Chapter 7: Discussion

By Tim Allen

PERIOD 1 – ROMAN

The Roman period was almost entirely represented by residual pottery. In the south-east corner of the site the natural clay was overlain by a layer of brown mottled clay 0.04 m thick, layer 343, which contained only Roman pottery. Clearly residual Roman material occurred in a number of bulk clay fill contexts in and around the medieval buildings on the Mount House site, which suggests that the clay was being dug from a rural Roman site nearby. Roman pottery was also found in Trench 4 dug in 1990 adjacent to Farm Mill Lane (Fig. 2.1). This material can now be related to the Roman occupation found at Oakfield House some 150 m to the north (see Chapter 1: Previous settlement in the Lower Windrush valley). It is possible that layer 343 indicates that this occupation stretched as far south as the Mount House site itself, but this remains uncertain.

PERIOD 2 – LATE SAXON

Nothing from the Mount House site itself points unequivocally to occupation before the 12th century. There are no features containing only pottery of types that would be expected had there been a significant presence on the site in the 11th century, and only a very small number of residual sherds and other finds of late Saxon or early Norman date were found in dump layers on the site. Although excavation to natural only took place over a limited area, and most of that in the north-west of the site, the scale of excavation across the site overall makes it likely that more residual 11th-century material would have been found had occupation of this date been on any scale. The adjacent church also appears to be of Norman origin (see Blair, Chapter 6: The evidence of the Winchester Pipe Rolls 1208–1398).

Two supposedly Saxon features are known in the wider landscape (Fig. 1.3): Emma's Dyke and the 'Saxon rampart' marked on the 1st edition 1:2500 O S map (1876), both of which have been questioned (Chapter 1). The 'Saxon rampart' appears to have been so described first by Langford, a Victorian antiquary who grew up at Witney, made various sketches of the town from 1839 onwards, and wrote down his observations in a series of letters written to the Revd J A Giles (BL, MS Top. Oxon. d.212, 213 and 216). His views were reproduced in Giles' history of the town (Giles 1852), hence perhaps its incorporation on the 1st edition O S map of 1876.

Evaluation was carried out both east, south and south-east of the site on the Mount Mills (now Sainsburys), the site of the former railway-yard and the land east of that. Although Rodwell had dismissed the Saxon rampart as recent (Rodwell 1975, 179), during the evaluation of the Mount Mills in 1984 it was decided to position Trench III south-east of the Mount House to lie across the likely line of any continuation of this feature. At the north end of this trench an earth bank of recent date was found, but below this feature were two roughly parallel ditches, which were also traced in trenches to the west (Fig. 2.1). In Trench III a possible headland nearly 4 m wide lay between the ditches, which were tentatively dated to the late Saxon/early Norman period. These ditches were aligned with the rampart feature marked on the 1st edition O S map, and it is therefore possible that a boundary of late Saxon origin did run along this line, but not marked by a ditch below ground. East of this no trace of either ditches or bank was found in evaluation, but the trenches were widely spaced, and the ditches may have lain between the trenches.

A small ditch containing a single sherd of late Saxon pottery was found at right angles to Farm Mill Lane at the north edge of the Mount Mills site. There has been no excavation of the immediately surrounding area on the north, north-west or the west, though a recent evaluation east of Church Green only 100 m north of Farm Mill Lane failed to produce any evidence for Saxon activity.

Overall there is still very little archaeological evidence for late Saxon and early Norman activity from the excavations in and around Mount House. The site of the manorial buildings of this period has not been located, and on present evidence may well have been situated elsewhere.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE 12TH CENTURY (PERIODS 3–5)

The stratigraphy provides the framework for the description and development of the site, but the chronology is provided by three main categories of evidence: documentary, the architectural details of the buildings, and the artefacts found within the deposits, not necessarily in that order of importance.

Documentary evidence

Documentary evidence supplies the background to the creation of the manor of Witney and its acquisition by the bishops of Winchester in 1044 (Chapter 1). There is, however, no documentary evidence relating to the construction of the first stone manor-house at Witney known to the authors. Twelfth-century references in the royal pipe rolls are sparse and unspecific, and the Winchester account rolls, which include yearly accounts of

the bishop's manors, do not begin until 1208, by which time the excavated buildings had long been established (see Chapters 1 and 6).

The architectural evidence

The earliest buildings on the excavated part of the site were those described in Chapter 2 as the Solar Tower and adjoining East Range. They are built of tabular limestone probably of very local origin, with ashlar masonry used for the quoins, window surrounds and doorway. The freestone is Taynton stone from the Cotswolds, of relatively local origin. The tooling on the stonework is diagonal and of fine quality, which is characteristic of 12th-century work (Renn 1968, 18). According to the 12th-century chronicler William of Malmesbury, fine-jointed ashlar masonry was first used in England by Roger, Bishop of Salisbury from 1115–39 at Sherborne (*Gestis Regum* II, 484), but fine-jointed ashlars are also found on the West Hall at Wolvesey, which Biddle dates to 1110 (Biddle 1986, 34). The walls at Mount House are usually rendered, a common tradition in 12th-century building using low quality material, as for instance at Bishop's Waltham, where the local material is flint.

Architecturally the only features are the splayed window lights, which are found in both early and later 12th-century buildings. There is a short stretch of pitched stonework, generally an indicator of an early Norman date, visible in the south face of the north wall of the Solar Tower, but this does not even extend to a single course throughout the whole of one wall, and cannot be considered architecturally diagnostic. Several authorities (Blair, Impey and Biddle pers. comm), however, have commented that the massive, but plain character of the Solar Tower points to an early-12th-century date.

The only *in situ* architectural details of any consequence in the excavated buildings as a whole are found on the exterior of the south wall of the chapel (Period 4a). In England pilasters with attached shafts such as these are first found on the keep at Castle Rising, dated on architectural and historical grounds to *c* 1140 (Renn 1968, 43), and become common in the latter half of the 12th century. There are no direct parallels between the ornamentation at the Mount House and that at the other Winchester manors such as Wolvesey or Bishop's Waltham, and several decorated *ex situ* fragments of sculpture from the site appear to belong to a local 'school' of decoration appearing on buildings dated to the middle of the century, mostly *c* 1150–70 (Chapter 3, The Worked Stone). Part of a monolithic window head of this style was built into the wall of the chapel (Pl. 2.6). If broken during carving and immediately incorporated into the wall this would allow a date anytime after 1130, but the stone may have been reused, which would indicate a later construction date for this building.

The West Block includes a garderobe at the north-west corner with an arched culvert leading out from it. The arch is pointed but uneven. If the construction is deliberate it would indicate a knowledge of Gothic architecture and be a useful pointer to the date of developments in Period 5a. Pointed arches are found on rare occasions in England from as early as 1160, and locally are found in the crossing at Bampton parish church, where the arch is decorated with billet ornament, and in the tower arch at Broughton Pogges, both likely to date to 1180–1200. Durham (pers. comm.) feels that this is simply a rough and utilitarian arch and has no dating implications.

The numismatic evidence

Among the artefacts the glass, coins and pottery are all potentially useful for dating. Medieval glass, however, is scarce, and the earliest fragments cannot be more closely dated than late 12th or 13th century. Unfortunately, on this site the chronology of both the coins and the pottery is open to alternative interpretations.

Five coins earlier than the first documentary evidence were found, four of which came from the infill of the Solar Tower. One of these is a penny of Stephen, minted between 1135 and 1150, two others are cut halfpennies of the same period, and the fourth is a 'denier Normand', a type current between the late 10th and 13th centuries (Chapter 3: The Coins). The wear on the complete penny indicates that it was in circulation for some years before being lost, and depending upon when it was minted, could have been lost at any time between 1140 and 1162, currently the latest attested circulation date (Chapter 3: The Coins). The halfpennies are slightly more worn, and were perhaps lost sometime after 1145. It is possible that coins of Stephen continued in circulation up to the major recoinage of 1180, though this is at present unproven. The fifth coin, a penny of David of Scotland, is contemporary with the Stephen coins, but was found redeposited in a late-medieval courtyard layer.

A group of three 12th-century coins of the same reign within one building is an unusual find. All of the coins in the Solar Tower were found in dumped backfill layers, along with a variety of other artefacts, including large assemblages of pottery that conjoined throughout the deposits, showing that the dumping was not a gradual process. The joining potsherds from layers throughout the dumping sequence also suggest that the pottery was not thrown away during the process of backfilling, but derived from a midden or dump elsewhere on the site. The three coins of Stephen, which were not found together and were therefore not deliberately buried, may have been lost by workmen during the infilling of the basement of the Solar Tower, and so date the infilling. It is more likely, however, given their intrinsic value, that they were brought into the tower with the midden material, and may have been lost some time before.

The coins indicate that the midden was forming during the circulation of Stephen's coinage, and thus provides important evidence for activity on the site in the mid 12th century. The date of their probable

redeposition within the Solar Tower is however more contentious; there may well have been a gap in time between the loss of the coins and their incorporation into the backfill, making them unreliable for dating the infilling. Other aspects of the backfilling of the Solar Tower also suggest the incorporation of dumped material that had been around for some time. A series of five triangular sections from a very large column was found within the backfill, one of which came from one of the lower fills, the other four from the uppermost rubble layer. Durham noted that all five showed evidence of weathering on both external and internal faces. Blair (Chapter 3: Worked stone) has plausibly suggested that the column stood at first floor level upon the central pier within the Solar Tower. Whether used in the column or left over from construction, the weathering implies a number of years during which the stones were open to the elements before being incorporated into the backfill; how long this time-lapse might have been is uncertain.

The absence of any later coin issues in the backfill of the tower is not necessarily significant. The only other medieval coin found in the limited excavations dates to *c* 1300, although much use was made of the manor in the years between, for instance in the reign of King John (Chapter 1). Since there is no documentary evidence of use during the second half of the 12th century, it is not known how often it was visited by the bishop, and what the pattern of coin loss is likely to have been. The deposits of cess found within the east garderobe block attached to the Solar Tower, which was filled in towards the end of the 12th century, give a mixed picture of the use of the tower. The animal bones reflect a fairly high status diet, but the plant remains do not reflect the diet that might have been expected of the bishop and his retinue (see Chapter 4, 'Plant and Invertebrate Remains'), perhaps indicating that the manor had not been visited by the bishop for some time, and that the facilities were being used in the bishop's absence.

The coins recovered reflect the particular circumstances of the dumping and the extent of the excavations, rather than the true pattern of coin loss on the site overall. At Mayenne in Northern France recent excavations of the basement of a 10th-century castle revealed that during the late 11th or early 12th century the whole complex of three rooms had been raised by internal dumping with more than 1 m of the fill being occupation debris (Early 2001). The date of the coins in one room was solely 10th-century, those of the next room 10th- and 11th-century, and those of the third room 11th-century, yet joining sherds show that the backfill was all of one date. This was interpreted as resulting from the digging down either of a midden or the clearing out of surrounding ditches, which came first on 11th-century material, and then on earlier 10th-century occupation. Something similar, though on a shorter timescale, may have occurred at the Mount House.

The ceramic evidence

The pottery can also be interpreted in different ways. Fabrics 1 and 2, the pottery traditions at the Mount House in the earliest phase of the site (Period 3), are both long-lived, starting in the late Saxon period and continuing throughout the 12th century (Chapter 3: The medieval and post-medieval pottery). The introduction of regional imports (Fabrics 5 and 9) has been used to define developments in Period 4, and the introduction of Fabric 3 (from North Hampshire) to define changes in Period 5. These introductions, which occur in chronological succession on other medieval sites in Oxfordshire, also appear in stratigraphic succession at the Mount House, albeit in small numbers, suggesting that the accepted sequence may be applicable to this site as well (Chapter 3: The medieval and post-medieval pottery).

If these pots are seen as first occurring at the Mount House as part of the general penetration of the products of these industries into the markets of the area, then the date of these vessels at the Mount House should reflect the general chronology derived from other local sites. This would see the regional imports of Period 4 (Fabrics 5 and 9) appearing in west Oxfordshire in the mid 12th century, though close to their production source sherds are found in earlier 12th-century or even late-11th-century contexts (Mellor 1994, 100; Vince *et al.* 1997, 53–4). The earliest occurrence of Fabric 3 elsewhere in Oxfordshire is in a well in Oxford dated by association with a worn coin of Henry II minted between 1168 and 1180 (Jope *et al.* 1950, 243), suggesting that it was introduced after 1175.

During the Norman period pottery is not generally a particularly mobile or high-status commodity, and the range of ceramic traditions in the Oxford region was not very great (Mellor 1994, 61, Fig. 23 and 90–3). Direct transmission of pots over distances of 30 miles or more is, therefore, unusual. There were few official markets in Oxfordshire until the late 12th century; the market at Witney is not documented before 1219, though its date of origin may be considerably earlier. A growth in the number of markets took place in the late 12th and early 13th centuries, and the marked increase in the variety of pottery fabrics in assemblages of this period may be a direct result of the new markets, which provided incentives to potters to market more aggressively and over greater distance (Mellor 1994, 92 and 93). This is the basis of currently accepted pottery dating.

An alternative interpretation of the introduction of these fabric types is possible. Before the rise of official markets in the late 12th/early 13th century, pottery was probably produced locally and was distributed from the source of production to local manors, as Mellor has suggested for Benson in south-east Oxfordshire (Mellor 1994, 92). These manors in turn may have passed pottery (perhaps with its contents) on to other manors owned by the same lord. The interchange of produce between manors

may have been regular, or may have occurred only occasionally, when building programmes necessitated timber, stone or other resources. At these times other materials such as pottery may have been transported as well.

Fabric 3 was in use at Netherton in North Hampshire from the early 12th century (Mellor 1994, 100). Similarly, cooking pots in one variant of Fabric 5 first appear at Newbury in the late 11th century, though pitchers only appear in the mid 12th century (Vince *et al.* 1997, 53–4). If vessels in these fabrics were brought direct to the Mount House from the bishop of Winchester's manors further south, perhaps accompanying other resources such as timber, then the date of their introduction to this site will reflect their dating on the bishop's other estates, rather than that of their appearance on other local sites, and they could have been present at the Mount House in the first half of the 12th century.

