

GALWAY'S HERITAGE IN STONE

CATALOGUE NO. 9

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The 2023 Archaeological and Conservation Works at St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church Galway and Menlo Castle



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Jim Higgins, Frank Coyne and Martin Fitzpatrick

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Galway's Heritage In Stone No. 9

Part I

**The 2023 Archaeological and Conservation Works
at St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church Galway**

by

Jim Higgins and Frank Coyne

and

Part II

**Archaeological and Conservation Works
at Menlo Castle Galway**

by

Jim Higgins and Martin Fitzpatrick



**Crows' Rock Press
Galway**

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PREFACE

This is the 9th volume in the Galway's Heritage in Stone Series. The previous volumes were as follows:

Galway's Heritage in Stone: Galway City Museum Catalogue No. 1: Catalogue of Late Medieval Sculpture Down to the 17th Century in Galway City Museum, Galway, 2003.

Galway's Heritage in Stone: Galway City Museum Catalogue No. 2: Catalogue of Post-Medieval and 18th – 19th Century Sculpture in Galway City Museum, Galway, 2004.

Galway's Heritage in Stone: Galway City Museum Catalogue No. 3: The Stone Carving Collection, N.U.I. Galway: A Corpus of Medieval and Late-Medieval Stone Carvings, Galway, 2011.

Galway's Heritage in Stone: Catalogue No. 4: Carved Stone of the Medieval and Late Medieval Periods from the 13th to the 16th Century Accessioned by Galway City Museum / Músaem Cathrach na Gaillimhe 2011 – 2016, Galway, 2018.

Galway's Heritage in Stone: Catalogue No. 5: Medieval and Late Medieval Heraldic Corbels, Galway 2019.

Galway's Heritage in Stone: Catalogue No. 6: 'Marriage Stones' The Heraldic Chimney Pieces of Galway City of the 16th – 17th centuries, Galway, 2020.

Galway's Heritage in Stone: Catalogue No. 7: Franciscan Monuments. The Medieval to Post-Medieval Sculpture and Funerary Monuments of The Franciscan Graveyard, The Abbey Church and Related Sites in Galway, Galway, 2021.

Galway's Heritage in Stone: Catalogue No. 8: The Medieval and Late Medieval Fonts and Stoups of Galway City, 2022.

It is hoped in this series to publish the entire *corpus* of Galway's medieval, late medieval and post-medieval sculpture in stone. Ten further volumes are planned. Galway has an outstanding quantity of such carvings and they deserve to be better known. In publishing this material it is hoped to contribute to the creation of a national inventory of archaeologically, architecturally and historically important stone sculpture. Where possible sculpture should be retained in public ownership by securing it in an Accredited and Designated Local Authority Museum or in the care of the National Museum or on the site it came from. A vital first step in ensuring that sculpture from archaeological sites or contexts does not go into private collections or cannot be sold within Ireland or exported outside of the island is having as full a record as possible. If a stone is stolen or temporarily mislaid it should be traceable from a published catalogue and hopefully retained in state ownership for the benefit of the public.

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General Introduction

This volume, the 9th in the series is different in content and intent from the previous volumes in the series in that rather than being a corpus of sculptured items and a detailed discussion of them, it is concerned with the physical work which has been done to record, consolidate and preserve the physical fabric which is an essential element of Galway's Heritage in Stone. It is vital that archaeological investigations and conservation works to buildings as well as to loose architectural fragments be recorded in tandem. The study of one should compliment the other just as the ecology should be taken account of just as much as the structural engineering. It is only when built archaeological, cultural, natural and intangible cultural heritage are all given their due importance, that our culture and heritage can be preserved, promoted and enhanced.



Plate 1 Tile of 19th century date incorporated in the inner edge of the right side of the Flamboyant Tomb.



Plate 2 The Flamboyant Lynch Tomb

Galway's Heritage In Stone No. 9

Part I

**The 2023 Archaeological and Conservation Works
at St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church Galway**

by

Jim Higgins and Frank Coyne

St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church Report on works carried under the C.M.F. Grant 2023

Introduction

The wonderful and historical gem that is St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church is undergoing important conservation work which is vital to the long term preservation of its fabric.

The church has been put forward for a grant under the Community Monument Fund by the Heritage Officer of Galway City Council and has gratefully received funding from the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government from funds provided by the National Monuments Service. It was previously also benefited over 5 years from the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Historic Structures Fund administered on behalf of the D.H.H.L.G and administered by Galway City Council. The conservation works have been supervised by Jim Higgins, the Heritage and Conservation Officer and by an Archaeologist (Frank Coyne of Aegis Archaeology) and a Conservation Architect (Fergal McNamara of 7.L. Architects). The conservation contractor and mason and his team have carried out the work to the highest standards in building conservation. The conservation has been carried out by conservation mason Laurik Mathieu and Tom Mitchell Builders and Conservation.

A total of €8,082,845.71 was allocated this year, (Streams 1-3) and St. Nicholas' has received €100,000 in funding. Over the last 5 years the church has received funding under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme administered by the Local Authority Galway City Council and provided by the D.H.H.L.G.

Works in 2023 included the scaffolding of the S.E. Wall of the exterior of the South Transept Extension and the interior of part of the same wall within the southern end of the same southern transept.

The church is in urgent need of repair and conservation and the work carried out successfully in 2023 is part of an ongoing urgent campaign of works. It is hoped to apply for further funding under the C.M.F. next year.

During a restoration campaign carried out in 1958-63 external cementitious pointing and the use of bitumen and a cementitious mix to render the interior was done with the best intentions in the world, to rectify severe dampness. This has however trapped moisture in wall-cores and led to damage due to moisture and salts, spalling and blistering occurring on stone funerary monuments in the church. These are being damaged at an accelerating rate. Weathering, moss growth and erosion are also having an increasingly detrimental effect. In 2023 the southern extension to the South Transept was chosen as a first phase of work aimed at alleviating the situation and consolidating the fabric.

The works have been carried out with the help and co-operation of John Olney National Monuments Service Archaeology and with the cooperation of the select vestry, the Rector Lynda Peilow, Manager Philip Kelly and follows on from the St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church Conservation and Management Plan which was aided financially and supported in various ways by the church, Galway City Council, and The Heritage Council.

External Works

The ribbon pointing in cementitious mortar inserted during the 1958-1962 works was removed and the wall was repointed using a suitable lime mortar mix. Some important discoveries were made. Several phases of water management or drainage features were discovered for instance. These included the following:

1 Drainage Troughs with V-shaped grooves which brought the water out into a drip of thin slabs, liscnovor and sandstone. These were obviously defunct by the 19th century and the entire set of crenellations have been re-set. It is likely that the interior of the parapet had saddle stones alternating with trough stones. These funnel shaped drainage features ran through the thickness of the wall. Examples survive elsewhere in Galway in Kirwin's Lane and in High Street.

2 A painting of the 1820 / 30 period shows this crenellated wall set lower 2) in the (?) early 19th century. The V-troughs and drip slabs became defunct and the wall was heightened. Some V-troughs were turned upside down to present as ashlar blocks Melted lead and thin slabs which were used as pinnings were visible.

3 In the 1880's (or perhaps earlier?) a series of new plain water spouts were added. Corbels inserted in the interior of the transept and the entire wall raised with reused ashlar limestone. Some of the 19th century spouts reused drainage exits in the parapet wall and rectangular holes above them. Others may have had lead pipes feeding them. Further examples had no water exit through the parapet and were ornamental.

4 In the 1950's – 60's restoration lead and copper lined trough or gutter with a wooden duck walk on top was substituted. The crenellations were taken down and reset on a stone string course. This course itself was set on ashlar with a lead damp proof course set on the levelled up ashlar courses. Cast iron down pipes and hoppers were provided at the corner of the building and some of the late water spouts blocked up. The stone spouts are now defunct and their drainage grooves have been blocked up.

The crenellations were a mix of dates with both pocked and flat chiselled tooling. The works revealed much new information about the phasing of the building.

Internal Works

Plaster was stripped in the S.E. corner of the S. Transept above the Lynch Corner Tomb of which only the lower part – an arcaded base survives. Some original lime render could be seen between the original wall face and the tomb itself which was clearly built up against the existing rendered wall face.

The area above the S.E. side of this tomb was also stripped of plaster.

The specifications for the 1958-1902 works clearly indicate that there were severe problems with dampness. Render of a cementitious nature with an inclusion of bitumen has been used in an attempt to prevent water ingress to the interior while cementitious mortar was also used to form raised bands of ribbon pointing was used externally .

This, it was clear from the 1990's at least that was causing severe problems with dampness was continuous and was appearing around the funerary monuments and window surrounds. This had accelerated in the last 10 years in particular with salts appearing on surfaces and blistering and occurring at the sides where the surrounding render impinged and for the last 5 years in particular on the main flat surfaces of funerary monuments. Gargoyles in the crossing tower, and on the south aisle exterior and the south porch door suffered major falling away of stone in the last 5 years especially work on stripping of plaster above the surviving base of the Lynch corner tomb and the two round-headed three-light windows over its inner side extended from the top of the tomb base up to the 1880's wood work of the heightened transept and behind the Gothic Revival woodwork which is supported on late 19th century limestone corbels.



Fig. 1 The scaffolded area of the 16th century southern extension to the south transept of St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church. The extension consists of the area to the left of the buttress shown in the photograph.

This stripping of plaster also extended around and above the Lynch Canopied and Traceried wall-tomb with its flamboyant decoration. During the 1958-62 works small wooden cylindrical plugs (like lengths of brush handles) were inserted in drilled holes in the side of the lower window in the actual walling and in the shuttering and extended between 6-8cm from these surfaces to act as a guide to the plasterers.

