

Appendix 4

Notes on Colchester keep

Plan of the keep

Twentieth century plans of the castle 'tend to show only the surviving remains of the structure and there is a need for a series of drawings which illustrate as many of the original features as can be reconstructed from available sources. The purpose of these notes, therefore, is to attempt such a series. The plans in Figure 67 are based on RCHM 1922, 52, although like all the other published plans those of the RCHM contain minor discrepancies which can only be eradicated by a fresh survey.

Features restored are numbered in Figure 67 and the sources used listed below beside the appropriate number. The area west of the crypt and chapel could not be reconstructed satisfactorily as there is not sufficient information.

- 1 Buckler 1876, 32.
- 2-3 From Nelson's plan of the castle in 1704 illustrated in Buckler 1876, 46-9.
- 4-5 Buckler 1876, 14.
- 6 As 2 and 3 above; Jenkins 1869, 60; the upper part still survives.
- 7-8 Nelson's plan in Buckler 1876, 49. The upper part of no 7 still survives.
- 9-11 Nelson shows these as three niches in the internal face of the wall. No 11 was not a niche but, according to the engraving made in 1732 of the southern elevation of the keep (illustrated in Buckler 1876, 43), was a window of c 17th century date and therefore Nelson is unlikely to have seen any niche there. It is suggested therefore that no 9 was originally a loop window which was subsequently enlarged. No 10 is shown here as a niche but the possibility that it was a fireplace or the gap left in 1683 from the demolition of a north-south wall cannot be ruled out. No blocked window at no 10 is visible from the outside.
- 12-13 Buckler 1876, 56; the latrine chutes are still visible.
- 14-16 Bases of the window (no 14), small room (no 15), and southern gallery (no 16) are still visible and easily accessible.
- 17 Base of the apse and apsidal side-chapel shown in RCHM 1922, 54.
- 18 Northern jamb of the window still survives.

The plan of the second floor is based on Cutts 1853, pl 3 with additional material from Buckler 1876, 39 and the evidence listed under nos 14-18 above. With the exception of the north-west tower, not enough of the second floor survived the demolition operations of 1683 to enable restoration of the windows, latrines, etc. The arcade of the chapel is reconstructed by taking into account the positions of the vaults below (shown dotted) and the responds of the apse illustrated in RCHM 1922, 54.

By analogy with the White Tower, the position of the chapel in Colchester keep implies the previous existence of a third floor of which there is now no trace.

A gap (not shown here) in the north wall left by the demolition of the western internal north-south wall is illustrated by Buckler 1876, 32 & 35 where, to judge by the scar visible today, the gap is drawn as being too

narrow. In Buckler 1876 the gap is shown at first-floor level suggesting that the demolished wall rose the full height of the keep.

Some points of detail

(a) The original entrance to the crypt was through its west wall (Jenkins 1869, 59-61). This is still partly visible behind a museum case.

(b) The present entrance to the keep seems to be a later insertion. Professor Zarnecki has kindly indicated that in his view a date for the door of c 1100 would be most appropriate. He stated that the mouldings and capitals are late 11th century and compare well with the work of Bishop Remigius at Lincoln, c 1092. The adjacent landing however seems to be of one build with the plinth but is markedly narrower than the doorway. The implication is therefore that the present doorway replaced an earlier entrance similar in size to that in the north wall. The level at which the original doorway was sited cannot be determined with any degree of certainty but the adjacent tower does not appear to have been rebuilt or show convincing signs of the landing having been lowered so that on balance the original doorway may well have been at ground-floor rather than first-floor level. If this is correct then the inserted door must have been designed to provide an entrance which was of greater width and which incorporated a portcullis. If, as is generally now accepted, the raising of the keep was stopped at the base of the first floor for temporary crenellations (RCHM 1922, 51; Renn 1968, 151) then a doorway in this position (ie at the ground floor) would have provided access into the early keep.

(c) It is possible that the inserted doorway could be contemporary with the second phase of the keep (ie from the first-floor crenellations upwards) since its portcullis appears to be an integral part of the second-floor wall. In this case, the inserted door would provide a *terminus ante quem* of c 1100 for the building of the crenellations, a date which is consistent with Renn's suggestion of 1086-7 for the latter (p 00). The buildings in the bailey (pp 67-9), including the chapel, presumably belong to this period, ie between c 1075 when building works started (p 30) and c 1100 or later when the keep was completed.

(d) The western internal north-south wall is likely to have been arcaded because (i) the absence of a scar on the lower 2m of the internal face of the main north wall is consistent with an arcade and (ii) because the presence of an arcade would explain why a wall of such thickness could be demolished so thoroughly when others of lesser width were not.

