



TULLY CASTLE

English Translation

TULLY CASTLE

County Fermanagh

History

Following the Flight of the Earls in 1607, the crown seized Irish land in Ulster and granted it out in large parcels to English and Scottish 'planters' on condition that they build settlements and provide strongholds loyal to the king. Sir John Hume of Polwarth in Berwickshire was granted 2000 acres at Tully, known as 'Carrynroe', in 1610, and had built a castle on Tully Point by 1613. The life of the castle was brief. Sir John Hume died in 1639 and was succeeded by his son, Sir George. In 1641, Rory Maguire set out to recapture his family's lands. He arrived with a large following on Christmas Eve, and found the castle full of women and children, but most of the men were away. Lady Mary Hume surrendered, believing that she had assured a safe conduct for all in her care, but on Christmas Day the Maguires killed 60 women and children and 15 men, sparing only the Humes. The castle was burnt and the Humes never went back. Castle Hume, a classical house, was built by Sir Gustavus Hume in 1728-9, on a different site, and this in turn was replaced by Ely Lodge.

The Site

The castle stands at the top of a south-facing slope on Tully Point on the W. shore of Lower Lough Erne. Today most people come from the north, the landward side, but originally the approach was through a gate in the centre of the S. bawn wall, either from a boat at Sand Bay or by a footpath that curves off to the W., perhaps from the village of 24 families that we are told the Humes built at the same time as the castle.

A Tour of the Castle

From the outside the castle was well protected. When you walk round the perimeter of the castle and bawn you see that the castle is three storeys high, with tapering stone walls. On the N. side, projecting turrets at the top of the tower protected vulnerable corners, and four flanker towers at the corners of the bawn had small musket loops which allowed all the walls to be covered. The E. side of the bawn is the best preserved and gives the best idea of the defences. If you walk first round the north and east sides of the castle, looking at the strength of the defences, you can approach the inside of the castle, as all visitors did originally, from the south.

Inside the bawn the castle looks more domestic. The two flankers on the east side were small houses, with stone floors and good fireplaces, but the SE. flanker also has a first-floor door that led out to a small timber platform for defence. Stone paving governed the routes you could take within the courtyard, either to flankers or to the castle, and the rest of the ground may have been planted: a formal garden to left and right of the central path and herbs in the areas close to the castle.

The first-floor windows of the castle are bigger on the south side than in other directions, both to enjoy sun and the garden and because it was the safest side, protected by the bawn. As you can see from the reconstruction drawing, the castle roof was thatched. Its turrets may have been roofed with stone or wood shingles. The flankers would have been roofed with stone. The quarter-round turret projecting from a corner of the castle between the entrance block and the main wing is a circular stair leading from the first floor to the attic.

Inside the castle you come first into a stair hall. In the early 17th century large staircases were still something of a novelty, but Tully had one. We can reconstruct its lines from impressions left on the wall. It started off straight, but then curved a little before reaching the first floor. Access to the second floor was by the more old-fashioned projecting circular stair.

The large room to the N. of the stair hall must once have been subdivided into two or more rooms. A big barrel vault covers the whole area. To the east is the arch of a big kitchen fireplace with recesses at both ends for ovens. In the centre of the room is a square hole in the vault. Its purpose is a puzzle: superficially it looks like a murder hole, but its placing is strange. The west end of the room may have been for storage, arms, food and drink and perhaps servants' accommodation. Drains lead out from this end of the castle and run out through the N. bawn wall.

On the first floor, the partition dividing the area into two rooms must be a second thought since it cuts into a window. The room to the east has a small corner fireplace tucked in beside the kitchen chimney stack, and its main window facing south was enlarged at some stage. The room to the west would have been the chief room for entertaining in the castle. It had a good fireplace in the west wall and plenty of windows. The stone details of the windows are all missing but the reconstruction gives an idea of their original appearance. A window near the SW. corner was blocked up, but in the blocking is a stone with a circular hole. Perhaps the Humes built up the window in 1641 as part of their preparations for the attack of the Maguires, leaving a hole for musket fire. The several changes in windows and the partition wall may have been made when Sir George Hume inherited from his father. Another (undocumented) possibility is that the Maguires took over the castle and made use of it for a time, after the Humes had abandoned it.

The floor at the level above is missing, but we can imagine sleeping quarters under the thatch. There was also a room over the stair hall at this level, and we can still see its fireplace and two-light window.

Scottish and Irish

The general design of this plantation castle was brought by Sir John Hume from the lowlands of Scotland, but certain features of it have clearly been created by Irish builders. The walls are battered, thicker at the bottom than the top, a sensible way to build that gives a striking skirt-like shape to the corners. The ground-floor vault was constructed on wicker centering, in the Irish tradition. And the castle's projecting turrets, a characteristic Scottish feature, were modified by the Irish builders so that instead of being supported on cut-stone corbels (as at Monea and Castle Balfour) they are carried on rubble cones smoothed over with render. The use of thatch on a three-storey castle would not have been common in Scotland, but Irish houses were usually thatched in the early 17th century.

The Lough Erne Shrine

This shrine was found in 1891 by fishermen off Abbey point, Tully. It is a house-shaped, yew wood shrine with a bronze covering and must once have enclosed a precious relic. It probably dates from the 8th century, and may have belonged to one of the island or lough-shore monasteries.

Further Reading E. M. Jope, 'Scottish influences in the North of Ireland: castles with Scottish

features, 1580-1640' in *Ulster J. Archaeol.* 14 (1951), 31-7; D. M. Waterman, 'Tully Castle' in *Ulster J. Archaeol.* 22 (1959), 123-6; W. K. Parke, *The Parish of Inishmacsaint* (1982).

Other Castles in State Care in Fermanagh: Monea Castle, 6 miles N.W. of Enniskillen; Enniskillen Castle; Castle Archdale, 4 miles W. of Irvinestown; Castle Balfour at Lisnaskea.