

University of
Salford
MANCHESTER

**Radcliffe
Heritage Project
Volunteer
Research**

Conservation
Statement: Radcliffe
Tower and Manor
House

Final Version

Client:

Bury Council

Technical Report:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Radcliffe Tower is the only surviving part of a Medieval manor house located in the borough of Radcliffe - Greater Manchester. It is a Grade I listed building and is also a Scheduled Monument. The manor house was rebuilt in the year 1403 by James de Radcliffe, he was lord of the manor of Radcliffe at the time. The rebuild consisted of a stone-built hall and one (rumoured to be two) towers, most likely built with ashlar blocks. De Radcliffe was granted a royal licence to fortify the site of the manor which included adding crenellations and battlements.

1.2 The rest of the manor house was demolished in the 19th century leaving just the remains of the tower. The tower measures 10.5 yards (9.6 m) by 19 yards (17 m) and currently survives to a height of around 20 feet (6.1 m). The remains of the tower are currently owned and under the care of Bury Council. It was being used as a pig sty before being restored

1.3 In 2009, plans to restore the shell of the tower as part of a wider restoration project covering Radcliffe's Close Park and the parish church were launched with the support of Bury Council and lottery funding.



2. Understanding the Building and Setting

2.1 Historical Overview

When James de Radcliffe planned the rebuilding of his manor house, his intention was that it should be fortified. This would mean gaining permission from the King. A 'licence to crenellate' was granted to James on the 15th of August 1403 by King Henry IV. Under its terms James was allowed to construct a new great hall and two towers and to enclose these with an outer wall. It has been a continuing debate as to whether one or two towers were built. Sketches do exist showing two, however no present or archaeological evidence exists to support the claim that there was once two towers.

The tower reflects the medieval period through its construction and architectural merits. Though only the first two levels of the tower remain, it is recorded that the tower stood at three stories high and most likely featured a crenellated parapet as would be expected of a defensive battlement of this type in the medieval period.

From the evidence presented it seems that the ground floor of the tower was used as a kitchen. It was constructed at the end of the great hall and was built with a barrel vaulted ceiling and three large arched fireplaces which leads people to believe they were used for cooking.

2.2 Later History

The manor house was occupied for more than a hundred years. In 1517, however, the manor passed to a distant relative Rober Radcliffe, Lord Fitz Walter, who in 1529 was made the Earl of Sussex. In 1561 the third Earl sold the manor to the Assheton family who lived at Middleton Hall, and by the 1670s the manor house and lands were being leased to local farmers.

3. Architectural Overview

3.1 The Tower

Radcliffe Tower was built in the local red sandstone and is of a type known as a 'Peel' or 'Pele' tower. This type of medieval fortification is to be found mainly in the north of England, and were typically rectangular in plan, three stories in height, with a single room on each floor. The ground floor was usually roofed with stone vaulting as found at Radcliffe tower.

The Tower internally measured 12.2 metres thick from north to south by 5.5 metres from east to west, with the walls 1.5 metres thick. In the south-west corner this width increased to 1.8 metres to accommodate a staircase which was built into the thickness of the wall. Elsewhere a double plinth ran along the base of the outside walls and increased the wall thickness to 1.9 metre

The ground floor of the Tower was entered by a doorway in the centre of the west wall.



The sketch to the left shows the interior of the ground floor of the Tower c.1842, looking north. The sketch shows part of the tunnel vaulting sill in position.

