Survey Report

Reference: Survey Report No 53.

Author: Randal Scott and Chris Stevenson

Location: **Mount Stewart Motte**
Mount Stewart
Co. Down

In association with:

THE NATIONAL TRUST

Cover illustration: Aerial view of site, showing outline and overgrown vegetation.

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1. Summary

1.1 Location

Figure 01: Location of Mount Stewart

A site survey was undertaken in the grounds of Mount Stewart Demesne at OS Grid Reference: L5636070130, County Down on 25th April 2015. The motte is located about 1 kilometre ENE of Mount Stewart House. It is sited on a low N-S ridge with, at one time, good views over the surrounding countryside. The site is now under shrub and tree cover. However, the motte itself is remarkably well preserved, with steep sides and a deep surrounding ditch still in evidence. Nearby monuments include a Rath and Templecrone church ruins (UAS Survey Report No. 46).

Figure 02: Author and members of Field Team examine ridge

1.2 Aims

In order to enhance the archaeological record of this site, the aims of this survey were to produce accurate plan drawings of the monument and carry out a photographic survey. This information was compiled into a report and copies submitted to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, to the National Trust and to the archives of the Ulster Archaeological Society.

2.Introduction

2.1 Background

The survey of the Motte was undertaken on 25th April 2015.   It was carried out by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society, in response to a decision taken by the committee of the society to extend an opportunity to members to participate in practical surveys of archaeological monuments. This followed a bequest to the society from the late Dr Ann Hamlin, from which the items of survey equipment were purchased. During discussions with Malachy Conway, Survey Archaeologist of the National Trust in Northern Ireland, it was noted that many archaeological sites on National Trust property had not been subject to a detailed archaeological survey. It was therefore agreed that members of the society would commence a programme to survey these sites and the Motte at Mount Stewart was subsequently chosen for the 2015 survey season. Therefore on 25 April 2015, a Survey Team (comprising of 16 team members, supervised by Mr H Welsh and Mr M Conway) visited the motte to carry out extensive inspection of the site and its surrounds.

2.2 Documentary Evidence

2.2.1 PSAMNI (1940).   The motte is described in A Preliminary Survey of the Ancient Monuments of Northern Ireland (1940), pages 88 and 89:

> **Mount Stewart Mote**
> On Moat Hill. ½ m. E.S.E. of Mount Stewart Farm Buildings.   Down. Sh. 11, Plan 8 (not marked as an antiquity in 1904 Edn. of O.S. Map).   This is an exceptionally perfect and imposing example of an Anglo-Norman mote-castle without a bailey.

> The ditch descends 8 ft. to 10 ft. from the surrounding ground to the present mud surface of the ditch-bottom which is 10 ft. wide.   The sides of the mote are very stezp, rising by a slope of 1.25 in 1 to a height of 22 ft. to 25 ft., with a flat top of 60 ft. diam.   The mote stands in a plantation of splendid beech trees planted in the early nineteenth century, and the accumulation of leaf-mould in the ditch probably lessens the depth measurements by several feet.   The trees, however, have not been allowed to destroy the structure, which preserves its original contour.
>
> H.C.L.

It is interesting to note, that at that time, there was a plantation of beech trees.

2.2.2 A Survey of County Down (1966) Page 195.
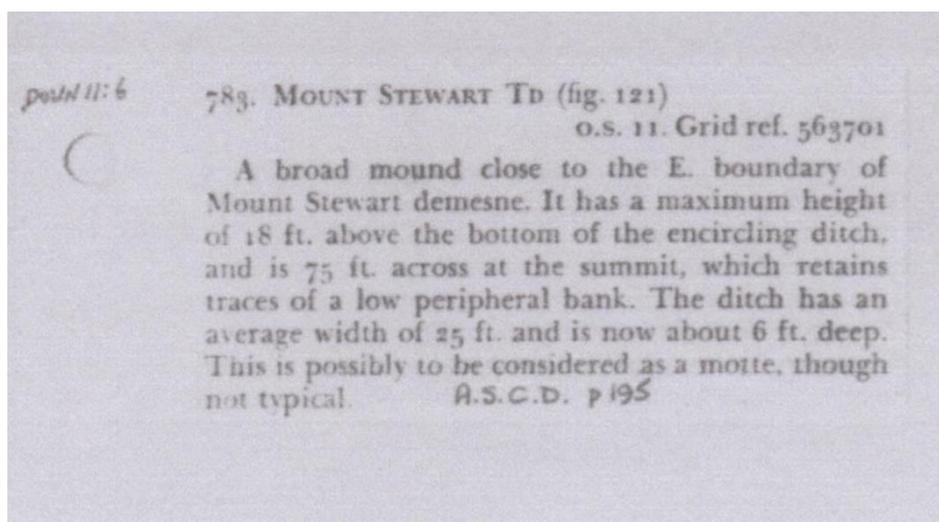
For clarity the above text is reproduced below:

Down 11:6 783 Mount Stewart Td (fig.121) O.S. Grid ref 563701

A broad mound close to the E, boundary of Mount Stewart demesne. It has a maximum height of 18 ft. above the bottom of the encircling ditch, and is 75 ft. across at the summit, which retains traces of a low peripheral bank. The ditch has an average width of 25 ft. and is about 6 ft. deep. This is possibly to be considered a motte, though not typical.

2.2.3 Sites and Monument Record (SMR). The SMR Number DOW 011: 006 lists the site as Moat Hill and describe the site as follows:

For clarity the above text is reproduced below:

The site is densely covered in a range of trees & shrubs making access across the ditch to summit difficult. The site consists of a sandy-stony mound, 22.5 m N-S x 21.5m E-W at the summit. It has a low, flat rim around its edge, but no discernable perimeter bank. The mound stands to a height of 8.5 m above the ditch, having a sharp profile. The ditch is 4.9 m wide & 1.6 m deep & is waterlogged. The site is on a low ride with wide but localized views. Much of the surface details are obscured by vegetation. There is no trace of an outer bank or bailey.

A record dating to October 1991 states:

MOUNT STEWART FOREST

| MOUNT STEWART | MOTTE | 50 ft + OD |
| CS 11; IG | | IGR |

Located within Mount Stewart forest are the remains of a probable motte. It is sited on a low N-S ridge with wide but localised views, being surrounded by low ridges in the middle distance. Unfortunately the site is now densely covered in a range of trees and shrubs making it difficult to get access across the ditch to the summit. The site consists of a mound of sandy-stony make-up, surrounded by a ditch. The top is relatively flat with a diameter of 22.50 m N-S and 21.50 m E-W. It has a low rim around its edge but no discernable perimeter bank. Much of the surface details are obscured by vegetation though a sub-rectangular pit on the west side, observed in 1988, appears to be an abandoned badger set rather than a structural feature. The mound stands to a height of 8.50 m above the ditch, having a relatively sharp profile. The ditch is water-logged in places, measuring 4.90 m in width and sitting 1.60 m below the external ground surface. There is no trace of an outer bank or bailey.

