

Summary

Excavations carried out at the Mount House, Witney, between 1984 and 1992 located the well-preserved remains of a Norman moated stone manor house of the bishops of Winchester, of which the north-west and south-east parts of the inner curia were excavated. A massive tower and attached range and a probable curtain wall were constructed in the first half of the 12th century, and a chapel and raised terrace added in the mid-12th century. Subsequently a central pier was built inside the tower, a garderobe block was added on the east side, and the raised terrace was extended. During the latter half of the 12th century the basement of the tower was infilled and was embanked on three sides, further rooms and garderobes being added upon the embanking. The whole complex was surrounded by a moat and curtain wall. A two-storey range with wall fireplace was added against the gatehouse and curtain wall on the north-west, and in the 13th century this was supplemented by a West Range and a garderobe at the north-west corner.

The Winchester Account Rolls dealing with the buildings have been studied for the period AD 1208–1396, and selectively thereafter until 1495, enabling a

conjectural reconstruction of the layout of the manor during the later medieval period. During this period alterations were made to the excavated buildings, and lengths of the curtain wall were rebuilt, but the Account Rolls suggest that after the mid-13th century new building mainly took the form of additions rather than major rebuilding, the late-12th-century manor remaining largely intact. Coins in robber trenches indicate that some buildings were demolished during the English Civil War, though additional building also shows that some of the buildings were being maintained. The remains were systematically demolished in the mid-18th century, and a new house built.

The site remained in the ownership of the Bishops of Winchester until 1862, when it was purchased by the 6th Duke of Marlborough. The present house was built c 1904. Following the excavations of 1984 the site was scheduled as an Ancient Monument (now SAM 21834), and in 1992 the exposed remains of the tower were given a protective cover. The site was purchased by Oxfordshire County Council in 1993, and the tower is on display to the public.

Résumé

Les fouilles menées à Mount House, Witney, entre 1984 et 1991 ont permis de localiser les vestiges bien préservés du manoir roman en pierres, entouré de douves, des évêques de Winchester. Les parties nord-ouest et sud-est de l'enceinte intérieure ont été fouillées. Une tour massive et une aile qui lui était attachée, ainsi qu'un probable mur de courtine furent construits dans la première moitié du XIIe siècle, et une chapelle et terrasse exhaussée furent ensuite ajoutées vers le milieu du XIIe siècle. Par la suite, on construisit un pilier central à l'intérieur de la tour, on ajouta une latrine du côté est et la terrasse fut agrandie. Au cours de la seconde moitié du XIIe siècle, on remblaya le sous-sol de la tour, dont trois côtés furent garnis d'un talus, au sommet duquel on bâtit des salles et des latrines supplémentaires. L'ensemble était entouré par des douves et une courtine. Une aile à deux étages avec une cheminée murale fut ajoutée contre la porterie et la courtine au nord-ouest, et au cours du XIIIe siècle cet ensemble fut complété par une aile occidentale et une latrine dans l'angle nord-ouest.

Les rôles des comptes de Winchester concernant les bâtiments ont été étudiés pour la période 1208–1396, de façon sélective après cette date jusqu'à 1495. Cette étude a permis une reconstitution conjecturale des dispositions du manoir durant la

période médiévale tardive. A cette époque, des altérations ont été faites aux bâtiments fouillés, et des tronçons du mur de courtine furent reconstruits, mais les rôles des comptes suggèrent qu'après le milieu du XIIIe siècle les modifications du bâtiment prirent essentiellement la forme d'additions plutôt que de reconstructions majeures, le manoir de la fin du XIIe siècle demeurant dans l'ensemble intact. Des pièces de monnaies, découvertes dans des tranchées dérobées, indiquent que certains bâtiments ont été démolis au cours de la guerre civile anglaise, bien que des constructions supplémentaires montrent également que certains des bâtiments étaient entretenus. Les vestiges furent démolis de manière systématique au milieu du XVIIIe siècle, alors que fut élevée une nouvelle maison.

Le site demeura la propriété des Evêques de Winchester jusqu'en 1862, date à laquelle il fut acquis par le sixième duc de Marlborough. La maison actuelle fut bâtie aux alentours de 1904. A la suite des fouilles de 1984, le site fut classé comme Ancien Monument (maintenant SAM-Scheduled Ancient Monument-21834), et en 1992 les vestiges exposés de la tour recevaient une couverture protectrice. Le site fut acquis par le Conseil du Comté d'Oxfordshire en 1993, et la tour est désormais exposée au public.

