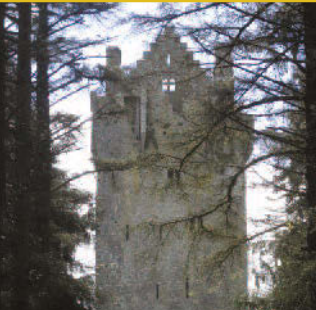


HERITAGE CASTLES of County Cork



**HERITAGE
CASTLES**
of County Cork

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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



**EAMONN
COTTER**

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Message from **Cllr. Declan Hurley**,
Mayor of the County of Cork and
Tim Lucey, Chief Executive, Cork County Council

This book, a publication of the Heritage Unit of Cork County Council, looks at the Castles, Tower Houses and Fortified Houses of the County, many of which still stand proud today. It is the fifth in a series of such Heritage Publications; a series which was shortlisted for the Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards in 2015. The initial four books in this series focused on Heritage Bridges of County Cork (2013); Heritage Houses of County Cork (2014); Heritage Churches of County Cork (2015) and Heritage Centenary Sites of Rebel County Cork (2016). This latest offering continues in the same manner, taking an insightful look at the Castles of the County.



Cllr. Declan Hurley
Mayor of the
County of Cork



Tim Lucey
Chief Executive,
Cork County Council

The County of Cork is steeped in Heritage, particularly when it relates to the County's Medieval Heritage. From the arrival of the Normans in the 12th century until well into the 17th century, the County of Cork saw scores of prominent castles constructed, many of which still form such a prominent part of the County's landscape and its history in general today. Indeed there is many a location within the County of Cork named for the very presence of its castle - Castlelyons, Castletownroche, Castlehaven and Castletownbere are just a few examples in this regard.

This publication tells the stories of the County's Castles, the family names that are synonymous with these structures and also informs as to what life was like in the County during Medieval Times, both within and outside Castle walls. Typical architectural and archaeological features are also presented to give a reader a great insight into castle construction and development and some fascinating featured examples from across the County are also provided, many of which can be visited today, free of charge.

By looking at the very first castles constructed by Norman Invaders in the 12th century through to the later centuries when tower houses became the home of both Old English and Gaelic families, and beyond to the later Fortified Houses, this publication will convey to the reader, the importance of these structures, and why they are such a vital component of the Heritage of County Cork.

We commend all of those involved in producing this fascinating and informative publication – a fitting addition to the nationally recognised Heritage of County Cork Publication Series.

Preamble and Acknowledgements



This publication is an action of the County Cork Heritage Plan which has been funded by the Heritage Council and through the heritage budget of Cork County Council. For more information on the effortless work and support of the Heritage Council, visit their website www.heritagecouncil.ie.

The Heritage Unit of Cork County Council (www.corkcoco.ie/arts-heritage) wishes to sincerely thank Eamonn Cotter as the primary author of this publication. Eamonn's knowledge of Medieval Cork and its Castles is exemplary and his ability to convey this in a writing style that is both educational and enjoyable has resulted in a wonderful addition to the Heritage of County Cork Publication Series. Angela Morris; Hugh Kavanagh and Rhoda Cronin are also gratefully acknowledged for their involvement by way of copy editing, GIS, and illustrations, respectively. Additional text, images, amendments and overall editing was carried out by Conor Nelligan, Mary Sleeman and Mona Hallinan of Cork County Council's Heritage Unit with special thank you also to Martin Millerick.

The project process from commencement to completion was managed by County Heritage Officer, Commemorations and Creative Ireland Coordinator, Conor Nelligan; County Archaeologist Mary Sleeman and County Architectural Conservation Officer Mona Hallinan with the backing and support of John O' Neill, Director of Service. A special thank you also to Isabell Smyth, Head of Communications, Heritage Council and Beatrice Kelly, Head of Policy and Research, Heritage Council, for their advice and support.

As part of this project, numerous Heritage Groups and individuals throughout the County were asked to get involved, drawing on the county's knowledge of the Castles, Tower Houses and Fortified Houses that are such an important part of the County's past, present and future. The response was fantastic with over one hundred castles put forward and it is this involvement that has resulted in a publication with such a variety and wealth of information. Thank you all.

There are many aspects to the production of a book but the most critical ones certainly relate to the design of the book and its printing. A very special thank you in this regard to Ian Barry for his creativity in design and indeed a warm thank you as well to all at Carraig Print who have produced a most delightful end product.

Lastly, thanks to you, the reader, for your interest in the shared Heritage of County Cork.

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Ballincollig Castle at a recent Heritage Week Event

Chapter 1

Introduction



Castles are among the most visible and most visually striking remnants of our ancient past surviving in the landscape today. Journeying through the countryside of County Cork the eye is regularly attracted to a tall slender tower rising from a great rock here, or a scatter of ivy-clad ruins overlooking a river valley there, and in towns the alert eye will occasionally pick out traces of an ancient castle nestled among modern houses and shops. The isolated ruins we see today however are only part of the story and we know from written records and archaeological investigations that a castle complex included a whole range of buildings which in many cases have disappeared, leaving just a single isolated tower.

But what is a castle? How do we define it? One widely-accepted definition of the castle is: *'a fortified residence which might combine administrative and judicial functions, but in which military considerations were paramount'*¹. The concept of a castle as a place of refuge, a place of safety, is well established in the English-speaking world through the phrase "an Englishman's house is his castle." The phrase was in use by at least the late sixteenth century and became enshrined in English legal thought in the early seventeenth in Sir Edward Coke's *The Institutes of the Laws of England*. It encapsulates the notion of a castle as a place of security, of refuge, where the occupants could live completely secure from outside threats.

Modern scholars disagree about which buildings should be called castles and which should not. One writer has suggested that a 'true' castle will have 'the defensive features of the medieval fortress'², but others support a much broader interpretation of the word, arguing that its use in medieval documents frequently implied not just a physical building, but also the area controlled from the building itself³. In reality the term is difficult to define and many buildings which were called castles by their contemporaries would be seen today as houses, with some minor defensive features. As we understand it today, however, the word castle is generally understood to be a particular building or group of buildings which once formed the fortified residence of a lord or noble.

In this book the term will be used to encompass a range of structures including earthwork fortifications, clusters of stone buildings within walled enclosures, single towers, and houses with minimal defensive features, and ranging in time from the mid-twelfth century to the late seventeenth century.

We often tend to think about castles purely in terms of their defensive capabilities, but they were not solely about defence, though in the early stages of the Norman invasion defence must have been a major consideration. A castle was also a domestic space, the home, not

just of the lord and his garrison, but also of his wife and children, along with a suite of servants and retainers, who lived in the castle along with their families.

Parts of the castle also had a semi-public function. The lord of the castle had significant community responsibilities: responsibility for the administration of law and justice, for the running of his great estates, patronage of the church and the protection of the community, for instance. These duties were administered from his castle, in particular from the castle hall, where the lord dined in public and entertained his many guests, such as emissaries from neighbouring lordships, officials of the crown, bishops and abbots representing the churches and monasteries which he patronised, and his own sheriffs and other officials updating him on the affairs of his towns and estates.

Over time the function, and along with it the form and layout, of castles inevitably changed. Thus we see a wide variety of castle types in County Cork, ranging from the extensive cluster of buildings within stout enclosing walls which would have existed at Glanworth, for instance, to the tall, slender tower houses such as Kilcoe, to the later castles such as Mallow and Kanturk, which were essentially houses with some minor defensive elements.

For the sake of convenience and clarity in discussing castles modern archaeologists and historians have divided them into various categories:

Earthwork castles: these great mounds of earth with timber structures on top were quicker and cheaper to build than stone castles and most were built in the earliest phases of the Anglo-Norman invasion, though some are known to have been built later, even after stone castles were built in the same area.

Anglo-Norman masonry castles were first built at the end of the twelfth century, but the majority were built in the thirteenth century and others were built into the fourteenth century. They occupy a large area of ground and comprise a range of buildings within a fortified enclosure wall. The buildings are mainly low-level, i.e. two storeys high, though some have tall gatehouses.

Tower houses are the most common castle type surviving. Tall slender buildings which can be up to six or seven storeys high, they were built in great numbers both by the native Irish and the descendants of the original Anglo-Norman settlers, from the late fourteenth century down to the mid-seventeenth century.

Fortified houses, more house than castle, were first built here in the late sixteenth century, and continued to be built through to the late seventeenth century. They are easily distinguished from earlier castles by the large number of windows, bigger rooms and many more fireplaces, and were clearly designed more for comfortable living than for defence.

Cork County was densely castellated, with a total of 346 castle sites recorded. Of these 184 are identifiable in the field and a further 162 are known from early maps or other documentary sources, but have not survived. This book, one of a series of Heritage publications by the Heritage Unit of Cork County Council, aims to provide the reader with a

broad understanding of the wide range of castle types which is found in County Cork, how castles would have functioned in society and the landscape, who would have built the castles, and why castles eventually went into decline and were abandoned. The book is arranged in chronological order, starting with the castles of the Anglo-Normans (including a brief look at earthwork castles), then moving on to the later medieval tower houses, then the fortified houses of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Each section will consider the historical and social context in which that particular castle type was built, the typical architectural features of each type, and the ethnicity and social standing of those who built them. The decline of the castles and the fate of the occupants will also be considered.

A subsequent chapter will consider in detail 30 exemplars, buildings which are typical of their type, and which, through their individual stories, can best illustrate the story of Irish castles in general. And finally a photographic section will illustrate the variety of castle types and the varied and attractive architectural detailing that can be found in the castles of County Cork.



Glanworth castle. The location on a cliff-edge overlooking a river is typical of many Medieval castles

¹ Saunder, A.D. 1977. 'Five castle excavations - Introduction', *Archaeological Journal*, 134. pp 1-10.

² Sweetman, D. 1999. *The Medieval castles of Ireland*. Collins Press, Cork. p 41

³ O'Keefe, T. 2015. *Medieval Irish Buildings 1100-1600*. Four Courts Press, Dublin. p 187

Chapter 2 The Anglo-Norman Castles


On a summer's day in May 1169 a flotilla of ships landed at Bannow Bay on the south coast of County Wexford. Their leader, Robert fitz Stephen, accompanied by his nephew Robert de Barry, strode ashore at the head of a heavily-armed force of over 400 knights, men-at-arms, archers and foot soldiers. These were the first of the Anglo-Norman knights to arrive in Ireland, hungry for both land and power. They had come at the invitation of Diarmait MacMurrough, king of Leinster, and now joined him in his campaigns against neighbouring chieftains. Others soon followed: another of fitz Stephen's nephews, Raymond de Carew, known to history as le Gros (*the Fat*) landed a few miles away at Baginbun the following year with a small force. There they fortified the headland, raided the countryside around for cattle and corn and settled in to wait for reinforcements. A far superior force sent out from Waterford to expel them was defeated by a cunning strategy: le Gros first attacked the Waterford men, then quickly retreated back into his fort; as the Waterford men pursued, le Gros released a large herd of cattle which stampeded into the Waterford forces, causing panic; le Gros' men followed and in the confusion easily defeated the attackers. The victory was a crucial one for the invaders, as reflected in the words of an anonymous poet:

'At the creek of Baginbun, Ireland was lost and won'

Three months later the great knight Strongbow, landed near Waterford with an overwhelming force of about 1,200 knights, archers and others. Initially the newcomers joined forces with the Irish king of Leinster Diarmait MacMurrough, to conquer Leinster and Dublin, before eventually spreading westwards and northwards. They and their descendants would go on to fundamentally change Irish society and the Irish landscape, leaving us a legacy of castles, churches, and towns, which survive to this day.



Baginbun head,
Co. Wexford, site of
Raymond le Gros'
landing. Arrows
indicate earthwork
fortifications.



A little over a year after the initial Anglo-Norman incursion on the east coast, on October 17, 1171, King Henry II of England landed in Waterford at the head of an army of 500 knights and over three thousand archers. Henry was worried that Strongbow, fitz Stephen and the other Anglo-Norman knights might become too powerful and establish an independent kingdom in Ireland. Supported by a powerful army he was able to assert his authority over them, and over the Irish kings. With this move he established, for the first time, the authority of the English crown over Ireland. After accepting the submission of Irish kings at Lismore and Cashel, and leaving garrisons in the cities of Cork and Limerick, Henry returned to England in April 1172, leaving Strongbow and the other lords to consolidate their initial gains.

One of the most significant events in the Anglo-Norman conquest was the Council of Oxford, held in May 1177. That Council effectively carved up the land of Ireland between Rory O'Connor as the dominant Irish ruler, and the Anglo-Norman lords. The MacCarthy kingdom of Cork, from the Blackwater at Youghal to Brandon Head in Kerry was granted jointly to Robert fitz Stephen and his son-in-law, Miles de Cogan. After some initial conflict they appear to have reached an agreement with Dermot MacCarthy to divide the kingdom, de Cogan and fitz Stephen to get the eastern part, the rest to remain under MacCarthy control. The newcomers quickly established control over east and north Cork and along the lower Lee valley, where many of their castles survive. Following the deaths of de Cogan (in 1182) and fitz Stephen (c. 1185) their successors took advantage of an internal MacCarthy succession dispute to expand into West Cork and by 1214 there appears to have been a string of castles from Killorglin in south Kerry down to Galley Head in West Cork. Many of their settlements in that area were, however, soon overrun by the Irish, and the castles have not survived.

These first Anglo-Normans were largely the descendants of men who had invaded England under William the Conqueror just over a century earlier and had spread across England and eventually settled in Wales. Most were Normans, but many more, such as the Barrys, were Flemish, natives of what is now Flanders in modern Belgium. They had fought with William as mercenaries in his conquest of England in 1066. It was only around the time of their conquest of Ireland that formal surnames were being adopted and many family names were toponyms, i.e. derived from placenames. The name de Barry, for instance, comes from the island of Barri in South Wales and de Carew from Caeriw in Pembrokeshire. Others adopted an ancestor's name, as did Raymond de Carew's cousins, who took the name fitz Gerald (*son of Gerald*), from their grandfather Gerald.

Many of these early settlers would have either known each other personally, or have been bound by deep ties of kinship, family loyalties and past shared adversities. Thus Robert fitz Stephen was joined by his nephews, Robert de Barry and Raymond le Gros, and his son-in-law Miles de Cogan. When it came to dividing up their newly-conquered territories the

leading men tended to favour their kinsmen and/or those close to them in the settlement of Wales.

When dividing territory the Anglo-Normans generally adopted existing territorial divisions, with occasional changes. Thus in North Cork the existing native *tuath* of Fir Máige became the Anglo-Norman *cantred* of Fermoy, in West Cork Corcu Loígde & Bérrre became Corkelye & Berre and in Mid-Cork Múscraige Mittíne became Muscramittine. Within these cantreds existing subdivisions were employed to create manors, the fundamental unit of Anglo-Norman land division, which were then assigned to individual knights. So, when Raymond le Gros acquired Fermoy from Robert fitz Stephen he divided the area into manors, each manor being approximately the equivalent of a later parish. Le Gros established his *caput* or chief centre at the manor of Glanworth, where he built his castle and settled the remainder of the cantred with his own relatives and supporters. His de Caunteton (Condon) nephews got Ballyderown, and the fitz Hughs got Duncroith (later Castletownroche) where both went on to build castles. Shortly before his death le Gros also settled Glanworth on one of his de Caunteton nephews.

The fate of the native occupants of areas captured by the Anglo-Normans varied. In areas effectively colonised, the lower levels of society, previously subject to the Gaelic lords, were taken over by the Anglo Norman lords as their serfs. However, there is little record of their fate and many probably moved. For example the O'Keeffes, pre-Norman rulers of Fir Máige (Fermoy), are later found much further west along the Blackwater valley, around Dromagh. In other instances records show that existing occupants remained in place and continued to work their ancestral lands, but now paid rents to their new Anglo-Norman landlords, as was the case with members of the O'Driscoll clan in the Myross area of West Cork.¹

The society encountered by those early Anglo-Norman invaders was very much a rural, agricultural one, with a small number of towns founded either by settlers of Viking origin along the coast, or by the larger monasteries.² An estimated population of less than half a million was supported by farming and trade in farming produce, both within Ireland and across the sea to Britain and Europe. Iron, salt and wine were commonly imported, while wool, hides, and honey were exported. Outside of some towns there was no coinage ("not until 1295 do we hear of a mint in Cork, though coinage was struck in Dublin, Waterford and Limerick very early in the century"³), so trade was based primarily on exchange of goods. The typical farm unit was approximately the same size as many modern townlands and was centred on the ringfort (known as *lios* or *ráith*), a circular area enclosed by a stone or earthen bank, within which was the family home and farmyard. Most of the heavy farm work was done by serfs, who were bound to the soil and were essentially the property of their overlord, and by slaves captured in war or purchased through slave markets in the towns. Irish society was aristocratic and hierarchical with numerous grades of kings, lords and commoners recognised in the law tracts, bound to each other by specific bonds of loyalty, food-rents and labour and military services. Politically it was a world of competing kings and kingdoms with a seemingly constant struggle for supremacy, and with no supreme authority. The office of high king was largely aspirational, and though it had become a reality under Brian Boru,

after his death in 1014 the situation reverted to the norm of fractured authority and competing claimants to the position. This lack of unity left Ireland vulnerable to outside interference.

By contrast, the newly-arrived settlers had come from a feudal society, effectively a social pyramid with the king at its peak as supreme lord of the soil, granting tracts of land to the great nobles, who in turn subdivided the land and granted it out to lesser nobles, and so on down through three or four levels (a process known as 'subinfeudation'). Castles were built by various ranks of nobility down to the minor lords.⁴ The nobility on each level paid for their land in military service to the rank above and the base tenantry paid in labour services (farmwork such as ploughing, weeding, and carting) and in farm produce. By the end of the twelfth century the military services had largely been replaced by money rent, though the king could still demand personal military service on occasions when he required an army.

The most visible castles which survive today are of course the great stone structures of the Anglo-Norman settlers, with their high walls and towers. However, castles of earth and timber were also built, and indeed some of these were built by the native Irish before and shortly after the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. The Irish were no strangers to building defensive earthworks (ringforts, raths, lioses), and these were a common feature of the Irish landscape for centuries before the arrival of the Normans. However, the vast majority of these sites were simply defended farmsteads and we do not regard them as castles. In the second half of the twelfth century, however, a new type of earthwork, the motte, began to appear in the landscape. The motte was a circular mound generally ranging from 3 to 11 metres high, with a distinctive conical, steep-sided shape and a flat top, on which timber structures would have been built. Many, but not all, had an enclosed courtyard or 'bailey' at their base, which would have sheltered a range of domestic and agricultural buildings. The number of mottes built by the native Irish must have been small and the vast majority of surviving mottes are located in areas settled by the Anglo-Normans.

Example of a twelfth-century motte -
St. Mullin's, Co. Carlow.



There are also references to stone castles being built by the native Irish before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans: Domhnall Mór Ó Briain built a castle at Adare before the Anglo-Normans arrived in that area⁵, and the 'stone house' of the king of Leinster, Diarmait MacMurrough, at Ferns, Co. Wexford, may have been a castle. An eighteenth-century reference to a stone castle built at Castlelyons in Co. Cork in 1104 is based on dubious evidence and it is most unlikely that such a castle existed.⁶ We know from archaeological and historical evidence that the Irish had frequent contact with Britain and northern France in the twelfth century and earlier, so it can be assumed that they were well aware of the stone castles and defensive earthworks in those areas.⁷ To what extent they copied what they saw abroad is, however, still very uncertain.

What is certain, however, is that the construction of castles in Ireland was begun in earnest by the Anglo-Normans in the late twelfth century. Some of their earliest castles, too, were mottes. They were a relatively easy and quick fortification to throw up, and though some are known to have been built later in areas where stone castles already existed, many must have been built as an initial defence before an area was conquered and pacified sufficiently to allow for building in stone. Surprisingly, since much of Munster was densely settled by the Anglo-Normans, very few mottes are found in the province, and only three have been positively identified in County Cork, all clustered in the Charleville area, with a possible fourth near Ballinacurra, Midleton. The lack of mottes in this region is puzzling, but it has been suggested that the Anglo-Normans conquered this area rapidly and were able to construct masonry castles from a very early stage.⁸ Another possible explanation is that instead of mottes they built another type of earthwork castle, the 'ringwork'. The ringwork is very similar to the native ringfort, *i.e.* an enclosure defended by an earthen bank with a ditch or fosse outside, and the main differences identified between the two are that the ringwork banks are more pronounced and the fosse is wider than one would expect in a ringfort, and the overall shape can vary from circular to rectangular to D-shaped.⁹ Many of them had stone castles later built within them, as was the case at Castle Barrett (**Exemplar 5**) in north Cork. There is some dispute among castle scholars as to the identification of ringworks and it may be that some sites identified as ringworks are in fact pre-Norman earthworks.¹⁰ Further research and archaeological excavation is required to explore this further.

A third type of earthwork fortification which the Anglo-Normans employed is the promontory fort, where a steep-sided promontory, either on the coast or formed by a river bend inland, was defended by digging a ditch or trench across the neck of the promontory. This type of fortification was already present in Ireland long before the Anglo-Normans and it is likely they simply occupied those existing sites. In Cork, three of the early Anglo-Norman castles, Glanworth (**Exemplar 4**), Castletownroche (**Exemplar 8**) and Carrigdownane are located on promontories. At least one, Castletownroche, is known to occupy the site of a pre-Norman fortification, and the same may be true of Glanworth.

Records of the earliest masonry castles are scant and it is rarely possible to assign a definite date to any particular castle. The best we can do is to identify certain castle types based on layout and architectural detail and assign a date range to each type based on comparison

with castles for which records survive. Each castle essentially consisted of high enclosing walls (*curtain walls*), usually with towers at the corners and along the sides. Within the enclosure was a range of buildings, either of stone or timber. The form and layout of the castles varied widely: County Cork, for instance, has surviving remains of fourteen masonry castles of the Anglo-Norman period, all of which differ slightly in form and layout.¹¹ Nonetheless, broad categories can be identified based on the site location, shape and type of enclosure, and on the form and location of the castle's 'keep', a term that will be discussed shortly.

The locations chosen by castle builders vary considerably, and not all are on sites that might be considered easily defended. Three, Castletownroche, Carrigdownane and Glanworth, are located on steep-sided promontories overlooking river valleys, sites which were easily defended by simply excavating a ditch across the neck of the promontory. Buttevant (**Exemplar 3**), though not on a promontory, is also on a high rock cliff overlooking a river. Indeed the name Buttevant, which is also found in castles in France and Britain, derives from the French *bote avant* meaning a tower in front of a ditch, and hence a tower on a cliff, or a frontier tower. Ballyderown and Licklash, both on the Blackwater east of Fermoy, and Mogeely, on the Bride east of Conna, are similarly located on or close to a cliff-edge overlooking a river. Castle Barrett (**Exemplar 5**), to the south of Mallow, is the most prominently located, perched high on a hill



ABOVE: Castletownroche castle from the air. Arrows indicate line of promontory fort.
BELOW: Ballincollig castle.



overlooking the principal route between Cork and Limerick at a pass through the hills. Others, like Inchiquin (**Exemplar 6**), to the southwest of Youghal, and Leitrim, to the southeast of Kilworth, are sited on low-lying land overlooked by higher ground, in locations that suggest military considerations were not high on the builders' priorities. Finally there are three built on prominent rock outcrops in otherwise flat land, the shape of the enclosures determined by the contours of the rock. These are Kilmaclenine, west of Buttevant, Castlemore, near Crookstown, and Ballincollig (**Exemplar 7**). Castlelyons could also be included in this group, but little of the original castle has survived the extensive seventeenth-century rebuilding.

Where a single dominant building is found within a castle complex it has traditionally been known as the 'keep', a name which derives from the belief that this building was a stronghold, the place the occupants retreated to for 'safe keeping' when in danger. However, we should bear in mind that they were also private living quarters, where the lord and his family lived their everyday lives. Nowadays the term 'keep' is usually reserved for the more massive towers, such as the great tower at Trim, Co. Meath, or the great cylindrical tower at Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, which were big enough to combine various functions. Many other castles, including the surviving examples in County Cork, have much smaller towers, such as the rectangular tower at Glanworth and the cylindrical tower at Buttevant. The modern labelling of these smaller towers is the subject of debate among castle scholars, a debate which hinges on the identification of the 'hall' and 'chamber', two of the most important spaces in a Medieval castle. The difference between 'hall' and 'chamber' is significant. The chamber was a private space reserved for the lord and his family, where they lived their daily lives. The hall on the other hand was a semi-public space where the lord carried out his administrative and judicial business; dined publicly and entertained important guests. Among the guests would have been emissaries from neighbouring lordships, officials of the crown, bishops and abbots representing the churches and monasteries which he patronised, and his own officials and sheriffs updating him on affairs of his towns and estates. The modern debate around these spaces centres on whether the hall was located on the ground floor or could be on an upper floor.

The case of Glanworth will illustrate the point. The central, freestanding building at Glanworth castle is a typical example of these small rectangular towers. It is a two-storey building with a ground-floor basement and a principal room on the first floor entered by a first-floor doorway accessed by an external stairs. The excavator of the site referred to it as a 'hall-keep' in the belief that the first floor functioned as a hall, even though a separate building on the site was also identified as a hall.¹² Others argue that the first floor of these buildings was not the hall, but was the private chamber of the lord and his family, and one writer has suggested the term *chamber-tower* to describe them.¹³ This is the term that will be used in this book.

The physical relationship of the hall and chamber-tower can vary from place to place. At three of the Cork sites, Glanworth, Buttevant, and Castletownroche, separate chamber-towers and halls can be identified, with the hall located close to the perimeter of the castle



The 'chamber-tower' at Glanworth. The ground-floor door is not original. The larger opening on the first floor is the original entrance, which was reached by an external stairs. Note the base batter and the narrow window/arrow loops.

enclosure, or incorporated into the curtain wall, so that visitors to it would not have to access the more private areas of the castle, which were the preserve of the lord and his family. At two, Castle Barrett, south of Mallow, and Licklash, east of Fermoy, the chamber-tower is attached to one end of the hall. Ballyderown, east of Kilworth and the little-known castle at Ballymacphillip, south of Ballyhooly, were also chamber-towers. Their surrounding buildings and enclosures have disappeared, and may have been timber.

At three of the Cork sites the chamber-tower was cylindrical: at Buttevant it was incorporated into the curtain walls, at Inchiquin it was free-standing, while at Castletownroche little of the original survives and later additions have obscured its original form. Mogeely castle, east of Conna, now very much ruined, had a rectangular chamber-tower incorporated into one corner of the enclosure.

In some castles we see no obvious evidence today of any building within the curtain wall, just empty spaces enclosed by high walls. The largest of these 'enclosure castles' in Cork is the great fortress of Lisscarroll, a vast space enclosed by seven-metre high walls with cylindrical towers at each corner and a massive gatehouse in the south wall. While nothing survives inside the enclosure there is evidence, along the west wall in particular, of former

buildings which stood here, and there must have been a range of buildings, mainly of timber, standing within the courtyard. Kilbolane (**Exemplar 1**), with its cylindrical corner towers, is similar to Liscarroll (**Exemplar 2**), though on a smaller scale. Another in the same group is Leitrim castle, east of Kilworth, a small square enclosure with a gatehouse along one side and a rectangular tower projecting from one corner. Several windows along the walls testify to the former presence of buildings ranged along the walls, and a fireplace in the east wall marks the location of a ground-floor hall. The castle at Castlemore, near Crookstown, crowns a prominent rock outcrop and consists of a large enclosure with rectangular towers along its curtain wall. These 'enclosure castles' generally date to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Ballincollig castle, also located on a prominent rock, is a large enclosure with rectangular towers along its curtain walls. The enclosure is divided in two, one part containing a tall slender watchtower to which was attached another building, which is now completely ruined. It also had a hall along the northern curtain wall. It was built in the later fourteenth century by a new Anglo-Norman settler, Roger Cole¹⁴ and many attribute the name 'Ballincollig' to him (i.e. Cole's Town or 'Baile An Chomhghail' in Irish).

The process of founding and building a Medieval castle can be broadly traced at Glanworth, the best documented of the Anglo-Norman castles in Cork. Archaeological excavations were carried out there by the Office of Public Works in the 1980s and have been recently published.

The most likely founder of Glanworth was Raymond le Gros, who, as noted above, established his chief centre or *caput* here sometime before his death in 1189. The castle is located on a promontory standing high above a bend in the river Funshion, and aerial photography has shown traces of a ditch cutting off and protecting the promontory, similar



The enclosure castle at Liscarroll from the air.



Liscarroll Castle.



Reconstruction drawing of Glanworth castle as it would have looked c. 1300. The chamber-tower is at the centre of the enclosure, the gatehouse to the right and the hall in the foreground, incorporated into the curtain wall. The town is off to the right. Illustration by Rhoda Cronin.

to what le Gros found at Baginbun in Wexford, which he had fortified when he first arrived in Ireland almost twenty years earlier. The Glanworth site may well have been a pre-Norman fortification and it would of course have made sense for le Gros to seize the fortress of the native O'Keeffe chieftain he had dispossessed - the symbolism of such an act would not have been lost on other chieftains in the region, and the practical value of an existing fortification would have been enormous.

Le Gros would have built timber structures initially within this fortified site. Around 1190 his nephew and heir Robert de Caunteton (Condon) built the chamber-tower, the first stone building on the site, which still survives. The stone hall on the northern perimeter followed about ten years later. The hall is now gone, but its foundations were found in the excavations. The site did not have a walled enclosure at this stage, no doubt the ditch cutting off the promontory, backed by an earthen bank topped by a wooden palisade, were felt to be sufficient protection. Other buildings within the castle would have provided domestic living space for the household garrison and servants, along with stabling for horses, workshops for carpenters, stone masons, blacksmiths, and so on.

A stone curtain wall and a strong gatehouse were added around 1230. The gatehouse was

a tall, strong rectangular building with a long entrance passageway through it, similar to that which can still be seen at Liscarroll Castle today. An interesting feature of the Glanworth gatehouse is the presence to one side of the entrance of two small ground-floor rooms which could only be entered via trapdoors in their vaulted roofs. These must have been either prisons or strongrooms for storing documents and other valuables. The rooms had no light or ventilation, which might suggest storage rather than prisons, and the room above might have been the counting house, where all goods and traffic entering and leaving the castle could be recorded.

Excavations at Glanworth castle have provided clues as to the everyday life of the castle's occupants. Many grains of wheat, oats and barley were found, items which would have been consumed as bread, porridge and beer. Other foods included beans, peas, lentils and radishes, all of which would have been grown in the castle gardens. The diet also included cattle, sheep and pigs, and interestingly, red deer. Deer hunting was the preserve of the wealthy in Medieval times and deer bones are found only in high-status sites such as castles and hunting lodges.