SMR Dn 11:6   October 1991
Scheduled

McNeill T E 'Ulster Mottes: a Checklist' UJA 38 (1978), p.53, No. 106
ASCD (1966) p. 195
PSAMNI (1940) p.88

The Field Report of October 1991 (see below) expresses concerns about the proliferation of vegetation on the site and suggests its removal.

SMR Down 11:b	Td Mountstewart	Type Motte	
A No.	Site Name	Parish	AR 50 ft
IG	GR	Barony	DC
OS			
NB part of forest survey			
Condition well pres.	Threat	Check/Action	Schedule
Land use seedling (oak) plantation		Field boundaries none	
Site description		Photos?	

Previously recorded by T.McE. for details.

Site now suffering badly from proliferation of vegetation. The top has several immature trees which could be removed (sycamore) as well as thorns and brambles. This obscures surface details at present. Similarly the ditch and sides are covered in bushes, thorn, holly, sycamore which obscure the ditch and make it difficult to get access to the centre. Immediately surrounding the ditch are oak seedling plantation which will completely shut out the site when mature and serious consideration should be given to their removal

OVER

| Visited by GR | Date of visit 4/10/91 | SM.2 | Input |

For clarity the above text is reproduced below:

Land use: Seedling (oak) plantation. Site Description: Previously recorded by T.McE. for details. Site now suffering badly from proliferation of vegetation. The top has several mature trees which could be removed (sycamore) as well as thorn and brambles. This obscures surface detail at present. Similarly the ditch and sides are covered in bushes, thorn, holly sycamore, which obscure the ditch and make it difficult to get access to the centre. Immediately surrounding the ditch are oak seedling plantation which will completely shut out the site when mature and serious consideration should be given to their removal.

GR 4/10/91

A field report of April 1988 is particularly informative about the site and its surroundings and is reproduced below:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF NORTHERN IRELAND, 66 BALMORAL AVENUE, BELFAST BT9 6NY

FIELD RECORD

SITE NO	Td.	TYPE	ALT.
O.S. 6" 11·6 DoUN I.G. 149	Mountstewart	Motte	So ft

PREVIOUS ACCOUNTS	GRID REF. JS635 7013.

Probable Motte - D. 22.9M. H. 3.6M. JD 1·8M (M'Neill 1975)

THREATS AND/OR CHECKS	FURTHER ACTION
	Schedule

SITE REPORT An impressive and well preserved earthwork of which there seem to reason to reject (without excavational evidence) as a motte.

It is set on a low N—S ridge with a wide but localised view being surrounded on all sides by low ridges in the middle distance. It has a thought provoking spatial relationship with the grass covered church site [Down 11 7] some 380 m s at the other end of the same ridge. The intervening space is generally flat with a gentle slope and would make an ideal village site.

A Plantation surrounded the motte from at least the early 19th century untill recent years when it was felled leaving many of the stumps in situ and has been partially replanted [Though not in the immediate vicinity of the motte) by seedling trees in the last year or so

The state of preservation of the site is impressive with the sides of the mound and ditch retaining a very sharp profile and little erosion having taken place.

P To

The top is relatively flat and is surrounded by a low rim or lip but no discernable perimeter bank. On the west side of the interior is a sub-rectangular pit c. 1 M. deep which appears to be the result of a collapsed and abandoned badger den. The west side is somewhat overgrown by bushes while the rest is open. Some stumps of the former plantation remain on both the summit and sides and laurels grow of the S. side of the mound. There is no sign of a ramped up entrance. The mound has a sandy stoney make up.

    The ditch is relatively narrow + shallow in relation to the size of the mound. Its sides are sharp [re-cut?] and slightly wider on the north side and waterlogged. There is no trace of an outer bank or of a Bretle bailey.

Dimensions.

Diameter   22.5 M.   N—S.
                21.5 m.   E—W.

Ht above ditch   8.5 m.

Width of ditch   4.9 m

Ditch below ext.   1.6 m.

Sketch
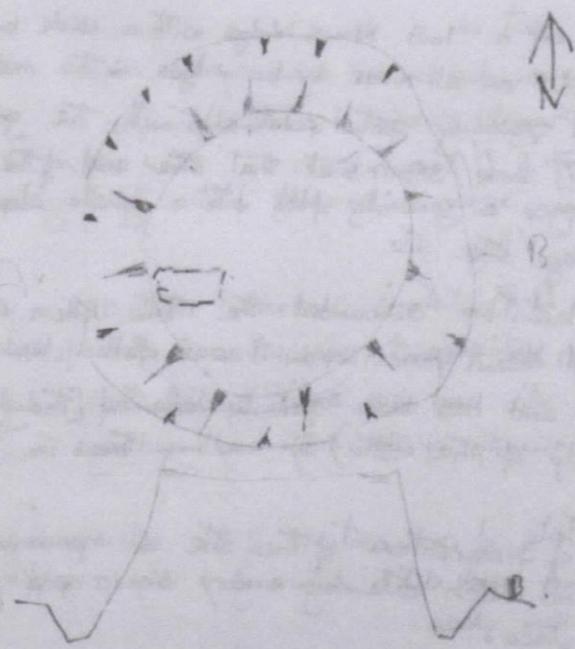
T.McE. 29.4.'88.

2.2.4 U.J.A. 38 (1975) The site is recorded under Number 106 in "Ulster Mottes: A Checklist" by McNeill T.E. Ulster Journal of Archaeology, 38, 1975, page 53.

2.3 Cartographic Evidence

2.3.1 Ordnance Survey 1834
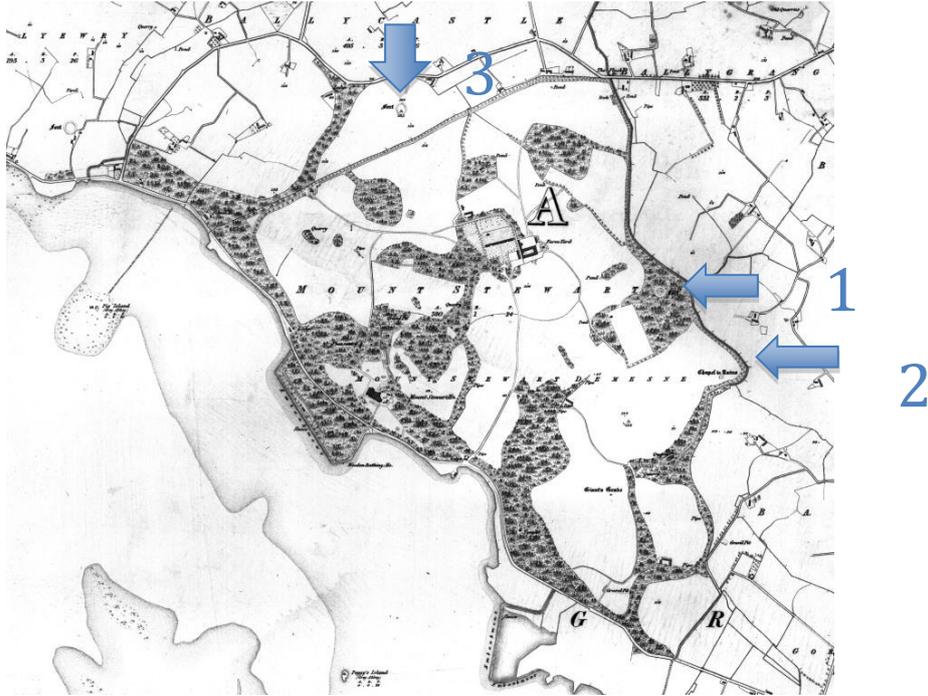
1. Motte – (Shown as Moat Hill.) 2. Chapel – (In ruins.) 3. Rath – (Shown as Fort.)

