

**Tower Houses in the Carra Barony of County Mayo:
A Condition Review.**

Dissertation submitted in part of the Requirements of the BA of Arts in Humanities in
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I hereby declare that this is my own work:

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Table of Contents

Tower Houses in the Carra Barony of County Mayo:.....	i
A Condition Review.	i
Table of Contents	ii
List of Figure and Page Numbers:.....	iii
List of Figure and Page Numbers:.....	iii
List of Maps and Page Numbers	v
Abbreviations	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Methodology	4
Chapter 3: Literature Review.....	10
Chapter 4: Irish Tower Houses.....	20
4.1 Introduction.....	20
4.2 Features of Irish Tower Houses.....	20
4.3 Distribution.....	26
4.4 Tower Houses from the sample: Distribution and Condition.....	28
Chapter 5: Introduction.....	32
5.2 Condition Survey: Doonamona.....	32
5.3 Condition Survey: Castleburke.....	41
5.4 Condition Survey: Castlecarra.....	51
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	57
Appendix A.....	59
Appendix B.....	64
Appendix C.....	68
Bibliography.....	72

List of Figure and Page Numbers:

Figure 1 Smithstown Tower House in Clare by Ua Cróinín.	7
Figure 2 Westropp's sketches of Fireplaces and Doors.	10
Figure 3 Dunsoghley roof by Leask	11
Figure 4 Simple stepped Crenellations, Turin Mayo.....	20
Figure 5 Irish Style.Crenellations Annaghdown, Co.Galway.....	20
Figure 6 Shrute Castle, Co. Mayo.....	21
Figure 7 Castle Burke Quorin stones.....	22
Figure 8 Ballyhowley Castle.....	22
Figure 9 Castleburke Ogee headed windows.....	22
Figure 10 Mullion and Transome window, Castleburke.....	23
Figure 11 Loop in Doonamona (Exterior).....	23
Figure 12 Loop in Doonamona (Interior).....	23
Figure 13 Castleburke Aunbries in N wall.....	24
Figure 14 Castleburke Aunbries in W wall.....	24
Figure 15 Wickerwork in Castleburke.....	25
Figure 16 O'Danachair's Distribution of tower houses in Ireland, 1400-1650.....	26
Figure 17 O'Danachair's Mayo's Distribution of tower house.....	27
Figure 18 Carra Barony from Knox's History of Mayo.....	28
Figure 19 Doonamona from the N.W.....	33
Figure 20 Doonamona from the N.E.....	34
Figure 21 The interior N.E wall.....	34
Figure 22 Remains of the staircase.....	35
Figure 23 Doonamona 1993 from Quinn's <i>History of Mayo</i>	37
Figure 24 Doonamona today.....	37
Figure 25 Doonamona 2003.....	37
Figure 26 Doonamona N.E wall from the S.W.....	38
Figure 27 Upper floor in the N corner, Doonamona.....	38
Figure 28 Ground plan of Doonamona, in Salters' <i>Castles of Connaught</i>	39
Figure 29 Castleburke W wall.....	41

Figure 30 Castleburke E Wall.....	42
Figure 31 Cross section of Castleburke.....	43
Figure 32 Cross section of Castleburke.....	44
Figure 33 Staircase in S wall.....	45
Figure 34 Part of a Vault on the W wall.....	45
Figure 35 Surviving wickerwork, Castleburke.....	46
Figure 36 Castleburke from Burkes' <i>Burke: People and Place</i>	48
Figure 37 Castleburke today form N.E.....	48
Figure 38 Irish Tourist Association Survey, 1945.....	49
Figure 39 The main entrance to Castlecarr.....	51
Figure 40 The W wall form the N.W.....	52
Figure 41 The Interior of the N wall.....	53
Figure 42 The interior of the E wall.....	53
Figure 43 Ground plan carried out by 1991 by the Lough Mask and Lough Carra Tourist Development Association.....	55
Figure 44 First Edition O.S Map 1828 (Doonamona).....	59
Figure 45 2005 O.S Map (Doonamona).....	59
Figure 46 First Edition O.S Map 1828 (Castleburke).....	64
Figure 47 2005 O.S Map (Castleburke).....	64
Figure 48 First Edition O.S Map 1828 (Castlecarr).....	68
Figure 49 2005 O.S Maps (Castlecarr).....	68

List of Maps and Page Numbers

O'Danachair's Distribution of tower houses in Ireland, 1400-1650.....	26
O'Danachair's Distribution of tower houses in Mayo, 1400-1650.....	27
First Edition O.S Map 1828 (Doonamona).....	59
2005 O.S Map (Doonamona).....	59
First Edition O.S Map 1828 (Castleburke).....	64
2005 O.S Map (Castleburke).....	64
First Edition O.S Map 1828 (Castlecarra).....	68
2005 O.S Maps (Castlecarra).....	68

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Abbreviations

FAS:	Foras Aiseanna Saothair.
ICOMOS:	International Council on Monuments and Sites.
JGAHS:	Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society
JRSAI:	Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquarians in Ireland
O.P.W:	Office of Public Works.
RIAI:	Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland.
R.M.P:	Record of Monuments and Places
S.M.R:	Sites and Monuments Record.

Abstract:

With *circa* 3,000 tower houses in Ireland, they are a very common sight in the landscape though many only stand as ruins. The topics of their archaeology, architecture and history have become the popular focus of academic study taking preference over their actual deterioration or even plans for their preservation. This thesis is a review on the condition of tower houses in Mayo focusing on the tower houses of the Carra Barony. By establishing the number of tower houses in the area and recording their condition the extent of the loss is apparent. Three tower houses in this barony were chosen and an in-depth condition survey was completed to assess their current condition and also the rate of deterioration. The success or failings of the legislation protecting our archaeological heritage is also assessed using data from the sample.

Chapter 1: Introduction

With circa 3,000 tower houses in Ireland they are a common sight in the Irish landscape and also the commonest medieval castle type in Ireland¹. Varying in style, features and even shape they have been the subject of much study in the academic world. Their prevalence and popularity as a focus of study does not however mean that they are a fully understood archaeological monument. Debates continue over nearly every aspect of these monuments from earliest date, style influences and even basic issues such as roof design.

In their simplest form tower houses can be described as defended residences of Anglo-Norman and Gaelic Irish Lords. These castles were mostly built between the 15-17th Century and were usually three to five stories in height². Typical features of these monuments include crenelations, battlements, narrow spiral staircases, murder holes and narrow defensive slit windows on the lower floors³. These tower houses are found throughout Ireland, but are concentrated in lands best suited for pasture. This can clearly be seen with Leask's studies finding circa 400 in Limerick, circa 325 in Cork, 253 in Tipperary and 120 in Clare, counties that are even today known for their rich pasture lands⁴.

Tower houses have been fortunate to be a subject of much study. Initially earlier travel writers have noted these castles in the landscape and often recorded their location and condition. Later more in-depth studies and recording occurred with the likes of Westropp in Clare. Leask's *Irish Castle and Castellated Houses* recorded many tower houses including their numerous features and Leask is also credited with terming these structures "tower house"⁵. Some modern contributors to the field of tower houses include Sweetman⁶, McNeill⁷, Barry⁸ and Cairns.⁹

¹ Wheeler, H. The National Monuments of Ireland. *Archaeologia Cambrensis* Vol 134, 1985. Pg 6.

² O' Danachair, O'Danachair, 1977, *Irish Tower Houses and their Regional Distribution*, Bealoideas, vol. 45, p 159.

³ Donnelly Colm, 1996, *Frowning Ruins: The Tower Houses of Medieval Ireland*. History Ireland, p 11.

⁴ -ibid, p 13.

-Leask, Harold, 1941, *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses*, Dundalk, p 75.

⁵ Leask, Harold, 1941, *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses*, Dundalk.

⁶ Sweetman, David, 2005, *The Medieval Castles of Ireland*, Cork.

⁷ McNeill, Tom, 1997, *Castles in Ireland: Feudal Power in a Gaelic World*, London.

⁸ Barry, Terry, 1987, *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland*, Cambridge.

⁹ Cairns, C.T, 1987, *Irish Tower Houses: A County Tipperary Case Study*, Athlone.

Western counties such as Galway and Clare have a wealth of information and sources on their tower houses. Galway benefits from having the *JGAHS* or *Journal of Galway Historical and Archaeological Society* which has featured many articles on the tower houses of the area an example being Nolan's *Galway Castles and Owners in 1574*.¹⁰ Studies were also carried out on the tower houses of Clare by both Westropp (many of these articles were published in the *JRSAI* or *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquarians in Ireland*), and by Ua Cróinín, (whose articles appear in the Journal "*The Other Clare*"). Mayo, unfortunately does not have the same degree of study or sources on the tower houses in this county. While the travel writers do mention the tower houses in Mayo and tower houses are mentioned in Knox's *History of Mayo*, the detail that is achieved in, for example, Ua Cróinín articles on tower houses in *The Other Clare* are not found in Mayo. Therefore, this thesis on the tower houses of Mayo will contribute to the field of study on tower houses in Mayo, by addressing a gap in the literature.

The condition of tower houses is the central focus of this thesis. Tower houses are in varying degrees of repair. With less tower houses in Mayo than in many other counties in Ireland it is clear that we should actively attempt to preserve the examples we have. It is important that these castles are maintained in a condition suitable for deciphering information while also taking into account aesthetic, archaeological and safety issues. Tower houses have long been subject to damage. There are numerous references in Cairns to tower houses been destroyed during raids and even some by the hands of their original owners who intentionally destroyed their towers rather than surrendering them during the Cromwellian invasion.¹¹ Later tower houses were also subject to destruction as they were seen as a valuable source of stone for road and wall building. Today these tower houses are subject to the destructive nature of time and if the proper mechanisms are not in place then these tower houses will be lost. Studies from Clare show the real danger of losing these monuments as stated in the article "*Disappearing Tower Houses*." Of the 210 towers noted in 1600, less than 40 are now in reasonable condition while 3 have collapsed in the last 8 years.¹² In Mayo our tower houses are subject to the same destructive forces as tower houses in the rest of the country. An aim of this

¹⁰ Nolan, J.P., 1901, *Galway Castles and Owners in 1574*, *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* vol. 11, p109.

¹¹ Cairns, C.T., 1987, *Irish Tower Houses: A County Tipperary Case Study*, Athlone p.9

¹² Ua Cróinín, Risteard, 1990, *Disappearing Towers*, *The Other Clare*, vol. 14, pp. 5-9

thesis will be to trace the rate of decay of these buildings and see if, as was the case in Clare, whether most damage has occurred recently. Carrying out a survey focusing on the condition rather than simply the historical or archaeological aspect of these monuments will hopefully highlight the fragile nature of many of these tower houses. In addition during the process possible weaknesses in the structures or areas prone to collapse or damage will be identified which will hopefully benefit the survival of other tower houses.

This issue of legislation for these tower houses is also an area worthy of exploring. With both the *National Monuments Act* and the *Legislation for Protected Structures* it is clear that these structures have never been better protected and should therefore not be in such a vulnerable state. By constructing a sample it will hopefully become apparent if this is the case and thus the effectiveness of the legislation will be addressed.

In a more basic sense the completion of a thesis on the condition of castles in the sample will contribute to the field of tower house studies in Mayo and highlight the rich archaeological heritage in this county. The benefit of carrying out a thesis focusing on the condition will also provide information on the state of tower houses in Mayo and hopefully rating the deterioration will highlight possible preventative measures for other castles. In addition, the condition surveys will provide up-to-date data that may benefit future projects carried out on Mayo tower houses. However, as stated by McManus reports and documentation on our heritage also have another important function, as it is through these documents we are “*creating monuments more enduring than stone*”.¹³

¹³ McManus, R. 1997. *Heritage and Tourism in Ireland-An Unholy Alliance?*, *Irish Geography*, Vol. 30, No. 2, p 94.

Chapter 2: Methodology:

This chapter will outline the methods used to complete the aims of the thesis. As previously stated, the main aims of this thesis were to identify the condition of tower houses in the Carra barony of Mayo and record the extent of their deterioration. This required identifying the study area, choosing a sample, gathering surveys on these tower houses, creating current conditional surveys and comparing these with the old surveys, recording the deterioration of the tower houses and finally reviewing the effectiveness of the legislation which affects our tower houses. This chapter will identify the method and sources used to achieve these aims.

Firstly, the extent of the study area was identified by recording the number of tower houses in Carra in Mayo. This data was collected through consultation with the S.M.R. maps (Sites and Monuments Records) and the R.M.P. (Record of Monuments and Places). To ensure that the information is as accurate as possible this data was cross referenced with Mike Salters "*Castles in Connaught*" which is an inventory of the castles in Mayo. After this information was compiled and presented in graph form with a general condition account to assess the overall condition (See Section 4.4).

Selecting the castles for the sample was also another important part of the project methodology. The tower houses for the sample were chosen according to a number of criteria. For example, the tower houses were in varying degrees of repair, this was determined through site visits. In addition the tower houses were subject to different protection under different pieces of legislation; this was achieved through consultation with Mayo Development Plan and the List of Protected Structures which are available on Mayo County Council website. The availability and quality of previous conditional and archaeological reports also had a major impact on the final sample. The O.P.W was a major source for the tower house surveys. An initial assessment of the files available was carried out by an on-line search of the database on the National Monuments website. It then became apparent that the numbers of surveys were limited with only 15 available. Then on visiting the O.P.W offices many of these files were found to have limited information. Some surveys for example, Robeen Castle (MA 110-047), only identified the site number, map number, altitude and one written source. Castles with limited information were not included in the sample. Better sources

for surveys were found to be *The Lough Mask and Lough Carra Tourist Development Association*, *Moytura Project* and *FAS/Belcarra Community Co.Op.*¹⁴

Condition surveys were also carried out on these tower houses so that the current condition and deterioration could be recorded. This condition survey was established through a number of different sources which includes the ICOMOS *Guide to Recording Historic Buildings* to ensure a good standard of recording. In addition, elements of Ua'Cróinín's survey works on the tower houses in Clare were also utilised as it gives a comprehensive survey of the building including historical information and also clear diagrams.

The survey included the following headings:

1. General information:

This includes the general information on the castle; its name, townland in which it is located, the parish, the barony, RMP number, national grid reference and the date of the structure where available.

2. Ordnance Survey Designations and Year: This section is included on the OPW surveys, the Lough Mask and Lough Carra and the FAS/ Belcarra surveys. This section includes any references to the castles in the O.S letters. The O.S letters are available in Mayo County Library.

3. Historical Background:

This section is included in O'Cróinín's surveys. It includes the history of the building and its owners (including historical references).

This section also contains a history of works (if any) carried out on the building. This includes maintenance works and alterations/ additions to the building. Recording the complete history of the building is important, as identifying new features as original features gives the building a false history which as stated by the Burra Charter (Article 22) should be avoided¹⁵.

4. Setting / Surrounding Area:

¹⁴ -Lough Mask and Lough Carra Tourist Development Association, 1994, *Bllinrobe & District: An Archaeology Survey*
-FAS/ Belcarra Community Co.Op, 1987-1988, *An Archaeology Survey of the Belcarra Area Vol2.*

¹⁵ The Burra Charter, 1999, ICOMOS,

The setting or surrounding area is also described, as it appears in the OPW files. The Burra Charter states the importance of recording the setting of the structure, as a structure is seldom separate from its setting¹⁶.