Today, when we see castles standing in isolation in the middle of a field or surrounded by modern farm buildings, it is easy to forget that that each castle was at the heart of a web of social interaction, trade and commerce, which extended well beyond the bounds of the castle walls and beyond the manorial boundaries. Within and around the castle itself there would have been a wide range of buildings in addition to the hall and chamber-tower already mentioned – accommodation for servants, household staff, and a military garrison, for instance, stabling for horses, workshops for stone masons, carpenters and other trades. A fourteenth-century description of Inchiquin castle refers to a substantial house beside the tower, and a courtyard nearby with two chambers, a kitchen, a bakehouse and an oven.¹⁵ The castle would also have had its own vegetable and herb gardens, as well as orchards.

Beyond the castle walls the other essential elements of an early Anglo-Norman settlement were the town and the parish church, and usually also, a monastery. Good examples of this in Cork can be seen at Buttevant and Glanworth. At Buttevant we know that the Medieval parish church was located immediately south of the castle, the town extended to the north, and the Franciscan friary was sited at the northern end of the original town. At Glanworth the medieval parish church was located in the graveyard where the ruined Church of Ireland stands today, a short distance to the northwest of the castle. The town is likely to have occurred between the two. There are also two interesting remains of medieval structures that may be associated with the town. These are the lower portion of a vaulted tower at the south east-corner of the graveyard and fragmentary remains of a building incorporated in the south wall of the graveyard which was recently consolidated by Cork County Council's Conservation team. Apart from these there are no visible surface remains of the town. The church of the Dominican priory still stands a short distance to the north of the graveyard.

Towns were an integral part of the manorial trading economy which was essential to the Anglo-Norman colony, and taxes levied on goods traded through the towns formed a

significant element of lordly income. The rights to make a town and hold a market had to be granted by the King. The thirteenth century witnessed a phenomenal growth in agricultural production and trade across Europe, and hundreds of towns and villages were founded to control and facilitate this trade. Towns acted as market places where the agricultural produce from the surrounding farms could be sold to traders who transported it to the port towns for export. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries huge quantities of wheat, wool, animal hides, livestock, timber and other produce were being exported from Cork, Kinsale, Youghal and elsewhere to ports such as Chester and Bristol in England, and on the Continent from the Low Countries down to south-western France. Returning ships brought cargoes of wine, French and English cloth, pottery utensils, spices and dyestuffs. The rural towns thus acted as hubs for the collection and export of local produce from the hinterland and for the distribution of imported goods to that hinterland. Local lords controlled that trade and prospered from taxes levied on the traded goods. Towns were therefore an integral part of castle life, and we should imagine streets of bustling shops and noisy marketplaces alongside castles such as Buttevant, Glanworth, Mogeely and Castletownroche.



Aerial view of Glanworth. Castle in foreground, above the river; ruined church at centre, site of Medieval parish church; monastery near top right-hand corner. (Source: Manning, C. 2009, p 12)

After an intensive construction phase from the late 1100s to the late 1200s, we see a noticeable decline in castle-building after 1300. This can be partly explained by the fact that so many had already been built, that few new castles were needed. In addition the fourteenth century was a period of great social disruption and economic decline, the result of serious infighting between the Anglo-Norman lords themselves and fighting between the Anglo-Normans and the native Irish. This situation was greatly worsened when the war between Robert Bruce, king of Scotland and Edward II of England spilled over into Ireland. The ensuing war, which lasted until Bruce's defeat in 1318, caused widespread famine.¹⁶ It was followed later in that century by the Black Death, which caused further devastation. Construction in stone in that period was mainly concentrated on churches and on renovations and additions to existing castles. It was not until the end of that century and on into the 1400s that we see the Irish regaining control accompanied by large-scale revival of castle-building and the emergence of a new type of castle, known to us as the 'tower house', which is looked at in the next chapter.

¹ McCotter, P. 1997, 'The sub-infeudation and descent of the Fitzstephen/Carew moiety of Desmond, part 2', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, vol 101, 64-80, p. 99

² For discussion on pre-Norman Ireland see D. Ó Corráin, 1972, *Ireland before the Normans*, and F J Byrne 'The trembling sod: Ireland in 1169', in *Medieval Ireland 1169-1534*, 1-42.

³ O'Sullivan, W. 1937 *Economic History of Cork City to 1800*, Cork University Press, Cork. P. 41

⁴ O'Keeffe, *Medieval Irish buildings*, p188

⁵ *Ibid.*, p 220

⁶ Smith, C. 1815 *The ancient and present state of the County and City of Cork*. 2nd ed. O'Connor, Cork. Vol. 1, p 157. Loeber, R. 2001. 'An architectural history of Gaelic castles and settlements, 1370-1600' in P.J. Duffy et. al. (eds.) *Gaelic Ireland, land, lordship and settlement c. 1250-c. 1650*. Four Courts Press, Dublin. 271-314. p 290

⁷ Barry, T. 2007. 'The origins of Irish castles: a contribution to the debate', in C. Manning (ed.) *From ringforts to fortified houses*. Wordwell, Bray. 33-40. p 36

⁸ O'Keeffe, T, 2000, *Medieval Ireland, an archaeology*. Tempus Publishing, Stroud. p. 33

⁹ Sweetman, D. 1999, *The Medieval castles of Ireland*. the Collins Press p. 4

¹⁰ O'Keeffe *Medieval Irish buildings* 198-9

¹¹ The fourteen are: Glanworth, Castletownroche, Carrigdownane, Ballyderown, Licklash, Kilbolane, Liscarroll, Ballincolling, Castlemore, Castle Barrett, Inchiquin, Leitrim, Castlelyons and Mogeely

¹² Manning, C. 2009 *The history and archaeology of Glanworth Castle, Co. Cork: excavations 1982-4*. The Stationery Office, Dublin. p. 138. Manning and others also use the term 'hall-house' for buildings similar to the 'hall-keep' but not enclosed by masonry curtain walls.

¹³ O'Keeffe, *Medieval Irish buildings*, pp 224ff

¹⁴ See Paul MacCotter at <http://www.paulmaccotter.com/mccarthy-riordan-kelleher-barrett-omahony-murphy-flynn-ocallaghan-irish-ethnic-cleansing/> Accessed October 5th 2017.

¹⁵ O'Keeffe, T, 2004 'Space, place, habitus: geographies of practice in an Anglo-Norman landscape', in H.B. Clarke et. al. (ed) *Surveying Ireland's past*. Geography Publications, Dublin. 73-98. p.82

¹⁶ Otway-Ruthven, A.J. 1980, *A history of Medieval Ireland*. Ernest Benn, London. pp 224-237.

Chapter 3

Tower Houses

The beginning of the 14th century, two hundred years after the arrival of the first Anglo Normans, was a period of turmoil and change. The Bruce invasion of 1315-8 left in its wake a trail of plunder and destruction leading to widespread disruption and famine. It was, according to the annals, a time when 'falsehood and famine and homicide filled the country'.¹ Later in the century the virulent plague known as the Black Death spread across Europe, reaching Ireland in 1348. A major outbreak at that stage followed by periodic outbreaks through the remainder of the century reduced the population by as much as forty percent.² The resulting loss of labour to work the land and loss of tenants to pay rent dealt a severe blow to the economy underpinning the Anglo-Norman colony. In addition the colony came under increasing pressure from the resurgent Irish, such as the MacCarthys in Cork, who were beginning to expand eastwards, recovering lands which had been lost to the invaders. Politically, power became increasingly fragmented as the influence of the Dublin government weakened and individual lords such as the Earls of Desmond, Kildare and Ormond, and many others, gained increasing autonomy. In effect they established semi-independent 'lordships', territories which they ruled from their castles with only occasional interference from the state. It was in that context that a new type of castle, the tower house, emerged in the late fourteenth century, gained



Togher Castle. Image courtesy of Margaret Hurley.

in popularity in the fifteenth and sixteenth and continued to be built in smaller numbers into the seventeenth. One of the interesting aspects of tower houses is that they were built not only by the descendants of the Anglo-Norman castle builders, but also by the native Irish. Not alone had the Anglo-Normans become, in that well-known phrase, "more Irish than the Irish themselves", but the Irish had perhaps become a little Anglo-Norman in their adoption of imported building traditions, and there are no major differences between the tower houses built by the two groups. From the 'clash of cultures' of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a merging of two cultures had occurred, expressed, among other ways, in the new architecture.

In Chapter 2 we saw how the pre-Norman Irish world of competing kings and kingdoms had been, in part at least, replaced by the feudal, centralised social and political structure of the Anglo-Normans. Of course this system, with the King of England at its head, only ever operated in those areas fully controlled by the King's administration based in Dublin, and never extended throughout the entire country. Through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that area gradually shrank and by the early sixteenth century the King's 'writ' or authority was confined to the Pale, a limited area around Dublin, and the other larger cities such as Cork and Waterford. Outside the Pale power was localised and rested in the hands of individual lords, both native Irish (MacCarthys, O'Driscolls, O'Mahonys etc.) and 'Old English', the name often given by historians to the descendants of the original Anglo-Norman settlers (FitzGerald, Barrys, Roches, Condons, etc.). There was however a certain hierarchy to this system, whereby the most powerful lords such as the Earl of Desmond and Earl of Ormond claimed superiority over other, lesser lords, but were not always able to enforce those claims. In Munster the FitzGerald, titled 'Earls of Desmond' since 1329, were the leading power. Descended from Maurice fitz Gerald, one of the first of the Anglo-Norman invaders, they established their principal base in County Limerick, centred on castles in Croom and Shanid. From there, through strategic marriages, fortuitous inheritances and sheer force of arms they expanded through Counties Cork, Kerry, Tipperary and Waterford. By the fifteenth century their sphere of influence stretched in a continuous belt from North Kerry through Limerick, across North Cork by close alliance with the FitzGibbon and Condon lords, and down through East Cork and West Waterford, to the sea at Youghal where they directly controlled the town and extensive territories around.

Over the western half of the county the MacCarthys held sway. Despite vicious internal rivalries, which the FitzGerald had exploited for their own ends, the MacCarthy Mór kings of Desmond³ had vigorously opposed Anglo-Norman expansion. Finghín MacCarthy inflicted a significant defeat on them at the battle of Callan in County Kerry in 1261, and went on to recover large tracts of land in southern Kerry and western Cork that had previously been lost to the invaders. Over the following two centuries the MacCarthys gradually expanded eastwards so that by about the year 1500 the County of Cork could be roughly divided along a line (by no means a straight one) stretching approximately from Milford on the Limerick border down through Liscarroll and Mallow and on by Blarney to the sea near Kinsale. Territory west of that line was, with some minor exceptions, controlled by the native Irish, principally MacCarthys, while land to the east of the line was in the hands



Desmond Castle, located within the coastal town of Kinsale.

of the Old English. East of the line the principal lords, in addition to the Earls of Desmond, were Barry, Roche, Condon, Barrett and Fitzgibbon. In the Irish area most of the territory was ruled by one or other branch of the MacCarthys – principally MacCarthy of Muskerry in the Lee valley, Macdonagh MacCarthy in the northwest and MacCarthy Reagh in the southwest. Other lesser lords included O’Callaghan, O’Keeffe and MacAuliffe along the Blackwater and north of it; O’Leary and O’Mahony along the Lee, O’Crowley along the Bandon river, O’Donovan, O’Driscoll and another O’Mahony to the south, and O’Sullivan on the Beara peninsula. These lords were frequently at loggerheads with each other: Roches and Condons regularly clashed, the Earls of Desmond harassed Barry lands, different branches of MacCarthys jockeyed for supremacy, and the minor lords struggled to maintain their position either by direct conflict or in alliance with a more powerful ally. In such a volatile society a castle was essential for any lord to protect himself, his family and his possessions.

Over the course of three centuries since the arrival of the Anglo-Normans the cultural and social boundaries between them and the native Irish had become increasingly blurred.⁴ The Old English families had intermarried with the Irish, and had adopted Irish ways, language and customs. They adopted the native Irish brehon law, and patronised bardic poets, as the Irish lords had done for centuries. In the late 1300s Gerald, the third Earl of Desmond, was himself a noted Irish poet, while the Roches of Fermoy were patrons of Irish learning. Both families were connected by marriage – Gerald’s half-sister Amy was married to David Roche of Castletownroche (**Exemplar 8**), which is why much of Gerald’s poetry is preserved in the *Book of Fermoy*, an anthology of poetry myths, sagas and medical tracts compiled for the Roches at their seat at Castletownroche castle.⁵ A century later a similar anthology, generally known today as the *Book of Lismore*, was produced at Kilbrittain castle for Finghín MacCarthy Reagh. Here too there were connections with the FitzGeralds – Finghín’s wife Caitilin, was the daughter of Thomas, the eighth earl of Desmond.⁶

Agriculture was still the mainstay of the economy in this period. In the Irish areas, including the western part of Cork County, farming tended to be more pastoral, with a strong emphasis on cattle, along with horses and sheep. As in the Gaelic tradition, cattle remained the principle symbol of wealth and often the cause of disputes and war. Tillage farming was also practised and the growing of oats and barley was common. Herds were allowed to range freely over pastures, woodland and hillside commonage, guarded by their herdsmen, who followed their stock as they moved, living in temporary huts. In the Old English areas in East Cork and along the Blackwater valley there was greater emphasis on tillage farming, but herds of cattle, sheep, pigs and horses were also common.⁷ Barley, wheat and rye were grown, along with beans and peas. Butter and cheese featured prominently in the diet, while oatcake and porridge were also eaten, as well as, of course, beef, pork and mutton. One visitor to a tower house in 1620 wrote that the table was “*plentifully furnished with variety of meates, but ill-cooked and without sauce*”!⁸ It doesn’t say much for the Irish culinary skills at the time.

Fishing was a significant industry along the coast, and the town of Baltimore was noted as a centre of the fishing industry, where foreign trawlers came to land and trade their catch,

repair boats and nets, and buy supplies. The O'Driscoll lords of the area profited well from taxes on fishing, and were also noted as pirates.⁹ The wealth and generosity of Finghín O'Driscoll at the end of the sixteenth century is legendary. One story is told of how he entertained the crew of an English fleet becalmed outside Baltimore by 'flooding' the town with wine and throwing handfuls of silver into a well near the castle. To this day the well is called *Tobar an airgid*, the well of the silver.¹⁰

Towns were more common in the Old English areas, where towns founded in the 13th century continued to function as marketplaces and trading centres. Tower Houses were built in towns also; Tyntes Castle in Youghal and Desmond Castle in Kinsale are examples.

Outside of the towns settlement patterns varied considerably across the country - in some areas the population appears to have been widely dispersed, while in others they lived in clustered settlements. Houses generally would have been simple affairs of clay walls and thatch roofs, similar to the poorer quality houses of the nineteenth century, or built of upright timber posts interwoven with wattle, plastered with clay and whitewashed. Since they were built of perishable materials they have not survived, so that the only record we have of them is from contemporary drawings and descriptions. In contrast to these simple cabins occupied by much of the peasantry, many of the great stone tower houses of the upper classes survive, which at the time, must have seemed extremely ostentatious.

Given the social and political instability of the fourteenth century and the economic disruption which it caused, the century witnessed a surprising burst of building activity, which continued into the following century. A great many new churches were built in that period and many existing churches were renovated and extended, reflecting the importance of religion and religious worship at the time. Frequently, new churches and tower houses were located close together, as at Garryvoe, Barnahealy and Kilcoe (**Exemplar 20**), and one can see that the architectural detail of windows and doors is almost identical in both tower house and church. Indeed at Ballinacarriga, near Dunmanway, a chapel was incorporated within the tower house itself.



Ballinacarriga Castle
- illustrating the fine
arcading in the Great
chamber in the
upper floor.

Image courtesy of Margaret
Hurley.

With regard to tower houses unfortunately there are no building accounts from the time, but a reference from County Down suggests that in the late sixteenth century a castle there would have cost £300 to £400 to build.¹¹ The cost would have been offset to some extent though by the requirement of the lord's tenants to assist in the work. Records from the Ó Doyne lordship in County Laois show that Ó Doyne's tenants were compelled to help build and repair his castles, and in County Kilkenny the tenants of the earl of Ossory were forced to house and feed the masons and labourers employed on his building works, and to transport the required building materials, without payment. The construction of these castles was by no means a small undertaking and their purpose, and indeed design, are of particular interest.

The name 'tower-house' suggests our general understanding of the function of these buildings, that they were essentially the defended dwellings of the gentry or lords of late medieval Ireland. The construction of tower houses seems to have begun in the late 1300s. Some castle scholars have in the past suggested that they originated with a Government statute of 1429 which granted a subsidy of ten pounds towards the construction of small castles of set dimensions. However, this statute was short-lived and only ever applied to the Pale, and it is accepted now that tower houses were already being built before it was introduced. Indeed, recent radiocarbon dating from Barryscourt (**Exemplar 11**) tower house suggests it was built around the year 1400. Given Barryscourt's size and complexity of design, it is likely that many of the smaller, simpler tower houses were built even earlier.

The tower house was a tall slender tower, generally five storeys high, with walls up to 2.5m (8 feet) thick at the base and topped with stepped battlements. Windows were generally plain and defensively narrow on the lower floors, but wider and more decorative on the



Base Batter - note how the wall thickens as it approaches the base.



Ogee headed ground floor window at Ballinamona Castle using chamfered edged limestone blocks dressed with subtle pick dressing.



Ogee head window at Carrigabrick Castle, Fermoy made from dressed limestone blocks with chamfered edges and decorated with hollowed out spandrels, it is flanked by a gun loop to the left.



The pointed arched door at Kilcrea Castle using dressed limestone with chamfered edge leading into the entrance lobby.
Image by Eoghan Nelligan.

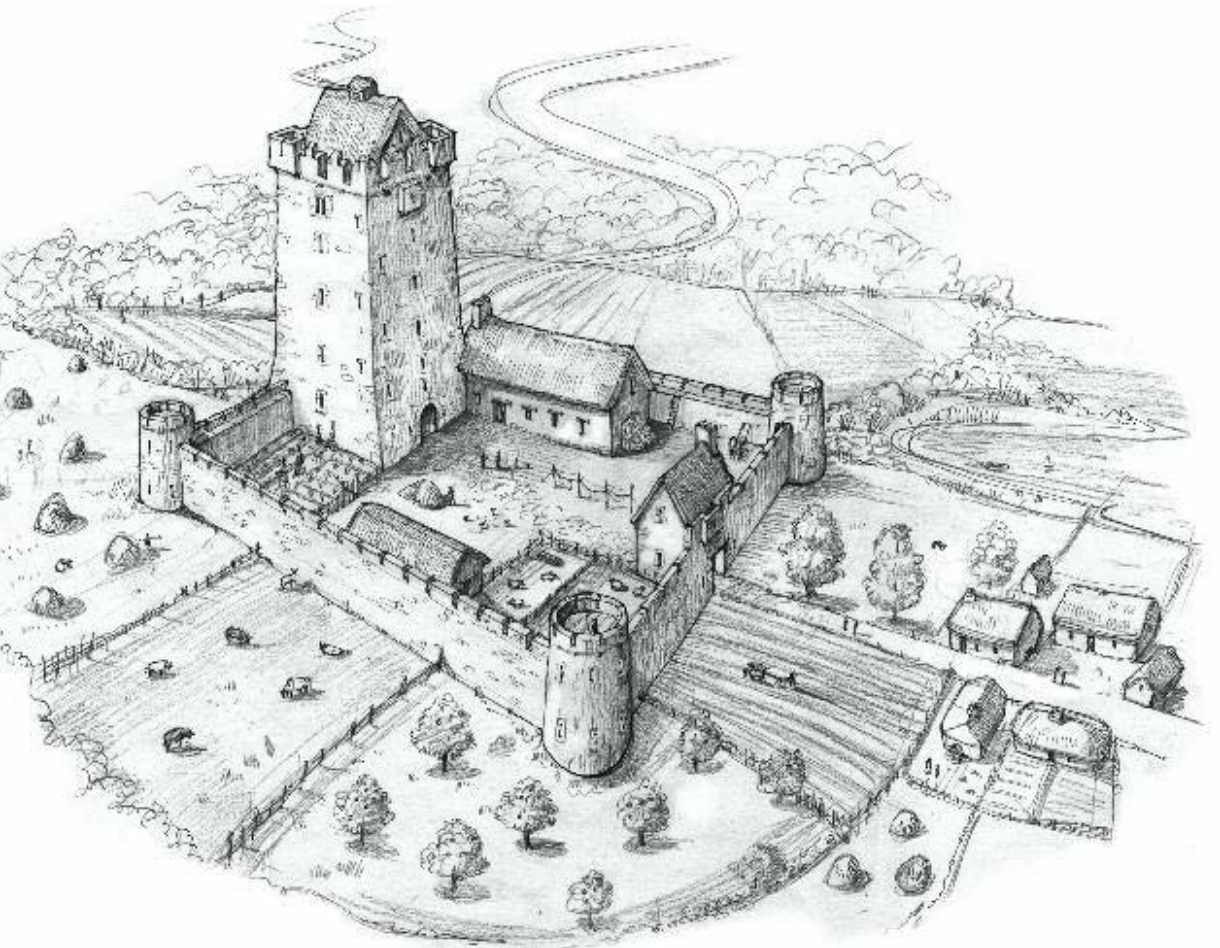
upper levels. Other defensive features could include projecting machicolations high over the entrance doorway and bartizans on the corners, through which the castle defenders could shoot down on attackers below. Some would have had an iron gate or grille known as a 'yett' hanging outside the entrance door. Later tower houses were equipped with 'gun loops', tiny circular openings just big enough to take a musket barrel.

The walls of tower houses were thick not only for defensive purposes but also for structural reasons, bearing the load of the upper walls. The walls were built of random rubble using local quarried stone bonded with lime mortar. The corners of the tower house were usually built with large dressed limestone blocks strengthening the vulnerable corners from attack.

A distinctive feature of most tower houses is the gradual thickening of the walls towards the base, a feature known as a 'base-batter'. In many tower houses this tall graceful batter is an aesthetically attractive feature, but it also had practical functions. The thickening of the walls made them more difficult for attackers to undermine, a favourite technique of medieval warfare, and it meant that attackers were kept further out from the castle and could be seen more easily by the defenders on the battlements above.

The window and door openings were generally made from dressed blocks of stone; in the County of Cork we find that these are usually limestone with chamfered edges (corners cut off). Some windows were covered in a hood moulding (projecting cover). This feature serves a dual purpose, being both a decorative feature as well as having a practical function of directing water away from the window opening. Internally window embrasures were splayed, this was used as an attempt to allow more light into the interior of the building through the very narrow window openings that were required for defensive purposes. On the upper floors, safe from attackers, windows were wider, usually with two or three lights. The typical window of the time had the graceful 'ogee' head, in contrast to the simple pointed windows of thirteenth-century castles. Tower house doors almost invariably had the typical pointed Gothic arch, but in some later examples internal doors have the flatter 'segmental' arch typical of the Tudor era (late 1500s).

The outstanding feature of the tower house was of course the tower itself, which is often all that survives on the site today, surrounded by open fields or by modern buildings. Originally it would have been surrounded by numerous other small buildings, of stone, clay or wood, and contained within a walled enclosure, known as a 'bawn'. The word 'bawn' is derived from the Irish words *ba* (cows) and *dún* (fortress), so a bawn was a place to keep one's cows safe. Some of the tower house bawns were certainly large enough to contain a small herd of cows, an important feature bearing in mind the importance of cattle but others could only have held one or two small buildings in addition to the tower house itself. Very few bawns survive intact today, but occasionally, as at Cloghleigh (**Exemplar 9**) in North Cork, their outline can be traced on the ground or from aerial photography. Good examples of surviving bawn walls in County Cork include Barryscourt in East Cork and Carriganass in West Cork.



How a typical tower house would have looked c. 1500. Illustration by Rhoda Cronin.

Within the tower house and in a cluster of buildings around it the lord would have lived with his family and a retinue of servants and labourers, along with a small armed garrison for protection. From here the lord would have administered his estates, dealt with tenants, collected his rents, and, in the case of the more powerful lords, held court and dispensed justice and punishment for minor offences.

An early seventeenth-century description of an O'Doyne castle in County Laois gives us a good indication of what would have been found around a tower house of that time. The description speaks of:

“ the castle... the hall, the parlour at thend of the hall, the kitchen, the brewhouse, the backhouse (bakehouse) and the rest of the houses within the bawn, the haggart and barnes on the south syde of the castle, the garden the orchard, the parke the stable and the houses for cattle on the west syde. ”

The description clearly suggests an extensive range around the tower house, including domestic buildings (hall, kitchen, brewhouse, and bakehouse) within the bawn, and agricultural buildings (barns, stable and cattle houses) outside it, along with a garden, orchard and haggart. The closest equivalent familiar to us would be the nineteenth-century landlord estate with its extensive range of buildings, gardens and orchards around the 'Big House'. Unlike the nineteenth-century estate, however, the buildings around the tower house would have been mainly built of timber or clay, with thatch roofs, which have all decayed with time.



The well-preserved tower house and bawn at Pallas, County Galway

Numerous contemporary sources suggest, as in the description above, that the 'castle' and 'hall' were separate buildings, and that the halls were essentially long thatched houses with walls of clay or timber. As we saw in Chapter 2 the hall was a semi-public place where the lord of the castle and his family dined while entertaining official visitors and where he conducted official business associated with the administration of his estates. By the end of



Dunmanus castle. Sited on a promontory which was almost an island before the present road was built.

the sixteenth century however dining was increasingly confined to the tower house itself, though the hall, as a separate building, still retained its earlier official and administrative functions.

The majority of the Cork tower houses are a simple rectangle in plan, but a few are more complex. Kilcoe (**Exemplar 20**), Dunmanus (**Exemplar 21**) and Dundeady are comprised of a main tower and a conjoined flanking tower, a style largely confined to West Cork. Barryscourt (**Exemplar 11**) has two conjoined flanking towers on diagonally opposite corners, and Poulnalong has a circular tower at one corner. A small number of the Irish tower houses are circular, including one in Cork, at Carrickabrick near Fermoy.

The majority of the Cork tower houses were entered on the ground floor, but a small group, mainly in West Cork, had both ground and first-floor entrances, usually one above the other. In these the lower entrance led to the ground-floor room only, while access to the upper

floors was through the first-floor entrance. Typically the main entrance door led into a small lobby, from which doors led to a main room straight ahead, a small guard-room to one side and the stairs on the other side. Many tower houses had 'murder-holes', openings in the ceiling above the lobby, through which the occupants above could spy on, or drop missiles on, a visitor or attacker below. Access to the upper levels could be by means of a spiral stairs in one corner of the building, or by series of straight stairs, or a combination of both. Usually the main stairs ended at the top floor room, and a separate stairs led from there to the battlements. It is often thought that the direction in which a stairs spiralled is related to defence - in a clockwise spiral the person coming up would spiral to his right and would tend to use the right hand for support, while the defender above would use his left hand for support, leaving his right hand free to wield a sword. However spiral stairs in many tower houses turned anti-clockwise, and occasionally different stairs in the same building turned in different directions so it is uncertain if this theory is correct.

The tower houses were generally five floors high, sometimes more. Most had one or more vaulted stone ceilings but later tower houses, of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, had timber floors throughout. The timber floors have long since decayed but their location is revealed either by rows of sockets where the joists were set into the walls, or projecting stone 'corbels' on which the joists rested. Close inspection of the underside of one of these vaults will often reveal evidence for wicker 'centering'; a distinctive Irish feature. When building a vault the masons would first build the side walls, then erect a wooden support framework for the vault. Wickerwork matting made of woven hazel rods was then laid on the support framework. A thick layer of mortar was laid on the matting and the vault was built on top. When the mortar was hard the timber support (the centering) was removed leaving the impression of the wicker on the underside of the vault. Occasionally fragments



Murder Hole at Kilcrea Castle.

Image courtesy of Eoghan Nelligan.



**Spiral Stairs
within a Castle.**



ABOVE: Wicker centred vault in Drishane Castle with imprint of wicker clearly visible in the plasterwork.

BELOW: A good example of a wall press, located on internal walls of a tower house for storage.



of the hazel wicker can survive, preserved by the lime mortar. Archaeologists can use these fragments to get a radiocarbon date for the castle. In castles of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries planks were used instead of wicker.

The typical internal arrangement was an entrance area and one main room at ground-floor level and above that a main room and smaller room(s) on each floor, with the smaller ones stacked above the entrance area. Internally the walls were probably whitewashed or plastered but little evidence of that survives, we do however have evidence of wall presses built into the walls (small rectangular niches), which were used for storage. The ground floor, or basement, was poorly lit by narrow slit windows in the thick walls and was used mainly for storage, as we see from a 1585 description of Mallow castle¹² which refers to the lower rooms as “*sellers vaulted over*”. Above the ground floor the walls become progressively thinner and the rooms slightly larger. The floors immediately above the basement would have provided living and sleeping quarters for the lord’s extended family and retinue of servants and retainers. The main room on the top floor was the largest and best lit room in the building, usually having a number of two- or three-light windows. Occasionally this top room would have impressive architectural detail such as arcading spanning one wall at Cloghleigh, Ballinacarriga, and Barryscourt and others. It usually had no ceiling, but was open to the high roof, and sometimes had a gallery over one end, as at Cloghleigh. The overall impression created is one of spaciousness and grandeur and the room was designed to impress. This room was the ‘great chamber’, where the lord and his family dined and entertained guests. It was common in the past to refer to it as the ‘great hall’ but, as previously noted, the hall was a separate building located in the bawn. Other smaller rooms on this level and above would have been more private spaces, for sleeping, washing, robing etc.

There is usually access at this level also to the

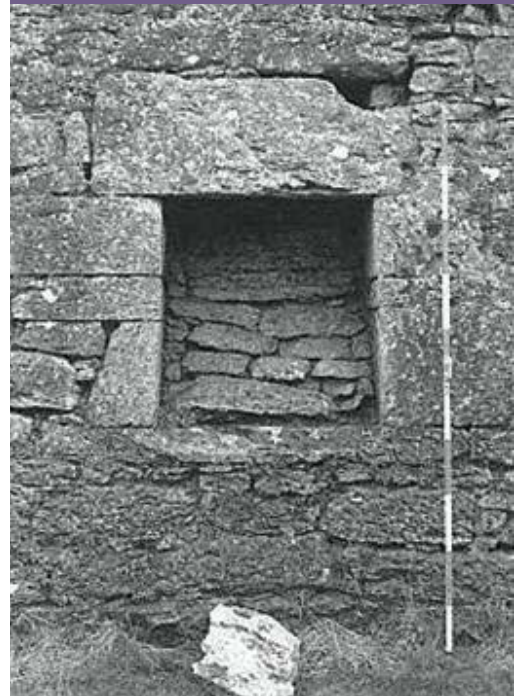
'garderobe' the Medieval toilet. Garderobe is translated from *wardrobe* meaning little room which lead to the toilet where clothes could be stored. Storing and keeping clothes dry must have been difficult in medieval times. The garderobe is usually found at the end of a narrow passage, where today one sees only the waste shaft which extended down through the thickness of the wall, exiting near ground level. Often one can see a ledge on the wall above the shaft opening, which carried a wooden seat, the forerunner of the modern toilet seat. Outside, waste usually flowed over a cliff into a river, or the sea, or a nearby quarry. At Castle Pook in north Cork excavations revealed that a cesspit dug one metre deep into bedrock had overflowed into a quarry. Cesspits like this will contain evidence of grains that the occupants of the tower house ate, bones from the meat they ate, seeds from plants they ate and sherds of broken pottery they discarded, giving us vital information on their diet and lifestyle.

