



# Gatehouse News

18 August 2015

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

A couple of pieces of news in the last few weeks have led to some small but significant changes to Gatehouse.

The [Ordnance Survey](#) stopped their Getamap service at the end of July. The getamap service allowed free online access to modern OS maps. Apparently there were some problems with the software associated with the service (I had some very slight problems easily bypassed) so the service has been stopped and replaced by [OS maps online](#) which is available on a subscription bases only.

This means the getamap button on the individual site pages had become defunct and I wasn't able to replace it with an alternative so I've had to entirely remove it.

The Streetmap button does have the 1:50000 OS map at some zoom levels but the, more useful, 1:25000 edition is no longer available in a free online form as far as I'm aware.

However the 6 inch 1st edition OS map from the later half of the 19th century, which is often more useful in understanding the medieval landscape, remains available via the wonderful [National Library of Scotland website](#). Also on that site is the 1:25000 edition from the mid 20th century which, for those of us lucky



[Shank Castle, Cumberland](#)

enough to be able to read contour maps, makes working out the basic viewshed of sites pretty straight forward<sup>1</sup>.

On a more positive note the entire *Transactions of the [Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society](#) from 1870 to 2006 have been scanned and made available online via the [Archaeological Data Service](#) (later volumes will be made available 10 years after publication). I've spent several days adding links to the specific online copies of the several hundred articles cited in the individual site bibliographies including many major pieces such as Mary Higham's '[The Mottes of North Lancashire, Lonsdale and South Cumbria](#)' from 1991; H.S. Cowper's exceptional full and well illustrated '[Millom](#)*

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<sup>1</sup> After attending a number of lectures which talked about 'viewsheds' I had wondered what the fuss was about until I realised how difficult many people do find it to read a contour map, something that I'd never found problematic and was almost a reflex act when looking at a map. Computer based geographical information systems do now allow fairly accurate plotting of viewsheds that anyone can understand although these still need to be considered with care as they can't show the effect of lost buildings and trees and are not yet precise enough to show the difference in view for the 'low status' pedestrian compared to that of the 'high status' horse rider.

See [Richard Nevell's Blog](#) for his thoughts on viewsheds.



Caerlaverock Castle

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[Castle and the Hudlestons'](#) from 1924<sup>2</sup>; and S.E. Rigold's '[Shank Castle, Cumberland](#)' of 1954 the last account of a rather fine pele-tower demolished in 1951-2 'after an offer of assistance in repair had been refused.'<sup>3</sup>

A few other bits of housekeeping have updated a few pages - fore instance fixing the broken links to the [Visit Cumbria](#) site - not the greatest for 'academic' content but the many oblique air photos by [Simon Ledingham](#) do make it worthwhile to look at.

The downloadable databases have been updated.

Philip



<sup>2</sup> Marred by Cowper not checking the primary source for the 'licence to crenellate' of 1622 quoted by Curwen - in fact no such thing. For Cowper not checking the *calendar* of the primary source was wrong although how close the nearest good library was to Cowper and the expense of getting to it may be an excuse. For modern writers, particularly archaeologists, who continue to fail to make these checks although most *calendars* are now available online there is no excuse other than than the inadequacy of the training archaeologists are given in basic history (as a form of study - rather than as a timetable of past events)

<sup>3</sup> This should be compared with the award winning [Blencow Hall](#) to show how a short sighted attitude to a historic building probably destroyed an asset that would be worth some hundred of thousands of pounds a couple of generations later.