

## CHAPTER 3

# The Origins of Sheffield Castle

*Sheffield Castle, once so massive and strong, has become a tradition and nothing more* (Leader 1872, 362)

In the last chapter we explored the process through which Leslie Armstrong and Joseph Himsworth came to record the archaeology of Sheffield Castle, as Castle Hill was redeveloped between 1927 and 1930. We now turn to the archaeological remains encountered and interrogate the interpretations they placed on them. This has previously mainly rested on Armstrong's 1930 publication (even his 1928 interim publication has been overlooked), but here we incorporate the full range of archival material discussed in the previous chapter. These records reveal that some of the published interpretations are questionable, a product of the conditions and the era in which the two men were working, and the influences on them of contemporary debates about the heritage of Sheffield. In common with others at the time, they were unduly influenced by the written record relating to the castle and especially by the ongoing local debate about the location of the hall of Waltheof, the last Anglo-Saxon lord of Sheffield (see Chapter 1). This debate had been (and, for some, remains) central to Sheffield's sense of its origins, and is therefore an appropriate place to begin our exploration of what F. E. P. Edwards (Sheffield City Architect from 1908 to 1926) (1930, 1) referred to as 'the most notable local building historically and such as Sheffield is never likely to possess again'.

### Civic pride and the search for Waltheof

In his diary entry for 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1929, Himsworth (1927–42, 15) recorded that 'A.L.A [Armstrong] rang up to say that he had been fetched down to the castle site to see what was probably the most important find yet made, viz. Saxon posts and floor made of twigs rammed with earth' (Figures 3.1, 3.2). As the ongoing construction work exposed further remains, Himsworth (1927–42, 15, underlining and strikethrough in the original) provided additional details:

March 26th. 1929. Much more has been done by clearing, which now exposed two post stumps. One split in two as though it had been riven by levering outwards when it was much longer. The loose stump was square. The split one in situ was roughly round. The two posts were ~~eight~~ 12 feet [3.66m] apart. One of the posts taken out of position was apparently adze dressed at the bottom (see also Figure 2.16).

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On 4<sup>th</sup> April 1929, he recorded that he saw:

a number of spars varying from three to six feet long much splintered. They were blackened and water-soaked [waterlogged]. One or two pieces spotted with bright blue mould, others crozzled [burnt/blackened] by fire. Diameter mostly about 4" to 6" [c.10cm–15cm]. All very splintry, split irregular shapes, but all with spring in the fibre when bent. All appeared to be of oak, and black right through.

Continuing this entry, Himsworth wrote that ‘an excavator’ who had originally uncovered these ‘spars’ ‘said they were the first pieces to come to light before they found the two posts’. He described them as being in a horizontal position between, and approximately level with, the posts.

As we established in the last chapter, while the Himsworth manuscript is not a diary in the sense of a contemporary, daily record of events, it was nevertheless constructed from such records, and so provides us with fairly immediate access to this potentially very important discovery. The photographs Himsworth took at the moment of discovery are even more immediate, and together they constitute powerful testimony of what he and Armstrong were in no doubt was ‘the most important [Saxon remains] yet discovered locally’ (Himsworth 1937, 5), constituting ‘actual proof ... of the existence [on Castle Hill] of a pre-Conquest Saxon building of timber’ (Armstrong 1930, 7). This building was aligned north–south, measured 23ft (7.01m) in length, and comprised two complete bays, and part of a third. It was constructed of ‘massive crutches, or “crucks” of oak, of which the lower portion of two – 13in by 14in (33cm × 36cm) and 12in by 13in (30cm × 33cm), respectively – remained in position, with traces of a third which had largely been destroyed by an 18th-century building (perhaps the Georgian ‘scale-cutting [part of the process of making bone knife handles] establishment’ Armstrong (1930, 14) refers to as having been built on this part of the site). The principal timbers, which Armstrong (1930, 22) thought had been shaped with an axe, were spaced at 9ft (2.74m) intervals and set in postholes 1–1½ft (0.30–0.46m) deep with a padstone at the base.



**Figure 3.1:** *Remains of the putative ‘Saxon’ building.* Joseph Himsworth’s photographs show (left) a post he described in his diary as ‘adze dressed at the bottom’ and (right) the floor of the building (see also Figure 2.16). Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

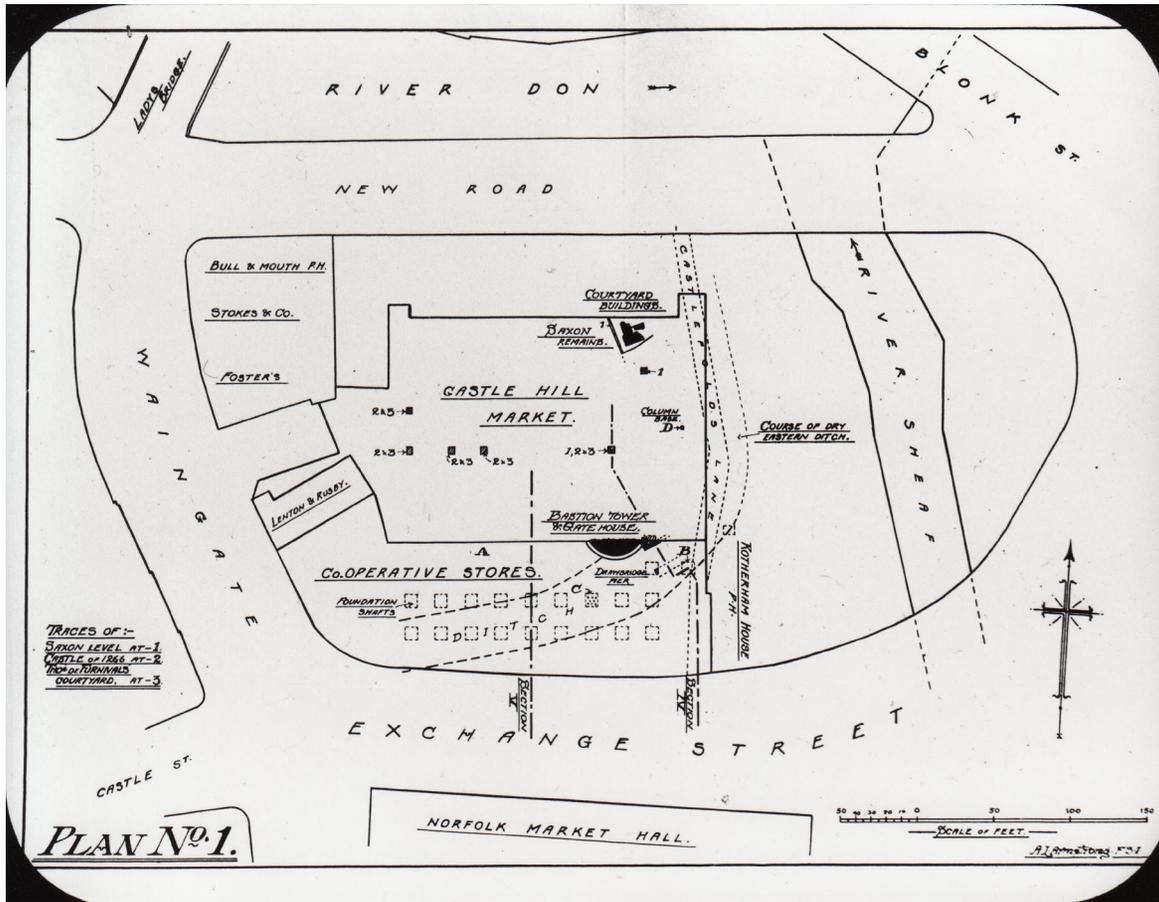


Figure 3.2: Plan 1 from Armstrong's 1930 paper on Sheffield Castle. The locations of the archaeological remains he recorded are plotted in the context of new developments on the site. Hunter Archaeological Society.

Running between the surviving oak posts was an oak sill beam 9in (23cm) square, to the west of which were floor levels consisting of a layer of earth and clay 2–3in (5–8cm) thick. Immediately below this deposit were wattle hurdles of birch and hazel, placed on a 6–9in (15–23cm) layer of hard packed clay 'very black and tenacious' (Armstrong 1930, 22). The wattle was interpreted as reinforcement for the floor, as the branches were laid at right angles to the sill beam and partially overlapped it, and were overlain by a surface of padded earth and clay (Armstrong 1930, 22–3, plate V; 1927–28, 6; Figure 3.3). Efforts were made to save the remaining traces of this timber structure, and Himsforth's diary entry for 12<sup>th</sup> August 1929 reports that the Clerk of Works, Loughran, 'showed me how they had preserved the Saxon floor [and] the posts ... in situ, by making a basement' (Himsforth 1927–42, 15; also 1935, 9; 1937, 5; 1944, 6). These remains survive, albeit in an 'advanced state of decay' and, while they have seen subsequent recording (e.g. Latham and Atkinson 1994, 10; Richardson and Dennison 2014a, 65; Anon. 1987), they have not been subject to modern scientific analysis (e.g. dendrochronological dating). Since the chamber in which they are housed is currently inaccessible to researchers, and our analysis of the archive suggests that none of the timbers curated by Museums Sheffield derives from this building (Mephram 2017), interpretations of this putative Anglo-Saxon phase must rest entirely on the written accounts and photographs of the excavations.

Armstrong (1930, 22) felt that this timber structure was 'essentially Saxon' (being 'far too primitive to have been erected by the first Norman Lords of Hallamshire'; Armstrong 1929c), and that stratigraphic evidence demonstrated that it predated buildings constructed, he believed, in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. As we noted earlier, Himsforth (1927–42, 15) refers to evidence for burning on the timbers, while Armstrong (1930, 22–3) argued that the presence of charcoal and wood ashes over the 'floor' surface confirmed that the Anglo-Saxon structure had been destroyed by fire, 'probably' when William the Conqueror 'ravaged the north in 1069'

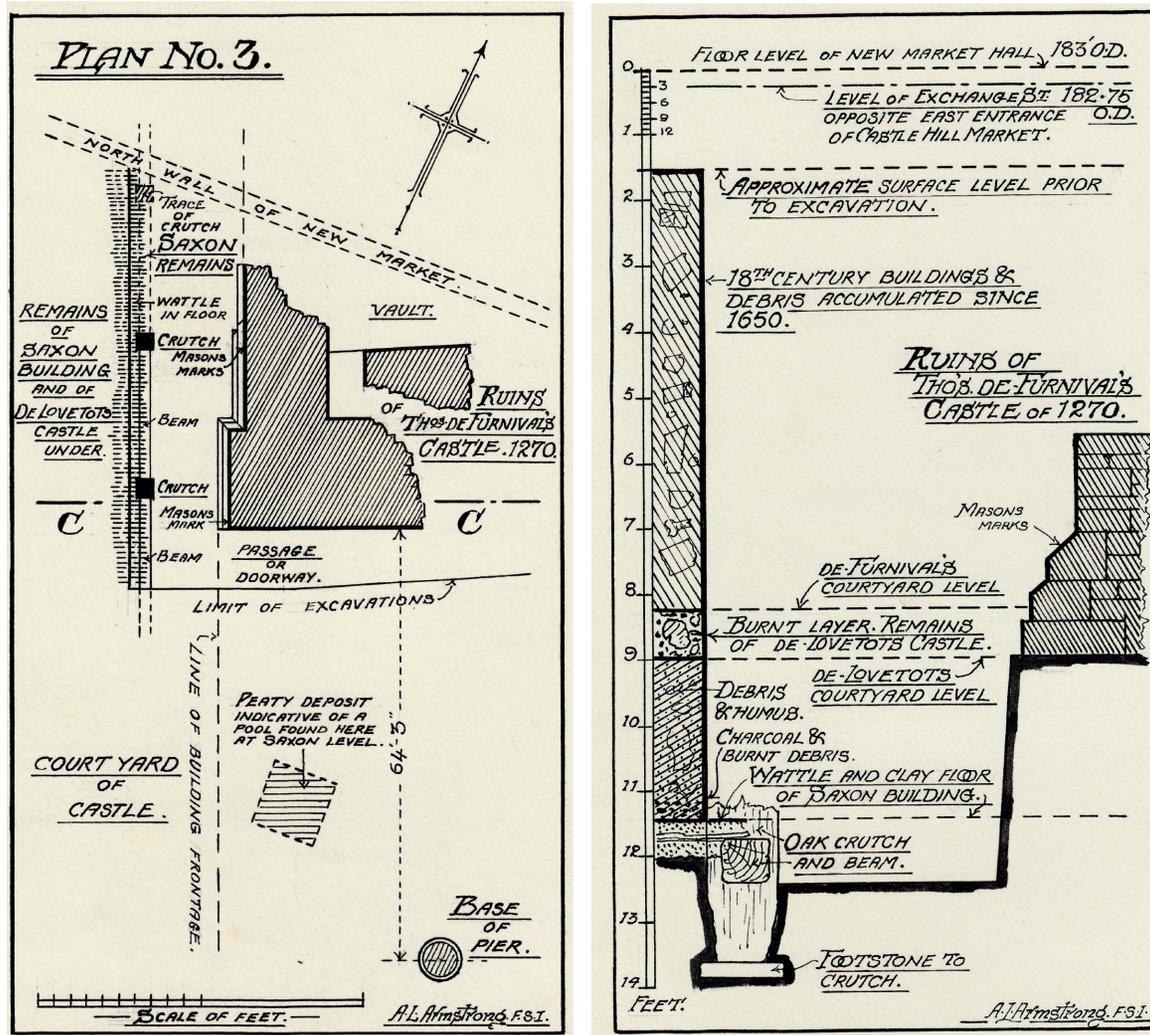


Figure 3.3: Plan 3 and Plate V from Armstrong's 1930 paper on Sheffield Castle. This shows the locations of the buildings encountered in the courtyard of the castle (left), and a schematic section drawing (right). Hunter Archaeological Society.

(although there is no evidence that William actually visited Sheffield). Armstrong (1930, 23) claimed to have found other features belonging to this 'Saxon' phase. For example, 50ft (15.24m) south of the 'cruck-built' timber structure was a band of black earth and clay, which he interpreted as part of the floor ('but without the wattle reinforcement') of a building aligned north-south of 'large size with a wide roof span'. Located 16ft (4.88m) south and 12ft (3.66m) east of this putative building was an area of peaty material enclosing 'remains of reeds ... kitchen refuse, including bones of deer, ox and pig, and indicating the presence there of a shallow pool of water' (Armstrong 1930, 23); it is labelled on Armstrong's plan 3 as being 'AT SAXON LEVEL' (Figure 3.3).

Armstrong also argued that the moat 'considerably' predated the castle and could belong to this Anglo-Saxon phase. This conclusion was based on the fact that 'the castle wall ... was not parallel with the ditch' ('Had it been dug by the twelfth century builders or by Thomas de Furnival, surely this would not have been the case'), and on 'other significant factors' (Armstrong 1930, 16, 23; 1928b, 366). These included three rows of 'riven oak piles', 5in (13cm) square and 5-6ft (1.52-1.83m) long with sharpened ends, driven into the bottom of the moat near the west 'bastion' tower of the gatehouse (Armstrong 1930, 19, 23; marked C on plan 1 (Figure 3.2); Armstrong 1929b). Himsforth documents their discovery in late 1927. On 25<sup>th</sup> November he recorded 'Two wooden props or stakes in middle of moat photographed' and provides two images of them emerging from

the mud (one clearly at an angle), and on 9<sup>th</sup> December reported that 'A.L.A. showed me two oak stakes about 5½' long. Sharp at both ends which had come out of the moat. And which had been fixed pointing outward' (Himsworth 1927–42, 2; Figure 3.4). The significance of these stakes lies in Armstrong's (1930, 12, 16, 22–4) belief that, with the supposed early enclosure ditch, reinforced by 'a stockade on the inner side', they constituted the defences around 'an important Saxon homestead', which was situated at a strategic location, 'the best in the district', where 'precipitous slopes' fell away northwards towards the River Don and eastwards towards the Sheaf. In a lecture delivered in 1937, Himsworth (1937, 5) tried to conjure up for his audience a 'mental picture' of this stockaded settlement: the building's timbers 'covered with skins to give some security from fire. It is likely the structure would be on a mound which would have its height increased artificially by throwing up soil and stone. In digging a trench would be made on two sides, the rivers Don and Sheaf protecting it on the other'. Yet, while Himsworth and Armstrong differed on whether there was an encircling moat in this early phase, they agreed that this was one of the most, if not *the* most, important of the discoveries made on Castle Hill in their time (Armstrong 1929c).

