Gatehouse News
17 June 2013

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

Since the last newsletter I've updated the Gatehouse records for the historic counties of Hertfordshire and Lancashire (and Lancashire North of the Sands, now part of Cumbria) bring these up to standard with improved and better credited descriptions and improved bibliographies. For Lancashire online links either to scanned copies or the British History Online transcriptions to the Victoria County Histories are given. The 8 volumes of this early edition of the VCH (1906-14) are notably full and of high scholarship being edited by, and containing much work by, William Farrer - a prolific historian who did much very basic work in transcribing and translating medieval documents and publishing these in various books and an example of the high standards an amateur historian can achieve.

Hertfordshire also has an elderly VCH, of value but somewhat less impressive than Lancashire's and a Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England *Inventory* published in 1910, perhaps, of more limited value. Hertfordshire's castles were reported on by the noted castle studies expert Derek Renn in his *Medieval Castles in Hertfordshire* (1971 Phillimore) but there doesn't appear to be a more recent county wide survey of the medieval fortifications. It's not a county with impressive castles; Berkhampstead being visible from the main line railway and in the care of English Heritage is the best known. I like Pirton with its complex of the motte and bailey and village earthworks and a fine Pirton

Grange, recently removed from English Hertiage's *Heritage at Risk Register*, an example of a late medieval yeoman's house dressed up with the moat and timber gatehouse with 'traces of a portcullis'.
Hertfordshire's proximity to London and Westminster means that it did have some important palaces. Hertford Castle was an early motte and bailey but it was at its prime when used as the palace of the Lancastrian kings; other palaces include Hatfield and Kings Langley. There were also a number of courtiers houses, aggrandized with battlements and licences to crenellate such as the Manor of the More and Rye House.

While Lancashire may be rich in its historic local studies it was a poor medieval county and also, in the 11th century a frontier county with the northern parts bounding the celtic kingdom of Strathclyde. The poverty may have lead to greater lawlessness in Lancashire and consequently the county has a large number of fortified buildings but few of any size. Clitheroe is well known for the tiny size of it's great tower but even the royal castle of Lancaster is a pretty modest castle in

Clitheroe's 'Great' Tower

comparison to the great castles of Yorkshire. The other royal castle of Lancashire, at least until the 13th century, was West Derby where, it seems, the original timber defences were never replaced. Here a Pipe Roll of 1213 reportedly records a 'garrison' of 140 foot soldiers, 10 Knights and 10 Crossbow men which seems an incredible number for what was a small castle and I suspect either represented all the troop available in the whole hundred of West Derby or a contingent of troops temporarily lodging at the castle before going onto Wales or Ireland.

NEW SITES ADDED
Looking at Lancashire I came across Nico Ditch, now in south Manchester, which a Wikipedia entry suggests might have been in built as late as the 11th century, putting it into the date range for Gatehouse. However, while this is recorded in medieval documents as a great ditch (*magnum fossatum*), it is clear this was an early medieval 'defensive' dyke (cf. Offa's Dyke) used only as a boundary marker in late middle ages. As such it is added as a 'reject' site to Gatehouse.

Elsewhere I came across Bayons Manor in Lincolnshire. This was a most impressive 19th century neo-gothic castle built by the eccentric Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt and blown up in 1964! This house falls well outside the remit of Gatehouse but is recorded in the PastScape record as a medieval castle! There are also suggestions it was built on the site of an earlier "fortified" house called Tealby Hall. I've not been able to exclude that possibility, although I feel it is unlikely, so that house is added as a questionable site.

Bayon's Manor in 1852