

# Vernacular Buildings and the Development of the Later Medieval Domestic Plan in England

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*THE later medieval domestic plan, comprising services, cross-entry, hall and sometimes chamber, can be identified in vernacular buildings in the 12th century. The plan did not emerge from the longhouse, as has been suggested. Instead, the longhouse is identified as regional variant of the later medieval domestic plan. The introduction of the plan was also not directly linked to developments in building structure, since it is found in houses which did not use post-truss or cruck construction. Three types of 12th-century building are identified which show how the domestic plan was used at an early stage. By the early or mid-13th century excavated evidence and standing buildings show that the plan was becoming widely adopted and that the divisions of space were articulated by the main structural posts.*

The great majority of later medieval houses were constructed according to a standard plan, insofar as finance and other considerations allowed. The buildings of the gentry were larger and the plan more complex than those of their peasants, but the key features of the domestic form were to be found at all social levels. That is extraordinary enough, but quite as remarkable was the way in which, in the course of a few decades in the early and mid-16th century, the plan was first modified and then superseded. Subsequently, over a rather longer period, existing buildings were transformed to match the new ideal. A number of studies have considered the end of the later medieval domestic plan; very few have examined its origins.<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, more difficult to trace buildings from the beginning of the plan than the end. Only a small number survive from the period around 1200 and their dating, and indeed sometimes their function, may be disputed. Nevertheless, the present paper seeks to suggest how the later medieval domestic plan was adopted into common usage in vernacular buildings.

The emergence of the later medieval plan, comprising a hall, services and chamber, is sometimes presented as one change among a number which took place in the 13th century and led to a building-type which persisted for over 300 years. The other changes are identified as the development of post-truss and cruck construction, and the use of ground-sill walls which removed the timbers from

<sup>1</sup> For the end of the later medieval plan, see M. Johnson, *Housing Culture: Traditional Architecture in an English Landscape* (London, 1993) and E. Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses* (London, 1975), 23–59.

contact with the soil making for greater longevity.<sup>2</sup> It cannot be assumed that the three developments were necessarily linked. The emergence of the later medieval plan was not connected to advances to building technology; it was possible to construct buildings of that plan using ground-fast posts, as will be shown. There was also no direct association between the introduction of stone footings and the use of cruck blades or principal posts in post-truss buildings. Wrathmell has shown that a number of buildings in different areas of the country were built using ground-fast principal posts and subsequently underbuilt in stone.<sup>3</sup>

It is paradoxical that, given the importance which has been laid on these innovations in timber construction, the development of the later medieval plan has generally been traced through stone buildings. Stone was most commonly used as a building material at the higher social levels. It is implied that innovations identifiable in supra-vernacular stone buildings trickled down through the social hierarchy to be adopted in vernacular timber houses.<sup>4</sup> That assumption needs to be treated with some caution. If we look at the demise of the later medieval plan, it becomes apparent that the innovations which marked its end did not start with the gentry. Pearson has noted that in Kent the wealthy yeomen were in the vanguard of innovation in the early 16th century. They were able to be more innovative in building design because they did not need the open hall for ceremonial purposes, and were able to experiment with fully two-storied buildings.<sup>5</sup> Traditional plans might therefore persist amongst the gentry and nobility for reasons of social space or a desire to adhere to the symbolism of earlier forms, at a time when they were being abandoned by other classes.

Very few standing vernacular timber buildings survive from the 12th century. The remains of buildings, such as Fyfield Hall (Essex) or Burstow Manor (Hertfordshire) are fragmentary and the original plan is rarely recoverable.<sup>6</sup> The best evidence for buildings of that period is from excavated remains. The interpretation of evidence from excavations, however, presents its own problems. Dating of such remains, particularly from rural sites, is often difficult. Buildings are generally dated from associated pottery found in post-holes and wall-trenches; but unless the history of deposition is clear, the pottery may relate to construction, demolition or, indeed, may be residual from previous occupation on the site. Even if the context of the pottery can be established reliably, the dating of ceramics may

<sup>2</sup> C. C. Dyer, 'English peasant buildings in the later Middle Ages', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 30 (1986), 19–45, at pp. 36 and 40, associates the development of stone-based footings with new types of timber building.

<sup>3</sup> S. Wrathmell, 'Rural settlements in medieval England: perspectives and perceptions', 178–94 in B. Vyner (ed.), *Building on the Past: Papers Celebrating 150 Years of the Royal Archaeological Institute* (London, 1994), p. 189; S. Wrathmell, *Domestic Settlements 2: Medieval Peasant Farmsteads* (York University Archaeological Publications, 8, York, 1989), 12; S. Wrathmell, 'Peasant houses, farmsteads and villages in north-east England', 247–67 in M. Aston, D. Austin and C. Dyer (eds.), *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), at pp. 258–9. See also C. R. J. Currie, 'Time and chance: modelling the attrition of old houses', *Vernacular Architect.*, 19 (1988), 1–9.

<sup>4</sup> M. Wood, *The English Medieval House* (London, 1965); P. A. Faulkner, 'Domestic planning from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries', *Archaeol. J.*, 115 (1958), 150–83; J. Schofield, *Medieval London Houses* (New Haven, 1995); M. W. Thompson, *The Medieval Hall: The Basis of Secular Domestic Life, 600–1600 AD* (Aldershot, 1995), 132–43; G. Duby, 'The diffusion of cultural patterns in feudal society', *Past and Present*, 39 (1968), 3–10.

<sup>5</sup> S. Pearson, *The Medieval Houses of Kent: An Historical Analysis* (London, 1994), 115, 134.

<sup>6</sup> For Fyfield, see C. A. Hewett, *English Historic Carpentry* (Chichester, 1980), 53–5 and for a dendro-date, M. C. Bridge, 'Tree-Ring Analysis of Timbers from Fyfield Hall, Essex (Ancient Monuments Lab report 17/98)'; J. T. Smith, *English Houses 1200–1800: The Hertfordshire Evidence* (London, 1992), 12.

be ill-founded, or thinking may have changed as a consequence of later discoveries.<sup>7</sup> If, however, we recognize the limitations of archaeological evidence, it is possible to use excavated remains to understand the character of vernacular buildings. The approach adopted here is that used by Wrathmell to re-interpret the houses excavated at Wharram Percy (N. Yorkshire). He suggested that excavated evidence might be better understood with reference to standing buildings, sometimes of a slightly later date. Excavated buildings were drawn from the same 'population' (in the statistical sense) as upstanding buildings of the same period, though factors may have operated to produce rather different samples.<sup>8</sup> However, as we move from the 14th century backwards, there are fewer and fewer surviving buildings to act as a guide to the interpretation of archaeological remains. Our interpretation of buildings of the 13th and 12th centuries must continue to be informed by a realization that these were the antecedents in a tradition of construction first clearly identifiable in standing buildings in the 14th century.

### THE LATER MEDIEVAL DOMESTIC PLAN

The later medieval house plan consisted of three, or commonly four, spaces. These spaces differed in size and disposition, depending upon the wealth of the owner and other factors. The first area encountered on entering a medieval house was the cross-entry which was commonly separated by a screen from the hall and by a wall from the lower end of the building. The cross-entry was entered by a door at the side of the building and generally, as the name implies, allowed access to a second door on the other side. In some buildings the organization of the external space did not allow a second door. At Penhallam (Cornwall), for example, a second door was not provided since it would have given access only to an unbridged part of the moat.<sup>9</sup> In some peasant houses the second doorway was later blocked, perhaps to reduce draught or prevent the ingress of water.<sup>10</sup> On one side of the cross-entry was a room or rooms, often used for the services. In simpler buildings it was a single room for the storage and sometimes for the preparation of food. At Foxcote (Hampshire), for example, there was a kiln for malting within the services of a 15th-century house and at Roffey (Sussex), a house abandoned in the mid- to late 16th century, had an oven and hearths.<sup>11</sup> The room might also have been used for storage of other goods, although there is rarely any certain archaeological evidence. In larger buildings the service end was divided into two areas, and in the

<sup>7</sup> For an example of the re-dating of pottery from rural sites, see J. Allen, 'Medieval pottery and dating of deserted settlements on Dartmoor', *Proc. Devon Archaeol. Soc.*, 52 (1994), 141-7.

<sup>8</sup> Wrathmell, *Domestic Settlements* op. cit. in note 3, 3-14; Currie, op. cit. in note 3, 1-9.

<sup>9</sup> G. Beresford, 'The medieval manor of Penhallam, Jacobstow, Cornwall', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 18 (1974), 90-145, esp. fig. 27.

