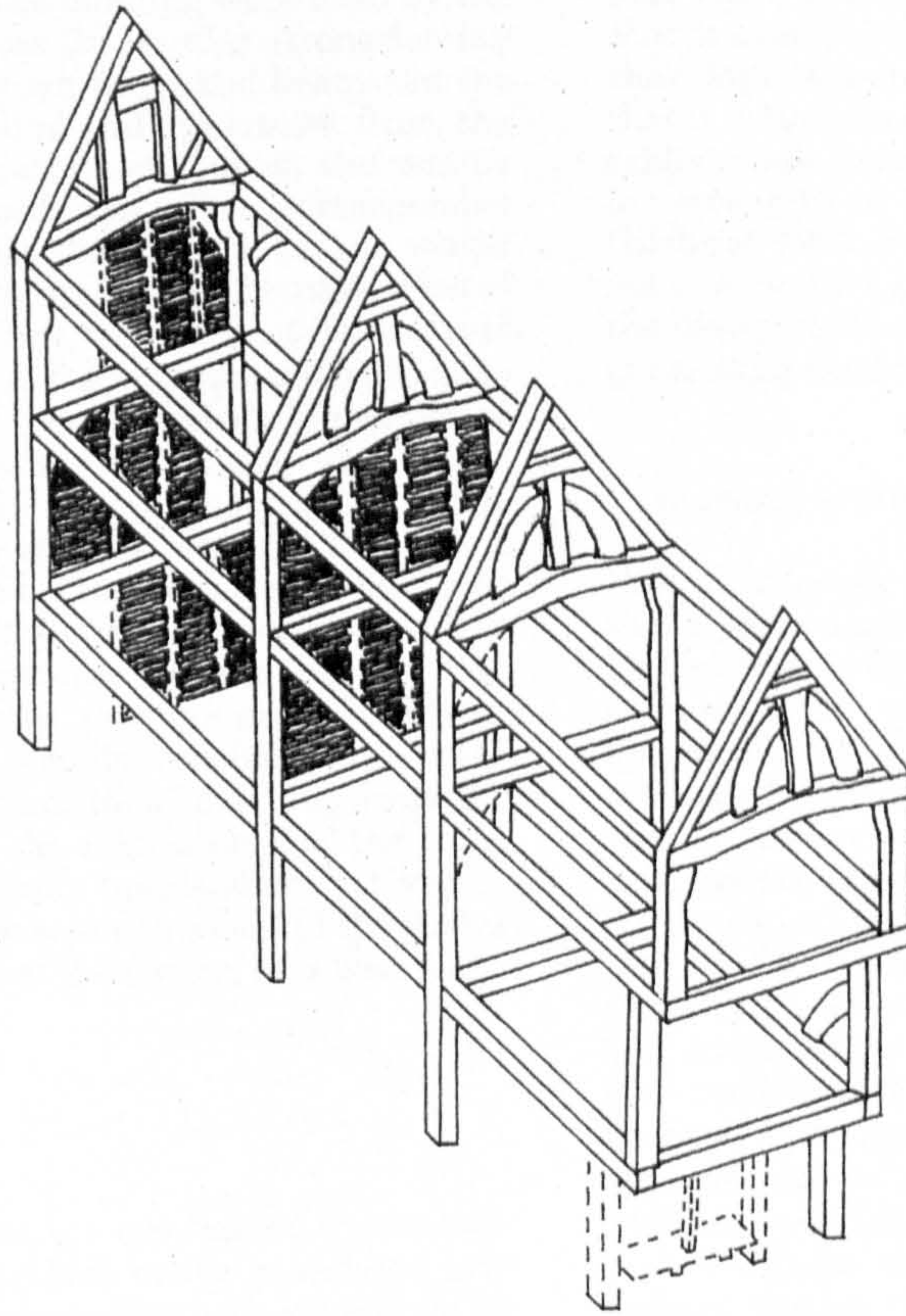


Figure 2.7 7 Shambles, York: the timber frame (After Rosemary Hayden)

major aspects of English medieval carpentry which seem to be ubiquitous, but which do not present obvious functional explanations:

- 1) the use of the tiebeam lap-dovetail joint
- 2) the bay system as it relates to plan and structure
- 3) the rules governing the position of the upper face
- 4) the rules governing the conversion of trees to frames

He suggested that the reasons for these rules were cultural rather than functionally practical and likened their use to a linguistic grammar, arguing that 'building and language are comparable in that they are both cultural activities devoted to a practical end. They have to satisfy practical demands, but these demands do not themselves define the end result. The culture does that.' (Harris 1989,1). This idea, that a cultural meaning may be embedded within the construction technique of a building, was pursued by Rosemary Hayden in her investigation of 7 Shambles (1995), a 15th-century shop and house, probably belonging to one of the butchers who dominated the narrow city centre street (see Fig 2.7). Here a careful observation of former internal subdivisions, combined with access analysis and recording of the structure of the external walls suggests that circulation patterns around the building were cued by the orientation of the braces (triangular strengthening timbers between the main posts and beams) in the side walls. On the ground and uppermost floor, the braces faced to the south-west, but on the middle floor they pointed north-east. This corresponded with the lines of access through the house, which were deliberately set to run along alternate sides of the building. Furthermore, two different types of roof structure (crown posts at the front and queen posts to the rear) were recorded, but detailed observation of the building sequence showed clearly that these were contemporary. Both would have been visible within the rooms they spanned, and the two rooms were not interconnected. The crown posts would also have been visible from the street to those looking into the building. Access patterns suggest that the rear room was a lower status sleeping area. Both roof truss types function equally efficiently, so what seems clear here is that their meaning differed. Crown posts indicate the high status of the front room which was relatively inaccessible, yet highly visible. This may not be so much a case of the desire for privacy on the part of the owner, as a wish to be *seen* to be exclusive.

### *External evidence*

The tools of explanation are not limited to internal analysis alone. We may look at the associated evidence of other disciplines working with other types of evidence and we may use our own contemporary observations by setting up experiments that attempt to reproduce the actions, if not the thoughts, of our

subjects. To take the analogy of a criminal investigation, the internal analysis of the evidence could be likened to the investigation of material by the Scene of Crime Officer and by forensic specialists, while the interdisciplinary work is equivalent to the taking of statements from witnesses, with all the implications for extracting bias, self-interest and forgetfulness that the police have to take into account. In this analogy, experimentation is the equivalent of the reconstruction of the crime, set up to jog memories, or in the case of archaeology, to highlight practical aspects that might otherwise be overlooked. Thus the work of Harris and others in dismantling and reerecting timber-framed buildings has much to tell us about the constraints and possibilities of medieval carpentry, but interestingly has led to some less functional insights about the way in which craftsmen transmitted meaning through their work (Harris 1994).

The use of historical, literary or art historical sources has a long pedigree in the study of smaller historical buildings. Likewise, archaeological evidence has been taken by scholars in other fields to illustrate their arguments. Archaeologists, over the last twenty years, have expressed reservations not only over the way in which evidence from different disciplines has been used in conjunction, but also over their perception that the impetus for the research agenda has come from the historians, that archaeology is seen as the 'handmaid' of history and that it is time for archaeologists to strike out and establish their own agendas in response to the particular strengths of the material record (Rahtz 1980; Gilchrist 1993, 8-15; Austin 1990). Such work has led to a healthy reassessment of the contribution of the discipline of archaeology, particularly its role in generating explanation.

### **Case study: medieval guildhalls**

Kate Giles' work (1999a and b, and forthcoming) on the medieval guildhalls of York and their post-medieval transformations has provided an excellent example of an integrated, truly interdisciplinary approach. Records of vernacular buildings can scarcely be accused of being unfamiliar with the written sources: the use of wills and probate inventories, hearth tax returns, estate records and maps, enclosure acts and their associated maps, tithe material, building contracts and independent surveys (Part VIIIA of the successive volumes of the Vernacular Architecture Group's *A Bibliography of Vernacular Architecture* has always been 'Documentary sources and approaches'). The novelty of Giles' approach lies in her determination not to be content with the view that documentary sources and buildings illustrate one another in a straightforward fashion. Rather than describing buildings and understanding them more fully through recourse to the documentation, she sees both forms of evidence as keys to the understanding of social change insofar as



'medieval and early modern people *represented themselves* through texts and artefacts' (Giles 1999b, 87, my italics). Her theoretical position, based on the work of sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, is that societies operate by certain rules which are transmitted from generation to generation, but which may change, either as the result of deliberate rebellion or subversion, or, more subtly, through the accumulation of minor changes to social practice that occur when individuals react in a way that shows that they understand what is required of them (they are, to use the jargon 'knowledgable agents') and are able (or not!) to manipulate the situation to achieve their ends. Place, familiar and unfamiliar, has an important role to play here. Suppose we wish, for whatever reason, another person or social group to change their behaviour. We may challenge them in unfamiliar and intimidating surroundings and achieve our aim by coercion. Or we may deliberately choose to persuade them gently, setting them at ease in a situation that is familiar and reassuring to them. Either way, buildings and spaces within them are playing an active role in building the social situation – they are not simply a stage on which unrelated social actions are played out, but are either carefully chosen and manipulated or exercise an unconscious influence on behaviour. This is the essence of Giles' argument about the way in which guildhalls were used from the 15th to the 17th centuries. The building now known as the Merchant Adventurers' Hall was built between 1357 and 1369 by the religious fraternity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and known as Trinity Hall. The fraternity's function was religious and social, operating in varying degrees as a burial club, paying for the funerals of and saying masses for the souls of its deceased members (a crucial function in a society whose religious sensibilities were dominated by a belief in purgatory), and as a hospital, at once performing good works and providing a supply of paupers whose prayers were extra efficacious in the speeding of souls through purgatory. In addition, the fraternity acted as a social and political network – the fraternity feast had practical political as well as paraliturgical functions (Giles 1999b, 92). A change occurred in the following century: the fraternity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary seems to have coexisted in Trinity Hall with the craft guild of the mercers. Granted, the personnel may have been much the same, but the aims and organisation of the two associations differed. So did the craft guild impose its new identity on the guildhall? Far from it – in an apparently deliberate attempt to maintain authority by associating with the older organisation in its original and unchanged space, the craft guild used a familiar and understood past to legitimise its position as a political power in the city. It was not until the Reformation, and even then, probably not for a generation afterwards, that the physical appearance of the guildhall began to change. Initially relying on a sense of continuity with the past, the craft guilds (still in existence long after

the abolition of the religious fraternities and the denunciation of the concept of purgatory) retained the guildhalls in their medieval form. Towards the end of the 16th century, however, changes were made. Among the most significant, in Giles' view, was a 'shift in emphasis from the interior open spaces of the guildhall itself to the exterior facades of the buildings and the way in which these were seen by York's citizens'. New wings were added and with them came classical architectural motifs and decorative bargeboards. In the 17th century, one of the guildhalls (St Anthony's) was entirely encased in brick. Giles suggests that this is connected to a change in perception from a medieval mindset, in which the bodily experience of space was paramount, to an emphasis on the eye and the gaze. She suggests that this may be connected with 'the cultural, ideological and political movements of the 16th and 17th centuries in which emphasis was placed on the external expression of the inward self' (Giles 1999b, 97). Other changes included the subdivision of the open halls, now used for secular functions, for smaller meetings of governing bodies and for storage of goods. The hospitals, while continuing in use, were now split from the halls in terms of access, and the documentary sources are clear about their function as a place of last resort for the *deserving* poor, and not for any indigent. The buildings remained, and remained recognisable, harking back to the past to reinforce the ancient authority of the guilds that occupied them, but they changed, and those changes both reflected and powered changes in social organisation and political influence within the city and in English society more widely.

Giles' work has depended on a very close reading of both buildings and texts, and on a willingness to use the two not simply to illustrate or explain each other, but rather to ask broad questions about the way in which societies transform themselves and the role of built space within those transformations. Such work demands a good knowledge of contemporary historical research and the differences of opinion amongst historians (Evans 1997). To dig deeper than the simple illustrative and descriptive potential of both written sources and material culture may demand a familiarity with some of the more arcane theoretical research in history, sociology, anthropology and human geography; but I suspect that a really good theoretical position is characterised by its simplicity and elegance, and that it is therefore possible to accept ideas about material culture as an active agent in social affairs, rather than simply a passive reflection of them, without necessarily embracing the jargon that such theory has generated, and which is so alienating to many with an interest in vernacular architecture. Using the records we make of vernacular houses to help us to understand wider social change is essential as Harrison noted in his review of Johnson's (1993) pioneering attempt to do just this (Harrison 1994). I am not sure that the message has yet penetrated, and until it does, we must continue to call for the integration of buildings,

landscape studies and written sources to extract social meaning from the evidence of the past.

One attempt to do this is currently being developed in the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York. Within the Centre, postgraduates learn the basic rules of each discipline and are encouraged to look across disciplinary boundaries in their search for explanation, by means of team-taught interdisciplinary seminars. Such work inevitably has led the teaching staff to consider the resonances within their own fields of research on medieval townhouses, on the household as a literary device and historical unit, on the development of civic structures in the later Middle Ages, and so forth. We have created the Urban Household Project 1350-1550 to provide a forum for discussion and find that as a group, rather than trying to answer one another's questions directly, we are modifying and recasting them. One colleague, a historian who studies the living and working conditions of single women in the 15th century, asked me 'What kinds of houses did single women live in?' and I had to reply that this was a question beyond the scope of archaeological investigation. But if we modify that to the question that another historian posed, namely 'Is there evidence from the archaeological study of the townhouses of medieval York to suggest that segregation of servants began in the later 15th century?' then we may be able to get somewhere, and by extension of the question (since many servants were single women), we may be able to place some of our spinsters within larger households. But, as with Giles' and Johnson's work, the aim is more than the simple illustration of hypotheses developed within the discipline of history. Rather, by introducing the theoretical postulates concerning the social use of physical space, we hope to modify and qualify historical approaches. The interdisciplinary group as a whole is concerned to gain a fuller understanding, based on both written and material evidence, of living and working conditions in the medieval city, and that understanding derives as much from the dissonances between our categories of evidence as from the coincidences. After all, what people do and what they say can be

very different, and understanding motives often depends upon understanding that disjunction.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought not so much to break new ground, as to try to couple up recent advances in approaches to and techniques of recording buildings (the train of MacCaig's poem) with the change in the type of questions that are being asked of the material past (the engine of theory). In neither field have I broken new ground, but I hope that the recorders of small buildings will have gained something from the juxtaposition of these thoughts. I advocate targeted recording, using the computer as a tool for interpretation rather than simply as a glamorous method of displaying results. Furthermore, I argue that the use of stratigraphic analysis is not everywhere necessary or appropriate, but that we should recognise the circumstances in which it *is* helpful and use it to its fullest to tease out the relative chronologies of the buildings we record. Doing so, of course, has implications for the way in which we record. Furthermore, if we achieve sufficient resolution in relative dating, we may be able to embark upon a detailed analysis of the changing use of space within the structure over the period of its use. But one way or another, these all represent technical advances - they are the carriages of the train. It is the questions we ask that will make it rattle and sing through the fields of knowledge and research. I have outlined some thoughts about the nature of buildings as bearers of social meaning because that is where my own interest lies. There are other approaches and equally useful ways of looking at them - as economic indicators, as aesthetic achievements, as feats of engineering and human ingenuity. I look forward to replies to this paper which present further case studies to illustrate such approaches. Finally, I hope that it will be clear that in my view, it matters little at which end of the train one begins in any particular investigation - what is crucial is that the whole process is engaged with and that investigation and explanation are never decoupled.

**2003** 'The material household: preface' in C Beattie, A Maslakovic and S Rees Jones (eds) *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850-c.1550: managing power, wealth and the body*. Turnhout: Brepols, 309-13.

## Preface

JANE GRENVILLE

The papers contained in this section all address the materiality of everyday living in houses and in households. That is, they adumbrate aspects of the structures themselves: house plans, construction materials and techniques, the size and shape of the domestic units operating within the buildings; and they look at the contents of houses: the furniture, fixtures, moveable household goods, and personal belongings that made houses into homes. Materiality in this sense is traditionally the sphere of the economic and social historian and of the archaeologist, but the two disciplines have pursued separate and very different trajectories in developing their specialist discourses and as a result more often have tended to talk past one another than to exchange useful insights. The interdisciplinary nature of the contributions presented here gives cause for real hope that the days of such myopic approaches are numbered. But the disciplinary differences remain apparent; in making them explicit, I hope to contribute to the process of creating a genuinely interdisciplinary approach to the study of the period. Readers should be aware that these comments emanate from a medieval archaeologist, albeit one who has been house-trained by patient colleagues at the Centre for Medieval Studies in York to appreciate the multivocal approaches of historians and literary scholars.

For archaeologists, the study of the medieval period has always been viewed somewhat equivocally. One argument proposes that a battery of theoretical constructs and practical techniques developed to understand societies through the only evidence available for 98% of human history, the artefactual and environmental assemblages of prehistory, is surely wasted on the study of a period readily accessible through the documentary evidence: 'It is in the reconstruction of prehistory, the unwritten history of all but a comparatively brief span of all humanity, that archaeology can render its greatest contribution to human understanding.'<sup>1</sup> Following on from this deeply anti-pathetic view towards the archaeological study of literate societies from within the

---

<sup>1</sup> J. G. D. Clark, *Archaeology and Society*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (London: Methuen, 1965), p. 22.

discipline of archaeology itself was the hostile attitude of some historians that archaeology was little but an expensive way of telling us what we knew already. This is perhaps most clearly articulated by Moses Finley: 'It is self-evident that the potential contribution of archaeology to history is, in a rough way, inversely proportional to the quantity and quality of the available written sources.'<sup>2</sup>

The most controversial expression of this view in medieval archaeology was made by Peter Sawyer, initially in his 1962 *Age of the Vikings* and then again, by way of rubbing salt into the wound while purporting to apologise: 'Archaeologists are, naturally, rather upset when it is suggested that their subject amounts to little more than a very expensive demonstration of the obvious, and it is unlikely that I shall be allowed to forget that I once said as much. There is obviously an element of truth in it.' He goes on to remark that 'it is an interesting exercise to consider in what particular ways archaeology can aid our study of early medieval history'.<sup>3</sup> This latter attitude, in which archaeology is seen as clearly subordinate to documentary history, has raised a sharp response from medieval archaeologists.

Philip Rahtz, in his inaugural lecture at York and again at the twenty-fifth anniversary conference of the Society for Medieval Archaeology, argued that 'medieval archaeology should develop as an autonomous discipline. It should not be merely providing illustrations of material culture for historians'.<sup>4</sup> The theme of archaeology as 'the handmaid of history' is one that recurs as a mournful chorus through much writing on medieval archaeology over the last thirty years. David Austin graphically describes the frustration of archaeologists:

The fact is that we have been so trapped by the agenda set by historians and feel so weighed down with the paraphernalia of medieval history that we scarcely feel able to interpret and analyse in the modes of contemporary archaeology [. . .]. By and large the archaeologist of the High Middle Ages concedes the primacy of the documentary historian.<sup>5</sup>

The archaeological approach of 1980s and 90s was a direct response to this last problem of who sets the agenda, and sought to establish an explicitly 'archaeological' approach to the period, by denying the efficacy of understanding the historical

---

<sup>2</sup> M. Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> P. H. Sawyer, 'English Archaeology before the Conquest: A Historian's View', in D. A. Hinton, *25 Years of Medieval Archaeology* (Sheffield: The Department of Prehistory and Archaeology and the Society for Medieval Archaeology, 1983), pp. 44-47.

<sup>4</sup> P. A. Rahtz, 'New Approaches to Medieval Archaeology, Part 1', in Hinton, *25 Years of Medieval Archaeology*, pp. 12-23 (p. 12).

<sup>5</sup> D. Austin 'The "Proper Study" of Medieval Archaeology', in *From the Baltic to the Black Sea: Studies in Medieval Archaeology*, ed. by D. Austin and L. Alcock (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 9-42 (p. 13); see also R. L. Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London: Routledge, 1994), esp. pp. 8-15.

context and concentrating instead on the material evidence as though it were indeed prehistoric.<sup>6</sup> Recently a more realistic approach has developed within archaeology, which sees the documentary evidence as an essential part of the discourse. It seeks various ways to enmesh material evidence within an archaeological discourse or to arrive at a theoretical stance that can convincingly straddle the two types of evidence to provide an integrated approach.<sup>7</sup> As Martin Carver observed:

I would like to suggest that the difference between a text and an artefact is a less important difference than that between the expressive and the inert, the conscious and the unconscious, the emic and the etic, which can be found in each medium [. . .]. The study of texts, art and archaeology already has much common theory, a common purpose, common approaches and a shared agenda.<sup>8</sup>

Intellectual debates within history and literature are perhaps fiercer still. Many researchers in the post-war period sought to free themselves of the hegemonies of legal and political histories and canonical literatures. The development of schools of economic and social history, particularly in the 1960s and 70s led to an upsurge in the study of the middling and lower ranks of society and their social conditions and the use of quantitative techniques for the analysis of data.<sup>9</sup> Echoes of the methodologies developed by these schools for the study of the 'everyday' resonate through the papers that follow, but how far have we yet been successful in melding the material evidence (the houses where they survive, the excavated evidence where they don't, and the household paraphernalia that they contained) with the documentary?

The documentary sources used in these papers are many and fascinating — wills, building accounts, coroner's reports, leases, inventories. Like photographs taken by someone else, they often clip the edge of the subject you really want to see, leaving its shape and nature tantalizingly unclear. Those documents that clearly record household contents, such as wills and inventories, do so partially, for certain ranks of society only (the richer peasants and artisans upwards), and unevenly. Nevertheless, used judiciously, their very inconsistencies can reveal nuances of local variation, as

---

<sup>6</sup> Rahtz, 'New Approaches to Medieval Archaeology', passim; Austin, "Proper Study" of Medieval Archaeology', passim.

<sup>7</sup> M. O. H. Carver, 'Marriages of True Minds: Archaeology with Texts', in *Archaeology: The Widening Debate*, ed. by B. Cunliffe, W. Davies, and C. Renfrew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 465–96 (p. 467). Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*; J. Moreland *Archaeology and Text* (London: Duckworth, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Carver, 'Marriages of True Minds', p. 467.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, the work of The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, founded in 1964 by Tony Wrigley and Peter Laslett, the work of Marxist historians such as R. H. Hilton and Robert Brenner, and the studies of everyday life by C. C. Dyer (most recently in *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850–1520* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002)).

Salter and Richardson demonstrate elegantly in their discussions of Kent material. Likewise the building accounts for the Iberian peninsula cited by Falcão Ferreira and Oliva Herrer provide a partial picture of the form and construction of medieval townhouses and their rural counterparts, but a preliminary investigation of the surviving archaeological evidence, both above and below ground, has revealed how much more there is to learn by taking the two categories of evidence together. The value of such intersection is triumphantly demonstrated when the three papers on Kent, including the consideration of townhouses by Sarah Pearson, are taken together. There is still much ground to make in such interdisciplinary approaches, but the papers presented here demonstrate the richness of the resources that we have hardly begun to tap (in the case of the European examples) and the colossal potential they hold for increasing our understanding of the social relations and economic conditions of the period when studied in great depth in relation to one another (in the case of the related studies in Kent).

Archaeological evidence also suffers from the 'clipped photo' syndrome. In their discussions of high-status architecture in Italy, both Paino and Caskey have to wrestle with the partial nature of their evidence. Parts of the complexes they describe have been rebuilt, crucial evidence for the original appearance is missing, and the overlay of early-twentieth-century attitudes towards Arabic influences in the visual arts provides a fascinating intellectual diversion. In reaction against the early art historians who regarded the study of aesthetics as an end in itself, and divorced their material from its social context, both authors are explicit in their discussion of buildings as direct social statements particularly in the relationship of power and its manifest display to the design and appearance of buildings. The idea that buildings can provide a concrete expression of social position and that their impact on their viewers can elicit specific and required social reactions such as the acknowledgement of overlordship is hardly new: these papers follow the fluctuating fortunes of the da Varano and the Rufolo families through the building's history, but what is interesting is the way in which the process is also turned round, and alterations to the fabric that are no longer extant are deduced from the known fortunes of the family at the time of the refurbishment. This reflexive approach to the use of the available evidence mirrors the theoretical stance, grounded in phenomenology and developed within the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, which argues that material culture both reflects and structures social practice.<sup>10</sup> Artefacts, buildings, and landscapes are increasingly seen as being not merely passive reflections of social structure, but active agents in the production and transformation of social identity. This is a line of thinking that has attracted much attention within archaeology in recent years and one which has the potential to deliver new insights. Its application to the study of Italian political history, albeit at a local level, suggests that there is a rich vein to quarry here.

---

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Fontana, 1993); A. Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

While there is much to be gained from the satisfactory marriage of material and documentary evidence, the problem is that these two different types of evidence do not always match up, sometimes fail to intersect, and sometimes flatly contradict one another. This may be the result of the partial nature of the sources, or the fact that we are attempting to use evidence collected for one very specific purpose, such as Alcock's coroner's reports, to deliver insights into aspects of domestic arrangements that were not, in themselves, the direct concern of the clerk of the court. So we do not know whether the scenarios described were typical in terms of their setting, and exceptional only in the fact of a random fatal accident, or whether such occurrences were alarmingly common, given the ubiquity of the domestic arrangements described.<sup>11</sup> The failure to intersect may be inherent in the nature of the material evidence, particularly in the case of movables. Few room arrangements beyond the most formal of governmental reception chambers survive generation change and although we may have the three-dimensional evidence of the buildings themselves, being certain of the location of specialized rooms mentioned in inventories is often a hazardous matter. It is here that close collaboration between students of the two sources may bear the most fruit, particularly if a commonly agreed theoretical approach is taken. But even then, we cannot be assured of congruence in the evidence, for what people say and what they do may be two very different things and what they say they do a third matter altogether. It is in identifying the dislocations between material and documentary evidence that we may arrive at the most interesting questions of social practice, the hidden agendas and the deliberate or unconscious masking of economic inequalities and social structures. The material presented in the following papers opens up a rich area for the study of such questions in relation to the social use of space.

---

<sup>11</sup> For a fuller critique, see P. J. P. Goldberg, 'The Public and the Private: Women in the Pre-Plague Economy', in *Thirteenth Century England III*, ed. by Peter R. Coss and Simon Lloyd (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991), pp. 75–89.



**2003** (with Maria da Conceição Falcão Ferreira) 'Urban vernacular housing in medieval northern Portugal and the usefulness of typologies' in C Beattie, A Maslakovic and S Rees Jones (eds) *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850-c.1550: managing power, wealth and the body*. Turnhout: Brepols, 359-89.

# Urban Vernacular Housing in Medieval Northern Portugal and the Usefulness of Typologies\*

MARIA DA CONCEIÇÃO FALCÃO FERREIRA AND JANE GRENVILLE

## *Introduction*

This essay considers the range of urban building types of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in northern Portugal, focusing in particular on the city of Guimarães, but drawing also on examples from Braga and Barcelos. It will outline the construction techniques and materials in use at the time, and go on to consider the various plan forms and their relationship to the street and the degree to which plan form is functionally or culturally determined. Readers should be aware that the work represents a three-way collaboration: it is based on a longer paper by Maria da Conceição Falcão Ferreira (Departamento de História, Universidade do Minho, Braga), translated by Karen Gonçalves (University of York Library Services), and finally edited and placed in a broader theoretical context by Jane Grenville (Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York).

Several years ago, when Falcão Ferreira embarked on a detailed study of urban medieval housing in Guimarães, Braga, and Barcelos, it was with very few resources and, in Portugal at least, in something of an intellectual vacuum. Apart from the 'Islamic' south in the studies of Silvio Conde, and brief mentions in urban history books, the appearance of the medieval townscape in Portugal was almost completely ignored. The material collected was presented at a session of the International Medieval Congress in Leeds in 2001, and the idea conceived there to place it in the anglophone public domain and to consider its implications more broadly in a joint paper.

Research in cognate areas includes that of the anthropologists William Kavanagh on the village of Nava in Spain, Jose Luis Acin Fanlo on the popular architecture of

---

\* All photos were taken by M. C. Falcão Ferreira in 2002.

Aragon, and Gonzalez Rodriguez on the built heritage of the Baixa Estremadura.<sup>1</sup> Equally important are the ethnographic and anthropological contributions of Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira and Fernando Galhano, amongst others, and the contributions of architects such as Tavora, Pimentel, and Meneres, and, earlier in the twentieth century, Lino.<sup>2</sup> It is no surprise that an article about the types of houses on the Iberian Peninsula was published in a Spanish publication called 'Dialectology and Popular Tradition', for this topic, essentially, crosses the boundaries of many fields of knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Alternative models for study may be found in British scholarship in the typological approaches pursued by Pantin and Schofield in terms of plan form and use of space and of J. T. Smith and Cecil Hewett in respect of constructional details and their chronological development.<sup>4</sup> Grenville has discussed this work elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> This essay will review the breadth of evidence available for northern Portugal from documentary sources combined with preliminary observations of surviving buildings. It will conclude by considering different explanatory models.

It is worth noting at the outset that notwithstanding Portugal's Roman past, most of its towns and cities owe little to a classical tradition. Most Portuguese historic urban

---

<sup>1</sup> W. Kavanagh, 'La memoria colectiva como condicionante de la arquitectura popular', in *Arquitectura popular en España*, ed. by Antonio Cea Gutiérrez, Matilde Fernández Montes, and Luis Ángel Sánchez Gómez (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1990), pp. 55–60, in which the author studies the *actuais* constructions of *aldeia* of Nava, to the north of the Sierra de Gredos; J. L. Acin Fanlo 'Arquitectura popular en Aragón', in *ibid.*, pp. 489–97; Gonzalez Rodriguez 'El "habitat" en la Baja Extramadura: Nucleos y construcciones', in *ibid.*, pp. 107–26.

<sup>2</sup> Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira and others, *Costruções primitivas em Portugal* (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos de Ethnologia and Centro de Estudos de Anthropologia Cultural, 1969); Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira and Fernando Galhano, 'Arquitectura', in *A Arte popular em Portugal*, vol. I (Lisboa: Editorial Verbo, 1959), pp. 15–137; Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira and Fernando Galhano, *Arquitectura tradicional portuguesa* (Lisboa: Publicações Dom Quixote, 1992); Fernando Tavora, Rui Pimentel, and Antonio Meneres, 'Zona 1 – Minho', in *Arquitectura popular em Portugal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Lisboa: Edição dos Arquitectos Portugueses, 1980), pp. 1–112; Raul Lino, *A Casa portuguesa* (Lisboa: Escola Tipográfica da Imprensa Nacional, 1929).

<sup>3</sup> W. Giese, 'Los tipos de casa de la Península Ibérica', in *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares*, vol VII (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1951), pp. 553–601.

<sup>4</sup> W. A. Pantin, 'Medieval English Townhouse Plans', *Medieval Archaeology*, 6–7 (1962–63), 202–39; J. Schofield and A. Vince, *Medieval Towns* (London: Leicester University Press, 1994); J. T. Smith, 'Medieval Roofs: A Classification', *Archaeological Journal*, 115 (1958), 111–49; J. T. Smith, 'The Reliability of Typological Dating of Medieval English Roofs', in *Scientific Methods in Medieval Archaeology*, ed. by R. Berger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 239–69; C. A. Hewett, *English Historic Carpentry* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> Jane Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997).

centres were founded in the Middle Ages.<sup>6</sup> Those which existed prior to this — and the city of Braga is a good example — were profoundly altered, or were completely deserted. As a result, the present urban network dates from the regeneration of the eleventh to fourteenth centuries and, in some areas, of the conquest of the 'Moors'.

### *Problems of Definition*

A major difficulty in understanding the documentary evidence presented by the Portuguese material is the interchangeable use of the singular and plural for the word 'house' — *casa* or *casas*. Additionally, and amongst a wide variety of terms too extensive to review in full here, we find the usage *morada de casas* and *casa de morada*, where *morada* implies a sense of residence or domestic dwelling. The imprecision of the categories, the scarcity of adequate sources, and the variety of building make it very difficult to be specific with terms. For many documents, we have applied the argument of André Bazzana<sup>7</sup> that *casas* (houses) is used for the integrated elements of a multicellular household. But there is an abundance of exceptions to this interpretation, and the variety and irregularity of the forms of usage in documents is as enormous as the differences between the properties themselves. In source material for Guimarães, Braga, and Barcelos during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, we were constantly confronted with examples that seemed to show no differentiation in the use of the singular or plural. Furthermore, expressions such as 'duas casas terreiras que são duas moradas' ('two ground-level houses which formed two dwellings'), 'forno com suas casas' ('an oven with its houses'), 'meias casas ora lançadas em uma morada' ('half-houses made into one dwelling'), 'três ou duas moradas (1 família)' ('three or two houses (one family)'), all raise tantalizing hints of multiple occupancy of single structures, the sharing of central facilities by several households or single households, spreading out to inhabit a series of buildings.