One of the right hand side stones had 2 drilled holes one plugged with wood while the lower of the two windows over the Lynch corner tomb had three drilled holes. The inner side of a stone of the ingoing had 2 more. These drilled holes were in the case of the window sill filled with 1950's – 60's cement mortar.

The mullions of both windows were cut into with an angle grinder during the 1950's – 60's work and a three sided tray of copper with the copper alloy being soldered were inserted just above the sills to trap water. One of these had become detached. The mullions seem to have been smoothed or cleaned in places with an angle grinder. The inner sides of the mullions were coated with smooth cement. Cement was used to try prevent water ingress above the sill level but had failed.

The upper window had 3 replacement stones which were probably mid or late 19th century insertions at the lower ends of its ingoing. Red and yellow brick occurred in the sloping ingoing on the right side of the window behind some of the inserted stones which also supports the idea of a 19th century phase of

repair.

There were traces of old lime wash beneath the 1950's / 1960's render in places especially around the windows and in parts of the tomb recess or the flamboyant canopied and traceried Lynch wall-tomb. On removal of render on the ingoing it was found that the inside of the sill of the lower window above the Lynch corner tomb had 3 cylindrical holes of uncertain function, one of which has part of a wooden plug in it.

The very battered remnants of two tapering, stone brackets or corbels were found above and to either side of the 16th century ground floor window. These had been battered away and red and yellow brick occurred as filling above both brackets. These two corbels may have been moulded or plain originally and these are smaller versions of the projecting brackets supporting the soffit-ribs of the crossing tower of circa 1500 and of the arches between the tower and the north and south transepts or the church. The top of the left hand bracket occurs 35.5cms above the ground.

An obvious explanation for the S.E. brackets or corbels is that they supported a shallow loft which ran across the inside of the south wall. Historical sources indicate that the Lynches had a loft and an organ (a much smaller type of instrument than later organs). The blocking of the tops of the defaced corbels with red brick, yellow brick and small stones shows that there were sockets above the corbels in which timber beams were set which might have supported a shallow loft may have been set. There is a door high in the western wall of the transept which is now blocked but gave internal access from the stair turret built by the Lynch family though which access to the now vanished loft may have been provided. The threshold of the doorway seems too high but the corbels may have had horizontal beams on which shorter timbers were set at right angles which would have brought the base of the gallery up in height. It is unlikely that this gallery was of anything other than a wooden structure supported on stone brackets or corbels. It is likely that the wide span involved would have necessitated further supports, at least two corbels at either end and another in the middle somewhere above the "Empty Frame" (a moulded frame with coats of arms and merchants marks above the Lynch Corner Tomb and probably directly related to it) and where a modern metal plaque occurs. Alternatively pairs of corbels may have occurred above the 'shoulders' of the windows at ground floor level and are likely to have occurred in pairs above the "shouldered corner" of each window. Eight brackets or corbels in all are likely to have occurred. This would not preclude the Lynch corner tomb still having an elaborate superstructure of whatever form. Further stripping of plaster in 2024 may solve this conundrum.

The Windows of the South Transept Extension

Both are badly lined and the stone work looks rebuilt and reused stone was made use of along with small packing stones. there is no real re-re-arch a flat slab and two others angled towards that slab occur (in the tower) and a large slab with other almost flat slabs (in the upper window) are shown. In the 1950's – 1960's repairs the spaces between the stones of the top of the window lining have been packed with mortar in places. A lime coating shows on the side stones of the window with an area left plain near the sides of the window. A lime coating also occurs on part of the soffit. The building of the ingoings and more especially the upper linings of the soffits is poor with no bridging of the joints across the stones in places even where the stones are ashlar blocks. Wooden nogginns at least 6 of which were visible may provide evidence of the previous use of lath and plaster lining in the ingoings of the windows.

It was also discovered that the ground floor window was also much longer and extended almost to the top of the Lynch Corner Tomb. It became clear too that the upper window had been repaired in the 19th century with new dressed stones at the bottom of its ingoing. This had drafted edges forming a frame to the stones general surface which was dressed with a point held at an angle. The sloping ingoing with its 4 cms thick concrete cap was removed when it became clear that the front of the base of the window had been blocked with 1958-1962 period shuttering. On removal of this the rubble infill was found to contain small stones and highly degraded mortar which was reduced to wet grit and

sand in places and had been capped with a smooth-finished sloping base of concrete (the wall finishes were nap-plaster the sloping sill were smoothly finished). The fill which may have been inserted in the 19th century but shuttered and rendered on its front with cementations nap plaster produced the following finds (1) A short fragment of window mullion with glazing grooves on its sides and with the remains of a sunk hole to contain lead which was attached to bars holding the leaded window comes or directly to the comes themselves which held glass panes, (2) A iron ring attached to an iron “eye” which was set in a roughly cylindrical lead plug and probably has two prongs attached to this eye and embedded in the lead. This was a ring, possibly one of several which was set in a stone slab which formed a door in the side of a box-tomb or a covering slab to a sub-surface tomb-vault or to a set of steps which gave access to it. A further find from the blocking of the base of this window was a stone with roughly angular facets which may be an arch springing but is more likely to simply fortuitously shaped (3) A post-medieval iron key was found beneath the sloping base of the upper window of the south transept extension.

The fill of the upper window above the Lynch Corner-Tomb also contained rubble, small stones, spalls, concrete and was also shuttered below its sloping area. It is possible it was blocked in the early 19th century renovations and shuttered at the front and filled further and given a sloping incline in the 1958-62 renovations when it was capped with concrete and given a smooth cement finish and was then painted like the ground floor window. The steep inclines in the bases of these windows possibly contributed to dampness as the starting point for the incline was taken from near the top rather than from near the base of the window sills in both cases and water and condensation on the inside of the glass flowed directly down the sharply sloping incline which was much more acutely angled than it would have been originally in the 16th century. The removal of the incline of the window ingoing showed that below the 1950's – 60's concrete and cement capping the mortar in the rubble fill had become gray brown sand and grit through deterioration and had trapped moisture and was very wet. It is noteworthy that the underside of these two window soffits between the window head frames consisted mainly of flat slabs rather than a rough arch of voussoirs such as might have been expected.

One wonders if the lower window might have been made longer originally so as to provide as much light as possible to the cage chantry structure of the Lynch Corner Tomb.

Interestingly some crimson red brick and small fragments of yellow brick were found to be incorporated in the right ingoing of the higher upper level window.

All of the three light windows at two levels in the south Transept Extension were filled in the same manner.

The Wall-Frame Containing the Canopied Flamboyant Lynch Tomb.

The stripping of the plaster around the flamboyant canopied and traceried Lynch tomb to the left of the Lynch corner tomb revealed some further fascinating features.

This elaborate tomb is set in a high rectangular projecting area of walling which projects to the south of the join between the original south transept and its 16th century extension.

On removal of the nap plaster render it was found that the right side of this rectangular setting had been shuttered for apparent support on its southern side. It was also clear that the stone used to construct this tombs setting contained reused stone of several periods. Some bears diagonal tooling or 12th to early 14th century type. More stones bear dressing made with a point type chisel along with linear tool marks made with a quern or flat bladed chisel. This combination is frequently found on 15th to early 16th century stone work.

Despite this the tomb is solid and there are no signs of movement in its joints. The crocketed finials which rise over the apex of the ogee-frame of the tomb and which flank its shoulders are complete

apart from that on the right where a small oval apex finial is missing.

A modern moulded canopy over the head of the tomb which is of concrete has been removed. It was damp and the wooden board set in the top of it had rotted. It was trapping moisture in the wall.

Above the concrete moulding a large area of shuttered concrete bearing impressions of 4 inch and 6 inch planking was visible one peg hole inserted to gauge the thickness of the nap plaster finish was found.

Above and below this area of shuttered concrete infill was a line of 6 flat stones in a row forming a frame. A single stone of the same type was visible towards the lower left hand corner of the area of shuttering though no similar stones survived on either side. It was clear that the top and bottom of a rectangular recess with roughly straight but unworked stone at the sides and cut stone at the top and bottom had survived. Two trial holes were made in the shuttered concrete, at the middle, at the top, and to the left corner above the surviving lower stone course. These showed that a wall surface occurred behind the shuttering.

The Niche Above the Flamboyant Lynch Wall-Monument.

The removal of the shuttered fill from the niche revealed that the stone wall face at the back of the niche was largely intact apart from an area near the base in the lower middle part of the niche. Here the concrete fill seems to have been thicker and some stone facing of the back of the niche seems to have been loose or lost here. Only part (one stone) of the lower frame had survived in situ. The sides of the niche were built of rubble of mixed sizes but on each side it was abundantly clear that the rubble wall had been built directly abutting the outer edges of a now missing stone framework probably similar to but no set as deeply in the wall as the upper and lower stones of the rectangular frame. Decayed lime mortar some of it with insufficiently burnt limestone pieces occurred between stones in the right hand corner of the back of the frame. Some lime mortar survived which was probably the remnants of the bedding for the top of the now missing right hand side stone of the niche frame.

In the 1958-1962 filling of the niche, a large number of scrap metal items were driven into the wall face of the niche. These had served to help to hold the shuttered concrete in place. These were removed to allow for the proposed re-rendering in 2024.

