

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Motte 160m east of St Peter's Church

PARISH: NORTH TAWTON

DISTRICT: WEST DEVON

COUNTY: DEVON

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 34286

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SS66600175

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

This monument includes a motte situated on a gentle hillslope overlooking the valley of the River Taw to the east of the present centre of North Tawton.

The monument survives as an approximately circular mound measuring up to 35m in diameter, up to 2m high and surrounded by a ditch up to 12.1m wide and a maximum 1.5m deep. The mound and ditch are bisected by a field boundary which runs in a north west to south east direction. To the east, the ditch and a small section of the motte are clearly defined within a field. To the west, the motte and ditch lie within a garden. The mound in this western area has been cut on the southern side by two depressions, which are consistent with the area having been landscaped at some time in the past. A small wooden summer-house has also been erected in this area while to the north and overlying the ditch is a large woodshed which abuts a garden wall. Beyond this garden wall the ground surface has been deeply cut away and levelled for formal gardens and further buildings.

The field boundaries, statues, garden ornaments and buildings, and the paths which cross the monument are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath these features is included.

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 160m east of St Peter's Church survives comparatively well, despite some disturbance as a result of its position within a formal garden, and will contain archaeological information relating to its construction and use. It holds an important location close to the church.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 30th July 1971 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Devon 766

NAME: Moated site east of St Peter's Church

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 34286

NAME: Motte 160m east of St Peter's Church

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 24th July 2002