Additionally, we are concerned with the housing of the lower echelons of society, those who did not employ architects or named master craftsmen and who built according to the local traditions of their area. In Portuguese there are many expressions for such buildings, ranging from *construção ou casa corrente* to *construção comum* and *habitação corrente* ('common housing', 'public housing', and 'common building'). In the face of the threat to the survival of such building stock from modern development, Beatriz Arizaga Bolumburu preferred to speak of *património menor* ('minor heritage'), thus drawing attention to its historic and cultural value.<sup>8</sup> The

<sup>6</sup> Félix Martín Benito, *La formación de la ciudad medieval: La red urbana en Castilla y León* (Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Editorial, 2000), pp. 57–92.

<sup>7</sup> André Bazzano, *Maisons d'al-Andaluz: Habitat médiéval et structures du peuplement dans l'Espagne Orientale*, vol. I (Madrid: Casa Velásquez, 1992), p. 161.

<sup>8</sup> Beatriz Arizaga Bolumburu, 'La recuperación del paisaje urbano medieval: propuesta metodológica', in *La Ciudad medieval: Aspectos de la vida urbana en la Castilla*

most commonly used term in English is 'vernacular architecture', and this will be used as a translation of *património menor* in this paper.

### *Building Materials and Resources*

It is often presumed in vernacular architecture studies that the materials and resources for building are entirely determined by the immediate environment. To quote the esteemed Portuguese scholar, Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira: 'Of course, in a very general way, where there was stone, they built in stone, and where there was none they built with earth, adobe or brick, or in timber.'<sup>9</sup> We would argue, in common with Pierre Garrigou Grandchamp,<sup>10</sup> that in the building process, cultural and economic phenomena proved greater determinants than natural conditions. Empirical support for this view is given by the widespread use of timber as a building material in the north of Portugal, notwithstanding the plentiful local supplies of stone. In a similar situation in Normandy, Garrigou Grandchamp has suggested that while stone is essential for the foundations of a house, the use of timber for the superstructure is culturally determined, timber being seen as a higher status material.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, notwithstanding the generalization that stone is more readily available in the northern regions of Iberia facing the Atlantic than in the Mediterranean south, the predominant materials in urban construction in late medieval northern Portugal were, without doubt, timber and clay. Further north still, in Provence, Philippe Bernardi detected that large amounts of timber and stone were imported, which reinforces the theory embraced here that local origin of building materials is far from being the rule.<sup>12</sup>

In the following section, we detail the use of materials in northern Portugal in the later Middle Ages. It must be noted that the evidence provided by the archival material is problematical in terms of 'reconstructing' the medieval house: much of it is fragmentary and such illustrations as exist are generally later and of doubtful authenticity. To support our hypotheses, we ventured into the buildings themselves, in the town of Guimarães, and here we found that the surviving fabric provided the most

---

*bajomedieval*, ed. by Juan Antonio Bonachía Hernando (Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Científico, Universidad de Valladolid, 1996), pp. 13–33 (p. 18).

<sup>9</sup> Veiga de Oliveira and Galhano, *Arquitetura tradicional portuguesa*, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Garrigou Grandchamp, *Demeures médiévales: Coeur de la Cité*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris: REMPART, 1994), p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Pierre Garrigou Grandchamp, 'L'aménagement de l'espace et l'architecture civile', in *Art et société en France au XV siècle* (Paris: Maisonneuve Larousse, 1999), pp. 59–91 (p. 64).

<sup>12</sup> Philippe Bernardi, *Métiers du bâtiment et techniques de construction à Aix-en-Provence à la fin de l'époque gothique (1400–1550)* (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 1995), p. 123; 'Les Bois utilisées dans le bâtiment au Moyen Âge: L'Exemple de Aix', in *Artisanat et matériaux: La place des matériaux dans l'histoire des techniques*, ed. by M.-C. Amouretti and G. Gomet (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 1998), pp. 49–59.

useful evidence for our attempt to understand the appearance of the medieval house. No detailed recording work on this medieval fabric has yet taken place, but the results of this pilot project expose the huge potential of this unstudied building stock.

### *Construction Materials and Techniques*

Construction materials fall into two main categories, natural materials (stone, timber, clay, and earth or cob) and man-made materials (brick, adobe (sun-dried mudbrick), metals, and plaster), and building techniques varied according to their use. There is plentiful surviving documentary evidence for the construction techniques in the three towns in this study (Guimarães, Braga, and Barcelos), but it must be remembered that written records are the product of many factors: the purpose for which the record was originally made, the recording habits of the notaries, the varying degrees of detail (and understanding on the part of the notary) about building techniques and structural alterations and improvements, as well as local and wider political and economic circumstances. Confidence in the interpretation of such sources can be raised by an acquaintance with the buildings themselves, as the photographs illustrating this paper demonstrate.

In high-status architecture, stone certainly dominated as a prestige material. All large high-status buildings, whether religious or secular, were built in stone, and there was a thriving secondhand trade and black market: a document of 1482 from Braga records a fraud that had been committed ten years previously by a scout (*escudeiro*), who had taken the stone of seven or eight dilapidated properties belonging to the cathedral chapter and used it to build the walls of his own house, amongst others.<sup>13</sup>

In vernacular building, by contrast, stone seems to be less ubiquitous. Certainly it was used for the ground floor of two- and three-storeyed constructions, to support the superstructure above. Two documents from Guimarães reinforce the point: a contract for houses of two storeys, with stone up to the first floor, large quantities of timber, and some tile, and an agreement with tenants that the owner would provide the timber, boards, and pegs to build a second storey (1479), implying that the ground floor did not need such materials, presumably being built of stone.<sup>14</sup> However, the position regarding single-storey structures is less clear. A document of 1501 illustrates the fact that one-storey vernacular buildings were unlikely to be in stone throughout: citing a dilapidated property in the city, the cathedral chapter of Braga promised that if 'a multi-storeyed house should be made of the said ruin, and the Cathedral

---

<sup>13</sup> Arquivo Distrital de Braga (hereafter ADB), *Gaveta 2.a das Propriedades do Cabido*, no 80 (suburb of Chãos, 1482).

<sup>14</sup> Instituto Nacional de Arquivos - Torre do Tombo (hereafter TT), *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.66, n.24 (Guimarães); TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.59, n.3 (Guimarães, s/r).

Chapter will donate the necessary stone. The stone will not be given, however, for a single-storey house.<sup>15</sup> Figure 1 illustrates surviving buildings with stone at ground-floor level in the central property, but throughout in the flanking buildings.

Most building stone in the north is granite, as the large size of blocks seen in figure 1 demonstrates. It is clear from the relatively low numbers of stonemasons recorded that it was used only selectively. Our observations lead us fairly firmly to the view that its use was restricted to the ground floor of domestic buildings, although it was more widely used in prestigious public structures such as churches. Furthermore, records suggest that stone was extensively reused, probably reflecting both its expense and the difficulty of working such a hard material. Nevertheless, the documents consulted for this project suggest its widespread, if somewhat limited, use in dwellings of widely differing social status.

In the cases studied in Guimarães, Braga, and Barcelos, both through documentary sources and in the surviving buildings, timber was the dominant material used in conjunction with clay and earth/mud. In this respect the towns differ little from their counterparts in neighbouring Spain, in Italy, in France, and in western Europe in general. The universality of timber as a building material in our three towns is well attested in the documentary evidence, with the richest information sources dating from the fifteenth century, and illustrating the value, both new and reused, of the material as the main structural element and in the form of internal subdivisions and flooring. Examples from Guimarães include the sale of some houses, with their grounds, timber, tile, and stone (1334); the repair in a dilapidated building of all the timber in the presence of two approved carpenters (1443); acceptance of the deeds on condition that the contractor give a dozen floorboards/planks, door-rings, and locks, which was most important (1479).<sup>16</sup> The emphasis on locks suggests a particular concern with the security of property and its contents (and presumably a significant level of house-breaking, although it may be that fear of crime outweighed the real risks). In Barcelos, the pattern of a stone ground floor with timber superstructure is repeated. In a series of examples from records dating to 1498–09, we find a house with a second storey raised in timber and divided up on the first floor by wooden laths (*grades de pau*). Another multi-storeyed house was divided in the basement by stone, and above, into two, by wooden planks or boards (*tabuado*) as shown in figure 2, and further discussed below. In a third, a room at the front was divided by timber and a chamber at the back by stone (*paredes*).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> ADB, *Livro 4 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 69.

<sup>16</sup> TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.27, n.28 (Guimarães, rua Sapateira); TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.50, n.25 (Guimarães, rua Nova do Muro); TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.61, n.24 (Guimarães, no street given).

<sup>17</sup> Arquivo da Misericórdia de Barcelos (hereafter AMB), *Copea Autentica*, fol. 185; AMB, *Copea Autentica*, fol. 188<sup>v</sup>; AMB, *Copea Autentica*, fol. 189<sup>v</sup>; AMB, *Copea Autentica*, fol. 190<sup>v</sup>.

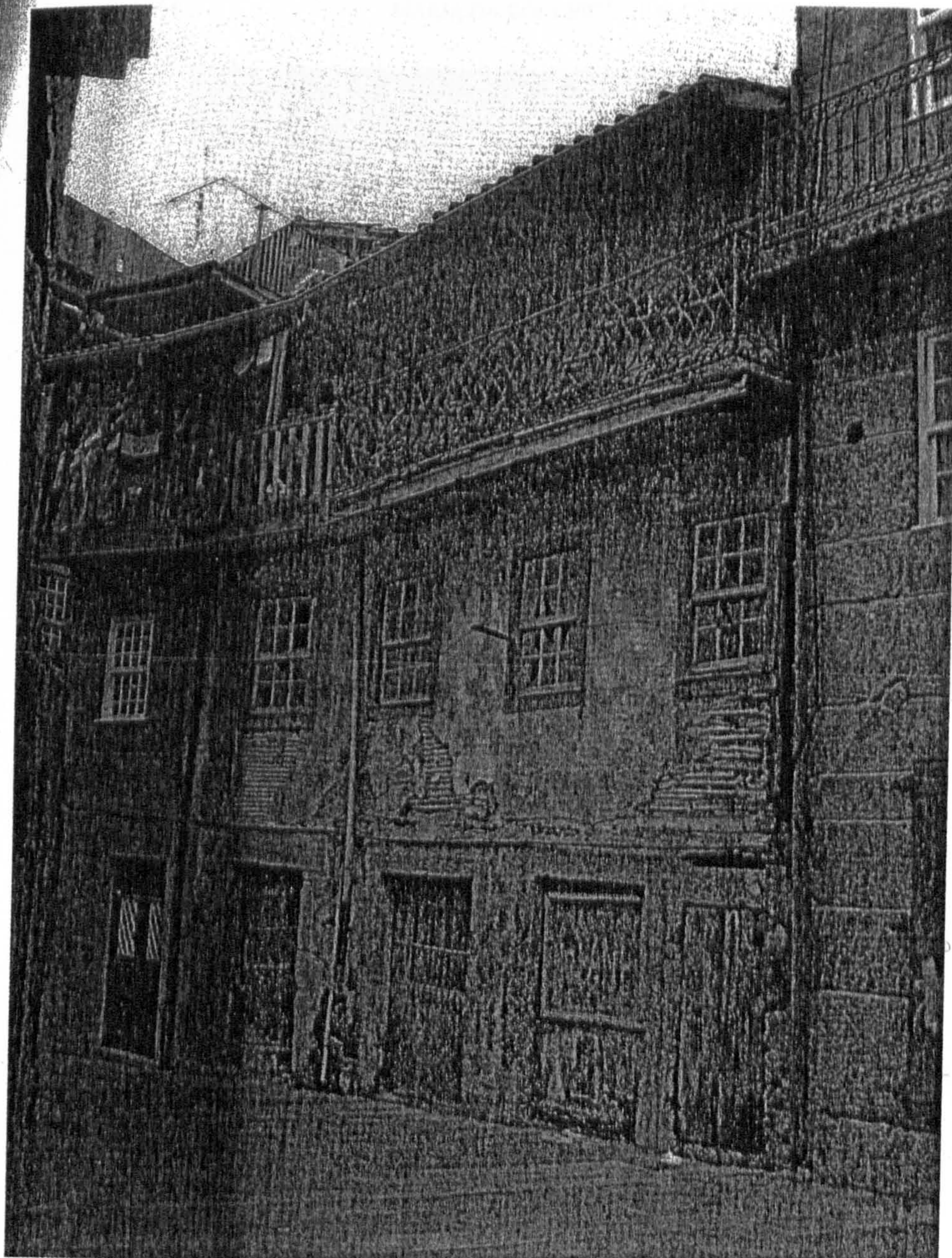
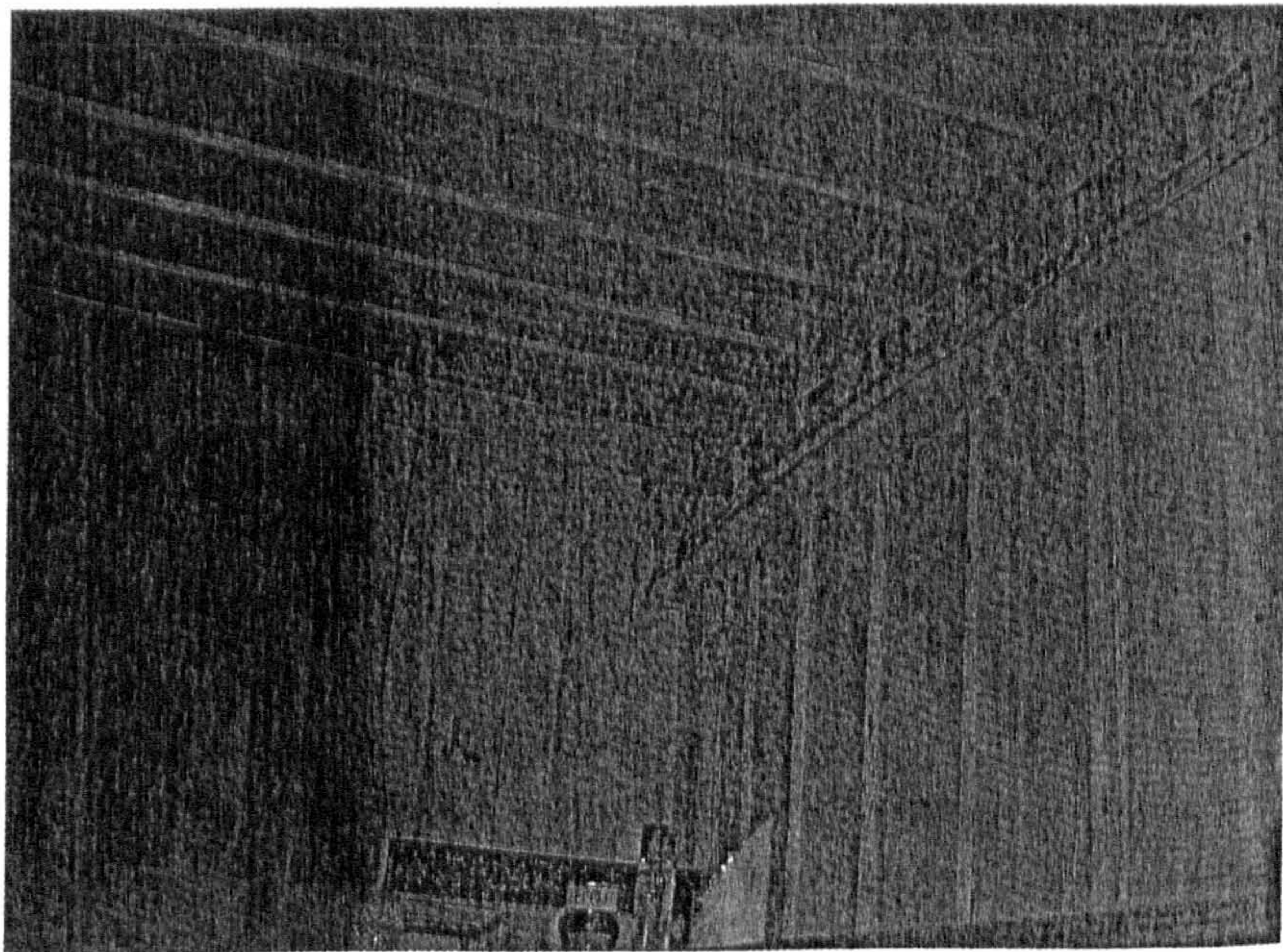
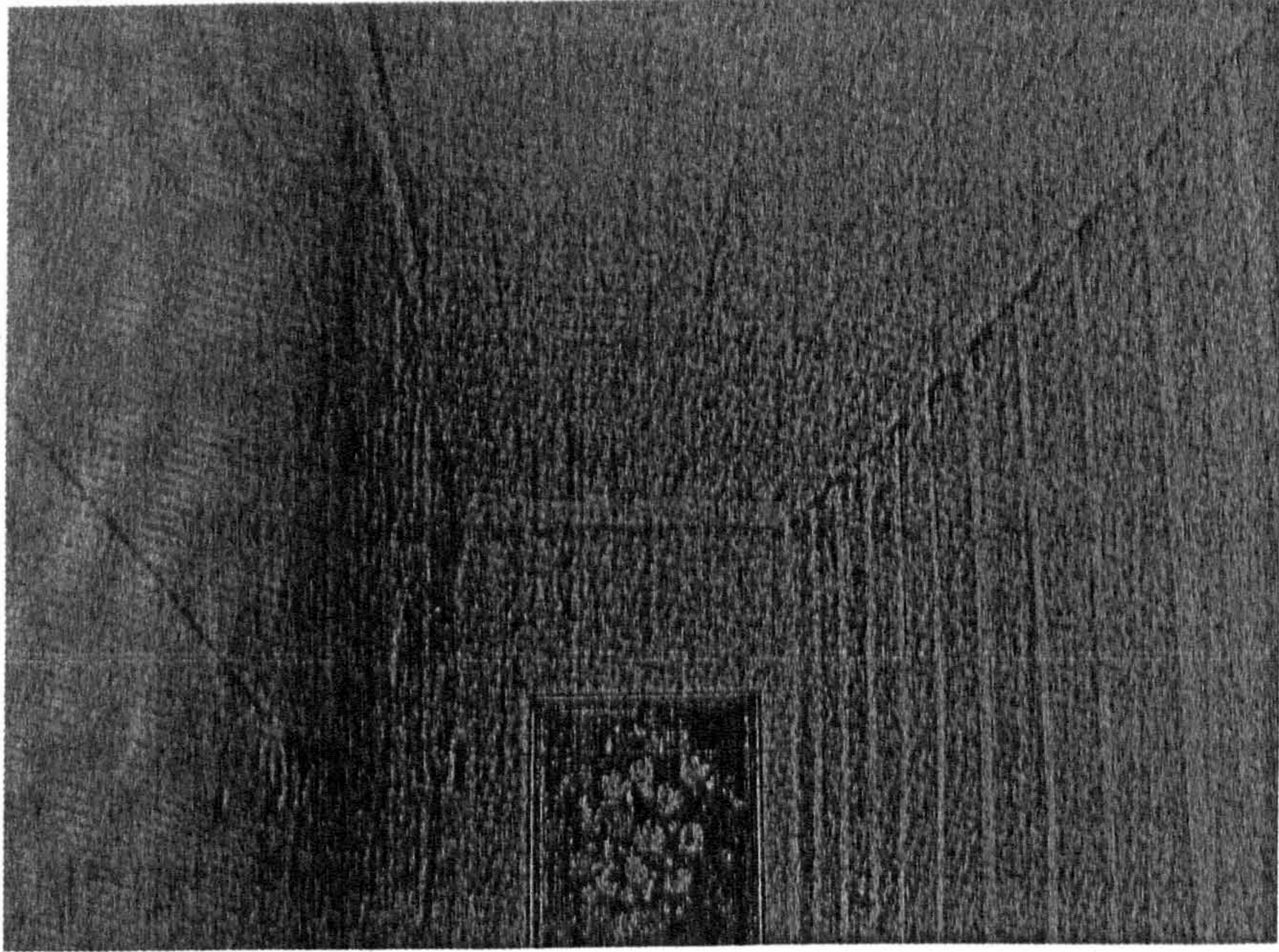


Figure 1. House in Guimarães, showing stone ground floor with lath and plaster laid on a timber frame above.





Figures 2a (above) and 2b (below). Internal partitions of wooden planks or boards (*tabuado*), Guimarães.

Evidence from Braga supports this general impression of mixed use of materials, with timber predominating, limited use of stone, and a concern for the refurbishment of dilapidated stock as much as for new building. We find documents that refer to repairing the stone, roof, timber, storeys, fascias, and other things (1470); remaking the façade and the walls, the floors of the upper storeys, timber, and the roof (also 1470); repairing the walls, floorboards, façades, and roof; removing floors, stairs, fascias, partitions, and roofs (1478); and finally building a single-storey house, using the timber that is already there (1481).<sup>18</sup> Figure 3, which shows dwellings in Guimarães, illustrates these mixed material houses with stone ground floors, although clearly the timber work above is of later date, probably replacing medieval fabric.

Clearly, then, we can conclude that timber, as a resource, was used in any type of building, in differing quantities, and in a variety of ways: in the building of additional storeys, in room partitions, within the roof frame. It was also used for doors, windows, interior staircases, and lintels. The documentary sources suggest that while pine was used to a certain extent, the commonest timbers for construction were oak, chestnut, and cherry tree. The various ways in which it was used will now be examined.

A centrally important aspect of medieval Portuguese construction technique is that known by the hard-to-translate term *taipa*. The word can refer to the material (adobe or clay mortar), but its more common use signifies construction technique. Fernandes defines it as a method of shuttering: 'Taipa is the system for moulding thick walls (45–70 cm) with a mixture of sand, small stones and clay (*argila*), within a space formed by two wooden *taipais* (2m x 0.5m), which are framed and dismantled as the wall grows.'<sup>19</sup> However, in this study, two radically different forms were identified: *taipa de fasquia* and *taipa de rodizio*, neither of which conforms precisely with Fernandes's shuttering or formwork method.

*Taipa de fasquia* is a common technique in late medieval construction in Guimarães and many other northern towns, both within and outside the city walls. It is used for the outer walls of the first and second storey of townhouses, above a stone ground floor. The technique is characterized by the retention of thin laths (*fasquia*, deriving from the Latin root *fascis*, a bundle of rods) nailed to vertical risers which in turn sit on sillbeams (see fig. 4). The result is akin to a lath and plaster technique in Britain, but with the laths clearly *external* and containing the plaster/adobé, rather than *internal* and forming a framework on to which plaster might be applied. Once the *taipa de fasquia* is completed, the façade may be plastered over to form a smooth appearance. It is the dilapidation of such façades that allow us so clearly to observe the method (see fig. 5).

<sup>18</sup> ADB, *Livro 3 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 35; ADB, *Livro 1 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 43; ADB, *Livro 1 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 44<sup>v</sup>; ADB, *Livro 3 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 53<sup>v</sup>; ADB, *Livro 3 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 44<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> José Manuel Fernandes, 'Alentejo and Algarve', in *Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*, ed. by P. Oliver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1520–21 (p. 1521).

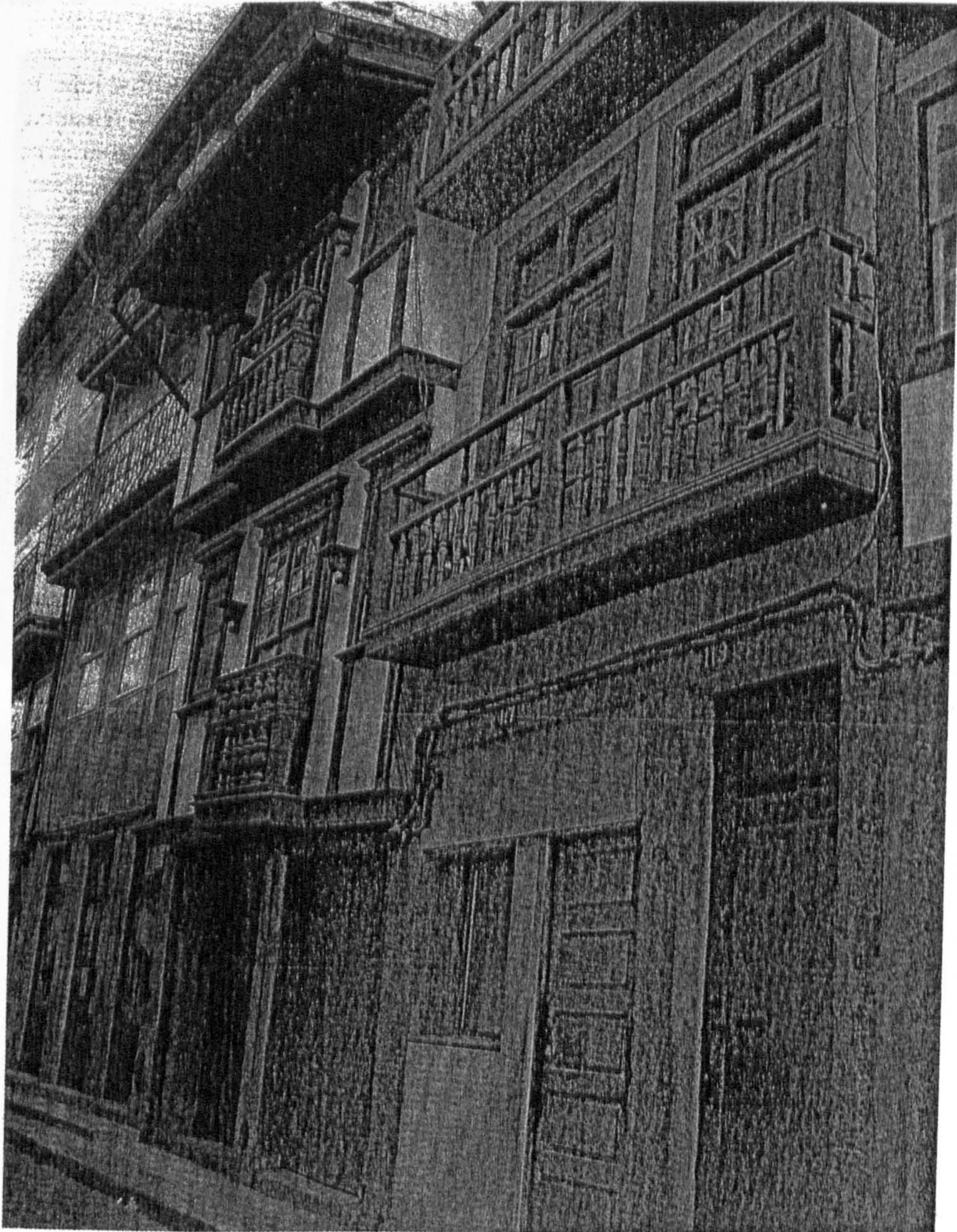
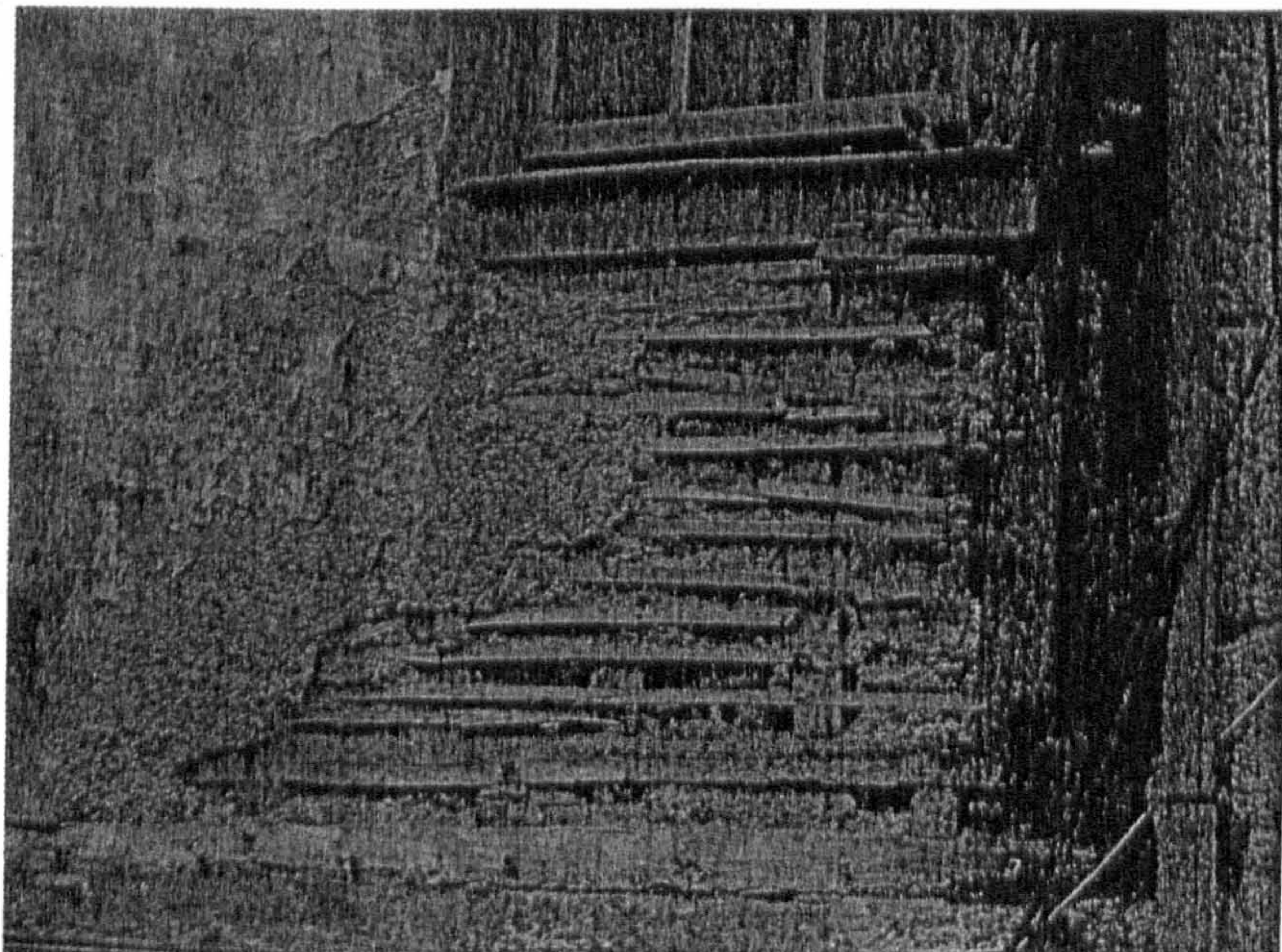
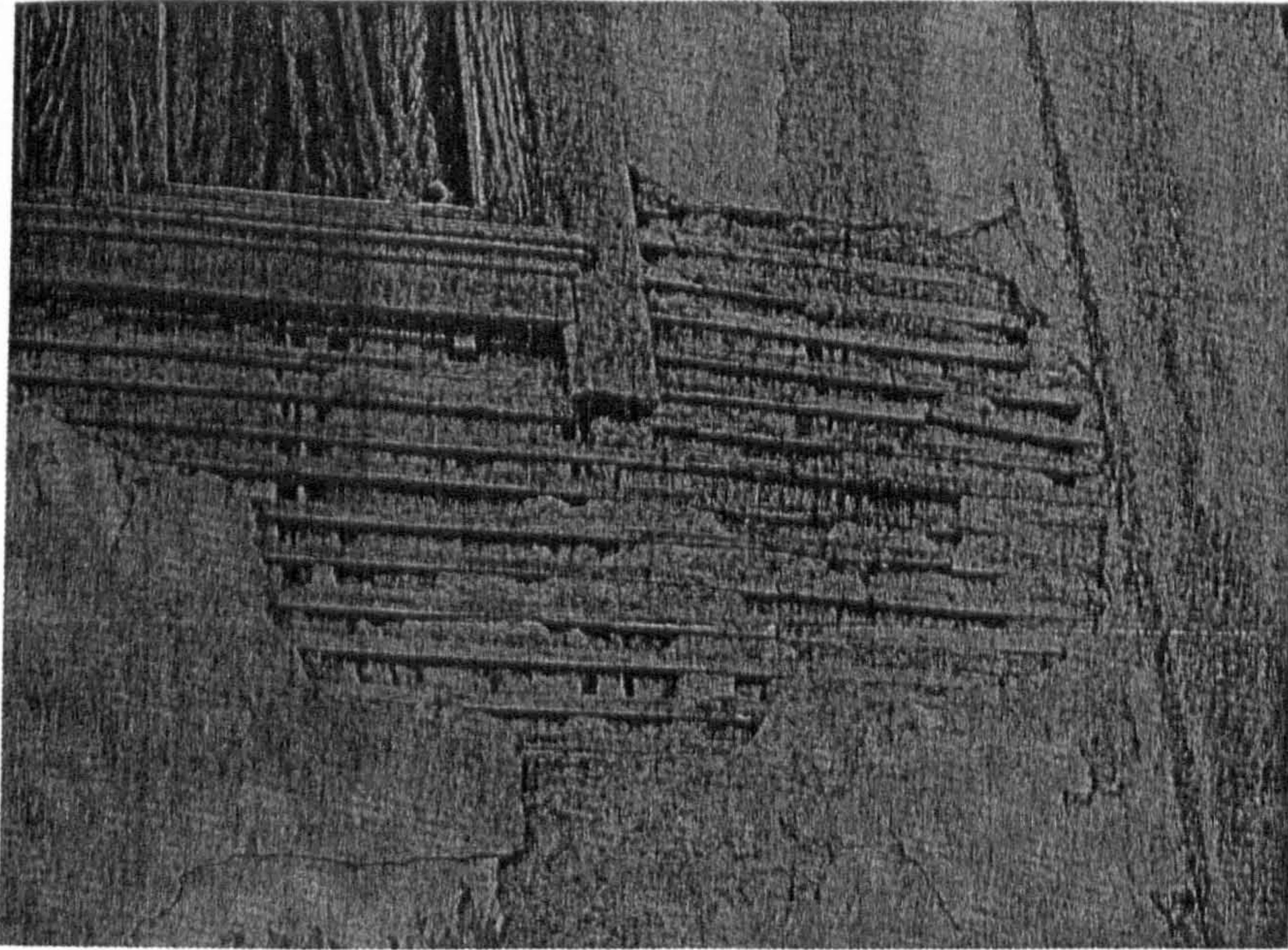


Figure 3. Stone ground floors with later timber façades above, Guimarães.



