



*Michael Thompson (1928 - 2019) An Appreciation*



**Michael Thompson (1928 – 2019)  
An appreciation**

Dr. Michael Thompson (1928-2019) was one of the finest archaeology and medieval architecture scholars of the twentieth century. He was an erudite and thoughtful man who wrote and reflected a great deal about restoration and conservation philosophy. This he did while working as an Inspector and later as Head of the Ancient Monuments Branch in Wales, until he retired in 1984, at the age of 55. All his ideas and considerations were based on his own hands-on experience. In the world of medieval castles he became well-known for authoring a number of excellent guides at sites where he was involved in excavation with subsequent explanation and presentation to the public. Like his contemporaries, the late Derek Renn, and Anthony Emery, he was able to distil and articulate complex ideas and themes and present them in a few well-chosen words.

The original 'blue' castle guides are sought after and remain on the shelves of many castle enthusiasts today. In Michael's case, for example, there were three: Pickering (1958), Farnham (1961), and Kenilworth (1977). Conisbrough (1969) regrettably remained a short pamphlet guide. His exemplary work on Bolingbroke castle never found its way into a blue guide, but is well documented elsewhere. Pickering was perhaps his most

enjoyable, as he noted: *'on account of the area and the wealth of documentary evidence in the Pipe Rolls', and Kenilworth castle, where I did a great deal at the south end and revealed a postern along the north curtain. In regard to surprises, Farnham was a classic example, and produced 'one of the most astonishing experiences of my life – the discovery of a flange, the buried stone tower, with its well shaft and associated motte which was part of the original work. It was, perhaps, my greatest contribution to knowledge, leading to my interest in castles'.*

Additionally, at Farnham, he was able to accurately revise Bishop Waynfflete's brick entry-tower to 1470-75 (from foundation to roof), with the help of the Winchester manorial accounts, and not to the Tudor period as previously believed. At Conisbrough he was able to recover the plan of the ground-floor great hall and other domestic buildings within the inner bailey. Another excavation project (with Peter Curnow) was undertaken at Richards Castle, Herefordshire, where they found much that was new and ground-breaking, such as the polygonal keep or tower on the motte top. Michael's life-long experience in unravelling buildings suggested that *'even on small monuments at least three or four visits are needed to understand what you see'* (2012 65), and this astute comment has always been lodged in the head of this writer.





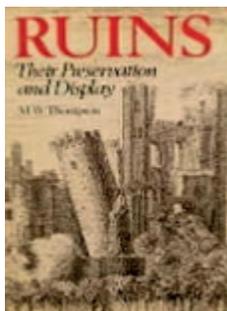
*Michael Thompson (1928 - 2019)*

Michael is rather less well known for a diverse yet prolific range of outstanding publications penned over 40 years. It starts in 1977 with his interest in the beginnings of archaeological investigation (*General Pitt Rivers, evolution and archaeology in the nineteenth century*), and concludes with his last work, a very personal and honest account of his life, completed in 2012. (*Reading, Writing and Archaeology - An Autobiographical Essay*).

Mention should also be made of his important contribution to medieval and other Russian archaeological studies in his early years, now little known other than to specialists. The following books (not listed in the Bibliography) are those translated and edited from Russian to English at the height of the Cold War: 1961: A. L. Mongait, *Archaeology in the USSR*; 1964: S. A. Semenov, *Prehistoric Technology*; 1967: *Novgorod the Great, Excavations at the Medieval City, 1951-62* directed by A.V. Artsikhovskiy and B. A. Kolbin; 1970: S. Rudenko, *Frozen Tombs of Siberia, the Pazyryk burials of Iron-Age horsemen*. Such was the scope and breadth of Michael's intellectual interests.

As a tribute and thanks for his contribution to enhancing our knowledge of medieval life, castles and others buildings, the following is an overview of some of the highlights and insights that Michael has brought to our attention and of the pleasure that it is to read and re-read his cerebral, yet quite accessible, written works.

**1981: Ruins - Their Preservation and Display:**



To preserve the authenticity of a ruin, while making it accessible and intelligible to the visitor, is the chief challenge or dilemma facing all those concerned with the care of ruined buildings today. Drawing on nearly thirty years' experience with the Ancient Monuments Service, Michael was probably the first writer to explore this problem in depth. He examines in detail the technicalities of the retrieval of overgrown remains, the

preservation of masonry, laying out for display, the representation of missing parts, the restoration of ancillaries such as moats, and the interpretation of what survives. Over 50 'before-and-after' photographs show the treatment given to some notable buildings in England and Wales. The chief emphasis is on medieval remains, but Roman and prehistoric ruins are also included.