Surprisingly few original fireplaces are found in tower houses, and where they do occur it is usually on the upper floors, in the smaller rooms. When fireplaces are found elsewhere, close inspection will often reveal that they are later insertions - sometimes you will find a fireplace inserted in a wide window embrasures, which saved mining out a great chunk



ABOVE: The garderobe at Carrigaphoooca castle. A wooden toilet seat would have been where the iron grille is now.

BELOW: The Guardrobe Exit at Cloughleigh Tower House, Moore Park, Fermoy.



The reconstructed 'great chamber' at Barryscourt castle. The fireplace on the right was not present originally, and was inserted in 1588.

of masonry. The great chamber would have had a hearth in the centre of the room with smoke exiting through a vent, or *louvre* in the high roof.

A small number of tower houses had rooms which were used either as strongrooms for storing valuables, or as prisons. The key to recognising these rooms is to note whether they were locked from the inside, as most rooms are, or secured externally. Most doors in a tower house could be secured by a wooden drawbar, set in a deep socket in the wall to one side of the doorway. When the door was closed the drawbar was pulled across and fitted into a matching socket on the opposite side. Typically the sockets are on the inside of the door, so the door could be closed and secured from within, but occasionally they are on the outside so that the door could be secured externally, so locking somebody or something in. These strongrooms can be seen at Cloghleigh and Castle Pook, but the more elaborate set-up at Kilcoe in West Cork is likely to have functioned as a dual prison. There, a passageway secured from outside led to a small room, also secured from outside. A manhole in the vaulted floor of the room was the only means of access to a small, dimly-lit dungeon below. Similarly, the vaulted room under the guardroom inside the entrance to Castle Cooke in North Cork would have been a prison.

Tower house roofs were generally steeply pitched and constructed so that the eaves and gables were set back from the outer wall face, leaving an open passageway or *wall-walk* around the wall-top, with gutters carrying rainwater out through the outer wall. The wall-walk allowed defenders to circulate around the wall-tops and to shoot arrows or guns while protected by the stepped battlements. Stepped battlements, as the name suggests, is where the merlons rise to the apex in two or more steps and is a unique feature of Irish Tower Houses. Of course the wall-walk could also have provided a venue from which the lord might impress important guests with a view of his broad estates. Roofing materials were usually thatch or wooden shingles, or could also be of locally quarried slate. A description of Mallow castle in 1584 refers to its *"high roof, the timber whereof seemeth to be sound, and is covered with thacke...(thatch)"*. Castlehyde castle was also said to have been thatched according to a 1587 description.¹³

Numerous defensive features can be found on the tower houses. The entrance door, a vulnerable point, was often protected by an iron grille or 'yett' hanging outside it. The yett was secured from inside by chains passed through openings to one side of the door at the apex of the arch, or both. Two of these yetts survive in County Cork, one at Ballea, near Carrigaline, and another at Cregg, near Fermoy. A description of Castlehyde



Drishane Castle with stepped battlements along parapet with projecting stone water spouts to drain water off wall-walk. A window with an elegant ogee head and hood moulding lights the Great Chamber within.

castle from 1587 must be describing a yett when it refers to the door as being "made of iron, double chained and strong for defence". High above the entrance doorway one often finds a 'machicolation', essentially a stone box projecting from the wall, which allowed defenders to reach out past the wall face and shoot down on attackers below while remaining protected. When these features wrap around the corners of the building, they are referred to as 'bartizans' or 'corner bartizans'. Bartizans can be located either at the wall top, or occasionally halfway up the wall. Often two are found, located on diagonally opposite corners, allowing defenders in each one to provide covering fire along two walls. In later castles they were equipped with gun-loops, small openings which can be barely seen from outside, but were just large enough to point a gun barrel through. Gun loops may also occasionally be found peering out through the walls of the tower house itself, usually located under or alongside one of the narrow windows. Often they had steeply-sloping sills to allow a musket be pointed down to the base of the walls, as at Carrickabrick and Cregg in North Cork. Occasionally two of these gun-loops are found one above the other in a figure-of-eight shape, the upper one for sighting through, the lower one to take the musket.

It is only in the latest tower houses that we find a systematic, well-planned pattern of gun loops incorporated into the building. A good example of this is at Ballynamona in North Cork, a castle of the prominent Nagle family. Here, many of the window embrasures are equipped with gun loops on either side of the windows. In addition, it has a gable-shaped recess on each external wall face which, as it rises, narrows and recesses back into the wall, reaching its apex at second-floor level, where the wall-face above projects over it allowing a line of sight along the wall base from an array of gun loops.



ABOVE: Corner bartizans on Castledonovan castle. The row of holes in the wall between the bartizans is to allow rainwater from the roof to run off.

BELOW: The entrance door to Cregg castle. Note the iron 'yett' swinging open and the 'yett-hole' at the apex of the arch.





ABOVE: Ballynamona castle, with the gun loop recesses in the walls and bartizan overhead on the corner, clearly visible.

BELOW: Ballynamona castle, side view of one of the gun-loop recesses.



Angle bastions, an architectural response to the increased use of guns in the late sixteenth century, are occasionally found in later tower houses, or were sometimes added. These are long, single-storey triangular spurs projecting from a corner of a tower house. Gun-loops along the sides of the spur allow for covering fire along the sides of the castle, and loops on the walls of the castle allow covering fire along the sides of the spur. Examples can be seen at Mashanaglass, near Macroom, which has two bastions, Castle Hyde, near Fermoy, where one survives, and at Carrignacurra, near Inchigeelagh.

Despite the thickness and strength of their walls tower houses do not seem to have been capable of withstanding a determined assault and contemporary accounts suggest that in the face of a serious attack the defenders frequently surrendered on terms. This was particularly so after the introduction of guns. The first recorded use of firearms in Ireland occurs in 1487, and the first recorded use of cannon is found the following year. As is often the case with new technology guns were initially only available to the very wealthy, so that it was well into the following century before guns came into widespread use. Many tower houses were built before then, at a time when warfare between the various lords comprised mainly of skirmishes in the field accompanied by cattle-raiding and burning of crops. Once sealed up inside the tower house and bawn the occupants were usually safe.

A seismic shift occurred in Irish politics and society in the late sixteenth century, when Tudor monarchs from Henry VIII on made a determined effort to bring Ireland firmly under Royal control. Rebellious lords now found themselves faced with government armies well equipped with 'miners' and 'sappers' expert in the techniques of undermining castle walls, and with powerful cannons which easily breached both bawn and castle walls. Physically, the tower house was unable to withstand such force. More fundamentally, the very nature of Irish society changed dramatically, particularly through the first

half of the seventeenth century. In Munster the revolt of the Earls of Desmond, the 'Desmond Rebellion' of 1579-83, met with brutal repression, seizure of the lands of Desmond and his supporters and installation of new settlers brought over from England. The subsequent revolt led by Hugh O'Neill, the great Gaelic Ulster leader, ended in the Battle of Kinsale, the decisive death-knell of an entire way of life. Nothing portrays the ending of this era as starkly as the story of the heroic last stand of O'Sullivan Beare and his followers at the tower house at Dunboy in West Cork. After the defeat at Kinsale the followers of Donal Cam O'Sullivan garrisoned Dunboy in a desperate last stand against the English forces. The English troops spent over a week digging defensive trenches and building gun emplacements for their cannon. At 5 a.m. on the morning of June 16th 1602 they launched a sustained cannon bombardment of the tower house. By early afternoon of the same day the walls were breached and the tower house captured. Defenders were killed and the tower house was blown up.¹⁴ Donal Cam struggled on for another six months but finally in despair led one thousand of his followers in a great march northwards to the safety of his O'Rourke allies in County Leitrim. Harassed repeatedly by English troops and hostile Irish, and devastated by hunger and harsh winter conditions, he arrived in Leitrim with only 35 of the original one thousand followers left alive and the once proud O'Sullivan clan was broken and disbanded. In a curious twist Donal Cam's kinsman Owen, leader of a branch of the O'Sullivans who had remained loyal to the crown, now inherited Donal's lands and castles. The tower house at Carriganass became his base initially but he eventually went on to build a fine new structure, more house than castle, at Reenadisert near Bantry. Here he built what today we call a 'fortified house', a new form of domestic architecture which appeared in the Irish landscape in the late 1500s. It is to these 'fortified houses' that we now turn our attention.



ABOVE: Angle bastion on corner of Mashanaglass castle. Note recessed gun-loop on castle wall.

BELOW: An arrangement of medieval weapons that would have been used prior to the introduction of firearms.



¹ Otway-Ruthven, A.J. 1980, *A history of Medieval Ireland*. Ernest Benn, London. p 237.

² Kelly, M. 2001, *A history of the Black Death in Ireland*. Tempus Publishing, Stroud. pp 101, 127

³ The ancient kingdom of Desmond (from the Irish *deas Mumha* - South Munster) had been ruled by the MacCarthy's prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. In the fourteenth century numerous noble titles were created by the Crown for the Anglo-Norman lords, who no longer recognised the old native kingdoms. One branch of the FitzGerald's was given the title Earls of Kildare, another, based in Limerick, became Earls of Desmond and the Butlers of Kilkenny became Earls of Ormond (from *iar-Mumha* - east Munster).

⁴ For discussion on 16th century Ireland see D.B. Quinn and K.W. Nicholls 'Ireland in 1534' in T.W. Moody et. al. (eds.) *A new history of Ireland, vol 3, Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691*. Oxford University Press. Paperback edition 2009, 1-38.

⁵ Simms, K. 'The Geraldines and Gaelic culture' in P. Crooks and S. Duffy ed. *The Geraldines and Medieval Ireland*. Dublin. 2016. 266-7

⁶ Ó Cuív, B. 'Observations on the Book of Lismore', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*. Section C, vol. 83C (1983), pp. 269-292.

⁷ Butlin, R. A. 'Land and people c. 1600', in *A new history of Ireland, vol 3: Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691*, 142-167, p. 149.

⁸ Leask, H. *Irish castles and castellated houses*. Dundalk. 1986. p. 92

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 10

¹⁰ O'Halloran, W. 1916 *Early Irish History and Antiquities and History of West Cork*. Sealy, Bryers and Walker, Dublin.

¹¹ O'Keeffe, *Medieval Irish buildings*, p. 262

¹² No trace of this castle survives now as it has been replaced by the sixteenth-century fortified house and the later house.

¹³ 'Fiants Ireland., Henry VII to Elizabeth I' in *Reports of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records, Ireland, vols 7-22*, (Dublin 1875-90). (Fiants, Eliz., no. 6792).

¹⁴ Breen, C. 2005, *The Gaelic lordship of the O'Sullivan Beare*. Four Courts Press. Dublin

Chapter 4

Fortified Houses



In the second half of the sixteenth century a new type of building known as the 'fortified house' appeared on the Irish landscape. This was a time of profound transformation in Irish society and the transition from tower house to fortified house reflected this change. Fortified houses can be seen as part of the process of Anglicization or modernisation of Ireland that was occurring at that time - a desire among the gentry to 'dress like the English, to speak English and to live in English-style houses'¹. Fortified houses are described by O'Keeffe (2000) as 'representing Ireland's belated rapprochement with the Renaissance, and in doing so they articulate a significant change in the self-perception of Ireland's gentry as the middle ages gave way to the modern period'². These buildings retain features from the castle tradition like machicolations, bartizans and gun loops but they also incorporate elements from a completely new architectural tradition, imported from England, like large windows, wooden stairs and a symmetrical design to the facade. As a building type only a small number of fortified houses were built in a short period in comparison to the large number of castles and indeed later country houses that were constructed, hence the fortified house is often referred to as a transitional building.

To fully understand this expression of architecture, the context in which it was fostered needs to be established. In the early 16th century with the adoption of the Reformation by the Tudor monarchy, relationships between England and Ireland became increasingly strained with the continuous outbreak of rebellion in Ireland through the 16th and 17th centuries. As the English monarchy attempted to wrest control of the country some Old Irish (Gaelic) and Old English (Anglo Norman) lords were able to secure their title by accepting the policy known as 'Surrender and Regrant'. This policy was introduced in 1541, and continued to be employed into the early 1600s. Under this scheme these lords could surrender their lands and then have them re-granted under English law in return for a pledge of loyalty to the Crown. The social and political background in which the fortified house developed had its origins in this mixture of hope for the future amidst a continuing threat of violent outbreak.

A series of brutal wars in the closing decades of the sixteenth century had left the country devastated and sparsely populated. Thousands had been killed in the wars and many more had died in the famines caused by the widespread burning of crops and killing of livestock, a standard practice in warfare of the day. This period came to a fateful end with the Battle of Kinsale in 1601 and the defeat of Hugh O'Neill of Tyrone. After the devastating wars and famines of the late sixteenth century the first four decades of the seventeenth were a period

of relative peace. With the suppression of the Earl of Desmond's rebellion, his vast lands, and those of his supporters, were confiscated and granted to settlers or 'planters' brought over from England; these are often referred to as the New English.

New English towns, such as Mallow and Bandon, were established to promote trade, and English Common Law was gradually imposed. New local, manorial courts were established where justices of the peace could try minor offences. More serious crimes could now be referred upwards to the 'quarter sessions' courts, and in 1605 the Lord Deputy declared that all men had the right of appeal to these courts. In addition there were provincial courts, such as the Council of Munster, which could hear civil cases, and these were well patronized by both Irish and New English litigants. The common people were happy to resort to these courts for justice, rather than being dependant on the mercy of their local lord as they previously had been. In this way the power and authority of those lords of ancient lineage who had survived was undermined and greatly diminished as people increasingly looked to the state for protection.³



Baltimore: an attractive traditional coastal village in West Cork where a New English settlement was sacked in 1631 by Barbary Pirates from the North African Coast. Baltimore Castle is located to the left background. Image courtesy of Enda O'Flaherty.

The peaceful conditions of those decades of the seventeenth century allowed the plantations to proceed and the economy to expand. A dramatic increase in pastoral agriculture produced great quantities of exportable goods, from which Cork, Youghal and Kinsale prospered and expanded. Dairy, sheep and cattle output increased dramatically under the immigrant farmers, driven by improved farming practices and imported breeds, especially of sheep. Butter, hides, skins and cloth were exported from Cork to France and England. Wool and live cattle were shipped principally through Youghal. Great quantities of pilchards were being netted off the south coast, and salted, barrelled and exported from Kinsale, Baltimore and other ports, mainly to southern Europe.⁴ Great woodlands along the Blackwater, Lee and Bandon rivers were being cleared to satisfy the demand for barrel staves, exported mainly through Youghal and Cork. Imports included wine from France and Spain, and tobacco imported directly from Virginia. A striking feature of this enormous increase in exports was that production was mainly, though not entirely, in the hands of New English settlers, particularly so in the case of the timber trade and the pilchard fisheries.⁵ Trade itself, however, remained largely in the control of the Old English merchant families in the port towns.

The peaceful times were soon shattered by the outbreak of another rebellion in 1641. The rebellion began with attacks on New English settlers in the north of the country and quickly spread, turning into full-blown civil war. On one side was a group describing themselves as the 'Confederate Catholics of Ireland', a coalition made up mainly of Old Irish and Old English and better known as the Confederation of Kilkenny. On the other side were the forces of the Dublin government and the English parliament. The war was complicated by the outbreak of civil war in England at the same time between parliament and the King, with combatants in Ireland backing both sides. The war rumbled on for a decade, until it was ended by the ruthless campaign of Oliver Cromwell. In England King Charles I was overthrown and beheaded, and in Ireland the rebellion was brutally suppressed. This was followed by further land confiscation and the final destruction of the power of the old Irish and Old English families.

Most of the fortified houses in Cork were built in the decades before the 1641 rebellion. Surprisingly, given the difficulties faced by the Old Irish and Old English at that time, both these groups were active in their construction of fortified houses. The builders were, of course, men who had remained loyal to the crown during the rebellions. Some, like Coppinger of Cork, and Roche of Kinsale, were of wealthy merchant families who were now investing in land, while Barry of Castlelyons was funded by his New English father-in-law Richard Boyle. Only three fortified houses were built after that rebellion, and it is notable that all three were built by New English arrivals. None of the Old English or Old Irish families had the means to build on so grand a scale after the destruction of the Cromwellian wars.

From an architectural perspective it is clear that those building fortified houses were concerned with providing a house of formal and symmetrical plan along Renaissance lines which answered a desire for more luxurious living standards but sacrificed nothing on the defensive nature of the building⁶. Whereas the tower houses of the previous centuries were



The aesthetically pleasing symmetry as evident at the entrance façade of Kanturk Castle was typical of many fortified houses. Note the projecting corner towers, the numerous large windows, the horizontal projecting 'string courses' marking each level, and the continuous row of corbels along the wall tops.

Image courtesy of Tony Roche, National Monuments Service Photographic Unit.

built tall with stout walls and narrow windows, fortified houses were lower, longer and deeper. They were generally three or four storeys high, usually with a ground-floor basement, projecting corner towers, which most often had a square form, however round and octagonal and polygonal shaped towers are also employed in fortified houses. As this was a period of architectural experimentation numerous building forms such as the H-Plan, a central rectangular block with a projecting tower at each corner creating a distinctive H shape, as seen at Kanturk and Mallow Castles and other forms such as Z-plans, U-plans, L-plans, and T-plans are also used in fortified houses. The roof is likely to have been covered with tiles or slates and had lead valleys. While no fortified house in Cork retains its original roof, evidence of potential roofing materials have been located on some sites. At both Dromanneen and Baltimore limestone slate was found at the property or uncovered during excavations while at Ightermurragh a sandstone slate was identified in the basement below the main entrance door⁷. During the course of excavations undertaken at Mallow Castle in 1941 by Harold Leask quantities of molten lead and fragments of a thick small slate were uncovered. Buildings constructed during the 17th century often employed the use of numerous gables and tall substantial chimney stacks.

Fortified houses like that of tower houses were constructed of stone, with dressed limestone primarily used for decorative features. The type of stone used was generally reflective of what was available locally as transportation either by land or water was an added expense. It is inevitable that some materials such as slate, lead, glass, carved and decorative stone would

not have been available locally and would therefore have been imported. In the fortified house, walls were thinner than before and with a few exceptions, lacked the base batter of the tower houses. The application of architectural details such as 'string courses', continuous horizontal lines of projecting masonry on the outer wall faces marked the boundary between each floor and 'stressed quoins', evenly cut blocks of stone used to define corners added to the visual strength of the building and further emphasised the elegant symmetrical order of these structures. Since fortified houses were built primarily in times of peace, when their owners felt secure about the future, windows were wider and were far more numerous than before and were regularly positioned to emphasise symmetry. The windows were a large rectangular form, divided by vertical stone bars known as mullions and horizontal bars known as transoms. Window surrounds were usually punch dressed with vertical and/or diagonal tooling. Overhead most were framed by a projecting stone 'hood' known as a 'hood moulding'. The numerous windows made the fortified house more vulnerable to attack, leading the owner of one such house in Kerry to lament, after an assault on his house, that he had built it 'for peace, having more windows than walls'.⁸

Entrance doors were mainly on the ground floor and were usually at the centre of the building, with an equal number of windows on each side giving a symmetrical balance to the façade. Door openings varied with pointed, semi-circular and elliptical arches all noted in fortified houses. Influences derived from the European Renaissance movement of previous centuries can be seen in the ornate front doorway at Kanturk, built by MacDonagh MacCarthy, one of the Old Irish lords. Here the round-headed doorway is flanked by pilasters on either side supporting an entablature with frieze and cornice overhead, showing that its builder was well aware of the most fashionable architectural trends of the time. By contrast the back door at Kanturk is the standard Medieval type with a pointed arch.



TOP: Mallow Castle - a well-known fortified house in North Cork.

ABOVE: A large window at Mallow Castle (fortified house). Image courtesy of Enda O'Flaherty.

BELOW: Renaissance-inspired entrance doorway to Kanturk Castle. It is constructed of cut and dressed limestone and consists of a round headed arch framed with classical pilasters that support a banded frieze and cornice.





Ightermurragh fortified house. Note the machicolation above the door, which is more typical of a tower house than a fortified house.

One of the very distinctive features of the Irish fortified house was its retention of a number of defensive elements carried over from earlier castles. As we saw in previous chapters corner towers or 'flanking towers' were a common feature on the bawn walls and curtain walls of earlier castles. In the fortified house flanking towers frequently become part of the house itself. At Kanturk, built around 1600, massive rectangular towers project from each corner, a style first seen in Ireland only ten years previously at Rathfarnham Castle, County Dublin.⁹ The flanking towers at Mallow are polygonal, while Ballyannan has circular towers at two corners. Several others have no flanking towers. Carrigrohane, for instance is a simple rectangle, and Kilmaclenine is T-shaped. Gun-loops remain common in the fortified houses and these tiny openings can be seen peering out near windows and entrance doors. Gun loops in the towers of course allowed flanking fire with muskets along the walls of the main block, increasing the defensibility of the house.

Bartizans can still be seen crowning the corners of the buildings, as at Baltimore, Carrigrohane, Monkstown and others. Machicolations are less common, but one is found high over the entrance to Ightermurragh. Kanturk has projecting corbels all along the wall tops. These were intended to support a continuous machicolation around the building, but were never finished because MacCarthy was forbidden by the authorities to finish the castle. The same feature is also found in Blarney castle and at Coppinger's Court. Yetts, the iron grille protecting an entrance door, are occasionally found in fortified houses, as at Kilmaclenine.

Internally the fortified house was spacious and well-lit, warmer with fire places in most rooms and more comfortable than tower houses. The internal arrangement of the fortified house would have consisted of a series of private rooms including dining, living and sleeping quarters. The stone vaults of the tower houses were abandoned and all floors in fortified houses were of timber, carried on a series



ABOVE: Fireplace at Ightermurragh Castle. The flat lintel and the moulding along the edges are typical of the seventeenth century.

BELOW: Interior view of Mallow Castle. Timber floors throughout. Joist sockets are narrower and closed together than in earlier castles. Note gun loop between ground-floor and first-floor windows.



of wooden beams and set in wall sockets or on corbels. Stairs were also invariably of timber rather than stone, as were all internal partition walls. Decoration such as corning and strucco were placed on the walls and ceilings. Timber panelling was also a common feature. Individual rooms were more numerous than before, allowing a greater degree of privacy. The garderobe, the Medieval toilet, was retained in only two of Cork County's fortified houses, including Mallow in North Cork, built in the 1590s. Generally, the garderobe disappeared in the seventeenth century and was replaced by the chamber-pot, which survived well into the twentieth century. While many of the domestic activities would have been undertaken in ancillary structures located



Interior doorways at Kanturk Castle. The uppermost has the pointed, Gothic arch harking back to the medieval period. The flatter arches on the others are typical of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.



Dromaneen in North Cork, with the only surviving intact bawn associated with a fortified house in the County of Cork. Image courtesy of Donie O'Sullivan.

close to the main building, some domestic spaces would have been catered for within the main house, such as the kitchens, the location of which is often indicated by a bread oven. Bread ovens, or 'wall ovens' are a common feature of the seventeenth century houses, though they are also occasionally found in the later tower houses. These were small circular spaces in the thickness of the wall alongside a fireplace. To bake bread, hot embers from the fire were placed in the oven, the bread mix placed inside and the door closed to retain heat.

Like that of tower houses the fortified houses also had 'bawns', enclosed courtyards. Only one has survived intact in Cork, at Dromaneen, said to be one of the largest bawns in Ireland. At Ightermurragh there are traces of two rectangular enclosures side-by-side. The house stood in one, the second may have been a walled garden. At Coppingers' Court the early Ordnance Survey maps show a rectangular enclosure to the rear of the house, where traces of former buildings still survive. One had a large fireplace with a bread oven, suggesting a kitchen or 'bakehouse'. Documentary references from elsewhere refer to bakehouses, storehouses, brewhouses and stables contained within the bawn.¹⁰ Pigeon-houses or dovecotes were also known, as pigeons were an important source of meat, as well as providing fertiliser for gardens. One of the corner towers on the bawn of Dromaneen Castle functioned as a dovecote, as did one of the towers of the seventeenth-century bawn added to Carriganass tower house. It is clear based on the documentary sources for this period that there are extensive activities associated with the lands adjoining the fortified house, albeit the need to keep these activities contained within a walled complex is telling of the social and political unrest that characterised the late 16th and 17th centuries.

The role and function of castles including that of the fortified house comes to an end in the latter half of the 17th century, a period that was yet again marked by political instability, culminating in the Williamite wars and the defeat of the Stuart monarchy at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, which also saw the taking of Charles Fort and James Fort in Kinsale that same year. The land was now almost completely in the hands of the Protestant Ascendancy, who were constructing large country houses and designed landscapes of gardens and parklands. The architectural styling of castles does, however, make somewhat of a reappearance in the late 18th century as Neo Gothic styled architecture. This is seen in a number of newly built or remodelled country houses such as Mitchelstown Castle, Mallow Castle, Castlekevin and



Interior view of flanking tower of seventeenth-century bawn at Carriganass Castle. Note gun loops at lower level and pigeon nesting boxes at upper level.

Castlerefke. Some fortified houses, such as Carrigrohane Castle, also continued in use, undergoing significant renovations in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, however, most of our fortified houses are ruined structures within our landscape, monuments to both medieval and modern Ireland.

The era of castles as powerful defended manorial centres was to inevitably come to an end, and with it, the centuries old social and judicial functions of castles were now being served by a variety of other buildings, such as court houses, market houses, military fortifications and police barracks. The defence of the realm now lay in the hands of the Crown with its newly formed standing armies and military fortifications built to withstand artillery attack. County Cork, given its strategic location and ability to provide supplies to the growing British Empire, needed protection and was protected by a number of these fortifications such as Charles Fort and James Fort in Kinsale Harbour and later Spike Island, Camden Fort Meagher and Cobh, protecting Cork Harbour. But that is another story.

The following chapter now takes a look at 30 featured castles, to give a wonderful overview and insight into the Heritage Castles of County Cork.

¹ Ohlmeyer, J. 2012. *Making Ireland English: the Irish Aristocracy in the Seventeenth Century*. Yale University Press. P. 407

² O'Keeffe, T. 2000. *Medieval Ireland: An Archaeology*. Gloucestershire. Tempus.

³ David Dickson, *Old World colony*, Cork. 2005. 15-16.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19

⁵ *Ibid.*, 19-20

⁶ Sweetman, D. 2005. *The Medieval Castles of Ireland*. Dublin. Collins Press.

⁷ Nunan, J. 2005. *A Masters Thesis - The Fortified Houses of County Cork: Origin Form, Fabric, Function and Social use of Space*. University College Cork.

⁸ M McCarthy Morrogh, 'The English presence in early seventeenth-century Munster' in C. Brady and R. Gillespie (ed) *Natives and Newcomers*. Dublin. 1986, 173-190

⁹ M. Craig, *The architecture of Ireland from the earliest times to 1880*. London. 1982. 111ff

¹⁰ Lyttleton, J. 2013. *The Jacobean plantations in seventeenth-century Offaly*. Four Courts Press. 145.



