CHAPTER 10

The Building Below the Castle

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On the edge of the stream that runs through the valley formed by Wādī-Qarn, at the foot of the hill crowned by the castle [of Montfort], stand the ruins of a large well-preserved Gothic building. The abbot Mariti, later Van de Velde, and M. Renan, identified here the remains of a church.¹

Nahal Kziv (Wādī al-Qarn), a perennial stream below the castle to its north, was a major water resource for the region, an area important in the growing of cane sugar and sugar refineries. From at least the Crusader period use was made of its waters to run a number of mills (most of these are apparently of Ottoman date). The hydraulic system of the mills included small canals located upstream and mill ponds adjacent to them.

The structure below Montfort Castle included a large industrial component with a complex water piping system, still partly recognisable, and quite different to the other mills along the stream (Plate 10.1, 10.2). In the past, visitors have commented mainly on the romantic nature of this imposing structure with occasional suggestions regarding its possible use.² More recent research has focussed on the architecture and functional aspects of the building which consists of a large Gothic hall constructed over a mill.³ A geometric as well as metric analysis was carried out at the site by the team from the University of Florence in November 2009.⁴ It has shown that the mill was originally of a rectangular plan, built on a modular base using the royal cubit (Plate 10.3). A detailed discussion on the layout of the building and on the use here of the royal cubit was published by the authors of this chapter in 2012.⁵

The earliest documented survey carried out by Rey in 1865 included a 1:2500 scale plan (Plate 10.4).⁶ It shows the mutual relationship between the castle and the building under discussion. A more detailed survey was carried out in September 1982 by Pringle, on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (BSAJ).

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¹ Rey, 1871, p. 146.
² Renan, 1864, p. 759. See also references above, Chapter 5.
⁴ This survey, part of an integrated campaign, was carried out in 2009 by the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence. The scientific coordinator of the mission was Cecilia Luschi and the research group included Prof. Mauro Giannini, Laura Aiello (Architect) and Carmit Horev.
⁵ See Luschi and Aiello, 2012, notably p. 70–73.
⁶ Rey, 1871, p. 143. See above, Chapter 5.
The publication of this survey included a theoretical reconstruction of the west wing (tower), derived from photos taken before the collapse of the remaining southern side of this tower in 1940–1942 (Plate 10.6). Pringle referred to the building as “a thirteenth century hall” and as a mill, over which was built “a guesthouse, dependent on the castle of the Teutonic knights and intended for the use of important secular or ecclesiastical visitors and their households.”

We have chosen to apply here the neutral term—“building”—to describe the structure.

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8 Ibid., p. 76.