In Michael Thompson's own words in the *Preface*: '*When I came to Cardiff, (1974) few things impressed themselves more on my mind than the great contrast between, on the one hand, the massive restoration of ruins undertaken at [Cardiff] castle and Castell Coch by William Burges for the Marquis of Bute and, on the other, the preservation of existing remains, as they stand, by the Government service concerned with these matters. It was clearly a subject for exploration and explanation, although it became plain at an early stage that the first step was to understand the treatment of ruins as it has been carried out over the last seventy years*'.

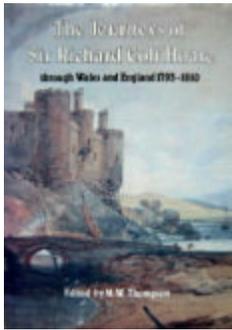
*'There is no general study, no periodical to which one can turn for an account of this work, and indeed much of it has now passed beyond living memory. The result has been this essay which is an attempt to give an account of the treatment of ruins without straying into the architect's sphere on one side nor into the official aspects of it on the other. As the Notes at the end of the book disclose, it has had, inevitably, to be drawn largely from my own experience....The relatively short length of the book will also, perhaps, be an encouragement to the prospective reader. It is a particularly pleasant task to acknowledge my debts to others, especially colleagues, whether architects or Inspectors, from whom over the years I have learnt so much. The only name that it would be right to mention specifically is the now-retired [late] Assistant Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments (Mr R(oy) Gilyard-Beer OBE, FSA, who for many years was my mentor in this matter. His lectures at Rome, York and elsewhere had gone some way to create a rationale of ruins'. (Jacket: Detail of a print, 1740, by the Buck brothers of Caerphilly Castle, Glamorgan).*





Michael Thompson (1928 - 2019)

**1983: *The Journeys of Sir Richard Colt Hoare through Wales and England 1793 - 1810***



This is a remarkable and little known book. Edited by Michael from unpublished papers by Colt Hoare, this drew attention to an important source revealing much about the strength of the cult of the Picturesque and the early Industrial Revolution. The journeys

in Wales, the Welsh Borders and Northern England are an aspect of Hoare's activities that preceded his more famous work in Wiltshire after he met William Cunnington in 1802. His descriptions here in many ways have more social and historical interest than his later more restricted antiquarian pursuits. They provide vivid descriptions and illustrations of parts of Britain little known at the period visited and hence they are seen with a fresh eye.

The money from a City merchant bank founded in the late seventeenth century had already provided the means for constructing the house and famous grounds at Stourhead when Richard Colt Hoare inherited the property through his wife. Grief-stricken by her early death he set off for six years of travel on the Continent, mainly in Italy. The outbreak of the Revolutionary wars put an end to this and from 1793 as a kind of substitute he made long trips to Wales each summer. In 1798 and 1799 he accompanied William Coxe to Monmouthshire, providing the illustrations for his history of the county.

This kindled ambitions in him to publish an annotated and illustrated edition of the thirteenth century description by Giraldus Cambrensis of the journey by Archbishop Baldwin through Wales in 1188, published in two volumes in 1806. From 1804 he travelled in Wales with Richard Fenton when he was encouraged to write a description of Pembrokeshire which Colt Hoare himself illustrated. Colt Hoare's own journals of his travels from 1792 to 1810, here published for the first

time, together with a few of his own illustrations, give a vivid glimpse of travelling in England and Wales at a period when the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars forced many would-be 'tourists' off the Continent to explore their own lands.

In Michael's own words: *Having catalogued the papers of General Pitt-Rivers at Salisbury and written his biography it was perhaps inevitable that I should be attracted by the volumes of journals of a much earlier antiquary, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, which after the sale of the Stourhead Library found their way to the Cardiff City Library. An added attraction was that Sir Richard's travels took him not only to Wales but to England into the Midlands and North as far as Durham, coinciding roughly with the area in which I had been concerned for many years with the preservation of ancient monuments. Sir Richard took the same roads, visited the same monuments, the same towns and even the same inns as I visited 60-80 years later! I would have shrunk from such a daunting task as transcription of this large body of material had I not received encouragement from Colt Hoare's biographer, Mr Kenneth Woodbridge (d. 1988)...*

*'Although the work still has topographical value its chief interest is biographical, in an area not covered by Woodbridge, the powerful influence of the cult of the picturesque on an individual, the starting point for the great Wiltshire projects. At a time when many others, like Turner and Wordsworth, were subject to the same influences there is a social aspect to this study. Hoare did much to promote the cult of Giraldus, one of his most permanent influences on the Welsh scene'.*

