A Social Archaeology of the Late Medieval English Peasantry:

Power, Community and Gender

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Chapter Five

Peasants and Material Culture: Thematic considerations

5.1 Introduction

It was argued in the general introduction to this work that a case-study approach to medieval peasant archaeology is vital. It is only through the contextualised consideration of evidence that this method allows that we can start to unravel the variety of meanings that medieval material culture could have possessed and activated. Material culture does not have one meaning, applicable throughout all contexts. As we have seen, changes in the spatial lay-out of a village would have evoked different meanings according to whether the lord of the manor was habitually present or absent; meanings which may well not be appreciated if village lay-out is studied in isolation from its wider social context. Similarly, linkages between lordly and ecclesiastical architecture within a region will have either reinforced or complicated the ways in which seigneurial power was experienced by medieval peasants according to whether or not these linkages were present in their own parish church. The case-study approach, therefore, allows us to consider seriously the multi-valenced character of the available evidence.

The present chapter is certainly not intended to detract from the central importance of the case-study model. What it does do however, is acknowledge that there are various types of evidence that are commonly found in late medieval peasant contexts which were not present within the three case-study areas considered. These are important classes of evidence which have the potential to add substantially to our knowledge of the social experience of the medieval peasantry. Given that this study as a whole is suggesting new ways of approaching the investigation of the medieval peasantry, it is vital that it deals comprehensively with as many classes of

material culture as possible. This is necessary since other rural sites may lack the evidence types that have so far been dealt with in the case studies but may be rich in hitherto unexplored categories of evidence.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore two-fold. Firstly, to enhance the understanding of peasant experience offered thus far with an investigation of two commonly-found and informative aspects of material culture – visual representations of the peasantry in churches, and castles – which were not present in the three case-study villages. Secondly, to consider two classes of artefactual evidence which are often found on medieval sites and to investigate experiential aspects of the peasantry's encounter with them. It was felt that these artefact types – pottery and dress accessories – were best addressed as classes of artefact and dealt with thematically. In the case of the dress accessories, this is due to the relatively small number of finds and the fact that their significance only became apparent when the scale of analysis was broadened. In contrast, it was felt that the very ubiquity of pottery derived from medieval sites and the concomitant issues associated with reporting and presentation of this material, merited its discussion as a separate class of artefact. Throughout this chapter, I have concentrated on choosing a selection of relevant examples to discuss. This is not the place to review every wall-painting or dress accessory from medieval Yorkshire. Instead, a selection of examples of each evidence-type has been discussed in order to demonstrate the potential that each of these types has to advance our study of the social experience of the medieval peasantry.

5.2 Visual Representations of the Peasantry

At various times in the course of this study, the place of the church in the lives of the medieval peasantry has been discussed. Various types of evidence have been examined in order to discuss the impact of activities centred around the church, the body of the church itself and the messages emanating from ecclesiastical sources, to highlight its impact on peasant experience of gender and power. However, an important feature of medieval

churches has not yet been touched upon, namely the visual representations of the peasantry in the form of wall paintings, stained glass and sculpture. Wall paintings only infrequently survived the Reformation, but it is important to recognise that "all medieval churches in England were more or less completely painted" (Rouse 1991:9) and that paintings would often have covered every available wall surface (Benson 1997). Similarly, much medieval stained glass and ecclesiastical sculpture has disappeared due to the activities of reformers and restorers. However, there are three subjects depicted with considerable regularity in wall paintings, stained glass and sculpture which either relate directly to the peasantry or deal with activities specifically carried out by the peasantry and which are not visible in the churches at Osgodby, Wawne or Wharram Percy: Labours of the Months; the Labours of Adam and Eve; and depictions of 'Christ of the Trades'. The following discussion of these pictorial themes attempts to highlight the features which would have impacted on a peasant audience and to draw out some of the implications of these features which are helpful to our investigation of social power in the Middle Ages.

The Labours of the Months, sometimes called the Cycle of Occupations or calendar cycles, could be represented in churches either in wall paintings or as sculpture. This subject consisted of a series of images depicting various activities appropriate to certain times of the year, often within small medallions. These are almost all agricultural tasks undertaken by the peasantry, although some months were represented by activities such as hawking or flower-gathering. There are many surviving examples of this motif. For example, Easby church in North Yorkshire has four remaining labours depicted in a thirteenth-century mural: pruning, sowing, digging and hawking (Fig. 37) (Caiger-Smith 1963: 182). Dewsbury church in West Yorkshire also has three thirteenth-century stained glass medallions depicting pig killing, harvesting and threshing (Fig. 38) (Pevsner and Radcliffe 1967: 179). St. Margaret's church in York had the figures represented on the outer archivolt, although none are now clearly visible, (Webster 1938: 91, 174) and the font in St. Peters' at Thorpe Salvin in the West Riding of Yorkshire also depicts Labours of the Months (Fig. 39). In

winter a man is warming himself at a fireplace, while sowing is depicted in spring. In summer going a-Maying is shown and in autumn, the binding of sheaves (Garbett 1958:12). Other examples among many from beyond the study region include those in Longthorpe Tower, Northamptonshire, Hardham in Sussex and Kempley in Gloucestershire (Tristram 1944; Tristram 1955). In general, winter labours represented include wood-cutting, spring months are associated with tasks such as ploughing and pruning, summer months are represented by various harvesting activities, and autumn tends to be represented by activities related to preparing food for the winter (Webster 1938: 99).

The second relevant theme in medieval visual representations of the peasantry is the Labours of Adam and Eve. This motif represented Adam and Eve working on the land after their expulsion from Eden. Surviving examples include an Anglo-Norman mural from Hardham, Sussex (Tristram 1944), and a thirteenth century example from the clerestory window of Canterbury Cathedral of Adam delving (Fig. 40) (Camille 1995).

The third image of relevance is that of 'Christ of the Trades'. The image usually consists of the figure of Christ surrounded by various tools such as harrows, scythes, blades, reaping hooks, sheep shears and so on. There are numerous surviving examples of this and related subjects such as depictions of Christ blessing the trades (such as in St. Just, Penwith, Cornwall) and pictures of the 'Instruments of Toil' (such as at Chesham church, Buckinghamshire). Examples of the 'Christ of the Trades' image include those at Amney St. Mary in Gloucestershire (Tristram 1955), and St. Mary's in Purton, Wiltshire (Fig. 41) (Edwards 1990). There are many other known examples of this motif and it is clear that it was by no means an uncommon one in late medieval churches, in fact there are three other examples of this subject within 10 miles of St. Mary's in Wiltshire (*ibid.*). These three sets of images have not tended to be discussed together as a class but, as they either directly illustrate medieval peasant figures or activities solely associated with them, they together comprise the visual representation of members of

their class that members of the peasantry would most commonly have encountered and therefore form a coherent topic for discussion.

There are essentially two types of interpretation that have been offered about the impact that these images may have had on medieval peasants. Michael Camille has argued that, although these images are capable of a number of readings, the figure of Adam delving in particular would have evoked for the peasants their subjection in sin. He argues that "medieval art is hegemonic and made *for* only two of the three orders" (Camille 1995:267, original emphasis). He is here referring to the division of medieval society into those who pray, those who fight and those who work and it is the first two of these groups that he is suggesting were the intended audience for these images. Similarly, Jonathan Alexander (1990: 445) has argued that the public placement and constant repetition of images of peasant work acted to "reflect and reinforce social norms". In contrast, other authors have argued that the representations of peasants would have evoked largely positive feelings on the part of the medieval peasant. J.C. Webster (1938: 102) has suggested that because the images are positioned in churches, they may have induced feelings in the villager that they occupied "their appointed place in the larger scheme of … salvation". Similarly, Aaron Gurevich has argued that the Labours of the Months was a genre in which peasant labour is "shown as taking place under the gaze of heaven and forming part … of one single harmonious rhythm of nature" (Gurevich 1972: 108) and that the presence of these images on cathedrals suggested that "the active life takes its due place beside the contemplative life. Each is in equal measure sanctified" (*ibid.*: 264). This sanctification of labour by the placement of images on churches and the concomitant suggestion of the divinely-appointed nature of labour is something that Gurevich repeatedly stresses.

There has been a similar lack of agreement about the meaning of the 'Christ of the Trades'. This image is usually interpreted as a warning against Sabbath-breakers, with the tools surrounding Christ indicating that those who work on the Sabbath crucify Christ anew with each transgression. As Colin Platt (1981: 125) has observed, this was one of the few "immediately

linking" images which would have been observed in a church setting by a peasant audience and therefore it is important to review the possible meanings invoked by this image. John Edwards outlines the history of the interpretation of Christ of the Trades, drawing attention to the fact in some of the earlier analyses of medieval wall painting, such as those carried out by J.C. Wall (1914) in the early twentieth century and E.W. Tristram (1944; 1950; 1955) in the 1940s and 1950s, the authors regarded it as an image depicting the consecration of labour which was probably often donated by guilds. The contrary interpretation offered by scholars such as E. Clive Rouse and A. Caiger-Smith – that of the warning to Sabbath-breakers – relies largely on links with Continental images, particularly upon the discovery of an image in a Florentine church which had, underneath the picture, an inscription declaring that all those who break the Sabbath would be consigned to eternal damnation (Edwards 1990). Tristram did rebut these objections, but these responses were ignored by later writers on the topic. He maintained that the image was intended to be a depiction of the sanctity of labour, observing that in England there are no known examples of tools cutting into Christ's figure. Moreover, he pointed out that the inscription in Fingringhoe church, Essex, (Fig. 42) placed in relationship to the image reads "In all work remember the end", and he argued that this supports the interpretation of the image as a representing the sanctification of labour (Tristram 1955: 121-5). Edwards, using both theological evidence and a surviving example of the image from a church in Wiltshire, supports Tristram's interpretation. He demonstrates that the Wiltshire example depicts a Christ of the Trades image in conjunction with representations of St. Peter welcoming souls to heaven, thereby representing the consecration of labour rather than a warning of damnation.

Athene Reiss has, however, attacked the interpretation of Edwards and earlier scholars. She argues that there is no reason to suppose that the English examples are any different from the Continental ones in which the tools of labour are undoubtedly attacking Christ. She further suggests that the dozen or so documentary references from medieval England to 'Saint Sunday' in churches could only be referring to these images. She also

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suggests that "in a devotional climate of an intimacy with Christ, this body that transcended boundaries of time or medium and that relied heavily on visual imagery or the evocation of imagery for its effect, the message that holy day work injures Christ's body and so should be foresworn was transparently comprehensible" (Reiss 2000:158). Some of Edwards' objections to the interpretation of this image as being a Sabbatarian one are indeed questionable. These include his argument that it was the Pharisees rather than Christ who emphasised the importance of the holy day. Reiss' refutation of this point, based on the argument that although Scripture does indeed indicate that Christ did allow that there were justifiable reasons for missing the Sabbath, "this did not militate against a fundamental observance of the Sabbath commandment" (*ibid.*: 11), seems reasonable. Similarly, some of the evidence Edwards uses to buttress his position is ambiguous, such as the inscription at the church of Fingrinhoe, Essex which both Edwards and Reiss use to support their positions.

I am not wholly convinced, however, that these images were "transparently comprehensible" (Reiss 2000: 158) to the medieval parishioners solely as a warning against breaking the Sabbath. Firstly, although the *intention* of the patrons of these pictures may have been the same as those of Continental examples and intended as a warning against Sabbath-breaking, as Reiss contends, the fact that the English pictures do not show the tools of labour cutting in to and harming Christ's body is important from the point of view of the audience's perception. Secondly, Reiss herself points out that the images are not placed in Decalogue contexts, that is in representations of the Ten Commandments, and that they do not "actively ... teach holy day observance" (*ibid.*:58). She writes that they "do not closely correspond to other forms of moralising about the holy day ... The Sunday Christ appears as an individual image, not as a representation of the Third Commandment" (*ibid.*: 59). It can be suggested that the separation of these images from representations of the other Commandments would have rendered them distinct from them and therefore more open to other interpretations.

Reiss herself suggests that priests may not have drawn directly on wall-paintings to illustrate their sermons, (Reiss 2000:58) and therefore it is, perhaps, possible that the Sabbatarian meaning of these images may not always have been clearly explicated. We *do* know, however, that they were sermonising about the sanctity of labour and the perils of wealth in this period as will be discussed below and therefore it is certainly possible that these images were interpreted as a consecration of labour. At the very least, it is not difficult to agree with Tristram himself who suggests that, while these images may have been partially interpreted as a warning against breaking the Sabbath, this is not the only meaning they would have carried for the medieval peasantry.

These three types of images of peasants – Labours of the Months, the Labours of Adam and Eve, and 'Christ of the Trades' – were not sending out just one message about medieval peasants to the audience that viewed them. They worked to reinforce contemporary social relations, to represent the curse of labour, and evoke meanings of its sanctity all at once. These contrasting messages and images of peasants permeated all of medieval society, not just the genre of visual representations. Paul Freedman has argued that peasants were viewed with both contempt and as being closer to God than their superiors, as both degraded and as exemplary throughout the entire medieval period as evidenced in a wide variety of historical sources (Freedman 1999). Labour was viewed both as necessary, worthy and the source of spiritual rewards in Heaven and also as a punishment fitted only for bestial rustics. A wide register of values was associated with the plough, for example. Rodney Hilton has drawn attention to the ways in which the attribution of positive traits to ploughmen was a source of anxiety for medieval elites. He argues that "the ploughman who was found to be disturbing cannot be clearly separated from the ploughman who was exalted as the embodiment of social and even theological virtue" (Hilton 1985: 249), partly because it was acknowledged that the ploughmen supported the entire society with their labour. There are many positive descriptions of ploughing from the Bible, the writing of Langland and other sources but it is equally an activity associated with the wicked efforts of Cain and with the

punishment of Adam. Adam himself was also an exemplar of both positive and negative traits. He was regarded as both the Father of Humankind as well as the first man to disobey God. Freedman points out that conflicting statements can exist within any particular genre and that multiple notions of the peasantry could be, and were, held simultaneously (Freedman 1999: 289).

It must be noted that the attribution of positive traits to labour was in no way intended to suggest that the peasantry should be treated in any significantly improved way. In fact the notion of the sanctity of labour can be seen to bolster the idea of a deferred reward, sending the message that peasants would be honoured in heaven because of the work they performed on earth. The evidence we have from medieval sermons shows us clearly that, no matter how strongly-worded, the message from the pulpit was not intended to urge the peasants to attempt to alter their conditions. For example it has been argued that Thomas Brinton, the late-fourteenth-century Bishop of Rochester, at times preached a "doctrine of Christian socialism" (Devlin 1954: xxiv). In fact, it can be seen that he predominantly stressed the natural-ness and correctness of the existing social order. He was of the opinion that "the rich have been created for the benefit of the poor and poor for the benefit of the rich" (cited in Rigby 1995:309) and that "since servitude was introduced into the world by sin ... justice demands that masters should rule over servants and that servants should be subject to their masters" (*ibid.*: 307). In a sermon preached in October 1373, he also used the analogy of society as a body with each part being necessary for the functioning of the whole; the feet were envisaged as "the farmers and labourers supporting the whole body firmly" (Devlin 1954: xii), thereby stressing the essentially harmonious nature of the social hierarchy. John Bromyard, a preacher of the mid-fourteenth century who ridiculed the pride of the rich, poured scorn on their pretensions and insisted that all humanity came from "the same first parents ... the same mud" (cited in Owst 1966: 292), still did not intend to excite revolutionary fervour. He advised peasants to say to themselves that "I prefer my rustic poverty with security and happiness, to those splendid banquets and robes with the remorse of

conscience, so many snares of men, and demons and the fear of punishment in hell" (*ibid.*: 196). He also opined that if the poor "held the place and power of the wealthy, they would do even worse" (*ibid.*: 367) and that nothing was more awful than "the poore man ... avauncyd heer to worldly richesses and possessions" (*ibid.*). Thus, although much medieval preaching and popular books such as Robert Mannyng's *Handlyn Synne* (c.1338) (Kemmler 1984:149) may have contained elements, supported by biblical passages, railing against the excesses of the rich, they were was not intended to encourage the peasantry to agitate for social change. It has been argued by Gerald Owst, however, that much of the fiery rhetoric did appear to do just that and played an important part in the revolt of 1381 (Owst 1966: 287-307). He suggests that, even though the sermons were not intended to be revolutionary in any sense, in the context of the times the clergy's words were deeply inflammatory, that "the pulpits of the land were often no better than war-drums" (*ibid.*: 307), and that the preaching had a profound effect on subsequent events.

If we turn to the context of peasant consumption of the images depicting peasants, it seems possible that they would have fulfilled a pedagogical function for the parish priest, as various writers have suggested that church imagery would have been a major source of religious instruction (e.g. Swanson 1989). In the Middle Ages, images were considered to be books for the illiterate (Johnson 1996: 196), and visual art in general in this period served didactic purposes (Sekules 1987). It is therefore likely that priests used them in teaching the Christian story and when illustrating points from their sermons. Yet images are not straight-forward and it seems likely that these visual representations of the peasantry would have created peasant subjectivities in more ways than those engendered by the teachings of the priest. The 'official' line taken by them and perhaps intended by the donors of the images are likely to have been joined in the minds of the peasants by their own 'hidden transcript' of interpretation (see Scott 1990). Indeed, there is even an example of this in the literature of the period. In the *Tale of Beryn* (c.1410), a purported sequel to *The Canterbury Tales*, the Miller and Pardoner attempt to interpret stained glass in Canterbury Cathedral. The

vignette has the Pardoner saying "He's carrying a quarterstaff or else a rake handle". The Miller replies "You're slipping, you're losing your mind" (Camille 1995: 247). Although the tone of the vignette is mocking, it alerts us to the fact that the meanings of ecclesiastical art were certainly not always transparent and to the tendency of people to interpret the unfamiliar in the light of their own experience.

It will be argued that the meanings evoked and subjectivities produced by these images would have been dependent on the specific historical context in which the peasants were placed at the time they viewed them. There would have been a number of factors which would have affected the way the Labours of the Months, the Labours of Adam and Eve and the image of Christ of the Trades would have been interpreted. Firstly, the interpretation of the images would have been influenced by the place of lordship in the lives of the peasants viewing them. The emphasis, as the titles of the images suggest, is on labour, and the meanings of labour would have altered across both time and space in the medieval period. Let us take the example of harvesting crops, which was a typical motif depicted in summer and autumn months of the 'Labours of the Months' cycle. Peasants whose lords were permanently resident in their township and who exacted heavy boon-works during the harvest would have associated this image predominantly with these burdensome duties, and they would therefore have had a strong ideological aspect, working to suggest that this labour was part of a divinely-ordained order. In another village, such as Wharram Percy, when the lords were rarely present and the demesne was leased out fairly early, depictions of harvest labour would have been redolent of times of bounty, provisioning of the family and so forth, associations with quite different meanings and emotional tone.

The meanings of labour would also have changed through time. Images of the delving Adam, for example, would have had very particular associations during the disturbances of the late fourteenth century. This was a period when the couplet "when Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?" had wide recognition and subversive potential, exemplified by

its use by Wat Tyler, one of the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381
(Freedman 1999). This was a period in which lordly prerogative over the
peasantry's labour was contested, and in which there were legislative
attempts via the Ordinance and Statute of Labours in 1349 and 1351
respectively to clamp down on the peasantry's improved negotiating
position in the wake of the Black Death. Manorial court rolls provide
evidence for the repeated flouting of these laws and the attempts to rein this
in. For example, in the court at Lincoln in September 1353, John Skit was
accused of leaving one place of employment for another in order to take
advantage of a much larger wage (Horrox 1994: 319), while in Lindsey in
1374 John Fisshere and others were presented before the justices for
refusing to work at Bardney. Of the latter, it is recorded that "on the same
day they left the town to get higher wages elsewhere, in contempt of the
king and contrary to the statute" (*ibid.*: 320). In this climate, the images of
peasant labour in the parish church are likely to have been viewed with
some ambivalence.

A second and related aspect of the context of peasant interpretation of these
images would have been the social position of the people who
commissioned them or who decided on their installation. Peasants viewing
the large stained-glass image of Adam delving in Canterbury cathedral or
the misericords showing (ludicrously overdressed) men mowing in
Worcester cathedral (Fig. 43) (Alexander 1990), which were large-scale
works in grand churches commissioned by powerful groups of monks or
possibly wealthy lords, would have drawn very different interpretations
from those peasants who had joined with the rest of their parish to
commission a mural of the Labours of the Months. In the first of these
contexts, the representations may have been experienced as impositions
from above, and in the second as a result of collaborative decision-making.
Labours of the Month images do not tend to be found in chancels, where
wall paintings depict more 'heavenly', less earthy, scenes and they seem,
rather, to be related to the nave and aisles (Benson 1997). It is likely,
therefore, that in parish churches, lords were not involved with the creation
of these types of image. Images of Adam delving may also have been

commissioned by guilds as Adam was the patron saint of many workers such as blacksmiths, tailors and potters, not just farmers (Östling 1986). Parish guilds were very common in the medieval period and Barbara Hanawalt implies that most churches would have contained one or two. She writes that "more than 500 [parish guild] returns survive in the Public Record Office. This number is very small compared to the number of guilds that must have existed, for it is estimated that there were about 9,000 parish churches; and often a church had more than one guild attached to it" (Hanawalt 1984:22). The role of parish guilds was to repair the churches, give charity to needy members, hold feasts and organise processions and to pray for the souls of deceased fellow members (*ibid.*). If guilds were a factor in the commissioning of church images, as seems likely, it must be remembered that these were often passively divisive organisations (McRee 1994). Not everyone could afford membership and images provided by these organisations would, therefore, have evoked specific meanings. They would have been a constant reminder of the presence of this particular (and sometimes exclusive) group and would have produced different meanings dependent upon whether the viewer themselves was a member.

This brings us on to the third aspect of the context of peasant viewing of these representations. Dependent on the social and economic position of the peasant, the images would have suggested different meanings. From transcriptions of 'principalia' (goods attached to customary tenements) and entries in court records, it is known that most yardlanders and half-yardlanders owned a plough but "small holders with no plough, the great majority, may have borrowed or hired them from wealthier neighbours" (Dyer 1998:171) or used spades and mattocks to dig their own land (*ibid.*). Therefore, Adam delving with a spade may not, to the peasants, have been seen as emblematic of all their number, instead they may have read it as referring only to the poorest of the number who could not afford oxen to help them plough (Camille 1995). For the most deprived cottagers, who could not even afford to receive the sacraments of the church, images such as this would have been redolent of their inclusion, nonetheless, within the pale of Christendom. Similarly, when ploughs are represented, the image

would have excluded these cottagers and would have evoked separate meanings for middling peasants who would have had to borrow or share ploughs, and for wealthier peasants who owned one.

The images are also gendered, and therefore the nature of their reception would have been dependent on the gender of the viewer. Although women are depicted in many of these images, they are present only marginally. Firstly, they are not pictured as often as men. The frequency of their depiction did, however, increase in the fifteenth century. One author poses the following question as a possible explanation for this: "Is their absence from most calendar cycles due to the fact that so many scenes are presented within small medallions or confining frames inside which there is simply no room for more than one figure?" (Henisch 1995:326), thereby betraying a deeply androcentric perspective. The tasks which are shown in the Labours of the Months cycles are tasks which both women and men would have been engaged in. Yet while there are depictions of men alone, men working with men, and men working with women, it is virtually unknown to come across examples of depictions of women by themselves or with other women. In the Labours of Adam and Eve, both characters are usually shown working, Adam delving or ploughing and Eve traditionally spinning. Difficult manual labour was Adam's curse only; Eve's being the pain that would, in the postlapsarian world, accompany childbirth (Freedman 1999:28). Yet there are no representations that even allude to Eve's curse. She is shown working alongside Adam, her punishment seemingly simply the same as his. Similarly, of all the variety of tools depicted in 'Christ of the Trades' images we see none that is exclusively female, such as the spindle. Furthermore, it has been argued that in the Middle Ages, labour was generally exemplified as masculine (Smith 1997), suggesting that all three motifs under discussion would have been associated predominantly with men in the minds of the peasants. Women, therefore, though not excluded from visual representations of the peasantry, were marginal within them.

Although images in churches may have been used for pedagogical purposes, they were also one of the only images of the peasantry that a member of this

group would have been likely to encounter. It can be seen that this makes these images extremely important to the creation of peasant identities and subjectivities. They objectified the medieval peasant and sent messages about what it was to be a member of this group; about what was constitutive of peasant-hood. The production of these images, however, was embedded in various relations involving ideology and power. The tradition and genre of the subject matter of many of the types of image under discussion was largely constrained by the Church's teachings and ideology and by the physical context of the images, as they occurred in Christian places of worship. Not every member of the peasant community had control of, or input into, the nature of the images, which may have been dictated by those who could afford to commission them. These constraints, of tradition and of control, meant that these hugely powerful images told stories about the peasantry and created 'horizons of expectation' of what it meant to be a peasant, of a quite specific nature. The images created subjectivities but also constrained the possibilities of what these might become. We must, therefore, consider the issue of what was left out of these depictions; what was not part of the depiction of peasant-hood.

One exclusion, that of various aspects of women's lives, has already been touched upon. Many of the activities central and important to the lives of medieval women, and which are emphasised as being particularly onerous in the *Ballad of the Tyrannical Husband* (a fifteenth-century work), such as child-rearing, marketing, and activities around the house such as butter- and cheese-making, spinning wool, care of poultry and food preparation, were not pictured, rendering them marginal to the core components of peasant-hood as structured by these images. The labour that only women performed was thereby rendered categorically separate from that which men and women performed together and which men performed with each other and, unlike these types of activities, was hidden from view.

It must also be noted that the images do not change in subject much over time, and, similarly, that there is little regional variation (Benson 1997). They are images of the peasant that are static and predominantly labour-

based. Peasants were not shown at market, in the manor court, in town, or within their own crofts. These facets of the peasant's life were not represented and were thereby rendered non-essential to the identity of the peasantry thus constructed. As the only images of themselves they would have ever seen, these pictures created an ideology of the centrality and constancy of peasant labour.

It can be argued that the ideological power of the images of peasants would have waxed and waned through time, being strongest when they were older and long-established in their churches. When a church was about to get a new mural, piece of sculpture or stained glass the choice of subject matter would have been, in itself, a matter for discursive debate. The messages thus conveyed to the peasantry about themselves, possibly linked to the donor of the new piece and their suspected prejudices and motivations, are likely to have been commented upon and accepted or rejected as part of a conscious piece of identity-formation. As the images fell into the background, however, and became the 'wall-paper' of the peasants' lives, no longer meriting discussion, their ideological force would have increased. This is when the structuring of peasant horizons about who they were and, implicitly, about what they should or could do, would have been accomplished.

5.3 Castles

5.3.1 Peasants and castles

The study of medieval English castles has a long history. For much of that history, it was the formal, military characteristics of castles which were the focus of attention and it is only in the last few decades that other, more 'social', elements have started to be considered. Castles are now being examined as administrative centres, stages for the playing-out of elaborate games of noble power and as works of art (see Stocker 1992 for a general discussion of the debate between 'symbolic' and 'military' interpretations of castles). Charles Coulson has been one of the most prolific scholars

involved in this re-interpretation, espousing the view that "the social purposes of fortresses almost always ... transcended their military functions" (Coulson 1979: 73). He has discussed the ways in which the military component of medieval lordship was essentially nostalgic (*ibid.*) and that, in castles such as Bodiam in East Sussex, features which appear to be 'military' actually could not have functioned effectively in battle at all (Coulson 1992). He draws attention to the ecclesiastical and imperial affinities of much castle architecture (Coulson 2000) and stresses their essentially seigneurial, hierarchical meanings (Coulson 2003). Elements of castles which allude to Arthurian romance have also been noted and discussed. For example, Richard Morris has argued that Caernarfon Castle in North Wales on which building began in 1283, "is an Arthurian castle in all but name" (Morris 1998:72) and that the Eagle Tower (Fig. 44) must be interpreted as a sign of "Arthurian enthusiasm" (*ibid.*). He has also pointed to its architectural links with Constantinople such as a sculptured niche in the Gatehouse which has affinities with the triumphal gate at Capua; Arthurian legend suggested that Arthur was the grandson of Constantine. Similarly, T.A. Heslop has suggested that some doorways at Orford Castle in East Anglia are "reminiscent of classical pedimented entrances" (Heslop 1991: 48), which may have been chosen because they alluded to the buildings of antiquity linked with King Arthur, whose era some had placed at the end of the Roman period (*ibid.*: 49). Matthew Johnson has also attempted to discuss non-military aspects of medieval castles, particularly using phenomenological approaches (Johnson 2002).

Although this kind of work is a welcome step away from purely functionalist, military explanations of castle architecture, it can be seen that the emphasis is very much on investigating aristocratic *motivations* for castle construction. There is no significant focus on the lived experience of the *practices* which would have occurred around rural castles, particularly those that would have involved members of the peasantry. Moreover, the cultural forces which are invoked to explain particular castle features are not those that would have been relevant to the peasantry. For example, that Orford Castle, Sussex was built at a time when Henry II was embroiled in

the controversy with Archbishop Becket, which may explain aspects of its fabric which appear to be deliberately distinct from church architecture (Heslop 1991) is not likely to have been a major feature of the peasantry's experience of it. Similarly, the aforementioned features of the fabric of Caernarfon Castle which display links with Constantinople would almost entirely have gone unnoticed by the people of the surrounding countryside.

When castellologists have mentioned the peasantry's experience of castles, it has tended to be in a simplistic fashion. The lords of castles are described as appearing to the "peasant-eye view" as "supermen" (Coulson 2000: 71). Castles are described as being a "power-statement at its most visceral level ... 'we could kill you if we wished'" (*ibid.*: 82). David Austin (1984: 71) interprets castles as "signifying the power and strength of lordship", and Matthew Johnson (1996: 123) writes that they were symbols of feudal authority. It is often mentioned that castles were sites of conspicuous consumption and the display of disposable wealth – Oliver Creighton (2002:35) writes that they were a "conspicuous symbol of power", and Michael Shanks (1992: 152) suggests that, at castles, "consumption was public and conspicuous". Statements of this kind are ubiquitous throughout the literature and there is little questioning of the ways in which these sorts of effects would have worked, or of the implications of them. Matthew Johnson has attempted a phenomenological interpretation of medieval castles but his book on the subject, while providing a good history of the study of English castles and of various social theorists' work, does, however, run into some problems, particularly with regard to discussions of the experience of the 'lower orders'. The work is often purely descriptive and at times not sufficiently rigorous in its linking of various castle features with supposed 'meanings'. For example, he draws attention to the fact that the various meanings of water which surrounded castles as moats included that of salvation, of barrier, of sensuousness, without describing in what situations or practices connected with castles these would have been 'activated'. He acknowledges that these meanings would have altered according to gender and social position, but provides no suggestions as to the forms these could take, apart from that the formal gardens in the watery

landscapes might have been seen as a set of 'resources' for members of the peasantry (Johnson 2002: 47). And although he makes the important point that we should not always conceive of the peasantry as 'emulating' their social betters, he then merely goes on to suggest that the material culture they deployed "might tell us about other things, such as their own view of the world" (*ibid.*:167) which is not particularly useful. In response to problems such as these, it is my intention here to attempt a discussion of the meanings evoked and power effects produced by castles as they impacted on the late medieval peasantry.

It is necessary to explore, firstly, whether it is appropriate to treat the rural castle as a meaningfully separate unit of medieval material culture in terms of its impact on the peasantry; in other words, whether they worked in any ways which were different from that of other manor houses in their impact on the local tenantry. Even the physical features which may be most distinctive to modern observers appear in so many different contexts in the medieval period that they would have not spoken exclusively to the peasantry of the power of castles. For example, massive walling and crenellation appeared in a variety of different contexts. Urban walling denoted borough status and privileges and reflected the wealth and importance of the town (Coulson 1995; Samson 1992), while crenels appeared on conventual precinct walls, urban walls, tombs, monuments and even furniture (Dean 1984).

In many important respects, castles operated very similarly to other manorial buildings. Firstly, similar activities took place in and around castles to those of ordinary manor houses. In a fashion similar to non-castellated manor houses, they were the sites of the appropriation of peasant resources in the form of agricultural goods and money (Pounds 1990: 201), and locations for the holding of manor courts. They were also, like other manor houses, surrounded by the appurtenances of lordship such as demesne lands, mills, warrens and parks, with all the associations of authority that they would have carried (Creighton 2002: 177). In addition, they often occupied similar positions within villages to other manor houses

(*ibid.*: 198). Mary Dean (1984:160) has argued that the architecture of castles should not be too clearly distinguished from that of fortified manor houses and Charles Coulson concurs that the 'castle-look' merely heightened the impact of standard architectural features shared by all manor houses (Coulson 2000), implying the lack of a categorical separation between these two types of building. Considering these similarities, were there, for the peasantry, in fact any unique experiential aspects associated with castles buildings?

It will be argued here that, despite these similarities, and dependent on a castle's size, location, status and organisation, there were a number of significant practices associated with them which did not occur in other manorial contexts and which it is necessary to explore in order to attempt a full account of the peasantry's experience of social power. Firstly, an important fact about these buildings was that the manorial tenants may have been forced to build them themselves, particularly in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Castle earthworks are the legacy of huge amounts of earth being moved by a large amount of people. Discussing the native labour used in the erection of Norman castles, Charles Coulson writes that "forcing a traumatised under-class ... to dig, carry and pile up vast quantities of earth ... and do other rough toil, cruelly rubbed in their subjection" (Coulson 2000: 91) and that the work we now see evidence for was "power made manifest" (*ibid.*: 92). An example from the thirteenth century comes from Scotland, where William the Lion, King of Scots had his bonded tenantry build several new castles in the county of Ross (Coulson 2003:282) and from the village of Crayke, the tenants of which were required to transport stone for the construction of the castle there, which will be discussed in the second part of this section. Villeins could also have been obliged to render labour services to the castle as well. For example, Pevensey Castle, East Sussex was owed 'heckage' by a number of manors in the vicinity from at least 1203; this was a labour-service which involved obligations to maintain the castle palisade (Salzmann 1906; Pounds 1990). Freemen could sometimes hold land 'in sergeanty' in exchange for craft services to the castle such as iron-working (Coulson 2003). It must be noted here, however,

that while it does seem likely that Norman lords would have used local labour to construct their castles as Charles Coulson suggests, and continental sources similarly discuss castle building as a major drain on the labour of the peasants, there are only a few records outside of the Conquest period in England for peasants being forced to work on either castles or manor houses (Chris Dyer pers. comm.) one of which has been mentioned above. However, even if we accept that peasants had only had to carry out this work in the early part of the Middle Ages, this work would have taken many years and would have impacted significantly on the peasants' own agricultural work. Subsequent generations' knowledge of the work their ancestors did would have forged a relationship with the structure – in the very palpable and significant amount of coercive power its presence represented –which was quite different from that with a more ordinary manor house. There does not appear to be evidence that peasants were ever forced, to work unpaid on these ordinary manor buildings (Miriam Müller pers. com.). [1]

Secondly, the simple physical dimensions of castles are of a different scale to other manor houses. The height of castles may not just have inspired "awe" (Coulson 2000) but also a sense of being monitored. They had a "panoptical viewshed" (Creighton 2002: 35), which would have allowed considerable surveillance of the peasant population. It can be suggested that a villager working in the field, or on the lords' demesne, or drinking or playing dice would have felt differently whilst engaged in these activities depending on whether or not s/he was carrying them out within the viewshed of a castle. Insofar as many castles had apertures in their external fabric, they could function similarly to Foucault's seminal 'Panoptican' in which Foucault used the model prison designed by Jeremy Bentham to investigate the way society disciplines its members; the peasantry would not have known when or whether they were being observed and may have

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[1] David Hinton (1999: 177), however, suggests that work on a lord's hall was a 'standard' customary practice. The only example he gives from the manor of Povington in Dorset (Chibnall 1951: 62) is open to interpretation. The relevant term in this text, cooperire, means 'roofing ' or 'covering' (Latham and Howlett 1995 :485) and therefore may only apply to this activity and not to more general construction and maintenance. My thanks go to Philip Shaw for assistance with the translation of this passage.

therefore engaged in pre-emptive self-disciplining. This effect would, of course, have depended upon whether the lord and his household were habitually resident and the relationship of the peasant to the castle staff. It is known that many late medieval English lords moved between residences fairly regularly. For example, in 1296-7, Joan de Valence visited London once, stayed for five and a half months at her estate at Goodrich Castle, two months with her daughter at Hertingfodbury and two months at Swindon (Woolgar 1999:47). Similarly, in the seven months from October 1318 to May 1319, Thomas of Lancaster stayed at Pontefract, interspersed with two short visits to York (*ibid.*).