Fragments of ceramic roof tile were also found in the dump deposits of the east terrace, and in large numbers in the embanking deposits and the infill of the Solar Tower that followed. In London ceramic tiles are documented from 1135, and have been found in archaeological contexts of the first half of the 12th century. These however are in a single fabric and in unusual forms, and it is only in the second half of the 12th century that ordinary peg tiles in a range of fabrics appear (Keily 1998, 27–31). Locally at Eynsham Abbey a drain built largely of complete and unused tiles was dated to the third quarter of the 12th century, and a single fragment of ridge tile also came from this phase (Mitchell forthcoming). Jope originally argued that ceramic peg and ridge tiles first appeared in the early 13th century at Deddington Castle (Jope 1951, 86–7), but the earliest type may have been present on the hall first constructed soon after 1157 (Ivens 1984, 115). At Ascot Doilly ceramic roof tile was associated with late-12th or early-13th-century deposits (Jope and Threlfall 1959, 243). Gittens believed that ceramic roof tile was used on the roof of the keep at Middleton Stoney (Rahtz and Rowley 1984, 99). This keep was believed to have been first built between 1130 and 1150 (on circumstantial grounds alone), but was not demolished until 1216, and the date when it was first roofed with ceramic tiles is unknown. At Newbury a single fragment of peg-tile was found in a pit dated to the early 12th century, but otherwise ceramic roof tile first appeared in the late 12th century, becoming much more common in the 14th century (Vince *et al.* 1997, 68–70). The ceramic tiles would suggest, therefore, that the developments of Periods 4b and 5a would be better accommodated in the second half of the 12th century rather than the first, though there is some evidence that these tiles may have been manufactured and used earlier.

The alternative chronologies

The dating evidence for the Mount House therefore remains somewhat equivocal, and two alternative chronologies for the 12th century are possible. One of these would see the coins of Stephen as potentially residual, and the presence of Fabric 3 as indicating a date in the last quarter of the 12th century for the developments of Period 5a, so that the developments of Period 4 would belong in the second half of the 12th century. The other, which was the chronology favoured in the interim report (Durham 1984), saw the coins as dating the infilling of the Solar Tower (Period 5a), so that the developments of Periods 3 and 4 would all belong in the first half of the 12th century.

One possible way to resolve the apparent dating discrepancies might be to claim contamination. The infilling of the Solar Tower, for instance, included one sherd of Brill/Boarstall pottery and a post-medieval pin, both of which were considered to be intrusive. It might be argued that the sherds of Fabric 3 within the upper infilling of the tower were also intrusive. Sherds of this fabric, however, also occurred in the infill of the west window of the tower, and south of the tower in layer 296/3, which appears to predate the infilling. The blocking of the Solar Tower door, which occurred when the tower basement was backfilled, also sealed sherds of Fabric 3.

The later chronology

Taking all the dating evidence together, the suggested sequence is as follows. The general character of the Solar Tower suggests a date in the early 12th century, while the decorated architectural fragments suggest a date after 1140, and probably in the second half of the 12th century, for the construction of the chapel in Period 4a (Chapter 3: The Worked Stone). The creation of the east terrace that followed incorporated fragments of ceramic roofing tile, which are extremely uncommon before the second half of the 12th century, and a larger quantity of tile was incorporated into the main embanking around the Solar Tower for the construction of the West Block. This embanking is interleaved with the backfill inside the tower, suggesting that the backfill of the Solar Tower must be significantly later than the reign of Stephen, when the coins incorporated within it were minted. The West Block also incorporates a garderobe whose culvert arch may indicate a date in the very late 12th or early 13th century.

This dating framework also fits with the accepted pottery chronology for Oxfordshire, and does not require architectural details found at Witney to be earlier than elsewhere in Britain. It is this chronology (misquoted in Steane 2001, 57–60) which has been followed in dating the development of the excavated part of the site. The buildings of Period 3, the Solar Tower and East Range are believed, therefore, to have been built between *c* 1120 and 1140, the developments of Period 4 (the chapel and garderobe) between 1140 and 1170, and the embanking of the tower complex probably after 1175.

The earlier chronology

The interim report saw the coins as having been lost during the process of infilling the tower basement, dating this event between 1145 and 1162, and this formed the basis for the dating of the preceding sequence (Durham 1984, 3–8). The embanking around the Solar Tower at the Mount House and the construction of the massive pier inside were linked, and were interpreted as a response to the troubled times of the Anarchy, protecting the basement level of the tower with a bank in the manner of castles such as Ascot Doilly (Jope and Threlfall 1959). The infilling of the Solar Tower was interpreted as slighting of the tower by Henry II soon after his accession, during the period (1154–58) when Henry of Blois was in France.

By working back from the infilling of the tower, and associating the east terrace with the documented fortification of six other manors by Henry of Blois (Winchester Annals for 1138, ed. Luard 1865), the addition of the east garderobe and the east terrace was dated to *c* 1138, and the construction of the chapel to *c* 1130. The Solar Tower and East Range were dated to the time of William Giffard, in the first quarter of the 12th century. Some stratigraphic revisions have been necessitated by the further excavation work, but it is possible to sustain a modified version of this chronology if the following assumptions are made:

1 The pottery (in particular Fabrics 5, 7 and 3) entered Oxfordshire not by market mechanisms, but by being carried along with other resources such as timber from the Hampshire manors of the Bishop of Winchester, and therefore may have been present in the early 12th century.
2 The ceramic roof tiles were used on this high-status site at an unusually early date, the early 12th century; a possibility perhaps supported by single tiles found in contexts of this date from Newbury and possibly Eynsham Abbey (see Chapter 3: The Tile).
3 The use of pilasters with attached shafts at the Mount House is the earliest yet known in Britain, and is due to the international taste and contacts of Bishop Henry of Blois. Such decoration is known on the continent at an earlier date, for instance at Falaise before 1123 (Renn 1968, 43).
4 The lozenge-decorated window-head incorporated within the chapel south wall (Pl. 2.6) was not reused from an earlier building, but left over from a very recent building campaign at the manor.
5 The 'pointed' arch in the north-west garderobe of the West Block was not in fact deliberate, but was a botched attempt at a round-headed arch, and so has no chronological implications.

This chronology originally saw the addition of the chapel, the east garderobe block and the east terrace all as peacetime elaborations of the building complex (Durham 1984, 5–6). The two phases of further embanking around the south and west sides of the Solar Tower were seen as defensive measures dating to 1138 and the years following, along with the construction of fortifications at Wolvesey, Taunton, etc., (Winchester Annals 1138, ed. Luard 1865). The West Block was seen purely as a series of terrace retaining walls with a long ventilation shaft to the tower undercroft, in which the central pier was later constructed (Durham 1984, 8).

The absence of Witney from the list of castles that Henry of Blois built in 1138, however, seems good evidence that it was not similarly strengthened at this time, rather than that it was omitted in error. The additional excavations, together with the more detailed analysis of the stratigraphic sequence, have shown that the embanking process was more drawn out, and that soil was dumped not only for embankments and to create revetted terraces, but also within buildings. The soils infilling the 'ventilation shaft' were very similar to those in the remainder of the West Block, so do not support the belief that this was infilled at a later date. The infilling of the Solar Tower is thus linked with the construction of the West Block, whose central staircase clearly shows that it was not a defensive fore-building. The case for major defensive embanking during the Anarchy is therefore reduced to the low bank around the south and west sides of the tower, which left the windows exposed.

If defensive measures are to be sought, these might more plausibly be found in the central pier within the Solar Tower, which might have been part of a heightening of the tower, perhaps reminiscent of Farnham (Kenyon 1990, 40–43). Other such measures could have been the addition of the moat, which is implied by the culverts in the east garderobe block, and the fairly rapid extension of the first floor east terracing (in this chronology). The strongest circumstantial argument for an earlier-12th-century chronology is that it strengthens the defences of the site during the Anarchy, which are otherwise without a substantial moat. The small scale of the mid-12th-century ditch surrounding the episcopal manor at Banbury does however show that substantial moats were not *de rigeur* (Rodwell 1976, 99–101; Litherland and Nichol 1999, 8).

At Wolvesey improvements to the domestic accommodation were also used to give an impression of greater strength, particularly the construction of the kitchen-keep and the extension of Wymond's garderobe tower between 1141 and 1154. The garderobe block at the Mount House might conceivably have been mirroring developments at Wolvesey, although it was not reinforced by pilasters to give the impression of strength as the Wolvesey buildings were, and the provision of an external stair turret (449) from the east terrace also detracts from the military effectiveness of the tower at the Mount House. If the chapel, whose basement was also infilled when the terrace was created, was in fact demolished at this time (Chapter 2, Period 4b), this could be interpreted as the result of military measures, but the evidence is equivocal. The subsequent addition of an enlarged

curtain wall might also have been part of these measures.

Rather than seeing the developments of Period 4b and 4c as occurring before the outbreak of war in 1138, however, the sequence at the Mount House (and the chronology of Wolvesey, which may have provided the inspiration for much of the work at Witney) necessitate that these developments occurred during the course of the 1140s and early 1150s. This would allow the chapel to have been built in the late 1130s, closer to the date of other examples of this decorative style in England. Whether effort would have been expended by the bishop of Winchester upon buildings of such a decorative nature at this time is, however, debatable.

As for the question of the destruction or slighting of the tower by Henry II during the exile of Henry of Blois from 1154–8, several contemporary and later chroniclers state that the castles of the Bishop of Winchester were destroyed, but disagree as to the number so treated (Biddle 1969, 30). The Royal Pipe Roll for 1155/6 records under Hampshire £6 1s spent *in prosternendo castelli Episcopi Wintoniensis*, which refers only to one Hampshire manor, but the Chronicle of Roger of Wendover for 1155 records that *Henricus Wintiniensis antistes, ab Anglia clam recessit, quapropter rex tria eius castella complanari fecit* (Hewlett 1886, Rolls Series 84; Riall 1994). There is no documentary evidence that the Mount House was so affected. The stratigraphic link between the infilling of the Solar Tower and the construction of the West Block indicates that this was not destruction by the king, but a planned rebuilding by the Bishop of Winchester, which (in this chronology) would presumably have occurred in the years after his return from exile in 1158, incorporating the coins of Stephen within the last years of their current circulation period before 1162.

Ultimately, the two chronologies are separated only by 20 years, and preference will depend upon the influence attached to political events upon the development of the buildings. It has been demonstrated that there are plausible reasons other than military for the various developments, but military and other considerations may both have been involved (see also Chapter 8).

PERIOD 3A: THE FIRST BUILDINGS OF THE 12TH-CENTURY MANOR

The solar tower

The thickness of the walls of the Solar Tower (2.2 m) shows that it was built like a Norman keep, but the walls were not sufficiently massive to allow for the passages, staircases and garderobes which are usually found within keeps. Nevertheless, the walls were similar to those of many of the smaller castle keeps such as Berkhamstead (Renn 1968, 105–7, Fig. 8). There are, however, some significant differences. The majority of castle keeps of the Norman period have a plinth or clasping pilaster buttresses at the corners for added strength, but these are absent at the Mount House. This may indicate less concern with defence. Practice on the Winchester properties certainly varied: there were such features at Farnham Castle, at Taunton and at Wolvesey, but the surviving tower of *c* 1150 at Bishop's Waltham has only one such buttress, on the exposed corner immediately adjacent to the moat.

Two aspects distinguish the Mount House tower from most others. Firstly, although the windows are narrow lights with internal splays of the type normally found at ground level, these are only 1.2 m off the ground, and they are unusually numerous for the size of the interior. Only at a few other sites, notably Appleby, is there a similar ratio of light to internal area (Renn 1968, 91, Fig. 3). In other cases where there are numerous windows at basement level, as for instance at Portchester, these are nearly 4 m off the ground (Renn 1968, 281–5). The use of windows at ground level for defensive purposes is not generally believed to have developed until the introduction of scientific fortification by Henry II and the adoption of arrowloops late in the 12th century (Renn 1968, 70–1; Cathcart King 1988, 77). Ground-floor windows are found in the 'keep' at Wolvesey, built between 1141 and 1154, but this building is interpreted by Biddle as a kitchen (Biddle 1986, 36).

Secondly, castle keeps are usually freestanding and accompanied only by a smaller forebuilding leading to a first-floor entrance. Among Norman keeps in Britain only a very few sites, including Appleby and Colchester, have an original entrance at ground level (Renn 1968, 90–2; Cathcart King 1988, 67). While there was no external doorway, the Solar Tower at the Mount House, however, was built, together with the East Range, with a linking doorway at ground-floor level. At just over 9 m wide (6 m internally) this latter building has similarities in scale to the class of narrow 'halls' that survive in a few 12th-century castles; the closest parallel among these is that at Christchurch, which is dated to the second half of the 12th century (Renn 1968, 143 and Fig. 17). None of these castle 'halls', however, is joined to the keep, or has access between the two at ground level.

It is the construction of tower and range together which most clearly marks this out from keeps proper. This style of building was present in France in the 10th and 11th centuries. At Mayenne, the 10th-century château consisted of a hall attached to a rectangular tower some 4 m square internally, which was clearly used as accommodation, as it had a separate stair turret attached (Fig. 7.1 and Early 2001). The tower and hall were interconnecting at first floor level, but the tower basement was completely separate. The Salle à Tours, built within the north-west corner of the late Roman fortress, has a rectangular block 30 m long and 8 m wide (internally) with an attached square tower at the south-east corner nearly 12 m square (Fig. 7.1). Internally this tower is only 6.5 m by 6 m, but there was access between the two buildings at ground level, as at the Mount House. In the early 12th