There are, however, very significant problems with the identification of an Anglo-Saxon phase of occupation on the site of the castle, not least the fact that cruck buildings (so central to Armstrong's interpretation) are now generally thought to date from no earlier than the 13th century (Gardiner 2012, 232; Grenville 1997, 59; McCoy and Stenton 2009, 6). Moreover, since Armstrong (1930, 22) recorded that the posts had been cut down to almost ground level when the building was destroyed, it is hard to know how he so confidently reconstructed the superstructure. The presence of padstones in the postholes opens up at least two possibilities for the form of the building. Cruck-framed buildings of c.1200–1350 see the weight of the roof carried to the ground through curved crucks sat on padstones, while timber buildings of the 11th to 13th centuries, characterised by jointed



**Figure 3.4:** Oak stakes in the moat near the west tower of the gatehouse. They were believed by Armstrong and Himsworth to be part of the Saxon defences. The photograph on the left, dated 25<sup>th</sup> November 1927, is labelled (in pencil, on the back) 'ALA [Armstrong] grubbing in the moat', and was reproduced in Himsworth's diary. The right-hand photograph shows Armstrong, at the rear, setting up the camera, with one of the workmen in December 1927. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

timbers in their superstructure, typically had earthfast foundations, with their principal posts set directly into the ground often on padstones to prevent them from rotting (Grenville 1997, 30–7; for distinctly Anglo-Saxon building traditions, see Gardiner 2012; Blair 2018, 51–60, 71). Richardson and Dennison (2014a, 85) have pointed out that the building recorded by Armstrong and Himsworth is on the same alignment as the 13th-century stone buildings located just 1.5m to the east, and suggest that, rather than the free-standing hall that Armstrong (1930, 23) proposed, it may have been a pentice-like construction built up against these structures (also below, Section: Courtyard buildings; as we will see in Chapter 7, evidence from the most recent excavations supports a 13th-century date for these wooden buildings). Armstrong's (1930, 22) capacity to interpret what was uncovered may also have been hampered by wattlework being taken away by 'souvenir hunters', one of several examples of the removal of material from the site of the castle during construction work (Himsworth 1927–42, 3, 9, 11; 1944, 21; also Chapter 2, Section: Joseph Beeston Himsworth: cutler and artist).

Armstrong (1930, 23–4) claimed to have recovered Anglo-Saxon pottery from the lowest fills of the south moat, which, if correct, would have reinforced his argument for an early phase of occupation. However, it is notable that he (1927–28, 2) initially dated this pottery to the 14th or 15th century in his site diary (27<sup>th</sup> October 1927), to between the 12th and 17th centuries in his interim report for the Society of Antiquaries (1928b, 366), and made no reference to Anglo-Saxon pottery in any of the early newspaper articles to which he contributed information. On 20<sup>th</sup> December 1928 he called Himsworth to tell him that in one of the recently excavated foundation pits he had just recorded 'nine "occupation levels" in ten feet', adding that 'the lowest level would be the stone castle period' (Himsworth 1927–42, 14). It would seem that, at this point, he had no expectation of finding pre-Norman phases. In a diary entry for 18<sup>th</sup> November 1927 it is, in fact, Himsworth who first refers to 'Saxon, Norman and Elizabethan pottery' (Himsworth 1927–42, 1, emphasis added). We are not to know whether Armstrong was influenced by his 'assistant', but no such pottery was identified during our analysis of his archive, nor among any of the other pottery assemblages recovered during later excavations on the site (see Chapters 6 and 7), and it seems certain that he was mistaken. In short, Armstrong and Himsworth did not find any 'independent' evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity on the site of Sheffield Castle, and the timber structure they documented was probably considerably later in date than they suggested.

That they were keen to find an Anglo-Saxon presence might be deduced from amendments to Himsworth's descriptions of what he observed. In his handwritten diary, Himsworth (1927–30, 8) records the discovery on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1929 of two posts which were '8 feet apart', but in his typescript he (1927–42, 15) amended this entry in black ink: 'two posts ... ~~eight~~ 12 feet [3.66m] apart' were found, after further 'clearing' on the site. The typescript record for 9<sup>th</sup> September 1929 tells us that he photographed the demolished remains of the slaughterhouses which had lined the south bank of the River Don. Among the remains were a number of oak beams '12 to 16 feet long X 15" X 9"'. Some appeared to have been in a severe fire' (Himsworth 1927–42, 16; Figure 3.5). A handwritten amendment to this entry by Himsworth, in the same ink used to amend the 26<sup>th</sup> March entry, points out that:

The span between the centres of the two crutch butts of the Saxon building foundation was 12 feet. Whether these beams date from Saxon times their size leads one to think them too large to have been made for slaughter house construction.

Did Himsworth 'amend' the typescript entry for 26<sup>th</sup> March to fit the dimensions of these oak beams? It is striking that he also implies that the beams were *reused* in (i.e. not made for) the slaughterhouses, and that some were fire-damaged, thereby creating a connection with the 'Saxon' building uncovered earlier in 1929, and supposedly destroyed by fire during William the Conqueror's 'harrying of the North'.<sup>13</sup> We suggest that Armstrong and Himsworth's interest in finding a Saxon presence on the site of Sheffield Castle derived from long-standing, and ongoing, debates about the origins of Sheffield, and tells us much about the way archaeology was used to write history in the early part of the 20th century.

Much of this debate was based on the statement in Domesday Book that Earl Waltheof had an *aula*, a hall or court, in Hallam (Hunter 1819, 17; Faull and Stinson 1986, fol. 320a; Chapter 1, Section: Elusive

<sup>13</sup> If the beams had indeed been part of the castle, one wonders where they had been in the 150 years between its slighting and the construction of the slaughterhouses at the end of the 18th century, and why they had not been appropriated by the good people of Sheffield, as had been the case with much of the rest of the fabric of the castle (see also Chapter 9).



**Figure 3.5:** *Demolition of the slaughterhouses along the bank of the Don.* A photograph from the diary of Joseph Himsforth. Their removal allowed him to record the north side of the site. At the bottom right are the timbers that Himsforth believed had been reused from the castle. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

antecedents). He was ‘the last Anglo-Saxon lord of Hallamshire’ (Hey 2010, 14; Hunter 1819, 22), and the ‘ubiquitous Waltheof’ (Leader 1910, 25) and the location of his *aula* were among the ‘hot topics’ of late 19th- and early 20th-century scholarship in Sheffield – and sold books. Local historian Sidney Addy (1893) had called his collection of essays *The Hall of Waltheof* even though that subject occupied only six of its 295 pages. In January 1923, Walter Hall (1923) wrote to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* to argue that the recent discovery of a deed, dated November 1562, for Stumperlowe Grange Farm (c.5km to the south-west of the city centre), in which it is described as within the ‘precyncte’ of Hallam, meant that the *aula* of Waltheof was situated somewhere on the hillside ‘along the crest of which runs the Redmires Road ... and at the foot of which is the river Porter in Whitely Woods’ (also Scurlfield 1986, 165). Thomas Winder (1923) concluded that ‘it is at Burnt Stones [c.5km to the west of the city centre] [that] we should dig for the ashes of the aula’. Studies by other local antiquarians allowed them to locate Waltheof’s *aula* at various places in the district, including at Wincobank hill fort (6km north-east of Sheffield city centre), or close to the ancient church at Ecclesfield (8.5km to the north of the city centre; A. S. M. 1927; Gatty 1927; F. C. 1927). Significantly, this flurry of letters to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* were all written before the excavations began – and so demonstrate a deep-seated concern with this issue.

However, like John Leader (1897, ix, xx), most antiquarians believed that ‘Waltheof’s hall stood on the site in Sheffield now known as Castle Hill’, thereby providing ‘Sheffield’ with pre-Norman, Saxon, origins. In an essay on Sheffield Castle on which he was working ‘almost up to the time of his death’ on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1929, Charles Drury (1929b, 177) elaborated on the argument for continuity – ‘when an important building has been erected or superseded by a stronger one, the site of the previous building has generally been used for the purpose’. On this basis, he proposed not only that ‘the Hall of Waltheof stood on the same hill as that castle which held for so long as prisoner the hapless Queen of Scots’, but also that it might have continued in existence to become part of the castle built by the first of the de Lovetots (Drury 1929b, 178–9; and below, Section: Discussion). Armstrong (n.d. (b), 4), too, was ‘inclined to think’ that the first de Lovetot ‘found one [a castle] already existing’ on the

site. The prevailing view was perhaps put most succinctly by the Rev. W. H. Small, who told the audience at his lecture in Walkley Wesleyan Church in February 1922 that ‘Waltheof, the last of the Saxon earls, lived in a house on Castle Hill’ (‘Old Sheffield’, 1922).

Drury (1929b, 192) had intended to include some account of the ongoing work on the site in his Sheffield Castle paper, but died before the ‘most important find’ was made. Equally, Armstrong knew of Drury’s draft paper, for he wrote to Drury’s widow requesting to read it. She replied asking Armstrong if he would finish the paper, stating that ‘I am quite sure [Charles] would rather you did it than anyone else’ (Bateman Drury 1929). Armstrong undertook the task, and at the end of his short addition to Drury’s essay cited the discovery on the castle site, in February 1929,<sup>14</sup> of ‘extensive traces’, including the floor and the outer wall, of a timber building of ‘typical Saxon construction’, finishing with the assertion that this find confirmed ‘Mr Drury’s opinions ... respecting *the coincidence of the Castle site with that of the Hall of Waltheof*’ (Armstrong in Drury 1929b, 193, emphasis added).

It is likely, therefore, that local antiquarian as well as public opinion strongly predisposed Armstrong and Himsworth to the likelihood of Saxon material on Castle Hill – and not just any Saxon material but the hall, the palace, of ‘the last Anglo-Saxon lord of Hallamshire’ (Hey 2010, 14). Even before the first traces of the hoped-for ‘Saxon’ phase were unearthed early in 1929, Armstrong was talking publicly about the possibility of finding it. In his lecture to the Hunter Archaeological Society on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1928 Armstrong speculated about ‘the first occupation of the site and the possibility of Waltheof’s Aula being there’ (Himsworth 1927–42, 12; also ‘Sheffield Castle’, 1928). In a set of handwritten notes he makes this clear (Armstrong n.d. (b), 3) – ‘for me’, he originally said, ‘Castle Hill is the site of the Hall of Waltheof & the excavations now in progress have already revealed evidences which go far to establish that assumption’. Even though he then allowed a sliver of uncertainty to enter the argument by inserting ‘most probable’ before ‘site’, there can be no doubt about what he really thought – or wanted (see also Armstrong 1929c).

This was a city where antiquarians regularly bemoaned the sacrifice of antiquity and beauty to industry and material gain, and lamented the absence of objects of archaeological interest. For example, in 1903 Robert Leader (1904a, 1, 13) told the visiting delegates of the British Archaeological Association that the oldest surviving feature ‘after our rivers, is probably that “goit” or mill race’, which had once fed the lord of the manor’s mill but was ‘now relegated to the status of a sewer’. In this context, finding the *aula* of Waltheof would be a major discovery and a significant boost to local pride (see Andrews 2015, 6–7 for the ARCUS excavation of that ‘goit’). As David Clarke (forthcoming) has recently argued, ‘the destruction of the hall of Waltheof is a key foundation story in the folklore of Hallamshire’. Armstrong and Himsworth needed to find this hall, and find it they did!

Even before the discoveries of 1929, the name of Waltheof was attached to the ‘civic’ story. On 5<sup>th</sup> April 1911 the Cutler’s Hall hosted the ‘consecration’ of a new Masonic Lodge, tellingly called the Waltheof Lodge (‘New Masonic Lodge’, 1911). A letter-writer to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* adopted the pen name ‘Waltheof’ (1912a; 1912b), perhaps to lend authority to his pronouncements on, for example, the real presence of Christ at the Eucharist. A report in the same paper on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1924 was the first of several in which the *aula* of Waltheof (as well as the man himself, and his wife Judith) was presented, in pageant form, as one of the seminal scenes, ‘real happenings in the course of Sheffield’s origin and growth’ (‘Sheffield’s History’, 1924). Waltheof reappeared in pageants in June 1929 and June 1931, the latter in the ‘yard’ of Sheffield Cathedral in a spectacle which, it was hoped, would have a ‘popular appeal to citizens’ (‘Sheffield of long ago’, 1929; ‘Sheffield down the ages’, 1929; ‘The history of Sheffield in pageant’, 1931; ‘Sheffield Pageant’, 1931; Figure 3.6). In 1926, one of the roads in the newly constructed Manor Estate in the former deer park was named after him, though at least one *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* reader, F. W. Boland, who was estate clerk to the Duke of Norfolk, had to be reminded about how ‘their high mightinesses at the Town Hall’ had ‘evolved such street names’ (Boland 1926; with a reply from Ward 1926; see also Odom 1927, 9; and Chapter 9).

For some, this interest in Waltheof was tinged with ethnic or even racial overtones. Belief in what Christopher Hill (1958, 52) called ‘the Norman Yoke’ seems to have persisted in the region in the early 20th century and may have informed the ‘Waltheof debate’. This was the assumption that before 1066 ‘the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of this country [England] lived as free and equal citizens, governing themselves through representative

<sup>14</sup> Note that in his diary Himsworth said that this discovery was made towards the end of March 1929 (see above), which is likely to be true as the first newspaper reports began to appear at that time (‘Saxon or Norman?’, 1929; ‘Current topics’, 1929; see also Armstrong’s (1929c) own contribution).



**Figure 3.6:** *Earl Waltheof and his wife Judith attended by Saxon and Norman ladies at the Sheffield Pageant in June 1931.* This tableau was set in the year 1075 ('The history of Sheffield in pageant', 1931). Waltheof first appeared in the pageant of 1924, with an array of other historical figures. This pageant was held in the grounds of Rye Lodge, Ashland Road, and 'The story was depicted in six scenes, embracing AD 214, "The Vale of the Rivelin"; 1075, "The Aula of Waltheof, Lord of Hallam"; 1199, "A Glade in Sherwood Forest", "A Room in the First Sheffield Castle" and "Wedding Tableau of Maud de Lovetot and Gerard de Furnival"; 1287, "Sembly Green"; 1530, "The Grounds of Sheffield Manor" and "Wedding Tableau of the Earl of Shrewsbury and Lady Saint Loe", "A Room in Sheffield Castle" and "The Shrewsbury Room in the Turret House". With thanks to [www.picturesheffield.com](http://www.picturesheffield.com) (s03100).

institutions. The Norman Conquest deprived them of this liberty and established the tyranny of an alien King and landlords' (see also Simmons 1990). We hear echoes of it in Robert Leader's (1904a, 7) address to the British Archaeological Association in Sheffield Town Hall on the evening of 10<sup>th</sup> August 1903, which told delegates that, 'when the Norman invasion burst upon the land', the people of the district, 'benefiting by their seclusion', had been enjoying 'a fair measure of peace and prosperity'. Canon W. Odom (1927, 6) is, characteristically, more direct. Earl Waltheof, he writes, having pledged allegiance to William the Conqueror, in the end rebelled, 'his proud spirit ... could not long endure submission to the Norman Yoke'. And finally, even closer to home, Armstrong (n.d. (b), 3), closely echoing the words of Joseph Hunter (1819, 22) a century earlier, argued

that ‘Waltheof was a man of outstanding eminence amongst the Saxons & it is hardly to be expected that he could for long quietly submit to the Norman Yoke’.

Further, in most accounts, emphasis is placed on Waltheof’s ‘ethnicity’ and on the fact that he is the end of a ‘line’, ‘the last Earl of purely English blood, tall, and of more than ordinary strength, matchless as a warrior’ (Odom 1927, 4; 1911; also Small 1922; Hall 1923). Himsworth (1937, 5) and Armstrong (n.d. (c), 3) too refer to him, respectively, as the ‘last of the Saxon earls’ and ‘so great a Saxon earl’. For many in the district, the discoveries on Castle Hill meant that Sheffield’s origins could now be traced back to the timber ‘hall’ of this last English or Saxon earl, rather than to the stone castle, and associated planned settlement, of the (foreign, French) Norman conqueror. In this context, the proof of Sheffield’s Saxon origins would have contributed to national, English identity as well as to civic pride.