Figure 03: OS 1834

2.3.2 Ordnance Survey 1920
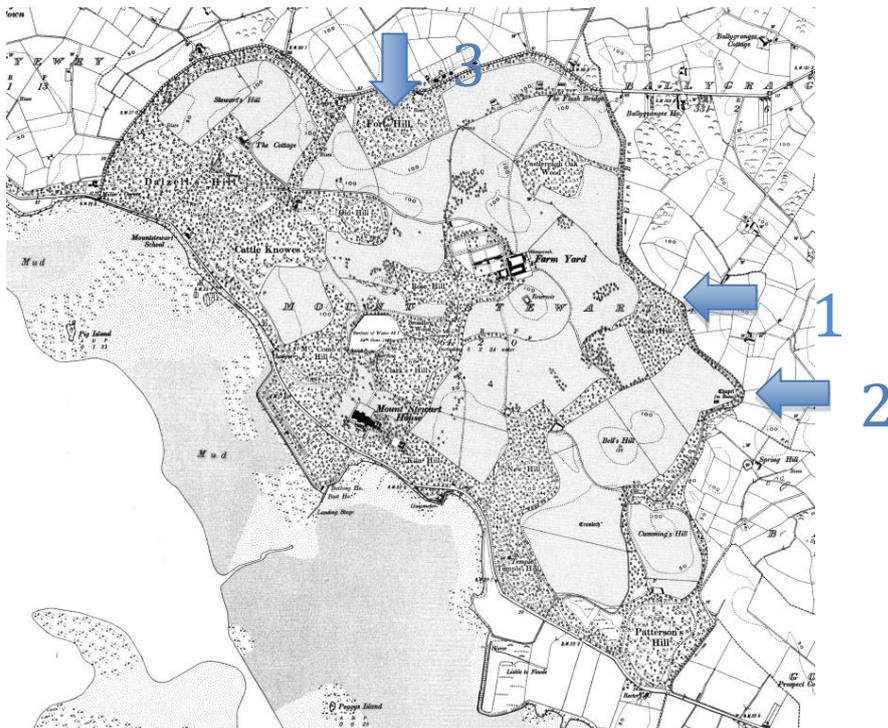
1. Motte – (Shown as Moat Hill.) 2. Chapel – (In ruins.) 3. Rath – (Shown as Fort Hill.)
Figure 04: OS 1920

2.3.3 Ordnance Survey 1967
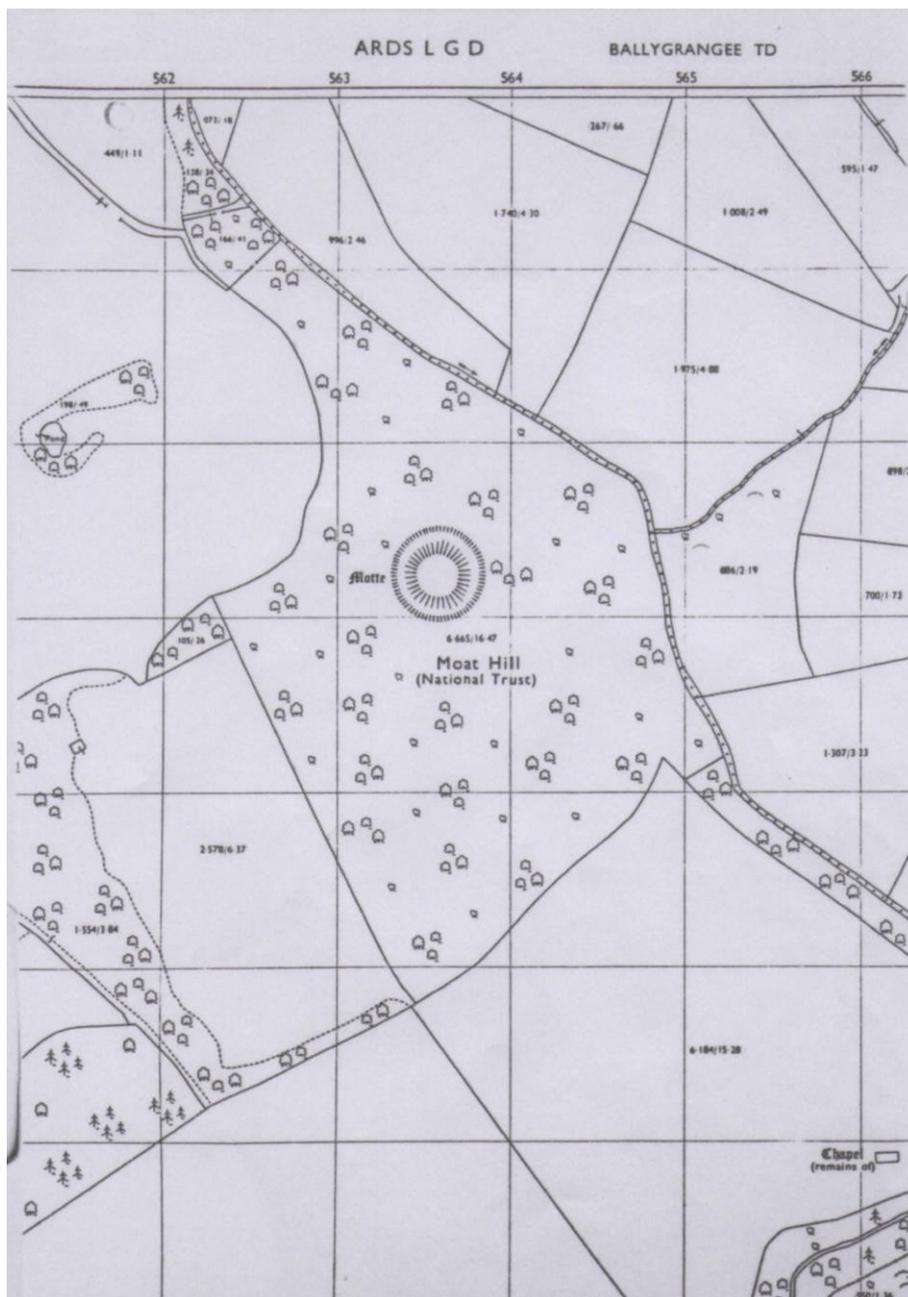
Figure 05: OS 1967

These maps show the increasing afforestation of the site and surrounding area over the 19th and 20th centuries.

2.4 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the National Trust and the Ulster Archaeological Society. All site records have been archived by the National Trust at Rowallane, Saintfield, County Down.

