

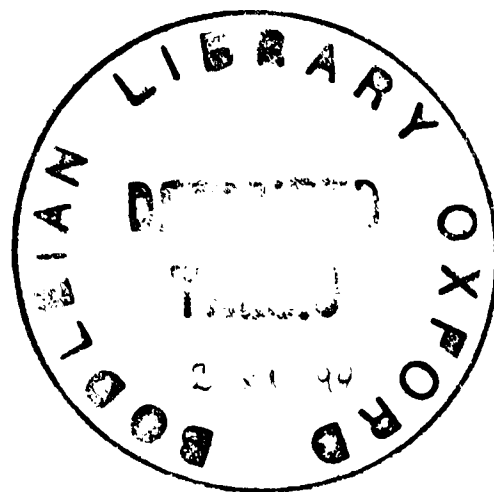
**THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT
OF ENGLISH MEDIEVAL
TOWNHOUSES
OPERATING COMMERCIALY
ON TWO STOREYS**

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THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH MEDIEVAL TOWNHOUSES OPERATING COMMERCIALY ON TWO STOREYS

Roland B. Harris. Hertford College. D. Phil. Trinity Term 1994

-- Short abstract --

Over the last thirty years the study of the English medieval townhouse has not developed on a par with medieval archaeology, or urban history. This thesis combines the evidence of standing buildings, archaeological excavation, antiquarian records, and documentary sources, to reconsider the form of townhouses used in the distributive trades, and, in particular, it examines the evidence for the origins of townhouses operating commercially on two storeys (split-level townhouses), and their relationship to the raised walkways of the Chester Rows.

The Romanesque townhouse in England has not been the subject of original research since the 1930s, so in the early parts of the thesis the corpus of evidence is sorted into broad categories: the urban manor-like property; the stone-built chamber block at the rear of a timber-built range on the streetfront; the grand suburban house; the commercial townhouse on the streetfront (the ground-level townhouse); the split-level warehouse; and the split-level townhouse.

The twelfth-century origins of the split-level townhouse are examined, and it is clear that prototypical or even fully developed examples of the split-level townhouse exist as early as their ground-level counterparts. Despite a general dearth of early thirteenth-century buildings, it can be seen that by the mid to late thirteenth century, the split-level townhouse was dominant in the principal streets of English towns, almost to the total exclusion of other house types. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the split-level design was adapted to the highly commercial and continuously built-up streets and the unusual topography of Chester, so that the upper-level shops were linked by a raised gallery.

Although split-level townhouses have proved elusive on the continent, examples are known in the Zähringen towns of modern Switzerland: several of these towns have also developed elevated walkways. There can be little doubt that the split-level townhouse and its variants were the result of commercial pressure, and an insatiable demand, not found again after the early to mid fourteenth century, for numerous small-scale retail units and undercrofts.

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH MEDIEVAL TOWNHOUSES
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-- Long abstract --

In the last thirty years the study of the medieval townhouse has been neglected, whereas historical research, such as that at Winchester and Cheapside, London, has advanced considerably. This neglect is of concern, since the townhouse used for selling was central to the function of the medieval town. Moreover, documentary sources are of limited use for the period before the late thirteenth century, and the results of excavations are hardly intelligible in the absence of comparable analysis of their standing counterparts. The most recent and thought-provoking publication on the subject of medieval townhouses is Patrick Faulkner's article of 1966,¹ in which he suggests that townhouses with shops on two storeys (split-level townhouses) were the norm in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: he is the first to consider a specialized urban house type at an early date. Developing his idea, Faulkner postulates that many of these split-level townhouses had raised galleries across their façades to facilitate access to the upper level, and that the galleried houses of the Chester Rows are simply conjoined examples of this type, unique only in their survival. There has been no serious consideration of Faulkner's somewhat breathtaking hypothesis, and this aspect of his article has been largely ignored. This thesis is a more detailed examination of the evidence for the split-level townhouse, with the aim of establishing why, at what date, and

¹ P.A. Faulkner, 'Medieval Undercrofts and Town Houses', *Archaeol. J.* 123 (1966), pp. 120-35.

from what background it emerged, and whether the Chester Rows were a close, and not at all unique, relation. In view of the lack of a mass of surviving buildings for the early medieval period, the thesis draws on the evidence of standing buildings, excavated structures, antiquarian records and drawings, and documentary sources.

Faulkner's all too brief article does not attempt an assessment of the Romanesque townhouse, and for that the most recent publication is Margaret Wood's article of 1974, which is essentially a reprint of the published version of her M.A. thesis of 1934.¹ There are flaws in her work, and the most significant of these are the lack of differentiation between urban and rural house types, and the restriction of her analysis of the whole *oeuvre* to a discussion of construction dates and the authenticity of Jewish and royal origins. The failure to distinguish different forms in rural and urban contexts has persisted, and has been exacerbated by a misunderstanding of manorial buildings. The purpose of Chapter 1 is to analyse the evidence of a much larger number of Romanesque townhouses than has been hitherto identified (seventy-one examples, as opposed to Wood's twenty-three), and to make broad distinctions based on their likely functions.

Some rural/urban interchange did take place, although only in larger properties away from the commercial street frontage, and these urban manor-like properties are principally evidenced by the more robust stone chamber blocks. These can be differentiated from less substantial chamber blocks that were built to the rear of timber-framed streetfront ranges on narrow plots, in locations on principal streets. A usual absence of fenestration in the front wall of the chamber block implies that the two structures abutted. Both types of chamber block can be distinguished

¹ M.E. Wood, *Norman Domestic Architecture* (London, 1974).

from the residential houses in the suburb of Wigford, Lincoln. Here, St Mary's Guildhall and the former building opposite (St Andrew's Hall) were built directly on the streetfront, but with no attempt to utilize the frontage for shops. They represent a type of grand residence that did not attempt to emulate the scatter of buildings found in a manorial complex, but which was purely urban.

Indeed, it would appear that the Wigford houses are a modification of a popular commercial townhouse type found across Europe and in England. This type of building (the ground-level townhouse) was that in which the ground floor was used for shops or workshops, with the residence placed above. The façade followed the continental arrangement in that it comprised wide arched openings to self-contained shops, with the principal, and elaborately fenestrated, room(s) above. The only significant difference between the English ground-level townhouse and continental examples was the absence of doorways on the streetfront which opened onto stairs up to the first floor: in England the access was via a passage at ground level, and a rear stair.

Although the ground-level design was undoubtedly popular, it only accounts for 45% of the forty-one known Romanesque townhouses on streetfront locations: the remaining 55% reveal evidence of at least some elements of split-level construction. It is not certain that two-level retailing occurred in each of these prototypical split-level townhouses, since in many cases it is simply a semi-subterranean undercroft that survives. Several Romanesque townhouses that incorporate a semi-subterranean undercroft take advantage of, or were built in response to, a sloping site. The Norman House, Lincoln, is the most intact example of this type, and the steep slope and corner site enable easy access to an undercroft oriented parallel to the street, and to several shops with wide

arched openings at the upper level. Contemporary and earlier split-level townhouses on level sites, however, confirm that the design was not developed in response to sloping sites. Undercrofts preserved without the contemporary superstructure are more common, and to these can be added excavated examples. Since it is highly improbable that large semi-subterranean undercrofts would have been considered direct replacements of ground-level shops, and as such shop units were in increasing demand throughout the twelfth century, it is unlikely that many of these sunken undercrofts did not support an upper level of shops in the manner of their thirteenth- and fourteenth-century successors. Moreover, it is clear from the orientation of Romanesque townhouses with semi-sunken undercrofts that they occupied valuable street frontages: while only 35% of ground-level townhouses were narrow-fronted buildings at right angles to the street and 65% were wide-fronted buildings parallel to the street, the comparative figures for split-level townhouses are 86% and 14%.

The evidence for townhouses in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England is such that there are virtually no examples on the principal streets that were not of the split-level type. The transition from near equal numbers of split-level and ground-level townhouses to the almost total dominance of two-level selling is not clear, for there is a dearth of standing examples of early thirteenth-century townhouses, only beginning to be rectified by archaeological excavation. Documentary records are less useful than standing or excavated buildings in determining the proportion of split-level townhouses since undercrofts (*cellaria*) changed ownership or occupancy less often than the small shops above, and are thus less well represented in title deeds. It is interesting to note that while Derek Keene argues that the cellars in Winchester known from documentary sources were the sum total of medieval undercrofts, the physical evidence does not

support him. Of the thirteen documented undercrofts of pre-c.1350 date only two correspond with the fifteen surviving or excavated examples. The lack of coincidence between the two random samples provided by the written record and the material remains suggests that the actual number of split-level townhouses in the city may have been in the order of several hundred. Likewise, in Chester it is likely that there were c.290 undercrofts by the mid fourteenth century, yet the documentary evidence considered in isolation would not suggest such a number. It is this over-reliance on documentary sources that has led to the association between undercrofts and taverns/wine storage. While taverns were at undercroft level, the wine trade cannot have used more than a proportion of the undercrofts, and many of these only on a seasonal basis: the evidence suggests that undercrofts were for stocking and selling bulky but valuable goods in general. Documentary evidence (especially that from Keene's survey of the Cheapside study area in London) has proved invaluable in the analysis of the upper levels of the split-level townhouse, not only regarding the nature of shops, but also in revealing the form and function of selds (single-trade bazaars located to the rear of the shops) and stalls.

The undercrofts in Chester carry a raised walkway providing access to the upper-level shops, with the whole system known as the Rows. The survival or record of ten pre-c.1300 townhouses is vital to the understanding of the origins of the Rows, for these houses provide unambiguous evidence of the existence of galleried buildings by this date. Three buildings preserve arcades opening onto the walkway while the others advance to the front of the walkway, and conform to its level. They reveal that lengths of the elevated walkway existed by the middle of the thirteenth century and, equally importantly, their different datings imply that the Rows gradually emerged rather than originated in a planned single

campaign. Indeed, the survival of many completely new-built Row buildings from the fourteenth century indicates that this emergence took in the order of 150 years. There can be little doubt that the houses of the Chester Rows are nearly identical to contemporary split-level townhouses, and thus it is necessary to consider compelling reasons for the adoption of the gallery. An absence of courtyard entrances or side windows to undercrofts indicates that the streets were continuously built-up by the time of the earliest surviving buildings, and the narrowness of the plots confirms that commercial pressure was intense: this even led to the longitudinal subdivision of undercrofts. Above, there is every indication that shops were typically some 2-3m wide and 3m deep. Added to this high density of undercrofts and shops was the unusual topography of Chester, where bedrock is immediately under the street, and where the land is a storey higher at the rear of the building as a result of the build up of Roman debris, overlain by less substantial medieval deposits: these factors resulted in the undercrofts being set much higher than elsewhere. When the access requirements of the undercrofts, all at right angles to the street, and the shops above are taken into account, it is clear that the frontage arrangements would have been congested, with tall flights of steps to the individual shops being especially problematic. Add to this the fact that the frontage was also in demand for undercroft fenestration, since continuously built-up streets prohibited side lighting for the undercrofts and rear lightwells were mostly impractical because of the higher ground level and the frequent rearwards continuation of the superstructure beyond this point, and it becomes clear that the subtle combination of a very active property market, the historical pattern of plot evolution, and the underlying topographical factors meant that a different solution was necessary - a gallery allowing intermittent access to the upper level.

Faulkner's theory that galleried townhouses identical to those of the Chester Rows were the norm is based on his interpretation of Tackley's Inn, Oxford. He considers that a series of spur walls projecting from the front wall of the undercroft carried the set-back and timber-framed wall of the raised ground level: in front of the recessed shopfronts there must have been a gallery. Re-survey has shown that his interpretation has no basis in fact, and, equally, his citing of spur-walls elsewhere as evidence of widespread use of galleries is nonsensical. Most of these spur-walls occur in undercrofts too narrow for the superstructure to have required midway support, and they are completely absent in Chester. Virtually all spur walls form one side of the entrance stair, and their function must be porch-like - similar to screens in a cross-entry.

Since neither the spur-walled townhouse nor Faulkner's other suggestion for a galleried townhouse - the so-called Woollen Hall, Southampton - show any signs of elevated walkways, the Chester Rows appear to have been unique in England. This uniqueness is consistent with the arguments for the construction of the Rows in response to a combination of local factors, but in the past has led to the assumption that the Rows must have been influenced by foreign arcaded systems. The idea of the planned arcade is inapplicable to the slowly emergent and haphazard Rows, and is unconvincing in a country where there was no tradition of arcaded streets: the only possible example of pre-c.1350 date, at the Pentice, Winchester, was created by the gradual encroachment of heavily oversailed solars.

Foreign parallels to the Chester Rows do, or formerly did, exist in the form of the elevated walkways of several of the Zähringen towns of modern Switzerland: Bern, Burgdorf (Berthoud), Fribourg-en-Nuithonie, Thun, and Zürich. As in Chester, these walkways emerged in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and came out of a tradition of split-level townhouses

extending back to the twelfth century. However, the origins of the Zähringen and the Cestrian systems are not alike in all respects: the variety of topographical conditions in the Swiss towns means that it is improbable that local factors played a significant role as has been argued for Chester. The split-level townhouse tradition in the Zähringen towns developed in an area of Europe where the arcaded street was emerging as a major element of the urban landscape and it was inevitable that the two ideas should combine; in England there was no tradition of arcaded streets, or pedestrian walkways separate from the street, and, thus, it took the underlying topographic factors of Chester to provide sufficiently pressing reasons for the solution of the Rows to evolve.

In the absence of any close link between England and the territory of the dukes of Zähringen in the twelfth or early thirteenth century, it is necessary to consider the possibility that the split-level townhouse was a pan-European house type. Despite the presence of semi-subterranean undercrofts in northern Europe during this period, these were not found in the context of split-level houses: they were located at the rear of ground-level buildings fronting the street, and thus were more similar to Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman timber cellars and twelfth-century chamber blocks. A few examples of split-level townhouses in Rouen appear to reflect either a shared English and Norman building tradition, or limited influence from England. Certainly, outside Switzerland, there is no evidence that any country had split-level townhouses at such an early date or in numbers comparable to those in England. Although England was a less urbanized country than many of its continental counterparts, the analysis of the origins and development of the split-level townhouse adds to the evidence from documentary research and from archaeology which

indicates that its towns in the early medieval period were as intensely commercial as anywhere in Europe.

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Fig. 164. After V. Parker, *The Making of Kings Lynn* (London and Chichester, 1971), Fig. 42.

Fig. 165. After MoLAS archive: site code HOR85 (Trench A) - 1985.

Fig. 166. After Kate Steane, City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit (archive/report in preparation).

Fig. 167. Based on A. White, 'Notes on an ancient crypt within Aldgate', *LAMAS* 4 (1874), Plate 3.

Fig. 168. Based on George Scharf, *London Red Portfolio*, Vol. 2, folios 24 and 25 (Society of Antiquaries of London).

Fig. 169. After Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, Fig. 20.

Fig. 170. As above (Fig. 21).

Fig. 171. Based on Horsman, *Saxo-Norman London* 1, Fig. 48.

Fig. 172. Based on Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, Figs. 7 and 8.

Fig. 173. As above (Figs. 8 and 15).

Fig. 174. Based on 1968 OS map; W.F. Grimes, *The Excavation of Roman and Medieval London* (London, 1968), Fig. 37.

Fig. 175. After E.P. Loftus Brock, in 'Proceedings of the Association', *JBAA* 28 (1872), Plates 9 and 10.

Fig. 176. After MoLAS archive: site code GDH85 - Group 32.

Fig. 177. After Norman, *Poultney Crypt*, Fig. 2.

Fig. 178. After MoLAS archive: site code LOV81 II.

Fig. 179. Based on E. Harris, 'A Medieval Undercroft at 50 Mark Lane, London, E.C.3.', *Med. Arch.* 2 (1958), Fig. 44.

Fig. 180. Based on MoLAS archive: site code MLK76.

Fig. 181. After Steedman, *Saxo-Norman London* 2, Fig. 19.

Fig. 182. As above.

Fig. 183. After MoLAS archive: site code PDN81 - group A12 (building AG).

Fig. 184. Survey RBH 1991.

Fig. 185. After G. Payne, 'Mediæval Crypt at Rochester', *Antiq. J.* 18 (1899-1900), Fig. 1.

Fig. 186. Survey RBH 1994; southwestern part after H. Sands, 'Wall painting in a house at Rye, II: the house in which the painting was found, formerly known as the "Flushing Inn"', *SAC* 50 (1907), p. 133.

Fig. 187. Survey RBH 1994.

Fig. 188. Survey RBH 1992.

Fig. 189. Based on Baker, *Pride Hill*, Fig. 4.

Fig. 190. After M.O.H. Carver (ed.), 'Two Town Houses in Medieval Shrewsbury', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society* 61 (1983), Fig. 26.

Fig. 191. Based on Baker, *Pride Hill*, Figs. 11-13.

Fig. 192. After J. Oxley (ed.), *Excavations at Southampton Castle* (Southampton, 1986), Figs. 3 and 5.

Fig. 193. Survey RBH 1994; after J. Oxley (ed.), *Excavations at Southampton Castle* (Southampton, 1986), Figs. 3 and 5.

Fig. 194. See title.

Fig. 195. Based on Ministry of Works drwg. 564/16.

Fig. 196. Based on English Heritage survey c.1980 (Glyn Coppack).

Fig. 197. After J. Gage, 'Remains of the Prior of Lewes' Hostelry, in the parish of St Olave, Southwark', *Archaeologia* 23 (1831), Plate 20.

Fig. 198. After C.E. Gwilt, 'A second Crypt, discovered 1832, part of the Hostelry of the Prior of Lewes', *Archaeologia* 25 (1834), Plate 67.

Fig. 199. Based on RCHM *Stamford* (London, 1977), Figs. 165 and 166.

Fig. 200. As above (Fig. 170).

Fig. 201. As above (Fig. 114).

Fig. 202. Based on survey RBH 1994, and unpublished drawings of c.1940 by W. Maclean Homan, now in East Sussex Record Office (2410-4439).

Fig. 203. As above.

Fig. 204. As above.

Fig. 205. As above.

Fig. 206. As above.

Fig. 207. After unpublished drawings of c.1940 by W. Maclean Homan, now in East Sussex Record Office (2410-4439).

Fig. 208. Based on survey RBH 1994, and unpublished drawings of c.1940 by W. Maclean Homan, now in East Sussex Record Office (2410-4439).

Fig. 209. As above.

Fig. 210. As above.

Fig. 211. After unpublished drawings of c.1940 by W. Maclean Homan, now in East Sussex Record Office (2410-4439).

Fig. 212. As above.

Fig. 213. Based on survey RBH 1994, and unpublished drawings of c.1940 by W. Maclean Homan, now in East Sussex Record Office (2410-4439).

Fig. 214. As above.

Fig. 215. As above.

Fig. 216. As above.

Fig. 217. As above.

Fig. 218. As above.

Fig. 219. As above.

Fig. 220. As above.

Fig. 221. As above.

Fig. 222. After survey by H. and M.R. Lovegrove (1962/3).

Fig. 223. Based on survey RBH 1994, and unpublished drawings of c.1940 by W. Maclean Homan, now in East Sussex Record Office (2410-4439).

Fig. 224. Based on Winchester Museums Service archive: site code BR 89, Tenement 365/6, Building F5347, Room 11152.

Fig. 225. Survey RBH 1993.

Fig. 226. Based on 1869-71 OS map; S. Teague, 'Archaeological Excavations at The Square, 1988', *Winchester Museums Service Newsletter* 3 (1989), Fig. 4.

Fig. 227. Based on Winchester Museums Service archive: site code SXS79.

Fig. 228. Based on R. Jackson, *Excavation and watching brief at Crowngate, Worcester: archive report*, Report 113, Archaeology Section, Hereford and Worcester County Council (March 1992), Figs. 5, 10, and 11.

Fig. 229. Based on C.H. Dalwood, and C. Mundy (eds.), *Deansway Archaeology Project: Interim Excavation Report* (December 1989), Archaeology Section Hereford and Worcester County Museum, Fig. 26.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

There can scarcely be a type of building more central to the function of the medieval town than the house used for selling. Yet there has been no serious attempt to analyse the form of the medieval townhouse since the advent of modern, and largely urban, archaeology in this country. The point has been made before that the physical appearance of a town is a reflection of, and one of the best ways of understanding, its social and economic character.¹ The layout of the medieval town was determined by the citizens - shopkeepers, tradespeople, taverners, money-lenders, clergy, prostitutes, and merchants - and the documentary evidence of their activities has formed the basis of recent historical research in Winchester and London.² The scope of such studies, however, has been largely restricted to compiling histories of the hundreds of individual properties, from which are drawn wider social and economic conclusions. Despite the undoubted success of this painstaking approach, there has been little progress in the understanding of the secular buildings of the early medieval town, which are arguably as informative as the plan onto which they were imposed. Indeed, the importance of townhouses used for distributive trade is heightened by the work of Derek Keene and others, since it is now abundantly clear that the urban landscape was dominated by commerce at an early date, and that shops were 'a well-established feature of the English urban scene by A.D. 1300, if not two hundred years earlier'.³

¹ *WS* 1, p. 3.

² *WS* 2; Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*.

³ Keene, *Shops and Shopping*, p. 29.

The inevitable limitation of documentary records as a source does not, of course, imply that the answers to questions about the early medieval townhouse lie firmly in the hands of archaeologists. The recently attempted synthesis of excavated and documentary evidence in the Cheapside area of London reveals that, whereas the written sources enable a good understanding of the 'working of a complex economic and social system', the 'scrappy archaeological evidence' can add little.¹ Keene's dismissiveness of the collected evidence of several major archaeological excavations is justifiable in this case because of the unusually good documentary material for London, and the absence of any standing building evidence.

Outside the City of London the balance of available sources is different and a reliance on documentary material for the early medieval period less valid. Title deeds provide the bulk of the evidence for the history of medieval tenements in most towns and it is an unalterable fact of life for the historian that for the period before the late thirteenth century these survive in relatively small numbers and often with little detail. Keene's own survey of medieval Winchester provides a good illustration of this problem because a decline in the fortunes of the city beginning in the early twelfth century, and an above average level of information for the twelfth century in the form of the c.1110 and 1148 surveys, means that rapid urban expansion or development could not have played a part in the sharp increase in documentary sources from the late thirteenth century. In the graph below the earliest references for almost every property, however tentatively suggested by Keene and however uninformative about the buildings, have been plotted for each decade between 1100 and 1350,

¹ D. Keene, 'The Character and Development of the Cheapside Area; an Overview', in Schofield, *Med. Cheapside*, p. 192.

and there can be little doubt that only an insignificant proportion of tenement histories begin before the 1280s.¹ Moreover, these early references are often isolated and lacking in information about the occupants, let alone the form of the townhouses they occupied. In addition to the general incompleteness of the documentary record, it is clear that parts of the buildings whose occupancy or ownership changed less rapidly than others are under-represented.

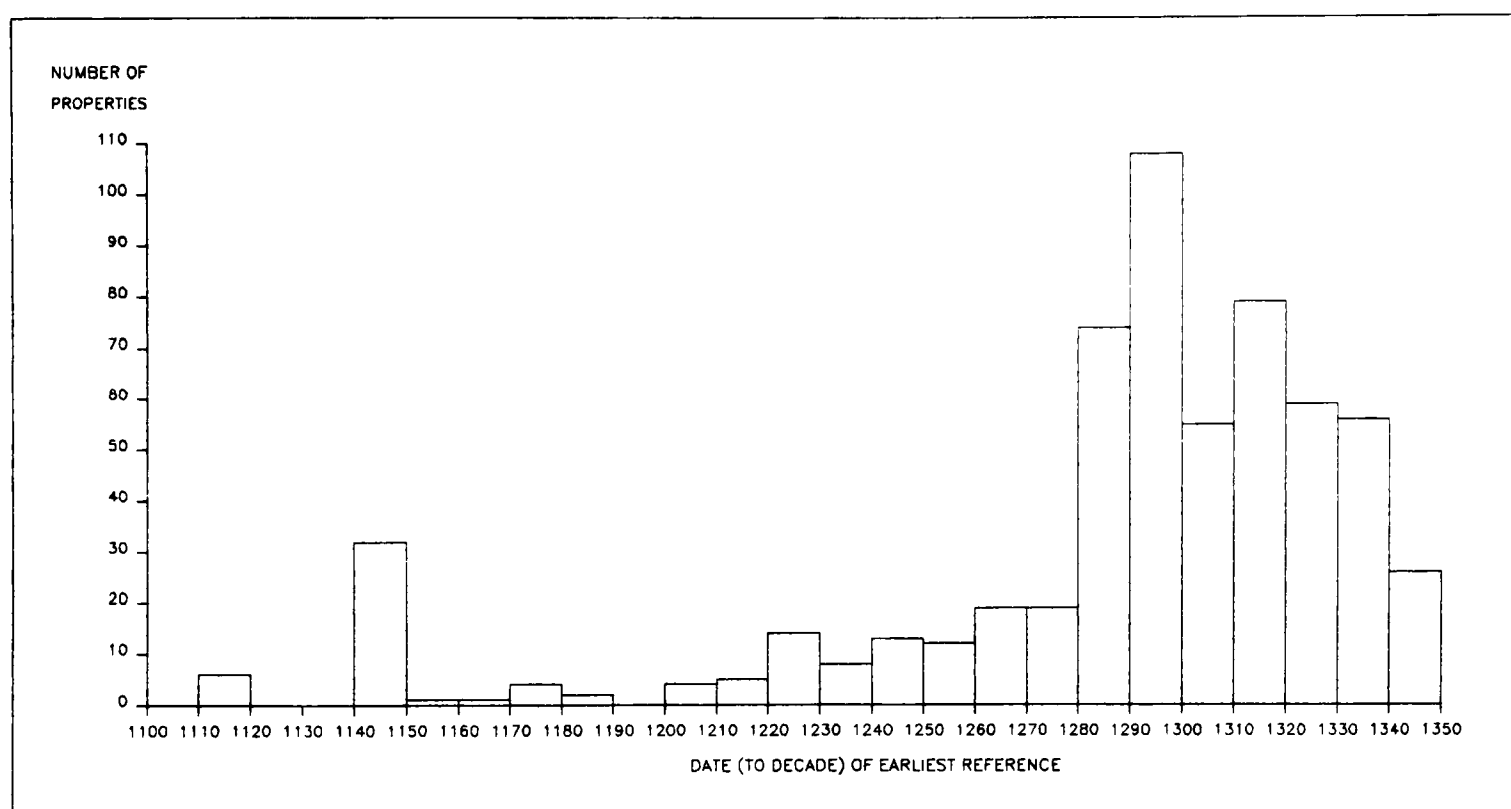


Fig. 1. The frequency distribution, with class intervals of ten years, for the earliest documentary references to properties in Keene's tenement histories for Winchester (WS 2, pp. 463-1091).

This is nowhere clearer than in the case of undercrofts, or *cellaria*, which form a significant part of the evidence discussed in this thesis. Again using Winchester as an example, Keene suggests that his distribution map of cellars in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Winchester is accurate despite its almost total reliance on documentary examples.² Certainly it is clear that undercrofts were commonly noted by the tarrage surveyors of 1417. It seems unlikely, however, that the documentary evidence accounts

¹ The exclusions are churches, royal buildings, and St Giles's Fair.

² WS 2, pp. 165-7.

for more than a fraction of the city's cellarage, and this under-representation is especially noticeable for the period before c.1350. A search of the tenement histories compiled by the Winchester Research Unit produces thirteen medieval cellars for this period.¹ Of these only two (properties 158 and 175/176-7) are found to correspond with any of the fifteen surviving or excavated undercrofts. Not only are the majority of these undercrofts missing from the pre-c.1350 documentary sources, but they are also absent from later records. There can be little doubt that the documentary records for Winchester give no indication of the real numbers of undercrofts, and, consequently, of split-level townhouses. Indeed, the lack of coincidence between the two random samples provided by written record and material remains suggests that the actual number of split-level townhouses in the city may have run into several hundred.

Despite being perhaps the most significant development in the study of medieval urban history the reconstruction of tenement histories is not, of course, the only approach available to the urban historian. Many early documentary references, especially those from twelfth-century surveys, cannot be related to subsequent records or to known topographic locations, but still provide much useful evidence of the early medieval urban landscape, population, patterns of property ownership and occupancy, and the trades of the townspeople. Earlier deeds surviving for London reveal a high level of differentiation between property values on and off the principal streets, and the 1148 survey of Winchester shows a similar ratio between High Street and side streets values, both examples being symptomatic of a considerable concentration of commercial interest on the main streets.

¹ WS 2.

With a few such exceptions, however, it is clear that the documentary evidence for the earlier part of the thirteenth century and the twelfth century is too scarce to allow widespread reconstruction of tenement histories or the physical setting of the commercial life of the town. Despite absences of important sections of the community the records from this period give little reason to doubt that the detailed picture of urban life illustrated by the abundance of deeds available for the period from c.1300 is applicable to the previous two centuries. These points are fundamental to the use of archaeological and architectural material in the investigation of the early medieval landscape: the lack of detailed documentary sources suggests that the key to a better understanding of the early medieval buildings lies in surviving physical evidence, with the underlying continuity in urban life between the twelfth and early fourteenth centuries justifying the careful use of later documentary evidence in the interpretation of the function of earlier structures. 'Scrappy archaeological evidence' is not restricted to the City of London and, thus, it is the purpose of this thesis to use all available sources, but with a particular concentration on the neglected source of standing buildings, including those recorded before demolition.

One of the most exciting aspects of urban history of this period is the apparent explosion of retail and wholesale trade and the resultant proliferation of shops mentioned at the beginning of this introduction. There has already been a suggestion that this development is reflected in the architecture of the period: in a brief but ground-breaking article published in 1966, Patrick Faulkner postulates that English townhouses with shops on two storeys (split-level townhouses) were the norm in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹ Moreover, he argues that many of

¹ Faulkner, *Med. Undercrofts*.

these had raised galleries across their façades to facilitate access to the upper level and that the galleried houses of the Chester Rows were simply conjoined examples of this type, unique only in their survival. Since 1966, more semi-subterranean undercrofts have been identified or excavated, but there has been no attempt to develop or even refute Faulkner's initial work on the house type: if anything his rather breathtaking vision of the early medieval high street has been ignored. This thesis is a more extensive examination of the evidence for the split-level townhouse with the aim of establishing why, at what date, and from what background it emerged, and whether the Chester Rows were a close, and not at all unique, relation.

The structure of the thesis

In view of the lack of any synthetic work on the medieval townhouse, it is hardly surprising that the current state of discussion on the subject is confused. The most obvious symptom of this confusion is the failure of many to consider urban housing as distinct from rural housing and to recognise that different forms of townhouse not only exist, but represent types quite clearly built in response to different functions. Faulkner's seminal article on the split-level townhouse goes some way to establishing order by at least arguing for specialised townhouses for retail use in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For the pre-c.1200 period, however, during which the split-level townhouse came to the fore, there has been no such attempt to identify house types. The first chapter of this thesis is thus an attempt to separate the commercial townhouses, or parts of townhouses, from buildings that form purely residential chamber blocks, suburban houses, or even urban manor-like properties. Since this chapter is a necessary prelude to discussion of the emergence of split-level townhouses, and as it relies heavily on physical evidence, it is inevitable

that several early medieval house types are omitted. For example, with the exception of Lower Brook Street (formerly Tanner Street), Winchester, there is insufficient evidence for a discussion of light-industrial tenements in urban centres. Likewise, there are few excavated examples of less substantial timber structures of the sort that can be expected to have formed residences for the poorer citizens, and certainly no standing examples. Because there is little danger of confusing the latter with substantial stone-built examples of early split-level townhouses, or their ground-level precursors, the lack of material to enable a study of lesser urban vernacular buildings is of no great consequence to this thesis, though it doubtless remains a future research subject of considerable interest.

Having established the *milieu* from which the split-level townhouse emerged, Chapter 2 discusses the evidence for split-level townhouses in the twelfth century, its subsequent dominance in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the archetypal form of the building. The close relationship of the elevated walkways of the Chester Rows to this dominant house type forms the subject of Chapter 3. Since the townhouses of the Rows form the logical development of the house type and probably formed a complete system by the middle of the fourteenth century, this date is taken as the end date for the thesis.

The constituent parts of the split-level townhouse, and especially their functions, require more detailed consideration than is possible in chapters discussing overall developments, and the subsequent two chapters are more detailed assessments of the undercroft (Chapter 4), and the upper level (Chapter 5). The latter considers shops, solars, stalls, stallboards, selds, and the residence, in particular focusing on the interrelationship, or lack thereof, between these parts.

A gazetteer has been adopted in view of the number of buildings that do not form individual case studies within the discursive chapters but which form the basis for the overall picture of the pre-1350 townhouse. Where townhouses are discussed and illustrated in the main text, duplication in the gazetteer is avoided by cross-referencing. Although the gazetteer attempts to be as exhaustive as possible, it cannot claim to be a complete account of all pre-1350 split-level townhouses: inevitably, some townhouses have proved inaccessible; archives of excavations of others have yet to reach a stage intelligible to anyone but the director; the evidence of some buildings is too fragmentary to merit inclusion; a large number of townhouses lack features to show that they predate c.1350 but subsequent analysis may prove that they do; and, less excusably, some townhouses are bound to have 'slipped the net'.

CHAPTER 1

ROMANESQUE TOWNHOUSES

While England cannot equal France in its number of surviving Romanesque townhouses,¹ the much lamented lack of such buildings in this country has been exaggerated by an overdependence on out-of-date research. To find a general discussion of the vernacular architecture of the period the student has been obliged to turn to the writings of Margaret Wood which, although marking admirable progress from the previous standard work by Turner, are all based on groundwork from the 1930s.² Even Wood's final publication is essentially a reprint of the published version of her 1934 M.A. thesis, albeit with a revised preface acknowledging more recent discoveries.³ Wood identified a total of twenty-three Romanesque townhouses, either standing, excavated, or recorded by antiquarians, and a gazetteer of these forms the main part of her work. Her analysis of the whole *oeuvre* was restricted to a discussion of construction dates and the authenticity of Jewish and royal origins traditionally ascribed in several cases. With seventy-one Romanesque townhouses now identified and examined in more detail, there is a larger corpus of evidence on which to base a study of the various house types, the architectural response for commerce, and the early attempts at making the best use of the street frontage by using the split-level arrangement.

In the absence of many documentary references to private commercial premises in the twelfth century, it is necessary to use other means of identifying the different forms of townhouses and, thus, those employed in

¹ It has been estimated that there may be two thousand surviving twelfth-century townhouses in France: G.I. Meirion-Jones, M. Jones and J.R. Pilcher, 'The Seigneurial Domestic Buildings of Brittany 1000-1700', in G.I. Meirion-Jones and M. Jones (eds.), *Manorial Domestic Buildings in England and Northern France* (London, 1993), p. 168.

² Turner, *Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Architecture*; Wood, *Norman Architecture (Thesis)*; Wood, *Norman Architecture*; Wood, *Med. House*; Wood, *Norman Domestic Arch.*

³ Wood, *Norman Domestic Arch.*, pp. 5-11.

the distributive trades. In view of the fragmentary and even rudimentary nature of the surviving or recorded fabric, this is not always achievable solely on the basis of the architecture. It is necessary to consider also the location of any building within the town and within the tenement plot, to utilise the rare contemporary documentary sources, and, with obvious caution, to consider the townhouses in the light of later English and contemporary foreign parallels that have more firmly identifiable functions. This functional analysis, however limited it may be, is long overdue in the study of English Romanesque vernacular architecture, where classification of house types has been based on the presence of supposedly common features. In the most recent publication on the subject, for example, Wood divides Norman houses into three types - the first-floor hall, the aisled hall on ground level, and the unaisled ground-floor hall - arguing that rural and urban types may have been separable only on the basis that 'the number of outbuildings, probably timber-built, would be greater in the country'.¹ Thus, the excavated manor house at Wharram Percy becomes a useful comparison for House I on the built-up and highly urbanized site at Lower Brook Street, Winchester.²

RUS IN URBE?

In the light of the above comments, it is ironic that this analysis of the Romanesque townhouse should begin with a house type indistinguishable from its rural counterpart. This is for the good reason that such urban manor-like properties need to be identified so that they can set apart from more specialized urban forms. Perhaps most similar is the grand suburban house, although the two-storey domestic chamber block at the rear of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

otherwise destroyed commercial townhouses could be, and has been, confused with the urban manor-like house. For this reason these categories of residential townhouses, or parts of townhouses, are discussed in succession.

The urban manor-like house

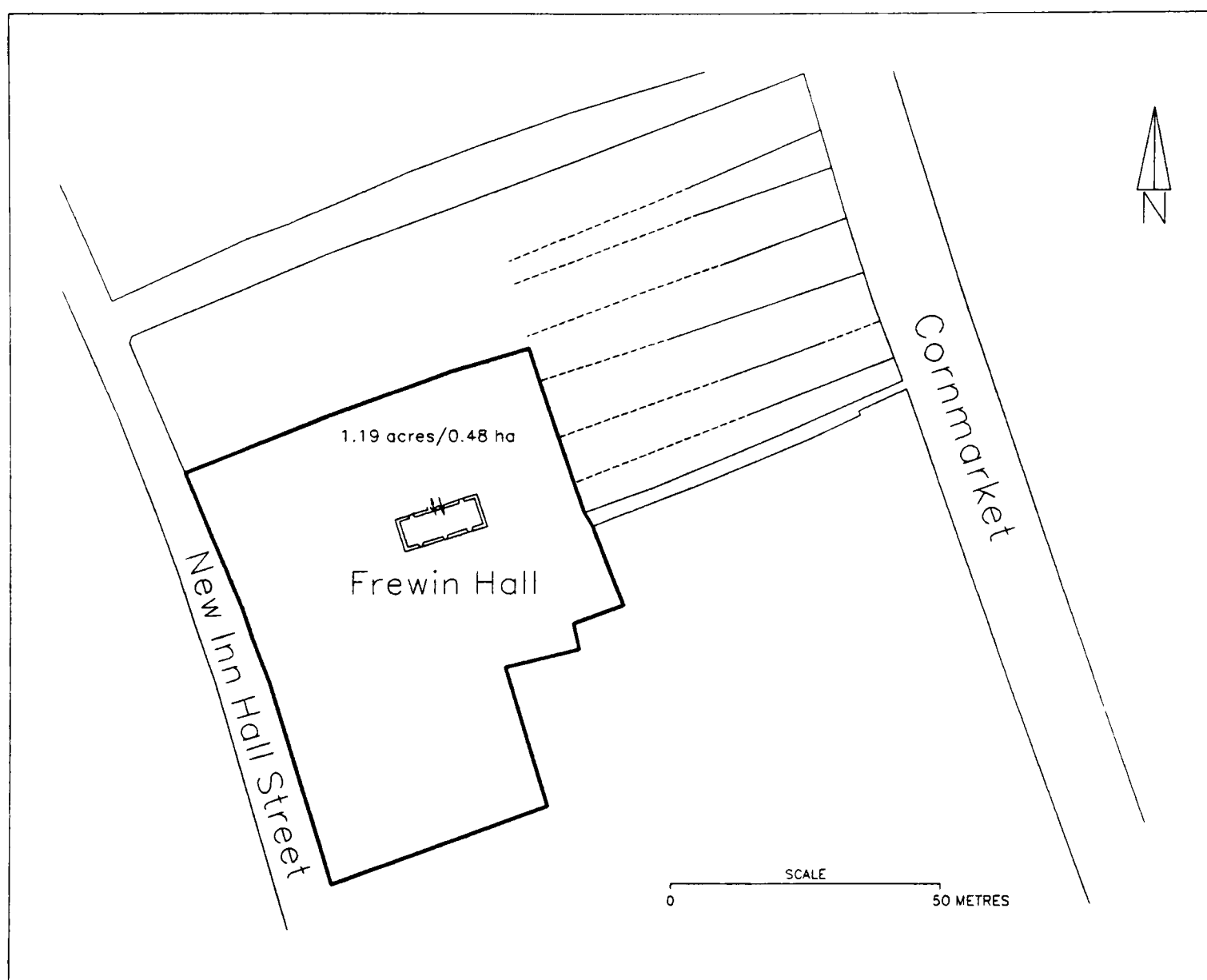


Fig. 2. Frewin Hall, Oxford. The undercroft is shown within the reconstructed main holding (outlined in bold). The tenement plots on Cornmarket are derived from the 1880 1:500 OS. map.

The stone undercroft at Frewin Hall, Oxford, has been dated on stylistic grounds to the period from c.1090 to c.1150.¹ Since John Blair's examination of the building a watching brief by Brian Durham revealed seven

¹ The imposts are the only mouldings, and I concur with this broad date range derived from their analysis and given in Blair, *Frewin Hall*, pp. 53-4.

floor layers above the vault, the lowest of which contained eleven sherds of pottery provisionally dated to c.1150.¹ The undercroft is all that survives of a large urban estate, identified from historical sources, that occupied the northwest quarter of the walled city.² The estate comprised an area of approximately 0.48 hectares and had a frontage of 112.5m on New Inn Hall Street by the later Middle Ages (Fig. 2). It has been suggested that the Norman *curia* was similar in extent.³ Documentary evidence has thus confirmed that the undercrofted building was entirely independent of what were probably commercial houses in the principal north-south street of Cornmarket.⁴ This is corroborated by its location 81.5m west of Cornmarket, too far to the rear to be convincing as a chamber block, or other domestic wing, on one of the similarly oriented tenement plots to the east.

Because the surviving structure consists only of the groin-vaulted undercroft it is difficult to recognise the purely domestic function of the townhouse from the architectural evidence. Archaeological excavation in the 1970s revealed that the natural gravel outside the undercroft was 550mm above the floor level, meaning that the undercroft must have been sunk by this amount, plus an unknown depth of soil.⁵ In this respect it is similar to split-level structures rather than the archetypal ground-level undercrofts of contemporary monastic and rural vernacular architecture. The two doorways in the side wall, however, have more in common with rural buildings such as the well-known chamber block at Boothby Pagnell, and provide further evidence that the house was in extensive grounds and not occupying a narrow tenement plot. At Boothby Pagnell the widely spaced

¹ S.M. Youngs and J. Clark, 'Medieval Britain in 1981', *Med. Arch.* 26 (1982), p. 204.

² Blair, *Frewin Hall*, pp. 48-99.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴ For example, see pp. 87-92.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-3.

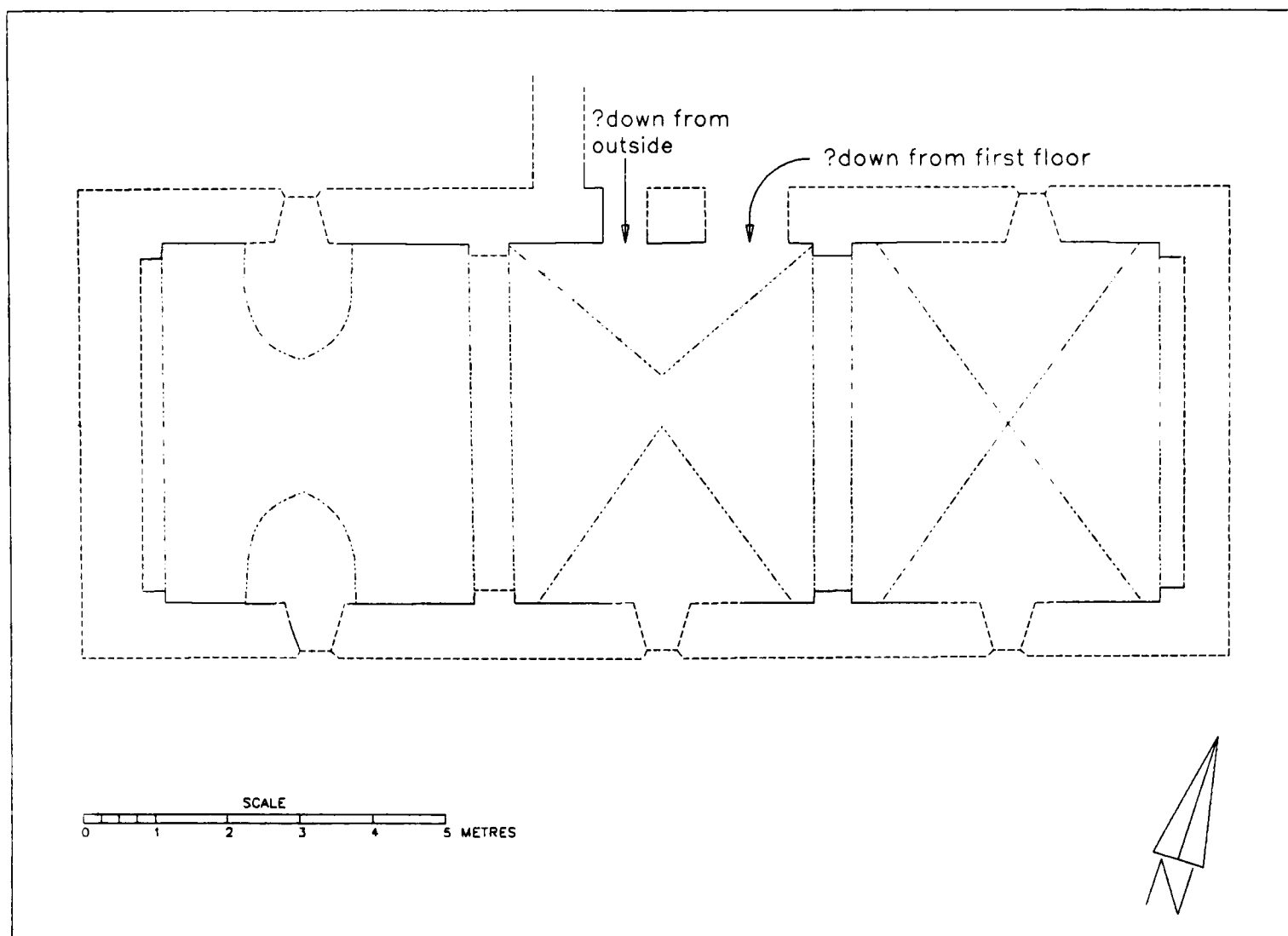


Fig. 3. Frewin Hall, Oxford. Reconstructed plan of undercroft, based on 1977 survey (Blair, *Frewin Hall*, Fig. 2).

pair of doorways duplicate access from the exterior, but Blair has suggested that at Frewin Hall the doorways opened onto separate stairs to the exterior and the first floor.¹ Both would have been contained within a forebuilding, for which some evidence survives, and it is difficult to postulate any alternative as the doorways are immediately adjacent.² Such interconnection between the undercroft and the levels above was by no means universal, or even very common, in rural two-storey blocks, but was nonetheless more applicable in a domestic context than in one where commerce favoured the separate leasing of undercrofts and the buildings above.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

² *Ibid.*

The original fenestration survives, although several of the windows are severely mutilated or blocked. As this comprises windows centrally in each bay of both side walls, excepting the bay in the centre of the north wall containing the doorways, this also confirms that the building was detached from any other structures to the north or south. Neither end wall appears to be original, so it is possible that these too had windows, making for a well-lit undercroft in spite of its semi-subterranean nature.



Fig. 4. Merton Hall, Cambridge. View of southeast elevation.

As at Frewin Hall, documentary research has uncovered the early ownership and function of Merton Hall, Cambridge.¹ The wealthy Dunning family apparently owned the site from the latter half of the twelfth century until 1270, with the townhouse fulfilling the function of a rural manor

¹ Otherwise known by the misleading name of The School of Pythagoras, the building is now called Merton Hall as a result of its ownership by Merton College, Oxford, between 1270 and the 1950s.

house.¹ Although Merton Hall is more detached from the modern commercial centre of the town than Frewin Hall in Oxford, the documented removal of twenty-seven houses in 1068 to permit the construction of the castle reveals that the eleventh-century town occupied land on the north side of the Cam, in the area of Merton Hall, as well as on the south side.² The churches of St Giles, St Peter by the Castle, and All Saints by the Castle were located nearby and were all well established by the twelfth century, confirming the continuance of settlement after the Conquest on this side of the river.³ Merton Hall would have been on the western fringe of this part of the town, and little had changed in this respect by the time of the 1876 OS survey. The location of Merton Hall 52.5m south of Northampton Street, to which it is neither parallel nor at a right angle, is consistent with a non-commercial role.

Corroboration of Merton Hall's function as an urban manor-like house can be found in the architectural evidence. The surviving structure comprises an undercroft, a first-floor room above, and a two-storey so-called solar wing, and provides evidence of an arrangement similar to that surmised for Frewin Hall, Oxford. The undercroft was again fenestrated on all the known Romanesque elevations, and very probably on the original southwest end wall. Unfortunately the ground-level wall at the junction of the main and solar wings has also been rebuilt, thus removing any signs of an original doorway or window. The only certain entrance to the undercroft is that remaining *in situ* on the northwest side. A doorway-like feature below the first-floor fireplace in the south wall, which Richard West recorded in 1739, was more probably the remains of another Romanesque

¹ J.M. Gray, 'The School of Pythagoras', *Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, Quarto Publ., New Series, 4 (1932), pp. 1-8.

² P.V. Addyman and M. Biddle, 'Medieval Cambridge: Recent Finds and Excavations', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 58 (1965), Fig. 13; *Camb. VCH* 3, p. 116.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-32.

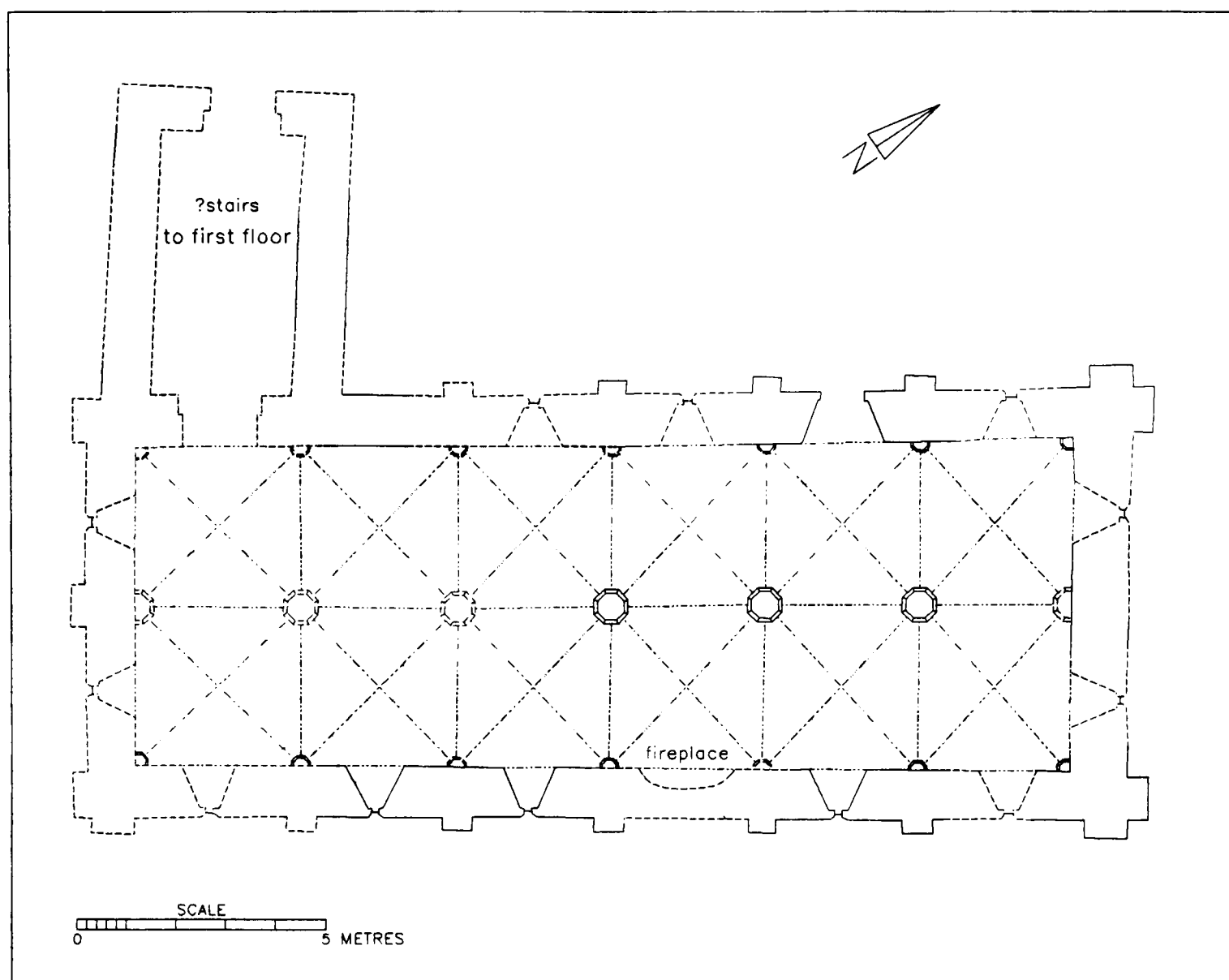


Fig. 5. Merton Hall, Cambridge. Reconstruction plan of undercroft. The profile of the destroyed vaulting ribs is unknown, so the ribs are represented by a single line.

fireplace,¹ as an archaeological investigation during a 1960s rehabilitation of the building discovered two flues in the single chimney breast.² Further proof of the sophistication of this undercroft is found in the surviving evidence for an original two-aisled quadripartite stone vault, removed c.1800.³ All four corner shafts and the scars of the vaulting cells remain, and the excavation unearthed bases of the side wall shafts and the

¹ West's drawing was independently published in 1739, and appears in two accounts of the building: J. Kilner, *The School of Pythagoras*, (Cambridge, c.1790); J.M. Gray, 'The School of Pythagoras (Merton Hall), Cambridge', *Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, Quarto Publ., New Series, 4, 1932, plate 2.5.

² The archaeological work of the 1960s has seen only brief interim publication by the excavator: J. Graham-Campbell, 'The School of Pythagoras (Merton Hall)', *The Eagle* 270 (June 1968). The excavator has kindly allowed full access to his private archive.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

central columns.¹ The excavation also revealed that the building has little in the way of footings and was constructed directly on natural river-gravel, with the undercroft floor being approximately level with the contemporary ground surface.

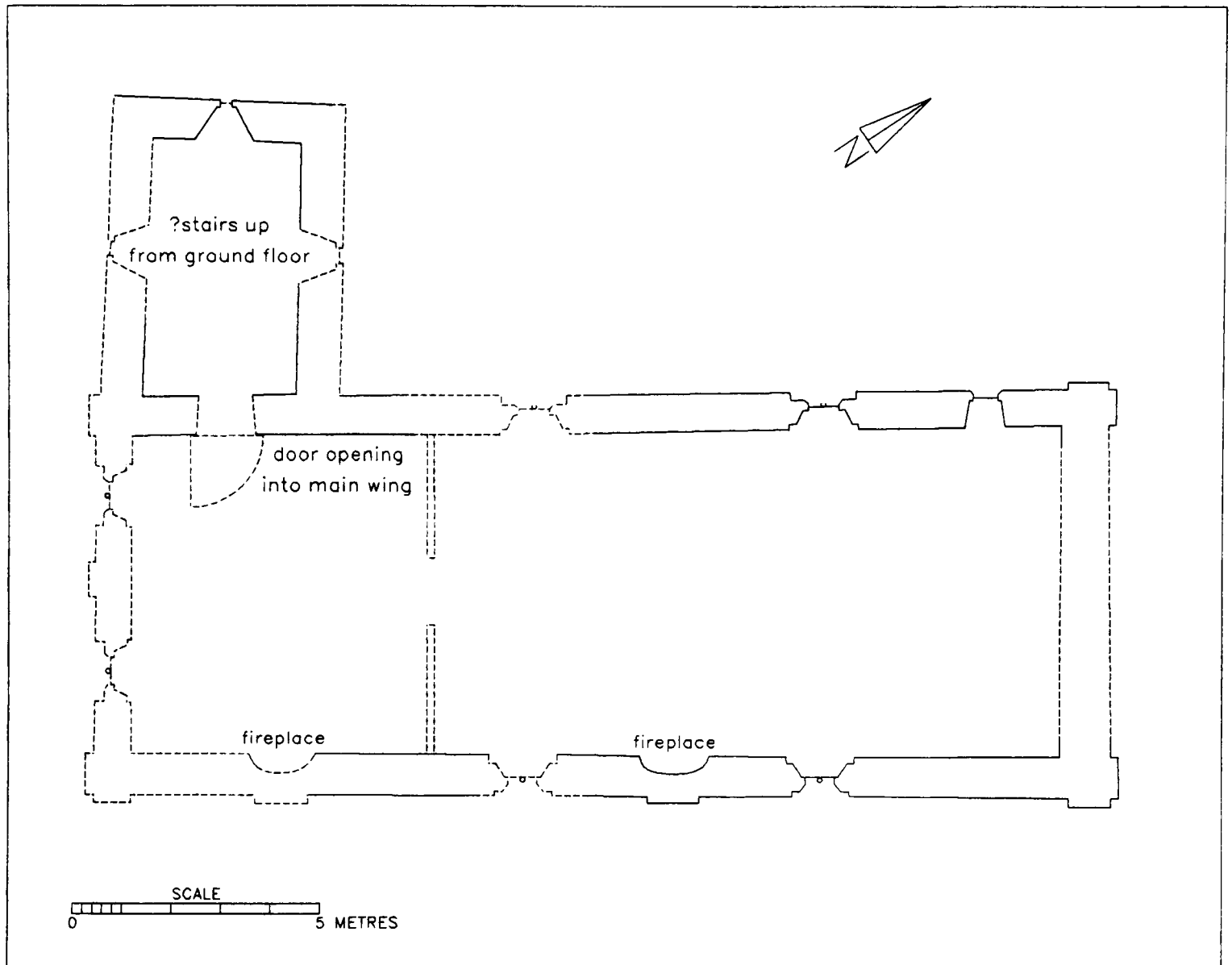


Fig. 6. Merton Hall, Cambridge. Reconstructed first-floor plan.

The interpretation of the upper storey has occasioned more debate in the past, especially over the issue as to whether or not the solar wing was added a few years after the main construction period. A survey of Merton Hall by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England tentatively argues that the two parts are coeval on the basis of an apparently original northwest return: this exterior return is now wholly

¹ The excavated bases are either visible or accessible via hatches in the suspended floor.

inaccessible.¹ On the other hand, Wood and James Graham-Campbell separately concluded that the smaller wing was added in the early thirteenth century.² The observations that led to these different interpretations are valid: it is only the common assumption that the first floor of such a building must necessarily comprise a hall and a solar that needs to be rejected. For example, Graham-Campbell's observation that the surviving jamb of a second first-floor fireplace at the southwest end implies that the main wing comprised two rooms is wholly reasonable,³ and is consistent with the evidence for subdivision provided by the off-centre location of the more intact fireplace. A room warmed by two fireplaces, however, remains at least a possibility. What is less reasonable is the assumption that the duplication of solars afforded by the smaller wing must mean that it is an addition. Indeed, the investigations of the 1960s contradict this since they revealed that the blocked roundheaded opening which contained, up until that time, a fifteenth-century doorway opening into the solar wing, was in fact an earlier doorway.⁴ The form of this doorway is very different from the distinctive late Romanesque windows of c.1200 in that it has a moulded outer order, its jambs extend below the string course marking the sill-level of the first-floor windows, and it has only slightly splayed voussoirs. There is no doubt that the doorway is an original feature, and not, as Graham-Campbell suggests, a 'window converted into a door'.⁵ The absence of a rebate and the splay of the reveals (narrowing on the side away from the main wing) mean that a door

¹ RCHM *City of Cambridge II* (London, 1959), p. 377.

² Wood, *Norman Domestic Arch.*, p. 24; J. Graham-Campbell, 'The School of Pythagoras (Merton Hall)', *The Eagle*, 270, June 1968, pp. 8-9.

³ The jamb is now below a modern theatrical stage, but remains accessible via a trap-door.

⁴ The fifteenth-century doorway has been moved to the corresponding position on the lower storey.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

opening into the 'solar wing' was an impossibility and indicate that the hoodmould-like feature on the main-wing face probably housed a surface mounted door; certainly the door must have opened out of the 'solar wing'. The presence of such an original doorway means that there can be little doubt that the two wings are coeval.

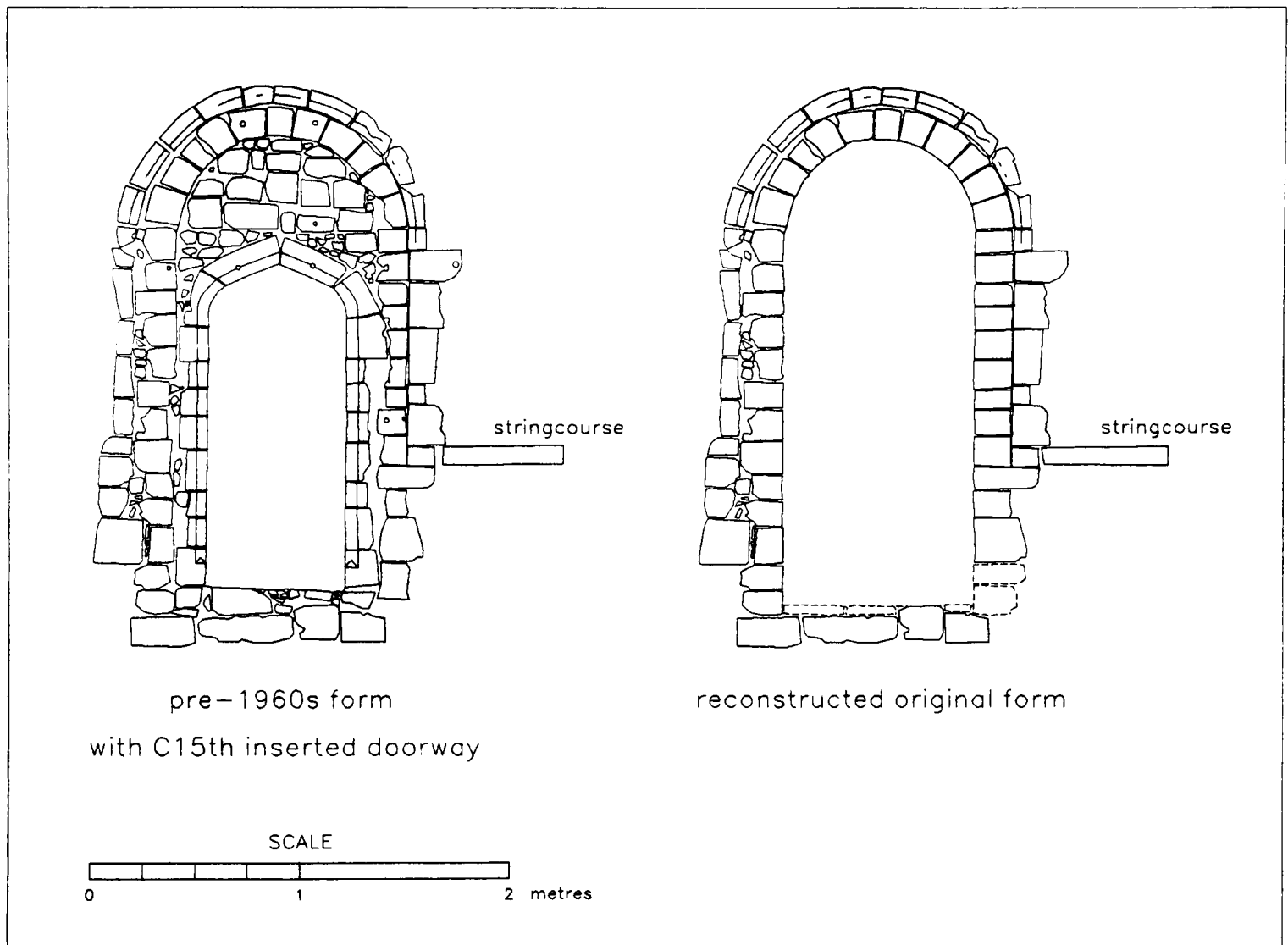


Fig. 7. Merton Hall, Cambridge. Southeast face of the doorway to the so-called solar wing in its state before the 1960s removal of the inserted doorway, and in its reconstructed original form.

Rather than accept the traditional identification of the smaller wing as a solar, however, it is more reasonable to conjecture that it was designed to provide access to the first floor as at Frewin Hall; the house set back from the High Street and Tooley Street, Southwark;¹ and the Music House, Norwich.² The fact that the Romanesque door opened into the larger room

¹ See pp. 381-3.

² See pp. 55-7.

indicates that this was the case: a reversed arrangement would have been adopted for a door opening out of the main wing. Corroboration that this was a porch and stair wing is provided by the lack of any other first-floor doorway. The originality of the doorway in the otherwise late medieval northeast wall is suspect. Although some of the stones forming the return in the northwest corner are *bona fide*, the internal return of the adjacent jamb was entirely rebuilt in the 1960s. Photographs of this area before the repairs show that the coursing was inconsistent and the stones most probably inserted. Furthermore, the chamfered exterior face of this jamb has an identical northeast counterpart in what is otherwise a wholly late medieval wall, whilst evidence for an external staircase at this point is unconvincing. If the smaller wing did function as a porch it is highly probable that it was similar to the forebuilding at Frewin Hall, Oxford, and incorporated a doorway opening into the undercroft: unfortunately, replacement of this area of walling in the late fourteenth century has removed all original features.

Merton Hall provides a substantially intact example of a large domestic range akin to the more fragmentary Frewin Hall, Oxford. The evidence at both buildings for a forebuilding functioning as a two-storey porch and staircase is a sign of architectural sophistication in the urban equivalent of the manor house: it is certainly worth noting that the largest Romanesque chamber block in England at this time - the so-called West Hall of Wolvesey Palace - had adopted a similar arrangement by c.1135-8.¹

Whereas the investigations of the Frewin Hall and Merton Hall are limited by the lack of an archaeological excavation outside the stone-built chamber blocks, excavations in the **Tower Street** (formerly Snitheling Street) area of **Winchester** in 1960 realised in part the potential for discovering remains

¹ *WS 6.ii* (in preparation).

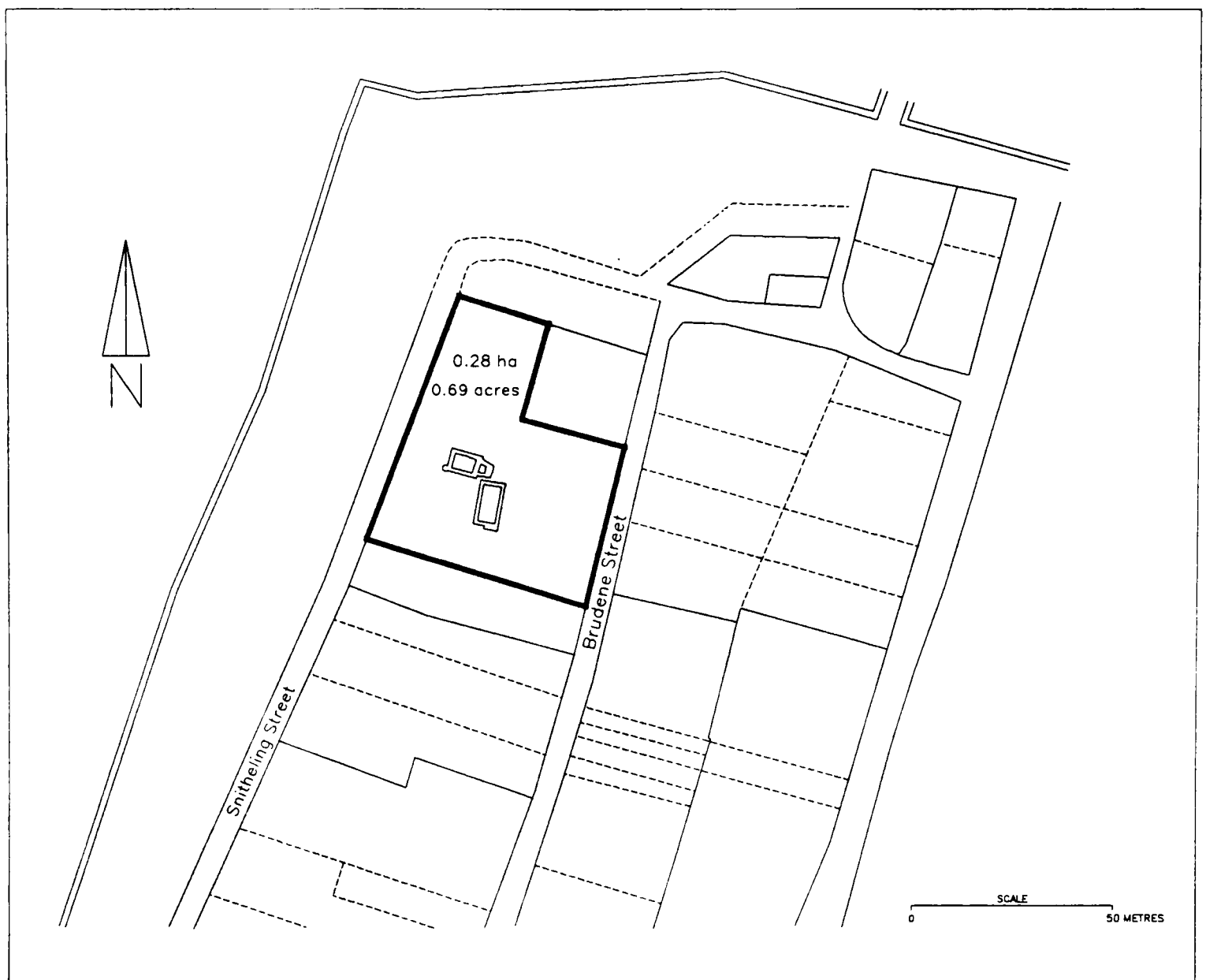


Fig. 8. The excavated structures at Staple Gardens, Winchester. The buildings are shown within the thirteenth-century holding established by Keene (WS 2, pp. 637-41).

of other buildings on urban manor-like sites. Although the archaeological work uncovered only a small proportion of the holding, the plans of a chapel and a house of the twelfth century were established.¹ They have been identified as being part of a property known as *Dorking* by the thirteenth century. At this point *Dorking* was the official residence of the archdeacon of Winchester, and may have been so since the twelfth century.² The chapel or church appears to have been that known by the fifteenth century as *Our Lady in Brudene Street*.³ The juxtaposition of

¹ Known as the Staple Gardens site.

² WS 2, pp. 639-41.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 641.

the two buildings suggests a courtyard plan, but, as the two-storey 'house' was probably a chamber or solar block, and not a first-floor hall as Cunliffe proposed,¹ the archdeacon's property doubtless also comprised a ground-floor hall and ancillary buildings. It is clear, nevertheless, that the stone house was not oriented with regard to Snitheling Street from which it was 37.7m distant: its position was presumably dictated by the adjacent church, to which it was placed at right angles, or by other buildings. An absence of a close relationship to the street frontage, the location of the property in the extreme northwest corner of the walled city, the size of the 0.28 hectare holding, and its identification as the archdeacon's residence in the thirteenth century, if not earlier, cumulatively provide good grounds for supposing that the building had no commercial function.

The analysis of the less than complete excavation has proved contentious, and two different interpretations of the stone house have been published.² Despite the ambiguity and inappropriate terminology of the original excavation report, it is possible to interpret the discoveries with some degree of

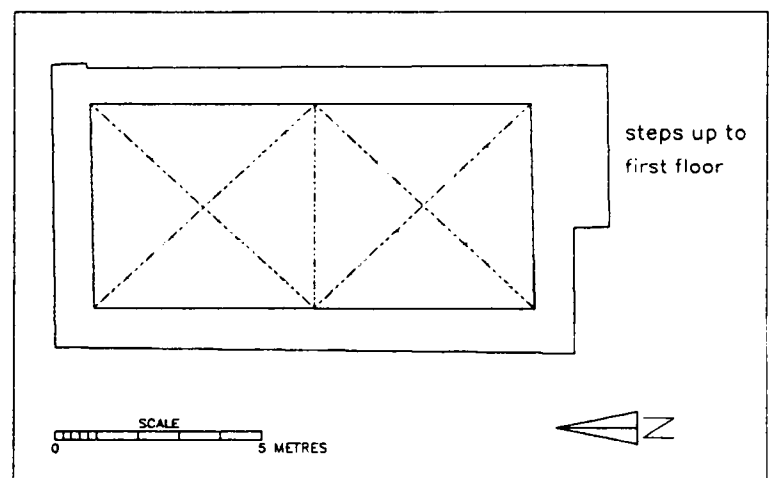


Fig. 9. The excavated undercroft at Staple Gardens, Winchester. The stone vault and the overall dimensions of the steps up to the first floor are reconstructed.

certainty. Three walls of the undercroft of the stone house had been robbed, but the north wall survived up to the contemporary ground level. The exterior foundation trench showed that the twelfth-century ground level was c.2.13m above the chalk floor of the undercroft. The springing

¹ Cunliffe, *Winchester 1949-60*, pp. 166-9.

² *Ibid.*; *WS I*, pp. 346-8.

of a vault at c.1.52m above the floor indicates that the 5.03m wide groin-vault had its apex at 4.04m above floor level, and, allowing for a reasonable vault (no dimensions were recorded for the numerous chalk voussoirs from this vault found within the building) and floor thickness, this gives a first-floor height of c.2.21m above exterior ground level. A wider length of the south wall has been interpreted as the footing of an external stair, that would have provided access to the first floor.¹ No doorways were identified as the walls had largely been robbed, but one could fairly assume that access was in the long side wall on the west. The combination of an external staircase to the first floor and an independently accessed undercroft is that found in the archetypal rural chamber block.

A group of buildings at Deloraine Court, James Street, Lincoln, has been identified as a surviving example of a series of structures on a large urban property, although the ground-level hall and service range were built slightly later than the twelfth-century chamber block.² The location within the Cathedral Close and the lengthy documented occupancy of Deloraine Court by clergy leave little doubt that the building was designed for domestic use only, and this is clearly reflected in its layout. The twelfth-century component consists of a west wing on a north-south axis measuring 29.9m x 6.7m. The ground storey is composed of two undercrofts, even now only slightly sunk into the ground, which had timber ceilings. The joists of these were given central support by arcade plates carried on stone columns. Three surviving columns from this arrangement provide the main dating evidence for the west wing, their scalloped capitals and chamfered bases indicating construction in the second half of the twelfth century. The subdividing wall of the undercrofts does not continue

¹ Cunliffe, *Winchester 1949-60*, p. 167; *WS 1*, p. 347, (note 4).

² Jones, *Lincoln 3*, p. 71.

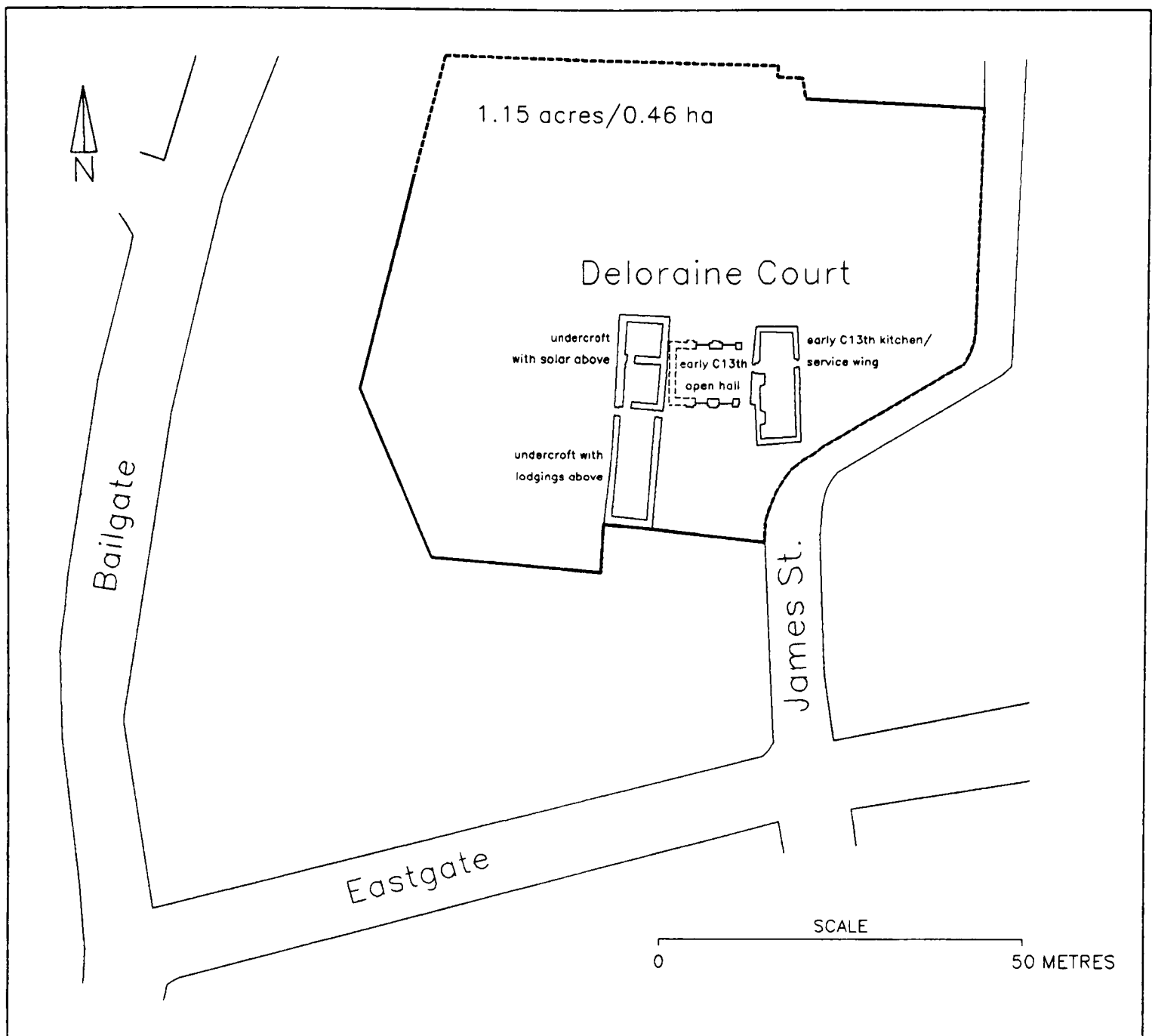


Fig. 10. Deloraine Court, Lincoln. Ground-floor plan of twelfth- and thirteenth-century ranges shown within reconstructed property boundaries.

into the first floor, and there is a relative paucity of twelfth-century details at this higher level. A free-standing cylindrical chimney on the east wall is, however, of this period and corroborates the interpretation of the upper storey as a chamber block.

At right angles to the west wing is the ground-level hall which Wood described as 'Norman',¹ and which Stanley Jones subsequently dated to the early thirteenth century on the basis of several rather contradictory

¹ Wood, *Norman Architecture*, p. 58.

parallels.¹ The hall is attached to the west wing at the point where the Romanesque chimney is located, the joining of the two roofs concealing the chimney. This part of the roof structure is not, however, original: the medieval fabric of the hall stops c.2m short of the west wing. The gap and the obviously free-standing design of the chamber-block chimney imply that the two structures were detached, although Jones favours a westwards continuation of the hall either in stone or timber.² Whether or not the two ranges joined, it is clear that the different axis of ground-floor hall and two-storey chamber block, and their structural independence, precisely correspond to the normal arrangement of rural manor houses of this period.³

A pattern then is discernible in the large urban properties or manors, which correlates with recent work on their rural counterparts. At Merton Hall it is clear that the traditional interpretation of such a building as forming the main domestic structure - comprising undercroft, hall and solar - resulted in misinterpretation of the physical evidence. That even the limited excavations of *Dorking* in Winchester should produce a chapel in addition to a two-storey domestic building, and that the surviving buildings at Deloraine Court should include a ground-level hall and service/kitchen range in addition to a vast chamber, or solar, block, indicate that it is reasonable to assume that the two-storey stone buildings on such properties were simply detached chamber blocks. The building of the hall and kitchen/service ranges at Deloraine Court only half a century or so after the construction of the chamber block could have involved the replacement of timber buildings. Such timber construction of halls could

¹ Jones, *Lincoln* 3, p. 82.

² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

³ Blair, *Hall and Chamber*, pp. 1-21.

account for the survival of chamber blocks alone at Frewin Hall and Merton Hall: similar reasoning, with some documentary support, has been made for the identical situation on rural sites.¹

Chamber blocks

The stone-built chamber block was by no means uniquely suited to the rural or urban manor or to supra-vernacular contexts and could be expected in properties where streetfront trading was combined with burgess accommodation. The survival, or record, of apparently free-standing buildings away from the street need not, therefore, imply a non-commercial function for the premises as a whole, although in the past such structures have been confounded with the surviving buildings from urban manor-like properties. Their locations in the midst of parts of the town identifiable as having a commercial or light-industrial function are the first clue as to their different origins. The evidence of their relationship to tenement boundaries and their design confirms this.

The excavations at **Lower Brook Street** (formerly Tanner Street), **Winchester**, were exceptional not only for revealing, amongst many structures, a pair of stone-built undercrofts away from the street (referred to as Houses I² and III³ in the interim reports), but also for investigating the area around the buildings. As House III is of the thirteenth century, it is only the mid twelfth-century House I that need concern us here. Despite its orientation at right angles to Lower Brook Street, House I did not occupy the full width of a typical medieval long and narrow plot. Instead, it was built at the southern end of a plot which extended as far

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-9.

² M. Biddle, 'Excavations at Winchester 1962-3: Second Interim Report', *Antiq. J.* 44 (1964), pp. 197-200.

³ M. Biddle, 'Excavations at Winchester 1964: Third Interim Report', *Antiq. J.* 45 (1965), p. 248.

north as St Mary's church, thus having a street frontage of c.23.1m. It has been suggested that the absence of property boundaries in the excavation of the pre-Conquest surfaces may indicate that the holding had been larger than this, thus incorporating the church. If indeed the property had been of a scale and function similar to the urban manor-like holdings discussed above, it seems, nevertheless, that by c.1150, when House I was built, the plot consisted of an area of only 0.11 hectares, containing a continuous range of timber buildings along the street frontage. The placing of House I away from this frontage is not comparable to the building of a stone house in the centre of an urban manor, but was simply a necessary setting back of c.7.7m behind an existing timber building on the streetfront.

Archaeological excavations in 1989 in Middle Brook Street, Winchester, revealed a partly subterranean undercroft (c.950mm below contemporary ground level) positioned 7m-9m back from the medieval street at the rear

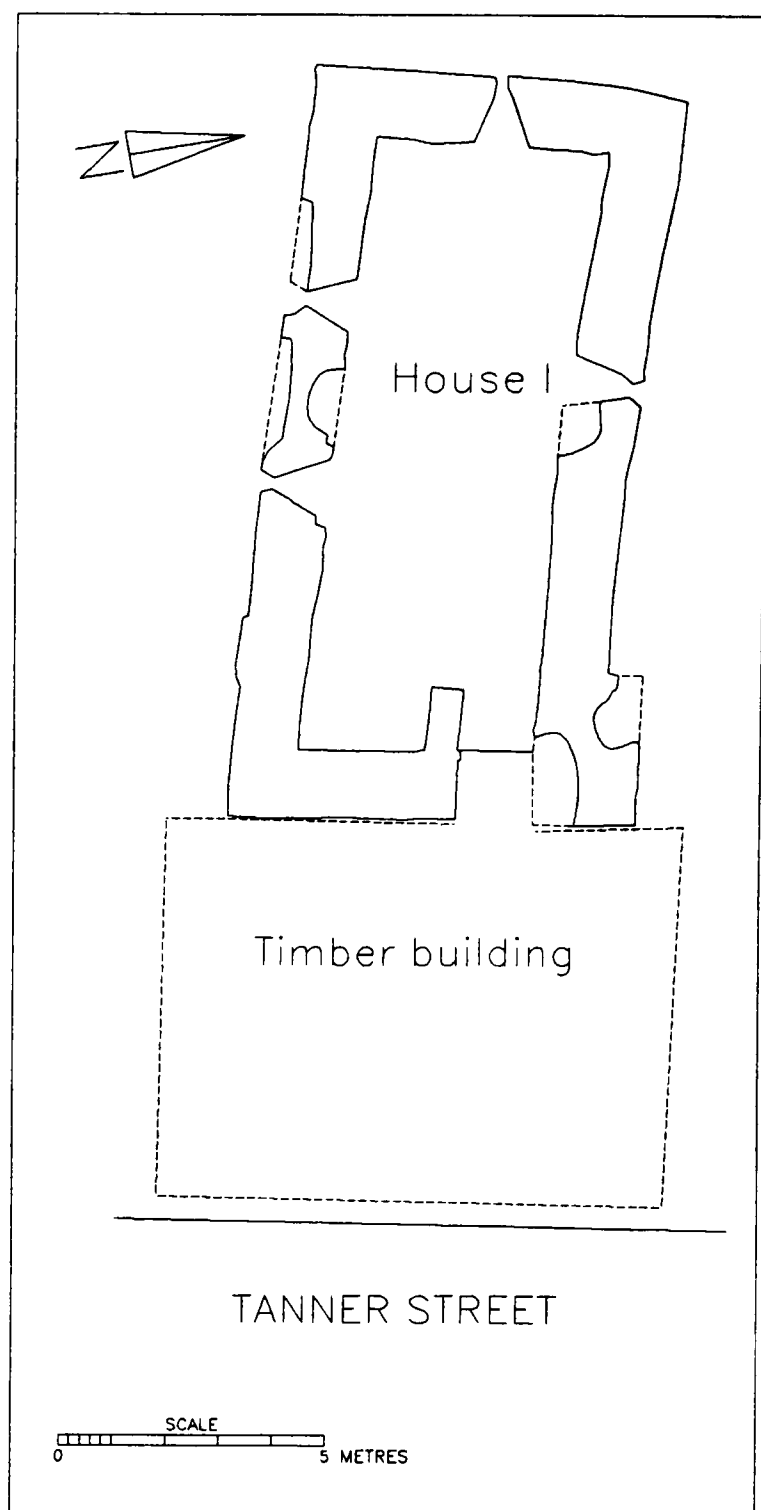


Fig. 11. House I, Lower Brook Street (Tanner Street), Winchester. Plan as revealed by excavation, showing approximate extent of streetfront building existing c.1150.

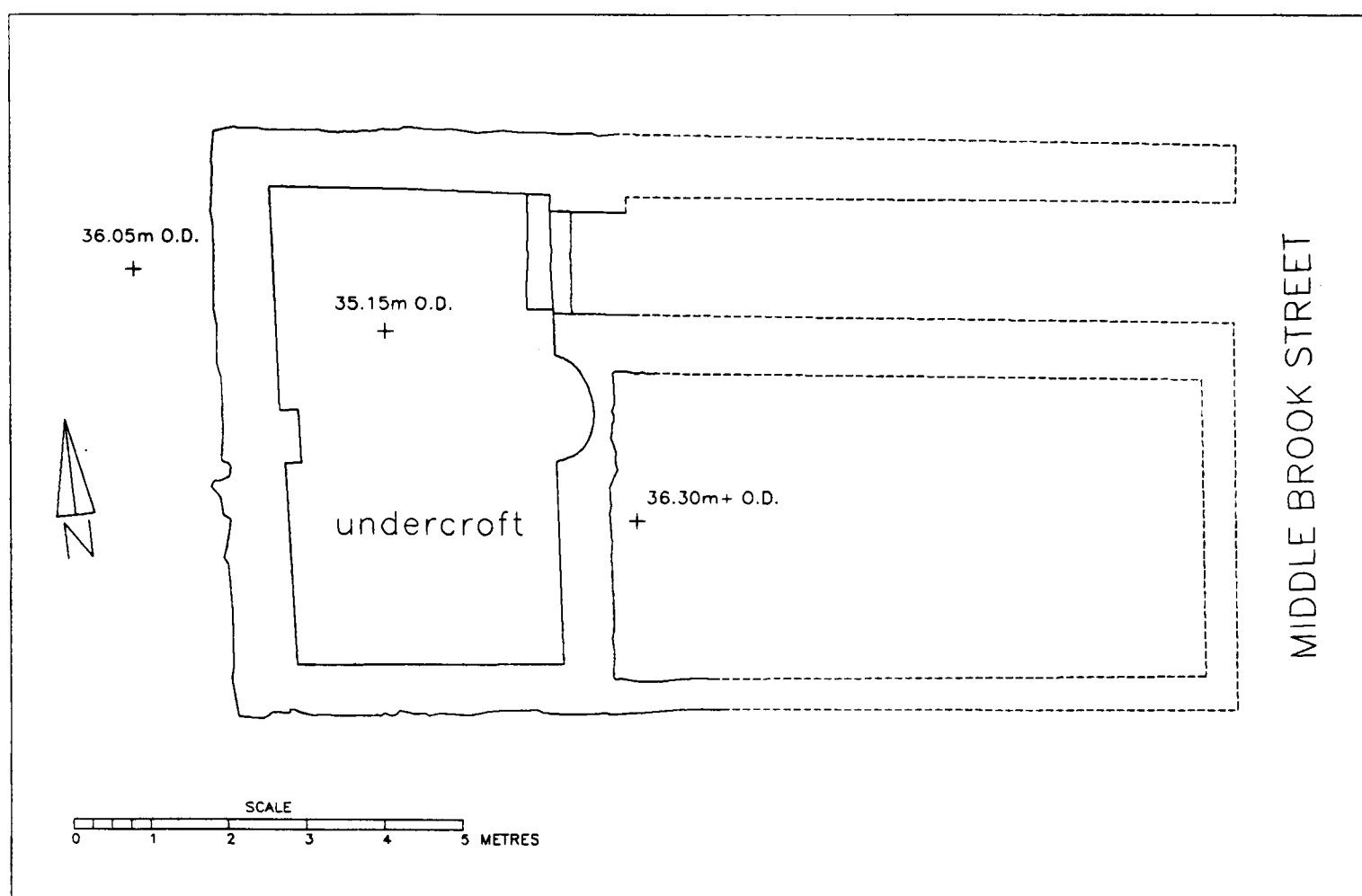


Fig. 12. Site BS89, Tenement 380, Middle Brook Street, Winchester. Plan of excavated undercroft at rear of coeval building: the outline of this streetfront structure is conjectural.

of a contemporary building.¹ A shallow buttress or respond in the centre of the interior face of the west wall of the chalk ashlar undercroft implies that the room was vaulted. Unfortunately, the possible eastern counterpart of this buttress or respond would have been removed by the insertion of a post-medieval well. This building equates with tenement 380 in Keene's gazetteer, and his documentary research identifies the property with that held by Roger the Vintner in 1148.² Although the excavation extended eastwards to show the rear of the streetfront building, the construction of this part of the building is unclear. The side walls continue the line of the undercroft and are also stone-built: the thinning of the south wall at this point indicates, however, that these were simply stone footings for a timber-framed structure. A stone wall, or footing, immediately south of the

¹ Pers. comm. Graham Scobie. The site archive is held by Winchester Museums Service.

² WS 2, pp. 722-3.

doorway to the undercroft is firm evidence of a major structural wall on this line. Such an arrangement most probably reflects the location of a through-passage, but could have been to allow independent access to the undercroft from the street.

24 St Thomas Street (formerly Calpe Street) may be another Winchester example of the two-storey chamber block.¹ The identifiably mid twelfth-century part of the standing building comprises an undercroft measuring 7.9m x 5.2m internally. This has a two-bay quadripartite groin-vault of coursed chalk and limestone ashlar. Of four narrow splayed windows only that on the northeast

remains unblocked. Some limited archaeological excavation has indicated that the now sunken under-

croft was approximately level with the contemporary ground surface.² A building between the undercrofted structure and St Thomas Street has prevented excavation in this area, but probably had a Romanesque precursor. Certainly there is no evidence that this property was anything

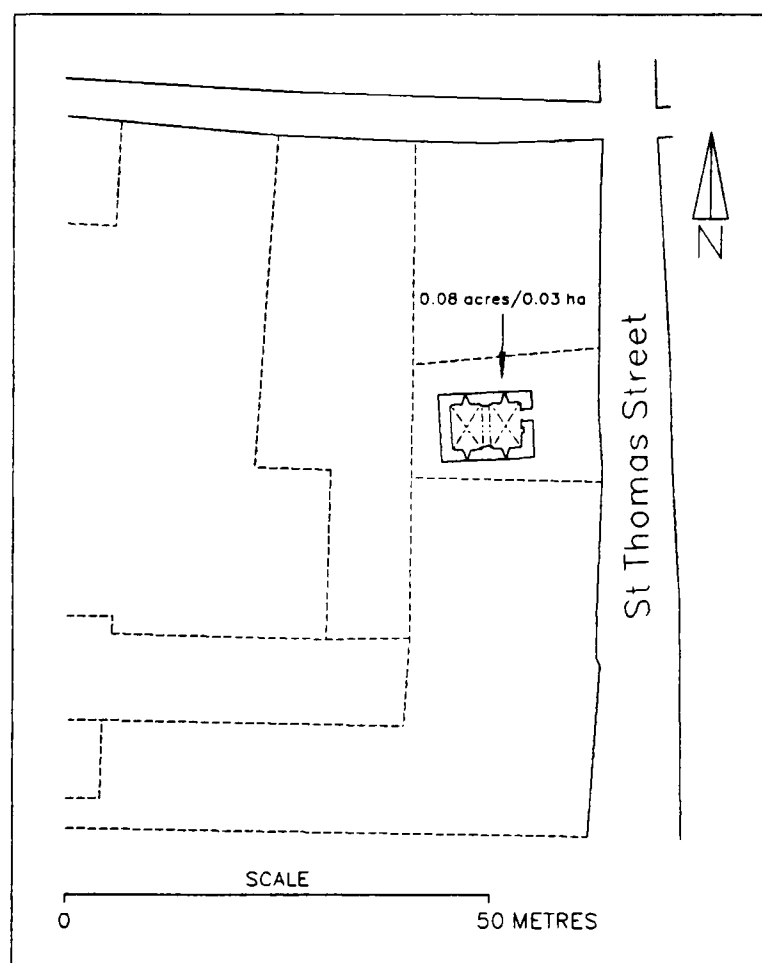


Fig. 13. 24 St Thomas Street, Winchester. Plan of the undercroft shown in relation to c.1300 tenement boundaries established by Keene (WS 2, Fig. 100).

¹ A third rear chamber block in Winchester may be represented by the fragmentary remains of the rear part of a stone structure set a maximum of 29m back from the north side of the High Street near the West Gate. The building was sunk by c.1m at the rear probably in response to the natural slope. The building was excavated in 1984 (Winchester Museums Service archive, site SG84) and has been provisionally dated to c.1100, and would equate with tenements 8 or 9 in Keene's gazetteer; WS 2, pp. 466-7.

² Pers. comm. Graham Scobie.

more substantial than an average tenement: the expansion of the property recorded in the documentary evidence belongs to the fourteenth century.¹

While inconclusive, the physical evidence for the St Thomas Street house conforms to the emerging pattern for chamber blocks on tenement sites. At 8.14m back from the streetfront its location is consistent with the other examples. An original entrance in the east wall only would have allowed access directly from a building between the undercroft and the street, and a lack of fenestration on this side could well result from such an abutment.

A vaulted undercroft was also used at the rear of the former Guildhall, High Street, Canterbury. This surviving structure preserves a central column, several corner shafts, and corbels which provide ample evidence of a quadripartite rib-vault. A date of c.1180 is indicated by the Caen stone column with a scalloped capital, and by the simple water-leaf designs of the capitals of the shafts and corbels. In the 1960s the east and west walls of the northern bays were found by S.E. Rigold to contain splayed windows, while the southern wall contained a doorway, rebated on the south face. He considered the possibility of the Guildhall undercroft forming part of a 'solar-block' to the rear of a hall, and his concern that the latter would be rather large (c.14.2m in length) would be removed if the hall was itself behind shops along the streetfront.² Such a commercial use for the front of the building is not contradicted by the historical evidence, as William Urry is unable to provide any evidence to support his suggestion that the *gilda mercatorum* met in this building in the twelfth century.³ Recent archaeological excavations in the area between the High Street and the twelfth-century undercroft have revealed later medieval stonework

¹ *WS* 2, p. 886.

² S.E. Rigold, 'Two Types of Court Hall', *Arch. Cant.* 83 (1968), p. 10.

³ Urry, *Canterbury*, p. 193.

only, corroborating the idea that the undercroft formed the lower storey of a stone-built chamber block placed behind a timber-framed street range. The semi-subterranean level of the Guildhall undercroft is similar to that of the example excavated in Middle Brook Street, Winchester.¹ In both cases this may result from the need to lower the floor of the upper storey in a chamber block with a vaulted basement to a level appropriate to the more modest storey heights of the streetfront range.

Excavation at the ruined shell of a chamber block, known as the Norman House, behind 48-50

Stonegate, York, was limited to the interior of the undercroft.² As a

consequence the nature of the c.13.9m gap between the street and the structure again remains uncertain. The expected narrow-fronted tenement plots along Stonegate were in existence in the Middle Ages, as evidenced by the numerous medieval buildings occupying such plots today, and it is perhaps reasonable to assume that a similar arrangement existed in the late twelfth century. Stonegate was certainly a principal street in medieval

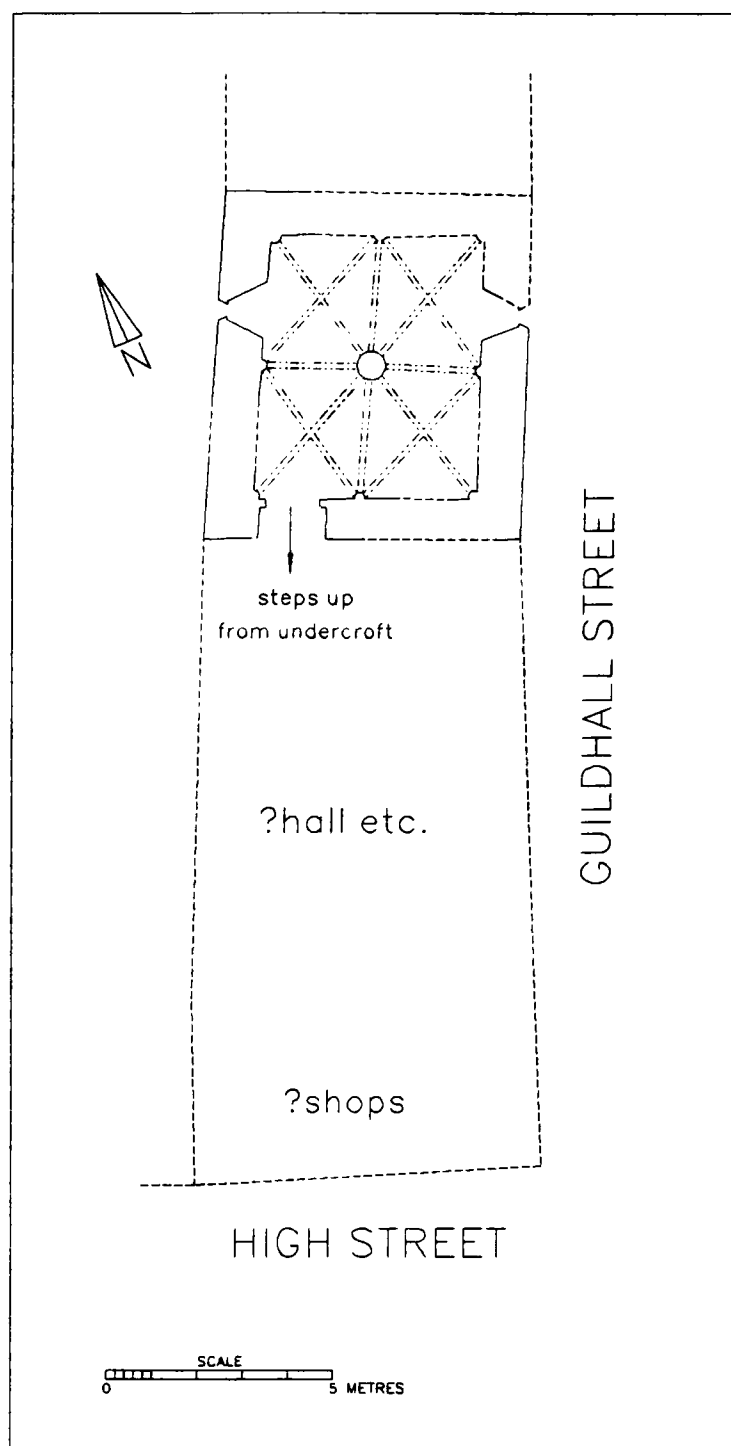


Fig. 14. The Guildhall, High Street, Canterbury. Plan of undercroft showing conjectural limits of the rest of the townhouse.

¹ See above.

² J. Stuart Syme, 'The Most Ancient Dwelling House in York', *Yorkshire Architectural and Archaeological Society Annual Report 1951-2* (1952), pp. 36-9.

York, and this is reflected in its name which implies a stone-paved street and which was recorded in 1118-19.¹

The southwest wall of the Norman House lies on a property boundary and, as the building is at right angles to the street, it is likely that the present plot perpetuates the twelfth-century arrangement.² Equally, it can be argued that it is probable that the surviving timber-framed building occupying the whole space between the Norman House and Stonegate is a direct replacement of an earlier building. On analogy with the example at

Lower Brook Street, Winchester, this could have predated the construction of the two-storey rear building. This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact that of the two surviving standing walls, only that overlooking the rear of the adjacent plot has windows. The gabled wall abutting the street range is sufficiently intact to reveal that the only opening in it was a possible doorway to the undercroft at the eastern end.

If then, as appears most probable, the timber-framed building simply replaces an earlier structure, it may be highly significant that the part immediately adjoining the Norman House is a somewhat mutilated former

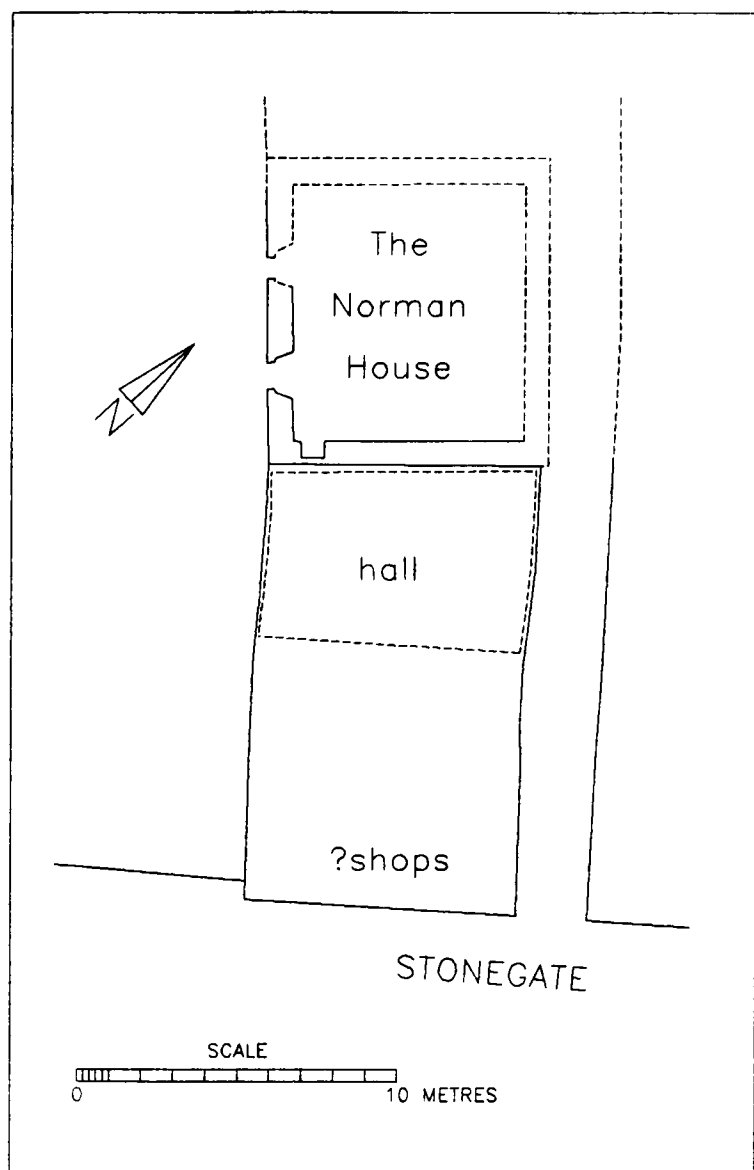


Fig. 15. The Norman House, 48-50 Stonegate, York. Plan showing surviving fabric, reconstructed form, and location of later hall.

¹ RCHM York V, *The Central Area* (London, 1981), p. 220.

² The excavations of the House I area at Lower Brook Street, Winchester, are a salutary reminder that twelfth-century plots could be considerably wider.

open hall at ground level, of late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century date. This implies that at that date, and possibly from the outset, the Norman House was a two-storey chamber block. The timber-ceiled undercroft beneath the solar could have functioned as the service room for the hall or, more probably in view of its considerable size, as a commercial undercroft in the usual manner, accessed from the street by the narrow passage on the northeast side which still exists.¹

A similar arrangement survived at the Foundry Yard, High Street, Colchester, until its demolition in 1886.² An excellent photographic record and measured drawings made during the dismantling have preserved sufficient detail to allow inclusion of this building.³ The ground floor of the stone structure comprised a barrel-vaulted undercroft sunk c.1.6m below the contemporary ground surface. At the north (rear) end a doorway in the north-east corner provided access to a small chamber c.1.6-1.7m square, which may have functioned as a staircase or a room providing security in an otherwise accessible undercroft.⁴ Another doorway in the centre of this wall had a semicircular arch but the nineteenth-century account of its phasing is ambiguous.⁵ More significantly, a flight of steps towards the front led, via a narrow lateral chamber, up to a doorway presumably level with the contemporary ground surface. This roundheaded

¹ Another possible example of a stone chamber block in York was found by excavation at 1-5 Aldwark. It measured at least 3.3m by 8m and was set back from the street by a maximum of 11m. Since its front wall was not located it could have been a similar building to the Stonegate example or, less likely, a 19m long building extending to the street frontage: H. Macgregor and R.A. Hall, 'Structures Adjacent to 1-5 Aldwark', in R.A. Hall, H. Macgregor, and M. Stockwell, 'Medieval Tenements in Aldwark, and Other Sites', *The Archaeology of York* 10/2 (1988), pp. 63-88.

² Two other Romanesque buildings in Colchester (the stone houses at Pelham's Lane and Lion Walk) may have been rear chamber blocks set back from principal streets, but their position directly on side streets means that such an interpretation is by no means certain: see pp. 320-2.

³ Crummy has collected together these sources and has produced a useful isometric drawing of the known features of the building: P. Crummy, 'Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester', *CBA Research Report* 39 (1981), pp. 54-9.

⁴ For similar chambers elsewhere, see p. 240 (note 2).

⁵ P. Crummy, 'Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester', *CBA Research Report* 39 (1981), p. 54.

doorway survived intact until 1886 and formed the only identifiably twelfth-century aperture in the south wall. In view of the fact that the only other feature in this c.4.9m high wall was an apparently post-medieval doorway, it seems reasonable to assume that an absence of fenestration resulted from the presence of a building between this two-storey block and the street *ab initio*. Allowing for later medieval encroachment onto the High Street, this forebuilding would have measured c.10m front to rear.¹ In view of its location at the commercial heart of the town it can be expected that the street-front structure had at least a partly commercial function. The scale

of the undercroft at the rear raises the possibility that this also was not designed purely for domestic use.

Recent excavations at 84-5 High Street, Worcester, exposed remains of an undercroft c.20m west of the modern street frontage.² A substantial part

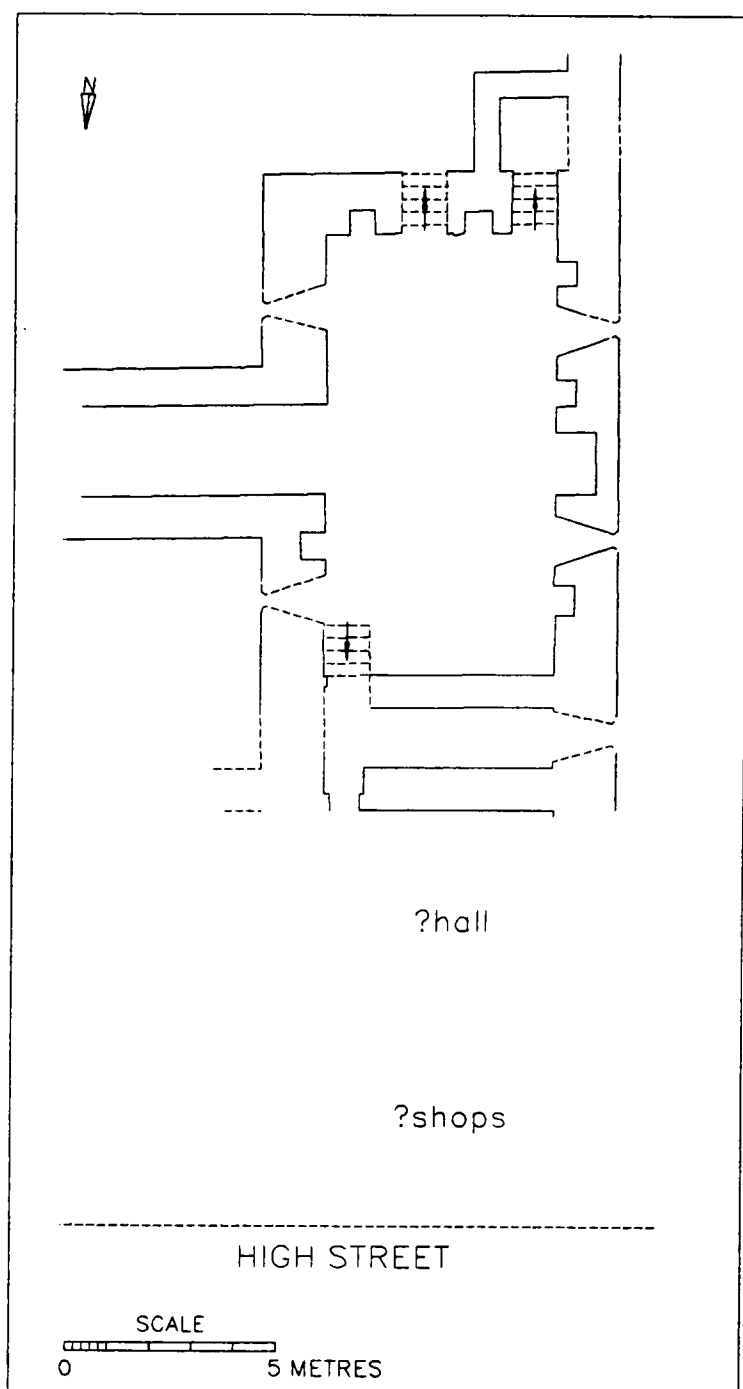


Fig. 16. Chamber block at Foundry Yard, High Street, Colchester. Plan of undercroft showing probable twelfth-century street line.

¹ The recorded encroachment of the Moot Hall (c.56m east of the Foundry Yard building) in the late fourteenth century seems to have been part of encroachment along much of the north side of the High Street to the west of West Stockwell Street: W.G. Benham (ed.), *The Red Paper Book of Colchester* (Colchester, 1902).

² C.H. Dalwood, 'Salvage Recording of a Medieval Stone Undercroft and Cellars at 84-85 High Street, Worcester', *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, 3rd series, 13 (1992), pp. 167-72.

of the east wall and only a fragment of the adjoining north wall survived, but to a sufficient height (2.6m) to show that the building was a two-storey chamber block, although the excavator has suggested that it formed the substructure to a timber first-floor hall.¹ The east wall was built of ashlar in which it was clear a doorway had been placed or rebuilt.² The north jamb and two voussoirs survived, as did the lower courses on the south side. The position of the rebate reveals that the door opened inwards as expected, and a lack of evidence of steps is consistent with Dalwood's suggestion that the undercroft was at ground level.

To the north of the doorway the surviving wall showed no signs of fenestration which indicates that the building was built-up against a streetfront range; there cannot have been much room to the south of the door for any windows (Fig. 17). An inserted mid twelfth-century vaulting shaft with a scalloped cushion capital and an *in situ* chamfered rib shows that the undercroft had a rib vault. As with the Norman House, York, the side entry may well be an early medieval feature and, thus, direct access from the High Street may have been possible.

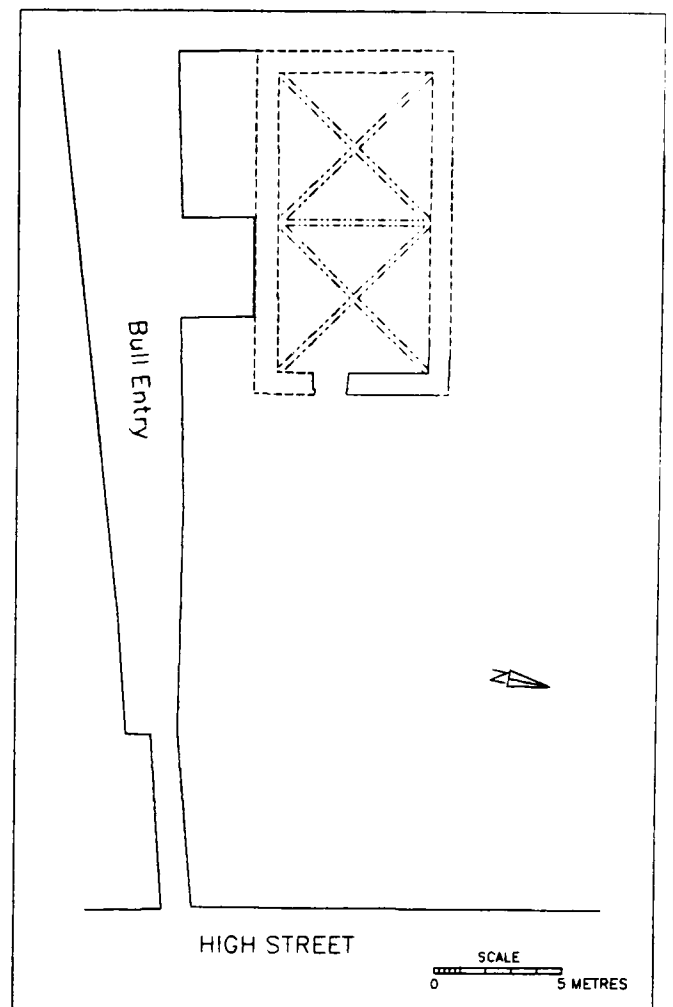


Fig. 17. 84-5 High Street, Worcester. Plan of excavated undercroft showing possible vaulting arrangement and the modern form of Bull Entry.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

² Dalwood's suggestion that the previous phase was 'a simple cellar, with access through the floor of the building above', is extremely improbable, particularly in view of the likely position of the undercroft at ground level: *ibid.*, p. 171.

There is, then, considerable evidence for the presence of stone-built chamber blocks on properties in central urban locations.¹ None of these tenements approaches the size of an urban manor, with the largest - House I, Lower Brook Street, Winchester - probably consisting of a domestic range behind a continuously built-up commercial frontage. It is the location of these chamber blocks, directly behind ranges of buildings extending to the streetfront and in areas of the town dominated by the distributive trades and industrial activity, that most clearly distinguishes them from their grander counterparts. As with the urban manor-like properties it is unfortunate that the other, presumably timber-built, elements of these townhouses do not survive: the only ground-level hall of this period on such a narrow plot was the stone-built example formerly at 36 Corn Street/28 St Nicholas Street, Bristol.² Unlike chamber blocks on 'urban manors', however, it cannot be assumed that those on tenement plots along the principal streets were invariably associated with ground-level halls. At Tenement 380, Middle Brook Street; House I, Lower Brook Street; and 24 St Thomas Street, Winchester, there is insufficient space between the chamber block and the street for the siting of a hall and, in the absence of doorways in any but the front wall, no reason to believe that halls were placed to the rear. The probable absence of a ground-level hall from these sites does not mean that the upper floor of the so-called chamber block assumed the role of a hall. As the development of the cross-passage indicates, the hall functioned as the point of access to other parts of the medieval house as much as being the principal room and it is clear that the first-floor of the chamber block was not such a point of

¹ Further possible examples include Building S1 at 8-9 Pride Hill, Shrewsbury, and the building on Site 7, Crowngate, Worcester: see (respectively) pp. 369-70, and pp. 412-13.

² This hall, however, was a grand stone-built structure positioned c.16.5m from St Nicholas Street and c.33.5m from Corn Street (the more probable frontage of the plot), and appears to have been wholly freestanding: R.H. Leech, *The Town House in Medieval and Early Modern Bristol*, forthcoming.

entry. Furthermore, the standing examples of streetfront ranges of this period that incorporate ground-level shops reveal that the chamber overlooking the street was the principal room.¹ Where there is a strong possibility for the presence of open halls between shop and chamber block (the Guildhall, Canterbury; the Norman House, York; 84-5 High Street, Worcester; and Foundry Yard, Colchester) the function of the solar over the shop is unknown, although it could have been held, as was subsequently to be the norm, with the shops below. While there remain substantial uncertainties regarding the structures in which these chamber blocks were located, the facts that they placed a substantial part of the residence away from the street and were located on commercial streets makes it abundantly apparent that they were townhouses that were used in the distributive trades. There can thus be little justification for the traditional confusion of the two forms of townhouse in which chamber blocks are found.

Grand suburban houses: the evidence from Wigford, Lincoln

Just as the survival of a chamber block set back from the street does not necessarily imply a purely residential function for the whole tenement, the location of a townhouse on a principal and built-up streetfront did not always reflect a commercial *raison d'être*. The well-known suburbs at Canterbury, Lincoln, Oxford, and Southampton, as revealed by documentation and excavation, demonstrate that building away from the commercial heart of the town was not necessarily restricted to the poor, especially in this period before the widespread construction of town walls.² That these

¹ For discussion of principal rooms, see pp. 273-9.

² At Southampton, the disappearance of substantial suburban houses following the construction of the town wall is well-established. That this should occur in spite of the smallness of the walled town (only 48.5 acres excluding the castle) is perhaps more reflective of the coastal town's vulnerability to attack than symptomatic of a universal (continued...)

houses need not have followed the model of the urban manor-like property by being set back within the holding, but could have been imposing buildings occupying streetfront locations as indicated by two buildings in the suburb of Wigford at Lincoln.

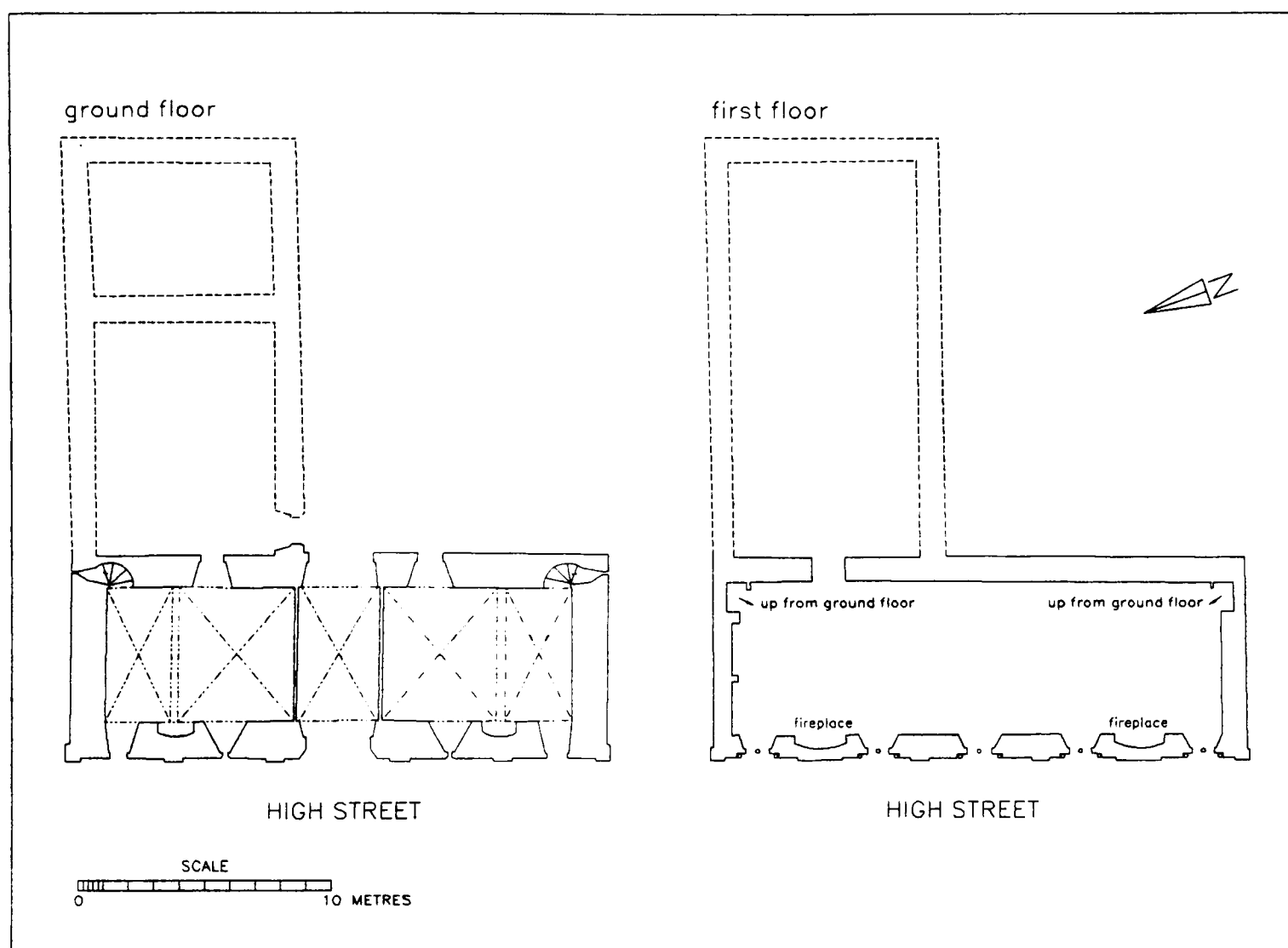


Fig. 18. St Mary's Guildhall, High Street, Wigford, Lincoln. Reconstructed plans based on those in Stocker, *St Mary's Guildhall*, Fig. 34.

St Mary's Guildhall, Lincoln, is a rare Romanesque building not only in terms of its sophistication and preservation, but also as a standing townhouse of this period that has undergone a thorough investigation.¹ This has included excavation, stone-by-stone recording, dendrochronological dating, comparative analysis of mouldings on both *in situ* and excavated

¹ There is no connection with the Guild of St Mary's before 1251/2. The earliest document certainly relating to the building, a 1228 grant of John the Marshall, precludes any public or civic function at this date: C.P.C. Johnson in Stocker, *St Mary's Guildhall*, pp. 5-7.

stonework, and documentary research.¹ Most importantly, this work has established that the twelfth-century building did indeed comprise at least two ranges: that is, although the much debated Norman House to the rear was found to be of late medieval date, it was built on the foundations of a twelfth-century north range (Fig. 18). However, the western range of this L-shaped plan is that which is most intact and consists of two groin-vaulted undercrofts separated by a carriageway, with a single first-floor room running across all three ground-level elements. This principal room at first-floor level was accessed via spiral staircases in the northeast and southeast corners. A range of five evenly spaced two-light windows overlooked the High Street and two fireplaces were located on this side of the room. The decorative stonework is consistent with such a sophisticated building and comparative analysis drawing on other Lincolnshire buildings and especially the west front of Lincoln Cathedral has established a date range of 1150-70 for ~~this~~ ^{the} construction of the west range of St Mary's Guildhall, with some grounds for favouring a date early in this period.²

While the physical evidence for the original form of St Mary's Guildhall has been so thoroughly explored, the interpretation is open to some queries. A lack of documentation firmly identified as relating to this property has not prevented some bold claims being made for the origins of the building. David Stocker's arguments for St Mary's Guildhall being Henry II's *hospicium* and the location of Henry's crown-wearing feast of 1157 seem to stem from a belief in the unique, even 'palatial',³ scale and form of this townhouse.⁴ While St Mary's Guildhall is larger than commercial townhouses in the city centre, it is clearly not of a size

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

comparable only with great castle halls.¹ It is particularly worth stressing that the suggested scale of the urban manor-like complexes discussed at the beginning of this chapter exceeds that of St Mary's Guildhall, and that these buildings also adopt a layout consisting of discrete ranges. At Deloraine Court, Lincoln, for example, the chamber block alone offers 130m² of floor area for each storey, with the total floor area of the three surviving ranges measuring 462m². This compares with 115m² per storey for the western range and 114m² for the northern range at St Mary's Guildhall. Far from being 'half the size' of the Wigford building,² the chamber blocks at Merton Hall (Cambridge), Frewin Hall (Oxford), and *Dorking* (Winchester) are indicative of much larger dwellings of the Deloraine Court type. Moreover, several of the commercial townhouses of this period are of a scale comparable to St Mary's Guildhall. For example, at the Norman House, Cuckoo Lane, Southampton, the largest room had an area of 118m² and, overall, the building measured at least 221m² per floor; excavated evidence of a rear wing implies that this building may have been up to twice this size.³ The nearby King John's Palace, Southampton, had a floor area of 179m², with the largest single room measuring 89m². There is then little reason to conclude that St Mary's Guildhall was of a grander scale than the largest townhouses to be expected in any town of importance and certainly, in the absence of a single piece of firm evidence, there are no grounds for supposing that it was a royal house.

There are, nonetheless, significant differences between St Mary's Guildhall and the other types of large-scale townhouse. Although no attempt was made to utilise this building for commercial purposes, St

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ See pp. 60-2.

Mary's Guildhall differed from urban manor-like properties in that it was built with the principal room overlooking the street. In view of the building's location within the wealthy suburb of Wigford it seems most reasonable to suggest that St Mary's Guildhall represents the development of a new type of grand townhouse with a purely domestic function, but which did not attempt to replicate the layout of rural manor houses.



Fig. 19. St Andrew's Hall, High Street, Wigford, Lincoln. Watercolour by Moses Griffiths of the building before demolition in 1783.

One building does not justify a separate category of townhouse, and it is fortunate that a similarly dated and equally sophisticated house stood almost opposite St Mary's Guildhall. A watercolour now in the Usher Art Gallery, Lincoln, by a respected topographical artist, Moses Griffiths, depicts a large two-storey Romanesque townhouse, St Andrew's Hall, which has been identified as the property on the south corner of Gaunt Street

and the High Street, Wigford.¹ Using this source in conjunction with notes on the structure by E.J. Willson,² which describe a two-aisled vaulted undercroft, there is enough information on which to base a reconstruction. A slight modification only is needed to the drawings undertaken by Jones:³ allowance should be made for a grand staircase up to the upper storey as this is implied by the large front doorway and the corresponding lack of first-floor fenestration in the end bay. Although the building replacing St Andrew's Hall has, in turn, been superseded by an Edwardian structure, an *ex situ* two-ordered arch of late twelfth-century form, almost certainly originating from a doorway in the medieval building, has survived.⁴

That these two buildings in Wigford may represent a new type of grand townhouse, perhaps occasioned by the rapid development of towns at this period, does not mean that such houses were necessarily confined to the wealthy suburban areas. In view of the highly developed property market and the consequent high values placed on street frontages in the town centres, however, it is likely that suburbs like Wigford offered greater scope for such enterprises. Although Keene has suggested that several of the properties in Milk Street, off the west end of Cheapside, London, were fronted by residences there is no evidence of these being on the grand scale of the Wigford buildings.⁵

¹ C.L. Exley and D.M. Williamson, 'Some notes on St Andrew's Hall, Wigford', *Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society* 6 (1955), p. 118.

² *Ibid.*

³ Jones, *Lincoln* 3, p. 145 (Fig. 128).

⁴ Currently incorporated in the rear wall of a first-floor room.

⁵ D. Keene, 'The Character and Development of the Cheapside Area; an Overview', in J. Schofield, P. Allen, and C. Taylor, 'Medieval buildings and property development in the area of Cheapside', *LAMAS* 41 (for 1990; published 1993), pp. 185-93.

TOWNHOUSES DESIGNED FOR THE DISTRIBUTIVE TRADES

The characteristics of urban manor-like properties, grand suburban houses, and chamber blocks defined in this chapter mean that these building types can be easily distinguished from buildings, or parts of buildings, used by the distributive trades. The location of the latter is important: ubiquitous streetfront locations on small and conjoining plots identical to those occupied by commercial townhouses documented in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are symptomatic of such commercial townhouses, but not unique to them. The examples of industrial buildings in Lower Brook Street, Winchester, and numerous documentary examples,¹ are reminders that streetfront plots were not exclusively fronted by retail and wholesale outlets. Unfortunately, a dearth of streetfront excavations of similar scale to that at Lower Brook Street means that, as yet, the popularity of townhouses of this category, and their integration with shops and residences cannot be appreciated, and this particular tenement type must await future analysis. In view of the possible presence of industrial buildings it is important that the analysis of the Romanesque townhouse used in the distributive trades should concern only buildings that appear, beyond reasonable doubt, to have functioned as such. As convincing as the location of the building is the architectural evidence that can be found for the distributive trades. This is seen most clearly in the early development of the split-level arrangement, but also in the use of street-level shopfronts of a form found in Europe throughout the medieval period.

¹ Such as the forges of c.1110 in Winchester; *WS* 1, pp. 44 and 339.

Ground-level townhouses

Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries the towns of France and possibly much of Europe were dominated by a house type that combined areas for the sale of goods and for domestic use, and that, for the sake of convenient differentiation from the split-level townhouse, will be referred to as the ground-level townhouse.¹ This comprised a building directly on the streetfront with a ground floor for commercial use and domestic accommodation on the floor, or floors, above. The universal attraction of this straightforward arrangement is well attested by its appearance in principal thoroughfares from classical to modern times. It is little wonder, therefore, that the ground-level townhouse should be found in England, especially during the strongly international climate of architecture in the twelfth century. The admittedly fragmentary evidence from England suggests that the resemblance to French townhouses extended well beyond the basic arrangement of the house and that the twelfth-century traveller to both Lincoln and Cluny, for example, might have found a notable consistency in the appearance of the main streets.

The façade of the ground-level townhouse on the continent is typified by a wide-arched opening, or an arcade of several arches, on the ground storey, with an adjacent doorway providing access to the domestic part of the house (Figs. 20 and 21). The upper storeys of these houses are distinguished by impressive, and occasionally continuous, ranges of windows. 25 rue de la République, Cluny, is one of the most intact examples of the basic form of this townhouse type. Within its arched opening to the ground-level undercroft are low walls and restored windows and doors. The originality of the stonework carrying the windows reveals

¹ Sournia and Vayssettes use the term *maison élémentaire* in their survey of Montpellier: Sournia, *Montpellier*, pp. 50-63.



Fig. 20. 25 rue de la République, Cluny.



Fig. 21. Maison de la Vaute, 19 Place de Cygne, Chartres.

that the arched frontage was almost certainly given similar treatment from the outset, albeit doubtless with more substantial medieval joinery. On one side of the undercroft opening, there is a simple doorway which opens onto a flight of steps up to the principal domestic room (*salle*). Elsewhere in Cluny the enclosed staircase is often provided with natural light via small windows (*fenêtres bâtarde*s) over the street entrance, as at the **Maison Romane**, *petite rue de Lamartine*. Also, there are instances of doorways connecting undercrofts with these stairs, such as those found at the **Hôtel des Monnaies**, *rue d'Avril* (Fig. 22). Where these doorways are absent the undercroft formed a self-contained unit suitable for separate leasing as a shop or workshop. Again, a lack of contemporary written records has meant that such a function has had to be extrapolated backwards from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century examples: this is a straightforward

process in a country where the ground-level townhouse was the dominant type throughout the medieval period. The consistently flamboyant nature of the fenestration on the street side of the first-floor room (at 25 rue de la République in the form of a finely carved range of seven windows - the *claire-voie*) reflects the status of this room within the house: where more floors were added, as at 4 rue Josephine Desbois or 9 and 11 rue du Merle, it is the first-floor *salle* which usually retained the most sophisticated architectural detail. Development of the basic two-storey Romanesque house in Cluny was not confined to vertical multiplication of the domestic floors, but also included the construction of wider townhouses with multiple undercrofts. The Hôtel des Monnaies, rue d'Avril, is the best preserved of these and incorporates two undercrofts, the entrances of which form a rudimentary arcade.

Romanesque townhouses in France are obviously by no means limited to Cluny, and other concentrations survive at Charlieu (Loire), Figeac (Lot), Montpellier (Hérault), Périgueux (Dordogne), and Toulouse (Haute-Garonne). The ground-level townhouse of the Cluny type was ubiquitous during this period, although it must be noted that outside Cluny there is a higher density of buildings with more than one undercroft. For example, 4 rue du Chapeau-Rouge (Fig. 22), 7 rue Rey and 15 rue École-de-Pharmacie are three of Montpellier's simpler early medieval townhouses and yet all have two undercrofts, albeit with narrower arcaded openings.¹

On the evidence of the nine English Romanesque townhouses with their lower storeys at street level and which preserve at least part of their façades, it appears that similar wide-arched openings to shops could have been as common in ground-level townhouses here as they were on the continent. Nowhere is this seen clearer than at the nearly intact façade

¹ Sournia, *Montpellier*, pp. 59-63.

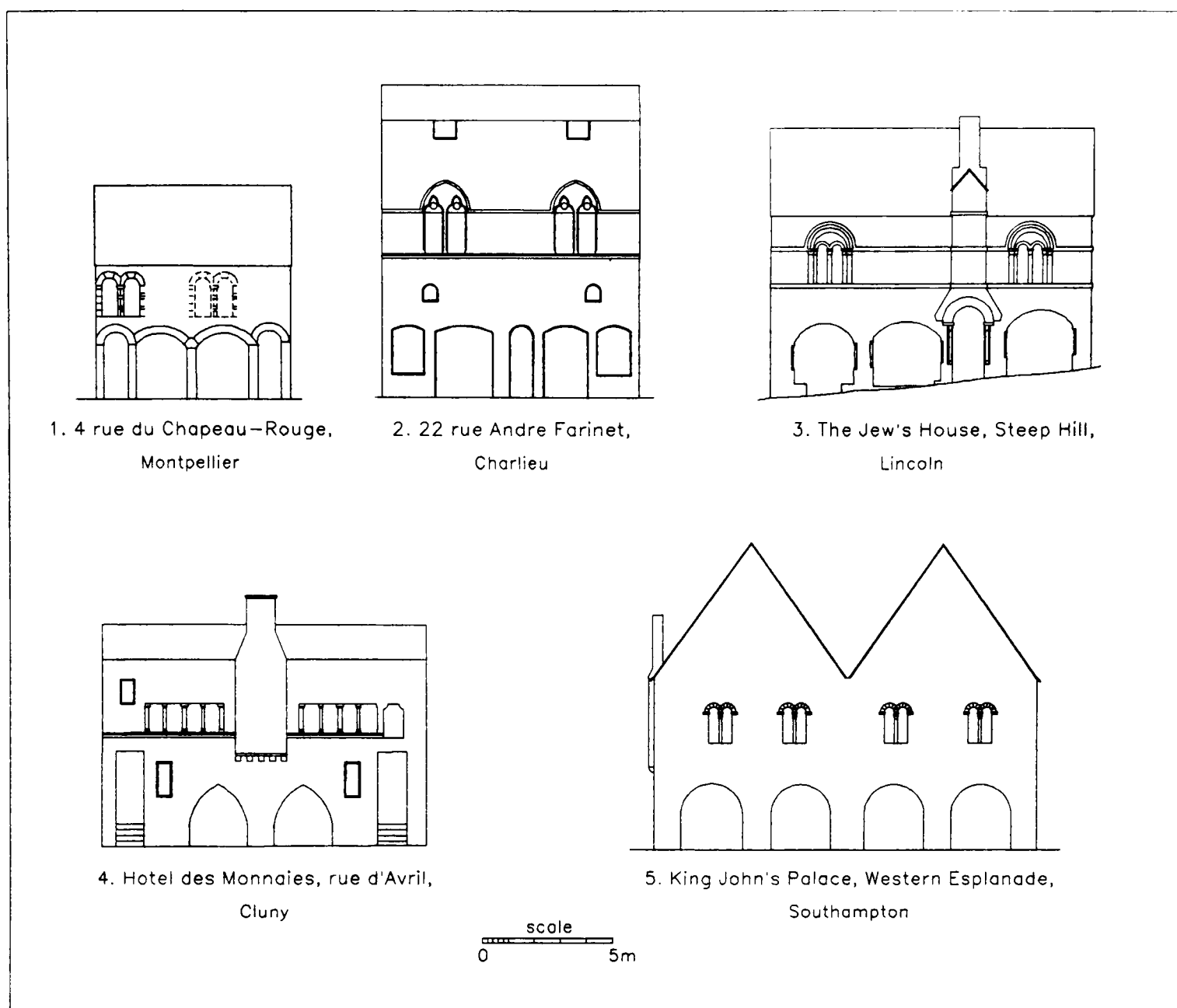


Fig. 22. Comparative reconstructed elevations of examples of English and French ground-level townhouses showing common usage of arcaded frontages.

of the so-called **Jew's House**, 1 Steep Hill/15 The Strait, Lincoln: a building which despite, or perhaps because of, its fame has previously escaped archaeological recording and analysis.

The stone façade of the Jew's House has undergone post-medieval alterations in the form of the insertion of the present shop windows, the creation of an entrance to the added cellar, and the replacement of the central window at first-floor level, but otherwise is a largely complete

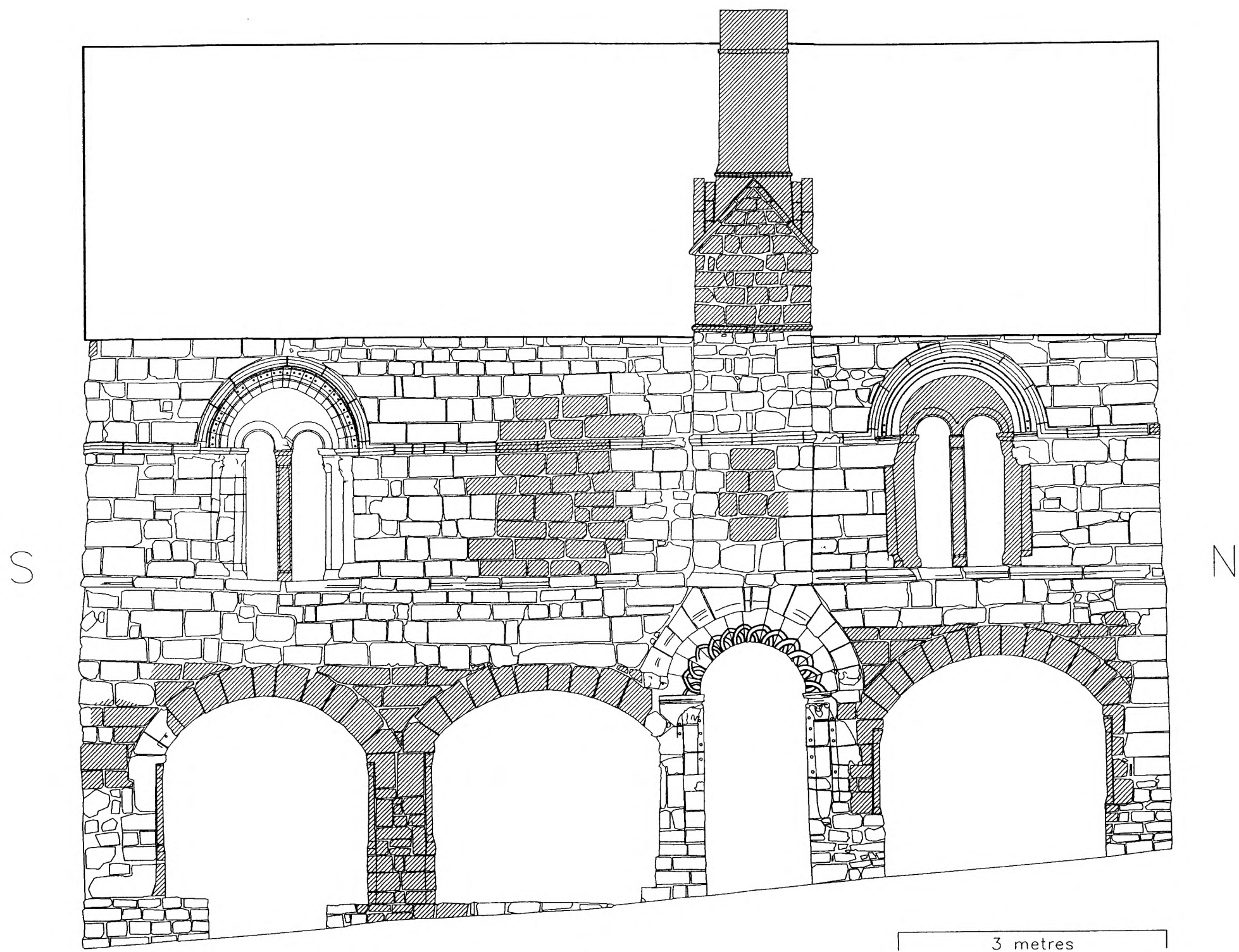


Fig. 23. The Jew's House, Lincoln. Front elevation showing existing and reconstructed (hatched) twelfth-century features.

elevation of the late 1150s or 1160s.¹ A c.1800 drawing in the city's Banks Collection provides a useful source of information as it predates the insertion of the present shopfronts in the nineteenth century.² The drawing shows an arcaded streetfront comprising three shouldered-arches with wooden lintels; an arrangement which although obscured survives intact apart from the removal of a stone pier between the southernmost pair of arches. To the south of the Romanesque doorway nineteenth-century shutter boxes conceal the exterior face of the jambs, but the interior face is clearly visible. Although this arcade has every appearance of being an early medieval feature it is not Romanesque and is in fact a replacement of a similar, but wholly stone-built, original.³ At the southern end of the façade there is a wildly off-vertical jamb together with the springing of a segmental arch which reveals the form of the earlier phase. A projecting abacus shows that this jamb formerly incorporated a narrow shaft. Immediately south of the doorway a mutilated counterpart to this arrangement survives, again with the springing and first voussoirs of a segmental arch. The small detached shaft seems not to have extended to ground level. To the north of the doorway the ashlar of a jamb supporting the wooden lintel are badly integrated with the Romanesque stonework suggesting that this too was a second phase. This is confirmed

¹ Wood dates both this and the Norman House on Steep Hill to 1170-80 (Wood, *Norman Domestic Arch.*, pp. 40-4). In a more recent publication, Jones advances a c.1200 date for both houses (Jones, *Lincoln 3*, pp. 147, Fig. 130; S.R. Jones, 'The Norman House (46-7 Steep Hill)', *Lincoln Archaeology 4* (1992), pp. 21-25). With its detached monolithic shafts and drilled capitals the Jew's House is clearly much earlier than the Norman House, and more similar in date to St Mary's Guildhall, Lincoln: see Figs. 48 and 49.

