

The Normans at Dunleckney.

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In the wooded area adjacent to Dunleckney Graveyard is a large mound. There are reasons to believe that this was the site of a Norman motte. A garrison of knights, with squires and servants was located here in the late 12th –early 13th c.

The evidence for a motte and bailey is both historical and visually evident.

A larger settlement was later established a short distance away to the West coinciding with the grounds of Dunleckney Manor house and out buildings. (Subject of a later article)

After 1166 AD the Normans soon established themselves throughout Leinster and later further afield by establishing earthen castles known as *mottes* at strategic positions in the landscape. They were constructed over a period of about 100 years. Based closely on continental prototypes, they consist of steep-sided, conical, flat-topped earthen mounds, enclosed by a fosse (ditch) and external bank. The bailey which is usually either crescent-shaped or rectangular, may be either attached to the motte or separate. The bailey is usually slightly raised and enclosed by a bank and fosse (ditch) for defensive purposes.

These earthworks were; surmounted by wooden structures (palisades, wooden towers and other dwellings). In some cases stone fortifications were added and later became a castle.

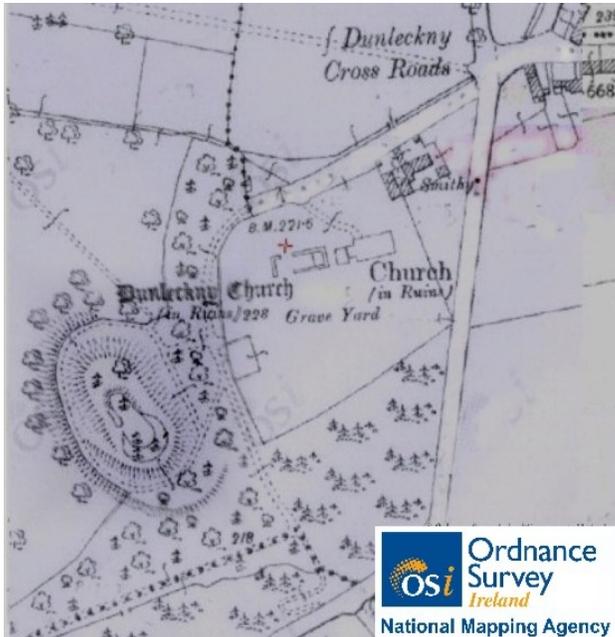
In the case of Dunleckney an existing natural mound was used but reshaped to the new requirements eg. raising the overall height. Another factor in the choice of many sites was the presence of an existing church nearby. According to the Archaeological Inventory of Co Carlow there are eight Norman mottes in the county, including Dunleckney and St Mullins.

Historical Aspects:

¹ Raymond le Gros was enfeoffed by Strongbow of the territories of Idrone & Forth, also of Glascarrig in Co Wexford. The Carews of Ireland were descended from Odo de Carew (d 1204) brother of Raymond le Gros. They owed their estates at Dunleckney (caput of the barony) and at Techmullin (St Mullins) to Raymond le Gros who in turn enfeoffed them to William de Carew. The above William (d 1213) gave advowson of Dunleckney with burgages there and also at St Mullins to the Nunnery of Graney in Co Kildare before 1207.

His male descendents were Nicolas (d1312) and John (d 1324)

² **Dunleckney** (Dunleckny Borough. *Motte* (possible) Large oval mound (Dims. 110m NW-SE; 70m NE-SW, 7m High) to W of church and graveyard.



19th c Landscaping

In the early 19th c the Dunleckney Estate underwent a major landscaping project. As part of this project shrubs and plants were sown on the motte to create a pleasure garden.

A pathway was cut into the side to facilitate easier access. Older residents can remember Mrs Vesey going there for picnics, driving in a small phaeton drawn by donkey.

The area around the motte is at present surrounded by dense woodland.

The motte is best approached via the Newton Plot through either of the gates in the cemetery wall. Fallen trees and dense undergrowth. make a climb to the top suitable only for fit people!.

The Newton Sisters

Maria Charlotte Augusta Newton was the eldest daughter of Philip Jocelyn Newton and his first wife, Henrietta Maria Kennedy, Born 1842 - unlucky in love - she died a spinster in 1888 and is interred in the Newton burial plot Dunleckney graveyard.

The inscription on her tombstone reads, "*Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much.*"

Adeline Sarah Newton, their third and youngest daughter was born 1849. who married Capt. Arthur Newton Forbes-Gordon, of Rayne, Aberdeenshire, Scotland. Unfortunately she died only days after giving birth to her second child a daughter, She is interred in the family burial plot in Dunleckney graveyard. A stained glass window. to her memory can be seen in St. Mary's Church, Bagenalstown.

Being the youngest daughter; Adeline was held with deep affection by her sister Maria, *who made frequent visits to the summit of the Motte from where she could look down on Adeline's grave and grieve.* Maria spent the remainder of her life doing good works and acts of charity. She was widely known for her kindness and understanding to those in need of succour.

Reference Sources:

¹ *Knights Fees in Co Wexford, Carlow and Kilkenny (13th to 15th C).* Irish Manuscript Commission.

Edited by Eric St John Brooks. 1950

² *Archaeological Inventory of Co Carlow.* OPW

³ Ordnance Survey of Ireland; <http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/#V1,671958,662943,7,9>

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