Figures 4a (above) and 4b (below). *Taipa de fasquio*: examples of this lath and plaster technique from houses in Braga (a) and Guimarães (b).

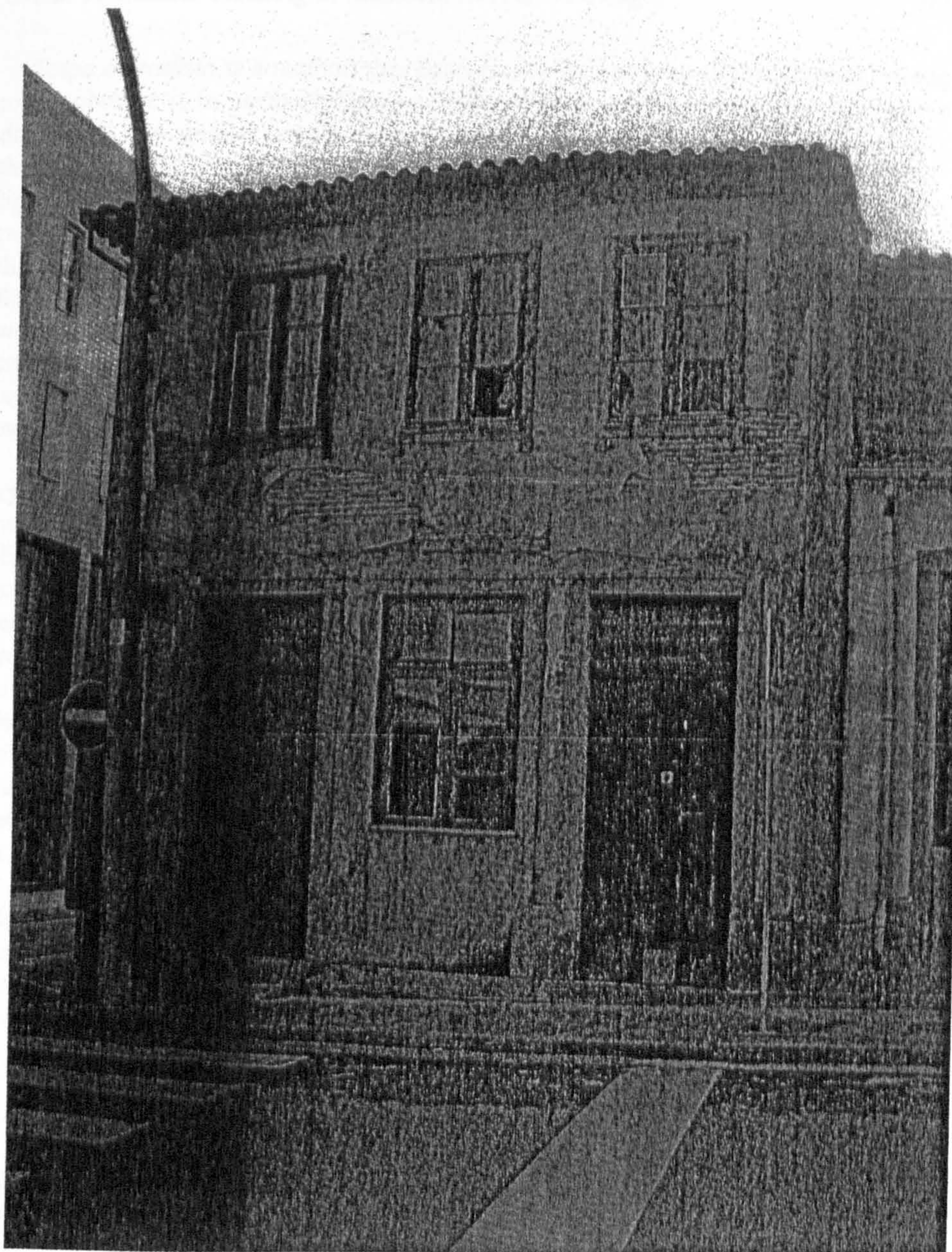


Figure 5. Decaying plasterwork on a house in Braga reveals the *taipa de fasquia* below.

*Taipa de rodizio* is a method that conforms more nearly to timber framing as one might observe it in northern Europe. Frames are prefabricated and the wall space divided up into smaller panels to take adobe or plaster infill. Figure 6 shows clearly that this framing was not meant to be seen, despite its somewhat elaborate and profigate use of timber to create small decorative panels. Clearly these were plastered over to present a smooth-rendered façade as the illustration clearly shows. Again, this is a common construction type, used for upper storeys above a stone ground floor. What is not yet clear, but further research on the buildings themselves may well yield an answer to this, is what factors conditioned the choice of the owner or craftsman between the two methods. Is this a chronological divide, an economic one, or a more subtle matter of cultural choice relating to the status of a building or its owner or to the identity of the occupants?

This multiplicity of meanings of the word *taipa* can cause great confusion when trying to interpret the documentary sources. Although it seems likely that the word (which also appears in the form *tapia* in western regions of Portugal) derives from the Hispanic transcription of the Berber word *tabiya*, meaning adobe, it seems that its use generally refers to the mode of construction, rather than to the material, and it always seems to imply the use of timber to frame the adobe wall.<sup>20</sup> Not all walls, however, were constructed with adobe as can be seen in the case of internal partitions known as *tabuados* (see fig. 2). Here a system akin to the British 'plank and muntin' may be observed, with grooved studs (or muntins) having planks fitted into them to create a solid wall of upright members. Further uses of timber included the construction of roof trusses and its use for doors, windows, and lintels, all of which are noted in the documentary examples given above and all of which have been observed, if not recorded in detail, in the surviving buildings inspected during the course of the pilot project.

Finally, roof construction was relatively simple. Tie beams supported wall plates (the opposite of the usual configuration in English medieval carpentry), and these in turn carried common rafters which were reinforced laterally by collars near the apex and longitudinally by purlins in the slope of the roof (figs 7 and 8). This is a form of roof construction that is well suited to buildings of solid wall or *taipa* construction.

Stone, timber, and unfired clay, then, form the basis of late medieval house construction in northern Portugal, but other materials are also present. By the end of the period, the documents record the use of tiles for roofing materials. For instance in Guimarães in 1455 we read of instructions regarding 'restuaro de umas casas com boa madeira, calibre, ripa e telha' (the restoration of some houses with good wood, rafters, lath, and tile) and in 1465 of an order to 'fazer casas, todas de madeira, com repartimentos e telhadas de caibros, ripa e telha' (make houses, all of timber, with divisions and roofs of rafters, laths, and tiles).<sup>21</sup> In Braga, another later fifteenth-century (1469) contract also documents the use of tile: 'refazer a parede, madeira,

<sup>20</sup> Bazzano, *Maisons d'al-Andaluz*, I, 77.

<sup>21</sup> TT, *Col. Guim., Docs Part.*, m.53, n.37 (Guimarães, no street given); TT, *Col. Guim., Docs Part.*, m.58, n.12 and 13 (Guimarães, no street given).



Figures 6a (above) and 6b (below). *Taipa de rodizio*: elaborate timber framing concealed behind plaster (now decaying to show the underlying frame), Guimarães.

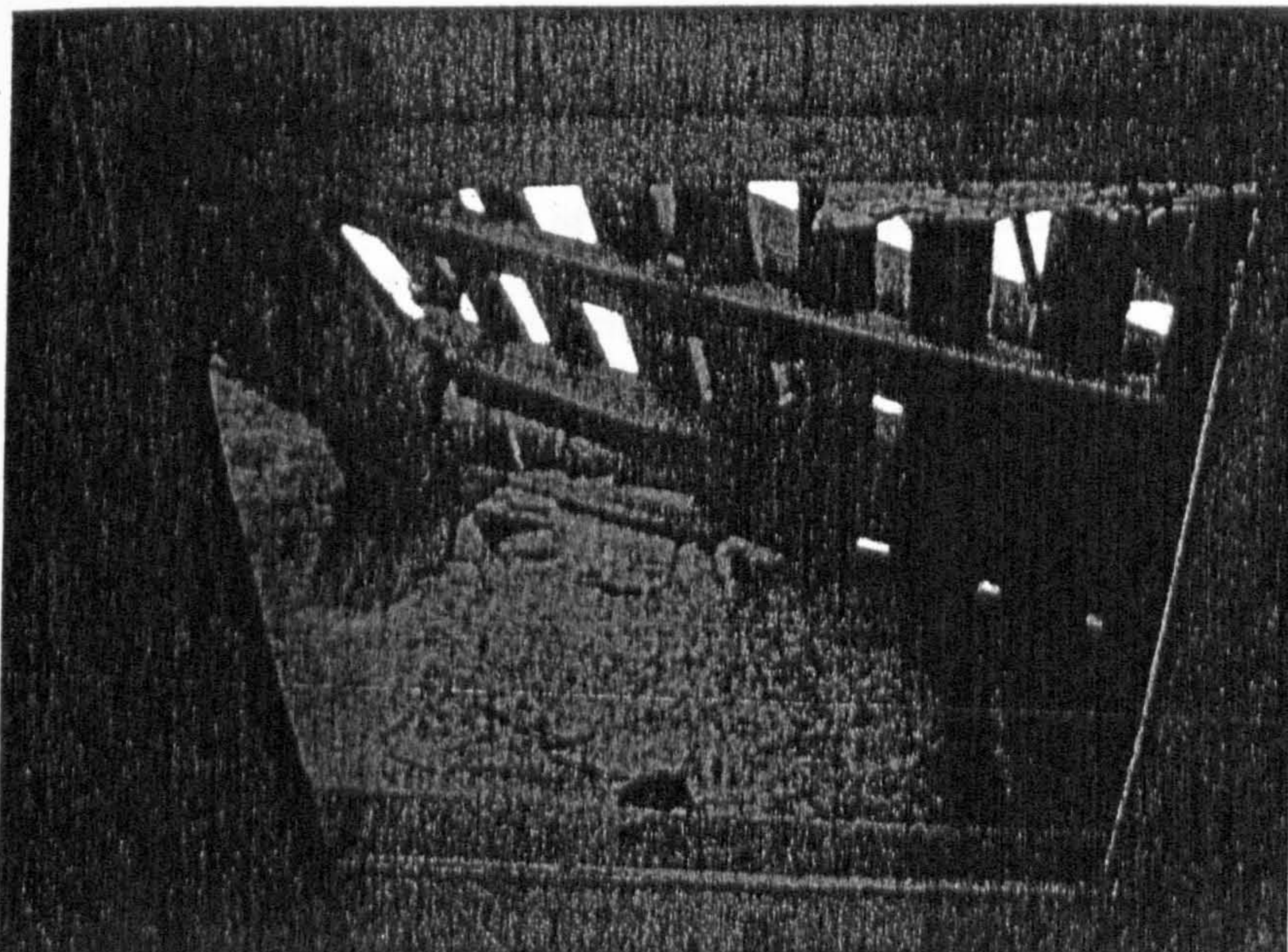


Figure 7. The arrangement of rafters and purlins in a roof in Guimarães.

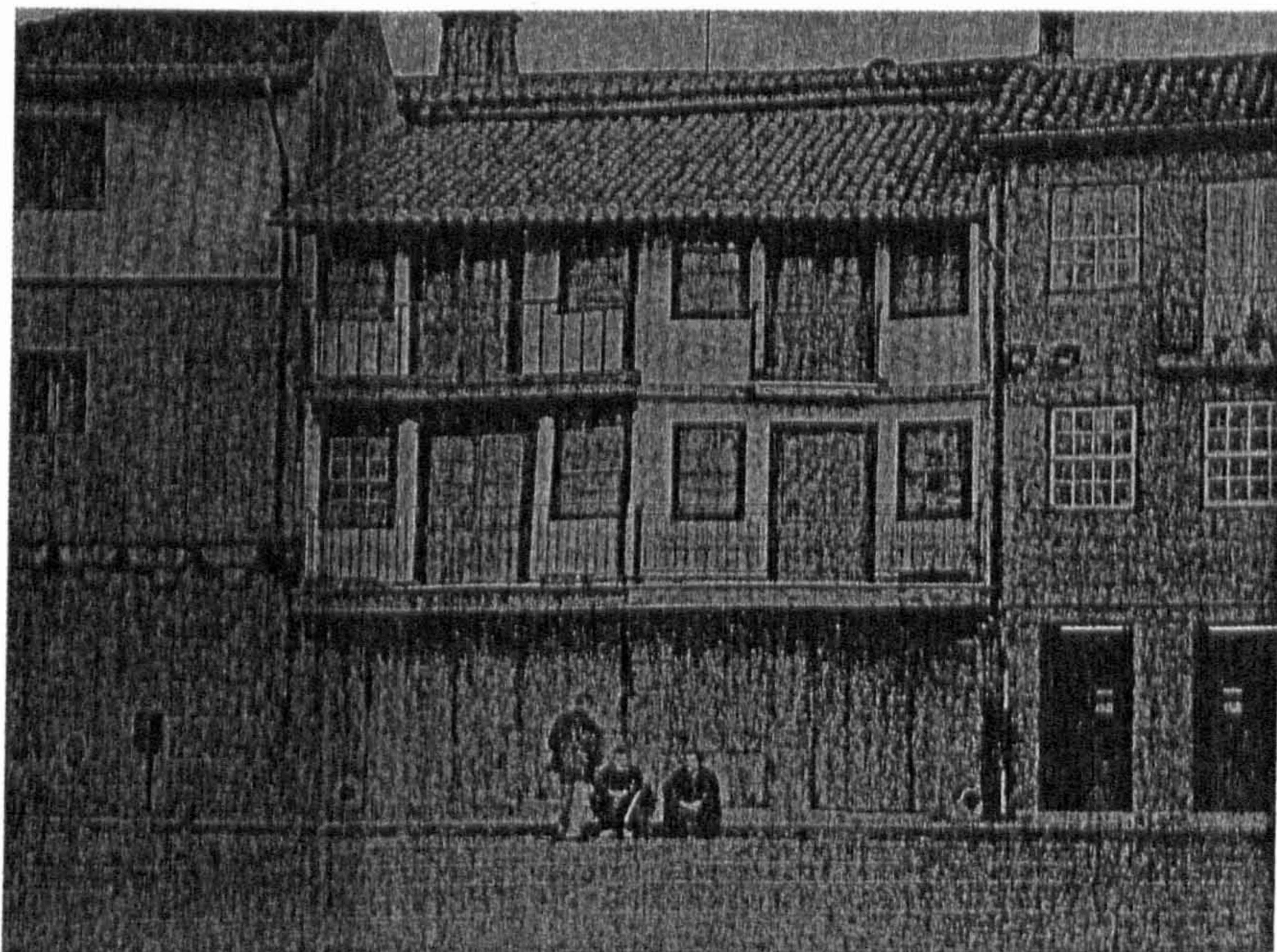


Figure 8. The external appearance of the typical roof, showing its shallow pitch, Guimarães.



telha e portas' (rebuild the stone, timber, tile, and doors).<sup>22</sup> From that city also comes the one reference we have so far located to the use of brick: 'fazer um frontal de brehlo ou de taipa caiada' (make a façade of *brehlo* (pieces of brick) or of white-washed *taipa*).<sup>23</sup> This is one of the latest documents we have consulted, dating from 1508. The emerging pattern suggests that fired clay did not come into use before the second half of the fifteenth century, when it seems to have become widespread through both towns and their suburbs. An earlier document from Guimarães, dating to 1313, refers to thatch as a roofing material and it may well prove to be the fact that many roofs that are now tile-covered were originally thatched.<sup>24</sup> This is an issue that would repay careful archaeological observation coupled with a further detailed trawl of the available documents.

One last material to be considered is iron. The use of iron was mainly linked to security and consisted largely of door-rings, keys (with a reference to a key as early as 1390), locks, and chains.<sup>25</sup> Within the surviving buildings themselves, there is evidence of the use of hinges and nails, but in the absence of clear documentary references to such items, it may well be that these represent later repairs. Archaeological observation would be the only way to resolve this question.

### *Form and Function: The Northern Portuguese Townhouse in the Later Middle Ages*

We would argue that a clear understanding of the buildings, their function and form, is best prefaced by a consideration of their topographical context. Street layouts, in terms of their dimensions and intersections, are critical to an understanding of the social space of the medieval town, and the relationship of individual houses and groups of houses to the street frontage has been a subject of considerable interest in urban studies across Europe.<sup>26</sup> Françoise Bourdon, proposing new methodologies, has noted: 'the plot is the main element of urban structure, and the smallest common denominator of human settlement.'<sup>27</sup> Formal plot analysis is a well-developed methodology, as work

---

<sup>22</sup> ADB, *Livro 1 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 31<sup>v</sup>, and *Livro 3*, fol. 25 (Braga, no street given).

<sup>23</sup> ADB, *Livro 5 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 93<sup>r</sup>-93<sup>v</sup> (Braga, no street given).

<sup>24</sup> TT, *Col. Guim., Docs Part.*, m.20, n.38 (Guimarães, no street given).

<sup>25</sup> TT, *Col. Barcelos*, m.1, n.26 (Barcelos, no street given); AMB, *Copea Autentica*, fol. 184<sup>v</sup> and 185 (1498/1499).

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Grandchamp, *Demeures médiévales*, p. 20; K. Lilley, *Urban Life in the Middle Ages: 1000-1450* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Cited by Yves Esquieu, 'La maison médiévale en France: État de la recherche', *Bulletin Monumental*, 153 (1995), 109-42 (p. 126).

in Beziens, Dijon, or Paris and in the Britain has shown.<sup>28</sup> It has long been recognized that subdivision into long narrow plots maximized access to the commercial frontage while at the same time ensuring a sufficient area of backland to allow the effective operation of the household.<sup>29</sup> Certainly in England, the disposition of the house to the street forms the basis of the most widely accepted typology for medieval town-houses, with a broad subdivision between houses built gable end to the street and those which controlled wider plots and were built parallel to the street.<sup>30</sup> Plots range in size between 2 and 4 m, and often there is no space between the buildings of one plot and the next. The disposition of the house to the plot will very often have a direct effect on its internal arrangements as well as external appearance, and this is seen in our Portuguese examples.

Observations in Guimarães and Barcelos show that, almost invariably, houses were arranged with their roofs parallel to the street rather than at right angles to it. Length to width ratio is generally between 3:2 and 5:2, but often properties are subdivided to form more than one dwelling (see fig. 8). In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, single-storey houses (known as *terreas* or *terreiras*) were evidently being raised to second and third storeys to produce the multi-storey structures common elsewhere in Europe.<sup>31</sup> The general trend appears to have been not only towards the upwards extension of single-storey buildings, but also towards uniformity of appearance. The question remains whether this was a purely functional and rational response to the problems of overcrowding in the city, or whether there was a social and cultural imperative that drove the process. Certainly, as the following examples show, it was not uncommon in the fourteenth century.

In 1315, there was reference to 'em casas erguidas em obrado, com uma parte por erguer' (unfinished houses erected, with one part still to be added) for which the fee was payable by the tenant.<sup>32</sup> A 1322 contract required the tenants to build 'casas sobradadas quer contra a rua como contra o muro, e de bom sobrado' (houses of more than one storey, whether against the street, or against the wall, with well-constructed storeys).<sup>33</sup> Also in 1322, appointees were obliged to 'sobradar umas casas' (add storeys to houses) which had been destroyed by fire (during the civil war of 1319–24).<sup>34</sup> From the same year again we hear of a cleric who was obliged to

---

<sup>28</sup> Esquieu, 'La maison médiévale', p. 128; T. R. Slater 'The Analysis of Burgage Plots in Medieval Towns', *Area*, 13 (1981), 211–16.

<sup>29</sup> W. A. Pantin 'The Development of Domestic Architecture in Oxford', *Antiquaries Journal*, 27 (1947), 120–50.

<sup>30</sup> Pantin, 'Medieval English Townhouse Plans'; Schofield and Vince, *Medieval Towns*; Grenville, *Medieval Housing*.

<sup>31</sup> Grandchamp, *Demeures médiévales*, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.21, n.15 (Guimarães, rua de Santa Maria).

<sup>33</sup> TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.22, n.33 (Guimarães, rua Forja).

<sup>34</sup> TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.22, n.28 (Guimarães, no canto da rua de Donais).

'erguer uma das casas tal qual a outra, de forma que fiquem ambas iguais na beira e na telha' (build one of the houses just like the other, so that they are the same from edge to tile).<sup>35</sup> A building which burnt down in 1404 was made into 'casas de um sobrado' (houses with one upper storey).<sup>36</sup> Finally, amongst these documentary examples, we hear of a case in 1438, where the tenants were told to 'alce a casa de um sobrado mais, do que já tinha' (raise the house by one more storey than that which it already has).<sup>37</sup> So the practice of raising additional storeys seems to have been common, although it is not clear from the documents whether these upper storeys covered the whole footprint of the ground floor.

As for the main façades, specifications for foundations are never found in the documents, and it may be that, like the earlier Islamic houses, these later medieval buildings simply did not possess them, but rather were built directly on to the ground surface. In the absence of excavations, our observations are of the house from the ground level up. Surviving examples in Guimarães demonstrate a ground-storey height ranging between 2.3 and 2.5 m to the top of the stone lintel above the door, which marked the separation between the ground and first floors. The doorway is invariably to one side of the façade. Timber upper floors were often jettied (see fig. 9) as may be seen in many European urban centres.<sup>38</sup> This technique protected the building from the frequent rains, and also extended the floor space over the street. Another strategy for this was the construction of balconies which could project out over the street the length of 'uma vara' (old Portuguese measurement = 1.10 m). Eaves, too, were prominent, to protect the vulnerable timber façades against the rains. Façades, as has already been noted, were of stone at ground-floor level and whitewashed *taipa* above.

A particular and somewhat unusual characteristic of these northern Portuguese houses are their *passadicos*, or bridges across the street at first-floor level, conjoining opposite properties (figs 10, 11, 12). Like the jetties and balconies, these provided additional space, as well as giving the medieval street one of its most characteristic features. Clearly the legal difficulties involved, just as with flying freeholds in modern cities, were formidable. In order to build such extensions, legislation demanded, in the case of *passadicos*, possession of the house opposite, and even in the case of a straightforward balcony, ownership of the air space, which, just like the soil, was the property of the council unless otherwise proven. The same can be said for the proliferation of *alpendres* (colonnaded walkways at ground-floor level; see fig. 13). These structures, which were built of timber, sitting on timber or stone supports, were situated either on the façade of the ground floor or at the rear of the

<sup>35</sup> TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.25, n.31 (Guimarães, rua de Trespão).

<sup>36</sup> TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.21, n.15 (Guimarães, rua de Santa Maria).

<sup>37</sup> TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.40, n.33 (Guimarães, rua Excura).

<sup>38</sup> Beatriz Arizaga Bolumburu, 'Formation et évolution du tissu urbain dans le Pays basque: l'exemple du Guipuzcoa', in *La Ville au Moyen Âge*, ed. by Noel Coulet and Olivier Guyotjeannin (Paris: Éditions du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques, 1998), pp. 46–47.

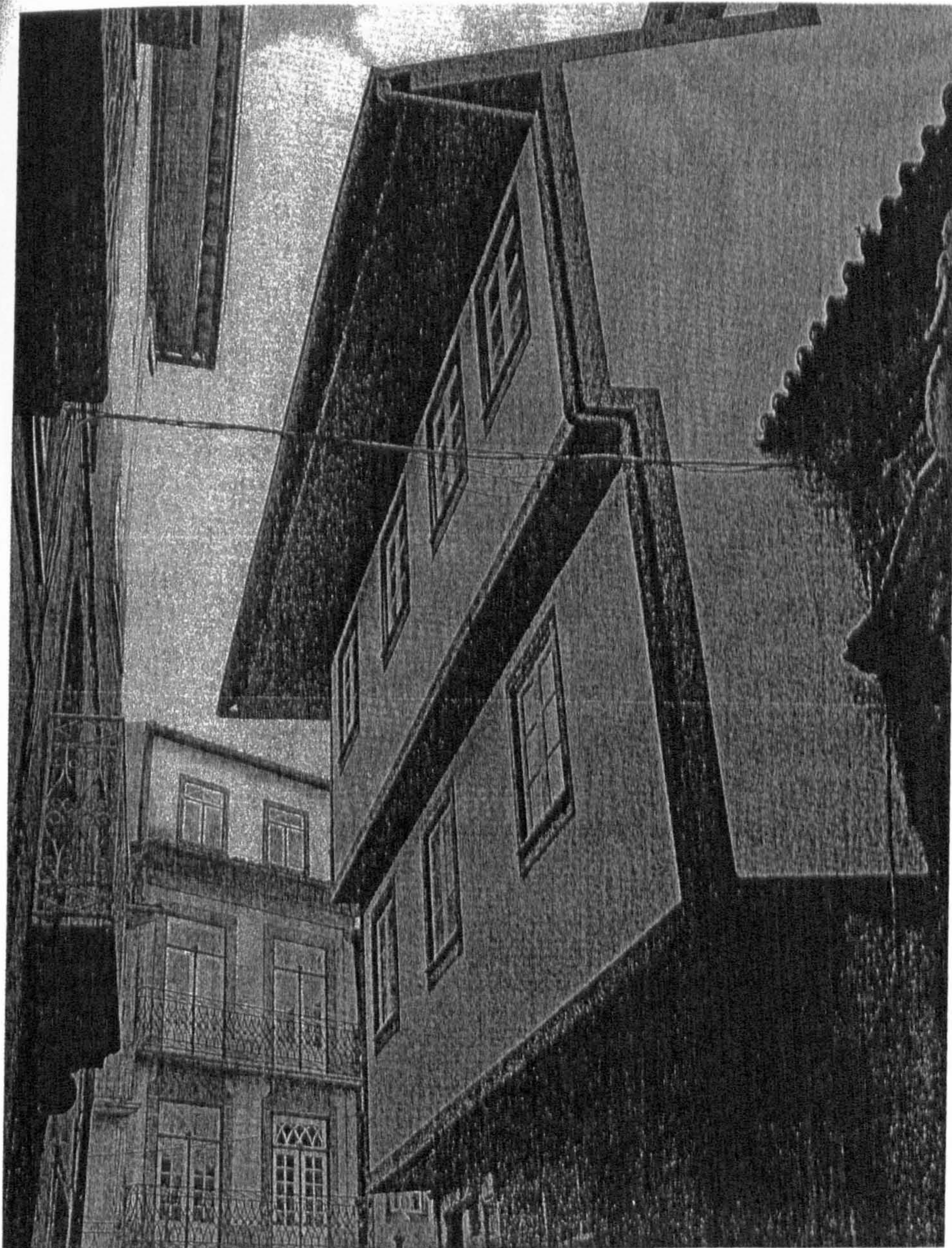


Figure 9a. Jettied upper floors on a building in Guimarães.

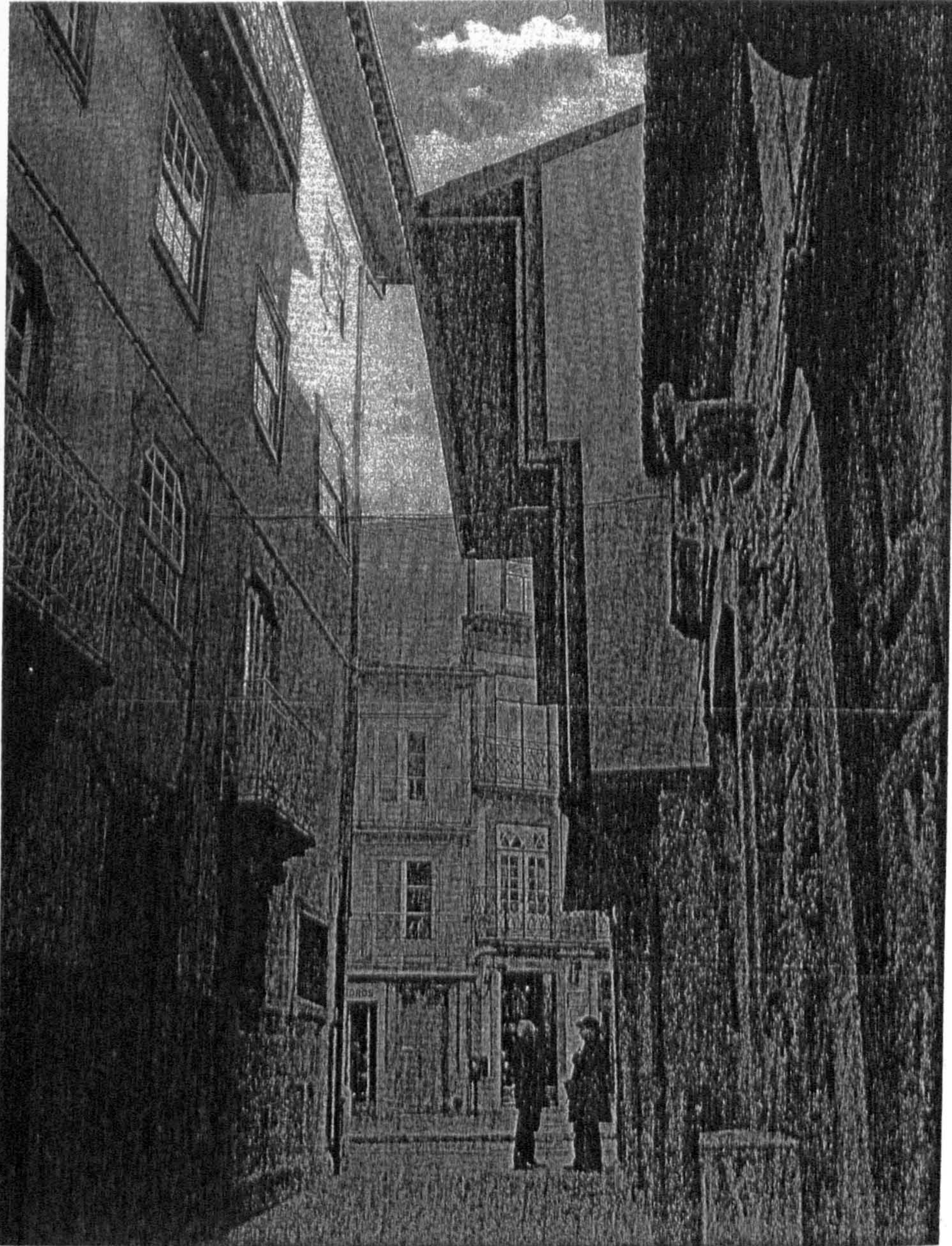


Figure 9b. The same building to show its proximity with its neighbours.



Figure 10. *Passadico* or bridge across a street in Guimarães with barrel vault below.