2.5 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey was led by Harry Welsh, assisted by Randal Scott, Chris Stevenson, Lee Gordon, Philip Baxter, Colin Boyd, Hilary Boyd, Mal Conway, Ian Forsythe, Ian Gillespie, Anne MacDermott,

Janna McDonald, Liz McShane, Jo Magill, Pat O'Neill, George Rutherford, Harry Welsh, June Welsh and Karine Wright. The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Malachy Conway, Survey Archaeologist of the National Trust, who worked closely with the survey team in choosing the site and facilitating access.

3. The 2015 UAS Survey of Mount Stewart Motte

3.1 Methodology

It was decided that the survey would take the form of the production of plan drawings and elevations accompanied by a photographic survey and field notes. This report was compiled from these sources in addition to background documentary material.

3.2 Production of Plan Drawings

Estimated height of existing motte

The average diagonal slope of the motte was measued as 10 metres. The distance from the top of the motte to the perpendicular was 6.85 metres. The angle of the slope ranged from 53° to 37° and averaged at 43°. The height was therefore calculated as 7.33 metres, as shown below.

Distance from perpendicular
6.85 metres

$47°$

Motte slope = 10 metres

Height = 7.33 metres

$43°$

Angle of motte slope:

$53°$, $43°$, $43°$, $42°$, $42°$, $43°$, $40°$, $42°$, $37°$.

Mean average taken as $43°$
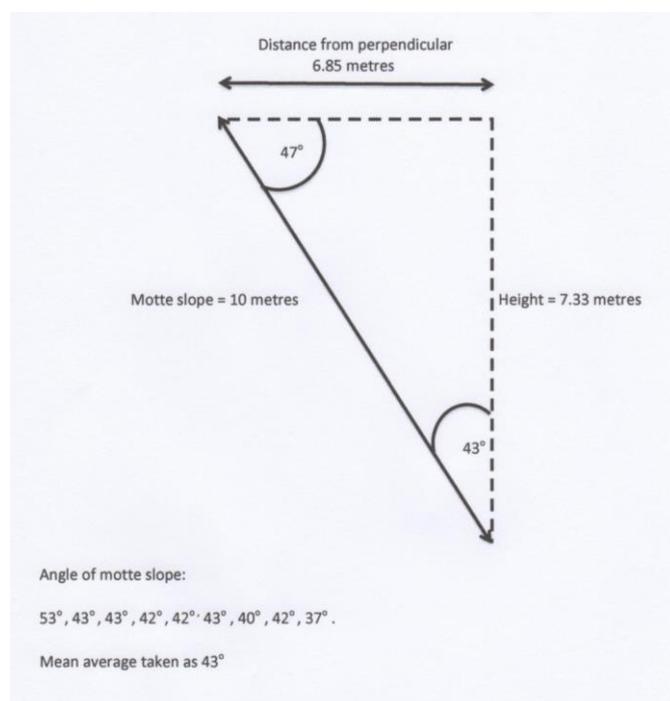
Figure 06: Motte Slope Calculation

Plan drawings and elevations were completed using data obtained from the field survey. Measurements were made using a Leica Sprinter 100 electronic device. The measurements were recorded on site in sketch plans and field notebooks. Field plans were later transferred to a computer-based format for printing.
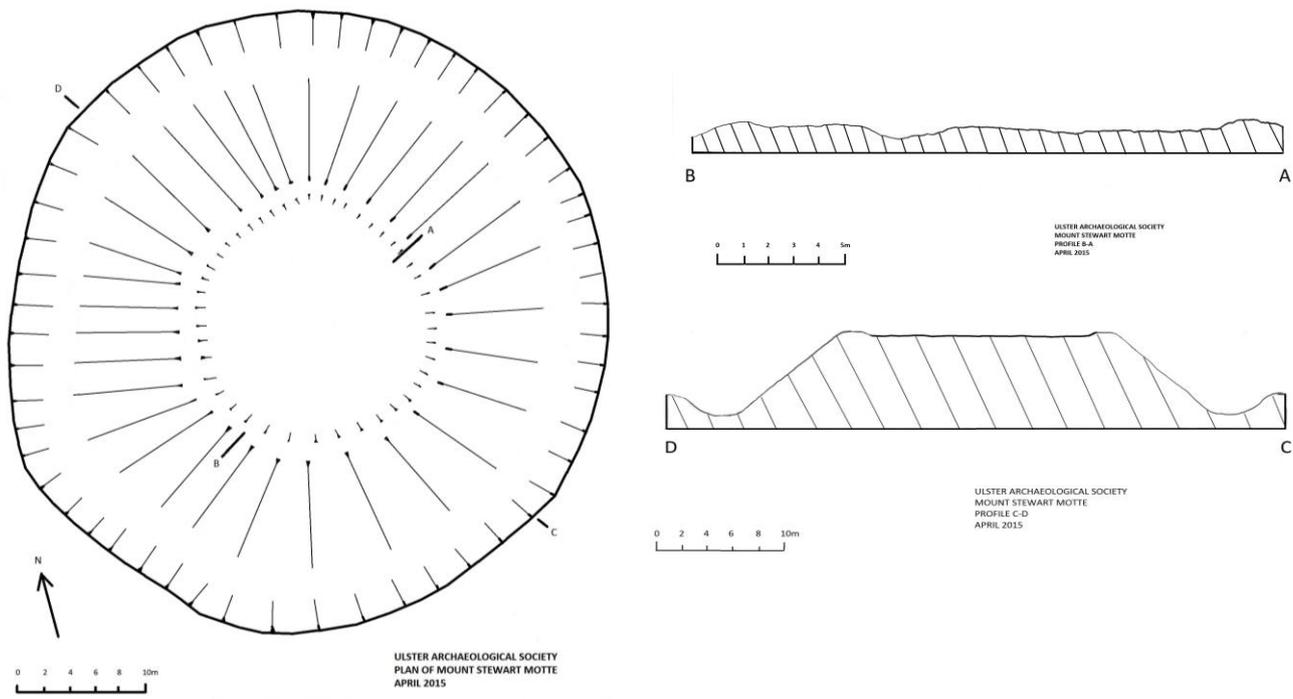
Figure 07: Plan of Motte and Profiles A-B & C-D (Courtesy of Mr. Lee Gordon)

3.3 Photographic Archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using a range of digital and aerial cameras during the site survey on 25 April 2015. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.

3.4 Discription of Motte

The sides of the motte are densely covered in both mature and sapling trees of various types. The top is roughly circular, relatively flat and approximately 23 metres in diameter in size. There is evidence of a large depression and hole in the centre that is thought to be an inactive badger set. The top is surrounded by a ridge that varies in height from 0.5 to 1 metre and 1 metre in width.

Figure 08: Ditch with steep sides to motte

Figure 09: Survey team examining the depression with old badger set entrance.

Figure 10: Ridged embankment surrounding the top of motte.

