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Chester Castle West Range
A description of the demolished buildings

by
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1 Introduction

1.1 A group of predominantly 19th-century buildings in the West Range of the Upper Ward at Chester Castle were demolished in 1982 (Fig 1).

1.2 The demolished buildings comprised a two-storey block with a one-storey addition on its south end, and a two-storey block inserted between the medieval Flag tower and a building at the rear of the Half Moon tower - the Old Mint (Figs 2 and 3).

1.3 The buildings were recorded in 1978 by means of measured drawings and photographs (Figs 4 and 5; Plates 1-4). The rooms were plaster-covered and some areas of plaster were stripped; the resulting features were also recorded. A written record was made for each individual wall, door, and window. This card index is labelled A7 in the archive.

1.4 During demolition in 1982 these records were enhanced by salvage recording and brickwork samples were retained.

1.5 The work was undertaken by archaeologists under the direction of Peter Hough.

1.6 The following is intended as an archive record, summarising the 1.2 and 1.3 work, to accompany a text prepared for publication in due course in the Journal of the Chester Archaeological and Historical Society. The latter suggests and interprets a phasing sequence; this text is intended as a detailed descriptive record.

1.7 Six figures and four plates are presented with this text. References are given to the field drawings and to the photographic archive. Drawings are presented as, for example, dwng 201, monochrome photographs as, for example, B&W 1.12 indicating the 12th photograph on sheet 1, and colour photographs as, for example, col 24. Brickwork references are as follows: EB = English bond, REB = rough English bond, EGB = English Garden bond.

2 Methods of recording and presentation

2.1 A recording system based on a sequence of wall letters was used in 1978 and 1982. A numbering system for features such as doors and windows was also used.

2.2 This unwieldy system has been replaced here by numbering for the ground and first floor rooms (Figs 2 and 3), and these are cross-referenced in Sections 6 and 7 below. The windows and doors are identified to each room, rather than individually. Seventeenth-century walls are lettered A to L.

3 The archive

3.1 Measured drawings in 1978 and 1982 were at a scale of 1:20. The overall plan of ground and first floors was at 1:100 and was based on an architect's drawing. A mistake on this plan in the interior of the Flag tower has been rectified.

3.2 A loose leaf folder (archive A6) with the field records was subsequently written up as a card indexed record of every room (archive A7). Room functions are taken from the War Department plans (archive B1, nos 1, 2, and 13).

3.3 The photographic archive was indexed in 1994 (archive E3). This comprises colour and monochrome photographs. A number of photographs cannot be identified. Unfortunately two rolls of black and white film are missing from the archive, as evidenced by two sheets of contact prints.

3.4 Detailed card indexes cover the data i) by rooms, ii) by areas of walls stripped of plaster, iii) by door and window features, iv) by roof features.

4 The buildings - exterior of southern range

4.1 The plan of the southern range originated in an Armoury built in 1686/7. The nineteenth-century structure comprised a 13.4 by 7.6m building, with a flat-roofed addition to the south, and a 9.5 by 5m block set lengthways against its north wall; this latter was not quite a rectangle in plan.

4.2 The buildings were of brick covered on the exterior with a whitewashed plaster render (Plates 1-4). Col 17, 18, 36-8, 40, 41, 46. B&W 4.29-37.

4.3 The plaster face of the east-facing facade of the southern block (Fig 4; Plate 3) was incised to give the effect of painted stone blocks. The central north-south building was set back 1.2m from the east face of the southern and northern additions. The facade was set on a sandstone offset plinth rising 1m above ground level and which still survives. Cuts into either end of the plinth were to accommodate drainpipes. Three flights of steps led to the three entries on the east side. The 12-paned upper and 16-paned lower sash windows of the central block were set beneath slight arches, as were the doors and the door of the southern addition. The window bases were marked by projecting stone sills, and they were protected with bars. A clock face had formerly been set at first floor level. The walls were carried up as parapets above the roof pitch.

Dwngs 226, 232.

4.4 The north-facing facade, similarly of mortar with incised stonework painted white, connected with the central block and with the Old Mint (Plate 4). At first floor level a corridor connected the two blocks. Steps at the east end of the facade brought the ground level above that of the offset plinth. The windows and door lintels were flat. One of the windows was a blocked doorway. The upper windows were sash. The wall rendering showed there had formerly been a lean-to set against it. The wall had an upper stone parapet.

4.5 The exterior facades of the two two-storey blocks rose 6.8m above the offset plinth, the pitched roof of the main block added a further 2m, while the pitched roof of the north block was less than 1m. The flat roof of the southern extension lay below the level of the east wall. For roofs and chimney furniture see dwng 221.

4.6 There is no drawn or photographic record of the west face of the central block. The plans show a door and two windows at ground level and first floor level. The first floor door led to an iron staircase. The northernmost ground floor window recess had been blocked on the inside.

5 The buildings: exterior of northern range

5.1 A 3.5m length of the east facing facade of the northern range was demolished (Fig 4; Plate 1). The plaster and white-painted facade continued northwards as the east face of the retained building - the Old Mint. A horizontal band at first floor level was carried across the facade. The 4-paned sash window rested on a stone sill.

Dwng 230.

6 The buildings: detailed descriptions of ground floor rooms

6.1 Room 1 (= A and B)

Divided by a plasterboard and wood-framed partition (post-1912). S wall curtain wall. N wall Rough English Bond (hereinafter REB), E wall English Bond (EB). Two blocked doorways in N wall. N wall and facing of S wall: bricks porous and brittle; orange red colour; size 9½, 2 ¾, 4½". Original mortar N wall white with black inclusions, S wall grey/brown with white flecks. Change in coursing at 1.1m above floor level. Two blocked windows in E wall, N blocked window subsequently cut by door to exterior. N wall has E addition butted on at a straight joint at E end. Both rooms lit only by skylights. Blocked doorway through curtain wall to S. Concrete floors. Ablutions in 1930. Cook house in 1952.

Dwngs 205, 224, 244, 246. Col 1.

6.2 Room 2 (= Room C)

N door wider than others in block. Doors to exterior at E and W. Blocked doorway in S wall - bricks 9 x 2 ¾ x 4½". S wall REB. Rectangular floor joist holes from earlier floor level blocked. W wall abutts S wall. W wall and N wall one build in English Garden Bond (hereinafter EGB). E wall abutts S wall and part conceals a floor joist hole. Mortar S wall grey brown with white flecks. N wall bricks 9 x 3 x 4¼", mortar grey brown with white flecks. Concrete floor.

Dwngs 200, 201, 227.

6.3 Rooms 3 and 4 (= Rooms D, E and F)

Modern wood-framed plasterboard partitions divided Rooms 3 and 4. E wall EB. Bricks 9 x 3 x 4¼", hard orange red, hard light brown mortar. Four 16-pane windows and a door. Former doorway blocked by second window from S. Blocking bonded with S wall. Scar of earlier wall in E wall. S wall is abutted by E wall. W wall windows as E wall windows. N window in E wall blocked on inside. Brick chimney breast on W wall. 12-pane window S end W wall. Line of different plastering and blackening in E wall corresponds with rafter evidence for an earlier lower floor in N and S walls. N wall REB butted by E and W walls. Brick sizes as N wall of Room 1, mortar light grey

brown, bricks hard orange red. Blocked rafter holes show earlier floor as in S wall. Cast iron fireplace and blocked opening in N wall. Door to 6 later insertion. Brick size of S and W wall as N wall of Room 2. Hard red purple. Wood floorboards. Reading, writing and games room in 1930. Taproom 1952. Office and NAAFI shop in 1954.

Dwngs 204, 211, 227; B&W 4.20; Col 2.

6.4 Rooms 5 and 6 (= Rooms G and H)

Excavation of these rooms following demolition revealed the 19th and 20th-century plan in detail (Fig 6).

