



Fig. 1. Lincoln. The Lucy Tower shell-keep from the Observatory Tower, prior to its recent refurbishment.

## Lincoln

### 11. Lincoln

There has been a debate as to whether Lincoln's first castle (of 1068) occupied only its present site or the whole of the upper city. But there is general agreement that the motte on which the shell-keep stands was a primary feature, situated to overlook both the castle interior and the lower city. The second motte, in contrast, was thrown up around a contemporary masonry tower (now called the Observatory Tower) which were both secondary additions to the site. The existence of two mottes probably relates to a situation of divided lordship over the castle, documented in the twelfth century, between kings and their sheriffs and the earls of Chester and their constables. A charter of king Stephen, from the 1140s, referred to more than one tower and to the building of one of them by (the late; d. 1136) Countess Lucy, whose son, earl Ranulf, seized the castle in 1140. As a result, the shell-keep - to which building this event has long been traditionally linked - is known as the Lucy Tower.

While there are discrepancies between the relative chronologies for the mottes and their towers published at various times (e.g. Hill 1948, 84-85, Brown *et alii* 1963, 704 and in Lindley (ed.) 2004), there has been a view held by some that the shell-keep was built some time between the 1130s and 1150s on an earlier motte: expenditure recorded after 1154 in the royal Pipe Rolls

seems not sufficient to account for its building. The name Lucy Tower existed no later than 1224-1225, when money was spent on its repair and it was called by this name. But not all are agreed that the name originally related to the shell-keep: it may have first related to the Observatory Tower and been later transferred to the shell-keep as the latter was the larger structure. Whatever the earlier situation may have been, the whole castle had passed its prime by the 14th century: kings gradually came to favour Nottingham. A survey of 1327 revealed that the Lucy Tower and other structures had partially collapsed.

The shell-keep was a most impressive structure built in a castle associated with royalty, with the highest ranks of lay society and close to a major cathedral community with its own religious society and buildings of the highest status. An unusual feature of its planning reveals that it was a very grand building in its own right: it is approached by a stairway leading directly up the motte from the centre of the bailey, not (as is the case at many shell-keeps) by peripheral stairways protected by wing-walls rising from the bailey curtain walls. The bailey curtain walls do, nevertheless, join with the shell-keep since the latter is situated on the castle's (southern) perimeter. It is, however, unclear that direct access from the curtain wall-walks to the shell-keep interior was possible.



*Fig. 2. Lincoln. The Lucy Tower, from the east, following its recent refurbishment. There is no direct access from the wall-walk to the shell-keep and the current modern route runs around the keep to the main entrance on the right.*

Conjoined rectangular antechambers to the east and west (partly destroyed in the 19th century) are contemporary with the shell-keep. The chamber on the west, perhaps two-storey, contained a garderobe. That to the east contained a fireplace, both features confirmed by recent archaeology. The 19th-century restorer (Willson) thought there had been evidence of a chapel in this possibly two-storey antechamber on the east side. Mid-19th-century restoration records for the whole site suggest that medieval details, including those around its main doorway, were accurately replicated at that time, with some original mouldings remaining.

The shell-keep construction exhibits timber reinforcement building technique in its lower courses, perhaps because its builders were concerned about the stability of the motte. It is a polygonal oval in plan, with pilaster buttresses at the angles of its fifteen external faces, and has a step-chamfered sloping plinth. It has lost its uppermost fabric. Decoration on the hood-mould of the main doorway is consistent with a building date in the 1130-1150s range. This entrance, on the bailey side, was large but simple, with a round-headed porch. On the opposite side, facing south-west what is now a postern door gave access to the motte slopes. With two (possibly three - a blocked door (or window on the SE) is evident) entrances through the shell-keep wall,

Lincoln was unusual. It is possible, however, that this second (SW) door was not an ordinary entry (the motte slopes here are very steep) but rather a doorway in which royal or other lords “appeared” to the citizens on ceremonial occasions. It is thought that the series of large square holes around much of the interior circuit were for a range of contiguous timber buildings placed against the inside face of the shell. They appear to be sockets for the roof trusses of single-storey lean-to buildings, but their precise layout and functions are now impossible to recover. A small central courtyard is postulated. There were probably no external windows (at least in the lower, surviving, parts, in the writer’s view). A deep well has been located some 5 metres west of the main entrance along the north wall, below what looks like an internal wall buttress (modern).

