

Sigginstown Castle: Grants and Research Update

Sigginstown Castle in
C. 1909

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We purchased Sigginstown Castle, Tacumshane, Co. Wexford in May 2016, since then we have been very busy. The castle is a tower-house built by the descendants of Anglo-Norman invaders. Sigginstown lies 2 hours due south of Dublin.



The CSG generously provided a Small Project Grant to help date the extant wicker in the tower vault. The first surprise was that the species is gorse. Locals in the Barony of Forth were known for gathering gorse for fuel and animal feed. There are few trees in the area due to the windy coast, but this is the first castle that Rory Sherlock had heard of with that species. The dating results are still to come.

We were also given a grant for a geophysical survey by the Heritage Council which was completed in June. The results allow us to see areas to avoid for excavation that may be impacted by our renovation plans. Our archaeologist says there is "lots of interesting stuff" in the three surrounding fields - we are both thrilled to find out more, and scared for our pocket book! We have a limited budget to work on the tower, the attached late 17th-century house, and agricultural building, so roofs, foundations and weather-proofing the buildings is our highest priority. There appears to be many scattered pits, possibly a fish pond (perhaps originally dug for local marl for bricks), in addition various intriguing lines and curves of foundations below. Although the site is not known to have remains of a motte and bailey like some tower houses, we are intrigued by a circle of land nearby that was once part of the property. We have already discovered the remains of a possible medieval hall-house or bawn wall, and a later cobblestone courtyard through test pits. There will be further excavations to be undertaken in the future.

Present day Sigginstown
Castle

©Michael Carroll



The castle was built by the Siggins family, who lost possession after the Cromwellian period in 1645. It was given to William Jacob, whose family held it for the next 150 years or so. The castle passed through marriage into the Wilson family, descendants of whom sold the castle to us. Many records have

been destroyed - partial Downs Survey information remains, as well as some census data. We look to locals for information and old photos, plus we are delighted to hear from descendants of Siggins, Jacobs, and Wilsons who contact us through Facebook pages and email.

This August for Heritage Week we held our first events - part of the agreement for the grant, as well as something we wanted to do. We built mud ovens, had a hearth cooking workshop, an outdoor music session, and sponsored a History Hunt along five sites of the Norman Way - part of Ireland's Ancient East heritage trail.

We venture forth with planning permissions soon, and hope that we will see many of you next year at the Ireland conference.

Liz and Gordon Jones (Connecticut, USA and Tacumshane, Co. Wexford)

For further information www.sigginstowncastle.com Lizjones429@earthlink.net
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Ph.D. & M. Phil. Castle Research

This is a new section which provides the abstracts of a few of the current M.Phil. and Ph.D. students whose research includes aspects of castle studies.

This can provide readers an opportunity to see some of the new research that is taking place by a largely new generation of researchers.

If you know someone who would like to have their abstract included within future bulletins please email Bulletin@castlestudiesgroup.org.uk

The Emergence of the castles in medieval Galacia (8th -13th centuries)

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In the eleventh and twelfth centuries a profound change in the conception of power and the political praxis occurs, this should be seen with a longer time frame. Only in that context can the phenomenon of the appearance of castles be analyzed, as a part of a very complex and multifaceted process of transformation.

This research focuses on the implications of the Galician castle network between the eighth and thirteenth centuries and seeks to address some necessary aspects. The first one is the predominance of the territory, as a matter of study, in order to understand the relationships of power, by giving prominence to geography and landscape as perennial sources. The second is the extension of the chronological limit from the feudal 11th century back until the eighth, to emphasize the central importance of long duration and to understand the emergence of the castles from their earliest origins, tracing them to the limits of Antiquity. In turn, the territorial framework chosen agrees, in principle, with present-day Galicia, as defined precisely in the 12th century following the independence of Portugal; thus, the reference will be Gallaecia, a clearly defined