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SUMMARY

This report correlates the results from four seasons of excavation, directed by Mr. P. A. Rahtz, in the upper bailey of Pleshey Castle, Essex, in 1959-60 and 1962-3. Three main periods were defined, following pre-castle occupation. They are summarised below.

The earliest features identified were a large circular stone base with an adjacent smaller more elliptical base, possibly the foundations for a tower and an outer staircase, used either for defensive or ecclesiastical purposes. This period is dated post-1140 or possibly 1180 up to the late 12th or earlier 13th century.

At a later stage a thick clay deposit was laid down into which slots and posts were cut for a rectilinear timber building. The orientation of this structure and the fact that it was succeeded by a chapel suggest that it also may have been a religious building. The date range suggested for this phase is post-1180 up to the mid-13th/early 14th century.

Subsequently a rectangular stone building, interpreted on the evidence of its plan as the castle chapel, was constructed possibly in the mid-13th/early 14th century. Extensions, probably side-chapels, were added on both long sides of the building, and a further extension was built against the east wall. The chapel is recorded as still standing, albeit in ruins, in 1558/9 and archaeological material also indicates that it was out of use by the early to mid-16th century.