Currently, reassessment of Lincoln’s shell-keep, involving Jonathan Clark, David Stocker, Neil Guy, Philip Dixon and others, is re-addressing its date and the context of its building. It has been pointed out, for example, that the mouldings in its main doorway are paralleled locally in Lincoln Cathedral’s west front and in the building known as St Mary’s Guildhall. A possible context for the building of the shell-keep may thus have been the aftermath of King Henry II’s crown-wearing ceremony held at Lincoln at Christmas





*Fig. 3. The shell-keep from the south. Refurbishment and conservation including tree-felling on the south side of the motte has enabled this clear view of the high quality, prestigious, exterior 'postern' door, albeit heavily restored, and other features, from Drury Lane, for the first time in 200 years.*

1157 (for the context, see Vincent 2007, 325-326). It could hardly have been newly built in time for the occasion however, since Henry was crowned king only in December 1154. One tradition, recorded by the northern chronicler Roger of Howden, placed the ceremony of 1157 in Wigford (just outside the walled area) and St Mary-le-Wigford church may have been the location. Strong local tradition, however, associates the royal visit and the ceremony in the 12th-century building which from around 1250 was known as St Mary's Guildhall (also in Wigford). This tradition sometimes goes so far as to suggest that the building was erected specifically for the royal court and crown-wearing. The new king may have been keen to emulate the crown-wearing ceremony which king Stephen had held at Lincoln at Christmas 1146. A likely scenario may be that the king lodged in Wigford (and the sheriff of Lincolnshire later accounted for repairs to the king's house - *hospicium* in the city: see Hill 1948, 182) and then proceeded to the Cathedral for his crown-wearing.

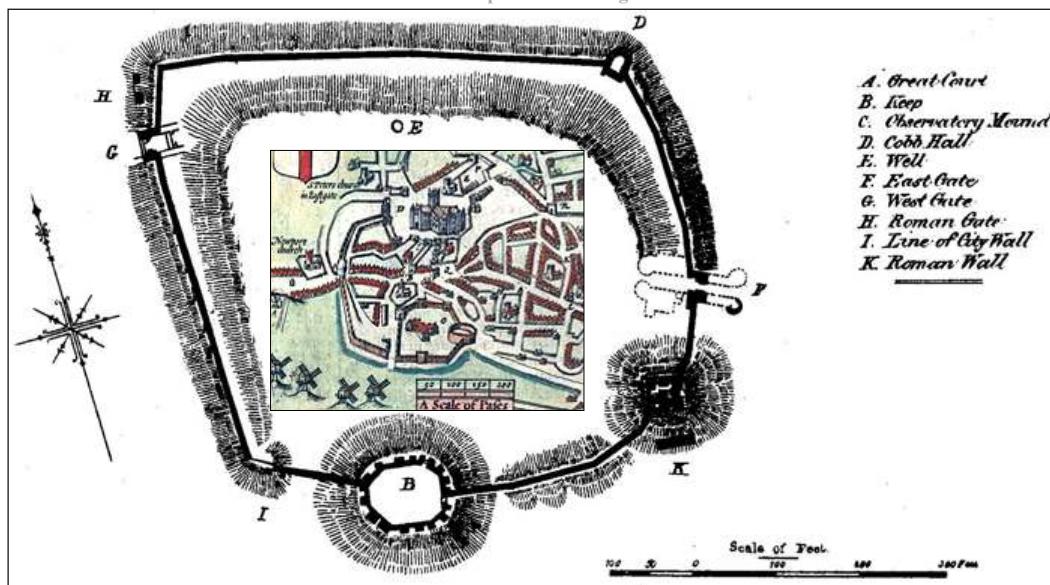
Certainty about the date of Lincoln's shell-keep thus remains, at present, elusive. It may belong to the 1130s or 1140s, with some details later copied in local buildings in the 1150s. Or it may date from the 1150s onwards. Silence in the royal pipe rolls about expenditure on a scale to match it might, however, be explained by a detail of the arrangements covering the betrothal of the king's son (prince Henry) to Margaret, daughter of king Louis of France in 1158: the city of

Lincoln (presumably meaning its revenues) was apparently given to the prince as part of this settlement (Barber 2001, 90-91). If the shell-keep was built during the young Henry's possession of Lincoln (he predeceased his father, in 1183) then expenditure would have been in his administration, not the king's. On the other hand, the king had apparently appointed the de la Haye family as constables to the castle in 1155, so he did not relinquish his interest in it. This family, who may have been constables earlier in the century, but displaced during Stephen's reign, continued to be associated with the castle to the early 13th century (Hill 1948, 87-89).