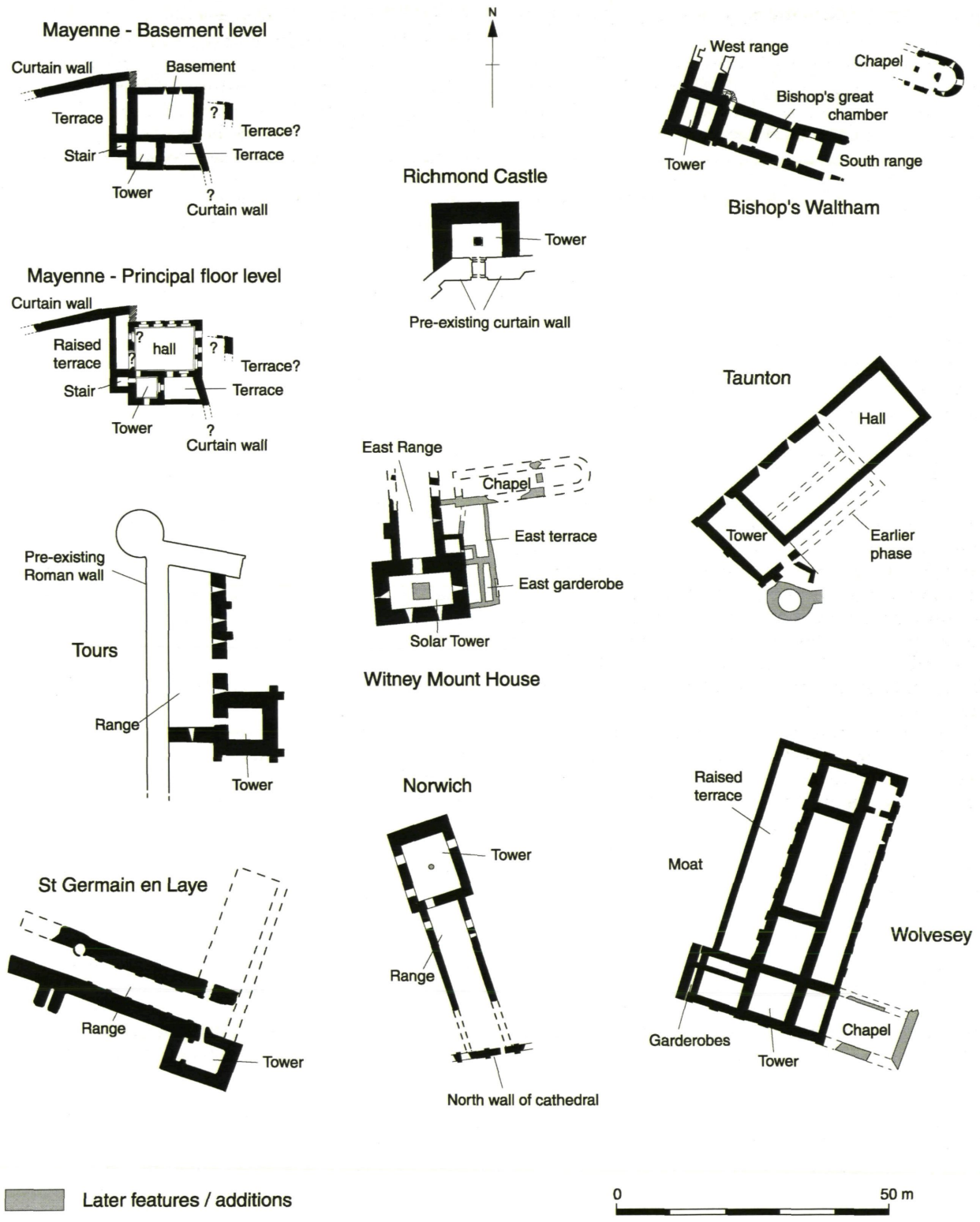

Figure 7.1 French and English comparanda for the tower complex.

century Louis VI of France built a similar ensemble at the royal palace of Saint-Germain-en-Laye just outside Paris (Renoux 1996, 33, Fig. 15). Here a range 10.5 m wide (but with a vaulted basement only 5 m wide internally) had a rectangular tower projecting from the south-east corner (Fig. 7.1). The tower was rectangular, 13 m long and nearly 10 m wide externally, 8 m by 5 m internally, and like the Mount House there was a connecting doorway through one of the long walls into the range at ground-floor level. In parallel with this, German palaces of the 11th and 12th centuries were commonly built with

a massive tower or Bergfried adjacent to the hall, for instance at Gelnhausen, though these towers were apparently not residential (Thompson 1995, 35–7 and Fig. 13).

In Britain such associated buildings are a particular feature of ecclesiastical residences of the 12th century. They first appear at the beginning of the century, as at Bishop Losinga's palace at Norwich (Whittingham 1949, 86–7 and pl. 5) (Fig. 7.1). The West Hall at Wolvesey comprises an integrated tower and range, the tower being smaller than that at the Mount House, and with less massive walls, but probably three storeys high (Biddle 1986, 30) (Fig. 7.1). A similar combination, this time of hall and tower, can be found at another of the Winchester manors at Taunton, where in addition to a massive and separate keep (Leach 1984, 11–26) there was also a double-vaulted hall with a cross-wing with a vaulted basement at the south-west end (Fig. 7.1), which was of similar size to the tower at the Mount House (Renn 1968, 319 and Fig. 68). Bishop Roger of Salisbury's residences at Sherborne and Old Sarum include towers (Fig. 7.1), the former of which is similar in scale to the Solar Tower at the Mount House (Renn 1968, 46–7 and 308–10). The tower at Sherborne has more massive walls but White has argued that these were due to its construction over an infilled ditch (1983, 67). The keeps at Old Sarum and at Bishop's Waltham have walls of similar thickness to those at the Mount House, but are square and smaller (Riall 1994, Fig. 6) (Fig. 7.1).

Even among episcopal palaces an entrance to the tower from the adjoining range at ground level is very unusual. At Bishop Losinga's palace there may have been a forebuilding attached to the tower on the north side (Whittingham 1949, Pl. 5), though this is now in doubt (Stephen Hayward pers. comm.); there is no surviving evidence of an original doorway between the tower and the range at ground level. At Sherborne there was a forebuilding leading to a first-floor entrance; the door to the ground floor of the tower (on the north side) is believed to be a late addition (White 1983, 67). At Bishops' Waltham access to the corner tower was at first-floor level, the ground floor of the tower being a basement entered from above; the situation at Wolvesey is not clear from the brief information available from the 19th-century excavations. Only at Taunton were the hall and cross-wing linked at ground level, but it is uncertain whether this was a tower at all, as it was of the same width as the adjacent hall, and may have been roofed as a single building.

The arrangements at the Mount House appear to be virtually unique in Britain. The windows of the ground floor in the tower would have provided considerable light, and together with the access from the adjoining range, suggest that the ground floor may have been intended for a wider range of uses than simply a cellar. This is not to imply that the ground floor of the tower was ever more than subsidiary to the 'solar' or great chamber at first-(or second-)floor level. Nevertheless, the tower shows a mixture of elements that suggest it was not primarily defensive, and was probably influenced by late-11th- and early-12th-century continental examples.

The East Range

At the Mount House the external chimney stack for the East Range shows that this had a first floor. The range, therefore, is interpreted as a two storey building with a first-floor chamber. The entrance to the East Range from outside was not found by excavation, but presumably lay towards the north end of the range, at the far end from the 'Solar Tower'.

In both its dimensions and position adjacent to the tower this range is comparable to Bishop Losinga's palace at Norwich, where the attached range consisted of a barrel-vault supporting a first-floor passageway to the north aisle of the cathedral (Fig. 7.1). The entrance to the vaulted undercroft was at the opposite end from the tower. There is no evidence of springing for a vault in the excavated lengths of the walls, which survived 1.8 m high in places on the east. The vault in Bishop Losinga's palace begins less than 1.5 m from the existing floor level (Hayward 1996, Fig. 46), and the range at Mount House, therefore, may have had a timber first floor. At Lincoln, however, the springing of the vaulted stone undercroft did not begin until above this level (Chapman *et al.* 1975, Fig. 14), and it may also have been higher from the original floor at Norwich.

At Norwich the position of the range leading to a doorway into the cathedral demonstrates a rather specialised processional function with Carolingian antecedents which cannot have been necessary at the Mount House (Pevsner and Wilson 1997, 220). Hayward comments, however, that at Norwich the range between the tower and the cathedral was wide enough for accommodation as well as for a linking passage (Hayward 1997 in Pevsner and Wilson 1997, 220), so may well have had a first-floor chamber.

Similar ranges are found adjoining the towers at Sherborne (the West Range) and Old Sarum (the East Range) (Fig. 7.2). Another similar building with a first floor over a stone vault is the East Hall at Lincoln (Chapman *et al.* 1975) (Fig. 7.2). The same arrangement in layout is also evident at the palace built after 1150 at Bishop's Waltham, one of the other residences of the bishop of Winchester, where the West Tower is attached directly to the range called The Bishop's Great Chamber (Blair 1993, 11; Hare 1993, 14–15). The range at Saint-Germain also had a vaulted basement (Fig. 7.1), but the range at Tours did not. At Wolvesey the West Hall has a solid basement, but above this was a two-storeyed block with a long range abutting a tower at one end, and the access to the range was at the end furthest from the tower, just as at the Mount House (Fig. 7.1). The hall at Christchurch has already been mentioned. The English parallels for the early building complex at the Mount House

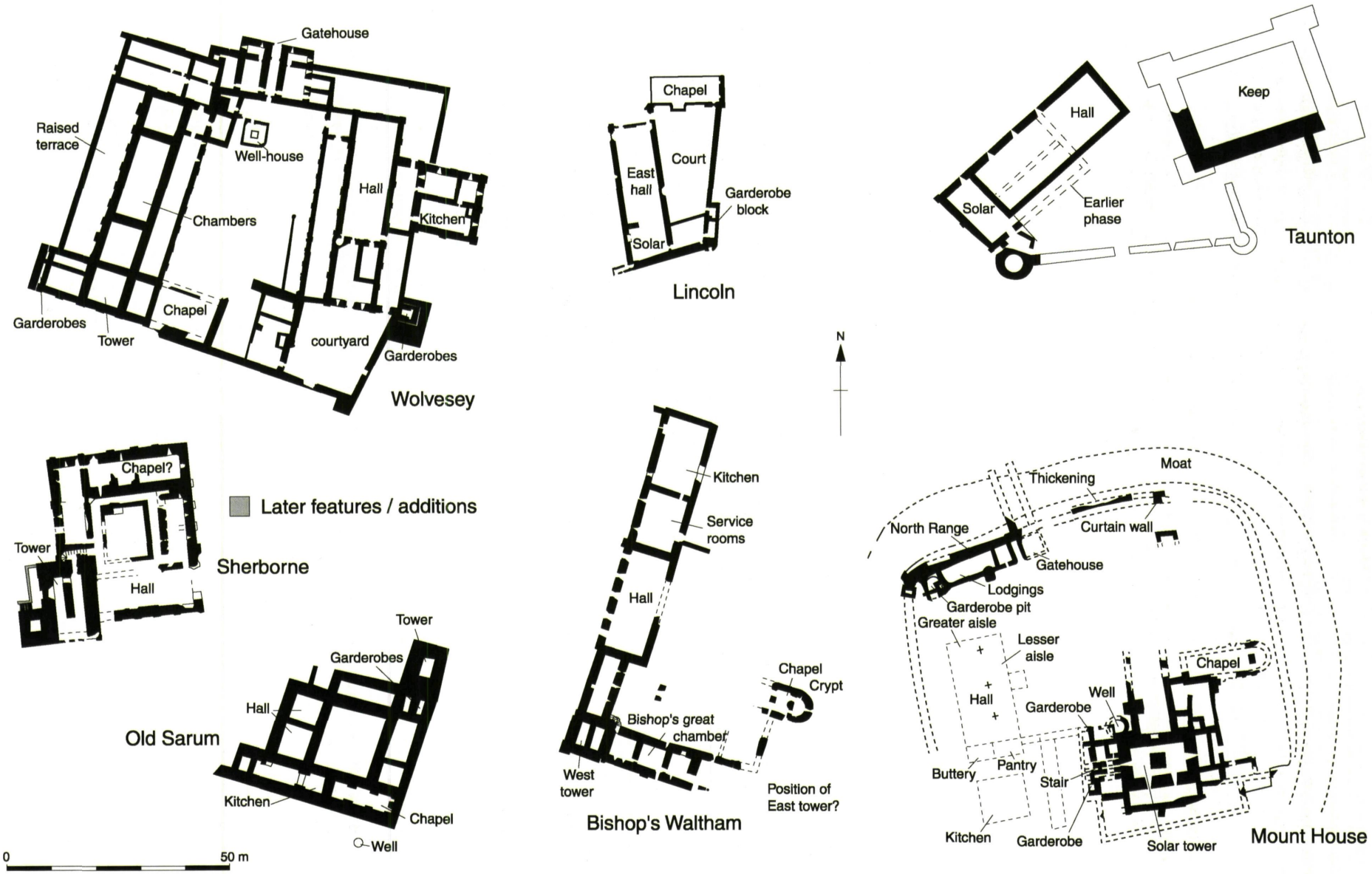

Figure 7.2 Plans of the Mount House manor house and comparable Norman ecclesiastical sites of England.

clearly lie in the early and mid 12th century, and predominantly in the other ecclesiastical complexes of that date.

Sanitation

There was no evidence of an integral garderobe in the original Solar Tower, in contrast to Old Sarum, where garderobe pits just south of the tower were apparently original features (Shortt 1965, 36). The south-west tower of the West Hall at Wolvesey had a latrine block cleansed by a stream (Biddle 1986, 30). No evidence for garderobes survives at Bishop Losinga's palace, however, and garderobes were not always incorporated into the smaller castle keeps; at the castle of Ascot D'Oilly constructed nearby in 1141 (Jope and Threlfall 1959, 233), a probable latrine sump only 1 m deep was added as an afterthought by digging away the mound at one corner of the tower. The stone garderobe tower attached to the East Hall at Wolvesey (within Wymond's Tower) was added some time after the range was built, and was dated sometime between 1141 and 1154 on historical grounds (Biddle 1976, 327). At Bishop's Waltham the later 12th-century tower had a private latrine built into the second floor, which discharged down the outside of the tower into the surrounding moat. There is no evidence that a moat lay immediately adjacent to the Solar Tower at the Mount House.

The boundary ditch and early curtain wall

The only other features likely to be primary are the length of boundary ditch 588 on the north, 344, a feature of similar proportions east of the Solar Tower, and stone feature 350 south of the Solar Tower. Ditch 588 clearly formed an early boundary to the site, predating the moat, and with an entrance whose position is mirrored by that through the stone curtain wall. The relationship between the curtain wall and this ditch is uncertain; the ditch did not cut through any mortar spill from the wall, nor did it incorporate any eroded mortar in its fill, perhaps implying that the ditch came first. It also appears that ditch 588 had not accumulated much silt when the moat was dug, and is therefore more likely to belong with the excavated manorial buildings than to predate them. Ditch 588 was clearly not a defensive feature. A similarly slight primary ditch (only 3 m wide) was found at the palace of the bishops of Lincoln at Banbury (Rodwell 1976, 93 and 99–100, Fig. 2).

Feature 344 ran parallel to the East Range and underlay the chapel, and only cut one very thin occupation deposit lying immediately upon the natural clay. It was traced for 19 m, including a possible gap on the east side of the site within the area of the later chapel. The excavations only included a very short length of the wall of the East Range opposite this putative entrance, but no corresponding entrance into the East Range was seen, and it is alternatively possible that this gap simply represents the unexcavated area between two trenches dug through the later chapel floor. The full profile of feature 344 was not established, and it was filled with a mixture of loose limestone and mortar. At Castle Rising the walls of the 12th-century keep and chapel were constructed in foundation trenches filled with similar loose material (limestone and sand), and the authors comment that 'this seemed to be the traditional method, and was probably based on sound practical experience' (Morley and Gurney 1997, 39). While it is possible that this was a foundation of similar kind, the underlying geology is different, and more likely it was either the robbing trench of a boundary wall, or a continuation of boundary ditch 588 infilled with material from an earlier building. The possibility of other early buildings on the site cannot be discounted, indeed the Solar Tower and East Range need not have been primary, but there is no conclusive evidence for anything earlier. One architectural fragment (WS 461, Fig. 3.21 no. 4) was found within the east wall of the East Range, but this may have been incorporated during the bonding of the chapel wall. The simplest option is to assume that 344 was the robbing of a boundary wall parallel to the East Range and Solar Tower.