<sup>10</sup> E. M. Jope and R. I. Threlfall, 'Excavations of a medieval settlement at Beere, North Tawton, Devon', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 2 (1958), 112-40, at pp. 118-20; C. G. Henderson and P. J. Weddell, 'Medieval settlements on Dartmoor and in west Devon: the evidence from excavations', *Proc. Devon Archaeol. Soc.*, 52 (1994), 119-40, at p. 127 (Hutholes 3) and fig. 7.

<sup>11</sup> A. D. Russel, 'Foxcote: the archaeology and history of a Hampshire hamlet', *Proc. Hampshire Field Club Archaeol. Soc.*, 41 (1985), 149-224; R. Holgate, 'The excavation of a later medieval hall-house at Brook Lane near Horsham, West Sussex', *Sussex Archaeol. Collect.*, 127 (1989), 123-31.

largest these two rooms might be separated by corridor leading to a kitchen beyond.

The hall lay on the opposite side of the cross-entry. It was the main formal and social space in a house, and in some buildings it served numerous functions, including eating, sleeping and other household activities.<sup>12</sup> The formality of the organization of space in the hall has been stressed by a number of writers, but it is likely to have been less strictly adhered to in peasant buildings, where there was less room, than in lordly ones.<sup>13</sup> Surviving medieval buildings might suggest that the hall was usually a lofty space, but there is growing evidence that before the mid-14th century many peasant buildings were quite low and the hall modest in scale.<sup>14</sup> Few of these low medieval buildings survive, because their profile made it difficult to insert a first floor. As the need for first-floor rooms grew, they were found unsuitable and were replaced.

The fourth space found in many medieval houses was the chamber, a term used here to describe the ground-floor or first-floor room beyond the hall. It has been suggested that the best chamber was generally on the upper floor in the 12th to 14th centuries, where the building permitted, but was placed on the ground floor in the 15th and 16th centuries. Two examples may be cited where there is particularly good evidence for the location on the first floor. Coppwilliam in Staplehurst (Kent) dated to 1370/1 had a ground-floor room so low that it served effectively as an undercroft and was probably used for storage. It is likely that the low ground-floor room in the cross-wing at 39 The Causeway, Steventon (Oxon., formerly Berkshire), which was divided by a row of samson posts, served a similar purpose.<sup>15</sup> It is presumed that the chamber, in addition to its use for sleeping, served a number of purposes, including keeping personal items and valuables. The Paston Letters indicate that chambers in the manorial buildings of that family accommodated a counting board and chests containing deeds, money and account books.<sup>16</sup>

The house should not be considered in isolation from the other buildings of the medieval farm. On some larger farmsteads the outbuildings were used for food-preparation and storage. The number of buildings on a peasant farmstead may have increased in the period after 1350, though on many farms before that date there would have already been a barn or kitchen.<sup>17</sup> Some buildings originally

<sup>12</sup> B. A. Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (New York, 1986), 39.

<sup>13</sup> D. Austin and J. Thomas, 'The "proper study" of medieval archaeology: a case study', 43-78 in D. Austin and L. Alcock (eds.), *From the Baltic to the Black Sea: Studies in Medieval Archaeology* (London, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> Currie, *op. cit.* in note 3, 5; Pearson, *op. cit.* in note 5, 51. R. Machin, *The Houses of Yetminster* (Bristol, 1978), 15-19, provides an example of a building of modest height constructed in c. 1500.

<sup>15</sup> N. W. Alcock and C. R. J. Currie, 'Upstairs and downstairs?', *Vernacular Architect.*, 20 (1989), 21-3; Pearson, *op. cit.* in note 5, 64; C. R. J. Currie, 'Larger medieval houses in the Vale of White Horse', *Oxoniensia*, 57 (1992), 81-244, at p. 203.

<sup>16</sup> N. Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century, Part 1* (Oxford, 1971), nos. 59, 150, 173, 191, 280; S. A. Moorhouse, 'The rural medieval landscape', 581-850 in M. L. Faull and S. A. Moorhouse (eds.), *West Yorkshire: An Archaeological Survey to A.D. 1500* (Wakefield, 1981), vol. 3, at p. 814. For other written evidence of the function of rooms in the medieval house, see L. R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge, 1991), 84-8.

<sup>17</sup> G. G. Astill, 'Economic change in later medieval England: an archaeological review', 217-47 in T. H. Aston, P. R. Coss, C. C. Dyer and J. Thirsk (eds.), *Social Relations and Ideas: Essays in Honour of R. H. Hilton* (Cambridge, 1983), at pp. 232-5; Dyer, *op. cit.* in note 2, 24-5, 31-5.

identified as houses have more recently been re-interpreted as outbuildings.<sup>18</sup> In the South-East, for instance, a number of standing buildings have now been recognized as detached kitchens, most dating to the period 1450–1550. Documentary evidence also suggests that these were not unusual in the 14th century.<sup>19</sup> A mid-13th-century example may have been excavated at Seacourt (Berkshire). One building in Area 5 on that site was identified as a house by the excavator on the evidence of the hearth, but the size and position of the fire-place and the presence of two other minor burnt patches suggests that it is more likely that the building was a kitchen. The larger adjoining building ('barn-byre'), though no evidence for a hearth survived, is more likely to have been the house. There was a further outbuilding, only part of which was examined.<sup>20</sup>

The development of the farm has been considered by Hurst. He suggested in an influential article that separate buildings for stock, corn and habitation emerged out of a single structure, the longhouse, in which all the functions were accommodated under a single roof. According to this interpretation, the later medieval building plan, at least at vernacular level, could have only developed once the animals were housed in a separate building. Hurst acknowledged that the change from longhouse to farm complex was not synchronous throughout England. It happened earlier in the south and later in northern England. He also noted gaps in the distribution map of the longhouse. At the time he wrote, no examples had been found in the central Midlands, East Anglia and Kent, which he attributed to the lack of excavations in those areas.<sup>21</sup>

The problems of the longhouse have been simultaneously ones of definition and recognition. Modern usage of the term 'longhouse' is generally confined to buildings in which stock was housed on one side of the cross-entry, in the position otherwise occupied by the services, while the hall and chamber lay on the opposite side. The term *longa domus* was applied in medieval documents to a range of agricultural buildings with no residential function.<sup>22</sup> The confusion over the meaning of the term and the problem of the identification of buildings has been compounded by some archaeologists who have referred to any building with opposed entrances as a longhouse, since it was assumed, erroneously, that these implied accommodation for both stock and people.<sup>23</sup> The imprecision of usage reflects the deeper problem of identifying the function of rooms in excavated buildings. It is often difficult to recognize whether a building accommodated both stock and their owners. Austin has identified six attributes which are commonly

<sup>18</sup> Wrathmell, *Domestic Settlements* op. cit. in note 3, 14; D. and M. Martin, 'Detached kitchens in eastern Sussex: a re-assessment of the evidence', *Vernacular Architect.*, 28 (1997), 85–91, esp. p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> Martin and Martin, op. cit. in note 18; M. F. Gardiner, *Medieval settlement and society in the eastern Sussex Weald* (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, 1995, University of London), 233, 272.

<sup>20</sup> M. Biddle, 'The deserted medieval village of Seacourt, Berkshire', *Oxoniensia*, 26/27 (1961/2), 70–201, esp. pp. 96–104.

<sup>21</sup> J. G. Hurst, 'A review of archaeological research (to 1968)', 76–144 in M. W. Beresford and J. G. Hurst (eds.), *Deserted Medieval Villages* (London, 1971), esp. p. 107.

<sup>22</sup> E. Mercer, "'Domus longa' and 'longhouse'", *Vernacular Architect.*, 3 (1972), 9–10.