² Lincoln Public Library, Banks Collection, Vol. 3, p. 35.

³ Tree-ring dating was undertaken for the purposes of this research by Cathy Groves (Dendrochronology Laboratory, Department of Archaeology and Prehistory, The University of Sheffield), and the following derives from her draft of a report for the Ancient Monuments Laboratory. Of the three lintels, or bressumers, cored - the interior and exterior lintels to the south of the Romanesque doorway, and the exterior lintel to the north - the first only was considered suitable for dating purposes. The ring sequence of this sample (01) was dated to the period 1162-1297, which, in view of the additional but unmeasurable 25-30 sapwood rings, gives a felling date of after 1321 and probably before 1352. During sampling it was noted that the outer surface may have been the bark edge, in which case the felling date range could be refined to 1321-6.

by the Banks Collection drawing, which records the former location of a Romanesque shaft at this point. The known radius and angle at the springing of the two southern arches and the closely defined limits of the northern arch enable an accurate reconstruction of this part of the original façade (Fig. 23).¹ The almost direct replacement of the arcaded shopfronts, only little more than a century after the original construction date, was most probably the result of structural failure. The off-vertical southernmost jamb and the observable deformations in the stonework courses at first-floor level are strong indicators that the elevation was distorting in a rhomboidal fashion, in the direction of the steep slope on which it was built.

The c.2.4m span of the openings, their similarity to continental forms, and the location of the Jew's House at the commercial centre of the twelfth-century city imply beyond reasonable doubt that they functioned as entrances to shops. The successive rebuilding of the shopfronts prevents a full reconstruction of the details within the arches. In view of the close parallel with the arcaded openings in French examples, however, and especially the restored façade at 25 rue de la République, Cluny, it is likely that the detached shafts on the jambs of the Jew's House arcade provide evidence of the original shopfronts within the arched openings. The one recorded and two surviving shafts do not extend below waist height of someone standing in the street and could well have been designed to correspond with the sill level of windows to either side of narrow doorways in the manner of the continental parallels.

Although a c.200mm deep arched recess in the northern shop and a recorded, but now blocked, equivalent in the outer wall of the southern

¹ Almost identical low segmental arches with the same hollow chamfer moulding are to be found in the first-floor *grande salle* of a townhouse in Saint-Antonin-Noble-Val, which dates from 1150-5: M. Scelles, 'La Maison Romane de Saint-Antonin-Noble-Val (Tarn-et-Garonne)', *Memoires de la Société Archéologique du Midi de la France* 49 (1989), pp. 62-3.

shop are the only details to survive in the shops, the internal organisation of the Jew's House is clear. The ground-floor arrangement at the Jew's House differs from the French model in that the streetfront doorway to the domestic parts of the townhouse did not open directly onto the staircase to first floor. Instead, the doorway still opens into a passage running through the building at ground level. That this is original is confirmed by the rear doorway which is Romanesque. Adjacent to this is a doorway from the rear of the

northern shop which is also original and, having a hoodmould, clearly opened to the exterior. This confirms that the insubstantial rear range is a later addition. Access from either of these two doorways to the first floor was thus by an external stair which, on the evidence of an original first-floor doorway at the northern end of the rear wall, must have been similarly located to the modern stair.

Although a prototype split-level townhouse, the Norman House, Steep Hill, Lincoln, has much in common with the Jew's House. Despite being built approximately two decades later and having a rear range and an undercroft, it is interesting to note that this building has an identical entrance

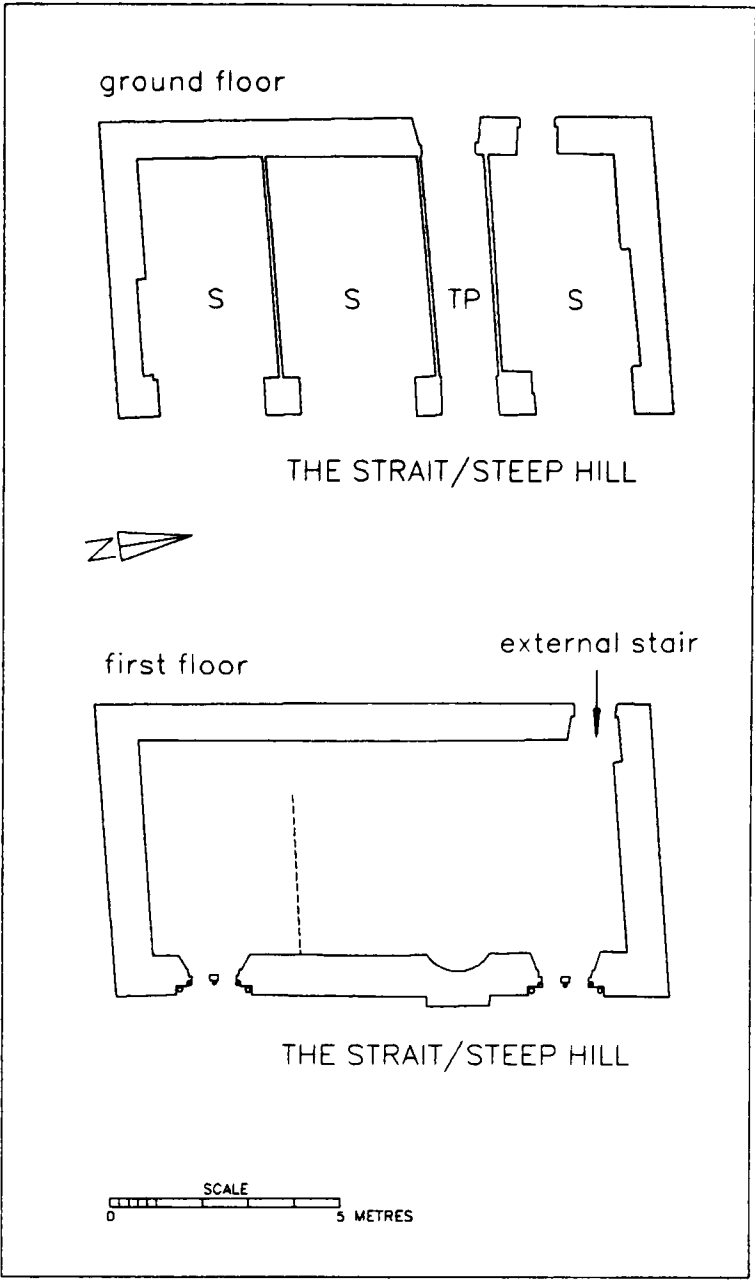


Fig. 24. The Jew's House, Lincoln. Reconstructed plans at ground and first floors. S = shop; TP = through-passage.

arrangement.¹ Situated between arcaded shopfronts, the doorway to the domestic parts of the house opens into a passage leading to the rear, although the presence of a two-storey rear range suggests that here the staircase to the first floor was internal.

What little is known of the entrances to the upper storeys of other English Romanesque townhouses indicates that these Lincoln examples were not exceptional.² At 30-2 King Street, King's Lynn, fragmentary remains of a late Romanesque house (dated to c.1200) were identified during a major restoration.³ The end walls are

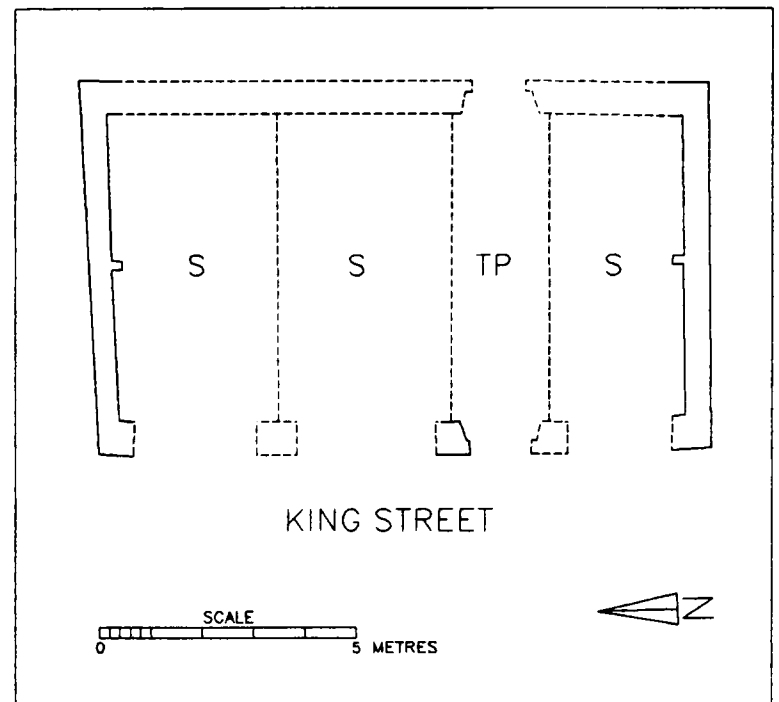


Fig. 25. 30-2 King Street, Kings Lynn. Plan of ground level showing conjectural internal arrangements. S = shop; TP = through-passage.

tain pairs of blind arches, or recesses, 300mm deep at two levels revealing that the building was two-storeyed. The south wall preserves its gable largely intact showing that the building did not rise any higher. An off-centre doorway was found by excavation in the front (west) wall, and another trial trench produced a doorway exactly opposite in the rear (east) wall, albeit 280mm higher.⁴ These are firm evidence for a through-passage of the Jew's House type. The limited excavations found no signs of flanking shops, but the location of the building opposite the quays on a principal street known to have demanded high rents implies a commercial

¹ For main discussion of the Norman House, see pp. 80-7.

² House E on the Flaxengate site, Lincoln, may have been a similar building, but a recent revision of the dating means that it could have been constructed as late as the mid thirteenth century. See pp. 336-8.

³ R. Taylor and H. Richmond, '28-32 King Street, King's Lynn', *Norfolk Archaeology* 40 (1989), pp. 260-75.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

function from the outset. While Taylor and Richmond consequently propose mercantile origins for this townhouse, they argue for its replacement by a row of shops c.1300.¹ A merchant's residence and provision for retailing in the Romanesque house, however, would not have been mutually exclusive and the similarity of the plan of the building to that at the dual-functioning Jew's House makes such a scheme the most convincing. The continuing presence of a row of shops would also explain the purpose of the streetfront range after an open hall was built at the rear of the building in the mid-thirteenth century: the authors of the report fail to ascribe any function to this substantial part of the house and simply call it a 'front range'.²

A doorway is all that survives of the façade of a Romanesque townhouse at 10 St Mary's Hill, Stamford. The roll-mouldings and zigzag decoration reveal a mid twelfth-century date. A public right of way through the passage behind is perhaps a clue that the passage through the building is of some antiquity. This view is given further substance by the remains of a semi-circular arch in the southern wall of the passage, which springs at a point 5.93m back from the street frontage. Although the springing of this arch is now at ground level and is likely to have been a metre or so above the twelfth-century floor level, the fact that the doorway is also partly concealed by later build-up means that there can be little reason to suppose that the lowest storey was originally semi-subterranean. The present building extends another 5.31m rearwards from the springing of the surviving arch and thus it appears that there were at least a pair of arches. A report of findings of more material from arches in this part of

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 272-3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 272.

the building in the nineteenth century is consistent with this.¹ The location of the arcade on the south side of the passage implies that the building incorporated the property to the south (No. 9a), resulting in an off-centre doorway in a façade of c.12.2m width. The juxtaposition of the doorway and the arches of a ground-level undercroft render improbable a design incorporating a staircase rising directly from the street. Beyond concluding that the doorway provided access to the domestic (presumably upper) parts of the townhouse via the rear of the building, the lack of twelfth-century fabric precludes a more complete understanding of the original layout. As far as the evidence goes it conforms to the Jew's House arrangement, and the presence of shops would have been consistent with the location of the building on a town centre streetfront.

At Cogan House, St Peter's, Canterbury, a thirteenth-century aisled hall has been added to the rear of a ground-level stone building located on and parallel to the street frontage. As E.W. Parkin noted,² this stone building corresponds with that identified by Urry as the 10.97m-wide stone house of Luke the Moneyer recorded in the survey of Canterbury of c.1200.³ Parkin also

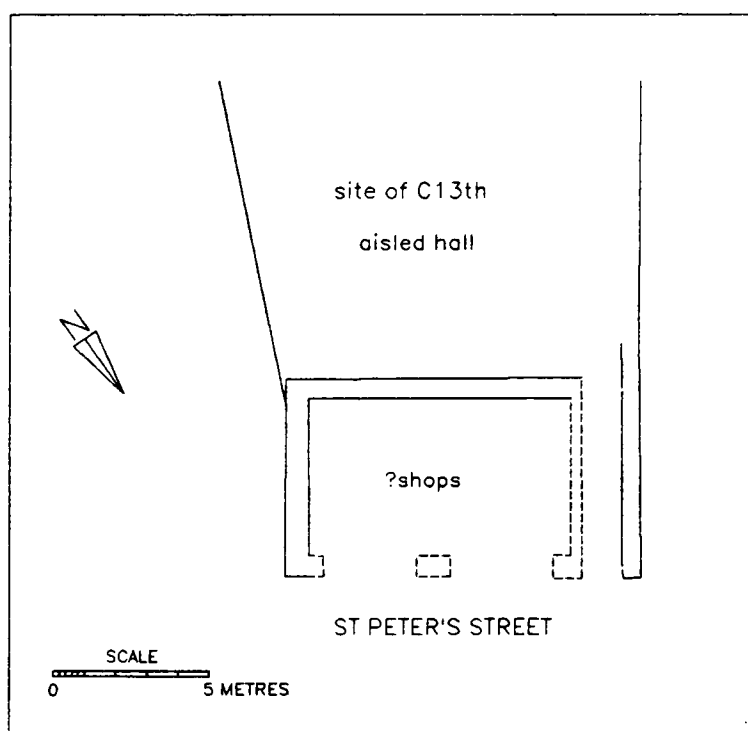


Fig. 26. Cogan House, St Peter's Street, Canterbury. Plan of ground floor showing hypothetical arcaded streetfront.

¹ *Stamford Mercury*, 15th January, 1886, p. 4, col. 2; *Stamford Mercury*, 12th March 1886, p. 4, col. 2.

² E.W. Parkin, 'Cogan House, St Peter's, Canterbury', *Arch. Cant.* 85 (1970), p. 123.

³ Urry, *Canterbury*, p. 312, and Map 2, Sheet 5.

what was originally the rear external wall. All four doorways on the ground floor are two-centred and doubtless inserted at the time of the construction of the aisled hall, although the through-passage on the northwestern side may perpetuate a twelfth-century arrangement. The general absence of detail from the earlier phase is compounded by the complete destruction of the front wall and, thus, confirmation of the similarities to the Jew's House design that the scale and orientation suggest is not possible.

The twelfth-century fabric of the **Music House, King Street, Norwich**, is more substantial which is fortunate as it is one of the few surviving Romanesque townhouses built at ground level and oriented at right angles to the street, and yet here also access to the upper storey was not direct from the street. The undercroft comprises a front section of two bays and a rear section of three bays, the two parts separated by a roundheaded doorway. The front part of the undercroft has a quadripartite rib-vault; the ribs have a central roll moulding and flanking hollow chamfers. At the rear the undercroft is less sophisticated

in that it has a quadripartite groin vault. A spiral staircase partly survives in the northeast corner and originally led up to the first floor. The present entrance to the undercroft in the south wall is not original as

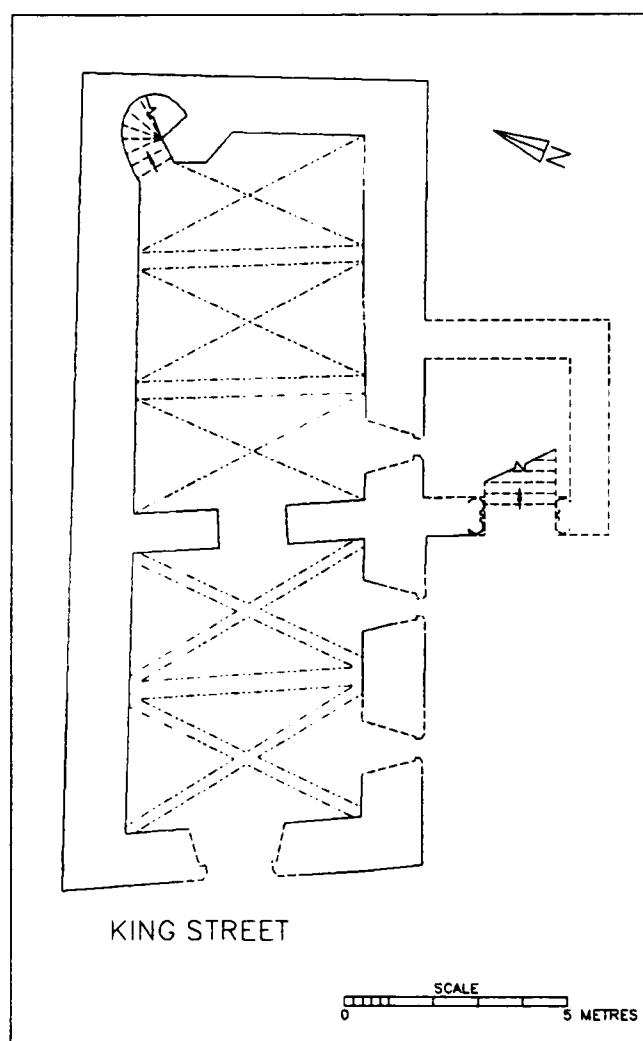


Fig. 27. The Music House, King Street, Norwich. Plan of undercroft level showing reconstructed porch.

Ernest Kent and Alan Carter suggest,¹ but is an adaptation of a narrow Romanesque loop window: the rear arch of the window survives along with the splay and the narrow outer arch. In the absence of any other possible locations for the original entrance it is almost certain that the later medieval doorway in the front wall is a replacement of a twelfth-century precursor.

Against the exterior face of the south wall of this building there remains a respond surviving to a height of 1.94m above the bottom of its base. The interpretation of this has been unsatisfactory. Carter's reconstruction plan follows the suggestion of Peter Eden that the respond is proof of a former aisled hall extending along the King Street frontage.² In addition to the problem of the absence of any twelfth-century material from the rest of this structure, this theory is inconsistent with the evidence of the surviving undercroft. The southern wall of the front three bays of the undercroft had narrow loop windows with splays of the form expected in exterior windows. It is inconceivable that these opened into a coeval ground-level hall, particularly as they were the only windows in the side walls of the undercroft. Moreover, had these windows been the only openings along the junction between the hypothetical aisled hall and the undercroft, there would have been no internal communication between the two parts of the building. Kent's interpretation of this fragment surviving from a porch is more convincing, although his suggestion that the respond was a door jamb is improbable since there is no evidence of a rebate. A section of what must be interpreted as a twelfth-century doorway just to the rear of this point at first-floor level means that some external access

¹ E.A. Kent, 'Isaac's Hall or the Music House, Norwich', *Norfolk Archaeology* 28 (1945), p. 33 (plan of lower floor); A. Carter, 'The Music House and Wensum Lodge, King Street, Norwich', *Archaeol. J.* 137 (1980), p. 311.

² *Ibid.*

to the upper storey was necessary and it is thus reasonable to assume that the ground-level respond was associated with a structure incorporating a staircase: for example, either forming an open arch at the bottom of an enclosed stair (as in Fig. 27) or supporting an open stair or landing.

Whatever the ambiguities of the interpretation of the respond it provides a more precise date than the broadly contemporary vault ribs. Kent was the first to point out exact counterparts in the infirmary at the cathedral, a building which is generally accepted as dating from the 1170s.¹ That the infirmary piers and the respond at the Music House are by the same hand is clear, and it is thus odd that, in addition to accepting the suspect aisled-hall theory, Brian Ayers and Robert Smith choose to regard the undercroft as an earlier phase.² They give no justification for this phasing which is wholly unconvincing in view of the compatibility between the stylistic dating of the vault ribs and the respond. Other than the fragment of the head of a doorway in the south wall, there is no other obviously twelfth-century material at the higher level. Indeed, it is unclear how much of the flint walling is original, although the heavy whitewash inside and out fails to disguise significant areas of refacing or rebuilding. The fragments of twelfth-century shafts on the external corners at first-floor level which Kent observed imply that the walls of the upper parts of the building have undergone repair and modification rather than complete replacement.

Although the so-called **King John's Palace** at the junction of Western Esplanade and Blue Anchor Lane, Southampton, was one of a series of townhouses along the quayside which incorporated warehousing, its ground-level design and arcaded frontage means that it is comparable to

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

² B.S. Ayers and R. Smith, 'Twelfth- and Fifteenth-Century Undercrofts at Howard Street, Great Yarmouth', *Norfolk Archaeology* 41, part 3 (1992), p. 344.

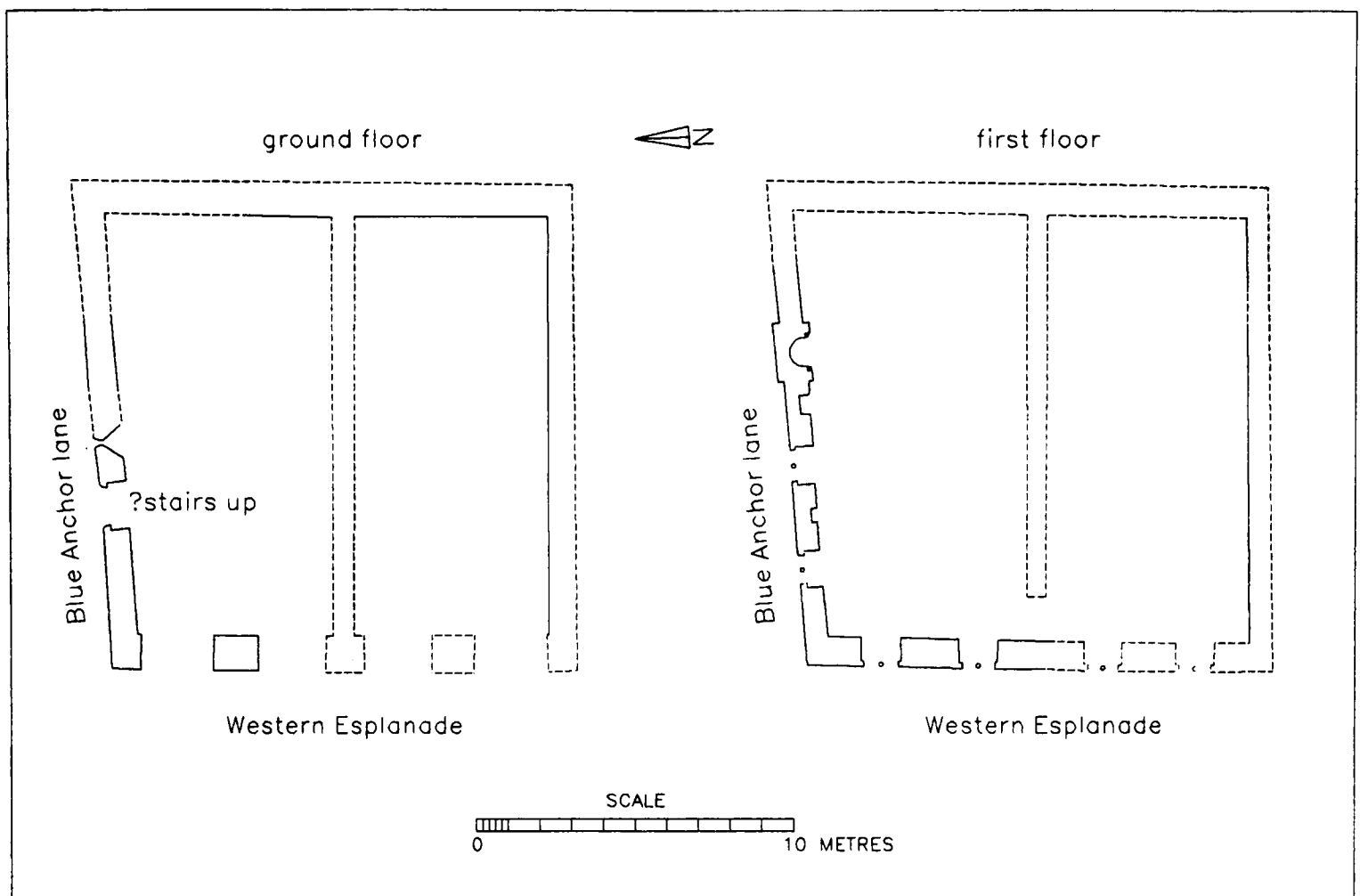


Fig. 28. King John's Palace, Southampton. Ground-level and first-floor plans showing reconstructed spine wall.

more typical retail ground-level townhouses. The other Romanesque buildings which run northwards along the former quay, however, show elements of split-level design and are discussed separately.¹ Antiquarian interest in King John's Palace has been shown by Englefield,² Turner,³ Wood,⁴ and, most comprehensively, by Faulkner.⁵ Despite rebuilding of much of the ground-floor parts of the western elevation even before the construction of the town wall and the simultaneous insertion of gun ports, one near intact roundheaded arch survives (Fig. 30). The northern jamb and springing of an adjacent arch of the same size indicates that the

¹ See pp. 70-2.

² H.C. Englefield, *A Walk Through Southampton*, 2nd edition (Southampton, 1841), pp. 68-9.

³ Turner, *Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Architecture*, pp. 34-7.

⁴ Wood, *Norman Domestic Arch.*, pp. 27-30.

⁵ Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, pp. 83-5.

elevation facing the quay incorporated an arcade, although the wall to the south was rebuilt in the early fourteenth century and contains a taller arch of that date. A single Romanesque doorway in the northern wall along Blue Anchor Lane confirms that the main elevation of the building was that facing the quay. It is not clear, however, whether this wide doorway provided additional access to the ground storey or opened onto a staircase up to the first floor. In view of the lack of evidence for a stone vault to the undercroft, access via an internal staircase at this point would have been straightforward.

The rudimentary fenestration of the ground storey compared to the surviving two-light windows above, complete with internal shutter rebates, the evidence for an arcade, and the quayside location are clear indicators that the undercroft level of King John's Palace

functioned as a large-scale warehouse. The presence of an elabor-

ate fireplace in the north wall and the aforementioned sophistication of the windows confirm the domestic role of the first floor. A second Romanesque fireplace at ground-floor level is a modern insertion and was formerly at 79½ High Street.¹

In the absence of archaeological excavation of the site it is difficult to decipher the internal divisions of even the lower level. An area of rough and slightly projecting stonework high up in the west wall must equate with the 'dressed-off haunch of an arch' observed by Faulkner and, in

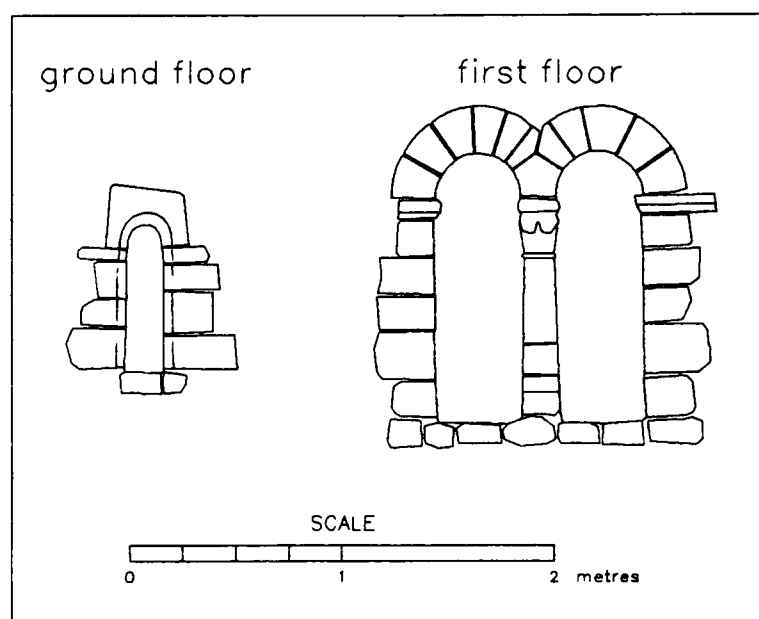


Fig. 29. King John's Palace, Southampton. Exterior faces of windows in north wall.

¹ See pp. 100-2.



Fig. 30. King John's Palace, Southampton. West face of blocked twelfth-century arch in western elevation.

conjunction with indications of a similarly located return in the fragmentary east wall, indicates a central east-west spine wall.¹ This suggests that the vast 14.69-15.75m x 15.42m structure would have had a twin-gabled roof on an east-west axis, with the central valley corresponding with the location of the spine wall. At 2.16m above the upper floor level, the springing of the arch in this spine wall may represent a doorway, a larger arch, or even an arcade. Whatever the case, it is clear that the two halves of the first floor communicated and were probably in single occupancy, whereas the ground floor may have comprised two wholly separate undercrofts, neither necessarily accessible from above.

Archaeological excavations in 1966-7 at a site in Cuckoo Lane, Southampton, revealed a similarly massive Romanesque townhouse, again on

¹ Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, p. 83.

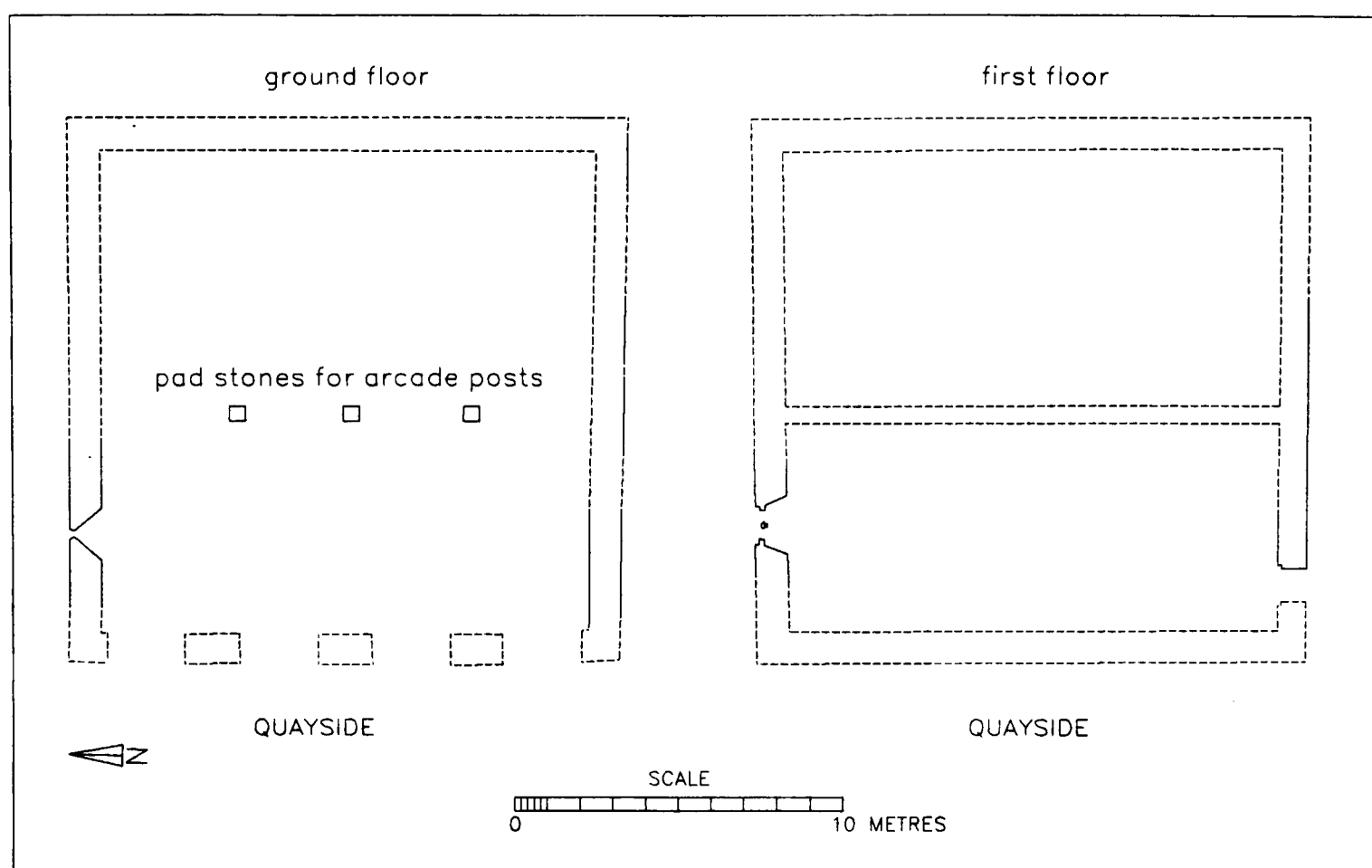


Fig. 31. The Norman House, Cuckoo Lane, Southampton. Reconstructed ground-floor and first-floor plans showing the conjectural arcade on the quay frontage.

the line of the later western town wall: this building is now known as the Norman House.¹ In addition, where the town wall was constructed over the west side of this building some original architectural fragments were preserved. In particular, two windows uncovered at the junction of the town wall with the north wall of the Norman House reveal a similar arrangement to those on the corresponding wall at King John's Palace.² That is, a narrow loop window at ground level had a grander two-light counterpart on the first floor, again indicating undercroft warehousing off the quay with domestic rooms above. Evidence was, likewise, uncovered for a spine wall in the form of near-central line of post pads, this time parallel with the frontage. Although the front wall was entirely removed in this

¹ Platt, *Med. Southampton*, pp. 285-317.

² Parts of the upper window, which comprise the sill and the base of the central column, remain exposed.

case, it is reasonable to suppose that this building followed the King John's Palace arrangement with an arcaded front facing the quay.

Built on a similarly grand scale but overlooking the market square, **Moyes Hall, Bury St Edmunds**, seems to have adopted a variation of the arcaded frontage. Unfortunately, the otherwise remarkably intact Romanesque townhouse has suffered a partial rebuild of the ground-level elevation facing the market, making this the most obscure part of the original structure. All the alterations in this area have been traditionally ascribed to George Gilbert Scott, but his involvement in these works of 1858 cannot have included much on the western half of the building. A photograph of c.1865 shows the rebuilding of both gables, and the insertion of a new doorway and ground-floor windows to the eastern undercroft only.¹ The photograph, however, does not evidence any survival of the Romanesque entrance to the western undercroft and simply records an early nineteenth-century door which also appears on an etching published in 1827.² An earlier drawing (dated by its depiction of the east wall before its collapse in 1806)³ shows what was probably the medieval entrance of the western undercroft.⁴ The combination of a narrow doorway to one side of an arched opening is reminiscent of the Cluny-type townhouse, but the intact groin-vault behind this doorway rules out a staircase up to the first storey. Instead, it is most likely that the narrow doorway simply entered the undercroft, with the adjacent arch enclosing a window. The pre-1806 drawing does not record any obviously medieval features in the entrance arrangements of the eastern undercroft, but the

¹ M. Statham, *The Book of Bury St Edmunds* (Buckingham, 1988), p. 95.

² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

³ The exterior face of the original east wall is 680mm east of the present wall, as shown by a surviving fragment of the twelfth-century buttress at northeast corner.

⁴ Watercolour in collection of St Edmundsbury Borough Council, The Manor House Museum, Bury St Edmunds.

survival of sections of original walling on the interior indicates that there was a similar arrangement here. While the eastern half of this two-bay

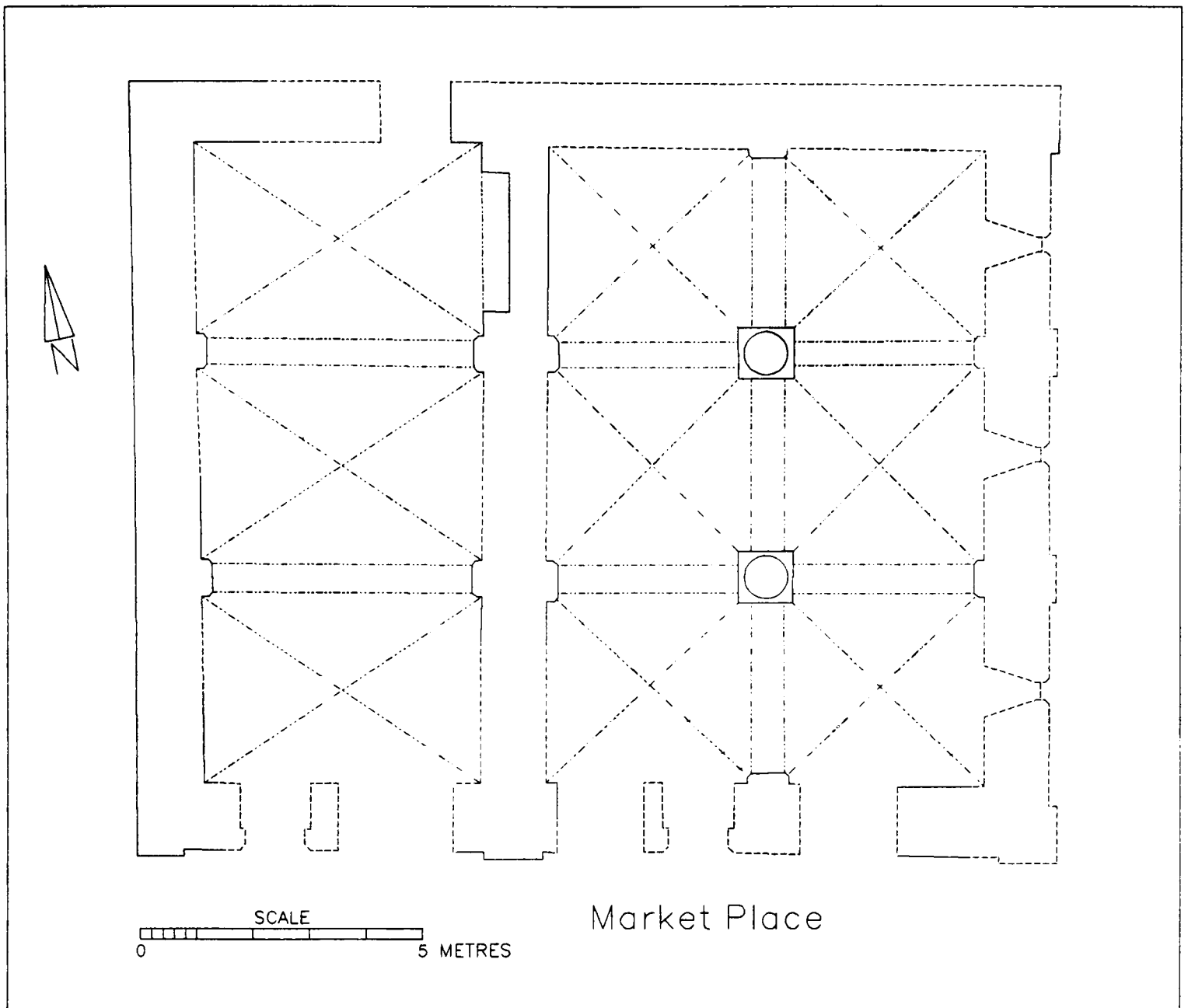


Fig. 32. Moyses Hall, Bury St Edmunds. Plan of undercroft showing conjectural arrangement of streetfront.

frontage has a later medieval splayed opening with a nineteenth-century arch, the western half preserves a Romanesque arched opening. The centre of this arch is 810mm north of the centre of the vaulting bay and several original quoins at the eastern end suggest that this asymmetry was to provide room for a doorway in the position of the modern entrance to Moyses Hall. Again the presence of the intact springing of the vault rules out access from this doorway to the first floor, and thus it must have opened into the undercroft. The fact that the unsplayed reveals of the

wider arch extend to ground level indicates that if this opening was simply a window it would have had a timber support for the sill. This could, of course, imply that the larger arch provided occasional access, perhaps for delivery of goods (if indeed the undercroft had a retail/wholesale function), while the doorway to the east was for everyday use. The size of the eastern undercroft at Moyses Hall compared with the shops at the Jew's House, Lincoln, for example, could mean that retailing from the shopfront was not intended, and that any fenestration in the larger arches was purely for lighting the interior. The scale of the ground floor here presages the similarly proportioned undercrofts of split-level townhouses of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and, like them, was most probably used for the stocking and retailing of bulky and expensive goods.¹

Such an interpretation of the ground-level function of Moyses Hall is corroborated by the rest of the structure, although the published discussions of the building fail to stress its likely commercial *raison d'être*. A fanciful nineteenth-century conjecture that Moyses Hall originally formed part of a vast synagogue complex has been responsible for much of this misinterpretation.² As a result, it has become accepted that the building was originally in one occupancy, and that the internal arrangements were very much as they are today. The matching lengths of the two undercrofts, the use of similar mouldings on the vault ribs, the consistent size and type of stone, and the identical height of the springings of the vaults are undeniable evidence of simultaneous construction under a single patron or developer. It was not these architectural consistencies between the two parts of the building, however, which gave rise to the theory of

¹ See Chapter 4.

² M. Margoliouth, *Vestiges of the Historic Anglo-Hebrews in East Anglia* (London, 1870), pp. 43-6.

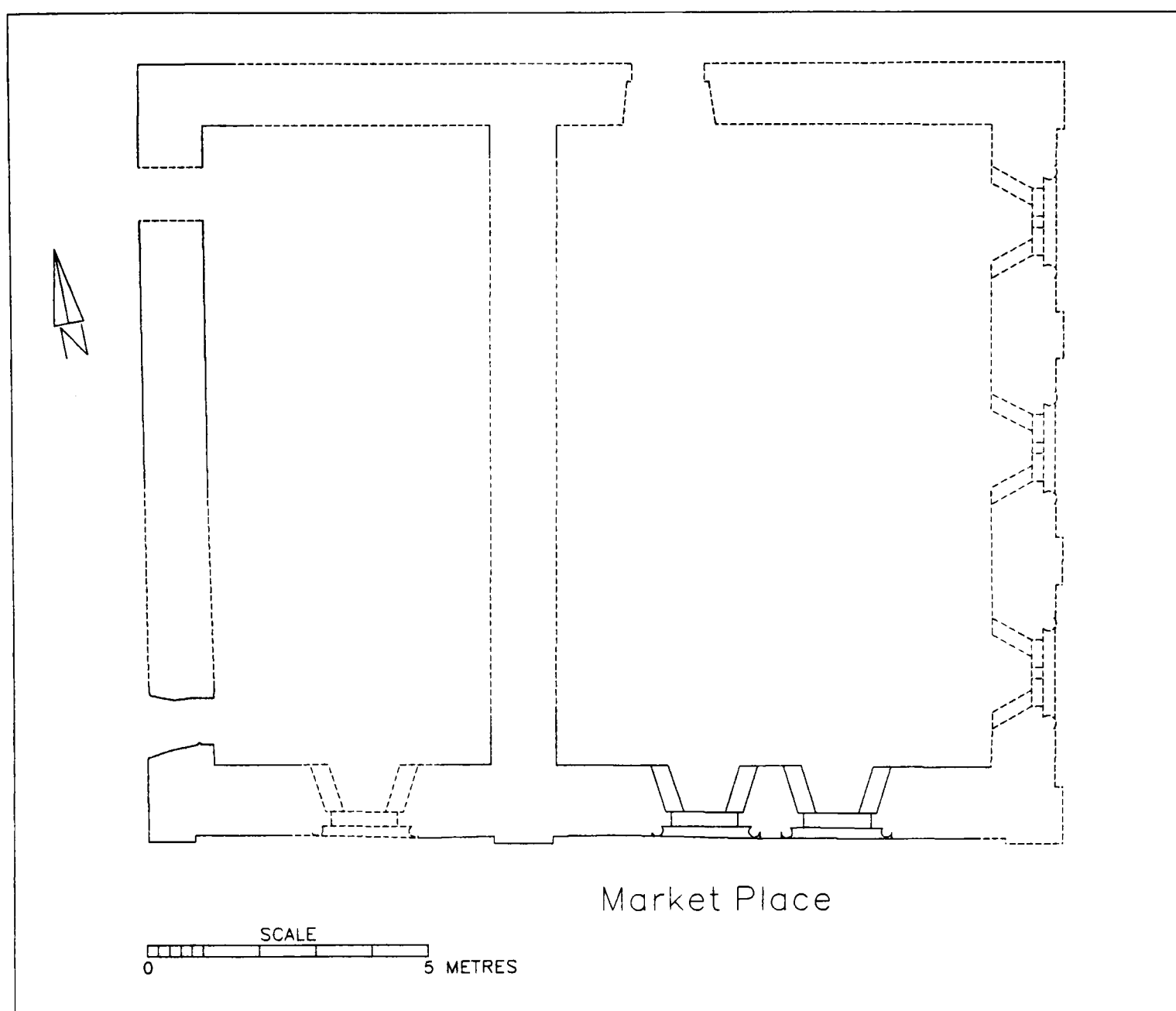


Fig. 33. Moyses Hall, Bury St Edmunds. Plan of first floor.

the building being in single occupancy, but rather the nineteenth-century discovery of a staircase in the dividing wall.¹ This was unblocked to reveal doorways into both halves of Moyses Hall. While Wood recognised the all too obvious fact that this is an inserted staircase of late-medieval date, she perpetuated the idea of a unified structure.² There is, however, no sign of original intercommunication between the two undercrofts, today's opening being under an inserted brick arch. Likewise, the doorway and the stair at the rear of the eastern undercroft are of nineteenth-century date. At first-floor level this lack of original intercommunication is

¹ S. Tymms, *A Handbook of Bury St Edmunds*, 6th edition, (London, 1891), p. 110.

² Wood, *Norman Domestic Arch.*, pp. 49-51.

replicated by neither of the two doorways showing any signs of twelfth-century masonry. The absence of twelfth-century internal doorways in an otherwise largely intact Romanesque building could be seen to imply that the fifteenth- and nineteenth-century doorways were new creations. The consequent arrangement of two separate but conjoining townhouses each comprising a large room, which may or may not have been subdivided, over a self-contained undercroft is, of course, more likely than the odd arrangement proposed by Wood in which a vast solar abutted the longer side of a hall. In this light it may be significant that there is a twelfth-century doorway in the southwest corner of the westernmost first-floor room. This doorway is located in the western, or side wall, and most probably opened onto an external staircase from the market square.¹ A low blocked doorway is also visible at the northern end of this wall, possibly marking the location of a garderobe.

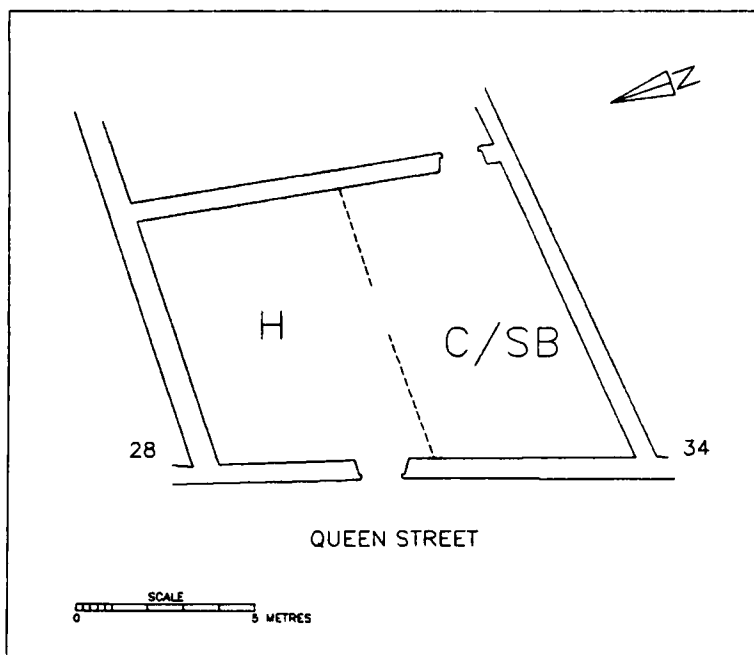


Fig. 34. 30-2 Queen Street, Kings Lynn. Ground-level plan. H = hall; C/SB = chamber/service bay.

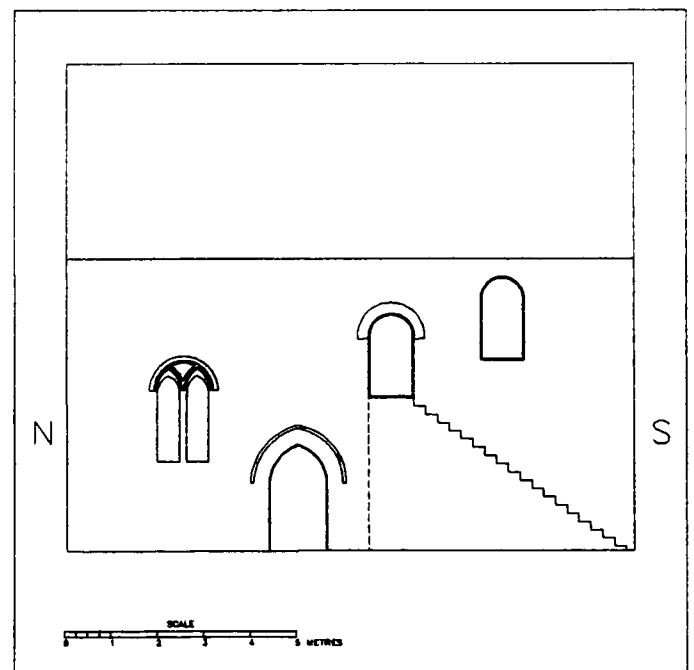


Fig. 35. 30-2 Queen Street, Kings Lynn. Reconstructed front elevation.

While the ground floor of Moyses Hall simply shows development from the house with arcaded shops, there are signs provided by a building in Kings

¹ Faulkner suggested that this doorway belonged to a 'counting-house' accessible from the square; Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, p. 79.

Lynn that the wide-arched opening was not used at all in some Romanesque ground-level townhouses. The demolition of three buildings in **Queen Street, King's Lynn**, in 1977 brought to light two twelfth-century townhouses.¹ The northern building (No. 28) survived largely only below ground,² while the foundations of the north wall of the other (No. 34) were all that was located.³ Around, or shortly after, 1200 a further building (Nos. 30-2) was placed between these two and sufficient of its façade survived to allow a reconstruction. Although the off-centre doorway was consistent with an arrangement of the Jew's House type, the rear doorway was not set directly opposite and thus there was no provision for a through-passage leading to a rear stair to an upper domestic storey (Fig. 34). Instead, a partially surviving two-light window placed midway up the front wall at the northern end suggested that the principal domestic room was a ground-floor open hall occupying the area normally given over to shops. To the south of the doorway the building was of two storeys, but it would seem improbable that there were ground-level shops here either. There was no early thirteenth-century fabric surviving in 1977 at ground-level in this area, but the presence of a first-floor doorway is clear evidence for an external stairway that would have occupied the area available for shops (Fig. 35). Moreover, the presence of the open hall directly on the streetfront confirms that retailing potential could not have been paramount in the design of the building.

The parallels between English and continental ground-level townhouses are not restricted to the arcaded shopfront, but extend to the use of the front of the first floor as the principal domestic room: the evidence for

¹ H. Richmond, R. Taylor, and P. Wade-Martins, 'Nos. 28-34 Queen Street, Kings Lynn', *East Anglian Archaeology* 14 (1982), pp. 108-24.

² See pp. 332-3.

³ See pp. 333-4.

this frequently being the elaborate fenestration of the street elevations of the upper storeys. It is ironic that Moyses Hall, which departs to some degree from the archetypal ground-level townhouse in its ground-floor arrangements, should provide the best surviving counterpart to the French first-

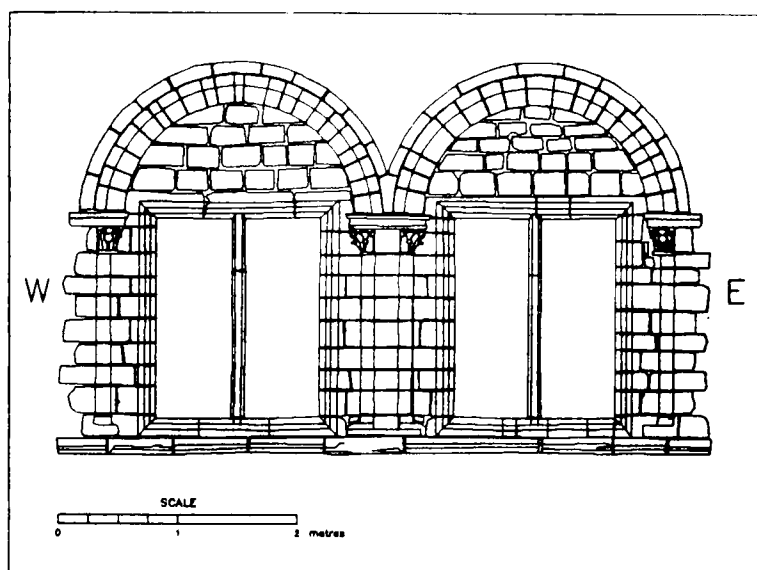


Fig. 36. Moyses Hall, Bury St Edmunds. First-floor window overlooking the Market Square.

floor window. The presence of window seats further validates the parallel (Fig. 38). The similarly located and richly carved windows at the Jew's House, Lincoln, or those reconstructed for St Mary's Guildhall, Lincoln, are two more, slightly earlier, English examples. Sadly there are few other Romanesque townhouses of the ground-level type in this country which preserve evidence of original first-floor fenestration on the front elevation, and no such survivals on townhouses oriented at right angles to the street in Cluny fashion. However, the fact that none of the small sample of Romanesque townhouses has a *claire-voie* probably reflects the apparently unique concentration of the window form in Cluny and its general absence elsewhere even in France,¹ rather than the lack of intact façades of narrow-fronted townhouses in England. Whatever the case, it certainly appears that where the French townhouse occupies a wide plot, as at 19 Place du Cygne, Chartres, (Fig. 21), or a spacious corner site, as at that formed by rue Grenette and rue Jean Morel, Charlieu, the fenestration is of more widely spaced two-light windows in the manner of the English examples.

¹ P. Garrigou Grandchamp, J-D. Salvègue, P. Dixon, and S. Content, 'Originalité et Évolution de la Maison Clunisoise', in P. Garrigou Grandchamp, and G.I. Meirion-Jones (eds.), *La Ville de Cluny et ses Maisons (XI^e-XV^e siècles)*, forthcoming (1994).

The fragmentary evidence, then, for the form of the English ground-level townhouse provides good reason to suppose that the arched, or arcaded,

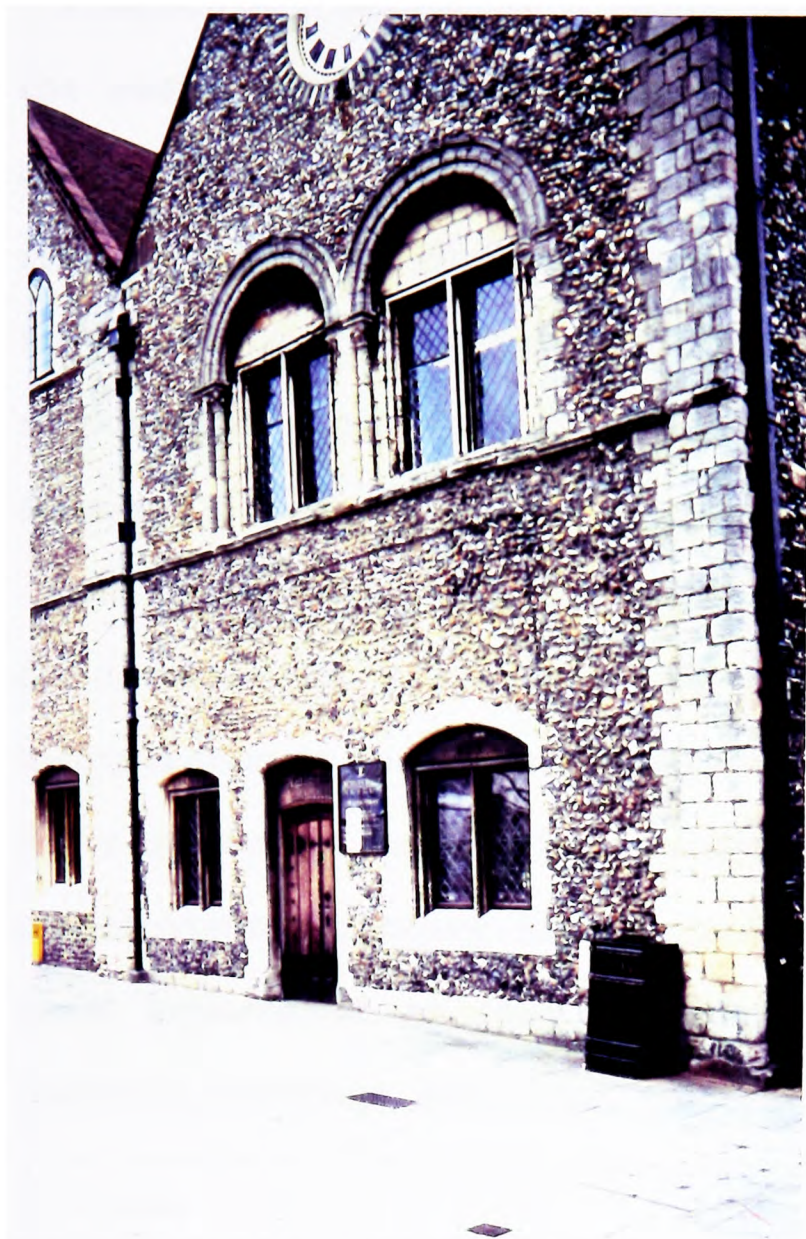


Fig. 37. Moyses Hall, Bury St Edmunds. View of façade from the southeast.

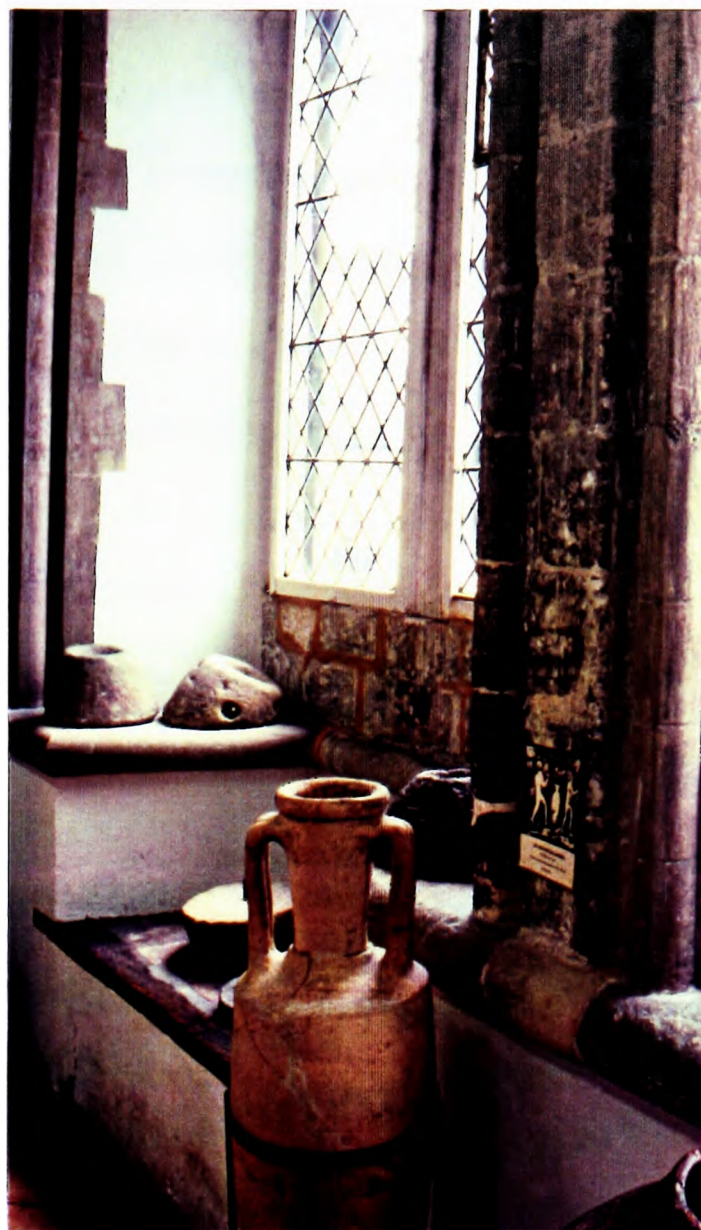


Fig. 38. Moyses Hall, Bury St Edmunds. Interior detail of window seat.

shopfront, the separate doorway leading to the domestic parts of the building, and elaborate fenestration of the first-floor principal room were all typical, although not universal, features of the façade. The implications which these design elements have for the internal arrangements suggest that common ground with contemporary townhouses in France was substantial. In fact, there were only two significant differences between Romanesque ground-level townhouses in the two countries: in England there is no physical evidence for the French fashion for multiplying the number of upper storeys, nor is there an irrefutable instance of a doorway in the main façade opening directly onto a staircase to the first storey.

Split-level warehouses

Fragmentary remains of a series of townhouses originally fronting onto the western quay north of King John's Palace at Southampton reveal a category of townhouse which falls somewhere between ground-level and split-level types. Only the building with its main elevation facing the north side of Blue Anchor Lane and with no direct access to the quay is a potential split-level townhouse, and, consequently, is considered separately.¹

The houses along this c.79m length of the town wall became redundant or devalued as a result of the construction of the wall, but their incorporation in the 1360s in the fabric of the wall has preserved the lower parts of several façades from redevelopment or demolition. Although the pre-fourteenth-century features are few in number these remains are of great importance as they provide a unique series of early medieval quayside buildings and, thus, may well represent a more widespread type.

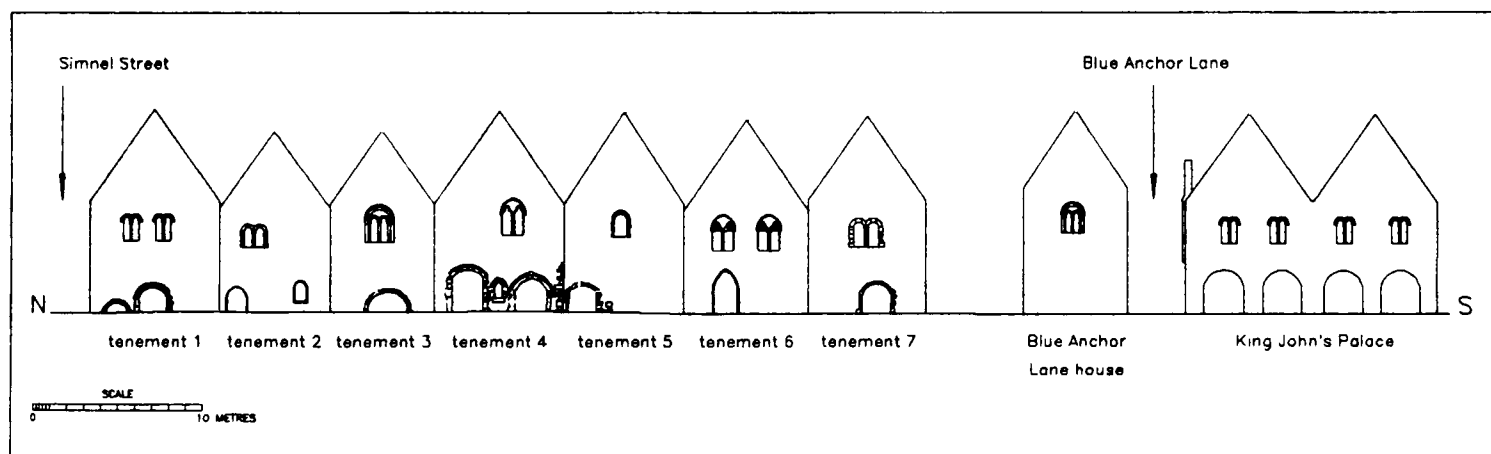


Fig. 39. Reconstructed elevation of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century houses on the Western Esplanade, Southampton. In the absence of identifiable addresses the anonymous buildings have been given numbers.

In the absence of archaeological excavation in this area it is difficult to estimate the overall dimensions of these townhouses or to reconstruct their internal plans. The density of doorways and windows preserved in the town wall, however, confirms that they were narrow and conjoining

¹ See above, pp. 57-60.

buildings, although the reconstruction of the widths of each building is mostly conjectural (Fig. 39). Such a high density of narrow-fronted houses would imply the presence of gables overlooking the quay. More significantly, the relatively unbroken nature of the row of buildings along the quayside would have resulted in access to all

levels being via the front façade. The twelfth-century Tenement 1 and thirteenth-century Tenement 4 each preserve a pair of doorways which would be expected in such an arrangement. Tenement 1 shows a marked difference in the vertical positioning of its two doorways, with the springing of the arched head of the northern doorway being 920mm lower than its southern counterpart. This most probably results from an internal arrangement comprising a semi-subterranean undercroft and a separately occupied first floor. The undercroft doorway would have been the narrower of the two entrances and, as one would expect in such a location, cannot have functioned as a ground-level shop: as such it is similar to twelfth-century prototypical split-level townhouses. In this case, however, there is no implication that the level above the undercroft had anything other than a purely domestic function.

The two other Romanesque houses partly preserved in this stretch of the town wall are even more fragmentary, each only evidencing a single roundheaded arch (Fig. 41). That at tenement 3 has a span of 2.34m and may thus be compared to the similar arches in the arcaded front of King John's Palace and even to the wide arched openings of ground-level

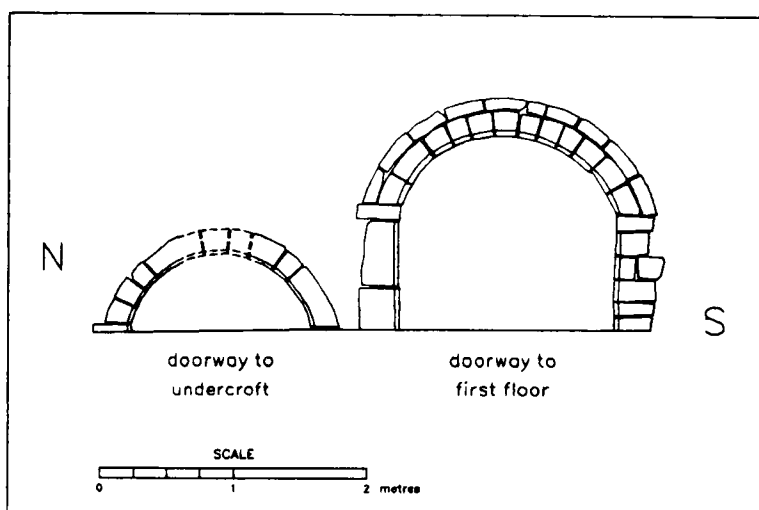


Fig. 40. Tenement 1, Western Esplanade, Southampton. Surviving fragments of a Romanesque house in the west face of the town wall.

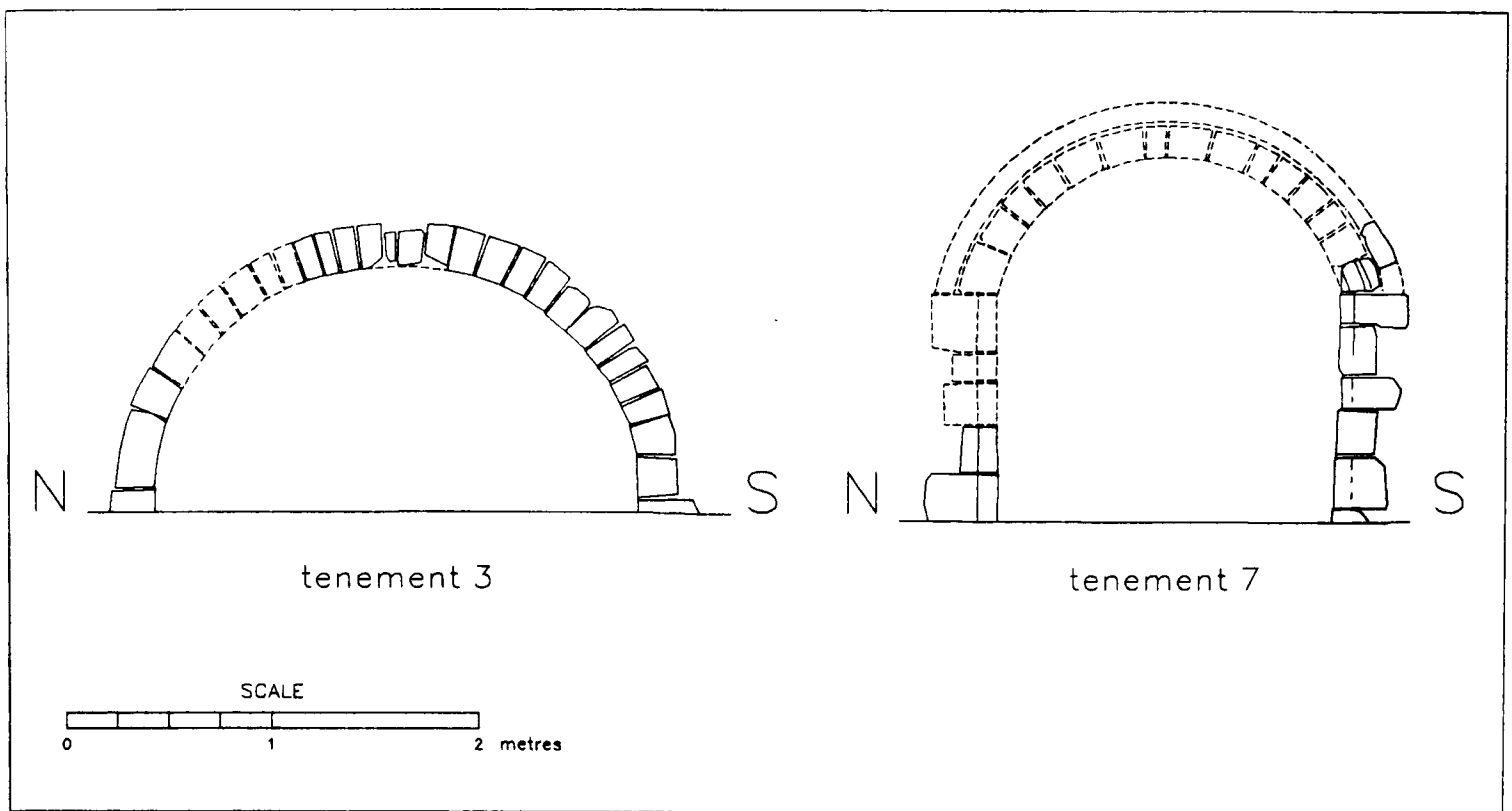


Fig. 41. Tenements 3 and 7, Western Esplanade, Southampton. Blocked arches in western face of town wall.

townhouses.

The tantalizing evidence for Romanesque buildings along this length of town wall at Southampton, then, is consistent with the modification of ground-level townhouses to the demand for undercroft space for imports and exports. Although tenements 1 and 3 may have had undercrofts sunk slightly below the contemporary ground level there is no reason to suppose that additional levels in the buildings had a commercial function. In view of the vacant area to the east of the town wall, it must be hoped that archaeological excavation will be a priority and that it will be able to add substantially to the fragmentary elevational details.

CHAPTER 2

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SPLIT-LEVEL TOWNHOUSE

Twelfth-century evidence of the split-level townhouse

The apparent adaptations of the ground-level townhouse plan to permit warehousing or retail/wholesale trade on the western quays of Southampton suggest that there was a need to develop the basic building type to suit specific commercial activities and locations. The lack of suitability of the ground-level arrangement for the distributive trades in England was not, however, confined to a few such special situations. Of the forty-one known Romanesque townhouses located on town-centre streetfronts only 45% were of the ground-level type while 55% reveal evidence of at least some elements of split-level construction. Despite the fact that one could expect some twelfth-century precursors of the split-level design that was so clearly dominant by the late thirteenth century, such a proportion is remarkable - particularly all the more so when it is considered that there is no observable chronological development from the ground-level to split-level types during the twelfth century: although more of the split-level examples do date from the later part of the century so equally do ground-level townhouses.¹ It could be argued that the sample of surviving or recorded standing Romanesque townhouses does not necessarily reflect the true proportions of the different types since the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century popularity of the split-level design must have favoured the survival of twelfth-century prototypical or fully-evolved split-level townhouses over those incapable of operating commercially on two levels. Conversely, the late- and post-medieval demise of two-level retailing, apart from such rare survivals as the Rows of Chester, could well have reduced the chances of survival for split-level townhouses. Redundant but intact

¹ For the chronological distribution of split-level townhouses, see pp. 117-19.

undercrofts from former split-level townhouses indicate, however, that the obsolescence of this part of the structure did not necessitate complete rebuilding. In some cases a rise in street level had rendered the undercrofts almost wholly subterranean, and elsewhere the raised ground floor of such buildings was adapted to the classically inspired designs of the post-medieval period. In the absence of a body of detailed architectural descriptions of the twelfth century, it is difficult to allow for such possible distortions in the apparent proportions of the various Romanesque house types, particularly when the surviving sample is so small. Nevertheless, it is significant that the excavated examples show a 7:8 ratio of ground-level to possible split-level townhouses, indicating that the survival of the more numerous standing buildings does not represent a wild distortion of the relative popularity of the two house types.

The identification of a significant proportion of Romanesque townhouses having features that can be associated with split-level construction does not mean that fully-evolved two-level retailing occurred in every case. With many of the examples comprising solely an undercroft sunk partly below the contemporary street level, there is little certain evidence that the upper level had a commercial function. Nevertheless, the construction, orientation, and size of these undercrofts are very different from those of the normal street-level shops found in ground-level townhouses, and when these structures are scrutinised in the light of more complete split-level houses such an interpretation is the most reasonable.

Split-level townhouses associated with sloping sites

Several Romanesque townhouses which incorporate a semi-subterranean undercroft take advantage of, or were built in response to, a sloping site. With suitable positioning of entrances this allowed near ground-level access

to two storeys. This may, of course, have been the situation in the large warehouse structures at Southampton,¹ but in the examples discussed below there is a greater likelihood that the two levels had a commercial function.

One such instance of the effect of a sloping site is found at the undercroft revealed by excavation and preserved under the new Magistrates' Courts at St Martin-at-Palace Plain, Norwich.² This building was constructed on a narrow plot which ran from the street on the north side of St Martin's

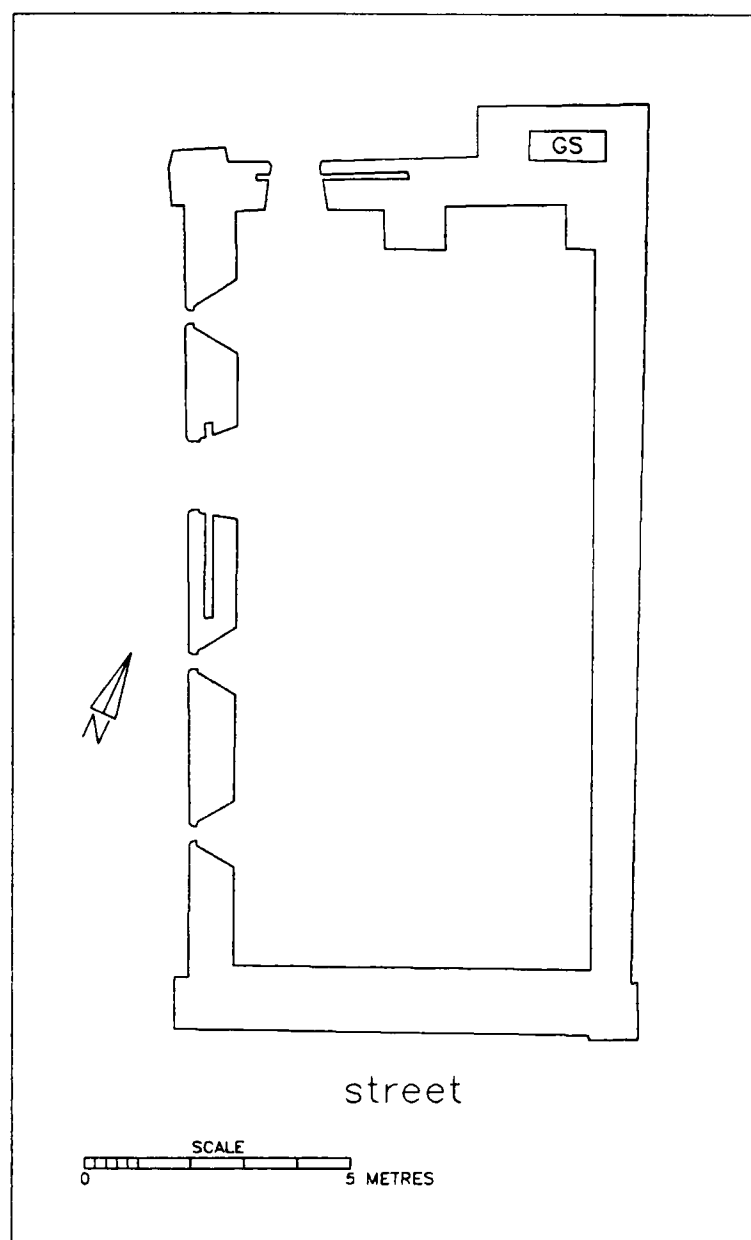


Fig. 42. St Martin-at-Palace Plain, Norwich. Plan of undercroft. GS = garderobe shaft.

church downwards to the River Wensum. The undercroft was cut deeply into this slope so that at the street end it was c.2m below contemporary street level. At the other end it was at ground level and only just above the twelfth-century water table.³ The entrance from the street appears to have been by the side doorway since the presence of exterior windows in the southeast wall confirms that this doorway did not open into an adjoining structure. A gently sloping passage to the side entrance would have made for easier access to the undercroft than a steep flight of steps at the front and

¹ See Chapter 1.

² B.S. Ayers, 'Excavations at St Martin-at-Palace-Plain, Norwich, 1981', *East Anglian Archaeology* 37 (1988).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

would have permitted more room for doorways to shops, or the house, above. The rear doorway in this instance could have allowed easy access from the waterfront.

Another example of a prototypical split-level townhouse on a sloping site is that excavated in 1989 on the south side of **Ludgate Hill, London** (Fig. 43).¹ Building C1 was at right angles to Ludgate Hill, but set back by c.5.5m. At this end it was sunk c.1.23m below the street level and at the rear was c.270mm below the external ground level: an internal drop of 1.04m from front to rear is sufficiently large to suggest two distinct floors perhaps marked by a partition wall. The building differs from the Norwich example in that the rear was slightly sunk and thus the semi-subterranean construction cannot have been intended purely as a means of terracing on an inclined site. In view of the space between the front of Building C1 and the street it is interesting to learn that in 1308 this tenement included four shops at the front (*quatuor shopis in anteriore parte*).² It is likely that the arrangement dates from the construction of Building C1 in the late twelfth century. A similarly-sized sunken undercroft immediately to the rear (Building C2) had a doorway facing the rear of Building C1 and may represent a detached chamber block. Further to the rear of the plot, fragmentary remains were excavated of a third stone structure (Building C3), possibly also sunken, and with what appears to have been the foundations of a staircase in the southeast corner.

A steeply sloping site at the ruined townhouse opposite the entrance to King John's Palace in **Blue Anchor Lane, Southampton**, resulted in the construction of a partly subterranean undercroft. Unlike the buildings at

¹ MoLAS archive VAL88, area C, and interim report (produced for the sponsors Rosehaugh Stanhope Developments plc): Bill McCann, *Fleet Valley Project Interim Report*, 1993.

² C. Taylor, 'Gazetteer of Properties on the South Side of Fleet Street', in Bill McCann, *Fleet Valley Project Interim Report*, p. 97.

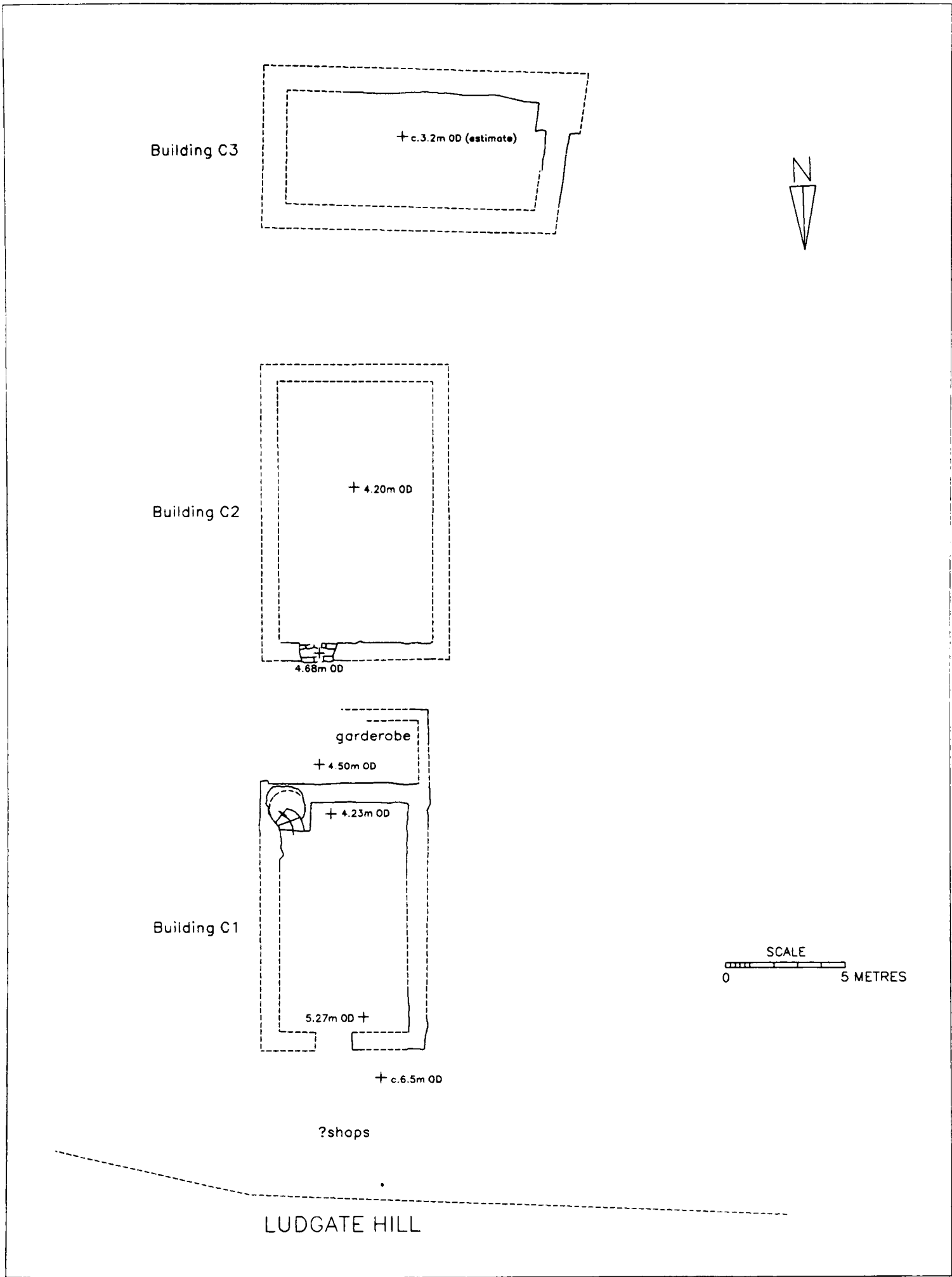


Fig. 43. Buildings C1-3, Ludgate Hill, London (Fleet Valley Project). Plan of undercrofts showing levels of contemporary surfaces.

St Martin-at-Palace Plain, Norwich, and Ludgate Hill, London, however, it is the long side elevation which faces the street and which contains

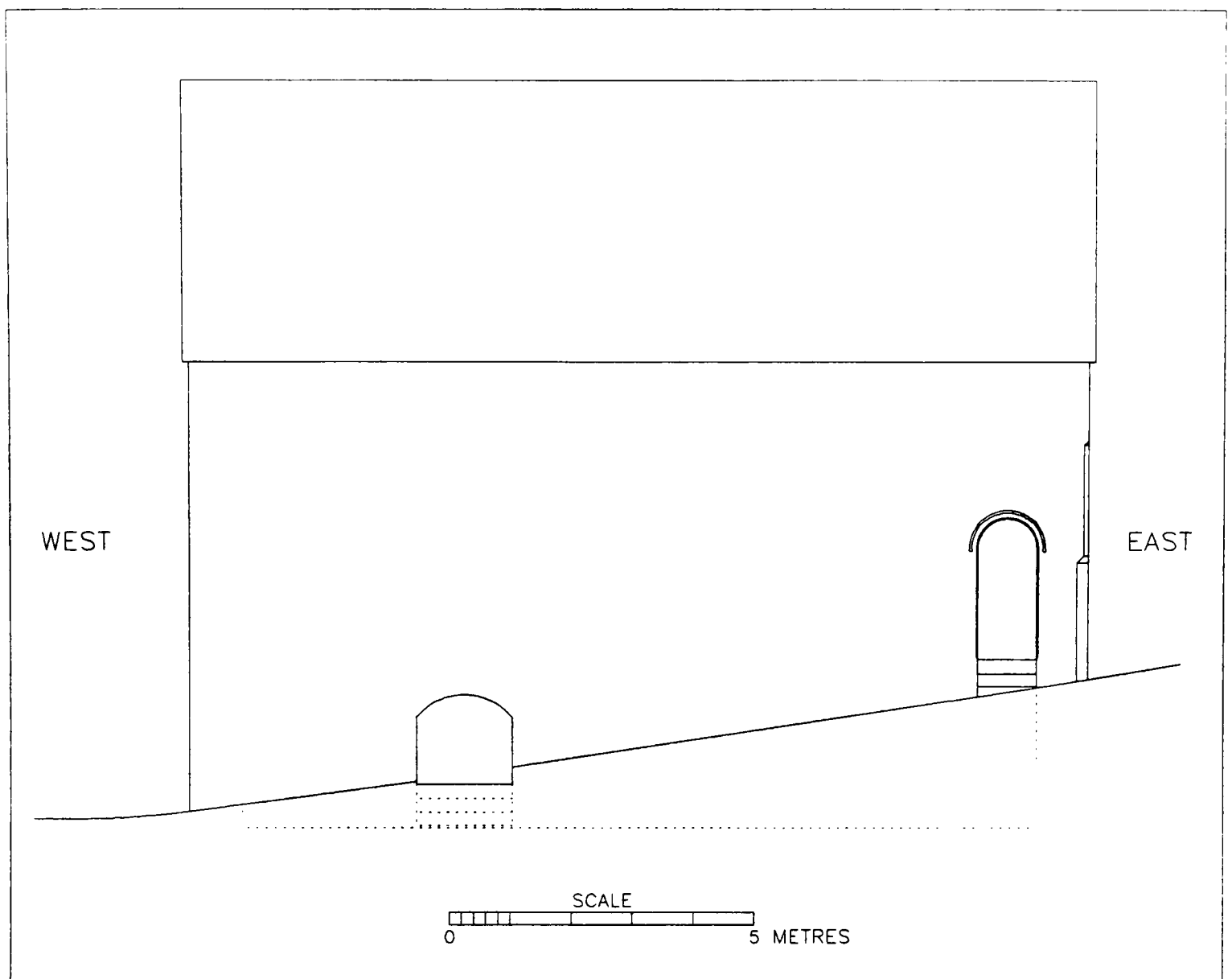


Fig. 44. House in Blue Anchor Lane, Southampton. Reconstruction of south elevation showing known twelfth-century features.

evidence for commercial activity. The building is similarly located to the other twelfth-century townhouses adjoining the Western Esplanade, but seems not to have had direct access through an arched or arcaded frontage onto the quay. The construction of the fourteenth-century town wall did not remove all the twelfth-century fabric at this western end, and enough survives to confirm that there was no entrance. The obviously exterior doorways and fenestration on the south wall of this building and the north wall of King John's Palace c.3.44m to the south show that Blue Anchor Lane was established by the twelfth century and, thus, there was easy access to the longer façade from the quay. The east-west slope along the Blue Anchor Lane frontage falls 2.13m, conveniently a storey height

difference from one end to the other. A nineteenth-century drawing of the building before it was reduced to the present low walls confirms that this opportunity for easy access to the undercroft and upper storey was appreciated, for it shows a Romanesque doorway at the eastern, or uphill, end of the long Blue Anchor Lane elevation and a less well-defined undercroft entrance at the western, or downhill, end.¹ The threshold of the latter is preserved, and indicates a doorway c.1.57m wide and c.730mm above the floor of the undercroft.

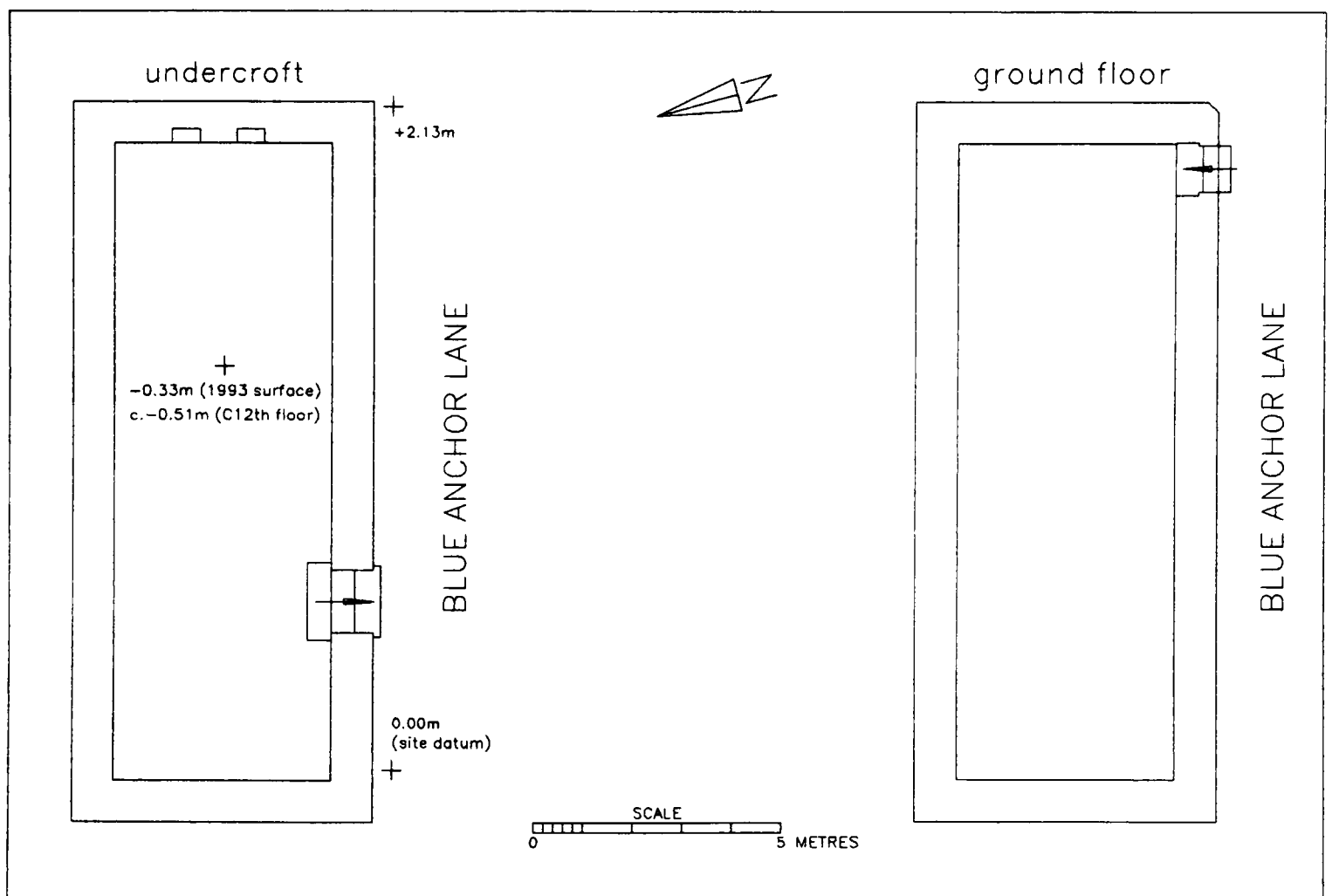


Fig. 45. House in Blue Anchor Lane, Southampton. Reconstructed plans at undercroft and ground levels. Relative heights indicate the slope.

Although the undercroft was partly subterranean and the upper storey partly at ground level, there is no evidence for commercial usage of more than the lower storey. There are no indications in the surviving ruin or in the antiquarian record of steps up to shops or indeed any other

¹ Turner, *Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Architecture*, facing p. 34.

medieval features to the west of the upper-level doorway. Moreover, what appears to be a garderobe chute in the northeast corner of the undercroft is a positive indicator of a purely domestic upper storey.

A sloping site is again found at the Norman House, 46-7 Steep Hill, Lincoln. This is one of the more intact Romanesque split-level townhouses, but, like the nearby Jew's House, has been simultaneously famous and neglected until recently.¹ Despite the fact that a large proportion of the two street elevations has undergone complete rebuilding, it is possible to reconstruct much of the original townhouse. The present structure comprises two parallel ranges which share a common central, or spine, wall, and which have gables overlooking a side street. On this southern wall fabric from the first phase, including the distinctive string-course on the exterior, continues rearwards of the spine wall confirming that the original townhouse was of similar extent to the surviving building. This is corroborated by the existing rear wall which, despite modifications, is largely medieval and preserves what appears to be a twelfth-century return at the northeast corner. It is therefore clear that there was a rear range coeval with the streetfront range, and of similar scale, height and stone construction. An absence of twelfth-century detail prevents a more complete understanding of the rear part of the house, but the continuity of the string-course at first-floor level on the south wall, and part-surviving blind-arcading on the rear face of the central wall, which rises to just below the ceiling level of the front range, provide strong evidence for it being two-storeyed in the manner of the front range. Such an arrangement presages the double-range plan identified by Pantin as a

¹ Under the auspices of Lincoln City Council, which owns the building and needed to carry out repairs, in 1991-2 Plowman Craven Associates made a rectified survey of the two street elevations, and the City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit produced plans and cross-sections of the undercroft.

common thirteenth- and fourteenth-century townhouse type,¹ but the two-storey rear range at the Norman House precludes the open hall which forms an essential part of this arrangement. The absence of an open hall is further corroborated by the presence of a large and heated solar, or private chamber, in the streetfront range; at the Jew's House the near-identical front chamber must have been the principal domestic room as there is no evidence for a substantial rear range.²

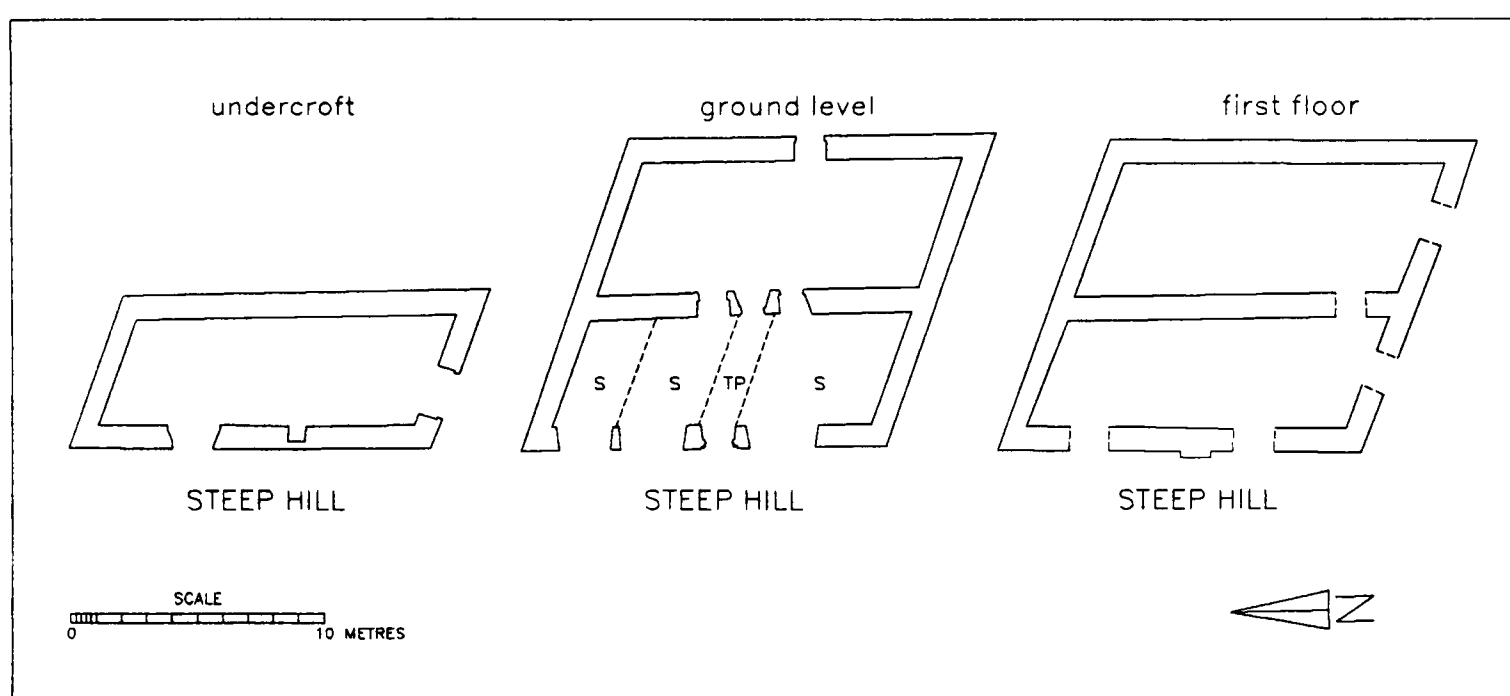


Fig. 46. The Norman House, Lincoln. Reconstructed plans at undercroft, ground and first-floor levels. S = shop; TP = through-passage.

It is the streetfront range at the Norman House, however, which provides the most interesting structural evidence. The ornately carved doorway in the west wall has a simpler counterpart in the spine wall and it is clear that they provided access to the domestic parts of the townhouse. A timber socket in the spine wall and a corresponding change in the colour of the stone surface confirm the former presence of the expected side wall of the passage on the south side, and there remains a partition wall on the approximate line of its northern counterpart. Both were probably of timber panelling or wattle and daub. Thin partition walls on both sides are shown

¹ Pantin, *Townhouse Plans*, p. 203 and pp. 217-23.

² See pp. 47-52.

on a drawing of c.1800 in the city's Banks Collection.¹ Flanking the twelfth-century doorway in the spine wall are two smaller doorways with monolithic flat-headed lintels. Recognising that they were coeval with the central joggle-arched doorway, Stanley Jones has used these doorways as the basis for his recent interpretation of the Norman House.² He argues that the three doorways provide entrances to service bays and a kitchen passage, in a manner akin to that found at the Great Hall of the Bishop's Palace, Lincoln, and suggests that the rooms on the street frontage were for 'storage or [sic] foodstuffs'.³ Quite apart from the fact that such an interpretation would place the service rooms in the streetfront range and the kitchen in the street, this is impossible on several grounds. Firstly, it presupposes the existence of an open hall which would have to be oriented at right angles to the axis of the building for the doorways to lead off the lower end (the opposite end to the dais), although Jones himself argues for an open hall with its dais at the northern end.⁴ Secondly, it demands the use of a three-doorway service bay arrangement without a screens passage (for there is no evidence of a cross-passage running along the central wall), which would make the Norman House the earliest known occurrence of the configuration of central passage with flanking doorways (it is not known until the thirteenth century, and then initially only on the grander scale such as at the episcopal halls at Lincoln and Wells).⁵ Most importantly this interpretation ignores the fact that the arrangement of doorways in the spine wall conforms to the norm for later

¹ Lincoln Public Library. Banks Collection, Vol. 3, p. 37.

² S.R. Jones, 'The Norman House (46-7 Steep Hill)', *Lincoln Archaeology* 4 (1992), pp. 21-5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Blair, *Hall and Chamber*, p. 14.

townhouses with two parallel ranges.¹ In these instances the passage provided access to the residence, while the smaller doorways opened forwards into the rear of shops on the streetfront. That this was the case at the Norman House is revealed by the evidence for shops contained in the arcaded frontage. A splayed jamb, adjacent to and of the same build as the southern jamb of the front doorway, extends down to the floor and implies an open arcade similar to that known at the Jew's House.² Recent stripping out of this part of the Norman House revealed a course of large slightly worn stones that may have formed the original inner side of the threshold of this wide opening. As most of the rest of the front wall has been rebuilt it is, of course, difficult to be precise about the details of the arcade. Considering the height of the undercroft vault and the slope of the hill, however, more than one shop south of the main doorway would have required improbably massive flights of steps. Conversely, north of the doorway this is less of a problem, and so two more typical smaller shops would seem reasonable (Fig. 47).³

At first-floor level, the nineteenth-century reproduction Norman window replaces an original, although the latter was set a little higher so that its sill was level with the ornate string-course. The twelfth-century arrangement is shown on the c.1800 Banks Collection drawing. This drawing also records a projecting chimney breast over the doorway, the base of which survives up to the level of the string-course. In his essay on first-floor halls in Lincoln, Jones identifies two chambers in the front ranges of both the Jew's House and the Norman House, although there is

¹ E.g. 38-42 Watergate Street and 48-52 Bridge Street, Chester.

² See pp. 47-52.

³ For discussion of shops, pp. 249-61.

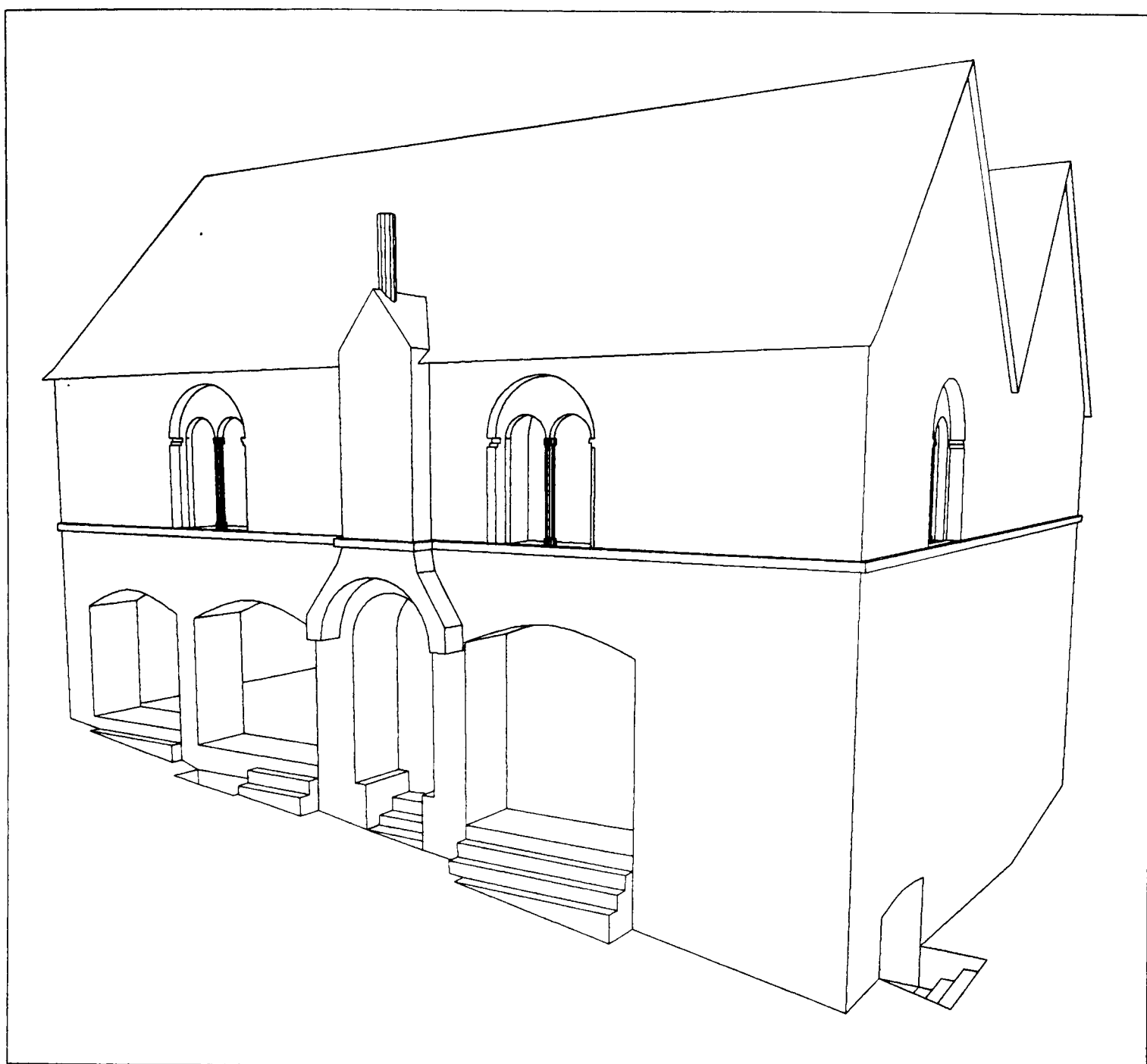


Fig. 47. The Norman House, 46-7 Steep Hill, Lincoln. Perspective reconstruction of the late twelfth-century townhouse.

no visible evidence for partitioning in either house.¹ This, however, is based on the assumption that the first floor of both houses comprised a hall and private chamber.² With the evidence at the Norman House indicating a further two-storeyed range to the east, it is quite possible that there was a single solar occupying the whole of the street range at this level, with other chambers and the staircase to the rear. The central location of the fireplace is consistent with such an interpretation.

¹ Jones, *Lincoln 3*, pp. 147-8.

² It is difficult to reconcile Jones's identification of an open hall at the rear of the Norman House and a first-floor hall over the front range of the same building.

Unfortunately there is no written or drawn record which adds to the fenestration details of the Norman House solar. Writing before the alterations of the later nineteenth century Turner noted that 'some windows may be distinguished, but less perfect than those of the Jew's house'.¹ One of the Norman windows observed must have been the blocked example on the Steep Hill façade recorded on the c.1800 drawing, whereas any further windows can only have been misinterpretations of the blocked jambs of what appear to have been seventeenth-century windows on the south wall.

The corner site and the slope of Steep Hill have made it particularly convenient for the Norman House to incorporate an undercroft. The twelfth-century barrel-vaulted undercroft is largely intact and has preserved its original window in the west wall, with multiple corbels supporting the vault at this point. A slope in the string-course at the southern end confirms that the present entrance is in the same location as its twelfth-century precursor. The original triangular-headed recess in the west wall is rebated for a cupboard door. The latter could imply a commercial function of the undercroft, although a more convincing case is made by the fact that the undercroft was independent from the house above, there being no original internal staircase. That at the northern end of the undercroft is almost certainly contemporary with the relatively recent insertion of two brick transverse walls,² whilst the one near the centre opens off a doorway of square-headed form with an internal rebate. Similar doorways at the rear of undercrofts at 39 Bridge Street, Chester, and Tackley's Inn, Oxford, date from the fourteenth century, but the form is so rudimentary that a later date cannot be ruled out.

¹ Turner, *Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Architecture*, p. 42.

² These were removed in 1994, at which point the undercroft reverted to single occupancy and, fittingly, to commercial use.

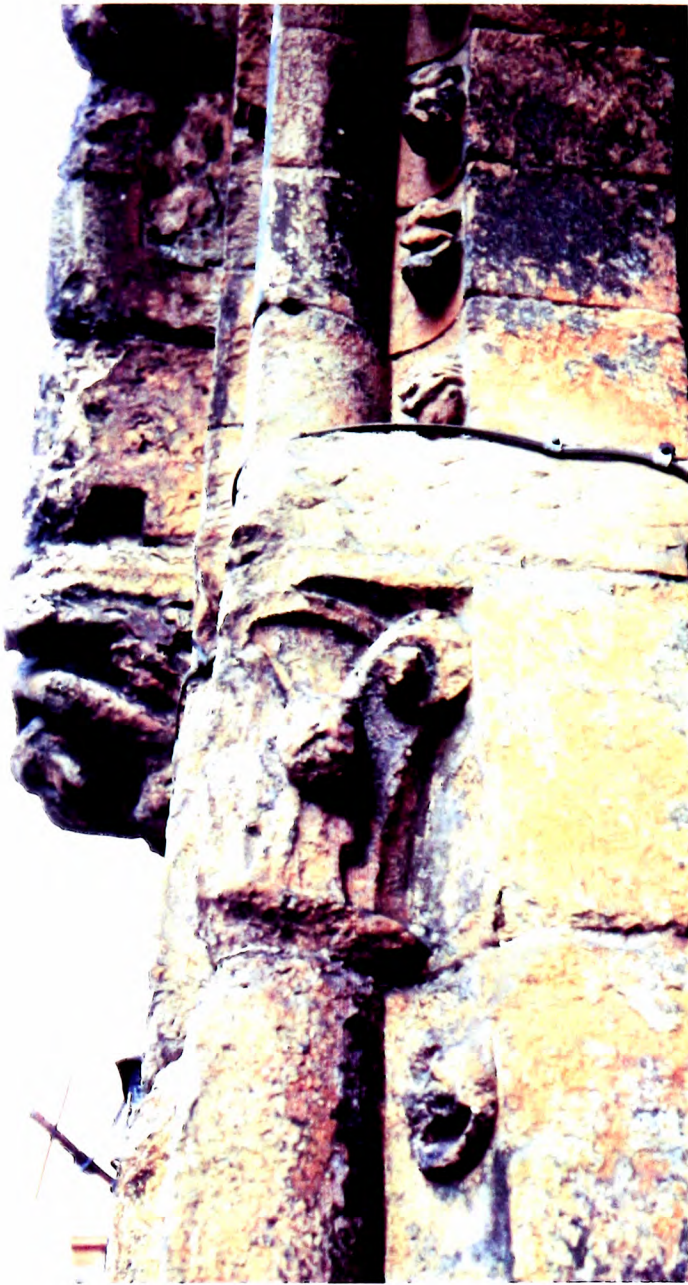


Fig. 48. Sculptural detail from doorway, the Norman House, Steep Hill, Lincoln.



Fig. 49. Sculptural detail from doorway, the Jew's House, Steep Hill, Lincoln.

Although the string-courses in the undercroft and on the west and south elevations, and the doorways in the central wall are all clearly twelfth century, it is the ornate front doorway which provides the closest dating for the Norman House. Unlike the Jew's House, with its use of detached monolithic shafts, the doorway here uses carinated (keeled) shafts integral to the flanking hollow chamfers, and thus the whole effect is more proto-Gothic. It is unfortunate that the nineteenth-century restorers chose to reconstruct the first-floor window on an earlier pattern similar to those

found at the Jew's House.¹ Whilst it is clear that the Norman House is later than its counterpart at the bottom of Steep Hill, it is difficult to understand the dating proposed by Jones, for he ascribes the building to c.1200 without citing his reasons.² With a building having sculptural detail of such obvious quality as the Norman House, there can be little ground for assuming a substantial delay before the stylistic norms of the period permeated through to its (supra-) vernacular context. Clearly, Wood's dating of the two houses to 1170-80 cannot be correct in both cases,³ but it is the Jew's House that is placed too late rather than the Norman House too early; with its detached monolithic shafts and distinctive sculptural detail the Jew's House can be dated to the 1160s, whereas the 1180s would be consistent with the Norman House mouldings.⁴

Split-level townhouses on level sites

Whereas the Norman House, Lincoln, is undoubtedly the best-preserved Romanesque townhouse evidencing a commercial function on two storeys, the building known as Setreton's formerly in Cornmarket, Oxford, was a more exact prototype of the typical thirteenth- and fourteenth-century split-level townhouse: it was a narrow building built at right angles to a level and continuously built-up street. The almost total destruction of this building in the 1950s, as part of the redevelopment of the Clarendon Hotel site, has at least some benefits for the archaeologist. Firstly, the demolition of the structure was the cause of it being identified and

¹ Wood states that the window is 'a re-set and restored Norman window said to have been found in pieces in a ground-floor recess in 1878', although the window is wholly nineteenth century and inconsistent with the evidence of the c.1800 Banks Collection drawing and with the construction date indicated by the style of the doorway; Wood, *Norman Domestic Arch.*, p. 44.

² S.R. Jones, 'The Norman House (46-7 Steep Hill)', *Lincoln Archaeology* 4 (1992), pp. 23-4.

³ Wood, *Med. House*, p. 4.

⁴ For discussion of the Jew's House, see pp. 47-52.

recorded. Secondly, the undercroft and, most unusually, the street frontage were excavated, providing information for the twelfth-century levels of both. Thirdly, and uniquely amongst standing or recorded Romanesque commercial townhouses in England, the building can be related to twelfth-century, and later, documentation which includes some elements of architectural description.

In view of the early date of the investigations at this building, and the salvage conditions under which they were made, it is of little surprise that there is no archive. In addition to the published site report,¹ however, there is material from a more recent but limited

investigation of the site by Brian Durham, which calls into question some of the original conclusions.² Martyn Jope argued that the undercroft of *Setreton's*, as Pantin named this tenement after a fourteenth-century tenant,³ was c.3.66m wide and c.7.62m long in its original form.⁴ It was

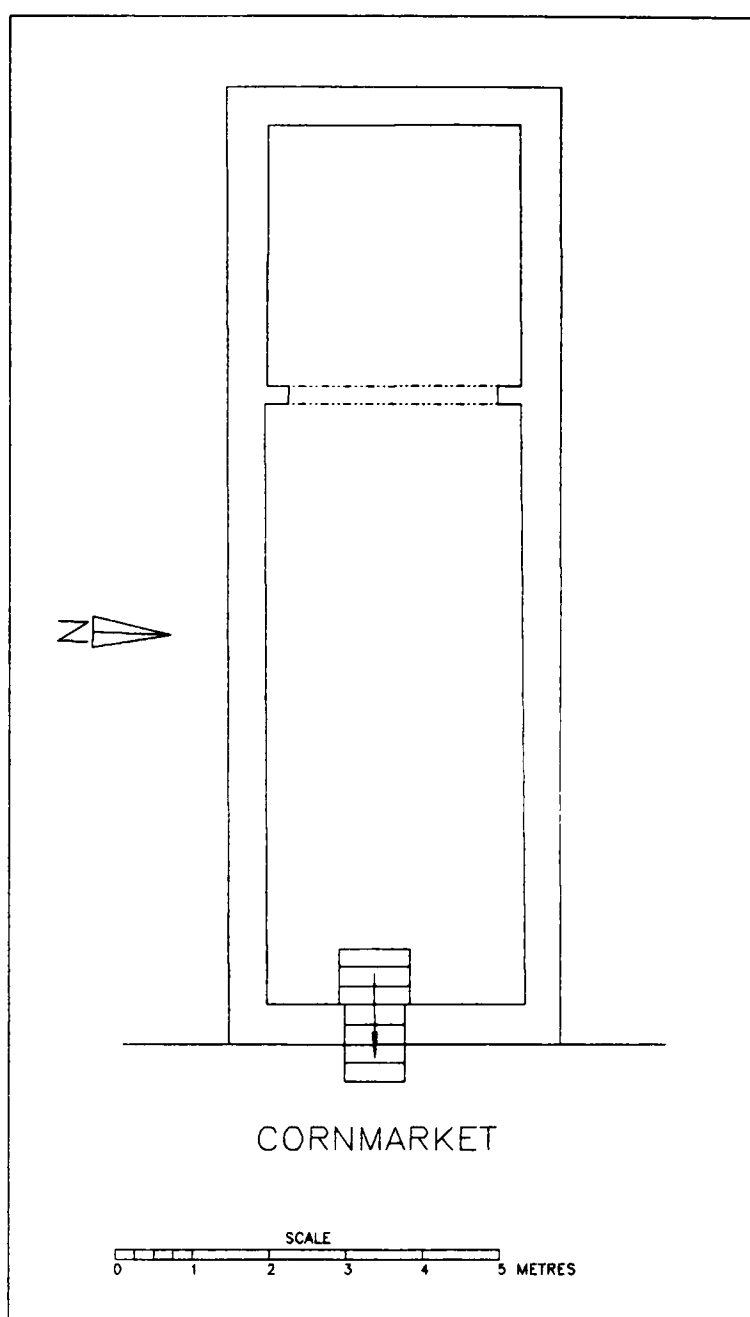


Fig. 50. *Setreton's*, Cornmarket, Oxford. Reconstructed plan of twelfth-century undercroft. The doorway to the street is thirteenth or fourteenth century, but probably a direct replacement of a Romanesque precursor.

¹ Jope, *Clarendon Hotel*, pp. 1-83.

² B. Durham in, S.M. Youngs, J. Clark, and T.B. Barry, 'Medieval Britain and Ireland in 1983', *Med. Arch.* 28 (1984), p. 237; Oxford Archaeological Unit archive.

³ Pantin in, Jope, *Clarendon Hotel*, pp. 106-12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-2.

noted, however, that the intact twelfth-century vault rib was placed off-centre, and that this resulted from the rebuilding of the south wall in the late thirteenth or fourteenth century on a line 380mm south of the twelfth-century wall: the interior footings of the original wall were located. Durham's more recent investigations of 1983 included the recording of a section through the south wall in one of these areas where the footings were recorded, but no evidence of the earlier wall was found. Moreover, it was clear that the upstanding wall had a construction trench sealed by layers which included pottery datable to the late eleventh to twelfth centuries. It is improbable that this section of the wall dates from Jope's suggested late thirteenth- to fourteenth-century rebuild. The 1983 section showed that build-up 1.64m deep over the possibly truncated top of the foundation trench was in turn cut by another foundation trench extending down to the springing of the vault. The pottery dating for the fill of this trench is consistent with Jope's dating of modifications to the vault, the south wall, and the east wall. The slightly contradictory nature of these two necessarily incomplete excavations means that the early history of the *Setreton's* undercroft is less certain than the original site report would indicate. What remains valid, however, is Jope's contention that the undercroft was semi-subterranean. He shows the interior floor-level at c.1.23m below the contemporary exterior ground level,¹ while the 1983 section shows that the undercroft was sunk by a minimum of 560mm and, since the ground level is likely to have been truncated, probably substantially more than this. It is interesting to note that, whereas Durham's section shows that the interior face of the south wall of the undercroft was well finished, the exterior face was extremely rough: this confirms that the undercroft was built as a semi-subterranean structure.

¹ *Ibid.*, Fig. 2 (p. 8).

Although Durham's 1983 investigations have added usefully to the earlier study of *Setreton's*, his pottery derived date range for the south wall of the late eleventh to twelfth century is less precise than that argued on architectural grounds by Joep.¹ It is difficult to refine the latter's mid to later twelfth-century dating, with c.1140-80 outside limits, since the V-grooved and chamfered imposts of the arch are all the dating criteria available, although a date late in this range would seem improbable. Indeed, more reasonable outside limits of c.1140-60 would be equally consistent with Pantin's suggestion that the building was constructed after the tenement plot came into the hands of Oseney Abbey c.1140.²

In view of the fragmentary nature of the original fabric above undercroft level, the use of the documentary evidence provided by the Cartulary of Oseney Abbey enabled Pantin to make a reasonably complete reconstruction of the twelfth-century arrangements.³ The crown of the undercroft vault gave a ground-floor level at c.1.8-2.1m above contemporary street level as defined in the 1955 excavations, and the documentary record revealed that the streetfront part of this storey was occupied by two shops, each c.2.1m wide. A corbelled-out fireplace on the storey above fixed the height of the shops at c.2.1m, and a bay post at first-floor level indicated that this floor was of the same height. No evidence was found, either documentary or architectural, for the depth of the shops, the function of the space, if any, behind them, or any internal divisions of the first floor. Pantin describes the first floor as a solar, but this identification is based on the later history of the house. From 1317 onwards a rear range containing the principal domestic rooms was held jointly with the streetfront building, and

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 106.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 106-12.

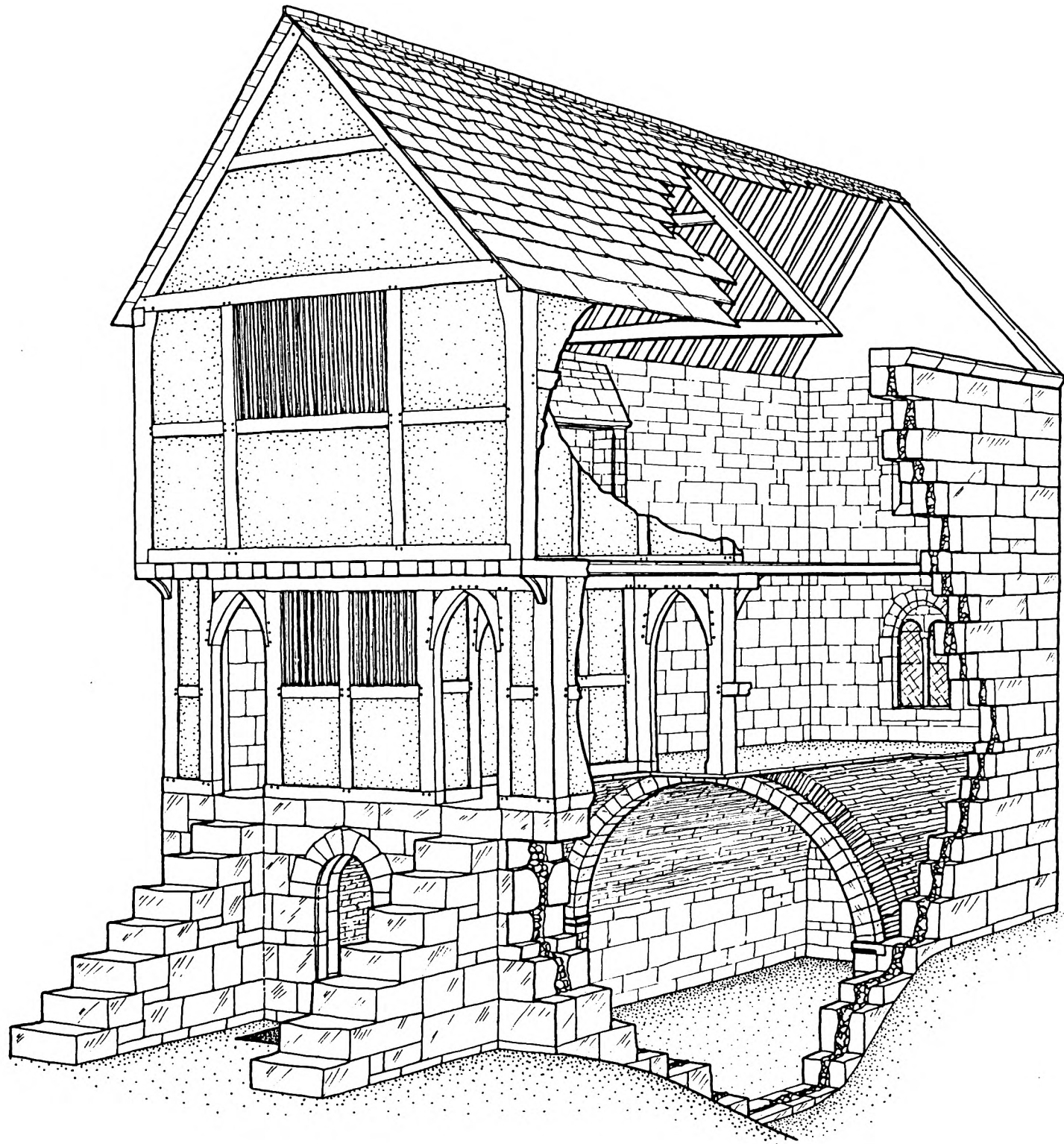


Fig. 51. *Setreton's*, Cornmarket, Oxford. Perspective reconstruction of the townhouse as it may have appeared by the late twelfth century.

this property is described c.1190 as having two cellars, two shops, and two solars.¹ Pantin conjectures that this indicates that the two buildings were held together as early as the twelfth century. Not enough remained, or was recorded, of the medieval building at the time of the demolition of the Clarendon Hotel to demonstrate whether or not the buildings were coeval. Although the first-floor room may not be that in the c.1190 deed, its identification as a solar is convincing: as with the other twelfth-century townhouses with ground-floor shops, the principal domestic room at first-floor level is more akin to a chamber, or solar, than a hall with its implicit function of providing access to other parts of the house.² Accepting, then, the frequently unsubstantiated, but otherwise wholly reasonable, observations of those involved in the 1955 recording of *Setreton's*, it is probable that the building was a fully evolved split-level townhouse.

Fragmentary remains of a townhouse with a similar semi-subterranean undercroft on a non-sloping site are found at **Marlipins, High Street, Shoreham-by-Sea**. The building underwent substantial rebuilding in the late thirteenth century, but it would appear that the plan remained unchanged.³ A splayed roundheaded window in the east wall is the most distinctively twelfth-century feature. The original southeast internal quoins survive and reveal that the Romanesque building did not have a doorway close up to this corner in the manner of the thirteenth-century house. In the absence of details of the twelfth-century streetfront or the upper storey arrangements, it is impossible to be certain of a two-level commercial function, although the location of the building at right angles to the central area of the High Street would indicate that the undercroft

¹ H.E. Salter, *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey*, 1 (Oxford, 1929), pp. 60-1.

² See pp. 273-9.

³ See pp. 365-7.

at least was used in the distributive trades.

Urry noted several Romanesque undercrofts in **Canterbury**, not all of which are still visible.¹ Of those buildings seemingly destroyed since the 1960s, 17 **Palace Street** is the only example which he identifies as a split-level townhouse, although two bays then surviving at the building on the corner of **White Horse Lane** and the **High Street** were wholly subterranean and possibly at least partly below ground in the twelfth century.² The remains included a stone semi-basement with an arched doorway and steps, presumably providing access directly from the street.

Urry does not describe either building in any detail or specify the evidence for his ascription of a twelfth-century date.³

Despite the unfortunate disappearance of these buildings without adequate record, there are upstanding remains of twelfth-century townhouses in **Canterbury** which have features associated with split-level construction. The sunken undercroft at the rear of the **Guildhall** site

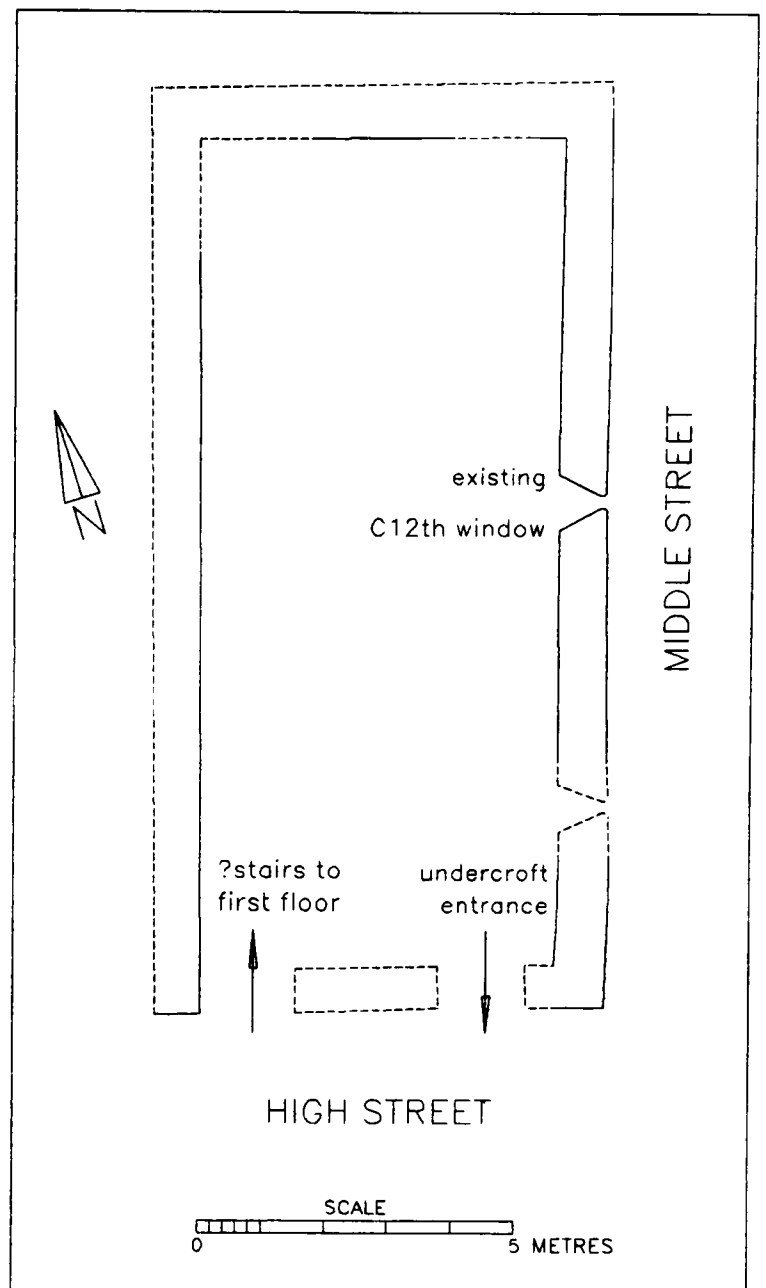


Fig. 52. Marlipins, High Street, Shoreham-by-Sea. Reconstructed plan of twelfth-century undercroft.

¹ Urry, *Canterbury*, pp. 192-4.

² *Ibid.*, p. 192.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

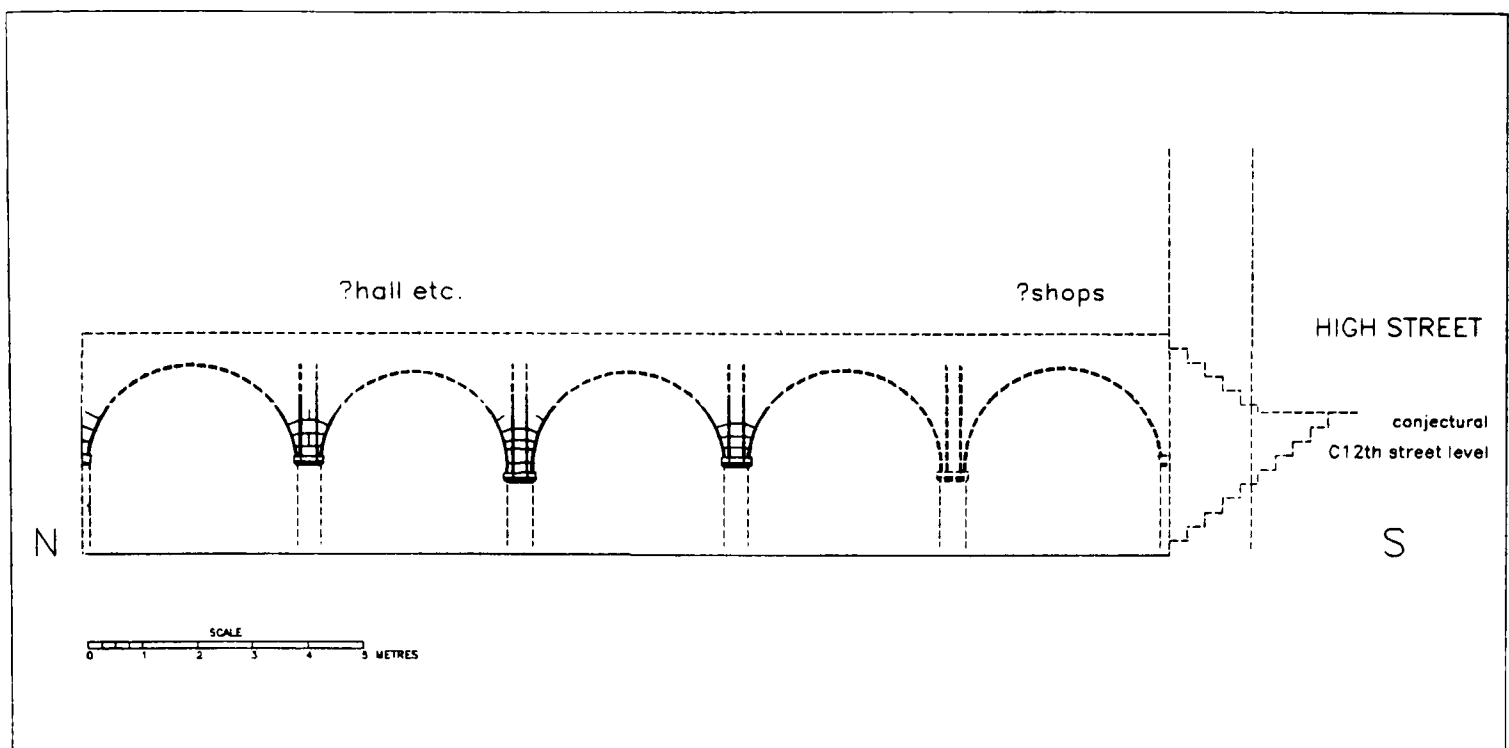


Fig. 53. 21 High Street, Canterbury. North-south section of undercroft showing central arcade and reconstructed entrance steps in relation to the conjectural contemporary street level.

probably formed the basement storey of a chamber block,¹ but another such surviving structure of late twelfth-century date at 21 High Street, Canterbury, is more likely to have been part of a split-level townhouse. This comprises an undercroft at right angles to the street measuring 14.93m x 5.05m. Lowering of the ceiling in the early twentieth century has obscured much of the medieval fabric, but a central arcade of columns remains in part. From these columns semicircular arches spring laterally and longitudinally as if forming the main ribs dividing bays of a two-aisled rib vault. Despite the fact that the modern ceiling is as little as 800mm above some of the capitals on the central columns, there is no indication that such a vault was constructed, and it must be presumed that the arches supported joists in the manner of the simpler examples at 9 St Mary's Street, Stamford, and, a little later, at 28-30 Watergate Street, Chester.² The survival of at least two column bases, albeit rendered, confirms that the modern floor of the undercroft is at its original level,

¹ See pp. 30-1.

² See (respectively) pp. 386-7, and pp. 140-3.

which is c.2.2m below the present street. The conjectural floor level of the storey above would have been in the order of 600mm-800mm above this. Excavations in this part of Canterbury indicate that one could expect a significant rise in street level since the twelfth century,¹ probably making the contemporary ground level in the order of 1.2m above the undercroft floor.

Although Canute's Palace, Porter's Lane, Southampton, suffered in bombing raids in 1940 and consequently is a ruin, substantial medieval parts remain and evidence an unusual split-level structure. This was a late twelfth-century townhouse which extended 34.18m along Porter's Lane and which comprised a partially subterranean pair of undercrofts supporting a finely built upper storey. It appears that immediately before the bombing there was not much more in the way of surviving twelfth-century fabric, and to find any record of lost Romanesque stonework one has to turn to nineteenth-century antiquarian descriptions. Documentary records for the building date back to between 1275 and 1289, but as this first mention is a grant of the building to the new foundation of the Oratory of the Holy Trinity at Barton, its designated function of providing hospitality for the poor cannot be applied to the period before this.² Canute's Palace's role as a refuge for the poor within a century of its construction should not be construed as evidence against purely commercial origins, for it is possible that construction of town defences in this area during the thirteenth century removed access to the quay, so reducing property values in the vicinity.³ A similar sequence of events was to

¹ Pers. comm. Rupert Austin, Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

² Walker, *Quilter's Vault*, p. 184.

³ St J. O'Neil argues that the south wall of the town postdates the 1290s, but this may only have been the case in the area immediately adjacent to God's House Gate; B.H. St J. O'Neil, 'Southampton Town Wall', in W.F. Grimes (ed.), *Aspects of Archaeology in Britain and Beyond* (London, 1951), p. 254.

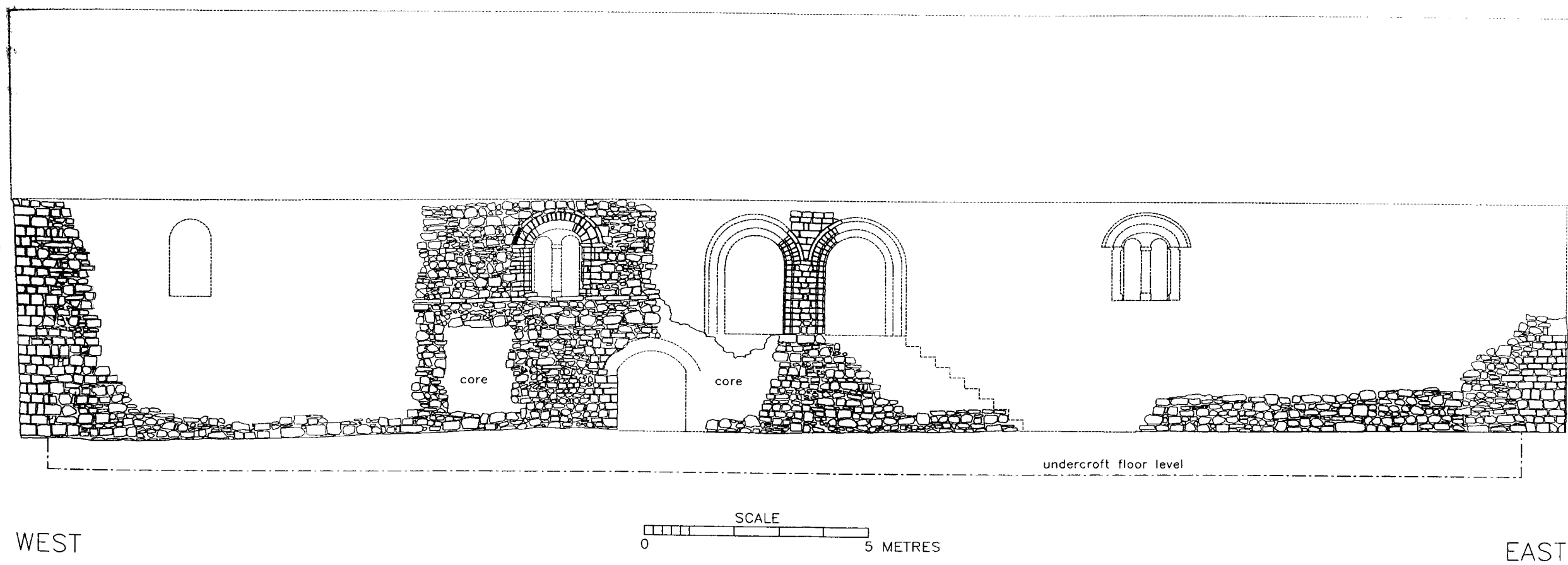


Fig. 54. Canute's Palace, Porters Lane, Southampton. Street elevation showing reconstructed doorways and windows.

occur in the southwest part of the town in the fourteenth century.¹ In the fifteenth century the creation of the Town Quay immediately south of the Watergate reversed the fortunes of Canute's Palace, at which point it became the Customs House.²

The standing building has long been the subject of antiquarian interest, and in recent times has seen some limited archaeological investigations. Excavation of the interior of the eastern part of the undercroft has confirmed that the surviving ground-level doorways for the undercroft were slightly subterranean as they are now.³ Unfortunately, neither this excavation, nor the unpublished earlier work of Pallister,⁴ revealed any evidence of the original function of the undercrofts. The drawings and description in Englefield's *A Walk Through Southampton* have been a more useful source, as he records, with dimensions, two lost windows on the street elevation.⁵ One, to the east of the first-floor doorways, was identical to that surviving to the west. The east window was placed further away from the doorways, however, leading Englefield to suppose that there must originally have been three doorways (or windows as he calls them) forming a symmetrical façade. Less precision is possible in placing the location of the second lost window: despite giving its dimensions in detail Englefield dismisses it simply as a 'smaller window at the west end'.⁶ His record of the two undercroft doorways in the south wall as being 'flat arches of segments of circles' corresponds with the rather fragmentary evidence provided by the first few voussoirs of the

¹ See pp. 70-2..

² Walker, *Quilter's Vault*, p. 188; Platt, *Med. Southampton*, pp. 36-8.