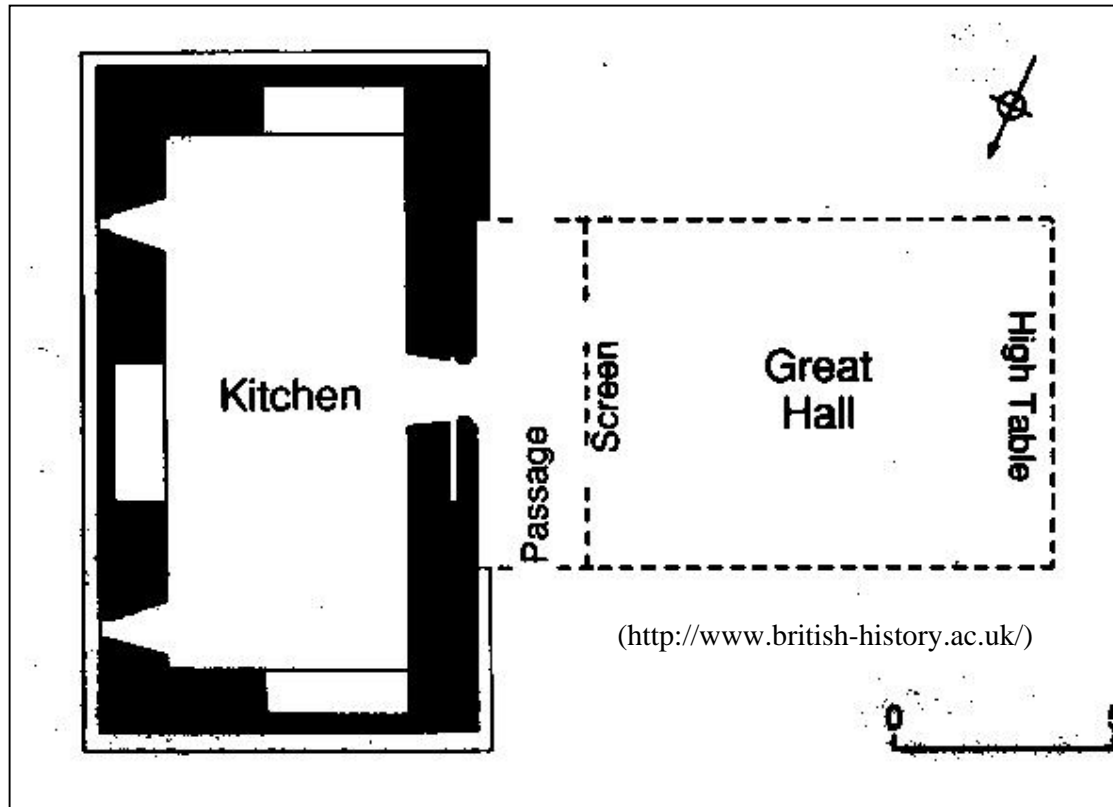
As was often the case in peel towers, the ground floor was vaulted, with a single span of stonework known as 'tunnel vaulting'. This vaulting created a lofty room nearly 5 metres high. Daylight was provided by two small windows in the lower part of the east wall, and by two larger windows set towards the top of the vaulting in the north and south walls.

The ground floor of most pele towers were unheated, but, at Radcliffe, the ground floor contained three substantial fireplaces, one set in the east wall facing the entrance, the others set towards the west and of the north and south walls. Each comprised an arched opening 3.2 metres wide and up to 2.8 metres high, with a chimney flue rising up through the wall.

3.2 The Great Hall

Although no longer standing (it was demolished about 1840), to the west of the Tower stood the 'great hall', which was built at the same time as the tower. The west wall of the tower formed the east wall of the great hall and its fabric contains a number of features relating to that building. These include the absence of the plinth to the Tower across the centre of the

west wall, and, above this, a change in the stonework of the west wall to smaller irregular courses (indicating that within the great hall this wall was plastered?). The west wall also preserves parts of a shallow slot into which the end rafters of the roof of the great hall were set. These features not only preserve the outline of the roof of the great hall but, as they belong to the original fabric of the Tower, they also show that the great hall and Tower were built at the same time. A further feature is the doorway giving access into the upper room.



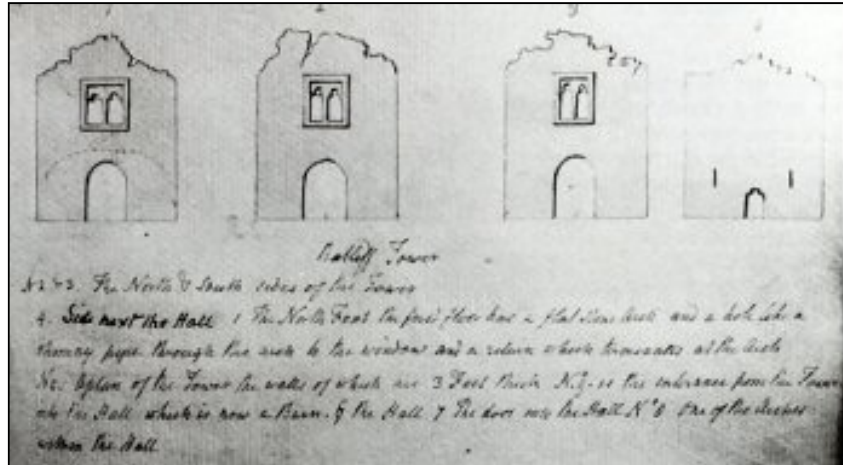
Above is a rough plan showing the original relationship between the Tower and the great hall. The outline and details of the great hall are approximate.