(e) The windows on the second floor were not of the 'loop' variety but were wider.

(f) From the first-floor level upwards, the eastern internal north-south wall is inserted. The butt-joint is quite clear at the northern end of the wall but not distinct at the southern end. The position of the windows in the north wall suggests that a north-south partition was always intended here.

(g) The chapel as reconstructed in Figure 67 was very similar to that in the White Tower. The internal dimensions are close to those of the White Tower and the number of bays the same. The main difference lies in the positions of the entrances.

(h) The similarity between Colchester keep and the White Tower is more apparent as a result of the reconstruction of the chapel. An important difference, however, is the occurrence at Colchester of a gallery at second-floor level within the thickness of the keep's outer walls.

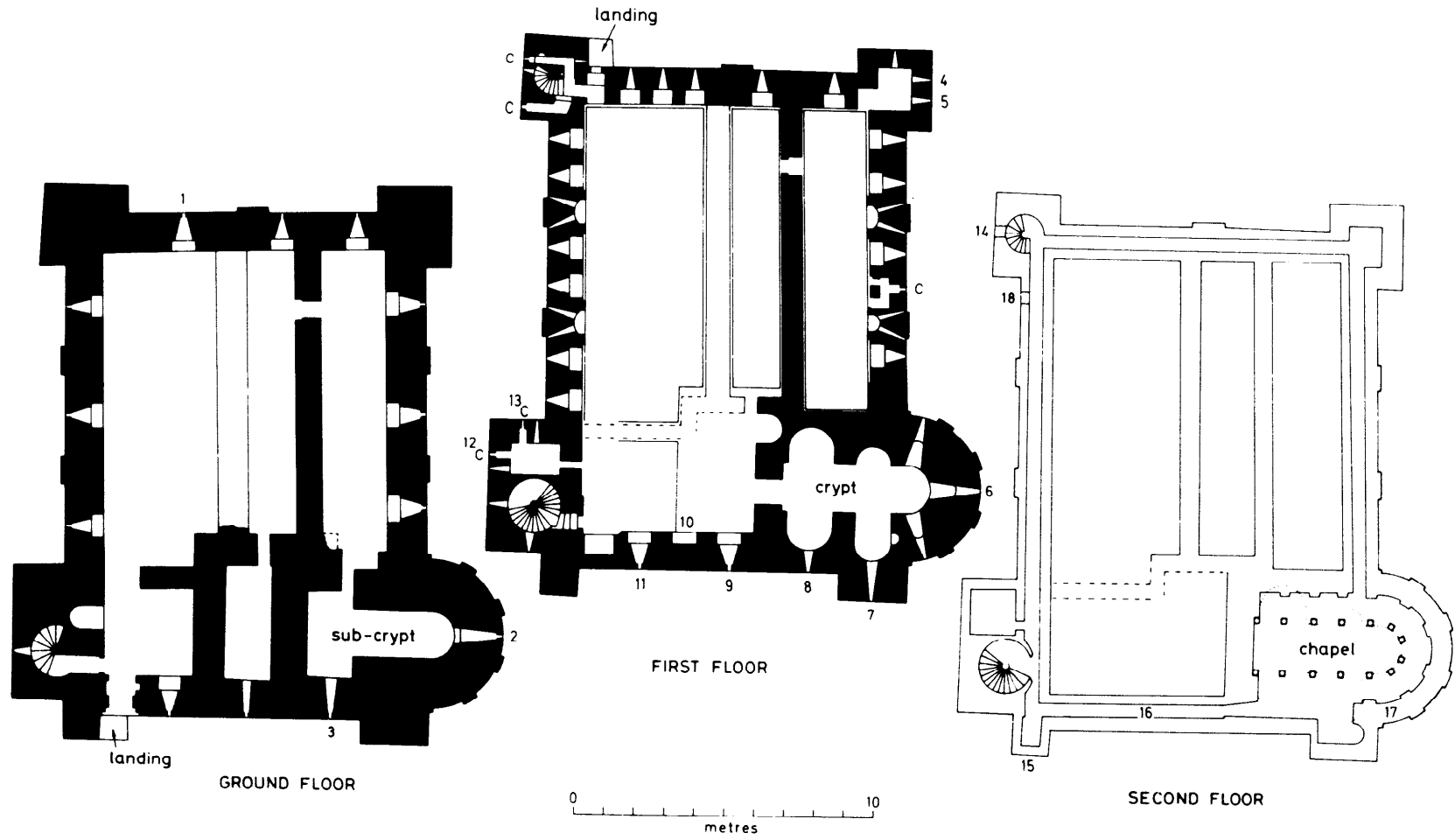


Fig 67 Colchester Castle keep. Latrine chutes are indicated by the letter C