Report on Archaeological Monitoring

at

Sigginstown Castle Co. Wexford

Licence No. 19 E 0037

Planning Ref. No.: 20180037

ITM Ref. No. 706250-607181

For Liz and Gordon Jones

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Introduction

The clients, Gordan and Liz Jones, received planning permission to carryout works to Sigginstown Castle and the adjoining 17th/19th century ruined house subject to a number of conditions including No.3 which relates to archaeology. As part of the clients' application for permission to carryout these works, an archaeological assessment was undertaken in November 2016 by Stafford McLoughlin. The assessment included the excavation of a number of test pits within the tower house and its adjoining house as well in the area of the proposed sewerage/percolation system and the propose accessway. The results of this work are contained in the Stafford McLoughlin report (December 2016, Licence No. 16 E 0519).

Phase No.1 of the proposed development included the removal of sod from the parapet of the tower house. The ground and second floors (in effect the first) of the tower house will be renovated.

Plate 1. Looking N at accessway

Plate 2. Looking S at accessway

Plate 3. Looking S inside house with tower house at rear

Test Pit No.1 which was measured 1m x 1m, was excavated in the ground floor of the tower house (Stafford Mcloughlin report p.6) to a max depth of 600mm. The only find from here was a clay pipe stem. Underfloor heating will be placed here.

Test Pit No.2 was excavated in the area over the vault of the tower house which has been designated as the 2nd floor. The pit measured 1m x 1m and was taken down to the top of the vault. Nothing of archaeological interest was found. (Stafford & McLoughlin report p.6).

Plate 4. S hearth looking S

Plate 5. S hearth looking NW

The house which probably dates to the late 17th century but has 19th century brickwork in it, especially its E wall which seems to be entirely 19th century has been archaeologically tested by Stafford McLoughlin (report pages 6 to 8). Three 1m x 1m test pits were excavated in the interior of the house and one outside the E wall at the N end. Nothing of archaeological interest was noted that would relate to the medieval period. There was nothing in the results of the test pits that would have suggested anything other than modern fill. No medieval or post-medieval finds were noted in the Stafford McLoughlin report.

The 19th century internal brick structures (fireplaces N and S) were partially recorded by Stafford & McLoghlin. The test-pit outside the E wall of the house produced 19th century glass and red brick.

The master bedroom is to be placed at the W end of the remains of the late 19th century agricultural building at the N end of the old house. The area was covered with collapsed material from the W and N walls of the agricultural building. Since this area is part of the 19th century building and is outside the 17th century house it was unlikely to have any medieval deposits in it.

Plate 6. N hearth and tiled area looking E looking S

The initial area for the Septic tank and percolation system and associated works were archaeologically tested with trial pits (Stafford McLoughlin report ps. 8 & 9).
Because of possible archaeological remains found by Stafford McLoughlin (report pages 8 &9) the area for the percolation system was moved to a new location.

Archaeological Monitoring

Work at the site commenced with the removal of the overburden from the accessway at the W side of the tower house and the house. The accessway is from the public road just SW of the castle. The S portion of the accessway has up to 300mm of sod and top soil stratified on the undisturbed boulder clay. From c. half way along the length of the house to the end of the modern farm building ruin there was a mixture of broken brick, mortar and rounded stones stratified on the boulder clay. There was no evidence of any archaeological remains. Hardcore was placed on top of a membrane giving access to the area proposed for the new build at the W end of the ruined farm building and the N end of the house.

Plate 7. Tiled area with N hearth at left looking N

Excavation of the Ruined House

The only obvious features in the house were those noted by Stafford McLoughlin (Report pages 6 to 8), i.e. the two brick fire place remains. These features were excavated, cleaned-up and recorded and then removed. The fireplace remains were situated towards the S and N ends of the house.

The North Fireplace the N fire place consisted of an E-W brick wall with the fire place hearth in the NE angle of where the walls meet. A test pit (No.3) was excavated by Stafford & McLoughlin immediately to the W of the hearth which revealed cobble stones were located underneath the modern overburden. A large stone was found just W of the hearth, also marked on Stafford and McLoughlin's ground plan of the house (p.13). The stone did not appear to have any structural significance in its present location and was merely sitting on top of the undisturbed boulder clay. The E-W wall of the fire place was three bricks wide laid lengthways in an E-W direction. Only two layers of bricks remained. The remaining section of the wall had a maximum length of dc.2m. The N-S was c.1m long.

What is very strange is that no evidence of burning was found anywhere near the fireplace. There was no charcoal and no burnt clay or fire-cracked brick.