The historian Thomas Whitaker, writing in about 1800 when the great hall was still standing, describes it as 43 feet 2 inches (13.1 metres) long and in one part 26 feet (7.9 metres) wide, and in another part 28 feet (8.5 metres) wide; 7.9 metres is also roughly the width suggested by the outline of the great hall on the west wall of the Tower. From this same outline it would appear that from the floor to the ridge of its gabled roof the great hall was about 11.5 metres high. (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>)

3.3 Extract from the Diary of Captain Roger Dewhurst

"The walls of Radcliffe Tower are six feet thick. There is a groove in each arch as if intended for a portcullis, and over the north and south arches there is a hole about two feet square communicating from the arch to the window, and back again from the middle of the pole to the arch. The west side of the tower joins to the hall by a side door about two and a half feet wide. The ground floor is arched over with a very flat arch. The tower has been three storeys high."

1784 sketch by
Captain Roger
Dewhurst showing
the Tower's
traciated windows.
He also confirmed
in his diary that the
Tower had three
storeys.





4. Social and Communal Value of the Monument

4.1 English Heritage states that association of a building or place 'with a notable family, person, event, or movement gives historical value a particular resonance. Being at the place where something momentous happened can increase and intensify understanding through linking historical accounts of events with the place where they happened'.

4.2 The way in which an individual built or furnished their house, or made a garden, often provides insight into their personality, or demonstrates their political or cultural affiliations. It can suggest aspects of their character and motivation that extend, or even contradict, what they or others wrote, or are recorded as having said, at the time, and so also provide evidential value.

4.3 The listed monuments at the site where Radcliffe tower is located provides a significant insight into English history from as early as 1086 where Radcliffe itself is mentioned as a royal manor in the Domesday Survey up until the present day. It provides a large amount significance to the local community through aesthetic, evidential historic and social values and is seen to be highly valued by many members of the local community as will be explored further into the report when the work of the Friends of Foxdenton is discussed.

4.4 The location and remains of Radcliffe tower and Manor not only serves as a tool for education into the history of the local area but it also provides a unique physical monument which people can visit that links the community back into the past (www.english-heritage.org.uk).



5. Conservation Issues and Capacity for Change

5.1 Introduction

This next section will explore the issues that are likely to arise in the conservation of the building and steps that can be taken, making sure the historical, social and communal values of the monument are maintained and preserved.

5.2 Ownership

The building is currently owned by Bury Council. In 2009, plans to restore the shell of the tower as part of a wider restoration project covering Radcliffe's Close Park and the parish church were launched with the support of Bury Council.

5.3 Building Maintenance

The building has had small amounts of restoration carried out on it over the years however a major restoration hasn't taken place. The maintenance work that has occurred before and since the friends of Foxdenton took on the role of maintaining the building is listed in the section previous titled 'Condition of the Building'.

5.4 The Size and Type of Building

The size and type of building this particular should not have any adverse effects on the ability to restore or conserve it. If plans for restoration do move further forwards then it could be restored to its full 3 story status if necessary funding was sourced to do so.

5.5 Access

The Tower and the grounds of the manor are easily accessible from main roads and Close Park already has a car park for visitors to utilize. There shouldn't be any problem with increased traffic to and from the site in the completion of the restoration of the building.

5.6 Archaeology

Archaeological mapping and plans have already been carried out on the many digs that have taken place over the years and could be utilized in the scenario that any ground works need to be carried out at the site.