Thirdly, it is likely that peasants were also less familiar with the interior of a castle than they would have been with other manor houses. Matthew Johnson suggests that "many local people may never have gained access to the castle" (Johnson 2002: 50) and David Austin argues that at Barnard Castle, Teesdale the high blank wall, gate and moat which divides the Outer Ward, which the peasants would have been familiar with, from the rest of the castle can be explained by the lords' desire to keep the peasants at a distance (Austin 1984:76). Norman Pounds also argues that the local community seems to have been "not welcome within" the castle (Pounds 1990:204), even for the purposes of receiving alms. He notes, in fact, only one case in which there is evidence for an almoner as part of a castle's staff, and that "overall, the charitable acts for which constables were responsible amount to very little" (*ibid.*: 207). C.M. Woolgar (1999:154) similarly suggests that when the contents of almsdishes, made up of food that had been served to the lord *were* given to the poor, these dishes were taken outside to the gate of the household for distribution. Peasants often had to present petitions at the castle gate and even in times of war they could have difficulty entering its supposedly protective grounds. An example of this occurred in 1315 at Bamburgh, Northumberland when locals had to petition the king for 'free access to the castle' in order to take refuge from Scottish marauders (Pounds 1990: 205). There is some evidence to suggest that, in some castles at least, the manor court also met before the castle gate rather than in the castle itself such as at Pembroke Castle (*ibid.*: 204). Similarly, in

1290 at Haverford Castle, it was noted "with evident surprise that 'the gates … had been opened and every one went in and out as he pleased'" (*ibid.*: 205). Therefore, while local people are likely to have been familiar with the outer areas of castle precincts, as they would have brought in hay and other products from the lord's demesne, it is possible that they proceeded no further. This lack of access to and knowledge of the castle's interior would have rendered it mysterious and, even though it was a constant and present force in the village, it was, in some respects, an unknown one. Castles were also where jails were located, managed by an often-reviled constable (Pounds 1990). The castle was thus rendered not only strange and opaque, but also could have evoked threatening meanings for the peasantry. Even if the members of the (usually skeleton-) staff were familiar participants in the local community and bound up in its affairs, the villagers would never have been entirely sure of who the castle contained at any given time.

It is also known that castles had a particularly intimate relationship with local churches. Roberta Gilchrist writes that "it was common to enhance the symbolism of lordship by twinning castles with parish churches or monasteries" (Gilchrist 1999: 235). Charles Coulson argues that new Norman castles were often adjoined to churches, creating a "landscape of lordship" (Coulson 2000:93) and Oliver Creighton remarks that "in many cases, castles and churches formed a magnate within a settlement" (Creighton 1999: 32). Churches are regularly found in proximity to mottes such as at Aughton, Humberside, Rockingham, Northamptonshire and numerous examples in Herefordshire (Morris 1989: 250). Richard Morris (*ibid.*: 263) suggests that important castles with their own chapels "were not regularly accessible to ordinary citizens" and in such cases, "it is normal to find a parish church standing in attendance *outside the stronghold*" (*ibid.*: 264 my emphasis).

Another set of features of castles' lives which had power effects and which did not occur at other lordly residences were those which linked castle communities to events and people of national importance. These included the hosting of nationally-significant (including royal) figures and the

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activities of castles during warfare. One of the important aspects of these types of events is the way in which they rendered the castle suddenly permeable to the peasantry. In the case of visitors, this is because of the need for servants, many of whom were probably recruited locally (Pounds 1990: 198), and in the case of warfare, the castle (predominantly in border areas) acted as a refuge. That this did occur, and was not simply a formal requirement, is well-documented. For example, Dunstanburgh Castle in Northumberland was built after the battle of Bannockburn in 1314, and included areas specifically intended to accommodate the people of surrounding areas (*ibid.*: 205). Similarly, in May of 1323, a royal mandate was sent to the sheriffs of Cumberland and the king's constables of Scarborough, Tickhill, Pontefract, Knaresborough and the Sheriff of York instructing them to harbour people fleeing from Scottish attack, and they were ordered to inform all other keepers of castles in their regions to do the same (Coulson 2003: 256). The effect of these events was to open up the castle to the peasantry, thus, at this time, rendering castles less mysterious and unknown, and sapping them of some of the meanings of monolithic authority built up by the various processes described above. Simultaneously, however, royal and other visits would have had the effect of firmly emplacing the peasantry within the feudal order. To receive suddenly an influx of so many people of various and much higher social rank than those encountered on a day-to-day level would have made the peasants acutely aware of their own, extremely lowly, social position. Seigneurial and royal power would, therefore, have been a quite differently-experienced force for a peasant working in a castle during a royal visit from one whose encounters with powerful figures were limited to arguing with the manorial bailiff in a village with a non-resident lord (such as at Wharram Percy).

It can be seen that castles operated in important respects quite differently from other manor houses. It has been argued in previous chapters that the peasantry could co-opt the landscapes and settings of lordship in their lived use of them. This could certainly have occurred in castle villages and would, again, have depended on whether the lord was resident and so on. However, the physical proximity of church and castle does seem more pronounced

than that of churches in other manors, rendering this co-option less simple in these contexts. With respect to the manor court being held under the lowering height of the castle this, too, would have engendered an experience different from that of other villages. Standing outside the building, constantly negotiating labour services (particularly in frontier regions such as the Scottish Borders or the Welsh Marches where the demesne was generally not leased out (Pounds 1990: 201)), with the knowledge of the jail within – these material factors would have created a context in which co-option of lordly meanings would have been a good deal more difficult than in other settlements.

It has been argued here that it is likely that there were significant differences in the experience of social power between peasant who lived in a 'castle-village' and those who did not. The peasants' relationship with this authority would have been made one of coercion, forged in the experiences of constructing the castle (or the knowledge that an ancestor had been forced to), of living in the view of a tall building housing the lord or his representatives, of habitually lacking access to and therefore knowledge of its interior, of knowing that prisoners were held therein and that they would be executed on nearby gallows, and worshipping in a church near the castle which may have been owned and controlled by the lord. At times when the castle was open and became part of 'the familiar' for a peasant, it was often only at times of vulnerability to attack or in contexts that served to remind them of their subordinate social position. It is, however, also very important to stress the limits of these suggested meanings. They would only have obtained in certain castle contexts. Temporal, geographical and other factors must be taken into account. If a castle was not particularly large, not associated with a church, not visited by important people and if it held its manor court inside its walls, the meanings associated with it may have been little different from those of other manor houses.

A final consideration is that of the gendered experience and effects of the medieval castle, of which there has been some recent discussion in the scholarly literature. Roberta Gilchrist has discussed the position of

aristocratic women who lived in castles and noted that they were often confined to towers and may even have had entirely separate courts within the precinct (Gilchrist 1996; 1999). She has outlined ways in which castle architecture constructed notions of femininity via ideas of chastity, purity and confinement (*ibid.*). When castles with separate women's courts can be identified, it would be necessary to establish that members of the peasantry had had opportunities to observe these arrangements (i.e. as servants) before an effect on them can be postulated. Insofar as this can be established, it could be argued that these observations would have served to throw into relief and thereby denaturalise the peasants' own, non-segregated, gender arrangements, allowing these to enter into the discursive realm and thus open them to contestation or reinforcement. Segregation would have had associations with the church for the peasants, as this is likely to have been the only other arena in which the peasantry experienced gender segregation in their own lives. It can also be noted that both peasant men and women are likely to have been equally familiar with the outer wards of a castle, as both would have carted hay and other products into it.

Castles have also been thought about as masculine areas. Tadgh O'Keeffe (2001) has argued that they may have been read as masculine due to the 'patricentric' nature of the inheritance of power in the middle ages. Similarly, Charles Coulson (1995: 195) writes that the martial ethos of late medieval aristocratic culture emphasised virility and machismo in the defensive works of the period. These are, however, problematic arguments in many respects, considering the number of castle lords who were women due to the presence of widows and during times when men were at war, at court, or on pilgrimage. In the normal course of events, noblemen could often be away overseas or in London serving the monarch (Archer 1997), and crusading too took them away for substantial periods of time. Widows particularly had more power after their first marriage and could choose to remain unmarried and devote themselves to estate management (Platt 1996: 61), acting in a legally independent state called *femme sole*. It has been estimated by Rowena Archer (1997), based on the 1436 income tax returns, that of all the wealth of the upper ranks of peers, a third was held by female

counterparts. In terms of people who *used* castles, and the experience of those who observed this use, many castles may, thus, not have been 'read' as specifically masculine at all, if their lords were not men. Connected with this is the fact that much recent scholarship indicates that castles did not, over the majority of their lifetimes, play an active military role and therefore that attributions of virility and so on would not have been the primary resonances which they expressed. Coulson's later writings, indeed (2003), argue that the taste displayed in castle architecture was not so much military as seigneurial and hierarchical. The 'gendering' of castles from the peasants' point of view, was, it can be seen, strongly affected by the specific practices that occurred within it. Certainly, if a castle was routinely garrisoned, was the site of regular jousting tournaments, and was habitually occupied by a male lord, it would have been read largely as a military and masculine space by the observing peasants. However, if a castle was often not inhabited by its lord, or if the lord was a woman, or if the castle was never garrisoned or prepared for military action, this is unlikely to have been the case. The 'gendering' of castles, in terms of the peasantry therefore, was reliant on similar factors and practices as that of other manor houses, and was accordingly varied depending on the historical context.

5.3.2 Crayke

Throughout this study, it has been repeatedly stressed that the wider social context of any given castle must be investigated before specific meanings are ascribed. As has been argued, the specific meanings attached by the peasantry to a medieval castle were reliant on a number of factors co-existing. The following discussion is an attempt to illustrate the ways in which the ideas outlined above can be utilised in a specific context, and the ways in which the presence of the castle interacted with other features in a community to produce specific environments of social power. The intention is to explore a castle in a Yorkshire village which had also been subject to archaeological investigation of the body of the settlement. The only example which met these criteria was the village of Crayke on the edge of the Vale of York approximately 12 miles north of the city of York (Fig. 45). Castle Hill

at Crayke has been investigated archaeologically on three occasions – in 1937, 1956 and 1982 (Adams 1990). Most of the finds were of early medieval date and have related to the monastic and immediate post-monastic phase of the use of the hill, both of which are pre-Conquest. Some Roman and later medieval material was recovered, however, and the late medieval village lay-out has been studied (*ibid.*). The castle has also been researched and its broad history is known.

Throughout the medieval period until the mid-nineteenth century, Crayke was a peculiar of the Bishops of Durham. The present castle was built in and around a preceding motte and bailey fortification (Ryder 1982), which was certainly in existence by 1195 (Douglas-Irvine 1923: 120), and which was probably raised by Bishop Hugh Pudsey after the dismantling of the episcopal castle at Northallerton in 1174 (Illingworth 1970). The castle was remodelled on two occasions in the fifteenth century, during which two tower houses were built. It lies on the summit of Castle Hill which is very steep and which is the most elevated part of the parish. The site "commands magnificent views in every direction" (Douglas-Irvine 1923: 120). Given its position, the fact that the village was below it, and that one of the buildings (The Great Chamber built early in the fifteenth century) was four stories high and the second (The New Tower, built at the end of the century) was three stories high, Crayke Castle certainly had the ability to act in the surveillance role previously outlined (pp.17, 189). The first remodelling occurred in the early fifteenth century when the massive Great Chamber was built – which was 70 feet long by 28 feet broad – and while the building of a large kitchen range was commenced by Bishop Neville in 1441 (Fig. 46) (Pevsner 1966; Illingworth 1970). There is an embattled parapet around the entire building, and small, square embattled turrets were positioned at each end (Douglas-Irvine 1923: 120). In order to carry out the construction work, the account of Robert Ingelard, supervisor of the works at the castle in 1441-2 relates that 1080 "freestones" were cut from the quarries at Yeresley (approximately five miles away) and Brandesby (two to three miles away) and were carted from there by the tenants at Crayke (Raine 1869/70: 66). It seems that the tenants were obliged to work on this structure for a

substantial period of time as nine years after the cutting of the freestones the kitchen was still unfinished (*ibid.*). Throughout the medieval period, therefore, the villagers of Crayke lived with a castle high on the hill above them, possibly experiencing it as a site of surveillance. For many years during the fifteenth century, they had to help construct a new castle, doubtless at no small disruption to their agricultural labour. With their own bodies they experienced the bishops' power to deploy resources, both financial (as the raising of tower houses was a costly business (Pound 1990: 290)) and human.

The castle's position and the labour extracted for its construction would have brought the oppressive burden of lordship into sharper focus for the tenantry of Crayke, a feeling that would have been enhanced by the fact that the castle was, as was common, surrounded by the various appurtenances of lordship. For example, a 'great barn' was present in a flat meadow in the inner bailey, and a dovecote is mentioned in 1379-80 (Douglas-Irvine 1923: 121; Department of Culture, Media and Sport scheduling document 1999, North Yorkshire SMR reference number NYM1824). The bishops also had a park, of 2000 roods (approximately six miles) in circumference and 30 to 100 roods (approximately 140 to 500 metres) in breadth, as recorded in 1560-70 (Adams 1990; North Yorkshire Ordnance Survey Record Card SE57SE15 North Yorkshire SMR reference 1829). Henry III (who reigned between 1216 and 1272) granted the bishops a saltery, a trap for catching deer, on the west side of the park at some time during his reign (Raine 1896: 69). It was well stocked with deer and timber and there are many references to poaching from the thirteenth through to the sixteenth centuries. The bishops of Durham, therefore, in a highly concentrated space around the castle, had gathered around them all the usual paraphernalia of lordship. Barns can be seen to represent lords' at least partial control or appropriation of the products of their tenants' labour (Creighton 2002: 82), while parks, which have been discussed previously in this work, have been described as "miniaturised landscapes of exclusion, reflecting directly the coercive power and status of castle lords" (*ibid.*: 191).

This experience of the power of the bishops was intensified by the disruption to the physical fabric of the village that the castle caused. In the outer precinct there are remains of cultivation terraces, some of which pre-date the castle. It has been suggested that in the thirteenth century, this precinct was enclosed and continued in use for agricultural purposes which were now linked to the castle (Department of Culture, Media and Sport scheduling document 1999, North Yorkshire SMR reference number NYM1824). Disruption was also caused by the construction of two trackways which were built in the medieval period to allow access from the castle to Brandsby Street in the village (Fig. 47) (Adams 1990). The position of the first trackway has been reconstructed from an investigation of the early field systems as well as the evidence of the later trackway, and it has been shown to cut through the medieval fields. Its precise date is unknown and it may have been constructed in the early medieval period (*ibid.*: 46). The second trackway, depicted on a map of 1688, has been dated to the period 1250-1350 as it must have been created to provide access to the castle of this period and it cut through settlement areas (Adams 1990). These features demonstrate a characteristic of lordship that was also seen at the village of Wharram Percy, that is to say, that on a macro-level, lords could often succeed in treating the village landscape in a cavalier manner.

Another pertinent feature of lordship for the peasants of medieval Crayke is the evidence for the very close relationship that the bishops of Durham seem to have had with the parish church. The castle was situated in close proximity to the church of St. Cuthbert, which appears to have been rebuilt in the fifteenth century (Doulgas-Irvine 1923). It has embattled parapets and pinnacles (Pevsner 1966) and, in 1690, it was reported to display a badge of Bishop Neville in one of its windows (Raine 1869). Neville became bishop in 1438 and thus this badge is presumably of medieval origin. It seems quite likely, given the chronological concurrence as well as the architectural similarities, not to mention the badge, that it was Neville himself who was responsible for simultaneously remodelling the church and the castle. It is not clear whether the inhabitants of the castle used the church themselves as there may have been a chapel in the castle (*ibid.*), but whether they did or

not, it seems that the fifteenth-century bishop was stamping his authority and identity on the fabric of the church in which the villagers worshipped. The bishops held the advowson of the church throughout the period and even privileged their priests with a more elaborate rood screen –the eastern side was much more heavily decorated than the side that the villagers would have seen (Douglas-Irvine 1923: 123)!

There is no indication of the venue in which the manor court was held and it is possible that, as occurred at Pembroke Castle, the manor court was held at the castle gate. It was physically separated from the village by a curtain wall and protected by a gatehouse (Doulgas-Irvine 1923: 120; Ryder 1982). The separation of the castle complex from the village is further emphasised by the fact that it is likely that both the castle and the village each contained a medieval pottery kiln. Excavations in 1937 in what would have been the area of medieval village discovered a kiln dated to the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries (Adams 1990; Sheppard 1939) as did excavation in Castle Garth (Adams 1990: 37). These kilns were of similar date (*ibid.*: 46) and indicate that there was no sharing of this resource between the inhabitants of the two areas. However, any separation would have been continually undercut in practice during the regular visits to the castle by royalty and bishops alike. The bishops of Durham frequently stayed in the castle en route to their manor of Howden in the East Riding (Illingworth 1970). For example, Bishop Pudsey dined there as he was travelling from Durham in 1195. He was taken ill afterwards and rode on to Howden where he died (Douglas-Irvine 1923: 120). It is also known that Bishop Kellaw held a council at Crayke Castle in 1314 (*ibid.*) and that royal visitors were also common. King John was at Crayke in 1209, 1210-11 and again in 1211. Henry III visited in 1227, Edward I in 1292, Edward II in 1316 and Edward III in 1333 (*ibid.*). The bishops would certainly have been present to host the monarchs at the castle. The bishops were some of the most powerful lords of the region (Department of Culture, Media and Sport scheduling document 1999), and would have travelled with a large retinue. Robert Swanson (1989: 82) has drawn attention to the requirement for bishops to maintain themselves in keeping with their status as great magnates including

maintaining an appropriate household; their presence in the castle at Crayke, therefore, is likely to have required the recruitment of the villagers as servants.

This frequency of royal and other visitations and the practices that they entailed, allows us to think about the differences that existed between Crayke and its neighbouring settlements. Obviously there would have been linkages and movement between them but other features of the manor would have set it apart. Because Crayke was a peculiar of Durham, its tenants would not have been obliged to attend various county and other courts at which their neighbours would have had to appear. The separate jurisdictional status of the manor would have been emphasised had it been surrounded by ditches and other bounds as claimed by the bishop of Durham in the reign of King John (AD 1199-1216) (Douglas-Irvine 1923:122; and see Samson 1992). The very presence of the castle and its visitors may well have reinforced the villagers' sense of themselves as people with a specific and separate identity. The relative familiarity with personages of great status would have, again, set them apart from the inhabitants of other manors, and may even have been something to boast about.

The gender of the lords of the manor and the inhabitants of the castle should also be mentioned here. Because the lords of the manor were bishops, and therefore members of the clergy, it can be argued that they were 'gendered' differently from lay men (Swanson 1999). Because the clergy were celibate and therefore did not engage in stereotypically masculine behaviour such as impregnating women, providing for a family and participating in battle, it has been argued that they engaged in "'cross-gender' behaviour" (*ibid.*: 161). However, it can be stressed that this marginal nature of clerical masculinity had its limits. Particularly in the later Middle Ages, the fact that the clergy did not fight was becoming less important (Cullum 1999) and, from the point of view of the peasant population, whose members would not have regularly born arms, this feature would not have been considered as vital to the maintenance of masculinity as it would have been to members of the noble class. Therefore, the bishops' lack of arms-bearing could have

been seen as relatively unimportant in estimations of their masculinity. It is, in fact, possible to argue that there was little difference in the perception of the bishops by the peasantry from others members of the lordly classes at all, as Patricia Cullum (1997:190) has argued that, by the fifteenth century the clergy were slowly being amalgamated into the ranks of the gentry, and were partially losing a specifically clerical identity. However, the sexual status of the clergy may well have been a source of masculine hostility, that is, hostility which specifically emanated from the men of the village. Robert Swanson (1999) has drawn attention to the myriad ways in which the clergy's celibacy was perceived as threatening to lay men. Because the bishops would still have looked like men but did not perform one of the defining acts of masculinity, there would have been an initial confusion in terms of the perception of their gender from the men of the village, which would also have been caused by the fact that clergy often flouted the rules of chastity. In addition, the supposed superiority of the bishops, both in terms of their social status as lords *and* in terms of their moral superiority as chaste men –which would have been perceived as threatening the key role that medieval men played – (*ibid.*), may have led the bishops of Crayke to have been viewed as more oppressive and threatening for the men of the village than for the women.

The intention of this case-study has not been to identify 'the' definitive meaning of Crayke Castle for the peasants of the village. There would not have been one, but rather many active meanings, but this is not to say that there was an endless array of them. I have here identified some pertinent historical and material cultural features of the castle and its context to suggest that the castle itself and the practices related to it led to experiences of seigneurial power at Crayke that were oppressive in ways different from lordship in non-castle manors. However, some of the practices associated with the presence of the castle, coupled with Crayke's tenurial status, may have suggested meanings other than those of burdensome lordship, meanings which would have added to a sense of solidarity between all those who lived in the village, as well as a sense of separation from their neighbours. This would not have effected anything as simple as the

undercutting of the more negative meanings of the castle, but would have been experienced side by side with them.

The preceding case study has, it is hoped, demonstrated that a particular approach to the documentary and archaeological records can allow us to investigate castles as something more than simply architectural monuments, and to write their social archaeologies from perspectives other than solely those of their immediate inhabitants. In order to look at castles in terms of their effects on the peasantry, we need to look for documentary evidence of peasant involvement in them, whether through building work, service work at the castle or as refugees. We need also to look at the documentary record to see how often they were occupied by their lords as well as at the sex of those lords in order to determine the 'gendered' connotations they may have had. From an archaeological point of view, we need to note any similarities, spatial or architectural between the castle and the parish church in order to consider experiential linkages between these for the peasants. Finally, we need to consider the phenomenological elements of castles from the point of view of peasants with regards to their topographical setting, the extent of the visibility of their interiors and so on. It is only through addressing these sorts of questions that we can hope to increase the scope of both castle and peasant studies in the medieval period.

5.4 Pottery

Items of earthenware are, by a considerable margin, the most ubiquitous artefact recovered from medieval sites. There has been much emphasis in the literature (most notably in the volumes of *Medieval Ceramics*) on the need to broaden the range of questions that are usually asked of the ceramic material (e.g. Moorhouse 1978, 1986; Davey 1983; see also Cumberpatch and Blinkhorn 1997) and it has been noted that practitioners are "still a long way from using pottery in the way that prehistorians or anthropologists use their data in reconstructing patterns of social or economic behaviour" (McCarthy and Brooks 1988:2). Changes that have been called for over the

years are, however, slowly being implemented. For example, information gleaned from pottery analysis is now routinely combined with that from other sources and fed back into the general interpretation of the site in recent excavation reports, such as in the second monograph on the medieval domestic settlement at Wharram Percy in which pottery forms were linked with other evidence to propose, tentatively, the existence of a 'higher-status' peasant household (Wrathmell 1989a: 22-23).

This section seeks to explore the ways in which pottery analysis can help address the kinds of questions focused on in this study as a whole, and asks what pottery can tell us about peasant experience and social life, particularly the intersections of gender and power. Before these issues are considered, the various interpretive uses to which medieval pottery is customarily put will briefly be outlined. Traditionally, pottery has been used almost solely as a dating tool, although this is now recognised as being its least reliable characteristic (Moorhouse 1986) as pottery forms remain stable over long periods of time. Other types of analysis used are fabric analysis, form analysis and site analysis. The following discussion will largely draw upon the categories outlined by Duncan Brown in his 1988 paper published in *Medieval Ceramics*, as it offers a particularly clear exposition of the use of ceramics in archaeological investigations of this period.

Fabric analyses consist of detailed studies of ceramic material made in order to reach precise conclusions about the provenance of its constituent clays. From this, a "consideration of trade mechanisms and the forces that controlled them" (Brown 1988:18) is made possible; much attention is paid to market areas, possible trade routes and so on. In terms of the approach to the study of the medieval peasantry that is being developed here, this is probably the least useful type of ceramic analysis. [2] Most peasants would

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[2] This is not true of all periods, however. In times of culture contact and colonisation, the distribution of pottery fabrics, as well as their form, can tell us about such issues as assimilation and resistance. For example, Duncan Brown has studied both the distribution and form of late Anglo-Saxon pottery with respect to the location of Danelaw regions. He concluded that differences between the Danelaw and Wessex, in terms of both factors, point to cultural resistance by those in non-occupied regions, particularly in Oxfordshire (Brown 2003).

have bought their pots from local market towns or travelling chapmen (Moorhouse 1981), and therefore the place where the vessels originated may not have been known by, or considered important to, the consumer (Blinkhorn 1998-9: 40; Brown 1997a: 100). However, if very distinct boundaries are observed in pottery distribution, as have been between the territories of Lindsey and 'Stamfordshire' in Anglo-Scandinavian Lincolnshire (Symonds 2003), it could be suggested that the factors which ensured that the chapmen and other tradesmen were only obtaining and distributing pottery derived from this area were of wider social and experiential importance.

Form analysis is the categorisation of pottery sherds in terms of broad functional groups; whether it formed part of a jar, a jug and so on. This type of analysis can tell us about the process of manufacture and the technical developments of the potting industry, as well as the various local and international cultural influences that may have exerted themselves on the potter (Brown 1988). These latter issues are not of great importance to our discussion here as they refer specifically to cultural forces that exerted themselves on the producer of the vessel rather than the consumer. Vitally, however, the ability of form analysis to communicate information about possible uses of the vessel has many implications for discussions of status which will be elaborated on below.

Finally, site analysis – the quantification of pottery attributes across various areas of the site – can provide information about activities taking place in particular parts of the site as well as about relative proportions of certain types of ware between areas of the site (Brown 1988), conclusions which both have implications for considerations of wealth. Site analysis can also tell us about the sequence of appearance and disappearance of ceramic types which is of less value to an experiential analysis, as this long-term historical process would have not been noticeable in the lives of individual members of the peasantry and may not have been important enough to have been remarked on and remembered by generations who lived subsequent to the changes.

It can be seen, then, that of the kinds of analysis of ceramics routinely being undertaken, it is those which broadly try to ascertain the *function* of the pottery under consideration, whether through individual analysis of the form of the piece or through quantified site analysis, that are the most valuable for a consideration of peasant experience. The attribution of a certain function to a particular jar or pot, however, is extremely difficult. It is recognised that the few broad forms regularly found in medieval assemblages – the jar or cooking pot, the bowl, the jug – can be put to a huge number of uses - domestic, agricultural, industrial, medical, even magical (Moorhouse 1978; Blinkhorn 1998/9). Documentary evidence has provided examples of pots being used to fight with, garden with, and store various items in, and even of sherds themselves being recommended for use as mixing or burning surfaces in medical and industrial recipes (Moorhouse 1978). It is clear that form analysis needs to be used with caution when attempting to attribute function to a particular piece of earthenware (Davey 1988) and other data utilised in conjunction with it. One of these additional pieces of data which should be taken into account is the position in the site at which the pot was found, although the problems of attributing function to medieval peasant buildings are well known (see Wrathmell 1989a). Defining an excavated building as domestic or non-domestic can be extremely difficult for various reasons. For example, buildings could swap functions in their lifetimes, and at the same time, features routinely used to ascribe functions to buildings can, in fact, be found in diverse context or be absent. For example, hearths could be non-domestic - for example, used in dairies (Moorhouse 1978) – or the hearth stone could be robbed leaving little trace of them, while drainage sumps in byres could be robbed out or, on chalky surfaces, simply be rendered unnecessary. Given these difficulties, the full suite of available tools for ascertaining the use of pottery should be employed as it is only by doing so, and in conjunction with an examination of small find and structural evidence, that the necessary evidential robustness for a positive attribution of function of medieval ceramic vessels will be achieved. This suite involves not only form analysis but work on wear marks, sooting characteristics and residue analysis (Moorhouse 1986).

Such an approach was adopted at West Cotton, Northamptonshire, where a combination of spatial provenance information, sooting analysis, and residue analysis allowed certain vessels of particular capacities to be unambiguously identified as having been used for cookery (Blinkhorn 1998/9:42). The application of residue analysis has been particularly important at this site as brassicas (either cabbage or possibly turnip greens) have been able to be identified from the traces remaining on the pottery (Evershed, Heron and Goad 1991), which is particularly useful as seed and pollen remains from vegetables are rare. This method has even allowed both regions of accumulation and densities of substances such as lipids to be identified on excavated pots. Using the method of gas chromatography/mass spectrometry, specific types of lipid such as tallow and beeswax have been identified and, combined with the shape of the vessel and sooting, the attribution of specific functions such as use in candle-manufacture or as lamps has been possible (Charters *et al.* 1993)

The accurate attribution of function to pottery is important for a discussion of the experience of the medieval peasantry for a number of reasons. Firstly, attributions on a basic level, such as knowing that a particular jar was used as a cooking pot, can lead to deductions concerning the number of people being cooked for if the vessel's size is considered (Blinkhorn 1998/9: 41). In turn, this can aid in understanding peasant family structure, social eating habits and so on. It is necessary, however, that these attributions to do not just rely on sooting analysis, as vessels could be heated for a number of other purposes. Secondly, the help that pottery can give in the difficult task of assigning function to an excavated building can inform us about the activities that were carried out on peasant crofts. For example, it may be possible to deduce that more than one building on a toft was in domestic use at the same time, which could be determined by finding a large number of pots which definitely had been used for cookery. This would have implications for our knowledge of peasant family structure. This is a debated point as some authors suggest that very few peasants lived with members of their extended families (Goldberg 1995) while others are more ambivalent on this point (Smith 1982). Nevertheless, ceramic evidence

alone will not usually be sufficient for this purpose given the poor dating resolution for most medieval pottery. Thirdly, functional determinations of pottery can also help to pin-point the spatial location of activities carried out in the village and surrounds, and this, coupled with our knowledge of the gendered aspects of these activities, will have implications for our understanding of the movement of men and women throughout the landscape.

Perhaps more importantly, the careful attribution of pot function on a site level can be informative about differential consumption between peasant households. Throughout this study, it has been highlighted that there were differences between the peasants of any given community; agriculturalists in any village could range in wealth from yardlanders to cottagers and these differences had power effects inasmuch as church sacraments had to be paid for, guild membership was restricted to those who could pay fees, and so on. Differences in resources seem to have varied in their impact on medieval villages, from the postulated large-scale variations in building structure and location according to wealth at Wawne, to the substantial village cohesion that appears at Wharram Percy. An analysis of pottery consumption between households could add an important element to the consideration of wealth differentials in the village, the forms that these took, and the power effects various member of the peasantry prioritised and deployed. The ceramic evidence can help us in two ways. Firstly, there is the basic distribution of the presence of items of 'high-status' pottery, for example decorated cups, chafing dishes, dripping pans and so on. These sorts of observations are routinely made in excavation reports. I argue below, however, that attributions of wealth must only be made in conjunction with other evidence. Secondly, simply knowing that an item was part of a jug or a cooking pot can be of interest. For example, if a number of ceramic cooking pots are found in fourteenth-century contexts, when it is known that metal cooking pots were in widespread use among the peasantry (Dyer 1982; Le Patourel 1968), a suggestion of low status could be made (although, again, ideally only in conjunction with other evidence). Similarly, quantification of jugs and other items which were used primarily as tableware and which

are therefore suggestive of formal dining habits (Brown 1997b), would be indicative of relative household wealth. It must be noted that on the rare sites, such as West Cotton, at which pottery has been found in middens, investigations into differences in wealth between households will be significantly easier than on most peasant sites. At West Cotton, the ceramic material was deposited in such a way as it was identifiable to specific tenements and even to specific rooms (Blinkhorn 1998/9). This is very unusual, as most medieval pottery was used to manure fields, and therefore only a very small proportion of that originally used is found during excavations of medieval houses.

In order to allow researchers to determine differential pottery consumption between households, significant changes in conventions of pottery reportage will have to occur as will be discussed below. One site in the region covered by this study did, however, contain a sufficiently detailed pottery report for an attempt of this sort to be made. The site used for this exercise is at Bolton, Fangoss, Humberside, the excavation of which was reported in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* of 1978 (Coppack 1978). Three buildings – Buildings One, Three, and Four were dated to the late medieval period. The pottery groups from these periods are shown in the table below:

Table 1: Late medieval pottery groups from Bolton, Humberside

Pottery Group	Provenance	Date
C	Occupation phase of Building One	Mid-fourteenth century
E	Construction and early occupation of Building Three	Early-fourteenth century
F	Occupation of Building Three	Mid-fourteenth century
I	Occupation of Building Four	Late-fourteenth to early-fifteenth centuries

The only directly comparable pottery groups in terms of the investigation of differences between household consumption of pottery in the same temporal period, are Groups C and F, both dated to the middle of the fourteenth

century. The pottery of these two groups was compared in order to explore any differences in the use of pottery between these two contemporary houses.[3] The results indicated that broadly similar proportions of bowls and jugs were used in these two households at this time: the Building One assemblage comprised 64% of cooking pots while 35% were jugs; and Group F in Building Three revealed 57% cooking pots and 24% jugs. On the basis of this evidence, we may reasonably surmise a broad similarity in the uses of ceramic material between these two buildings in the middle of the fourteenth century insofar as the percentages of jugs and pots were the same, and that this may indicate the present of houses of similar status. The assemblage from Building Three, however, showed considerably more variety than that from Building One, as 10% of the assemblage was comprised of bowl sherds and 6% of sherds were from drinking pots. However, it is unfortunate that both these conclusions are severely circumscribed at this site given the differences in the area of the tenements excavated. Building One only had two trenches cut through it, whereas over half of the area of Building Three was excavated. If the areas investigated had been more comparable, it would have been potentially fruitful to contrast the broad similarity in pottery form with small find and structural evidence in order to see whether this similarity was shared over other types of material culture. However, on no other site in my study area was it possible to carry out such a comparison on the ceramic assemblage as the reportage of the evidence was inadequate for the task.

It is not just functional analysis, however, that can help us in our exploration of the role that pottery played in the expression of status differences in the medieval village. The proportion of decorated wares between house assemblages would also be informative in this regard. Even though decorated ware would not have been much more expensive than plainer versions (Le Patourel 1979), an analysis of its proportion of the assemblage of each house plot would allow any differences between households to be observed.

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[3] All figures are based on sherd counts and all percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

An important role of pottery analysis in terms of a discussion of peasant experience can be seen, through functional and other forms of analysis, to be concerned with the ascription of status. We have seen how pottery analysis can add to investigations of status by offering a potential means of *attributing* status to certain households; what can it add in terms of a conceptual consideration of this aspect of peasant life?