³ Walker, *Quilter's Vault*, pp. 183-216.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁵ H.C. Englefield, *A Walk Through Southampton*, 2nd edition (Southampton, 1841), pp. 32-4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

westernmost doorway.¹ The segmental arch was doubtless used to maximise the possible width of the undercroft doorways without rising above the level of the low first floor.²

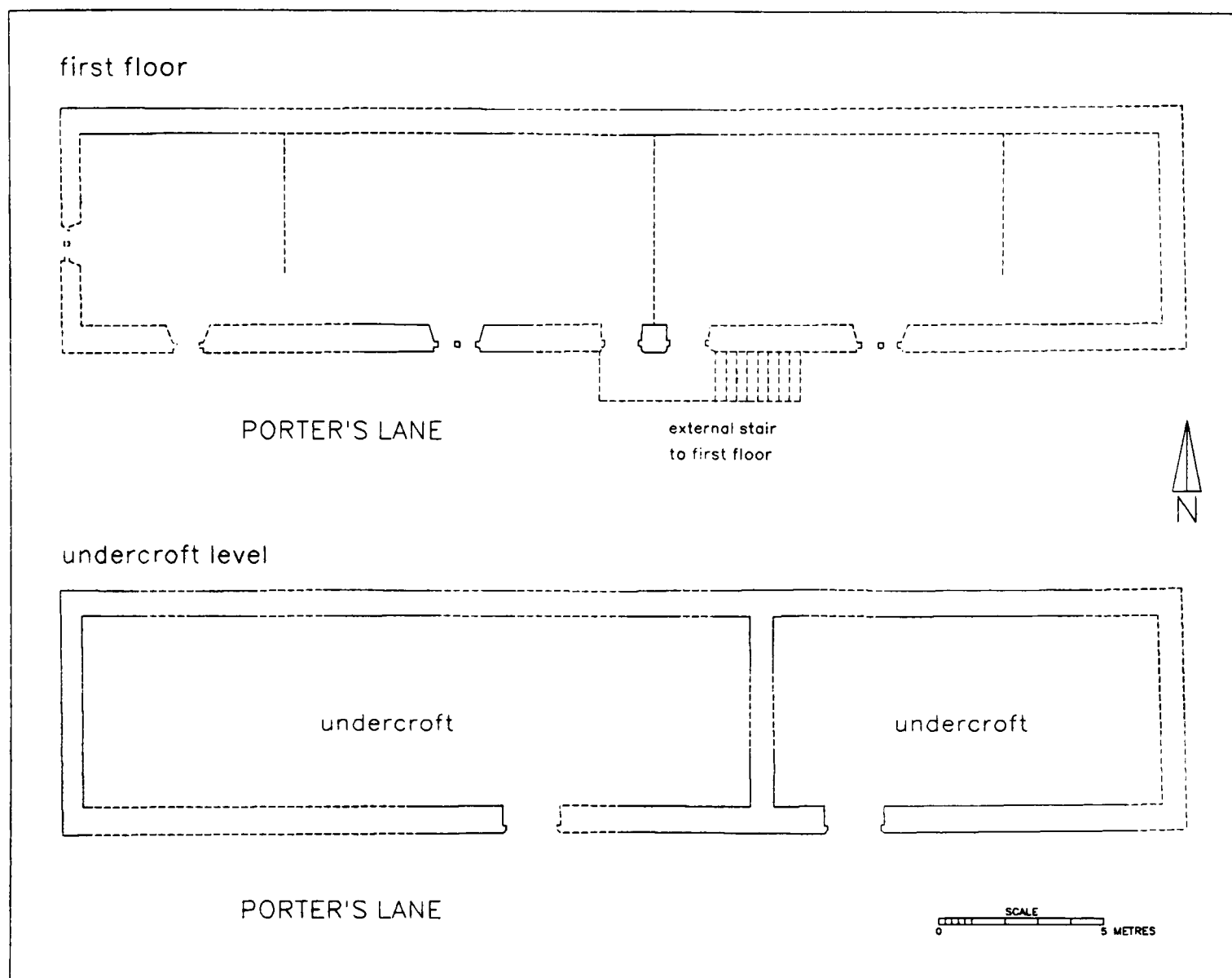


Fig. 55. Canute's Palace, Southampton. Undercroft and first-floor plans showing original fabric and conjectural internal divisions.

Faulkner's more recent analysis of the building is largely descriptive,³ although he does make the hypothesis that the simple ground storey must have been a 'quayside warehouse'.⁴ Like Wood,⁵ he assumes that the upper storey incorporated a hall, but his reconstruction of the internal

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

² Faulkner describes the part-surviving western doorway as having had a semi-circular arch (Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, p. 91). If this had been the case the voussoirs would have risen above the threshold of the first-floor doorways.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁵ Wood, *Norman Domestic Arch.*, pp. 26-7.

divisions is less than convincing. Faulkner interprets the part of the building to the west of the ground-level cross-wall as having five bays of 3.96m, with the pair of corbels placed 8.23m from the west end marking the position of a partition wall. To the west of this division he conjectures that there was a chamber, and to the east, as far as the stone dividing wall of the undercroft, a first-floor hall. Faulkner suggests that the eastern undercroft carried a counting-house.

Such a reconstruction would mean that both first-floor doorways opened into the hall, from which the chamber and counting house would have been accessed. It is surely more likely that these symmetrical doorways opened into separate rooms divided by a stud partition wall, as occurs, for example, with the identical arrangement in the lodgings range at Atherstone Place, Lincoln.¹ In view of its proximity to the easternmost doorway it is unlikely that the stone cross-wall extended above undercroft level. Both halves of the first floor could have been subdivided for domestic use in a manner similar to that suggested by Faulkner for the western part, but the unusual combined access and the narrow proportions of the exceptionally long structure may have resulted from a specialised function. The proportions anticipate those documented for selds in the thirteenth and fourteenth century,² while the location of Canute's Palace on the south quay could have provided an opportunity for use in the import and export trade beyond the provision of cellarage.

The accepted dating of Canute's Palace has long been that of Wood, who placed its construction c.1180.³ Following the excavation of the eastern undercroft this has been challenged, although Walker cites little evidence

¹ Jones, *Lincoln 3*, pp. 105-27.

² See pp. 270-3.

³ Wood, *Norman Domestic Arch.*, pp. 26-7.

to support his dating of the building to the 1160s.¹ The pottery discovered on what appears to be the original floor surface is only given a broad twelfth-century date, so Walker's revised dating must be based on architectural detail. The semicircular-headed doorways at first-floor level are not closely datable, but the internal face of the two-light window to the west of them has more diagnostic details. The keeled jamb shafts with foliated capitals are proto-Gothic, and are indicative of an 1180s construction date.

Another twelfth-century townhouse at 79½ High Street, Southampton, survived until it was damaged in the Second World War and subsequently demolished. The Ministry of Works undertook a survey, and the original chimney stack was dismantled and re-erected at King John's Palace, where it remains today. Keeled shafts and roll mouldings on the fireplace and chimney stack indicate a date of c.1175-85. The Ministry of Works drawings show a medieval building oriented at right angles to and directly on the High Street, with two gables. Romanesque fabric was located in the southern half of the building only and there is no evidence to suppose, as Faulkner does, that the two parts became a single structure until the construction of a longitudinal arcade in the undercroft in the thirteenth or fourteenth century.² Faulkner is right, nevertheless, to draw attention to a continuous roll moulding which ran up the chimney breast from the undercroft, through the later medieval ground floor, and stopped at an offset level with the hearth of the original fireplace. This would appear to suggest that a ground floor was inserted, presumably at the time of the construction of the stone arcade in the undercroft, and that the original

¹ Walker, *Quilter's Vault*, p. 196.

² As there is no evidence of its form or exact location, the central spine wall is omitted from Fig. 56, which shows both the twelfth-century and the thirteenth- or fourteenth-century parts of 79½ High Street.

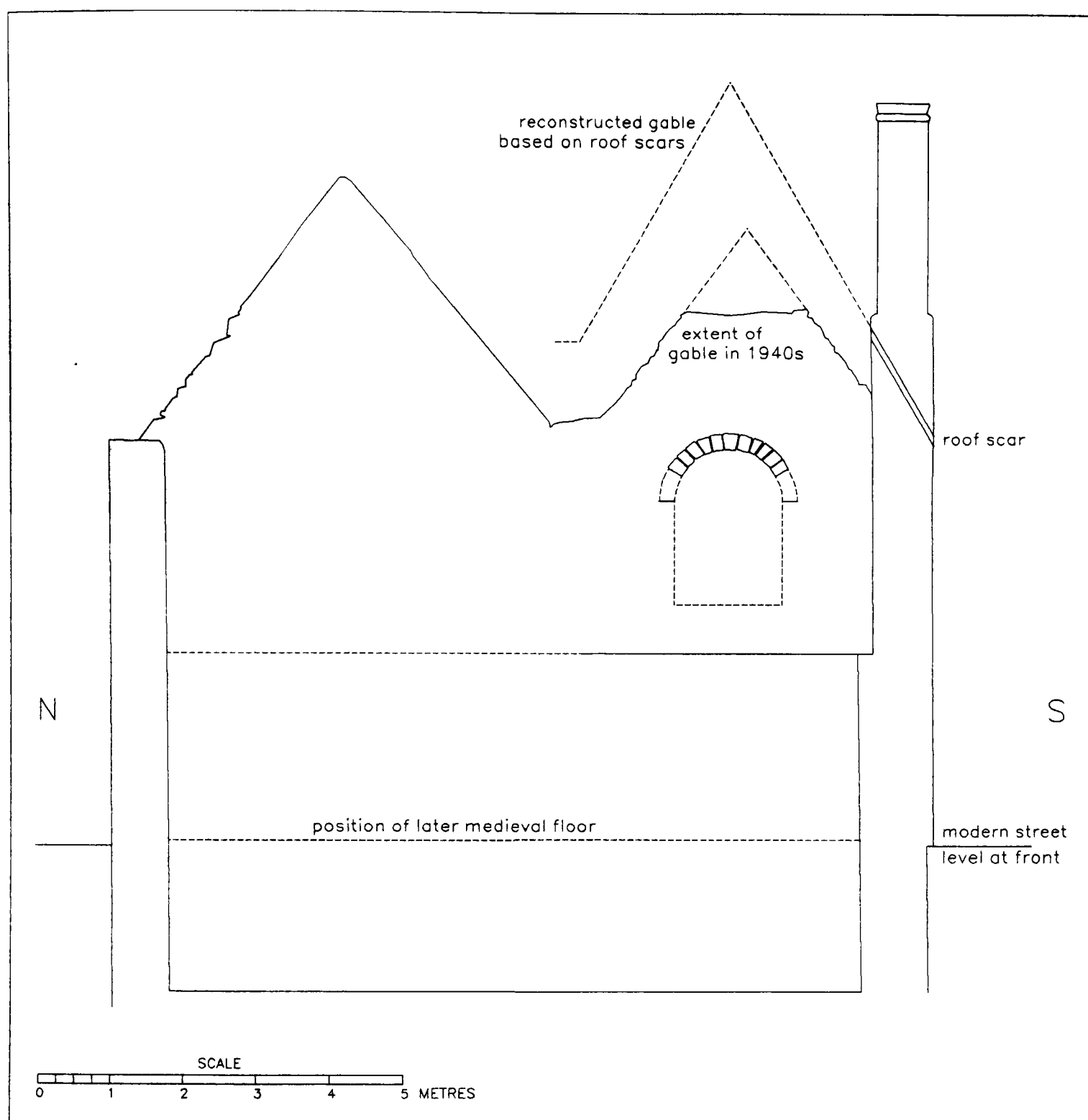


Fig. 56. 79½ High Street, Southampton. Cross section of building looking west towards rear. The thirteenth- or fourteenth-century ground floor is shown but probably had no twelfth-century precursor.

undercroft was timber ceiled and was *c.*4.4m in height. This is unusually high, but not dissimilar from the 4.2m high undercroft at 39 Bridge Street, Chester, which was also timber ceiled.¹ At the time of the recording in 1944, the undercroft was *c.*2m below pavement level and, on the basis of the build up on other sites in the immediate vicinity, it is reasonable to

¹ See pp. 304-5.

suggest that 79½ High Street was originally sunk at least c.1m below the contemporary street level. This would place the upper room(s) at c.3.7m above the street and rather high to be convincing as an upper level shop; the presence of the elaborate fireplace is consistent with this storey being the principal domestic room(s).

A few tantalising antiquarian drawings of the Moot Hall, High Street, Colchester, provide another instance of a building with a semi-subterranean undercroft carrying an upper storey which was reached by an external stair from the street. As at Canute's Palace, in this case the function of the first floor from the outset may well have been neither commercial nor residential, but civic, although this, of course, would necessitate pre-emption of Richard I's charter of 6th December 1189 which confirmed borough status on the town. That the construction of the Moot Hall predates 1189 is clear from the sculptural detail of a window recorded just before demolition of the building in 1843.¹ The use of column-figures on the inner order of this two-ordered window is similar to such designs in mid twelfth-century work in the Ile-de-France, and, in England, at Lincoln and Rochester. George Zarnecki argues convincingly for the Colchester example being by the sculptor responsible for the west portal of Rochester, which can be dated to c.1160.²

This well-recorded window formed one of a pair flanking the central first-floor doorway to the street. Although the second window did not have any intact sculptural detail, the doorway had survived and, fortunately, its appearance has been preserved in a watercolour.³ The sculpture of the two-ordered arch is consistent with a c.1160 date and,

¹ A.J. Sprague, in 'Proceedings of the Central Committee', *JBAA* 1 (1846), p. 143.

² G. Zarnecki, 'The sculptures of the old Moot Hall', in P. Crummy, 'Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester', *CBA Research Report* 39 (1981), pp. 63-7.

³ The watercolour is an annotation in William Wire's copy of Morant (see note 3, p. 103), now in the possession of the Colchester and Essex Museum.

Zarnecki argues, the Rochester doorway. The notes accompanying the 1843 drawing of the window state that the sills of both windows were 3 ft (910mm) above the floor of the hall and about 9 ft (2.74m) above street level. As Crummy observes, such a low height indicates that the lower storey, or undercroft, of the Moot Hall was semi-subterranean.¹ Excavation of the adjacent property to the west in 1973-4 revealed that the mid twelfth-century ground level lies in the region of 300mm-500mm below the nineteenth-century level so it is clear that the sinking of the undercroft cannot have been due to a substantial rise in the street level.² Indeed, it is likely that the floor of the undercroft was well below the street since it is clear that this part of the building had a stone vault: Philip Morant describes the building at the junction of Pelham's Lane and High Street as having 'arched passages, in the same manner as the under-part of the Mote-Hall'.³ Further evidence for the lower storey being an undercroft is provided by a record of alterations to the Moot Hall in 1373-4 in which it was stated that 'the said commonalty had a cellar (*celarium*) beneath the hall of the commonalty of Colchester, in no sort of occupation, but empty and idle, and be devised and counselled that the said cellar should...be forthwith restored with decent windows, for throwing sufficient light into the said cellar, and that its walls should be strengthened, and that the said sale of wool should be held decently in the aforesaid cellar'.⁴ It is, of course, unlikely that such an undercroft would have seen use other

¹ P. Crummy, 'Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester', *CBA Research Report* 39 (1981), p. 61.

² *Ibid.*, Fig, 13.11.

³ P. Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the most ancient Town and Borough of Colchester*, Book 3 (London, 1748), p. 28.

⁴ W.G. Benham, *The Red Paper Book of Colchester* (Colchester, 1902), p. 6.

than being let for commercial use: the pre-1361 guildhall at Winchester, for example, was also on the first floor with the lower storey let as a shop.¹

Semi-subterranean undercrofts

In addition to these examples of split-level townhouses which survive or are recorded as standing to two storeys, there are several twelfth-century undercrofts which, by virtue of being partly sunk and located directly on commercial street frontages, are likely to have been part of similar buildings.

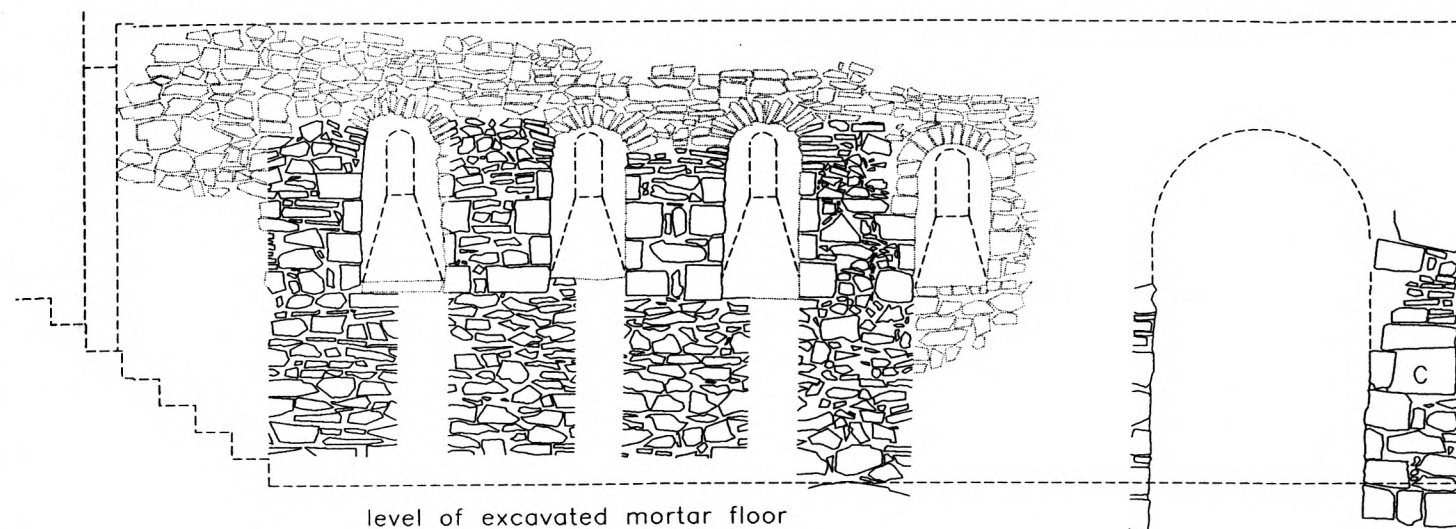
A recently rediscovered undercroft in Guildhall Lane, Leicester, appears to have formed the lower storey of a split-level townhouse, although there is no structural or documentary evidence to confirm that the ground floor contained shops.² The undercroft is rectangular, oriented at right angles to Guildhall Lane,³ and was not built with a stone vault. A mutilated and partially obscured series of four loop windows survives in the west wall, and to the north of these there is a 1.59m wide doorway with a tile-lined niche beyond. The integration of the quoins of the northern jamb of the doorway and those of the niche indicate that the doorway is an original feature. Niches with the same tile lining are found in the north and east walls. The south wall along the Guildhall Lane frontage is entirely plain although very incomplete. This abuts the west wall which, at the time of

¹ *WS* 2, pp. 593-4.

² It was rediscovered by the Leicestershire Museums Survey Team, in 1989.

³ Not unusually for a medieval townhouse, the undercroft does not form a perfect right angle with Guildhall Lane. Despite the presence of the Roman street surface almost directly below the undercroft floor, its apparently better orientation with the Roman street grid must be coincidental as it is built in the centre of the site of a Roman crossroads.

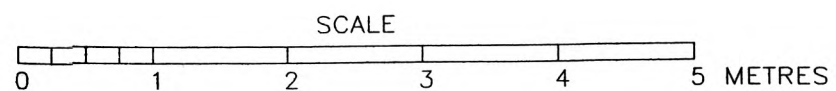
Elevation of west wall



N.B. stones shown in dotted line are derived from a mono-photogrammetric plot of the 1861 photograph

Dashed lines show possible reconstructed form

'C' marks tile-lined cupboard



Plan

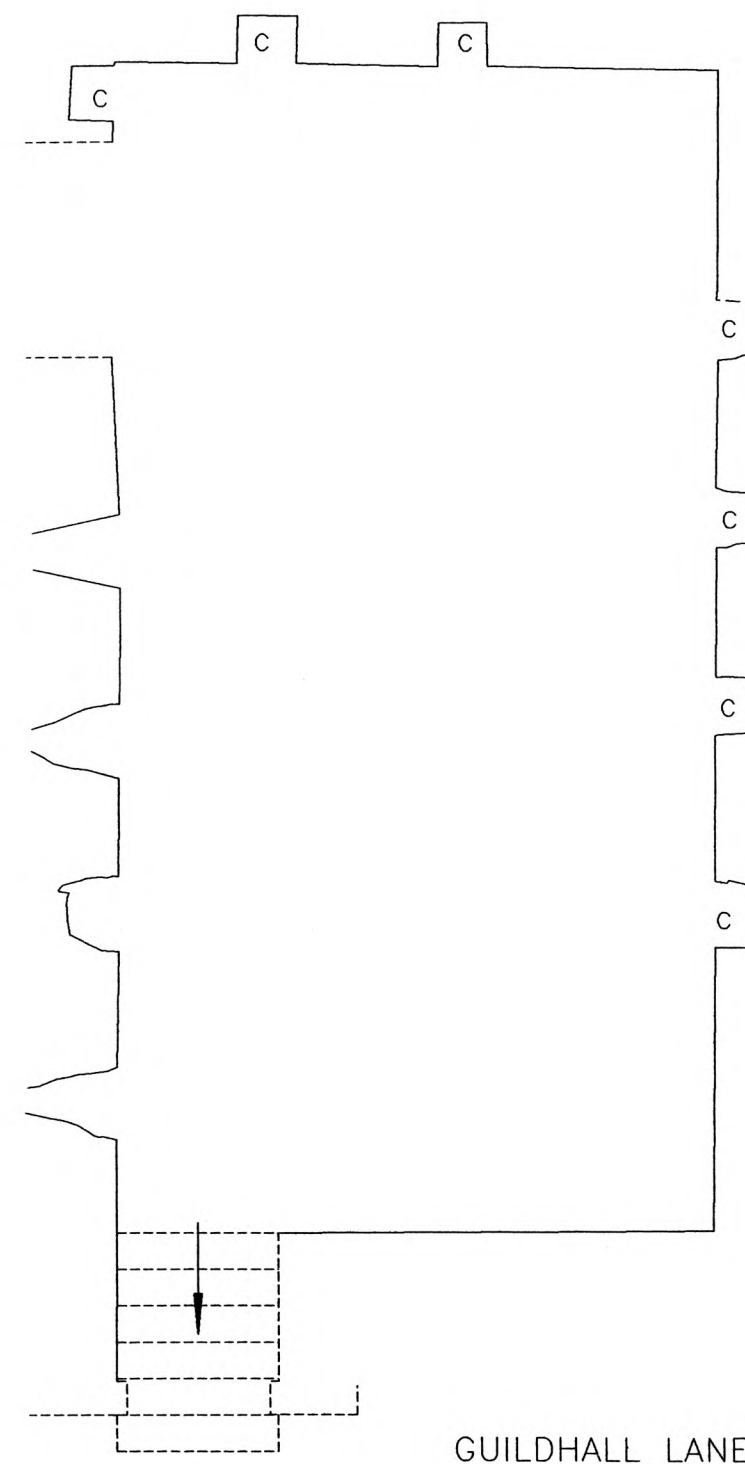


Fig. 57. The undercroft, Guildhall Lane, Leicester.

a photograph of 1861, continued at least 1.11m beyond this point.¹ In view of the location of the undercroft on the street frontage it is most likely that the extension of this wall beyond the main undercroft marks the location of a flight of steps down from Guildhall Lane.

In the absence of excavation of the exterior of the undercroft there is little evidence for the contemporary ground level. There has been no significant build-up since the early medieval construction of the nearby churches of St Nicholas and St Martin. Closer still, the investigation of the fourteenth-century Guildhall, opposite the south end of the undercroft, has revealed the bottom of the foundations at 64.35m OD. With the modern ground surface at 64.73-64.95m OD, the fourteenth-century street level cannot have been much different from that of today. This is consistent with the high-set loop windows that have external sills at c.2m above floor level.

Although there is no conclusive evidence to date the construction of the undercroft, the results of recent excavations indicate that it probably predates the mid twelfth century. This is certainly implied by the presence of pottery which has been dated to c.1050-c.1150 in a layer that overlaid the mortar floor.² Negative evidence is provided in the form of a complete absence of medieval pottery in a layer that predated the construction of the building. Indeed, a lack of residual medieval pottery in deposits either earlier or coeval with the undercroft may be significant. The architectural evidence is consistent with such a dating, but there are few features which can be dated stylistically and none that preclude a

¹ The photograph was taken by J. Weatherhead, curator of the museum, and, during the survey and excavation of the building in 1989-90 (by the Leicestershire Archaeology Unit), it has been used to produce a CAD drawing using computer aided mono-photogrammetry (by the Leicester CAD Centre at Leicester Polytechnic). The resultant plot did not match the surviving stonework closely, and thus only elements have been incorporated in the elevation of the west wall in Fig. 57.

² Leicestershire Archaeology Unit draft of a forthcoming publication on the Guildhall Lane undercroft.

construction date later in the twelfth century. The four loop windows are the most distinctive element of the undercroft and their roundheaded splays, apparently concentric, indicate a late eleventh- or twelfth-century date: their tile construction is, of course, of little significance for dating purposes.

Under the Vicars' Hall, South Street, Chichester, there is a large two-aisled undercroft datable, on the basis of its combination of early Gothic capitals and round-headed windows, to c.1180-c.1210. Bases are visible on the freestanding columns and responds of the central arcade which reveal that the present floor is at its approximate medieval level. Modern South Street is c.1.2m above this level, but excavations and watching briefs along the street have shown that Roman structural remains have been

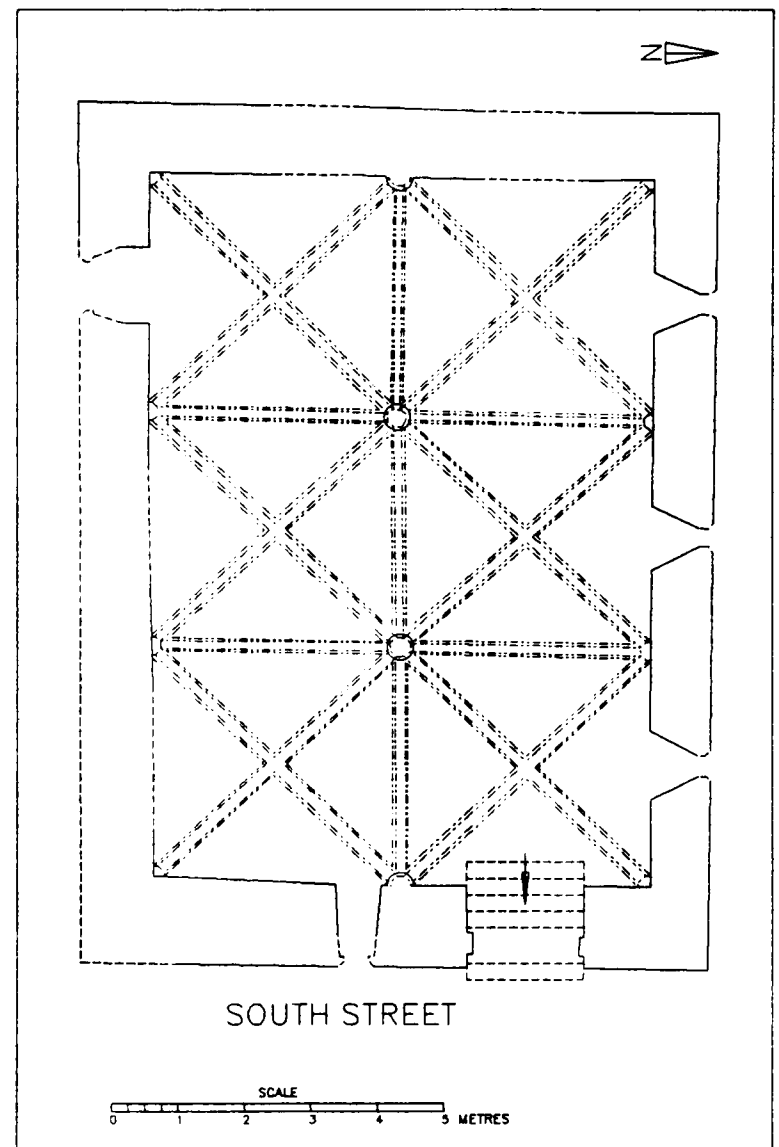


Fig. 58. The Vicars' Hall, South Street, Chichester. Plan of c.1200 undercroft.

discovered frequently within a depth of 1m from the surface and indicate that it is probable that the undercroft was originally sunk between 500mm and 1m. The three heavily splayed loop windows in the north wall and the single extant window in the south wall are accordingly set high. Neither doorway in the rear (west) wall is original and they almost certainly date from the westwards extension of the undercroft necessary to support the late fourteenth-century Vicars' Hall. There can be little doubt that the Vicars' Hall undercroft was a

commercial structure with access to South Street only although documentary evidence for the building functioning as a guildhall before its transference to the vicars choral could mean that the first floor did not incorporate shops.¹ A late thirteenth-century date for the first record of a guildhall on this site leaves open the possibility that the building was not constructed for this purpose.

An undercroft at 76 Westgate Street, Gloucester, is a more certain candidate for being part of a split-level townhouse. Oriented at right angles to the street on a narrow plot which, on the evidence of an absence of side windows, was probably part of a built-up street frontage in the twelfth century, the

undercroft appears identical in form to those in fully evolved split-level townhouses. It is largely intact and comprises five bays marked by chamfered ribs on the segmental barrel vault. The ribs spring from scalloped capitals on wall shafts which die into the wall above floor level. The capitals date the building to the late twelfth century. The southern-

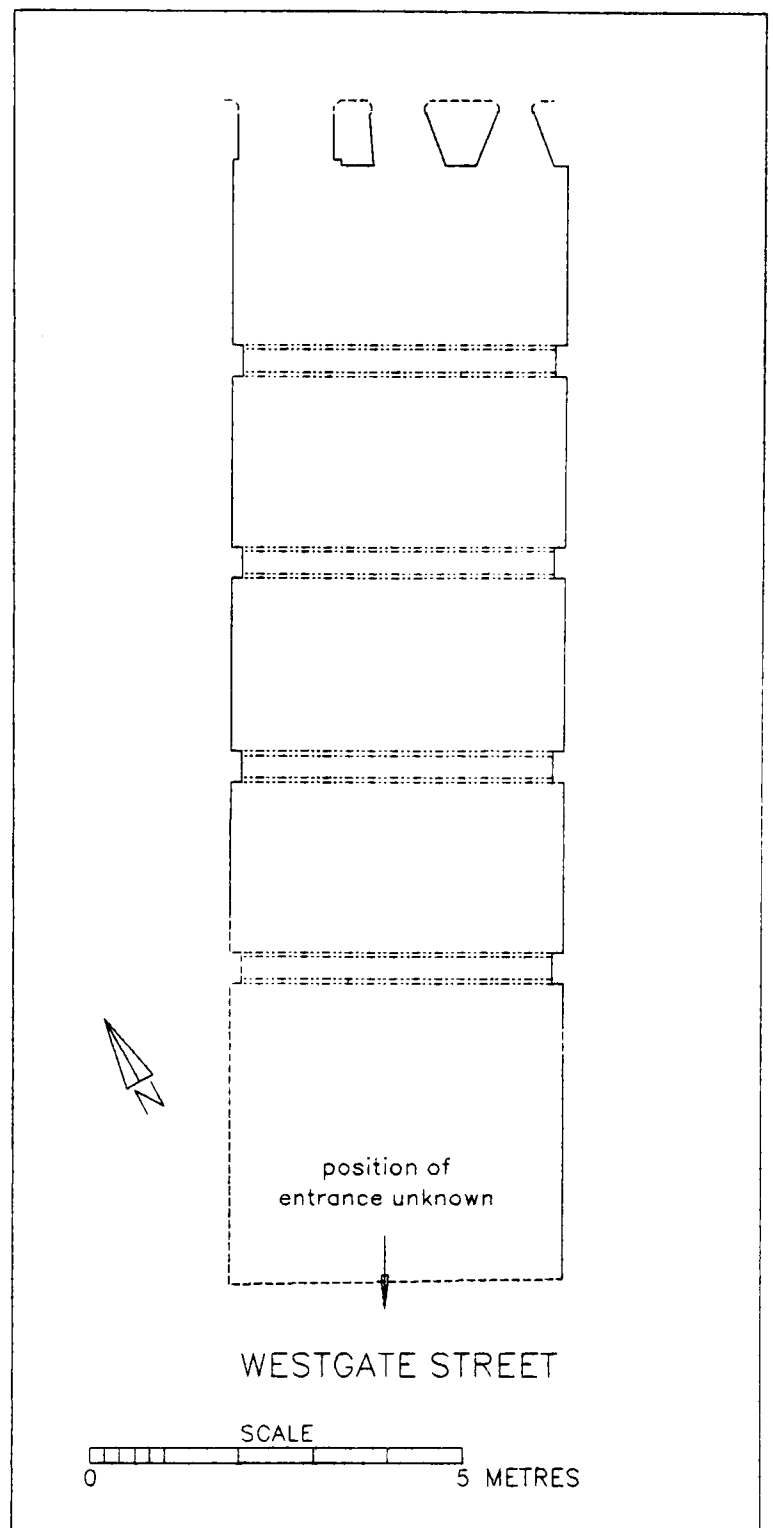


Fig. 59. 76 Westgate Street, Gloucester. Plan of undercroft including reconstructed southern rib.

¹ F.W. Steer, 'The Vicars' Hall, Chichester, and its Undercroft', *Chichester Papers* 12 (1958), pp. 2-3.

most rib is missing, as is the vault in this section, but a mutilated shaft on the east wall records its location. The internal southwest return appears original, showing that the medieval front wall was on the present alignment. The remainder of the front wall is post-medieval and, thus, no twelfth-century entrance from the street survives. The rear wall, however, preserves an original roundheaded doorway (recently blocked) in the northwest corner. To the east of this are two windows: that in the centre is unusual in that it is angled like a squint, which may reflect the avoidance of a wall or other structure abutting the rear of the undercroft at this point. The

undercroft is now wholly subterranean, as is a similar undercroft from a later split-level townhouse at 47-9 Westgate Street,¹ and it would appear that even originally it was sunk deeply, thus allowing near street-level access to a shop, or shops, above.

Destruction of the front wall has also occurred at 50-6 Howard Street South, Great Yarmouth, where the insertion of a vaulted undercroft parallel to the street in the fifteenth century removed the front two bays of a

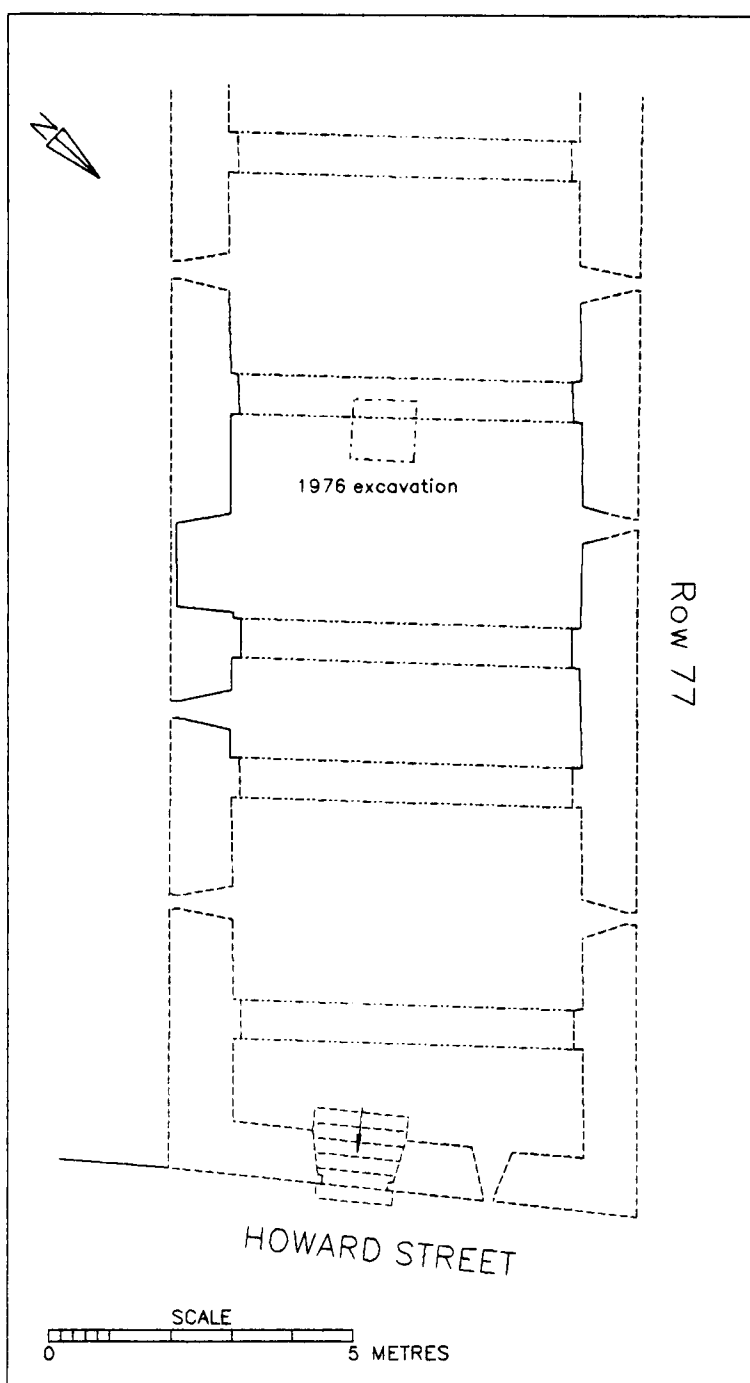


Fig. 60. 50-6 Howard Street South, Great Yarmouth. Plan of twelfth-century undercroft showing reconstructed front bays.

¹ See pp. 236-8.

twelfth-century undercroft. As would be expected on a corner site, evidence for narrow loop windows is found on the side facing Row 77. Similar fenestration, however, also existed on the opposite (southeast) side, which reveals that the building was originally freestanding. Excavations in 1976 showed that the very apparent rise in floor level from the twelfth century is about 1.1m.¹ The modern street level is c.2.6m above the original floor level, which suggests that the undercroft was partly subterranean. A surviving threshold

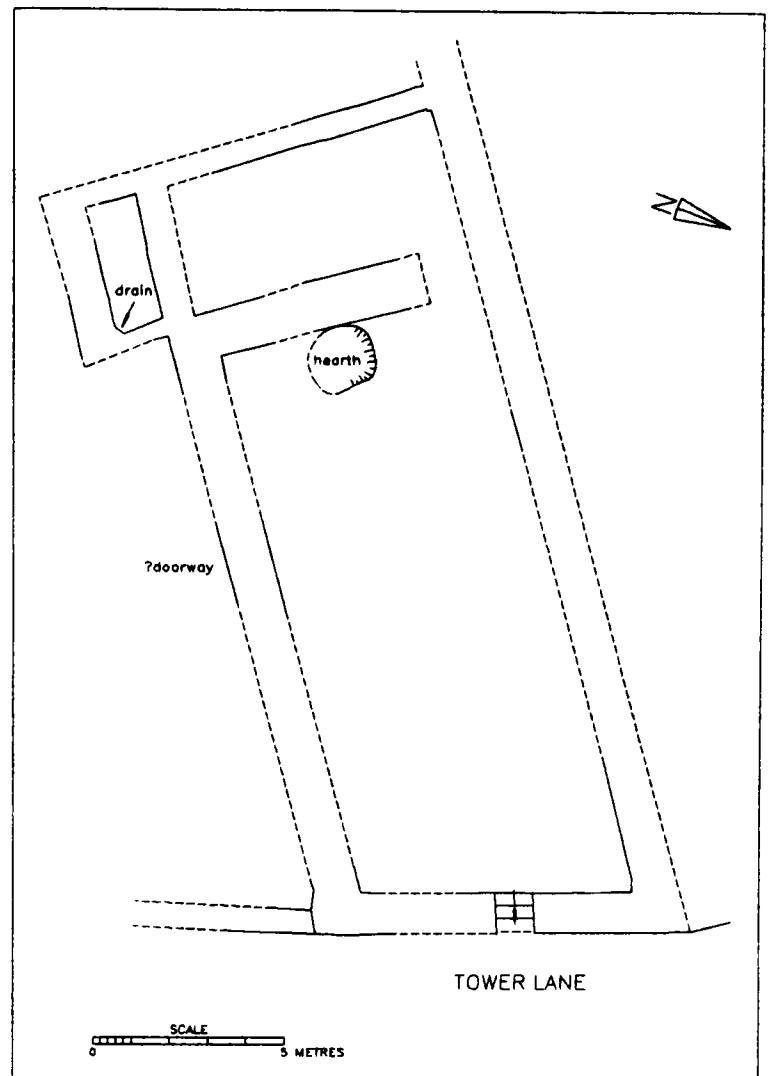


Fig. 61. Building B1, Tower Lane, Bristol. Plan of undercroft showing possible location of doorway to rear chamber, and the location of the later twelfth-century hearth.

in the fifteenth century undercroft shows that by this date the street was a minimum of c.1.3m above the twelfth-century floor level.

Excavations at 1 and 2 Tower Lane, Bristol, in 1979-80 revealed a stone-built undercroft (building B1) sunk c.1m below contemporary street-level and oriented at right angles to the street.² The thickness of the end walls (1.23m) and side walls (1.60m), the depth of the foundations (1.20m), and the presence of a garderobe at the south corner reveal that the building was of two storeys. Since Tower Lane runs along the inner side of the town wall the excavator has suggested that the building was at the rear

¹ B.S. Ayers and R. Smith, 'Twelfth- and Fifteenth-Century Undercrofts at Howard Street, Great Yarmouth: Excavation and Survey 1987/88', *Norfolk Archaeology* 41, pt. 3 (1992), Fig. 4 (p. 343).

² E.J. Boore, *Excavations at Tower Lane Bristol* (Bristol, 1984).

of a long plot fronting Broad Street.¹ However, there is no documentary evidence to suggest that Tower Lane was not built-up in the twelfth century,² and several factors indicate that the structure did not form a rear chamber block. Firstly, at c.55m to the rear of the Broad Street frontage it is unusually distant from the streetfront. Secondly, it was located on the Tower Lane frontage and adopted a skewed façade that suggests it formed part of a valuable built-up street. Thirdly, there was an external doorway in the centre of the Tower Lane elevation, with steps down to the undercroft. Fourthly, it had a garderobe and a smaller chamber at the end away from the street, which indicates that this was considered to be the rear. There can be little reason to suppose that the Tower Lane building was anything other than a fully evolved or proto-typical split-level townhouse. The typical Romanesque masonry of the building is dated more precisely to the early to mid twelfth century by the discovery of pottery of this date in the foundation trenches, and a coin of c.1125-30 in the south wall.

During archaeological excavations at 1-6 Milk Street, London, in 1976-7, the chalk, gravel, and ragstone foundations and the lowest courses of some sections of walling were revealed of an undercroft (Building 6) dating from 1100-50.³ Although the front wall was not discovered it is clear that Building 6 was built up to the street frontage: the foundations of the south (side) wall were uncovered up to the limit of the excavation, c.300mm west of the 1977 frontage. Since Milk Street was in existence by the twelfth

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

² Pers. comm. Roger Leech.

³ This dating of Building 6 is based on that used in the most recent discussion of the building where it is dated to Alan Vince's ceramic phase 5 (1100-50): Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, p. 148. Elsewhere in this publication, the phase drawing of Building 6 also places its construction with ceramic phase 5 (Fig. 35, p. 121), but the overall archaeological sequence summary (Fig. 50, p. 154) places it in ceramic phases 4, 5, and 6 (1050-1180), and the specific Milk Street archaeological sequence summary (Fig. 45, p. 132) places it in ceramic phases 5-7 (1100-1240).

century it would appear that the western limit of the excavation approximately coincided with the southwest internal return. Two spur walls projecting from the rear have been identified as the foundations of stairs or a porch construction: the suggestion of stairs leading to a doorway at the rear is certainly reasonable. What is less convincing is that neither of the two alternative reconstructions in the excavation report allows for access from the street.¹ In view

of the narrow frontage, the sunken nature of the undercroft (c.500mm below contemporary ground level),

and the position of the building at the front of a plot on a street leading off Cheapside, it is most likely that at least the lowest storey of this townhouse had a commercial function.

A similar undercroft (Building M2) was excavated at 13-17 Berkeley Street, Gloucester.² This small undercroft (6m x 4m internally) of mid twelfth-century date was oriented at right angles to, and directly fronting, a street which survived up to the early fourteenth century. Building M2 went out of use at approximately the same time as this street. The walls were marked by robber trenches c.1m wide and so there was little evidence

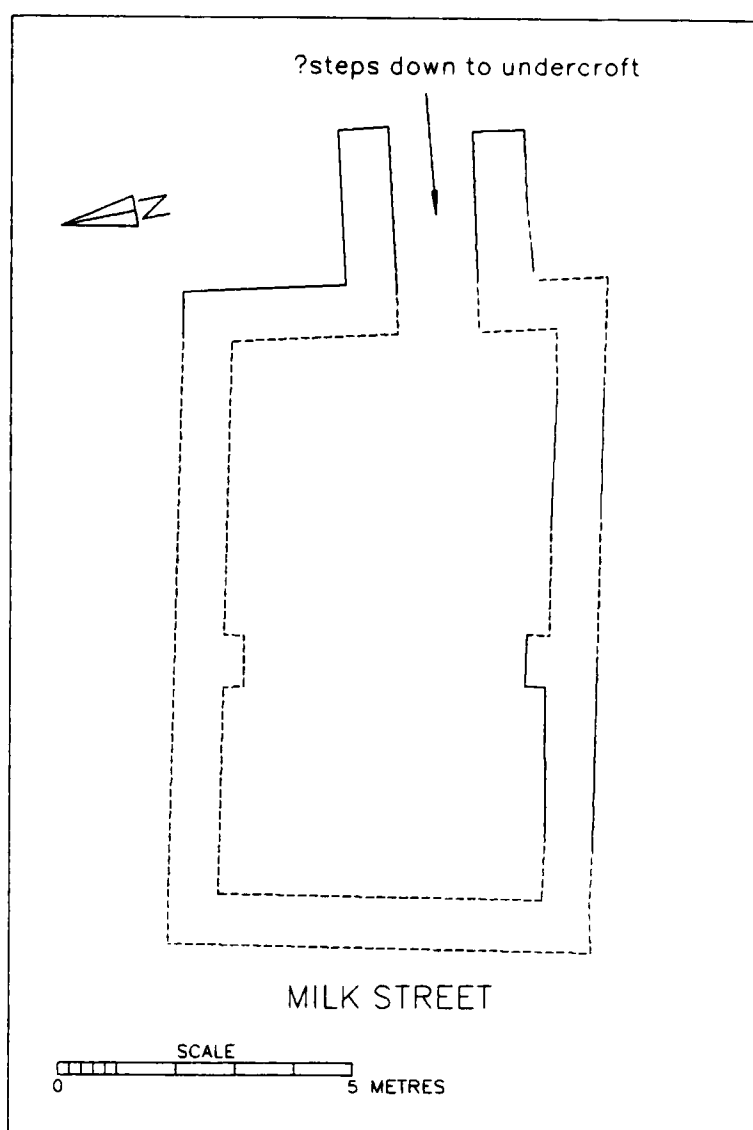


Fig. 62. 1-6 Milk Street (Milk Street excavations Building 6), London. Plan of undercroft showing approximate location of unexcavated front wall.

¹ S. Roskams and J. Schofield, 'Milk Street excavations, 2', *London Archaeologist* 3 (1978), Fig. 11 (p. 233).

² Hurst, *Gloucester*, pp. 24-69.

of doorways or other features, although two robber trenches representing apparently secondary walls to the south probably mark the location of an entrance to the lower storey. The excavation did reveal evidence of the contemporary ground level at c.500mm above the level of the floor.

At 44-6 Bow Lane (Well Court excavations Building 8), London, a

two-part undercroft excavated in 1979-80 which dated from 1100-1240, and possibly 1100-50.¹ The undercroft was oriented at right angles to Bow Lane and was built directly on the street frontage. Unfortunately the evidence for the location of the front wall comprised only a foundation trench and so there were no remains of an entrance arrangement. The south wall of the undercroft did not survive in any form and Keene has argued that the building could have extended southwards as much as an additional 9m.² A north-south wall separated the excavated part of the undercroft into front and rear chambers, with a further less substantial wall projecting from the rear possibly indicating a stair. The main walls were 1.4-1.6m thick and had foundations between 1.1m and 2.8m deep, which suggests that the upper storey, or storeys, were built of stone. The construction

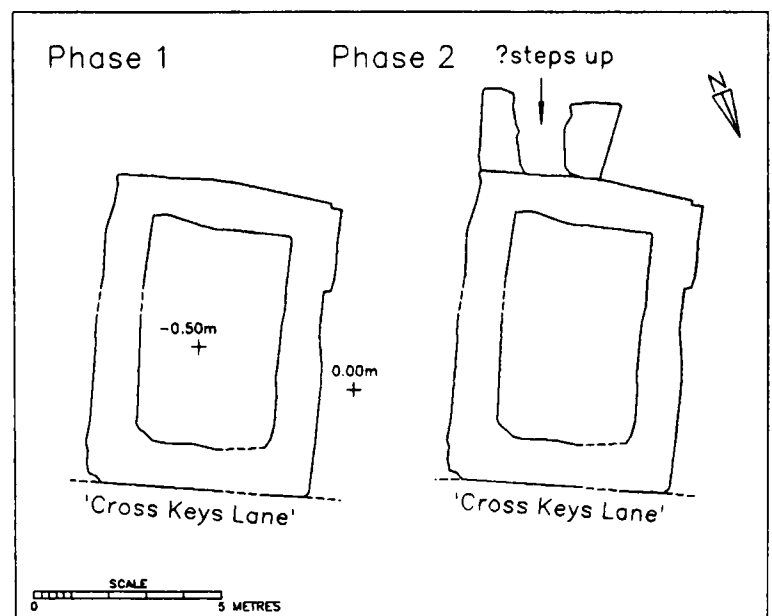


Fig. 63. Building M2, 13-17 Berkeley Street, Gloucester. Phases 1 and 2 (both mid-late twelfth century) showing relative ground levels.

¹ Building 8 has been dated on the basis of a combination of associated ceramic material and on its construction technique: Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, pp. 82-3, 154 (Fig. 50), and 164-5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

of Building 9 (1240-1400) removed the rear wall of Building 8, but the front part of the undercroft may have continued in use.¹

Building 8 falls within the Cheapside Study Area of the Social and Economic Study of Medieval London, so there has been considerable documentary research.² Little evidence can be directly related to Building 8, but it is clear that in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries it formed part of a property along a continuously built-up frontage to Bow Lane (Corvisers' Row, or *corueiseria*, c.1220). The property included shops c.1220, and it may be that the undercroft was used by the wealthy drapers whose residences formed the rear part of the property: the possible rear stair to

the undercroft of Building 8 certainly implies communication with the rear of the plot.³

The excavation of House B, New Fresh Wharf, London, has shown that this was a long narrow building of twelfth-century date that lay directly on and at right angles to the Thames Street frontage with the River Thames

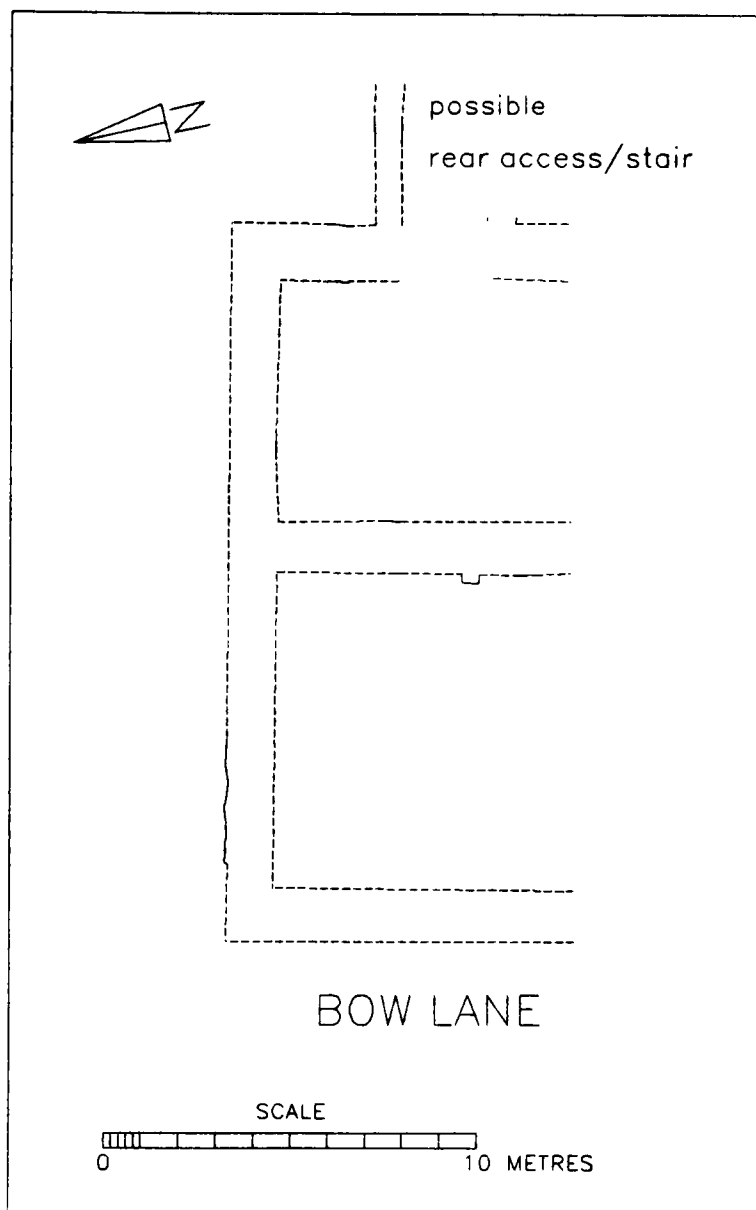


Fig. 64. Well Court Building 8, Bow Lane, London. Known extent of undercroft showing probable location of rear steps and doorway.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-3.

² Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, 104/23.

³ *Ibid.*; Keene, in Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, pp. 92-6, and 107-11.

revetment only c.5m to the south of the rear wall.¹ No evidence survived of how this building was influenced by its waterfront location: no entrances were located although there was an internal partition wall dividing the undercroft into two roughly equal parts. It is argued by Schofield that the fact that the buildings at New Fresh Wharf formed a near continuous range along the south side of Thames Street would indicate that the waterfront in this area was no longer a place for the general off-loading of cargoes, but that goods

for storage and distribution from the individual properties may have arrived at the waterfront.² The fragmentary nature of the evidence and the added complexity of the sloping site mean that it is difficult to establish the relationship of the internal floors with the external ground level. It is clear, however, that the floor level of the southern room was at c.1.5m OD, while the street level was at 3.54m OD: a change in the foundation depths of the east wall from 2.34m OD to 0.84m OD within 3m of the northeast corner indicates that there was a change in the internal floor level near the front of the northern room.

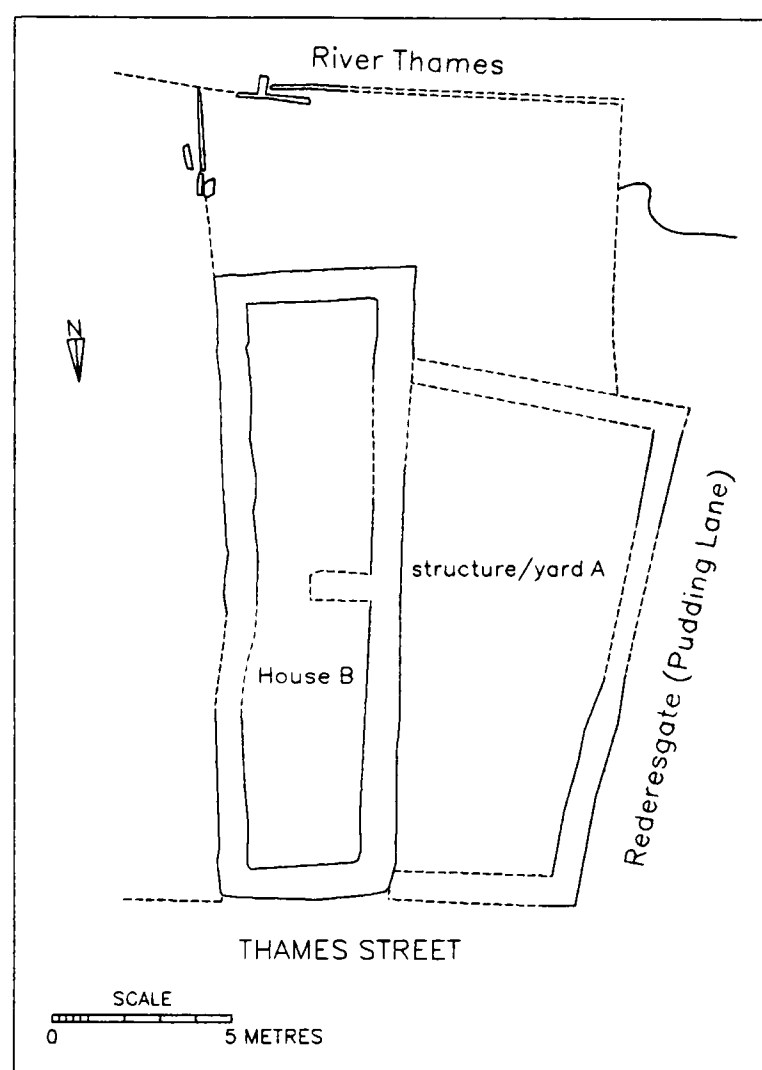


Fig. 65. House B New Fresh Wharf, Thames Street, London. Plan of undercroft showing adjacent possible yard.

¹ Steedman, *Saxo-Norman London* 3, pp. 45-6.

² J. Schofield, 'Conclusions', in Steedman, *Saxo-Norman London* 3, p. 137.

There is, then, a significant corpus of evidence for the existence of fully-evolved or prototypical split-level townhouses in the twelfth century. That a few of the buildings included in this discussion possibly had only an undercroft and none of the other commercial elements of the true split-level design does not alter significantly the general trend that shows that the known twelfth-century townhouses on the street frontage are divided almost equally between the ground-level type and the townhouse with the semi-subterranean undercroft. Although the large and often stone-vaulted undercroft is found in a few ground-level townhouses,¹ this type and scale of sunken lower storey is almost universal in the split-level townhouse and presumably marks a change in the distributive trades from the use of medium-sized single shops to small shop units over vast, and separately occupied, undercrofts. Since it is highly improbable that semi-subterranean undercrofts would have been considered direct replacements of ground-level shops, and as such shop units would have been in increasing demand throughout the twelfth century, it is unlikely that many of these sunken undercrofts did not support an upper level of shops in the manner of their thirteenth- and fourteenth-century successors. Moreover, it is clear from the orientation of Romanesque townhouses with semi-sunken undercrofts that they occupied valuable street frontages: while only 35% of ground-level townhouses were narrow-fronted buildings at right angles to the street and 65% were wide-fronted buildings parallel to the street, the comparative figures for split-level townhouses are 86% and 14%. Fortunately, the survival or record of structures above sunken undercrofts, such as those at 46-7 Steep Hill, Lincoln, and *Setreton's*, Oxford, corroborates this strong circumstantial evidence, and confirms beyond reasonable doubt that the majority of twelfth-century partly

¹ Such as Moyses Hall, Bury St Edmunds: see pp. 62-6, and 68-9.

subterranean townhouses on streetfront locations operated commercially on two levels.

The different forms of the prototypical split-level townhouses and the lack of a chronological development are notable. Most significantly, it is clear that townhouses utilising sloping sites to provide ground-level access to two storeys did not precede the first occurrences of split-level townhouses on flat sites. This would, therefore, seem to exclude the possibility of the origin of the type via topographical necessity, although such a factor may have proved decisive in the design of any one building. As a consequence it is more likely that the active property market in the twelfth century placed such a high value on the frontages of houses in the principal streets that it became necessary to evolve methods of increasing the density of shops.¹ This is in accord with the narrow-fronted plots synonymous with split-level townhouses of all periods. The absence of a gradual evolution from ground-level to split-level townhouse with identifiable intermediary stages indicates that the adoption of the two-tier arrangement as a solution to intense commercial pressure was made in a single step and, almost certainly, on numerous independent occasions.²

The subsequent development of the split-level townhouse: the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries

The increased popularity of the split-level townhouse during the second half of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century is indicated by the chronological distribution of examples known from

¹ D. Keene, 'The Property Market in English Towns A.D. 1100-1600', in J.-C.M. Vigueur (ed.), 'D'une ville à l'autre: structures matérielles et organisation de l'espace dans les villes européennes (XIII^e-XVI^e siècle)', *Collections de l'École Française de Rome* 122 (1989), pp. 201-26.

² This is, in turn, corroborated by the apparently independent evolution of the split-level townhouse in the Zähringen towns of modern Switzerland: see pp. 203-13.

physical evidence and shown in the graph below (Fig. 66).¹ A fall-off in the numbers of townhouses in central streetfront locations that are not of split-level design and an almost complete absence of the ground-level type after c.1200 confirm that the increase in split-level townhouses is not a result of better survival from the later period, but a true reflection of the adoption of the split-level design.² It is unfortunate, however, that the drop in numbers of known split-level townhouses dating from the first half of the thirteenth century is found in all types of secular urban buildings, since a general lack of data for this period could be disguising a more gradual decline of the ground-level townhouse. Although economic history would suggest that the glut of late twelfth-century townhouses preceding this dearth of material reflects a period of rapid urban expansion and general economic growth, it would be unwise to assume that the construction of townhouses in the early thirteenth century was as minimal as Fig. 66 implies. The results of excavations of semi-subterranean undercrofts have already had an effect on the frequency distribution in that they have modified large differences between class intervals and it is possible, if not probable, that below ground archaeology will add more examples dating from the first half of the thirteenth century.

Although there is no reason to suppose that the architectural and archaeological evidence is substantially biased in favour of the split-level townhouse, it is necessary to consider the documentary evidence for such a transition. Contemporary documentary records obviously need not be restricted to the lowest storey and it is hardly surprising to find that the

¹ The histogram shows the frequency distribution with and without the Winchelsea evidence, since the chance survival of so many undercrofts in a planned town founded in 1292 inevitably has a distorting effect on what is a relatively small sample.

² There has been no attempt to produce a histogram of ground-level townhouses used in the distributive trades over the period 1100-1350, since the examples dating from 1200-1350 are so few that the frequency distribution for this period is uninformative, other than confirming the almost complete absence of the building type after c.1200.

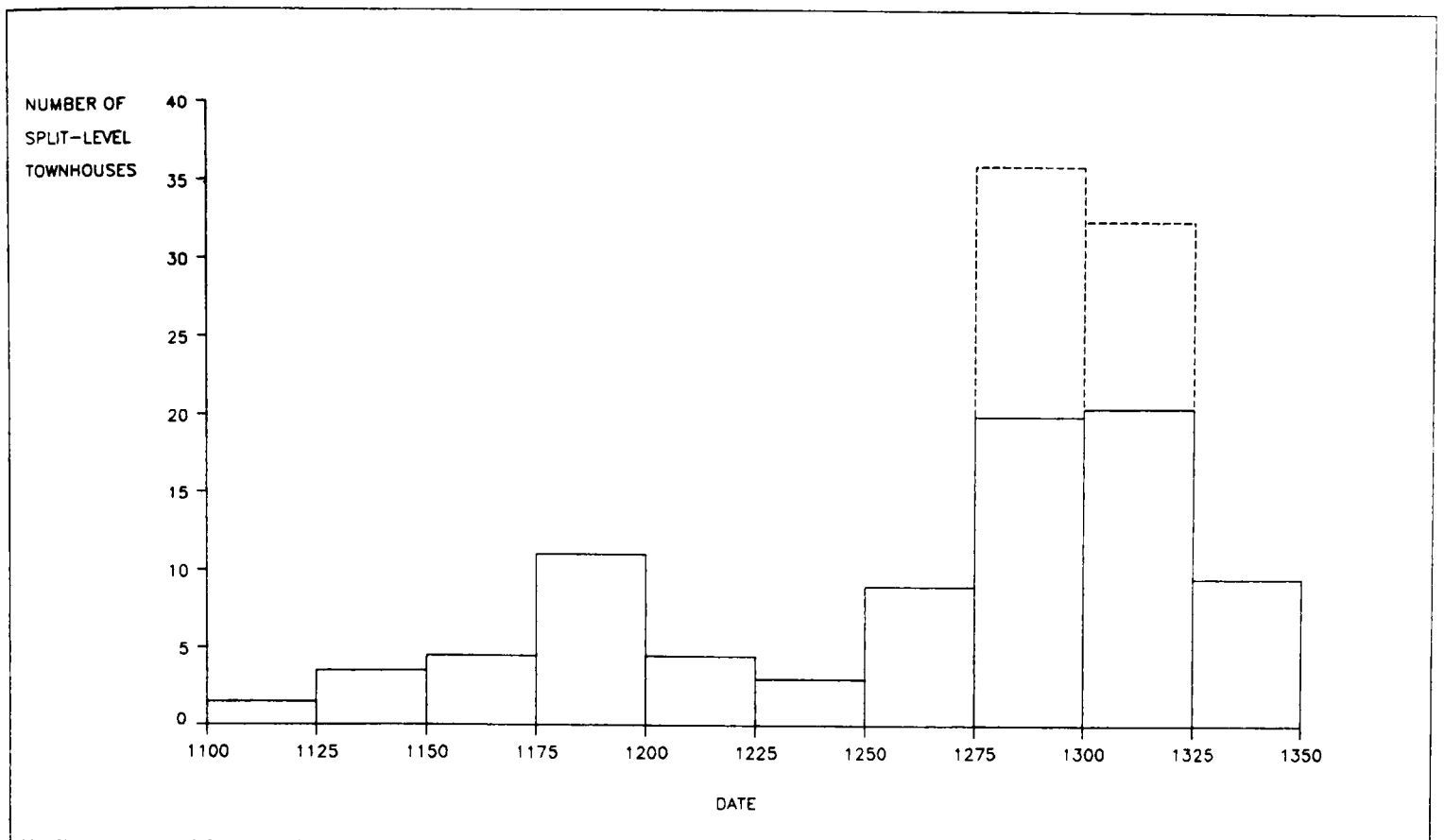


Fig. 66. Histogram showing the frequency distribution of known split-level townhouses within 25 year class intervals between 1100 and 1350. The dashed line represents the Winchelsea examples.

undercroft, or *cellarium*, occupies a less prominent position even in such detailed sources as are available for Cheapside, London. Despite an apparent under-representation of undercrofts the tenement histories of the Cheapside study area constitute the best collated documentary evidence for thirteenth- and fourteenth-century townhouses. Moreover, the Cheapside gazetteer is an important resource in that, by including most of Cheapside, or West Cheap, and the surrounding lanes, it covers the central retail area of the city and, therefore, those townhouses most likely to have adopted the split-level design. Of the twenty-seven tenements with undercrofts (*cellaria*), all but three had shops above, and two of these exceptions may have utilised the ground floor as part of a tavern and brewery,¹ and thus it is clear that the undercrofts formed part of split-level townhouses. The group of twenty-seven townhouses identifiably of split-level design,

¹ Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, 11/5 and 95/1-2.

however, is small in proportion to the seventy-four properties for which there are records of shops but no record of undercrofts. This could be taken to reflect a dominance of ground-level over split-level retailing, but it is clear from the tenement histories of Cheapside that the number of shops per property (typically three) and the turnover of occupancy and ownership, mean that it is inevitable that shops should figure more frequently in the records dependent on title deeds than do undercrofts that are associated with a mixture of long-term ownership and occupancies, and very short-term hiring for periods of a few weeks to merchants (for which it is unlikely there would be any record).¹ It must be suspected, therefore, that undercrofts on the street frontages of Cheapside study area were the norm. While it is arguable that the documentary evidence for Cheapside in itself suggests, or at least does not rule out, the almost total dominance of the split-level townhouse, the lack of surviving buildings means that direct cross-checking between physical and written evidence cannot be undertaken.

At Winchester, however, the combination of compilation of a tenement gazetteer (again by Keene), archaeological excavations, and surviving standing buildings means that a more direct comparison of the different sources is possible. Keene suggests that his distribution map of cellars in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Winchester is accurate despite its almost total reliance on documentary examples.² Certainly it is clear that undercrofts were commonly noted by the tarrage surveyors of 1417. It seems unlikely, however, that the documentary records account for more than a fraction of the city's cellarage, and this under-representation is especially noticeable for the period before c.1350. A search of the

¹ For discussion of short-term hiring of undercrofts, see pp. 233, and 244-7.

² *WS* 2, pp. 165-6.

tenement histories of the Winchester Research Unit produces thirteen medieval cellars for this period. Of these only two (properties 158 and 175/176-7) are found to correspond with any of the fifteen surviving or excavated undercrofts. Not only are the majority of the latter absent from the pre-c.1350 documentary record, but they are also not recorded at a later date. There can be little doubt that the documentary sources for Winchester give no indication of the real numbers of undercrofts, and, consequently, split-level townhouses. Indeed, the lack of coincidence between the two random samples provided by the written record and the material remains suggests that the actual number of split-level townhouses in the city must have been in the order of several hundred.

Of course it is one thing to identify a semi-subterranean undercroft and thus a split-level townhouse, and quite another to argue that the upper level had a commercial function: the point has been made earlier in this chapter in regard to some of the prototypical split-level townhouses of the twelfth century that may have had purely residential or civic upper storeys. However, the location of most of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century undercrofts in the principal streets or in the close vicinity to them suggests that they conformed to the commercial split-level house type known from the more complete examples and the documentary evidence. As with the twelfth-century examples, the association of the split-level townhouse with narrow plots on which the building was placed at right angles to the street and the lack of parallel examples must imply that the buildings were built in response to a highly active property market and thus that they were almost certainly of commercial function. The only significant group of undercrofts not obviously located in the commercial centre of the town are those at Edward I's late thirteenth-century

foundation of New Winchelsea, and this apparent anomaly demands an explanation.

That the surviving medieval townhouses in Winchelsea should be widely spread over an area north of the market is of itself no surprise since the southern half of the town ceased to be populated within the medieval period, and doubtless contains a great number of unexcavated medieval tenements. What is more surprising is that semi-subterranean undercrofts dating from c.1300 are to be found so far away from the principal commercial district that is identifiable, on the basis of its higher rent values, as Quarter 33, and the Mondays Market traditionally located between Quarter 38 and Quarter 39. Moreover, the only archaeological excavation of Quarter 33 revealed a stone building, possibly of two storeys, but constructed at ground level.¹ If W. Maclean Homan's reconstruction of the order and size of the plots within each quarter is correct,² their lack of correlation with the position of the near contemporary undercrofts is such that there can be little doubt that the precise layout of the plots was not adopted, but there is no reason to suppose, as G.E. Chambers suggests, that the 1292 Rental was simply a prospectus.³ While the former streets and buildings that are evident in the undulating meadows of the vacant quarters of the town indicate that initial development extended throughout the proposed area, it may be that the commercial centre established itself to the north of St Thomas's church and towards the port: the 1292 Rental shows some recognition of the value in this area in that the plots of

¹ A. King, 'A Medieval Town House in German Street, Winchelsea', *SAC* 113 (1975), pp. 124-45. Anthony King modified his interpretation of the house in this report to that of 'a first-floor hall with an undercroft' at ground level: A. King, 'German Street, Winchelsea', *SAC* 118 (1980), p. 369.

² W.M. Homan, 'The Founding of New Winchelsea', *SAC* 88 (1949), pp. 22-41. The plots in Fig. 67 are based on his reconstruction, but have been re-plotted against the most recent OS survey.

³ G.E. Chambers, 'The French Bastides and the Town Plan of Winchelsea', *Archaeol. J.* 94 (1937), pp. 203-4.

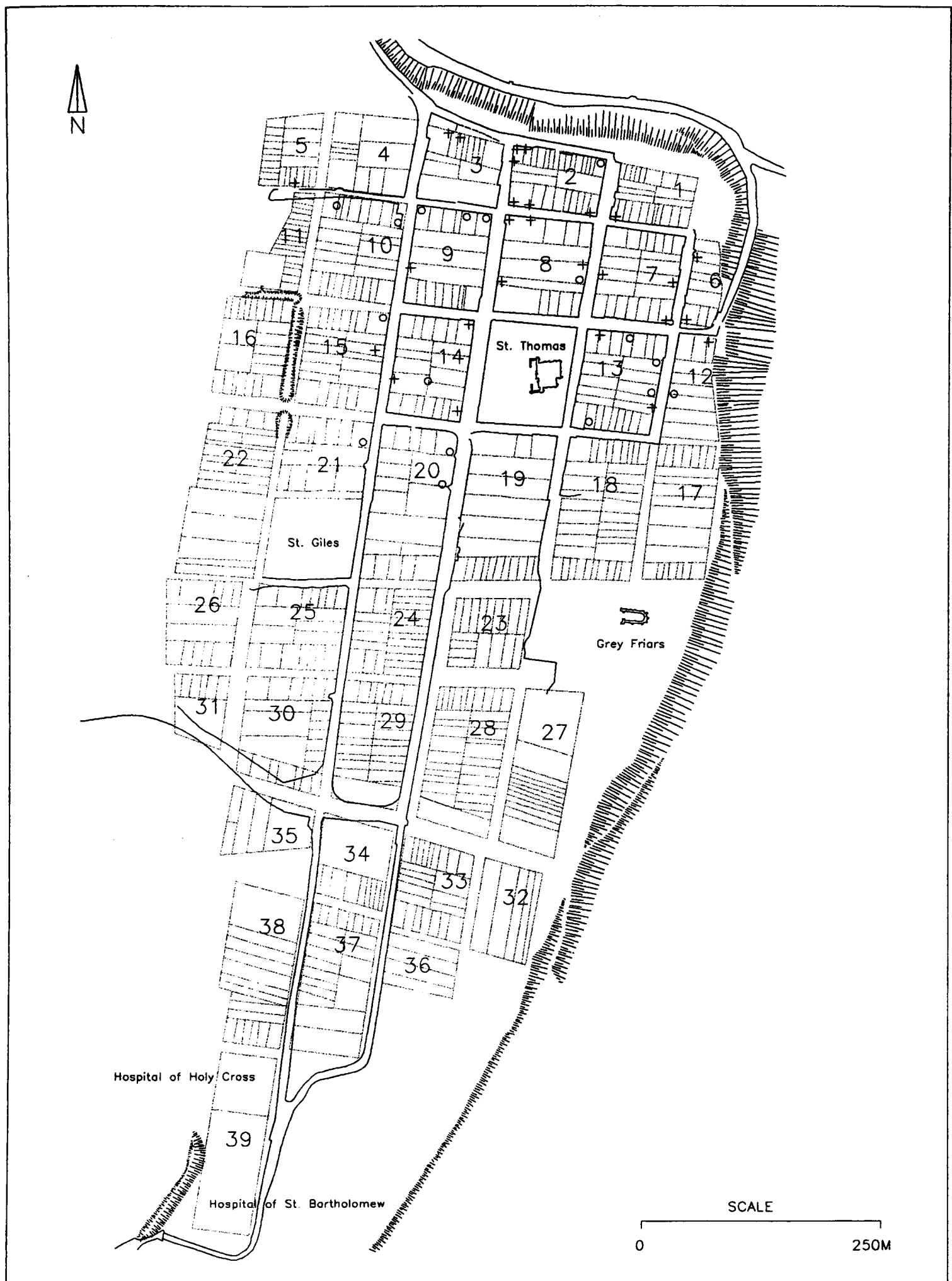


Fig. 67. Winchelsea. Plan showing existing undercrofts (crosses), and former undercrofts noted by Homan (circles). The modern streets are shown in solid line and Homan's reconstructed plots of 1292 in dotted line.

Quarter 6 (next to the Strand Gate) have the second highest rent values and Quarter 6 and Quarter 1 (to the northwest) have the highest density

of plots in Winchelsea.¹ It is possible that the layout of Winchelsea did not follow the 1292 Rental in all details and that even if it did the division of the town was not as focused on the southern side of the town as the location of the market might suggest.

The architectural evidence could be seen to suggest a second reason for the wide dispersal of undercrofts in Winchelsea. Eleven of the twenty-two Winchelsea undercrofts investigated for this thesis were of a simpler form than was normal in that they had no windows at all, and a further three had openings more like air vents than windows. External access from the street prevailed and it could be that undercrofts of this type were intended for the simple storage of goods and were not the scene of sales pitches, deals, entertainment, display and sampling of goods, or any of the activities implied by the more usual sophistication of undercrofts of this period. In view of Winchelsea's strong association with the Gascon wine trade the traditional identification of the surviving undercrofts as wine cellars is likely to be correct in several instances.² The seasonality of the dominant trade of Winchelsea could mean that a number of the Winchelsea undercrofts functioned as stores below residences rather than as part of fully-fledged split-level townhouses, but the small population and village atmosphere of modern Winchelsea should not influence one to suppose that it was never a commercially active town: at 54 hectares the town of Winchelsea c.1300 covered twice the walled area of Southampton and possibly had a secular population in excess of 3,600,³ giving an almost identical or higher population density to that for contemporary

¹ Beresford, *New Towns*, pp. 23-5.

² For discussion of undercrofts and the wine trade, see pp. 228-47.

³ Assuming that the 802 plots in Winchelsea had an average minimum of 4.5 persons per plot as has been argued elsewhere: *WS* 2, p. 366.

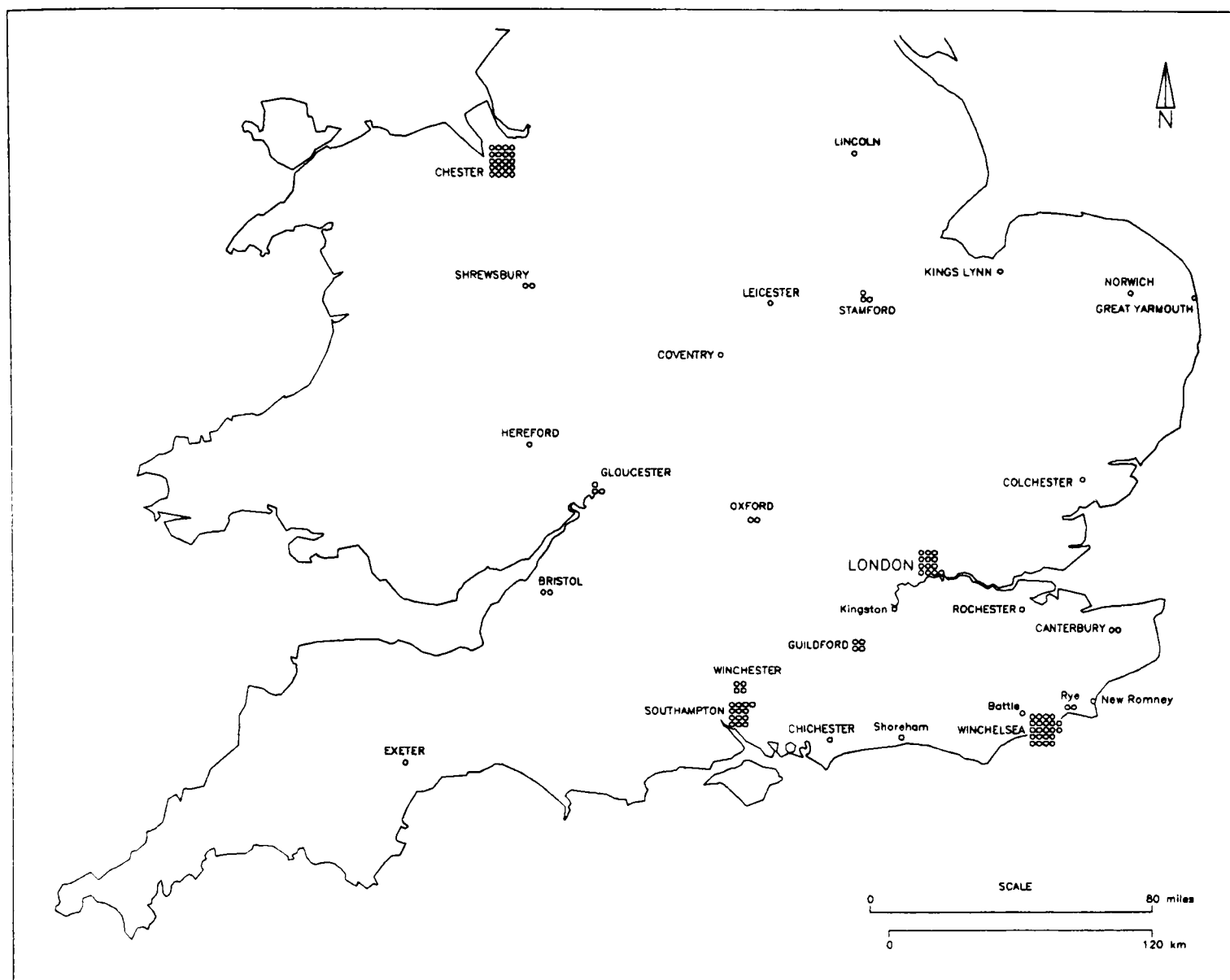


Fig. 68. Distribution map showing the location of the 106 pre-1350 split-level townhouses in the gazetteer.

Winchester.¹ It is perhaps significant that the general form of the houses in Winchelsea followed the normal pattern of split-level townhouses in highly urban areas in that they were built near or on the street frontage and the undercrofts were positioned so that the ground floor was in the order of 1-1.5m above contemporary street level. On the basis the current topographic, archaeological, and architectural evidence, it is reasonable to propose that the large group of undercrofts in Winchelsea reflects the presence of standard split-level townhouses over a wide business district perhaps focused to the north of the market, although the presence of undercrofts below residences cannot be ruled out.

¹ WS 2, p. 270.

While on the one hand it has to be recognized that even in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, not every semi-subterranean undercroft necessarily carried a commercial ground floor, on the other it is possible that not every principal urban street in England was lined with split-level townhouses. In some instances this 'negative evidence' is not convincing due to poor preservation of standing buildings, a dearth of medieval deposits, or a lack of archaeological excavations. For example, the first and last of these factors surely pertain to the medieval port of Boston. At York good preservation above and below ground coupled with above average examination of both has failed to produce split-level townhouses, yet no alternative form of townhouse used for distributive trade in the principal streets has been identified.¹ Both Kings Lynn and Kingston upon Hull, however, have produced positive evidence of ground-level building types. The houses at Hull are known from the excavation of late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century levels on several sites, and are chiefly of post on pad construction.² In this case, the lack of split-level townhouses may be a result of the fact that large areas of the town were so susceptible to flooding resulting from rising tide levels that they were built-up by deliberate dumping at this period.³ Moreover, Peter Armstrong and Brian Ayers have argued that the ground-level buildings were erected in what was only a 'proto-urban' environment, and that archaeological evidence reveals that the town did not really develop until the late

¹ RCHM York V. *The Central Area* (London, 1981). Also, it should be noted that there has been no comprehensive documentary research at York on a par with that at Winchester, or Cheapside, London, and this may produce evidence of medieval cellaria.

² L.E. Webster and J. Cherry, 'Medieval Britain in 1976', *Med. Arch.* 21 (1977), pp. 244-5; P. Armstrong, 'Excavations in Scale Lane/Lowgate 1974', *East Riding Archaeologist* 6 (1980), pp. 1-46; P. Armstrong and B.S. Ayers, 'Excavations in High Street and Blackfriargate', *East Riding Archaeologist* 8 (1987), pp. 1-52.

³ P. Armstrong, 'Excavations in Scale Lane/Lowgate 1974', *East Riding Archaeologist* 6 (1980), p. 45; P. Armstrong and B.S. Ayers, 'Excavations in High Street and Blackfriargate', *East Riding Archaeologist* 8 (1987), pp. 49-51.

thirteenth century.¹ At Kings Lynn the evidence of standing buildings can be added to that of a reasonable body of archaeological excavations, and together these show a predominance of ground-level townhouses, although not to the exclusion of split-level townhouses.² The ground-level houses at Hampton Court (Nelson Street), 8 Purfleet Street, and 9 Nicholas Street comprise narrow streetfront ranges with narrower residential/warehouse ranges extending rearwards, and date from the fourteenth century. Similar houses probably also of fourteenth-century date have been excavated at Baker Lane, 50 King Street, and 18 Queen Street.³ As Erik Schia argues, this house type is similar to the *Einzel-Hof* (single-yard) townhouse found in Hanseatic towns, and, as early as the twelfth and even eleventh century, outside Hanseatic influence at Trondheim.⁴ Since the merchants of Kings Lynn traded with both Norway and the Hanseatic ports either could have influenced its vernacular architecture.⁵ While it is certainly possible that, given the exceptionally strong trade links and the residence of alien merchants, Kings Lynn and other east coast ports may have adopted similar house designs to their North European counterparts, there is no evidence that split-level houses were excluded. It is likely that the *Einzel-Hof* townhouse was restricted to the immediate vicinity of the waterfronts of ports with a Norwegian, Baltic, or Hanseatic connection, and may not have appeared in England until the later thirteenth or fourteenth century: of the *Einzel-Hof* houses in Kings Lynn only Hampton Court indisputably

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

² A single example dating from c.1350 is preserved at Clifton House, Queen Street: see p. 334.

³ H. Clarke and A. Carter, 'Excavations in King's Lynn 1963-1970', *Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph* 7 (London, 1977), pp. 438-40.

⁴ E. Schia, 'The Topographical Layout of Buildings in Norwegian Urban Societies', *LSAK* 20 (1990), pp. 193-202.

⁵ The Norwegian trade peaked in the thirteenth century and faded in the fourteenth century to be replaced by trade with the Hanseatic ports: E. Carus-Wilson, 'The Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash', *Med. Arch.* 6-7 (1962-3), p. 196.

predates 1350. In view of the lack of a single reason why the split-level townhouse should be under-represented in towns in eastern and northern England, it should be noted that, excluding the concentrations in Chester, Southampton, and Winchelsea, the numbers of identified split-level townhouses per town or city are very small, often no more than one or two, and are the survivors of almost total rebuilding of the principal streets in the later medieval and modern periods (Fig. 68). With such a low survival rate of early medieval townhouses in England and such a small area excavated under controlled archaeological conditions in every town, it would be unwise to attach too much significance to towns even as important as York that are apparently devoid of split-level houses.

Allowing for the possibility that exceptions to the rule may be demonstrated in the future, there can be little doubt that although failing to recognise the popularity of the house type in the twelfth century, Faulkner was correct to suggest the dominance of the split-level townhouse in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England.¹ That Faulkner's all too brief article of 1966 was not followed by more intensive archaeological synthetic works on the medieval townhouse has meant that his suggestion has not achieved widespread support or corroboration. It is this lack of serious investigation of the physical evidence of townhouses over the last twenty-eight years that has allowed documentary research to dominate discussion of the urban landscape: in view of the inevitable under-representation of undercrofts in early medieval documentary sources the theory of two-level trading has not seen the universal acceptance that it warrants. Faulkner's observation that 58 French Street, Southampton, is 'representative of a fairly normal house' is truer than ever today.² Since

¹ Faulkner, *Med. Undercrofts*, pp. 127-32.

² *Ibid.*, p. 127.



Fig. 69. 58 French Street, Southampton. General view from the southeast.



Fig. 70. 58 French Street, Southampton. Detail of street frontage.

the publication of his article, the building has been transferred into the care of English Heritage, restored to its medieval form, and opened to the public: it is an unrivalled type-example of the late thirteenth-century split-level townhouse.

CHAPTER 3

THE GALLERIED TOWNHOUSE

The townhouses forming the Chester Rows contain all the elements of the normal split-level design with the added sophistication of a gallery at the upper level, linking the small shops. Short of multiplying the commercial storeys yet further, they are typologically and evolutionarily the logical climax of the building type. In even the most recent publications on the Chester Rows, however, there has been a failure to recognise the proliferation of split-level townhouses in other English high streets in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the possibility of the Rows being simply a modification of this form has been largely ignored. Instead, the Rows have been viewed as a unique raised arcade resulting from town planning on the grand scale, and with influences, for example, being identified in classical Byzantium rather than in more convincing comparisons with the two-level shops of contemporary London.¹ Having now the advantage of an understanding of the English townhouse tradition in the period during which the Rows appeared does not, of course, mean that such a more obvious derivation can be presumed. Indeed, it is essential that the evidence from Chester is considered to see when, over what length of time, and in what form the Rows emerged and whether or not there were local preconditions which demanded an elevated walkway.

In addition, the evidence for such galleries elsewhere requires investigation. Faulkner proposes Chester-like galleries in buildings in Oxford and Southampton, and argues that they were the norm throughout England.² The precise form of the Winchester Pentice, the only known arcaded street in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England outside Chester, likewise

¹ J. Grenville, 'The Rows of Chester: some thoughts on the results of recent research', *World Archaeology* 21, No. 3 (Feb. 1990), pp. 446-60.

² Faulkner, *Med. Undercrofts*, pp. 120-35.

needs to be scrutinised, although the arcading here is at ground level. Similar arcades were common on the continent and were the norm in this period in the *places* of the French *bastides*. J.T. Smith's contention that these continental buildings inspired the Chester Rows means that their plan forms and relationship to fully-evolved galleries needs evaluation.¹ Further afield, the raised galleries of the main streets of the Zähringen towns of Bern, Burgdorf, Fribourg-en-Nuithonie, Thun, and Zürich, in modern Switzerland, provide the closest parallels to the Chester Rows, and, even in the absence of everyday trading links or any other historic association, it is instructive to examine the form and origins of these systems.

THE CHESTER ROWS

At their maximum extent the Chester Rows formed a system of townhouses c.1850m (1.15 miles) in length (Fig. 71), continuous with the exception of side lanes, and having galleries, or Rows, connecting small shops raised over undercrofts. Even in their present extent of c.1160m (0.72 miles), and despite the very obvious post-medieval rebuilding, the Rows continue to be a source of interest both to tourists and architectural historians. Since the first antiquarians and travellers visited the city, the apparent uniqueness of the system has dominated debate,² and in article of 1958 Smith proposes that a fire of 1278, which reputedly destroyed the whole city, resulted in 'the boldest concept of the great age of medieval town planning'.³

¹ Lawson and Smith, *The Rows*, pp. 40-1.

² B.E. Harris, 'The Debate on the Rows', *JCAS* 67 (1985), pp. 7-16.

³ Lawson and Smith, *The Rows*, p. 41.

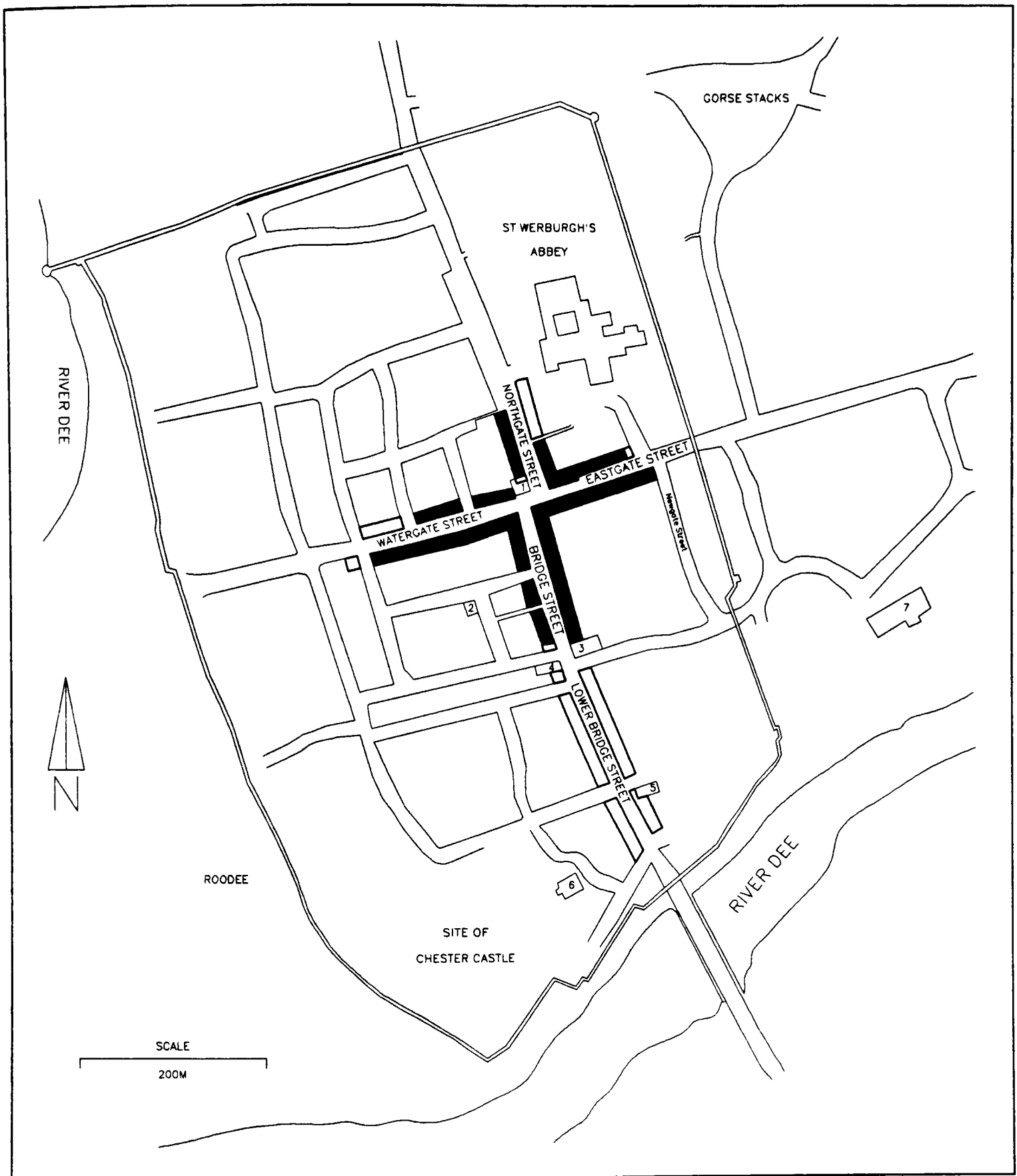


Fig. 71. Chester c.1350, showing the present extent of the Rows (shaded) and their former extent (outlined in bold). Key: 1. St Peter's; 2. Commonhall; 3. St Michael's; 4. St Bridget's; 5. St Olave's; 6. St Mary's; 7. St John's.

The architectural evidence of the thirteenth century

The late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century zenith of economic prosperity in Chester was followed by decline which may account for the unusual preservation of townhouses from this period and which may have

ensured the continued existence of the Row system itself. Certainly, the problem of studying the origins of the galleried system is made easier by the survival of a series of buildings, or parts of buildings, which date from or before c.1300. Moreover, the fact that several of these townhouses contain contemporary carpentry structures has enabled the widespread use of dendrochronology,¹ giving more precise dating limits than would otherwise have been possible for buildings which have little in the way of stylistically datable features.

Since the ten pre-1300 buildings which survive, or were recorded before recent demolition, form the most important evidence for the early origins of the Rows, each will be treated as a separate case study. The house numbers used are those relating to street level and not Row level.

The unfortunate demolition of 12 **Watergate Street** in 1985 provided a rare opportunity for archaeological excavation and structural recording of an early medieval Row building. In fact, this remains the only recorded demolition and excavation of a site on the street frontage in the Rows in modern times. The results of this salvage operation have been published,² but the analysis of the structure predates the discovery of much comparative evidence elsewhere in Chester, and does not address in detail the importance of 12 Watergate Street to the investigation of the origins of the Rows.

The medieval building comprised an irregularly shaped undercroft, between 5.75m and 5.95m in width, and 9.40m and 10.00m in length, with a timber arcade and ceiling, supporting two timber-framed storeys; in other words, it was one of the more typical smaller Row buildings oriented at right angles to the street. The undercroft was built of the usual local

¹ Under the auspices of the CRRP.

² Ward, *12 Watergate Street*, pp. 32-53.

sandstone and, in common with most of the surviving examples in the Rows, had a modern lightly-built shopfront. Excavations in the southwest corner, revealed the former existence of two successive front walls, surviving as stone footings. The inner one, c.1.25m back from the modern street, was 550mm in width and being overlain by a flagged floor built up to the second, more southerly wall, must have been the earlier. This first stone wall corresponded with the front of the Row walkway above, and a process

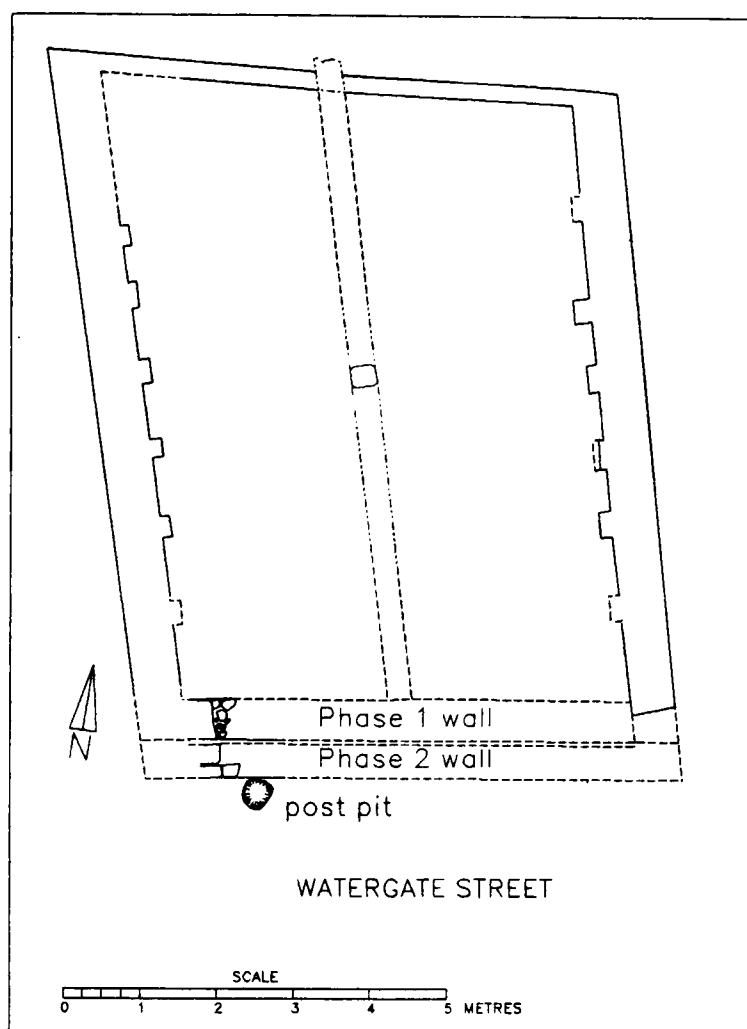


Fig. 72. 12 Watergate Street. Plan of undercroft showing successive phases of medieval front wall as excavated in 1985.

of encroachment can thus be identified equating with the sloping stallboard above.¹ The shallow so-called post-setting in front of these two walls cannot be phased from the excavation archive and may reflect a timber porch or a stall belonging to a building with either front wall.

The stone side walls of the undercroft contained irregularly spaced corbels of a simple quarter-circle profile which indicate that this level was ceiled in timber from the outset. A central arcade plate, running north-south, survived in part and was supported by a timber post, complete with braces, and lodged joists above. Simon Ward has argued that this was a secondary structure inserted into the undercroft,² although it seems more likely that the arcade was coeval with the undercroft walls. Whether or

¹ The stallboard was substantially enlarged, possibly in the seventeenth century; *ibid.*, p. 49.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 47-8.

not the arcade at 12 Watergate Street was original to the stone undercroft, or a direct replacement of an earlier arrangement, it is clear that alterations took place at an early date, for not only did the timber joists support a stone rubble floor c.300mm deep, as found in other early medieval undercroft ceilings in Chester,¹ but also the rearrangement of the arcade was contemporary with, or earlier than, the construction of the timber superstructure which survived until 1985. A tree-ring date for the post at the rear of the west end of the Row walkway of 12 Watergate Street indicates that the felling of the timber took place after 1237.² This would also be an acceptable dating for the undercroft if there was not good evidence to show that the superstructure at Row level and above was a second phase. Ward observed that the undercroft corbels, which were almost flush with the wall head, only extended as far back into the wall as the other facing stones, and were thus very unlikely to have supported a heavy timber ceiling without the countering thrust of stone walls continuing upwards. Furthermore, the timber frame did not conform to the distorted parallelogram plan of the undercroft, and projected well beyond it at the rear, supported by the higher level of the ground at this end. Despite such reasonable indications that the first-phase building had stone walls at Row and higher levels, this does not, of course, imply construction wholly in stone. The rear wall of the undercroft survived but the batter of its exterior face had reduced the width of the wall from 550mm at foundation level to 250mm at the level of the undercroft ceiling, and it is clear that nothing as substantial as a multi-storeyed stone wall could have existed here. The footings of the first-phase front wall were identical at 550mm in width, but were narrower than the 600mm-wide side walls. While

¹ See pp. 225-6.

² Ward, *12 Watergate Street*, pp. 45-6.

not necessarily thinning as rapidly as dramatically as the rear wall, the front gable wall was probably also timber framed, along with the internal divisions.

The timber framing of the second phase provided conclusive evidence for the existence of the Row walkway at the date of its construction. The west wall survived reasonably intact from a post at the rear of the Row walkway for 5.1m rearwards to another post 800mm south of the rear wall of the undercroft. Beyond this post an imprint of lost timber framing of identical character was preserved in the side wall of the adjacent property, revealing that the building extended rearwards to a height of at least two storeys. A lack of mortices at ceiling height in the surviving portion of the west wall is interpreted by Ward as signifying that the room directly off the walkway was a hall open to the roof, although it is immediately obvious that such an unlikely scheme would have meant that the only possible external wall for a hall would have been that fronting the oversailed Row walkway. Since the room off the walkway was wider east-west than it was deep, it is likely that any ceiling joists would have run parallel to the side wall and, thus, no trace of them would be expected. The front wall of what must have been a shop, or shops, partially survived. A doorway at the west end still in use in 1985 was demonstrably original, and east of this the few mortices and peg holes revealed a lack of vertical studding, consistent with fenestration.¹ There appears, therefore, to have been a through-passage at the side of the plot giving access to a shop at the front and leading to the rear part of the townhouse. In view of the 5.1m depth of the bay behind the Row walkway, and the consequent large area available for retailing, it is possible that there were two shops, the second being entered directly off the walkway.

¹ See pp. 255-6.

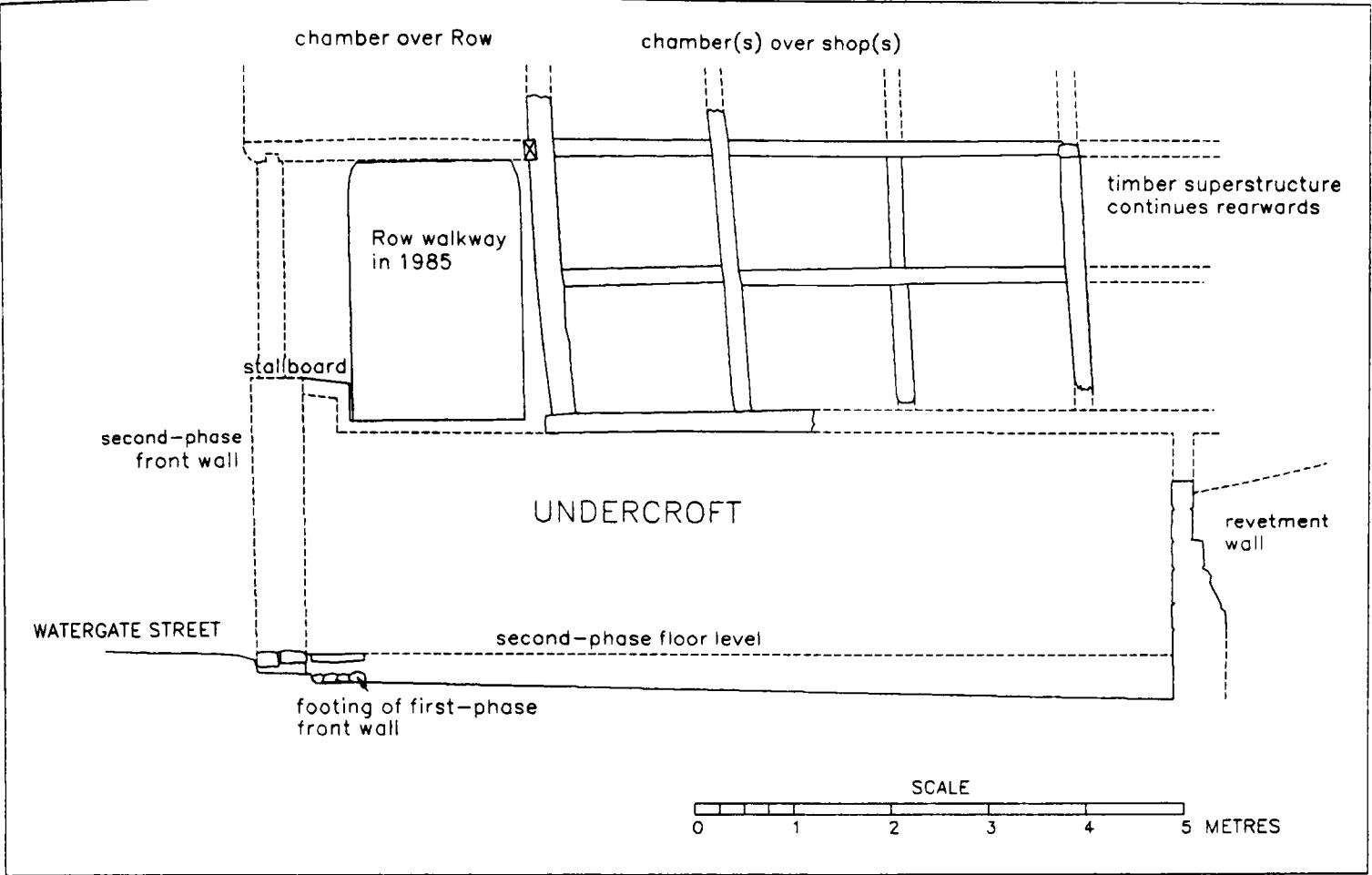


Fig. 73. 12 Watergate Street, Chester. Longitudinal section looking west showing second-phase timber superstructure, encroached front wall of undercroft and stallboard.

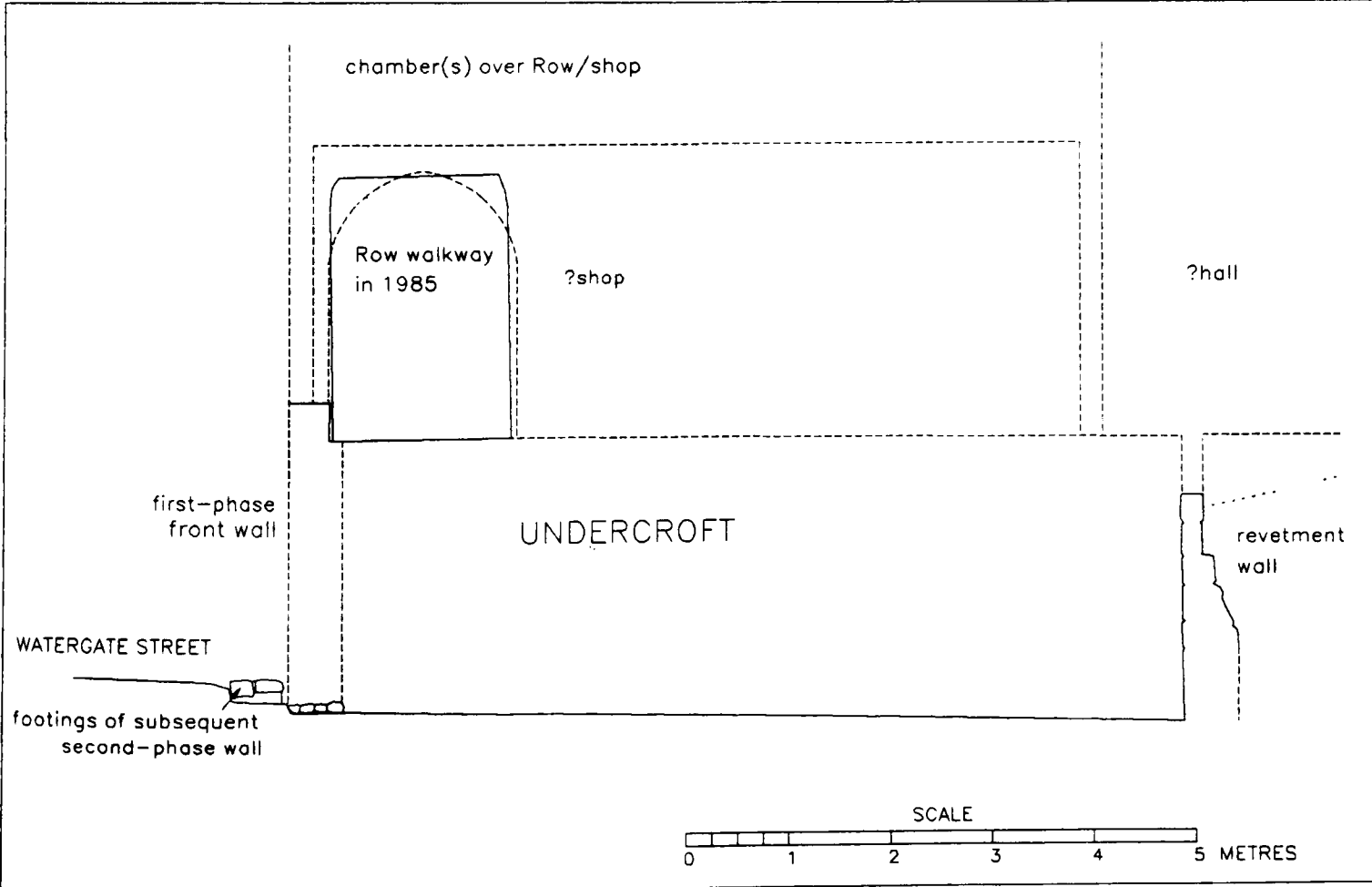


Fig. 74. 12 Watergate Street, Chester. Longitudinal section looking west showing first, stone-built, phase and a schematic reconstruction of upper level rooms.

Not only was the frontage at the level of the Row walkway preserved, but there was also conclusive evidence for the oversailing of the Row. The southeastern post revealed a mid-height jowl or integral bracket which carried the end of a beam spanning the Row. The end of this timber was cut to a quarter-circle profile in the style of a jetty joist, and a mortice in the underside, 250mm back from the southern end, implied that joists of the chamber over the walkway were indeed jettied-out beyond their front supports. At the west end, the bay post at the rear of the walkway did not have a jowl or integral bracket, but two mortices for an identically located joist.

Ward notes the integral nature of the walkway in this phase, but does not discuss the relationship between the construction of the new super-structure and the front wall of the undercroft.¹ The mortice towards the front of the timber which oversails the Row at the west end is directly above the second, and southernmost, of the two footings of the successive front walls of the undercroft. The encroachment of the undercroft must therefore have occurred by, or at, the time of the replacement of the upper storeys. As this encroachment corresponds with the medieval extent of the stallboard and is forward of the Row walkway proper, it must imply that the structure prior to this also contained the Row walkway.

The significance of 12 Watergate Street for the early history of the Rows is considerable. A timber-framed rebuild after 1237 of the storeys above undercroft level incorporated a Row walkway and, as a solid wall did not block this gallery at the east end, if not the west also, the adjacent property towards the High Cross must also have contained a walkway. That the eastern wall of 12 Watergate Street was shared with its neighbour implies that the undercrofts were contemporary. The earlier phase,

¹ Ward, *12 Watergate Street*, pp. 38-42.

perhaps datable to the early thirteenth century, survived in the form of the undercroft which extended under the Row walkway of the succeeding phase. Since the encroachment of the undercroft to create a stallboard was prior to or contemporary with the building of the post-1237 superstructure, it is most logical to conclude that the undercroft supported a Row walkway before such a second phase. In the absence of stylistic dating, and with undercrofts of this form predominantly dating from the thirteenth century, there is of course no reason to place the first phase substantially before the date of the succeeding phase.

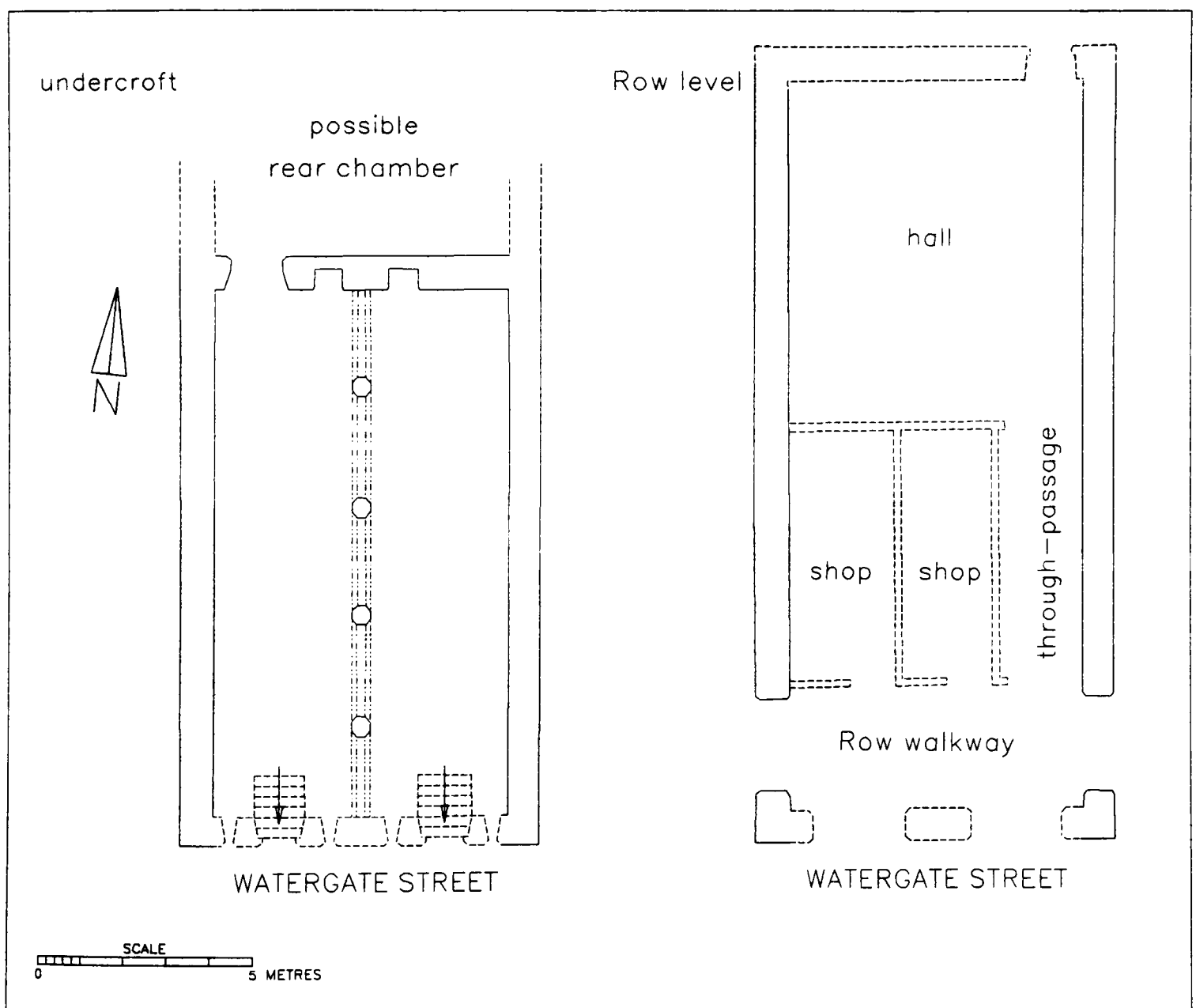


Fig. 75. 28-30 Watergate Street, Chester. Plans of undercroft and Row level showing probable internal arrangements.

Along with the adjacent medieval plot to the west, 28-30 Watergate Street is concealed behind an impressive façade dating to 1700. This major

rebuilding preserved one of the most intact medieval buildings in the Rows: the eastern side-wall survives for its whole height, the undercroft is nearly complete, the Row walkway arrangement is untouched, and there is evidence of the internal arrangements. As at 12 Watergate Street, the sandstone undercroft is oriented at right angles to the street and contains a longitudinal arcade placed centrally, although in this case the construction is of stone. The arcade comprises four bays of two-centred arches, a fifth bay at the front having been destroyed, and springs from octagonal piers. The mouldings of the capitals and bases of these columns are very worn and are not usable as a tool for dating the stonework with any precision. Smith conceded¹ that the late thirteenth-century dating ascribed to the undercrofts in the Rows by Wood,² might have needed a slight extension into the early fourteenth century to include this building, whilst P.H. Lawson carefully avoided attempting to date the arcade.³ The presence of an intact corbel-plate and joists spanning the width of the undercroft has, however, permitted the use of dendrochronological dating. Final ring dates of 1213, 1235, 1239, 1243 and 1248 for the cores from the common joists give, in the absence of sapwood, a *terminus post quem* of 1258 for the felling date of the latest of these:⁴ the consistency in the final ring dates of these samples suggests that, although lacking sapwood or the sapwood/heartwood boundary, the timbers may have been felled within a short time of this date.

The confirmation of a late thirteenth-century date for the undercroft arcade and ceiling is important, as there is little doubt that the mildly-

¹ Lawson and Smith, *The Rows*, p. 33.

² Wood, *Med. House*, p. 87.

³ Lawson and Smith, *The Rows*, pp. 15-17.

⁴ This is calculated by adding the minimum number of sapwood rings expected (10), derived from a 10-55 range that forms the 95% confidence limits for the number of sapwood rings on British oak trees over 30 years old. Sampling and matching undertaken by Dr M.K. Hughes and Dr P. Leggett of Liverpool University.



Fig. 76. 28-30 Watergate Street, Chester. View along the Row walkway, looking westwards. pointed arches that span the Row walkway at either side of the property are of the same phase. That these, and the walls above, are of stone confirms the fact that stone construction throughout was not confined to the more elaborate townhouses built parallel to the street over several undercrofts. In this manner 28-30 Watergate Street is comparable to the arrangement proposed for 12 Watergate Street, and similarity extends to the deep shop(s) evidenced. A wide timber doorway marks the inner end of the entrance passage and the entry to the hall, and thus defines the rear wall of the shops, c.5.95m back from the rear of the walkway. The height of the chambers over the Row and shops is established by a chamfered and projecting eaves-course on the section of the east wall which survives to its full 5.7m above Row level.

Thus, 28-30 Watergate Street, probably by virtue of its substantial stone construction, is perhaps the most complete thirteenth-century townhouse surviving in the Rows and, with its remarkable stone arches spanning the

walkway, confirms that the undercroft supported a gallery from the outset; a gallery which must have continued at least into the neighbouring properties at the time of construction.

A fortunate chance of survival has meant that one of these houses flanking 28-30 Watergate Street has been preserved albeit in a more fragmentary state. Contained in the western half of Booth Mansion, the medieval remains at 32-4 Watergate Street are at undercroft level only. The wide undercroft (8.0m) is oriented at right angles to the street and contains a timber arcade 6.38m in length. This extends under the Row for 850mm at which point the arcade plate has clearly been cut short and thus

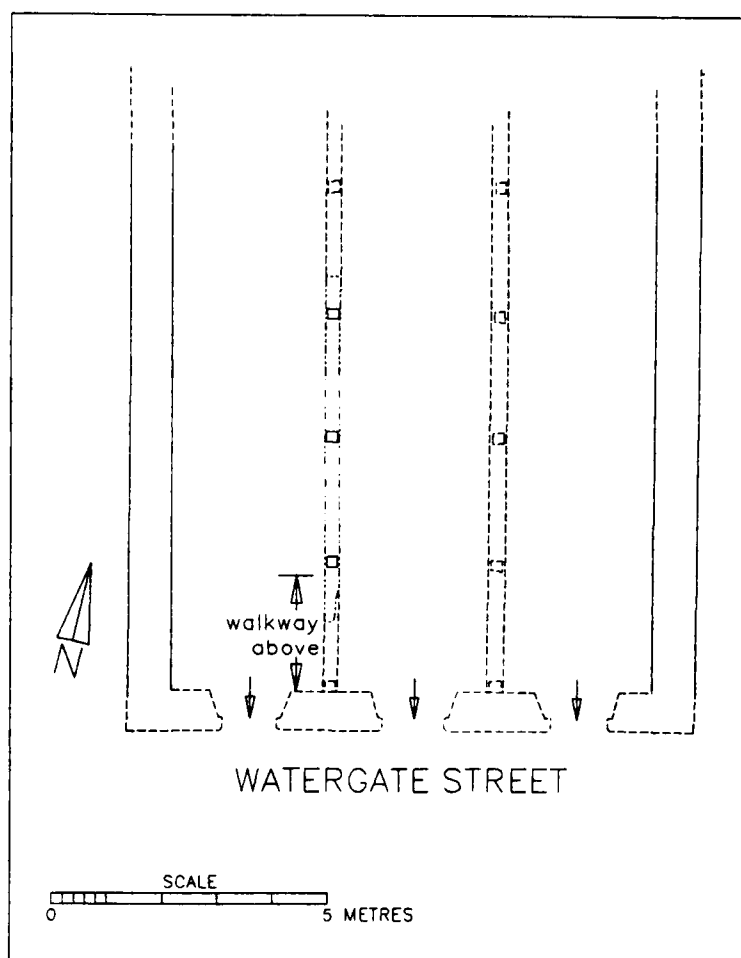


Fig. 77. 32-4 Watergate Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft showing existing part of arcade extending under the Row walkway.

would have continued further. The southernmost of the surviving posts is 2.30m to the rear of the streetfront side of the walkway and, as this corresponds exactly with the bay lengths in the arcade, it is almost certain that the arcade extended under the walkway. Interestingly, the arcade is located towards one side of the undercroft, almost precisely a third of the overall width in from the west wall, implying that there was an eastern counterpart. The moulded bolsters on top of the arcade posts and the chamfers on the posts themselves did not provide adequate dating evidence on stylistic grounds, so dendrochronological analysis was undertaken. Dates of 1201 for the final rings from a bolster, and 1213 and 1231 for two

of the posts give, in the absence of sapwood, a *terminus post quem* of 1241.¹ This indicates that 32-4 Watergate Street was built a decade or two earlier than the house to the east and, as it is clear that 32-4 was galleried at the time of the construction of 28-30, it is most probable that it too was built with a gallery from the outset.

The medieval fabric at 11 Watergate Street comprises an undercroft measuring 13.5m x 6.2m which has three octagonal piers dividing the undercroft into two aisles of four bays. Traditionally, the structure has been accepted as wholly of the thirteenth century: Wood dates it to c.1270-80,² with which Lawson and Smith concur,³ as do Brown *et al.*⁴ More recently, it has been argued that the capitals of the central arcade are fifteenth century, contrasting with a c.1250-c.1290 dating for the undercut abaci and heavily projecting bells of the capitals of the responds.⁵ Such an

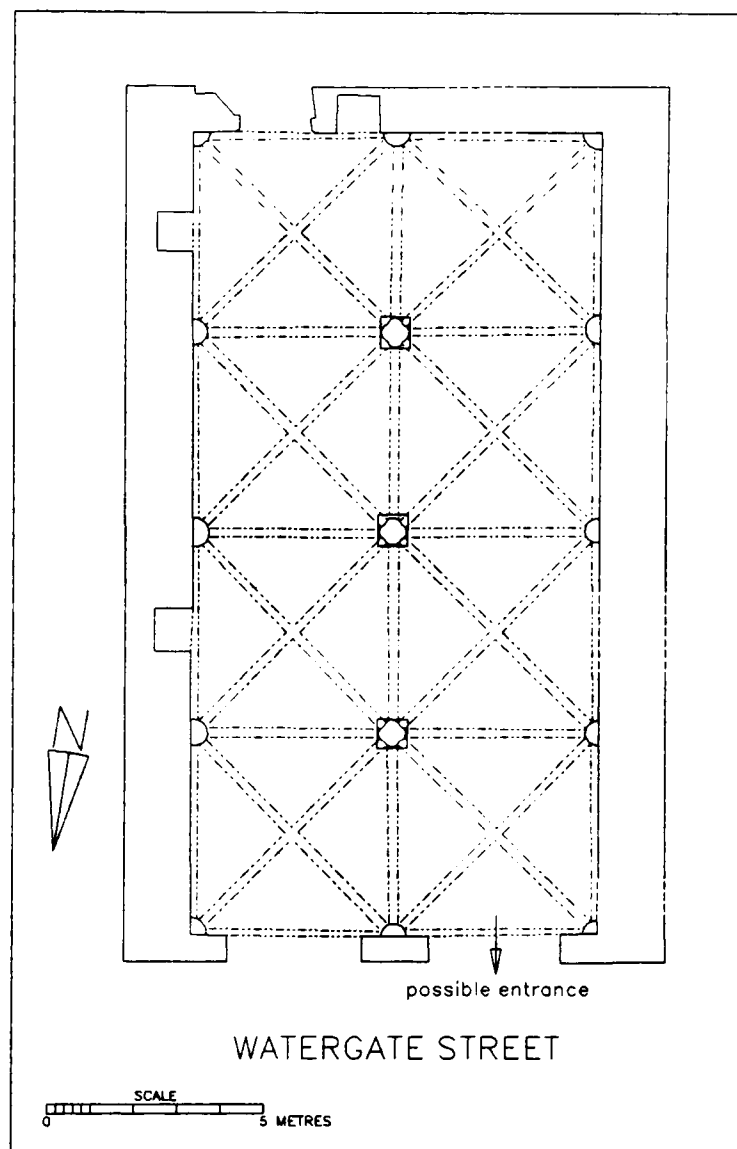


Fig. 78. 11 Watergate Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft excluding later encroachment of stallboard.

implied rebuild would explain the fact that the masons' marks which are consistent on the central piers and vault are completely different from

¹ See p. 141 (note 4).

² Wood, *Med. House*, p. 88.

³ Lawson and Smith, *The Rows*, p. 19.

⁴ Brown, *Watergate Street*, p. 127.

⁵ Pers. comm. John Maddison.

those of the side walls. This possible second phase, however, is so thoroughly consistent with the later thirteenth-century structure that it cannot have involved more than a direct replacement of the vault, presumably due to failure.

The floor directly over the apex of this vault is level with the Row walkway, and equally significantly a part-surviving front wall coincides with the front of the gallery, excluding the later stallboard. Thus, as with other Row townhouses which preserve no early fabric above undercroft level, 11 Watergate Street can only be said to conform with the known streetfront and the level of the Row walkway, although this, of course, implies that at the time of its construction such parameters were established by neighbouring properties.

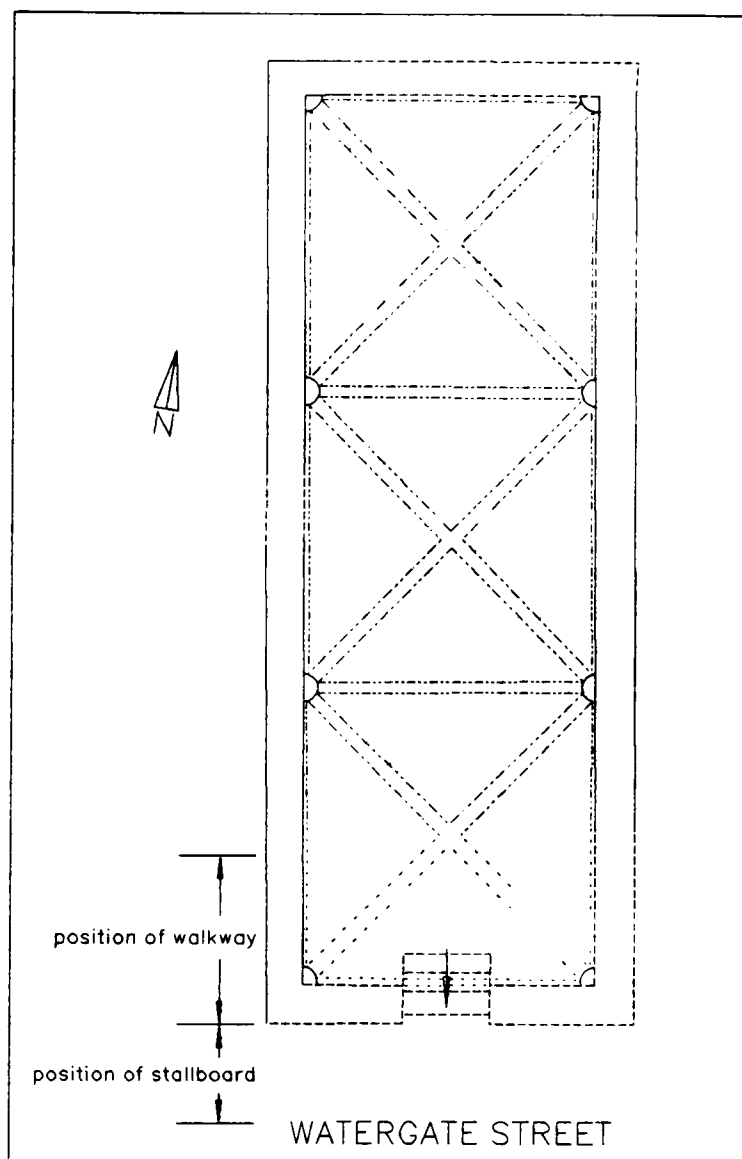


Fig. 79. 21 Watergate Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft showing reconstruction of vault in front half of streetfront bay.

The surviving undercroft at 21 Watergate Street provides similar circumstantial evidence for the existence of the Rows at the time of its construction.¹ Here, the east wall continues to the point where the walkway and stallboard meet above, and that this marks the original façade is confirmed by the rib-vault; if the missing front half bay of vaulting is

¹ 21 Watergate Street is also commonly referred to as No. 23.

reconstructed (as in Fig. 79) it extends to this point. Wood,¹ and Lawson and Smith date the undercroft to the thirteenth century,² and on the basis of the form of the rib vault and the corbels from which it springs this can be refined to the second half of the century: the recent dating to the late fifteenth century by Brown *et al.* must be a typographical error.³

Again it is the undercroft which is the sole medieval survivor at 37 Watergate Street. Comprising five bays measuring in total c.14.2m x c.4.9m the undercroft is distinguished by a quadripartite rib-vault at the rear. Central columns divide these two bays of vaulting into aisles. It is clear from the way in which the ribs spring from the front pair of corbels that the present northern limit of the vault is original. That is, the two ribs received by these corbels occupy all the space available, so disallowing even the intention of extending the vault towards the streetfront. The considerable irregularity of the vaulting, however, indicates that it was inserted into a pre-existing timber-ceiled undercroft. The fact that the northernmost springers appear to incorporate the corbels of the timber ceiling beyond and the manner in which the central springer at the rear overlies the eastern jamb of a doorway in the south wall confirm this. Wood dates the vault to the late thirteenth century and this seems reasonable,⁴ although the similarity between the springers here and at 28 Eastgate Street may suggest a date nearer 1300.⁵ Less easy to establish, of course, is the dating of the phase before the insertion of the vault. The rear doorway from this phase has been taken as twelfth century on

¹ Wood, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture*, pp. 12 and 98.

² Lawson and Smith, *The Rows*, p. 21.

³ Brown, *Watergate Street*, p. 139.

⁴ Wood, *Med. House*, pp. 87-8.

⁵ See below, pp. 153-4.

the basis of its semi-circular head,¹ but the continuous chamfer and large voussoirs are perhaps more consistent with an early or mid thirteenth-century date.

The side walls of this first-phase undercroft are coated with granite-like tanking, but removal of a long section of this revealed that the sandstone walls continue under the Row walkway and end at the rear of the stallboard. In the absence of any early medieval superstructure it is not certain that this was the arrangement as built, but, as at 11 Watergate Street and 28 Eastgate Street, the fact that the undercroft coincides so precisely with the front edge and height of the walkway is a very strong indication that this was the case.

The stone vault at 12 Bridge Street is similar to that at 37

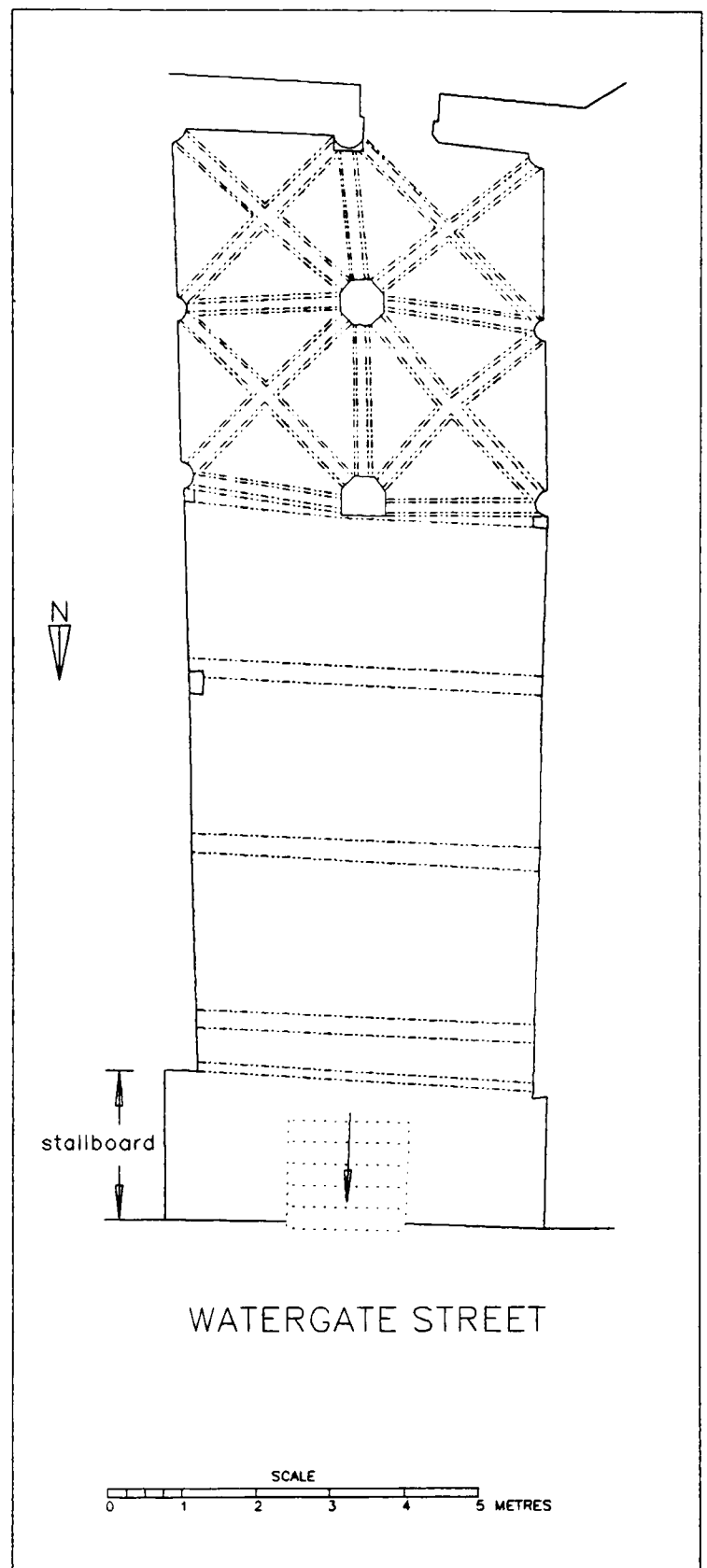


Fig. 80. 37 Watergate Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft, including the later medieval encroachment under the stallboard.

Watergate Street in that it occupies the rear of an undercroft oriented at right angles to the street, although it is a far more sophisticated structure. The undercroft has seen some restoration, particularly of the end walls, from the time of its rediscovery and excavation in 1839, but

¹ Brown, *Watergate Street*, p. 126.

otherwise the six bays of quadripartite rib-vaulting, together measuring 12.95m x 4.60m, are intact. The deep and single-chamfered ribs, the vestigial traces of the original trefoil-headed windows of the rear lightwell, and the trefoil-headed doorway to a staircase up to Row level are all indicative of a mid to late thirteenth-century date for the undercroft.

The east wall of this undercroft contains fabric earlier than the 1839 doorway and it is thus improbable that the vault extended further towards the street; a rise in the floor level evident at this point may also be an original feature. The front undercroft is clad throughout its 12.8m length, but presumably has at least part-surviving stone walls. Although there is no evidence, in the manner of 37 Watergate Street, for the vault at 12 Bridge Street being inserted into a pre-existing undercroft, it is almost

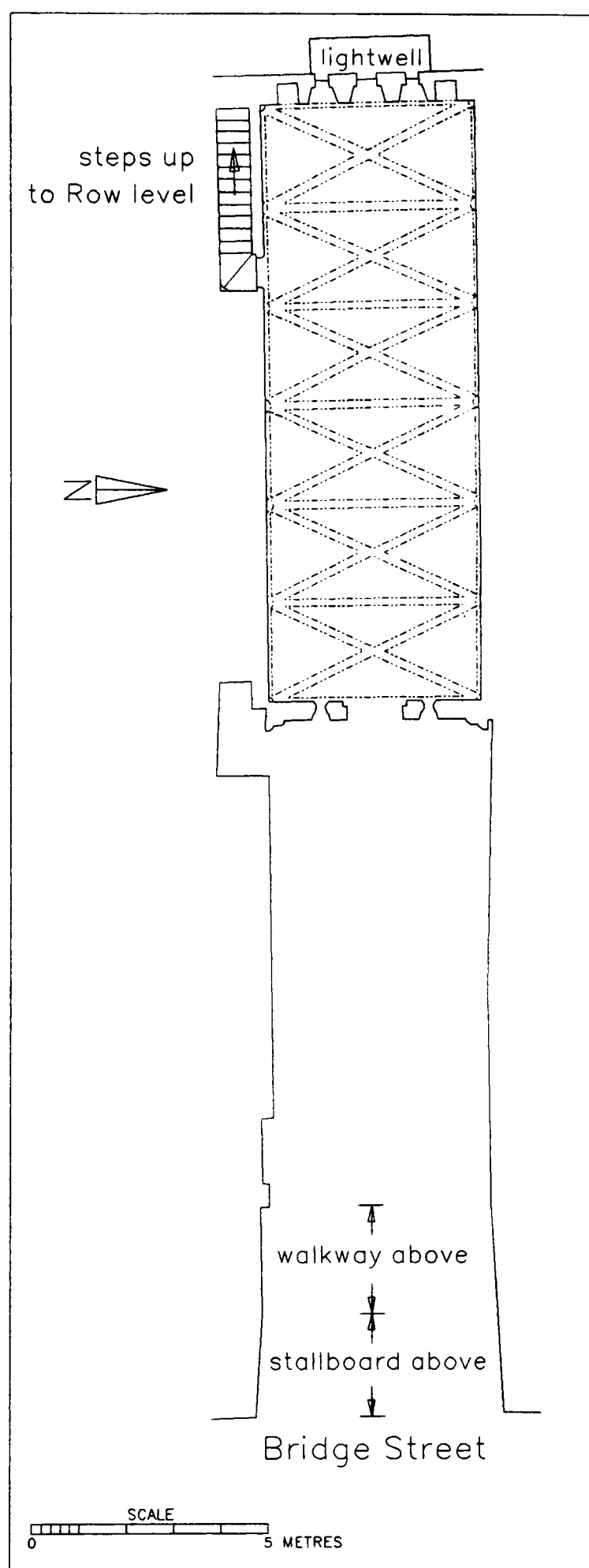


Fig. 81. 12 Bridge Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft.

certain that the construction of a long undercroft on the street frontage preceded a rearward extension. What is less certain, of course, is the

relationship of the front, or earlier, undercroft to the Row walkway. It is surely significant, however, that the floor placed on top of the stone vault is at exactly the same level as the Row walkway.

48 Bridge Street (Three Old Arches) forms the northern third of an early to mid fourteenth-century townhouse that extended as far south as Whitefriars, but also contains fabric from an earlier building which may have been smaller and oriented at right angles to the street. That these remains comprise a stone façade intact to the top of Row level is a cause for excitement, although the debate surrounding its dating needs addressing.

It is clear that the façade pre-dates the major rebuilding of the fourteenth century since not only does it preserve the pre-stallboard arrangement, but also because the fourteenth-century undercroft behind is c.800mm wider than the street frontage. The shifted south wall of the undercroft corresponds with the reconstructed location of the upper face of the central truss in the hall and the position of the former valley between the central and northern gables, and thus must have been carried out simply to



Fig. 82. 48 Bridge Street, Chester. Street elevation.

provide support for the major structural walls and thrusts from the new Row and above level building; before this reconstruction it is probable that

48 Bridge Street was a single tenement oriented at right angles to the street.

Despite doubt which has been expressed recently as to whether the arches in the façade are Romanesque, on the basis of a purely exterior knowledge of the building,¹ the structural evidence then is that they predate the early fourteenth-century phase. Outside the semicircular form of the arches and the simple continuous chamfers, however, there is little evidence on which to base a closer dating. With an unfortunately misdated comparison to the rear doorway at 37 Watergate Street, Smith places the façade in the late thirteenth century, where it cannot contradict his theory of a Row system planned and built immediately after the fire of 1278.² The only close comparison to the building lies in St Michael's Passage, Southampton, where a split-level townhouse with a similar façade survived until recently. The two roundheaded arches in this case had continuous mouldings extending to the original street level as at the Three Old Arches, but the survival of other architectural features has permitted closer dating to c.1200.³ In view of the danger of restricting the usage of roundheaded arches in a vernacular context to before 1200, it would seem reasonable to propose that 48 Bridge Street dates from the late twelfth to the early, or even, mid thirteenth century. The need to qualify the phasing and dating of this façade is due to its unique position as the only intact gallery from the early medieval Rows. Not only does it demonstrate the presence of adjacent galleries and the oversailing of the walkway from the outset, as does 28-30 Watergate Street, but it also provides the necessary proof that each building did not have individual access via steps from the street.

¹ Doubts were expressed on stylistic grounds during discussion at the 1992 BAA conference in Chester.

² Lawson and Smith, *The Rows*, pp. 35-6.

³ See pp. 180-88.

