

CHAPTER SIX

PLACE AND PRESTIGE: ENACTING AND DISPLAYING AUTHORITY IN ENGLISH DOMESTIC SPACES DURING THE CENTRAL MIDDLE AGES

BY KATHERINE WEIKERT

Defining social space, and therefore using it in historical enquiry, can be tricky.^{ci1} As Henri Fefevbre describes it, a space is not a thing itself but ‘a set of relations between things’ (1991, 81-82); in trying to discern a social space we try to view the interlocking and intertwined relationships between people, buildings and objects and further try to interpret what this means for that society. Space within the context of this article means the physical but empty area in which people exist, in which roles are enacted and objects placed. This means that this article is less interested in the physicality of a building, but more in the space itself, the place where social relationships were enacted using not only physical objects but the persons themselves. Lao-Tzu expressed the concept of a building as a social space as such:

Cut out doors and windows to make a room
But it is in the spaces where there is nothing
That the usefulness of the room lies (trans. Mair 1990).

This quote helps to illuminate an idea that architectural and spatial theorists Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson would articulate more than two thousand years later: that a building in and of itself serves the purpose of organizing the space that it encloses, and furthermore that organizing a space is tantamount to organizing the people within that space (1984, 1-18). Therefore buildings display complex social information through their spaces, particularly in regards to relationships between inhabitants and the visitors to these spaces, and as these relationships change, the buildings will also alter (ibid, 154–155). These relationships between the users of

the space can thus be extrapolated to consider wider aspects of a culture or society.

Using spatial analysis stemming from Hillier and Hanson's methodology, this chapter will engage with several sites in England that have excavated evidence of a manorial existence at some point during the span of ca 900–ca 1200. Following upon this, the chapter will discuss the trappings of authority as seen as a spatial feature at the estate, and how the spatial perception of authority shifted in this three-hundred-year period. Adding another layer of analysis, the material culture that signals the prestige or authority of a place will be considered. Castle studies will also be briefly incorporated in order to discuss a few interestingly choreographed spaces that can be found at castle keeps with spatial analysis. Finally the corpus of evidence from the spatial analysis will be discussed to indicate the implications for the performance or display of authority in England in the central middle ages.

Part I: Methodology

The Hillier and Hanson theory and methodology of spatial analysis is outlined in great detail in their book *The Social Logic of Space* (1984). This methodology is a universal method of analyzing space and has been utilized in disciplines from anthropology to architecture to discern the subtleties of space; its use has been applied to everything from a 1960s British flat conversion to an Ashanti palace complex (Hillier and Hanson 1984, 156, 169). Jane Grenville has dryly noted that the method could even be used to ascertain the unspoken hierarchies in an archaeology department by determining the relative accessibility of staff offices (1997, 20). Hillier and Hanson maintain that the physical form of a building actually obscures the relationships underpinning the spatial order (1984, xii) although the combination of spatial analysis with material analysis or documentary research has been very fruitful to widen discussions, for example with questions of gender, status and space in the medieval world (Amanda Richardson 2003a, 2003b; Weikert 2013). Within medieval scholarship and more particularly medieval archaeology, the methodology or adapted or derived versions of it in either practical or theoretic terms has been successfully used by scholars such as Graham Fairclough (1992), Roberta Gilchrist (1999), and Leonie V. Hicks (2009). Patrick Faulkner, working years before Hillier and Hanson's monograph, used theoretically

similar though methodologically different means to discuss prestige and access in the late medieval household (1958, 1963), influencing later scholarship as much as the work of Hillier and Hanson.

The following brief overview offers a demonstration of how to read access analysis, with all information taken from the guidebook of the theory and method of spatial analysis, *The Social Logic of Space* (Hillier and Hanson 1984). In interpreting a Hillier and Hanson spatial analysis, each circle represents a space within a premise, and the lines represent permeability to those spaces, i.e. the access between the spaces, with each line representing one point of access (see fig. 6-1). Circles that are filled in are transitional spaces such as stairwells, hallways and so forth, whilst the empty circles are considered as living or useable spaces. The starting point for all spatial analysis is the carrier space, the space that contains the building or settlement, and is represented by a crossed circle at the bottom of the diagram. The concept of a carrier space can be a subjective term as it is not always technically “outside,” but for the purposes of this chapter each site’s carrier space can be considered as “outside” the premises.

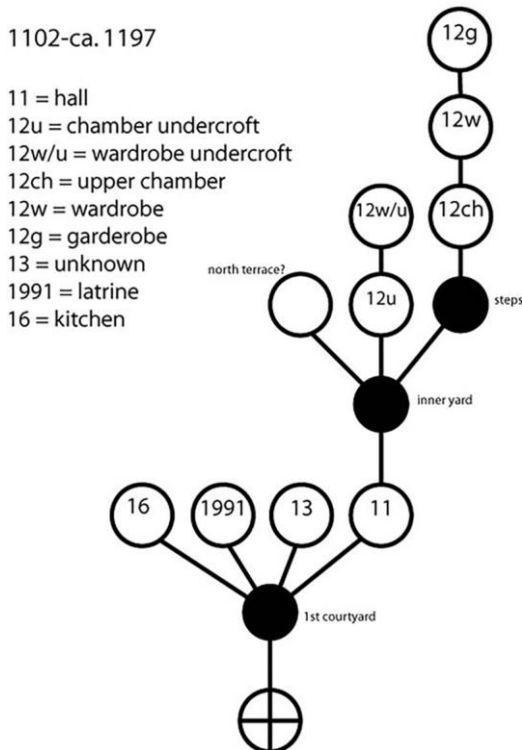


Figure 6-1: Example of spatial analysis from Facombe Netherton, Hampshire, in the twelfth century. Filled in circles represent transitional spaces; blank circles represent living or usable spaces. The carrier space, represented by the crossed circle at the bottom, is in this case outside the manorial complex. Image by the author

In reading these analyses, depth is measured in the number of steps away from the carrier space; the higher the depth, the more private the space. Spaces that are positioned on a ring are points of access between visitors and inhabitants of the space, whilst spaces on trees are private or secluded areas. One can determine the social importance of spaces by gauging the level of investment in these spaces. For example, Facombe Netherton in the twelfth century (see fig. 6-1) shows a particular investment in the private spaces, leading to questions of who was in these spaces and for what purpose in order to get an idea about why the notion of seclusion was important to the groups using these spaces.