After the trial holes showed that there was a wall-face at the back of the niche it was decided to open the entire niche which was found to be very damp in the areas where the concrete shuttering was removed. The upper test hole which had been made near the middle of the niche just below the surviving upper stone frame was tested to greater depth with a small drilling to determine whether the line of framing stones were deeply bedded and self-supporting. The drilling of a small hole showed that they were deeply bedded and that it was safe to remove the shuttered concrete fill. This fill had an amount of gravel 2-3cms but that rounded stones up to 4 to 8cms across also occurred. An attempt seems to have been made to fill holes in the wall face which occasionally were as much as 10-12cms long and 10 to 15cms high. On removal of the fill lime wash, white lime beading for side stones and a lighter coating of fine white lime was found in places. The latter was obvious and occurred in some thickness where the missing side stones would have abutted the upper frame and where similar side stones originally abutted the sides of the niche where there were clearly two side stone which were abutted by the rough small stones of the wall frame in which the Lynch tomb was set.

When the bottom 30 to 40cms of the niche frame is examined in detail it is clear that it projects inwards on each side lower down below the level of the single surviving lower piece of cut stone frame at the bottom. It is likely that when in the 1950's-60's restoration works – a moulded concrete course a sort of decorative canopy was inserted above the finials of Lynch Tomb and below the level of the lower edge of the cut stone niche-frame, that an area of walling and perhaps most of what remained of the lower framed edge were removed to insert the moulded concrete string course. The latter was

removed as it was trapping water.

On excavation at the bottom of the niche it was clear that the impressions of some planking had occurred and brown to black organic residue seems to have derived from this plank or perhaps pieces of timber a slot occurred in the top of the 1950's – 1960's moulded concrete and the construction of this and a wooden frame work for the concrete canopy seems to have necessitated the removal of the middle of the wall-frame.

The shuttered concrete was of mixed success. It had reduced to lime dust in places whereas it was completely solid elsewhere.

Fourteen pieces of scrap metal were driven into the wall face of the niche in an attempt to help to secure the shuttered concrete metal tubing, iron spikes, hammered band iron, circular sectioned iron and steel, spiked supports for gutters and a tubular copper alloy spikes were among the items used. A large heavy chisel with a faceted shank and burned top had an interesting history. It had been purposed by heating and reshaping its working end and bending its shaft to an elongated L shape. It is reminiscent of a modern mason's tool for pushing mortar into joints, though it must have been difficult to use. Its altered end has been reduced to a point by rusting.

One metal spike had copper alloy were still attached and it is likely that this was run through the wooden plank shuttering at fastening to the outside of it as a sort of tie to keep the shuttering secure as concrete was poured and packed into the niche.

It is clear that the niche above the Lynch tomb was originally rendered. Small areas of lime mortar survived on stone surfaces. Thicker areas of white-grey mortar occurred where side stones were bedded and butted directly against the poor quality surrounding walling on either side. Some limestone insufficiently burnt in places, was found in the corners.

Grey and white lime mortar was also found below the level of the lower stone course in all areas where the stone wall-leaf was disturbed by the 1950/60's concrete 'canopy'. Similar mortar was visible between the stones of the back of the niche generally.

Very thin white layers of mortar occurred on the underside of the upper line of cut stones suggesting perhaps that another internal framework of either stone or plaster had occurred originally within the ashlar framework which is now so fragmentary. Did the niche contain an epitaph, monument painting or something else completely? It is likely that whatever was there related to the Lynch family and their monument below it – The Flamboyant Lynch Tomb. Several questions remain unanswered or what answers we can offer at present are tentative. The wall frame housing the Lynch Flamboyant tomb is crudely built of small scrappy stone with occasional reused stone some with diagonal tooling of 12th-14th century type some with 15th century style pecking. The tomb canopy and its altar and mensa were off centre in relation to the rough facing wall which house it. An attempt to rectify this in the 1950's – 60's works probably had the dual purpose of supporting what appeared to be weak at the upper right side of the canopy and the area between the top of the tomb finials and the wall niche above it in particular. The supporting of the right side of the wall-frame by shuttering not only supported it but also made the tomb appear more centrally balanced in that projecting wall-frame.

An Earlier Niche Behind the Lynch Canopied and Traceried Wall-Tomb.

Behind the Traceried Canopy about three quarters of the height from the mensa of the tomb, a cut stone niche with a chamfered edge occurs. The sides of this cannot be seen as the sides of the niche are blocked with stone.

An Entrance to a Tomb-Vault?

The lower left side of the projecting wall-frame around the tomb is slightly irregular and a long stone projecting from near its base has two wedge-like stones which are built at an angle on top of a long stone. Abutting these is a rectangular stone relatively straight on the top, bottom and right side but angled to support the rough voussoirs of a relieving arch of which only two rough voussoirs survive. These stones are each 31cms high and that on the left is 8.5cms, that on the right 10.5cms wide. The left stone is 17-18cms thick and appears to be sunk deeper into the wall face where it is visible. The crudely shaped lintel on which this relieving arch rests is broken and does not extend beyond the surviving left hand voussoir. A rough fill of broken stones and mortar seems to occur below the feature and a wedge of wood also occurs below the rough limestone lintel. Archaeologically supervised removal of a section of the fill showed it to include old mortar, stone, some plaster moulding and a nail. These were recorded by Frank Coyne and Gerard O’Riordan of Aegis Archaeology.

This feature and the top of which is 41-42cms above the present ground level would seem to suggest the former presence of an ope but is difficult to explain. While it is difficult to prove as yet it is possible that the wall-frame around the Flamboyant Lynch Tomb is of several periods. This idea will be explored in further detail in 2024.

The Walling Around The Lynch Tomb

The wall projecting wall around the tomb is of poor quality stone and one wonders if the tomb was moved here and placed with its tracery almost tightly packed up against an area of better quality stonework on which traces of lime wash had survived. It can be seen in the niche that the backing to the tracery at an upper level is crudely packed stone further down in the tomb niche it looks as if two masons were at work. Above the mensa to about 82cms the masonry is fairly level but there after it slopes off to one side and is more irregular. Does this suggest a two-phase wall or just two teams of masons.

The wall frame around the tomb niche varies a lot. It projects 20 to 22cms from the old wall face for part of its height and is closer to 29 at the top. It is probably this impression of top heaviness which inspired the 1950’s – 1960’s restorers to shutter the wall frame and the niche above it to such an extent and to fill the latter feature completely.

The concrete shuttering formed a strip 28 to 29cms wide and 12cms thick and was added to right side of the rectangular panel of walling in which the flamboyant, canopied and traceried tomb. Lighter shuttering extended to 80cms in width on the right side of the upper part of the same tomb to the right of its projecting finials. A deep thickness of shuttered concrete covered an area of 163cms by 312cms around and below a recess. In the wall the recess was investigated in two small areas and the 1958-1962 concrete infill to this recess was between 21 to 22.5cms thick. A wall face was found in the two areas investigated. A length of five cut stone slabs formed a top to this blocked niche or recess. These ran for a length of 320cms and the stones of this border averaged 11 to 12cms in height. A similar single stone 11.5cms high and 50 cms in length seemed to bound part of the lower left hand corner of the blocked recess. It seems likely that the recess was originally framed all around.

The Flamboyant Lynch Tomb is 238cms wide across the top and the finials project up to between 11 and 12cms from the original wall surface. The nap plaster render applied in the 1958-62 restoration obscured up to 6.5cms depth or the decorated sides of these finials in places the tops of the foliated finials are eroded and spalling in places. The tomb is 434cms in height from its central finial to its mensa of its altar. The mensa to the base of the moulded surround on the right side measures 96.2cms

and 98.5cms to the base of the moulded surround on the left hand side. The height of the mensa to the present floor level is 122.5cms on the right and 123.8cms on the left.

A noticeable feature of the inner recess of the Flamboyant Lynch Tomb is the markedly sloping and irregular coursing of the stonework especially some 81 to 82cms above the mensa of the tomb-cum-altar recess. Perhaps suggesting that more of the original east wall of the original south transept might have extended further to the south than was previously thought or perhaps that two masons had been at work though this will require further research. Externally the junction between the original south transept and its extension to the south is marked by a buttress. Though the inside of the Flamboyant Lynch tomb recess was originally rendered only traces of what appears to be whitewash survives rather than render.

Traces of green and possibly red paint survive in a very dark form on this tomb and blue and red colouring survives on the Lynch Corner Tomb. It is hoped to get paint and plaster, whitewash and other analysis done with a Heritage Council Grant in 2024. A modern tile was found in the small rough stones. It has been decided not to re-render or replace coverings on the bases of windows until next year and to monitor how the fabric dries out in the meantime. Considerable drying had taken place in the month since the stripping works were carried out.



Fig. 2 Left to right – archaeologist John Olney of the National Monuments Service, Frank Coyne of Aegis Archaeology, Fergal McNamara of 7L Architects and Laurik Mathieu, Conservation Stone Mason of Mathieu and Mitchel Builders and Conservation Contractors inspecting the exterior of the South Transept Extension, at St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church, Galway.



Fig. 3 Laurik Mathieu, Conservation Stone Mason raking out joints on the exterior of the south transept extension. The raised ribbon pointing was applied during works carried out between 1958 and 1962. Old photographs taken before that date show flush pointing with eroded lime mortar pointing. The raised ribbon pointing has trapped moisture in the core of the wall. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 4 Part of the rectangular surround to the flamboyant canopied and traceried wall tomb or wall frame. This incorporates reused stone of 12-14th century date as well as 15th and 16th century material. The stone with the pen on it projects by about 6cms from the wall face and has two wedge-like stones similar to a relieving arch on top of it. This is a broken lintel, a crude fill below it. It is possible that there was an entrance to a vault here. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 5 Varied coursing and quality of stone used in the walling at the back of the flamboyant canopied and traceried Lynch Tomb seems to suggest two teams of masons or some rebuilding. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 6 The 19th century water spouts became defunct when a metal lined conduit was set behind the parapet and fed into the down pipes in the 1958-62 works. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 7 The lead lined outlet from the parapet wall to the 1950's – 1960's hopper and downpipe. A larger diameter downpipe in cast iron will be required.



