

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Motte, 50m north of Holycross Church, Ryton

PARISH: GATESHEAD

DISTRICT: GATESHEAD

COUNTY: TYNE AND WEAR

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 32043

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): NZ15106488

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes a medieval motte mound and associated ditch, occupying the north end of a spur to the north of Holycross Church, Ryton, commanding a view over the River Tyne.

The mound is 30m in diameter at its base, 4m high and 9m in diameter at its top. The top of the mound is triangular in plan with corners on the north, south east and south west. A 1m wide linear depression running across the top of the mound may indicate an unrecorded excavation. The ditch curves round the south side of the motte, cutting across the spur. There is no evidence of a ditch on the other sides of the mound where the ground falls steeply away. The ditch is 2m wide at its base, 12m wide at its top and 1.6m below the level of the ground to the south. The ditch and the foot of the slope of the mound contain some pre-20th century graves, which are excluded from the scheduling although the ground beneath them is included.

The relationship between the mound and the steep slope will be preserved to the west of the mound where there has been no discernible disturbance caused by the presence of the graveyard.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Motte castles are medieval fortifications introduced into Britain by the Normans. They comprised a large conical mound of earth or rubble, the motte, surmounted by a palisade and a stone or timber tower. In a majority of examples an embanked enclosure containing additional buildings, the bailey, adjoined the motte. Motte castles and motte-and-bailey castles acted as garrison forts during offensive military operations, as strongholds, and, in many cases, as aristocratic residences and as centres of local or royal administration. Built in towns, villages and open countryside, motte castles generally occupied strategic positions dominating their immediate locality and, as a result, are the most visually impressive monuments of the early post-Conquest period surviving in the modern landscape. Over 600 motte castles and motte-and-bailey castles are recorded nationally, with examples known from most regions. Some 100-150 examples do not have baileys and are classified as motte castles. As one of a restricted range of recognised early post-Conquest monuments, they are particularly important for the study of Norman Britain and the development of the feudal system. Although many were occupied for only a short period of time, motte castles continued to be built and occupied from the 11th to the 13th centuries, after which they were superseded by other

types of castle.

The motte 50m north of Holycross Church is a well preserved example of this class of monument. The top of the mound and the ditch, where graves have not disturbed it, will preserve deposits relating to the motte's construction and use.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 17th November 1964 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Durham 72

NAME: Castle Mound north of Ryton Church

Scheduling amended on 1st April 1974 to:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Tyne and Wear 22

NAME: Castle Mound north of Ryton Church

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 32043

NAME: Motte, 50m north of Holycross Church, Ryton

SCHEDULING AFFIRMED ON 02nd December 1998