



Gallow's Hill Motte. From the north.

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Location: Townland of Gallowshill, lr. Cnoc na Croiche (the hill of the gallow's) or perhaps a corruption of 'GaeI's Law' or 'foreigner's' hill (Dave Pollock, 2017), Co. Waterford.

Description: Gallowshill is situated on the wide neck of a promontory extending into Dungarvan Harbour, and the early 13th-century medieval walled town and castle of Dungarvan occupy the end of the promontory, 1km to the east. The castle is represented today by a flat-topped, grass-covered, sub-circular earthen mound, measuring 13.5m by 8m at the top and 39m by 35m at the base. Once thought perhaps to be a prehistoric barrow, it has more recently been interpreted as an Anglo-Norman motte, probably built in the 12th or 13th century. The mound is enclosed on three sides by a late 20th century housing estate, but a communal green space has been left to the west. There is no indication today of the layout of a medieval castle and settlement at Gallowshill. The top of the mound has been used for bonfires, resulting in a thick layer of charcoal and significant fire damage below.

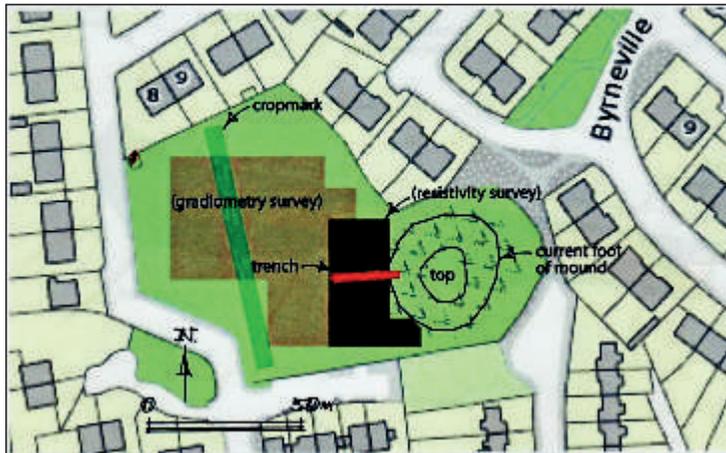
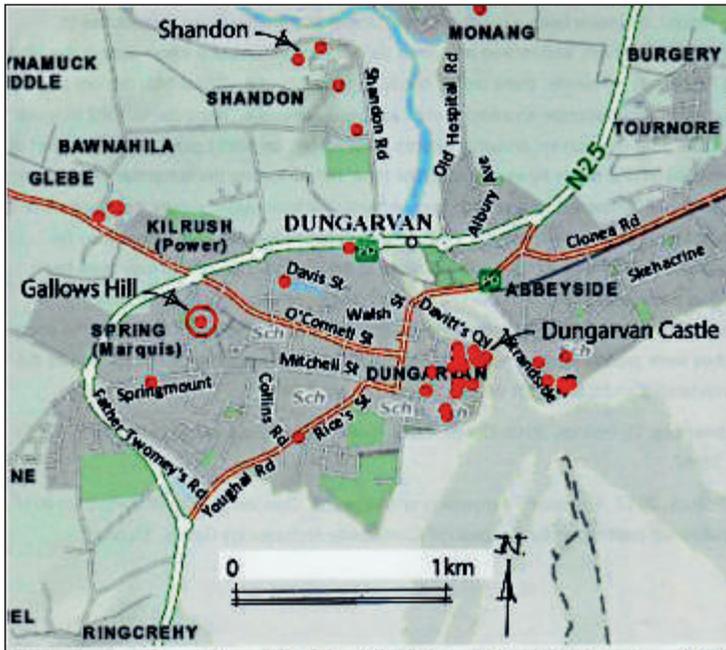
The sides of the mound have slipped, but nonetheless there was a strong suggestion of a concentric ditch, perhaps extending to 15m from the current base of the mound (based on current topography and geophysical evidence). There is no suggestion of an attached ditched enclosure on the (open) west side of the mound. A 22m long trench was excavated there in 2017

by the Gallow's Hill Community Archaeology Group under the direction of archaeologist Dave Pollock. The trench extended beyond the apparent wide ditch to test for settlement remains outside it and cut a short distance into the mound to look for intact mound material and sealed ground below.

The excavation exposed an early shallow quarry ditch around the mound, and a pair of concentric deep ditches cut through the infilled early ditch, and into the slumped foot of the mound. The investigation at the foot of the mound was inconclusive because the original edge of the mound was not reached and because a late ditch had torn away an important part of an early one. At present it appears that the early quarry ditch was cut at least 6.5m wide (perhaps up to 10m) but was only about 0.6m deep, with a steep outside face and a relatively flat base. Part of this ditch close to the mound was cut a further 0.3m down, again with a flat base, but the deeper cut may have been backfilled to the shallower level during construction. The ditch is particularly shallow and too slight to provide for the mound.

The early ditch may be significantly deeper or wider on the other sides of the mound, or the early mound might have been much smaller than the later version. The deep ditch at the foot of the mound is almost certainly one of two late concentric ditches around the mound. There is enough information to indicate that the ditches were curving and enclosed the mound. No indication of a bailey was found on this (west) side of the mound, but the ditch of a potentially medieval enclosure, removed from the mound, was intercepted at the west end of the trench.

The mound may have been a counter-castle, blockading the landward approaches to medieval Dungarvan, and reused as a town defensive work and/or a siege-work in the 16th or 17th century. However, there are no surviving accounts of a 13th or 14th century siege of Dungarvan to corroborate an interpretation as a counter-castle. The order in 1582 to repair 'two forts at Dungarvan' probably refers to Gallowshill, as does Lord Inchiquin's report of having 'taken one castle by



storm neere (sic) the town' before forcing the surrender of the town. It appears that Gallows Hill was used to secure the town's fresh water supply, coming from a nearby spring known as St Brigid's Well. A cannon ball recovered from topsoil may be associated with the late ditches and the reuse of the mound. The mound may have been used as an artillery platform in the 17th century, but there is no visible ramp climbing the mound. This is probably the castle taken by storm by Lord Inchiquin in 1647, and the deep ditches were probably cut

sometime between 1642 (when Dungarvan was captured by the Confederates and then by Sir William Saintleger) and 1647.

References:

- D. Pollock, 2018, 'Dungarvan's spare castle', *Archaeology Ireland*, Vol. 32 (1), pp. 35-37.
- D. Pollock, 2017, *A research excavation at Gallows Hill, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, in 2017*, unpublished draft report for Gallows Hill Community Archaeology Group, 15 pp.