*'I hope therefore that this shortened version of the journals will be of interest to the general reader as well as the historian and antiquary. No work of this kind can be undertaken without the assistance of others: in addition to the invaluable help from Mr Kenneth Woodbridge. [The late] Mr Donald Moore, Keeper of Prints at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, helped by listing Hoare's drawings in the collections under his*



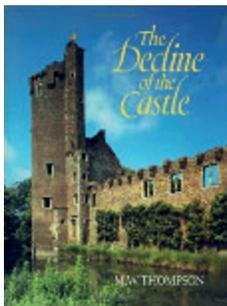


Michael Thompson (1928 - 2019)

*charge. Mr Peter Humphries [Cadw, retired] has assisted with photography. Lastly, I must not omit the publishers [Sutton Publishing] without whose bold willingness to undertake such a non-commercial project all my labours would have come to nought'.*

(Jacket: Conwy Castle, J M W Turner).

**1987: The Decline of the Castle.**



This ground-breaking book was written after Michael had relocated and retired in 1984 to Cambridge, his 'alma mater', and it was published by Cambridge University Press. Since the excavations at Farnham

the change of function away from the castle as a military fortification had been a subject of major interest. This is the finest book on late-medieval castles that has been written. The book's success, since reprinted in paperback, suggests that it has been an innovative work for readers, particularly for historians interested in Civil War 'slighting'. Appendices 1-3 are vital tools in this research.

Extensively illustrated with photographs, plans and antiquarian engravings, the book examines the 'decline' of the castle as both fortification and seigneurial residence over the two hundred and fifty years that preceded the Civil War. In general, this was a period in which function played less and less part and display - even fantasy - ever more, in the minds of castle builders. Although few new castles were built in England after 1400, the growing power of artillery and warfare in France continued to provide stimuli for architectural development. Michael relates alterations in design to contemporary social changes and devotes particular attention to the rapid decline both in the Tudor period and to the massive destruction wrought by Parliamentary forces during the Civil War. A concluding chapter examines the attractive quality the image of the castle has continued to hold over the intervening three centuries and

examines some remarkable latter-day examples of the genre, among them William Burges' Castell Coch in Glamorgan and, in this century, Edwin Lutyen's Castle Drogo.

In his *Preface*, Michael notes: *'This book attempts to relate the particular course of events in this country from when castles stopped being erected anew, through the period of decline in use but survival in fantasy, up to the final destruction in the Civil War. Events took a very different course on the Continent and in Scotland and Ireland, and by drawing attention to the contrasts the colours of the picture are sharpened and the development made more intelligible, no more so than by differing responses to the new weapon, artillery here, as opposed to that on the Continent'.*

*'Some attempt is also made to relate alterations in design to contemporary social changes, without, I hope, trying to climb too far up the greasy pole of socio-architectural history! Special attention has been paid to the systematic destruction of the Interregnum, far more extensive than is usually appreciated, while the concluding chapter briefly describes the extraordinarily evocative quality the image has continued to hold over the last 300 years'.*

*'My interest in this subject was first aroused when I was able to demonstrate that the great brick entry-tower at Farnham Castle which so dominates the town, was not a Tudor addition but was erected in the fifteenth century, apparently as a direct imitation of the tower at Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire. Later events brought me into a position of guide-writer to the latter (1974) and I also had considerable dealings with Lord Cromwell's manor at South Wingfield. Over some years I had seen the demolished stump of Bolingbroke castle emerge from the turf, and subsequently I had not a little to do with the great Jacobean and Carolean edifice at Bolsover, Derbyshire, and afterwards with the remarkable reconstruction of the Marquess of Bute at Castell Coch. Peter Smith's map of tower-houses concentrated my thoughts, and a first essay in this field was a contribution on the abandonment of the castle in Wales and the Marches'.*





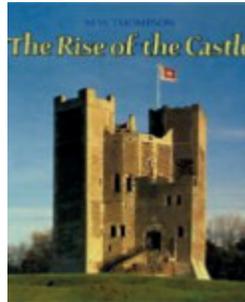
Michael Thompson (1928 - 2019)