<sup>23</sup> N. W. Alcock and P. Smith, 'The long-house: a plea for clarity', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 16 (1972), 145–6; G. I. Meirion-Jones, 'The long-house: a definition', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 17 (1973), 135–7. All the buildings with opposed entrances at Gomeldon were assumed to be longhouses: J. Musty and D. Algar, 'Excavations at the deserted medieval village of Gomeldon, near Salisbury', *Wiltshire Archaeol. Nat. Hist. Mag.*, 80 (1986), 127–69.

found in excavated longhouses, although not all will be identifiable in every case.<sup>24</sup> These attributes may be reduced to three issues: is there a clearly definable area of the building which housed stock, often marked by an axial drain; is there a separate domestic area generally indicated by a well-built hearth; are these two areas separated only by a cross-entry? A byre in a building contiguous to the house, but separated from it by a solid wall, cannot be termed a longhouse. The presence of a drain alone does not indicate accommodation for animals: drains have been found in domestic contexts, such as a chamber (room AD) at Upton (Gloucestershire) which, since it was only approachable by ladder, cannot ever have housed stock.<sup>25</sup> The size and position of the drain for animal effluent is usually decisive, though the presence of other features, including post-holes for stalls and tethering rings, may also allow identification.<sup>26</sup>

In the late medieval and post-medieval periods many longhouses were converted into farmhouses, either by the removal of animals and conversion of the former byre to domestic use, or by the construction of a solid wall between the byre and living room. Such changes took place at, for example, West Whelpington (Northumberland) in the late 17th century.<sup>27</sup> Hurst proposed that conversion was indicative of the way in which the medieval peasant house *as a type* developed from the longhouse. This seems improbable for two reasons. First, many of the so-called longhouses have been incorrectly identified; they do not conform to the strict definition. Second, it is doubtful whether the longhouse, as a building type, was ever truly ubiquitous. Three sites in particular have been used to demonstrate the transition from longhouse to farm complex and in each case the evidence is suspect.<sup>28</sup>

The village of Hangleton lies high on the Sussex Downs and since its original publication the interpretation, sequence and function of the buildings has been modified by subsequent study.<sup>29</sup> Two buildings described as longhouses were found. Building 1, which was constructed in the early to mid-13th century, has what may now be recognized as a standard late-medieval house plan (below, Fig. 5). A cross-entry separated the hall from a room identified by the excavator as a byre or store room. The internal dimensions of the latter room, 5.3 m by 2.3 m, are barely

<sup>24</sup> D. Austin, 'Dartmoor and upland village of the south-west of England', 71-9 in D. Hooke (ed.), *Medieval Villages* (Oxford, 1985), at p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> P. A. Rahtz, 'Upton, Gloucestershire, 1964-1968. Second report', *Trans. Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeol. Soc.*, 88 (1969), 74-126, at pp. 89-90.

<sup>26</sup> For an example of a tethering ring, B. Harbottle and R. A. S. Cowper, 'An excavation at Memmerkirk, Northumbria', *Archaeol. Aeliana*, ser. 4, 41 (1963), 43-63, pls. IV and V.

<sup>27</sup> D. H. Evans and M. G. Jarrett, 'The deserted village of West Whelpington, Northumberland: third report, part one', *Archaeol. Aeliana*, ser. 5, 15 (1987), 199-308, at p. 296; D. H. Evans, M. G. Jarrett and S. Wrathmell, 'The deserted village of West Whelpington, Northumberland: third report, part two', *Archaeol. Aeliana*, ser. 5, 16 (1988), 139-92, at pp. 146-8.

<sup>28</sup> These sites are considered in J. Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (London, 1987), 142-5.

<sup>29</sup> E. W. Holden, 'Excavations at the deserted medieval village of Hangleton, part 1', *Sussex Archaeol. Collect.*, 101 (1963), 54-181; J. G. and D. G. Hurst, 'Excavations at the deserted medieval village of Hangleton, part 2', *Sussex Archaeol. Collect.*, 102 (1964), 94-141; J. T. Smith, 'The validity of inference from archaeological evidence', 7-19 in P. J. Drury (ed.), *Structural Reconstruction: Approaches to the Interpretation of the Excavated Remains of Buildings* (BAR British Ser., 110, Oxford, 1982); S. Wrathmell, 'Rural settlements' op. cit. in note 3, 189; Martin and Martin, op. cit. in note 18, 87; Wrathmell, *Domestic Settlements* op. cit. in note 3, 14; H. E. J. Le Patourel, 'Rural building in England and Wales: England', 820-90 in E. Miller (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: III 1348-1500* (Cambridge, 1990), at p. 855.

consistent with the area needed to accommodate a number of animals, and there is no other evidence to indicate that function. A series of post-holes found running at an angle across the room may belong to an earlier structure since other post-holes in the hall underlie the flint walls of the building. The only possible evidence in support of the identification as a longhouse is the apparent width of the entrance. However, the four-foot gap in the wall was not the full width of the doorway, because door-posts would have reduced its effective size. The plan of the second building identified as longhouse (Area 12) was recorded after removing the topsoil and from observations made during bulldozing. No detailed study of the building-plan was possible. A hearth of three large stones suggests that the building was a house, though its position adjoining the wall which evidently divided the hall and chamber is unusual. No evidence was found to demonstrate the function of the south-east room, identified as the byre, since the building was not thoroughly excavated.

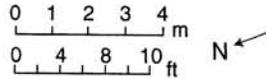
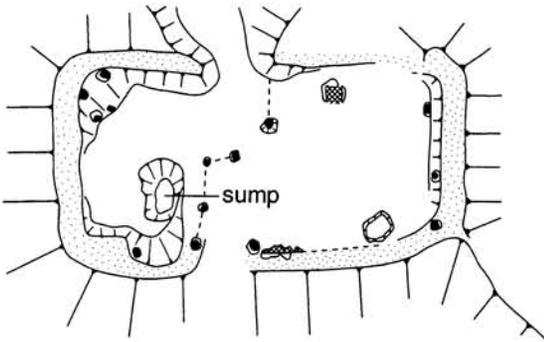
The second site, Gomeldon (Wiltshire), like Hangleton lies on a slope of the chalk downs at the edge of the Bourne valley near Salisbury. The structure of the buildings was discussed in the excavation report by J. T. Smith and subsequently by Wrathmell.<sup>30</sup> The excavators suggested that the transition from longhouse to farm complex began with Building 2, a house constructed in the 12th century. The hall, identified from the presence of a hearth lay on the south side of the cross-entry and was adjoined by a lightly built bakehouse. The function of the northern half of the building on the opposite side of the cross-entry is unclear. During the course of the 13th century Building 2 was demolished and replaced by a number of further buildings, also identified as longhouses. The development of the plans culminated in the emergence of farmhouse complexes with separate houses and barns.

The development described by the excavators is problematic and based on slight evidence. There are considerable problems in identifying the functions of a number of buildings, and the presence of drains or sumps does not establish that they were used to accommodate animals. It is difficult to see how a number of drains in the Gomeldon buildings would have functioned with tethered stock. Building 3, also identified as a longhouse, may be cited as an example. In the first phase the southern end had two hearths set near or against the walls (Fig. 1). The north end, identified as the byre, was separated by a possible screen and had a pit of uncertain function. The arrangement is not like a typical longhouse, and is in any case difficult to interpret. It would have been at least as valid to identify the building as a storeroom and kitchen. Evidence for that use may also be suggested by the second phase when the sumps and pits were filled in and two new hearths established in both the northern and southern halves. The identification of these buildings as longhouses must therefore be viewed with scepticism and the supposed development at that site of longhouse to farm treated as unproven.

The third site given as an example of the development of a longhouse into farmstead is Upton (Gloucestershire) in the Cotswolds. The stone walls of a row of buildings survived in places to the height of 0.6 m which was close to that originally built. The floors of the buildings were also well preserved allowing some of the functions of the rooms to be identified. The earlier of two excavated houses, AE,

<sup>30</sup> Musty and Algar, *op. cit.* in note 23, 127-69; Wrathmell, *Domestic Settlements op. cit.* in note 3, 12.

Phase 1



Phase 2

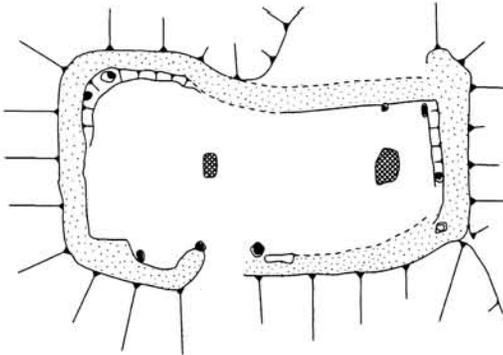


FIG. 1  
Gomeldon Building 3 (after Musty and Algar). The hearths are indicated by cross-hatching.

was built in the mid- or later 13th century. Drains in the lower end of building had an unusual T shape, rather than the more common axial plan. The second building, AC, was constructed in the late 13th or 14th century. The house clearly was not suitable for housing stock, and these were accommodated in separate, but adjoining buildings, AA and AB. One interpretation has suggested that the longhouse form found in building AE was replaced by the plan of house with separate byre seen in buildings AA to AC, but this is probably unnecessarily complex. There is no certain evidence that AE accommodated stock in the lower end. Indeed, the excavator excluded the possibility that the room might have been a byre and suggested, plausibly, that it was used for dairying or, less certainly, for an activity such as spinning. The animals in both farmsteads were kept in yards or byres adjoining the house.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Rahtz, *op. cit.* in note 25; R. H. Hilton and P. A. Rahtz, 'Upton, Gloucestershire, 1959-1964', *Trans. Bristol Gloucestershire Archaeol. Soc.*, 85 (1966), 70-146, esp. pp.101-7; Hurst, *op. cit.* in note 21, 113; R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (1966, London), 101.