The foundations of this putative wall 344 were in excess of 0.6 m deep and continued down into the limestone bedrock. No other excavated walls on the site, including the curtain wall on the north 530, had such deep foundations, except for stone feature 350, whose edge ran parallel to the tower on the south, and which may have been a corresponding east-west boundary wall. Excavation did not reveal any return of this putative boundary wall on the west, but on this side of the tower the later embanking deposits were only removed in one very small area.

The courtyard residences of Bishop Roger were not apparently surrounded by a curtain wall at a close distance, though the palace at Old Sarum lay close to the edge of the motte upon which it was built. Bishop Losinga's palace at Norwich lay on level ground, but the surrounding cathedral precinct wall was some distance away. At Wolvesey the West and East Halls at first had no curtain wall, and were only joined into a courtyard layout (similar to Bishop Roger's palaces, see Fig. 7.2) between 1138 and 1141, as the troubles of the Anarchy developed (Biddle 1976, 327). At Banbury, however, where there was a shallow ditch like that at the Mount House, the Bishop's Palace appears to have been surrounded by a massive curtain wall, which had deep foundations (Rodwell 1976, 99–100).

The area enclosed by this putative early curtain wall at the Mount House is unknown. No return on the west was found within 1984 Trench 3 (see Fig. 2.1) It is possible that the excavated curtain wall on the north and west was also an original feature, as there is no firm dating evidence for its construction. The original manor, therefore, might have consisted of a walled enclosure almost as large as the 13th-century circuit, with high status accommodation in the Solar Tower and East Range and a walled

bailey on the north and west surrounded by a small boundary ditch, similar to the situation at Banbury. There is, however, no evidence of construction debris in the fills of ditch 588, which where excavated lay less than 2 m from the north curtain wall, nor of eroded mortar from earlier construction deposits. The curtain wall on the north may, therefore, be later, indeed its overall dimensions and shallow foundations are similar to those of wall 354 (see Period 4c). In Period 3 the principal buildings may have had a surrounding wall only on the east and south, in effect a private yard for the bishop preceding the later raised alure and terrace.

PERIOD 3B

Room 446, the small room in the north-east angle of the Solar Tower and East Range, is clearly secondary, as its north wall abutted the wall of the East Range. There was a gap on the east side of room 446 extending right down to ground level, which is plausibly interpreted as a doorway (Pl. 2.8). The presence of this gap rules out interpretation as a garderobe. The function of room 446 is uncertain, but it may have housed a circular wooden stair giving access to the upper floor of the Solar Tower, similar to the stair turret at Mayenne in France (Fig. 7.1), and Aldingbourne and Benington in England (Renn 1968, 88 and Fig. 3; 105–6 and Fig. 8). The likely presence of an external stair to the tower from the yard east of the East Range is another indication that the Solar Tower was not primarily defensive in character.

The external face of the East Range wall and the walls of room 446 adjacent were rendered. A niche or recess of some description was found in the outside of the East Range wall in line with the south wall of the chapel built in Period 4. This was largely destroyed by the keying-in of the blocking wall 482 built together with the chapel, but render on the exterior of the East Range wall continued into the south end of the recess, suggesting that the recess was an earlier (perhaps even an original) feature, though its function is unclear.

PERIOD 4A: THE CHAPEL AND RAISED TERRACE

The chapel
(incorporating comments from John Blair)

The excavations revealed parts of a sumptuous later 12th-century building which can plausibly be identified, from its form, alignment and the possible presence of an altar, as the manorial chapel. The exposed remains comprise: two isolated sections of the south wall, including the bases of pilaster-buttresses with nook-shafts running up the angles, with a chamfered plinth (Fig. 7.3); the northwards return of the west end wall, linked to other structures further west; a fragment of the probable north wall towards its east end; and an internal square or rectangular plinth, possibly the base of a solid stone altar.

A date in the middle or later 12th century would be consistent with the finely tooled and jointed ashlar, and with the nook-shafts on the pilasters. Such nook-rolls are known on major buildings from *c* 1140 (for instance the keep at Castle Rising), but are more characteristic of lavish work of the second half of the century. The decorated window-head (Fig. 3.21, no.1) re-used in the south wall is itself most characteristic of mid-12th-century work (see Chapter 3: the Worked Stone). The same mason's mark was found both on a quoin of the external chimney stack 27 of the East Range and on the south wall of the chapel (Fig. 3.24, no. 29). The significance of these marks is uncertain, but it may indicate that the same mason or masons were employed on these different buildings, and thus that these developments took place within the working life of one master mason, a period of no more than 30 years. If the buildings of Period 3a are dated 1120–1140, the chapel, therefore, should have been constructed by around 1160.

The two exposed sections of the south wall do not appear to represent a single continuous length: they differ slightly in axis, in alignment and in the spacing of the buttresses. The excavation plan of the eastern trench indicates some uncertainty as to the accuracy of the grid at this point, so the change in alignment may be illusory (although the adjacent Norman church of St Mary (Fig. 5.6) does taper in width). The spacing of the pilasters with attached shafts is, however, clearly different. This could perhaps indicate a two-cell building, comprising a short nave and a longer but very slightly narrower chancel, or even two phases of construction. If the latter, John Blair has suggested that the first and western part of the building, whose west and south walls run parallel to and at right angles to the East Range, was constructed to fit with the alignment of the pre-existing buildings on the site, but that the second part was adjusted to a more directly eastern orientation.

There are problems, however, in that the gap between the existing pairs of pilasters cannot be divided by a further pilaster using either of the two spacings that are known, nor using one of each. It is possible, therefore, that the pilasters were not evenly spaced, and that the gaps decreased in width from west to east along a building of a single phase and alignment.

The interpretation of wall 806 as the northern wall of the chapel rests upon its parallel alignment and upon the fact that, like wall 97, it was abutted by clay infill of probable later 12th-century date, but no direct relationship was established by the excavations. If correct, the chapel was narrow, only 7 m wide, and at least 18 m long. The eastern limit of the chapel, and how the chancel terminated, is unknown; an apse is most likely up to *c* 1160, a flat east end increasingly probable thereafter.

An internal rectangular block of masonry found towards the east end of the building has been interpreted tentatively as an altar (Chapter 2: Period 4a). The top of the surviving masonry, which was clearly truncated, is 1.3 m above the floor level

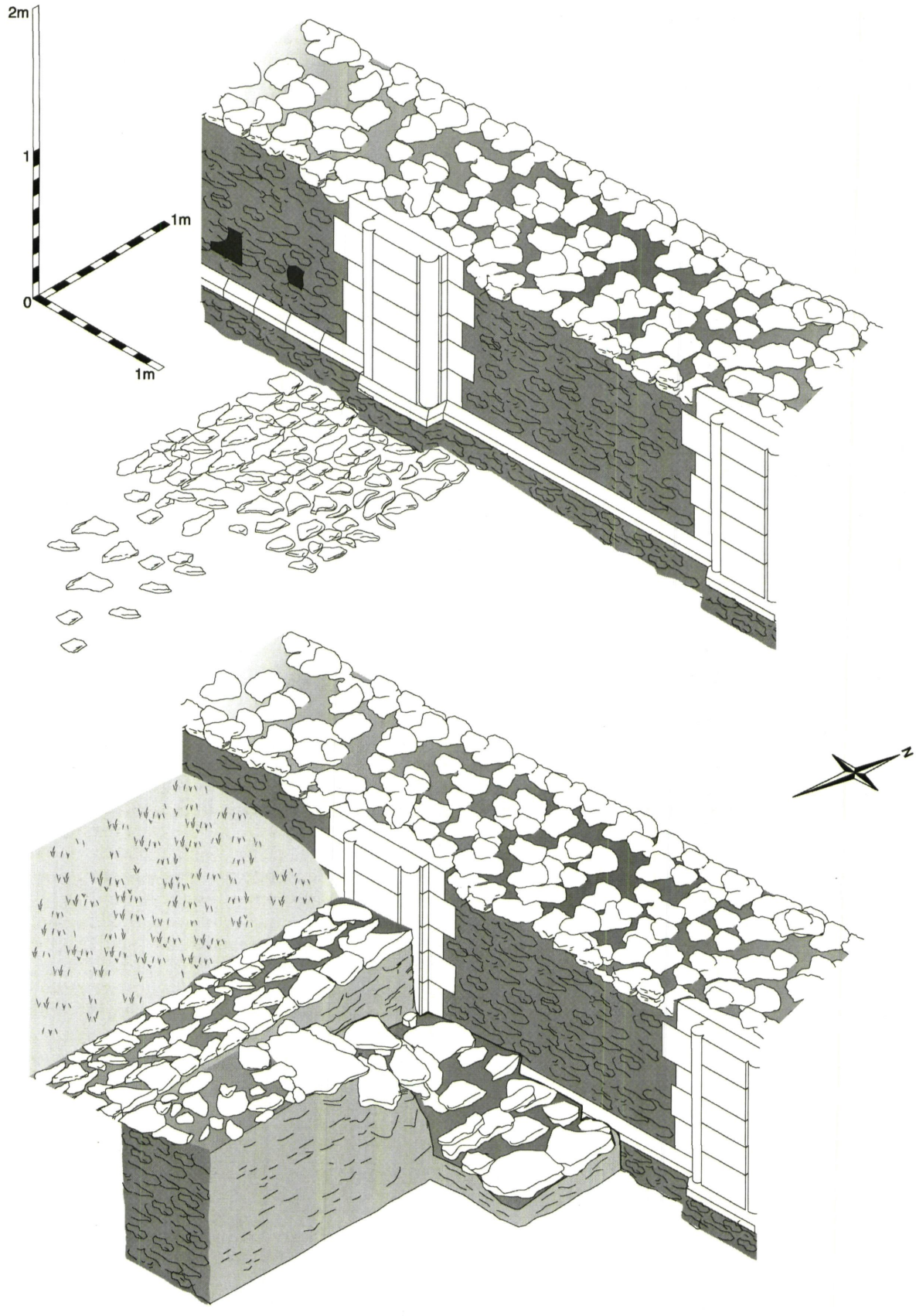

Figure 7.3 Isometric views of the south chapel wall and stair to terrace.

established at the west end of the chapel, so if this interpretation is correct it would imply at least one step in the floor level within the building to allow the altar to function effectively at the usual height for such structures. The block is also at least 1.2 m wide, and probing with an auger suggested that it extended further east, though robbed to a lower level. If correct, this would make it closer to square than rectangular, and interpretation as an altar implausible.

An alternative interpretation is that this was a pier for a vaulted stone undercroft with a first-floor chapel above, similar to the early chapel found at Bishop's Waltham (Hare 1987). John Blair comments that episcopal chapels were normally of two storeys, with a first-floor chapel above for the bishop and his peers, and a ground-floor chapel below for the servants of the manor, similar to the suggested arrangement at Bampton, Oxon., and at Wolvesey (Blair 1988b, 89–90; Blair 1992, 55 and Fig.3; Biddle 1986, 30). The thickness of the walls (1.3 m wide) suggests that this may well have been the case at the Mount House. In this context it is worth noting the curious curving outer face of the excavated fragment of the north chancel wall, which might possibly be the base of a very small spiral stair. This is of course a very odd place for such a feature, but it is just about believable if there was another building abutting at this point.

There is however no excavated evidence of any windows for the ground-floor chapel, and the size of the excavated pier makes a ground-floor chapel unlikely. There was no indication of decoration as in the undercroft at Bishop's Waltham, but a plain and more utilitarian undercroft is possible. Biddle's account of the chapel undercroft at Wolvesey appears to leave open the question of whether the undercroft was in fact used as a lower chapel (Biddle 1986, 32). It remains unclear why, if the chapel had two floors, the lower floor should have been infilled in Period 4b, but the undercroft at Wolvesey was also infilled at a later date.

There is a change in the alignment of the existing boundary wall of the Mount House in line with the south wall of the chapel, which may indicate that the boundary wall originally respected the chapel, stopping against it, and was then extended across the chapel after it had been demolished. This would suggest that the chapel projected eastwards beyond the existing eastern limit of the Mount House site, and may at some stage have been in excess of 22 m long (see also Period 4b: the Moat below).

Two reconstructions of the chapel are suggested, one on Fig. 2.9 and a longer version in the Period plans (Fig. 2.8). The width of the reconstructed chapel is very similar to that of the Norman chapel at Bishop's Waltham (Hare 1993). The overall shape (with a ratio of between 2.6:1 and 3:1 length to breadth) also matches those of other freestanding Norman chapels such as that at Castle Rising, Norfolk (Morley and Gurney 1997, 24–38) and at Minster Court (Blair 1993, 10, Fig. 5), and is similar to the proportions of the parish church of St Mary adjacent (Fig. 5.7). Another comparable example may be the chapel of Bishop Losinga at Norwich (Whittingham 1949, Pl. 5), where the east end has been excavated, but recent accounts have cast doubts upon the exceptional length of Whittingham's reconstructed plan, as the chapel was rebuilt later in the medieval period (Atherton *et al.* 1996, 111).

It seems odd that the bishop's manor should not have been built with a chapel from the start, and in the interim report it was suggested that the excavated chapel replaced an earlier structure on the same spot, from which the monolithic window-head reused in the wall of the excavated chapel was derived (Durham 1984, 3). This window-head, however, is itself dated to the 2nd or 3rd quarter of the 12th century (Chapter 3, The Worked Stone), and there is no other evidence for an earlier phase of chapel. At Wolvesey the latest interpretation of the phasing is that the chapel in the South Range was added some 20 years after the completion of the West Block (Biddle 1990d, 1203–5 and Figs 386–7), though the bishop may have made use of the chapel of the Anglo-Saxon palace in the interim. At the Mount House there may have been a small oratory within the domestic block. For public devotions the bishop may otherwise have used the recently constructed parish church (see Chapter 5 for the late-11th- or early 12th-century date of the church). Alternatively, a chapel may have lain elsewhere within the site.

The construction of the chapel overlay both a thin occupation deposit upon the natural clay and the infilling of feature 344. Feature 344 was clearly infilled immediately prior to the construction of the chapel, as the south wall of the chapel directly overlay it. Adjacent to the south wall of the chapel the top of 344 was filled with a layer of larger flat limestones, presumably to provide a more level surface for the construction of the wall (see Pl. 2.5).

Feature 344 was filled with stone and mortar for a distance of at least 15 m south of the chapel. If this took place in one operation, it was not simply infilled to allow the construction of this new building, and infilling over such a length may well indicate an expansion of the area of the curia. It is alternatively possible that the wall was left standing a few metres south of the new chapel, and remained in use as a boundary until Period 4b. The building of wall 77 over the infill, however, makes this unlikely. Wall 350 south of the Solar Tower appears to have continued in use (see Chapter 2, Period 4), but apart from this fragment nothing of the line of the curtain wall in this period has been confirmed by excavation.

