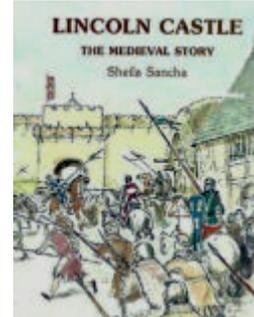
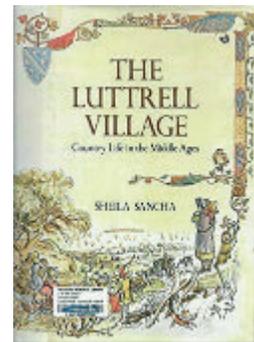
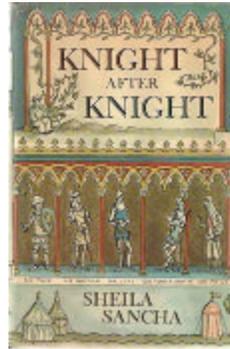




### Sheila Sancha (1924 - 1994)



Author Sheila Sancha, painted by her husband, celebrated society artist Carlos Luis Sancha, c. 1948



'Children's author Sheila Sancha, before she sadly died prematurely in 1994, aged 70, wrote: 'I was born in 1924, and was brought up in the Lincolnshire Wolds, near the source of Tennyson's brook. The family house was built alongside a Roman quarry that had been flooded and turned into a lake. Father, a businessman, always seemed to be painting landscapes and enlarging the garden. I went to school in the south of England, the holidays being spent at home, among sisters, horses and dogs.

After serving from 1943 until 1946 in the WRNS I studied at the Byam Shaw School of Art, where I met Carlos Sancha. We married in 1948 and returned to Lincolnshire to live in a remarkable house (belonging to father) and this was the place that sparked off all the interest in medieval subjects. It was a medieval moated house, of the same date and brick as Tattershall Castle, with magnificent stone mullioned windows, some of which boasted the original glass. It contained four huge rooms and no electricity, and winter evenings were lit by candles and pressure-lamps. Carlos worked as a portrait painter and when there

were more commissions in London than Lincolnshire we moved with our two children to a flat in Earl's Court. There, there was electricity, there were washing machines, and the children could attend school.

In 1956 I commenced a series of drawings for the *Shell-B.P. News*, a job which lasted ten years. We had a third child and moved to a flat in Kensington, where we remained. I illustrated for Bovis, the building firm, and a historical magazine *Past and Future*, both on a regular basis. In 1966 I decided to attempt a book and thought it would be fun to invent some characters and insert them into a strict historical context; but I underestimated the difficulty and research involved and *Knight After Knight* was not published until 1974. My studio was now filled with files on medieval history, costume, armour and buildings. I was invited to write a book on castles and launched into further years of research and *The Castle Story* was not published until 1979 (initially by Kestrel/ Penguin). I am now hard at work on a book about a medieval Lincolnshire village'. [This proved to be *The Luttrell Village - Country Life in*





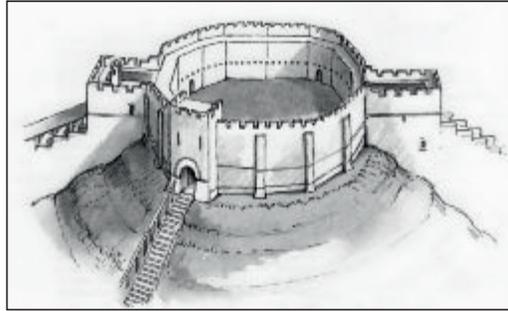
### Sheila Sancha (1924 - 1994)

*the Early Fourteenth century*. This was published in 1983 and aimed at children up to 12. The Luttrell village was actually Irnham. *The Castle Story* (1979 onwards) was a great success, both in the UK and internationally. It was extremely well-researched to an academic level, yet written and illustrated with such ease and clarity it is entirely suitable for all ages. In the *Acknowledgements* she noted:

'I have done my level best to make the information in this book as accurate as possible; but I have worked alone and therefore have come to my own conclusions. Luckily I was able to use the superb library of the Society of Antiquaries, as well as the first-rate public reference library in Kensington, and also, whenever I came across an exceptionally knotty problem, there was no difficulty in tracing the right authority to help me to unravel it. I would now like to thank all those who have taken time and trouble to reply to my letters or to answer my questions verbally. I would particularly like to thank Brian Davison of the Department of the Environment, who advised me in the very early stages of this project, and whose help has been invaluable'.

I am also extremely grateful to [the late] Derek Renn. I have always found his book *Norman Castles in Britain* a veritable mine of information and therefore I was delighted when he volunteered to read and comment on the first draft of my text; this allowed me to assess the accuracy of my statements and gave me the much needed confidence to carry on and finish the work. Packing such a wealth of information in between the covers of a book has been no easy task, and I would have been lost without the skill and enthusiasm of Dorothy Wood and Treld Bicknell of Puffin Books. Finally, a multitude of thanks are due to Kaye Webb: there would have been no book at all if she had not visited my studio and invited me 'to put the people back into the castles'. London, 1977'.

All this is over forty years ago and this writer never met Sheila Sancha, though Derek Renn, was always the gentleman, and always generous with his time and interest; David Stocker talked



*A bird's eye view of the Lucy Tower, Lincoln Castle, from Sancha, 1985, p. 27, view from the north.*

about her too. In fact she consulted David on one of her final books *Lincoln Castle - The Medieval Story* (1985); This took a number of years to research.

During that time she remained baffled by many of the aspects of the Lincoln castle ruins and made slow progress until Andrew White, then Keeper of Archaeology for Lincolnshire Museums, advised her to study the Willson Collection which was in the Lincolnshire Archives at the time (now at the Society of Antiquaries, London). These notes, sketches and measured drawings from the pen of E. J. Willson, the architect who restore the castle in 1834-5, 'came as a revelation'. For Lincoln castle further examples of Sancha's illustrative work can be found at: <http://www.castlestudiesgroup.org.uk/Shell%20Keeps-Catalogue1-Lincoln-low-res-21-09.pdf>

Goodreads has the full list of her publications and still continues to receive enthusiastic reviews: For example: 'Photographs of the great majority of British castle ruins are annotated and added to with line drawings of the terrain /knights /workers/ original walls. etc. which aids understanding and interest. Explanatory diagrams on most pages add understanding, and perspective views from moat /drawbridge/ attackers /defenders raise awareness of features of castle building that help in a fuller understanding. The 1979 book is as useful today as it was then. Highly recommended'.....it remains so.

Sheila Sancha's father was Neal Green (1885-1974) and they lived at 15th century Halstead Hall (& moated site), Stixwold, near Woodhall, Lincs, now a Grade I listed building.

