

TIMAHOE MONASTIC SITE

CONSERVATION PLAN



Margaret Quinlan Architects

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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Margaret Quinlan FRIAI

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The village of Timahoe, with a population of over 500 people, is set in a broad fertile valley in County Laois, 12 km south of Portlaoise. To the north-east is the Timahoe Esker Nature Reserve.

Timahoe is notable for its medieval remains, principally a well-preserved round tower with elaborate Romanesque decoration at the doorway and lowest window, and the ruins of a large rectangular church, partly incorporated in a late medieval castle. These buildings share a site with a 19th century church, converted by Laois County Council to a library for some years and now used by Timahoe Community Development. The present village of Timahoe was constructed around a triangular green in the 19th century. The land and road improvements around the village have largely erased the pattern of enclosures associated with the medieval ecclesiastical site.

1.2 AIM OF PROJECT

In summary, the Conservation Report aims to safeguard the fabric and significance of Timahoe monastic site and to enhance its setting. Timahoe monastic site is a place of great archaeological and historic importance, in a beautiful setting overlooking the village green of Timahoe. The local stakeholders wish to establish a framework within which the significance of the monuments and their setting can be preserved and enhanced into the future.

Consultation with the planning authority will help to ensure that the policies set out in the plan will be recognised in the County Development Plan and lead to greater statutory protection. The plan itself will form the basis for funding applications to preserve and protect the character and significance of the place in keeping with the aims of community funding schemes and the overriding objectives of the Heritage Council.

1.3 STEERING GROUP & STAKEHOLDERS

Steering Group

Catherine Casey, Laois County Council
Roghan Headen, Joan Clancy, John Delaney and Andrew Daly, Timahoe Community Development Association

Stakeholders

Office of Public Works, National Monuments Section
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Laois County Council
Timahoe Community Development Association
Church of Ireland community represented by Arthur Kerr and Gordon Bradley
Cosby family

1.4 PROJECT TEAM

Margaret Quinlan, Architect and Team Leader
Patrick Quinlan, Architect
Aighleann O'Shaughnessy, Architect
Dave Pollock, Archaeologist
Dr Rachel Moss, Art Historian
Dr Fiona McGowan, Ecologist

1.5 STATUTORY PROTECTION

The existing statutory policy framework for the protection of the architectural heritage is provided by:

- National Monuments Acts, 1930 and as subsequently amended
- Record of Monuments and Places
- Planning and Development Act, 2000
- Heritage Act, 1995
- Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1999

Existing statutory protection extended to the monument, site and setting is as follows:

The following features are included on the Record of Monuments and Places and are protected under the National Monuments Acts:

Ecclesiastical site: SMR LA018-031001
Medieval Church: SMR LA018-031002
Graveyard: SMR LA018-031003
Burials: SMR LA018-031004
Round Tower: SMR LA018-031005
Castle – Tower House: SMR LA018-031006
Sheela-na-gig: SMR LA018-031007
Shrine: SMR LA018-031008
Bronze Age burial: SMR LA018-031009
Exhibitionist Figure: SMR LA018-031010
Enclosure: SMR LA018-060
Urn burial: SMR LA018-062

The Medieval Church and Round Tower are also National Monuments in State Care number 114.

The former Church of Ireland church (Willie Headen Memorial Library) is included on the Record of Protected Structures in the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023, reference number RPS 353.

The church is also included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, registration number 12801802. It is noted as being of Architectural, Archaeological and Social interest and of Regional importance. Other Protected Structures in the village of Timahoe include St Michael's Roman Catholic Church (RPS 354), Timahoe National School (RPS 355), Stone Warehouse (RPS 356), and the facades of two public houses on the village green: Ramsbottom (RPS 357) and the Tower Inn (RPS 358).

Timahoe has been designated an Architectural Conservation Area in Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023.

The historic patrimony at Timahoe is also recognised by the County Development Plan with the designation of the following as 'Key Heritage Assets' for the county:

Archaeological Assets: Intact Round Tower at Timahoe

Architectural Assets: Historic village of Timahoe

Natural Assets: Timahoe Esker nature reserve

1.6 METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork was carried out at various stages between March 2014 and October 2014. Documentary research was carried out using primary and secondary sources. Repositories consulted included the National Museum, Office of Public Works archive, the Cosby family archive at Stradbally Hall and the library of the Representative Church Body.

Following updates to the SMR in 2015, Site SMR LA018-031010 Exhibitionist Figure was added.

Consultations took place with members of Timahoe Community Development Association, with representatives of the National Monuments Section of the Office of Public Works and Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, officers of Laois County Council and the Cosby family.



Figure 1: Round Tower & 19th Century Church at Timahoe

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The placename

Timahoe is situated in County Laois, in the barony of Cullenagh and the civil parish of Fossy or Timahoe. The name Timahoe comes from the Irish Tigh Mochua. This is seen in archival documents also as Teach Mochua or Tech Mo Chua, and in English records as Tymochoe, Timochoe or Timorchoe.

The saint

Mochua is said to have been a son of Lonán, attached to the Fothairt, sharing a line of descent with Brigid of Kildare. Accounts of his life deal mainly with his relationship with other saints, his great knowledge and his various cures. He was first a warrior, then a convert to Christianity at the age of 30 and later became a monk. His death is given as 654 in *Cronicon Scottorum* and 657 in the *Annals of the Four Masters*.

He is remembered on the 24th December in Timahoe as both Mochua and Crónán.

The “folklore” story about St Mochua can be seen on many websites such as thestandingstone.ie and askaboutireland.ie. The basic story is also in Brendan Lehane’s book *Early Celtic Christianity* and in Geoffrey Keating’s *History of Ireland*.

St. Mochua lived as a hermit without worldly goods except he had three pets - a rooster, a mouse and a fly. The rooster called him for the hour of Matins. If, weak from his vigils and prayers, Mochua dozed off during the day, the mouse would nibble at his ear to arouse him again. The fly would walk along each line of his Psalter as he read it, and when he became tired, the fly would stop at the point where the saint had broken off until he could return again to resume reading the Psalms.



Figure 2: Sculpture commemorating the life of St Mochua, by Michael Burke

Historical timeline

657: Death of Mochua.

880: Death of Focharta, abbot of Teach Mochua.

919: The place was plundered and the oratory burnt; Cairbre, airchinneach (hereditary steward) of Teach Mochua died, also an anchorite died at an advanced age.

928: Death of Maol-Caoimghin, Abbot of Teach Mochua.

931: Cosgrach, son of Maolchaige, bishop of Teach Mochua and the Commanns, died.

936: Finguine, Seach-abb (vice abbot) of Teach Mochua and Lord of Magh Abhna, died.

951: Gormghal, lecturer of Teach Mochua and Inis Robhartaigh, died.

969: Finguine, grandson of Fiachra, abbot of Teach Mochua, died.

1001: Conaing, grandson of Fiachra, abbot of Teach Mochua, died.

1007: Finsneachta, grandson of Fiachra, abbot of Teach Mochua, died.

1041: Cuciche Ua Dunlaing, Lord of Laoighis, with his son and Cailleoc his wife were slain at Teach Mochua by Mac Conin, who was himself killed the next day by Ó Braonain in revenge.

1069 Giollamuire, son of Dubh, chief of Crimthannan, was slain by Macraith ó Mordha in the doorway of the oratory of Teach Mochua. They had both sworn an oath on the "Caimminn", a reliquary. Macraith ó Mordha was afterwards killed near Aghaboe, in revenge for the violation of the reliquary of Fintan, Mochua, and Colmán.

1142: The place was plundered and the oratory burnt. It was re-founded by the O'Mores.

1302-1307: The parish was valued for taxation for the Holy War at 8 marks.

1555: the O'Mores were in possession of a castle, added to it and strengthened it

1598: O'More won a battle against the English under Sir Henry, General Harrington. Adam Loftus, son of the archbishop of Dublin was slain. 1200 in total recorded killed

1599: Thomas Loftus, brother of Adam, was knighted by Robert, Earl of Essex.

1609/10: Thomas Loftus received a grant of Timahoe from Essex. He died there in 1635 and is buried in St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. It was afterwards given to Richard Cosby, probably by assignment, as Anne Loftus, daughter of Sir Thomas, married Francis, son of Richard Cosby.

1642: The English General Monck defeated the Irish under General Preston in a battle fought near Timahoe.

1650: Tradition says that the friars dwelt in Timahoe until 1650, when they were murdered by Colonels Hewson and Reynolds.

1657: The Report of the Commission issued from the Lord Protector's Court of Chancery, said that Timahoe had the Earl of Kildare as patron, and had 4 townlands worth £16 per annum.

1735: Geo II Act passed establishing toll road from Killcullen to Timahoe.

1739: Geo II Act passed establishing toll road from Timahoe to Tipperary Town.

1827: It was reported that Daniel Keane climbed to the top of the Round Tower on the outside, unaided, threw his coat over the top in front of a large number of spectators and won a large sum of money.

1915-16: Vestry Account Book entry bemoaned the 'miserable present situation' of the parish; which had lost much of its income due to the disturbance caused by the land question and death and departure of key families.

2.2 DESCRIPTION AND EVOLUTION OF MONUMENTS

The Round Tower (SMR LA018-031005)

The most complete medieval structure at Timahoe is the round tower. There are several published descriptions available, the most detailed and accurate being by Crawford (1924) (see Appendix VI). Others include Petrie, Dunraven and archaeology.ie. Below is a synopsis only, compiled from available material.

The Round Tower is built of sandstone and limestone. Its height is c 29.59m, and its circumference at the base is c 20.75 m. It has seven levels under the cap, and each floor is carried by an offset in the masonry. The tower has a slight lean, perhaps from settlement after construction. The batter or slope of the tower is 1 in 40.

The first two floors are without any opening or light. The Romanesque doorway is on the third level, at 4.7 m above ground level, on the east face. This is said to be the finest of its kind and in a good state of preservation. It is a sandstone doorway of four receding orders, in two pairs, decorated with human heads with intertwined hair. The decoration suggests construction around 1150 (Crawford 1924, O’Keeffe 2003).

O’Keeffe considers the doorways of round towers to have a ceremonial importance. The doors are normally raised off the surrounding ground and frequently faced the door of the contemporary main church (O’Keeffe 2003). The round tower at Timahoe is a relatively late example, and might postdate the construction of the known medieval church, but the doorway in the tower is not aligned with the likely west door of this church. There is no sign of a church in the appropriate place at Timahoe, and no record of remains being exposed during construction of the 19th century church, when this part of the site is likely to have been truncated.