Resources

The current method of volunteers helping to ensure the heritage of Radcliffe Tower and Manor continues through thorough research into the history surrounding the De Radclyffe family and their manorial site. Signs and plaques are to be placed at the site in order to educate the local public on the findings of the months of research undertaken by the volunteers



6. Outline of Conservation and Maintenance Policies

6.1 English Heritage states that "Only through understanding the significance of a place is it possible to assess how the qualities that people value are vulnerable to harm or loss." The understanding of this fact should then in turn provide the basis for developing and then implementing a management strategy for the renewal, repair or maintenance that will best conserve the heritage values of the building in its setting.

6.2 Every conservation decision should be based on an understanding of its likely impact on the significance of the fabric and other aspects of the place concerned. Historic buildings obviously cannot be made to last forever, however, using the right conservation plan they can be made to survive as long as possible with suffering the least amount of alteration to their historic fabric as possible. (www.english-heritage.org.uk)

6.3 One of the best applied historic conservation policies is to find a viable 'new use' for the building in order to give it new lease of life. An economic use that can be used to support initial repair and then provide the owner with a reasonable return on their investment and which in turn then generates a sufficient income from the building to ensure the long-term maintenance of the buildings fabric and any associated public open spaces, such as the gardens located at Foxdenton. There are guidelines and policies to be followed in order to ensure that historic buildings retain as much of the historic fabric and significance as possible through the conversion. (www.bpf.org.uk)

6.4 Firstly, the specific reasons for conserving all or part of a historic building must be stated, this is called the conservation philosophy. Then, it must be outlined how and in what way this could affect its significance and usefulness in its converted state. It must be stated in a framework for evaluating the conservation of how the conflicts and benefits of the conservation process could affect the use and the management of the building as a whole once converted to a new use. Finally it must be shown how the conservation will be carried out through the sourcing of the correct skills and expertise in the areas needed.

6.5 As stated above, the first stage is the establishment of the cultural significance and its vulnerability, together with a framework of policies for its future care, and the second stage is the implementation of these policies. English Heritage suggests the following categories to provide a framework for this approach:

- basis of approach;
- control of change;
- provision of services and retention of character;
- specific elements;
- care of fabric;
- setting;
- management.

(www.maintainourheritage.co.uk)



