

Souterrain

In 1906 Stanley Howard recorded the presence of a souterrain near the motte. It was roughly Z-shaped in plan, consisting of three passages. A souterrain so close to the base of the motte may indicate that the mound for the motte rests on an earlier ringfort, as has been shown in excavations at similar sites in Ireland. There is a particularly dense concentration of souterrains in County Louth and there are likely to be more on and around Faughart Hill.

Cropmark enclosure

Around 150m to the south of the church, in the field on the opposite side of the road, aerial photographs record the presence of a large subcircular enclosure on ground sloping to the south. It can be detected as a relatively thin band of differential crop growth, most likely indicating that the site has been significantly truncated by ploughing over many centuries. For the most part the enclosure is circular, c. 46m in diameter. There is clear evidence that it formed a straight side on the north-eastern perimeter, with indications of an inner concentric ditch visible on the eastern perimeter.



Battle of Faughart

One of the most notable graves in the cemetery at Faughart is the alleged burial-place of Edward Bruce, who was killed nearby in a battle known as the Battle of Faughart, which marked the end of Scottish involvement in Ireland.

The Bruce Wars comprise one of the more curious episodes in the history of Scotland and Ireland. Robert the Bruce was interested in opening up a second front against the English. Some scholars argue that he had a 'Celtic Alliance' in mind and that he had intended eventually to persuade the Welsh to rise

Below left: **Aerial view of Faughart cropmark enclosure** (CUCAP).

Below: **Commemorative plaque marking reputed site of Edward Bruce's grave.**

Cover: **View of motte from cemetery.**

up against the English, and thus to squeeze the English on all possible fronts.