### The ashes of 1266?

If we can dismiss the argument that Armstrong and Himsworth uncovered an Anglo-Saxon phase on Castle Hill, what then of the proposition that they found ‘traces ... of the De Lovetots’ castle’ (Armstrong 1930, 10, 21–2)? Although his 1930 paper did not discuss the written sources behind this supposition, his manuscript notes reveal his familiarity with the textual evidence for a castle in Sheffield by the late 12th century, and also with the local tradition that it was built earlier in that century by the first de Lovetot lord, William (Armstrong n.d. (b) and (c); see also Chapter 1). Armstrong (1930, 21) deduced that, after the destruction of the alleged Anglo-Saxon settlement, the site lay abandoned ‘for a considerable period’, leading to a build-up of nearly 2ft (0.6m) of ‘debris and humus’; activity post-dating this he placed in the 12th century and later. However, as we have seen, the timber building he found is not of Anglo-Saxon date, and, as McCoy and Stenton (2009, 8) have argued, the ‘debris and humus’ may represent not abandonment but the deliberate levelling-up of the ground surface prior to the redevelopment of the site. As we will see in the course of this volume (and especially in Chapter 7), this levelling-up was a fairly constant process across the history of the site and had a significant impact on both the topography of the hill and the character and preservation of the archaeology.<sup>15</sup>

Above this layer, Armstrong claimed to have identified traces of the destruction of the de Lovetot castle in the late 13th century, annotated on his published section drawing as ‘BURNT LAYER. REMAINS OF DE LOVETOTS CASTLE’ (Armstrong 1930, 12, plate V; Figure 3.3). Destruction layers, 4–8in (10–20cm) thick, comprising ‘charcoal and wood ash combined in places with calcined rubble and fragments of dressed masonry displaying damage by fire’, were found ‘at various points’ on the site. Beneath the courtyard buildings he recorded ‘a layer, from 9 to 12 inches in thickness, of ashes and burnt stones’ stratigraphically located above the remains of the supposed Saxon building (Armstrong 1930, 7, 21; 1928, 365). Armstrong (1929c) elaborated in a newspaper report in late March 1929, describing this deposit more vividly as ‘a layer six inches to 12 inches thick of red ash, containing an abundance of charcoal and fragments of stone crackled and burnt to a deep red tint by the action of fire’. He also describes a stone of ‘typical “axed” masonry of early Norman character, which once formed part of a window’ and uses this as further evidence for the discovery of the destroyed de Lovetot castle. Himsworth’s (1930g) sketch of the section he saw above the River Don in 1930 also records this burnt layer. At one location he labels a layer as ‘red ash 8" thick’, which is above a ‘9" black occupation level’, west of a layer of ‘red ash 12" to 8" thick’. In an inked-up version of this sketch in his typed diary, these burnt layers have become, simply, ‘Ashes 1266’ (Himsworth 1927–42, fig. 47; Figure 3.7), and his script for a lecture given in 1944 notes that the section he saw in 1930 had ‘revealed red ash of 1266 fire destruction’ (Himsworth 1944, 5). Rather like the case for the *aula* of Waltheof, the evidence for the de Lovetot castle grew in the retelling – but that evidence consists entirely of the burnt layer.

This burnt layer was below the remains of what Armstrong (1928b, 365) assumed to be the ‘historic castle built by Thomas de Furnival in 1270’, and it is quite clearly a text-based assumption that it dates to 1266. Armstrong and Himsworth had no independent means of dating the burnt layer to the mid-13th century, never mind to a precise year. Although Armstrong had little to say about his reasoning, he was well aware that in 1266 ‘Johane Deyvill *cum equis et armis*’ burnt ‘Saffield’ during the Barons’ War, in which Simon de Montfort led a

<sup>15</sup> As we saw in Chapter 2, Wigfull (1916, 239) regretted the decision to abandon a proposal to cut a road through the site. It was replaced with a scheme that ‘involves a raising of the site rather than an excavation, and so what remains of the Castle will be placed still further below the surface, [and] it may be for future generations of archaeologists to discover and explore’.

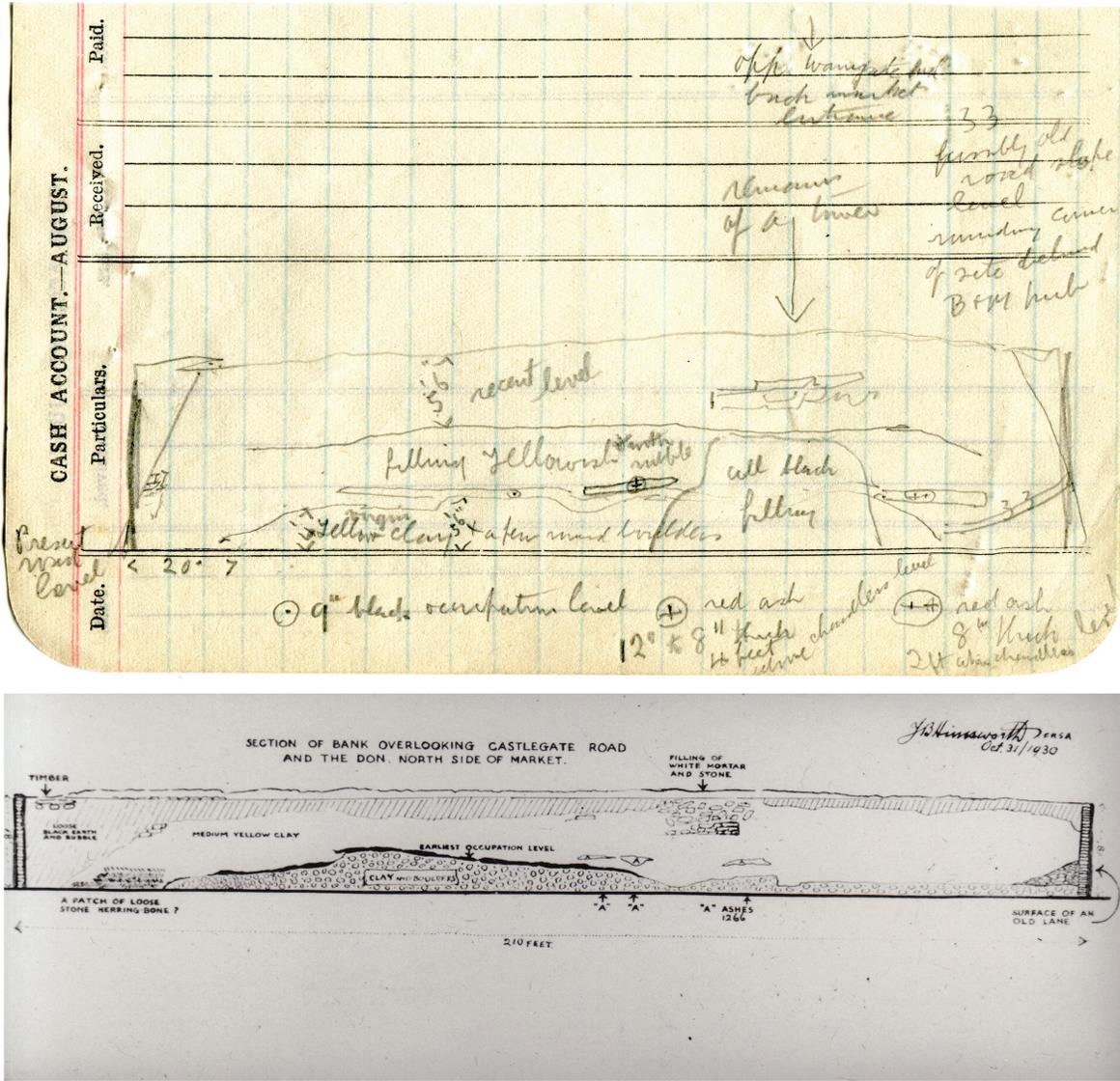


Figure 3.7: The north bank of the site overlooking the Don. Sketch section by Joseph Himsworth found with the original handwritten diary (top). Courtesy of Pat Wagner. The typed copy of the diary contains this inked-up version of the drawing (bottom). Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

revolt against Henry III (Armstrong 1930, 7, 10). This must be the basis for his statement that the de Furnivals resisted the barons resulting in ‘the stronghold itself and the town which looked to it for protection, being alike consumed by fire’ (Armstrong 1930, 7). Certainly, in 1270, the second Thomas de Furnival received a licence to ‘build a stone castle and fortify and crenellate it’ at Sheffield, thought to be a reward for supporting Henry III in the Barons’ War (Maddicott 1994; Hart 1989b, 3). However, the extent to which the ‘earlier’ castle had been damaged is unknown, as is the scale of any rebuilding undertaken as a result of the acquisition of a licence to crenellate (Guy 2005, 205). Further, more recent study has cautioned against interpreting licences to crenellate as secure evidence for the date at which building work was undertaken, with many being acquired long after construction had been completed, or even prior to work that was never undertaken (Coulson 1979; 1993; Creighton 2002, 67).

The interpretation of the burnt layer is problematic in various ways, and even a modern analysis failed to recover any dating evidence from it (Latham and Atkinson 1994, 10). The late 13th-century events do not offer the only context for the burning and rebuilding that Armstrong recorded. For example, a fire documented

in the Pipe Rolls for 1184–85 saw £66 spent on rebuilding, although the extent of the damage and reconstruction is unclear (McCoy and Stenton 2009, 10). Referring to Himsworth's section and descriptions, Richardson and Dennison (2014a, 73) show that his 'Ashes 1266' layer was 3.64m beneath the layer Armstrong associated with the same event. Magnifying the uncertainties masked by an apparently definitive single year, McCoy and Stenton (2009, 11) suggest that the 'crozzled' cruck-built building which Armstrong took to be Anglo-Saxon was in fact 'a building that stood within the bailey of the first Sheffield Castle, and which may have been demolished after being damaged by the 1184–85 fire'. In sum, the archaeological case for the de Lovetot castle is circumstantial, poorly explained in the 1930 paper and driven by the written sources, which were alluded to rather than fully analysed, and which, in any case, do not adequately support the interpretation offered.

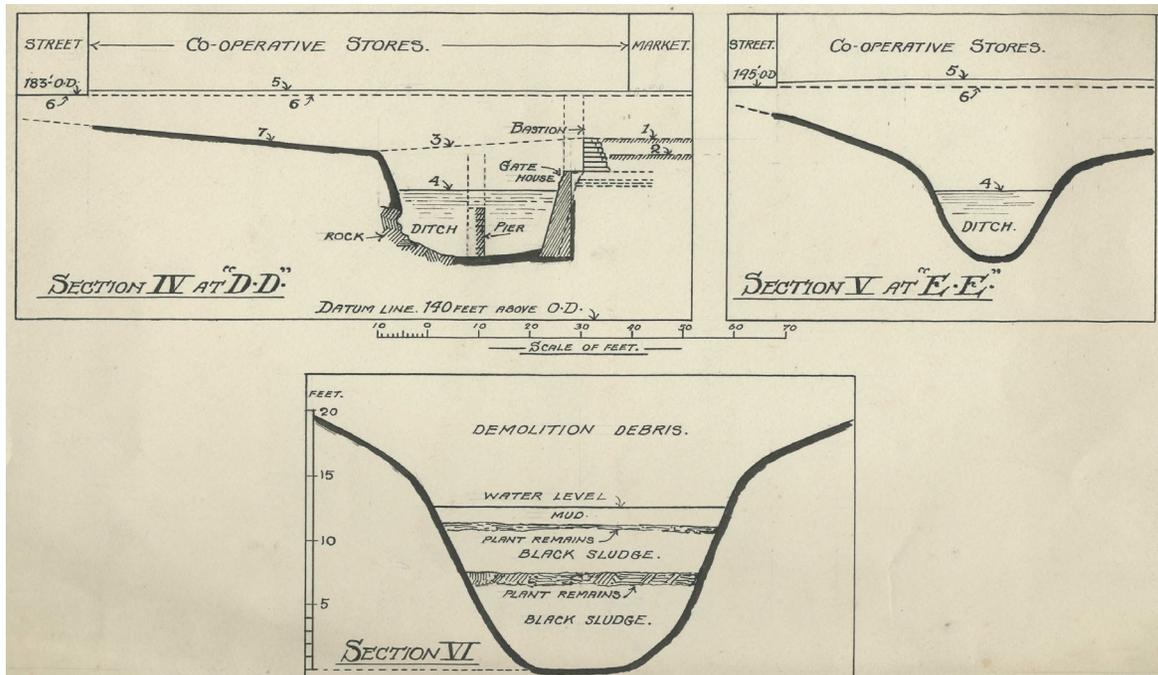
### The inner courtyard moat

In several places on the south, east and – less clearly – west sides of the castle, Armstrong and Himsworth recorded the moat, or 'ditch' as Armstrong generally referred to it. While they disagreed about its date, their observations confirmed the accuracy of the 17th-century documentary sources that describe the monumental scale of the moat (Anon. 1644, 2; Vicars 1646, 7; Ronksley 1908, 47). However, they also observed significant differences between its various sections, and at no point were able to date the cut feature, although they offered dates for some of its fills.

As noted in Chapter 2 (Section: Sheffield Castle: where the two rivers meet), a report in volume 1 of the *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society* records the discovery, during the construction of a new building, of a ditch which seems to have run parallel with Exchange Street, on the southern edge of the castle site (Wigfull 1916, 239). Despite its location, it was not, Armstrong (1930, 13) insisted, 'part of the main ditch of the building' – as 'plainly shown' by his recent excavations, though he does not tell us precisely how this was shown, or how he associated it with the Civil War phases instead (see also Chapter 5). In Armstrong's published accounts, the moat 'proper' was first encountered on what turned out to be the south-east corner of the inner courtyard, close to the west tower of the gatehouse, and its upper portion was filled with mid- to late 17th-century demolition debris. However, the bottom 13ft (3.97m) comprised a 'black tenacious sludge, none too fragrant' containing many finds, including 'cannon-balls and stone ballista-balls, knives, keys, personal ornaments, coins, glass, ... and leather ... kitchen refuse such as potsherds, animal bones, antlers of red deer, roe and fallow deer, and oyster shells' (Armstrong 1930, 15). This was the only point at which the bottom of the moat was reached, with Armstrong's recording elsewhere stopping at the base of the foundation shafts for the Co-op (Johnson 1927b). He reported that the moat extended down to '14 feet 6 inches [4.45m] below the plinth course of the gatehouse, a total depth of 33 feet [10.06m] below the level of Exchange Street' (Armstrong 1930, 15; Himsworth 1927–42, 3). On his plan 1, Armstrong (1930) depicted the south moat running parallel to Exchange Street and as c.30ft (c.9m) wide (Figure 3.2; see also Himsworth 1927–42, 3), and on plate VII he presents it as having a uniform profile with a consistent depth along its length (though we need to note that these sections are further examples of Armstrong's tendency to produce 'typical', schematic, sections; Figure 3.8; Chapter 2, Section: Albert Leslie Armstrong: more than just the 'gifted amateur').

A foundation shaft, located in the centre of the former Castle Folds Lane (marked B on his plan 1; Figure 3.2),<sup>16</sup> exposed the south side of the moat as it curved sharply to the north-east and ran beneath the buildings to the north of the Rotherham House Hotel. This revealed that the bottom 7ft of the moat had been cut through rock, with the south face almost vertical (Armstrong 1930, 18). This foundation shaft also encountered brownish peat, 8in (20cm) thick, which included reeds and aquatic plants, and lay between layers of black sludge, 7 to 8ft (2.1–2.4m) below, and 4 to 5ft (1.2–1.5m) above (Armstrong 1930, 19; Figure 3.8). Sphagnum moss, reeds and rushes were identified at the top of the upper black sludge layer, leading Armstrong (1930, 19) to conclude that there was only a moderate depth of water in the moat by the 17th century, covering a bottom of 'mud, deep and treacherous'. He felt that his evidence suggested that the south moat had formerly held a large body of water but that the depths had fluctuated over time. There was, again, some difference of opinion with Himsworth. On 18<sup>th</sup> November 1927 Himsworth (1927–42, 1, 7) tells us that, while Armstrong 'was quite

<sup>16</sup> This is the name they use for the lane which ran from Castle Folds, or Exchange Street as it was to become, northwards through the site to the Don. It is also the name which appears on the 1888 Goad Fire Insurance Map, but on the 1853 Ordnance Survey Map it is called Shambles Lane.

