



Gatehouse

Gatehouse News

3 May 2015

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

Gatehouse has [lists](#) of medieval fortified building by general type. I've slightly changed these by adding a definition of the type to the top of these lists so that site visitors coming directly to these pages will have some idea what they are looking at rather than going to the site ['types'](#) key.

I have started to add other lists of sites based on thing other than county and type. The last one I did was a listing of the [castell and llys of the native princes of Wales](#) along with a new distribution map.

I hope to do a few more of these - the next one probably being a list of 'Norman Keeps' (11th and 12th century square(ish) towers). Some scheduling records state there were 77 of these. Most of these are well known and many subscribers to this newsletter will, like me, visited all the standing great towers but the lost towers like [Duffield](#) in Derbyshire and, particularly the smaller lost towers like [Radcot](#), Oxfordshire, [Newnham](#), Kent and, possibly, [Wetherby](#), Yorkshire, do often miss attention which, hopefully a new listing, will slightly address.

These smaller towers, built by gentry status knights, rather than nobles do all seem to have been demolished. I tend to be a bit wary of the generalised statement that Henry II demolished the 'adulterine' castle of the Anarchy in the 1150s as a bit of Whiggish history but in regard to these small, keep like, towers may have been seen as particular offensive (in an upstart manner) to the greater nobles and the Crown when more certain royal authority was



Wetherby Civic Society Plaque seemingly based on next to no evidence at all. I hadn't been aware that Scottish armies controlled the north of England in the 12th century.

established under Henry II which *may* be a reason these were destroyed. The exception is [St Leonard Tower](#), in Kent, which as a bishops castle, was beyond royal authority.

A couple more county Historic Environment Records have been added to the very useful [Heritage Gateway](#) database. These are the Gloucestershire and Merseyside HERs although the Merseyside online HER is pretty useless. I've added links to these online records for the relevant sites.

This means that only Cumbria, Lancashire and Northamptonshire are still without an online database. Cumbria and Northamptonshire have 'mapping' site but these don't allow searching by 'type' and given minimal information (often just the HER number and a site name).

Unfortunately I suspect these 'mapping' sites will be considered as adequate and proper online searchable and research worthy HERs for Cumbria and Northamptonshire will not be forthcoming. Lancashire does not seem to have anything online but Peter Iles did, most kindly, let Gatehouse know of Lancashire sites in some detail a good few years ago.

This means that practically Gatehouse has gone through all the archaeological databases so is



Hartlebury Castle - photo by [Dave Barlow](#)

finished in 'data collection'. I've also (more or less) finished with separating my personally comments from site descriptions and therefore finished with the site descriptions. In reality I expect, as I read new works or catch up on older texts, I will be adding sites and changing/adding to site descriptions and the work on Gatehouse will never be finished but this Newsletter does mark an end of a phase of the development of Gatehouse.

As an example of the way the work of Gatehouse never quite finishes I've finally traced a reference for the licence to crenellate granted to [Hartlebury Castle](#) in Worcestershire in 1268. This licence is not recorded in the royal rolls but is transcribed, in full, in William Thomas's *A survey of the cathedral-church of Worcester* (1736). He cites as his source the White Book of Worcester Cathedral (*Liber*

alba episc. Wigon intitulat.) which I've not been able to trace more exactly although it may well survive in [Worcester Cathedral Library](#). I presume this was a book in which copies of relevant charters etc of the cathedral were collected. If so then Thomas's transcription is a of a medieval copy of the original patent letter. The content of his transcription is entirely consistent with this being an accurate copy and the fact this is missing from the royal rolls (themselves the royal copies of the original patent letter) is a simple error. As with many licences to crenellate this seems mainly to be a reward to Bishop Giffard for his service as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Hartlebury was certainly a castle before 1268 although Giffard may have finished a particular phase of building around 1268 and obtained a licence for the 'topping out' ceremony.

New Sites Added

From the Gloucestershire HER;

- [Wall-By-Alsworth](#) - the HER record suggests medieval village defences which can be rejected.
- [Northwick 'castle'](#) - a site identified by Christopher Dyer as a possible castle very early in his career. Rejected as quarry works. (Christopher Dyer is one of my favourite historians who I much respect but nobody is perfect)
- [Ozleworth Church Tower](#) - this most unusual hexagonal church tower has been suggested as a mural tower of a fortified manor house an idea that can be rejected. However this is an interesting site which should be considered in the light of [Michael Shapland's](#) recent work on Anglo-Saxon Tower-nave Churches.
- [Wragg Castle](#) - dubious castle place name.
- [Upton St Leonard moat](#) - dubious moated manor.
- [Hartpury Abbots Court](#) - a moated site of sufficient strength and status to be considered a fortified manor house.
- [King John's Castle, Tewkesbury](#) - a gentry status house with a three storey medieval

chamber block which, if it was in the north, would be called a pele tower. However has not occurred in the usual castle studies gazetteers I suspect because the obvious grandiosity and inaccuracy of the houses name.

- [Oxenhall 'motte'](#) - dubious possible motte.
- [Ragman's Castle](#) - dubious mound.
- [Awre Bailey Close](#) - dubious place name. I suspect many 'bailey' place names are references to a manorial bailiff not a castle enclosure.
- [Awre Hill Bailey Croft](#) - dubious place name.

and, from my own experience;

- [Hagley Hall, Rugeley](#) - while looking at my comments on the supposed [bishops manor at Rugeley](#), Staffordshire I re-examined the records for Hagley Hall. As this house apparently had a gatehouse with drawbridge in 1392 I've recorded this as a doubtful fortified manor house (I'm not at all sure what 'drawbridge' means here and the gatehouse was almost certainly of timber). I'm pretty certain this was not a moated house despite what the VCH says.