A tiled and bricked area was found immediately to the E and NE of the N-S wall of the N fireplace which extended to the N wall of the house. They were at slightly higher level than the base of the fireplace wall but still could have been more-or-less contemporary with it. The area consisted of eight tiles each 240mm sq. and two 300mm sq. tiles tacked-on at the N side. There was a line of red bricks running N-S butted against the E side of the tiles. There were nine rows of bricks running E-W. This feature could have been the floor of a wash-up area. Nothing of archaeological interest was found that could date this feature, but since it was butted against the fireplace at slightly higher level than the base of the fireplace it may belong to the later house.

Plate 8. S hearth cleaned-off

South Fireplace was situated just NNE of the doorway to the house and consisted of two brick walls which joined at the NW angle. The so-called fireplace was situated in this angle but like the N fireplace showed no sign of burning. Its E-W wall measured c.3m in length and was c.400mmm wide (3 bricks thick) and had a max height of 400mm. The N brick wall was not well preserved. Its S end was butted against the N wall of the tower house. The wall was destroyed in the area opposite the doorway. It was originally c.4.75m long.

It would appear that access to the kitchen area was through a doorway shown in the Stafford and McLoughlin report the E end of the N wall of this feature and that the N-S wall had been breached at the time of the occupation of the later house. Access to the rest of the ground floor would have been via a N-S passage along the side of the W wall of the house.

The fireplace itself had no evidence of charcoal burning etc. However a small amount of charcoal was found to the E side of the hearth area. Across the front of the hearth was a strip of hard-packed mortar (as shown on Stafford McLoughlin illustration p.13), c.1.7m long and c.450mm wide. There was brick and mortar in the hearth area with a max depth of 250mm.

Plate 9. S hearth viewed from Tower House

House Floor Level In the between the two fireplaces there were the remains of cross-walls as evidenced by some stone and brick foundations but also scars in the E and W walls of the house. About 150mm to 250mm of top soil was found stratified in the floor areas not occupied by the fireplaces and tiled floor. The overburden was stratified directly on the surface of the undisturbed boulder clay. There was no evidence of occupational material between the top soil and the top of the undisturbed. No further features were found during the removal of the overburden from the interior of the house. The undisturbed boulder clay was then removed to the level required for the rebuilding of the house by digger.

Plate 10. Fireplace at 2nd floor level in S wall

The Percolation area measured c.10m SW. The sod and top soil was removed to a depth of c.300mm to reveal the top of the undisturbed boulder clay. Nothing of archaeological interest was noted here. The septic tank area was also excavated and the service trenches for the pipes archaeologically monitored.

Plate 11. W wall od Tower House 2nd floor

<u>The 19th century fam building</u> had the overburden removed by machine with a toothless bucket down to the undisturbed boulder clay. There was nothing but rock and top soil at the W end and nothing but top soil and rotten manure in the rest of the ruined farm building. The cob wall here was also removed. Nothing of archaeological interest was noted.

Plate 12. Entrance to stairwell

<u>Exterior of House, Tower house and Farm Building</u> were archaeologically assessed. The area at the S side of the farm building was covered with dead nettles, indicating recent disturbance. Where the E wall of the house and the S wall of farm building meet was tested to see if the cobbles stones, as revealed in Stafford and McLoughlin's test trench No.5, were in place, which they were. The overburden which consisted of top soil and rotted manure was then removed in a c.6m wide strip starting at the E wall of the house for the full length of the farm building and taken it down to the cobblestone surface. The area of stripping was then extended to a 2m wide strip along the E side of the farm house. The cobbles were not revealed at the E side of the farmhouse. Nothing of archaeological interest was noted. A 3m wide area was then stripped along the E side of the house and the tower house and was taken down to the level of the existing cobbles. The top soil and sod were removed in a 2.50m strip at the S side of the tower house.

Nothing of archaeological interest was noted and the only small finds discovered were pieces of late 19th and 20th century earthenware.

The Tower House

The ground floor of the tower house had previously been tested by Stafford and Mcloughlin (Test Pit No.1. p.6). The only finds recovered from 1m sq. pit was a fragment of a clay pipe stem. The floor level here was reduced by 450mm below the base of sill of the doorway into the anti-chamber which leads to the stairs and the now blocked-up original doorway. The fill of ground floor consisted of boulder clay on which the tower house is built. This material was removed by hand-digging. Nothing of archaeological interest was noted. A tin-walled, late 19th or early 20th century, stone ware jar for preserves were covered. There was no meaningful stratification of material in the ground floor deposit, it was all clearly boulder clay.