*Internal Diameter:* 85ft x 66ft (26m x 20m).  
*Shell wall height:* survives to 20ft - upper masonry lost.  
*Motte height:* 45ft (14m) (from the inner ward level).

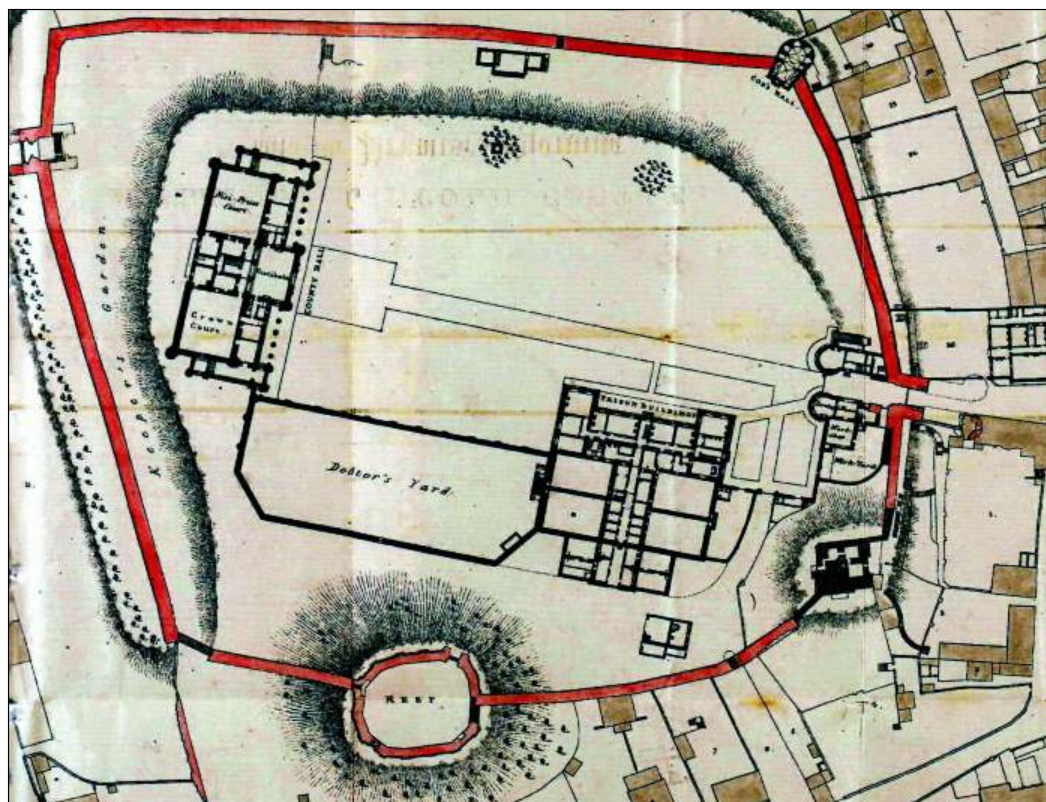
*Published refs:* King 1782, 261-266; Willson 1850; Clark 1884, II, 189-201; Brown *et alii* 1963, II, 704-705; Renn 1968, 226-227; Wilcox 1981, 30-31; King 1983, I, 261-263; Sancha 1985; Lindley (ed.) 2004; Dalton 2004; Marshall 2004; Stocker 1991; 2004; Thompson 2004; Hodge 2015.

*Pamela Marshall and Neil Guy have shared with me their first-hand knowledge. Neil Guy has shared with me his (un-published) research and his correspondence with David Stocker and others about the dating of the structure. I am grateful to them all. Further clarification has come from Jonathan Clark at an onsite Castle Studies Group study day in September 2015.*