5. Condition survey:

The condition survey includes a general description of the condition of the building and the current function (if any) is noted. The main body of the survey includes descriptions and measurements of the roof and walls including openings (windows and doors). The interior, where accessible, was also described on a room by room basis.

6. Bibliography:

All references to the castle in books, periodicals and other sources (such as in the Mayo Development Plan, Excavation Reports etc) were noted, it is hoped that this will benefit future researchers.

7. Comments and Recommendations:

Comments are also included where necessary. These relate to the condition of the building and also identifying possible future threats. Any recommendations, following the completion of the survey, were also noted.¹⁷

A photographic record is also included in the survey. ICOMOS' "*Guide to Recording Historic Buildings*" states that a good photographic record is required to show, not only the building but also the relationship of its elements, to show the effect of a decorative scheme or show details that are to be restored¹⁸. It continues by stating that a scale should also be in the photograph if possible.

¹⁶ Article 8

¹⁷ -The sources for this survey are: FAS/ Belcarra Community Co.Op, 1987-1988, *An Archaeological Survey of the Belcarra Area*, Vol2.

-Dublin Environment Inventory, 1994, *Survey of the Built Environment: Inventory Guidelines*.

-Mc Afee, Patrick, *Stone Buildings* pp104-207

-Ua Croinin, Risteard, 1997, *Disappearing Towers*, in *The Other Clare*, Vol4, pp5.

¹⁸ Icomos, 1990, *Guide to Recording Historic Buildings*.

The diagrams follow the example of O'Cróinín's in *Disappearing Towers*, in the journal *The Other Clare*¹⁹. The following example is Ua Cróinín's drawing of Smithstown Castle in Clare (Fig 1). The lettering corresponds to a ledger identifying the features so the diagram is easily readable.

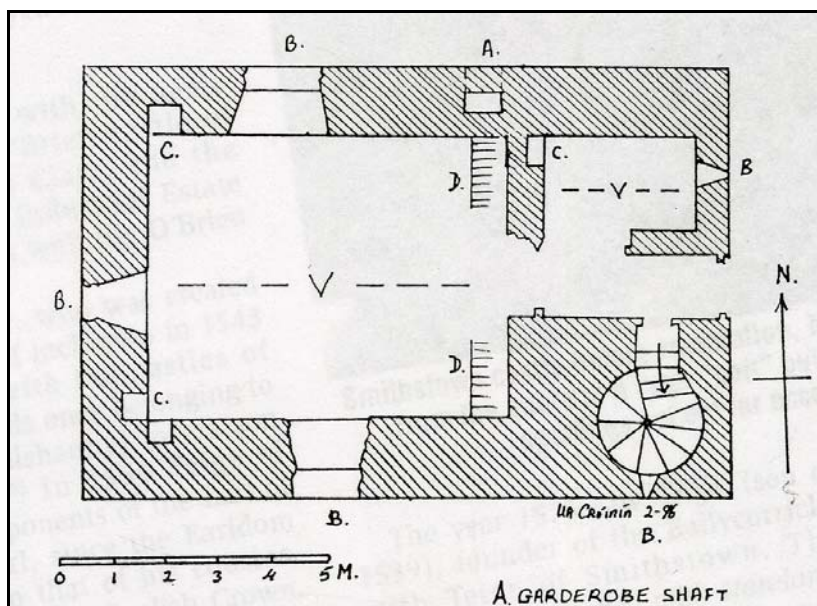


Figure 1 Smithstown Tower House in Clare by Ua Cróinín.

Assessing the failings or success of legislation with regards tower house conservation was achieved through consultation with various primary sources. These included the legislation of the National Monuments Act 1930-2004 and the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 1963-1999. The success or failings of the legislation was judged through consultation with the data collected on the tower houses for this thesis.

In conclusion various methods and sources were used in the completion of this thesis. This included the finding of a sample through research and site visits. While research, for example using Mike Salters "*Castles of Connaught*," gives some indication of the tower houses that could be suitable for this study, it was not until these sites were visited that it could be gauged whether or not the tower houses were suitable.

The formation of a condition survey that was then applied to the sample was also a major part of this project. Combining various headings from various other surveys allowed for a detailed survey of

¹⁹ Ua Croinin, Risteard, 1997, *Disappearing Towers*, in *The Other Clare*, Vol4, pp5

these tower houses to be carried out and also aspects such as history of works were included which does not appear on all surveys.

With regards to the methods used in the drawing and photographic records they are current with best practice as they were carried out using ICOMOS guidelines and standards.

This project also helped examine the success of our legislation that protects our monuments. By use of the sample and corresponding legislation protecting them, it was established whether or not the legislation protecting these structures was successful.

Chapter 3: Literature Review.

Tower houses are a much studied field and as a result there are vast quantities of books, theses, surveys and papers written about the topic. The study of tower houses has also seen major changes. Some of the earliest references to tower houses can be found in travel books written in the 17th to 19th century. These books recorded various information on the area through which the authors were travelling. Examples include *Pocockes Tour in Ireland in 1752*²⁰ and *Guide Through Ireland: Descriptive of its Scenery, Towns, Seats, Antiquities etc* by James Fraser.²¹ These books are similar to Lewis's *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*,²² which will also be used for this study. While the above sources provide limited, usually only descriptive information, they do give early description of the castle. This will be especially usefully in this study as they can be used to gauge the extent of the deterioration of these castles in the last 200 years.

Westropp's surveys carried out in the 1900's are also an extremely useful source, but mostly concentrate on individual tower houses or "Peel Castles" as they were termed²³. Westropp documented numerous tower houses and recorded many of their architectural features through sketches. For example, his drawings of various types of fireplaces and doors in tower houses make a useful inventory and make for easy comparison (Fig 2).²⁴

²⁰ Pococke, Richard, 1752, *Pocockes Tour in Ireland*, Dublin.

²¹ Fraser, James, 1838, *Guide Through Ireland: Descriptive of its Scenery, Towns, seats, Antiquities etc*, Dublin.

²² Lewis, Samuel, 1837, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, London.

²³ Westropp, Thomas J, 1898-1900, *Notes on the Lesser Castles or Peel Towers of the County of Clare*, In *Royal Irish Academy Proceedings 3rd Series*, Dublin.

²⁴ Westropp, Thomas.J, 1898-1900, *Notes on the Lesser Castles or "Peel Towers" of The County Clare*, Dublin, pp 360-365.

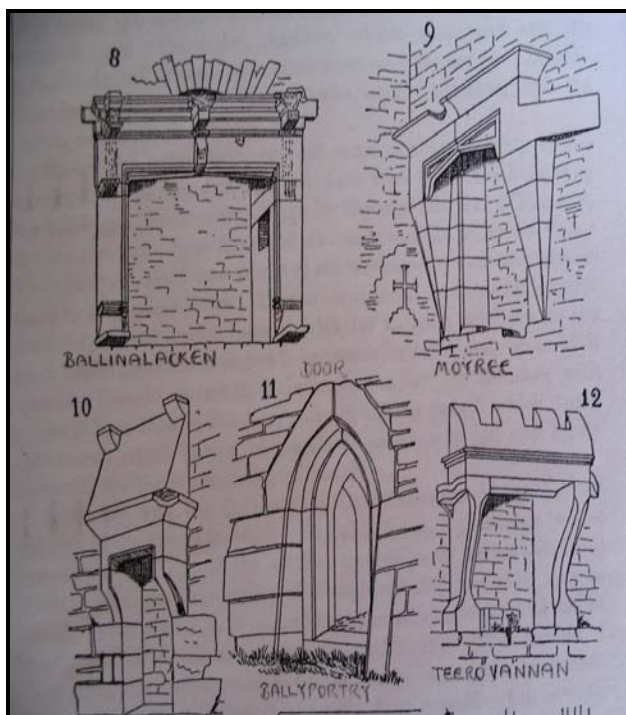


Figure 2 Westropp's sketches of Fireplaces and Doors²⁵

It can be seen that this approach to tower house study- whereby the author focuses on singular tower houses, rather than the field as a whole, was a very common approach. It is common to find defensive features and architectural styles all being recorded in great detail. Issues, however, such as the social climate in which they were built or the daily life of the people who lived in them, are not addressed. Leask also had a similar approach to the study of tower houses.

Leask and his book *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses* had a major impact on the field of tower houses and influenced many of his successors including Sweetman²⁶.

Tower houses themselves were not even defined as an independent castle type until Leask in 1941. Therefore, in a study concentrating on tower houses, this book is of critical importance. It is common to find in Leask's work that he concentrated on individual tower houses describing them and their features. One major contribution was the drawings of tower houses. The "Vaults built on wickerwork"²⁷ and "Dunsoghley roof" (Fig 3) are commonly replicated, for example in theses and articles including Donnelly's *Frowning Ruins: The Tower Houses of Medieval Ireland*²⁸. His

²⁵ Westropp, T.J., 1898-1900, *Notes on the Lesser Castles or Peel Towers of the County of Clare*, Dublin.

²⁶ Sweetman, David, 2005, *The Medieval Castles of Ireland*, Cork, Preface.

²⁷ Leask, Harold, 1941, *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses*, Dundalk, p87

²⁸ Donnelly, Colm, 1996, *Frowning Ruins: The Tower Houses of Medieval Ireland*, History Ireland pp 11-16.

description and drawings of the features of tower house will be especially useful when identifying features in the sample of tower houses for this study.

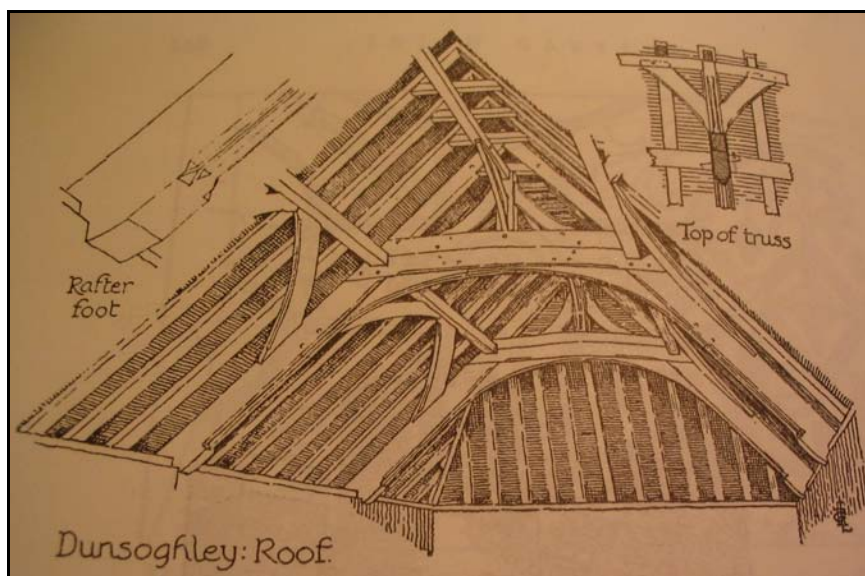


Figure 3 Dunsoghley roof by Leask²⁹

Leask's work has not been without its criticisms, however. Mc Neill acknowledges that *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses* is just not to the same standard as works he carried out on ecclesiastical buildings of medieval Ireland.³⁰ Leask has been criticised for isolating the castles from the circumstance of their creation—namely not addressing the society at the time. The conclusions he reaches can also raise some criticism. One conclusion that he reached, which is relevant to this study, is his theory on why certain tower houses survive while others fall into ruin. Leask claims that tower houses which survive in good condition do so because they have histories that have been uneventful and that others have fallen into ruins as a result of their “unhappy record”.³¹ Leask's work did, however, cover many aspects of tower houses such as their origin, distribution and even roof design. These areas still remain topic of debate. These debates and Leask's contribution and opinions will be addressed later. It is a common conception that pre 1700 sites were always valued or respected more than monuments dating from after this time. In a country that was finding its identity after receiving independence in 1922, it is understandable that a country would wish to

²⁹ Leask, Harold, 1941, *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses*, Dundalk, p120.

³⁰ Leask, Harlod, 1960, *Irish Churches and Monastic Buildings*, Dundalk

³¹ Leask, Harold, 1941, *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses*, Dundalk, p76.

preserve that which makes them different from the invading or colonising forces³². Sites which represent the Celtic origins of our society were therefore seen as more worthy of preserving. This is reflected in the National Monuments Act 1930, which has been noted as being extremely biased towards these earlier monuments³³. As stated by Barry this did not change until there was a “maturing” of attitudes to these monuments- eventually there was a general acceptance of the positive contributions that all newcomers made to this island.³⁴ When this occurred medieval Ireland and medieval castles became a subject of interest and eventually lectureships in medieval archaeology were set up in many of the main universities.³⁵ Barry’s study, *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland*, is described by O’Keeffe as being “groundbreaking.”³⁶ Barry acknowledges that medieval archaeology is “only in its infancy”.³⁷ He provides a broad survey of medieval archaeology but there is limited information on tower houses themselves as in contrary to McNeill’s *Castles in Ireland*³⁸, Barry’s remit is broader.

After this time Mc Neill, focusing on tower houses in Northern Ireland, carried out the first major works on tower houses since Leask. There has subsequently been an increased interest in tower houses south of the boarder. Another major change was the movement away from concentrating on individual tower houses to viewing them within their broader field. This saw the realisation that tower houses were not simply defensive castles but more importantly manorial centres with an important social function. This was due largely to the works of McNeil³⁹, Cairns⁴⁰ and O’Connor⁴¹.

McNeil in his book *Castles in Ireland: Feudal Power in Gaelic World*⁴² does not simply focus on individual tower houses but also addresses issues such as dates and distribution, the structure and importantly life in a tower house. Interestingly McNeill identifies the arrangement of the rooms

³² Barry, Terry, 1987, *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland*, Cambridge, p1

³³ -Pickard, R, Conservation and the Built Environment,

-Whelleer, Henry, 1985, *The National Monuments of Ireland In Archaeological Cambrensis: Journal of the Cambrian Archaeological Association*, Cardiff.

³⁴ Barry, Terry, 1987, *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland*, Cambridge, p1

³⁵ Ibid p1-2.

³⁶ O’Keeffe, Tadhg, 2000, *Medieval Ireland: An Archaeology*, Gloucestershire, p9.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ McNeil, Tom, 1997, *Castles in Ireland: Feudal Power in a Gaelic World*, London.

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Cairns, C.T, 1987, *Irish Tower Houses: A County Tipperary Case Study*, Athlone

⁴¹ O’Connor, Kieran, 1998, *The Irish Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland*, in *Discovery Programme Monograph no3*, The Royal Irish Academy.