Plate 13. Entrance to garderobe with pounded floor in front

Plate 14. Original floor level (2nd floor) S side

Plate 15. Original floor level E side of 2nd floor

The second floor of the tower house was tested by Stafford & McLoughlin with a 1m sq. trench almost at the centre of the floor. Before any material was removed from this floor it could be seen that there was very little build-up judging by the level of the bases of the sills of the doorway into the garderobe and the doorway from the stairs. The deposits were removed by trowelling the surfaces of the floor to see if the original floor level could be uncovered. The deposits in the garderobe chamber were cleared-out but no floor level was found here. There was merely sterile loose clay and small stones. Work on the main floor level commenced at the W wall. In the SW angle of the chamber a pounded clay floor was covered immediately below the level of the sill of the doorway to the garderobe. The clay floor did not extend more than c.500mm out from the sill of the garderobe doorway. Beyond the area of the pounded clay floor c.200mm to 300mm below the existing surface there was a mortar and stone layer which appeared to be original floor level and was at the same level as the pounded clay surface. Above this surface was clay and stone loosely deposited. The levelled-off floor was left in situ and the vault stones were not uncovered. The floor was then covered with a tarpaulin to keep it dry. Nothing of archaeological interest was noted.

Plate 16. Original floor level (2nd floor) looking E

Plate 17. Original floor level (2nd floor) looking W

Plate 18. Farm shed with overburden removed

Summary and Conclusion

All the ground works were archaeologically monitored. The interior of the 17th/19th century house was hand excavated down to the undisturbed boulder clay. The remains of the fireplaces were recorded and removed. Top soil was removed from outside the E side of the house to reveal the cobbled 19th century yard. The two floors of the tower house were excavated by hand. Nothing pf archaeological interest was noted either small finds or features other than the two fireplaces and the red-brick and tiled area. It is typical of tower houses that little of archaeological interest is ever found in the buildings. It is likely that the building of the 17th and 19th century house has removed any trace of material associated with the tower house.

Plate 19. Cobbled area with top soil removed to expose cobbles at E side of house and S side of farm shed