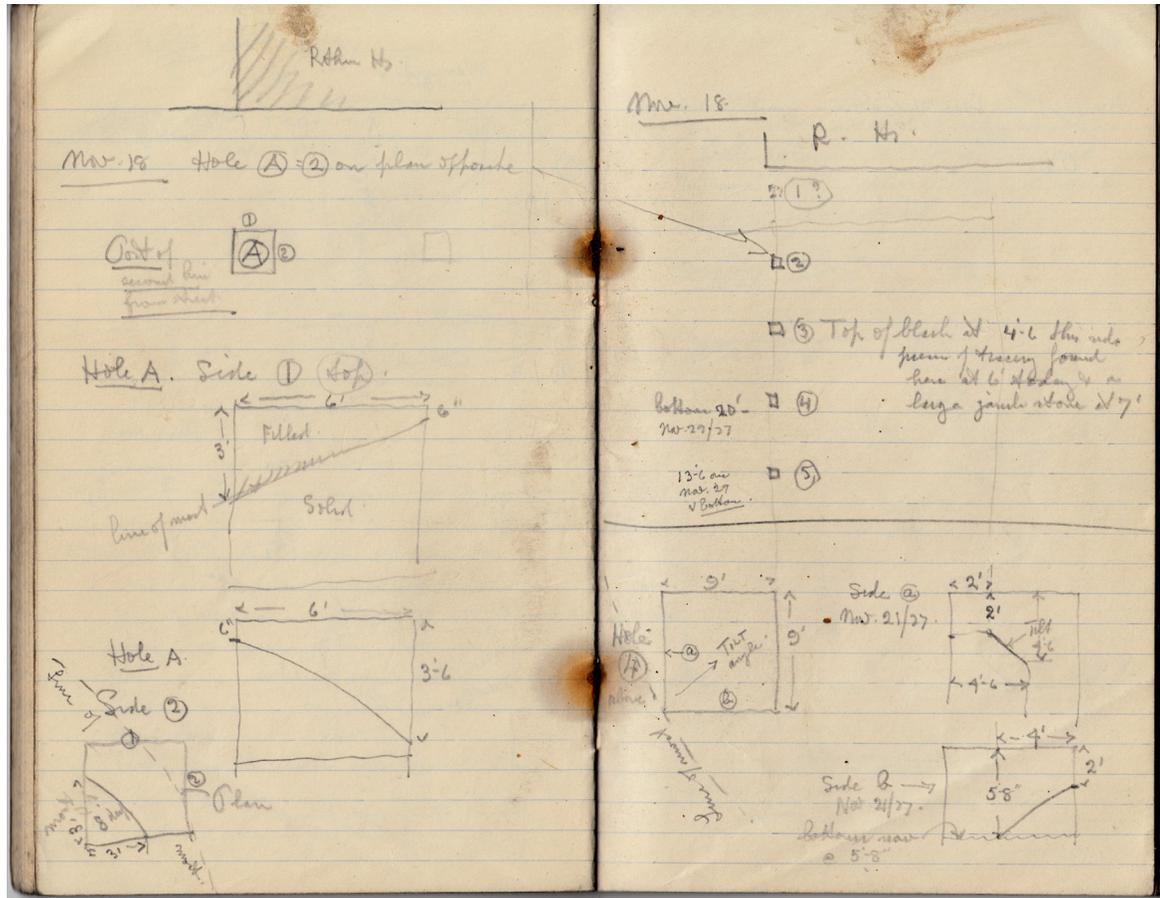


**Figure 3.8:** Plate VII of Armstrong's 1930 paper on Sheffield Castle. This shows three schematic sections through the moat. Their locations are shown on plan 1 (Figure 3.2). Hunter Archaeological Society.

positive' that the water in the castle moat had been stagnant, he himself 'thought it possible ... that the moat was fed by a stream of water still known to be running under property in High Street' (for a resolution to this argument, see Chapter 7).

Armstrong (1930, 11) proposed that, from the gatehouse, the moat 'curved round sharply east of north, towards the Sheaf', its alignment later followed by the steep and narrow Castle Folds Lane, and he argued that the silts encountered in a foundation pit at the northern end of this lane indicated that it followed the centre of the east moat. In his site diary, on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> November 1927, Armstrong (1927–28, 3) recorded, in both plan and section, the appearance of the moat in a series of nine-foot-wide stanchion holes running northwards from the Rotherham House Hotel (Figure 3.9). Himsworth (1927–42, 3), in his diary entry for 19<sup>th</sup> January 1928, noted that during the clearance of buildings along Castle Folds Lane 'black sludge showing a "section" of the moat is very clearly defined against the yellow clay forming the foundation or subsoil of the old lane'. Armstrong concluded that the moat on the east side of the inner courtyard was rather shallower than that to the south and suggested that it did not generally hold water, but conceded that water may sometimes have flowed into it from the south moat. He was of the opinion that the Sheaf may have run further west, and so closer to the castle, than it currently does and would, therefore, have provided additional defences – 'the river and its high bank and the dry ditch surrounding it [the castle] and the steep glacis ... would provide a strong defence on that [east] side' (Armstrong n.d. (f); Armstrong 1930, 18; see Chapter 7 for further discussion and Figure 7.16 for an illustration).

The evidence for the western section of the moat is much less clear. In his interim report for the Society of Antiquaries, Armstrong (1928b, 366) suggested that the south moat continued westward 'across Waingate' in the direction of Castle Street, but in his 1930 publication he was adamant that the western 'ditch' 'was certainly not encountered in any of the excavations I was privileged to examine' (Armstrong 1930, 12). Nonetheless, he was 'informed' about 'a considerable depth of black sludge-like material' in the basement of a property south of the Bull & Mouth public house (Armstrong 1930, 13); similarly, Himsworth (1927–42, 8) heard about the 'deep black ditch sludge' encountered on the site of R. J. Stokes's shop, at the northern end of Waingate (Armstrong 1930, plan 1; Figure 3.2). All this led Armstrong to conjecture that the line of the west moat roughly followed the course of the old Waingate, but ran west of it at the 'top' (south) and to the east of it as it approached Lady's Bridge. After Armstrong's paper had been completed (Northend 1930a), Himsworth (1927–42, 20) recorded in



**Figure 3.9:** Pages from Armstrong's site diary. Here he records the appearance of the moat in a series of foundation shafts running north from the Rotherham House Hotel. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

his diary entry for 18<sup>th</sup> November 1930 a 'peaty strip of soil' running south along the back of the Bull & Mouth pub, speculating that this was where the moat emptied into the Don.

There is other evidence for the west moat that Armstrong's publications omits. On Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1927, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* announced the discovery, after the removal of 12ft (3.66m) of 'made ground', of what (unnamed) 'experts' believed to be the site of the castle moat, which 'appears to have run along a portion of Exchange Street, and then branched away towards the top of Waingate' ('Castle moat find', 1927). The description is not entirely clear – 'the definite demarcation of the "made" and natural ground and its contour lead to the belief that the south-westerly section of the moat was situated at this spot' – but, in the light of the most recent excavations in this area (see Chapter 7), it seems certain that this was indeed part of the moat.

There are other, equally inexplicable, examples of what we might call this 'under-reporting'. Thus, on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1927, again in the early weeks of Armstrong's involvement, and before anything of what he regarded as of significance was found, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* reported the discovery, 'late yesterday afternoon', of 'a very old skeleton' ('Castle relics', 1927). It was buried about 8ft (2.44m) down and about 20ft (6.10m) north of Exchange Street (so in or close to the moat) and was reckoned 'so old that it may be that of a man who saw Sheffield Castle in its pride and glory'. We do not know how they established the date of the skeleton or, for that matter, how they knew it was male. Neither do we know what happened to it subsequently – other than that the bones were placed in a shed on the site. What we do know, and what makes this as curious as the section of moat discussed above (if not more so), is that neither Armstrong nor Himsworth makes any reference to it in any of their papers (published or unpublished) (see Munby *et al.* 2019, 33, 143 for evidence that at

Oxford Castle, by the late 15th or early 16th century, 'the silting-up ditch was being used for the burial of executed prisoners').

Himsworth's (1927–42, 16–17) diary entry for 1<sup>st</sup> July 1930 suggests that he may have recorded, but not recognised, part of a dam at the point where the west moat met the Don. He had observed holes being filled with concrete near Lady's Bridge (to 'stiffen the ground at the edge near the river bank'), exposing what he believed to be a 19th-century wall, underneath which were 'heavy worked stones that looked like much earlier work'. A contemporary description of the siege of Sheffield Castle in 1644 reveals that a dam controlled the flow and level of water between the east moat and the Don. Thus, on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 'at night, 'the Major Generall [Crawford] ... went to view a sluice that was stopt to keep the water deep about the east side of the Castle, which he thought to draine the more to facilitate his businesse'. The next night, 'the Major generall attempted to break up the Sluice through the Dame, to let out the water of that corner against the Orchard, on the east side of the Castle, which could not take effect' (Anon. 1644, 3). If what Himsworth observed in 1930 was part of a similar structure, it would imply that the western arm of the moat entered the Don c.10m to the east of Lady's Bridge (City Architect's Department 1930; see Chapter 5 for Butcher's important conclusions about these structures).

### The de Furnivals' monumental entrance

Similarly, we now know that the construction work uncovered more of the monumental entrance to the castle at its south-eastern corner than Armstrong recorded in his 1930 paper. On the morning of Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> September 1927, about 40–50ft (12.19–15.24m) north of Exchange Street, a south-facing wall said to be 'undoubtedly a section of the old castle' was reported in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*:

Strongly resembling the letter 'V', but running inwards instead of outwards, the facing wall is about 3ft. high and some 12 ft. thick. There were three layers of stone, and each stone was 14 inches thick and weighed about 2cwt ... The mortar between the stones has a hard gritty feel, almost like wet sand ('Castle relics', 1927).

This wall was so impressive that it was thought to be one of the buttresses on the outer wall of the castle. Yet, the detailed newspaper report is hard to match with anything in Armstrong's published accounts, or unpublished notes and drafts, even though he must have been at work on the site at the time of its discovery. He must have known about it – there is even a photograph in *Yorkshire Telegraph and Star*. His silence might be because it was quickly demolished, as contemporary newspaper reports record ('Part of Sheffield castle', 1927; 'Castle relics', 1927). As we stressed in Chapter 2, this was an active construction site with its own priorities, when attitudes towards archaeological remains were quite different. Himsworth (1927–42, 3) frequently lamented (and photographed) the destruction of what was being uncovered (see also Chapter 9).

It is just possible, given the reported size of the masonry and the thickness of the walls, that this 'demolished' fragment was part of the monumental entrance to the inner courtyard, which in its scale and grandeur matched the section of moat which ran past it. Armstrong's site diary for 7<sup>th</sup> October 1927 records the discovery of a stretch of wall, 15 yards (13.72m) long, comprising five courses of dressed masonry (24in × 14in × 12in (61cm × 36cm × 30cm)), with a rubble backing at least 12ft (3.66m) thick. On 11<sup>th</sup> October, he recorded and sketched a curved wall, with a radius of 20ft (6.10m), comprised of 'ashlar very well worked & jointed backed with flat bedded rubble' (Armstrong 1927–28, 1–2; Figure 3.10). Himsworth was now also involved and in his diary he too records, almost day by day, the uncovering of these massive structures. On 11<sup>th</sup> October he met Armstrong and Wigfull on site to view the 'walling, both straight and round in plan; both sections having a good plinth [which] had been uncovered when a trench was excavated for the back wall foundations for business premises [the Co-op]'. On 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> November, he returned to photograph these structures, and on 5<sup>th</sup> December met Armstrong on site 'to view more masonry which is evidently a portion of a bastion ... Photographed it three courses high.' He went back the next day – 'Photos taken of more courses' (see Figure 2.2) – and in his surviving photographs we can still see this beautifully coursed stonework as it emerged from the earth. Armstrong phoned him at 9.30 am on 9<sup>th</sup> December to tell him to go down to the site – 'There were nine courses including plinth of tower or bastion now uncovered' (Himsworth 1927–42, 1–2, photos 8 and 9; also Figure 3.10 (2)).



**Figure 3.10:** *Photographs from Armstrong's 1930 paper on Sheffield Castle. These show the west tower of the gatehouse, plinth and walls of the forestructure. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.*

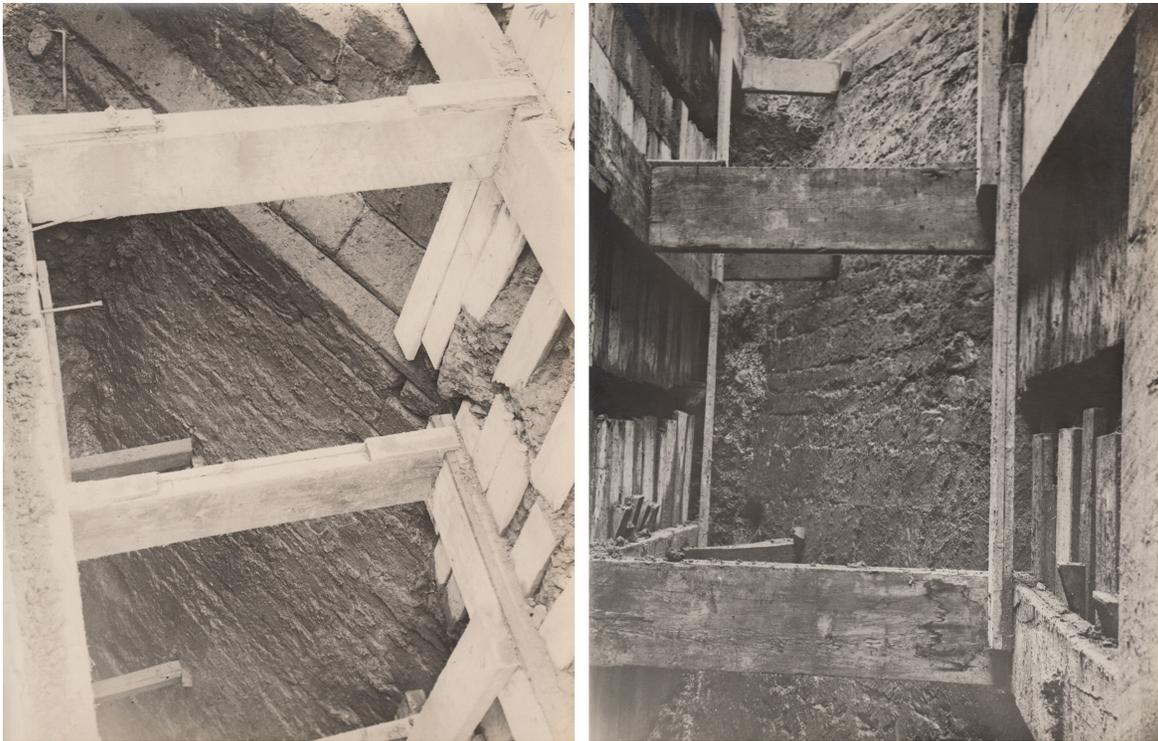
From what they had found, Armstrong (1930, 17) declared it ‘easy to picture the strength and massive dignity of the entrance to the castle in the days of its pride’ (Figure 3.11).

Published plans and discussions of this tower, and of the monumental entrance more generally, tend to draw on the evidence uncovered on the site of the Co-op, with Armstrong’s plan 2 showing the plinth course and the rubble backing projecting southwards from under the ‘outer wall of the new building’. However, Armstrong (1930, 11) also tells us that on the north side of this wall, on the site of Castle Hill Market, they encountered ‘[a] further portion of the large circular bastion, a continuation of that uncovered upon the site of the Co-operative Stores’. He does not provide any further details – but Himsworth (1927–42, 11–12) records the discovery, again in both text and image. Thus, he tells us that on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1928:

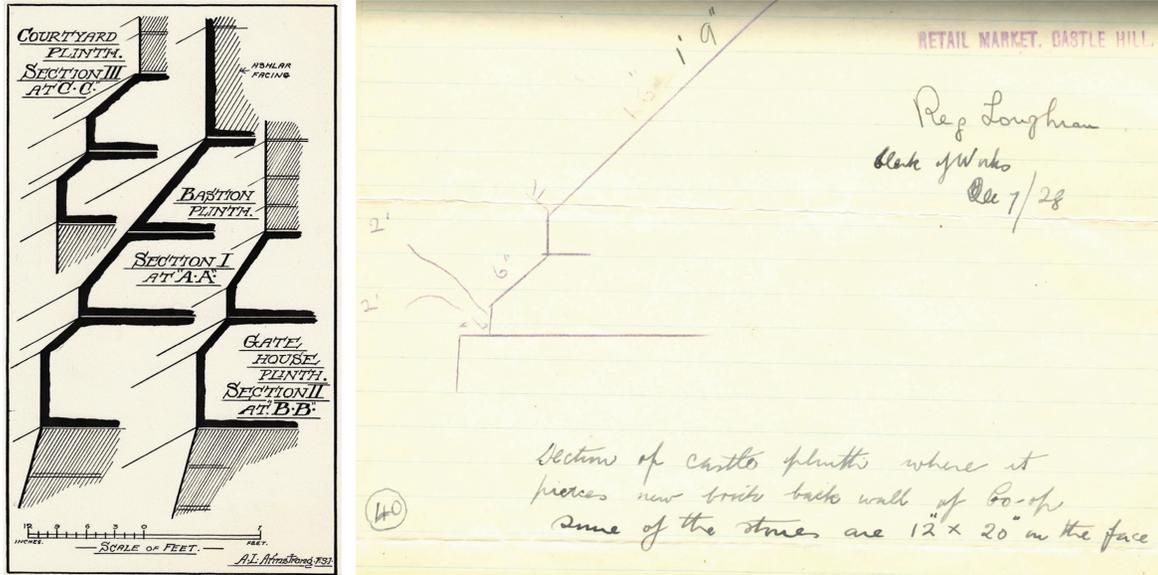
The plinth where it comes through the Co-op. brick wall, was reached in digging a pillar hole about 12 feet deep [he later (18<sup>th</sup> December 1928) corrected this to 18ft 6in from the Co-op floor level to the top of the plinth]. It was in a perfect state. A very handsome piece of masonry, in clay ... Loughran gave me the measurements. Some of the stones are about 10" X 20" on face.