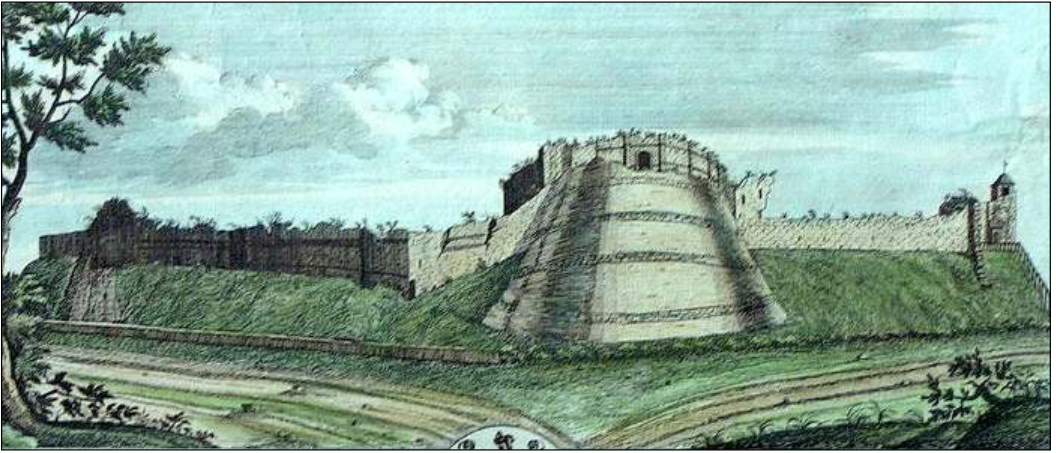


ABOVE: Fig. 4. Lincoln Castle plan, as published in G T Clark, 1884. Inset: John Speed's 1611 plan of Lincoln.

BELOW: Fig. 5. Lincoln Castle plan, as produced by E J Willson, 1832. by kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries of London. North at the top.



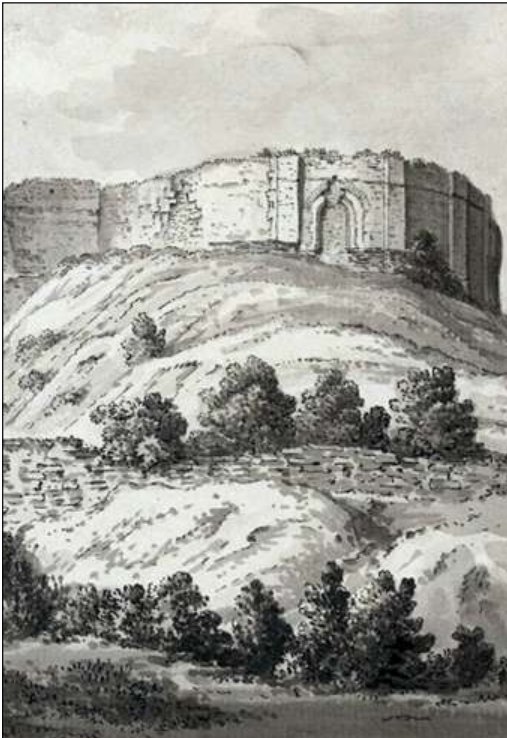




ABOVE: Fig. 6. Lincoln Castle from the south. Samuel and Nathaniel Buck. 1748. The horizontal bands or layers shown on the motte are not recorded in any later antiquarian illustrations apart from their city view (fig. 31).

BELOW: Left: Fig. 7. Lincoln Castle from the south (cropped detail). S. H. Grimm, 1784. Shelfmark: Additional MS 15541 Item number: f.130 © The British Library Board. Reproduced with thanks. Grimm shows an elegant (blocked) doorway of two orders without imposts (cf. Arundel), but with some serious damage to the voussoirs and relieving arch above. This was later considerably reworked and repaired by Willson in the 1830s

Right: Fig. 8. Detail of the external shell-keep doorway that faces south-west. Major repair work is evident on the jamb on the left side and the mouldings have disappeared. This was apparently a large and grand doorway on a very steep part of the motte with no obvious direct stepped approach to it.





ABOVE: Fig. 9. The wing-wall approach to the Lucy Tower from the east. View from the south. The narrow, now inaccessible, chamber or passageway behind the (?Victorian) rebuilt wall, was, according to Willson's plan (fig. 34), effectively part of the chapel along with the priest's accommodation, possibly in a room below. The fireplace (an insertion?) seemingly blocked the passageway. However the original antechamber or annexe appears to be contemporary with the shell-keep.

BELOW: Left: Fig. 10. As above, the approach viewed from the south-east all heavily reworked especially at the top. Right: Fig 11. A close up of the round-headed window with sculpted shoulders. This has been assembled from fragments found in the area and placed in a fictitious position where probably no wall would have originally existed to this height..