S wall REB. Hard brittle well-fired bricks of various sizes and colour, light brown grey and black. Horse hair plaster. Recess at N end with inserted brickwork. Door to 4 inserted. Internal wall of brick abutts S wall. N wall very crude varying brick sizes, E end earliest and then rebuildings. E end mortar light brown, brick $9\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{3}{4} \times 4$ ". W end early $9\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ ", brick porous brittle orange-red, light brown mortar with lime flecks. Windows possibly inserted. Easternmost window formerly a door. Doorway at NW corner of 5 narrowed from original by brick coursing. Chimney breast in S wall. Evidence for at least two phases of fireplace. Earliest a brick-blocked opening beneath a brick arch. Subsequent cast iron grate also blocked. Cupboard in area of blocked hatch through S wall. Timber-framed plasterboard wall at N end marks timber stairs to upper floor (Room 14). N wall bricks $9\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ " bricks, porous brittle orange-red, white plaster with lime flecks. Horse hair plaster. Wooden floors. Grocers shop (Room 5) and ?serving bar (Room 6) in 1930. Bar in 1952. NAAFI stores in 1954.

Dwng 228.

6.5 Room 7 (= Rooms J and K)

Triangular area between Flag tower and Room 5. N wall bricks $9 \times 2\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ ". Added brickwork joining SE corner of Flag tower to armoury block same size. Light mortar with lime flecks as W wall of Room 5. Concrete floor.

Dwng 228.

6.6 Room 8 (= Room N)

S wall brick, buttressed area hollowed out of Flag tower N wall. At N end doorway to Room 11 blocked prior to construction of E wall - C18th use as ovens. W wall curtain wall, brick lined space made in wall with slit window to exterior. Concrete floor. Larder in 1930.

Dwng 245. Col 62, 63.

6.7 Room 9 (= Room M)

Access from Old Mint Room 11. Unlit room. Concrete floor. W wall blocked brick arches to C18th ovens in Room 8. Larder in 1930.

Dwng 245. Col 62, 63.

6.8 Room 10 (= Room L)

Triangular storage room partitioned off in SW corner. Brick chimney breast in NW corner. N wall REB. Bricks $9\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ ", mortar grey-brown, porous brittle red-brown bricks. Door in S wall set in partitioning across a wider gap. East window formerly a doorway. Blocked window and door in W wall. Concrete floor. NAAFI offices in 1930 and 1954.

6.9 Room 11 (= Rooms O, P, Q, R, Y)

REB main walls. S wall bricks $9\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ " grey-brown mortar soft porous orange-brown bricks. N wall grey mortar white flecks, orange bricks, $8\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ ". Two doors to E. One door to S. To W of latter a blocked doorway to Room 8. Stairway at W set against back of Half Moon tower. Doorway through to tower blocked with brick. Replaced by existing door further N. At NW corner door and step down to brick lean-to. Two windows in N wall. Interior room bricks $9\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ grey hard mortar, orange to dark brown bricks. The chimney breast is in white mortar.

The interior walls in Room 11 are in modern brick. Existing doorway originally accompanied by two others subsequently blocked in brick. This room was a kitchen with chimney breast on S wall and dumb waiter to its west. Fitted dresser. NW and SW corners of room have lath and plasterboarded voids. Clear that an earlier W wall of this interior unit was set slightly to the east of its present position. Kitchen in 1930 and 1954.

7 The buildings: detailed descriptions of first floor rooms

7.1 Room 12 (= Room AC)

North wall secondary to east wall and keyed in to west wall. Both east and west walls secondary to south wall. EGB bricks. Windows in east and west walls similar. Door to Room 13 framed by wooden lintel under brick relieving arch.

Dwng 227.

7.2 Room 13 (= Room AF)

East wall REB and EGB above. Lower section limewashing shows shadow of an earlier wall, subsequently demolished and then plastered over. Brick fireplace in west wall and a secondary inserted fireplace in north wall subsequently blocked. Timber partition around alcove on west side forming hallway through to Flag tower. Door to fire escape to west. Three windows to east. Roof of timber purlins and planks tiled on exterior, whole supported by three iron girders.

Dwng 211, 227. Col 10. B&W 4.20 and 21.

7.3 Room 14 (= Room AH)

Timber partition E wall; N wall REB. Room continued across west wall at ground floor level to the face of the Flag tower. Lavatory cubicle in SW corner of room. Stairs on S wall. Roof of timber framing unceiled with planking internally and tiled externally.

Dwng 206.

7.4 Room 15 (= Room AG)

East and north walls REB. Windows modern and correspond to those in the first floor corridor through to Block B. Chimney breast in S wall. Timber partition west wall. Rooms 13 and 14 were the NAAFI kitchen in 1954.

Dwng 206.

7.5 Room 16 (= Room AM)

Access from Flag tower. Skylight in roof. Fireplace in W wall. W wall medieval sandstone curtain wall. N wall brick lower half REB, upper half irregular brickwork. Blackened staining from former oven in Room 8 on both brick types. E wall lath and plaster. S wall medieval sandstone part obscured by brickwork. Blocked doorway (with breeze blocks) through to Room 18 - the Old Mint. Unceiled roof planking internally and tiled externally.

Col 7-9.

7.6 Room 17 (= Room AL)

S wall REB. Window in E wall. E wall abutts N wall. N wall REB. W wall lath and plaster. Fireplace in NW corner. S wall lath and plaster with Flag tower behind. Ceiling of plasterboard. NAAFI staff dining room in 1954.

7.7 Room 18 (= Rooms AP, AO, AY)

Retained. REB walls. W wall sandstone of Half Moon tower. S wall shows floor joist holes at a level 0.15m above existing floor. Timber stairway contemporary with present, later floor level. Internal divisions in lath and plaster. Three sash windows in E wall. Two similar in N wall. Brick relieving arches of ground floor doors and window show above the room's floor. EGB E wall with later brickwork 1.8m above floor level, and same with N wall though here addition occurs at 1m above floor level. S wall uniform build of reused bricks some formerly plastered. Windows correspond with change of brick and belong to addition. Chimney breast, fireplace, and dumb waiter continue through from Room 11 below. Entry to first floor of Half Moon tower by way of doorway 1m above floor level. Plasterboard ceiling in two S rooms, planked and unceiled in N room. Cooks quarters and corporals room in 1954.

B&W 4.2-9.

Figure captions

- Fig 1 location maps
- Fig 2 ground floor plan
- Fig 3 first floor plan
- Fig 4 exterior elevations
- Fig 5 interior elevations

Plate captions

- Plate 1 The demolished buildings and retained Mint, view west
- Plate 2 The demolished buildings, view south
- Plate 3 East front of armoury block, view north
- Plate 4 North front of armoury block, view south

