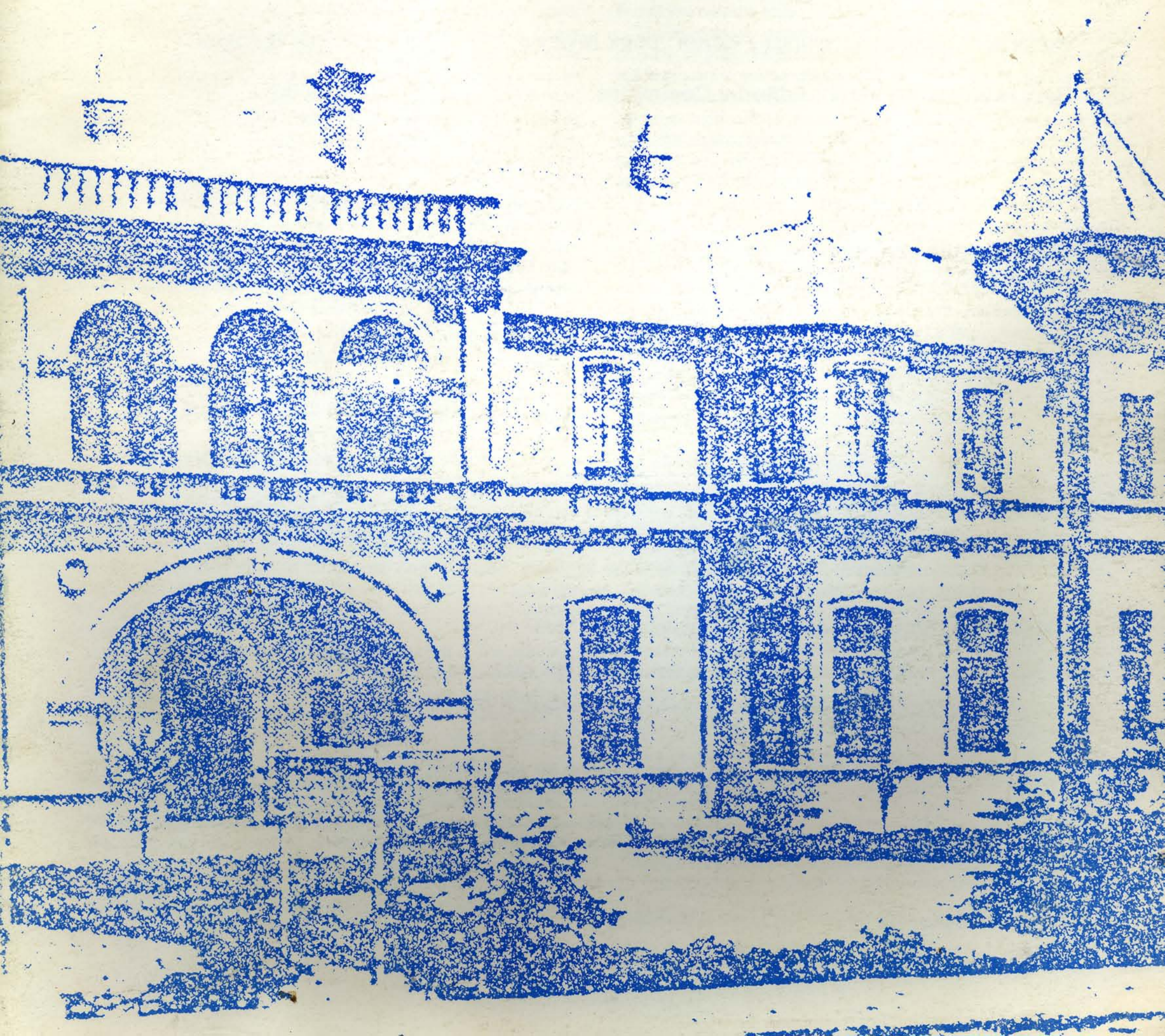


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Fortified frontier farmhouses: English precedent for the Eastern Cape

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Gefortifiseerde grensplaashuise: Engelse presedent vir die Oos-Kaap. Hierdie essay bied ter inleiding waarnemings deur die Engelse van die Oos-Kaapse landskap. Hierdeur word 'n verband met hul tuisland gesnoer. Daar word vergelykings getref tussen die grensstreek van die Oos-Kaap as betwiste gebied tussen Europese setlaar en plaaslike stamme en die grensgebied van Engeland en Skotland voor die agtiende eeu. Karakteriserende elemente is by Sephton Manor, as prototipiese voorbeeld van gefortifiseerde plaashuis in die Oos-Kaap, geïdentifiseer. Aan die hand hiervan word daar by soortgelyke voorbeelde in die grensprovinsies van Cumbria en Northumberland in Engeland besoek afgelê. 'Peles' en 'bastles' word beskryf en met dié van Sephton Manor vergelyk. Die afbrand van Sephton Manor word aangeteken.

Fortified frontier farmhouses: English precedent for the Eastern Cape. As an introduction to this essay, observations made by English settlers on the landscape of the Eastern Cape are quoted. In this way a link is forged with their homeland. The Eastern Cape, an area to become a zone of dispute and warfare between European settler and aboriginal peoples, is compared with the border frontier zone between England and Scotland in the time before the 18th century. The representative frontier farmhouses are compared in terms of those elements which distinguish the type in the Eastern Cape, using Sephton Manor as a prototypic example. The English border counties of Cumbria and Northumberland are explored with these elements in mind. Peles and bastle houses are described and illustrated. Some passing comments are made on the local farm buildings. Their defences are described and compared to Sephton, and the event of its razing by fire recorded.

Introduction

In 1995 we commemorate the bi-centenary of the First British Occupation of the Cape. The English architectural legacy is rich and varied, sometimes distinct of style but inappropriate to circumstance. Of the buildings forming part of this legacy the fortified farmhouses of the Eastern Frontier of the Cape are the most charming because of their origins and the simplicity and directness of response to the local circumstances. This essay compares those buildings with the fortified frontier farmhouses of the English border counties, built by the English under similar circumstances although distanced in time and space. Data on the farmhouses are presented as a montage of observations and quotations to illustrate similarities and differences. Drawings and photographs are used to elucidate the discussion. What is original is the conjectural reconstruction of Sephton Manor and other of the drawings. The photographs are valuable, for buildings are not static artefacts, but suffer the vagaries of weathering and the interventions of change, addition, demolition or restoration.

Background

The sense of familiarity evoked by the landscape of the Eastern Cape which the British were to settle in 1820 touched in them a nostalgic chord:

I like this part of the country very much — it is very pleasant & capital land, and all things seem to thrive well. It is like a Gentleman's Garden, decorated with clumps of all sorts of Flowering Shrubs as if they had been regularly planted, and all parts covered with the finest grass as high as your middle. I never saw in England so much good land together.¹

So writes Cypress Meser, leader of the advance Settler party of Major General Charles Campbell. Two years later George Thompson notes that he

passed the location of the late General Campbell ... The natural features of the countryside are here exceedingly beautiful, and Mrs Campbell's neatly ornamented cottage ... had a most pleasing appearance, surrounded by luxuriant woods & copses of evergreens, in the disposal of which the wanton hand of nature seemed to have rivalled the most tasteful works of art.²

Thomas Phillips writes of his journey into the Albany District in 1820: The whole scene continued lovely, repeated clumps of shrubs, the distant ground on every side appeared to be a Park, and the road was so tastefully planted out that it was in vain persuading some of the party that we were not approaching a Nobleman's residence.³

Yet this idyll was soon upset by the realities of drought, flood, and,

even more unexpectedly, the Xhosa invasion of 1835, an event which was to have consequences both on the physical circumstances of the Settlers and, even more far-reaching, on the politics of the region and of the country today.

The immediate response was to recognise a need for securing property through the provision of defensive structures. The existing buildings were in the humble yet sturdy idiom of the Georgian vernacular current in England. Besides the dwellings there were the associated utilitarian outbuildings necessary to the farmer. All these had to be upgraded against fire since some four hundred and fifty-five farmsteads had been torched in the attack.⁴ Tanned canvas or thatch roofing had to be replaced by wooden shingles or slate.

It was the seminal work of Lewcock,⁵ still the model of the type locally, which made these dwellings known. His work had stimulated an initial field investigation by Le Roux & Heystek,⁶ then lecturers in the School of Architecture, University of Pretoria. This was followed by the documentation of Barville Park, Heatherton Towers, Sephton Manor, Sidbury Park and Stoneyfield by fourth-year students in 1986,^b 1987^c and 1979,^d under the guidance of Le Roux. Barville Park and Sidbury Park have since been glamorously presented in Viney's⁶ volume on Colonial Houses, Sephton Manor is not readily accessible, and Stoneyfields is, alas, ruinous. Heatherton Towers is remotely situated and cannot be visited without prior arrangement.

The inherited sense of frontier

It was Lewcock's pregnant, if somewhat paucid, observation of Barville Park that it was of a

character so remarkably similar to the farmhouses of Cumberland and Northumberland that one is left in no doubt as to the origin of its builder, if not its owner,⁷

which focused attention on the border counties of England (Figure 1). The significance of those parts as inspiration for the fortification of the farmhouses was further underlined by Alexander's article in the supplement to the Graham's Town Journal of 20 August 1835:

In Persia the mills at a distance from the village are each provided with a tower ... 30 feet high, (like one of the ancient peel houses on the borders of England and Scotland).⁸

The idea of frontier is appropriate both to those counties and to the Eastern Cape since distinct borders were not clearly defined. Historically Hadrian's Wall came to symbolise the border zone:

It is important ... to see it as a part of a complex frontier zone ... and it remained a frontier zone into the 18th century. The Roman wall was by no means intended as an impenetrable barrier ... far from being unbreachable one of its main purposes was to control, not stop, north-south traffic.

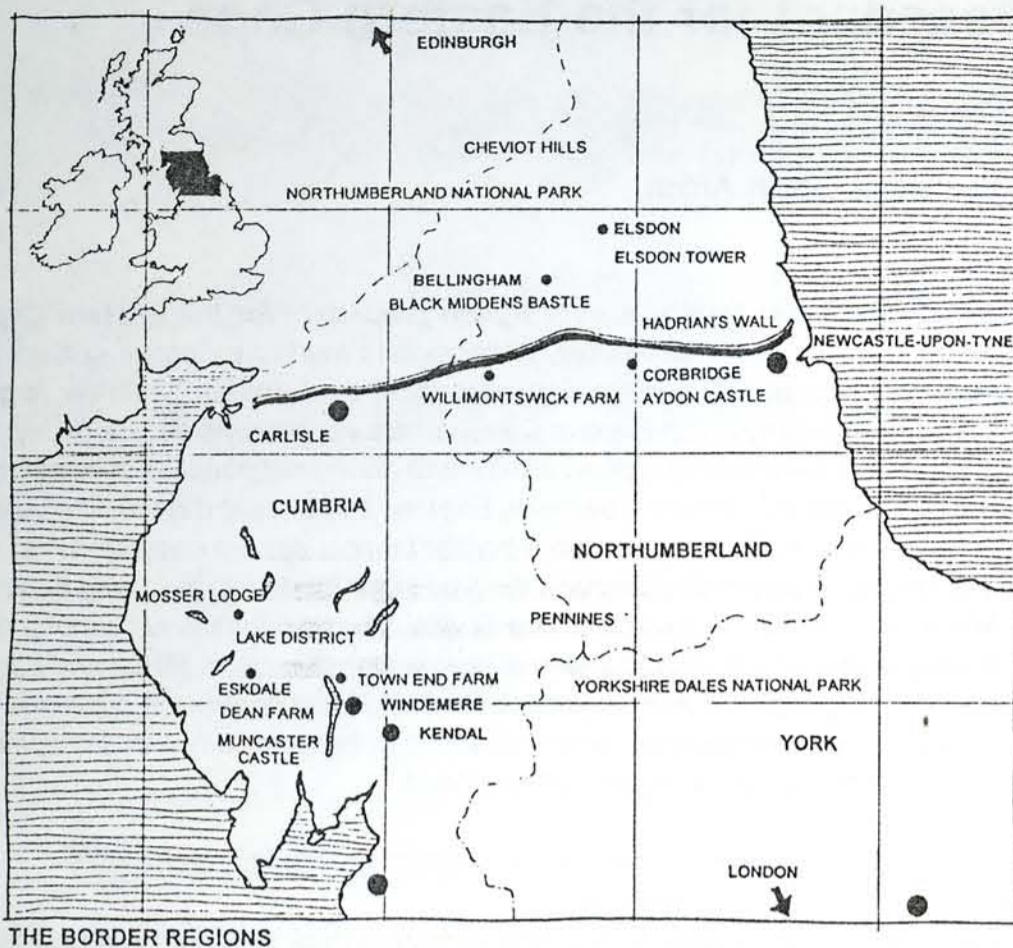


Figure 1 Map showing the English border counties of Cumbria and Northumberland with inset map of the British Isles. Places indicated are those visited.