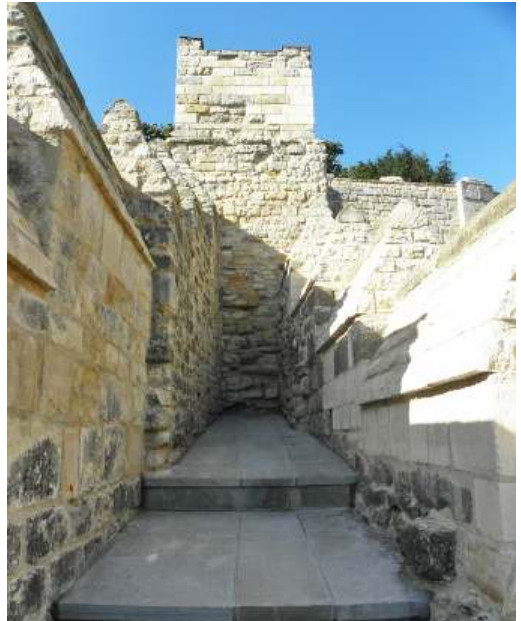






ABOVE: Fig. 12. Detail of one of the shell-keep's 15 pilasters with a compressed roll-moulding above the string-course offset. Some pilasters have been completely rebuilt

BELOW: Fig. 13. Left: Detail of the step-chamfered, plinth of the pilaster above. The pilaster widens out laterally. Right: Fig. 14: The east wall walk that leads up to the shell-keep wall - now much higher than originally constructed. Entry into the antechamber was from within the shell-keep, not from the wall-walk.





ABOVE: Fig. 15. View of the renewed wall-walk from just below the Observatory Tower to the Lucy Tower.

BELOW: Fig. 16. Left: The new platform, like a chemise, that allows access to the shell-keep's main entrance from the wall-walk. Fig. 17. Right: Soffit of the elegant arch over the principal entrance from the bailey.







ABOVE: Fig. 18. Full view of the (reconstructed) principal entrance prior to the refurbishment and installation of new walk-ways. The outer arch is circumscribed by a billet and scallop moulding c. 1130-1150s; some pieces reworked, some original.

BELOW: Fig. 19. Principal entrance from the interior of the shell-keep with its segmental arch. For many years the keep was used as the prison graveyard and small headstones remain.







*ABOVE: Fig. 20. The interior of the shell-keep looking west from the main entrance. The following four figs. below move around the keep in an anticlockwise fashion. The 'buttress' on the north wall hides the motte-top well. New steps lead up to an recently unblocked door that gives access to the west wall-walk.*

*BELOW: Fig. 21. The interior looking south-west. The 'postern' doorway centre-left. Modern steps have been inserted to continue onto the west wall-walk to the right. Note the prominent socket holes to support the roof trusses of a range of what may have been single-storey lean-to buildings. The sloping tiles above conceal what was a flat wall-walk thereby suggesting that the full height of the shell wall is only missing the crenellations, perhaps adding another 5 ft only. (See Willson's projected height, fig. 33)*







ABOVE: Fig. 22. Shell-keep wall continuing to the south-east corner. Possible site of the hall block. There is a blocked ?door near the corner (more visible from the exterior).

BELOW: Figs. 23-24. East wall with indented recess (a partly 19th century modern rebuild). The recess corresponds to the location of the conjoined wing chamber / chapel on the exterior side and this area is probably where the stairs were located to both upper and lower chambers (see figs. 34, 38, 40).

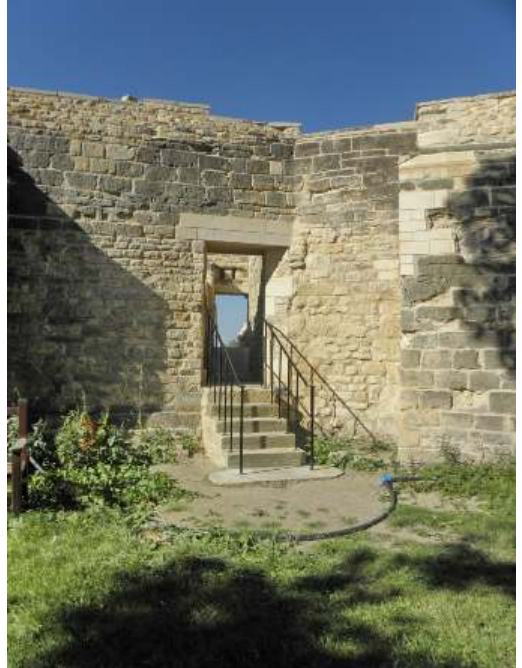






*ABOVE: Figs. 25 & 26. The south-west corner of the shell-keep interior.. Internal detail of the postern doorway. There is a draw-bar socket (section on the right at the same level as the present iron bar) to secure a door.*

*Right: Fig. 27. New steps and entrance created (by unblocking a previous post-medieval entry) that now allows access to the walk-walk to the west. The passageway now bridges over the latrine outfall (bailey side), so probably did not originally connect to the wall-walk but only the west antechamber.*