3.5 The Surrounding Area

The area immediately surrounding the motte is commercially planted woodland that has had little or no maintenance in recent years. The original trees (owned by the Forestry Commission) have not been coppiced recently and the new saplings are too numerous and spindly to have any value. There are numerous metal stakes protruding from the ground that were once used to hold up the protective plastic wrappings, but now form dangerous trip hazards.

Figure 11: Approach through scrub woodland with dangerous trip hazards.

The area further afield is cultivated and well managed and forms part of the Mount Stewart estate owned by the National Trust. The ruins of Templecrone Church and a rath are nearby. (See UAS Field Report 46.)

Figure 12: The Motte, ditches, woodland and managed estate.

4. Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The Mount Stewart motte is almost certainly a Anglo-Norman one. An overview of the Anglo-Norman period in Ulster was included on UAS Survey Report No 46 but, for convenience, it is reproduced here. Thus the Anglo-Norman period and the nature of Ulster Earldom are

described. The types and functions of mottes are considered next, and finally the area around Mount Stewart is looked at in more detail.

4.2 The Anglo-Normans in Ulster

At the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ulster, the Irish Dal Fiatach were in control of much of modern Down and South Antrim, including, of course, the Ards peninsula. The principal family/kings were the MacDunlevy. Other tribes in Ulster at this time were; the Dal Naraide, controlling the Six Mile Water valley in South Antrim; the Ui Tuirtre, kingship O'Flynn, and Fir Li, in mid and North Antrim; the Ui Echach Cobo, kingship families MacCartains and MacOenghusa (Magennises) in West Down and East Armagh; the Cenel Eoghain, kingship families O'Neill and MacLochlainn, in Tyrone, Derry and Fermanagh; and Cenel Connaill in Donegal. See Figure 15. There were rivalries both between the tribes, and for the kingship within the tribe. The Anglo-Normans would exploit these rivalries to the full. In early February 1177, John de Courcy marched north from Dublin and surprised and defeated the Dal Fiatach under their king, Rory MacDonlevy at Down, his capital. Rory returned about a week later with considerable reinforcements and was again defeated by de Courcy. Rory made another attempt, this time supported by kings from Cenel Eoghain and Ui Echach and accompanied by the Archbishop of Armagh and the Bishop of Down, to oust de Courcy in June 1177. The coalition was again defeated, and the clergy taken prisoner. Afterwards the Bishops were set at liberty, but the inferior clergy were killed (Bardon p.35).
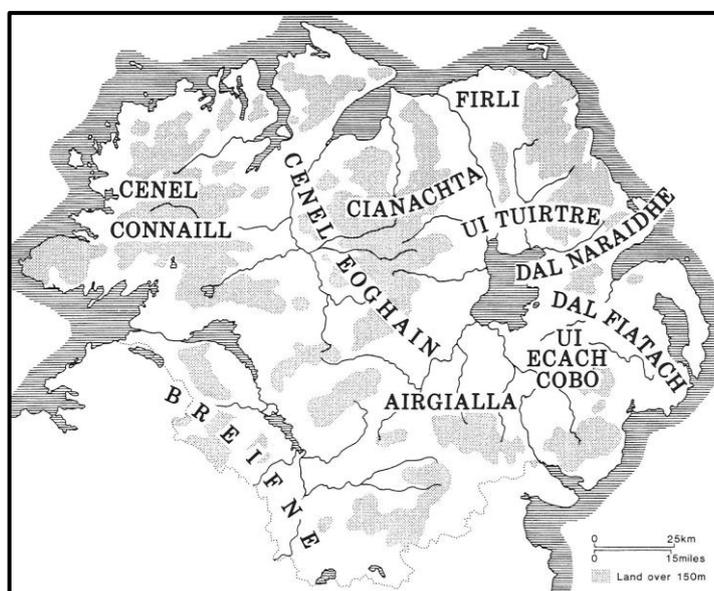
Figure 13: Map Showing the Lands of the Main Irish Tribes

Thus John de Courcy gained control of the territory previously held by Dal Fiatach and Dal Naraide. He rapidly consolidated his hold over the area, building major castles at Carrickfergus and Dundrum, and causing several mottes to be built by his barons and knights on land allocated to them. Indeed, within about 10 years he had also arrived at an accommodation with Ui Echach Cobo. So much so that in 1188 a united army of Anglo-Norman and men of Iveagh (Ui Echach Cobo) set out from the castle of Magh Cobha (Ballyroney) to raid into Tir Eoghain's land (Lawlor p.163). We "*even find Rory MacDunlevy raiding Tir Eoghain as an Anglo-Anglo-Norman ally in 1196" (McNeill p.6). Again de Courcy "fostered Irish links in religion, and in a famous ceremony in 1186, in the presence of the Papal legate Vivian, translating into Down Cathedral the bodies of no less than St Patrick, St Columba and St Brigid. The appeal to traditional formulae and to those saints shows him either attuned to Irish ways or well able to exploit them*" (McNeill p.16).

In mid and north Antrim, de Courcy was defeated by Cumee O'Flynn in 1178 and had to retreat over a period of two days and without horses, to Carrickfergus Castle. John de Courcy escaped with only eleven of his knights (Bardon p.36). Thus Carrickfergus Castle seems to have been built, in part at least, by 1178 (McNeill p.9). After Cumee's death in 1194, de Courcy gained a foothold in the Fir Li lands around the lower Bann Valley and the Antrim North Coast. The Castle at Mount Sandel (near Coleraine) was built around 1197 to help maintain control. However the O'Flynn's continued as lords of Ui Tuirtre for several more generations and probably submitted to de Courcy and were allowed to retain at least a portion of their territory under his protection (Lawlor p.49).

