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TWELFTH TO SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

# The Archaeology of Medieval Europe

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**TABLE 3.3 ISOTOPIC DATA OF TERRESTRIAL AND AQUATIC FOOD RESOURCES**  
from European archeological animal remains (2<sup>nd</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century AD).

Types of food*	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$			$\delta^{15}\text{N}$			References
	mean	SD	N	mean	SD	N	
<b>Terrestrial resources</b>							
Herbivores	-21.4	0.8	128	5.2	1.4	128	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Omnivores	-21.4	0.6	64	6.9	1.5	64	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Carnivores	-20.3	1.0	26	9.0	1.7	26	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Domestic fowl	-20.5	1.1	21	9.4	2.1	21	2, 5, 6
Wild fowl	-21.5	0.8	9	9.3	3.7	9	6
<b>Aquatic resources</b>							
Freshwater	22.0	2.3	8	14.2	4.3	11	5, 6
Anadromous species	-15.0	0.6	6	11.2	2.5	6	6
Catadromous species	-23.2	2.4	11	11.2	1.3	11	5, 6
Marine fish	-13.8	1.7	35	13.1	1.8	35	1, 5, 6

\*Herbivores = *Bos* sp., *Ovis/Capra*; Omnivores = *Sus* sp.; Carnivores = *Canis* sp., *Felis* sp., *Vulpes vulpes*; Domestic fowl = *Gallus* sp., Wild fowl = Duck, Goose; Freshwater = Cyprinid, Pike; Anadromous = Salmonid; Catadromous = *Anguilla* sp.; Marine fish = Haddock, Cod, Herring.

(1) Bocherens *et al.* 1991b; (2) Herrscher *et al.* 2001; (3) Privat & O'Connell 2002; (4) Polet & Katzenberg 2003; (5) Müldner & Richards 2005; (6) Müldner & Richards 2007; (7) Herrscher, unpublished.

## HOUSING

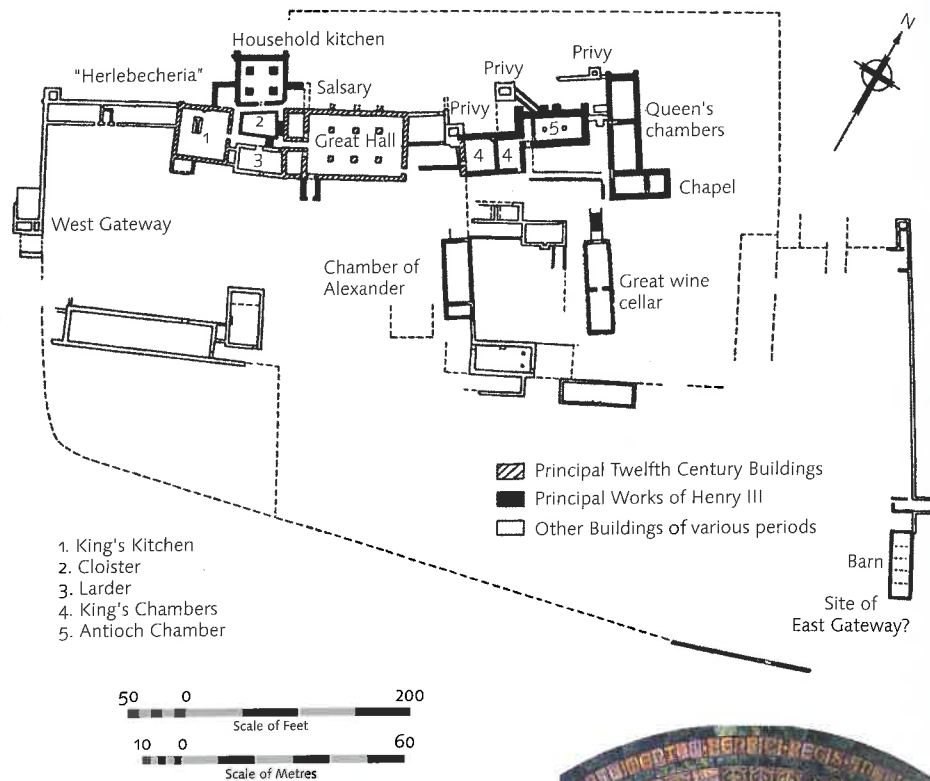
### PART 1: PALACES AND PALACE LIFE IN THE NORTH *by David A. Hinton*

Although the appropriateness of attaching the label 'Feudal' to the hierarchical society of later medieval Western Europe has been called in question (eg Reynolds 1994), only in Italy was the balance of power in favour of an urban aristocracy rather than a landed one, however much a ruler's wealth came from the profits of tax on trade, rather than the products of rural estates. Further north, kings, dukes, counts and barons mostly had a level of wealth far above that of even the richest merchants, although it was less disposable and they therefore frequently needed loans, for which their jewels and plate served as pledges. The aristocratic home was more than a residence; it also served to display secular power, which in our period frequently involved a fortified building, a castle. However questionable the defensive need for castles may have been, except in frontier zones, they remained symbols of military capacity; a ruler had strong-points to show his rule, his subjects to show that they could give him their support. Castles are discussed in Ch 6, and see AME 1, Ch 12 for a discussion of the display of secular power in the preceding centuries.

#### Buildings and Physical Settings

The distinction between a castle and a palace was often a narrow one, but the thirteenth century saw increasing use of what might be quite sprawling complexes, enclosed, but with no serious fortification (Fig 4.1; and see Fig 1.14). A ruler who was internally strong dominated through control of the law courts. In the great kingdoms, power became more centralised, represented by a permanent presence of the king's officers even when the king himself was absent. Royal houses also grouped around favoured centres, as kings became less dependent on itinerancy to exercise control, let alone to consume the payments in kind that had once sustained them.

The growing power of the thirteenth-century kings of France is reflected in the growing importance of Paris. The kings had long had a great residence there, but the *Palais de la Cité* became a display centre in which justice and hospitality were dispensed, a magnificent hall dominating a public open space to emphasize that only a select few were entertained inside. Linked to the hall was a processional way into the triumph of European Gothic architecture, the Sainte Chapelle. The Capetian dynasty established

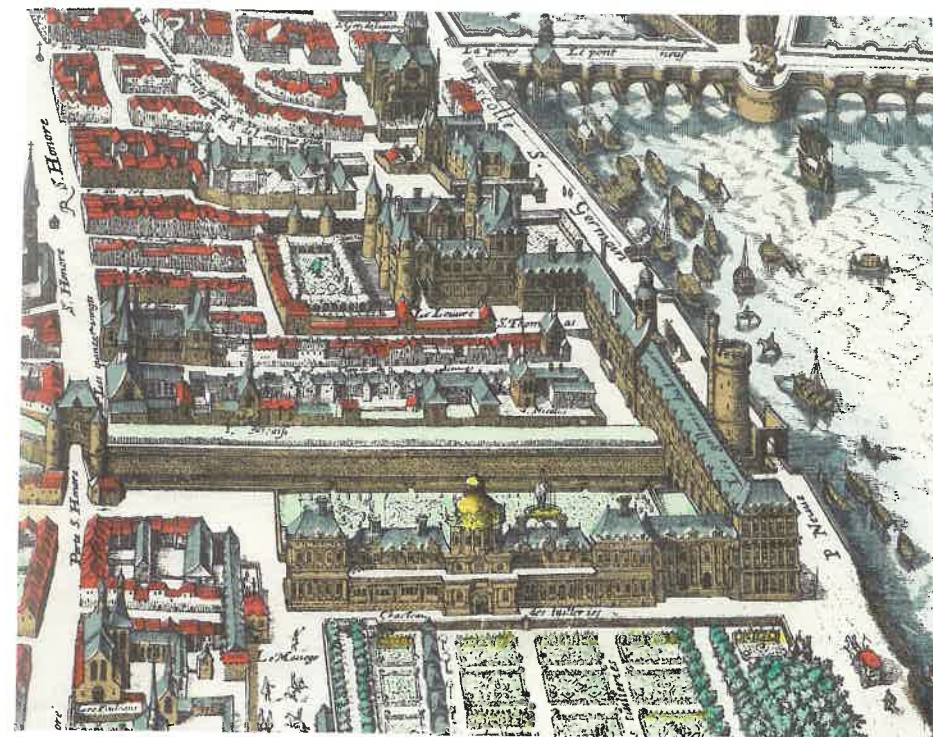


**Fig 4.1** Clarendon Palace, England, rural retreat and hunting lodge of Henry III (1216-1272). (Above): Interpretation of the palace in the time of Henry III. (Right): Reconstructed tile floor from the Queen's chamber (1250-2) (James & Robinson 1988).



itself as pre-eminent in the minds of Europe's élite, the Ottomans having already been eclipsed long before the Sack of Constantinople in 1204, an event that brought a final load of Byzantine treasures to the west.

A hall was where its owner dined in state – on a dais to raise him and his family above those at the lower end. Elaborate service was involved; even when, as often happened, a lord dined in the less formal surroundings of chambers, the food might still be processed through the great hall on its way to him. The great hall was also usually where business was conducted; the hall served as a law court. As a building, the hall was not necessarily very convenient for such purposes, particularly when several different cases were being heard at the same time, but a large space remained an essential element for most magnates in which to entertain and to receive their dependents. Practice varied



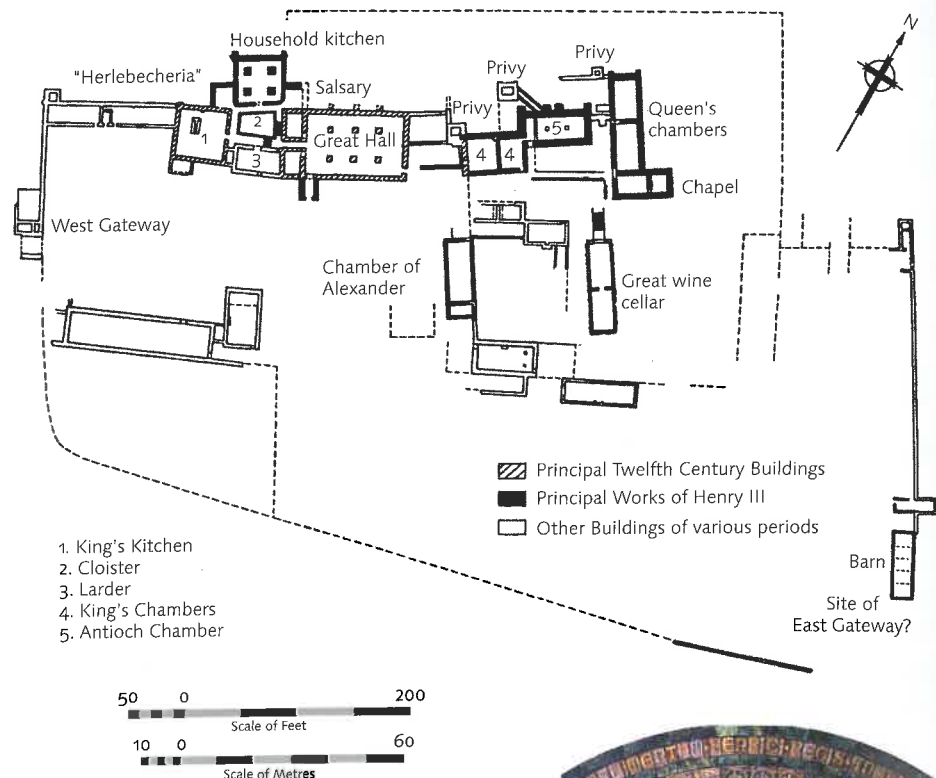
The medieval Tuileries Palace and the Great Gallery at the Louvre, as depicted by Merian in 1615 (Wikimedia Commons).

Fig 4.2

over whether it was at ground- or first-floor level, and in the latter case whether the undercroft space was used for kitchens and storage, or as a second hall, where inferiors were fed.

For all its grandeur, the *Palais de la Cité* was hemmed in; increasingly France's rulers preferred to stay at the Louvre, which had immediate access to the great forest of Vincennes (Fig 4.2). A previous impressive stone manor-house and some suburban sprawl were removed, and a riverside complex – access by water was often as important as access by land for grand houses – was enclosed and moated (Van Ossel 1998).

Similarly, further north, the counts of Brabant deliberately built for themselves the most imposing stone residence within their newly founded town of s'Hertogenbosch at the end of the twelfth century, but in the 1230s moved out, granting the *domus ducis* to Italian bankers (Janssen 2002). For the counts of the Low Countries, French and German kings were far enough away for royal vassalage not to be a major issue for most of the Middle Ages, though it was a deliberately symbolic act for the king of France to raze the palace of the counts of Flanders in 1553. In the south, the growing ambitions of the counts of Provence led them to extend their existing stronghold at Drôme with a great hall and chapel, effectively at the same time as they were drawn through marriage into the French and out of the Spanish ambit, which was to lead to their title's incorporation



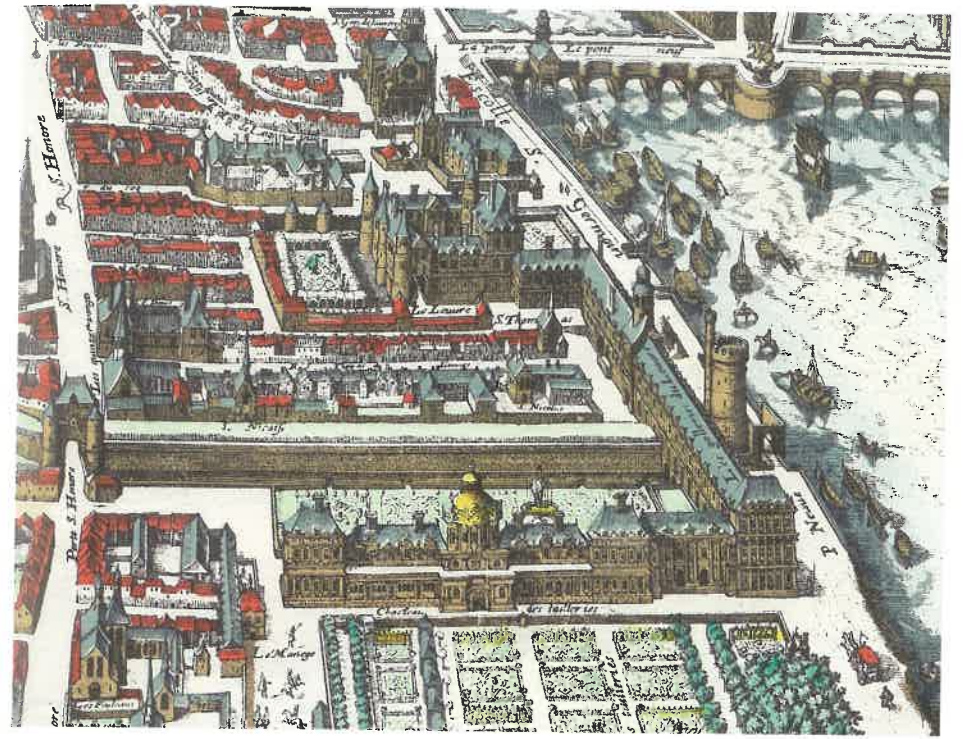
- 1. King's Kitchen
- 2. Cloister
- 3. Larder
- 4. King's Chambers
- 5. Antioch Chamber

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The medieval Tuileries Palace and the Great Gallery at the Louvre, as depicted by Merian in 1615 (Wikimedia Commons).