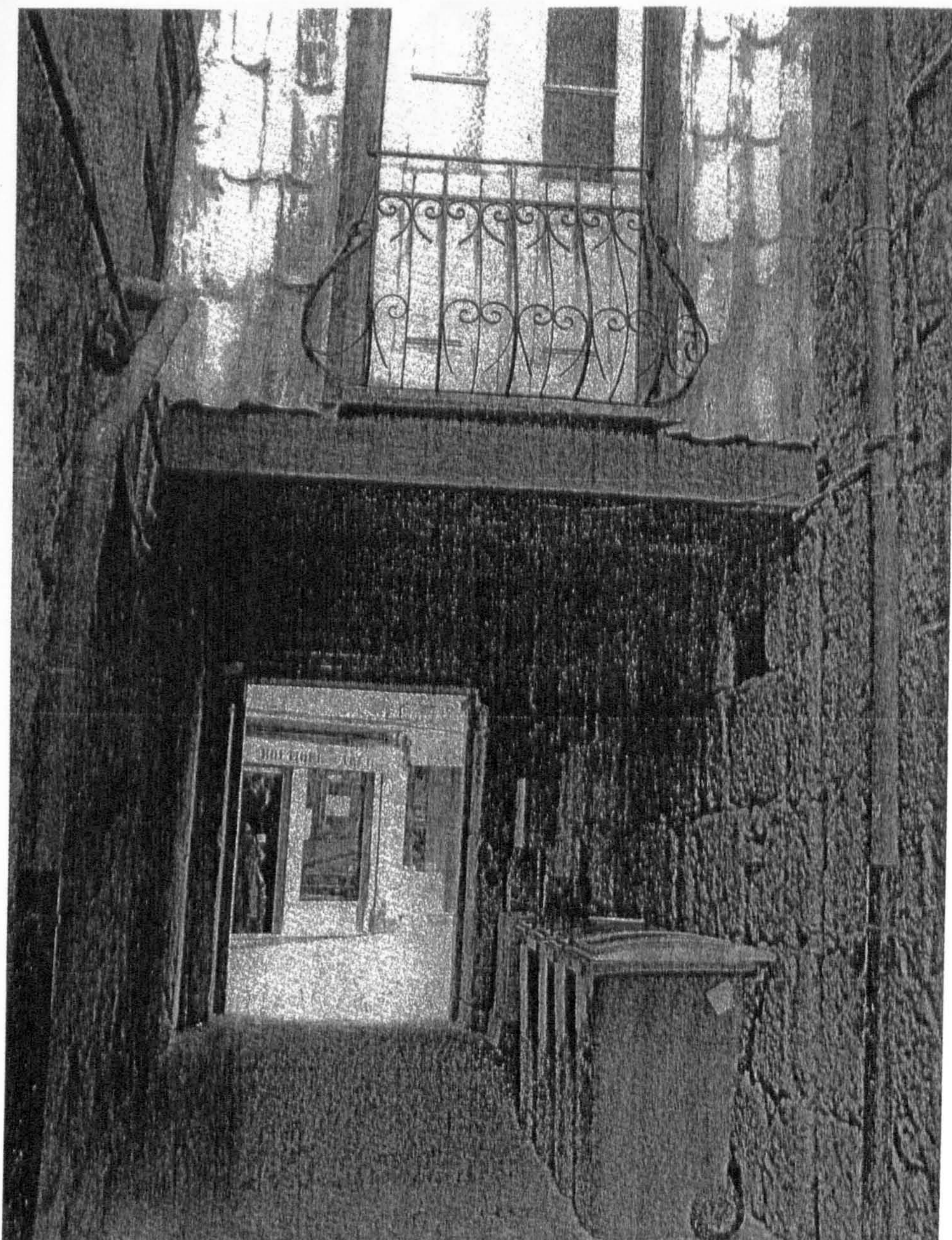


Figure 11. A *passadico* or bridge carried on simple joists across an alleyway in Guimarães.

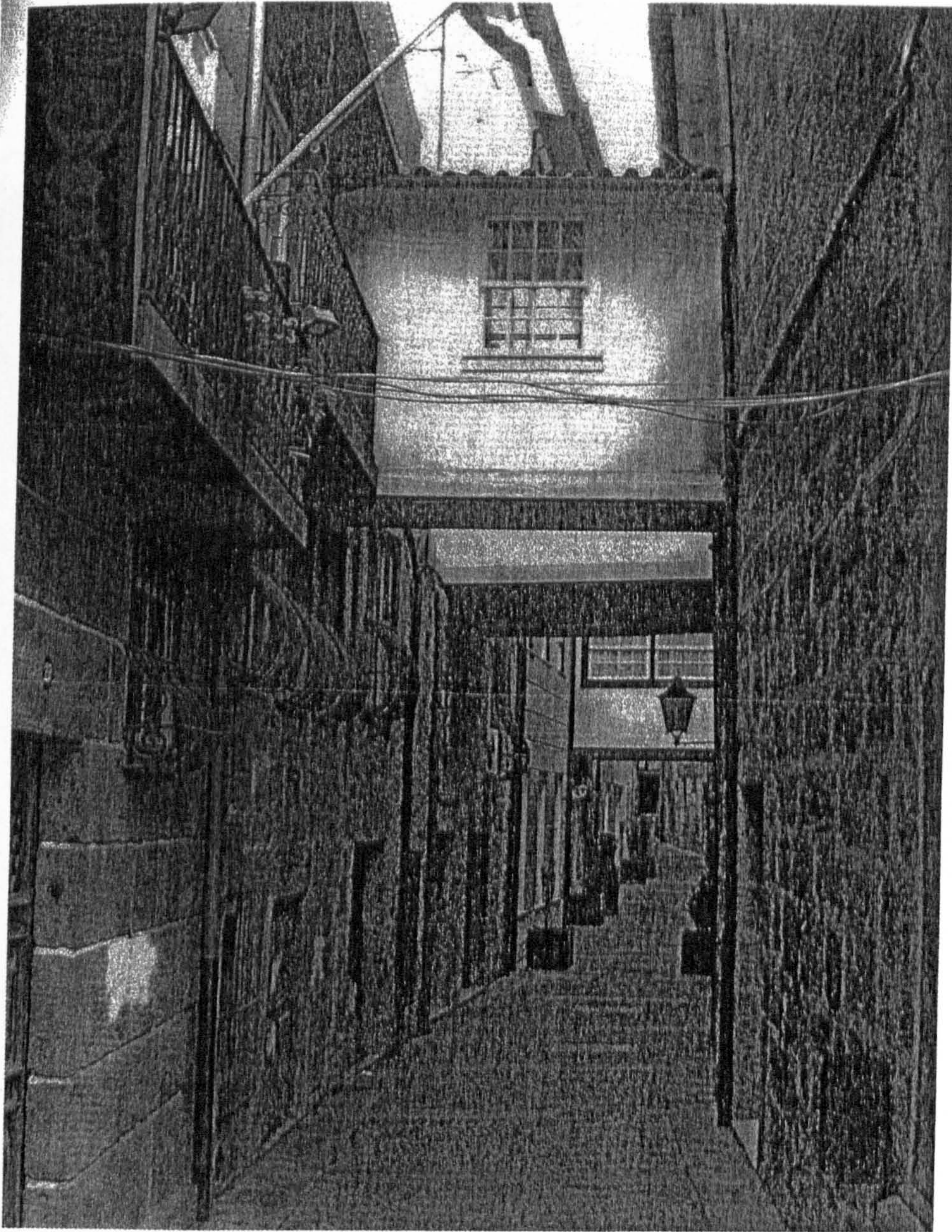


Figure 12. A series of *passadicos* in Guimarães.



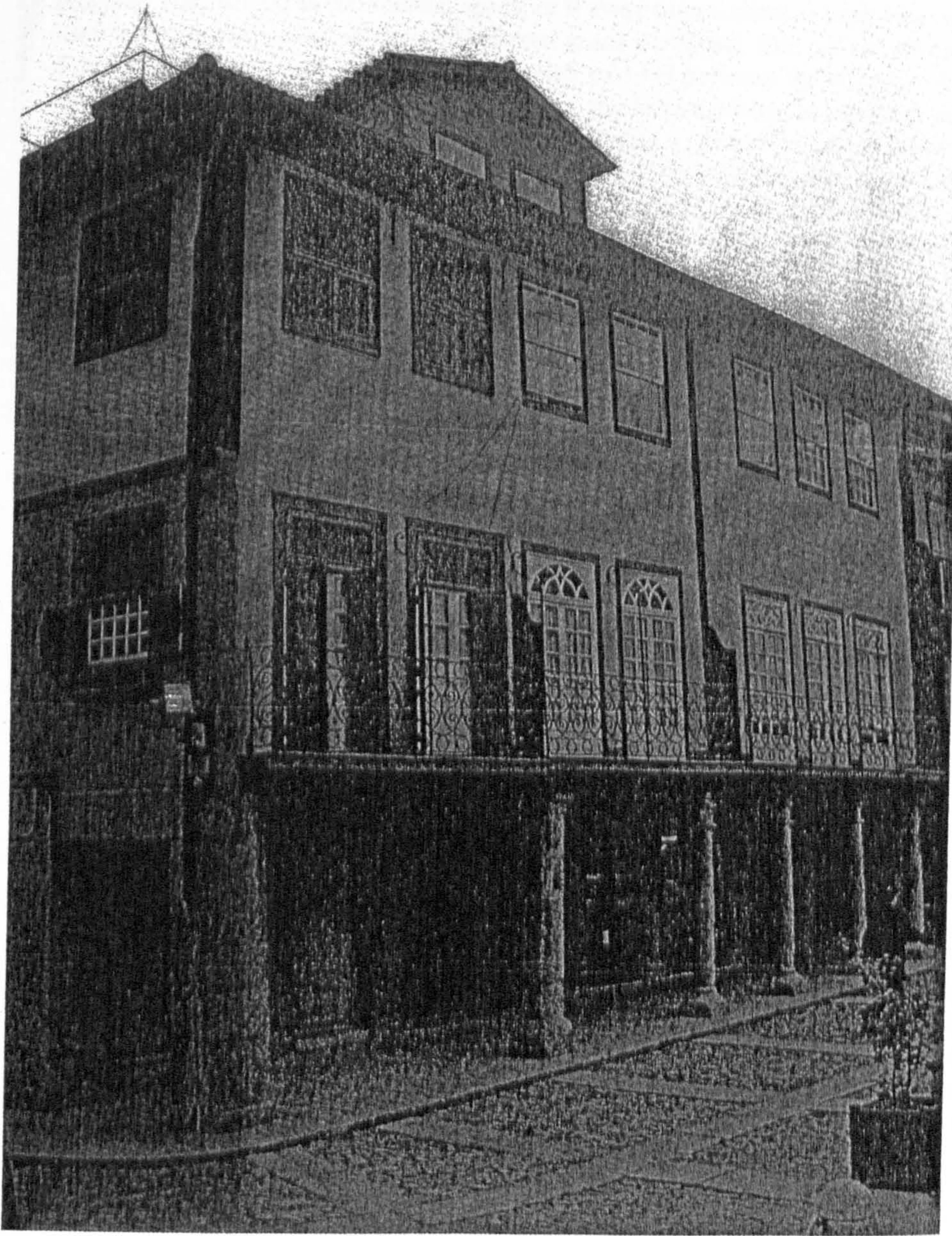


Figure 13. An *alpendre* or colonnaded walkway in Guimarães.

property. They served as commercial space, or if away from a street or back lane, were used for other purposes that such a sheltered space permitted. The earliest recorded date for such a structure is 1278.<sup>39</sup> In a dispute of 1499 between the attorney of the council of Guimarães and the cathedral chapter, the former wished to construct additional storeys above an existing *alpendre* and to build a *passadico* across the street to a house belonging to the latter.<sup>40</sup> Issues to be settled included the problem of damage to the walls of the existing structures and loss of light for the cathedral chapter house, as well as obstruction to their main entrance. The situation was resolved by the insistence of the cathedral chapter that the attorney rented their building in perpetuity and became entirely responsible for its upkeep and maintenance. Clearly the problems of overdevelopment of property and its impact on the amenity of neighbours were as central to the concerns of an overcrowded city centre then as now.

As far as interiors are concerned, very little is known. Documentary sources become systematically available only from the sixteenth century. Earlier information has survived only very sporadically and may not be representative of the norm. Once again it is the documents of a contractual nature which provide the most useful clues, although the vast majority provide no more than very general references, for instance to 'casas com seu exido entradas e saídas' (houses with their grounds, entrances, and exits); 'casas com seu exido e poço' (houses with their grounds and well); 'casa, exido e conchouso' (a house, grounds, and water pump/tank); 'casa e adega, forno e casas' (house and cellar, oven and [out]houses). None of these shed much light on the interior of the house and how it was divided up, but a few examples are indicative of the functions and contents of popular housing of northern Portugal.

In the contract for some houses in the *rua Nova do Muro*, belonging to a canon from Guimarães, we read that a basement cellar was to be divided by a wall and *taipa*, and completely independently accessed via its own doors. Its purpose was the storage of bread and wine, and it could be locked with a key. It was to occupy the whole length of the house. A barn, also the length of the house, was to be constructed against the alley, in which to keep cattle, pigs, firewood, and other things. But it was also ruled that the barn should occupy a third of the basement, the other two thirds remaining for the cellar.<sup>41</sup> As we know, houses often served the purpose of both living and working space: some houses in the skin and hides quarter were contracted with an *aloque* (tank for tanning).<sup>42</sup> However, despite the fact that in Guimarães, there are documents of great interest, it is not until the first decades of the sixteenth century, after the period we are concerned with here, that information is given about the way in which the house was organized internally.

<sup>39</sup> TT, *Chanc. D Alfonso III*, 1.1, fol. 159<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Arquivo Municipal Alfredo Pimenta (Guimarães), *Nota Antiga*, 1.7, no 723, fols 10<sup>v</sup> and 11.

<sup>41</sup> TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.59, n.3.

<sup>42</sup> TT, *Col. Guim., Docs. Part.*, m.62, n.10 (Guimarães, rua de Couros).

For such material, we have had to turn to Barcelos, where fifteenth-century documents give us some insights into the disposition of interiors, with *lojas e sótãos* (stores and undercrofts always on the ground floor), *cozinhas* (kitchens, either on the ground floor or that above), and a *câmara* or chamber. For example, a document of 1390 tells us of a newly built property in the *rua da Santa Maria* comprising a three-storey house with its yard, with trees, all enclosed and covered. On the ground floor, there was a division which was boarded, plus an area which still had an earthen floor. Above was a wooden-floored chamber which it was possible to lock from inside, with an iron latch. On the ground floor, the exit to the grounds was also protected by an iron latch.<sup>43</sup> This is a building in which the kitchen was certainly on the ground floor and the single room on the first floor was multi-purpose. A split inheritance from 1398 allows us to observe a building subject to apportionment. Situated in the important *rua de Cima de Vila*, this was a multi-storey dwelling.<sup>44</sup> After the death of the owner, the inheritors resorted to dividing up the property in the following way: one party kept one half, with a basement store and an upper storey, apart from a section of the store, which was separated by a wall and had a door leading into the adjoining house; the other inheritor retained the remaining portion of the house with its own basement, upper floors, and chamber, plus the stated section of store. The will also stated that, should either party wish to extend their property by adding more floors or walls, they could do so without permission from the other party, provided that they took care that their neighbour's walls would not be damaged by rain.

Further evidence from later in the fifteenth century comes from the *Barcelo Tombo do Hospital* (hospital archives, including inventories of properties owned by the hospital), the most fruitful source for this topic. It is possible to highlight only selected examples in this essay. A useful starting point is a two-storey house in the *rua de Santa Maria* with one upper storey.<sup>45</sup> Walls are mentioned, and, on the upper storey, there was a timber partition. Behind this house, and in front of the hospital, there was a ruin which had been a house, divided in the basement into two sections. On the upper floor, it was again divided in two by timber partitions. A second ruin comprised a three-storey house with one large room on the ground floor and the upper storeys divided into a main chamber at the front and another to the rear. The door gave on to the street.<sup>46</sup>

In the *rua de Cima de Vila*, an extended house of one upper storey was divided on the ground floor into three dwellings. Above, on the first floor, there was a *casa dianteira* (principal chamber), kitchen, and chamber (*câmara*) divided by *taipas*. The main door and façade were facing the street, and behind a door gave on to the

---

<sup>43</sup> TT, *Col. Barcelos*, m.1, n.26.

<sup>44</sup> TT, *Col. Barcelos*, m.1, n.30, and ADB, *Gaveta dos Prazos do Cabido*, n. 98.

<sup>45</sup> AMB, *Copea Autentica*, fol. 190.

<sup>46</sup> AMB, *Copea Autentica*, fol. 189<sup>v</sup>/fol. 190.

property's boundary wall.<sup>47</sup> Another house, of one upper storey, sited in front of the *forno* (large outdoor oven), had its store (*loja*), subdivided into two. Above, it was divided into three: a room (*sala*), kitchen (*cozinho*), and chamber (*câmara*), divided by *taipas*. It had an exit onto the public street to the rear.<sup>48</sup>

Braga documents provided further evidence, of which constraints of space allow only a small selection to be discussed. Again, houses with cellars appear to be fairly common and it seems that many plots had several houses on them, or large houses subdivided into multiple occupancy.<sup>49</sup> One contract in particular describes the construction, for a single woman, of 'umas casas térreas mais outras pequenas junta a elas' (some ground-level houses, plus other small ones, next to them).<sup>50</sup> Another notes some houses rented to a canon, near to the council steps, who lived at the rear of the property, having sub-let the houses at the front.<sup>51</sup> Use of townhouses for commercial as well as domestic purposes is well attested in Braga. In the Jewish quarter of the town, there were two pharmacies, both with their houses; and one could also find some multi-storey houses and another pharmacy which shared the entrance with one of these houses.<sup>52</sup> In the *Triparias*, or *rua da Triparia*, we learn of some multi-storeyed houses, plus two ground-level ones, for a butcher or meat seller.<sup>53</sup> Generally speaking, residential space was to be found in houses of more than one storey, with commercial space below, but in the sixteenth century, there is evidence for domestic use at ground level in the example of some dwellings which were rented to a canon. He was obliged to raise the houses at his own cost, making them multi-storeyed, with a good façade of whitewashed *taipa*.<sup>54</sup> Much of the non-domestic activity seems to have been concerned with small-scale urban agricultural practices, as the keeping of cattle in town and, in one case, the record of a haystack in a backyard testify.<sup>55</sup> Amongst other things, a mill is also registered, with its house (or houses), belonging to a cobbler, inside the city.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>47</sup> AMB, *Copea Autentica*, fol. 78<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> AMB, *Copea Autentica*, fol. 79<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> ADB, *Tombo 2.º do Cabido*, fols 122<sup>v</sup> and 129.

<sup>50</sup> ADB, *Tombo 2.º do Cabido*, fol. 130.

<sup>51</sup> ADB, *Livro 2 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 92 (1482).

<sup>52</sup> ADB, *Livro 1 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fols 42<sup>v</sup>/43 (1470); ADB, *Livro 1 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 44 (1471), and *Livro 3 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 57<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> ADB, *Livro 1 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 102 (1474) and *Livro 3 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fols 45<sup>v</sup>/46.

<sup>54</sup> ADB, *Livro 5 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 66 (1507–08).

<sup>55</sup> ADB, *Livro 3 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 6<sup>v</sup> (1466).

<sup>56</sup> ADB, *Livro 1 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 104 (1474), and *Livro 3 dos Prazos do Cabido*, fol. 46.

In a short essay, it has been possible to mention only very few of the documents which we have studied. Yet even with a greater volume of information than we have been able to mention here, it has proved difficult to identify clear patterns within the evidence. We are left to conclude that use of space within the properties is principally marked by diversity, as the cases we have cited show. However, we can conclude, in general terms, when considering subdivision of properties, that in houses of only one storey, the interior space, whether a single room or several, served commercial and domestic functions simultaneously. In the case of a house with upper storeys, two different arrangements are found: first, in which the ground floor has a section devoted to domestic use and other section(s) are devoted to non-domestic activities, while the upper floor is a chamber or chambers; or second, where the whole of the ground floor is devoted to commercial or industrial activities — store, workshop, cellar — while the living quarters are all on the upper storeys. The upper floors typically were subdivided in two: the front part containing the *sala* or main reception room and the rear the kitchen. Sometimes a private chamber would be added to this arrangement and sometimes such rooms would be found on the top floor of a three-storey building. Nevertheless, we should be alert to the fact that these buildings are more characterized by diversity than by similarity, even within the relatively small study area of the three neighbouring towns of Guimarães, Barcelos, and Braga. Even so, there are distinctive similarities with the architecture of neighbouring regions, perhaps most obviously from Galicia to the west, but also from other parts of Europe at the time.

### *Conclusion: Some Theoretical Reflections*

A principal concern of Falcão Ferreira in the conclusion to the original, longer, Portuguese version of this paper was the extent to which the urban houses discussed here could or should be assigned to a typology, and if so, whether that classification should be based upon the building materials used or on the plan form. The attempt to impose some formalized order on the apparent chaos of the objects of study, be they archaeological artefacts, animals, plants, or rocks, might be seen as an essential first step in the birth of Western intellectual disciplines, and the study of vernacular architecture is no exception to this rule.<sup>57</sup> In an English context, concerns about the theoretical positioning of vernacular architecture studies have been explicitly aired over the last twenty years and have led to a questioning of the usefulness of purely typological approaches.<sup>58</sup> Johnson notes the utility of typologies as 'local descrip-

<sup>57</sup> B. Trigger *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>58</sup> R. Lawrence 'Interpretation in Vernacular Architecture', *Vernacular Architecture*, 14 (1983), 19–28; M. Johnson, *Housing Culture: Traditional Architecture in an English Landscape* (London: University College Press, 1993), pp. 7–16 and 28–43; J. Grenville 'Houses and Households in Late Medieval England: An Archaeological Perspective', in *Medieval*

tions and classifications of house types, building materials and techniques, and decorative styles [which] aim to establish controls over dating and regional variation' but goes on to point out that a strictly typological approach can easily detach itself from the broader questions one might pose about the society which inhabited the buildings and become an exercise in identifying changes to buildings and their construction techniques without tying them back to arguments about societies and the way in which they use buildings.<sup>59</sup> In Britain, discussions concerning the social use of space have emerged alongside the more conventional consideration of the formal attributes of construction and dimensional space that one might routinely find in the pages of the main journal devoted to the subject, *Vernacular Architecture*. The principal question to emerge is how far the disposition of domestic, work, and commercial space, of higher- and lower-status space, and of public and private space can be understood to reflect and to structure social identity.<sup>60</sup>

A review of work in the Iberian peninsula suggests that similar concerns arise, although they are less explicitly expressed. The work of Bazzana, Giese, Rossi, and García Grinda serve to illustrate this. André Bazzana's studies of Islamic architecture are well known.<sup>61</sup> Within a vast body of data, he has identified just two very simple types, the monocellular and the multicellular house, which shared a similar pattern in terms of arrangement of space, although the multicellular building is seen to be capable of more subtle subdivision of space, both horizontally and vertically, particularly in the case of Islamic-style houses built around a central patio.<sup>62</sup> He argues that the house is, in effect, for the family, constructed in proportion to its needs and way of life, and with an infinity of specific conditions which make it impossible to talk about types. To some extent, then, he appears to conform to Johnson's ideal of a study of vernacular housing that takes social use of space as its starting point, but his reluctance to generalize must limit the value of his work to those seeking comparative studies.

In his article 'Los tipos de casa de la Peninsula Iberica', Giese proposes a chronological typology which proposes a development from the rectangular one-storey house to that of two storeys, again based on the distribution and respective use of space. He identifies as his earliest type those houses with the cattle-shed at the side of the kitchen (a room used for eating and sleeping as well as cooking), and refers us to examples from Galicia and the north of Portugal. He goes on to argue that the

---

*Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essay for Felicity Riddy*, ed. by J. Wogan-Browne and others (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 309–28.

<sup>59</sup> Johnson, *Housing Culture*, p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> Grenville, 'Houses and Households'; K. Giles *An Archaeology of Social Identity: Guild-halls in York c. 1350–1630*, British Archaeological Reports British Series 315 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2000).

<sup>61</sup> Bazzana, *Maisons d'al Andalus*, I, 161–86.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

practice of dividing the interior using timber boards, for example in the Alto Minho region, attests to the subdivision of this multi-purpose kitchen space which he identifies as a sign of progress and thus a secondary and later type.<sup>63</sup> Finally, he argues that in the North Peninsula further developments of this subdivision of space resulted in the adoption of two-storey houses.<sup>64</sup>

Aldo Rossi's method of classification highlights the difficulty of trying to create a system that is comprehensive yet also allows for multiple specifications, whether in regard to form or functions.<sup>65</sup> He classifies properties in terms of 'single house-units', 'conjoined house-units', and 'patio-houses', using descriptive spatial and topographical analysis. Using the criterion of social space, he adds the category of public/private use and combining these elements proposes a flexible diversity of classifications for urban buildings.

The architect García Grinda, writing in 1990, urges us to reflect on the notion of 'type' applied to traditional construction — specifically in the Castile-León area, especially the region of Burgos.<sup>66</sup> He understands that, because of the influence of Vitruvius, we attempt to explain architecture with three relevant types: in accordance either with function, or with materials, or finally, with appearance. He comments on the work of the eighteenth-century architect, Francesco Milizia, and points to his broad classification of architecture into private and public construction. That division, he notes, fails to define the concept of 'type', though an implicit definition is offered in a discussion of local materials and style, form and spatial layout. García Grinda comments on the attempts of theoreticians of the nineteenth century to seek more precise definitions of 'type' in order to distinguish it from 'model'. For instance, in 1832 Quatremere de Quincy defined a 'model' as an inflexible prototype which 'must be repeated such as it is'. A 'type' permits architects/designers to 'conceive works that do not resemble one another at all' so that 'everything is precise and given in the model; everything is more or less vague in the type'.<sup>67</sup>

All of these writers recognize the importance of introducing order to the incoherent accumulation of disparate pieces of evidence. At issue is the basis for that order. In Britain there has been a tendency, attacked by Johnson, to take the formalist route of identifying specific plan types and construction methods and considering these in isolation from the social forces at play. Iberian scholars may have avoided this, but

<sup>63</sup> Giese, 'Los tipos de casa', p. 572.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 575.

<sup>65</sup> Aldo Rossi, *La arquitectura de la ciudad*, 8<sup>th</sup> edn (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 1982), p. 87.

<sup>66</sup> José Luis García Grinda, 'L'aplicación y el concepto del tipo en la arquitectura popular: evolución *versus* permanencia en el territorio castellano-leonés', in *Arquitectura popular en España*, ed. by Gutiérrez, Fernández Montes, and Sánchez Gómez, pp. 430–47.

<sup>67</sup> M. Quatremere de Quincy, *Dictionnaire historique d'architecture* (Paris, 1832), cited by García Grinda, 'L'aplicación y el concepto del tipo', n. 85.

in so doing they find themselves paralysed by the sheer variation that confronts them. In the original version of this paper, Falcão Ferreira was unable to find sufficient homogeneity to propose a clear typology of buildings in late medieval northern Portugal, either within plan types or in the use of materials.

A possible solution to the problem is to abandon the search for very specific types and to accept instead that within flexible parameters, variation is inevitable. Rather than trying to establish a clear and almost certainly oversimplified progression, such as that proposed by Giese, or a scheme so complex as to be hard to define, as Rossi's, or to anguish over the semantics of models and types, as does García Grinda, we could analyse the variation in the use of space in medieval urban housing to understand more about the structure of family and commercial life. By recording in detail a sizeable sample of the many surviving buildings, we could begin to identify the specialized spaces that are referred to in the many documents that our Portuguese colleagues have studied, but also to understand the variation between those households with and without such defined functional areas. Are these differences topographical? Do we see clear 'quarters' separating rich and poor citizens, or are their dwellings cheek by jowl? The latter would not necessarily indicate a level of integration between members of different social strata: as Mark Girouard has convincingly demonstrated in his study of social relations in the English country house in the medieval period, high visibility can accentuate rather than blur social boundaries.<sup>68</sup> Absolute precision of detail regarding numbers and sizes of rooms is unnecessary to such an exercise, and a broad, even overlapping, band of categories can deliver interesting answers. Questions about household size and complexity and about chronological change are similarly amenable to solution through careful examination of the fabric and plan form of individual houses or of groups of houses, without necessarily having to provide a clear metrical typology of the sample.<sup>69</sup> Issues raised in this paper over the reliability of economic and environmental factors in explaining choices in the selection of building materials may be looked at once a clear understanding of the surviving fabric has been calibrated with the semantic complexities of the documents. The possibilities raised by an interdisciplinary study of the surviving buildings, of documents pertaining to them, and of guild records can ably demonstrate the degree to which local political power, as vested in the guild, could affect the appearance of the town. In short, the serious study of medieval domestic buildings need not be hamstrung by anxieties over the creation of firm typologies arising out of observed patterning of attributes. Such patterns are unlikely to emerge, or if they do, are unlikely to be easy to interpret, from random observation. Rather, by careful framing of our research questions in advance of fieldwork, we may be better equipped to understand the riches that the study of the material past, both in terms of archaeological and historical evidence, has to offer.

---

<sup>68</sup> M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

<sup>69</sup> Grenville, 'Houses and Households'.



**2004** 'The archaeology of the late and post-medieval workshop – a review and proposal for a research agenda' in P S Barnwell, M Palmer and M Airs (eds) *The Vernacular Workshop: from craft to industry, 1400-1900. CBA Research Report 140.* York: Council for British Archaeology, 28-37.

---

### 3 The archaeology of the late and post-medieval workshop – a review and proposal for a research agenda *by Jane Grenville*

---

The purpose of this chapter is to review the current state of knowledge regarding the late medieval and post-medieval workshop as a location for craft and industrial production, as opposed to the technology of craft production, which is a subject that has received much attention from scholars whose work will be heavily plundered here. The aim is to identify, as far as possible, the social relations of production and to propose a research agenda for future work to further elucidate from archaeological and documentary evidence this less thoroughly studied angle. The preparation of the paper for the Oxford conference in November 2002 involved the creation of a database of 164 sites culled mainly from the pages of *Medieval Archaeology* and *Post-Medieval Archaeology* and from the principal syntheses on 15th- to 17th-century industry (Crossley 1990; Blair & Ramsay 1991; Newman 2001). A fairly wide spectrum of industrial activity is included in the database but most of the sites fell into a few major groupings: metal working, pottery, food and drink trades, brick and tile production, tanning and leather working, textiles, and glass manufacture. The database was prepared by Holly Gourley, and my warmest thanks go to her. Space precludes a full examination of the database in a short paper: the material presented here covers metals, pottery, and glass. It is hoped to be able to develop the project at a later date to include a wider range of industries.

#### Research questions

As noted above, the development of technologies has received much interest in the literature; my particular concern at the outset of the investigation was to consider the relationship between space, production and social organisation. Subsequent discussion and comment at the conference in Oxford extended the range of questions further.

The first issue was that of the definition of the workshop. At the conference, Palmer defined the workshop as: 'a physically defined space in which manufacture is carried out in such a way that the workforce controls the speed, intensity, and rhythm of the work'. This is helpful but there remain problems in identifying such spaces in the period in question, both in surviving buildings and in excavated evidence. As will be seen below when individual crafts are looked at in more detail, archaeological visibility of workspace is often very low indeed. We can find evidence for *craft* in the form of the product, but unless the *process* required heat or water power

or deep pits, it is often difficult to 'see' the activity in excavation. Even then, the emphasis has been on the consideration of technologies and relatively little space is given in site reports to the elucidation of the social relations involved in operating that technology. Where it is, the evidence consulted has been documentary only and the potential information contained in the relative disposition and layout of the buildings on site has not been considered. In standing buildings the problem is possibly greater since any workshop spaces that might survive will have had their evidence obscured or stripped by subsequent use. A combination of historical research and careful observation of the spatial relationships within and between both excavated and surviving buildings will be suggested as a way forward here.

A second issue over the definition of the workshop is that often it seems to have been conflated with a shop, in its retail sense. This is one area in which this investigation suggests that a poorly supported generalisation has been taken up into the literature and repeated despite the fact that convincing evidence, based on current knowledge, may be rather flimsy. It may be the case that production and retail were closely associated in physical terms, but at the moment the weight of evidence, or at least its interpretation, does not actually support this view generally, and in any case the situation may vary from industry to industry and craft to craft, depending on the peculiarities of production and the exigencies of markets and sales. It will be shown in the industries considered here that while the craft-master might take responsibility for sales, these were often made away from the point of manufacture, as records of transport costs and of breakages show.

A third issue arises from the survival and visibility of the evidence and the research imperatives of the archaeological community. Evidence for urban workshops is difficult to come by. Backland areas have remained in intensive use throughout the post-medieval period and even where they have been excavated, there has been a tendency to give more weight to the medieval and earlier evidence, rather than to the post-medieval. Generally speaking, surviving buildings have, as noted above, lost all evidence for former uses or their evidence has passed unobserved. Much of the detailed site evidence used here is inevitably drawn from rural locations where targeted projects have been carried out. The question of how much urban evidence languishes unrecognised in contract archaeology archives deserves closer attention than it has been possible to give it

here. Rather, this chapter seeks to consider the potential for further study by revisiting some of the better published sites, and by considering the trends illustrated by the broader sample of sites recorded in the database sites and the potential that their further study would release. The need for a major research project to investigate the survival of evidence for urban workshops is clearly demonstrated by the results of this initial survey of published material.

All of these issues arise to some extent from the nature of previous investigation. Workshops have not been a central focus of archaeological inquiry. Most of what we know has come almost as an aside from researchers investigating other matters. Historians concern themselves with social and economic conditions in the past; industrial and historical archaeologists pursue an interest in artefacts, their production and distribution; contract archaeologists come across such buildings or their sub-surface remains in the course of pre-development investigations and tend to be most interested in answering broad questions about the development of the site itself and the wider area within which they are working. All of these, in the process of answering their own more specific questions, have shed light upon workshops, but it is often a rather oblique light. Buildings archaeologists such as myself, have been primarily concerned with the development of buildings and the social use of space – any type of building is a fair target for research, but to my knowledge the late and post medieval workshop has not been investigated in detail. The aim of this paper, in shifting the focus to this neglected building type, is to try to frame a research agenda for the study of 15th- to 17th-century craft and industry that will encompass both technical and social questions. Because these questions have not been specifically asked, workshops have not received the sort of primary research needed. The result is a total lack of synthesis of material across Britain and generally speaking a lack of synthesis on the smaller city or regional levels as well. This last, geographical, issue is compounded by the fact that, in compiling our database, we discovered a strong bias towards southern sites.

