



Imagining architecture

Whether a building has been long lost or is yet to be erected, the business of visualising it convincingly is both highly technical and demanding. John Goodall talks to five outstanding practitioners about their artistry



Liam Wales

ARCHITECTURE and art filled my childhood. My great-grandmother, grandmother and father designed, drew and made things all the time and I worked with them. Then, I studied sculpture as a student and worked as a cabinet-maker. Making things remains as important to me as drawing. I started doing house portraits

John Millar

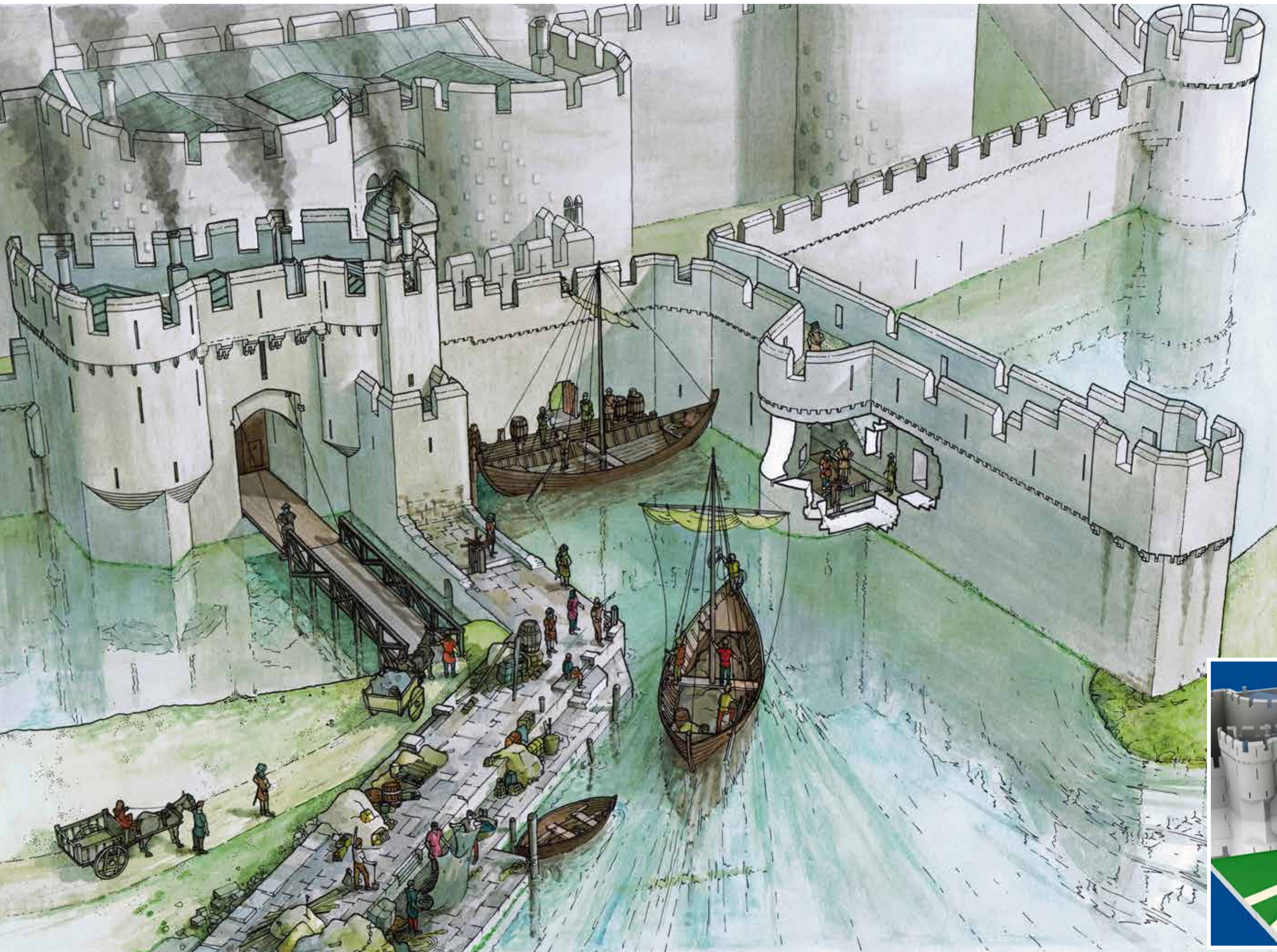
after leaving art college and then I began illustrating guidebooks for English Heritage.