⁴² McNeil, Tom, 1997, *Castles in Ireland: Feudal Power in a Gaelic World*, London

internally –identifying sleeping quarters and social quarters. This is especially important as it draws attention to the fact that these were also homes and manorial centres. It looks past the defensive nature of castle to the people who built and lived in them.⁴³ While other authors, such as Leask tend to focus on the defensive nature of castles, others such as O'Connor and Cairns also tend to address the social aspect of tower houses. Other more recent works on the social function of tower houses include *The Social Environment of Tower Houses*.⁴⁴

The importance of tower houses as manorial centres was addressed by O'Connor in *The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland*. The importance of tower houses as centres of the estate is evident through the vast quantities of farm buildings that are located around tower houses and also adjoining halls⁴⁵. O'Connor acknowledges the need for further research into this area and highlights the lack of archaeological excavations that have been carried out in the vicinity of tower houses. Cairns' article *Irish Tower Houses: A County Tipperary Case Study*, also deals with issues such as the social aspect of tower houses, the number of tower houses to aspects such as defence, roof design to living in a tower house.⁴⁶ Cairns' works are often positively referenced by other writers including O'Connor, Sweetman, McNeill. Before undertaking the study on Mayo tower houses it is important to understand the nature and history of tower houses and consulting with Cairns' work will hopefully benefit this study.

The importance of surveying individual towers themselves has continued with works including Sweetman's *The Medieval Castles of Ireland*⁴⁷ and numerous theses including Ua Cróinín's *The Tower Houses of NW Clare*⁴⁸ and Fitzpatrick's *A Survey of the Tower Houses in SW county Galway*.⁴⁹ These works continue to address individual tower houses recording their architectural and archaeological features

Sweetman's *Medieval Castles of Ireland* is one of the most recent publications on tower houses. The author has utilised all the resources available to him including the information provided by the

⁴³Ibid, p 221.

⁴⁴ Sherlock, Rory, pending, *The Social Environment of Irish Tower Houses*, unpublished thesis, Galway.

⁴⁵ O'Connor, Kieran, 1998, *The Irish Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland*, in *Discovery Programme Monograph No3*, The Royal Irish Academy, p26

⁴⁶ Cairns, C.T, 1987, *Irish Tower Houses:A County Tipperary Case Study*, Athlone, pp13-26

⁴⁷ Sweetman, David, 2005, *The Medieval Castles of Ireland*, Cork.

⁴⁸ Ua Cróinín, Risteard, 1997, *The Tower Houses of NW Clare*, unpublished thesis, Galway.

⁴⁹ Fitzpatrick, Martin, 1994, *A Survey of Tower Houses in SW County Galway*, unpublished thesis, Galway.

Archaeological Survey which started in 1960. In this respect issues such as the actual number and distribution of tower house can be addressed using up-to-date information. This will be important in the study of tower houses in Mayo as every attempt will be made to ensure that the information referenced is as accurate as possible. Sweetman does acknowledge the fact that there are still debates over many of these issues and highlights the difficulties that are in area such as dating tower houses.⁵⁰

Local and national journals continue to be an excellent source of information on tower houses. Current journals such as *Archaeology Ireland*, *History Ireland* and *Cathair na Mart* are sources that supply usually up-to-date research. Ua Cróinín's work on the tower houses of Clare has also been published in the Journal *The Other Clare*, making it more accessible to the general public. Earlier Journals such as the *JGHAS* (Journal of the Galway Historical and Archaeological Society) and the *JRSAI* (Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquarians in Ireland), are also excellent sources. These journals often focus on individual tower houses or tower houses in certain areas and provide detailed information. Examples of such articles include Nolan's *Galway Castles and Owners in 1574*⁵¹ which is found in the *Journal of the Galway Historical and Archaeological Society* and Westropp's *The Normans of Thomond* which is found in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquarians in Ireland*.⁵² It is clear from these sources that there is a wealth of information on tower houses-but commonly western tower houses of Clare and Galway. This thesis will focus on tower houses in Mayo, which have not been accorded as much attention. One journal article that is especially important is Ua Cróinín's *Disappearing Towers*. Highlighting tower houses that he believed to be in danger of collapse, he carried out a detailed survey thus ensuring that they are at least preserved by record. He also recorded the rate of decay noting that of the 210 towers noted in 1600, less than 40 are in reasonable condition while 3 have collapsed in the last 8 years.⁵³ This record highlights the danger that these castles are in and emphasises the need for action.

Excavation works are also an extremely important source of information on tower houses.

Archaeological investigations are always carried out prior to proposed development or prior to

⁵⁰ Sweetman, David, 1992, Dating Irish Castles in *Archaeology Ireland* issue 22, vol6no4, pp 8-9.

⁵¹ Nolan, J.P, 1901, *Galway Castles and Owners in 1574* in *JGAHS* Vol1, p109.

⁵² Westropp, Thomas J, 1980, *The Normans of Thomond part 1*, 1980 p292.

⁵³ Ua Cróinín, Risteard, 1990, *Disappearing Towers*, in *The Other Clare*, vol14, p5.

conservation works. It should be taken into consideration that these works are, as noted by O'Connor, carried out on tower houses are usually small in size with limited goals and also limited to specific areas of the castle under conservation or consolidation⁵⁴.

As part of the licensing agreement excavations reports are compiled and then put on-line so they become available to a wider audience. This has become an issue recently in relation to tower houses. There have been a significant number of these tower houses that have been purchased and restored, sometimes as tourist attractions such as Bunratty Castle in Clare, Dunaguire in Kinvarra, Galway or as interpretative centres such as Dysert O'Dea in Clare or even private homes such as Turin Castle in Mayo and Strongfort in Galway. The issue of the reuse of ruins and the selling off of our national heritage for financial gain are also questions that need to be addressed in the future.

The survey and condition report will be compiled from numerous different resources.

As these modern surveys and condition reports will be compared with the official O.P.W survey there will be some similarity between them both. Similar headings such as name, National Grid Reference (N.G.R.), Records of Monuments and Places Number (R.M.P.), O.S. Designation, town land full address, summary description, date, historical background, setting, roof descriptions, wall descriptions, openings: doors and windows, interior and references of printed sources will all be included in the survey.⁵⁵

Other surveys of tower houses that have also been consulted include *Lough Mask and Lough Carra Tourist Development Association 1994*, which were carried out in the Ballinrobe area. These were useful sources as they were carried out on tower houses in Mayo, but many of the headings were left blank or had very limited information. Ua Cróinín's work that was carried out on tower houses in Clare is also extremely beneficial to this study. These surveys were then published in the journal *The Other Clare*. Ua Cróinín has carried out many surveys of tower houses, in varying states of decay. He also noted many tower houses that he believed were in danger of collapse but also tower houses that were of particular interest such as the round tower houses in Clare, including Newtown in Ballyvaughan,⁵⁶ and restored tower houses such as Ballyportry in Corofin⁵⁷. A similar approach was

⁵⁴O'Connor, Kieran, 1998, *The Irish Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland*, in *Discovery Programme Monograph no3*, The Royal Irish Academy, p 28.

⁵⁵OPW Inventory

⁵⁶Breen, Martin, Ua Cróinín, Risteard, 2002, *Some Restored Tower Houses in the Burren Area of Co. Clare* in *The Other Clare*, vol26, pp10-12

⁵⁷Breen, Martin, Ua Cróinín, Risteard, 1994, *Tower Houses in the Corofin Area*, in *The Other Clare*, Vol 18 pp23-25

taken to survey all these castles, be they ruinous or fully restored. They were all recorded using an archaeological survey and all architecture features of interest were noted. Importantly their social history, including the ownership history of the owners and the changes or additions made to the building over the years was recorded, giving these castles an accurate history.

A useful resource for this study is the guidelines for survey work that have been established by ICOMOS in the paper *Guide to Recording Historic Buildings*.⁵⁸ This will ensure that the survey work carried out will be of the appropriate high standard. In addition to this the RIAI-*Guidelines of the Conservation of Buildings*⁵⁹, will be extremely useful as it deals with the conservation and recording of historic buildings directly and is aimed at the architects who will be carrying out this work.

With so many different writers and different types of information available there are obviously many contrasting opinions and interpretations. The debate over the interpretation of evidence is, according to O’Keeffe, just as important as the act of archaeological excavation as it is through the former process we establish our understanding of the past⁶⁰. Despite the volume of studies carried out on the topic of tower houses debates continue over nearly every aspect of these structures. Their origin, distribution and even design are still debated topics.

The different theories for the exact origin of tower houses show how much more we have to learn about these buildings. Tower houses began to appear in the Irish countryside in the fifteenth century, although a fourteen century date has been argued. Leask and Sweetman⁶¹ find their origin in association with the “£10 grant” which was introduced by King Henry VI in 1429.⁶² This grant was established according to Leask to promote castle building as a method of protecting newly acquired lands and protecting the inhabitants from attack. Leask claims that this scheme was so successful that additional statutes had to be introduced specifying the minimum internal dimensions and again in 1449 additional statute attempted to restricted the numbers been built. These later statutes had limited success however. Leask gives a convincing argument and even supports his

⁵⁸ ICOMOS, 1990, *Guide to Recording Historic Buildings*.

⁵⁹ RIAI, 1997, *Guidelines for the Conservation of Buildings*.

⁶⁰ O’Keeffe, Tadhg, 2000, *Medieval Ireland: An Archaeology*, Gloucestershire, p8

⁶¹ Sweetman, David, 2005, *Medieval Castles of Ireland*, Dublin, p137

⁶² Leask, Harold, 1941, *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses*, Dundalk, p76.

theory by the use of the example of Donore Castle in Meath, with its dimensions of (19'9" by 12'9") corresponding closely to the original requirements (20' by 16').

O'Keeffe in his book *Medieval Ireland*, states that this £10 grant did not start the building tradition but more encourage an ongoing trend. This theory is also supported by Bradley and Murtagh.⁶³ Another major problem with Leask's theory is noted by O'Keeffe in that none of the supposed tower houses which received those grants, apart from Donore Castle, survive.⁶⁴ O'Keeffe also dismisses the theory of continental influences in the development of tower houses and believes that they developed independently with no external influences.⁶⁵ Like Cairns and Barry, O'Keeffe states that the earliest date of construction of these castles is in the 14th century and identifies the donjon (keep) castles and to a lesser extent the hall houses (both of the thirteenth century), as the dominant influence for these structures.⁶⁶ Barry also claims that the tower house was a movement away from a central power such as Dublin to more localised power centres and supports the early 14th century building date. O'Connor disagrees with both O'Keeffe and Barry, however, stating that there are no architectural or archaeological evidence that indicates that these towers were constructed in this period⁶⁷.

The similarity between early tower houses and hall houses has not gone unnoticed by Sweetman either. Sweetman also acknowledges the importance of the £10 grant in promoting tower house building and believes that they developed from hall houses as a greater need emerged for more strongly defended residences. Support for this theory is evident when one looks at the archaeological record. Tower houses, such as Shrile Castle in Mayo, were originally constructed as hall houses and later developed into tower houses, possibly reflecting the change in society at that time.

The seemingly straight forward question of the number of tower houses in Ireland has been addressed by many of the authors. It has become apparent in attempting to answer this question that vast numbers of our tower houses have been lost through the years either by collapse or conscious removal. The number of tower houses is constantly declining, often due to changes in what it

⁶³ Bradley and Murtagh, 2003 in *The Medieval Castles in Ireland and Wales* by O'Connor, Kieran and Kenyon, John p215

⁶⁴ O'Keeffe, Tadhg, 2000, *Medieval Ireland: An Archaeology*, Gloucestershire, p51.

⁶⁵ *ibid*

⁶⁶ O'Keeffe, Tadhg, 1997, *Barriscourt Castle and the Irish Tower Houses*, in *Barriscourt Lectures 1. Dublin*, p51.

⁶⁷ O'Connor, Kieran, 1998, *The Irish Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland*, in *Discovery Programme Monograph no3*, The Royal Irish Academy, p24.

classified as tower houses, therefore it is difficult to state the exact number. This can be seen taking the example of the number of tower houses in Limerick. Leask working from a limited number of archaeological surveys identified no less than 400 tower houses in Limerick.⁶⁸ This is similar to Westropp's survey which was carried out using documentary sources in 1900, which found 405 tower houses. Modern archaeological surveys can identify no more 176 tower houses. This may be as a result of the total destruction of these sites or they may have been broad in their definition of tower house. This problem has also been seen in the works of Barry. Barry estimated that there are approximately 7,000 tower houses in Ireland.⁶⁹ This number was achieved through consultation with O'Danachair's distribution map, which is based on Ordnance Survey maps. The problem with this number is that many of these tower houses have now been identified as hall houses and strong houses and not as tower houses.

With regards the actual number of tower houses in Ireland, Sweetman utilises the most up-to-date surveys and also is aware that hall houses or strong houses have often been confused with tower houses. Sweetman claims that McNeill made an estimate of 1,057 in the Republic of Ireland and c. 61 in Northern Ireland, based on the Archaeological Survey of Ireland.⁷⁰ This number, however, only relates to the tower houses that can be identified by their over ground remains. 2,834 castles of various types and 1,303 sites of castles have also been identified and if two-thirds of these castles and sites are tower houses, which is feasible, then the actual number of tower houses would be c 3,000.⁷¹

With so much debate over so many aspects of tower houses, including the most basic information such as origin and number, the importance of preserving the primary source of the castle itself has been slightly over-looked. It is crucial that survey works continue. As stated by the Venice Charter, the structure and form of a monument should be permanently and reliably preserved and often the only method that can guarantee preservation is through 'preservation by record'.⁷² However, the condition of tower houses and their deterioration has not been stressed to the degree necessary. This thesis will readdress neglect of the topic of tower house preservation and condition. The ruins of the

⁶⁸ Leask, Harold, 1941, *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses*, Dundalk, p75.

⁶⁹ Barry, Terry, *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland*, Cambridge.

⁷⁰ Sweetman, David, 2000, *The Origin and Development of the Tower House in Ireland*, in *The Barryscourt Lectures VIII*, Dublin, p272

⁷¹ *ibid* p273.

⁷² ICOMOS, 1964, *The Venice Charter*, Article 16.

tower houses provide us with authentic evidence in that they can be read as “historical documents”.⁷³ These tower houses can provide us with information on the development in technologies. Styles can be traced chronologically, showing the skills development of the builders, changes in fashion and improvements in technologies. We should continue with our debates and academic studies of tower houses, but be mindful that our primary archaeological record (tower houses themselves), are not left to collapse in the fields around us.

“The destruction [of archaeological monuments] can sometimes be accidental, but it is often out of neglect, and that is especially sad because it tells us that the past no longer has a value, and that the material of the past no longer holds memories.”⁷⁴

⁷³ Thompson, M.W, 1981, *Ruins: Their Preservation and Display*, British Museum, p21.

⁷⁴ O’Keeffe, Tadhg, 2000, *Medieval Ireland: An Archaeology*, Gloucestershire, p.9.

Chapter 4: Irish Tower Houses.

4.1 Introduction

Before a condition review of these Mayo castles can be carried out issues such as their origin, number, distribution and their features must first be addressed. The issues of origin and number of tower houses have previously been addressed in the Literature Review. Before conducting a survey on these towers it is important to identify the features that appear on Irish tower house and that will be expected on the tower houses within the sample. As stated by Donnelly, no two tower houses are the same, but they do share many common architectural features and, as such, can be defined as a separate architectural series⁷⁴.