Map showing the many names of County Cork Castles in the year 1300, together with the extent of Anglo Norman Territory





limit of an authority c. 1300

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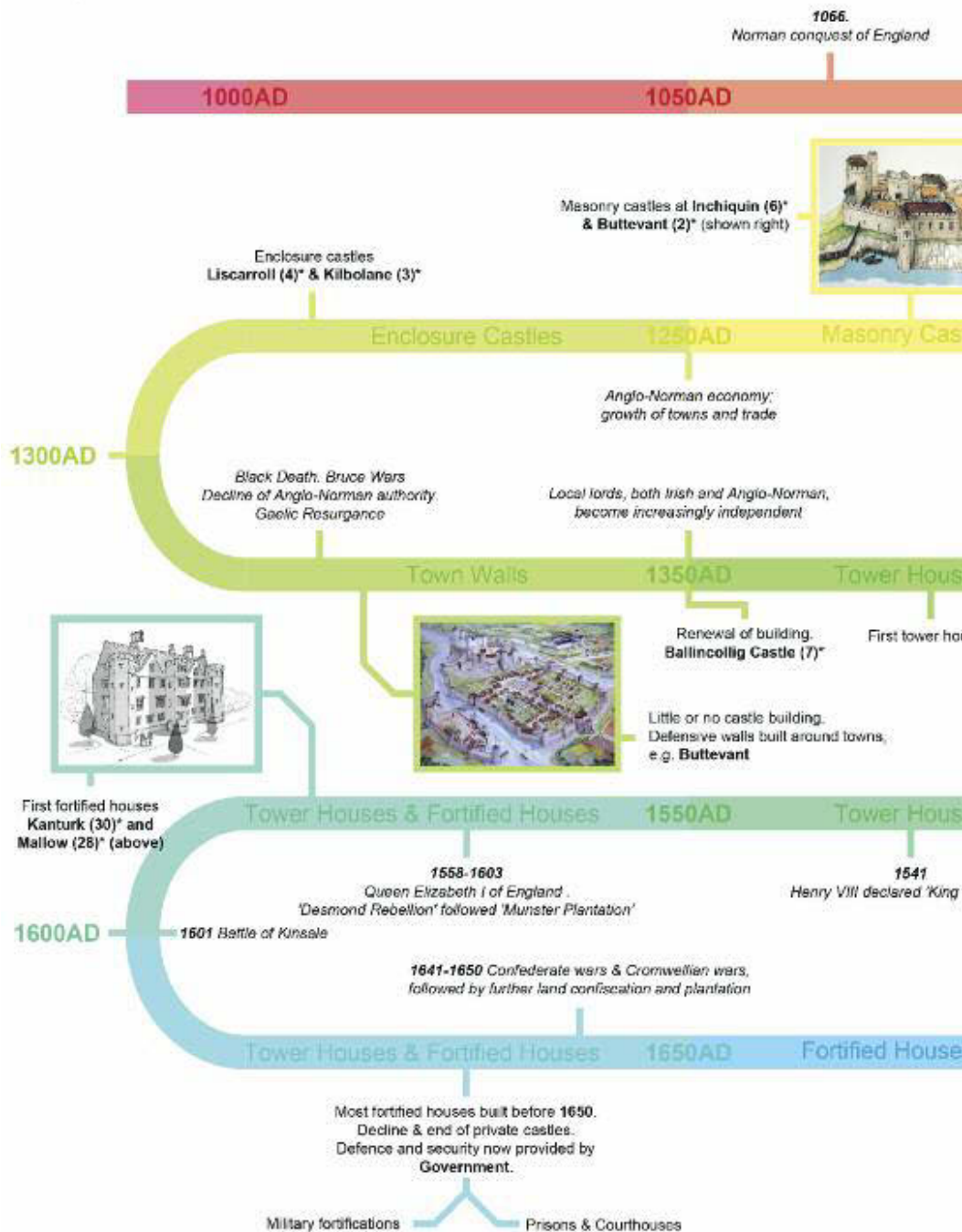


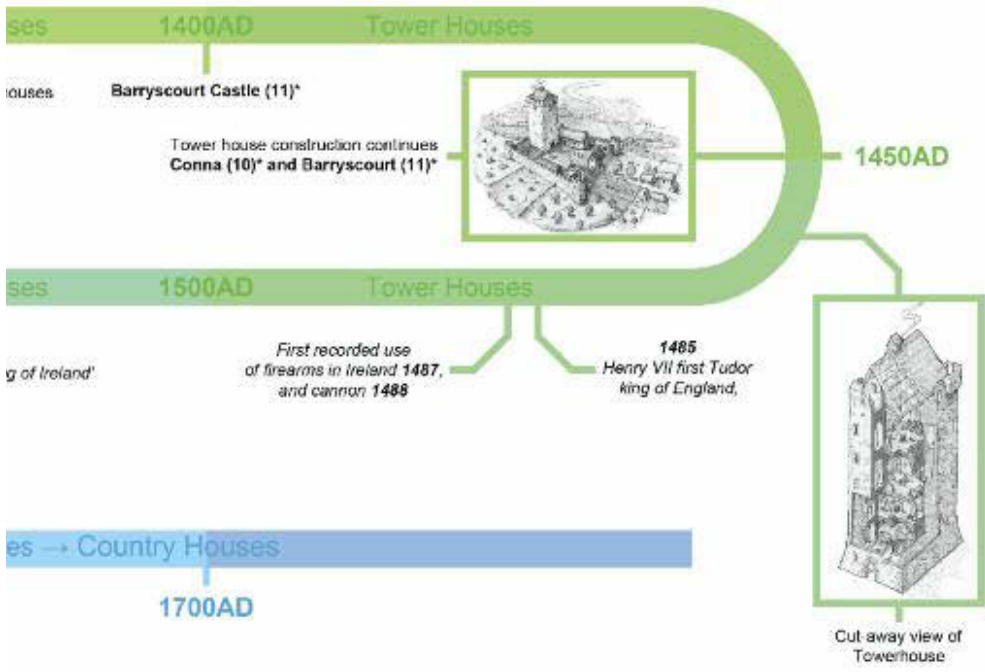
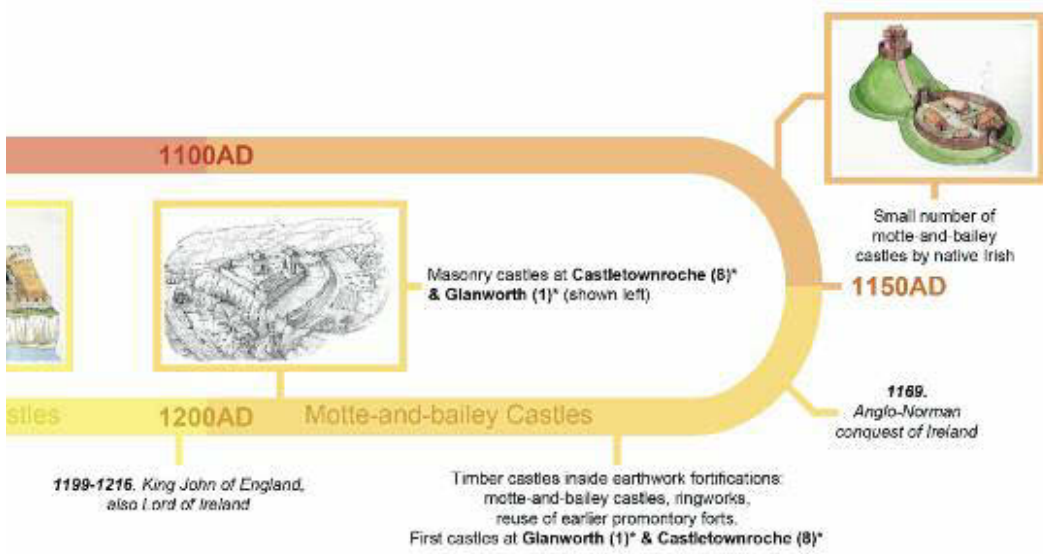




Timeline of events from the arrival of the Normans up to the 17th century

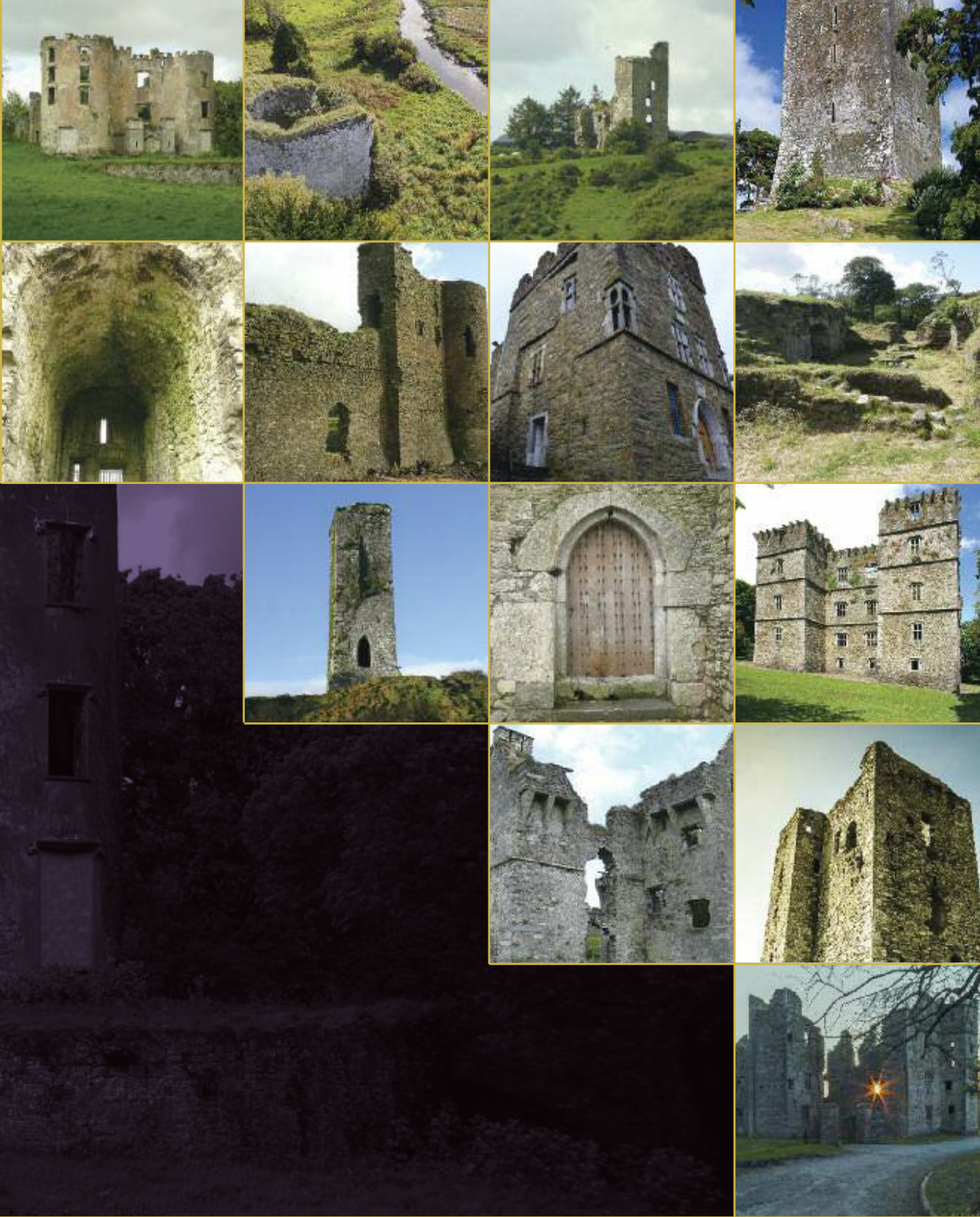
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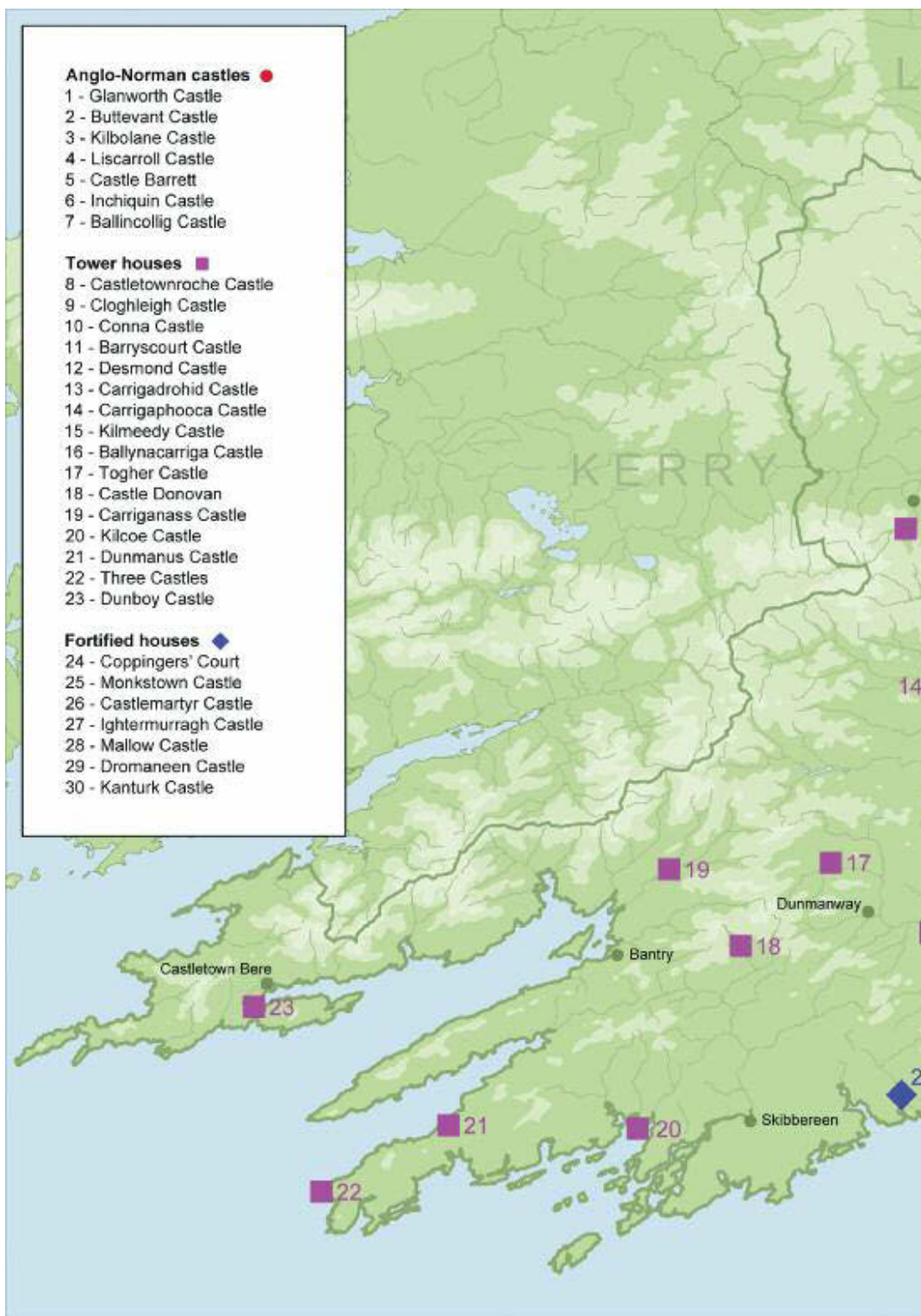


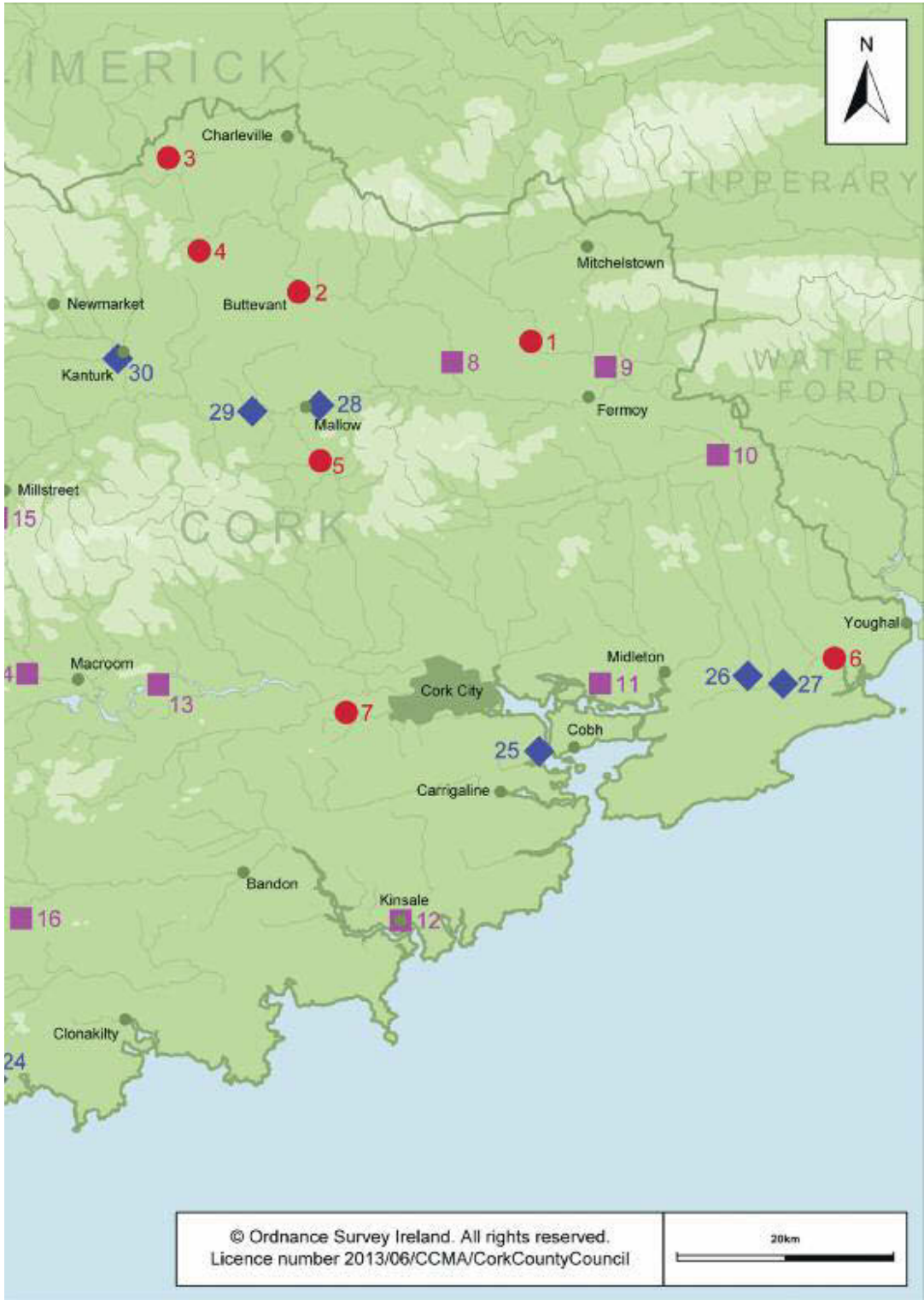


Chapter 5
Details of 30 Exemplars









EXEMPLAR 1

Glanworth



Glanworth Castle in the background overlooking the river and medieval bridge. Image courtesy of Pauline O'Dwyer.



Perched high on a rock overlooking the River Funshion and the modern village of Glanworth, the castle here is one of the earliest built in Cork by the Anglo-Normans. Nearby they founded a town and built their parish church, on the site now occupied by the ruined Protestant church.

Before the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland in the late 1100s Glanworth was the seat of the native Irish O’Keeffes, kings of an extensive territory then known as Fermoy. The O’Keeffe fortress here at Glanworth was captured from them by Anglo-Norman forces under Raymond de Carew, better known as Raymond le Gros (the Fat), one of the leading figures of the Anglo-Norman conquest of Munster. Le Gros built the first castle here at Glanworth in the 1180s and bequeathed it to his nephew Robert de Caunteton (Condon). Around 1250 the castle and its lands passed to David Roche of Castletownroche through his marriage to the Condon heiress, Amice. The Roches continued to hold Glanworth down to the seventeenth century, when it was confiscated and granted to English settlers after the Cromwellian wars.

When Raymond le Gros conquered this region in the 1180s the site at Glanworth must have seemed like the perfect location for a castle. It is ideally located on a triangular rock outcrop jutting into the river valley, and had already been fortified by the previous occupants, the



The ‘chamber-tower’ at Glanworth. The ground-floor door is not original. The larger opening on the first floor is the original entrance, which was reached by an external stairs. Other defensive features displayed include the base batter and narrow slit windows.

Image courtesy of Pauline O’Dwyer.

O'Keeffes. Steep cliffs rising from the valley protect it on two sides, while the landward side was protected by a ditch/moat, which is visible today only from aerial photography in certain light conditions.

As it stands today Glanworth provides a good picture of how an Anglo-Norman castle would have looked. The enclosing curtain walls with their circular corner towers crown the cliff-top. On the landward side substantial remains of a strong gatehouse survive. Within the walls the free-standing two-storey building at the centre of the enclosure was the 'chamber-tower', which was the private residence of the lord and his family. Archaeological excavations near the northern curtain wall uncovered foundations of the stone hall, where the lord would have dined, entertained guests and carried on the business of running his estates.

Castles evolved and changed over time and Glanworth Castle was no different in this respect. The first structures built here by le Gros were probably of timber, as building in timber was faster than in stone. The only defence at that stage was the ditch/moat and an earthen bank topped with a timber palisade fence. A few years later his nephew and heir Robert de Caunteton (Condon) began building in stone, beginning with the chamber tower and hall, followed by the stone curtain walls and gatehouse. There would also have been other buildings within the castle walls to accommodate the numerous servants and officials who formed the lord's household, and the castle would have required stabling for horses and workshops for carpenters, smiths and other tradespersons. Since these were of timber they have not survived.



Glanworth Castle from the northwest. Curtain wall flanking tower in foreground. Gatehouse tower to right and chamber tower behind.



Glanworth Castle in winter as viewed from the medieval bridge. Image courtesy of Paul Cotter.

Did you know...

An interesting feature of the gatehouse is the presence to one side of the entrance of two small strongrooms or prisons which could only be entered via trapdoors in their vaulted roofs. Archaeological excavations in one of these rooms uncovered a *Sheela-na-Gig*, a female exhibitionist figure carved in stone.



Glanworth Castle. Courtesy of Pauline O'Dwyer.

Over time the gatehouse was extended and raised by several storeys. The tall slender tower which survives today was part of a larger tower built in the fifteenth century, as indicated by its ogee-head windows.

Glanworth Castle is managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and is open to the public.

EXEMPLAR 2

Buttevant



Buttevant castle south façade. The left tower is original. The large windows were created in the 19th century at the same time as the right tower and the central doorway.

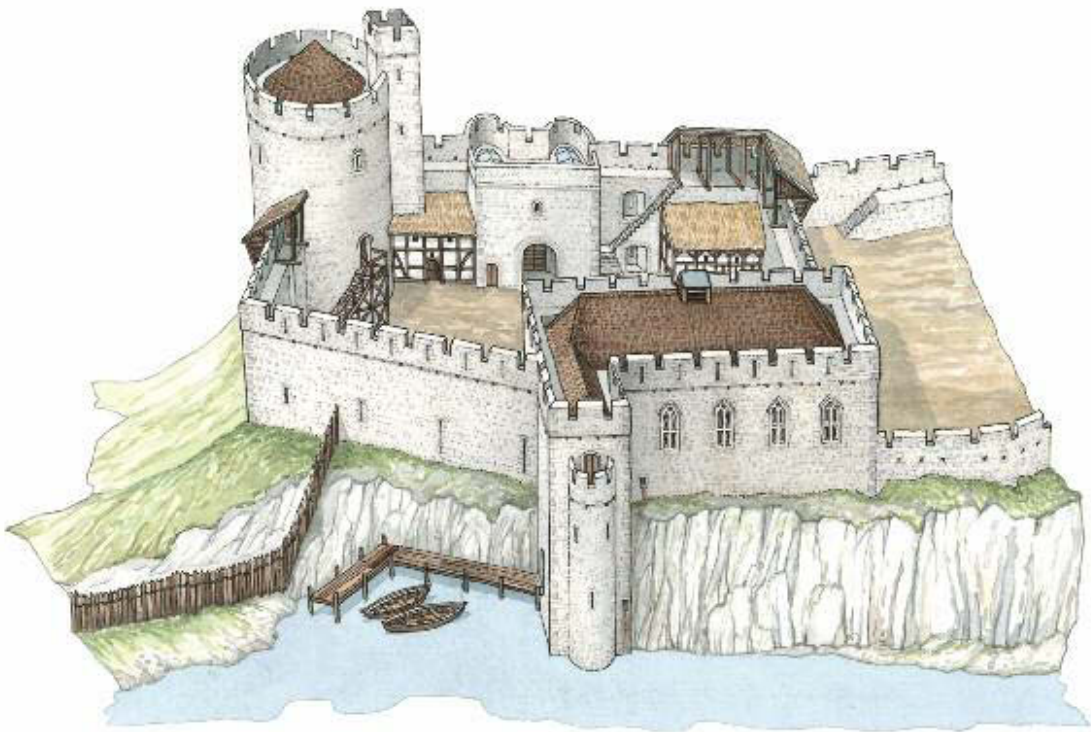


Buttevant castle is sited on a high limestone cliff overlooking the River Awbeg, just south of the town of Buttevant. The location of the castle reflects its name, Buttevant, which is derived from the French words *bote avant*, meaning a tower in front of a ditch, therefore a defensive tower, or frontier tower. The name is also found in Medieval castles in France and Britain, and a tower on the walls of Dublin Castle was called *Butavant* in the thirteenth century.

In the early thirteenth century this area of North Cork was settled by the Anglo-Norman Barrys after they conquered the O'Donegans, the native Irish occupants of the area. The Barrys established their main centre here at Buttevant, where they built their castle and town. They occupied Buttevant castle until they abandoned it in favour of their new mansion at Castlelyons in the late seventeenth century. They remained landlords of Buttevant for another century, however, then sold the castle, town and lands to a Scottish businessman John Anderson. It subsequently passed through several owners, and was occupied well into the twentieth century.

The castle was extensively renovated in the early 1800s by Anderson and his son James. Those renovations included opening up wide windows in the Medieval southwest tower, adding a new D-shaped tower at the southeast corner, and building an ornate entrance doorway between the two. Today the castle consists of a rectangular enclosure with the towers and entrance forming the south side and high walls along the other three. Inside the enclosure there are numerous ruins dating from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. Along the cliff-edge near the northeastern corner there is evidence for a fine hall with a garderobe outlet extending down the cliff face. The southwest tower contained the private quarters of the lord and his family, while the hall was where he dined, entertained guests and conducted the business of running his estates. Elsewhere inside the castle walls there would have been a range of other buildings, domestic and agricultural: stabling for horses, workshops for carpenters and blacksmiths, accommodation for servants and an armed garrison and storage. The castle's orchard and mill are mentioned in 1364, and were located immediately to the north of the castle itself.

A town was an essential element of an Anglo-Norman settlement, as the lord of the castle profited from taxes on traded goods. In 1234 the king of England granted a licence to David Barry to hold a market and fairs at Buttevant, and a new town was created near the castle.



Buttevant Castle reconstruction. Illustration by Uto Hogerzell, provided courtesy of Tom Blake (Buttevant Heritage Group).

Did you know...

Among several traditions associated with Buttevant castle is the story of a tunnel leading from the castle to the Franciscan friary, over 400 metres away. Whatever the truth of the tunnel, there are steps within the castle courtyard leading down to an underground room, which was probably a basement under the now ruined eighteenth-century house.

Like its French name, the town of Buttevant derives its layout from contemporary towns in southwestern France - a grid pattern with a long straight main street, side streets branching off at right angles and back lanes giving access to the gardens behind the houses. In the town's marketplace, farm produce from the surrounding countryside was purchased by traders and transported to the port towns of Cork and Kinsale. From there it was exported to Atlantic ports from England to the south of France. Wheat was an important export from Ireland in the thirteenth century, much of it going to feed the English armies in southwestern France, where they were at war with the French. Other exports included wool, animal hides and woollen mantles. In the early fourteenth century the town was enclosed with walls to protect the occupants at a time when Ireland was becoming increasingly lawless. Traces of the wall foundations and a town gate have been found in archaeological excavations in the town.

**Buttevant Castle is located on private land.
Access will require permission from the owner.**

EXEMPLAR 3

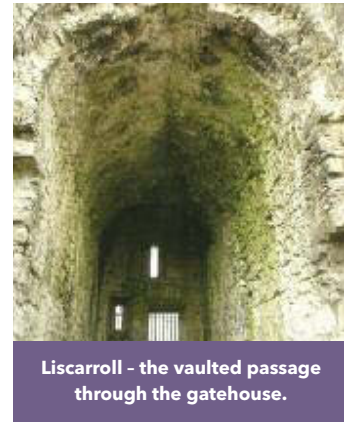
Liscarroll

Liscarroll Castle is located on the broad limestone plains of North Cork and is one of the largest and best-preserved of our Medieval castles. It is an example of an 'enclosure castle' a walled enclosure with no central tower inside. It formed a lonely outpost of the de Barry manor, whose main centre in north Cork was at their town and castle of Buttevant.

The construction date of Liscarroll castle is not recorded, but a late thirteenth-century date is most likely for this type of castle. It may well have been built by David de Barry who died in the late 1270s and who had served as justiciar (the king's chief representative in Ireland) in the 1260s.¹ Liscarroll was held by the Barrys down to the early seventeenth century, when it was acquired by an English settler, Percival. The castle was the scene of a several battles in the mid-seventeenth century. In 1649 it was captured by Cromwellian forces under Sir Hardress Waller. A sustained artillery bombardment during this battle caused considerable damage to the walls, making it indefensible, a fate suffered by many castles when cannon came into common usage. Percival's regained possession of the castle after this and their descendants held it down to the twentieth century.



Liscarroll Castle from the west.



Liscarroll - the vaulted passage through the gatehouse.

The massive walls and towers of Liscarroll castle present a formidable stronghold, a necessary provision in what was effectively border territory between the Anglo-Norman Barrys to the east and the native Irish to the west. Originally the Barry lands in this area would have extended much further to the west but the Irish, particularly the MacCarthys, were beginning to push back and recover lost lands by the late twelfth century². Barrys had to build this great fortress at Liscarroll to protect the heartland of their territory at Buttevant. Its seven metre high curtain walls are fortified by stout circular towers projecting at each corner. The tall narrow slits in the tower walls allowed defenders armed with longbows to shoot along the curtain walls. From inside, the towers defenders could reach the wall-walk, where they could walk along the wall-top protected by battlements, which no longer survive. A rectangular tower midway along the north wall of the enclosure appears to have also been used to gain access to the wall tops and to provide extra security on that side.

Entrance to the courtyard is through a massive gatehouse in the south wall, bristling with defensive features. First the visitor or attacker was faced with an outer door or gate. Inside that door there was a long vaulted passage, with small openings in the high vault through which defenders above could shoot arrows down on attackers in the passage below. Once inside the passage an attacker was faced first with a wooden drawbridge, then a portcullis,

then another gate at the inner end of the passage which led into the courtyard. The portcullis was an iron-and-timber gate which could be raised and lowered by a mechanism in the room above the vault. It slid up and down in slots in the side walls of the passage which can still be seen today. The upper floors of the gatehouse provided accommodation, with a well-preserved Medieval fireplace in one room and a garderobe (toilet) in another. These upper levels were extensively



Liscarroll Castle interior northern end, showing the rectangular tower and doors to the circular flanking towers in each corner.

renovated in the fifteenth or sixteenth century as can be seen from the ogee-head windows which are typical of that era.

Inside the enclosure one can see traces of buildings which have long since collapsed. These are particularly evident on the west side, where there are traces of garderobe shafts and evidence of two-storey buildings which may have been built partially or completely of timber. A similar enclosure castle at Ballintobber in Co Roscommon was described in the fourteenth century as having *"a hall, a chamber, a kitchen and other houses"*. No doubt Liscarroll would have had a similar range, along with stabling for horses and other agricultural buildings and craft workshops.



The massive gatehouse at Liscarroll.

Did you know...

The southeast corner tower of Liscarroll castle has a well, which kept the defenders supplied with water during a thirteen-day siege. During conservation works in 1936 workers found a bronze harp-peg in the southwest tower, no doubt from a harp played by Lord Barry's harper at feasts held in the castle hall.



Liscarroll - the portcullis slot in the entrance passageway.

Liscarroll Castle is available to view by the public.

EXEMPLAR 4

Kilbolane



The Anglo-Norman castle at Kilbolane is sited at the edge of a low plateau, where the limestone plains of North Cork extend on into County Limerick, close to the village of Milford. Only about half of the original castle walls survive, much of the stone having been taken for building during the seventeenth century.

Kilbolane castle was built in the second half of the thirteenth century and is broadly contemporary with Liscarroll castle about 10km to the south. When the Anglo-Normans invaded Ireland in the late twelfth century they quickly spread across the east and south of the country, conquering land, establishing manors and building castles as they went. This region of North Cork, including Buttevant, Liscarroll, Ballyhea and Kilbolane was settled by



Kilbolane castle from the southwest



The south tower at Kilbolane. Note the door leading onto the wall top and the base batter near ground level.

the Barrys after conquering the O'Donegans, the native Irish occupants of the area. Barrys established their main centre at Buttevant and sublet the Kilbolane area to the Prendergast family. Through marriage it passed to the Rochford family, who built the castle here. The Kilbolane area was very much at the limit of Anglo-Norman control in this region and by the late thirteenth century the native Irish were beginning to fight back to reclaim lands which the Anglo-Normans had seized. The castles at Kilbolane and Liscarroll were vital to the Barrys and Rochfords to protect their borders from the resurgent Irish.

