



Gatehouse News

5 March 2016

Developments of the Gatehouse Website. The comprehensive bibliography and gazetteer of the castles, fortifications and palaces of medieval England and Wales.

A dull winter had exacerbated my **Life And Zeal Inhibition of Novel ExertionS Syndrome** so I can't report an answer to the outstanding questions regarding the genesis of the castle in England¹.

I've updated the records for;

- [Tickhill Castle](#), trying to make the form of the great tower on the motte and the gatehouse a little more clear.
- [Stainborough Castle](#). Here a gothic folly of Wentworth Castle surmounts an earlier earthwork the form of which may be a ringwork castle. I've recorded this in Gatehouse as a 'possible' timber castle, on the



Stainborough Castle

bases of the report by Julian Birch from 1980, although I am quite doubtful of the site myself so I've extended the description and added my comments to express these doubts.

Paul Remfry pointed out to me an error in my interpretation of his thoughts on [Pen-y-Bryn](#) in Caernarfonshire. He also kindly gave me some of his work on the site and new references. John Davies also informed me of some further references. and I did my own online searching so I've extended the description and added the references for Pen-y-Bryn and the related motte of [Aber](#).

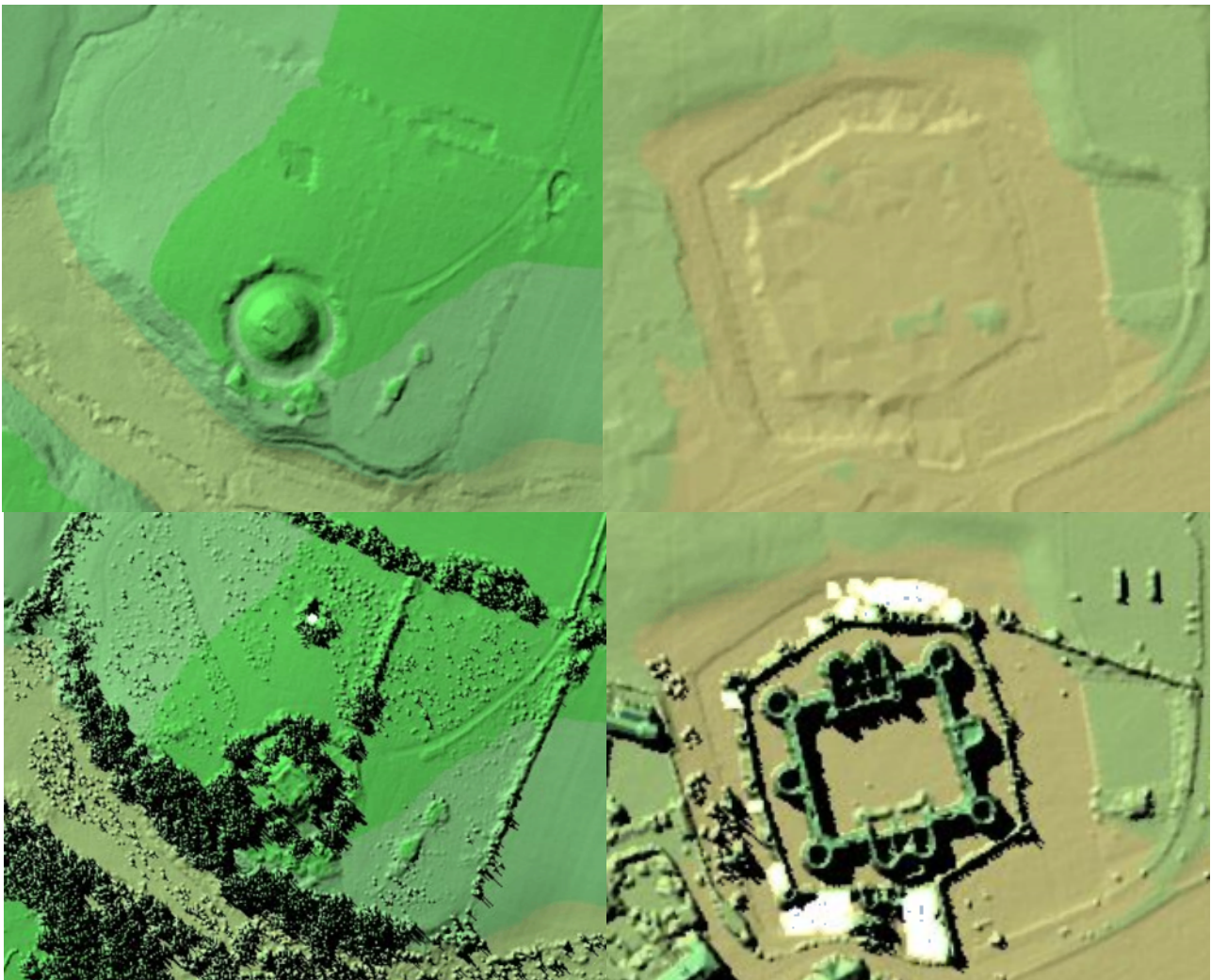
There is considerable contention with this site, involving some personal attacks which I consider unjustified. I would say that looking at the various evidence I feel the lack of medieval pottery at the excavation at Pen-y-Bryn is significant. There are arguments about this excavation, which are justified in the limited terms of its chance of finding in situ foundations, but if there had been some significant medieval occupation one might expect at least some 'background', re-dumped, medieval shards. Anyway I hope I've added enough references for people to be able to get a balance of the various views to which to make their own judgement.