4.2 Features of Irish Tower Houses

1. Parapet:

The parapet is the found at the roof level and is one of the most distinguishable features of tower houses. Features of a parapet include crenellations and machicolations.

There are many different styles of crenellations in Irish tower houses. They can be simple stepped crenellations (Fig 4) or Irish style Crenellations (Fig 5).



**Fig 4 Simple stepped Crenellations
Turin, Kilmaine, Co. Mayo**



**Fig 5 More complex Irish Style.
Annaghdown Castle, Co.Galway.**

Machicolation and Bartizans:

Machicolation is a box-like protrusion that is commonly found at roof level and is defensive in nature. As stated by Leask they project outwards over the entrance or “*more exposed angles of the building.*”⁷⁵ These are supported on corbels so there is no base to

⁷⁴Donnelly, Colm, 1996, *Frowning Ruins: The Tower Houses of Medieval Ireland*, History Ireland spring, pg13

⁷⁵Leask, Harold, 1941, *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses*, Dundalk, p 98.

them. During times of attack, arrows can be fired down onto the attackers below via the machicolation.

Bartizans are similar in function to machicolation but are found on the corners.



Bartizans or corner projections on Shrul Castle, Co. Mayo. These examples are circular, but more commonly they are square/rectangular (See Fig 5). Machicolation are similar projects over the doorway.

A base batter see point 2.

Figure 6 Shrul Castle, Co. Mayo.

Roof:

While none of the tower houses within the sample have surviving roofs, it is common to see hipped roofs in reconstructed tower house (such as Turin in Mayo Fig 4). The original roof design of tower houses has been a case of much debate as only one surviving example exists at Dunsoghley, Co. Meath. It cannot be known whether this design was utilised for all tower houses. Documentary sources indicate that roofs were usually thatched, although slate and wood shingle covering has been suggested in some cases⁷⁶. The earliest recorded roofs were simple ridges between stone gables, while later tower houses became more complex with enclosed wall heads⁷⁷.

2. Base Batter: (Fig 6)

A Base batter is a thickening of the ends of the wall towards the ground. This is a defensive feature as not only does it support the high walls but objects drop from the parapet during attacks bounce off the base batter and into on the on-coming attackers.

⁷⁶ Cairns, CT. *Irish Tower Houses: A County Tipperary Case Study*, Athlone, 1987, p16

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p15

The walls of the tower houses were often covered in a lime plaster or harling giving them a white appearance. Early documentary references to tower houses describe them as “white castles of stone” and “white-gleaming castles”⁷⁸.

3. Quoirn Stones:

Quoirn stones are corner stones. These are commonly dressed stone.



Figure 7 Castle Burke Quorin stones.

Quoirn stones from Castleburke.
Quoirn stones from Ballyhowley Castle, Knock.

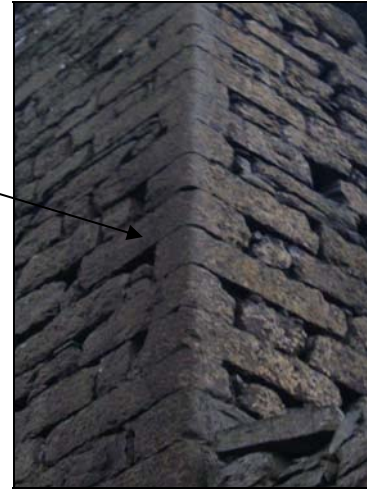


Fig 8 Ballyhowley Castle.

4. Windows:

There are numerous different types of window found in Irish tower houses, these can often be found with or without carvings. Some examples from the sample include:

1. Ogee headed windows:



This example is from Castleburke. These are very common windows in tower houses.

Figure 9 Castleburke Ogee headed window

2. Mullion and transome windows:

⁷⁸ O’Keeffe, Tadgh, 2000, *Medieval Ireland: An Archaeology*. Gloucestershire, p47



Mullions are the vertical divides in the window while the transome are the horizontal divides. These are usually found on the upper floors of tower house as they are not as defensive. The remains, of what Leask describes as moulding can also be identified around the top of the window.

Fig 11 Mullion and Transome window, Castleburke.

3. Loops:

Loops do let light in but they also have a defensive function. Loops are usually wider in the interior and narrow to the exterior of the building. This way arrows can be fired out, but the space is too narrow to allow them back in. Loops are usually found on the lower floors of tower houses. They may sometimes have a widening in the centre forming a cruciform shape these are commonly referred to as cross loops. Later these loops were adjusted for guns.



Fig 12 Loop from the exterior Doonamona.



Fig 13 Loop from the interior, Doonamona.

5. An Aumbries

Amburies are cupboard like spaces found in the walls of the castles. They are common features in Irish Tower houses and can be found in both Castleburke and Doonamona in the sample.



Fig 14 Castleburke Aunbries in N wall.

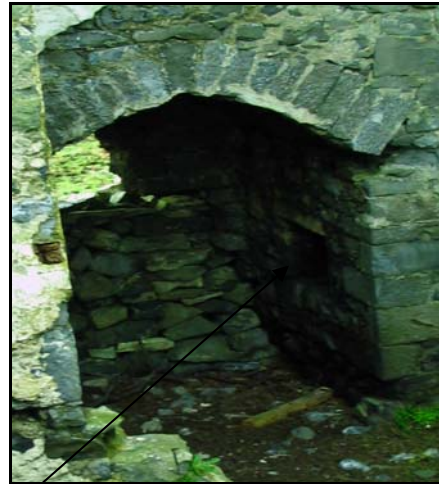


Fig 15 Castleburke W wall.

6. Oubliette

Oubliette are often described as prison or secret chamber⁷⁹ They are often found between floors with only one entrance into and out of the chamber. As stated by Leask these chambers are commonly found in the inward coving of the vault.⁸⁰

7. Wicker Centricking

Remains of wicker within the plaster is also a common feature in tower houses and can be seen at Castleburke. Wicker mats were used to support the vault during its construction. This wicker was simply left in position and then plastered over. Often when the plaster begins to fail, the imprints of the wicker or even the wicker itself can become visible on the wall⁸¹.

⁷⁹ Sweetman, David, 2005, *Medieval Castle in Ireland*, Dublin, p157

⁸⁰ Leask, Harold, 1941, *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses*, Dundalk, p99.

⁸¹ Ibid, p87



Evidence of wicker centricing in
Castleburke

Fig 16 Wickerwork, Castleburke.

4.3. Distribution:

As previously stated the distribution of tower houses usually corresponds with area of good pasture land.

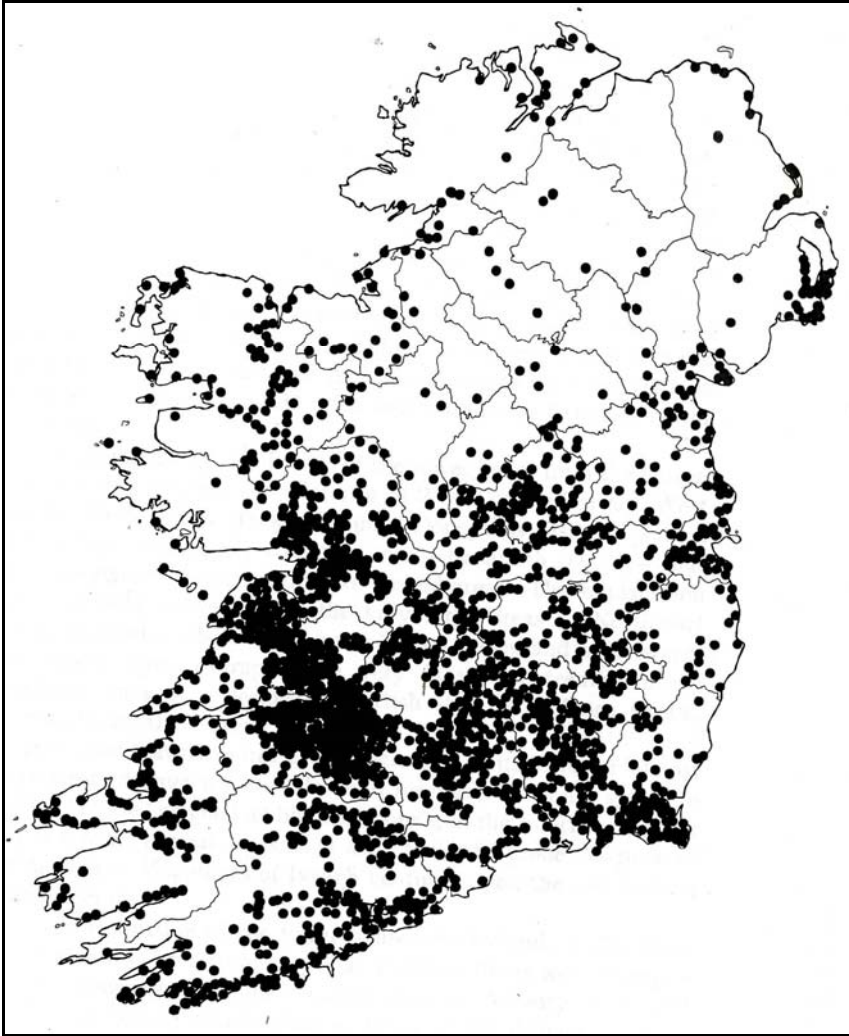


Fig 17 The Distribution of tower houses in Ireland, 1400-1650⁸²

In a society where wealth was judged by cattle numbers, it is not surprising to see that large scale development of these impressive structures occurred in areas best suited for pasture⁸³. The importance of a water supply also influenced location as most tower houses are near a water source.

⁸² O'Danachair, 1977, *Irish tower houses and their regional distribution*, Bealoidas vol45, p 161

⁸³ Donnelly, C.J. *Frowning Ruins: The Tower Houses of Medieval Ireland*, History Ireland spring, 1996, pg13

Tower houses are also found in turbulent area, commonly where ownership had been taken by force. Their purpose was to underpin the land and to maintain control⁸⁴. Tower houses were especially prominent along turbulent border Gaelic Irish/Anglo Norman areas. Where individuals feared for their assets or families due to the threat of attack a tower house with its defensive nature could be held with ease.

Transport networks and the desire to control them was another factor influencing the distribution of tower house. Several tower houses were located on access points in bogs or dense forest. Due to the poor quality of the road networks, river ways and coastal links were more effective modes of travel and transport and therefore more desirable to control.

Looking at the O'Danchair's distribution map for mayo it is clear to see these influences on distribution.

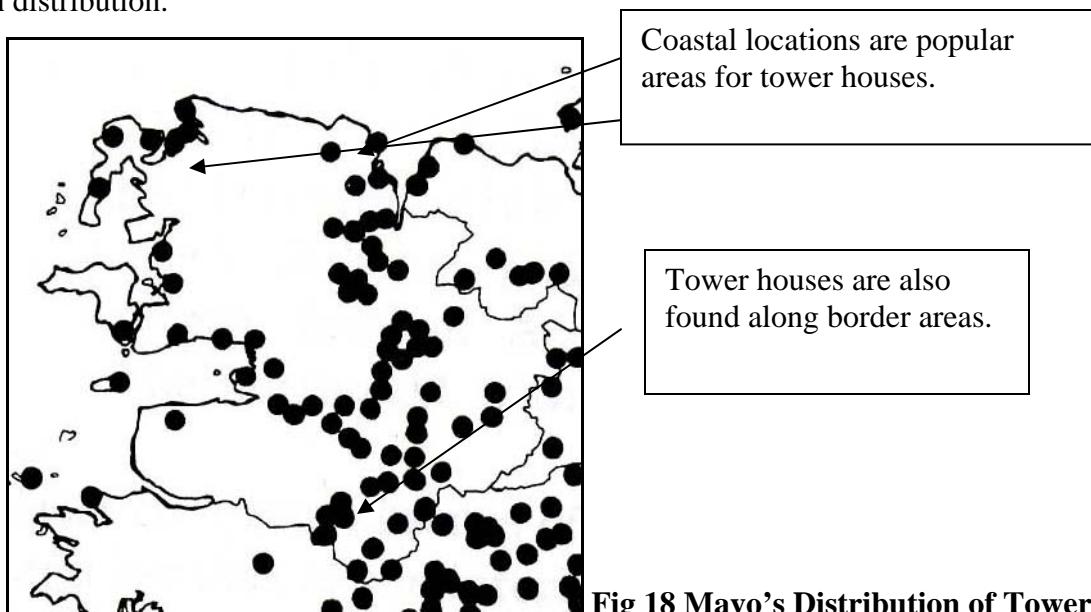


Fig 18 Mayo's Distribution of Tower houses

Mayo was divided into Baronys and this study will be focusing on the Carra Barony of County Mayo.

⁸⁴ Mc Neil, Tom, 1997, *Castles in Ireland. Feudal power in a Gaelic World*, London, p213

The red marks indicate castles in the Carra Barony. This list has been compiled using Knox's *History of Mayo* maps (Fig 19)⁸⁵, S.M.R maps and Salters *Castles of Connaught*⁸⁶. These castles and their current condition, where available are set out as following in chart and pie chart form.

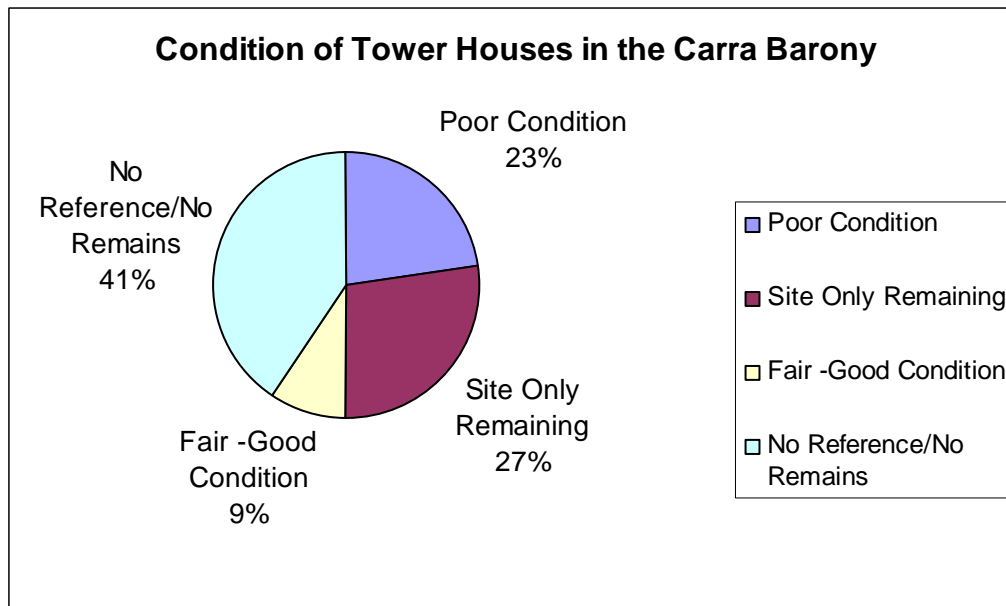
Castle	N.G.R	Condition
Ahena	M284739	Buried base of tower
Ballybourke	M099814	Site of*.
Belcarra	M199854	Fragmented remains
Burnafaunia		O'Donovan in 1838 states that there are no remains surviving.
Castlecarra	M171753	Good Condition.(See 5.3)
Castlebarry	M147904	No remains
Castleburke	M203812	Fair condition (See 5.2)
Coolcon	M329645	Site of.
Doonamona (See sample 5.1)	M204812	Up standing remains (See 5.1)
Castlelucas	M214801	Site of
Gweeshadan	M210824	Fragmented remains.+
Lecarrow	M220918	Site of
Lehinch		No references×.
Liscromwell	M176917	No remains.
Lufferton	M133794	Part of a wall.
Murdeen	M353866	Fragment of a hall house.
Moyhenna	M220918	Site of.
Newbrook		No reference×.
Newcastle		No reference×.
Raghrei		No references×

⁸⁵ Knox, 1915, *History of Mayo*, Ballina

⁸⁶ Salter, Mike, 2001, *Castles of Connaught*, Worchester

Rinnahulty	M224884	House now on site.
Turlough	M205935	No remains-last wall removed in 70's. .