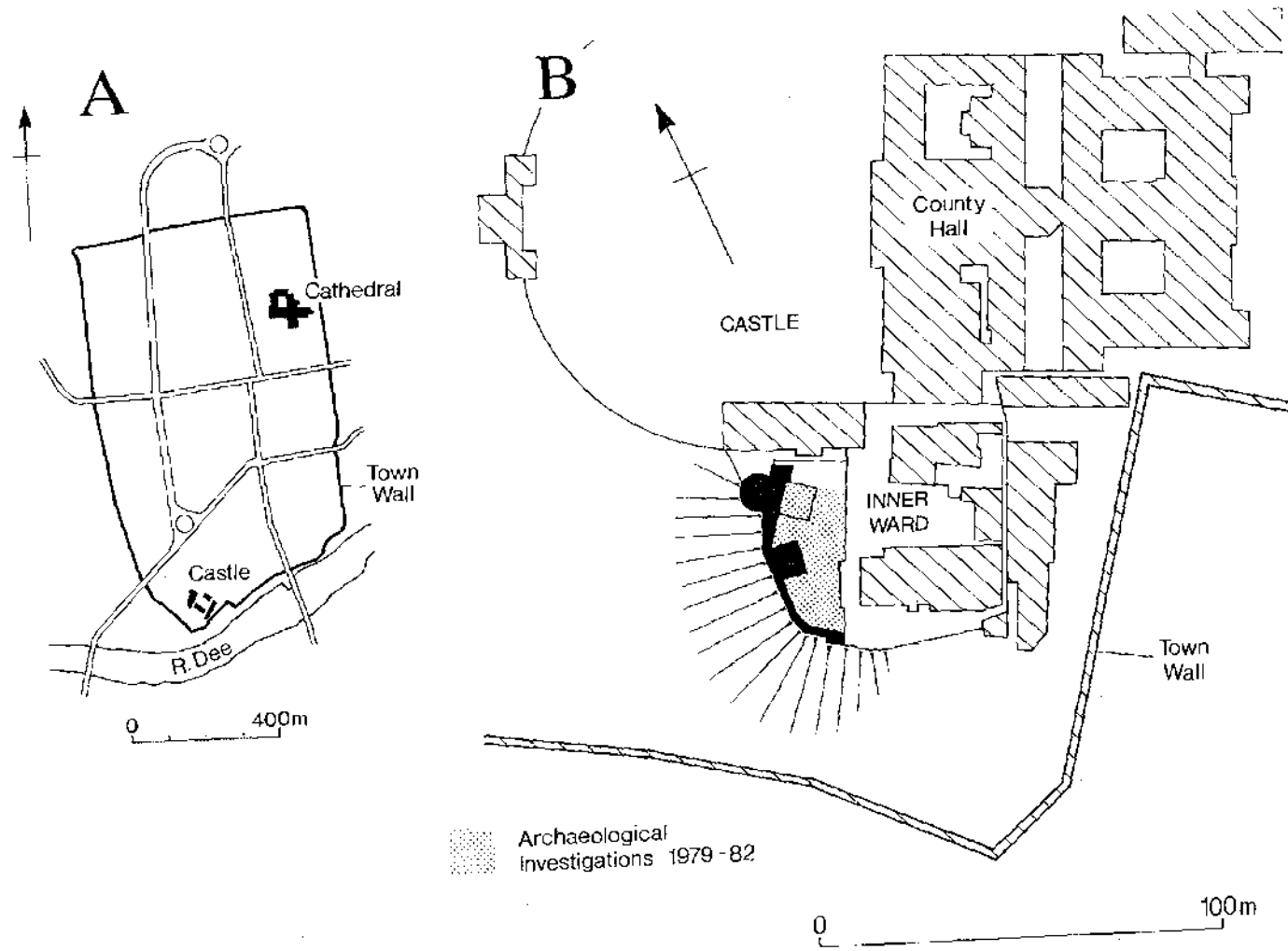


Figure 1

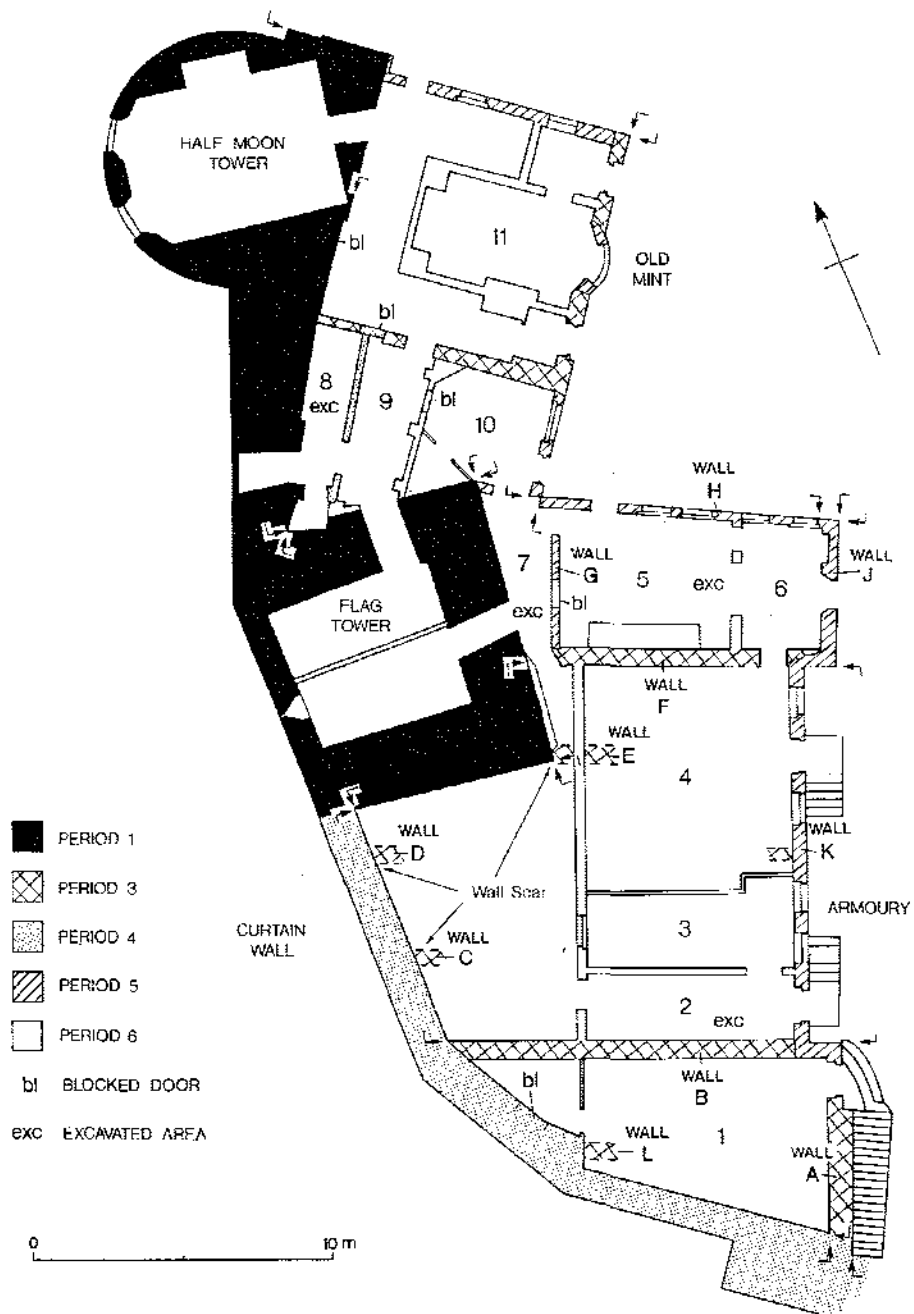


Figure 2

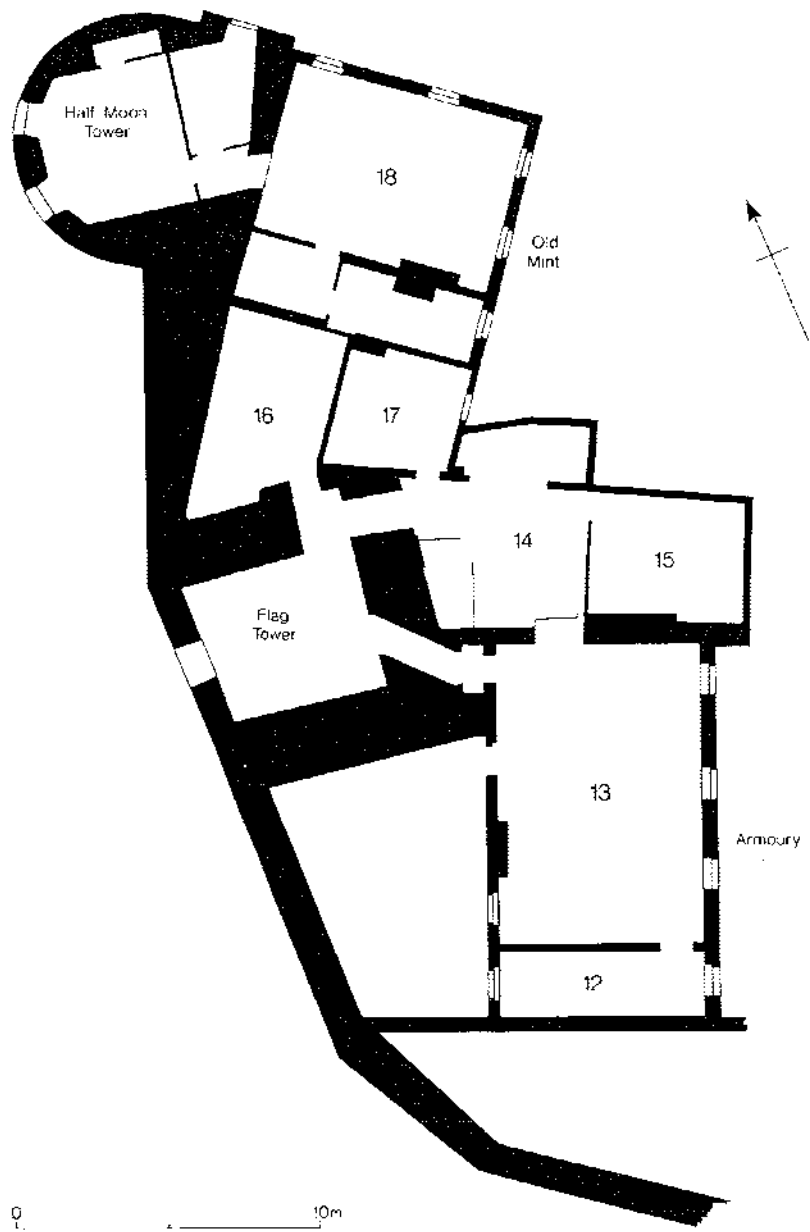