Principal among those questions is that of the social organisation of craft and industry in the period between the breakdown of feudal modes of production and social organisation and the establishment of factory-based large-scale manufacture. Within the feudal mode of production, 'ownership' lay ultimately with the lord of the manor and the rights to production derived from him. In rural crafts the relationship was relatively straightforward, with lords controlling the operation of crafts, even if the craftsman had access to an open market in terms of selling to his neighbours (Dyer 2002, 169–70). In towns, the rights to production were often ceded by the Crown to the town authorities, as their claims to self-determination became ever more successful, and the power of authorising the creation of craft guilds then lay with the city fathers (Ramsay 1991, xxii). By

the time of the early manufactories, such as Matthew Boulton's great enterprise at Soho in Birmingham or Josiah Wedgwood's at Burslem, social relations had changed radically (see Uglow 2002, 212–17 for a discussion of paternalistic discipline in the new factories; also McKendrick 1961). What, in the intervening period, was the social make-up of the independent workshop, and how far can the buildings reveal this? Were workshops predominantly domestic in location and scale? What were the social relations within the workshop and how did the workplace operate? What were the household relations? Were these reflected in the way that space was used in the workshop? Could we approach that issue using interdisciplinary approaches? By which I mean going beyond poaching the historians' data for things that would back up an archaeological case and vice versa.

In terms of economic organisation, how far does the evidence from workshops inform us about markets for incoming raw materials and for the finished products? Did the agglomeration of trades in specific districts suggest cooperative purchasing and selling by individuals, or did it simply reflect more functional access to raw materials, sources of power, and transport routes? Common sense indicates that, for instance, horners and tanners might have shared raw material from butchers and that this shared interest might express itself in terms of locations of workshops but the unequivocal identification of these relationships archaeologically remains to be undertaken. Can we substantiate the view that rural industries tended to move into the towns around 1400 and back out again around 1600?

## Methodology

Our approach, influenced by the availability of time and funds, was not to comb the county sites and monuments records for information, but rather to review the existing published evidence. We found that there are a few very well known sites and they make repeated appearances in all the syntheses. I shall argue below that this is because of the lack of sustained research in the field except by a limited number of individuals, whose approach, sensibly enough, has been to conduct intensive research campaigns on specific sites. These, then, become the standard sources of information and little impetus exists to investigate more widely. Nevertheless, additional material does exist in the form of notes and short reports from the annual reports on fieldwork in the end sections of *Medieval Archaeology* and *Post-Medieval Archaeology* where short notes of archaeological activity around the country are reported. These reports are often limited to a paragraph or two in which a summary of what was uncovered is provided. One of the first difficulties encountered was that mention of material of interest to us (workshops from 1400 to 1650) may have been summarised in a sentence or two or even less. It

seems likely that there may have been more excavation and building recording of post-medieval workshops than there are full published reports of the results. In some cases, it may be hoped that fuller publication will follow or further published information can be tracked down in county journals. However, many of the sites found through this research project were excavated as a result of development work and therefore it seems likely that access to fuller publication will not be forthcoming in many cases.

In deciding upon the kinds of information required, it was assumed that since the paper was to be about workshops specifically, rather than industry more generally, excavated evidence and standing buildings would form the bulk of the material. Nonetheless, there are problems here of the quality of evidence since there is a need for relatively large areas to be excavated to be able to interpret material accurately. The example of baking is offered by Schofield and Vince (1994, 122). We know from documentary sources that baking was carried out on a professional level from at least the early 13th century, but how can one interpret finds of ovens as commercial or domestic? To do this we would need to have excavated sufficient numbers in close proximity to be able to see if they are commonly found, but in a dispersed pattern (maybe indicating household ovens) or that they come in a range of sizes (thus saying something about production levels).

Surviving attested workshops from the first half of the 17th century and earlier are rare in the synthetic literature and the production of the database did not throw up significant numbers that had not previously been considered. This remains, then, a class of building which has either largely disappeared or is not recognised and targeted research to try to find such buildings is one of the recommendations for further work.

Noting these caveats and constraints, the initial trawl, upon which the results presented here are based, was undertaken industry by industry in an attempt to synthesise what is known. Of the 164 sites on the database, 131 are in the south, and only 33 in the north (as defined by the course of the River Trent, for ease of reference). These represented a fairly wide spectrum of industrial activity but with the majority of sites falling into the following categories:

- 1 Metalworking (including specialist sites producing bells, armour, guns etc)
- 2 Pottery
- 3 Brick and tile production
- 4 Food and drink related industry (including brewing/malting; baking; salt production; corn-mills; and butchers)
- 5 Leather and animal by-product related industry (tanning, horn working etc)
- 6 Textile production
- 7 Glass production

The constraints of space within this chapter prohibit the exploration of all of these categories, although it is hoped that they will be considered in later publications. For present purposes only metalworking, pottery, and glassmaking are discussed.

## Metalworking

Metalworking is probably one of the best understood of all the craft industries for several reasons. First and most importantly, the remains of this industry survive much better than those of most others, making the analysis easier to carry out. Secondly, this area of study has benefited from the sustained interest of industrial archaeologists and historical metallurgists (for broad yet detailed syntheses see Tylecote 1986, 142–222; Crossley 1990, 152–203; Cranstone 2001, 186–203). Although the focus of previous study has tended to be on process and product, rather than the organisation of the workplace, sufficient plans and discussions of workshops have been published to enable a preliminary consideration of the research issues with which we are concerned here.

The winning of ores is known archaeologically from the Bronze Age onwards but it is difficult to suggest certain dates for many of the simpler forms of extraction. Few examples survive which match the dramatic appearance of the famous Bentley Grange iron pits (Beresford & St Joseph 1979), but Crossley suggests that such simple methods of extraction persisted beyond the medieval period wherever shallow seams were found (Crossley 1990, 204). Outcrops on hillsides were extracted by means of digging drifts into the slope but the dating of such features is difficult indeed and there seem to be no surviving workshops to accompany them dating from before the 18th century (Davies 2002).

Metalworking is a craft which undergoes several important technological changes within our period of interest as a result of an increasing level of financial investment. Before the Black Death iron was smelted in many small bloomeries each having a limited output (Crossley 1990, 153–6) and this form of purifying iron continued well into the 17th century where small-scale production was adequate, such as at Muncaster Head, Cumbria (Tylecote & Cherry 1970). How far did such domestic-scale practices reflect social resistance to the loss of autonomy that a bigger operation implied? Regular operation would provide an output of about 20 or 30 tonnes a year and there was no need to keep the facility in continuous use – it could easily be worked as a sideline for a family with other interests such as farming. Indeed, smelting does seem to be a largely rural occupation throughout most of the period: the well-known site at Rockley in Yorkshire (Fig 3.1), excavated by Crossley and Ashurst in the 1960s, dates from the 16th century and was operated by water power (Crossley & Ashurst 1968). Indeed, the first major technological development to the process of metalworking was

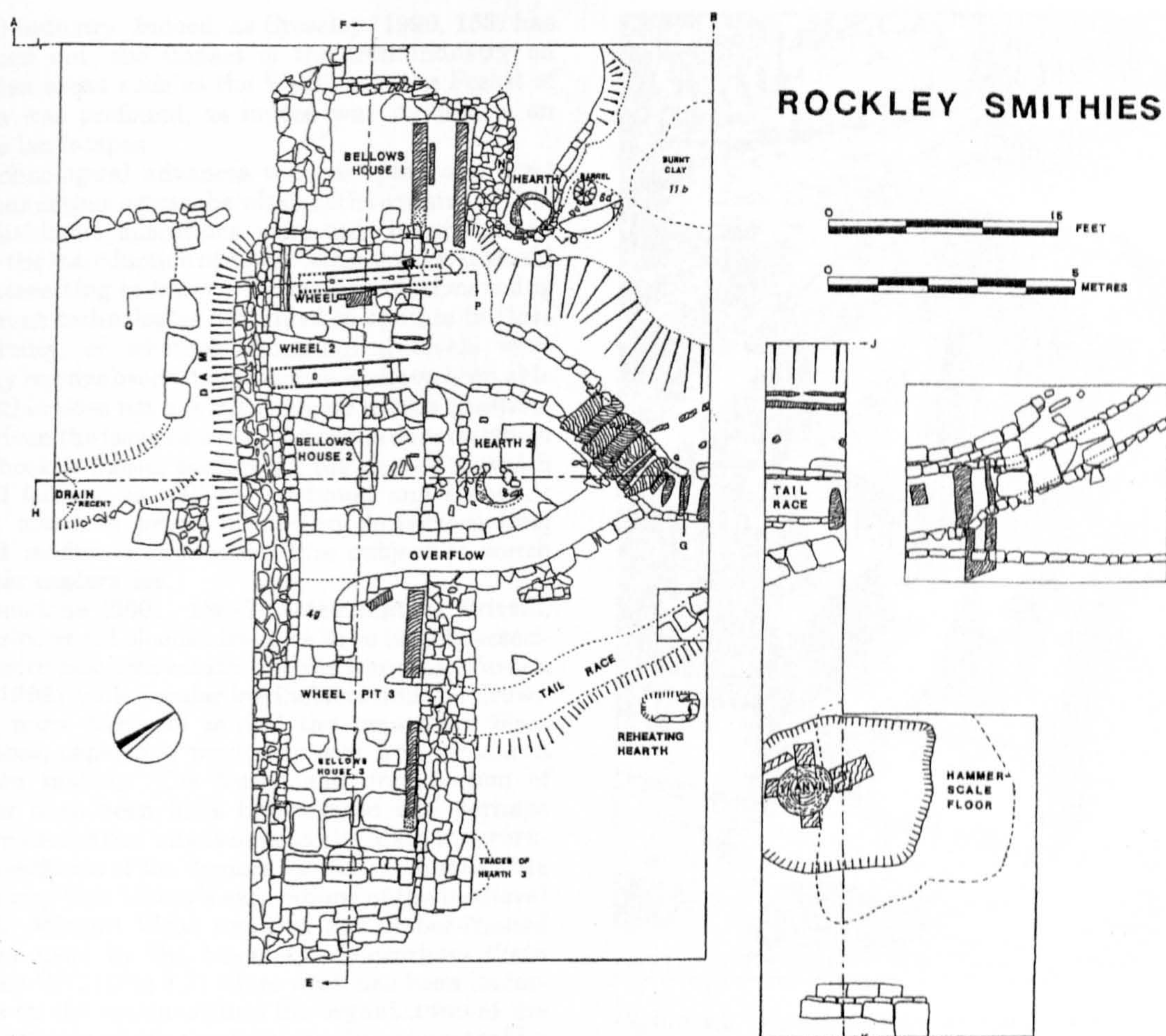


Figure 3.1 The smelting complex at Rockley, Yorkshire, in period 2, showing the importance of the complex water system. (By permission of the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology)

the introduction of water power, which increased output from about 3 tonnes a year in a furnace with hand-powered bellows to about 25 tonnes where there was water power. The earliest known water-powered forge at Chingley in Kent dates from the early 14th century (Crossley 1975). The use of water to power hammers as well as bellows increased production still further, up to about 45 tonnes (44.25 tons) a year, as illustrated by Agricola in his *De re metallica* (Agricola 1556). There is little here to help us to understand the social relations of production, but it is clear that increased output could be achieved without a commensurate increase in labour. One small insight comes from Byrkenott in Weardale, County Durham (Geddes 1991, 170) where a water-powered furnace was producing 18 tonnes (17.75 tons) of forged iron in less than a year in 1408–09; this seems to have been an intermittent operation if a reference to a casual payment made to the woman who operated the bellows is to be taken at face value. As I noted earlier, the evidence is more about the

industry than about the workshops specifically associated with it, but interesting aspects of technological change and social relations are already beginning to emerge.

The next big development was the blast furnace, the first imported from Europe in 1496 at Newbridge in Sussex (Crossley 1990, 156). Here iron ore in a tall, narrow shaft furnace remained in contact with the charcoal fuel and resultant carbon monoxide for a longer time than in a bloomery and had a lower melting point. An early example was excavated at Chingley, Kent (Crossley 1975). The resultant cast iron then had to be converted into malleable wrought iron by oxidising it in a finery. Geddes (1991, 174) has suggested that 'the introduction of cast iron and the indirect process of making it wrought iron marked the end of the Middle Ages and the start of the modern era in the English iron industry'. The continuous operation demanded a greater investment of both time and money and the requirement for charcoal and water ensured that this remained a

rural industry. Indeed, as Crossley (1990, 153) has pointed out, the impact of the iron industry on wooded areas such as the Weald and the Forest of Dean was profound, as indeed was its demise on those landscapes.

Technological advances were adopted over long periods of time across the whole of the country so that old-fashioned operations were still in production after the introduction of newer technologies. It would be interesting to know whether installations using different technologies continued to operate in close proximity, or whether technological levels were firmly regionalised – the evidence we have been able to gather does not allow an answer to this question, but given the issue raised at the conference on which this book is based, concerning the degree to which social factors, as well as functional and economic ones, acted as prime movers in decision-making about modes of production, the subject is worth further exploration.

Cranstone (2001, 186–7) notes that in Britain, water-powered bloomeries seem to be largely associated with monastic estates such as Rievaulx (Vernon *et al* 1998) while secular landholders and the Crown were more likely to control the innovative blast furnaces, capable of producing cast iron for use in cannon making. The teams and organisation of labour have been little investigated and perhaps future excavation might seek to elucidate the working conditions of the furnace operators, in much the same way that Money's excavations of the medieval site in Minepit Wood revealed the timber-framed shelter used by the bloomery ironworkers there (Money 1971) (Fig 3.2). More work has been undertaken on the continent into the organisation of the iron industry which seems to have been operated by peasant ironmasters on a small scale of production, but one that was technically innovative, with the introduction of small blast furnaces (Magnusson 1995).

If iron production and forging was predominantly a rural occupation, and apparently one that doubled up with agricultural activity, then the working of metals in specialised ways was clearly urban. Geddes (1991, 182) documents the complexity of the guild system operating within the towns that identified as many as fourteen ironworking guilds by the late medieval period: ironmongers, cutlers, smiths, armourers, clockmakers, lorimers, spurriers, wire-drawers, pinners, nail-makers, lockyers, furbours, ferrous and blacksmiths. According to Dyer (2002, 320) 'the unit of production remained the workshop based on the household, which normally consisted of a handful of workers: the master, his wife, a child or two if they were of working age, and one or two servants or apprentices' but he notes that the metal trades tended to employ a larger workforce, citing Thomas Downton's pewter workshop in London which boasted eighteen servants and apprentices in 1457. Homer (1991, 71) uses the same evidence of Downton's establishment to illustrate a rather different picture, namely that of 56 pewterers' 'shops' (*sic*)



Figure 3.2 *Reconstruction of iron-working structures at Minepit Wood, Sussex. (By permission of the editor of Medieval Archaeology)*

in London, 79% consisted of the master working without paid underlings at all, or with only one or two apprentices. Downton's large establishment was exceptional rather than typical, supporting the argument that the household unit formed the basis of the industrial team within the metals trades as well as in other crafts. Indeed it may be worth noting that small workshop operations, if not household based, continue to this day within the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter, as highlighted by English Heritage in its recent study (Cattell *et al* 2002).

The database compiled for this paper contains 37 metal working sites, 30 of which are southern and 7 are northern. Unsurprisingly, the eight blast furnaces, two bloomeries, and two sites more generally attributed to an association with iron production, are all rural. Two sites specifically associated with bronze are also rural as is the one gun-casting site identified. Urban sites include an armour maker, three bell makers, a pinner and a number of non-specified metal working sites. The Pennington Brass Foundry in Paul Street, Exeter (PMA 1983,

199–201) provides one of the few thoroughly excavated urban metal-working sites we were able to track down. Its location on the rear of a burgage plot hard against the city wall is indicative of early concerns about health and safety and environmental control. Cranstone (2001, 190, quoting Rowlands 1975) notes that the metal manufacturing trades tended to operate in a semi-domestic context, with an organised ‘putting-out’ system, similar to that operating in the textile industry, being developed and run by ironmongers, but also comments that ‘the smithies and workshops, and their operatives, of the 16th to 18th centuries have received little attention relative to the blast-furnace and the major ironmaster.’ This absence of extensive synthesis of archaeological or documentary evidence for the physical location and layout of the workshop impedes our understanding of the spatial relations of production. Was it attached to the main house or detached within the plot or set at a distance from the master’s dwelling?

In total, 14 of the recorded metal working sites are urban and 23 rural. Specialist metal workers tend to be based in the towns. The balance between access to materials and power sources and access to markets is likely to be significant here and one might expect specialist smiths of finished metals to be producing nearer to their markets than to the source of the refined materials, easily transportable to town. Evidence for the point of sale of the finished products in relation to the point of production, is, however, difficult to come by and more work needs to be undertaken on the coincidence of ‘workshop’ and ‘retail shop’ in these urban trades. Refining activities, blast furnaces and bloomeries, were all rural, probably reflecting the requirement to be near to raw materials and power sources. The anti-social nature of the work, with its requirement for large spaces, access to fuel, creation of heat, smoke, smells, and pollutants may also be significant here.

Problems exist with exact dating, but of sites where dates are provided 7 were definitely operating in the 15th century, 24 in the 16th century and 20 in the 17th century, indicating better survival for the middle and later part of our period of interest. Interestingly, all of our earliest examples (except one at Trelech, *PMA* 2000, 255) seem to come from urban contexts Norwich (*Med Arch* 1995, 233), Edinburgh (*PMA* 2001, 218), Bath (*PMA* 2000, 215–16) Hounslow (*PMA* 2000, 255), Hedon (*Med Arch* 1997, 300). In the 16th century, nine sites are urban and fifteen rural, which may indicate a shift coinciding with the new technological developments. In the 17th century seven are urban and thirteen rural. Here the urban examples exclusively represent specific types of metal working (for instance, bell casting) and the great number of the rural examples are of blast furnaces and bloomeries. Our database indicates a slight trend for a move to the countryside by the metal working industries between the 15th and the 17th centuries, but whether this generally can be sustained on investigation of a larger set of

evidence, and one that runs into the later periods when Sheffield and Birmingham began to be identifiable centres of metal production, requires further research. What we are seeing are relatively small-scale, family-based but entrepreneurial operations – the removal of exclusive ownership rights on the part of the feudal lord of the manor, as well as technological change, seem to be contributing to a change in the industrial base and this may have been contributory to the major changes in the later 18th century. Can these preconditions for changed relations of production be seen elsewhere in the archaeological and historical record for post-medieval industry?

## Pottery

Turning to the pottery industry we find some more concrete examples for the relationship between household and craft workshops. Ceramics, the most plentiful component of the medieval and post-medieval archaeological record, are often identified as the signals of major change. The period 1450–1550 saw a dramatic increase in pottery types on the English market, both home-produced and imported, and in the amount of pottery in use. Gaimster and Nenck have suggested that this changing ceramic profile represents ‘the division between the respective disciplines of medieval and post-medieval archaeology in this country’ (Gaimster & Nenck 1997, 171). Barker, too, looking at the second part of our period, sees the changes in pottery distribution as pivotal, though perhaps more in terms of economic changes in the path than as a marker of disciplinary divides in the late 20th century (Barker 1999). To some extent, one has to agree that the ubiquity of pottery in the record, its usefulness for dating purposes and for identifying trading networks and the consequent expenditure of archaeological resources in terms of both time and money, tends to skew its importance. Nevertheless, it is a useful indicator of standards of living and there is a huge amount of literature on the subject, the synthesis of which only the brave or foolhardy would attempt. Studies deal with typologies, fabrics, production methods, pottery as a dating indicator or as evidence of long-distance trade. Rarely tackled, however, are the social relations of production with which we are concerned here and this is a major area for further investigation.

In his chapter on ceramics, Crossley alludes to the local nature of coarse pottery production in the 16th century. He suggests that specialist potters producing day-to-day earthenwares tended to aggregate in particular localities where access to suitable clays and fuel was convenient and where agricultural incomes were low, as for instance in the area around Wakefield (Crossley 1990, 245–6). Here a concentration of kilns has been found and even some of the placenames (Potovens, Potterton) support his view that pottery production was specialised and localised. This was scarcely new; the same situation

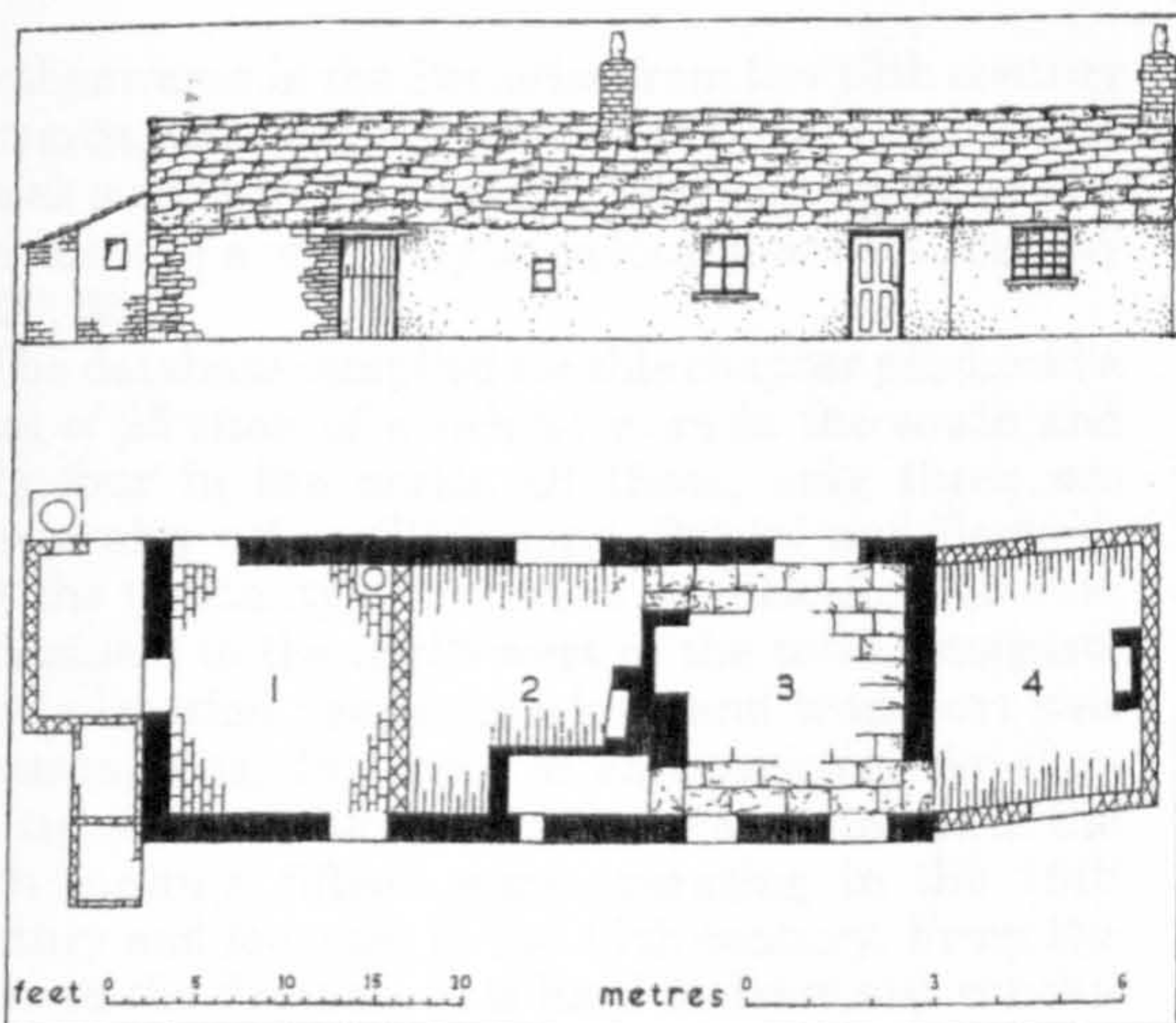


Figure 3.3 Potter's House at Rodger Lane, Potovens, Wakefield. (By permission of the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology)

pertained through the medieval period and indeed the distinctive placenames make their early appearances in documents of the 12th to the 14th centuries (Ekwall 1960, 372). Such centres of production are identified across Britain from central Scotland to Surrey and the south coast, where rural potteries are seen to supply local urban markets (Crossley 1990, 243–53). Crossley argues that increasing specialisation enabled more people to work as full-time potters, rather than using the industry as a supplement to an agricultural living and that at the end of the period covered here, the manufacture of finewares, based on imported prototypes of tin-glazed and stoneware pottery, moved to the towns, while coarseware production remained largely rural. This tendency was amplified in the 18th century when specialist mass-produced finewares began to emanate from the Staffordshire potteries.

If we have some sense, then, of the specialist rural potter, what of his working conditions? Again, the evidence is sparse, but work by Brears and Bartlett at Potovens in West Yorkshire has been particularly helpful, because not only the kilns but also the cottages of the potters have been recorded, and documentary research has revealed something of the social relations of production (Brears 1967; Bartlett 1971). Brears notes that unlike their medieval predecessors, the Potovens potters appear to have worked full-time, rather than engaging in agriculture as well, and supplied a wide area. Although the lord of the manor still controlled access to the raw material, clay, the organisation of the industry was based around small operations (a workshop and a cottage on a small parcel of land) with a master and his apprentice operating a full-time kiln. Brears suggests that the industry was at its height in the second half of the 17th century when there were over a dozen full-time potteries working (Brears 1967, 5–6). Remarkably, a

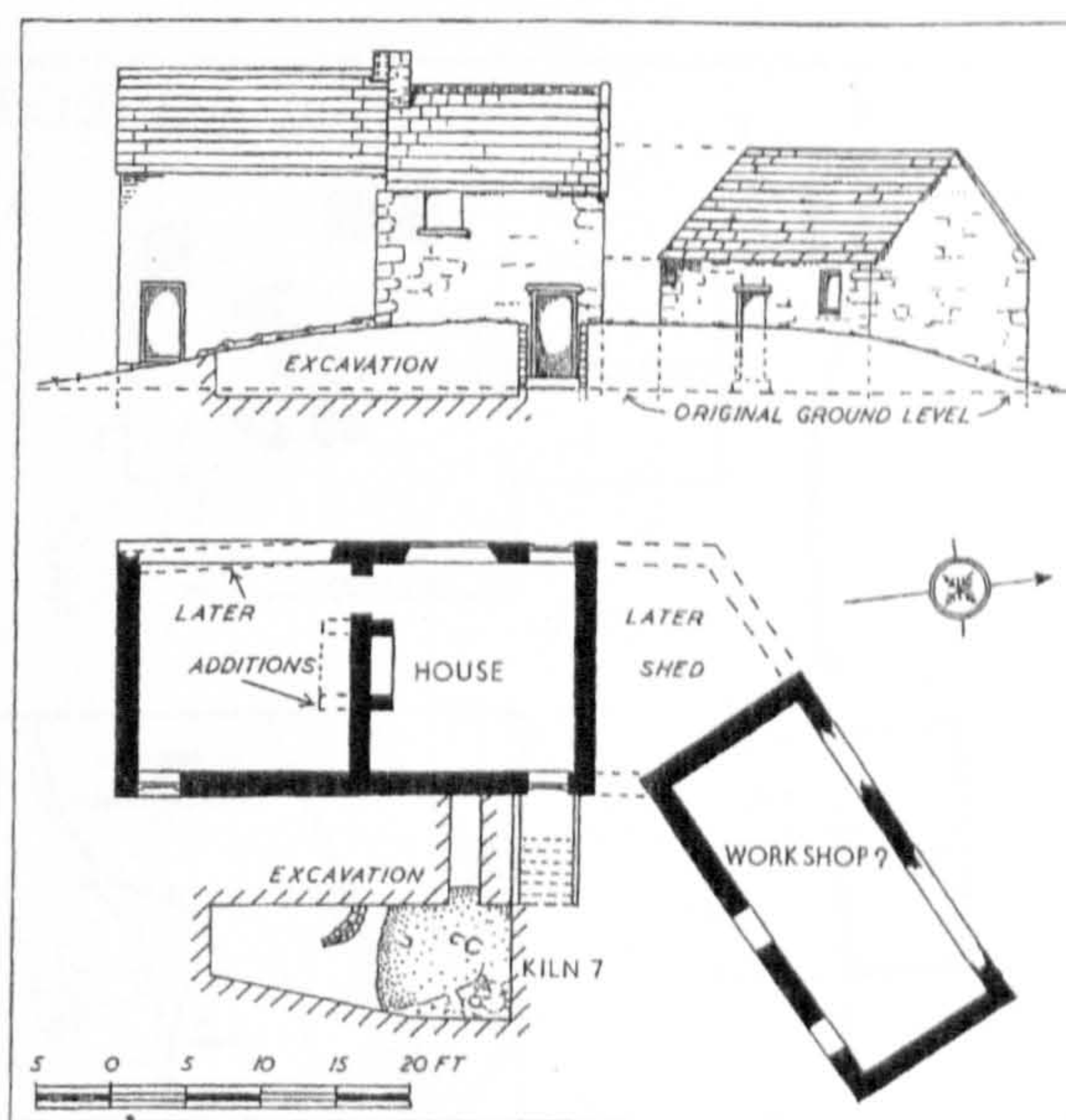


Figure 3.4 Robert Glover's house of 1679, Potovens, Wakefield. (By permission of the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology)

number of the cottages survived to be recorded by Brears, including one that was identified from an initialled datestone with a known potter, Joseph Willans. The surviving mid-17th-century cottages were typical of artisans' dwellings of the period and area, ranging from single-cell units to a three-cell in-line plan and end entry (Fig 3.3). What is interesting in the Rodger Lane example is the pair of external doorways at the southern end, giving access to a waste dump and a heated additional cell, but the absence of direct access to the kilns at the north end – one would have to walk around the gable end to reach these. By the later 17th century, Robert Glover was able to build himself a relatively large stone house with an upper storey, but here the access to the kiln is very direct, as it sits almost directly outside the front door (Fig 3.4). At other sites, settling tanks, sandpits and mixing floors have been identified, but a full articulation of the entire pottery site is so far lacking (Crossley 1990, 274). Nevertheless, a strong sense of household-scale full-time production is gained from the study of the surviving buildings, the excavated evidence for kilns and dumps and the documentary evidence.

Specialisation at particular sites implies that marketing involved travel and Caldwell and Dean (1992) suggest that by the early 17th century, at least, family members were acting as travelling salesmen as well as sales being made from static shops. Certainly, in the absence of a second source of income, it is likely that whole families would be involved in the production and marketing of the wares. Notwithstanding the mass production of



earthenwares in the Potteries from the 18th century onwards, Crossley suggests that these rural enterprises survived well into the 19th century to supply the needs of a relatively wide local market (Crossley 1990, 254).

The database compiled for this chapter produced a total of 25 sites, of which 21 were in the south and only four in the north. Of these, only three are conceivably urban (Richmond, Bristol and Boston), but the proximity of Potovens to Wakefield (2.4km (1.5 miles) to the north-west of the town) suggests that a location near to markets and transport was advantageous. In terms of chronological developments, seven of the sites were certainly in use in the 15th century, fifteen were operating in the 16th century and fourteen in the 17th century. From the sites on the database it is hard to draw any conclusions about changes regarding urban and rural locations over our time period. For the whole of our period of interest the industry as represented by our sample is overwhelmingly rural, but the few urban examples seem to have remained in operation over the whole of the period.

### Glass production

The frequency of vessel and window glass within medieval assemblages is testimony to its production but evidence is thin in the period up to the middle of the 16th century. Throughout the middle ages, glass sold in Britain mostly came from abroad, (France, Germany, Italy) and English glass producers occupied the lower end of the market both in terms of cost and quality. Crossley (1990, 226) notes three critical technological innovations in post-medieval glassmaking. The first, of crucial importance in terms of the social relations of production as well as the physical means, was the introduction of technological innovations by continental immigrants from 1567 onwards, who brought with them more efficient furnaces to make glass of better quality. We will return to the significance of this immigrant population below. At the beginning of the 17th century furnaces began to be fired with fossil fuels rather than wood and this too caused a major shift in the location of production. Finally, by the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century the complexity of furnaces increased, but this development lies outside the time period of this chapter.