It is, firstly, important for medieval archaeologists to start to think more subtly about how wealth, status, and material culture interacted in this period. While it does seem likely that there were links between these aspects of social life, the nature of these links is not at all clear. When material culture of superior quality is found, archaeologists tend automatically to attribute this to greater wealth, and therefore to the higher status of the people in control of that wealth. Yet, in fact, the ways in which greater wealth worked to produce socially-bestowed esteem in the Middle Ages are not clear. The information we have for some of the *practices* which differed between rich and poor, for example the fact that wealthy peasants held official positions more than did poorer peasants and that they tended to act as pledges more that poorer peasants (e.g. Britton 1977; Pimsler 1977), were not necessarily related to increased social status as they were not necessarily a privilege, as was outlined in Chapter Four (pp. 125-126). In contrast, in terms of use of *material culture,* the very fact that some people were prepared to invest in more expensively-decorated ceramics or dress accessories, which were not bought for their increased utility, does seem to imply that some value, connected with something that could be called 'status', was attached to these superior goods. These contrasts lead me on to my second point which is that we must be careful not to conflate the finding of *one* type of better-quality material culture with 'wealth'. Archaeologists tend to make mechanistic links between the finding of one example, or examples, of one type of good-quality material culture, and the assumption of wealth. It can be argued, however, that these good-quality items are not necessarily evidence for a generally higher level of 'wealth' but are in fact, evidence for the making of choices. We need to pay particular attention to

which types of material culture people were investing in. People may have been deliberately choosing to invest in dress accessories, rather than pottery for example, for specific reasons. The 'work' these types of material culture could do in society was not identical, and opportunities for social display of diverse types of material culture varied (see below). We also need to ask why people might have been investing in dress accessories, for example, rather than buying more land or lending money or utilizing their financial resources in other ways. This is where we need to think about the specific nature of the links between wealth, status, and types of material culture. The choices that people were making can potentially give us an understanding of which *particular types* of material culture created greater social status in the community. Returning to the first point, therefore, it can be seen that while practices that differed between rich and poor may not have been the factor which led to the bestowing of social esteem on the wealthy, rather, this social esteem was bestowed by the consumption of particular kinds of material culture. Particular kinds of material culture can be seen not to 'reflect' status, but to actively to 'create' it.

When considering whether and how particular types of material culture may have been creative of status differences, an important factor to examine is that of opportunity for display. Visibility is often a characteristic seen as important to items of medieval earthenware. For example, jugs and ornate Saintonge mortars in high-status urban houses were interpreted as having been meant to be seen, (Brown 1997b), and Chris Cumberpatch has posited a dichotomy between glazed, decorated and brightly coloured vessels associated with the more 'public' aspects of dining, and unglazed, undecorated and often discoloured vessels, associated with 'non-public' places and practices (Cumberpatch 1997). Similarly, emulation or adoption of elite practices is sometimes inferred by the presence of such things as lobed cups and chafing dishes in peasant contexts (Stamper and Croft 2000; Wrathmell 1989a). 'High-status' and wealth are therefore ascribed to peasant households in which there is ceramic evidence that practices similar to those of the elite took place. There is also an assumption that some pottery had a 'display' function insofar as a pottery assemblage can be split

into 'public' and 'non-public' pieces. The assumption that display was important in the acquisition of certain pieces of earthenware will now be examined and compared briefly with the display role of dress accessories.

The issue of display in the consideration of excavated peasant dress accessories will be considered in the final section of this chapter, and it is suggested there that in wearing many of these items the peasantry were engaged in fashioning identities which were resistant to those constructed for them by their lords. The pottery evidence, by contrast, appears to tell quite a different story with respect to the nature of display, identity and the role of material culture. It must first be noted that the messages sent by the wearing of peasant dress accessories were primarily received by *viewers*. Once chosen and affixed by the wearer, the main 'work' of identity-expression or display that they accomplished was via the people who saw them. The nature of the identities formed in the medieval village varied according to the type of material culture deployed. In the wearing of items of dress accessories, it was individual identity that was being formed. Gender-group identities were constructed by various church ceremonies practices associated with tithing groups, and village-wide identities were expressed and formed via large-scale co-operative works. Pottery and its associated practices, however, were constitutive mainly of *household* identities. If wealthy peasants drank ale out of fine cups, ate meat cooked using a dripping pan and had exotic and decorative wares displayed in the house, they were primarily engaged in the creation of a household identity; one that would have been largely invisible to other villagers. This conclusion, however, contradicts David Austin's suggestion that that in medieval houses "the space before the hearth [was] ... public, an area into which the neighbour or visitor may intrude with scant but due ceremony" (Austin 1990:58). His argument, however, is supported only by a nineteenth-century ethnographic parallel from Ireland, and is therefore not necessarily relevant. Moreover, he contradicts himself later in the paper by concluding that "the house was essentially private" (*ibid.*: 75). It can be suggested that the space of the house was *primarily* viewed and experienced by those who lived in it and that, therefore, it is these individuals who would

have been primarily affected by the materials used therein. Similarly, any practices within the household which could be interpreted as 'emulative' of lordly activities would have had limited power effects beyond any change wrought in individual and household self-perception.

A few further points can be made with regard to the medieval peasant experience of earthenware. It has been noted that the peasantry employed only a limited number of forms of pottery. Containers for cooking, fetching water, washing clothes, dairying, mixing medicines were all of substantially similar shape and size. However, this need not imply a lack of experiential discrimination between items, nor that individual pieces were casually used for a variety of different purposes. Things may look similar - for example a track suit and a pair of pyjamas, or an office and a home study - but evoke very different meanings according to the uses to which they are put. We need not assume that because we can see no sizeable difference between vessels that no more precise categorisation understood by medieval people existed.

In a very important paper, Chris Cumberpatch has remarked on the emotional aspects of certain pieces of ceramic ware, notably in connection with ceramic jugs (Cumberpatch 1997). He outlines the powerful elements of medieval life which came together in the consumption of ale in a variety of situations such as during the harvest, as part of boon works and so on. Some writers have gone beyond simply describing pottery to discuss its use and relationships with human activity but Cumberpatch's is a rare example of a paper which goes even further and discusses the *meanings* of medieval pottery, a task he also achieves in his paper discussing medieval anthropomorphic pottery (Cumberpatch forthcoming). As such, his work represents an important step in the analysis of medieval ceramic assemblages. His 1997 paper draws attention to the phenomenological importance of pottery attributes which are potentially of even more significance for the discussion of peasant experience than the attribution of function which has been concentrated on thus far. It would be very interesting to be able to extend his analysis of relationships between texture,

colour, form and, I would add, decorative features to try to understand patterns of association and therefore categories which were meaningful to the medieval peasantry. It is difficult to find a pottery report which records all of these attributes for each sherd. At Bolton, Humberside, for example, it was not possible to evaluate the texture of the pottery as, for example, Humberwares were only identified as 'sandy' or 'smooth', which does not correspond to Cumberpatch's categorisation of these wares, specific types of which fall into both the 'gritty' and 'sandy' categorises of comparison which he uses for his phenomenological analysis (Coppack 1978). However, I undertook an analysis to compare other attributes, and an extremely strong correlation was found between form and the presence of glaze or decoration. Of the four pottery groups of relevant status and period, all of the jugs in three groups showed evidence for glaze or decoration and in the fourth group, 92% of all jugs showed evidence for these embellishments. Among cooking pots sherds, on the other hand, only 8%, 10%, 24% and 33%, respectively were glazed or decorated. This evidence clearly supports Cumberpatch's proposition of a separation of public and private aspects of ceramics in food preparation.

What can we say in summary about the potential that already-existing types of ceramic analysis have for the exploration of the social experience of the late medieval peasantry? Firstly, attempting to determine the function of a vessel using all available means is of vital importance. This can help us not only to determine the function of individual features (which is crucial in understanding various aspects of the peasantry's social life as outlined above), but it can also tell us about possible wealth differences between households as well as about choices made in household constructions of identity. This is possible not only via identification of 'high status' forms of pottery but also via the identification of proportions of vessels which can tell us about dining practices and the uses of substitute material such as metal. This sort of examination has the potential to interrogate some of the assumptions inherent in various attributions of wealth and status. We might find that a house with many jugs and high-status items does not display the reduced number of pottery vessels which could be read as evidence for the

substitution of pottery with metal. We might also be able to make finer discriminations of the sort postulated above between types of superficially-similar items. For example, if this kind of investigation is made over a large number of sites, we might find that it is only vessels of particular dimensions or lip form which have residues indicating that they held urine or honey or wax and so on. Ethnoarchaeological information can be of use to the archaeologist here. For example, Paul Blinkhorn used ethnographic information to stress the importance of pot capacity in the selection of vessels by prospective purchasers and to indicate that very large pots cannot be discounted as having been used for cookery (Blinkhorn 1998/9). Ethnographic evidence was also important at the site of West Cotton mentioned above, to suggest possible uses for beeswax identified from the residue analysis (Charters *et al.* 1995).

These considerations will require that the attribution of function is placed at the top of the agenda of medieval pottery specialists *and* that these attributions are quantified and presented feature by feature. Given that these attributions will require the deployment of different methods, as outlined above, it is likely to be a fairly expensive operation. However, these costs could be offset by abandoning the detailed fabric analysis that is routinely carried out. Purely in terms of dealing with the kinds of issues considered in this study as a whole, defining which specific wares were being consumed at a particular site is of limited importance as argued at the beginning of this section. Apart from identifying high-level categories such as finewares, which could normally be done simply by a visual inspection, it is not necessary to be much more precise.

The information contained in most pottery reports is usually totally inadequate for the purposes of answering any of the types of question dealt with in this study as a whole. Usually, assemblages are simply divided up by fabric and a type series is given. For example, in the monograph which deals with the majority of pottery found in peasant tofts at Wharram Percy (Andrews and Milne 1979) there is no quantification of different forms and there is no way of comparing the make-up of the assemblage of each house

in terms of pottery form (Fig. 48). We are told how many sherds of Staxton or Pimply ware were found under which wall, but it is very difficult to see how this information could be used to answer the questions being dealt with in the present research. The discussion of the South Manor Area is slightly better insofar as, for each ceramic group (which are groups of contemporary pottery types which therefore have chronological significance,) while still divided by fabric, also includes a discussion of which forms appear in that fabric. However, this information is not categorised by feature and the discussion of the pottery as a whole still is predominantly concerned with fabric types (Stamper and Croft 2000: 73-81). In this report, there is also a discussion of differences in numbers of sooted vessels through time which is useful and highly unusual in most comparable reporting. For the sites of Wawne and Osgodby and for numerous other sites, there is no reporting of pottery forms in any quantified fashion which could facilitate comparison between different features let alone between different sites. For example, the pottery report for the site of Skelton near York only mentions fabric types and no form analysis was carried out at all (Screeton 2001). Again, at Cowlam in the former East Riding of Yorkshire, only fabric forms are mentioned, with no indication of the quantity of sherds found of each type, or the context of recovery (Hayfield 1988). Nor is there any standardised, consistent recording and reporting of decoration or colour in any serious way.

Further work on Cumberpatch's phenomenological model is crucial, and a study of symbolic marks on pottery is also likely to prove illuminating. In the literature on ceramics, there are tantalising references to pots with lettering which have been interpreted as protective symbols associated with witchcraft (Dunning 1967), jugs with crosses which are also interpreted as protective (le Patourel 1979), and anthropomorphic forms (le Patourel 1968). While it has been noted that devices such as these are much scarcer on pottery than on other forms of material culture, such as jewellery (McCarthy and Brooks 1988), a systematic study of these features would be an extremely important addition to the investigation into peasant beliefs,

practices and identities and of the part that material culture plays in the construction of these.

In order for medieval pottery studies to contribute to answering questions of peasant experience and social life, therefore, they need to focus more on the functional, symbolic and phenomenological elements of the material under consideration. Allied with this, there must be a concerted effort to present the information in such a way as to allow both intra-and inter-site comparisons to be made.

5.5 Dress Accessories

5.5.1 Power and display

Any investigation into the deployment of social power in the medieval period must consider the role of personal display. The cultural awareness of display informed medieval practices from law to liturgy (Lerer 1996), and it has been recognised that clothing and personal adornment performed a vital role in processes of recognition and in the maintenance of social hierarchy in the Middle Ages. This section will attempt to investigate the role that personal display played in the lives of the medieval peasantry through an analysis of dress accessories from excavated rural medieval settlements, and will draw some conclusions about the peasantry's deployment of social power via the medium of these items.

In the Middle Ages what people wore was seen as exemplifying who they were. Knights, for example, were always shown in armour on their funerary effigies; the armour acting as a metonym for the social position of knighthood (Lachaud 2002). The literary sources also indicate the strength of the identificatory power of clothes. In Langland's *Piers the Plowman*, clothing acts as an absolutely fundamental signifier of identity. For example, a king's penitence is demonstrated by his donning of a hair shirt; people of Scottish descent are described only in terms of their shabby and makeshift

footwear; friars' "greed for clothes" is emblematic of their general laxness (Goodridge 1966:26), and the poverty of doctors, prophesied by Hunger if his advice is taken, is described as involving them selling their "ermine hoods and their fine cloaks of Calabrian fur with gold tassels" (*ibid.*: 88). When Piers is discussing becoming a minstrel, his clothing is described at length and is emblematic of his change of status: "I will put on my working clothes, all darned and patched, my leggings, and my old gloves" (*ibid.*: 83). Similarly, the character of Haukyn's spiritual state is illustrated through the metaphor of his cloak; it is written that he "wears a coat of Baptism ... yet stained and spattered all over with dirty marks ... smeared in one place with scorn" (*ibid.*: 159) and Life's arrogance and rejection of Conscience's advice is described thus: "Life only burst out laughing, and went to have his clothes slashed in the new style" (*ibid.*: 249). It can be seen that clothing is a fundamental signifier of both characters and their spiritual state in the poem. Similarly, in the twelfth-century French literary work by Chrétien De Troyes, *Erec and Enide*, dress also acts as a "fundamental symbolic reference" (Le Goff 1988:150). For example, when Enid changes her clothes for her wedding, it becomes a symbol for all the changes which hung upon that ceremony.

The importance of dress for signalling social position is demonstrated by the fact that dress in the period was often subject to legal prescriptions. Prostitutes, for example, were either required to wear striped hoods or were forced to do so as a punishment. This prescription was laid out, for example, in the London *Liber Albus* of 1419 in which it was pronounced that "if any woman shall be found to be a common courtesan ... let her be taken from the prison unto Aldgate, with a hood of ray [striped cloth] ... and there let the cause be proclaimed" (Riley 1862: 181). Other regulations concerning the dress of prostitutes come from Great Yarmouth and Bristol (Karras 1984:421n). Items of clothing were similarly prescribed or proscribed for other groups. For example, crusaders were to abjure certain types of clothing, such as luxury furs or costly cloth, according to the levy for the Holy Land in 1188 (Lachaud 2002). The clergy also were enjoined to wear only modest garments and accessories. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215

proscribed the wearing of brooches and belts decorated with gold or silver, gilded riding equipment and excessive numbers of finger rings for all secular clergy. In 1257 the diocese of Salisbury banned the wearing of brooches, buttons and other dress accessories of gold and silver for all clerics (*ibid.*). The reasons given were twofold – to protect decency and because of the "necessity for dress to reflect the separation of the clergy" (*ibid.*: 109). There is evidence for churchmen being charged with wearing incorrect clothes and other adornments, such as in 1421 when Richard Kirkeby and William Wyvill, one a deacon, the other a chaplain, were charged with, among other things, the wearing of chapelets, or garlands, which transgressed clerical vestimentary prescriptions (Cullum 1999:187). Similarly, tax relief on certain expensive goods for knights and gentlemen, which are known of from instructions to tax collectors and levies from 1283, 1290, 1294 and 1307, demonstrate that members of these groups were expected to express their identity and status through particular forms of display (*ibid.*).

The general regulation of personal appearance can be seen most clearly in the sumptuary laws. These were a series of statutes enacted from the early fourteenth century that laid down rules for a wide range of social practices, mostly food and dress. By the fifteenth century, food was largely replaced as the regulatory object by dress (Hunt 1996:298). A statute of 1337 was the first law in the period specifically to target dress, as it ordered that no-one under the rank of a knight or lady could wear furs (*ibid.*: 299). The Statute of 1363 also laid out the condition that "Carters, Ploughmen, Drivers of the Plough, Oxherds, Cowherds, Shepherds and all other Keepers of Beasts, Threshers of Corn, and manner of people of the estate of a groom attending to husbandry and all other people that have not 40s of goods" were restricted to garments made from "Blanket and Russet wool costing not more than 12 pence per piece" (*ibid.*: 304). This statute also restricted the wearing of girdles and other apparel even modestly ornamented with silver to landowners earning at least £500 per annum or others with goods valued at least £1000 (Egan and Pritchard 1991). Although this statute was no sooner passed than it was repealed by the king due to a petition probably

originating from the Commons, this type of legislation gives an insight into the ways in which dress and dress accessories were viewed by the lawmakers of medieval society and their importance in the maintenance of the social order. Some local by-laws also sought to regulate clothing, such as those instituted by the Council of the City of London at some stage between 1338 and 1353 ordering that prostitutes were forbidden from wearing even very poor furs such as budge (lambswool) or wool (Hunt 1996:302). There were further sumptuary statutes in 1463 and 1483 and quasi-sumptuary legislation passed in 1389 and 1420, the latter prohibiting the use of silver-plating for any purpose other than for knights' spurs and "all the apparel that pertaineth to a baron and above that estate" (*ibid.*: 305). It can be seen that this kind of legislation was not designed merely to restrict entry to groups, but was fundamentally identificatory (Sørensen 2000:131); its purpose was to achieve "recognizability" (Hunt 1996:396). David Hinton also draws attention to the role played by tax levies on possessions. He argued that these levies meant that "what a man or woman owned and wore therefore mattered, it was something to be observed and scrutinized. People's roles could be identified, so awareness of appearance was heightened" (Hinton 2005: 205).

These themes of signification and the normative pressures exerted on personal display are intimately related to social power. One of the major reasons for the stress laid on the regulation of physical appearance in this period was the emphasis placed on the importance of what was visible on the outside corresponding to the inner being of the individual (Lachaud 2002), a concept which had a fundamental place in medieval thinking and which ultimately had its roots in the works of St. Paul who wrote in the first century AD and Tertullian (a leader of the early church and important author) writing in the late second and early third centuries AD (Elliott 1991). Thus, it was not just legislators, but also medieval moralists, who wrote about women's dress in huge detail (Hanawalt 1998). There are even records of clothing and fashion being blamed for the onset of the plague. For example, the chronicler John of Reading writing about a later outbreak in 1365, who wrote "An unexpected pestilence followed, in which many

people went to bed healthy and died suddenly ... And no wonder, given the empty headedness of the English who remained wedded to a crazy range of outlandish clothing ... They began to wear useless little hoods [and] extremely short garments which failed to conceal their arses or their private parts ... these misshapen and tight clothes did not allow them to kneel to God or the saints" (Horrox 1994: 133).

The stress on the importance of accurate identification of people based on their clothes has links, it can be argued, with Christopher Dyer's theories about the maintenance of social hierarchy at this time. He has suggested that it was cultural, rather than legal or economic dominance, which was the most important factor in the lords' continuing control throughout the medieval period. The fact that peasants' esteem was low and felt to be low – that they could successfully be made to give deference and, in fact, that they *wanted* to be like lords and that they admired lordly characteristics – was the key to the maintenance of the system (Dyer 2003). Extra-economic coercion has long been recognised as being a factor in the maintenance of the feudal system (see Rigby 1995), but what is of particular relevance here is Dyer's insistence that *display* played an absolutely key role in the upholding of the system of differential esteem at this time. While he predominantly discusses architecture and the building of massive and costly castles in particular, the conclusion has relevance for an investigation of medieval dress. It is clear that in the Middle Ages, dress was not seen as a matter of superficial outer appearance, rather it was viewed as an absolutely fundamental and vital signifier of identity and, therefore, of potential social power. Alan Hunt has written of the "intense, almost religious significance ... attached to clothing as the expression of power" (Hunt 1996:307). Items of personal adornment were a vital way of *displaying* wealth, which was important in maintaining the social system, and therefore was one of the most important ways of *identifying* people according to specific scales of wealth. The legislative and other regulations can be seen as ways of buttressing the social system, of which dress and display were vital parts.

Personal display was also an arena in which this hierarchy was challenged. In many of the numerous revolts in which the peasantry took part in the late medieval period, there is evidence that a common livery was donned (Holford 2001) and various examples from Yorkshire have been mentioned throughout the preceding chapters (see pp. 78, 113). Similarly, the wearing of drag and blackface by poachers was not uncommon. It has been argued that this was not only in order to hide personal identity, but also to challenge the social conventions which usually defined the (male) peasant body as a labouring and invisible one (Sponsler 1997).

This understanding of the role of personal appearance and dress codes aids our attempt to examine power from an explicitly archaeological point of view. If power and display are closely intertwined at this time, we can start to interrogate the material culture of this period in ways which allow us to think about how it was implicated in the exercising of social power. One of this ways this issue can be approached is through the analysis of dress accessories found from excavated peasant settlement sites.

5.5.2 Dress accessories from excavated rural settlement sites

Given the relative scarcity of well-excavated peasant sites in Yorkshire, [4] two sites from Lincolnshire – Goltho and Riseholm – and one from County Durham – Thrislington – which have been subject to major archaeological work are also included in the present discussion. There seemed no compelling reason to ignore these information-rich sites very close to Yorkshire, particularly as it is not merely the experience of the Yorkshire peasantry that is being outlined in this study as a whole. The published material from seven sites in total was therefore used: Wharram Percy (Andrews and Milne 1979; Wrathmell 1989a), Riplingham (Wacher 1966), Bolton (Coppack 1978), Boulby (Aberg and Smith 1988), Thrislington (Austin 1989), Goltho (Beresford 1975) and Riseholm (Thompson 1960). In

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[4] There is often also a scarcity of good reporting of these items from Yorkshire sites. At times, dress accessories from excavated rural medieval sites are not even quantified and are merely dealt with descriptively (as at Cowlam (Hayfield 1988) and Thornton Riseborough (Anon 1978)).

compiling the table of evidence it was ensured that only material from peasant contexts and from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries was included (including residual objects found in later contexts but dated to the medieval period). All dates which were suggested by the authors of the small finds reports for items which could not be definitively dated stratigraphically were accepted (see Table 2).

It is apparent that many types of dress accessory, particularly buckles, brooches and pins, served a practical function and that therefore their presence in archaeological deposits is not only indicative of personal display. Therefore, it was felt that in order to investigate the operation of personal display amongst the peasantry, both quality and decoration/decorativeness were the key factors which should be examined. The material was therefore categorised in two ways. Firstly, by constituent metal, and secondly by whether it was decorated or purely decorative in function. Any plating, tinning, and work such as engraving or incising was counted as decoration (Fig. 49). Bosses/mounts, pendants and finger rings were counted as predominantly decorative objects (Fig. 50).

The methodological issues and concomitant caveats that need to be understood when considering these types of materials will briefly be outlined. Firstly it must be noted that some items may have been incorrectly assessed as being items of personal adornment. In this period, it is hard to know precisely whether some buckles and pendants were for horse furniture or used as a dress accessory. Similarly 'ornamental strips' and mounts could have been parts of caskets and other items of furniture rather than constituents of dress accessories. Secondly, it is also apparent that only a relatively small number of metal dress accessories were found; 125 objects in total for the seven sites. Calculations of statistical significance were not, therefore, deemed to be useful. This small number is not surprising as metal was fairly expensive in the Middle Ages and these items were much less likely to be lost than other types of material culture, such as ceramic goods, and were more likely to have been picked up if they were found or even melted down and re-worked if they became damaged or excessively worn.

For example, although we know from, for example, port books, that vast quantities of both aglets (tags for lace or ribbons) and bugles or glass beads for head dresses were used and imported in the late medieval and early post-medieval period, the quantity recovered from excavation is very small (Egan and Forsyth 1997). [5] In addition, many dress accessories, such as mounts and pins, are small and would require careful excavation technique to recover, which may not have been employed in some excavations. It is possible that this problem affected the recovery of dress accessories in the sites of Osgodby and Hatterboard where pottery was the only type of material culture found. In addition, small lengths of wire which may well represent the remains of head dresses tend not be investigated with this possibility in mind (ibid.), and thus the range of dress accessories attested in the archaeological record may not always have been fully appreciated.

Even given these caveats, it can be argued that some clear and rather unexpected results emerge from this brief survey. Firstly, out of all the dress accessories, only five per cent were made of poor quality metal, i.e. lead and lead alloys (commonly known as pewter). The rest were made of copper-alloy and iron (Fig. 51), and there was one gold item. There was a very definite distinction between lead/tin and copper/iron in terms of perceptions of quality in the medieval period (Egan and Pritchard 1991: 18-19). As David Hinton (1999: 178) writes, while "a copper-alloy brooch would not have impressed anyone who could afford a gold one ... it would be noted as a small luxury by those with whom the wearer had everyday contact". It has been assumed that the "'common people' ... were presumably the main customers for belts with cheap, base-metal accessories" (Egan and Pritchard 1991: 19), but the data presented here shows that this was certainly not universally the case.

Secondly, over half (52.8%) of the objects were either decorated or were purely decorative in function, and we come to this figure without including

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[5] We know that this small number is not indicative of the amount of cash in circulation and Christopher Dyer has argued that the low number of coins found on both peasant and manorial sites is that they are both difficult to recover during excavation as well as being very valuable to their users (Dyer 1997).

all belt-chapes and strap-ends as purely decorative, which, in fact, it could be argued that they were (Fig. 52). If we include this group as decorated or purely decorative then the numbers of such artefacts rises to 67.8%. Geoff Egan and Frances Pritchard suggest that strap-ends may not have been worn by the medieval poor. They argue (1997: viii) that they were in "less universal usage" than girdles and buckles which were "basic articles of dress which the overwhelming majority of Londoners would have worn" (*ibid.*). For the thirteenth century they also suggest, using evidence from effigies, that at this time "strap-ends were usually fitted to girdles worn by those of high status" (*ibid.*: 126). They also point out in their discussion of girdles that many of the peasants depicted in the Luttrell Psalter wore entirely unadorned belts (Fig. 53) (*ibid.*: 35). This evidence is particularly interesting in that, although it should not be assumed that pictorial evidence is an unproblematic reflection of reality, it can give us clues about the ways peasants were seen by other groups at this time and possibly reflects normative standards which peasants could accept, reject or ignore. The implication of Egan and Pritchard's work is that we would not expect the 'lower sort' of medieval society to be using strap-ends, a view which is belied by the evidence presented here. It should also be noted that the strap-ends form the majority of items which could be considered to be highly decorative from the sample – examples that show evidence of very elaborate engraving and also enamelling and gilding – and they also present most evidence for repairs, perhaps indicating that they were, in fact, a particular locus of display for members of the peasantry.

This brief investigation has indicated the importance of these objects for a social study of the medieval peasantry and that excavation and reporting methods might take this into account. Certainly, careful excavation and sieving for small items is necessary as are concerted attempts to distinguish dress accessories from horse furniture or from metal adornments of household objects. Standardised quantitative reporting is also vital so that comparisons can be made between sites, periods and features.

What are we to make of these findings in terms of an analysis of social power in the medieval village? It seems clear that the peasantry were investing their, at times, meagre resources in the realm of personal display, that they eschewed accessories made from what was considered to be inferior metal, and often invested in both decorated and decorative items (which would doubtless have been more expensive, even if only slightly, than plain ones) as well as those of a purely decorative nature. Unfortunately, precise dating of these finds is very difficult. It would be interesting in terms of an analysis of power to know whether the use of these objects increased or reduced in frequency as a result of various sumptuary laws but a much larger corpus of securely-dated material would be needed in order to address these issues of temporal variation.

The clearest and most logical conclusion must be that personal display was obviously a priority for the peasantry as they invested almost solely in quality materials and decorative items. This refutes the argument made by Christopher Dyer that 'luxury' items are rare in peasant contexts because the peasantry were primarily interested in leisure and that, for example, although "a garnish of pewter may have been an attainable purchase for many peasants, [it was] only at the unacceptable cost of many hours of drudgery" (Dyer 1982: 36). [6] David Hinton (1999; 2005: 234) also suggests that leisure may have been more important to the peasantry than high-status goods, although no specific evidence for this assertion is provided. Although the peasantry may, indeed, not have been prepared to work hard for particular items of tableware, it can be seen that they were prepared to purchase considerable quantities of decorative items for their person, and in materials of a quality superior to pewter.

In considering the broader context of medieval England, it is possible to understand that this prioritisation of the purchase of dress accessories was a choice with potentially significant implications. It has been argued that

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[6] Christopher Dyer does appear to alter his opinion on this matter, however. In a later paper, he suggests that, when they could, peasants did ape the material culture of their social superiors (Dyer 1998).

peasants simply copied the jewellery of their social betters, particularly before the fifteenth century (Hinton 1990:161; 2005: 251). Hinton (2005: 218) argues that "to appear in public inappropriately arrayed could be interpreted as a deliberate challenge to the established order ... but the motive was usually social aspiration". It is certainly clear that, in some instances there is evidence for emulation, for example, in the cheap buckle-plates that are nevertheless decorated with lions and hunting dogs (*ibid.*: 199). However, it is not clear that emulation is the best explanation in all cases. Hinton's oft-repeated assertion that items made in base metal were 'following' those made in precious metals (*ibid.*: 251), would need to have very specific chronological information to support it – i.e. there would need to be tight dating of the example in precious metal appearing prior to any examples in a base metal. This information is usually lacking, and it seems that what we are often seeing is simply a single form being manufactured in a variety of different metals. If this contemporaneous appearance of a specific form is what is in evidence, we need to be aware of assuming the presence of an emulative social process.

An alternative argument is that the wearing of good quality, decorative items produced an identity at odds with that fashioned for the peasantry and communicated to them by church sermons, wall-paintings and didactic sumptuary legislation. The peasants were negotiating and resisting the imposition of an identity that only represented their bodies as humble, servile and labouring. Given that to wear something particular made you become somebody particular in the Middle Ages, and that the identities thus fashioned were fiercely resisted by the elite, these items of material culture can be seen as constitutive of resistant identities. It must be noted that this site of resistance was not explicitly gendered. Most items of dress accessories are not gendered (or the presumed gender of the wearer has not yet been, or cannot be, determined). The dress accessories do not speak to us, therefore, of gender-differentiated power, but rather of identity and resistance of the peasantry as a group.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed four types of medieval material culture which would have impacted on the lives of the peasantry. It is clear that the presence of each of these types would have had specific experiential effects upon the members of the peasantry, dependent upon the surrounding context, various pertinent aspects of which have been suggested. It has been repeatedly stressed that it is impossible to come to satisfactory conclusions about the meaning of these material culture types devoid of this surrounding context and that therefore castles, wall paintings and so on are not best approached as classes of objects but rather as parts of specific historical milieux. The ways in which utilising these types of material culture may add to a social archaeology of the peasantry have been discussed and a variety of approaches explicated. It is apparent from this discussion that these types of material culture can be fruitful for investigations into the medieval peasantry, but that, in order for them to assist with these investigations, methods of archaeological investigation and reportage pertaining to them needs, in some cases, to undergo revision.

Chapter Six

Discussion

This thesis has outlined an approach to the archaeological study of the late medieval English peasantry which facilitates the exploration of this group's experiences of power, resistance, community and gender. Utilising the full range of documentary and material cultural evidence available for particular rural settlements, it has attempted to reach conclusions about the nature of the operation and experience of various types of social power within these villages. This chapter will discuss two topics which have not so far been addressed, outline the reasons for this, and suggest directions for future research into these areas. It will also advance some arguments concerning medieval women's experiences of social power and conclude with a discussion of approaches to medieval material culture generally which may help promote the aims of this work in the course of future research.

6.1 Tenurial status

The medieval peasantry was not an undifferentiated mass; there were many gradations of wealth and status within this group, examples of which have been discussed in the foregoing study (see pp. 97-98,181-182, 207-208). It will be noted, however, that the types of differences within the peasantry that have been discussed hitherto do not touch on the issue of tenurial status, that is, on the differences between villein and free tenants. The importance of this distinction in the late medieval period has been debated by historians of the period, and there are significant differences in the meaning that they attribute to it.

Some medievalists have stressed the importance of the differences between villein tenants and free tenants. For example Christopher Dyer, in his work on the bishopric of Worcester, maintains that both manorial lords as well as the tenants themselves placed a great deal of importance on servile status. He argues that both the terminology used in the court rolls of this manor as well as the presence of formal manumission procedures indicates the importance of a distinction based on tenurial status (Dyer 1980). Similarly, Miriam Müller (2001) has written about the importance of differences in the tenurial make-up of medieval villages to their inhabitants' experiences of lordship, and has also argued that the common event of villeins claiming ancient demesne status reflected a desire for personal freedom, regardless of how onerous or otherwise their obligations to their lord may have been (Müller 2003). Another author who maintains that material differences existed between peasants as a result of their tenurial status is Phillipp Schofield. He writes that "to hold land freely was certainly to enjoy advantages over your unfree neighbours" (Schofield 2003: 21). He outlines the features of free tenure such as the ability to use the common law to petition against a manorial lord and the ability to buy and bequeath land freely. He also mentions servile tenants' lack of mobility and the considerable efforts that lords made in order to recover absconders. He suggests that personal shame could also be part of servile tenure, citing evidence of the unfree tenants of the archbishop of Canterbury who performed their labour services in secret, as well as the famous tale of a late thirteenth-century tenant of the earl of Gloucester who drowned himself rather than hold land as a serf (*ibid*.: 160). Rosamond Faith (1997: 264) too draws attention to the importance of markers of status such as the paying of merchet. She argues that these were emblematic of servitude and would have been of particular importance in situations in which other conditions, such as the tenurial status of land, could be confused.

There is a large body of opinion, however, which does not accept that the distinction between servile and free tenants in this period can be applied usefully to an investigation of the lived experience of the peasantry. Even some of the authors mentioned above are aware of the complexities of the situation as it played itself out 'on the ground' in the late medieval period, which can be counterposed to the relatively simple picture presented by a strictly legal perspective. Many authors, for example, draw attention to the complex situation engendered by the fact that the tenurial status of a land holding could be separate from that of the tenant who held it. Rosamond Faith highlights the case of the abbot of Eynsham who, in 1279, held land in villeinage in Finstock, Oxfordshire. Many prosperous peasants who did not consider themselves to be villeins also held land in this way. She writes that "[i]n these confused conditions it was often difficult to define who was a villein and who was not" (Faith 1997: 262). J. Ambrose Raftis (1964: 68) also comments upon this situation, highlighting the fact that in the manors of Ramsey Abbey, not only could villein property be bought by freemen, but that "villein tenure of freehold was a regular feature ... from the earliest available rolls in the thirteenth century" (*ibid.*: 82).

It was not just the situation concerning landholding that was inconsistent in the importance attributable to tenurial distinctions. Many of the practices which were technically forbidden to the unfree peasantry, and considered to be emblematic of their servile status by some of the authors mentioned above, were, in fact, routinely carried out by them. If these constraints were widely ignored, villeinage itself would start to erode (Schofield 2003: 162) and there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that they *were* routinely ignored. For example, Müller, although obviously considering the distinction between freedom and villeinage an important one as outlined above, writes that:

> though in theory propertyless and without rights of property, in practice villein tenants bought and sold, bargained and accumulated, dealing with their chattels and produce as if they were their own. Thus when the

lord exercised his jurisdictional rights by seizing a
tenant's goods for whatever reason, the latter could
react strongly neither recognising nor acknowledging
the lord's rights in the matter (Müller 2003: 13).

In terms of peasant mobility, and contrasting with Schofield's interpretation,
Raftis has drawn attention to the fact that emigration of villeins from the
manors of Ramsey Abbey was a regular feature of manorial life and that
fines to leave the manor were trifling, suggesting that lords had very little
interest in the enforcement of this siegneurial prerogative (Raftis 1965; 1964:
139). Other social practices seem to have been carried out with no
distinctions made with respect to tenurial status such as the enactment and
enforcement of bylaws (Raftis 1964: 206), and participation in legal causes
(Ingram 1981).