Figure 3



Figure 4

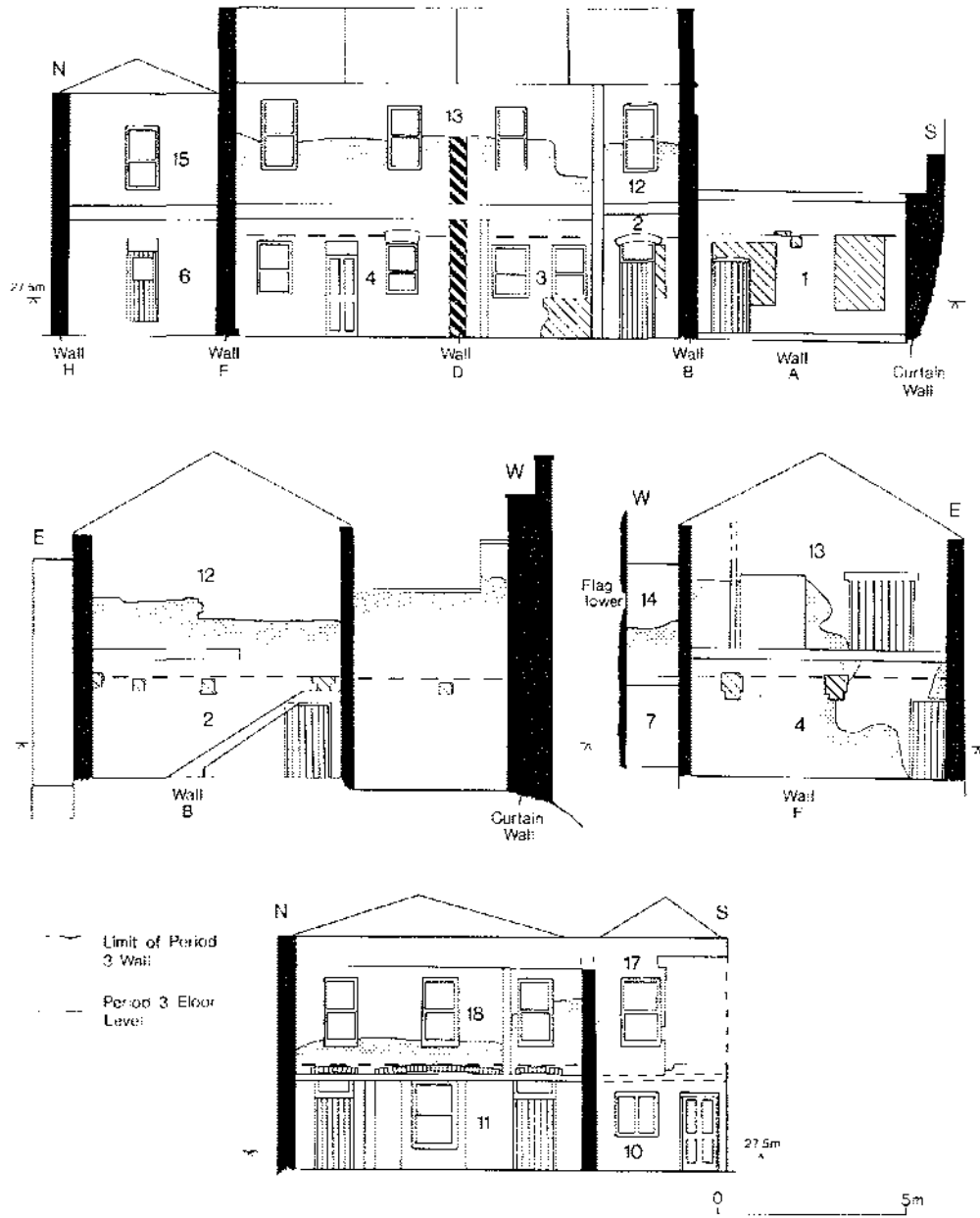
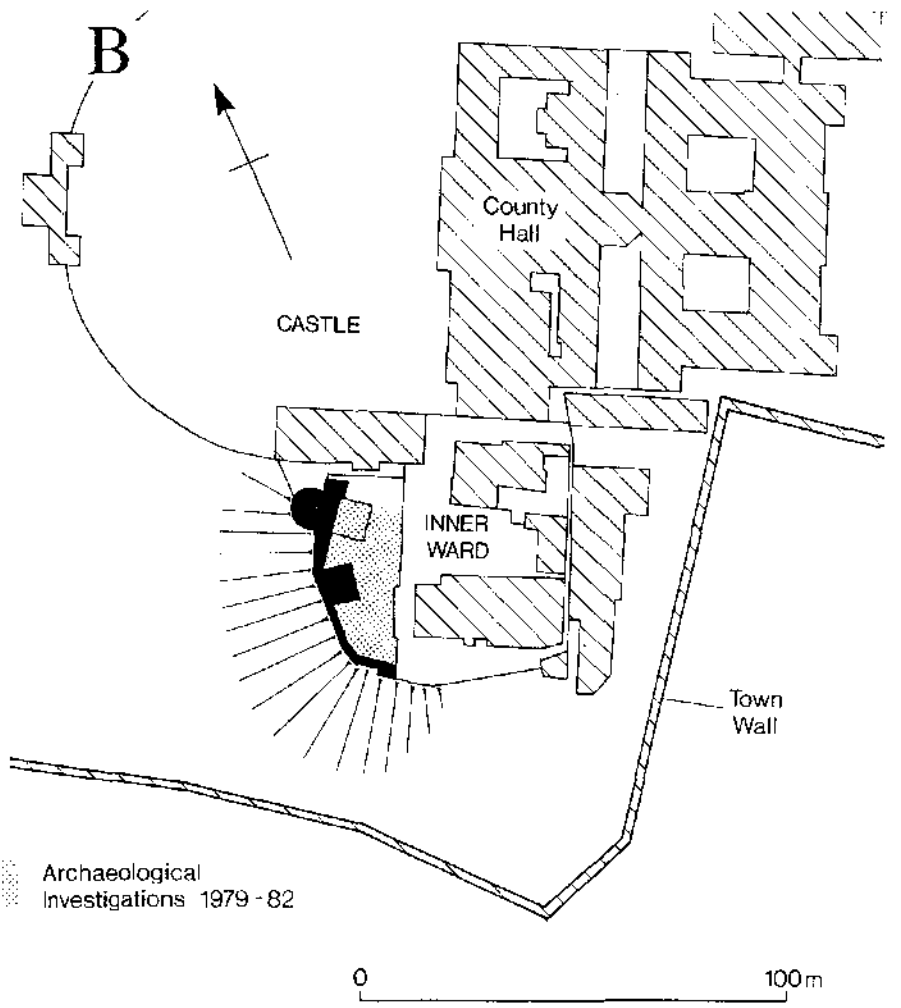
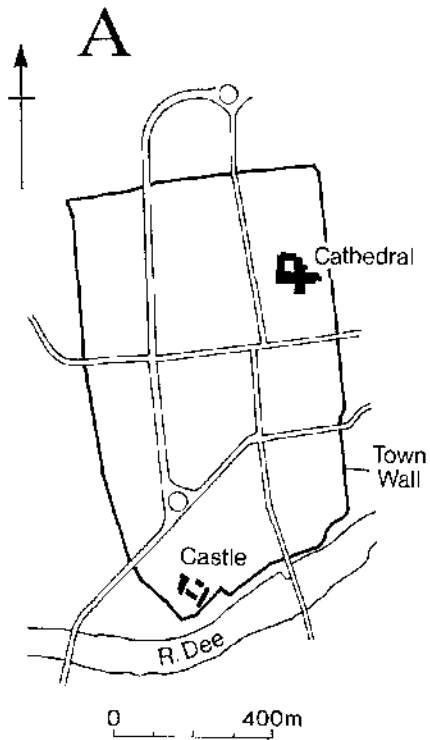