Over the following centuries Kilbolane passed through various hands and was granted to a Cromwellian soldier, John Nichols in the seventeenth century. It was abandoned shortly afterwards, when a new house was built nearby.

Kilbolane, like Liscarroll Castle, is an example of what is known as an 'enclosure' castle, which means it had no central tower inside. Instead it was a large courtyard enclosed by six-metre high 'curtain' walls with buildings ranged along the inside of the walls. It was originally surrounded by a deep moat, parts of which still survive. A circular tower projecting from each corner allowed defenders to shoot along the curtain walls, but only two of the towers

Did you know...

When the lord of Kilbolane, Gerard de Prendergast, died around 1250 without a male heir, Kilbolane passed to his daughter Maud. As marriage was often used to create and solidify strategic alliances, under the instruction of King Henry III, Maud was married off immediately to Maurice de Rochford though she was only ten years old.



The west tower at Kilbolane. The ogee-head window near the top is part of a fifteenth-century rebuild.

survive today. The towers also provided living space for the garrison troops and stairs inside the towers allowed access to the top of the curtain walls. The walls would have been crowned with battlements, which were thick enough to allow defenders to walk on the inside of the battlements and shoot down at attackers below. Near the ground level the 'base batter', an outward slope of the wall face, added stability to the wall and made it more difficult for attackers to undermine it.

Kilbolane castle, like each of its contemporaries, would have been the focal point of an Anglo-Norman manor. The manor was the fundamental land unit of Anglo-Normans society and in many instances is roughly equivalent to the modern parish. Inside the castle the lord and his family would have lived along with their servants, administrative officials who helped to run the manor, and an armed garrison to protect them. We can therefore picture a range of buildings within the enclosure including a two-storey block which was the living quarters for the lord and his family, and a single-storey hall where the lord dined publicly and carried on the business of running his manor. Other buildings would have included a brewing house, a bakehouse, a smithy and stables.

The castle was extensively renovated in the fifteenth century, when the upper levels of the towers and curtain walls were rebuilt and new vaulted ceilings were inserted in the towers. The ogee-head windows on the upper floors of the towers are typical of this period.

EXEMPLAR 5
Castle Barrett



Castle Barrett from the north. The sixteenth-century tower house is in the foreground, the earlier castle immediately behind it.



Castle Barrett is spectacularly located on a hilltop overlooking the modern main road from Mallow to Cork. The road runs through a pass between two ranges of hills and just as today it carries the main Cork-Limerick road and the Cork-Dublin rail line, so it would have been an important trade route in Medieval times, and the castle was strategically placed on the hilltop to monitor movement along that route.

After the Anglo-Norman invasion this area of central County Cork, stretching from the River Blackwater south to the River Lee was settled by the Cogan family, who built their castle here in the early thirteenth century. In the valley below the castle they founded a town called Ballynamona, and a parish church. No trace of either the town or the church survives today. Nearby they founded a monastery, or *preceptory*, for the Knights Hospitaller. Extensive remains of the monastery, today known as Mourneabbey, still survive.

Castle Barrett is a frontier castle and therefore experienced numerous surrenders and occupations as the native Irish and the Anglo-Normans continuously vied for power. During the fourteenth century the native Irish began to fight back against the Anglo-Normans and recover lands they had previously lost to them. A branch of the MacCarthy clan based in Kanturk began attacking and driving out the Cogans and their English tenants along the Lee valley, with the aid of other Irish families such as O'Callaghans, O'Riordans and

O'Kellehers. They were driven back by a Royal army sent over from England, supported by the Barretts - another Anglo-Norman family who held lands nearby around Grenagh. Much of Cogans' land was subsequently lost to the Irish and then seized by the Barretts after the Irish were defeated.³ The Cogans were forced to surrender their castle in 1439 to the Earl of Desmond, the leading Anglo-Norman lord in Munster. Desmond's descendants held it down to the late



Castle Barrett from the south. The earthen bank of the ringwork can be seen in the foreground.

Image courtesy of John Aherne.

sixteenth century, when it was confiscated by the Crown. In the 1620s it was purchased by Andrew Barrett, whose descendants held it down to the end of that century, and from whom it gets its present name. It was confiscated after the Williamite wars of the 1690s and was abandoned.⁴

The castle was built inside an earthen enclosure known today as a 'ringwork'. These circular earthwork fortifications were occasionally built by the early Anglo-Norman settlers in the early stages of the invasion, to protect themselves until they could build in stone. On the ground the remains of these earthen banks, if they survive, often appear as a curved embankment. They would have had a timber palisade fence around the perimeter and timber buildings inside, which were in time replaced by the stone castle, protected by stone curtain walls. The masonry here is of two distinct periods. The earliest section, which is now very ruinous, was a two-storey rectangular chamber-tower similar to that at Glanworth. Later in its history, probably after it was acquired by the Earl of Desmond, a tower house was added to the northern end of the earlier building. The ogee-head windows in the tower house date it to the sixteenth century.

Did you know...

The Knights Hospitaller (The Knights of St. John of Jerusalem) began as a monastic Order in Jerusalem, dedicated to helping the sick poor. In time they developed a military branch and fought in the Crusades. Nobles all over Europe gave them land on which to build monasteries, known as *preceptories*, and gave them part of the tithes of local churches. The Hospitallers sent this money back to Jerusalem to fund their activities there. The Hospitallers' experience in warfare proved useful to the Anglo-Norman lords here in their fight against the native Irish.



Castle Barrett. Image courtesy of John Aherne.

**Castle Barrett is located on private land.
Access will require permission from the owner.**

EXEMPLAR 6
Inchiquin



Inchiquin Castle from the north.



Inchiquin is one of the few cylindrical Anglo-Norman towers in Ireland. Today it stands forlorn and isolated, bereft of all its supporting buildings, but in its day it would have been the focal building of a thriving Anglo-Norman settlement.

In the aftermath of the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland the medieval territory of McKill or Imokilly, stretching east from Cork City, was one of the areas granted by King Henry II of England to the knight Robert fitz Stephen. As the leading knights usually did, fitz Stephen subdivided the territory into manors, the basic unit of Anglo-Norman land division which was approximately equal to the later parish. The manor of Inchiquin was granted by fitz Stephen to a branch of the fitz Gerald family, who built the castle in the early thirteenth century. Their descendants held the manor and castle of Inchiquin down to 1286, when it passed by marriage to Thomas de Clare. Ownership was disputed in the following centuries, but Inchiquin was recovered by the fitz Geraldts in the early fifteenth century.⁵ At the close of the sixteenth century it was confiscated by the Crown after the suppression of the Desmond Rebellion, and was granted to the English adventurer Walter Raleigh. Raleigh's estates, including Inchiquin, were sold in 1602 to Richard Boyle, another English adventurer and speculator who amassed vast estates across Munster, as well as acquiring the title Earl of Cork.

Inchiquin castle is located close to the Womanagh River, just 7km west of the coastal town of Youghal. Unusually for Anglo-Norman castles it is located on low-lying land, on the edge of flats which, just 6km from the sea, would have been subject to tidal flooding. Being tidal, the river would have been navigable for small boats, facilitating the transport of goods to and from the port town of Youghal. Originally, like most Anglo-Norman manorial centres, the castle would have been enclosed by stone curtain walls which would also have held numerous other buildings. Nearby there would have been a town and a church, and both are mentioned at Inchiquin in thirteenth-century documents, but no trace of either can now be seen.

The only surviving building today is the low massive circular tower with walls almost three metres thick, and with a distinct base batter, the thickening of the lower walls, so common in castles. The castle would have been at least three storeys high originally, but the upper levels of the walls have collapsed. This was the chamber tower, the private accommodation for the lord and his family. There would have been a hall nearby where the lord dined and



Inchiquin castle in its landscape setting. Image courtesy of John Finn.

Did you know...

The last Geraldine inhabitant of Inchiquin was Katherine Fitzgerald, known as the 'Old' Countess of Desmond. Katherine was the widow of Thomas Fitzgerald, the twelfth Earl of Desmond. After his death in 1534 she settled at Inchiquin, which had been granted to her for her maintenance and upkeep until her death. After Richard Boyle acquired Inchiquin he tried to evict her. Katherine, then aged 136 years, set out for London and pleaded her case in the court of James I. She returned to Inchiquin and died later that year following a fall from a tree which she climbed to pick cherries!

entertained guests, and conducted the business of administering his estates. Two fourteenth century documents refer to a substantial house beside the tower, and a courtyard nearby with several buildings including a kitchen, a bakehouse and an oven.

Unusually for chamber towers of this date the entrance was through a ground floor door, where one can see the deep socket in the wall thickness which would have held a wooden drawbar to secure the door. To one side of the entrance a stairs rises in the wall thickness to the upper floors. As was typical of the time, the ground floor had narrow windows while those above were wider and more ornate, with stone window seats. Traces of a fireplace and chimney flue, and a garderobe (toilet) chamber can also be seen on the first floor.

**Inchiquin castle is located on private land.
Access will require permission from the owner.**

EXEMPLAR 7

Ballincollig

Ballincollig castle is built on a steep-sided isolated limestone rock outcrop which forms a raised plateau rising from a level limestone plain. It is an example of an 'enclosure castle', with no substantial central tower, and is one of the last Anglo-Norman castles to have been built in Cork.

The castle here was most likely built by Roger Cole, from whom the name Ballincollig (Cole's land) is derived. Cole settled in this area in the 1390s, and built the castle during a period of extreme turbulence and violence, when the native MacCarthys were pushing eastwards, recovering lands they had lost to the Anglo-Normans two centuries prior and driving out the settlers.⁶ In the following century the castle was acquired by the Barretts, who held it down to the sixteenth century. Towards the end of that century the castle was the scene of a battle for control between two branches of the Barrett family. The attackers assaulted the castle *"with swords, guns, great sledges or hammers and broke the iron grate...."*. The 'grate' referred to must have been a 'yett' an iron grille which hung in front of the timber door of a castle.



Ballincollig Castle from the southwest.



Barretts held the castle for several decades more until they first mortgaged it, then surrendered it in 1630, to Walter Coppinger, of an old Cork City merchant family.⁷ The castle saw action during the Confederate wars and the Williamite wars of the seventeenth century and was thereafter abandoned. It came into the possession of the Wyse family in the mid-nineteenth century.



Ballincollig Castle watchtower with inserted 19th Century door with date plaque, 'W 1857'.

A high enclosing, or 'curtain' wall studded with rectangular towers rings the edge of the plateau on which the castle is built. The enclosed area was divided in two courtyards by a crossing wall. The lower courtyard is now empty but would originally have contained numerous buildings. The upper courtyard contains a slender four-storey tower, similar to a tower house but much smaller inside. The tiny size of its rooms suggests it was a watch tower rather than a living space. As part of the 19th Century repair works carried out by the Wyse family, the ground floor is now entered through a modern opening in the east wall, and the original door in the north wall is built up. Access to the remainder of the tower is through a first-floor door which was originally reached by an external stairs. From there an unusually narrow stairs, straight at first, then spiralling, rises in one corner of the building, giving access to the floors

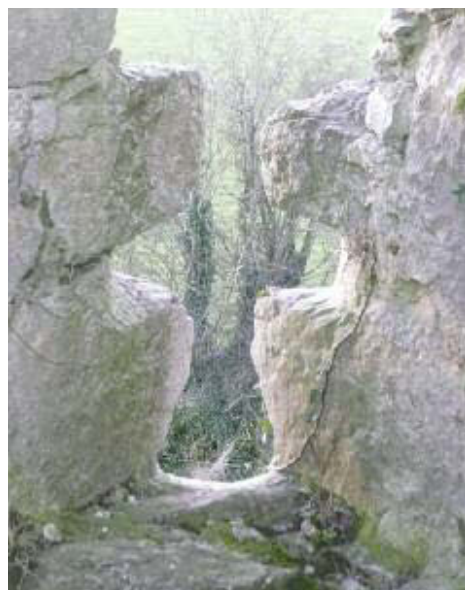
above. Beside the tower, along the curtain wall, there are traces of an attached building, which is now mostly covered in overgrown rubble, making it impossible to discern its original form, but it must have been the residential block where the lord and his family lived. Three wide windows in the northern curtain wall indicate the location of the hall. The windows date to the sixteenth century, but may be insertions into an earlier wall. Remains of three towers survive along the curtain wall: a four-storey tower at the southeast corner, and small garderobe towers midway along the south wall and at the northeast corner of the enclosure. The garderobe towers suggest there were buildings ranged along these walls, as do the projecting stone corbels high on the west curtain wall. The corbels are large stones projecting from the wall and shaped to carry timber beams, in this case the support beams for the roof of a building. These buildings may have been built entirely of timber, or of timber framework on stone foundations, but no other trace now survives. Numerous gun loops dating to the fifteenth century can be seen along the curtain walls.



A view from a tower; facing south from within Ballincollig Castle.

Did you know...

The staircase at Ballincollig has some unusual, if not unique, features. Firstly it is unusually narrow. Secondly it spirals in different directions, first clockwise then changing to anti-clockwise. And thirdly, the garderobe in the tower is set on the edge of the stairs, rather than in a separate chamber.



Ballincollig Castle - gun loop in curtain wall.

**Ballincollig Castle is located on private land.
Access will require permission from the owner.**

EXEMPLAR 8

Castlewidenham (Blackwater Castle), Castletownroche



Castlewidenham (Blackwater Castle), Castletownroche (circled).

Google Earth image

Castlewidenham castle is located high on a limestone cliff overlooking the Awbeg River, towering over the village, bridge and road below. The castle has many elements, of different ages, and has been continuously occupied since the late twelfth century.

After the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland the land was divided up among the leading knights by King Henry

II of England. The eastern half of County Cork was granted to Robert Fitz Stephen. He in turn sub-divided the area into smaller territories along existing native Irish land divisions, and granted the territory of Fermoy to his nephew, the knight Raymond le Gros. Le Gros again sub-divided Fermoy into smaller units known as manors, an area approximately equal to a parish. Le Gros himself established his main stronghold at Glanworth, and granted the manor of Duncroith to his relative, Alexander fitz Hugh, of the fitzGerald family. Fitz Hugh died without a male heir and Duncroith passed to his daughter Synolda, who was married to a Roche. Their son, Alexander Roche, inherited Duncroith, and from him it acquired the name Castletownroche.⁸ The first castle on the site was built by fitz Hugh, probably before the end of the twelfth century, and his 'stone castle' is mentioned in the foundation charter of the nearby Augustinian priory of Bridgetown, which fitz Hugh founded in the early 1200s.

The Roches held Castletownroche down to the mid-seventeenth century, when the castle was the scene of several battles during the Confederate wars and the subsequent Cromwellian wars. During one of these battles, in 1650, a Cromwellian force under Lord Broghill bombarded the castle with cannon from a nearby field still known as the 'camp field', and the garrison surrendered. Roche's lands were confiscated and Castletownroche was granted to an English soldier, John Widenham, whose descendants held it down to the late twentieth century.

The castle is built on a towering promontory which was the site of a prehistoric fortress dating back to the late Bronze Age, from which it got its name Duncroith (*Dún Cruadha* - *difficult fortress*). The earliest parts of the Anglo-Norman castle are the traces of a circular tower, now

incorporated into later buildings close to the tip of the promontory, and an early hall further along the cliff edge above the river. The tower can be identified by its steep base batter (the thickening of the base of the wall), and a tall, narrow arrow loop, now blocked. The hall was built on a lower level, on a rock shelf and its ruin is now infilled with rubble and soil. At one end a garderobe shaft extends down the cliff face to the valley below. With the circular tower and the nearby hall the layout here is very similar to Buttevant. Both the tower and hall date from the early thirteenth century, if not the late twelfth. They were replaced in the fifteenth century by the fine five-storey tower house which stands intact today and an attached two-storey block. The tower is almost identical to the many tower houses found in the region, but is smaller in area than most, which suggests its function was to provide additional security, and perhaps house an armed garrison, while the attached two-storey block, or house, would have been the main residential accommodation for Lord Roche and his family. The two-storey block was remodelled into a country house in the eighteenth century. A short distance away from the castle there are traces of a bawn wall with circular corner towers, similar to those found around tower houses of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

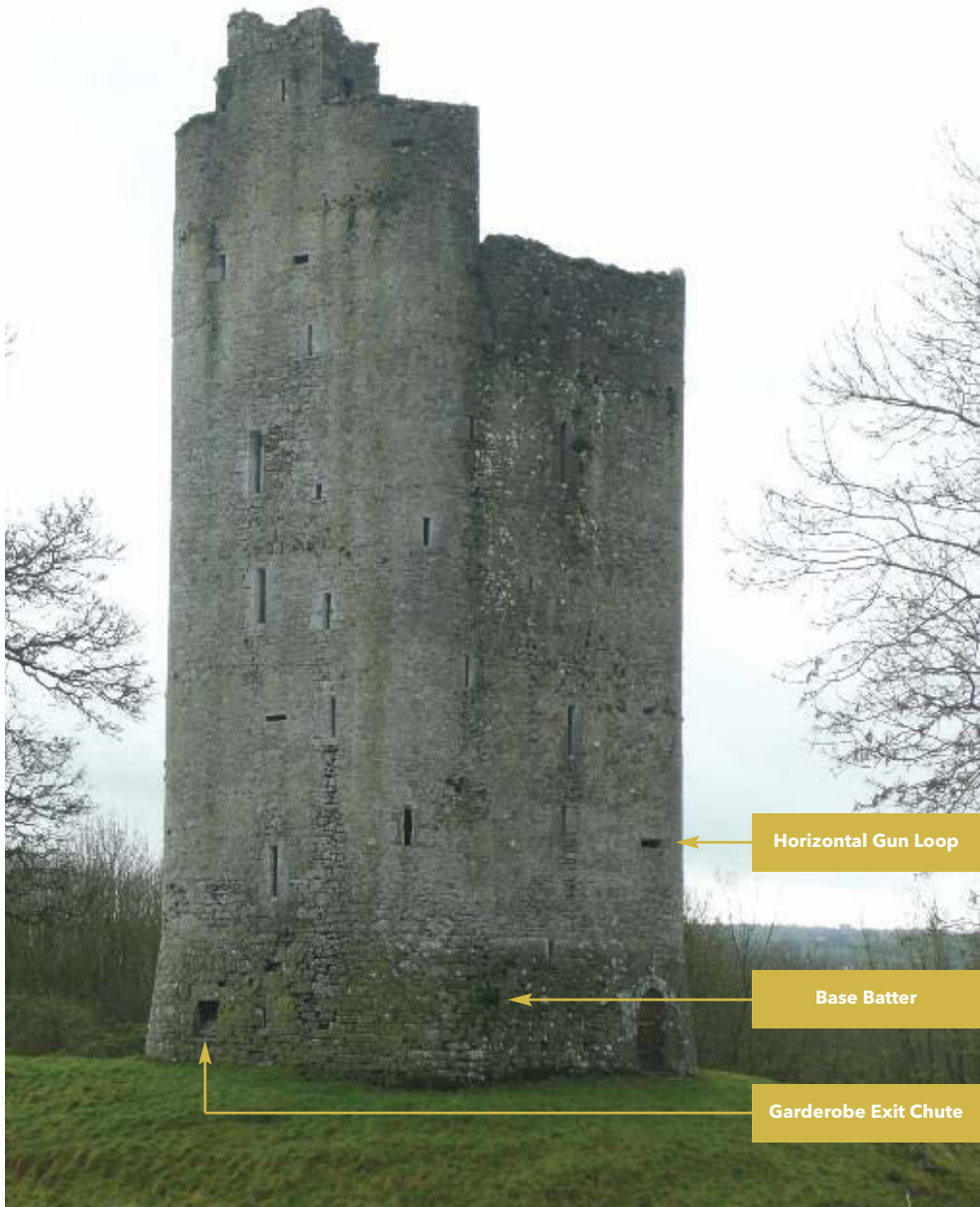


Did you know...

Close by the castle a cut limestone doorway through a wall leads to a covered passageway with flights of stone steps zig-zagging down the steep cliff. At the base is a crystal clear spring well, which was no doubt the water supply for the castle. Even up close the passageway is barely visible from the outside. When overgrown with ivy and trees, a besieging force would have been completely unaware of its existence. During the course of the Ordnance Survey in 1936 a 'Sheela-na-gig' was noted as lying beside a holy well near the tower house, it was subsequently moved near the tower, being put on display in different locations, today it can be viewed within the castle courtyard.

The castle is now a hotel and a popular wedding venue (Blackwater castle) and is accessible to the public.

EXEMPLAR 9
Cloghleigh



Cloghleigh Castle from west. In this picture one can see the thick lower walls or base batter, a horizontal gun loop over the entrance door and a garderober exit chute.



Cloghleigh is a classic example of a late Medieval tower house. The name Cloghleigh means 'grey stone' or 'grey castle', from the grey limestone of which it is built. Cloghleigh is also often called Kilworth Castle as it is located near Kilworth village.

From the early fourteenth century the authority of the Anglo-Norman governments began to weaken, and the power of local lords increased in their own areas of influence. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries practically all of these lords, both Gaelic and Anglo-Norman, built tower houses as a means of dominating and protecting their lands and possessions. Cloghleigh is one such tower house, built in the fifteenth century by the Condons, descendants of the Anglo-Norman de Cauntetons who had ruled this area of north-east Cork from their main stronghold at nearby Ballyderown since the late 1100s.

Near the end of the sixteenth century the Condons supported the Earl of Desmond, the most powerful ruler in Munster, when he went into open rebellion against the Crown. The rebellion was brutally suppressed and the lands and possessions of the Earl of Desmond and his followers, including the Condons, were seized by the Crown. In what became known as the Munster Plantation the seized lands were granted away in a planned, systematic programme of dispossessing existing landowners and replacing them with loyal English settlers. When rebellion again broke out against the new English settlers in 1641 Condons initially regained Cloghleigh, but finally lost it again in a notorious battle fought at the castle on June 3rd 1643. On that date an army under Colonel Vavasour captured the castle from the Condons. Vavasour's soldiers massacred the occupants, including 20 men, 11 women and 7 children. The following day, June 4th, Vavasour's army was defeated by



Cloghleigh Castle - arcading on the top floor

an Irish force as they retreated towards Fermoy. The castle was not occupied after that time.

Cloghleigh is perched near the edge of a limestone cliff towering over the river Funshion and dominating the landscape around. Aerial photographs show that the tower house was originally surrounded by a walled enclosure or 'bawn' with a circular tower at each corner. Within the bawn there would have been a range of domestic and agricultural buildings. The entrance layout is typical of tower houses in this area – a small lobby inside the door with doors leading to the ground floor room and to the stairs. A straight stairs leads to the first floor and from there a spiral stairs rises in one corner to the fifth floor. The top floor in a tower house is normally the largest, best-lit and most decorative. Here in Cloghleigh the visitor entering the door to the top floor is struck by the attractive triple arcading spanning the opposite wall and one can imagine the Condon lord seated at a table here with his family, impressing his guests with the best of modern architecture! A row of joist sockets and a doorway above the entrance to this room suggest there was a gallery here, where Condon's bards, rhymers and harpers would have provided musical entertainment for his guests.

An interesting feature of Cloghleigh is the number of 'mural chambers' - rooms created within the thickness of the walls. These are found on several levels and one, just below the top floor, was designed to be locked from outside, showing that it was used either as a strongroom for storing valuables and family documents, or as a prison. Cloghleigh has no original fireplaces, and the only lit fire in the castle would have been on the top floor, which would have had the fire in the centre of the room with the smoke rising through a louvre in the roof above.

Another unusual feature at Cloghleigh is the horizontal gun loops. These were an early form of gun loop which allowed a crossbow man or gunman inside the castle a wider field of fire.

Did you know...

After the castle was captured from them in 1641, the Condons regained it by a ruse. They sent an old brogue-maker into the area with bottles of poitín hidden in his basket. The soldiers occupying Cloghleigh brought him to the castle thinking to make fun of him. They found his poitín and drank it, after which they fell asleep. While they slept the Condons crept up the cliff through the hidden passageway, came into the castle by a hidden trapdoor, and killed all of them.

**The castle is on private property.
Access will require permission from the owner.**

EXEMPLAR 10

Conna



Conna Castle. Image by Mike Searle.

Conna castle is an excellent example of a Cork tower house. Perched high on a rock overlooking the River Bride close to the village of Conna, it forms a dominating feature within the landscape along the valley.

Conna castle was built by a branch of the Fitzgeralds, the most powerful of the Anglo-Norman lords in Munster, who held the title Earls of Desmond. Their main base lay in Limerick and North Kerry, but they had begun acquiring territory in East Cork from the fourteenth century. Conna was acquired in 1460 from the Barrys of nearby Castlelyons when William Barry's daughter, Alice, married Thomas Fitzgerald.⁹ In 1579 the then Earl of Desmond, Gerald Fitzgerald, led a rebellion against the Crown. The rebellion was suppressed in 1583 after over four years of devastating war and destruction across Munster.

Modern historians estimate that up to one-third of the population of the province perished, either directly in the war or in the resultant famine.¹⁰ The Earl, Gerald, was defeated and killed and his lands were subsequently confiscated. Fifteen years later the Gaelic Ulster leader Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, went into rebellion and led his forces down through Munster for a fateful encounter with the English forces at Kinsale. In Munster he was supported by many who had survived the suppression of the earlier rebellion. Earl Gerald's nephew James FitzGerald, then the occupant of Conna castle, took up the title Earl of Desmond and became known to history as the 'Súgán Earl', or 'Straw Earl'. He briefly led the rebellion before being captured and imprisoned in the Tower of London, where he subsequently died, bringing to an end the long reign of the Earls of Desmond. Their vast territories were confiscated by the Crown and granted to English settlers. Conna castle passed through several owners and was the scene of further fighting in the wars of 1641-45. In the nineteenth century the then owner granted it to the state and it remains in state ownership today.

The castle was probably built, by Thomas Ruadh FitzGerald in the mid 16th Century. It stands five storeys high with stone vaults over the first and third floors. The entrance is on the ground floor and is guarded by a projecting machicolation overhead which allowed defenders to



Conna Castle. Image by Mike Searle.

shoot down on anyone trying to break down the door. The circular opening at one side of the doorway is a 'yett-hole'. The 'yett' was an iron grille or gate that hung outside the timber door and protected it. An iron chain attached to the 'yett' passed through this opening and could be secured from inside, giving added security to the entrance. Around the corner, on the north side, the opening in the wall is the garderobe shaft, the exit chute from the toilets, which carried waste over the cliff and into the river. Inside the door is the usual small lobby giving access to the ground-floor room and to the spiral stairs which rises to the fourth floor level. The castle has two fireplaces, one on the second floor and one on the fifth. Also in this room is an example of a feature known as a 'slop stone'. This was a large stone with a channel cut on its surface to form a tapered funnel which projected past the wall face. It was used to dispose of waste liquids and is usually found under a window. As is common the lower floors are lit by narrow windows while the fourth floor room, over the upper vault, is the largest and best lit, with double windows in all four walls. An arch over the east end of the room adds an attractive architectural detail to this 'Great Chamber'. This was a private chamber in which the lord and his family entertained guests. Above this level a turret at the east end of the castle rises one further storey and contains one chamber with a small fireplace and two double windows. The ogee-headed windows are fine examples of their type and are typical of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The fireplace and the high quality of the windows suggest this was a private space for the lord and lady of the castle.

Did you know...

Conna castle was burned in an accidental fire in 1653, in which three daughters of the steward, Edward Germaine, were killed. In the late 19th century the castle was repaired by the L'Estrangne family and was subsequently taken into State Care.

Conna Castle is in State Ownership.

EXEMPLAR 11
Barryscourt



East facade of Barryscourt Castle. Here we can see many of the common features of a tower house, including a base batter to the lower walls, narrow windows to the lower floors, wide ogee headed windows to the upper floors and a pointed arched door. During the course of restoration works the stepped battlements were reconstructed.



Barryscourt is one of the largest and most elaborate of our tower houses, on a similar scale to Bunratty in County Clare. From the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion Barryscourt was a significant seat of the Barrys, one of the most prominent Anglo-Norman families of County Cork. Their chief centres of power were initially at Castlelyons and

Buttevant, but in the fifteenth century their power centre shifted to Barryscourt, while branches of the family continued to rule at Castlelyons in east Cork, Buttevant and Lisscarroll in north Cork, and Rathbarry and Barryroe in West Cork.

The first of the Barry name to come to Ireland was Robert, who was one of the group of Anglo-Normans who came ashore at Bannow Bay in County Wexford in May 1169 led by Robert's uncle Robert fitz Stephen. While there must have been a castle of some kind at Barryscourt since around 1200, recent radiocarbon dating shows that the present castle was built around the year 1400, probably by Lord John Barry, known as John *Ciotach* (left-handed), who was Sheriff of Cork for some years. In the seventeenth century David Barry, the then occupant of Barryscourt and head of the Barry clan, build a fine fortified house at his other castle at Castlelyons, which then became Barry's principal residence. Thereafter Barryscourt was occupied by various tenants of the Barrys. The Barrys retained ownership of the castle and its extensive lands until the late eighteenth century, when they sold it, along with Castlelyons and their castle and town of Buttevant, to a Scottish entrepreneur John Anderson.

Barryscourt is a complex tower house, with a large main tower and smaller flanking towers at three corners. The main block is three storeys high, with a stone vaulted roof over the first floor,

and the principal room, the Great Chamber, above the vault. The Great Chamber is the largest and brightest room, with fine double and triple ogee-head windows set in deep embrasures fitted with window seats. Attractive triple arcading spans one wall.



Arcading in the Great Chamber of Barryscourt Castle. The roof is a modern reconstruction.

Barryscourt is one of the few Cork tower houses with an original fireplace, which is located on the first floor. Like many early fireplaces it did not have a full chimney, but a short flue from which smoke exited through a hole in the wall. On the floor above, the Great Chamber did not have a fireplace originally,

but in the sixteenth century one was inserted into a window opening in the west wall. An abbreviated Latin inscription tells us it was made in 1588 for David Barry and Ellen Roche (his wife), while a similar inscription in an adjacent window bears the same names with the date 1586. These dates mark a phase of major renovations to the castle.

An unusual feature of Barryscourt is the chapel, which are rarely found in tower houses, although County Cork does have some examples including Ballinacariga near Dunmanway. In Barryscourt the chapel is located on the third floor of the north-east tower and is identified by the presence of a *piscina*, a stone-cut bowl which was used during Mass to wash the sacred vessels. In Medieval churches the *piscina* is always found at the east end of the south wall, which is where the Barryscourt example was located. Another feature to note is the stepped battlements on the wall tops. These are a distinctively Irish form of battlements, but it is not known how they developed. The Barryscourt examples have been largely reconstructed based on detailed archaeological and historical research.