Paul has also added [a short essay on the early castles of Gwynedd](#) to his website, with some pages given some short details of a number of those sites. I've added the links to the individual site pages and made some adjustments and/or additions to the pages for;

- [Castell Prysor](#) (which may well have been a clay bonded masonry round tower rather than a motte, although a stone revetted, near vertical sided motte could be a possibility)
- [Tomen y Mur](#) (where I feel either the stone sided revetted motte, or a motte made of Roman building rubble, may be a more likely form than a collapsed tower)

My thanks go to Mike Dobson for letting me known that the [Environment Agency](#) has, since last autumn, released the available [LIDAR](#) data

¹ The question is put in R.Allen Brown's papers 'An Historian's Approach to the Origins of the Castle in England' and 'The Norman Conquest and the Genesis of English Castles' reprinted in *Castles, Conquest & Charters: Collected Papers* (1989: Boydell Press) although I don't believe the evidence in his time supported his conclusions and subsequent evidence further weakens his position.



Top left DTM 1m lidar of [Castell Aberlleiniog](#). Top right DTM 1m lidar of [Beaumaris Castle](#).
 Bottom left DSM 1m lidar of [Castell Aberlleiniog](#). Bottom right DSM 1m lidar of [Beaumaris Castle](#).
 The advantages and disadvantages of the different forms fairly obvious here.
 Images captured from [Lle A Geo-Portal for Wales](#)

it holds for England. At much the same time [Cyfoeth Natural Cymru \(Natural Resources Wales\)](#) released its data.

At the moment the freely available data is in the form of a large set of downloadable raw asc. files which require processing to be useful. One place that has done this is [houseprices.io](#) which has a combined processed image of all the available DSM 1m data (see <https://houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map>). This is a great way to lose several hours of time but for repeated and comparative study it is not great. Because it is the DSM (Digital Surface Model) one of the great advantages of lidar, looking at the underlying form of earthworks under tree cover, is lost since this requires DTM (Digital Terrain Model). The DTM data has been

released so this was a choice by [houseprices.io](#) but they are not an archaeological organisation. However, in Wales, the website [Lle A Geo-Portal for Wales](#) does have a 'preview' page which does have the DTM images in a quick and fairly readily accessible form (see <http://lle.gov.wales/Catalogue/Item/LidarCompositeDataset/?lang=en> then click the Preview tab to get a map and then select the form of coverage from the somewhat hidden menu, a blue diamond, in the upper right corner of the map and then zoom the map.) Even for the 1m resolution coverage in Wales is not great although most of the great Edwardian castles are covered. The amount of 25cm coverage, the highest available resolution, is very limited indeed but does include Aberystwyth Castle.

In both England and Wales lidar scanning seems to have been done mainly to look at flood management so coverage is best on the coast and up major river valleys.

In England the raw data is available from [Data.Gov.UK](https://data.gov.uk). This has a map giving a rough idea of coverage and allowing the download of the raw data.

Crude processing of the raw data, a set of .asc files, is tedious rather than difficult. I did a, more or less, word by word following of the instructions by Stephen Eastmead for Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group (see swaag.org) to produce an image of one of my local castles, the motte and bailey at [Lowe Hill, Wakefield](#).