The sites researched for this chapter were:

- Bishopstone, East Sussex, a late Anglo-Saxon monastic settlement or pseudo-thegny site (G. Thomas 2010)
- Brighton Hill South, also called Hatch Warren, Hampshire, a late Anglo-Saxon and early Anglo-Norman settlement which as excavated included a manorial site (Fasham et al. 1995)
- Bishop's Waltham, Hampshire, another late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman manorial site (Lewis 1985)
- Goltho, Lincolnshire, a relatively well-known site in occupation from around 900 through to the high middle ages, and here studied through ca 1200 (Beresford 1987; Stocker 1989)
- Faccombe Netherton, Hampshire, yet another late Anglo-Saxon through high medieval manorial site studied here in its phases through ca 1204 (Fairbrother 1990; Weikert forthcoming A)
- West Cotton, Raunds, and Raunds Furnell, both in Northamptonshire, late Saxon manorial settlements (Audouy and Chapman 2009; Chapman 2010)
- Portchester Castle, Hampshire, an Anglo-Saxon thegny site overlaid by a Norman and later-period castle (Cunliffe 1977; Cunliffe and Munby 1985). Analysis with the keep at Portchester raised interesting questions to the social use of the space, necessitating the inclusion of two contemporary keeps in the south of England, that at:
 - Rochester Castle, Kent (Brown 1969, Port 2008), and
 - Canterbury Castle, Kent (Renn 1982)

Sites chosen for this research were based upon a set of semi-flexible criteria, namely that:

- Sites would have been in occupation at some point from ca 900–ca 1200
- Sites were manorial in type and drawn mainly from the thegny or landed gentry classes in an attempt to view society below the royal levels, though some sites had periods of royal holding particularly in periods after the Norman Conquest. The castle keeps in the post-Conquest period were the exception to this criterion.
- Sites must have been excavated to the degree that buildings and systems of access could be identified to some degree of confidence.

In all instances, the terminology used here for the spaces at the sites is consistent with the terminology used by the excavators in their published reports. All phasing is also as published with the exception of accounting for redating at Goltho as suggested by Stocker (1989) and rephasing at Faccombe Netherton undertaken by the author (Weikert forthcoming A).

Part II: Analysis

In the earlier phases here studied, buildings that are interpreted as “halls” and “chambers” are found at low levels of depth, demonstrated at Faccombe Netherton (fig. 6-2), Portchester (fig. 6-3), Goltho (fig. 6-4) and possibly at Bishopstone (fig. 6-5). The distinguishing feature is that the hall building and the chamber building are either at the same depth, such as at Goltho and Portchester, or that the chamber building actually appears at a lower depth than the hall, such as at Faccombe Netherton, where this configuration appears until the late eleventh century. Despite some extant transitional spaces at sites such as Portchester and Goltho, which give the schema more depth, once visitors were allowed through those transitional spaces of gates or yards, they were equally able to access either hall or chamber.

After enclosure, after ca. 990

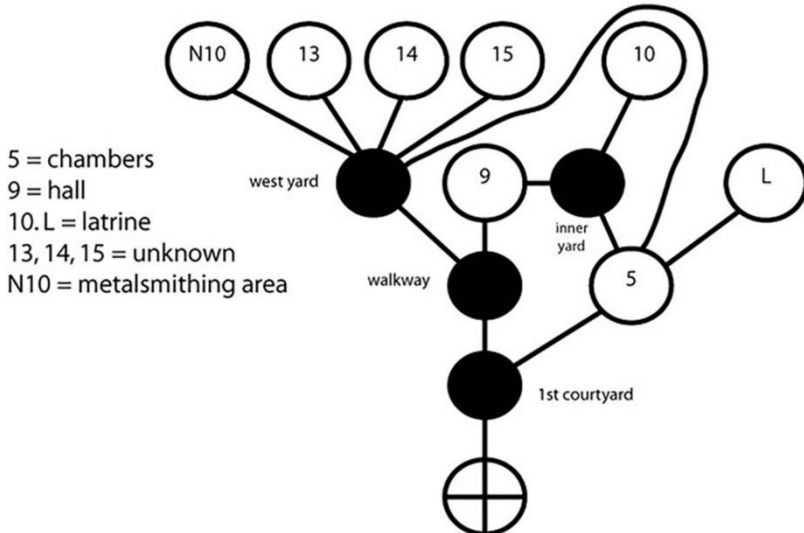


Figure 6-2: Spatial analysis, Faccombe Netherton, Hampshire, after ca 990. Image by the author.