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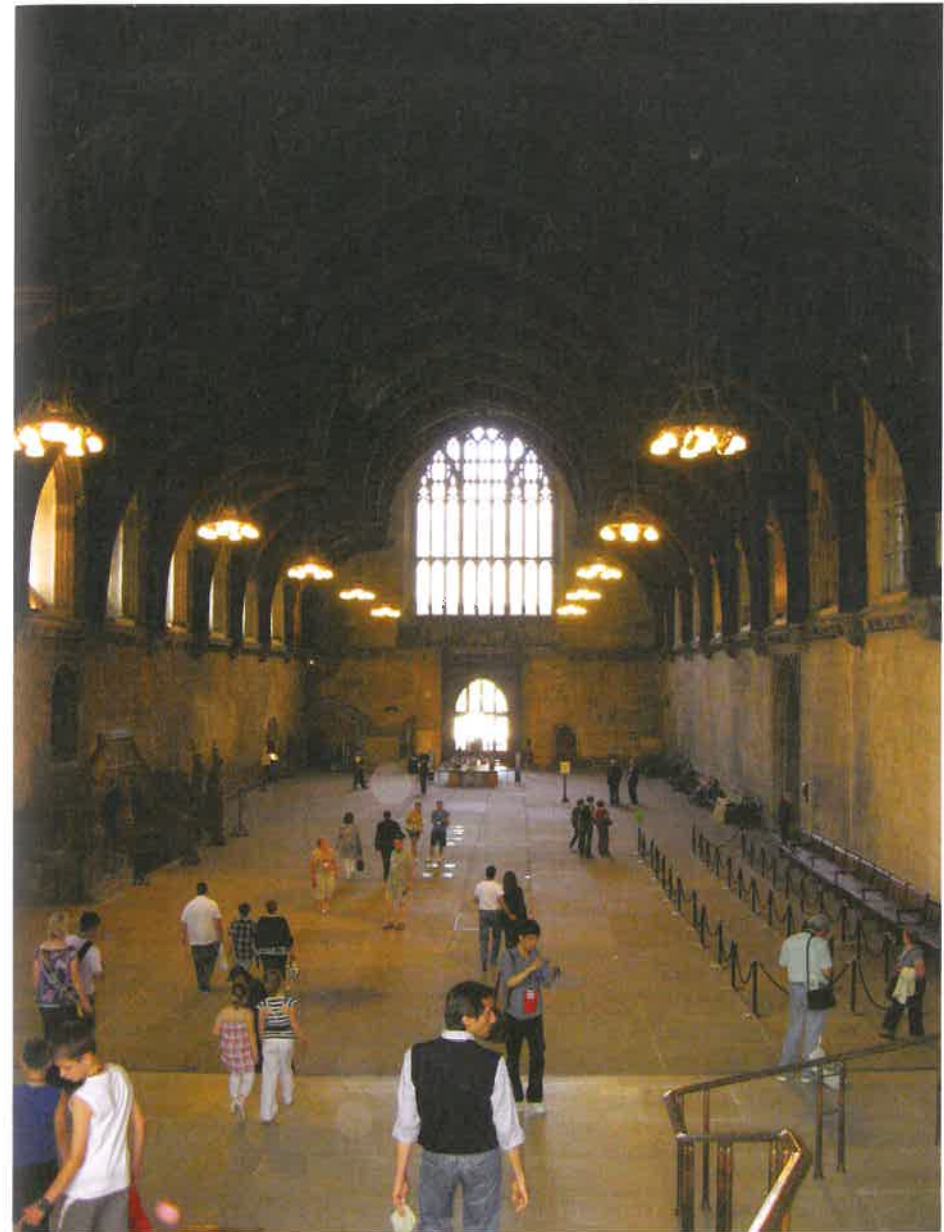
with that of the kings of France at the end of the fifteenth century, without a power struggle (De Meulemeester & Poisson 2002).

### Status of place

By the time that the Provence title merged with that of the crown, the kings of France had shifted their court southwards to Amboise and other centres. A grand façade could be achieved at such places, leading into a series of courtyards, graded in importance according to the uses of the buildings – stables in the outer yard, then lodgings in ranges and towers for the grandest visitors, and finally for the owner's family, which might involve separate households and spaces for wives and sons. At Amboise, the local hunting was good. It was not infrequent for new sites to be used despite their not having long traditions of royal association. Dynasties in general no longer felt the need to associate themselves with origin myths and supposed ancestors when conquest by force was seen as providing sufficient rights. Inauguration by placing a foot into a rock imprint was ousted by unction with papally blessed oil; a sufficient vestige of antiquity hung around Scotland's Stone of Scone, a place where abbey and palace co-existed, for England's Edward I to symbolise his conquest of the Scots by removing it to put under the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey; but the Scottish kings themselves had already lost contact with most of the rest of their Pictish and Gaelic past. It was Perth, a few miles to the south on a navigable river, which provided them with a headquarters in the castle, although even that was dispensed with during the thirteenth century, the king staying in one of the town's religious institutions instead. Scone Abbey was the setting for some early meetings of the Scottish Parliament, but Perth came to be preferred, and Scone even ceased to host coronations. In England, a crowning at Westminster rather than Kingston became essential for validating the claims of competing families, although the French monarchs remained loyal to Reims, where a huge new thirteenth-century nave could accommodate an enormous audience for such events.

New tradition did not become strong enough to make Perth a permanent base for the parliament meetings, unlike England's Westminster, where Henry III's lavish patronage created a centre not only for coronations, but for royal burials and for the highest courts in the land, a centre that was to endure all the changes of dynasty that were to follow the thirteenth century (Fig 4.3). In the sixteenth century, Henry VIII developed Whitehall for executive purposes where his Privy Council met, leaving Westminster for the law courts and parliaments (Thurley 1999). Westminster Abbey was used for public events, but Henry III also sought to build a more private chapel to rival Sainte Chapelle (Binski 1999); other kings followed different trajectories, the Hungarian dynasty preferring to enhance what was already on the site at Prag (Boháčová *et al.* 1992, 86-7). Association with the Church varied: the presence of a cathedral alongside a royal house was not unusual, but kings and bishops did not always make good neighbours.

Processions were important modes of display, for a variety of ceremonies. Kings and great nobles expected to be received with due deference; mayors and corporations assembled outside town gates to greet them and to usher them inside, where they would be



The interior of Westminster Hall, London, founded by William Rufus in 1097, and developed by subsequent kings of England. The hammerbeam roof was commissioned by Richard II in 1393 and completed 1401. Pictured in 2010, the hall now forms the public entrance to the Houses of Parliament (M. Carver).

Fig 4.3

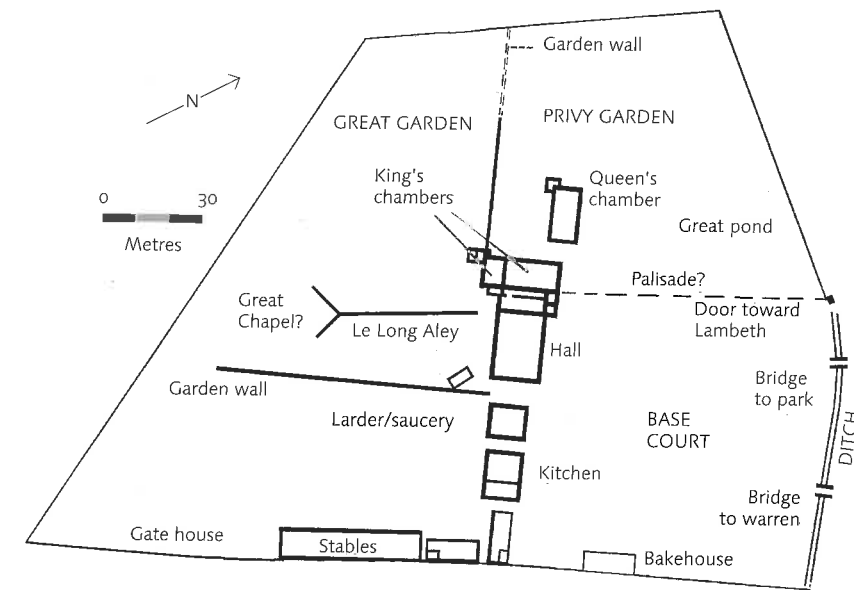
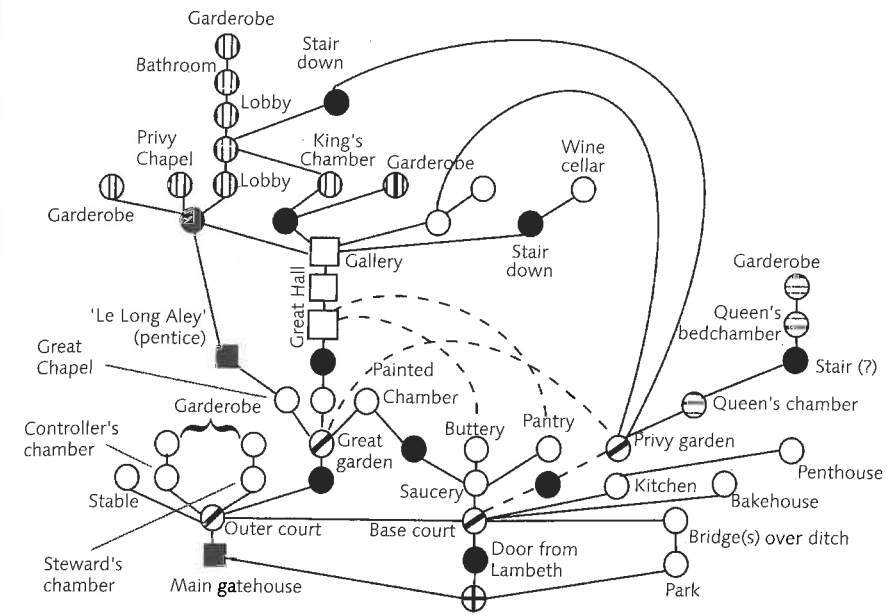
fêted in the hope of favour. Towns might have origins so ancient that they could claim mythical, often royal, founders, but even the oldest needed support, and many were either royal foundations, or had royal licences for their walls, urban privileges and markets. Kings knew too that, in general, towns paid fees, even if at times maintenance costs meant that these had to be temporarily reduced or rescinded. Magnates could not fail to observe the private wealth that merchants showed in their stone houses as well as in what towns spent publicly on their town halls, market halls, and walls. In northern Italy, rival patrician families built needle-like towers as high as cathedrals, which were forcibly lowered when their ambitions were brought down to earth. This was a factor of constrained ground space; most northern European cities had neither the wealth nor the same degree of constriction, though late medieval towers of several stories were certainly built.

### Status in death

The English king Henry III was associating himself with a saintly predecessor, Edward the Confessor, by developing that king's foundation at Westminster. Burial at places with family associations remained important for many. For the Capetians, it was Saint Denis with its Merovingian ancestry. The Scottish kings associated themselves with the cult of their own family member St Margaret by their use of Dunfermline as a mausoleum, but just as the use of Scone for coronation was not regarded as an essential part of the acceptance of a new incumbent's claims to the throne, so burial with St Margaret fell into disuse in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Oram 2008; Fawcett 2005).

Kings and queens expected to be buried inside churches, not in outside cemeteries like most of their secular subjects. The east end of the nave, and at the crossing, as close as possible to the high altar, were the preferred locations. The German emperors used Speyer cathedral, where the town's main street was axially aligned with the great west entrance, so that it became a processional route for a succession of dynasties from the Salians to the Hapsburgs (Meier 2002, 180-1). Prague was also replanned, creating a grand processional route across a towered bridge and up into the palace complex. Other magnates made a range of choices; even if they could not claim to have had a saint in the family, many had ancestors who had founded monasteries where family burial was appropriate. A few selected churches on their estates, adding chantry chapels that outgrew in proportion the buildings to which they were attached – but where no priest would dare to challenge the family's right to choose where and with what monument they should be remembered.

Military emphasis inevitably made for a gendered society, although some wives and widows were effective household controllers. Analysis of palace sites has shown that gender difference was incorporated into their design, and this gradually changed throughout the period: in the thirteenth century, the king fronted the political access while the queen was contained in more private space, more difficult of access. By the early sixteenth century, the layout had become more complex, with the king's and the queen's households operating with a certain independence (Richardson 2003b; here Fig 4.4). Some brides brought family connections that enhanced their husbands' status; complex heraldry identified those who claimed ancient rights. Again with Italy as an



(above) An example of access analysis by Amanda Richardson, used to map ease of movement in Kennington Palace, England, during the 1380s. The rooms are marked by open circles, the passages by black spots. The hatched circles distinguish the king's and the queen's apartments. A schematic plan of the palace is shown below. (Richardson 2003b, fig 14).

Fig 4.4

exception, most countries increased the number of noble titles, creating extra tiers in the stratification of society, which sumptuary laws enhanced, setting out codes of what was appropriate for all ranks to wear and eat.

### Conspicuous consumption

The association of the Louvre with the forest of Vincennes was a medieval commonplace. Forests and parks were one of the most potent symbols of power – not only for secular society, of course, since prelates and abbots also hawked and hunted, and wanted to dine on venison and wildfowl. Laws protecting game varied in detail, but were widely instituted (Ch 3, p 132). Houses increasingly had fenced parks attached directly to them, or indeed all around them, with windows or galleries placed to give views over parks and gardens, implying ownership as far as the eye could see. Although parks might be grazed by domestic stock, and even on occasions ploughed, access to them was exclusive, and the space that they took up was largely removed from normal exploitation. This applied with perhaps greater force to fish-ponds, as those had to occupy lower ground which would otherwise have provided farmers with the best hay meadows, essential for keeping stock through the winter in most of western Europe. To the élite, however, it was more important to have a supply of freshwater fish such as pike, bream and carp for their own tables; swan and duck shared the water; peacocks were kept, as were hawks to provide game birds and wildfowl. Doves, raised usually in separate buildings but also in nesting-boxes built into castle walls, were another delicacy and another form of lordly exploitation of tenants, who were not permitted to chase the birds away from their crops. Netted song-birds were also cooked. Faunal remains show the residues of the feasts at which these, and the flesh of young animals killed before they had bred, were principal components. Elaborate cooking methods and profligate use of imported spices further emphasized the distance between the exceptionally powerful and the rest of society (Woolgar 1999; Woolgar *et al.* 2006). Etiquette books set out the courtesies of service, though they may have been aimed at aspiring gentry, expressing ideals rather than showing what actually happened in noble households.