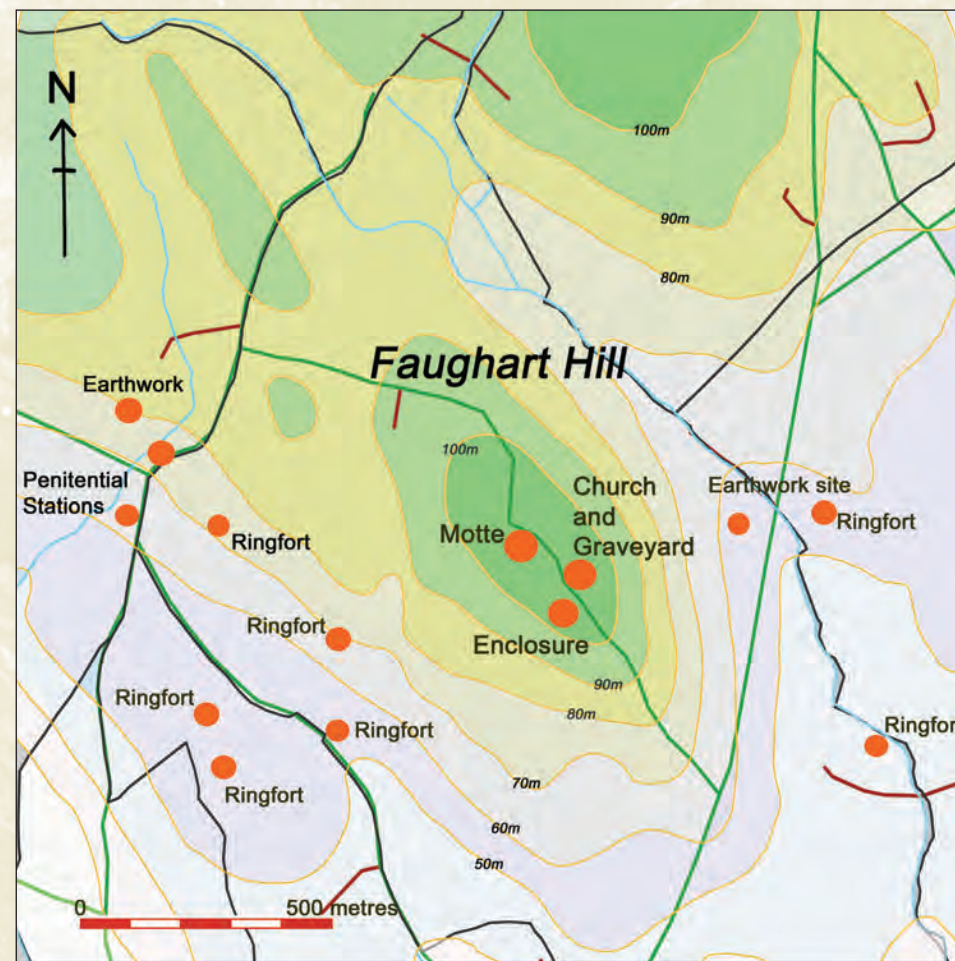
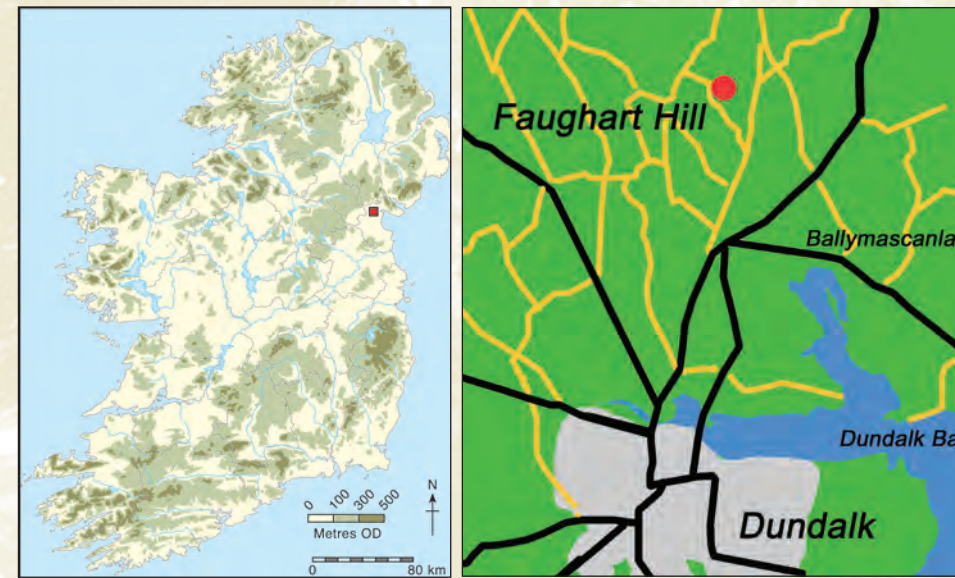
Edward Bruce, who had battled alongside his brother Robert in Scotland, landed in Ireland near Larne in May 1315. By July his army had moved southwards through the Moyry Pass (between Newry and Dundalk) and captured, looted and burned the town of Dundalk. On 1 May 1316 Edward was inaugurated as king of Ireland near Faughart, with the tacit support of Irish chieftains. He then doubled back to take Ulster, eventually laying siege to Carrickfergus Castle, where he was joined by Robert. By 1317 the Bruce army was raiding as far south as Castledermot in County Kildare.

These activities culminated in the Battle of Faughart on 14 October 1318. Edward Bruce marched southwards again through the Moyry Pass, not far from the scene of his inauguration two years previously. Here he was confronted by a hastily gathered force from the Anglo-Irish side. It is suggested that Edward's Irish allies refused to advance with his army in such haste. Details of the battle itself are sketchy, and the reported number of warriors involved may be exaggerated and unreliable. The clearest account of the battle occurs in the Lanercost Chronicles:

'They [the Scots] were in three columns at such a distance from each other that the first was done with before the second came up, and then the second before the third, with which Edward was marching, could render any aid. Thus the third column was routed, just as the two preceding ones had been. Edward fell at the same time and was beheaded after death; his body being divided to the four chief quarters of Ireland.'

It is believed that Edward Bruce's arrogance and his rash and hasty decision-making ultimately led to the failure of the Bruce campaign in Ireland.

A small marble plaque and a large granite slab are believed to mark the resting-place of the remnants of Edward Bruce's body. A nearby stone (located amongst some yew trees at the south-west corner of the church) also appears to have some significance, however. Mac Iomhair records a local tradition that Bruce's body was buried there, and repeats a translation of a Gaelic account of the battle that says that 'a coarse unhewn stone had been set upon the grave to distinguish it as that of the king of Ireland'.



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Further reading :

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Faughart, Co. Louth



—the hill of heroes, saints,
battles and boundaries