CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Summary of Periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Dating summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IA</td>
<td>Buried soil.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>Castle rampart constructed. Large circular base with small adjacent base built, but not possible to determine whether they pre- or post-date the rampart. Posts and timber slots producing no coherent plans. Large base probably supported tower with an external stairway; 'tower' either defensive or ecclesiastical.</td>
<td>post-1140 or possibly 1180; up to late 12th or earlier 13th C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>? Occupation deposit (3106) built up against 'tower' base. Evidence of timber buildings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>? Occupation deposit (3104) over 3106. Traces of timber buildings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>'Tower' destroyed by fire. Ramp or path (396) laid across debris.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIA</td>
<td>Thick clay layer (PC 59 S) deposited all over site, probably in preparation for Period II building. Three possible pier bases may have survived from a distinct building or have been part of the IIB structure.</td>
<td>post-1180; up to mid-13th/early 14th C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIB</td>
<td>Rectangular timber building aligned E-W. Possibly a chapel. Fencing and light timber structures to north.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIC</td>
<td>Destruction of IIB building. Features probably related to construction of IIIA chapel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIA</td>
<td>Construction of stone chapel.</td>
<td>Construction of chapel in mid-13th/early 14th C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIB</td>
<td>Extension on N side of IIIA building, probably side-chapel.</td>
<td>mid-13th/early 14th C to 15th C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Period** | **Description** | **Dating summary**
--- | --- | ---
IIC | Extension on S side of IIIA building, probably side-chapel | 
IID | Extension on E side of IIIA building | post-1380s to 15th C.  
III E | Destruction of IIIA-D chapel. | early/mid-16th C.  
III F | Robbing of fabric of IIIA-D chapel. | early/mid 16th C,  
| | = IIIA-F | up to recent times.  
IIIa-d | Series of deposits of rampart wash etc. accumulated on W edge of site. Internal sequence can be determined but relationship to phases of stone chapel uncertain. |  
IV | Post-destruction accumulations. | early/mid-16th C. to recent times.  
V | Topsoil. |  

**Correlation of Historical and Archaeological Periods**

Since the dating of the three main phases of occupation on the site is far from precise, any attempt to correlate the historical and archaeological periods of the castle must be extremely tentative.

The Mandeville family owned large estates in Essex and Pleshey was one of their main strongholds. The earliest levels on the site, at least Period I with its 'tower' either defensive or ecclesiastical, seem likely to be related to the Mandeville period.

The rectilinear timber building of Period II was possibly constructed during the tenure of the Bohun family, for whom Pleshey was an important residence. The stone chapel of Period III may also have been built by the Bohuns. If the dating of the earliest floor tiles is taken as the date of construction then the chapel was built between 1300 and 1314 by Humphrey VIII de Bohun (Earl of Hereford and Essex 1298-1322). If, however, the earliest historical record of a chapel in the castle refers to this structure, then it could have been built by Humphrey de Bohun (Earl of Hereford and Essex 1220-74). Nevertheless it must be remembered that the Period II building could also have been a chapel and that there may have been more than one chapel in the castle, rendering the historical references ambiguous.

The stone chapel of Period III was certainly standing during the time of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester (late 14th century) and since this period must have been the wealthiest in the history of the castle, it is likely that the chapel received some attention. The Mill Green B tiled floor and the carved architectural details provide evidence probably of this date. During the mid-15th century three Queens of England held the castle as part of their dowries. There are historical records of repairs to various buildings
in the castle at this time, including to the 'campanile' of the castle chapel and the occurrence of fragments of Flemish tiles suggest that repair work was done inside as well as outside.

The Chapel as part of the Castle Complex

The upper bailey was no doubt crowded with buildings. The outlines of structures plotted from parchmarks (fig. 3) give some indication of the cramped arrangements, and further buildings adjacent to the south end of the brick bridge have recently been found in excavations by Mr. S. R. Bassett (personal communication). Only the most important of these buildings would have been completely of stone and/or brick, others probably used stone footings with half-timbering and daub in-fill for their superstructures, while the still less important were just of timber. The excavations described in this report found many indications of these timber structures which leave little evidence in the archaeological record and cause considerable problems in interpretation.