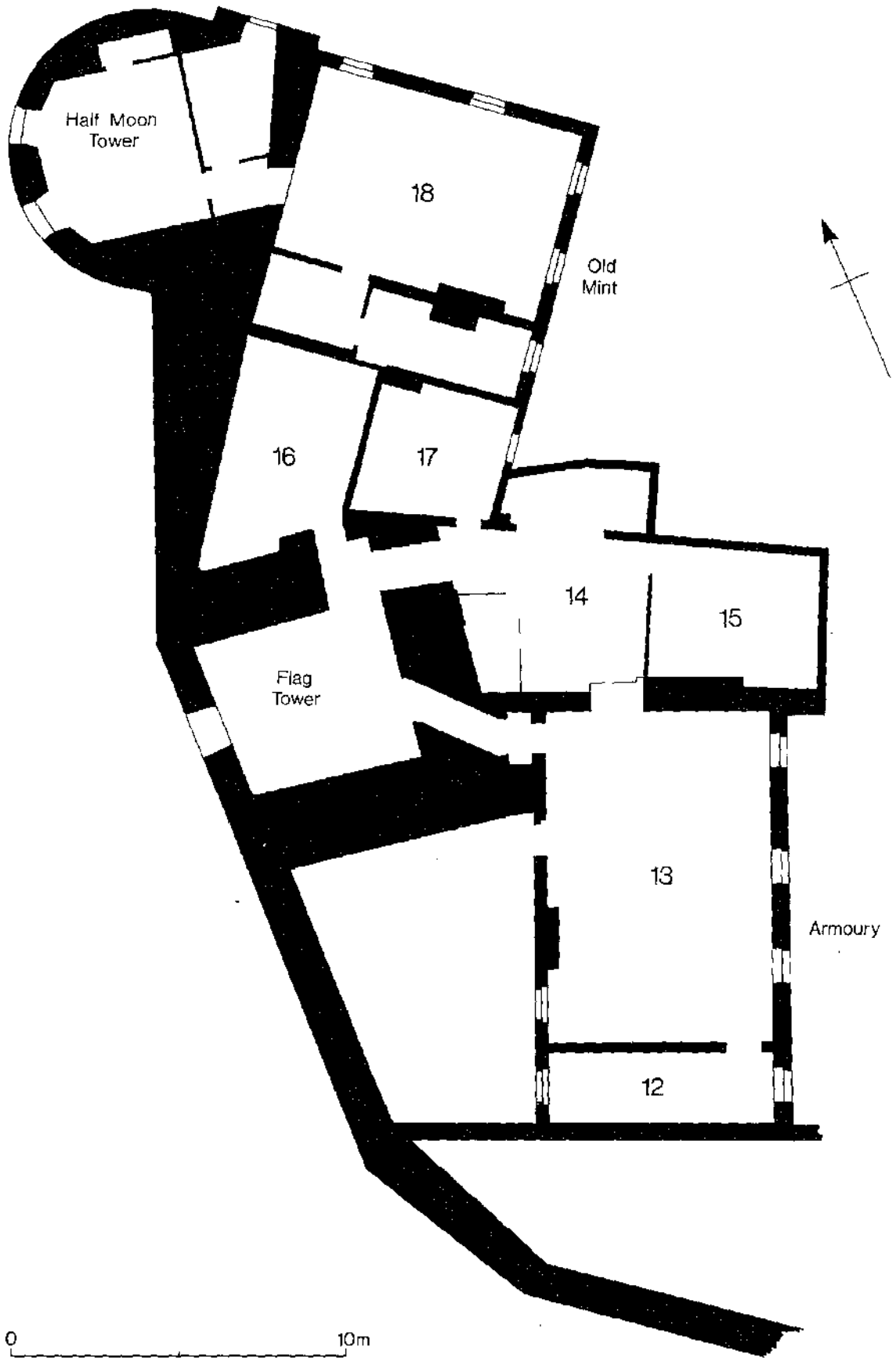
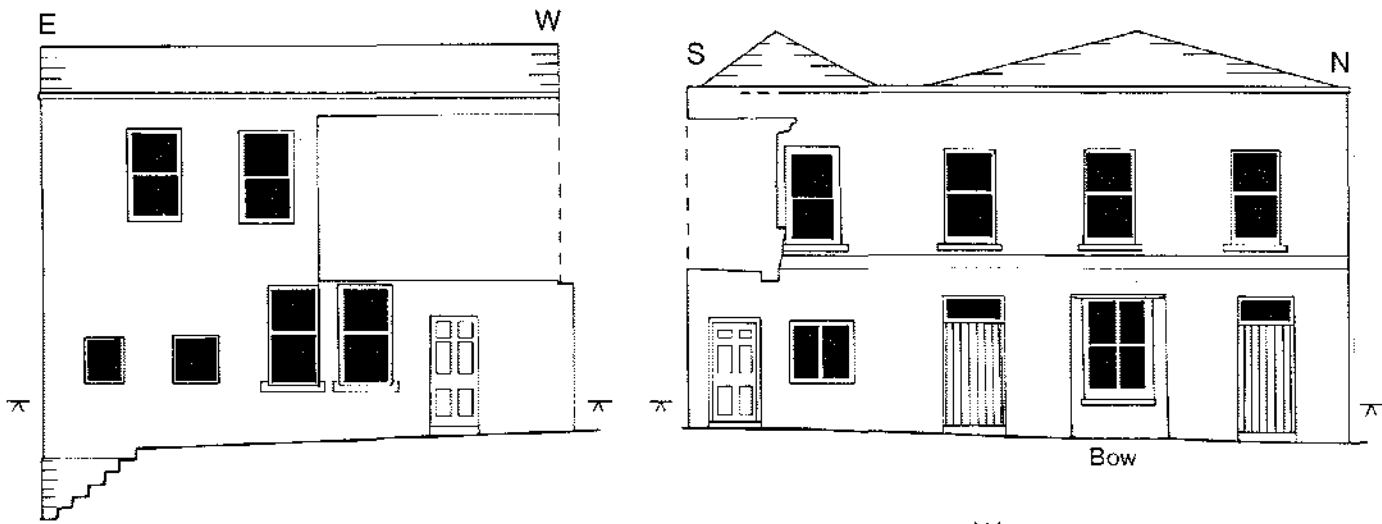
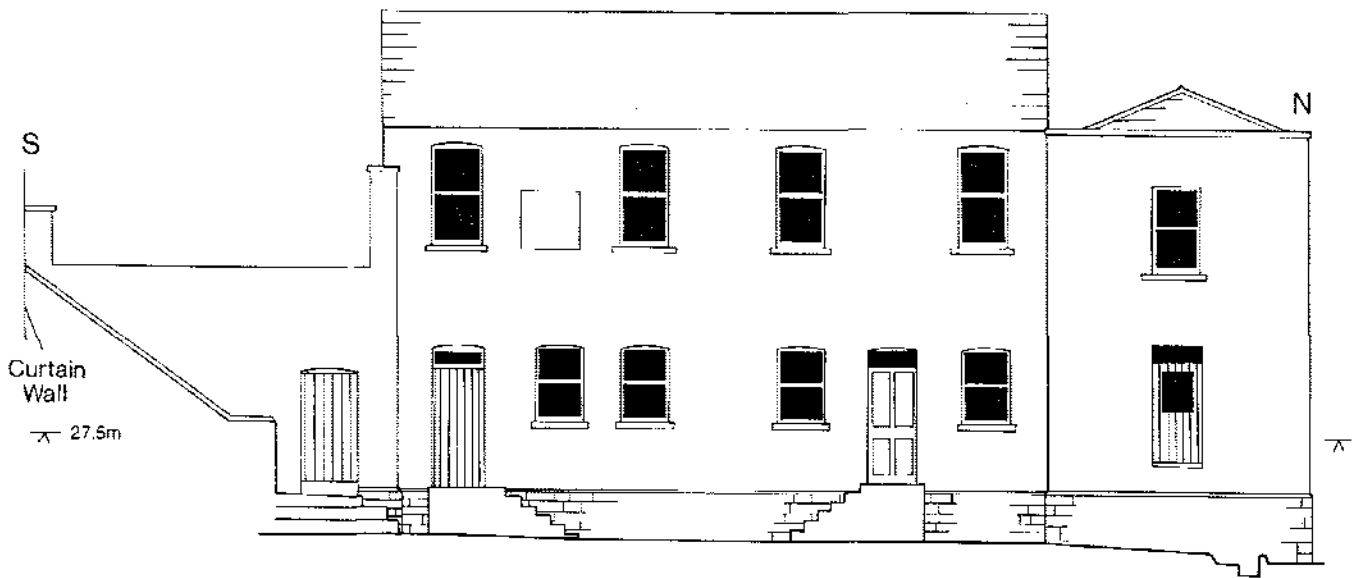