The fourth level has an opening facing south, also in sandstone, with a pointed arched window of four stones externally, with a projecting architrave. It has a round arch internally. This window is carved in a similar style to the doorway.

The fifth level has an opening facing north, a narrow window with a semi-circular head of one stone. The sixth level has an opening facing west, a rough rectangular window without any splay to the inside.

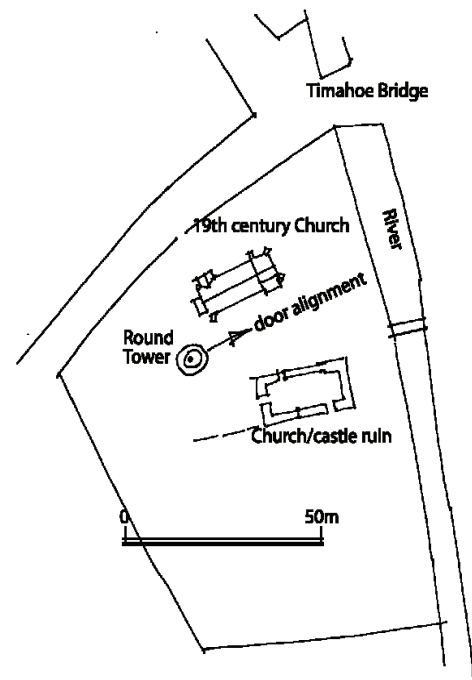


Figure 3: Orientation of doorway (D. Pollock)



Figure 4: Doorway of round tower

Immediately under the conical cap, there are four windows facing the cardinal points. These are triangular headed, with a curved recessed arch under the angle, and are slightly tapering towards the top.

The conical cap was repaired in 1888. There are illustrations which pre-date the repair, which show that part of it had collapsed. There are references (O'Byrne) that the Board of Works removed a beehive shaped cap and replaced it with the cap now to be seen. The cap may have been deformed before actual collapse and taken the shape of a beehive.

The Friary (SMR LA018-031002)

It is recorded that an abbey was established here by the O'Mores. The only surviving part of an abbey is the 15th century remains of an arch, probably a chancel arch. The arch has inner and outer jambs, built of limestone, with chamfered dressed stone. The outer arches have support corbels with carved leaf decoration. The impost on the inner arch is also carved with foliage under it (See fig. 2.4). Although referred to as the Friary, there is no evidence that it was ever a Franciscan foundation. A suggestion that the friary may have been Augustinian arises from a record of an inquisition in Kilmainham in 1606, when Elizabeth 1 granted to Edmond Butler "the site of the late monastery or house of the B.V. Mary of Connall". This refers to an Augustinian Priory founded in Great Connall in 1202. The grant included "the manor and possessions of Timocho, otherwise called Farrin-Prior". Academic research outside the scope of this report is needed to confirm the Augustinian connections or otherwise. The presence of a parish church 1km away is of interest when considering the 16th century castle use.

The ruined medieval church was converted to a castle in the 16th century. The original large rectangular building, probably with a west door, appears to have been extended to the east with the insertion of an arch in the 15th century. The evidence for the insertion is clear and the original building has no indicators of a late medieval construction; there is no battering of the lower walls and no dressed limestone quoins.

An original east window may have been removed from over the arch, and an original west door may be represented by the present rough opening.

The roof pitch of the original building can be seen on the outside of the east gable, but is ambiguous on the inside, masked by later wall plaster.



Figure 5: Arch with decorated corbels

An original window in the south wall may be represented by a masonry patch under the late gable. The late medieval eastern extension to the church may have been quite small. There is no fragmentary roofscar for the new chancel, and no sockets for purlins; the roof may have been very close to the top of the arch and patched when the arch was blocked.

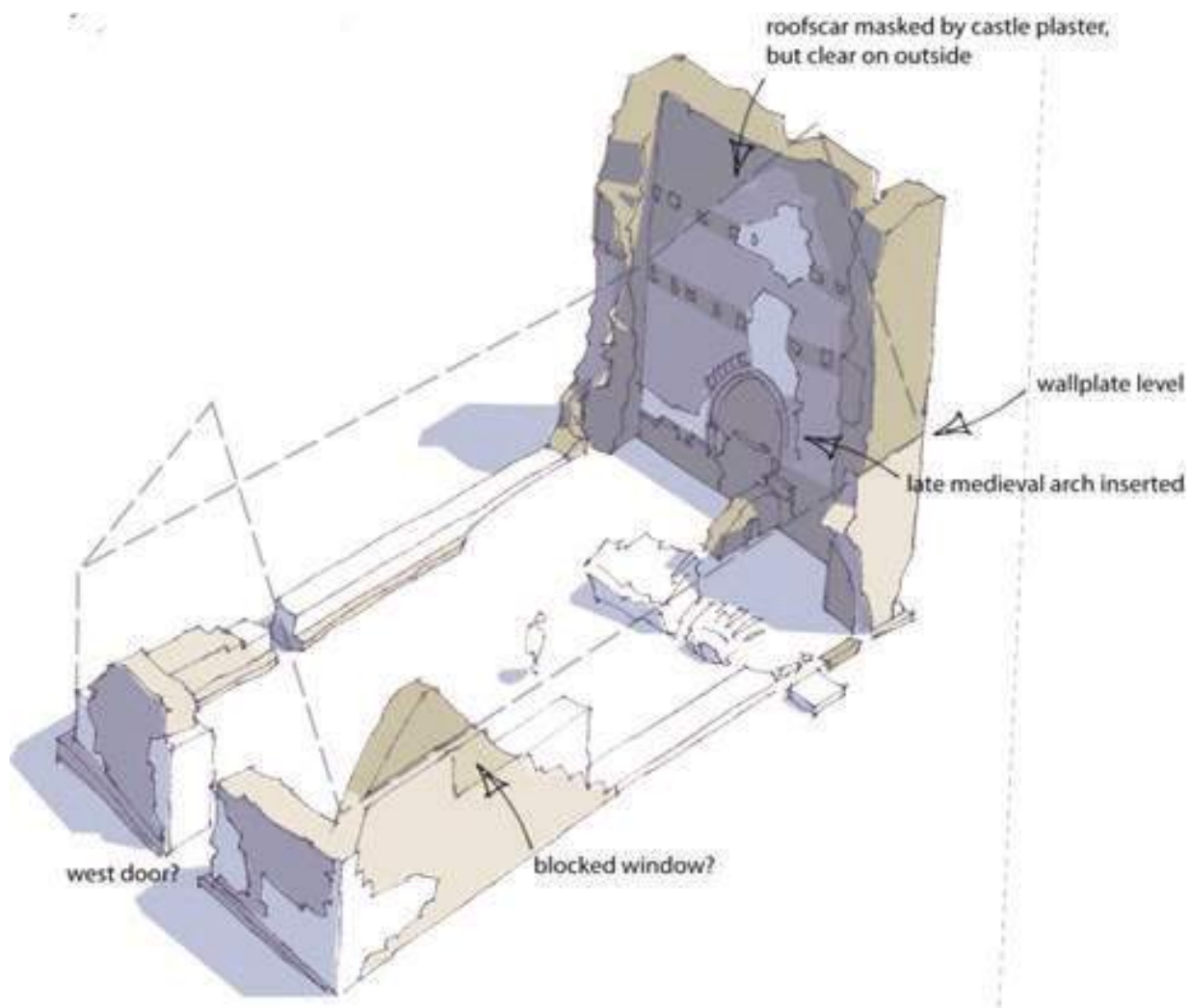


Figure 6: Oblique sketch of medieval church/castle remains from southwest with likely outline of friary (D. Pollock)

Castle (SMR LA018-031006)

The castle was built in the 16th century when the east end of the original church stood to full height. From the remains, it is not clear if the castle was in fact a fortification of the church or merely retained parts of the church in the new structure. The walls of a rectangular structure, probably the nave of the church, are visible at low level only apart from the castle walls. This measures c. 23m long and c.12m wide. The castle was c. 7m by 12m.

The chancel was removed, the arch was blocked, and a three-storeyed towerhouse reused the gable, and extended a short distance along the nave of the old church.

Most of the tower has fallen and been removed, but a corner (probably southwest) lies across the interior of the former church. Sockets for first floor and second floor joists can be seen in the reused church gable, over the ragged start of a low barrel vault.

