



Gatehouse

# Gatehouse News

13 August 2013

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

Over the last eight weeks I've reviewed and updated the records for the historic counties of [Lincolnshire](#) and [Northamptonshire](#) (including the [Soke of Peterborough](#)).

Lincolnshire was one of the more populous counties of medieval England although it has a noticeably low [density of castles](#) (Norfolk, the most densely populated of the medieval counties of England, has the lowest overall castle density). The high intensity of agriculture to support this population, continuing to today, also means that of those castle a good number have been lost or survive only as cropmarks.

Lincolnshire is not the easiest of counties for historical research. Although there are a few good early histories of some parishes the county wide parochial histories (Marret's *The History of Lincolnshire, Topographical, Historical and Descriptive* (Boston 1816) and Allen's *History of the county of Lincolnshire* (1834)) are not great and the VCH is elderly and limited to the history of the religious houses of the county. David Roffe did a survey of some [earthworks in south Lincolnshire](#) some years ago and for these sites a his excellent tenurial histories are available.

A feature of Lincolnshire medieval fortifications are the group of brick built solar towers of the the C15 all drawing their inspiration from Ralph Cromwell's great brick tower at [Tattershall Castle](#). These include [Ayscoughfee Hall](#), the lost [West Butterwick Tower](#), [Gainsborough Old Hall](#), [Hussey Tower](#)

at Boston, [Rochford Tower](#) and the, very ruinous, [Tower on the Moor](#) at Woodhall Spa of which only a stair turret survives.



Tower on the Moor, Woodhall Spa

Rather more easy to research is Northamptonshire. Downman's chapter on the [earthworks of the county](#) in the 1906 VCH is not the best of such surveys and is superseded by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England survey of the 70's and

early 80s (all available as transcriptions at [British History Online](#)). The VCH is currently active in the county and its parochial histories are generally recent and full, although only about half the county has been covered.

Unfortunately the worthy early county histories are not available online (Bridges's *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire* (Oxford 1791) and Baker's *History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire* (2 vols. 1822-41)).

One of the features of Northamptonshire is the large number of ringwork castles. The scheduling report for [Alderton castle](#), arguably the best known of these, says there are seven ringwork surviving in Northamptonshire although I record 13 possible ringworks (Alderton, Benefield Castle, Castle Hymel at Fineshade, Culworth Berry Close Hill, Farthingstone Castle Dykes, Little Houghton Ringwork, Long Buckby, Preston Capes Castle, Rothersthorpe Berry, Sulgrave Castle Hill, Thrapston Chancery Lane, Wadenhoe Castle Close, Weedon Lois Castle Mound, ). Does anyone have any thoughts on the odd isolated locations of the giant motte of [Little Houghton](#) and [Sibbertoft Castle Yard](#)?

#### NEW SITES ADDED

A moat at [Westhope](#), in the Shropshire parish of Diddlebury is recorded in Shropshire HER as a 'fortified house?' but was probably a homestead moat.

Downman mentions, probably as an aside, a [Moot Hill at Sibbertoft](#) in his section on castle mounts. Added as a reject site.

Downman had a section for 'enclosures ramparted and fossed' which seems to be the equivalent to the rather broad definition of fortified manor house used in Gatehouse. Include in that section are [Helmdon Manor House](#) and [Hinton Manor House](#), both moated manor houses possibly of sufficient strength to be considered fortified.

[Daventry Burnt Walls](#) is an interesting site described in 2001 as a ringwork (a description I question) but which may well be a fortified manor house, possibly one of pre-Conquest date (i.e. a thengal *burhgeat*).

#### NEW DESIGN FEATURES

I hope I've moved the small Bing air photo to the right of the open window for a somewhat neater look.

This little window is really there just for quick glance so people to decide if it is worthwhile clicking one of the many buttons which open maps, air photos etc. Added to these buttons are 'Geology' which opens the [Geology of Britain viewer](#) map app by the [British Geological Survey](#). This gives information on both the bedrock and superficial geology. 'GeoHack' opens a large table of links to various mapping, air photo and other web resources based on a given location. I already have a button with a link to the more useful of these (Google maps etc.) but this comprehensive listing might be useful.



The fine surviving earthworks of [Lilbourne Castle](#), Northamptonshire