



Gatehouse

# Gatehouse News

22 February 2013

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

Welcome to the latest edition of the Gatehouse Newsletter in a new pdf format which, I hope, will be easier on the eye and allow a bit more content than the previous email and webpage versions.

A rather indirect improvement for Gatehouse is the news that Andrew Herrett has redesigned and improved his [CastleFacts](#) website so he can more readily update it from the Gatehouse databases. Andrew has considerably more interest in web design than I do and his site has a much better search facility than Gatehouse, and has photographs and mapping which are not part of Gatehouse.

A new resource in Gatehouse is a section on the historical sources on royal support for urban defences collated together under the title of [murage](#). For the first time I've moved outside the geographic boundary of England and Wales and attempted to cover all the realms held by the English Crown. This resource consists of four lists

- [Grants of murage \(in all forms of royal support for town defences\)](#).
- [Grants of exemption for murage \(in the form of taxes and tolls\)](#).
- [Petitions for grants of murage \(in the form of taxes and tolls\)](#).
- [Other evidence regarding murage such as evidence regarding collection, embezzlement and auditing](#).

These lists link to detail pages which transcribe the source, give the bibliography and, sometimes, give some comment.

This sort of documentary history has been done in print before. Hilary Turner managed to get references for most murage grants into her *Town Defences in England and Wales* (John Baker, London 1971) and do some timeline charts. Avril Thomas's comprehensive survey of Irish towns *The Walled Towns of Ireland* (Irish Academic Press 1992) referenced the Irish primary sources but often missed the records held in London. However nothing has really been collated for the French territories of the English Crown and the Gascon Rolls are still being transcribed and published (see [The Gascon Rolls Project](#))

At the moment this is pretty raw data and I need to do much more work on how to present this effectively. I'd certainly welcome comment on how to do this. Over time I do hope to do more with data such as producing timeline charts. Anyone who would like copies of the databases I've collated is welcome to contact me.

I purchased Simon Blathwick and Richard Bluer, *Great houses, moats and mills on the south bank of the Thames: medieval and Tudor Southwark and Rotherhithe* (Museum of London Archaeology Monograph 47: 2009) on a trip to the Museum of London and then realized I'd missed from Gatehouse [The Rosary](#), a small palace of Edward II on the south bank of the Thames opposite the Tower of London. This short lived palace was a modest moated house, built "for debauchery and other similar pastimes" (Burford) which were, apparently, "hedging and ditching" (Phillpotts) by which agricultural practices are meant rather than some euphemism.

The last series of Time Team (or at least the three day evaluation dig version) has been filmed and broadcast. The excavation at [Oakham castle](#) was, in my view, really rather disappointing with much effort spent on

locating buildings which were actually pretty clearly known about. The interesting and important question as to the origin of the castle was touched on by Stewart Ainsworth although the edit of the programme seems to suggest the rest of the team thought he was wasting their time. A rather better programme was the evaluation of [Henham Hall, Suffolk](#) a medieval moated manor house rebuilt in the 1520s as, using [John Goodall](#)'s terminology, a 'castle-like' house. The programme on [Caerau](#) managed to entirely fail to mention the Norman ringwork within the Iron Age hillfort although it is nicely visible on the aerial shots.

At a one day conference at Horncastle, on [Lincolnshire Castles](#), held by the [Society For Lincolnshire History and Archaeology](#), Mary Anderson's discussion of the brick towers of Lincolnshire introduced me to [Ayscoughfee Hall](#) a much altered house which was one of a number of small brick towers built shortly after Cromwell's brick tower at [Tattershall Castle](#) begun in 1434. David Stockers paper on the [city walls of Lincoln](#) was fascinating but, for me, the outstanding paper of the event was David Roffe's [An Englishman's home: the early castles of Lincolnshire](#) which he has published online on his [website](#). Roffe's view of the continuity of English law and tenure post-Conquest contrasts with the picture presented by Andrew Lowerre in his 2004 PhD *Placing Castles in the Conquest. Landscape, Lordship and Local Politics in the South-Eastern Midlands, 1066-1100* which I have just read and to which I've added references for the appropriate sites with some occasional quotes and additional comments. I favour Roffe's view of this question but it worth remembering that the development of tenurial holdings (and settlement formation) was an ongoing process not fully developed before the Conquest and continued and adapted post-Conquest.