- * “site of” means the original site of the castle can be identified but there are no substantial remains.
- × No references to the castle have been found by author.
- + Possibly not a tower house.



Of the 22 castle in the Barony of Carra, 6 have only poor fragmented remains surviving, 4 only the sites remains, 2 (Castlecarra and Castleburke) are in fair to good condition and 10 have no remains or no reference. It should also be noted that all these castle may not have original been tower houses. The possibility of their being additional castle sites that are not recorded in the Carra barony is also likely.

In conclusion from the data in the chart it can be seen that the majority of tower houses in the region are in a poor condition or have been completely removed.

With regards to the success or failings of the legislation the two sites that are in the Carra Barony that are of fair –good condition are the sites that are on the Record of Protected Structures, and one is also a National Monument. So the additional protective Legislation that is provided through being on the record of Protected Structures and being a National

Monument has, in this sample, benefited the structure. The other sites are, however, in poor quality suggesting that the basic level of protection offered through the R.M.P.⁸⁷ is not efficient to ensure their survival.

⁸⁷ National Monuments Act, 1994, Section 12(1)

5.1 Condition Reports on the Sample Tower Houses. Introduction.

One of the aims of this thesis was to assess the condition of tower houses in the Carra Barony with the use of a sample of three tower houses. It was decided that the tower houses in the sample should be in varying degrees of repair and protected under different legislation. The final sample includes Doonamona Castle which is in poor condition, Castleburke which is in fair condition and is on the Record of Protected Structures⁸⁸ and Castlecarra which is in good condition and is recorded as a National Monument and on the Record of Protected Structures. For the purpose of the study three condition surveys were carried and the results of the condition surveys are as follows. (The additional information for the surveys can be found in the Appendices.)

5.2: Condition Survey on Doonamona: (Complete survey found in Appendix A)

Setting:

This castle is located by a cross roads leading to Balcarra to the North, Ballintubber to the west, Gweeshadan to the east and Clogher to the south. The castle is situated on a level plain between elongated drumlins. A fort is visible 200m north of this site. This is not the original setting of this castle as a lake was once located to the south east of the castle, but was removed to make the land suitable for agriculture⁸⁹.

Summary of Condition Survey:

This castle is in poor condition. All that remain is the N.W. wall, N.E. wall and parts of the interior. Stones found within the interior seem to have fallen recently. This was confirmed by the owner who stated that stone regularly fall from the tower.

One of the most obvious features in this castle is the removal of the majority of the quiron stones from ground floor level. The lack of mortar at the base of this castle, which is clear by the large gaps between the stone at the base of this wall, is possibly as a result of weathering. There is some plant

⁸⁸ Under the Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts 1963-1999.

⁸⁹ Quinn, J.F, 1993, *History of Mayo Vol 1*, Ballina.

growth on this castle especially at the top of the wall and also at second floor level where the wall previously collapsed.

On the N.E wall (Fig 20) the south end of this face has collapsed. The upper floor is also missing numerous stones many of which can be identified in and around the castle. The main area of concern is a large crack measuring 4.5m in length which is found on the south end wall. This section is in real danger of collapse, especially as the crack also appears on the interior wall. A missing window at first floor now has a tree growing from it.

The interior of this castle is also in poor condition. There is no evidence remaining to indicate the internal layout of this castle. There is considerable vegetation growth on this face.

The main feature on the N.E wall is the remains of the spiral staircase (Fig21), (Fig 22) and the remains of a hanging eye (Fig 22). Eight corbels are also found on the N.E interior wall as well as the remains of a vault at the third floor level.



Figure 19 Doonamona from the N W.

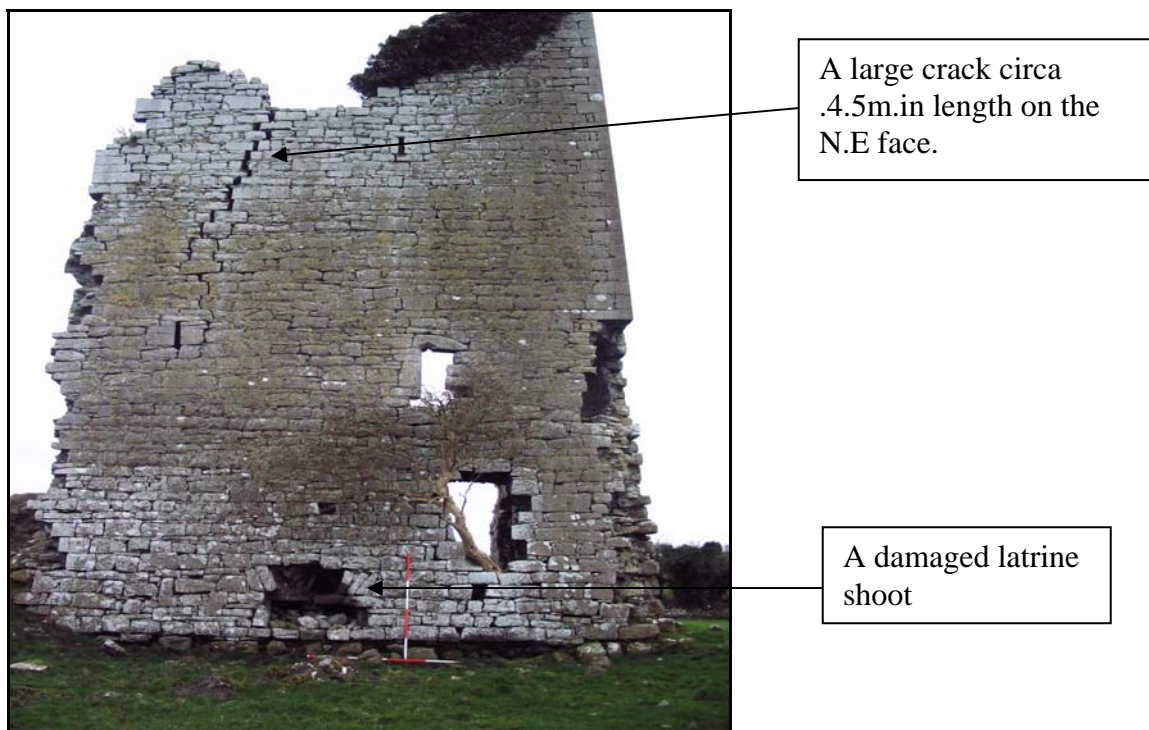


Figure 20 Doonamona from the N E



Figure 21 The interior of the N.E Wall

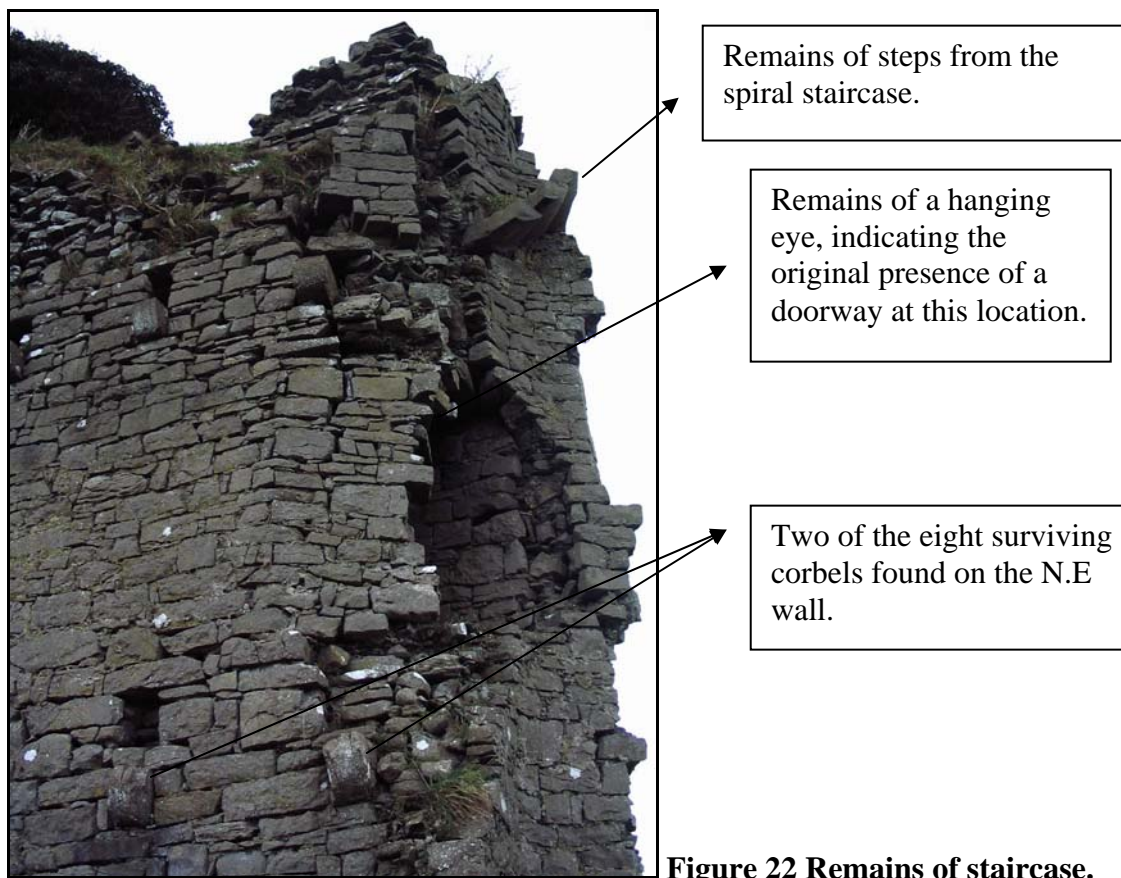


Figure 22 Remains of staircase.

Rate of Deterioration (See Fig 23-Fig 25):

There are two main surveys carried out on Doonamona tower house that will be utilised for this study, these are the *Moytura Project*⁹⁰ and Morahan's *An Archaeological Survey of the Belcarra Area*⁹¹ which is more detailed.

The first difference that is evident is the change in the surroundings of the castle. The “wet lands” that were located to the E and the S of the castle, which was described by Quinns in 1993 as a “small lake” that “contributed to the defence” of the castle is no longer present, possibly due to the reclaiming of the lands for agricultural purposes.

The location of the original bawn is also identified by Morahan, where he states that “a small series of walls and banks adjoined the tower at the S. and W...wall clearance in more recent times has unfortunately, removed these”

⁹⁰ F.A.S & Lough Mask/Lough Carra Tourist Development Association, 1987-1988, *Moytura Project Phase 1*, Ballinrobe.

⁹¹ Morahan, Leo, 1987-1988, *An Archaeological Survey of the Belcarra Area*, Vol 2, F.A.S & Belcarra Community Co.Op.

The castle is described in 1987 by Morahan as a “*poor and dangerous remains..*”. The cementing agent which he describes as “*fine gravely mortar with small stones evident in the gravel*” is no longer visible in the castle which requires repointing. Photographs included in Morahan’s survey show substantial vegetation growth including a tree from the N.E corner. A more complete staircase is also found in these photos.

Local evidence indicates that the curtain walls of this castle have only been removed in the last 20 years.

Comments and Recommendations:

This castle is in particularly poor condition. The fact that stone frequently fall from the building indicates that this building is a danger to the livestock in the field and also visitors to the site. This castle is on the Tóchar Phádraig (The pilgrim walk from Ballintubber to Croagh Patrick) and as such many walkers pass in close proximity to the site. To ensure that the castle is not a danger to the general public, it is especially import that this structure is stabile. Works to consolidate the top story of this building is required immediately. In addition the crack in the southern end of the N.E wall is also visible on the interior, this suggests that immediate attention is required to prevent collapse. Possible solutions include the pinning or cementing of the N.E side of the wall. Another approach would be the dismantling and re-erecting the parts of the wall that have become unstable. This would require a detailed survey of the present condition of the wall to record the current condition and position of the original fabric⁹². The fact that it is a focal point at the crossroads and that it is a feature on the Tóchar Phádraig suggests that it is worthy of protecting and stabilising, the issue of funding the works, however, would need to be addressed.

The fact that this castle is in such poor condition and has appeared to be in this state for many years indicates that in this case the legislation is not sufficient to protect this structure. The *Record of Monuments and Place (R.M.P.)* on which this castle appears was established under the National Monuments Act⁹³ This gives archaeological sites a basic protection in so far as anyone proposing to carry out works on/ or in the vicinity of the monuments must give written notice to the minister of Arts, Heritage Gaeltacht and the islands. There is no incentive, however, to prevent deterioration or preserve these monuments.

⁹² Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2004, *Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, Dublin, p207.

⁹³ National Monuments Act, 1994 Section 12(1)



Fig 23 Doonamona 1993⁹⁴



Fig 24 Doonamona today



Fig 25 Doonamona 2003

Comparing the photos there appears to be little difference between the castle except that there is some material missing from the upper level and there is substantial plant growth.

⁹⁴ Quinn, J.F, 1993, *History of Mayo*, Ballina.

Figure 26 Doonamona N.E wall from the S.W.



A mural passage measuring 5m in length is identified in the 1988 survey. This passage is no longer visible due to vegetation growth and possible stone collapse.



Fig 27 Upper floor in the N corner, Doonamona.

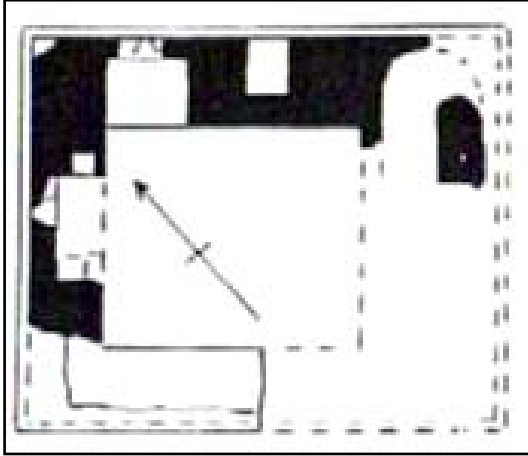


Fig 28 Ground plan of Doonamona.⁹⁵

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⁹⁵ Salter, Mike, 2004, *Castle of Connaught*, Worcester, p76.