The raised terrace

An area 2 m wide alongside the East Range was raised at least 1.8 m by clay dumping, presumably to first-floor level, and the stair turret outside the Solar Tower (room 446) was infilled to first-floor level at the same time. This raised terrace was retained by wall 217 = 232; failure to trace wall 217 as far as the chapel wall (97) may be due to the fact that the area

immediately south of wall 97 was not excavated, or that part of the wall was robbed out when further clay dumping was carried out east of 217, making the wall redundant.

The use of raised terraces has a long history on the continent. Raised terraces of the 10th century have recently been found alongside the hall at the Château de Mayenne (Fig. 7.1 and Early 2001); this idea may have derived from buildings with verandahs at either end raised over a vaulted basement, such as the 9th-century palace of Santa Maria de Naranca at Orviedo (Thompson 1995, 34–5). The direct influence for Witney is likely to have been the West Hall at Wolvesey, where a raised terrace documented as a garden lay along the west side of the Chamber Block (Biddle 1986, 29). Biddle comments that 'a similarly conscious integration of structure and landscape can be seen in other palaces of the period, for example in the bishop's palace at Beauvais or in the comital palace of Henry of Blois' family at Troyes' (1986, 30). The early curtain wall comprising 344 and 350 would have obscured the view from the ground floor of the Solar Tower and East Range, and the construction of this raised area partly may have been to remedy this. The chapel, built extending eastwards on the northern side, will have shielded the barnyard from view, so that the vista from the raised terrace was out over the meadows and fishpond to the river Windrush. Such raised terraces become more common towards the end of the medieval period, as for instance outside the tower at Sherborne (White and Cook 1995, 4).

Wall 217 = 232 was not parallel to the East Range; the builders appear to have been content to reuse the existing masonry of room 446 at one end, and to have built onto this on a line that would ensure that wall 217 abutted the chapel. It is possible, therefore, that this raised walkway was not roofed. The changing width, however, would not have prevented the construction of a timber superstructure at first-floor level, and a wooden pentice between the Chapel and the Great Chamber is mentioned in later accounts (Winchester Account Rolls 1273–4). This terrace, therefore, may have been a covered passage or alure from the start, created to provide private access for the bishop from the tower to the chapel without needing either to pass through the East Range or to descend the external stair and cross the yard. A surviving example of such a pentice exists at Canterbury. Wall 217 was rendered twice on its eastern side, forming the west side of a courtyard partly enclosed by the chapel and Solar Tower, perhaps for the bishop's private use. The east wall of room 446, including the blocked doorway, was also rendered.

PERIOD 4B: THE EAST GARDEROBE BLOCK, THE EXTENSION TO THE RAISED TERRACE AND THE CENTRAL PIER IN THE SOLAR TOWER

A massive central pier was added inside the Solar Tower, a large garderobe block was added to the east side of the Solar Tower, and at the same time the terrace was extended by infilling the courtyard enclosed by the raised alure, chapel, garderobe block and Solar Tower to a depth of nearly 2 m. The interior of the chapel may have been infilled at the same time.

The east garderobe block

The garderobe block measured 7.5 m wide and was 5 m long, with four culverts leading out to the east. Between the narrow privy chamber and the Solar Tower an area 7.5 m by 3 m (or more than 20 sq. m) was added to the accommodation. The provision of such a large garderobe block supports the suggestion that the Solar Tower was of several storeys. While groups of as many as four privies on one level are known at sites such as Castle Rising (Renn 1968, 297, Fig. 64), serving two large chambers, this is a much larger building than that at the Mount House, and the garderobes are constructed within the massive walls of the keep. It is very unlikely that a line of privies of this size were needed on one floor at the Mount House, and it is more likely that there were privies at more than one level.

Where the size of the walls allowed, garderobes were usually approached along a passage within the wall, in order to increase the distance from the chambers they served. This was not always the case, however; the original garderobe pits for Bishop Roger's tower at Old Sarum, for instance, lay immediately adjacent. At the Mount House the walls of the Solar Tower were not substantial enough to allow for such a passage, but the added privies were placed at the opposite end of the added chambers away from the tower. It seems most likely that the garderobes at the Mount House were divided from the original tower chambers by one or more wardrobe rooms at both first- and second-floor level. This arrangement follows that of the West Hall at Wolvesey, where the latrines lie at the end of a block projecting westwards from the main tower, and also lying at the end of the raised terrace incorporated within the West Hall. A similar arrangement is also found at Lincoln (dated after 1155), where the garderobes lie at the end of a short block projecting east from a solar chamber at the south end of the East Hall (Chapman *et al.* 1975, 38, Fig. 13).

Garderobe towers are sometimes used as part of the defences, as for instance at Gold Hole Tower at Richmond Castle, dated to the late 11th century. At Wolvesey Wymond's Tower, built between 1141 and 1154, was a massive block of solid masonry encasing only two garderobe shafts, and appears to have been built with defence as a second function. At the Mount House, however, despite the solid infill of the interior of the east garderobe block up to first-floor level, the construction of a long block with relatively slight walls and four culverts along one side, suggests comfort rather than defence. Garderobe towers of similar date in an ecclesiastical context are the two mid-12th-century examples at Fountains Abbey (Wood 1965, 379). Nevertheless, garderobe

shafts that were not fully enclosed could be vulnerable to attack, as the capture of Château Galliard in 1204 was to show (Wood 1965, 379), and at the Mount House the garderobe was completely walled in to ground level, the culverts leading out from the garderobe chamber had iron grilles, and besides were only 0.53 m wide by 0.7 m high.

It is unusual to find a garderobe chamber at ground floor level; most garderobes were constructed by digging pits below ground level. For instance, very large garderobe chambers were added in the later 12th century to Roger of Salisbury's palace at Old Sarum (Wood 1965, 379 and 385). These pits were up to 12.80 m deep, and depth was regarded with special importance for reasons of hygeine, as the 13th-century instructions of Henry III show (Wood 1965, 385). Although the underlying limestone bedrock at the Mount House would certainly have been hard to excavate, numerous other examples show that the difficulty of excavating bedrock did not deter medieval magnates. Whatever other reasons were involved in this decision, once it had been decided to create a garderobe chamber at ground level it will have been imperative to embank the east side of the Solar Tower and elevate the domestic quarters (see below), simply to provide sufficient height above the garderobe chamber. As mentioned previously, the inspiration for the progressive alterations to the Witney manor may have been the West Hall at Wolvesey, which was constructed on an infilled basement at first-floor level, with a terrace on the west side. Both the West and East Halls at Wolvesey had garderobes bottoming at ground level, and both had similar culverts leading out from them (Nisbett 1898, 216). Between 1138 and 1141 Henry of Blois added a further block at the north end of the West Hall at Wolvesey, which was also at ground level, and which Biddle interprets as a reredorter (Biddle 1972, 126–7; 1986,10).

No excavation was carried out to natural east of the garderobe, so where the culverts led is unknown. The interim report (Durham 1984, 5) suggested that there was a large cess pit just to the east, thus explaining the later collapse of the garderobe block. The provision of culverts, and the logic of embanking around a ground-level garderobe, however, is that the culverts drained into the moat (see also below). Comparison of the level of the ground within the garderobe and the level at the edge of the moat as excavated to the east and south-east shows that there was ample drop to allow for a satisfactory fall along a chute covering the distance (some 12–13 m) between the garderobe and the inner edge of the moat. Wymond's Tower at Wolvesey apparently emptied into marshy ground adjacent to the moat (Nisbett 1898, 216). Amongst the animal bones found within the east garderobe were those of water vole, which may perhaps have entered the garderobe from outside along the culvert, and have lived in the moat. At Middleton Stoney, however, bones of water vole in the latrine pit have been used to suggest that these animals were living in the upper floors of the stone keep (Levitan 1984, 119–20; M. Robinson pers. comm.).

The east garderobe was designed to empty simply by gravity feed, the battered wall deflecting material down towards the culverts, which sloped away, presumably into the moat. Large ceramic pots, probably chamber pots, were found at the base of the garderobe chamber; similar large pots were found at the base of the garderobe at Ascot Doilly (Jope and Threlfall 1959, 247–50).

The relationship between the construction of the chapel and the east garderobe depends upon wall 77, which was contemporary with the garderobe block and abutted the wall of the chapel. This wall is plausibly interpreted as a retaining wall for the infilling of the area between the garderobe, East Range and the chapel. Wall 77 was not excavated except at the north and south ends, and in plan it is not straight, having several offset lengths. It is possible, therefore, that the wall is of more than one period, and that the construction of the east garderobe was not followed immediately by the infilling of the area between these buildings. The variation in the line of the wall is, however, more likely to be a result of differential movement resulting from the pressure of the soil infill against its west side; the profile of the excavated section at the north end demonstrates how severely the wall was affected (Fig. 2.12), and on present evidence there is no reason to posit more than one period of construction.

The clay infilling extended the terracing process begun in Period 4a. The original terrace could only have been used as a private walkway, perhaps accompanied by a garden bed; the extended terrace was nearly 8 m by 10 m in area, and was probably a raised garden, as later documentary references mention *herbarium*(arbour?) *iuxta capella* (Winchester Rolls 1245–6), and a *steyram iuxta herbag' extra cameram domini* (Winchester Rolls 1304–5; see also below). The example of the raised terrace at Wolvesey has already been mentioned (Biddle 1986, 30).

In the corner of the raised area a small square room (449) was built up against the east wall of the Solar Tower and abutting the garderobe block. This room had no doorway at the level to which it survived, and was filled with clay. Since this room was not excavated its use is uncertain. The reference to repairs to the stair outside the lord's chamber in 1304–5 (see above) would strengthen interpretation as an external stair (similar to the earlier room 446 and compare Fig. 7.1 Mayenne), though the subsequent subsidence and infilling of the east garderobe block (see Period 5 below) might have resulted in the construction of a further garderobe on this side of the chamber block. The infilling of its interior with clay so similar to that of the terrace to the north, however, makes this interpretation less likely than that of a stair.

The infilling of the chapel

The ground floor of the chapel was also filled with clay, the same deposit (layer 93) apparently being

found both north and south of the chapel wall. The excavation records suggest that this also overlay the surviving south chapel wall top, and that this fill ended at a straight north-south edge in line with the west edge of retaining wall 77. If correct, this would mean that the chapel was demolished at this time, though the south wall was probably left standing to greater height from the line of wall 77 eastwards to act as a retaining wall for the clay fill within this building. The slight change in the surviving height of the south chapel wall east and west of this line could then indicate different phases of robbing. In this case this early chapel would have had a very short life, and presumably its successor (whose approximate location is known from later documentary records, see Chapter 6) will have lain further north.

It is more probable, however, that layer 93, from which both medieval and post-medieval finds were recovered, was in fact two deposits, the earlier being one of the fill layers south and/or north of the chapel wall, the later layer being part of a post-medieval robbing of the upper part of the chapel walls, which were mistakenly conflated. The change in the clay over the chapel wall could simply reflect different stages in the robbing of the medieval buildings, especially at a wall junction.

There is a further complication as the pottery from the lowest infill layer also contains sherds of a type not recorded before the late 12th century (Chapter 3, The Medieval and Post-medieval Pottery, Chronological Development Period 4). This may also be intrusive, since the fills of the chapel were emptied by machine. On the grounds of general similarity of deposits the chapel infilling is believed to be contemporary with the extension of the east terrace in the second half of the 12th century. If the sherds are not intrusive, then either the infilling of the chapel to first floor level took place later than that of the yard to the south, or the developments of Period 4b have to be dated to the late 12th century.

The central pier within the solar tower

The primary mortar floor surviving within the Solar Tower was cut by the construction trench for the massive central pier. The alignment of the central pier is also slightly different to that of the tower, a matter of some 3 degrees. The sheer size of the pier at the Mount House also shows that this was not part of the original design, as it occupies one seventh of the interior floor space. Similar central piers are known at Richmond Castle, North Yorkshire (Renn 1968, 294–5 and Fig. 60), and at Walden. The former served both to support a stone vault and central pillar at first-floor level, and to enclose a well within the Tower. Richmond Castle keep is attributed to Earl Conan (1146–71). The keep at Walden was one of Geoffrey de Mandeville's castles, and was surrendered to Stephen in 1142 and demolished in 1157–8 (Renn 1968, 337 and Fig. 75). During the 13th century a pier was inserted into the 10th-century donjon at Mayenne in Normandy to support a stone vault (Early 2001), and a similar circular pier was added to Bishop Losinga's tower at Norwich (Whittingham 1949, 86–7).

The reason for the addition of the central pier was probably to support a stone vault and a central column at first-floor level. In the rubble infilling of the tower in Period 5 segments of a circular column-drum over 1.38 m in diameter were found, which may have come from the first floor of the building. Segments of a column-drum of smaller diameter found in this rubble may derive from a second storey, though this column may have come from elsewhere in the manor.

The insertion of the central pier rendered the ground floor of the Solar Tower unusable except as a cellar basement. The addition of such a massive pier probably indicates that the tower was heightened at this time. The status of a lord was indicated by the impressiveness of his keep or tower, and his apartments were usually the most elevated. The alterations of this period can be seen, therefore, as raising the level at which the bishop functioned, involving the construction of the garderobe block, the infilling of the ground floor of the chapel and the creation of the east terrace (see also below).

There is no direct dating for the insertion of this central pier, which is isolated from developments outside. The same mason's mark, however, was recorded on the ashlar masonry of the pier within the Solar Tower, the chapel wall and the east garderobe arches (see Chapter 3, The Worked Stone). As already suggested, this may indicate that the same mason or masons were employed on these different buildings, and thus that these developments took place within a period of no more than 20 to 30 years. It was not the same as the mark recorded on the external chimney stack of the East Range and the chapel. The construction of the chapel and the east garderobe are likely to be separated by at least 10 years, both to accommodate the two coats of render on the retaining wall of the Period 4a terrace, and to allow time for the presence of the loose infill of wall 344 to be forgotten before wall 77 was constructed on top (but see Period 3 for the earlier comment on the foundations at Castle Acre: Morley and Gurney 1997, 39). The adoption of the same line for the east garderobe and terrace wall was probably coincidental, or may have been due to the continued presence of curtain wall 350 on the south, which may have had a surviving return in line with feature 344. The construction of the central pier could have been contemporary with either the chapel or the garderobe block. Between 1158 and 1170, Henry of Blois also raised the level of the East Hall at Wolvesey by adding an extra storey (Biddle 1986, 34).

The primary dump against the solar tower

The relationship between the construction of the south wall of the east garderobe block and the primary earth dump against the Solar Tower on the south and west was not established by excavation. The east garderobe block was not cut through any such bank against the Solar Tower on the east side, nor did it incorporate any

bank within the fill of the western room abutting the Solar Tower, so it is reasonable to assume that the dumping was later. Observations made during the watching brief in 1991 showed that the south wall of the garderobe block was rendered on the outer (south) side, also suggesting that the primary bank was later.

