
Mote, Moat, or Motte?

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suspect that Shone is identical with Muff, which appears as Mough in the inquisition of 1621,²¹⁹ and as a small house and bawn called Nuff on a map of 1622.²²⁰

WHITECASTLE. Irish Garnagall. O.S. Donegal 31 5 2.

Whitecastle was a small castle, occupied in 1600 by Brian Oge McLaughlyn.²²¹ It is mentioned along with Red Castle in all the accounts and maps quoted above, and was demolished before 1835, probably before 1665. It was included in the Carey estate. The present house is eighteenth-century, but its vaulted cellars are doubtfully claimed as older. In the garden we saw a mullion of a large sixteenth-century rectangular window, unglazed and with bar-holes.

219. *I.C.H.R.* ii, Donegal 11 James I.

220. Reproduced in Hill, *Plantation of Ulster*, p. 432.

221. *C.S.P.I.* 1600-1, p. 276 f.

MOTE, MOAT, OR MOTTE?

As late as fifty years ago, it is safe to say that the British Isles did not contain half a dozen men of archæological scholarship who recognised that what was then commonly known as a "moat" or merely a "mound," was probably, in nearly all cases, the site of a Norman castle. I think the first scholar of high rank to discover the fact was Mr. Horace Round. In the *Quarterly Review* of 1894, he attacked Mr. G. T. Clark for his attempt to show that the moated mound was a Saxon castle. He was followed in 1898 by Mr. George Neilson in the *Scottish Review*, in an illuminating paper on *The Motes in Norman Scotland*.

The question of the origin of these mounds, found as they are all over England, Wales, South Scotland, and Eastern and Southern Ireland, began to excite the interest of several prominent writers on antiquarian studies, and among the most notable of these were Dr. Goddard Orpen and Mrs. Ella S. Armitage. The former confined his attention to Irish examples, the latter chiefly to those in Great Britain. Dr. Orpen contributed many relative articles to the *J.R.S.A.I.* during the opening years of the present century, and in 1911 appeared the first two volumes of the four entitled *Ireland under the Normans*. In 1912 Mrs. Armitage's *Early Norman Castles* was published. In her preface she acknowledges the valuable assistance afforded her by Dr. Orpen. It must be remembered that during the years that these two writers were collecting materials for their work, motor-cars were little in use and unreliable as a mode of transport; therefore, both writers were confined in their investigations to mote-sites near railway stations, and consequently record only a small percentage of those that exist. Their work, however, established the identity of these mounds with Norman castles, and their contention was proved beyond doubt by literary evidence from the various records of the early Norman period.

About 1910 began the splendid work still being carried out by the Royal

Commission on Historical Monuments; the reports cover Great Britain, the Scottish monuments being dealt with by local committees. In 1927 Mr. W. Mackay MacKenzie published in book form his Rhind lectures, *The Mediæval Castle in Scotland*. In 1928 appeared Professor Macalister's invaluable book, *The Archæology of Ireland*. All these works deal at some length with Norman mote-castles.

The early Ordnance Surveyors in the United Kingdom usually marked motes as either "mound" or "fort," but on re-surveys they adopted phonetically, from the local names, the word "moat," without pausing to consider that a moat in the dictionaries is solely a ditch, and cannot, therefore, be a mound. The popular word for these mounds thus became in time "moat," until even the dictionaries gave the meaning as equally "a deep trench round a castle or fortress; a mound or hill." The most recent dictionaries, however, mark the latter meaning as obsolete. Under the word "mote" they merely say "a particle of dust, a speck."

Of all the learned writers above mentioned, only two depart from the name mote and insert the modern French word *Motte*; Mrs. Armitage explains that she does so because the phonetic similarity of the two words mote and moat was likely to lead to confusion. Dr. Macalister follows her lead without any apology. All the others, including the Royal Commission for Scotland, retain the proper spelling. In England this difficulty is being surmounted by submitting the term "castle mound" in the O.S. maps.

The objection to the word *motte* is threefold. In the first place it gives a sound quite out of harmony with the popular pronunciation; to introduce a French word for a familiar English one in English literature, without any valid reason, is pure pedanticism; and we can prove from contemporary literature that the Anglo-Normans pronounced the word mote and spelled it *môt*, the equivalent to the modern mote.

"The Song of Dermot and the Earl"* was written in French by an Anglo-Norman scribe about 1172. In his description of de Lacy's conquest of Meath he refers to the grant of Slane to Richard the Fleming where

(Line 3176) "xx feiz li donat vraiment

Si la gest ne vus ment

Un mot fist cil ieter

Pur ses enemis greur"

(Twenty fiefs he gave him truly,

If the gest does not deceive you;

A mote this man erected

In order to harass his enemies)

* Edited by Dr. Orpen, 1891, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

and later, when the Irish counter-attacked,

(Line 3300) "La mot firent tut la geter
Desque a la tere tut verser"
(The mote they overthrew completely
And levelled it all to the ground).

In the six lines quoted above from the twelfth-century poem, we select the following words as showing the then customary use of long vowels:—

The modern word "vous" is spelled "vus."
The modern word "une" (fem.) is spelled "un."
The modern word "pour" is spelled "pur."
The modern word "toute" is spelled "tut."

All through the poem similar spellings are to be found, such as "tuz" for toutes, "lur" for leur, "suz" for sous, "iur" for jour. From these samples of early French spellings it is safe to say that "mot" was pronounced with the "o" long. Should any doubt exist as to this, it seems to be brought beyond question by a reference to the form used by contemporary Irish scribes. Generally the Irish used their own word, "Dun," to describe a Norman castle mound, but in several instances they adopted the current Norman word, leaving, where they did so, no doubt as to the pronunciation then in use. In the A.F.M. the word used is Mhota, as in Baile an Mhotaigh (Ballymote), Mhota Gairead (Mount Garrett), while in Moate (Co. Westmeath), the sound is perfectly preserved though the spelling is very un-Irish.

The officers of the Ordnance Survey (N.I.) are correcting moat into mote in their maps now in preparation.

Should an inquiring stranger ask an Irish countryman if there were any "mottes" in the neighbourhood he might be met with unexpected but none the less unrestrained laughter, as in semi-slang the word has another meaning very far from that of a castle mound!

H. C. LAWLOR.

POTTERY FROM AGHALEE GRAVEYARD

THE ruin of the old church at Aghalee,¹ though much defaced, is probably a romanesque structure. There was a door on the west, and above it a probably rectangular window in the gable. The frameless remains of slit-windows, round-headed or rectangular, may be seen in the north and south walls. The east wall has disappeared.

From near and east of the probable site of the east wall the sexton in 1938 brought me a number of wheel-made medieval sherds. Many pots are represented

1. O.S. Antrim 62 16 3.