5.3 Condition Survey on Castleburke (Complete survey found in Appendix B)

Historical Background:

This castle was built by Richard De Burgh circa 1238. Historical references indicate that this castle was granted to the Mac Evillys and held by Myles Mac Evilly in 1574 and later in 1611 by Theobald Bourke son of infamous Granuaile, the adopted son of the family. Myles son of Theobald sold the castle and the lands to Colonel John Brown of Westport. The castle is now owned by Eamonn Burke. The eastern wall collapsed during the storms of February 3rd, 1990⁹⁶.

Setting:

This castle is situated on a high rock cleft of rock on the N.E shore of Lough Carra. The castle is surrounded by agricultural land and much of the bawn survives and later ancillary buildings are found in the S.W corner of the bawn.

Summary Condition Survey:

Much of the E and N wall of this castle has collapsed and an excellent cross section of the tower house can be seen. There is evidence to indicate that rock is falling from the upper floors making the site extremely hazardous. While there is some surviving original material at parapet level the area is to over grown with vegetation to decipher features.

On the W wall the masonry appears to have been cleared of ivy and the area has been repointed.

While this face has seven windows, four of these show evidence of been in filled (see Fig 29)

The N wall (Fig 30) is another wall that is in good condition with the most prominent features being the vast quantities of plasterwork. On the ground floor is found an entrance doorway. On the first floor level on the eastern side is two large, possibly originally a mullioned and transome window⁹⁷.

It can be assumed that these were later additions (possibly with internal floor changing as well) as they are not suitable for defensive reasons. Two windows of the same form and measurements, now joined however, are found to the right of these windows.

Because of the collapse of the S and the majority of the E wall a cross section of the castle is visible (Fig 31). Many features are still visible including two mural corridors, a spiral staircase (Fig 32 and

⁹⁶ Bourke, Eamonn, 2001, *Burke, Bourke & De Burgh: People and Places*, Dublin, p38.

⁹⁷ Almost 1.2m in width and almost 2.9m in height

Fig 33), large quantities of plaster work (Fig 33), part of a vault (Fig 34) and wicker centring (see Fig35).

Figure 29 Castleburke W wall



Large mullioned and transome window probably a later addition.

Original window have been in filled.

Clearly ivy has been removed from this building and these areas have been repointed.

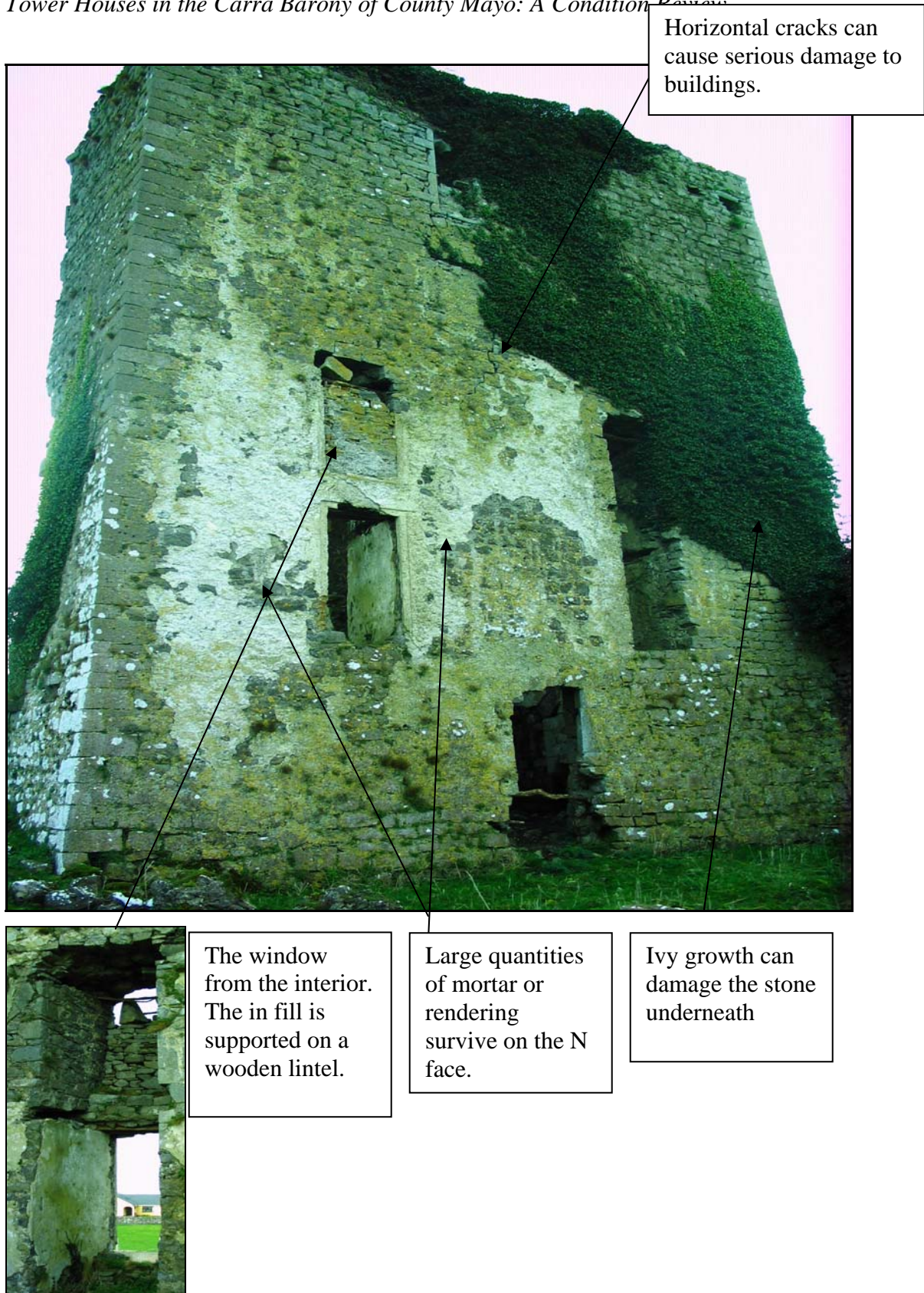


Figure 30 The N wall of Castleburke.



The southern side of the east wall has collapsed. There is some vegetation growth and limited features. There is also much lichen growth.

Figure 31 Due to the collapse of the E and S wall a cross section of the interior of the castle is visible



Fig 32

1

2

3

1. (Figure 33)

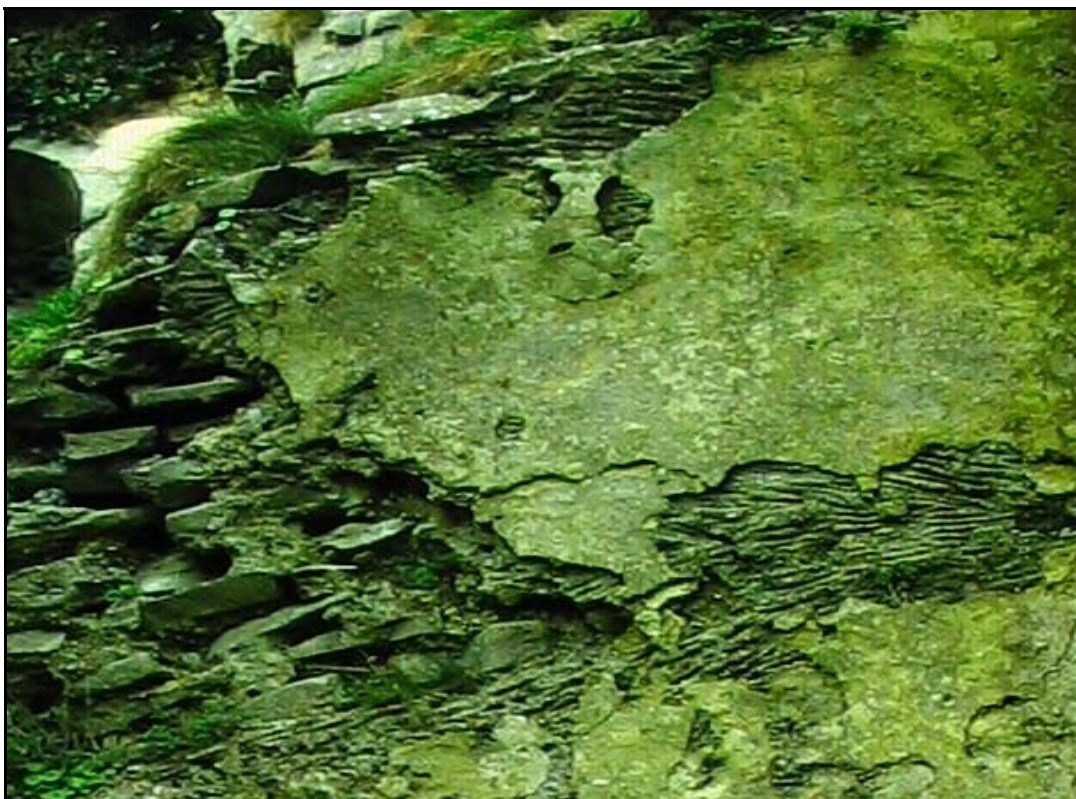


Surviving examples of plaster can be seen in this mural chamber as well as the staircase through the doorway.

2.(Figure 34)



Part of the vault supporting the upper floor survives. Due to vegetation growth, however, it is difficult to decipher features in the upper floor.



3 (Figure 35) Wicker Centring on the Interior of the N Wall.

The surviving mortar can also be seen covering the wicker work indicating that it is original plaster.

Rate of Deterioration:

The most notable change to this building is the collapse of the E and S walls. Prior to the collapse of these walls this tower house was in very good condition. A survey carried out by Lavelle et al in 1987/1988⁹⁸ gives a description of the interior of the castle especially in the upper floors that are no longer visible due to vegetation growth. *Archaeological Survey of Ballinrobe and District*,⁹⁹ a survey carried out in 1991 and the earlier survey by Lavelle, both identify a mural chamber and a guarderobe, which due to vegetation growth or stone collapse are no longer visible. A survey carried out in 1945 describes the interior with a complete vault as well as a fire place in the east gable, which no longer survives (see Fig 38).

⁹⁸ Lavelle, D et al, 1987/1988, *Moytura 2 Archaeological Survey*, Ballinrobe.

⁹⁹ Lough Mask and Lough Carra Tourist Development Association, 1989-1992, *Archaeological Survey of Ballinrobe and District*, Castlebar.

Comments and Recommendations: Removing ivy from stone buildings can be especially dangerous. It can often be the case that the ivy is supporting the wall and removing it often causes walls to collapse¹⁰⁰. The stone underneath the ivy is commonly damaged and repointing is often required. There is however an even greater danger in only repointing certain area on a wall. This is especially the case if the wrong mortar is used, which has in instances resulted in the collapse of walls¹⁰¹. Using modern cement based mortars rather than the original lime based mortars can cause water to run from these areas down on to the stone below which may not be repointed therefore quickening the weathering process here. Capping of the wall tops can also prevent water damage to the wall, however, the use of flashing or cement such as used in Castlecarra can alter the appearance of the structure and can trap water in the walls. The type of capping to be used varies between structures so structures have to be assessed on an individual bases¹⁰². The stability of the other walls should also be assessed with this castle after the complete collapse of the S and E walls. As this castle is on the Record of Protected Structures there are numerous benefits with regards protection of a structure. Firstly the development plans must include objectives for the protection of such structures and more importantly it becomes the responsibility of the owners of the protected structures to maintain them. With Protected Structures the planning authority also has additional powers to protect structures from being endangered either directly or through neglect. Importantly grants are also available to owners to ensure the preservation of structures on the record of Protected Structures.¹⁰³ It is apparent that this castle is in better condition than castles that do not appear on the Record of Protected Structures.

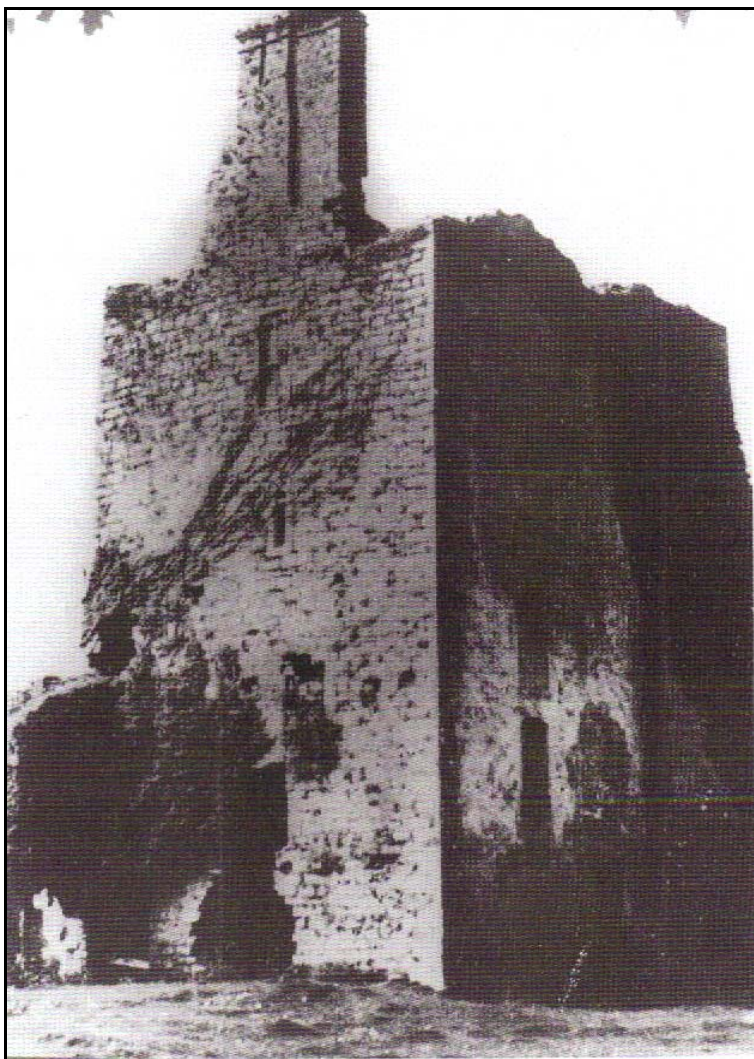
¹⁰⁰ Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2004, *Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, Dublin, p 206

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p207.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

Figure 36 Castleburke.¹⁰⁴



Castleburke before the E and S walls collapsed. The photograph below shows Castleburke today.



Fig 37. Castleburke today from the N.E.

¹⁰⁴ Bourke, Eamonn, 2001, *Burke: People and Places*, Dublin, p39.