Loughran cursed the delay caused (above, Chapter 2, Section: Doing archaeology in Sheffield 1927–30) but, embodying the tension at the heart of the whole process between recording the past and building the future, he nevertheless, that very day, provided Himsworth with a (signed!) measured drawing of the profile of this plinth (Himsworth 1927–42, fig. 40; also Armstrong 1927–28, 7). Himsworth picks up the story on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1928, when he tells us that Loughran had instructions (he does not say from whom) to ‘bring up ... the best or largest piece of plinth for preservation as it could not be left in situ.’ He photographed the process, and his photo 39 (Figure 2.14) shows those involved at the bottom of a deep shaft with a piece of the plinth. By 18<sup>th</sup> December ‘Loughran had got a complete section of the large plinth out and set it up on the surface’ – we can see it in Himsworth’s photos 41 and 42 (1927–42, 13–14). It is clear, both from these pictures and Loughran’s drawing, that it has the same profile as that supporting the west tower on the Co-op site (see Armstrong 1930, plate VI – ‘Bastion plinth. Section I at “A.A”’; Figures 2.14, 3.12).

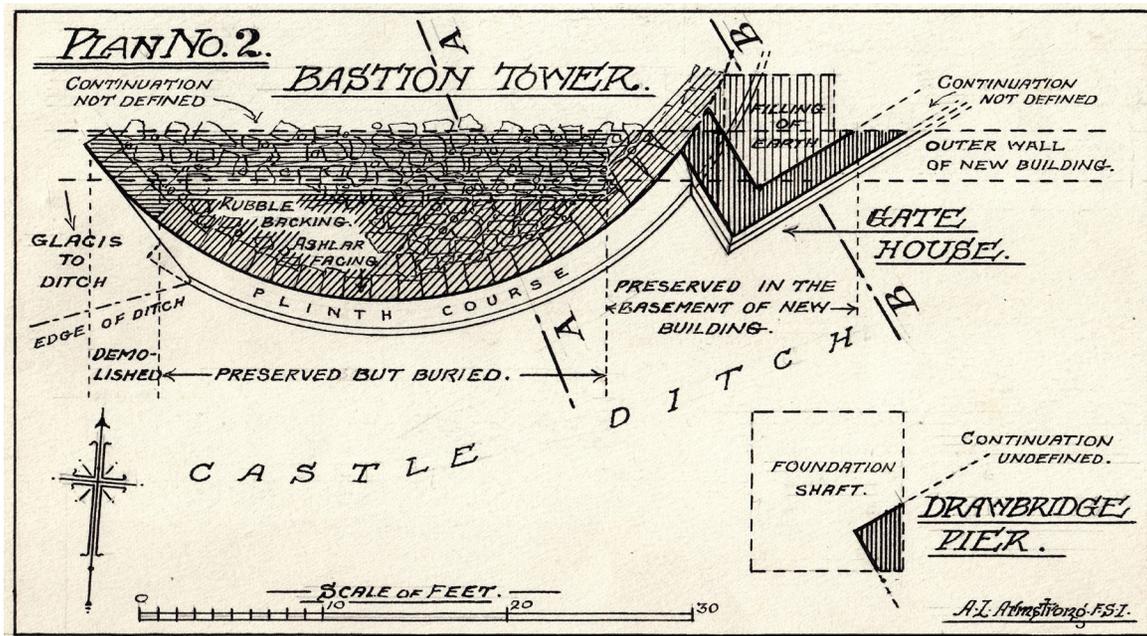
Neither Armstrong nor Himsworth tell us the location of this portion of the tower plinth – only that it was on the Castle Markets site. It could therefore have lain anywhere along the continuation of the arc of the plinth



**Figure 3.11:** *The lower walls of the gatehouse projecting into the moat. Signs of cannonball impact can be seen at the lower left of the right-hand image. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.*



**Figure 3.12:** Plinth courses from Sheffield Castle. Plate VI from Armstrong’s 1930 paper (left) depicts sections of plinth courses from the courtyard building and the gatehouse. Hunter Archaeological Society. On the right is a scrap of paper on which Clerk of Works Reg Loughran had drawn the courtyard plinth. He provided this to Himsworth, who included it in his diary. It was the discovery of this plinth that caused Loughran to curse delays in strong ‘Builders language’! Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.



**Figure 3.13:** Plan 2 from Armstrong’s 1930 paper on Sheffield Castle. This shows the gatehouse west tower, forestructure and drawbridge pier. Hunter Archaeological Society.

course shown on Armstrong’s plan 2. However, one possibility is that it was located on the eastern side of this west tower, where a gatehouse was later added (see below). On Armstrong’s plan 2, a rectangular cut (labelled ‘filling of earth’) is shown at this point, and this seems to extend into the Castle Markets site (Figure 3.13). Leslie Butcher’s (1961, 32) statement that Armstrong removed a ‘section’ of the plinth of the forestructure (gatehouse), where it met the tower and had it preserved, ‘but he never recorded the position on his published plan’, might be taken as supporting this suggestion (but see Chapter 5, Section: Gatehouse; this section of plinth is currently among the fragments of the castle residing in the chamber built around the courtyard remains).

In his published accounts Armstrong drew on these notes and observations to describe a monumental entrance consisting of circular towers on either side of a fortified gateway. The exposed remains of the west tower had a radius of 20ft (6.10m) and was described by Armstrong (1930, 14) as being of excellent workmanship, with an ashlar face of fine jointed masonry 'laid in courses 12 and 14 inches [30–36cm] on bed backed with flat-bedded rubble, only partially grouted in mortar'. Although the full extent of the tower was not ascertained, the rubble core extended 12ft (3.66m) from the ashlar face, and the total width of the gateway recorded by Armstrong (1930, 10) was 40ft (12.19m) from east to west, with walling to a total height of 20ft (6.10m). The massive ashlar base course of the tower had a tooled ashlar plinth 24in (0.96m) in height splayed outwards in two bold chamfers. At the centre of the tower seven courses of stonework, standing to 6ft 6in (2.01m) from the plinth course, survived, while only three courses stood on the western side, and on the east only the plinth remained. Below the plinth, the footings for the tower were splayed at an angle of 75° into the ditch. The plinth did not extend beyond the western side of the tower, where the ground sloped steeply from the glacis towards the moat cut (Armstrong 1930, 16–17; see above).

A rectangular gatehouse was partially uncovered which projected 6ft (1.83m) from its junction with the west tower, 'added for the accommodation of the drawbridge machinery and to increase the strength of the main entrance of the castle' (Armstrong 1930, 17). Its walls, 2ft 6in (0.79m) thick on the sides and 1ft 6in (0.49m) at the front, were of 'roughly chiselled masonry in irregular and narrow courses' and, Armstrong (1930, 17) thought, were 'much inferior' to those of the tower. Like the tower, the gatehouse had a plinth course below which the walls splayed 75° into the moat. The space between the gatehouse and the west tower was filled with earth and clay, and the pottery recovered from the filling was thought by Armstrong (1930, 17, plan 2) to date to the 14th century (although none of the pottery within the archive could be related to this deposit in our analysis). Armstrong (1930, 16) says little about the materials from which the gatehouse and tower were constructed, noting only that the latter was built from 'a fine grained freestone, slightly grey in colour when fractured ... believed to have come from the vicinity of Handsworth', where there were sandstone quarries. Himsworth (1927–42, 2) provides us with more information when he tells us (25<sup>th</sup> November 1927) that 'most of the castle building now uncovered appears to be of Handsworth stone', although pieces of window tracery found in the moat were 'rather yellow' and were probably, he thought, of 'magnesium' [magnesian] limestone (see Himsworth 1927–42, photo 7; also Chapter 7). In his 1930 paper, Armstrong (1930, 20) referred to the recovery of demolition debris from the moat, including chamfered stone mullions, window jambs and tracery, probably from the windows of the chapel or hall, but in one of his draft manuscripts, he commented that the windows were of 14th-century date, and so were probably insertions having been 'modernised' at that date (Armstrong n.d. (d)).

Himsworth records further elements of the entrance complex discovered on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1928. While sinking a foundation shaft, the construction workers encountered 'a square pier in the middle of the moat'; it was 'in an exceptional state of preservation, clean cut stone, angle (only one preserved) perfect, not a stone out of place' (Himsworth 1927–42, 2–3; also Armstrong 1930, 17, and plan 1). We can still see that 'perfect angle' in Himsworth's photos 11 and 12 (Figure 3.14). The sinking of another foundation shaft, just 5m to the east in the middle of the former Castle Folds Lane (marked B on Armstrong's plan 1), encountered a stretch of masonry deemed to be 'of similar character to that of the drawbridge pier' (Armstrong 1930, 18). This was 12ft (3.66m) high and had been partially demolished, but Armstrong was sure that it was either the eastern end of the pier we have been discussing, or that it was a second pier. He believed that the former, and presumably the latter, occupied a free-standing position within the moat, and was so placed 'to receive the movable portion of the drawbridge' (Armstrong 1930, 17, 11; 1928b, 366). Himsworth (1927–42, 3) concurred – the pier in the middle of the moat was 'probably for a drawbridge to fall upon from the castle gateway'. Armstrong (1930, 17; 1928b, 366) believed, perhaps because of the quality of the masonry/construction, that it was 'contemporary in date with the bastion tower'. That would, of course, make the pier earlier than the gatehouse, which, as we have seen, Armstrong (1930, 17) said, was 'clearly of more recent date'. We would therefore have to assume that it was originally intended to support an earlier drawbridge than that raised and lowered by the new mechanism installed (so Armstrong assumed) in the gatehouse.

However, the actual location of this 'pier' was, and (to some extent) remains, a matter of debate. Although Armstrong and Himsworth both placed it in the *middle* of the moat, there are signs that the former (at least) was not entirely sure. Armstrong toyed with an alternative interpretation in a draft of his published paper, where he described the portion found in foundation shaft B as part of the abutment 'on the outer side of the bridge', although the word 'landward' had first been used before being overwritten (Armstrong n.d. (d), 22), and in another draft stated that it was 'obviously part of the abutment of the southern half of the bridge'



**Figure 3.14:** *The drawbridge pier.* Photograph taken by A. Senior. Himsworth (1927–42, 3) described the pier as ‘perfect, not a stone out of place’. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

(Armstrong n.d. (e), 6). In this scenario, the drawbridge would cross the moat in a single span, without the need for support in the middle, with both the 'first' pier and the masonry in shaft B forming the southern, landward platform on which it rested. Clearly, Armstrong struggled to interpret what he had seen, before deciding that it was a free-standing pier (for further discussion, see Chapter 5, Section: Gatehouse).

The east tower is noticeable by its absence from detailed descriptions of this monumental entrance, although Armstrong (1928b, 366) clearly assumed it was there and makes repeated reference to it (Armstrong 1930, 11, 16–17). In fact, Armstrong and Himsworth may have seen more of these entrance structures than they realised for parts of the east tower plinth and eastern angle of the forebuilding were visible in some of the site photographs, although the latter was partially obscured by 'trench timbers' (Butcher 1972a, 17; Richardson and Dennison 2014a, 58; see Chapter 5, Section: Gatehouse). Himsworth's (1927–42, 11) diary entry for 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1928 supports the possibility that they encountered (and recorded) part of the east tower:

three men digging a hole for a market pillar. Expected they might 'pick up' the plinth where it comes through the back wall of the Co-op., and I hope, the bastion or tower I expect to balance the other side of the castle entrance.

Four days later he describes, as we have seen, the plinth 'coming through' the Co-op wall (see also Butcher 1961, 32). The significance of Himsworth's report of 3<sup>rd</sup> December is that it places the discovery of 7<sup>th</sup> December in the context of the *east* tower, the one which would 'balance the other side of the castle entrance'. All this implies, of course, that he and Armstrong had seen both the east tower and the eastern corner of the gatehouse structure, but Armstrong had not included them in his final report or marked them on his plans. Armstrong and Himsworth associated these structures with the rebuilding of the castle in 1270 when, as we have seen, Thomas de Furnival II was awarded a licence to crenellate. Thus, Himsworth (1937, 6) told the audience at his '500 Years of Sheffield Trade and Sheffield Castle' lecture that '[t]he finely worked stone remains uncovered in 1927–29 are undoubtedly those of de Furnivals [Furnival's] 13th century castle'.

### Himsworth discovers the curtain wall above the Don

The numerous foundations dug west of the gatehouse failed to identify the curtain wall surrounding the inner courtyard. However, Armstrong (1930, 11) thought it unlikely that this wall had been entirely demolished (he reasoned that the ashlar facing might have been robbed, but not the foundations and rubble core), and so assumed that its remains lay to the north of the rear wall of the Co-op building, but the lack of foundations dug on the site of the new market hall meant that there was no opportunity to investigate this hypothesis. There seems to have been rising ground along the northern edge of the moat cut, as shown on William Fairbank's *Correct Plan of the Town of Sheffield* (Figure 1.8; Fairbank 1771a), and which Armstrong referred to as the *glacis*, and the southern line of the curtain wall may have run along the top of this slope (see Chapter 5, Section: Curtain wall). On the eastern side, the buildings along Castle Folds Lane (Shambles Lane, see above) were 'backed against the glacis'; that they were 'built of castle material was amply demonstrated during their demolition' (Armstrong 1930, 21). Armstrong does not say *how* this was demonstrated, but we can reasonably assume that he saw the large masonry blocks which had, in the past, been mistaken for the actual walls of the castle. Here again, Himsworth's (1927–42, 6) record is invaluable. On 28<sup>th</sup> September 1928 he photographed, on the north-east of the site, a set of stone steps leading down to some brick-built basements, 'the floor of which rests upon some good stone walling in Castle Folds Lane below' (see also his photos 21, 22, 23; Figure 2.11). On 26<sup>th</sup> November he recorded that men were 'digging away some of the bank (west) of Castle Folds Lane [i.e. into Castle Hill] ... the debris in the bank side was largely composed of old mortar (lime and sand) such as was seen in one or two places near the south moat' (Himsworth 1927–42, 10). And on 30<sup>th</sup> November he refers to the discovery, 'near the edge of the bank in Castle Folds Lane', of a 'base of what appears to be remains of a Norman pillar' (Himsworth 1927–42, 11, also his photos 36 and 37; Figure 3.15).

