

NOTE

Was Castlegarde a Walled Town?

In her book, *The Walled Towns of Ireland*, Avril Thomas has three categories of towns, those for which there is definite evidence for walling, those with some evidence and those with doubtful evidence. In the middle category she lists Garth in Co. Limerick, which she describes as, 'An obscure place, now marked by a demesne called Castle Garde'.¹

For several reasons this identification is questionable. First and foremost is that the main piece of evidence cited, a 1409 grant of murage to the bailiff and community for sixty years, seems to be spurious. The reference quoted is from the *1st Report of the Commissioners on the Municipal Corporations in Ireland*, published in 1835, which was a detailed inquiry into how each of the individual Corporations of Ireland was run.² At the very front of the report is a list of other places where the Commission found some evidence of former communal organisation. Garth appears in this list, citing the Patent Roll of 10 Henry IV part 2, as the source. This particular roll was subsequently published in the Patent Roll Series and a perusal of the index to the relevant volume reveals no Garth, while a subsequent trawl, by this writer, through all the entries on the roll also found nothing.³

Some of the other supporting evidence is also dubious. The church of Garth is mentioned in the ecclesiastical taxations of 1302-06. The problem, however, is that this Garth lies in the Aherlow deanery of Emly whereas Castlegarde is in the Ownney deanery of the same diocese, while the existence of Garth church in the deanery of Garth in Limerick diocese is ignored totally for no apparent reason.⁴ A burgess reference is noted in a receipt of 1290, which reads, 'Maurice Wyton for trespasses by the burgesses of Castletown [villa Castri] 30s'.⁵ Castlegarde is in Doon parish, which was once part of Tipperary and the account is recorded for that county, however, it seems more likely that it is a reference to the Castletown near Doon, which contains an early castle and is a parish in its own right.

The alternative Garths mentioned above are today both called Ballingarry. Westropp noted the murage reference under Ballingarry near Rathkeale/Adare.⁶ Presumably his source was the 1835 Commission, because the published roll did not appear until a few years after his own work. Though not impossible, a royal grant of murage at this time, in an area outside the Pale seems unlikely since people would then have been looking towards local magnates for protection, rather than the Crown. However, if a murage reference could be confirmed then it is more likely to refer to Ballingarry because it almost certainly did not refer to Castlegarde.

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¹ Avril Thomas, *The Walled Towns of Ireland*, Vol. 2, (Dublin, 1992) p. 228.

² *1st Report of the Commissioners on the Municipal Corporations in Ireland* (London, 1835) p. 7.

³ Patent Roll 1408-13, Henry IV Vol 4 (London 1909); also available on University of Iowa website at <http://sdr.lib.uiowa.edu/patentrolls/search.html>

⁴ H.S. Sweetman and G.F. Handcock, (eds), *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland, 1302-07*, (London, 1886), see pp 279 and 289 for Emly Garth (also called Garthgriffin) and pp 272 and 291 for Limerick Garth.

⁵ H.S. Sweetman (ed.), *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland 1285-92*, (London, 1879) p. 354.

⁶ T.J. Westropp, 'The Ancient Castles of the County of Limerick', *PRIA*, vol. 26 (1907) p. 223.