Drawing J. Booysen

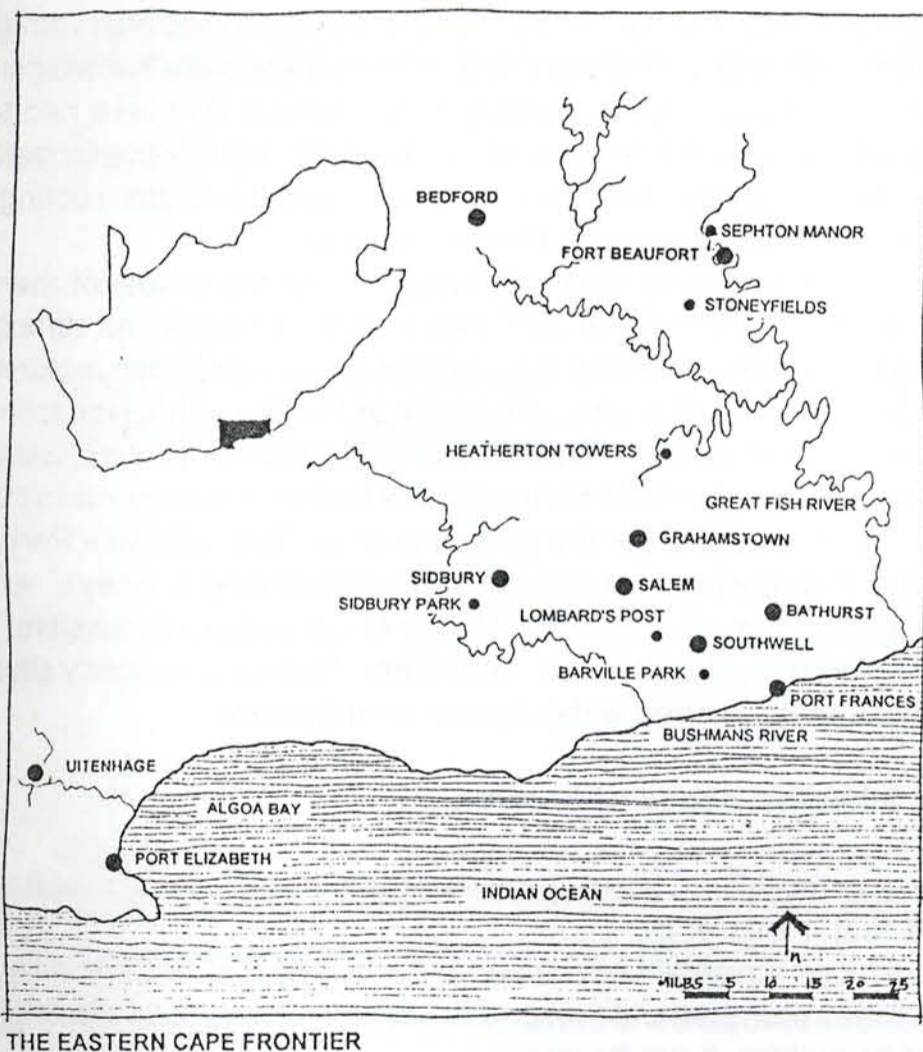


Figure 2 Map of the Eastern Cape Frontier Zone of 1835 with inset map of Southern Africa.

Drawing J. Booysen

Another function was almost certainly to divide, not exclude, native communities, in particular to put a bar between the Brigantes to the south and the Salgovae to the north.⁹

Much as the Romans, so the British too had to administer an inherited zone of contact between peoples at the Cape, although the Colony was in an expansionist phase and the idea of frontier fluid (Figure 2):

In using the term 'Eastern Cape frontier zone', [there is] no constant area in mind.¹⁰

The first defensive line to the east was erected by Van Riebeeck against the Khoi, begun in 1659, but this was soon breached by the

White settlers themselves and by the eighties of that century had become obsolete.

Initially ... most Black-White contacts occurred in the Zuurveld area and the vicinity of the Fish River, but in course of time this zone expanded northward as far as the Orange River and eastward to the Natal border. To the west, various White districts might be seen as frontier districts.¹¹

The idea of *frontier* rather than *border* with the associated type of sporadic attack by marauding bands or raiding parties determined the nature of the defences. Since in both areas the inhabitants were often dependent on their own resources the defences were of a domestic scale.

Characteristics of the fortified farmhouses

The farmhouses of the Eastern Cape derive their characteristic elements from a plan given in the illustrated letter of Gilbert published in the *Graham's Town Journal* of 10 September 1835.¹² Unfortunately the 'curiously annotated'¹³ copy (Figure 3) of the journal was discovered to be defaced. The additions to the drawing and annotations had been erased, possibly by an over-anxious novice researcher!¹⁴ While Lewcock notes that 'there is no evidence that *Sephton Manor* actually had a tower in this position'¹⁴ [that indicated on the drawing] Merriman's observation that 'a tower had been built in the middle of the house'¹⁵ would appear to prove him wrong. On the measured drawings (Figure 4) one discovers walls of thickness and size which could readily be associated with the original layout of a tower although not in the 'middle'. Since also proximate to the surrounding wall, a position suitable for the tower added to the original illustration, the walls could well be the remnant base of such a structure (Figure 5).

Since Gilbert built *Sephton Manor*^f according to the prescripts in the letter this building can be used to determine the elements which characterise the fortified farmhouse. These are as follows:

1. A defensive farmyard wall, loopholed and sometimes with corner bastions or lookout towers (Figure 6)
2. Lookout towers (Figure 7)
3. Corner bastions with loopholes attached to the main dwelling (Figure 8)
4. Loopholed lower-storey walls, shuttered on the inside (Figure 9)
5. Water well or cistern within the defensive area

With these characteristics in mind the authors undertook a brief field expedition to the border area of England in August 1991.

Tower houses and forts

The county of Cumbria or Cumberland was the first to be visited. This is the county of the Lake District and the Cumbrian mountains, both being jewels in the crown of the National Trust, since it is an area of great scenic beauty. They have the character of the vernacular — stone walls with slated saddle-roof and chimneyed gables. Yet in the pastoral calm of misty valleys and smoky heather one has to imagine a history of terror and warfare, to which the presence of remnant fortifications testifies.

The Lake District of Cumbria was home to Anglian settlers who spread from Northumberland in the east. They were joined by third generation Viking refugees who had fled across from Ireland in the ninth century.¹⁶ Their presence is vouched for in the place-names, by relics such as tall stone crosses styled with the familiar strapwork ornamentation of the Norsemen, and the living memorial of the race of Herdwick sheep endemic to the region.¹⁷ These were a fiercely independent people not conquered by the Normans for they are not recorded in the Domesday book. They were thus not subjected to the strictures of the feudal system but similarly could not call on the protection of a lord. This probably accounts for the nature and scale of the fortifications.

The tower houses (Figure 10) best serve as examples of the fortified domestic structures. Brunskill's¹⁸ field handbook of the local vernacular architecture is a fruitful guide.

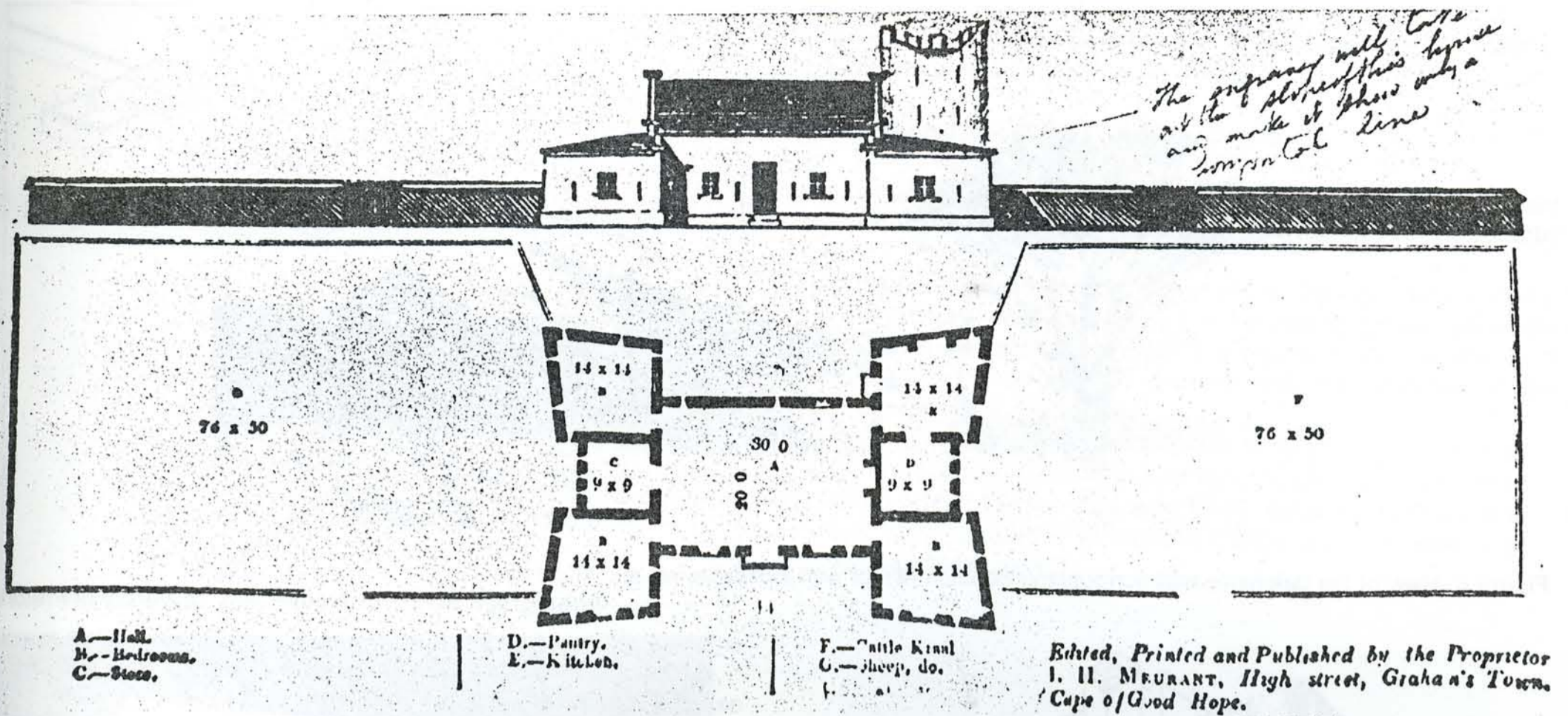


Figure 3 Copy of Gilbert's illustration in the Graham's Town Journal of 10 September 1835 showing hand-drawn pencil addition and annotations which read 'The engraver will take out the slope of this house and make it show only a horizontal line'.