Fig. 8 The crenellations are of several dates and have been re-set. Mastic used to repair breaches in the stone in the 1990's or 2000's was removed and replaced with lime mortar. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 9 Recent mortar raised strip-pointing was put over mastic in places. This has now been removed and replaced with a lime mortar mix set back in the joints. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 10 Ashlar block with diagonal tooling of a type common between the 12th and 14th centuries incorporated in the rectangular projection from the wall. This occurs 297cms above ground level. It and 15th – 16th century worked stone has been reused in the walling supporting the flamboyant Lynch canopied and traceried wall tomb.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 11 Scaffolding on the exterior of the southern extension to the south transept of St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 12 Cementitious, mortar and stone along with degraded brown and grey mortar from the infill of the upper window of the South Transept Extension. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 13 The inclined base of the ingoing of the upper window of the south transept extension after the removal of the 1958-62 concrete capping. Note the red brick in the right side of the ingoing. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 14 The ingoing of the upper window part of the window is rebuilt. The block of ashlar and brick on the right are indications of repair or rebuilding. Note the post-medieval tooling on the stone. Photograph: J. Higgins.

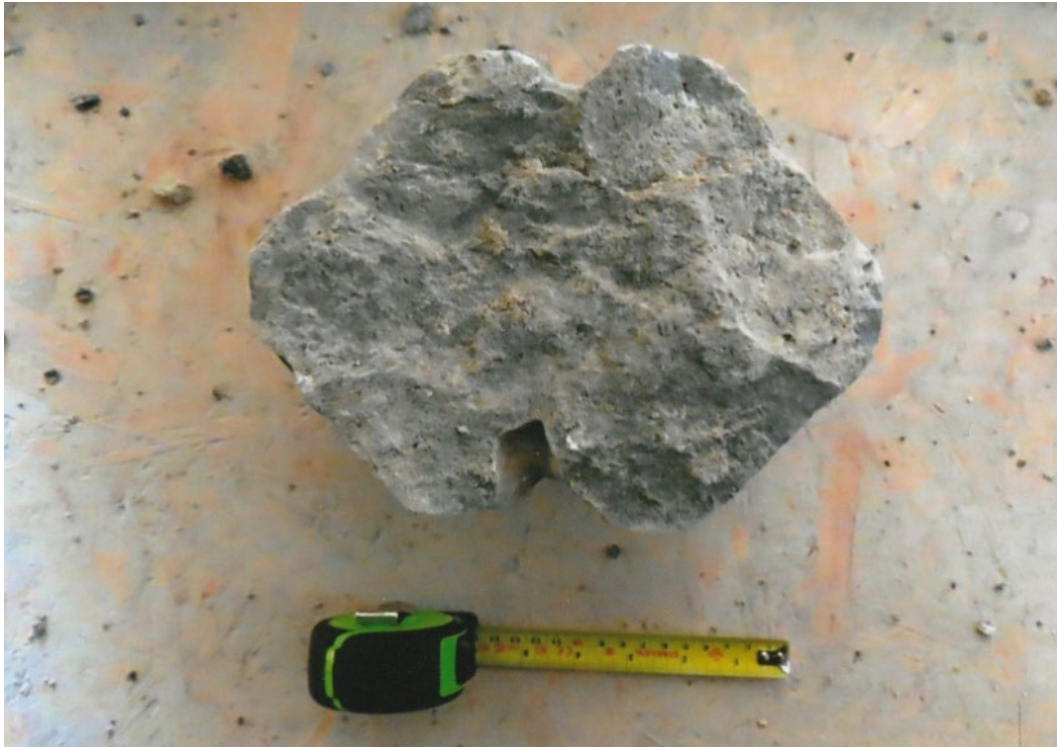


Fig. 15 Top view of the mullion fragment. Note the horizontal sinking for attachment of the bars supporting the glass as well as the vertical glazing grooves. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 16 Detail of the mullion showing the thin tooling on the general surface and pecked within the glazing groove. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 17 The iron pull ring with a lead plug from a tomb. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 18 The pull ring from a tomb panel or vault cover with a lead plug which was set into the stone panel. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 19 Key found in the rubble beneath the 1950's/60's covering of the slope of the upper window of the South Transept Extension. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 20 The Iron Key. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 21 A&B Two sides of an ashlar block with a thin coat of 1950's – 1960's cementitious shuttering from the ground floor window of the south transept extension. The ashlar block is probably of the 14th to 15th centuries. Photographs: J. Higgins.



Fig. 22 A side of the ashlar block.



Fig. 23 The back of the ashlar block.



Fig. 24 Triangular stone from the fill of the sill of the lower window.



Fig. 25 Another view of the same stone which is unworked. Photograph: J. Higgins.

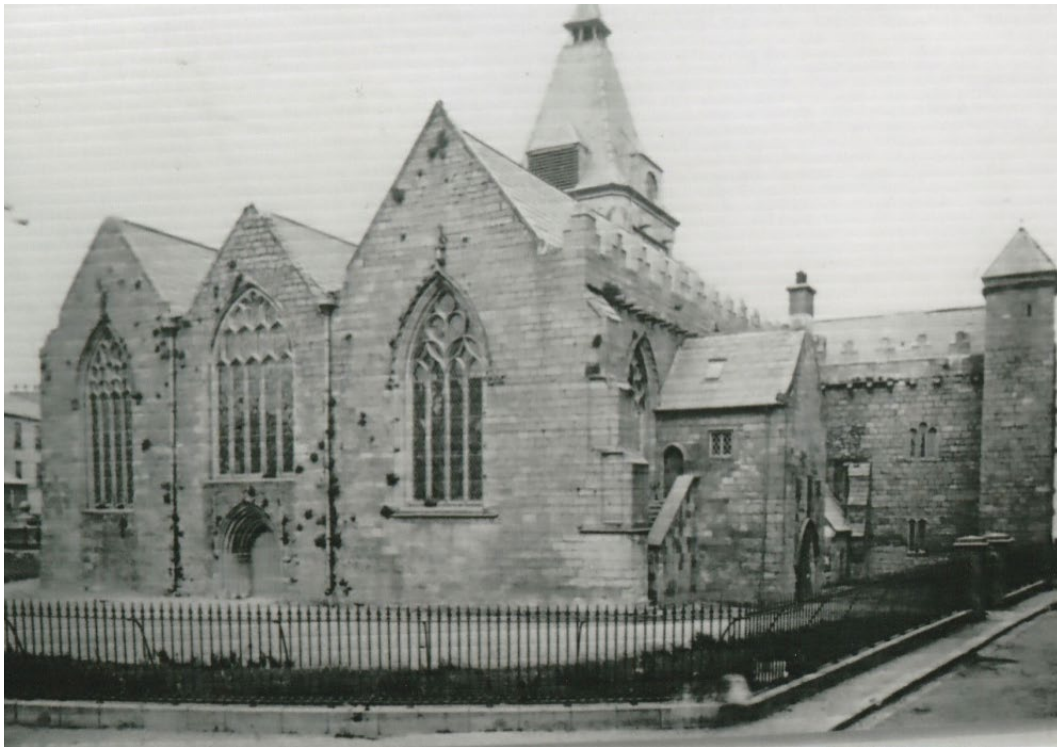


Fig. 26 St. Nicholas' in the 1880's prior to the repointing of its fabric. Photograph reproduced courtesy of Christine Hunt.



Fig. 27 Cleaning the joints after the ribbon-pointing was removed. Photograph: J. Higgins.

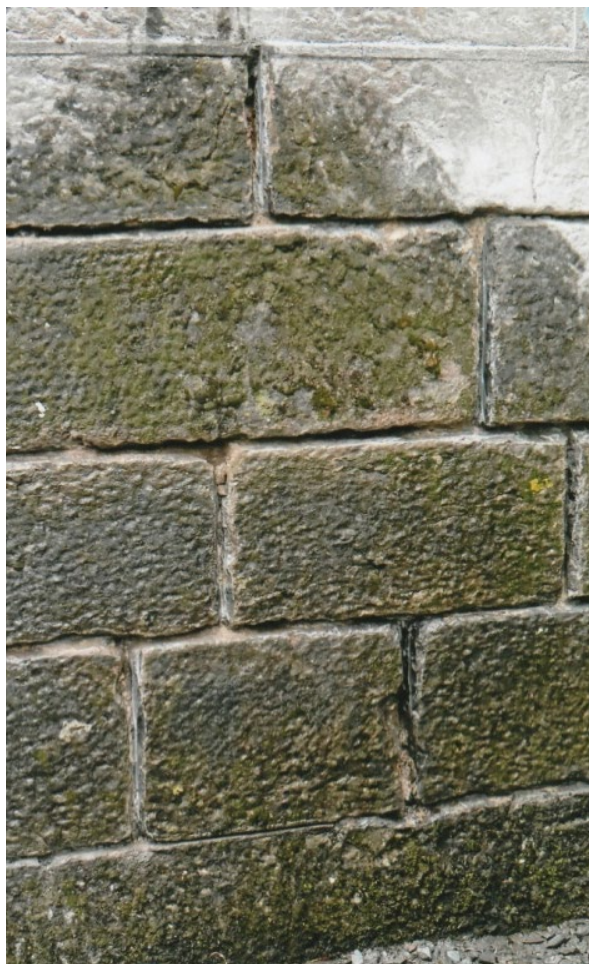


Fig. 28 Cleaned joints between the 16th century ashlar blocks, with some remaining ribbon pointing at the top of the image. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 29 Preliminary packing of joints with new lime mortar as part of the repointing process. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 30 Stone work on the exterior of the South Transept Extension. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 31 In the last few decades the crenellations had been “pointed” with mastic and cementations and non-cementations raised bands. These inappropriate materials have been removed. Note the post-medieval string course on which the crenellations had been set. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 32 Removing mastic “strip pointing” in some areas mortar pointing had been used over mastic and was failing. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 33 The battered remnants of the left hand corbel / bracket which supported part of a gallery across the South end of the South Transept Extension. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 34 The remains of the right hand corbel or bracket from which supported the gallery from Lynch's stair turret across the South end of the South Transept Extension.