It is ironic that the first building known to have enclosed the Row walkway, precipitating its almost complete removal from Lower Bridge Street, should preserve the clearest evidence of the medieval Row in that street. Indeed, the ostensibly sixteenth- and seventeenth-century townhouse at 6 Lower Bridge Street (The Falcon), incorporates a readily discernible medieval walkway in what is now the front bar. The rear of the Row is defined by a timber-framed shopfront dating from the sixteenth century and the front of the walkway is marked by a series of three stone piers. From the record of the enclosure of the townhouse in 1643, it is clear that the medieval frontage onto Lower Bridge Street was almost double that surviving, and the spacings of the existing piers are correct for an arcade of this 17.60m length.¹ The absence of any traces of arches springing from these piers reveal that the structure of the chamber over the Row was almost certainly wholly timber framed.

In the absence of mouldings on the piers, it is fortunate that there is other evidence confirming that such a pre-stallboard Row arrangement is indeed one of the earliest survivals of a Row frontage. The stonework of these piers is integral with that of the front wall of the undercroft; an undercroft which is almost wholly intact and which can be dated reasonably precisely. The front wall of the 9.5m x 7.1m undercroft contains an off-centre doorway with mutilated lancets to each side, indicative of origins between c.1250 and c.1300. Closer dating, however, is provided by the more central of the two longitudinal arcades which support the timber ceiling. Unlike the northern arcade, formed as it is of reused tie-beams and crown posts, the central arcade is supported at its ends by original corbels, and comprises an arcade plate carried on octagonal stone piers. Dendrochronological analysis of a core from the arcade plate has given a

¹ *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, 19 (1924), p. 66, [4623].

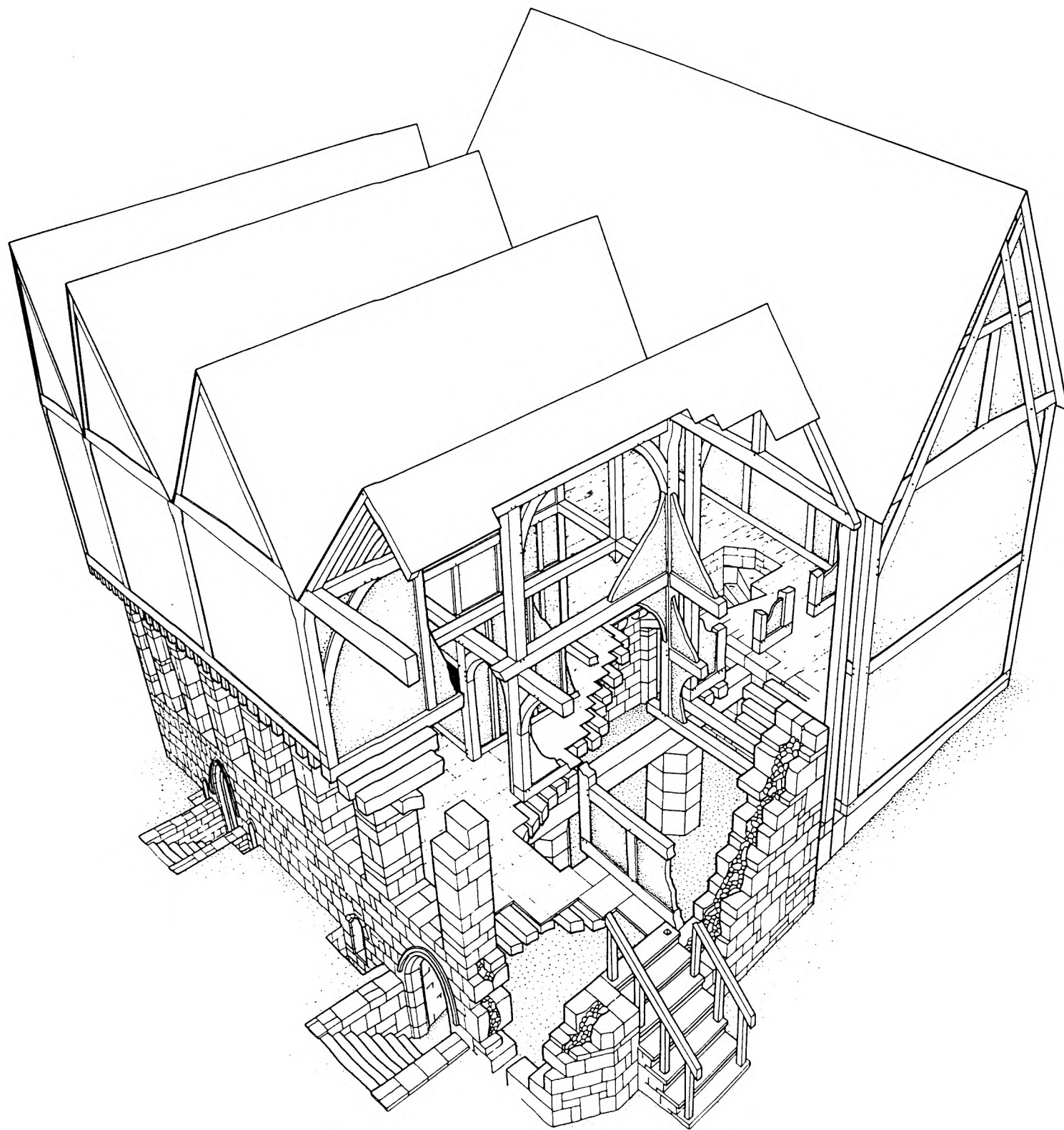


Fig. 83. 6 Lower Bridge Street (The Falcon), Chester. Perspective reconstruction of the townhouse in its mid to late thirteenth-century form.

final growth-ring date of 1234 which, in the absence of sapwood, gives a *terminus post quem* of 1244.¹ As the two reused tie-beams of the northern arcade almost certainly originate from the roof structure of this phase of building, and produced cores without sapwood and with final growth-ring dates of 1180 and 1181, it is perhaps fair to assume that, if the three timbers are indeed contemporary, a minimal number of heartwood and sapwood rings are absent from the central arcade plate. An acceptable compromise between the dendrochronological and stylistic evidence for the dating of the undercroft would be a range from c.1244-c.1270. Thus, 6 Lower Bridge Street is similar to 28-30 Watergate Street in preserving a mid to later thirteenth-century undercroft and coeval Row arrangement, again demonstrating that the two levels advanced to the same street frontage.

Behind the Gothic Revival façade of 28 Eastgate Street is one of the most intact stone-vaulted undercrofts in the Rows. Measuring 12.95m x 4.20m and comprising four bays, the undercroft is oriented at right angles to the street. Most unusually the front wall survives, albeit with substantial replacement of stonework, and it is composed of a central doorway with flanking lancets. This establishes that the medieval undercroft projected under the walkway, if such existed at the time it was built, but not under the stallboard. Equally importantly, the distinctive sunk chamfers which appear on the jambs of the doorway and windows provide reasonably precise dating limits for the building. It is argued that the moulding made its first appearance at Caernarfon Castle, possibly between 1283 and 1292 in the Queen's Gate, and by 1305 at the latest in the passage of the King's Gate.² The gatehouse to the Abbey of St Werburgh in Chester uses the

¹ See pp. 141 (note 4).

² J.M. Maddison, 'The Choir of Chester Cathedral', *JCAS* 66 (1983), p. 41.

moulding and is datable to c.1300, and it occurs again in the two western bays of the abbey choir which were built shortly afterwards.¹ It appears then that Wood's dating to c.1290 is a little early,² and the undercroft may well have been built as late as the first or second decades of the fourteenth century.

As at 37 Watergate Street and 12 Bridge Street, the datable and intact undercroft of 28 Eastgate Street does not provide conclusive evidence of the existence of the Row walkway at the time of construction. It does, however, project exactly to the front of the walkway and is deeply sunk into the ground so that it is consistent with the west-east downwards slope which distinguishes the Row on the south side of Eastgate Street. In other

words, the building fits into the Row system very precisely, implying that the building, if not a longer stretch of the street, was galleried by c.1300.

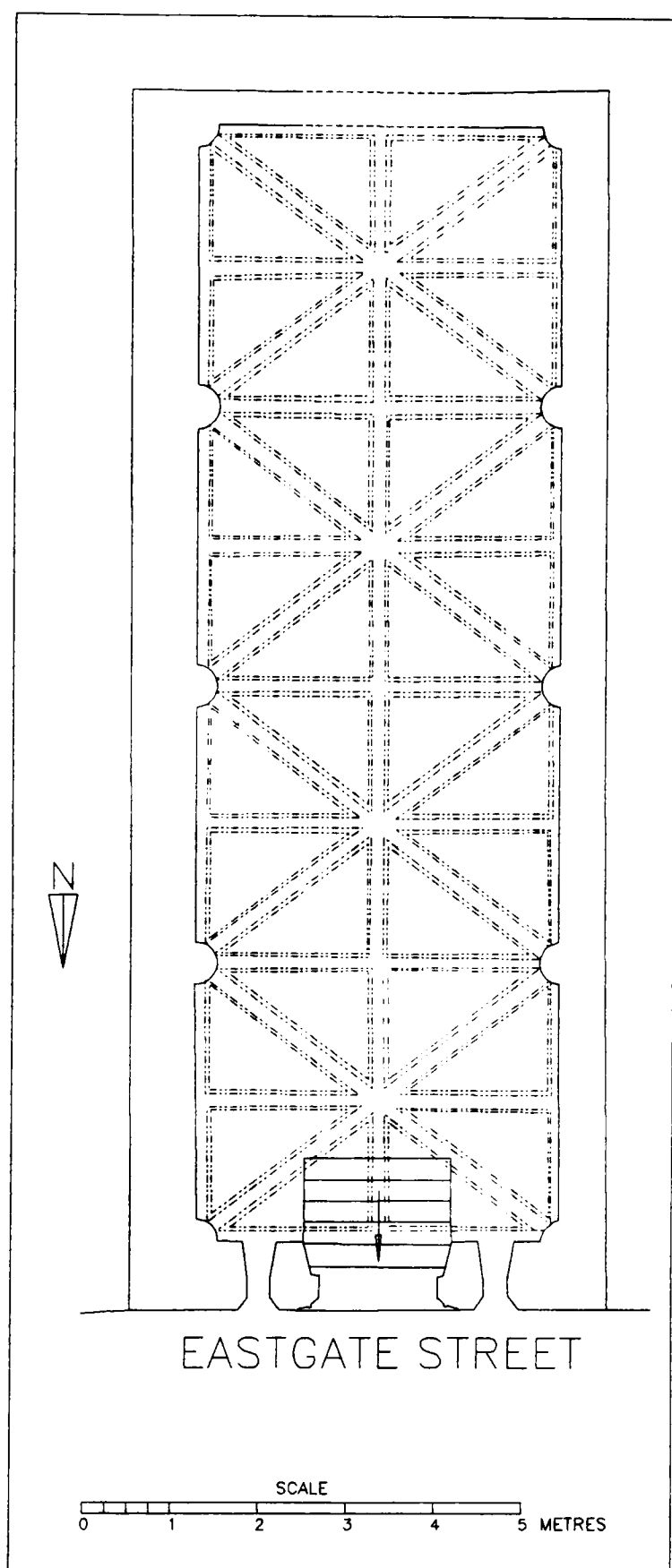


Fig. 84. 28 Eastgate Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-1.

² Wood, *Med. House*, p. 88.

The implications of the case studies

These ten townhouses dating from around or before 1300 provide unambiguous evidence of the existence of galleried buildings at this date. Only one structure does not advance to the front of the present Row, and as this mid to late thirteenth-century undercroft at 12 Bridge Street was a second-phase development at the rear of a pre-existing building, this does not imply the absence of a gallery. In fact, the exact correspondence of the level of the floor on top of the vault with the Row itself suggests that the latter existed at the time of the construction of the extension, if not at the time of the building of the front undercroft. 11, 21, and 37 Watergate Street, and 28 Eastgate Street do not evidence the walkway itself, but all show remarkable correlation between the undercroft locations and the front and, most importantly, the level of the gallery, with the Eastgate Street undercroft even conforming to the gradual west-east downwards slope of the walkway. Clearly there has been no need to modify the structures to accommodate the Row and, in the absence of any evidence, it would seem perverse to presume that this has occurred.

That a Row-type building therefore existed at 37 Watergate Street by the early to mid thirteenth century is made all the more conceivable by the five townhouses which indisputably contained galleries in the thirteenth century. The eponymous Three Old Arches in Bridge Street provides a dramatic survival of a façade up to the top of the gallery, as does the enclosed walkway at 6 Lower Bridge Street, with the buildings probably dating from the early and mid thirteenth century respectively. The fortunate survival of the arches spanning the gallery at 28-30 Watergate Street, probably dating from the last third of the century, and the slightly earlier building adjacent on the west, provide two more instances. Nearby, the excavations and observations during demolition of 12 Watergate Street

exposed another example galleried by the mid thirteenth century and, as this structural phase included forward encroachment for a stallboard, presumably before this.

The importance of the evidence from these ten Chester townhouses cannot be overestimated. They reveal that galleried buildings existed by the middle of the thirteenth century and, equally importantly, their different datings imply that the Rows gradually emerged rather than originated in a planned single campaign. Indeed, the survival of many completely new-built Row buildings from the fourteenth century indicates that this emergence took in the order of 150 years. Moreover, the structural evidence from the case-studies, corroborated by the houses surviving from the fourteenth century and others known from print evidence or antiquarian record, suggests compelling reasons for the evolution of a gallery in what otherwise appear to be standard split-level townhouses.

The narrowness of the street frontages is very apparent in the Rows, being seen in all the surviving medieval structures. Even the grander parallel halls, such as 6 Lower Bridge Street and 38-42 Bridge Street,¹ are built over multiple undercrofts oriented at right angles to the main street. This implies considerable commercial pressure and the continuously built-up frontages that were a necessary precondition of a Row system; recent documentary research by Alan Thacker has confirmed the intense commercial activity in the city centre at this period.² A total absence of courtyard entrances or side windows to undercrofts corroborates that this continuous street frontage was established by the time of the earliest surviving buildings. Furthermore, several undercrofts, including those of identifiably thirteenth-century origins, demonstrate longitudinal subdivision.

¹ For discussion of 38-42 Watergate Street, see pp. 316-20.

² A.T. Thacker, *VCH Chester* (forthcoming).

Thus, the surviving arcade at 32-4 Watergate Street was one of a pair that originally contained wattle and daub partitions. This would have resulted in three undercrofts each with a frontage width of only c.2.75m. Immediately adjacent to the east, at Nos. 28-30, similar partitions formerly blocking the stone arcade resulted in a pair of street frontage widths of 3.18m. This tendency towards subdivision of undercrofts already end-on to the street, and consequent concentrated use of the commercial frontage, was echoed in the small shops above. As with such upper-level shops known in other medieval towns, there is every indication that the Row-level shops were typically some 2-3m wide and 3m deep, many doubtless being lock-ups with or without a chamber over.¹

A series of two or three shops over an undercroft, possibly also subdivided and thus with more than one entrance, would not in itself have precluded the adoption of a standard split-level arrangement, had not the underlying topography in the Rows compounded the problem of providing access and fenestration to such a complex frontage. The sandstone bedrock in Chester is just below the modern street surface and may be responsible for the fact that the undercrofts are only slightly sunk into the ground. A more significant factor in this unusual aspect of the Chester Row buildings appears to be the slope from the street front up to c.2m higher towards the rear of the buildings: a slope which is now accepted as being caused by the debris of Roman public buildings, overlain with some less substantial medieval occupation deposits.² With ground a storey height different front to rear any incentive not to dig deep into the bedrock would have been compounded, since it would have been most unsatisfactory to have had the upper level a metre or so below contempor-

¹ For discussion of shops, see pp. 249-61.

² T.J. Strickland, 'The Roman Heritage of Chester', *JCAS* 67 (1985), pp. 17-36.

ary ground level. The presence of timber-framed superstructures, doubtless the norm, would have made this undesirable if rot were to be avoided, whereas the difficulty of accessing the rear plot, with its free-standing ancillary buildings, would have made the arrangement functionally impractical. Further evidence for the almost street-level undercrofts being so constructed through necessity is provided by the fact that wherever the bedrock is deeper below medieval ground level and the Roman debris slope less significant, the undercrofts sink lower, and the raised gallery comes to an end. This happens most clearly at the Market Square end of the Rows in Northgate Street, and around the junction with Newgate Street on Eastgate Street.

In the context of continuously built-up tenements with narrow frontages the high-set undercrofts of central Chester clearly rendered impossible a more standard split-level arrangement, such as that seen at 58 French Street, Southampton.¹ For the two or three shop units to have had the usual independent access would have required a whole series of flights of steps for each building, 2m or more high and projecting out into the highway. When the access requirements of the undercrofts, all at right angles to the street, are taken into account the frontage arrangements would have been more congested, particularly when allowance is made for the greater pressure of subdivision. Add to this the fact that the frontage was also in demand for undercroft fenestration, since continuously built-up streets prohibited side lighting for the undercrofts and rear lightwells were mostly impractical because of the higher ground level and the frequent rearwards continuation of the superstructure beyond this point, and it becomes clear that the subtle combination of a very active property

¹ See Figs. 69, 70, and 127; and pp. 379-81.

market, the historical pattern of plot evolution, and the underlying topographical factors meant that a different solution was necessary.

The galleries, or Rows, which survive clearly provide a solution to these problems, without necessitating a radical rearrangement of the normal organisation of the split-level townhouse. The commercial effectiveness of this solution is equally apparent, since far from subtracting a front room from the houses, the use of galleries maximised the retail frontage of the narrow plots. That is, by distributing the steps up to the Row walkway at approximate intervals of every three tenements or so, more of the frontage at both levels was made available for trade. Access to this commercial frontage also became easier; whereas in more standard split-level townhouses numerous lightwells, and flights of steps descending to undercroft level had made parts of the upper level, including windows, inaccessible, in the Rows this ceased to be a problem. This would have allowed the customer to have been served from the window, thus reducing the necessary area of the shop, increasing the room for stock, and giving greater security against shoplifting.

That the increased street frontage available for commercial usage was a driving force in the creation of the Rows, is further evidenced by the creation of the wide and often sloping stallboards on the street side of the walkway. Temporary stalls, or *tabulae*, are an often forgotten element of the medieval street, but it is clear that they formed an essential part of the retail economy and provided a considerable source of income from rent. In the Chester Rows, the function of the stallboards can be equated with such *tabulae* from an early stage, and it is clear that they represent a doubling of the stall space along the central streets. Whilst the few buildings from the thirteenth century with intact, or recorded, frontages imply construction without stallboards, it does appear that they were being

built during the century and thus represent an early recognition of this commercial potential.¹

The documentary evidence for the origins of the Rows is more ambiguous than that provided by the standing buildings, but it does confirm this model of the gradual emergence of a system largely under the influence of the intense pressure of prospering distributive trades and the consequent high demand for streetfront space. The lack of detailed architectural description in thirteenth-century documents, however, makes it difficult to be absolutely certain that areas such as Ironmongers' Row and Baxters' Row, known as such by the 1290s, were raised galleries, rather than simply the continuous lengths of non-galleried shops known as 'Rows' in other medieval towns. Nevertheless, it is clear that there was continuity in the architectural elements and functions of townhouses described in the mid thirteenth century and the galleried buildings recorded in the more detailed deeds of the mid fourteenth century onwards.

For example, in the 1220s four shops were recorded as abutting St Peter's church and it is possible that they were identical to a similar number of shops known to have been immediately north of the church in the 1250s.² Hugh Selimon's property at this later date included a shop 3.05m (10ft) deep and 1.83m (6ft) wide adjacent to the door of the house behind,³ while Henry of Helsby's house directly to the north was similarly accessed via a door between three shops.⁴ It is possible to trace these properties, and those to the north, beyond the first record of the term Ironmonger's Row in 1293,⁵ into the mid fourteenth century where the

¹ For discussion of stalls and stallboards, see pp. 267-70.

² BL Add. Ch. 49, 975. The author is grateful to Alan Thacker for this and the following references to documents in the BL, PRO, and Ches. RO.

³ *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, 43 (1948), p.1 [No. 8946].

⁴ BL Add. Ch. 49, 982.

⁵ PRO, CHES 25/1.

house formerly of Henry of Helsby was still fronted by three shops,¹ and the adjoining property was described as having a cellar with shops above, and solars over the shops.² Certainly then, there is no implication of radical replanning between the 1250s and the 1340s; rather, there is a strongly implied consistency.

Thacker has identified similar continuity at other central sites around the Cross.³ West of St Peter's, on the north side of Watergate Street, Flesher's Row included property (owned by the Doncaster family from at least the 1290s) that fourteenth-century deeds reveal as conforming to the raised gallery arrangement. Likewise, on the corner of Eastgate Street and Northgate Street the Buttershops are known to have existed by 1270. The 'Buttershopprow' is not recorded until 1369, but the connection, or even confusion, with Baxter or Bakers' Row (in existence by 1293 and continuing further east along the north side of Eastgate Street) implies that it was a true Row somewhat earlier. The early integration of a seld with the raised gallery is evidenced at Corvisers' Row, where the eleven shops comprising the seld, owned by Robert le Barn in 1275, are documented as late as the fourteenth century.⁴ In 1356 steps were recorded leading to 'le Covyserrowe,' clearly confining the term 'Row' to the elevated walkway.

Despite the lack of detailed itemisation of the parts of the houses in these highly commercial Rows in deeds earlier than the mid fourteenth century, it is more than reasonable, in the light of such apparent continuity and the more substantial architectural evidence, to suppose that

¹ Ches. RO, MR/30.

² H. Taylor, 'Notes upon some early deeds relating to Chester and Flint', *JCAS* 2 (1888), pp. 174-7.

³ A.T. Thacker, *VCH Chester* (forthcoming).

⁴ For discussion of selds, see pp. 270-3.

the term 'Row' in medieval Chester denotes an elevated walkway *ab initio*. The most significant contribution of the early medieval documentation, however, is not simply to corroborate the dating of the gradual origins of the Rows as revealed by the buildings, but in the implied connection between the earliest lengths of conjoining galleries and single trade 'Rows' in the commercial heart of the city. The architectural evidence, although of utmost importance, does not comprise sufficient examples of townhouses predating the early fourteenth century to make conclusions about the location of the earliest lengths of Row. Indeed the scatter of surviving townhouses from this period has very obviously been distorted by the commercial failings of Watergate Street that have made it less prone to redevelopment, and the less fortunate similar process in Lower Bridge Street, that, being earlier, led to the almost total removal of its galleried houses. The deeds from medieval Chester, however, are sufficiently numerous to correct the imbalance found in the location of the surviving buildings, and imply that the first substantial lengths of Rows were occupied by shopkeepers competing in the same trade, and were centred around the Cross. For example, the continuity identified in Ironmongers' Row between the 1250s and the 1340s may date back to the four shops recorded abutting St Peter's in the 1220s. This does not mean that the building type was restricted to this area in even the earliest days, but does reveal a substantial concentration. The survival of 6 Lower Bridge Street from the mid thirteenth century 215m from the Cross may indicate that larger properties were adopting the galleried form away from the absolute commercial centre of the city at a very early date, or may equally imply that the Rows were already widespread by this time. Quite clearly, the lack of a large mass of early thirteenth-century standing buildings and documentation cannot be taken as evidence against such a possibility.

Indeed in view of the unlikelihood of archaeological excavation ever being able to add greatly to the debate over what is essentially an above ground feature, the most reasonable conclusions that can be reached in the absence of being able to strip back every building in the Rows to expose any medieval fabric, are that the Rows originated out of a need to adapt the normal split-level townhouse found elsewhere throughout the country in response to a series of local preconditions, with the first galleried houses appearing in the early thirteenth century. The close relationship between the development of the Rows and economic pressures in the city centre, meant that the accelerating economy of Chester during the second half of the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth century appears to have caused a multiplication of the building type into a system recognisable today.

GALLERIED TOWNHOUSES ELSEWHERE IN ENGLAND

Spur-walled undercrofts and their implications

As has been seen in the Introduction, Faulkner's article of 1966 is an isolated consideration of townhouses with undercrofts, significant for its recognition of the dominance of split-level townhouses in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹ His reinterpretation of Tackley's Inn, Oxford, as being a galleried building akin to 38-42 Watergate Street, Chester, however, is used as the basis for the theory advanced in his article that such Row-like arrangements were common in town centres. Furthermore, Faulkner questions whether the Chester Rows are 'only exceptional in their survival'.² In his analysis of the undercrofts at Southampton, published subsequently, Faulkner discusses spur walls that he considers to be similar

¹ Faulkner, *Med. Undercrofts*, pp. 120-35.

² *Ibid.*, p. 132.

to those at Tackley's Inn, and, on the strength of the supposed common function of these spur walls being to support a timber-framed façade set-back from the frontage, concludes that 'this evidence of a gallery covers all the Southampton undercrofts that may be assigned tentatively to a fourteenth-century or near-fourteenth-century date'.¹

Such proposals for the widespread adoption of galleries at least in Southampton, if not nationally, are certainly a reversal of the traditional interpretation of the Chester Rows being unrelated to the trends of townhouse building elsewhere in England, but are equally at odds with the explanation of the origins of the Rows advanced in this chapter: the proliferation of galleried houses which Faulkner envisages would have occurred without the combination of local preconditions that are so convincingly part of the process of the creation of the Chester Rows. With the identification of such galleried townhouses outside Chester being applied to buildings mostly with no surviving fabric above undercroft level, however, it is obvious that Faulkner's theory is based largely on hypothetical reconstructions of these houses. Beginning with a much-needed reassessment of the medieval arrangement of Tackley's Inn, Oxford, the keystone of his hypothesis, and then analysing the spur-walled undercrofts from Southampton and elsewhere, it can be demonstrated that Faulkner's theory, however attractive, is wholly incorrect.

Tackley's Inn, 106-7 High Street, Oxford

Faulkner's reinterpretation of Tackley's Inn, Oxford, as having a gallery along the street followed William Pantin's work of the 1940s in which he established the building as a rare survival of a medieval academic hall,²

¹ Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, p. 80.

² Pantin, *Tackley's Inn*, pp. 80-92; Pantin, *Oxford*, pp. 123-7.

and subsequently used the building as a type-example of the 'double-range' plan.¹ Continuous ownership of the property by Oriel College from the early fourteenth century to the present day has resulted in an abundance of documentary material which Pantin attempted to relate to a survey of the standing building, and, indeed, such a combination of sources, albeit with the addition of the evidence of early drawings, is used in this reassessment of Tackley's Inn.

Prior to the construction of the surviving parallel hall known as Tackley's Inn, the site appears to have been occupied by two tenements.² These were combined in the building described in 1324 as 'lately newly built' by Roger le Mareschal, rector of Tackley, near Woodstock.³ Pantin's consequent dating of the building to c.1320 was revised in the 1960s⁴ in the light of his discovery of a coroner's inquest of 1300 which describes a man mortally wounded *in aula vocata Takkeleseyn*.⁵ With Roger le Mareschal's presentation to the benefice of Tackley providing a *terminus post quem*,⁶ Pantin's emended dating was, thus, 1291-1300, adding elsewhere that the site could have been purchased before 1300 and rebuilt later.⁷ Less satisfactorily explained, and overlooked in all discussion of Tackley's Inn, is the mention of a 'William de Takles Inn' earlier than this, in the account of the Pleas of the Crown before the Justice in Eyre, 1285.⁸

This confusion over documentary evidence for the date and origin of the name 'Tackley's Inn' does not put into doubt the more significant facts

¹ Pantin, *Townhouse Plans*, pp. 203 and 217-19.

² Pantin, *Halls and Schools*, pp. 39-41.

³ Shadwell and Salter, *Oriel Records*, p. 165.

⁴ Pantin, *Townhouse Plans*, p. 217.

⁵ J.E. Thorold Rogers (ed.), 'Oxford City Documents', *OHS* 18 (1891), p. 156.

⁶ A.B. Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to AD 1500*, Vol. 2 (1959), p. 1130.

⁷ Pantin, *Halls and Schools*, p. 40.

⁸ J.E. Thorold Rogers (ed.), 'Oxford City Documents', *OHS* 18 (1891), p. 197.

regarding its ownership and function in the early fourteenth century, the period to which the architectural evidence dates the surviving building. Roger le Mareschal certainly owned the property in 1324 when it was granted to Adam de Brom. Whether intended from the outset as having a partly scholastic use, or built as a financial speculation, Tackley's Inn then became an academic hall, as the first premises of what was to be known later as Oriel College. This grant describes a messuage in which:

*...diverse shops, cellars, and solars contiguous to the said kings's way, are leased to laymen, but the hall and inner chambers to scholars of the University of Oxford, to inhabit after the manner of scholars.*¹

Edward III's grant refounding and endowing the college in 1326 gives more detail of the street frontage arrangement:

*...unum messuagium, quinque shopas, quinque solaria et unum celarium cum pertinenciis.*²

This is further elaborated in a rental of Oriel College from 1363, in which the five shops are apparently listed east to west:³

Taklehyn

<i>De aula per canonicum</i>	<i>vii marc'</i>
<i>De Bytteswell pro taberna</i>	<i>i marc'</i>
<i>De eodem pro prima shopa</i>	<i>xs</i>
<i>De Agnete Latoner pro secunda shopa</i>	<i>xs</i>
<i>De Willelmo Tapermaker pro II shopis</i>	<i>xxs</i>
<i>De Rogero Grasiere pro quinta</i>	<i>xiis</i>

*vii li. xviiiis. viiid.*⁴

¹ Shadwell and Salter, *Oriel Records*, p. 165.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³ Pantin, *Tackley's Inn*, p. 81.

⁴ Shadwell and Salter, *Oriel Records*, p. 382.

For this period no other documentary evidence adds to these extremely useful descriptions, but some mention of the documentation of the adjacent properties is relevant. That Tackley's Inn was part of a continuously built-up frontage from the outset is apparent, with 104-5 High Street probably held by Guy le Armerer in 1279, John de Weston c.1290, and his wife, and her second husband, in 1326.¹ To the west, 108 (Brasier's Place) is identifiable back to 1279² and was one of the medieval buildings destroyed in the creation of King Edward Street in 1872-3.³

Beneath the site of the documented but no longer surviving five shops there is a five-bay vaulted undercroft, now wholly subterranean, parallel to, and directly on, the street frontage. To the rear a ground-level open hall, also parallel to the street, is largely intact, albeit shortened at the east (lower) end and re-roofed c.1500.⁴ Adjoining the east of this is a partly preserved two-storey service or accommodation wing slightly projecting to the south. These scholastic parts are not greatly relevant to the analysis of the commercial frontage, other than that an impressive surviving hall window with a two-ordered chamfer confirms an early fourteenth-century construction date, as does the adjacent demolished, but recorded, rear doorway of the cross-passage.⁵ It is also worth noting that the academic half of the building (possibly including a detached kitchen or other ancillary single-storey structures at the rear)⁶ was surprisingly modest, requiring no architectural modification of a medium-sized medieval townhouse.

¹ H.E. Salter, 'Survey of Oxford: 1', *OHS*, new series, 14 (1960), p. 40.

² Shadwell and Salter, *Oriel Records*, p. 170.

³ J. Munby, *Buckler and Tackley's Inn*, pp. 123-69.

⁴ Pantin, *Tackley's Inn*, pp. 131-3.

⁵ J. Skelton, *Oxonia Antiqua Restaurata*, 2nd edition (1820), plate 99; J.C. Buckler, in Munby, *Buckler and Tackley's Inn*, p. 134 (Fig. 4).

⁶ Pantin, *Tackley's Inn*, p. 89; J. Munby, *Buckler and Tackley's Inn*, pp. 130-7.

The undercroft comprises five quadripartite rib-vaulted bays measuring 3.28m, 3.40m, 3.40m, 3.05m, and 2.98m from east to west. The narrow profile of the single-chamfered ribs which run down to the ground without a capital, and the proportions of the vault are indicative of an early fourteenth-century date. Original access from the street was provided by a flight of steps at the east end, where a mid-bay spur wall receives an extra vault-rib onto a carved, but now mutilated, corbel. The present floor

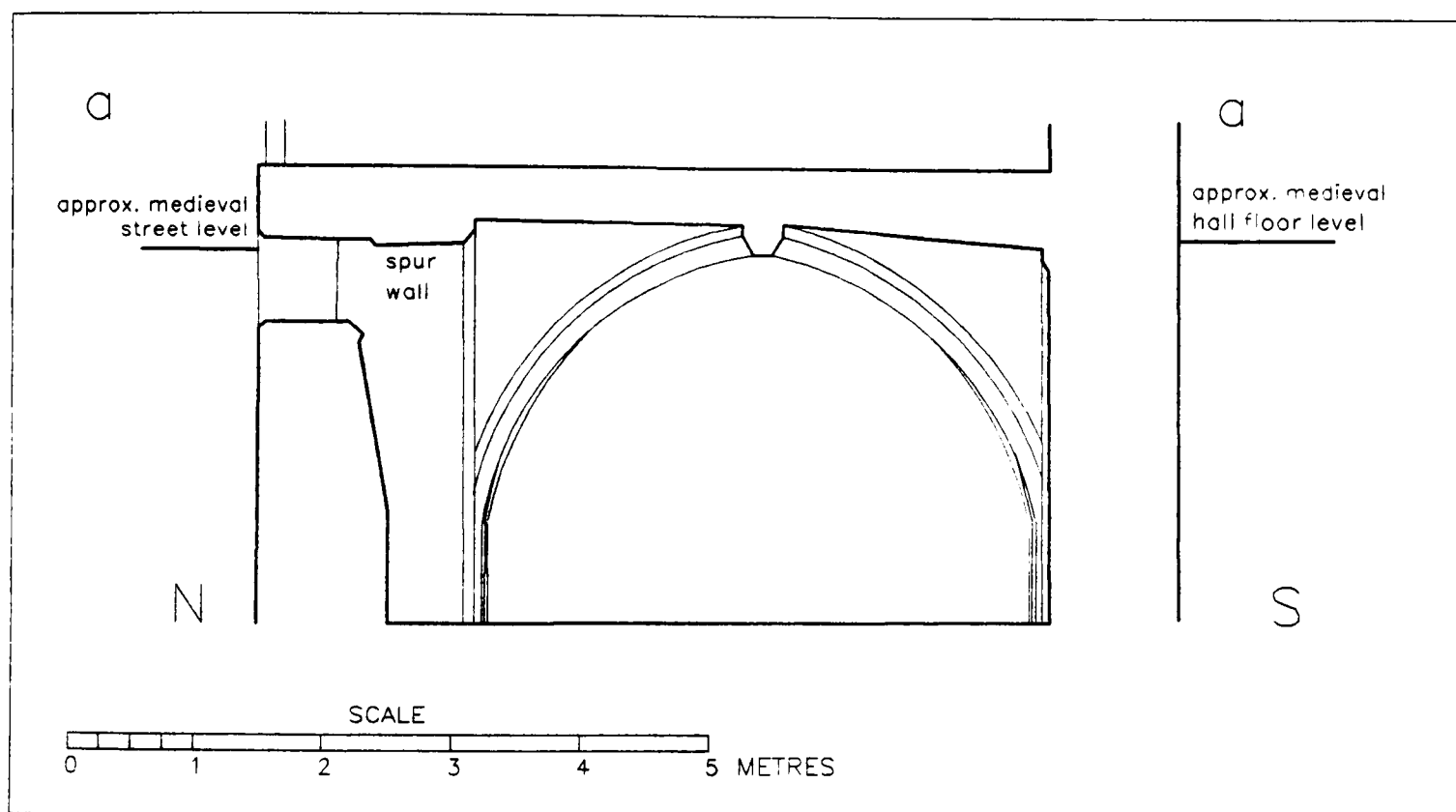


Fig. 85. Tackley's Inn, 106-107 High Street, Oxford. Section across undercroft looking east (marked 'a-a' on plan).

level is at or above the medieval level, as the wall shafts continue down to this point, and, thus, the currently truncated steps must have projected into the undercroft by at least two treads.

Both Pantin and Faulkner make much of an opening in the westernmost bay of the undercroft, respectively interpreting it as an entrance from the street¹ and, more perversely, as the remains of a stair from the street up

¹ Pantin, *Tackley's Inn*, p. 87.

to gallery level.¹ A splayed opening of ashlar on the inner side corresponds in width and angle of splay with the surviving blocked window in the adjacent bay and, as it also occurs at an identical height above the floor, it is only reasonable to conclude that it was another window.

One other doorway, potentially original, survives in part at the rear of the easternmost bay and may have provided access from the shop above rather than from the chambers at the rear. Indeed, in the rental of 1363 the undercroft is let together with one shop which Pantin identifies as being the easternmost.² Alternatively, it may relate to the division of Tackley's Inn, established by 1442, in which the whole building east of and including the former through-passage, together with the undercroft, formed a tavern, with the western half being known as Buckley's Hall.³

In addition to the two westernmost bays of the undercroft the other three bays have evidence of blocked windows, although only that of the second from the east is of the same internal splay of 1.37m. That adjacent to the entrance is necessarily narrower at 1.09m and the blocked window in the centre bay is 880mm in width. The sill of the most intact window, in the second bay from the west, is level with the top surviving step of the original entrance stairs. This latter point coincides with the front of the undercroft wall, its thickness of c.1.01m being evidenced in modern openings at the front and rear of the west end. In the absence of archaeological evidence for the early fourteenth-century street level, it is most reasonable to suppose that two or three steps projected into the street both from this undercroft entrance and from the shops above, necessitating shallow lightwells for the undercroft windows. Of the street

¹ Faulkner, *Med. Undercrofts*, p. 129

² Pantin, *Tackley's Inn*, p. 81.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-2.

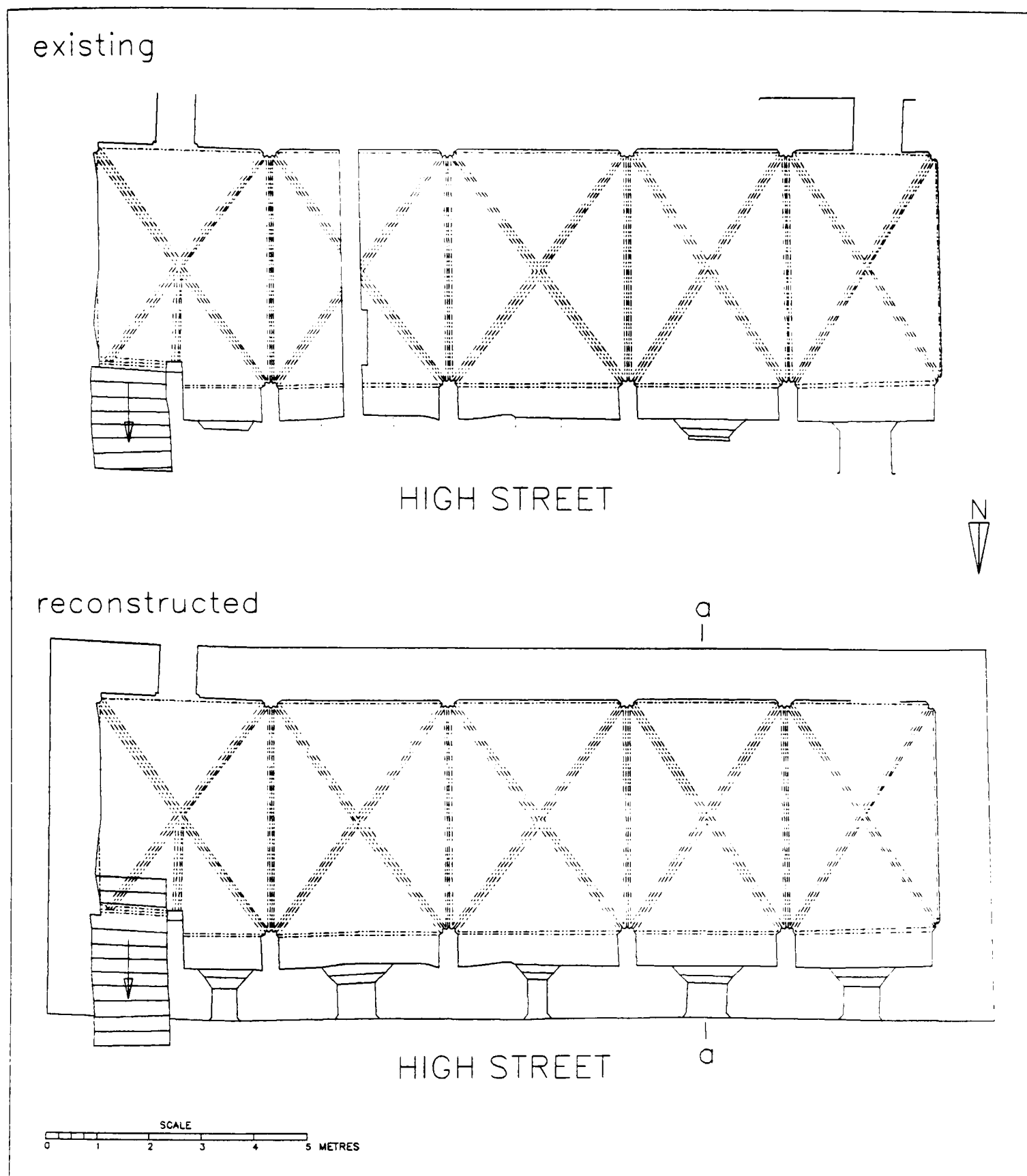


Fig. 86. Undercroft plans as existing and reconstructed. The dotted lines in the plan as existing mark the visible edges of window blocking.

frontage above ground nothing survives, and it is doubtful whether the stone east wall is fourteenth century. Removal of plaster on the street side of the supposedly medieval north wall of the hall,¹ hoping to find traces of partitions between the five documented shops, revealed that the

¹ Pantin, *Tackley's Inn*, Fig. 21.

whole wall at this level is of brick. The position of the through-passage leading from the street between shops and through the lower end of the hall, however, is precisely ascertainable. An 1814 plan of Oriel College's holdings in the parish of St Mary's shows it surviving¹ and is corroborated by J.C. Buckler's drawings,² and one published by J. Skelton of the rear elevation.³ An offset of c.310mm (1ft) between the entry and the cross-passage is shown on the 1814 plan and in the Skelton drawing, and was recorded by Pantin in the 1940s when the junction of the north and east walls of the hall still survived.⁴ This offset corresponds with a reasonable width of a tiebeam in the hall, the known stone construction of the east wall clearly preventing the incorporation of a tiebeam within the wall thickness itself. Furthermore, the present roof of c.1500 perpetuates such a truss location and its even division of the hall into three bays, in the absence of any contrary evidence, may well be a direct replacement of the earlier medieval structure.

With the upper face of the easternmost truss aligning with the eastern side of the through-passage from the street it is logical to see an interrelationship between the hall and shop plans. That is, a three-bay hall corresponding to three façade gables, with the wide service, or accommodation, wing lying behind a further two gables. In the unlikely event of the streetfront range being roofed parallel to the hall, the main

¹ Original plan in the Bursar's Secretary's Office, Oriel College, Oxford. Published as a frontispiece to Shadwell and Salter, *Oriel Records*.

² J.C. Buckler, in Munby, *Buckler and Tackley's Inn*, p. 134 (Fig. 4).

³ J. Skelton, *Oxonia Antiqua Restaurata*, 2nd edition (1820), plate 99.

⁴ Pantin, *Tackley's Inn*, Fig. 21.

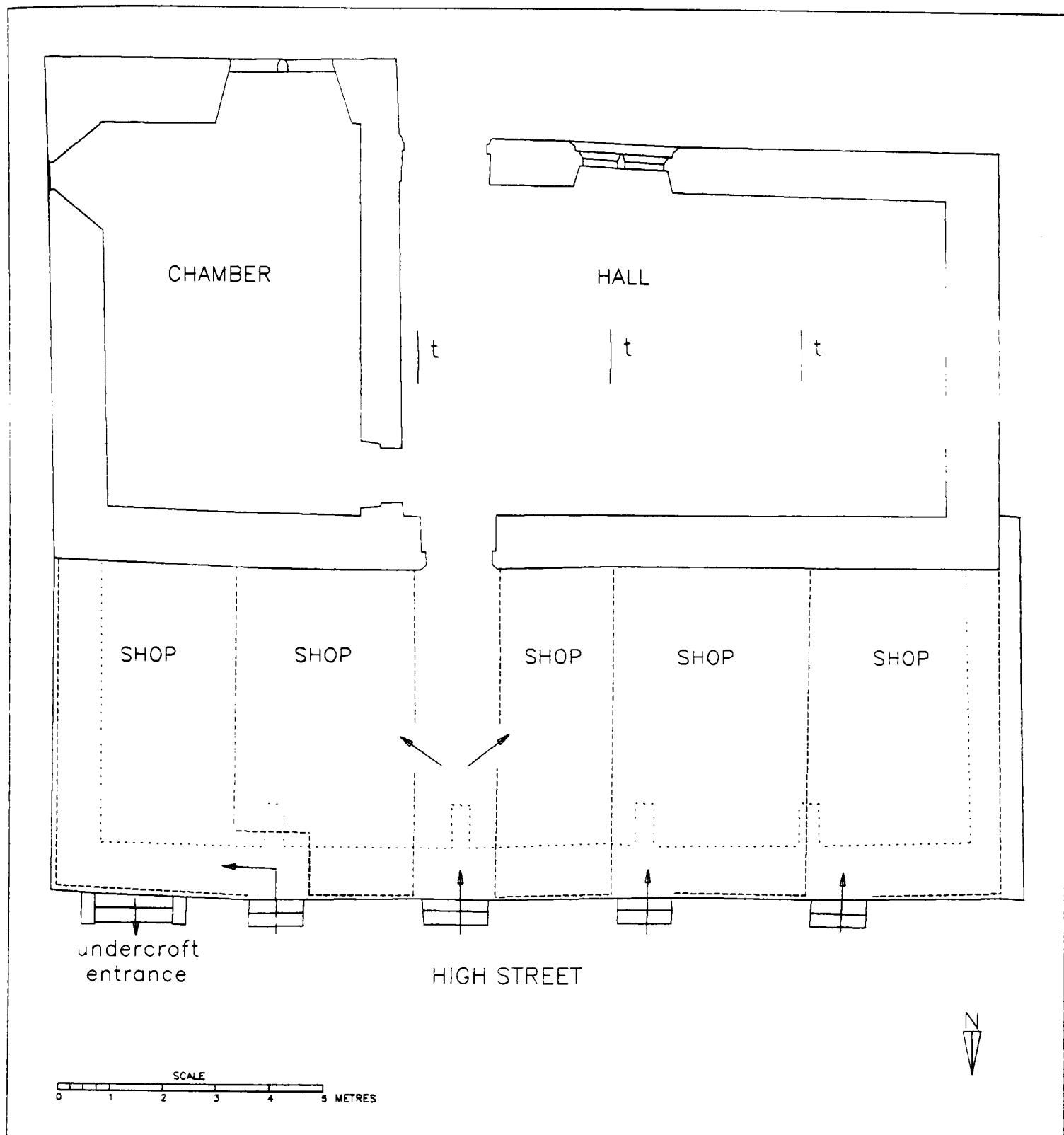


Fig. 87. Tackley's Inn, Oxford. Reconstructed plan of the ground floor, showing the position of the undercroft spur walls in dotted line. Arrows indicate the probable entrance locations of the five shops. The upper faces of the tiebeams are lettered 't'.

trusses would have coincided instead.¹ In other words, the tiebeams of the hall most probably corresponded with the valleys between the street

¹ The assumption that the shops and solars were timber-framed is based on the fact that this was the normal method of construction at this date, there is no certain survival of any fourteenth-century stonework in front of the hall, and the west wall of the undercroft was a party wall that supported the timber frame of the adjacent property (the present western property boundary still falls at this mid-wall point). That gables faced the street is implied by the fact that if a parallel front roof was employed an undrainable valley would be formed (adjacent buildings prohibiting drainage at either end).

frontage gables and, thus, the main structural posts of the façade. Such a straightforward structural scheme is argued for similar parallel halls at 38-42 Watergate Street,¹ 48-52 Bridge Street,² and 6 Lower Bridge Street, Chester,³ and is analogous to the relationship between a cross-wing and hall, a gable entrance and barn, or even a transept and nave.

Whatever the case, the location of the through-passage is reliably identifiable (its west wall is perpetuated in the modern property division) and the centre of the passage falls exactly over a spur wall in the undercroft below. This is of great significance as Faulkner argued for a galleried façade on the basis that these spur walls bore the main posts of a timber frame set back c.1.5m from the street frontage.⁴ Such a reconstruction would place a substantial post in the centre of the rather narrow front doorway to Tackley's Inn.

Accepting the more likely arrangement first proposed by Pantin, of five shops with individual access,⁵ it becomes apparent that, allowing for windows and an entrance to the undercroft, there are few variables possible in reconstructing the façade. While two shops were most probably entered from the through-passage in the manner of 58 French Street, Southampton,⁶ at least three shop doorways must have been placed on the street frontage. The easternmost shopfront would have been occupied by the wide undercroft entrance, necessitating access via the adjacent bay. The two westernmost shops would have had doorways to one side of the undercroft windows, the second from the west only having room to the east of the window. The reconstructed plan shows the effect of the through-

¹ See pp. 316-20.

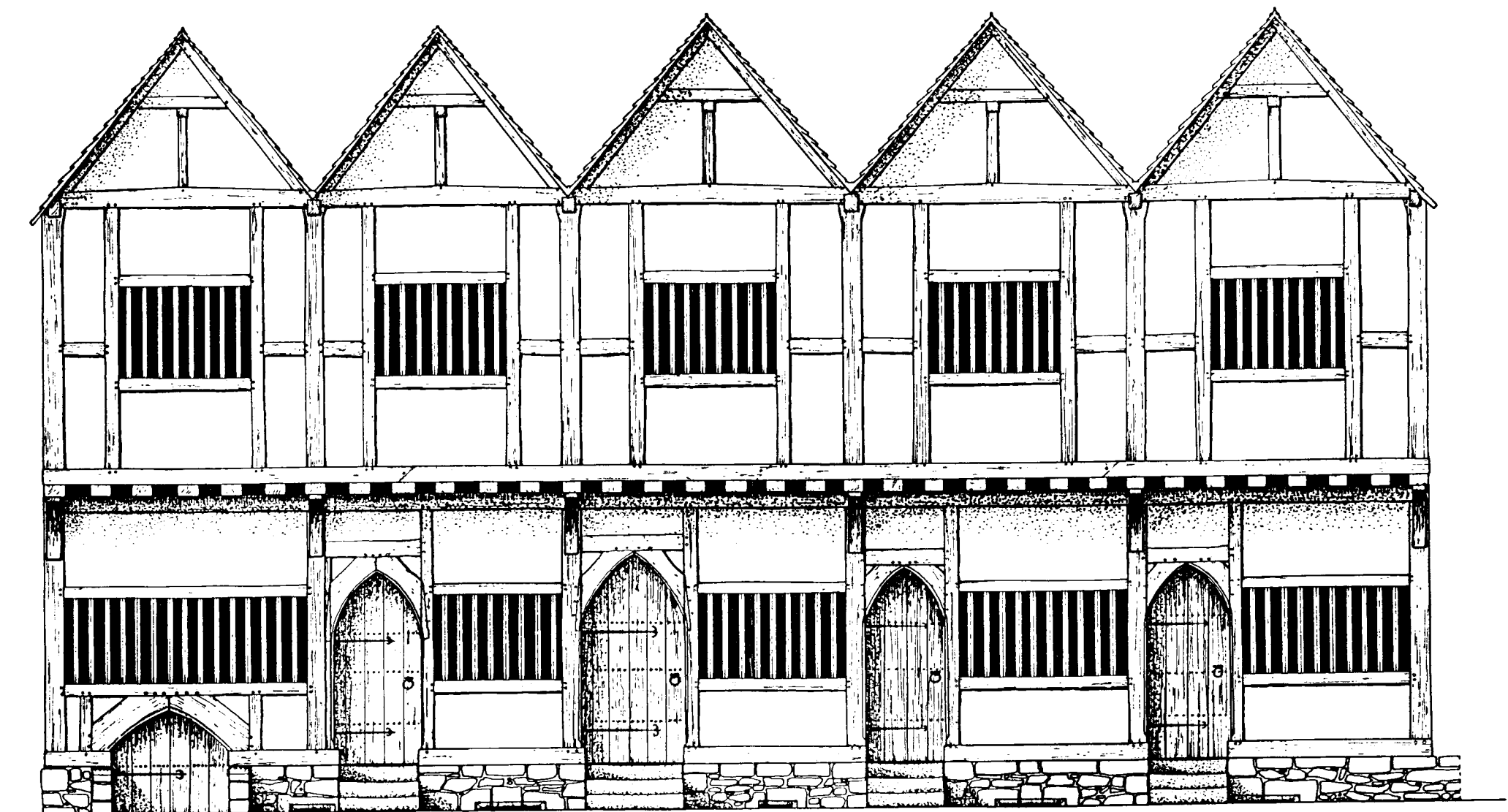
² See pp. 307-11.

³ See pp. 151-3.

⁴ Faulkner, *Med. Undercrofts*, p. 129.

⁵ Pantin, *Tackley's Inn*, pp. 80-92.

⁶ See pp. 379-81.



Scale



5m

passage in reducing the width of the middle shop. In this light it is perhaps significant to find the third and fourth shops from the east listed in the rental of 1363 as in the single occupancy of William Tapermaker. From this closely dictated arrangement, which leaves little scope for alternative schemes, a reconstructed elevation (Fig. 88) has been drawn showing a jettied upper storey, or solar, over each shop.

Precise survey has rendered more reliable the interpretation of Tackley's Inn, refuting Faulkner's attractive, but always suspect, adoption of a galleried arrangement, and reinstating the simpler split-level arrangement favoured by Pantin. The five shops to the street remain primarily evidenced by documentation, although the surviving structure corroborates this by implying that there was a timber-framed front range of two storeys over the undercroft, having five gables, or bays, to the street. These manifestly did not coincide with the bay divisions of the stone undercroft and, in view of the fact that the vault only supported light internal timber-framed walls, this is not at all remarkable.

Spur-walled undercrofts elsewhere

Thus, it is a misinterpretation of the evidence at Tackley's Inn which formed the basis for Faulkner's identification of galleries over the ten spur-walled undercrofts in Southampton.¹ It is clear, however, that the theory is not only unsustainable on these grounds, but also on the specific architectural evidence of the undercrofts.

The early fourteenth-century undercroft at 137-9 High Street (formerly the Queen's Hotel) is the oldest of the Southampton group and, being parallel to the street, is the most similar to that at Tackley's Inn. The

¹ Several of these examples post-date c.1350, but are included here as they are central to Faulkner's arguments.

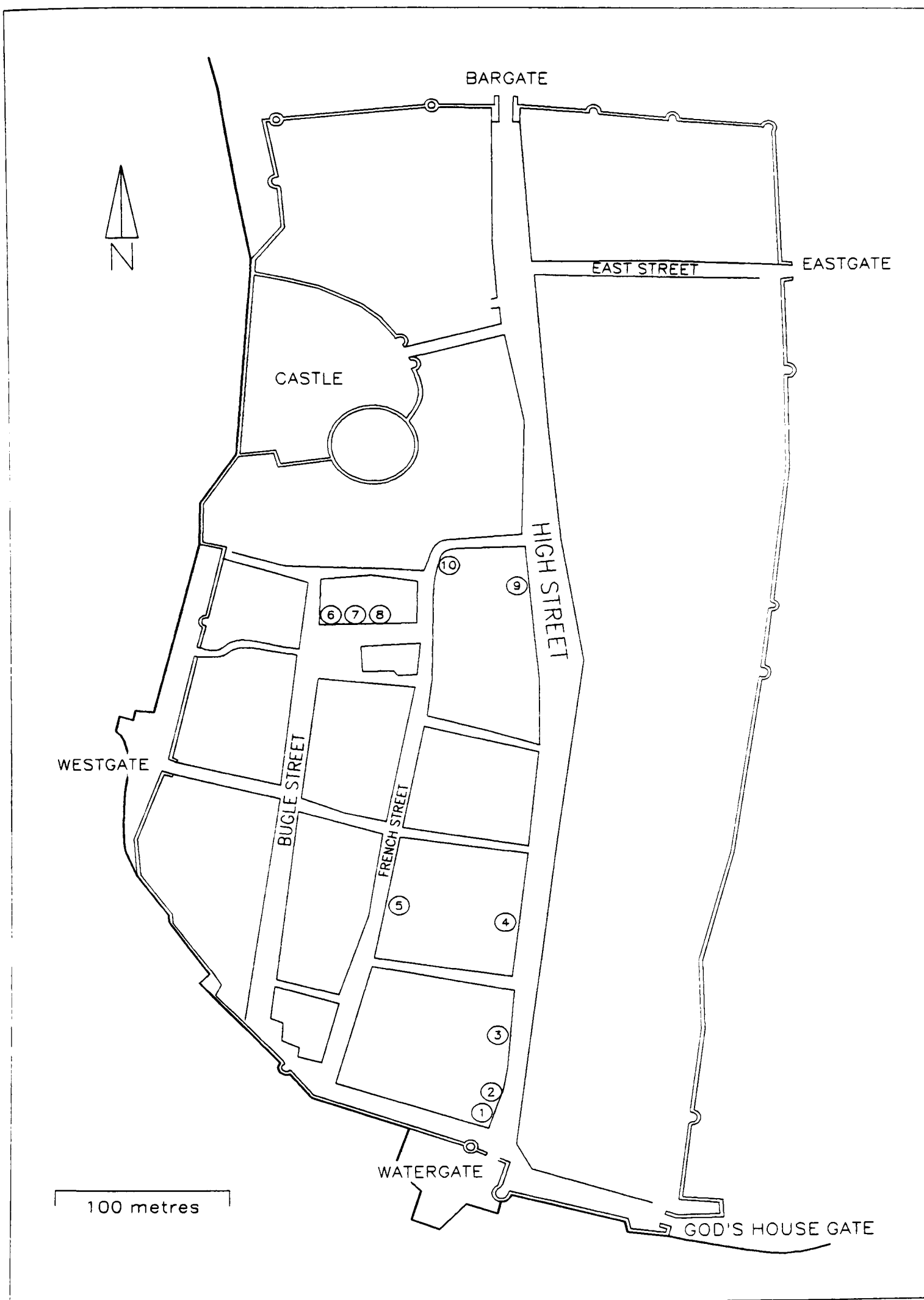


Fig. 89. Spur-walls in Southampton: 1. Canute's Palace Vault; 2. 88 High Street; 3. 94 High Street; 4. 104 High Street; 5. Weigh House Vault; 6. 13 St Michael's Sq.; 7. Church Hall; 8. 11 St Michael's Sq.; 9. 137-9 High Street; 10. corner of West Street.

vault is a segmental ellipse, as with most of the Southampton examples, and at 5.46m wide is only 320mm wider than the undercroft at Tackley's Inn. At 137-9 High Street, however, the transverse ribs of the barrel vault do not spring from spur walls since the latter are restricted to flanking the one entrance from the street. With this doorway being placed at the northern end of the undercroft, it is inconceivable that these spur walls, thus confined to one part of the c.20.3m front wall, could have been designed to carry the main posts of a timber-framed frontage recessed to allow for a gallery.

The nine other spur-walled undercrofts are not sufficiently wide to have merited such additional support, had a gallery existed. The two spur walls at Weigh House Vault, for example, flank the front entrance of a typical undercroft oriented at right angles to the street, of 6.04m width. If the

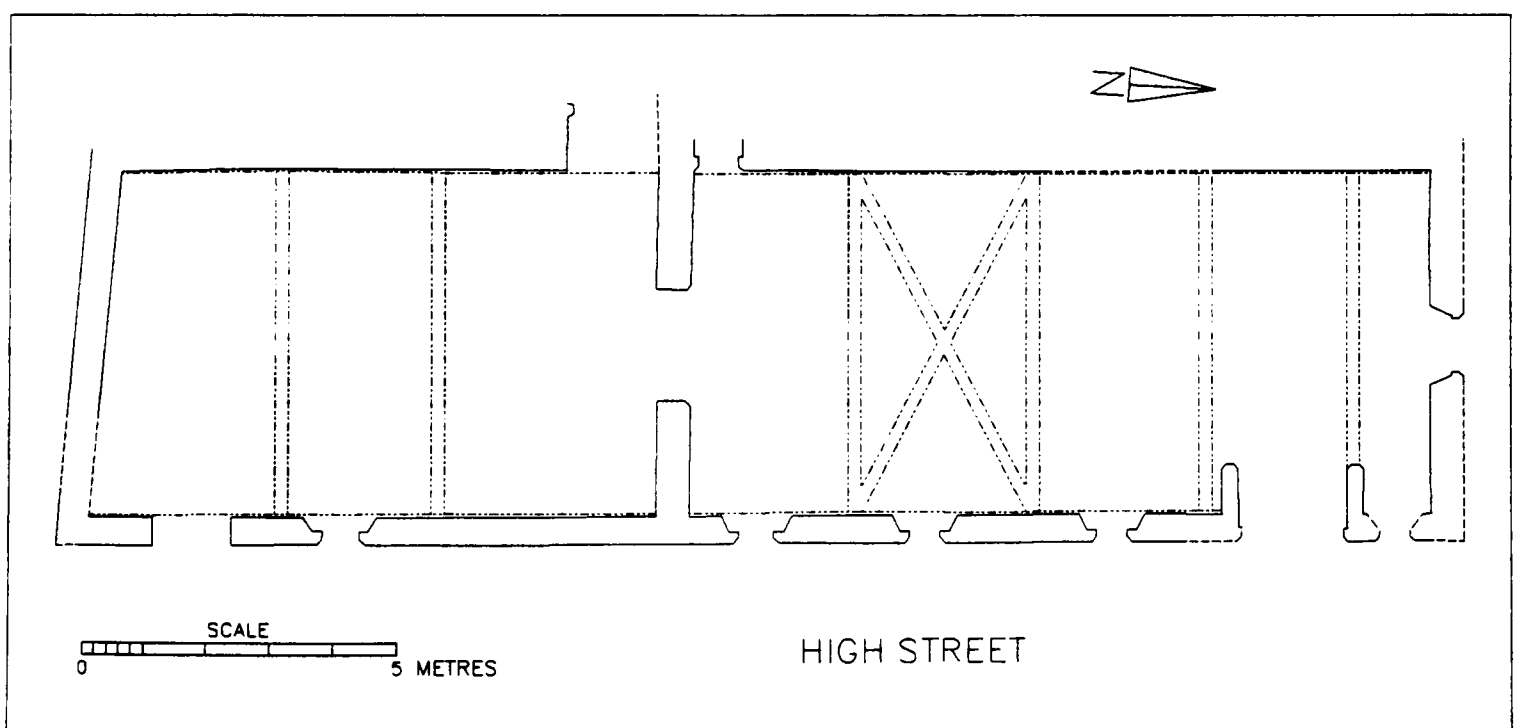


Fig. 90. 137-9 High Street, Southampton. Plan of undercroft.

original superstructure had indeed been timber-framed, it is exceptionally unlikely that the façade would have comprised three bays with the principal posts at the c.2.2m spacings necessary if the spur walls were to fulfil the function identified by Faulkner.

Indeed, one could expect that such narrow buildings, with the implied arrangement of gable-end facing the street, would comprise one bay in width only, with the main structural posts placed on the side walls of the undercroft. The frontage between these posts would thus be of relatively insubstantial construction; such lightweight studwork is found at the shopfront of the similarly proportioned 58 French Street. Furthermore, even where galleries are known to exist in Chester, the undercrofts do not reveal spur walls, or any other

special supports, on the line of the wall at the rear of the Row. In

view of the timber ceilings of many of the Cestrian undercrofts, this absence is especially significant. Moreover, as is shown by the thirteenth-century shopfront at Row level revealed during the demolition of 12 Watergate Street, the principal posts of the superstructures were located over the side walls of the undercrofts, and this most obvious of arrangements was perpetuated even in the post-medieval timber frames throughout the Rows.

It is interesting to note that townhouses with spur-walled undercrofts were not confined to Southampton, and several comparable examples are found amongst the large number of the undercrofts at Winchelsea. A

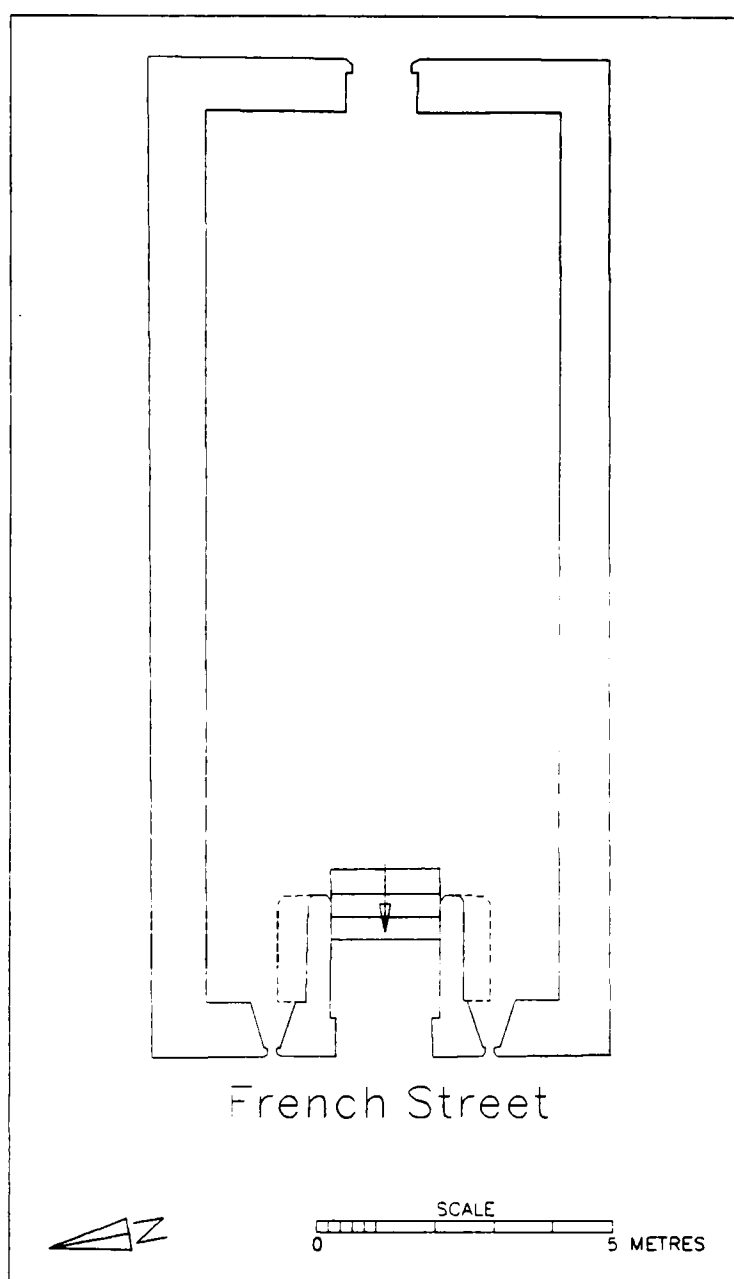


Fig. 91. Weigh House Vault, French Street, Southampton. Plan showing spur walls and flanking benches (dashed).

particularly important example was discovered during the excavation of the street front of Lower Brook Street in Winchester.¹ The undercroft of House I was similar to those surviving from c.1400 at 94 High Street and 13 St Michael's Square, Southampton, in that it was oriented at right angles to the street and had an entrance which was immediately adjacent to one side wall, with a spur wall on the other side of the steps. The significance here of this example lies not in its early dating, from the mid-twelfth century, but in the fact that the undercroft was set back c.9m from the medieval street front behind a timber building. Consequently, whatever the function of House I, that of a typical streetfront townhouse operating commercially on two levels is excluded, and the purpose of the spur wall is clearly unrelated to the presence of a gallery.

It is, therefore, very apparent that Faulkner's hypothesis that Tackley's Inn and the Southampton townhouses with similar spur walls were galleried buildings is no longer tenable, although, of course, his implied observation that the Chester Rows were closely related to the national development of split-level townhouses remains valid. The purpose of spur walls, however, needs to be addressed, and it would seem reasonable to identify different functions between those forming shallow recesses in the front wall as at Tackley's Inn and the vast majority that are associated with undercroft entrances. In the case of the latter it is most probable that the spur walls were designed to reduce the effect of having a doorway opening directly from the street into a large room, in a similar way to the screens passage across the lower end of the hall. In addition to reducing the worst effects of wind and driving rain, spur walls also provide an edge to the often substantial flights of steps down to the undercrofts: the solid stone

¹ See pp. 26-7.

handrails at Firebrand House, High Street,¹ and 1-3 Salutation Cottages, Mill Road, Winchelsea,² may simply be a variation on the spur-walled design. The use of spur walls at Tackley's Inn may be a stylistic feature arrived at by the repetition of the arrangement of the eastern bay where a spur wall flanks the edge of the steps from the street. Alternatively, it could be a deliberate attempt to create a series of recesses in the front wall similar to the trapezoidal recesses in many of the later fourteenth and fifteenth-century undercrofts in Norwich; although no signs of shelving, racking, or seating are to be seen these may have functioned as storage or seating divisions.

The Woollen Hall, Southampton - a possible galleried townhouse without a spur-walled undercroft

Although Faulkner and,³ more recently, Grenville⁴ have identified 58 French Street, Southampton, as an example of a galleried townhouse, this is based on a straightforward misinterpretation of the streetfront arrangement, and, thus, the so-called Woollen Hall, nearby in St Michael's Passage, is the only English townhouse without spur walls and outside Chester for which a Row-like gallery has been proposed with anything approaching authority. The physical remains of such a potential gallery, however, are no longer accessible and the analysis of the complex building is dependent on variable and occasionally contradictory records.

¹ See pp. 391-2.

² See pp. 396-7.

³ Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, p. 106.

⁴ J. Grenville, 'The Rows of Chester: some thoughts on the results of recent research', *World Archaeology* 21, No. 3 (Feb. 1990), p. 453. Glyn Coppack's survey and English Heritage guidebook consistently contradict such a claim, and he has confirmed (pers. comm. 1993) that Grenville's 'pers. comm.' reference to him as a source for this interpretation is wholly erroneous.

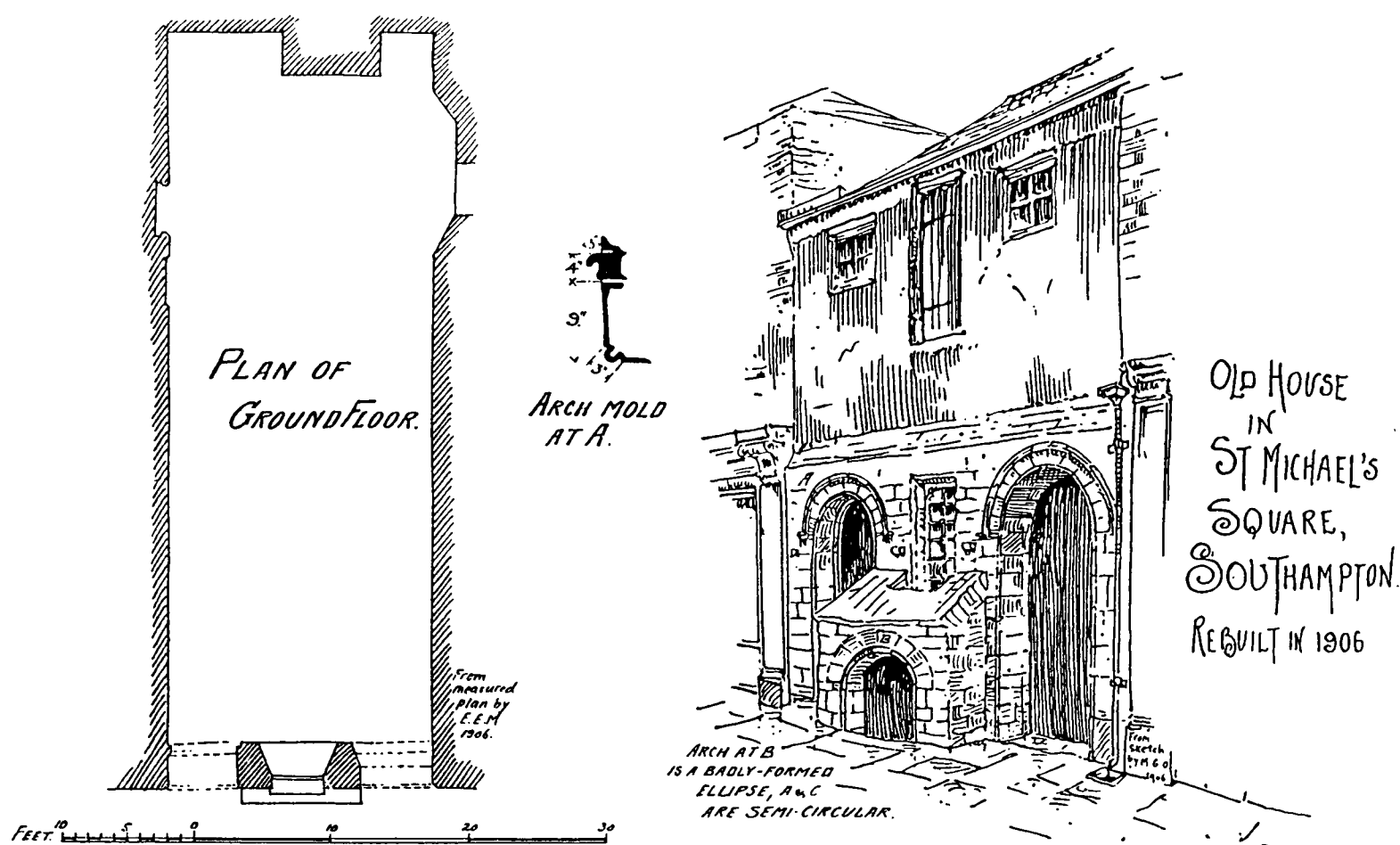


Fig. 92. The Woollen Hall, St Michael's Passage, Southampton. Plan and view of façade as recorded in 1906: G.W. Minns, 'Relics of Old Southampton', HFCAS 6, supplement (1913), p. 1.

The townhouse was rebuilt in 1906 but a perspective view of the façade and a plan of the ground floor record the earlier form of the building.¹ These show a split-level townhouse with a projecting porch that functioned as the undercroft entrance, and which was flanked by two tall semicircular arches with hoodmoulds (Fig. 92). Recording by the Ministry of Works in 1945 revealed that substantial amounts of the structure had survived the rebuild of 1906.² Both east and west walls were largely intact to the top of the ground floor, and the undercroft was preserved along with its rear wall and the rear half of its stone barrel vault. Of the frontage nothing survived, even at undercroft level, except for an isolated 'fragment of door jamb' shown on the plan, and the east jamb of the easternmost of the two large arches. Faulkner used these sources to reconstruct the split-level

¹ G.W. Minns, 'Relics of Old Southampton', HFCAS 6, supplement (1913), p. 1.

² Ministry of Works S.W. drawing 564/7.

townhouse with a gallery fronting a ground-floor shop.¹ Excavation of the site in 1989 revealed that the undercroft partially survived, the rear half still with its intact vault.² Unfortunately the undercroft was not recorded in detail nor was it excavated under controlled archaeological conditions, and work focused on the tenements immediately to the east.³ An evaluation in advance of the main excavation, however, involved the excavation of a trench c.8m x c.1.9m along the northern side of the Woollen Hall, and the remains of the St Michael's Passage frontage were recorded in detail.⁴

The initial trench was placed too far to the south to pick up the outer face of the front wall, but it uncovered most of the thickness of this wall and the returns with the east and west walls. Most importantly, the front entrance to the undercroft was discovered to be substantially intact, though unexpectedly to the east of the centre line: the fragment of the jamb recorded by the Ministry of Works suggested a doorway west of centre. After the completion of the evaluation, the north edge of the trench collapsed, revealing a door jamb with a hollow roll-moulding similar to that on the detached jamb found in 1945 and to that recorded in 1906. Following completion of the main excavation, the area of the collapse was dug out to reveal that the side wall of the entrance continued c.500mm north of the moulded jamb, at which point it was butted by a twentieth-century brick wall on an east-west alignment.⁵ The moulded jamb was integral with the east side of the entrance and coincided with the front of the building, and the stonework to the north of it must represent the

¹ Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, pp. 111-14.

² Southampton Archaeological Unit, site code S0U393.

³ The badly damaged west wall survives to the top of the ground floor and the undercroft is apparently partly preserved under the present building on the site.

⁴ Southampton Archaeological Unit archive: site code S0393 - especially section 33, plan P016.

⁵ No drawn record of this wall was made, and that part included in Fig. 93 is derived from rectification of site photographs taken by the Southampton Archaeological Unit..

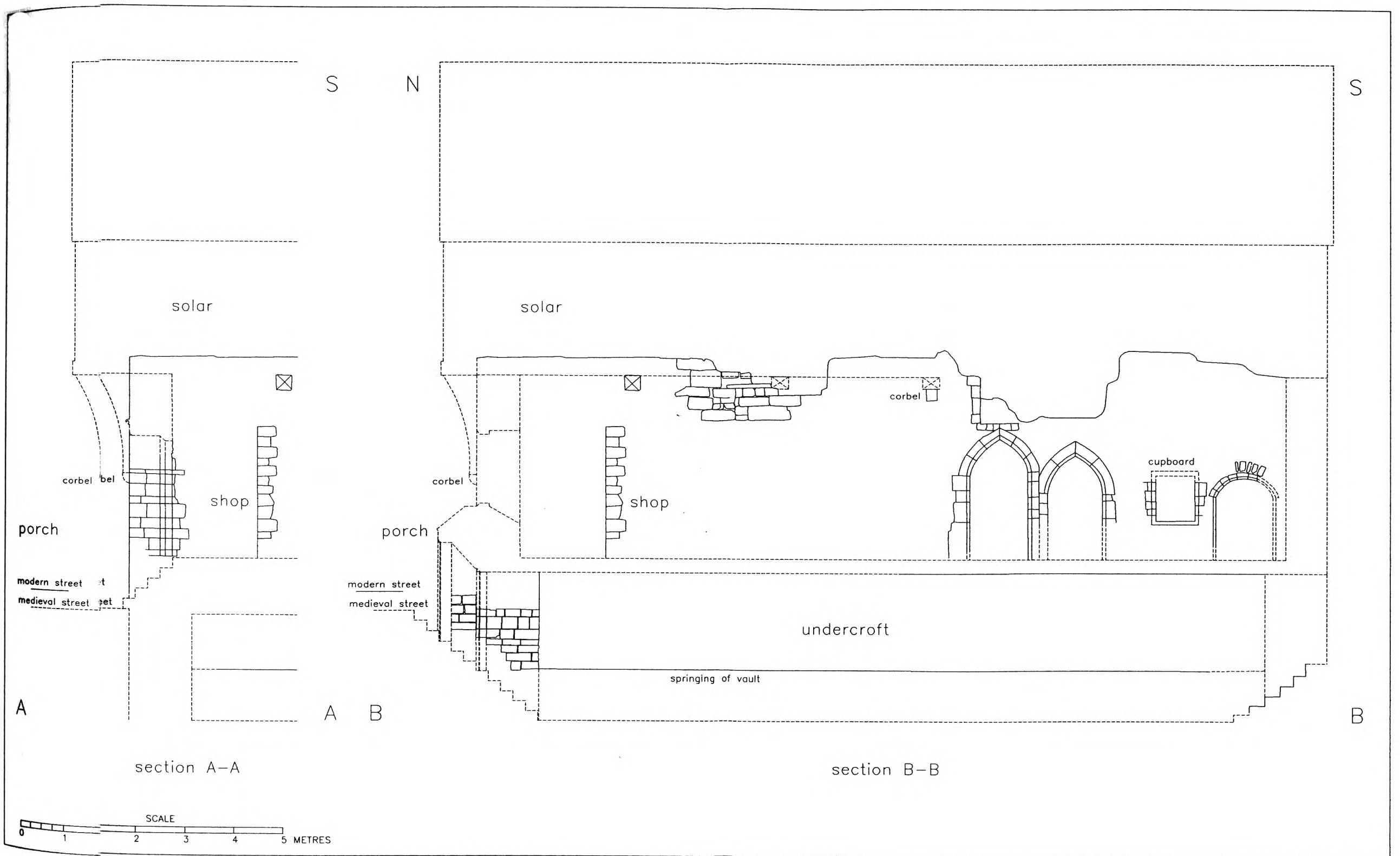


Fig. 93. The Woollen Hall, St Michael's Passage, Southampton. North-south cross sections: refer to plan in Fig. 95 for location.

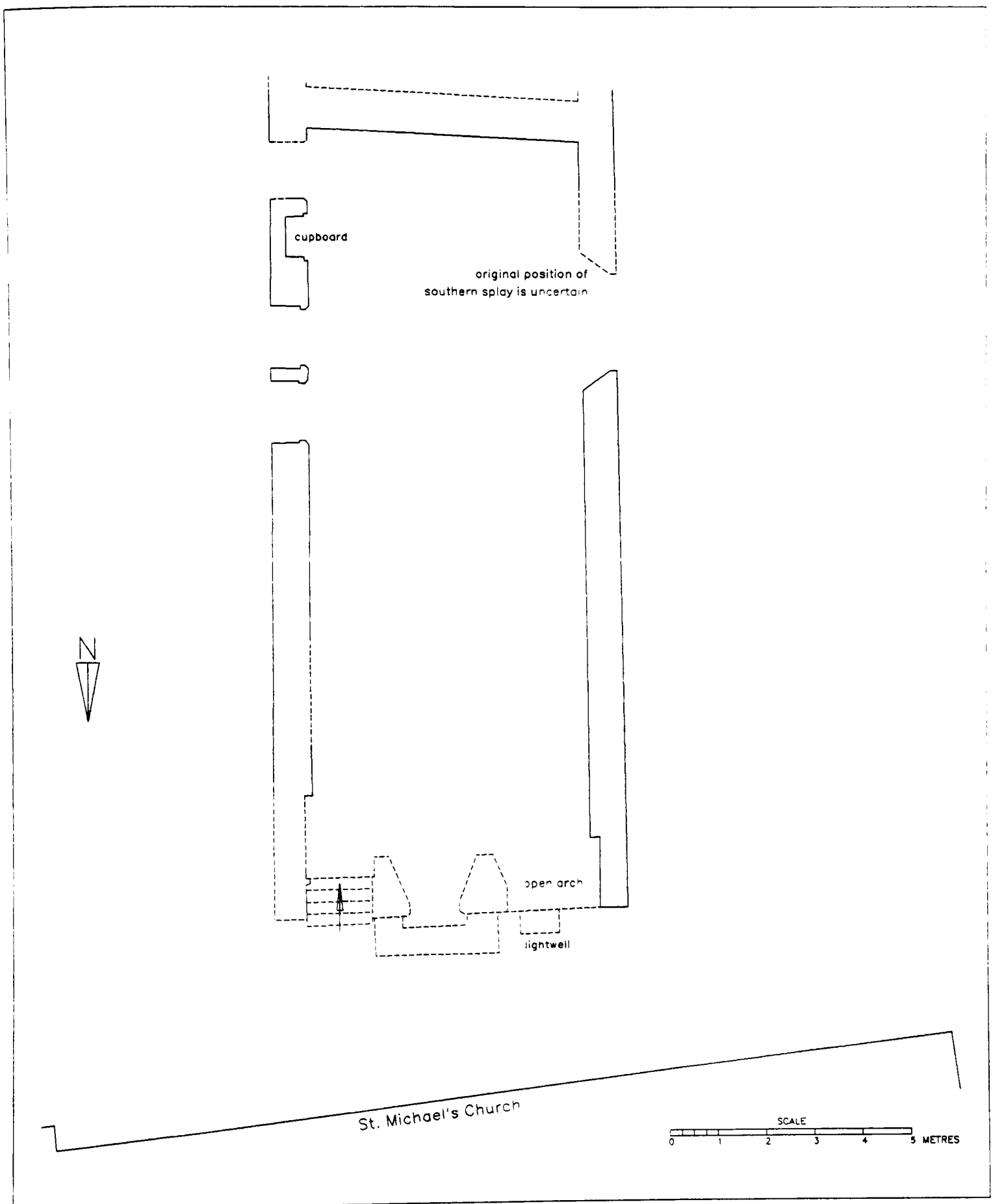


Fig. 94. The Woollen Hall, St Michael's Passage, Southampton. Plan of ground level combining evidence of the 1945 survey, and the 1906 drawings.

inside face of the porch-like projection recorded in 1906.

There is good evidence, then, to suppose that the 1906 sketch of the façade is reliable, and in this light it is interesting to note that, even allowing for the possibility of inaccurate perspective, the artist has shown

that the western arch of the arcade is wider, and taller, than its eastern counterpart: with the off-centre undercroft doorway nearer the east wall it is clear that the arch on this side was indeed narrower. The larger western arch was, as Faulkner noted, over an undercroft window, that had an internal splay on the eastern side only.¹ If the building over the undercroft was accessed from the street, it must have been via the eastern arch, which would, thus, simply have been a doorway.

The combination of information from the records of 1906, 1945, and 1989 permits a reconstruction of the frontage at undercroft and ground-level. In addition, the thinness of the ground-level stonework compared to the wall at a lower level and the corbels on the façade imply that the storey above was timber framed and jettied forward. Evidence for the internal arrangements, however, is more ambiguous. Unless hitherto unknown antiquarian evidence comes to light, it is impossible to be certain about the relative sequence and function of the three doorways recorded in the Ministry of Works elevation of the east wall. The southernmost has a segmental arch and may be original, whereas the pair of two-centred arches appear to date from the later thirteenth or fourteenth century: the straight joint between them indicates that they are not contemporary, but the order of construction is not clear. Likewise, the relationship between northernmost of these doorways and a blocked opening above is uncertain. The low level of the sill of this window or doorway is consistent with the low apex of the segmental arched doorway, and could suggest an original first-floor level that was c.1.5m lower than that shown by the ceiling beams which survived until 1945. The splayed opening or recess at the rear of the preserved west wall, however, reaches a height above both possible floor levels, and suggests that the rear part of the building was open to

¹ Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, p. 112.

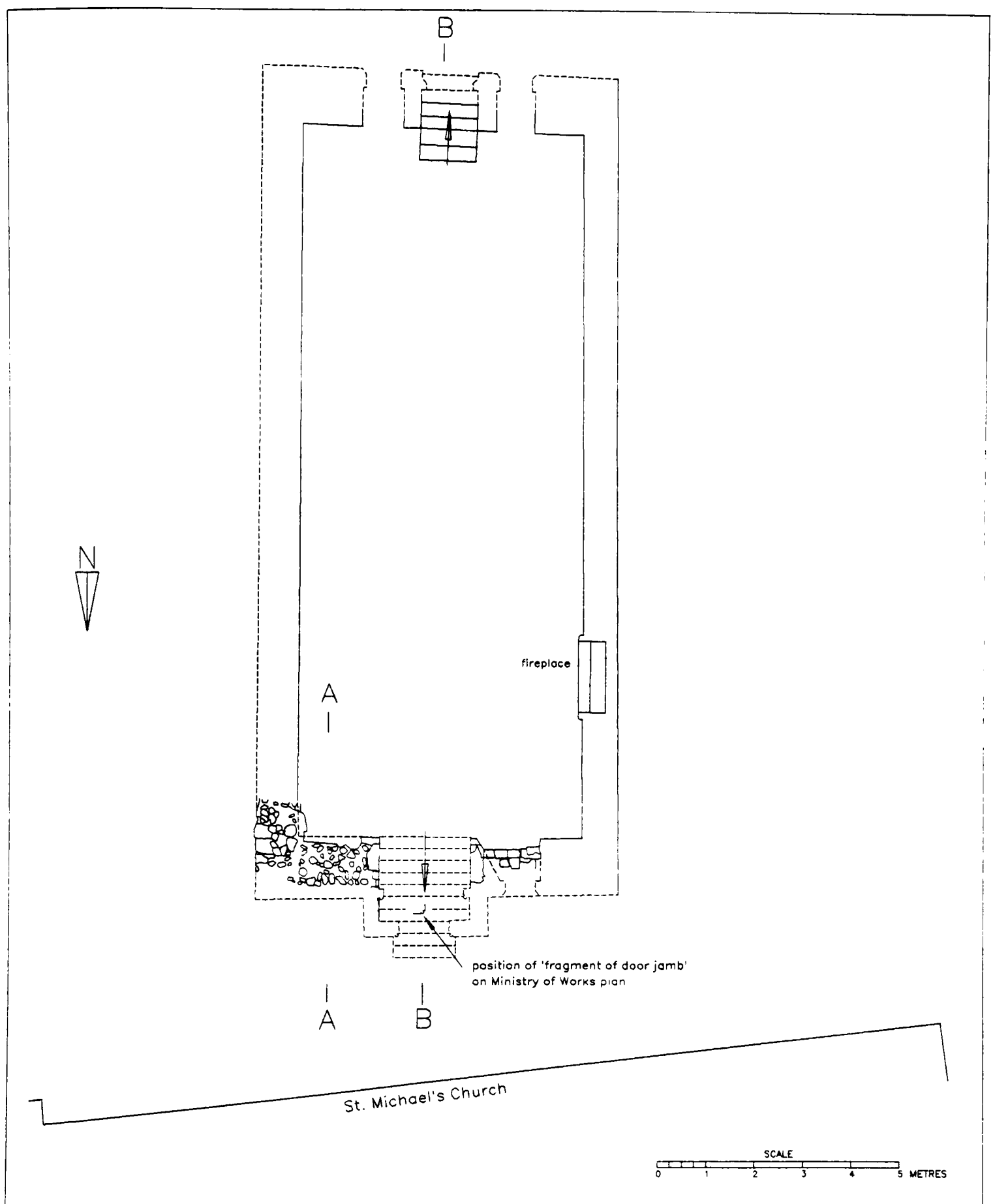


Fig. 95. The Woollen Hall, St Michael's Passage, Southampton. Plan of undercroft combining the evidence of the 1989 excavation, the 1945 survey, and the perspective sketch of 1906.

the first floor. A further confusion is offered by the location of the segmental arched doorway in the east wall which implies that the ground floor extended rearwards of the undercroft. This is not unusual in itself,

but is illogical in the context of an undercroft with a doorway and windows in the rear wall.

Whatever the ambiguities of the rear part of the ground floor, it would seem reasonable to assume that the storey above the façade arches extended back some distance, probably as far as the ceiling beam 9.3m from the street. On the basis of the usual form of the split-level townhouse, the area below the first-floor solar or chamber is likely to have been a shop. Faulkner argues that such a shop was set back behind a raised gallery implied by the open arcade.¹ Certainly, the continuity of the jambs of the two arches below the floor level of the ground storey suggests an arcade of the type seen at 48 Bridge Street, Chester.² In the case of the eastern arch, however, there is little to suggest a gallery: the continuation of the jambs to street level would be expected if the steps up to the ground floor were contained within the thickness of the front wall. Moreover, a rebate which is shown on the 1945 survey to be integral with the surrounding stonework of the eastern jamb of the arch was clearly intended for a door opening inwards, which is hardly compatible with an open arcade. Unfortunately, no trace of the western arch survived to be recorded by the Ministry of Works, so the drawings from 1906 provide the only evidence. No rebate is shown on the plan, but there is what appears to be an alteration to the western jamb in the form of a splay which may have removed evidence of a window. Taken in the context of the evidence for an original door in the eastern arch, the presence of a square-headed window in the centre of the façade that seems out of place if it opened onto a gallery rather than an interior space, and the lack of any sign of a transverse wall or shopfront set back from the frontage, it is most

¹ *Ibid.*

² See pp. 149-50.

reasonable to conclude that the western arch, while enclosing openings at two levels, did not open onto a gallery but directly into the front room or shop. However tempting it is to be able to identify galleried split-level townhouses, it seems that there is no example of such a development in England outside Chester: a point which must validate the arguments for the local factors in the development of the Rows.

Ground-level arcades

Compared to the continent, England is largely devoid of known medieval arcades, a fact that has had little bearing on the traditional identification of the Chester Rows as such an arcade raised up one storey. Even where there is indisputable evidence for the building of new towns to plans more usual in Europe the townhouses did not follow foreign design: at Edward I's *bastide* town of New Winchelsea, for example, there was no attempt to replicate the arcaded market squares (*places*) of its French counterparts. Instead, the town appears to have adopted the native split-level townhouse form which was undeniably more sophisticated in its commercial operation. It would be unwise, however, to claim that the lack of arcaded streets in medieval England was due solely to the proliferation of split-level townhouses, when the most effective use of the building type, the Chester Rows, itself ultimately created a system of arcaded streets, albeit haphazardly and at a raised level.

The traditional interpretation of the continental arcade has been for protection from the sun, but while no such function would have been necessary in England, the protection from more adverse weather would, one would think, have been equally, or more, desirable. The benefit of such protection from the elements was certainly recognised in medieval England outside the Chester Rows in the provision of monastic cloisters, the

numerous pentries in both ecclesiastical and vernacular contexts, and covered markets and selds. A difference in the organisation of the retail trade, and particularly markets, would appear to be a more logical suggestion for the failure to adopt arcades: evaluation of this hypothesis must await the much-needed architectural and historical analysis of the continental arcades.

There were, nonetheless, a few instances of arcaded building in England, although most occurrences appear to have been of late medieval date, well after the peak of split-level townhouse construction. The earliest of Chester's surviving ground-level arcades is north of the market place at the fifteenth-century 63-5 Northgate Street, whilst similar or later dates can be ascribed to the Butterwalks in Totnes and the arcade in Kendal. In fact, the oversailed arcade in Winchester known as the Pentry is the only ground-level arcade in England containing buildings from the period of split-level townhouse construction. Moreover, the surviving medieval documentation for this area of the city evidences the early origins of the site and the subsequent tenement arrangements and has been examined in detail by Biddle¹ and Keene.² Extending 73.25m east from the Buttercross on the south side of the High Street, the Pentry was clearly built in the commercial centre of the city and, despite its known incorporation of only one truly split-level building, its use of a ground-level gallery or arcade is so rare and pertinent to the discussion of galleried townhouses that detailed consideration is merited.

Briefly summarising Biddle and Keene's explanation of the early evolution of the site, encroachment occurred, possibly as early as the late tenth century, on the north side of New Minster wall and comprised the twelve

¹ *WS 1*, pp. 396-419.

² *WS 2*, pp. 555-79.

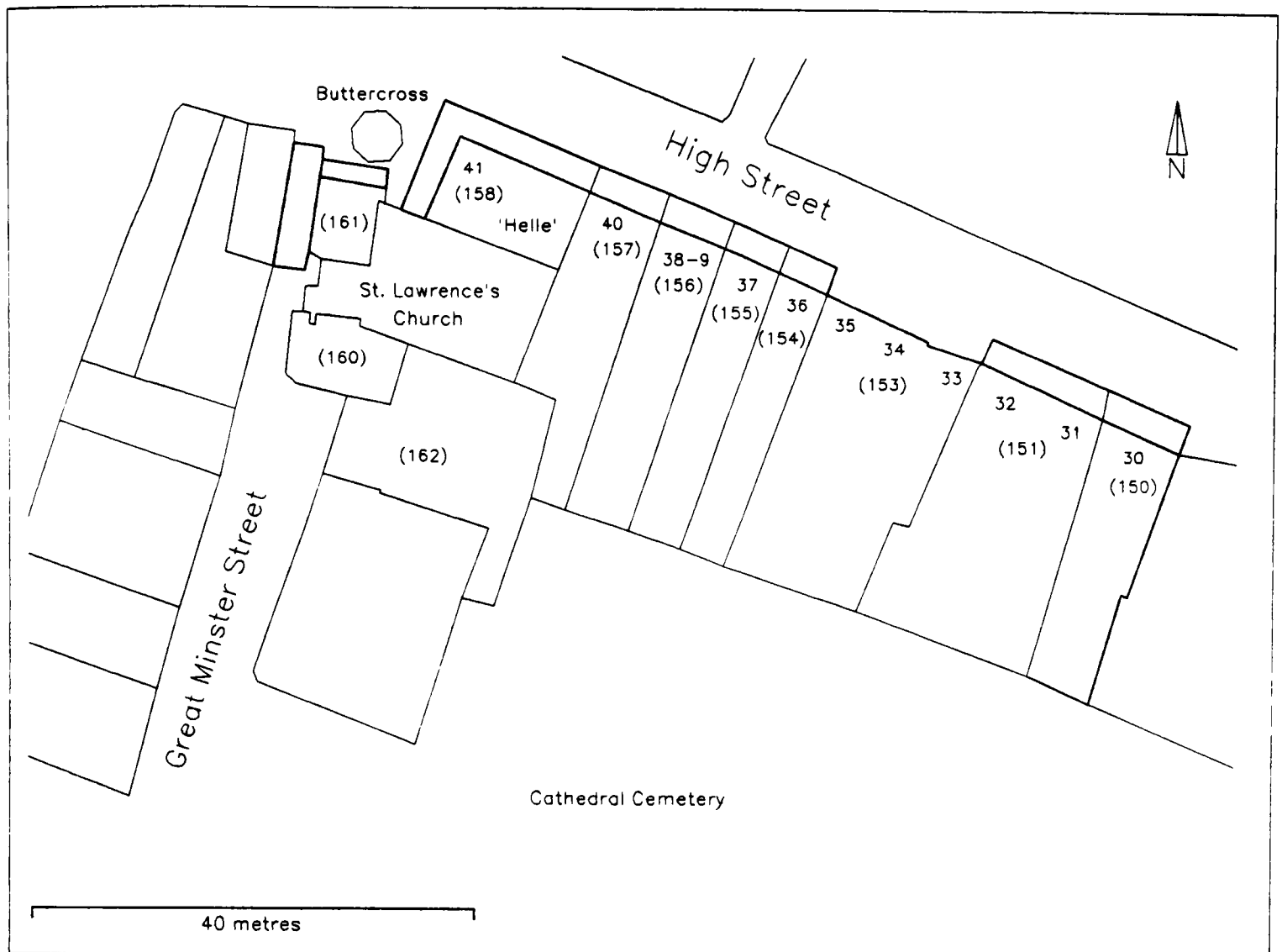


Fig. 96. The Pentice, Winchester, in its mid fourteenth-century form. The numbers in brackets are those used by Keene and those without brackets are modern street numbers.

tenements and five moneyers' workshops which were demolished shortly after 1066.¹ This land was incorporated into William the Conqueror's enlarged royal palace site,² but either during the early twelfth-century underuse of the royal palace or after its destruction in the siege of 1141³ moneyers moved back into the area they had occupied previously.⁴ Amalgamation into a single mint may have occurred over the next few decades⁵ and certainly by the time of the construction of a new mint

¹ *WS 1*, p. 398.

² *WS 2*, p. 573.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 575.

⁴ *WS 1*, p. 419.

⁵ *WS 2*, p. 576.

following a fire in July 1180.¹ Output dropped in the early thirteenth century and probably ceased in 1217-18,² shortly after which the Drapery moved onto the site. This must have been away from the street frontage since in 1242 there was an attempt to expel the tenants and move them back to the High Street.³ Such an arrangement may be explained by a lane, closed in 1248, that ran east-west in the Drapery, probably along the north wall of the church of St Lawrence.⁴ In the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the shops and tenements were described as being within the Drapery or Drapery Row, with the same properties first being said to lie beneath the Pentice in 1334,⁵ after which this gradually became the norm.

In reconciling this documentary evidence with the surviving arrangement of the Pentice, Keene makes several assumptions or hypotheses which necessitate a complex and ultimately implausible interpretation of these events. He objects to the idea of the Pentice being a piecemeal encroachment of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries on the grounds that the narrowness of the High Street would have disallowed it, and, instead, sees it as part of the developments of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The explanation given for the existence of the arcade is that the civic intervention in the Drapery in 1242 implies public regulation, in turn suggesting a public market-building, which could have been open-sided with an arcade along the street. The transformation of this public-building into separate tenements and shops would have been caused by 'successive repairs and rebuildings'.⁶

¹ *WS* 1, p. 419; *WS* 2, p. 576.

² *Ibid.*, p. 577.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 556.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 579.

Without even considering the architectural evidence in detail, there is a weakness with the starting point of such a hypothesis. It is unreasonable to assume that the narrowness of the High Street in this area, resulting from the earlier medieval developments, precluded further encroachment around 1300. Even disallowing the possibility that the northern side of the High Street has encroached since the early fourteenth century, the street is c.10.5m wide including, and c.8m wide excluding, the covered walkway or pentice. This compares favourably with the beginning of Watergate Street in Chester, next to the High Cross in the absolute centre of the city, where known encroachments at this period narrowed the street from c.7.5m to c.5m. Less precisely measurable but similarly scaled encroachments also took place in London in the late thirteenth century at the converging streets of Bucklersbury and Poultry where they meet Cheapside.¹ Thus, it is wholly feasible that an encroachment could have taken place in this area of Winchester at this date, and its form of a pentice may simply reflect that, as this was indeed narrower than most of the High Street, it would have been more desirable to maximise the width of the street available to pedestrians by advancing the buildings only at first-floor level. The surviving buildings in the Pentice, and the tenement histories carefully compiled by Keene, do not only allow for such an origin of the structure, but also disprove the arcaded public-market theory.

Of the buildings of manifestly irregular and unplanned width that form the Pentice today, that containing the earliest fabric is 35 High Street. At first-floor level two bays of timber frame survive, together 5.25m wide by 7.20m deep, with an intact crown-post roof on an east-west axis, parallel to the High Street. This parallel roof does not oversail the walkway, but, instead, has its eaves running along the line of the shop front below (the

¹ Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, Map II.

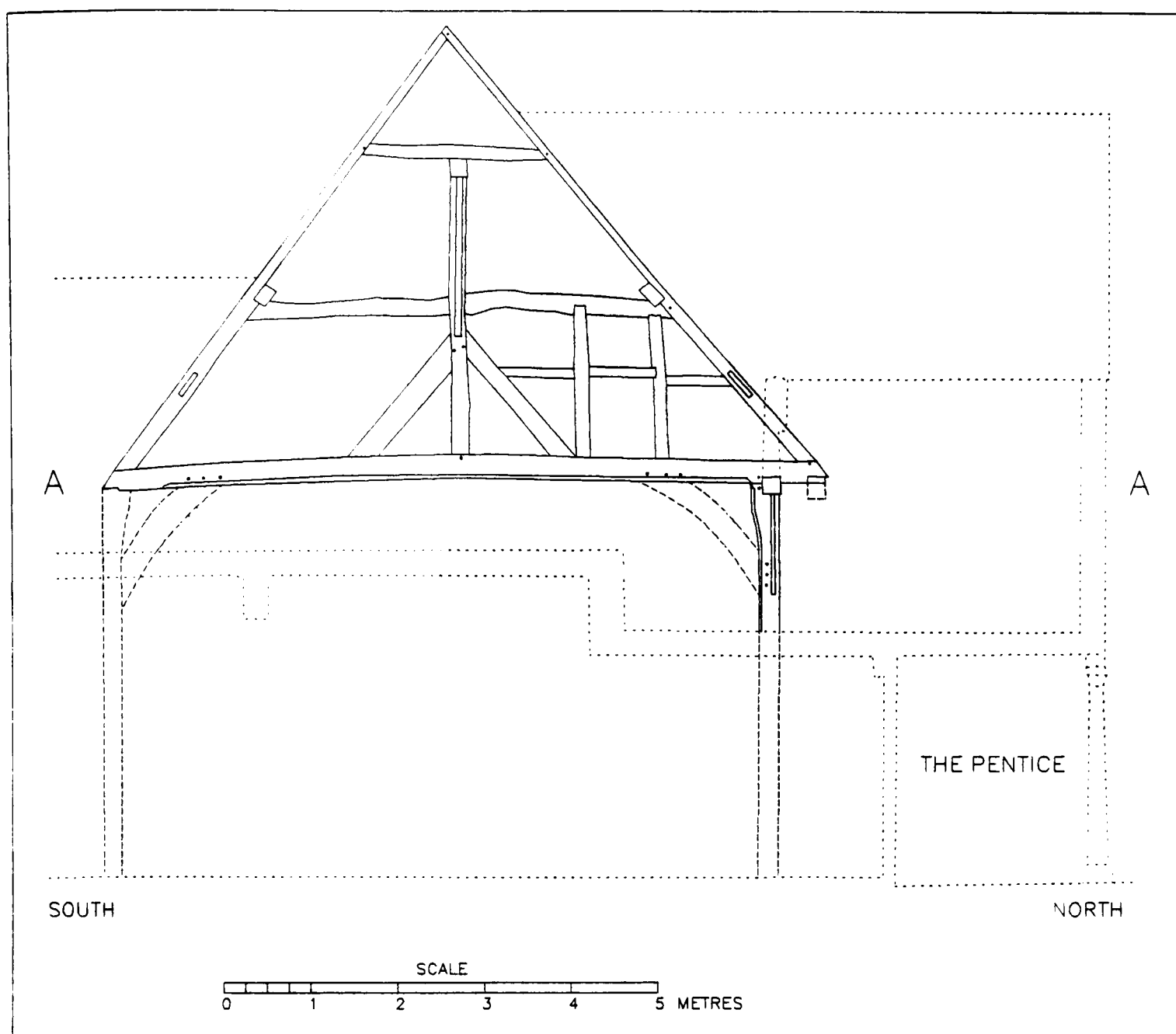


Fig. 97. 35 High Street, Winchester. Section and elevation of central truss, looking west. The later fabric is shown in dotted line.

gable-roofed chamber currently over the walkway is an addition of the fifteenth or sixteenth century). Along this eaves it is clear that there were formerly two parallel wall plates. The inner one survives largely complete with the carved chamfer of a former window, later mostly destroyed when access was required to the added chamber, whilst the front plate is evidenced by a dovetail in the end of the tiebeam which projects c.500mm beyond the inner plate. This then is an example of the common arrangement found in houses with recessed halls, such as Wealden houses, and means that at least one end of this structure must have been flanked by a first-floor jetty on the line of the front, or flying, wall plate. Thus,

not only was there clearly no oversailed walkway along the length of these two parallel bays, but this was also the case in at least one further bay.

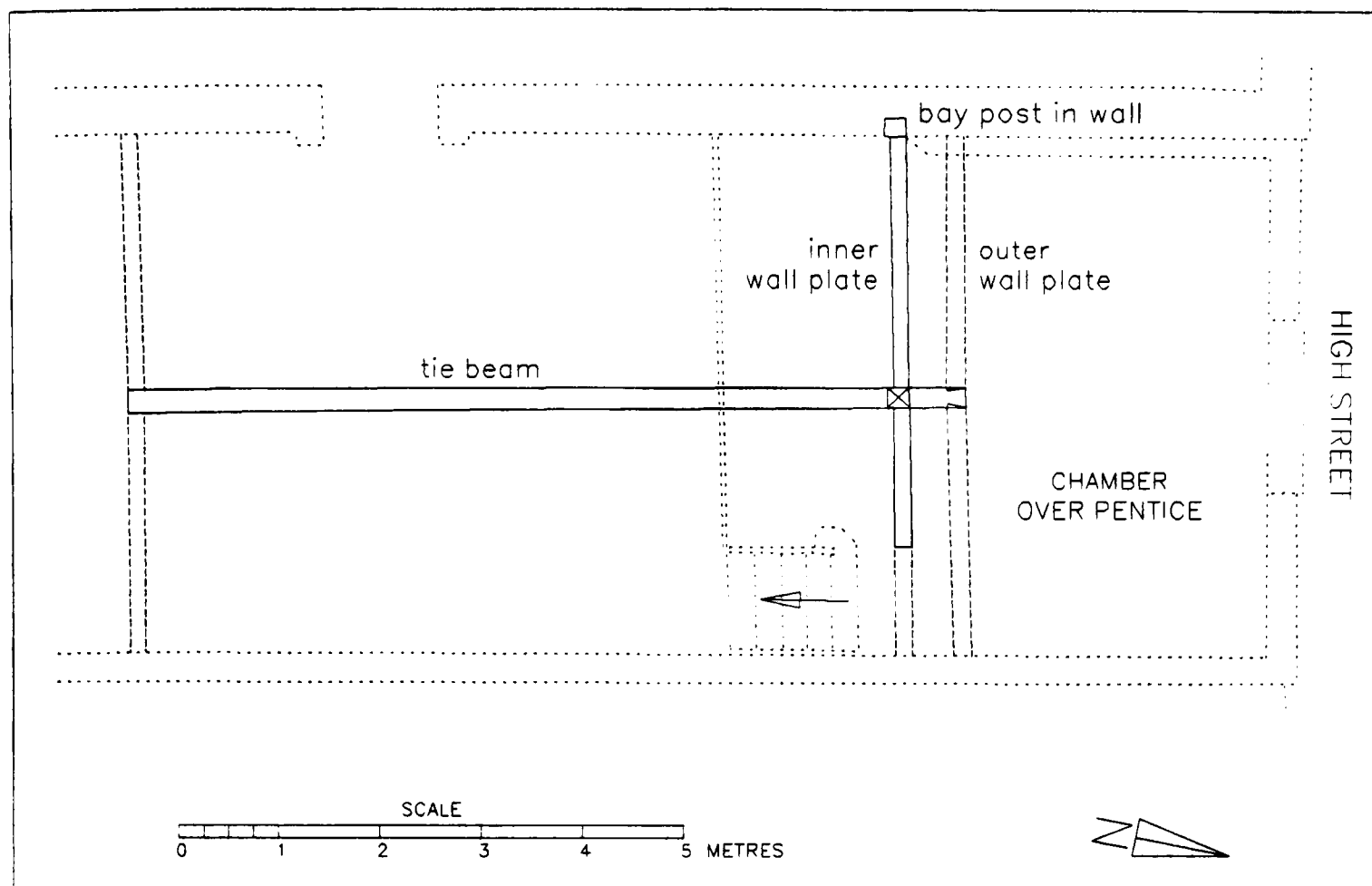


Fig. 98. 35 High Street, Winchester. Plan at first floor level showing location of medieval roof truss and wall plates. Later fabric is in dotted line.

In the absence of enough annual growth-rings in the timbers of this building to permit dendrochronological analysis, dating must be on stylistic evidence of the unusual roof type combining a tall crown post with a second, lower, collar tenoned into diminished principal rafters that, in turn, clasp wind-braced side purlins. Previously published comparisons with similar composite roofs in York implied a 1320-96 date range,¹ and a further example at Marlipins in Shoreham, Sussex, is from c.1300,² and, thus, a fourteenth-century date seems extremely likely. Keene, recognising that the structure must have extended at least in one direction, proposes

¹ E. Lewis, E. Roberts and K. Roberts, *Medieval Hall Houses of the Winchester Area* (Winchester, 1988), p. 61.

² The pair of struts to the purlins, however, may well be a later alteration and certainly are not pegged at the junction with the tiebeam.

a later fifteenth or sixteenth-century date since at this period the adjacent property to the west was in the same ownership.¹ The two-bay structure, however, occupies the western end of what was formerly the largest property in the Pentice, having a frontage of c.15.25m. Known in documentary evidence from the 1330s onwards as a single property, it had been subdivided into three tenements and two shops by 1417,² and thus it is almost certain that the two fourteenth-century bays surviving formed part of this grander structure which extended to the east. In its fourteenth-century state as a single tenement there is only reference to one shop in the Drapery, and, significantly in view of the lack of oversailing, no mention of the Pentice.

The fact that a fourteenth-century property in the centre of the Pentice manifestly did not oversail the walkway for at least half, if not all, of its c.15.25m frontage clearly contradicts the assumption that the Pentice was a continuous walkway running beneath gabled chambers at this date, and likewise the theory that its origins lay in an arcaded front of a public market-building. Indeed, with the only other buildings having such early chambers, at 33 and 34 High Street, being of similar fifteenth or sixteenth-century date as that at No. 35, and no other earlier above ground structural evidence being known, one has to look elsewhere to demonstrate that there was a covered walkway at all before the late Middle Ages. The documentary sources, however, leave little doubt that the arrangement by the second half of the fourteenth century was broadly as it is today, with sporadic and decreasing breaks in the continuity, such as that demonstrated at 35 High Street. For example, in 1334 the substantial property of 31 and 32 High Street included a vacant plot under the Pentice (*sub*

¹ *WS* 2, p. 561.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 557-8.

penticio),¹ by 1365 No. 38 had a shop *in rengia Draperie subtus le Pentis*,² and by 1366 No. 37 similarly had a shop *subtus la Pentic' in rengia Draperie*.³

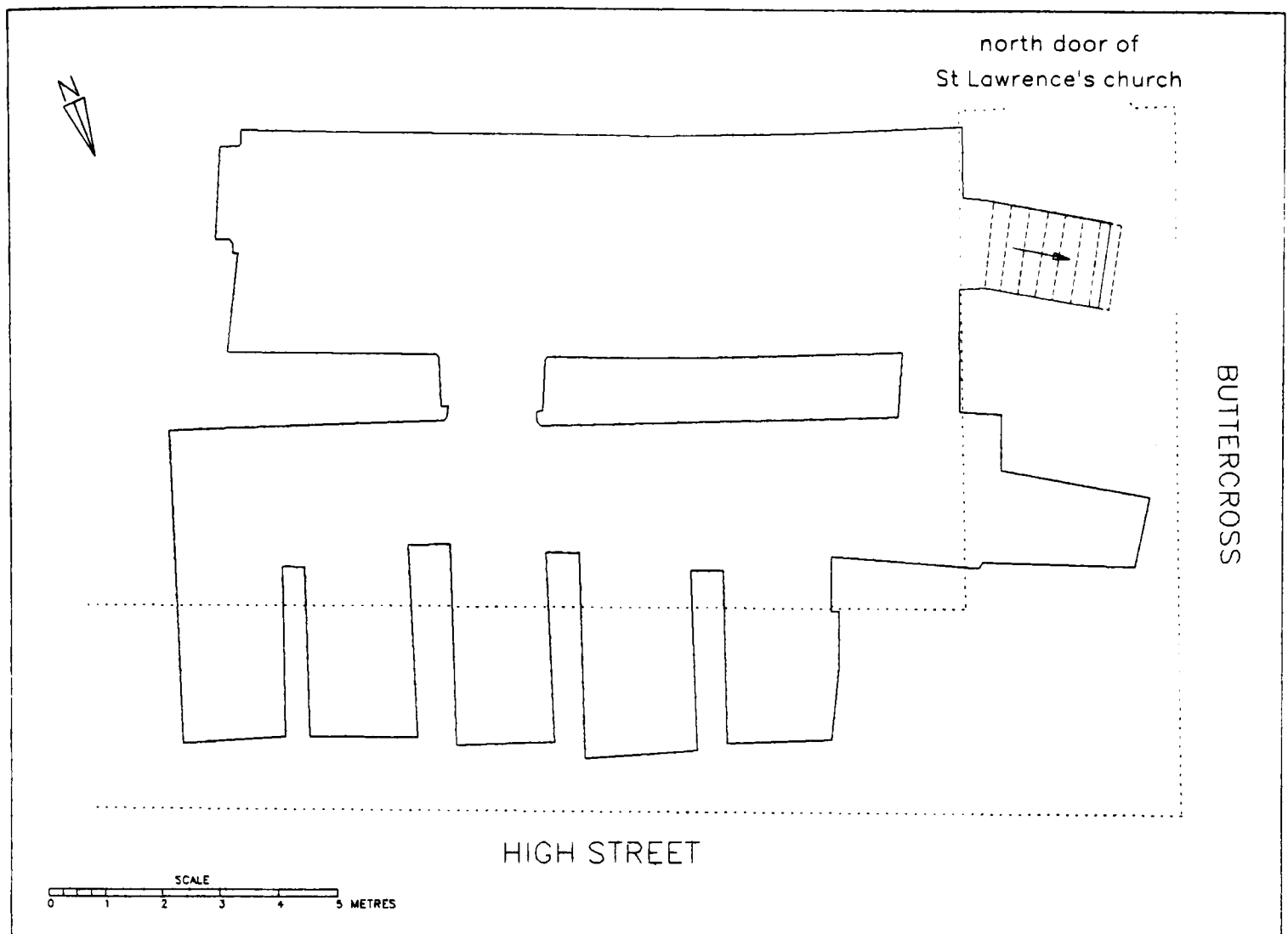


Fig. 99. 41 High Street, Winchester. Plan showing the medieval undercroft known as *Helle*. The position of the Pentice above is shown in dotted line.

Compounding the documentary evidence is the survival of the one undercroft known to have existed in the Pentice. Although the corner property next to the Buttercross, known as early as 1309 as *Helle* and now as 41 High Street, was described in 1286 as adjoining the Drapery at its west end,⁴ it appears that the building conformed to the ground-level structural arrangement of the Pentice, as it does today, and thus formed

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 556.

² *Ibid.*, p. 562.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 561.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 563.

part of the evolving covered walkway. The undercroft consists of several elements of which the front part only is of relevance here. Five, and possibly originally six, small chambers, c.1.6m wide and c.2.5m deep, extend under the walkway of the Pentice, and, although the undercroft can only be tentatively dated to the fourteenth century, this provides structural evidence for a Pentice building 'undersailing' as well as oversailing the walkway. Such an arrangement has the same components as a Chester Row building, albeit sunk deeper into the ground, but the comparison cannot be extended too far as these small chambers do not equate with the large undercrofts (with streetfront doorways) directly below the walkway in Chester. The absence of medieval undercrofts in the rest of the Pentice is something of a mystery, and can hardly be due to a lack of commercial pressure in view of the centrality of the site; Graham Scobie has postulated a high water table in this area,¹ but the excavation of a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century undercroft at the rear of 30 High Street (site SQ88, 31a-b The Square),² the easternmost and lowest property in the Pentice, would appear to rule this out as a decisive factor.

An interesting footnote to the analysis of the Pentice is provided by the timber-framed house almost adjacent to the west of it, set back at the rear of the Buttercross. Known by 1380 as *le Taverne de Paradys simul cum shopis et cameris superedificatis*,³ the surviving structure appears to be of a comparable mid to late fourteenth-century date, and comprises a stone cellar, with shops and tenement above. The first floor oversails c.2m and the building thus appears identical to those forming the nearby Pentice.

¹ Pers. comm. Graham Scobie, Winchester Museums Services.

² See pp. 409-10.

³ *WS* 2, p. 567.

'Paradise', then, provides yet further confirmation that the origins of the Pentice lie not in the survival of an earlier arcaded frontage but in similar and eventually conjoining encroachments. Far from being a designed colonnade, either derived from a public-market or from a scheme in its own right, the Pentice evolved in a manner similar to the Chester Rows, although having less obvious commercial benefits its *raison d'être* must necessarily remain more obscure.

Continental arcades and galleries

It has been mentioned above that in his discussion of the origins of the Chester Rows, Smith argues that the Rows are part of the same general development of town design which gave rise to the arcades (*cornières*) of the market squares (*places*) of the planned new towns (*bastides*) in southwest France.¹ Smith's sense of the appropriateness of such a comparison was doubtless coloured by his theory of the Rows being the result of town planning following the 1278 fire. Furthermore, the theory found a neat link in Edward I: at the same time at which Edward was using Chester as a base for his Welsh campaigns he was also establishing himself as a major *bastidor* in Gascony. That this was an activity equally applicable at home is shown by the number of new towns in England and Wales created during Edward's reign.² As the *bastides* range in foundation dates from 1141 (Montauban, Tarn-et-Garonne) to 1373 (Labastide d'Anjou, Aude) and are concentrated in the 1260s to 1290s (Fig. 100), the parallel remains chronologically acceptable, even though Smith's theory of a post-1278 replanning of Chester is no longer tenable. Moreover, the plotting of all known *bastides* that have either a surviving arcaded *place* or are

¹ Lawson and Smith, *The Rows*, pp. 37-41.

² Beresford cites fourteen in England and twenty-nine in Wales in his gazetteer: Beresford, *New Towns*, pp. 386-574.

recorded as having such shows that the distribution was even across the whole area of *bastide* construction and was as popular in Edward's foundations as it was in those of the French kings, Alphonse de Poitiers, and the seigneurial founders (Fig. 101). That this even distribution reflects an almost total dominance of the arcade is indicated by the fact that although only 17% of the *bastides* have intact arcades, they are found in 74% of those towns with surviving buildings of sixteenth-century date or earlier.

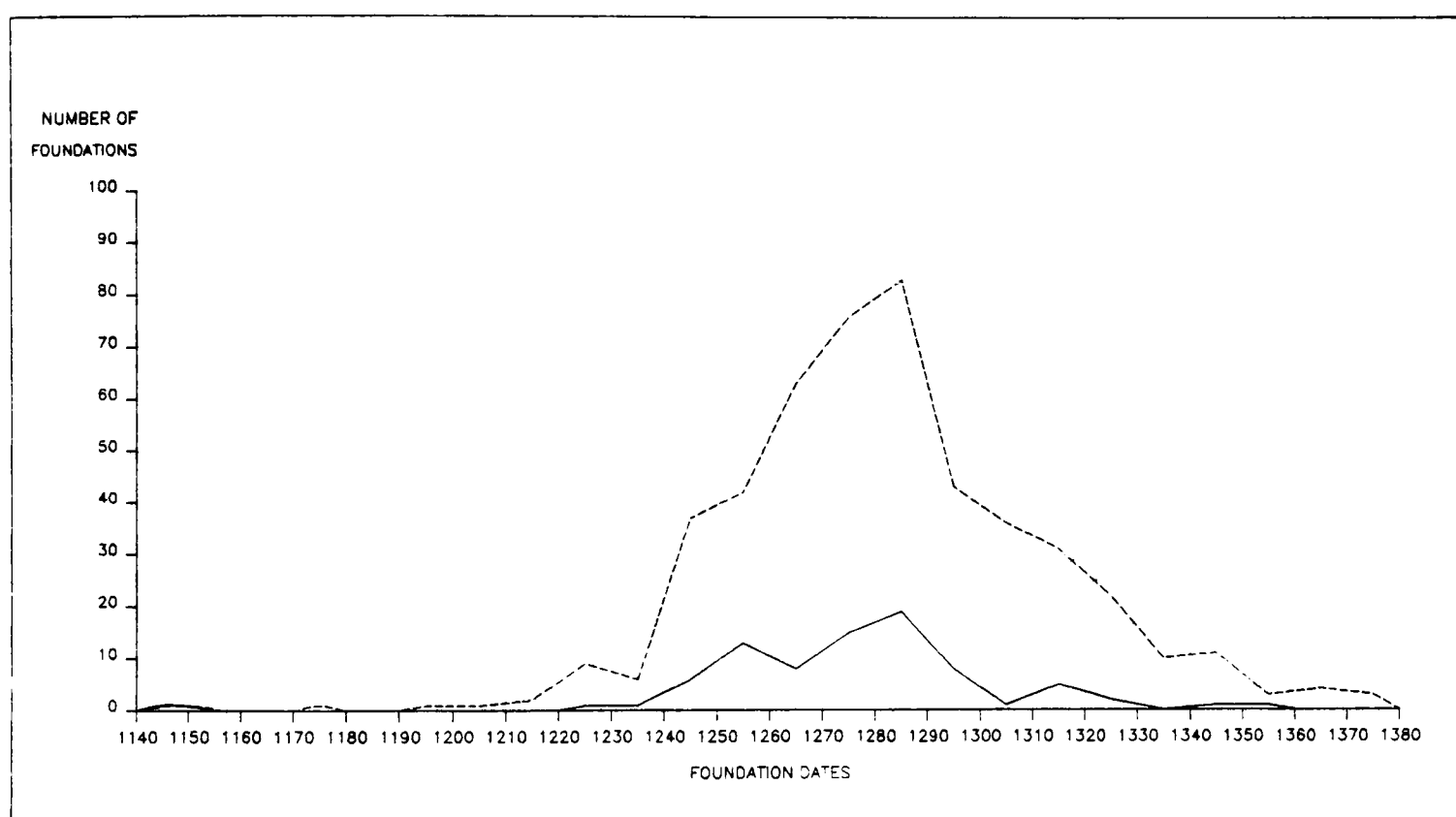


Fig. 100. Graph showing chronological distribution of foundations of *bastides*. The dashed line represents all *bastides*, and the solid line those with surviving arcades.

Two pieces of evidence, however, reveal that despite its evident universality in the *bastides* the *cornière* almost certainly had no influence in the design of English medieval townhouses or even in the overall form of the Chester Rows. Firstly, the gradual emergence of the Winchester Pentice remains the only known occurrence of arcading at ground level in England or Wales within the period of the establishment of the Chester Rows, despite the more favourable conditions presented by the creation of

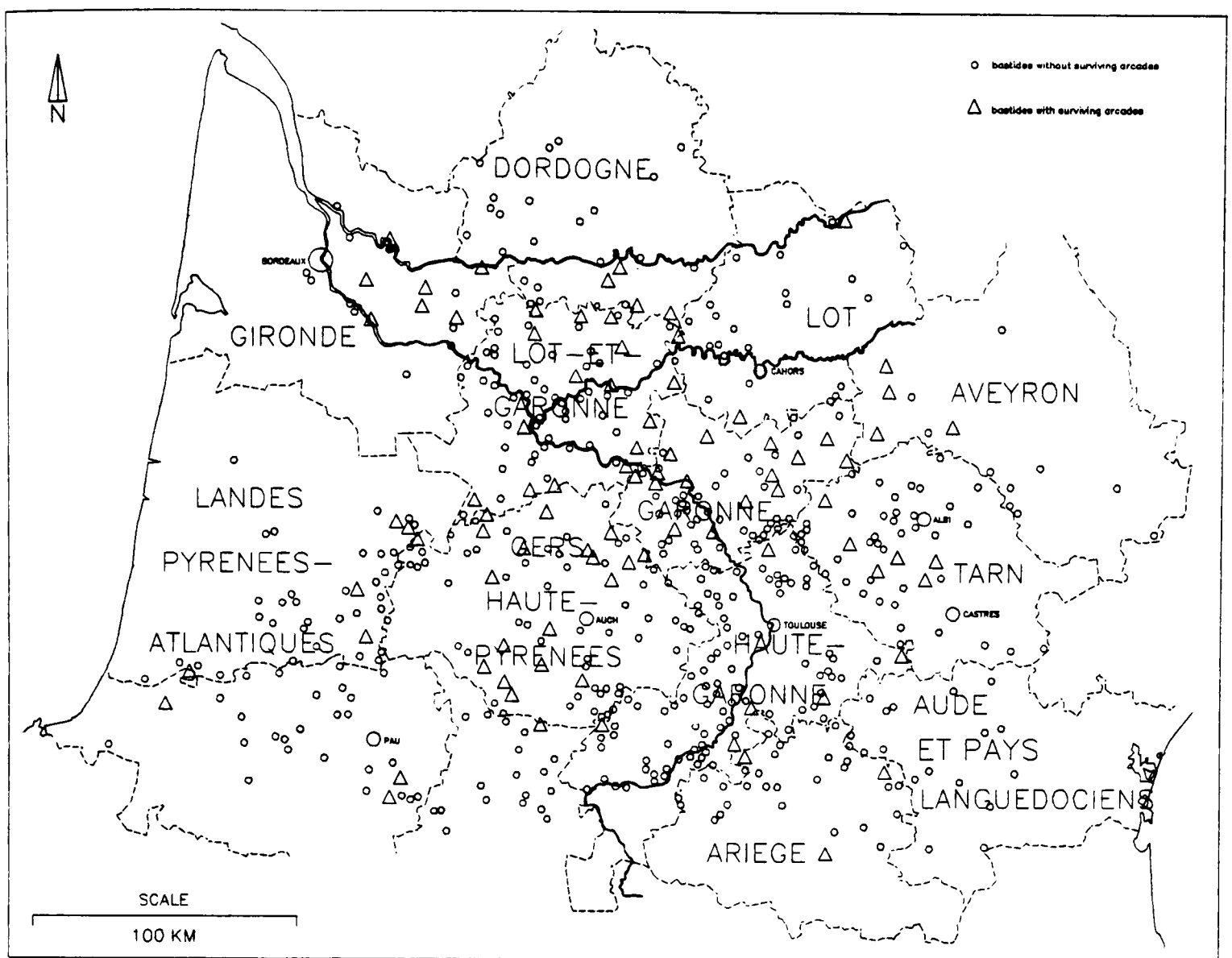


Fig. 101. Map of southwest France showing the location of all *bastides* and those with surviving arcades.

new towns. That this failure to adopt the continental *cornière* occurred in towns otherwise of near-identical form to *bastides* is best illustrated by New Winchelsea, planted by Edward in 1288. Here the gridded and walled plan of the hilltop town, built to deal with the import of wine from Gascony, is the closest parallel in England or Wales to the layout of towns like Monpazier. In addition to the street plan, the 1292 rent roll and standing buildings of c.1300 also survive. The documentary evidence makes no mention of an arcaded market place, and a whole quarter is not given over to the market.¹ More significantly, the architectural evidence consists of stone-vaulted undercrofts sunk well below the late thirteenth-century

¹ Beresford, *New Towns*, pp. 14-28.

ground level and indicates that the split-level townhouse was the norm.¹ New Winchelsea thus had an overall plan similar to its Gascon counterparts, but with its individual building plots occupied by townhouses of a quite different form.

The second reason for concluding that the *bastides* could have had little influence on the Chester Rows, or indeed the English townhouse of this period, is that the French houses were considerably less sophisticated. The *cornières* of the market squares provided protection for stalls which would have been equally useful in the wetter English climate, but otherwise the houses of the *bastides* show little or no development from the ground-level Romanesque house. That is, they almost exclusively continued with a design which allowed retailing on one level only, and which had already been superseded in England. Typically having a single ground-level shop, or undercroft, opening off the rear of the *cornière* with an adjacent doorway providing access to a single domestic storey above, the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century houses are similar to the simplest of Romanesque antecedents, albeit with the variation of rooms over the deep arcades. It is interesting to note that where a *bastide* has never had *cornières* the same form is maintained. The lavish thirteenth- and fourteenth-century townhouses at Cordes, for example, are a development from their twelfth-century antecedents at Cluny only in term of architectural style and scale.

There survive two possible exceptions to the ground-level house type, but the adoption of elements of the split-level arrangement at these *bastides* seems purely coincidental: they are both in the county of Aveyron, and well east of English rule or influence. At Sauveterre-de-Rouergue (founded 1281) Lauret *et al.* have identified cellars beneath the thirteenth-

¹ See pp. 388-407.



Fig. 102. Monpazier. West side of the market square.



Fig. 103. Castelsagrat. View north along arcade on west side of market square.

century arcades, which remain at ground-level.¹ More like true split-level construction are the houses forming the Arcades Reyniés on the north side of the *place* in Villefranche-de-Rouergue (founded in 1256). This side of the square forms an elevated arcade, while on the west side the Arcades Alphonse de Poitiers slope from ground level at the southern end up to this higher level. The standing buildings date from at least the fifteenth century, and the arrangement may be original.

The Zähringen towns

Although there is no obvious historic connection between England and the urban foundations of the dukes of Zähringen,² it is these, now mostly Swiss, towns which have surviving or recorded systems most similar to the Chester Rows. Bern, Burgdorf (Berthoud), Fribourg-en-Nuithonie, Thun, and Zürich have, or are recorded as having, raised walkways, while other Zähringen towns, such as Freiburg-im-Breisgau and Murten (Morat), only have arcades at ground level. Most of the buildings forming the raised Row-like systems are ostensibly of seventeenth-century or later date, but there is little doubt that they perpetuate arrangements dating from as early as the mid thirteenth century. The charters of Fribourg-en-Nuithonie, Thun, and Burgdorf respectively date from 1249, 1264, and 1273, and all gave the burghers the right to build stone arches in front of their houses and to build over them. The 1218 charter of Bern makes no mention of arcades, but the Chronicle of Justinger states that after the fire of 1286 the town was rebuilt with arcades; it is not clear whether they were widespread before.³

¹ A. Lauret, R. Malebranche, and G. Séraphin, *Bastides: villes nouvelles du Moyen-Age* (Toulouse, 1988), p. 299.

² For discussion of the seemingly anachronistic Savoyard connection, see p. 281.

³ F. Divorine, *Berne et les Villes Fondées par les Ducs de Zähringen au XII^e Siècle* (Brussels, 1991), p. 109.

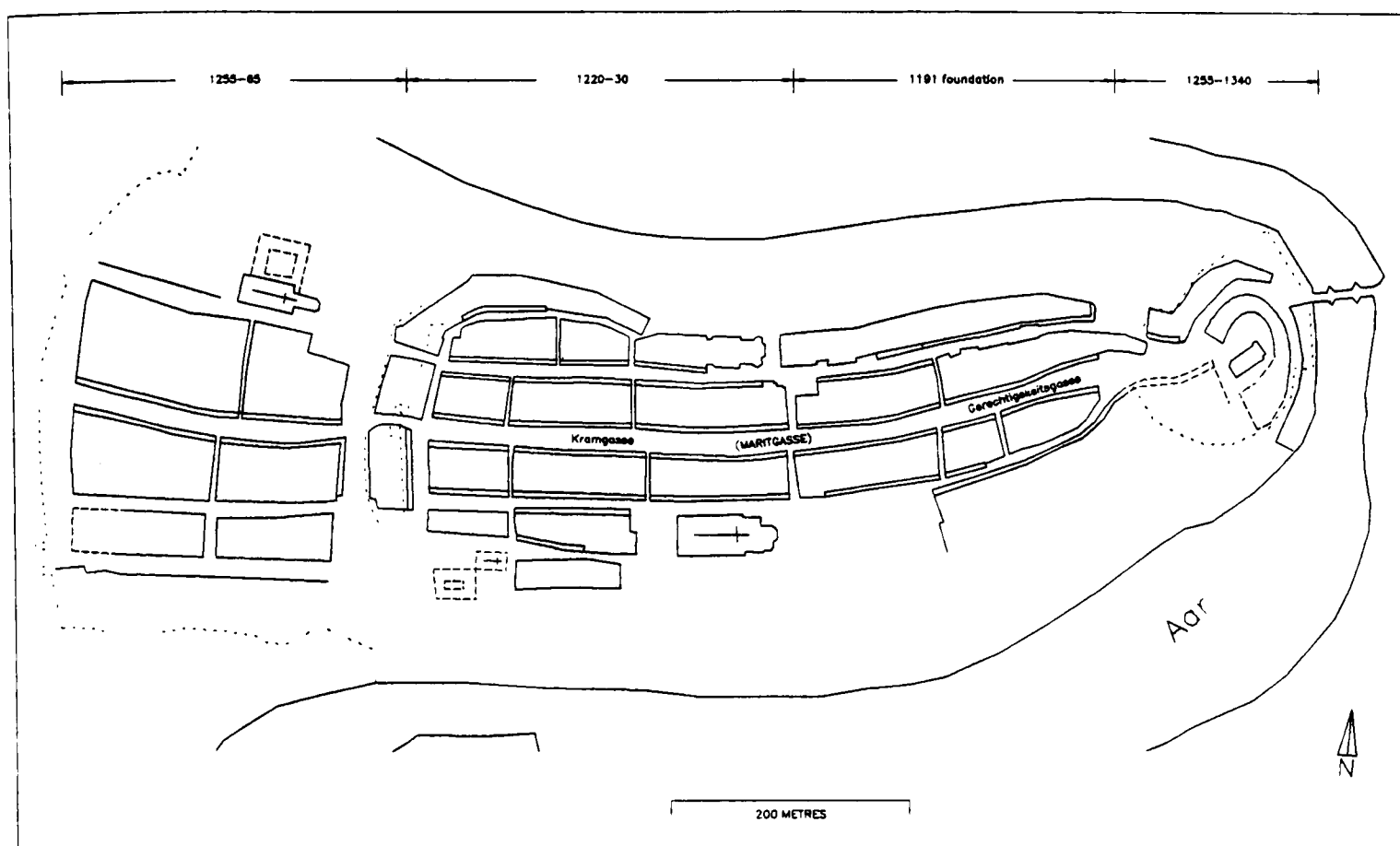


Fig. 104. Bern. Map showing the town c.1300 and the current extent of the arcades within the area. The dotted lines mark the location of known town defences.

At Bern the area of arcaded streets is extensive and includes the streets of the initial foundation of 1191 and the progressive westwards extension of the town which was built between 1220 and 1370. The greatest concentration, however, is within the initial foundation and the first extension (1220-30). In all parts of the town there are buildings without arcades amongst the long arcaded street frontages and the fact that the façades of most of these correspond with the rear of the walkways indicates that the latter were an encroachment (Fig. 104). The arcades are raised only slightly above street level, except for the area of the *Hochtrotoirs* at the east end of the Gerichtsgasse (Fig. 107),¹ but are throughout high enough to allow for separate street entrances to undercrofts. On those few occasions where there is a break in the arcades the street frontage is recessed to the rear of the walkway. This supports

¹ Divorne has argued that the *Hochtrotoirs* are set so high as a result of smoothing of the slope at the east end of the Gerichtsgasse in the sixteenth century; *ibid.*, pp. 116 and 119.

Divorne's hypothesis, based on the main undercrofts extending to the rear of the walkway, that the arcades were created by encroachment.¹

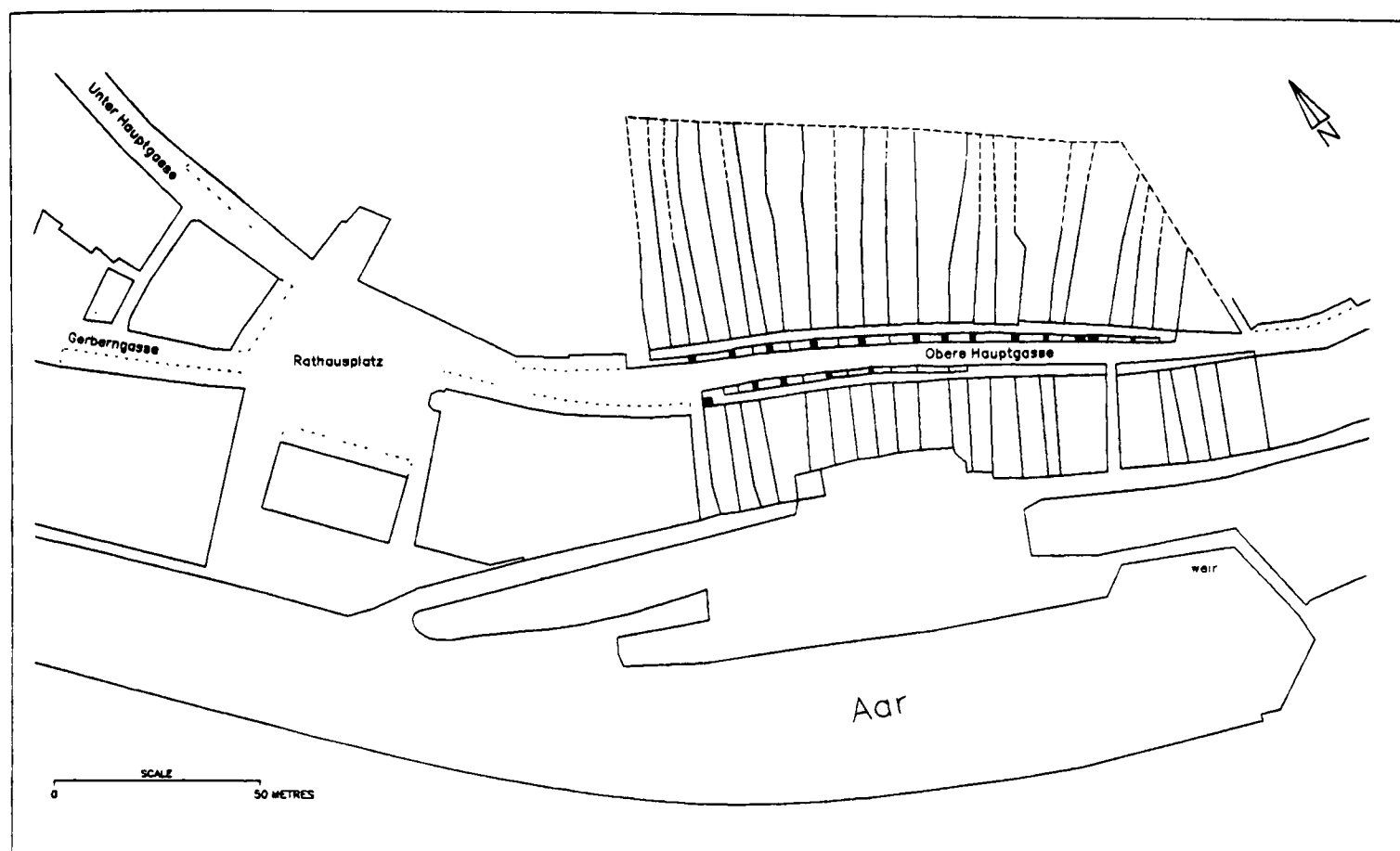


Fig. 105. Thun. Map of the town centre in its modern form, showing the extent of the raised walkways along Obere Hauptgasse. The ground-level arcades within the western extension of 1218 are shown in a dotted line.

At Fribourg-en-Nuithonie the charter, or Handefeste, of 1249 seems to have little effect since only the rue des Bouchers and the lower end of the Grand-Rue have arcades: it is the latter which is elevated. The limited extent seems original since here also the arcaded areas encroach into the streets. Moreover, references to arcades in documentary sources are limited and seem to refer to unusual buildings. Hence 32 Grand-Rue is described as '*under den Swibogen*' in 1445 and 1556, and '*subtus voltas*' in 1460.²

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.

² P. de Zurich, 'Les Origines de Fribourg et le quartier du Bourg aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles', *Société d'Histoire de la Suisse Romande*, 2nd series, 12 (1924), p. 125.

The comparison between the Chester Rows and Thun was made as early as the nineteenth century,¹ but the 'Rows' in Thun include only one building which oversails the walkway,² despite the authorization of arcades in the charter of 1264. Since the elevated walkways are confined to the length of the Obere Hauptgasse of the town of 1190-1, and there are ground-level arcades in the thirteenth-century extension to the town, it may be that the open walkways represent an earlier development. Like the Chester Rows, the walkways at Thun have raised stallboards that flank occasional flights of steps down to the street (Fig. 108). The fact that the Obere Hauptgasse follows the side of a steep hill means that the townhouses on the north side of the street are like those built on the debris slope in the Chester Rows, while for those on the south side the situation is reversed and they have an additional storey at the rear. Similar open *Hochtrottoirs* survived until 1880 on the northeast side of the Rennweg in Zürich, although these did not develop stallboards (Fig. 106).