No example survives intact but ... it is clear that in its complete form a tower house of several floors of domestic accommodation

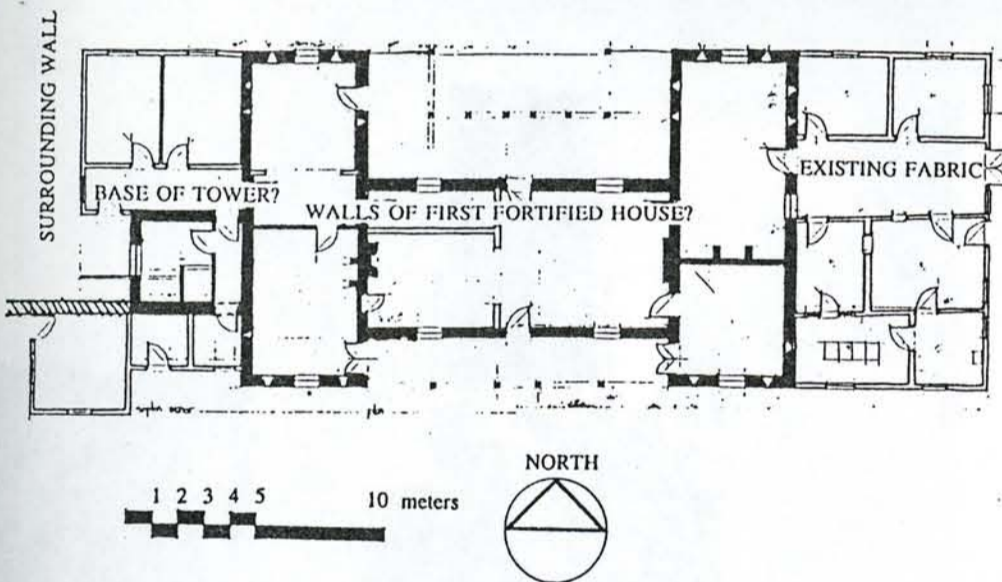


Figure 4 Measured drawing of the floor plan of Sephton Manor (1986). Drawing School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

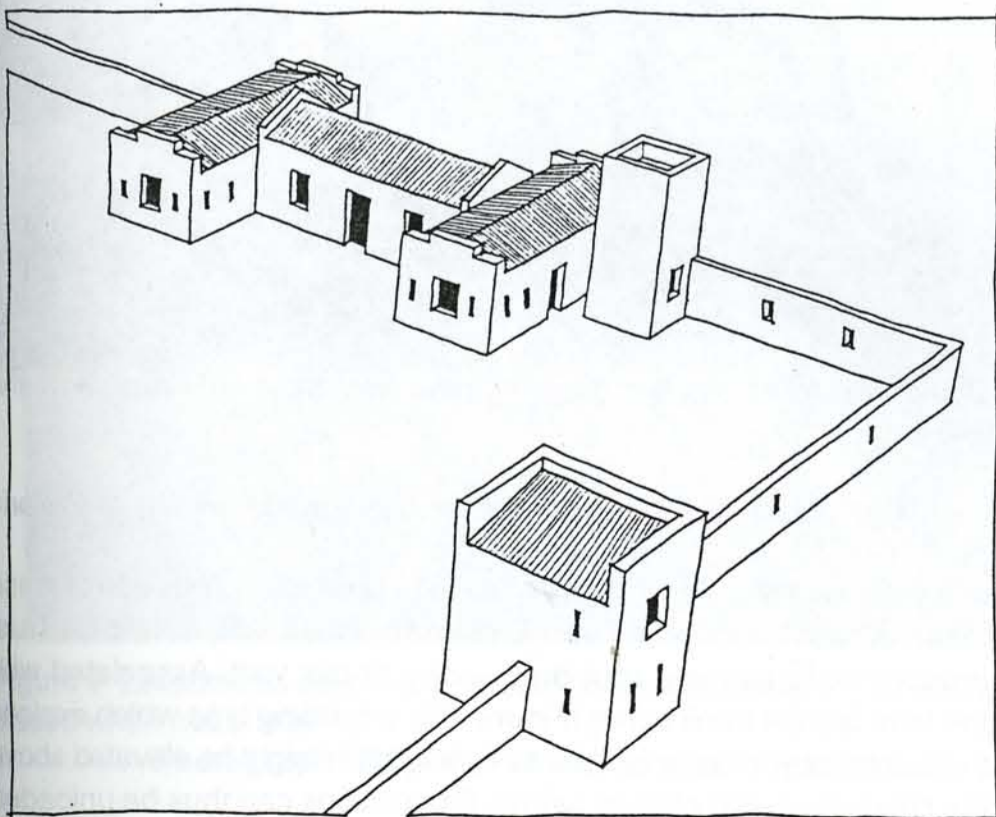


Figure 5 Reconstruction of Sephton Manor as it might have been in 1835. Drawing J. Booysen

Photograph Lewcock manuscript, Cory Library, Grahamstown

housed within walls of defensible thickness — four feet or more — underneath a battlemented parapet and set within a walled enclosure, the barmkin ... Most tower houses have been incorporated into later structures, no unaltered barmkin survives, and ... our knowledge of the defensive predecessors of these buildings depends on a few rather baffling references.

Most of the tower houses had a simple rectangular plan without projections. They were three stories in height; the ground floor was set under a low segmented barrel vault ... Some examples, especially the later ones, had a conventional timber floor ... but a fireproof ground floor would be essential for effective defence. Entrance to the first floor was usually by means of an external ladder or a stone staircase ...

The tower house was usually placed at the corner of its barmkin or defensive enclosure ...¹⁹

The term *pele*, used by Alexander in his recommendations to the governor, refers to this type although the word is a metonymy, originally used for the barmkin and later applied to the associated tower house,²⁰ the term derives from the French,²¹ which in turn derives from the Latin, *palus* being a stake or stockade.²² This suggests that the original fortifications would have been timbered structures, such as the bailey with its surrounding motte (hence moat).

The defence of tower houses would have been passive: ... the master of the house, being warned of approaching raiders, would drive his stock into the barmkin enclosure, then shut up his family and tenants behind the door and iron grille of his tower house, waiting for the raiders to leave ...²³

Two such buildings, the Gatehouse at Eskdale and Muncaster Castle, were visited. Both had been extensively added to and the existing structure much altered, thereby making it difficult to visualise them in their original state.

The Cumbrian excursion was valuable in that it provided an opportunity for discovering the vernacular building styles, particularly the style of the rural constructions. The slate-coursed rubblework of Dean Farm (Figure 11) can be compared with the random coursed ashlarwork of Stoneyfields (Figure 12). The slated roof of Mosser Lodge (Figure 13) is graded and pegged as is typical in Cumbria whereas in the Cape slated roofs would be constructed of Welsh slate imported into the Cape as ballast and fixed with galvanised shipbuilding iron-mongery (Figure 14).



Figure 6 View of the defensive wall surrounding Sephton Manor with lookout tower and loopholes.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria



Figure 7 (Left) Tower in kraal wall as seen from outside. Note loophole at side of wall for raking fire. (Right) Tower from inside of Kraal. Note the stair to the upper storey and compare with that of the bastle house (see Figure 21).

Photographs School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

Although not specifically on the itinerary the farmsteads were of interest. What would readily identify as loopholes in the Cape examples proved to be ventilation slots in most of the British cases (Figure 15). What distinguishes these, although the same in size, is the fashion in which they are constructed, left as opening in the coursing and not lined with a formed single vertical stone. The resulting irregular edge would have made them impractical as loopholes. Yet we were often led to wonder if we were not looking

at a defensive structure because of the presence and position of these features as in the case of Town End Farm, Troutbeck, a National Trust property unfortunately shut on the day of our visit. Associated with the farm are the bank barns (Figure 16), a building type which exploits the topography in order that the threshing barn might be elevated above the cow house and stables below. Grain crops can thus be unloaded from carts to the barn above, threshed and the straw then dropped as fodder to the animals below, an ingenious cybernetic solution. Field

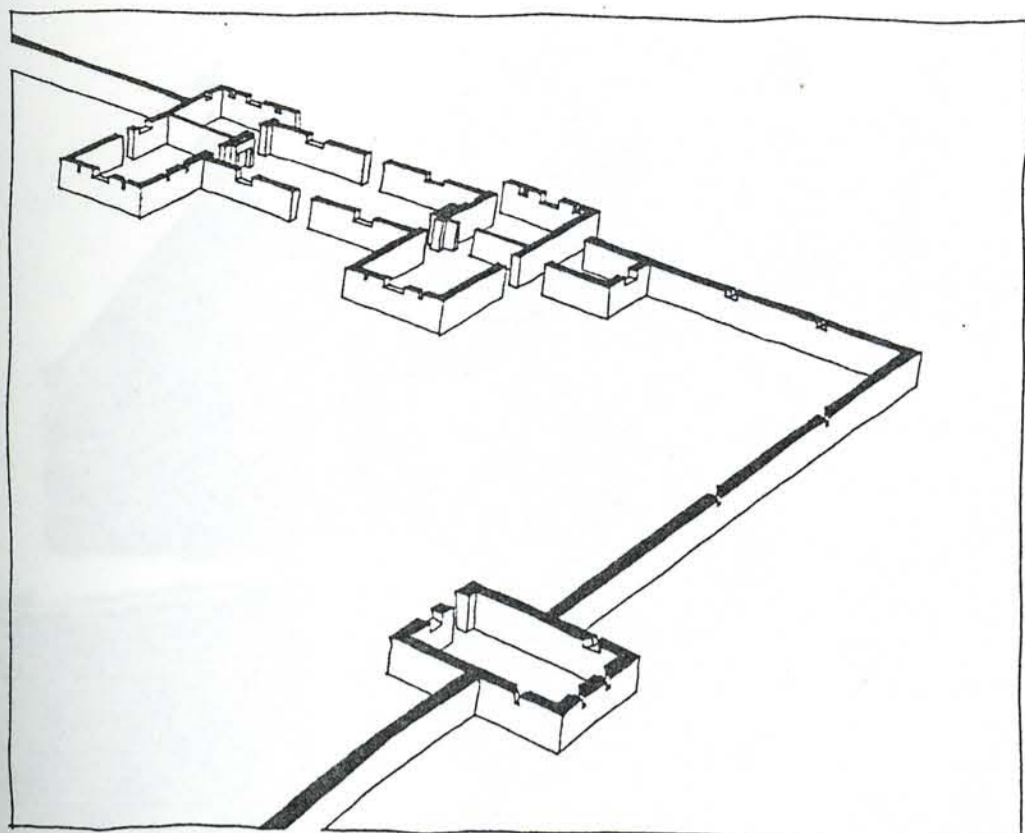


Figure 8 Cut-away plan of Sephton Manor as it might have looked. The right-hand bastion would probably also have had flanking loopholes.