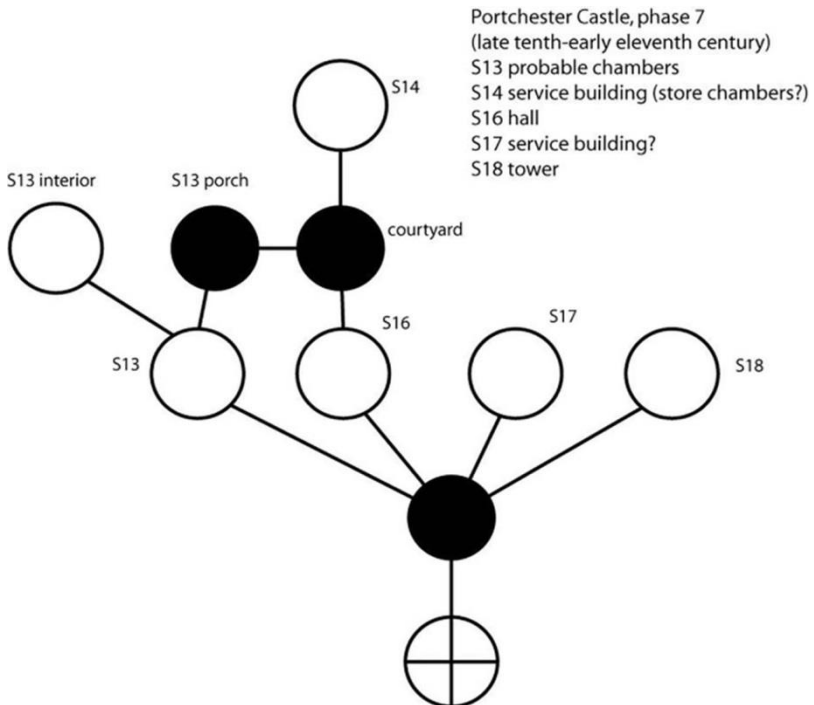


Figure 6-3: Spatial analysis from Portchester Castle, Hampshire, late 10th – early 11th century. Image by the author

Goltho, period 3, first phase
(after ca 850/950)

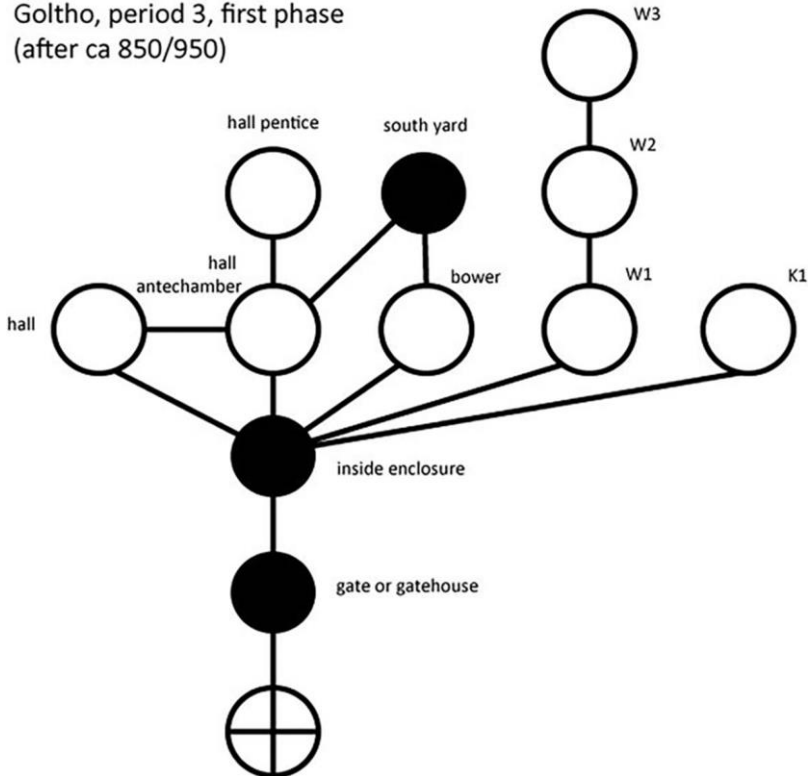


Figure 6-4: Spatial analysis, Goltho, Lincolnshire, ca 850/950. Image by the author

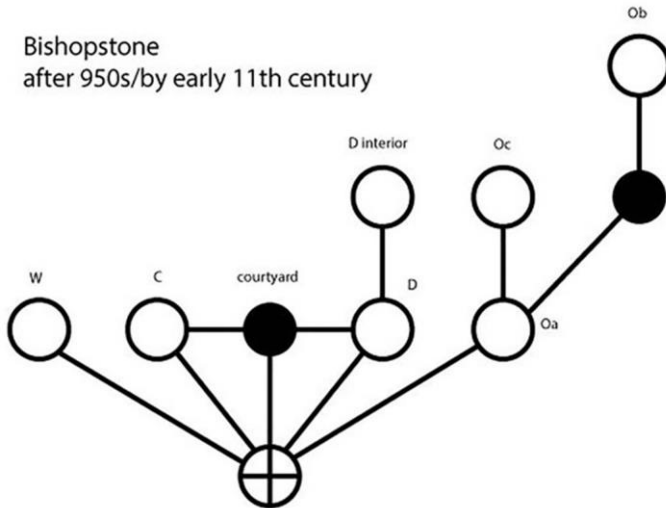


Figure 6-5: Spatial analysis at Bishopstone, Sussex, after ca 950s. Image by the author.

It is interesting to point out that these sites also have, in this earlier time-frame, interpreted “hall” and “chamber” spaces that appear on rings, and often on the same ring as the other. Since spaces on rings are spaces where visitors and inhabitants interact with each other, this would mean that both “hall” and “chamber” spaces were accessible to not only those who lived on the estate but to those who visited the estate.