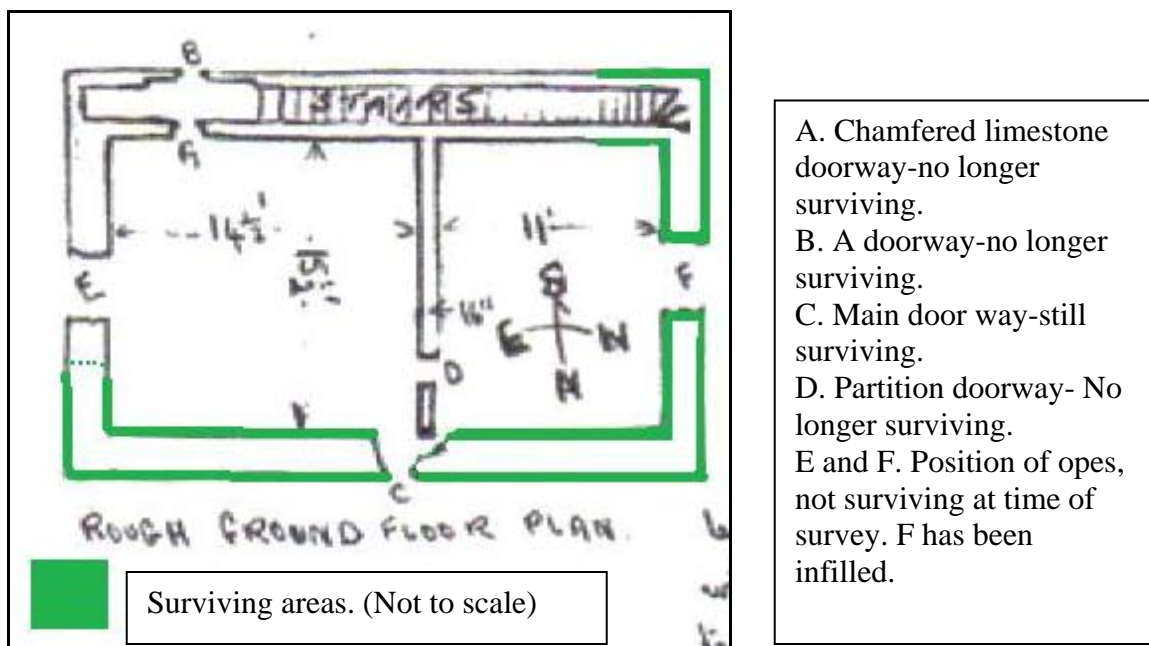


Figure 38. Irish Tourist Association Survey, 1945.¹⁰⁵ Areas in green show the current ground plan.

¹⁰⁵ Irish Tourist Survey, 1945, *Burriscarra*, unpublished (Mayo library)

5.4 Condition report on Castlecarra (Complete Survey found in Appendix C)

Historical Background:

This is a Staunton Castle built between 1238 and 1300 and was held by them up to the end of the 16th Century. In 1591 it is recorded that Captain William Bowen acquired possession of the castle from Peter (Barnwell) Baron Trimleston, although it is unclear how he came to be in possession of it¹⁰⁶. In 1991 the castle is recorded as being in the ownership of Pat Stauton.

Setting:

This castle is picturesquely located on the banks of Lough Carra. This site is surrounded by a deciduous forest to the E.

Summary of Condition survey:

This three storey tower was constructed in the 13th Century but also has many 15th Century additions. This castle is in generally good condition although there is no roof present but the possible remains of a gable wall survives on the E face. This castle has had extensive works carried out which is evident from the large quantities of plastic sheeting found between the masonry

The entrance to this castle is in the southern wall (Fig 39). This face has clearly been repointed and the presence of plastic sheeting in the masonry indicates that substantial works has occurred. These works are identified as “*O.P.W conservation works*” in the *Archaeological Survey of Ballinrobe and District*. Many of the windows on the ground floor of the castle including the W and S wall are covered by the bawn, indicating that it is a later addition. Another common feature on this castle is the presence of water shoots at roof level. Some, however, such as on the W wall are in poor condition (Fig 40). The main entrance and the main window in the W side have large metal gates inserted to prevent access to the site.

The interior of the castle is also in good condition but has had substantial works carried out on it. On entering the main doorway a guard room is located to the right while two vaulted chambers are

¹⁰⁶ Blake, M.J., 1909-1910, *Notes on the Place Names Mentioned in Browne's Map of Mayo 1854* in the *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol 4, Galway, pp238-239.

found to the left. The upper walls no longer survive and a staircase is found on the eastern wall. The first floor is now a concrete platform that was inserted by the O.P.W (See fig 42). This wall also has surviving joist holes indicating the first and second floor level (Fig 42). Plastic sheeting in the masonry indicates that much of the eastern wall has been rebuilt in the interior.

There are also many features preserved on the N wall (Fig 41). The presence of plastic also indicates that a lot of this wall has also been rebuilt

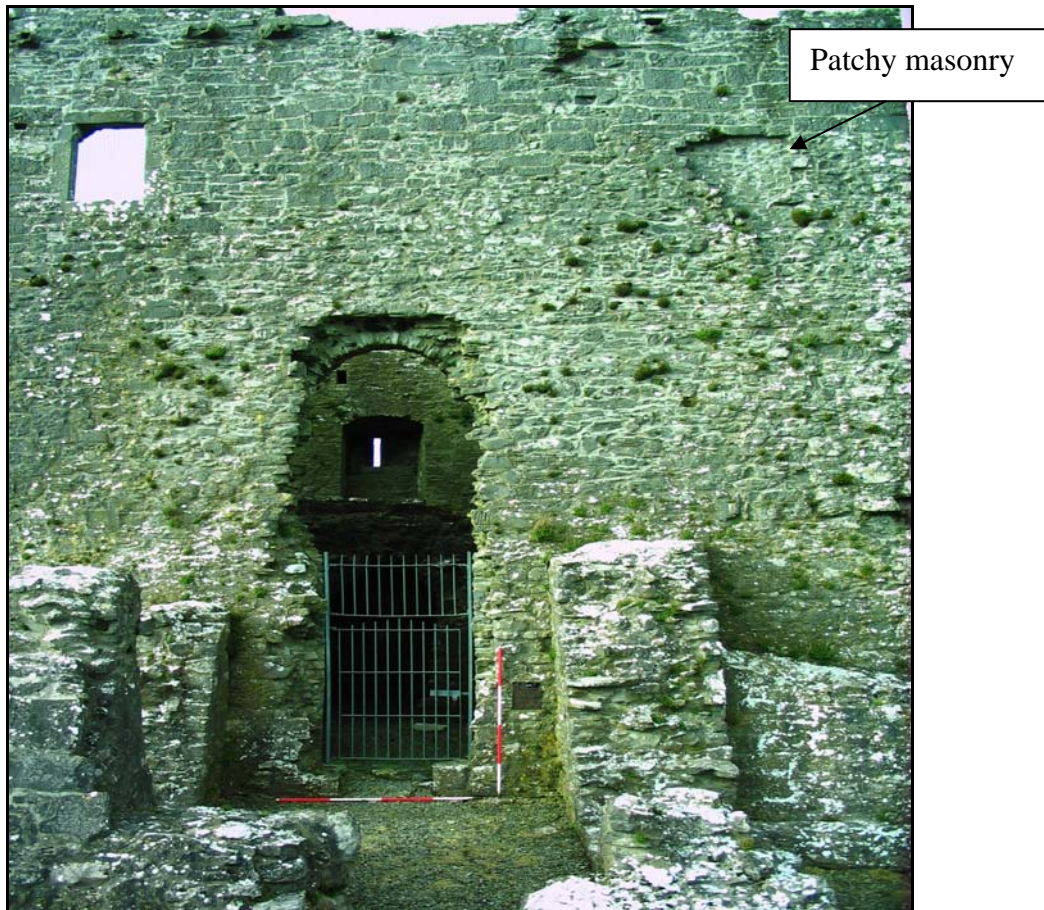


Figure 39 The main entrance to Castlecarra.

Taken from the top of the bawn. The masonry to the front of the doorway is surviving fragments from a porch area. The metal gate prevents entrance to the castle itself.



Figure 40 The W wall from the N.W

The fragmented bawn is clearly visible. The water shoot under the window was placed there during O.P.W conservation works. An additional building in the south of the bawn is visible in the background.



Remains of the arch that leads from the entrance chamber to the back chamber.

Figure 41 The Interior of the N wall.



Surviving Joist holes.

The O.P.W carried out conservation works which included making the first floor a concrete platform.

Figure 42 The interior of the E Wall

Rate of Deterioration:

Due to the substantial works carried out on this castle the condition has altered very little. As previously stated the O.P.W have carried out extensive works to conserve the building.

Comments and Recommendations:

It is unclear if this castle is truly a tower house. Although it does share many features with a typical Irish tower house, it appears to be an earlier castle with later additions. It is, however, protected under legislation (the Record of Protected Structures) as a tower house. This castle has had vast amounts of works carried out to “conserve” the building. It may be the case, however, that the castle has been over restored. The necessity of a concrete floor at first floor level for example, when the public is not permitted entry is a cause for debate. This castle was deemed as worth of inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures and as a National Monument and yet after such reconstruction work it is unclear if this castle still has the same historical value. Capping of all walls and extensive rebuilding raise the issues relating to reconstructions, including the possibility of creating false histories.¹⁰⁷ There is also a difficulty in restoring a building with many phases of works as later additions may cover earlier features and the issue of restoring a structure back to its original, earliest form, may arise. This issue has been addressed by the Venice Charter which states that *“The valid contribution of all periods to the building of a monument must be respected, since unity of style is not the aim of a restoration”*¹⁰⁸.

Another issue is the use of plastic sheeting to demonstrate new build from original. Although keeping with the principles of the Venice Charter¹⁰⁹ it does impact of the aesthetic of the building. Another conservation issues is that plastic sheets used to show new work from old, as well as affecting the aesthetic of the building, can cause damage to walls as they prohibit the natural flow of water through the masonry.

The impact of the metal gates, (see fig 39) on the structure should also be noted. While they do stop entry to the building, thus preserving the interior and safety of visitors these metal gates will damage the masonry if they are removed. As stated in the Burra charter all changes should be reversible and

¹⁰⁷ Venice Charter Article 3 “...conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard then no less as works of art then as historical evidence.”

¹⁰⁸ Venice Charter Article 11.

¹⁰⁹ Article 12 “Replacement of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so the restoration does not falsify the artistic or historical evidence.”

have a minimal impact on the original fabric.¹¹⁰ This castle does have a picturesque location on the banks of Lough Carra and is also part of the Doon archaeological trail. As such visitors are encouraged to visit the site so the health and safety of the visitors is important. The need for capping and metal gates is a result of this.

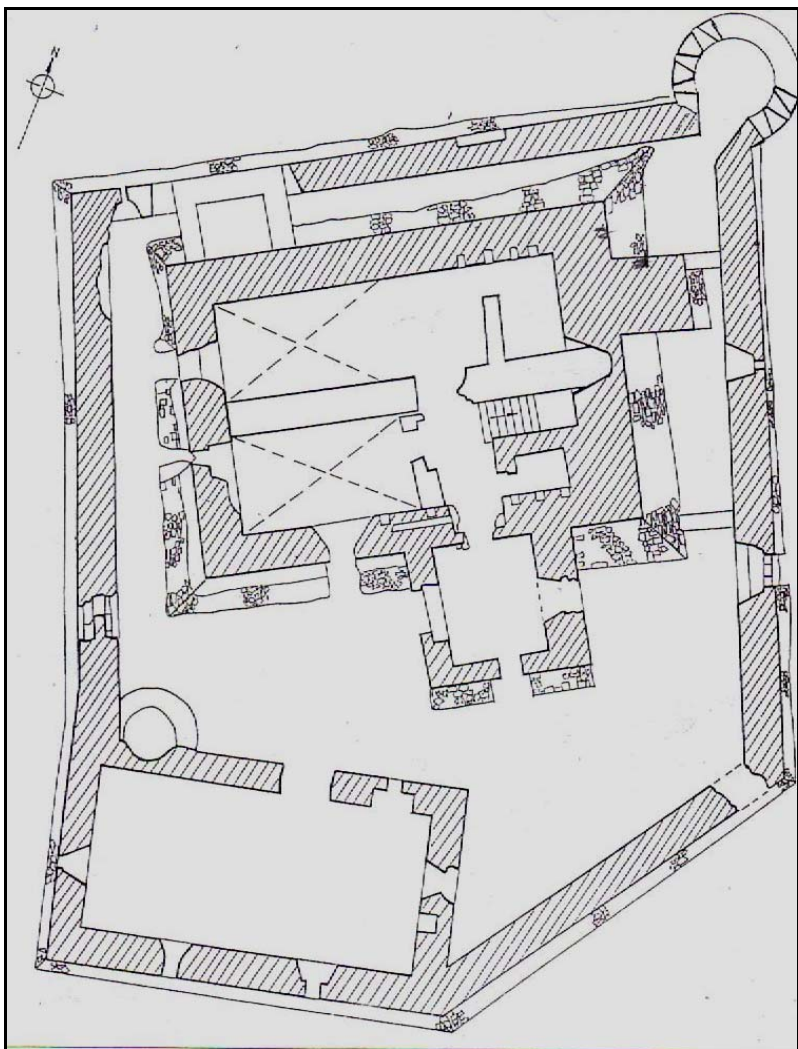


Fig 43 This plan was carried out by 1991 by the Lough Mask and Lough Carra Tourist Development Association.¹¹¹ There has been no change

¹¹⁰ Article 7.

¹¹¹ Lough Mask and Lough Carra Tourist Development Association, 1989-1992, *Ballinrobe and District: An archaeological Survey*, Castlebar.

Chapter 6.1 Conclusion

This thesis looked at tower houses in the Carra Barony of Mayo with emphasis on their condition. The main aims included finding the extent of the study, recording the condition of these sites, rating their deterioration and evaluating the success or failings of legislation with regards to the castles in the sample.

The first task undertaken was the completion of a literature review. The literature review gave a brief overview of the literature available regarding tower houses in Ireland. It became apparent that tower houses are a popular academic topic but also that they continue to be the cause of much debate. The various arguments over their origin and even number were used as examples. The methodology was also completed. This detailed the procedures that were carried out to successfully achieve the aims of the thesis.

Prior to commencing the condition survey, chapter 4 dealt with the topic of Irish tower houses themselves. The typical features of Irish tower houses and tower houses in the sample were identified and explained. Combined with this, the issue of distribution was addressed especially the distribution of tower houses in Mayo. One of the main aims of this thesis was to firstly gauge the extent of the study. This was achieved through identifying as many of the castles in the Carra Barony as possible. When this data was compiled their current conditions were recorded. After this was completed it was found that while the area had many castles recorded, many of these had not survived. Those that have are in very poor condition with results finding that only two castles in the area could be classified as being between “fair and good” condition.

To continue on from this, in chapter 5 of the Carra data, a sample of three tower houses were chosen on which to conduct an in-depth condition survey. These tower houses varied in condition and are protected under different legislation. For example Doonamona is in poor condition and only protected under the protective legislation of the R.M.P¹

¹ National Monuments Act, 1994, Section 12(1)

Castleburke is on the Record of Protected Structures² and is in fair condition. Castlecarra is a National Monument, on the Record of Protected Structure and also has had conservation work carried out by the O.P.W. The condition surveys identified their current condition, problems with the structure and also recorded the rate of deterioration. Comments and recommendations were also provided.