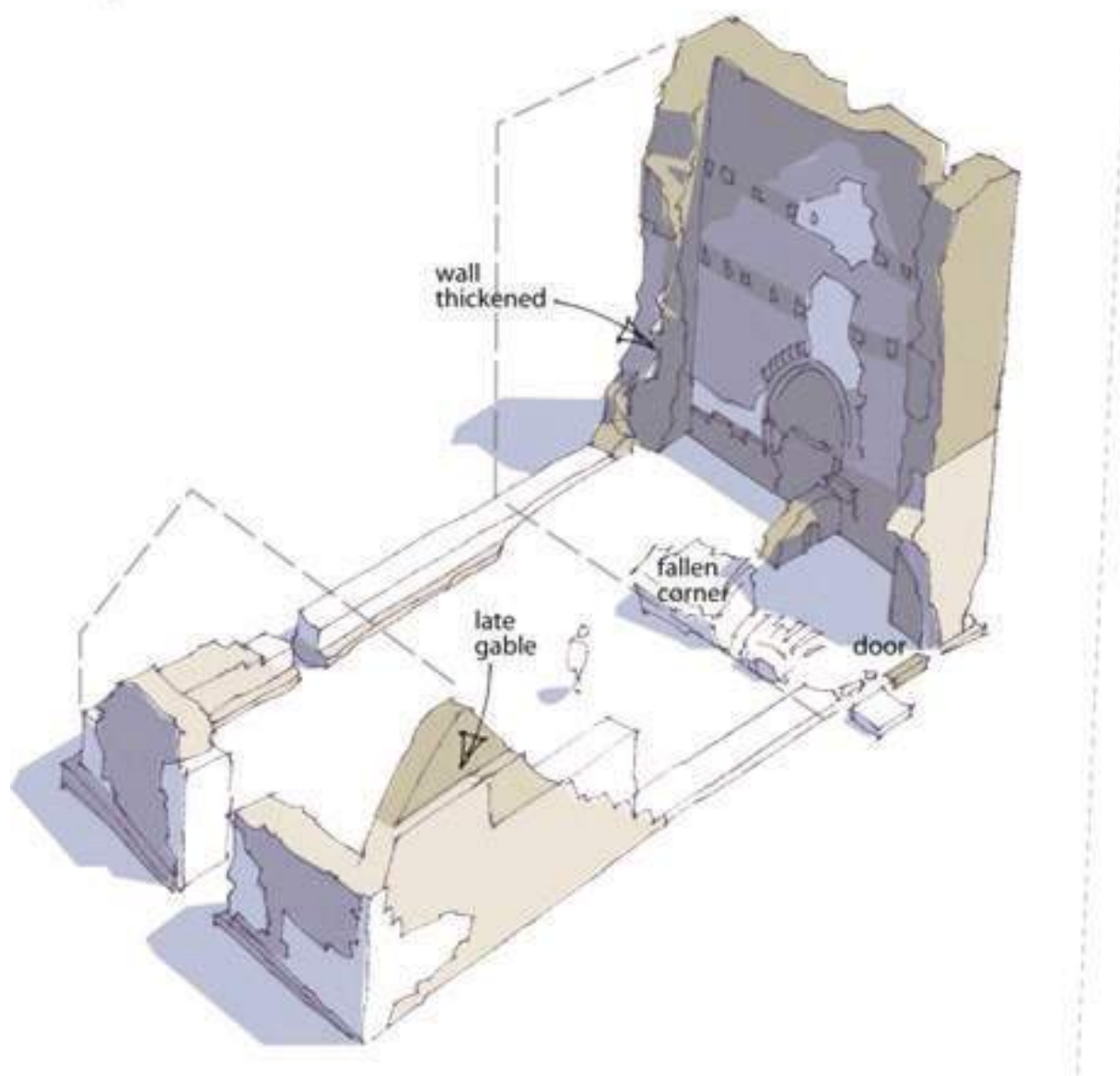


Figure 7: Oblique sketch of medieval church/ castle remains from southwest, with likely outline of towerhouse and later structure (D. Pollock)

A first floor embrasure and defensive loop has been constructed in the southeast corner. The surviving fragment of north wall includes a ground floor loop and the side of an embrasure for a first floor loop or window. The south wall fragment has the side of a ground floor door passage, with threshold slab, and the side of a first floor embrasure.

The north and south walls were thickened by the addition of an inner wall to carry the tower. A thin wall with a splayed opening appears to have divided the ground floor, under the vault. The 1792 drawing of the site by Grose shows the towerhouse much as today, with little more than one wall standing.

A pair of gabled buildings are standing to the west, the larger probably in the shell of the old church. The entire shell of the old church is shown roofed on the first edition OS 1/10560 survey of 1841. The larger of Grose's buildings is probably responsible for the gable standing today at the west end of the church (but without a window), and buildings probably extended east into the shell of the former towerhouse. Grose's gabled buildings may be part of the 16th century or 17th century castle, or may be more recent.



Figure 8: Gable of church/castle with blocked arch

Other features of antiquarian interest: Timahoe

Ecclesiastical site: SMR LA018-031001

St. Mochua, who died c. 657, founded an Early Christian monastery at Timahoe. It was plundered and burnt in 919 and 1142. In later medieval times, the O'Mores refounded the monastery, and in 1609 it was granted to Richard Cosby. The saint's feast day is on the 24th of December.

Graveyard: SMR LA018-031003

Rectangular-shaped graveyard, 107m by 79m, enclosed by a stone wall. A 19th-century former Church of Ireland church stands in the northern quadrant of graveyard. All visible headstones are post-1700. In 1978, human remains were discovered during building works. Garda reports indicate that 13 skulls as well as two articulated skeletons were discovered, 40cm below ground level.

Found on the north side of the church (C of I) near the round tower. No artefacts were found and all were reburied.

Burial: SMR LA018-031004

A large quantity of human remains were discovered within the ruins of Timahoe Castle and beside the round tower.

These may have been related to the battle in 1598 between General Harrington and Melaghlen O'Moore, when 1200 people are said to have been killed.

Sheela-na-gig: SMR LA018-031007

Separate descriptions in 1894 of a strange figure in stone at the doorway of Timahoe tower house and a grotesque stone figure may refer to the same figure. According to local information, there was a figure on the part of the north wall of the tower house which has fallen; it may lie buried in the debris.

Shrine (SMR LA018-031008)

The shrine was known as the Caimmin and may have been a crozier. It was taken by O'More in 1069.

Bronze age burial (SMR LA018-031009)

A bronze age burial was found in the vicinity of the round tower.



Figure 9: 19th century church, now a visitor centre

Church of Ireland Church (now a heritage centre)

The parish church at Timahoe was constructed circa 1855 to the designs of architect Joseph Welland, Architect to the Board of First Fruits and subsequently to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The church was closed in 1974, later acquired by Laois County Council and converted to use as a library, known as the Willie Headen Memorial Library. The library use has been discontinued and it is now being used under annual licence by Timahoe Community Development who plan to develop it as a visitor centre for the site.

The National Inventory of the Architectural Heritage record is as follows [author’s comments in parentheses].

Reg. No. 12801802. Date 1840 - 1870
 Categories of Special Interest:
 ARCHITECTURAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIAL
 Rating: Regional. Original Use: church/chapel
 In Use As: library/archive [exhibition/visitor centre].

Description: Detached Gothic Revival former Church of Ireland church, built c.1840 [one drawing is dated 1855],

with projecting porch, chancel and vestry. Now in use as library [no longer].

Double-pitched slate roof with limestone coping and profiled cast-iron rainwater goods on ashlar corbels. Mono-pitched roof to outshoot; stone. Rock-hewn snecked limestone walls with ashlar plinth and quoins. Paired lancet-arch window openings with limestone ashlar surrounds and iron-framed fixed-pane diamond-leaded windows. Pointed-arch door opening with hood moulding and timber panelled door. Interior renovated, c.1985, to accommodate use as library; scissors-truss timber roof on stone corbels; limestone arch to chancel. Church is set back from road in own grounds; landscaped grounds to site; tarmacadam drive to front. Remains of freestanding medieval round tower to site. Remains of detached church, c.1150, to site. Remains of detached castle, c.1650, to site. Gateway to site comprising limestone ashlar piers with cast-iron gate.

A folio of original drawings for the church is held at the RCB Library, portraying a simple structure

comprising a three-bay nave, chancel, projecting vestry and porch, largely as executed. An unusual projection on the west gable is seen as a later alteration to the original drawings, providing a covered space for the bell-ringer beneath the bellcote.

The drawings include hand-tinted ground floor plan, three elevations, cross and long elevations. They are especially valuable for the interior details of pews, pulpit, readers desk and altar rails, probably no longer extant. The church is almost identical, except handed, to the Church of Ireland church designed by Welland at Valentia Island, for which a similar set of drawings also survives. Subtle differences between both buildings include the structure of the roof trusses, the spacing of the nave windows, and the substitution of paired lancet windows at Timahoe by a single rose window in the west gable at Valentia.

Sculpture

There is a fine modern sculpture on the site, commissioned by the Pupils of Scoil Muire Fatima, the nearby primary school. By local sculptor Michael Burke, it is titled "Mochua's Desk" and depicts the folklore account given above.

Urn Burial SMR LA018-062

An urn was found near Timahoe Castle containing cremated bones, in a triangular cist formed by three upright flags with a flag at top and bottom.

Enclosure: SMR LA018-060

This is an oval-shaped enclosure (dims. 52m SWNE, 24m SE-NW) defined by a bank just over 1m high, with no evidence of fosse. It is not marked on the 1841 or 1909 editions of the OS 6-inch maps, but is visible on aerial photographs.

Male exhibitionist figure SMR 018-031-010

"Round tower (LA018-031005-) entered through a Romanesque doorway with four orders of sandstone blocks at first floor level in the E face. The internal arch of the doorway is decorated with lozenge patterns or chevrons while the doorway is decorated with typical Romanesque features such as human faces on the angles of the capitals. At the base of the doorway on the N side on the third order there appears to be a possible male exhibitionist figure in an acrobatic position with legs bent behind the ears and the hands appear to be pulling the cheeks apart to reveal the anus. The figure has a bearded face with hands beneath the chin either pulling at his beard or pulling the cheeks of his backside apart to reveal his anus" (Description listed in SMR, www.archaeology.ie).

Other features of antiquarian interest: Fossey Lower

Graveyard: SMR LA019-016001

The graveyard has within it a late 16th-century parish church (see below) with undivided nave and chancel, and a slight base batter. All visible headstones post date 1700 AD. It is an irregularly shaped graveyard (int. dims. 53m N-S; 33m E-W) enclosed by a stone wall containing post-1700 AD memorials. The church located in the north quadrant of graveyard.

An Early Christian sandstone cross-slab which is decorated on both faces was found in the graveyard during a clean-up scheme. On one face there is an incised cross with interlaced terminals with the initials E.D. later carved on the bottom of the slab; on the other face there is a panel of interlace enclosed by a triple-lined circle, below which there is an interlaced triquetra knot.

Church SMR LA019-016

Fossey church is a National Monument in state ownership, a late 16th-century parish church, built of uncoursed rubble, with a slight base-batter. There is a broken-out doorway in the west gable. Five windows are visible in the south wall and four in the north wall. In both walls one window is much larger than the others. The window dressings had been removed prior to repairs by the OPW in 1945 (OPW file). The smaller windows are simple rectangular opens which are chamfered and have glazing-bar-holes and grooves. There is a small flat headed niche or aumbry in the southeast angle of the church. Directly above this aumbry there is the lower half of a window that has been set into the top of the wall of the church. A first floor may have been inserted when the church appears to have been refitted with new windows in the late 16th or early 17th century. These flat-headed limestone windows display evidence of pocked dressings with blank margins and have iron grille holes but no glazing grooves.

2.3 DESCRIPTION AND EVOLUTION OF SITE AND SETTING

The discovery of one or more prehistoric burials on site, an urn with human bones “under a flag near Timahoe Castle” (LA018-062), and “three pans of small bones...in the floor of the Castle of Timahoe”(LA018-031004) suggests earlier but unrelated activity here.

In common with many early Christian settlements the site was strategically located, in the case of Timahoe at the point where a pass joined the ancient territory of Mag Recht in Loígis with Mag Lacha in Ossory. Many early sites became nuclei on road networks for this reason and also because the monasteries were settlements and centres of activity.