Lowe Hill is a tree covered mound, in a public park, some 1850m NW by N of Sandal Castle. Much of the vegetation cover on the motte and baileys banks are evergreen rhododendron so that, even in the winter, viewing the site either on the ground or from the air is difficult. It is an ideal site for DTM lidar and the motte and its bailey show fairly well (A slight ditch with divide the bailey into two only slightly shows). The rig and furrow running up the castle also shows up well, although this is

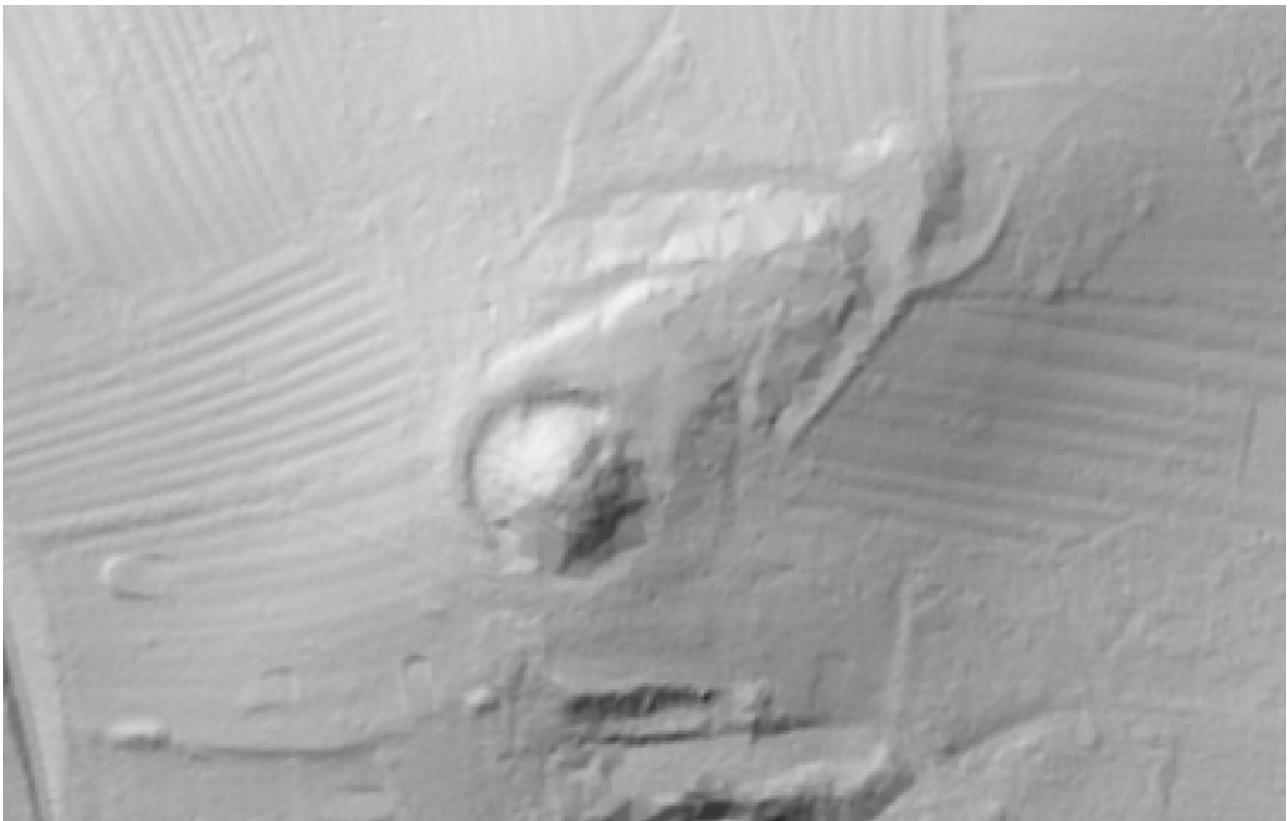


Somewhere in those trees is a motte.

actually very nicely visible on the ground on the west side of the site.

I am hopeful that, in the near future, someone will produce a website that allows me to mash up a location specific link to the processed lidar images which I can add to Gatehouse. Please do let me know if such a site is published.

Philip Davis



Process image of DTM 1m data for [Lowe Hill Wakefield](#)