One shift in the rings we can see is in the “chamber” space. In many places, mid-way through the range of time studied, the “chamber” would remain on the ring but alterations to the buildings (such as the partitioning of an inner room or the build of a second story) placed these spatially inner rooms off the ring and at the beginning of its own branch or on its own on a branch. This can be seen at Portchester from the start of the analyses in the tenth century (see fig. 6-3) but the shift can be seen at Faccombe Netherton starting in the mid-eleventh century (see fig. 6-6) and Goltho from the mid-tenth to mid-eleventh century (see fig. 6-7).

Before ca. 1035-1102

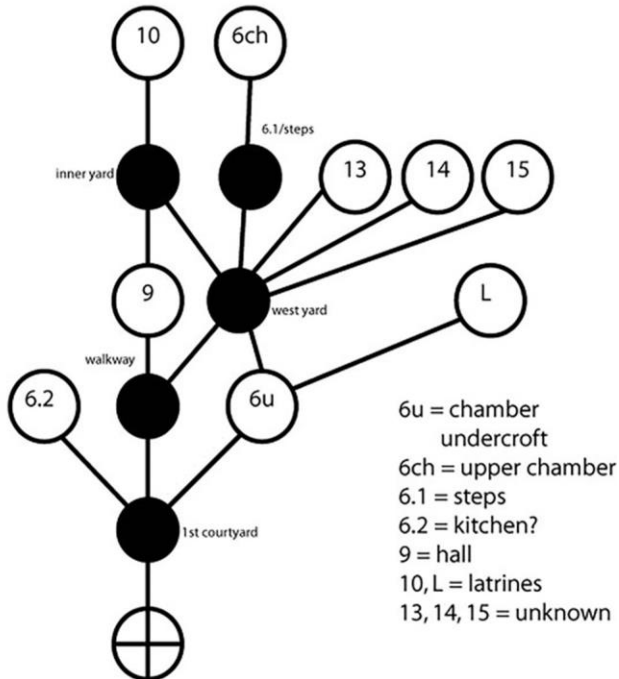


Figure 6-6: Spatial analysis from Faccombe Netherton, Hampshire, 11th century. Image by the author.

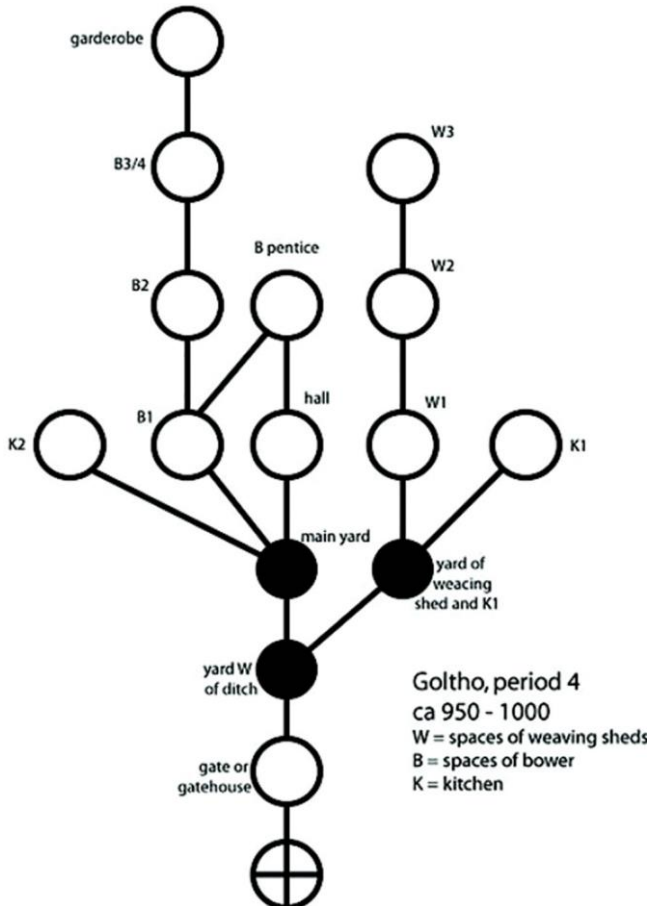


Figure 6-7: Spatial analysis from Goltho, Lincolnshire, mid- to late 10th century. Image by the author.

Brighton Hill South is slightly more difficult to interpret in these terms as the majority of the excavated buildings were uninterpreted, but there are two possible areas of this separation: the first with an inner room from one building or possibly with the use of building space beyond the excavation area, as indicated by the dotted line on analysis (see fig. 6-8.) A separate notion of ‘privacy’ was beginning to be seen in these places with reserved

space for the inhabitants, although in most cases the main room can still be seen not only at a relatively lower depth but still on the ring with the hall.

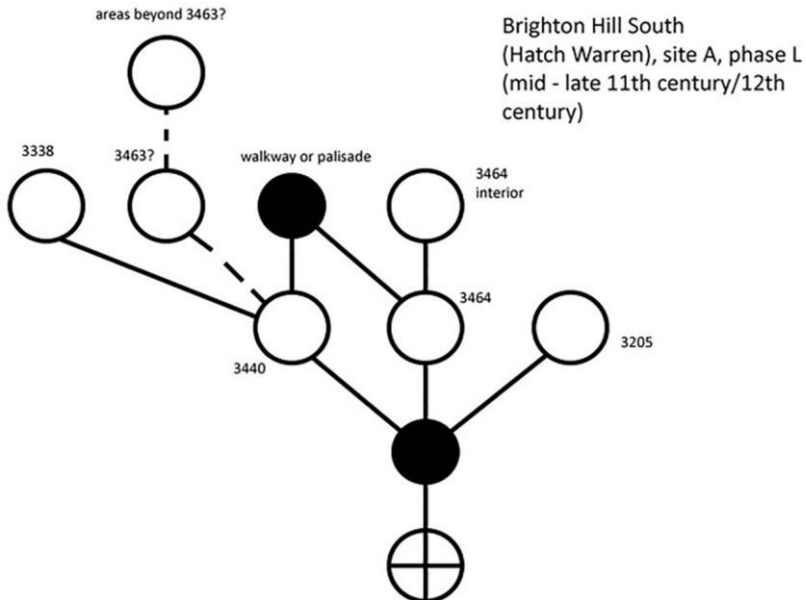


Figure 6-8: Spatial analysis from Brighton Hill South (Hatch Warren), Hampshire, mid- to late 11th century/12th century. Image by the author