At Burgdorf the initial foundation dates from the later twelfth century, and raised arcades survive in the thirteenth-century extension to the town known as the Oberstadt Ost. At the junction of the east and west towns on the north side of Kirchbühl and the south side of Schmeidengasse, the arcades of the new town advance into the street from the frontages of the original town. Within the Oberstadt Ost, however, the arcades do not stand forward of the line of buildings without arcades, which suggests that either these buildings have lost their arcades or the arcades are an original feature: the authorization of arcades in the 1273 charter may be official recognition of a feature already established. Three semi-sunken undercrofts excavated under the Kronenplatz are within the arcaded area

¹ Anon., 'The Rows of Chester', *JCAS* 5, pt. 4 (1895), pp. 433-4.

² 47 Obere Hauptgasse.

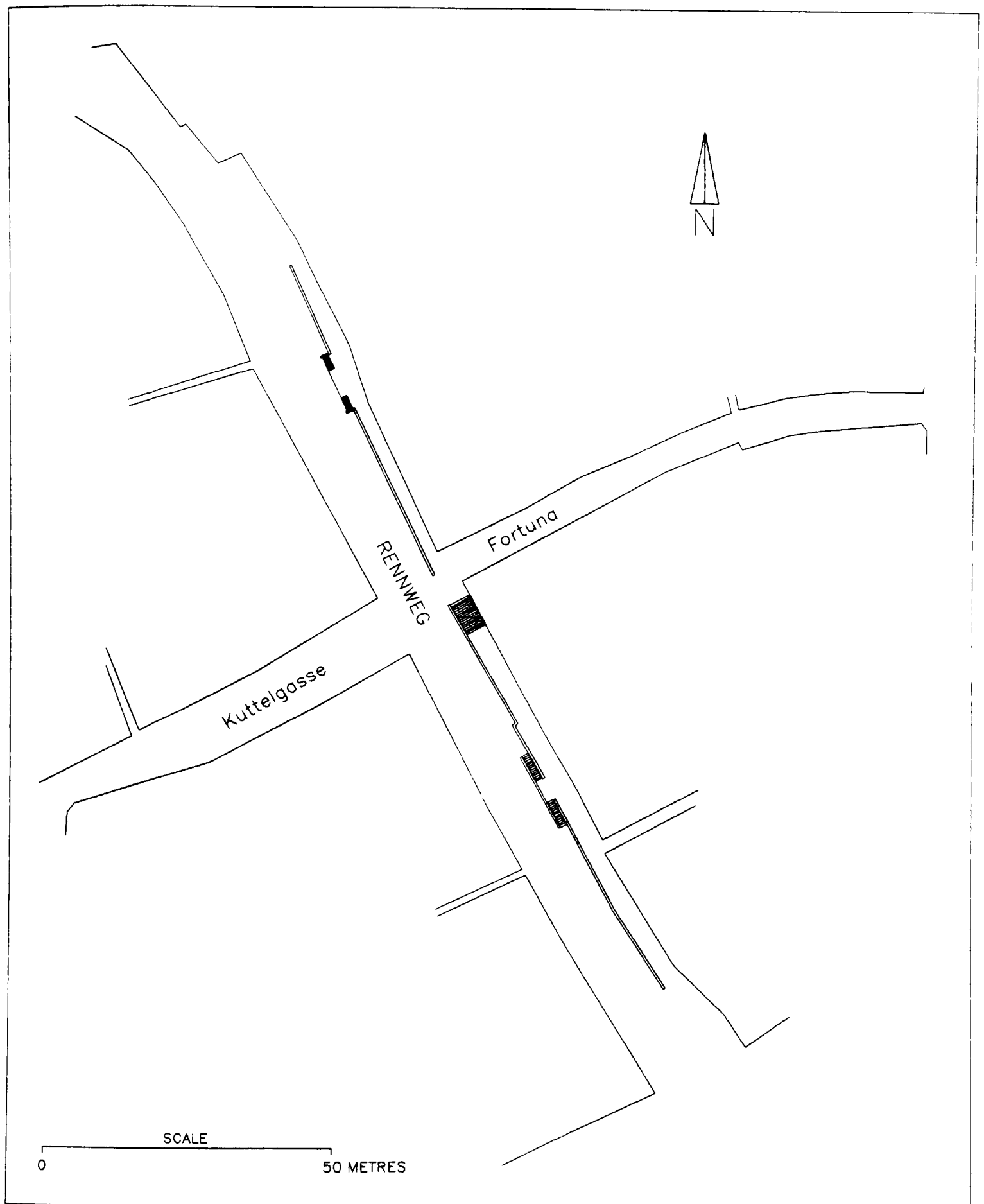


Fig. 106. Zürich. Map of Rennweg area showing former extent of elevated walkways.

of the Oberstadt Ost and date from the second half of the thirteenth century.¹ The western pair of undercrofts formed a single structure

¹ D. Gutscher, 'Zum Forschungsstand der Stadtarchäologie - Burgdorf als Modellfall', *Archäologie der Schweiz* 16/2 (1993), pp. 101-2.



Fig. 107. Bern. View of north side of Gerechtigkeitsgasse, looking east.



Fig. 108. Thun. View of Obere Hauptgasse, looking west.

possibly identifiable as the *Kaufhaus*, known from documentary sources to have existed by 1335.¹ The timber ceilings of these undercrofts would have corresponded with the level of the surviving gallery immediately to the west and it is almost certain that they too carried a slightly raised arcade. There can be little doubt that the arcades of the Oberstadt Ost originate from around the period of the charter and, in view of the concentration of the distributive trades in this area, it is not surprising that the arcades did not extend into the Oberstadt West which had ceased to be the location of the town's commercial life.

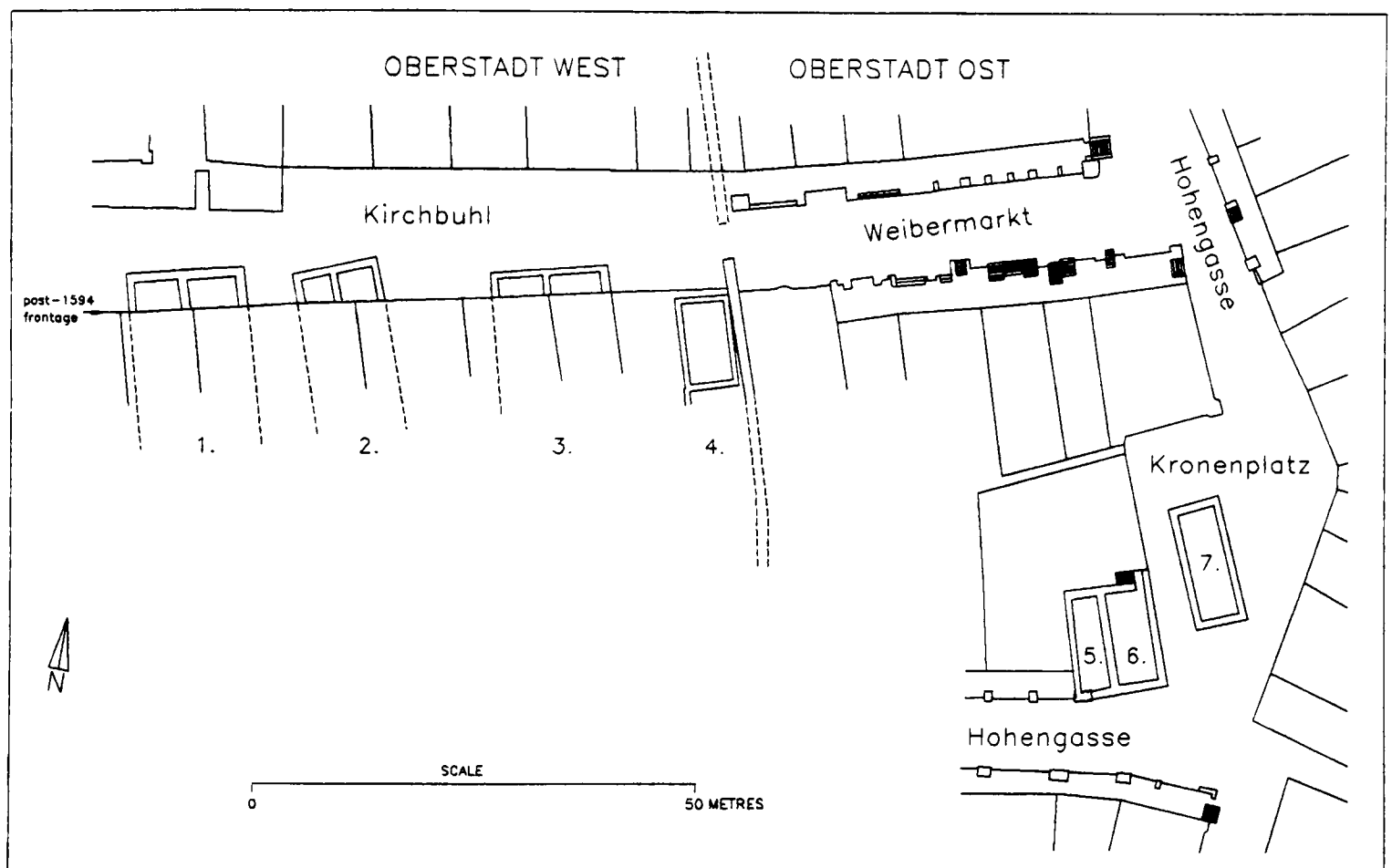


Fig. 109. Burgdorf. Map of central area showing the junction of the twelfth-century foundation (Oberstadt West) and the thirteenth-century extension (Oberstadt Ost), and the location of the excavated townhouses.

The recent excavations at Burgdorf have not been restricted to the area within the Oberstadt Ost, but have also taken place on sites in the principal street of the original town. These have been of immense

¹ It was to the *Kaufhaus* in Burgdorf that merchants brought goods for taxation; *ibid.*, p. 102.

importance as they have revealed what appear to be twelfth-century split-level townhouses in a part of the town that has no arcades, and are evidence for the existence of a Zähringen tradition of split-level townhouse construction which antedates the development of raised arcades. In 1985 and 1991 archaeologists discovered seven twelfth-century undercrofts on the south side of the Kirchbühl.¹ That immediately adjacent to the original town wall was approximately on the line of the modern street, but the other six project forwards up to 5m, to the line of the streetfront before it was modified in 1594 (Fig. 109). All the undercrofts were semi-subterranean and provided with stairs down from the street at the front. The six undercrofts form three pairs, with each pair forming a freestanding townhouse: clearly there was no continuous arcade.

Similar evidence for early split-level townhouses has been found at Fribourg-en-Nuithonie. The Handfeste of 1249 for Fribourg mentions the procedure for constructing undercrofts (article 30) which suggests that the split-level townhouse was already a well-established architectural feature.² Recent excavations and standing building investigations in Fribourg have confirmed this by revealing details of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century townhouses. At 5 rue d'Or a townhouse dating from the thirteenth century partially survives and includes an undercroft at right angles to the street.³ The undercroft has stairs to the street and an adjacent window (Fig. 110). 9 rue de la Samaritaine has an intact undercroft oriented at right angles to the street which is similar but, on account of its greater width, has windows flanking the central doorway on the streetfront.⁴ The

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-1.

² P. de Zurich, 'Les Origines de Fribourg et le quartier du Bourg aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles', *Société d'Histoire de la Suisse Romande*, 2nd series, 12 (1924).

³ G. Bourgarel, 'Ville de Fribourg', *Archéologie Fribourgeoise 1989-1992* (1993), pp. 70-4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80.

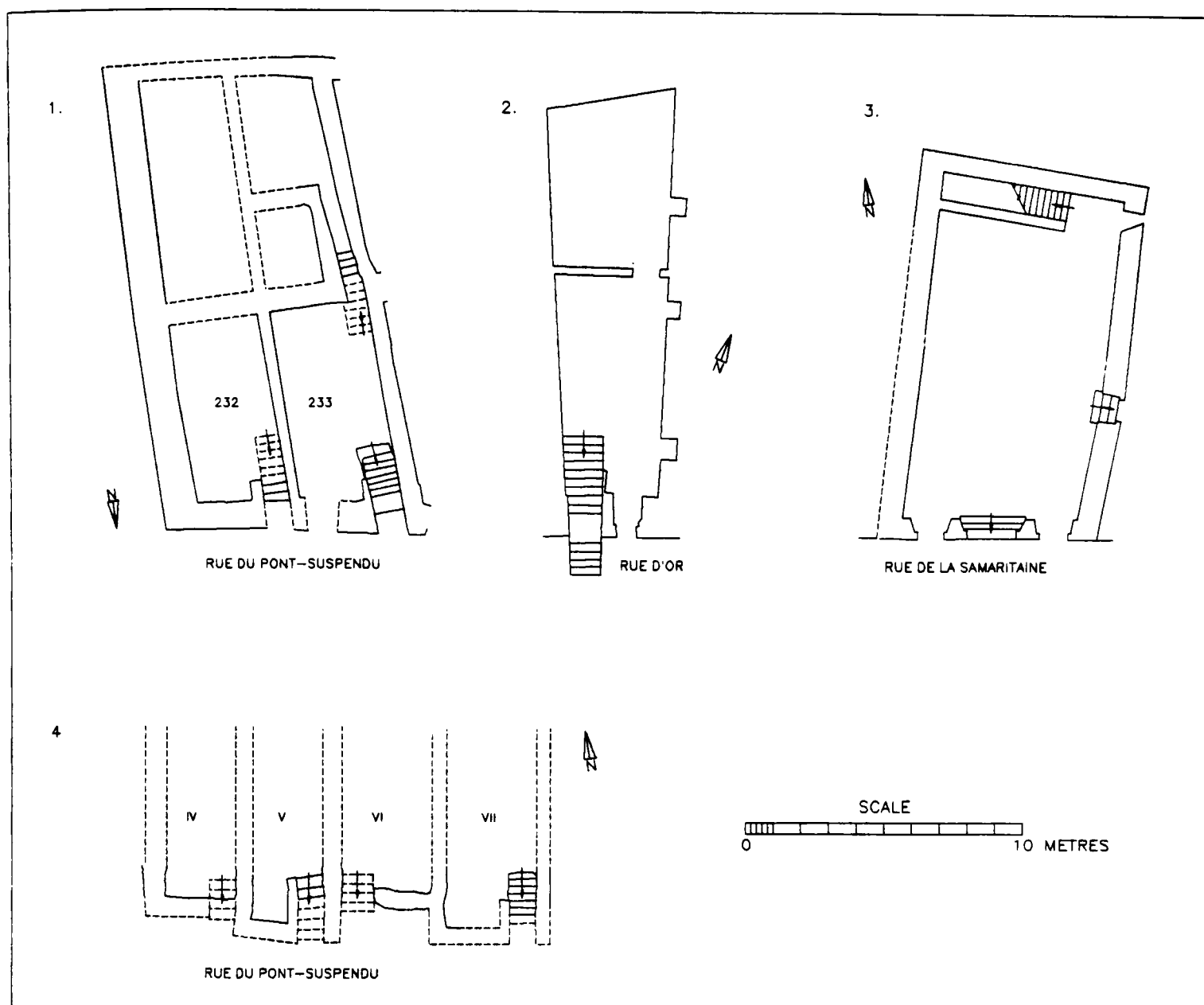


Fig. 110. Fribourg-in-Nuithonie. Comparative plans of semi-sunken undercrofts: 1. 74-5 rue Pont-Suspendu; 2. 5 rue d'Or; 3. 9 rue de la Samaritaine; 4. tenements IV-VII rue du Pont-Suspendu.

joists of the undercroft ceiling have provided a dendrochronological date of 1265. At 14-16 Place Notre-Dame, three conjoining houses were discovered with undercrofts of similar date; probably the 1240s.¹ Slightly earlier was a twelfth- or thirteenth-century undercroft excavated at 14 Grand-Rue, although the site here was well away from the streetfront.² The rear wall was located (with a doorway and narrow loop) 16m back from the Grand-Rue. Excavations at 74-5 rue de Pont-Suspendu, produced two more early undercrofts that preserved steps up to the street; these dated

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-92.

² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

from the second half of the twelfth century or the very early years of the thirteenth century (Fig. 110).¹ Excavations some years before during the digging of a gas trench along rue de Pont-Suspendu revealed a continuously built-up frontage of the former buildings on the north side of the street.² These had been demolished to make way for the expansion of the cemetery and the eastern arm of the cathedral which was begun c.1283, and thus the seven tenements are a fortunate survival of a 34m length of the early medieval streetfront. Despite the confines of working within a service trench, the excavations were unusually thorough and recovered two frontages with intact steps down from the street, and another with a central doorway.

There can be little doubt that continuously built-up street frontages created by buildings at right angles to the street, with undercrofts, were the norm in Fribourg by the twelfth and thirteenth century. In view of the location of such buildings in the commercial centre of the town, and the documentary evidence for function from the fourteenth century, it is clear that there were shops above these undercrofts. The setting of the undercrofts partly above ground and the location of their principal entrances in the streetfronts indicates that the lower level also had a commercial function. That the undercrofts had more than a domestic storage function is also confirmed by the good quality of the construction, which includes such fine stone carving as the fine crocket and waterleaf capital column in an undercroft at 19 rue de la Samaritaine.³

¹ J. Bujard, and E. Broillet, 'Fouilles archéologiques de bâtiments médiévaux à Fribourg. Rue du Pont-Suspendu 74-75 et Grand-Rue 55', *Archéologie Fribourgeoise* 1986 (1989), pp. 166-76.

² H. Schwab (ed.), 'Fribourg. Quartier du Bourg: rue des Epouses, place de la Cathédrale, rue du Pont-Suspendu et rue des Bouchers', *Archéologie Fribourgeoise* 1980-1982 (1984), pp. 90-126.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

The Chester Rows have a valid parallel in the Zähringen towns of Bern, Burgdorf, Fribourg-en-Nuithonie, Thun, and Zürich. This parallel is not confined to the presence of elevated walkways which allowed shops and commercial undercrofts at two levels but extends to the fact that they evolved such systems out of a similar tradition of split-level townhouses. Despite the formal foundations, and refoundations, of the Zähringen towns, and the comprehensive charters, there is little evidence for the forcible adoption of the arcaded street. Indeed, the charters do not talk of the imposition of systems, but rather the right of individual burghers to encroach over arches, and it appears rather that the raised walkways and arcades developed in a sporadic fashion similar to that in Chester. Although there is no economic or political link between these two developments separated by 650 miles, and certainly no reason to suppose direct influence in either direction, it seems that the pressures on frontages in the commercial streets produced similar solutions. However, the origins of the Zähringen and the Cestrian systems are not alike in all respects: the variety of topographical conditions in the Swiss towns means that it is improbable that such local factors played a significant role as has been argued for Chester. The split-level townhouse tradition in the Zähringen towns developed in an area of Europe where the arcaded street was emerging as a major element of the urban landscape and it was inevitable that the two ideas should combine; in England there was no tradition of arcaded streets, or pedestrian walkways separate from the street, and, thus, it took the underlying topographic factors of Chester to provide sufficiently pressing reasons for the solution of the Rows to evolve.

CHAPTER 4

THE LOWER LEVEL: UNDERCROFTS

As the most substantial and lowest storey it is inevitable that the undercroft is often the only surviving element in excavated and standing medieval townhouses. The number of undercrofts represented in the physical evidence, however, is not paralleled in the comparatively rarer references to *cellaria* in contemporary records. The discussion of the relative frequency of physically surviving and recorded undercrofts in Chapter 2 argues that this discrepancy does not reflect a wildly disproportionate survival of split-level townhouses but simply an under-representation of the undercroft in documentary sources.¹ In view of a lack of documentation comparable to that available for shops, an analysis of the function of the undercroft must concentrate on the physical evidence, comparing this with the few available written records. Until now, there has been an apparent conflict between the two sources in that Faulkner, from his study of standing buildings, argues for a subdivided undercroft with the front part comprising a shop let out for retail purposes,² while Keene suggests that the documentary sources show that the undercroft was 'used principally for the storage and sale of wine'.³

The general form of the undercroft and its implications for function

In addition to the evidence provided by the arrangements for access, the forms and details of the construction of many undercrofts are proof that these were parts of the buildings to be used by people, and even to impress. The Undercroft, Simnel Street, Southampton, perhaps best

¹ See pp. 73-4.

² Faulkner, *Med. Undercrofts*, p. 125.

³ *WS* 2, p. 166. See also Keene, in Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, p. 187.

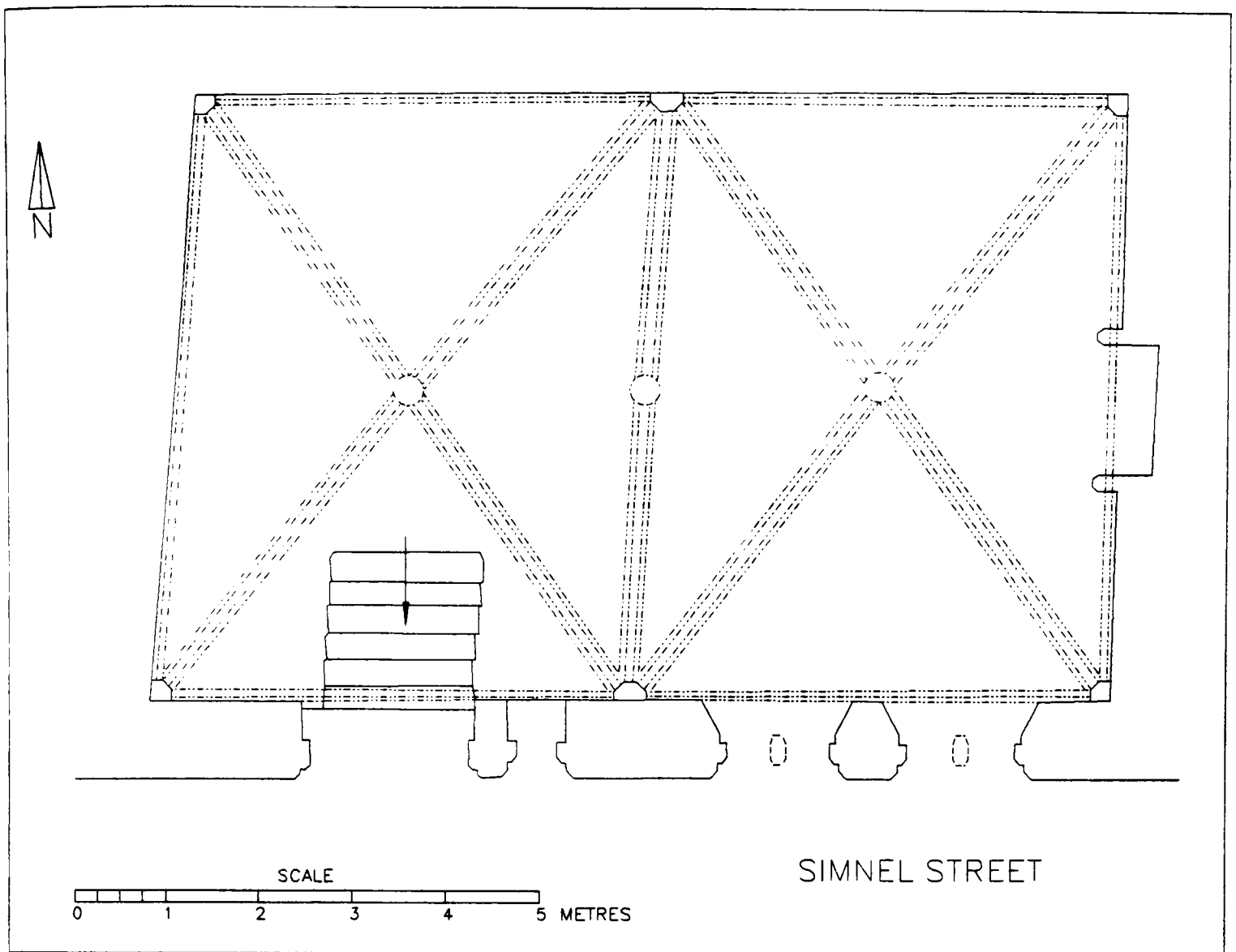


Fig. 111. The Undercroft, Simnel Street, Southampton. Plan.

illustrates both these points for the undercroft was built to be well-lit, warm, and decorative - a far cry from the modern idea of a cellar.

The Undercroft is on a corner site only as a result of the later creation of Bugle Street and the lack of doorways or fenestration in the end walls suggests that the street was continuously built up at the time of its construction. A c.11.9m-wide frontage parallel to the street gives ample scope for the windows that rise above the wall ribs of the vault, and which allow the undercroft to be adequately lit by daylight (Fig. 112). A doorway to the west of the windows opens onto a flight of steps. Sinkings in the stonework on the inner face of the doorway reveal that there were handrails on either side of the steps. In the centre of the east wall is a



Fig. 112. The Undercroft, Simnel Street, Southampton. View of south wall.



Fig. 113. The Undercroft, Simnel Street, Southampton. View of east wall.

fireplace with a stone hood (Fig. 113). The angle brackets decorated with ball-flower, and mouldings integral with those of the lintel, show that this is a sophisticated fireplace dating from the original construction of the undercroft in the early fourteenth century. Similar attention to detail was given to the quadripartite vault which springs from carved corbels, and which has two bosses with foliage decoration and one in the form of the face of a bearded man. With provision of access, fenestration, and warmth, and with such architectural pretension, The Undercroft was obviously no mere domestic store and, excepting the doorway opening directly from the street and the absence of glazing, potentially offered comfort on a par with many a manorial hall or chamber. Although The Undercroft may be unique in preserving windows, entrance, rib-vault, and fireplace within one structure, these features are sufficiently numerous in undercrofts elsewhere to indicate that the undercroft in the split-level townhouse was a part of the building designed to cope with a mix of expensive goods and equally valued people, be they occupants, guests, or customers.

With internal dimensions of c.10.15m x c.6.55m (66.32m²), the Simnel Street example is a fairly typically sized undercroft: the average floor area of the undercrofts from split-level townhouses is 67.90m². Quite clearly, undercrofts of such dimensions were significantly larger than the storage areas required by the households above, and would have been capable of holding substantial stocks of even the bulkiest of goods. Excavation in the Cheapside area of London has produced smaller than average undercrofts in side streets that Keene has argued were intended for 'purely residential and storage functions',¹ although elsewhere he suggests that those on Bow Lane were used as 'storage and distribution centres' in the wine trade.²

¹ D. Keene, 'The Character and Development of the Cheapside Area; an Overview', in Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, p. 187.

² *Ibid.*, p. 190.

Looking nationally, however, there is no evidence for two categories of split-level townhouse. The lack of any consistent difference in the scale of undercrofts in side streets and principal streets indicates that when the split-level townhouse form was adopted its undercroft potential was usually fully exploited irrespective of the site.

Even at the smallest extant undercroft of pre-c.1350 date, at the Mermaid Hotel, Mermaid Street, Rye, the only original entrance was from the street and this feature, as much as scale, is a good indicator of a commercial function. Of the pre-c.1350 undercrofts in the split-level townhouses identified in the research for this thesis, 89% either have evidence of access direct to the street, or have lost their front walls but, on the basis of more intact side and rear walls, can only have had doorways in the front wall. These doorways were typically 1.3-1.8m wide, full height, and were on occasion given more sophisticated architectural treatment in the form of mouldings or hoodmoulds. That at The Undercroft in Simnel Street has a two-ordered chamfer on the exterior and was thought sufficiently important for the form of the vault to be modified (Fig. 112). Similar adaptation of vaults to accommodate full height doorways set as near street level as possible is a common feature, either involving the provision of an extra vault rib, a raising of the vault web, or, as in the case of many of the Winchelsea examples, a separate barrel vault containing the steps. Although chamfered mouldings and the general good quality of the stonework forming the doorways indicate that the principal entrance to the undercroft was worthy of special treatment, their essentially utilitarian role seems to have precluded the sort of sophistication seen, for example, on the doorways to the residential parts of the twelfth-century townhouses in Steep Hill, Lincoln.¹ The robust sunk-chamfer mouldings on the doorway

¹ See pp. 47-52, and 80-7.

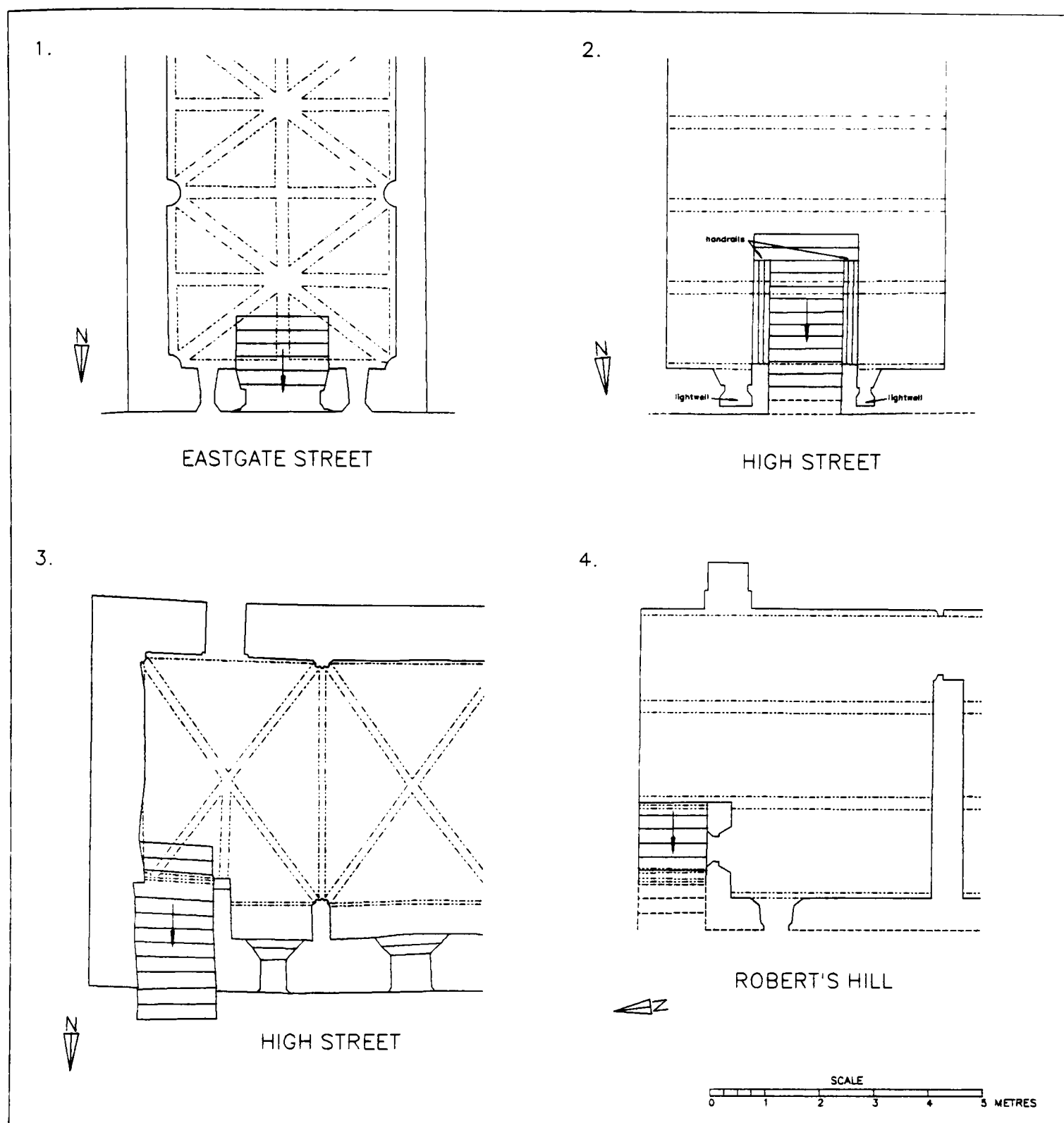


Fig. 114. Examples of undercroft entrances at: 1. 28 Eastgate Street, Chester; 2. Firebrand House, High Street, Winchelsea; 3. Tackley's Inn, High Street, Oxford; 4. Hiham Mews, Robert's Hill, Winchelsea.

of the c.1300 undercroft at 28 Eastgate Street, Chester, seem to have been an excellent compromise between functionality and decoration.¹

On the interior of the street doorways the development of spur-walls discussed in Chapter 3 may well have been an attempt to reduce the draughtiness of a large door opening directly into the undercroft. In

¹ See pp. 153-4.

addition, the frequently substantial height of the threshold above the undercroft floor and the resultant flights of steps would have made delivery of goods awkward: spur walls provided safe and rugged sides to the steps. Certainly, in several cases where spur walls are absent, there is evidence of less substantial handrails. At The Undercroft sinkings to either side of the doorway show that the handrails were timber, but at 1-3 Salutation Cottages, Mill Road,¹ and Firebrand House, High Street, Winchelsea,² they were of stone. The moulding of the top rails at the Winchelsea examples suggests that they were for the convenience of customers as much as for the easing of deliveries.

While the majority of known undercrofts in split-level townhouses only had entrances on the streetfront, a smaller proportion were built with stairs to the storey above. Such stairs were narrow and frequently contained within the side wall. That in the south wall at 12 Bridge Street, Chester, has a doorway 620mm wide and a stairway 685mm wide, with a right-angle turn near the bottom (Fig. 115).³ Similar dimensions are found at the two Guildford examples at 72/4 and 91 High Street, where a ninety-degree turn was again necessary (Fig. 115).⁴ Even more restrictive were the spiral staircases for which there is some evidence, as in the rear wall of 9 Lovat Lane, London (Fig. 115).⁵ Here it appears that there was a counter turn to the two lowest steps which allowed the doorways at undercroft and ground-floor levels to be one above the other. The destroyed undercroft at the western end of Aldgate, London, had a narrow

¹ See pp. 396-7.

² See pp. 391-2.

³ See pp. 147-9.

⁴ See pp. 327-30.

⁵ See pp. 353-4.

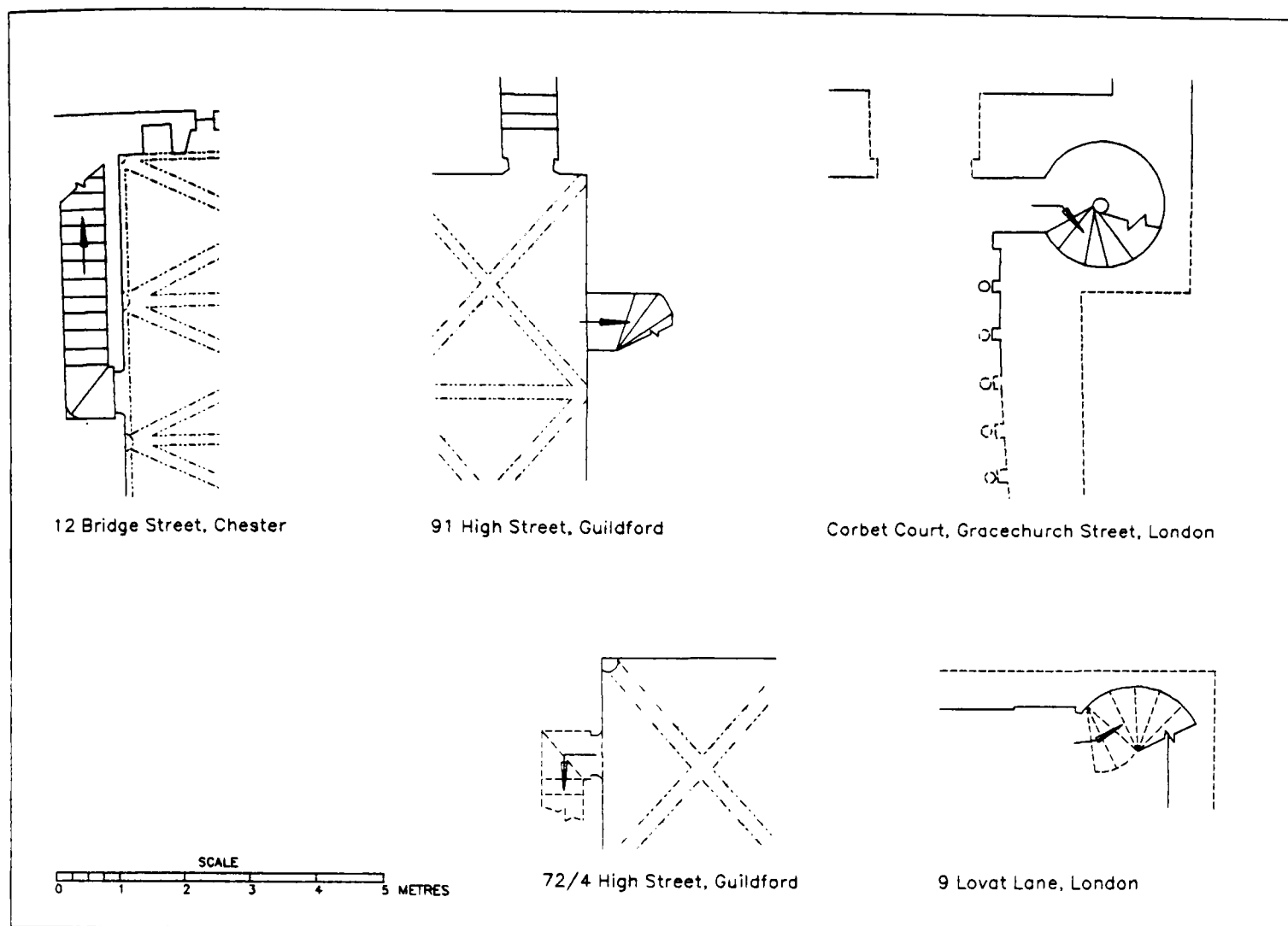


Fig. 115. Details of undercrofts showing examples of internal staircases.

stair in its western wall which seems to have been of spiral form.¹ Another London undercroft that was demolished in the nineteenth century was that at Corbet Court, off Gracechurch Street, and this had a spiral staircase in its entrance porch (Fig. 115).² None of these examples, whether spiral or straight flights, was at all suitable for the movement of goods and their usual location towards the rear of the building confirms that their function was to provide access between the undercrofts and residence above for people only. These undercrofts could not have been built to be let out as separate units, and the provision of private internal access would have had the benefit of allowing more secure fastening of the main entrance.

¹ See pp. 339-40.

² See pp. 349-51.

As in modern times the attractiveness of delivery of goods to the rear of a building does not seem to have gone unnoticed and, where circumstance allowed it, this was used. At The Vine, Great Minster Street, Winchester, there was a wide doorway in the rear undercroft which backed on to the less important Little Minster Street.¹ At the undercroft of this type at St Martin-at-Palace Plain, Norwich, the River Wensum formed the rear of the plot,² and at House B, Thames Street (New Fresh Wharf), London, the Thames was only c.5.2m from the rear wall:³ direct delivery of goods from the waterfront is likely in both these examples. A large majority of rear doorways, however, appear to have opened into plots with no possible access for the delivery of goods. The combination of rear access with internal stairs at 72/4 and at 91 High Street, Guildford, suggests that they were not intended to provide a link with the residence above. Moreover, the possibility that the undercroft was leased with the rear plot, or garden, is not borne out by documentary evidence and is contradicted by the presence of domestic cess-pits which must relate to the residence above or beyond.⁴

The attempts to provide sources of daylight in the large undercrofts, in spite of the narrow and partly subterranean frontages typically available for fenestration, is another feature which distinguishes these spaces from a cellar in the modern sense. Rear windows and lightwells are a relatively rare feature, not only a result of the frequent loss of the rear walls of medieval undercrofts during later extension, but also as a consequence of their original frequency: more rear walls survive without windows than

¹ See pp. 234-6.

² See pp. 75-6.

³ See pp. 114-15.

⁴ However, it has been argued that ground-level undercrofts on the continent, such as those at Cluny, would appear to have been held along with rear plots: P. Garrigou Grandchamp and G.I. Meirion-Jones (eds.), *La Ville de Cluny et ses Maisons (XI^e-XV^e siècles)*, forthcoming (1994).

with. The front wall, however, was almost always fenestrated,¹ and this corresponds with the ubiquitous street entrance and the implied focus of activity at the front of the undercroft. In view of the semi-subterranean nature of the undercrofts, normal practice was for windows to open into lightwells projecting into the street. This was not without problems as the details of a tenancy of 1547 reveal: a shop by the cellar of Mercer's Hall, Cheapside, London, was let to Thomas Havenynge on condition that he prevent 'naughty persons annoying our cellar by way of pissing in at the windows'.² A more common inconvenience must have been the coincidence of windows and stalls placed against the townhouse: Keene and Harding suggest that the stalls along the front wall of the late thirteenth-century undercroft between Cheapside and St Mary le Bow initially avoided the seven windows but eventually blocked them.³ A more practical form of window construction is found in the undercrofts of Winchelsea, in which the lightwell is contained within the thickness of the front wall, although this must have given a reduced light level.

The fireplace is the one element of The Undercroft, Simnel Street, Southampton, which is not found in many other split-level townhouses. Surviving, although inaccessible, examples are known from c.1200 in the side wall of the undercroft at The Woollen Hall, St Michael's Passage, Southampton,⁴ and from c.1300 in the rear wall of the streetfront chamber of that at 2 Eign Street, Hereford.⁵ The latter may have been a tavern and,⁶ as it is consistent with a documentary reference to the building of *une chymeneye* at *un et lautre bout del celer* of a tavern in Paternoster

¹ Give exceptions in Winchelsea.

² Keene and Harding, 105/16.

³ *Ibid.*, 104/20.

⁴ See pp. 180-8.

⁵ See Fig. 120.

⁶ See pp. 238-9.

Row, London, in 1342, it could suggest that fireplaces were associated with undercrofts, or parts thereof, used for more than straightforward sale of stock.¹ Less sophisticated than these stone fireplaces and not closely datable, is the hooded hearth implied by a soot-blackened area between two double-corbels in the west wall of the undercroft at 51 Watergate Street, Chester. Excavation is better equipped to discover these less substantial hearths, and examples have been found at House I, Lower Brook Street, Winchester;² and 1-2 Tower Lane, Bristol:³ in both cases these were later additions to mid twelfth-century undercrofts. Although the use of braziers cannot be ruled out, especially in the absence of many intact floor surfaces that might be expected to show evidence of scorching, it would appear from the lack of examples of fireplaces and hearths that the majority of undercrofts were intended to be left unheated. The usual absence of glazing grooves in the windows is consistent with this implied acceptance of a low ambient temperature, and, as dehumidifying an unventilated undercroft produces as much as 10 litres of water per day, was doubtless essential if a reasonable air-flow was to be maintained. If the undercroft was especially linked with the wine trade then the absence of heating was a positive necessity. Perhaps of more importance was the fact that by avoiding hearths within undercrofts a major fire risk was removed.

The evidence of undercrofts being constructed with fireproofing in mind is not restricted to the lack of surviving fireplaces. The common use of stone-built groin vaults, quadripartite rib vaults, and barrel vaults certainly provided effective protection against the spread of fire. In view of the lack of hearths in undercrofts it is reasonable to assume that the

¹ Salzman, *Building in England*, p. 433.

² See pp. 26-7.

³ See pp. 110-11.

fear was from the spread of fire originating from the residence above rather than vice versa, and this corroborates the obvious use of undercrofts for stocks of valuable merchandise.¹ The different occupancy of the undercroft, the shops, and the residence frequently implied by the provision of separate access, must have heightened such fears: the merchant would have been powerless over domestic organisation and the standards of fire safety employed directly above his goods. Add to that the common use of timber framing for the structures above undercroft level, and an absence of glazing, air-tight doors, or an effective method of fire control, and it becomes clear that the risk of fire merited the expense of building vaults.

That fireproofing was a major, if not the only, reason for the building of stone vaults is corroborated by the unusually well-preserved timber ceilings dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth century in Chester, in which the original position of the joists was c.300mm-600mm below the level of the floor above. Recording at 12 Watergate Street during demolition of this thirteenth-century building revealed that the joists were closely set at c.460mm centres and supported wide boards over which was a layer of soil and rubble with a layer of sandstone flags on top.² At 36 Bridge Street, joists at c.470-570mm centres and measuring c.250mm square have been dated by dendrochronology to after 1327: they still support planks with rubble on top.³ A similar arrangement, albeit with a greater depth of rubble, is preserved at 28-30 Watergate Street.⁴ At 38-42 Watergate Street the fourteenth-century joists have been raised to the level of the

¹ The extent of fireproofing is understandable in view of the likelihood that valuable as property was on the principal streetfronts, it would often have been exceeded by the value of the goods within: Keene, *Shops and Shopping*, p. 42.

² See p. 136.

³ See pp. 306-7.

⁴ See pp. 140-3.

walkway during post-medieval alterations, but the surviving transverse arches and bridging beams confirm that here too the joists were formerly at a lower level and carried a rubble ceiling (Fig. 116).¹ The c.300mm-c.600mm depth of rubble make-up is well in excess of the depth of bedding necessary to lay a thin stone floor over timber joists and it is difficult to envisage any other function than protection of the undercroft from the outbreak of fire above: these Chester ceilings must have provided a cheaper way of acquiring the fireproofing qualities of masonry vaults.

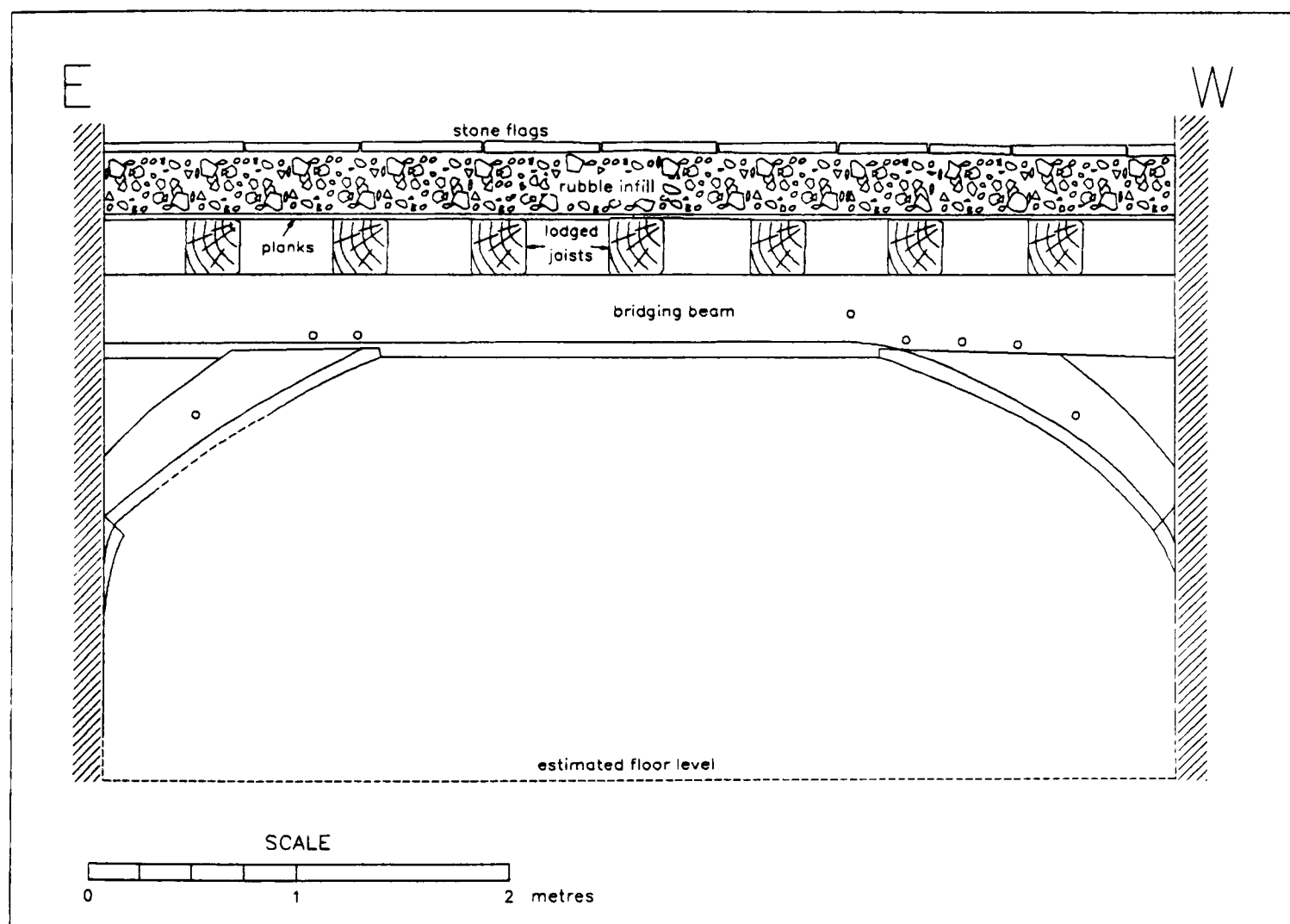


Fig. 116. 38-42 Watergate Street, Chester. North face of northernmost braced bridging beam in the eastern undercroft (No. 38), showing reconstructed section of stone rubble ceiling.

In view of the unreliability of the documentary record of the frequent outbreak of fires in towns of this period, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of stone vaults or rubble-covered timber ceilings in the event of fires of the period. The well-known 1278 fire of Chester which was

¹ See pp. 316-20.

recorded as destroying much of the town may have caused widespread damage to superstructures, but it is surely significant that undercrofts of an earlier date than this survive and there is no evidence of a large-scale rebuilding of undercrofts during the decade or so after the fire: the absence of any signs of burnt stone or charred timber in the undercrofts which predate the fire indicates that the stock was indeed adequately protected. A succession of French raids on Winchelsea between 1337 and 1380 caused widespread devastation, but little damage is obvious to the undercrofts. This medieval evidence for the resilience of undercrofts in the event of fire, is corroborated by their survival through later disasters. Many stone undercrofts survived within the area destroyed by the Great Fire of London, until their deliberate destruction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Likewise the intense attacks on Coventry and Southampton during World War II further demonstrates the strength of stone-vaulted undercrofts, since most of the surviving examples were under houses otherwise completely destroyed by bombing and the ensuing fires.¹

Although much of the stonework in early medieval undercrofts was fairly robust, more decorative carving was undertaken: the bosses and corbels at The Undercroft, Simnel Street, Southampton, were by no means unique. For example, corbels carved in the form of human figures are preserved at Tackley's Inn, Oxford; 35 High Street, Battle; and 1-3 Salutation Cottages, Mill Road, Winchelsea. More common are finely-worked corbels, wall-shafts, and capitals associated with vault construction and found, for example, at 11 Watergate Street, Chester; 76 Westgate Street, Gloucester; 50-6 Howard Street South, Great Yarmouth; 72/4 High Street, Guildford; and formerly at the demolished Gisors' Hall, Basing Lane, London.

¹ Coventry preserves several more medieval vaulted undercrofts than the single example in the gazetteer, although they fall outside the period covered by this thesis.

The specific functions of undercrofts

The consistent evidence of scale of construction, fenestration, principal access to the street, fireproofing, and a high build-quality which, on occasion, extended to decorative work, means that there can be little doubt that the undercroft of the split-level townhouse was intended for commercial use of a type that combined stocking of valuable, if bulky, goods, and the serving of customers. This would seem in accord with Faulkner's suggestion that the front part of the undercroft comprised a shop, if it was not for the complete lack of evidence for subdivision of undercrofts in the necessary proportions. Where there is, or has been, subdivision of undercrofts it is either longitudinal (as at 28/30 and 32/4 Watergate Street, Chester), or into transverse parts of roughly equal size: there is no example of a partitioned-off or otherwise defined area of an undercroft which corresponds to the documented size of medieval shops.¹ If Faulkner's interpretation applies to any undercrofts, the distinction between the shop and the rear chamber could not have had a physical expression and, thus, it remains an unprovable hypothesis. In view of the correspondence between the rise and fall of the wine trade and that of the split-level townhouse, Keene's suggestion that there was a strong association between cellars (undercrofts) and taverns - to such a degree that the two terms were sometimes interchangeable - is attractive.² That it is based on more tangible evidence than Faulkner's interpretation means that it is possible to scrutinize it more fully. The records of the importation of wine studied by Margery James confirm that wine formed the chief import in England during the period covered by this thesis.³

¹ For discussion of shop size, see pp. 249-51.

² *WS* 2, pp. 166-7; D. Keene, 'The Character and Development of the Cheapside Area; an Overview', in Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, p. 187.

³ James, *Wine Trade*.

Moreover, she provides us with reasonably reliable estimates of the quantity of overall wine imports and their fluctuations, the tunnage passing through most of the English ports, details of the importers, and the distributive trade within England. Looking at the quantities handled by individual importers,¹ it can be seen that even in peak years few London traders shipped more than 200 tuns (1,600 barrels), although John de Oxenford, a London vintner, imported 400 tuns (3,200 barrels) and 600 tuns (4,800 barrels) in the flourishing years between 1318 and 1323.² The importation of wine was not restricted to vintners of this type, and taverners themselves were engaged directly with the import of wine from Bordeaux. Two taverners from Ipswich, for example, imported and had on sale 7 tuns (56 barrels) and 11 tuns (88 barrels).³ This was of a quantity to have demanded extensive cellarage for which the medieval undercroft is the obvious solution. Specific references to undercrofts as the initial destination of wine, however, are rare, although by the early thirteenth century London cellars were specifically mentioned for use by the Lorraine wine fleet.⁴ In the parish of All Hallows Heywarfe, next to Dowgate, London, there were in 1236 six shops in front of a stone house which had an undercroft with an iron-barred window (*fenestram ferratam*).⁵ The tenants were to 'load and unload the cellar itself (*tenentes ipsum cellarium karkient et diskarkient*) and unload their wines free from carriage on the wharf (*vina sua sine karagio super kaynum*)'.⁶ James states that 'the

¹ See below for discussion of total imports of wine compared to available cellarage: pp. 244-7.

² James, *Wine Trade*, pp. 160-1.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 190-1.

⁴ G.A. Williams, *Medieval London: From Commune to Capital* (London, 1963), p. 50-1.

⁵ G.A.J. Hodgett (ed.), 'The Cartulary of Holy Trinity Aldgate', *London Record Society* 7 (1971), p. 85 (entry 430).

⁶ *Ibid.*

Gascons almost invariably hired cellars in the Vintry',¹ but an oath taken by the London wine-drawers in 1301 in which they agreed not exceed a scale of fixed charges for drawing wine from the waterfront to cellars in all parts of the city, including the suburbs, suggests that wine could be unloaded and transported directly to undercrofts away from the wharves.² A similar list of charges dating from c.1300 at the latest was drawn up by the guild merchant of Southampton and it is interesting to note that their definition of the shore extended some way up the High Street and French Street.³

For documentary evidence of the use of the undercrofts of typical split-level townhouses in the wine trade, the unusually detailed tenement histories compiled by Keene and Harding for the Cheapside study area provide the only source with enough examples to give a reliable view of even one area of an English town.⁴ The thirty-one properties with undercrofts or *cellaria* that predate c.1350 form a sample that confirms a connection between cellarage and the wine trade on the principal commercial streets located well away from the waterfront. Of the thirty-one cellars, fourteen (45%) are within buildings identified as taverns, or occupied by taverners, by the 1350s. Moreover, of the remainder five are within tenements recorded as being owned by vinters, who appear to have been interchangeable with taverners,⁵ and another was held by a cornmonger (*bladarius*) and described as a brewhouse (*bracina*).⁶ Although these undercrofts in townhouses associated with taverns and taverners,

¹ James, *Wine Trade*, p. 76.

² R.R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letter-Books preserved among the archives of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter-Book C, c.1291-1309* (London, 1901), pp. 111-12.

³ P. Studer (ed.), *The Oak Book of Southampton* vol. 1 (Southampton, 1910), pp. 70-3.

⁴ Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*.

⁵ See *ibid.*, 11/5, 11/8-9, 11/10, 104/20, 104/32, and 145/36.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 105/13-15.

vintners, and brewhouses only account for 65% of the cellared houses in the Cheapside study area, there is no other common type of occupancy or ownership. Two leather merchants,¹ one draper,² one mercer,³ and another cornmonger⁴ are the only other specified traders in houses with undercrofts. The lack of different trades of a scale comparable to that of wine echoes, and may well be closely related to, the proportions of imports throughout England. At Exeter, for example, wine accounted for 53%, foodstuffs for 24%, dyestuffs and other products for use in the clothing industry for 10.1%, raw materials such as iron for 6.7%, and manufactured goods for 6.2% of the imports between 1302 and 1321.⁵

Although as early as 1926 Salter suggested that the Mermaid Tavern, or Swindlestock, in Carfax, Oxford, was situated in semi-subterranean cellars in 1279,⁶ Keene was the first to propose that the arrangement was the norm.⁷ The documentary evidence for this in Cheapside, London, is certainly more convincing than that produced by the surveys of Oxford or Winchester, but, on its own, remains ambiguous. Of the sixteen recorded properties in the Cheapside study area that appear to have been taverns before c.1350, only five are identifiably at undercroft level,⁸ and even these are not all certain: Keene is tentative in his identification of a subterranean location for Simon de Weston's tavern.⁹ Two more, *la Bole* and *la Lyoun*,¹⁰ were possibly at ground level,¹¹ and the remaining nine

¹ *Ibid.*, 95/3, and 95/4.

² *Ibid.*, 95/12.

³ *Ibid.*, 105/3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 95/1-2.

⁵ M. Kowaleski, 'The Local Customs Accounts of the Port of Exeter 1266-1321', *Devon and Cornwall Record Society*, new series, 36 (1993), p. 25.

⁶ H.E. Salter, 'Oxford City Properties', *OHS* 83 (1925), pp. 155-6.

⁷ *WS* 2, p. 166.

⁸ Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, 11/10, 95/18, 105/8-9, 104/20, and 145/36.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 95/18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11/8-9, and 145/37.

are not located.¹ That taverns within undercrofts form the majority of known locations may reflect the true situation, but the numbers from the Cheapside study area are too small to be accepted as conclusive evidence that this was the case. Indeed, it could be argued that there is nothing in the documentary evidence for Cheapside to indicate that the organisation of medieval taverns was different from their twentieth-century counterparts. Contracts of 1342 for a tavern to be built nearby in Paternoster Row certainly indicate that the part used by customers could be above the undercroft: here a vaulted undercroft of uncertain function was to be constructed for a vintner and taverner so that it extended 600mm above street level, had four windows to the street, and fireplaces at either end, yet the contract for the timber superstructure specifically identifies that most of the ground floor and the whole of the first floor were to be equipped with trestle seats for use as a tavern.² Considered in isolation, the less detailed documentary records of the Cheapside properties simply reveal an association between taverns and vintner-owned or occupied tenements and the record of undercrofts, with the occasional example of a tavern located in the undercroft.

Considered in the context of the physical evidence of undercrofts elsewhere, however, it is reasonable to conclude that the Cheapside examples of taverns in cellars were the norm, and that the Paternoster Row building was an exception. The rarity of direct access between undercroft and ground floor and the narrowness of such internal staircases and doorways where they do occur would appear to rule out the use of tavern cellarage in the modern sense: it is improbable that taverners ran in and

¹¹ (...continued)

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11/8-9, and 145/37.

¹ *Ibid.*, 11/5, 105/11, 105/19, 105/26, 104/6, 104/12, 104/24, 104/32, and 145/10.

² Salzman, *Building in England*, pp. 432-4.

out of the street, and up and down flights of stairs, with foaming jugs. This suggests a combined cellarage and drinking function of undercrofts forming taverns which would have been further encouraged by the apparent lack of a clear division of the wine trade into wholesale, retail for consumption off-premises, and sale for consumption in the tavern; the presumed *dégustation* in advance of wholesale purchase of what must have been a very variable product would have fitted such an arrangement. In view of the different requirements of barrel and customer, some evidence of internal division of the undercroft could be expected to survive.¹ Indeed, documentary references to the serving of wine in taverns make explicit the normality of such separation of wine and purchaser: a rule in London of 1352 stipulates that 'no taverner shall hang a cloth before the door of the cellar where the wines are stored, so that the purchasers may see whence the wine is drawn, that is to say, that one of each company may see that the vessel into which wine is drawn be clean and from what cask his wine be drawn'.² This follows repeated rules of a similar nature in the 1330s and 1340s that were intended to make visible the drawing and serving of wine.³ Even where undercrofts were rented by Gascon wine merchants for the rapid selling of their imports this dual function seems to have occurred: in London in 1300 a writ of *certiorari* requested information as to the whether merchants of Bordeaux could live and entertain in the premises rented for the short-term storage of wine.⁴

It is particularly significant, therefore, that at the most unambiguous example of a surviving undercroft in a townhouse documented as a tavern,

¹ Keene implies that 'architectural distinction between their front and rear compartments' was a normal feature of medieval undercrofts: *WS* 2, p. 166.

² R.R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letter-Books preserved among the archives of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter-Book F, c.1337-1352* (London, 1904), p. 246.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 77, 78, and 83.

⁴ R.R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letter-Books preserved among the archives of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter-Book C, c.1291-1309* (London, 1901), p. 80.

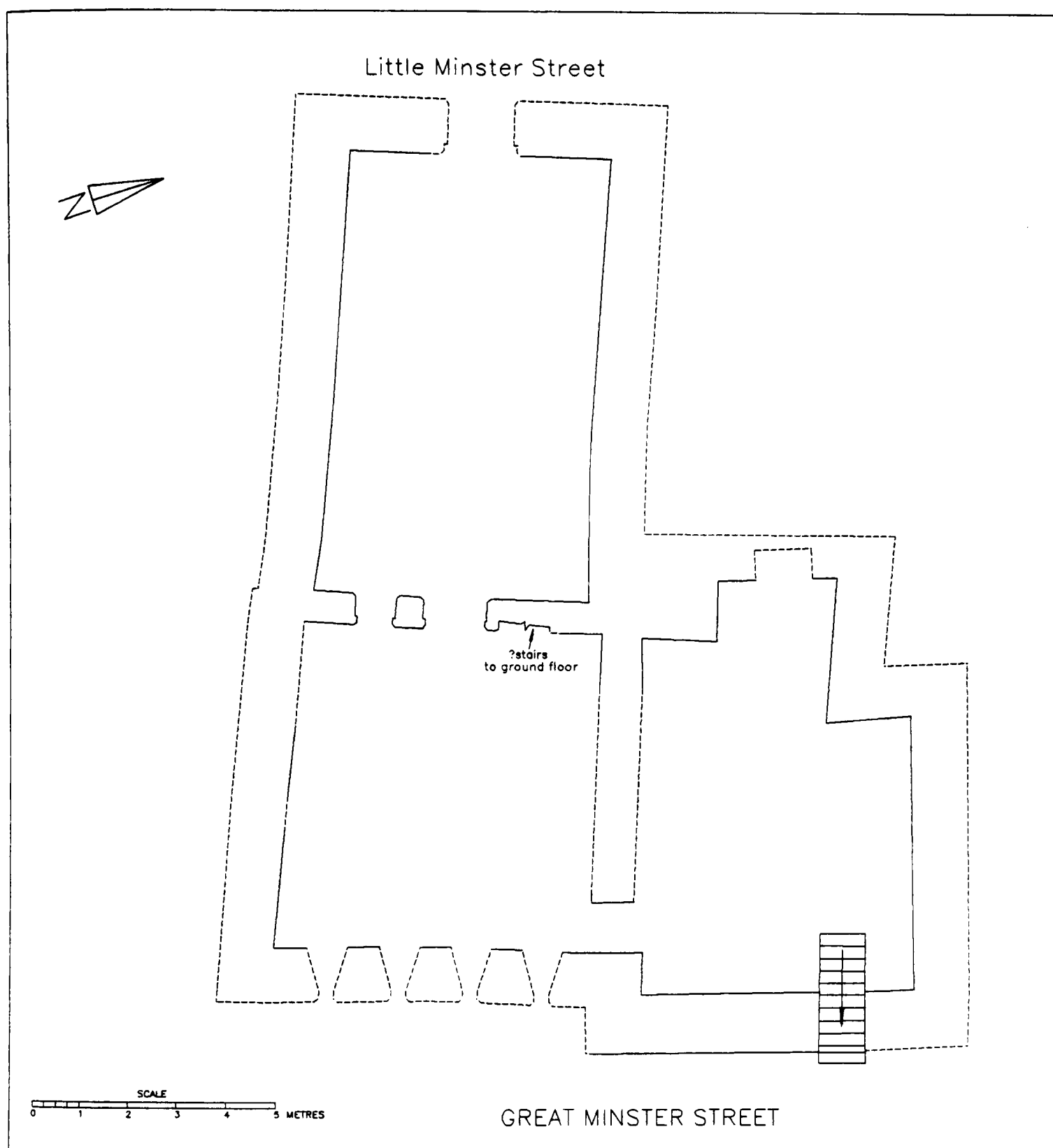


Fig. 117. The Vine, 8 Great Minster Street, Winchester. Plan of undercroft.

there is evidence of subdivision. Keene's gazetteer of medieval tenements in Winchester reveals that The Vine, 8 Great Minster Street, Winchester, was owned by Walter atte Crouche, taverner, from the early 1330s.¹ In addition there is a record of Walter atte Crouche making an encroachment on the east of his property in 1337, which measured 8 yards 8 inches

¹ WS 2, pp. 586-7.

(7.52m) by 5 feet (1.52m).¹ This encroachment has been identified with the front chamber of the southern part of the surviving undercroft, which is indeed of the approximate width, but it is the identically-sized section of the undercroft to the north that encroaches into Great Minster Street. As the northern section is part of the same construction phase as the southern sections it remains reasonable to suppose that the whole undercroft dates from this period. The stylistic dating evidence certainly suggests an early to mid fourteenth-century date.

The architectural evidence of the undercroft at The Vine does not only corroborate the dating suggested by the documentary sources, but also confirms that the tavern was at undercroft level. Between the front and rear section of the southern part there is a doorway with an adjacent window or hatch. These are rebated on the side of the barrel-vaulted undercroft at the rear, and it is probable that something was served from the hatch: wine or beer must be most likely. Moreover, the stone vault and an absence of a direct source of daylight in the rear part of the undercroft are consistent with barrel storage. A wide doorway to Little Minster Street was the obvious point of delivery for barrels.

The front chamber in the southern part of the undercroft is very different from the rear chamber in that it has no vault and was well lit by four lancets (now blocked).² A narrow staircase from the front chamber up to ground floor cuts through the vault of the rear part, but may well be an original feature. Access from the street to the front section was via a northern undercroft, which comprised a streetfront chamber only, again having no stone vault. No evidence survives of fenestration in the front wall of the latter, although the remains of a lightwell are preserved at the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 587.

² Keene shows three only: *ibid.*, Fig. 67, p. 587.

rear. The present barrel chute overlies stone steps and appears to reuse the fourteenth-century entrance to the tavern.

Even without documentary records, the architectural evidence of The Vine is indicative of a tavern, for there is no obvious alternative that explains the subdivision and different treatment of the front and rear sections. The presence of a hatch and doorway in the cross-wall reveals that, as the near contemporary rules for serving wine in London suggest, the drinkers came up to the wine cellar proper to be served rather than were waited on. It is possible that the British tradition of being served at a bar, hatch, or doorway was established at an early date.

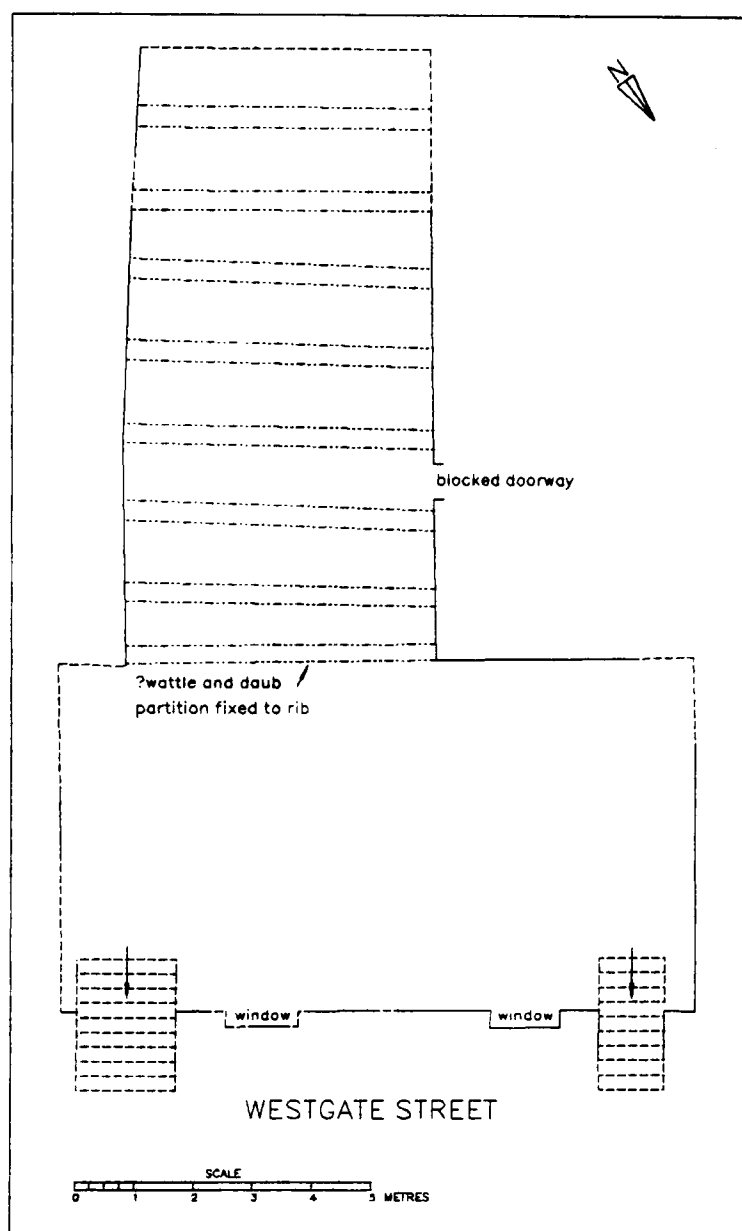


Fig. 118. 47-9 Westgate Street, Gloucester. Plan of undercroft.

A similar architectural arrangement survives at 47-9 Westgate Street, Gloucester, where a ribbed barrel vault dating from the early fourteenth century has been recently rediscovered behind an unvaulted chamber on the streetfront.¹ It has been suggested that the barrel vault fronted the street and that the wider undercroft in front represents an encroachment.² The treatment of the front face of the barrel-vaulted section shows that

¹ B.S. Nenke, S. Margeson, and M. Hurley, 'Medieval Britain and Ireland in 1991', *Med. Arch.* 36 (1992), p. 36.

² Pers. comm. Phil Moss.

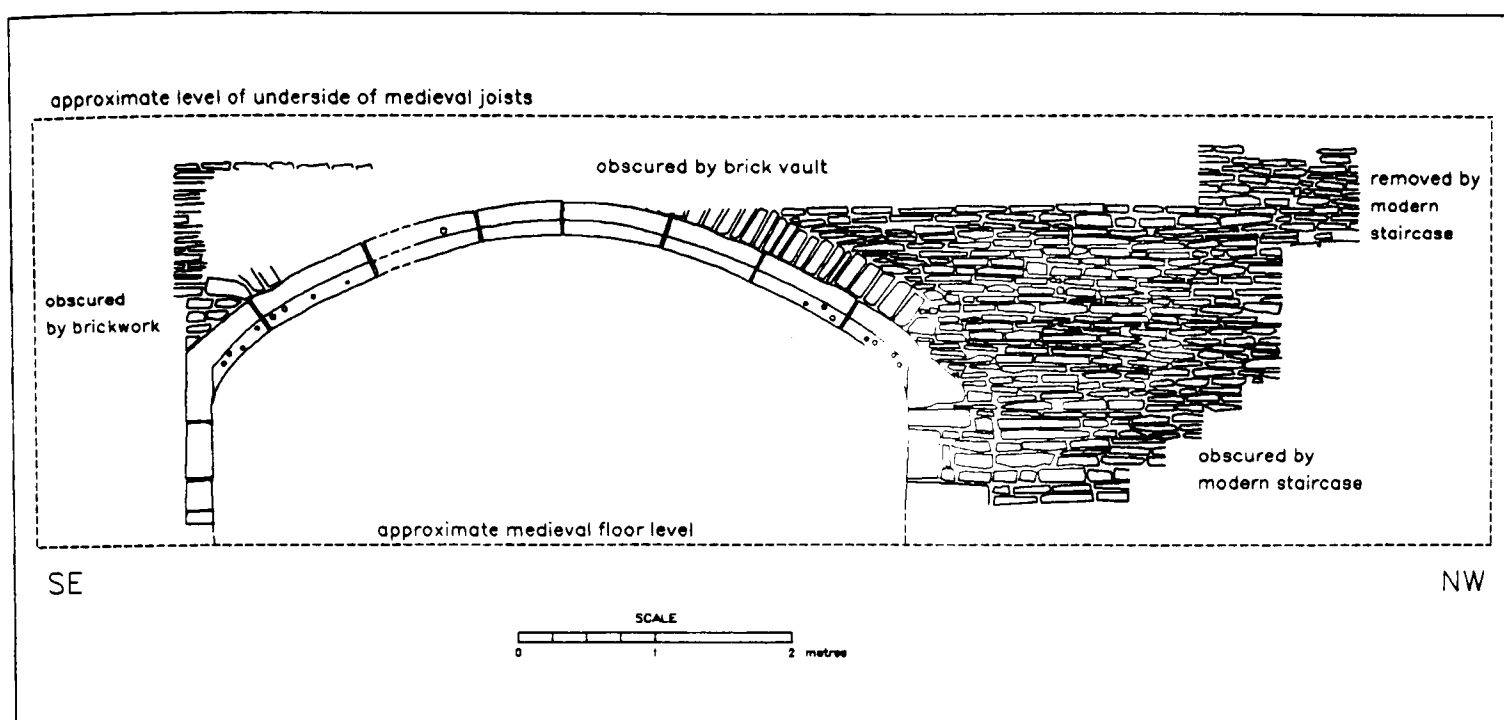


Fig. 119. 47-9 Westgate Street, Gloucester. Elevation of rear wall of front chamber.

this cannot have been so: the rib nearest the street and the vault itself are flush with the rear wall of the front chamber, the stonework of which is of one phase (Fig. 119).¹ If this wall had been the exterior face of the original front wall, the arched rib would, thus, have formed part of the façade, which would have been a most unlikely arrangement. It is clear that the barrel-vaulted undercroft is coeval with the front chamber, although it is reasonable to assume that the two parts had different functions.² As at The Vine, Winchester, the front section had good fenestration and access direct to the street. The rear undercroft was less well lit, although the inaccessible rear wall may have contained a window opening onto a light well. It is unlikely, however, that there was rear access for deliveries, as in the Winchester example, for there is no known lane at the rear. A small blocked doorway in the west wall could have provided access to an adjacent undercroft or, more probably, opened onto a staircase within the wall that would have led to the house above. The

¹ Figs. 118 and 119 are based on a survey by P. Moss and A. Cook, for Gloucester Archaeological Unit.

² Fig. 119 shows holes in the northernmost rib which indicate that there was a wattle and daub partition, although there is no way of telling when this was constructed.

duplication of doorways on the streetfront could indicate that the wider one on the east was a goods entrance suitable, if the parallel with The Vine is correct, for the delivery of barrels.

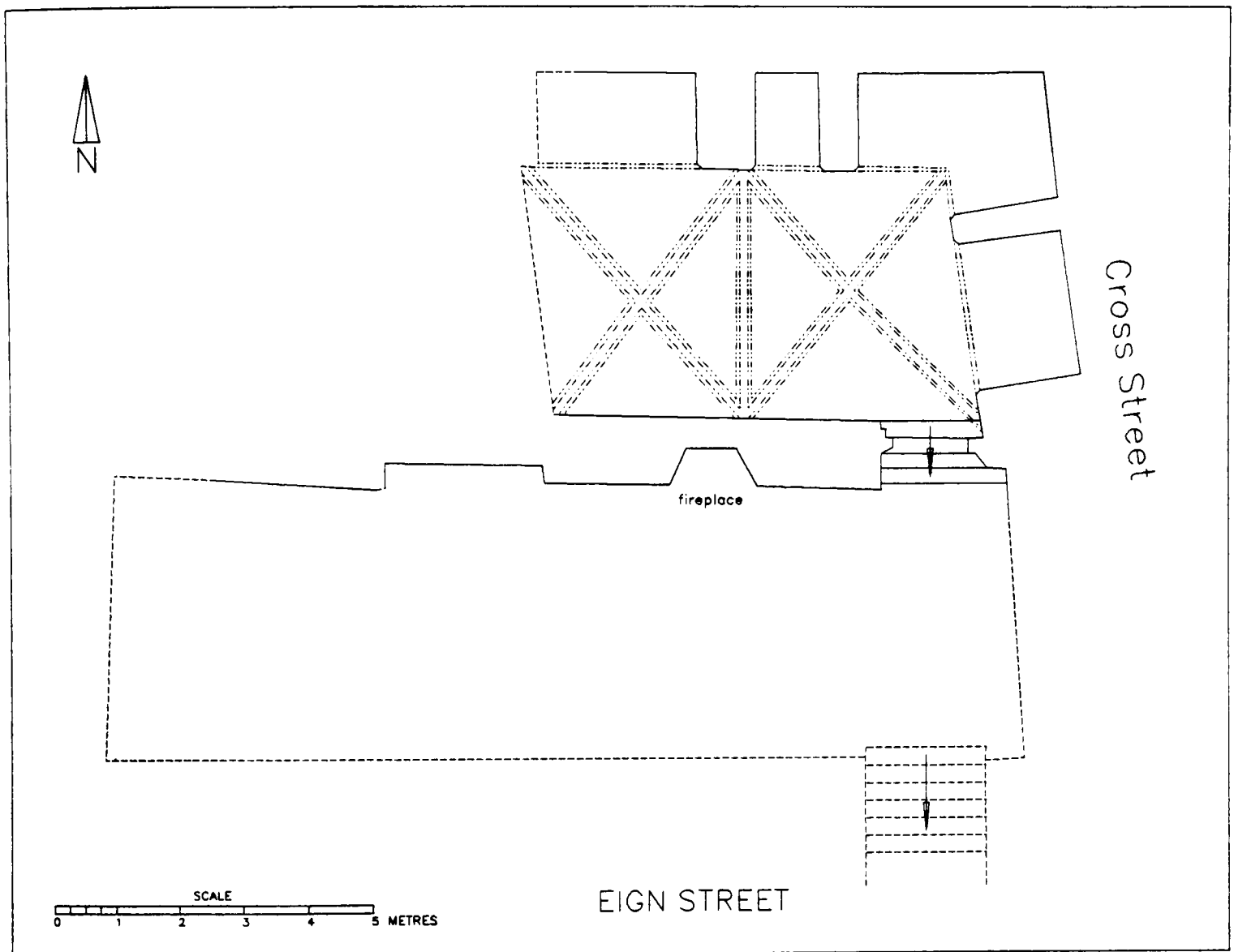


Fig. 120. 2 Eign Street, Hereford. Plan of undercroft showing the reconstructed extent of the streetfront chamber.

At 2 Eign Street, Hereford, there is a mutilated undercroft of c.1300 date with similar subdivision.¹ Until 1938 the rear part comprised two bays of quadripartite vaulting,² off which still survive four low-arched recesses

¹ The undercroft is currently (1994) inaccessible since carpet has been laid over the entrance hatch. The City of Hereford Archaeology Unit has archive photographic coverage, and several illustrated notes have been published: A. Watkins, 'Reports of Sectional Editors, 1923: Archaeology', *TWNFC* for 1921, 1922, and 1923 (1925), pp. 287-8; E.J. Bettington, 'An Underground Mediæval Chamber in Eign Street, Hereford', *TWNFC* for 1930, 1931, and 1932 (1935), pp. 177-8; F.C. Morgan, 'Vaulted Cellar West of All Saints' Church', *TWNFC* for 1939, 1940, and 1941 (1944), p. 61.

² F.C. Morgan, 'Vaulted Cellar West of All Saints' Church', *TWNFC* for 1936, 1937, and 1938 (1940), pp. 205-6.

that presumably had a storage function.¹ There is no access to the rear chamber other than from the doorway in the back wall of the front chamber, and again there is no fenestration. The front part is less intact but does not appear to have been vaulted. As at the Winchester and Gloucester examples, the front chamber is wider than the vaulted undercroft at the rear. The surviving fireplace towards the centre of the rear wall of the streetfront part of the undercroft indicates that here too there was subdivision into a more comfortable

and presumably well-lit room

suitable for reception or entertainment of valued customers, and a less hospitable but more secure room to the rear that appears to have been designed for storage.

Two other undercrofts of this type survive in Hereford but these have four-centred barrel vaults and probably date to the fifteenth century,² thus falling outside the period of this thesis. A written account of a townhouse at 5-8 High Street, Bristol, that was demolished in 1914,

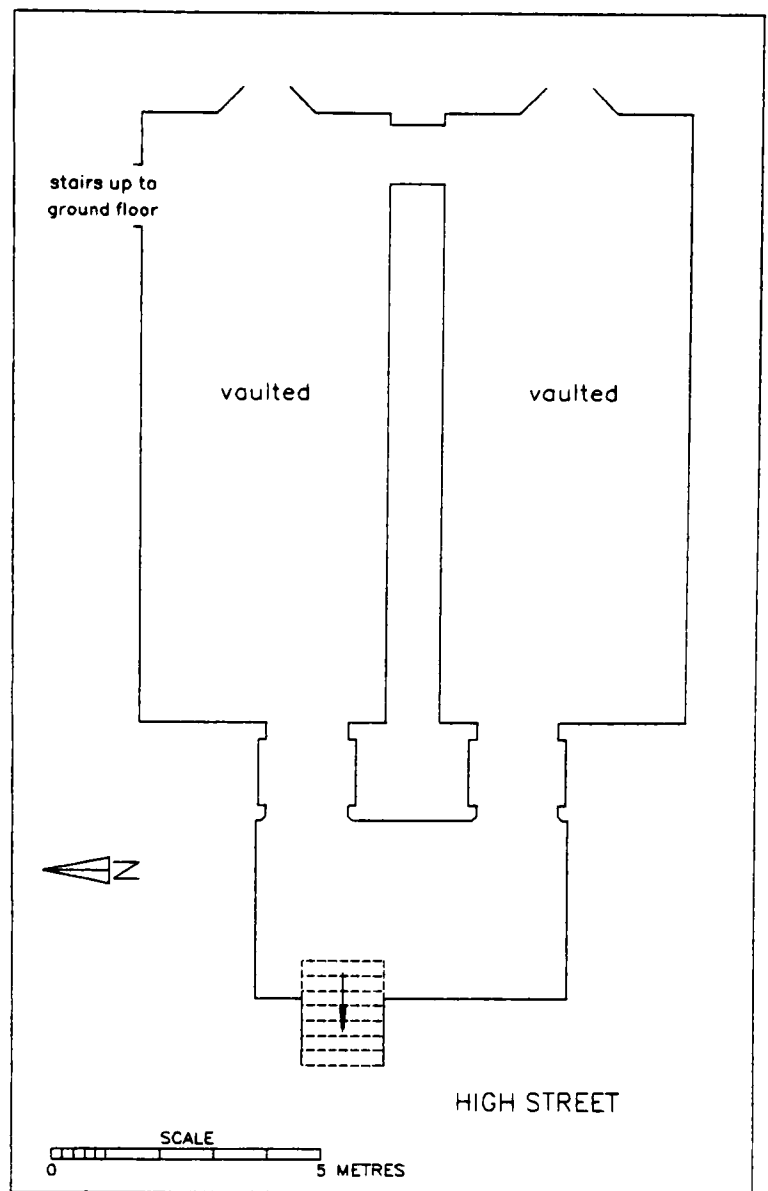


Fig. 121. 5-8 High Street, Bristol. Reconstruction plan of the demolished undercroft.

¹ There are similar recesses in a nearby medieval undercroft at 17 St Peter's Street, the dating of which is unclear as the late twelfth-century columns appear to be re-used material inserted at the time of the rebuilding of the house above in the sixteenth century; A. Watkins, 'Nash House,' Hereford', *TWNFC* for 1930, 1931, and 1932 (1935), pp. 56-7.

² 22 High Town, and 10 St Peter's Street: see survey and reports on these see High Town conservation study archive at the City of Hereford Archaeology Unit.

however, describes an example apparently of late thirteenth-century date.¹ This comprised a timber-ceiled undercroft parallel to and directly on the streetfront that opened, via two very short passages, onto two barrel-vaulted undercrofts at right angles to the street. Although the description of the undercroft had no accompanying plan, the photographs and dimensions in Pritchard's article have allowed the reconstruction of the undercroft shown in Fig. 121.²

A pair of early to mid fourteenth-century undercrofts preserved somewhat incongruously below a block of modern flats at

46-8 French Street, Southampton, provides the fifth and final example of this type of structure. As at Bristol, there are two parallel barrel-vaulted chambers to the rear that share the dividing wall and are oriented at right angles to the street. Both of these had access from the house above via spiral staircases in the rear wall. Neither had fenestration from the sides or the rear, and thus a storage function is implied. The northernmost

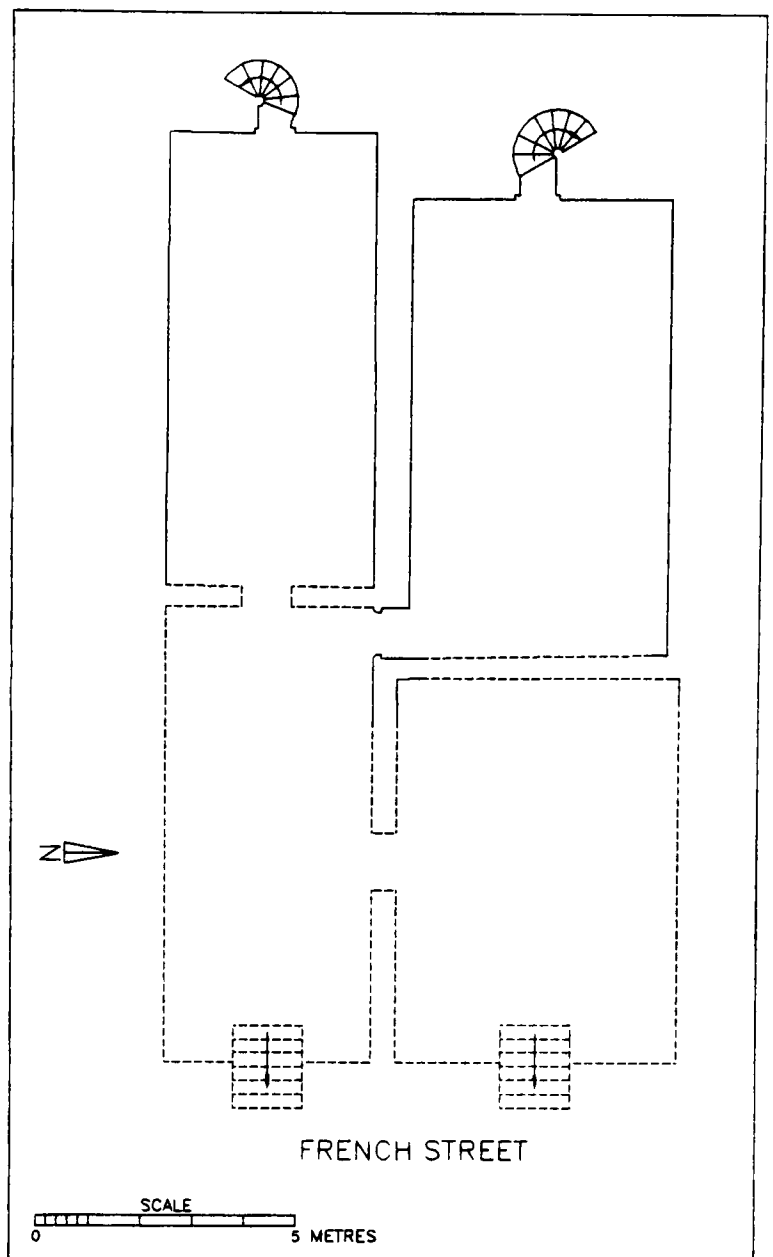


Fig. 122. 46-8 French Street, Southampton. Plan of undercrofts showing the probable former extent of the demolished front chambers.

¹ J.E. Pritchard, 'Bristol Archaeological Notes, 1913-1919: High Street' *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society* 42 (1920), pp. 127-34.

² In addition to the details shown Pritchard describes a small chamber (1.83m x 1.22m) off the internal staircase at the northeast corner of the undercrofts. Similar small chambers are known at 3 Laurence Pountney Hill (London), and may have functioned as secure counting houses or places to keep especially valuable goods or money.

vaulted undercroft advances east of the other, and at this point there is a doorway connecting the northern rear chamber to the southern front chamber. The front chambers were clearly not vaulted, as Faulkner observed, since the walls continue well above the springing of the vaults to the rear. The tothing of a thin cross-wall can be seen in the southern undercroft, and more substantial remains of a similar wall survive in the northern undercroft. The forwards extent of the front chambers can be deduced from the evidence of the medieval street line preserved at 58 French Street just to the south, and St Michael's church to the north. The combined area of the front rooms reconstructed on this basis would have given $c.76m^2$ for what could have well been a tavern.

Other occurrences of subdivided undercrofts are found although rarely with the evidence for different functions of the two parts implied by the different construction techniques and architectural features in these five examples (see Fig. 123).¹ The large vaulted undercroft of $c.1300$ at the rear of 12 Bridge Street, Chester, is set back 12.8m from the front of the Row walkway, probably behind a contemporary or earlier undercroft of identical dimensions on the streetfront, although the construction quality may indicate that this was more than the cellarage for a tavern in front.² At Quilter's Vault, High Street, Southampton, the whole length of the late thirteenth-century undercroft survives, but there is no difference in the architectural treatment either side of the, now removed, dividing wall.³ In view of the association of Winchelsea with the Gascon wine trade it is

¹ The undercroft at 37 Watergate Street, Chester, has stone vaulting at the rear only, but, in the absence of any identifiable partition between this part and the timber-ceiled area in front, it is uncertain whether this functioned as a two-part undercroft: see pp. 146-7. The undercroft at 12 The Square, Winchester, has a surviving vault set back $c.7.2m$ from the street, and which measures 8.72m long and 5.63m wide. The only possible part of the original front half of the undercroft is a fragment of stone walling on the west side at the junction with the vault, and this suggests that the front part was timber ceiled. The barrel vault may be fourteenth century, although it is not closely datable on stylistic grounds.

² See pp. 147-9.

³ See p. 378.

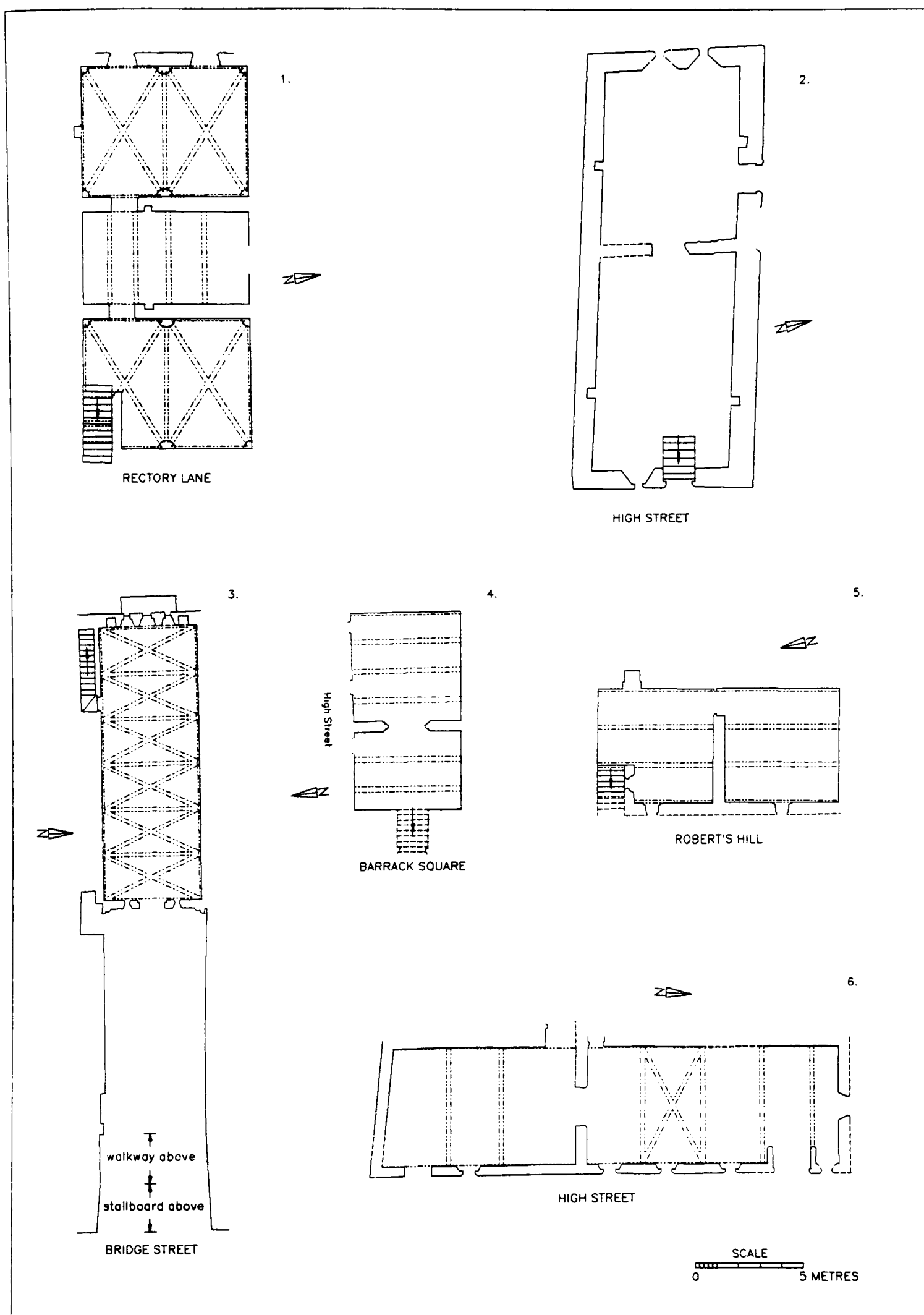


Fig. 123. 1. Black Friars Plat, Rectory Lane, Winchelsea; 2. Quilter's Vault, High Street, Southampton; 3. 12 Bridge Street, Chester; 4. The Stone House, Barrack Square, Winchelsea; 5. Hiham Mews, Robert's Hill, Winchelsea; 6. 137-9 High Street, Southampton.

perhaps significant that three subdivided undercrofts of c.1300 remain standing. In the case of The Stone House, Barrack Square, a dividing wall with a wide doorway separates the undercroft into a three-bay front part and a four-bay rear part, whereas in the case of Hiham Mews, Robert's Hill, the two identically-sized parts are parallel to the street. The third Winchelsea example, at the so-called Black Friar's Barn, Rectory Lane, is the most sophisticated in that it comprises three undercrofts. The undercroft on the streetfront and that at the rear have quadripartite vaulting and that in the middle has a ribbed barrel vault. All three examples have more provision for natural lighting than is normal in other Winchelsea undercrofts, which is consistent with, although not proof of, use as taverns.¹

Although the evidence of the buildings with undercrofts equally divided into two areas suggests that these were built with defined areas for barrel cellarage and for drinking/selling, the examples are too few for it to be assumed that this was the norm for undercrofts of this function.² In view of the proportion of taverns within documentary records of townhouses,³ and accepting that the majority were at undercroft level, the number of undercrofts showing arrangements similar to The Vine is low. The lack of undercrofts of this type could suggest that other undercroft forms were adaptable to use as taverns, perhaps even having less substantial internal partitions of which no evidence survives. The five-bay undercroft at Tackley's Inn was certainly a tavern by 1363, and probably functioned as

¹ For a general discussion of the evidence for New Winchelsea and its undercrofts, see pp. 122-5.

² To these examples it may be possible to add the twelfth-century undercroft at The Music House, King Street, Norwich, where the rear half of the subdivided undercroft is treated more simply in that it has a groin vault rather than the rib vault of the front part. However, the fact that it is at ground level may indicate that the front was used for retail purposes: see pp. 55-7.

³ James suggests that 'as early as 1309 there were as many as 354 taverners in London': James, *Wine Trade*, p. 193.

such from the time of its construction earlier in the fourteenth century.¹ There is a wide streetfront entrance to the undercroft suitable for barrel delivery, but no original subdivision or other evidence of separation into drinking and storage areas. It is possible that the recording of stripped walls and the excavation of floor surfaces elsewhere will uncover more evidence of the two-part undercroft which appears to have been more compatible with use as a tavern than does the single-space of Tackley's Inn.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of identifying taverns from physical evidence, there can be little doubt that the medieval undercroft was a commercial entity and that it was peculiarly equipped for the requirements of the wine trade, whether wholesale or retail. However, while wine was the chief import to England during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries at a typical level in excess of 20,000 tuns (160,000 barrels) per annum,² it can hardly have accounted for all or even the majority of undercrofts. Fig. 124 shows purely hypothetical examples of the quantities of wine which could have been stocked if the undercroft was used as a wholesale store only (Fig. 124.1), and in rear undercrofts of the sort seen in subdivided taverns (Figs. 124.2 and 124.3). These are broadly consistent with the recorded figures for the two taverns in Ipswich.³ If it is assumed that there was an average storage capacity of eighty barrels per undercroft and that the imports from each of the two annual wine fleets were sold on before the arrival of the next, only 400 undercrofts would have been required for imports to London that were in the order of 8,000 tuns (64,000 barrels) per annum in the early fourteenth century.⁴ Similar reasoning

¹ See pp. 164-75.

² James, *Wine Trade*, p. 10.

³ See above, p. 229.

⁴ James, *Wine Trade*, p. 10.

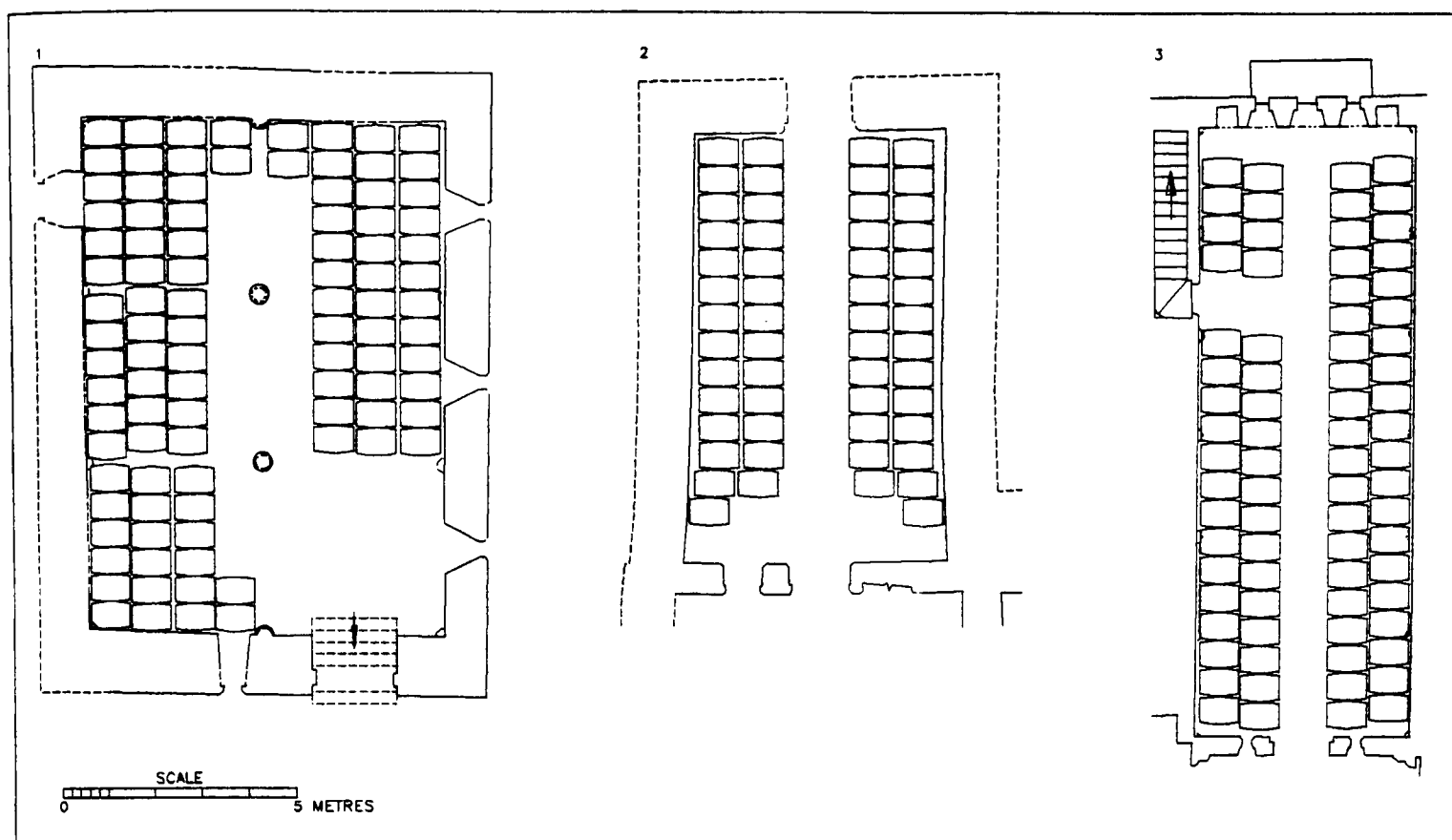


Fig. 124. Potential wine stocking (figures exclude stacking barrels) in undercrofts at: 1. Vicars' Hall, Chichester (96 barrels); 2. the rear of The Vine, Winchester (54 barrels); 3. the rear of 12 Bridge Street, Chester (76 barrels).

using the 1300-1 figures would account for sixty-three undercrofts in Southampton, and for sixty-five to seventy undercrofts in Winchelsea,¹ although it has been suggested that wine imports in this year were about two-thirds of their level in years of uninterrupted trade.² Such numbers of undercrofts are considerably smaller than the expected number of split-level townhouses in these towns, but the proportion of wine cellars is difficult to estimate.³ The evidence of Chester is thus of great importance for the number of split-level townhouses encapsulated within the Rows alone can be reliably reconstructed at c.290 by the time the system reached its full extent around 1350. Despite an absence of the detailed records, it is clear that wine was not imported on a scale even approaching the estimated annual storage potential of 5,800 tuns (46,400 barrels) for these

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³ William Urry has pointed out that in 1553 the number of wine cellars in Canterbury was restricted to four, and suggests that a reference to '*les iiiij. celers de vin*' in 1220 means that this was a long-standing limit; Urry, *Canterbury*, p. 111.

undercrofts: wine imports to Chester were surprisingly low in volume, and well below those for Bristol or Southampton.¹ Although it is clear that undercrofts were used by the wine trade in Chester,² it is improbable that even at peak times more than say 15% of the undercrofts could have been used in this way. The absence of any other high volume trade peculiar in type or quantity to Chester suggests that the majority of undercrofts were used for a wide variety of trades.

Moreover, even where documentary records reveal the ownership of a split-level townhouse by a vintner it does not follow that the undercroft was used exclusively for the storage and selling of wine. James has shown that the seasonality of the medieval wine trade meant that after the selling of the vintage and racked (*reek*) wines, wine traders were engaged in gathering together comparable quantities of a variety of products and materials (especially grain) for export to the destinations of the wine fleet:³ it is possible that during the summer and early autumn some undercrofts used in the wine trade but not occupied by permanent taverns may have functioned as collection points for these exports.⁴ This would be applicable, however, only where the merchants held undercrofts on a relatively long-term basis: at the beginning of the fourteenth century foreigners were lading 75% of the ships carrying wine from Gascony to England and the restrictions on the time that non-resident Gascons could spend in England selling their wines, and the desire to sell early when demand was at its peak meant that their tenancies of undercrofts could be

¹ Pers. comm. Alan Thacker; see A.T. Thacker *VCH Chester* (forthcoming).

² *Ibid.*

³ James, *Wine Trade*, pp. 164-8.

⁴ The evidence for exports to Gascony by wine merchants is complicated by the Charter or Rolls of Oleron (the sea-laws of the Middle Ages) that are best preserved in the fourteenth-century copy of the Oak Book of Southampton. This makes it clear that the intention at least was that a ship loading at Bordeaux, or elsewhere, 'hires out her casks to stow the wines'. If this was normal practice this may have meant that empty barrels were placed high in the ship or were filled with dry goods such as grain: P. Studer (ed.), *The Oak Book of Southampton*, Vol. 2 (Southampton, 1911), p. 73.

measured in weeks.¹ In such circumstances, where imported wine was sold on quickly wholesale, undercrofts must have become vacant more quickly after the arrival of the wine fleets, and other secondary seasonal functions, or vacant premises, can be expected. In view of the lack of written records detailing the precise functions and occupants of undercrofts even as late as the mid fourteenth century, and the lack of functional evidence from excavations of undercrofts, it is unlikely that the complete range of activities of this fundamental element of the split-level townhouse will ever be fully understood, although future study of the types, transport, and quantities of imports and exports will help to elucidate the context in which undercrofts became so popular.

¹ The return to a writ of *certiorari* of 1300 addressed to the mayor and sheriffs of London gives the residential limit as forty days: R.R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letter-Books preserved among the archives of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter-Book C, c.1291-1309* (London, 1901), p. 80. James states, however, that it was extended to three months as early as 1280: James, *Wine Trade*, p. 71.

CHAPTER 5

THE UPPER LEVEL: SHOPS, SOLARS, STALLS, STALLBOARDS, ENCROACHMENTS, SELDS, AND RESIDENCES

Since the relationship between different parts of the split-level townhouse at the upper level(s) requires consideration, it is the intention of this chapter to examine in detail the identity, function, and form of all the major elements of the townhouse above the level of the undercroft. The various parts of the upper level(s), of the split-level townhouse are inevitably less well represented than undercrofts in the physical evidence but are frequently referred to in the documentary sources.

This is especially the case with the shops on the street frontage, where the sheer number of these typically small units has meant that they are the most documented specific part of the split-level townhouse, whereas their susceptibility to redevelopment and their usually insubstantial construction means that they rarely survive. Moreover, the location of shops above undercrofts has precluded them from figuring at all in the excavation of split-level townhouses. This is not the case for all the elements above undercroft level, however, for in some cases the undercroft did not extend under all of the townhouse. More elusive than shops are the large single-trade markets known as selds in contemporary documentary sources: it is clear that these were located at the upper level and to the rear of the streetfront shops. The final commercial element of the split-level townhouse were the stalls in front of the building that were created by encroachment into the public highway as early as the thirteenth century.

Shops (and solars)

As a result of the profusion of medieval title deeds relating to shops they have become the part of the townhouse most studied by urban historians, and there can be little justification of repeating here published results which discuss, for example, the trades of shopkeepers,¹ the grouping and zoning of different trades,² or the property market.³ Such research, however, has focused on the use of contemporary records of shops for the study of the social and economic structure of the town and further analysis of this material is necessary to determine the significance of the details of construction and layout of the shop contained in documentary sources in relation to the physical evidence.

The result of documentary research, and especially the tenement histories of Oxford, Winchester, and Cheapside, London, is a mass of examples which reveal that the early medieval shop was a consistently small-sized retail unit: two to four shops typically formed the streetfront of a tenement at right angles to the street. As with undercrofts, the documentation for

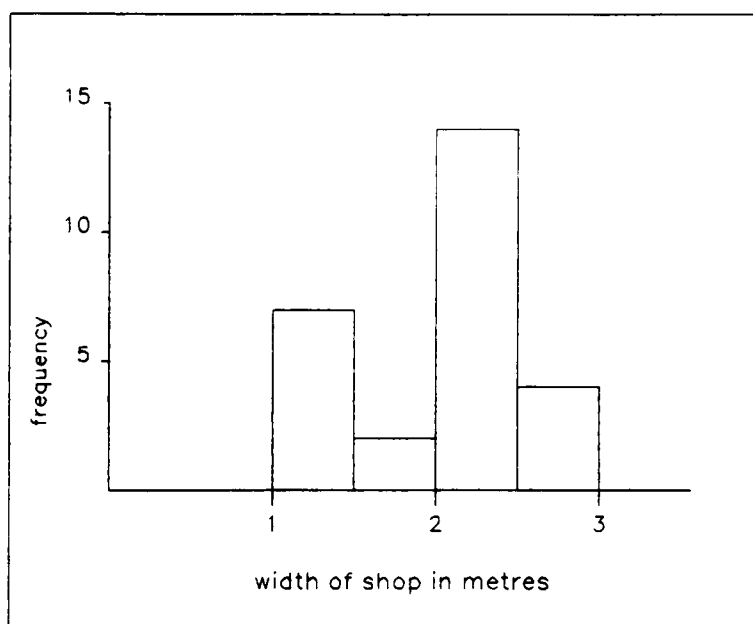


Fig. 125. Histogram showing frequency distribution of pre-c.1350 shop widths for the Cheapside study area.

¹ Keene cites the principal trades of shopkeepers in Cheapside itself as *merciers*, drapers, goldsmiths, spicers, saddlers, girdlers, chandlers, ironmongers, cutlers, and spurriers, and in the side streets were founders, wiredrawers, bucklemakers, pursemakers, buttonmakers, hosiers, hoodmakers, and embroiderers; Keene, *Shops and Shopping*, p. 31.

² *Ibid.*; *WS* 2, p. 335.

³ D. Keene, 'The Property Market in English Towns A.D. 1100-1600', in J.-C.M. Vigueur (ed.), 'D'une ville à l'autre: structures matérielles et organisation de l'espace dans les villes européennes (XIII^e-XVI^e siècle)', *Collections de l'École Française de Rome* 122 (1989), pp. 201-26.



Fig. 126. Histogram showing the frequency distribution of depths of pre-c.1350 shops in the Cheapside study area.

frequently given measurements allow more precise analysis of the average size and the variation from this. The twenty-five shops on Cheapside whose individual widths are recorded had an average width of 2.02m, with the narrow dispersion of actual values around this mean reflected by a small standard deviation of 510mm: the histogram in Fig. 125 shows the frequency distribution produced using class intervals of 500mm. The consistency of the widths of the Cheapside shops is not found in the lengths, for which the mean is 3.49m and the standard deviation is a considerable 1.34m. The physical evidence for the dimensions of shops is more limited. The five shops at Tackley's Inn, Oxford, must have had an average width of 3.1m, and, in view of the location of the front wall of the hall, a length of 6.2m.¹ Such a length contrasts with the Cheapside average and appears to have been unusual: at 58 French Street the shop measured 3.7m wide and 4.5m deep, while the shops at 48-52 Bridge Street, 38-42 Watergate Street, and 6 Lower Bridge Street, Chester, were still

¹ See pp. 164-75.

nearer the London figures at c.3.25m long, and possibly an average of 3.2m wide (Fig. 132).¹

There are no documentary references to dimensions of shops in ground-level townhouses, but it would appear that such shops were very different from those in the split-level townhouse. The two vaulted ground-floor rooms at Moyses Hall, Bury St Edmunds, measure 4.9m wide and 11.5m long, and 7.7m wide and 11.4m long, and occupy the whole ground floor.² The three shops at the Jew's House, Lincoln, averaged 3.2m wide and 4.9m deep and are probably more typical: shops of similar depth but unknown width probably existed at 30-2 King Street, Kings Lynn;³ and Cogan House, St Peter's Street, Canterbury.⁴ It is likely that the 5.3m wide and 6.4m long front chamber or the whole ground floor (15.6m in length) at the Music House, King Street, Norwich, was also a shop.⁵ It would appear that the shop in the split-level townhouse was smaller probably in actual dimensions and certainly in proportion to the size of the building, than the shop in the English ground-level townhouse, which, like the shop in the continental house, occupied the whole ground floor of the streetfront range.

Not only was the shop in the split-level townhouse smaller, but it could also have the appearance of being tacked onto the front of the building. This was due to the fact that, as both the physical and documentary evidence reveals,⁶ these shops were normally of timber-framed construction, even where the townhouse to the rear was built of stone, and this

¹ There are no surviving partitions to mark the shop widths, and the estimate of five shops in each of these townhouses is based on the most likely arrangement indicated by the location of principal structural walls, the main entrance, etc.

² See pp. 62-6.

³ See pp. 52-3.

⁴ See pp. 54-5.

⁵ See pp. 55-7.

⁶ Although Keene has identified a few stone shops in Poultry, London, he argues that most shops in London were built of timber: Keene, *Shops and Shopping*, p. 35.

this difference in construction has given rise to the suggestion that shops could have been created by encroachment onto the highway.¹ In a few rare instances shops were created in such a manner, as was certainly the case in front of Reginald le Hamberger's house at 1 Poultry, London, where in the mid thirteenth century a purpresture in the form of a pentice had developed into four shops, with solars above.² Elsewhere the presence of stone party walls or a stone undercroft advancing as far forward as the front wall of the shop reveal that if encroachment had taken place at any point it was not by the addition of rows of timber shops in front of separate townhouses to the rear. The integrated nature of shop and townhouse can be seen at the few better preserved split-level townhouses. At 58 French Street, Southampton, the shop was placed between the through-passage on the one side and the northernmost of the two stone side walls on the other, and was timber framed at the front and rear (Fig. 132). Likewise, at 28-30 Watergate Street, Chester, the stone-built townhouse - almost certainly with a stone façade to the street - contained a shop opening onto the Row-walkway that was defined front and rear by transverse timber-framed walls: the rear wall partly survives and was timber framed, and the lack of evidence of a stone wall at the front of the shop implies that the frontage was of timber.³ At both 48-52 Bridge Street, and 38-42 Watergate Street, Chester, the shops were built against the stone wall of an open hall,⁴ and here too the lack of any stonework to the street side of the parallel hall suggests that the rows of shops were timber framed. Similar reasoning means that the five shops at Tackley's Inn, Oxford, were probably also of timber, and, as at the other examples,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

² Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, 105/25.

³ See pp. 140-3.

⁴ See Fig. 132 (p. 274).

the shops did not advance further forward than the stone-built undercroft below.

The predominance of timber-framed construction for shops in split-level townhouses even where the party walls or the whole structure behind was of stone suggests that the streetfront range was so built for a particular purpose. A thirteenth- and fourteenth-century fashion for timber framing has long been argued, but this would appear to be contradicted in this instance by so many high quality residences of stone behind timber shops. Indeed, it would be more reasonable to assume that the builders of such townhouses cared less for the commercial streetfront range than for their residence and were, thus, unlikely to be concerned that the frontage must follow the latest fad while the domestic rooms failed to do so. Timber construction of shops allowed a certain amount of flexibility in the position of internal walls, but it is improbable that this strikingly modern idea was the chief motivation behind the use of timber. More convincing is the fact that with the demand for retail space such that shops had extremely narrow frontages, the use of thick stone partition walls would have been more wasteful of space than thin timber walls with wattle and daub panels. For example, a typical townhouse frontage comprising two shops 2.02m wide and a 1m wide entrance to the building behind would have required a plot 9.04m wide if built with stone walls 1m thick, whereas the same in timber frame would have required a plot of only 5.64m, if a partition thickness of 150mm is assumed. More efficient use of space must have been appreciated at the time and, as commercial effectiveness underlay the development of the split-level townhouse, this is the most plausible reason for the use of timber-framed front ranges.

Original shopfronts in surviving split-level townhouses are rare and this is almost certainly a result of the use of timber-framed construction and

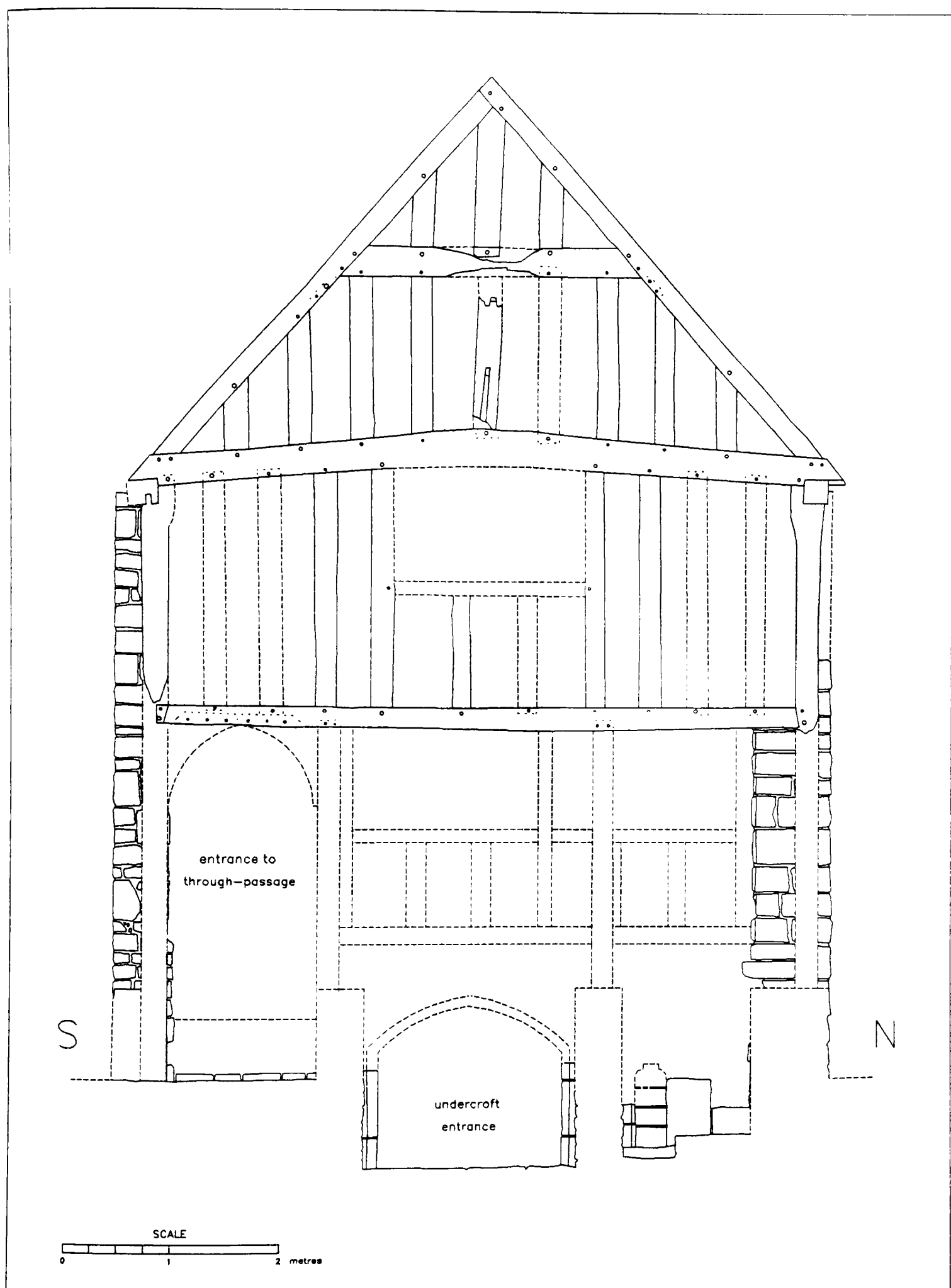


Fig. 127. 58 French Street, Southampton. Front elevation as surviving in 1940, with reconstructed elements in dashed line (these differ in some respects from the present form of the building).

the susceptibility of this part of the building to redevelopment. Although

58 French Street, Southampton, is the most intact split-level townhouse of pre-c.1350 date, the medieval shopfront had been lost before bomb damage in 1940 and thus nothing more than the line of the frontage and the position of the doorway survived on which to base the present reconstruction.¹ Nevertheless, the surviving ground-level entrance, the doorway of the undercroft, and the lightwell, provide some evidence of the general form of the late thirteenth-century shopfront in that it is clear that there could not have been a doorway in the shopfront and that it must have been entered off the passage which led to the residence. Moreover, the provision of the stairwell containing the steps to the undercroft, and the adjacent lightwell would have prevented access to the shop window: in view of the raised ground floor of the split-level townhouse, the window would have been set too high to make such access desirable.

No other split-level townhouse survives for which even such general aspects of the shopfront can be deduced and the absence of extant examples of shopfronts of this period confirms just how unfortunate was the destruction of 12 Watergate Street, Chester, in 1985.² Here, the salvage recording of the upstanding building revealed a partially surviving shopfront on the Row walkway that probably dated from the third quarter of the thirteenth century. The top rail, a door post, and the posts at either end of the frontage were all that survived. To the east of the doorway the top rail revealed little in the way of peg holes, apart from a group in the centre and two pairs at the east end. The latter were associated with mortices of c.170mm width and clearly marked the position

¹ The reconstruction of the shopfront undertaken, along with the rest of the house, in 1983-5 by English Heritage is generally acceptable, although the continuation of the window across the end of the north wall is unfortunate and the use of large panes of window glass a perhaps unnecessary concession to the late twentieth century.

² See pp. 134-40.

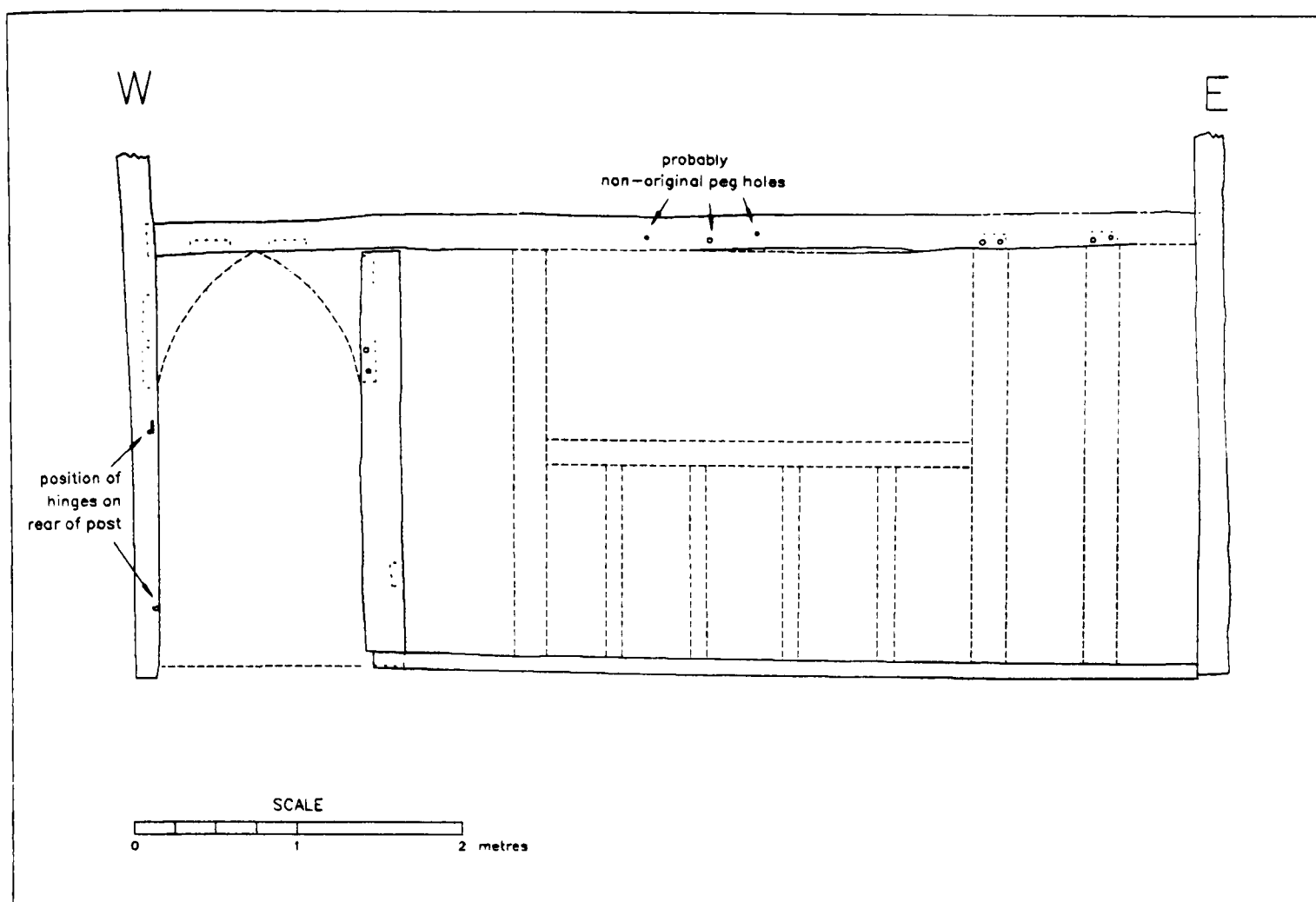


Fig. 128. 12 Watergate Street, Chester. Reconstruction of thirteenth-century Row-level shopfront showing timbers that survived until 1985 with their major distortions corrected.

of substantial studs, whereas the central peg holes may have secured lightweight studs. However, the height of the central peg holes above the underside of the rail was inconsistent with the positioning of peg holes elsewhere in the timber frame of this period and indicates that they were not original. Whatever the case, it is clear that the area between the doorway and the studs on the east had little in the way of structural timbers and this implies that there was at least one window, and possibly a second doorway: the $5.1\text{m} \times 4.9\text{m}$ (25m^2) area available to the east of the through-passage is sufficient for there to have been a second shop.

Documentary sources provide little more evidence for the shopfront than the surviving or recorded examples since even in the Cheapside study area there are only a few accounts of the expected combination of windows and doors. William of St Albans, chandler, by his will, dated 1336 and proved in 1337, left to his wife Joan four shops (previously described as seven)

on the north side of Cheapside, each with two windows, with solars above.¹ Another shop on Cheapside had in 1366 a doorway opening off the street and a second to the entrance passage to the adjacent property.² Away from Cheapside, on the corner of Soper Lane and St Pancras Lane there was a small shop described in a will, proved in 1290, as having a window.³ Nearby, on the west side of Soper Lane, a shop is described in a lease of 1319 as containing three chests and two stalls and as having a doorway flanked by two further stalls on the outside.⁴ More detailed is the late thirteenth-century account of the adjacent shop that had a doorway and window in a frontage that measured $1\frac{5}{8}$ ells of King Henry III less an inch (4ft 9½in; 1.46m).⁵ A stall from which Alice, wife of Hugh de Chelmeresford, traded was in front of the shop and said to be in the window (*en la fenestre*) and measured $1\frac{1}{4}$ ells less 2in (3ft 7in; 1.09m) in length from the entry to the shop on the south to the post of the window on the north. Keene has subtracted the length of the stall from the width of the shop to give a doorway width of only 1ft 2½in (368 mm), but this fails to take into account that, as measurements of the depth and the width at the rear were given also, the dimensions of the shop are likely to have been internal while the external stall may have overlapped the window post: as this forms the northern edge of the property this would almost certainly have been a major structural post up to 300mm square.

The presence of stalls in front of shop windows and, as with Alice's stall, their separate occupancy suggests that in these cases customers had to enter the building to make purchases from the shop. Moreover, even

¹ Keene and Harding, *Cheapside*, 105/17.

² *Ibid.*, 145/9C.

³ *Ibid.*, 145/19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 145/5A.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 145/5B.

where there was no stall, the nature of the split-level townhouse renders unconvincing Keene's argument for it being a common event for the customer to buy while standing in the street.¹ The problems of access to the shop window were by no means unique to 58 French Street, Southampton, for the split-level townhouse at right angles to the street was the most popular house type and a front entrance to the undercroft was essential: lightwells for undercroft windows in the front wall were also the norm. Where the frontage width and the pressure of the property market resulted in several shops above a single undercroft, access may have been possible to the windows of some of the shops, although the awkward height difference would have remained. Indeed, it may be that the difficulty of serving customers from a room set typically c.1m above street level, even where steps to the undercroft did not prevent any approach, was fundamental to the proliferation of stalls in front of the shops. In the absence of strong evidence from documentary sources it can only be assumed that in a reverse of the situation of large arched shopfronts in Romanesque ground-level townhouses, the shopkeeper in the split-level townhouse rarely sold wares through a window. The multiple stalls and chests frequently recorded within shops in the Cheapside study area confirm that this was the case.²

Although usually separated from the building behind, shops were frequently in the same occupancy as the solars above. Indeed, interconnection between shops and the solars over them has been long understood, and a commercial function for some of these is argued by Keene.³ Considering the pre-c.1350 documentary evidence for Cheapside,

¹ Keene, *Shops and Shopping*, p. 34.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

it appears that despite a considerable number of solars of uncertain relationship to the rest of the house, solars at forty-three properties were within the same tenancy as shops below. Only six solars were clearly independent of any other part of the townhouse, and a further six solars were associated with the house behind. Moreover, only two of these references to solars forming part of the residence can be reliably identified as being on the streetfront above shops (105/16 and 104/37-41). More complex tenancy arrangements, such as that at 104/32 where a tavern, probably at undercroft level, was held with solars above separately leased shops, occur in one or two cases only, and it is clear that in Cheapside the norm was for shops to be occupied along with the solars.

A similar pattern, but with less examples, is indicated by the tenement histories for Winchester. In the High Street area there are seven properties which are described as having solars on the streetfront.¹ Of these solars one is described as being over a cellar,² and, like a similar London example,³ it may have been a shop over a semi-subterranean undercroft. The other solars were over shops and it appears that most were in the same occupancy as the shops: only that at the property next to the Buttercross, and known as *Helle*, possibly formed part of a residence.⁴

Keene suggests that occasional references to fixtures such as cupboards and chests indicate that solars could have been used for stockrooms or even as shops,⁵ but most of the documentary evidence from Cheapside and Winchester lacks sufficient detail for it to be possible to establish the

¹ *WS* 2, 44, 77, 90, 158, 194, 195, and 197.

² *Ibid.*, 77.

³ Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, 104/32.

⁴ *WS* 2, 158; see (above) pp. 196-7.

⁵ Keene, *Shops and Shopping*, p. 36.

precise function of solars. Furthermore, the multiplication of solars, one on top of the other, may have meant that stockrooms and lodgings could have coexisted above shops: it is unfortunate that the documentary sources reveal little of the number of storeys in the streetfront range of the split-level townhouse.

Physical evidence of the relationship between the solar and the rest of the townhouse confirms the presence of both solars linked with shops and solars forming part of the main house behind, but the numbers are too few to be a reliable indicator of the relative proportions. At 58 French Street, Southampton, there can be little doubt that the solar was part of the residence, with the doorway in its rear wall opening onto a gallery linking it to the two-storey block at the rear, and to a staircase in the hall. Likewise, at 38-42 Watergate Street and 48-52 Bridge Street, Chester, the number and juxtaposition of doorways in the rear walls of the shops appears to be excessive for access to even the narrowest of shops, and indicates that at least one doorway in each case opened onto a staircase leading from the hall up to a solar. That there should be just one example in each of these Chester houses, however, means that other solars within these wide-frontaged townhouses were without access to the residence and presumably occupied by the shopkeepers: the alternative of interconnecting solars all along the frontage accessed by the one staircase from the residence is unlikely. Perhaps the clearest structural evidence for the normal arrangement being combined shop and solar units separate from the residence is their almost universal timber-framed construction, even when the house abutting the rear was built of stone. Thus, the majority of the timber-framed shops and solars at 38-42 Watergate Street and 48-52 Bridge Street, Chester, would have been self-contained. Similar construction at

Tackley's Inn, Oxford, is implied by the absence of surviving doorways linking the shops or solars and the stone hall.¹

Encroachments, stalls, and stallboards

Although the small shop units and the frequently connected solars above presented a solidly commercial streetfront they were not the sum total of retail outlets facing the street. In addition to markets or freestanding stalls that fall outside the scope of this thesis, it has been mentioned above that there were stalls in front of the shops, and some of these were clearly of a permanent nature. The value of such developments rather than a lack of space within the tenement plot to the rear seems to have been the cause of encroachment into the street. Likewise, the areas in front of the Row walkways in Chester, known as stallboards, were almost certainly timber encroachments into the highway having a threefold function of providing shelter for the undercroft entrances, additional scope for setting up stalls along the raised walkway, and enabling forwards extension of the solars above.

Of course, any such development in a public thoroughfare would have been contentious and, thus, it is possible to find examples of encroachments in the documentary records for court proceedings. Indeed, the documented examples from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are far more numerous than surviving contemporary structures. What is less clear, however, is the precise nature of these documented encroachments and the significance, if any, they had for the development or the popularity of the split-level arrangement.

London is again the richest source of documentary evidence and this chiefly comprises encroachments listed in the Eyre of 1244, with its 'Special

¹ For reconstructions of these four properties, see Fig. 132, p. 274.

Inquest into Purprestures' of 1246,¹ and the Eyre of 1276.² These two documents contain the largest number of individual records of encroachment offences for this period and as such provide the only opportunity of studying a large corpus of terminologically consistent descriptions. With each document containing well over one hundred specified encroachments it has been possible to collect together the different occurrences of each term and compare the statistical results of the two surveys.

TABLE 1. 1246 'Special Inquest into Purprestures'.³

FORM OF ENCROACHMENT	OCCURRENCES	%
PENTICE	64	45.70%
SOLAR	45	32.14%
CELLAR STEPS	15	10.71%
PORCH	14	10.00%
WHOLE BUILDING	1	0.71%
POSTS BEFORE DOOR	1	0.71%

The categories of encroachment contained within the inquest of 1246 are fairly self-evident, although the popular offence (32%) of building solars

¹ H.M. Chew and M. Weinbaum (eds.), *The London Eyre of 1244* (London Record Society, 6, 1970), pp. 136-153.

² M. Weinbaum (ed.), *The London Eyre of 1276* (London Record Society, 12, 1976), pp. 89-98.

³ Since several encroachments mention more than one architectural element, it has been necessary to reduce such composite terms to single architectural elements to avoid undue proliferation of categories. Thus, Master Richard of Stamford's integrated solar and porch arrangement (*unum solarium et unde porticum*) has been placed into the separate categories of solar and porch. In this manner it has been possible to reduce the 1246 survey to six main encroachment types.

to the nuisance of the king's highway perhaps requires some explanation: it would appear that solars restricted use of the street by having a massive, and too low, jetty or by being jettied out on posts, in the manner of 58 French Street, Southampton. Although there are specific references to building out on posts, such as that by the nuns of St Helens (*unum solarium stans super duos postes in vico regio*),¹ and Richard of Hadstock (*levavit duos postes qui subpediunt unum solarium*),² it is unlikely that these two instances were simply exceptions to the normal, and thus unexplained, problem of solars obstructing the street by deep and low jettying. The latter itself appears as a more detailed offence in the case of Master Thomas Eswy of Ironmonger Lane who had a jetty in his solar (*unum getticium in quodam solio*).³ Furthermore, the five documented instances of combined solars and porches (*solarium et unde porticum*) imply projections more substantial than a simple jetty. It would appear that the more precise definitions of some of the records of encroachment by solars are the result of inconsistencies in the description of offences rather than evidence of their variance from the norm. Indeed it is unlikely that jetties supported by posts or simply cantilevered out were seen as two very distinct types, and, in this light, it may be significant that the concluding comments of the inquest which sum up the encroachment categories list only cellar steps, pentices, and jetties.

It is clear from the text of the 1246 survey that word pentice (*appenticium*) does not signify a massive structure in the manner of the pentices in the centre of Chester and Winchester, but instead small lean-to roofs sheltering elements of the street frontage. Evidence of the small

¹ H.M. Chew and M. Weinbaum (ed.), 'The London Eyre of 1244', *London Record Society* 6 (1970) p. 146 (No. 430).

² *Ibid.*, p. 150 (No. 469).

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-3 (No. 396).

scale of pentices is found in the itemised offences: for example, Stephen of Bocking had a pentice above the steps of his cellar (*appenticium ultra gradus celarii*)¹ and Gervase Bran had a pentice at the door of his house (*appenticium ad hostium domus*).² The only instance in this text for a pentice being associated with more substantial structural elements occurs at Henry Rufus's pentice and solar (*appenticium et unum solarium*).³

The distinction between such pentices and porches is not clear, although porches would have been restricted to protecting entrances from the elements. With the porch (*porticum*) being absent from the categories in the summary at the end of the document, unlike the pentice, it could that again there was no great distinction, although at only 10% of the recorded encroachments porches may have been left out of the summary simply because they were a less common type of encroachment. There is some evidence, furthermore, that porches could be slightly more substantial than pentices. It was judged that the porch of Martin le Blaeter was an encroachment and that the posts thereof should be demolished (*postes illius prosternantur*).⁴ Elsewhere there are five instances of the combination of solar and porch (*solarium et unde porticum*).

The Eyre of 1276 provides an extremely useful comparison to the 1246 inquest, and describes a largely similar pattern and number of encroachment types. At 117 offences of this type the sample is slightly smaller than the 140 of the earlier survey, but is still adequate for the purposes of statistical analysis. The smaller number of offences may simply reflect the different method of assessing the instances of encroachment; in January 1246 the justices '*circiverunt Civitatem cum maiore et civibus ad*

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140 (No. 364).

² *Ibid.*, p. 140 (No. 368).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 147 (No. 435).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 148 (No. 442).

videndum et inquirendum de omnimodis purpresturis,¹ whereas the 1276 inquest does not evidence such a walkabout.²

TABLE 2. Eyre of 1276.³

FORM OF ENCROACHMENT	OCCURRENCES	%
PENTICE	42	35.90%
SOLAR	45	38.46%
STEPS	13	11.11%
PORCH	2	1.71%
WINDOW	3	2.56%
BEAM	6	5.13%
SHOP	5	4.27%
PALISADE	1	0.86%

The most obvious difference between Table 2 and Table 1 is the absence of the category of cellar steps in 1276. There is only one record of the term in the text, but the coincidence of the presence of a new encroachment type of unspecified steps, with the same 11% proportion of the total, means that it is reasonable to suppose that the steps recorded in 1276 provided access to cellars or, rather, undercrofts. That such a

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136 (No. 349).

² M. Weinbaum (ed.), *The London Eyre of 1276* (London Record Society, 12, 1976), p. 90 (No. 342, note 1).

³ As with Table 1, for the purposes of simplicity the table below uses single architectural features for each category, whereas, in reality, a few instances of encroachment combined two or more of these elements.

flight of steps should have led to the door of John de Stypenhethe's tavern is consistent with this interpretation.¹

The percentage changes within the common categories of the 1246 and 1276 inquests are not large enough to suggest a significant alteration in the type of encroachments over thirty years, confirming that split-level townhouses were already widespread in London by the earlier date. The reduction in the proportion of pentices and porches over this period, partly countered by an increase in offending solars, could have been caused by a rise in the number of townhouses with frontages similar to that at 58 French Street, Southampton. That is, the oversailing solar, probably supported on posts, would have performed the roles of the pentice and porch, with the additional gain of forwards expansion of the upper storey, or storeys. It is perhaps significant that a similar arrangement was achieving its peak of popularity in the Rows of Chester at this period.

The identification of statistical significance in the small changes in the proportions of encroachment categories depends on the justices' consistent terminology and classification of architectural elements. Whilst alternative words for the same encroachment types appear to be used elsewhere, in London it does seem that the main offences of building pentices, solars and porches were consistently recognised and defined. The occurrence on several occasions of combinations of these elements in both surveys is, perhaps, the best evidence for this. The word pentice (*appenticium*) in London seems to have continued to refer exclusively to lean-to roofs, as it had done in the 1246 inquest. Presumably, these pentices would have been supported by brackets or from hooks in the wall above. Keene

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 97 (No. 461); for discussion of the relationship between taverns and undercrofts, see (above) pp. 228-47.

argues that the function of the London pentices was to protect stalls that were attached to windows and which could be raised at night.¹ Where the lean-to roof of a London pentice was of more solid construction this was noted, as in the four great pentices in Ironmonger Lane that were erected in 1422-3, and were timber framed and clad.² As in 1246, the porch (*porticum*) cannot not easily differentiated from a pentice and, in view of this ambiguity, it is not clear why this type of encroachment should have declined in popularity.

Despite the evidence in other documentary sources for London,³ there is no mention of stalls encroaching on the highway in either 1246 or 1276. That of Alice, wife of Hugh de Chelmeresford, has been mentioned above, and there are another seven properties of pre-c.1350 date with stalls in the Cheapside study area: four are in Cheapside itself and four are in Soper Lane.⁴ The clearing of Cheapside in 1274 could be responsible for this apparent lack of stalls, although it can hardly account for their absence in 1246, or their minimal number in side streets.

In Chester the stalls, now known as stallboards, in front of the upper-level shops are clearly encroachments as they are built forward of the early medieval streetfront. Their function appears to have been twofold: they provided retail space on the unused outer side of the Row-walkway and simultaneously formed porches over the undercroft entrances. Unlike stalls in London, Chester stallboards appear to have been seen at least initially as unwanted encroachments. As early as 1293 indictments were

¹ Keene, *Shops and Shopping*, pp. 35-6.

² Keene and Harding, *Medieval Cheapside*, 95/5J-M.

³ Such as the example of a stall in Eastcheap recorded in 1170-97, and rented by Ralph the Butcher (*machecrario*) from the canons of Holy Trinity Aldgate for 2s: G.A.J. Hodgett (ed.), 'The Cartulary of Holy Trinity Aldgate', *London Record Society* 7 (1971), p. 52 (entry 271).

⁴ Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, 104/15, 104/16, 104/20, 104/34, 145/2, 145/5a, 145/5b, and 145/7c.