The castle stands at the corner of a large walled enclosure or bawn, with a fine ground-floor hall along one side. Archaeological excavations revealed evidence for seventeenth-century gardening within the bawn, an indication of how the function of the bawn, and the tower house itself, had changed. Initially, tower house bawns would have contained domestic buildings such as a bakehouse and brewhouse, along with storehouses. The transformation of the Barryscourt bawn into a pleasure garden indicates that the tower house had become solely a dwelling and had lost its military and defensive functions.

Having been in ruins for many years, extensive conservation and restoration works to Barryscourt castle were carried out by the Office of Public Works. Barryscourt castle now provides a wonderfully authentic experience of a medieval tower house.

Did you know...

During the conservation and restoration of Barryscourt Castle faint traces of wall paintings were discovered in the chapel. Traces of red, yellow, orange and black paint were found on incised designs which included human and animal figures along with boats and ogham script.



The entrance door to Barryscourt Castle. Note the 'yett' holes at the apex and left side of the doorway. An iron grille hanging outside the door was secured by passing chains through the holes and securing them inside.

The property is in state care and is open to the public.

EXEMPLAR 12
Desmond Castle



Desmond Castle.



Desmond castle in Kinsale is one of around forty surviving 'urban tower houses' in Ireland. Urban tower houses are found in several medieval towns and were the homes of either wealthy merchants of the town or rural gentry investing in urban property. These are very similar in form to their rural cousins and, like them, date approximately to the period from 1400AD to 1600AD. In some the ground floors would have been shops or warehouses, with residential accommodation overhead¹¹.

The medieval town of Kinsale developed in the thirteenth century under the patronage of the Anglo-Norman de Courcey lords, and became an important trading port, which, by the fifteenth century had come under the control of the most powerful Anglo-Norman lords in Munster, the FitzGerald Earls of Desmond. The castle was built as a town residence by a branch of the FitzGerald, and a plaque over the entrance door bears the FitzGerald coat of arms. In 1600 and 1601 it was used as a magazine for storing weapons and gunpowder during the Spanish occupation of the town which lasted for 100 days prior to the Battle of Kinsale in 1601. Later it served as a prison for many years down to the mid-nineteenth century.

Trade was the lifeblood of the Medieval town of Kinsale. Along with Cork and Youghal it was one of the premier ports for Cork County. When the Anglo-Normans invaded Ireland in the late twelfth century they soon established a thriving market economy based on the export of agricultural produce and fish. Goods such as wheat, wool, hides and woollen mantles were traded in the small inland towns like Buttevant, Innishannon and Carrigtwohill and carted to the port towns for export. In the thirteenth century in particular Ireland produced great quantities of surplus wheat, much of which went to supply English royal armies campaigning in Scotland, Wales and southwestern France. Increasing disorder and warfare in the fourteenth century led to a steep decline both in agricultural production and in trade, so that grain was now being imported through Kinsale instead of being exported. The port towns continued to function however, and began to flourish again in the fifteenth century. For Kinsale, the protection of such a powerful lord as the Earl of Desmond provided the secure and stable conditions in which the town could prosper. After the Earl went into rebellion against the Crown in the late sixteenth century the rebellion was brutally repressed and the Earl's lands and castle were confiscated and granted to English settlers.

The castle is located on rising ground overlooking the core of the historic town, where its



Scaled Model of Desmond Castle available to see within the Castle itself.

Did you know...

From the later seventeenth century the castle was used as a prison for a long period. At one time it was used to house foreign prisoners of war, many of whom were French, hence the name 'French Prison'. A disastrous fire in 1747 killed 54 prisoners.



Desmond Castle.

occupants could observe the marketplace - the centre of activity in this port town. The castle stands three storeys high. Its entrance door is typical in form of the late medieval period, though it is somewhat more ornate than is commonly found in contemporary tower houses. Windows on either side of the door appear to be modern insertions but the ogee heads on the windows above are again typical of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, while the square hood moulding over the windows and the horizontal 'transoms' dividing them suggest a date towards the end of that period. Other original windows are set at the corners of the building.

Desmond castle has been extensively renovated in recent years and is a very popular tourist attraction in Kinsale.

The property is in state care and is open to the public.

EXEMPLAR 13

Carrigadrohid

Carrigadrohid castle guards an ancient crossing on the upper reaches of the River Lee. Unusually it is built in the river, on an outcrop of bedrock.

Carrigadrohid is said to have been built in the mid-fifteenth century by a branch of the MacCarthys known as Lords of Muskerry. Muskerry was a region of mid County Cork which was under the control of these MacCarthys. It was around this time also, or slightly later, that the MacCarthys built Blarney Castle, and the construction of these strongholds



Carrigadrohid Castle and bridge from the south. Image courtesy of Enda O'Flaherty.



represents the eastward expansion of the MacCarthys, as they gradually reclaimed lands they had lost some three hundred years earlier when they were driven westwards by the invading Anglo-Normans. In 1656 the castle was recorded as being in good repair and worth £100. However the adjoining bridge is recorded as being of timber and only passable by foot (NIAH online). The bridge which stands onsite today is a combination of two bridges built at different times. The northern half of the bridge was constructed in the 18th century while the southern section was constructed in the 19th century, with pointed arches added when a section of the bridge was damaged by flood in 1853. The castle passed to the Bowen family in the eighteenth century. It was described in 1750 as being “in good repair and inhabited by John



Carradrohida Castle from the northwest. Image courtesy of Aoife Nelligan.

Did you know...

Around the middle of the seventeenth century Boetius MacEgan, bishop of Ross in southwest Cork, was a prominent leader of the anti-Cromwellian forces. He was captured near Macroom was brought to Carrigadrohid castle where he was ordered, under pain of death, to advise the defenders to surrender. Instead MacEgan urged them to continue the fight, whereupon he was hanged by the reigns of his own horse, in sight of the castle. A stone tablet on the castle wall commemorating the event was carved by the famous Cork sculptor Seamus Murphy.

Bowen esq.¹², but appears to have been abandoned by the end of that century.

Tower houses were the defended homes of local lords who controlled large tracts of lands around their castles. These lords lived almost independently of central government and were at times the sole judicial authority in the areas they controlled. As well as being homes and administrative centres the tower houses were essential to control movement, of goods and of people, through the countryside. For this reason they were frequently located at strategic points, either at river crossing points, at prominent coastal locations or near passes through mountain ranges. While many are located near rivers, close to strategic crossing points, Carrigadrohid is unusual in being located actually in the river, making it ideally located to control movement across the bridge.

Carrigadrohid differs from most tower houses in that it is noticeably longer than it is wide, and at three storeys high, is lower than most tower houses. However, it was originally shorter, and may also have been higher, but has been extensively modified over the course of its history. The original east end was demolished at some time and the building was extended in that direction, while a new wing with a spiral stairs and several small rooms was added to the north side.

The architectural detail of the castle is, however, broadly similar to that of other tower houses. A stone machicolation projects from the wall top, tiny gun-loops are visible, and a garderobe (toilet) shaft extends down the thickness of the south wall, discharging into the river. The interior is ruinous but intricate decorative carving, now badly weathered, can be seen on surviving parts of a fireplace surviving on the second floor.

The extension of the castle to the east probably dates to the sixteenth century and the addition of the northern wing must be later again, probably dating to the eighteenth century, under its then owner, Bowen.

The castle is in private ownership and is not accessible to the public. However it can be viewed from the bridge and surrounding area.

EXEMPLAR 14
Carrigaphooca



Carrigaphooca Castle from northeast showing steepness of approach to entrance doorway.



Carrigaphoooca tower house is located on a rocky outcrop commanding the valley of the Sullane River a few kilometres west of Macroom. In times past the valley would have been an important routeway between the Lee Valley at Macroom and County Kerry.

The castle is said to have been built in the early 1400s by a branch of the MacCarthys of Muskerry, a medieval barony in the Mid-Cork region. Around this time the Muskerry MacCarthys were expanding eastwards, recovering lands that their ancestors had lost two centuries previously to the Anglo-Norman invaders, eventually extending as far as their great castle at Blarney. Their expansion was accompanied by much infighting between different branches of the family and with other native Irish families in the region. It was an era when the authority of central government had all but collapsed and local lords like the individual MacCarthy lords had become almost independent rulers of their own territories. Against this background each lord built a tower house to protect himself, his family and his possessions.

Carrigaphoooca is a simple rectangular tower standing five storeys high, located on a steep rock outcrop. The castle was said to have been defended originally by two outer defensive walls but no trace of either survives today¹³. Remains of corner bartizans survive on the wall tops at two corners. These were projecting stone boxes which allowed defenders to remain protected while leaning out over the wall tops and shooting down through gaps in the bartizan floors on attackers below. Unusually, the windows throughout have simple lintelled heads, including the only surviving window on the top floor, where one would expect to find one or more ornate ogee-head windows. This, and the lack of fireplaces in the castle, would suggest that it was built more with protection in mind than comfort.

Despite its defences the castle was captured in an attack in 1602 by another MacCarthy along with O'Sullivan Beare of West Cork. Their men broke through the outer walls and burned the wooden door of the castle, whereupon the defenders surrendered and were allowed to go free.



Carrigaphooca castle from the west showing remains of bartizans on two corners.

Did you know...

The name Carrigaphooca means the rock or castle of the *púca*. The rock on which the castle stands was said to be the haunt of a legendary spirit known as the *púca*.

The castle is now owned by the State and has been consolidated by the Office of Public Works. The castle however is located on private land and is not accessible to the public.

EXEMPLAR 15

Kilmeedy Castle



Kilmeedy Castle. Image by Mike Searle.

Kilmeedy castle is a late medieval tower house standing on the edge of the Finnow river valley three kilometres south of Milstreet town. It is strategically located on a route through hilly countryside linking the Blackwater valley at Millstreet with the Lee valley at Macroom.

Kilmeedy tower house is believed to have been built in the mid-fifteenth century by a branch of the MacCarthy family. The MacCarthys were a leading Irish clan who ruled County Cork and south Kerry before the Anglo-Norman invasion of the late twelfth century. The Anglo-Normans captured the eastern half of Cork County as well as sections along the southwest coast, driving the MacCarthys back into the poorer lands of West and Mid Cork. By the late thirteenth century Anglo-Norman control of the area was breaking down and what is referred to as the 'Gaelic



Did you know...

Local tradition holds that a former owner of the castle discovered steps leading down to an underground chamber in a field north of the castle. The steps have not been located.

Resurgence' was beginning. The MacCarthys and other native Irish lords were beginning to fight back against the colonists and recover lands they had lost. Over the course of the fourteenth century the MacCarthys gradually expanded along the valley of the River Lee, eventually reaching as far as Blarney where they built their castle there in the late fifteenth century. It was a period of general lawlessness and instability, with endemic low-level warfare between the various lords, including between different branches of the MacCarthy clan themselves, and between them and other native Irish lords. Against this background each lord built a tower house for protection and as a centre of administration from where he could control his lands. Several tower houses in this area were built by different branches of the MacCarthys. The MacCarthys seem to have held Kilmeedy until it was confiscated after the Cromwellian wars of the mid-seventeenth century.

Kilmeedy castle was built in a strategic location, where a river valley running north-south and linking the valleys of the Blackwater and Lee meets another valley running westwards towards a mountain pass leading into Kerry. It was therefore in an ideal location to control movement of people and goods around the region. The castle stands five storeys high, and was protected by projecting bartizans low on the north-east and south-west corners. Only the northeast one survives, with gun-loops to allow covering fire along the north and east walls. Such gun-loops are a feature of castles of the late fifteenth century and later. The entrance layout is typical of tower houses, with the entrance door leading into a small lobby, from which doors lead to the main ground-floor room straight ahead, a small guardroom to one side and stairs on the other side. The stairs rise straight to first-floor level and spiral upwards from there to the top floor, though the top floor is no longer accessible as the stairs is damaged. Each level has one main chamber and one smaller, the smaller chambers stacked over the entrance area. The castle had at least one fireplace, in the second-floor main chamber.

EXEMPLAR 16
Ballinacarriga



Ballinacarriga Castle from the air. Inside note decorative arcading in the Great Chamber on the top floor. Lower left of photo remains of circular corner tower on bawn wall. Also note bartizans on left and right corners of castle. Image courtesy of Margaret Hurley.



Ballinacarriga is a well-preserved example of a late medieval tower house. It is strategically located on a rocky outcrop, giving it a commanding view over Ballynacarriga Lough and the valley of a small stream which flows by the castle to join the Bandon River a short distance to the north, near Dunmanway. The castle is noted for its high quality decorative carvings.

Ballinacarriga castle is one of many tower houses built in West Cork by native Irish families, as distinct from tower houses in the east and north of the county which were mainly built by the descendants of Anglo-Norman settlers. It was built in the sixteenth century by the Ó Muirthile family. The family joined the rebellion of 1641 against the English settlement of Munster. As a result their lands and castles were subsequently confiscated and granted to the English settlers.

This substantive castle has several defensive features, including bartizans and a machicolation. Bartizans were essentially stone boxes projecting from the corners of a castle, allowing defenders inside to lean out and fire arrows or gunshot on attackers at the base of the walls. Unusually, the bartizans are located less than halfway up the walls, whereas in many tower houses they are found at the wall tops. As is often the case they are wrapped around diagonally opposite corners, each allowing covering fire along two adjacent walls. Projecting stone corbels high on the wall-top high above the entrance door show that there was originally a machicolation here protecting over the entrance. The machicolation had the same function as the bartizan but is found on the wall face rather than a corner. Another unusual feature at Ballinacarriga is the opening for a portcullis, a timber-and-iron grille which could be raised and lowered behind the door, providing extra security.

A relatively rare feature at Ballinacarriga is the sheela-na-gig, these are found at other castles including Glanworth and Castletownroche. The sheela-na-gig is a female exhibitionist figure carved in stone. The origin and purpose of these carvings are uncertain, but they are found in numerous castles and churches across Ireland from the late twelfth century on. Rare intricate decorative carvings are also found on window embrasures on the first and third floors. Included in the carvings are depictions of the Crucifixion, Instruments of the Passion (the crown of thorns, a hammer and a heart pierced by swords), and figures which may represent St John, the Blessed Virgin and St Paul as well as decorative panels. These depictions may represent the



Ogee headed window at Ballinacarriga Castle with chamfered edges and decorative spandrels.



Ballinacarriga Castle - Sheela-na-Gig.

Lord's private chapel. Religion was an integral part of daily life in the Medieval period and while private chapels are relatively rare in tower houses, numerous abbeys and friaries were constructed during this period. An inscription, reading "1585 R.M. C.C." is believed to represent the date of renovations to the castle by Randal Ó Muirthile and his wife Catherine Ó Cullane.

Did you know...

The Ó Muirthile family provided many clergymen over the centuries, including "Reginald Imurhyle" (Uí Muirthile) who lectured in canon law at Oxford University in the fifteenth century, and "John O Murrily" who was bishop of Ross 1517-1519. No doubt it was this association with the church which prompted the religious iconography inscribed on the castle windows.¹⁴



Ballinacarriga Castle is located on elevated ground high above the adjoining public road.

Image courtesy of Enda O'Flaherty.

The castle is now a National Monument in State care and is open to the public at specific occasions such as Heritage Week.

EXEMPLAR 17

Togher



Togher Castle in its landscape setting. Courtesy Margaret Hurley.

Togher castle was built on a rocky ridge on the valley of the River Bandon and is another fine example of a tower house in West Cork built by a native Irish family. Togher is believed to have been built by a branch of the powerful MacCarthy clan, the MacCarthys of Gleann an Chroim, the glen a short distance to the west of Togher.¹⁵ The MacCarthy lands and castles were confiscated for the part the MacCarthys played in the rebellion against English settlement in the 1640s, and Togher was subsequently granted to a Cromwellian settler.

Like many other tower houses Togher is a simple tall rectangular tower standing four storeys high. Internally each level is divided into one main room and one smaller one. Two corners of the building are crowned by projecting bartizans. These were stone boxes projecting from the corners of a castle, allowing defenders inside to lean out and fire arrows or gunshot on attackers at the base of the walls. At Togher the bartizans are on diagonally opposite corners.

Did you know...

A tiny unlit chamber at the foot of stairs was known locally as *'chambrin á chodaigh'* (the tyrant's little room). The tyrant in this case was the castle sentry, who controlled access to the stairs.



Toghher Castle from the northwest showing its well-preserved bartizan.



Togher Castle chimneys. Note projecting stone flashing for original roof and diagonal 'Jacobean' chimney pots. The corrugated iron roof was installed in the early 20th century.

Although it is believed that Togher Castle was built in the late sixteenth century, the castle does have several features that may indicate an early seventeenth-century date. The surviving windows all have flat lintelled heads. The spiral stairs, which rises from the ground floor, is wider than normal and winds around a substantial masonry column to the full height of the castle. Unlike the earlier tower houses, in which one or more of the main rooms would have had a stone vaulted ceiling, the main rooms at Togher all had timber floors and ceilings. These have decayed and collapsed over time but the joist sockets are clearly visible on the walls. Above the ground floor each of the main rooms had a fireplace, one of which has a bread-oven or wall-oven to one side, another indicator of a late date. The bread-oven was a semi-circular recess to one side of a fireplace. To bake bread embers from the fire were placed in the oven to warm it, the bread mix was placed inside and the door closed allowing the bread to bake. Many of the ovens were built of stone, but in later houses they were built of brick which had better heat-retaining properties.

The chimneys overhead are typical of the early seventeenth century. Their zig-zag or 'diamond' shape is a style often referred to as 'Jacobean', from the English king James I who ruled from 1603 to 1625.

The castle is on private property but is easily visible from the adjacent public road.

EXEMPLAR 18

Castle Donovan



Castle Donovan from the south. The vertical series of small rooms and passages stacked directly above the entrance area is found in most Cork tower houses. To the right note the large lintelled window divided by vertical stone mullions and a horizontal stone tramson with projecting hood-moulding, typical of the late 16th and early 17th centuries.



Castle Donovan tower house is sited on a sandstone rock outcrop overlooking the Ilen River, just a few kilometres north of Drimoleague village. Like many of the tower houses in this area it was located to control movement along a river valley and into a nearby mountain pass.



Castle Donovan from northeast. Note the large lintelled windows and bartizans on two corners.

This was a castle of the O'Donovan family, who were close allies to the MacCarthy Reaghs, a branch of the MacCarthys who ruled large areas of southwest County Cork.¹⁶ The castle is traditionally said to have been built by Domhnall na gCroiceann O'Donovan who was chief of his clan from 1560 to 1584.¹⁷ Like that of Ballinacarriga (Exemplar 16), Castle Donovan is a very substantive tower house, standing four storey's high with attic. The tower stands to its full height with the exception of the south-west corner. Castle Donovan exhibits many typical features found in tower houses such as pointed arch doorways, stone vault over the ground floor, narrow windows most likely associated with the early phase of construction, and later lintelled windows with projecting hood mouldings, a feature we see extensively used in later fortified houses. A date of 1626 is inscribed on one of the windows which may relate to later renovations carried out to the building. Common defensive features such as a base batter, battlements, corner bartizans and gunloops can all be found at Castle Donovan. Old photographs also show machicolations over the doorway. Internally the building consisted of a vertical series of rooms and passages stacked directly above the entrance. A wide spiral staircase survives in the north-east corner.

The O'Donovans, along with their traditional overlords, the MacCarthys, took part in the rebellion against English rule in the 1640s. In 1650 the castle was attacked and blown up by Cromwellian forces. Gunpowder and cannon were known in Ireland since at least 1487, but because of their cost and scarcity were never widely available to local lords like the O'Donovans or MacCarthys. It was only in the wars of the seventeenth century that cannon were widely used against tower houses, and then mainly by Government forces. The tower houses were no defence against the power of cannon, and soon became redundant.

Did you know...

Archaeological excavations at the castle in recent years uncovered a number of interesting artefacts, including several strips of lace made of woven gold metal threads, the threads made from silver coated in gold leaf. This material would have been used to trim the fine clothing of some wealthy lady. Also found were several decorative copper alloy strips and a hasp which would have come from a casket or box, probably one which held precious items such as jewellery. These artefacts give us a glimpse of the sophisticated and fashionable clothing and jewellery worn by the O'Donovans.



Public visits to the castle are encouraged with a fine carpark located adjacent to the tower house. Image courtesy of Phillip O'Sullivan.

In recent years, significant consolidation and conservation works were undertaken at Castledonvan by the Office of Public Works, and the building is now open to the public.

EXEMPLAR 19
Carriganass Castle

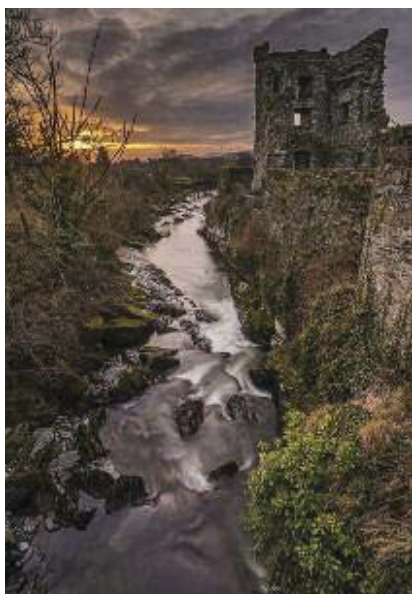


Carriganass Castle from the west. Note bartizans on wall tops. Also bawn wall in foreground.



Carriganass Castle is built on a rock outcrop on the Owane River, near Kealkill in West Cork. Carriganass the ‘castle on the waterfall’ overlooks the fast-flowing Owane River with its waterfall which gives the castle its name.

Carriganass was a castle of the O’Sullivans reputedly built by Dermot O’Sullivan about 1540.¹⁸ Like many of their neighbouring clans the O’Sullivans were forced to build tower houses to protect themselves in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This was a time when much of Ireland had become disturbed and lawless as the authority of the Crown and the Dublin-based government declined and local lords had become almost independent of government rule and often at war with each other. O’Sullivan built Carriganass in the upper reaches of the Owane valley, overlooking the valley below and guarding the approaches to nearby mountain passes which led into the territories of neighbouring lords.



Stunning photo of Carriganass Castle perched above the Owane River.

Image courtesy of Tara O’Neill.

The remains of the tower house itself stand in the south-west quadrant of a rectangular bawn. The tower is four storeys high with the west wall, most of the north wall and a short run of the south walls standing to full height. The tower house has evidence of many standard defensive features such as bartizans to the corners at the upper levels, which survive in ruins to the north-west and south-west corners. The common narrow vertical windows openings are evident throughout with a single ogee headed window light present on the third floor level. No significant features survive on the interior of the building, there is however a slight trace of vaults over the first and third floors.

Carriganass castle is surrounded by a bawn, an enclosure with stone walls with projecting or flanking towers at each corner. Evidence for bawns is found in many tower houses, but the particular



Typical sixteenth-century gun loop in bawn wall at Carriganass.



Carriganass Castle viewed from one of the bastions at the corner of the bawn wall. Note the extensive base battering.

shape of the towers at Carriganass is unusual. While the flanking towers of many bawns are circular or rectangular in plan the Carriganass towers are in the form of triangular or spear-shaped projections from the bawn. This shape of defensive architecture, referred to as 'bastions' appeared first in Italy in the late fifteenth century in response to cannon, and quickly spread across Europe. There, the bastion was usually of solid earth and masonry to absorb the force of cannonball and was fitted out with defensive cannon. Fortifications using these solid bastions were also built in Ireland by Government forces from the beginning of the seventeenth century, similar such structures are located at James Fort and Charles Fort, Kinsale. The flanking towers at Carriganass were not designed for cannon warfare, but their shape shows that O'Sullivan was aware of the most modern military architecture available. The towers were provided with numerous gun loops, tiny openings barely visible from outside through which gunmen inside could provide defensive fire outward and along the bawn walls.

The construction of the defensive bawn around Carriganass may have been sparked by a bitter internal dispute which broke out between two branches of the O'Sullivan clan in the 1580s. When Hugh O'Neill, leader of the Ulster Irish, went into rebellion against England in 1599 he led his forces south to rendezvous with Spanish troops who landed at Kinsale to support him. One branch of the O'Sullivans, led by Donal Cam, supported O'Neill. Donal's cousin Owen, the occupier of Carriganass, supported England. Soon after the defeat of the Irish at the Battle of Kinsale, Carriganass was surrendered to the English. Owen O'Sullivan went on to build a modern fortified house at Reenadisear near Bantry.

Did you know...

One of the flanking towers in the bawn of Carriganass also functioned as a pigeon house. Rows of recesses in the upper levels of the walls inside the tower were nesting boxes. Pigeons were a source of meat and eggs for the table, and manure for the garden.

The castle is managed by a local group and is open to the public.

EXEMPLAR 20

Kilcoe



Kilcoe Castle as restored.



Kilcoe castle is a fine example of a coastal tower house, built in a commanding position directly on the coastline, where it could oversee seaborne traffic and trade, including piracy.

During the political unrest and turmoil that beset Ireland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the authority of the English Crown and its Dublin government declined. In its place local lords became increasingly independent and powerful and warfare was endemic between the many clans ruled by these lords. Across most of the western half of County Cork the native Irish MacCarthys were the most powerful group. Over the centuries they split into several branches, who were sometimes at war with each other in an ongoing struggle for supremacy. In order to protect themselves and their territories each clan built a tower house. Kilcoe was built by the



Kilcoe - aerial view of the building and slipway at the tip of the island on which the castle is built.

Clan Dermod branch of the MacCarthys who held it until it was captured by English forces in the early seventeenth century. It does not seem to have been occupied afterwards.

The ruling clans along the south and southwest coast of County Cork, MacCarthys, O'Driscolls, O'Sullivans and others, were very much involved in fishing and maritime trade generally, not all of it entirely legal! To protect these interests, numerous tower houses were built directly on the coastline and evidence of these maritime activities can still be seen. The island on which Kilcoe Castle is built is essentially a rock outcrop. At its western end there are remains of a stone building, built so close to the edge of the rock that part of it has collapsed into the sea. This part of the island is little above sea-level and at its western tip the rock slopes gently down to the sea. The rock has been smoothed out here to create a small quay or slipway on which a small boat could be pulled up. The quay may well have been the normal means of access to the castle, and would have been used to haul up fish and other supplies for the castle.

The castle itself consists of a main tower with a conjoined smaller tower at its northeastern corner. Inside there is a complex arrangement with passages created in the thickness of the walls linking the larger rooms in the main tower to the smaller rooms in the flanking tower. Along one of these passages there was a door which was secured from the outside by a wooden drawbar, as can be seen from the position of the drawbar sockets on either side. The passageway leads on to a garderobe (toilet) and a small room in the smaller tower. The door to this small room was also secured from outside, unlike most tower house doors which are secured from inside. Though small, the room had three windows, giving it a bright, pleasant appearance, but a trapdoor in its stone floor was the only access to a deep, dark room below which had no windows. These rooms would have functioned as prisons, the upper one for valuable, high status prisoners, or hostages, and the lower windowless one for the 'common criminal'. The presence of two prison chambers is a rare, if not unique, feature, in Kilcoe Castle.

Did you know...

High on the south wall of Kilcoe, over the entrance door, there are two stone heads, one on either side of a window. Carved stone human heads like these are common in tower houses and may represent the builders or owner of the castle.

**Kilcoe castle is in private ownership and is not open to the public.
It has been fully restored in recent years and is occupied.**

EXEMPLAR 21
Dunmanus Castle



Dunmanus Castle. Image courtesy of Amanda Clarke.



Dunmanus castle stands on a rock outcrop overlooking the sea at Dunmanus Harbour, a sheltered cove on the northern shore of the Mizen Peninsula. It is a typical example of a coastal Cork tower house.

This was a castle of the O'Mahonys, said to have been built by Donogh O'Mahony about 1430. The O'Mahonys were a native Irish clan with two main centres, one on the Mizen Peninsula and another around Bandon. Several of their tower houses still survive. In 1602, shortly after the Battle of Kinsale, Dunmanus was captured by crown forces, but was subsequently recovered by the O'Mahonys. However, they were outlawed in 1643 and their lands confiscated, including Dunmanus Castle and 1,594 acres of land in addition. This land was granted to New English settlers .

Fishing was a hugely significant element of the economy of the south and southwest coasts of County Cork from the mid-fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries and tower houses along the coast were located to exploit that resource²⁰. Most of the large-scale fishing was done by continental fleets, mainly from Spain and England. Part of the catch may have been processed on board the vessels and transported directly back to their home countries, but fishing also



Dunmanus Castle, as viewed from the west, in a commanding position along the coast.

generated considerable onshore processing activity, in addition to boat repairs and the providing of food and drink for the boat's crews. Donal O'Sullivan wrote in 1605 that at least 500 fishing boats came to his ports on the Beara Peninsula every year. The Irish lords of the area did not engage directly in this industrial scale fishing, but they did control it and profit from it in the form of taxes. The O'Driscolls, for instance, levied a charge on every ship that worked the fishing grounds off Baltimore and a further charge on ships which anchored in Baltimore Harbour. O'Sullivan had sea-going galleys to patrol the fishing grounds and to ensure that the foreign fleets paid their taxes.

Like other tower houses along the coast of County Cork, Dunmanus Castle is located close to the shoreline on an easily-defended site. It faces onto a long, sheltered harbour which would have been capable of anchoring ocean-going fishing vessels. The rocky promontory on which it is built is well protected to the east and north by steep rock. On the west side a gently sloping gravel beach would have provided a natural landing point for small boats.

The castle itself is similar to several other West Cork tower houses. It is comprised of two attached towers, a form hardly seen at all in the east and north of the county, with the exception of the larger examples at Barryscourt and Blarney. Windows on the upper two levels are twin-light ogee-headed, which is consistent with the traditional 1430 date for the construction of the castle.

Did you know...

There was formerly a carved stone head, said to be a likeness of Donagh More O'Mahony, on the west wall of the castle, but is said to have been removed in 1972.



Vaulted ceiling of Dunmanus Castle. Access through door is from above.

Image courtesy of Finola Finlay



Dunmanus Castle - note the ground floor entrance and raised entry, first floor.

Image courtesy of Finola Finlay.

The castle is in private ownership.

EXEMPLAR 22

Dunlough Castle (Three Castles)



Dunlough Castle occupies a most prominent position in the landscape; Dun Lough lake to right.

Dunlough Castle, known as 'Three Castles' locally, is a spectacularly-located coastal tower house. With its attached walls and towers it forms a linear defence cutting off a large headland at the western tip of the Mizen Peninsula.

Dunlough was a castle of the O'Mahonys, a native Irish clan. One branch of the family ruled the Mizen Peninsula and another held territories around Bandon. Their principal stronghold on Mizen was at Ardintenant, on the south coast of the peninsula, and they also had several other castles in the area. According to tradition a



castle was built here at Dunlough in the thirteenth century, but the present ruins are of fifteenth-century date. An earthen bank-and-ditch running parallel with the walls are believed to be remains of a prehistoric promontory fort. The O'Mahonys lost most of their lands after the defeat of the Irish at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601. Dunlough Castle was subsequently acquired by the New English speculator and first Earl of Cork, Richard Boyle.