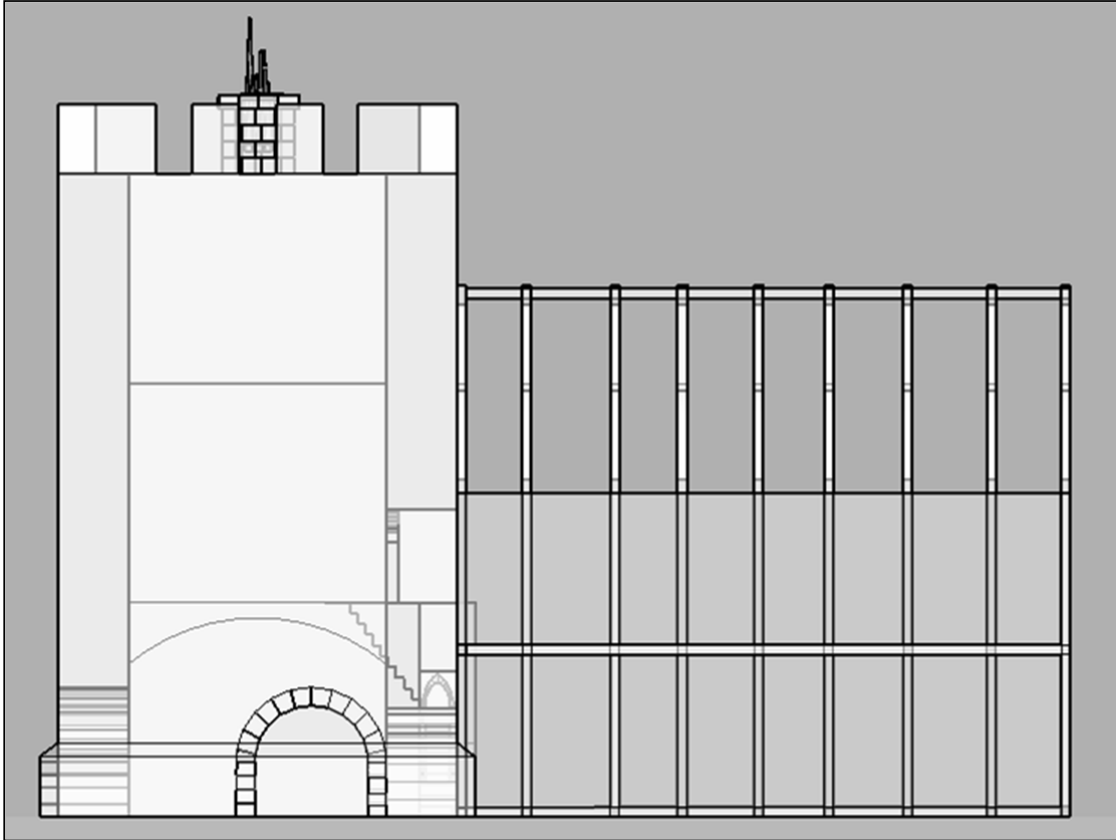
7. *Next Steps*

7.1 The next steps to follow on from this Conservation Statement for Radcliffe Tower according to the Princes Regeneration trust is as follows. The commissioning of consultants should arrange the preparation of any other relevant technical documentation that has not yet been completed but is still required:

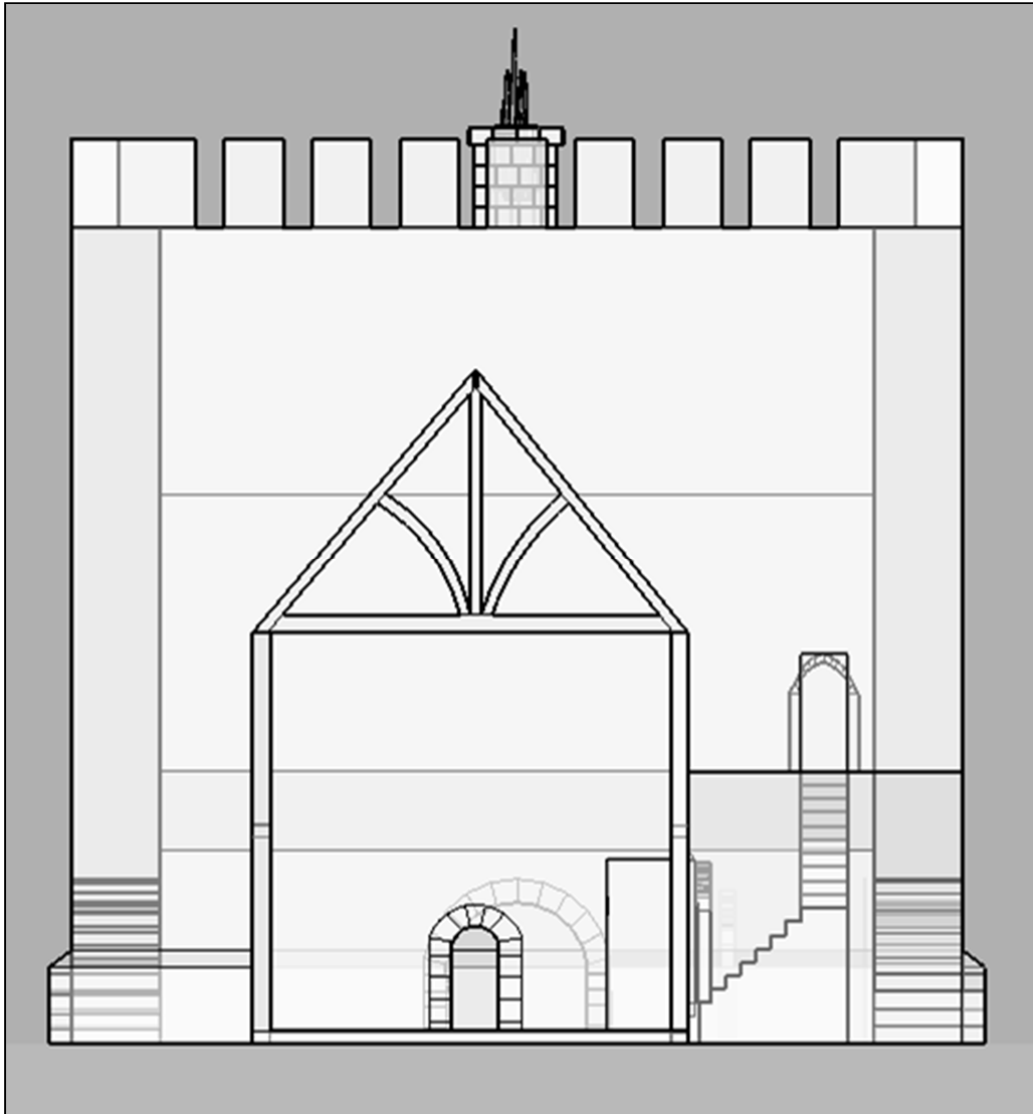
- Audience Development Plan,
- Business Plan, Education or Interpretation Plan,
- Economic Impact Assessment,
- Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Specialist conservation report. (The Prince's Regeneration Trust. (2009)