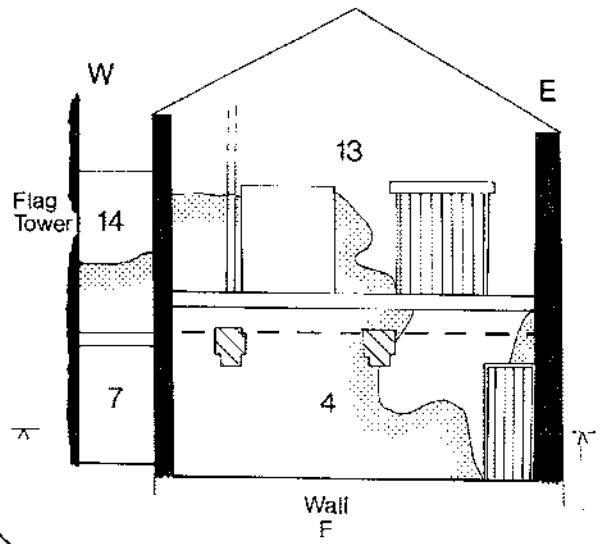
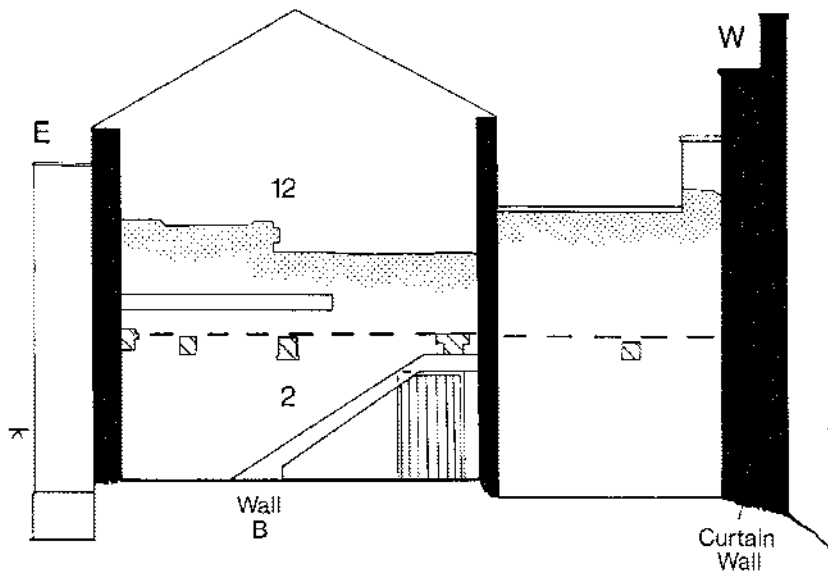
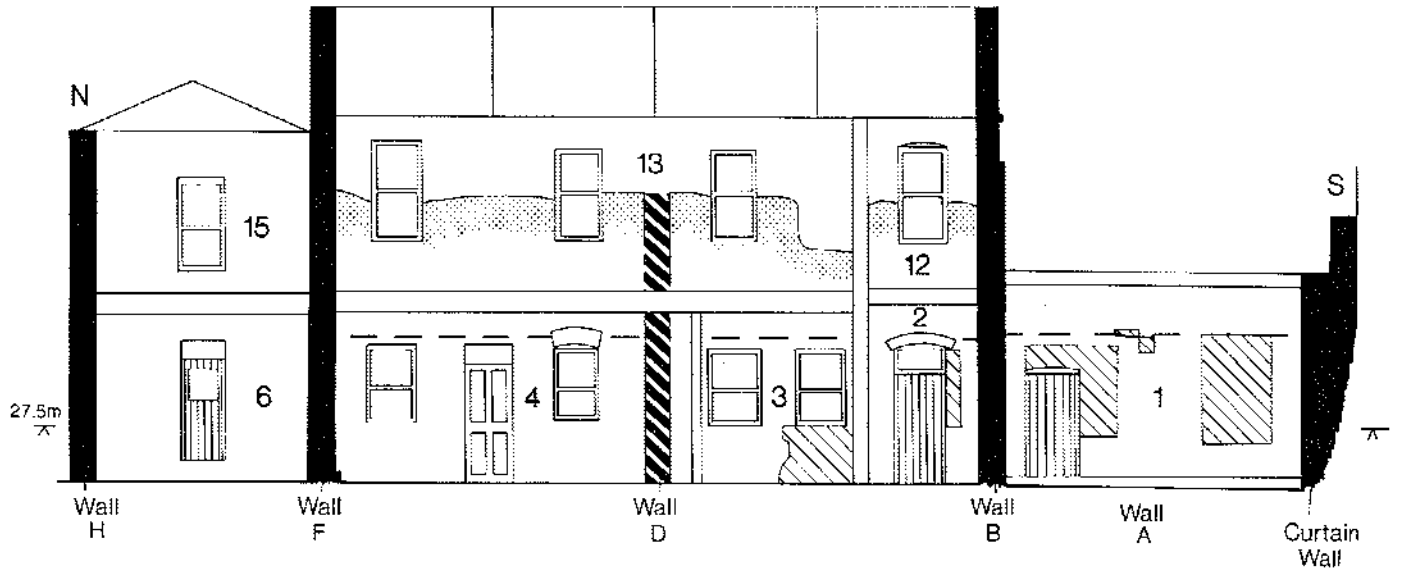
Figure 5