Early monastic sites often have concentric enclosures. There is nothing obvious in the topography of the present churchyard to suggest a former enclosing bank and ditch close to the medieval church and round tower, but a curving land boundary can be seen c150m to the south, converging on the river to the east and extending to an old road approaching from the southwest. Further pieces of the enclosure may be represented by a short arc c.300m to the west, and by a gentle bend in the line of the old road approaching the bridge from the northwest. The evidence is tentative at present but might be confirmed by non-invasive topographic and geophysical surveys.

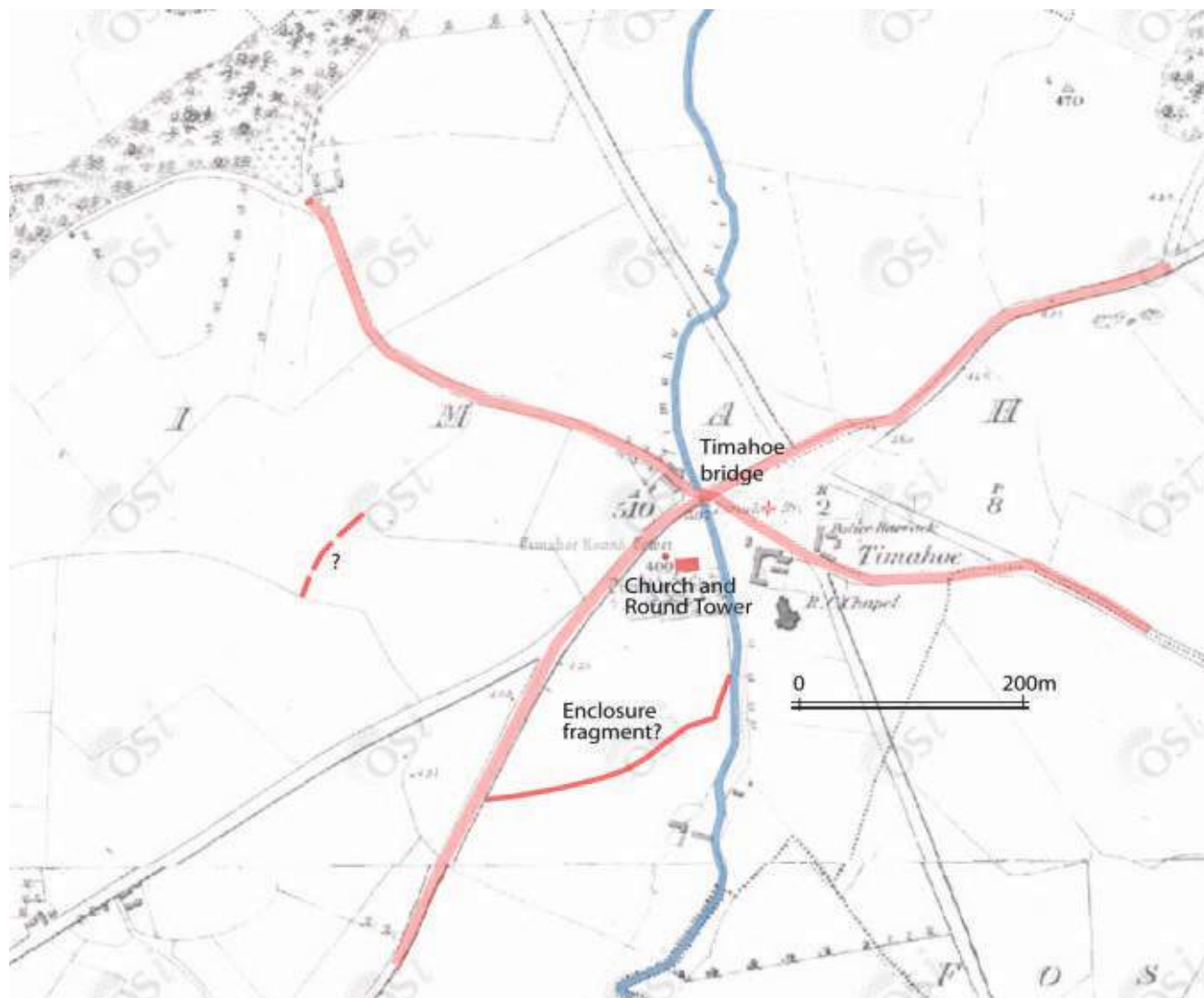


Figure 10: 1841 OS map, with river and old roads highlighted, showing possible enclosure (D. Pollock)

A tentative site evolution might run as follows:

Later first millennium AD. Monastic settlement beside river, enclosed, with church and other buildings.

6th/7th century: There are references to a house and an oratory. There is also a reference to an uninhabited house near the monastery, which served as a hospice. There are no traces of structures from this date remaining.

10th century: The existence of a school at the monastery in Timahoe is recorded in the Annals.

12th century: The Round Tower dates from the mid-12th century, though it is possible that the base is earlier. It is thought to have been built by the same people as built Killeslin church. The O'Mores are recorded as having re-founded the monastery after the plunder and burning in 1142. The tower may date from this time.

1182: Hugh de Lacy built a castle near Timahoe for Miler FitzHenry, husband of his niece – likely to refer to the motte south west of the village.

1400s: The archway that can still be seen within the castle walls date to the 15th century. This would seem to be an alteration to the O'More foundation, or a second separate foundation.

16th century: conversion of church to towerhouse and ancillary range.

1609+: A castle was built by the Cosby or Loftus family. (There is also a reference to a castle being built in Elizabethan times.) This castle seems likely to have involved a fortification of the abbey founded by the O'Mores.

1735: Geo II Act passed establishing toll road from Killcullen to Timahoe. This road is still known as the Pike to this day

1739: Geo II Act passed establishing toll road from Timahoe to Tipperary Town

1767: Cosby estate maps portray Timahoe village as a small collection of cottages. The monastic site comprises a round tower and adjacent structure which appears as a substantial, roofed habitable building, in an orchard setting.

c. 1820-30: Proposals prepared by architect William Deane Butler for Thomas Cosby envisage the reconstruction of Timahoe as a model village around a circular fair green, but are never realised.



Figure 11: Overlay of radial village design

c.1830: The new Catholic Church was erected by Rev Cornelius Dowling, parish priest of Stradbally. It was dedicated to St. Patrick, and replaced a “wretched thatched house” but remained in a backland position to the south of the village. Mrs Cosby was the patron of the parochial school.

1837: Lewis records slight remains of the Cosby castle in existence. At this time, the Cosbys were still proprietors of the estate. The village had 9 houses, surrounded by good dairy farms. A constabulary police force was stationed there.

1841: Ordnance Survey map denotes ‘Timahoe Abbey (in ruins)’ and ‘Timahoe Round Tower’, with an enclosed orchard shown to the south of the ruins. The village settlement as shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey comprises a cross roads with little urban structure and only a handful of buildings, including a police barracks and one other set of buildings addressing a central open space, probably a fair green, traversed by paths.



Ordnance Survey 1st Edition, 1839



Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition, 1908



Figure 12: First and second edition Ordnance Survey maps and modern aerial photo of Timahoe

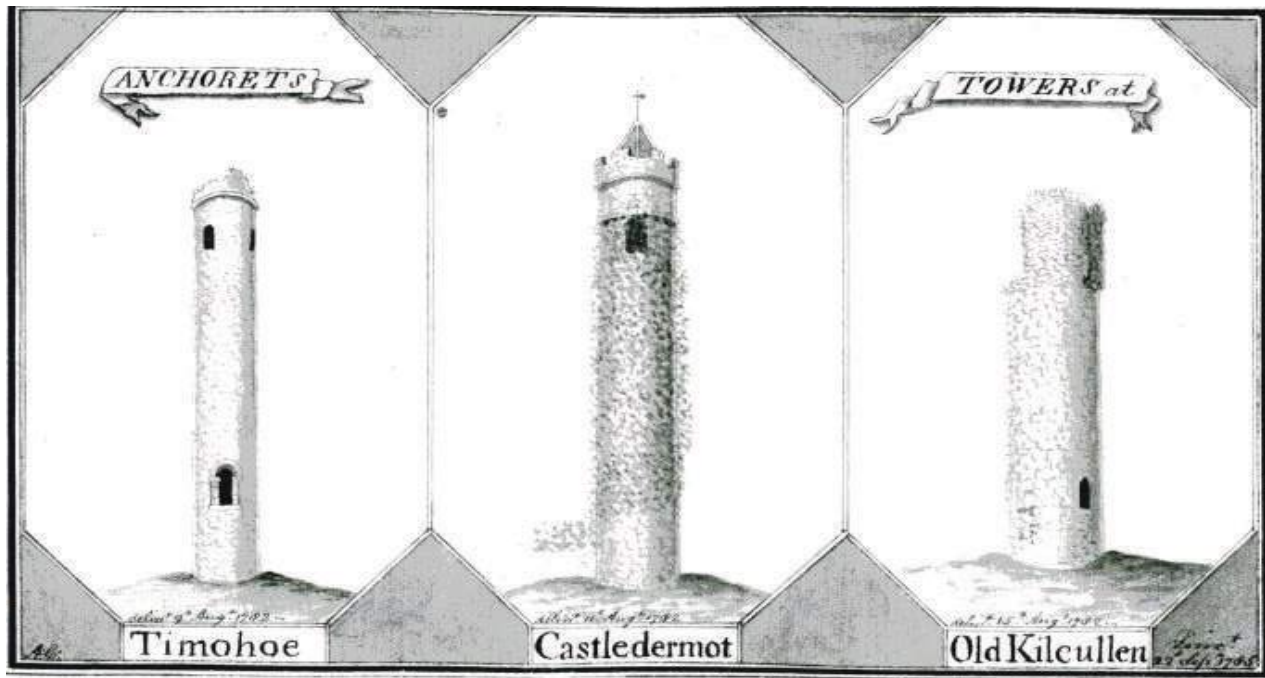


Figure 13: Engraving of Timahoe round tower (left) before restoration of conical cap

The older roads stand out against the newer straighter highways, and there is a clear crossing of older roads at Timahoe bridge, on the north side of the site. The river is the most prominent natural feature, and must have formed part of an enclosure around both the church and the castle sites. The walls or hedges around the castle are much as today.

An orchard is shown to the south, and this enclosure still defines the south end of the churchyard. The north end is defined by the road approaching Timahoe bridge, on the 1841 map and today. A wall running west from the shell of the church survives as a low ridge today, running into undergrowth on the west side of the churchyard.

ca 1855: Construction of new Church of Ireland church to designs of Joseph Welland. A sketch map denotes an orchard to the south of the site, the ruins and round tower, on a site of little more than an acre.