*'The subject clearly needed further treatment. The appendices that provide the material on which the book is in no small measure based will, it is hoped, have independent use for reference. As we are venturing into new ground the reader has to be supplied with the information that is not available in published sources. The illustrations have been chosen to further understanding of the text rather than purposefully to beautify it. There is always a temptation to do the latter; the library shelves groan under the weight of lavishly illustrated volumes that seek precisely to do that and not much else. If the fantasy element is to be discussed it is perhaps as well for the author not to be drawn himself too much into the fantasies! Acknowledgement is made in the list of illustrations to those who have kindly allowed their use. However I must record my gratitude to those colleagues (alas, not all alive today), inspectors and architects, in the government service, from whom I have learnt so much. I am particularly beholden to my former colleague Mr Jeremy Knight, for the material used in Appendix 4, to [the late] Dr. D. F. Renn for drawing my attention to a number of useful articles, and to Dr. Anthony Emery for advance loan of his article on South Wingfield [GMH Vol. II]. My [late] wife has carried the burden of typing the text, and has taken most of the photographs.'*

Whilst a review article by David Stocker FSA in the *Archaeological Journal* (1992, 149, 415–20), was a little critical of Thompson in not going far enough in his revisionist move away from the overriding military interpretation of castles, Thompson countered and defended his view when he wrote a response: 'The military interpretation of castles' in a later volume of the *Archaeological Journal* (1994, 151, 439-45).

### 1991: *The Rise of the Castle*

Romanticised as ruins, treated as relics of forgotten military campaigns or as mere lessons in architectural history, the castles of England and Wales have too rarely been examined as places in which real people lived. Fresh both in style and



approach and richly illustrated, Michael's book aims now to redress the balance. Examining the rise of the castle from its European origins in the tenth century to 1400, the author devotes particular attention to the

domestic accommodation, colourfully adorned but often cold and claustrophobic, that castles offered their aristocratic inhabitants. He considers the way the timber feasting halls of the Anglo-Saxon nobility came to be transformed into the towering masonry keeps of the full medieval period and reviews the manner in which accommodation was continually adapted to changing methods of fortification in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Another neglected theme, the castle's role in stimulating the establishment of new towns and monasteries throughout the realm, forms the subject of later chapters. The book closes with the castle at its 'zenith', reviewing the extravagant outburst of self-conscious construction that took place in the fourteenth century as display and appearance came for the first time to play a more important part as function in determining building design.

*The Decline of the Castle* provides a sequel to the book, the two volumes together offering a conspectus of the whole castle experience from the ninth to the twentieth centuries. The publication date reversal of the chronological order is accidental without special significance. *Jacket: Orford Castle.*

From the Preface: *With some experience of medieval halls and mottes, Long Buckby (1955) and the Pickering castle guidebook (1957) my road to Damascus as far as castles are concerned was the uncovering of the vast masonry structure at Farnham castle, Surrey, in 1958, the highlight of thirty years in the service of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments. The correction of the dating of the construction of the great brick entry tower*





*Michael Thompson (1928 - 2019)*

*of this castle to 1470-5 from the Winchester Pipe Rolls concentrated my attention on the later history of castles, which ultimately led me to write *The Decline of the Castle* (1988). The earlier history of castles attracted then and since far more interest and far more controversy; the storms around the subject are as continual as those around Cape Horn. I was repelled by the debate, sometimes carried to unseemly lengths, between archaeologist and historian: to an outsider like a dispute between the deaf and the blind. One had misgivings about entering such a hubbub.*

*My first intention had been to write about the hall, the second anchor of English history, perhaps outranking the parish church itself in its antiquity. However, long association with castles in my work led to the thought that the hall could best be treated as part of the earlier history of the castle which may be viewed in some respects as an aberration of the hall culture; the *Decline* had been in a sense an account of the resurgence of the hall from its long confinement within castle walls. Furthermore, the residential element of the castle, less robustly built than the defences and less immediately evocative, has never received the attention it deserves. The castle was an alien introduction from abroad and cannot be understood without looking at its place of origin; comparison and contrast with the Continent in the eleventh and twelfth centuries are essential to an understanding of architecture in this country.*

**1995: *The Medieval Hall***



This is the first general account of the history of the 'great hall' in Britain and continental Europe from Anglo-Saxon times to the late middle ages. Using a wide range of literary and archaeological sources in combination of close examination of standing halls and

remains, Michael describes and interprets the development of one of the dominant architectural features of medieval (and Early Modern) life. He also examines social functions of the hall - the hall-culture, a way of life turning on the great room at the social and physical centre of secular and religious communities. The well-illustrated and ambitious review is of great interest to architectural historians and it socio-cultural approach makes it equally valuable to students of medieval history and literature. It is informed by studies of literary sources as diverse as Beowulf and Gawain, monastic rules and Arthurian poetry.