This shift emerges in a dramatic fashion later in the period, in which the spaces traditionally seen as “private” are seen in analysis to be just that. “Chamber” or “bower” spaces are separate, on their own trees and to a certain degree separated from the spaces we tend to view as more “public.” This can most clearly be seen at Portchester (see fig. 6-9) where the chamber block (building N1, currently interpreted onsite as its later fourteenth century iteration of the “constable’s hall;” see Weikert 2013) is accessed entirely separately from the hall and keep spaces, and again rather dramatically at Faccombe Netherton where from the twelfth century the whole spaces of the chamber area are split from the rest of the site and exist on their own branch (see fig 6-1).

Portchester Castle, period 1b
early first half of the 12th century

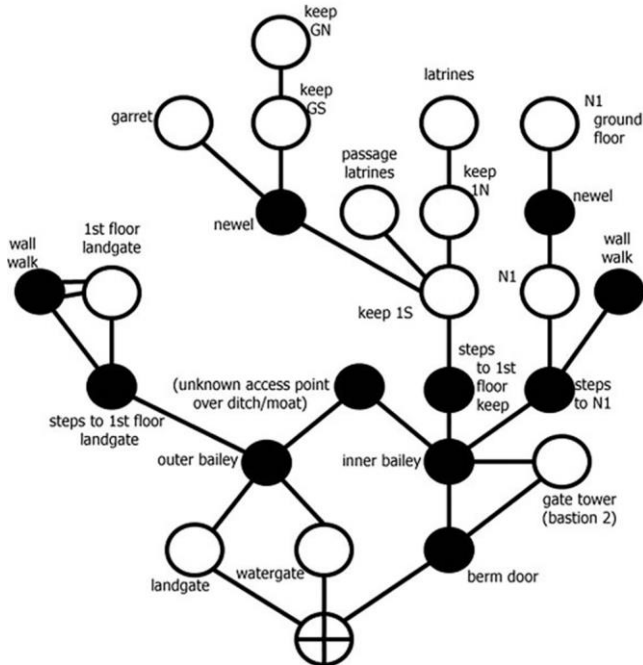


Figure 6-9: Spatial analysis, Portchester Castle, Hampshire, early first half of the 12th century. Image by the author.

Part IIb: Analysis at Castle Keeps

Interesting patterns emerged from keep sites when viewing them with the methodology of spatial analysis. At Portchester the keep (see fig. 6-10), in its fullest form in the twelfth century, was comprised of a ground floor with three floors and garret space above, with primary exterior access on the first floor via a set of forebuildings and interior access between the floors via a newel stair in the southwest corner.



Figure 6-10: Portchester Castle keep viewed from the inner bailey. Photo by the author.

The whole of the keep was divided into north and south rooms with access between the rooms through doors in this spine wall. The remaining door rebates give us an idea of how this space was to be experienced: doors are generally hung in the direction of travel, indicating the order in which spaces were meant to be experienced. The remaining door jambs from Portchester keep (as seen in figs. 6-11 and 6-12, for example) implies access that includes an interior ring within the spaces of the keep itself (see fig. 6-13).



Figure 6-11: Portchester Castle, Hampshire: door in the interior spine wall, second floor of the keep, looking from the north room into the south room. Photo by the author.

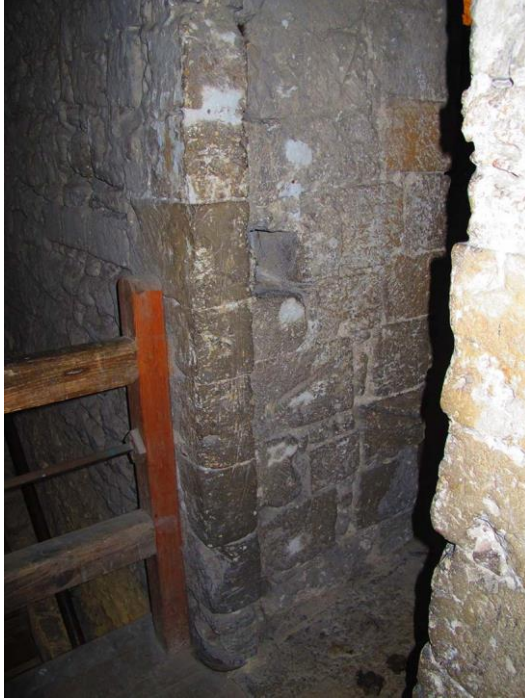


Figure 6-12: Portchester Castle, Hampshire: close up, door in the interior spine wall, second floor of the keep. The door jamb implies access from the north room to the south room. Photo by the author.

