



Gatehouse News

28 September
2013

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

Glyn Roberts kindly brought to my attention [Audley's Moat, Endon](#) in north Staffordshire. This is a moated site that has recently had a geophysical survey. This was certainly a high status site, associated with a deer park, although it may be questioned how fortified it was.

Trying to find online copies of *Moated Sites Research Group Report* I came across a note on the [Medieval Settlement Research Group website](#) that online copies of the successor *Medieval Settlement Research* was available via the [Archaeology Data Service](#). Going through these I found 'England's fortified medieval bridges and bridge chapels: a new survey' a paper from 2010 by David Harrison, Peter McKeague and Bruce Watson ([Online copy](#)). Gatehouse has previously recorded a few of these, categorized as urban defences, but I realised I'd missed a considerable number of potentially fortified bridges and that also there was a need for a separate category within Gatehouse.

The narrowness of bridges combined with the fact they cross a long linear obstacle has always made them a place which is defensible (consider the story of Horatius on the Tiber bridge in ancient Rome and the legendary Danish axeman at Stamford Bridge). However

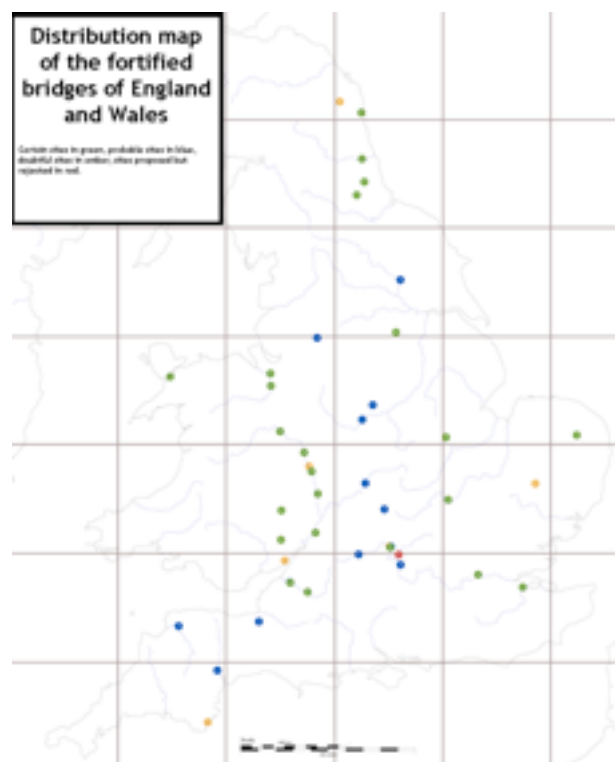


Warkworth Bridge and Bridge Gate. A very rare surviving example of a fortified bridge.

a number of medieval bridges had gates in gatehouses, either on the bridge itself, or at one end of the bridge, which made these bridges fortified. Some also had drawbridges, although in some cases these may have actually been raisable bridges to allow masted vessels to pass under the bridge. In practice it may be these gates were mainly gates to control traffic and ease the collection of tolls and many bridges had simple bar gates for such a purpose. A number of bridges also had chapels or even hospitals (in the medieval sense of visitors lodging houses) on them which, again, may have had a role in toll collection. Some bridges had hermits associated with them. These hermits may also have been toll collectors although taking the toll in the form of a charitable donation. Given the large number of individuals and members of institutions who had royal charters granting them freedom from toll it may have been in practice more effective to extract tolls through *voluntary* alms than pontage tolls, although a considerable number of pontage tolls for all types of bridge are recorded in the royal records.

With the help of James Wright I was able to contact Bruce Watson who, most kindly, shared his listing of fortified bridges with me and this, combined with my own research, added 39 records to Gatehouse (a few of these are records produced by separating bridges from their associated town walls for which records did exist). A new [listing of fortified bridges](#) is added consisting of 45 records although I reject one proposed bridge entirely and doubt a further 6. I've added a distribution map to that listing and the [distribution maps page](#) (click on the maps to get the full size map). I've also updated all the information on the first page of the [statistical information page](#) which was last updated over two years ago.

I must stress this is very much a first stab at this research and that fortified bridges have been quite poorly recorded, certainly in the archaeological databases. I would certainly like to hear of any other possible fortified bridges



in the UK. I won't record those in Scotland in Gatehouse but I will pass on any information on any site to Bruce Watson for his ongoing research on the subject. As always such help will be [acknowledged](#) although I am aware that people share their information for the love of the subject.

While I was at the conference of the [Society of Medieval Archaeology](#) I met Simon Roffey who is excavating a *leprosaria* and later leper hospital just outside Winchester (see [The Magdalen Hill Archaeological Research Project](#)), this fascinating site is outside the scope of Gatehouse however Simon mentioned a large 'cellared' or sunken feature on the site which seems to have been short lived and is securely dated to the Anarchy of the 1140s. The current working hypothesis for this feature is that it was a sub-structure supporting a timber tower of some size and possibly a fortification guarding the eastern approach to Winchester. See the [gatehouse record](#) for more information. Simon would certainly welcome further ideas regarding this feature, particularly analogues and you are welcome to contact him (his details are on the Magdalen Hill website)

or me and I will forward information on to him.

Also at that rather fascinating conference I had a chat with Mark Gardiner who was recently produced a working paper for the Highways Agency in regard to a couple of features proposed by Nick Austin as the site of William the Conquerors landing and initial base. I had been aware of Mr Austin's theory from his website for some time and Gatehouse had listed his two 'norman camps' as doubtful sites. Taking to Mark I am now able to reject these sites which are basically lynchets. Nick Austin has recently published his theory as *Secrets of the Norman Invasion* which has had some publicity particularly by that part of the popular press that likes 'conspiracy theory' ideas. My initial comments on Nick Austin's work, when I first became aware of them some years ago that his theory 'has all the characteristics of a personal campaign rather than a serious academic study - such as selective evidence and derogatory dismissal of previous scholarship' to these comments I now add 'Gatehouse is an amateur historian who as always found the professional archaeologists and historians working for state bodies, county councils or in academia both welcoming and helpful. Of course, as a large group of individuals, they have differences and disagreements and I do not always agree with all interpretations made by professionals or academics. If Mr Austin has found professionals 'secretive' or unreceptive this is all to do with Mr Austin's approach and manner. The risk is that ill mannered individuals with an axe to grind like Mr Austin will sour the the relationship between amateur researchers like myself and the professions who skills and knowledge are, at the moment, so readily shared. I believe there is further room for investigation and interpretation of the

events around Hastings in 1066 but Mr Austin may well have soured the ground for any contribution to that investigation from private individuals.'

These are, of course, my personal comments but links to Nick Austin's website and to Mark Gardiner's report are given in the records for Wilting Manor [Upper](#) and [Lower](#) 'Norman Forts'.

NEW SITES ADDED

As detailed above.

NEW FEATURES

As detailed above.

The [downloadable versions of the databases](#) have all been renewed to reflect the new information etc.



Definitely not Wilting Manor