None of these examples shows clear evidence for buildings occupied by both humans and animals and, consequently, for a transition from longhouse to farmhouse. Indeed, searching through the published sites, it is apparent that there is little archaeological evidence for longhouses anywhere in southern and eastern England. Many of the sites in that area which have been claimed as longhouses do not stand critical scrutiny. For example, the period III house at Wythemail (Northants) is certainly a long building measuring about 20 m internally, but the function of the two rooms below the cross-entry was not certainly established by excavation. Although it was suggested that these housed cattle, there was no evidence of a drain. The building at Wythemail is one of a number of long structures found on rural sites in the east Midlands. It may be compared with building 55820 at Westbury, which measured at least 17 m long and was divided into two with the southern half apparently providing accommodation and the northern part serving an uncertain agricultural function. Similarly, building 10 at Great Linford measured about 21 m long internally and accommodated a hall, kitchen and possible dairy.<sup>32</sup> These examples serve to show that a long range of buildings do not necessarily have the function of a longhouse. There must also be definite evidence for the accommodation of animals and humans on opposite sides of the cross-entry.

The evidence from standing buildings is a little more complex. Standing buildings pose separate problems since their plans have generally been extensively modified and the supposed byre-end, either transformed, often beyond recognition, or rebuilt. Few, if any, standing buildings in southern and eastern England retain evidence of byres. Thus, it has been necessary for those who argue for the ubiquity of the longhouse to claim that the rebuilding of the lower end *of itself* provides evidence for the transition from longhouse to farmhouse.<sup>33</sup> Recent work, however, has emphasized that rebuilding might take place for quite different reasons. It was often a response to the need for further accommodation and particularly for first-floor rooms which could not be fitted into low houses.<sup>34</sup> It is no longer tenable to argue that rebuilding necessarily demonstrates the former presence of a byre-end.

The longhouse may be better regarded as a regional rather than a universal building type. Undoubted examples of standing and excavated longhouses have been recorded from the Welsh borders, Devon, Somerset and both the north-west and north-east of England as far south as Cheshire and Yorkshire.<sup>35</sup> Documentary references noted by Field and Dyer indicate that longhouses were present in

<sup>32</sup> D. G. Hurst and J. G. Hurst, 'Excavations at the medieval village of Wythemail, Northamptonshire', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 13 (1969), 167-203, esp. pp. 176-7; R. J. Ivens, P. Busby, N. Shepherd, B. Hurman and J. Mills, *Tattenhoe and Westbury: Two Deserted Medieval Settlement in Milton Keynes* (Buckingham, 1995), 100-2; D. C. Mynard and R. J. Zeevat, *Excavations at Great Linford, 1974-80* (Buckingham, 1991), 65-7.

<sup>33</sup> J. T. Smith, 'The evolution of the English peasant house to the late seventeenth century: the evidence of buildings', *J. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.*, ser. 3, 33 (1970), 122-47, esp. pp. 130-2; Smith, op. cit. in note 6, 42-4.

<sup>34</sup> N. W. Alcock, 'The origin and spread of cruck construction in Britain', 57-60 in N. W. Alcock (ed), *Cruck Construction: An Introduction and Catalogue* (CBA Research Report, 42, London, 1981); Pearson, op. cit. in note 5, 67.

<sup>35</sup> Wales and the borders: S. R. Jones, and J. T. Smith, 'The houses of Breconshire. Part 1: the Builth district', *Brycheiniog*, 9 (1963), 1-77 and subsequent articles by the same authors in that journal. Devon: N. W. Alcock and M. Laithwaite, 'Medieval houses in Devon and their modernization', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 17 (1973), 100-25; Henderson and Weddell, op. cit. in note 10. Northern England: A. Pacey, 'A cruck-framed house and byre at Hyde, Cheshire', *Vernacular Architect.*, 2 (1971), 7-9; Mercer, op. cit. in note 1, 41-2; B. Harrison and B. Hutton, *Vernacular Houses in North Yorkshire and Cleveland* (Edinburgh, 1984); Wrathmell 'Peasant houses', op. cit. in note 3.

Worcestershire.<sup>36</sup> They do not seem to appear in Lincolnshire. Few longhouses, either excavated or standing, have been recorded in the east Midlands, East Anglia, central southern and south-eastern England. That contrast appears to be one of the differences underlying Astill's regional map of excavated farmsteads. His Regions 1 and 3 encompass the longhouse zone of the north and west of England, whereas Regions 2 and 4 in the south and east are outside it.<sup>37</sup> The distribution of longhouses may have a cultural explanation, comparable to that used to explain the areas of cruck and post-truss building. Others have preferred to evoke an environmental interpretation, arguing that cattle could be kept outside in crew-yards during the winter in the drier areas of the southern and eastern England, but needed shelter in wetter regions of the north and west.<sup>38</sup>

Once we recognize the longhouse as a regional type, then it follows that the longhouse was not the source of the later medieval domestic plan, but merely an one version of it. In the longhouse the services were replaced by the byre at the lower end, but otherwise all the elements of the later medieval domestic plan were present. The cross-entry, hall and chamber occupied their accustomed positions.

### THE ORIGINS OF THE LATER MEDIEVAL DOMESTIC PLAN

If the earlier interpretation of the origin of the later medieval domestic plan has proved unsatisfactory, is it possible to suggest an alternative lineage? It is uncertain how much early medieval buildings in England owed to the house plans found in the homelands of the Germanic settlers. Certainly, there can be no direct connection between the 5th- and 6th-century Continental longhouses and those found in England in the 13th century.<sup>39</sup> Some elements of the ground plan of buildings constructed between the 5th and 9th centuries seem to have been derived from Romano-British precedents. The side walls of early-medieval buildings, like their 2nd- to 4th-century predecessors, were divided into two halves by centrally placed doorways. The length of each half of the side wall was equal to the width of the building. The proportions seem to have been adopted because they were considered harmonious from the exterior; by contrast the internal space was divided up in ways which generally did not relate to the double-square plan.<sup>40</sup> These buildings had little in common with the later medieval plan, except insofar as the cross-entry was one of the major organizing principles of the design, and the main living space was a large hall which is presumed to have been open to the roof.

<sup>36</sup> R. K. Field, 'Worcestershire peasant buildings, household goods and farming equipment in the later Middle Ages', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 9 (1965), 105-45, at pp. 115 (Kempsey) and 134 (Wolverley); Dyer, op. cit. in note 2, 24-5.

<sup>37</sup> G. G. Astill, 'Rural settlement: the toft and the croft', 36-61 in G. G. Astill and A. Grant (eds.), *The Countryside of Medieval England* (Oxford, 1988).

<sup>38</sup> Alcock, op. cit. in note 34; G. Beresford, *The Medieval Clay-Land Village: Excavations at Goltho and Barton Blount* (Soc. for Medieval Archaeol. Monogr. 6, London, 1975), 13.

<sup>39</sup> Hurst, op. cit. in note 21, 103-4; P. Dixon, 'How Saxon is the Saxon house', 275-87 in P. J. Drury (ed.), *Structural Reconstruction: Approaches to the Interpretation of the Excavated Remains of Buildings* (BAR British Ser., 110, Oxford, 1982); S. James, A. Marshall and M. Millett, 'An early medieval building tradition', *Archaeol. J.*, 141 (1984), 182-215; H. Hamerow, 'Migration theory and the Migration Period', 163-77 in B. Vynner (ed.), *Building on the Past: Papers Celebrating 150 Years of the Royal Archaeological Institute* (London, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> James, Marshall and Millett, op. cit. in note 39, figs. 4, 12 and 14.