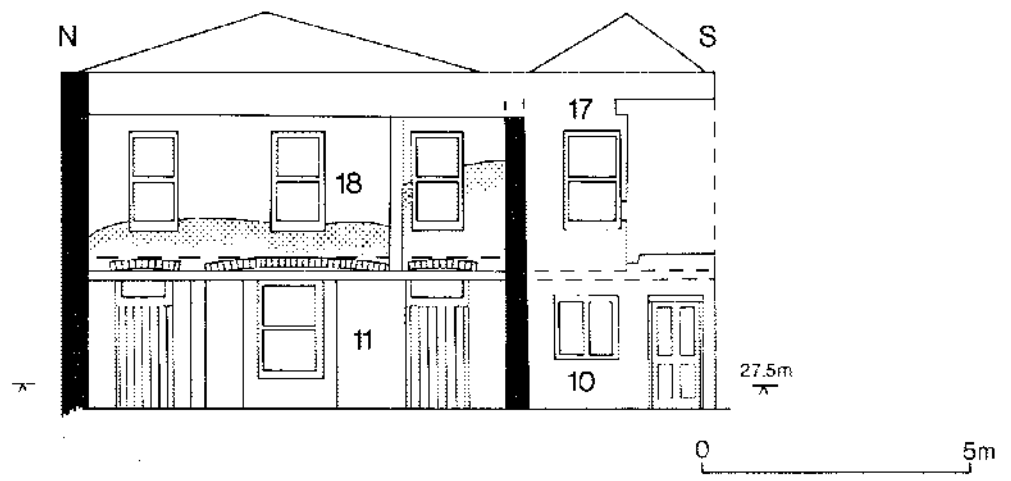


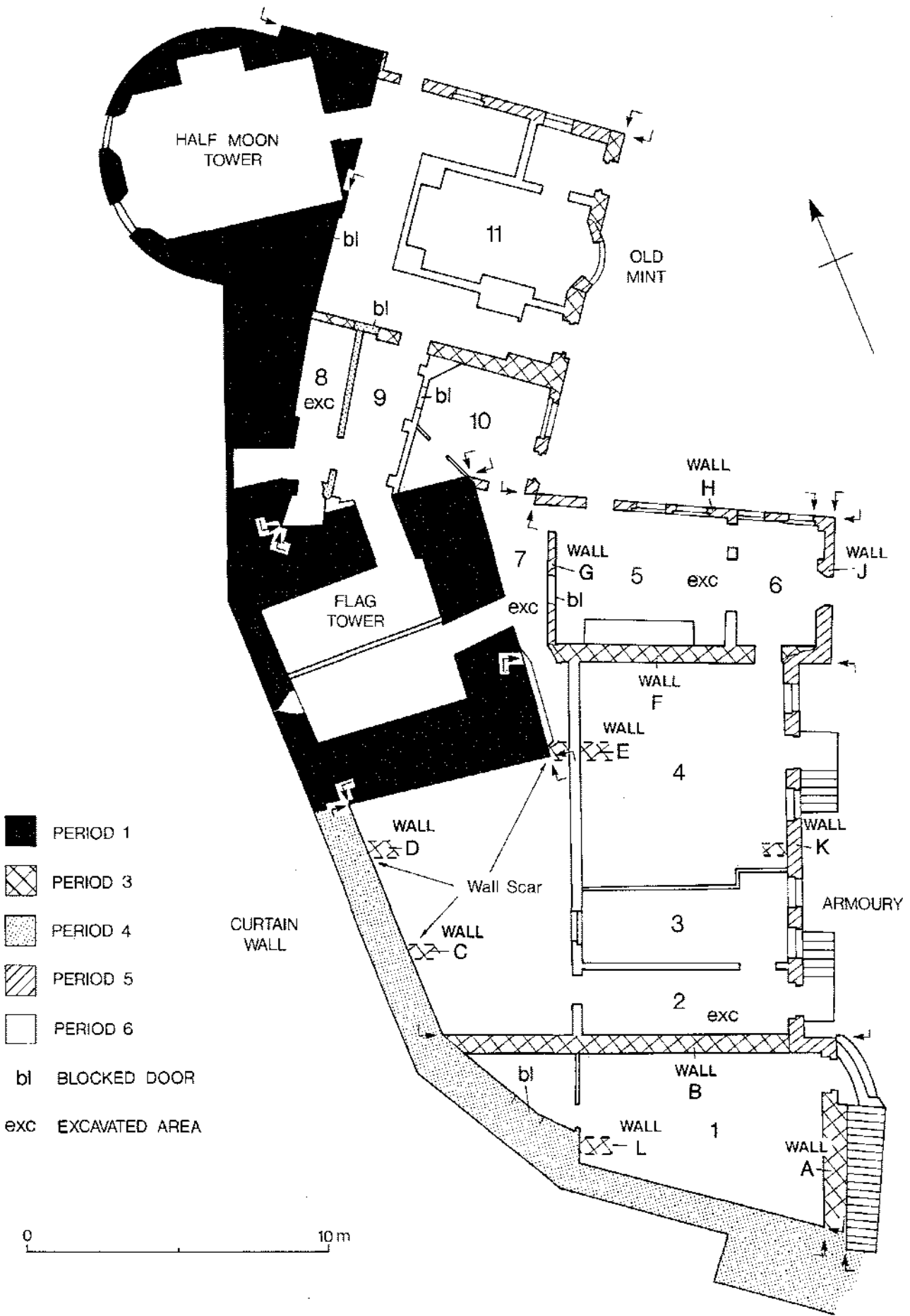


0 5m



 Limit of Period 3 Wall
 Period 3 Eloor Level





- PERIOD 1
- PERIOD 3
- PERIOD 4
- PERIOD 5
- PERIOD 6
- bl BLOCKED DOOR
- exc EXCAVATED AREA

0 10 m

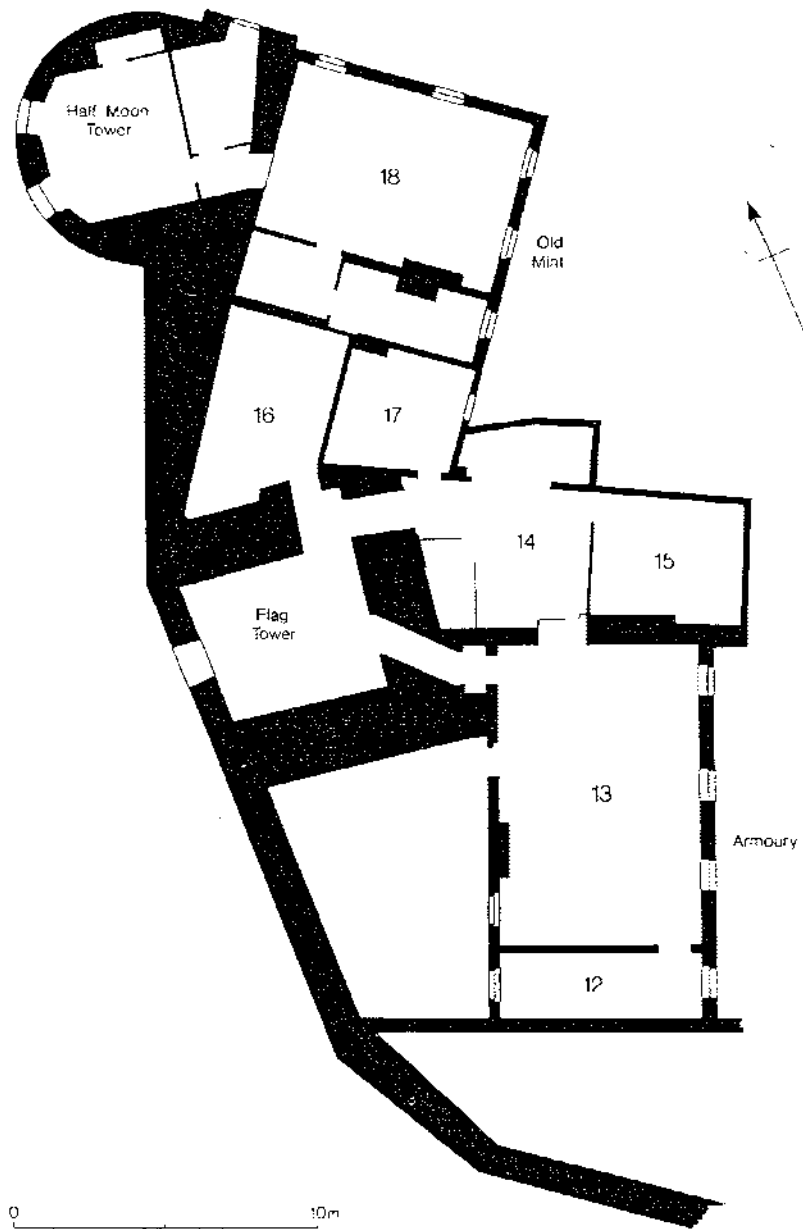


Figure 3



Figure 4

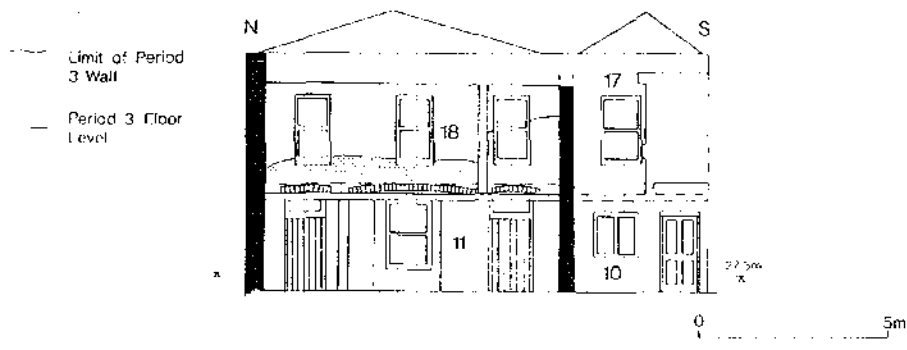