Evidence for social attitudes, too, does not indicate huge concern with the
distinction between freedom and villeinage. For example, there was no
barrier between the marriage of the unfree and free (Raftis 1964: 206), and
peasants, in fact, "tended to choose spouses from the same social rank as
their own, but were comparatively indifferent to their legal status" (Faith
1997: 262). On a broader social scale, Rodney Hilton draws attention to the
fact that in medieval literary sources, the predominant social contrast that
was considered to be important was that between lords and 'the common
people'. Legislation which could be considered to be reflective of (albeit
elite) social opinion such as sumptuary law does not mention the distinction
between freedom and servility, but rather stresses the ownership of land or
the enjoyment of particular levels of income as the relevant criteria for
permission to wear certain items (Hilton 1975: 24). In fact, it is this stress
on *wealth* rather than on tenurial status which is usually concentrated on by
historians of the medieval peasantry when discussing intra-group divisions
in the medieval rural settlement. The language used tends to be that of 'rich'
'middling' and 'poor' tenants and of 'virgaters' and 'half-yardlanders'
(denoting amount of land owned) rather than of freeman or villein; it is

economic rather than tenurial distinctions which are stressed by most writers (e.g. Schofield 2003: 165-9; Razi 1980).

It can be seen that the realities of the free/unfree distinction were complex. The distinction in a purely legal sense is not, for the purposes of this thesis, particularly important. As the focus in this study has been on peasant experience, the important aspects of the tenurial distinction are those connected with social practices. It can be seen that the actual impact of whether a peasant was a villein or free varied from manor to manor, and that in many manors social practice rendered this distinction un-meaningful. My position in this matter is very similar to that of Edward Britton whose work on the village of Broughton in Huntingdonshire did not concern itself with categorisations of individuals in terms of freedom or villeinage, because not only did most documents fail to mention this distinction, but also because there appeared to be no simple connection between the socio-economic hierarchy and legal distinctions of freedom and villeinage. Britton draws attention to the opinions of such historians as Hilton, Cam, Maitland and Vinogradoff to conclude that studies concerned with social realities render "a consideration of personal legal status ... rather irrelevant" (Britton 1977: 167) and that in establishing how villagers "actually lived ... categories such as freedom and villeinage contribute little" (*ibid.*). I agree with the many authors to whom it is wealth rather than tenurial distinctions which are important when considering the lived experience of the medieval peasantry, particularly when we are investigating this experience from an archaeological perspective. Medieval archaeologists, as historical archaeologists, must obviously utilise concepts derived from documentary sources as these had a reality in the period under study, but they must not be led by them. 'Historical' concepts must interleave with those derived from archaeology, but should not be allowed to determine the character of our archaeological interpretations. From the perspective of archaeology, noting differences in the material cultural of different households in medieval rural settlements is important but I believe it is most relevant to interpret them as

possible indicators in variations in changes in wealth (as was done for the variation found in the house types of Wawne) and then only if there is a cluster of evidence which can allow us to make this interpretation (as discussed in Chapter Five). Given the complex nature of tenurial distinctions, and the variability through space and time that their impact had on the peasantry, as well as the different time-scales that historians and archaeologists deal with in this period, it is difficult to see how attempts to attribute differences in material culture to differences in tenurial status could realistically or helpfully be made by medieval archaeologists.

6.2 Dispersed settlement

The foregoing thesis, it will have been noted, has focussed on the elucidation of the experience of social power of those medieval peasants who inhabited nucleated settlements. It was due both to chance and the fact that archaeological investigation of medieval rural settlement has tended to occur at nucleated village sites, that the three settlements in Yorkshire which had the necessary evidence needed to embark on the case studies produced here, were all of a nucleated nature. It is, however, important to note that much medieval rural settlement did not take this form. Given the importance of space, practice, and visual experience to the conclusions drawn in this thesis, it seems likely that the experiences of social power, community and gender of the inhabitants of dispersed settlement would have been quite different from those in more closely-nucleated settlements. However, while the specific conclusions may differ significantly, I believe the approach outlined in the thesis as a whole is still useful for analysing the experiences of social power in those areas of dispersed settlement. This section is a brief attempt to map out some of the possible similarities and differences in these experiences with respect to the medieval peasants who inhabited different settlements using the general approach of the thesis. It will also suggest some potentially fruitful avenues for future research.

I will begin with a discussion of the experience of lordship in dispersed settlements, focussing initially on the similarities of this experience between nucleated and dispersed forms of medieval settlement. It should firstly be mentioned that the bulk of work on medieval dispersed settlement has been concerned with considerations of origin; did these settlements appear later or earlier than nucleated villages, what forces caused them to appear, are these different from those which led to nucleation, and so on (e.g. Warner 1983; Taylor 1995)? This focus, in its experiential effects, can be seen to be very similar to that which concentrates on the original planner(s) of villages – insofar as, while there may have been different experiences between villages planned by lords and those planned by villagers, or those with an early and those with a later date of establishment *initially* – these differences may not have been significant once the peasants' *use* of the settlements had invoked new meanings. Other factors which are equally as important in the experiences of lordship between nucleated and dispersed settlements are those to do with the residence or non-residence of lords as well as the large-scale impact that lords had on the landscape. It has been argued that it is in areas of dispersed settlement such as the east Midlands that we particularly see lords re-organising the landscape, insofar as they replaced peasant holdings with granges for religious houses and allocated parcels of land to peasants in the process of colonising waste (Lewis *et al.* 1997: 205). However, the case studies in this thesis have shown that in areas of nucleated settlement too, such as that around Wawne, lords could wield considerable power over the landscape on a large scale as well as on the macro scale of the village as at Wharram Percy. The power effects of this scale of alteration of the landscape would therefore have been felt similarly in both of the major forms of settlement. Similarly, architectural differences in manorial residences were comparable in both forms of settlement, with moated residences being particularly common in areas of dispersed settlement (*ibid:*. 1997: 204-5), although it must be noted that in areas

where peasant houses were also moated these differences would not apply (*ibid.*).

There were, however, significant factors in the experience of lordship which did differ between nucleated and dispersed settlement. Firstly, throughout this thesis, the importance of the surveillance abilities of manorial buildings has been stressed. It is clear, however, that in areas of dispersed settlements, these abilities would have been severely compromised. In many areas of dispersed settlement, the habitation units themselves did not cluster around the manor house but lacked a distinctive centre of this kind (Lewis *et al.*1997: 129). Given that many peasant houses in these areas were not intervisible with the manorial seat, it is clear that the power effects attributable to surveillance are not applicable in this context. While this does not mean that the peasantry were not aware of the presence of their lord, the arbitrary nature of the lord's surveillance, so much an important feature of this kind of power, would not have been operative. Another important feature in this regard is the high proportion of free tenants in areas of dispersed settlement (Brown and Taylor 1989: 80; Dyer 1991: 48; Lewis *et al.* 1997: 182, 240). Given that this meant that lighter obligations were owed to lords, the disciplining of medieval tenants by the extraction of labour with respect to work on the demesne and other services – time and labour which could have expended on their own holdings – would not have occurred, and the power effects of lordship would have been concomitantly altered.

Possibilities for future research on the experiences of seigneurial power on the inhabitants of dispersed settlement should, I believe, focus on the immediate regions of these areas. It is known that areas of dispersed lordship were often interspersed with areas of nucleation (Taylor 1995), and Christopher Dyer (1991: 61) has urged us to "accept that in adjoining districts medieval people lived according to different rules and adopted different ways of life". Similarly, it is also known that in many areas of dispersed settlement, the only significant areas of nucleation were boroughs

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and market villages (Lewis *et al.* 1997: 216). Elsewhere in the thesis I have mentioned the experiential impact of the relative freedom of burgesses from seigneurial constraints for the peasants in surrounding villages (p.104-112). However, this contrast may not have been so great for those living in areas of dispersion, as many tenants in these areas were freeholders and were therefore also relatively unhampered by lordly constrains as mentioned above. In others respects, however, towns would been perceived as *more* different from their own settlements by those in dispersed settlements than those in nucleated ones due to the very fact that towns themselves are nucleated settlements. Potentially fruitful avenues for future research, therefore, could include the exploration of the experiential impact of towns upon the inhabitants of areas of dispersed settlement, as well as the impact on the experiences of peasants who lived in areas where settlement types were inter-mixed.

Experiences of community are also likely to have differed significantly between peasants living in dispersed and those living in nucleated settlements. Although it seems that spatial differentiation of members of the community occurred in nucleated villages (for example, Wawne), and in dispersed settlement (for example, at Hanbury where customary tenants were centrally-placed in 'ends' settlement [1] whereas freeholders' messuages tended to be on the margins of settlements (Dyer 1991: 41)), there were many differences in the experience of practices which constituted community. Brian Roberts (1983: 45) has classified the elements of 'communality' in medieval settlements into: communality of assent (the willingness of the peasantry to divide land among heirs), communality to economise (the sharing of work and lands) and communality by enforcement (to control, to tax and so on). He argues that, although elements of all these forces would have existed in dispersed settlement, it is only in nucleated settlement that all three would have been operative. Although

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[1] 'Ends' settlements are those which are arranged along both sides of a road, either in isolation or in pairs, about 100 to 300 yards apart, forming an orderly pattern.

Roberts' formulation may be considered to be overly-schematic, it does highlight some important differences between the two settlement types. Firstly, although open-field systems *could* operate without a nucleated village (Taylor 1983), field systems in areas of dispersed settlement tended to be not as closely regulated as in nucleated villages. For example, in the manor of Pendock, Worcestershire, the medieval arable lay irregularly in fields and tenants did not organise them into any rotational system (Dyer 1990: 113). Similarly, the arrangement of household strips in the fields of Hanbury, Worcestershire, and throughout the East Midlands (Dyer 1991; Lewis *et al.* 1997) was also haphazard. To be sure, communal regulation of fields through the medium of by-lays which organised fallowing procedures or the management of pastures did occur in dispersed settlements. However, the absence of regularly distributed selions meant that the experiences of agricultural *practice* gained by peasants who lived in dispersed settlements were quite different in nature from those who resided in a nucleated settlement. For example, the absence of this regular distribution meant the risk was not spread as in more regularised field systems (McCloskey 1976), insofar as one householder (possibly one who was well-established and had been in the area for some time) could hold land in fields which were less flood-prone or more nutrient-rich, and others (possibly incomers), may have held their strips predominantly in fields with few of these advantages. Secondly, the fact that in many dispersed settlements arable land was also present in crofts adjacent to messuages which could alter with tenurial status, as in Hanbury where free tenants were more likely to hold enclosed parcels of land near their houses and have none in the open fields (Dyer 1991: 43), meant again that resources were not always shared evenly (and see Dyer 1990: 113). This is in considerable contrast to many nucleated villages in which there appears to have been a concerted attempt to ensure fairness in the distribution of selions. Experiences of community would have been much affected by the fact that one's neighbour could have, and legitimately so, land of considerably different quality from oneself. More importantly, perhaps, the day-to-day familiarity with other tenants, gained from working

side-by-side with them on similar tasks throughout the year would not have been such a regular feature of life in dispersed settlements, as tenants could also perform agricultural work in their crofts for a significant portion of the time (see below p. 265 for Tim Ingold's stress on the importance of shared activity).

The morphology of these settlements was another feature of dispersed settlements which did not serve to evoke meanings of cohesion. Because settlements were scattered, sometimes in single farmsteads, sometimes on either side of a road but not facing each other, and sometimes strung out along a road or on the side of a green, the daily taskscape and round of activity for most medieval men and women in dispersed settlements would have included much less close contact with their fellows than in nucleated settlements (Fig. 54). On the scale of daily activity, peasants would not have seen their fellows using substantially the same spaces, observed their routines or had as many opportunities for interaction. It is, therefore, clear that in terms of identity-formation it is the household rather than the community, which would have been stressed in the daily experience of these peasants insofar as it is with members of the household, rather than with other members of the community, with whom people are likely to have had the most regular interactions. Avenues of research into the power correlates of this could include the archaeological investigation of variability of material culture employed in the houses of dispersed settlements. It would be instructive to know whether greater variability was found in the households of these settlements, suggesting that perhaps it was knowledge of the habits and houses of others which may have created a relative uniformity in nucleated settlements, or whether there was less variability, suggesting that it was partly the desire to differentiate themselves from their neighbours which led peasants in nucleated settlements to utilise the suite of material culture that we find in these contexts. However, this research would only be possible if a general range of variability for nucleated settlements could be determined for comparative purposes. As we have seen,

the level of variability in the households of nucleated settlements could vary quite widely, for example, between Osgodby where considerable variation was found, and Wharram Percy where similarity predominated. Further research would be needed to determine whether nucleated settlements as a group do, in fact, exhibit meaningful similarities in their range of variability and, if so, to establish the parameters of this variability before comparison with dispersed settlements would be possible.

Conclusions reached earlier in the thesis about pottery vis-à-vis dress accessories are also of relevance here. Given that pottery consumption was primarily a choice constitutive of household identities. (p. 212), it would be instructive to know whether this was a locus of elaboration in houses in dispersed settlements. Similarly, given that there may have been fewer opportunities for day-to-day display in dispersed settlements, due to the decreased intervisibility between inhabitants, it would be interesting to know whether the consumption of dress accessories altered in these places. These comparisons would enable us to come closer to understanding in which contexts the power that these objects exercised was considered important. That is to say, if we find fewer dress accessories in houses in dispersed settlement, it could be suggested that it was indeed in day-to-day contexts in which peasants wished these to be seen, and for which fewer opportunities were afforded in a dispersed settlement. On the other hand, if the same or more of these items are found, it might be possible to suggest that it was in social situations which occurred in both forms of settlement such as in church or in the manor court, that deployment of the power of these objects was intended to take place.

This emphasis on the decreased day-to-day interactions of members of the peasantry in dispersed settlement has implications for the experience of gender in the medieval settlement. This issue is dealt with at length below, but suffice to say that, given that women in dispersed settlements would have had decreased opportunity to have become aware of their shared

activity – to view other women engaging in activities which they themselves engaged in and to discuss this with them – their sense of gendered identity and solidarity may have been less marked than for women who resided in nucleated villages. It can be suggested, therefore, that for women who lived in medieval dispersed settlement, it may have been household identities, rather than gendered ones, that were created by the spaces they inhabited.

A final point to be made in this brief examination of some issues of importance in the study of medieval dispersed settlement is that, in many respects, the term 'dispersed settlement' is highly unsatisfactory. This is because the phrase encompasses green-side settlement, which can appear fairly 'nucleated', settlements in which houses were strung out along a row, as well as landscapes of isolated farmsteads, and it can be seen that the experiential differences between these settlement forms may have been just as significant as that between 'dispersed' and 'nucleated' forms as they are currently understood. A more refined nomenclature for what is now known as 'dispersed settlement' is necessary if we are to approach the variety of experiences of power, community and gender gained by all members of the medieval English peasantry.

6.3 Women and power in the late medieval countryside

One of the themes that has run throughout this thesis has been the importance of understanding that the experience of social power is fundamentally connected to social *practice*. It is inadequate to conceive of power as being *possessed* only by social institutions and their representatives as this not only denies the presence of significant differences between contexts in which the same institutions are operational, for example, between medieval villages, but fails to recognise the many different types of power that exist in social relationships, such as interpersonal power (see Chapter One pp. 31-35). This section attempts to explore the ways in which

these different conceptualisations of power can add to our understanding of the operation of gender in rural medieval England. It must be stressed that I am not concerned here with an assessment of the general 'status' of women, but with an analysis of the way in which our knowledge of the social practices of medieval peasant men and women can tell us about their possible experiences of social power.

The first set of social practices that I wish to mention is concerned with the work that medieval women did around their tofts and crofts. It is an uncontroversial point amongst medievalists that it was women who performed the 'domestic' tasks of the peasant household such as cooking, cleaning, childrearing, clotheswashing and so on (Hanawalt 1986: 141, 147-8; Bennett 1987: 116-7). The second, and less acknowledged, set of activities that medieval peasant women performed is that concerned with work outside this household sphere. Although some authors argue that women only carried out tasks in the field intermittently, such as at harvest time (e.g. Dyer 1994b; Hanawalt 1998), there is, in fact, a substantial body of evidence which attests to the fact that women's work outside of the toft and croft was a constant and routine part of village life. For example, Jeremy Goldberg's examination of the 1379 Poll Tax data for the East Riding of Yorkshire and Howdenshire and the York cause paper evidence draws attention to the role of women in pastoral agricultural tasks such as in the shearing and washing of sheep as well as in general agricultural labour such as weeding crops, reaping and winnowing (Goldberg 1992b: 139-40). Similarly, women's participation in manual agricultural labour has been highlighted by Rodney Hilton. Hilton, using evidence from Leicestershire estates around 1400, draws attention to numerous examples of women doing the same manual jobs as men such as haymaking, weeding, mowing, carrying corn and breaking stones for road-making (Hilton 1971: 102). Importantly, Hilton also noted the likelihood that peasant women participated in ploughing activities alongside male members of their families, and also drew attention to a case in which a girl was attacked in the

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fields while she was harrowing (*ibid.*: 101). Stephen Rigby (1995: 253-254) draws on the work of Middleton, Tawney and Penn, as well as on legislation such as the Ordinance of Labourers in the mid-fourteenth century which obliged all men and women to take paid work if they had no other way of supporting themselves, to observe that women carried out all tasks that men did, including that of ploughing. Similarly, Helena Graham, who draws on these works as well as on the evidence presented by Eileen Power and Barbara Hanawalt, and the evidence of village by-laws of the thirteenth and fourteenth century which provide evidence for female gleaners and reapers, concludes that women carried out all tasks that men did including thatching and sheep-shearing (Graham 1992:127). Although Power, who wrote in the 1920s and 1930s, did not think that women were engaged in ploughing, the work of the aforementioned authors refutes this, as does the fact that additions to the Statute of Labourers enacted after the Black Death made explicit reference to both female and male carters and ploughers (Horrox 1994: 325). In short, there is widespread evidence that attests to the fact that medieval peasant women did a great deal of work outside of the 'domestic' space, and did so regularly.

It is clear, however, that this widely-available evidence does not seem to be taken account of by many medievalists; it is often ignored, and attempts made to argue that separate, gendered spheres of activity existed in the medieval village. For example, Barbara Hanawalt (1986: 218; 1998: 72) states that men and women had separate skills and separate domains and writes that "in peasant society, men did the construction, road work, digging in marl pits, and above all the field work" (*ibid.*: 165). She also argues that the only spaces that women had freedom of movement in were the house and village, not the field (*ibid.*: 84). Judith Bennett (1987: 6) echoes these ideas by stating in the introduction to her book on women in the medieval English countryside that "a separation of the sexes – into private wives and public husbands – was already firmly established in the households of the medieval countryside" and that "skilled or heavy work away from the

domestic croft was usually undertaken by men and women took responsibility for a wide variety of smaller tasks centred on the household" (Bennett 1988: 18). Similarly, Matthew Johnson argues that, except for during the harvest, women primarily worked in the house (Johnson 1996: 174) and Janet Nelson (1997) argues that the Middle Ages was an era in which firm controls being placed on women caused them to return to the home (she is contrasting the medieval period with that of the sixth and seventh centuries).

There are a variety of reasons for the perpetuation of these interpretations of medieval men's and women's labour which appear to ignore a great deal of evidence on the nature of gendered labour. Not the least important of these is the fact that the majority of all research relating to women in the Middle Ages has concentrated on the women of the elite (e.g. Gilchrist 1997; Richardson 2003); a group for which there is much evidence for considerable gender segregation and that this group has been unconsciously allowed, simply because of the greater amount of research carried out on it, to act as a paradigm for the whole of medieval society. However, I also believe that the perpetuation of these interpretations is due to the idea of a public/private dichotomy, which has very deep roots in scholarly thinking about gendered abilities and spheres (see Landes 1995: 142-4; Davidoff 1995). The public/private dichotomy has a conceptual slipperiness about it, insofar as it alludes to gendered use of space, to gendered activities, as well as to divisions in the spheres of gendered influence; it implies both women's confinement in the home and lack of access to or importance in 'public' spaces and institutions. It has a long genealogy, which it is not my intention to outline here. Suffice to say, it is fundamentally a Victorian middle-class gender ideology which is too often exported back into interpretations of the past (Spencer-Wood 1993; 1999). As Suzanne Spencer-Wood (1999: 175) writes "The monolithic ... gender dichotomy does not accurately describe the full range of diversity in actual gender roles in the past" and, in contrast, she argues that women's roles in many past societies were both 'domestic'

and 'public'. Some medievalists have also commented upon the lack of applicability of this model to this period. Mary Hartman (2004) has indicated that fields and households were not neatly divided units in this time and both Stephen Rigby and Matthew Johnson have argued that the public/private dichotomy is inapplicable to pre-capitalist societies (Rigby 1995: 253; Johnson 1997: 153). However, it seems clear that the equation of 'woman' with 'house' and 'man' with 'outside house' is fundamental to much thought on gender and is still very much operative within many medievalists' conceptions of gendered activity in the village. This equation appears to be implicated in the lack of interpretive weight given to the quantity of the evidence that indicates its inapplicability to this context insofar as women were not confined to the space of the house.

What are we to make of this evidence for medieval peasant women's activities both inside and outside the home in terms of an analysis of the operation of power? I will turn firstly to a discussion of the import of the former; of peasant women's work in and around the home. Various feminist archaeologists have drawn attention to the power inherent in the knowledge that women possessed, particularly with regards to food preparation (e.g. Spencer-Wood 1999; Gero and Scattolin 2002). Alison Wylie has highlighted arguments which state that in peasant societies the control of 'domestic' contexts renders women powerful over many aspects of community life (Wylie 1992), and Donley-Reid has similarly observed that it is the powerful of a community who often control, among other things, domestic space (Donley-Reid 1990). An important development in this literature is the concern with the use of the term 'specialisation' (Pyburn 1999; Gero and Scattolin 2002; Trocolli 1999). It is clear that women in many historical contexts were specialists in a variety of tasks and this is certainly an accurate description of their work in the medieval peasant household as, in this period, there is no evidence that men routinely had knowledge of how to carry out women's tasks. Medievalists, too, such as Matthew Johnson (1996: 174) and Karin Altenberg (2003) have mentioned

the power that women had insofar as it was they who had the ability to prepare food. Similarly, Caroline Walker Bynum makes the point that it was medieval women who knew how to cook and that "to prepare food is to control food" (Walker Bynum 1987:191). Although Walker Bynum's work focuses on the way that the social relations of primarily elite groups could be disrupted by women's ascetic practices, her work does point us in an important direction. The knowledge and skill that were exclusive to women in the medieval countryside need to be analysed in terms of their relationship to power. These abilities tend to be thought about as simply domestic tasks that women universally and naturally perform rather than as specialist skills, which partially accounts for the fact that the power they allow women to exercise does not tend to be recognised or acknowledged. It is clear that it was medieval women who had greater competency with the range of material culture within the house than did men as there is no evidence that men routinely engaged in tasks focussed on the house, such as cooking and cleaning. Women's familiarity with and knowledge of this material culture would have had power effects insofar as there would have been a greater sense of 'power-to' in this context for women than for men. I am not, it should be emphasised, proposing that there was a significant difference in the amount of time men and women spent in the house. It must be remembered that agricultural activity (which would have taken up the majority of men's time and which took place predominantly outside the household) was seasonal and there would have been a number of months in the winter in which it is likely that men were in the house a large part of the time. Rather, I am arguing for a distinct experience of power within this space.

If we broaden the context within which the gendered exercise of power among the medieval peasantry is examined in order to encapsulate the practices which took place in the village as a whole, some important contrasts emerge. The evidence outlined above demonstrates that medieval women had knowledge of and competencies with the material culture found

in the space of the toft and croft. They also had knowledge of and competencies with the material culture associated with agricultural tasks that took place in the fields and meadows (as outlined on p. 242-243). I am not arguing that they had *exactly the same* familiarity with the material culture associated with these tasks as the male members of the household did, but it is clear from the evidence we have for women's work in the fields and as paid labourers that it was not alien to them. It is not necessary to argue that women did exactly the same work as men to suggest that it was significant that they *could* do so, whereas there is no evidence to suggest that the same can be said of medieval men vis-à-vis women's work. Therefore, if we envisage the medieval settlement as a map of spaces, which gendered members of the community had knowledge of, and which were the locations of material culture over which they exercised power (in the sense of 'power-to'), we can see that there was an asymmetry. Men experienced power-to over the spaces of the fields, and not in the space of the home. Women experienced this power-to (either actually or potentially) in all spaces of the village.

This asymmetry in the competencies of medieval peasant men and women allows us to consider the issue of dependency. It is clear that men and women in late medieval peasant families were reliant on each other on one level, as there were differences in the activities that they routinely carried out. However, these differences were not of the same quality. Men were *dependent* upon women to carry out the tasks that they did. If they could not oblige a wife or a female family member to carry out the tasks, they would have had to pay for them to be completed (see McIntosh 1986: 174). For example, Blashill (1896: 118) cites examples of women being paid to take on the job of caring for other people's children, and one of the situations which would have necessitated this would have been subsequent to a father having been widowed. This dependence and its acknowledgment is alluded to in the threat that medieval men felt that women embodied insofar as they were responsible for the preparation of food as argued by

Caroline Walker Bynum (1987: 190). In contrast to this dependence, although it was certainly preferable for women if their husbands carried out their usual jobs, women were not dependent upon them to do so; the evidence demonstrates that they could do it themselves if need be. Richard Emerson (1962: 32) has argued that within inter-personal relationships *"power resides implicitly in the other's dependency"* (original emphasis). He goes on to note, in fact, that "mothers, lovers, children, and nations enjoy the power to influence their respective partners, within the limit set by the partner's dependence upon them" (*ibid.*: 33). In late medieval peasant society, men's dependence on women to perform tasks such as caring for the pigs and chickens, maintaining the home and personal possessions, producing cloth, taking care of the children and preparing food, was considerable; there is no evidence that men were able to carry out these tasks. We can see, therefore, that this dependency meant that women were able to exercise significant power within these relationships and within their lives.

The foregoing argument is based on a view of power which has been referred to as the 'second stream' of power research (Scott 2001: 9-12), which focuses not on organisations of power but on the various practices through which the power that is diffused throughout society is exercised. I have focussed on the power implications of various practices and knowledges that were differentially present amongst the medieval village community. The argument has been based on a reading of the evidence which allows us to begin to deconstruct the spatial dimensions of the commonly-utilised categories of 'public' and 'private'. However, there are other dimensions to this conception, which are also intimately bound up with ideas of social power and which draw on 'mainstream' conceptions of this power, that is, those to do with 'public' institutions. Many authors, although they may well acknowledge women's superior control of the home (or 'domestic' context - the usage of this word points towards understandings of this space as that which is opposed to 'public' contexts),

and possibly even that they were operative in spaces outside the home, can return to the idea of a public/private dichotomy, in its *institutional* form rather than in its *spatial* form (e.g. Erler and Kowalski 1988: 3-5). In other words, they turn to the supposed lack of participation of women in the 'public' institutions of the medieval village, to assert medieval women's powerless status. For example, Stephen Rigby (1995), who acknowledges the lack of a division of labour, argues that medieval women were excluded from public life and that they had no direct control over the regulation of the community as they could never be jurors or officials. The inability of women to be jurors or officials is also stressed by Rodney Hilton (1975: 105-6), and Ralph Houlbrooke (1986: 171) typifies this position when he writes that "women's position in late medieval and early modern English society was on the whole a subordinate one" due to the fact that they "had little share in administrative responsibilities at any level". Hanawalt makes a similar point when she writes that domination in terms of usage of domestic space was different from legal and political control over it (Hanawalt 1998). Judith Bennett (1987: 180) also writes that for women in the manor of Brigstock, Northamptonshire "political authority and legal competency gave men control over the governance of their communities" and that "the exclusion of women from public office ... constituted the major obstacle to female authority in medieval rural communities" (Bennett 1988: 26). Bennett's view is echoed by Karin Altenberg (2003: 259) who writes that "actual power was linked to the male head of the household who represented the house in public and legal matters". Helena Graham (1992: 127), while acknowledging the amount of work that women did outside of the space of the house, also writes that "women were always politically subordinate to men and excluded from the political government and decision-making processes of their communities".

It is clear that practices related to political institutions were differentially gendered in the medieval village. The first point to be made about this, however, must be that, given that it has been recognised that the many

bundles of concepts linked with ideas of the public/private dichotomy are not appropriately utilised when placed in the context of the Middle Ages, it is vital that these practices are not conceived of as 'public'. They must simply be thought of as *different* activities with none of the associated and loaded connotations that the term 'public' carries. Secondly, it is necessary to examine more closely this purported exclusion of women from legal and administrative power, given that so many scholars find that this determined the entire character of the power relationship between medieval peasant men and women. The following discussion will attempt to establish the limits and explore the contextualised, historical meanings of this exclusion.

The first type of institutional power I will deal with centres around the manor court. The medieval manor court was the primary 'public' institution of legal and political power in the medieval settlement; it was the space of the exercise of institutionalised authority. It is clear that women were active in this sphere, that they used the manor court for their own ends, and even for the ends of other women in the village. Women had the legal right to bring suit to the manor court (Rigby 1995) and there is evidence in both the manor of Havering, Essex and Brigstock, Northamptonshire that women were active in court and made use of it for private suits (McIntosh 1986; Bennett 1987). Margaret McIntosh found that in the manor of Havering between 1200 and 1500, at least half the female parties acting in the courts in most years were acting alone and not merely as part of a couple (McIntosh 1986: 219). Similarly, Rodney Hilton also found that a considerable amount of pleading was done by women in the manor courts under their own names (Hilton 1975: 105). Barbara Hanawalt provides evidence for husbands and wives being present in the manor court to purchase land, and for married women acting independently in the courts when their dowry lands were alienated by their husbands without their permission (Hanawalt 1986: 154). Helena Graham (1992) similarly suggests that women could answer for their own ale-selling personally, rather than their husbands appearing in their stead, especially if they were the wives of

poorer cottagers. Judith Bennett (1981) has shown that a considerable number of women purchased their own marriage licences and could act as pledges for other women. Similarly, Margaret Kerr (1998) found that unmarried and widowed women were active litigants in a large variety of suits such as robbery, housebreaking, and assault. She argues that, in terms of criminal offences, women were legally able to prosecute crimes and suggests that after the beginning of the thirteenth century women who attempted to use the courts to appeal felonies without their husband's blessing would not be turned away. Chris Briggs (2004), in an investigation of the court rolls of Oakington, Cambridgeshire and Great Horwood, Buckinghamshire, found that the medieval common law principle that the wife possessed no chattels of her own was sometimes seemingly ignored given the fact that four per cent of debt plaints featured married women. He also concludes that not-married and widowed women could play a relatively large role in the credit market and used the manor court when these arrangements went awry. Furthermore, the court rolls that were examined in this case gave no indication that women were less successful than men in their use of the courts as civil litigants. It is clear, then, that medieval women, predominantly not-married and widowed women but some wives as well, attended the manor court, used it for their purposes or the purposes of their households, and were certainly not routinely excluded from the space of the court or the power exercised therein.

The ownership of property is also seen as an important difference in the power wielded by medieval peasant men and women. Although it is clear that men certainly had superior rights over property within marriage, it is equally clear that at the stage in their lifecourse when women were not wives, they had the same rights as men (Rigby 1995; Graham 1992:144). Widows particularly, as heads of households, enjoyed extensive rights (Erler and Kowalski 1988: 2) and widows and other singlewomen made up a large proportion of late-medieval peasant households. For example, a survey of a dozen hamlets in the manor of Ombersley, Worcestershire, showed that one

out of seven tenants was a widow (Hilton 1975: 99-100), and similarly, in 1260 in Holderness, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, one-sixth of villein holdings were in the hands of women and one-third of the tenants who were cottagers were women (English 1979:191). It is also known that free peasants had a common-law right to a third of the husband's property after his death, and customary tenants could have even more generous provision made (Rigby 1995: 256). It is also known that medieval peasant women had rights of the disposal of their property as they used the customary law to bequeath chattels and land (Kerr 1998). Even within marriage, there are some indications that women routinely had control over their own resources, as one court case in the York Consistory Court heard how a man had gained control of 'his wife's money' and had consequently left her impoverished (MacRae-Spencer 1995). It can be seen therefore, that rights of ownership of property and chattels were equally enjoyed by medieval men and singlewomen and widows, which allows us to conclude that the purported monopoly that medieval men enjoyed over the exercise of institutional power was, in fact, significantly compromised. Women routinely used the manor court and did command ownership of much property. However, it is equally clear that their exercise of these specific forms of power varied throughout the lifecourse and seems to have been lessened when a woman was married. Let us then examine the institution and reality of medieval peasant marriage in terms of the gendered exercise of power therein and discuss its implications for the administrative and institutional power that has thus far been considered.

One of the most striking features of medieval matrimony is the doctrine of consensual marriage. This held that a marriage had been contracted legally and effectively purely with the consent of the two parties; given this consent, family and lords had no formal ability to influence or annul marriages. Solemnisation was unnecessary; a simple exchange of vows between the two individuals was sufficient to effect a legally binding marriage. Jacqueline Murray has written (1998: 124) that "[t]he Church's doctrine of

consensual marriage effectively challenged the very foundations of the patriarchal family and the hierarchical society structure that characterized medieval society". She draws on a study of court rolls in Norfolk dated from 1284 to 1290, which indicated that pressure by lords to marry particular people was actively resisted, and concludes that seigneurial control was not strong in this respect. Shannon McSheffrey (1998: 117) concurs with this assessment and has written that "young people below elite social levels routinely chose prospective mates for themselves throughout the normal course of social interaction". Michael Sheehan also agrees that the doctrine of consensual marriage, formulated by canonists and theologians in the twelfth century had been disseminated among the general populace by the thirteenth century. He examined both pastoral literature and liturgical evidence to suggest that the central role of consent, which protected young people from parental or seigneurial pressure, was well known at an early date (Sheehan 1978). In work which explores similar themes, Jeremy Goldberg has stressed the important role that servanthood played in young people's choice of marriage partner. He suggests that there was a strong relationship between service or employment outside the natal home and a high level of individualism in marriage (Goldberg 1992b: 327; 1997a:108). He argues that this may have meant that urban sub-elite women had more choice in the selection of marriage partner than did their rural counterparts, but also notes that the York matrimonial litigation indicated that in rural society, too, among less substantial peasants, marriages displayed a "remarkable degree of individualism" (*ibid*.: 328). Similarly, Richard Smith (1997: 41) draws attention to the way that late-medieval English families allowed a great degree of mobility for their young people which affected the nature and age of marriage. Mary Hartman makes a related point that, if a young man or woman had been employed as a servant prior to marriage, it is likely that they would both bring resources of cash or goods into the marriage, thus equalising this stage of the relationship and meaning that "shared decision-making in running those household was more likely to occur from the outset" (Hartman 2004: 32). Furthermore, it seems clear that

in Yorkshire most first marriages were contracted in the early-to-mid twenties, with teenage unions being very uncommon (*ibid.*: 39, Goldberg 1997b: 9). Although this may not have been the case throughout the country, all evidence suggests that marriages were companionate, that is to say that at whatever age they took place, the bride and groom were routinely of the same age at the time. This emphasis on consent, and the evidence that, in some places at least, couples were relatively mature when they got married and tended to be of the same age and own similar resources, is an initial indication that power disparities between men and women were not structured into the institution of marriage. Certainly, Bennett's (1981: 211) evidence that "in a goodly number of cases, unmarried women had sufficient personal resources to purchase their own marriage licenses" which may have led to greater freedom of choice in marital partner, supports this interpretation for some cases at least.

Other forms of documentary evidence also support the idea of relatively non-misogynistic features at the inception of a marriage. Christine Peters has drawn attention to Mirk's account of marriage in the *Festial*, a manuscript composed in the late 1380s by a canon of Lilleshall, Shropshire, and widely circulated in the early fifteenth century, which "places very little stress on female subjection as the basis for living well in marriage" (Peters 2000: 78). She also notes that in most late medieval marriage ceremonies it was the bride herself who handed over her marriage goods to the husband in exchange for future rights in her widowhood (*ibid.*: 87). It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that as an institution, there were many factors of medieval peasant marriage which allowed its inception to take place under conditions of reasonable autonomy for the men and women involved.