Plate 20. Cobbled area looking W to house

Plate 21. Area stripped at E end of farm shed

Plate 22. Percolation area stripped of its overburden

SITE LOCATION MAP 1:10560

N

Map Series

10560

5784
REVISION DATE = 27-Mar-2015
SURVEY DATE = 01-JJA-2000

Clip Extents

LLX,LLY = 705959,686896
LRX,LRY = 706542,686896
ULX,ULY = 705959,687316
URX,URY = 706542,687316

Projection

ITM

ITM Centre Point Co-ordinate

X,Y = 706250,687101

Extraction Date

18-Dec-2017

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Map Series

6 inch

WX052
REVISION DATE = 31-Dec-1922
SURVEY DATE = 31-Dec-1840
LEVELLED DATE = 31-Dec-1922

WX053+053A
REVISION DATE = 31-Dec-1940
SURVEY DATE = 31-Dec-1840
LEVELLED DATE = 31-Dec-1944

WX047
REVISION DATE = 31-Dec-1922
SURVEY DATE = 31-Dec-1840
LEVELLED DATE = 31-Dec-1922

WX048
REVISION DATE = 31-Dec-1940
SURVEY DATE = 31-Dec-1840
LEVELLED DATE = 31-Dec-1944

Raster Extents

LLX,LLY = 705959,686193
LRX,LRY = 707481,686193
ULX,ULY = 705959,688009
URX,URY = 707481,688009

Projection

ITM

ITM Centre Point Co-ordinate

X,Y = 706250,687101

Extraction Date

18-Dec-2017

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SITE MAP 1:2500

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DATE:	REV:	BY:	DESCRIPTION:
DD/MM/YY	-	-	FIRST DRAWING

MAPS

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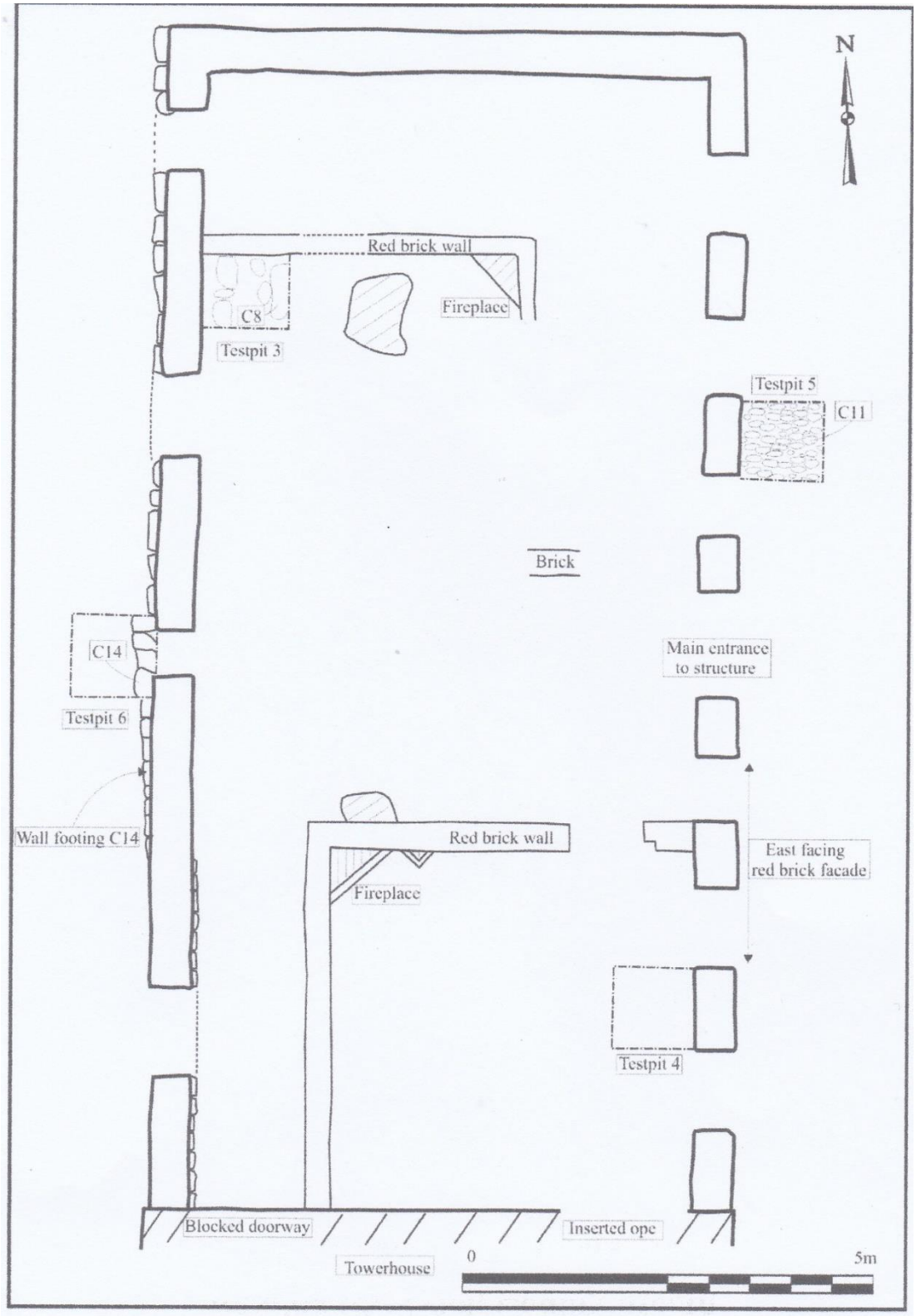
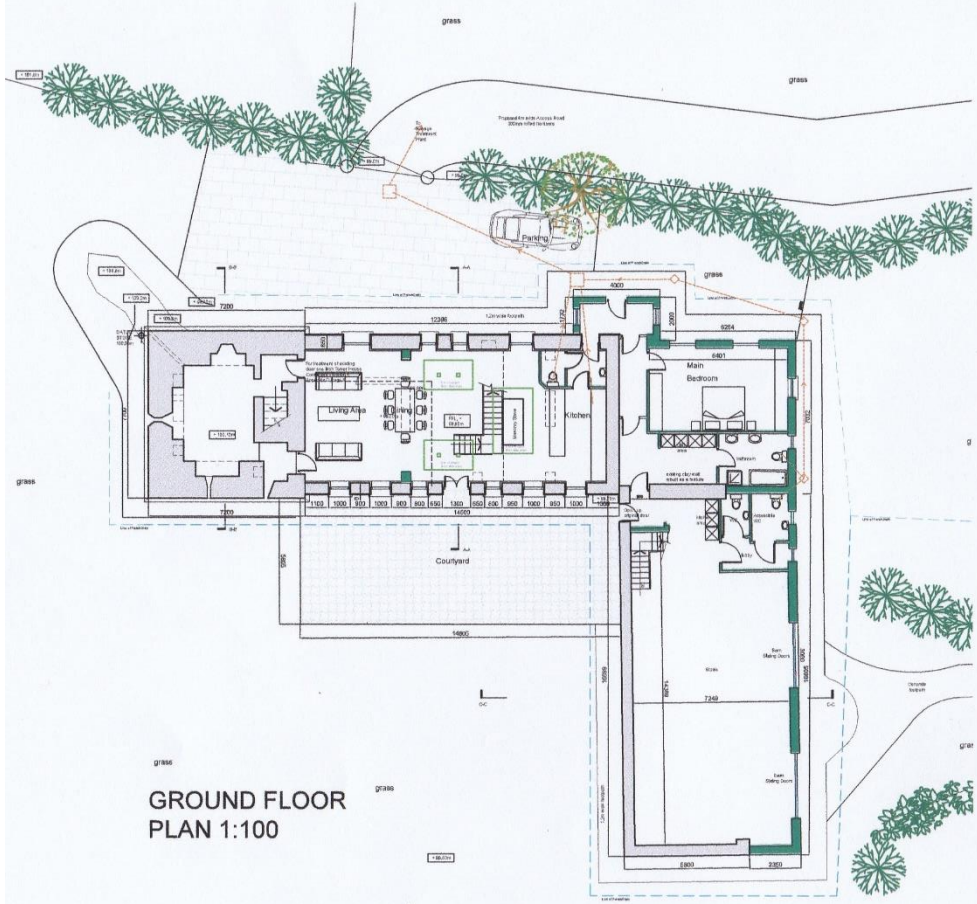
PROJECT TITLE: RENOVATION OF BIGGINSTOWN CASTLE	
CLIENT: LIZ & GORDON JONES	DRAWN BY: David O'Brien MScAEES BSc
DRAWING TITLE: MAPS	PROJECT REF. NO.: LJ 01 PP 01
SCALE: 1:10560 1:2500	