He notes: '*As a schoolboy I spent a short time each day at morning prayers in a large nineteenth-century hall complete with gallery, screens and adjoining solar tower, and in the holidays lived in the hall section of a sub-medieval vernacular house. Later I became familiar with the somewhat attenuated hall culture of a Cambridge college. Although acquainted therefore with halls from an early date it was, and indeed still is, a matter for surprise and puzzlement how dominant a part they played in medieval secular life.*

*This book is really an attempt by the author to resolve this puzzlement and take the reader along with him. Measurements and the abstruse vocabulary of timber roof construction are avoided so far as possible; it is what went on under the roof that matters. It is a coherent account of the subject - for the first time - that is sought, the purpose of halls within the society that used them. Errors there must be in an undertaking of this kind, but if it makes the subject more intelligible and prompts thought on neglected but central issues it will have been eminently worthwhile to have done it. Halls tended to become my major interest in the two books on castles that I recently wrote since they provide the essential background. In a review of these books in the *Bulletin monumental* (1993(2), p. 436) they were described as a sort of sociologie. If the study of halls in the society that produced them, from literary or any sort of relevant evidence*





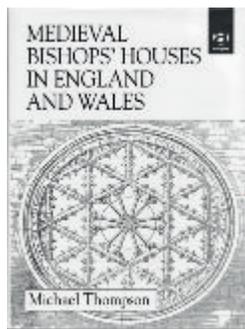
Michael Thompson (1928 - 2019)

available - without the jargon normally associated with this subject - can be described as 'sociology' then I am very happy to accept that description for this book. Among supporting institutions the extremely helpful service and agreeable facilities provided by the Cambridge University Library and the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs deserve special mention. Individuals who have allowed the reproduction of illustrations, who are named in the captions, are offered my particular thanks'.

The history of the secular medieval hall written in such a persuasive, lucid way, is an absorbing subject, but the writer readily admits in his autobiography that out of all his works, this is one he would write rather differently today (2012 66), in the light of further research and synthesis since made by others after the book was written. However this publication rewards very close study and is an object lesson in skilful brevity.

'Jacket illustration: Eltham Palace, interior view of the hall.'

#### 1998: Medieval Bishops' Houses



From 1133 to 1536 there were 17 bishops' sees in England and four in Wales. Two of these 21 sees had two cathedrals: Bath and Wells and Coventry and Lichfield. At each cathedral the bishop had a house or palace. The book describes the surviving medieval remains there and the far more numerous manor houses and castles owned by the bishops, as well as their London houses. Apart from royal residences these are by far the largest group of medieval domestic buildings of a single type still extant. An attempt is made to describe how these buildings relate to the way of life of the bishops in relation to their duties and their income and how in particular the dramatic social changes of the later middle ages influenced their form. The work of the great

bishop castle-builders of the twelfth century is discussed as is the general history of the medieval house with its early influence from the Continent, the changes in style of hall and chamber (still controversial) and its climax in the great courtyard houses of Cardinal Wolsey. The book includes over a hundred plans, sections and photographs of the surviving parts of bishops' residences, with a survey of 1647 of the Archbishop's palace at Canterbury before demolition. It will be of interest to architectural historians, of course, and its social-cultural approach makes it equally valuable to students of medieval history and literature.

In Michael's own words he notes: 'My interest in medieval episcopal residences began in 1958 with the remarkable tower base discovered in the excavations on the keep at Farnham, and consequent hunting through the Winchester Pipe Rolls. Acquaintance with the see palace at Lincoln, Durham castle, Lyddington and St Davids did much to broaden these interests. I was anxious to pick a medieval class of person, whose activities were reasonably well documented, the houses of whom had survived in sufficient numbers to illustrate the views I had formed in my books on castles and the hall (1991, 1995). Bishops' houses seemed an ideal example. Hence the present book, not a catalogue, nor an exhaustive study, but I hope by following certain themes to reach a coherent account of a fairly chaotic subject. I have not had an opportunity to see all the buildings in question but fortunately Dr [John] Schofield has covered London examples of episcopal houses, while Anthony Emery's three-volume work on larger medieval houses, will furnish descriptive detail of the buildings under examination. This removes the burden of description beyond a minimal level. Norman Pounds has been collecting information about bishops' houses on record cards over some years, a record that he has most kindly passed on to me.

This has furnished valuable guidance on tackling a large and seemingly inexhaustible literature. I am also grateful to Tim Tatton-Brown for explanations of the excavations on the palace at Canterbury. [The late] Dr Charles Coulson has most kindly



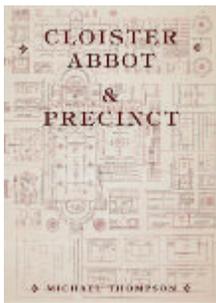


Michael Thompson (1928 - 2019)

allowed me to extract licences to crenellate for bishops from his full list. Many others have helped by allowing me to use their illustrations in my figures and will be mentioned in the captions. [The late] John Dunbar advised me on bishops' houses in Scotland and John Newman on the palace at Mathern, Gwent. To all these I am very grateful'.