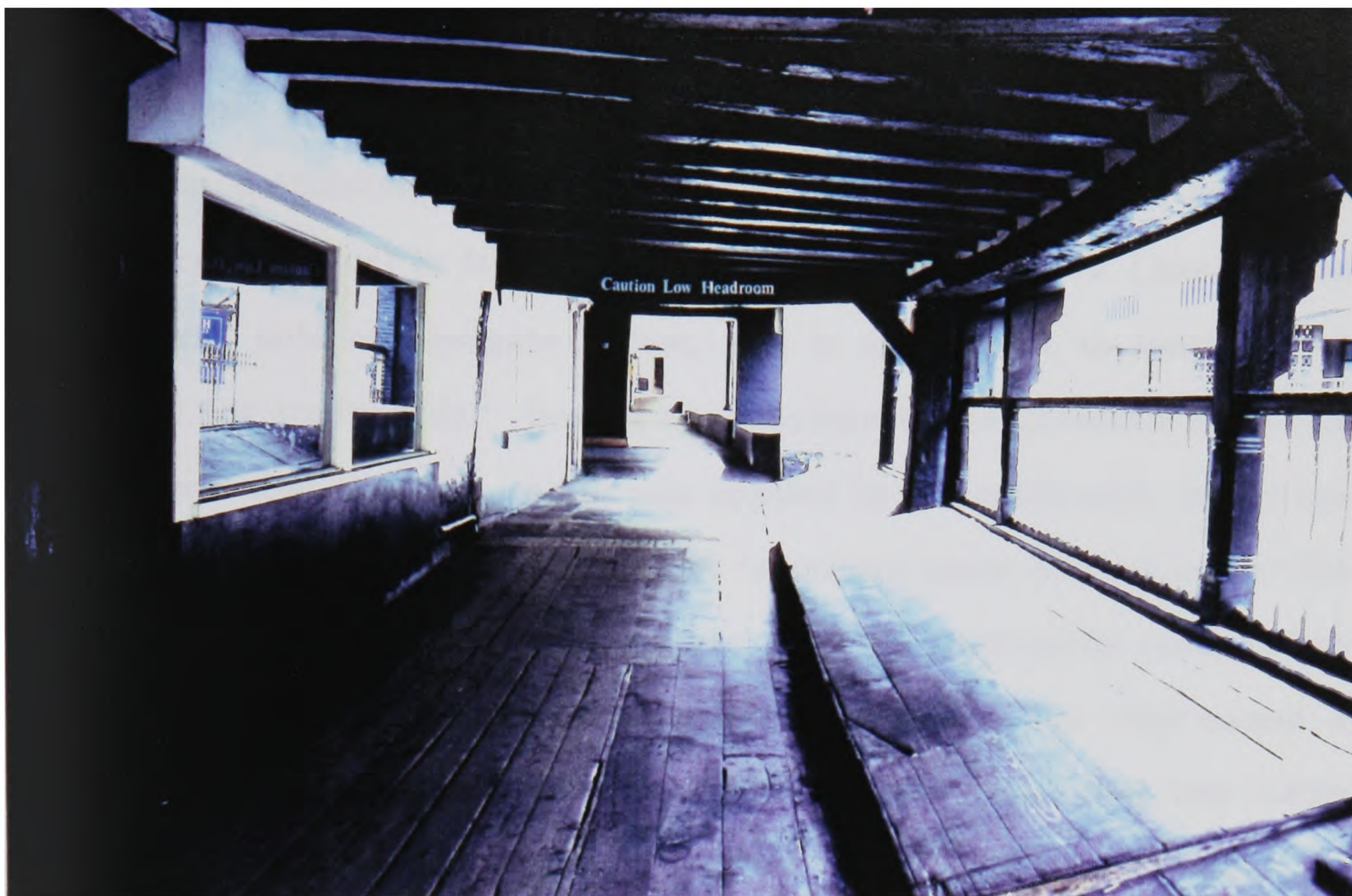


Fig. 129. 12 Bridge Street, Chester. View along the Row walkway looking northwards, and showing the sloping stallboard.



Fig. 130. Watergate Street. View west along Row walkway on south side.

made before the eyre of the justice of Chester for encroachments in the form of steps and *porcheria*. That these occurred in front of Row-walkways is demonstrated by those erected by Hugh Brickhill (then, or soon to become mayor) in front of four houses in Bakers' Row (*Baxterrowe*) on the north side of Eastgate Street, and it is difficult to believe that these were not stallboards.¹ During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it would seem that the term *tabula* was applied to the stallboard, hence the otherwise enigmatic reference to rent of 'a certain piece of land under the *tabula* of John Routon'.² It would appear that the stallboards remained in civic hands throughout the medieval period. In 1356 the city owned a narrow plot of land at the northern end of Bridge Street that was 1.83m wide and 2.74m long and that lay next to the steps to Corvisers' Row.³ In 1508 the city owned a strip of land in the same area at Row level in front of the Staven Selds that measured 17.03m long (identical to the frontage width of the Staven Selds) and 2.29m wide (the width of the stallboard before further encroachment in the late seventeenth century).⁴ The site was on the corner with Watergate Street, and on this side there was a strip measuring 19.66m by 1.83m. Thacker suggests that at a point between the 1290s and the mid fourteenth century the city accepted the encroachment of stallboards in the principal streets, but maintained ownership of the land.⁵ In view of their light-weight construction in timber, subsequent encroachments, and the continuous rebuilding of façades it is perhaps not surprising that no surviving example of an early medieval stallboard has been identified. The seventeenth-century stallboard in front

¹ PRO, CHES 25/1. The author is grateful to Alan Thacker for this and the following references to stallboards.

² BL, Harleian Manuscript 2158, f. 194v.

³ Chester City RO, CHD/2/1.

⁴ Chester City RO, CHD/2/7.

⁵ A.T. Thacker, *VCH Chester* (forthcoming).

of 12 Bridge Street gives a good impression of the probable appearance of its precursors, although later encroachment means it is a little deeper than medieval examples (Fig. 129).

*Selds*¹

The physical evidence for selds is even more elusive than that for shops, stalls, and encroachments. Selds have been variously defined as 'shed[s] or warehouse[s]',² 'indoor market-cum-warehouse[s]',³ or 'privately controlled, off-street bazaars',⁴ and comprised large indoor spaces containing booths or stalls that were located immediately to the rear of the shops. To date, the identification of selds has rested solely on the basis of documentary records which, in view of the size, number, and substantial construction of these English 'souks', must be of considerable concern to the archaeologist and architectural historian. Indeed their existence has been so universally ignored that it must be suspected that if a seld were encountered on an archaeological excavation or during the recording of a standing building there would be little or no chance of it being identified as such. The failure to recognise selds can hardly be due to their rarity: Keene estimates that in 1300 there were in the order of 4,000 retail units in selds in Cheapside compared to around 400 shops.⁵ Consistent features are found in the Cheapside selds showing that they were at the same level as the shops, were entered by passages between the shops,⁶ often had

¹ The term 'seld' was on occasion interchangeable with shop, but in this thesis is used in the manner described below unless specified.

² R.R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letter-Books preserved among the archives of the Corporation of the City of London: Letter-Book C, c.1291-1309* (London, 1901), p.87, n.2.

³ G.A. Williams, *Medieval London: From Commune to Capital* (London, 1963), p. 53.

⁴ Keene, *Shops and Shopping*, p. 38.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁶ The Tanners' Seld was an exception in that it directly fronted the street; Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, 104/42.

residences to the rear, were provided with stone outer walls, were typically 20m or more in length, were found both open to the roof and with rooms over, and contained small plots on which stood chests, cupboards, and stalls.¹

That selds were not restricted to Cheapside is suggested by the less complete documentary evidence of elsewhere. At Winchester the term seld was used to describe similar buildings at St Giles's Fair,² but a more exact parallel is the Clothseid on the High Street, first known as such in 1311 but with origins in the twelfth century.³ In Chester there were selds along the west side of Bridge Street sufficient in number for the area around the lane leading to the Common Hall, and probably extending northwards towards the junction with Watergate Street, to be known as 'the selds' in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁴ Traditionally these Cestrian selds have been interpreted as long strips extending along the street frontage, but Thacker argues that they were identical to the London selds and were at the level of the Row-walkway: an example of a seld on the corner of Bridge Street and Watergate Street (the *seldae lapidea*) was described in 1314 and 1325 as being at Row level above two undercrofts.⁵ He cites a half seld of mid thirteenth-century date as an example of typical dimensions: it measured 3.05m by 15.85m, implying the division lengthways of a building originally 6.10m wide, or, more probably, the division crossways of a building 31.70 long. The record of the construction in 1334 of a 'house' in Middlewich (6.71m wide and 30.38m long) as selds (*pro seldis*) for the use of foreign merchants indicates that these structures

¹ Keene, *Shops and Shopping*, pp. 38-9.

² *WS* 2, pp. 1091-2, and 1098.

³ *Ibid.*, 93 and 96-100, pp. 517-18.

⁴ A.T. Thacker, *VCH Chester* (forthcoming).

⁵ *Ibid.*

were not limited to a few great cities.¹

One could expect that the number of surviving early medieval townhouses in Chester would include examples of selds, but the area of 'the selds' coincides with one of the least well preserved parts of the medieval Rows. The vaulted undercroft at the rear of 12 Bridge Street is the only structure certainly of pre-c.1350 date along or near the part of Bridge Street formerly known as 'the selds'. None of the medieval

superstructure survives, but the fact that the vaulted undercroft

was built 12.8m back from the front of the Row walkway, presumably behind a contemporary or earlier undercroft, means that the c.6.4m wide building was 26.6m long: these unusual proportions for a townhouse in a continuously built-up street would be consistent with the presence, at the upper level, of shops on the walkway, a seld behind the shops, and a residence at the rear. Likewise an undercroft at 32 Bridge Street that cannot be closely dated, but which is certainly medieval, backs on to the site of the fourteenth-century Common Hall and is thus in the heart of 'the selds'. At 4.7m wide and 40.7m long, and also in a continuously built-up

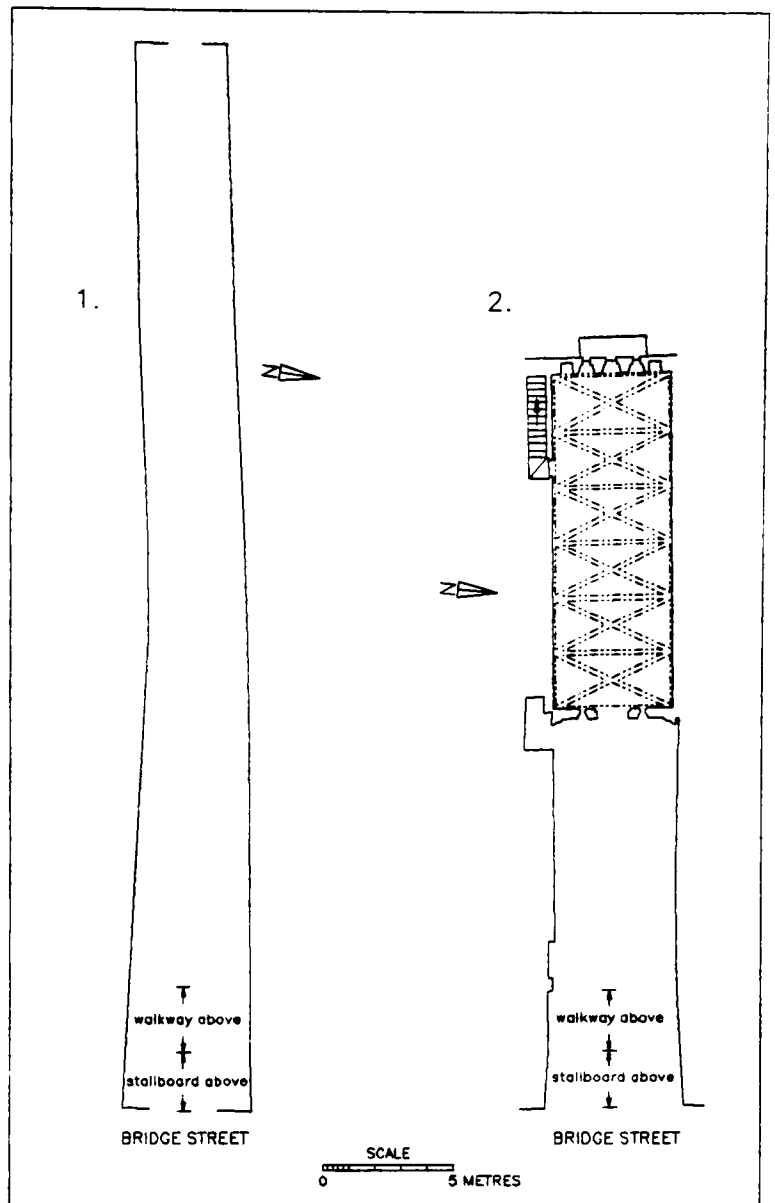


Fig. 131. Undercrofts in Chester, possibly originally below selds: 1. 32 Bridge Street; 2. 12 Bridge Street.

¹ 'Calendar of Recognizance Rolls of the Palatinate of Chester from the earliest times to the end of the reign of Henry IV', *Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* 36, Appendix 2, p. 374 (London, 1875). In 1349-50 the Middlewich seld had twelve stalls: P.R.O., SC6/783/15, m. 3. The author is grateful to Jane Laughton for these references.

block of properties, it is another, and more probable, candidate for being the 'ghost' of a lost seld.

The residence

The recognition of selds as potentially a major component in the English townhouse is of particular significance when it comes to the study of the residential part of the split-level townhouse, for selds occupied that part of the townhouse universally assumed to have been an open hall. This assumption is based on undeniable architectural evidence, but for townhouses largely of post-c.1350 date and mostly not of split-level design: in view of the drop in demand for space for commercial use from the early/mid fourteenth century such a building form is not necessarily applicable to the earlier period. In several split-level townhouse there is irrefutable evidence of open halls to the rear of streetfront rows of shops, but the examples are few in number, and it is thus necessary to assess the case for the predominance of the open hall and to consider the alternatives where its presence is precluded.

The physical evidence of the open hall is very limited as a result of the fragmentary survival of superstructures of split-level townhouses. The least ambiguous evidence is that at 38-42 Watergate Street, Chester, where parts of the two opposing doorways of the original cross-passage survive, along with three identical doorways opening off the western side. This reveals an arrangement in which the service rooms were placed overlooking a side street, while the hall extended to the eastern limit of the building, the whole arrangement lying parallel to Watergate Street, and directly to the rear of shops at the level of the Row walkway. The stone wall separating the commercial and residential parts survives to the top of the next storey, and a lack of doorways at this upper level confirms that the

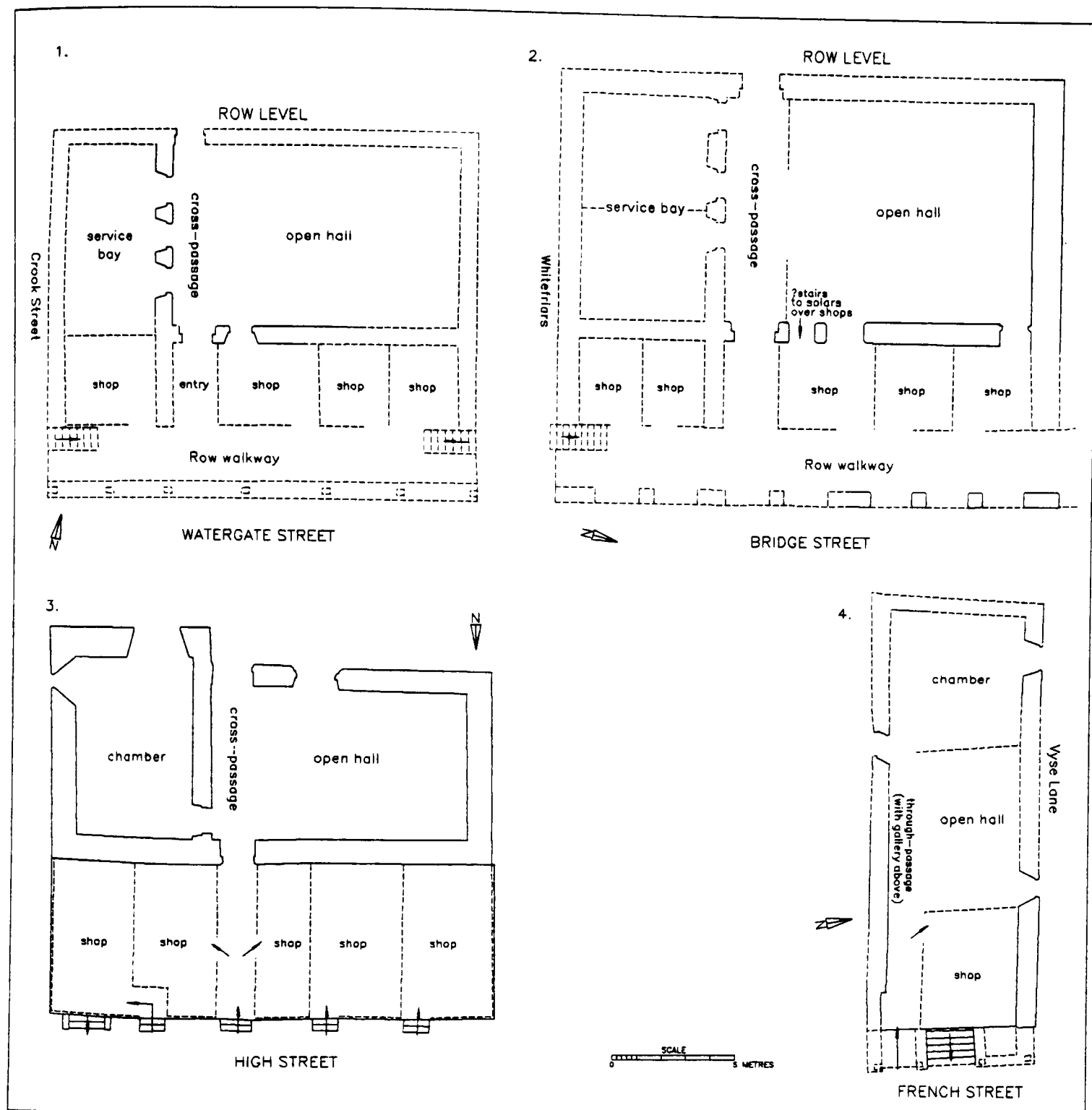


Fig. 132. Reconstructed plans showing halls at: 1. 38-42 Watergate Street, Chester; 48-52 Bridge Street, Chester; 3. Tackley's Inn, Oxford; 4. 58 French Street, Southampton.

hall was of two-storey height, almost certainly open to the roof. Similarly, there can be little doubt that the two-storey room to the rear of the shop at 58 French Street, Southampton, functioned as a hall: the 5.3m x 6.6m space is too small to have functioned as a seld, and has a fireplace. There can little excuse for doubting that the two-storey room to the rear of the shops at Tackley's Inn, Oxford, was an open hall for it has an elaborate

window in the rear wall, and the added advantage of a surviving grant of 1324 that records shops, cellars, solars, inner chambers, and a hall.¹

In view of the fragmentary nature of the structures above undercroft level, it could be expected that such documentary sources provide more evidence of the hall, as in the case of shops, solars, and stalls. A search through the Cheapside study area gazetteer for halls of pre-c.1350 date, however, produces only one example that was well away from the principal frontage of the property on Ironmonger Lane.² That this lack of documented halls was not the result of a possibly unusual concentration of selds in Cheapside, is indicated by comparable absences of halls at Winchester, and Chester. Moreover, it cannot be assumed where contemporary references to halls, or *aula*, do exist that they refer to open halls, or indeed any principal apartment. For example, the use of the term *aula* in respect of the Norman House, Steep Hill, Lincoln, could not have referred to an open hall since the building was of two storeys throughout and the principal room overlooked the street.³ Clearly the term *aula* could be used to describe a building comprising several chambers, and is indistinguishable from other terms signifying a residence such as *domus*, *mansura*, or *mansio*. In view of the position of the selds, Keene argues that in Cheapside these residences were normally at the rear of the tenements, although there were exceptions such as the seld with a dwelling over it (*mansio desuperedificata*) on the eastern corner of Bow Lane and Cheapside.⁴

¹ See p. 166.

² Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, 95/3.

³ C. Johnson and A. Vince, 'The South Bail Gates of Lincoln', *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 27 (1992), p. 16.

⁴ Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, 104/27.

As is the case with the comparable lack of documentary references to undercrofts, an absence of numerous references to halls does not necessarily reflect their rarity, but could simply result from the fact their occupants and owners changed less frequently than at the better documented shops. Unlike the situation with undercrofts, however, there is insufficient architectural evidence to show beyond reasonable doubt that the historical sources under-represent the hall. Moreover, the almost complete absence of examples of open halls in early split-level townhouses could mean that their appearance, if ever the norm, was restricted to a period well after the initial development of two-tier retailing.

To see when and how a change in the location and form of the principal room could have occurred it is useful to first consider the domestic arrangements in the Romanesque ground-level townhouse. As with the continental examples of the ground-level townhouse, it is clear that their English counterparts had ground floors often completely occupied by commercial space: possible exceptions are those townhouses with stone-built chamber blocks located at the rear of what may have been shops and ground-level halls. The principal domestic rooms were normally at first-floor level, as is evident at the Music House, Norwich; the Jew's House, Lincoln; Moyses Hall, Bury St Edmunds; King John's Palace, Southampton; and the Norman House, Cuckoo Lane, Southampton. The use of the term first-floor hall to describe these is perhaps to be avoided since it derives from a misidentification of structurally similar upper-level rooms in chamber blocks from rural houses of the same period. In the absence of positive evidence for substantial ground-level halls immediately to the rear of the commercial ground-level townhouse in the twelfth century, however, it would be equally inappropriate to identify these upper rooms as solars or private chambers. Rather it would seem that the first-floor of the Jew's

House, Lincoln, for example, fulfilled a composite function: while lacking the important elements of the hall such as access direct from the exterior and subsequent access to subsidiary service rooms and chambers, the room must have been where the occupants ate and entertained, and where the servants slept.

The Romanesque split-level townhouse appears to have perpetuated the position and form of such principal rooms: as has been observed above, despite the greater space available at the Norman House, Lincoln, the front room at the upper level appears to have had a similar role to that at the Jew's House, and even had the same arrangement of a fireplace in the front wall that was corbelled out over the principal entrance below. The function of the rear range of the Norman House is not immediately obvious, but there can be little doubt there was no open hall. Likewise, while there was no open hall directly above the undercroft at *Setreton's*, Cornmarket, Oxford, since the building was of two-storeys throughout, there was a fireplace on the first floor. While other early or prototypical split-level townhouses do not exhibit such clear evidence of the continuity of the domestic arrangements of the Romanesque ground-level townhouse, it is clear that the upper storey did not become a solar that was an adjunct to the shop, as in the later split-level townhouse, but preserved a domestic or specialized commercial/civic function.

It is unfortunate that the general dearth of surviving townhouses from c.1200-c.1260 removes much of the chance of observing the transition from the Romanesque split-level townhouse to that of the later thirteenth century. Although it appears that by the c.1300 solars overlooking the street were usually part of a timber-framed streetfront range and occupied in conjunction with the shops below, it is by no means clear at what date this became the norm. The stone arches that span the Row walkway at the

late thirteenth-century 28-30 Watergate Street, Chester, for example, imply that there was a stone-built solar above which could well indicate that this was still intended to be an important room. A contract of 1310 for a townhouse at St Michael in Cornmarket, London, specifies that directly above three shops there were to be two halls (*deus Sales*) with fireplaces, a buttery, a pantry, and a kitchen, and a further two chambers on the second floor.¹ Later still, the residential part of a tavern in Paternoster Row, London, was described in the building contract of 1342 as occupying part of the second floor: the hall (*la sale*) was to have a bay window overlooking the street, as was the adjacent bed chamber (*la chambre du lyt*).² Indeed, with frequently conjoining townhouses on narrow plots removing the possibility of windows at the sides or, where ancillary buildings or ranges extended to the rear, at the back of the building, it would be surprising if there was not some reluctance to abandon the well-lit streetfront for an ill-lit location behind the shops. It is interesting to note that, as in the possible twelfth-century examples, the few examples of open halls occur in townhouses where lighting was less of a problem, either in the wide townhouse oriented parallel to the street (38-42 Watergate Street, Chester), or on a narrow plot along a side lane or passage (58 French Street, Southampton).

Although the evidence is less than satisfactory for the adoption of the open hall directly to the rear of the shops, there can be little doubt that by the end of the thirteenth century, if not considerably earlier, the location of the principal room overlooking the street had ceased to be the norm in the English townhouse. Since it is equally clear that townhouses at this date continued to function in part as residences, the principal

¹ Salzman, *Building in England*, p. 418.

² *Ibid.*, p. 434.

rooms, ancillary chambers, service rooms, and kitchens must have been located to the rear: if not immediately behind the shops, then further to the rear, as is known to have been the case in Cheapside.¹ Since the residence presumably remained above undercroft level as it had been in the English ground-level house, and as it remained in the continental house, it is perhaps more correct to view this change as a shift rearwards rather than down a storey. The value of the newly accessible street frontage over the undercroft for retail purposes, and the commercial possibilities of the additional storey(s) created by solars over shops, as vertical extensions of the cramped shops or as accommodation for shopkeepers, must have provide sufficient reason for the relocation of the principal room: the alternative that, uniquely in Europe, citizens of English towns in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries could no longer abide the street outside their residences and, as Pantin suggests, required 'space and quiet' is unconvincing.²

Despite obvious gaps in both the material and documentary evidence for the form of the upper levels - most noticeably regarding the residential component - it is abundantly clear that by developing smaller shop units than those in the ground-level townhouse; linking such shops with solars above; and adopting selds, stalls, and stallboards, as well as the large-scale undercrofts below, the split-level townhouse was more than a simple doubling up of the commercial street frontage. It was, or became, a highly-sophisticated combination of a whole series of often discrete wholesale and retail units within one coherent structure.

¹ D. Keene, 'The Character and Development of the Cheapside Area; an Overview', in J. Schofield, P. Allen, and C. Taylor, 'Medieval buildings and property development in the area of Cheapside', *LAMAS* 41 (for 1990; published 1993), p. 188.

² Pantin, *Townhouse Plans*, pp. 205-6.

CHAPTER 6

ORIGINS, CONTEXT, AND CONCLUSIONS

There can be little doubt that the weight of evidence corroborates Faulkner's hypothesis that the split-level townhouse was dominant in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and that elevated walkways were a refinement of the design. His suggestion of galleried townhouses being a common form that may have led to the establishment of Row-like systems outside Chester has, however, no foundation, at least in England. Moreover, it is clear that the split-level townhouse was a major building type at an earlier date than he supposes, having origins as early as any standing Romanesque townhouse. In view of the provision for two-tier selling and the normal location of split-level townhouses on narrow plots in continuously built-up streets in the centre of towns, it is clear that the design was adopted in response to commercial necessity. Certainly there can be little doubt that the period from the twelfth century to the early fourteenth century was characterized by urban expansion, followed by a period of economic decline and pestilence that coincided with the demise of the split-level townhouse. An appreciation of the correlation between the use of the split-level device and the state of the economy is vital to understanding the widespread adoption of the most commercially viable building type available, but in itself this correlation does not explain the origins of the split-level townhouse. It is thus necessary to consider the possibility of architectural influences, either in the form of the adoption of a foreign, even pan-European, house type as a result of cultural, social, and mercantile interchange, or the perpetuation of a pre-existing Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Norman tradition of undercroft construction.

Continental split-level townhouses

In Chapter 3 the discussion of the elevated walkways of several Zähringen towns in modern Switzerland concluded that, like the Chester Rows, these two-tier systems emerged from a background of split-level townhouse construction. In Fribourg-in-Nuithonie it is clear that split-level townhouses similar to those in England were being constructed as early as the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. A tantalizing link between England and the territory of the dukes of Zähringen is suggested by the Savoyard possession of Fribourg in the thirteenth century and the well-known Savoyard connections of Edward I, the presence of Savoyards in military and architectural roles in Edward's campaigns in North Wales, and the involvement of Savoyards in the building of new towns in the thirteenth century. There can be little doubt, however, that the adoption of the split-level townhouse design in England, the origins of the Chester Rows, and the construction of split-level and galleried houses in Fribourg all predate the Savoyards association with England and the period when the counts of Savoy held Fribourg (1252-77). Moreover, Fribourg was at the northwestern frontier of a county of Savoy that did not reach such an extent until the mid thirteenth century and that never advanced far into Zähringen territory. It is thus almost certain that there was no particular close link - trade or otherwise - between England and the territory of the dukes of Zähringen during the period of the emergence of the split-level townhouse in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. This apparently parallel development raises the question as to whether the split-level townhouses in modern Switzerland and England are chance survivors of a common European house type. Indeed, in view of the greater degree of urbanization on the continent, such a source of the English split-level townhouse could be anticipated.

A study of the published accounts of recent excavation and recording of continental medieval townhouses certainly reveals a wide distribution of semi-subterranean undercrofts, although the proportion of early medieval townhouses formed by them is not clear. As far east as Riga, townhouses with cellars sunk 1-1.5m below the contemporary ground surface have been excavated and found to date from the early thirteenth century. However, the two cellars on the corners of Peldu Iela/Daugavas Iela and Peldu Iela/Ūdensvada Iela belong to plots oriented at right angles to Peldu Iela and are at the rear of streetfront houses built at ground level.¹ It is probable that these buildings have more in common with the rear chamber blocks found in England than with commercial townhouses. In view of this comparison, it is interesting to note that later in the thirteenth century the cellar on the corner of Peldu Iela and Ūdensvada Iela was rebuilt in stone to a height of two storeys while the ground-floor timber hall between it and the principal street remained in place.² There have been excavations of six other examples of stone-built rear chamber blocks of thirteenth or fourteenth century date in Riga, but no clear evidence of commercial cellarage.³

The well-known timber-built cellars at Lübeck are similar to those in Peldu Iela, Riga, in that they were usually set back from the street frontage. A typical example revealed by excavation at 72 Königstrasse was originally more than 2m below ground, measured 4.65m x 3.65m, and was 19m from the street frontage.⁴ It was dated by dendrochronology to

¹ A. Caune, 'Die als Keller Eingetieften Holzständerbauten des 13. Jahrhunderts in Riga', *LSAK* 23 (1993), pp. 211-12.

² A. Caune, 'Gebäude und Topographische Strukturen in Riga vom 12. bis 14. Jahrhundert Aufgrund der Archäologischen Ausgrabungen', *LSAK* 20 (1990), pp. 183.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁴ U. Müller, 'Ein Holzheller aus dem späten 12. Jahrhundert Erste Erbebrunne der Archäologischen Untersuchungen auf den Grundstücken Königstrasse 70-74 in Lübeck mit einem Beitrag zu ausgewählten Glasfunden', *LSAK* 22 (1992), pp. 145-66.

shortly after 1176. This type of building was still being built over a century later: at 5 Kapitelstrasse excavations uncovered a semi-sunken undercroft from a two-storey block which stood detached from a single storey building at the streetfront.¹ This building dated from c.1290, and only when rebuilt c.1330 did it contain an undercroft on the street-front. The undercroft of the fourteenth-century house had a doorway to the street and thus the rebuilding of 5 Kapitelstrasse provides one of the few examples of a possible split-level townhouse in Lübeck (Fig. 134.1). Another building with an undercroft accessible from the street, but, like the previous example, with no clear evidence of ground-level shops, has been discovered at 19 Grosse Petersgrube, and dates to c.1300 (Fig. 134.2).² Despite

Lübeck's 'explosive phase of expansion in the early thirteenth century',³ it would appear that there was little in the way of undercroft or cellar construction on the streetfront until the late thirteenth or fourteenth

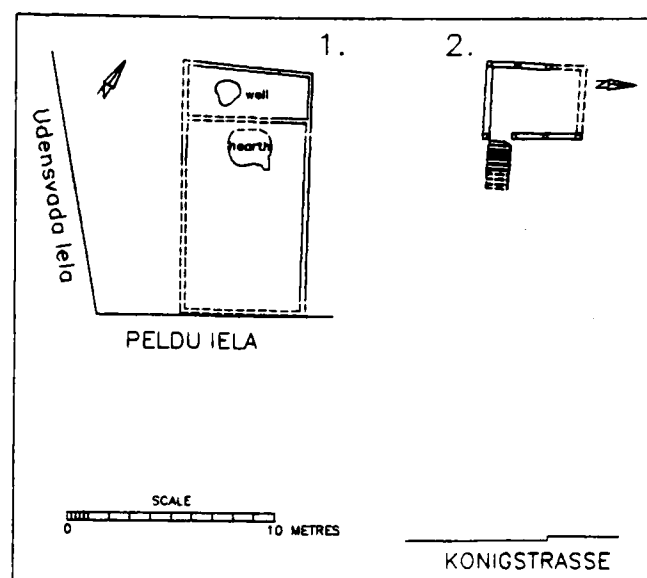


Fig. 133. Comparative excavated timber cellars at: 1. At the rear of a building in Peldu Iela/Ūdensvada Iela, Riga; 2. At the rear of 70-4 Königstrasse, Lübeck.

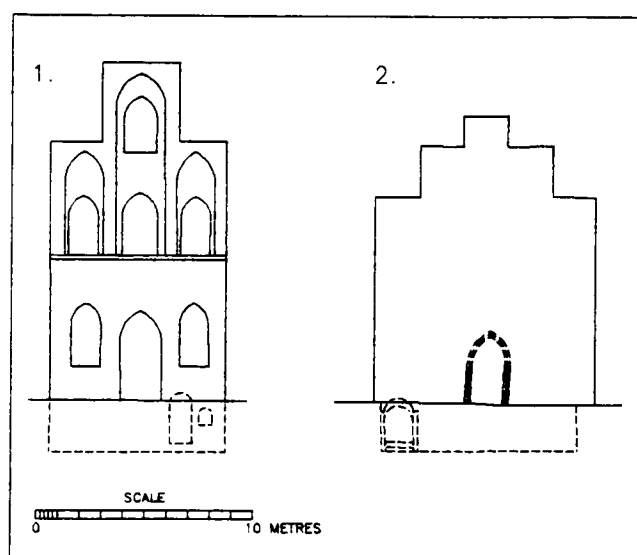


Fig. 134. Brick-built split-level townhouses in Lübeck at: 1. 5 Kapitelstrasse; 2. 19 Grosse Petersgrube.

¹ W. Erdmann, 'Entwicklungstendenzen des Lübecker Hausbaus 1100 bis um 1340 - eine Ideenskizze', *LSAK* 7 (1983), Abb. 9.

² *Ibid.*, Abb. 6.3.

³ G.P. Fehring, 'The archaeology of early Lübeck: the relation between the Slavic and German settlement sites', in H.B. Clarke and A. Simms (eds.), 'The Comparative History of Urban Origins in Non-Roman Europe: Ireland, Wales, Denmark, Germany, Poland and Russian from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Century', *BAR International Series* 255, Vol. 1 (1985), p. 283.

centuries. Before the advent of these brick-built structures the predominant house type was a wholly timber-framed building with a small cellar at the rear that presumably had a largely, if not wholly, domestic function.

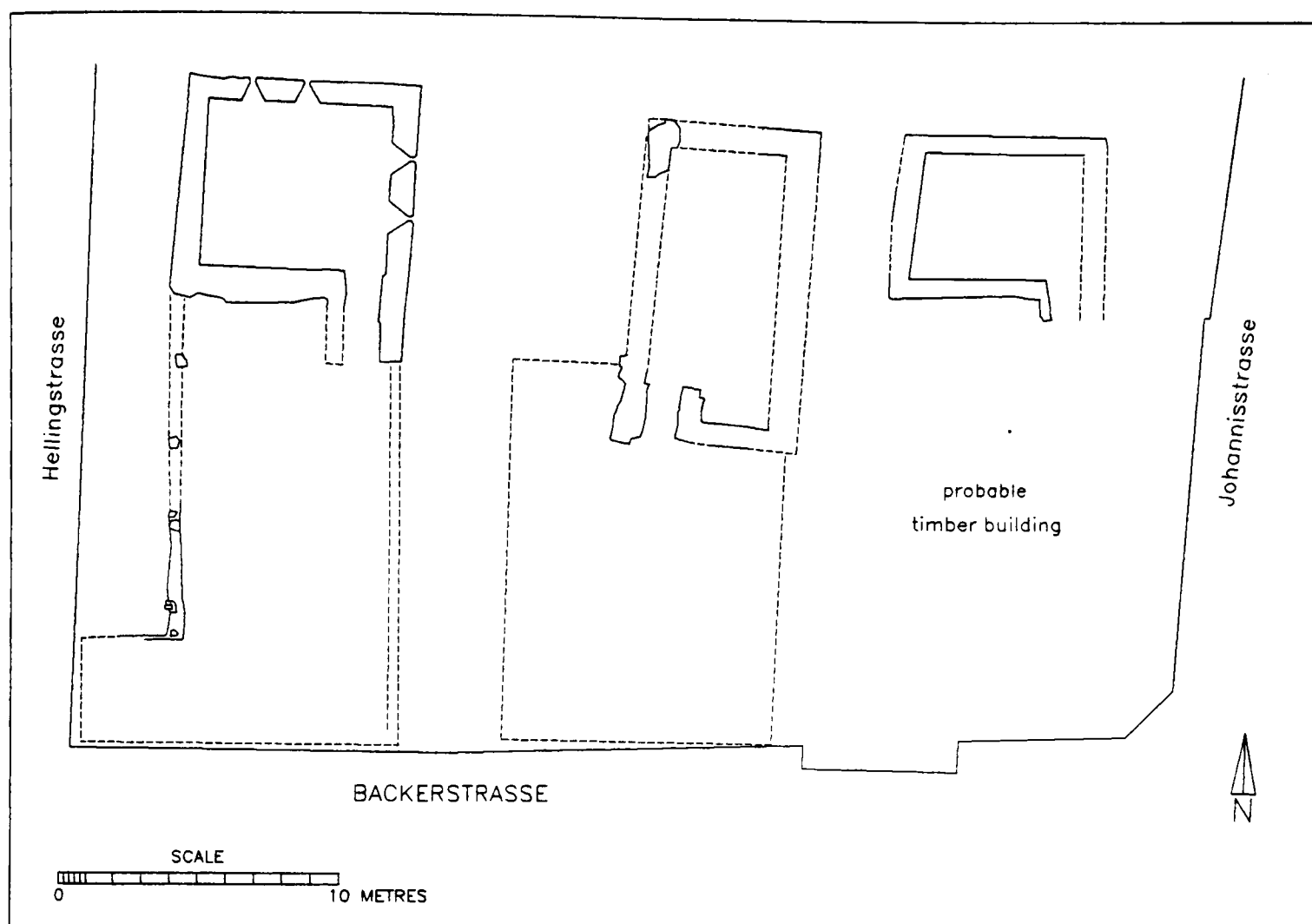


Fig. 135. 51-9 Bäckerstrasse, Minden. Plans of thirteenth-century stone undercrofts at rear of timber buildings.

An excavated timber-built cellar at Nikolausberg, in Obergünzburg (near Munich), was similar to the earlier Lübeck examples, and C¹⁴ dating indicates a date range of the later twelfth to early thirteenth centuries.¹ Again the building was set back from any medieval streetfront. By the late twelfth century, a house excavated in Kirchherrengasse, Münster, had a sunken stone undercroft at the rear of the site, and a side passage from the street in the manner of the Norman House, Stonegate, York.² The

¹ G. Weber, 'Hochmittelalterlicher Holzkeller und Tonröhrenleitung auf dem Nikolausberg in Obergünzburg', *Das archäologische Jahr in Bayern* 1989 (1990), pp. 172-6.

² G. Isenberg, 'Das Asche-Gelände am Alten Steinweg in Münster', *Ausgrabungen und Funde in Westfalen-Lippe* 6/B (1991), pp. 323-5.

excavation of three conjoining narrow plots at 51-9 Bäckerstrasse, Minden, revealed stone-built cellars dating from the thirteenth century in each case (Fig. 135).¹ These were partly subterranean and set well back from the street frontage, behind ground-level timber ranges. At the thirteenth-century 21 Gauchstrasse, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, the undercroft was again set back, but formed part of a wholly stone-built structure.² Likewise, the precociously early stone undercroft of the late eleventh century discovered at 17-19 Kleinmar-schierstrasse, Aachen, was built at the rear of a street-front building.³ While there is good evidence of the eleventh- to thirteenth-century semi-sunken undercroft in townhouses throughout modern Germany, there is little published evidence of the presence of the split-level townhouse before c.1300. Even after this date it is unclear as to whether those buildings with undercrofts that were entered from the street incorporated shops at the upper level.

The great number of surviving early medieval townhouses in Anjou, Burgundy, Gascony, Poitou, and the area of modern Italy provides a more substantial and informative sample than that of the German material which is largely derived from excavations, and it is significant that split-level townhouses are rarely found. Recent investigation of the Burgundian town of Cluny, for example, produced over 100 late Romanesque houses of the ground-level type, but not one instance of even a prototypical split-level townhouse.⁴ Likewise, the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century *bastides* discussed in Chapter 3 have virtually no examples of two-tier retailing,

¹ G. Isenberg, 'Archäologische Beobachtungen zur Ausbildung der Parzellenstrukturen und zur Baulichen Nutzung der Grundstücke in Mittelalterlichen Städten Westfalens', *LSAK* 20 (1990), pp. 110 and 116 (Abb. 3.2).

² M. Untermann, and S. Kaltwasser, 'Archäologische Untersuchungen in der Altstadt von Freiburg im Breisgau', *Archäologische Ausgrabungen in Baden-Württemberg 1989* (1990), pp. 299-303.

³ W.M. Koch, 'Aachen - erste Ergebnisse einer Stadtarchäologie', *Dörfer und Städte: Ausgrabungen in Rheinland 1985/86* (1987), pp. 95-102.

⁴ P. Garrigou Grandchamp, and G.I. Meirion-Jones (eds.), *La Ville de Cluny et ses Maisons (XI^e-XV^e siècles)*, forthcoming (1994).

despite the strong connection between Aquitaine/Gascony and England at this time. A house in the *bastide* of Puylaroque, Tarn-et-Garonne, provides an interesting exception to this apparently normal state of affairs.¹

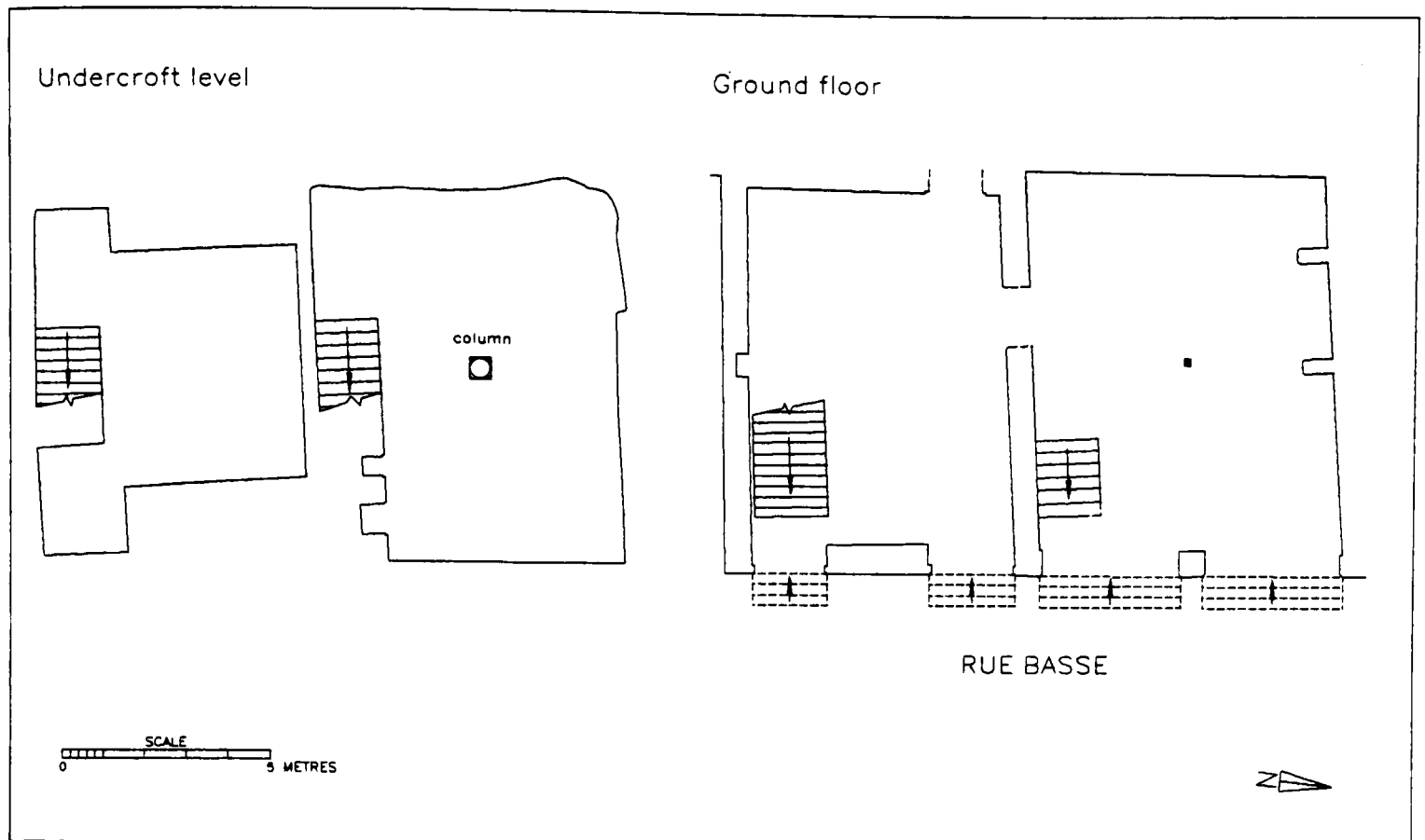


Fig. 136. Rue Basse, Puylaroque. Plans at undercroft and ground-floor levels, showing reconstructed street frontage arrangement.

The façade of the house in rue Basse, Puylaroque, appears to be that of a straight-forward ground-level townhouse, with an arcade of two wide arches and two wide doorways to the south. The remains of three elaborate windows above confirms the expected presence of the principal rooms on the first floor. The ground floor, however, is c.750mm above the modern street level: that this floor level is original is confirmed by the hearth level of a fireplace in the north wall, and doorways in the central partition wall and the rear (west) wall. A subdivided undercroft lies below this floor and is vaulted south of the partition wall, but timber ceiled on the north side. The southern stair leads up to a doorway of the same

¹ P. Garrigou Grandchamp, M. Grubert, and M. Scelles, 'Les maisons médiévales (XIII^e-XIV^e siècles) de Puylaroque (Tarn-et-Garonne)', *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique du Midi de la France* 50 (1990), pp. 113-25.

width in the façade, while its northern counterpart ends at a point c.600mm behind one of the wide arches normally associated with shop entrances: there is no doubt that the undercrofts were accessible from the street, and perhaps exclusively so. Two other arcaded townhouses in Puylaroque are known to have undercrofts. Those at a house in rue de la République were accessible from the street at the rear only,¹ and that at a house in rue d'Eglise is entered from the rear of the ground floor via a stair within the thickness of the wall.² These examples of townhouses with some or all the elements of the split-level design are ruled out as a potential source for their English counterparts since they date from the late thirteenth or fourteenth century. Moreover, it is unlikely that the houses in Puylaroque represent influence in the other direction as the town, although of obscure foundation, lay well to the east of the control of English, and is surrounded by *bastides* founded by Alphonse de Poitiers.

In Italy evidence of anything like an English split-level townhouse is difficult to find, despite the proliferation of early medieval townhouses. Some buildings, however, have semi-subterranean undercrofts: one of the best published examples, at 10 Via della Pace, Tuscania, in northern Lazio, is a narrow building oriented at right angles to the street and which has a shallow loggia over a flight of steps up to the first floor and another flight down to an undercroft.³ The lower storey is c.1.6m below modern street level which, on the basis of nearby ground-level buildings of the same period, is not very different from the medieval level. While it is probable that the undercroft had a commercial function, the first floor has every appearance of a normal residence, and there is not even a window

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-13.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 126-31.

³ D. Andrews, 'Medieval Domestic Architecture in Northern Lazio', in D. Andrews, J. Osborne, and D. Whitehouse (eds.), *Medieval Lazio: 'Studies in architecture, painting and ceramics'*, *BAR International Series* 125 (1982), pp. 32-3.

at this level on the street elevation. In view of its construction in the early thirteenth century, and its failure to utilise the upper level for commercial purposes, 10 Via della Pace can hardly be seen as an early development of a continental split-level house type.

As the emergence of the split-level townhouse in England occurred during the twelfth century it is, of course, those areas of the continent with a stronger connection with England at that time which are of more interest. So far, archaeological and architectural research into the towns of Flanders has produced no comparable buildings of the same date, or earlier, than the twelfth-century split-level townhouses of England despite a healthy trade between the two countries at that time. However, in the case of Normandy, with which links were obviously stronger in the twelfth century, there is, in Rouen, evidence of Romanesque townhouses of types similar to those in England. Three structures identified as first-floor halls have been discovered on urban manor-like sites: an undercroft east of the centre of the Palais de Justice,¹ 31-3 rue aux Juifs,² and behind rue de la Pie.³ As with identical houses in England, it seems that these are misidentified chamber blocks.⁴ Two-storeyed buildings at right angles to, but set back from, the street frontage on smaller plots have also been noted. This *type intermédiaire* obviously forms an exact parallel of chamber blocks behind commercial streetfront buildings found in England. Two published examples are 18 rue Saint-Romain⁵ and 68 rue du Gros-

¹ B. Gauthiez, 'Les maisons de Rouen, XII^e-XVIII^e siècles', *Archéologie Médiévale* 23 (1993), pp. 133 and 136.

² *Ibid.*

³ D. Pitte, 'Découverte d'une construction civile romane en pierre, rue de la Pie, à Rouen (janvier 1988)', *Bulletin des Amis des Monuments Rouennais* (1989), pp. 92-6.

⁴ See Chapter 1.

⁵ D. Pitte and Y. Lescroart, 'Rue Saint-Romain', *Archéologie Médiévale* 19 (1991), pp. 290-3.

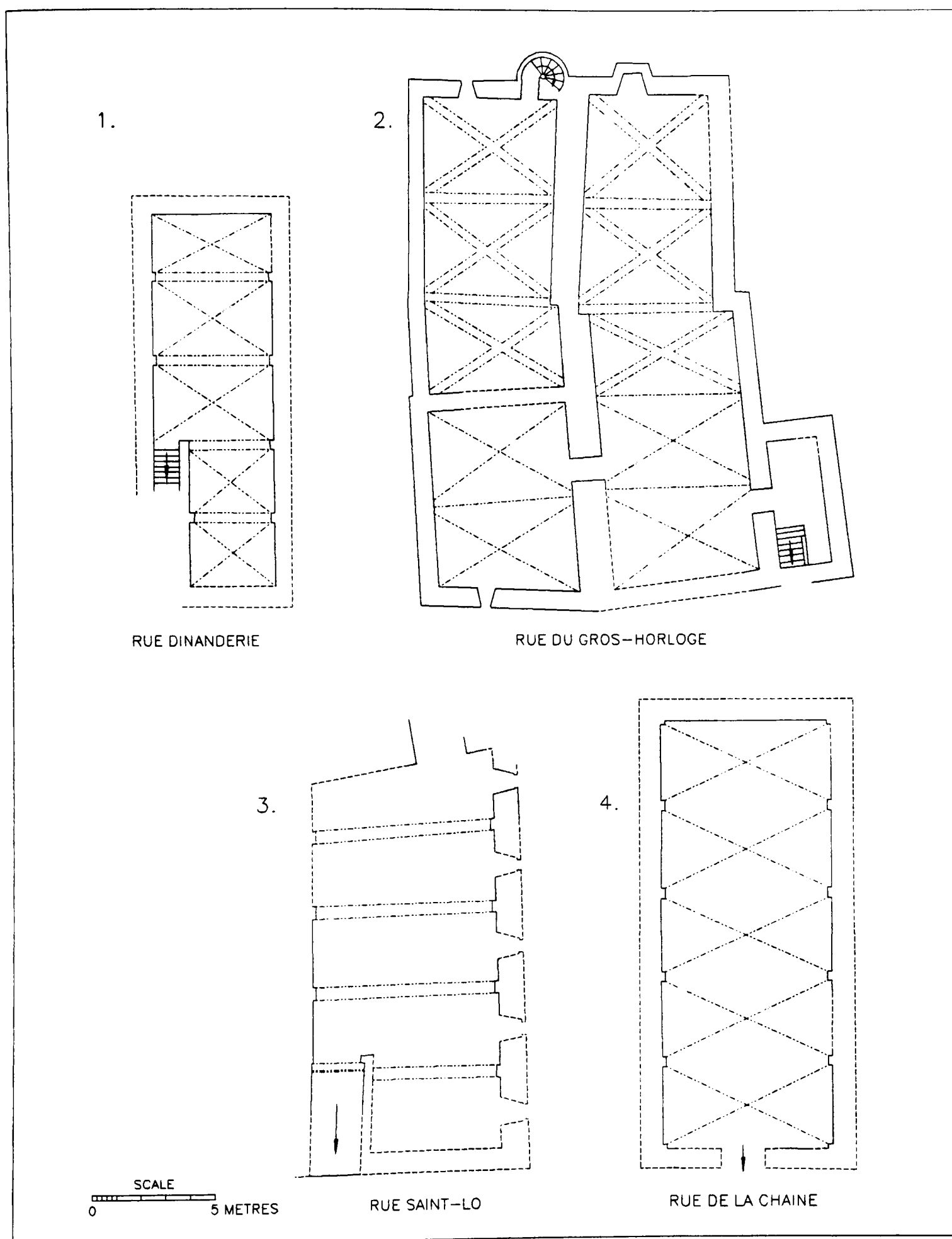


Fig. 137. Undercrofts in Rouen at: 1. 13 rue Dinanderie; 2. 59-67 rue du Gros-Horloge; 3. Below the Palais de Justice, rue Saint-Lô; 4. 32 rue de la Chaîne.

Horloge.¹ Much more fascinating, however, is the evidence of four

¹ B. Gauthiez, 'Les maisons de Rouen, XII^e-XVIII^e siècles', *Archéologie Médiévale* 23 (1993), pp. 134 and 138.

Romanesque undercrofts which seem to have been part of commercial split-level townhouses (Fig. 137). A destroyed building apparently dating from the middle of the twelfth century at 59-67 rue du Gros-Horloge had a pair of undercrofts oriented at right angles to the street, with access provided by a porch-like structure to one side.¹ Of similar date was another house oriented at right angles to and directly on the street frontage at 32 rue de la Chaîne; this also is destroyed.² Gauthiez shows a groin-vaulted undercroft sunk c.1.5m below the contemporary street level, with a second, apparently contemporary, *cellier* below. The entrance to the upper undercroft was via a doorway placed centrally in the streetfront. A spur wall alongside steps down from the street is found at the groin-vaulted undercroft, 13 rue Dinanderie, which has been dated to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.³ A recently discovered and surviving undercroft below the Palais de Justice is at right angles to and directly on rue Saint-Lô, from which there was an entrance.⁴ The undercroft dates from the late twelfth century, has a ribbed groin vault, and also has a spur wall immediately adjacent to the steps from the street. Fenestration was along one side and probably indicates that the building had a side passage. These examples of undercrofts mirror exactly the evidence of the split-level townhouse in England and it is probable that they will be multiplied by future research and publication.

It is tempting to view these few twelfth-century examples of fully-evolved or prototypical split-level townhouse in Rouen as reflecting the political union of England and Normandy: the apparent subsequent decline

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 133-4 and 137.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ D. Pitte and P. Cailleux, 'Découverte de la salle basse d'une maison en pierre sous l'aile est du Palais de Justice à Rouen', *Bull. Société Emul. Seine-Maritime* (1990), pp. 2-8.

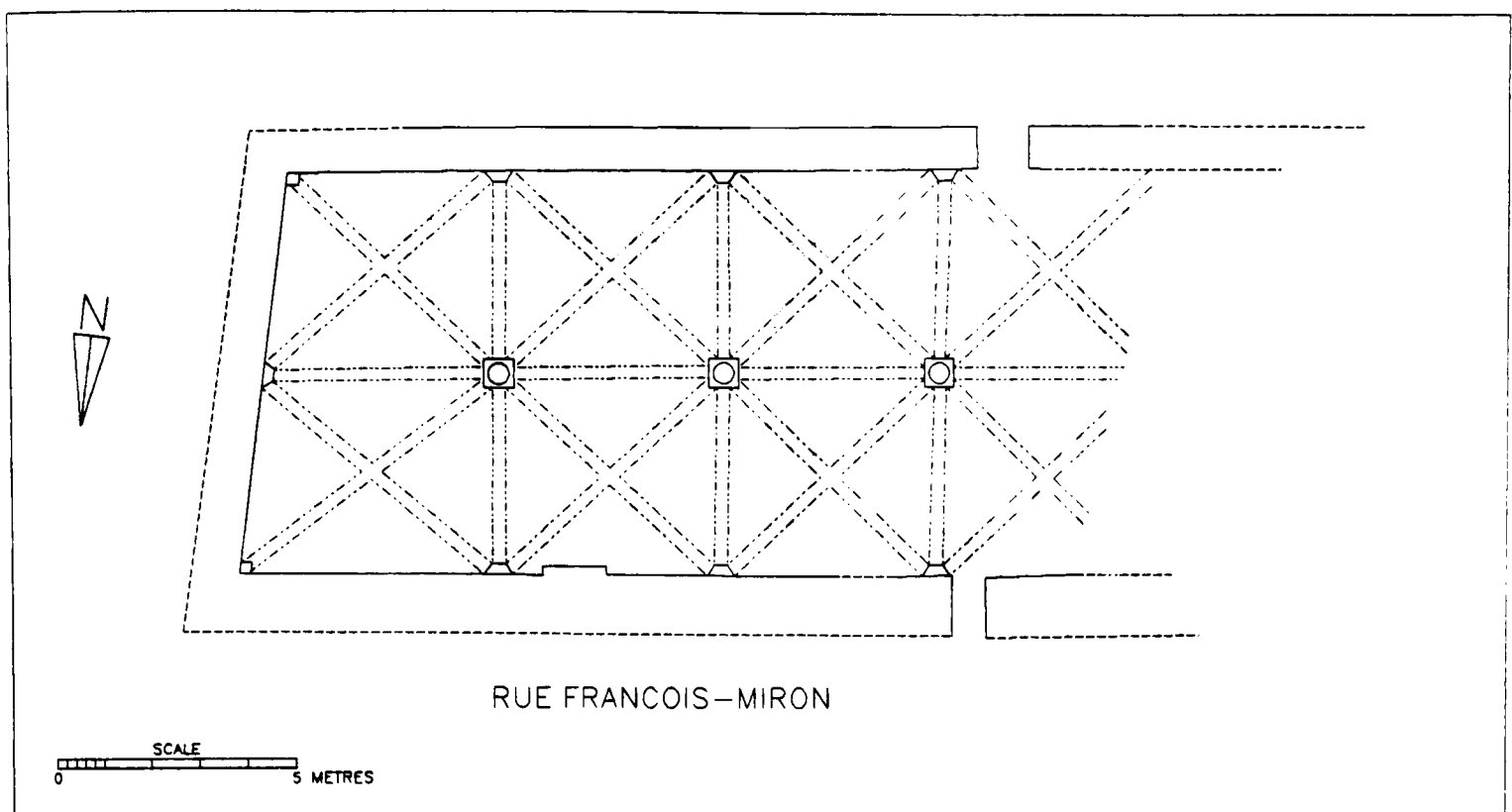


Fig. 138. 68 rue François-Miron, Paris. Plan of undercroft.

in interest in the house type certainly coincides with the loss of Normandy to Philip Augustus in 1204. Edward Impey has identified a rural equivalent of such a shared building tradition in the twelfth century in seigneurial architecture.¹ The presence of a few examples of semi-subterranean undercrofts in the Ile-de-France, however, is a reminder that vernacular architectural design was no follower of transitory political boundaries. A thirteenth-century vaulted undercroft in rue Guy-Patin, Beauvais, was destroyed in 1967 and may well have been part of a split-level townhouse.² More convincing is the evidence of 68 rue François-Miron, Paris, where a two-aisled vaulted undercroft survives.³ The undercroft is directly on and parallel to the street (formerly rue Saint-Antoine), and there is at least one surviving doorway from the street. The crocket capitals and the form of the rib vault leave little doubt that this undercroft dates from the late

¹ E. Impey, 'Seigneurial Domestic Architecture in Normandy, 1050-1350', in G.I. Meirion-Jones and M. Jones (eds.), *Manorial Domestic Buildings in England and Northern France* (London, 1993), pp. 82-120.

² F. Blary, *Le Domaine de Chaalis: XII^e - XIV^e siècles* (Paris, 1989), pp. 333-5.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 329-32.

twelfth or early thirteenth century. Although both this and the Beauvais example were holdings of the Cistercian abbey of Chaalis, it is clear that they functioned as '*entrepôts accueillant le surplus des productions destinées à la commercialisation*',¹ and were doubtless of identical function to their wholly secular counterparts.

Two possible examples, of course, fall well short of providing statistically significant evidence of a common building type and, as the numbers in Normandy are so few also, it is difficult to make sense of these split-level townhouses in northern France. In the absence of a substantial body of standing or excavated townhouses of the ground-level type, they could represent either a general but low-level usage of the split-level design, or its widespread popularity. Equally, it is unclear as to whether the building type spread radially from Normandy having been adopted from England. The absence of split-level townhouses in more intensively examined areas of northern Europe to the east of Normandy could indeed suggest that the use of the building type was largely restricted to the area geographically and politically closest to England, although the undeniable presence of split-level townhouses in the Zähringen towns of modern Switzerland suggests that judgement must await much-needed research into the form of the European townhouse. Nevertheless, the fact remains that, notwithstanding the evidence from Switzerland, there is no evidence to indicate that any country or region had such a high proportion of fully-evolved or prototypical split-level townhouses in the twelfth century, or that any continental examples antedate the appearance of the house type in England.

As it appears at least possible, if not probable, that the split-level townhouse is an indigenous building type it is important to consider the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

possibility that the pre-twelfth-century, and indeed, pre-Conquest, tradition of cellar construction in England was the source of the building type. The large majority of these urban sunken-floored buildings have little obvious connection with the undercrofts of later split-level townhouses in that they are typically timber-built, small, shallow, and probably only of one storey. There are, nevertheless, timber structures on a scale comparable with later stone-built undercrofts and sufficiently deep and substantial as to imply two-storey construction. John Schofield suggests that these larger timber buildings may be related to early stone-built undercrofts in London, and identifies evidence of a common design in the use of the rear doorway in timber-built examples at Well Court Building 7 and Fish Street Hill Building FM03, and at the twelfth-century Milk Street Building 6.¹ By alluding to the supposedly shared feature of rear access, however, Schofield draws attention to the difference between the Anglo-Saxon cellared building and the split-level townhouse: in his two Anglo-Saxon examples the doorways probably formed the only entrance to cellars that were built well to the rear of the plot behind ground-level buildings on the streetfront, while the rear doorway in the twelfth-century example was at the back of a townhouse directly on the streetfront and almost certainly provided with a principal entrance facing Milk Street. This distinction is not simply the result of an unfortunate choice of examples by Schofield: as Horsman observes, it was normal for the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Norman timber-built cellar to be located to the rear of streetfront ranges built at ground level.²

A late but rare exception to both the location at the back of the plot, and the timber construction, is a cellar dating from the late eleventh to

¹ Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, p. 161.

² Horsman, *Anglo-Norman London 1*, p. 70.

early twelfth century, that was discovered during excavations to the west of the west front of Hereford Cathedral (1993). Here a stone cellar sunk c.2.4m below the contemporary ground surface was built directly on the frontage of what was then the principal street leading to the crossing of the River Wye. Despite the fact that the position of the Hereford cellar on the streetfront is similar to that of undercrofts in split-level townhouses, there is no implication

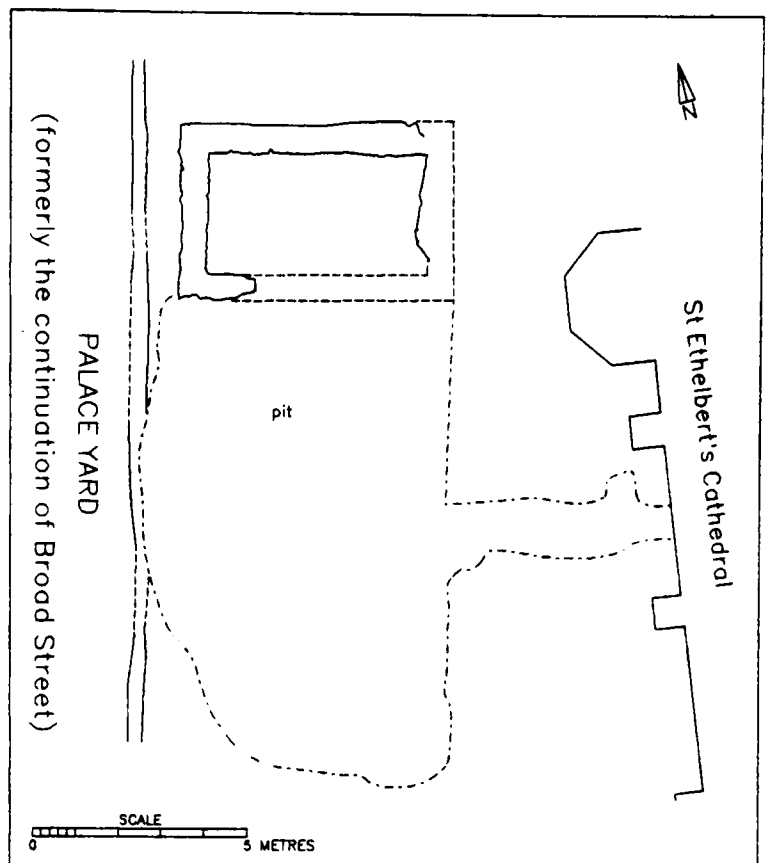


Fig. 139. Cathedral site (HE93A), Hereford. Plan of excavated cellar showing the location of the eastern edge of the contemporary street and the present west front of the cathedral.

that it formed the lower storey of a split-level townhouse, pre-dating the already precociously early example in Leicester: the front wall had survived almost intact up to the level of the street and had no evidence of a doorway or steps. Moreover, on the basis of the surviving walls there was no reason to suppose that the cellar was provided with any source of natural light. Since the buildings along this side of the street can only have formed a thin row in front of the west end of the cathedral, it is most likely that the constraints of the plot necessitated the construction of the cellar on the street frontage and that it was not built with a view to two-tier retailing. While unusual at this date, the use of stone in cellar construction is not unique, for another example dating from c.1000-50 has been excavated next to Gropecunt Lane, Cheapside, London.¹ The remains were fragmentary and comprised the southeast corner of an undercroft

¹ MoLAS archive: site code CID90 (groups 43.1 and 43.17).

c.700mm below the contemporary ground level, and measuring at least 3m long and at least 1.8m wide. The rear wall was c.25m back from the street frontage, which suggests that the undercroft was located more conventionally than the Hereford example.

On the basis of currently identified examples of townhouses from the late tenth and eleventh centuries, there is little reason to suppose that the pre-c.1100 townhouse had already adopted the split-level design: the cellared building at the rear of a ground-level townhouse has more in common with the comparable timber and stone structures in Germany and Poland, and may be a predecessor of the two-storey chamber blocks discussed in Chapter 1. In the absence of evidence of fully evolved or prototypical split-level townhouses before c.1100 in England, or before the mid/late twelfth century on the continent, it is most reasonable to assume that the split-level townhouse was an English invention of the twelfth century. The few examples in Normandy probably owe their existence to a shared building tradition with England, and those in the nearby Ile-de-France possibly represent a limited spread of the house type beyond the Norman frontier. The presence of split-level townhouses in the Zähringen towns cannot be explained in terms of direct influence from England, or Normandy, and thus appears to be a truly parallel phenomenon.

If indeed the English split-level townhouse was an example of domestic innovation, it might be expected that there would be evidence of the need for two-tier retailing over and above urban expansion. An essential precondition for the multiplication of commercial storeys must have been restricted sites, and it is increasingly clear from numerous archaeological excavations that narrow plots with near continuous buildings along the

street frontages were the norm in the late tenth and eleventh centuries.¹ While the predominance of long narrow plots oriented at right angles to the street provided the restricted frontages that appear to have been a prerequisite of the adoption of the split-level design, it is clear that additional factors must have given rise to two-tier selling: similarly narrow plots in later periods of economic prosperity have not generated demand for such a device. The answer is arguably provided by the physical and documentary evidence for shops, since their number and smallness distinguish the split-level from other types of townhouse. As Keene notes in the case of Cheapside, even when land values had returned to their late thirteenth-century levels in the later sixteenth century, the number of shops was much reduced, but their average size much increased.² Likewise he argues for the appearance of references to warehouses on off-street locations from the fifteenth century,³ which corresponds to architectural evidence for the rise of such structures: this must have been the death knell of the undercroft. The townhouse in the period from the twelfth to early/mid fourteenth centuries was thus distinguished by the proliferation of shops, stalls outside shops, and booths in selds that were symptomatic of an insatiable demand for small retail outlets, and that were distinct from the wholesale and storage spaces required in bulk by merchants or vintners. Thus at a date before which the typical plan of the rural medieval house - with its open hall, cross-passage, and service rooms with chambers above - had been adopted, the high value of potential retailing space on principal streets meant that the urban property owner and the builder had already adopted the ground-level townhouse of the

¹ For example see: G. Milne (ed.), *From Roman Basilica to Medieval Market* (London, 1992), pp. 35-7; Horsman, *Saxo-Norman London 1*, pp. 13-16 and 33-6.

² Keene, *Shops and Shopping*, pp. 42-3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

continental type and had progressed to a more efficient two-tier design. As should be expected for a 'nation of shopkeepers', selling, not war, was the mother of invention.

GAZETTEER

The gazetteer has more than one function: to describe in note form and to illustrate those English townhouses not described in detail in the preceding chapters, but on which the statistics and generalizations are dependent; and to provide a much shorter summary and index to buildings discussed in the main text. Following the balance of chapters 1 to 5, for the period before c.1200 all types of townhouse are included and for the period c.1200-c.1350 entries are almost exclusively restricted to split-level townhouses.¹ Remains or records of buildings that are too incomplete to be understood are omitted, as are examples known only from documentary sources.

BATTLE

1. Battle: 35 High Street. A surviving rib-vaulted undercroft dating from the early fourteenth century.

The undercroft is parallel to and directly on the High Street. A doorway in the front (east) wall partly survives. The lower parts of the rebates of this doorway appear intact and continue down to only 900mm above the modern floor. This suggests that the undercroft was originally well below street level. The 1.28m height of the northern doorway and the low springing of the vault confirm that the floor was raised in the nineteenth century. To the south of the main entrance, a window splay survives. There is no way of telling whether the northern doorway provided access from the building above or from the side lane, although a second external entrance so near the main doorway is unlikely.

¹ 22 King Street, Kings Lynn, is the townhouse dating from after c.1200 that appears to have been of the ground-level design exemplified by the Jew's House, Lincoln, and is thus included in the Gazetteer.

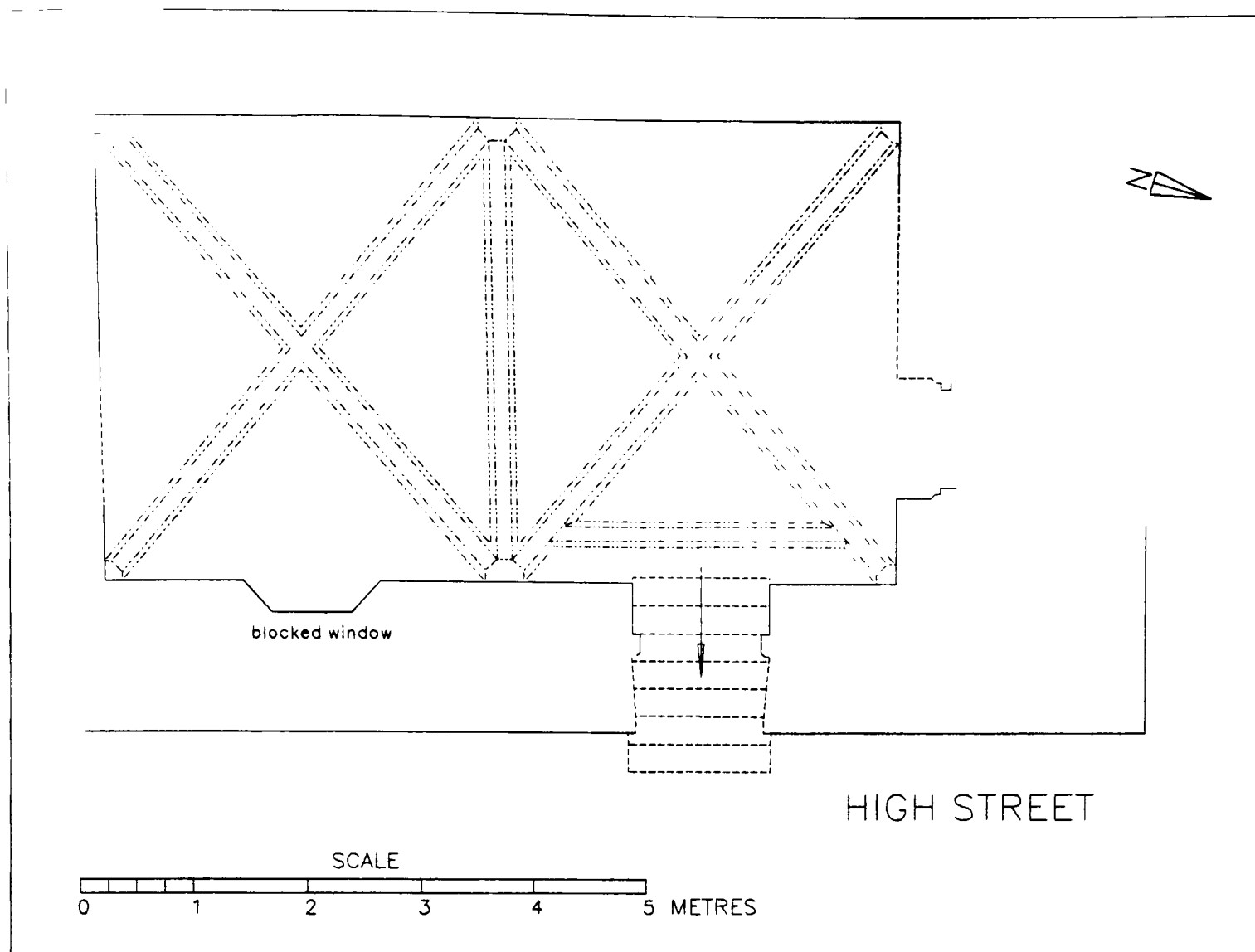


Fig. 140. 35 High Street, Battle. Plan of undercroft showing reconstructed steps from street.

BRISTOL

2. *Bristol: 5, 6, 7, & 8 High Street.* A thirteenth-century undercroft, comprising a timber-ceiled streetfront chamber, with two barrel-vaulted chambers to the rear, dating from the thirteenth century, and demolished in 1914. See Chapter 4 for discussion and plan (pp. 239-40).

3. *Bristol: Tower Lane.* An early to mid twelfth-century undercroft excavated in 1979-80. The undercroft was directly on and oriented at right angles to the street frontage, and was semi-subterranean. See Chapter 2 discussion and plan (pp. 110-11).

BURY ST EDMUNDS

4. *Bury St Edmunds: Moyses Hall.* A largely intact two-storey townhouse, or pair of townhouses, at ground level, dating from c.1180. See Chapter 1 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 62-6, and 68-9).

5. *Bury St Edmunds: 79 Guildhall Street.* A doorway and the surrounding wall only, surviving from a twelfth-century townhouse.

The doorway is of high quality construction and has a roll-moulded arch and capitals with volutes, which are indicative of a mid-late twelfth-century date. The decorative side of the doorway faces the rear of the building, and is set 6.10m back from the present street line. The arch of the doorway spans 1.43m and its apex is 2.03m above the present floor. On the street side of the doorway there is a 60mm rebate and a splay. The doorway is set in a



Fig. 141. 79 Guildhall Street, Bury St Edmunds. Rear doorway viewed from the west.

stone wall that runs parallel to the street, but which is largely clad. In view of its orientation and its distance from a street for which there is no evidence of encroachment, it seems that the doorway must have been at the rear of a townhouse that fronted and ran parallel to Guildhall Street. The ornate form of the doorway may imply that it provided the chief access to

the residence, perhaps opening onto a stair, and raises the possibility of a rear courtyard.

CAMBRIDGE

6. *Cambridge: Merton Hall, Northampton Street.* A surviving and substantially intact chamber block on an urban manor-like property, dating from c.1200. See Chapter 1 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 14-20).

CANTERBURY

7. *Canterbury: 44 Burgate.* An undercroft of the late twelfth century excavated in 1984.¹

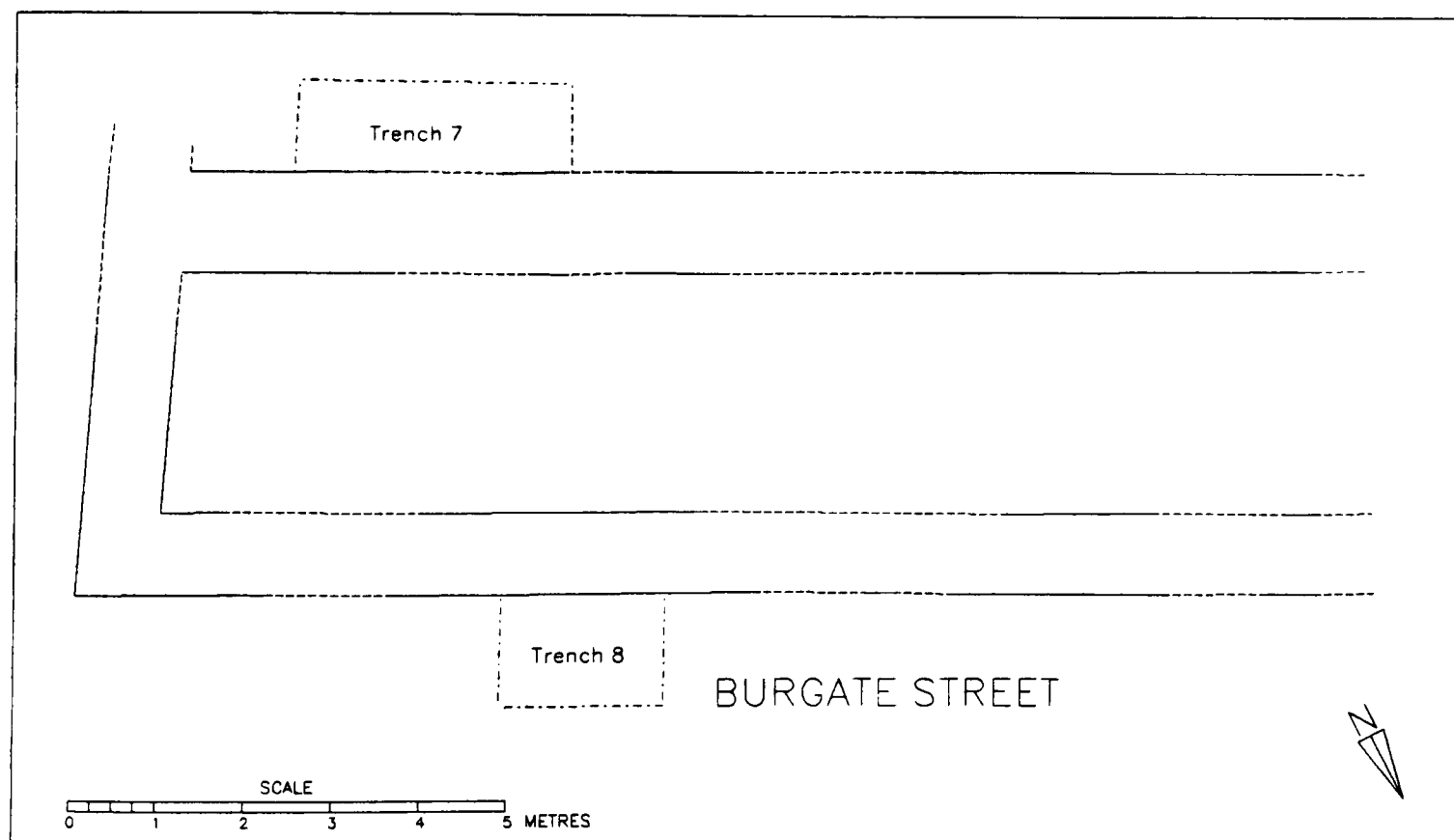


Fig. 142. 44 Burgate, Canterbury. Plan of undercroft.

The undercroft lay directly on and parallel to the Burgate Street frontage, extending for at least 14m. The archaeological excavation was very limited and details of the original form of the building are unclear.

¹ S.S. Frere and P. Bennett, 'Canterbury Excavations: Intra- and Extra-mural Sites, 1949-55 and 1980-84', *The Archaeology of Canterbury* 8 (Maidstone, 1987), pp. 105-8.

However, a small *sondage* against the street frontage (Trench 8) revealed a construction trench that places the foundation offset of the twelfth-century wall at least 2.75m below the contemporary ground surface. A similar investigation of the rear wall (Trench 7) unearthed a construction trench 650mm deep. Whatever the exact level of the contemporary ground level, it is clear that the undercroft was at least partly subterranean. On the interior face of the two long walls a stringcourse apparently marked the springing of a removed barrel vault. Urry recorded a stone house on the site c.1180¹ and c.1200.²

8. *Canterbury: 21 High Street.* A surviving late twelfth-century undercroft from a split-level townhouse, and located at right angles to and directly on the street frontage. See Chapter 2 for discussion and cross section (pp. 94-5).

9. *Canterbury: The Guildhall, High Street.* A surviving undercroft (formerly stone-vaulted) set back from the street by c.14.2m and dating from c.1180. It formed the lower level of a two-storey chamber block, probably at the rear of a ground-level range extending to the High Street. See Chapter 1 for discussion and plan (pp. 30-1).

10. *Canterbury: Cogan House.* A surviving but largely inaccessible and featureless shell of a ground-level townhouse, probably dating from the late twelfth-century. See Chapter 1 discussion and plan (pp. 54-5).

¹ Urry, *Canterbury*, p. 246 (Rental C24).

² *Ibid.*, p. 266 (Rental D107).

CHESTER (THE ROWS).¹

11. Chester: 11 Bridge Street. A surviving thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century undercroft.

The medieval fabric consists of an undercroft at right angles to the street and which measures 12.15m x 5.50m. It has a partly surviving timber arcade that carries what appear to be original lodged-joists. In the rear section the arcade plate and joists have been removed, but an intact stone corbel in the centre of the rear wall would have supported the east end of the arcade plate. Dendrochronological analysis has not produced a date, but the simple lodged-joists and the unbraced arcade post are indicative of a thirteenth- or early to mid fourteenth-century date. In the north (side) wall of the rear section a piece of apparently original floorboarding, a section of a joist, and a plate (presumably for a timber-framed superstructure) survive.

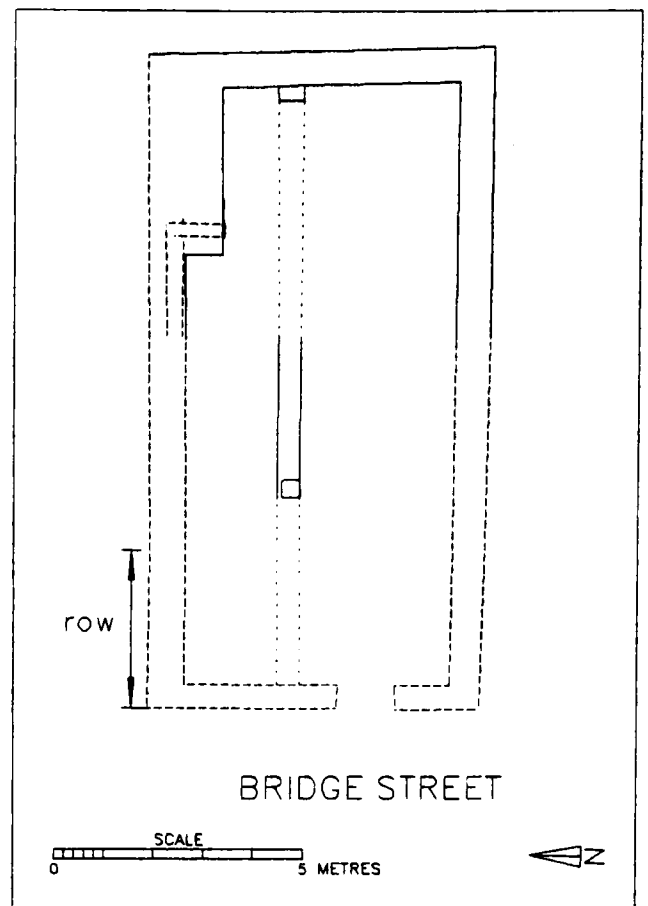


Fig. 143. 11 Bridge Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft.

12. Chester: 15 Bridge Street. A surviving fourteenth-century undercroft oriented at right angles to the street.

This comprises an undercroft that is 10.5m long and 4.6m wide (internally), originally sunk c.1m into the sandstone bedrock. It is spanned transversely by a pair of two-ordered chamfered arches which indicate a

¹ In view of the confusion created by two inconsistent street numberings (at street level and Row level), the street-level numbers are used here to include the property above.

mid fourteenth-century construction date: similar examples survive at 36 and 50 Bridge Street (see below). These transverse arches carry large lodged-joists which have not been sampled for dendrochronological dating. At the front of the south wall, Lawson and Smith note a 90mm deep recess, now hidden by the modern internal fittings, similar to that at 28 Eastgate Street, Chester.¹

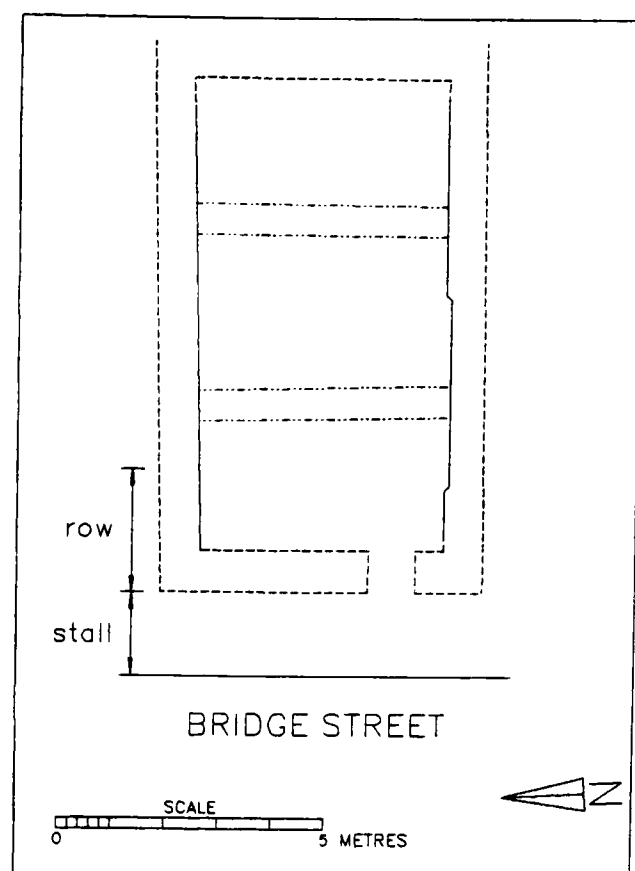


Fig. 144. 15 Bridge Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft.

13. Chester: 35-9 Bridge Street. Fragmentary remains of a pair of undercrofts of possible c.1300 date.

35 Bridge Street was all but demolished in the mid nineteenth century, with the exception of the south wall of the undercroft. This is now clad but the rear part was visible to Lawson and Smith in the 1950s, at which point evidence of a corbel table was still surviving.² A separate chamber with a cupboard was found to the rear.³ The south wall of No. 35 forms the north wall of a more substantially surviving undercroft at Nos. 37-9. This undercroft is remarkable for its height of c.4.2m, which allows two modern storeys and cannot be explained by the presence of a now lost stone vault: there is no evidence of a vault, and the multiple corbels in the rear wall are clearly original and show that there was a timber ceiling *ab*

¹ Lawson and Smith, *The Rows*, p. 10.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 10-12.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

initio. Neither has the floor seen significant lowering since initial construction as is demonstrated by the level of the threshold of a square-headed rebated doorway in the rear wall which is only 190mm above the present floor. That the doorway is original is clear since it uses the same unusual bed of local sandstone with a large quantity of inclusions as found in the surrounding wall. This doorway now provides a view of a section of a hypocaust from the Roman bath house, although the rough rear face of the medieval wall cannot have been

exposed as it is now. Further elements of the bath house are found in the fabric of the west (front) wall.¹

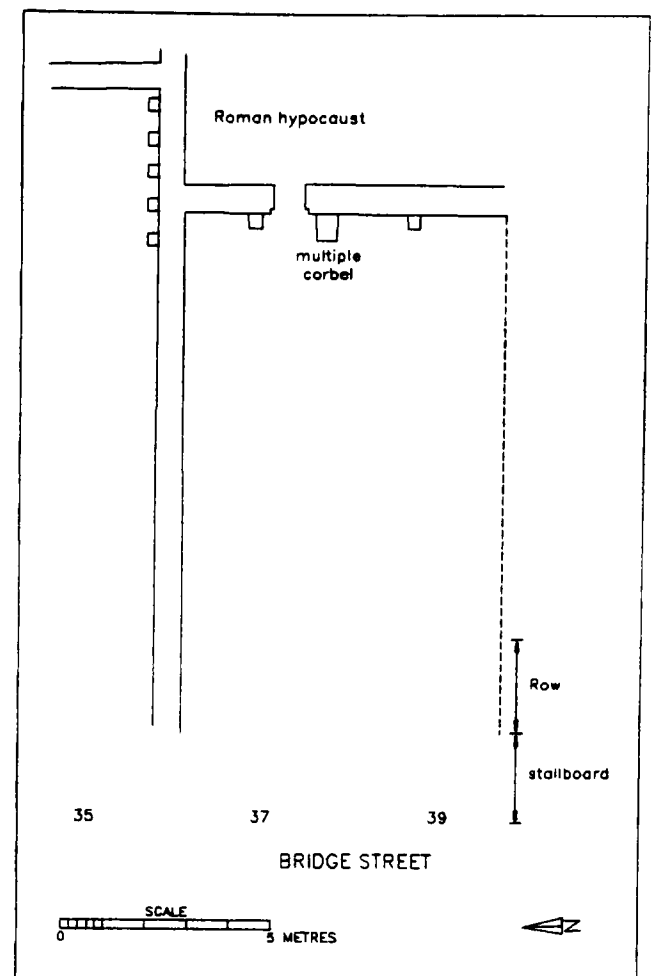


Fig. 145. 39 Bridge Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft.

14. Chester: 12 Bridge Street. A surviving undercroft (rediscovered in 1839) with a six-bay quadripartite vault set back 12.8m from the front of the Row walkway, and dating from the mid to late thirteenth century. The vault and its relationship to the Row walkway are discussed in Chapter 3 (pp. 147-9). For a discussion of the staircase contained within the southern side wall refer to Chapter 4 (pp. 220-1), and for its possible identification as the 'ghost' of a seld see Chapter 5 (p. 272).

¹ For a plan of the Roman bath house in relation to the medieval undercrofts of 35-39 Bridge Street see: T.N. Brushfield, 'The Roman Remains of Chester', *JCAS*, old series, 3 (1871), plan facing p. 15.

15. Chester: 32 Bridge Street. A surviving undercroft which cannot be dated precisely due to post-medieval replacement of the carpentry and an absence of any features providing close stylistic dating. Its importance, and the reason for its inclusion, is that it is the most likely candidate for an undercroft originally below a seld. See Chapter 5 for discussion and a plan (p. 272).

16. Chester: 36 Bridge Street. A largely intact mid fourteenth-century undercroft.

Oriented at right angles to the street, this undercroft is spanned by two transverse arches but is otherwise timber-ceiled. The mildly-pointed and two-centred chamfered arches are indicative of an early to mid fourteenth-century date. This has been corroborated by sampling of three *in situ* joists from the ceiling which produced dendrochronological dates for the final rings of 1248, 1286, and 1317. In the absence of sapwood, this gives a *terminus post quem* of 1327 for the felling of the last of these.¹

At the rear of the undercroft a section of these joists still carries rubble make-up, a feature of several of the timber-

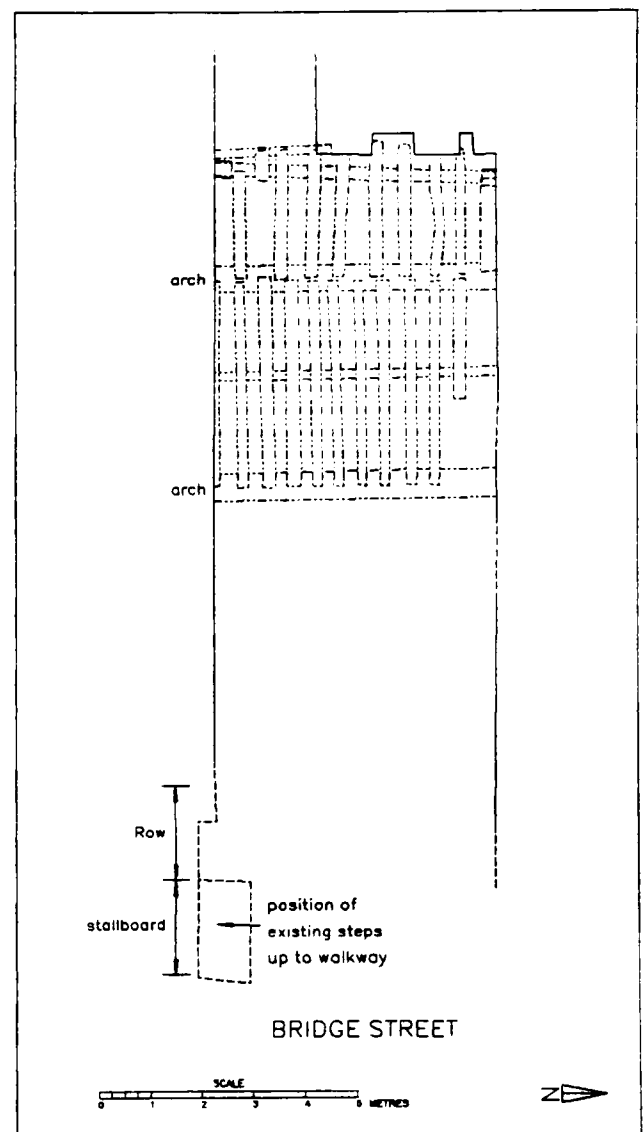


Fig. 146. 36 Bridge Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft showing the surviving medieval joists.

¹ This is calculated by adding the minimum number of sapwood rings expected (10), derived from a 10-55 range that forms the 95% confidence limits for the number of sapwood rings on British oak trees over 30 years old. Sampling undertaken by Dr P. Leggett (Liverpool University), and matching carried out by Cathy Groves (Dendrochronology Laboratory, Department of Archaeology and Prehistory, The University of Sheffield).

ceiled undercrofts in Chester and presumably intended to have a fireproofing function.¹ Also at the rear is a passage that almost certainly led a short way to a rear entrance, but which is now blocked.

17. Chester: 48-52 Bridge Street. A partially surviving townhouse of the early fourteenth century, that incorporates the façade of an earlier building. For the discussion of the earlier building see Chapter 3 (pp. 149-50).

48-52 Bridge Street was one of the few townhouses in the Chester Rows to have had a hall behind the Row-level shops that was oriented parallel to the principal street. Like the other surviving examples at 6 Lower Bridge Street, 14-16 Northgate Street, and 38-42 Watergate Street, and a probable example which is known from documentary sources to have been in existence by 1289/90 at 16-20 Watergate Street,² this building is on a corner plot. Another common feature with the other examples is the fact that the hall was built over several undercrofts oriented at right angles to the street and, thus, the commercial elements of the townhouse appeared identical to those of several conjoining smaller properties. The retention of an earlier façade for the northernmost third of the building must have made the single occupancy of the domestic parts behind still less obvious.

Of the three undercrofts, the middle one survives to the greatest degree. A slightly pointed near-segmental arch with a two-ordered chamfer spans this undercroft at the rear of the position of the Row-level shops, and supports the eastern (front) stone wall of a hall. The wider undercroft to the north had a pair of arches on the same line and with the same chamfers, but these were removed at the turn of the century: fortunately

¹ See pp. 225-6.

² BL Add. Ch. 50,032. The author is grateful to Alan Thacker for this reference.

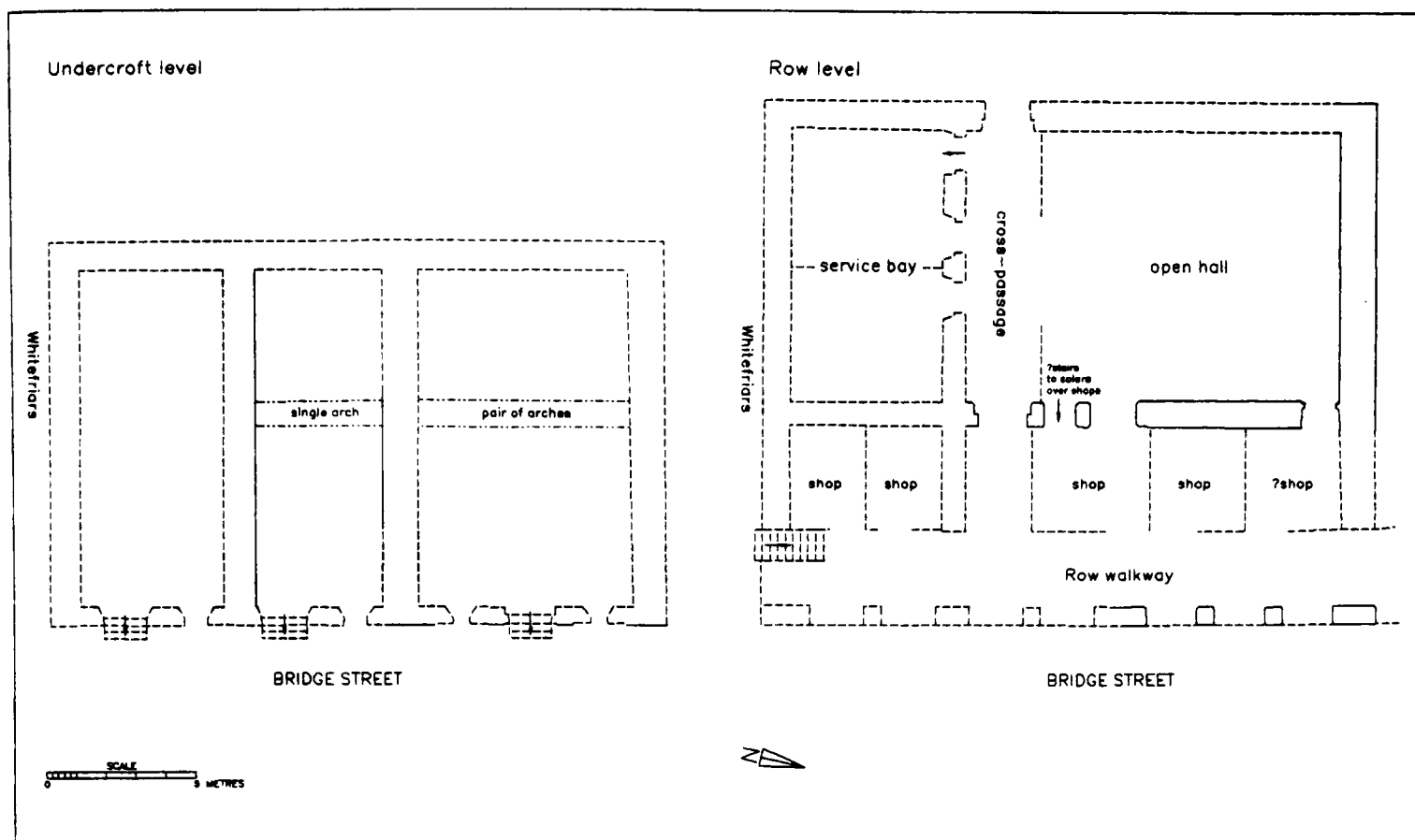


Fig. 147. 48-52 Bridge Street, Chester. Reconstructed plans at undercroft and Row levels.

they were recorded by Arthur Baker.¹ It is clear from the relationship of the façade of the northern part of the townhouse with the undercroft behind, that this undercroft was widened by moving the south wall further southwards at the time of the almost complete rebuilding in the fourteenth century. The remains of the southern undercroft (No. 52) comprise only fragments of sandstone walling towards the rear, but as it is to the south of the Row-level hall it is unclear whether the wall at rear of the shop at the upper level would have been of stone or timber frame and, thus, the need for a transverse arch is uncertain.

The evidence at Row level chiefly consists of the almost completely intact east wall of the hall, in which there are four very different doorways. The widest is that at the south end and has a two-centred arch, a two-ordered moulding on the east (street) face, and a rebate on the west (inner) face. There can be little doubt that this was the front doorway of a cross-entry

¹ A. Baker, [drawings without text]. *JCAS*, new series, 5, part 4 (1895), pp. 400-1.

at the lower end of the hall. A groove 190mm north of the inner jamb of the doorway on the east face marks the position of a thin partition, presumably forming an entrance passage between the shops along the Row walkway. A similar groove 450mm north of the inner jamb on the inner face marks the location of the screens at the lower end of the hall. Immediately to the north there are a pair of segmental-arched doorways, curiously devoid of rebates. The northernmost, and wider, of the two is partly a reconstruction of 1973, but the apex of the arch survived at this date enabling the restoration to be carried out with reasonable accuracy. The close proximity of the doorways means that it is improbable that both provided access to the rear of shops along the Row walkway. It is perhaps more likely that one functioned in this way while the other opened onto a staircase to the extensive chambers over the shops and walkway. The final doorway is at the northern (upper) end of this wall and has a slightly segmental two-centred arch with a moulding on the west (inner) face, and, oddly, a rebate on the western face. It is unlikely that a door from a shop would have opened inwards to the hall, particularly at the upper end, and it may be that this arrangement results from the location of a stair abutting the eastern face of the doorway, or even reflects a specialized use of one of the small units along the Row walkway normally used as shops. The east wall of the hall rises another storey above Row level and, although it has been clad for much of its recent history, there are no visible or recorded openings in it. This is, of course, wholly consistent with the presence of an open hall.

The northern wall of the hall survives, but is less visible: the northern jamb of the north doorway in the east wall joins a massive stone wall which extends 8.88m westwards. There is no evidence of a return to the south of this wall and it thus represents the minimum width of a

reconstruction of the hall. The rear walls of the undercrofts do not help in fixing the position of the rear wall of the hall since Baker's record of the medieval rear walls before their demolition c.1900, puts them only c.4.3m west of the east wall of the hall:¹ the Row level must have extended further to the rear than the lower storey. The ostensibly sixteenth-century fireplace in the north wall of the hall, however, appears to confirm that the internal width was c.8.88m, since it would demand remarkable coincidence to explain otherwise the fact that it sits exactly central to the surviving north wall. It may be that the core of this fireplace is even earlier than is indicated by the sixteenth-century lintel.

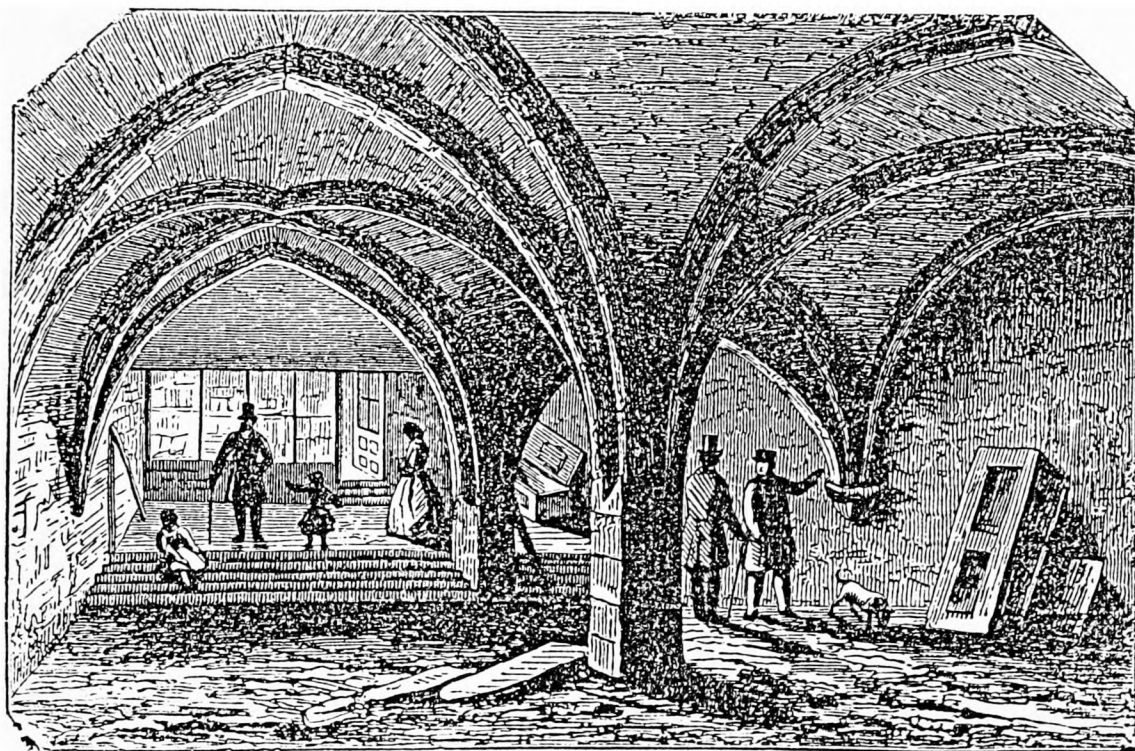
Analysis of the divisions of the rest of the building is useful in adding further detail to the hall. The relocation of the south wall of the northern undercroft at the time of the almost total rebuild must have had a reason. Its effect, however, is clear and this was to widen the width of the northernmost gable roof overlooking Bridge Street. The gable widths of the southern two parts of the structure can be deduced from the comparable major east-west walls. When applied to the building behind any interrelationship between the gabled façade and the hall appears irregular: tiebeams across the hall placed as would be expected to coincide with the valleys and ridges of the gables would give two bays to the north of 4.1m, with two bays to the south of 2.9m. Such narrow bays at the lower end of the hall are immediately suggestive of a spere truss and it is significant that, if a likely tiebeam width of c.300mm is assumed to have been used, the lower face of the possible spere truss coincides exactly with the groove for the screen forming the cross-passage. This confirms that the rebuild of the early fourteenth century included a thorough redesign, albeit preserving an impressive façade from an earlier building, and that the hall

¹ *Ibid.*

was central to the overall plan: this is also found at 6 Lower Bridge Street and 38-42 Watergate Street.

18. Chester: The Falcon, 6 Lower Bridge Street. A surviving timber-ceiled undercroft of mid thirteenth-century date. For discussion of the building and illustrations see Chapter 3 (pp. 151-3).

19. Chester: 12 Eastgate Street. A late thirteenth- to early fourteenth-century undercroft that was vaulted at the rear only at the time of its demolition in 1861.



CRYPT IN EASTGATE STREET (SOUTH), CHESTER,
Formerly existing under Messrs. Beckett & Co's premises.
Pulled down in 1861.

Fig. 148. 12 Eastgate Street, Chester. View of undercroft looking northwards: *JCAS*, old series, 2 (1864), facing p. 410.

The demolition of this *c.*7.75m wide undercroft followed the accidental collapse of the vault during works intended to preserve the structure within a new building on the site. A description and a drawing (Fig. 148) accompanying the record of these events, show that at the rear of the

undercroft there was a double-aisled rib vault of two bays.¹ The rib arrangement shown in the drawing differs from the normal quadripartite arrangement in that the western (left hand) bay has no wall rib and there are no north-south ribs between the columns. The written account records that several shafts were found in a chamber to the rear of the undercroft 'the sides of which were built on an inclined plane'.² The shafts, it was thought, may have come from blind arcading, while the chamber with sloping sides may represent a light well.

20. *Chester: 28 Eastgate Street.* A surviving rib-vaulted undercroft of four bays, which dates from c.1300. Unusually, it has a largely intact front wall. See Chapter 3 for discussion and plan (pp. 153-4).

21. *Chester: 32 Eastgate Street.* A thirteenth-century townhouse which was demolished in 1828.

This c.8.5m wide plot preserves fragments of sandstone walling towards the rear, and these may well be part of the thirteenth-century building known to have existed, at least in part, until the construction of the present building in 1828. The record of the earlier townhouse is unfortunately restricted to a pair of two-centred stone arches which spanned the Row walkway at either end of the property, in the manner of those at 28-30 Watergate Street. In a similar way to the surviving fabric at the latter, the c.1m north-south depth of the stonework to the street side of the arches at 32 Eastgate Street fell well short of the depth of a stallboard, but would have been sufficient to allow for a return and, thus, a stone façade.

¹ *JCAS*, old series, 2 (1864), p. 410 and drawing opposite.

² *Ibid.*, p. 410.



Fig. 149. 32 Eastgate Street, Chester. View of arches across Row walkway, looking westwards: Pickering, in G. Ormerod, *History of the County Palatine and City of Chester*, Vol. 1, 2nd edition (1882), facing p. 356.

22. *Chester: 14-16 Northgate Street.* A largely demolished townhouse dating from the first half of the fourteenth century.

This building is the only example known in the Chester Rows which resembles a courtyard house, but it was simply a parallel streetfront range with a lodging range to the rear, built on a corner site formed by Northgate Street and Leen Lane. The rear building was demolished in the late nineteenth century, but its overall plan is known from the 1875 OS map, and E.W. Cox's written record of it at this time provides useful detail of the internal arrangements.¹ The rear range comprised a stone undercroft set at the usual level with a two-storey timber building above. This had screens-passages at the southern end on both levels, and the

¹ E.W. Cox, 'The Chapel and Parsonage Hall of S. Nicholas, Chester', *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, 3 (1901), pp. 21-2.

roof was a crown-post type. Evidence of a substantial building adjoining the western side indicates that there was a range linking the rear and the streetfront parts of the townhouse, and which provided access to the two levels of screens-passages.

23. Chester: 11 Watergate Street. A surviving late thirteenth-century undercroft with a two-aisled rib vault. See Chapter 3 for discussion and plan (pp. 144-5).

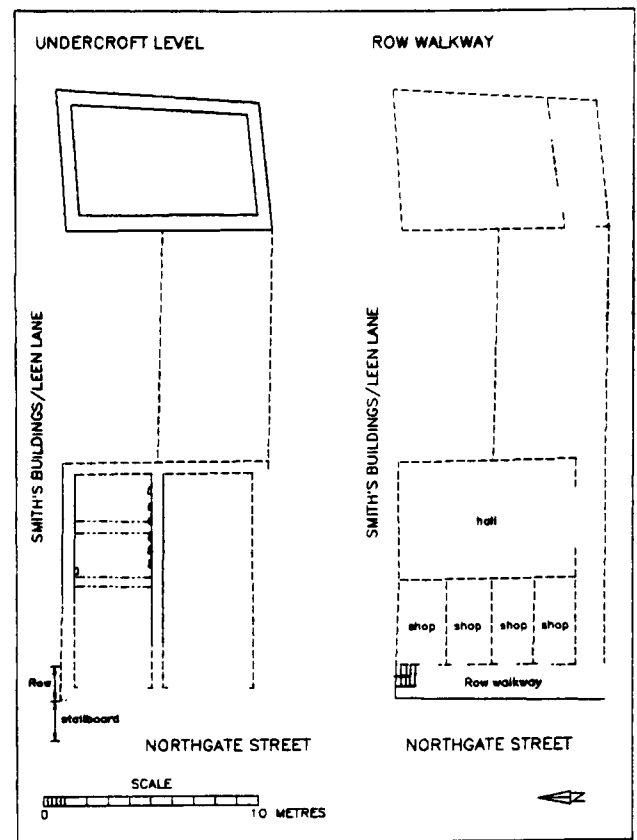


Fig. 150. 16 Northgate Street, Chester. Plan of known features at undercroft level and the reconstructed arrangement of the building at Row level.

24. Chester: 21 Watergate Street. A surviving late thirteenth-century undercroft with a quadripartite rib vault. See Chapter 3 for discussion and plan (pp. 145-6).

25. Chester: 37 Watergate Street. A surviving early to mid thirteenth-century undercroft with an inserted late thirteenth-century rib vault at the rear. See Chapter 3 for discussion and plan (pp. 146-7).

26. Chester: 63-5 Watergate Street. A demolished pair of undercrofts possibly dating from the early fourteenth century.

The demolition of these fourteenth-century undercrofts in the early 1970s followed the earlier removal of the late medieval timber-framed building.¹ The correlation of the bay spacings at undercroft and above levels

¹ Lawson and Smith, *The Rows*, p. 22.

suggests that the undercroft was included in the rebuilding work of the fifteenth century. As with other examples in the Rows, the front undercroft comprised a stone-built structure oriented at right angles to the street and extending forward to the front of the walkway and rear of the stallboard; the stallboard was an encroachment. The great width of the undercroft meant that its timber ceiling required a central arcade of timber posts. As Lawson and Smith observe, this appears late medieval in date.¹ Likewise, the bridging joists spanning the undercroft and their supporting carved corbels were doubtless of this phase too.² At the west end of the rear wall a doorway

opened onto four steps down to a narrow vaulted undercroft running parallel to the street across the rear of the main undercroft. A passage from the rear of this vaulted undercroft apparently provided access to another undercroft beyond;³ certainly the doorway in the centre of the passage is rebated on the rear (south) face.

The collapsed condition of the barrel vault at the time of Lawson's survey revealed plaster above the springers and 'square recesses which

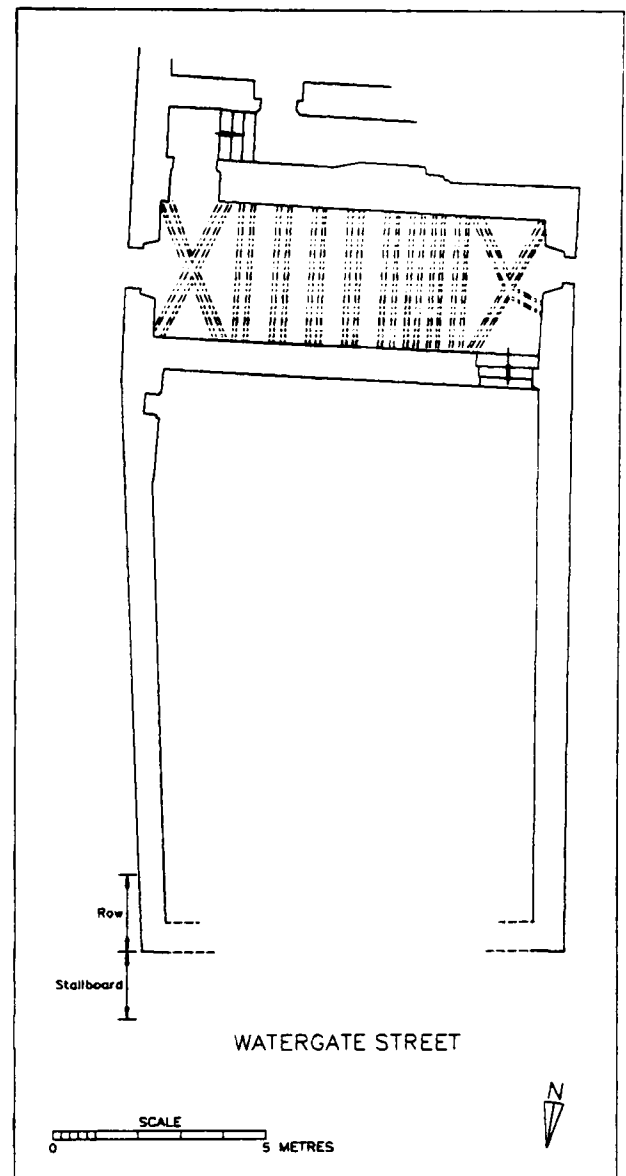


Fig. 151. 63 Watergate Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

² Several of these corbels carved in the form of human and animal heads are preserved in the store of the Grosvenor Museum.

³ Lawson and Smith, *The Rows*, p. 23.

suggest corbelling'.¹ It may be that, like the timber ceiling and the arcade in the front undercroft, the fourteenth-century vault was an insertion into an earlier, possibly thirteenth-century, undercroft. Unfortunately, there is no known record of the precise form of the doorways at the front and rear of the vaulted undercroft.

27. *Chester: 12 Watergate Street.* An early to mid twelfth-century townhouse, recorded and excavated during demolition in 1985. The undercroft and substantial fragments of the timber-framed building above survived. See Chapter 3 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 134-40).

28. *Chester: 28-30 Watergate Street.* A surviving late thirteenth-century split-level townhouse with a largely intact timber-ceiled undercroft, and fragmentary remains of the stone-built upper storeys. See Chapter 3 for a discussion and plans (pp. 140-3).

29. *Chester: 32-4 Watergate Street.* Fragmentary remains of a mid to late thirteenth-century undercroft oriented at right angles to the street and probably subdivided longitudinally by two timber partitions. See Chapter 3 for discussion and plan (pp. 143-4).

30. *Chester: 38-42 Watergate Street.* A remarkably intact split-level townhouse oriented parallel to Watergate Street, and dating from the first half of the fourteenth century.

The 1875 1:500 OS map for Chester shows the extent of what is almost certainly the large medieval plot extending from the rear of 38-42 Watergate Street to Hamilton Place. The architectural evidence corroborates

¹ *Ibid.*

that Nos. 38-42 were part of a single structure. Above the three undercrofts, of which Nos. 38 and 40 were interconnected, it is clear that the original arrangement at Row level comprised an open hall lying parallel to the street with a service bay at the west end overlooking Crook Street. An entrance between shops along the Row walkway frontage opened into the cross-passage.

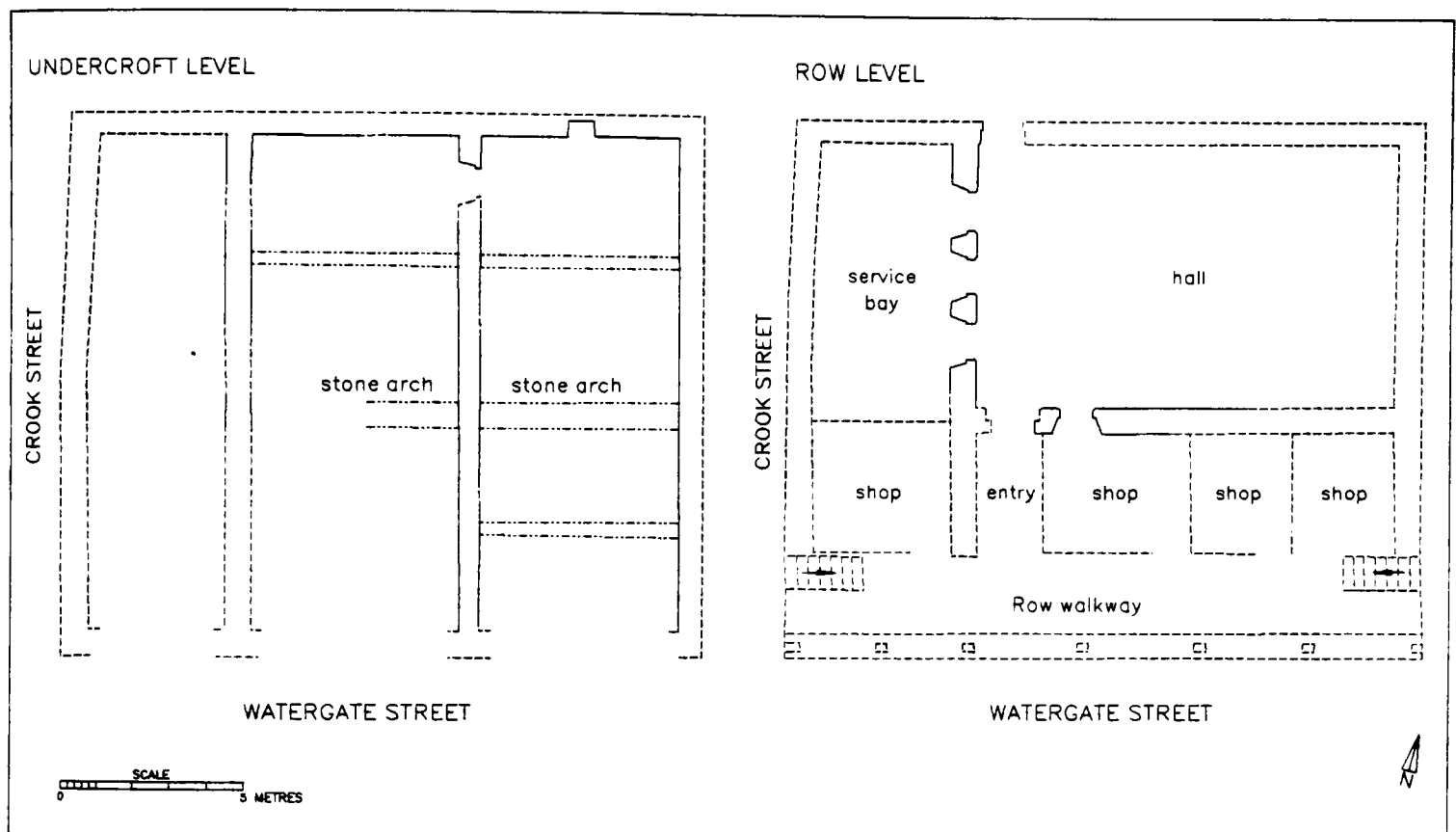


Fig. 152. 38-42 Watergate Street, Chester. Plan of undercroft level showing extent of surviving transverse arches/joists, and plan of Row level showing reconstructed arrangement.

Phase 1. The earliest element of the building is the east wall of the undercroft of No. 38: the stonework and carpentry of the second phase have been cut into this masonry. The wall extends under the Row walkway and thus may survive from an earlier split-level townhouse of the galleried Row type - a reasonable suggestion in view of the fact that the Row walkway was in existence at 28-34 Watergate Street by the late thirteenth century.

Phase 2a. The second phase comprises the three near-identical undercrofts, of which No. 38 is the most intact. This undercroft is divided into five timber-ceiled bays. A transverse stone arch supports the stone wall

at the junction of the shops and hall above. It has single-ordered chamfers and forms a depressed three-centred arch spanning 5.22m. On the north face corbels survive just above the height of the apex, and the scars of their removed counterparts can be seen on the south face. The wall above the arch thins by 100-120mm at the level of the corbel table. This level is c.100mm below the tops of the braced bridging joists which support most of the timber ceiling of the undercroft, and thus indicates that the corbel table must have supported a corbel plate of c.100mm thickness: comparable plank-like timbers over transverse arches survive *in situ* at 15 and 36 Bridge Street, although in these properties there is no projecting corbel table. At 38-42 Watergate Street the ceiling of the undercrofts has been raised so that the joists no longer sit on the corbel plates. The floor level above is consistent with the Row walkway and the internal doorways and is clearly at its original level: it seems that c.300mm of rubble infill between the ceiling and floor, of the type seen at 36 Bridge Street, has been removed, most probably at the time when the failing bridging joists in No. 38 were given additional support at their eastern ends.¹

Although the 230mm x 230mm joists are in a reused position, their uniform scantling and appearance, and the lack of disused peg holes or mortices indicative of reuse from elsewhere, suggests that they are in all probability the original second-phase joists. Dendrochronological sampling of these joists produced three final ring dates of 1229, 1286, and 1293. In the absence of sapwood, this gives a *terminus post quem* of 1303 for the

¹ See pp. 225-6.

last of these.¹ An early to mid fourteenth-century date is consistent with the stylistic dating evidence of the transverse arches.

Phase 2b. Above the corbel table on the south side of the transverse arch in the undercroft of No. 38, the inconsistent masonry joints and a change in the stone size provide evidence of a break in construction. Presumably this was only a momentary pause in construction, or a change in craftsmen, for there can be little doubt that the building above the undercrofts was part of the same rebuilding of the tenement. The main feature of the Row-level building is the former open hall, now divided horizontally and vertically by an inserted floor and central chimney stack, all of the seventeenth century. That this part of the building was originally a hall is clear from the presence of a cross-entry complete with three service doorways. An absence of openings in the upper levels of the surviving south and west walls confirms that this hall was of two-storey height and doubtless open to the roof. Although the rear wall has been destroyed, the northwest internal angle of the hall survives giving internal dimensions of 11.25m x 7.17m.

As well as the fragment of a doorway opening into the cross-passage, the south, or front, wall of the hall contains a doorway just east of the main entrance to the house. This is rebated on the south, or street, side and it is possible that it may have provided access to a staircase to the chambers over the shops and Row walkway rather than to a shop. The use of only two voussoirs to form the arch of this doorway has been identified as unique to this building and 28-30 Watergate Street,² but the technique

¹ This is calculated by adding the minimum number of sapwood rings expected (10), derived from a 10-55 range that forms the 95% confidence limits for the number of sapwood rings on British oak trees over 30 years old. Sampling undertaken by Dr M. Hughes and Dr P. Leggett (Liverpool University).

² Brown, *Watergate Street*, p. 127.

is found elsewhere.¹ There are no other medieval openings in the south wall of the hall and it is probable that the shops at Row level were self-contained. The depth of these shops was c.3.25m, and the massive corbel east of the main entrance may well mark the location of a timber partition wall giving this shop a width of c.3.1m. No details survive of the chambers over these shops and the Row walkway.

CHICHESTER

31. Chichester: Vicars' Hall, South Street. An intact undercroft of c.1180-1210, with a late fourteenth-century upper storey. The undercroft has a three-bay quadripartite rib vault of two aisles. See Chapter 2 for discussion and plan (pp. 107-8).

COLCHESTER

32. Colchester: Culver Street/Lion Walk. A fragmentary mid twelfth-century building at ground level, demolished in 1971 and excavated in 1972-3.²

The earliest medieval structure identified on this site was oriented at right angles to and directly on the side lane frontage (Lion Walk) and set parallel to and c.6m south of the larger Culver Street. The excavation revealed little concerning the area between the north wall of the building and Culver Street, and it is unclear as to whether the main structure was a chamber block to the rear of a streetfront (and possibly commercial) range, or simply faced onto vacant ground. Two roundheaded doorways in the north wall indicate that any property in this area was in the same occupancy and, in the absence of any discovered entrance to Lion Walk,

¹ For example, at 48-52 Bridge Street, Chester; and 79½ High Street, Southampton.

² L.E. Webster and J. Cherry, 'Medieval Britain in 1972', *Med. Arch.* 17 (1973), p. 167; Crummy, *Colchester*, pp. 53-5.

suggest that the building was entered from Culver Street.

Philip Crummy interprets the building as a first-floor hall over a basement.¹ He cites the absence of a hearth or fireplace and of partition walls for a

'through-passage or service rooms' as evidence for a non-domestic function of the lower storey.² With a later cellar

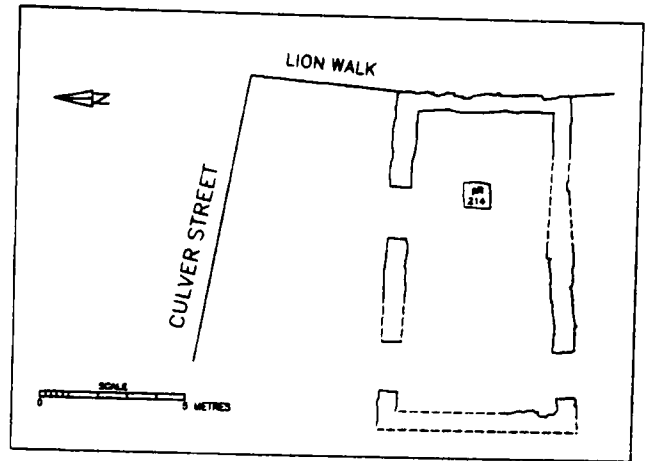


Fig. 153. House formerly at corner of Culver Street and Lion Walk, Colchester. Plan of ground floor showing mid twelfth-century features standing and excavated in 1971-3.

having removed 37% of the ground floor, there can be no certainty about the lack of a fireplace or hearth, and even if such a feature had been located this would not necessarily reflect domestic use. The lack of a service bay and cross-passage arrangement, of course, is hardly an issue in a mid twelfth-century building. The interpretation of a centrally-placed stone-lined pit (feature 214) as a possible post-setting for an arcade supporting the first floor is based on insufficient evidence.³ It is clear, however, that the upstanding north wall (which still reached a height of 2.8m in 1971) did not reveal signs of stone vaulting and, thus, a timber ceiling must have been used if, indeed, the building had an upper storey.

The Lion Walk/Culver Street townhouse remains ambiguous since there is little to support or contradict the excavator's interpretation of the building: it could as equally well be a ground-level open hall as it could a two-storey chamber block at the rear of commercial range.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

33. *Colchester: Foundry Yard.* A two-storey rear chamber block of the twelfth century, demolished in 1886. See Chapter 1 for discussion and plan (pp. 33-4).

34. *Colchester: Pelham's Lane House.* A two-storey stone chamber block that was demolished in 1730.

Crummy has brought together the antiquarian evidence for this building, and has used this to prepare an isometric drawing of the known features.¹ The south wall survived to a height of two storeys in the early eighteenth century, and showed three round-headed windows lighting a first-floor room. At ground level more survived and the arrangement was more complex: a barrel-vaulted undercroft below the first-floor room opened onto rooms on the north of which the form and date are

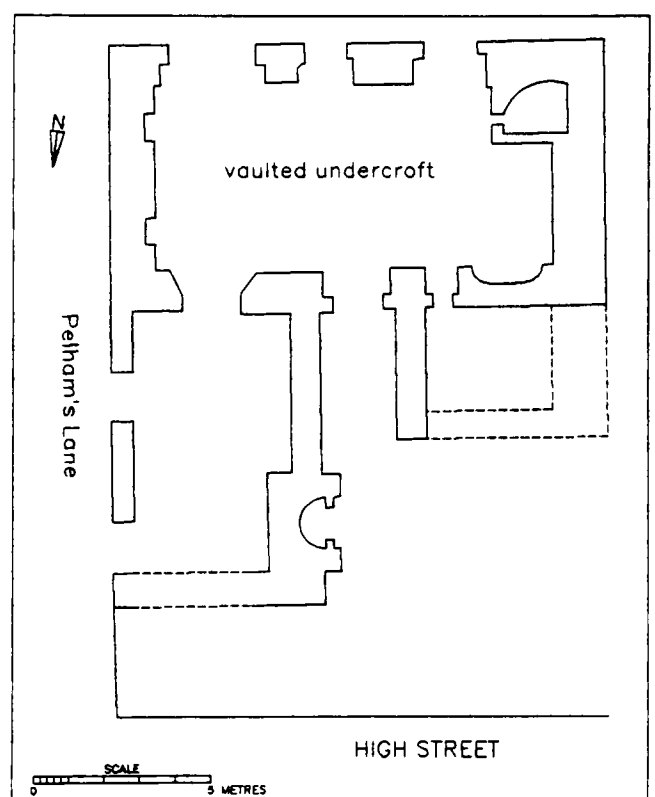


Fig. 154. Pelham's Lane/High Street, Colchester. Plan of undercroft and rooms to the north.

unknown. Since the late medieval building on the High Street frontage was timber framed, it is tempting to suppose that it was the direct successor to an earlier timber streetfront range incorporating shops, as is suggested for the Norman House, Stonegate, York.² The doorways in the south wall of the undercroft, however, indicate that the two-storey structure was accessible from a yard or entry at the rear, leading off Pelham's Lane.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56 and 60.

² See pp. 31-3.

35. *Colchester: The Moot Hall.* A twelfth-century townhouse with a semi-subterranean undercroft that was demolished in 1843. See Chapter 2 for discussion (pp. 102-4).

COVENTRY

36. *Coventry: 38-9 Bayley Lane.* A late thirteenth-century undercroft preserved and excavated in 1987-8.¹

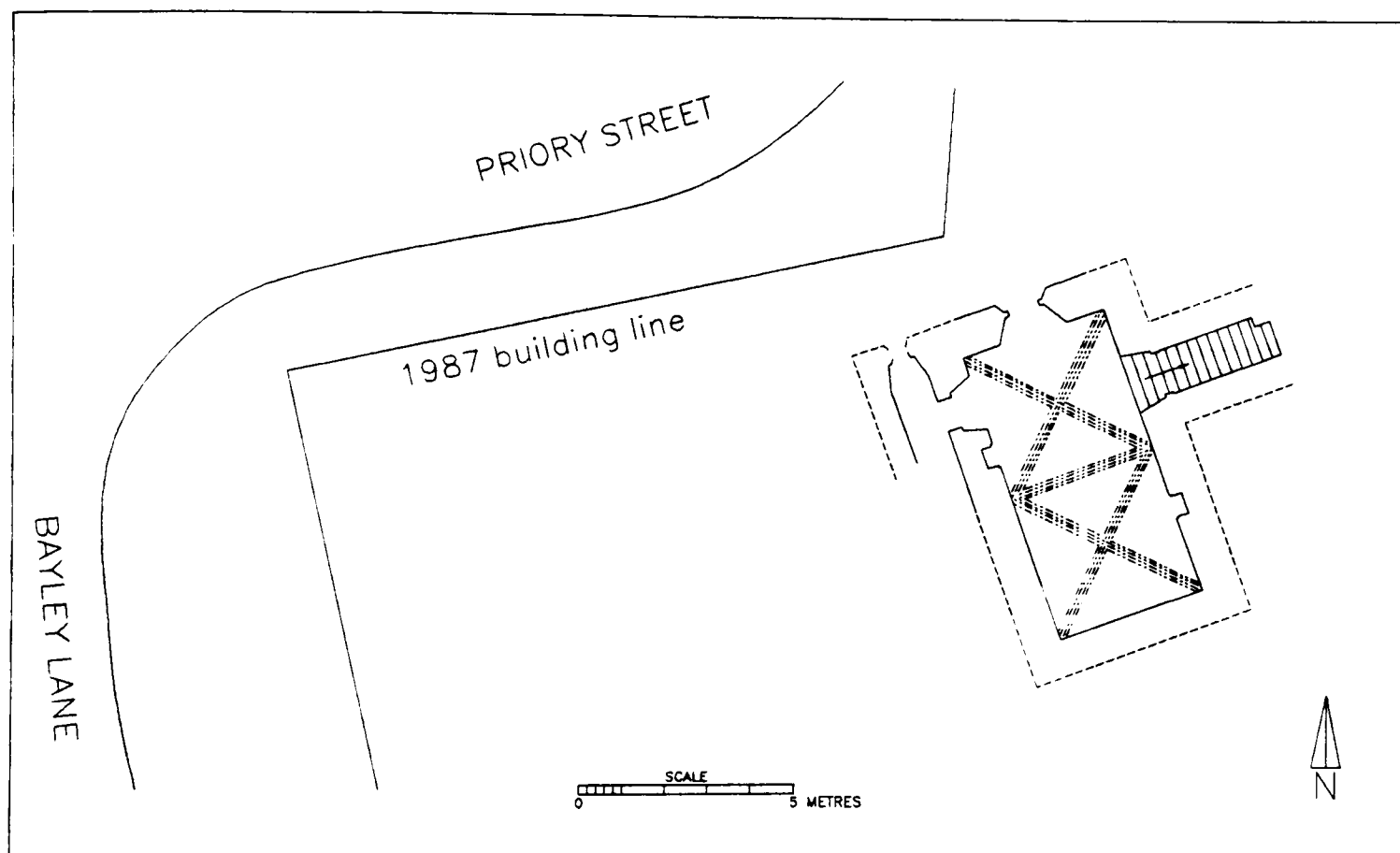


Fig. 155. 38/39 Bayley Lane, Coventry. Plan of undercroft.

The sandstone undercroft is of two bays with a quadripartite rib vault. Entrances in the east and west walls of the northern bay appear original, and are certainly consistent with the late thirteenth-century date suggested for the undercroft. The doorway in the west wall opens into a passage, whereas that in the east wall opens directly onto a flight of steps. These are now blocked off, but Ministry of Works records show that

¹ The excavation was undertaken by Coventry Museums Field Archaeology Unit, and the undercroft was surveyed by the Special Projects Section of Property Services, Coventry City Council. The archive is held by the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum: site code BL87.

fourteen steps lead to an outer doorway: if this marks the original ground level this would imply that the undercroft was deeply sunk so that the crown of the vault was only c.600mm above street level. It is not certain how the undercroft relates to the medieval street plan, although its orientation parallel to, but c.20m back from, Bayley Lane suggests that it was at the rear of a property on that street. The eastern entrance, however, suggests that there was easy access to the rear of such a building from the adjacent area which is now

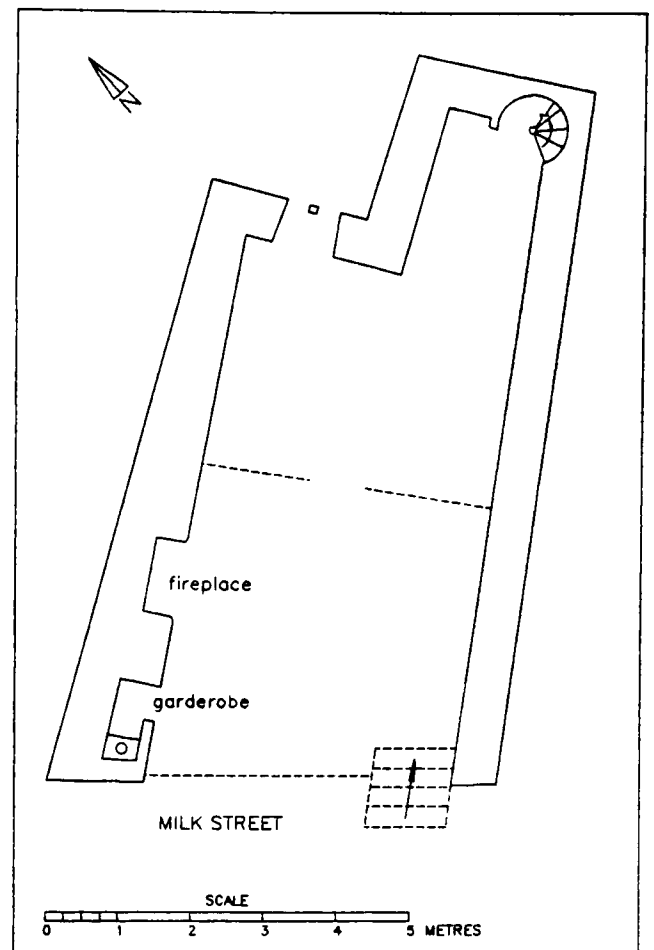


Fig. 156. 8 Milk Street, Exeter. Plan of street level showing timber in dashed line.

formed by a corner of modern Priory Street. Moreover, the windows in the north walls of the western passage and the main undercroft show that originally the building did not extend as far north as it did by the time of the 1887 OS map.

EXETER

37. Exeter: 8 Milk Street. An early fourteenth-century split-level townhouse that survived until destroyed by bombing in May 1942.¹

Oriented at right angles to the street, this building consisted of an undercroft with two stories above. The stone undercroft was originally timber ceiled and rose c.1m above contemporary ground level. The original ground floor was accessed by steps from the street. It comprised a front room with a garderobe and a fireplace, and, beyond this, a chamber with

¹ D. Portman, *Exeter Houses 1400-1700* (Exeter, 1966), pp. 82-3.

a two-light window with shouldered arches in the rear wall, and a spiral stair leading to the upper floor. The two floors above the undercroft were built of stone, with the exception of the front wall, which was timber framed. On the basis of the window and fireplace detail, the building can be dated to the early fourteenth century.

GLOUCESTER

38. *Gloucester: 13-17 Berkeley Street, building M2.* An undercroft discovered by excavation (in 1969-70) and of probable mid twelfth-century date.¹ See Chapter 2 for discussion and plan (pp. 112-13).

39. *Gloucester: 13-17 Berkeley Street, building M3.* A sunken timber building, or undercroft, of the late eleventh to early twelfth century found by excavation in 1969-70.²

This sunken structure (c.1.5m below contemporary ground level) is a useful link between Anglo-Norman timber cellars and later stone undercrofts. The building comprised three sides with framed walls and ground plates and a fourth side built with earth-fast posts. The different technique for the one wall could indicate that this was the entrance side. This is given further credence by a gap between

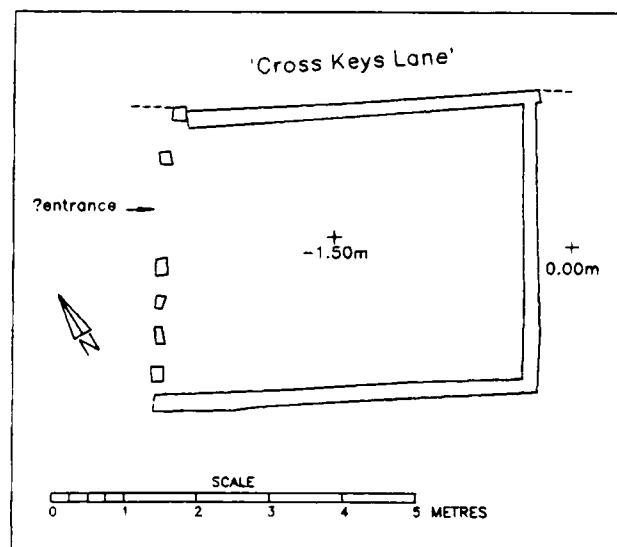


Fig. 157. Building M3, 13-17 Berkeley Street, Gloucester. Plan showing post hole construction of west wall, and internal and external ground levels.

two of the posts of c.750mm suitable for a doorway. As with the later

¹ H. Hurst, 'Excavations at Gloucester, 1968-1971: First Interim Report', *Antiq. J.* 52 (1972), pp. 44-7.