The primary bank abutting the Solar Tower on the south included sherds belonging to regional imports of mid-12th-century or later date, and this embanking probably occurred soon after the construction of the east garderobe block. The bank was approximately 1 m high, and stopped at the bottom of the windows, indicating that the ground floor of the Solar Tower was still in use at this time. On the west of the Solar Tower the bank was of similar height, but was not excavated to the base of the tower. The height of the bank is similar to that piled around the tower at Ascot Doilly, Oxfordshire, though in that case there were no windows in the ground floor of the tower, and this correspondence may be fortuitous. As at Ascot Doilly, however, the material both for the bank and for infilling the chapel and the yard east of the East Range may have been derived from the digging out of a surrounding ditch or moat.

The moat

Only two sections were dug to the bottom of the moat, and even its width was only established in one place on the east, and by extrapolation from two partial sections on the north. The dimensions of the moat on the north and east show a considerable difference, the moat being about 10 m wide and 2.6 m deep on the north, but only 5.5 m wide and 1.1 m deep on the east. The northern ditch had permanent water in the bottom, perhaps to a depth of 1 m, indicating a water table at shallow depth in the medieval period, and the shallower depth of the eastern arm may be due in part to the natural slope of the ground, which dropped on the east and south sides, so that there was probably also standing water in this ditch. This does not however explain the difference in width.

While considerably more substantial than the perimeter ditch of Period 3, the moat at the Mount House was comparatively modest in size. The northern arm is comparable to the ditch at Ascot Doilly, which also held permanent water to a depth of about 1 m, and which was approaching 10 m wide and about 2 m deep. Ditches of similar dimensions and date were also found at Middleton Stoney (also built on limestone bedrock): Ditch C, which also held standing water, surrounded the keep and was only 5 m wide and probably just over 2.5 m deep, while Ditch T around the western bailey was of similar dimensions to the moat on the east at Mount House (Rahtz and Rowley 1984, 57–60). At all these sites the high water table obviously limited the depth to which a moat could have been excavated, and the water in the ditch may have been felt sufficient deterrent, even though some of these ditches, in particular the ditch on the east at the Mount House, were not very deep.

At Middleton Stoney, however, Ditch T bottomed where the limestone gave way to clay, and its shallow depth suggested to the excavators that the main purpose of its excavation was for building material. This may also have been the case at Witney. The material used in the infilling of the courtyard and for the south and west primary banks was predominantly clay. The evidence of the moat on the east suggests that the natural clays overlying the limestone bedrock were nearly 1 m deep, though the clay was apparently shallower on the north. There should have been, therefore, ample material from the moat to provide the required quantity of infill. Some of the primary dump deposits were of burnt limestone pieces, and these were presumably not derived from the moat, unless burning was used to loosen the limestone bedrock before excavation.

The difference in the width and depth of the moat on the north and east of the manor may result from any combination of several factors. The water table has already been mentioned. The ground to the north is level, but slopes away slightly to the east and south, so for defensive purposes a more substantial ditch would have been necessary on the north side. The slope, however, is not very great, but the difference between the inside and outside of the curia would have been much greater once the ground level was raised between the chapel and east garderobe block. This may support the little pottery dating available in suggesting that the moat was either contemporary with, or later than, the east terrace.

Alternatively, the moat may not have been primarily defensive, but instead dug mostly for status. In this case, an impressive moat would have been important on the north towards the road to the mill and ford, and later the town, but much less so between the principal residential buildings and the barnyard within the manorial complex as a whole. In addition, the line of the moat as recovered on the east appears likely to respect the chapel (even though the east limit of this was not determined), suggesting that the moat was later than this. If the moat were a secondary addition to the manor, when not only the chapel, but also buildings in the barnyard to the east were already in existence, the moat may have been constrained by existing buildings, hence its narrowness.

Very little pottery was recovered from the lowest fills of the moat. On the north, however, this did include a sherd of a type considered to have been introduced in the second half of the 12th century, perhaps indicating that the excavation of the moat and the construction of the bank around the Solar Tower were broadly contemporary. The manors of the Bishops of Winchester at Wolvesey and Bishops Waltham were both moated, but archaeological evidence for the date of these moats is lacking, so both are dated on circumstantial grounds to the period of the Anarchy (Biddle 1986, 10; Hare 1987, 21). It is of course possible that the Mount House moat was cleaned out periodically, and that the earliest finds are considerably later than its original excavation, but given that the lowest fills were

waterlogged this seems unlikely. The recovered pottery gives only a *terminus post quem* for the layer from which it was recovered, and there was a second phase of embanking around the tower in the late 12th century (Period 5a), which equally might have derived from the digging of the moat.

Summary of the developments

The creation of the east terrace is seen, therefore, as partly due to the desire to regularise the plan of the tower and adjacent buildings in the later 12th century, and to take the opportunity to install a sophisticated garderobe block and to create a private raised garden. The comparative slightness of wall 77 argues against a defensive function. The soil dumped against the east side of wall 77 contained pottery of a fabric conventionally dated to the late 12th century or later, suggesting that this wall was not originally supported by a bank on the outside, but that a bank was added later.

The soil dumped around the south and west sides of the Solar Tower, however, could have had a more defensive purpose, though protection to a depth of only 0.90 m would hardly have secured the tower from battering rams. The bank at Ascot Doilly occupied the narrow berm between the tower and its surrounding ditch, so that there was no level ground between the moat and the tower, but this was not the case at the Mount House. It appears that the original curtain wall, if that is the function performed by masonry 350, remained in use after this bank was made, and that on the south the 'bank' resulted in the heightening of the area around the tower by about 0.90 m. On the south this may have been intended to make access to the curtain wall easier, and generally may have been seen as providing support for the tower.

It was not Winchester ecclesiastical residences alone that were embanked. At the Bishop's Palace at Lincoln, the East Hall or chamber block, begun in *c* 1155 was abutted on the west side by a bank over 4 m high (Chapman *et al.* 1975, 9 and Fig. 3). The bank material was seen as the result of gradual rubbish dumping accumulating during the 30 years or so between 1170 and the construction of the West Hall. Quite apart from the inherent implausibility of this suggestion, the character of many of the domestic 'rubbish' deposits (predominantly clay and stones) belies this, and this is probably another example of the deliberate raising of the ground level alongside a chamber block during the second half of the 12th century. As at the Mount House, the embanking was halted for a while at the level of the bottom of the basement lights of the semi-buried building.

PERIOD 4C: CONSTRUCTION OF THE CURTAIN WALL

The embanking against the south side of the Solar Tower was cut through by the construction trench for a massive wall 354. As this wall continued both west and east beyond the line of the Solar Tower, this is interpreted as an enclosure or curtain wall. The robber trench of stone feature 350 just to the south was also probably cut from the top of this embanking, and if 350 was an earlier curtain wall it is likely that its demolition coincided with the construction of 354. There are no associated artefacts to date the construction of wall 354, but the robber trench of wall 350 included sherds of Fabric 3, which does not appear elsewhere in Oxfordshire before *c* 1175. The reason for moving this boundary is unclear, unless 350 was already showing signs of collapse. In view of the uncertainties surrounding this feature, only further excavation will clarify these questions.

Unlike 350 wall 354 was built in a shallow foundation trench that certainly did not reach the limestone bedrock. The dimensions of this wall, and its shallow foundations, are matched by those of the robbed curtain wall 530 on the north side of the manor, and it is suggested that it was at this time that a stone curtain wall and gatehouse was first built around the whole of the inner curia. Both 354 and 530 were built of limestone bonded with an orange mortar. As in the case of wall 354, there is no direct dating for the northern curtain wall, except that a mortar layer sealing mid 12th-century sherds in posthole 699 may well have derived from the construction of the wall. The northern curtain wall appears to have consisted of two lengths of wall on different alignments, if the robber trench behind the Period 7 strengthening is to be believed (Fig. 2.38). The eastern part was approximately at right angles to the alignment of the primary buildings, the western part (including the gatehouse) was on the same alignment as the church, the change in alignment occurring just west of the line of the East Range.

The width of both walls was approaching 1.6 m wide at the base, but this narrowed rapidly, and the effective width was 1.4 m. This is comparable with the dimensions of the curtain walls at Wolvesey and at Bishop's Waltham, both of which were two storeys high. It is, however, relatively slight when compared to the walls of other castles in the region, for instance the mid-12th-century curtain wall at Deddington (2 m) or Banbury (3 m), let alone the major castles of the later 12th century, and probably shows that the curtain was intended more for show than for defence against serious attack.

At the north-west corner the curtain wall returns south in a curve, and there is no tower. This is typical of the curtain walls of Norman castles such as Deddington (Ivens 1983, 35–8), and most early Norman castles have relatively low curtain walls that follow strong natural or artificial contours (Cathcart-King 1988, 63). Cathcart-King distinguishes between these castles, typical of the mid-12th century, and those of *c* 1200. The later 12th century saw the introduction of 'scientific fortification' involving straight sides enfiladed by mural towers, often round, at the angles, a process initiated by Henry II in *c* 1168 and adopted by baronial lords from *c* 1185 onwards (Cathcart-King 1988, 77 and

90–93). In the third quarter of the 12th century, however, the most probable date for the building of the Mount House curtain wall, only a few royal castles such as Windsor and Dover show the influence of these new defensive principles, and the Mount House is built in traditional style.

The north gatehouse

The excavation on the north-west included a small part of a gatehouse, believed to be the main entrance to the courtyard. At the gatehouse the curtain wall increased from 1.6 m to 2 m thick, and a wall running back from it at right angles was interpreted as one side of the gatehouse. This square or rectangular gatehouse projected only very slightly from the line of the curtain wall, and appears to have belonged to the class of simple mural towers with a passage running through, similar to examples at Lewes, Lincoln, Ludlow and Portchester (Renn 1968, 224, 233, 236 and 281–3). Excavation did not establish whether the gatehouse was open or enclosed at the rear when first built, but the chamfered plinth found on the south face of the wall probably indicates that it was enclosed. A documentary reference of 1220/1 (Winchester Account Rolls) to *solium supraportam* (a room above the gatehouse) makes it clear that by this time a gatehouse, rather than the outer gate, was certainly enclosed, and of two storeys (Chapter 6, The Environs and the Perimeter Walls).

The excavations did not establish the sequence at the north gate with any certainty. The original access was over an unexcavated causeway between lengths of ditch 588. The curtain wall was clearly constructed in line with this, and therefore may have been built while ditch 588 was still in use, and before the moat. It is equally possible, however, that the moat came before the curtain wall, the causeway being replaced by a short timber bridge. At a later date a projecting wall was added running north into the edge of the moat, and this has been interpreted as part of a stone bridge abutment, and also an extension to the gatehouse (see below). The available excavation area did not resolve whether this was a timber bridge with stone abutments, or a stone bridge, but probably the former. The line of the moat west of the gateway is complicated by the incorporation of the open ditch 588 into its inner side, but it does appear that the moat narrowed at the bridging point. In the absence of excavation this could even indicate that the moat originally ended in line with 588, leaving the causeway in place, and that this was only dug through at a later date, perhaps when the stone abutments were added. The ground radar survey suggested that the moat may have narrowed and shallowed across the north entrance considerably, or may never have cut through the causeway completely (Chapter 5, Geophysical Survey).

At right angles to the bridge abutment wall was a slot running across the entrance along the line of the outer edge of the gatehouse wall. Although no corresponding slot was visible running down the projecting wall in line with the slot across the entrance, nevertheless this has been interpreted tentatively as a slot for a portcullis. Stratigraphically this must be a 13th-century or later addition, and as such agrees with the date of the introduction of a portcullis at other castle sites; only at Castle Rising is there apparently evidence for a portcullis in the mid-12th century in England, whereas these are common after 1200 (Cathcart-King 1988, 64 and 78). Since a portcullis normally lies behind the front of a gatehouse, rather than directly in front, the projecting wall adjacent may have belonged to an extension of the gatehouse, as well as the abutment for a bridge.

Source of the building stone

The source of the freestone for the various manorial buildings appears to have been Taynton stone throughout the medieval period (Chapter 3). Although only a small number of pieces was examined, these include ashlar blocks and other architectural fragments dating from the early 12th century, the late 12th or early 13th century, the late 13th and the 14th centuries. More exotic materials do not appear to have been used. The main building stone, the Jurassic Great Oolite limestone, stretches in a wide belt across the Midlands from Bath to Lincoln. An outcrop of this limestone occurs beneath and to the north-west of Witney, and the stone may have been quarried very locally; the stone for the curtain wall may even have come directly from the construction of the surrounding moat. On the north the moat was cut nearly 2 m into the limestone bedrock; on the east however the moat was dug less than half a metre into the limestone. Allowing for lime for mortar, an approximate calculation suggests that there would have been sufficient limestone to construct a curtain wall at least 2 m high around the whole circuit.

Supplementary material was presumably brought from quarries nearby. Roofing-slates were dug from quarries on the bishop's land in 1247/8, and further quarrying for slates is mentioned in 1305/6, 1311/12, 1319/20, 1326/7 and 1339/40 (Winchester Account Rolls). In the 14th century Corn Street was known as 'Crondall Street', which means Quarry Lane; in the Account Rolls for 1329–30 a payment of 18d was made for digging a ditch *extra Crondelbarr*, and quarries are marked on early maps just beyond the limits of the town in this direction (C. Day pers. comm., Fig. 1.1). It is not known when these quarries were first opened, but they were part of the bishop's estate, and may have been the source of the stone for the 12th-century buildings, as well as for town buildings of later medieval date.

PERIOD 5A

Alterations to the solar tower

The tower block was substantially remodelled at this time. The presence of large quantities of masonry in the backfill of the basement of the Solar Tower,

including segments of two circular column-drums that may have supported stone vaults in the upper floors, certainly suggests that the internal features of the tower were demolished. Weathering was noted by Brian Durham both on the outer curving face and on one of the flat joining faces of several of the column fragments (unpublished draft), which suggested to him that the column was demolished almost to the bottom, and then left open to the elements for some time. Since much of the dumped material backfilling the tower may have derived from a midden, these stones may have been piled in a heap in the open. In either event, the building may well have been unroofed for several years. We can be fairly confident, however, that the tower walls themselves were not demolished to basement level, since after the collapse of the east garderobe block (see below) a massive buttressing wall was built abutting the tower wall on the east side; had the whole of the tower been demolished a more elegant solution to the problem of subsidence would probably have been found.