Michael felt this publication 'broke new ground' and 'I remain pleased with it'. It is, in fact, perhaps his most interesting work, superbly and profusely illustrated with plans photographs and insightful comments.

### 2001: *Cloister, Abbot & Precinct in Medieval Monasteries*



Another little known, but well-researched work. The relationship between the origin of the cloister in Western monasticism, the place of the abbot in it, and his escape from it to life outside the monastery is fascinating. Ranging from what the tourist sees

of monasteries in eastern Europe to discussions of the first monasteries of St Pachomius in Egypt, this book has a broad and diverse scope. Major monastic areas in England and Ireland are examined as is the invention of the cloister in Europe, including the famous and controversial plan of St Gall. The abbot's journey from his position in the cloister at the time of the Norman Conquest to spending more time, outside the monastery in the twelfth century is chronicled with special reference to the Abbot of Westminster. In the past the subject of how monasteries had to protect themselves in the face of social upheaval in the later middle ages has been virtually ignored, but is examined here in some detail. Well-illustrated with numerous plans, and with several appendices providing supporting material, this original study is essential reading for the student of monasticism.

From the *Preface*, Michael noted; *Having recently discussed medieval bishops' houses (1998) my attention inevitably turned to the housing of*

bishops' fellow lords spiritual, the medieval abbots and priors. The resources available, either written or architectural, do not allow anything like the same kind of treatment and so my familiarity with extensive monastic remains exposed in the 'heroic' inter-war years of the Office of Works (1977) made it appear necessary to work on a broader canvas.

*It seemed particularly useful to look at monasticism in less insular terms than is customary in this country: so the first two chapters of the book have strayed widely from Egypt to Europe and only in the last three chapters of the book has the subject been confined largely to England. The prime interest in this brief work is still with buildings but perhaps treated a little more historically than usual. The author is not trying to teach so much as to explore for his own satisfaction, as much as that of the reader, to pursue those aspects of the subject often ignored but of great interest.*

*The reader may find it helpful to read the chapter entitled 'Conclusion' first as forming a summary of the book.*

*A work of this kind cannot be written without relying on many others. I have had the advantage of being able to cull monastic licences to crenellate from the list of [the late] Charles Coulson. John Schofield has most kindly made additions for me to the list of abbots' houses in London. The Egypt Exploration Society has told me of references to fieldwork on the sites of the monasteries of Pachomius in the Thebaid. Lorna Price and her husband Robert P Dittmer made the photographs of the illustrations especially from the first volume of the great work by Horn and Born on the St Gall plan. Dr Glyn Coppack kindly allowed me to use several of his monastic plans. The other illustrations have been drawn from the publications of many workers in the field, both past and present, to whom I must express my gratitude for allowing their use. The bibliography at the end names many of them.*

Appendix V lists the Monastic licenses to crenellate by date, indicating whether they are Augustinian,

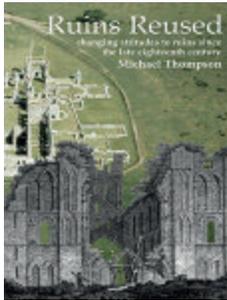




Michael Thompson (1928 - 2019)

Benedictine, Cistercian or Premonstratensian, and indicates which monasteries have large gatehouses, surviving in whole or in part.

### 2006: *Ruins Reused*



Historic and picturesque ruins have been an integral part of the British landscape for many centuries. They have been an influencing factor in the development of art, architecture and landscape management. However, it is only in recent years that

people have become interested in what these ruins can reveal about the nation's past. *Ruins Reused* charts the development of this active relationship between the public and the historic built environment. Using a variety of sources, including the surviving diaries of Richard Colt Hoare, and the works of Ruskin, Morris and Lubbock, the author examines the evolution of our attitudes to the preservation of our heritage.

In his *Preface* the author comments that *'This book is not a second edition of my book "Ruins: their Preservation and Display" 1981, which was a matter of nuts and bolts, methods and results; this one tries to describe the personalities and motives of the people involved with ruins in this country and the later entry of the State into the field. Towards the end of the book the purpose of preservation of ruins is discussed. It has been prompted by some of the fervent support of 'restoration' among archaeologists (not I think among architects), a matter much influenced by the supposed need of tourists, for tourists would be the main target of 'restoration' The book may then be of interest to the general reader for he is as often as not this kind of tourist. The disappearance of the old Works organisation, in name at all events, is perhaps another good reason for looking back at it, but this subject has been treated rather more perfunctorily than it deserves. Although I had thirty years at the sharp end of preservation I now tend to write about it, rather than do it in the field.*

### Conclusion

The chronology of Michael's *Prefaces* allows us to plot the progressive path of Michael's thinking on all the inter-related subjects that caught his attention over nearly 40 years, and helps us to understand his journey and his intellectual exploration, which was more into the outlook and mind of medieval society, rather than just the buildings themselves.