² *Ibid.*

structures on the site (see above and below), building M3 was directly on a former east-west street.

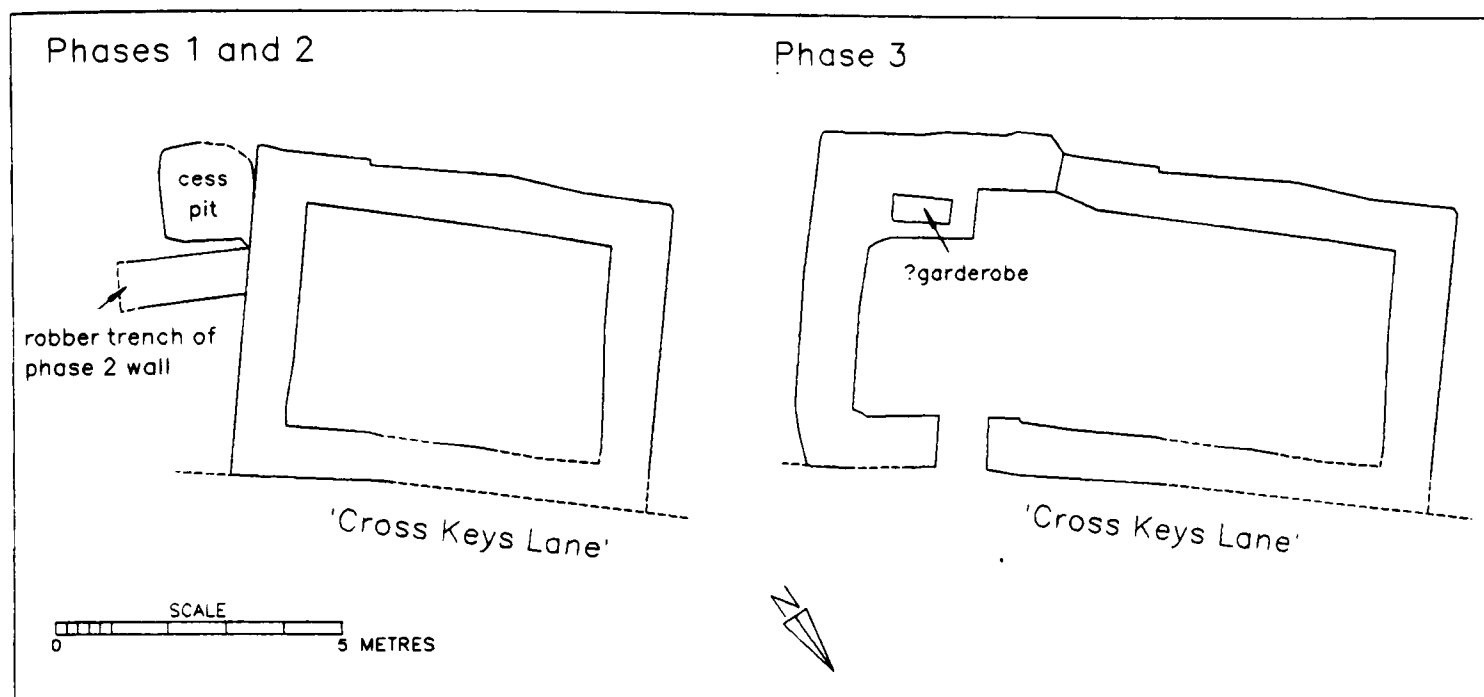


Fig. 158. Building M4, 13-17 Berkeley Street, Gloucester. Plan of phases 1 and 2 (mid-late twelfth century), and phase 3 (thirteenth century).

40. Gloucester: 13-17 Berkeley Street, building M4. A small ground-level mid to late twelfth-century building, which saw extension in the thirteenth century, discovered by excavation in 1969-70.¹

The first-phase building (mid to late twelfth century) measured 5.3m x 3.8m internally and lay parallel to, and directly on, a former east-west street. No evidence was found for an entrance to this ground-level structure, although an addition of a wall at the east end shortly after the initial construction may have related to an external stair. The eastern wall was demolished in the thirteenth century and the building extended so that its internal width was 9.3m. Access directly from the street to this lower storey was provided by a doorway 1.6m west of the internal northeast return. There appears to have been a garderobe in the southeast corner.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7, and Fig. 12.

41. *Gloucester: 47-9 Westgate Street.* A surviving early fourteenth-century segmental barrel-vaulted undercroft, at the rear of a streetfront chamber. See Chapter 4 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 236-8).

42. *Gloucester: 76 Westgate Street.* A surviving late twelfth-century undercroft, with a segmental barrel vault, oriented at right angles to the street. See Chapter 2 for discussion and plan (pp. 108-9).

GREAT YARMOUTH

43. *Great Yarmouth: 50-6 Howard Street South.* A surviving late twelfth-century barrel-vaulted undercroft. See Chapter 2 for discussion and plan (pp. 109-10).

GUILDFORD

44. *Guildford: 72/4 (previously 115) High Street.* A surviving vaulted undercroft of the late thirteenth century.

This undercroft is substantially more intact than its better known counterpart on the other (north) side of the High Street, and it also comprises a two-aisled vault of three bays, set at right angles to the street. 72/4 High Street has been the subject of recent archaeological recording, and a watching brief of the excavation of a new foundation trench on the street frontage.¹ The digging of this trench revealed the chalk and mortar bedding for the original top step. The bedding was a maximum of c.340mm below the modern pavement level, which indicates that the level of the present street (which is on a steep slope) differs very

¹ M.G. O'Connell, 'The Undercroft 72/74 High Street, Guildford', *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 74 (1983), pp. 101-11.

little from that of the thirteenth century. The floor of the undercroft is c.2.8m below the modern pavement.

In view of the fact that there were two original steps outside the north doorway, it is surprising for there to be evidence of an external rebate. This rebate does not appear to have continued down as far the current threshold, and could indicate that the steps have been lowered, or that there was a raised threshold: the latter may have been a necessary precaution against rainwater

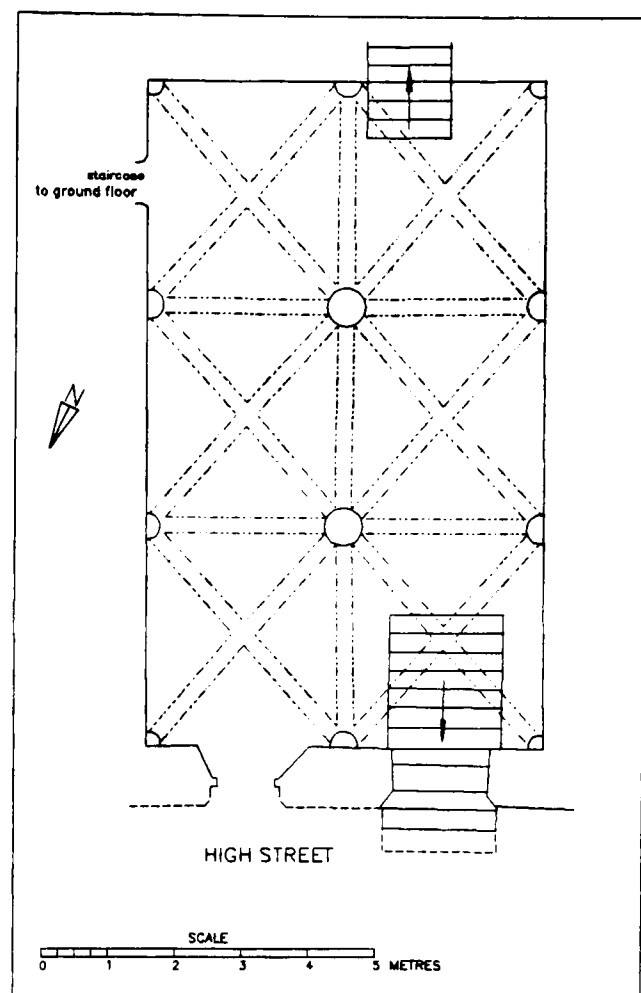


Fig. 159. 72/4 High Street, Guildford. Plan of undercroft.

flooding on the steep slope of the High Street. There were two other original doorways in the undercroft. That in the east wall of the south bay survives, has a two-centred arch, and formerly provided access to a staircase within the wall: its blocking means that the direction of the stair cannot be followed. Although the opening and steps in the rear wall are modern, it is clear from antiquarian evidence that this was preceded by a doorway with a two-centred arch which presumably dated from the original construction.¹

45. Guildford: 83 High Street. A part-surviving undercroft probably dating from the thirteenth to fourteenth century, oriented at right angles to the street.

The property is on the corner of the High Street and Swan Lane, and the medieval remains comprise the front section only of an undercroft with

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105-7.

a pointed barrel vault. A wide area of modern brickwork in the centre of the front (south) corresponds to the street entrance. Examination of the exterior of the chalk undercroft was made possible during recent building works which involved the digging of a 1.10m deep trench against the façade, and this confirmed the presence of a 1.45m wide doorway with 500mm deep jambs.¹ To the east of this, the external face of a 470mm wide square-headed window was observed; this is also visible on the interior and has no internal splay.

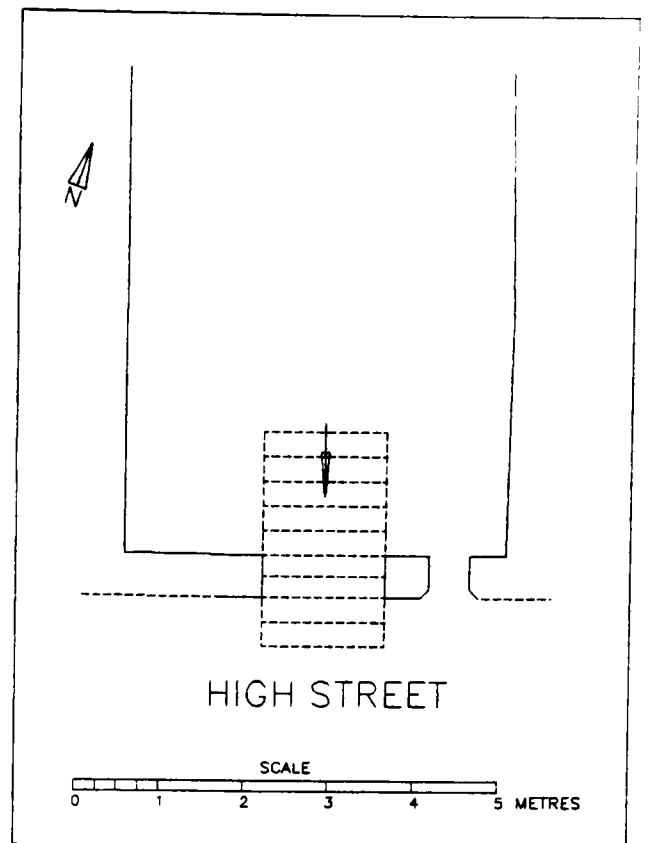


Fig. 160. 83 High Street, Guildford. Plan of undercroft.

46. *Guildford: Angel Hotel, 91 High Street.* A partially intact late thirteenth-century undercroft oriented at right angles to the High Street.

The complete replacement of the vault with a reasonable replica in recent years has left the walls as the only surviving thirteenth-century material, and these are less visible than when Wood surveyed the structure.² Since the wider opening in the front wall is now blocked, Wood's survey provides the best record of its previous state, and she states that until 1939 this housed a two-light window.³ O'Connell has recently accepted that this was

¹ The watching brief was undertaken on 31/12/93 by Guildford Museum.

² The loss of the original vault is surprising since Wood described it in 1950 as in good condition: Wood, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture*. p. 83.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 83; a photograph of the window is to be found in *VCH Surrey III* (1911), facing p. 564. The plan of the undercroft in Fig. 161 is based on Wood's survey.

the arrangement in the thirteenth century,¹ but, in the light of the ubiquitous front entrance in the English medieval undercroft, it seems improbable that this was really the case. A window as wide as this (1.39m; 4'7") but without a splay is unusual, but certainly not unique, although the presence of an adjacent *bona fide* splayed window is inconsistent. More significantly, although there are two other doorways to the undercroft, these are too small for use as goods entrances: that at the rear is c.660mm

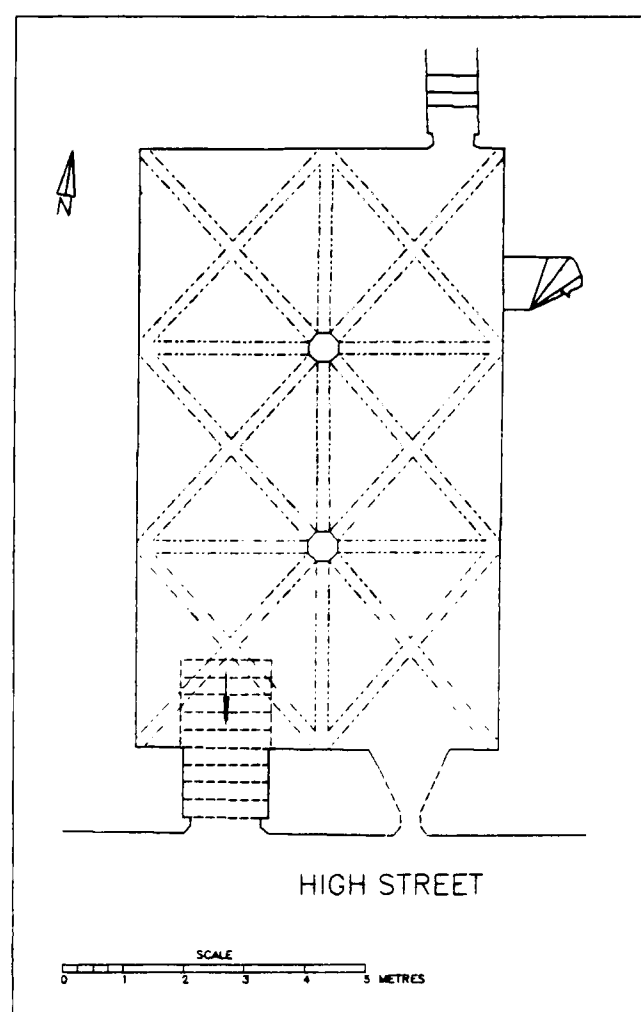


Fig. 161. The Angel Hotel, 91 High Street, Guildford. Plan of undercroft.

wide and opens on to a narrow staircase within the wall. It is most likely that the window observed by Wood was a later insertion and that the original plan of the Angel Hotel undercroft was identical to that of the undercroft at 72/4 High Street.

47. Guildford: 149 High Street. A partly surviving undercroft oriented at right angles to the street, and dating from the thirteenth to fourteenth century.

Prior to the 1960s the undercroft was part of the property numbered 28 High Street, and is that described by Wood as 'a pointed barrel vault, mutilated, with a chamfered rib'.² Only the lower courses of the vault survive on the east and west walls, but the four springers and some

¹ M.G. O'Connell, 'The Undercroft at 72/74 High Street, Guildford', *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 74 (1983), p. 107.

² Wood, *Thirteenth-Century Architecture*, p. 84.

sections of ribs remain from a pair of ribs north and south. Modern brickwork has obscured the central area, but the spacing of the north and south ribs indicates that there was a third rib. The front wall is preserved in its lower courses along with a tread in the centre surviving from a former staircase to the street. Since the modern rear entrance is crudely cut through the chalk wall and there is no other evidence for access to the undercroft, it is almost certain that this represents the original arrangement.

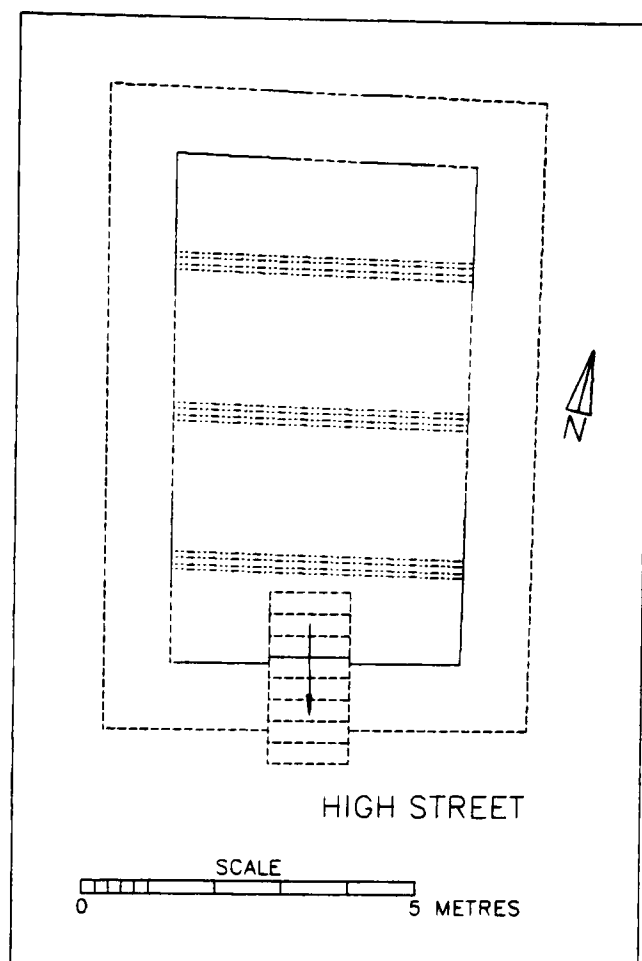


Fig. 162. 149 High Street, Guildford. Plan of undercroft showing reconstructed ribs and street entrance.

HEREFORD

48. Hereford: 2 (formerly 89) Eign Street. A surviving though mutilated undercroft of c.1300, comprising a front timber-ceiled chamber, and a vaulted part to the rear. See Chapter 4 for discussion and plan (pp. 238-9).

49. Hereford: stone cellar, site HE93A, the Cathedral. A late eleventh- to early twelfth-century stone cellar discovered during excavations immediately west of the west front of the cathedral in 1993. See Chapter 6 for discussion and illustration (pp. 293-4).

KINGS LYNN

50. *Kings Lynn: 22 King Street.* A thirteenth-century stone house parallel to the street, demolished in 1901.¹

During demolition of this (c.12m wide) house a first-floor window at the south end was uncovered. This was a two-light traceried window datable to c.1250-75. A two-centred doorway just to the north of centre also survived, and parts of two other unlocated windows were discovered. A photograph records two adjacent doorways - probably that which survived in the front wall and a blocked one next to it. These details would be consistent with a townhouse comprising a principal chamber, or solar, over several independent shop units. The ground-level position, the high quality of the first-floor room, or rooms, and the doorway arrangements suggest that this building is a rare thirteenth-century example of the type of ground-level townhouse common in the twelfth century and epitomized by the Jew's House, Lincoln.

51. *Kings Lynn: 30-2 King Street.* A surviving ground-level townhouse oriented parallel to the street, and that dates from c.1200. See Chapter 1 for discussion and plan (pp. 52-3).

52. *Kings Lynn: 28 Queen Street.* Foundations only of a late twelfth-century house, excavated in 1977.²

The townhouse was at ground level and oriented at right angles to the street. It measured 7m wide and 21m deep, and a hearth was located approximately on the centre line, but c.5m back from the frontage. No

¹ P. Wade-Martins, 'No. 22 King Street, Kings Lynn', *East Anglian Archaeology* 14 (1982), pp. 125-8.

² H. Richmond, R. Taylor, and P. Wade-Martins, 'Nos. 28-34 Queen Street, Kings Lynn', *East Anglian Archaeology* 14 (1982), pp. 108-24.

evidence was found of internal partitions, and it is possible that there was a separate room (a shop?) between the street and the hearth. The dating of both this and 34 Queen Street is based on the fact that both buildings post-date an excavated stake that has given a radiocarbon date of 940 ± 70 years, and that they predate 30-2 Queen Street.

53. *Kings Lynn: 30-2 Queen Street.* A townhouse of c.1200 or the early thirteenth century, oriented parallel to the street, that was recorded prior to, and during, demolition in 1977. See Chapter 1 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 66-7).

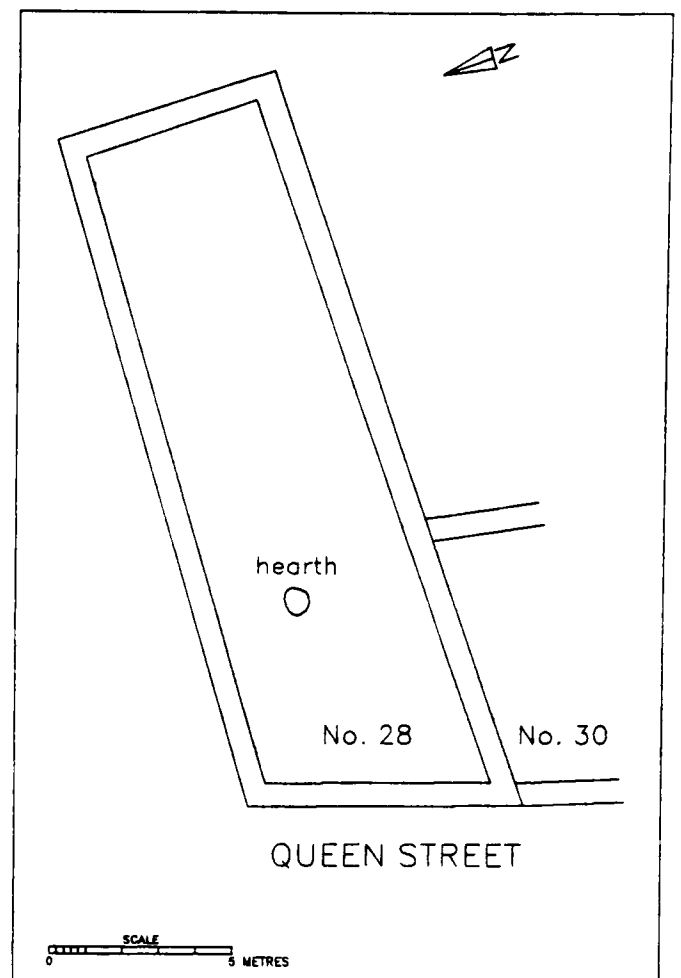


Fig. 163. 28 Queen Street, Kings Lynn. Reconstructed plan of ground level.

54. *Kings Lynn: 34 Queen Street.* Foundations only of a late twelfth-century ground-level townhouse probably oriented at right angles to the street frontage, discovered by excavation in 1977.¹

The remains of this building were fragmentary and only merit inclusion since 34 Queen Street formed a continuous range with the above properties. The foundations of its north wall survived below the south wall of No. 32 and extended c.11m from the streetfront. The narrowness of the plot in the post-medieval period suggests that the building was oriented at right angles to the street. The dating of this and 28 Queen Street are based on the fact that they both post-date an excavated stake that has given a

¹ *Ibid.*

radiocarbon date of 940 ± 70 years, and that they predate 30-2 Queen Street.

55. *Kings Lynn: Clifton House, Queen Street.* A surviving brick-vaulted undercroft dating from c.1350.

The semi-subterranean undercroft is oriented at right angles to and is directly on the waterfront side of Queen Street (formerly Wingate). It has a quadripartite vault of two aisles and of four bays. The central rib of the front bay divides in two to allow headroom for a central doorway, confirming that access from the street is an original feature. A thirteenth-century doorway in the south wall opened into a room in which a tiled floor and two hearths have been discovered: it appears that this was part of a second medieval townhouse at right angles to the street, with the two being combined by the late sixteenth century.¹

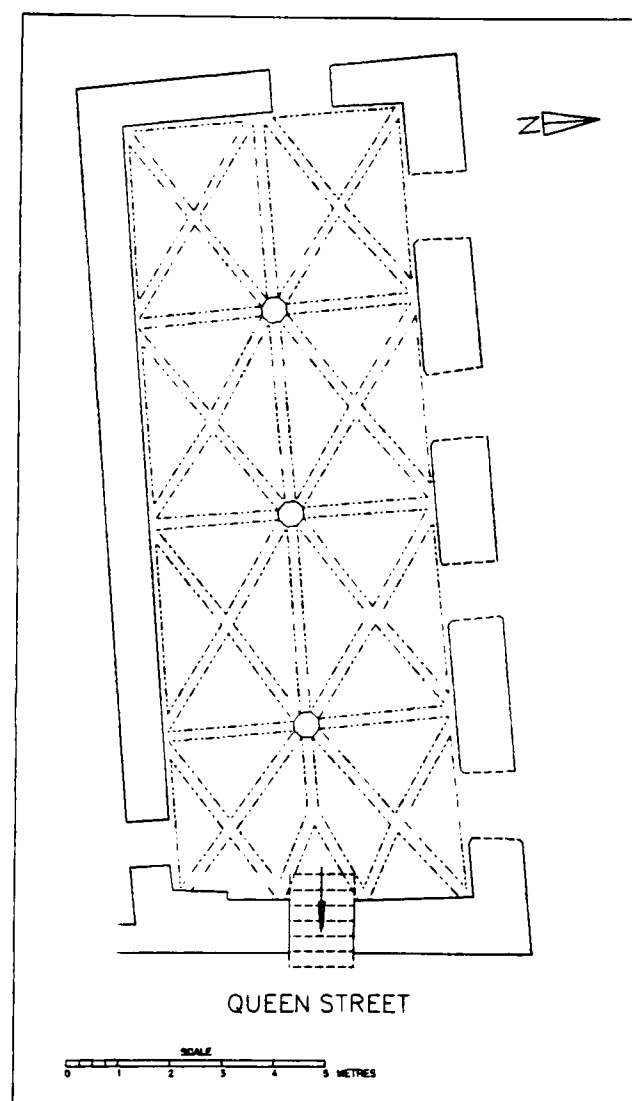


Fig. 164. Clifton House, Queen Street, Kings Lynn. Plan of undercroft.

KINGSTON

56. *Kingston: Horsefair site.* A well-preserved fourteenth-century undercroft at the corner of Thames Street and Old Bridge Street, excavated in 1985.²

¹ V. Parker, *The Making of Kings Lynn* (London and Chichester, 1971), p. 89.

² Site archive at MoLAS: site code HOR85 (Trench A).

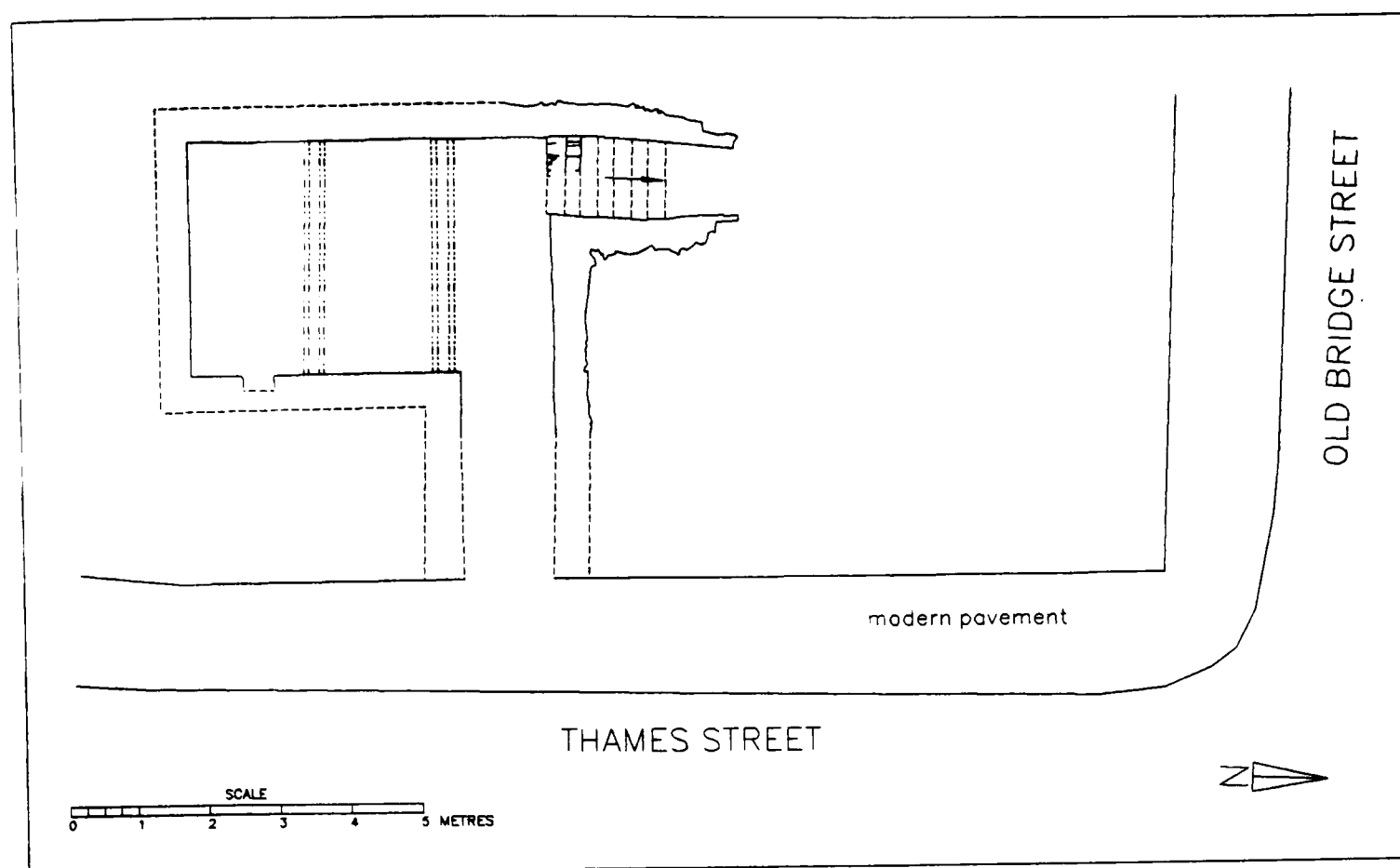


Fig. 165. Horsefair site (1985, Trench A), Kingston, Surrey. Plan of undercroft with vaulting ribs and northern steps reconstructed.

The undercroft was set back from Old Bridge Street by 8.2m, and from Thames Street by 2.5m. A wide entrance on the east side indicates that exterior access was from Thames Street. The stair in the northeast corner presumably provided internal access from a ground-level structure between the undercroft and Old Bridge Street. The chalk and knapped flint chequer-work walls of the undercroft survived to a considerable extent and at the rear of the undercroft a c.2m length of the two-centred barrel vault was preserved. To the north of the surviving chalk vault, springers of chamfered ribs remained *in situ*, showing that the vault was of three bays. At the southern end of the east wall there was a square-headed recess or cupboard, without a rebate.

LEICESTER

57. *Leicester: Guildhall Lane.* A surviving undercroft of early twelfth-century date, oriented at right angles to and directly on the street frontage. See Chapter 2 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 104-7).

LINCOLN

58. *Lincoln: Buildings A, Aii, and E, Grantham Street.* A ground-level townhouse oriented parallel to and directly on the streetfront, discovered by excavation (Flaxengate site) in 1972-6.¹

The footings were discovered of a stone building (Building E) that R.H. Jones dates to the late twelfth century.² However, recent analysis of the finds has revealed that his dating and phasing is incorrect, and that Building E is datable only to the period before the mid thirteenth century.³ To the west another building oriented at right angles to the street (Aii) is placed by Jones in his phase 4 (late thirteenth to early fourteenth century),⁴ but is in fact of the same general phase as Building E. A small building (A) between them is also broadly contemporary with Building E, and is rebuilt in the mid thirteenth century.

Jones offers little in the way of interpretation of these structures, but what conjectural reconstruction is attempted is suspect. The perspective reconstruction of Building E in the report is based on the local examples of the Jew's House and the Norman House, and is shown complete with a principal entrance to the residence below a chimney breast.⁵ There can

¹ R.H. Jones, 'Medieval Houses at Flaxengate Lincoln', *The Archaeology of Lincoln* XI-1, (1980).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 9-12.

³ Kate Steane, of the City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit, has kindly provided me with draft plans showing the new phasing of the site.

⁴ R.H. Jones, 'Medieval Houses at Flaxengate Lincoln', *The Archaeology of Lincoln* XI-1, (1980), pp. 21-6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

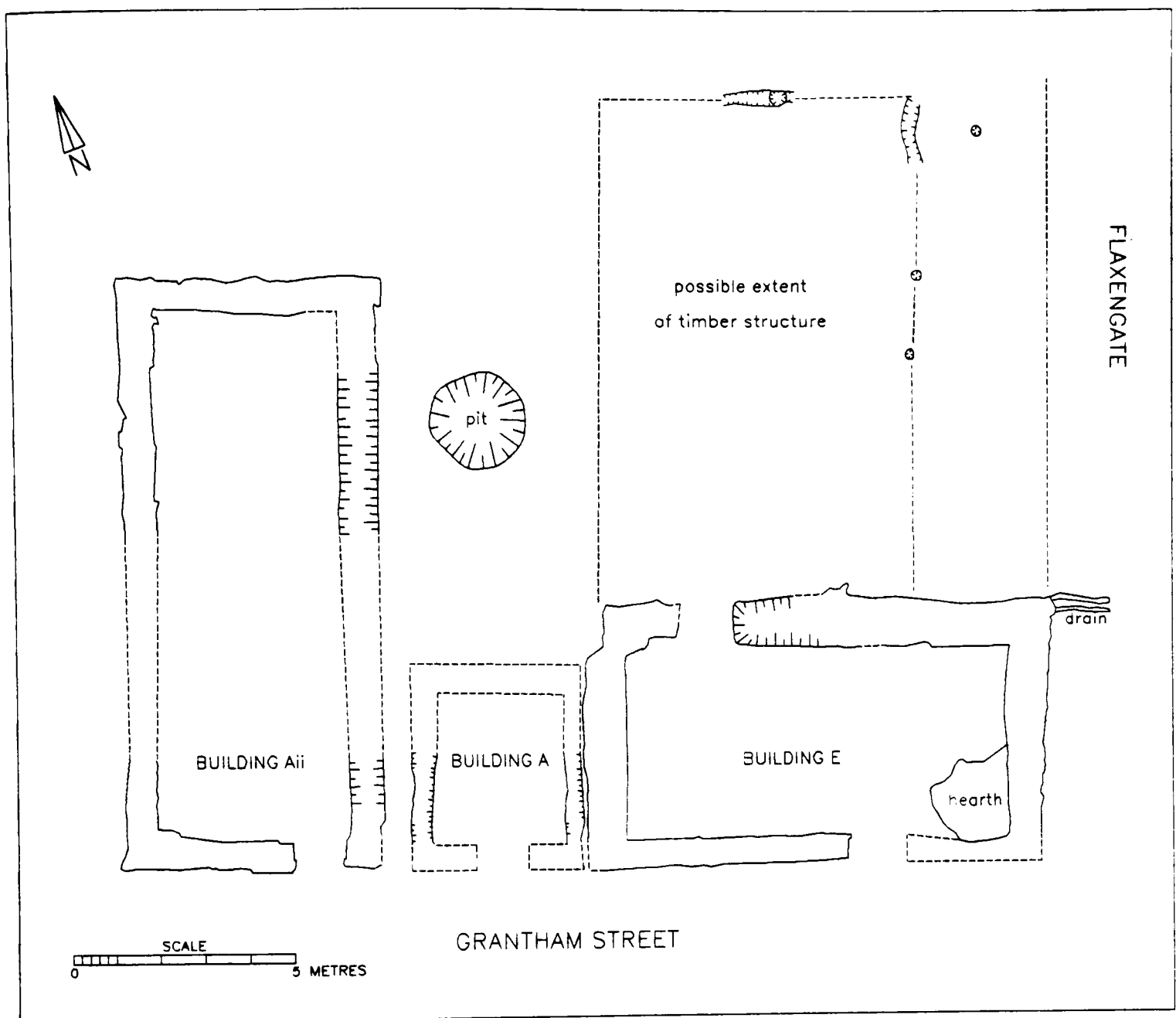


Fig. 166. Buildings E, A, and Aii, Grantham Street, Lincoln (Flaxengate site). Plan of buildings in revised first phase (dating from before the mid thirteenth century).

be little justification for this reconstruction for not only does this form of doorway date from c.1160-70 at the Jew's House, and c.1180-90 at the Norman House, but it is also found only where there is a passage and opposing doorways: those in the front and rear walls of Building E are staggered by c.3.6m. It is not even clear that Building E was of two storeys *ab initio*, for it is now apparent that the garderobe at the rear was added in the early to mid fourteenth century. The doorway in the frontages of all three buildings, and the fact they are conjoining, suggests a commercial, and probably retail, function. In view of the fragmentary remains of a timber structure of some size to the rear of Building E, it is

possible that there was as a domestic hall behind a two-storey range on the streetfront.

59. Lincoln: *The Norman House, 46-7 Steep Hill (formerly Aaron the Jew's House)*. A surviving prototypical split-level townhouse of c.1180-90, with undercroft and evidence of arcaded shopfronts above. See Chapter 2 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 80-7).

60. Lincoln: *15 The Strait - 1 Steep Hill (The Jew's House)*. A surviving ground-level townhouse with a remarkably intact arcaded façade that dates from c.1160-70. See Chapter 1 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 47-52).

61. Lincoln: *Deloraine Court, James Street*. A surviving late twelfth-century chamber block detached from a hall (probably early thirteenth-century), and which formed part of an urban manor-like property. See Chapter 1 for discussion and illustration (pp. 23-5).

62. Lincoln: *St Mary's Guildhall, High Street, Wigford*. A substantially surviving grand suburban house of c.1150-70, located parallel to and directly on the streetfront, and entered via a courtyard. See Chapter 1 for discussion and illustration (pp. 38-41).

63. Lincoln: *St Andrew's Hall, High Street, Wigford*. A demolished grand suburban house of the mid to late twelfth century, located parallel to and directly on the streetfront. A single reset Romanesque doorway survives in the present building. See Chapter 1 for discussion and illustration (pp. 41-2).

LONDON

64. *London: Building at west end of Aldgate, at division of Fenchurch Street and Leadenhall Street.* A vaulted undercroft of the early fourteenth-century demolished before 1874.¹

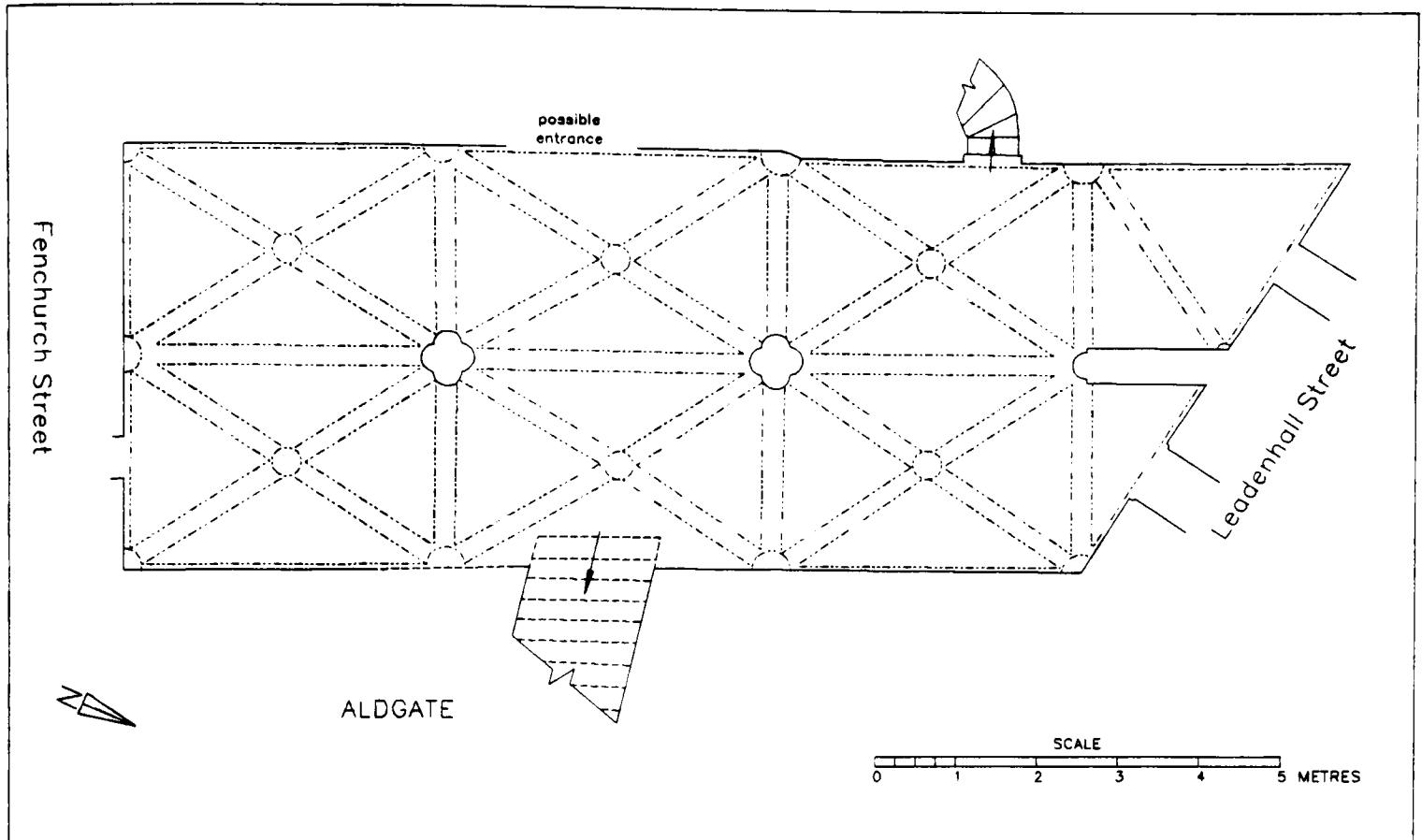


Fig. 167. Plan of undercroft at western end of Aldgate, London, at junction with Fenchurch Street and Leadenhall Street.

The drawn record of this undercroft shows that it comprised a two-aisled vault that was three bays in length, with two further part-bays at the northern end resulting from the irregular shape formed by the convergence of Fenchurch Street and Leadenhall Street.² Despite the fact that the building fronted these streets, there was no access to them. Instead the end walls were used for the placing of windows. A recess (1.53m wide) in the east wall survived until demolition and almost certainly contained the original steps from Aldgate. It is difficult to tell from the nineteenth-

¹ Another undercroft survived up to a similar date nearby at 15-18 Aldgate High Street, but the profile of the ribs shows that it dated from the fifteenth century: E.P. Loftus Brock, 'Description of an ancient crypt at Aldgate, recently demolished', *JBAA*, old series 36 (1880), pp. 159-64.

² A. White, 'Notes on an ancient crypt within Aldgate', *LAMAS* 4 (1874), pp. 223-30.

century survey whether a similarly sized opening in the west wall was a later creation. To the north of this, a smaller doorway with a two-centred arch was clearly original and led to a narrow staircase which provided access from the ground floor. The destruction of the undercroft outside controlled archaeological conditions has meant that there is no record of the contemporary ground level, but the position of the windows high up in the walls, with their internal sills c.2.86m above the floor level, suggests that the undercroft was set largely below street level.

65. *London: Gisors' (Gerard's) Hall, Basing Lane.* A stone-vaulted undercroft of exceptionally high quality, that was demolished in 1852.¹

The undercroft was directly on and oriented at right angles to Basing Lane. It had a two-aisled quadripartite vault of five bays, with hollow-chamfered ribs. The profiles of the capitals and bases of the central columns and the wall shafts drawn by George Scharf enable the building to be dated to the late thirteenth century. There were three windows in the east (side) wall, two in the south (rear) wall, and one in north (front) wall. All of these had wide splays and were set with their sills almost as high as the apex of the vault. The doorway to the street was lost by 1852, but the vaulted stair to the rear was preserved. The top stair that Scharf records is on the inner face of the front wall and at c.3.2m above the undercroft floor, but the position of the window sills c.1.5m above this suggests that, as would be expected, the steps continued to rise through the c.1.2m thickness of the wall, giving a street level a maximum of 300mm below the undercroft windows. Of course, it is possible that steps advanced into the street, in which case lightwells would have been

¹ Norman, *Poultney Crypt*, p. 253. Since Sir George Scharf's plan, sections, and details are dated April 1852, it must be presumed that these were done in view of the impending demolition; *London Red Portfolio*, vol. 2, folios 24 and 25 (Society of Antiquaries of London).

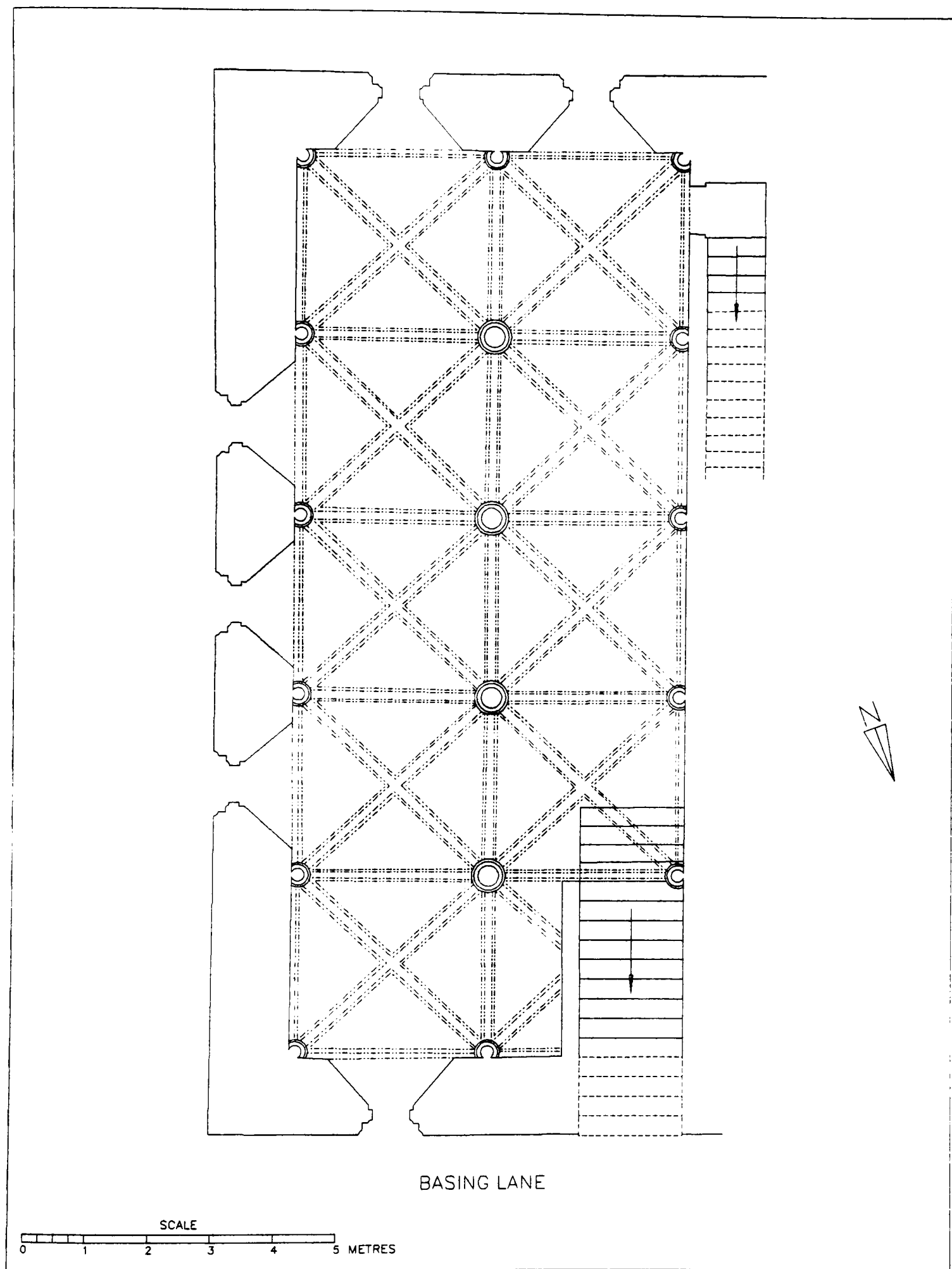


Fig. 168. Gisors' (Gerard's) Hall, Basing Lane, London. Plan of undercroft.

necessary. The stair was placed against the west wall and was flanked on the east by a spur wall. Unusually, a half barrel-vault carried the stair and spur wall, creating a space below. At the rear of the west wall a

second doorway opened onto a narrow staircase contained within the thickness of the wall, and providing access to the ground floor.

66. London: 44-6 Bow Lane (Well Court excavations Building 8). A two-part undercroft excavated in 1979-80 which dated from 1100-1240, and possibly 1100-50.¹ See Chapter 2 for discussion and plan (pp. 113-14).

67. London: 48 Bow Lane (Well Court excavations Building 11). An undercroft excavated in 1979-80 which fronted and was at right angles to Bow Lane, and which dated from 1240-70.

The east, south, and west walls of the undercroft survived in part, and the location of the north wall is fixed by a property boundary. The south wall was preserved to the greatest degree, and was built on foundations comprising at least two, and probably three, relieving arches. In the ragstone and chalk wall above the floor level of the undercroft, three chamfered greensand ashlar near the east end probably formed the western jamb of a doorway opening off a passage now known as Well Court. Although the western (front) wall was

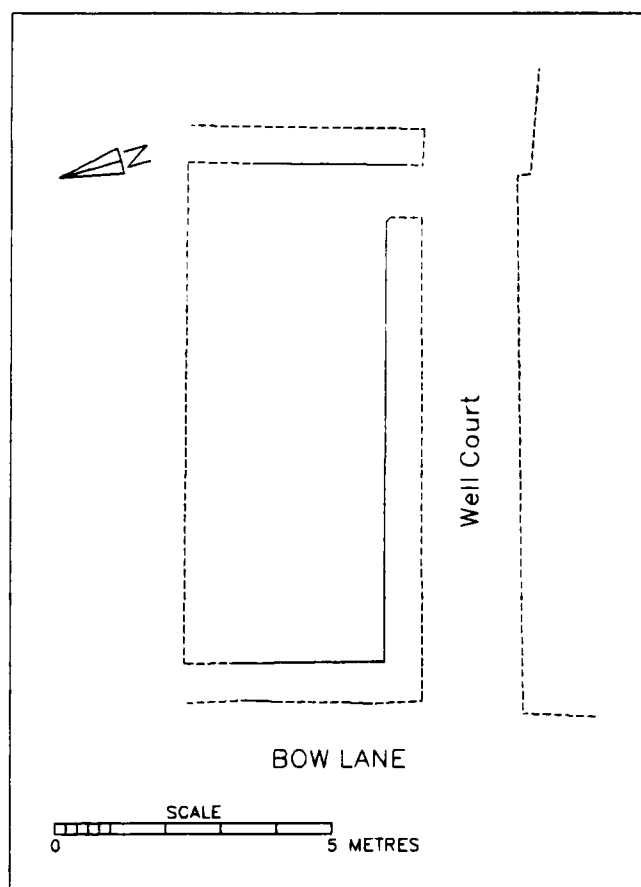


Fig. 169. Well Court Building 11, Bow Lane, London. Plan of undercroft showing probable location of north wall.

partly intact, it did not survive to a sufficient height to establish whether or not there was an entrance directly from the street. The contemporary

¹ Building 8 has been dated on the basis of a combination of associated ceramic material and on its construction technique: Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, pp. 82-3, 154 (Fig. 50), and 164-5.

street level was not discovered, but was at least 500mm above the floor of the undercroft, and, on analogy with street levels and exterior ground surfaces discovered elsewhere on the Well Court site, Building 11 was probably sunk by c.1.5m.¹

As the published report dismisses a series of ragstone blocks at the western end of the south wall which formed a curved profile suggestive of vaulting as 'disturbed or even inserted during the post-medieval period', the reasoning is unclear for supposing that there was a vault springing from a lower point than this.² The documentary evidence for this part of the site, however, records a vaulted undercroft in 1269. At this date the undercroft was occupied separately from the building above;³ the townhouse over the vault appears to have contained a shop.⁴ The identification of Building 11 with this vaulted undercroft has allowed a closer dating within the date range of 1240-1400 that is derived from ceramic dating.⁵

68. London: 6-8 Well Court, Bow Lane (Well Court excavations Building 12).

A partly surviving undercroft which was excavated and demolished in 1979-80 which dated from the thirteenth or fourteenth century.⁶

The undercroft was set back from Bow Lane by 23m and crossed the line of the east-west passage now known as Well Court, suggesting that the latter provided access to this building. The north, east, and west walls survived although recording work concentrated on the east and west walls where there was good evidence of a stone vault. Three ashlar forming

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³ Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, 104/23.

⁴ Keene, in Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, p. 94 (Fig. 25a).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-105.

part of a wall rib on the west wall, and the robbed 'ghost' of a wall rib on the east wall enabled the excavators to identify a two-bay rib vault of two aisles. The near semicircular profile of these wall ribs is not indicative of a Romanesque structure since the transverse width of the bays was c.400m narrower and it is thus clear that pointed arches were necessary on this axis. The excavators dated the vault to the second half of the thirteenth or the fourteenth century, but, in the absence of ceramic dating evidence, there appears little reason to rule out a date earlier in the thirteenth century.¹ The original floor of the undercroft was 900mm below

the contemporary ground surface, with the crown of the vault being c.2.2m above ground.

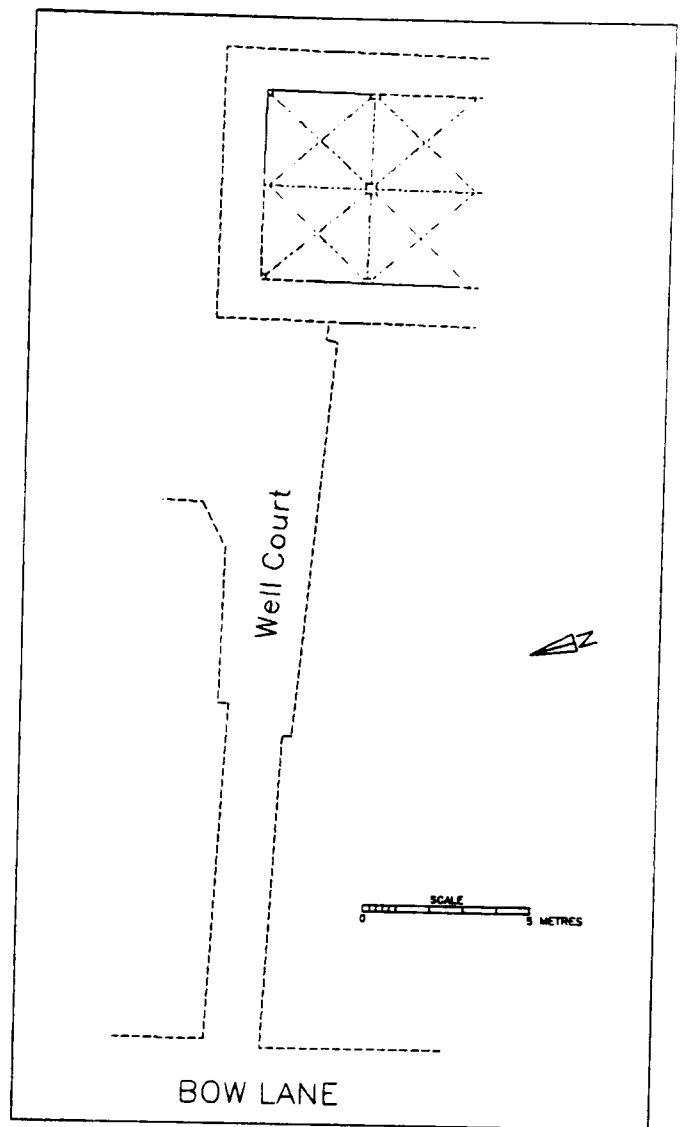


Fig. 170. 8 Well Court (Well Court excavations Building 12), Bow Lane, London. Plan showing reconstructed vault of undercroft.

69. London: 47-9 Cannon Street (Watling Court excavations Building 3).

A sunken-floored building of 1050-1100 which was excavated in 1978-9.²

This substantial sunken structure was walled with two skins of planks, and was oriented at right angles to Cannon Street (Basing Lane) from which it was set back by c.4.6m. A lack of pits in this area between the street frontage and the building could well indicate the presence of a

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

² Horsman, *Saxo-Norman London 1*, pp. 26-8, and 57-61.

ground-level structure.¹ Parts of the north, east, and south walls only survived, although the location of the west wall has been estimated on the assumption that a substantial floor joist (c.2.5m west of the east wall) represented the centre of the building.² The building was sunk as much as 2.3m below contemporary ground surface, which implies that the ceiling was approximately level with the external ground surface and provides a reasonable basis for believing that there was an upper storey.

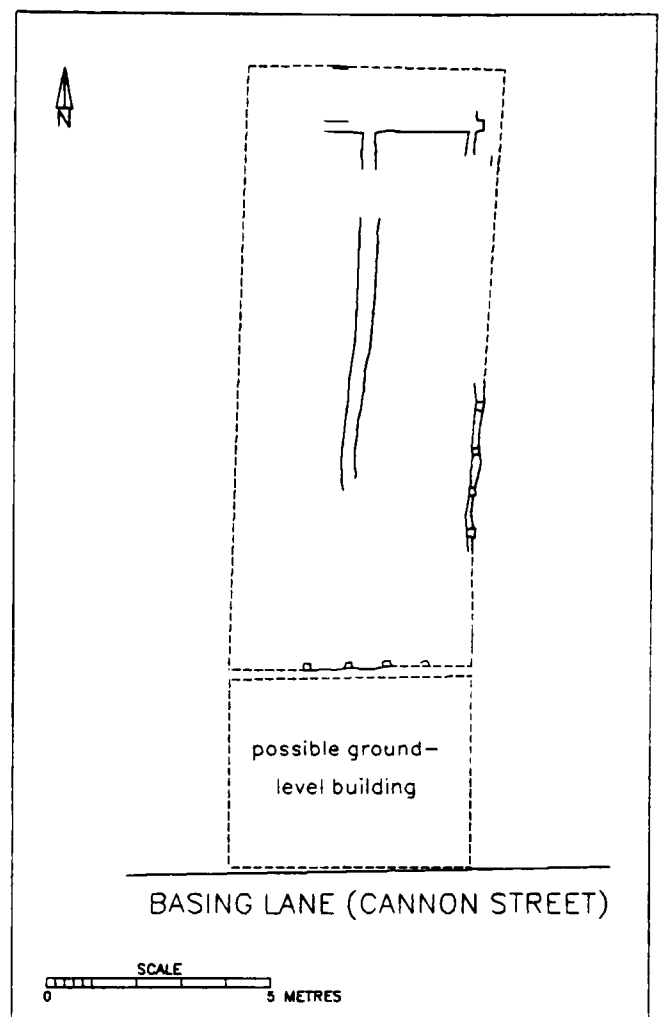


Fig. 171. Watling Court Building 3, London. Plan of undercroft showing fragments of timber floor joists.

70. London: 49-51 Cannon Street
(Watling Court excavations Building 6).

The northern part of a stone building of 1100-80 which fronted onto Basing Lane (Cannon Street) and which was excavated in 1978-9.³

The excavated structure comprised fragments of the north and east foundation walls only, with the east wall extending southwards beyond the limit of excavation. The proximity of the east-west Cannon Street suggests that Building 6 was built up to the street frontage. Little other detail was unearthed, although a stone foundation to the east could have marked the location of an external stair. There was no evidence for the relationship of Building 6 to contemporary ground level. Ceramic dating placed this

¹ Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, p. 48.

² Horsman, *Saxo-Norman London 1*, pp. 57-61.

³ Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, pp. 49-52.

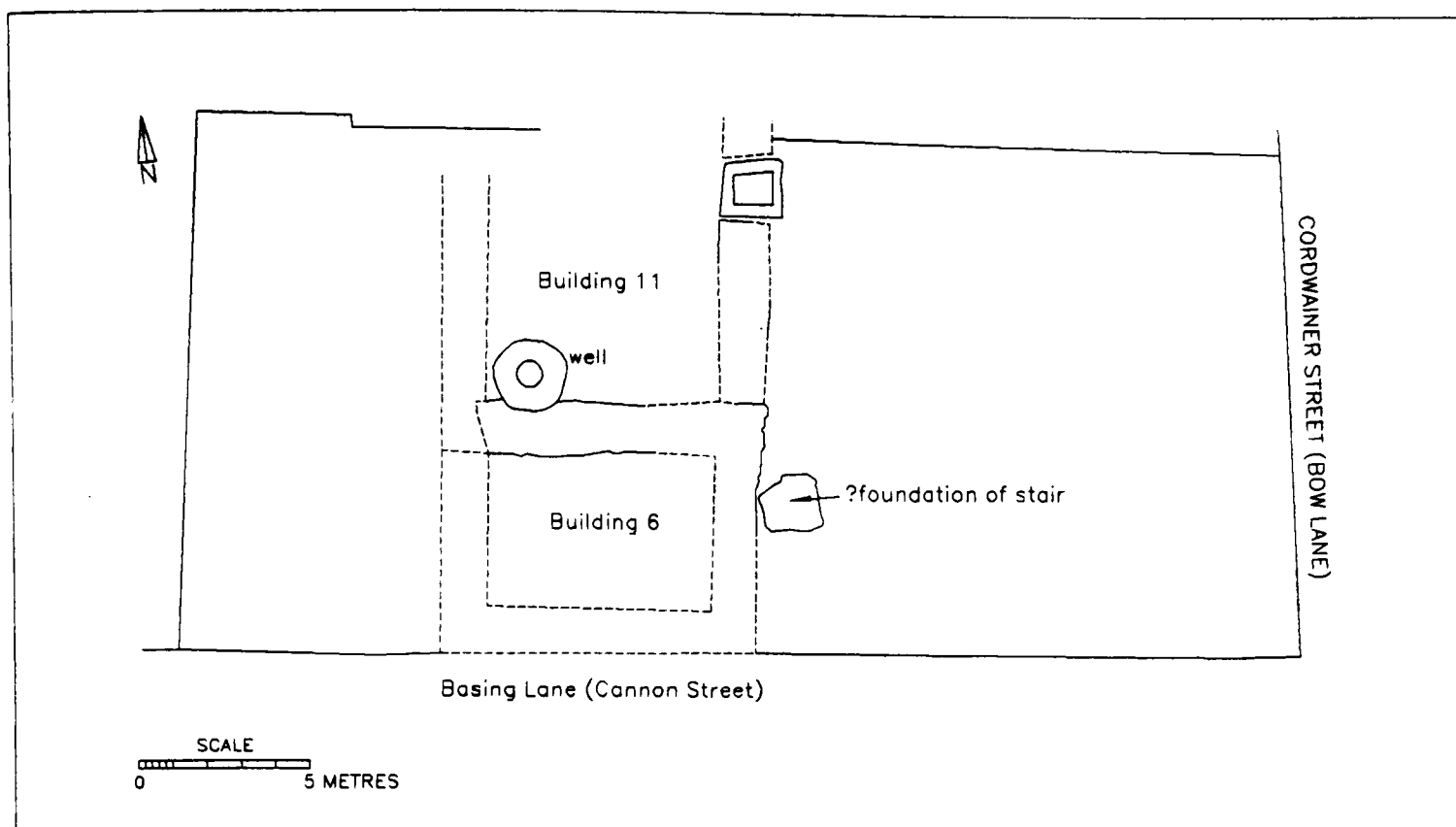


Fig. 172. Watling Court Building 6, London. Plan of undercroft showing later extension (Building 11) and the plot established by the late thirteenth century.

building in the period 1100-80, and fragments of two walls (Building 11) directly to the north could indicate a rearwards extension, which included a stone-lined well, in the period 1180-1400.¹ Taylor's documentary history of the site produced no evidence earlier than the late thirteenth century, at which point Building 6/11 formed part of a substantial corner property.² Four shops recorded on Cordwainer Street (Bow Lane) in 1280 confirm that by this date Basing Lane (Cannon Street) was the less significant thoroughfare and that Building 6 may have had a purely domestic function, possibly being a two-storey chamber block.

71. London: 39-53 Cannon Street site (6 Watling Court; Watling Court excavations Building 7 and Building 12). An initial building of 1150-80 with a vaulted extension of 1180-1400, that was discovered by excavation in 1978-9.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-6.

² C. Taylor, in Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, p. 69.

The earliest part of the excavated building (Building 7) comprised the foundation trenches only surviving from the east end of a building set well away from any street frontage. Ceramic dating evidence places this structure in the period 1150-80. An extension to the east of Building 7 also dated by ceramic material (to 1180-1400) appears to have had a segmental barrel vault with four ribs, although the published description is obscure.¹ The crown of the vault was 1.4m above the floor, but the relationship of either Building 7 or Building 12 to the contemporary ground surface could not

be established. By the late thirteenth century this building formed part, and possibly the undercroft below the chapel,² of a large property known as *la Rouge Sale*, which may have been similar to the urban manor-like properties discussed in Chapter 1.³ Certainly, by this period *la Rouge Sale* was set away from the street frontages and attracted notable residents, and it is possible, given the presence and continued use of Building 7, that the property was in existence by the twelfth century.

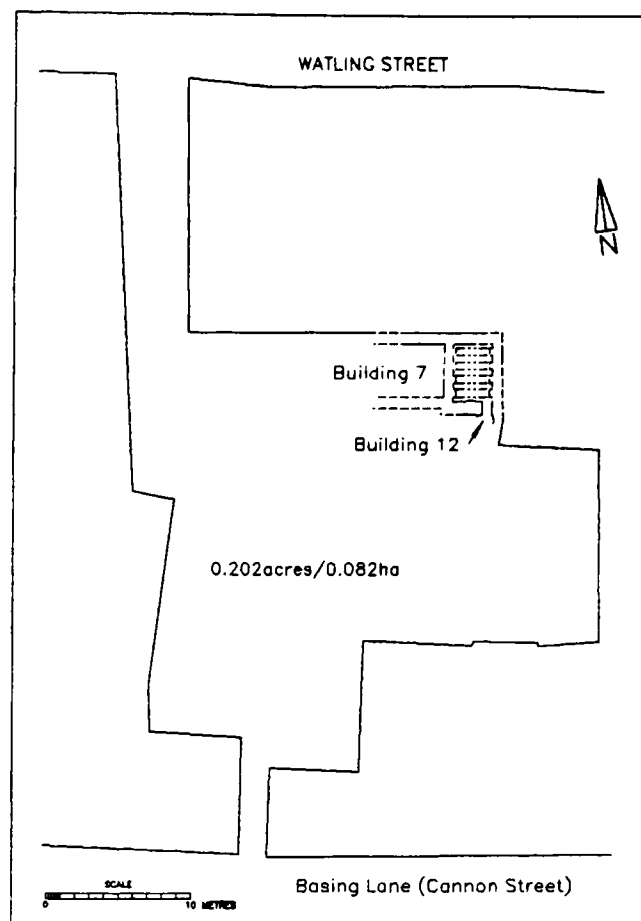


Fig. 173. Watling Court Building 7, London. Plan of undercroft with extension (Building 12) shown in c.1300 extent of *la Rouge Sale*.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54 and 162.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 63 and 162.

³ C. Taylor in, Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, pp. 63-6.

72. London: 56-8 Cheapside (house against north side of St Mary le Bow).

A fragment of an undercroft built in 1271-9 and discovered by excavation in 1965.¹

The excavations revealed the western end of a rib-vaulted undercroft which lay parallel to Cheapside. The hollow chamfered ribs and a well-preserved moulded corbel in the northwest corner confirm that this was the townhouse built by Canterbury Cathedral Priory in 1271-9 (see below). Enough survived to enable the reconstruction of the dimensions of this westernmost bay at 3.5m x 5.8m internally. This bay size has been used to reconstruct a seven-bay undercroft occupying most of the known site of the house (Fig. 174). Unfortunately the excavation archive does not provide

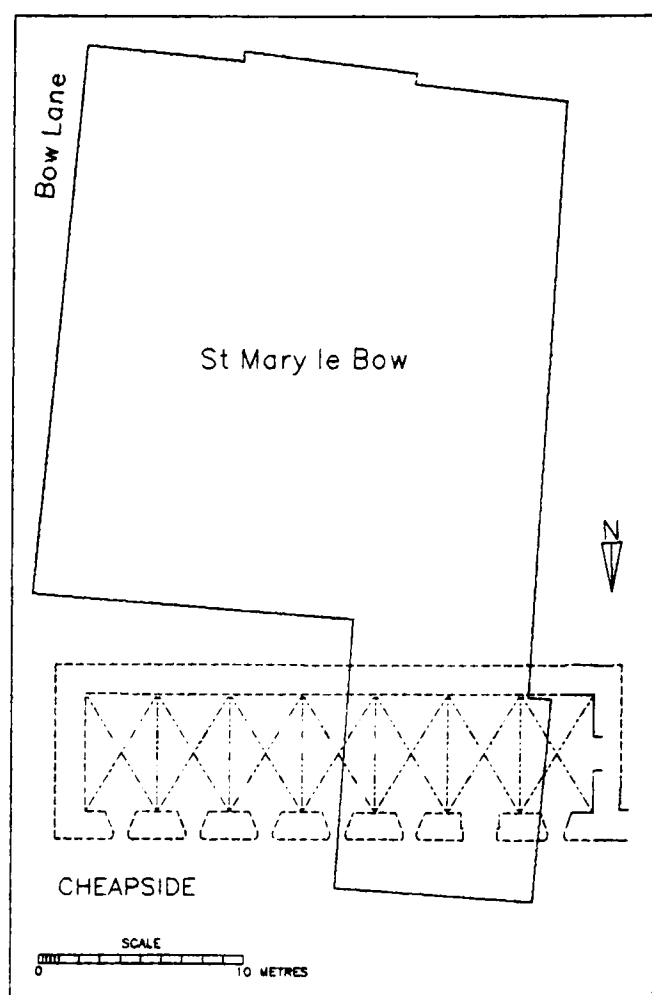


Fig. 174. 56-8 Cheapside, London. Plan of undercroft (reconstructed with seven bays) shown in relation to the modern outline of St Mary le Bow.

evidence of the relationship of the undercroft to the medieval street level. The excavations at Well Court (c.44m to the south), however, show that the ground level in the second half of the thirteenth century was at c.13.5m OD (which gives a build-up since then of c.2.2m). Since the probable original floor at 56-8 Cheapside was 3.81m below the 1965 ground level, a similar build-up here would mean that the undercroft was sunk c.1.61m below the 1270s street level.

The excavated undercroft was part of house built in the 1270s which was owned by Canterbury Cathedral. Keene has shown that the collapse of the

¹ W.F. Grimes, *The Excavation of Roman and Medieval London* (London, 1968), pp. 168-70.

adjacent tower of the church of St Mary le Bow in 1271 destroyed an earlier building known by the late twelfth century as a *domus lapidea in Westchep*.¹ Rebuilding began immediately, and was probably completed by 1279 at a minimum cost of £572. 2s. 7¾d. or £1008. 0s. 1d. During this period, however, records of rents paid show that part of the building was available for use. A further expenditure in 1318 was for the eastwards extension of the building: since the reconstruction of a seven-bay undercroft falls short of the Bow Lane frontage, this may explain the discrepancy. The documentary evidence records selds directly above the undercroft, solars over these, and stalls, possibly of a substantial nature, on the street side. The letting of a part of the townhouse to a vintner in 1341 included the undercroft, solars, and stall, and is the first indication that the undercroft functioned as a tavern: Keene suggests that the undercroft may have had such a function from the outset.

73. London: 72-5 Cheapside. A stone-built sunken structure dating from 1000-50 which was discovered by excavation in 1990. See Chapter 6 for discussion (p. 294).

74. London: Corbet Court (off Gracechurch Street). A mid twelfth-century undercroft recorded prior to demolition in 1872.

The undercroft had two aisles, each with three bays of groin vaulting. There was a barrel-vaulted porch at the northern end, with blind arcading and a spiral stair to an upper storey. The southeast corner did not survive, although Loftus Brock's plan suggests that the undercroft may

¹ Keene and Harding, *Cheapside Gazetteer*, 104/20. The following summary of the documentary evidence relating to this property is derived from Keene's much more extensive discussion in his gazetteer.

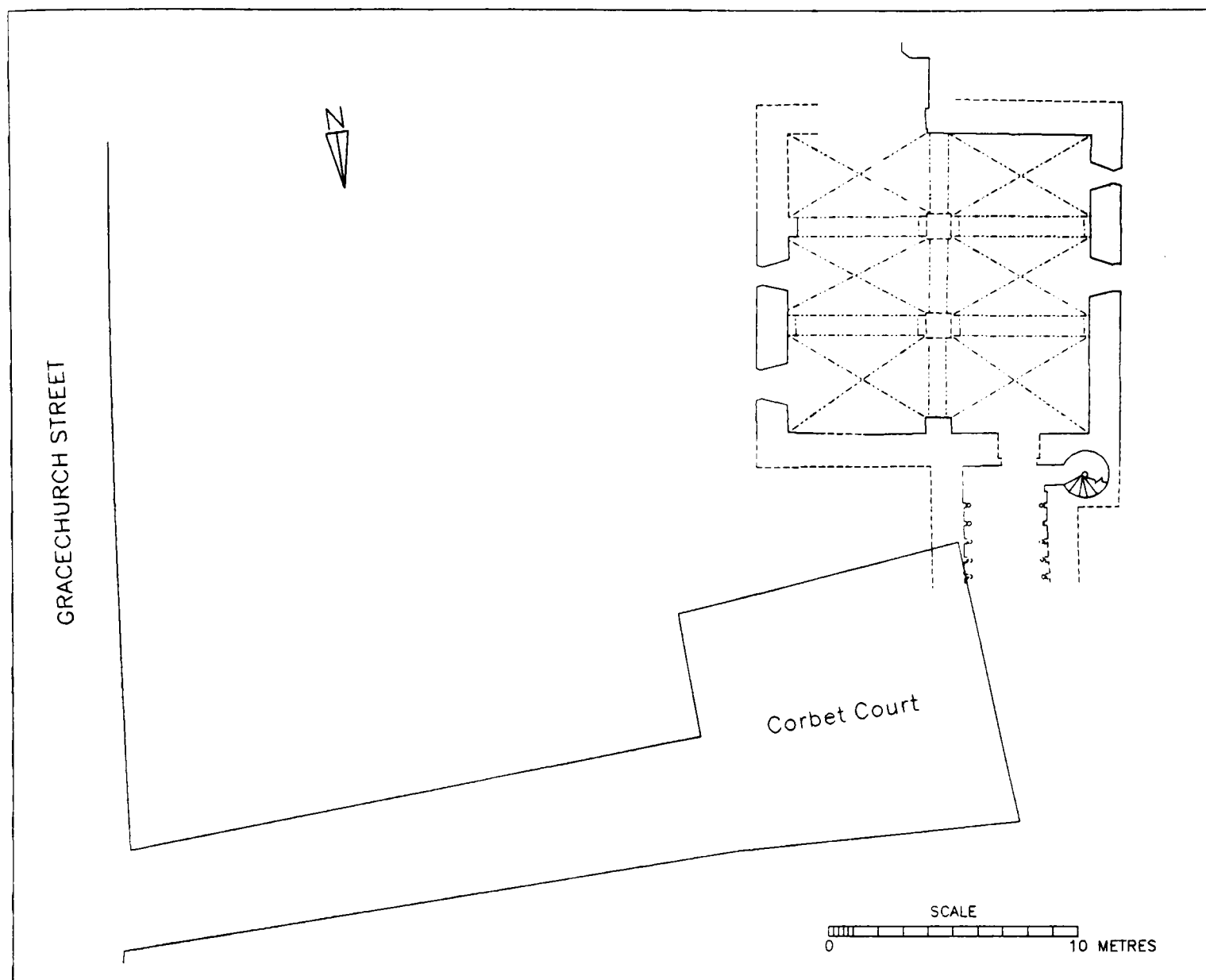


Fig. 175. Undercroft at Corbet Court, off Gracechurch Street, London.

have extended further at this end.¹

The precise depth to which the twelfth-century undercroft was sunk was not established, but there can be little doubt that Schofield's contention that it stood at or near contemporary ground level is incorrect.² Loftus Brock's reconstructed floor level at c.1.55m below the springing of the vault is reasonable, and this level, he recorded, would have been 18ft (5.49m) below the 1872 level of Corbet Court.³ The late nineteenth-century level of Corbet Court lay in the region of 17.8m OD, thus placing the estimated undercroft floor level at 12.31m OD. The observed natural

¹ E.P. Loftus Brock, in 'Proceedings of the Association', *JBAA* 28 (1872), pp. 176-9.

² J. Schofield, *The Building of London from the Conquest to the Great Fire*, revised edition (London, 1993), p. 52.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

brickearth c.10m to the northeast lies at c.12.10m OD, over which lay substantial Roman construction and destruction layers.¹ Moreover, a shaft providing access to the GPO tunnel along Gracechurch Street, c.30m to the east, showed that such layers were overlain by a dark grey organic soil which survived to 15.64m OD and which predated the creation of Gracechurch Street.² It is thus almost certain that the Corbet Court undercroft was partly subterranean, and possibly sunk by as much as c.3m below the contemporary ground level.

75. London: Buildings C1, C2, and C3 Ludgate Hill (Fleet Valley Project).

Excavations in 1989 revealed the remains of three undercrofts dating from c.1200 on a single property. The northernmost building (i.e. that nearest the street-front) appears to have been semi-subterranean. See Chapter 2 for discussion and plans (pp. 76-7).

76. London: 81-7 Gresham Street. A twelfth-century sunken structure, excavated in 1985.³

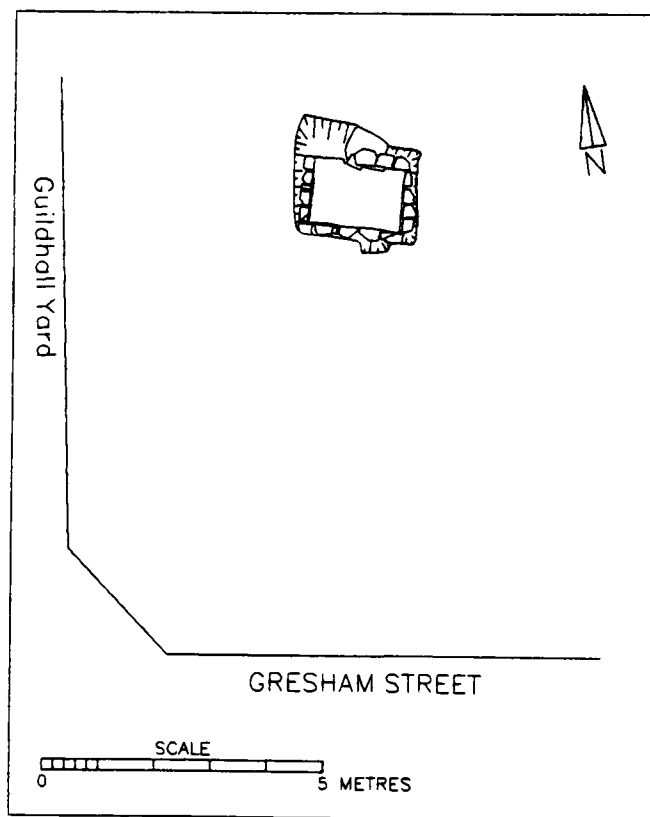


Fig. 176. 81-7 Gresham Street, London. Plan of excavated cellar.

This stone-built rectangular structure measured 1.65m x 1.15m internally, and survived to a height of c.500mm: it was entirely below the contemporary ground level. The quality and form of construction do not suggest use as a garderobe pit, and it is most likely

¹ P. Marsden, *The Roman Forum Site in London* (London, 1987), p. 16 (Fig. 10).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70 (Figs. 57 and 58).

³ The site archive is at MoLAS: site code GDH85 - Group 32.

that it formed a cellar. Its location 4.2m from the modern Guildhall yard frontage, and 7.6m from the modern Gresham Street frontage (the most likely frontage of a medieval tenement on this site), and its approximate orientation to these streets, is consistent with it being a cellar of the type seen more commonly in eleventh-century contexts, or on the continent.¹

77. London: 3 Laurence Pountney Lane. A quadripartite rib-vaulted undercroft dating from the early fourteenth century, recorded just before demolition in 1894.²

This building was formerly on the site south of Cannon Street identified by P. Norman as forming one of the principal residences of Sir John de Pulteney, and the narrow undercroft which survived until the late nineteenth century certainly appears to have been part of a range of similar structures. The principal part of the undercroft was a two-bay chamber at right angles to, and with direct access to, Laurence Pountney Lane. A minimum of three original doorways in the side walls of this cannot be accounted for by staircases within the walls, and shows that there was a conjoining undercroft to the south at least. At the rear, a doorway 1.37m above the original floor level of the undercroft opened into a

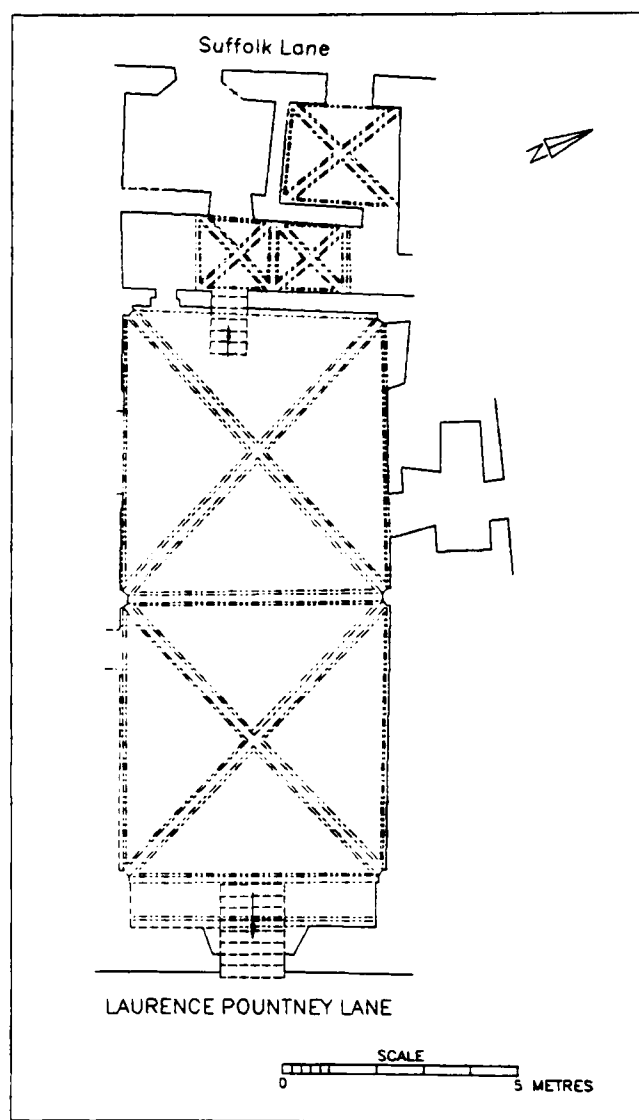


Fig. 177. 3 Laurence Pountney Hill, London. Plan of undercroft.

¹ See Chapter 6.

² Norman, *Poultney Crypt*.

narrow vaulted passage. There was a small window next to the doorway. Two small vaulted chambers led off the passage: despite the fact that these chambers fronted Suffolk Lane, they appear only to have had windows, and no doorways, in their west walls. A possible doorway at the north end of the passage in W. Hilton Nash's plan again suggests that the undercroft formed part of a more extensive range.¹ The overall plan of the house of which this undercroft was the sole surviving element may have been of considerable size, but the street access and right-angled orientation of the undercroft suggest that the lower storey of this house was used in the normal commercial manner.

78. London: 9 Lovat Lane. An undercroft of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, which was recorded during excavations at 9, 9½, and 10 Lovat Lane in 1981-2.²

The undercroft was oriented at right angles to and directly fronted Lovat Lane. The south wall was demolished before it could be recorded, but the other three walls survived at least in part in an existing basement with a floor level 700mm above the original. The rear (west) wall was preserved to a height of 3.85m above original undercroft floor level and was recorded using photogrammetry. Several angled stones towards the southern end of this wall were identified as evidence for a vault, although it is unclear why Gadd supposes that this was a quadripartite vault:³ a segmental barrel vault with a slightly pointed profile is implied. At the northern end of the west wall there were remains of an original brick-lined spiral stair with a chalk vault which had led up to the first floor. Most

¹ Norman, *Poultney Crypt*, Fig. 2.

² D. Gadd, MoLAS Level 3 archive report: site code LOV81 II.

³ *Ibid.*, LOV81 Area II, Fig. 8, 'Undercroft: Reconstruction to show vaulting, staircase & doorways'.

of the steps were missing, but enough evidence survived to show that the stair was a 180° spiral with one doorway above the other: Gadd proposes a reverse spiral for the first few steps.¹ Immediately south of the lower doorway there was a c.75mm deep recess for housing the open door. This is consistent with a reverse spiral at the bottom of the stairs in that it too implies a doorway at right angles to the rear wall.

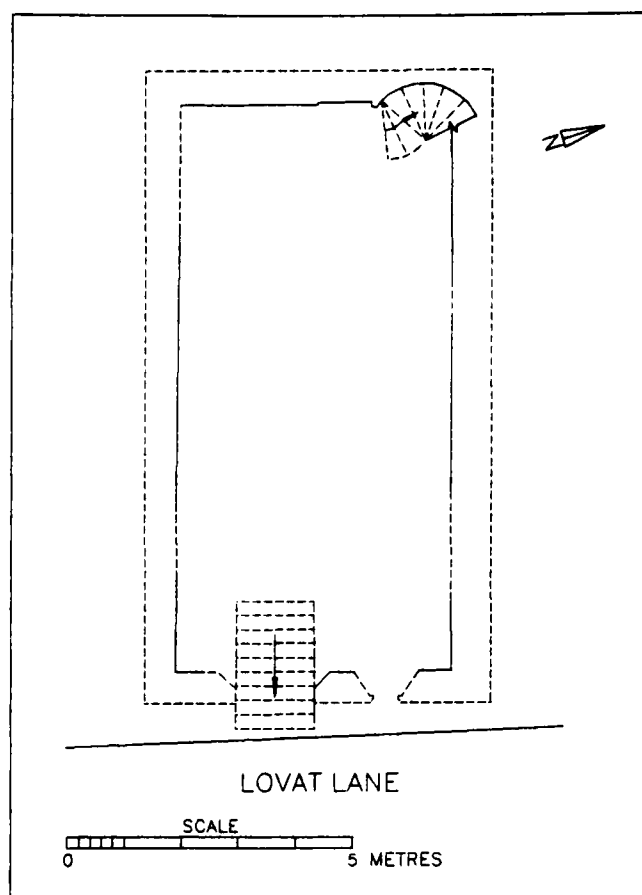


Fig. 178. 9 Lovat Lane, London. Plan of undercroft showing reconstructed entrance arrangement.

The north wall survived only to a height of 1.45m above the original floor level. The east (front) wall, however, stood to 2.25m above the medieval floor and contained two blocked openings which were evidently an off-centre doorway with a window to the north. There was no recorded evidence of the relationship of the internal floor level with the contemporary street surface, but the positioning of the streetfront window c.2.7m above the original floor level is a good indication that the undercroft was substantially subterranean.

79. London: 50 Mark Lane. An undercroft of probable early fourteenth-century date, discovered during brief excavations in 1958.²

The undercroft was set back from Mark Lane by c.17.2m, and was parallel to the street. No entrance was found although a central unexcavated baulk could have concealed a north or south entrance. Several internal layers

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

² E. Harris, 'A Medieval Undercroft at 50 Mark Lane, London, E.C.3.', *Med. Arch.* 2 (1958), pp. 178-82.

were found in the eastern half of the undercroft which appear to show a primary floor surface c.1.3m below the level of the natural sand/gravel which lay 1.07m to the north. It can be expected that the contemporary ground level was still higher than this.

Attached shafts in all four corners and midway along the east and west walls indicate two bays of quadripartite vaulting. The profile of the surviving bases was compared by the excavator to those at Gisors' (Gerard's) Hall (c.1290), although they are simpler.¹ These

bases, and the presence of thirteenth-century pottery in an unspecified context, were taken as evidence for the existence of the undercroft by the early fourteenth century.²

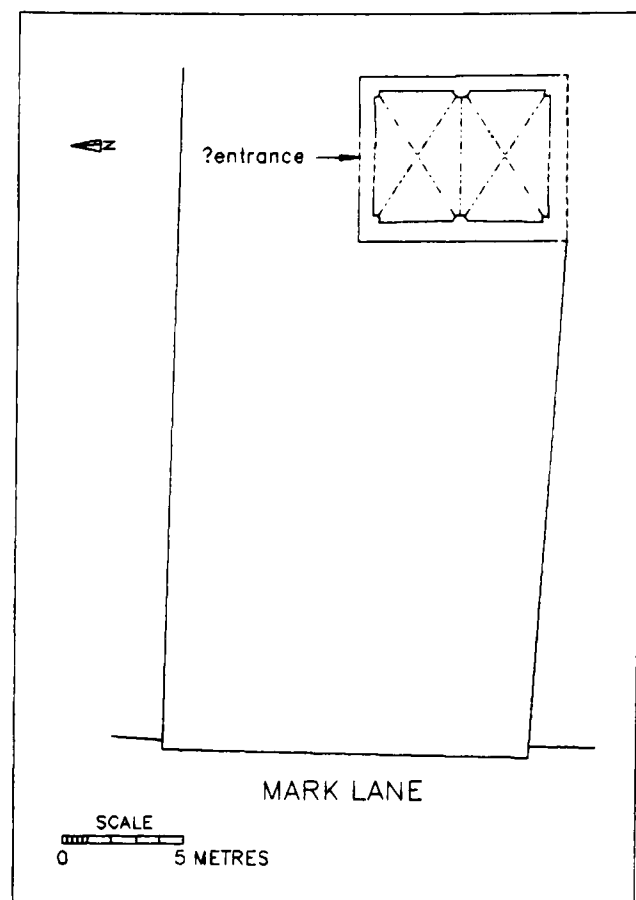


Fig. 179. 50 Mark Lane, London. Plan of undercroft showing the probable arrangement of the vaulting.

80. London: 2 Milk Street (1-6 Milk Street excavations Building 6). Fragmentary remains of an undercroft dating from 1100-50, excavated in 1976-8. See Chapter 2 for discussion and plan (pp. 111-12).

81. London: 5 Milk Street (1-6 Milk Street excavations Building 10).³ An undercroft probably dating from the thirteenth century, excavated in 1976-8.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

² *Ibid.*

³ MoLAS archive MLK76. The building numbering is that used in the most recent synthesis of the Milk Street excavations; Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, pp. 113-50.

A commercial function of this undercroft is strongly suggested from part of a flight of steps down from the street-front, revealed by excavation. The walls were best preserved in the southwest corner next to the steps, but a section of wall to the east may represent either the rear wall or a dividing wall: there are foundations to the east of this which imply a rearwards continuation of the structure.¹ In view of this evidence, and the direct replacement of Building 7 on the north by Building 11 during the

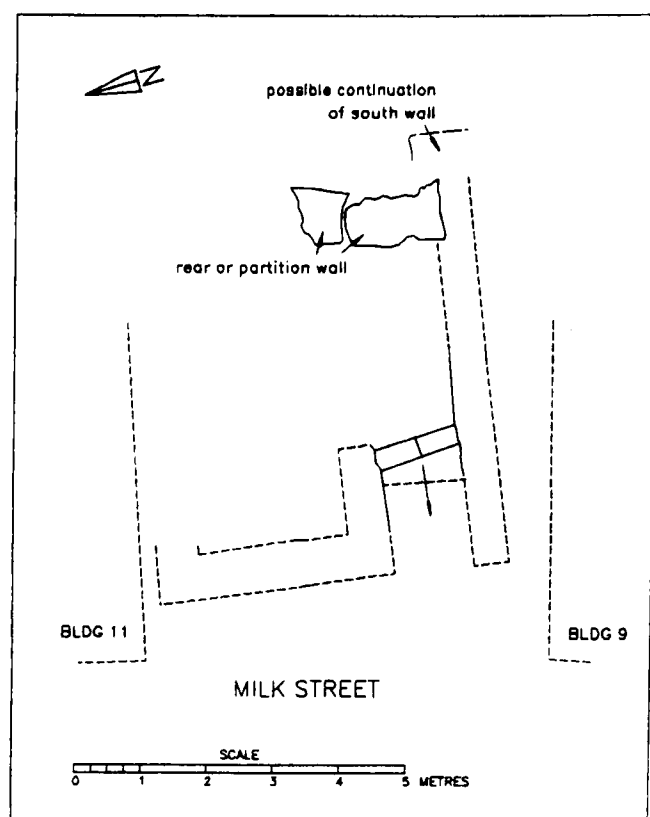


Fig. 180. 1-6 Milk Street (Milk Street excavations Building 10), London. Plan of undercroft showing location of adjacent properties.

same period as the construction of Building 10, it is improbable that the latter was oriented parallel to Milk Street, as been suggested recently by Schofield.² The dating evidence for Building 10 is not precise since the building falls into the wide bracket of ceramic phases 8-11 (1240-1400). A documented undercroft with a vault (*volta*) formed part of this property and may have been Building 10.³

82. London: 8 Milk Street and 12-13 Mumford Court (7-10 Milk Street excavations Building 8).⁴ A large cellared building of 1100-80 which was excavated in 1972.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

² *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³ Taylor, in Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, p. 145.

⁴ MoLAS archive code is MIL72. The building numbering is that used in the most recent published synthesis of the Milk Street excavations in; Schofield, *Medieval Cheapside*, pp. 113-50.

The excavated remains of Building 8 were not substantial and do not allow a detailed reconstruction of this townhouse. The structural evidence consisted of fragments of the foundation walls of an undercroft sunk c.500-600mm below the contemporary ground surface. This was set back from Milk Street by c.10m and was divided into two parts by an east-west wall.

83. London: House B New Fresh Wharf, Thames Street.¹ A twelfth-century stone building located in excavations and observations between 1974 and 1978. See Chapter 2 for discussion and plan (pp. 114-15).

84. London: House C New Fresh Wharf, Thames Street. An undercroft of the mid thirteenth century or later which was recorded in excavations and observations between 1974 and 1978.²

This building was oriented at right angles to and directly on Thames Street. An east-west wall c.12.2m south of this frontage may represent the rear of the building, although the east wall continued further south. The northern part of the east wall and most of the west wall predated the construction of House C and belonged to the adjacent properties. One certain foundation block and another possible example to the

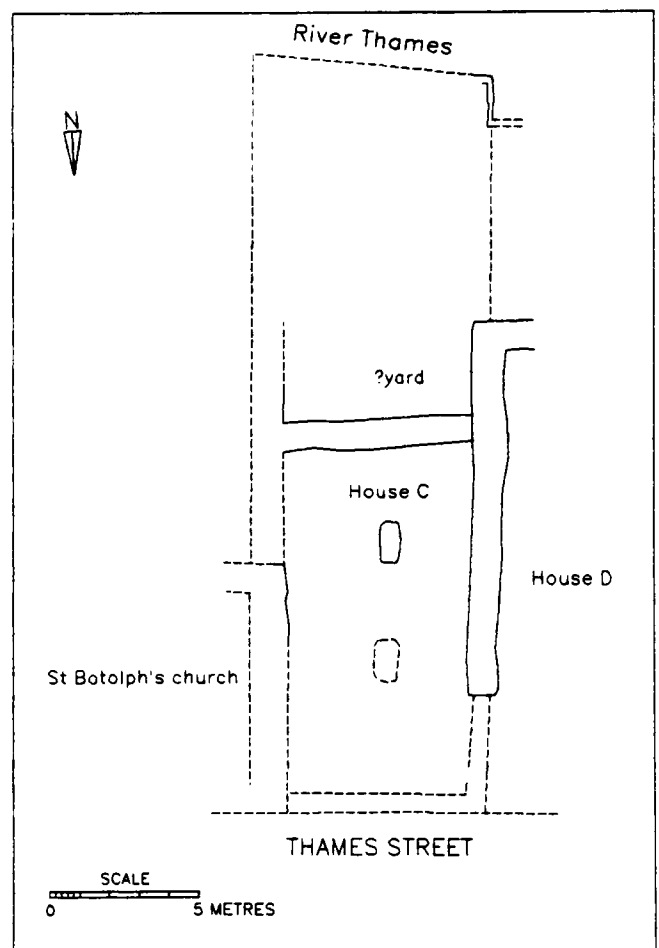


Fig. 181. House C New Fresh Wharf, Thames Street, London. Plan of undercroft.

¹ It is unclear whether Building A at New Fresh Wharf was actually a roofed structure or simply an open yard and it is thus omitted from this gazetteer. See Steedman, *Saxo-Norman London* 3, pp. 43-5.

² MoLAS archives NFW74 and FRE78.

north could have carried piers of a stone vault, or a stone or timber arcade. An internal floor level at 2.37m OD could have represented the original surface, and is unlikely to have been any higher. No contemporary street level was found directly in front of House C, but was probably at c.3.5m OD: the undercroft thus being sunk at its streetfront in the region of 1.1m.

85. London: House D New Fresh Wharf, Thames Street. A late twelfth-century ground-level building discovered by excavations and observations between 1974 and 1978.¹

House D was oriented at right angles to the Thames Street frontage, but was set back by c.3.8m. Over this distance the ground surface sloped down from the c.3.5m OD level of the street to the 1.75m OD level of the internal floor surfaces. A doorway in the north (front) wall opened into a small section of the ground floor/undercroft and may have been a porch. The internal face of the east wall preserved evidence of render and the main part of the building had a cobble and pebble floor. A passage ran down the western side of the tenement, between House D and its neighbour,

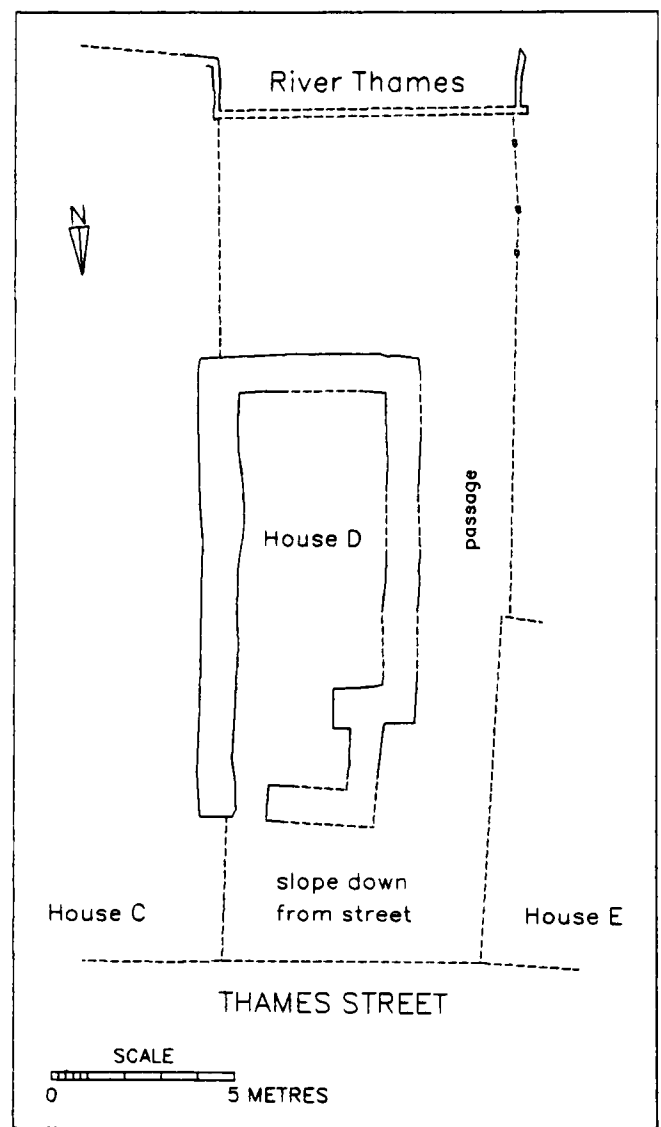


Fig. 182. House D New Fresh Wharf, Thames Street, London. Plan of undercroft.

¹ MoLAS archives NEW74 and FRE78.

House E.¹ House D overlay dumping behind a new waterfront revetment of the late twelfth century, and was probably built at this time.²

86. London: Building PDN10/Building AG Pudding Lane. A mid to late twelfth-century ground-level townhouse which was excavated 1981.³

The excavated remains of this building included four sections of footings for the north and south side walls which were of such a substantial width (c.1.1m) and depth below the contemporary ground level (700mm+) as to imply a stone superstructure. The contemporary internal and external surfaces were located at approximately the same height (c.6.60m+ OD) demonstrating that the townhouse was built at ground level.⁴ No evidence was found for the form of the front wall

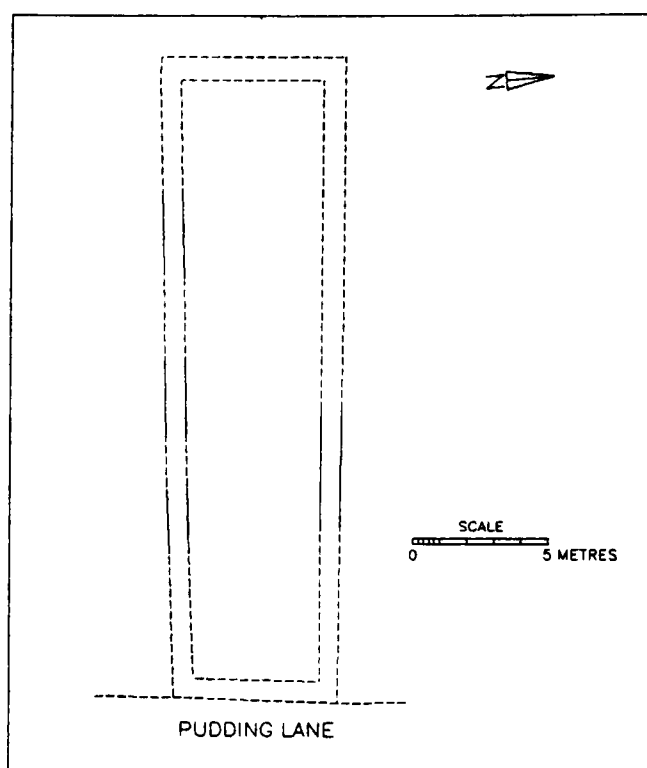


Fig. 183. Building PDN10, Pudding Lane, London. Plan of excavated undercroft showing reconstructed extent.

although an entrance could be expected here in view of the location of the townhouse on the street frontage and its orientation at right angles to it. The fact that this building was the first to be built on the street frontage, following a series of ten earlier houses in the vicinity known from excavation, could imply that the building was designed to have at least a commercial lower storey (it has been suggested that Pudding Lane was

¹ The excavated remains of House E were too fragmentary, although it may have had an undercroft with an arcade; Steedman, *Saxo-Norman London* 3, pp. 44-6.

² Steedman, *Saxo-Norman London* 3, pp. 46-8.

³ Archive held by MoLAS: site code PDN81 - group A12 (building AG).

⁴ Archive held by MoLAS: site code PDN81, Group 12, paragraph 12.30.

either created anew or developed from a pre-existing back lane at the time of the construction of PDN10).¹

The dating evidence for the Pudding Lane townhouse derives from pottery smashed on its earliest floor, and other ceramic evidence, which gives a date in the second half of the twelfth century.²

NEW ROMNEY

87. New Romney: Assembly Rooms, Church Approach. A partially surviving split-level townhouse of probable early fourteenth-century date.

Although the only visible remains comprise the rear elevation, enough remains to identify the building incorporated into the later Assembly Rooms as a typical split-level townhouse.³ The rear wall is distinguished by a partly intact large but blocked medieval window, slightly north of the centre line, and, to the south, a small doorway with a two-pointed arched head. The doorway is virtually intact, although it too has been blocked. At 630mm wide and 1.84m high it was obviously unsuitable as either the main entrance to a substantial stone building, or as a doorway for delivery of merchandise. The threshold of the doorway is c.200mm above modern ground level and as such is just above the level of what have been identified as two window heads protruding above the ground. There is no surviving access to the undercroft implied by these loop windows. In view of the ambiguity of the evidence for an undercroft, a limited excavation was undertaken around the northernmost one of the windows. The loop window was fully exposed and revealed an external height of 700mm and an external width of 310mm, with a 50mm plain chamfer throughout, and an

¹ Horsman, *Saxo-Norman London 1*, pp. 19-21.

² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³ The Assembly Rooms have a brickwork date of 1656.

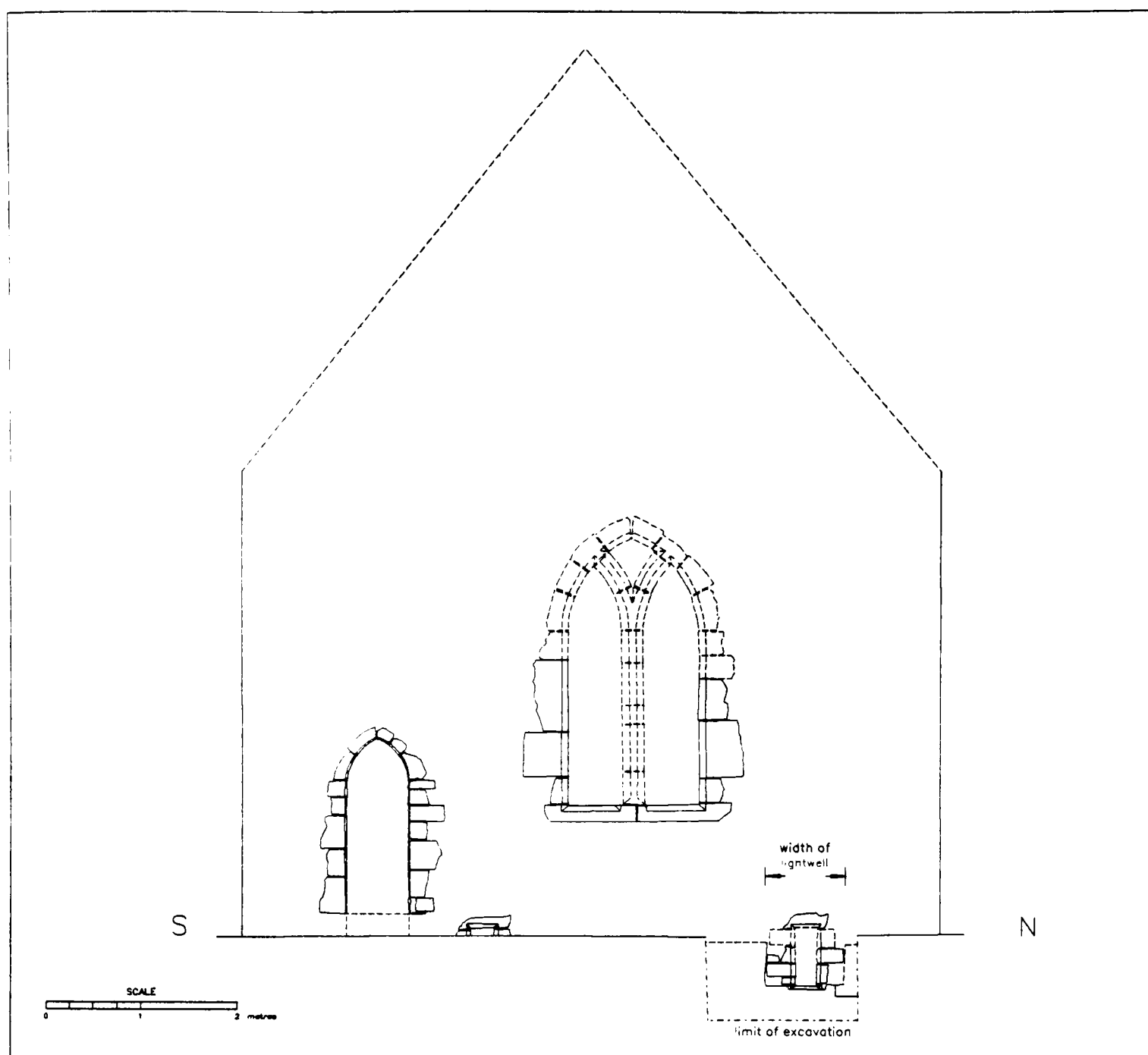


Fig. 184. The Assembly Rooms, Church Approach, New Romney. Rear elevation showing reconstructed form of window and gable, and the lightwell revealed by excavation.

internal rebate. The upper half of the window was blocked with rubble, and the lower part was blocked with the soft soil fill of the former undercroft beyond. Either side of the external face of the window the wall was vertical for c.250mm, beyond which the wall took on a slight batter. It appears that the window was placed in a lightwell equating with the area of vertical walling. The top of the batter would have been at, or perhaps just above, contemporary ground level; the doorway to the south confirms such a level. Without undertaking a larger excavation, the height of the undercroft cannot be determined. However, the positioning of the two

loops towards the edges of the rear elevation yet with their heads only c.200mm below the threshold of the doorway means that it is inconceivable that they lit a vaulted space, and it is unlikely that a timber-ceiled undercroft would have exceeded 2.5m in height. Ceramic dating evidence from the trial excavation is consistent with the architectural features in that it suggests a construction date in the early fourteenth century.¹

NORWICH

88. *Norwich: Music House, 69 King Street.* A largely intact late twelfth-century townhouse of the ground-level type and oriented at right angles to the street. See Chapter 1 for discussion and plan (pp. 55-7).

89. *Norwich: House at St Martin-at-Palace Plain.* A twelfth-century undercroft partly sunk into a natural slope, and oriented at right angles to the street. It was discovered by excavation and has been preserved for viewing below the modern magistrates' court. See Chapter 2 for discussion and plan (pp. 75-6).

OXFORD

90. *Oxford: Frewin Hall, New Inn Hall Street.* A surviving mid twelfth-century undercroft with a quadripartite groin vault, which probably formed the lower storey of a chamber block of an urban manor-like property. See Chapter 1 for discussion and plan of the building (pp. 11-14).

¹ The author is grateful to Mark Gardiner (Field Archaeology Unit, Institute of Archaeology, University of London) for his assistance on this excavation, and especially for the dating of the ceramic material.

91. *Oxford: Setreton's, Clarendon Hotel site, Cornmarket.* A mid twelfth-century split-level townhouse recorded and excavated during demolition in 1952. See Chapter 2 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 87-92).

92. *Oxford: Tackley's Inn, 106-7 High Street.* A surviving early fourteenth-century split-level townhouse that was oriented parallel to the High Street. See Chapter 3 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 164-75).

ROCHESTER

93. *Rochester: George Inn, 35 High Street.* A surviving undercroft of c.1320.

The undercroft is directly on and oriented at right angles to the High Street. It has four bays of quadripartite vaulting with chamfered ribs, and a ridge rib with hollow chamfers. Nine bosses with foliate and zoomorphic carving, and undercut corbels with quirk mouldings confirm George Payne's dating of the undercroft to c.1320.¹ At the front of the undercroft there is a central segmental-headed doorway flanked by spur walls, the compartments to either side having two-centred arches. That the west wall was external is evident from windows in each bay, while two original doorways in the east wall could

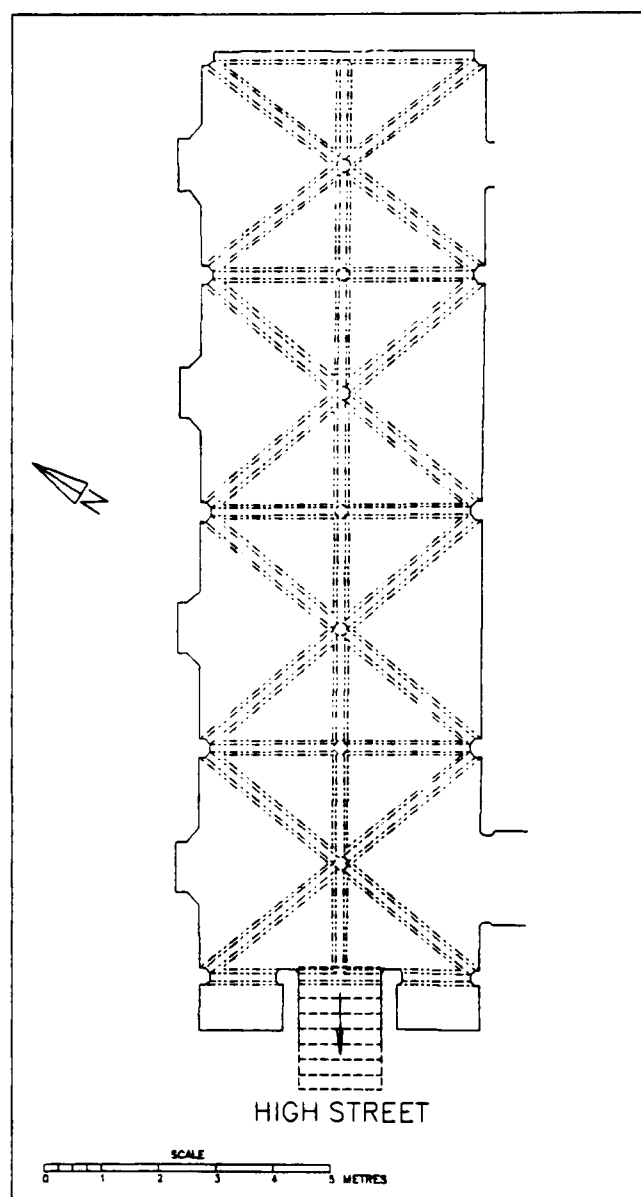


Fig. 185. 35 High Street, Rochester. Plan of undercroft.

¹ G. Payne, 'Mediæval Crypt at Rochester', *Antiq. J.* 18 (1899-1900), pp. 82-7.

indicate that there was a conjoining undercroft on this side: it is unlikely that both, and especially that at the front, could have provided access to the nominal ground floor.

RYE

94. *Rye: Flushing Inn, Market Street.* A surviving two-part undercroft parallel to Market Street, probably dating from late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.

The southern part was inaccessible, but is recorded as comprising a timber-ceiled undercroft with an entrance from the street at the southwestern corner, two loop windows in the wall to Pump Street, and a blocked doorway leading through to the larger undercroft.¹ The latter has a stone barrel vault of near

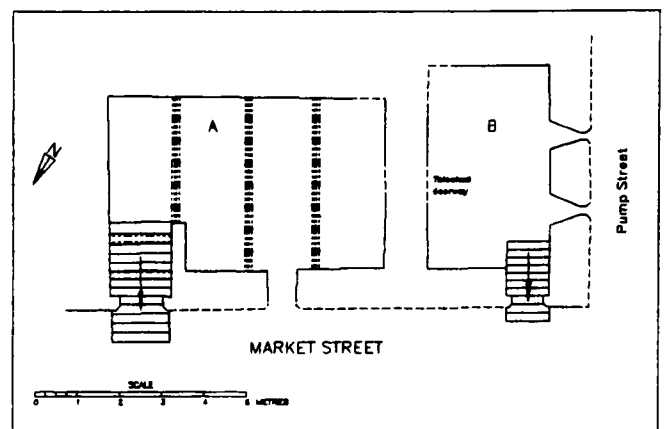


Fig. 186. The Flushing Inn, Market Street, Rye. Plan of undercroft.

semi-circular profile, the four bays separated with hollow-chamfered ribs. The doorway at the northeast end is original and opens onto a flight of steps to Market Street. There is a spur wall next to this entrance, but the collapse of the top courses has revealed that it is built around a vault rib and is apparently a later insertion. A splayed loop in the front wall is shown in Harold Sands's drawing of 1905,² but the surviving window at this point has no splay: oddly it does not appear to have been modified and, thus, Sands may have been in error. The internal access in the southeastern corner is a crude post-medieval insertion.

¹ H. Sands, 'Wall painting in a house at Rye, II: the house in which the painting was found, formerly known as the "Flushing Inn"', *SAC* 50 (1907), pp. 125-37.

² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

95. *Rye: Mermaid Inn, Mermaid Street.* A surviving small and stone-vaulted undercroft dating from the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century.

The undercroft has a near semi-circular barrel vault of six short bays defined by hollow-chamfered ribs. A doorway leading to a passage at the rear is a later adaptation, and the only original entrance was from Mermaid Street. The present front doorway, however, is four-centred and associated with the insertion of flanking brick-built spur walls, and thus most probably an adaptation of the late fourteenth or fifteenth century. The steeply sloping Mermaid Street is 1.76m

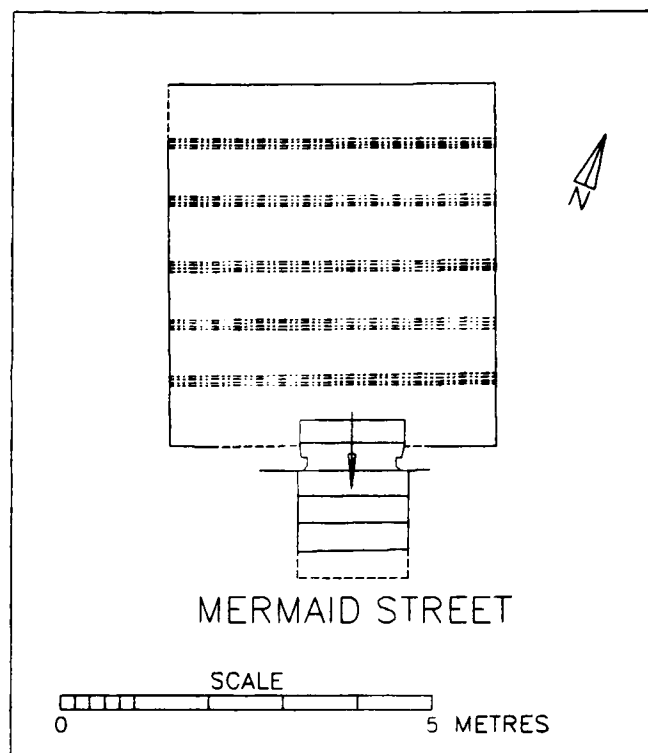


Fig. 187. The Mermaid Hotel, Mermaid Street, Rye. Plan of undercroft.

above the floor of the undercroft at the western (downhill) side of the doorway, and it would appear that the ground level has altered little since the construction of the undercroft.

SHOREHAM-BY-SEA

96. *Shoreham-by-Sea: Marlipins, High Street.* A surviving split-level townhouse oriented at right angles to the High Street. The building was constructed in the twelfth century, but was substantially rebuilt c.1300: the earlier phase is discussed in Chapter 2 (pp. 92-3).

The rebuild of c.1300 seems to have left unaltered the basic form of the building: it remained a two-storey townhouse with a semi-subterranean undercroft oriented at right angles to the street. The thoroughness of the rebuild, however, means that the majority of the architectural features date

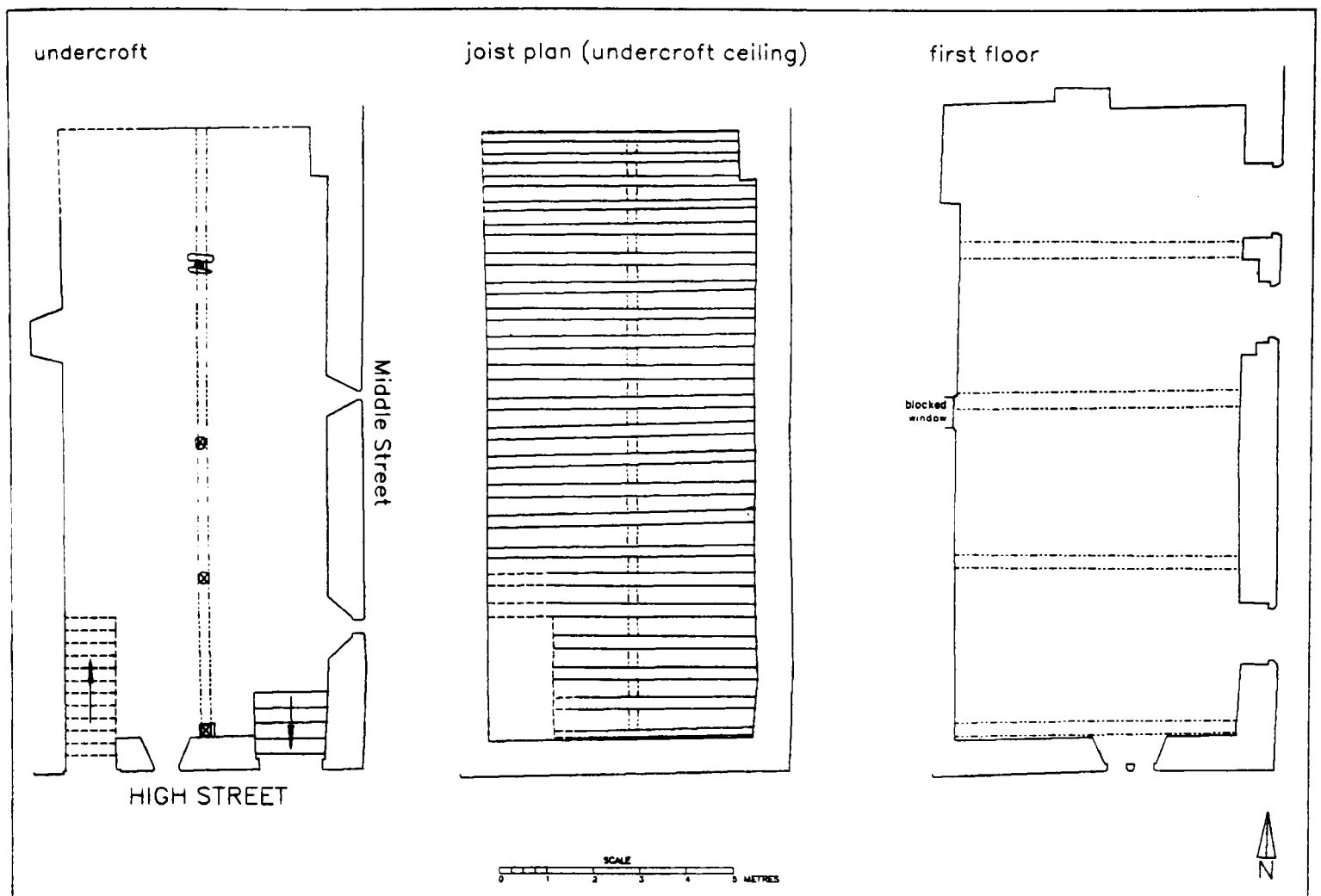


Fig. 188. Marlipins, High Street, Shoreham-by-Sea. Plans of the surviving building, showing the probable form of the stairs to the first floor.

from this period: it is also one of the best-preserved townhouses of c.1300. It is from this date that the front wall survives, with its distinctive flint and Caen stone chequer-work. This wall contains two doorways - that to the east providing access to the undercroft and that to the west opening onto a stair to the upper level. The external rebate of the latter reveals that the doorway opened outwards, possibly reflecting the close proximity of the steps to the rear.

Inside, there is a near central timber arcade that runs the length of the undercroft, with transverse lodged-joists: although sampling these timbers has failed to produce enough annual growth rings for dendrochronological dating, there can be little doubt that the whole ensemble is contemporary with the façade. Unusually, the arcade plate that sits on the arcade posts is a single piece, that, even in its present day truncated form, is over 12.19m (40ft). The roof of the upper level is preserved, and this also

appears to date from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Although the four-bay roof structure has seen alteration to a form similar to a queen-post roof, this has not affected the end two trusses which remain intact crown-post types. Even the two altered trusses have preserved the earlier collars, the upper parts of the crown posts, and the crown plate.

While unusually well preserved in its c.1300 form, Marlipins is not a typical split-level townhouse, in that it has only two storeys and has no evidence for shops at the upper level. The provision of separate access to the two storeys implies that the lower level was a normal commercial undercroft. The upper storey, if not shops, can hardly have been a residence: there is no evidence of any internal subdivision or rear access to ancillary chambers or buildings. It is therefore most likely that the first floor had a specialized, perhaps civic/guild, function,¹ as suggested for some of the twelfth-century prototypical split-level townhouses: indeed, the twelfth-century origins of Marlipins may indicate that the building in its rebuilt form of c.1300 perpetuated the use and internal arrangements of its predecessor.

SHREWSBURY

97. *Shrewsbury: 2-3 Pride Hill (Bennett's Hall)*. Fragmentary remains of a two-storey stone townhouse dating from the mid thirteenth century which survived to a greater degree before development of the site in 1958: some limited recording work was undertaken before this partial demolition. A small excavation to the rear of the building was carried out in 1986.

¹ Arthur Packham suggests a customs house as a possibility: A.B. Packham, 'The Marlipins,' *New Shoreham*, SAC 65 (1924), pp. 182-3.

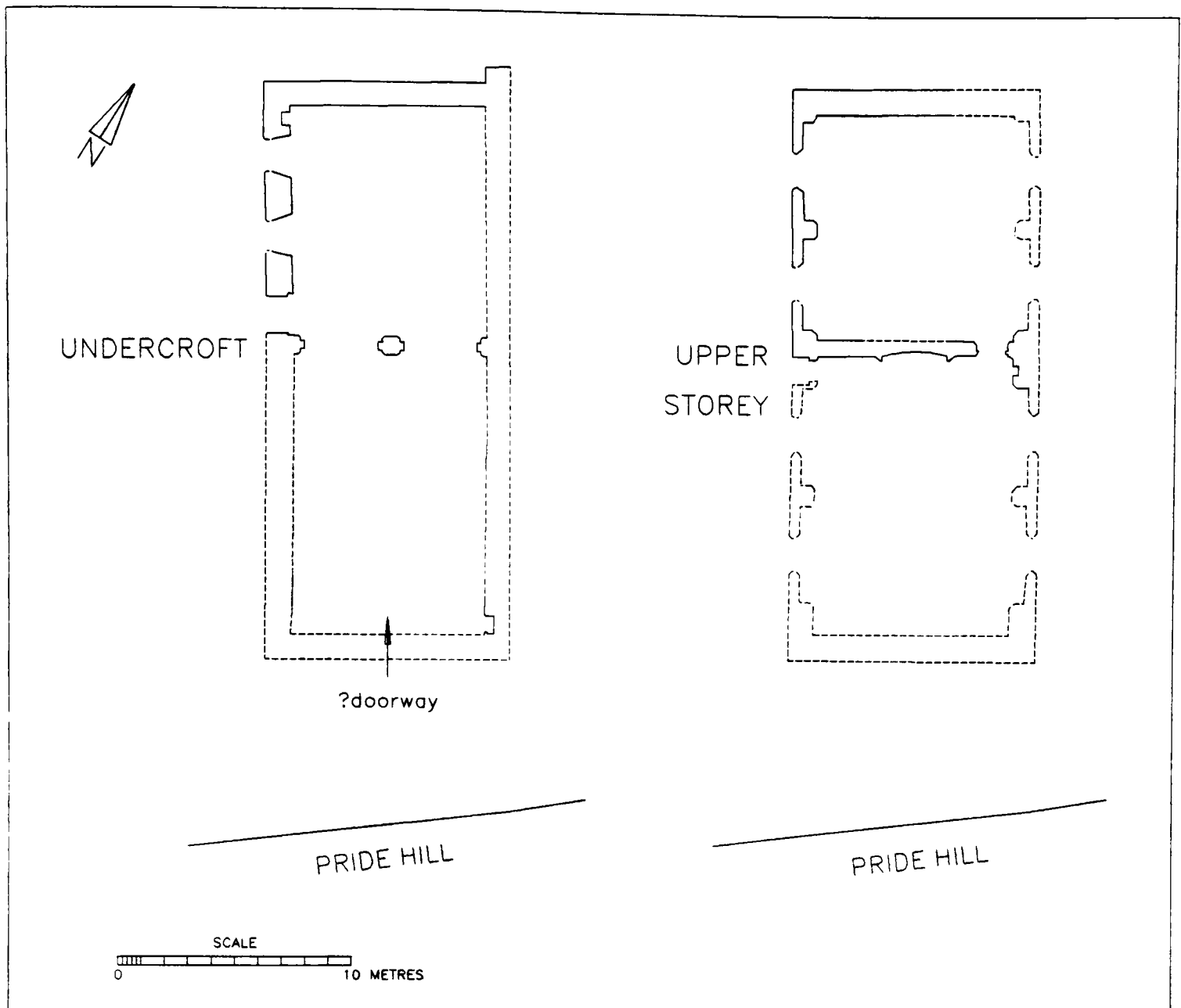


Fig. 189. 2-3 Pride Hill, Shrewsbury (Bennett's Hall). Reconstructed plans of undercroft and upper levels, based on that by J.T. Smith.

Bennett's Hall comprised a transversely subdivided undercroft at right angles to the street, with a similarly divided upper storey. The pair of transverse arches provide evidence of the height of the undercroft (c.4.65m), and fabric surviving in 1958 included a doorway immediately to the northwest of this, with windows and a cupboard beyond. Smith has argued that this doorway was the only entrance to the undercroft, and that it may have opened into a porch which also provided protection for a doorway to the upper level, slightly to the southwest.¹ The possibility of a porch is wholly reasonable: the basis for assuming that there was no

¹ J.T. Smith, in Baker, *Pride Hill*, p. 17.

access from the front of the building is less so. Indeed, there is no evidence for the reconstruction of the front wall of the undercroft, and Smith fixes its position solely on the basis of an assumed symmetry of the upper storey.¹ In view of the restrictive access via a possible porch arrangement, it is likely that a more substantial doorway would have been provided, possibly between shops forming a timber-framed range along the streetfront.

The upper storey comprises two rooms, the front one, at least, having a fireplace. Smith's extensive discussion of the function of these rooms rightly doubts Faulkner's categorisation of Bennett's Hall as an 'upper hall type', but his comparisons with rural manorial chamber blocks implies that the building was part of a spread-out urban manor-like property, which is contradicted by its orientation and proximity to an important commercial, and largely built-up, street frontage.²

98. Shrewsbury: 8-9 Pride Hill. The lower storey of a structure possibly of twelfth-century date, which was on the line of the thirteenth-century town wall, and which was discovered during salvage excavations in 1972.³

The unfortunate restrictions placed on the salvage recording mean that the record of the site is inevitably very poor and, thus, the building known as S1 is difficult to interpret. S1 comprised a rectangular stone structure measuring c.10.5m by c.7.6m (externally), parallel to, but c.19m back from the Pride Hill frontage. Two roundheaded openings were discovered, one of which appears to have been related to a garderobe chute from the building above. The location of the opening (in the east

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10 (note to Fig. 4).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18; Faulkner, *Domestic Planning*, p. 162.

³ W.E. Jenks in, M.O.H. Carver (ed.), 'Two Town Houses in Medieval Shrewsbury', *Shropshire Archaeological Society Transactions*, 61 (1983), pp. 25-6, and Fig. 26.

wall) on the eastern boundary of the plot (in its fourteenth-century state), would mean that the plot model of this area proposed by Baker does not apply in the twelfth century: Carver, however, suggests that the building was cut into the town wall and that this 'opening' was either a relieving arch or the remains of stone vaulting.¹

There is little evidence of function for structure S1, but its location at the back of a narrow tenement plot which predates the construction of the town wall in the

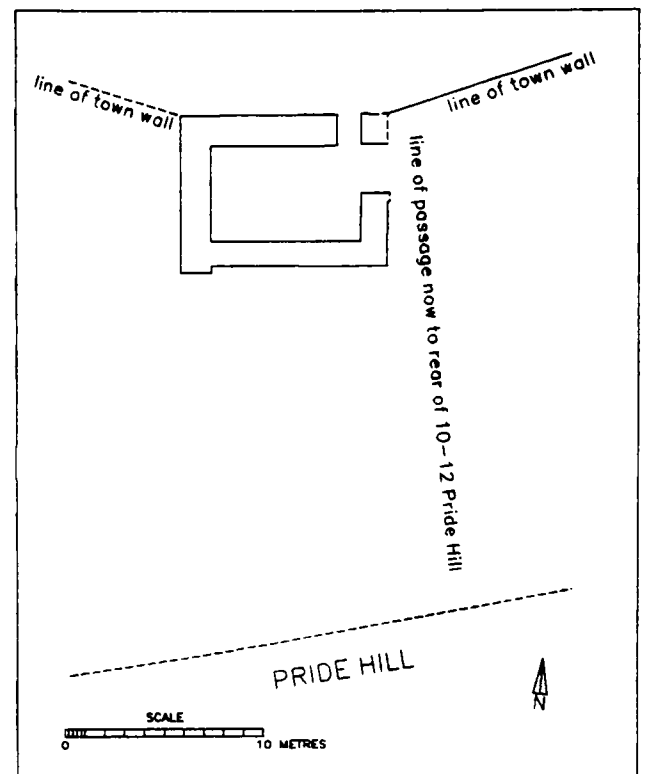


Fig. 190. 8-9 Pride Hill, Shrewsbury. Plan of excavated possible twelfth-century chamber block at the rear of the plot.

thirteenth century indicates that, irrespective of its date, it is more likely to have been the undercroft of a chamber block at the rear of streetfront range, than the defensive tower/stable suggested by the excavator.²

99. Shrewsbury: 13-16 Pride Hill. Surviving but fragmentary remains of a townhouse dating from the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century.

The main evidence of the early medieval townhouse comprises an undercroft lying parallel to, but c.12.7m back from, Pride Hill. In the rear wall there is a single-light window with a shouldered lintel, which provides the main dating evidence for the building. The lower parts of a window survive in the front wall, but the sill is so much higher (c.3m) than the rear window, it can only represent fenestration of the storey above. There are the remains of similar, but cruder, blocked openings flanking this

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

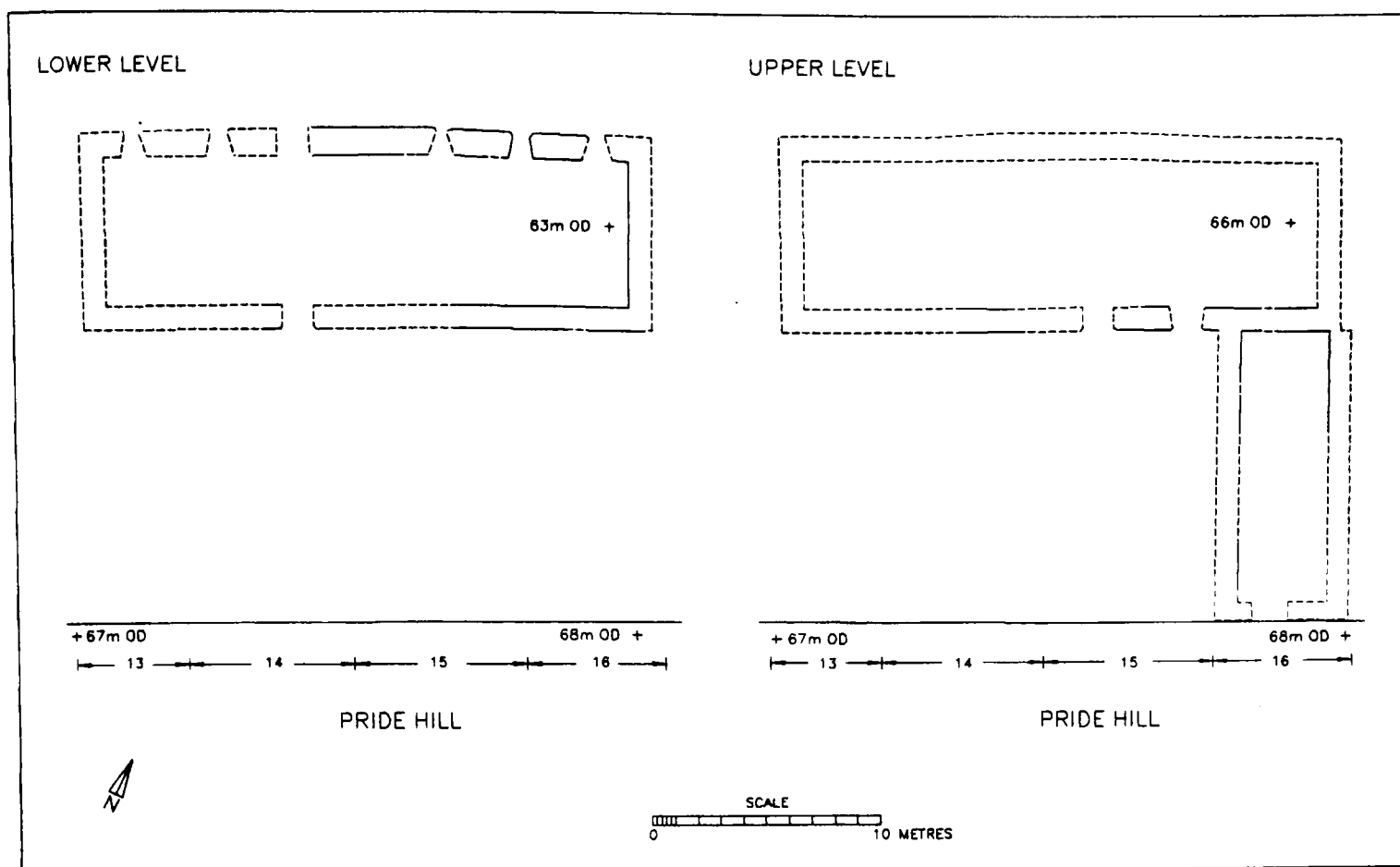


Fig. 191. 13-16 Pride Hill, Shrewsbury. Reconstructed plans of known thirteenth- to fourteenth-century building at lower undercroft and upper undercroft levels.

window. At the western end of the front wall of the undercroft there is a blocked doorway. Baker's reconstructed schematic section shows no buildings linking this rear structure and the probable streetfront range, but No. 16 at least had a contemporary undercroft set at a higher level between the rear undercroft and the street.¹ It would seem most likely that the upper-level window of the rear range opened into a substantial courtyard at the rear the streetfront range of No. 15, and possibly No. 14. As with the other Pride Hill buildings, it is clear that the extreme slope north-south across the site resulted in an unusual design.

¹ N.J. Baker, J.B. Lawson, R. Maxwell, and J.T. Smith, 'Further Work on Pride Hill, Shrewsbury', *Shropshire History and Archaeology* 68 (1993), Figs. 11-13.

SOUTHAMPTON

100. *Southampton: Castle Hall, Western Esplanade.* A partly surviving early to mid twelfth-century undercroft, with the so-called Castle Hall above.

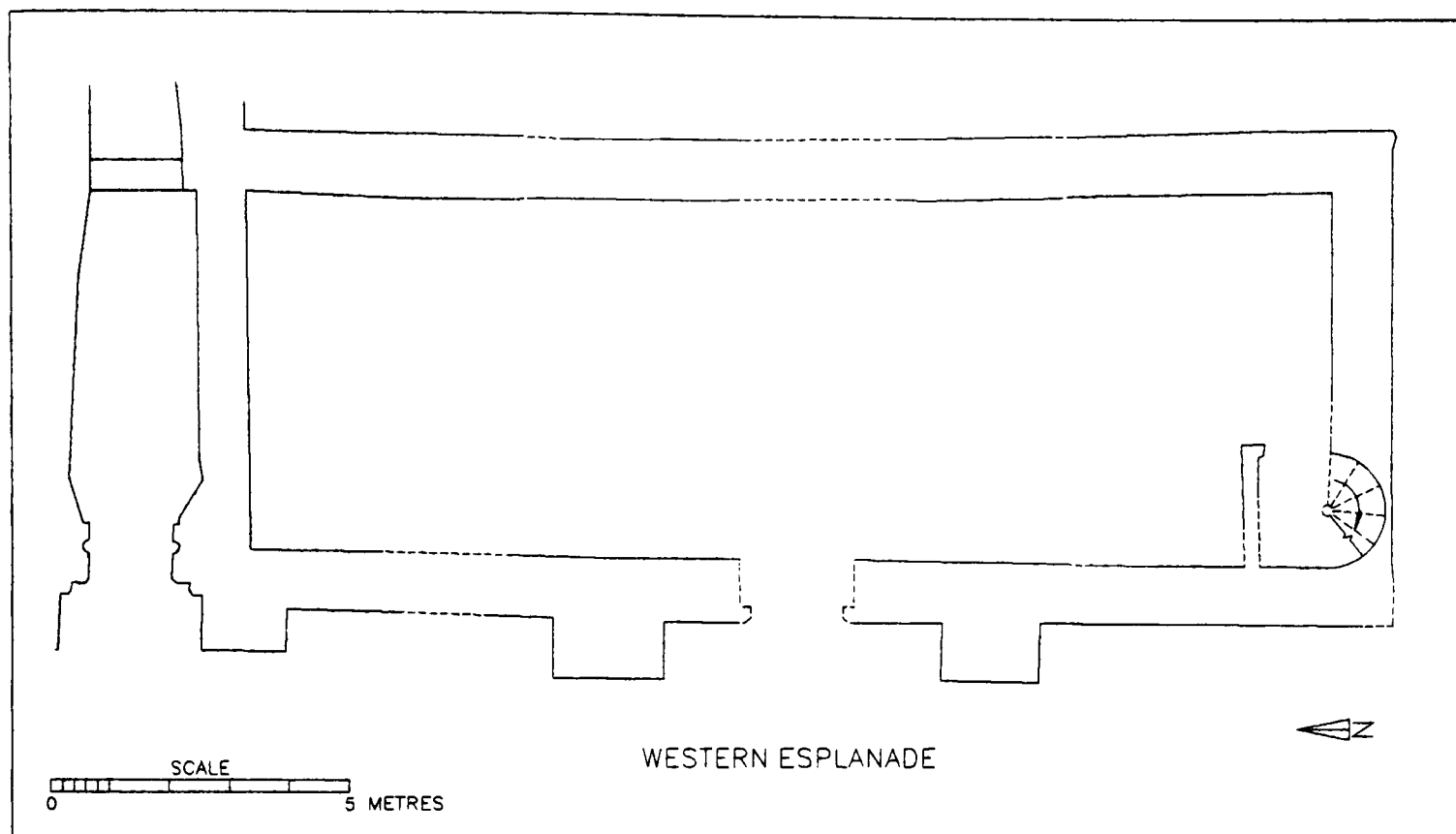


Fig. 192. Castle Hall, Western Esplanade, Southampton. Plan of undercroft.