1880: 'Round tower and abbey' vested in the state on 30 October 1880 as National Monuments under the Church Temporalities Act

1880s: The cap of the tower was repaired.

1885: Vestry Account Book notes £20 for the construction of a new wall and fencing around the churchyard by order of the Vestry. After 1915, small sums of money are paid annually to the Timahoe Burial Ground Fund to cover the maintenance of grounds, paths, etc.

1889: Revised Ordnance Survey shows the new Church constructed within the monastic site, to the north of 'Timahoe Round Tower' and 'Timahoe Abbey (in ruins)'. The entire site is now portrayed as an orchard, although labelled 'Grave Yard.' A building - probably residential - has been erected in the site immediately to the west of the Grave Yard.

The urban structure of Timahoe has developed substantially. The green has acquired a more regular triangular shape, well defined on two of its three sides by buildings. In addition to the Constabulary Barracks and RC Chapel, the village has acquired a Dispensary, a School and a National School. A Corn Mill has been constructed on the Timahoe River to the north of the town.

The green is called Goose Green and is in the ownership of the Cosby family.

1908: The Ordnance Survey description of the monastic site has changed, with the 'Round Tower' now flanked by a 'Castle (in ruins) on site of Abbey.' The site is still

labelled as a Grave Yard, but is no longer depicted as an orchard.

Timahoe village has developed further with the addition of a post office, pump and smithy. The Constabulary Barracks has moved a few doors to the north while only one school is now shown. The mills are now labelled 'Corn & Saw Mills' with a more extensive infrastructure of mill pond, weir and sluice.

Timahoe today has a school, a Catholic church, a community hall, two pubs and a general shop. It is a community, with an active GAA club, a Tidy Towns group, a community-run heritage centre and a new children's playground. It is on the route between Portlaoise and Carlow and the main traffic flow is on the east side of the green.

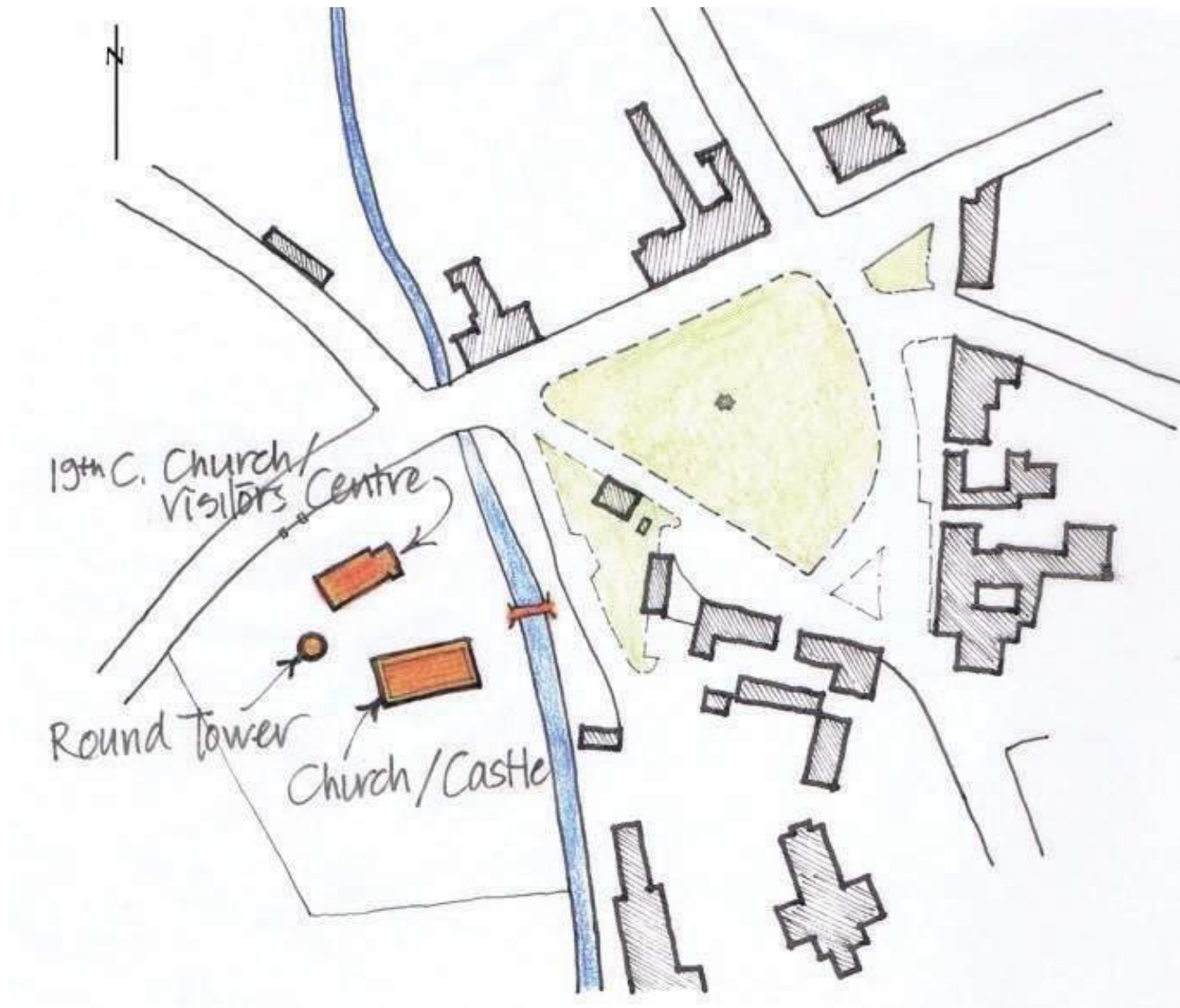


Figure 14: Key site plan (G. Carr)

2.4 ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Habitats present at the site are classified according to Fossitt (2000). The sketch map of the area shows the location of five habitat types on the site.

Stone walls & old buildings

Masonry walls around the site host a range of species including two species of fern, grasses and a few flowering plants.

River

The Timahoe river runs picturesquely along the eastern boundary of the site. The river bed is clear and stony with no aquatic plants noted along this stretch. A dipper was noted flying along the river during an April visit. The presence of this species indicates good water quality and a healthy ecosystem. The banks of the river feature a curtain of rich vegetation in the summer with tall giant fescue grass, watercress, meadowsweet and rosebay willowherb.

Grassland

Grassland is the main habitat of the site around the buildings and the graves. The main area of grass around the graves and the buildings which is mowed regularly features only a few species such as Perennial rye grass and Daisy.

It has a low biodiversity value because it features only a few species compared to other parts of the site.

Tree lines

The Timahoe Round Tower site is blessed with many beautiful, mature trees. The most prominent species is the native Pedunculate Oak, approximately a century old, which are valuable habitats in their own right. The richest part of the site from a biodiversity perspective is the area under the trees which appears to be less intensively mown, allowing the emergence of wildflowers such as Tufted vetch, Arum lily, Cow parsley, Cowslips and Dog violet. There are several grass species growing here such as: Yorkshire fog, Annual meadow grass, Cock's foot grass and False oat grass.

Scrub

The western section of the site is an area of scrub that was recently cleared of previously planted evergreens (possibly *Leylandii* cypresses), Willow and Elder bushes.

In between the stumps of these bushes the area is dominated by nettles and brambles making it inaccessible to the general public.



Figure 15: River and tree line habitats

Fauna

The appendix to this report includes a list of birds observed on the site, and a list of the mammals likely to be found on the site.

A 2008 bat survey carried out by Scott Cawley Ltd for Laois County Council identified three species of bat roosting in the Church: Common pipistrelle bats, Brown long-eared bats and Natterer's bats. A fourth species, Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*) was recorded during the 2008 survey using the site most likely foraging for food.

An updated report in 2014 identified two species roosting in roof space of the Church: Common Pipistrelle bat and the rare and noteworthy Whiskered bat.

These mammals are a very important aspect of the biodiversity of the Timahoe Round Tower site. Bats are protected under national and international legislation.

CHAPTER 3: ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Timahoe is a place of historical, archaeological, architectural and art historical significance in a secluded natural setting which has an authenticity of scale and character, although much altered from early Christian times.

Timahoe is of **historical significance** as the site bears evidence to many phases of Irish history from its Early Christian foundation, through Anglo-Norman settlement, the Reformation and dissolution of the monasteries, early plantation, Nine Years War, the 1641 Rebellion, the Cromwellian campaign, to the first World War which left the Church of Ireland community in a weakened state. The elaborate doorway on the tower suggests a particular significance for the early mediaeval establishment in the 12th century. Similar to many other early monastic sites, the Timahoe is a nucleus on the early road network.

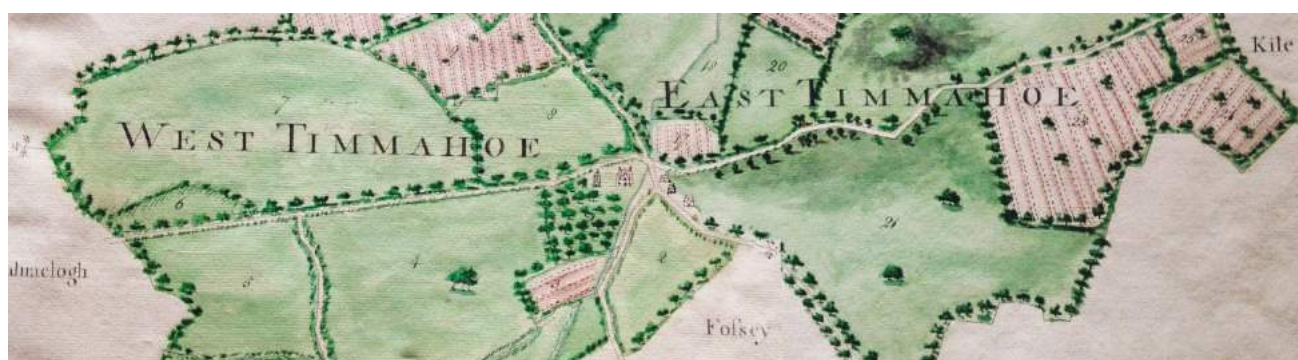
The site is of **archaeological significance** with its monastic foundation dating back to at least the 7th century. While the pattern of physical enclosures associated with the medieval ecclesiastical site are no longer visible and remains may have been disrupted by the 19th century church building and other development, much information remains to be recovered from sensitive topographic and geophysical survey

The **architectural significance** of Timahoe centres on the round tower - one of Ireland's most imposing and intact examples - and the adjoining mediaeval remains of a church, later adapted to castle. The 19th century Church of Ireland is a good example of its type and adds to the ecclesiastical character of the site.