Direct evidence for the power relationships of husbands and wives in marriage during the course of a marriage is not plentiful. Nonetheless, it is still possible to try to glean some ideas of the values and power operating within the peasant marriage. Firstly, in terms of spousal violence, it

certainly cannot be argued that medieval values mirrored those of the West today. There is evidence that men were physically violent to their wives in medieval times and that a certain level of this was tolerated much more so than is widely done in many contexts today. However, it is also clear that husbands had no lawful right to kill or injure seriously their wives, while women who killed their husbands were not executed any more frequently that other murderers (Kerr 1998). Evidence from the cases from York Consistory Court indicate that marital assault was taken seriously by the court and that many decisions were made in favour of the wife. Extreme violence was not acceptable, and medieval women did enjoy some protection (McRae-Spencer 1995). Companionate marriage in the broader sense can also be inferred from the fact that many men, upon marriage, went to the manor court to relinquish their land back into the hands of the lord and then the couple took it back in both of their names, as well as the fact that husbands and wives often appeared in court together when purchasing new blocks of land (Hanawalt 1986). Relative equality and respect can also be inferred from the testamentary evidence available. Evidence from Bedfordshire wills shows that 65 per cent of men left their wives as executrix of their wills (*ibid.*), and it was also a common practice in the late medieval manor of Havering in Essex (McIntosh 1986: 219). Barbara Hanawalt stresses the rational basis for companionate medieval marriage, observing that it is likely that both husbands and wives had similar goals and that it would have been easier to achieve them if both parties co-operated.

It is therefore possible to see that the evidence we have for the structure of marriage, both in its inception and during its progress, allows us to interpret it as being an institution in which many factors encouraged equality between the participants. How does this conclusion connect with the observation made above that women's participation in certain institutions of political power seemed to decrease upon marriage? That this less consistent participation is often interpreted as the hallmark of women's "oppression"

in this period has been noted (p. 248-249). The examination of the meaning of this decreased participation is obviously important for an understanding of women's power in the Middle Ages as a whole. We have, initially, noted that there were salient features of the structure and operation of marriage which are likely to have led to equality within it. It is, secondly, important to consider the competencies that women had in the home and the dependency that this led to on the part of men, as was outlined previously (pp. 247-248). Given the existence of these situations, it is possible to consider the institutional power that men supposedly had in the context of marriage and assess its importance in the lives of medieval women. It is natural that we would put a great deal of weight on it, given the importance that institutional structures play in current gender inequalities but, in truly acknowledging the 'otherness' of the past, we must accept the possibility that the exercising of power at these loci was not so important from the perspective of medieval peasant women as has hitherto been supposed. This point will be expanded on below in the discussion of persuasive power.

I will firstly, however, turn to a discussion of the types of institutional power in the medieval village which did not alter according to a woman's lifecourse, that is, the power concerned with the holding of the position of official and juror, positions which women almost never occupied at this time. It can be seen, once again, that if we attend to the evidence without preconceived notions about the value of exercising certain types of power, it is possible to question hitherto common assumptions. As mentioned in Chapter Four, occupying the position of official certainly did not seem to have been universally valued during the Middle Ages. There is some evidence to indicate that people actively avoided fulfilling various offices and that it was generally recognised, both in the literature and in the legislation of the period, that people were loathe to judge their fellows (pp. 125-126). In addition, the gendered nature of the exercise of this power was often intercut with other social divisions such as those of wealth or status as the occupation of these positions often seemed only to be possible for

villagers coming from certain families (see discussion of Wawne p.97; Razi 1980: 77, 122). The gendered nature of these roles was not absolute, either, as can be seen from evidence from the manor of Halesowen in the early fifteenth century in which women were elected as aletasters (the officer responsible for enforcing the assize of ale) on several occasions, and Kingsbury, Middlesex, when women were elected as beadles (parish officials who were expected to keep order during church services) in 1466 and as reeves in 1543 (Bolton 1976: 80). It can also be suggested that it is unacceptable to emphasise women's absence from the exercise of this power and to make it central to general judgments about gendered power among the peasantry in this period while ignoring other types of power which women did hold, such as that which created men's dependency on them and that of persuasive power which will be elaborated on below. Such an approach exports our own privileging of institutional power onto the past.

The fact that institutional power may well have played a much less important role in the medieval period is attested to not only by the fact that in some manors widows regularly paid for licenses in order that they might be released from the obligation of attending the manor court (Müller 2001), but also by a consideration of the importance of persuasive power. The importance of persuasion as a form of power has been highlighted by many feminist archaeologists. For example, Alison Wylie draws attention to the work of feminists in other disciplines to stress the importance of not allowing politico-jural forms of authority to be the only ones that are considered as serious forms of power, as this exclusive focus can often obscure the possibility of recognising other forms of (female) power such as influence (Wylie 1992). Influence is often considered to be 'weaker' than other forms of power, a point made by Suzanne Spencer-Wood (1999) (and see Dommasnes (1998)). Gero and Scattolin (2002: 153) sum up the arguments very well when they write that "observing whether men or women occupy public, authorized roles as rulers or hereditary officials hardly covers the infinite numbers of social occasions in which gender roles

are called up and acted on, nor does this situation predict what others areas of intergendered interactions will also be hierarchically ordered". Medievalists have only paid scant attention to the possibilities of this sort of power, however. For example, although Stephen Rigby (1995: 257) does mention influential power in his work on medieval women, he still refers to it as *private* power, thus inherently limiting the possible importance that may be ascribed to it. In a similar fashion, 'power' and 'influence' are contrasted in Susan Johns' discussion of medieval gendered power (Johns 2003). Moreover, while Erler and Kowalski (1988: 10-11) do mention medieval women's possible means of influence, they preface the discussion with a reminder of "the subordinate position of medieval women" (*ibid.*: 10), making it clear that only a limited role for this influence is envisaged.

Persuasive power, however, is of huge importance in discussing the medieval peasant gender context and is obviously connected with the dependence that men had on women as has been discussed above. The importance of persuasion has been highlighted by many theorists of power. For example, Dennis Wrong considers persuasion to be a distinct form of power because "it clearly represents a means by which an actor may achieve an intended effect on another's behaviour" (Wrong 1979:32). Similarly, John Scott considers persuasive influence to be an elementary form of power and one which operates through "the offering and acceptance of reasons for acting in one way rather than another" (Scott 2001: 13). However, it must be recognised that medieval women also exercised other forms of power such as 'corrective influence' insofar as they had the power to manipulate. Scott (*ibid.*) defines this as the "use of both positive and negative sanctions of various kinds ... in order to influence the interest-oriented calculations of agents". It is also important to be aware that these theorists do not explicitly relate these forms of power to the interpersonal realm, although it is clear that they are applicable to it. If gender is a negotiated discourse, and therefore one to which participants bring different resources, we need to think about the resources that individuals in the

medieval village brought to their negotiations. It must be understood that, although I am stressing the importance of medieval women's exercise of persuasive influence, this must not be taken to mean that we should fail to recognise both the inducements and the deprivations which they also had the power to offer to or impose upon men. It can be seen, then, that the persuasive power that women exercised in the medieval village is likely to have prevented men from behaving, in their position as official or juror, in a way which their wives significantly or consistently disagreed with.

In summary, it is my contention that medieval peasant women exercised considerable power within their environment. There is evidence that they had considerable competency and familiarity with all aspects of material culture in the village, both in the toft and croft as well as within the fields and the wider 'agricultural' spaces. The evidence suggests that men's competencies were asymmetrical to those of women, in the sense that while they could do everything that men could do, the opposite did not apply. The power implications of this have been drawn out and based on the idea of dependency, and it has been argued that the asymmetry would have made men dependent on women in a way which would have allowed women to have exercised a great deal of power in those relationships. In terms of the institutional power that tends to be the focus of medievalists' discussions of gendered power, the evidence suggests that the gendered distinctions of these practices were far from absolute or straightforward, and that many of them altered throughout the lifecourse. Of those that did not, it can be seen that the persuasive power that women exercised is likely to have prevented medieval peasant men from routinely acting unilaterally. These conclusions are at odds with those drawn by a number of medieval historians and archaeologists, and I have stressed various features of the operation of power which tend to be ignored by many scholars. However, it seems clear that if we abandon deeply-embedded conceptions such as 'public' and 'private' and 'domestic' and 'institutional' along with the concomitant differential values and weightings that tend to be ascribed to each, we can

come closer to being able to approach the historical evidence on its own terms.

A criticism that can be made of the type of approach I am advocating for the study of concepts such as power in historical contexts is that what I am actually presenting evidence for is the fact that medieval peasant women were dupes of a patriarchal system which 'allowed' them certain forms of domestic power while denying them the ability to consistently exercise others. It could be said that my argument that medieval peasant women may not have experienced their lack of ability to exercise certain forms of institutional power, such as the ability to act as jurors or village officials, as particularly oppressive given the other types of power that they were able to exercise, demonstrates only that medieval peasant women were simply subject to a false consciousness about the real nature of their situation – that is to say that the dominant patriarchal ideology had persuaded women to actively believe in values that justified their own subordination, and that they thus failed to recognise the fact of and the instruments which maintained that subordination. However, false consciousness and notions of hegemonic ideologies have been criticised by many writers, including political scientist and anthropologist James Scott (1990). Scott draws extensively on Abercrombie's *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (Abercrombie *et al.* 1980) in his argument. Abercrombie, Hill and Turner attempted to demonstrate empirically that subordinate groups are much less integrated into the dominant ideology than proponents of this thesis presume and that these groups can and do produce ideas that run counter to those of the dominant group (see Eagleton 1991). Utilising these ideas, Scott argues that there is considerable evidence that subordinate groups do not internalise the values of the dominant group and often attempt to transform society in ways which should be literally inconceivable had a hegemonic ideology been in effect (Scott 1990:70-107). However, there are also definite problems with Scott's critique of false consciousness. Firstly, Scott does not refer to gender groups in his refutation of the hegemony /false consciousness thesis. As is

typical of many thinkers, he universalises a particular conception of modern Western women's forms of gendered oppression and writes that "in the case of women, relations of subordination have typically been both more personal and intimate; joint procreation and family life have meant that imaging an entirely separate existence for the subordinate group requires a more radical step then it has for serfs or slaves" (Scott 1990: 22). It is clear that in many historical and non-Western contexts the 'family' situations in which women find themselves, cannot be primarily characterised by any particular 'intimacy' or sharing and indeed, as many socialist feminists have pointed out, it is of limited applicability even to 'our' own context. Scott believes that these differences limit the applicability of his work to that of gendered oppression but, as this is based on the inadequately partial conceptions of unequal gendered power relations, I cannot agree with his assessment. Secondly, it seems to me that Scott assumes as much as do the proponents of the theory of false consciousness/hegemony. Scott appears to think that no-one is ever 'duped' into thinking in ways which are inimical to their 'real interests' (an extraordinarily problematic concept, as will be discussed below) and that, even if we do have evidence for them apparently behaving as though they are, it is only because they are being "realistic and prudent" in the face of massive power disparities (*ibid.*: 103). Given this, Scott's argument is essentially un-falsifiable.

In the case of my argument about the experiences of power of medieval peasant women, it is possible that Scott would argue that they were in fact resisting the superior institutional power of men, but that we do not have evidence for it in the 'public' transcript, and hegemony theorists may say that they were not doing anything of the sort because they had been effectively 'duped' by the ideology of patriarchy into not desiring this power. The key factor which unites these positions, however, is that they both presuppose some form of 'objective' or 'real' interest which, in the former scenario is (secretly) being fought for and in the latter is unrealised. Many theorists of power have drawn attention to the fact that we cannot

speak from a "transcendental value standpoint", meaning that we cannot assume that values remain the same across time, space and culture (Knights and Willmott 1982: 327; and see Lukes 1974: 256; Betts 1986: 359-61; Bradshaw 1976; MacLachlan 1981: 321-2). Concepts of 'objective interests' or 'true preferences' are, of course, important in an ethical sense and these normative demands, formulated in conjunction with wide consultation with people of different backgrounds to avoid universalising Western norms, are necessarily part of modern political programmes and have been championed by many feminist philosophers (e.g. Nussbaum 1999; 2001). However, it is obviously inappropriate to export uncritically our modern conceptions of power into the past and there is plentiful evidence for historical variability in people's experienced interests. In the medieval period, for example, the ability to obtain remission from purgatory and to guarantee salvation was arguably a greater 'interest' of most people than the ability to exercise certain forms of institutional power (see Brown 1995: 2-3). Similarly, it is possible that in a post-capitalist world, analysts would suggest that all early twenty-first century workers were slaves who were utterly powerless in the face of the drive to generate profit, but, while that may have a place as a normative argument, it would most certainly not be an accurate description of the totality of the lived experience of most of those workers (see Narayan 2002 for a discussion of the importance of experience in determinations of patriarchal oppression within modern Western contexts). Experiences, interests and preferences have and will vary across time and we do not advance the cause of feminist archaeology if we merely transfer modern values on to the past. As Donna Seifert writes: (1991: 1) "a feminist approach requires that assumptions about gender roles, gender systems, and gender ideology be critically evaluated". One of the goals of a feminist and contextual archaeology in general should be to point to the contingency of the gender values of today and to highlight the evidence we have for their variety in the past, as well as to demonstrate resistance to patriarchal power where there is evidence for it.

I have proposed that the small degree of decrease in the exercise of certain forms of institutional power which occurred when a medieval woman married and the non-exercise of other types of institutional power by all medieval peasant women was not experienced as oppressive, yet I do not mean to suggest that medieval peasant women were duped by patriarchy. Nor do I believe that medievalists are missing available evidence for their resistance to this situation, and nor do I believe that this resistance would have been impossible. The evidence suggests, in fact, that medieval peasant women exercised a large amount of power in their environment and that in areas where they did not, this absence would not have been *experienced* as oppressive. It may even have been viewed as a welcome respite from onerous obligations to these institutions. This interpretation can help us to explain why there was there was no alteration to gender relationships subsequent to the Black Death. If we take the concept of agency seriously and agree that it is through its exercise that feudal relations of power started to shift after the Black Death (pp. 112-117), we need to ask why other relations of power did not also shift. As noted in Chapter Three, moments of crisis such as the onset of the Black Death allow people to objectify their material conditions and commence a struggle for change in them. Various thinkers concerned with gender issues, in archaeology as well as more generally, have emphasised how these times of social change can lead to alterations in gender relationships. For example, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen (2002: 168) has observed that "gender relations as contractual and agreed arrangements ... are especially vulnerable in situations of change and therefore become particularly volatile in such contexts" and Judith Bennett (1996) enquires as to how moments of crisis affect patriarchal power. It could be considered to be particularly surprising that there is no evidence for a change in the gender regime of the time given the increased power that women had to independently support themselves at this period, as argued by Jeremy Goldberg (1992b: 345-361). Goldberg suggests that, subsequent to the Black Death, the resulting labour shortage meant that wages rose, presenting increased opportunities for women to support themselves

independently. Goldberg argues that the evidence suggests that women were, in these situations, less likely to marry or remarry and could be more selective in their marriage partners, (although he does admit of some likely regional variability to this model insofar as pastoral economies and those areas which contained towns with thriving textile industries would have required more (female) wage-labour than arable economies and areas in which textile towns were absent (*ibid.*:355-6)).

Stephen Rigby has attempted to answer the question as to why medieval peasant women did not act in concert to alter their material conditions. He argues that "women's position within the household meant that they did not form a separate community and their social organisation thus tended to the amorphous, rather than the communal end of the spectrum" (Rigby 1995: 280). This accounts for the fact that "women were unlikely to arrive at a common sense of identity with ... women of their own class" (*ibid.*). He further suggests that "in terms of a *subjective* sense of social identity and immediate economic interests, membership of a household was more important than gender" (*ibid.*). These arguments require examination, and I believe do not take into account the large amount of evidence we have for practices which would have generated a sense of identity between women nor for recent theorising about the nature of identity formation.

There are a range of theoretical arguments which outline the processes by which people may come to construct their identities in relation to other people and the ways that material culture is implicated in these processes. Daniel Miller observes that the closely-woven principles of *habitus* are specific to certain groups such as gender and class which leads to a sense of identity between those who share that *habitus* (Miller 1987: 104) and Sofaer-Derevenski highlights the fact that gender identity is partly related to a cumulative identification with a repertoire of forms and social practices (Sofaer-Derevenski cited in Chapman 2000: 173). Given this, we can see that the shared use of a similar template of material culture would thus have

linked women together and would have been an important facet of their identity formation. In the medieval village, although it is true that the arrangement of space in many settlements emphasised discrete households and therefore would have been important in definitions of identity based on the relationships therein, it is also true that linkages between women would have occurred as discussed below. In a similar vein, Tim Ingold writes that "it could be argued that in the resonance of movement and feeling stemming from people's mutually attentive engagement in shared context of practical activity, lies the very foundation of sociality" (Ingold 1993:518). If this argument is accepted, it can be seen that 'sociality' in the village would have been, for women, bound up with both men with whom they worked but possibly more so with women who shared with each other the entire spectrum of their 'contexts of practical activity'. These contexts which would have brought women together include not just those in which observing other women working on tasks that they themselves were engaged in, discussions with them about these tasks and the sharing of a similarly-patterned spatial and temporal taskscape would have occurred, but also through such things as clothes-sharing. It is known from early medieval contexts that, as cloth was not expendable as it is today, in small villages where women would have been each other's godmothers and friends, people may well have been left each other's or each other's mother's clothes in wills (van Houts 1999:104). Other practices such as the birthing process, from which men were excluded and midwives and female neighbours assisted the birthing woman would also have built up these feelings of a gendered community (McMurray Gibson 1996: 151), as would have churching ceremonies, parish activities segregated by sex such as Hocktide celebrations and sitting together in church. Ralph Houlbrooke (1986) has drawn attention to a large array of practices which women performed together such as going to market and supervising animals as well as socialising and the practice of purgation in ecclesiastical courts in which compurgators had to be of the same sex as the accused. He notes how the economic and social functions which they performed "arguably facilitat[ed]

the development of independent common opinions" (*ibid.*: 171). Judith Bennett's (1981) evidence for women pledging for each other can be seen to be an outcome of these feelings of gender-group solidarity.

The evidence seems to suggest, then, that there were many practices which medieval peasant women engaged in which allowed them to come together, construct their identities in this interaction and have opportunity to find common cause. It is clear that many aspects of their social organisation were 'communal' rather than 'amorphous' *contra* the arguments of Rigby (1995: 280). The fact that there is no evidence that women attempted to alter their circumstances in the wake of the Black Death, at a time at which many other social relations were changing and in which it might be expected that gender relations could also alter, seems to lend support to my thesis that the relative disadvantage that medieval women experienced vis-à-vis their men was less significant than has been heretofore assumed.

6.4 Conclusions

6.4.1 Context and variability

A key theme of the present work is the demonstration of the variability in experiences of power, community and gender within the late medieval English peasantry. It is very important to realise the importance of writing archaeologies of experience and *mentalité* which use a holistic and truly contextual approach to the material. In other words, looking at, for example, village plans, or church fabric in isolation from other data sources available does not allow us to understand adequately the different meanings engendered by this material which would have been affected by other features of the context under consideration, and which would have varied over time, between genders and so on. For example, both Osgodby and Wharram Percy could seem to have superficial similarities in their experience of lordship, given that both manor houses were positioned in

close proximity to peasant messuages. However, it is only when considering documentary material to understand differences in lordly residency patterns, the fabric of the church which demonstrates the differences in seigneurial strategies with regards to impact on ecclesiastical buildings, and archaeological and historical information on the villages' respective regions to investigate the 'solidity' of practices of lordship for the perception of the peasants, that we can see significant differences as well as similarities. Similarly, all three case-study villages may seem to have evidence of the same type of construction of community insofar as houses were laid out along a road. Yet, a consideration of differences in material culture employed within the tofts, archaeological information which allows us to see spatial differentiation between certain types of houses, and a consideration of the choices that peasants made in terms of their use of village space, allows us to see, again, differences in the extent and manner in which 'community' was created in these villages. That this holistic and integrated use of data occurs so rarely is partly due to academic specialisms in which medievalists tend to focus on churches, or pottery, or dress accessories and so on. But it is also partly the product of the focus on large-scale processes of social development of most current medieval archaeology. Historians, on the other hand, have tended to concentrate on smaller-scale issues, such as the dynamics within individual villages, and have therefore been able to address contextual issues such as differences in the experience of lordship due to tenurial differences or the status of their lord. However, these interpretations will necessarily be constrained insofar as they do not utilise the extensive amount of information available in the material cultural evidence, such as derived from considerations of the use of space or artefactual evidence.

As an example of the variability we see when all available data are utilised in our interpretations, let us consider the evidence for the tempo and nature of the deployment of seigneurial power in the three villages that were considered in this thesis, as well as peasant response to this power. At

Osgodby, seigneurial power was ever-present but apart from the peasants in that it was bounded off by architectural features and separate from important social practices of the peasantry. Lords at Osgodby would not have been present in the parish church for worship with the peasantry, and their presence in the fabric of the chapel at Cayton and the church at Seamer was minimal. At Wawne, the seigneurial power of the monks of Meaux was exercised heavily, constantly and through a variety of media. It would have been encountered by the peasants of Meaux both as heavy moments of imposition which were of limited temporal scale, such as in the Cellarer dispute, and as more capillary 'force effects' encountered within their lives and within the landscape in the form of the dykes the monks had built, of the constant extraction of labour services and – more widely in the region – in the form of the proliferation of deer parks reserved for the use of the lords. Resistance to this power was carried out in a similarly 'capillary' way through various media such as direct complaints, and subversive harbouring of fugitives. At Wharram Percy, lordly power was a distant force which was compromised by the complicated position of those who exercised it. At times, however, it suddenly and heavily imposed itself upon the village. Direct resistance to this power occurred through a variety of practices carried out through both the short and long term such as stone-robbing, poaching and hand-milling and, more indirectly, through the creation of a cohesive community through non-individualistic and shared uses of space. It can be seen that, when we attend to a variety of sources and consider material culture and practice, the evidence points to a wide range of experiences of power and resistance in medieval villages. Macro-level social processes affected local conditions in specific ways and the response of villagers to these processes was not always identical. The foregoing comparisons show the importance of seeing medieval lords and peasants not simply as two amorphous masses behaving in predictable, schematic ways. Large-scale processes were mediated differently throughout time and space by human agents, and looking at material culture and space as well as at

documents can help us understand the variability of the experiences of these processes.

6.4.2 Material culture and choice

Concomitant with the focus of this thesis on the role of medieval material culture in aiding our understanding of medieval experience, rather than viewing it merely as a reflection of large-scale social processes, has been an emphasis on the necessity of viewing archaeological data as, at least partially, reflective of choices made by medieval people. In interpretations of evidence from medieval rural settlement sites, it is important not to fall back onto well-worn explanations which actually explain little, or, indeed, to abjure explanation altogether. For example, when quernstones or robbed stone or copper-alloy buckles are found in the excavation of a peasant toft, these need to be *interpreted*, not merely mentioned in small-finds catalogues. Similarly, and as previously mentioned, when certain forms of pottery are found, we have not completed our interpretive task once we have mentioned that the items, and possibly the household, were 'high-status' or that the items may have been 'emulative' of social superiors. We need to see this as evidence for choices that peasants were making in their purchasing of goods. Why were they spending money on domestic pottery? What meanings did this have and what identities did it produce? It should be remembered that peasants could always have done otherwise, and expended their resources elsewhere. We must also investigate similarities and differences within the material cultural suite recovered in different households. Again, this is evidence of choice and must be interpreted. Because the range of material culture found in the excavation of peasant buildings is relatively restricted and excavators often find the range of items that, in some senses, they expect to find, small differences, or differences in frequency of find type tend not to be remarked upon. Excavated items should not remain un-interpreted simply because their discovery was predictable, but must be seen

as evidence for choices that were made by people in the past, which themselves need to be the subject of investigation.

6.4.3 Temporality

The foregoing discussion has focussed on material culture as reflecting choices made by people in the past, rather than as merely evidencing technological, political or environmental processes. It could be argued, however, that this focus does not adequately acknowledge the active, structuring role of material culture, and confines our interpretations to a pseudo-idealist model, with material culture simply reflecting decisions made in the heads of these people. That kind of interpretation of archaeological material culture is much reviled by many scholars, and current theorising stresses the active nature of material culture in constructing social lives and experience. It is argued that material culture does not express or reflect social attitudes or identities, but actively constructs them (e.g. Barrett 2001: 156; Gilchrist 1994: 15-18). Although it constitutes a vital insight, this sort of theorising can give too much primacy to material culture and positions materiality as pre-eminent in structuring social life. It almost seems to imply that people come to the material culture in their world as a *tabula rasa,* waiting for that materiality to suddenly produce meaning for them. It is important that archaeologists accept that human consciousness also has a part to play in constructing social life, and that meaning does not solely reside in humans' material world; people *do* "carry ideas around in their heads" which they then apply to material culture (cf. Barrett 2001: 157). It is clear that these ideas themselves will have been structured by the social life of the agent, which itself will have been partially structured by the materiality they have encountered in that life (i.e. no sort of "objectification of knowledge" is implied here), but it is important to be alert to the fact that while material culture indubitably structures sociality and experience, that material culture is itself structured by cognizant human agents.

It is possible that one way of resolving the tension between material culture as structuring human experience but also as the result of human agency and consciousness is to play closer attention to temporality. The way material culture 'works' in society alters through time and I have already mentioned one way in which this occurs, which is related to intention versus the lived use and maintenance of a system. I have discussed how, over the course of the use and maintenance of space, the intentions of the initial author(s) of these spaces and systems can quickly become redundant. However, it is another social scale which is most important for our purposes here and was alluded to in the discussion of medieval church wall paintings. I drew attention to the ways that the 'structuring' properties of these paintings are likely to have come to the fore once their 'discursive' existence as topics of conversation and so on had faded. It seems likely that it is in the planning, construction and first phases of use of material culture that it is most clearly the 'product' of human consciousness (one that has itself been structured by previous experience including encounters with materiality as mentioned above). However, it is once these phases have elapsed that material culture as a 'structuring agent' can most accurately and usefully be investigated. It is when material culture has moved into a non-discursive and 'undiscussed' temporal realm that it can most actively start to structure human life. Historical archaeology is perhaps uniquely placed to investigate this proposition and its implications, as the more closely-dateable material that is dealt with by archaeologists working in historical periods allows more plausible establishment of the temporal zone in which an item of material culture was in its early, 'discursive' phase, amenable to discussion, active interpretation and so on, and when it has moved into its later 'non-discursive' phase when it worked more as a structuring agent.

6.4.4 Future research directions

The approach developed in this thesis has thrown up a variety of questions which future research could address. The possibilities in extending the approach developed here to dispersed settlement have been mentioned above. The investigation of the impact of towns upon the inhabitants of dispersed settlement, as well as the experiential aspects of living in areas of mixed settlement types has been suggested, as has an the analysis of the range of material culture found in houses in dispersed settlement contexts.

Other possibilities for future research involve applying the approach developed here to other settlements, including those in different parts of England. As argued in Chapter One (p.46), building up a picture of the variability of the impact which large-scale processes such as lordly power and resistance had on local contexts allows us to, among other things, write broad histories based on robust research. The three case studies undertaken here have allowed us to see that considerable variation in the material element of the construction of peasant community, for example, could exist within a relatively limited geographical area. It has also alerted us to aspects of the material world of the peasantry which appear to occur in a variety of contexts, such as linkages between lordly and ecclesiastical architecture (although the meanings evoked and parties responsible for these linkages could vary). Applying this approach to other villages could allow us to extend the investigation of patterns of difference and similarity in the experience of the late medieval peasantry, discern the range of variability in this experience, and to meaningfully advance some general conclusions on these topics.

The present research has also suggested fresh ways of investigating medieval life with respect to links between material culture, wealth, status and display which would be possible utilising existing published data. The importance of viewing the material culture of the medieval English

peasantry as being, at least in part, reflective of choice allows us to look at archaeological evidence with new questions in mind. If we find small houses containing high quality pottery, or a high number of items of copper-alloy dress accessories in houses with poor ceramic assemblages or large houses containing only low-quality artefacts, we can start to think about the ways that material culture was implicated in the production of status in the Middle Ages. Considerations of the ways this material was consumed, both by the owners themselves and by those who would have viewed it, as well as the presence or absence of patterns of association between object types would allow us to understand peasant priorities as they manipulated the material world. Although some difficulties can be envisaged, such as the need to compare similarly-excavated peasant tofts and problems of variability in the dating resolution of different material culture types, it is likely that some patterns would be discernible and informative.

It can be seen, therefore, that a variety of avenues for future research have been opened up by the development of a new approach to the archaeology of the medieval peasantry, which, if followed, have the potential to substantially augment our understanding of this group.

6.4.5 Concluding comments

This thesis has proposed an approach to the archaeology of the late medieval English peasantry which has emphasised the importance of context in undertaking interpretations of the social life of this group. For this reason, three case studies were chosen which comprised sites in which archaeological data of both differing qualities and quantities, and of single- and multi-periods were available, thereby enabling the approach to be applied to a wide variety of medieval settlement. Inevitably, the in-depth study of specific settlements that was undertaken has meant that not every type of social context has been covered, but the case studies have dealt with

sites which evidenced variation in lordship types, strategies of peasant community, and degrees of exposure to wider social influences.

The intellectual inspiration for this research included the theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of medieval material culture that have been developed by scholars such as Matthew Johnson, Roberta Gilchrist and Pamela Graves. All of these writers have established invaluable ways of incorporating social theory into medieval archaeology. However, these authors have not focussed on the peasantry, and, given the differences between the material culture of the medieval elite and that of the peasantry, it was not viable to follow precisely any one of their approaches when it came to developing a social archaeology of the peasantry. For example, access analysis or space syntax theory can not usefully be applied to peasant houses which only contain a very few separate rooms and in which it is sometimes impossible even to determine the number of rooms that were in existence. In addition, the project of developing an archaeological approach to the study of the medieval peasantry that is informed by social theory must contend with the higher burden of proof that historical archaeologists bear in comparison with prehistorians. Theorising which is widely accepted when applied to prehistoric contexts is often criticised when used on material from historic periods; it seems to be felt that such thinking is overly-abstract and unnecessary in historic contexts, due, presumably, to the presence of documentary records which tend to be positioned as the ultimate arbiters of the 'truth' of an interpretation. Archaeological evidence and theorising derived from critical approaches are rarely allowed to stand on their own in medieval archaeological writing in particular, and it seems to be felt that they must be buttressed by documentary 'proof'. However, this stance fails to appreciate the nature of both material and documentary data as complementary sources; documents do not give us simply better information than material culture, they speak of quite different types of human activity. In addition, both are imbricated in relations of social power, and therefore both require an interpretive effort to

be made when utilising them in archaeological discourse; neither are 'neutral' sources. The theoretical maturation of medieval archaeology must involve the acceptance of the *archaeological* nature of our data and the concomitant willingness of scholars to utilise interpretive approaches that draws on the materiality of these data.

Part of this process of maturation will involve accepting the challenges that an engagement with different forms of theorising presents to practitioners of medieval archaeology. In 1990 David Austin wrote that "[i]nstead of piling, pointlessly, empirical Ossa upon positivist Pelion in the vain hope that the accumulated mass of archaeological data will somehow speak for itself, we should attempt to analyse what material existence itself actually meant in the Middle Ages. Meaning will come from understanding its language and its involvement in the practices of day-to-day living" (Austin (1990:35)). This call for an investigation into the meaning of medieval material culture is arguably as relevant today as it was 16 years ago. Insofar as this thesis has demonstrated the ways in which analytical work which combines documentary and material evidence can play a vital role in theorising power, community and meaning in the lives of the peasantry, it is hoped that it has contributed to responding to the theoretical challenges that presently confront the discipline of medieval archaeology.