Directional analysis suggests that visitors would experience these spaces in the order of entering the first floor south room via the main entrance, then move into the first floor north room, then via internal access (probably by wooden stairs very similar to the current interpretation) to the second floor north, and finally progressing to the second floor south room. Although the second floor south room was the culmination of the circuit, the access analysis actually shows that the second floor north room was the social culmination of this progression, along the line of what Graham Fairclough would call an “axis of honour” (1992, 354). Access for the chosen inhabitants would then continue to the third floor; visitors would return to the first floor and ultimately out of the keep.

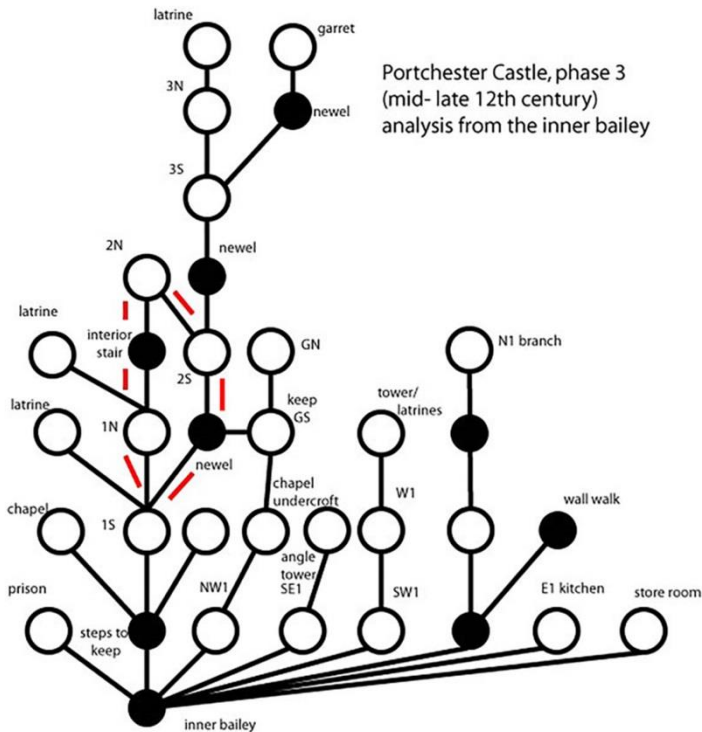


Figure 6-13: Spatial analysis, Portchester Castle keep, mid- to late 12th century. Interior ringed circuit highlighted in red. Image by the author.

Interestingly, other contemporary castle keeps show this same progression of access. Rochester Castle also demonstrated the same sort of ringed circuit but a slightly more complicated one with the culmination both in the mural gallery of the second floor or the second floor south room (fig. 6-14). Canterbury Castle displays a number of interior rings in its access analysis, particularly with the projected accesses between the possible mural gallery and associated spaces on the second floor (fig 6-15).

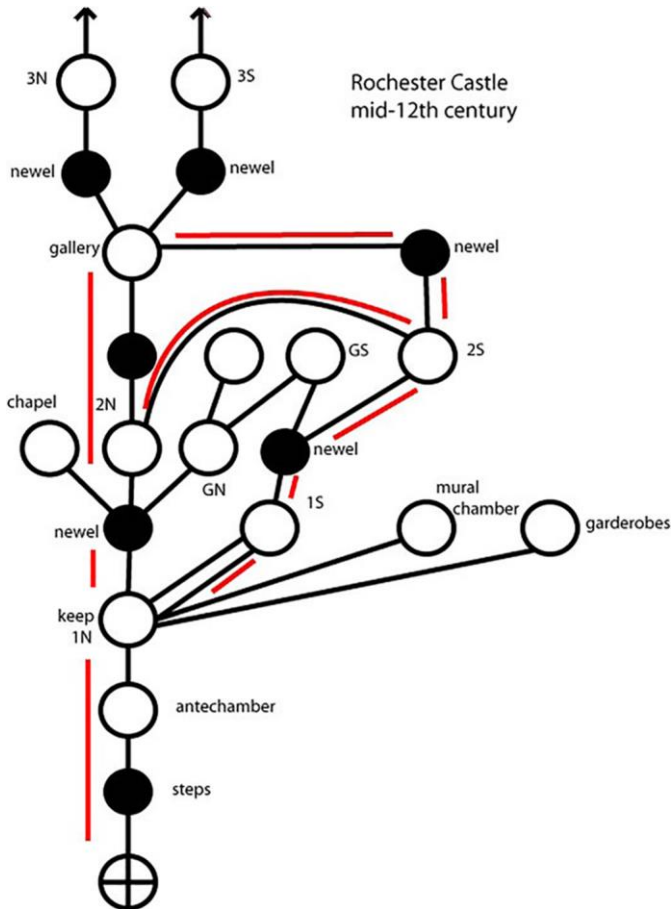


Figure 6-14: Spatial analysis, Rochester Castle, Kent, mid-12th century. Interior ringed circuit highlighted in red.