It is difficult to reconstruct the appearance of the Solar Tower above ground level. There are relatively few decorative fragments from the site as a whole, and this also applies to the stone infill of the tower ground floor. This did include a springer for two arches with angle rolls, possibly from a blind arcade at the top of the tower, but since the stonework does not appear to have fallen in directly from demolition, this may have come from elsewhere in the complex. There are no surviving floors to accompany the walls of the West Block and the walls south of the Solar Tower, and the interim report saw all these as revetment walls for defensive terraces (Durham 1984, 8). The presence, however, of at least one garderobe at the extremity of the west terrace, which appears to have been integral with the rest of the walls, strongly supports the view that these walls were parts of a building.

The stratigraphy south of the Solar Tower is the main evidence for the sequence at this time. It appears that further dumping took place between wall 354 and the tower; the dumped material was cut through when a narrower wall 58 was built on top of wall 354. The dumping between 354 and the Solar Tower clearly shows that the curtain wall was built to at least 2 m in height before the change of plan was decided upon, and the existing tower and garderobe block may have been surrounded by curtain wall 354 for some years before the decision was taken to extend the tower block.

The rise in the level of the surviving top of wall 354 from west to east, and the robbing evidence for its high level further west, show that this wall was partly robbed before wall 58 and the wing walls returning north to the Solar Tower were built. It appears from the 1991 plans, however, that the bulk soil fills of the secondary embanking abutted the wing wall at the west end of wall 58, suggesting that the building of these walls and the process of embanking were interrelated tasks.

The robbing of the curtain wall, rather than its wholesale incorporation into the new building, suggests first that the new building was not intended to be a defensive structure, and secondly that the builders wished to reuse the stone in the new construction. The sequence appears to have been to build the eastern retaining wall south from the Solar Tower to wall 354, then dump progressively westwards. Before the south-west corner of the Solar Tower was reached, robbing of wall 354 began, and a narrower wall (58) was constructed in its place. This wall returned north (as wall 257) to the corner of the Solar Tower, and then west as wall 256 to form the south wall of the West Block. The dumped soils west of wall 257 all slope down away from the line of wall 354, clearly showing that this wall continued in use west of 257. It is not known whether this stretch of wall continued to act as a curtain wall to its full height, or whether the lower part was simply kept as a retaining wall for the dumping to the north.

The southern extension to the Solar Tower converted it into a virtual square, 15.8 m east-west by 15 m north-south. The southern wall was only 0.8 m wide, but surviving remains at other Winchester manors such as Bishop's Waltham show that this would have been quite enough for a two-storey addition to the tower, though not perhaps for three storeys.

The West Block

The new south wall of the West Block lay slightly south of the corner of the Solar Tower, another indication that the southern extension to the Solar Tower was not simply a low retaining wall for the embanking. The West Block was 12 m wide north to south and was traced for 7.5 m west of the tower. This was probably its full extent, as a garderobe was found draining westwards from the north-west corner, and another is suspected at the south-west corner. The north-west garderobe projected northwards from the main West Block. Both garderobes presumably led via culverts to the moat on the south. Central to the building was a staircase rising from ground level on the west, presumably to a door at first floor level in the Solar Tower. The projected height of this doorway is approximately 4 m above the exterior ground level (assumed to be level with the natural clay at the westernmost limit of excavation within the West Block).

The privies indicate that there were chambers, probably wardrobes, at first-floor level either side of the stair. On the south side of the stair was a parallel wall, presumably to support the first floor and enclose the southern chamber; there was no corresponding wall on the north side, where it is suggested that a wooden ladder or stair descended to a small basement room. The small room just inside the entrance on the north side, however, had a stone barrel-vault, and a similar vault may have supported the first floor between this and the small room on the north.

This building could be seen as a forebuilding of sorts, but was clearly not defensive, because the stair rises at right-angles to the tower, an unusual arrangement most closely paralleled by the 13th-century stair to the Checker building at Abingdon Abbey (Wood 1965, 330). The dimensions of the stair are narrow, as is common with internal stairs, and suggest that it was only of two storeys. Blair has commented that the privies either side of the stair make it unlikely that this was the principal entrance to the tower, and that it was probably a service entrance. This interpretation fits well with the reconstruction of the layout of the manor based on documentary evidence, which places the kitchen and service buildings in the south-west corner of the manor (see Fig. 6.1). The vaulted room and semi-basement north of the stair may then plausibly be interpreted as store-rooms, perhaps even a wine-cellar.

While nothing of the internal arrangements of the enlarged tower survive, the fact that the West Block staircase, and thus the first floor entry into the tower, is central to the original rather than the enlarged tower, probably means that the south wall of the original tower survived at least to first floor level, the southern extension being used as either a gallery or additional smaller chambers. There were presumably doors at the north-west and south-west corners of the original tower leading into the chambers north and south of the stair and the privies beyond. The unequal division of the tower interior, presumably between the Great Chamber and lesser ones, is not uncommon; other examples include Portchester and Castle Rising (Renn 1968, 281–5 and 295–8). Parallels for the complex overall, however, are difficult to find.

At the south-east corner of the tower a corresponding wall to the southern wall of the West Block is indicated running eastwards from wall 417 by a robber trench 415. This symmetrical arrangement may indicate that wall 415 was contemporary with the southern extension to the tower and with the West Block. It may even imply that the east garderobe block was still standing when the enlargement of Period 5a began, and that the intention was to produce a symmetrical building with both east and west projections from the tower, so that the plan of the tower and East Range as a whole was that of a T, or possibly a cross. If so, this extension must have been planned to extend further than the east wall of the garderobe block, since wall 72, which continued the line of the end wall of the garderobe block southwards, was clearly too insubstantial to have been an external wall. Since both walls 366 and 367 were 1 m wide, this was perhaps intended to be a long thin chamber bounded by walls 415, 366 and 367.

There is no evidence to show whether such a building was ever completed. The infilling of the east garderobe block, which occurred at the very end of the 12th century, must have taken place soon after the completion of the West Block, if not during its construction, but was clearly before the start of the Winchester Account Rolls in 1208–9. The mention of the construction of a new garderobe for the king in that year, however, may indicate that the east garderobe block had only recently fallen into disuse.

The interim report interpreted the collapse of the east garderobe block as due to subsidence into a large feature immediately outside, either a cess pit (Durham 1984, 5) or possibly an early moat (Durham 1984, 6–8). An arrangement including both culverts and an external cess pit, however, is unlikely, since garderobe pits are normally dug at the bottom of the garderobe shaft (as at Old Sarum) and culverts lead either onto naturally low-lying ground (as at Wolvesey) or into an adjacent moat. It is possible that an early moat lies hidden beneath the later terracing, but there is certainly no evidence of subsidence of the chapel into such a feature, so it would presumably have dated to Period 4b at the earliest.

The collapse of the garderobe block is more likely to have resulted from a combination of two factors: the construction of its east wall over the earlier robber trench 344 and the weight of soil in the compartments west of the garderobe chamber, causing the east wall to subside and fall outwards.

Water supply

Due to its situation several hundred metres from the nearest stream or river the manor probably will have needed to obtain water from cisterns or wells from the very first. Wells on this site need only have been some 3 m deep because of the high water table. A well has tentatively been identified in the angle north-west of the tower and East Range; a well house was found at Wolvesey in a comparable position in the north-west angle of the courtyard adjacent to the West Hall (chamber block). This well, however, is unlikely to have been the original source of water as it cut several courtyard layers and is dated to the late 12th century by a sherd of Fabric 3 found in the stone lining. There may, therefore, have been another well within the curia.

At many sites a well in the courtyard was positioned close to the kitchen and other service buildings, as probably occurred at Castle Acre (Kenyon 1990, 160), and the Winchester episcopal pipe rolls refer to a wall between the bakehouse and the well in 1211/12. This linking wall was not located by the excavations, unless it was the north wall of the West Block, but as the stratigraphy was not completely excavated in this area the wall may survive lower down. Alternatively this reference may be to another well. A reference to the roofing of a 'garderobe next to the well' in 1320/1 does however appear to refer to the excavated structure (see also Chapter 6).

The position of the excavated well may have been related to a probable change of use of the ground floor of the East Range during Period 5, since after the loss of access to the tower the addition of at least one hearth against the wall at ground level (310) may indicate that this building became a secondary

kitchen. The fire implied by burnt deposit 310 was presumably served by a projecting stone or wooden hood, and the flue could have been recessed into wall 9 higher up.

The addition of a large masonry block (25) opposite external feature 27 deserves further consideration. Feature 27 was interpreted as a chimney stack, similar to masonry 606 projecting from the North Range behind surviving wall-fireplace 576. The absence of any projecting or recessed fireplace and flue within wall 9, however, led Durham to the view that this was solely for a wall fireplace at first floor level (Durham unpublished draft). At a later date projecting masonry 25 was added, with evidence of burning both of its stones and of wall 9 adjacent, and, furthermore, there was also substantial burning against wall 9 further north. For neither of these is there any surviving evidence of a recessed fireplace or flue within wall 9. It is just possible that 25 was a fireplace of the early type found at such sites as King John's House, Southampton (Wood 1965, 261), which was built upon a projecting rectangular block of masonry several courses deep, and was not recessed far into the wall. The construction of structure 25 is described in Period 5b (early 13th century), but the dating of the internal developments in the East Range is not well-defined, and this structure could have been built somewhat earlier, as it seals only 12th-century material, and is abutted by a layer containing a probably late-12th-century (or later) sherd. The survival, however, of structure 25 nearly 0.5 m high above its chamfered plinth without any trace of a recess makes this interpretation doubtful. Alternatively, it could have replaced an earlier fireplace against wall 9 (hence the burning on the wall and the burnt stones built into 25), and have been an internal pier for a first floor fireplace, as originally interpreted by Durham. This interpretation would also imply that the East Range had a wooden first floor, not one supported on a stone vault.

The ground floor of the East Range is probably the cellar referred to in the Winchester pipe rolls in 1220/1, and as the 'great cellar' in 1248/9; no underground buildings of any size were found by the excavations, and documentary references to cellars in medieval buildings that still survive in Oxford show that this often simply meant the ground floor of a building in which the principal apartments were at first floor level (Munby pers. comm.).

PERIODS 5 AND 6

The North Range

The excavated evidence suggests that it was soon after the construction of a curtain wall, towards the end of the 12th century, that the development of a courtyard plan with the manorial buildings grouped around the perimeter began. The North Range was a long and relatively narrow building (15.2 m by 4 m internally) constructed against the curtain wall in the late 12th or very early 13th century (Fig. 7.4). It was a domestic building of relatively high status, since it had a wall fireplace, and presumably was, therefore, of two storeys from the outset. The fireplace was decorated with jamb-shafts, which presumably supported an arch similar to surviving examples at Castle Hedingham and Rochester (Wood 1965, 261). Unusually the base of the fireplace was semicircular, and appears to have been constructed from fragments of a large column. It is possible that this was related to the column parts of which were found within the infill of the Solar Tower, and the chronology suggested by the pottery would certainly allow a late-12th-century date for both the infilling of the Solar Tower and the construction of the North Range.

At the west end the range was adjacent to a very large and deep pit. Although the limited excavation did not reveal very steep sides to this feature, it is plausibly interpreted as a garderobe pit, used from a garderobe probably corbelled out from the west end of the range at first-floor level. Dump layers within the abandoned building in the later 13th and earlier 14th centuries included fragments of painted window glass which were from windows glazed in the late 12th or early 13th century, and another fragment, apparently from the wall fireplace 576 itself, may indicate that the glass had fallen from the windows of the North Range. A large number of roof-tiles was recovered from the lower dump layers and from the moat immediately north of the building, and Duncan suggests (see Chapter 3, Tile Report) that these, which were all of a limited range of fabrics, came from the roof of the range itself.

This building was entered at the south-east corner adjacent to the gatehouse, as a fragment of surviving wall, an external threshold and a drainage gully show. Access to the upper floor may either have been at the west end, where the floors were largely destroyed by later alterations to the building, or via an external stair between the range and the gatehouse. The latter is most likely; this narrow area was too small to form a useful room, and was later infilled to support a stone stair. The succession of mortar surfaces in this narrow area, and the occasional associated postholes seen in section, probably formed the base from which a wooden stair was constructed. The Winchester episcopal pipe rolls mention a room above the gate as early as 1220/1 (see Chapter 6), to which this stair would also have provided access.

Since the doorway to the North Range was close to the gatehouse the function of this building was probably closely connected with the traffic passing through the adjacent inner gate of the curia. The constable or bailiff, who was responsible for security and for the running of the manor in the lord's absence, usually lived above or adjacent to the gate (McNeill 1992, 60), and the bailiff's chamber seems the most plausible explanation for the use of this building.

Very few other such buildings have been excavated, but a freestanding building of similar proportions in use in the 12th and 13th centuries was excavated at Banbury Castle (Rodwell 1976, 103–8 and Fig. 8), and several such buildings were found at

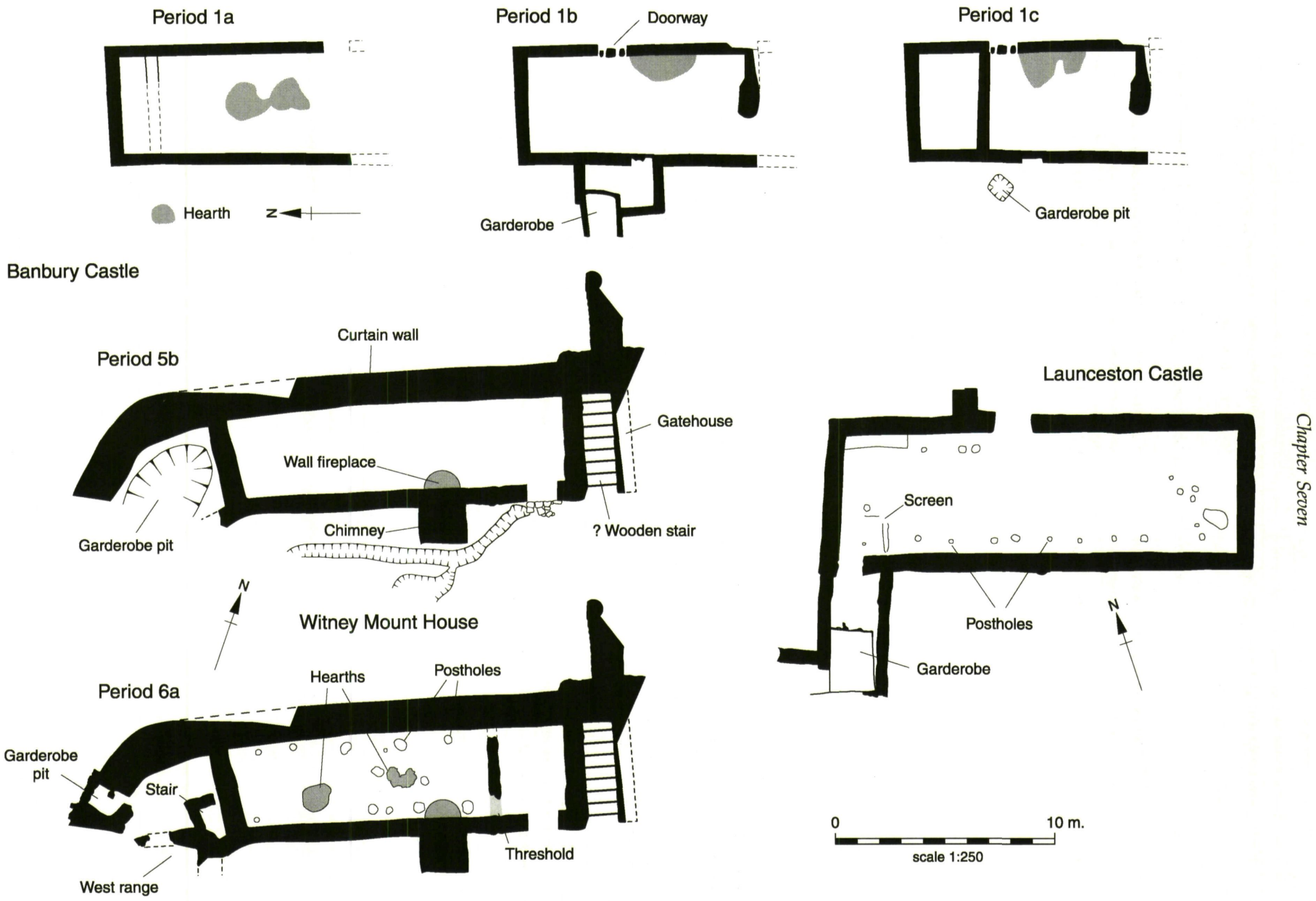

Figure 7.4 Plans of the North Range in Periods 5b and 6a with comparative plans of contemporary lodgings and other domestic ranges at Banbury Castle and Launceston.