Wine was the expected drink at royal or noble tables, although it could also be bought in urban taverns. In England, to which it had to be imported at considerable expense, a barrel made a good gift, one reason why kings exercised purveyance rights and maintained their own cellars in Southampton, one of the principal entry points. Several royal palaces, and even some lesser royal houses, had below-ground cellars, though storage in the basement of a tower usually sufficed, and few magnate houses had other provision for it. A few examples of the gold, silver-gilt, and enamelled goblets in which it was served, at least on the greatest occasions to the host and greatest guests, have survived (Fig 4.5). Glass was rarely used, and wood (*treen*) let alone pottery, was considered too base for such a superior liquid, at least until the very end of the Middle Ages. The plate had to be carefully stored and accounted for, requiring iron-bound chests and strong-rooms, often in towers with tiled floors which were fireproof, where the owner's charters and deeds could also be kept – a source of resentment and a target



Fig 4.5  
Luxury silver gilt bowl or porringer on foot ring, engraved with the alphabet on lid and body (The Studley bowl, c. 1400). Possibly made for a noble child to eat from and learn the ABC at the same time (Victoria and Albert Museum; Alexander & Binski 1987, pl. 728).

for revolt by tenants. Designs, of plate, jewellery, architecture and tombs, tended to be conservative, and usually took their lead from Gothic France and the workshops of Paris, but Henry III looked to Rome for Westminster's internal fittings, and increasingly 'Renaissance' classical imagery and use of materials such as terracotta and maiolica tiles percolated into fifteenth-century western Europe from Italy (see Ch 8).

Access to luxuries and the ability to entertain were essential for anyone seeking to build up a network of retainers; 'feudal' ties of army service proved unreliable for foreign campaigns, and professional soldiers had to be paid. The nobility was still generally expected to fight alongside its rulers, gaining family honour and showing the right to bear arms, as well as the hope of winning financial reward through ransoms; a difference between England and much of the rest of Europe was created after the middle of the fifteenth century, as such opportunities disappeared alongside the development of more realistic royal ambition. Being successful in war, skill and courage in horsemanship and in wielding arms, and learning to take hard knocks and falls, were necessary. Hunting provided training, but jousts and tournaments gave the extra lure of prizes and of fame in competition with social equals, where flaunted wealth would be admired by the wider audience of spectators. Rulers who provided a round table or other ceremony associated with feasting and fighting could expect to add lustre to their own names.

Tailored clothes in the finest woollens and linens gave new awareness of the body's shape; dyes gave colour, but not always for brightness – some of the most expensive were deep, dark reds, purples and blues. Silk was even more costly, but above all, furs were noticed; fourteenth-century sumptuary laws in England at first tried to restrict them all to the highest ranks, then created grades by which ermine and *budge* (actually imported lambswool, but who knew that?) were for the highest, the richer knights could wear *minever* – but the less prosperous could only have fur facings, not whole robes. Even in 1532, sable was only for royalty, reflecting the lure of the darkest shades (see Ch 8, p 359). As for jewellery, sumptuary legislation in most Italian cities again

had different intentions from elsewhere in Europe, as great expenditure could have led to the creation of a nobility, especially if head-gear such as coronals were permitted, as those could have seigniorial implications; elsewhere, even in Milan where a dukedom existed, the purpose was to preserve its privileges (Lightbown 1992, 79-89).

In the archaeological record, such organics as furs rarely survive. Expensive gold and silver plate has mostly been melted down – ironically, survivals of metal-mounted cocoa-nut and nautilus shells, ostrich eggs and burr maple cups survive as they were more valuable in the late Middle Ages than they were to be later. Ostrich eggs in particular were *exotica*, as were the strange creatures acquired by a few western rulers for their zoos; animal qualities of fearlessness and fighting skill led some kings to associate themselves with lions and leopards, which became heraldic devices (see above, p 116 and Ch 8, p 358). Heraldry is displayed on small metal harness pendants, on buildings, and on tombs and effigies; some badges associated with particular families have also been found, such as the gold and enamel Dunstable swan in England, a Lancastrian symbol. Base-metal badges for family retainers are more commonly found. Chains showing devices in their links and on pendants suspended from them became statements of family allegiance, and collars expressed office, in the fourteenth century; again, a few have survived in treasuries.

Lavishly illustrated books have had a better survival rate, most notably the *Très Riches Heures* painted for the zoo-owning Duc de Berry, lord of most of the south of France at the end of the fourteenth century, which shows not only his fantasy castle at Mehun-sur-Yèvre, but also the orderly world of people working in his fields to sustain him in his great wealth (Fig 3.1). The Duc was a famous collector of treasures, especially jewels (Camille 2001). Such unabashed acquisition and delight in ownership is seen in others: King Richard II 'secretly' visited his treasury in London's Tower; Henry III's frustration at not being able to buy a cameo from a German merchant rings out from the austere pages of royal accounting records.

Objects of display were not just expressions of status, but a reassurance of their owners' ability to maintain their social position. Sales were rarely necessary, and it was even rare for a merchant's child to be married into an aristocratic creditor's family; in any case some of the wealthiest lenders were Jews, who as non-Christians were unable to join any Christian kin network. Their precarious position meant that Jews' houses and cemeteries were often placed where a royal or lordly power-base protected them – until they became superfluous and persecuted. For Christians, however, the difference for most purposes between aristocrat and merchant was that the former acted within a military theatre, whether real warfare or regulated tournament, for which the base-born were not trained. The bearing of arms on horseback was still the symbol of knighthood, even as more lethal projectiles made cavalry charges with lances and swords less effective; gun-powder was not handled by medieval gentlemen.

The symbolic character of objects at every social level is discussed in the next chapter, and the effects of war and the knightly ethos on residential buildings are further explored in Chapter 6.

Northern houses require heating, achieved by burning logs or peat in open hearths and ovens and occasionally by underfloor systems using hot stones (AME 1, 175). In the south, sub-floor and hot flue systems were used to make heated bath-houses in the Roman tradition. The tiled stove represents a late medieval innovation of great significance for northerners, providing a high level of heat by means of a safe device for retaining and diffusing warmth. The oven was clad in decorated tiles that in turn provided a medium for the exchange and distribution of culture (Fig 1). Here we briefly consider the achievement of Hungarian designers (Sabján 2007; for production and trade in northern Europe, see Ch 9, p 340).



**Fig 1**  
The late medieval tiled stove. An example dating from the end of the 14th century from a house in Cressier, Switzerland, reassembled in the Laténium Museum, Neuchâtel. The spectator is age 6 (M. Carver).

Tiled stoves began to spread in the Hungary of the Anjou-period (1301-1386). By the late-fourteenth century all types of tiles can be found among the remnants of Hungarian stoves. Tiles with closed front and relief-decoration or with barrel-back and jagged-pierced front became popular. The stoves built from these tiles are rich Gothic constructions, designed and decorated under the influence of architecture (Fig 2). Their lower part was built from flat tiles with patterns in relief. At the top, triangular tiles, decorated with small towers at the tips formed a gable. Behind them, a pointed dome rises with a ceramic pinnacle at the top.

In the Sigismund-period (1387-1437) stoves were made to royal and aristocratic order in great variety: virtually all sizes and decorations can be found this time, using tiles varying greatly in size. The influence of architecture can be seen in tracery, and heraldic devices provide the subject of images. After 1408, the arms of Sigismund were featured, encircled by the badges of the 'dragon order'. Tiles of many different colours are employed.

The stoves of the Matthias-period (1457-1490) dazzle with delicate sculptural work. The stove with the knight-figure, constructed in several varieties, originates from the best-known workshop of the age, and had a great impact on the formation and development of Hungarian stove-building. The front of the older type was made with delicate tracery and smaller sculptures; the back is a semi-cylindrical niche. The first examples of these stoves were made in the pre-fifteenth century, later pieces date from the end of the Matthias-period. The tile mantelpiece, differentiated by its brown glaze,



appears first on late Gothic refined stoves of the Matthias-period. It is characterised by corner pieces decorated with coats of arms and gables with finials, and huge tiles decorated with blind tracery.

0 50 100 cm

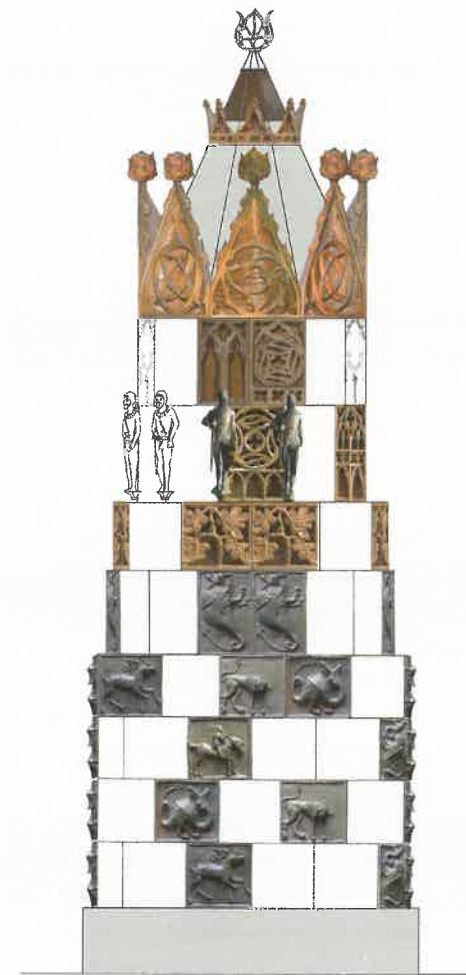


Fig 2

Reconstruction of a late 14th-century stove from the Anjou-period in the castle of Diósgyőr (after Boldizsár *et al.* 2007).

The use of stoves became widespread in the second half of the fifteenth century. Aristocratic mansions, priests' houses, guestrooms of monasteries, rural castles and even country peasant dwellings were heated by stoves. In the sixteenth century, most of the ceramics now had a curved pot-like shape and were made on a potter's wheel. All were unglazed, although sometimes decorated with red or white colour (Fig 3). These stoves followed aristocratic prototypes; their construction could include between 6 and 10 types of tiles. The production of new types in the centre of Hungary was stopped by the Turkish occupation, but tradition lived on in the Uplands and Transylvania.

The late Tibor Sabján

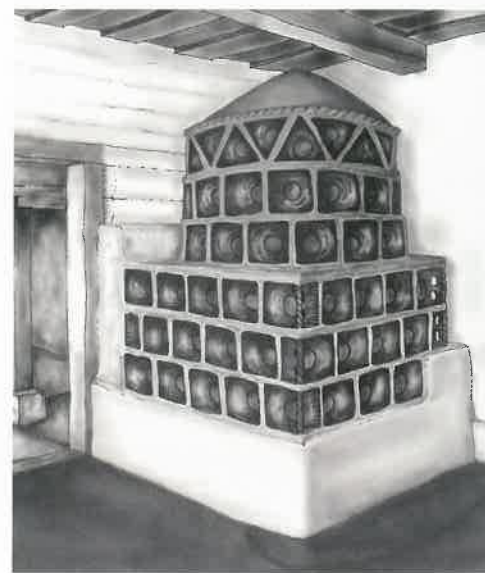


Fig 3

Stove of unglazed tiles from the 16th century or earlier in an outbuilding of the mansion of Baj (after Sabján 2007).

### History of research

Archaeologists have long been interested in the study of houses as the focus of medieval domestic life. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, English architectural historians concerned themselves primarily with studies of elite domestic buildings such as castles, palaces and manor houses (Turner and Parker 1851, 1853, 1859; Gerrard 2003). Gradually, however, the study of English 'house history' more generally attracted the attention of pioneering scholars such as Addy (1898) and Innocent (1916) and was exemplified in the regional study of Monmouthshire houses by Fox and Raglan (1951). Early attempts to develop a systematic understanding of the medieval house were aided by the work of both the *Victoria County History*, with its parish-by-parish surveys, and the regional and town-based inventories of the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments. Interest in this vernacular housing – the term essentially refers to houses of indigenous type serving the population at large – was further reflected in the foundation of the Vernacular Architecture Society in 1952 and the Society for Medieval Archaeology in 1956-7. The study of houses also became an important aspect of rural settlement studies, for example at Wharrah Percy by Maurice Beresford (1954), and the analysis of towns, such as W.A. Pantin (1962-3; Gerrard 2003: 95-99). These studies focused on the construction traditions apparent in the wall frames and roof trusses of buildings, or in the geology of stone or use of early brickwork. Such patterns were linked with established regional and agricultural 'zones' (Clifton Taylor 1965; Smith 1965 and see synthesis in Le Patourel 1991). They also focused on the plan form of buildings, stripping away later accretions to reveal simplified or schematic plan forms, to which labels such as 'hall', 'services', 'solar', 'chamber' or 'parlour' were variously applied.

Many early studies were concerned to establish the basic typologies of medieval housing and those of Faulkner (1958), Wood (1965) and Mercer (1975) had an enduring influence on the study of high status buildings, whilst those established by Eden in the 1968 Cambridgeshire RCHM(E) volume became the basis for subsequent lower status housing typologies (RCHM(E) 1968; Longcroft 2002). Since then, an important group of regional studies has been published, such as that for Hampshire (Roberts 2003), North Avon and South Gloucestershire (Hall 1983), Hertfordshire (Smith 1992) Lancashire (RCHM(E) 1985), Kent (Pearson 1994), Shropshire (Moran 2003), Suffolk (Johnson 1993a), North Yorkshire (Harrison and Hutton 1984) and West Yorkshire (Giles 1986). These have been greatly enhanced by the systematic use of dendrochronological dating, and useful syntheses of this dating evidence have recently been published (Pearson 1997, 2001; see also Ch 1, 00). Numerous local studies, published by vernacular architecture groups and scholars, have added important colour and detail to the picture (Pattison *et al.* 1992, 1999).

Some of these studies have been quite traditional in nature. However, increasingly, vernacular architecture has adopted a social and cultural perspective. The development of houses has been linked to changes in the specific economic circumstances and social

status of groups of wealthy peasants or yeomen (Pearson 1994; Dyer 1997c; Roberts 2003). The organisation and cultural meaning of space within houses, access routes around them, and relationships within and between rooms, has also received much attention (Alcock and Currie 1989; Barley 1991; Johnson 1993b; Martin 2003; Gardiner 2000, 2008). The ways in which vernacular houses were transformed during the early modern period, has also been the focus of much debate (Hoskins 1953; Machin 1977a, 1977b; Alcock 1983; Johnson 1993b). Many of these studies have been enhanced by a critical awareness of the intellectual discourses and disciplinary methods through which buildings have been studied, in the past and present (Johnson 1994, 1997; Dyer 1997c; Grenville 1997; Mercer 1997; Currie 2004). The drive towards interdisciplinary study has also encouraged medieval archaeologists and historians to think more critically about the material context of the household and the archaeology of domesticity (Beattie, Maslakovic and Rees Jones 2003; Kowaleski and Goldberg 2008; see also Box 1.2).