It's essential, when doing a reconstruction drawing, to visit the site and get a sense of it. When doing house portraits, I like to draw on location and to work quickly to give the pictures spontaneity. I never forget a scene and I delight in the way that quirky details—cars, signs and people—bring drawings to life.

I now mainly work alongside architects and interior designers to create artistic visualisations of their proposals for new buildings and interiors. I typically work on the basis of their computer-aided drawings (CAD); in effect, I embellish the 3D wire frame of a room or structure that they provide. Working by hand, it's possible to render organic shapes with a facility and also to edit down the excess of material that

Liam Wales at work amid the Cambridge Circus crowds (top left), visualising a proposal for a new house by Levitate architects (left) and an atrium by Studio Indigo (above)

a computer provides you with. When it comes to my own tastes in architecture, I'm less interested in grand designs than the playful treatment of detail. For this reason, I love the work of Caruso St John Architects—for example, Tate Britain or the signage at Bankside. My favourite interiors, however, are those of Kettle's Yard in Cambridge, with its beautifully placed objects and sculpture. Visit www.liamwales.com



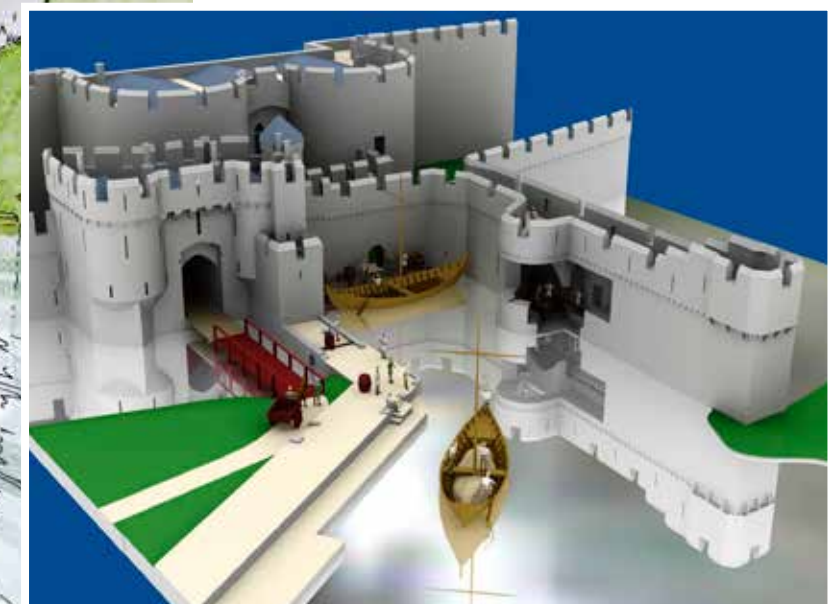
A reconstruction of the 14th-century harbour at Beaumaris (left) by Chris Jones-Jenkins (above). It's based on a CAD model (below)

Chris Jones-Jenkins

MY interest in visualising lost historic buildings is born of my studies at the Welsh School of Architecture. I trained there as an architect, but didn't want to go into practice. Instead, I took a temporary post at St Fagans, the National History Museum of Wales. The museum has a collection of re-assembled historic buildings, but, at that time, they hadn't been formally recorded, nor did the museum have plans and views suitable for guide-books. I was one in a small team that took on this task. With this experience, I went on to work for Cadw, reconstructing views of lost castles and abbeys.