From the end of the 9th century the large spaces which characterized the interior of earlier buildings were often divided by partition walls, creating rooms little more than 2 m long at the ends of the houses.<sup>41</sup> However, the opposed entrances were generally not marked by structural divisions and did not evidently separate functional areas. It is rarely possible to distinguish an upper and lower end. The requirement for separate functions was met by the more wealthy through the construction of a number of adjoining buildings, sometimes set around a courtyard. Clusters of adjoining buildings have been recorded at Goltho (Lincolnshire), Portchester (Hampshire), Facombe Netherton (Hampshire), Steyning (Sussex) and in the later 10th-century phase at North Elmham.<sup>42</sup> Alternatively, instead of placing the buildings around a courtyard, they might be set in line, sometimes physically connected end-to-end. The 10th- to 11th-century manorial buildings at West Cotton (Northants) comprised an aisled hall joined to a building with three rooms in line. A very similar pattern of buildings was found at Furnell's Manor on the nearby site of Raunds and at Sulgrave in the same county.<sup>43</sup> A group of three similar buildings is found in an urban context at Brandon Road, in Thetford (Norfolk), where Buildings B, C and D dated to c. 1000 appear to have been conjoined.<sup>44</sup> The arrangement persisted into the 12th century and is found at Brooklands (Surrey) and Ellington (Huntingdonshire). The remains at these latter two sites are difficult to interpret. It is not clear whether there was a series of axial buildings or whether the rooms were joined to form one structure. The buildings were in total 37 m and 23 m long respectively and on both sites there was a series of chambers beyond the hall. Blair has noted axially planned buildings were also found at supra-vernacular level in the 12th and early 13th century. The main difference in the examples he cites was that the chamber block was physically separate from the hall.<sup>45</sup>

The period between the 10th and 12th century was formative for the later medieval domestic plan. Two particular developments were necessary for the development of the full plan. The first was the incorporation of the chamber, hall and services into a single building, for while these rooms were in physically separate or even contiguous buildings, their formal relationship remained ill-defined. The later medieval plan had a clear convention for the organization of external form

<sup>41</sup> G. E. Cadman, 'Raunds 1977-1983: an excavation summary', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 27 (1983), 107-22, at pp. 113-14 (Buildings B and S); P. Wade-Martins, *Excavations in North Elmham Park 1967-1972* (East Anglian Archaeology, 9, Gressenhall, 1980), 1, 179-82.

<sup>42</sup> G. Beresford, *Goltho: The Development of an Early Medieval Manor c. 850-1150* (London, 1987), fig. 59; B. W. Cunliffe, *Excavations at Portchester Castle. 2: Saxon* (London, 1976), fig. 99; J. R. Fairbrother, *Facombe Netherton: Excavations of a Saxon and Medieval Manorial Complex* (74, London, 1990), 2, 59-69; M. F. Gardiner, 'The excavation of a late Anglo-Saxon settlement at Market Field, Steyning, 1988-89', *Sussex Archaeol. Collect.*, 131 (1993), 21-67; Wade-Martins, *op. cit.* in note 41, 140.

<sup>43</sup> D. Windell, A. Chapman and J. Woodiwiss, *From Barrows to By-pass: Excavations at West Cotton, Raunds, Northamptonshire 1985-89* (Northampton, 1990), 24-5; B. K. Davison, 'Excavations at Sulgrave, Northamptonshire, 1960-76', *Archaeol. J.*, 134 (1977), 105-14.

<sup>44</sup> S. James and M. Millett, 'Anglo-Norman buildings', 39-41 in C. Dallas, *Excavations in Thetford by B. K. Davison Between 1964 and 1970* (East Anglian Archaeology, 62, Gressenhall 1993).

<sup>45</sup> R. Hanworth and D. J. Tomalin, *Brooklands, Weybridge: The Excavation of an Iron Age and Medieval Site 1964-5 and 1970-71* (Surrey Archaeological Society research volume, 4, Guildford, 1977), 49-59; C. F. Tebbutt, G. T. Rudd and S. Moorhouse, 'Excavation of a moated site at Ellington, Huntingdonshire', *Proc. Cambridgeshire Antiq. Soc.*, 63 (1971), 31-73; J. Blair, 'Hall and chamber: English domestic planning 1000-1250', 1-21 in G. Meirion-Jones and M. Jones (eds.), *Manorial Domestic Buildings in England and Northern France* (London, 1993), at pp. 6-7.

and the management of internal space so that a visitor on arriving at a house could readily distinguish between reception and private rooms. The second change was the movement of the cross-entry, separating the hall and services, from its position near the centre of the building, to one near the low end. By the end of the 12th century, and in some cases earlier, these features can be found in a number of buildings. It has been noted elsewhere that the plan of the large, and presumably seigneurial, building at Sulgrave (Northants) seems to conform with the later medieval domestic plan.<sup>46</sup> The opposed entrances of the cross-entry separated the service area from a hall, beyond which was the cross-wing. The kitchen was situated in line with the main building a short distance from the services. The buildings are dated to the late 10th century, which seems remarkably early, but consideration of the interpretation and dating will have to await the publication of the full report. Building AD at North Elmham dated to the mid-11th century was more modest in size, measuring 12 m long and 6.6 m wide in its first phase. It had a single door which led to a passage marked by partition walls. The excavator considered that one partition wall replaced the other for, if contemporary, they would have created a very narrow passage. The larger room was evidently the hall since it had a hearth, but must have also performed the function of the chamber. The excavation did not identify the use of the smaller room, though it is possible that it was the service area.<sup>47</sup> The essentials of the plan were being employed even in peasant buildings in Cornwall in the late 10th century. The buildings at Mawgan Porth were longhouses divided in two parts, the hall and byre, by a cross-entry. However, unlike later medieval buildings, the cross-entry in Houses 1 and 2 led into further rooms attached to the side of the house. The hearth was in the usual position in the halls of both houses, but in House 1 there was a second fireplace nearer the cross-entry.<sup>48</sup>

The earliest examples of the mature later medieval domestic plan may be divided into three types. The first type is the unaisled hall with chamber and services. Two virtually identical buildings are now known from the sites of Monkton (Kent) and Bishops Waltham (Hampshire). The position of the entrances to Monkton building III (Fig. 2) are not indicated by breaks in the wall-trench. A continuous wall-trench across the entrance is common in buildings of this type, though sometimes the position of the doors may be inferred from the presence of deeper post-settings. There is some hint of deeper posts in the Monkton buildings, and the locations of the doors also seem to be indicated by two posts (2787, 5581) set in from the line of the wall. The houses at both sites had rooms at one end. These rooms were narrower than the main building and were off-set from the centre to form a continuous wall line on one side. The phasing of the Bishops Waltham building is not certain, but the excavator's interpretation is followed here, except where indicated. The cross-entry must have belonged to the first phase, since it is indicated by a break in the wall-trench on the west side and a narrowing

<sup>46</sup> Davison, *op. cit.* in note 43, 109–111; Currie, *op. cit.* in note 15, p. 87, and Grenville, *op. cit.* in note 28, pp. 79–81, remark on the significance of the Sulgrave plan.

<sup>47</sup> Wade-Martins, *op. cit.* in note 41, 179–80.

<sup>48</sup> R. Bruce-Mitford, *Mawgan Porth: A Settlement of the Late Saxon Period* (English Heritage Archaeol. Rep. 13, London, 1997).