The castle needed kitchens, brew-houses, store-houses, (for food and equipment), stabling for animals, workshops, offices, and accommodation for servants, and nobility. These specific functions cannot always be differentiated from the archaeological evidence. Ovens survive in stone and brick quite frequently; chapels can be identified occasionally by their plan but more often by features such as piscinae or sedilia; ordinary and possibly multi-purpose buildings such as store-houses or stables seldom have diagnostic features except in outstanding examples such as the stable range at Goodrich castle (Radford 1975). The chapel excavated at Pleshey Castle can clearly be identified from its plan. Interpretation of the less substantial timber buildings occurring in all phases of the site is considerably more problematical.

The chapel was built on the west side of the road or track from the SW entrance to the brick bridge and the motte; the areas of metalling around the east end of the chapel were probably related to this track. There was no evidence of other stone buildings abutting the chapel so presumably its north and south walls were kept free to provide access to the door-ways through these walls at the west end. The chapel clearly occupied a prime position and must have been an impressive sight, and intended to be such for visiting dignitaries coming into the castle through the SW entrance.

The People

The castle household comprised all kinds of people: the nobility who owned the castle; the stewards etc., who organised the running of the household; and all the servants from the kitchen staff to farmworkers. It is partly through the small personal objects found in an excavation that the archaeologist can hope to approach the people whose life-style he/she is trying to re-create. There are a number of objects from Pleshey Castle which must once have been prized personal possessions — the silver signet ring, and silver spoon with a twisted shaft, the bone pin with a castellated head, and the copper alloy tweezers used perhaps for holding open the pages of a book.

Many specialist craftsmen were involved in producing the artefacts found, either working at the castle or in production centres elsewhere: metalworkers;
bone-workers; potters; masons, who carved the architectural details of the chapel; glaziers and artists to produce the painted window glass; tilers, and brick-makers as well as the builders themselves who raised the chapel.

Much has been said in this report of the wealth of the castle, but the excavated material includes ordinary domestic utensils particularly pottery and tools made mainly of iron, used by the castle household to service what in effect must have been a large farming and hunting estate, stimulating local industry and trade.

Trade

A Norwegian honestone from layer 3106 (Period IC) shows contact with the Scandinavian world at a very early stage in the history of the site. This is not an isolated instance, however, since hones occur fairly frequently on medieval sites. It would be expected, in fact, that an important medieval castle would be drawing upon fairly widespread marketing areas. The floor tiles provide an interesting picture of the marketing area drawn up by Pleshey Castle for at least this one commodity, radiating out from the immediate area of Pleshey, to the continent. All of the tiles may not have been used in the chapel, but since they must have been used in other buildings in the castle their general economic significance is valid. In the late 13th to 14th centuries the castle was clearly obtaining tiles from kilns working fairly locally in the county: the Central Essex tiles were perhaps produced close to Pleshey; the West Essex group may have been coming from the SW and the Mill Green B tiles from the SE. Sources in nearby counties were also tapped: the Pseudo-Penn tiles, for example, were doubtless manufactured no further distant than Buckinghamshire and the 'Westminster Tiler' seems to have worked in or near London. There is a hint of contact further afield during the same period with the Tyler Hill kilns near Canterbury while in the mid-15th century Flemish tile fragments demonstrate influence either in the form of imported tiles, or of the presence of Flemish craftsmen working in Essex.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to think of this wide range of floor tiles from a single site as being exceptional; in fact it seems to be typical of major establishments in the area. One might compare, for example, the situation at Waltham Abbey (Drury forthcoming, b), and Little Dunmow Priory each of which has yielded tiles from at least six different sources; unfortunately Pleshey remains almost the only large secular establishment to have been excavated on a sufficient scale to indicate the range of material present.