Another aim was to assess the success or failings of the legislation that protects these monuments in the sample. This was carried out throughout the text and it was found in this case that the castles who had the additional protection offered under the Record of Protected Structures or are recorded as National Monuments were in better condition than those that were not. It should also be noted, however, that these castles may only have been included on the Record of Protected structures in the first place because they are in a better condition than other tower houses.

In conclusion tower houses are a common sight in the Irish landscape and also a popular academic topic. The building themselves however have been neglected over the years and there is a real danger that many more of these monuments will be lost.

As stated in the introduction to Grosse's *The Antiquities of Ireland*, we have in Ireland had the "*reverential custom*" of leaving our historical structures on the landscape thus becoming "*a country of mouldering ruins.*" But he continues, with 200 years of modern industrial and agricultural activities "*reverence for the past has diminished, with consequent destruction.*"³ Even in the academic world it appears that their preservation is not paramount. While we still require research into nearly every aspect of tower houses, this should not be at the cost of the buildings themselves which have been almost forgotten in the fields and farmlands around us. Their preservation can no longer become secondary to our quest for understanding them.

² Planning and Development Act, 2000, Section 1.3.1

³ Grosse, F, 1795 *The Antiquities of Ireland*, London, Introduction.

Appendix A:

Archaeological and Condition Survey: Doonamona

1. General Information:

Name of Castle: Doonamona Castle (Fig 4.1)	RMP Number: MA090-05501
Townland Doonamona	National Grid Reference: M204812
Parish Drum	Date Unknown
Barony: Carra	Date of Survey: February 2009

2. Ordnance Survey Designations and Year:



Fig 44 First Edition Map



Fig 45 Current O.S Map 2005.

3. Historical Background:

This is a Bourke Castle of unknown construction date. Early references indicate that it was the stronghold of the O'Kellys of Ui Maine who settled in the area in the middle of the fifteenth Century⁴. It is believed that the O'Kellys sold the castle back to its original owner as Richard MacDavy MacParson (Bourke), is noted as being the owner in 1574.

⁴ Bourke, Eamonn, 2001, *Burke, Bourke & De Burgh: People and Places*, Dublin, p85.

According to O'Donovan in the *Annals of the Four Masters* Doonamona as well as other castles in the area are recorded as being possessed by the Governor Sir Richard Bingham. Knox records that Sir Richard moved to Doonamona Castle soon after the 30th July of this year⁵.

4. Condition Survey:

This castle is in poor condition. All that remain is the N.W. wall, N.E. wall and parts of the interior. Stones found within the interior seems to have fallen recently. This was confirmed by the owner who stated that stone regularly fall from the tower.

- **Roof:**

There are no visible remains of the roof surviving. A small portion of a possible string course for expelling water survives on the N.W wall.

- **Walls:**

N.W Wall (Fig 4.1):

The north side of this wall has collapsed. The wall is broadest at the base measuring circa 10.20m in width and decrease in width towards the top of the tower to a width of only 3.30m.

The corner stones from the N.E corner have been removed and at first floor level a large hole (*circa* 1.80m in height) indicates that a corner window has been removed. There are dressed quoin stones found from the first level up, they have been removed from the ground level. There is no remaining mortar at the base of this castle, which is clear by the large gaps between the stone at the base of this wall. This is possibly just due to weathering. There is some plant growth at the top of the wall and also at second floor level where the wall previously collapsed. Lichen growth is abundant over many of the stones.

N.E Wall (Fig 4.2):

⁵ Knox, H.T, 1915, *History of the Country Mayo from the earliest times to the close of the 16t Century*.

The south end of this face has collapsed. The upper floor is also missing numerous stones many of which can be identified in and around the castle. A large crack measuring 4.5m in length is found on the south end wall and this section is in real danger of collapse. A missing window at first floor level leaves a large gap measuring 1.70m in length and almost 1.5m wide in areas; a tree now grows through this gap. The quorin stones have also been removed from the corner of the N.E meeting the N.W wall up to first floor level (5.5m up the N.E wall). It appears that the castle was built on a plinth that has, like much of the stone in the castle, been removed in areas.

S.E Wall:

No section of the S.E wall survives above ground.

S.W Wall

A little over 5m of a rubble base survives from the S.W wall. This is not the exterior of this wall, the stones of which have been removed.

- **Openings (Windows and doors):**

N.W Wall:

There are three remaining windows on this face. The first window is a narrow slit, rounded headed window on the first floor. Measuring 1.40m in length and the slit measures only .80m in width. The sill stone is cracked and a large crack is found in the centre of the arch of the window itself reflecting the overall poor quality of the castle. The second window is also a round headed, slit window that is located at third floor level. This window is broken in half. The third window is found above this window and to the left. This is a much cruder and shorter in length window. As previously mentioned a possible fourth window may have been present but was removed.

N.E Wall:

Above the gap with the tree is another window. This is an ogee headed window with the left hand side has been removed. Carvings are found on the upper sill of the window.

Another smaller window is found on the southern side of this face, this is a simpler window and square in shape (.5m in height). This window is found between floors indicating it is probably located on the spiral staircase. A window similar in form and in size is found on the upper floor on the northern side of the face. A damaged latrine is also found at ground level on this castle (Fig 20).

S.E/ S.W:

No features

- **Interior:**

There is little evidence remaining that indicates the internal layout of this castle.

Some features survive on the interior N.W wall. An embrasure is found at ground floor level with a narrow slit window (.80m in width). The arch of the embrasure survives but the stones are badly weathered. An aumbries (small square opening in the stone-possibly used for storage) is found to the northern side of the window. An opening is found in the corner of the N.W and N.E wall possibly originally a doorway. There is considerable vegetation growth on the upper floor.

On the interior of the N.E wall (Fig 21) It is clear that that the spiral staircase was in the eastern corner as three of these steps can be identified in the upper level (Fig 22). In addition two steps have been identified in the rubble next to the castle. At the upper floors at the staircase is a fragmented hanging eye, which originally would have supported a door. A small fragment (.51m in width) of the northern corridor wall leading to the stairs survives. A section measuring 1.6m in width 1.7m in height also survives. The entrance to the staircase can then be measured and is 1.2m in width. Eight corbels are also found on the N.E interior wall. Three are positioned at the first floor, with a further five marking the position of the second floor. There is a crack on the southern end of this wall which incorporates the last corbel on the second floor. This crack is in the same location as the crack that is visible on the exterior of this wall indicating that this whole section is in danger of collapse. Two embrasures for window are also found at both ground and first floor level. The embrasure on the ground floor measures 2m while the embrasure on the first floor measures 1.10m measure circa 1.10m.

In addition, on the Northern side of the N.E wall the remains of a vault can be identified at the third floor level.

6. Bibliography:

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Appendix B.

Archaeological and Condition Survey: Castleburke

1. General Information:

Name of Castle: Castleburke (Kilvoynell Castle)	RMP Number: MA090-05501
Townland Castleburke	National Grid Reference: 12039/28121
Parish Ballintober	Date Circa 1238.
Barony: Carra	Date of Survey: March 2009.

2. Ordnance Survey Designations and Year:



Fig 46 First Edition O.S Map 1838

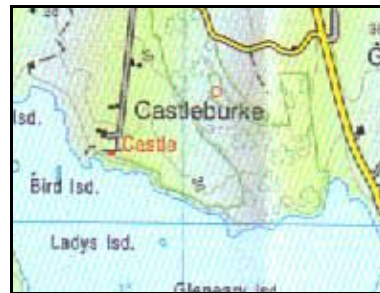


Fig 47 Current O.S Map, 2005.

3. Condition survey:

Roof:

There are no visible remains of the roof.

Walls:

West Wall:

This face measures 9.5m in width and 13.5m in height. There is some vegetation growth on this face, especially on the northern side of the wall. There is evidence that there has

been vegetation (ivy) removed from the building and these areas have been repointed. Nine joist holes for supporting the roof can also be identified at roof level. A pronounced base batter is found on this face and measures 2.7m in height.

North Wall.

This is the other complete wall on this Burke Castle. The most prominent features on this wall include the vast quantities of plaster covering this face and the vegetation growth. The surviving plaster work is found in patches on this face but is most prominent on the eastern side and in the centre between the windows. The vegetation is found on the west side of this face and extends from first floor level to the top of the castle.

East Wall

The majority of this wall has collapsed. There is also some ivy growth from the ground floor to first floor level.

South Wall.

This wall has also collapsed. The buildings that were added as later additions to the castle are visible on this side. These areas are also in poor condition and there is much plant growth.

- **Openings (Windows and Doors):**

West Wall (Fig 29).

There is evidence of seven windows on this face. Only the upper sill window survives of the window on the ground floor the rest has been filled with rock. The partial remains of a narrow slit window is found above this window on the southern side of the wall. This has been partially filled as well but a gap measuring 1.4m high and almost a meter in width is found to the right of it. As this window is positioned between floors it can be assumed that it is positioned on the spiral staircase. A similar window is positioned almost 2m above. This one is slightly smaller and more complete. A slightly wider window is found over 2m above this window, possibly also originally lighting the stairs. At second floor level is a large mullion and transome window with six lights. It is 1.25m in width and almost 1m in height. The six lights of the window have been filled with

stone. It can be assumed that this window is a later addition to the castle. At the third floor level a slit window which has a carved sill. A two light ogee headed window is found on the upper floors. This originally was a mullioned and transome window but the upper mullion is missing.

North Wall (Fig 30).

There are five main opening on this face. On the ground floor is found an entrance doorway measuring 1.17m in width and circa 2.6m in height. The original stone work for this doorway has not survived apart from two stones on the western face, these are however in poor condition. On the first floor level on the eastern side is a large, possibly originally a mullioned and transome window. Due to the size of this window almost 1.2m in width and almost 2.9m in height it can be assumed that these were later additions (possibly with internal floor changing as well) as they are not suitable for defensive reasons. Above this window is a similar window which has been in filled even though some of this in fill is becoming loose. Two windows of the same form and measurements are found to the right of these windows. In this case, however, the divide that separates these two windows has collapsed forming one large window. The final window on this face is found on the upper floor it is a mullioned and transome, two-light window. This window is in especially poor condition. Only a small part of the mullion remains and the transome is completely absent. The base of this window has also been in filled. This window is also partially covered in ivy.

East Wall (Fig 31).

The majority of this wall has collapsed so there are little features. There is evidence of only two windows one at approximately first floor level and the other at upper story. There is no surviving material to indicate what type of windows these were. But the bottom may have been a slit window and the upper a mullion and transome window. The upper sill windows of the above window are extremely disturbed and look extremely likely to fall.

Southern Wall.

This wall has collapsed so there are limited features. Two windows, possibly slit windows or larger square windows, were on this side but little survives.

- **Interior:**

Because of the collapse of the southern and the majority of the eastern wall a cross section of the castle is visible (Fig 32). Access into the interior however is not possible. On the western wall many features have survived. On the eastern side two corridors leading to the spiral staircase have survived and spiral staircase is visible in the doorway (Fig 32 and Fig 33). Two windows lit these corridors. Large quantities of plaster work still survive, although it is unclear if this is the original plaster work or later works (Fig 33). Part of a vault is also visible, (Fig 34), as well as two embrasures for two windows one on ground floor level and the other on the upper floors. The ground floor embrasure also has an aumbries on its northern side. Much of the upper floor is covered in vegetation.

On the interior of the north wall many features can also be identified including an aumbrie on the eastern side of the wall. Wicker centring is also visible (see Fig 35)

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Appendix C.

Archaeological and Condition Survey: Castlecarra.

1. General Information:

Name of Castle: Castlecarra Castle	RMP Number: MA 100-08201
Townland: Castlecarra	National Grid Reference: 11717/27535
Parish Burriscarra	Date Between 1238-1300
Barony: Carra	Date of Survey: March 2009.

2. Ordnance Survey Designations and Year:



Fig 48 First Edition Map 1828



Fig 49 Current O.S Map 2005

3. Condition survey:

This castle is in generally good condition. Although parts of the towers of the bawn are missing and also no roof is present.

- **Roof:**

No remains of the roof survive although part of a gable wall may still be present on the E side.

- **Walls:**

S Wall (Fig 39)

The entrance to this castle is in the southern wall. The remains of a base batter are found in sections along this wall and measures between 1.75m at the western corner and 2m next to the doorway. This base batter could possibly be a later addition. Numerous stone are missing from the top floor but there are parts of eight water shoots remaining. This face has clearly been repointed and the presence of plastic sheeting in the masonry indicates that substantial works has occurred. These works are identified as “*O.P.W conservation works*” in the *Archaeological Survey of Ballinrobe and District*. In some areas the stone work is patchy as in the eastern side of this wall. Parts of a porch also extend from the main doorway.

W Wall (Fig 40)

Similarly this wall has sections of a base batter along the base of the wall. The fact that the base batter is blocking ground floor windows is further proof that it is a later addition. Two water shoots are found on this side but the presence of plastic sheeting shows that extensive work was also carried out on this face and this may not be their original position. There are the remains of five water shoots at roof level but these are in poor condition. There is also the beginning of vegetation growth.

N Wall

The northern side of this castle has ten water shoots. There are numerous stone missing from the upper floor giving the building an irregular roof line. There is a steep drop in the path towards the eastern side and a widening of the bawn.

E Wall

The main feature on this wall is an extension found on the northern side of the wall. This extension does have a base batter and measures circa 1.75m at its base and is 7.75m high. There is much vegetation growth on this face. On the upper levels are the possible remains of a gable wall.

- **Openings (Windows and doors):**

S Wall

On the southern wall there are only three openings; the main entrance, a window at ground floor level and one window on the upper floor. The main doorway is 9.9m high x 1.9m wide. A modern metal gate prevents access to the interior of the castle. The ground floor window is splayed and widens into the interior of the building. Any cut stone around this window has been removed leaving a crude square window. The upper window is square measuring .85m wide and 1m high and is located to the west of the main doorway.

W Wall

The main feature on this wall is one large window on ground floor level. This window has also been fitted with a metal gate to prevent access to the site. A smaller window is also found to the south of this large window. This stone around this window shows to have been restored therefore the original size is unclear.

N Wall

There are three windows on this face, two on the upper floor and one at first floor level. The upper window is narrower than the other two measuring only .75m high and .15m wide.

E Wall

There are numerous windows on this face, including one on the first floor level measuring on the northern section of the wall. A small window is also found on the extension on the northern wall measuring .16m wide and .45m high. A similar window is found on the opposite side on the southern side of the extension. There is a narrow slit defensive window on the eastern wall of the castle on the southern end of the wall. A larger window is found to the south of the slit window and is partially covered by the bawn with the conservation works however, it has been re-exposed.

- **Interior:** (Fig 41 and Fig 42)

On entering the main doorway a guard room is located to the right a typical feature in most Irish tower houses. To the left is a large chamber which is vaulted. An archway survives that leads to a large chamber in the north interior, the upper walls no longer survive. A vault is also over this second chamber. A staircase is found on the eastern wall. The first floor is now a concrete platform that was inserted by the O.P.W (See fig 42). This wall also has surviving joist holes indicating the first and second floor level(Fig 42). Plastic sheeting in the masonry indicates that much of the eastern wall has been rebuilt in the interior.

There are also many features preserved on the N wall (Fig 41). The presence of plastic also indicates that a lot of this wall has also been rebuilt.

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