The **art historical significance** lies principally in the incorporation of Romanesque sculpture in the tower, particularly in the elaborate doorway consisting of four orders. Sculpture in towers is rare with the closest surviving example located in Kildare. There are close links to the sculpture at nearby Killeslin church which also had a round tower, demolished in 1703.

The **authenticity of its setting** has survived to a significant degree with the probable outline of the early monastic enclosure still open and largely free of building. The scale of the present-day settlement of Timahoe may have changed little since mediaeval times.

The site is set in a **natural landscape** bounded by the Timahoe river. The site has five habitat types and is rich in **biodiversity** with great potential to become an ecological educational resource for students and cultural groups.



CHAPTER 4: DEFINING ISSUES & VULNERABILITIES

Principal issues which arise in terms of protecting the significance of Timahoe historic site, enhancing the site and the village and realising its cultural value are:

- Ownership, responsibilities and management
- Physical condition of fabric
- Condition of the site
- Lack of visual connection between village and historic site
- Lack of knowledge and awareness
- Landscape and Ecology
- Presentation and Interpretation

4.1 OWNERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES & MANAGEMENT

There are a number of stakeholders involved in the historic site between owners, users and statutory bodies. While there will be much overlap, each body has its own focus and priorities. The absence of a coordinated strategy between the bodies can result in lack of clarity and create a risk of poor management.

The national monuments are in the ownership of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs but are in the care of the National Monuments Service of the Office of Public Works.

Laois County Council is the owner of the church/visitor centre and the remainder of the site. Timahoe Community Development Association is the user of the church/visitor centre on a licence agreement and shares responsibility for the site. The Goose Green is owned by the Cosby family.

The wider community is active and involved with a strong level of interest, engagement and pride. The very fine sculpture commemorating St Mochua on the site was commissioned and installed as part of a 2005 project between the school and Laois Arts Office. Timahoe has won the local community litter challenge on many occasions and is an entrant in the national Tidy Towns competition.

Such an active community may well take other initiatives and create a demand for additional uses for

the church building which in turn will require skilled management.

4.2 PHYSICAL CONDITION OF FABRIC

The condition of the fabric must always be of paramount importance in order to avoid loss or damage to original material or to the significance of the place.

Round Tower and Medieval Church/ Castle

The mediaeval buildings on site are in state care and are looked after by the National Monuments Service. They are inspected annually and any necessary maintenance or repairs are carried out on a planned basis. However, the local community are the day-to-day guardians of the site and are in a position to notice and report any sudden deterioration or damage.

19th century Church building/Visitor Centre

Maintenance and repair of the church building, graveyard and enclosure is the responsibility of the owners, Laois County Council. Timahoe Community Development are the users of the building, holding it under annual licence but have no resources at present. Difficulties can sometimes arise when the user is not the responsible body. The building is a protected structure and the owner is obliged to prevent endangerment. The building requires ongoing maintenance. The most critical items are roof repair and maintenance of rainwater goods.

Graveyard and Enclosure

The boundary of the graveyard section does not appear to be delineated on any map or deed. There appears to be a natural limit to the burial section running approximately parallel to the west wall of the church/castle. Clarity on this issue is important.

The boundary walls to the road boundaries require regular maintenance in order to avoid widescale repair which often leads to loss of character. The fenced boundaries also need attention.



Figure 16: Scrub and decaying vegetation on site

4.3 PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE SITE

While the graveyard and the surrounds of the individual buildings are well-maintained, a large tract of the site is in a degraded condition, with tree-stumps from a clearance of conifers, decaying materials and ground that is rough, uneven and unsuitable for walking. It is used for dumping grass cuttings and other green waste. It is unsafe, visually unattractive and detracts from the character of what should be a very fine site. The boundaries are gapped and give no sense of enclosure.

Dealing with this problem is not straightforward as there are restrictions under the National Monuments Acts on any disturbance of the ground including clearance of stumps, scrub and replanting.

4.4 LACK OF VISUAL CONNECTION BETWEEN VILLAGE AND HISTORIC SITE

One of the main issues facing this project is the lack of connection to Timahoe historic site from the village centre. A visitor could walk along the north and east sides of the Green and not be aware of a 30m tall tower standing less than a hundred paces to the west. This is especially the case when the oaks fringing the site are in leaf.

The village, small as it is, seems to turn its back on the site and also on the amenity of the Timahoe river dividing the two.

The main access to the site is via a new footbridge near one side of the green. One discovers the presence of the site from signposts rather than by visual connection. Following the signposts, the visitor navigates a route to the footbridge behind some houses fronting the Green.

The other modern interventions of the gazebo on the Green did not help to resolve this problem. The second entrance to the site is through a fine gateway leading to the 19th century church but this is on the road on the outskirts of Timahoe.



Figure 17: Visual connection between the village and the monastic site

4.5 LACK OF AWARENESS

Archaeology

Lack of knowledge of the existence or the extent of underground archaeology can impede the full protection of the archaeological significance of the place.

Aside from evidence the upstanding remains, little is known of the earlier buildings on the present site close to the surviving buildings or the wider complex of ancillary buildings within the larger enclosure. Traces of the monastic enclosure may have survived outside the present site. Lack of knowledge of the existence or extent of underground archaeology can hinder the full protection of the archaeological significance of the place.

Archaeological remains within the site have been disturbed by grave digging and by construction of the 19th century church, but any remains to the north, close to the bridge, should be in better condition. Issues of potential disturbance of archaeological layers arise with clearance of tree stumps and improvement to the degraded section of the site.

Surviving buildings

The round tower is the element that marks the Timahoe site apart. The highly decorated doorway is rare in the context of round towers generally and adds greatly to its significance. Further study would be of benefit. However, neither the tower or the doorway are accessible. The church/castle building is complex. Lack of information on site about the surviving buildings makes the cultural and educational value of the site difficult to appreciate

4.6 LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGY

Five distinct habitat types have been observed on the site, each of which hosts a variety of species and which collectively create an unusual variety of plant life within a relatively small site. These habitats must be protected in any works to the site including the remediation of the area along the western side of the site which is now overgrown with nettles, brambles and cleavers.

Two species of bat were identified roosting in the roof space of the 19th Century Church in 2014: Common Pipistrelle and Whiskered. These mammals are a very important aspect of the biodiversity of the Timahoe

Round Tower site but create implications for any future conservation works to the Church.

The unspoilt setting of the monument is also dependent on its wider context including the village settlement of Timahoe. New residential, leisure or agricultural developments within the visual envelope of the monument have the potential to damage its setting.



Figure 18: Beautiful visual setting of the monument and village

4.7 PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

Timahoe Monastic site has enormous potential in terms of the cultural tourism as well as day trippers and family outings. The presence of a sound, roofed building with basic facilities on the site is a great advantage to a historic site. However, much remains to be done in terms of designing and providing interpretative material and in making the old church building a welcoming place, visually and environmentally. Access for wheelchair users is available but only with assistance



Figure 19: Stepped access to church

CHAPTER 5: POLICIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

The overriding aim of this plan, and all of the policies and recommendations herein, is to retain, protect and enhance the authentic historic fabric of the monument and all of the elements which contribute to it.

5.1 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 5.1.1 Retain the full authenticity and integrity of the monument and its setting.
- 5.1.2 Protect the upstanding remains from physical damage to fabric.
- 5.1.3 Define a vision for the site in its setting and seek to liaise and cooperate with other bodies who share aims and vision
- 5.1.4 All actions arising from this plan should be carefully planned and considered, consulting as necessary with stakeholders and relevant statutory bodies.
- 5.1.5 Observe all statutory requirements. Note that ministerial consent is necessary for any works on the site which has an impact on the monuments or disturbs ground surfaces.
- 5.1.6 Ensure that the necessary expertise is used in planning and implementing works by seeking professional conservation advice and employing craftspeople with specialist conservation skills for works to the protected structure.

5.2 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations which address the issues in Chapter 4 are set out under the following policy headings:

- A Ownership, responsibilities and management
- B Physical condition of fabric
- C Physical condition of the site
- D Create visual connection between village and historic site
- E Improve knowledge and awareness
- F Landscape and ecology

POLICY A: OWNERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITIES AND MANAGEMENT

Clarify the roles of all parties with responsibility for the site and its setting.

- A1** Establish clear formal relationships with the other stakeholders, including persons with responsibility for strategy and management and those who deal with day-to-day issues. Maintain contacts list
- A2** Establish boundaries of responsibilities between users and owners. This will affect issues such as insurances, health and safety, maintenance and repairs.
- A3** Aim to agree a Memorandum of Understanding which will set out all matters between parties including security of tenure for the present users.
- A4** Consider a steering committee to integrate the input of stakeholders
- A5** Delineate a boundary for the graveyard and mark on drawing with agreed dimensions
- A6** Ensure that the Care and Conservation of Graveyards Guidelines are followed on the site.
- A7** Clarify the general situation of burials. Identify those graves still in use and confirm that new graves cannot be opened.

POLICY B: PHYSICAL CONDITION OF FABRIC

Safeguard the fabric into the future by implementing a range of phased conservation works, management measures and guidelines for building management and users.

Round Tower and Church/Castle

- B1** Liaise with the OPW National Monuments Service architect or area works manager re any matters affecting the monuments including giving notice of any plans such as Heritage Week events or planned visits by large groups.
- B2** Act as guardians of the monuments by being vigilant, noting any irresponsible behaviour or damage, and reporting to the National Monuments Service and Gardai.

Church/Visitor Centre

- B3** Agree with Laois County Council to nominate a liaison person to be responsible for dealing with the community representatives on all issues pertaining to the site and setting.

B4 Formalise an inspection and maintenance regime by the preparation of a table of maintenance measures to be carried out on a six-monthly, annual, bi-annual or five-yearly basis, with sign-off of each action upon completion. Quinquennial inspections are recommended as an excellent means of monitoring changes in the fabric and implementing remedial measures in a timely manner.

B5 Maintain a building dossier with full records of all works including before and after photographic recording.

B6 Follow the guidelines set out in the relevant volumes of the Advice Series produced by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht particularly Maintenance, Roofs, Windows, Ironwork.

B7 The building is a protected structure and any works which affect the character may require planning permission. Restoration of character may not. Consult with the Planning section before developing proposals.