The use of wood as the principal fuel for medieval furnaces required their location, like the bloomeries discussed above, in a rural setting. For instance at Knole in Kent a four-pot glasshouse has been calculated to have used about four acres of fifteen-year-old coppice wood a month (Charleston 1991, 244). Furnaces were probably fairly temporary structures of stone, clay and some brickwork and leave little archaeological trace. Only in the 16th century do they seem to have become more permanently built (Charleston 1991, 246). The importance of a good source of timber, along with a coincidence of suitable

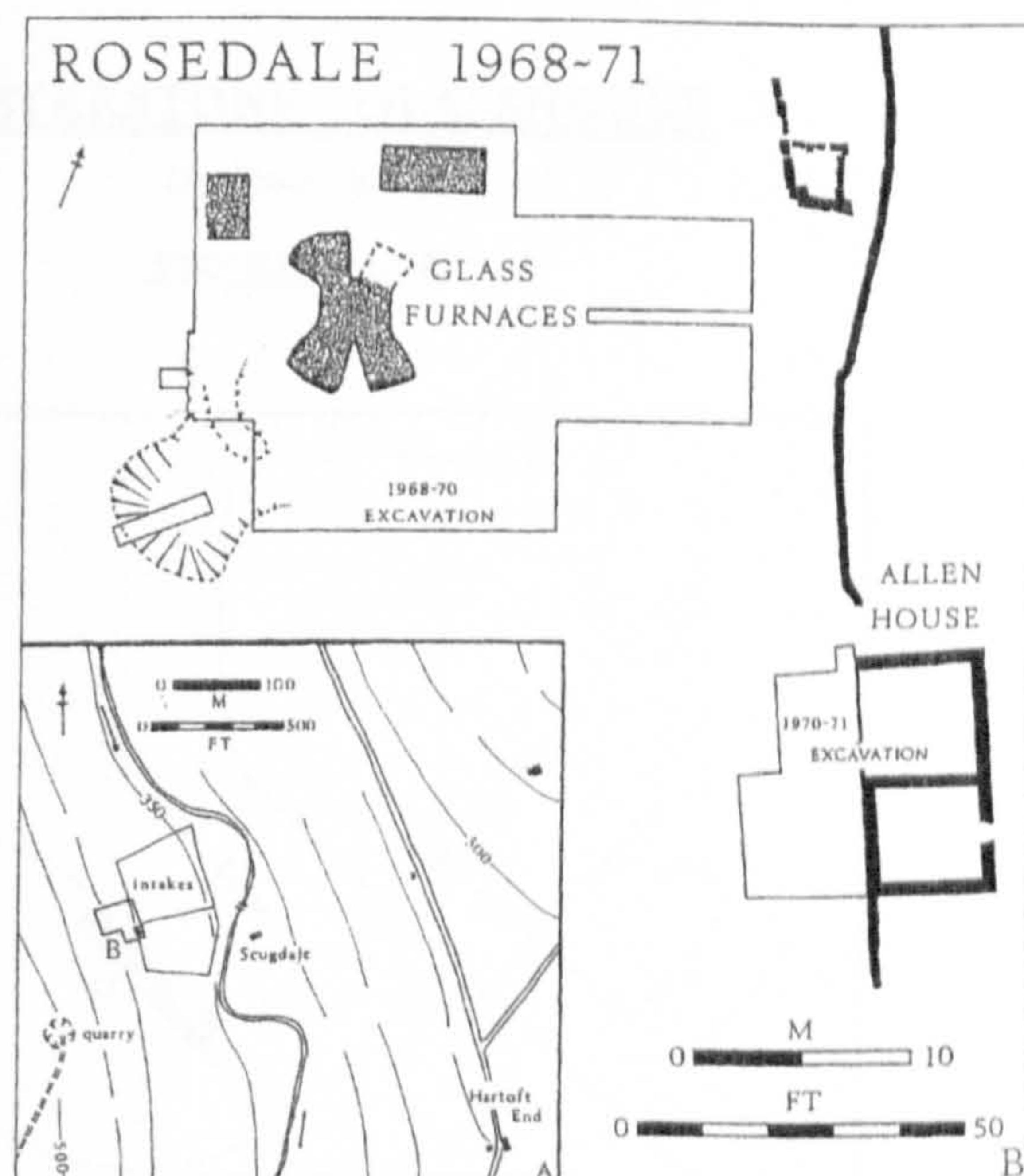


Figure 3.5 Allen House, Rosedale, Yorkshire. The inset (A) shows the relationship of the house to the intakes. The main illustration (B) shows the same area at a larger scale to illustrate the relationship of the house and the furnaces. (By permission of the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology)

sands, clays and building stone, is reflected in the rural locations of glass furnaces: the sites of Bagot's Park in Staffordshire and Hutton-le-Hole and Rosedale in Yorkshire which we will examine in more detail typify this.

At all of these sites the more elaborate and solidly built furnaces are associated with the immigration of French glassmakers after 1567 when John Carré won the patent to regulate the glass industry (Crossley 1990, 229). In his interesting discussion of the workforce at Bagot's Park near Abbots Bromley in Staffordshire, Crossley (1967, 44-7, 64-7) identifies the importance of family ties in the glassmaking industry and comments on the advent of the French in the documentary record of the later 16th century. For Rosedale and Hutton-le-Hole, the written evidence for immigrant workers is absent, but Crossley postulates a continental origin for the glassmakers, based on the form of the furnaces and interestingly speculates on a possible link between the name of the cottage adjacent to the Rosedale site (Allen House) and a corruption of the word 'Allemain', by which the French from the border province of Lorraine, who dominated the glass trade at this time, might have been known. It is a long shot, but an attractive theory if true.

Allen House (Fig 3.5) provides us with a rare glimpse of the possible domestic arrangements of the glassmakers. Here a two-roomed cottage is associ-

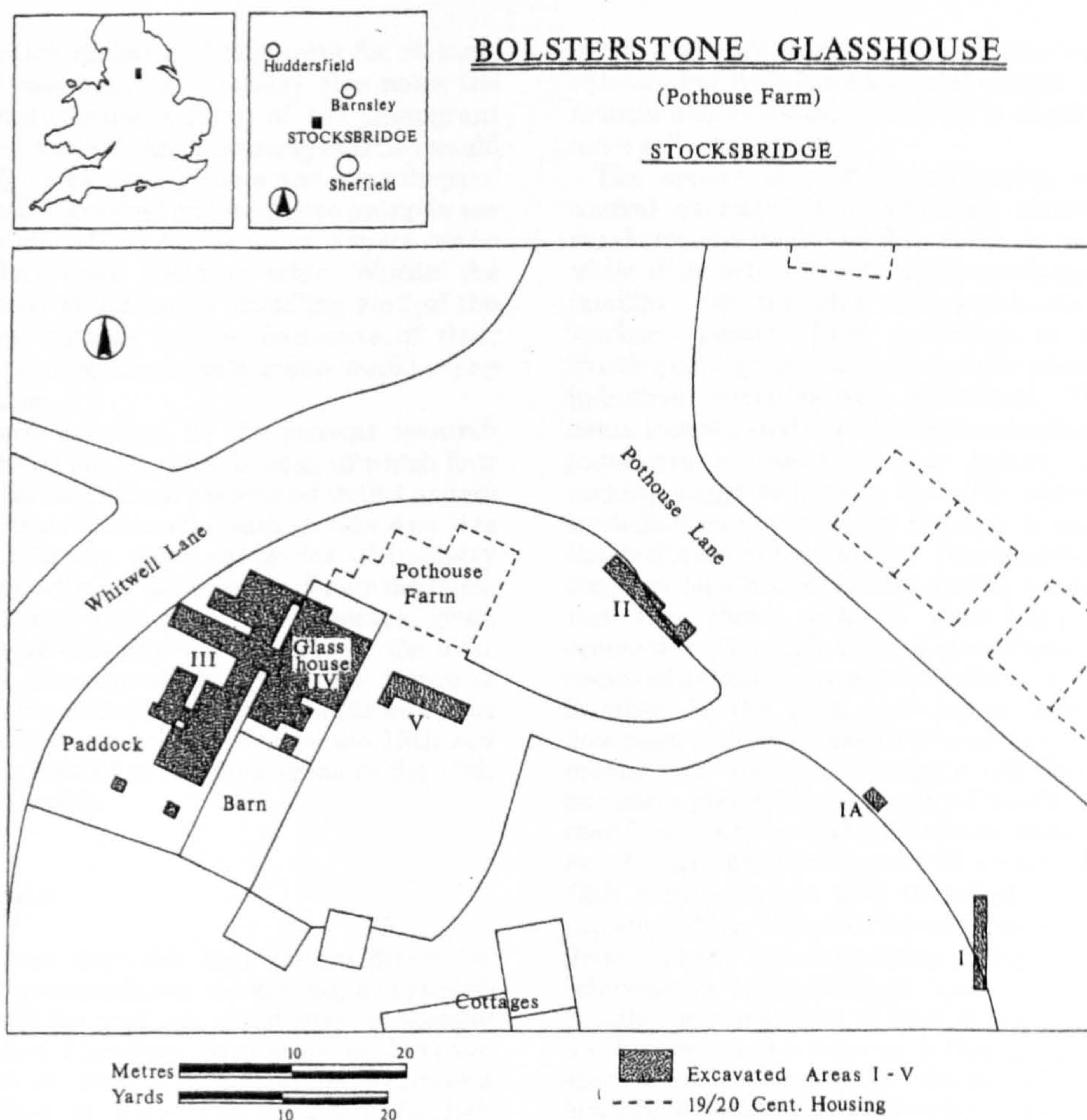


Figure 3.6 *Bolsterstone Glasshouse, Stocksbridge, Yorkshire. Location map and plan of excavated areas. (By permission of the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology)*

ated with two intake paddocks and the lower cell is a byre with a central drain running across its width. It is dated on the basis of pottery and clay pipe finds to the early 17th century. Crossley is very cautious about assigning the occupancy of the house to the glassmakers, but its proximity to the furnaces and the absence of other dwellings in the vicinity must surely make a strong argument. The arrangement of the house, with its relationship to the intakes and its byre indicate that farming formed at least part, if not all, of the income of the occupant and it seems reasonable to suggest that glass making was therefore a part-time occupation here in the early 17th century. Documentary evidence from Bagot's Park supports the contention that glass making was not, in the early 17th century, a single and continuous occupation.

The strength of family ties and the consequences of their sundering are explored by Dennis Ashurst in his consideration of the glassmakers of Bolsterstone to the north of Sheffield. This is a somewhat later

site, its principal phases dating from the mid-17th to the mid-18th century, after Sir Robert Mansell was granted a patent authorising the licensing of coal-fired furnaces (Crossley 1990, 233), a development which resulted in the abandonment of the wood-burning furnaces such as Rosedale. At Bolsterstone a local family, the Foxes, controlled the furnaces and their monopoly was so jealously guarded that a will was changed in the mid-18th century, effectively to cut out a sub-branch of the family that threatened competition (Ashurst 1987, 149-53). This particular incident occurred later than the time period under investigation here, yet this highly focused and protectionist 'family business' aspect of glassmaking seems to have pertained from the late 16th century. Indeed, the layout of the buildings at Bolsterstone, close to the furnaces (Fig 3.6), reinforces this sense of a domestic level of production, albeit one that, according to Crossley (1967, 65) engaged a team with a master 'but the number of other men varied, with at least one other skilled

founder, a batch maker and labourers for stoking, cartage and case-making'. Crossley also notes the 'notorious status-consciousness of the immigrant *gentilhommes verriers*'. An interesting exercise would be to identify more of the houses and workshops of this highly self-identified and exclusive group to see the extent to which their domestic use of space can be seen to reflect their business ethic. Within the broader context of Johnson's 'middling sort' of the 17th century, notable for the enclosure of their houses, the peculiarities of this group would repay closer attention.

The database compiled for the present research project identified eleven sites in total, of which four were urban (three of them associated with London) and seven rural. The north/south divide was less marked than in the other categories of industry explored here, with six southern and four northern sites, but this may reflect a bias in research, given the activities of Crossley and Ashurst in the later 20th century. Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the development of the industry, the 16th and 17th centuries are better represented than the 15th and the shift from wooded to coalfield areas in the 17th century is noticeable.

## Conclusions

Our survey has revealed that the evidence for medieval and post-medieval workshops, as opposed to industry and the products of industry, is sketchy in the published literature. Syntheses, such as the excellent work of Crossley, Schofield and Vince and the contributors to Blair and Ramsay's *English Medieval Industries*, have been able to shed some light on technologies and locations. Economic and social historians such as Dyer (2002), Kermode (1998), Goldberg (1992), Swanson (1999), Corfield (1990), Clark and Slack (1976) have discussed the social relations of production and Giles (2000) has situated those social relations within the material context of the guildhalls and parish churches. What we do not have is a detailed consideration of the social relations within the workplace. We have some indications of gender relations from documentary sources but their precise articulation remains obscure, as does the operation of the master/apprentice relationship within the workplace.

One major issue that is inadequately resolved is the relationship of the workshop to the domestic dwelling. Given the oft-repeated statement that medieval workshops were associated with a domestic mode of production, it is perhaps interesting to note that of the 164 sites included in our database, 86% did not provide enough information to be able to say definitively whether or not they were associated with a domestic dwelling. In 5% of cases it was clear that they were not. In this paper, we have highlighted some of the 9% of sites that clearly are associated with a domestic structure, simply because it is this area that we were trying to elucidate. A

more systematic interrogation of the unpublished records that lie behind the brief entries in *Medieval Britain* and *Post-Medieval Britain* might produce a more reliable sample.

The matter of craft specialisation was also a central question. It is commonly considered that rural artisans combined their trade with agriculture while their urban counterparts specialised. We are familiar with the idea that post-medieval textile workers operated from workshops at home on a 'putting-out' system and frequently combined their industrial activities with agriculture. Yet the evidence investigated here for the rural and semi-urban industries of metal-working, pottery and glass-making suggests that by the 17th century, a craft workshop was more likely than not to specialise, to the exclusion of agriculture. This tendency towards single-occupation economies may be connected to the fact that these seem to have been *household* economies. The high level of specialised knowledge required seems to have been handed down through families. In the glass industry in particular, the dominance of immigrant families in the 17th century meant that this was a highly self-identified and exclusive group: the strength of family ties can be seen in the history of the Bolsterstone site where the Fox family ran a business that persisted until the 18th century when new technology overtook the capacity of the kiln and it was adapted for pottery firing. There are tantalising glimpses of gender relations in the published material, but a more detailed investigation of both written sources and the houses on the sites of workshops may help to answer critical questions. Did all members of the household participate in the craft or was there some diversification, with junior members working outside the home in other occupations or bringing work in? How was work disposed physically within the house and its plot? How far was access to work areas controlled and restricted?

Finally, how did the changing economic conditions of the early modern world affect craft production and its material expression? The evidence collected for this chapter suggests that craftsmen were working in an increasingly entrepreneurial mode during the 16th and 17th centuries, creating the social, as well as economic, conditions for the acceleration into full industrialisation of the mid-18th and the 19th centuries. The rights of the landlord over the products of industry carried out on his land seem reduced to cash rents only and an increasingly capitalised industrial basis saw the rise of the specialist craftmaster engaged not only in production but in extensive marketing of his wares beyond the immediate vicinity. The extent to which the changes in the post-medieval economy set the preconditions for industrialisation is an area of study that would repay further attention from historical archaeologists, asking questions about the relations of production that are as searching as those they have already asked, and largely successfully answered, about the means of production.

**2005** (with Ian Ritchie) 'Archaeological deposits and value' in C Mathers, T Darvill and B J Little (eds) *Heritage of Value, Archaeology of Renown: reshaping archaeological assessment and significance*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 211-26.

## Archaeological deposits and value

Jane Grenville and Ian Ritchie

### Introduction

Heritage management is often reduced to day-to-day regulatory decisions regarding the fate of archaeological deposits. These decisions are usually made in response to development and resource extraction plans made by corporations or government agencies. The decision makers are generally government officials or local politicians, and their conclusions are usually made with the advice of professional archaeologists. In arguing for the relevance of surviving material remains of the past, archaeologists are often characterized as opposing the social, economic, and political benefits of development. In this paper, we address the issue of how archaeological and heritage matters may be seen more positively and as inherently valuable.

It can be difficult to argue this case with the initiators of economic projects, who often see archaeology as having little "real-world" (by which they generally mean economic) value. If it were universally the case that economic factors are always paramount, then archaeologists and their supporters among the lay public would appear to be doomed to argue repeatedly for the financial value of the archaeological resource as a visitor attraction and that of the historic built environment as an enhancement to quality of life, and thus a positive attraction to a workforce seeking congenial surroundings in which to live. In York, we are familiar with both of these aspects of the economic argument. The Coppergate rescue excavation of the late 1970s and early 1980s, for instance, was transformed into one of northern England's foremost tourist attractions with the opening of the Jorvik Viking Center in 1984, and in many ways acts within the tourist economy of York in a similar way to an "anchor" department store in a large retail park, while both public and private bodies trade shamelessly on the historic character of the city to attract less-transient populations (the Archaeology Department of the university is housed in one of the most beautiful medieval buildings in England, and we make much of that fact in our publicity materials for prospective

students). But the very fact that these enterprises are successful suggests that today's sophisticated consumer sees something "worth buying" in the past and its material manifestation in the present. And if they are prepared to buy it, they are anxious to consume it in other, less financially defined ways: they want to understand it, and its study and conservation are part of that process. Archaeologists should take heart and argue more boldly for the inherent *interest* of the archaeological resource.

This, at heart, is the argument presented by Martin Carver, Professor of Archaeology at the University of York, United Kingdom, who proposed in 1996 a way of thinking about archaeology that would provide archaeologists with strong, socially relevant arguments for the value of research in a broader economic and social arena. In this paper, by two of his colleagues, we review decisions taken in two very different situations, one in York and the other in a fairly remote and underpopulated area of Wyoming, and assess how far the Carver model was successful. One might expect that in York, where the past forms such a key component of the present, an opportunity for a major new archaeological discovery would be seized with both hands. On the other hand, in the mineral extraction industry of Wyoming, the potential for finding out more about past inhabitants of the area would scarcely raise a blip on the developers' Richter scale of significant areas for investment. The outcomes were in fact the reverse. In this paper, we revisit current methods employed for attributing value to archaeological deposits and materials and assess the implications of the two cases. We apologize in advance for any misrepresentation of Carver's views. The conclusions reached are our own.

## Background

Martin Carver has developed his views on evaluation over many years (Carver 1987, 1990, 1993). His paper "On archaeological value" (1996) arose partially out of discussions with postgraduate students taking the master's degree in Archaeological Heritage Management at York, a program then directed by Jane Grenville, and attended by Ian Ritchie as mid-career development. Grenville's approach to the topic arises partly out of a skepticism born of a three-year stint with the Council for British Archaeology in the late-1980s arguing the case for archaeology in a plethora of public inquiries on planning issues. A British public inquiry is akin to a court case. Each witness presents a formal case, is cross-examined by the opposition, often employing high-performance lawyers for the purpose, and is reexamined by his or her own lawyer or lay advocate. An independent inspector adjudicates and his/her decision is forwarded to the appropriate government minister for approval or rejection. Within the framework of material considerations set by successive governments in a series of Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), the provisions to protect the archaeological resource of PPG16 (*Archaeology and Planning*) and PPG15 (*Planning and the*

*Historic Environment*) are helpful, but they are explicitly set against economic imperatives, so strength of argument is paramount in winning a case. Unless it can prove a high economic potential in its own right, as in the case of the Jorvik Center, archaeology has to rely on other more subtle appeals to amenity value and the general good. Later, in teaching the Archaeological Heritage Management course, Grenville had the opportunity to reflect more generally on these issues (Grenville 1993, 1994, forthcoming); more recent thinking is expressed within this chapter. Ritchie bases his views on twelve years of work as a federal agency archaeologist, advising and acting as advocate for archaeology within the American legislative system, and on the year of reflection spent at York. We are grateful to Martin Carver for his comments and to David Brinklow of the York Archaeological Trust, who discussed the first case in some depth with Grenville, but stress that the opinions expressed here are ours and not necessarily shared by them.

This chapter is in three parts. First, we summarize Carver's paper and highlight major points we wish to return to. Then, we present two case studies, one where the model entirely failed to deliver and another where it appears to have been successfully applied. We will examine the reasons for these differing outcomes with the benefit of several years' hindsight. We end by trying to decide whether the model is robust enough to survive in the real world, or whether it should be quietly done away with. The chapter was written with the Atlantic between us and therefore communication was entirely via e-mail. The division of responsibility in authorship is that the original drafting of the first section was Ritchie's, with comments from Grenville, and the reverse was followed for the last section. Each of us wrote up our own case study.

### "On valuing archaeology"

And so to the main points of Carver's 1996 argument. Archaeology in Britain has been torn from the grasp of central government and placed in the arms of a market that acknowledges no value in the subject itself (unless the results are so spectacular as to underwrite an income-generating tourist attraction). This market sees archaeology and its evaluation as a hurdle in the path of economic development. Accepting as a *fait accompli* the fact that archaeology is no longer protected by the strong arm of the state, Carver has argued persuasively for the need to develop an arsenal of intellectual weaponry to defend the archaeological resource against the marauding appetites of land-hungry developers. He states that "the fate of archaeological sites is no longer the exclusive preserve of an inspector, but has come to depend on the outcome of a debate between several groups of players: developers, planners, community taxpayers, and academics. This debate is informed by the predictive value that each party can put on a piece of land. . . . The purpose of this paper is to propose a definition of archaeological value which can serve the debate on behalf of archaeologists" (Carver 1996: 45).

This definition eschews the traditional view of archaeological sites as “monuments,” as enshrined in British legislation, and instead takes the line that it is research value that provides the key to the debate. Carver notes that previous commentators (in particular see Lipe 1984; Darvill 1993) have identified some of the values attaching to archaeology, but have not defined how they compete with one another, let alone with market and community values. Market values are those of capital and production. Community values (the common good, the rights of minorities, political value) are measured in cost and votes. Archaeological value is defined as a global human value (along with environmental value), whose measure is not to be had in money or votes, but perhaps in a “feel-good” factor or sense of ontological security. Carver’s argument is that some of the values assigned by other commentators (monetary, touristic, and associative) ultimately derive from that informed interest in the past, which we might define as basic archaeological value. This human interest in the past, and its spin-offs, are what he perceives as lying at the core of archaeological activity.

In redefining the battlefield, Carver’s proposed strategy include the following points of attack:

- Archaeology has to be shown to have a payoff for society at large (however that may be defined), and this seems to be in terms of sufficient moral rewards and human benefits to allow the community to suspend, temporarily, its normal desire to maximize profit and allow archaeologists access to the land instead;
- It must have a large and supportive clientele to sustain this noncommercial value;
- It must be able to support its attribution of value convincingly outside and inside the profession;
- It must be anticipatory rather than reactive; and
- It must insist on the global, not national, character, of its definition.

Carver goes on to review arguments between empiricists and idealists about whether data have independent objective existence, or whether they are simply those observations which we choose to accept as relevant at the moment of observation. He plumps firmly for the latter: “the heritage is essentially man-made and membership of this illustrious and privileged archive depends entirely on contemporary knowledge and political will” (Carver 1996: 50). Furthermore, and at the heart of his argument, is the notion that “monumentality” defines what is known and that “research,” in contrast, favors the unknown. This is the nugget, the punch line. Carver notes “here then is a paradox: the point of archaeology is to know more; but the resource on which it depends is managed so as to favor what is already known” (1996: 52).

Following on from this, one of Carver’s central propositions is that “archaeological value is ascertained by matching the deposit model to the research agenda” (1996: 53–54), and that having established it, sites of high value should



be excavated and the rest conserved. Here the ideas run into direct conflict with prevailing practice: given that value has, up to now, been identified in the United Kingdom by using notions of monumentality, it is hardly surprising that decisions about excavation adhere to the reverse principle. PPG 16, *Archaeology and Planning*, recommends, in direct contradistinction to Carver's principle, that sites of national importance should be preserved and those of lesser importance excavated or released for destruction. It is critically important to remember here that Carver's approach demands the excavation of sites for which there is a clear research agenda (that is, those whose importance can be demonstrated in terms of their potential to yield *new and relevant knowledge*). PPG16 demands their preservation in situ. It is worth noting that the options, in this idealist view, are either to excavate or conserve; nowhere does either camp admit that a frequent outcome is the sacrifice of archaeological deposits unrecorded. This is an area we shall return to at the close of the paper.

So Carver proposes a brave new world in which archaeological decision making is on the basis of research interest, and exciting sites are excavated, not left to those shadowy "archaeologists of the future," who are going to have much better facilities and techniques than we have. New stories will be woven, new research directions suggested, and the whole profession will march forward with confidence and intellectual vigor. This is very different to the current realities of a PPG-led archaeology in the United Kingdom and a deregulated system in the United States, but could it happen? In this paper, we look at two case studies, one where the idea foundered and the other where it appears to have had some success.

### Case study 1: A possible Roman amphitheater and some medieval townhouses

York was founded as a Roman legionary fortress in A.D. 71 on a virgin site above a crossing of the navigable River Ouse. It thrived mightily and spawned a major civilian settlement or *colonia* on the southwest bank of the river in the second century. Roman masonry survives to some height in the southwest wall of the typically playing-card-shaped fortress, and much material from Roman times has been excavated since the early sondages of the nineteenth century (see fascicules in the *Archaeology of York* series published for York Archaeological Trust by the Council for British Archaeology for more detail) but the location of the legionary amphitheater, which would have been comparable to that at Chester, has never been ascertained. Little is known of the settlement in the fifth and sixth centuries, but by the seventh it was certainly an ecclesiastical center; for here, according to Bede, King Edwin of Northumbria was baptized. Excavations have revealed the continuing prosperity of the city from the eighth century onward, and York's post-Conquest importance as the second city of the kingdom, the seat of the archbishop of the northern province of the English church, and an economic power based on the textile industry and general trading, is observable in the riches of its medieval architecture. As the textile industry migrated in the early

modern period to the West Riding, York lost its economic preeminence, and its status sank to that of a typical English county town, although the presence of the great cathedral always marked it out as one of particular social gentility.

Left behind by its near neighbor, Leeds, during the Industrial Revolution, York made a modest industrial recovery in the later nineteenth century as a center for the manufacture of railway rolling stock and chocolate, but it could never be described as one of the great industrial centers of the north. Its poverty was documented in minute detail by Seebohm Rowntree (a scion of one of the great York chocolate dynasties) in his 1901 pioneering classic of social studies *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*. York in the 1950s and 1960s had a decidedly down-at-heel air, as Grenville can remember from childhood visits, and as Kate Atkinson brilliantly documents in her novel *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* (1995). Atkinson's title is significant; by the 1960s, York was beginning actively to trade on the fact that its glorious past and swift decline had left a legacy of historic buildings that were never cleared in subsequent periods of prosperity. Additionally, its riverine location preserved an archaeological resource of remarkable intactness, with organic materials surviving exceptionally well in anaerobic conditions; the Jorvik Center cleverly interprets and displays information from a particularly rich ninth- and tenth-century site.

The redefinition of York as a prime tourist destination is now complete. Once again, as in the late medieval period, it is second only to London, in one respect at least. Direct revenues to historic buildings and sites, but perhaps more critically the secondary spending of tourists on accommodation, food, and souvenirs now form a major aspect of the city's economy. Its historicity is used as a magnet for potential employers and their workforces, and white collar businesses such as insurance, call centers, and indeed the university itself are now major employers, with only chocolate manufacture surviving as large-scale industry (York is the home of the international bestseller, the Kit Kat; although curiously enough, Yorkies, made by the same firm, are manufactured in Norwich!).

So in a city that depends on the beauty and interest of its historic features for a significant fraction of its annual income, how does Carver's model fare? In the center of town, there is a little side street called St. Andrewgate. Its line lies directly outside the wall of the Roman fortress. To the southeast, a site lay vacant from 1984 until the late 1990s. Recently, it has been built on with a series of bijou townhouses of the type we have become wearisomely familiar with since York's economic renaissance began in the 1970s. But these have a singular feature; their ground floors are all two to three feet above the road, and there are steps up to the front doors. This is not a flood precaution, for we are well above the highest of flood levels here. Rather, it is a precaution against the expense of an archaeological excavation, for this has been suggested as a likely site for the undiscovered Roman amphitheater (Ottaway 1993). Archaeological evaluation by the York Archaeological Trust had shown well-preserved medieval structures along the

street frontage and boreholes suggested a large, saucer-shaped limestone structure, at several meters depth, to the southeast of the site. Applying Carver's model, the clever and intellectually bold response would have been to undertake a research project to excavate selected parts of the site over a two-year period, with a funding package from various public and private sources, including the developer. The research benefits for the Roman period were clear. Identification of the site of the amphitheater would be a coup in itself, but its careful excavation to understand its use and the process of decay could have revealed much that we do not understand about Roman York and the period after the legions left. Furthermore, the potential for careful excavation of medieval house plots would have provided an opportunity to marry some of the evidence gleaned from the standing buildings investigated by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (1981) and latterly by Grenville and her students (Grenville 2000). Not surprisingly, a consortium of the York Archaeological Trust and the York University Archaeology Department put together a proposal for a carefully targeted research strategy to sample parts of the site. Public access to the excavation and a clear information strategy were major components of the scheme: this was to be archaeology in the public interest (in both the intellectual and commercial sense of that word).

Here was the site par excellence on which to test our commitment to archaeology. There is nothing to grab the public's archaeological imagination like an active and well-interpreted excavation, as the reaction to the Coppergate dig twenty years previously had shown, when thousands of visitors queued for a chance to view the work in progress. Negotiations began. The developers were reasonably agreeable to the prospect of a major research excavation. They were prepared to provide some funding (mainly in kind, in the form of mechanical diggers and the provision of a viewing platform). Other funding sources were approached. The city archaeologist, an officer of local government charged with negotiating archaeological mitigation under PPG16 and advising the elected members of the city planning committee, was enthusiastic, and the politicians themselves were amenable to the idea. All looked set fair. So what went wrong? It would be inappropriate to enter into the details of the negotiations between the developers and the council in a paper such as this, but broadly speaking, in a disagreement over the fundamental planning issue of density of housing, the developer threatened to withdraw support from the archaeological project. To the city councilors, this was a very minor matter and they immediately acceded. The archaeology was simply not important enough to either side to be worth fighting over and was tossed out of contention without a second thought. The debate over density raged on unabated. No amount of lobbying on the part of the archaeologists could make any difference to this: without the economic and political support of either developer or council, this was a lost cause. To return to Carver's military analogy, the archaeology simply became "collateral damage,"

and nobody except the archaeological consortium cared much. Instead of the great plans for a research excavation, a narrow trench was dug along the route of a new service road, with predictably incoherent results, and the ground was raised up by three feet on the advice of the developers' independent archaeological consultant, in order to avoid damaging the deposits. This was a perfectly reasonable solution within the letter of PPG16, which enjoins the preservation of nationally important sites, but one which sacrificed the research value for at least another century and probably more.

If we apply Carver's three sets of value and test his model, it seems that market forces were strong, community value was interpreted only in terms of the planning issues of site density, and archaeological value, however huge it seemed to us as professionals, was quite simply too puny to have any serious impact at all. How could it have been different? We will return to this issue in the final section, having considered a case with a more favorable outcome.

### Case study 2: Stone circles and coal mining

We now turn from York to the wide, open spaces of the American West, to see how archaeological deposits there are faring. Wyoming is big, has a relatively small population, and is heavily reliant on mineral extraction for its economic survival. Much of the land is held by the central (federal) government. The Powder River Coal Company (PRC) holds leases on federal coal under federal land managed as the Thunder Basin National Grassland, by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service. Coal mining is conducted on both land belonging to the state of Wyoming and privately owned lands in Campbell County. In order to operate in the most cost-effective way, PRC has been focusing on recovering low-overburden coal along Porcupine Creek, where numerous prehistoric sites on the first and second river terraces will be affected. The large number, high density, and specific composition of the sites highlight the importance of the prehistoric and historic native peoples as well as homesteaders and ranchers of the semiarid Powder River basin. The mediation of the interests of coal mining versus those of the archaeological deposits in large part must follow the processes outlined in two key pieces of federal legislation: the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA).

Under various regulatory authorities of the Office of Surface Mining (OSM), the USDA Forest Service, and the Department of Environmental Quality of the State of Wyoming, PRC hired an archaeological contracting firm to complete any outstanding survey and to conduct evaluations of the sites in affected areas along Porcupine Creek. The evaluations included testing to determine the extent, depth, and age of deposits with a goal of determining their eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Sixteen sites were evaluated and of those, six were added to the register. These included lithic scatters, stone circles, hearth

features, and buried cultural horizons, as well as two historic-period sites. The ten ineligible sites (those with no research potential owing to the state of their deposits) will no longer be managed. Their data are assumed to be fully recovered, and coal extraction will destroy their physical remains.

Data recovery plans have been developed for the eligible sites, and three of these have been implemented. There are two key areas of investigation: first, the known stratified deposits on the banks of Porcupine Creek, and second, the broad area exposure created with road graders to uncover activity areas and features associated with the stone circles. The aim is to decipher the spatial organization of Plains people over time (and across different contemporaneous cultures). The research questions being addressed include spatial analysis of hearths and family and community activity at loci of late prehistoric stone circle (teepee ring) sites. This spatial analysis is a major step forward in research in the Powder River basin, after at least ten years on a research/knowledge plateau, which had established chronologies, seasonality, and resourcing strategies fairly well but had not tackled social organization.

So here is a case where the local curators have set up a research program and persuaded the developers to implement it. Carver's model has delivered precisely the outcome that its creator intended. Superficially, it seems strange that in York, an archaeological "honey-pot" that trades on its illustrious past and the fascination of its rediscovery (and has a density of archaeologists per thousand of population higher than most places!), the model failed, while in the remote American West, where one might expect the power of a strong economic lobby to triumph, it was possible to align the public interest, the archaeological significance, and the developers' goodwill to produce a positive result. How can we analyze these two outcomes to evaluate the efficacy of Carver's model?