After Armstrong had completed his paper, by the summer of 1930 (Northend 1930a), traces of the north curtain wall seem to have been uncovered on top of the river cliff above the Don, known from at least the later 18th century as 'the precipice' (see Chapter 1; Fairbank 1769). This discovery was made during the demolition of the late 18th-century slaughterhouses, which took place prior to the construction of the new road along the south bank of the Don – 'Castlegate'. Again, it is the diary of Joseph Himsworth that is crucial for providing



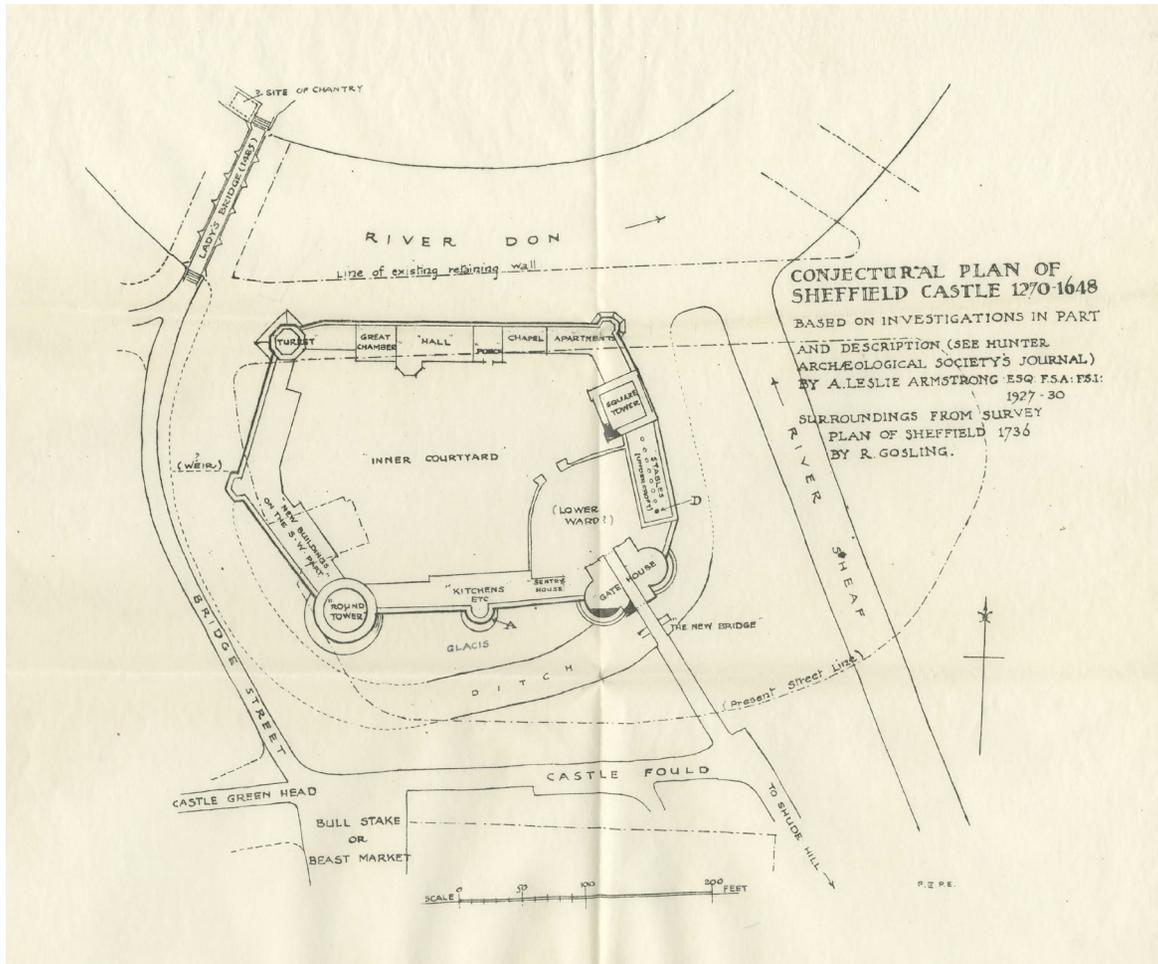
**Figure 3.15:** *The 'base of what appears to be remains of a Norman pillar'.* On the left is the photograph that appeared in Himsworth's diary showing the pillar on its side leaning against a site hut, and on the right a photograph of the pillar in the ground taken by A. Senior, mounted on card and annotated by Leslie Butcher during his research on the castle. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

evidence of this part of the castle. On 1<sup>st</sup> July he noted that underneath what he took to be a 19th-century wall 'were heavy worked stones that looked like much earlier work' (Himsworth 1927–42, 17), and then in his diary entry for 4<sup>th</sup> September 1930 he records:

About 50 feet [c.15.2m] from N.E. corner some squared rubble masonry appears; also at about 100 feet [c.30.5m] along the Don front facing the river, like buttresses, both about four feet [c.1.3m] wide. These are approximately about five feet [c.1.5m] back from the old brick wall and about seven feet [c.2.10m] below the present market level (Himsworth 1927–42, 18).

Further tantalising glimpses of masonry appeared on 10<sup>th</sup> October, when Himsworth (1927–42, 18) records that he visited the site at 2.15pm just in time to stop workmen destroying 'masonry almost six feet [1.8m] by four feet [1.2m] high overlooking the Don and parallel with it'. This wall was at a similar level to the courtyard buildings to the east and located about 9ft (c.2.7m) back from the brick retaining wall along the Don. Himsworth speculated that it may have formed the rear, or inner, wall of a tower, since a section of walling extended from it towards the Don.

At the western end of this section overlooking the Don, and 'at a higher level', Himsworth (1927–42, 18–19) also noted the destruction of part of a square building, which had a wall comprised of stones that were '12" X 9" [30cm x 23cm] and 10" X 6" [25cm x 15cm]'. It was 13ft (3.96m) long and bonded with white lime mortar (with very little sand); the top of this lay 'about five feet [1.52m] below market site'. A roughly measured drawing of the section is included in his typed diary, where a 'Filling of White Mortar and Stone' is noted towards the east end (Himsworth 1927–42, fig. 47; Figure 3.7); the unpublished sketch in his manuscript diary labels it 'remains of a tower', presumably one of the towers on the castle's curtain wall (Himsworth 1930g). Above this, Himsworth (1930g) wrote 'opp. Waingate and back market entrance', which helps to locate this tower more precisely. In a letter written to Armstrong on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1930, Himsworth (1930e) noted that these observations tended to support a suggestion that had been made by the City Architect, Edwards, concerning the likely location ('but not just as he plans them') of the principal apartments of the castle along its northern edge. Edwards (1930) had drawn a 'conjectural' plan of the castle layout in response to the publication of Armstrong's findings, in which he made use of the written sources, although his supposition about the location of the principal buildings was simply based on a belief that that might be expected to have been 'at the least vulnerable position' of the castle (Figure 3.16; also Himsworth 1930f, and for an alternative perspective, see below).



**Figure 3.16:** *Conjectural plan of Sheffield Castle.* Drawn by City Architect F. E. P. Edwards in November 1930. This was sent to Armstrong in a letter dated 15<sup>th</sup> November 1930, after his paper had been published in the *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

Remains of this tower may have been identified c.1868 during construction of a tunnel for a new sewer running under the site of the castle, from the weir on the Sheaf at the rear of the Alexandria Hotel westwards to the end of Bridge Street (Leader 1872, 362–3). A shaft excavated in the yard of Messrs C. Chambers & Co. (shown on the 1896 Goad Fire Insurance map as located in the middle of Castle Hill, at the north-western end of Castle Folds Lane), cut through a ‘subterranean passage’, which reignited old stories about underground links between the castle and the hunting lodge (stories that had been dismissed by Hunter (1819, 193) half a century earlier as ‘palpably absurd’). Another was excavated ‘near to Waingate’ and, at a depth of about 20ft (6.10m), it encountered three walls, one 12ft (3.66m) thick and probably an outer wall, while the second was 4½ft (1.37m) thick and the third 3ft (0.91m) thick. Significantly, the structure was built of ‘large rubble with dressed quoins’ (Leader 1872, 363; Leader 1880, 146). It seems that there was a substantial tower located on the north-western edge of the promontory, perhaps exploiting the slope towards the Don and Waingate.

In his diary entry for 20<sup>th</sup> October 1930, Himsworth (1927–42, 19–20) recorded that ‘There now appear four patches of rubble filling on edge, and lead me to suggest there were probably four towers with a sloping glacis in between, overlooking the Don, about 10 [c.3m] to 12 feet [3.6m] wide’. Sadly, the photos he took of this were already lost by the time his diary was typed (the handwritten word ‘lost’ has been inserted beside ‘Photos’). On 18<sup>th</sup> November he was able to confirm his observations – ‘The long N. face of the bank under the market facing the Don having been washed by the recent rains shows the rubble fillings, behind what I assume were the four towers, to advantage’. Himsworth (1927–42, 17) identified this corner as being the highest on the north side of the



(26)



(27)



(28)



(29)  
ALA



(30)

**Figure 3.17:** Two pages of photographs of the plinth course from Himsworth's diary. Photograph 28 shows a planning frame for the 'setting out' of Castle Hill Market. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

site, and the place where the largest perimeter tower was likely to have been situated. He felt that these sections of walling along the Don, along with the evidence for the original edge of the promontory, established the extent of the castle site (see also Chapter 7). It is clear from his diary entries that Himsworth was far more concerned with recording the topography of the site than was Armstrong in his published work (Butcher 1972a, 8).

### Courtyard buildings

Structures probably associated with the hall and domestic accommodation of the castle were encountered at what is likely to have been the north-east corner of the inner courtyard. Stone walls – now encased in the chamber beneath the former market – were located c.6ft (1.83m) to the north-east of the putative Saxon timber structure, and Armstrong (1930, 20–1; plate V, plans 1 and 3; Figures 3.2, 3.3) argued that they were part of Thomas de Furnival's castle built after 1270. The first signs of the remains appeared on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1928, and, alerted by the City Architect, Armstrong, Himsworth and Wigfull met on the castle site at 12.00 to view, about 'four or five feet below the present ground level', 'walling with a double plinth ... There was a corner or return in the plinth which was presumably a courtyard wall with a filling or backing of loose mortar and pebbles to the east' (Himsworth 1927–42, 6–7). Wigfull later (23<sup>rd</sup> October) told Himsworth (1927–42, 8) that the plinth was of 'sandstone, perhaps from Sheffield Park or Arbo[u]rthorne' (Figure 3.17).

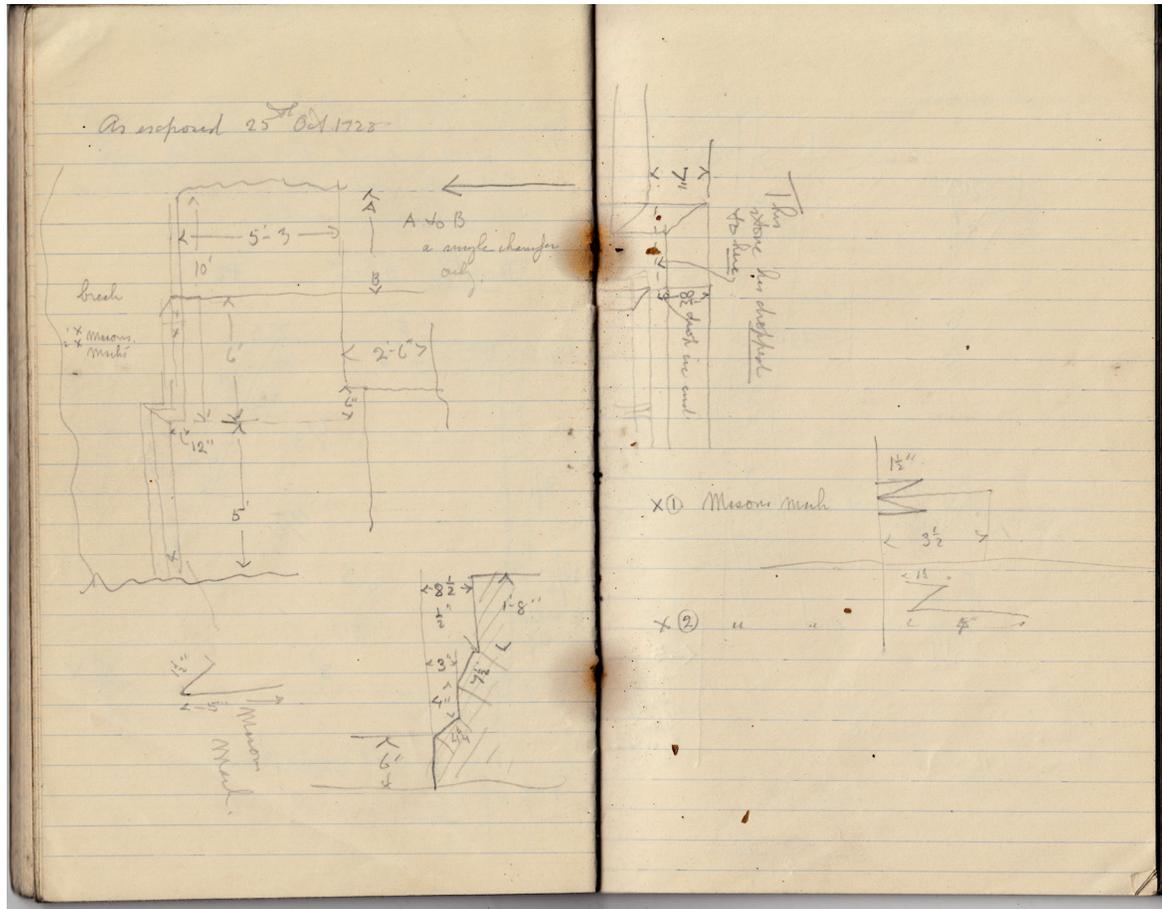
Himsworth (1927–42, 7) returned on 18<sup>th</sup> October to see that more of the walls had been uncovered, observing that 'A young man from the City Arch. Office was "setting out" for parts of the new building' – i.e. Castle



**Figure 3.18:** *The return wall of the courtyard building.* Photograph taken by Joseph Himsworth. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

Hill Market. Himsworth captured the moment in his photo 28, in which the ‘frame’ for one of the pillars for the new building, precariously held in place and levelled with bricks, sits on top of the wall and plinth which is still in the process of being exposed (Figure 3.17; see also his photo 38 for a close-up). This juxtaposition says much about the pressured conditions under which Armstrong and Himsworth went about their task, and so, more broadly, about the relationship between archaeology and development at the end of the 1920s.

Himsworth’s diary entries for 23<sup>rd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> October 1928 reveal that work continued to uncover more of this structure, with Reg Loughran very helpfully ‘putting’ two men to ‘test the wall for continuation to the south’. Significantly, Himsworth (1927–42, 8) noticed at the south end of this wall ‘a return towards the east’ comprising ‘roughly dressed good squared rubble’, with no plinth (Figure 3.18). In his diary, Armstrong (1927–28, 5) provides a detailed sketch plan of the walls ‘as exposed 25th Oct 1928’ (Figure 3.19), and this seems to have been the basis for the plan he published (as plan 3) in 1930 (Figure 3.3). On this, Armstrong shows the remains as consisting of two walls at roughly right angles to each other, one aligned from north-east to south-west, the other from south-east to north-west, and the measurements on plate V show that the top of the walls was at 177ft (54.10m) above ordnance datum (AOD) and their base at 174ft (53.03m) AOD. The north-east to south-west wall (the one described and photographed by Himsworth; Figure 3.18) survived for 15ft (4.57m) and was 5ft 3in thick (1.61m), and was interpreted by Armstrong (1930, 20) as the external wall of a building facing the courtyard (also Himsworth 1927–42, 6). Its western elevation was faced with hammer-dressed stone built in narrow courses rising from a double-chamfered ashlar plinth course. At the north-eastern end of this wall, the plinth changed to a single chamfer, while at the south-western end the ‘roughly dressed good squared rubble’ noted by Himsworth (1927–42, 10) was taken by Armstrong to mark either a doorway or passage through the



**Figure 3.19:** Sketches of the courtyard building. A record in the site diary of Leslie Armstrong of features exposed on 25<sup>th</sup> October. This sketch formed the basis of plan 3 in his 1930 paper. Note also Armstrong's sketches of the masons' marks, and their location on this structure (see also Figure 3.21). Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

wall. The south-east to north-west wall was dressed with similar stone, and was, Armstrong (1930, 20) argued, an internal division within a set of apartments.

On 30<sup>th</sup> November 1928 workmen discovered, at the northern end of this structure, the 'remains of a stone vaulted room or dungeon'; the vaulting, Himsworth (1927–42, 10) noted, 'suggested a large span' (also his photos 33 and 34; Figure 3.20). Armstrong (1930, 20) argued that it was a cellar or dungeon. He may well have favoured the latter interpretation, which is what appears in one of his drafts (Armstrong n.d. (e)), while the caption to the published photograph (his fig. 13) labels it as the 'remains of a vaulted apartment, probably a dungeon'. There seems to be no basis for this interpretation other than, perhaps, the fact that dungeons are what castles have (see also Himsworth 1935, 8; 1937, 5, 7; 1944, 6). There was apparently a narrow passage giving access to this room, but there were no surviving remains of any steps (see Chapter 7 for further detailed discussion).