Fig. 35 The water spouts and stonework on the exterior of the south transept extension before the removal of the 1950's – 1960's raised pointing. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 36 The removal of the 1950's – 1960's pointing has shown several phases in the water management features above the string course on top of the spouts the entire parapet was rebuilt.



Fig. 37 The wooden duck-walk behind the parapet covers a metal drainage trough with feeds into the hopper at the top of the cast iron down pipes.

Catalogue of Finds

Iron pull ring with a lead plug attached. This is from a tomb, probably from a floor slab above a vault or entrance to a vault or from a removable slab in the side of a box tomb. A circular iron ring which is round in cross section with an internal diameter of 8.8cms and an external diameter of 13cms rotated in a further ring with a hidden double prong which was set in a roughly cylindrical lead plug which in turn was originally suck into a socket hole in a stone slab. The smaller ring is 2cms in internal diameter and is between 1 to 1.3cms in width along its circumference which is 4.6cms in its external diameter. The lead plug averages 6cms in height and is 5.1cms and 5.5cms in diameter at the top and at the back respectively.

Iron Key found beneath the sloping concrete covering of the upper window of the south transept among decayed grey-brown mortar in the late fill of the ingoing at a depth of 8cms.

The object has an ovoid hoop, tapering shank with a baluster outline and half circular sectioned moulding which forms a collar just before the wards. There is a slight bow or thickening of the loop just inside the middle of the back of its loop. Traces of other mouldings may occur a short distance from the suspension loop or handle. The rectilinear wards have two projections, the one at the top is notched between them is an opening resembling two conjoined sub-triangular voids joined near the tip. Two notches, one at the top, the other at the bottom of the wide side of the inner triangle are notched. The shaft is roughly circular in cross section. This continues as a thicker cylindrical segment with a well defined circular cross section to the end of the key which extends beyond the ward the object is 13.1cms long. The loop is 4.6cms in maximum external and measures 3.6cms across the inside of the loop. It is 3.3cms wide (including the shank and wards and is 1cms in diameter at the tip. The key is of a type common in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Ashlar block, limestone, a roughly rectangular block of dressed stone of medieval type found in the fill of the partly blocked lower part of the ingoing of the window which lit the lynch corner tomb in the south transept it had been reused in the fill to retain rubble and decayed mortar and bears traces of the shuttered concrete used to block the lower fill of the window space. It measures 51cms long 24cms wide and 20 thick and one surface (the original 'back' is more crudely finished and less obviously tooled than on the front face and the sides.

Faceted Stone

This roughly triangular lump of limestone was retained by the masons. It is 36.5cms in height and 26 in width. It is fortuitously but accidentally fractured but is not tolled and is not an architectural fragment.

Finds From The Recess below the Flamboyant Lynch Tomb

Iron nail with round head

Heavily rusted

Plaster Moulding

Part of a roll moulding of gritty grey plaster. The surface layer of smoother plaster off while plaster. The external surface has been painted or stained and is dark grey to greenish black in colour where the outer surface survives. H: 6.2, L:10.2, T: 6.5cms.

Timber Wedge

The wedge has been damaged by hammering into the fill of the blocking of the fragmentary lentelled opening below the Lynch Flamboyant and Traceried Canopied Tomb. Several facets cut by an axe or adze survive may have been attached to old render or a 19th century heating system. Numerous other pieces of timber driven into the north pane of the lower widow of the South Transept Extension. Six of these may have been for supports for timber and plaster lining. These were left in *situ*.

Limestone Window Mullion Fragment

The mullion is roughly sub-lozenge shape but with flattened nibs on either side giving it an octagonal cross-section with facets of unequal size, linear tooling with fine lines and a good fine finish occur on the original worked surfaces. Glazing grooves run down the sides of the stone to accommodate a casement or lead frame with comes holding glass panes. The glazing grooves are roughly u-shaped in section and bear fine pocked tooling made with a point-type chisel. Some linear tooling made with a small querk or flat bladed chisel occur around the outer rims of the glazing grooves in addition to the vertical glazing grooves. Parts of the sides of a small wedge shaped sinking made to hold lead glazing bars and wire to secure the casement and lead-set glazing also occurs. This was cut horizontally into one side of the mullion.

The mullion is a maximum of 19.2cms by 14cms. The angled facets are 8cms wide and the nibs are between 2.3 and 2.4cms in maximum width.

It does not correspond with the mullions in the window where it was reused as building material among small stones and decayed mortar.



Fig. 38 Side view of the window mullion fragment. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 39 The Southern Extension to the South Transept at St. Nicholas' Collegiate church before the 2023 conservation work. Work on stripping the plaster internally was carried out in September and early October 2023 and included an area on the east side of the southern end of the Transept extension above the Lynch 'Corner Tomb' which bears the arms of Lynch and Athy and including the area around the two windows on the right of the photograph and around the Flamboyant Canopied and Traceried Lynch Wall-Tomb, part of which is visible on the left side of this image. Photograph: J. Higgins 2022.

Conclusions

The placement of the two windows in the east wall of the south transept extension. Generally these have some unusual features. They have cut stone ashlar ingoings on the inner faces of their ingoings but a fill of cruder, smaller stonework around the interior of the window frames. The upper window in particular has badly laid blocks of ashlar in the depth of the ingoing with no overlap or attempts to span the joint of the stone below as one might expect of good masons practice. Inside this the stone work is of poor quality (as is the stonework around the exterior of the flamboyant Lynch Tomb) the higher up it goes. Both windows have crude stonework and flat slabs instead of an arch between the chamfered frame of their soffit ribs and the inside of the window frame and one suspects that there was always difficulty with water ingress almost from the start. Concrete was packed in to support the soffits of the windows in the 1950's – 60's work. The windows look like insertions. It is difficult to know and the topic requires more investigation which an analysis of good mortar samples (if they can be got behind the later modern mortar) might.

It is taken as a given by Leask and others that the South Transept was extended by the Lynchs but given the evidence being uncovered now it is difficult not to conclude that there was some more early walling in the South Transept extension than one might expect or that despite external indications that the flamboyant Lynch Tomb recess might retain parts of the earlier South Transept in the fabric of the back of its recess though not in the rectangular projection into or onto which that wall tomb was built.

The coursing visible above the tomb *mensa* extending up to a height of 80/81cms on the left and 82cms on the right is of evenly coursed large stone. Above this the stone goes off at an angle and is

smaller and more uneven. Rather than the original transept having extended to the left corner of the projecting wall housing the tomb did it (the original south transept extend far as the right side of the tomb). The projecting rectangular area housing the tomb contains 12-14th and 15th century reused stones and smaller unworked stones above its hood.

Stripping of more plaster to conserve the fabric in 2024 may elucidate the phasing and extent of the original South Transept in more detail.

The lime wash or whitewash.

This is visible in the ingoings of the two windows and extended to a limewashed area some cms in width which was left uncovered. This limewash is also visible but has a lesser survival rate in the area forming the back wall of the flamboyant Lynch tomb recess. It is likely that the limewash post dated a lime render coating and is therefore possibly post medieval in date. It was clearly covered in the 1950's – 1960's rendering of the building. The white wash lavery could be as early as the 17th or as late as the 19th century and requires further research.

The Funerary Monuments effected by the 2023 Conservation Work.

The two monuments effected are the Lynch Flamboyant Tomb (Higgins and Heringklee (1991) Cat. No. 355) which projects from the inside of the west face of the east wall of the transept. This has been described elsewhere (Higgins and Heringklee 1991, 214-217 and Higgins 2011 Cat. No. 55. This is of a type defined by the writer as a Canopied and Traceried Wall Tomb (Higgins 2011 Cat. No. 55 and is referred to herein as the Flamboyant Lynch Tomb.

The second tomb which is the Lynch Corner Tomb referred to in Higgins 2011 The Lynch-Athy Tomb. This bears the arms of Lynch and Athy and has been described in detail elsewhere (Higgins and Heringklee 1991, Cat. No. 286, pp. 218-220 and Higgins 2011, Cat. No. 47. This can be linked directly to the Empty Frame (Higgins and Heringklee Cat. No. 386A pp. 220-222 and Higgins 2011 Cat. No. 47A).

The Lynch Corner Tomb was boxed in and its top sheeted in wood for the duration of the September-October 2023 works. It had been hoped to find some evidence for the super structure of this tomb in 2023 and the corbels or brackets found above it on the S.W. wall were initially thought to have supported the superstructure which may have included an arcade with openings between the arches but it seems more likely that these brackets with the brick filled sockets above them are just as likely if more likely to hold the supports for Lynch's organ loft which is said to have been in the South Transept. We will have to await further plaster removal in 2024 to confirm this.

Two further brick filled sockets were also found higher up in the interior of the east wall of the South Transept Extension.