Drawing J. Booysen

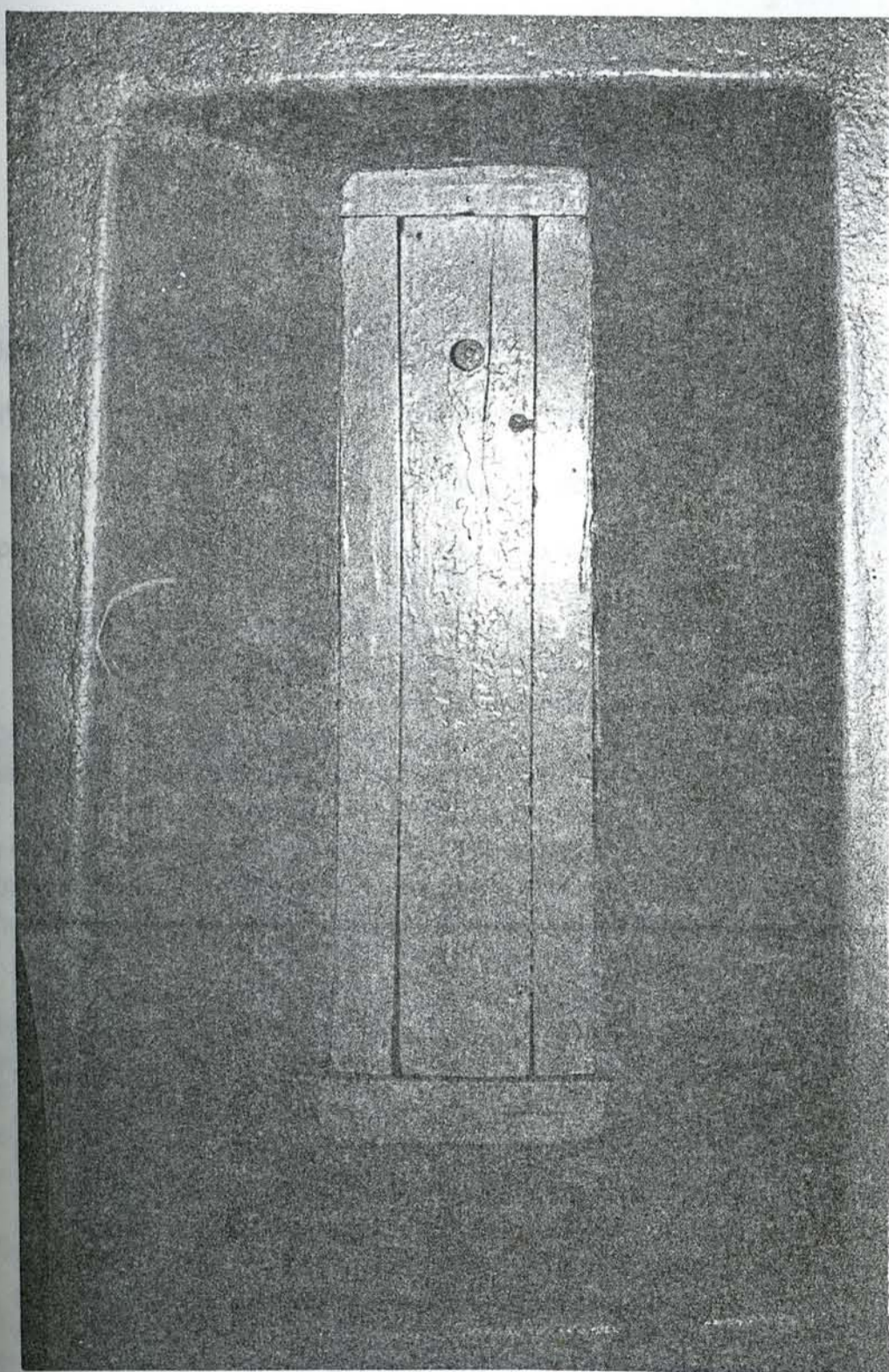


Figure 9 Loophole as seen from inside of house with timber shutter which closed when not in use.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

barns (Figure 17) operate in much the same way. Here mowings from the fields above can be swept into the upper loft and the hay fed down

to the cattle in winter.²⁴

It was in Northumberland that we discovered peles in a state of satisfactory preservation.

Peles, blockhouses and lookout towers

Unlike the landscape of Cumbria, that of Northumberland is reminiscent of the Eastern Cape, with its rolling desolate landscape and scrubby knolls.

The abandonment by the Romans of their British colonial possessions in the early fifth century for the defence of Rome against the invading Goths and Vandals left the region in the turbulence of settlement, raids and invasion, circumstances that persisted until the Norman conquest of 1066.²⁵

The settlements themselves tended to be in the wooded river valleys and took the form of scattered villages ... comprising of timbered huts. At first they avoided the deserted Roman towns and were suspicious of stone buildings and the remains of 'Roman' civilisation.²⁶

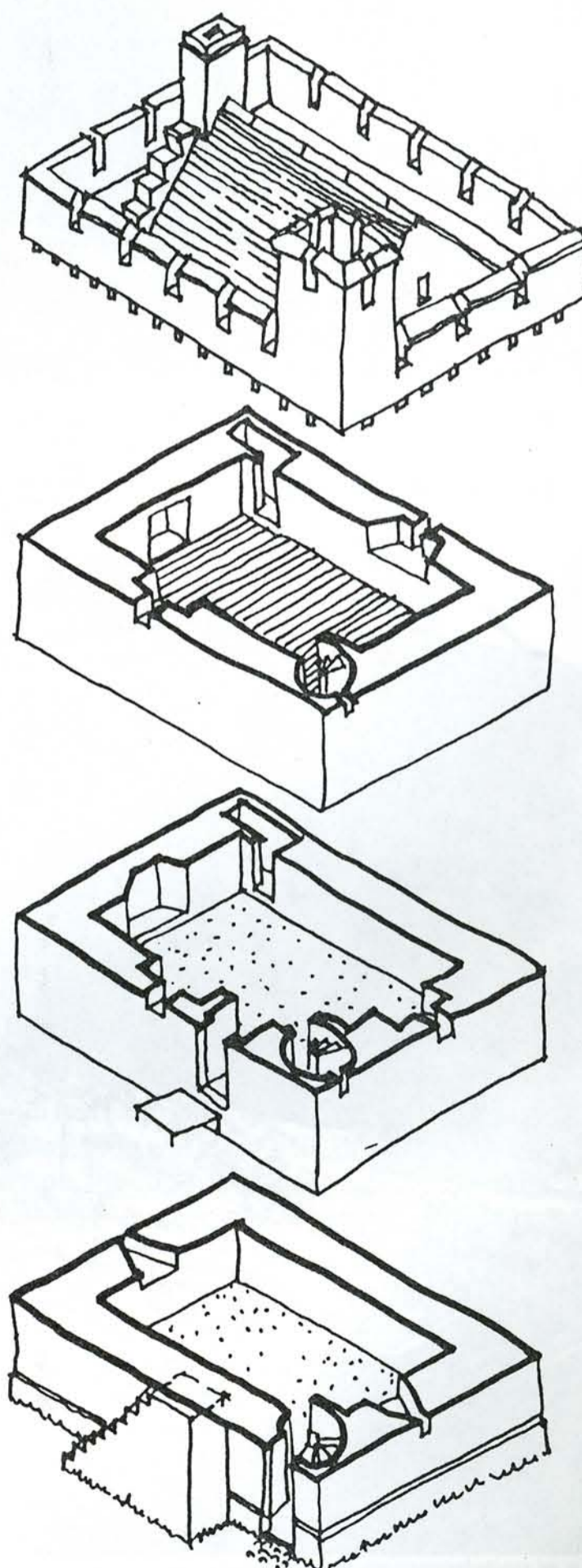


Figure 10 Representation of the tower house.

Drawing J. Booysen after Brunskill

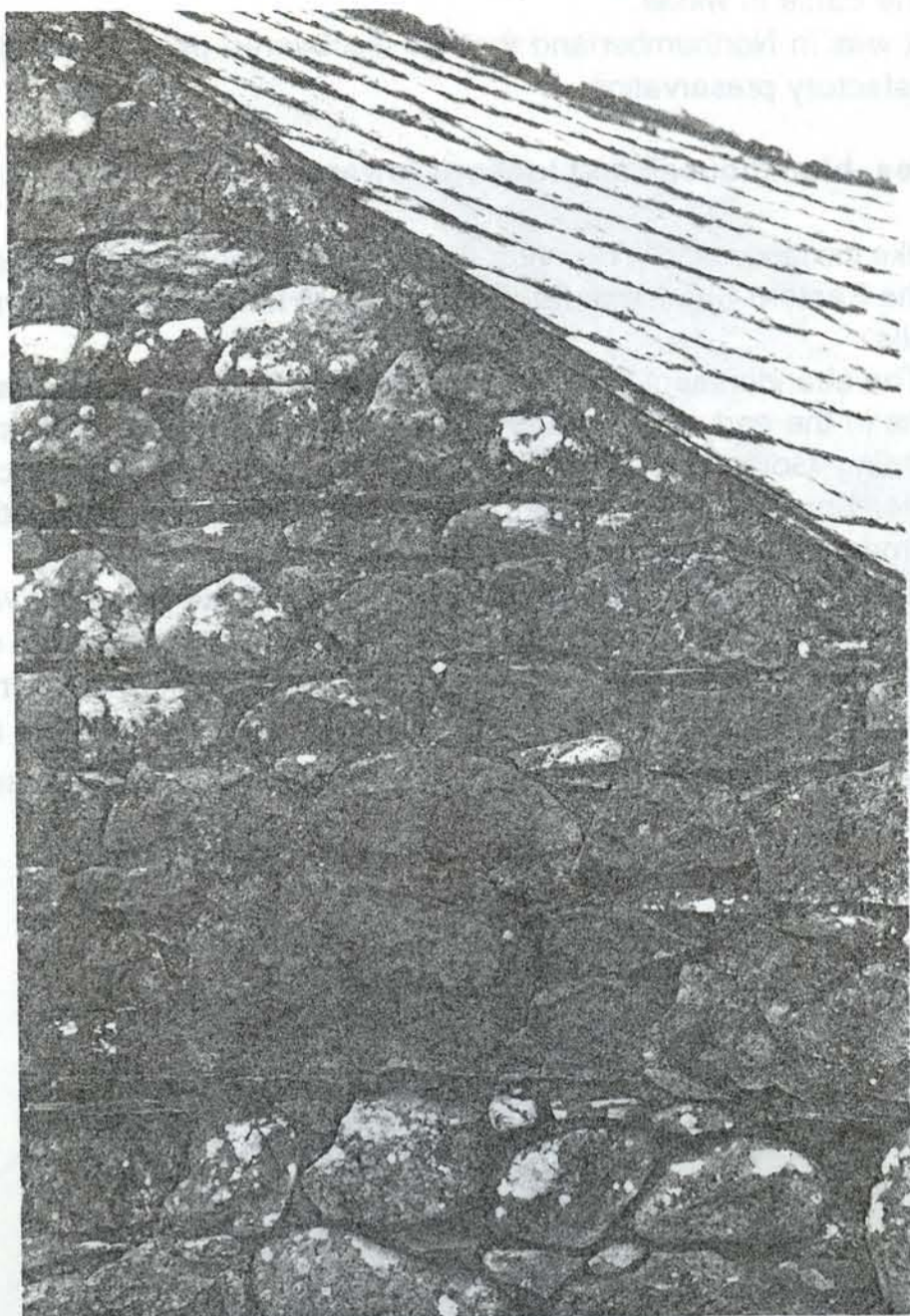


Figure 11 Slate coursed and snecked rubble of one of the barns at Dean Farm.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

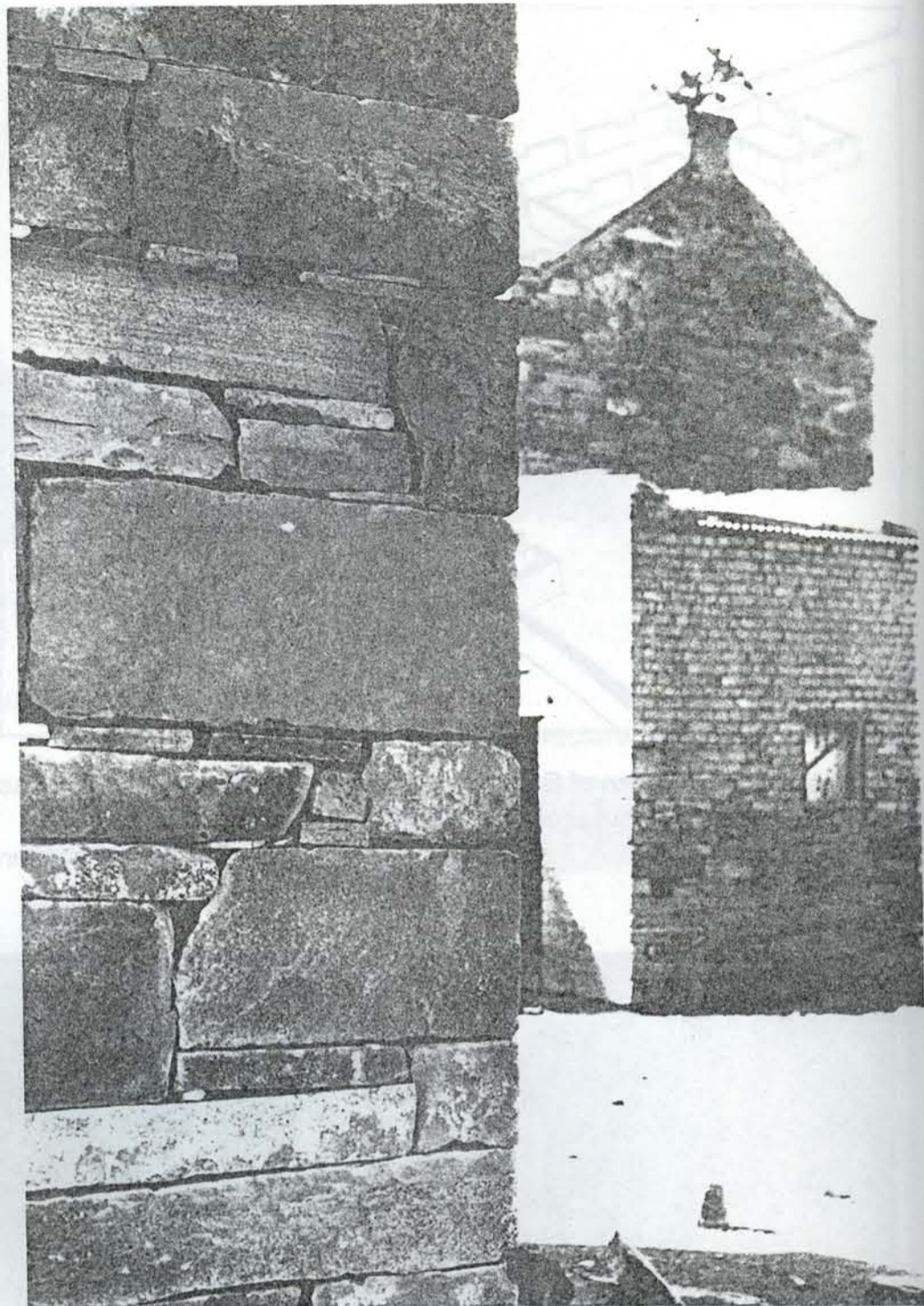


Figure 12 Dry set random coursed ashlar construction of the outbuildings at Stoneyfields.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