*Ruins* (1981) to *Ruins Reused* (2006) brings us almost to full circle on the professional interests and output of Michael Thompson. His later books, often quite modestly publicised, reveal a consistent disciplined, rational approach in unravelling and resolving his 'puzzlements' on architectural development, whether the medieval castle, hall, bishop's houses, palaces, cloisters and monasteries. He sets out on an odyssey to find the answers and always wants the reader to travel with him. His books are intellectually rigorous, delving deeply into origins, looking at pan-European shared cultures with comparative examples from further afield including Russia, Egypt and the Middle East. After retirement Michael made 39 overseas journeys in his almost restless quest for answers. He is generous in referring to all that have helped him, and he wanted to share his knowledge; we are glad that he has.

Ultimately his quest is a journey to find his true self and reconcile his contradictions. His final 'autobiography' is an honest self-appraisal of strengths and weaknesses. He writes of 'two souls, or two angels, who bear us company and trouble us each in his own way, one turning us towards good and the other towards evil since sudden changes cannot be accommodated to one single entity'. (from Michel de Montaigne, essays, 11, 1,377), (2012, 4).

Undeniably, to this and many other writers, he has given great pleasure, enlightenment and deep insights. Overleaf is a full bibliography covering his medieval interests, and published output.

Neil Guy





*Michael Thompson (1928 - 2019)*



**Michael Thompson**  
**Bibliography 1955 - 2012**

1956 'The excavation of the west bailey of a ring motte at Long Buckby, Northants, *Journal. of the Northants. Nat. Hist. Soc. and Field Club.*, 33, 55-66

\_\_\_\_ 'A group of mounds on Seasalter Level, near Whitstable, and the medieval embanking against the sea', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 70, 44-67

\_\_\_\_ 'Excavation of a medieval moat at Moat Hill, Anlaby, near Hull', *Yorks. Archaeol. Journal.*, 39, pt. 1, 67-85

\_\_\_\_ 'Excavation of two moated sites at Cherry Holt, near Grantham, and at Epperstone, near Nottingham'. *Journal of Lincs Architectural, and Archaeological. Soc* 6, pt. 2, 72-82

1958 *Pickering Castle, Yorkshire*, Ministry of Works, green guidebook.

1959 'Excavation of the medieval fortified hall of Hutton Colswain at Huttons Ambo, near Malton', *Archaeological Journal*, 116, 69-91

\_\_\_\_ *Conisborough Castle, Yorkshire*, HMSO pamphlet guide

1960 'The date of 'Fox's Tower', Farnham castle, Surrey', *Surrey Archaeol. Collections*, 57, 35-92

\_\_\_\_ 'Recent excavations in the keep of Farnham castle, Surrey', *Medieval Archaeology* 4, 31-94

\_\_\_\_ 'The first inspector of ancient monuments in the field', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd series, 23, 103-24

1961 *Farnham castle, Surrey*, HMSO blue guidebook

\_\_\_\_ 'Motte substructures', *Medieval Archaeology*. 5, 305-5

1964 'Reclamation of waste ground for the Pleasance at Kenilworth Castle' *Medieval Archaeology* 8 222-3

1965 'Two levels of the mere at Kenilworth castle', *Medieval Archaeology* 9, 155-151

1965 'The origins of Bolingbroke castle, Lincolnshire', *Medieval Archaeology* 10, 152-153

1965 'An alert in 1318 to the constable of Bolingbroke Castle, Lincs' *Medieval Archaeology* 9. 167-8

1967 'Excavations in Farnham castle keep, Surrey', *Château Gaillard* 2, 100-105

\_\_\_\_ 'A contraction in plan at Archbishop Chichele's College, Higham Ferrers, Northants.' *Medieval Archaeology*, 11, 255-57

1968 'A single-aisled hall at Conisbrough castle, Yorkshire', *Medieval Archaeology*, 12, 153

1969, with Peter Curnow, 'Excavations at Richards Castle, Herefordshire 1962-64' *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd ser., 32, 105-27

\_\_\_\_ 'Further work at Conisbrough castle, Yorkshire', *Medieval Archaeology* 13, 215-6