7.2 The education and interpretations plans for the entire site including: the Tower, the Church and the War Graves, the manor house, the tythe barn, the Bealey family and many other historical details are currently being undertaken. However further steps such as a specialist conservation report or any of the other documentation listed above could be undertaken.

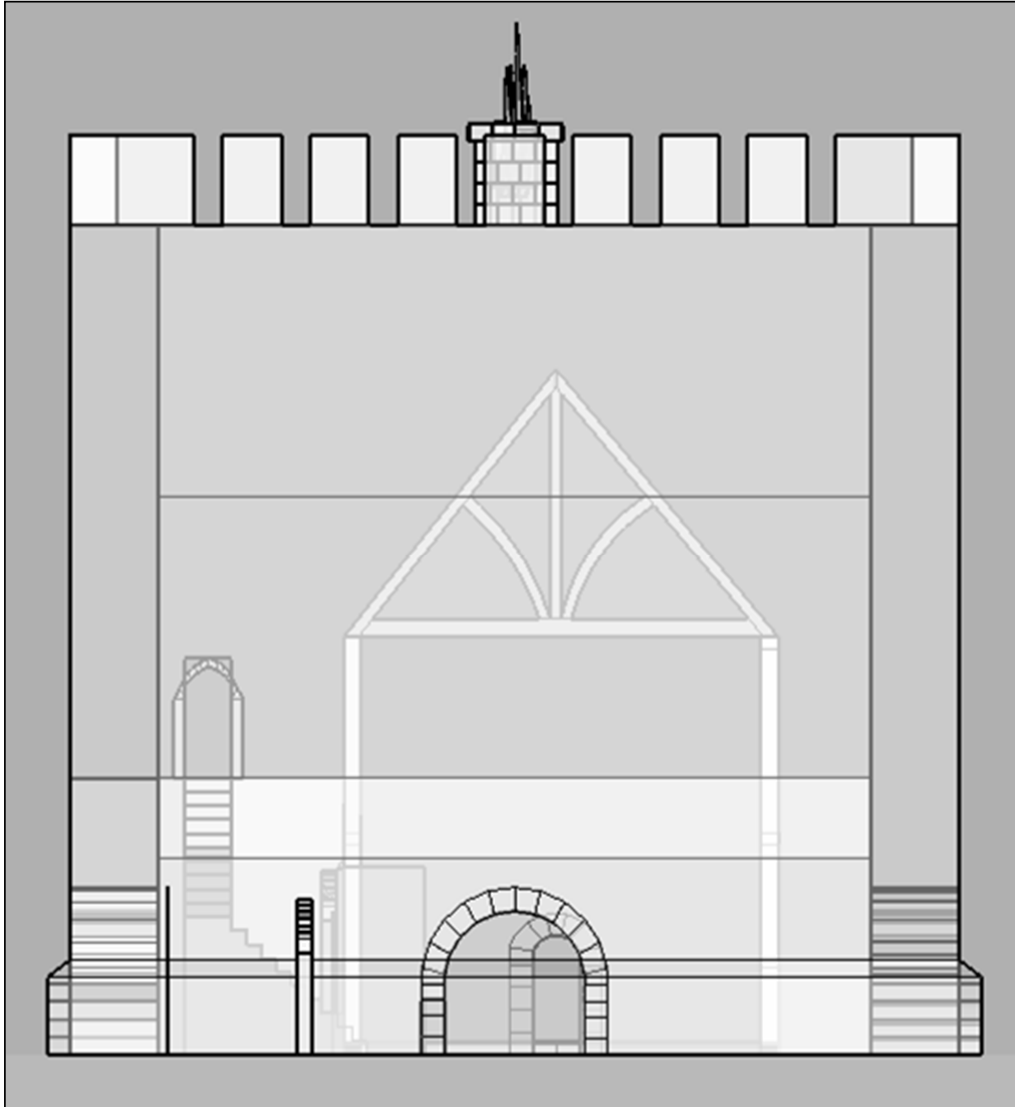
8. Illustrations



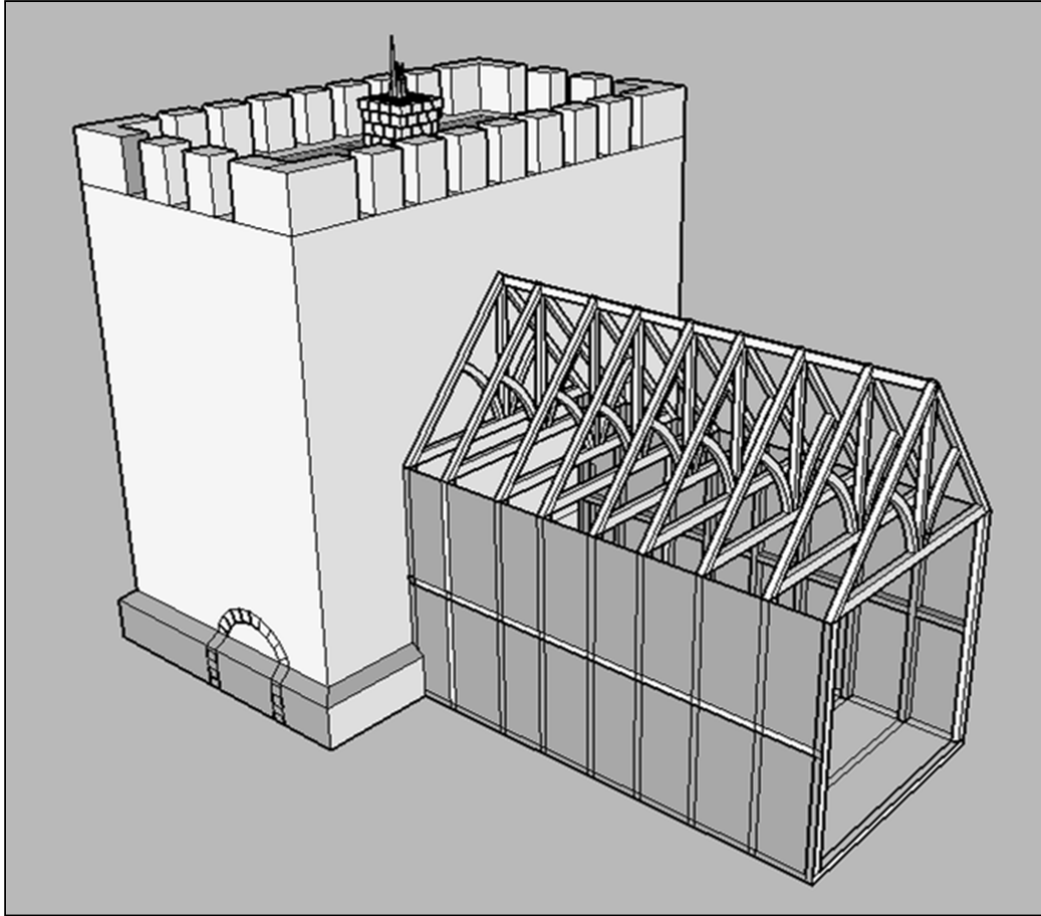
A suggested reconstruction of the cross-section through Radcliffe Tower and manor.



A suggested reconstruction of Radcliffe Tower's western elevation where it meets the hall.



A suggested reconstruction of Radcliffe Tower's eastern elevation.



A suggested reconstruction of Radcliffe Tower and hall.



8. References

1. Welsh, Pamala (1 April 2010). "[Ancient tower is to be saved](#)". Prestwich Advertiser. Retrieved 2012-02-20.
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5. The Prince's Regeneration Trust. (2009). *How to:Write Conservation Reports*. Available: http://www.princes-regeneration.org/sites/default/files/how-to-write-conservation-reports_0.pdf