The bulk of my time, since the last newsletter, has been taken up with a full review of the sites in the historic county of [Gloucestershire](#) and



*David Roffe*

the records for these sites have generally been much improved. A couple of interesting sites were historic references from a perambulation of the Forest of Dean; [Mosleyescastel](#) and [Seyntelcastel](#). David Cathcart King, who had a military view of castles, rejected these references as referring to "some conspicuous element that looked vaguely like a castle" however, it appears to me, that these were possibly the houses or lodges of the bailiffs or foresters of a couple of the balliwicks of the forest. The lack of remains suggests these were houses were probably fairly modest but they would have had some administrative and policing function which would explain the 'castle' title if we move away from a military camp view of castles into a more administrative centre view. More research would be of value in this regard. Were Mosley and Sentinel the names of places or of the foresters themselves? Another site that sparked my interest is the 'motte' at [Newington Bagpath](#). This is scheduled as a motte castle but, to me, the





*Lower Down Shropshire*

description given by Lindley in the 1950's suggests a collapsed small square tower such as that recently excavated at [Newnham, Kent](#) (see Paula Jardine-Rose's interim excavation report in the last *Castle Studies Group Journal*). Paul Martin Remfry has made the point that several collapsed towers have been reported as mottes (2001-2, 'The dating of Medieval Military Architecture' *Castle Studies Group Newsletter* no. 15 p. 87) he cites [Richards Castle](#) and [Dinas Emrys](#), although [Pevensey](#) is the one that first comes to my mind. Some years ago I suggested [Lower Down Shropshire](#) was a collapsed tower, rather than a motte with shell keep and this may be more typical of the small towers of the knightly class that Newington Bagpath may represent. Another small tower of this form and date may have been at [Radcot](#), Oxfordshire excavated by TimeTeam a few years ago. Surviving towers of this sort are rare, possibly because they were

built by knights and lower status lords and therefore of a lesser quality with cheaper materials. Bishop Gundulf's tower at [West Malling](#) is possibly the best surviving example but Gundulf was a particular skilled builder. In places with limited access to limestone mortar may have been of poor quality (in [Castell Nanhyfer \(Nevern\)](#) walls were clay bonded) and such buildings may have collapsed and been eroded in such a way that traces of mortar may not be obvious.

I also wonder if these towers were used in a somewhat different way from the classic Great Towers of royalty and the high nobility. Pamela Marshall and Philip Dixon have shown how these great towers were used for courtly display and ceremony but the smaller towers may have been more residential and functioned in an almost identical fashion to the 'pele' towers of the 13th to 15th century. Indeed it may be a better understanding to suggest the

'pele' tower tradition has an earlier origin than usually suggested than to try to suggest these towers are mini 'keeps'.

*Castri de Cadebir* is a site known from a single record in the rolls of King John. This is usually considered to be [Cadbury Castle](#) in Somerset an Iron Age hill fort brief reoccupied in the early 11th century. However, an alternative site suggested is [Cadbury Heath](#), just outside Bristol. This was within the royal forest of Kingswood. If we, once again, allow ourselves to be freed from the shackles of a purely 19th-20th century military interpretation of the term 'castle' and use it in the more varied and nuanced way that medieval people may have actually considered the term then Cadbury Heath may well be seen as a entirely probable site for a hunting lodge - one possibly started but never finished. A large moated site [Barrs Court](#) lies in Cadbury Heath and is worthy of inclusion as a fortified manor house in it own right. This is first specifically mentioned in 1485 but did this site originate earlier?

Robert Sapy was granted a [licence to crenellate the manor of Westubury](#) with a fence and to make 'a wooden peel-house' in 1330. Quite what this meant in practice is obscure. A more careful reading of the VCH history suggests the Sapy manor house was at [Old Ley Court](#) rather than the main manor house of the parish which was [Westbury Court](#), although this may well have been a strong house itself.

## New sites added

From Hoyle, Jon, 2008, *The Forest of Dean Gloucestershire Archaeological Survey* (Gloucestershire County Council) Vol. 2

- [Nass Point](#) - a 'castle' place name and dubious history. Doubtful.
- [Eastbach Court Castle Hill](#) - a castle place name. Doubtful.

From Newbury, John, 1993, 'Map and Documentary Interpretation in Brimpsfield Parish' *Glevensis* Vol. 27 p. 33

- [Brimpsfield 'Castle Hill'](#) - a castle place name. Doubtful.

From Blathwick and Bluer (as above)

- [The Rosary](#) - short lived palace of Edward II. Certain.

From elsewhere

- [Barrs Court](#) - probable fortified manor house
- [Henham Hall](#) - probable fortified manor house
- [Ayscoughfee Hall](#) - probable tower house
- [Westbury Court](#) - probable fortified manor house.

Philip Davis

*King John Hunting*  
British Library  
Cotton Claudius D. II, f. 116