The Form of the Superstructure of the Lynch Corner Tomb

While it is clear that this monument is likely to have had an elaborate superstructure, the reconstruction of will be informed better by the stripping face of plaster above it and the so called Empty Frame (Higgins and Heringklee 1991 Cat. No. 386 and 386A and Higgins 2011 Cat. No. 47, and Cat. No. 47A). it could be argued that a series of decorated panels (Higgins and Heringklee 1991 Cat. Nos. 445 (A-K), pp. 255-257 Higgins 2011 Cat. Nos. 46A-K) which were in the graveyard in the 19th century, in the church in the South Transept during the 1950's – 1960's restoration and visible in a film of the restoration works but are now reused in various places through the church having been cut up with an angle grinder during the 1950's – 1960's works might have formed part of the superstructure or not. One objection to this theory is that some of the fragments have a rebate on their undersides which does not correspond to any sort of mortice and tenon arrangement at present extant on the Lynch Corner Tomb. This will be explored further in 2024.



Fig. 40 The Flamboyant Canopied and Traceried Lynch Wall Tomb prior to commencement of works.



Fig. 41 The Lynch Corner-tomb in the South Transept Extension prior to commencement of Conservation works.
Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 42 The area above the Lynch Corner Tomb. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 43 The corner of the ingoing of the upper window on the east side of the east wall of the south Transept extension. The lower most stone on the left side has later tooling and may be a 19th century repair or insertion. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 44 Traces of lime-wash along with later small drilled holes and 1950's / 60's mortar filling in the ingoing of the lower window. The rough mortar filling was been striated to take the 1950's / 1960's cementitious mortar render.
Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 45 Two lowermost stones on the right side of the upper window in the east wall of the South Transept Extension are retooled or 19th century insertions as is the red and yellow brick behind them. Note the binder of the lime-wash on the ingoing and outside it the line of the 1950's – 1960's render. A plain band was left outside of this on the sides of the ingoings and window soffits. Photograph: J. Higgins.



*Fig. 46 New copper ties set in lead to hold the window grills of the exterior windows of the South Transept Extension.
Photograph: J. Higgins*



Fig. 47 The 1950's – 1960's grills repositioned on the windows. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 48 The scaffolded area in the South Transept Extension. In the east wall the Flamboyant tomb projects from a rectangular area of walling (left). The Lynch Corner-tomb (right) has been boxed in with wood. The windows above the tomb and the area above and around the Flamboyant Lynch tomb were stripped of modern mortar which was trapping moisture. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 49 The window grills were removed and now copper alloy ties and lead plugs were used to replace the old ones shown here. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 50 A loose drip tray of copper alloy. These had been set in grooves cut with an angle grinder in the window mullions in the 1950's – 1960's works. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 51 The window mullions were smoothed with an angle grinder in the 1950's – 1960's and were cut with an angle grinder to insert copper alloy 'drip trays'. The intersection between the window and the mullions at the base, and the old glazing grooves were filled with cement. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 52 A drill hole and a timber-filled drill hole with a nail at the side of the widow.
Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 53 Drilled holes of unknown function in the sill of the window.
Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 54 The windows in the east wall of the South Transept Extension as revealed in October 2023. The lintels were used instead of an arch in the core of the wall. Flat slabs and cantilevered stones and packing including some reused stone was used to support the window heads internally.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 55 The blocked ope, truncated lintel and relieving arch to an opening to the left of the base of the Lynch Tomb.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



*Fig. 56 Brick filled socket above the upper window in the South Transept Extension (upper right corner).
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



*Fig. 57 A partially brick filled hole above the upper frame of the rectangular niche above the Flamboyant Lynch tomb.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



Fig. 58 Copper alloy spike, one of 14 metal pieces driven into the back wall of the niche over the Lynch tomb to help to hold the 1950's – 1960's shuttered concrete.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 59 The wire was threaded through wooden shuttering while the concrete was inserted in the fill of the wall-niche.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 60 The Lynch corner tomb in the S. Transept with a blank panel on the right. The concrete capping predates the 1950-1960's works and seems to have been added in the late 19th century.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 61 Some of the carved panels of the Lynch Tomb were painted originally. This will be analysed in 2024.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 62 A ring-pull like the St. Nicholas discovery set in the side of a box-tomb at Fortbill Cemetery, Lough Atalia Road, Galway.



Fig. 63 Traces of eroded paint on the arcading of the Flamboyant Canopied and Traceried Lynch Tomb.



Fig. 64 The removal of some of the late mortar from a sample area of the lintelled ope to the left of the Flamboyant Canopied and Traceried Lynch tomb showed the presence of an ope with walling to the back of it.



Fig. 65 A piece of moulded plaster moulding found in the recess below the Lynch Canopied and Traceried Wall Tomb.



Fig. 66 Nail and wooden wedge from the interior of the blocking and wooden wedge from the interior of the infill of the ope below the Lynch Tomb.



Fig. 67 The tracery of the flamboyant Gothic Style Canopied and Traceried Wall Tomb Lights have been inserted to show the line of a cut stone recess with a chamfered edge occurs behind the upper part of the tomb. It is unclear whether this feature continued on either side as the tomb recess is blocked with stone mortar and a (19th century) tile.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 68 Layers of lime wash on the moulded side of the canopied wall-tomb.



*Fig. 69 Water flowing from a window sill in the South Transept of St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church October 2023. The window embrasures were filed to the base of the interior of the sills prior to the 1950's – 1960's re-rendering of the interior of the church.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



*Fig. 70 Trapped moisture making its way from around a wall plaque and doorway onto the floor of the South Transept of St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church, October 2023.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*

Galway's Heritage In Stone No. 9

Part II

The 2023 Conservation Works and Archaeological Testing at Menlo Castle

By

Jim Higgins and Martin FitzPatrick

Introduction

Works are ongoing at Menlo Castle as part of Galway City Council's Three Castles Project which is aimed at conserving and making publicly accessible Terryland Castle on the Dyke Road, Doughiska Castle at Merlin Park and Menlo Castle all of which are in the ownership of Galway City Council.

The works are being done as an Action of Galway City Heritage Plan and on foot of The Conservation and Management Plan for The Three Castles (Menlo, Doughiska and Terryland Castles). The Three Castles Project is funded by Galway City Council with funding voted by the Elected Members and from the Community Monuments Fund administered by the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government with funds from the National Monuments Service.

The Conservation and Management Plan was funded by The Heritage Council and Galway City Council.

The works are being carried out by Cunningham Civil and Marine with Peter Conway as site foreman and Conservation and Galway Stone Design Heritage Contractors. The Conservation Architect is Fergal McNamara 7L Architects the archaeologist is Martin FitzPatrick of Through Time Archaeological Services, Consulting Engineers Austin Reddy Quantity Surveyors.

The works are being overseen by Jim Higgins, Heritage Officer and Conservation Officer who initiated the project as an action of the Heritage Plan in 2014.

A Summary Account of Conservation Works at Menlo Castle 2023.

Dr. Jim Higgins, Heritage Officer and Conservation Officer

The castle is a Recorded Monument and a Protected Structure and a notable landmark located in a prominent position beside the River Corrib. The multi-phase castle, stable block boat harbour and some walling associated with a 17th – 19th century walled garden, a wall-turret and an entrance gate which could be a gate lodge, 19th century gateway incorporating another turret of 16th-17th century type 19th century walling, the site of a gate lodge and various reused architectural carvings.

The entrance gate was conserved by Galway City Council in 2014. The Castle is being conserved with funding voted by Galway City Council as well as substantial funding under the Community Monuments Fund of the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government as part of the Three Castles Project. The three castles Project is ongoing for the last four years. The project was started on the basis of an action of the Galway City Heritage Plan and as an action of the Three Castles Conservation and Management Plan initiated by the Heritage Office and funded by Galway City Council and The Heritage Council.

Menlo Castle is a Recorded Monument and a Protected Structure in the ownership of Galway City Council and Conservation work has been ongoing at the site in 2021, 2022 and again in 2023. The works carried out in previous years have been published elsewhere (Higgins 2022, 2022A and 2022B).

Previous Works

The works on the Castle at Menlo carried out to date have been summarised in several articles in Galway's Heritage Oidhreacht na Gaillimhe (Higgins (2021F) and Higgins (2022), (2022A) and (2022B). These works will be published in greater detail in a Final Report which is hoped to publish on conclusion of the Three Castles Project in 2027.

The Structure

The structure is in poor repair in places and in reasonably good condition in others.

Three main phases are apparent

(A) Possible Hall House Castle incorporated in parts of the tower house fabric ?High Medieval.

B) The Tower House – 16th century or circa 1500

C) The 17th century Front Range with numerous 18th – 19th century alterations

D) The Back Range various dates. This incorporates 17th, 18th and 19th century fabric.

Like the rest of the building it was given mock-Georgian features in the 19th century.

E) The 19th century Stable Block which may incorporate some earlier features.

The 2023 Works

The Back Range was the focus of the 2023 work and this was really a continuation of the previous work on the Belvedere, the mock Gothic 19th century, the spine wall and so on.

The works had been planned to start in September after the nesting season had ended but because of the continued presence of bats, kestrels and barn owls, work did not start until October.

The relevant parts of the building were scaffolded and the edges of wall ledges, niches, windows and other opes were cleaned of soil, weeds, decayed mortar, loose stone, brick and other detritus.

Internal Works

A large number of fireplaces and their flues some of them small, were located in the wall faces and in some of the corners at ground, first, second and third floor levels were cleaned of debris and their fabric was consolidated. This was also done in the case of window openings, recesses and chimney flues.