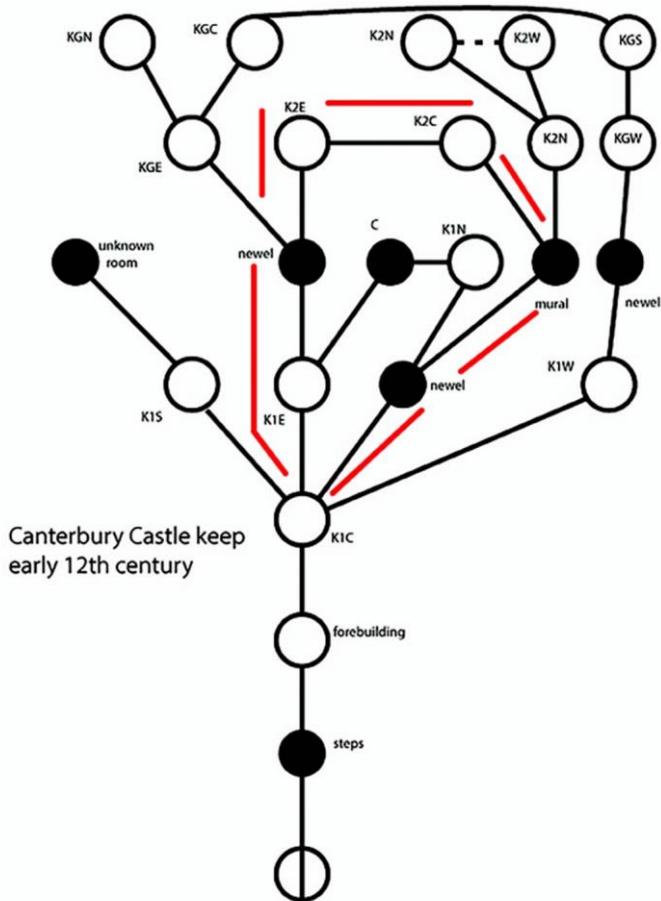


Figure 6-15: Spatial analysis, Canterbury Castle, Kent, early 12th century. Interior ringed circuit highlighted in red.

These keeps, in analysis, display what Robert Liddiard has called choreographed spaces (2005, 51). As by definition these ringed spaces are intended for interaction between visitors and inhabitants, in these cases this interaction is taking place within what has been traditionally interpreted as a structure allegedly designed to keep people out. Although castle studies have come a long way since an either/or interpretation of the

structure as being purely defensive or purely social, spatial analysis at these castle keeps show another element of the social and symbolic use of castles in the Anglo-Norman period, adding to the nuance of interpretation of these sites.

Part III: Discussion

Access and spatial analysis at manorial and castle sites provide a number of useful ideas to explore, particularly in the evidence of shifting roles for the elite in terms of their display or performance of their own authority.

First, one construct of authority in the manorial landscape was the ease with which a visitor could access high-status areas in the early period as opposed to its seclusion in the later periods. The earlier phases display that marked investment in distributed spaces, but what is remarkable are the buildings seen in these distributed systems: both the “hall” and the “chamber,” implying both their permeability as well as a lack of privacy. Indeed, spatial analysis shows that these spaces were not “private” at all but instead important spaces for social interaction at the estate. They were spaces in which the elite of the estate would be seen enacting their particular roles and displaying objects that would mark their status: goods such as tapestries, boxes, chests and cups that were passed from generation to generation as seen in the Anglo-Saxon wills (amongst other sources, primarily Whitelock 1930). In this it would seem that both what archaeologists tend to term the “hall” and the “chamber” spaces served similar roles in the earlier period of this timeframe, and their differentiation is not socially clear.

Perhaps it is best thought that, as Leonie V. Hicks has pointed out, the “nature of [the] business would affect the choice of spaces in which to complete it” (2009, 63). These two spaces were still given separate names at this time, as seen in Anglo-Saxon wills that bequeath tapestries for specific rooms, either the hall or chamber (Whitelock 1930, 15, 65). Anthony Quiney has pointed out, quite rightly, that the use of a space is determined by the user, not the observer, and could possibly be changed by a simple movement of furniture or shifting of décor (2009). Consider the oft-cited evidence of the feasting of Harold in an upper chamber at Bosham in the Bayeux Tapestry and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s reference in 978 of the senior counsellors of England meeting in an upper

chamber, whose wooden floor then collapsed (Swanton 1996, 123). These are indicative of what we see in these spatial analyses: the “chamber” space was just as important a place for the interaction of visitors and inhabitants, and was often more of a public space than the hall may have been for elite interactions in this period.

These ideas feed into a larger picture of the construct of a social elite. In the earlier phases, this construct was viewed through the literal visibility of the elite. The elite spaces were accessible in order for the inhabitants of the manor to be seen by the visitors, and were places of interaction. The prestige of the manorial owners was meant to be on display in public and semi-public spaces, whose use could change perhaps with a change of furnishing or tapestries in order to make a particular impression at a particular time. Again, as Leonie V. Hicks has noted, “legitimacy had to be witnessed in a ‘quasi-public manner’ else this display was meaningless” (2009, 59).

This construct of an elite was also made in regards to the “positional goods” (cf. Reuter 2000, 23) that were displayed in these spaces. Some of these types of objects can be seen in excavation, for example bone mounts for caskets found at Facombe Netherton (Fairbrother 1990, 447). The Anglo-Saxon wills also give multiple examples of positional goods such as cups and tapestries being given along direct lines of inheritance, and often to the family member that was in the best position to display these objects: persons who were primary heirs, sometimes those receiving main familial estates, but almost always those who were in the best position to display these goods as a part of the construction of prestige within their households (Weikert forthcoming B).

This construct of an elite was also made to the extent that those servicing the manor, working in the craft, service, or agricultural areas, were possibly meant *not* to be seen in the spaces they occupied. At estates such as Facombe Netherton and Portchester (see figs. 6-2, 6-16 and 6-17), the services occupied a separate spatial and social sphere at a reasonably high level of privacy, and off any accessible routes to the more public spaces. In a practical sense it means that those servicing the estate in these ways were spatially tucked away into places where interaction with anyone in the public places was unlikely. In a way it is a perversion of the old adage that children should be seen but not heard: the estate benefitted from the work that slaves and servants performed, but these people and the work itself were somewhat out of sight to those moving in the elite distributed spaces.