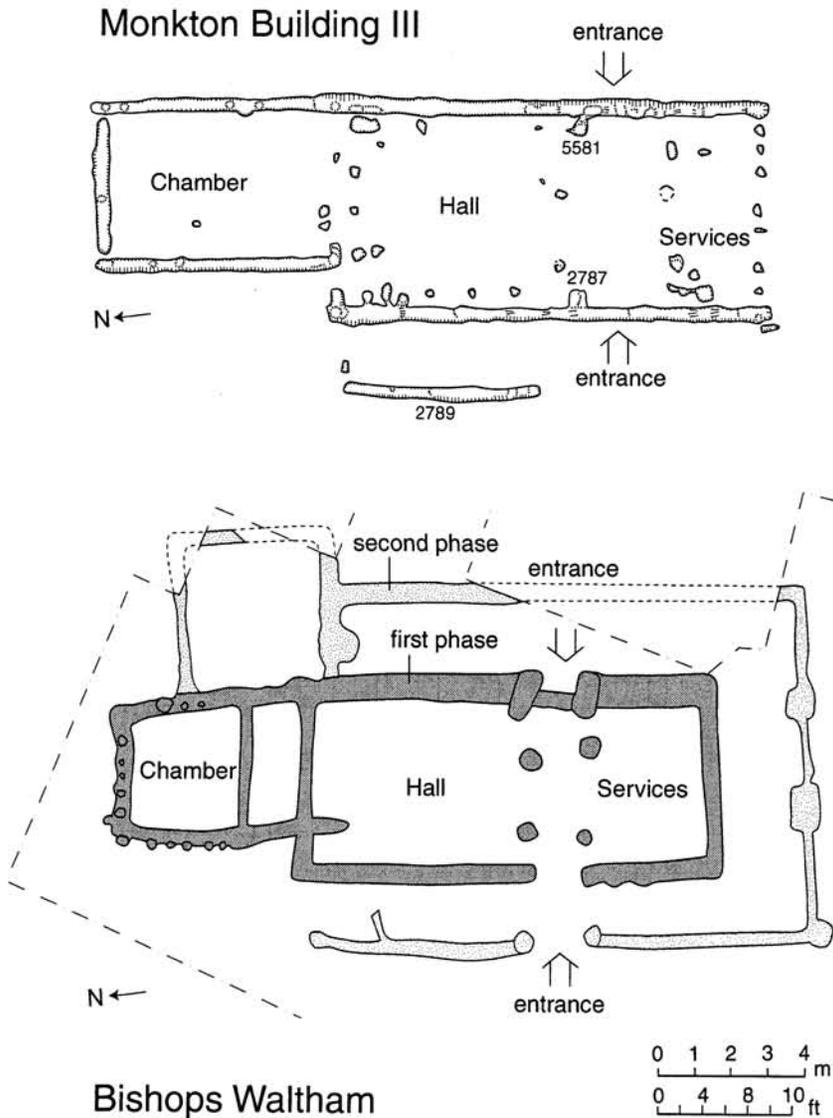


FIG. 2  
 Monkton Building III (after Pratt) and Bishops Waltham (after Lewis).

and change in direction of the trench on the east.<sup>49</sup> Post-holes mark the position of screens either side of the cross-entry.

The Bishops Waltham building is clearly divided into four areas which, even in the absence of evidence for a hearth, may be interpreted as the services and hall,

<sup>49</sup> *Contra* E. Lewis, 'Excavations in Bishops Waltham 1967-78', *Proc. Hampshire Field Club Archaeol. Soc.*, 41 (1985), 81-125, at p. 86.

with narrower chamber at the north end. The service area was not subdivided into a buttery and pantry, but was a single room with a broad entrance. The dating of the building is not certain, although the 11th or first half of the 12th century is most probable. Monkton Building III is almost identical in plan and it seems very likely that the rooms served similar function, though there is no separate evidence. The pottery associated with the Monkton building is attributed to the period 1125–75.<sup>50</sup>

These plans allow a re-consideration of buildings where the evidence is less complete. A building at Brome (Suffolk) was indicated by two parallel wall-trenches with centres about 6.7 m apart (Fig. 3). There was no evidence of the end-walls, though in 11th- and 12th-century buildings these were often of lighter construction than the load-bearing side walls. The north-eastern trench marking the position of the side wall was considerably longer than that to the south-west. Near to the north-east end of the longer trench were two post-holes which may mark the position of the door. The south-west end of the shorter wall turned, indicating the end of one part of the building. The position of the end is also suggested by the post-hole in the interior of the building near the longer wall-trench. However, the building must have extended beyond that point since the longer trench continued to the south-west. The plan may have resembled that already identified with a less substantial chamber at the south-west end, although there is a significant difference in the position of the entrance; there was no evidence for a cross-entry at Brome. That building was dated to the later 11th or early 12th century.<sup>51</sup> A further example of this plan was found at Ashwell (Hertfordshire) where traces of a building were located beneath the upcast of the moat constructed in the 14th century (Fig. 3). The position of side walls and one end-wall were marked by trenches measuring between 250 and 400 mm in depth. The line of the wall to the south-west, at the end of the hall, was indicated by a short, irregular length of trench between 80 and 150 mm deep. However, it is possible that the building at Ashwell continued beyond to the south-west with an end-chamber represented by a single trench. The main part of the building was clearly divided into two with the north-east room, identified here as the services, marked by a floor of small chalk lumps and the south-west room, identified as the hall, by more widely scattered pieces of chalk.<sup>52</sup>

The second type of building-plan is distinguished by the inclusion of one or two aisles. The plan is most clearly represented at Hutton Colswain (N. Yorkshire) where a mid-12th- to early 13th-century timber building was recorded in 1953–4 beneath a hall with stone footings (Fig. 3). The phasing proposed by the excavator is not followed here: it is hardly logical and was treated with some doubt by J. T. Smith who attempted to interpret the structure of the building.<sup>53</sup> In the present analysis, all the features cut into the ground are attributed to a single phase of

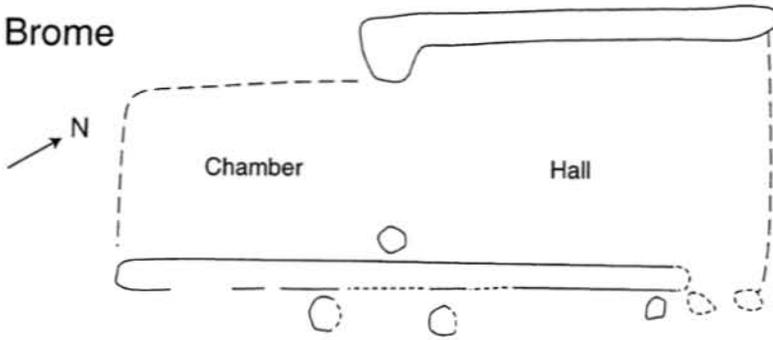
<sup>50</sup> S. Pratt, 'The Monkton early medieval settlement', in I. Riddler (ed.), *Roads to the Past: East Kent Road Schemes* (Canterbury, forthcoming).

<sup>51</sup> S. E. West, 'Brome, Suffolk. The excavation of a moated site, 1967', *J. British Archaeol. Assoc.*, ser. 3, 33 (1970), 89–121, esp. pp. 93–5.

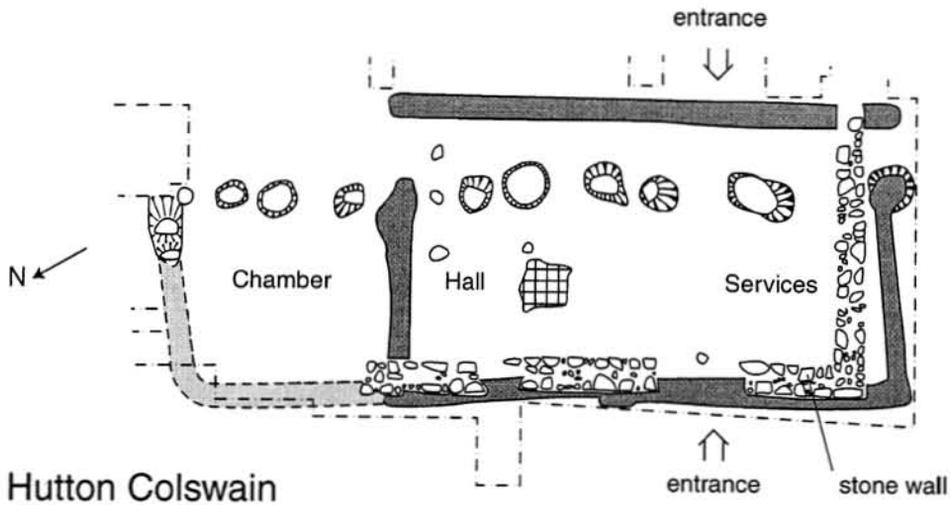
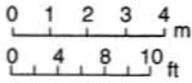
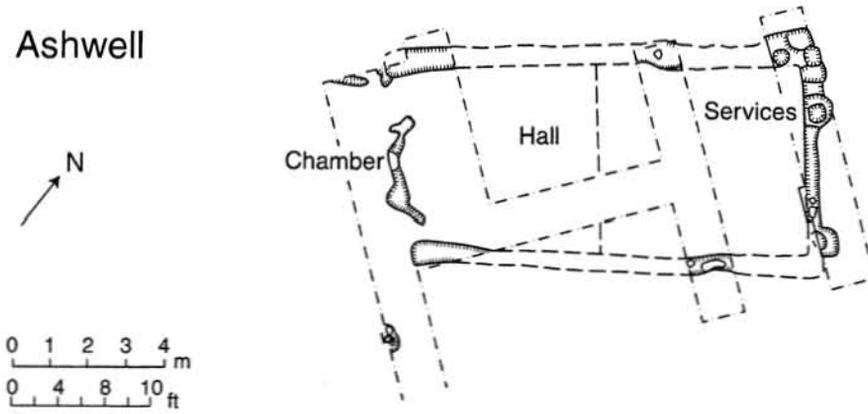
<sup>52</sup> D. G. Hurst and J. G. Hurst, 'Excavation of two moated sites: Milton, Hampshire, and Ashwell, Hertfordshire', *J. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.*, ser. 3, 30 (1967), 48–86, esp. 71–3.