The Architectural Fragments Recovered

Between 2021 and 2023 a large number of architectural fragments some of which can be reinserted in the fabric of the castle were recovered. A full corpus of these will appear in the Final Report and as many as possible of them will be put back in their original position, if possible, in the course of the conservation work over the next few years.

3 Window Fragments 17th century

3 Georgian Doorway Fragments

2 Water Spout Fragments from a broken spout on the “Jacobean” style Façade

18 Corbel Fragments mainly heavily spalled and Fragmentary from inside of wall walk behind the parapet of the façade

6 pieces of slate

Saddle stone from wall walk of the main façade

Large piece of a 17th century doorcase (a base block) from a 17th century Renaissance Style doorcase which is now at Ashford Castle

3 pieces of paving probably from the 19th century porch of the main front.

The 2023 Structural Discoveries

The outline of the buildings in the 16th century Tower House and 17th century main block was established in parts. The former extent of a porch added in the 19th century and the foundations of a door-portal of the 17th century (now at Ashford Castle) was established. The door case itself was of Galwegian origin and was in the Renaissance Style of the 1600's to 1650's. This locus for its foundations and for the porch will be investigated further in 2024.

Inside the porch and a late 18th or very early 19th century doorcase occurred. The Georgian doorcase inserted in the 17th century “Renaissance” front of the house is fragmentary, with stones missing. It was hoped to recover parts of the frame of the Georgian door and several pieces were recovered.

A course of corbels on the inside of the wall of the main front was fragmentary and some had fallen into the building when they sheared off. Several were found in 2022 and more in 2023.

The front of an octagonal water spout was found in 2022 and the remainder of it in 2023.

The stones which formed low walls at the sides of the steps into the house and which are of late 18th or 19th century date were visible in the ruins of the castle up to the 1980's or early 1990's have apparently been stolen. One at least was still present until 2011 and a search is being made for it this year. These stones had baluster shaped carvings cut in half relief on them.

Further coping stones from the gable of the tower house were found this year. Several were re-set in position during the 2022 conservation of the tower-house. Some coping from the half circular “Tudor Style” battlements of the 17th century gabled façade of the castle were recovered in 2022 and one more possible fragment was found in 2023.

The Conservation Work in 2022 - 2023

The work of 2023 is a continuation of the works carried out in 2021-2022 on the following parts of the castle:

- (A) The exterior of the Tower house and its interior main gable face
- (B) The upper levels of the west wall and the ‘Belvedere’ Turret and its supporting elements
- (C) The internal spine wall between the 17th century and later block
- (D) The upper parts of the north wall and the riverside frontage.

On July 26th 1910 a tragic fire broke out at the castle in which Miss Ellen Blake and daughter (of Sir Valentine Blake Fourteenth Baronet) and Delia Earley a servant of the Blake family died.

In 2023 the works have included the external faces of the above mentioned chimneys and the interior and exterior of much of the north wall facing the river.

The areas for conservation were scaffolded with six stages of scaffolding and the works to be carried out and checked against photomontages made by 7L architects. The work has included clearing growth debris and soil as well as fallen stone off the wall ledges, window sills and niches. Limestone lintels have been cut and placed in sockets where wooden beams have rolled out. In many cases round topped logs cut down the middle had been used in many window embrasures and niches. In some instances such half logs were used deep in the recesses of built openings with rectangular timbers sawn and shaped near the wall faces.

A major challenge in 2023 has been the consolidation of the wonderful state weather sheeting on the exterior face of the Georgianised block at the back of the site running parallel to the river. This block is an interesting puzzle as regards the date of the earlier phases. Almost flat revival arches in stone over the heads of some opes are of a type current in medieval work as well as work of the 16th and 17th centuries and some of the tower elements of the main river-facing wall of this block may be of 16th – 17th century in part. However there are many enlarged opes which are clearly of 18th and 19th century date and the façade was heavily modified in the 18th and 19th centuries. A large number of chimney flues were put through walls, various fragments of 17th century chimney pieces were used in later fireplaces. Other chimney pieces were partly blocked with smaller fireplaces being made. In some instances two blockings were made or even three to individual fireplace openings and many of the walls are riddled with a large number of chimney flues.

The exterior wall faces were covered with schist slates from first floor level up. This was both ornamental and practical. It provided weather sheeting on the upper facades. Weather sheeting of wall hung slates were popular in Galway from the 18th century and early 19th century and many Galwegian buildings had such slating, especially in Dominick Street Upper and lower. Regular grey, blue and black slate was used, often Welsh slate. Only few buildings with it survive in the city much of it was removed in the 1970's and 1980's.

At Menlo silvery schist slates, mainly reused roofing slate was used as weather sheeting. It is clear that some of these had been reused twice in some instances. They were often broken fragments of bigger slates which were occasionally held in position by a thick bedding of lime mortar but in a few places were also secured by a nail. The sheeting of slate was placed over several string courses and had a bell-cast overlap over these string courses.

The ivy growth removed in 2021 had loosened many slates and as many as possible were put back in the 2023 conservation work.

Licenced Archaeological Monitoring Martin FitzPatrick

Licenced monitoring was vital to providing information about the site and its features. The aim of the archaeological work was to examine mounds of rubble for architectural fragments and sort stone for reuse, recover architectural fragments from the site both externally and internally which could go back into fabric on in conjunction with the conservation work. It was also hoped to clarify the original layout and extent of walls and other features to allow for the consolidation and preservation of these features as part of the overall works.

These works were also necessary to safe access for future conservation work and to allow for the safe erection of scaffolding. Universal access for the public at the end of the Conservation Work is also vital.

They also were done as to facilitate the long-term objective of creating a comprehensive record of the architectural and archaeological development of the site between 1500 (or earlier) and down to and post-dating the fire of 1910 which destroyed the castle. The interpretative information along with historical references and new research will provide material towards the objective interpretation of the site. This interpretation will also inform the heritage panels which will introduce the site to the visitor and which will be erected in 2025. Safe access to the site for visitors is an important part of the future use and enjoyment of the castle and its curtilage. The conservation work and the careful planning of a signposted route with informative information panels on the archaeological, historical, built, natural and intangible cultural heritage of the site are all vital to the process of public engagement with the site.

Finds

A large body of material has been found in the preliminary archaeological monitoring including ridge tiles, slate, pottery, clay pipes, bricks, as well as architectural fragments. These are being cleaned, numbered, catalogued and processed and will be described and discussed in detail in the Final Report.



Fig. 71 The Castle at Menlo prior to the removal of ivy in 2021.



Fig. 72 The main frontage of Menlo Castle has yet to be conserved. The Georgian doorcase in the middle had a porch in front of it and a doorcase of Renaissance style and early 17th century date. The doorcase is now at Ashford Castle though parts of its jambs are still at Menlo and were identified in 2023.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 73 Part of the Tower House element of Menlo Castle conserved in 2022. It may incorporate earlier fabric of a Hall House.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 74 A limestone lintel inserted over a window. The original lintels had rotted out but were circular logs of wood cut in half.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 75 The schist weather sheeting on Menlo Castle. Ivy growth had dislodged many slates prior to its removal in 2021.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



*Fig. 76 The interior of the 17th century block of Menlo. Fallen stone and rubble was sorted and architectural fragments were put on pallets in 2022 and 2023.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



*Fig. 77 Repairs to one of the Menlo Castle chimney stacks in 2023.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



Fig. 78 Some of the inserted Georgian sash windows inserted on the River front of the 17th and 18th century block were precarious. An old limestone coping of some sort had been used as a lintel but did not fill the gap. The slate weather sheeting overlay it.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 79 Scaffolding and planking around decorative finials of brick and stone on the River front of Menlo Castle. The brick was Annaghdown – Clonboo brick and had previously been rendered in lime mortar and harling.

Photograph: J. Higgins.

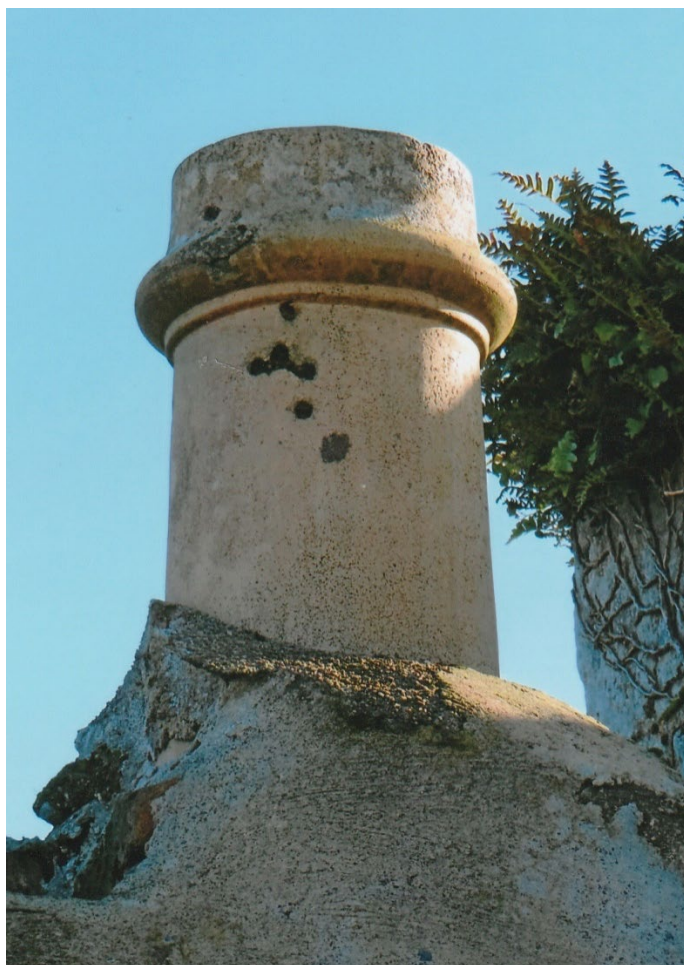


Fig 80 The 19th century crenellated turret or Belvedere at Menlo Castle. This was supported on an arch and projected over 18th century fabric. The arch needed re-supporting and two new voussoirs, a o shew-back and a very large curved-fronted corbel were inserted in 2022 by Galway Stone Design to replace lost features.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 81 Sebastian and Kris of Galway Stone Design inserting the voussoirs and corbel to support the Turret in 2022.