I think of buildings in terms of structure and use. Essentially, my work involves designing a new building within the constraints of what remains and what information we have. Ideally, I like to focus on one building at a time. A site visit is the first stage of every project, preferably in the company of the person who commissioned it. Usually, I do the preliminary work on a computer, building a model in three dimensions using CAD. This serves as an underdrawing when I transfer it to the drawing board.

As a child, I was inspired by *Eagle* magazine. Every week, it published a cut-away of a plane or a ship, which I used to put in a scrap book. My favourite building is Caerphilly Castle, because its medieval ruins were actually reconstructed from the late 19th century. As such, it physically expresses the conceptual problems I face. I enjoy thinking about how my own reconstruction would differ from that undertaken. ➤





Peter Urmston

I SEE my self as a technician rather than an artist; my work is a crossover between digital and conventional media. I draw using a computer and try to visualise architecture in a way that seems real. Usually, I make a basic 3D computer model of the building I'm reconstructing. This gives dimensions, heights and widths and, from it, I fix an appropriate view for the finished artwork. I then transfer the view into a programme that allows me to draw in detail and render surfaces.

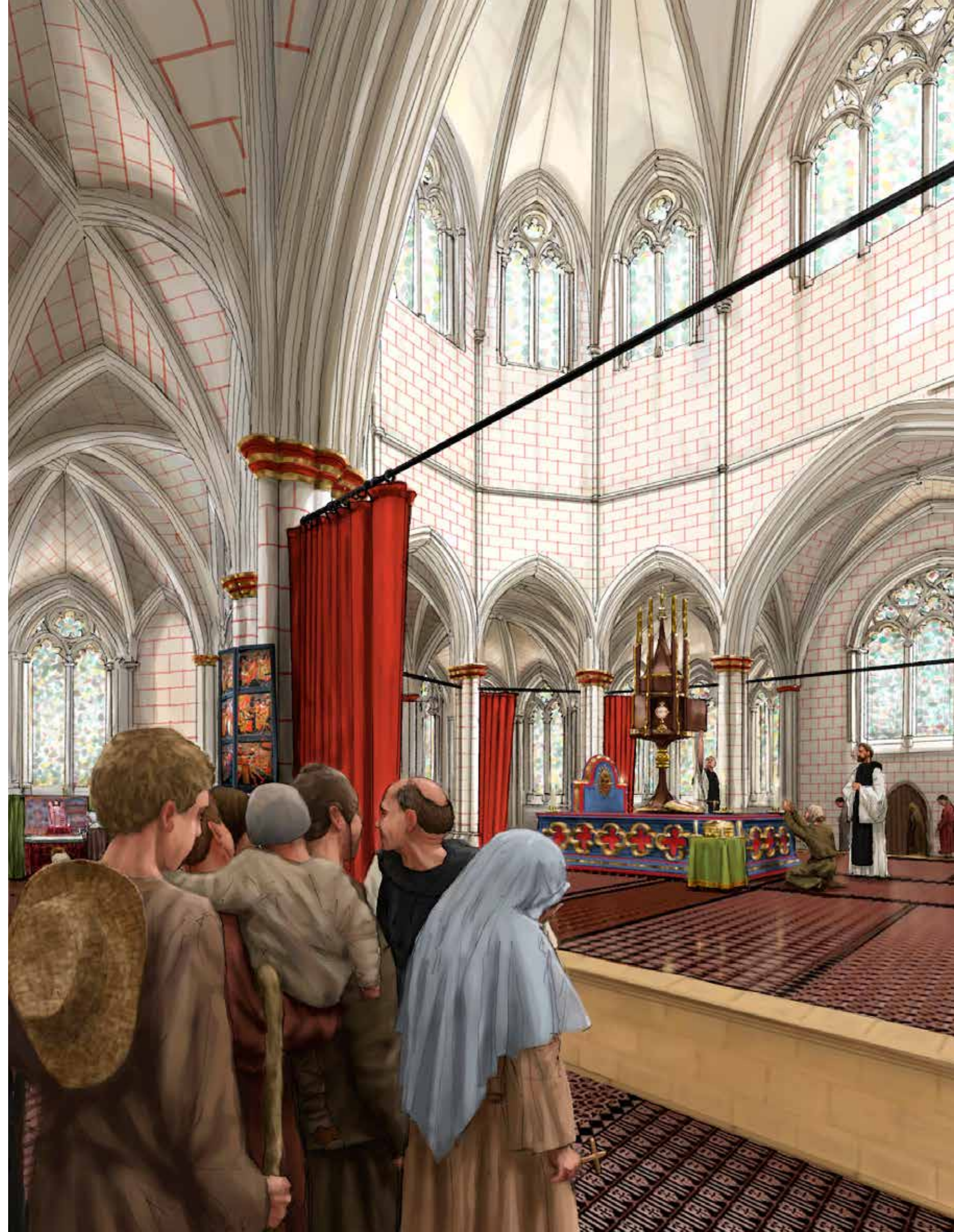
My mother was a history teacher and, from an early age, I was interested in the subject. I trained as a designer and specialised in illustration. The technical complexity of architecture fascinated me. In 1996, I made a decision that computers were the future and I've never looked back. It never occurred to me when I began quite how sophisticated computer-generated imagery would become. I started off trying to simulate reality. Now, I feel the challenge is to temper realism and stylise the drawings.