### High status medieval houses

The study of high status medieval houses has always been closely linked to other forms of elite domestic architecture, particularly castles and palaces (see above for palaces, and Ch 6 for castles and moated houses). Early attempts to understand the different forms of post-Conquest manor houses suggested the existence of two very different structural forms (Wood 1950, 1965; Faulkner 1958). The earliest form of surviving medieval domestic building dated to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is the stone-built, two storeyed 'first-floor hall', with a high status first-floor or 'upper hall' located over a vaulted, ground floor undercroft. One of the most frequently cited examples of the type is Boothby Pagnall (Lincs) and importantly, the type was also found in urban locations, such as the late twelfth century 'Norman' house in Lincoln (Faulkner 1966) (Fig 4.6). Access within the building was usually provided by an external stair to first floor level, although the undercroft was also accessed internally by a newel stair from the hall. The second type of early domestic building was the ground floor aisled/non-aisled or 'end hall', where the hall was attached to other rooms used for services or accommodation, such as the Bishop's Palace at Hereford (Blair 1987).

Traditionally, debate has centred on questions concerning the origins of these types, whether in Norman France or England, and whether the two types were contemporary, or if aisled halls were a slightly later development. However, more recently the debate has been advanced by Blair's (1993) suggestion that many so-called 'first floor halls' may in fact be detached 'chamber blocks', once associated with (now lost) free-standing open halls. Blair's argument drew carefully on linguistic, literary and historical evidence, but although it sparked lively debate during the 1990s, the archaeological evidence to support Blair's hypothesis has yet to emerge consistently. Whatever the conclusion, it is clear that the 'first floor hall' did exist, in buildings such as castles, and endured as a late medieval type in public buildings (see Ch 9 below, on guildhalls). But the difficulty in proving whether a building was indeed a hall or chamber may itself be telling. The ambiguity of the archaeological evidence may, as Quiney (1999) has sug-



The stone house at 47, Steep Hill, Lincoln, dating between 1170 and 1190 and known as the Norman house (formerly 'Aaron's House'). Not to be confused with 'The Jew's House' a similar building on the same street at no 42.

Fig 4.6

gested, indicate that such buildings were far more flexible, multi-functioning spaces that we have previously assumed.

The evolution of high status houses in the late medieval period has often been presented as one of gradual accretion, through which a characteristic 'tripartite' layout developed. The tripartite plan consisted of a central open hall, with a 'low' end containing services (usually a buttery and pantry, with detached kitchens elsewhere) and a 'high' end leading to high status chambers or solar wings (Fig 4.7). Within this there was enormous variety, as has been revealed by the regional surveys cited above and the important gazetteers of Emery (1996, 2000, 2006). The late twelfth century appears to have been a pivotal moment in the coalescing of the tripartite plan (Grenville 1997: 93-95; Gardiner 2000, 2008).

Gardiner's work raises important questions about the social functions of the open hall throughout the medieval period. It has long been acknowledged that the tripartite plan had symbolic meaning as well as functional advantages in late medieval society. The spatial hierarchies apparent in its 'high' and 'low' ends could – and were – used to reinforce and reproduce feudal and patriarchal power over the family and the wider household (Johnson 1993a; Grenville 1997: 89). But Gardiner (2008: 61) suggests that the increasing formalisation of such arrangements must be viewed in the context of the

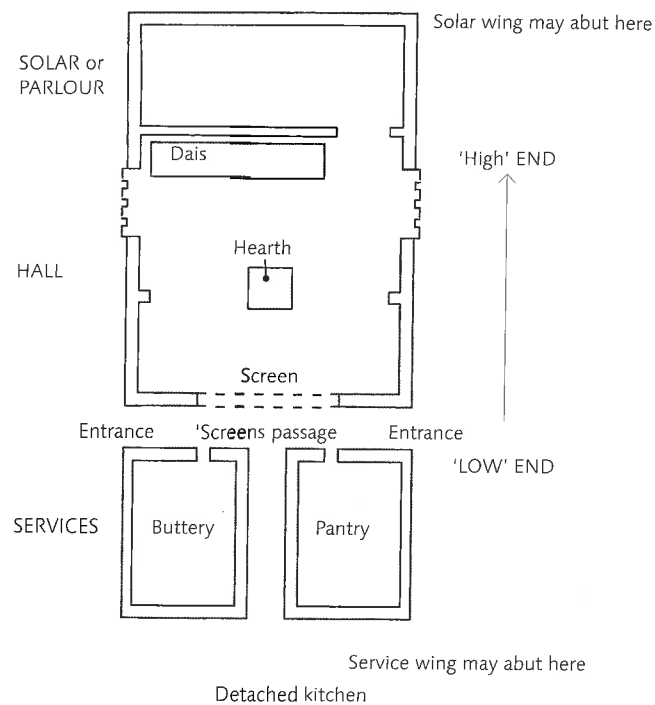


Fig 4.7 The late medieval tripartite plan, showing the hall, solar and services, separated from the hall by the screens passage (after Grenville 1997).

codes of behaviour prescribed in the contemporary courtesy books and the increasing formalisation of rituals of domestic ceremony in elite households. At the other end of the chronological scale, Phillips (2005) has demonstrated how late medieval household ordinances codified particular forms of ritual behaviour which evoked powerful paraliturgical symbolisms in the treatment of the person of the late medieval lord.

Some scholars have argued that the importance of the open hall in elite houses was waning by the end of the Middle Ages, as the desire for 'privacy' encouraged lords to withdraw from the hall and use rooms such as chambers and solars for the hitherto public rituals such as eating (Girouard 1979; Thompson 1995). Grenville (1997: 108-9) has challenged this hypothesis. The evidence of the size and investment in buildings such as the courtyard arrangement at Gainsborough Old Hall (Lincs) suggests not only that the open hall endured throughout the late medieval period, but actually got larger during the fifteenth centuries. Understanding how – and why – the elite held onto the tripartite arrangement alongside the use of subsidiary buildings such as private accommodation ranges, parlours and lodgings, is an important question for future research. It might be suggested, for example, that late medieval lords were desperately holding onto the symbols of feudal power in a period of economic and political uncertainty and rapid social change.

### Lower status 'peasant' houses

The study and interpretation of lower status English medieval housing must be understood in the context of the work of the RCHM(E) and the Vernacular Architecture Group mentioned above. But it was also influenced by the development of landscape and local history, particularly the work of the Department of Local History at Leicester University and scholars such as Beresford (1971) and Hoskins (1953, 1967), and the discovery and excavation of 'deserted medieval villages' such as Wharram Percy (N Yorks), Hangleton (Sussex), Upton (Gloucs.), Gomeldon (Wilts), West Whelpington (Northumberland), Dartmoor (Devon), Grenstein (Norfolk) during the 1950s-1980s (Astill 1988b; Austin 1990; Le Patourel 1991). These studies revealed important information not just about houses, but also their associated landscapes of tofts and crofts, and the subsidiary buildings such as barns, stables, kilns and bakehouses, found on rural sites (see Ch 3, p 97). Such studies were important in demonstrating that houses could contribute to academic debates in rural history, particularly Beresford's (1954) hypotheses about desertion. From these studies, a picture emerged of peasant houses as rather flimsy and impermanent structures, which had to be rebuilt every 20-30 years. It led Mercer (1975: 8) to conclude that 'rural vernacular houses prior to the late middle ages appear from the evidence of excavation, to have been of uniformly poor quality throughout the whole of England'.

However, during the 1980s, several important challenges to this hypothesis emerged, and are summarised in detail by Grenville (1997: 123-128). Initial challenges came from historians such as Dyer (1986), highlighting a range of documentary evidence to suggest a reasonably high standard of living amongst the peasantry in the post-Black Death period. Evidence from the study of surviving buildings in North Yorkshire (Harrison and Hutton 1984) and sites deserted only in the eighteenth century, such as West Whelpington (Northumberland) encouraged the re-examination of the excavated evidence to suggest that such buildings were originally cruck-framed – a much more permanent form of construction than previously thought (Wrathmell 1989). Interdisciplinary research by Dyer (1986), provided documentary evidence for peasants not only using crucks but also employing professional carpenters. From this work emerged the idea of medieval peasant buildings as 'semi-permanent', requiring little initial financial outlay but regular maintenance over time (Fig 4.8).

Although the earliest surviving examples of lower status housing in England date to the mid-fourteenth century, the majority of standing examples date to the end of the fourteenth or fifteenth century. The systematic application of dendrochronological dating to vernacular houses means that it is now possible to identify particular patterns in the construction dates of surviving houses. It is important to remember that this data may tell us as much about patterns of survival as construction, and about the ability of certain types of building to be adapted or modernised in subsequent centuries (Currie 1988). Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that there were periods of large-scale investment in the construction of rural houses in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that such investment represents the

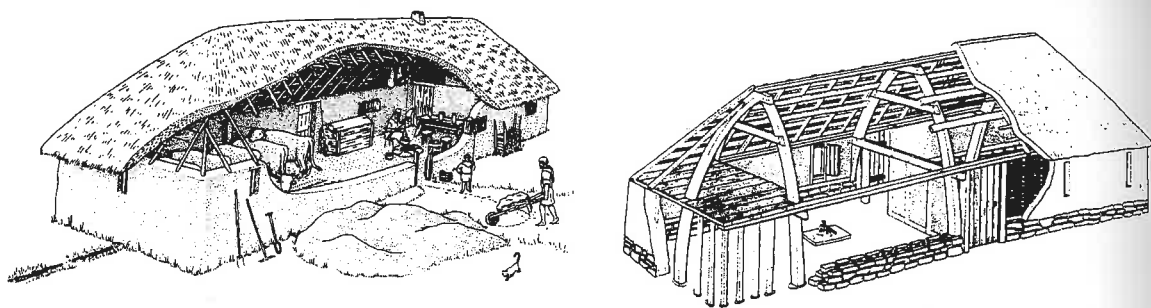


Fig 4.8 Peasant Houses. Cob wall (left) and cruck with studding (right) (Grenville 1997).

growing confidence and economic wealth of the upper levels of the peasantry – what we might think of as a proto-‘middling sort’.

What of the structure and form of lower status medieval housing? Over the past fifty years, landscape history has shed light on the underlying frameworks of topography, geology, settlement patterns and agricultural specialisms of late medieval England (Miller 1991). Vernacular architecture studies, too, have appeared to reveal clear regional patterns in the distribution of construction traditions, such as crucks, or the timber-framing of wall and cross frames (Smith 1965; Harris 1978) and cruck construction (Alcock 1981). However, although as Roberts and Wrathmell (2000: 27) note, it might be expected that such provincial frameworks would have impacted on the functional arrangement and plans of medieval houses, in reality they, like their high status counterparts, show ‘a remarkable consensus about the organization of social space’ (Gardiner 2000: 179; Le Patourel 1981).

A basic typology of lower status medieval houses emerged from early regional studies such as those of Fox and Raglan (1951) and the RCHM(E) (1968; Longcroft 2002). Early scholars may have presumed that the adoption of the open hall was a result of the diffusion of ideas from elite housing, or the deliberate emulation of these forms by the late medieval peasantry. However, Gardiner’s (2000) important article raises questions about this hypothesis, demonstrating the early origins and presence of the form, *across* the social scale.

The longhouse has traditionally been considered a distinctive type of lower status peasant house, associated particularly with areas of marginal, pastoral farming. Its distinctive function was to provide accommodation for both people and their animals, usually presumed to have been cattle, oxen or horses. Much debate has surrounded its identification through distinctive features such as the presence of a cross passage indicated by opposed doorways; the separation of a ‘low’ end containing a byre or *shippon* (cattle shed), evidenced by a drain and/or tethering device; a central hearth and cooking pits in the body of the house; and separate spaces beyond this for sleeping, often provided in an annexe (Alcock and Smith 1972; Mercer 1972; Meirion-Jones

1973; Austin 1985: 76; Harrison 1991; Grenville 1997: 134–141). The ‘story’ of longhouse development was traditionally presented as that of conversion and rebuilding into ‘farms’, as animals were gradually removed from the house and accommodated in separate buildings, freeing up the low end for conversion and adaptation to domestic use (Beresford and Hurst 1971). This in turn has provoked debate about the equivocal nature of the evidence, of rebuilding and of the original functions of such buildings. These problems are raised in Meeson’s (2001) study of Hill Top, Longdon (Staffs). Previously interpreted as a rare example of a surviving hall-house within the region, a disastrous fire and subsequent stratigraphic analysis revealed important evidence to suggest that the ‘low end’ had previously been used as a form of byre and platform for the (seasonal) storage of agricultural produce. Indeed, Harrison and Hutton’s (1991) study of inventories from longhouses in the Vale of York suggests not only that longhouses could be associated with areas of arable, as well as pastoral farming, but also that the presence and therefore the ‘visibility’ of animals and/or crops in such buildings was a seasonal phenomenon.

Our insistence in drawing a distinction between the longhouse and other medieval house forms may tell us much more about modern cultural assumptions about living with animals than it does about medieval practice. Green (2007) has recently demonstrated how the idea of the ‘vernacular’ emerged from particular discourses of the early modern period. More recently, Gardiner (2000:168) has therefore suggested that the longhouse should simply be seen as a regional adaptation or variation of the tripartite plan.

Traditionally, regional surveys of lower status housing have sought to understand the number and distribution of variants of the open hall in particular areas. These include the use of cruck or box-framing, associated roof types and other features such as jettying, the presence or absence of aisled and non-aisled halls, and the gradual accretion of storeyed wings, in line with or at right angles to the hall, containing services and/or more private accommodation. Some of the most interesting patterns to emerge from these studies shed light, not on regional, but rather on social differences in the choice of house type. In Kent, for example, Pearson (1994: 134–5) has shown how the lower levels of the gentry preferred halls with wings set at right angles, whereas the upper levels of the peasantry often occupied two-storeyed buildings with their ends in line with the hall, such as Wealdens, jettied and unjettied houses (Fig 4.9). In late fifteenth century Hampshire, Roberts (1995) has shown how new demesne lessees did not simply adapt or rebuild previous houses on manorial sites, but often relegated these to service functions, preferring to build new fully-floored houses with internal chimney stacks and chambers for public use.

These variations of the open hall type remind us that our focus on the universality of the open hall and tripartite plan can cause us to overlook important evidence of the ways in which late medieval houses were constantly adapted and altered throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Many buildings provide evidence of what is often termed ‘piecemeal’ rebuilding. In Sussex, the Rape of Hastings survey revealed that 40% of houses had experienced partial or piecemeal rebuilding from the late fifteenth century onwards (Martin and Martin 1987, 1999; Martin 2000). More detailed studies



**Fig 4.9** Chart Hall Farmhouse, Chart Sutton (Kent). An early Wealden house (1379/80) (©RCHME).

of individual buildings within the area show how such rebuilding was often designed to meet the changing needs of the late medieval household, by creating 'suites' of rooms, which in turn required new access arrangements (Martin 2003). In Devon, the study of a series of peasant houses revealed important evidence for their 'modernisation', and for the partial flooring of open halls through the use of internal jetties which extended the space of first floor chambers, possibly for semi-industrial activities such as spinning and weaving (Alcock and Laithwaite 1973). The tripartite plan itself could also be adapted for storage or industrial use, as in the aisled houses of West Yorkshire, where the aisles of the halls then appear to have been used as services (RCHME 1984).