*Fig. 82 One of the surviving 19th century chimney pots at Menlo Castle.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



Fig. 83 Some areas of 19th century repair with Roman Cement over earlier lime mortar and schist and grey slate weather sheeting at Menlo Castle.



Fig. 84 Window, door and water spout fragments on pallets in 2023. The tapering water spout comes from a broken water spout on the 17th century frontage and will be put back in position. The window fragment in the middle was found in 2022. A full catalogue of architectural fragments is in preparation.

Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 85 The interior of the surviving gable of the tower house is attached to the 17th century Renaissance style façade (on right) and a very thick side wall on the left which could be incorporate tower house fabric as well as the walling of an earlier hall-house type castle.



Fig. 86 A fragment of a saddle stone from between the gutters of the 17th century frontage of Menlo Castle found in 2023. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 87 The Tower house element of the building of which a gable and small areas of two side walls survive over ground was conserved in 2021 and 2022. Photograph: Jim Higgins.



Fig. 88 The weather sheeting of schist (with some blue Bangor slate repturs extended over string courses on the river side façade of the castle and must have produced a glimmering shiny effect which contrasted with the white render of the lower façade. Photograph: J. Higgins



*Fig. 89 Not a plug socket! Just old holes in some of the schist weather slating at Menlo Castle.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



*Fig. 90 Some of the surviving schist weather sheeting bedded in lime mortar some have nail holes but are reused.
Note the remnants of ivy roots.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



*Fig. 91 Detached weather sheeting slates which fell when the ivy was removed are being put back.
Note the nail holes in some of the slates.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



Fig. 92 Scaffolding at Menlo Castle in October 2023.



Fig. 93 Internal Work: Twelve of the rotted out and burnt wooden lintels visible in this photograph were replaced by limestone lintels in 2023. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 94 The exterior face of walling consolidated in 2023. Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 95 Georgianised Gothic Revival window and below enlarged window with possible earlier features.
Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 96 Ground floor window with relieving arch above a lintel. Part of the lower walling of this frontage may be late medieval. The upper, blocked window is 18th – early 19th century.
Photograph: J. Higgins.

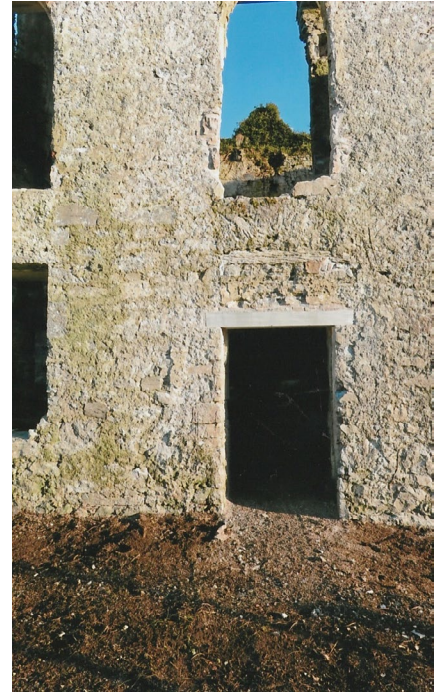


Fig. 97 Doorway with new lintel inserted in 2023. May originally have been a late medieval window with a lintel and a relieving arch over it.
Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 98 Architectural fragment palletted for numbering and cataloguing.
Photograph: J. Higgins.



*Architectural fragments including fragments of corbels from the internal face of the main front.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



*Fig. 100 Architectural fragments including water spouts, window and coping fragments.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



*Fig. 101 Reused schist roofing slates, Blue Bangor and Killaloe slate at Menlo Castle.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



*Fig. 102 Architectural fragments including some 18th – 19th century Georgian door and window fragments.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



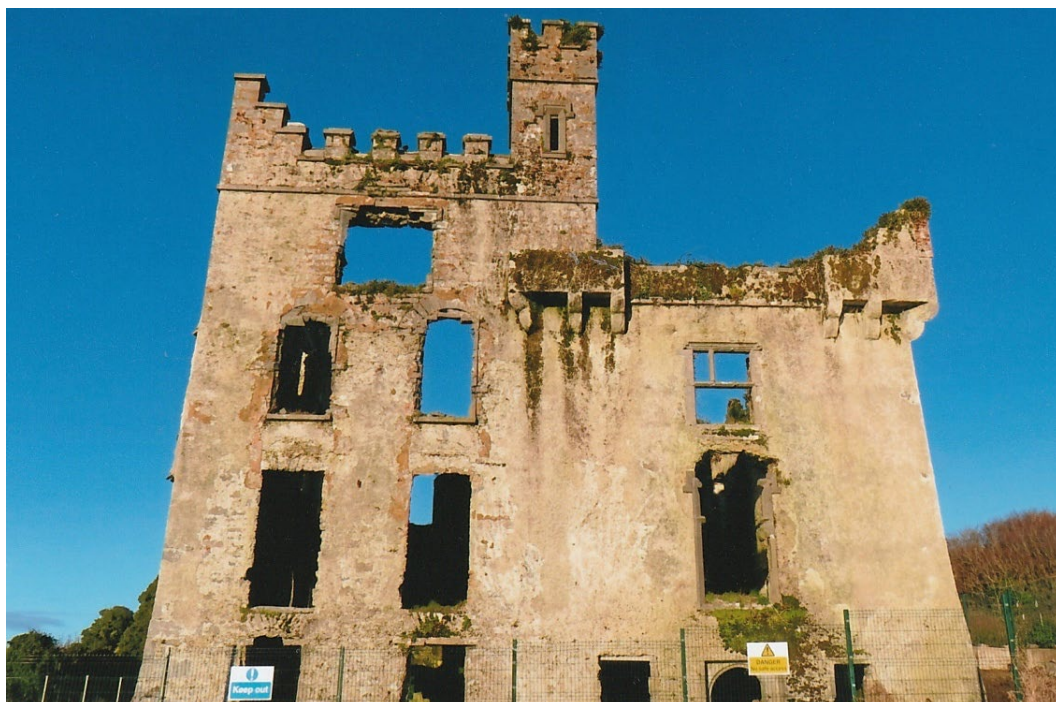
Fig. 103 Architectural fragments including the jamb of a 17th century renaissance style doorcase now at Ashford Castle which was discarded when the rest of the door was removed in the mid- 20th century.
Photograph: J. Higgins.



Fig. 104 Paving, roof ridge fragments, slate and brick in advance of cataloguing Menlo Castle 2023.
Photograph: J. Higgins.



*Fig. 105 Part of the Hall House Castle-cum-Tower House partly consolidated in 2022.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*



*Fig. 106 South frontage which will be conserved in 2024.
Photograph: J. Higgins.*

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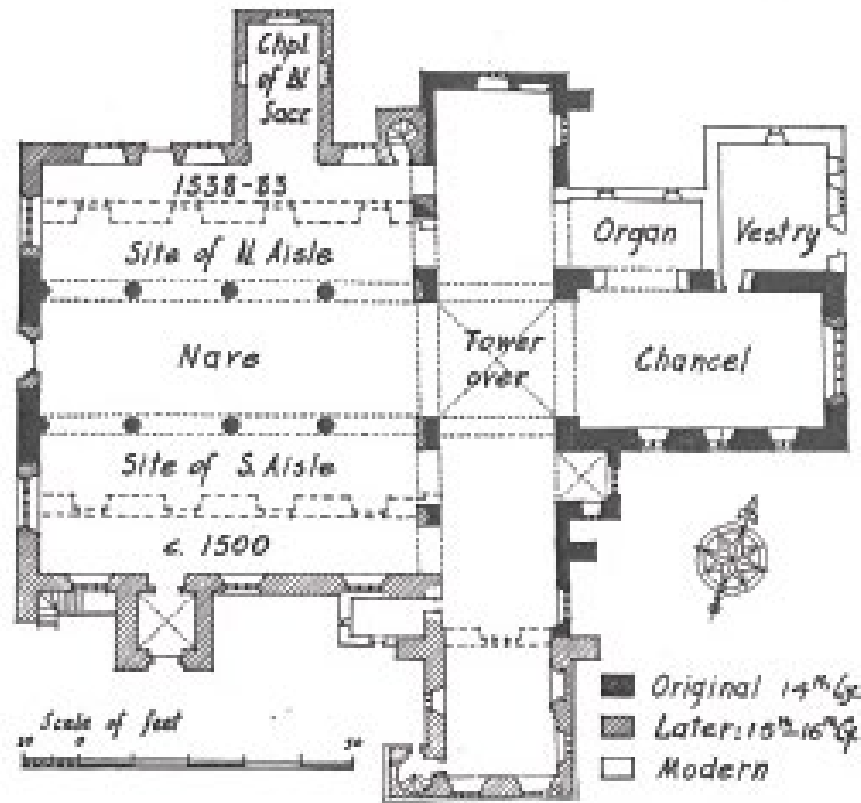


Fig. 107 St Nicholas Collegiate Church map by H.G.Leask.



Fig. 108 Menlo Castle Main Front 2023