The value placed on property along the western quay at Southampton was such that even at the castle its frontage on that side was utilized for warehouse-type undercrofts, irrespective of the consequent weakening of its defences. A stone building directly south of the later Watergate possibly dates from the early to mid twelfth century and has become known as the Castle Hall since its discovery by excavation in the 1970s.¹ The original structure measured 18.4m x 6.0m internally and comprised two storeys, the lower being a timber-ceiled undercroft which would almost certainly have opened onto the western quay.² A spiral stair in the southwest corner connected this to the upper storey, which, as a result of

¹ Oxley, *Southampton Castle*, pp. 16-38.

² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

the north-south cliff along the western side of the city, was at the ground level of the castle bailey. Windows sills and jambs in the west and north walls, and the threshold of a doorway into the bailey on the east side are all the architectural details which survive from the original first floor. While these indicate a room of some sophistication and undeniably part of the castle, there is little other evidence proffered in the excavation report to validate the identification as the hall.

101. Southampton: Castle Vault, Western Esplanade. A surviving twelfth-century undercroft, within the extent of the medieval castle, but with access to the former quay only.

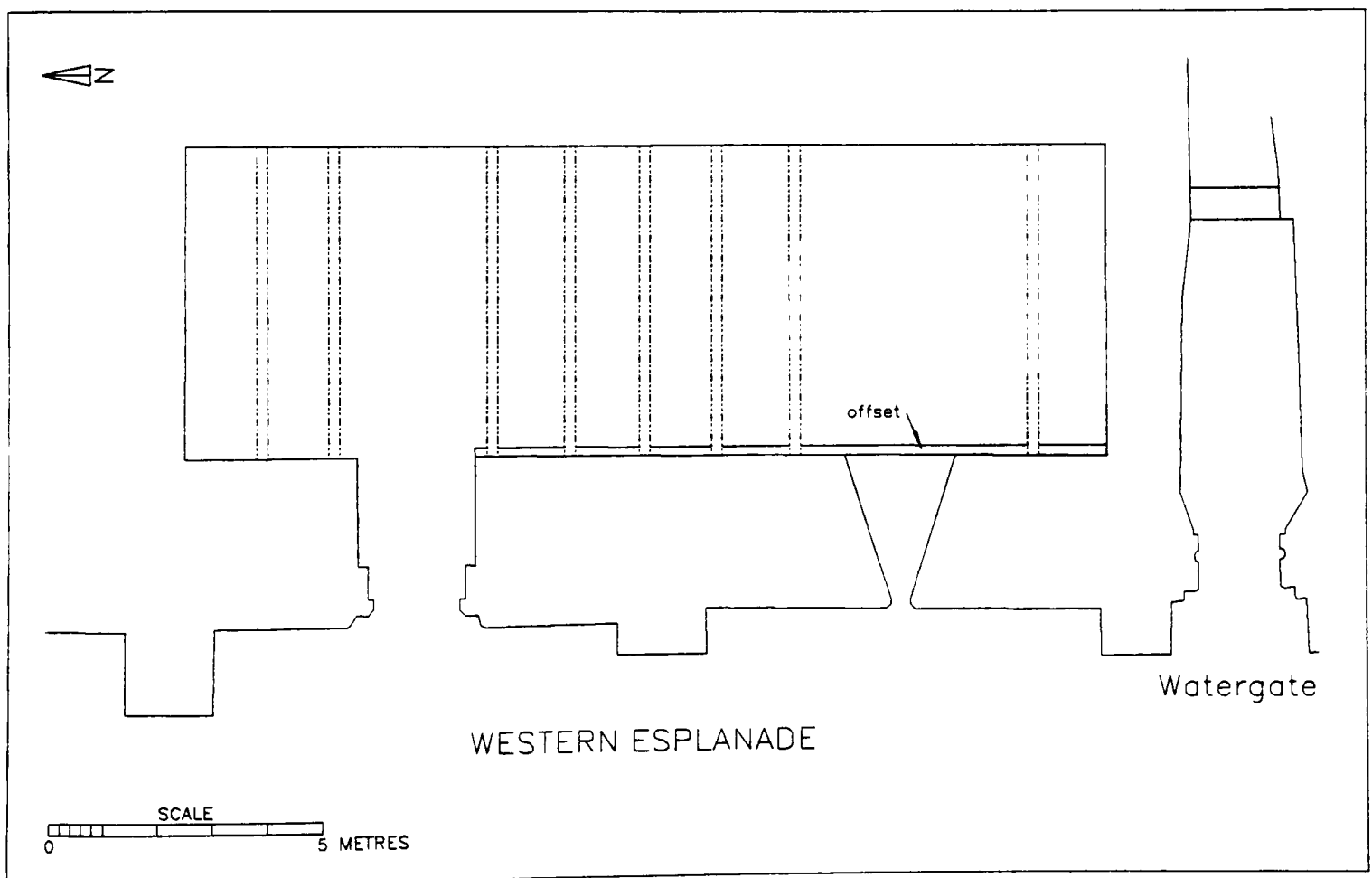


Fig. 193. Castle Vault, Western Esplanade, Southampton. Plan of undercroft.

A similar arrangement existed at the more well-known Castle Vault, a surviving undercroft on the northern side of the Watergate. Here the barrel-vaulted undercroft, which measures 17.05m x 5.70m internally, also opens off the former quay. It has been suggested that it was used for

storing wines and other goods imported into the castle,¹ but the absence of any direct access from the undercroft to the castle and its lack of security throw doubt on this. That there was no stair from the undercroft to the presumed first floor indicates that here, and very possibly at the Castle Hall also, the undercroft may have been used in exactly the same way as the private commercial undercrofts on the western quay.

102. *Southampton: King John's Palace, Western Esplanade.* A large mid twelfth-century townhouse with a ground-level arcade opening onto the medieval quay, incorporated within the fourteenth-century town wall and now a surviving ruin. For discussion and plans see Chapter 1 (pp. 57-60).

103. *Southampton: Canute's Palace, Porter's Lane.* A ruinous but surviving twelfth-century townhouse which comprised a long range on Porter's Lane with semi-sunken undercrofts and an upper storey accessed via an external stair. For discussion, plan, and elevation see Chapter 2 (pp. 95-100).

104. *Southampton: Blue Anchor Lane House.* A partly surviving undercroft from a two-storey townhouse of twelfth-century date built on the slope of Blue Anchor Lane, so that its undercroft is partly subterranean. For discussion, plan, and elevation see Chapter 2 (pp. 76-80).

105. *Southampton: Norman House, Cuckoo Lane.* A large-scale twelfth-century townhouse on the medieval western quay, which is known largely through excavation, although a first-floor window is preserved where the building was overlapped by the fourteenth-century town wall. For discussion and plans see Chapter 1 (pp. 60-2).

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

106. *Southampton: 79½ High Street.* A townhouse demolished after bombing during the Second World War, which consisted of two ranges directly on and at right angles to the street.¹

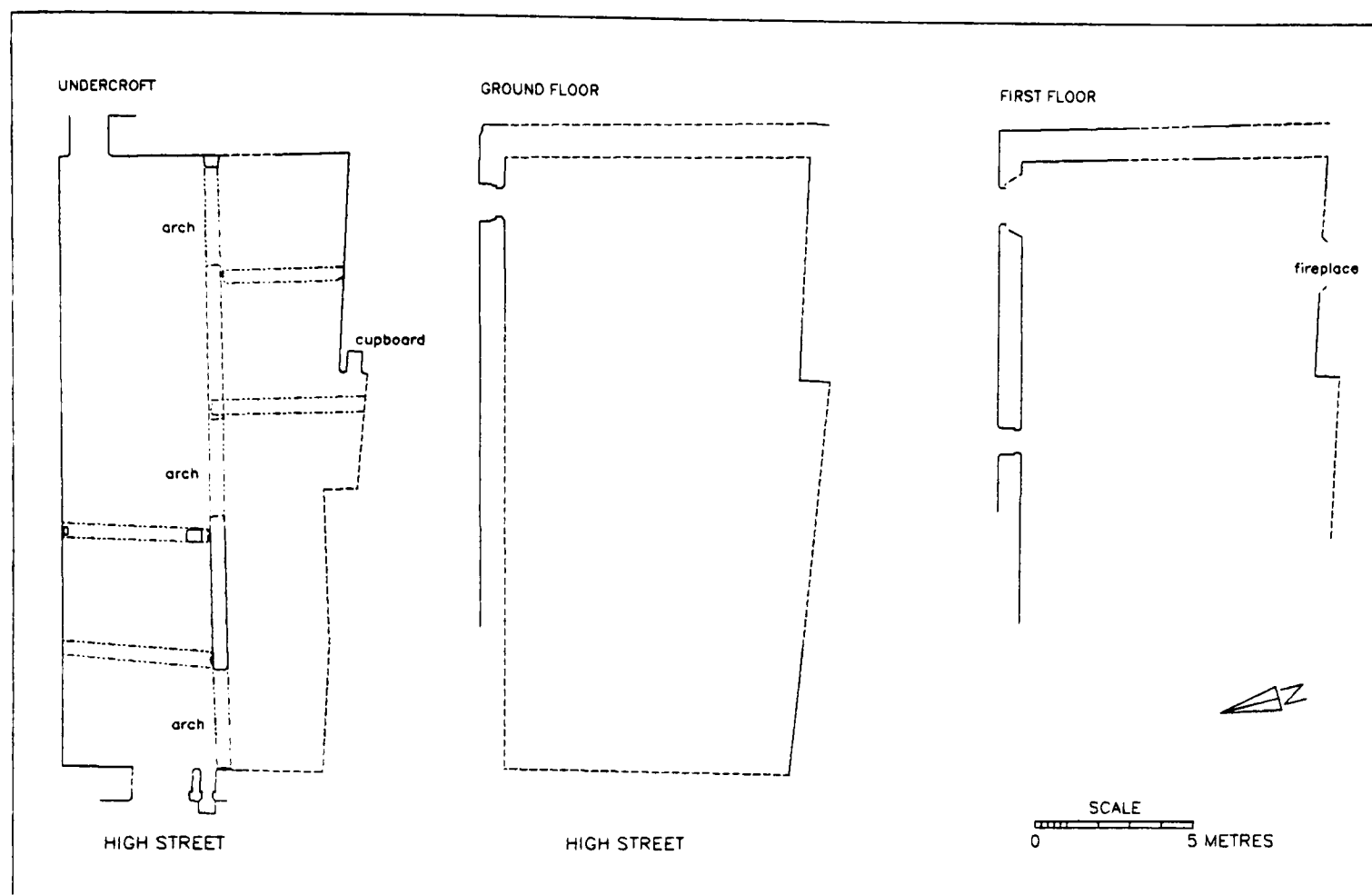


Fig. 194. 79½ High Street, Southampton. Plans of destroyed building taken from Ministry of Works post-bombing survey No. 564/1 and 564/2.

The southern part dates from the late twelfth century and had a large semi-subterranean undercroft with a residence above; for the discussion and illustration of this phase see (pp. 100-2). A major rebuild in the late thirteenth or, more probably, the early fourteenth century is revealed by a central longitudinal arcade in the undercroft: this may represent the replacement of a similar twelfth-century arrangement or the combining of two previously separate properties. Faulkner placed this arcade and the gable window at the east end of the northern range in the mid thirteenth

¹ The building was surveyed by the then Ministry of Works; Ministry of Works drawings 564/1-4. Fig. 194 is based on these survey drawings.

century,¹ but the low profile and almost four-centred arches appear more consistent with early fourteenth-century undercroft arches elsewhere.² The rear doorway of the undercroft, and, probably, the doorway down from the street and its flanking window with lightwell also belong to this period. In the north wall a doorway at ground level with a two-centred arch had its rebate on the south side and thus must have opened into a conjoining building at this date.³ A splay in the wall above this marked the position of a former window of uncertain date, which could pre-date the construction of the building to the north or simply indicate that it was a low structure. A nearby late fourteenth- or fifteenth-century doorway in the north wall at this level, however, shows that by the late Middle Ages the conjoining building was of at least three storeys (it had gained a small undercroft by the fifteenth century).

It is clear that by the early fourteenth century, 79½ High Street had evolved into a split-level townhouse comprising an undercroft, a raised ground floor, and a first floor. There is no evidence for the two-storey open hall for which Faulkner argued on the dubious grounds of a post-medieval timber wall (recorded on the Ministry of Works drawing) which ran 'up through two stories in a manner that suggests that a two-storied hall lay to the north'.⁴

107. Southampton: Tenements 1-7, Western Esplanade. A surviving series of façades, or parts thereof, from early medieval townhouses, preserved when incorporated within the western town wall, which was built in the

¹ Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, p. 91.

² For example, 38-42 Watergate Street, and 15 and 36 Bridge Street, Chester.

³ Faulkner says the door head went unrecorded (Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, p. 90), and thus cannot have seen the Ministry of Works drawing which, to add confusion, is misidentified as the doorway on the first floor.

⁴ Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, p. 90.

1360s. See Chapter 1 for the discussion of the Romanesque buildings, and a reconstruction of the possible arrangement of the conjoining tenements (pp. 70-2).

108. Southampton: South side St Michael's Passage. A split-level townhouse of c.1200, known through antiquarian records, post-bombing recording, and through archaeological excavation: the undercroft is partly preserved, although wholly inaccessible below a modern building on the site. See Chapter 3 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 180-8).

109. Southampton: The Undercroft, Simnel Street. An early fourteenth-century surviving undercroft, with a rib vault and fireplace. The undercroft is on an east-west axis on the corner of Simnel Street and Upper Bugle Street and is below, but wholly unconnected with, 38 Upper Bugle Street. See Chapter 4 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 214-18).

110. Southampton: 88 High Street. A largely intact undercroft with an elliptical barrel vault, oriented at right angles to the street and dating from c.1330.

The undercroft has its principal entrance to the High Street in the form of an off-centre doorway with spur walls flanking the internal steps. To the south of the doorway a blocked opening is almost certainly an original window. At the rear, there is a central doorway,

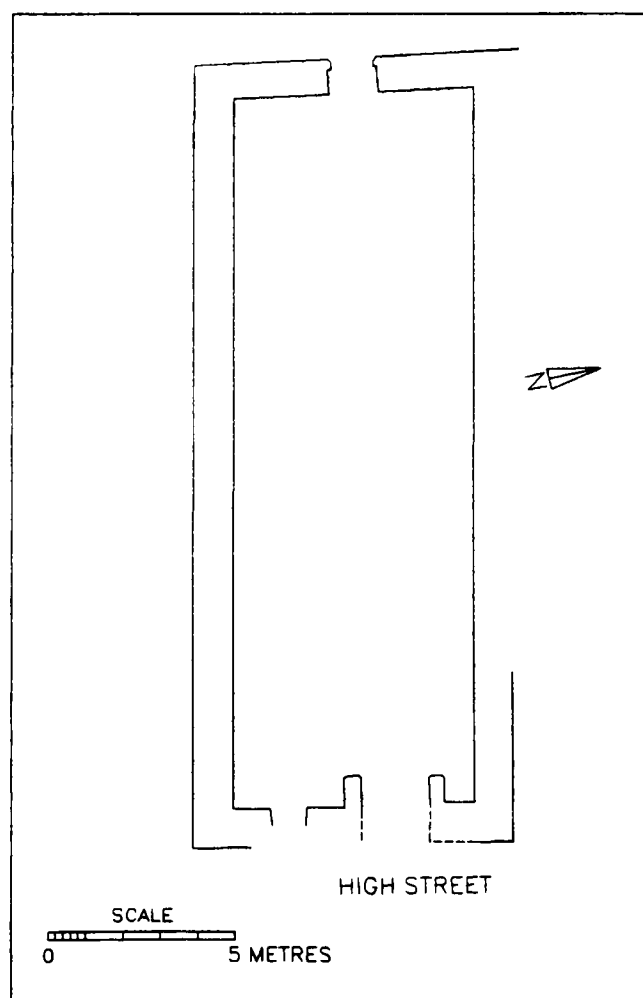


Fig. 195. 88 High Street, Southampton. Plan of undercroft.

somewhat narrower than that at the front. The vault springs from a stringcourse.

111. *Southampton: Quilter's Vault, 89 High Street.* A surviving barrel-vaulted undercroft dating from c.1270.

The undercroft is oriented at right angles to the High Street, at which end there is the principal doorway with a flanking window. The entrance at the rear (west) end is a late medieval adaptation of a thirteenth-century window of similar form to that immediately to the north. A third entrance, in the north wall, may well be original and, as Faulkner suggests, may have provided access to the partly-surviving spiral staircase which lead to the building above the undercroft.¹ The vault and the north and south walls show the scar of a former transverse wall which divided the undercroft just west of centre. Excavation has confirmed that this was an original feature, and that a timber threshold was inserted about a decade after the construction of the undercroft.² It is unclear, however, whether the impressions of stones in the natural soil below this threshold represent an earlier stone threshold, or imply that there was no doorway in the wall prior to c.1280. See Chapter 4 for discussion of the possible function of Quilter's Vault, and for a plan (pp. 241-2).

112. *Southampton: 137-9 High Street (formerly the Queen's Hotel).* A surviving rib-vaulted undercroft dating from the early fourteenth century.

This undercroft runs along and parallel to the modern High Street, and has windows opening on this side and to West Street on the north. The long undercroft is divided into two chambers, with a wide doorway in the

¹ Faulkner, *Southampton Buildings*, p. 98.

² Walker, *Quilter's Vault*, pp. 195-6.

transverse wall. The southern chamber is infilled, and, thus, the plan depends on the Ministry of Works survey made when the undercroft was exposed in December 1942.¹ It is unclear whether the opening at the southern end of the east wall was another window or a second entrance from the street, and, if either, whether it was an original feature. Likewise, the purpose of the rear doorway in the southern part remains obscure. The accessible northern chamber consists of four and half bays of vaulting that are barrel-vaulted, with the exception of one bay of quadripartite vaulting. The rear doorway was clearly intended for access only, and not goods delivery, but its blocking (500mm back from the interior wall face) means that it is uncertain whether this led into another north-south undercroft fronting onto West Street, or to the building above. Either side of the main entrance there are spur walls projecting 790mm from the front wall: the significance of these is discussed in Chapter 3, where there is also a plan (p. 177).

113. Southampton: 58 French Street. The best preserved split-level townhouse, which dates from c.1290. It comprises a semi-subterranean undercroft with steps up to the street and a smaller doorway to the yard at the rear; a single shop on the raised ground floor, accessed via a through-passage which leads to the open hall; a room to the rear of the hall, with a chamber above; and a gallery across the hall linking the rear chamber, a staircase from the ground floor, and a solar over the shop.

The importance of the townhouse was recognized following bomb damage in 1940, and the Ministry of Works undertook a survey. Subsequently, a more thorough investigation by Glyn Coppack took place after the building was taken into care in 1972, and this formed the basis for the restoration

¹ Ministry of Works S.W. 564/17.

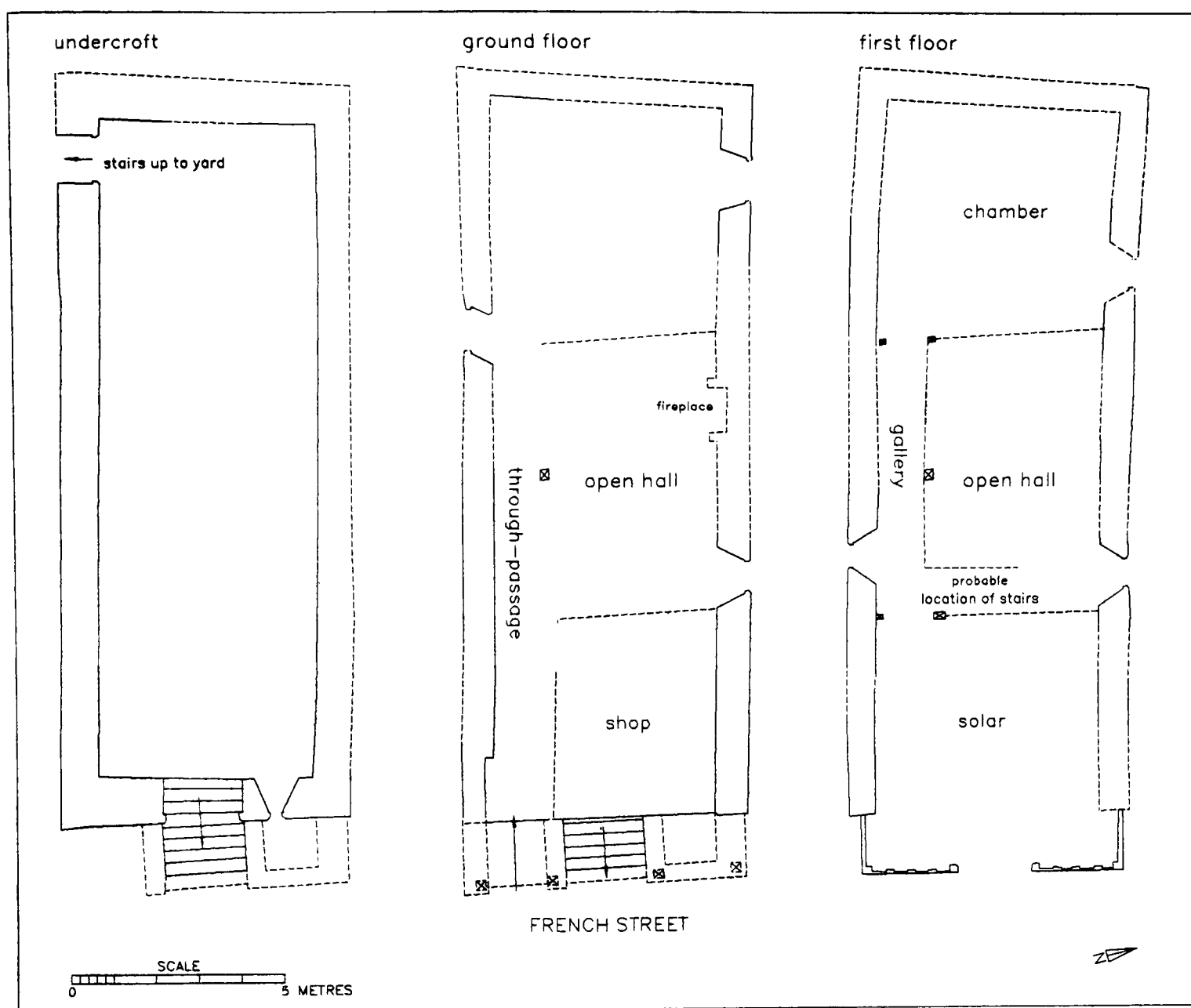


Fig. 196. 58 French Street, Southampton. Plans of building.

of the building by English Heritage.¹ Allowing for the necessary incorporation of some features from the later development of the house, this reconstruction is reasonably accurate, and makes redundant most discussion of the building. Faulkner's interpretation of much of the structure has thus been superseded, including his theory of a galleried shopfront.² The shop and frontage are illustrated in Chapters 2 and 5 (Figs. 69 and 70 (p. 129), and Fig. 127 (p. 254)), and the shop and hall are discussed in Chapter 5 (pp. 250, 252-4, and 274).

¹ Archive held by English Heritage, Keysign House, London.

² See p. 180 (note 4).

114. Southampton: 46-8 French Street. A pair of surviving undercrofts dating from the fourteenth century, in which the rear part of each is vaulted and the front was originally timber ceiled. See Chapter 4 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 240-1).

SOUTHWARK

115. Southwark: House at corner of High Street and Tooley Street. A mid twelfth-century townhouse set back from the two streets that was demolished in 1831 to make way for the approach to the new London Bridge.¹

The remains were recorded in 1831 and at that date comprised a groin-vaulted undercroft with a porch on the east side, and upstanding fragments of stone walls at first-floor level.² The fact that steps descended c.1.07m from the floor of the porch to that of the undercroft means that it is likely that the twelfth-century building was only slightly sunk below the contemporary ground surface. The capitals of the shafts that carried transverse arches were carved with various scalloped designs and date the building to the mid twelfth century. In 1831 the first-floor was used as a schoolroom, and demolition revealed surviving twelfth-century fabric which John Gage hints included a fireplace.³ The walls survived to a maximum of c.3.7m, and the interior face only of a Romanesque doorway (1.56m wide) was preserved in the east wall, immediately south of the undercroft entrance below, which suggests that there was a

¹ Not, as John Schofield states anachronistically, for the approach to London Bridge railway station; J. Schofield, *The building of London from the Conquest to the Great Fire* (Revised edition, London, 1993), p. 52.

² J. Gage, 'Remains of the Prior of Lewes' Hostelry, in the parish of St Olave, Southwark', *Archaeologia* 23 (1831), pp. 299-308.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

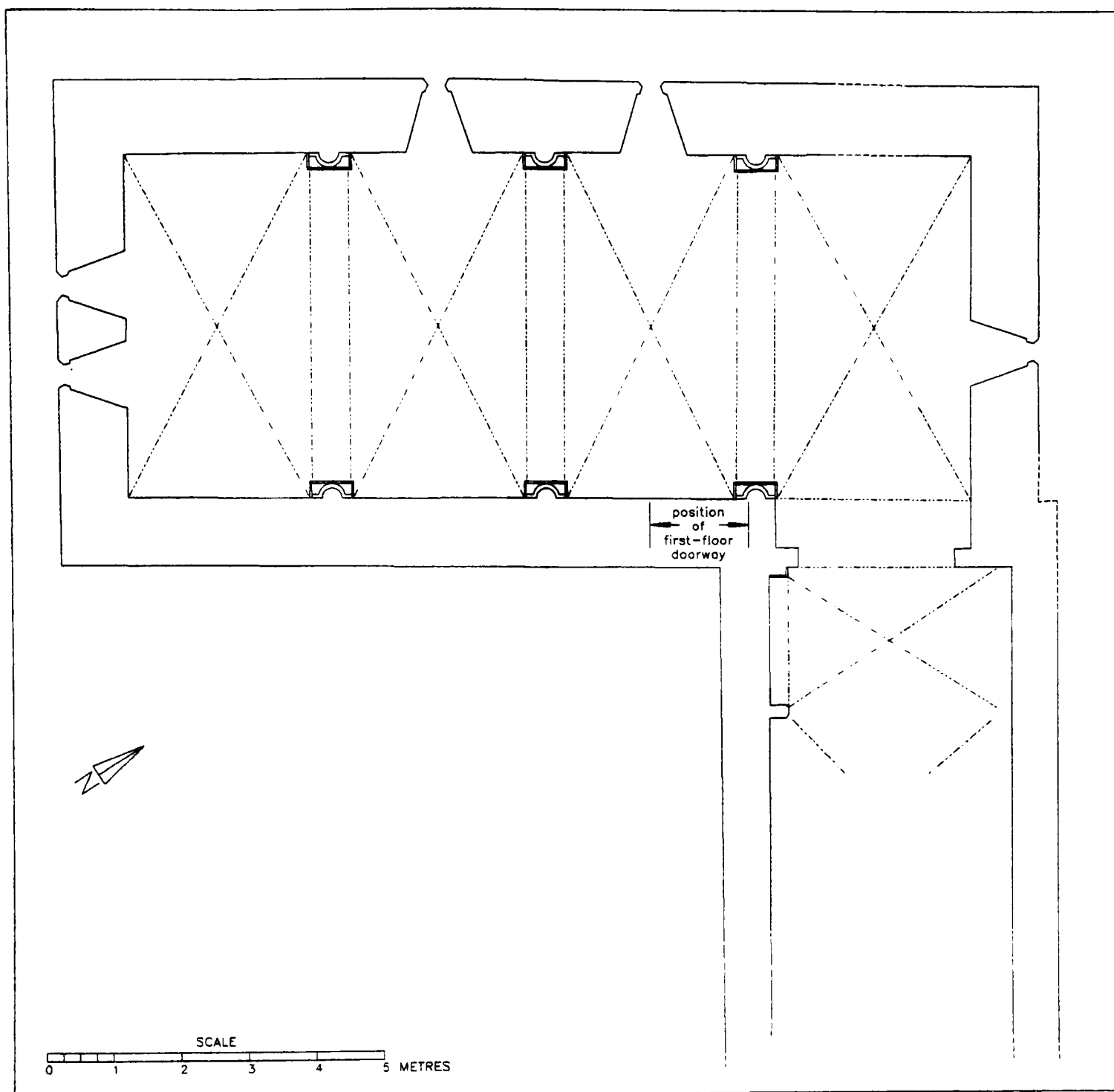


Fig. 197. House set back from corner of High Street and Tooley Street, Southwark. Plan of undercroft showing position of first-floor doorway.

combined porch structure providing access to both levels.

Although initially identified by Gage as part of the Prior of Lewes' hostelry,¹ George Corner argues on more convincing grounds that it was the 'mansion house of the Earls of Warrene and Surrey, in their town of

¹ *Ibid.*

Southwark; (or Town-hall, or Hotel de Ville...)'.¹ Certainly, its location well away from Tooley Street and the High Street, the position of both doorways away from either street, and fenestration on three walls indicate that it was a free-standing building with a non-commercial function. Its similarities with Merton Hall (Cambridge), and Frewin Hall (Oxford) suggest that it formed the two-storey chamber block of an urban manor-like residence.

116. Southwark: Prior of Lewes' Hostelry, Carter Lane. A stone-vaulted undercroft of early to mid twelfth-century date that was discovered, recorded, and demolished in 1832 during construction of the approach to the new London Bridge (completed 1831).²

The undercroft comprised four bays of groin vaulting separated by wide arches springing from a central column and flat pilasters. The simple form of the pilasters and ribs, and the scalloped capital of the column suggest a date of

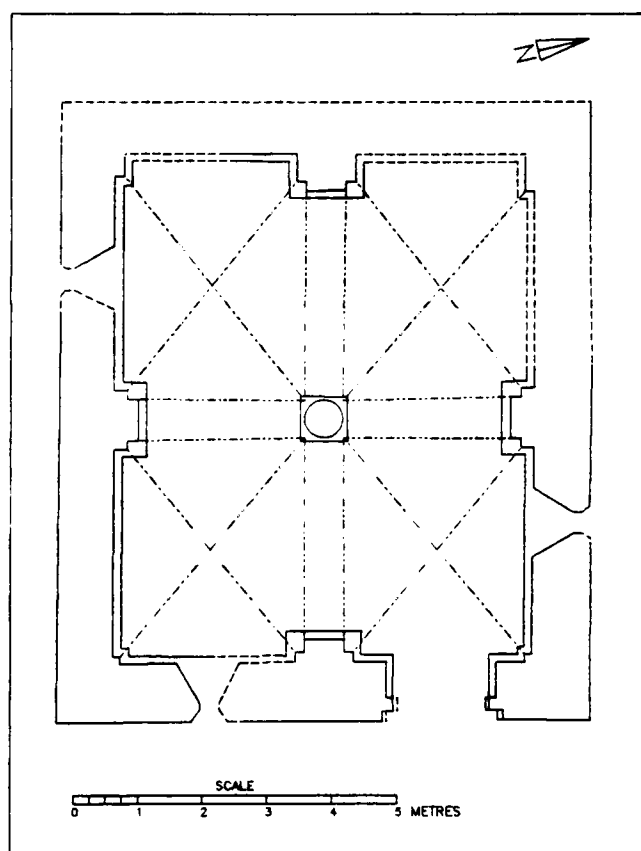


Fig. 198. Prior of Lewes' hostelry. Carter Lane, Southwark. Plan of undercroft.

the early to mid twelfth century. A blocked doorway at in the east wall appears to have been the only original access. Windows survived in the north, east, and south walls, and may also have originally been present in the west wall: by 1832 this was substantially incomplete. The continuation

¹ G.R. Corner, 'Observations on the Remains of an Anglo-Norman Building in the Parish of Saint Olave, Southwark, hitherto assumed to have been the Hostelry of the Prior of Lewes, but now believed to have been the Manor House of the Earls of Warren and Surrey in Southwark', *Archaeologia* 38 (1860), p. 38.

² C.E. Gwilt, 'A second Crypt, discovered 1832, part of the Hostelry of the Prior of Lewes', *Archaeologia* 25 (1834), pp. 604-6.

of the jambs of the doorway to the floor level of the undercroft and the relatively low sills of the windows imply that the undercroft was built at or near ground level.¹ In his later work on this building and that to the northwest, George Corner confirms Gwilt's assumption that this formed part of the Prior of Lewes' hostelry, or townhouse: the exact function of the undercroft is unclear, but its location and orientation suggest that it probably formed the lower storey of a residential chamber block.

STAMFORD

117. Stamford: 17 St George's Square. Fragmentary remains of an undercroft, probably of early thirteenth-century date.²

The only diagnostic feature which survives is the blocked arch in the external face of the east wall. This is of semicircular form with a single-order chamfer, and springs from chamfered imposts. The springing of the arch is at the approximate level of the modern pavement, and it is likely that it survives from a semi-subterranean undercroft. The north and south walls appear integral with the east wall and indicate that the original building, which lay directly on and parallel to the street, was c.7.2m deep and a minimum of 8m wide. It seems unlikely that this building was of the same form as those at 10 St Mary's Hill and 9 St Mary's Street, where similar arches at undercroft level formed part of arcades extending at right angles to the street.

¹ In 1832 the exterior ground level was c.1.8m-c.2.1m above the original floor level: *ibid.*, p. 605.

² RCHM *Stamford* (London, 1977), p. 119.

118. Stamford: 10 St Mary's Hill. Surviving fragments of a twelfth-century townhouse of ground-level type and possibly of similar form to that at the Jew's House, Lincoln. See Chapter 1 for discussion (pp. 53-4).

119. Stamford: 13 St Mary's Hill. A surviving early thirteenth-century undercroft along with fragments of the stone-built superstructure.

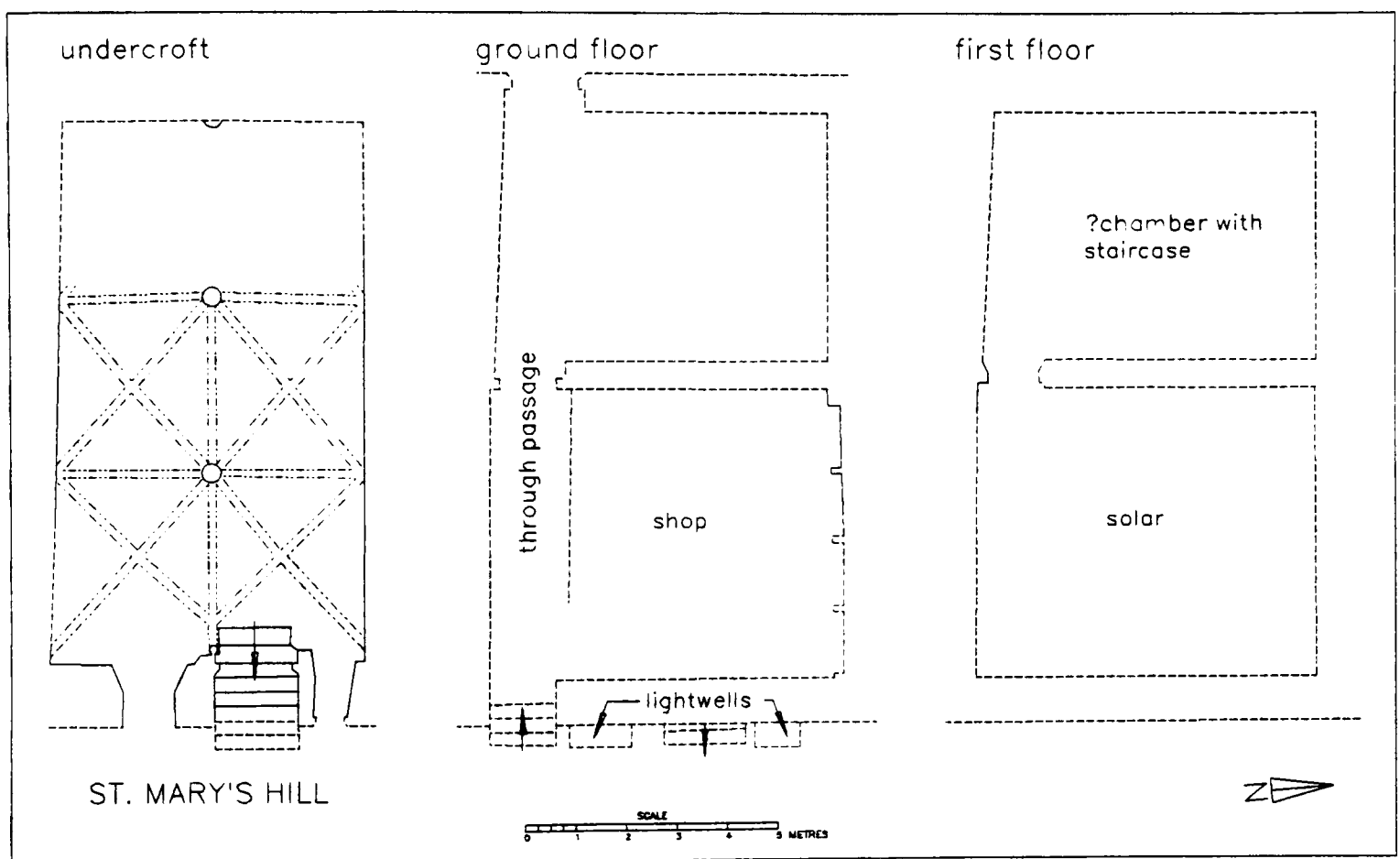


Fig. 199. 13 St Mary's Hill, Stamford. Plans of undercroft, ground floor, and first floor, showing reconstructed internal arrangements.

The undercroft is of two aisles set directly on and at right angles to the street. The stone rubble rear wall is plainly inserted and the two bay deep undercroft extended rearwards at least one further bay. The vaulting is quadripartite with plain chamfered ribs, a central row of columns, and carved corbels. The only original doorway is that to the street and is in the north aisle: the flanking windows are necessarily asymmetrical. The doorway and window are segmental headed, and the vault arrangement is modified to allow for the doorway. The inner face of

the doorway is rebated, and integral steps up to the street confirm that the undercroft was always at least partly subterranean.

Above undercroft level, some remains of the contemporary stone-built superstructure survive. A voussoir from a doorway on the ground floor and a rebate from a doorway on the floor above show that there was a transverse wall 6.7m from the streetfront: the undercroft extended at least 5.3m beyond this point, revealing that this transverse wall was internal. The location of the lower of the doorways coincides with the only possible location of a street entrance to the ground floor, and, thus, it is clear that there was a through passage similar to that preserved at 58 French street, Southampton. The position of the first-floor doorway immediately above that on the ground floor could imply that the rear part of the building was of two storeys, or that there were stairs against the rear of the transverse wall. A section of blind arcading is preserved at ground-floor level in the north wall to the east of the transverse wall. Such elaboration does not preclude the use of this front room as a shop, and is paralleled in the similar recesses at the Jew's House, Lincoln.

120. *Stamford: 9 St Mary's Street.* A surviving fragment of a late twelfth-century townhouse which appears to have been at ground level.

The remaining fragment comprises one near complete arch and one half arch of a stone arcade (Fig. 200). The front arch is semicircular and the rear is segmental. Between the two there survives the springings for a lost arch. The arcade is at right angles to the street is similar to that recorded at 10 St Mary's Hill, Stamford, although in this case it is not associated with an original entrance. It probably formed an arcade to support the timber ceiling of ground-level shops or an undercroft, in the manner of those at 28-30 Watergate Street, Chester; and 21 High Street,

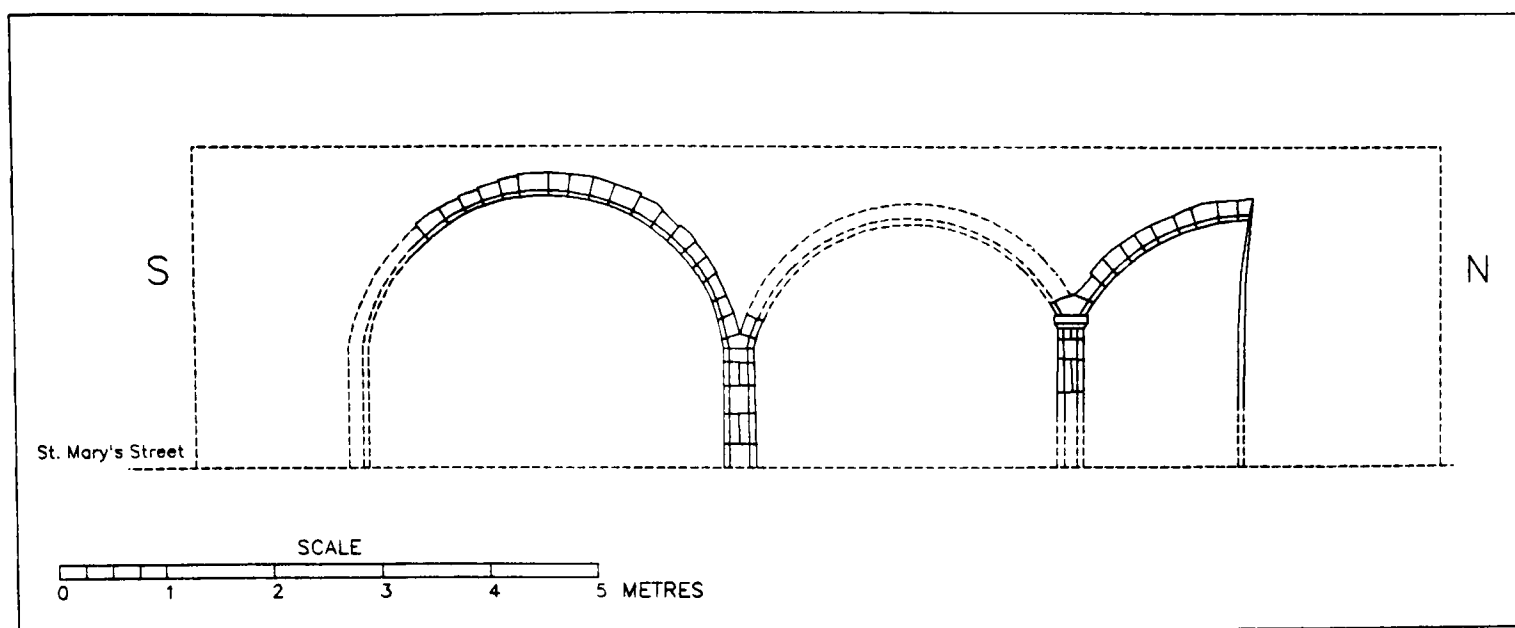


Fig. 200. 9 St Mary's Street, Stamford. Elevation of east face of west wall showing blocked arcade.

Canterbury.

121. Stamford: 24 High Street St Martins. A surviving vaulted undercroft which, on the basis of its carved corbels, dates from the thirteenth century.

This small undercroft (c.4.32m x c.4.35m) is on a corner site. The present access is internal only, but the irregular arrangement of the vault ribs in this northeast corner suggests that the original entrance was located here, but opened onto the side street. This is certainly more probable than a previous suggestion that the original entrance was in the east wall.¹ The later openings in the north and west walls may simply replace earlier windows.

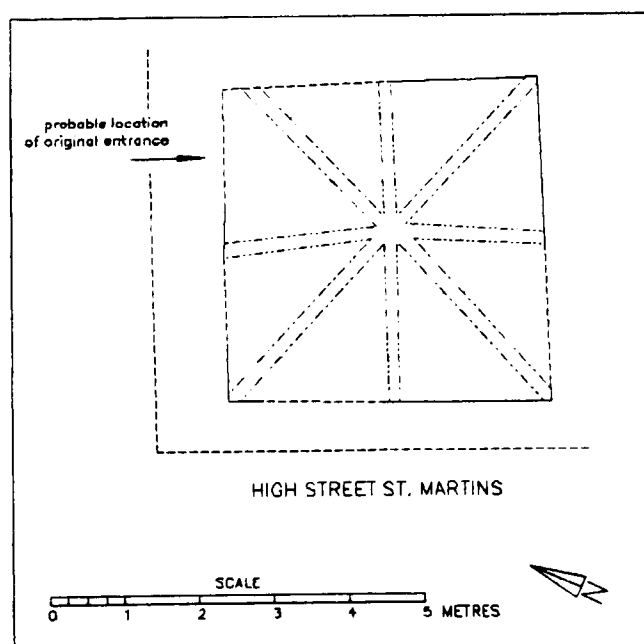


Fig. 201. 24 High Street St Martins, Stamford. Plan of undercroft.

¹ RCHM *Stamford* (London, 1977), p. 82.

WINCHELSEA

122. Winchelsea: The Retreat, Barrack Square. A surviving undercroft of c.1300 below a later fourteenth-century timber-framed house.

The undercroft occupies a plot on the corner of the High Street and Barrack Square, and has an original entrance from the latter. There is a stone barrel vault of five bays, marked by hollow-chamfered ribs that die into the walls. In the southern side wall to the High Street there are two slightly splayed windows. The present level of Barrack Square is c.4.0m above the floor of the

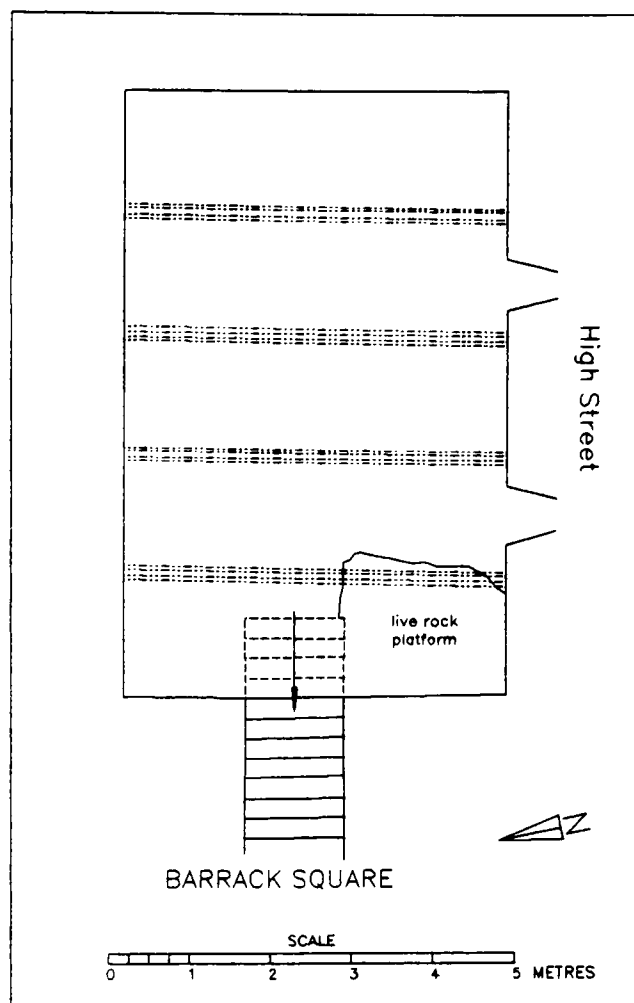


Fig. 202. The Retreat, Barrack Square, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

undercroft, but the surviving steps and stair vault suggest that the medieval street level was c.1.4m below this, making the original ground floor c.900mm above the street.

123. Winchelsea: The Stone House, Barrack Square. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

As with The Retreat (above), the undercroft at The Stone House is on the corner of the High Street and Barrack Square and has the entrance facing the latter. The steps down from the street are narrow and post medieval, but the two-centred arch at street level confirms that the original entrance was in this position. The undercroft has a stone barrel vault with hollow

chamfered ribs, and is divided into two parts: that towards the front is of three bays and that to the rear of four bays. The wide doorway in the dividing wall has no rebate for a door. High set windows in the side wall to the High Street provided light to both halves. Barrack Square is c.3.7m above the floor level, and the soffit of the apex of the entrance doorway c.950mm above that. As with most of the Winchelsea examples, however, the undercroft doorway would have risen above the level of the ground floor that would have been in the order of 1.6m above the contemporary street level.

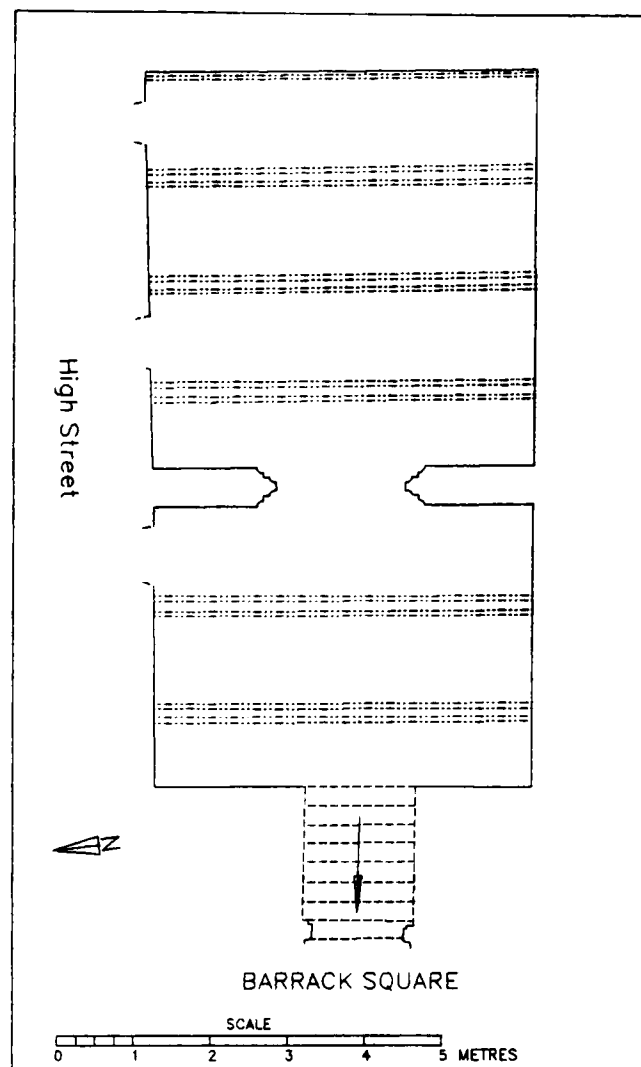


Fig. 203. The Stone House, Barrack Square, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

124. Winchelsea: Old Castle House (formerly Ye Old Castle Inn), Castle Street. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

At 5.9m x 10.3m this undercroft is the largest unsubdivided example in Winchelsea, and doorways in the side walls indicate that the townhouse above was larger still and may have been oriented parallel to the street. The undercroft is barrel vaulted with the six bays divided by hollow chamfered ribs. A wide flight of steps down from the street partly survives, although mutilated. At the rear there is a blocked widely-splayed window and to the north of this a small doorway with a two-centred arch. The latter is only 950mm high, 760mm above the original floor level, rebated for a door opening into the undercroft, and opens onto

a narrow chute continuing up to modern ground level: this is an unusually intact garderobe chute which probably served a garderobe at first-floor level. An off-centre opening in the apex of the vault of the rear bay is clearly original since the ashlar forming it are overlapped by mortar carrying the imprint of the vault centering. No parallel is known, but its worn appearance suggests that it was used as a hatch for raising or lowering goods. The undercroft is partly infilled with rubble, but the foundation offset is visible in the northeast corner, showing

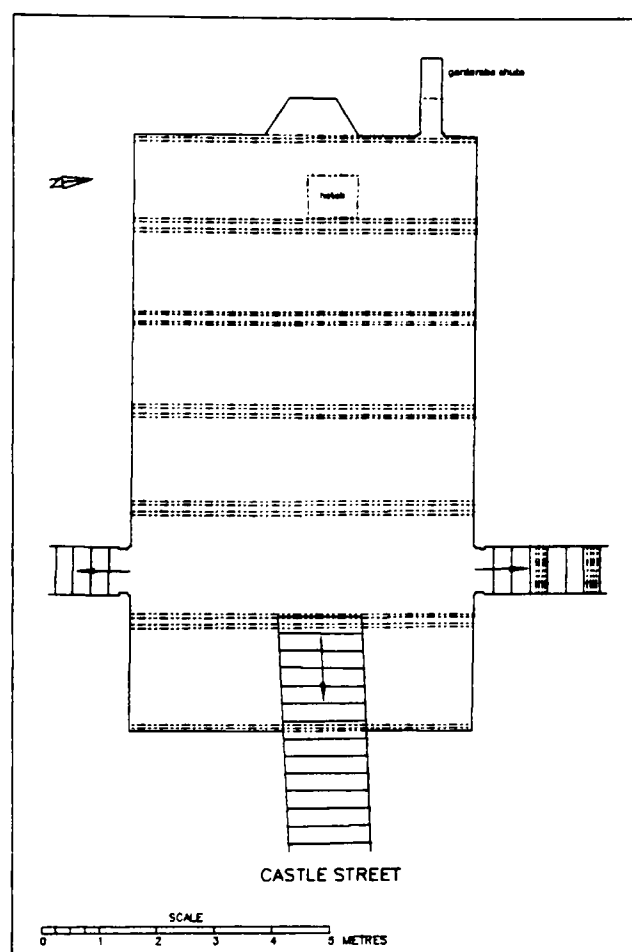


Fig. 204. Old Castle House, Castle Street, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

that the original floor was c.3.8m below the contemporary street level, and that the ground floor was c.930mm above the street.

125. Winchelsea: Yew Tree Plat, German Street. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft comprises a single bay of quadripartite rib vaulting, with an adjacent stairway. The vault ribs are chamfered and spring from moulded corbels. The front wall is the least intact and most probably contained a window. Access is via a doorway in the southwest corner that opens onto a staircase up to German Street: the separation of the stairs and the undercroft may be a development of the spur wall device.¹ A second, smaller, doorway at the bottom of the stairs opened to another undercroft or, more likely, an internal stair. The present street level is

¹ For discussion of spur walls, see pp. 163-80.

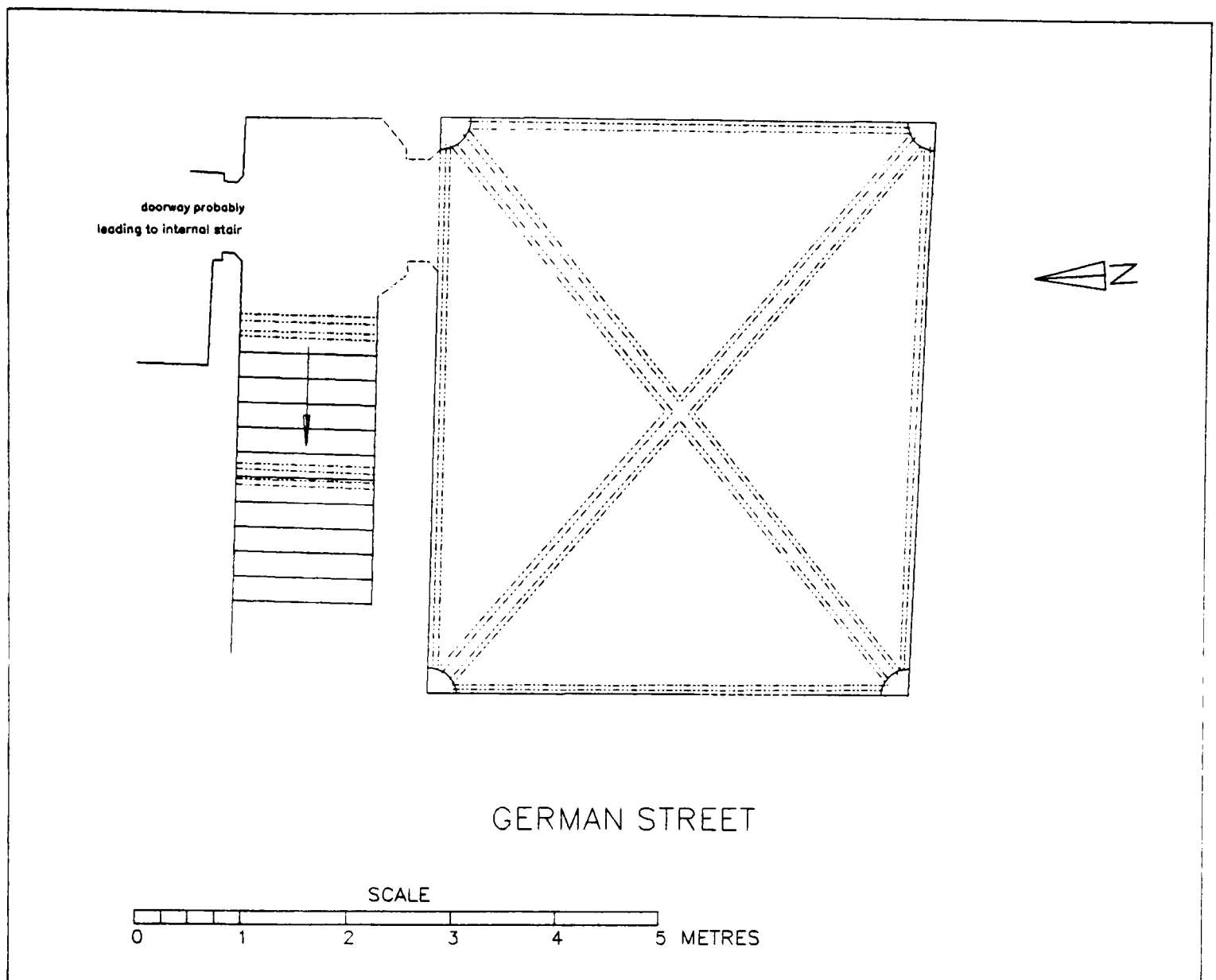


Fig. 205. Yew Tree Plat, German Street, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

c.3.4m above the undercroft floor, and the original ground floor was c.1m above the contemporary street level.

126. Winchelsea: Firebrand House, High Street. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft is oriented at right angles to the street and has a stone barrel vault of six bays: the bays are separated by chamfered ribs. The front of this undercroft is exceptionally well preserved and comprises a central stair with flanking windows. Stone handrails to the stair remain, although the roll moulding on top has been largely removed. The windows are blocked on the exterior so that apparently original ferramenta is still

visible. Both windows open into lightwells contained within the thickness of the front wall. Two rebated square cupboards are built into the under-stair space. At the rear, a smaller doorway now opens onto a stair that leads up to the house, but the adjacent large splayed window (blocked) shows that originally it opened to the plot to the rear of the house. Modern High Street is c.4.1m above the undercroft floor and the original ground floor was c.1.45 above the contemporary street level.

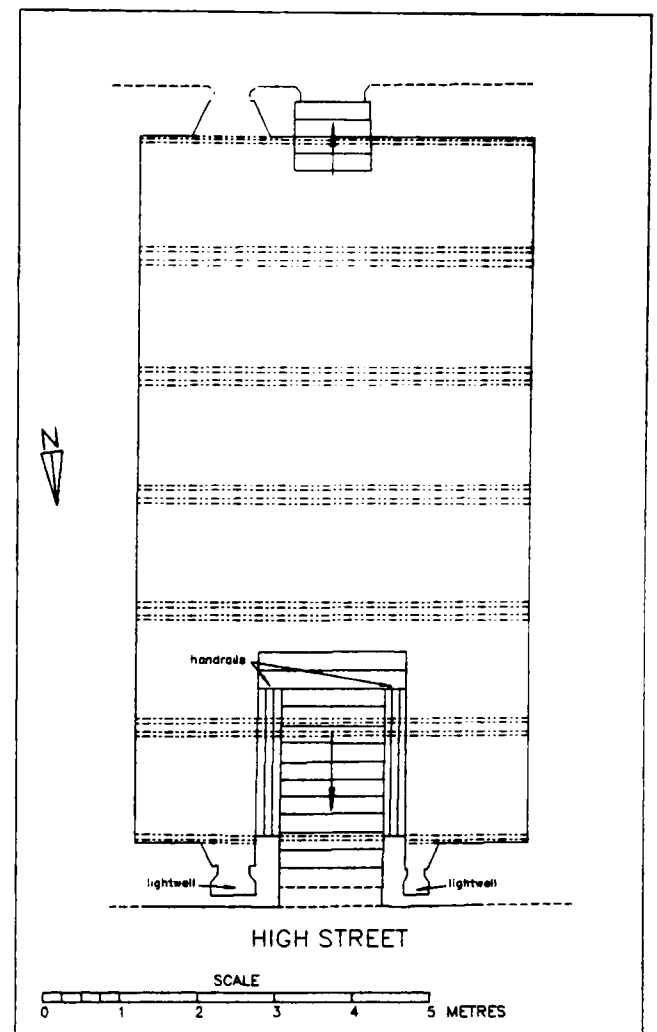


Fig. 206. Firebrand House, High Street, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

127. Winchelsea: The New Inn, German Street. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft vault has been destroyed but surviving springers of the hollow-chamfered ribs reveal that it formerly comprised four bays of quadripartite vaulting. Although The New Inn faces German Street, it is likely that the medieval building was accessed from the High Street, since the modern steps up to the street on this side appear to reuse the medieval entrance. This orientation differs from the other

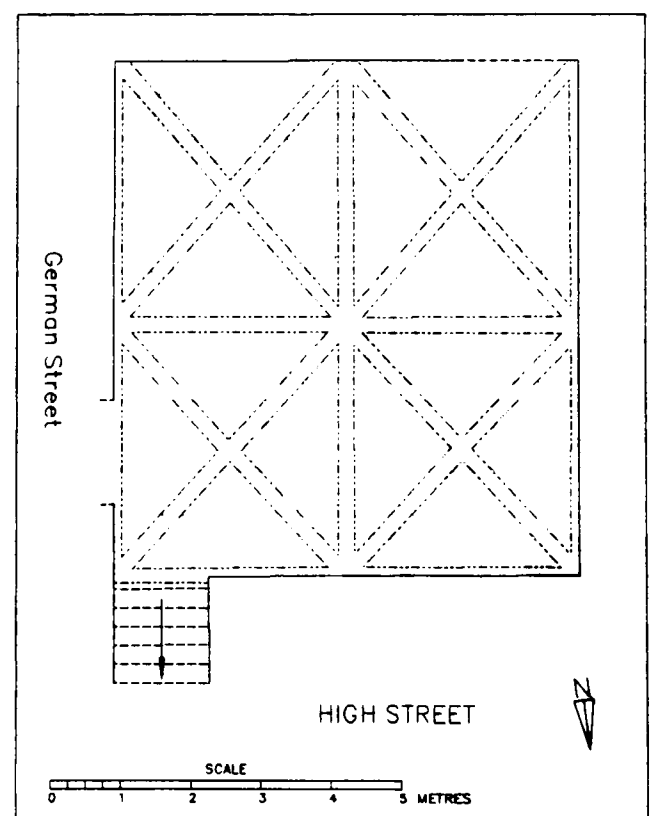


Fig. 207. The New Inn, German Street, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft showing reconstructed rib vault.

undercrofts on corner sites in Winchelsea - the entrance is normally on the north-south street. The present street level is c.3.6m above the probable level of the original undercroft floor, and the ground floor of c.1300 would have been c.1m above the contemporary street level.

128. Winchelsea: Bay Tree House, Hiham Green. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

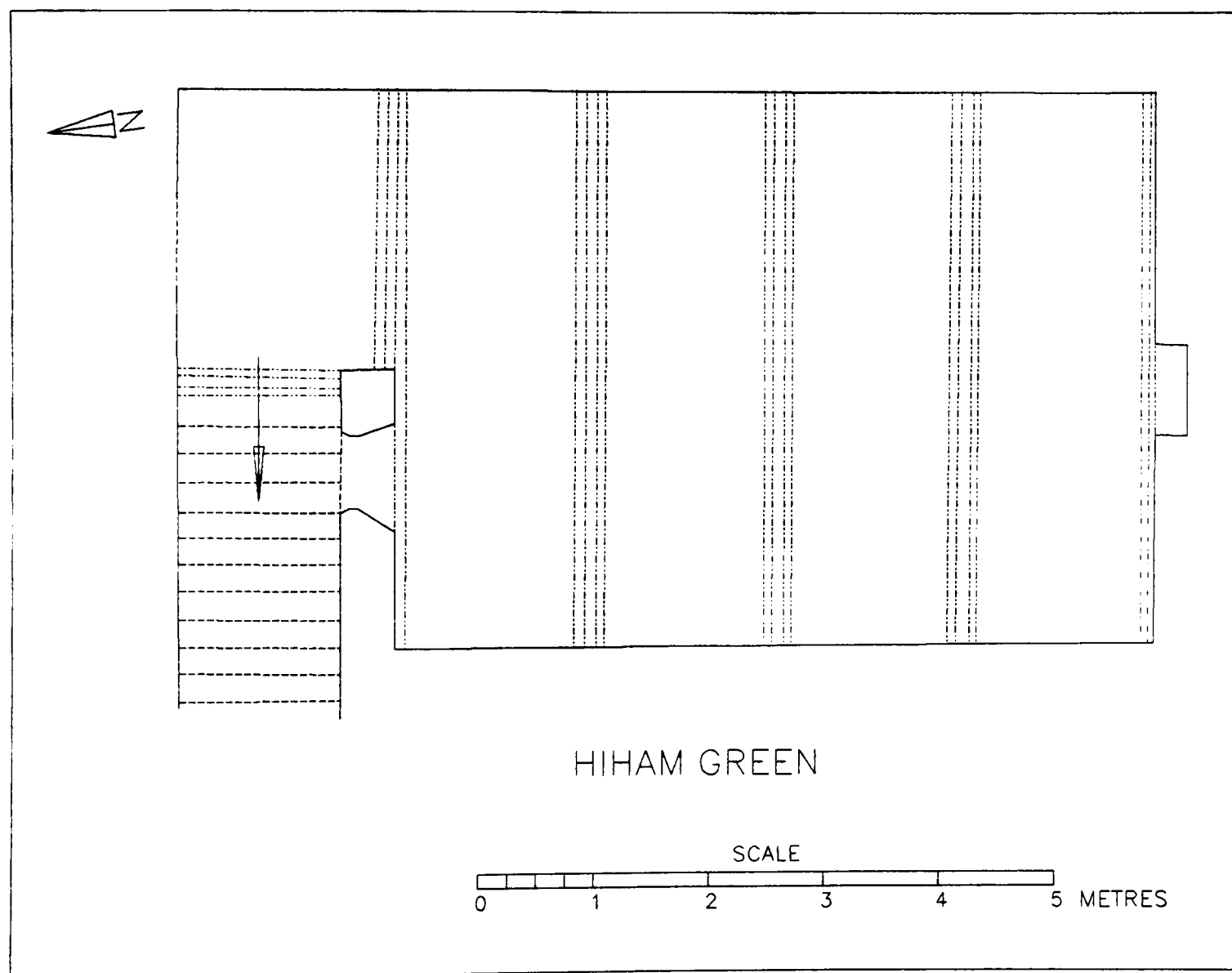


Fig. 208. Bay Tree House, Hiham Green, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

The undercroft lies parallel to Hiham Green and extends partly under the adjacent plot (Chapel Plat) to the north, from which it is entered. It has a barrel vault of five bays with chamfered ribs. At the northern end a spur wall flanks the entrance steps. The entrance is the only opening in the undercroft and the window in the spur wall must have been designed

to make best use of light from the doorway. Rubble and earth have obscured much of the undercroft, particularly in the area of the stair, and thus it is impossible to determine original internal and external levels. It is similar to other Winchelsea undercrofts, however, and probably projected c.1m above contemporary ground level.

129. Winchelsea: Cellar on the corner of Hiham Green and Mill Road. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft is oriented at right angles to Hiham Green: a surviving staircase reveals that it was entered from this side. It is located beneath the forecourt of three garages and is accessed via the original steps. The undercroft has a barrel vault of five bays marked by chamfered ribs. There are no windows or openings other than the doorway in the centre of the west wall. The lower part of the staircase vault survives. The floor of the undercroft is c.3.8m below modern Hiham Green and the original ground floor would have been c.900mm above contemporary street level.

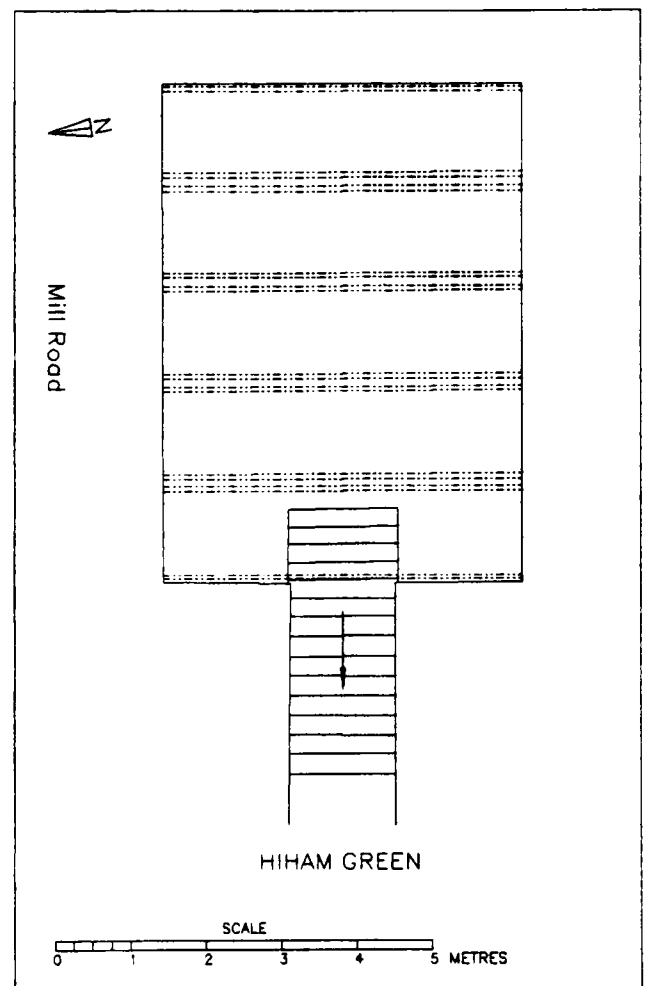


Fig. 209. Southeast corner of Hiham Green and Mill Road. Plan of undercroft below forecourt of garages.

130. Winchelsea: Five Chimneys, Mill Road/Barrack Square. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft is on the corner of Mill Road/Barrack Square and Castle Street, and, although now reached internally, formerly had its entrance to Castle Street. The undercroft has a barrel vault of four bays, with hollow chamfered ribs. Other than the doorway in the centre of the west wall there are no openings. A small projection of stonework in the northeast corner clearly butts the undercroft walls and has been inserted at a later date. The floor of the undercroft is c.3.9m below modern Castle Street, and the original ground floor was c.1.3m above the contemporary street level.

131. Winchelsea: Line's End, Mill Road. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft is oriented at right angles to the street and comprises a barrel vault of six bays. Plain chamfered ribs mark the bays. The steps down from the street are against the east wall of the undercroft and are

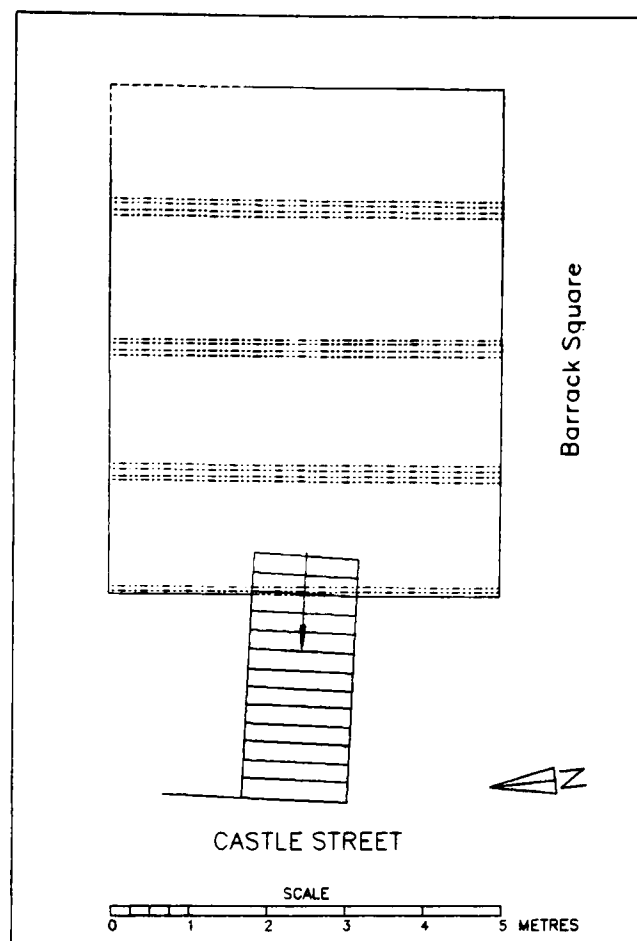


Fig. 210. Five Chimneys, Mill Road, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

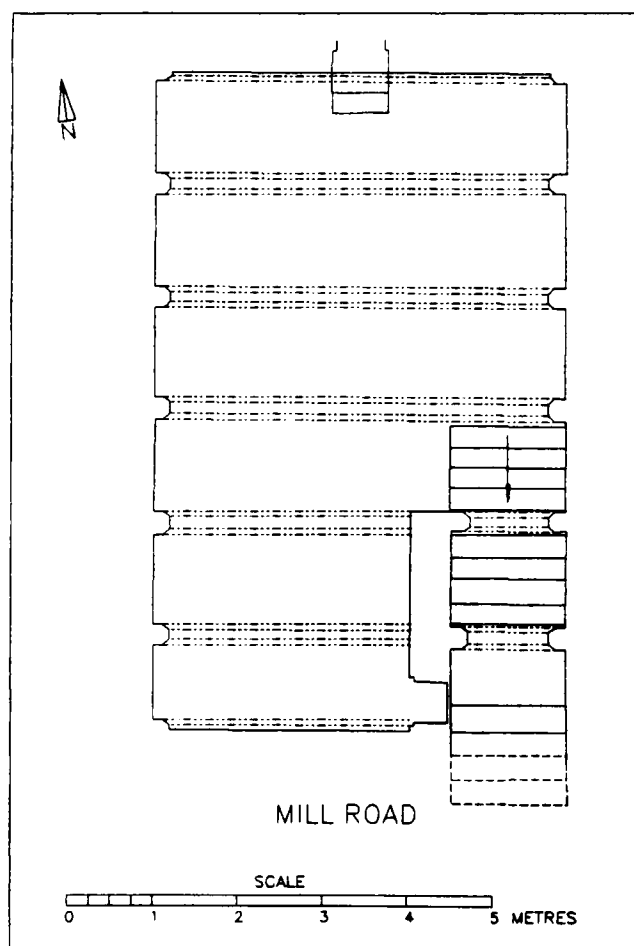


Fig. 211. Line's End, Mill Road, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

flanked on the western side by a spur wall. This contains a rebated cupboard with a two-centred head. At the rear, a blocked doorway formerly led to a second undercroft or to steps. The original ground floor is likely to have been c.1m above the contemporary street level.

132. Winchelsea: 2 and 3 Salutation Cottages, Mill Road. A surviving undercroft of the early fourteenth century, below the building formerly known as the Salutation Inn.

The undercroft is one of the more sophisticated examples in Winchelsea in that it has a quadripartite rib vault of three bays, finely carved corbels, an elaborate doorway on Castle Street, and steps with stone handrails. The latter are of similar profile to those at Firebrand House, High Street, but are in an even more mutilated state: only the ends of the handrails survive at the junction with the front wall. At the western end there is second doorway with a two-centred arch, which is blocked. To either side of the doorway are pairs of rebated cupboards, again with two-centred arches. Allowing for the fact that the head of the eastern doorway probably rose above the floor of the ground storey, it would appear that the latter was at least c.1.5m above the fourteenth-century street level.

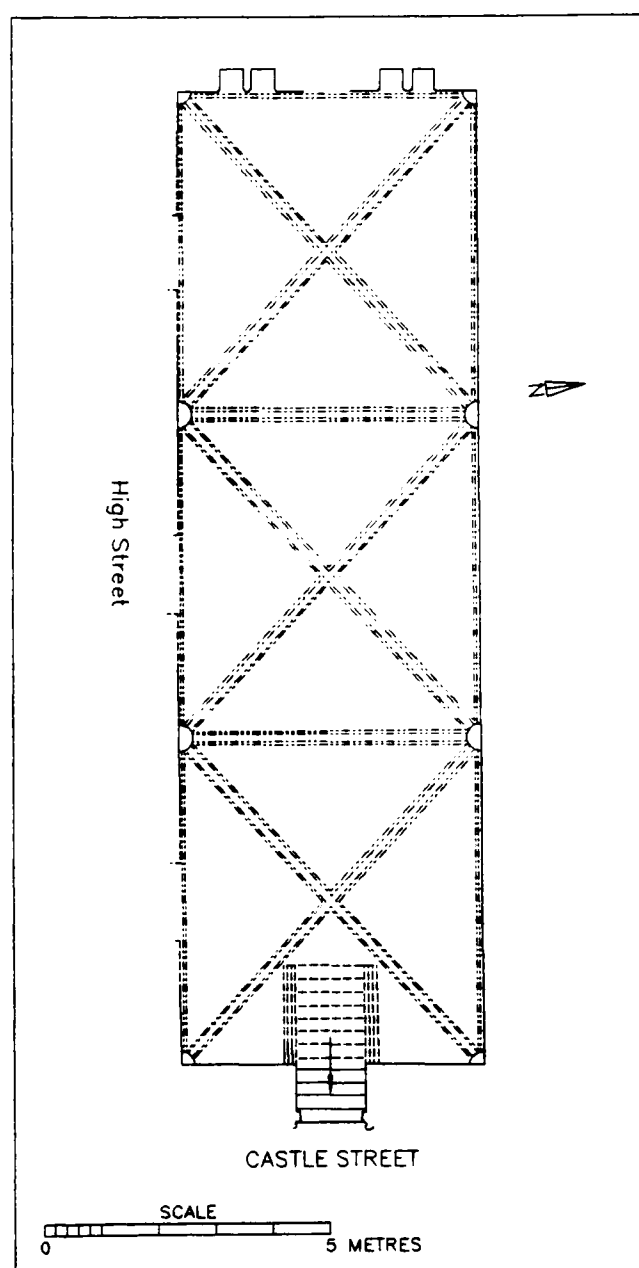


Fig. 212. 2-3 Salutation Cottages, Mill Road, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

133. Winchelsea: Manna Plat, Mill Road. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft is on a corner plot and the steps up to its original entrance in School Hill survive in part. It is oriented at right angles to School Hill and has a barrel vault of six bays, with chamfered ribs. The doorway to the steps is in the centre of the west wall, and there is a cupboard with a two-centred arch in the centre of the east wall: the cupboard is rebated and has a groove for a shelf. There is a single window or air vent in the south wall. The floor of the undercroft is c.4.2m below modern School Hill and the original ground floor was c.800mm above contemporary street level.

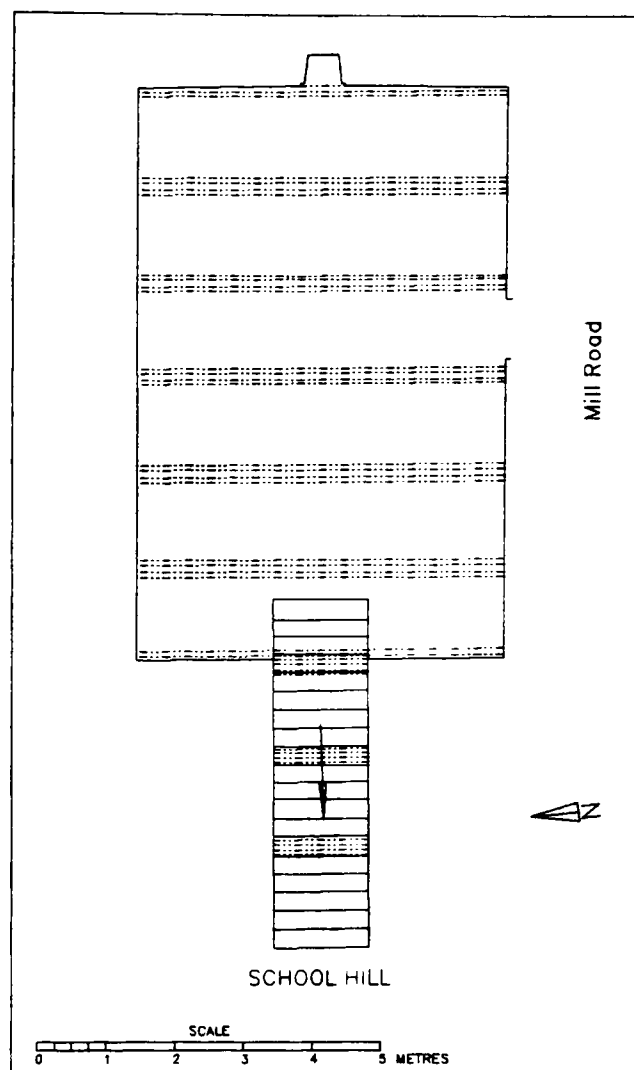


Fig. 213. Manna Plat, Mill Road, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

134. Winchelsea: The Mill Farmhouse and Mill House, Mill Road. A surviving undercroft of c.1300 below The Mill Farmhouse, but belonging to and entered via Mill House.

The undercroft is oriented parallel to Mill Road and comprises one and half bays of quadripartite vaulting. The eastern half bay of the vault has one diagonal rib missing as an original feature; there are no springers for it. The site of original but lost steps up to the street is flanked by a spur wall. A modern fireplace and brick lining of a boiler room obscure both sides of a window in the spur wall that was recorded in detail by

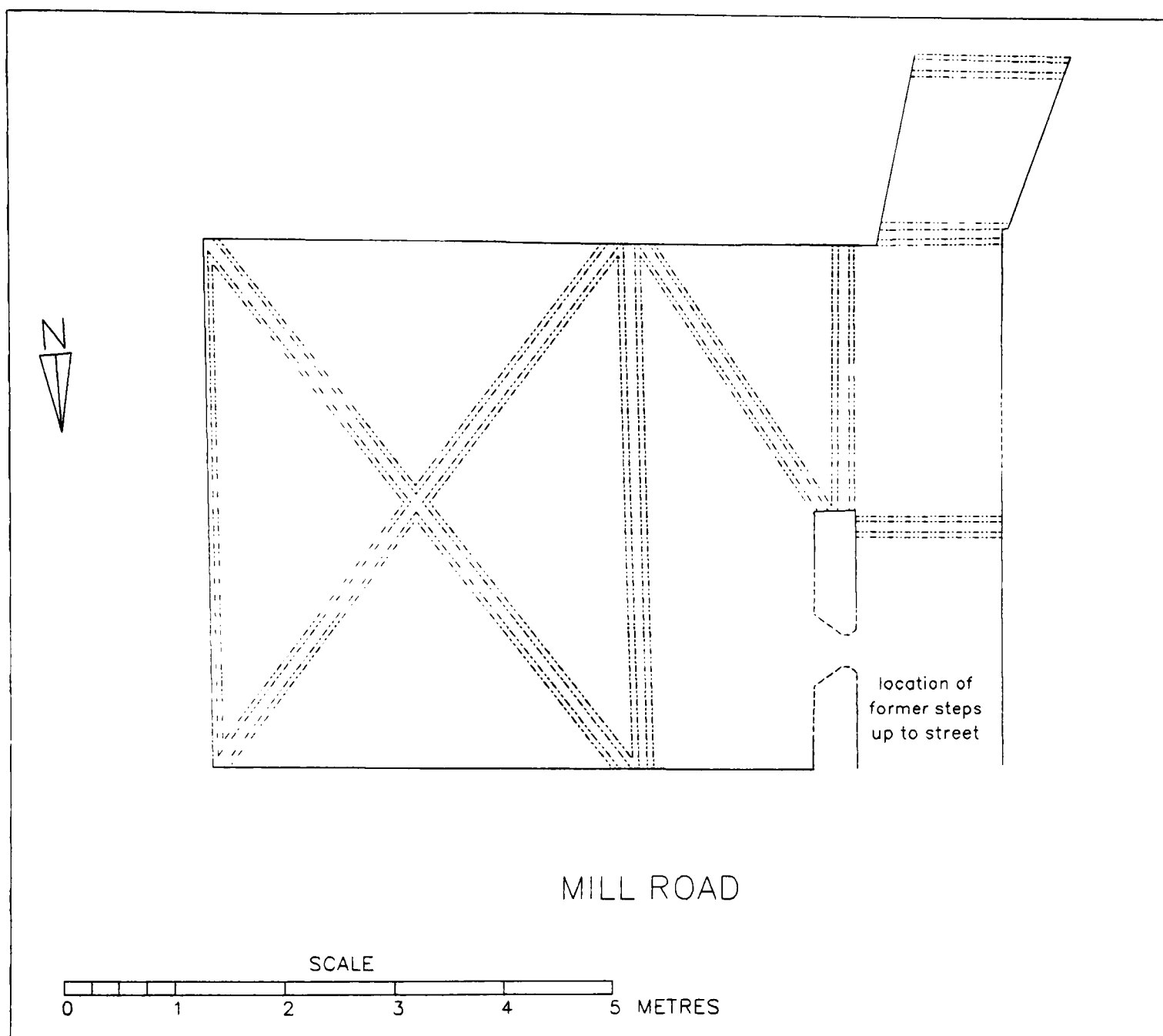


Fig. 214. The Mill Farmhouse/Mill House, Mill Lane, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft, showing window recorded by Homan.

Homan in the 1940s.¹ As in other Winchelsea examples, the window was probably intended to help spread light from the doorway as there are no other windows. Opposite the stair is another doorway and short passage, blocked at the northern end and at a slight skew: the function is unclear but, as its vault slopes, it is most likely to have opened onto an internal stair. In view of the loss of the stairs and the uncertainty of medieval ground levels in this area it is difficult to estimate the relationship of the

¹ W. Maclean Homan, unpublished survey in East Sussex Record Office; Ref. AMS 2420.

undercroft to medieval street level, but it is likely to have been almost wholly subterranean, as found elsewhere in Winchelsea.

135. Winchelsea: New Cottage, Mill Road. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft is under the front garden of the modern house and is oriented at right angles to the street. It has a barrel vault of six bays, with hollow chamfered ribs. There are no openings other than that in the centre of the front (north) wall which contains a modern stair: a vertical joint in the stonework to the west of the doorway reveals the width of the medieval steps. The floor of the undercroft is c.4.1m below modern Mill Road and the original ground floor was probably in the order of c.800mm above the contemporary street level.

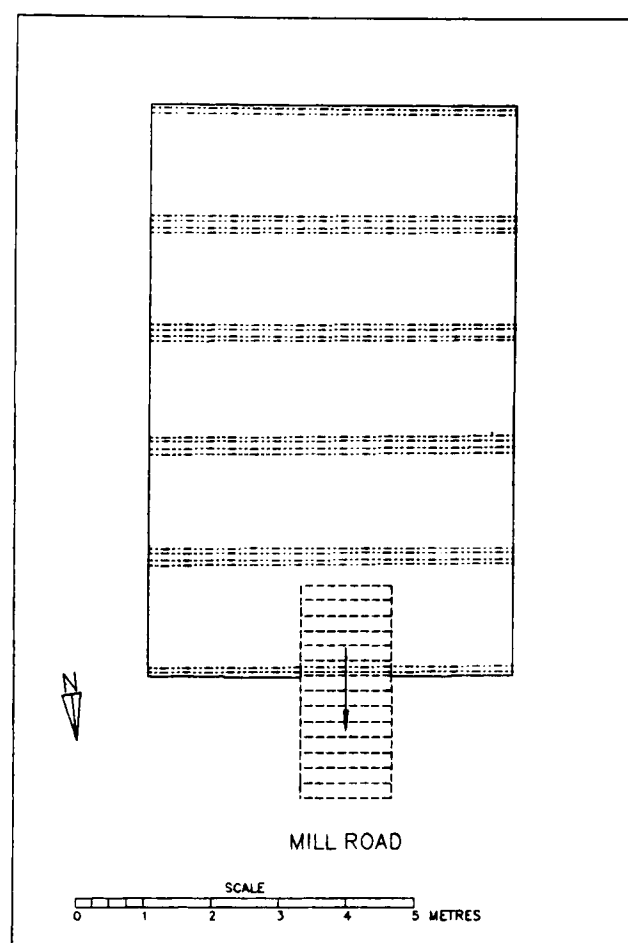


Fig. 215. New Cottage, Mill Road, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

136. Winchelsea: 1 & 2 The Five Houses, North Street. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.¹

The undercroft is oriented parallel to North Street and extends under No. 1 and part of No. 2: the medieval entrance is under No. 1. The steps up to this entrance are flanked by a spur wall. The undercroft has a barrel

¹ Not to be confused with undercrofts below 2 and 3 The Five Houses, North Street, or that below 4 and 5 The Five Houses, School Hill.

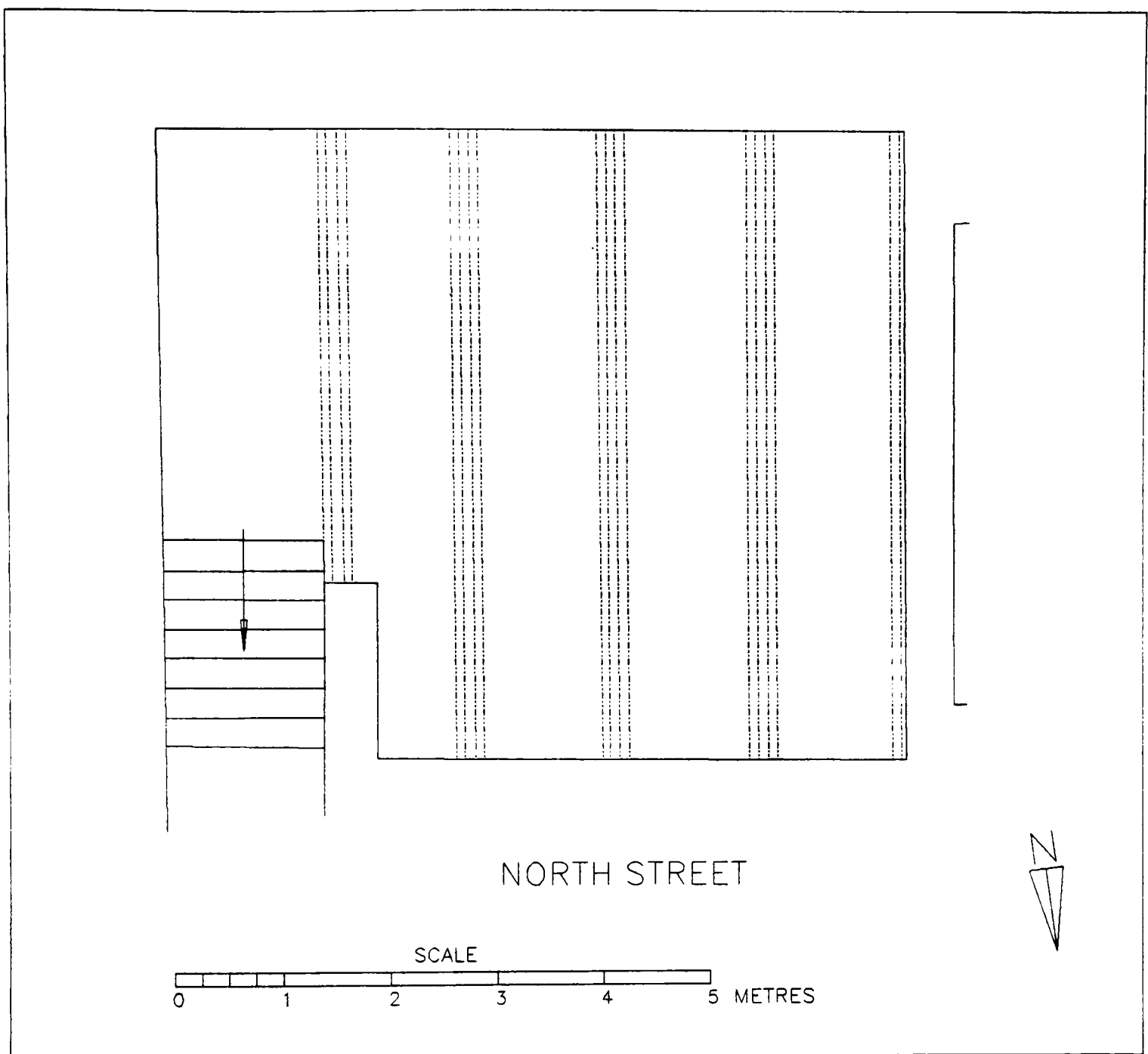


Fig. 216. 1 & 2 The Five Houses, North Street, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

vault of five bays, with hollow chamfered ribs. The floor of the undercroft is c.3.1m below modern North Street and the original ground floor would have been fairly high at c.1.9m above the contemporary street.

137. Winchelsea: 2 & 3 The Five Houses, North Street.¹ A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft is oriented parallel to North Street and is below No. 3 and part of No. 2: it is now entered via No. 3. There is no medieval

¹ Not to be confused with the undercrofts below 1 and 2 The Five Houses, North Street, or that below 4 and 5 The Five Houses, School Hill.

entrance on the north side, however, or the intact east and south walls, so the original doorway must have been in the central area of the west wall where there is no c.1300 masonry, and thus faced School Hill. The undercroft has a barrel vault of five bays, with chamfered ribs. There are no windows, cupboards, or other features. The floor of the undercroft is c.3.8m below modern North Street, and the original ground floor would have been c.1m above the contemporary street level.

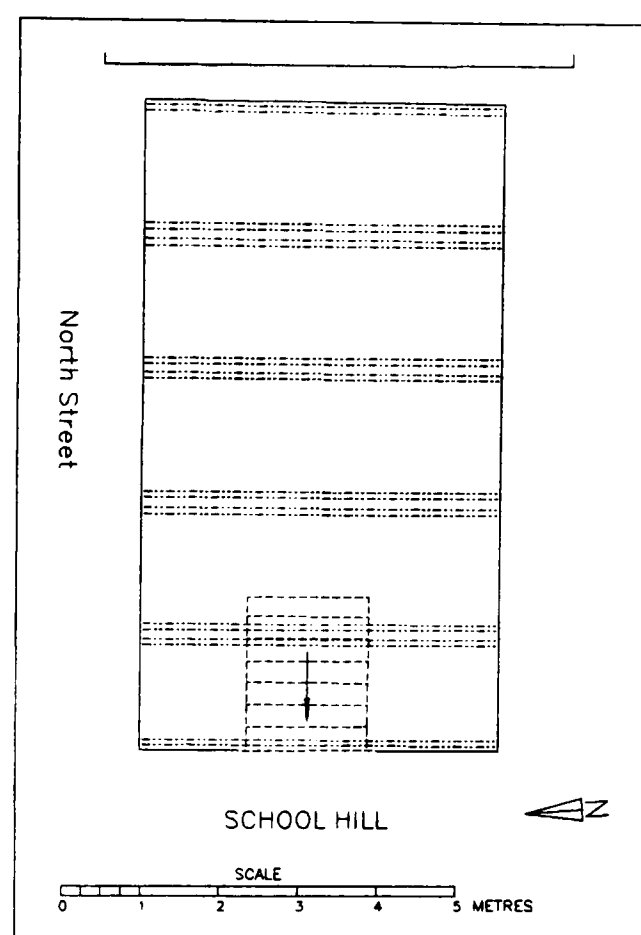


Fig. 217. 2 & 3 The Five Houses, North Street, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

138. Winchelsea: 2 Pipewell Cottages, North Street. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft is listed by English Heritage as being below the green in front of Pipewell Cottages, but is wholly under No. 2, and thus parallel to, but set back from, the modern position of North Street. It is on a line consistent with the adjacent undercrofts at 1 and 2 Moneysellers, and confirms that the alignment of North Street has been altered. The almost square undercroft has a barrel vault of four bays, with hollow chamfered ribs. The entrance opens onto steps flanked by a spur wall, and there are cupboards in the north and south walls. At the eastern end, the floor of the undercroft is c.3.3m below the modern ground surface, and the original ground floor probably would have been c.1.4m above the contemporary street level.

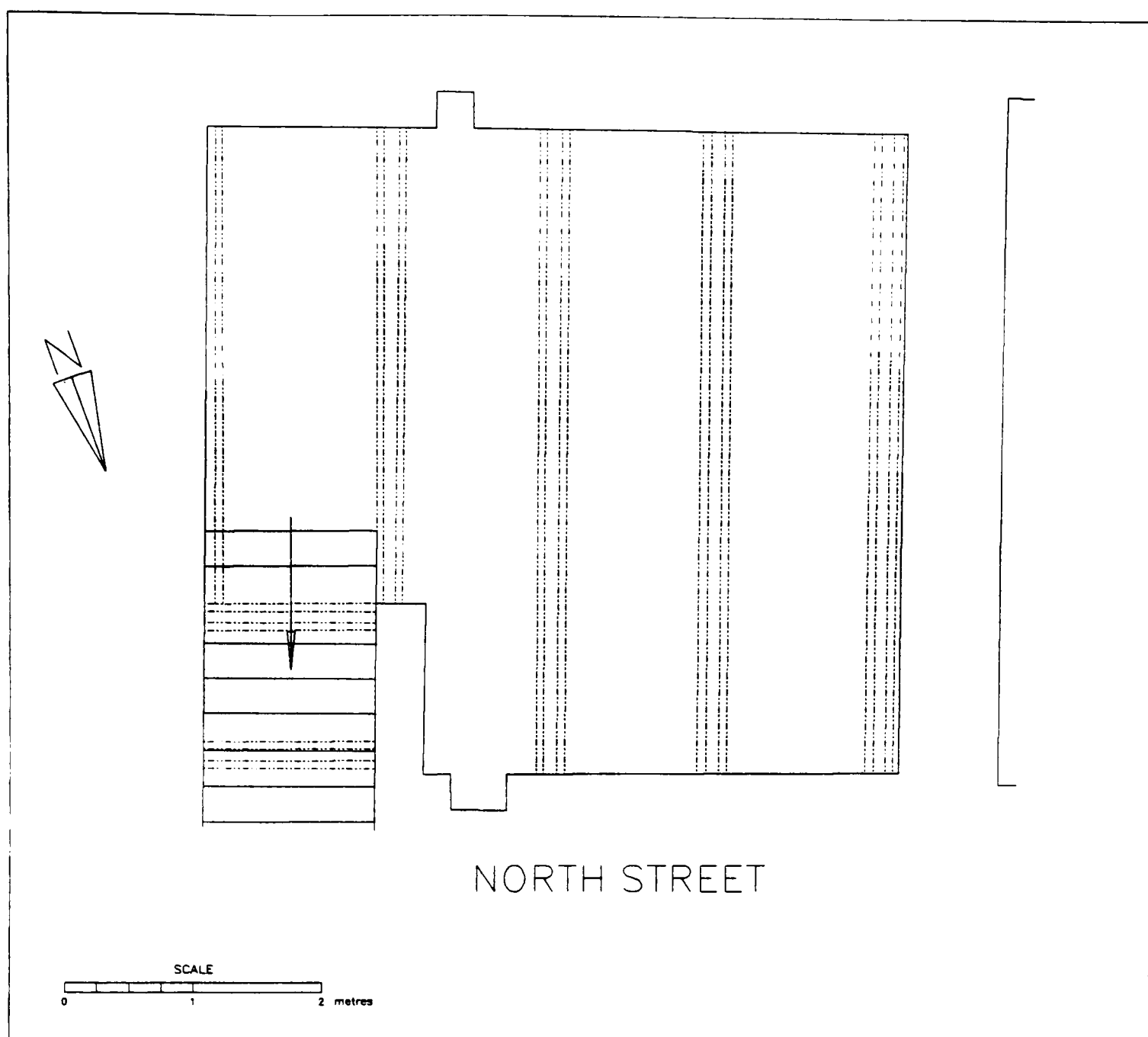


Fig. 218. 2 Pipewell Cottages, North Street, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

139. Winchelsea: 1 and 2 Moneysellers, North Street. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

A large undercroft parallel to, but set well back from, modern North Street on what appears to be the medieval line - the adjacent undercroft is similarly aligned (see above). The undercroft now comprises eight bays of a barrel vault, with chamfered ribs, but the odd relationship between the western rib and the west wall suggests that the undercroft extended further in that direction. Furthermore the two former openings in the front (north) wall do not appear to have been entrances, and the possible

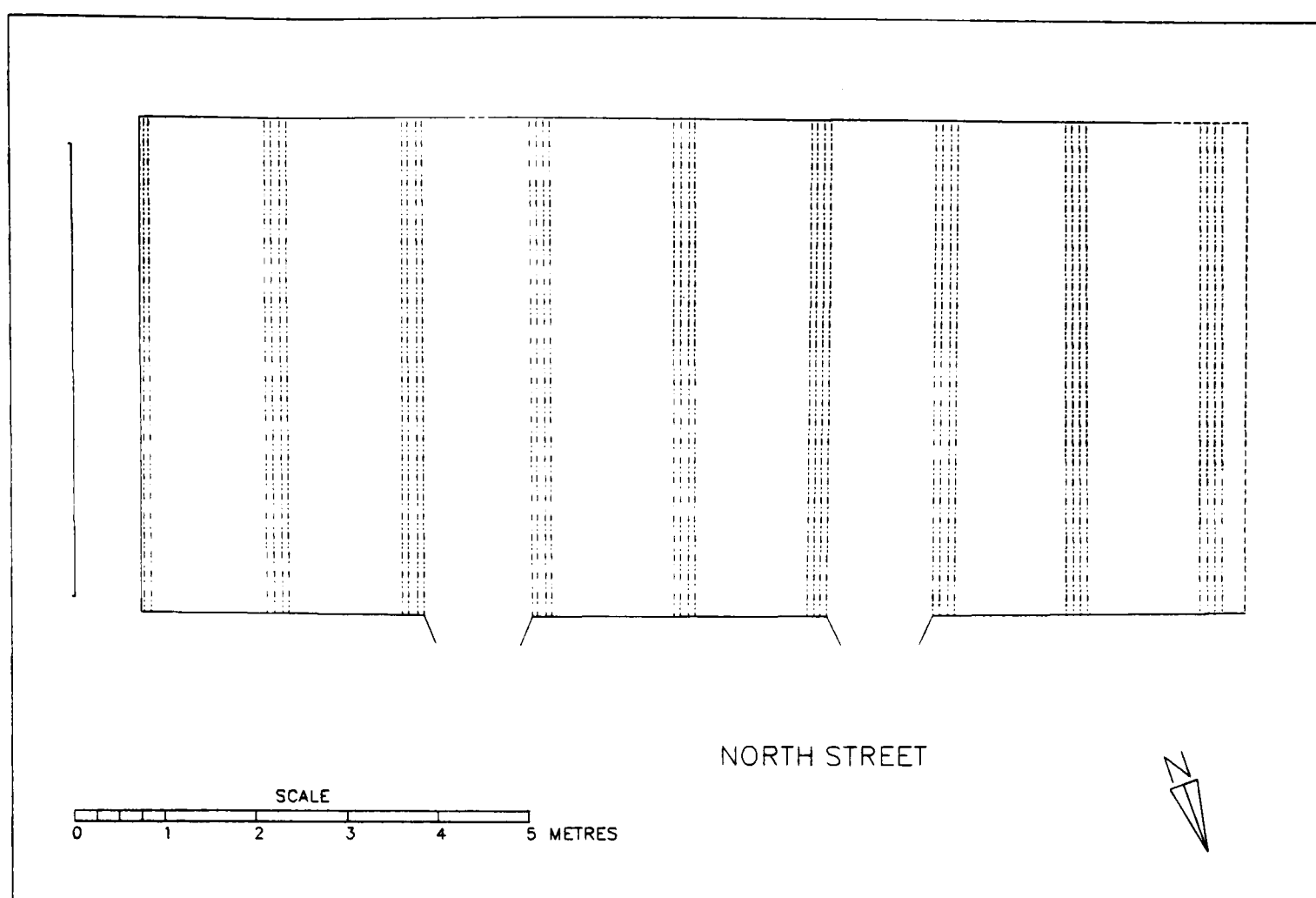


Fig. 219. 1 & 2 Moneysellers, North Street, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft showing present westwards limit that probably falls short of the original west wall.

lost western part of the undercroft could have contained stairs up to the street. The floor level of the undercroft is only just below the springing of the vault and has probably been raised *c.*750mm, placing the reconstructed floor *c.*4.8m below the modern ground surface next to the present entrance at the rear of No. 2. The ground level at the adjacent property suggests that the original ground floor of this building would have been *c.*1.3m above the contemporary street.

140. Winchelsea: Black Friars Plat, Rectory Lane. A surviving undercroft of *c.*1300.

The undercroft is oriented at right angles to the street and has a barrel vault of six bays, with chamfered ribs. There are two lights or vents in the vault on the north side that suggest that there was no conjoining

building, at least when the building was erected. The west wall has a central doorway leading to a well preserved vaulted staircase up to the street. To the north of the foot of the steps, there is a rebated cupboard with a two-centred arch and a groove for a shelf. The floor of the undercroft is c.5.1m below modern Rectory Lane and the original ground floor would have been only c.500mm above the contemporary street level.

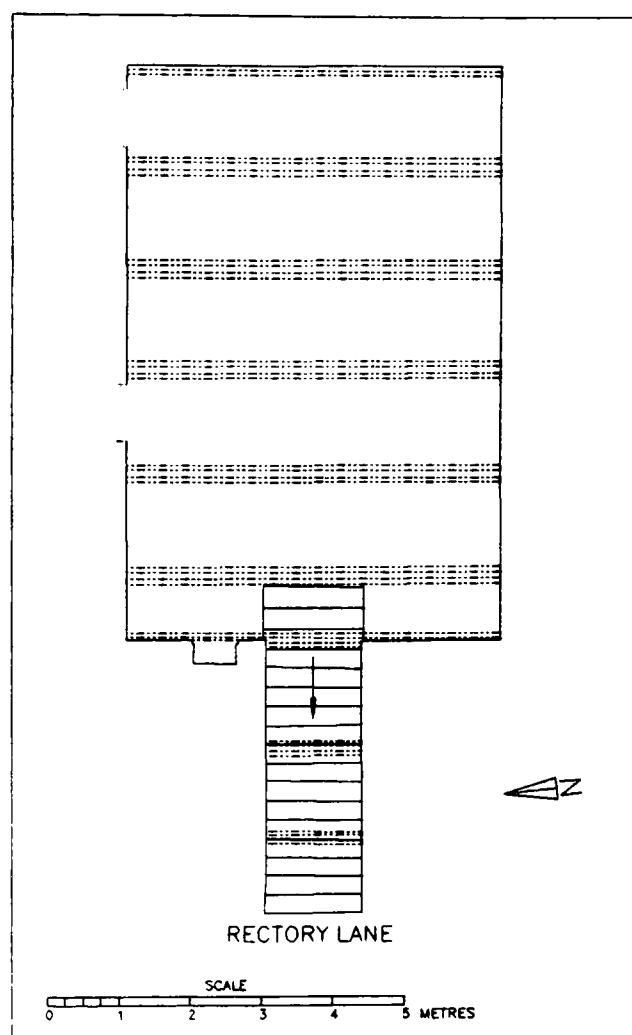


Fig. 220. Black Friars Plat, Rectory Lane, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

141. Winchelsea: Hiham Mews, Robert's Hill. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft comprises two parts of identical dimensions lying parallel to the street. Each half has a barrel vault divided into three bays by chamfered ribs. There are windows in the front wall in both parts that open into lightwells within the thickness of the wall. The northern part has stairs up to the street, with a flanking spur wall that contains a window. There is a cupboard in the east wall of the northern part of the undercroft, and Homan records a second cupboard below the window in the west wall,¹ although this is below the rubble with which this undercroft partly filled. The doorway connecting the two halves is rebated on the southern side. Modern Robert's Hill is c.3.6m above the floor of the

¹ W.M. Homan, AMS 2431.

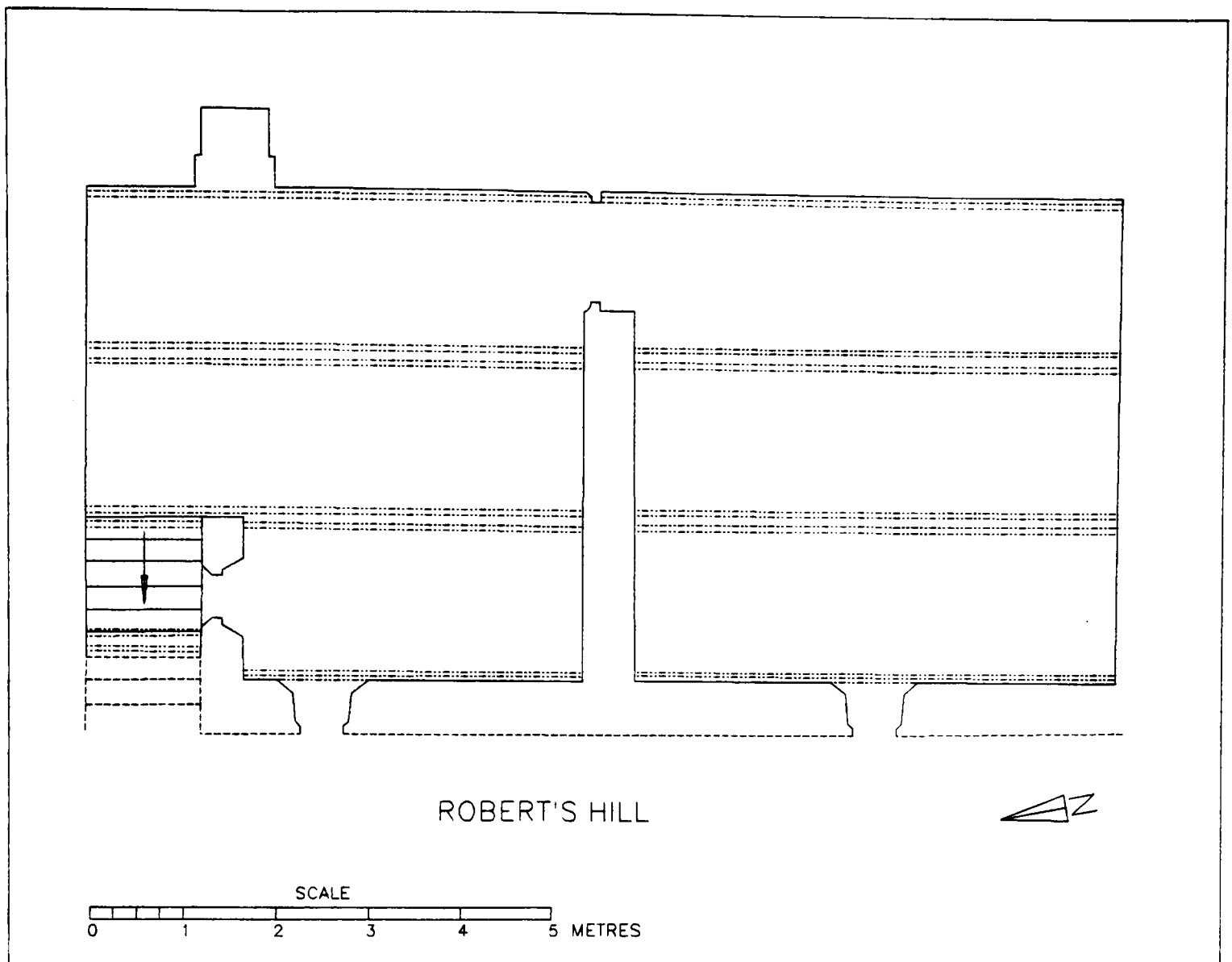


Fig. 221. Hiham Mews, Robert's Hill, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

undercroft, and the original ground floor would have been c.1.3m above the contemporary street level.

142. Winchelsea: Rookery Cottage, Rookery Lane. A surviving, but inaccessible, undercroft dating from c.1300.

The undercroft entrance was blocked when Homan undertook his survey, was opened in 1962, and blocked off again in 1963: during this period it was measured by H. and M.R. Lovegrove, who also wrote a report.¹ The undercroft is oriented at right angles to the street, has a pointed barrel vault with ribs, and has a spur wall with a window next to the steps to the street. The staircase to the street is well-preserved and has an intact

¹ Their archive is in the possession of the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. D.S. Allison.

barrel vault. In 1962-3 the top step visible was slightly back from the street frontage and 2.39m below the stair vault and, thus, it is likely that the original threshold was a step or two higher, making the medieval threshold c.1.5m below modern street level. Ducts recorded in the front and rear walls by the Lovegroves appear to be windows with lightwells contained within the walls in the usual Winchelsea manner.

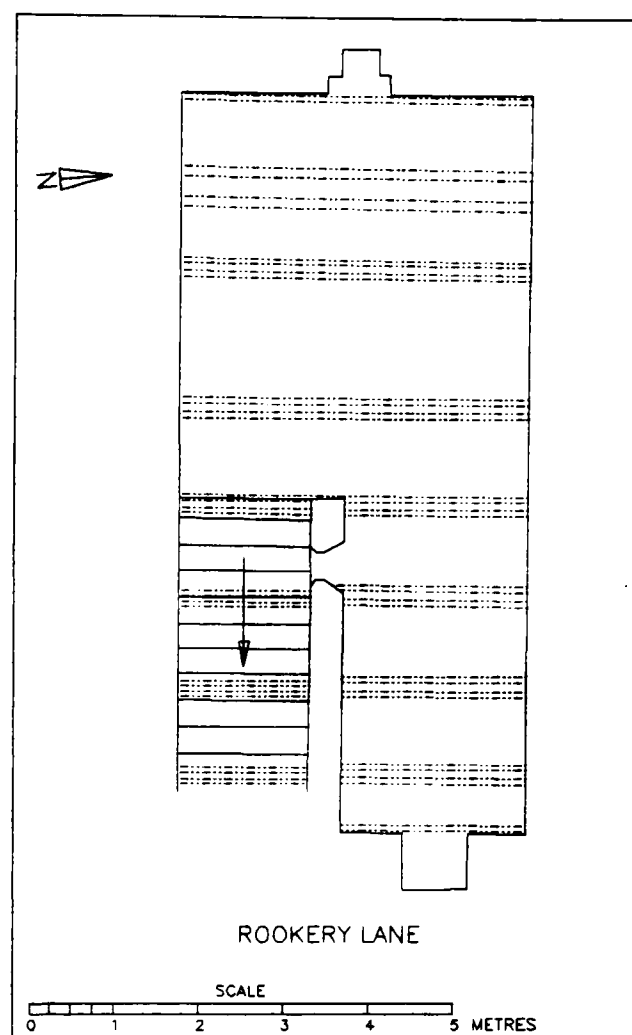


Fig. 222. Rookery Cottage, Rookery Lane, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

143. Winchelsea: 4 and 5 The Five Houses, School Hill. A surviving undercroft of c.1300.

The undercroft is oriented at right angles to the street and has a six bay barrel vault, with hollow chamfered ribs. The front wall is largely of modern brick and thus the original entrance does not survive. A part of the splay of a window does remain, however, indicating that the doorway and stairs were located towards the north. The floor of the undercroft is c.2.8m below modern School Hill and, accepting an average rise of 1.2m in street levels in Winchelsea since

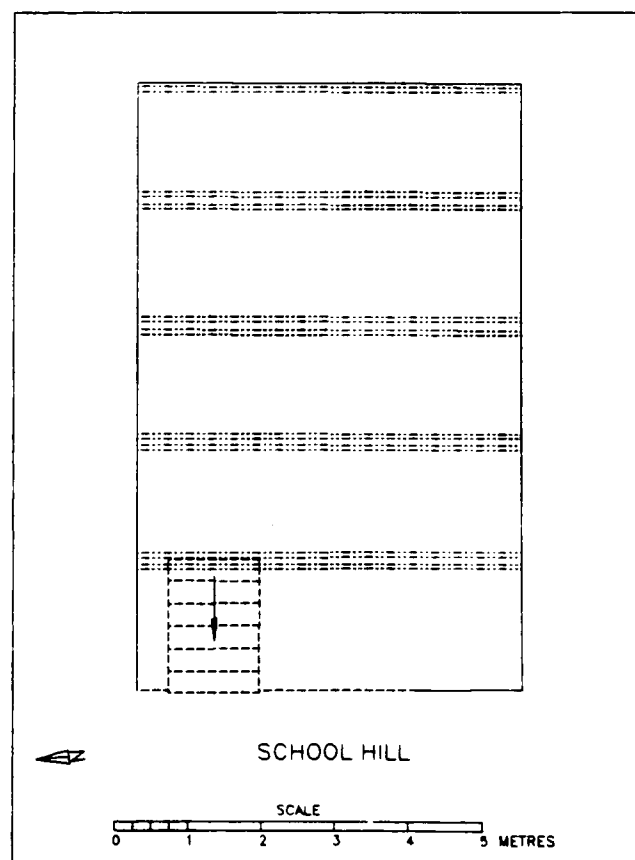


Fig. 223. 4 & 5 The Five Houses, School Hill, Winchelsea. Plan of undercroft.

c.1300, the original ground floor would have been c.2m above contemporary street level.

WINCHESTER

144. Winchester: Dorking, Tower Street. A twelfth-century two-storey chamber block and adjacent chapel that were discovered during excavation of this urban manor-like property. See Chapter 1 for discussion and plan (pp. 20-3).

145. Winchester: 24 St Thomas Street. A surviving twelfth-century groin-vaulted undercroft, from a chamber block at the rear of tenement. See Chapter 1 for discussion and plan (pp. 29-30).

146. Winchester: House I, Lower Brook Street (formerly Tanner Street). A twelfth-century undercroft excavated in 1962, and oriented at right angles to the street. See Chapter 1 for discussion and plan (pp. 26-7).

147. Winchester: Tenement 380, BS89 Middle Brook Street (formerly Wongar Street). A partly subterranean undercroft located behind a streetfront range, and which dates from the twelfth century. See Chapter 1 for discussion and plan (pp. 27-9).

148. Winchester: Room 11152, Building F5347, Upper Brook Street.¹ An undercroft dating from the late thirteenth century, excavated in 1987.²

¹ Information regarding this building was derived from the archive held by Winchester Museums Service.

² Archive held by Winchester Museums Service: details regarding the date of the building are pers. comm. Graham Scobie.

The undercroft was located at the southern end of a property identified in Keene's gazetteer as tenement 365-6.¹ It was more substantially built than the rest of the property and may have been the only part with a stone superstructure. The undercroft was oriented at right angles to and directly on Middle Brook Street, and was sunk c.550mm below the contemporary street level. Unfortunately the expected doorway to the street was not discovered since the limit of the excavation fell short of the streetfront. A doorway in the rear wall,

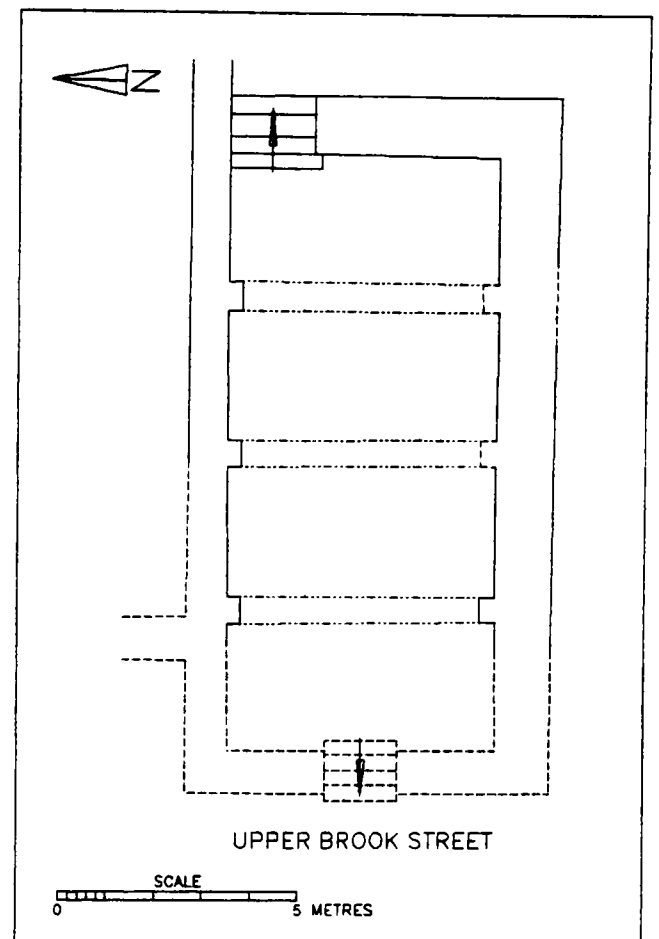


Fig. 224. Room 11152, Building F5347, Upper Brook Street, Winchester. Plan of undercroft.

however, was located. Responds divided the undercroft into four bays and, in view of their close spacing, suggest that there was a ribbed barrel vault. In the mid fourteenth century, the floor of the undercroft was raised to the level of the street.

149. Winchester: 35 High Street (the Pentice). A partly surviving timber-framed townhouse dating from the fourteenth century, and located within the Pentice. See Chapter 3 for discussion and illustrations (pp. 192-5).

150. Winchester: 41 High Street (the Pentice) - 'Helle'. A surviving undercroft tentatively dated to the fourteenth century, and which extends under the arcaded walkway of the Pentice. See Chapter 3 for discussion and plan (pp. 196-7).

¹ WS 2, pp. 712-13.

151. Winchester: 63 High Street. A surviving though mutilated late thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century undercroft.

The undercroft is of a rectangular plan with surviving fragments of a segmental chalk barrel-vault. The vault is best preserved on the western side, and springs above a chamfered stringcourse. Some evidence remains of a central entrance in the front wall in the form of the eastern ends of three steps, later mostly destroyed by the insertion of a chute. No signs remain of flanking windows, but the wall at this level is not medieval. The problems of access in its present state mean that it is difficult to

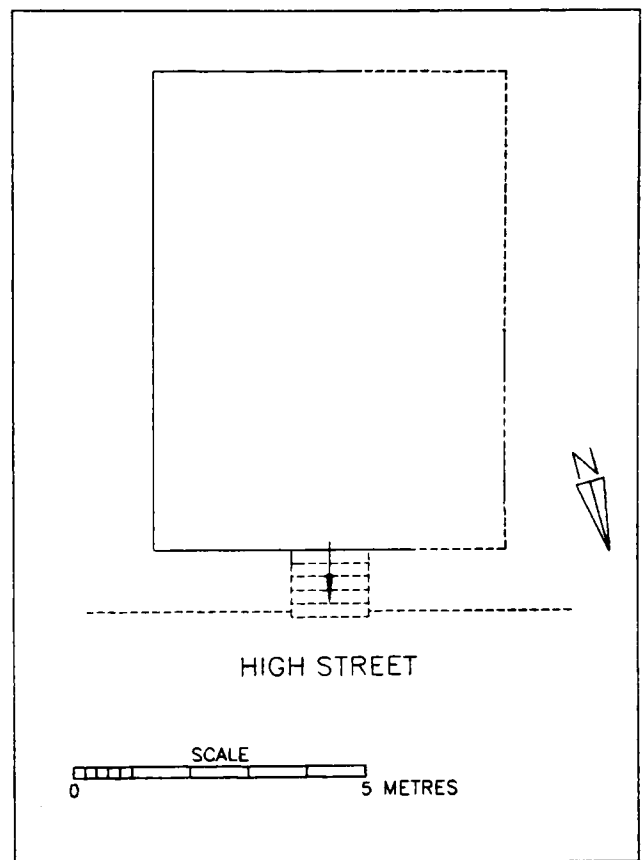


Fig. 225. 63 High Street, Winchester. Plan of undercroft.

discern whether the rear and the east wall are coeval: it is possible that the undercroft originally extended further southwards.

Documentary research by Keene has identified that this property was in Skinners' Row in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, and that it contained a shop in 1314-15.¹

152. Winchester: site SQ 88, 31a-b The Square. An undercroft dating from the thirteenth or fourteenth century discovered by excavation in 1988.²

The undercroft was set a maximum of c.66m back from the frontage of 29 High Street and not at the rear of Keene's tenement 150, as Steve Teague

¹ WS 2, 619.

² Fig. 226 was prepared from the site archive at Winchester Museums Service (site SQ 88).

suggests,¹ but at the rear of the adjacent Woolseid.² The undercroft is oriented at right angles to the High Street and The Square. A doorway at the south end of the undercroft may indicate that it fronted onto The Square rather than that it fulfilled a domestic function at the rear of the Woolseid: a market was established on the cathedral cemetery in the area of The Square during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the southern frontage would have been valuable.³

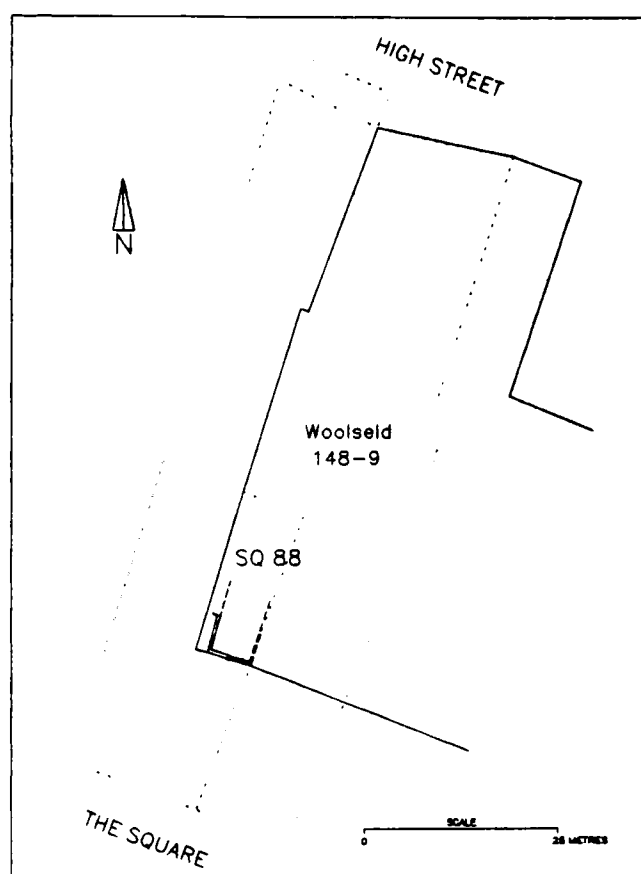


Fig. 226. Site SQ88, 31a-b The Square, Winchester. Plan of undercroft shown with property boundaries of late nineteenth century (dotted line) and c.1300 (solid line).

153. Winchester: The Vine, 8 Great Minster Street. A surviving undercroft which dates the first half of the fourteenth century, and which can be identified as a tavern. For discussion and a plan of the structure see Chapter 4 (pp. 234-6).

154. Winchester: Site SXS 79, Sussex Street. A townhouse dating from the late twelfth to early thirteenth centuries, discovered during excavations in 1979.

Two structures were located only approximately at right angles to Sussex Street, and were set back from the modern frontage by c.12m. The undercroft (Building 2) was sunk c.1.6m below the contemporary ground

¹ S. Teague, 'Archaeological Excavations at The Square, 1988', *Winchester Museums Service Newsletter* 3 (1989), p. 5.

² *WS* 2, pp. 554-5.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 579-80.

level. A wider section of the robbed wall in the southeast corner may mark the location of steps. The building was demolished in the late thirteenth century. Excavated debris indicates that the building was roofed with slate, stone-built, at least partly glazed, and was plastered. Unfortunately, it appears that there was no evidence to show whether the undercroft was stone vaulted or timber ceiled. To the south, a ground-level structure (Building 1) abutted Building 2, and appears to have been timber framed and contemporary with the undercroft.

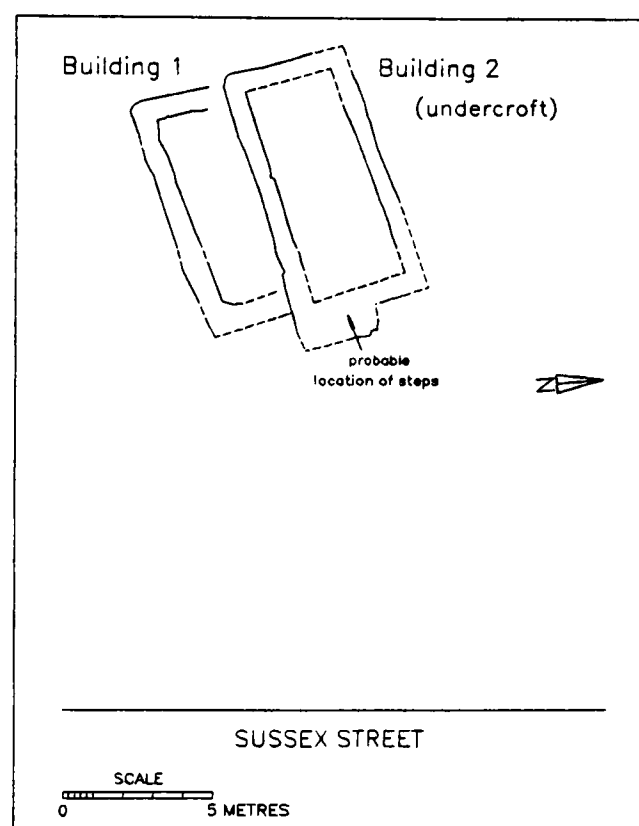


Fig. 227. 79 Sussex Street, Winchester. Plan of undercroft (Building 2) and adjacent ground-level structure (Building 1).

WORCESTER

155. Worcester: 84-5 High Street. A twelfth-century undercroft c.15m back from the High Street that was demolished and excavated in 1991. See Chapter 1 for discussion and plan (pp. 34-5).

156. Worcester: Site 7, Crowngate, Deansway. A sandstone building excavated in 1991-2, probably at right angles to Deansway (formerly Birdport) and dating from the twelfth century.¹

¹ There is some confusion over the dating of the building as it is placed in Period 9 (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries), but is referred to throughout the archive report as being of twelfth-century date: the only dating evidence for the building seems to be two sherds of twelfth- to thirteenth-century cooking pot found in the floor layers in front of the sandstone building. R. Jackson, *Excavation and watching brief at Crowngate, Worcester: archive report*, Report 113, Archaeology Section, Hereford and Worcester County Council (March 1992), pp. 9, and 12-15.

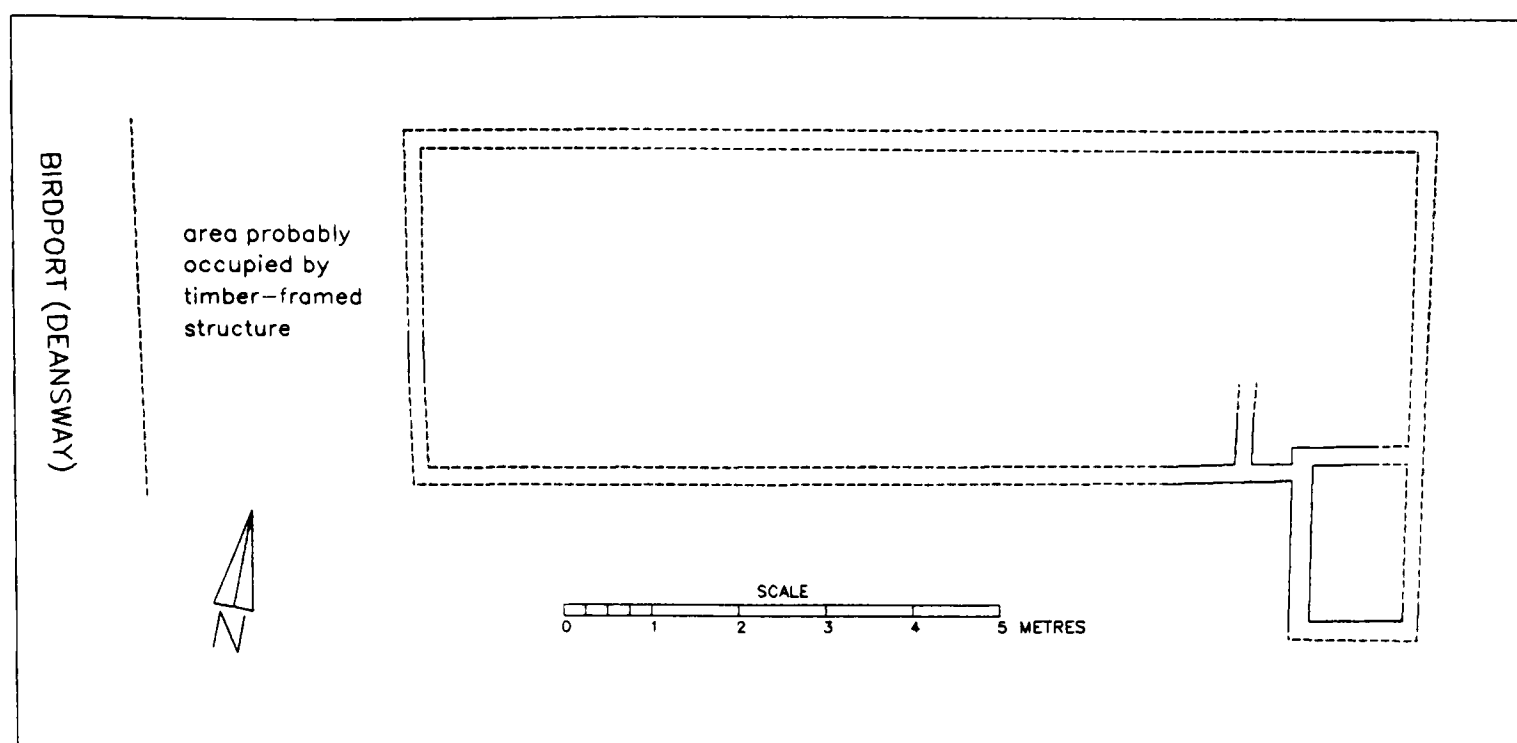


Fig. 228. Period 9 building, Crowngate, Deansway, Worcester. Plan of lower storey (undercroft?) showing reconstruction of possible original extent. Note that there is no evidence for the location of the north wall.

Fragmentary remains of the sandstone south wall, and rubble debris resulting from demolition and robbing, were found during the excavation and subsequent watching brief. This indicated that the building was c.11.50m long, with a probable garderobe projecting to the south at the rear. Environmental analysis of the so-called garderobe is consistent with such an interpretation, and it is thus reasonable to assume that the garderobe itself was at first-floor level: the excavated structure represents the cess-holding structure below.¹ In view of the multi-storeyed form of the building, the excavated lower storey probably represents an undercroft.

Trench A, at the western edge of the site, produced what have been interpreted as floor layers of a small timber structure of similar date to the undercroft.² Such a building would explain the setting back of the stone building by c.3m from the medieval Birdport frontage, and could represent a shop. The floor levels in the front structure are likely to be

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

at or near contemporary street level: it is unfortunate that the excavation was unable to continue to the bottom of the *in situ* walling to the rear and thus determine whether or not the undercroft was at least partly subterranean.¹ There was no evidence at all to support the excavator's suggestion that the north-south width of the stone building would have been c.5.50m to 6.00m wide,² although the combined east-west length of c.14.5m of the possible timber structure and the stone building is more consistent with a narrow building at right-angles to the street than a parallel structure. Likewise, there can be no justification of the assumption that the building contained a first-floor hall,³ although the garderobe does suggest that the rear part of an upper storey had a domestic function.

157. Worcester: Site 4, Powick Lane, Deansway. A stone-built structure, probably a two-storey chamber block, excavated in 1988-9, and possibly dating from the twelfth-century.⁴

Although the analysis of the excavation is incomplete, the form of the building is clear: it was approximately at contemporary ground level and was set back from any of the nearby medieval streets. Its near right-angle orientation to Broad Street and Powick Lane suggests that it formed a chamber block at the rear of a tenement on either street. The thickness of the stone walls and a projection from the northeast corner suggestive of an external staircase are consistent with a two-storey block. Thus, the well would have been located in a ground-level undercroft. Following the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5 and fig. 11.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-15.

⁴ C.H. Dalwood, and C. Mundy (eds.), *Deansway Archaeology Project: Interim Excavation Report* (December 1989), Archaeology Section Hereford and Worcester County Museum.

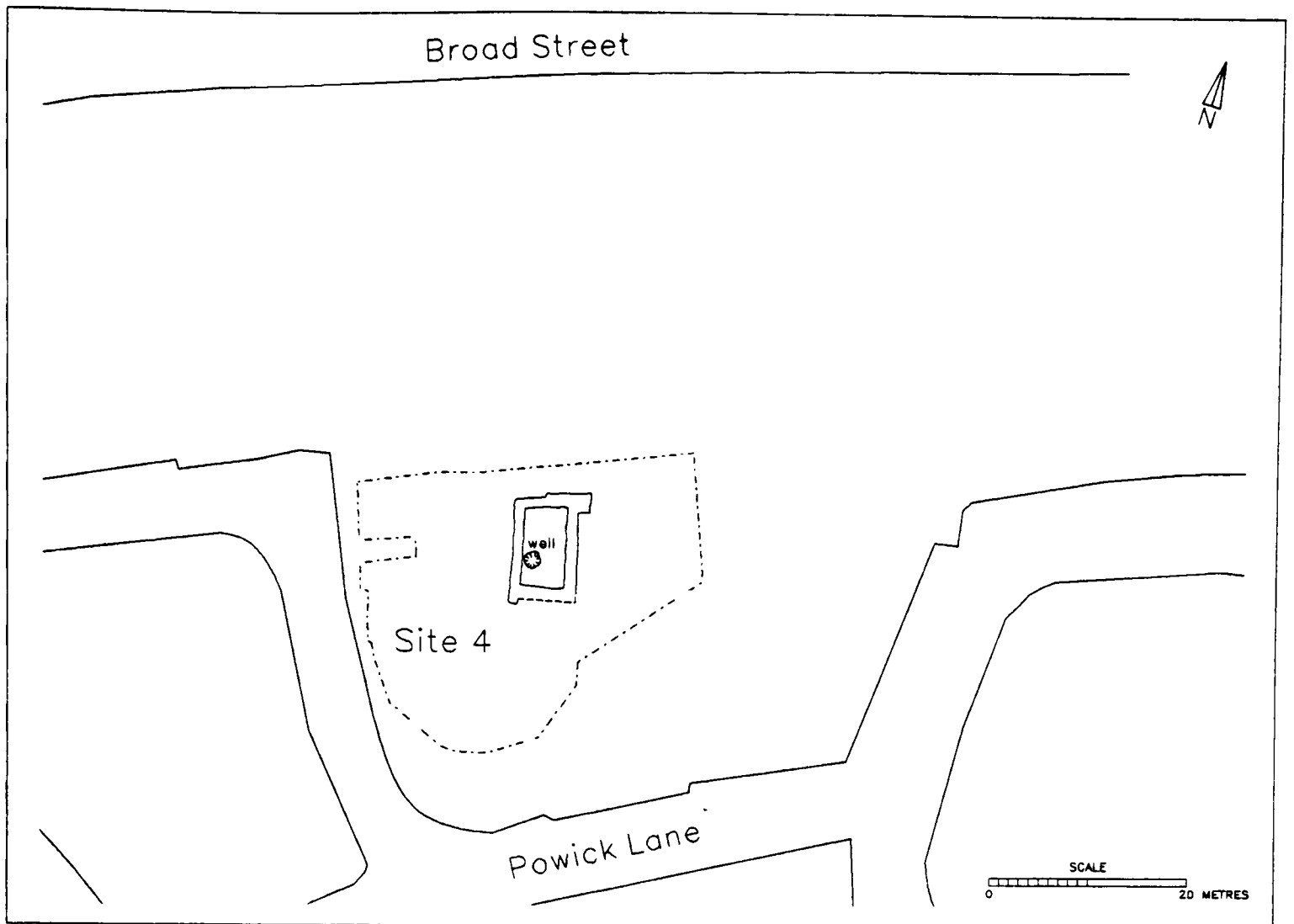


Fig. 229. Site 4, Powick Lane, Worcester. Plan of site showing stone building and surrounding streets.

production of the interim report, analysis of the ceramic evidence has given a broad date range to the building of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries:¹ the twelfth-century dating is on 'typological grounds'.² In view of the continued appearance of freestanding chamber blocks at least until the early fourteenth century, such typological dating is suspect: a twelfth-century date is possible but by no means certain.

¹ Pers. comm. Hal Dalwood, Archaeology Section, Hereford and Worcester County Museum.

² C.H. Dalwood, and C. Mundy (eds.), *Deansway Archaeology Project: Interim Excavation Report* (December 1989), Archaeology Section Hereford and Worcester County Museum, p. 23.

YORK

158. *York: Norman House, 48-50 Stonegate.* A late twelfth-century chamber block set back from the street by c.13.9m. See Chapter 1 for discussion and plan (pp. 31-3).

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ABBREVIATIONS

1. Journal titles and institutions

<i>Antiq. J.</i>	<i>Antiquaries Journal</i>
<i>Arch. Cant.</i>	<i>Archaeologia Cantiana</i>
<i>Archaeol. J.</i>	<i>Archaeological Journal</i>
<i>BAA CT</i>	<i>British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>British Archaeological Reports</i>
<i>BL</i>	<i>British Library</i>
<i>CBA</i>	<i>Council for British Archaeology</i>
<i>Ches. RO</i>	<i>Cheshire Record Office</i>
<i>Chester City RO</i>	<i>Chester City Record Office</i>
<i>CRRP</i>	<i>Chester Row Research Project</i>
<i>HFCAS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society</i>
<i>JBAA</i>	<i>Journal of the British Archaeological Association</i>
<i>JCAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society</i>
<i>LAMAS</i>	<i>Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society</i>

<i>LSAK</i>	<i>Lübecker Schriften zur Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte</i>
<i>LTR</i>	<i>London Topographical Record</i>
<i>Med. Arch.</i>	<i>Medieval Archaeology</i>
<i>MoLAS</i>	Museum of London Archaeological Service
<i>OHS</i>	<i>Oxford Historical Society</i>
<i>PRO</i>	Public Record Office
<i>RCHM</i>	<i>Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (volumes thereof)</i>
<i>SAC</i>	<i>Sussex Archaeological Collections</i>
<i>TWNFC</i>	<i>Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club</i>
<i>VCH</i>	<i>Victoria History of the Counties of England (volumes thereof)</i>
<i>WS</i>	<i>Winchester Studies</i>

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