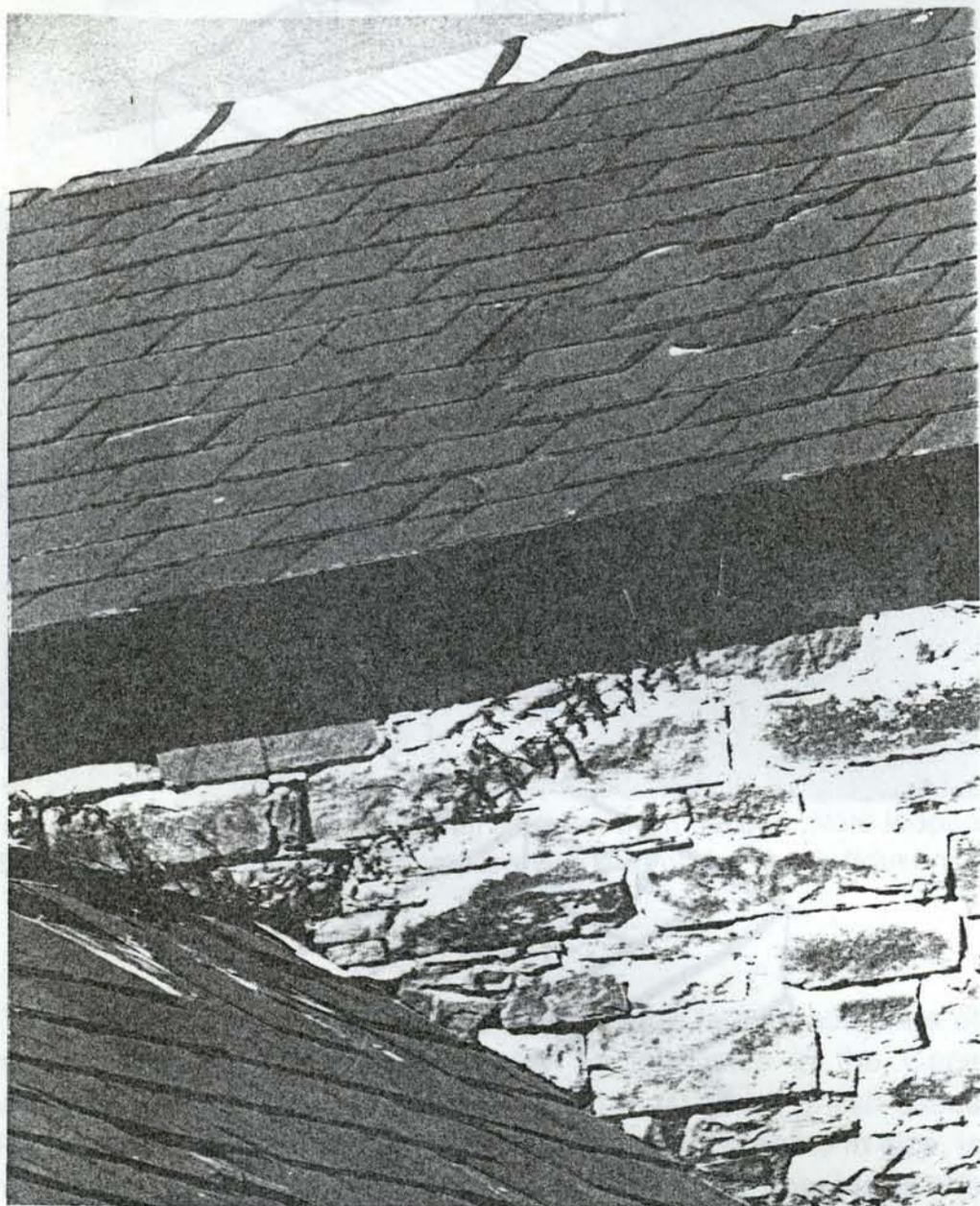


Figure 14 Welsh slated roof of Stoneyfields imported as ballast on the ships trading about the Cape in the nineteenth century.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

The minor kingdoms were consolidated under William, but the borders with Scotland remained contentious:

In the Middle Ages Northumberland was a land of castles and pele towers. The unsettled state of the border prevented the building of even modest houses.²⁷

Only when the Stuart kings of Scotland ascended the English throne in the 17th century did the rule of law prevail and were the borders secured and the defences suddenly redundant.

At Aydon Castle (Figure 18) we were to discover the romance of a Gothic setting. Perched defensively on the edge of a ravine in which the Aydon Burn flows, it evokes in its state of preservation as a property of English Heritage its rustic past:

Aydon Castle is one of the finest examples in England of a thirteenth century manor house. It was originally built as an undefended house, during a period of unusual peace in the Borders ... Unfortunately ... its building preceded a renewed outbreak of troubles in the Borders and the house had to be fortified almost immediately afterwards. Pillaged and burned by the Scots in 1315, it was seized by the British rebels two years later, and underwent frequent repairs and modifications ... The castle was converted into a farmhouse in the seventeenth century, which it remained until very recently, but despite this has survived little altered from its original state.²⁸

Here is a building that originated in circumstances very similar to those pertaining in the Eastern Cape, although built some half a millennium earlier, and which displays many of the characteristic features of domestic-scale fortification.

There is no keep at Aydon and that gives it its outstanding architectural importance as it is a very early case of a fortified house

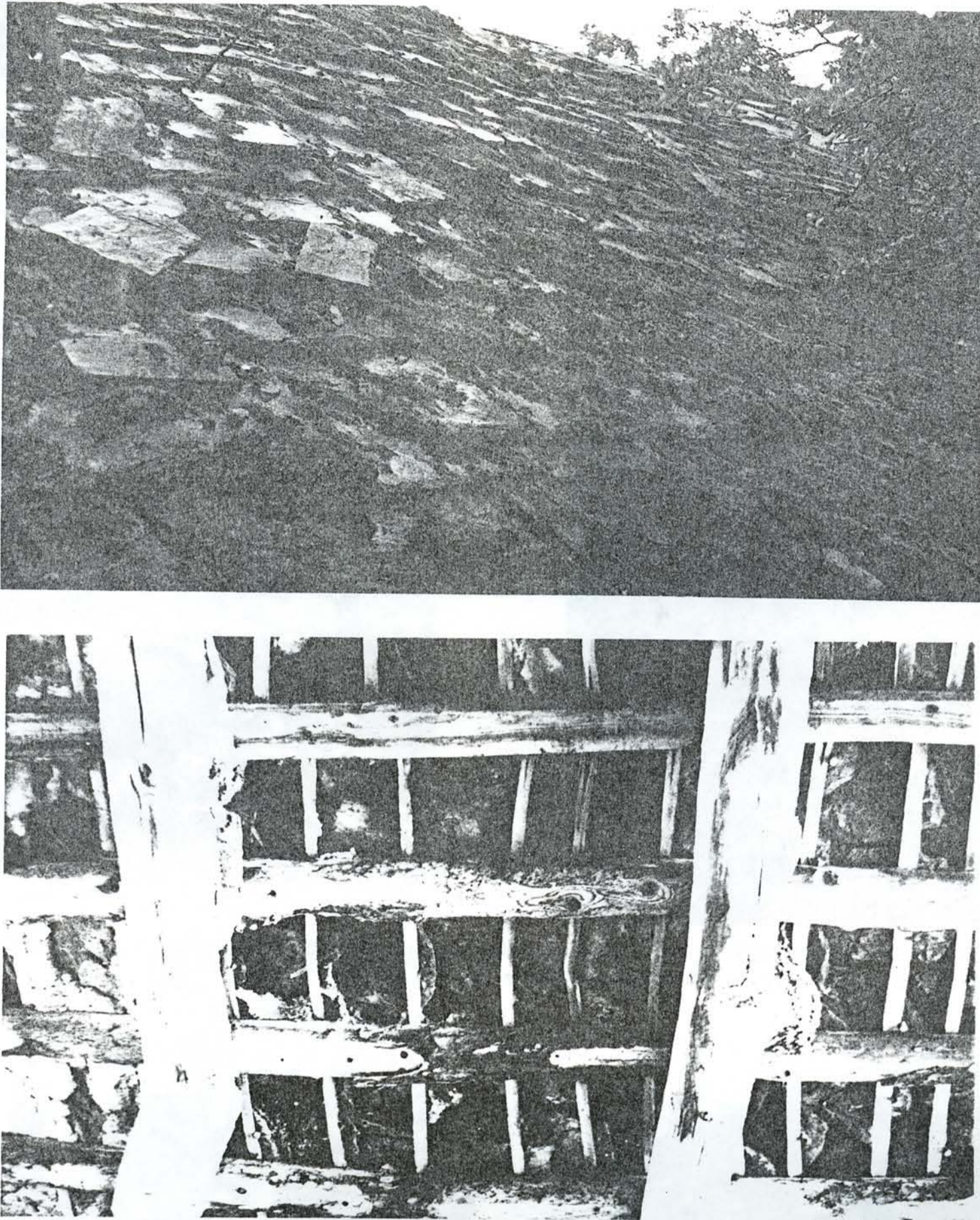


Figure 13 Wood pegged and graded slate roof tiles as seen from the outside (top) and inside (bottom) at Mosser Lodge, Cumbria.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

rather than a castle.²⁹

[As such it] represents a standard of living and social status between the pele tower and bastle house.³⁰

In Elsdon (Figure 19) there is a pele still very much in its original state which offers a clear picture of the scale and size of such buildings. The pele incorporated into the farming complex of Willimontswick Farm at Bardon Mill in its unselfconscious state of functionality and dilapidation has the sense of rural charm which one experiences when visiting the farms of the Eastern Cape (Figure 20).

Bastles and barns

We, having been alerted by Brunskill to the bastle house, were determined to see one. This was to prove no easy task. Not only was the type unfamiliar to those who manned the offices associated with historic monuments, but when we did track down an example readily accessible to the public we found that it was remote from public transport. We therefore hired a taxi at some expense since our time was limited. The money was however well spent.

Bastles show some variations, but on the whole they are

remarkably uniform and [have] several elements in common which distinguish them from peles and towers on the one hand and more conventional buildings on the other. The typical bastle is rectangular on plan with external dimensions of about 35 feet [19.5m] by 25 feet [7.5m]: it is of two storeys and has quite steeply pitched gables. The walls are built of stone in large blocks of irregular shape, the gaps between the blocks being packed with small stone chippings set in weak mortar with very little lime; they are about 4 feet [1.2m] thick on the ground floor, thinning to about 3½ feet [1.05m] at first floor level.³¹

The bastle (Figure 21) is a vernacular defensive dwelling peculiar to the region, having only recently become the focus of interest, along with the enterprises of the common man.