Figure 20: Interior of former church

Graveyard and Enclosure

- B8** Formally agree boundary of the graveyard section with Laois County Council and mark on site and on map. There appears to be a natural limit to the burial section running approximately parallel to the west wall of the church/castle. Clarity on this issue is important.
- B9** Ensure that the boundary walls to the road boundaries are regularly maintained to avoid extensive masonry repair which often leads to loss of character.
- B10** Maintain the fenced boundaries and control the vegetation.
- B11** Be vigilant for anti-social behaviour as the site is vulnerable being secluded with easy entry and exit. Note any debris or evidence of fires. Take action to avoid anti-social use becoming established as it leads to casual damage, graffiti etc.

POLICY C: PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE SITE

Improve the appearance of the site, protecting and enhancing the presentation of its important archaeological, architectural, art-historical and ecological features.

- C1** Following on from this Conservation Plan and in consultation with the owners and statutory authorities, prepare detailed proposals to improve the degraded area and to reinforce the boundaries by planting suitable native species. The main issues are expanded further in Policy F and in the Ecological Report, attached as an appendix.
- C2** Follow the guidance given by Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht consulted in the course of preparation of this Plan including:
 - tree stumps can be ground down only to ground level not removed entirely
 - any levelling for remediation will require Ministerial Consent
 - recommendation that the archaeological testing be carried out prior to application for consent

- replanting the orchard will not be considered on a site of such importance
- C3** Appoint an archaeologist to obtain a licence for the excavation of several hand-dug test pits in the degraded area to establish the depth of archaeological layers. This will inform any further action necessary and the findings will be part of an application for Ministerial Consent for the remediation of the site.
- C4** Consider possible mitigation measures if archaeological layers are close to the surface such as importing top soil to level the degraded part of the site.
- C5** Arrange with Laois County Council and Office of Public Works to carry out a Tree Condition Survey and to implement any recommended actions.



Figure 21: Proposals to improve visual connection between village and monument (G Carr)

POLICY D: CREATE VISUAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THE VILLAGE AND THE HISTORIC SITE

Improve the setting and presence of the site within the village to ensure that visitors can easily discover the site and fully appreciate all aspects of the monument, site and setting.

D1 Establish a clear visual connection between the village green and the site. The monument is visually prominent from some approaches, especially the approach vista along the Pike Road, but is relatively invisible from the village. The route to the footbridge which is the preferred physical connection to the site should be made clearly visible from the green.



Figure 22: View of tower when approaching along the Pike Road.

D2 Consider the outline proposal set out in Figure 21, which aims to create a visual connection to the site. It is notable that the 1820-30s design for the village commissioned by Thomas Cosby (Figure 11) respected the importance of the monastic site - aligning the market house axially with the round tower. The proposed scheme aims, in a more

modest way, to recreate this axis by carrying out some relatively minor works listed below:

- Relocate the gazebo to the position indicated in Figure 21 and use for display of map material
- Clear the space between the two modern buildings on the west of the green to the greatest degree possible to create a clear route
- Plant parallel lines of willow to frame the approach to the bridge and the view of the tower
- Open the vista to the tower at eye-level by modest trimming of low branches of the two trees on either side of the bridge

Improving the sense of visual connection between the village and the site may also help to inhibit anti-social behavior mentioned by increased passive surveillance.

D3 Consider other measures to provide a sense of destination for visitors such as ground treatment incorporating a paved route between the green and the footbridge.

D4 Carry out all necessary consultations on these measures with the owners and stakeholders.

POLICY E: IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS

Expand and improve knowledge and awareness by making information about the site and the upstanding remains available in the visitor centre. Safeguard the archaeological endowment into the future by further investigation to improve knowledge of remains and protect archaeological features as yet unknown.

E1 Gather all known material including information assembled for this Plan and make available for exhibition design, presentation and interpretation.

E2 Seek consent of the owners including the Cosby family and the Office of Public Works to digitise images for display.

E3 Approach the OPW re the commissioning of a 3D laser scan of the site and particularly the tower doorway and the interior. This will create an

accurate record of the monument and its sculpture which will facilitate further study. It will also provide material for interpretation including close-up detail and a virtual walk-through experience for display in the Visitor Centre.

- E4** Carry out archaeological testing in degraded area of site and at boundaries to establish the depth of archaeological layers in accordance with the licence to be issued by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- E5** Plan to commission a non-invasive investigation of the site and the wider setting. Little is known of the earlier buildings on the present site close to the surviving buildings or the wider complex of ancillary buildings within the larger enclosure. Traces of that enclosure may have survived outside the present site. Evidence may be revealed by detailed topographic (LiDAR and 3-d laser scanning) and geophysical (resistivity and magnetometry) survey.

POLICY F: LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGY

Continue to manage the site to protect and enhance its landscape setting and ecological diversity.

- F1** Protect biodiversity as identified in Appendix III Ecology Assessment by maintaining each of the five distinct habitat types on the site.
- F2** Following archaeological testing, necessary consents and agreements on all procedures to protect the archaeological potential, take appropriate action to rehabilitate the site.
- F3** Carry out additional hedgerow planting to strengthen boundaries, improve enclosure and provide screening following the archaeological testing
- F4** Improve the aesthetic appeal and biodiversity of the site, which might include:
 - a wildflower meadow with mown grass paths to encourage visitor circulation
 - limited planting of native shrubs and small trees where allowed, erection of bird boxes, feeders, and perhaps an 'insect hotel,' in conjunction with the local school.

- a composting area to address the problems caused by on-site disposal of grass cuttings in an open (i.e. not shaded) corner of the site, with local school and community groups engaged to manage the system.

See Appendix III for further detail.

Please note that the replanting of the orchard as proposed in Appendix III is now almost certainly ruled out following further consultation with the Heritage Service.

- F5** Develop the site as an ecological as well as a cultural resource. Be aware that any seating areas or facilities will require consultation with the Office of Public Works. Protection of the setting of the monuments will be the priority.
- F6** Establish management policies for site maintenance including controls on the use of mechanical cutting equipment and herbicides.
- F7** Consult with Laois County Council to ensure that a commitment to protecting the landscape setting of the monument will be set out as a policy in any statutory plan or village design statement for Timahoe.

POLICY G: PRESENTATION & INTERPRETATION

Aim to fully utilise the body of information available and the asset of the church/visitor centre to promote the significance of the Timahoe site as a historic place of national importance

- G1** Provide an exhibition in the visitor centre to enrich the cultural and educational experience by outlining the historical, archaeological, artistic and ecological legacy of the site. This should include contextual information such as that on the neighbouring site of Killeshin. Seek to provide the interpretive material in partnership with stakeholders, Laois County Council and the Office of Public Works which has particular expertise in the field of external signage and exhibition.
- G2** Seek opportunities to promote the significance of its historic legacy, building upon existing initiatives such as Heritage Week. Consider developing a trail for County Laois similar to the Ecclesiastical Trail in Co Carlow and the Monastic trail in Co Offaly, both adjoining counties. A cooperative integrated approach might be productive.
- G3** Provide appropriately designed and sited information panels and signage around the village to assist in orientating and informing visitors and to facilitate exploration of both monument and village. The gazebo feature on the Green could contain, or be the focus of, some of this material.
- G4** As part of the exhibition design, commission maps to portray the built and landscape features of Timahoe village and principal walking routes around it. Map format should be suitable for reproduction online, in print, and at a larger scale on information signage.
- G5** Consider improvements to the facilities and environmental conditions in the visitor centre. The heating should be reviewed and a lighting scheme purpose-designed for exhibition and other uses.

A new and more subdued colour scheme would improve the space.

- G6** Plan to install audio-visual facilities in the centre - digital projector, electrically-operated screen and a sound system. As well as visitor presentations, this will encourage diverse activities such as training days, film screenings etc and may provide an income.
- G7** Consider a partnership with Laois Co Council and other bodies in providing audio-visual facilities and seating as there may be a need for council staff training venues.
- G8** Plan to provide universal access to the visitor centre. The layout facilitates the design of a ramp and the guidance in the Advice Series Access volume can be followed.
- G9** Examine all available options for grant aid to assist measures required to enhance awareness, access, presentation and interpretation of the site and setting, including but not limited to the Heritage Council, Leader, Laois County Council, Fáilte Ireland, and Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Ireland Fund. This document will provide a useful resource when seeking funding.

CHAPTER 6: IMPLEMENTATION & REVIEW

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION

This Conservation Plan was commissioned as a means of elaborating our understanding of Timahoe, of understanding the significance attaching to the monument and its setting, and the significance of other aspects of the place which may heretofore have been overlooked.

In this way, the monument and its setting can be understood in all its richness and policies created to guide the future conservation of the site. These policies in turn inform positive interventions to protect and enhance this significance into the future.

The Conservation Plan is not a statutory document, but in setting out a site-specific statement of significance, can assist in interpreting and applying existing statutory policy and law to this site. For example, the document may assist the guardians of the property in discussions with statutory authorities regarding future works to the monument and site.

The Conservation Plan includes numerous specific proposals which should be implemented on a phased basis. The measures recommended for implementation in the short term include:

- Carry out archaeological testing.
- Remediate the rough area of the site in accordance with requirements to protect archaeological and ecological heritage.
- Improve visual and physical connection between the village and the monument.
- Develop plans for improvements to access, presentation and interpretation.

6.2 REVIEW

Progress in implementing actions under each policy heading should be reviewed on a regular basis but at least annually. The rate of progress in implementing recommendations may necessitate revisions to the

Conservation Plan. These should be discussed and only adopted with the agreement of the majority of principal stakeholders. The continuing relevance of the plan and its provisions should be subject to a high-level review at least every five years, or sooner if necessitated by sudden changes in the condition or context of the monument and its setting.

Finally, this Conservation Plan and its appendices should form part of an archive, to which should be added all new information and records generated during implementation. Even contemporary correspondence with statutory authorities will form a valuable part of the historic record for future generations charged with protecting this place.

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APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT: DAVE POLLOCK

Notes on the archaeological significance of the medieval ecclesiastical site at Timahoe, Co. Laois.

METHODOLOGY

To assess the current archaeological knowledge of the site, the relevant files in the National Monuments Archive were consulted and the site was visited during 2014.

The medieval church remains at Timahoe comprise a well-preserved round tower with elaborate Romanesque decoration at the doorway and lowest window, and the ruins of a large rectangular church, partly incorporated in a late medieval castle. Part of the site appears to have been truncated to below the medieval ground level, probably during the construction of a 19th century church, now used as a library.