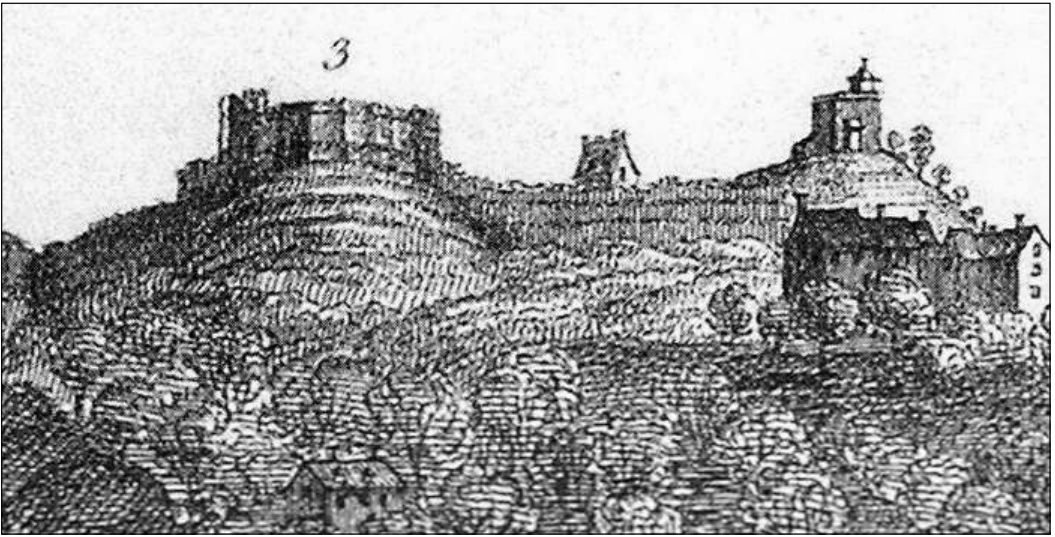




*ABOVE: Left: Fig 28. The west wall-walk looking back up to the shell-keep. Right: Fig. 29. Norman light along the west section of the wall-walk, looking into the bailey.*

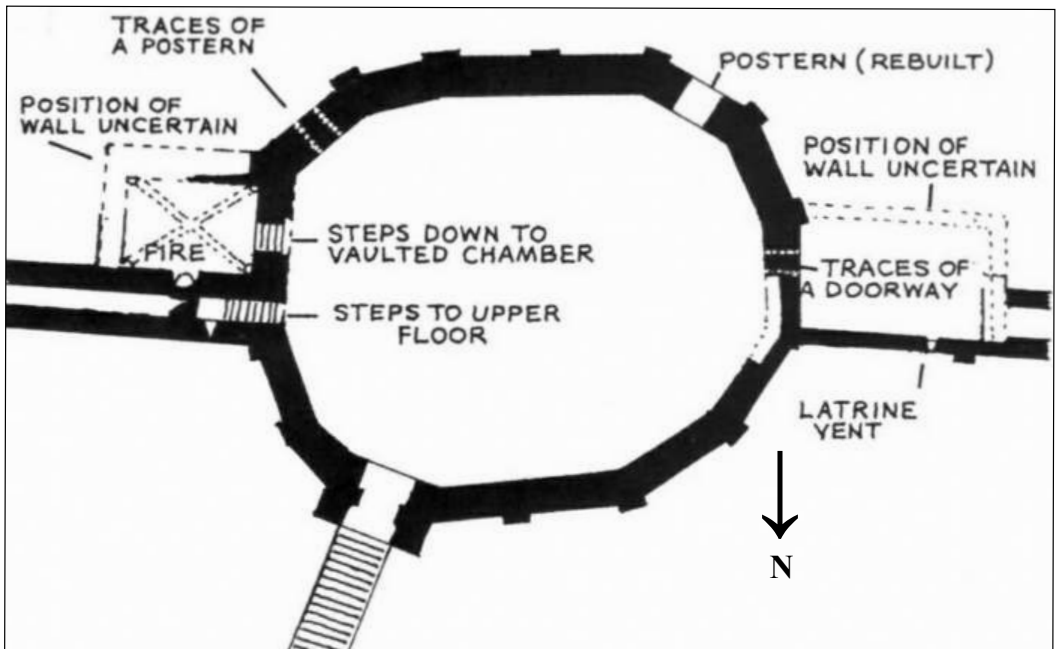
*BELOW: Fig. 30. Detail of the latrine vent that discharges into the bailey side of the motte (fig. 34).*