One of the problems with making sense of these processes of adaptation and alteration is the tendency to interpret them as evidence for an inevitable process of transition from the medieval to the early modern house type. Early discussions of this transformation of medieval houses as part of a process known as the 'great rebuilding' were outlined by Hoskins (1953; see subsequent debate in Machin 1977a; Alcock 1983; Johnson 1993). The typological model of this shift from 'medieval' to 'early modern'

house type was laid out by the RCHM(E) (1968) and discussed in syntheses such as Mercer (1975: 23-33). Most recently, it has found its way into the theoretically-informed account of the transformation of medieval housing through a process of 'closure' associated with large-scale social, economic and ideological shifts of capitalism, Renaissance and Reformation, which occurred during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Johnson 1993a).

The retention and/or abandonment of the open hall to facilitate fully-floored, multiple-storeyed accommodation throughout the house, and the introduction of new forms of heating is often seen as one of the defining characteristics of this shift, particularly when associated with the transformation of traditional access routes into the house through the creation of the lobby entry (Grenville 1997: 153-156). The evidence emerging from dendrochronologically-dated buildings in Kent and Hampshire is particularly important here. It indicates both that although the open hall persisted in both areas well into the sixteenth century, some halls had begun to be floored over as early as the 1470s, and that new fully-floored buildings were also being built at this early date. Clearly, in many regions from the late fifteenth century onwards, inhabitants and craftsmen were able to choose from a wide range of options, depending on the changing needs of their households. Indeed, Dymond's (1998) study of five building contracts from Suffolk, dating to the early 1460s, demonstrates that contemporaries deliberately identified 'advanced' features such as parlours, continuous jetties and oriel windows, in neighbouring properties, that they wished to emulate in the design of new houses.

### Urban housing

The earliest surviving examples of medieval townhouses are the stone-built, two-storeyed, 'first floor halls', such as the Jew's House, Lincoln (Faulkner 1966). At first glance, these would seem to reinforce the idea of a universal adoption of the tripartite plan. However, as yet unpublished work by Harris (1994) has argued that such buildings must be understood on their own terms, operating commercially on two storeys. Faulkner's (1966) study of medieval undercrofts in Southampton and Winchelsea, and in-depth studies such as those of the rows of Chester (Brown et al 1999) provide further evidence for this. Undercrofts could be let separately from the houses above them as warehouses, shops or taverns, and contain impressive architectural features to suggest they were spaces of display as well as function. It might be suggested that the urban first floor hall needs to be reinterpreted in the light of Blair's 'chamber block' hypothesis. However, what seems more likely is that these early forms of urban house reveal evidence both of a commercially distinctive function, and the ability of urban (as well as rural) buildings to host spaces with multiple functions (Quiney 2003).

The houses of the urban elite have received far less attention than their rural counterparts. In part, this reflects problems of survival. Many of the largest houses in London and other provincial cities were associated with episcopal and monastic dignitaries, and were confiscated or sold during the Reformation. The changing fortunes of England's aristocracy also impacted on the maintenance of expensive urban mansions and

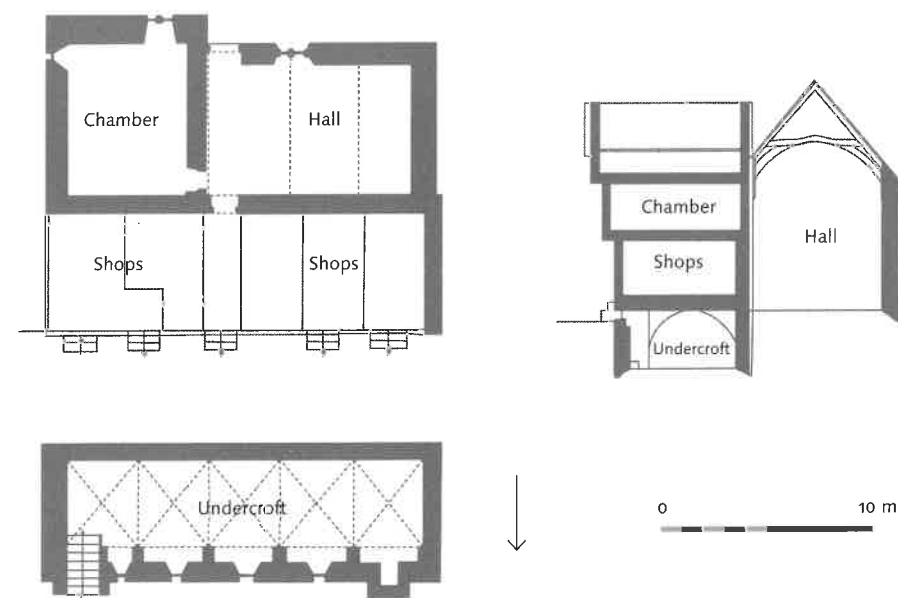
palaces. Schofield (1994) and Quiney (2003: 187-216) have shed important light on these buildings. As London and Westminster in particular became established as the permanent seat of government, both spiritual and secular lords sought to establish urban bases in the capital. By the end of the Middle Ages, the archbishops of York and Canterbury, and all bishoprics except St. Asaphs, as well as twenty-two abbots and six priors, had established such residences in the city, such as Winchester House, built on the Southwark bank of the Thames. These complexes might be accessed through gatehouses and were arranged around courtyards. They contained great halls, often raised over undercrofts, accommodation and service ranges and subsidiary buildings such as kitchens and chapels. Their close relationship to rural building forms was also emphasised through the addition of towers, such as that at Sir John de Pulteney's inn, which was granted a licence to crenellate in 1343 (Quiney 2003: 194-6).

At present, there has been little comparative analysis of the rural and urban houses of individual aristocratic patrons, which might shed light on differences between both urban and rural 'ways of living' and respective household structures (for rural palaces see above). Nevertheless, the apparent retention of 'traditional' building forms in these elite residences may tell us something important about the conservative ways of living amongst the spiritual and the secular elite. However, another important and as yet under-studied aspect of these buildings was the way in which these buildings were subsequently converted into inns for pilgrims and travellers; a type of building that has received comparatively little attention from archaeologists, but warrants further study (Quiney 2003: 201-212).

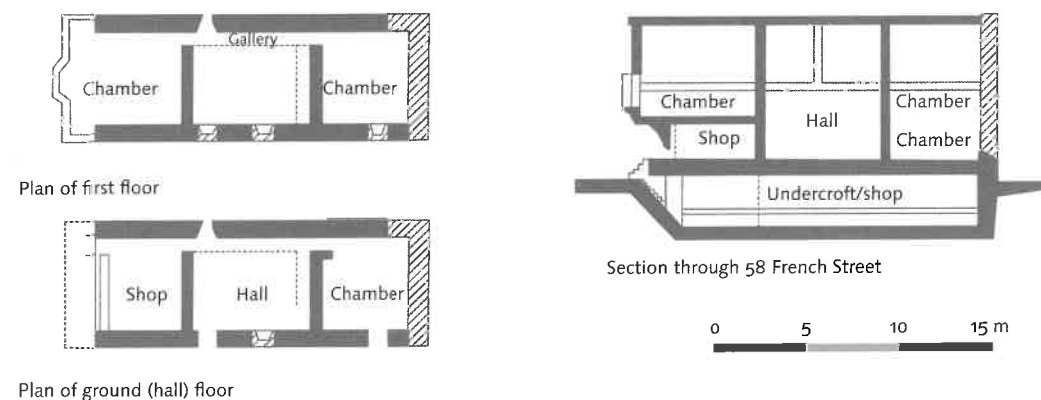
The majority of surviving middle-lower status urban houses in England date to the later medieval period. However, from an analysis of the dendrochronological data it is possible to identify patterns in their investment and construction. Pearson (1997, 2001) notes the survival of a significant group from the period *c.* 1275-1375, a slowing down during the late fourteenth century, a further increase during the early fifteenth century and subsequent decline in the later fifteenth century (but see Roberts 2003: 193 for some regional differences within this pattern). The sheer diversity of late medieval urban communities has meant that traditionally, it has seemed difficult to differentiate the houses of the lower gentry from those of the upper levels of the merchant classes. However, recent research has begun to reveal important information about the distinctiveness of late medieval urban English houses.

Traditionally, the open hall yet again formed the focus for the typological analysis of urban houses. The key scholar in this field, Pantin (1962-3), started from the presumption that medieval urban houses were '*rus in urbe*': urban adaptations of the tripartite form, developed first in the countryside and then adapted to the constraints of the urban burgage plot. The simplest adaptation of the rural model was the parallel plan, where the hall was placed parallel to the street, with services and solar in a linear form. Variations of this plan included the creation of a row of often separately-let storeyed shop-and-chamber units in front of the hall, or a full courtyard arrangement, as at Tackley's Inn, Oxford (Fig 4.10). The alternative type was the right-angled plan, where the house was set with its gable at right angles to the street, facilitating the creation of

an individual shop with undercroft below and chambers above it, as at 58 French Street, Southampton (Fig 4.11). Pantin's typology has proved enduringly successful, partly because it seemed to fit the evidence of the buildings themselves, but also because it supported the idea of a common use of the tripartite form across all medieval houses. Indeed, Grenville (2008: 117-119) has argued that its use was an important mechanism



Town house parallel to the street: Tackley's Inn, Oxford, plan and elevation, showing a row of separately-let shops in front of the hall (after Grenville 1997; Faulkner 1966 and Harris 1994). **Fig 4.10**



Town house gable-end-on to the street: 58 French Street, Southampton, showing the central hall with shop in front, chambers above and undercroft below (after Grenville 1997 and Faulkner 1966). **Fig 4.11**

through which immigrants into towns, particularly young men and women entering service in urban households, gained a form of security and learned how to behave, in the otherwise unfamiliar surroundings of the city.

The power of Pantin's thesis has meant that alternative typologies of urban houses, such as those of Schofield, which sought to categorise buildings according to their size and scale, have largely been overlooked (Schofield 2003: 89). However, Pearson (2005, 2009) has now provided a fundamental challenge both to Pantin's typologies and to the assumptions on which they are based. Pearson criticises Pantin's relatively small and selective sample of forty houses and argues for much greater diversity in the size and scale of medieval houses. But most importantly, she suggests (like Harris) that urban houses were distinct from their rural counterparts because of their commercial functions. She argues that the hall was far less significant in such contexts. Many urban houses at the lower end of the scale, such as Lady Row, York cannot be said to have had halls at all, whilst others such as the Wealden terraces of Spon Street, Coventry, had halls of only a bay, or one-and-a-half bays. In many urban buildings, commercial and storage space, in undercrofts, shops, chambers and outbuildings, seems to have been much more important. Moreover, far from being '*rus in urbe*', Pearson suggests that the constraints and opportunities of towns may have led to different priorities, such as the provision of commercial and storage space at ground floor level, or the development and prominent display of multi-storey timber-framing. Indeed, Pearson suggests that rural buildings may subsequently have sought to emulate their urban counterparts through the adoption of features such as multiple storeys within the rural context.

Pearson's work raises broader questions about the identification of different kinds of spaces in all types of lower status medieval housing. In towns, it is clear that some halls, such as Dragon Hall in Norwich or Hampton court, King's Lynn (Norfolk) were always more than domestic spaces. Halls could be used to store and display goods, and to negotiate commercial transactions as well as accommodating the domestic life of families and households. But halls could also be reduced in size, to provide more space for shops. Shops often adopted characteristic pairs of windows with internal rebates for shutters, under which there were stalls or sills, and a door to one side (Stenning 1985; Clark 2000; Quiney 2003). In contrast, workshops have always been much more difficult to identify (Grenville 1997: 172, 2004). Such structures are often assumed to have been located to the rear of properties, and therefore to be particularly vulnerable to subsequent alteration. However, the ephemeral nature of their fixtures and fittings has meant that it is often impossible to identify clear archaeological evidence for their location. This apparent absence of evidence may be more significant than we realise. Evidence from several studies, and from surviving documentary sources such as inventories suggest that the divisions between shops and workshops may not have been so clear cut (Alston 2004a). Indeed, given that the household was often heavily involved in production and retail, it seems likely that halls, chambers and solars were used as alternative working, as well as domestic spaces.

### The material household

The sections above have sought to synthesise recent research on the archaeology of medieval rural and urban houses. Such studies tend to focus on the plan form and structural framework of such buildings. Whilst they reveal a certain amount about the appearance, location and access of spaces within houses, they tell us far less about the materiality of houses: their decoration, furnishings, fittings and fixtures and the ways in which they were used by the households who inhabited them. Traditionally, medieval historic interiors have been poorly understood in England, with attention focusing on the architecture, decoration and subdivision of houses, rather than on the objects and assemblages used within them (but see Alcock 1993; Barnwell and Adams 1994; Ayres 2006; Gore & Gore 1991). However, the flourishing of interdisciplinary approaches has recently begun to demonstrate the potential of more integrated studies of houses, people and objects. Collaborative research projects, such as the work of the Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior have demonstrated the potential of historic interiors in Renaissance Italy to be approached more holistically (Ajmar-Wollheim & Dennis 2006; Ajmar-Wollheim et. al 2007; Aynsley & Grant 2006; Olson et. al 2006; see also Ch 5, p 190).

English scholars are now beginning to realise the potential of sources such as probate records for revealing the material culture used in medieval houses. Goldberg (2008), for example, uses a wide sample of rural and urban inventories to shed light on the different value systems of rural peasant and urban bourgeois households. Importantly, Goldberg suggests that the multiple functions of urban houses may have made them more 'permeable' than their rural counterparts, resulting in the increasingly sophisticated use of textiles and objects in urban houses to delineate private and intimate spaces, such as the marriage bed, or chamber. Similar support for the idea of late medieval houses as multiple-functioning spaces emerges from Richardson's (Richardson C 2003) study of probate inventories of the fifteenth century from Sandwich (Kent). Richardson suggests that the lack of firm associations between the objects and the spaces listed reflected the use of rooms for a variety of household functions. The emergence of much more fixed relationships between objects and the spaces in the sixteenth century is therefore interpreted as evidence of the emergence of single-function rooms in the early modern house.