Armstrong (1930, 21) also recorded the circular base of a stone pier or pillar, which measured 2ft 6in in diameter (0.79m) and stood 2ft (0.60m) high, and was marked on his plan 1 at point D (see also plan 3), 64ft (19.5 m) to the south-east of the remains of the stone courtyard buildings (a rough pencil sketch appears in his diary; Armstrong 1927–28, 7). He thought it was of 13th-century date (or perhaps earlier) and associated with either the hall or the chapel, and he believed that it was *in situ*. He described the top as chamfered, but partly hacked away 'as it interfered with the foundations of a 19th century building erected there' (Armstrong 1930, 21). Himsworth also recorded and photographed this base, but in his diary for 30<sup>th</sup> November 1928 disagreed with aspects of Armstrong's assessment:

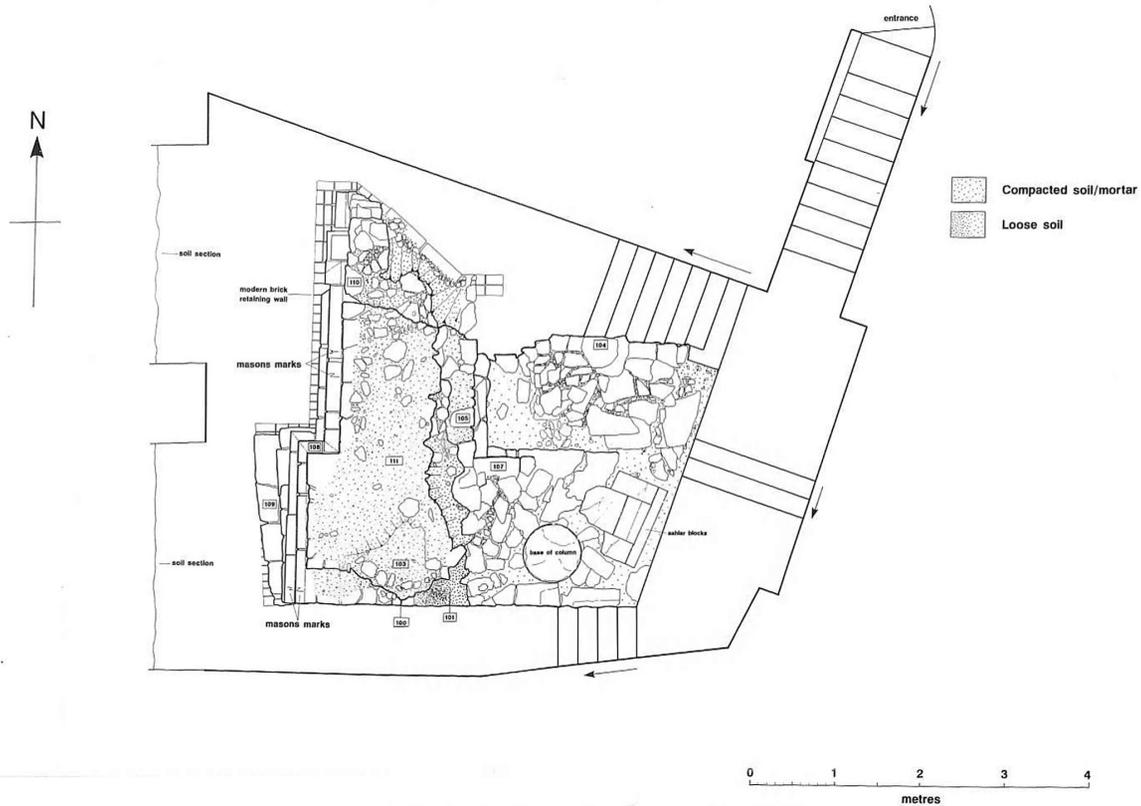


**Figure 3.20:** *The vaulted courtyard 'apartment' during excavation.* Photograph by A. Senior (Armstrong 1930, fig. 13). Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

Considerably to the S.E. near the edge of the bank in Castle Folds Lane, a base of what appears to be remains of a Norman pillar. A.L.A. thought it was in situ, but Loughran and I think otherwise as there was no setting. It was in a clay bed very near the surface. A.L.A thinks it a very likely spot for the Chapel or perhaps the Great Hall (Himsworth 1927–42, 11).

Unfortunately, by the time his photographs of this base were taken (his photos 36 and 37; see also Senior 1928; Figure 3.15), it had clearly been moved as it was on edge leant against what appears to be a site hut (perhaps that in which the skeleton found on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1927 ended up? This base too is currently in the chamber enclosing the courtyard remains).

Neither Armstrong's nor Himsworth's analysis of these structures makes it certain that the walls are contemporary, and therefore represent a single phase of construction. Nor was the modern study of the walling by Latham and Atkinson (1994) able to establish the relationship between the two walls, which had been unsympathetically reconstructed in more recent times as part of their display (Figure 3.21). This is an aspect of a more general problem – the lack of phasing information, and detailed, context-specific, dating evidence, about the remains uncovered in the process of constructing the Co-op and Castle Hill Market. This means that we can rarely date structures or establish relationships between them. It also results in an 'unhealthy' dependence on written sources



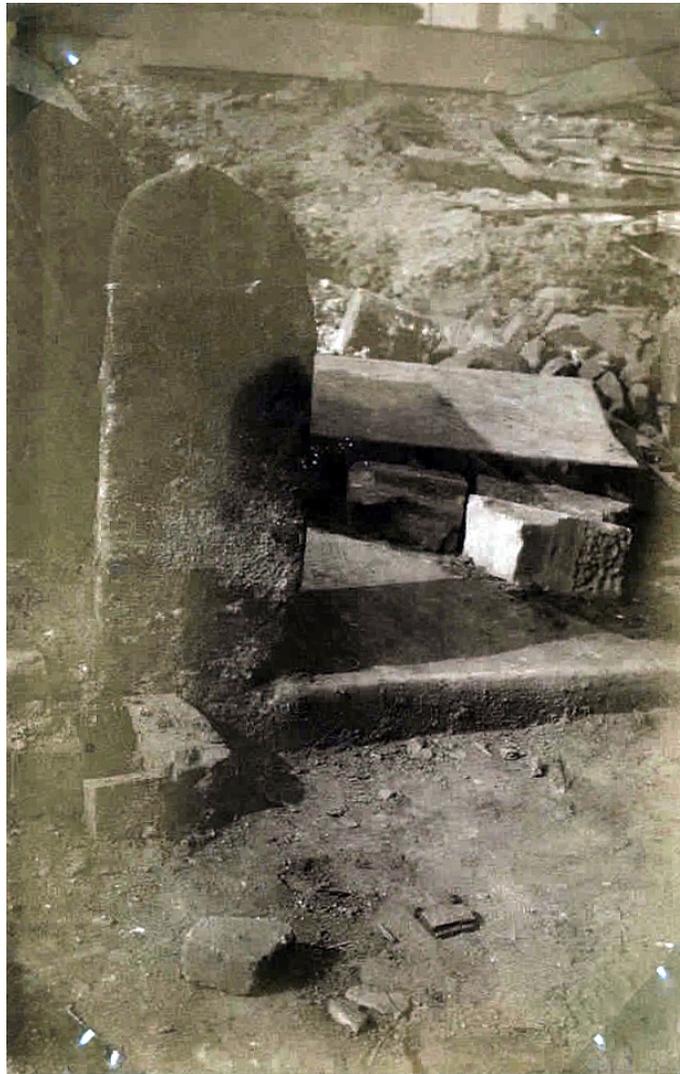
**Figure 3.21:** *The remains of the courtyard building.* Drawn by Ian Latham and Simon Atkinson in 1994. © South Yorkshire Archaeology Service.

to date and, by extension, affects how we interpret the archaeological evidence (see below, Section: Discussion). Nonetheless, in this case we do have some indications that these courtyard buildings were built at roughly the same time as the gatehouse structures, and so may have been part of a restructuring of the castle (for further discussion of this, see Chapter 7). They have similar masonry, and Armstrong (1927–28, 5; 1930, 23, plate IV) recorded three masons' marks on the outer plinth of the courtyard structure, one of which was identical to a mason's mark on the plinth course of the west gatehouse tower (see also Himsworth 1927–42, 13). Armstrong (1930, 12) predicted that the range of buildings on the eastern side of the courtyard would extend to the north of the remains he recorded, and Himsworth's observation (1927–42, 18), on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1930, of a 'piece of plinth' (as well as 'a piece of window tracery'), in the section overlooking the Don supports his argument. These substantial stone buildings may have formed part of either the Great Hall or domestic accommodation ranged along the north wall of the castle.

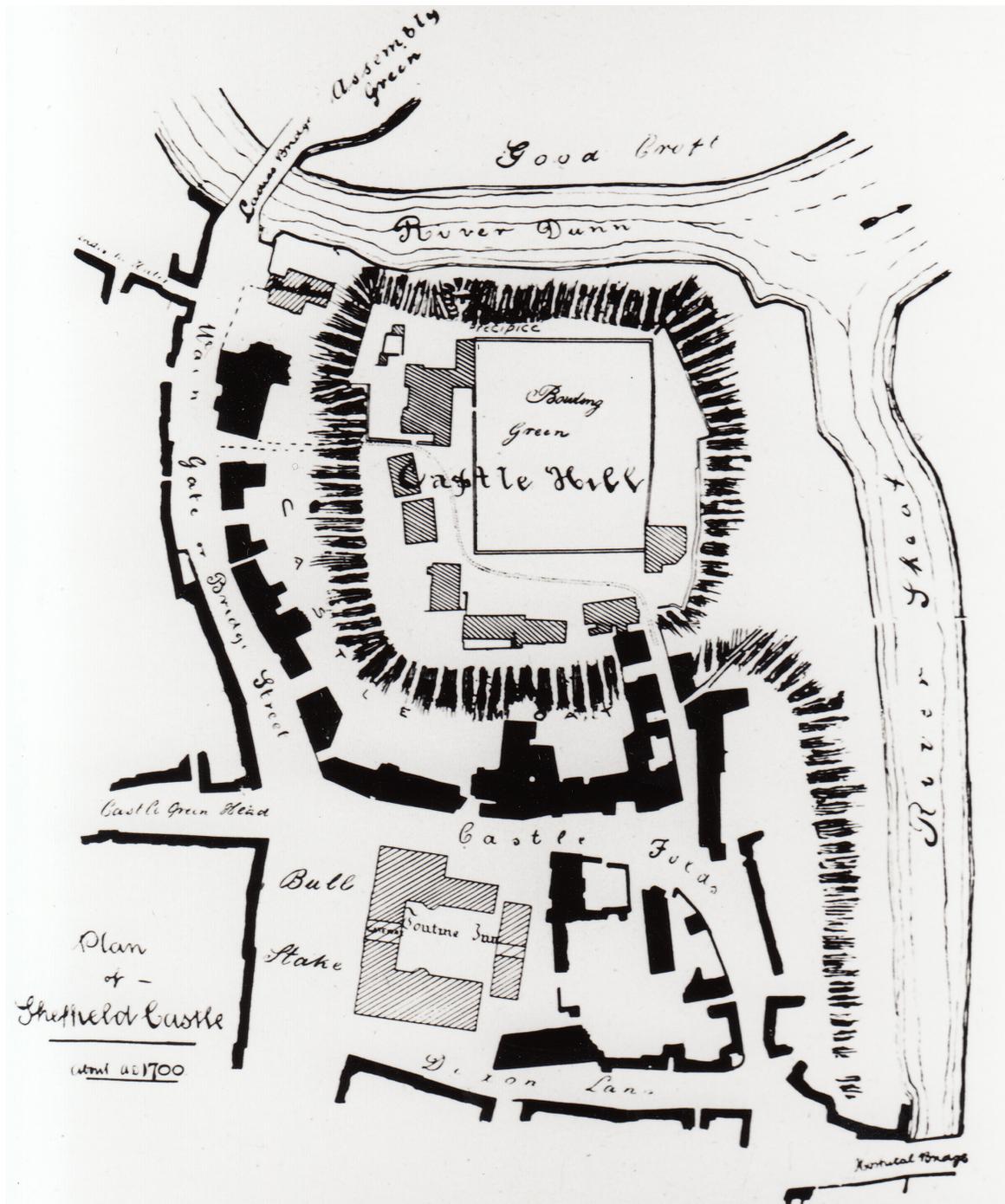
Himsworth's diary provides us with indications that traces of other buildings in, or close to, the courtyard might have been revealed during the construction work. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1929 he recorded the discovery of 'about three courses of very fine masonry suggesting a large doorway and two smaller ones.' Armstrong thought that, while the stonework derived from the castle, it had been 're-erected' – i.e. possibly after the Civil War 'slighting'. Himsworth (1927–42, 14), and Loughran, disagreed ('the jointing was ... too good') and believed it to be *in situ*. Unfortunately, the photographs Himsworth took do not survive (Richardson and Dennison 2014a, 49), but, given the date of discovery, it is likely that this structure too was in the north-eastern corner of the castle.

Himsworth also records that in or close to Castle Folds Lane 'big pockets of old lime and sand mortar' were found, 'evidently castle debris'. In one place, having dug down about 4ft (1.22m), they found 'large blocks of rubble, apparently for rough foundation work'. Himsworth (1927–42, 13) goes on to tell us that these blocks, which measured 18in by 9in (45.72cm by 22.86cm), showed 'no signs of discolouration from exposure at any time'. It is not easy to understand exactly what he means here, but one might suggest that this rubble derives from the castle wall (and/or courtyard buildings) pushed into the moat in the context of its Civil War slighting (see also Armstrong 1930, 8, 14; Tuck and Rajic 2019, 29; and Chapters 5 and 7).

Finally, we should note Himsworth's reference to the uncovering of a 'square sandstone pillar ... about 4½ feet high', to the south-east of the vaulted room of the courtyard building; this pillar had an iron rod embedded in it and was thought to be either part of the battlements or a railing of the 18th-century bowling green (Himsworth 1927–42, 11, photo 35; 1937, 9; Figure 3.22 and 3.23). As Himsworth notes, this bowling green is depicted as the central feature of the site in Thomas Winder's (1907) *T'Heft an' Blades O'Shevviold*. More to the point, it is at the heart of a plan of Castle Hill produced by the Fairbank family in 1769 (Figure 3.24; also Figure 9.4; Hall 1932) and features as one of the focal points in depictions of the site from the early part of the 18th century – for example, on Ralph Gosling's 1736 *Plan of Sheffield* (Figure 1.6), in Thomas Oughtibridge's 1737 *North Perspective View of the Town of Sheffield* (just above and to the left of the Lady's Bridge on the left-hand side of the picture, two people can be seen playing bowls; Figure 8.26), and in Nathaniel Buck's 1745 *East Prospect of Sheffield*, in which it is depicted as surrounded by a high wall. If Himsworth is correct that the pillar and iron rod were part of this complex, it would serve, along with these images, to confirm that significant activity took place on the site after it was slighted, some of which was every bit as important, socially and culturally, as what happened in the castle 'in the days of its pride' (Armstrong 1930, 17); see Chapters 7 and 9 for a further in-depth discussion).



**Figure 3.22:** A sandstone pillar with an iron rod embedded in it. Photograph from Himsworth's diary. He thought it was either part of the battlements or a railing of the 18th-century bowling green. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.



**Figure 3.23:** Plan of Castle Hill as it was believed to have appeared around 1700. From *T'Heft an' Blades O'Shevviold*, by Thomas Winder from 1907. Himsworth drew attention to this plan in his diary when trying to make sense of the pillar depicted in Figure 3.22. This plan is almost certainly based on detailed surveys of the site, on behalf of the Duke of Norfolk, by William Fairbank in 1769 and 1771 (see Figures 3.24 and 9.4). Winder had been architect and surveyor of the Duke of Norfolk's Yorkshire and Derbyshire estates. Public Domain.