\_\_\_\_ 'Further work at Bolingbroke Castle, Lincolnshire', *Medieval Archaeology*, 13, 216-20

\_\_\_\_ 'Kenilworth Castle since 1962' *Medieval Archaeology* 13 218-20

\_\_\_\_ *Conisbrough castle, Yorkshire*, Dept of Environment, pamphlet guidebook

1971 'Kenilworth Castle' *Archaeological Journal*. 123 204-7

1974 *Tattershall castle, Lincolnshire*, National Trust guidebook





*Michael Thompson (1928 - 2019)*

- 1974 'Old Bolingbroke Castle' *Archaeological Journal* 131 314-7
- 1976 'The construction of the manor at South Wingfield' in G. Sieveking, I. Longworth and K. Wilson (ed.), *Problems in economic and social archaeology*, (Duckworth: London), 417-38
- 1977 *Kenilworth castle, Warwickshire*, HMSO blue guidebook.
- 1977 'Three Stages in the Construction of the Hall at Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire', in M. R. Apted, R. Gilyard-Beer and A. D. Saunders (eds), *Ancient Monuments and their Interpretation: Essays presented to A. J. Taylor* (Chichester: Phillimore), 211-18.
- 1981 'The architectural significance of the buildings of Ralph Lord Cromwell (1394-1456)' in A. Detsicas (ed.), *Collectanea Historica - Essays in memory of Stuart Rigold*, (Maidstone: Kent Archaeological Soc.).
- 1986 'Associated monasteries and castles in the middle ages: a tentative list', *Archaeological Journal* 143, 305-21.
- 1987 'The abandonment of castles in Wales and the Marches', in J. R. Kenyon and R. Avent (ed.), *Castles in Wales and the Marches: essays in honour of D. J. Cathcart King*, 205-17, Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press
- 1989 'The Green Knight's castle' in C. Harper-Bill, C. Holdsworth and J. Nelson (ed.), *Studies in Medieval History presented to R. Allen Brown*. (Woodbridge: Boydell).
- 1990 *The Cambridge Antiquarian Society 1840-1990*. (Cambridge Antiquarian Society).
- 1991 'The architectural context of Gainsborough Old Hall', in P. Lindley (ed), *Society of Lincolnshire history and archaeology*, Occasional Papers, 8, 13-20
- 1992 'Keep or country house? Thin-walled Norman proto-keeps', *Fortress* 12 13-22
- \_\_\_\_ 'A suggested dual origin for Keeps', *Fortress*, 15, 3-15
- 1993 'Medieval technology in 1492', *Medieval History*, 64-70.
- 1994 with John Kenyon, 'The origin of the word keep' in, *Medieval Archaeology* 38, 175-6
- 1994 'The military interpretation of castles', *Archaeological Journal*, 151, 439-445
- 1994 'The Place of Durham among the Norman Episcopal Palaces and Castles', in D Rollason, M. Harvey and M. Prestwich (eds). *Anglo-Norman Durham*, 425-36. (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer)
- 1996 Robert Willis and the Study of Medieval Architecture, in Tatton-Brown & Munby, (eds.) *The Archaeology of Cathedrals (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology Monographs S.*
- 1997 'Castles' in D. S. Brewer and J. Gibson (eds.), *A companion to the Gawain poet*, (Martlesham, Boydell & Brewer) 119-130
- 2004 'The early topography of Lincoln castle' in P. Lindley (ed.) in *The early history of Lincoln castle*, Occasional paper 12, of the Society for Lincolnshire history and archaeology, 23-29

**Books**

- 1977 *General Pitt-Rivers: evolution and archaeology in the nineteenth century*. (Moonraker Press, Bradford on Avon).
- 1981 *Ruins, their presentation and display* (London: British Museum Press: A Colonnade book).
- 1983 *The journeys of Sir Richard Colt Hoare through England and Wales, 1793-1810*, (diaries shortened and edited by M.W.T). (Stroud: Sutton Publishing).
- 1987 *The Decline of the castle*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- 1991 *The Rise of the castle*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- 1995 *The Medieval hall, the basis of secular domestic life 600-7600 AD* (Scolar Press);
- 1998 *Medieval Bishops' houses in England and Wales* (Ashgate Publishing).
- 2001 *Cloister, abbot and precinct in medieval monasteries* (The History Press).
- 2006 *Ruins reused, changing attitudes to ruins since the late eighteenth century*. (Heritage Marketing & Publications Ltd, King's Lynn).
- 2012 *Reading, writing and archaeology: an autobiographical essay* (Fastprint Publishing, Peterborough) (self-published)