Dunlough is a promontory at the western tip of the Mizen peninsula. A long narrow lake runs across much of the neck of the promontory and walls running east and west from the lake to the shore serve to cut off the promontory completely. At its western end the wall ends in sheer rock cliff, while the eastern end runs to a small sheltered harbour. The western section of the wall is fortified by three towers from which the local name Three Castles is derived. The castle is unusual in being difficult to access overland across hilly terrain, though it would of course have been accessible from the sea. Rather than being on a prominent rock, like most tower houses, it is hidden in a narrow valley between steep rocky ridges which would have made it a difficult place to live. Also, though the largest of the three towers is very similar to a tower house it is quite small when compared with other tower houses in County Cork. The impression is that this was not a place where a lord resided with his family and retainers, and from where he administered his estates, as was the case with most tower houses. Rather, it appears to have been sited to observe and control maritime activity in and out of the bay immediately to the north, including the movement of fishing vessels.

In an area where there was a scarcity of good farming land, fishing was the main source of income for the Irish lords of the south and southwest coasts of County Cork from the mid-fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Records have survived of the involvement of the O'Driscolls and O'Sullivans in levying taxes on English and Spanish fleets engaged in fishing and it is likely the O'Mahonys were similarly involved. These coastal lords were also noted as pirates and their activities were regularly condemned by English government officials in Ireland. Given its remoteness and difficulty of access overland Dunlough Castle would have been ideally located to engage in these illicit activities.



Dunlough Castle from the south. Dun Lough lake located to foreground. Image courtesy of Finola Finlay.

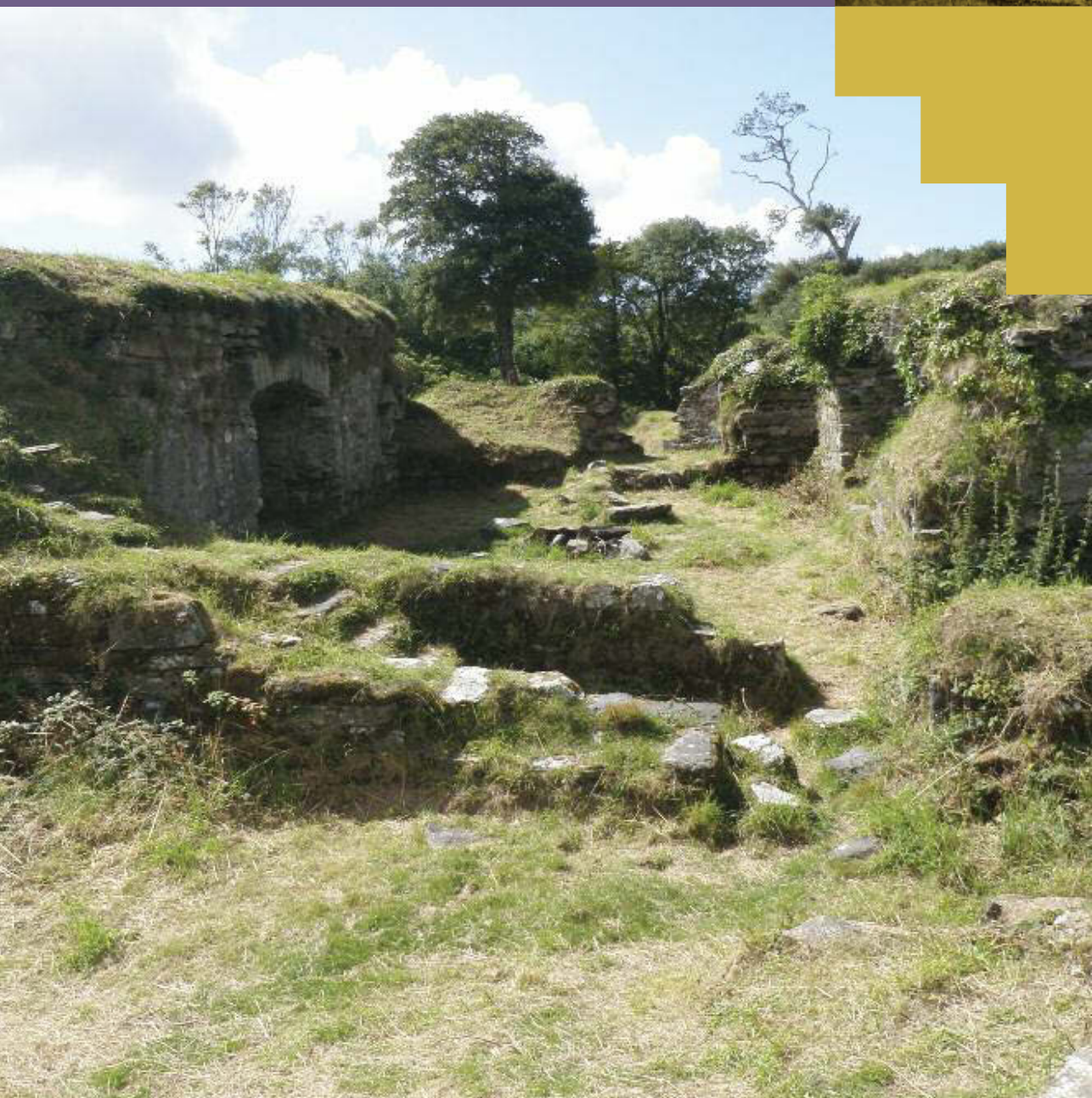
Did you know...

The lake here, Dunlough Lake, is said to be haunted by a lady who causes the death of anyone who lays eyes on her.

The castle is privately owned.

EXEMPLAR 23

Dunboy Castle

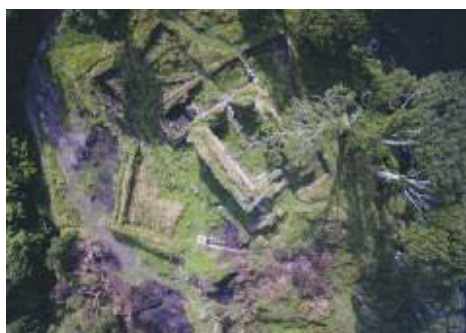


The remains of Dunboy Castle. Image courtesy of Damian Shiels.



Dunboy is a coastal tower house on the south coast of the Beara Peninsula. Like other coastal tower houses in the area it is sited on the shoreline, and guards the entrance to a small sheltered harbour.

Little survives of Dunboy tower house today with the exception of the ground floor, but it is well known for the part it played in the aftermath of the Battle of Kinsale, one of the most significant events in Irish history. Dunboy Castle was the principal residence of the O'Sullivan Beare, so named from Beare, the ancient name of the peninsula. The O'Sullivans ruled the peninsula and lands north of Bantry, but split into two factions in the late sixteenth century. When the Ulster leader Hugh O'Neill rebelled against the English in 1599 he led his forces south to rendezvous with a Spanish force at Kinsale. One branch of the O'Sullivans, led by Donal Cam of Dunboy, joined the rebellion, while the other branch sided with the English. After the defeat of the Irish at Kinsale English troops swept through West Cork to quell any further opposition. Donal Cam's followers garrisoned and fortified Dunboy in a desperate last stand against the English forces, but were defeated after the English troops launched a sustained cannon bombardment of the tower house, opening great breaches in its walls. All the defenders were killed and the tower house blown up²¹. Donal Cam struggled on for another six months but finally in despair led one



Aerial view of Dunboy, clearly showing the later built star shape fortification.

Image courtesy of Marie O'Driscoll and Donal Collins.



Enhanced aerial view of Dunboy.

Image courtesy of Marie O'Driscoll and Donal Collins.

thousand of his followers in a great march northwards to the safety of his O'Rourke allies in County Leitrim. Harassed repeatedly by English troops and hostile Irish, and devastated by hunger and harsh winter conditions he arrived in Leitrim with only 35 of the original one thousand followers left alive and the once proud O'Sullivan clan was broken and disbanded.

The fortification of Dunboy in 1602 by O'Sullivan was carried out with the assistance of Spanish and Italian troops and involved the construction of a type of fortification developed in Italy a century earlier. The fortification surrounded the castle in a more or less rectangular shape but with sharply projecting corners which gave it a star shape. It is here that we see the development of specific fortifications to launch and withstand artillery attack. The sole purpose of this type of structure is defence. The fortification at Dunboy, consisted of stone walls with earthen embankments behind to mount cannon. As part of the fortification they also dismantled the upper floors of the tower house, clearly recognizing that a tower house was completely ineffective against modern artillery warfare. In spite of their efforts the castle was quickly overrun by the English troops.

Forty years later another star-shaped fort was built, enclosing the castle and the 1602 fortifications. This time the builders were English forces fighting another rebellion that had broken out in 1641. It was one of a series of coastal fortifications constructed by the English Crown at that time to guard against the possibility of another intervention in Ireland by the Spanish, other such fortifications at the time included James Fort and Charles Fort at Kinsale. The fate of Dunboy and its O'Sullivan lord symbolises the fate of the Irish lords in the seventeenth century. Their lands were taken, their castles destroyed, their power broken. Castles were outdated. Military fortification was now the sole prerogative of the Government and numerous such structures were built along the Cork coastline and harbour, including Camden Fort Meagher, at Crosshaven and Spike Island in Cork Harbour.

Did you know...

English forces spent about two weeks preparing for the assault on Dunboy in 1602. Defensive ditches were dug and earthen banks built up. Rafters were taken from a nearby church to build platforms for the cannon. Cannon were brought in by boat and set up. The bombardment started at 5a.m. on June 16 and the castle was taken early the same afternoon.

The castle is privately owned.

EXEMPLAR 24

Coppingers' Court

Coppingers' Court is one of twenty-four fortified houses recorded in County Cork. The house is located in the secluded Roury River valley, two kilometres west of Rosscarbery.

Coppingers' Court was built by Sir Walter Coppinger in the early seventeenth century. Coppinger came from an old merchant family in Cork City, where his ancestors had lived for centuries and provided mayors of Cork on several occasions. Sir Walter himself died in 1639 and the house was burned down two years later during the rebellion which broke out in that year. It does not seem to have been inhabited afterwards.

The first four decades of the seventeenth century were a time of relative peace in Ireland after decades of rebellion, war and famine. Munster had been left devastated by two rebellions, one suppressed in 1583, the other ending in the defeat of the Irish at the Battle of Kinsale. Both were followed by extensive land confiscations from those who had participated in the rebellions, and settlement of those lands by loyal tenants brought over from England. Many who did manage to hold onto their lands found themselves in dire financial straits as their lands had been devastated by the wars. Frequently they turned to wealthy men like Walter Coppinger for loans,



Coppingers' Court



against which they mortgaged their lands. Unable to repay the loans they were forced to surrender the land. Even before the turn of the century Coppinger had already begun to acquire the lands in West Cork from MacCarthys. It was said he planned to build a new town in the vicinity of Coppingers' Court, but nothing came of it.

Fortified houses are regarded as a development from the tower house and an intermediate stage between the tower house and the 'modern' country house of the eighteenth century. The fortified house retained defensive features from the castle tradition such as machicolations, bartizans and gun loops but they also incorporated elements from a completely new architectural tradition, imported from England. They were designed for more comfortable living, with more fireplaces, many more windows and larger rooms. Coppingers' Court has the lintelled windows with hood mouldings overhead that are typical of this period, and was warmed by numerous fireplaces. Its chimneys have the 'diamond' shape typical of the early seventeenth century. It is also well-served for defence, with five sets of machicolations crowning the wall tops and allowing defensive gunfire along the walls, as well as a series of gun loops in the walls at ground level. With modern mansions like these new landed gentry like Sir Walter could live in some luxury and show off their wealth and status yet similarly remain protected, while managing their estates.

Did you know...

Coppingers' Court remained in the hands of Walter Coppinger's descendants until the end of the seventeenth century, when it was confiscated. It was acquired by the Hollow Sword Blade Company, a London-based company which acquired vast territories across Ireland at this time.



Coppingers' Court. Image by Mike Searle.

The castle is privately owned.

EXEMPLAR 25

Monkstown Castle

Monkstown Castle is an example of a seventeenth century fortified house, which was built by the Archdeacon family in 1636 - indicated by a date carving above one of the fireplaces in the house. The Archdeacons were a long established merchant family in Cork City. Credit for building the house is traditionally given to Anastasia, the wife of John Archdeacon. Her family, the Galweys, were also well established in the business life of Cork City. These established merchant families, including also the Coppingers, prospered in the economic boom of the early seventeenth century and were one of the groups who began investing in land and establishing country estates. In the fallout from the rebellion of the 1640s and the following Cromwellian wars, the Archdeacons, as Catholics, were dispossessed of Monkstown and other lands. Monkstown was granted to a Cromwellian soldier, who sold it to Michael Boyle, Protestant Bishop of Cork from 1661-63.

Monkstown Castle is one of three similar fortified houses in County Cork: Mount Long, which is almost identical, and Kanturk which has a similar layout but is on a larger scale. The layout consists of a central block with a rectangular flanking tower projecting from each corner. At



Monkstown Castle. Source: Flickr.



Monkstown the flanking towers almost obscure the central block. The architecture of Monkstown is typical of the early seventeenth century - the wide lintelled windows with projecting hood mouldings overhead, the continuous horizontal string course separating each level, and the numerous chimneys are all features of this period. The numerous windows and fireplaces in these houses reflected the owner's desire for more comfortable living accommodation, but the fortified houses still retained defensive features carried over from the tower houses of the previous century. Massive corner bartizans crown four corners of the building, supported on long tapering corbels. These enabled defenders inside to provide covering fire along the base of the walls. The house is also equipped with numerous gun loops at ground level, with the flankers allowing cross-fire along the walls of the central block. Inside, a fireplace on the first floor is crowned by an elaborate mantel crowned with a three-tier cornice, reminiscent of the main entrance doorway to Kanturk Castle. The style hints at influences derived from the European Renaissance movement of previous centuries.

Did you know...

Monkstown Castle was built by Anastasia, wife of John Archdeacon while he was overseas in Spanish military service. It is said that on his return, as he sailed into Cork Harbour he spotted the new house where his old castle had formerly stood. Thinking the enemy had fortified the place he fired his cannon, damaging one of the bartizans.



Monkstown castle has been recently restored for private use.

This castle was recently restored and is privately owned.

EXEMPLAR 26
Castlemartyr



The tower house at Castlemartyr.



Castlemartyr castle is a multi-period site which has seen a succession of buildings, including a tower house and a seventeenth-century house, both in ruins, and an early eighteenth-century house now functioning as a luxury hotel.

Castlemartyr castle neatly illustrates the change, both in architectural style and in way of life, exemplified by the move from tower house to fortified house, and the subsequent move to the country house. The tower house was for centuries the seat of a branch of the fitz Gerald family, Anglo Norman settlers of the late twelfth century. They held Castlemartyr until the late sixteenth century when their lands were confiscated after the suppression in 1583 of a rebellion by the senior branch of the family, the Earl of Desmond. Castlemartyr was acquired first by the English



The seventeenth century fortified house at Castlemartyr.

adventurer Walter Raleigh, then purchased by the speculator and businessman Richard Boyle for his son Roger, who built the fortified house. He replaced it with a more substantial house around 1660, and this in turn was replaced around 1730 by the present Country House.

The tower house at Castlemartyr is a simple rectangular, five-story structure within a large enclosure or 'bawn'. This was the typical dwelling of a fifteenth and sixteenth century lord in a time when the authority of central government had broken down and local lords like these fitz Geraldts ruled their territories independently. Here the fitz Gerald lord would have lived with his family, along with servants and a small armed garrison.

In the early seventeenth century a fashionable new mansion, a fortified house, was built adjacent to the tower house by its new owner, Roger Boyle. Boyle was an ambitious figure among the English who had settled in Ireland in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. For a man of his wealth and social standing a modern mansion would have been a necessity.

Architecturally and socially these are very different buildings. Verticality is the key element of tower house architecture. The towers were tall and narrow with small living spaces stacked one above the other in a strictly hierarchical structure. Fortified houses were longer, lower and deeper. More rooms on each floor meant more individual space and privacy, while at the same time there was easier access between the rooms and floors than in the tower house, and less strict control over movement within the building. This mode of construction reflected the sense of peace and security felt by the builders in the peaceful decades of the early seventeenth century. The houses were also much more comfortable to live in, lit by larger and more numerous windows and warmed by many fireplaces, unlike tower houses, some of which had no fireplace.

The fortified house at Castlemartyr, like many of its contemporaries, was abandoned during the turbulent years of the late seventeenth century and replaced by a Country House. This was in turn replaced around 1730 by the present Country House. The revival of building in early eighteenth century Ireland brought with it an entirely new architecture with a scale, grandeur and elegance not seen before, as exemplified in the Country House here at Castlemartyr. Country houses reflected wealth and status, in a politically and economically prosperous environment. Properties were now undefended homes surrounded by beautifully designed landscapes and gardens. Administrative and defensive functions were now the responsibility of the central Government, who constructed purpose built military fortifications, courthouses, barracks and administrative centres. The castle by this point in time is completely redundant.

Did you know...

The first Country House which Boyle built at Castlemartyr was said in 1677 to have had a chapel, forty hearths, ten bedrooms, a kitchen, brew house, bake house, cooling room, laundry, pantry and wine and beer cellars.

The castle is on private property but can be viewed from the amenity walks on the hotel complex.

EXEMPLAR 27

Ightermurragh Castle



Ightermurragh Castle aerial view. Image courtesy of John Finn.



Igthermurragh Castle, located close to Castlemaryr, is one of the finest surviving fortified houses and is a leading example of this type of architecture from the early seventeenth century.

An inscription over a fireplace in Igthermurragh tells us that *“Edmund Supple and Margaret Gerald, whom love binds as one, built this house in 1642”*. The Supples and fitz Geraldts were Old English families whose Anglo Norman ancestors had settled this area in the thirteenth century. Margaret’s ancestors had built the castle at Inchiquin a few miles downriver in that century and occupied it until around 1600. Edmund’s ancestors had settled in the Killeagh area, a few miles to the west.

Edmund Supple died only six years after building the castle, when his only son was still a minor and the castle was claimed by a related branch of the family. After some years of legal dispute the castle and land were acquired by the perspicacious English figure Roger Boyle, who resided at Castlemaryr. It was lived in at least until 1750, when it was described as 'one of the most modern structures of this kind, in the country', and said to be 'inhabited by Mr. Smith'.²²

Igthermurragh is an imposing four-storey structure built on a cross plan, comprising a large main block with two smaller projecting blocks. The building displays the typical architectural detail of the era. Continuous projecting string courses differentiate each storey. The windows throughout are lintelled and divided by transoms and mullions; some have projecting hood mouldings overhead. The ground floor is well-equipped with gun-loops, thirteen in all, most in the projecting blocks where they provided covering fire along the main wall.

As was the case with all fortified houses the interiors provided much more comfortable living spaces than did their predecessors, the tower houses. Fireplaces, serviced by substantial chimney stacks and wide windows are found on every level. Rooms are larger and more numerous, providing greater privacy for the occupants. Stairs and hallways allow more freedom of movement than was previously the case. Yet like all fortified houses, it retains defensive features. The main entrance is on the front façade of one of the projecting blocks. This block is essentially a small tower, without windows and with a projecting machicolation overhead protecting the entrance. The doorway itself has a bluntly-pointed arch more like the Gothic arch

of earlier castles than the flatter 'Tudor' arch more common in other fortified houses. Another relict of antiquity can be seen in the internal layout. The stairs are contained in the rear projecting block, providing access to each floor in the main block. Each floor has a passage running from the stairs to the front of the house, dividing the floor space into two spaces, one larger than the other.²³ This layout is reminiscent of the 'screens passage' found in castles of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and is an unusual survival in the seventeenth. It is as if the builders still kept an eye to the past, or were keen to display their own descent from an ancient past in what was in its day a most modern piece of architecture.



Did you know...

The mid-seventeenth century rebellion against English settlement, referred to as the Confederate War, had begun a year before Ightermurragh was built. During that war Edmund Supple and his wife were forced to abandon the house with their infant child.

Entrance doorway to Ightermurragh Castle. Note recess for coat-of-arms immediately above doorway and machicolation projecting from wall top.

The castle is on private property.

EXEMPLAR 28

Mallow Castle



Mallow Castle at sunset. Image courtesy of Breda O'Mullane.

Mallow Castle, a ruined fortified house, stands on a plateau overlooking the River Blackwater on the edge of Mallow town. It is believed to be the earliest fortified house in County Cork. Like that of Castlemartyr, Mallow Castle is a multi-period complex which has a succession of buildings dating from different periods.

After the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland in the late twelfth century the Mallow area was first settled by the Roche family. Soon afterwards it was acquired by the FitzGerald family, whose main base was in County Limerick. FitzGerald acquired extensive territories and became the most powerful Anglo-Norman lord in Munster. In the fourteenth century they were given the title Earl of Desmond by the King of England. When the last Earl went into rebellion against the Crown in the late sixteenth century his lands were confiscated and granted to new English settlers, or 'planters'. Mallow was granted to Sir Thomas Norris, a senior English administrator responsible for managing the province of Munster for the English Crown. Norris inherited the ancient Fitz



Gerald castle at Mallow, part of which he repaired and lived in for a time before building this fortified house. Only fragmentary remains of the older castle are now present. The construction date of the fortified house is not recorded, but its builder, Norris, died in 1599. The castle was assaulted and damaged during the Confederate war of the 1640s, but was reoccupied until it was burned in 1689.

The fortified house at Mallow represents an entirely new departure in Irish architecture. The main contrast with earlier castles is the size and comfort levels of the new buildings. The fortified houses are lower, longer and wider than the tower houses which preceded them. Windows are wider and more numerous. Interiors are more spacious, and warmer, given the number of fireplaces. They were designed primarily for domestic comfort, not for protection or defence.



Mallow Castle front facade.

They were not entirely without defensive measures though, and numerous gun loops can be seen along the west and north walls, many of them below the window sills. Interestingly the east wall has no gun loops, suggesting there was an enclosed bawn here, which itself would have had gun loops in its walls.

A notable feature of the fortified houses is their symmetrical layout, a design based on ideas adopted from the European Renaissance of the previous century. This symmetry is exemplified at Mallow by the series of projecting towers. The west front is perfectly balanced with polygonal towers at each corner and a third exactly at the centre. The facades on either side of the centre tower are identical, each one with three windows on the ground floor, two on the first floor and three on the second floor. A fourth tower projected from the centre of the rear wall. This tower contained the timber stairs and the garderobe or latrine which was accessible directly off the stairs. Mallow is one of the few fortified house to have a garderobe, which was replaced in the following century by the chamber pot. A bread oven is also located within the site.

Other architectural detail at Mallow is typical of its time. Each of the two entrance doors has the flat 'Tudor' arch, and the windows have the usual lintelled form with projecting hood mouldings overhead.



Mallow Castle entrance door, with flat 'Tudor' arch. Note yet-hole on right.



Bread oven in mallow castle house indicating 17th century core.

Did you know...

When the fortified house was burned in 1689 the occupants renovated the nearby stables and lived there. This building was subsequently enlarged throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into a Neo-Tudor style county house by the descendants of the Norris (Norreys) and Jephson family, who resided there until 1984. The country house is now often referred to as Mallow Castle House to differentiate from Mallow Castle, the ruined fortified house. Mallow Castle House like all country houses of the time had a large demesne, including a deer park located directly beside the county house. The deer park includes a herd of rare white deer which are reputedly descendant from a herd given to the family by Queen Elizabeth 1st. . Mallow Castle House is now in the ownership of Cork County Council. The building is not yet open to the public, however the grounds are accessible and enjoy a variety of different family friendly events throughout the year.

The ruined fortified house, Mallow Castle, is a National Monument (number 281). It is in State guardianship and is accessible to the public.

EXEMPLAR 29

Dromaneen Castle



Dromaneen Castle. Image courtesy of Donie O'Sullivan.

Dromaneen Castle is spectacularly located on the edge of a limestone cliff overlooking the River Blackwater, and can be clearly seen from the Mallow-Killarney road on the far side of the valley.

Dromaneen Castle was a seat of the O'Callaghans, a prominent native Irish family who managed to retain their lands here in North Cork through the rebellions and land confiscations of the late sixteenth century, only to be finally dispossessed for their part in the Confederate war of the 1640s. The fortified house appears to have been built in the first decade of



the seventeenth century, on the site of an earlier castle of which very little survives. O'Callaghans' territory lay on the border between the Anglo Norman Barrys, fitz Gerald's and Barretts to the north, east and southeast and the MacDonagh MacCarthys on the west. The MacDonagh MacCarthys were their overlords and no doubt provided protection against any incursions by their Anglo Norman neighbours. Neither the MacDonagh MacCarthys or the O'Callaghans became involved in the rebellions of the late sixteenth century, and MacDonagh MacCarthy was openly supportive of English settlement in the region after the suppression of the rebellions. Both groups availed of the 'Surrender and Regrant' scheme offered by the Crown. This was a scheme whereby a family or clan group could surrender their lands to the crown and have the lands regranted to them under English law on promise of loyalty to the Crown. Thus both families held onto their lands and clearly felt secure to invest in the construction of fortified houses - MacCarthy at Kanturk and O'Callaghan at Dromaneen. It can be no coincidence that both houses were built around the same time, each with nearly identical Renaissance-style doors, which may well have been carved by the same mason.

Dromaneen is a much smaller, simpler building than its neighbour Kanturk. In its layout it is essentially a simple rectangular gable-ended structure. It appears to have had a stairs tower on the front façade where there are doors on each floor. Internally the two lower floors are divided by a stone wall, unlike most fortified houses which have wooden partitions internally. Otherwise it has the wide lintelled windows usually found on fortified houses, and five machicolations along the wall tops.

An added building projects from the west end of the house and another separate structure is located a short distance to the east of the house. A wall linking these two creates a small courtyard. The entrance to the courtyard has a highly ornate doorway similar to that at Kanturk Castle.



Entrance doorway to Dromaneen Castle.



Dromaneen Castle. Image by Mike Searle.

Did you know...

In 1645 Dromaneen Castle played host to Cardinal Rinuccini, the Papal Nuncio to Ireland, along with the nobility and gentry of the region who came to greet him.²⁴ Rinuccini was a leader of the Irish Confederate Catholics, also known as the Confederation of Kilkenny, during the Confederate wars of the 1640s.

EXEMPLAR 30

Kanturk Castle



Kanturk Castle. Image courtesy of Tony Roche, National Monuments Service, Photographic Unit.



Kanturk Castle fireplace.

The splendid fortified house nestling among a grove of trees, south of Kanturk town, is one of the largest in County Cork.

Kanturk Castle was built around the year 1600 by the native Irish MacDonagh MacCarthys, lords of this region of northwest Cork known as Duhallow. The MacDonagh MacCarthys did not participate in the rebellions against the Crown in the late sixteenth century and were openly supportive of English settlement in the region after the suppression of the rebellions. In addition they availed of the ‘Surrender and Regrant’ scheme offered by the Crown, where they kept their lands in return for loyalty to the Crown. As a result MacCarthy MacDonaghs clearly felt confident enough in their position to invest in the construction of such a fine mansion.

Kanturk Castle is essentially comprised of a central rectangular block, with a flanking tower projecting from each corner. Before this time flanking towers were commonly found at the corners of castle enclosures or tower house bawns. Now the flankers were added to the house itself, in an effort to give the impression of strength, and the design is repeated elsewhere in County Cork such as at Monkstown, Mountlong and Coppingers’ Court. Architecturally Kanturk has the Classical symmetry that is found on other fortified houses – the openings such as the central doorway and windows are regularly and evenly distributed across the façade, each floor is then evenly defined by horizontal strings courses. Windows themselves are further divided into even proportions through the use of vertical stone mullions and a horizontal stone transom, topped with a projecting hood moulding. The wall-tops are crowned with rows of tapered corbels. These were designed to carry continuous machicolations such as those seen at Blarney Castle. However, at Kanturk the machicolations were never finished, and the building was never roofed. Interestingly Kanturk Castle as we see it today is exactly as it was built. As the castle was never finished it was not subject to changes, alterations and additions that may be found in many other historic buildings.

The most striking features of Kanturk are its plan layout and its front doorway. The round-headed doorway is flanked by pilasters on either side supporting an entablature with frieze and cornice overhead, reflecting influences derived from the European Renaissance movement of previous centuries. One of the fireplaces inside is of a similar design. The plan layout, with its four flanking towers, was first seen in Ireland only ten years previously at Rathfarnham Castle, County Dublin.²⁵



The stunning Kanturk Castle on a winter's day.

Image courtesy of Ellen O'Sullivan and Eddie Walsh.

The builder of that house was an Englishman, the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, Adam Loftus. The fact that Kanturk incorporated Renaissance influences suggests that its builder was familiar with up-to-date architectural trends. The fact that its builder, a native Irish Catholic lord, was following the architectural lead of a Protestant English Archbishop in the year 1600 is testament to the degree to which cultural boundaries were being crossed in early seventeenth century Ireland.

Did you know...

According to tradition MacCarthy's neighbours became jealous when they saw the scale of his new house. They complained to the Crown that he was becoming a threat, and the Crown ordered him to stop building. The fact that the building was never completed is a testament of the power of the Crown over the Irish Lords.



Kanturk castle from the inside.

Kanturk Castle is managed by the OPW and is open to the public.

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- ⁵ MacCotter, P. 2016 'The dynastic ramifications of the Geraldines, in P. Crooks and S. Duffy ed. *The Geraldines and Medieval Ireland*. Four Courts Press. Dublin. 170-193.
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- ¹⁴ Ó Murchadha, D. 1996, *Family names of County Cork*. Collins Press. Cork. 251
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- ¹⁷ Bolger, T. and Hegarty, L. 2012, 'Archaeological excavations at Castle Donovan, County Cork' *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, vol. 117 61-90. 63
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Chapter 6

Protecting Heritage Castles for the Future

All of the castles mentioned in this publication are Recorded Archaeological Monuments, and, as such, are subject to statutory protection. This protection comes principally from the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004, which define and protect Ireland's archaeological heritage, and some may also come under the remit of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010.

Archaeological sites and monuments are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) established under Section 12 of the National Monuments Acts (1930-1994). Under this legislation, two months written notice must be given to the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for any works on or near a site listed on the RMP. In addition, the Cork County Development Plan has an objective to protect all known archaeological sites, and the County Archaeologist should be consulted prior to proceeding with any works at or near an archaeological site. Further information in relation to archaeological sites in the County is available in the published series of Archaeological Inventories for County Cork (consisting of four volumes and an appendix volume), the details of which, can also be found online at www.archaeology.ie. This online resource includes an interactive map where a viewer can inspect any area for the presence of an archaeological monument.