Although long recognised as a distinct building type the bastle has only recently received attention comparable to that devoted to tower houses. The term, still unfamiliar, refers to a two-storey elongated defensive dwelling, including provision for animals as well as their owners ... The living accommodation in a bastle house consisted of two rooms at first floor level. Entrance was from an external ladder or stone staircase into a door about



Figure 15 (left) Ventilation slot in the barn of Dean Farm, Cumbria, which might be mistaken for a loophole. (right) It however lacks the characteristic single stones at the broaching as shown by the Black Middens Bastle example.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

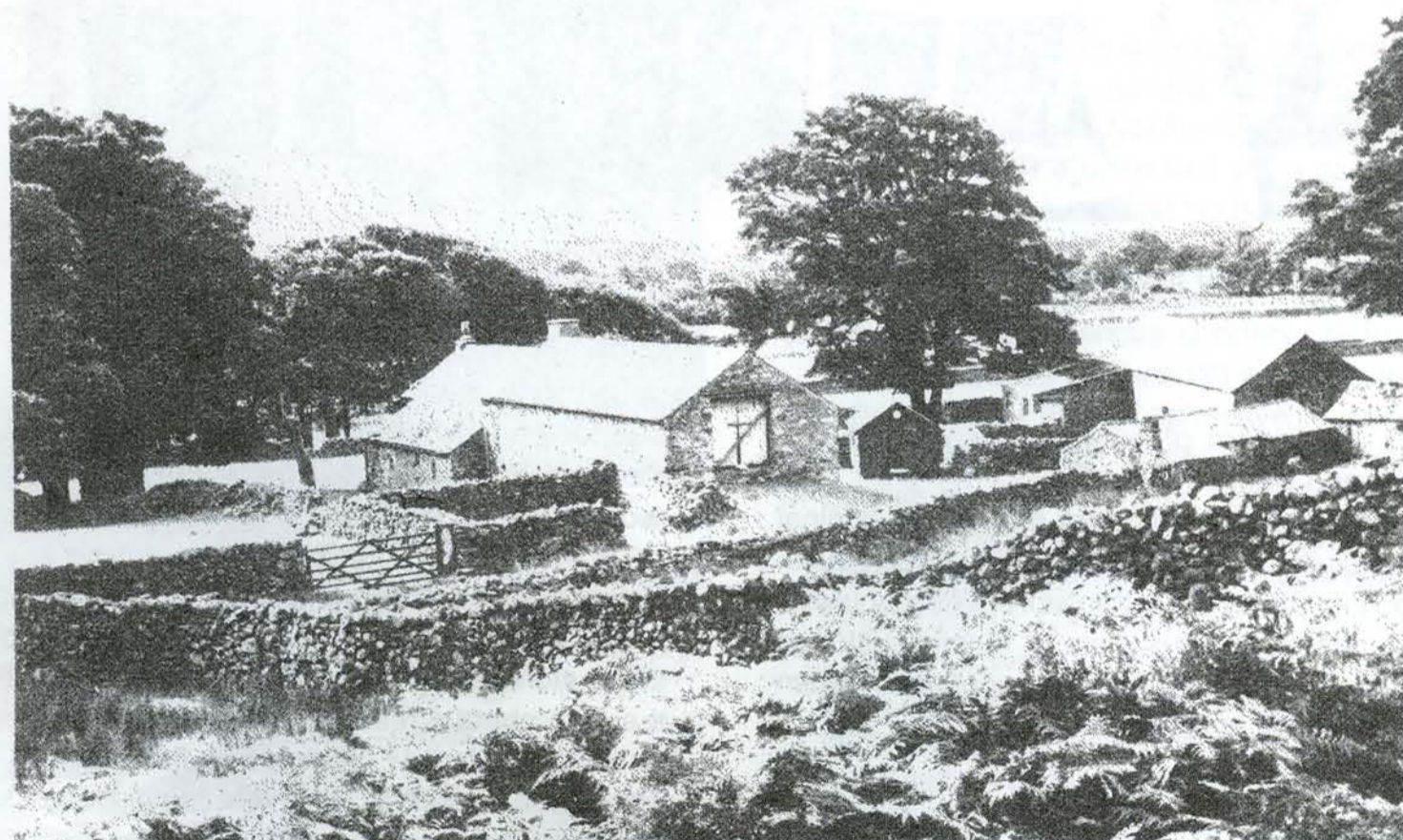


Figure 16 A bank barn in the valley of Low Greendale, Wasdale, near Seascale, Cumbria. This is of the more unusual head-loading type, whereas the flanking type is more usual.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

halfway along one of the sidewalls and so into the larger room ... The intermediate floor was usually of wood ... and ... there was no internal access between one level and another.³² [In Cumbria] No complete example survives; some are ruined, some

converted to other uses, some have been incorporated into the walls of later houses or farm buildings ...³³ a fact which elicits the wry paradox from Rowland³⁴ 'Barns have been converted into houses and houses have been converted into barns'.

We visited Black Middens Bastle (Figure 22), the first in the care of English Heritage and in the throes of being restored. It is typical, measuring 10.8m x 7.2m and having stone walls 1.2m thick. It has the characteristic stone staircase to the first floor. In the walls adjacent to the door are two small windows. The remnant crucks of the timbers which supported the now absent roof can still be seen in the walls. The size bears witness to the humbleness of the dwelling and the vulnerability of the common folk who farmed in these desolate regions.

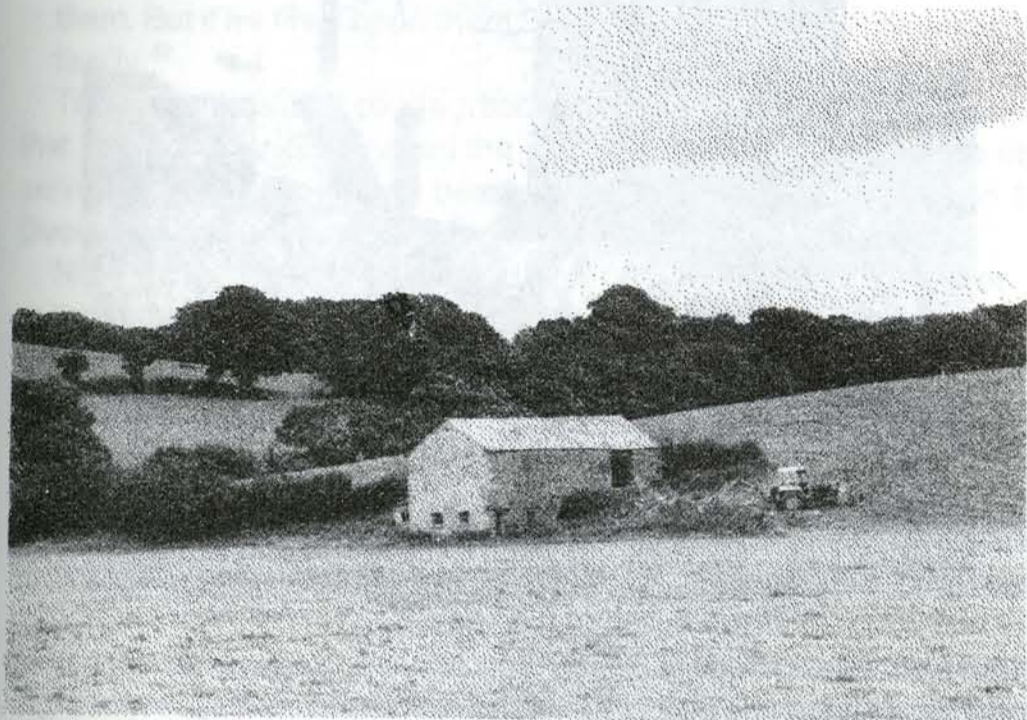


Figure 17 A field barn still in use being loaded with hay from the fields as feed for livestock tethered there in winter.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

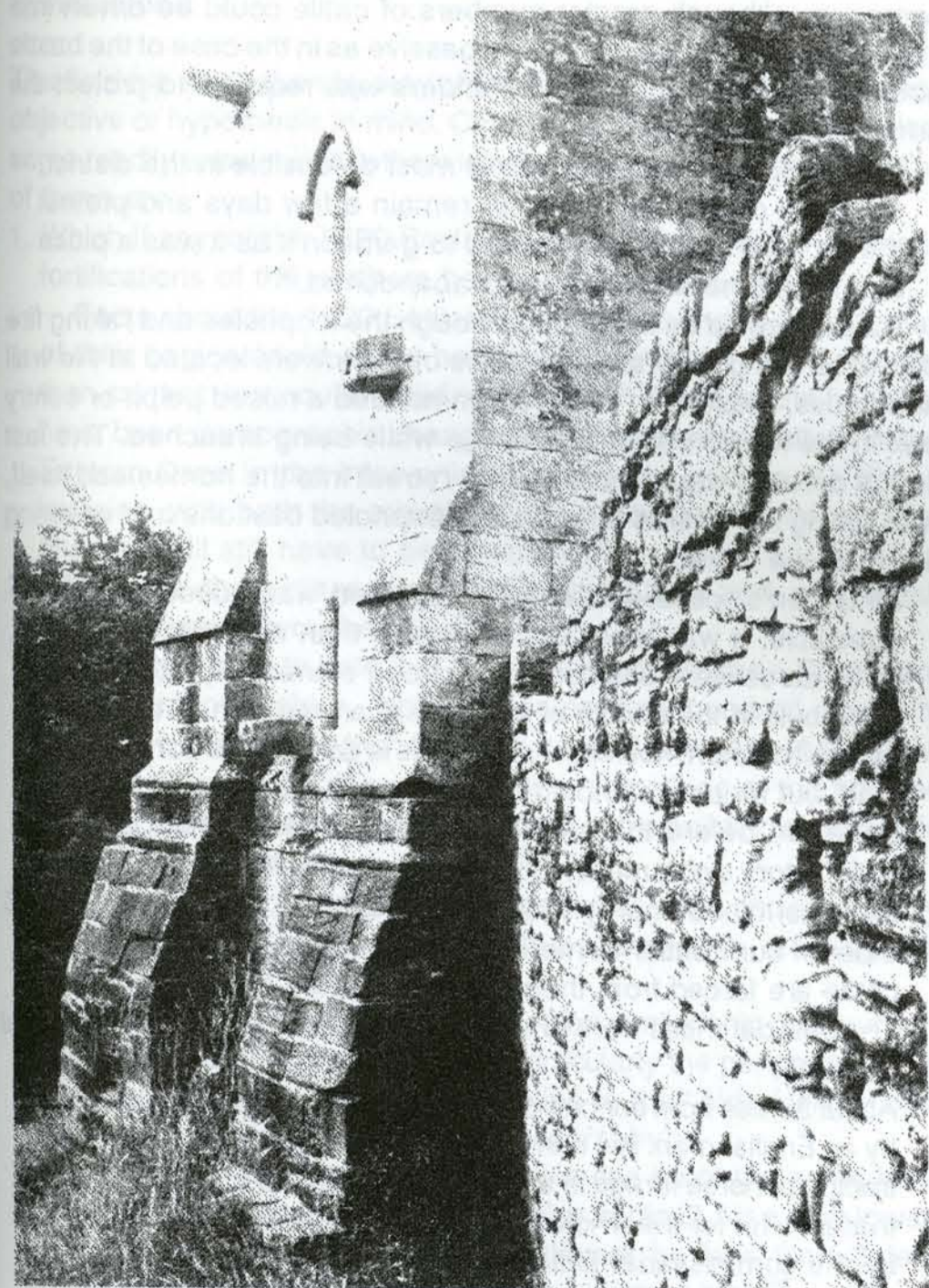


Figure 18 Aydon Castle, the buttressed lower portion of the original tower house and the adjacent pele, or walled barmkin, which would later lend its name to the entire structure.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

Once we had learned how to recognise the type it became easier to distinguish examples in their disguised form as farm buildings or their altered state as dwellings.