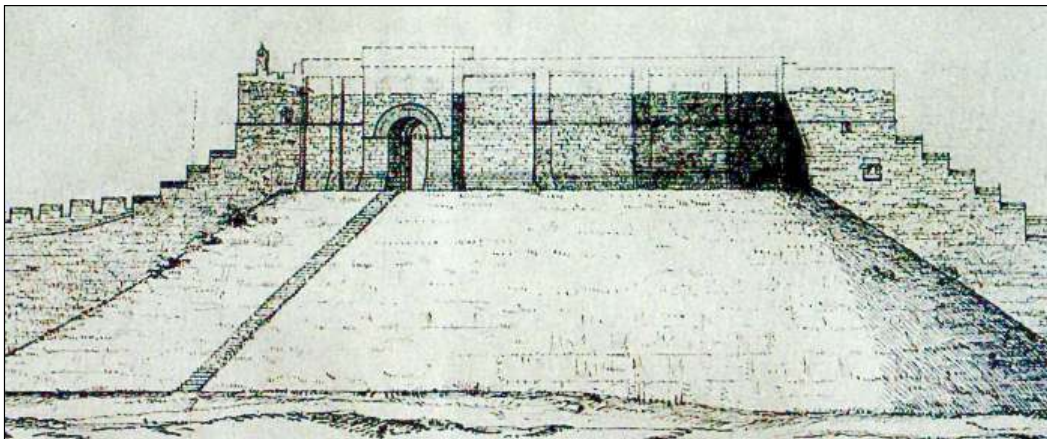


ABOVE: Fig. 31. Samuel and Nathaniel Buck. South view of Lincoln City (detail) from their 'Cities, Sea-ports, and Capital Towns'. 1743. The Lucy Tower appears to show a high wing-tower to the west adjoining the shell wall - probably part of the rectangular chamber on the west (no longer extant), which may have been two storeys high, containing a double latrine. The house with the steep gable is the top storey of Cobb Hall Tower

BELOW: Fig. 32. Plan of the Lucy Tower as illustrated by Sheila Sancha, 1985. The plan is based on the scholarly notes, sketches and measured drawings of architect E. J. Willson (1848-50) held at the Society of Antiquaries of London (unpublished material). Willson restored parts of the castle in 1834-5. This plan is subject to revision following work carried out in the 'Lincoln Castle Revealed' project but much that has been found, including the fireplace does correspond to Willson's plan, though the vaulting of the east chamber is uncertain..