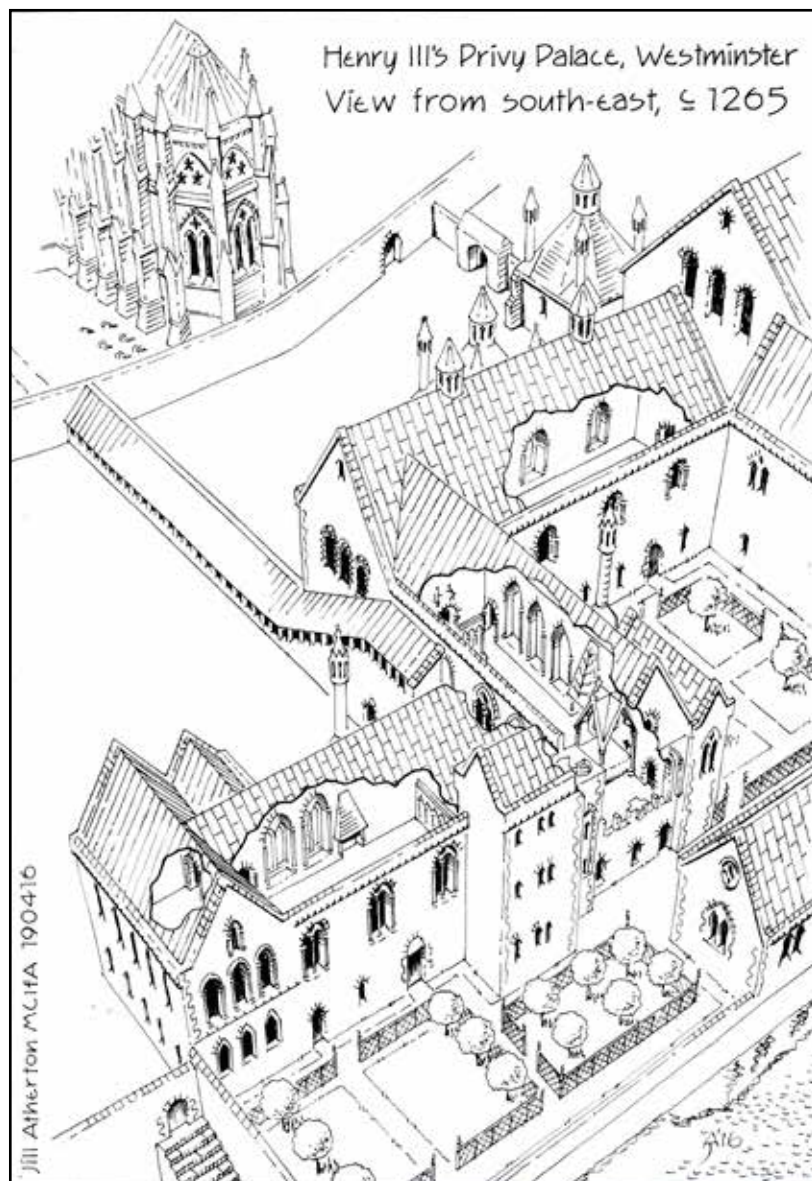
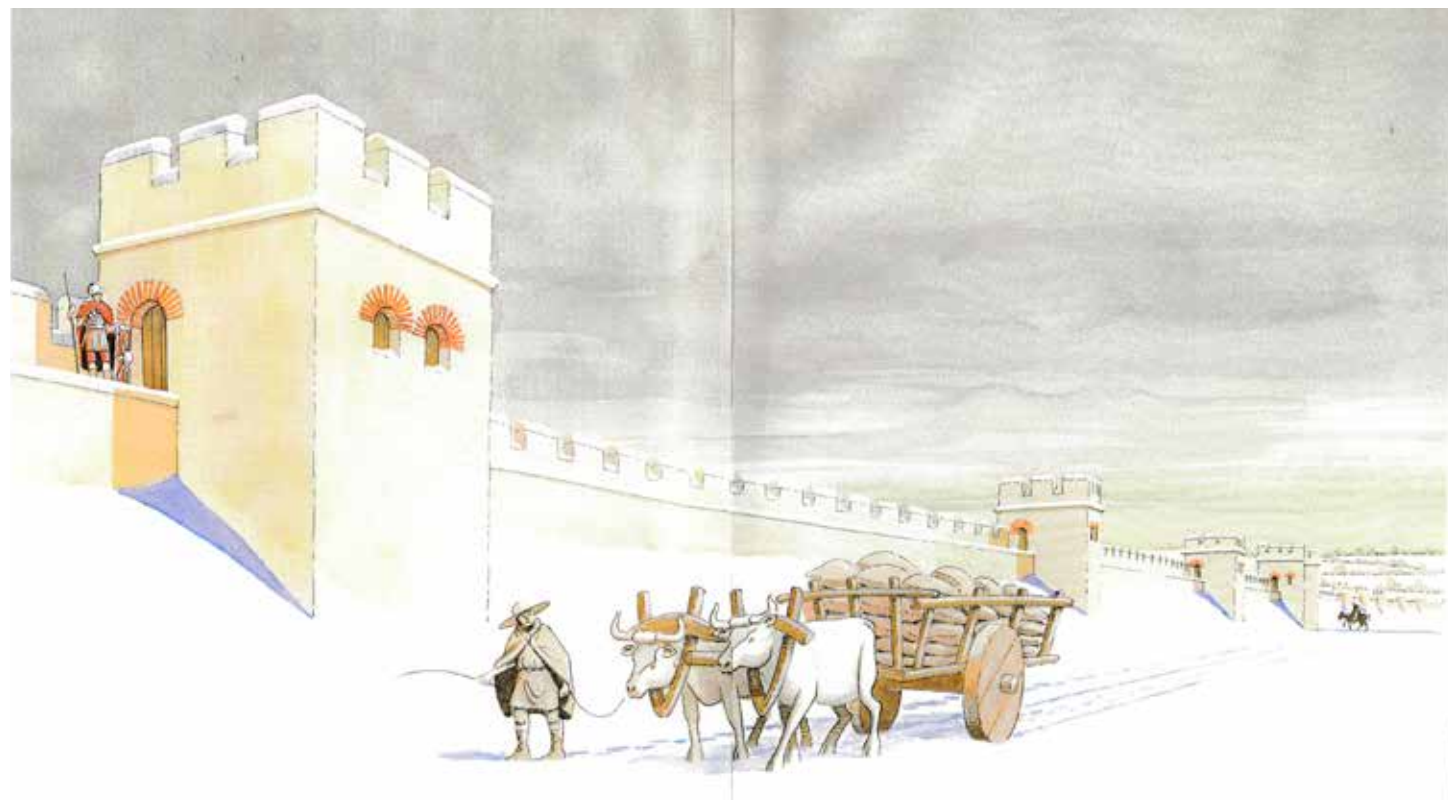
I'm not just interested in the reconstruction of lost historic buildings. I also depict buildings that are not yet built, as for example in planning applications. My favourite building is the central court of the British Museum. I love the way that a modern intervention has completed a much older building. The pattern of the glazing also reflects an early fascination with the possibilities of computer-aided design. Visit www.petEURmston.co.uk >