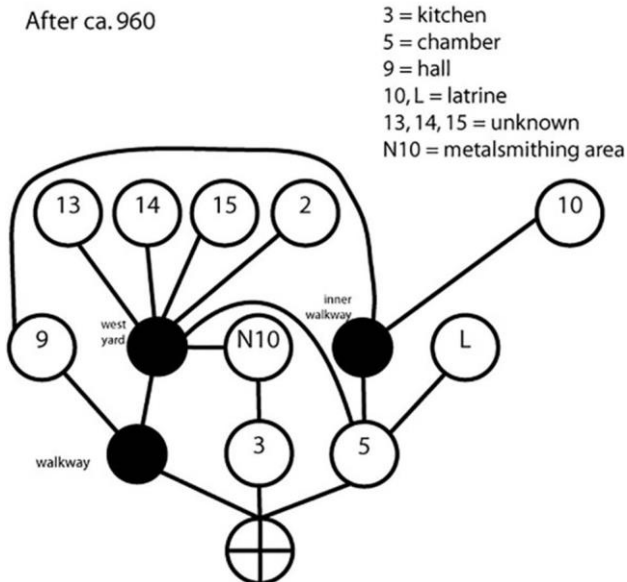


Figure 6-16: Spatial analysis, Facombe Netherton, Hampshire, after ca 960. Note services areas at a high level of depth on a tree. Image by the author.

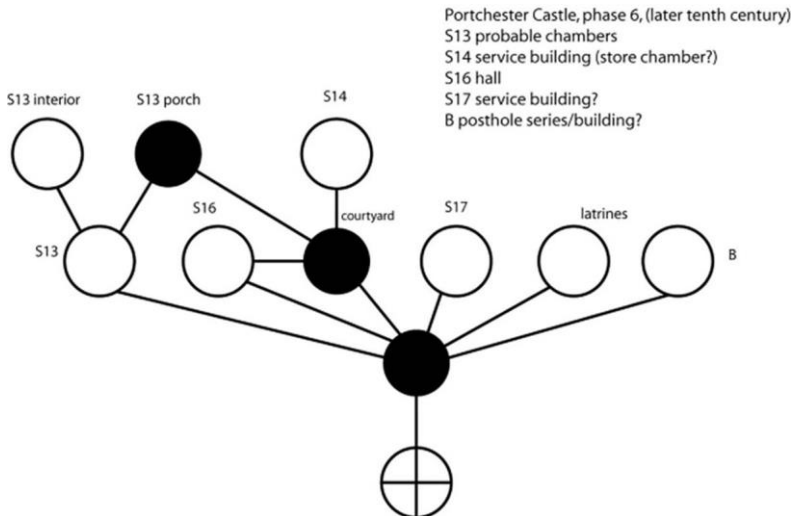


Figure 6-17: Spatial analysis, Portchester Castle, later 10th century. Note the service buildings at mid- and high levels of privacy off areas of rings. Image by the author.

Later in the period, these roles shifted. The later builds begin to view a chamber space as one of social seclusion, a space of the elite alone. The hall becomes the primary and possibly the only point of interaction between inhabitants and visitors. Across the board in the sites studied, there was no exception to this. Additionally, the service buildings, to some extent and at some sites, become points of easy access and visibility and though spatially on nondistributed systems, at very low levels of privacy (see fig. 6-1). To a great extent, the elite had removed themselves from view, perhaps only appearing in the public areas of the estates at particular times in order to give a particular impression or to set a specific scene to those who would be viewing or interacting with them at that precise moment. The elite construct was no longer in the visibility of the person but in estate itself, and signs and symbols of this altered accordingly. A twelfth century dovecote at West Cotton, for example, signaled the place's status to those outside the estate, as it would have been clearly visible to not only those on the approaching road but also to a competing manor directly to the south of the excavated site (Chapman 2010, 34; Courtney 2010). At Facombe Netherton, in a slightly later period than here studied, the manor's roof displayed finials depicting an agricultural scene over the

hall and a hunting scene over the solar (Fairbrother 1990, 138–156; 202), signifying areas of wealth and prestige of the late thirteenth–early fourteenth century manor. Both scenes also represented a ritual control over the landscape (see Sykes 2005; Mileson 2007, 16–17; Sykes 2007, 50–51; R. Thomas 2007 for recent work, among others) and as a visual cue, would have reminded the visitor of the owner’s status without having to see the owner himself. Consider also the later applications for crenellation for manorial buildings as yet another visual indication of an estate’s status or ambitious (Coulson 1979). David Hinton has also noted, in regard to the personal appearance of Norman barons, that they were “secure enough *in their estates* to feel no need to wear things designed to emphasize their status and to impress those below them” (2005, 172; emphasis my own). The implication, of course, is that those in earlier periods did and would have utilized objects such as brooches and jewelry to mark their status on their very person in appearances meant to be viewed by visitors to their manors.

Throughout the central middle ages in England, the perception and the performance of an authoritative elite did not remain static. With the use of the methodology of spatial analysis in combination with desk-based analyses of standing and excavated manorial sites from the central middle ages, a spatial and social pattern emerges. From after ca 900 to the mid- to late eleventh century, a secular authority was displayed by those holding the authority themselves as a part of a public or semi-public performance of their authority. Those in a position of authority embodied their own authority, and it was displayed in the spaces of their estates, both “hall” and “chamber.” From the late eleventh century and certainly by the early twelfth century, this perception of authority changed. No longer was the position of the elite enacted within their spaces in a public or semi-public way. Instead, the elite person’s ability to withdraw from view left the spaces of their manor to signal the status of the occupants. The signs and signals of authority in both periods were seen through their spaces, their display, and their performance—or the estate’s performance—of status and prestige.