## Discussion

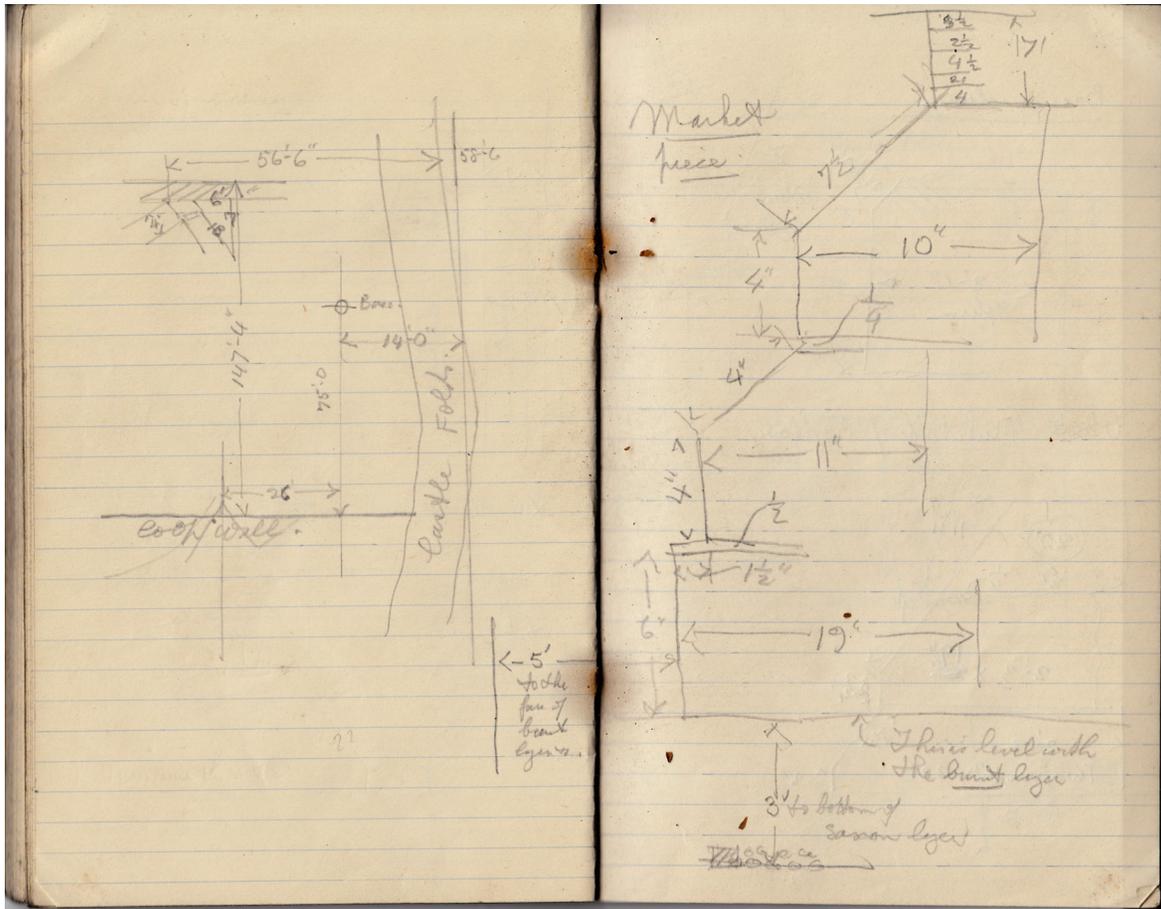
Archaeologically, what did Armstrong and Himsworth ‘observe’ on Castle Hill between 1927 and 1930? In very broad terms, they found one or more timber structures, the moat, layers of burning, the courtyard buildings, the gatehouse towers, the drawbridge pier, the gatehouse, and buildings along the north wall overlooking the Don. Before we can consider what these mean historically, we have to be able to date them (even relatively), and this is where the interpretations of the two pioneers are, in some respects, questionable. On-site working conditions hampering their ability to recover contextual information, and their limited knowledge of, for example, ceramic chronology, undoubtedly made dating features difficult, and Armstrong’s efforts to do so were based largely on a combination of stratigraphy and text-based assumption. His conclusions are summarised in his plate V (our Figure 3.3), in which he shows the ‘three successive buildings which have occupied the site’ (Armstrong 1930, 22). The stratigraphic sequence, as presented, is as follows (from bottom to top) – wooden building, debris and humus, burnt layer, courtyard/stone castle. Similarities in construction style and in materials allowed Armstrong to extend this sequence horizontally (from the north-east corner of the site) to include the gatehouse towers (and drawbridge pier), an argument reinforced by the fact that the same mason’s mark (the M-shaped one seen in Figure 3.19; also Armstrong 1930, plate IV) was found on the plinth course of the tower and on the courtyard buildings. The gatehouse added to the monumental entrance (in the 14th century?) would thus come at the end of this sequence which incorporates all the major features observed by Armstrong and Himsworth, apart from the moat. As we noted earlier, Armstrong (but not Himsworth) placed that at the beginning of this sequence, but there is, in fact, no stratigraphic connection between it and the timber buildings (and the ‘Saxon’ ceramic evidence, if it ever existed). We’ll come back to consider the ‘absolute’ dates within this sequence, but now have to return to the stratigraphic relationships – i.e. can we be sure that the features and structures appeared in the sequence set out in Armstrong’s plate V?

The earliest elements in this sequence were discovered ‘at the eleventh hour’, in one of the last excavations on the site – to create the chamber that would house the remains of the courtyard buildings. That ‘last trench’, Armstrong (1929c) says, produced ‘clear evidence of three successive buildings on the site’:

First a Saxon structure, which there is every reason to think is part of the Hall of Waltheof; secondly, traces of a building of early Norman date which was subsequently destroyed by fire, and which must be the castle of the first Norman Lords, the De Lovetots; and finally, the magnificent dressed masonry and massive walls of the great castle of Thomas De Furnival, erected in 1270, or soon after (also Armstrong 1930, 21).

The impression here (and in Armstrong 1930, plate V) is that a clear stratigraphic relationship was established between all of these structures. And at first sight this is reinforced by the notes and drawings Armstrong made while the excavation/construction was taking place. Thus, at the base of a measured sketch of the plinth of the courtyard buildings (labelled ‘Market piece’) is a note which says ‘This is level with the burnt layer’, and below this is another – ‘3ft to bottom of Saxon layer’. Importantly, however, there is another note, again level with the base of the plinth but with an arrow pointing to the left, which reads ‘5ft to the face of burnt layers’ (Armstrong 1927–28, 6; Figure 3.25). From this, and from the fact that the earlier note said ‘level with’, not ‘on top of’, the burnt layer, we can deduce that there is no stratigraphic relationship between the ‘burnt layer’ and the courtyard buildings above (see also Armstrong 1930, 21). There do seem to be physical, stratigraphic, relationships between the timber buildings, the humus/debris, and the burnt layer, but even here Armstrong’s (1927–28, 6) sketch drawing leaves room for some doubt since it suggests that the ‘Saxon’ layers lay *c.* 3ft (*c.* 0.91m) below the courtyard plinth – with the burnt layer 5ft (1.52m) away. Crucially, it seems that the section depicted in 1930, plate V is one of Armstrong’s typical, schematic, sections (above, Section: The inner courtyard moat) – not what was actually observed at that ‘eleventh hour’.

And, if the stratigraphic situation is not clear, we are on even shakier ground when it comes to assigning dates to each of the layers and structures. Chronologically, the sequence is anchored in the belief that the timber buildings are of Saxon date, which, as we have seen, rests almost entirely upon textual references to Waltheof, and assumptions about the ‘primitive’ character of cruck-built structures. It now seems that this ascription of a Saxon date was an exercise in wish-fulfilment rather than having any relationship to past reality. There may be an early medieval phase on the castle site, but the timber structures discovered in March 1929 do not belong to it. Nor is there any strong evidence for Armstrong’s putative early moat (but see Chapter 7). *If* there was



**Figure 3.25:** The plinth of the courtyard buildings (labelled 'Market piece'). From Armstrong's site diary. There is a note which says 'This is level with the burnt layer', and below this is another – '3ft to bottom of Saxon layer'. Another note, again level with the base of the plinth, has an arrow pointing to the left, which reads '5ft to the face of burnt layers'. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.

an early medieval settlement it is *possible* that it was surrounded by a ditched enclosure; it is now clear from the work of Steve Bassett (2007) and John Blair (2018), for example, that such enclosures were a feature of the early medieval landscape of England (also Squatriti 2002). But the only 'evidence' for it are the fragments of Saxon pottery apparently found at the base of the south moat, and the fact that the (later) castle walls did not run parallel with it (Armstrong 1930, 16, 19, 23). The latter is at best circumstantial, and, as for the pottery, as Leslie Butcher (1972a, 8) pointed out, Armstrong identified it himself, it is not illustrated in his report, and he (Butcher) could not find it in the Museum – nor could we (see Chapter 6). Moreover, as we will see in Chapter 7, modern excavations have also failed to find any securely pre-Conquest pottery. If Waltheof was ubiquitous to Robert Leader, he remains elusive to us.

Next in the sequence is the layer of humus/debris, nearly 2ft (0.61m) deep. Again, there are no 'independent' dates, and Armstrong (1929c; 1930, 21) dates and interprets it with reference to what he assumes comes before and after. In essence, he sees it as a product of the passage of time after William's supposed destruction of the *aula* of Waltheof. However, as we noted above, it is just as likely, if not more so, that this deposit was created rather rapidly through what McCoy and Stenton (2009, 8) called 'landscaping works', carried out to create the surface on which the site's next phase would be constructed. One of Armstrong's (1930, 13) abiding impressions of the site is of the 'enormous depth of "made ground"' covering it. Much of this, he believed, accumulated or was deposited in the 18th and 19th centuries ('as indicated by the pottery and coins'), but there had also been significant interventions in the Middle Ages. Thus he suggested that, when building his castle, Thomas de Furnival 'slightly raised the whole area of his courtyard and rendered it level by the addition of considerable

material on the west and north', and that, before him, the de Lovetots 'had raised the ground in various places and partially levelled it' (Armstrong 1930, 8, 12); further evidence for this building up of the site emerged from the recording undertaken by Butcher, discussed in Chapter 5, and in the results of the 2018 evaluation, discussed in Chapter 7. Armstrong does not provide evidence (or locations) for any of this, but it is notable that the last suggestion could contradict his own argument that the layer of 'debris & humus' accumulated over decades (Armstrong 1930, 23). This constant levelling-up was a product of both the topography of the hill and (we will argue later in the book) its earlier usage, had a significant impact on the character and preservation of the archaeological remains, and could affect the ways in which the heritage of the site can be deployed in its future regeneration (see Chapters 7 and 9). It also means that, in fact, no significant amount of time need have passed between the demolition of the wooden buildings and the creation of the 'humus' layer, or between that and the building represented by the burnt layer above.

Armstrong (1929c; 1930, 12) is unequivocal in reading this thick layer of 'charcoal and wood ash', which, in places, also included 'fragments of stone crackled and burnt to a deep red tint by the action of fire', as the remains of the 'first' Sheffield Castle, built, perhaps, in the early 12th century, and destroyed by fire, supposedly, in 1266. This destruction layer is, in fact, his only evidence for the de Lovetot castle. But is it really the remains of that castle? Nothing dates the structures which burnt down to the 12th century, apart, perhaps, from the 'piece of typical "axed" masonry of early Norman character' referred to earlier (Armstrong 1929c) – but we do not know what this piece actually looked like, and it is not mentioned in Armstrong's (1930) published account. It is simply an assumption that the layer itself can be associated with any of the documented fires discussed earlier in the chapter, let alone that deriving from the actions of Johane D'Eywill in 1266. The label 'Ashes 1266' and the description 'destroyed by fire in 1266' (Himsworth 1927–42, fig. 47; Armstrong 1930, 10) mask, then, considerable uncertainty in the apparent fixity and objectivity of a date (see also Chapter 7). Continuing this text-based approach, Armstrong immediately assumed that the gatehouse towers (and therefore the courtyard buildings) were 'remnants of [the] castle which Thomas de Furnival built in 1270', the date a direct link with another text, the licence to crenellate issued to Thomas de Furnival by Henry III (Armstrong 1930, 7, 10; 1928b, 365; Gatty 1869, 48; 1873, 13; Tucker 1874, 240; Drury 1929b, 180; Butcher 1972a, 8). And, while the towers might well belong to the later 13th century, as we will see in Chapter 5 it is possible to make a case for a date early in that century. The 14th-century pottery reportedly recovered from a deposit associated with the construction of the later gatehouse might have provided us with an independent means of dating the last element in our sequence but none of the pottery in the Museums Sheffield archive could be associated with this context (see Chapter 6).

In the unpublished draft of his proposed book on the castle, Armstrong extended his text-based archaeological framework into the early modern period. In an account of the 1644 siege of Sheffield Castle by Parliamentary forces, during the English Civil War, the castle itself is described as 'strongly fortified with a broad and deep Trench of eighteen foot [5.5m] deep, and water in it, a strong [brest]-work [pallisadoed], a wall round of two yards [1.83m] thick' (Vicars 1646, 7). These details, Armstrong argued, 'were confirmed' by the excavations he oversaw. In this case it looks like the archaeology is providing the objective account against which the texts are measured. That the reverse is true, however, can be gleaned from the fact that Armstrong associated the phrase 'a strong brest-work pallisadoed' with the archaeological discovery of 'a series of stout oak "pallisadoes", which were an average of 5 feet (1.52m) in length & had their ends sharpened. These were found driven into the bottom of the moat in three parallel lines, in eschelon' (Armstrong 1929b, 2). The 'breastwork' is, of course, a *raised* fortification, and so the palisade referred to in the text can hardly be the same as, or help explain, the sharpened posts found in the moat, but Armstrong used it to explain an aspect of the archaeology he observed. The fact that he would later, in his published account, place these stakes at the beginning of the archaeological sequence as part of a Saxon defensive system highlights the uncertainty about the dating of the moat, and about the way it and its fills seem to 'float' in the sequence.

The first page of one of the manuscripts in the Museums Sheffield archive, handwritten by Armstrong, contains a list of names and dates of the great men (and some women, including Judith, widow of Waltheof, whom he thought 'appears to have been a proto Mrs. Pankhurst and stood for women's rights!') who made the history of Sheffield Castle. They provide the framework around which the subsequent draft for a lecture or book chapter was constructed (Armstrong n.d. (b)), and exemplify a core element in Armstrong's approach to writing history. While his use of specialists to extract information from the finds speaks of a 'modern' approach which few suspected existed in the 1920s (see Chapter 2), it is nevertheless clear from the foregoing discussion that the objects would only be allowed to speak within a framework structured by texts, and as the product of an historical process driven by the 'great men' of history. This is an approach which would have been very normal

in Armstrong's day, and which also informed the culture-historical approach which framed his writing of prehistory (see Chapter 2). Himsworth too, despite his instinct to seek out the 'common man', his deployment of empathy to engage with the past, and his leanings towards environmental determinism (see Chapter 2), nevertheless read the archaeological sequence at Sheffield Castle through the lens of great men. In the 'Saxons remains' we have, he argues

the Aula of the last of the local Saxon earls, Earl Waltheof ... The Conqueror ravaged the North in 1069, possibly banning [*recte* burning] this Saxon building the ashes of which came to light during recent excavations about two feet below the level of de Lovetots Castle which was destroyed by the rebellious Barons along with the town in 1266 (1937, 5; also Himsworth 1935, 8).

It is also one which has structured much subsequent understanding of the castle, and of Sheffield (for example, Hey 2010, 15–16). The new scientific dates produced as part of Wessex Archaeology's excavations in 2018 help us clarify and amend this sequence, and break the hold of 'great men' (see Chapter 7).

### Conclusion

In this chapter we have elucidated the events that led to the first and hitherto only publication of the excavations at Sheffield Castle, revealing how interwoven became the actual historical realities of the castle's architecture, with the struggles of Armstrong and Himsworth to record and make sense of what they had seen, and the demands of inter-War concerns about Sheffield's heritage. Armstrong's paper set the agenda for all future work, with even modern excavations adopting its dating horizons (e.g. Davies and Symonds 2002, 9), but it has never previously been subject to critical analysis. For the first time, we have uncovered the circumstances and set out the process by which the published account emerged, identified the documentary and cultural influences on what Armstrong (and also Himsworth in his lecture scripts and diary) wrote, and traced what he omitted. The 1930 paper has repeatedly been misunderstood and undervalued because of a failure to appreciate the recording methods employed and the intellectual and cultural contexts within which Armstrong and Himsworth were working. While the texts on which it relied are certainly important to enhancing our knowledge of what happened at Sheffield Castle from the 12th century onwards, they are also partial (in the sense that they derive from, and tend to relate to, elites), and they can serve to limit our understanding, by reducing the range of scenarios we might consider, when imposed on archaeological sequences, and that is what had happened in the 1920s. Armstrong phased the castle remains on the basis of the characters around which Sheffield's early history had been constructed – Waltheof, de Lovetot, and de Furnival. In doing so, he created a long chronology for the site, back into late Saxon times, when, given the elusiveness of Waltheof and the scanty evidence for the 'de Lovetot castle', a short chronology, and one focussed on the 13th century, is equally possible (Hunter 1819, 26; Drury 1929b, 179), if just as unlikely. As we will see in subsequent chapters, our reanalysis of the evidence from earlier excavations, and the results of those recently carried out by Wessex Archaeology, have freed us from the constraints of the historical framework, have provided us with greater chronological precision, and have thereby helped to dilute some of the agency conventionally attributed to these great men.

The prominence of Waltheof, William de Lovetot and Thomas de Furnival in the work of Armstrong and Himsworth is heightened when we consider those elite actors who are absent. By comparison with the way in which the castle is discussed in the early 21st century, Mary, 'the unfortunate Queen of Scots' (Armstrong 1930, 8), is muted here, as are the Earls of Shrewsbury and Dukes of Norfolk. This is in no small part because Armstrong and Himsworth were in search of the origins of Sheffield and its castle; theirs was a history with local horizons. In the last two chapters we have shown how the means by which the archaeological sequences were constructed were, despite the pressurised circumstances of commercial construction, not all that different from then normal archaeological practice, and have used our awareness of the theoretical and conceptual perspective within which Armstrong and Himsworth worked to 'liberate' the evidence gathered from the framework imposed upon it. For all its undoubted shortcomings, our detailed analysis reveals a valuable record of the archaeology of Sheffield castle, and a unique insight into how it was uncovered and its story unlocked.

### Bibliography

The full bibliography is available at the end of this volume, or at: <https://doi.org/10.22599/SheffieldCastle.k>.