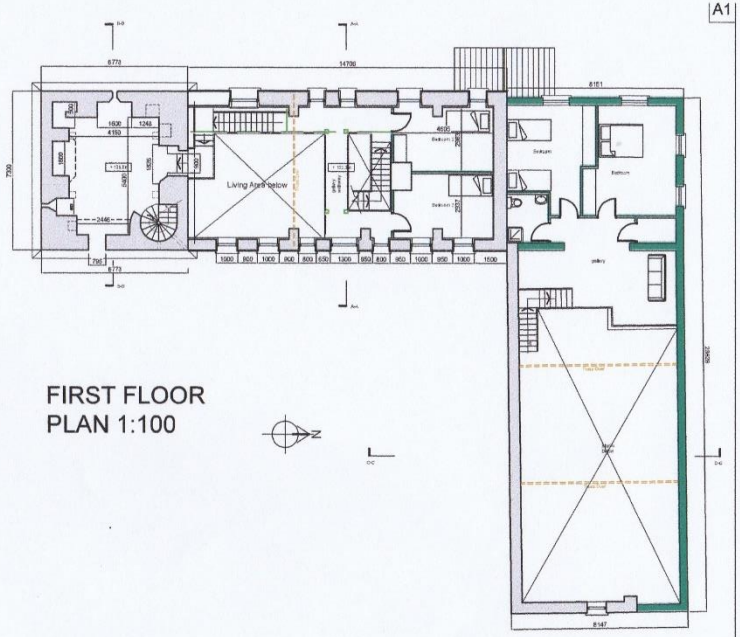
PROPOSED
SAND FILTER -
SEE ENGINEERS
REPORT
Castle
(in Ruins)
New
Entrance
Mill Race
Sight Line 100m
Sight Line 100m
Site Notice



Layout of attached house showing position of test pits 3-6, and location of internal features at ground level (Stafford and McLoughlin)

A1





Existing Walls Thus

Proposed Walls Thus

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DATE:	REV:	BY:	DESCRIPTION:
LJ 01	-	-	FIRST DRAWING

PROPOSED FLOOR PLANS

These drawings must be read in conjunction with the Archaeologist's, the Tower House Consultant's and the Conservation Architect's Reports / Specifications.

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PROJECT TITLE:	PROPOSED WORKS TO SIGGINSTOWN CASTLE		
CLIENT:	GORDON & LIZ JONES	DRAWN BY:	David O'Brien MSc AEES BSc
DRAWING TITLE:	PROPOSED GROUND AND FIRST FLOOR PLAN	PROJECT REF. NO.:	SC 01
SCALE:	1:100		PP 05 D