### Conclusion and implications of the Carverian model

It is often said that it is easier to explain what went wrong when a project fails than to analyze the elements of a successful outcome. In this case, however, we will be taking the opposite view; it is reasonably easy to account for the success of the Wyoming project, and once that is identified, the shortcomings of the York scheme may be better understood. From this analysis, we hope to draw some caveats to attach to Carver's model and a prediction of situations in which it is likely or unlikely to produce results. In Wyoming, two external factors underpinned the negotiations: first, public opinion, and second, the law.

#### Public opinion

Wyoming is a mainly rural state, and mineral extraction is one of the main engines of its economy. Several sites have recently been "accidentally" destroyed or damaged by expansion at the mines. The state newspaper picked up on the fact

that the fines imposed had been lower than the cost of the archaeological evaluation and investigation would have been and made the obvious observation that it is cheaper to destroy archaeology than to preserve/investigate it. So what incentive is there to mining companies to look after the past? This provoked outrage among the good citizens of Wyoming, and so great was the reaction that in order to recover their public relations losses, the PRC and other companies have initiated a more responsible program of archaeological investigation.

Is it then the case that in Wyoming, the argument turned on public opinion? The community embraced the archaeological argument and made sufficient impact in a newspaper campaign to persuade the developers that cooperation with the archaeologists was the easier option. In York, there simply was no public opinion. The negotiations over the St. Andrewgate development never hit the local press. The fact that it did not is perhaps surprising. The local newspaper, the York Evening Press, is widely read and well respected. It frequently takes up populist causes. Local television and radio stations are also effective and reach a wide audience. Archaeology has certainly played a prominent role in the media in the past: in 1989 a controversy over the excavation in advance of the development of a site known as the Queen's Hotel hit the headlines. Archaeologists had worked through very productive, waterlogged medieval deposits to reach the upper levels of a major Roman building when the time allowed for research by the regulations then in force was up. Massive public pressure ensued, with the story leading the front page and reaching the regional and finally the national television news bulletins. Although the site was never fully investigated, some reprieve was won, and the case was instrumental in the major changes to the administration of rescue archaeology ushered in with the new PPG16 advice in 1990.

Will most community values and archaeological values, as separately defined by Carver, in fact, be congruent in practical terms if the model is to succeed? Public opinion matters to politicians. Local politicians decide planning issues, and developers face an uphill struggle if they seek to implement deeply unpopular schemes. In many cases, the politicians and their paid officers will simply reject those projects that arouse public indignation. But there are cases where a significant sector of the local population is opposed to a scheme backed by the local politicians on the grounds of economic or political expediency. An interesting case of this was that of the excavations in advance of the construction of new city council offices in Dublin in the 1970s. Direct action seemed the only course available, so objectors to the project took to the streets in large numbers to protest the early cessation of research to enable construction to begin. Indeed, in York itself, a current controversy surrounds proposals for a major development at the foot of Clifford's Tower, the keep of the medieval royal castle and a major tourist attraction in the city. Here again, it has been direct public action in the form of a sustained press campaign, protest meetings, and even a street demon-

stration that has led to the holding of a public inquiry, whose outcome is not known at the time of writing, to decide the fate of the development.

There are, of course, dangers in following this line of argument to its logical conclusion. We should be aware of the risks involved in allowing broad public opinion to dictate what should and what should not be excavated. Archaeologists will have to become extremely canny and effective communicators, and, perhaps, formal training in public relations will become part of the undergraduate syllabus sooner or later. This is a lesson that should be well taken from the green lobby; yet archaeologists need to find very strong arguments to equal those of the environmentalists that the planet itself is in danger if their concerns are not heard and acted upon. Archaeologists can never claim that the world will end if we do not pay attention to archaeology, nor is it a safe argument to follow the oft-mooted suggestion that we must understand the past in order to avoid repeating mistakes. But the formulation of really strong justifications for archaeological research must be high on the agenda of heritage managers if Carver's model is to work.

This line of argument assumes that, logically, the case for archaeological research is always a just one, and that all archaeologists have to do is cleverly explain their case and all will fall into place. Yet this is manifestly not the case in situations where different agendas, for instance, the rights of indigenous populations or minority groups, are paramount. In the United States, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) demonstrates this argument very well. Here, the archaeological imperative has certainly not been seen as inalienably justified, and archaeologists as a broad interest group have lost out, whatever the positions of individuals within the various lobby groups (Thomas 2000). In York itself, the excavation of the putative Jewish medieval cemetery in 1983 was brought to a rapid halt by the legal action of some members of the modern Jewish community (Addyman 1994). Archaeologists have to understand that they form an interest group, and they must argue their case without the assumption that they have a divine right to win (Smith 1993). Carver's model seems to us to imply that assumption, and we would caution that, as human rights legislation begins to bite across the world, its legal implications will be tested most rigorously.

Finally, in considering the importance of community values in shaping the future of archaeological research, we would note that not every site is a Roman amphitheater and that unmediated public opinion alone would tend to favor such high-profile projects at the expense of less immediately engaging undertakings. However, the reverse is also the case: Ritchie strongly believes that a major reason for the success of the Wyoming case was the preparedness of the curatorial archaeologists to sacrifice some sites of lesser importance, given their state of preservation. Does such a willingness increase the confidence the developers need to feel, that they are not being led down a primrose path to major, but ultimately

unproductive, expenditure on research? The balance between public opinion, archaeological research, and economic imperative will require a mechanism for ensuring that compromises are reasonable.

### Legal apparatus

Our aim here is not to consider in detail the legislation and planning guidance concerned in the two cases, but rather to point out, briefly, the centrality of regulatory systems in the outcomes we have described and to consider the position of the legal apparatus within Carver's model.

All the Wyoming work took place under federal laws on a privately financed project oriented to recovering coal leased from the federal government. If such a project were to be done on private land, recovering private resources without federal permits, then only state laws protecting archaeology would apply, and these are weaker. Protection and research would be much less likely. The federal system has proved relatively successful in using Carver's model for developing interesting research agendas and excavating sites of high research potential, but the case highlights the importance of legal muscle in achieving a result acceptable to the archaeologists. We argue that in a completely unregulated situation, archaeology is weak, relying entirely on the force of its arguments for the importance of the resource to win over public support and with it the acquiescence of the developer.

In the United Kingdom, as Carver notes in his original paper, the wording of the legislation privileges monumentality and the known over the unknown. Protection is offered to sites identified as being of national importance and scheduled as ancient monuments through the mechanism of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC), which is administered on behalf of the government by English Heritage. Until 1990, unscheduled sites had little formal apparatus for their consideration, and archaeology tended to depend upon ad hoc decisions by local planners and by English Heritage, or on the goodwill of developers for the opportunity to investigate. Matters were formalized with the issue of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning, which advised local authorities that archaeological significance and potential should form a material consideration in the determination of planning consent. In other words, archaeology became a part of the planning system. As mentioned above, there are two matters to note here. First, the advice of PPG16 is strong, but does not carry the force of law. Second, in contradistinction to Carver's suggestion that the best, in terms of research questions and deposit survival, should be excavated and the rest sacrificed or preserved in situ, PPG16 recommends "where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favor of their physical preservation. Cases involving archaeological remains of lesser importance will not always be so clear cut" (PPG16, paragraph 8).



In the United Kingdom, then, research is in a relatively weak position, at least as far as rescue or planning-led archaeology is concerned. There are understandable reasons for the tenor of PPG16: the 1970s and 1980s had seen a spate of large-scale urban excavation, negotiated in advance of redevelopment, and although much was learned, publication and popularization lagged behind, and developers felt that the situation was unpredictable for them in terms of cost. PPG16 has offered a breathing space to archaeology to tackle its publications backlog and has made the excavation team a more familiar and understandable sight to the construction team and their bosses. But there are real anxieties, notwithstanding work being carried out to synthesize the disparate results of evaluation exercises, that research has fallen behind and that the true *raison d'être* of the discipline, to learn more about the past, is being lost in a welter of bureaucracy (Morris 1993, 1998; see Darvill and Russell 2002 for a more upbeat assessment).

Nevertheless, history, and not least the history of our two case studies, shows that without regulation, we are fighting a very tough battle. In order to get the balance of that regulation right, effective lobbying at the highest levels must be undertaken. We would argue that this requires taking research value and community value to the heart of government to produce a regulatory framework that will back up in general terms the particular arguments that are made, site by site, in the planning process. Carver's model assumes that his various value sets are equal in power in any given situation. They are not. The model will work only if research value wins over community sympathy to the extent that politicians are prepared to introduce legislative apparatus that will provide an additional weapon in the marketplace debate.

## Conclusions

So what have we learned? First, that community values and archaeological value, as defined by Carver, must be congruent, both generally and in individual cases, in order for the model to work. That implies the need for a clear and acceptable research agenda that the public understands and signs up to. Popularization, while viewed with some anxiety within the profession, becomes an essential tool of the trade, as the complete failure to engage public attention in the St. Andrewgate case and the centrality of the newspaper coverage in the Wyoming instance, demonstrate.

Second, we must accept that legal provisions, notwithstanding their current basis in the rhetoric of monumentality rather than research, are critical to the success of the endeavor. If we wish successfully to challenge that rhetoric in the redrafting of laws and advice (and the PPGs are currently under review in the United Kingdom, so this is an apposite moment to comment), we must engage with the political process at the national as well as local level.

Finally, even if we accept the broad precepts of the Carver model, there remain

further challenges. What do we do when community values are clearly at odds with archaeological value? Do we justify, for example, the excavation of human remains to which vocal sectors of society raise loud objections, or do we back off and accept that our research agendas will be mediated by public opinion? One answer to this may be to become more engaged in the rough and tumble of open debate and to abandon the somewhat aloof "professional" stance that has served us in the past. Archaeologists, too, are members of the public and could benefit from arguing out their case from an experiential rather than an academic standpoint.

Another significant challenge is that, if we sacrifice parts of the landscape to development, how do we protect unknown sites or those "nonsites" which do not conform to our current theories and knowledge base, but which may, one day, be perceived as valuable. Do we even try? Archaeologists have to learn that taking risks and gambling on our present state of knowledge is an activity that is well understood by our partners/opponents in the business world. In learning to be bolder in this respect, we will be moving closer to the thought processes of the developers with whom we work, and we may well, therefore, find communications becoming easier. Ritchie found that the ability to "speak their language" in terms of making major decisions to write off sites stood the Wyoming archaeologists in good stead for developing a clear research-led strategy with developers. Conversely, we must dare to argue for excavation, even where preservation in situ is ostensibly a preferred option, if the research gains are so great as to outweigh the future value of the deposits. To illustrate this, when we read the original version of this paper in Bournemouth at the Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) conference of 1997 and Seattle at the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) conference in 1998, we were berated for our irresponsible attitudes toward archaeology in a climate of restraint and conservation. We counter this by asserting that we did not at any stage propose the *total* excavation of the St. Andrewgate site, but rather a carefully targeted sampling strategy based on exhaustive preexcavation evaluation, and by arguing that this is in fact the only *responsible* response to such an opportunity. If archaeology is to engage public interest, it must not let slip major opportunities for research and hence new stories to tell to an avid audience. Intellectual stagnation does not excite the general public. If the high profile cases are lost, what hope for the lesser?

Carver's model is full of assumptions about the inherent value of archaeology to the community. We argue that this link is not implicit, but needs actively and repeatedly to be demonstrated through tough negotiation over individual sites and general legal and planning principles. Carver's model seems to us to be designed for an ideal world, where archaeologists are local heroes and Joe Public is more motivated by interesting ideas than by the need to earn a living and the wish to earn a fortune. We hope that, through our case studies and comments, we have refashioned the model for a tougher future.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Martin Carver, from the Department of Archaeology, University of York, U.K., and David Brinklow, from the York Archaeological Trust, to whom we are both indebted.

## Bibliography

- Addyman, P. V. 1994. Circumstances of excavation and research. In J. M. Lillie, G. Stroud, D. Brothwell, and M. H. Williamson, eds., *The Jewish burial ground at Jewbury Archaeology of York Fascicle 12/3*. York: CBA. 298–300.
- Atkinson, K. 1995. *Behind the scenes at the museum*. London: Doubleday.
- Carver, M. O. H. 1987. *Underneath English towns: interpreting urban archaeology*. London: Batsford.
- . 1990. Digging for data: archaeological approaches to data definition, acquisition and analysis. In R. Francovich, and D. Manacorda, eds., *Lo scavo archeologico*. Firenze: Edizioni all'Insegna del Giglio. 45–120.
- . 1993. *Arguments in stone: Archaeological research and the European town in the first millennium*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- . 1996. On archaeological value. *Antiquity* 70:45–56.
- Darvill, T. 1993. *Valuing Britain's archaeological resource*. Poole: Bournemouth University.
- Darvill, T., and Russell, B. 2002. *Archaeology after PPG16: Archaeological investigations in England 1990–1999*. Poole: Bournemouth University.
- Grenville, J. C. 1993. Curation overview. In J. Hunter, and I. Ralston, eds., *Archaeological resource management in the U.K.* Stroud: Sutton. 125–33.
- . 1994. Research strategies and priorities: An afterthought—the Chester Rows. In J. Wood, ed., *Buildings archaeology: applications in practice*. Oxbow monograph 43. Oxford: Oxbow Books in association with the Institute of Field Archaeologists, Buildings Special Interest Group. 97–107.
- . 2000. Houses and households in late medieval England: an archaeological perspective. In J. Wogan-Browne, R. Voaden, A. Diamond, A. Hutchison, C. Meale, and L. Johnson, eds., *Medieval women: Texts and contexts in late medieval Britain. Essays for Felicity Riddy*. Turnhout: Brepols. 308–28.
- . Forthcoming. The Curator's egg. In J. Hunter, and I. Ralston, eds., *Archaeological resource management in the U.K.* 2nd ed. Stroud: Sutton.
- Lipe, W. 1984. Value and meaning in cultural resources. In H. Cleere, ed., *Approaches to the archaeological heritage: A comparative study of world cultural resource management systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1–11.
- Morris, R. K. 1993. Archaeology: A casualty of the market. *British Archaeological News* (NS) 8:1–2, 12.
- . 1998. Collapse of public-interest archaeology. *British Archaeological News* (NS) 31:15.
- Ottaway, P. 1993. York's Roman amphitheatre. *Interim* 18(3):15–21.
- Rowntree, S. 1901. *Poverty: A study of town life*. London: Macmillan.

- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (RCHME). 1981. *The city of York V: The central area*. London, HMSO.
- Smith, L. 1993. Heritage as postprocessual archaeology? *Antiquity* 68:300–309.
- Thomas, D. H. 2000. *Skull wars: Kennewick Man, archaeology and the battle for native American Identity*. New York, Basic Books.

**Due 2005**

**'The curator's egg: a new overview' in J Hunter  
and I Ralston (eds) *Archaeological Resource  
Management in the UK*, fully revised edition.  
Stroud: Sutton.**

## CHAPTER 12

# THE CURATOR'S EGG: A NEW OVERVIEW

*Jane Grenville*

This chapter offers a critical commentary on some of the issues raised in this part of the book, and in taking account of changes over the last ten years, considers some longer-term implications for the historic environment sector, both professional and academic. It concentrates, perforce, given its writer's professional experience, on the situation in England, but it is hoped that it will have resonances for the UK as a whole, where equal difficulties pertain in persuading devolved government to move heritage further up the agenda of cultural strategies. As the title of the chapter implies, some, but not all, of this change has been for the better. At the time of writing (the winter of 2003-4) we stand on the precipice of the most fundamental revision of heritage legislation and policy for half a century, providing a fine opportunity for reflection on policy formation in the past. Two major documents crystallize much of the thinking behind the proposed changes, although, as this chapter will show, they themselves are the result of a decade of radical re-thinking; they are *Power of Place* (English Heritage 2000), and *The Historic Environment: a Force for our Future* (DCMS 2001). The first was a review of policies relating to the historic environment commissioned by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport from the heritage sector, led by English Heritage but to reflect the thinking of the wider constituency. Its steering group comprised representatives of 'the usual suspects' such as the National Trust, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Council for British Archaeology, but also some members whose inclusion would have seemed less obvious ten years ago: the English Tourism Council, the British Property Federation, the Country Landowners Association, the Black Environment Network and the representatives of other environmental interests such as the Countryside Agency, English Nature and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (a new 'design watchdog' which replaced the Royal Fine Arts Commission in 1999). More than a hundred others, representing both a broader range and a more specialist working knowledge, contributed to the deliberations of five working parties detailed to look at definitions and research, legislation, tourism, access and sustainability. A consultation launched on the Internet received more than 600 responses and MORI was commissioned to undertake an opinion poll on the perception of the historic environment amongst the general public. The resulting document, *Power of Place*, certainly aroused strong reactions, many of disappointment at the time, although with the passage of years it seems to be largely accepted as having had a benign influence in persuading the government to consider the significance of the historic environment in planning for the future. The government's reply, *Force for our Future*, a joint response from DCMS and the (then) Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, seemed to recognise that significance to a degree, although its emphasis on access (both physical and intellectual) and on education before protection and curation has aroused negative comment. This came not least from the All-Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group (APPAG), which convened in July 2001 and issued its first report, *The Current State of Archaeology in the United Kingdom* in January 2003, and whose very existence signals a welcome heightening of consciousness in Westminster.

That raising of awareness is reflected in the plethora of proposed changes in the pipeline that makes the writing of an overview chapter so difficult at this particular moment. The current system involves two-track legislation with different agencies handling different aspects of the historic environment: intervention on a Scheduled Ancient Monument requires Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) and this is determined by the national bodies (English Heritage, Historic Scotland, Cadw and DoENI) under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (AMAA Act: see Chapter 5). Intervention in a listed building, whether for purposes of repair or alteration, requires Listed Building Consent (LBC), and demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area requires Conservation Area Consent. Both are granted by local planning authorities

under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. All this is likely to change with the Planning and Compensation Bill which is making its way through the Parliamentary process and the overhaul of heritage legislation which is proposed in the next three years; together these measures will introduce the biggest shake-up since the 1944 and 1947 Town and Country Planning Acts. Already, the two systems seem to be converging, to date in the nature of policy and advice. It would be fruitless to speculate here on the precise provisions of the new heritage act but it certainly is worth noting that in the vanguard of the revision of heritage legislation come two major reviews under the auspices of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport: the designation of heritage assets, whether scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings or conservation areas; and the functions and status of Sites and Monuments Records, or, as they are now becoming known, Historic Environment Records (HERs). A much-trailed revision of Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) notes 16 (*Archaeology and Planning*) and 15 (*Planning and the Historic Environment*) to create a single Planning Policy Statement (PPS) has been halted midflow, after it was realised that the implications of changing the designation system are so great that they would necessitate a further revision of planning advice – twice in two years was not deemed a good use of civil servants' time. In any case, it is likely that the outcome of the Designation Review will require primary legislation, so the whole process is locked in a circle, whether vicious or virtuous remains to be seen.

No less important, and certainly closely related, are the more focussed reviews: reconsiderations of ecclesiastical exemption and of maritime archaeology that took place in 2004. A review of agri-environmental schemes is underway and the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations are being revised. Portable antiquities have not escaped attention: the Treasure Act of 1996 has been extended to include deposits of prehistoric base-metal objects, the UK has finally signed up to the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Illicit Export of Antiquities and a private member's bill makes a new offence of 'dishonestly importing, dealing in or being in possession of an cultural asset illegally excavated or removed from any monument or wreck contrary to local law' (see Chapter 6). The functions and status of the National Monuments Record were reviewed in 2004. Indeed, it seems that scarcely any aspect of heritage provision is not up for grabs: at an organisational level, English Heritage itself is halfway through a process of 'modernising'. A major organisational change in England since the first edition of this book has been the merging of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England into English Heritage in 1999 and the regionalisation of the enlarged organisation to nine offices. The series of questions asked in the first edition of this chapter could be thoroughly overhauled to reflect this state of flux, but it seems most fruitful to leave them in place, if slightly re-worded, at least for this edition, to act as a benchmark in a rapidly changing situation: these are the headings of the following sections. I have omitted the question posed in the earlier edition: 'How should they be investigated/how are assessments made?'. The information such a section might contain is to be found in many other contexts, not least elsewhere in this book.

## **WHO IDENTIFIES SITES FOR DESIGNATION AND WHO CONTROLS THEIR SUBSEQUENT DESTINY?**

Given the current proposals for change, there is much to say here. Designation takes many forms: heritage assets may be statutorily registered as scheduled ancient monuments or as listed buildings or as conservation areas or on two non-statutory registers (Parks and Gardens; Battlefields), and as World Heritage Sites (inscribed by UNESCO under the 1972 World Heritage Convention). The opacity of this system in terms of control has been the principal driver for change: 'the system is now so complex that few people fully understand all parts of it. It is not apparent that monuments, buildings and landscapes need separate regimes' (DCMS 2003, 9, para 23). The details of the respective legislation for ancient monuments and listed buildings are dealt with elsewhere (Chapters 5 and 00): the briefest of outlines is all that is offered here, to illuminate the commentary that follows.

Historical accident dictates that Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings are designated by the relevant minister (in England currently the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, although before 1992 by the Secretary of State for the Environment), on the advice of the relevant national agency (English Heritage, Historic Scotland, Cadw or DoENI). Conservation Areas, by contrast, are designated by local planning authorities. In the British system the identification of heritage assets is relatively inclusive, rather than exclusive. Compare, for instance, England's 371,591 listed buildings (English Heritage 2003, 19) with Japan's figure of 4352 in 1998 (Kindred 2003, 36). In addition, 19,446 sites and uninhabited buildings are scheduled as ancient monuments, and this figure expands to

36,117 if individual entries are disaggregated into their separate components (English Heritage 2003, 17) and there are 9080 conservation areas (English Heritage 2003, 25). An interesting effect of this is that controls are commensurately weaker – to oversimplify for the purpose of making the point, there are three possibilities: very strict control over a very small number of heritage assets or looser curation of a larger number or considerable control over a larger number of monuments as a result of greater critical mass in public awareness (as in Denmark, for example). The UK has opted for the second.

The answer to the question of who, therefore, controls the destiny of sites, remains to a very large extent the owner. Generally speaking, the owner initiates projects and control extends to issues of principle (the granting or refusal of consent) and to the manner in which the process is carried out once consent is granted. It is estimated that around 90% of listed building consent applications are approved (DCMS 2001, 33). Contrasting perceptions of the strength of the controls are to be found in two recent official publications: *Heritage Counts 2003: the State of the Historic Environment* notes, ‘only around 5% of the historic environment is formally protected by an Act of Parliament’ (English Heritage 2003, 16, italics added), while the Designation Review consultation document, *Protecting our Environment: Making the System Work Better* states that, ‘it is widely believed – though the evidence has not been collected – that large numbers of owners simply go ahead with alterations without permission because they do not realise that they need it, because they dread the bureaucracy and delay or because they think they would be stopped from making the change they want’ (DCMS 2003, 15-16, paragraph 51). So the heritage agency is anxious that too little is protected, while the owners are concerned that the bureaucracy is overpowering. If nothing else, this reflects the tensions that have persisted in the British planning system since its inception over the degree to which the right of private interests to treat private property as they see fit is conceded in the public interest.

Nevertheless, the quantifiable evidence suggests that it is indeed the owner who is the more powerful actor, in whose hands lie the initiative for change or neglect. It is perhaps interesting to note the varying effects of action or neglect on upstanding and subsurface sites: lack of direct human intervention on a subsurface site may be benign, but the effects of natural agents such as rabbits, bracken and water erosion cannot be minimized (see also Chapter 22). In a building, the failure to undertake routine interventionist maintenance is usually a major cause of decay, yet neglect may also prevent the worst excesses of modernization and loss of original features. Active conservation measures to prevent natural and artificial acceleration of decay are therefore essential for both subsurface sites and buildings. Having said that, once the decision to seek change has been taken, the destiny of the site lies within the control of external agencies (although the wishes of the owner undoubtedly remain a material consideration to be balanced against other matters in the determination of the case). The impact of a single designation system and a single heritage act that wraps up the existing divisions between ancient monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas will be interesting to observe. The stated aim is to simplify the system and make it more understandable to owners and the public at large. But as Andrew Gilg notes in his entertaining overview of the largely unentertaining, even depressing, history of countryside planning since the Second World War (Gilg 1996), one of the most common outcomes of policy change is the unexpected consequence – of policies blown off course by unforeseen events or by human irrationality in the responses of individuals that undermine structural forces – so the ultimate impact of the proposed streamlining is difficult to predict.

The first comprehensive guide to policy, the Department of the Environment’s *Circular 8/87*, was issued in 1987 and concerned the provisions for listed buildings and conservation areas. Notwithstanding the fact that it related primarily to historic buildings, one of its most important policies was a harbinger of major changes that have occurred in the 1990s, for it contained, tucked away at Paragraph 52, the advice that ‘Ancient monuments, and their settings, whether scheduled or not are *of course* a material consideration in the determination of planning applications’ (my italics). The appearance of this advice was of the utmost importance. Although it appeared simply to formalize best practice in the most efficient local authorities, it was by no means a matter of course, as implied, to regard archaeology as a material factor in the planning process. Nonetheless by the mid-1980s most counties held Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) and the checking of planning applications against this information to look for archaeological significance was beginning to be more common (see Chapter 10). With the formal blessing of the DoE for this practice, the possibilities for the protection of the archaeological resource seemed to be greatly enhanced.



The introduction of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG 16, DoE 1990a; also Welsh Office 1991; Scottish Office 1994a; 1994b) decisively shifted the balance towards the inclusion of archaeology as a material factor in the planning process. PPG 16 advises that 'archaeological remains should be seen as a finite and non-renewable resource . . . . Appropriate management is therefore essential to make sure that they survive in good condition.' (Paragraph 6). The baseline for this management is clearly set out in Paragraph 8: 'Where nationally important archaeological remains, *whether scheduled or not, and their settings*, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation' (my italics). The point to note here is that the archaeological resource as a whole is being flagged up and that setting and context, as well as the tightly defined legal lines drawn on maps around scheduled monuments, are being taken into consideration. It might, however, be noted, that the definition of setting seems to be in relation to the monument, that we start from the inside and move outwards, rather than taking the alternative model that that monuments subsist in a pre-defined context. Furthermore, this was the first time that archaeology appeared as a material factor within the planning system in a major document dedicated to that purpose: 'developers and local authorities should take into account archaeological considerations and deal with them from the beginning of the development control process' (Paragraph 18). The relevant personnel are clearly identified: 'All planning authorities should make full use of the expertise of County Archaeological Officers or their equivalents'. There is no obligation to consult English Heritage in the case of non-scheduled monuments although 'local planning authorities may find it helpful' to do so (Paragraph 23). By contrast, as discussed above, they are required to do so in the case of a proposal likely to affect the site of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Paragraph 23). The second major change heralded by PPG 16 was the introduction of developer funding and with it competitive tendering. Paragraph 25 states that where local planning authorities decide that pre-development excavation is justified 'it would be entirely reasonable for the planning authority to satisfy itself before granting planning permission, that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of remains' with the caveat that non-profit making developers such as charities, or individuals, might have recourse to English Heritage for financial assistance. Of course, this latter provision might be more effective were the English Heritage grant-in-aid not to be subject to continual real term cuts. The impact of the introduction of developer funding will be dealt with in more detail below.

In the early 1990s, then, without any legislative changes, there was a significant shift in the perception and treatment of the archaeological resource. While the involvement of central government remained mandatory in the case of SMC, the broadening of the net to include non-scheduled sites brought with it a devolution of powers to the local authorities, which already dealt with Listed Building Consent. County Archaeologists suddenly found themselves with a new role, that of curator and arbiter between developer, planning committee and archaeological contractor rather than the researcher and excavator of the 1970s and '80s.

The rebranding of DoE Circulars as the more plain-English PPGs necessitated the reconfiguration of Circular 8/87 and its replacement document, PPG 15 *Planning and the Historic Environment*, appeared in 1994 after a tough tussle in the drafting stages. One of the principal issues was whether or not the 'presumption in favour' of the retention of a listed building (circular 8/87 para 91 'the Secretary of State is of the view that the presumption should be in favour of preservation except where a strong case can be made out') should be watered down to the 'starting point' and 'the prime consideration' for the determination of applications for demolition (Draft PPG 15, para 3.3). In the event, it was retained at paragraph 3.3 of the published PPG: 'there should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings' and the basis of the advice remained much as before, although arguably more comprehensibly set out. A major difference between the treatment of buildings and that of below-ground archaeology was that the standards required of archaeological information relating to the two were quite different. PPG 16 positively demanded high-level archaeological information for subsurface sites *before* a planning application could be determined; PPG 15 remained somewhat apologetic. The significance of this disparity is discussed below in the section on excavation and recording.

One significant difference in terms of control and influence within the existing two-track legislation is the consultation system. Applications for Listed Building Consent to demolish or partially demolish are referred by ministerial direction to six national bodies: the Council for British Archaeology, the Ancient Monuments Society, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society and the Twentieth Century Society, with the Garden History Society consulted on applications

within their interest area (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions/Department of Culture, Media and Sport Circular 14/97, paragraph 15). These bodies, known collectively as the amenity societies, use a huge network of well-informed volunteers (both professionals 'moonlighting' and a large band of really knowledgeable amateurs) to visit sites, provide local knowledge and help to frame comments to local planning authorities. There is no parallel mandatory consultation system built in to the process of determining Scheduled Monument Consent, which is handled internally by English Heritage ancient monuments inspectors. PPG 16 suggests at Paragraph 23 that county archaeologists 'may wish to consult locally based museums and archaeological units and societies', but there is no compulsion to do so. Comment from interested parties therefore tends to appear in the form of highly active single issue interest groups, of which prime examples are the Stonehenge Alliance (Fielden 2002; and, in reply, Young 2002), and the Friends of Thornborough Henges (Dormor 2003; Horton 2003) or from the CBA and the IFA in response to formal consultations on broader issues or in editorial comment in their journals, respectively *British Archaeology* and *The Archaeologist*. It is not difficult to see the historical circumstances that give rise to such an anomaly in consultation practices between the listed building and the scheduled monument regimes: at the time that LBC became compulsory (Town and Country Planning Act 1968), there was little expertise within local authorities to assess the historical merits of individual buildings, whose selection for listing had been made not by the authority, but by the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings (then a part of the DoE and now reconstituted as English Heritage). Consultation was introduced at the specific request of the planners. By contrast, at the time of the introduction of PPG 16 in November 1990, every county had an archaeological officer, and the SMRs were, to a large extent, locally generated. The soliciting of friendly advice from interested parties might therefore safely be left to the discretion of individual county archaeologists. Whether or not the sometimes less benign function of statutory consultation might usefully be extended into the realms of PPG 16 is a matter for debate: many outside the national agencies and local government feel that archaeologists working within 'the system' cannot help but be compromised by political (with a small 'p') interests and would welcome an opportunity to influence policy and decision-making from an external position more formally than through the current channels of single-issue pressure groups which have to wait until a public enquiry to be given a formal voice. Those within the national agencies and local government note that idealistic positions cannot be sustained within the tough world of *Realpolitik* and that often the outcome of holding a hardline position will be no development at all, and the further alienation of the development community from archaeology, a potentially dangerous position to arrive at, given current funding arrangements. So formal consultation might have two very different consequences: it could blunt the sharpness of external comment or it could result in total sclerosis of the system, in which no compromises would ever be found to be acceptable. It is worth noting that, even after *Power of Place*, the heritage lobby is regarded in Westminster as being notably divided within itself, its disarticulated voice easy to ignore. The same holds true in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, where there has been no attempt to devise an equivalent document. The extent of the differences between English Heritage, the National Trust, the Society of Antiquaries, the Council for British Archaeology and the Stonehenge Alliance in the public enquiry into the proposed road scheme at Stonehenge, which was taking place in the spring of 2004 as this chapter was being written, only reinforces such perception.

The current designation system, dealing with three types of statutory designation (Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) and two non-statutory registers (Parks and Gardens, and Battlefields), together with World Heritage Sites is likely to be radically revised in the near future with the introduction of a single unified list 'to cover any type of historically, archaeologically or architecturally important site...It might also cover important historic areas, such as World Heritage Sites. Purely local designations – conservation areas and locally listed buildings – could be included in a local section of the list... A few conservation areas considered of special historic importance in a national context could be entered on the main List' (DCMS 2003, 10, para 24). It is worth noting, in the light of the comment on conservation areas, that this 'main list' will represent a selection rather than a consolidation of all existing designations, and that some will be registered on 'local lists', perhaps implying a demotion in their perceived significance. It is suggested that each item on the new List should be supported by a map showing exactly the area covered by the designation and a statement of significance showing the reasons for listing, what is significant about the asset (DCMS 2003, 13, para 41).