<sup>53</sup> M. W. Thompson, 'Excavations of the fortified medieval hall of Hutton Colswain at Huttons Ambo, near Malton, Yorkshire', *Archaeol. J.*, 114 (1957), 69–91. For Smith's sceptical comments, see particularly p. 91.

Brome



Ashwell



Hutton Colswain

FIG. 3

Buildings at Brome (after West), Ashwell (after Hurst and Hurst) and Hutton Colswain, period 1 (after Thompson). The hearth is indicated by cross-hatching.

timber construction. The main body of the building comprised a single-aisled hall. The excavator's identification of the location of the entrances in the end-walls is rejected here and alternative entrances are proposed so that the plan of the timber building resembles that of its stone replacement. The line of aisle posts is continued beyond the main building by a series of post-holes which turn marking the end-wall of a further room. The full extent of the end-wall was not recorded and it is uncertain whether this is because no further post-holes were present or, as seems more likely, because the band of overlying rubble was not removed here. Similar comments also apply to the north-west wall of the room identified as the chamber.

The building at Bishops Waltham (Fig. 2) was converted into an aisled structure in the second phase. Aisles were added to the west, south and east of the building and the existing walls turned into an arcade. At the same time a further room was added to the east of the chamber. It is interesting to compare the development in plan with the Building III at Monkton. This too may be interpreted as a two-phase building with the addition of a single aisle on the west side of the hall in the second phase. A new exterior wall (2789) was constructed and the original wall of the hall removed. The roof was supported on aisle-posts set in slightly from the original wall line suggesting an alteration in the roof structure over the hall.

It may be surmised that most of these buildings were manorial or sub-manorial in status. Brome and Ashwell stood on sites which were later moated. Bishops Waltham adjoined the site later occupied by the palace of the bishop of Winchester. Hutton Colswain was set within a large enclosure which in the 13th century was modified and a gatehouse added. Only at Monkton is there no suggestion that the buildings were of seigneurial status.

The character of the Monkton settlement may also be indicated by two buildings of a third type (Fig. 4). There is no certainty that these were houses, though they have some similarities to Building III at the same site. In particular, the entrances were set one third from the end and Building II A had posts set in the interior by the presumed doorway. The two buildings had overlapping plans and one must have replaced the other, although the order could not be determined. Building II B has a clear entrance in its east wall marked by a break in the wall-trench. The corresponding entrance in the west wall is indicated by deeper post-holes for the door jambs. The line of the end-walls may be inferred by a central post and by deeper post-settings in the side wall-trenches. Building II A is similar, but the wall-trenches run across the entrances which are identifiable from the deeper post-settings. A post-hole near the northern end of the building may mark the position of a partition wall for a chamber. These two buildings are much more modest in size than the previous types identified and may be indicative of the smaller buildings of this transitional period.

#### THE ADOPTION OF THE LATER MEDIEVAL PLAN

The 12th-century buildings discussed above represented the first stage in the adoption of the later medieval domestic plan. There is little difference between the third building type represented by Buildings II A and B at Monkton, and the first

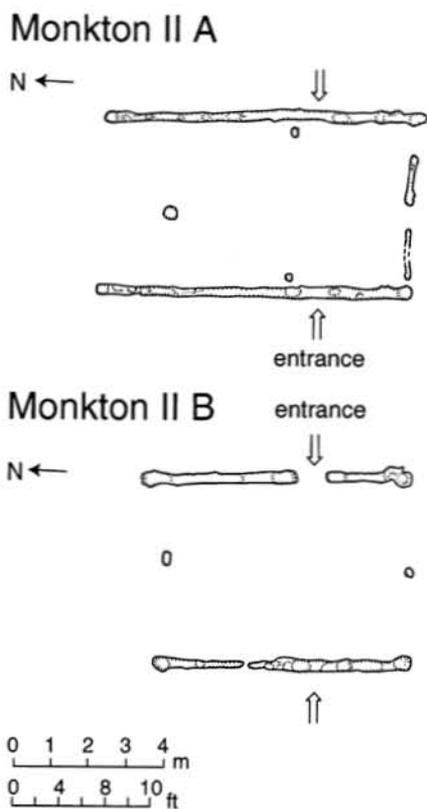


FIG. 4

Monkton Buildings II A and II B (after Pratt).

phase of the period 2 house at Wintringham (Huntingdonshire) dated to c. 1200 (Fig. 5). Although the latter lay on a site which was later moated, there is no evidence that it was a manorial building. The end-chamber at Wintringham appears to have been a later addition to the building. The walls were of mud-and-stud construction and two post-settings close to the wall just inside the doors were identified by the excavator as supports for a tie-beam to counteract the outward thrust of the roof. It seems improbable that the wall structure could support the weight of the roof, but not that of a tie-beam.<sup>54</sup> It is more likely that the posts were necessary to support a greater weight which could not be carried by the walls, suggesting a beam to carry the joists of an upper floor over the services and cross-entry. Similar post-settings were also found in Buildings II A and III at Monkton.

By the early 13th century the later medieval plan can be readily identified in excavated vernacular buildings, although archaeologists have often failed to do so. It was suggested by the excavator at Hangleton that Building 1 (Fig. 5) was constructed in two stages, the first only as far as the cross-entry and later extended

<sup>54</sup> G. Beresford, 'Excavation of a moated house at Wintringham in Huntingdonshire', *Archaeol. J.*, 134 (1977), 194-286, esp. pp. 210-11.

to the north-east. The evidence for that view is poor and the idea seems to have been suggested by the partial survival of a sill wall, which very probably supported a timber screen. It is easier to envisage it as a single-period building, preceded by a structure represented by a series of stake-holes, some of which underlie the flint walls. The building therefore consisted of a service end, partially screened cross-entry, hall with hearth and a chamber. The building is dated to c. 1250.<sup>55</sup> Building 3 at Tattenhoe (Buckinghamshire) is dated no more closely than the late 11th to late 13th centuries, but on the evidence of other houses a 13th-century date is most likely (Fig. 5). The building had three or possibly four bays. The cross-entry is indicated on one side by a truss or cruck (post-holes 7693/4 and 7699), and on the other by a truss, cruck or studs (7695 and 7698). The position of the hall may be inferred from the hearth and the room beyond is likely to be the chamber.<sup>56</sup>

The evidence from standing timber buildings from before c. 1250 is rather meagre, particularly as the survival is often fragmentary and does not allow the full plan to be determined. Songers, Boxted (Essex) is a small house of the 13th century with later additions. It comprises an aisled hall with a lodged first-floor room above the services, but there is no evidence of a chamber at the high end as originally built. A very similar plan is found at Purton Green (Suffolk), where a simple three-bay aisled building had a floor over the end bay. The pattern of sooting suggests that the upper room was not fully screened from the hall.<sup>57</sup> Lime Tree House, Harwell (Oxon., formerly Berkshire) is a four-bay aisled building, now much modified. The north bay, removed in 1912, had a cantilevered and hipped end. It was separated by a partition from the hall which occupied the central two bays. The role of the south bay, which had a similar structure to its counterpart on the north, is uncertain; it may have formed part of the hall or have been separated by a partition.<sup>58</sup>

These examples of excavated and standing vernacular buildings of the early and mid-13th century had three or four bays and, as far as can be determined, the divisions of the house were articulated by the structural posts. The 'forest of posts', as J. T. Smith has described the numerous timbers of buildings of the previous centuries, had been reduced to a small number of principal posts evident at Tattenhoe and in the standing buildings discussed.<sup>59</sup> The presence of an upper storey or merely a low loft over the services is suggested in a number of buildings. The room which served as the chamber may have been incorporated into the body of the building, in contrast to the 12th-century buildings of types one and two in which the chamber was narrower than the hall and must have been roofed separately. However, detached chamber blocks have been identified among the royal, episcopal, knightly and even vernacular buildings of the period.<sup>60</sup> The

<sup>55</sup> Holden, *op. cit.* in note 29, 74.

<sup>56</sup> Ivens, Busby, Shepherd, Hurman and Mills, *op. cit.* in note 32, 22-3.