Two types of baked clay chimney-pots were found at Pleshey, neither of which has close parallels in the area. Type 1, represented by fragments from Period I contexts may have been produced fairly locally since other types possibly influenced by it have been identified in the area. The Type 2 form (Period II) reflects again strong influence from north France and Belgium.

The sherds of imported pottery demonstrate links with similar areas in the late 15th and 16th centuries — with Germany, the South Netherlands, and also with Spain. The ordinary domestic pottery is potentially the most informative category of material from the site in terms of local trading patterns, but so little work has yet been done on the kilns of the Essex region that at the time of writing few comments can usefully be made.
The market of the burgh of Pleshey must have benefited from the business contacts and needs of the castle both local and long distance and was evidently still prospering up to the 15th and 16th centuries. Further research into the documentation of the town would undoubtedly be extremely profitable.

The Importance of the Pleshey Castle Sequence for Ecclesiastical Archaeology

The two most important aspects of the Pleshey Castle excavation results in relation to the archaeology of churches are:

(1) The possibility of timber churches underlying the stone chapel: the rectilinear building of Period IIB, and the round ?church tower of Period I.

(2) The survival of a medieval church plan including tiled flooring in situ and some evidence of interior arrangements.

Little work has yet been done on timber churches in this country, and although the identification of the timber chapel/s at Pleshey is extremely tentative, it may be that further investigation at other sites will provide closer parallels.

The interior arrangements in a medieval church are likely to have left extremely slight traces. Screens and seating may indeed have been completely timber framed in many cases, leaving only the negative evidence of areas of untiled floor. In churches which are still functioning, this ephemeral evidence will have been destroyed by later improvements to drainage, heating and flooring. It is only in the rare cases where a church has gone out of use and the site has been undisturbed by later building that evidence such as that at Pleshey can survive. It is clear from the discussions in previous chapters of the interpretation of the tile footings within Pleshey Castle chapel that further research on the lay-out of existing church plans, and into the requirements of the medieval form of service, will be invaluable.
TABLE I

DETAILED STRATIGRAPHIC INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

The features and layers are described in sequence according to their year of excavation (i.e. 1959, 1960, 1962, 1963) and within each year the feature list is followed by the layer list. The original field numbers are used with a prefix number relating to the season (p. 10). The field layer letters have been retained except for 1959 where the letters published in the First Interim Report (Rahtz 1960) are used for ease of reference, but a correlation table of the 1959 field and published contexts is given in Table II. Where field numbers or letters which appear on finds and site records are not listed, these features have been regarded as unstratified. Where several contexts can be correlated although numbered differently during excavation the number used in the sequence diagram, other drawings and in the text is underlined (e.g. 935=327). In order to simplify the sequence diagram further (fig. 5) where this can be done without adversely affecting the sense, some feature numbers have been grouped together, as for example 'Chapel walls', these being all of one build. Where a feature number is not individually indicated on the sequence diagram for this reason, the group label is given in the feature description below and underlined (e.g. 068 Chapel walls. N wall of main chapel building...). If the stratigraphic position of a feature could not be reasonably closely determined, the feature has not been included in the sequence diagram. Finds are cross-referenced to this table except for the domestic pottery for which a detailed context list is given in Chapter IV.

ABBREVIATIONS

Stratigraphy

TS Timber Slot
PH Post Hole
SH Stake Hole
Strat. inc. Stratigraphic position inconclusive.

Finds

| AB  | Animal Bone         | IN  | Iron (Nails)        |
| AF  | Architectural Fragments | IP  | Imported Pottery   |
| B   | Bricks              | J   | Jet                 |
| C   | Coins               | L   | Lead                |
| CA  | Copper Alloy        | P   | Plaster             |
| CP  | Chimney-pots        | RT  | Roof Tile           |
| CPI | Clay Pipes          | S   | Silver              |

208