Until this point de Courcy had enjoyed the royal favour, but when John became King in 1199 de Courcy's luck ran out – or did he speak out against King John's ousting of Arthur of Brittany from the succession? (Bardon p.38). John authorized Hugh de Lacy from Meath to wage war on John de Courcy. John de Courcy was driven out of Ulster by 1205 and Hugh de Lacy was created Earl of Ulster. Hugh de Lacy, in turn, fell foul of King John, was defeated and fled from Ulster in 1210. For the next 16 years Ulster was administered by seneschals (sheriffs) for the Crown. This was a pattern that was to be repeated – periods under an Earl interspersed with those administered under the Crown.
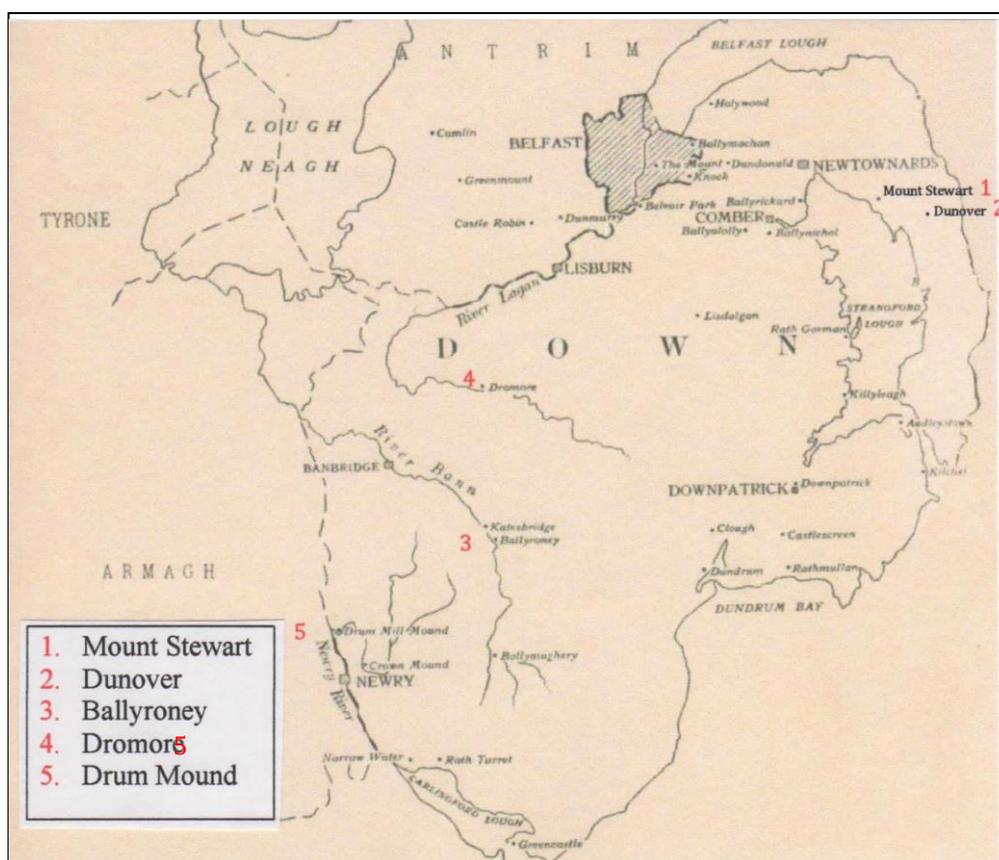
Figure 14: Map of County Down showing main Anglo-Norman Centres

King John died in 1216 and was succeeded by Henry III. Hugh de Lacy returned to Ireland in 1223, allied with Aed O'Neill of Tir Eoghain to fight for the Earldom and eventually was made Earl again in 1227. He died in 1243 and the earldom reverted to the Crown. In 1264 Walter de Burgo of Connacht was made the Earl of Ulster by Edward, (later Edward I), but in 1264 he was Lord of Ireland under his father, Henry III. Earl Walter died in 1271, leaving a minor 12 years old Richard as heir. Once again the Earldom reverted to the Crown, until Richard de Burgo (later known as the 'Red Earl") come into his Earldom in 1280. By this stage Edward I was now king, having succeeded his father, Henry III, in 1272.

In 1315, during Edward II's reign, and late in Richard de Burgo's earlship, Edward Bruce, of Scotland, invaded Ulster via Larne. He allied with Domnal O'Neil of Tir Eoghain, and wreaked havoc in Ulster and as far south as Dublin, before finally being defeated in 1318. Between famine and war much damage was done to the Earldom's prosperity. The 'Red Earl' died in 1326. His heir and grandson, William, was only fourteen but was made Earl by Edward III in 1328. He was murdered in Belfast by some of his tenant barons in 1333. This event marked the beginning of the decline of Anglo-Norman power in Ulster, with most of its possessions falling to the Gaelic Irish over the next century. A branch of the O'Neills, later known as the O'Neills of Clandeboye, took over South Antrim and North Down, including much of the Ards Peninsula – only the Southern tip remained, precariously, in the hands of the Anglo-Norman Savages (Bardon p.67).

4.3 The Nature of the Ulster Earldom
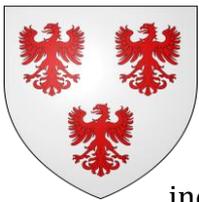
John de Courcy was primarily responsible for the foundation of the Earldom of Ulster. He established control over East and South Down, South Antrim and a foothold in North Antrim around the Lower Bann and Bush Valleys. The central/western part of County Down remained with Echach Cobo ("Men of Iveagh") as did mid Antrim under Ui Tuirtre (O'Flynn). Although fairly independent, they paid tribute to the Anglo-Normans, for example in cattle or service by men-at-arms. This essentially remained as the 'core' of the Anglo-Norman Earldom, but subsequent Earls extended their influence; for example it was Hugh de Lacy who consolidated control over North Antrim. Walter de Burgo presided over a period of peace and was collecting tribute (and old debts) from the O'Neills in 1269 - 3,500 cows (Orpen p.39); and the 'Red Earl' extended control along the North Western coast, building the castle of Northburgh (now Greencastle) in 1305 at the mouth of Lough Foyle. However, the Earldom was continually under threat; West County Down was defended by great mottes and castles at Dromore, Magh Cobha (Maycove) at Ballyroney/Seafin (O'Neill p.65) and Drum Mound near Newry; County Antrim 'borders' were on the Bann and Main rivers. The safety of the Earldom depended on the strength of the Earl and his barons.

The great baronial families, who came over with John de Courcy, were the 'Savages' and 'de Logans'; with King John came the 'de Mandevilles'. The 'Bissets' were installed in the Antrim Glens by Hugh de Lacy during his second period as Earl after 1227. These families would have been principal landlords or vassals of the Earl. Under them were lesser landlords and tenants and so on down to those who actually farmed the land. We only have limited 'snapshots' of ownership and organization, principally from occasional pipe- rolls covering 1211-1212, 1260-1262 and 1276., inquisitions (1226 and 1333) and an assessment of Church taxation in 1307.

The Earldom was divided into bailiwicks for administrative purposes. From the Inquisition of 1226 we know that these were Antrim (South Antrim, Six Mile Water valley) , Carrickfergus (coastal area from Belfast to about Glenarm), Ards (mostly the peninsula), Blathewic (North Down around Newtownards), and Lecale (South Down around Downpatrick). Later, and certainly by 1333, the bailiwicks were: Blathewic, Down, Antrim, Carrickfergus and Twescard (see Figure 17). The changes to note are the addition of Twescard in North Antrim (by Hugh de Lacy as described earlier), the adsorption of Lecale into Down and the expansion of Blathewic, to take in North Down and Ards. (O'Neill p.12). Within these bailiwicks are manors e.g. Artken (Ardkeen, Upper Ards), Dundonald – both mentioned in accounts of 1276 (Orpen E.o.U. p.41) - and Vils (towns) eg Cragfergus (Carrickfergus) which is listed separately from the bailiwick of Carrickfergus in the inquisition of 1226. (Orpen E.o.U. p.31)
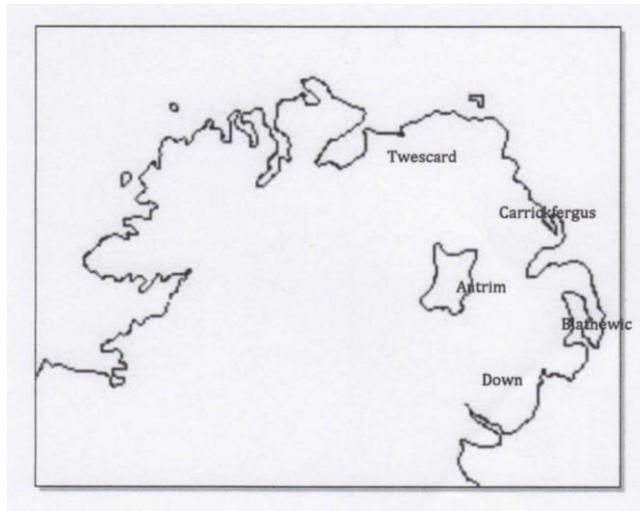
Figure 15: Map of Ulster Showing the Anglo-Norman Bailiwicks in 1333