These more recent interdisciplinary studies seek to engage with a rich vein of material culture studies, particularly so-called 'genealogical' or 'biographical' approaches to the analysis of people, places and artefacts (Lucas 2006: 39-42). Genealogical approaches seek to study the biographies of individuals or households and their material remains. In contrast, biographical approaches to objects seek to understand the changing cultural meanings of sites and objects (Appadurai 1986; Hoskins 1998; Gosden & Marshall 1999; Caple 2006; Olson et. al 2006). Both of these approaches have considerable potential to be applied to the rich palimpsests of surviving buildings, and the documentary and artefactual remains of medieval domestic material culture (Egan 1998; Ottaway 2002; and see Ch 5, p 213).

There is a prevailing belief that medieval and early modern towns and villages were unremittingly squalid, and their occupants slovenly. This idea has been widely endorsed in art, historiography and literature from the nineteenth century to the present. Some scholars have challenged the notion, arguing that conditions were generally better than commonly supposed and warning against 'regarding as a lineal heritage from the Middle Ages bad new conditions which actually resulted from the industrial revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' (Thorndike 1928: 193; see also Sabine 1933, 1934, 1937; Palliser 1990).

Palaeopathologists studying morbidities in excavated human skeletal remains

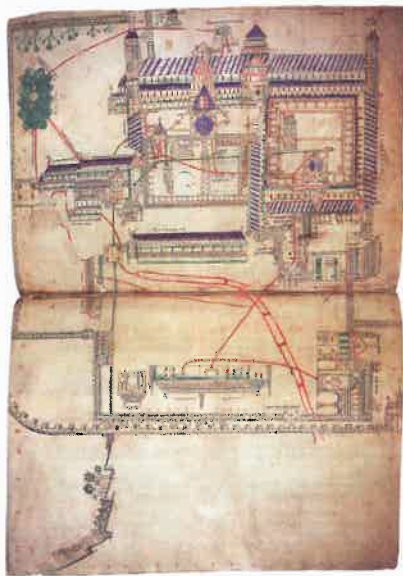


Fig 1  
Waterworks of the Priory and Christ Church Cathedral in Canterbury, illustrated c. 1165, showing the latrine block with fifty-five cubicles (Cambridge, Trinity College Library, MS R.171, fols. 284v-285r).

have lent support to this suggestion. One study indicates that children from medieval York (c. 950-1550) showed less evidence of physiological stress than their counterparts in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London, indicating that (in addition to any genetic advantages) they were exposed to fewer environmental pathogens (Lewis 2002; see also Ch 12). Recent surveys on the subjects of personal care and sanitation further revise the preconception that people were universally lousy, dirty and unhygienic (Gläser 2004; Smith 2007; Vigarello 1988 cf. Crawford 2007: 82). Attitudes to dirt and disease are relative, circumstantial and socially constructed (Douglas 1966). In other words, the criteria used to judge good hygiene in our period were different to those advanced by modern germ theory. Because of this, it is increasingly considered anachronistic to transpose biomedical paradigms of bacterial sanitation onto the evidential record (Horden, 2000; cf. Cooper, 1913). Now scholars are asking: by what standards did men and women of the period identify hygiene, and what steps did they take to foster it?

The answer lies in a set of beliefs inherited in our period from the ancient Greek world. In its original sense, the word *hygiene* signified an 'art' (or set of practical techniques) for maintaining health, and it referred to a wide range of behaviours in addition to physical cleanliness and grooming, such as diet, exercise, and even the cultivation of a balanced emotional state. The management and regulation of a person's immediate environment was also of principal importance, according to the Hippocratic tract *Airs, Waters, Places*, written at some point between 430 and 330 BC (Smith 2007: 95). Encyclopedists like

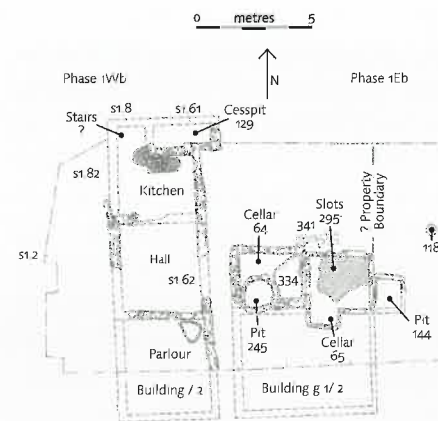


Fig 2  
Plan of late medieval tenements excavated at Potterygate, Norwich, showing cesspits 245 and 129 (©Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service).

Bartholomaeus Anglicus (fl. 1230-40), codified these ideas, and from about the mid-thirteenth century, they were disseminated in Europe via the *regimen sanitatis*, or 'guide to healthy living'. According to this developing genre of medical literature, anything that putrefied and compromised the quality of air and water was a serious health hazard. Carion or butchers' waste, blood, stagnant water, 'foul things' cast into streets, privies situated too close to living spaces, manure and dunghills, corrupt gutters, compost heaps, smoke and industrial waste were all judged especially injurious (Horrox 1994, 174). The 'information revolution' of the later fourteenth century gave men and women direct access to these ideas, which were formerly the preserve of the academic and medical elites (Murray Jones 1994; 1998). The advent of printing and the repeated onslaught of virulent epidemics further stimulated the

production of neatly packaged manuals for literate, middle-class town-dwellers (Wear 2000: 158, 184-209). These manuals recommended prophylactics including fumigants, the cultivation of sweet smelling gardens, and gentle exercise in clean air (Fay 2007).

Armed with this knowledge, we can identify circumstances in the archaeological record that men and women of our period would have judged unhygienic. The state of two of London's minor watercourses – the Fleet and Walbrook – clearly failed to meet the standards. Blood and muck from nearby slaughterhouses were dumped into the Fleet (Sabine 1933: 343). Excavations have demonstrated that other kinds of noxious waste were also deposited in and around ditches, dating to between the mid-eleventh and late thirteenth centuries, which drained into the two streams. The material included inedible by-products from butchery (predominantly, head and feet-parts of oxen), and the skinned remains of animals, including cats and dogs, killed for fur, as well as domestic and industrial refuse, leather working scraps and quantities of old, worn-out shoes (Telfer 2003; Drummond-Murray & Liddle 2003). Sedimentary analysis shows that the Fleet became increasingly contaminated during the fourteenth century, after its stagnant drainage ditch, mentioned above, was back-filled and the area surrounding it was developed (Schofield and Vince 2003: 179; Telfer 2003). Possibly, the pollution occurred precisely because such former dumping grounds were no longer available, forcing people to deposit waste directly into the stream. At any rate, the deteriorating situation caused alarm. In 1357 a royal writ forbade men and women from throwing waste into London's



watercourses, and directed them to make use of the city's waste collection facilities (Sabine 1937: 37).

For sewage and drainage, the most desirable sanitary arrangements were located within wealthy institutions such as monasteries, friaries and the larger hospitals (Bond 2001). At Norwich Benedictine Cathedral Priory, for example, numerous wells and a flint-lined culvert provided water for cooking, housekeeping and the laundry, as well as the monks' personal and religious ablutions. The wells' supply was remarkably clean; it was filtered by the chalk and gravel on which the priory precincts were built. Running water, channelled by the culvert, flushed out sewage from the latrines of the infirmary as well as the commodious facilities at the monks' dormitory. This arrangement prevented the water table from becoming contaminated. An excavation of one portion of the culvert revealed an enormous barrel vaulted drain, supported by Caen stone arches, that spanned 3 metres in width and 2.5 metres in height. The monks' latrines were scoured regularly; access to the culvert for this purpose was provided via special cleaning hatches. Similar systems were found at the hospital of St Mary Ospringe and St Mary's Abbey, York (Gilchrist 1992: 108; Gilchrist 2005: 36-8, 120, 138, 140, 177; Addyman 1989: plate 2) and the Priory and Cathedral at Canterbury (Fig 1).

Access to high quality facilities was not limited to the residents of large institutions. At the late fifteenth-century tenements at Pottergate, Norwich, rented by the affluent, aspiring middle-class, cesspits constructed in flint rubble and mortar were situated in cellars which probably communicated with,

and thus serviced, first floor, timber-framed en-suite accommodation in the adjacent domestic blocks, by means of a connecting chute (Fig 2, cesspits 245 and 129: Atkin, Carter & Evans 1985, 12-15, 21). The large cleanable cess pit at Cuckoo Lane, Southampton had a wooden floor supported by wooden struts. On its excavation the pit was discovered to have preserved small bits of cloth, probably used for wiping or feminine hygiene, together with a huge secondary assemblage of pottery, glass, wood and leather, dumped in the disused toilet around 1300 (Platt & Coleman-Smith 1975, 293). A different arrangement was found at an impressive stone-built merchant's house at Winkle Street, Southampton. Here, a well-constructed stone drain, probably dating to the fourteenth century, sluiced the contents of a garderobe pit out to sea (Platt & Coleman-Smith 1975: 273-5). In both cases, excreta were kept well away from the main accommodation. These examples can be compared with the malodorous situation at one fly- and maggot-infested latrine situated in a fifteenth-century tenement in Sidbury, Worcester. Its cesspit was contrived out of old barrels, which fostered anaerobic conditions. When excavated, the material preserved in the barrels contained large quantities of human parasite remains (an indication of poor manual hygiene routines following defecation), as well as partially decayed domestic refuse, including food waste, feather and bone. In order to diminish the bad smells, small bundles of straw, hay and sedge were periodically thrown in the latrine to seal it (Greig 1981: 279; see Fig 9.8 for an example of a latrine pit of 1290 from Germany).

The belief in the importance of clean air for health had implications for the ways in which people in our period treated their living spaces. Excavated evidence gives the lie to Desiderius Erasmus' oft-quoted statement that the rush-strewn floors in English houses were left "sometimes for twenty years", festering with "spittle, vomit, dogs' urine and men's too, dregs of beer and cast off-bits of fish, and other unspeakable kinds of filth" (Mynors and Dalzell 1992: 471). The floors of fourteenth and fifteenth-century peasant houses excavated at Wharram Percy were swept so often that they were worn concavely, whilst floors in the urban tenements at Winchester were also kept scrupulously clean (Keene 1982, 28-9; Hurst 1984, 99). Medieval men and women were expected to keep the streets outside their front doors equally tidy. A recent reassessment of archaeological evidence suggests that people lived up to their obligations for much of the time, and argues that layers of rubbish excavated from medieval streets are unlikely to represent jettisoned waste, but were deliberate deposits for making-up and stabilising the subsoil (Jørgensen 2008: 560).

In fact, the problem of disposing of waste varied in severity at different points during our period. When settlement density was low, following the crash in population suffered during the Black Death of 1348/9 and subsequent epidemics, or in spacious rural or suburban plots, it was possible to bury sewage and refuse on a property without overburdening it. Land pressure intensified as urban populations recovered (or were augmented by immigration) during the early fifteenth to sixteenth centuries. Whenever the quantity of waste material threatened to

exceed a level that could be safely and easily disposed of, new measures had to be employed. One solution was to line rubbish or cesspits with timber or stone; these linings made it possible to clear out the pit's contents. The removed waste might be put to a useful purpose, either as agricultural fertilizer, or to shore up riversides and consolidate ground (great quantities were disposed of in these ways, particularly up to the early part of the fourteenth century, when agriculture was intensive and towns were rapidly expanding into hitherto uncolonised land: Rawcliffe 2004; Gläser 2004: 18, 34, 80-1, 101). Other materials (including bone, ash, metals and wood) might be recycled in a manufacturing process or used in a new product, thus avoiding disposal in the first place (Carver 1987, 82). Finally, if no further use could be found for it, refuse might be carted to a civic dump (Carver 1987, 98; Harbottle and Ellison 1981). From the late fourteenth century and throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth, several larger towns devised schemes to fund waste collections, which regularised the process (Jørgensen 2008). Archaeologically, we see a discernable decrease in the amount of human waste and rubbish that was permanently deposited within tenements at this time (see Ch 9, p 392; Atkin and Evans 2002: 31; Gläser 2004: 63, 101, 121; Platt and Coleman-Smith 1975: 34; see also AME 1, 177).

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by Isla Fay

## Conclusion

It is clear that the historiography of medieval houses creates an important legacy for modern scholars. But modern studies are beginning to question many of the assumptions that have hitherto dominated our understanding. It can no longer be presumed that innovation occurred amongst the elite and filtered down the social scale to rural peasants or the urban bourgeoisie. Rather, a gradual emergence of common ways of organising and using space can be traced through the medieval period, particularly in the use of the tripartite plan. But this common template should not be seen as a rigid model, imposed on the rural and urban landscapes. It was a form that could be adapted and altered to meet the very different social, domestic and economic needs of medieval households, in rural and urban areas. Indeed, what seems to characterise middling-status houses in late medieval England is the flexibility and the multiple uses of domestic space. The significance of these new ways of thinking about medieval houses is considerable. It begins to shed light on the distinctive 'ways of living' of the inhabitants; ways of living which were carried forward into other sites and spaces, such as the public buildings and churches of late medieval England, which form the focus of other chapters in this volume.

### PART 3: SOUTHERNERS: HOUSE AND GARDEN IN AL-ANDALUS

by Julio Navarro Palazón & Pedro Jiménez Castillo

For a map and historical framework of al-Andalus, please see Ch 1, p 19.

#### Houses: History of Research

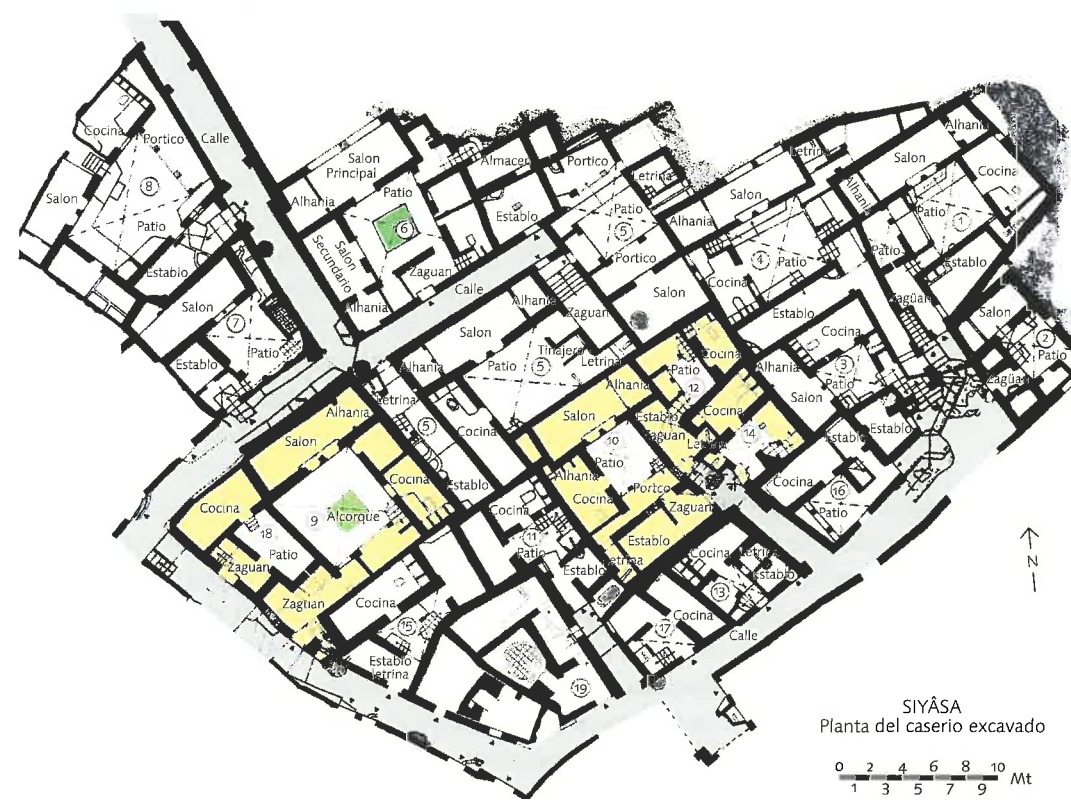
While some written records do mention the medieval Andalusian house, they are not very informative. Chronicles and poetry refer mainly to princely dwellings and legal documents tend to be ambiguous. Other texts, such as the inventory of properties belonging to the churches of Granada in the beginning of the sixteenth century, contain relevant information, but must be used with caution as they reflect the situation after the Castilian reconquest. However, the form and function of the Islamic house is becoming better known through archaeology. Archaeology can establish the plan of a house, the use of the rooms and the way the house interacts with the rest of its settlement area, in both town and country. These studies should lead to a greater understanding, not just of practical and technical matters relating to construction, but of the social organization that reflect the way space was structured.