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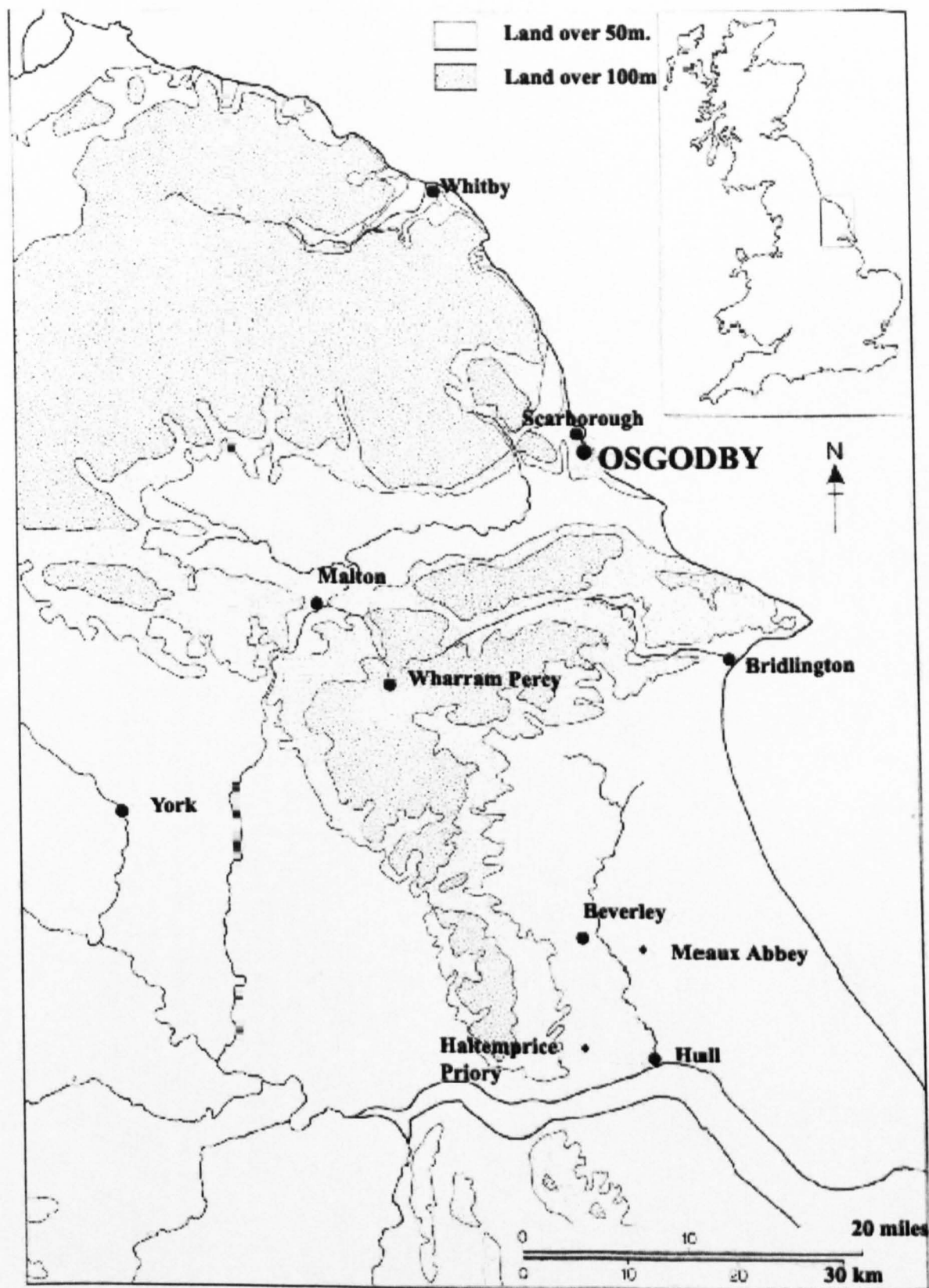
Figure 1: Location of Osgodby
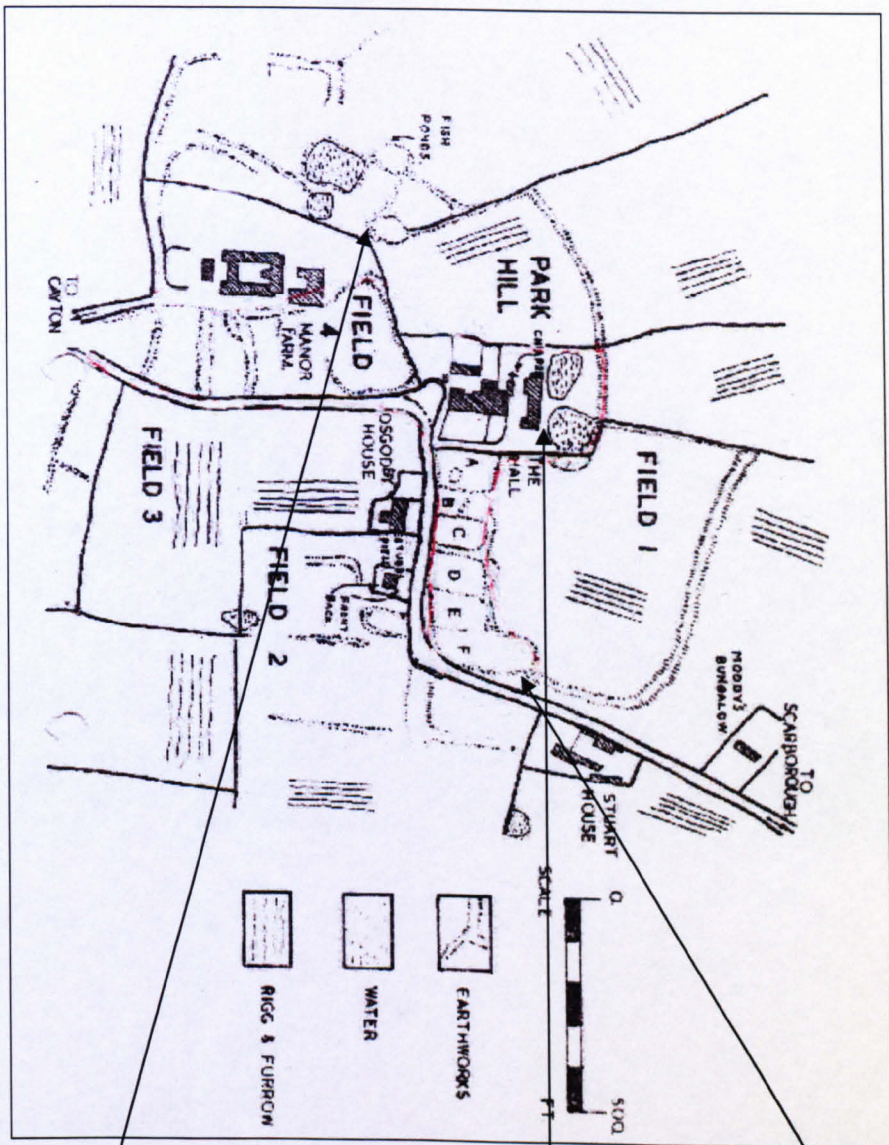
Figure 2: Site plan of Osogdby village showing features mentioned in text (after Farmer 1968)
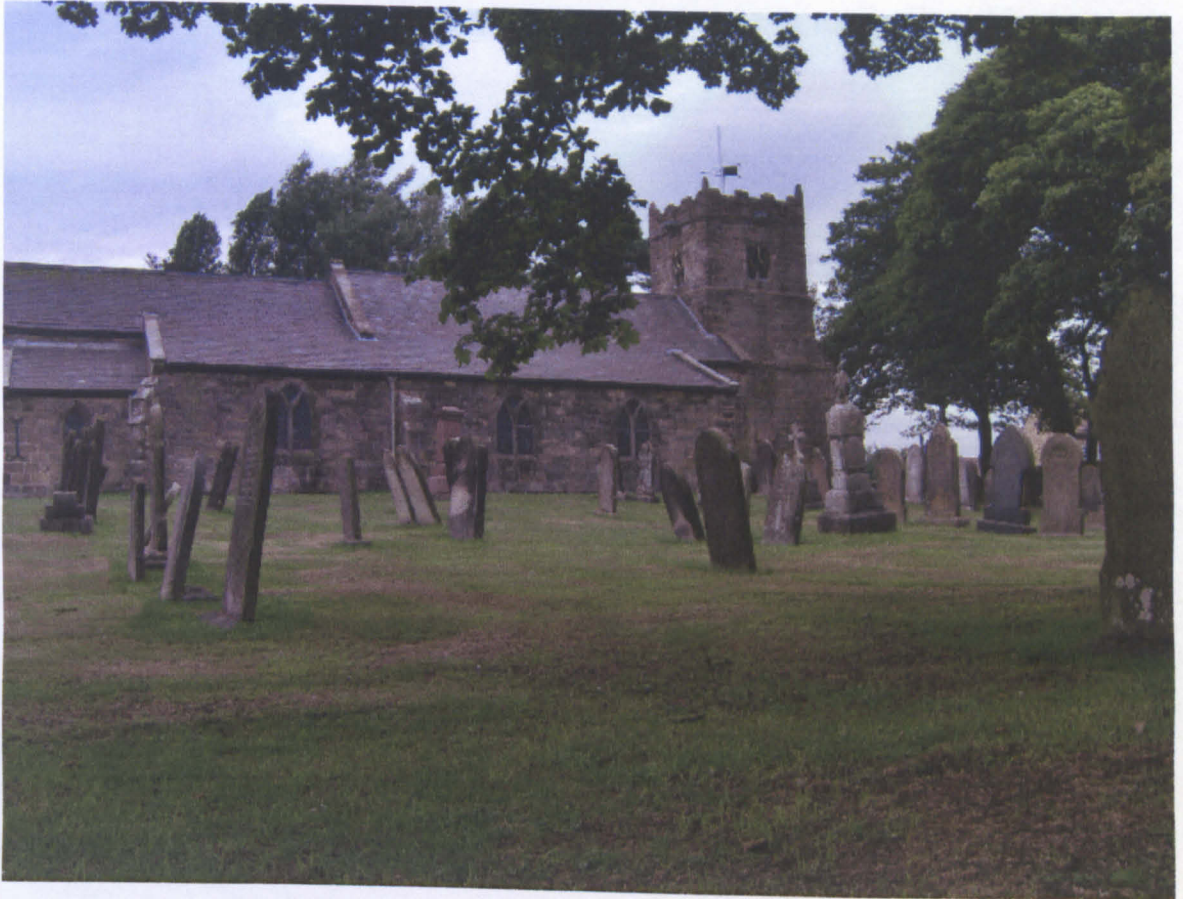
Figure 3 : Cayton church

Figure 4: Interior of St. John the Baptist, Cayton
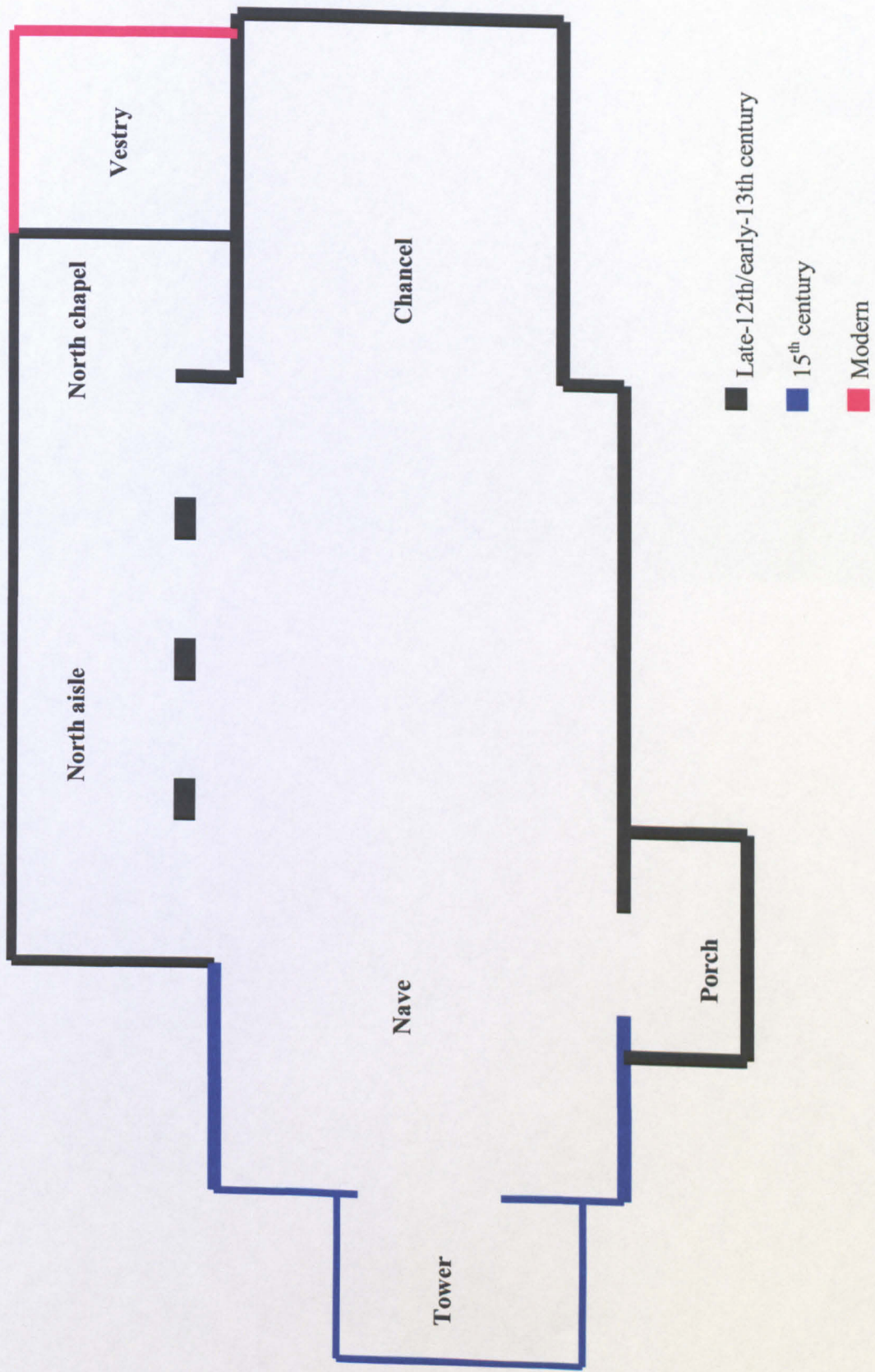
Figure 5: Phased sketch plan of the church of St. John the Baptist, Cayton. Not to scale.

Vestry

North chapel

North aisle

Chancel

Nave

Porch

Tower

Late-12th/early-13th century

15th century

Modern

N

Figure 6: Brass from St. John the Baptist, Cayton
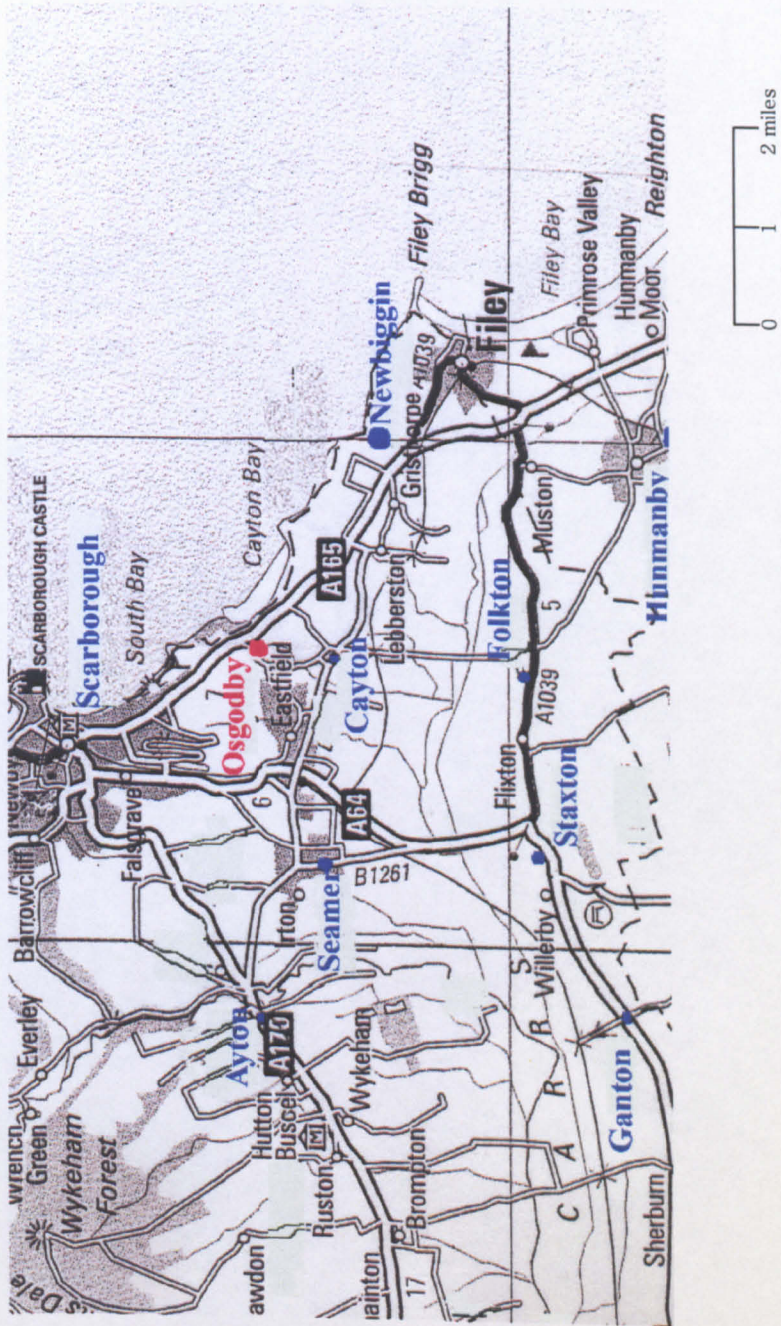
Figure 7 : Osgodby and its region
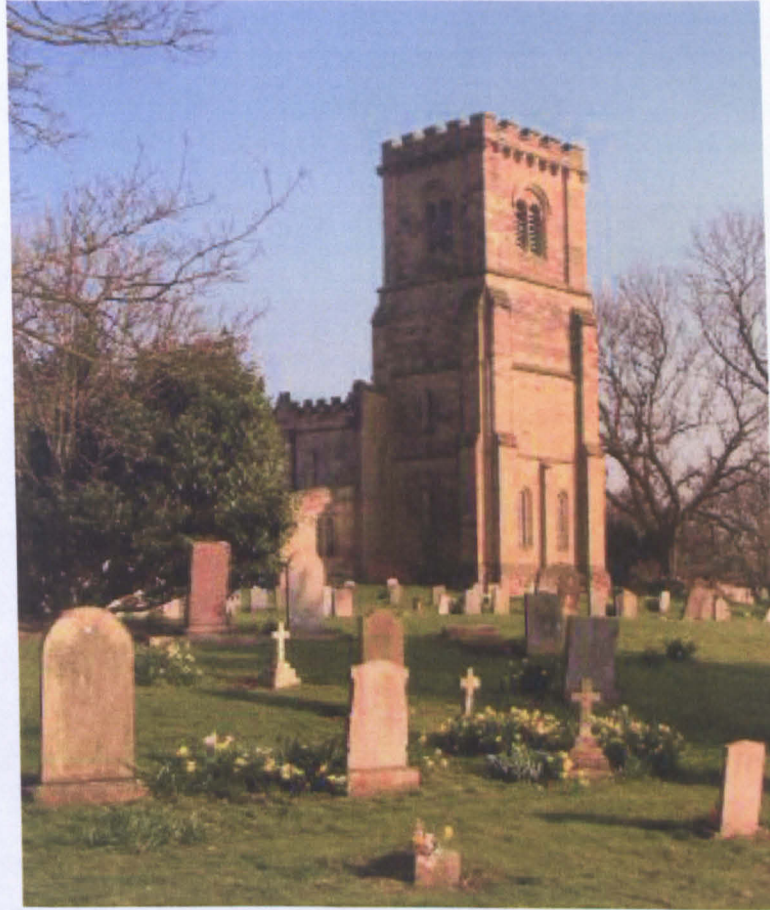
Figure 8: The church of St. Martin, Seamer (http://www.st-martins-seamer.net/default.htm)
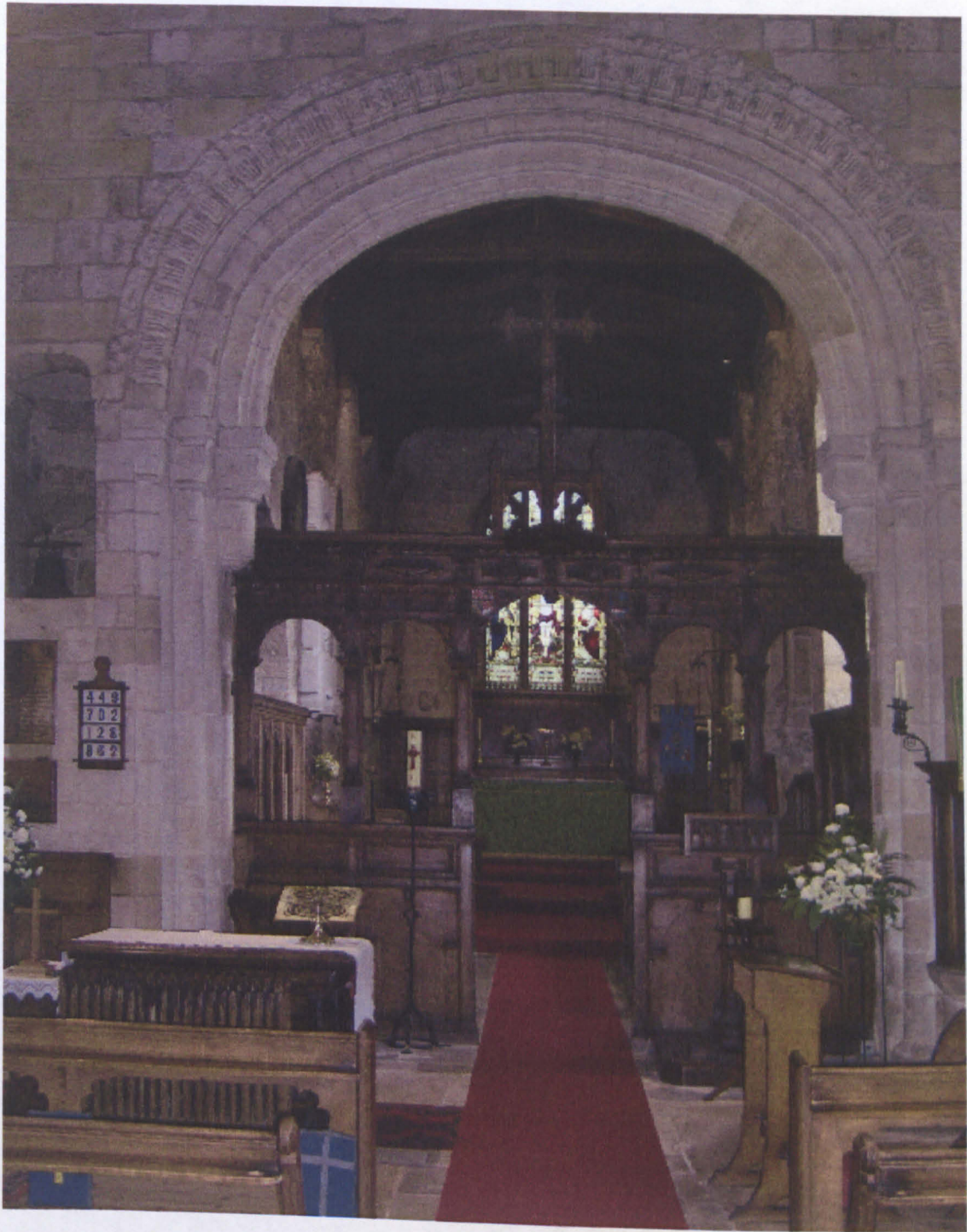
Figure 9: Interior of St. Martin's, Seamer
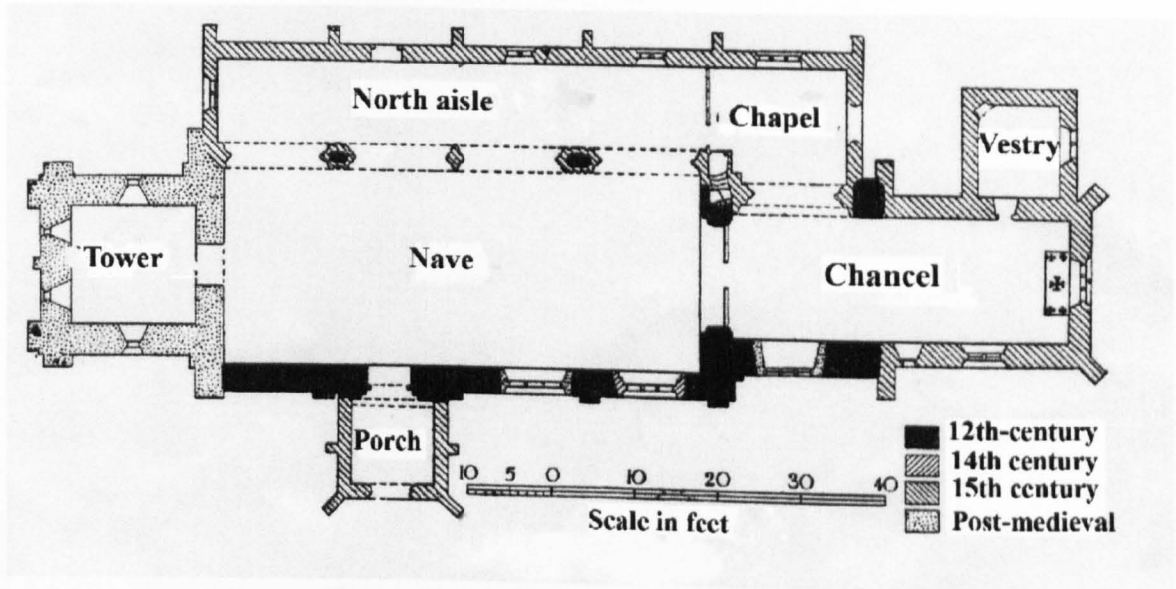
Figure 10: Phased plan of the church of St. Martin, Seamer (after Russell
1923b)

Figure 11 : (Above) North aisle of St. Martin's, Seamer
(Below)   North chapel, St. Martin's, Seamer

Figure 12: Stairs to rood loft, positioned in nave of church, St. Martin's, Seamer
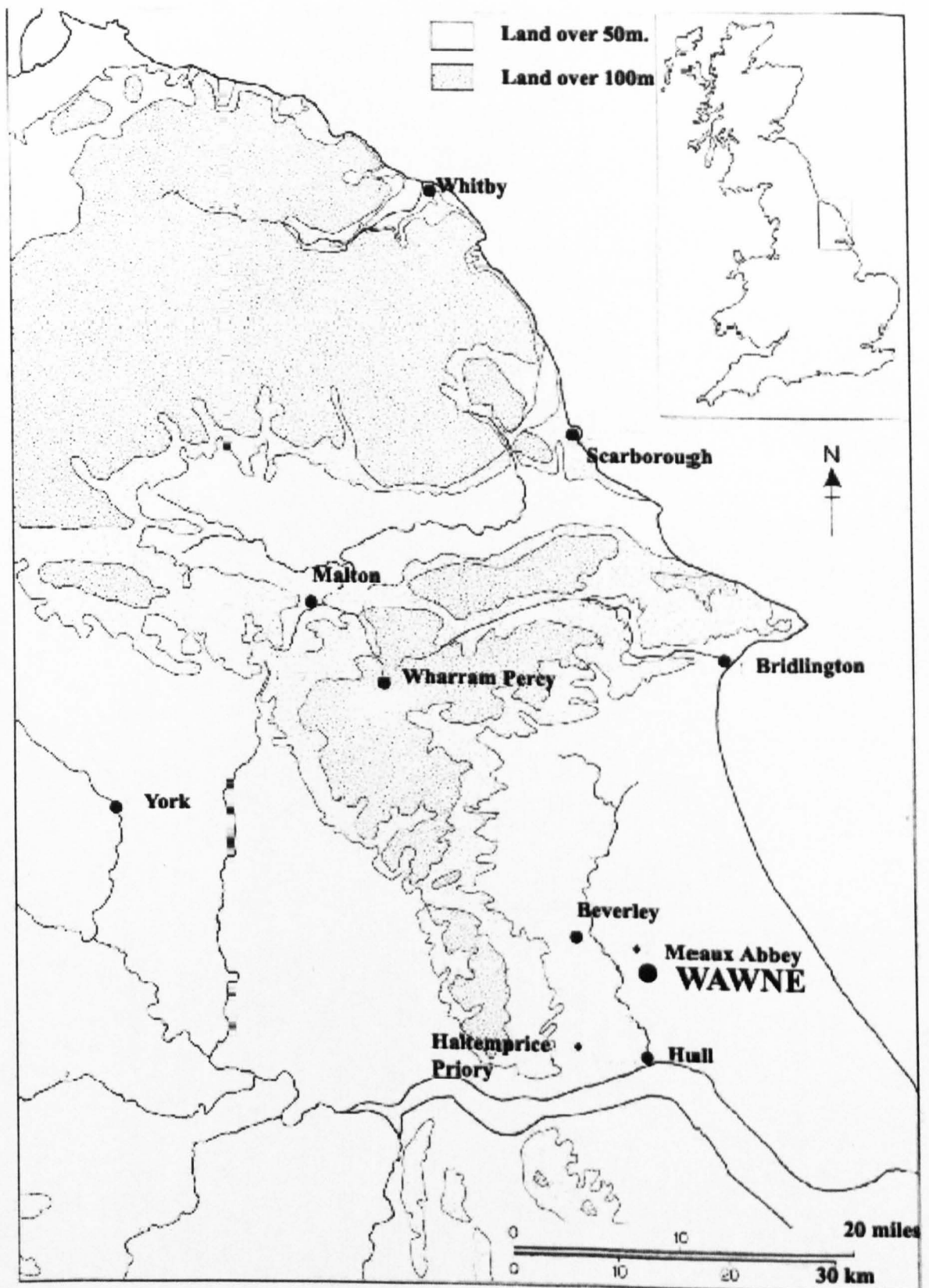
Figure 13: Location of Wawne
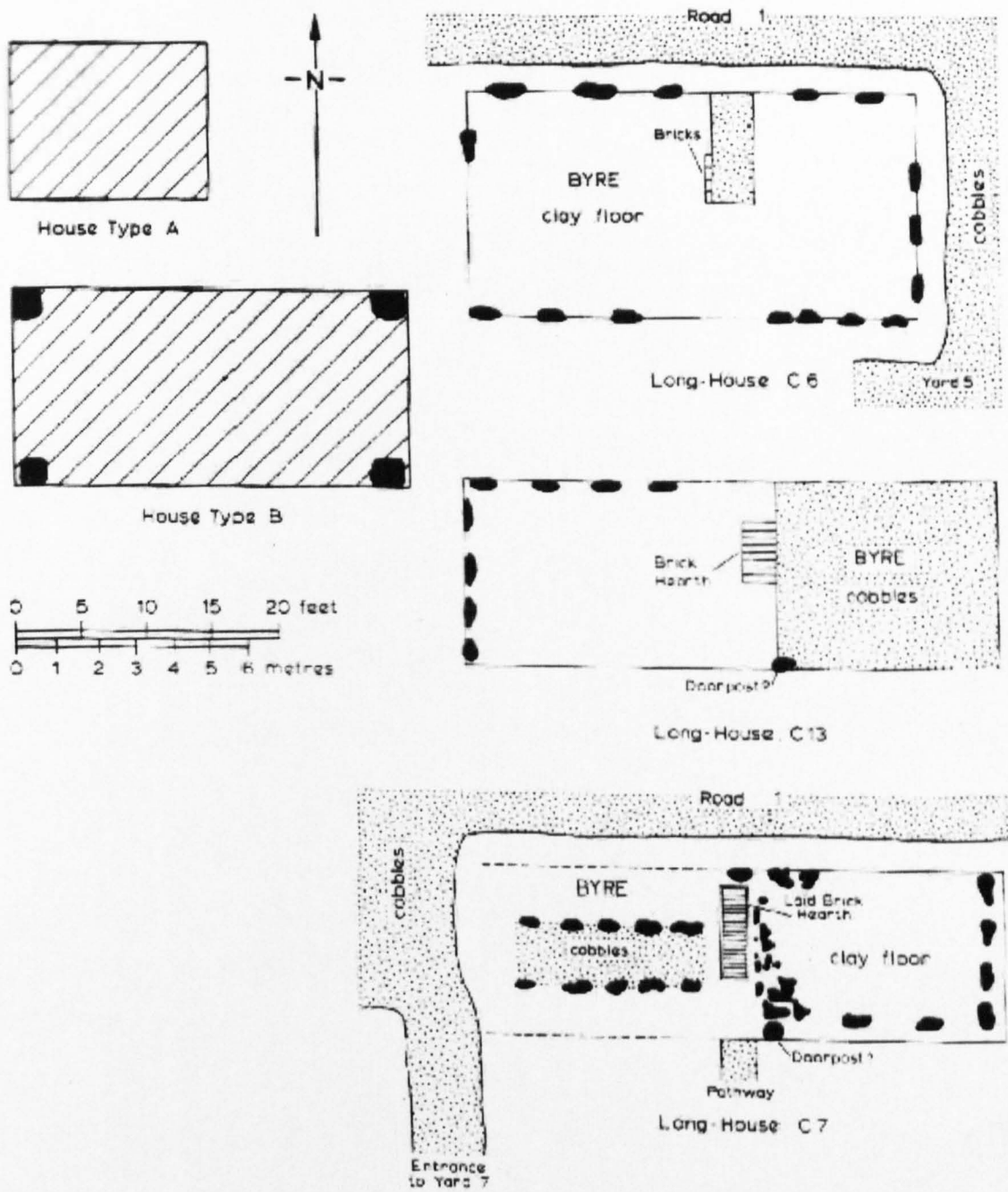
Figure 14 : Examples of House Types A, B, and C, Wawne (Hayfield (1984)
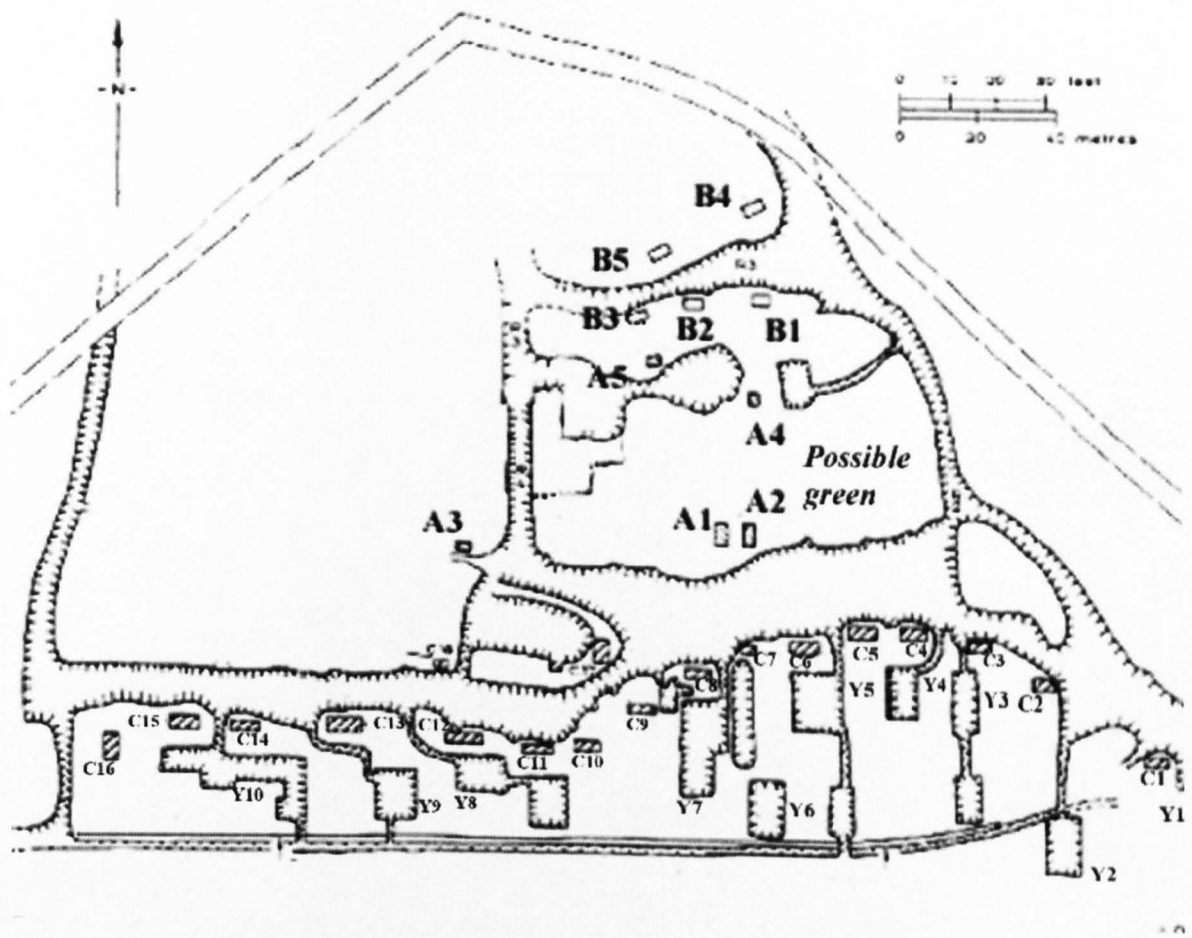
Figure 15 : Site plan of the village of Wawne, showing all features discussed in text (after Hayfield 1984)
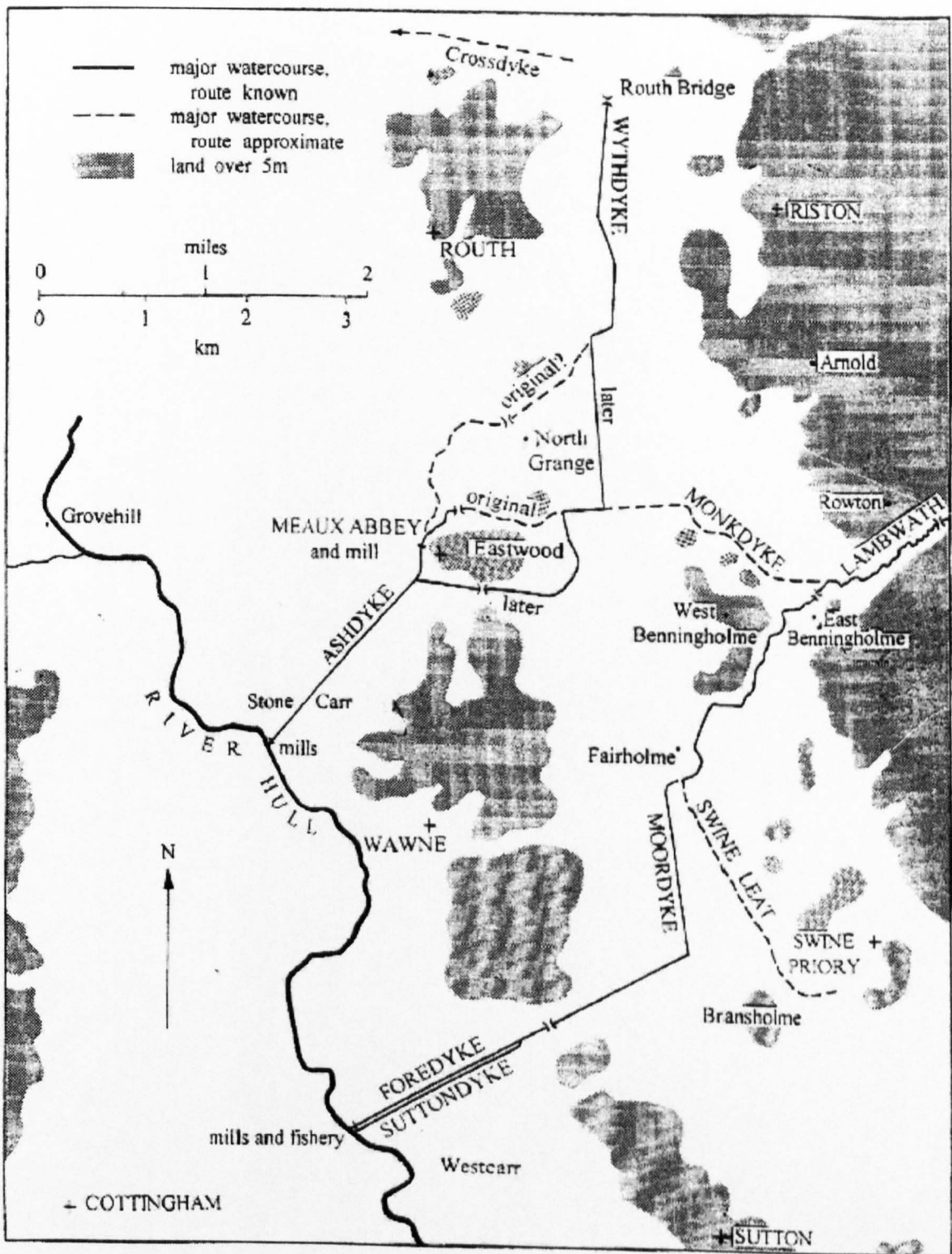
Figure 16: Map of dykes in the valley of the River Hull (Lewis 1996)

Figure 17: The church of St. Peter's, Wawne, showing crenellated nave and clock.