Defence of the bastle house was purely passive. The simple pitched roof allowed no provision for battlements or a walkway for defenders. One can only assume that at the approach of raiders animals would be shut into the ground floor. One man would

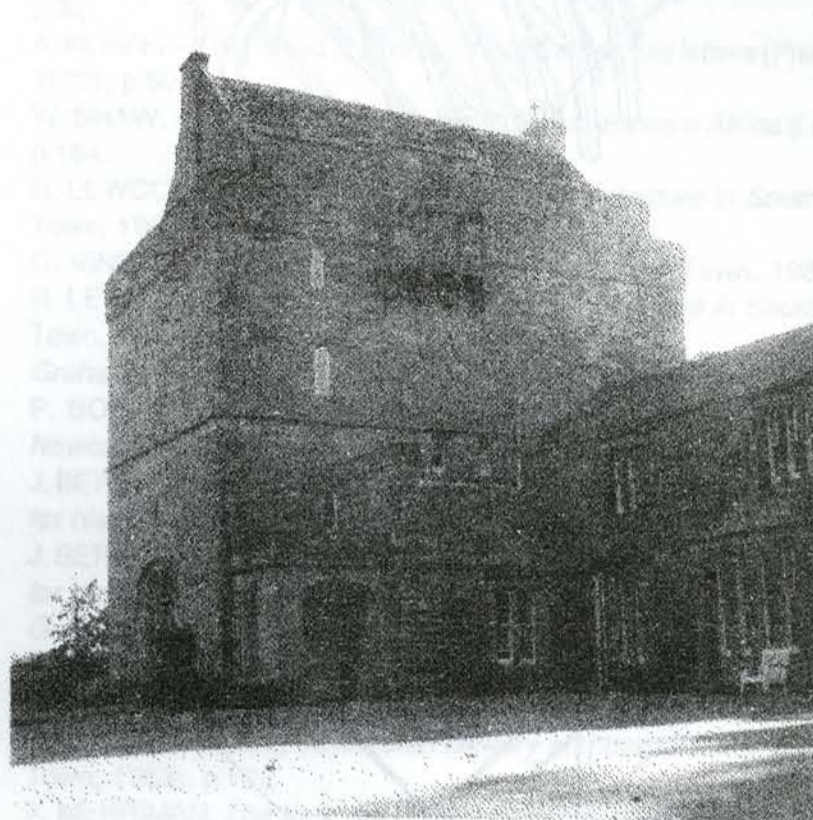


Figure 19 The tower at Elsdon still in a good state of preservation, clearly showing the characteristics of these defensive structures, viz. the small windows and parapetted roof. The original entrance would probably have been at first floor level below the strategically positioned balcony at roof level.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

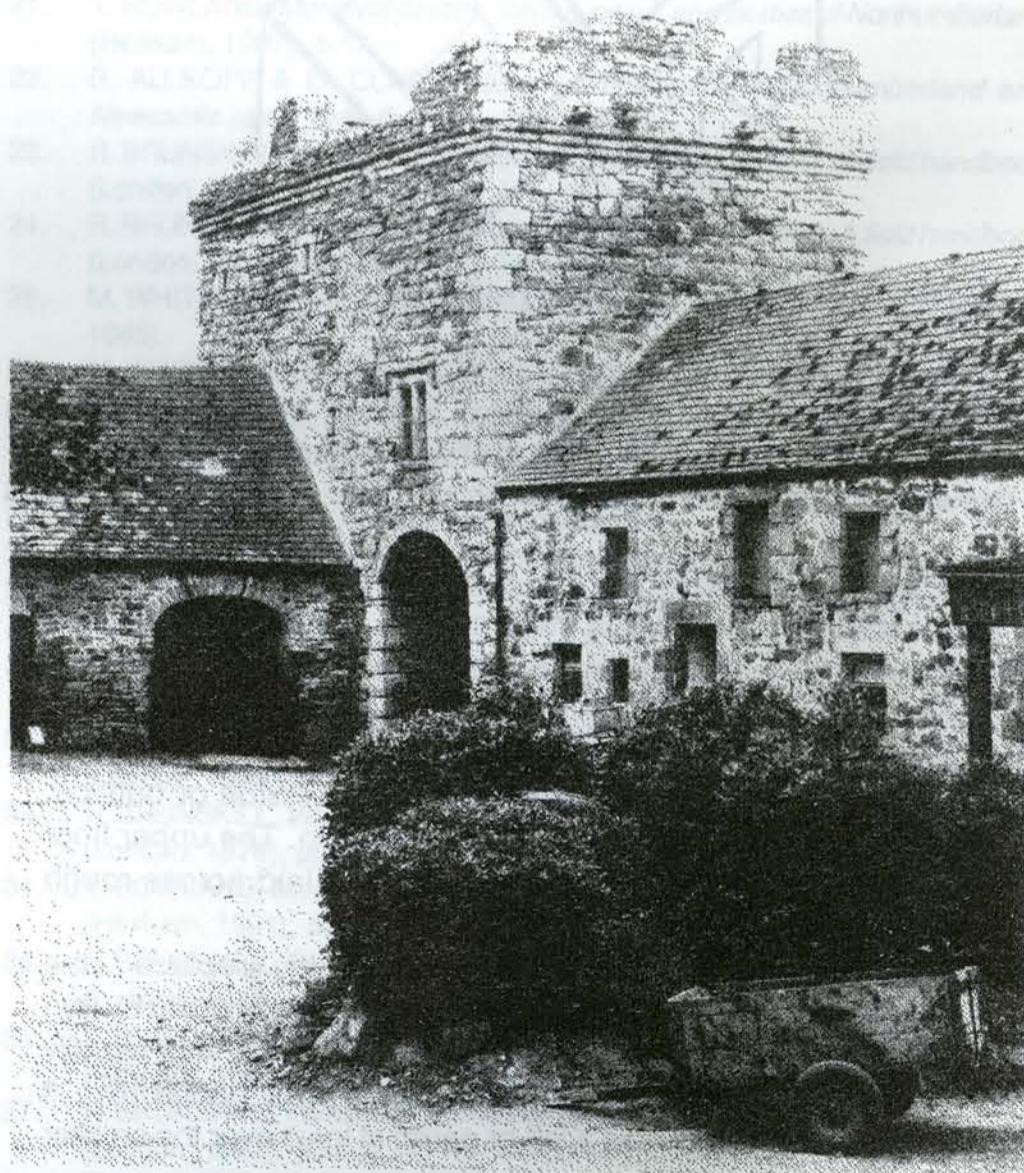


Figure 20 The now derelict tower incorporated into the farmyard structure of Willimontswick, near Haltwistle in Northumberland.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

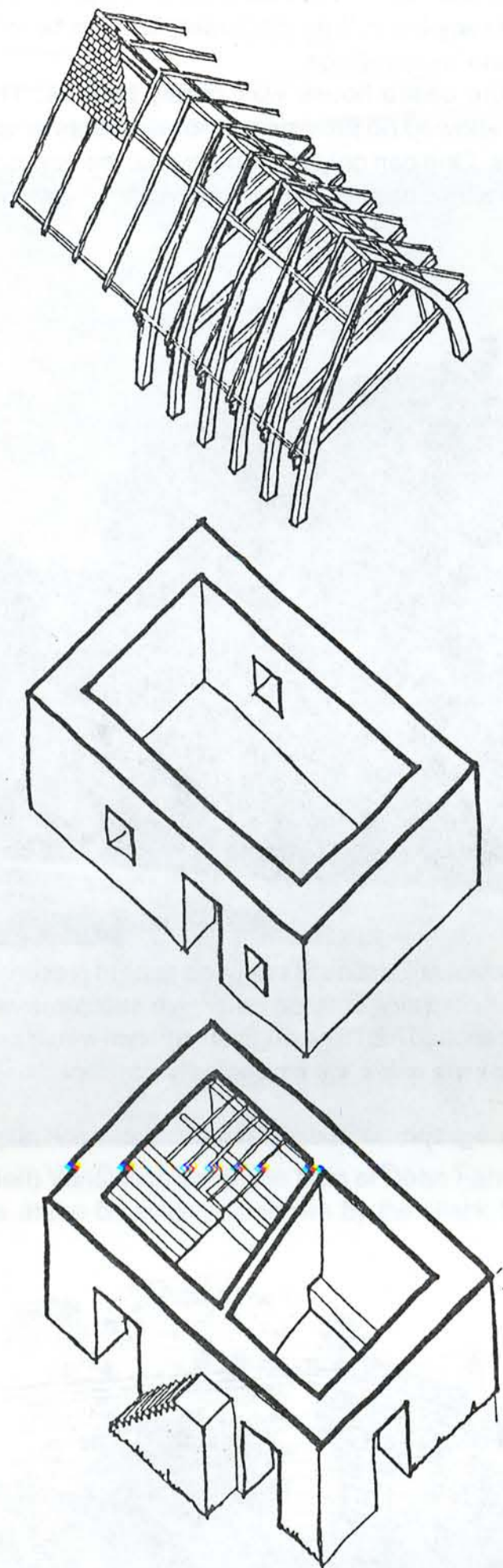


Figure 21 Diagrammatic representation of Black Middens Bastle, with speculative reconstruction of cruck roof and graded slate roof tiles.

Drawing B. de Villiers, School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

stay with them and close the drawbar; the remainder of the household would shelter in the first floor, ladder drawn up and door secured, all depending on stone walls four feet thick for protection.³⁵

Entry was through a narrow door in the gable end at ground level. Access to the upper floor might be a ladder inside or outside. Sometimes there might be a spiral stair within. The upper floor often consisted of large paving type stones laid across rough hewn timbers.³⁶

[The larger room] contained the principal or only fireplace ... the room was lit by small narrow window openings protected by iron bars. The smaller room opened off the larger and was usually unheated, serving, presumably, as the principal bedroom ... It seems likely that there was a loft or garret at least over the smaller room.³⁷

The basement of a bastle tower was not just a stable or cowshed. It would be a place for the storage of food for people and animals and also fuel. Corn would be stored for food and seed. Cattle

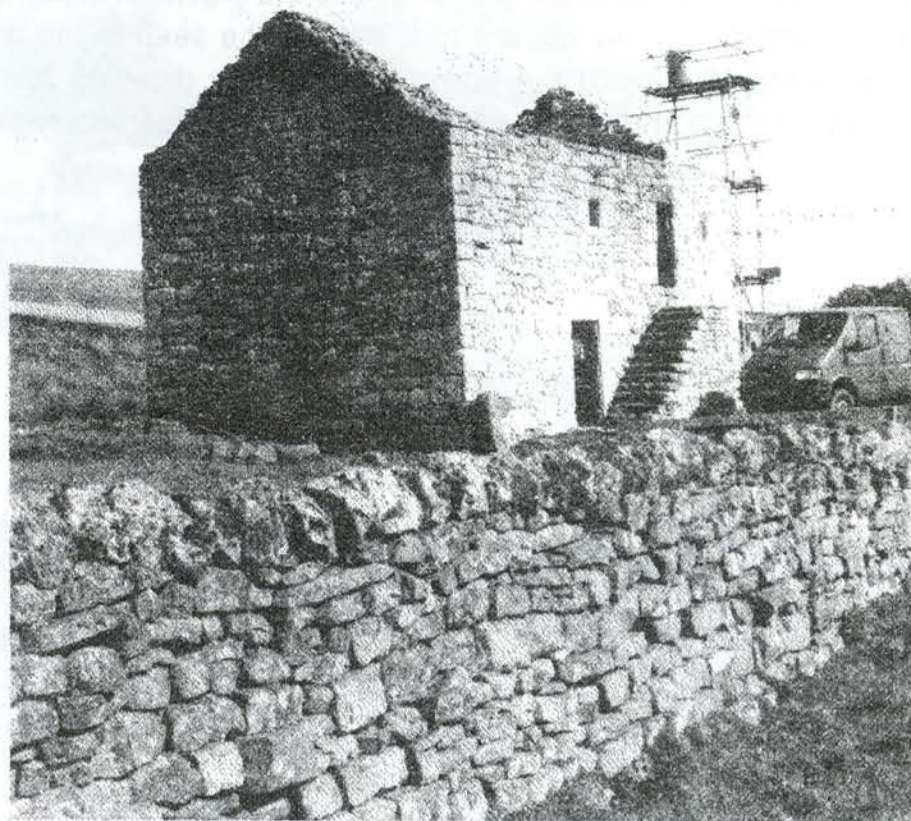


Figure 22 Black Middens Bastle, near Elsdon, Northumberland, in the process of restoration as the first in the possession of English Heritage.

