



Gatehouse

Gatehouse News

11 Feb 2015

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

My more detailed re-examination of Perriam and Robinson's *The Medieval Fortified Buildings of Cumbria* (1998 Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society) carries on. I've completed the part regarding the historic county of Cumberland and, hopefully, will finish Lancashire North of the Sands and Westmorland by the end of the March. I hope this will have added something

to most records for [Cumberland](#), probably least for the major sites (which were mainly up to the standard I'm trying to achieve for Gatehouse as a research aid). For many 'lost' minor sites the amount of information is so minimal that it is not possible to expand on these, but for many middling sites I do hope the Gatehouse records are improved.

There are a good number of lost sites in Cumberland known from late 16th and early 17th century sources. A map of the '[Debateable Lands](#)' of 1590 has many sites marked which are usually described as 'towers'. However the form of these buildings is unclear, very few have any remains; [Kirkandrews](#) is a Scottish style tower house, [Netherby Hall](#) was probably a pele tower attached to a hall but [Haithwaite](#) and [Stonehaugh](#) were pele-house type bastles. My definitions of pele-towers and pele-houses now includes reference to the social status of the inhabitants of these buildings, as well as the form, so I've changed the '[confidence](#)' statement for many such sites. Where a gentry status person (fairly loosely defined to include



Simon Ledingham's photograph of Kirkandrews Tower

vicars, rectors, squires and sergeants as well as knights) can be identified with such a lost site I'm assuming (by analogue) a pele-tower, but where the site was held by a tenant of other social status I'm now assuming some form of stonehouse most probably a chamber over byre peel-house type bastle.

The early Cumbrian maps can be found online at the useful (if somewhat poorly designed - no one should use frames!) [Old Cumbria Gazetteer website](#).

In chasing down a reference I became aware of W.G. Collingwood's chapter 'Remains of the pre-Norman Period' in the *Cumberland Victoria County History* (Vol. 1 of 1901). It seems later castle studies authors, who all 'knew' castle were post-Conquest overlooked this chapter in a standard source but at the time Collingwood was writing mottes were widely considered to be Saxon and, therefore, pre-Conquest. Collingwood included a few sites not previously recorded in Gatehouse although all can be rejected.

Last newsletter I said I would write something about the books of last year. On reflection there is not really much point. For those who, like me, are members of the [Castle Studies Group](#) then the annual [Bibliography](#), now penned by Gillian Eadie after many years of stalwart service from John Kenyon, is the source for a comprehensive listing of castle related publications and this is ably supported by the reviews of major texts in the annual *Journal* of the group. However two books of 2014 do stand out as worth mentioning, in terms of the limited regional scope of interest of Gatehouse; Ron Shoemsmith's *Goodrich Castle Its History & Buildings* inspired me to take a visit to [Goodrich Castle](#) but arguably the best book of 2014 was Neil Ludlow's *Carmarthen Castle - The Archaeology of Government* published both in English and Welsh which has left me wanting to revisit the beautiful south west of Wales which I last went to over 10 years ago.

Something less often reviewed in the CSG *Bibliography* and *Journal* are television programmes. Last year saw two series on castles broadcast by the BBC. The five part [Secrets of the Castle](#) was another of a series



Ruth Goodman at Guédelon

with historian Ruth Goodman doing some historical re-enacting and experimental archaeology. This was based at Europe's biggest experimental archaeology site [Guédelon](#), where a '13th century castle' is being built with contemporary tools and methods. I found these five programmes entertaining; the second - which had a trebuchet launching missiles was a bit silly, more men with toys than history but the third, showing interior design and the making of medieval paint was really interesting. 'Secrets' was clearly intended for a more populist audience and its mainly unacknowledged expert authorities were, presumably, the french experts used at Guédelon.

Presumably intended for a more bookish audience was the three part [Castles: Britain's Fortified History](#). Quite what the BBC were doing making this programme is difficult to understand. It was presented by Sam Willis, who is a maritime historian and who, as far as I'm aware, has never written anything in the academic press on castles. The actual account of castles was extraordinary dated and could have been written in the 1950s, it certainly didn't seem to appreciate the meaning of the work done in the last 30 odd years. The academic consultant was Oliver Creighton but I wonder how much input he actual had it to

this. The slight recognition of the Bodiam Castle debate was the description of the gatehouse and barbican of the castle as over-elaborate although this was stated shortly after the description of the Edwardian Castles of Wales as the apogee of the 'true' defensive castle (The gate passage at Caernarfon Castle was never completed but that truly was excessive and over-elaborate).

The main comment I have heard about this programme from people within academia is "I watched it for 20 minutes and then turned off". The BBC can have a reputation for making dull documentaries but this really was direly boring as well as grossly out-dated.

There are academics who actually understand castles and who are good presenters and there is both room and a need for a programme for the intelligent general audience that brings the developments in castle studies over the last 50 years to that audience. The Channel 4 series from 2003 [Castle](#), presented by Marc Morris, was nearly that programme but didn't quite make it for me.

However, that the BBC can produce excellent castle related stuff was shown by a short series of five audio essays [The Fall and Rise of the British Castle](#) on the Radio Three's The Essay series. The first four of these essays are all excellent although for me Nicola Coldstream's account of master masons Master James of Savoy and Master Hugh of Chester and Roberta Gilchrist's on women in castles stood out.

While the TV programmes are no longer available to download the radio essays are and are certainly worthwhile listening.



To Hell in a handcart

Changes

The 'comments' section I added to english sites a couple of months ago is gradually being updated, records up to Hampshire have been updated so that my personal comments are now more clearly differentiated from the 'authoritative' descriptions. I'm gradually working through this but as every time I do such a review I find I end up doing some sort of rewrite, correction or addition it takes rather longer than one might suppose.

New Sites Added

All in Cumberland.

From Perriam and Robinson;

[Aikton Hall](#) - rectory moat - not really a fortified site.

[Calder Abbey Gate](#) - fairly ordinary monastic gatehouse - not usually considered as a 'fortification'.

[Workington Rectory](#) - 15th century hall house of architectural interest but not fortified.

[Crossfield](#) - questionable fortified manor house.

[Castle Carrock Stonehouse](#) - record of lost stonehouse bastle.

[Swates](#) - questionable moated farmstead.

[Templegarth](#) - A recorded 'stonehouse', the documentary evidence being similar to many supposed bastle sites although the standing remains seem to be of a single storey building.

[Greystokes Hallsteads moat](#)

[Greenthwaite Hall](#) - unfortified 16th century hall house

[Hutton John moated site](#) - precursor site Hutton John Tower.

[Haltcliffe Hall](#) - supposed stronghold of uncertain form.

[Lazonby Castlerigg 'moat'](#) - probably an Iron Age site only.

[Thackwood](#) - rejected pele tower.

[Warwick on Eden earthwork](#) - irregular earthworks suggested as a fortification.

From the VCH;

[High Mains](#) - rejected 'mound with base court'

[Skew Hill mote-hill](#) - rejected 'mote-hill'

[Watch Hill mote-hill](#) - rejected 'mote-hill'

[Longtown](#) - I'd previously included references to a 'pele' at Longtown with [Arthur Knowes](#) and these may well be the same but there is sufficient doubt for me to now feel a separate record is justified.