N

Chancel

Vestry

Nave

Porch

North aisle

South aisle

Tower

Font

0 1 2 3 4 5 m.

■ Early/mid 13th century

■ Late 13th century

■ Late 15th century
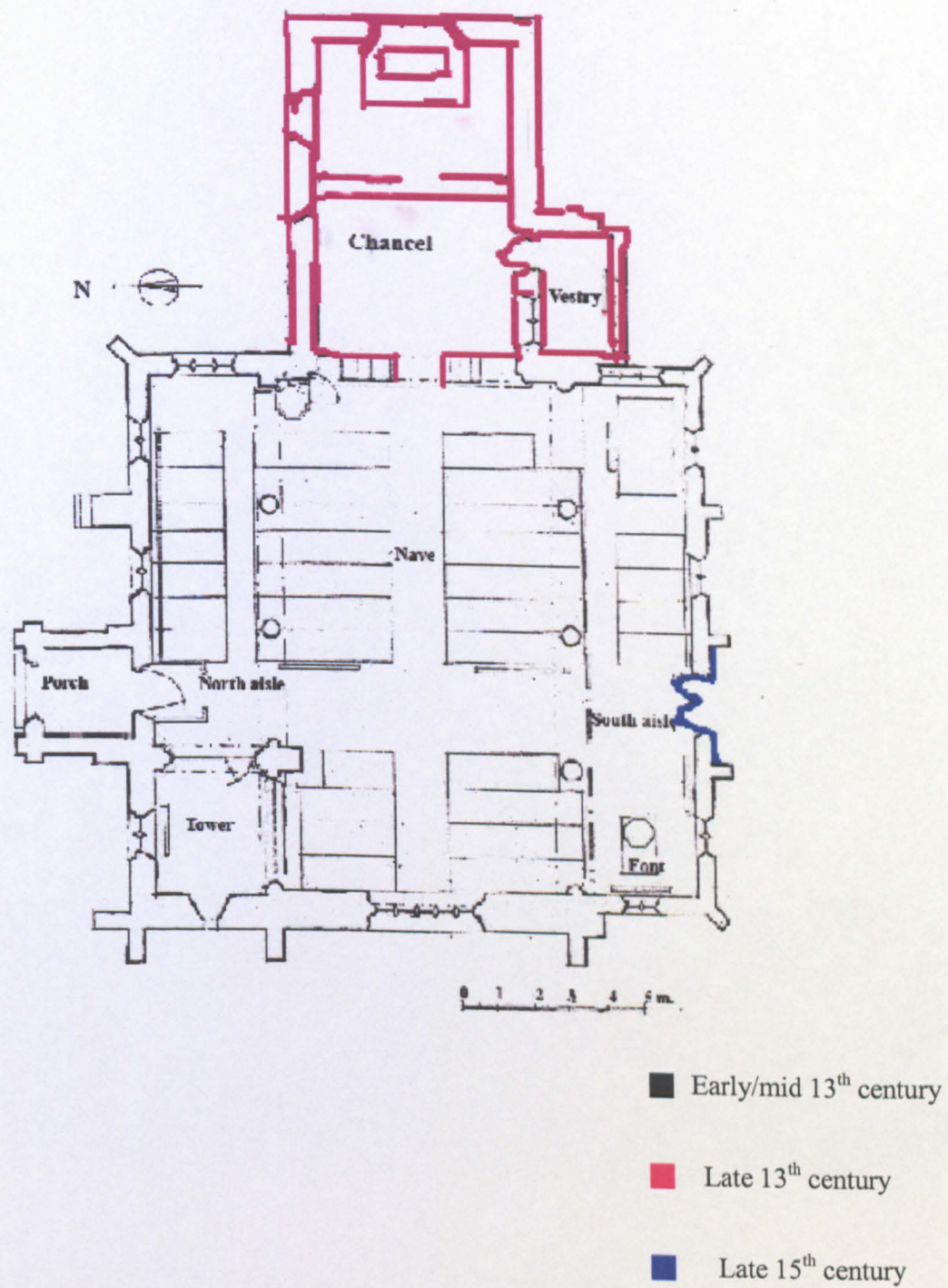
Figure18 : Phased floor plan of Wawne church

Figure 19 : Interior of Wawne church, looking east towards chancel

Figure 20 : St. Peter's, Wawne, nave interior showing four bays and south aisle
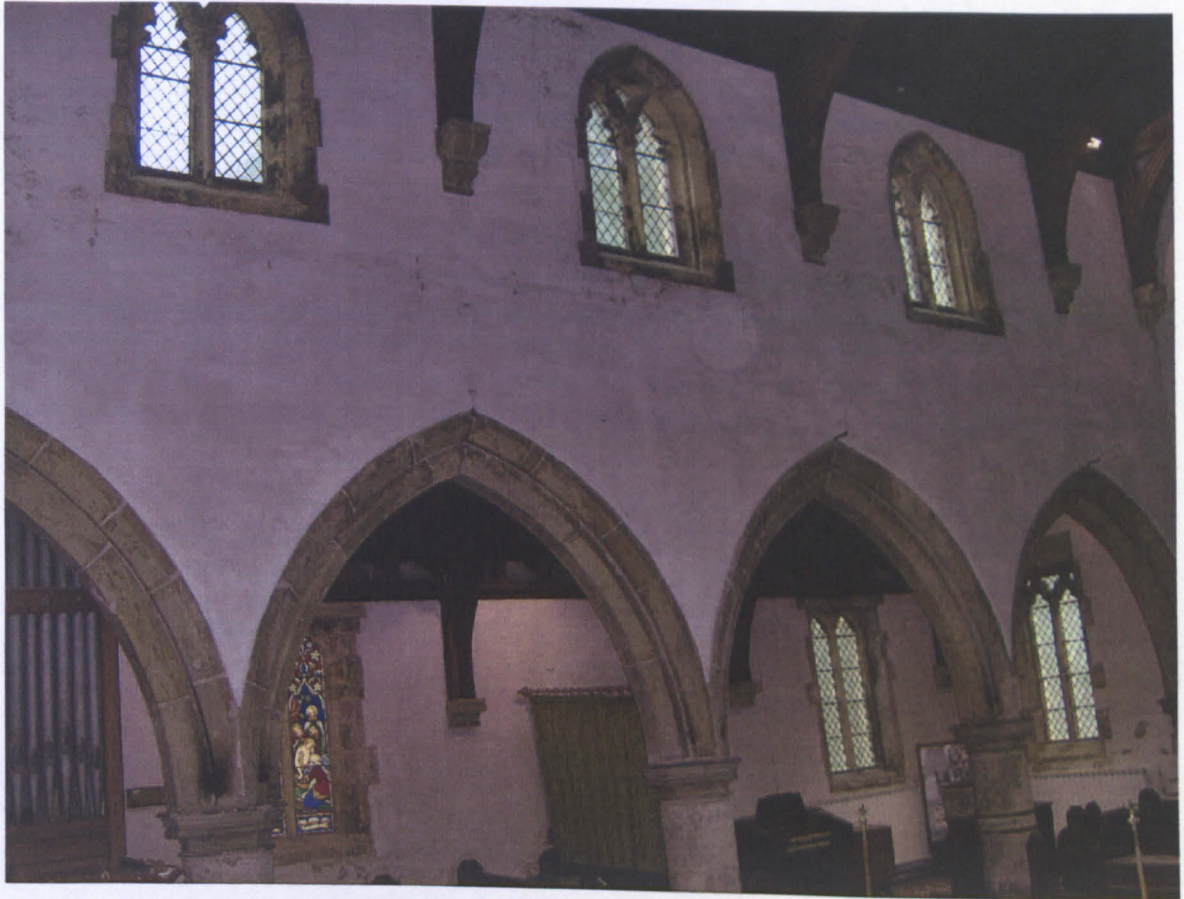
Figure 21: St. Peter's, Wawne, north wall of nave showing clerestory

Figure 22: St Peter's, Wawne, west nave window
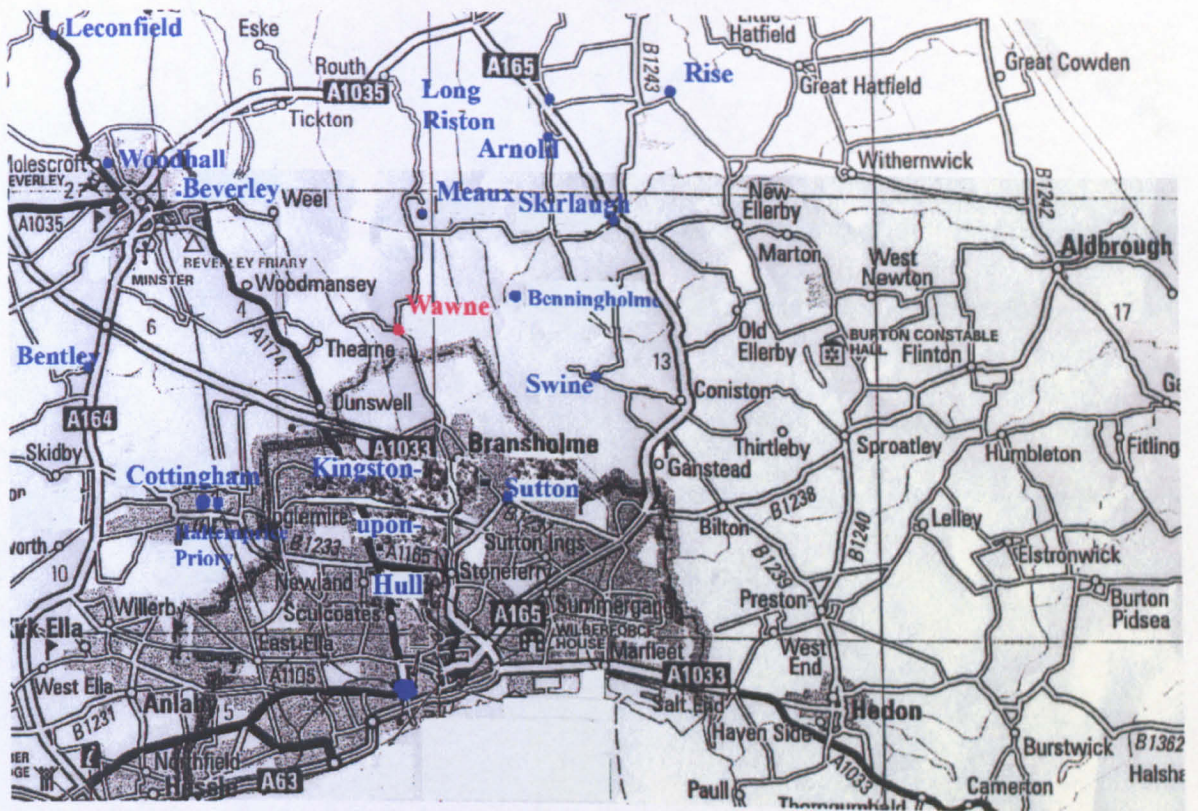
Figure 23 : Wawne and its region
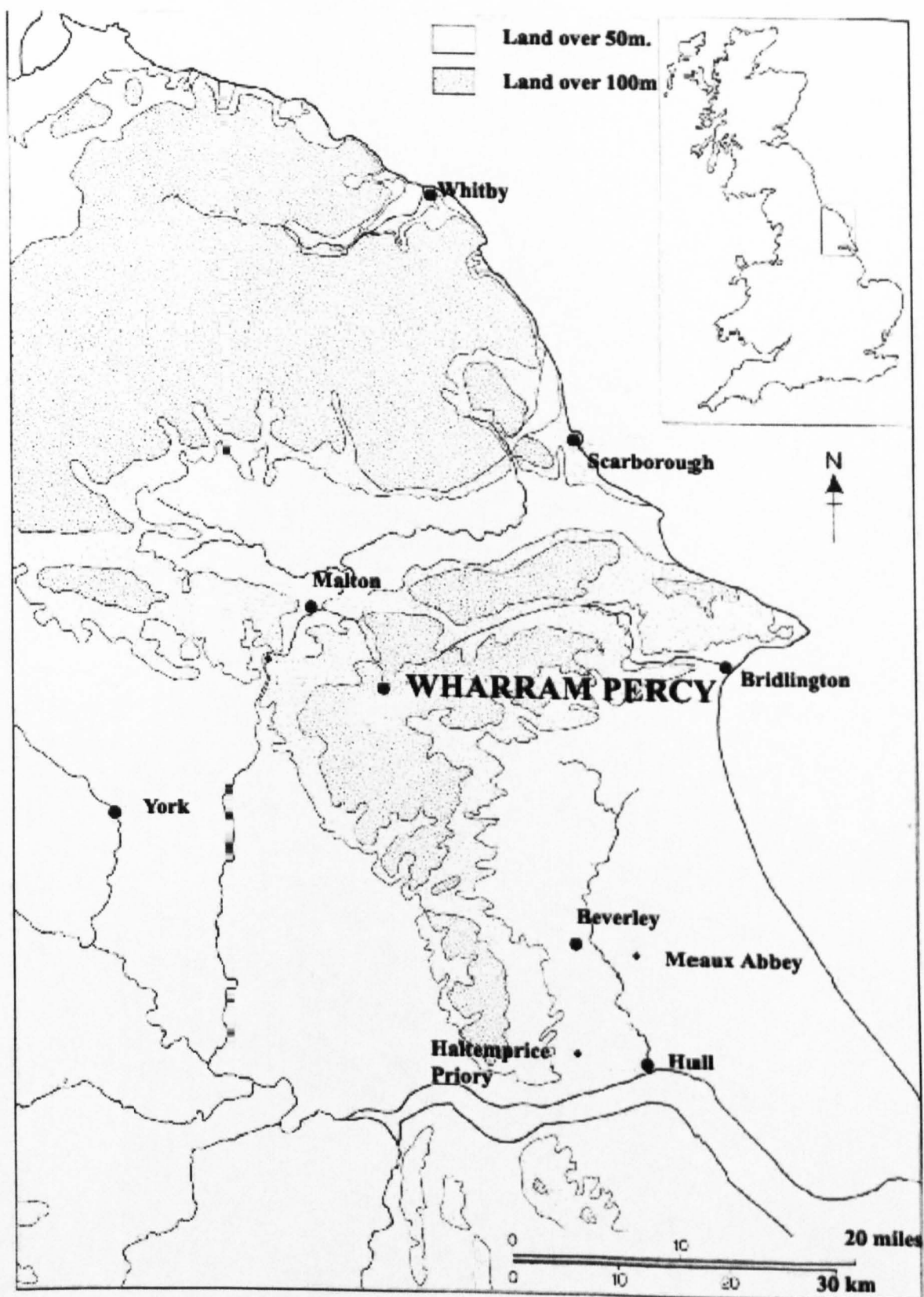
Figure 24: Location of Wharram Percy

Figure 25: Wharram Percy, showing features mentioned in text (after Beresford and Hurst 1990)

'lynchet' bank

N

Camera
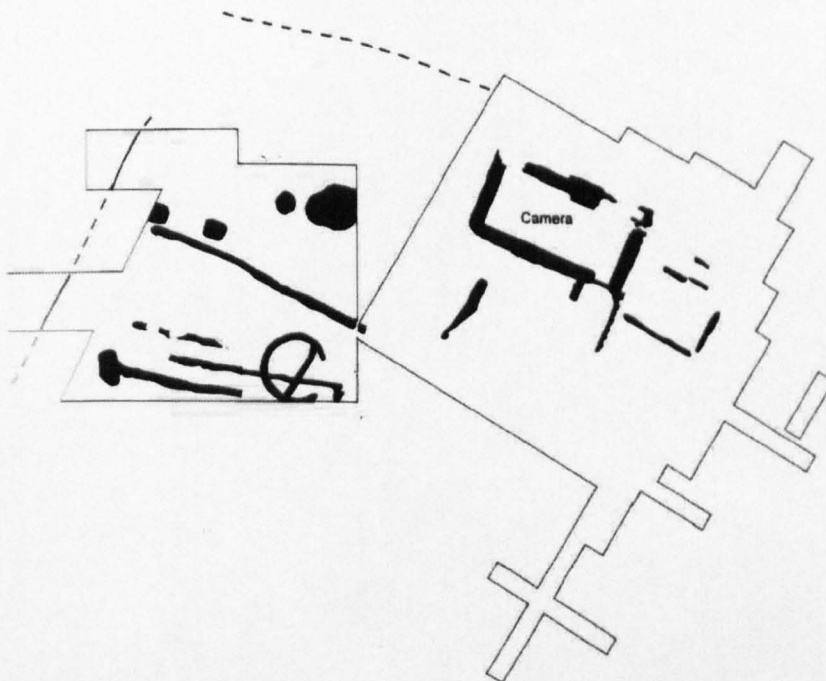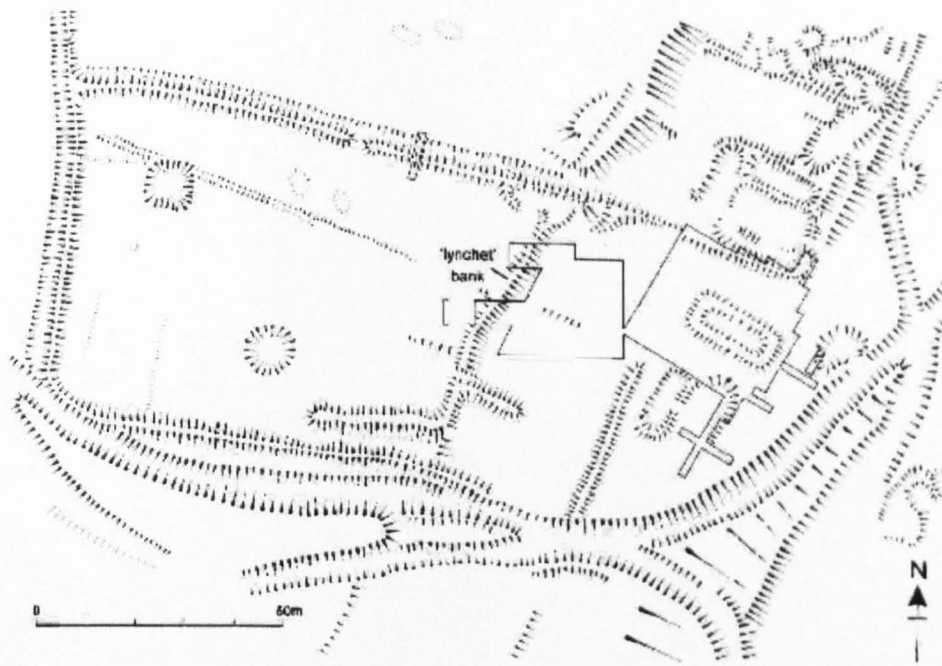
Fig 26: (Above) Detailed earthwork plan of south manor area showing excavated area (Stamper and Croft 2000)

(Below) Excavated remains of the South Manor (Stamper and Croft 2000)
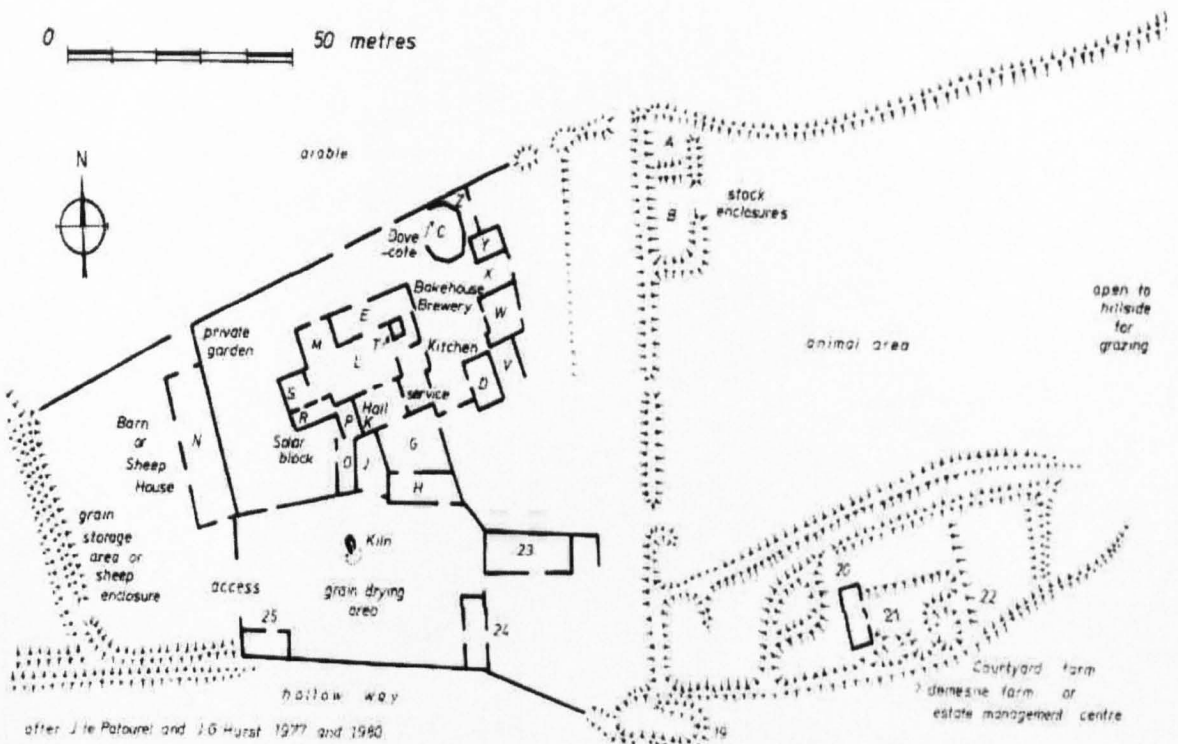
Figure 27: Plan of North Manor (Rahtz and Watts 2004)
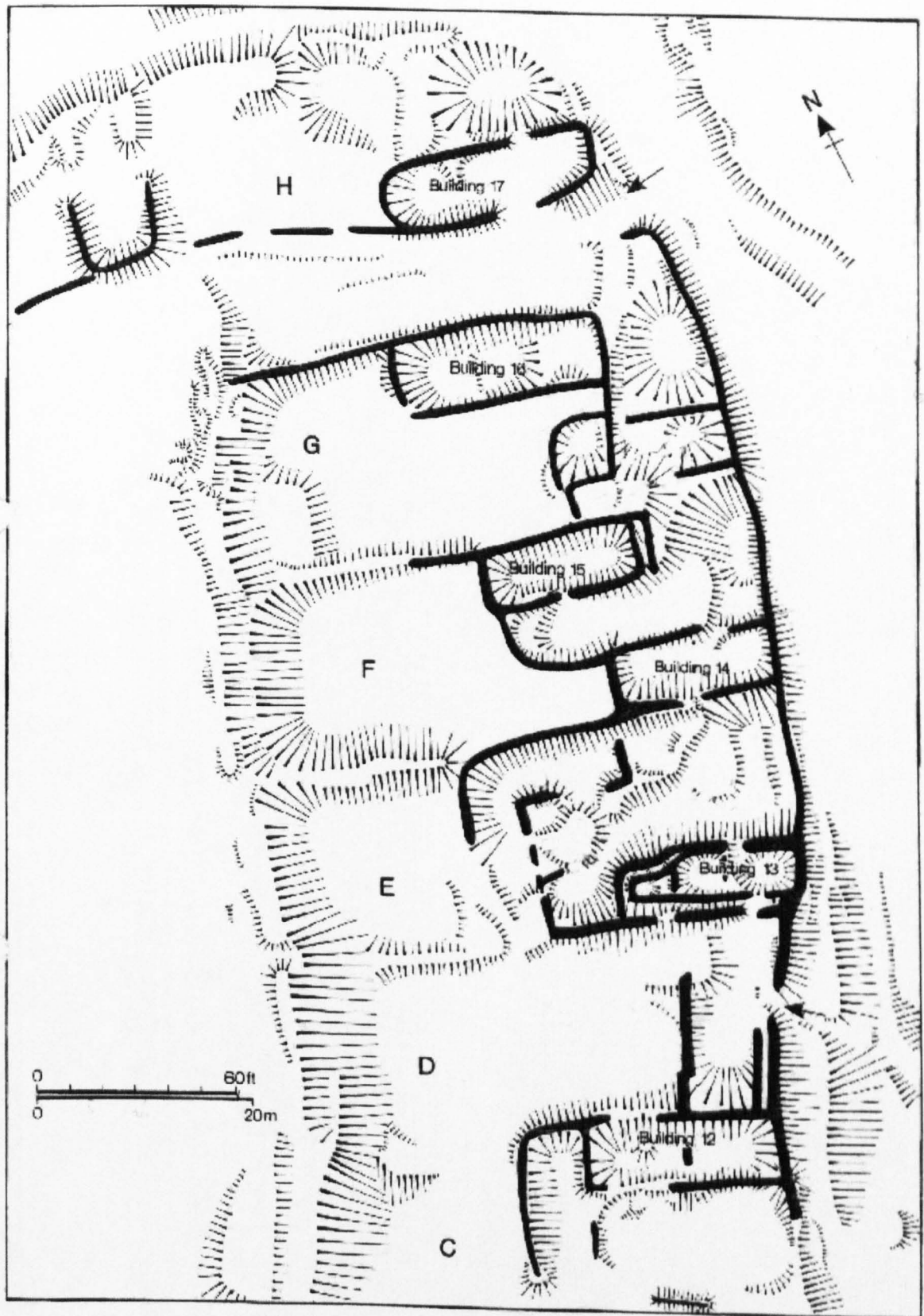
Figure 28: Earthwork plan of the northern part of the west row, Wharram Percy showing, in bold, the additional evidence of buried walls from aerial photographs (Wrathmell 1989a)
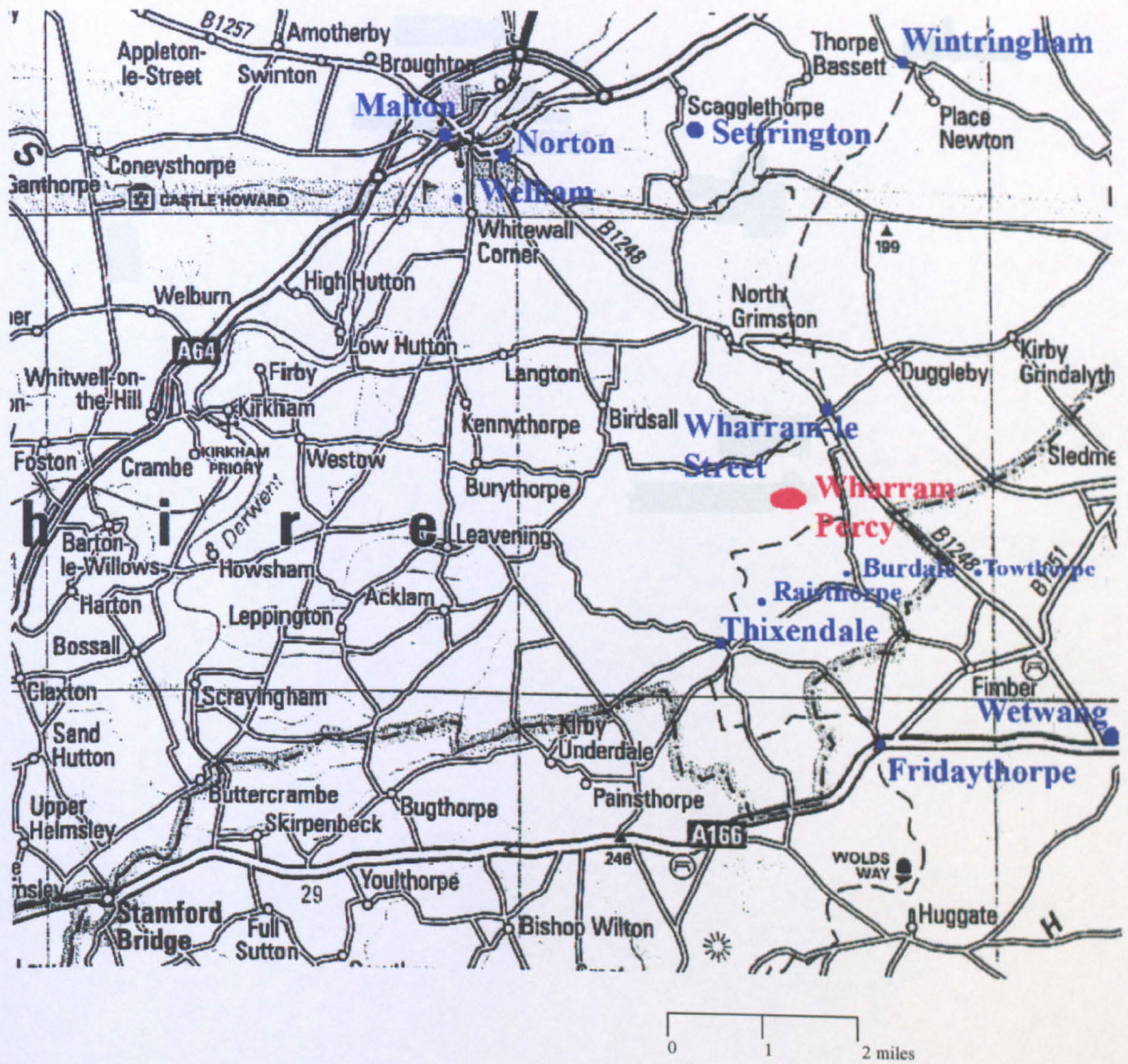
Figure 29: Wharram Percy and its region

Figure 30 : The church of St. Martin, Wharram Percy
(http://www.eriding.net/media/wharram.shtml)

KEY

ANGLO-SAXON

1st NORMAN

2nd NORMAN

RAFT 3rd NORMAN c.180

3rd NORMAN c.180

TRANSITIONAL c.1200

14th CENTURY

15th CENTURY

16th CENTURY

17th CENTURY

18th CENTURY
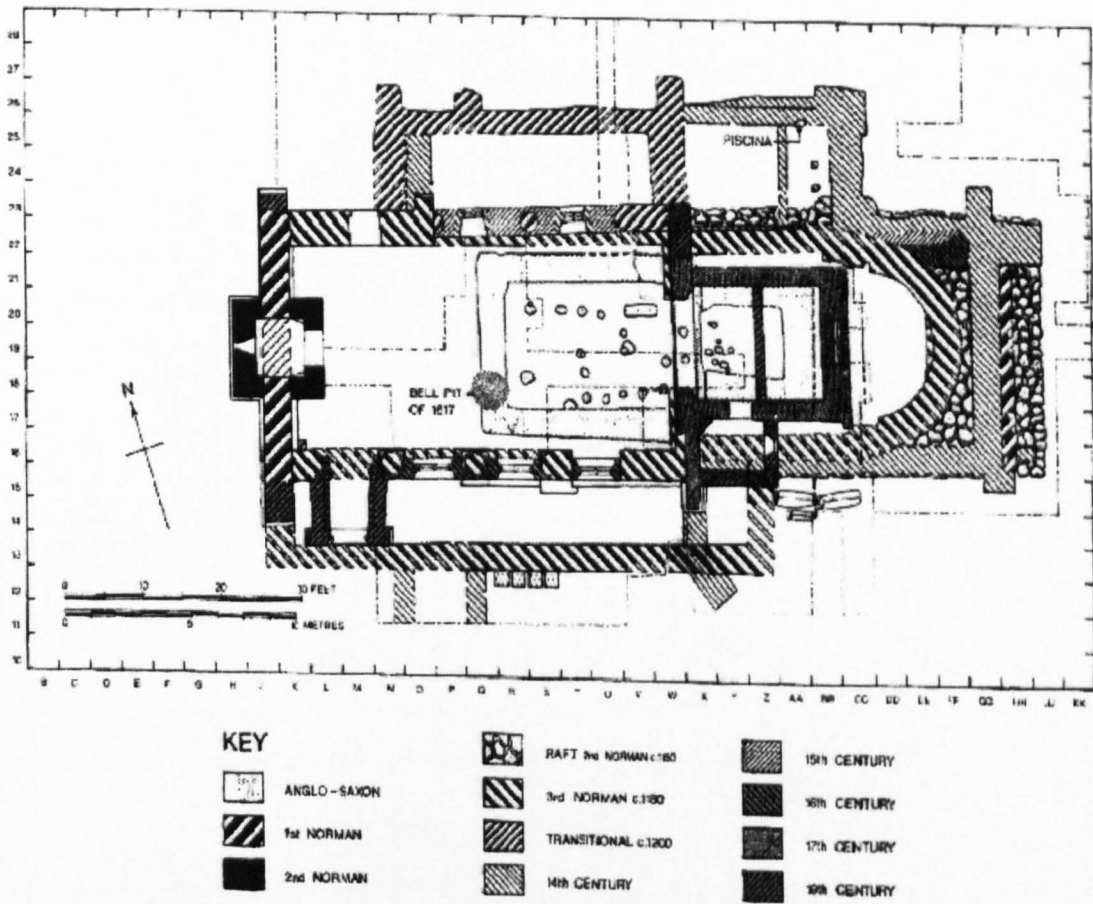
Figure 31 : Phased plan of church of St. Martin, Wharram Percy
(Hurst n.d. Available at:
ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/cbaresrep/pdf/013/01304003.pdf)
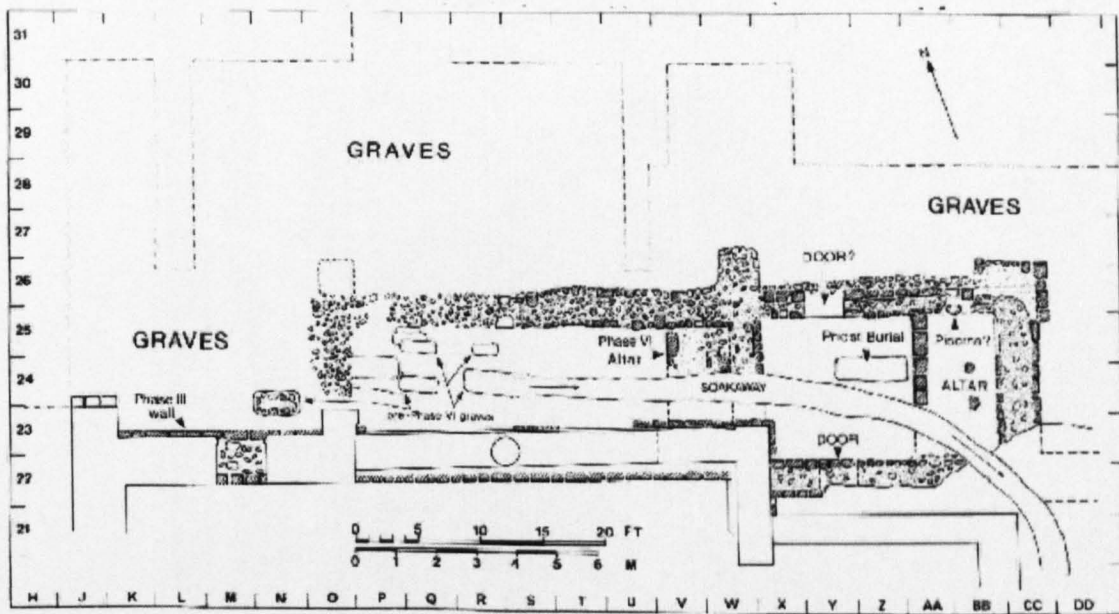
Figure 32: Plan of north aisle and chapel, St. Martin's, Wharram Percy (Beresford and Hurst 1987).
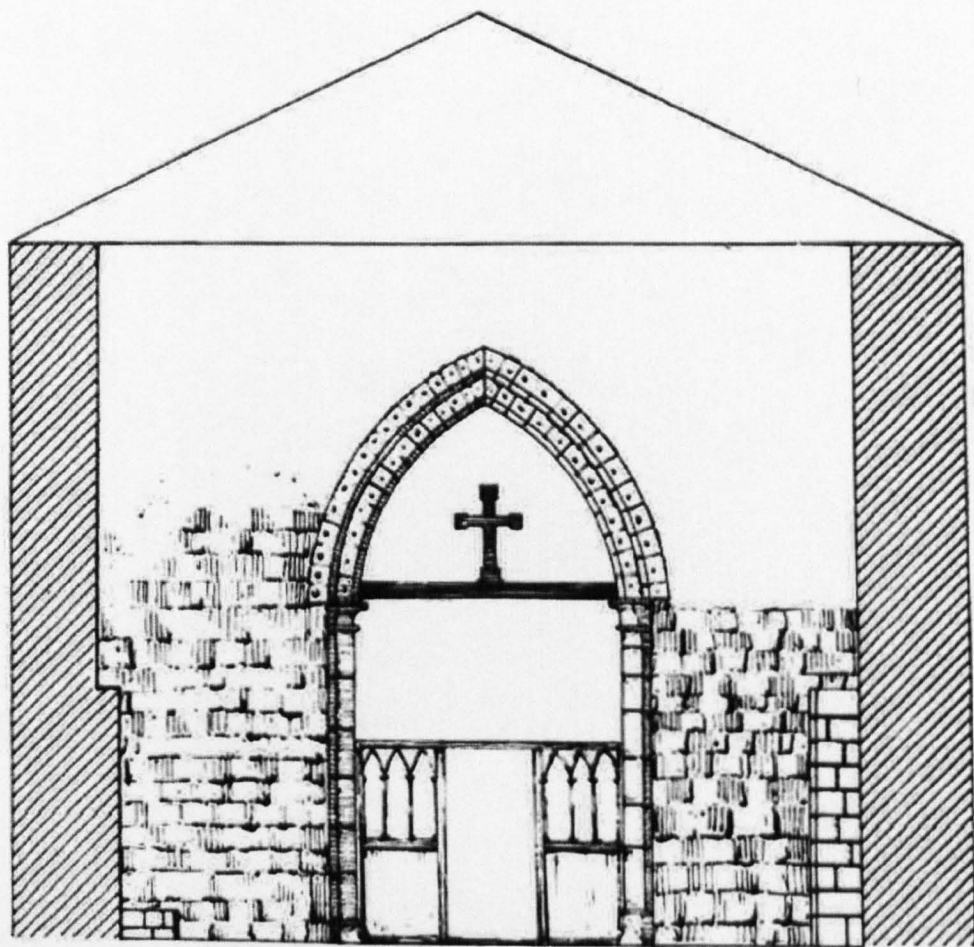
0   5   10 ft.