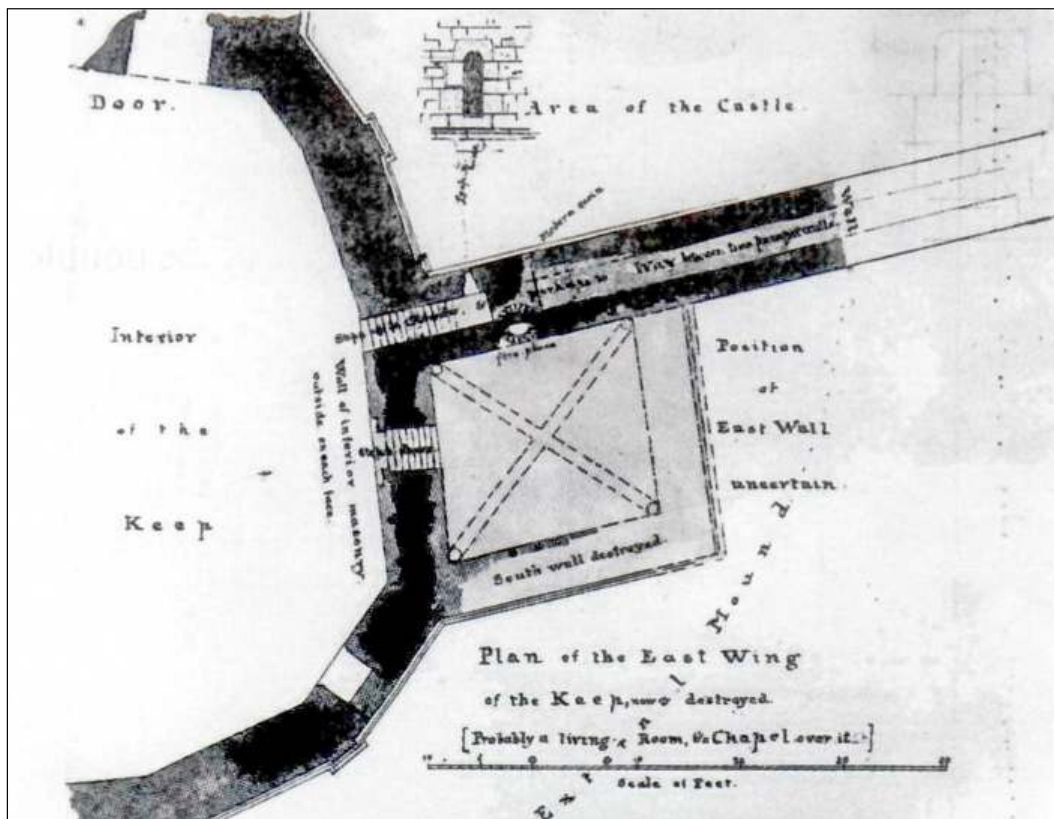






ABOVE: Fig. 33. The original Willson drawing of the 'North elevation of the keep at Lincoln Castle', with dotted lines suggesting what may have been the original height. © Copyright of the Society of Antiquaries of London and reproduced by kind permission. The gate-tower stands only a little higher than the shell wall, and the east and west wing chambers outside the shell are drawn in their fullest form as deduced by Willson.

BELOW: Fig. 34. Willson's plan of the east wing and antechamber or annexe that he felt may have been a living room with chapel over. Evidence for the fireplace remains. © Copyright Society of Antiquaries of London and reproduced with their kind permission. MS 786/G, p. 69.



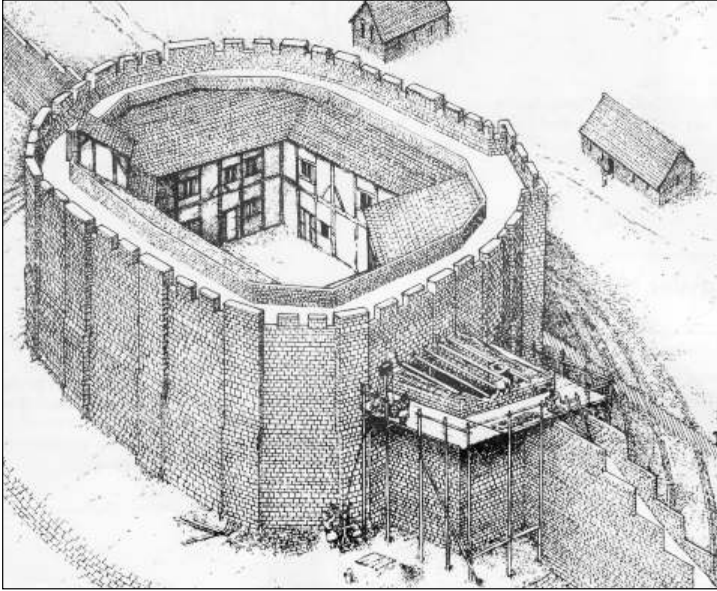


Fig. 35. 'The Lucy Tower in c. 1185' (from the south-east). From 'Lincoln Castle in the Middle Ages', 1980, by Helen Elliot, illustrated by Tig Sutton. Produced by FLARE Education Group. This drawing shows the east chamber or annexe adjacent to the keep under construction. The principal bailey gate-tower does not rise significantly higher than the shell-keep battlements. Whilst the height of the shell keep is speculative (suggesting two-storey internal buildings) the internal layout with lean-to roofing hints at what may have been in place in the 12th century, although current archaeology suggests single-storey occupation rather than two.

BELOW: Left: Fig. 36. The south-west facing postern door from the exterior berm around the shell-keep. It appears that the original jambs and roll mouldings (if Grimm is correct - fig. 7) on both sides have been replaced by 19th century 45 degree chamfered ashlar blocks that unite and support the outer and inner arches.

Right: Fig. 37. The base of the same entrance looking to the south-east, the right-hand jamb. The step-chamfered plinth looks original, but there is much at Lincoln that is deceptive..







*Figs. 38-41. Clockwise: 38: The blocked door into the shell-keep from the east chamber on the south-east side. 39: Example of a pilaster with 3 chamfered courses plus at least another 3 straight courses; 40: The south side of the east annexe. The disturbed stones near the base of the wall possible mark the location of the fireplace. 41: The impossibly steep aspect of the motte from the south-west - from the rear of the the Castle Moat House in Drury Lane.*