In the Earldom, the land would have been laboured by native Irish – they exchanged Gaelic masters for, mainly, Anglo-Norman ones. The productivity of the land would have been improved, with more cultivation and the establishment of mills, as well as continuing the original cattle-based agriculture. The main vassals and substantial farmers often lived in halls, fortified to some extent by being placed on, or near, a motte. They would have paid rent, to barons or major landowners. In turn, they exploited their land by leasing it out on a basis of crop sharing or rent in kind. Thus an Irishman named O'Coltaran from the Cave Hill gave the services of twenty-four reapers in August in Belfast as rent for his land; 1333 Inquisition, (Bardon p.46.) The vassals and substantial farmers were usually Anglo-Norman, but could occasionally be Irish; in 1260 Sir Roger de Altaribus requested that he be granted the land in Twescard which had originally belonged to O'Hagheran and who had been killed. It was valued at £2.0.0 per annum, a substantial holding. (McNeill p.98).

We have already seen how John de Courcy confirmed Downpatrick as an ecclesiastical centre (4.2), re-dedicating the original Church of the Holy Trinity to St Patrick. His other gifts to the church, which helped him to secure its support, included: a Benedictine priory of St Andrew in the Ards (Black Abbey); the restoration of Nendrum, also by Benedictines; and the establishment of the Cistercian Inch Abbey. His wife, Affreca, in 1193 founded the Cistercian monastery of Grey Abbey. (Orpen, I.u.N. Vol 1, p.19).

4.4 Mottes, Types and Functions

The traditional view of the motte was purely in terms of military conquest. While this was probably the case in some instances, mottes are now considered to have a more varied range of functions, (McNeill 2011). In order to explore these ideas further we will look at some examples of mottes in the Earldom. This will assist in trying to decide the function of the motte at Mount Stewart.

As we have seen, the Earldom had a more secure eastern area, but was under threat, particularly on its western border. An important factor for the security of the Earldom at any given time was the strength and unity of the Earl and his barons. However, security also depended on strategic alliances with Irish Kingdoms, particularly if negotiated from a position of strength!

Mottes with attached baileys were more likely to have a military function. The motte, with a tower on it, would have acted as a refuge or keep. The bailey, an enclosed area adjacent to the motte, probably contained stabling, barns etc. In Ulster about 23% of mottes have baileys and

these are generally concentrated on the borders of the Earldom, or beyond. Again, in Ulster the baileys were quite small and most likely accommodated foot soldiers, underlining their military function.

Antrim motte and bailey is an example of a 'frontier motte' at least in 1211 – 1212. The pipe roll of King John for 1211 – 1212 (Davies 1941) has the following entries for expenditure at Antrim: "*And as allowances for 40 foot-soldiers, who guarded the district of Antrim for a quarter of a year after the capture of the booty of Tuirtre, 40 cows*" "*And as food-allowances for them for one quarter, 40 cows.*" "*And to them for being maimed.*" "*And for the loss of their mantles, 10 cows.*"

This tells us that Antrim, at that time, was guarding the border against Ui Tuitre to the north, and that men garrisoned at Antrim were likely Irish: They were compensated for wounds and loss of their mantles (type of Irish cloaks).

The roll also tells us of 30 men at Drumore and 10 men at Maycove (Ballymoney/Seafin), both "military mottes and baileys" on the western borders of County Down. These mottes were placed on the western edges of MacDunleavy and Iveagh territories; they were both allied to the Anglo-Normans by this stage, and the sites at Drumore and Ballymoney, while supported by the Anglo-Normans, may represent seats of the MacDunleavy and Iveagh power respectively (McNeill, 2011, p.21). Later in about 1252, and at a time when Brian O'Neill was threatening County Down, Seafin stone castle was added to the Maycove site close to Ballyroney motte by the Justicar Fitz Geoffrey. These western Co. Down mottes were too far apart to act as a purely defensive line, but were used as centres from which raids into enemy territory were carried out. When Brian o'Neill made his final attack in 1260, he was defeated and killed in battle outside Downpatrick, - well inside the 'motte line'. Brian's brother, Aedh Buidhe, become king of Cenel Eoghain in about 1263 and when Walter de Burgh become Earl in 1264 he established an alliance with Aedh: Aedh was married to Walter's cousin Aleanor. In turn Aedh paid off Brian's old debts, 3500 cows (Orpen, p39), promised hostages and agreed to recognise Walter as his lord. This strategic alliance was carried on by Walter's successor, Richard, the Red Earl (McNeill, p30).
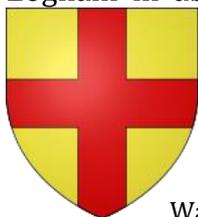
Walter de Burgh

The importance of march castles to the security of the Earldom is further underlined by events after Walter's death in 1271. Avelina, widow of Walter, was at first "*unwisely endowed with five of his castles in the marches of Ulster*" This was seen as weakening the Earldom and new arrangements were made, with Avelina being endowed with other lands. (Orpen E.O.U. p.39).

We can now consider the majority of mottes in Ulster, the remaining 75% or so. These mottes are now thought to mark the centre, *caput,* of a manor or estate. The largest mottes, sometimes with a bailey, marked the Earl's *capita.* The vast majority of mottes had no bailey and ranged downwards in size depending on the importance of the holding it represented – Earl's sub-manor, Earl's free tenants to those held under a knight's fee or fraction thereof. Again, these mottes are sited in lands within the Earldom and therefore in settled, controlled areas. This re-evaluation of the roles of mottes has taken place over the last 30 years or so and is summarised in McNeill 2011.

Mottes in Ireland were mostly constructed during the years 1175 – 1225. The sequence of events leading up to a motte's construction is thought to have been as follows: Grant or seizure of land; the defining of an estate and its resources; selection of a site for the *caput* of a manor; and finally the building of a motte. This sequence is supported by considering the placements of the mottes. They usually occupied a prominent site controlling the better land suited to arable, or at least mixed farming. This implies that the lords or owners must have acquired a good

knowledge of their holding before establishing the *caput.* These new owners improved the productivity, and hence the income from their estates. The motte was one element of the manorial *caput*, probably with a hall and barns near to it, but would have been a powerful visible reminder of the local lord's presence. The *caput* acted as an administrative centre for the manor or estate. It can be summed up as follows: "*The majority of mottes were built to mark out the caput, of essentially peaceful estates whose aim was the efficient exploitation of their agricultural resources*" (McNeill 2011). Also the relationship between a motte and an adjacent church is considered important. A linked motte and church seem to occur in more organised and settled areas, representing more enduring and important tenancies.