Figure 33: Chancel arch, St. Martin's Wharram Percy, showing possible reconstruction of rood features (Bell and Beresford 1987)

Figure 34: Tower of St. Martin's, Wharram Percy showing position of
corbel table with carved heads
(http://www.eriding.net/media/wharram.shtml)
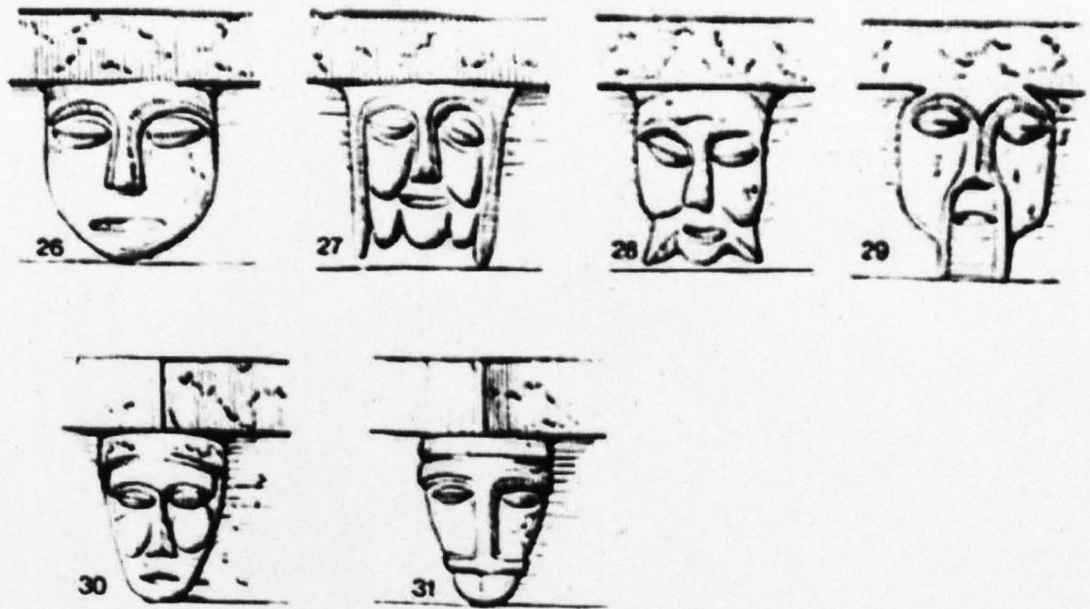
Figure 35: Drawings of a selection of sculptured heads from the corbel table of the Church of St. Martin, Wharram Percy (Bell and Beresford 1987)
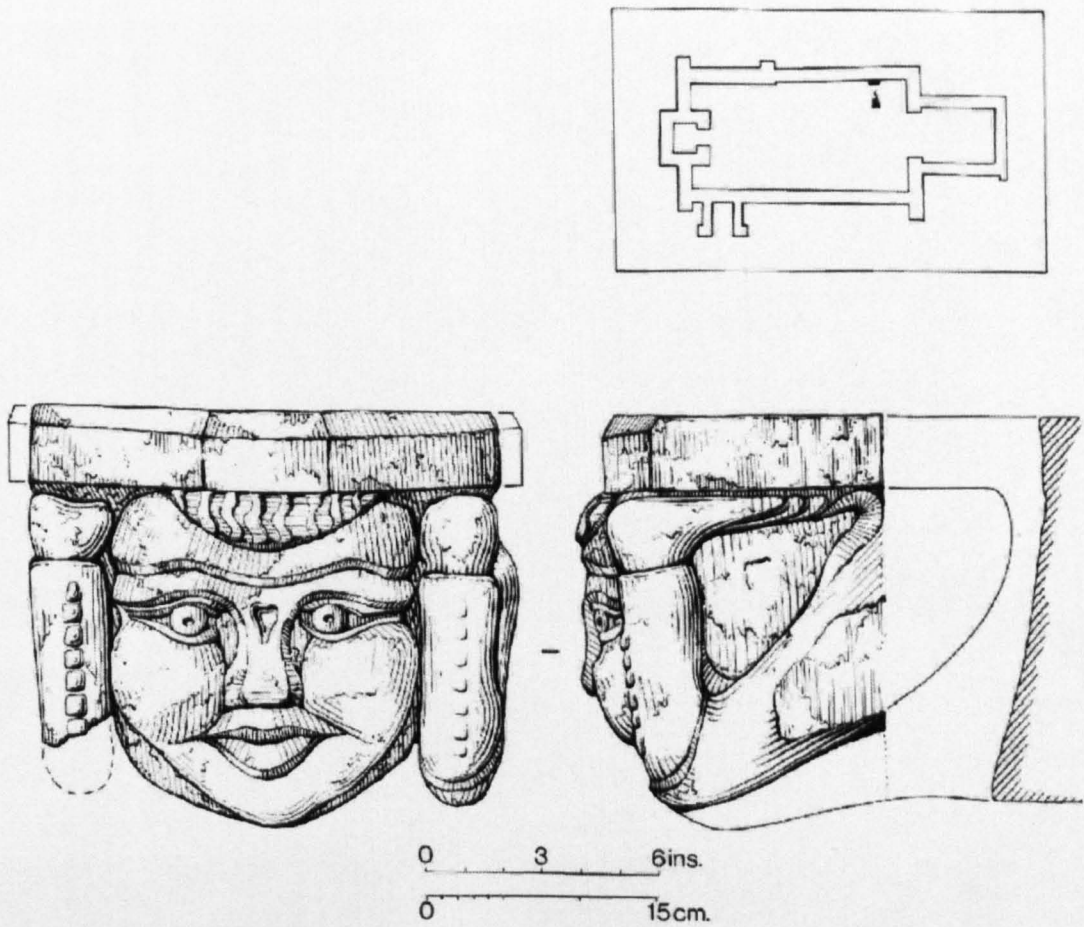
Figure 36: Statue bracket in shape of female head from church of St. Martin, Wharram Percy (Bell and Beresford 1987).

Digging

Hawking

Pruning

Sowing

Figure 37: Labours of the month, Easby Church, North Yorkshire
(http://www.paintedchurch.org/easblab.htm)

Figure 38: Labours of the months, Dewsbury church, West Yorkshire (Photo: D. Hadley)

Figure 39: Labours of the month, Thorpe Salvin church, South Yorkshire.
(Photos: L. Menzies)

Figure 40: The Labours of Adam, Canterbury Cathedral (Camille 1995)

Figure 41: 'Christ of the Trades', Purton, Wiltshire (Edwards 1990)

Figure 42: 'Christ of the Trades' (drawing after a wall painting), Finringhoe, Essex (Reiss 2000).

Figure 43: Misericords from Worcester cathedral (Alexander 1990)
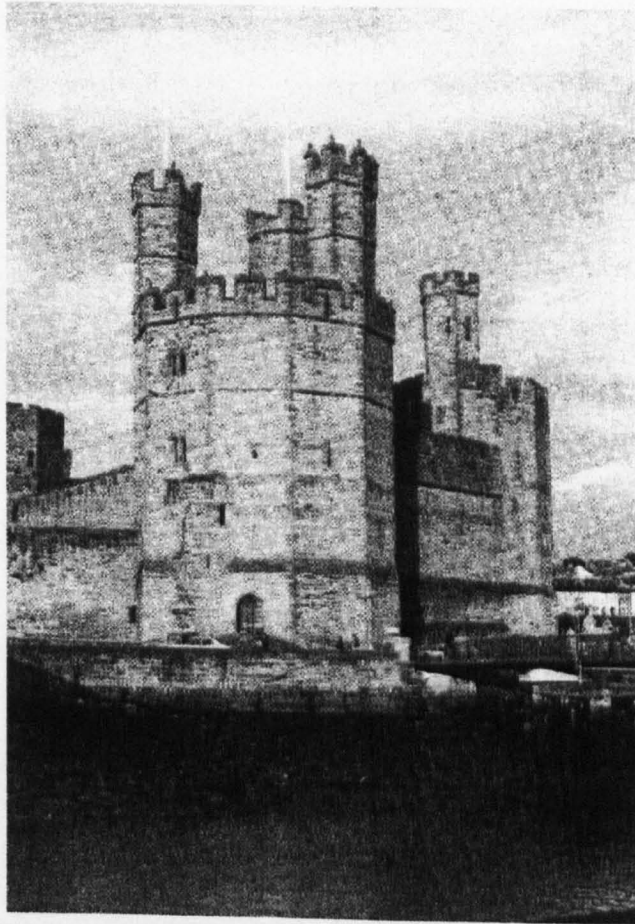
Figure 44: Caernarfon Castle, The Eagle Tower (Morris 1998)
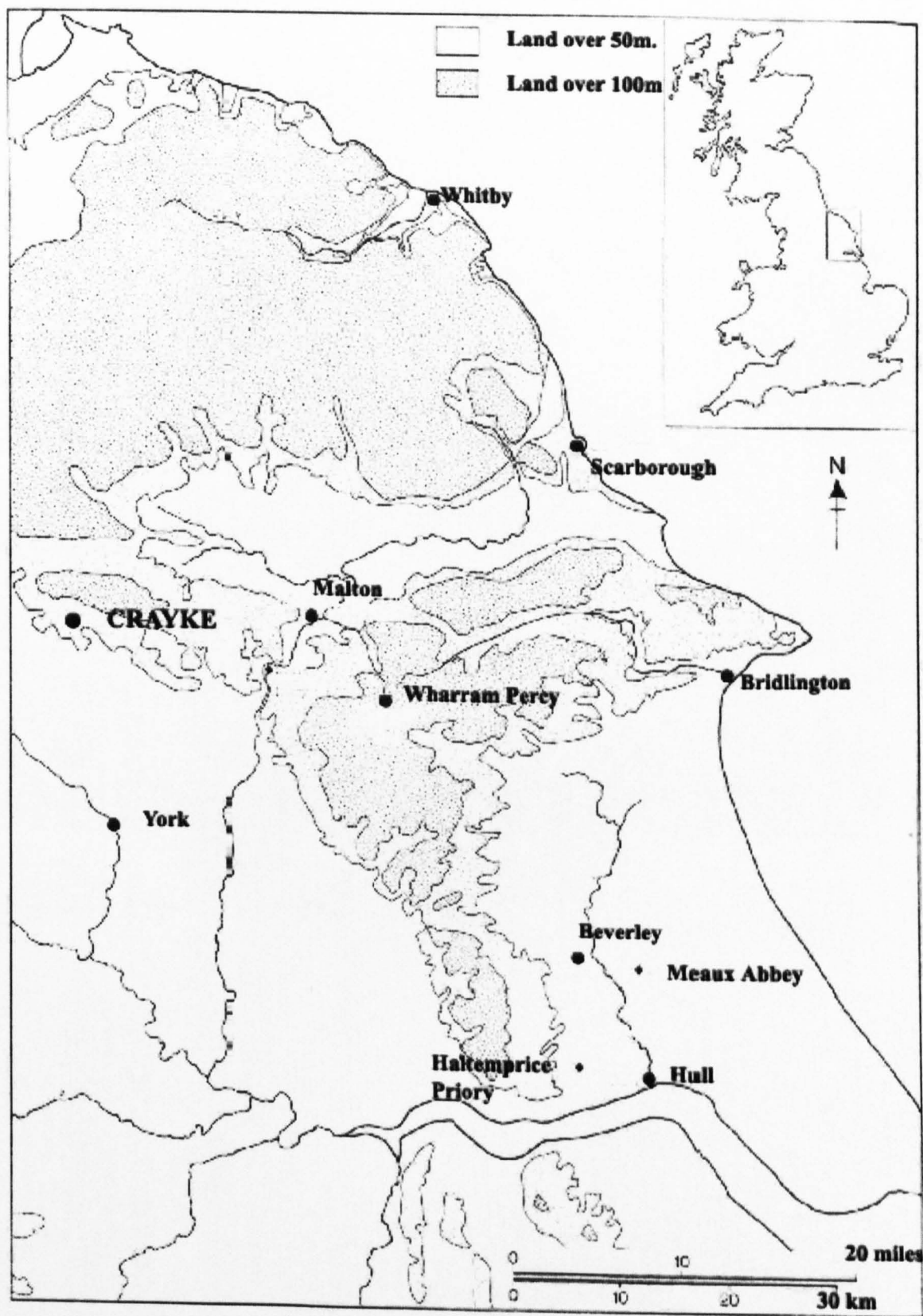
Figure 45: Location of Crayke
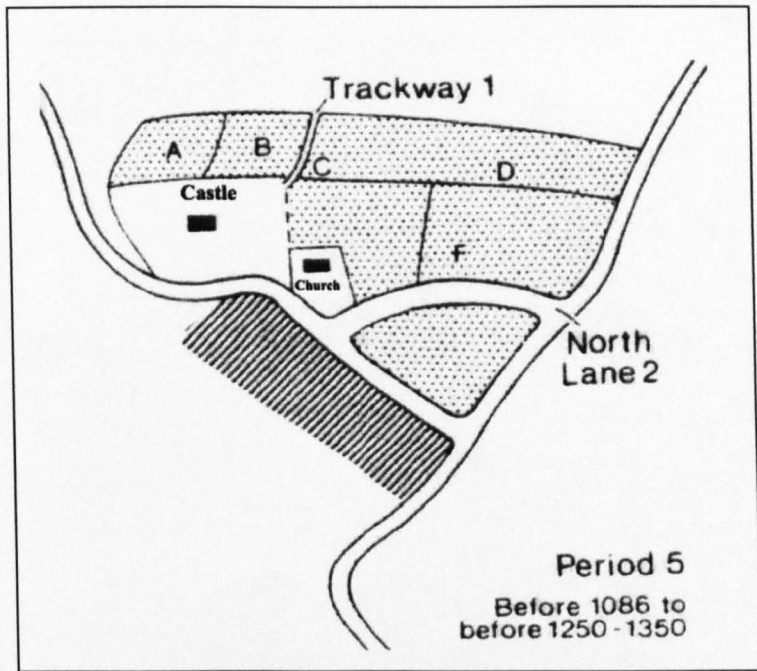
Figure 46: Crayke castle. Photo: John Turner
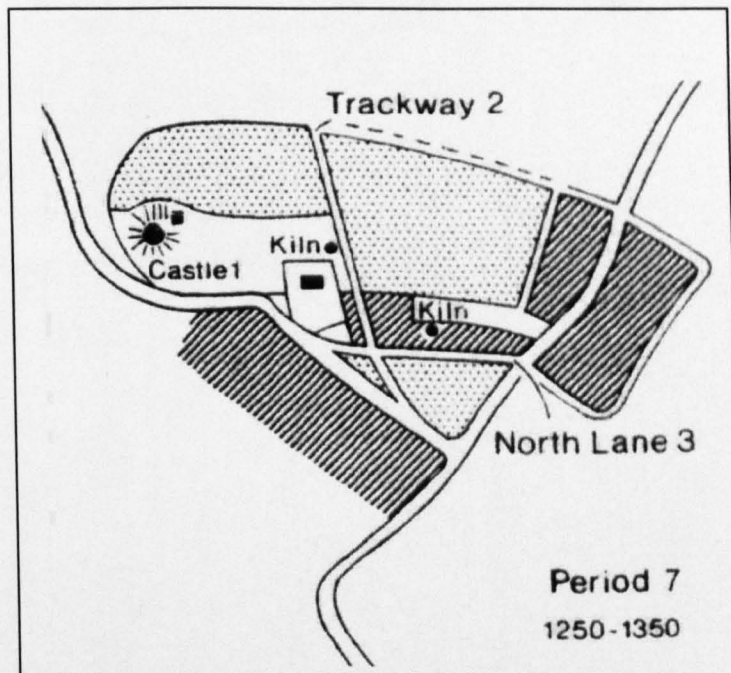
Figure 47: Trackways, Crayke (Adapted from Adams 1990)

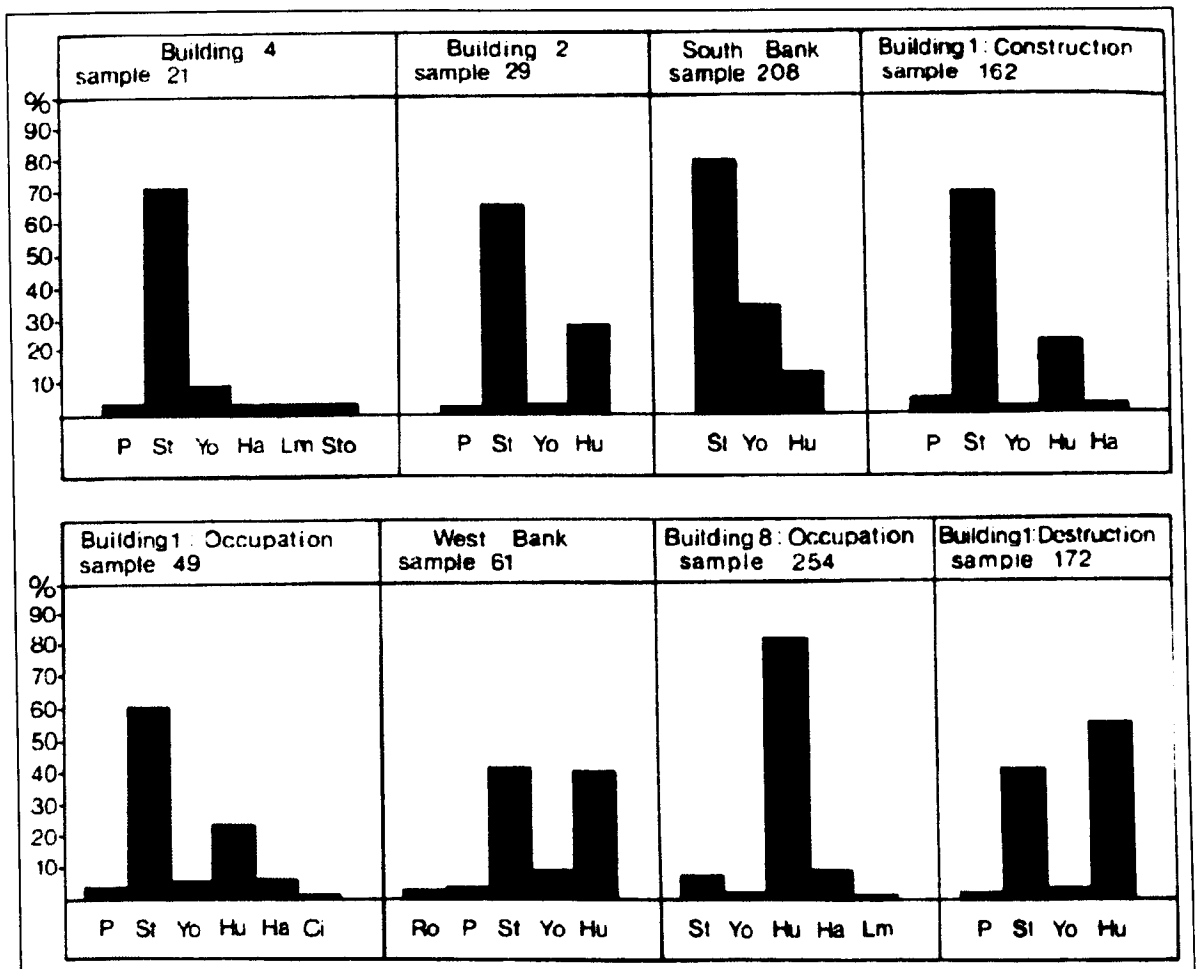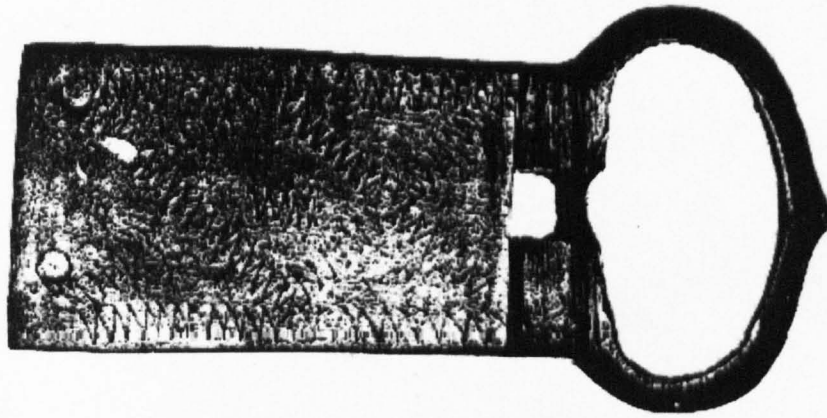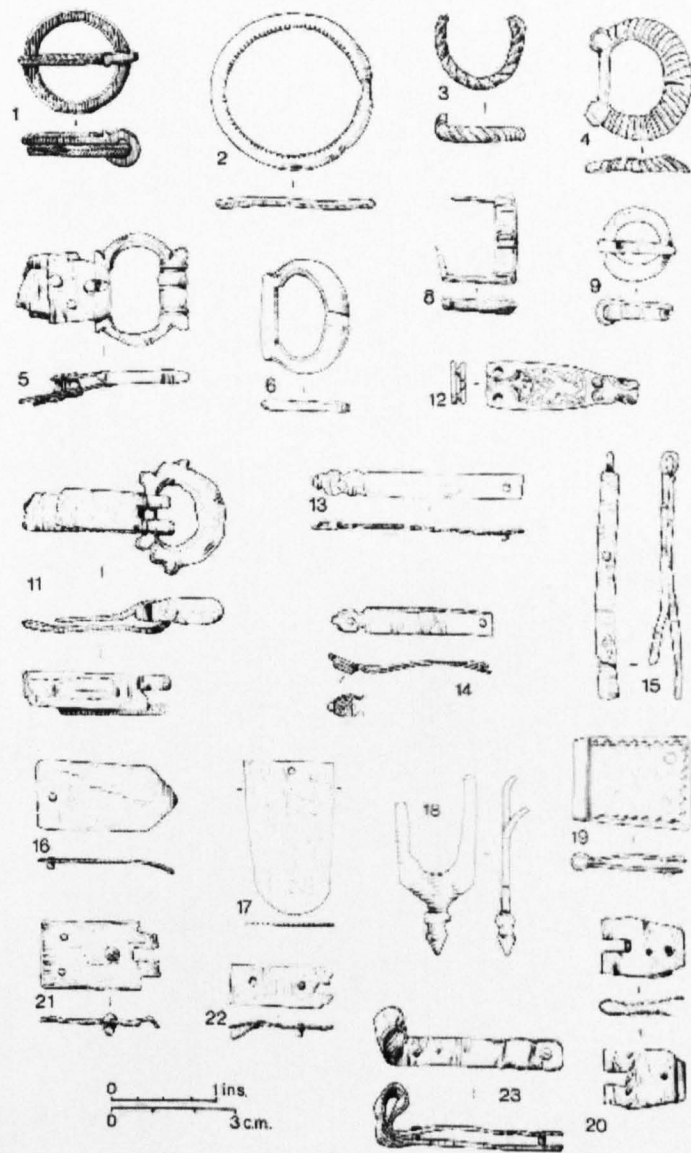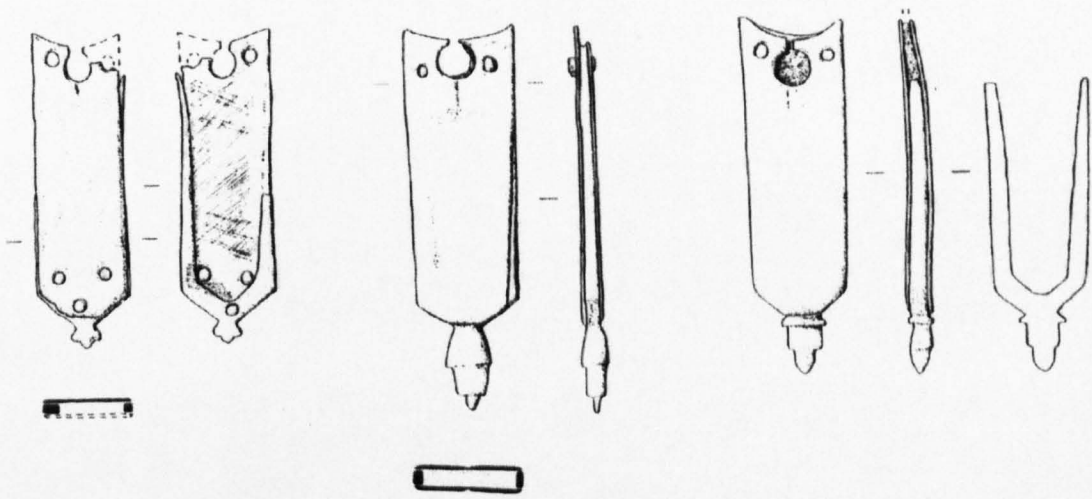**Figure 48: Pottery report from Wharram Percy (Andrews and Milne 1979)**

Figure 49: Example of decorative engraving (Egan and Pritchard)

Figure 50 : Mounts on a medieval belt (Egan and Pritchard)

Figure 51: Selection of copper-alloy objects from Area 6, Wharram Percy (Andrews and Milne 1979)

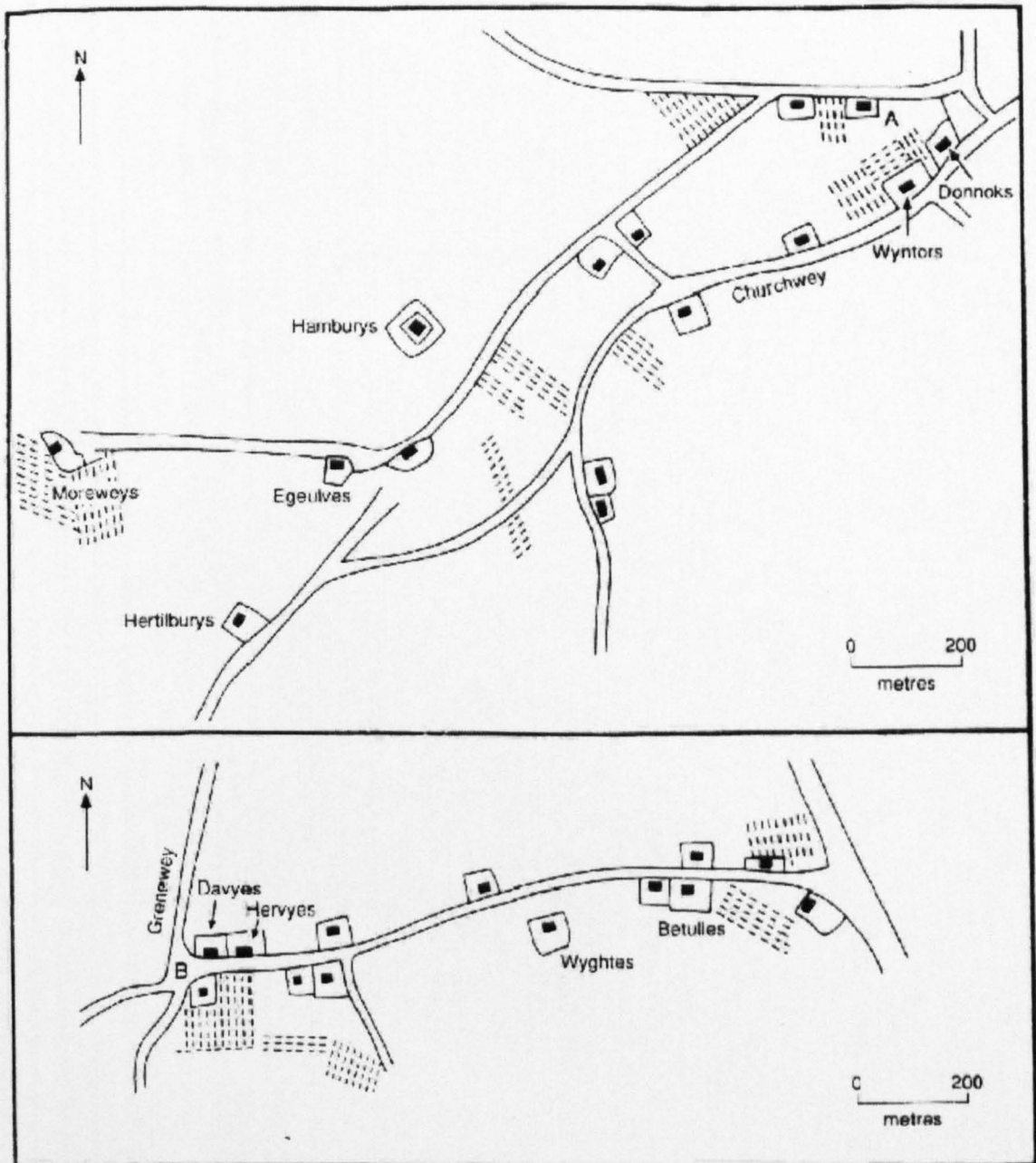**Figure 52: Examples of medieval strap-ends (Egan and Pritchard)**

Figure 53: Depictions of peasants in the Luttrell Psalter (Camille 1998)

Figure 54: Example of a dispersed settlement pattern; 'ends' settlement from Hanbury (Dyer 1991)

	Brooch - plain	Brooch - dec'd	Brooch/Buckle - dec'd	Buckle - plain	Buckle - dec'd	Strap-ends - dec'd
Copper-alloy: WP			5	9	8	2
Copper-alloy: Bolton					1	
Copper-alloy: Thrislington						1
Copper-alloy: Riseholm				1	1	
Copper-alloy: Goltho		1		6	1	2
Lead/lead-alloy: WP	1			3		
Lead-alloy: Goltho				1		
Iron: WP				8	2	
Iron: Riplingham		1				
Iron: Goltho				6	8	
Iron: Thrislington				4		
Gold: Goltho						
Unknown metal: Boulby						1

Table 2: Dress accessories from excavated rural settlement sites

	Strap-ends (plain)	Lace-end	Bosses/Mounts	Pins -plain	Pins -dec'd	Finger ring	Purse evidence - dec'd	Pendant
Copper-alloy: WP	2	3	12	4	1	2	1	1
Copper-alloy: Bolton	1		1					
Copper-alloy: Thrislington			2	1				
Copper-alloy: Riseholm	1							
Copper-alloy: Goltho	5		2			1		1
Lead/lead-alloy: WP			1					
Lead-alloy: Goltho								
Iron: WP							1	
Iron: Riplingham								
Iron: Goltho								
Iron: Thrislington								1
Gold: Goltho						1		
Unknown metal: Boulby								

Table 2: Dress accessories from excavated rural settlement sites (cont'd)

	Belt-chapes plain	Belt-chapes dec'd	Belt accessories	Buttons
Copper-alloy: WP				
Copper-alloy: Bolton				
Copper-alloy: Thrislington			1	
Copper-alloy: Riseholm				
Copper-alloy: Goltho	2	2	1	1
Lead/lead-alloy: WP				
Lead-alloy: Goltho				
Iron: WP				
Iron: Riplingham				
Iron: Goltho				
Iron: Thrislington				
Gold: Goltho				
Unknown metal: Boulby				

Table 2: Dress accessories from excavated rural settlement sites (cont'd)