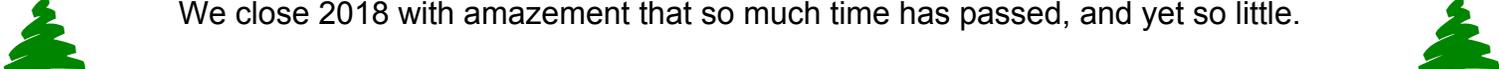




We close 2018 with amazement that so much time has passed, and yet so little.



This year we celebrated a big milestone – we received planning permissions for our project at the castle! We had been thinking about this since before we bought the castle, by talking to every person we could about the process, their experience, what to do and what *not* to do! Navigating building permissions in foreign countries is an experience, but all has ended well with the help of many diligent and wonderful people who we continue to meet in this journey!

In early January we did a 3 minute “lightening” presentation at the Archeology fair in Boston which was very educational. Later in the month we submitted our planning application! This was with the great help of David O’Brien (architectural designs and planning), Catherine McLoughlin (conservation and archeology) John Creed and Philip Lawlor (engineering). We then got a Request for Further Information which was a good sign, but caused significant more work (and cost!) with more studies, archeology, and additions to the team of Bena Stutchbury (castle expert) and Michael Tierney (conservation architect). We went round and round until we submitted more reams of paper (!) in September, and were granted permission in mid-October. Hurrah! Phase Two is complete.

We were able to host a few more events, starting with a very cold Beltane music event on April 30th, and a very rainy May Day where we decorated a May Bush for the first time. Many people braved the weather to help us and we enjoyed learning about local folklore. We also did more archeology in May as part of the RFI process and found more cobblestone courtyards, and also evidence of medieval settlements in the fields. Marilyn, Gordon’s mother came with us on a Castle Studies Group tour around Cork, and we were honored to have several of the very knowledgeable members come and visit our little castle, poking about and offering suggestions about interesting features! Through this we have met quite a few medieval studies people, archeologists and other castle geeks like ourselves 😊

We were delighted to return to Ireland in August with our good friend Tom from our Society of Creative Anachronism group. Our first SCA visitor! He congenially slaved away with us setting up events, fixing tents that blew down (twice), and helped us with cooking events at the Heritage Park and castle. We had created a heraldic flag that told the story of the main families associated with the castle and held a Flags and Families event. We all had great fun recreating a Mumming play from earlier historical versions. We also got to participate in an archeological dig at the Heritage Park at the original Carrig site where the Anglo-Normans invaded in the 12th century!

We visited again during September for Clayfest, a conference around natural building materials, where we played in the mud and had a great time meeting various folks who have restored old buildings, salvaged materials. It was quite inspirational, and we hope to use some of the techniques starting next year, plus stay in touch with these great people.

Our challenge will be to stay within budget and get multiple roofs on the old buildings in 2019. We hope to start with the tower and have plans to use green oak for that roof using a combination of hand and modern power tools. We expect Gordon to stay in Ireland for a few months next year as we embark on the tower roof, a new build area in the back, and



start working on the house roof to enclose it from the weather. We need to get shelter up soon at the castle so we can stay on site and not rent a separate home when we are there!

Next year the money will really start to pour out (and away!) so we have been investigating some avenues for funding. We received a LEADER grant for a feasibility study, which might lead to a capital grant to help with some of the construction costs. We would have to prove a business case for added tourism in Wexford. We have always had a lot of ideas for events and activities at the castle, and we need to balance this enthusiasm with realism about what would attract visitors, without needing to be “open” every day – that feels too much like **work!**

On the personal, non-castle front, we continue to be blessed with good health and employment. Liz continues her global project management work and travels a lot. Gordon has been working on the ambulance as an Emergency Medical Technician, and singing in various professional and church engagements. This will reduce in scope next year due to the project. Ian has graduated university and is evaluating his career options as he works part-time at trampoline park – learning a lot about work teams and customer service! Morgan spent her last season as a goalkeeper of the university soccer team, and looks forward to her last semester as a student. She is looking for work in international business and hopes to live abroad. Life is very, very busy and we are grateful!

In addition to the above, thanks to these wonderful people who have helped us this year:

- Castle owners Sonja and Kevin from Tullaun, Peter of Caherkinmonwee, Jim Brunton of Butlerstown, and Paul from Foulksrath for being so generous with their information, budgets, phasing, and experience.
- David & Sean Walsh, Mick Carroll, Liam & Lena Wright and the Tacumshane villagers for keeping an eye on the castle and property, and helping us with various issues
- Neil Carroll for providing advice about construction approaches.
- James Grace for contemplating the tower roof project
- Annabel & Brian Faulkner for their experience restoring several buildings in the area.
- And all the others who gave advice, visited, listened and got us this far!



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