Zusammenfassung

Bei Ausgrabungen die zwischen 1984 und 1992 im Grundstück von Mount House Witney ausgeführt wurden, entdeckte man die gut erhaltenen Überreste eines aus Stein konstruierten, romanesquen Herrenhauses, dass von einem Wassergraben umgeben war und dass die Bischöfe von Winchester besitzten, wovon nordwestliche und suedöstliche Teile des inneren Hofes (inner curia) ausgegraben wurden. Ein massiver Turm mit angeschlossenem Reihenquartier und einer wahrscheinlicher Ringmauer wurden in der ersten Hälfte des 12. Jahrhunderts errichtet. Eine Kapelle und eine erhöhte Terrasse wurden Mitte des 12. Jahrhunderts dazugefügt. Ein zentraler Stützpfiler wurde später innerhalb des Turmes errichtet, Klosettammern wurden an der Ostseite hinzugefügt, und die erhöhte Terrasse wurde erweitert. Während der späteren Hälfte des 12. Jahrhunderts wurde das Kellergeschoss des Turmes aufgefüllt und auf drei Seiten eingeböschet, weitere Räume und Klosettammern wurden auf der Böschung errichtet. Die gesamte Anlage war von einem Wassergraben und einer Ringmauer umgeben. Eine lange zweistöckige Gebäudefassade mit offenem Wandkamin wurde an der nordwestlichen Seite an das Pförtnerhaus und der Ringmauer angebaut. Im 13. Jahrhundert wurde diese durch weitere Bauten an der westlichen Ringmauer vergrössert und ebenso durch ein Klosett an der nordwestlichen Ecke.

Das sich mit den Gebäuden befassenden Winchester Register wurde für den Zeitraum von

AD 1208-1396 studiert, und danach selektiv bis 1495. Dies ermöglichte eine mutmassliche Rekonstruktion der Anlage des Herrenhauses im späteren Mittelalter. Während dieses Zeitraumes, wurden Änderungen an den ausgegrabenen Gebäuden durchgeführt, und die Ringmauer wurde teils wieder aufgebaut. Doch das Register lässt darauf schliessen, dass nach Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts neue Bauarbeiten anstelle von wesentlichen Umbauten eher als Zubauten erschienen, und somit hervorgeht, dass das Herrenhaus aus dem 12. Jahrhundert grossenteils intakt blieb. Münzen die man in Gräben fand, deuten darauf hin, dass einige Gebäude während des Englischen Bürgerkrieges demoliert, jedoch andere Gebäude durch zusätzliche Bauarbeiten instand gehalten wurden. Die Überreste wurden Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts systematisch demoliert, und anstelle derer ein neues Haus errichtet.

Das Grundstück verblieb bis 1862 im Besitz der Bischöfe von Winchester, wonach es vom 6. Herzog von Marlborough gekauft wurde. Das gegenwärtige Haus wurde c1904 gebaut. Den Ausgrabungen von 1984 folgend, wurde das Grundstück als ein Ancient Monument (jetzt SAM Nummer 21834) verzeichnet, und 1992 wurden die ungeschützten Überreste des Turmes durch eine Abdeckung geschützt. Das Grundstück wurde 1993 von Oxford County Council gekauft, und der Turm ist nun der Öffentlichkeit zugänglich gemacht worden.

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The late Neil Robson, first as District Treasurer and later Chief Executive of West Oxfordshire District Council, and his colleagues John Sykes (Chief Planning Officer) and Mike Abbey (District Solicitor), were prominent in the negotiations to preserve the site from development and ensure that the finds were transferred to the ownership of the County Museum. As local MP, the then Home Secretary Douglas Hurd lent his support to the scheduling of the site, and later local councillor Dr Margaret Ware, OAU director Ian Burrow and County Archaeologist John Steane lobbied tirelessly for the protection of the site as a Property in Care. Brian Davison, Inspector acting for English Heritage Properties in Care, was of great assistance through the later stages.

The site passed from Crest Homes to West Oxfordshire District Council, who sold it on to the Thames and Chiltern Tourist Board. Their refurbishment of the Mount House itself led to a Public Open Weekend in 1988, for which Chris Moxon, Town Clerk of Witney (already contracted to look after the grounds) was very supportive in creating safe access for the public. Jane Sharman of English Heritage led the negotiations that followed with the Board about the display of the remains, Caryl Stanley designed the prototype protective cover, and Nicholas Redding supervised the design. Peter Kendall of English Heritage approved the 1991 excavations in advance of the construction of the protective cover, and as project architect Jaqui Allen made adjustments to the design in the light of the further discoveries.

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Structure of the report

This report contains the results of excavations, survey work and documentary research relating to the Mount House at Witney. Due to the circumstances of the excavations, survey was undertaken only after the excavations had been completed, in an attempt to shed light on the unexcavated parts of the building complex. The post-excavation analysis has relied largely upon existing documentary work, supplementing this with detailed research on only one particular aspect of the medieval Winchester Pipe Rolls, the Building Accounts. The order in which the work was undertaken, and the scope of the different aspects, has also affected the order in which the information is presented.

Chapter 1 describes the geology and archaeological background to the area followed by a summary of the manorial history. This is taken from pre-existing documentary research, but including an abbreviated post-medieval history of the site (currently being

prepared for the Victoria County History of Oxfordshire) up until 1983. The narrative continues with a summary of the discovery of the medieval remains and the story of their preservation and eventual display. This chapter concludes with the Aims and Scope of this report.

Chapters 2 to 4 contain the stratigraphic narrative, the finds and environmental reports. Chapter 5 follows with the survey work carried out on the unexcavated parts of the curia, and Chapter 6 then considers the Building Accounts of the Winchester Pipe Rolls for Witney, and the evidence of the post-medieval maps and drawings, in relation to the excavated and surveyed remains. Chapter 7 discusses the excavated (and surveyed) remains and places them in the context of contemporary medieval developments, and Chapter 8 discusses the wider context of selected aspects of the results.

Frontispiece: The Solar Tower and East Garderobe Block looking south-west