<sup>57</sup> Hewett, *op. cit.* in note 6, 85-7; C. A. Hewett, 'Songers, Cage Lane, Boxted, Essex', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 17 (1973), 131-2; G. and S. Colman, 'A thirteenth century aisled house', *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.*, 30 (1965), 149-65.

<sup>58</sup> Currie, *op. cit.* in note 15, 152-7.

<sup>59</sup> P. A. Rahtz, *The Saxon and Medieval Palaces at Cheddar* (BAR British Series, 65, Oxford, 1979), 384.

<sup>60</sup> Blair, *op. cit.* in note 45, 2-9. For another interpretation of the buildings of Boothby Pagnell type, see A. P. Quiney, 'Hall or chamber? That is the question. The use of rooms in post-Conquest houses', *Architect. Hist.*, 42 (1999), 24-46.

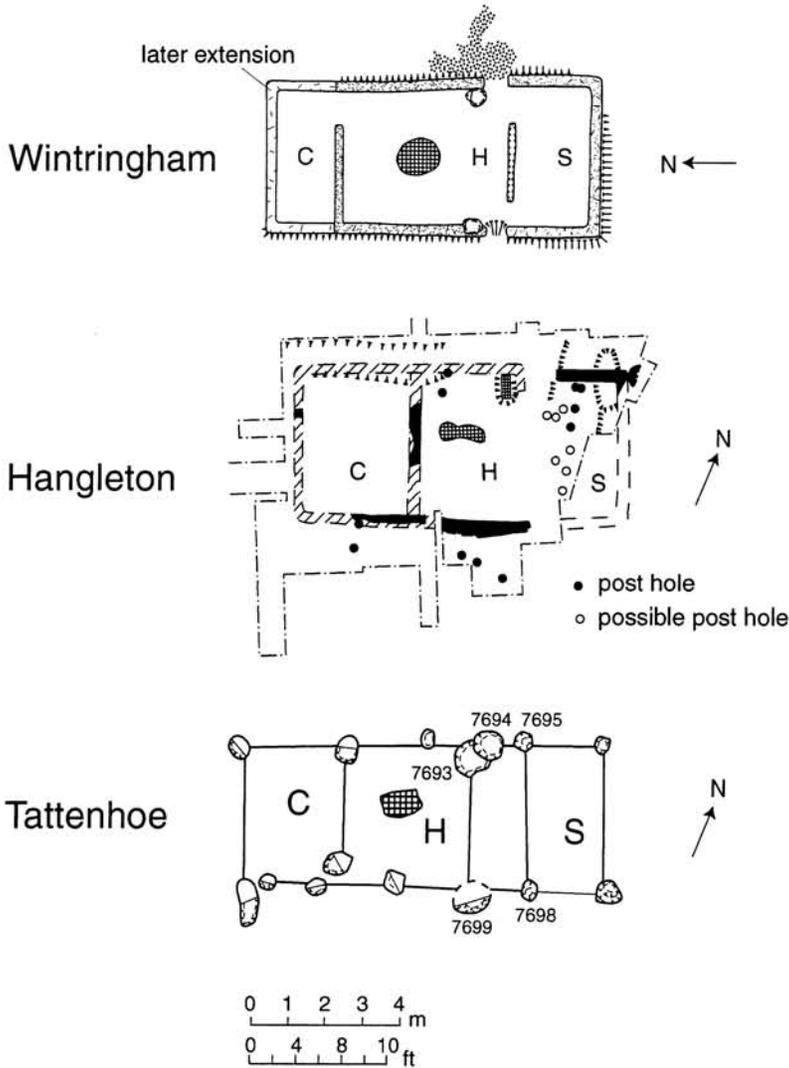


FIG. 5

Early 13th-century buildings from Wintringham (after Beresford), Hangleton (after Holden) and Tattenhoe (after Ivens et al.). The hearths are indicated by cross-hatching.

houses at Songers and Purton Green may have separate chamber blocks and there is a surviving example at The Cottage, Aston Tirrold (Oxon., formerly Berkshire) built in 1284 although the contemporary hall, which is presumed to have stood close by, no longer survives. Generally, it is the chamber blocks of vernacular buildings which have rarely survived as standing structures and equally have not been recognized in archaeological excavations.

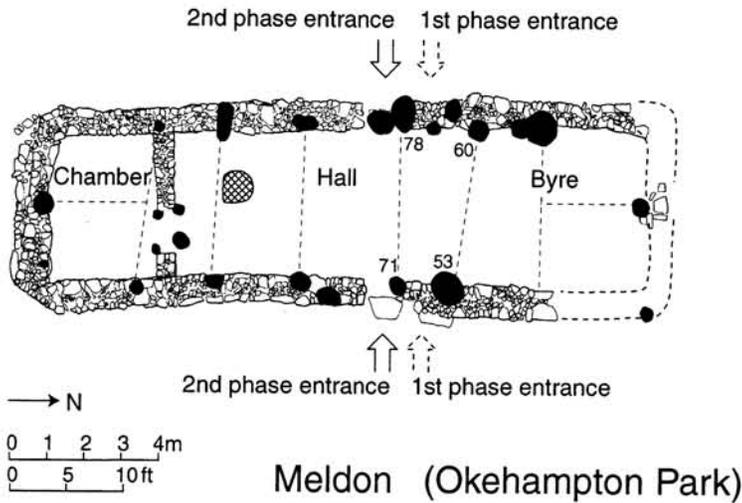


FIG. 6

The timber and stone phases superimposed from Building A1 at Meldon (after Austin). The hearth is indicated by cross-hatching.

The development of the longhouse plan is less easy to trace. It has been argued above that it was not a different type of house-plan, but a regional adaptation of the later medieval form. Excepting the precocious example of Mawgan Porth, few securely dated early examples of longhouses are known. The earliest phase of Building A1 at Meldon near Okehampton was probably constructed around the mid-13th century and its plan is indicated by post-holes underlying the later stone building (Fig. 6). It has been argued by Wrathmell that the ground-fast cruck structure was later underbuilt with stone.<sup>61</sup> The plan of the building was essentially reproduced when this happened, although the position of the cross-entry was moved slightly to the south. Its earlier location is apparently indicated by the pairs of post-holes 71–8 and 53–60. A set of four post-holes found within the building was unconvincingly identified as the setting for a smoke hood. It seems more likely that they mark the jambs of the entrance to the chamber which was in an identical position in the stone-built phase.<sup>62</sup>

The diversity of the early examples of the later medieval domestic plan suggests that it is unlikely that it sprang from a single source or even a single social class. The plan emerged both from the sub-division of functional space within the unitary area of buildings, and from the aggregation of separate buildings into a single whole. The problems of organization of space and structure faced by the builders of houses in the 10th and early 12th centuries, whether they were peasant carpenters or master masons, were similar, and no consensus had been reached about the solution. By the mid-12th century a pattern was beginning to emerge, which was sufficiently flexible to be adapted to serve the purposes of both peasants

<sup>61</sup> Wrathmell, *Domestic Settlements* op. cit. in note 3, 12.

<sup>62</sup> D. Austin, 'Excavations in Okehampton Deer Park, Devon, 1976–1978', *Proc. Devon Archaeol. Soc.*, 36 (1978), 191–239; Allen, op. cit. in note 7, 145; C. G. Henderson and P. J. Weddell, op. cit. in note 10, 129–31.

and their lords. It is first apparent in the larger vernacular buildings, whose owners had sufficient wealth to construct the number of rooms necessary for its full implementation. The later medieval domestic plan was not associated with the emergence of a method of construction using a limited number of principal posts, whether trusses or crucks, but once this form of building had been adopted, it was natural that the bays so formed should have been integrated into the plan. The pattern of bays was then used to articulate the divisions of space within the building. By 1250 the period of experimentation in building-plans was largely over and the layout of medieval rural house remained little changed for the following 250 years. The use of a standard plan, which was sufficiently flexible to be adopted in houses of middling peasants and those of the gentry, reflects a remarkable consensus about the organization of social space. Social status was expressed in the variations which might be wrought within the framework of the plan in, for example, the size of rooms and form of external elevation. One of the results of the use of a standard building-plan was to allow social difference to be indicated more precisely since houses were more directly comparable. This must have been one of its attraction to the more wealthy.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Tom McNeill, David Martin, Stuart Wrathmell and Christopher Whittick, and to the anonymous referees for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this text, though that does not imply that any of those would accept its conclusions. I am also indebted to Ian Riddler of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust for drawing the Monkton buildings to my attention and to Libby Mulqueeny at the Queen's University Belfast for preparing the illustrations.