These statements of significance would represent a major advance for buildings, which to date have been described in terms of their physical appearance, rather than discussed in terms of their historic, architectural or archaeological significance and the reasons for their designation. Such a process has been in place in scheduling for some time, with the production of generic monument class descriptions in the late 1980s and early 1990s against which individual sites were explicitly compared and ranked against identified criteria in the Monuments Protection Programme (Startin 1993; English Heritage 1996; Nieke 2001). Furthermore, the government 'is minded to require owners, local authorities, amenity societies, parish councils and the public to be informed and consulted when an application is made to place an asset on the List' (DCMS 2003, 14, para 45) reflecting a desire for greater openness and public involvement is what has, hitherto, been a somewhat secretive process. The reason for the clandestine nature of the procedure was to avoid pre-emptive demolition where owners, getting wind of a potential listing, demolished or destroyed assets before the listing became legal. The most infamous case of this, the destruction in 1980 of the Firestone Factory, a 1930s Modern Movement building on Western Avenue in London, precipitated the accelerated re-survey of listed buildings in the 1980s, but every lister has their tales to tell: my own concerns the loss of two out of three hydraulic accumulator towers in the 1820s docks at Goole in Yorkshire, which disappeared mysteriously between my initial reconnaissance visit and my return to make notes on my recommendations. Under the new system, consultation will almost certainly be required, subject to the essential caveat of the provision of protection during the period of consideration (DCMS 2003, 14, para 45), and during that time, a more reasoned decision could be made about whether it was desirable to retain all three towers or whether the one that was randomly retained was a good example or alone sufficed to demonstrate the historical significance of what was, at the time of its construction, a radical new technological advance.

The implications of a unified list for a new consent regime have not been fully worked out but, interestingly, a 'suite of consents' seems to be envisaged. This would build upon a development in both ancient monuments and listed buildings administration: that of the management agreement, whereby certain agreed interventions are given 'blanket consent' for the period of the agreement (usually ten years). Provision for voluntary management agreements was made under Section 17 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979, and English Heritage produced its *Developing Guidelines for the Management of Listed Buildings* in 1995. It has been noted that management agreements have been of some value for the care of ancient monuments but that their coverage of individual monuments only has been a hindrance to their wider effectiveness: 'agricultural management can be achieved if sufficiently large areas are tackled but it is very difficult to achieve on a small scale' (Fairclough 1999, 33) raising once more the issues of context and setting that are yet to be resolved. Their efficacy in the curation of listed buildings has been tested only on 20th century listings so far, and even then only eighteen examples are recorded, partly, it would seem, because of anxieties over their non-statutory status: 'without statutory backing no agreement can replace the degree of certainty and clarity that potentially gives the building owner and/or manager the confidence to proceed, unfettered by the normal listed building consent process, or, in failing to obtain it, obviating the risk of enforcement or prosecution' (Kindred 2003, 14). It seems likely that the introduction of management agreements to the suite of consents proposed in the Designation Review will address this problem. The anxiety is that it is driven by a government deregulatory agenda and that the certainties of control of each different proposal for a designated site or building will be lost, thus opening the door to incremental loss of significance through cumulative small changes, a problem warned against in PPG 15: 'minor works of indifferent quality, which may seem individually of little importance, can cumulatively be very destructive of a building's special interest' (paragraph 3.13).

Behind the proposal for a single List lies a decade or more of thinking about the nature and significance of the material remains of the past. Vocabulary is often a good indicator of change: rather than subdivide our surroundings into discrete 'monuments' (with all the intellectual baggage that concepts of monumentality carry (Carver 1996)), archaeological sites, standing buildings and conservation areas, we have become accustomed to referring to the whole as the 'historic environment'. Adopting the terminology of environmentalists in their pursuit of sustainability, we have come to understand our historic environment as 'heritage assets' or 'environmental capital', and to work in partnership with other interests, not only in the ecology sector but also in local communities to 'manage change' (a phrase

one hears constantly bandied about, as an antidote to the 'pickled in aspic' characterisation of the sector by the detractors of conservation).

The provision of a unified list will go some way towards combatting the disjunct nature of the present system, but yet more radical thinking is afoot. Strong arguments were being made within English Heritage and beyond in the mid 1990s for Historic Landscape Characterisation (English Heritage 1997; Fairclough 1999). This is a broader assessment of whole rural or urban landscapes within the framework of the Countryside Character Map which was produced by the Countryside Agency in collaboration with English Nature and English Heritage and subdivided the country into 159 areas defined as 'biogeographic zones which reflect the geological foundation, the natural systems and processes and wildlife in different parts of England, *and provide a framework for setting objectives for nature conservation*' (UK Biodiversity Steering Group 1995, 100; my italics), and English Heritage's *Atlas of Settlement Diversity* (Roberts and Wrathmell 2000). Characterisation is currently underway or completed in more than half of England's counties and does not result in designation or legal protection, and so lies outside the purview of the Designation Review. It does indeed provide a framework for setting objectives for conservation, but it sends shivers down the backs of those at opposite ends of the spectrum: diehard designators see it as the slippery slope to deregulation while non-sympathetic developers understand it to be an extension of the power of the historic environment lobby to cover absolutely everything. The solution, in the best tradition of British compromise, will probably lie somewhere in between: we are coming to realise that the historic environment is an indivisible whole, and that we can neither ignore parts of it that are not sufficiently significant to designate, nor can we impose blanket protection over the whole of country. The aim, rather, is to encourage the kind of dialogue that might have led to a more thoughtful approach to the fate of those hydraulic compressor towers: we might not have saved them all, but we would have made an informed decision.

#### WHO EVALUATES, INVESTIGATES AND RECORDS?

Archaeological fieldwork in the 1970s and 1980s was largely a matter of excavation and of territoriality (see Chapter 14). Local units were set up to meet the challenge of rescue archaeology. Some were funded by local authorities, others supported by museums or university departments. Yet others formed as independent charitable trusts. Each confined its activities to its home town (e.g. York or Winchester), county (e.g. West Yorkshire), or region (e.g. Wessex). Some university units effectively became regional or county units (Birmingham covering the West Midlands, for instance, or the Institute of Archaeology Field Unit, which concentrated operations in Sussex). The only true roving unit was the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission's Central Excavation Unit, which acted in the capacity of a national flying squad. The territorial norm, however, was sanctioned in the framing of the AMAA Act 1979, for when areas of archaeological importance were to be designated, a local unit was to be named as the investigating body, setting the brief and carrying it out.

The advent of large-scale developer funding at the end of the 1980s, followed the principle of 'polluter pays' that was being widely adopted at the time in environmental conservation, and which suited a Conservative government dedicated to the reduction of government involvement in public projects. It was formalised in the advice of PPG 16, leading to the almost universal adoption of competitive tendering systems in the early 1990s. This is, perhaps, hardly surprising, given that it would not occur to a property developer to use a particular firm of architects or engineers simply because they happened to operate locally. Nevertheless, for a discipline like archaeology, which has always regarded itself as fundamentally research-led, the change proved to be somewhat traumatic. The debate continues over the relative importance of the need for firmly based local knowledge upon which to build an effective research programme versus an assumed gain in technical/financial efficiency. John Walker first raised the issue in 1996 in *British Archaeology* (Walker 1996). More recently the report of the All-Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group recommends that 'urgent consideration should be given to replacing the present system of competitive tendering in developer-funded archaeological investigations by a local franchise system' (APPAG 2002, 21, para 72), a suggestion brusquely dismissed by Martin Carver in his first Antiquity editorial as a very dead horse (Carver 2003, 7) and by David Jennings, director of Oxford Archaeology, as 'dead in the water' (as quoted in *The Field Archaeologist*, Anon 2003,8).

The impact of PPG 16 has been surveyed by the Archaeological Investigations Project (AIP), commissioned by English Heritage from the School of Conservation Sciences at Bournemouth University (Darvill and Russell 2002). Some 89% of archaeological investigations (variously defined from assessment to evaluation to excavation) are now triggered by the planning system and carried out by professional archaeological contractors. The upbeat conclusion of the report is that archaeological investigations have increased sevenfold and field evaluations by a factor of two-and-a-half. Watching briefs have increased more than twentyfold, excavations undertaken as a condition of consent numbered about 200 in 1999, and the report suggests that worst fears about the loss of area excavation and the knowledge derived from it have not been realised. Nevertheless, there remains considerable disquiet within the archaeological community about the degree to which research questions are able to be formulated and answered under this regime, a consistent anxiety, again articulated most recently by APPAG (2003, 35, para 169) concerns the proliferation of 'grey literature', technical site and finds reports which are never made generally available and which add little, therefore to the sum of archaeological research.

Turning to policy for historic buildings, the effects of PPG 15 are less well documented. The recording of buildings is being carried out in both planning and non-planning contexts but, as signalled above, the requirements of PPG 15 for recording are set out in a more disparate way than those in PPG 16 and hence are easier for applicants, and indeed, local authority curators, to ignore. Nevertheless, they are there. The requirements for pre-determination investigation to provide information germane to the decision-making process are given at paragraph 2.11 and 3.24. 2.11 states that local planning authorities 'should expect developers to assess the likely impact of their proposals on the special interest of the site or structure in question, and to provide such written information or drawings as may be required to understand [its] significance ... before an application is determined' and 3.24 that they should consider where 'to require exploratory opening up, with listed building consent as necessary, before considering consent for the main works'. Post-determination conditions are also provided for: local authorities should consider 'in all cases of alteration or demolition whether it would be appropriate to make it a condition of consent that applicants arrange suitable programmes of recording of features that would be destroyed in the course of works for which consent is being sought' (paragraph 3.23) and 'if there is any likelihood that hidden features will be revealed, the local planning authority should attach an appropriate condition to the listed building consent to ensure their proper retention of recording' (paragraph 3.24). The importance of using these provisions was quickly made known to both archaeologists and the historic buildings conservation sector (Rosier 1996; 1997; Wood *et al* 1994; Wood 1995) and the publication of *Informed Conservation* by English Heritage (Clark 2001) provides much useful information on the techniques of investigation for buildings. Nevertheless, building recording has not become as commonplace as one might have hoped, given the number of LBC applications each year (SHER figures show these as fairly steady between c.31,000 and 32,500 between 2001 and 2003 (English Heritage 2003, 25)). The 200 or so building recording projects logged by the AIP in 1999, compared to numbers in single figures at the beginning of the decade, show that this is an area of work that is being developed (Darvill and Russell 2002, 52), although more recently early results from the Yorkshire Archaeological Research Framework suggest that these figures were optimistic (Roskams pers. comm.). Whatever the precise quantification, there is little doubt that this is an area of archaeological endeavour that is progressing less quickly than envisaged in the first edition of this chapter.

It would, however, be misleading to suggest that all archaeological investigation is carried out under contract and funded by developers. The AIP reported that about 3156 (11% of all investigations between 1990 and 1999) were not triggered by the planning process (Darvill and Russell 2002, 45-49). Contracting units, universities, the Scottish and Welsh Royal Commissions, English Heritage's own survey teams (some inherited from the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments for England at merger in 1999) and amateur societies are still able to undertake research excavations and surveys where funding is available (see below). APPAG, however, notes the tendency amongst universities to situate their research outside the UK on the grounds of costs and the impact of international projects on ranking within the Research Assessment Exercise (to which I return at the end of this chapter) and the report argues that this results in a lack of cohesion within the discipline (APPAG 2002, 30; paragraphs 132-134 and 138).

As to who undertakes this work, the answer is about 275 archaeological contractors, both commercial and local authority or university-based. The top twenty contractors

carried out 48% of the recorded field evaluations and their dominance in the market is illustrated in the AIP's findings on other types of investigation. The degree to which the profession has embraced commercialism may be judged by the contents of the advertising section of the *IFA Yearbook*, with its glossy notices for companies offering general and specialist services that would have been unthinkable even fifteen years ago (although the much lamented Mark Gregson spotted what was coming as early as 1981, and had some great ideas about how to short circuit a potential disaster (Gregson 1982)). The archaeology of buildings is apparently growing in importance: increasing numbers of archaeological contractors are including building recording services in their portfolios. The Institute of Field Archaeologists supports an active Buildings Special Interest Group to promote professional standards in this area, but interestingly, only the University of York offers a specialist training course at postgraduate level. The AIP report notes the continuing contribution of what it describes as 'the independent sector' – museums, university departments, amateur societies and interested individuals – and defines their activities outside the planning process as 'research'. It would be interesting to undertake a more detailed survey to establish how far the planning of projects reflects this perceived difference between research and contract work. Darvill and Russell (2002, 42) suggest that 'the supposed division between 'research' investigations and 'contract' investigations is far less sharp than is often portrayed', but it is unclear whether this refers to aims and objectives or to purely methodological matters.

### HOW IS THE MONEY CONTROLLED?

Other chapters in this volume cover the problems of funding and they should be referred to for a broader discussion (e.g. Chapters 4 and 13). Nevertheless, it is important to allude to them here, for there are implications for the relationship of curation to research to be discussed in the final section.

Developer funding seems, at the moment, to be the accepted form of financing the bulk of archaeological rescue work, with £68.3m from that source alone in 2000 (Aitchison 2002). As a result, the archaeological field profession has become locked into broader economic cycles more tightly than hitherto. As in the building trade, cyclical boom and bust have severe implications for the retention of a skilled workforce already compromised by persistently low salaries and poor professional progression (Aitchison 1999; Aitchison and Edwards 2003), which may be the result of competitive tendering, or may, as David Jennings suggests, find their roots in structural problems extending over the last thirty years (as quoted in *The Field Archaeologist*; Anon 2003, 8). Whatever the cause, the insecurity of such a workforce must surely carry implications for the quality of research.

Finance for non-planning-led work may emanate from English Heritage in the form of the Archaeology Commissions budgets, or 'Rescue budget', but this has been dramatically reduced in the past decade from a peak of c.£7m in 1994 to c.£4m in 1999 (Darvill and Russell 2002, 37) and is now holding something like a steady state, with a budget of £4.64m in 2003-4 (*ex inf.* English Heritage). Current reorganisation within English Heritage will involve the virgining of some funds previously ring-fenced for excavation and survey into a new budget for building recording and conservation research. This is a development regarded as retrogressive by some (not because buildings and their conservation are seen as unworthy of support, but because this should not be at the expense of an already cash-strapped section of the budget). In recent years English Heritage has administered the substantial funding (£3.8m in 2003-4 and c.£3m in 2004-5) released by the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ASLF) introduced in the 2000 budget to derive environmental benefits from the aggregates industry. Additionally there are university research funds (although these are comparatively meagre and hard fought over), the learned societies and local or county-based amateur societies. Such funding tends on the whole to be fairly small-scale. The AIP reports a significant, if anecdotal, problem of 'initiative fatigue', whereby the bidding process for project funding from these sources is seen to be so time-consuming (and hence money-consuming also) that its outweighs the benefits of the occasional 'win' (Darvill and Russell 2002, 54).

Contrast these relatively tiny sums with the £366m committed in 2002-3 to heritage projects by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the sums in excess of £2 billion that it has dispensed to c.12,000 projects since it was set up in 1995 (HLF 2003). The problem, as APPAG has pointed out, is that the terms of reference of the HLF, with its emphasis on education and access, conservation and regeneration, make it difficult to release funding for archaeological research *per se*, and in particular its rules prevent the support of training excavations (APPAG 2002, 15, paragraph 37 and 22, paragraph 44). HLF funding has

occasionally been won for large scale investigation – the project to reveal and display the considerable archaeological heritage of Portmahomack in Easter Ross is a notable, but all too rare, example.

Funding by the research councils might be regarded as another source of central support for the profession. On the whole, however, grant aid from the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) (soon to be re-constituted as a fully-fledged Research Council) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) tends to support individual projects at doctoral or post-doctoral level. Applications to the AHRB for archaeological projects are considered by a panel that also deals with history and classics, and does not ring-fence sums to the different disciplines: the perception is that often archaeology loses out in a tough competition. NERC projects tend to find favour where the emphasis is on the science rather than the archaeology, which serves simply as a convenient means of testing or illustrating some novel scientific application. While one might argue that it is the responsibility of the profession to ensure that such work has relevance for the wider research agenda, it is clear that the disjunctions noted in the earlier recension of this chapter between academic and professional archaeology are, if anything, rather wider than they were. The reasons for and implications of this unhappy state of affairs will be considered in the final section.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP OF CURATION TO RESEARCH II**

The implications of the foregoing summary for the relationship of curation to research are formidable. Various trends have been identified:

- Changing definitions of the historic environment;
- Conflicting visions for its future;
- Changing modes of curation from ‘policing the monuments’ to ‘managing change in the historic environment’;
- The harmonisation of above- and below-ground archaeology in designation and policy;
- The widening of the fault line than runs between professional and academic archaeology.

All of these have an impact on the relationship of research and curation as the following amplifications will demonstrate.

### *Changing definitions of the historic environment*

The influence of both the modern and the postmodern intellectual movements in academia (for archaeology, see Johnson 2000, for planning, see Gilg 1996 and for conservation of the built environment see Earl 2003) has resulted in the extension of the boundaries of their fields of study to embrace broader (and particularly more recent) timespans and more extensive categories of material (i.e. not simply the high-status, aesthetically accomplished structures and artefacts, but also low-status material culture and evidence for quotidian economic and social activity). What is ‘valuable’ is not therefore restricted to the ancient, the rare and the beautiful, but to the representative, the informative and the mundane. In addition, as noted above in the discussion of designation reforms, lessons have been learnt from the ecological lobby about the limited value of tightly drawn physical boundaries around areas for protection – birds and animals, after all, cannot be corralled within Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The response has been to broaden the approach through the methodology of characterisation of whole areas (Cooke 1999; Fairclough 1999).

The envelope of inclusion within the definition of ‘historic environment’ has stretched almost infinitely. The trend of the last ten years has been away from the identification of single sites and single buildings or of clearly defined conservation areas, towards a more holistic approach to the significance of the historic environment. To an extent this simply continues an existing historical trajectory: all developments in the history of designation since its inception in 1882 have tended towards greater inclusiveness, with the range expanded from unoccupied scheduled monuments to listed buildings to conservation areas, to parks and gardens and battlefields (see Hunter 1996 for an interesting set of essays on these 19th and 20th century developments). Yet, the definition offered in *Power of Place* was broadbrush indeed: ‘The historic environment is what generations of people have made of the places in which they lived. It is all about us... Most of our towns and cities, and all of our countryside, are made up of layer upon layer of human activity. Each

generation has made its mark' (English Heritage 2000, 4; para 02). Nor does the DCMS demur from this hyper-holistic approach: 'The past is all around us. We live our lives, whether consciously or not, against a rich backdrop formed by historic buildings, landscapes and other physical survivals of our past. But the historic environment is more than just a matter of material remains. It is central to how we see ourselves and to our identity as individuals, communities and as a nation. It is a physical record of how *our country* is, how it came to be, its successes and failures. It is a collective memory, containing *an infinity* of stories, some ancient, some recent: stories written in stone, wood, brick, glass, steel; stories inscribed in the field patterns, hedgerows, designed landscapes and other features of the countryside' (DCMS 2002, 7: para 1, my italics). The persistence of earlier intellectual baggage in the form of an insistence on national identity as the cornerstone of heritage as well as the impact of the post-modernist agenda of plurality is very easy to deconstruct from the DCMS statement and perhaps less so from the *Power of Place* definition, framed as it was by a committee dominated by academics acutely sensitive to the potential for semantic analysis from their fellows. Those same academics might care to take note of what happened to their words when given a makeover by policy wonks.

This broad definition may suit an academic bent of mind, but it raises uncomfortable questions about operational utility. As definitions become endlessly flexible, advocates of a 'real world' approach to heritage conservation are orchestrating a backlash. In recent discussions regarding the Designation Review, the possibilities of *reducing* the number of items on the list have been raised (DCMS 2003, 12, Qu 4.2 'Should some of the items at Grade II move onto [*sic*] local lists?') and in a DCMS-sponsored seminar on the consultation paper, I have heard the warmly expressed opinion that 'the dross' at the 'lower end' of the Grade II category should be de-listed gain considerable assent around the table. The various controversies over the listing of 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings, particularly those that result from experiments in social housing held by many to have been largely unsuccessful (Buckingham 2000), also demonstrate a disjunction between academic/professional and public opinion. This is acknowledged by the heritage profession: 'ministers have had the courage to take possibly unpopular decisions where they felt that the architectural evidence for the importance of these buildings has been convincingly established' (Smith 2000, 16).

Current problems over capacity may also be exacerbated by ever-expanding definitions of value. DCMS may be comfortable with the broad definition it espouses above, but neither it nor the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, currently responsible for planning matters, seem willing to accept the financial implications. Anxieties about the fragility of the existing planning framework and the pressure under which historic environment professionals operate are expressed in a report on *Local Authority Conservation Provision*. This highlights the tensions in the curation of the above-ground resource: an average of 1.7 conservation officers per local planning authority spend over half their time dealing with development control casework and suffer from the lowly status of their sector within planning departments as a whole (School of the Built Environment, Oxford Brookes University 2003). County Archaeological Officers experience similar institutional difficulties, in part associated with the government priorities noted above, in that they find themselves operating outside the planning department entirely, sometimes in Libraries and Museums sections, and sometimes in Leisure departments, and almost always with workloads that exceed capacity.

### *Conflicting visions for the future*

Taking an expanded resource base as read, then, and given the difficulties and opportunities it provides, what are the stated aims of the various agencies and pressure groups for the historic environment? The *Power of Place* consultation suggests that the need for change is widely accepted: 'although people value the historic environment, this does not represent resistance to change' (English Heritage 2000, 4: para 05). Rather, the objective should be to promote good decision-making in planning. The headings of the subsections of the document (and the order in which they appear) give a strong indication of the curatorial imperatives and priorities that the *Power of Place* team culled from their extensive consultation:

- 'Conservation-led renewal: unlocking the value';
- 'Reinvestment: the benefits of old and new';
- 'Prevention not cure: common sense makes economic sense';
- 'People and place: reflecting wider values' (this section being principally concerned with child education, lifelong education, tourism and access issues);



- ‘Managing change and enhancing character’;
- ‘The first precondition: knowledge’;
- ‘The second precondition: leadership’.

Notice how economic development and the integration of historic environment issues into the planning cycle dominate the beginning of the document, how education, social inclusion and tourism are privileged above research (notwithstanding its characterisation as ‘the first precondition’) and how the functions of ‘authority’ are considered last.

The DCMS/DLTR reply *The Historic Environment: Force for our Future* takes the same elements and orders them differently:

- Providing leadership
- Realising educational potential
- Including and involving people
- Protecting and sustaining
- Optimising economic potential

It is interesting that economic development seems to take such a low place in this agenda, but we should remember that the document was chiefly the product of DCMS, with some input from DLTR and none from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (currently, and confusingly to the uninitiated, the planning ministry – we need not worry, for doubtless the names will all change again at or before the election) or from the Department of Trade and Industry. Even the regulatory aspect of the system takes a back seat. Instead, the two central planks of the Culture, Media and Sport agenda, educational and access, along with a ‘leadership’ role that envisages facilitation rather than coercion, dominate. It is here that the criticism has come.

The All-Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group has taken up the cudgels against such current policy development with vigour: ‘The past is a fragile and non-renewable resource and must be properly *protected and preserved*. The Government’s priorities are expressed in terms of broadening access to and developing the educational potential of the cultural sector. These aims, while worthy in themselves, force Government-funded bodies with responsibilities for archaeology to divert attention away from what should be *their core aims, to identify, protect and sustain* the historic environment, towards other goals. National agencies, national and regional museums find that their activities are increasingly skewed to those initiatives for which the Government is sometimes willing to provide funding, but which do not necessarily correspond to the wider priorities. Without the preservation of this fundamental resource, there will be nothing left to provide access to or to educate people about’ (APPAG 2003, 6; my italics).

Clearly there is a difference of opinion here about precisely what are the fundamental aims of historic environment management. Is it above all an exercise in protection? If so, protection of what, from what and for whom and with what social and economic consequences? Are audiences more important than resources or do resources cease to exist as meaningful entities without their audiences, as some recent academic thinking might suggest? And does this kind of thinking play into the hands of a pragmatic civil service, ever alert to the possibilities of subverting one political process in favour of another, in this case the protection of the historic environment in favour of regeneration, access and education agendas? Certainly the heritage profession needs to continue its research into the events of the past and their material remains, but perhaps it also needs to lose yet more innocence and turn a more sophisticated eye to the theoretical issues of heritage management, of which more below.

#### *Changing modes of curation*

In its current modernisation programme, English Heritage (2002) identifies three audiences:

- future generations, who should have an opportunity of enjoying England’s historic environment in a condition at least as good as that which we currently enjoy;
- the people of today who live in or visit England and whom [*sic*] we want to enjoy, appreciate and learn from their historic surroundings;
- those people who want to make changes to the historic environment; individuals owners or corporate bodies that engage with English Heritage because they are involved with changes to the historic environment.

This is, perhaps, another way of identifying its statutory core duties (to secure the preservation of ancient monuments and historic buildings and to promote the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of conservation areas in England and to promote the public’s enjoyment of and advance their knowledge of those assets and their

preservation (National Heritage Act 1983 Section 33)), but the very formulation in this way reflects a sea change in approaches to public duty that affects not only central government but also local authorities. In a management briefing note of June 2002, the Chief Executive, Simon Thurley, is very explicit about this: 'What is the modernising programme about? Recognising that we are a service organisation' and 'I want to give us a much clearer client focus' (original emphasis). In external documents the same message is sent out. The *User's Guide*, which is undated but was distributed in 2002, has this to say: 'We use this role [adviser to local planning authorities] to achieve positive improvements to historic buildings, and to ensure that new buildings are of a high quality. Each year we provide advice on around 18,000 planning and listed building consent applications. Many still see us as a reactive regulator, but we are working hard to combat that image. We work proactively and in partnership to ensure that change recognises potential' (English Heritage n. d., 41).

This change in attitude from regulator to enabler owes much to political pressure, as the Conservative administration of 1979-1997 pursued its avowed goal of rolling back state intervention and its successor, the New Labour government of 1997 onwards shows little sign of wishing to take an alternative view, at least in the realm of planning. Archaeologists have fought shy of hard hitting political analysis of their situation in print, if not in the pub, and I argue that now, more than ever, the academic discipline needs to abandon its precious approach to its subject matter as being 'the past and nothing but the past' and to admit that unless we understand, and through understanding take some control over, the conditions under which that knowledge is generated, we shall be unable to resolve the current furious debate over whether the academic discipline and its contracting/policy making colleagues are there to protect, to preserve, to research, to manage change or to educate (whom and about what?). Until we have clarified the theoretical and political issues that underpin this debate, we shall continue to appear at Stonehenge enquiries into the next century divided and divisive. We can no longer afford to fight battles across the board room of English Heritage and the planning committees of the local authorities in the absence of a fundamental analysis of the role of the past in the present. At first sight, the current government policy, as articulated by English Heritage in its modernisation programme, chimes well with recent thinking in academic sociology, in which the role of the intellectual is seen as changing from that of a legislator to that of a facilitator (Baumann 1987, and for a specifically archaeological spin, see Smith 1994; 2004; Smith *et al* 2003). Gilg (1996, 8) suggests that ideologically left or left-of-centre parties are instinctively interveners and it is the right wing that favours non-intervention – archaeologists need to ask themselves how they might, or indeed whether they want to, reconcile the new role of facilitator with a perceived wish for continued intervention in the form of strict controls over designation and development of the archaeological resource. More research remains to be undertaken regarding the potential and political implications of new ways of managing both the historic environment and its audiences, for we are as yet uncertain about the consequences, or even the pragmatic methods, of this kind of approach.

#### *The harmonisation of above-and below-ground archaeology in designation and policy*

The introduction of a single Planning Policy Statement (PPS) to cover planning for the historic environment, whether buildings or subsurface sites, and the current proposals for a single designation system suggest that two-track legislation is on its way out and that a harmonised system will be in operation within the next few years. How this will work out in practice is difficult to predict, for the devil, as always, will be in the detail. The proposal to include a statement of significance in each list entry is a response to the puzzlement of many house owners, when faced with a bald list description that simply describes the appearance of their home, and the needs of many developers who have little help in adjudging the relative archaeological importance of the site they wish to develop until after they have commissioned an initial appraisal. The statement of significance, borrowed from Conservation Plan terminology, is intended to provide a justification for the inclusion of the site, structure or landscape element on the list and to identify the cultural assets of the place that it is desirable to retain in making plans for its future use. The DCMS consultation document, *Protecting our Historic Environment* has suggested that they could go as far as 'indicating the works for which consent would be needed' (DCMS 2003, 13) but, arguably, this is to confuse two stages in the operation – the first being the identification and formal assessment of significance and the second being the application of explicit tests to adjudge whether *specific* proposals would have detrimental impact upon that significance. At present, the view of English Heritage is that the two

parts of the process should remain very clearly separated so as not to lose the opportunity at the stage of determination of consent to investigate the precise nature of the proposals. They might be broadly acceptable but problematic in certain details, or conversely, they may represent an acceptable practical solution to the introduction of a change that might, in general terms, seem incompatible with the retention of significance of the place.

For the archaeological community with its interest in the research potential of archaeology above ground (see, for example, Wood *et al.* 1994), the disparity between the recording requirements imposed upon the developers of subsurface sites as opposed to above-ground archaeology has long been a matter of concern. The re-issue of planning policy advice in a single PPS, rather than two PPGs, will almost certainly signal the beginning of the end of this long-running saga. It is likely that policies for the thorough pre-application investigation of significance and the impact of proposed changes will be harmonised and clearer guidance given on post-determination conditions for recording. Of course, the necessity to produce statements of significance for each item on the list will involve a good deal of additional research of the type that has been called for over the years, and the mechanism for achieving this remains unknown at the time of writing: will there be yet another grand 'listed buildings re-survey/MPP' project, designed to bring all the listings up to date in as short a time as possible, or will statements of significance be required for existing designations as and when applications for consent are made in their respect? And if the latter, whose financial responsibility will that be – the developer's or the state's?

#### *The fault line between professional and academic archaeology*

In the first edition of this book, I closed with the comment that 'academia and the field profession cannot afford to operate in mutual isolation: such a course would without doubt lead to the terminal stagnation of the discipline' (Grenville 1993, xx). Twelve years on from writing that, the situation seems little improved. The profession continues to complain that the universities do not turn out adequately *trained* archaeologists: 'While most graduates do not intend to use their degree in a professional capacity, there are skills shortages on graduation which have not been adequately addressed by undergraduate courses. These include, for example, fieldwork and the handling of finds, both of which are vital to a full appreciation of the subject' (APPAG 2003, 28-9; para 123). Such a complaint mirrors those in other sectors and arguably reflects a general dislocation of expectations between employers, who want graduates to step into their first job fully competent and technically trained and universities, who hope that their graduates will do so, but are more concerned with a wider intellectual training that will add value to their work careers throughout their lives. How far an industry can, and should, set the syllabus for its associated degree courses remains a bugbear in academic areas other than archaeology and planning. Additionally, as the funding of universities is further removed from general taxation and placed at the door of those who benefit from it, in the form of tuition fees, how far will archaeology, with its poor pay and conditions after graduation, suffer as an academic discipline? A lack of good students coming through the system and moving into the profession will exacerbate capacity problems that are already causing concern.

Equally worrying has been the tendency of academic archaeology to dig itself deeper into its bunker. The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), undertaken by the Higher Education Funding Councils, assesses research success of individual departments in each university on a cycle of five to six years. The assessment is made by a panel of peers within each subject, so effectively that panel decides what does and does not constitute 'effective' research. The problem here is that the RAE is the major engine in university development these days. Millions of pounds of additional funding rest on its results and it is, currently, the only means of deriving additional core funding (as opposed to project-specific money) available to universities. Vice-chancellors focus upon it to the point of neurosis, for both the money and the prestige that a high score brings can make or break an institution. Research into the process of research (see for example Kuhn 1962) suggests that it is susceptible to fashion in its favoured paradigm. Given that RAE scores are determined by panels of peers, I return to my argument in the previous section: unless or until the academic establishment in archaeology is prepared to accept 'applied' research into the conditions of knowledge generation, the management of the archaeological resource and its reception by a wider public as a legitimate part of archaeological endeavour, then the split between academic and professional archaeology will continue to grow to the intense detriment of both sides.

## CONCLUSION

So, how are we doing? Archaeology (in its broadest sense) in the early 21st century is arguably more attuned to its audiences, more businesslike in its operations and receives more money (which is different from saying that it is adequately funded in a strategic sense) than it was ten years ago. It continues to dissipate its intellectual talents, through inadequate career structures and poor communication between the field profession, the curatorial arm and the academic community. It produces more data than ever before and is beginning to make some inroads into the business of adequately collating it and telling the stories it reveals to an avid public. It understands, and is beginning to succeed in persuading the public, if not governments, that the historic environment is the fourth dimension of where we live, not a foreign country to be visited.

The extent to which we are still at loggerheads with one another can be observed by attending conferences, reading *The Archaeologist* (the journal of the Institute of Field Archaeologists), *The Digger* (an informal and infrequent 'underground' newspaper produced by the digging fraternity) and *Context* (the journal of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation) and by sitting in smoke-filled bars gossiping. Another, quicker way of doing that is to compare two recent comments on the state of affairs. The Archaeological Information Project's conclusion is that 'the archaeological community has a continuing duty to meet its responsibilities towards the raw materials of the discipline (the archaeological resource) and those who have authorized and sanctioned a high-profile place for archaeology in today's society (the general public). In this it has actually done rather well' (Darvill and Russell 2002, 51). We might contrast this with the view of Lord Redesdale, the Chairman of APPAG: 'I really do feel that archaeology *is* in crisis' (Redesdale 2002, 23). Both speak from a position of considerable empirical knowledge of the situation, but one set of data was gathered ostensibly as an objective statistical exercise and the other as a policy-forming exercise: statistics and gut feelings don't seem to match.