Photograph School of Architecture, University of Pretoria

would be kept, but others would be killed and salted for preservation.³⁸

The defences of Sephton Manor would have operated in much the same way although greater numbers of cattle could be driven into the walled kraal. Defence was not passive as in the case of the bastle houses. A minimum of eight defenders was required to protect the homestead effectively:

The homestead was one of the most defensible in the district, so seven of us volunteered to remain a few days and protect the property until troops arrived to garrison it as it was a place that should never [have] been abandoned.³⁹

Raiders would be fired upon through the loopholes and raking fire delivered along the walls by means of the towers located at the wall and house. Alexander⁴⁰ had recommended a raised pulpit or sentry box in the kraal in the event of the walls being breached. The last line of defence would have been a retreat into the homestead itself, with raking fire offered through the loopholed bastions and covering fire from the tower.

Mr Gilbert's house, where we breakfasted, was indeed a curious spectacle. It was more like a fortress than a private dwelling; three acres were enclosed in a strong stone wall; a tower had been built in the middle of the house, armed with three pieces of small cannon, not for ornament, as is sometimes done in England, but for use; stands of arms were in the tower; a wooden barricade before the entrance. It was a melancholy, but yet satisfactory sight; melancholy for the necessity, satisfactory for the determined energy which it displayed in him as in several other of our frontier farmers, who are determined, even if their cattle are forced from them, to defend their dwellings.⁴¹

The best defences were to establish a position of trust with the local inhabitants:

About 3 miles from our camp there was a very large farm occupied by an Englishman. His name was Dell. He was the greatest contractor for horse forage in the Colony. It was reported in the camp that an offer for the whole of his stock of forage had been made by the commissariat Officer which Mr Dell refused to accept. However, this morning at daybreak he and his wife reached our camp. The Kaffirs had set fire to the whole of his property, and they barely had time to escape with their lives. Twice since we had been in camp Colonel Somerset had advised him to sell his stock and abandon the place, but Mr Dell said he felt satisfied

the Kaffirs would not molest him or his family. He employed nearly all Kaffirs about his farm and had been told by them that he and his farm would never be interfered with during the war [the 7th Frontier war of 1846], unless other tribes joined them, in which case he would receive timely notice.

But they deceived him. The warning he got this morning was from a Hottentot servant, who overheard the Kaffirs saying that a portion of their tribe was coming down to destroy the place, but would not attack Mr Dell or his family if he did not fire upon them. But if he fired upon them they would kill him and the whole family.⁴²

This describes the conflagration of Barville Park. It would seem that Sephton Manor survived the war of 1846. Merriman, whose observations have previously been cited, had breakfasted there on 16 December 1850. He appended his journal entry as follows:

NB. — This house was sacked and burnt a few days after, not by Kafirs, but by Hottentots.⁴³

Two years later a column of Highlanders who bivouacked there found the place a burned-out ruin.⁴⁴

Thus it is in this beautiful country a man may be wealthy today and a beggar tomorrow.⁴⁵

To Alexander, the author of a pamphlet which initiated the building of defensive farmhouses in the Eastern Cape, we give the final word: Forgetting bullets and assegais, I halted and gazed round continually in a silent transport of emotion and delight. Nor was it possible to refrain from breathing a fervent hope, that the period might arrive when, throughout the favoured land of the Amakosa with its heavenly climate and noble prospects, peace might dwell in its valleys ...⁴⁶

Conclusions

The field trip was taken by way of familiarisation rather than with any objective or hypothesis in mind. Certain questions do however arise, some readily answerable, others in need of thorough research. Some of these are:

1. Which if any, of the 1820 Settlers were familiar with the domestic fortifications of the northern border counties of England?

Facts about the 1820 Settlers are well documented and a map of their origins could easily be drawn up and correlated with the then current vernacular building practices. There would however have been demographic changes in the settlement pattern of the Eastern Cape in the intervening fifteen years prior to the Xhosa invasion, with both the arrival and the departure of persons. The changes will still have to be determined.

2. Who were the artisans in the Eastern Cape and with which circumstances were they familiar?

It is interesting to note that Alexander himself was a Scotsman, of Clackmannanshire, which is some one hundred and fifty kilometers from the English border.⁴⁷ It would also be useful to know more of Gilbert's origins, and discover something of the artisans working in the Eastern Cape at the time of the building of domestic scale fortifications.

3. Did the recent experiences of the Napoleonic wars, and specifically the provision of defensive structures, assist in meeting the circumstances at the Cape?

Jooste has touched on the issue of the similarity in construction of defences at the Eastern Cape, particularly the peripheral walls and loopholes. He cites the instruction in the 'Aide Memoir of a British Soldier' (not found in his bibliography):

The interior opening of the loophole can be of the same form in both these conditions [horizontal or vertical], for a man to use his musket conveniently; it should not be less than 2 feet [600mm] wide and 1 foot 6 inches [450mm] high.⁴⁸

A study of the military instruction and practice of British forces, both at war and in the Colonies might prove fruitful. Alexander's article is already indicative of the breadth of references available to the military men.⁴⁶

4. Do peoples have a subliminal cultural consciousness and recall so that similar circumstances are met with means already tried? For this question there is no easy answer, only speculative ones.

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Notes

- a. Schalk le Roux became interested in these buildings through the curriculum development for a course in the history and documentation of South African architecture, presented by himself to 2nd year students from 1983, thereafter by Marlien Heystek. They together did a field trip in January 1986.
- b. Documentation of Barville Park, Sidbury Park, Sephton Manor and Stoney Fields done in August 1986 by 4th year Design students specialising in Conservation Studies: Booyesen, Jan (University of Cape Town); Boshoff, Paul; Liebenberg, Jan; Marincowitz, Eugenie; Potgieter, Helene; Thijsse, Abraham (University of Port Elizabeth); Van der Walt, Pieter.
- c. Documentation of Lombard's Post by Jan Booyesen and Jan Moolman in August 1987.
- d. Documentation of Heatherton Towers by Jan Booyesen, Stephanus Lewis and Erich Hough in April 1989.
- e. Telephonic communication from librarian of the Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, June 1993.
- f. Jooste, N.J. in his unpublished paper *Versterkte plase in die Fort Beaufort-distrik en omgewing* submitted in partial fulfilment of a BA(Hons) degree in History at the University of Fort Hare has provided valuable references for the study of Sephton Manor.

Die wederwaardighede van Meliengo Hoi en sy liedjie

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The vicissitudes of Meliengo Hoi and his song. When Estelle van der Merwe started puppet making in the 1920s, she created, among others, a black character named Ta. The main scene enacted with Ta concerned a story in verse about a domestic servant being sent to buy some fish, but buying liquor instead, and in the end receiving a severe thrashing. The story in fact represents a version of an old Afrikaans folksong about a man called Meliengo Hoi, but—as has been the fate of the majority of these songs—it is nowadays virtually unknown. Yet it must have been quite popular during the early part of the century as versions were recorded in the Cape, the Free State and the Transvaal. As has happened with numerous folksongs, 'Meliengo Hoi' served as the basis for a new, in this instance satirical, script. It concerned the capers of Mr Vittorio Carpio who, as Chairman of the United Nations' Special Committee for South West Africa, visited the region in 1962, and was eventually signatory to a very favourable report. When a furore broke out, he claimed that his coffee had been poisoned and that he consequently did not grasp the contents of the communique. Rumour had it that in truth he had become too fond of South Africa's KWV brandy. Estelle van der Merwe immediately created a puppet called Carpio and she adopted Ta's script for him to enact. The song about 'Maliengo Hoi' faded further and further into oblivion. When in 1987 a newspaper reader enquired about someone he vaguely remembered called 'Maliengkahoi', the response was that 'she' was identified as some or other girl or woman, perhaps even a vicious British queen of yore.

Die wederwaardighede van Meliengo Hoi en sy liedjie. Toe Estelle van der Merwe in die twintigerjare begin het om marionette te maak, het sy onder meer die swart karakter Ta geskep. Hierdie Ta het blykbaar die rol van die harlekyn vertolk en was as lomperd en dommerd die skyf vir die gehoor se humoristiese en onskuldige skimpe. Die hooftoneel waarin Ta opgetree het, was 'n verhaal in versvorm omtrent 'n manlike huishulp wat gestuur word om vis te gaan koop, maar in plaas daarvan koop hy drank, en op die ou end kry hy 'n deeglike pak slaai. Hierdie verhaal is gebaseer op 'n ou Afrikaanse volkslied oor 'n man genaamd Meliengo Hoi, maar—soos dit met die meeste van hierdie ou liedere die geval is—dit is vandag feitlik onbekend. Tog moes dit gedurende die eerste dekades van die eeu taamlik gewild gewees het, want variante is in die Kaap, die Vrystaat en Transvaal opgeteken. Soos met talle volksliedere gebeur, het 'Meliengo Hoi' ook as inspirasie gedien vir 'n nuwe, in hierdie geval satiriese, teks. Dit handel oor die manewales van mnr Vittorio Carpio wat, as voorsitter van die Verenigde Nasies se Komitee insake Suidwes-Afrika, die gebied in 1962 besoek het, en op die ou end het hy 'n baie gunstige verslag medeonderteken. Die verslag het 'n hele opskudding veroorsaak, waarop mnr Carpio beweer het dat sy koffie vergiftig is en hy nie die inhoud van die verklaring ordentlik begryp het nie. Volgens gerugte het hy egter eerder te lief geraak vir Suid-Afrika se KWV-brandewyn. Estelle van der Merwe het dadelik 'n marionet genaamd Carpio geskep en Ta se teks vir hom aangepas. Die lied oor 'Meliengo Hoi' het algaande feitlik totaal vergete geraak. Toe 'n koerantleser in 1987 navraag doen omtrent iemand genaamd 'Maliengkahoi' wat hy nog vaagweg onthou het, is 'sy' op die ou end as die een of ander meisie of vrou geïdentifiseer, moontlik selfs 'n boosaardige Britse koningin van lank gelede.

'n Insiggewende kort studie, *Estelle van der Merwe's marionettes*, vestig die aandag op 'n eens gewilde volksliedkarakter, asook op verskeie tendense rakende die volkslied. Die studie is deur Wieke van Delen van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kultuurhistoriese Museum in Kaapstad gedoen en handel oor een van die pioniers van die poppeteater in Suid-Afrika, Estelle van der Merwe, wat, gebore in 1906, reeds in die twintigerjare self marionette begin maak het.¹

Afgesien van sprokiekarakters soos Jan en die Reus (uit die verhaal 'Jan en die boontjierank') stel Estelle van der Merwe in die dertigerjare verskeie politieke figure soos genls. J.B.M. Hertzog en J.C. Smuts asook die Duitse diktator Adolf Hitler in haar teater voor. Daarbenewens gee sy gestalte aan 'volkskarakters', geskep deur die tekenaar T.O. Honiball, wat destyds gewild begin raak het, naamlik oom Kaspas, Nefie en ta' Engeltjie asook Dirk Mostert se oom Bart en tant Soesen.² 'n Volkome nuutskepping is die swart marionet genaamd Ta. Van Delen stel dit soos volg:

A lovable barefoot black puppet, with the name Ta written on

his controls, forms a separate unit in the collection. Ta seems to have acquired the role of buffoon, becoming the butt of the audience's humorous and innocent disparagement of the clumsy and the slow-witted.³

Dit is hierdie Ta wat die hoofkarakter word in die uitbeelding van 'n toneeltekst wat sy wortels in die Afrikaanse volkslied het. Om as 'n latere vergelykingsbasis te dien, word Estelle van der Merwe se teks hier weergegee presies soos sy dit geskryf het:⁴

1. Eendag ek looppe daar by die straat
Die ounooi hy was baie kwaad
'Jy moet gou by die wenkel loop
Jy moet vir my die ves gaan koop'

Refrein:

Die ounooi is baie kwaai
Hy maak die tamaai lawaai (Alles 2X)