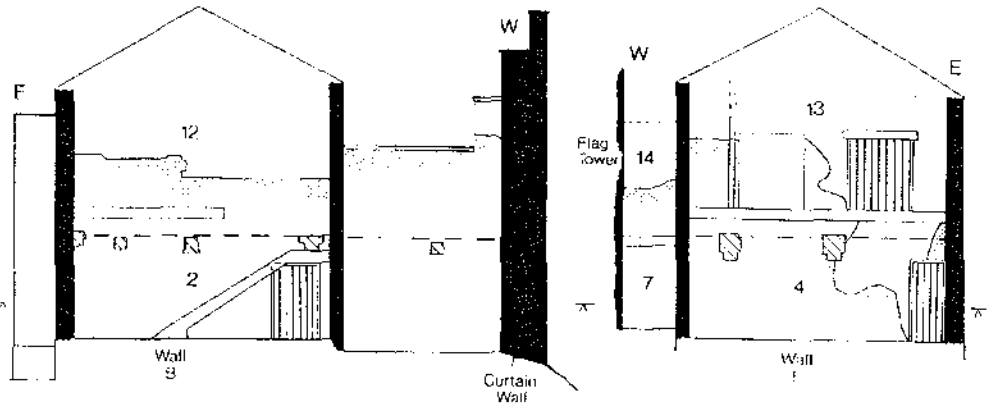
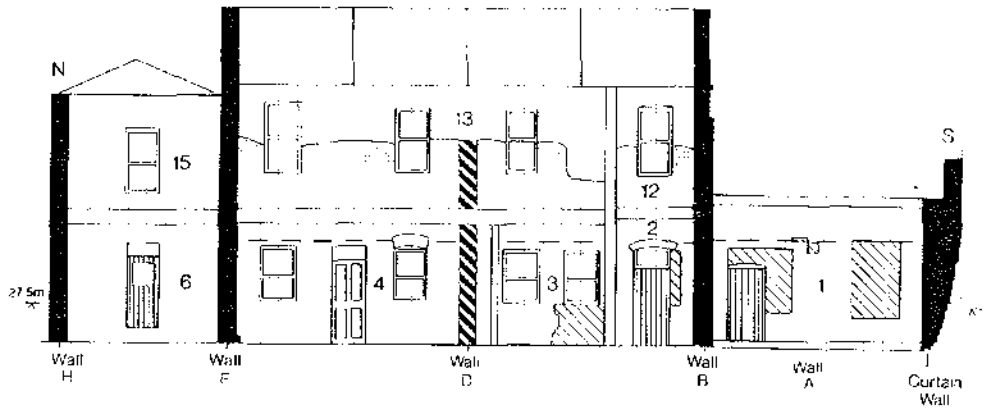


Figure 5



Plate 1
The demolished buildings and retained Mint, view west



Plate 2
The demolished buildings, view south

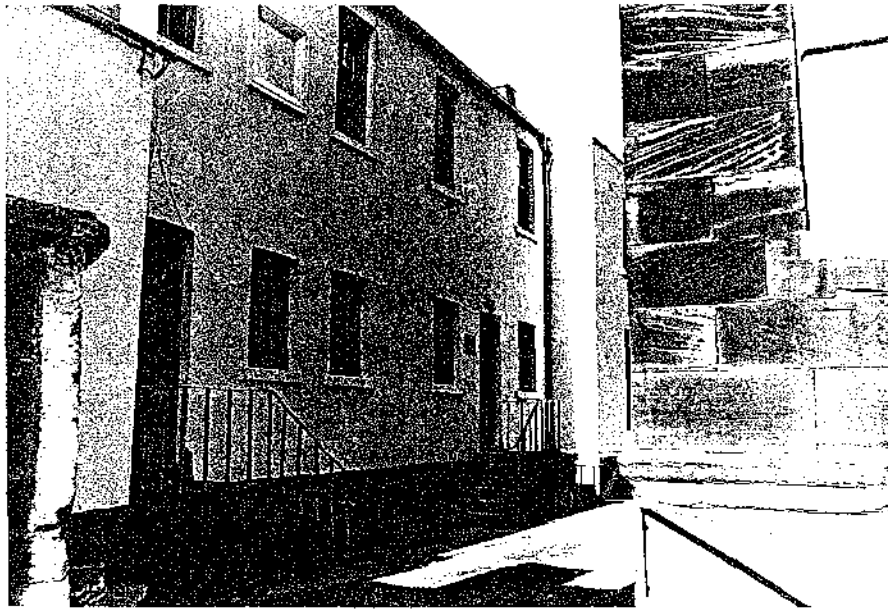


Plate 3
East front of armoury block, view north



Plate 4
North front of armoury block, view south