Finally the motte at Mount Stewart is a medium sized one, without a bailey. It also has a church site nearby (see UAS report No 46, Templecrone Church Ruins). This implies that the motte controlled a small to medium sized estate, situated in a relatively peaceful and well-organised area within the Earldom.

The next section looks at the area around Mount Stewart in more detail and considers the evidence for estates, tenancies and administration.

4.5 Ownership and Settlement around Mount Stewart.

Mount Stewart, before the Anglo-Norman invasion, was in the territory of the Irish Dal Fiatach. After the invasion by the Anglo-Norman John de Courcy in 1177 the Mount Stewart area would have been in the vanguard of Anglo-Norman settlement. The Anglo-Norman motte at Mount Stewart was probably built in the first few years and most likely before 1201, when King John's mandate of October 1200 declared: *'The king commands all persons holding lands in the marches of Ireland to fortify their castles before the ensuing feast of St John the Baptist (24th June), otherwise the King will seize their lands*" (Lawler U.J.A. 1939 p.54). John de Courcy granted the Upper Ards to his favourite, William de Sauvage, whose stronghold in the Ards is considered to have been Ardkeen. (Lawlor U.J.A. 1938 p 159). Mount Stewart was under overall Sauvage control at this time as suggested by the statement: "*North of Savage's lands, round the modern town of Doneghadee, William de Coupland had an extensive territory; his name still preserved in 'the Copeland Islands*". (Lawlor U.J.A. 1938 p.159). John de Dundoeunald was evidently the lord of a motte castle at Dundonald, captured by King John in 1210 in the campaign against de Lacy. We do not have a name associated with Mount Stewart motte at this time but nearby Dunover (near Ballywalter) was possessed by Lucian d'Arquilla, probably under Savage. Lucian was deprived of Dunover in 1210 – it was granted to Godfrey de Serland by King John. However Lucian was restored to Dunover in 1216 on King John's death. (Lawlor U.J.A. 1938 p.159.)

The Savages, in common with the three other major baronial families, had fluctuating fortunes depending on their relationship with the resident Earl. However the baronial families always continued to play a major part in the Earldom's affairs – too important to be completely ignored! Thus the Savages were granted land by Hugh de Lacy in Twescard. They seem to have dropped completely out of the de Burgh's favour. However after the Earl's murder (William de Burgh) in 1333, a Robert Savage became seneschal of Ulster in 1334 and in 1347 was granted estates in the Six Mile Water valley. (McNeill p.80-82). (The Six Mile Water was historically known as the River Ollar or Abhainn na bhFiodh.)

Returning to the Mount Stewart area, the FitzWarin account of 1276 assesses income of £60.19s.8d. from "the manor of Artken (Ardkeen, Upper Ards) with the Fishery of Balimithegan perhaps Ballymakeagan, in the parish of Comber" (Orpen, E.o.U. p.41). This suggests that the influence of the Ardkeen manor, and hence the Savages, still extended to the Mount Stewart area. Orpen also mentions that the important manor of Dundonald came into the King's hand (Edward

I) on the death of Emmeline de Lacy, Countess of Ulster in 1276. Emmeline was the second wife and widow of Hugh de Lacy and held Dundonald [together with Antrim and Dundrum castles, and sheriffdoms of Down and North Villa (Newtownards)] in dower.

The next information is obtained from the Inquisition of 1333, held after the murder of William de Burgo. The inquisition is important in that it not only assessed the Earldom in 1333 but also as it was before the war with Edward Bruce (1315 to 1318). The first point to note is that Mount Stewart by 1333 is in the bailiwick of Blathewic whereas previously it had been in Ards (see 4.2 above). The second point is that the manor of Dundonald was held by William de Burgo and he controlled tenements throughout the Ards area, of which some at least would have been originally under Savage's control. This situation seems to have applied to the area around Mount Stewart. Thus Dunover is held in 1333 under the Earldom as a knight's fee (ie directly) by John and Richard Coyly. (Lawlor U.J.A. 1938, p159). The damage done to the Earldom by the war with Edward Bruce is clearly illustrated by a statement made in the Inquisition of 27 September 1333 relating to County of the New Town of Blathewyc (Orpen, J.R.S.A.I. 1914, p.63-66). Thus:

> *"William de Burgo, late Earl of Ulster, held in his demesne as of fee the manor of Doundannald of the King in chief as of the Crown by the same services as he held the rest of his lands and tenements in Ulster. In this manor there are no buildings, but there was a castle which is now prostrate and destroyed by the war of the Scots".*

Orpen also states:

> *"The county of the new town of Blathewyc (Lower Castlereagh, the Ards and Dufferin) was all held of the manor of Dundonald."*

The Inquisition goes on to list several "lets" but the ones of interest to us are those around Mount Stewart. They are part of a small group listed, interestingly, under "Free Tenants".

> *"£9.9.1 rent from 3½ carucates which Robert de Sengelton holds for life by Feoffment of the said Earl".*

This is a substantial holding held by a locally important man. A carucate is the amount of land that can be ploughed by one oxen team in a season, (approximately 100 – 120 acres). Again there is no direct link to Mount Stewart but the entry is placed in the Inquisition next to other surrounding tenements and thus it is possible that Robert held the motte area of Mount Stewart.

> *"£2.13.4d chief rent from tenements at Castletoun, from which only 10s can be got now, because* waste and destroyed by war."

Castletoun equates to modern Ballycastle, a townland situated immediately north of Mount Stewart.

> *"1 pair of silver spurs or 3d rent for lands in Balytoun which Nicholas Galgyl holds in fee."*

Balytoun equates to modern Ballyboley, a townland situated just northeast of Mount Stewart.

> *"1s 8d chief rent from lands and tenements in Balymorky held as above"* i.e. in fee by free tenants. Orpen suggests that Ballymorky is derived from Baile Murchadha. If so it equates to modern Ballymurphy, a townland immediately southeast of Mount Stewart and suggests possible Irish tenancy.

As noted above the north Ards area, including Mount Stewart, seems to have passed from Savage to de Burgh control. This probably occurred sometime after 1280 when Richard de Burgh became Earl and may reflect the poor relationship between the two families. However, as noted earlier, the Savage family remained powerful, holding lands in Twescard and were in possession of the manor at Ardkeen until the nineteenth century.

5. Summary and Recommendations.

The motte at Mount Stewart would appear to be a *caput* of a small to medium sized Anglo-Norman estate, possibly held under a knight's fee. It is located in the settled and firmly established part of the Ulster Earldom and the motte would have been constructed more as a status symbol than a defensive structure. The settled nature of this estate is reinforced by the presence of the adjacent Templecrone Church ruins.

The motte itself is remarkably well preserved but badly obscured by vegetation. The National Trust have plans to clear and preserve the site and hopefully open it up to public access. This is to be welcomed.

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PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD FORM

Site: Mount Stewart Motte
Date: 26 April 2014