We still know very little about the houses of the Emirate period (eighth-ninth century). In recent years archaeologists have made contact with remains in the countryside at Majada de las Vacas (Granada) and Peñafior (Jaén) and in modern cities such as Valencia, Mérida and, especially, Córdoba, where a large area of the Segunda district has been uncovered, abandoned in the early ninth after the notorious "revolt of the suburbs" (*revuelta del arrabal*). The information available from the Caliphate (tenth

century) is significantly fuller, provided especially by the splendid courtly city of Madinat al-Zahra, the site of Pechina (Almería) and, more recently, traces of houses that have appeared in urban excavations in Córdoba and Murcia. The Taifa period (eleventh century) includes houses in Vascos (Toledo) and the interesting urban complexes recently unearthed in Zaragoza.

Archaeological knowledge of architecture in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, including that of citadels and palaces, has experienced a quantum leap (Navarro 1995), and the domestic residence in particular has been illuminated by the study of dwellings in the abandoned town of Siyása (Navarro 2002; Navarro & Jiménez 2007b) (Fig 4.12). There are other sites known in the countryside, such as Yecla (Ruiz 2000) and Calasparra (Pozo 2000) – while in towns most contact has been via rescue archaeology, for example in Valencia, Denia, Orihuela, Elche, Lorca and Murcia. In Gharb al-Andalus (the West) the most important archaeological sites for domestic architecture are Saltés (Bazzana & Bedia 2005; see AME 1, 157), Mértola (Macías 1996) and Silves (Varela & Varela 2001), the last two in Portugal.

In the later phase, corresponding to the Nasrid kingdom of Granada and the Marinid kingdom of the western Maghreb (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries), there are more



Plan of the excavated area at Siyása (Cieza, Murcia).

Fig 4.12

examples of domestic buildings still standing on either side of the Straits of Gibraltar. To these may be added the information provided by archaeological excavations, some classic such as the Alhambra itself (Orihuela 1996), others more recent, such as the annexe to the Cuarto Real at Santo Domingo and the housing complexes at Ceuta (Hita and Villada 1996 and 2000), Qasr as-Saghir (Redman 1986) and Belyounech (Cressier, Hassan Benslimane and Touri 1986), the latter two in Morocco.

The territory of Al-Andalus, as all medieval Islam, inherited the Mediterranean courtyard house, the origins of which can be traced back to Mesopotamia. By 2000 BC courtyard houses in the city of Ur already featured rooms on two storeys opening onto a central courtyard with an elaborate water collection system. We see the same arrangement twenty-five centuries later in Sassanian examples. In the Aegean world we know of courtyard houses at Gurnia (Crete) abandoned around 1200 BC, and from the fourth century BC courtyards are found flanked by lobbies (*prostas*) or perimeter porticos (*peristylon*). By the third century BC, paved patios surrounding houses are featured in Phoenician Kerkuan and Carthage, on the coast of Tunisia.

### Layout

While Islam adopted the courtyard house, it took it to fresh levels of development, largely aimed at improving privacy, especially in towns. Modifications included the reduction of openings to the street and measures to prevent a direct view of the interior, either through an open door or from the roof-tops or terraces of adjacent houses. However, the courtyard house was not universal under Islam: courtyards could become redundant or inconvenient in cold wet climates. Muslims living in the Balkans, on the shores of the Caspian Sea, northern Iran, Afghanistan, Yemen or some mountainous areas of the Maghreb preferred houses without doors leading onto patios, and employed openings that were high up, narrow slits or arched windows with stained glass or shutters to achieve ventilation and maintain privacy.

In al-Andalus, the courtyard house was the main type, but simpler forms can be encountered in the countryside, the direct heirs of pre-Islamic traditions, in which the structural units grew (with the family) as contiguous cells. Rooms with a number of different functions might be added and eventually surround an open central space, thus in effect creating a courtyard plan. It is sometimes difficult to draw a clear line between these examples and houses with an original courtyard design, just as written sources fail to distinguish between occupancy by single or multiple family groups.

A surviving house-plan that has a central courtyard surrounded by four wings often means that it was built at a time when there was plenty of space available – as in large farms or early houses in towns. Small plots and the absence of one or more wings may imply a more recent construction adjusted to fit the land available (Fig 4.13). A plot may subsequently be transformed by inheritance. The medieval Islamic house developed on the ground floor, and an upper floor, by no means universal, was the result of the search for more space on a cramped plot, or in consequence of partition of the property.



Andalusian house excavated on a plot on Alfaro Street, Murcia.

Fig 4.13

### Interiors

To appreciate the interior of the Medieval Islamic house, we might pay it an imaginary visit, beginning by handing over one's horse to an ostler at the entrance. Houses were equipped with stables (as determined at Siyâsa by the presence of mangers), situated away from the main living area of the house, to keep the noise and odour at a distance. In some cases, the stables formed an annex to the house and had their own door opening directly onto the street. In towns, it was never necessary to go through the living space to get to the stables.

An L-shaped entrance hall, the *ustuwan*, leading from the street into the courtyard, was the feature that did most to transform the Mediterranean house for Muslim use. The door leading in from the street, and the door leading out into the courtyard were offset, so that it was not possible for passers-by to see into the courtyard or beyond into the house, even when both doors were open. The entrance hall served as a holding bay for visitors before they were admitted to the main house and often had a stone bench for them to sit on while waiting.

Regardless of the size of the Andalusian house, the central courtyard (*sahn*) was its essential feature (Fig 4.14). It let light and air into the rooms and was the focus of most

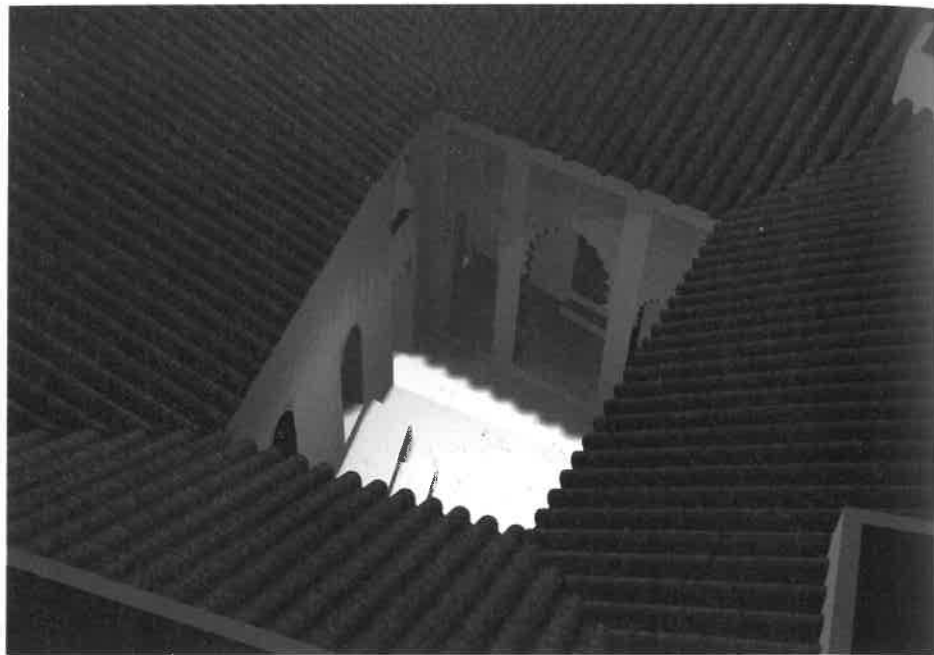


Fig 4.14 Digital Reconstruction of House 8 at Siyâsa (Cieza, Murcia).

of the daily activity – a role that led to its being the chief subject for architectural ornament. Where the house was laid out on a spacious plot, the courtyard had a generous size and was symmetrical in form; but on small plots it might amount to less than 4 or 5 square metres. In the palaces and richest households, the shape is generally rectangular, running north-south, but in more modest homes it may be square. On at least one side, usually the north, it was usual to have a portico, intended to dignify the range containing the principal reception room and to link the upper floors by the gallery that the portico supports. Where a water supply was available, the courtyard provided the site for a sunken garden, sometimes occupying almost the whole space (see below).

The Andalusian house was characterized by the presence of a long and narrow salon that acted as a reception or living room (*majlis*). Its location was typically in the north wing, looking south to catch the early sun. It was intended for family gatherings and the reception of guests, and at night it could be used for sleeping. Larger houses might acquire a second salon in another wing, and the two rooms might be used alternately, depending upon the seasons (as in Houses 4 and 6 at Siyâsa), although they might also be intended to serve separate branches of the family.

The living room occupied the central part of a wing, and their ends were often stopped by partition walls, leaving small enclosed areas beyond known as *alhanias* or *alcobas*. This word is glossed as 'bedroom' in the Diwan of Ibn Quzman (d. 1160 AD), in the Leiden Glossary of the late twelfth century and in the *Arabic Vocabulary* attributed to Friar Raimon Martí of the thirteenth century. Sebastian de Covarrubias, in his

dictionary of 1611, states that the *alhanía* is a "chamber, place of rest and sleep, where you sleep and the bed is located, because the *alhanía*, says Father Guadix, is as good as the bed." There is evidence that the floor was higher than in the living room and in some cases, there was a platform on which was installed a wooden structure or *tarima* (a term of Arab origin) that served as a bed.

The kitchen was an essential element, and occurred regularly in the twelfth and thirteenth century houses of Siyâsa. There the kitchens have three main characteristic features: the hearth, the cupboard and the work surface. The main hearth, rectangular with an apsidal end, was usually paved with slabs of stone and sunk about 10 cm into the floor in order to contain the ash and cinders. The cupboard, containing the cooking pots and other utensils, was constructed of stone or wattle-and-clay, and plastered, and it was located adjacent to the hearth. The bays of the cupboard (or dresser) were formed by ornamental arches, consisting of at least two shelves and a variable number of compartments. The work surfaces took the form of L-shaped benches built around the hearth, with a height ranging between 10 and 30 cm, and were designed to function as tables for processing food.

According to Fray Pedro de Alcalá's *Arab Dictionary*, the name given to a latrine was the euphemistic *bayt al-ma*, or water-closet (as it is still called in Morocco). At least since the Caliphate period it had the same characteristics: a small building usually located in a corner of the courtyard, and entered through an L-shaped passage. The better-preserved examples have a high narrow window to admit air and light.

### Conclusion

The design of the house was practical, drawn from centuries of experience in living in Mediterranean climates. But it was also influenced by a concern for privacy common to all Islamic societies irrespective of their geographical location. Controlled breeding (endogamy) and the concept of family honour (*ird*) characteristic of Arab society, confined women to private quarters (*haram*, literally 'forbidden'), which must be carefully preserved from strangers. These precautions were particularly needed in the city, where promiscuity among individuals, families and clans was much higher than in rural areas. Therefore, the house, where women spent most of the day, was a building that had to be well guarded against any uncontrolled physical or visual relationship with the outside world.

This architectural scheme was applied to simple houses and to palaces alike. In the palaces, it characterized the domestic areas of courtly buildings, where the king and his family lived, together perhaps with noble associates. The same model was also adopted for ceremonial areas, those that genuinely represent the power and the government, but on a larger scale and adding specific elements such as the throne hall and a developed courtyard, featuring gardens, *qubba*, pavilions and large ornamental pools (see below).

### The Gardens of Al-Andalus, History of Research

The conquest of the Kingdom of Granada in 1492 introduced Europeans to the orchards and gardens located on Andalusian soil, in particular at the palaces of the Alhambra and the Generalife. The unanimous appreciation of their striking beauty and amenity was celebrated in many chronicles at the time, an admiration maintained throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. James Cavannah Murphy (1815) carefully described and drew attention to those "Moorish" elements that seemed typical of the gardens, all very different from those known in the rest of Europe. Of the authors of the first half of the twentieth century, Valladar and Forestier exposed for the first time the elusive nature of the Andalusian garden, and the need to draw on new sources to discover its medieval origins. Forestier (1915) recognized the difficulty of extracting the essence of the medieval garden from those preserved in the Alhambra and the Generalife, which had been modified over five centuries. Forestier's insights were influential; for example, he claimed that medieval gardens had raised walkways or promenades, a design only seen in traditional Moroccan courtyards; these features have been subsequently confirmed by many archaeological excavations. Intuitively he suggested that medieval gardens featured architectural topiary, an attractive hypothesis not yet endorsed. However, he also promoted the idea that edible and ornamental plants would grow on the same parterre, which seems unlikely, especially in the palaces.

The second half of the twentieth century saw the continuation of interdisciplinary attempts to recover and to analyze the early Islamic garden. Researchers such as the eminent architect L. Torres Balbás refrained from making speculative reconstructions, but not so Prieto Moreno (1952), who based his image on tenuous conjecture and personal impressions. G. Marçais's 1941 lecture (published 1957) entitled "Les jardins de l'Islam," introduced a strategy that was to be followed in future investigations on the subject; it would be necessary to use sources as diverse as literature, iconography and archaeology, all embedded in the broader context of the history of gardening. James Dickie (1965-1966, 1992) took a traditional line, exploiting the limited information contained in the written sources combined with the testimony of the standing architecture. In 1973 an international congress on Islamic gardens was held in Granada, at which were presented several studies relating to gardens in al-Andalus. Some were general and some more specific topics, such as the use of water in Nazari gardens, references in the poetry of the time, the Geoponica texts and even the contribution of palaeontology (AAVV, 1976).

