



# Gatehouse News

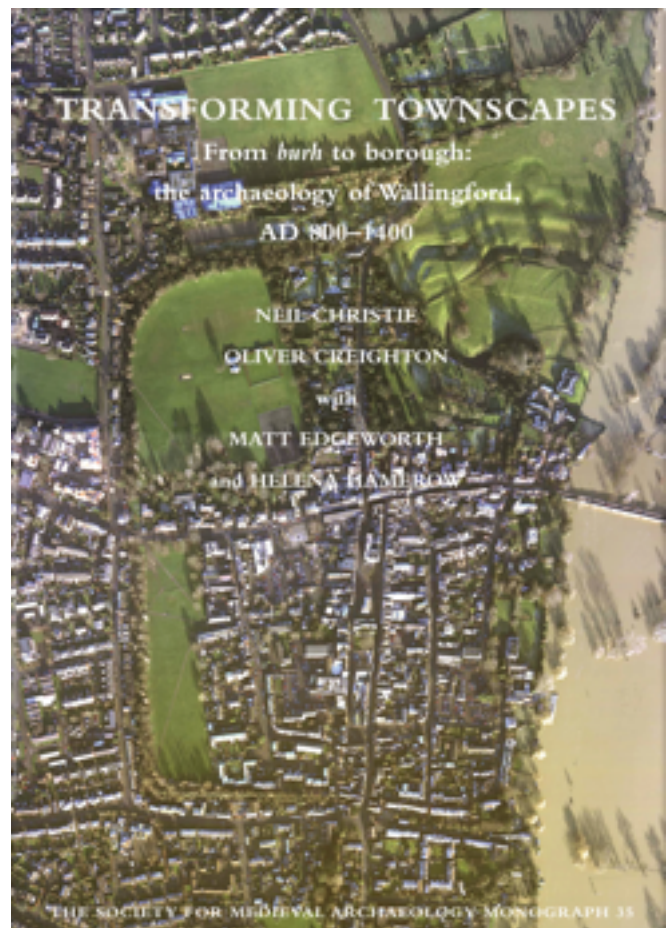
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**Developments of the Gatehouse Website. The comprehensive bibliography and gazetteer of the castles, fortifications and palaces of medieval England and Wales.**

The records for the [historic county of Sussex](#) have been updated and brought up to standard. This means these records now generally have much fuller descriptions, more clearly attributed and are more precisely and accurately located. There are some improvements and updates of the bibliographies with some more links to online copies.

The East Sussex County Historic Environment Record has been online, as part of [Heritage Gateway](#), for some time but the West Sussex County HER has recently been added so this update was timely. A couple of new sites are added as they appear in the West Sussex HER.

Just published, for the Society for Medieval Archaeology, by Neil Christie, Oliver Creighton *et al* is [Transforming Townscapes](#). This is the first of what may be a few summaries of the [Wallingford burh to borough project](#) which has been in progress for the last decade. This includes considerable amounts of details about Wallingford Saxon [town defences](#) and the post-Conquest [castle](#) as well as much other useful information on the 12th century [sieges of the castles](#) and the associated field works, the [bridge](#) and much else about the town. This book, along with the forthcoming *Wallingford castle and town in context* (Archaeopress BAR British series), is likely to make Wallingford one of the best studied urban castles of England. I still need to fully work through the text myself but one point I picked up was the suggestion that the castle is possibly



built on the site of a royal hall and associated complex including dwellings for housecarls; that is a royal compound with a garrison. The land rents and service duties linked to supporting the castle (the honour of Wallingford) spread over seven counties also seems to have had a pre-Conquest origin. This is yet another example that shows the Norman Conquest was fundamentally just a change of management with regard to civil political systems, although the new 'management' did bring a new language and a new architectural style.

One of the things discussed in *Transforming Townscapes* is the 12th century sieges of Wallingford including the identification of a possible siege work at the east end of the Wallingford Bridge. I notice this site is later occupied by [St Mary Magdalen's Hospital](#), traditionally founded by the Empress Matilda. In a discussion with Peter Purton regarding a potential siege work site of Arundel Castle at [Lyminster](#), another work at the opposite end of a major river crossing from the castle I noted another religious foundation on the possible

site shortly after the end of hostilities. This begs the question if part of the reason for these foundations are a deliberately attempt to 'demilitarise' these military camps. There may well have been other religious foundations of the mid 12th century founded on the site of castles. Such sites, when abandoned, may have had limited agriculture potential and, therefore, were economical sensible places to give to a religious foundation and one must not underestimate the power of religious thought, particularly the idea that the sin of killing needed to expunged by a period in purgatory and that that period in torment could be reduced by earthly intermission and prayer with the possible directly link between a perceived or actual military site and the sin of killing. I'm of the opinion that these grants of such 'castle' sites to religious communities was motivated by a complex of reasons. Other possible sites include [Hailes](#) and [Trentham](#).

Rachel Swallow very kindly let me look at her new paper 'Two for one: The archaeological survey of Shocklach Castle, Cheshire' (to be published in *Cheshire History* Vol. 53 pp. 18-44). There are a small number of 'paired' castle sites in England and Wales, that is castles in the same parish, which have aspired a little interest. These paired sites are often seen as successive castles or, alternatively one

site is seen a a siege work to another. At Shocklach the two site are adjacent to each other with a road between them, which is uniquely close (indeed, they are protected as two areas under the same single [scheduling report](#)). It has always been previously assumed that the eastern site was a successor to the western site or that they were actually one site perhaps with different areas having greater use in different periods. However, Rachel shows these were two separate castle sites in two separate and different manors held by different lords possibly contemporaneously. They seem to have functioned as toll houses on the important and ancient road that separates the two sites.

#### NEW SITES ADDED

- [Wallingford east end of bridge](#) - a possible siege work.
- [Hastings Artillery Fort\(s\)](#) - mid 16th century artillery coastal defences
- [Littlehampton gun battery](#) - a possible gun battery of 1587.
- [Coates Castle](#) - a dubious reference to a 'possible motte and bailey'.



Skipsea Castle in the snow.

Season greetings from Gatehouse.