A small number of castles are designated **National Monuments** as defined by Section 2 of the National Monuments Act (1930). The term is defined as a monument *'the preservation of which is a matter of national importance by reason of the historical, architectural, traditional, artistic or archaeological interest attaching thereto...'*

Some National Monuments are in the ownership of the State. Others are in private ownership but in the guardianship of the State, which means the State is responsible for their maintenance and upkeep. Buildings in State ownership may be open to the public. Those in private ownership are not accessible to the public without the owners' permission.

In addition to their status as Recorded Archaeological Monuments, castles, like other buildings, may also be regarded as part of our architectural heritage. The primary means by which we protect our architectural heritage is through the creation of a Record of Protected Structures. Under the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010, a Local Authority must maintain a Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Structures that are considered to be of architectural, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest can be considered for inclusion in the RPS. The protection applied to a building on the RPS extends, for the very most part, to all parts of the structure, inside and out, and to any features in the curtilage of the building.

Under the provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010, planning permission is required if any works are proposed which would materially alter the character of a structure. Works that involve routine maintenance and repair and which are carried out in accordance with best conservation practice and employing appropriate materials and technologies would not necessarily require planning permission. Nevertheless, clarification should always be sought from the Local Authority Architectural Conservation Officer.

Many of our towns and villages as well as our designed landscapes and streetscapes are designated as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's), also under the Provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2010. These ACA's can contain a whole range of different structures including castles, churches, civic buildings, and notable commercial premises and houses. Within these Architectural Conservation Areas any works which are deemed to materially alter the exterior character of the area, even where such works are normally considered to be exempted development, will require planning permission. Cork County Council has produced a most useful publication entitled 'Guidelines on the Management and Development of Architectural Conservation Areas' which is available online at www.corkcoco.ie/arts-heritage. The publication is also available, free of charge, from the Heritage Unit, Floor 3, County Hall, Cork.

The Heritage Unit is at hand to provide advice and information in respect of any proposed works to our Heritage Castles, designated as archaeological monuments, protected structures, or both and regularly works with local community groups looking to protect and promote their local heritage. To contact the Heritage Unit, send an email to cork.heritage@corkcoco.ie or phone 021 4276891.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Castles were such a significant part of Medieval society. An understanding of castles is crucial to a fuller understanding of life as lived in Medieval Ireland. They are not the full story of course, and far more Medieval people lived outside of castles than in them. Nevertheless the castles, and the people who occupied them, dominated the lives of Medieval people in much the same way Government dominates our lives today through parliament, courts, prisons and legislation governing almost every aspect of our lives. These functions of modern Government operated in Medieval times though the castles.

The castles we have mentioned in this book are but a small selection of the total number which survives in County Cork. They are not presented as being the best-preserved or the most visually appealing or the most easily accessible, though we have tried to keep those criteria to the forefront. Rather, they are presented as a representative cross-section across the County of the different types of castle that dot the landscape.

Our hope is that the book will give the reader a better understanding of the range of castles that exist and of the social and political context in which the castles were built and occupied. It is also our hope that the reader will visit individual castles with this book in hand and come away with a better understanding of the date of that castle, and how the castle would have looked and functioned in its day, particularly of the many buildings that were once part of the castle's life but have not survived. The reader should also bear in mind we have discussed only castles which have survived. There are many Medieval castles that we know of from brief documentary references but which have not survived the test of time. In relation to castles that have survived, many are on private property and the owner's permission should be sought before visiting. In all instances our castle buildings are centuries old and every caution should be exercised when visiting them.

Castles are an integral part of our heritage and a fascinating one at that, covering a period of over 500 years, in that time, telling of past conflicts, invasions, rivalries and settlements. The seventeenth century saw many changes and a move away from the medieval past, where governments began to overtake independent lordships coupled with a whole new world of warfare, in terms of both the weaponry employed and the fortresses used for defence. However, sin scéal eile.

May our castles continue to remind us our collective past that we can enjoy both in the present and long into the future.

Learn More about Heritage Castles

There is a wide range of sources of information on County Cork castles. As archaeologically and architecturally important buildings, many of the castles discussed in this book are described in some detail in the Archaeological Survey Database at webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/ and published in the four volumes of the Archeological Inventory of County Cork (West Cork, East Cork, Mid Cork and North Cork). General information on our archaeological heritage and its protection is available at www.archaeology.ie.

Another useful source is the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH). The NIAH is a National programme of survey and recording designed to help inform Local Authorities as to which buildings should be considered for inclusion on the RPS. Further information is available at www.buildingsofireland.ie.

Another great resource, which incorporates the RPS and the RMP as well as a range of other heritage aspects, is the Heritage Council's map viewer (www.heritagemaps.ie).

As part of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland, the Cork Archaeological Survey Team (1982-2009) carried out a comprehensive survey of castles within the County of Cork. Some of the files from these visits can be viewed in the County Library with many more held by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Guidelines for a whole range of proposed works to historic structures are available on the website of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, including: Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings; A Guide to the Conservation and Repair of Masonry Ruins, A Guide to the Repair of Historic Windows, and many others - see www.chg.gov.ie.

For those with an interest in the archaeological sites of all ages there is a wonderful resource called "Archaeology in the Classroom". This is an excellent educational resource for everyone, not just for school-goers! See www.itsabouttime.ie for more information, which contains a full lesson on the castles of our past.

Another valuable source of information is Cork County Council's very own heritage website - www.corkcoco.ie/arts-heritage. The Heritage Unit also periodically sends out a heritage update email, should you seek to subscribe, send an email to cork.heritage@corkcoco.ie.





THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW KNIGHTS

by Conor Nelligan

Beneath the shadow of a great curtain wall
Stones lead to the sky, from great heights they might fall
Fortified Houses, great Castles and Towers
The homes of their time or expressions of power?

Built to protect but who was kept safe?
The world was changing at such a fast pace
Old knowledge took flight as wild geese stole away
Resistance was feudal, whole lives kept at bay.

Ground truths had been covered by a golden vale of lies
The new lie of the land had many manors of disguise
Castellated minds had made new laws unto themselves
Brehon's breath to sink as ink on dusty old bookshelves

Cater to the people and the king will stay in power
The king will know his subjects, we are studied by the hour
We're blindly losing freedom while now being entertained
The rouse is now convenience - rank and file maintained.

In the Age of Information who is really kept informed?
Life as data in a web now seems the worldwide norm.
Yet we are slowing learning of the all in everything,
Hidden in plain sight, through us it's trying to sing.



The past presents a chance for us to understand today
For life will not know progress if we're lost along the way
The castles that surround us often block our source of light,
Can we call it freedom if our days belong to knights?

In times of castles past, ponder where it is you'd stand -
Looking down on others and commanding all the land, or
Beyond the castle walls with the forest at your back,
Cherishing this life, never planning to attack?

Times were very different then but a lot was still the same
Most people lived an honest life, still others knew no shame
Anglo Normans, then Anglo Irish, set their sights up river
But banks collapsed and waters raged - it all seems too familiar.

If we listen to the sound that's heard between notes on the flute
The breath of life can change the air and play a song of truth
Hunger for the truth and you will feast inside great halls,
The wild geese may return someday and we much know their call

So gaze upon a castle and know now where you stand,
And let your thoughts be guided by the true heart of this land.
We must know our wrongs for us to truly know our rights -
Know where to stand and make that stand in these days that follow knights.

Ballinroher castle, near Clonakilty - 16th century Tower house of the Mac Carthy Riabhachs. Image courtesy of Diarmuid Kingston.



Ballinvard/Rossmore Castle - late 16th century Tower house of the O'Hurley clan. Image courtesy of Daniel O'Leary.



Ballyclough Castle - Tower House built the Barrys





Ballyhooly castle was an earlier castle converted into a tower house. The wide windows are a late insertion. The castle is strategically located overlooking the River Blackwater and is one of a number of Roche castles built along the Blackwater valley.

Belvelly Castle, Cobh island - Tower house built by the Hodnett family in the 15th century guarding a strategic crossing point. The castle was occupied by Sir Peter Courthorpe in the mid 17th century and has recently been restored for private use.



Belvelly Castle - typical draw bar socket. Image courtesy of Dan Noonan.

Belvelly Caslte -
wicker centered vault
on upper floor. Image
courtesy of Dan
Noonan.



Belvelly Castle - Wall
Press. Image courtesy
of Dan Noonan.

Belvelly Castle -
Detail of window
embrasure at Belvelly
Castle with splayed
ingoings. Image
courtesy of Dan
Noonan.





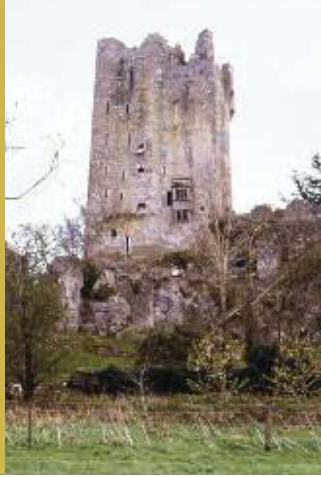
Blarney Castle - one of the most famous of the Cork Tower houses, it was the principal residence of the MacCarthys, Lords of Muskerry, and one of a chain of MacCarthy Tower houses built between here and Macroom to the west. Blarney was built in two distinct phases, the first Tower house was built in the late 15th century on the site of an earlier castle and a slightly higher and bigger Tower house was added in the 16th century to the east side of the earlier tower with a continuous line of machicolations along the parapet wall. Image courtesy of Donie O'Sullivan.

Blarney Castle - later Tower house added onto an earlier Tower in the 16th century. The castle was remodelled in the 17th century; windows were enlarged; fireplaces inserted and a new gate house was added, located on the right of this photograph.



Blarney Castle - upper floor of earlier Tower house with partially blocked ogee headed window, narrow stair way windows, water spouts at base of parapet and large inserted chimney on top.

Blarney Castle - detail
of north elevation
showing the earlier
Tower house to right
and the later Tower
house to left



Blarney Castle - the
lintel of the central
machicolation on the
south side is known
as the Blarney stone,
when kissed gives
you the gift of the
gab!

Carrigabrick Castle,
near Fermoy. The only
circular tower house
in County Cork





Carrigacunna Castle, Killavullen - restored tower house built in mid 16th century by the Nagles, remodelled in the 17th century. The cross-shaped gun-loop (right hand side) was difficult to access from inside and was more for display than defence.

Carrigacunna Castle - door from entrance lobby to spiral stairs



Carrignamuck/Dripsey Castle. Tower house built on west side of the Dripsey River, reputedly built by Cormac Láidir MacCarthy, Lord of Muskerry 1455-95. Attacked by Broghill in 1650 when cannon made a breach in the east wall which was subsequently repaired. The castle was remodelled in 1866 seeing the insertion of fireplaces and new windows including a wooden tracery window from Aghabulloge Church of Ireland. Image courtesy of Doug Lucey.

Castlebernard Castle, Bandon - the Tower house was the chief residence of the Kinalmeaky branch of the O'Mahony clan. A late 18th century Country house incorporated the remains of the castle to the rear, the house itself was converted to a Neo Gothic style in the early 19th century with battlements and turrets to make it look like a castle!
Image courtesy of Donie O'Sullivan.



Castlelohort, Cecilstown - late 15th century tower house built by Donough Óg McCarthy McDonagh, restored by Percevals, Earls of Egmont, in the mid 18th century and remodelled again in the 19th century



Castlelyons Castle - The ruins are of a 17th century fortified house built on the site of an earlier castle.





Castlemagner Castle -
remains of Tower
house with bartizan

An evocative image
of Castlemore Castle,
near Crookstown,
before it became
overgrown with ivy.
Image courtesy of
Deirdre Bourke.



CASTLEMORE, CROOKSTOWN, CO. DUBLIN, 1847



Castle Pook, near
Doneraile. An Ogee-
head window with
triquetra decoration

Clodagh Castle near Crookstown - Tower house, probably a MacCarthy castle, but by 1584 in the hands of MacSweeney's, it was sacked by James Fitzgerald in 1598 and repaired by Brian MacSweeney in the same year. In 1844 the Earl of Bandon did some restoration work on it. Image courtesy of Aoife Nelligan



Cor Castle, Innishannon - a Country House built in the Neo Gothic style, a style that became popular in the early 19th century making the house look like an old castle but with all the comforts of a modern house.

Downdaniel Castle, Innishannon - Tower house of the Barry Óg clan built in 1476, it later passed to the MacCarthy Riabhach.





Drishane Castle, Millstreet -
Tower house of the MacCarthys, built in the mid 15th century. The circular tower added in late 16th /early 17th century to allow flanking fire by defenders. Castle surrendered to the Queen and re-granted. Land passed to the Wallis family who added a County house in the early 18th century.

Dromagh Castle - an O'Keeffe Tower house. Part of the bawn wall and circular corner towers is all that survives, which were partly rebuilt in the 19th century with the addition of battlements and a gateway. Image courtesy of Patricia O'Keeffe.



Dunbeacon Castle - remains of a 15th century Tower house reputedly built by Donall O'Mahony, sited in a strategic coastal location. Taken by English forces after fall of Dunboy at beginning of 17th century. Image courtesy of Finola Finlay

Dundeedy Castle - Tower house of the Barry Roes, the picture shows the line of the bawn wall cutting off the Galley head, the remains of the tower is behind the wall.



Kilbrittain Castle - Principal seat of the MacCarthy Riabhach from the early 15th century, surrendered by Confederates following cannon attack in 1642, extensively restored and enlarged into a Country house by the Stawell family in the 18th and 19th century, burnt in 1920 and restored again in 1969. Image courtesy of Triona O'Sullivan

Kilbrittain Castle
Great Banqueting
Hall. Image courtesy
of Triona O'Sullivan.





Kilcolman castle, near Doneraile, was once home to the poet Edmund Spenser

Kilcrea Castle, Ovens - Tower house reputedly built by Cormac Láidir MacCarthy in the middle of the 15th century as part of network of Castles in the Muskerry area. A carved head on upper floors is reputedly that of Cormac who is buried in the adjacent abbey (Kilcrea Abbey). Image courtesy of Eoghan Nelligan.



Kilcrea Castle Garderobe chute. Image courtesy of Eoghan Nelligan.

**Kilmaclenine Castle -
a Fortified House near
Mallow**



**Lisgriffin Castle, near
Mallow - remains of
the Fortified House
built by the Barry
Family in the early
17th century**



**Lombard's Castle,
Buttevant - the c.
15th/16th century
urban residence for
the Lombard family -
merchants who
originated from Italy
and who were
involved in the wool
trade.**





Macroom Castle - Tower house built by the MacCarthys, repaired by Teigue MacCarthy in the mid 16th century, burnt a number of times in the 17th century and incorporated into a large Country house that you see in the photograph with Neo Gothic battlements and bartizans, which was burnt in 1920's, left in ruins, and subsequently demolished.

Mashannaglass Castle
- angled gun loop in
Tower House



Raheen Castle - Tower house built in the late 16th century by the O'Donovans with gable shaped gun loops protecting the corners. The holes that you can see in the upper wall are reputed to be the results of bombardment by Cromwell's forces in 1649.

Reenadisert Castle,
near Bantry - a
Fortified house built
in the early 17th
century by Sir Owen
O'Sullivan who held
the Lordship of Beare
here after the fall of
Dunboy in 1602.
Captured by
Cromwell's forces in
1650. Note the corner
bartizan and
chimney stacks.



Reeninadisert Castle -
detail of one of the
diamond shaped
chimneys



Reeninadesert Castle
- detail of gun loop





Rossbrin Castle - This Tower house was the alleged home of Finghian O'Mahony who died in 1496. Image courtesy of Amanda Clarke.

Rossmore Castle - remains of an O'Mahony Tower House, strategically located on the north shore of Dunamaus Bay, later passing to the MacCarthy Muclagh's. Image courtesy of Amanda Clarke.



Wallstown Castle, near Shanballymore - Tower House

Glossary Of Terms and A Note On The Architectural Details Of Castles

A variety of architectural features and decoration can be found in castles responding to ongoing changes in both architectural fashion and in response to the changes in warfare. Presented here is a description of some of the main features associated with castles, together with a Glossary of Terms.

Windows and Doors

The external envelope of any structure is essentially defined by the application of windows and of doors. In fact one of the principal methods for dating any castle is the form of the windows and doors, particularly the shape of the door arch and the window heads. Window and doors were distinguished from the surrounding masonry by use of regularly shaped or cut stones to create an arch and surrounds. The earliest type of arch found in Irish castles was the semicircular or half-round arch. This type of arch dates to the second half of the twelfth century and is associated with Romanesque architecture (which in itself is more commonly applied to churches than castles). In Cork only one example of a half-round arch survives at Ballyderown castle, near Kilworth. Here, part of a round-headed window survives, with typical Romanesque 'roll-moulding' along the edges of the cut stone.

In the early 1200s the half-round form was replaced by the more familiar Gothic arch. This was a pointed arch, with little embellishment except for its chamfered edges. The pointed arch continued in use into the seventeenth century and it is the most common arch form used in tower houses. Due to its prolonged and prolific use as a feature for both windows and doors, on its own the pointed arch is of little use in dating a castle. Occasionally small openings are found at the apex of the arch and to the side. These are 'yett-holes'. A 'yett' is an iron grille, hung outside the timber doorway. Chains attached to the yett were passed through these openings and secured inside the door to keep the yett locked.



The surviving section of the half-round window at Ballyderown Castle.



The pointed doorway to Barryscourt Castle. Note the roughly dressed limestone forming the doorway with 'yett-holes' at the apex of the arch and on the left-hand side.



Punch dressing with drafted edging on the underside of the door arch at Ballynamona Castle.



Mallow Castle entrance doorway, which has a flat arch (Tudor arch).



Decorative chamfer-stops at Mallow Castle entrance doorway.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the stone surrounding these arches were often embellished with fine 'punch dressing', which consists of small circular indents applied to the face of the stone. The stone would be edged with what is called vertical tooling or ribbon dressing, a series of straight lines tooled all around the stone to create a smooth edge. Similar decoration can also be found around the windows and along the quoin stones of the castle.

In the second half of the sixteenth century a new form of arch appeared, often referred to as the 'Tudor' arch. This was a flatter arch, rounded at the corners. It can be found in internal doors in some later tower houses and either internally or at the entrance in later fortified houses. Decorative motifs known as 'chamfer-stops' can occasionally be found near the base of the door surround, as at Mallow castle.

The earliest window form found in Irish castles was the half-round arch. Two other forms, the simple, or slender pointed arched window ('lancet') and the more decorative 'trefoil-pointed' are also found in thirteenth-century castles, but none survive from that date in County Cork. A form of lancet window did continue in use into the fifteenth and sixteenth century, and can be found in the hall adjacent to Barryscourt Castle. In the fifteenth century, however, the 'ogee-head' became the most popular form and is found in almost all tower houses and as later insertions into the earlier castles. Several variations of the ogee head can be found, but the distinguishing feature is the upward curve at the centre of the window head.

Where double or triple windows are found they are divided by vertical stone columns known as mullions. Towards the end of the sixteenth century it is common to find windows further divided by horizontal stone bars known as transoms.

In the seventeenth century the ogee-head window gives way to the flat-lintelled form which is found in fortified houses, and also as later insertions in tower houses. This form survived down to about the middle of the seventeenth century. After that the use of cut stone surrounds was abandoned in favour of timber window frames.



Pointed or 'lancet' windows at Barryscourt Castle.



A typical simple ogee-head window.



Internal doors at Kanturk Castle. Note the pointed arch on the upper door and the flatter Tudor arch on the two below.



Seventeenth-century windows in Ballyhooly Castle. Note the transoms and mullions dividing the lower window. Also the projecting 'hood-moulding' over the windows. To the right of the lower window an earlier blocked-up double 'lancet' window can be seen.



Blarney Castle stepped battlements and continuous machicolation (location of the famous Blarney Stone).



Flanking tower at Liscarroll Castle. Note the low base batter. The tall slit in the wall is a typical thirteenth-century arrow loop.



The 'star-shaped fort' at Charles Fort, near Kinsale. The projecting bastions are typical of seventeenth-century military fortifications.

Defensive Features

The 'base batter' is essentially the most common feature of castles. This is the outward slope at the base of the walls. It provided a more solid foundation for the walls and made the walls more difficult to undermine, and by keeping attackers out from the wall face made them more vulnerable to arrows fired from the battlements. In the twelfth and thirteenth century the base batter is low and abrupt, but in the tower houses it starts higher on the wall face and slopes out more gently.

Among the earliest defensive features of castles are battlements (also called crenellations) and machicolations. At their simplest battlements are simply gaps in the masonry along the wall-top allowing defenders to lean out and shoot down at attackers below. Leaning out of course left the defender exposed so early castles were fitted with a wooden gallery which projected out from the wall-tops. Defenders could step out on this gallery and shoot down through an opening in its floor while remaining protected by its wooden facing and roof. Since they were of timber these galleries or 'alures' have not survived, but occasionally sockets in the walls mark the location of the supporting wooden beams.

At an early stage the wooden hoarding was replaced by the 'machicolation', a projecting wooden box which served the same purpose as the wooden allure. Machicolations are typically found over doorways. Where found clasping the corner of a castle they are usually referred to as 'bartizans'. A further development was the continuous machicolation as found at Blarney castle. From the fifteenth century tower

house battlements were typically built to a stepped profile which is unique to Ireland. Very few of these survive as they were easy to throw down and were subject to weathering.

Flanking towers projecting from the corners are found in castles of all periods. Arrow loops and, later, gun loops in these towers allowed defenders to shoot along the castle walls. Arrow loops were thin vertical openings or loopholes that allowed medieval archers to fire arrows at attackers and they also protected the archers' bodies from enemy weapons that were fired against them. Gun loops operated on a similar principle and in later castles, existing arrow loops were often adapted to cater for firearms.

The first recorded use of a firearm in Ireland occurs in 1487, when an O'Donnell shot an O'Rourke. In the following year the first use of cannon is recorded, at the capture of a castle in County Westmeath. Generally it was only the royal armies and those of the most powerful lords who could afford cannon, and they came into widespread use only in the wars of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In response castle builders began to incorporate various defences into castle design. Circular gun ports capable of taking the muzzle of a small cannon are found in a circular flanking tower at Poulinalong Castle, near Inishannon. Gun loops, tiny openings to take the muzzle of a handgun, are found in many tower houses and fortified houses. Bastions, projecting pointed spurs, were added to the corners of some tower houses serving to protect the corner of the castle and allow flanking fire along its walls.

In the seventeenth century the castle became increasingly redundant. The power and authority of the great lords who built the castles was broken and all authority was concentrated in government and exercised by government military forces such that by the middle of the seventeenth century the concept of having one single building, a castle, combining military, domestic and administrative functions, was completely outdated.

In this situation entirely new forms of defensive buildings were developed, such as Charles Fort, near Kinsale. These were purely military in design and function, though they did of course contain living quarters for soldiers. Such fortifications were designed to be low lying to withstand artillery attack and had massive thick walls with corner bastions to place artillery on for the purpose of launching attacks. These fortifications were often surrounded by a glacis, or sloping ground away from the fort's walls, which mitigated against gunfire attack - later seen in the sophisticated 18th/ 19th century artillery fortifications at Spike island and Camden Fort Meagher - two wonderful sites situated in Cork Harbour which are now open to the public to visit.

Glossary Of Terms

ARCADE - A series of arches supported on piers or columns.

ARCH - A curved structure formed of brick or stone, such as the upper part of a window or door.

ARCHITRAVE - A decorated frame of door or window surround.

BARTIZAN - Projecting stone 'box' guarding the corner of a castle. Gaps in the floor allowed defenders to shoot down through. Late 16th and 17th century examples had gun loops in their sides.

BASTION - A projection from a wall or castle enabling defenders to direct fire along the wall.

BATTER - The sloping face of a wall

BATTLEMENT - A parapet (i.e., a defensive low wall between chest-height and head-height), in which rectangular gaps or indentations occur at intervals to allow for the discharge of arrows or other missiles. Also called **CRENELLATIONS**.

BAWN - Enclosing defensive wall around a castle, fortified house or abbey.

BUTTRESS - A mass of masonry projecting from or built against a wall to give it added strength.

CENTRING - The temporary wooden support structure on which an arch or vault is constructed.

CHAMFER - Straight face of a stone made when the sharp angle of a corner is removed.

COPING - Waterproof course of masonry atop wall or gable.

CORBEL - A stone projecting from a wall used to support a wooden beam or a masonry structure such as a **BARTIZAN**.

CORNICE - A moulded horizontal projection crowning an **ENTABLATURE** or wall. Often found inside a room where the wall meets the ceiling, or outside where the wall meets the roof.

CRENELLATIONS - see **BATTLEMENTS**.

CURTAIN WALL - An enclosing wall, particularly of an Anglo-Norman castle.

DRAWBAR SOCKET - Socket in jamb of door or window into which a closing bolt or drawbar was inserted.

DRYSTONE - Masonry constructed without mortar.

EMBRASURE - The recess in a wall for a doorway or window.

ENTABLATURE - The upper part of a classical building or structure, comprising an **ARCHITRAVE** and **CORNICE**.

FOSSE - A ditch or moat surrounding a defended or enclosed area.

GARDEROBE - A medieval latrine delivering through a shaft in the thickness of a wall.

GUN LOOP - A small narrow slit/ope in wall, used in fortifications, through which arrows or gunshot could be discharged.

HOOD-MOULDING - A projecting moulding over a door, window or arch.

INGOING - Sides of an embrasure.

JOIST - A beam supporting floorboards.

LANCET - A tall narrow window with a pointed head.

LINTEL - A horizontal beam or stone over an opening or passage to support the wall above.

LOBBY - Passage/room serving as a common entrance to several compartments.

LOOP - see **GUN-LOOP**.

MACHICOLATION - A projecting parapet supported on corbels between which stones etc. could be dropped on assailants.

MOULDING - An ornamental contour given to angles or features of a building, whether a projection or a cavity.

MULLION - An upright between the lights of a window.

MURAL PASSAGE - A passage in the thickness of a wall.

MURAL STAIRS - Stairs contained within walls.

MURDER-HOLE - An aperture in a floor or vault, usually above the main entrance to a castle, or at the entrances to upper floors, through which intruders could be fired upon.

NICHE - A recess set into a wall, often designed to take a statue.

OGEE - A double curve, partly convex and partly concave. Shape used to form window heads

PARAPET - A low protective wall placed at edge of a roof, platform, bridge etc., sometimes **CRENELLATED**.

PLANTERS - The name often given to settlers who came from England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and settled in Ireland on land confiscated from the previous owners

PUTLOG HOLE - An opening left in a wall for the insertion of scaffolding.

QUOINS - The stones, generally dressed, at the angles of a building.

RAMPART - A defensive bank or wall.

REBATE - A step-shaped channel or a continuous rectangular notch or groove cut on an edge, so that a plank, door etc. may be fitted into it.

RELIEVING ARCH - An arch built into the thickness of the wall over an open arch or lintel to take weight off it.

REVETMENT - The facing applied to a wall or bank built of some other material.

ROMANESQUE - An architectural style derived from Roman architecture and favoured in Europe from the 10th to the 12th centuries. Its defining feature is the semi-circular arch on windows and doors.

SEGMENTAL ARCH - The shape of this arch is a segment of a circle, i.e. drawn from a centre below the **SPRINGING** line.

SEMICIRCULAR ARCH - The shape of this arch is semicircular, i.e. the centre of the circle is on the **SPRINGING** line.

SCREENS PASSAGE - In Medieval castles a passageway dividing the floor of a building into a hall on one side and service rooms on the other.

SLOP-STONE - A stone channel penetrating the thickness of a wall and enabling the external disposal of waste liquid.

SPANDREL - Space between curve of **ARCH** and surrounding rectangular **MOULDING** or framework.

SPLAY - Sides of a window opening with obtuse or acute angle to other wall faces.

SPRINGING - The starting-point of the curve of an **ARCH** or vault.

STOP - The shaped termination of a **CHAMFER, MOULDING** or hood.

STRING COURSE - A projecting horizontal band of masonry, often moulded.

TRANSOM - A horizontal bar of stone or wood across a window-light or other opening.

TREFOIL - Three-lobed or three-leafed motif.

TURRET - A small, slender tower usually attached to a building.

VOUSSOIR - The individual, usually wedge-shaped stones or bricks forming an **ARCH**.

WALL PRESS - A cupboard or niche built into thickness of wall.

WALL-WALK - A walkway positioned outside the roof and behind the parapet of a castle or church.

WEATHER-SLATING - The covering of an external wall with slates.

WICKER CENTRING - A form of **CENTRING** for a vault in which the stones are supported during construction on a framework of timber and plaited wooden mats (usually willow), the latter often leaving an impression in the mortar.

YETT - an iron grille usually located outside the wooden door of a castle, to protect the door.

YETT-HOLES - The holes made in masonry to accommodate chains which could be pulled to close an iron grille.

Details of 30 Featured Castles

Exemplar	Name	Townland
	Anglo-Norman Castles (7)	
4	Glanworth Castle	Boherash
3	Buttevant Castle	Castleland
2	Liscarroll Castle	Liscarroll
1	Kilbolane Castle	Kilbolane
5	Castle Barrett	Castlebarrett
6	Inchiquin Castle	Inchiquin
7	Ballincollig Castle	Ballincollig
	Tower Houses (16)	
8	Castletownroche Castle	Castlewidenham
9	Cloghleigh Castle	Moorepark
10	Conna Castle	Conna
11	Barryscourt Castle	Barryscourt
12	Desmond Castle	Townplots
13	Carrigadrohid Castle	Carrigadrohid
14	Carrigaphoooca Castle	Carrigaphoooca
15	Kilmeedy Castle	Kilmeedy East
16	Ballynacarriga Castle	Ballynacarriga (Carbery East (Eastern Div.) By.)
17	Togher Castle	Togher
18	Castle Donovan	Castledonovan
19	Carriganass Castle	Carriganass (Bantry By.)
20	Kilcoe Castle	Kilcoe
21	Dunmanus Castle	Dunmanus West
22	Dunlough Castle (Three Castles)	Dunlough
23	Dunboy Castle	Dunboy
	Fortified Houses (7)	
24	Coppingers' Court	Ballyvireen
25	Monkstown Castle	Monkstown (Castle Farm)
26	Castlemartyr Castle	Castlemartyr (Imokilly By.)
27	Ightermurragh Castle	Ightermurragh
28	Mallow Castle	Castlelands (Fermoy By.)
29	Dromaneen Castle	Dromaneen
30	Kanturk Castle	Paal East

RMP no.	ITM_E	ITM_N	NAT_GRID_E	Nat_GRID_N	Nat. Mon.	RPS
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CO139-015----	484572	533214	84597	33143		0775
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CO032-097002-	550036	597644	150075	97587	339	0272 & 0821
CO023-120----	538238	601832	138274	101776	517	0178

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