Views by Peter Urmston:

Above: **Framlingham Castle, Suffolk, in the early 16th century, showing its gardens park and mere. Most of the internal buildings have vanished**

Facing page: **The choir of Hailes Abbey, Gloucestershire, is today reduced to its foundations. Medieval pilgrims came here to venerate a phial of Christ's blood displayed on the high altar**





Jill Atherton

I HAVE been interested in drawing since I was a toddler, but also in the manipulation of objects in three dimensions. These things were in my blood: my uncle won a gold watch as a prize for his technical drawing and my grandmother was a tailoress and made up her own clothing patterns and panels. I would watch her and play with the leftovers. I can enjoy reading Archimedes for fun.

I also used to enjoy reading my grandfather's books. One of these, the *Harmsworth History of the World* (1906), dealt with the Americas and I was fascinated by its illustrations. This led me, indirectly, to discover the work of Tatiana Proskouriakoff, who produced reconstructions of Mayan sites in the 1930s and 1940s. Other artists I have come to admire are Peter Jackson and Terry Ball. I first started doing my own archaeological drawings when I worked in Canterbury. I feel that I'm an archaeologist who can draw.

To do a good reconstruction drawing, you have to understand the material you're working from. That involves climbing around the remains and recording them. I find all the bits and join them up as a model in my head. With a view in mind, I lay out the drawings using a 3D grid with three vanishing points. It's a technique I have devised myself. In the past three years, I have started using a computer for some things. But I like a pencil and I don't like drawing or writing on a computer.

I also do a lot of archaeological recording and carry a 5ft red-and-white folding scale in my handbag so I can set to work on any object or building that catches my eye. At the moment, I'm recording timber-framed buildings in Evesham; sadly, they are still disappearing. My favourite building is usually the one I'm working on. At present, it's Westminster Abbey.

The walls of Roman Canterbury (above) and the Privy Palace of Henry III at Westminster (left) by Jill Atherton



Stephen Conlin

I GREW up in the small historic city of Armagh, which fostered in me a love of Georgian architecture. In the public library there, founded by Archbishop Robinson in 1771, I used to pass time by browsing through the graphic collection. It was there, at the age of six, that I remember seeing a printed version of Wenceslaus Hollar's panoramic engraving of the Thames in the 1630s. I was amazed that so much detail could be incorporated into one view, also by the atmosphere that he infuses into the scene.

In my work, I'm trying to do something similar: essentially, to instil technical drawings with atmosphere. My tools are light, texture, scale and the inclusion, where appropriate, of people. I learnt etching and aquatint, techniques that lend themselves to line-work.

When setting out a drawing, I start with the ground plan and then project details up from that. If it is a panorama, I always try to find the landmarks to ensure they appear correctly within the overall composition. It's also extremely important to walk around a city you are drawing, because aerial views tend to compress contours.

Besides Hollar, I remember being impressed by Henry Brewer's work and the idea that you could illustrate a city in different phases of development. I became interested in cut-aways relatively late, partly inspired by Mitchell Beazley's *Great Architecture of the World* (1975), edited by John Julius Norwich. Alan Sorrell's reconstruction drawings were also an inspiration to me, although I got to know his work entirely in black and white.

I have always loved climbing up the towers of castles and cathedrals for the views. For this reason, rather than a favourite building, I have a favourite prospect: the view from the top of York Minster.



Stephen Conlin (top) drew this projection of the the baths at Bath (right) and the cut-away of Dunfermline Palace, Fife, in 1600, after the birth of Charles I (above). The latter is now a ruined shell