Launceston Castle, Cornwall (Saunders 1977, 134–6). At Banbury the building was 4.6 m wide internally and at least 10.7 m long (Fig. 7.4), and was situated parallel to the curtain wall in the south-west corner of the Bishop's palace. This building may have been primary (i.e. mid 12th century), but dating evidence was slight. The two 12th-century buildings at Launceston, both close to the gatehouse in the bailey, were 5 m–6 m wide and at least 12 m long. None of these buildings had a first floor, as there were central hearths or burnt areas, though at Banbury the hearth was later moved up against one long wall. At both sites these buildings, interpreted as lodgings by Kenyon (1990, 131–33) were later divided by a partition wall into hall and chamber. The latter also had a garderobe added, as did the 13th-century successor to the 12th-century buildings at Launceston, Hall G (Fig. 7.4).

At Mount House the intense burning of the mortar floor surrounding the wall fireplace and adjacent wall in the North Range suggests a conflagration at some stage, the damage from which led to changes in its function and status. Overlying the burning (and not itself reddened) a partition wall (601) was constructed, dividing off a small room 3.2 m wide at the east end. This wall does not appear to have run right across the building, and there may have been continuing access to the main room at the south end, though the gap was only 0.7 m wide. It is alternatively possible that it was at this stage that the garderobe pit was infilled and another door created in the west wall, from which access to the main chamber was obtained.

Shortly after the construction of the partition wall the upper floor of the building appears to have been in danger of collapse. This is the preferred interpretation of the series of postholes cut through the mortar floor of the range along the north and south sides, the two lines of postholes placed not opposite one another, but staggered so as to support diagonal bracing timbers beneath the suspended upper floor.

Other interpretations of these postholes are possible. At Launceston Castle Hall G also underwent several changes of use, and in its final phase had similar rows of postholes close to the long walls. These were interpreted as holding uprights for fitted benches (Saunders 1977, 134–5 and Fig. 49). At the Mount House, however, such benching would have extended for virtually the whole length of both long walls of the main chamber, making the room very narrow. Furthermore, the chamber overall is not of the same scale as the Launceston example (11.6 m by 4 m compared with 18 m long and nearly 6 m wide), which was interpreted as a courtroom.

The postholes might have held scaffold supports during repairs. This is consistent with the evidence that these postholes were deliberately backfilled with vertical limestone slabs nearly flush with the mortar floor, and in some cases were surfaced with a skim of mortar. The distance of the postholes from the walls (less than 0.6 m), however, appears rather narrow for a scaffold. The mortar patching seen overlying the infilled postholes was also found towards the west end of the building where the main mortar floors had already been destroyed.

While it is possible that the wall fireplace went out of use temporarily during the life of the postholes, subsequently it appears to have been in use again as charcoal from the fireplace overlay the adjacent postholes after they had been infilled. It seems unlikely, however, that the doorway between wall 601 and 533 would have been used for long while fireplace 576 was in use, as these are in close proximity. Perhaps, therefore, 576 went quickly out of use following the removal of the posts, repairs to the floor and the introduction of central hearths 664 and 635.

Central hearths imply that the first floor had gone, as presumably had the garderobe pit, and suggest that the building was no longer of high status. The date of these changes is sometime in the mid 13th century. Hereafter the bailiff may have occupied the small chamber, though this would imply a considerable reduction in status, and more likely he lived elsewhere, though it is not until the late 14th century that the account rolls locate him in a tower at the end of the hall. Two internal hearths in the North Range may indicate that the main room was used as a kitchen, perhaps to serve the West Range, whose construction was contemporaneous with the infilling of the large garderobe pit, and which was linked to the North Range by a covered porch. Modification and change of function is a common characteristic of medieval buildings, as is shown by the Launceston building Hall G, which was first a hall, then a workshop and lastly a courtroom (Saunders 1977, 134). The small room survived the disuse and final destruction of the rest of the range, presumably acting as a guardroom or gatekeeper's chamber.

The barton in the 12th and early 13th centuries

Close to Farm Mill Lane 1990 evaluation Trench 4 revealed evidence of a stone building and a lime kiln dating between the late 11th and 13th centuries. These most probably belong to the barton of the excavated 12th- and early 13th-century manor. The lime-kiln may have been part of one of the major building campaigns of the 12th century.

The extension of the south and east terraces

The stratigraphic narrative (Chapter 2) provides only limited evidence for the date of the extension of the terraces to their present limits. A few stratigraphic clues are provided by the records, but these are among the more doubtful of the recorded relationships, and not enough excavation was carried out in these areas to establish the sequence with confidence. Some of the surviving walls themselves, such as that overlying the east-west wall containing the postern south-east of the Solar Tower, are clearly significantly later than the late 12th/early 13th century, but these may be rebuilds of earlier walls.

Along the outside of the eastern boundary walls vertical straight joints edged with ashlar blocks are visible at intervals. In the interim report (Durham 1984, 10) it was suggested that originally there had been a series of square towers along this side, which were later converted into a straight boundary wall by the addition of linking sections of wall between the tower fronts, and infilling behind. Sondages dug alongside the existing east boundary wall (Trenches S1 and S2), however, found no corresponding straight joints on the inside of the wall, and only post-medieval deposits abutting the upper part of these walls. These trenches, however, did not reach the bottom of the walls, whose date is therefore still uncertain.

The tower, its southern extension and the stepped southern terrace wall are all parallel (see Fig. 2.1). This need only imply that the tower building was still extant when the stepped boundary was constructed, but a composite of the original excavation plans and 1984 architect's plan suggested corresponding alignments between excavated medieval walls and several of the existing walls of the stepped southern and south-eastern boundaries. It appears, for instance, that wall 350 is in line with one of the corners of the present Mount House boundary, and the north-south return of this corner is in line with the existing boundary wall some way north of the chapel. This may simply be coincidence, but if not, the only date at which these alignments could have been laid out is before (or during) the construction of the chapel.

Documentary evidence does not shed much light on the question; the stepped boundary appears both on the Blenheim estate map of 1814–16 and on Buck's illustration dated *c* 1729, but is not shown on the copy of the 1662 map of Witney (Fig. 6.5), though this may simply be due to the level of detail felt appropriate to a map of this scale.

PERIODS 7 AND 8

The rebuilding of the northern curtain wall

The rebuilding of the northern curtain wall in the late 14th century was part of a series of documented repairs or rebuildings of parts of the curtain wall during that century. As such it simply could have been necessary refurbishment of walls in poor repair, and need not be seen as deliberate strengthening, although the resulting wall was 0.5 m wider, and now had a more defensible battered outer face. It seems likely that the original curtain wall was demolished to foundation level on the south inner side, but the smooth inner face of the surviving batter on the north suggests that this was the cast of something: logically, the original wall retained to a height of at least 1 m. The thickening of the curtain wall, therefore, may simply have been the cheapest method of repairing the existing wall.

The 14th century was, however, a time of particular political and social turmoil, and Thompson (1998, 158) has commented upon an increasingly hostile attitude towards the church in later medieval times, which made security increasingly important. Locally discontent at the control of Abingdon by the abbot of St Mary's had resulted in the storming of the abbey in 1327 (Townsend 1970, 31–6 citing Wood 1792, 409–11), and as a result the abbot had a moat dug within the precinct as an additional line of defence. At Mount House, therefore, the widening of the curtain wall on the north side facing the town may also have had the intention of reinforcing the defences, or at least giving the impression of strength. The fact that the moat was not emptied, however, shows that defence was not the primary purpose.

The east range in the later medieval period

This building continued in use until well into the 15th century. During the later 13th and 14th centuries the floor appears to have been replaced numerous times, more frequently towards the north end than the south. This is probably related simply to proximity to the presumed doorway into this building, particularly once the doorway linking the range to the tower had been blocked, and need not imply that the building was subdivided. Eventually the walls were repointed and replastered, and a new door was inserted through the west wall, but this too does not appear to have been due to partitioning of the interior, as the stone kerb added around the edge of the interior (Fig. 2.6, 818 and Fig. 2.21, 813) appears to have extended throughout the excavated part of the building.

The purpose of this kerb is unclear. While just wide enough to have been used as a path, its position makes this unlikely. It is possible that, since the floors were either of mortar or clay, both of which wore away upon brushing, it was laid down to prevent the removal of the floor next to the walls, the worry being that this would expose and weaken the foundations of the building. Exactly the reverse in fact occurred, since the late medieval clay floors were eroded in the middle, and accumulated up against the side of the walls. The change from mortar to clay floors is not dated, but must have taken place during the 15th or even possibly the 16th century, and probably reflects the reduced circumstances of the manor after the buildings had been leased out at the end of the 15th century.

The other buildings of the manor

Excavation revealed little about the rest of the manor. The excavated north end of the West Range appears to represent a narrower building than the North Range, which might suggest that this was not domestic, and instead perhaps a stable, but the presence of a garderobe just outside suggests that it did incorporate domestic functions. Possibly it was a stable with sleeping accommodation for servants above; alternatively the excavated building could have been an annex to a larger building further south, as the geophysical survey might suggest.

The study of air photographs and the geophysical survey (Chapter 5) were undertaken in the hope of discovering the plan of the West Range and identifying where other buildings were located on the west side of the courtyard. The large linear response identified down the west edge of the site (Fig. 5.4 anomaly a) may well represent a continuation of the line of the medieval curtain wall, though the possibility that this is simply the footings of the present curtain wall cannot be discounted entirely. Due to service runs, the immediate continuation of the West Range southwards was not clear, and the tentative outline of a building identified further south (Fig. 5.4 anomaly b) is at an angle to the probable line of the curtain wall. If genuine this is likely to belong to the late medieval period (see Chapter 5), but it may be that the resulting outline is composed of a number of phases of construction on different alignments, or is due to differential survival of stonework underground.

The maximum area indicated by the geophysical survey that might be taken up by a north-south building in this area is only some 16 m by 7 m (or at the most generous estimate 10 m). John Blair's reconstruction of the manorial layout based upon documentary evidence (Chapter 6) would place the hall in this approximate position. If this is the site of the hall, it was smaller than would be predicted from the scale of the other manorial buildings.

The large wall shown by the geophysical survey running east-west close to the boundary of the cottage in the south-west corner of the site is probably also ancient (Fig. 5.4 anomaly c). None of the Ordnance Survey maps, nor the Tithe maps of Curbridge and Witney and the estate map of 1814–16, show any boundary along this line. The 19th-century drawing by Langford (Fig. 6.5), reputedly copied from a survey of 1662, is at rather too small a scale to be certain, but also appears to lack a wall in this position.

John Blair has placed the services in this area of the manor, and the line of his alure linking the Great Chamber to the services corresponds well with that of the wall found by resistivity. Although several of the possible walls leading off to the south could be interpreted as forming bays of even width (*c* 4.5 m), they are not all evenly spaced, and at the west end the resistivity survey could be interpreted as showing two parallel walls very close together. A group of buildings adjoining a passage would therefore be a possible interpretation. Given the remaining uncertainties about the documentary evidence, however, the possibility that this was the north wall of the hall, lying next to the Great Chamber and opposite the north gate, cannot entirely be discounted. In this case the resistivity survey (Fig. 5.4) could indicate a group of smaller service buildings on the west.

The only other excavated building is the tower or garderobe in the north-east corner of the site. This remains undated, and thus very difficult to interpret. It presumably lay at the north end of a range of chambers, and is best seen as a garderobe. The number of chambers indicated in the documentary record (see Chapter 6), most of which would have to be accommodated on the east side of the curia, perhaps suggest that by the later medieval period there was a continuous conglomeration of buildings stretching from the Solar Tower on the south-east to this garderobe.

PERIOD 9

The demolition of the manor

The archaeological evidence appears to indicate two phases of demolition, a limited area associated with coins of the mid 17th century and the remainder dated by pottery to the later 18th century. The earlier phase coincides with the period of the Civil War when the town was occupied at different times by both royal and parliamentary armies, and Mount House was owned by Speaker Lenthall of the Long Parliament thereafter. Damage was common at this time; Godstow Abbey near Oxford, for instance, was damaged in the Civil War of the 1640s and henceforth plundered for building stone (Ganz 1972, 150–159). During his ownership of the Mount House, Lenthall built himself a house at Burford, for which he pulled down much of Burford Priory (Monk 1894), and may also have demolished buildings at Witney (only 10 miles distant) for the same purpose.

Although the 19th-century copy of a 17th-century map of Witney (Fig. 6.5) shows no trace of the ruins, the archaeological evidence for the main demolition of the medieval buildings in the later 18th century is unequivocal. This demolition is not securely identified in the documentary record, but the archaeological evidence is consistent with Crossley's suggestion (see Chapter 1) that it can be identified with the alterations made by James Gray in 1757, shortly after the lease of the manor was sold to the dukes of Marlborough. There are no other occasions suggested by the documents of the later 18th century, and the buildings had certainly vanished by the time that the estate map of 1814–16 was drawn (Bodleian MS C17:49).