At the end of the twentieth century, the character of the Islamic garden was encapsulated in a suite of ideas originally owed to Forestier, namely that it had a spiritual purpose, evoking paradise; it instilled tranquillity through standing water (with occasional fountains); it combined ornamental and vegetable plants in the same garden; and, in general, that the form and character of the inherited Medieval Islamic garden can be read from the gardens of the al-Andalus area.

These diagnostics were challenged and critiqued by modern scholars, especially Tito Rojo (2001, 2007). Although the early authors, and later romantic travellers, had regarded the surviving gardens as 'Islamic' this was not strictly true, since they had been developing in a local milieu for two or three hundred years before the lands were con-

quered by the northern Christian Kingdoms. Much of the later literature on the medieval Islamic garden in general, and al-Andalus in particular, has simply repeated the list of defining attributes without demonstrating their validity. Most are simplistic, or even in contradiction with the reality that we now know better, thanks to a small group of specialists who, following Tito Rojo's lead, have been extensively studying the writing, illustrations and materiality of the garden.

### The archaeology of gardens

In addition to the interdisciplinary harnessing of Arabic studies, history, ethnobotany and literature, much of the new reality of the medieval garden is owed to archaeology. Recent syntheses which reflect these developments are Tjion Sie Fat and de Jong (1991), Petruccioli (1994), the doctoral thesis of Rafael Fernández García (1995), Ruggles (2000), Navarro (2005) (on the archaeology of garden architecture in al-Andalus), Antonio Almagro (2007) (on the visual analysis of such spaces), Zangheri, Lorenzi & Rahmati (2006), Conan (2007), and García & Hernández (2007).

Unlike architecture, a garden is a living organism composed of things which flourish and die, sensitive to changes in fashion, neglect and abandonment. Archaeology, therefore, reports principally on architectural elements such as the provision of flower beds and promenades, porticos and pavilions, pools, fountains, wells and ditches supplying water for irrigation, all of which were part of the garden landscape. The enormous volume of new information provided by medieval archaeology includes not only the gardens of palaces, but also details of the little-known domestic garden. New techniques applied to archaeological research, especially palynology and paleobotany, are yielding valuable first-hand information on the species planted through the analysis of pollen and seeds, as demonstrated by the work at the Generalife (Casares, Tito & Socorro 2003).

The garden has been linked to power in a special and intimate manner: it provides pleasure to its owners, and becomes a sign of distinction and authority. In al-Andalus, there was virtually no palace without a garden. In most cases, the garden was built inside the palace, within available courtyards of sufficient size to allow the planting of trees, shrubs and ornamental plants. Water was provided for irrigation as well as being itself a garden feature. In many cases, gardens and surrounding orchards also lay outside the buildings, enhancing the glories of the royal house and adding the production of fruit to the simple pleasures of ambience.

Thanks to archaeology, we now know that, in addition to palaces, domestic dwellings from the humblest houses to the richest exhibited the Andalusian taste for gardens in their residential courtyards. They were almost always square or rectangular, equipped with perimeter gutters to collect rain-water and sunken to prevent flooding. Larger houses might also feature ornamental ponds and fountains. In more humble domestic properties, conditioned by the small size of the courtyards, the garden shrank to a square in which only one tree could be planted.

It will be convenient to present now a summary historical synthesis, intended both to offer an assessment of current knowledge and pointers for future work.

### A History of the Andalusian garden

The oldest known Andalusian gardens in a town, now in ruins, is at Madīnat al-Zahrā' built by the Umayyad caliphs of Al-Andalus in the tenth century. It featured both large landscaped open spaces and smaller, more formal parterres with pools, fountains, promenades and water-channels. The gardens of al-Zahra were seen as part of its geography of reception. In the garden fronting the reception hall of 'Abd al-Rahmān III stood a central pavilion on a raised platform with promenades and pools. At the end of one of the promenades of this enormous garden was another pavilion, which looked out over another stretch of pasture and a garden lying at a lower level divided in the shape of an axial cross. The presence of water, both moving and still, in the gardens of the palace of Madīnat al-Zahrā' was important. Large pools, still and silent, formed mirrors that varied in tone depending on the depth of the pool. They reflected the architecture and threw light back into the interior of the rooms. By contrast, the streams were incorporated into the architecture by means of systems of channels, watering the flower-beds while their murmuring sound filled the garden space. On a terrace at a higher level still was a residential area known as Casa de la Alberquilla, structured around a square courtyard faced with two porticos and a central garden, with a cruciform layout of promenades, interrupted on one axis by a pool. This first example provided a model of the design to be adopted later in family houses and palaces.

From the late eleventh century, after the brilliant but unstable period of the first Taifa (tenth-eleventh century AD), the African dynasties began to develop the courtyard gardens first known from the Umayyad period. The Taifa Palace of Aljafería (eleventh century), built by King Abu Jafar Ahmad Ibn al-Hūd Muqtadir Billah, near the city of Zaragoza, provides an important link in the evolutionary process of the Andalusian patio garden. This now has two pools, one appearing before each portico, but each of different sizes. Scarcely any remains of Almoravid (eleventh century) residences exist, and we know only the walls of the palace that Ali Ibn Yusuf ordered to be built in Marrakesh, exhumed when the site of the first Kutubiyya was excavated. This is a small cross-shaped courtyard which possibly formed part of his private premises and that was possibly preceded by two pools, similar to what was to be constructed few years later in Castillejo de Monteagudo.

The Castillejo de Monteagudo, known in Arabic sources as Qasr Ibn Sa'd, palace of Ibn Mardanish, or King Lobo, is the best surviving example of Andalusian residential architecture from the mid-twelfth century. Although dated to the second Taifa period, we can consider it, from its architectural decoration, as a late example of an Almoravid building. Situated a few kilometres from Murcia, this recreational residence was laid out around a cross-shaped rectangular courtyard, fronted by small pools on the shorter sides. The remains of another Mardanisí palace, the Dar al-Sugrà, discovered beneath the monastery of Santa Clara at Murcia, comprised part of a garden of two broad platforms with small longitudinal water channels at whose intersection stood a pavilion or *qubba*. This courtyard was three times bigger than that of Castillejo de Monteagudo.

The Almohad caliphs (c. 1147 - c. 1269) came to exercise control over a vast territory extending between Africa and the Iberian Peninsula, and inaugurated an era of demon-

strative building. They had their capital at Seville, notable for its magnificent homes, especially those built within the palace complex of the Alcázar of Seville. Their gardens all adopted the courtyard cross formation, now combined with pools arranged at each end of the long axis. The first and best known is called the *Crucero*, a large courtyard divided into four gardens, each subdivided in turn into four. The gardens lay 4.70m below the level of the house, the deepest we know. Another courtyard garden in Seville, completely destroyed in 1356 to build the residence of King Don Pedro, has been rediscovered under the *Patio de la Monteria* (Fig 4.15). Exceptionally, the garden here was square and appears to have featured a high platform surrounding its perimeter. On each side of the garden, steps descended from the platform to the paths of the cross-formation, located one metre down, while the surfaces of the four garden areas were 0.50 m below that. A channel at the base of the platform collected rain-water from the roofs and prevented it flooding the cultivated areas.

Between the period of the Alcazar palace complex of Almohad Seville and the first buildings of the Alhambra, there is a gap of a century in which we have only one single example, – the residence erected in Murcia for Ibn Hūd al-Mutawakkil (1228 – 1238). This building, known in the thirteenth-century Christian sources as "Alcacer Ceguir" (al-Qasr al-Sagīr), is still partially standing in land that now belongs to the Monastery of Santa Clara. Its architectural organization and decoration are essential for under-



Cruciform garden discovered beneath the *Patio de la Monteria* at the royal palace of Seville, 12th century (digital reconstruction by A. Almagro). **Fig 4.15**

standing the birth of Nasrid art in Granada. The new plan was laid over the ruins of the *Dâr al-Sugrà* (above). One of the most innovative aspects of this garden is a central large rectangular pool running north-south, with garden spaces placed on each long side, a design that was to be adopted in the Nasrid palaces of the Abencerrajes, and Comares, both of them located in the Alhambra.

The Nasrid emirs established their capital in Granada in 1238 and maintained a kingdom in its name for more than two and a half centuries – until 1492. Most of the gardens and orchards preserved from this period are in the palace-city of the Alhambra and the Generalife. El Patio de la Acequia in the Generalife, whose construction may have started in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, is noted for its exceptional state of preservation (Fig 4.16). The rectangular shape is more elongated than usual and the four gardens in the cross arms, each 48.60 x 12.70 metres, contained plants typical of the genre. Recent palynological studies have indicated that the beds were occupied by meadow grass with colourful flowers enclosed with myrtle hedges. Also indicated is the presence of citrus fruits (bitter orange, lemon, citron), pomegranate, jujube, grape vines, and other ornamental types of trees such as the cypress, laurel, jasmine and roses (Casares, Tito & Socorro 2003).

The most common type of garden now being adopted for palaces and houses of this period had a tripartite organization, in which two rectangular parterres flank a large central pool that occupies the entire elongated length of the courtyard, with porticos standing on the shorter sides. The most famous example of this type of garden is in the Comares Palace, the ruling sultan's private residence built by Yusuf I (1333-1354). Currently, the parterres are occupied exclusively by myrtles on raised platforms, but a wealth of iconographical evidence shows that they had once contained fruit trees. Drawings and antique prints also show fountains in the centre of the pool, now disappeared, and on the short sides, now levelled.

Of the Nasrid dynasty of Granada, Sultan Muhammad V (1354-1359 and 1362-1391), had a great interest in architecture, and in the Palacio de los Leones he set out to do something new, influenced by the architecture of his ally Peter I (1350-1369), king of Castile. But even today there is no consensus that there was a garden there during the Middle Ages. However, archaeological excavations since 1995 at Cuarto Real de Santo Domingo, located in the historic centre of Granada, have discovered a new garden of the greatest interest, with elements indicating a date in the Nasrid period, and probably the reign of Muhammad II (1273-1302). It was rectangular, measured 42.30 x 34.40 metres and was bordered on three sides by a high wall. The lower south side was flanked by a portico with five arches in front of a *qubba*, perfectly preserved, with two small outbuildings on either side. The garden was divided into two large parterres by a central promenade running from the portico, opening into a square platform containing an octagonal pool of 1.43 metres a side. The pool was fed by water led via a channel from a fountain of white marble located in the portico. The edge of the pool was surrounded on all sides by a raised promenade, which, like the base of the pool, was composed of bricks laid in a pattern (Fig 4.17).



Patio with central channel at the 14th-century Generalife in Granada.

Fig 4.17

The palaces and gardens of Al-Andalus transcended the boundaries of Islamic territory and were adopted as a sign of prestige by Christian Castile. As Castile became the strongest kingdom of Spain it employed its growing wealth to develop with renewed vigour this architecture of Islamic tradition. Models of Andalusian origin were selected, modified, reworked and recreated, so renewing the influence and development of Islamic art, especially in the city of Toledo. A typical example is the palace of Don Fadrique, a building closely linked to the Toledo plaster artisans, which was built in Seville a few years after the Christian conquest in the middle of the thirteenth century.

Paradoxically, while typical Islamic elements such as cross-shaped courtyards fell into disuse in later thirteenth century al-Andalus, they were maintained and developed in designs owed to the Mudéjar (Islamic residents of Christian Spain). The recently excavated Alcázar of Guadalajara, which is providing valuable information about the interactions between Christian and Muslim in the architecture of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, featured a courtyard with a great cross-shaped area. Instead of a pavilion, it had at its centre a large rectangular pool lined with concrete in which were embedded ceramic pots to encourage the breeding of fish (Fig 4.18). This is a valuable example of the Castilian Mudéjar contribution to Andalusian architecture, since this model of cross-shaped court with great central pool, appears later in the Nasrid palace of Alijares.

## MATERIAL CULTURE – ARTEFACTS AND DAILY LIFE

*Else Roesdahl and Frans Verhaeghe*

### Introduction

The material world of communities and individuals in medieval Europe (and elsewhere) included their physical environment, man-made landscapes, settlements, major buildings and housing, all of which relate in one way or another to power, economy or religion. This material world also comprised a wide range of portable objects and commodities, which shaped the daily lives and behaviour of medieval people, and form the subject of this chapter.

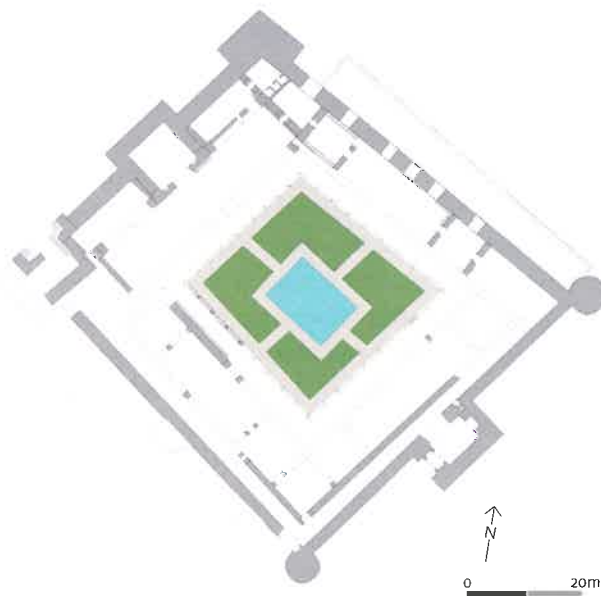
All objects are vehicles carrying many kinds of information – about raw materials, production and technology, consumption and consumption patterns, functions and disposal, trade and exchange, processes of change (including fashion, innovation and transfer of technology), and more abstract properties, including religious and ethnic identities. Objects could have many different meanings depending not only on their function but also on their social, cultural and economic contexts. They also help with chronological queries, but we should keep in mind that an artefact may have had a long life-span and a complex biography.

Nor should we forget that artefacts never emerged or functioned in isolation: each was an integral part of a much larger assemblage. Although important in basic practical terms, they were also set in specific technical, cultural and even ‘artistic’ traditions and were used – consciously or otherwise – in complex social relations. They were, of course, also linked to other components of material culture and just like these, they were agents, playing an ‘active’ – not a passive – role in people’s behaviour and in the evolution of material culture and society through time.

Archaeology documents the intricacy of such links with numerous examples. Among them are the changes in housing and housing culture and its relationship with heating arrangements, fittings and other material equipment; the development of paper and printing; the invention of guns; or – on a more modest level – the copying, adapting and adopting of new fashions and their attendant objects. Such complexities and interactions between artefacts and the many spheres of (domestic) life deserve more attention in future research.



**Fig 4.17** *The garden and pavilion of the Cuarto Real of Santo Domingo, Granada, end of the 13th century (digital reconstruction by A. Almagro).*



**Fig 4.18** *Plan of the fortress at Guadalajara (13th–14th century), which featured a courtyard with a great cross-shaped area. Instead of a pavilion, it had at its centre a large rectangular pool lined with concrete.*