The present village of Timahoe was constructed around a triangular green in the 19th century. The planned village, and land and road improvements, have largely erased the pattern of enclosures associated with the medieval ecclesiastical site, but a good deal might be recoverable from sensitive topographic and geophysical survey.

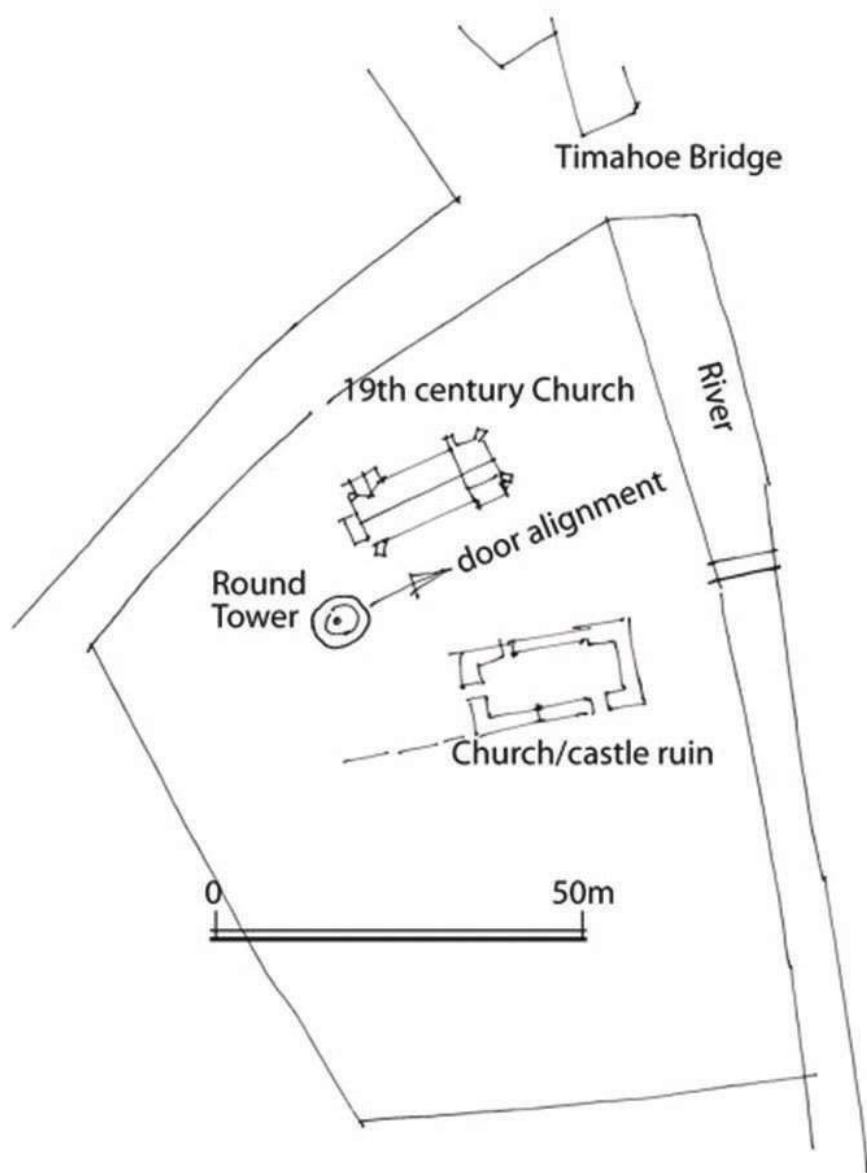
The elaborate doorway on the tower suggests a particular importance for the early medieval establishment, and the survival of the tower gives the present monument a particular significance.

THE ROUND TOWER

The most complete medieval structure at Timahoe is the round tower (LA018-031005). The building was described in detail by Crawford (1924 etc.) and is unusually spacious for an Irish round tower. The decoration suggests construction around 1150 (Crawford 1924, O'Keeffe 2003). The conical roof of the tower is a rebuild of the 19th century.

O'Keeffe considers the doorways of round towers to have a ceremonial importance. The doors are normally raised off the surrounding ground and frequently faced the door of the contemporary main church (O'Keeffe 2003). The round tower at Timahoe is a relatively late example and might postdate the construction of the known medieval church, but the doorway in the tower is not aligned with the likely west door of this church. There is no sign of a church in the appropriate place at Timahoe, and no record of remains being exposed during construction of the 19th century church, when this part of the site is likely to have been truncated.

The tower tapers as it rises, and has a slight lean, probably from settlement after construction.

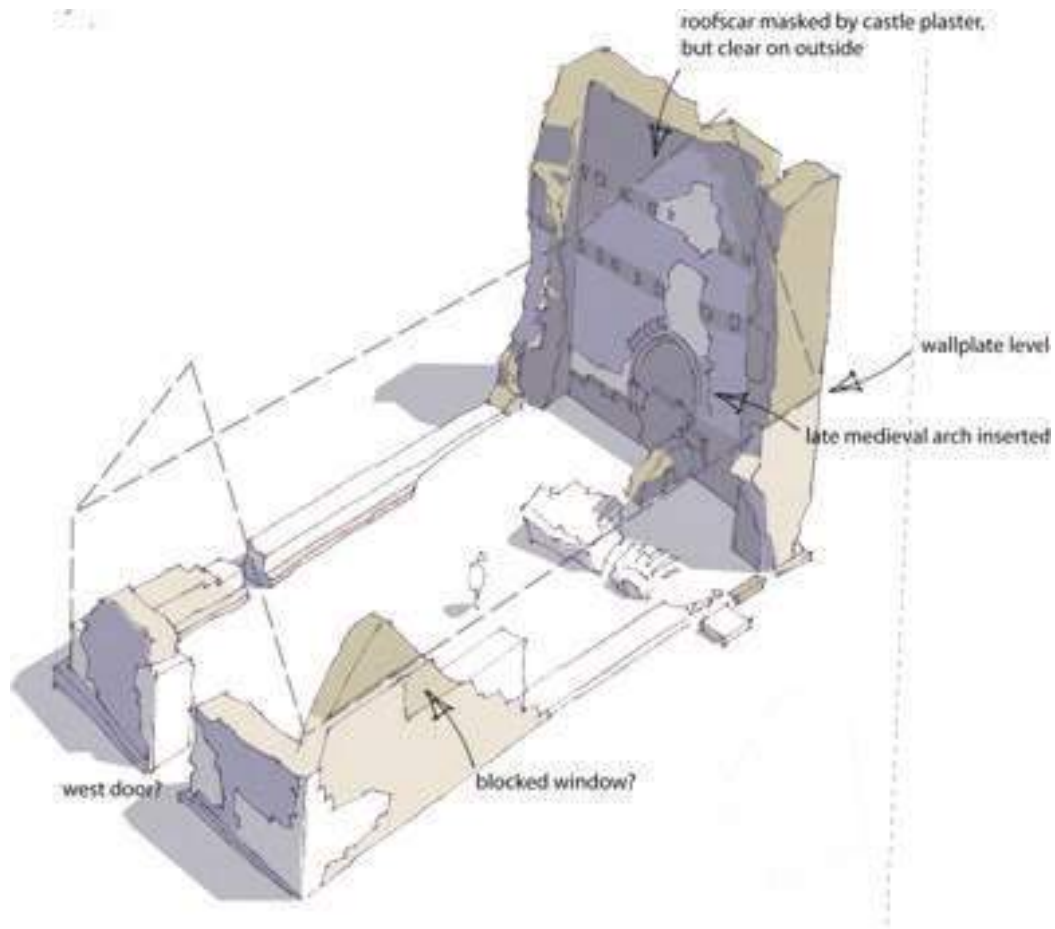


Door alignment, Round Tower

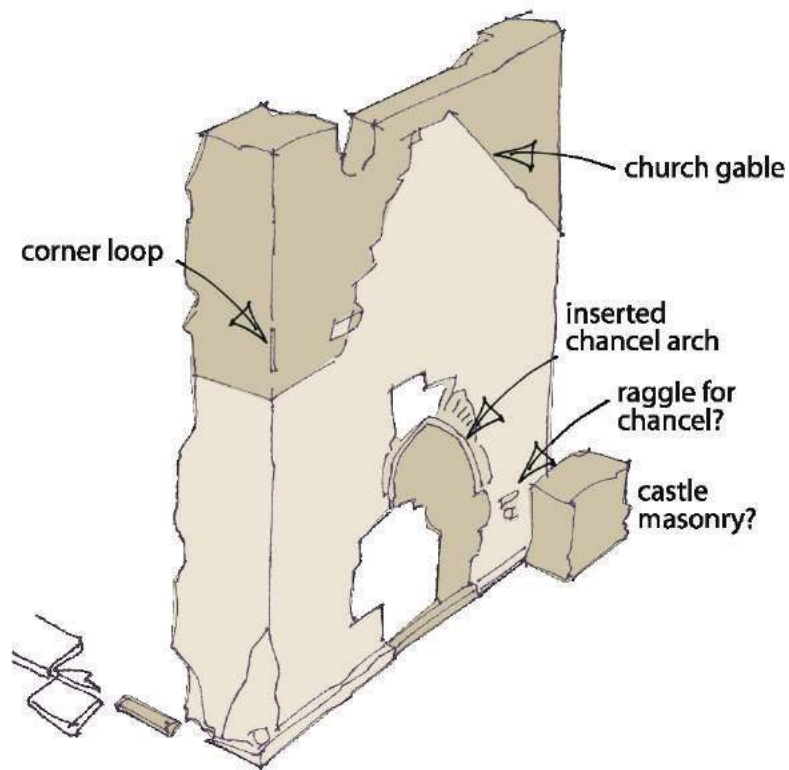
MEDIEVAL CHURCH

The ruined medieval church (LA018-031002) was converted to a castle in the 16th century. An original large rectangular building, probably with a west door, appears to have been extended to the east with the insertion of an arch. The decoration of the arch is potentially 15th century (Crawford 1924, NMS database), but there is little to date the original building. The arch is clearly inserted, and the original building has no indicators of a late medieval construction; there is no battering of the lower walls and no dressed limestone quoins. An original east window may have been removed from over the arch, and an original west door may be represented by the present rough opening. The roof pitch of the original building can be seen on the outside of the east gable, but is ambiguous on the inside, masked by later wall plaster.

An original window in the south wall may be represented by a masonry patch under the late gable. The late medieval eastern extension to the church may have been quite small. There is no fragmentary roofscar for the new chancel, and no sockets for purlins; the roof may have been very close to the top of the arch and patched when the arch was blocked.



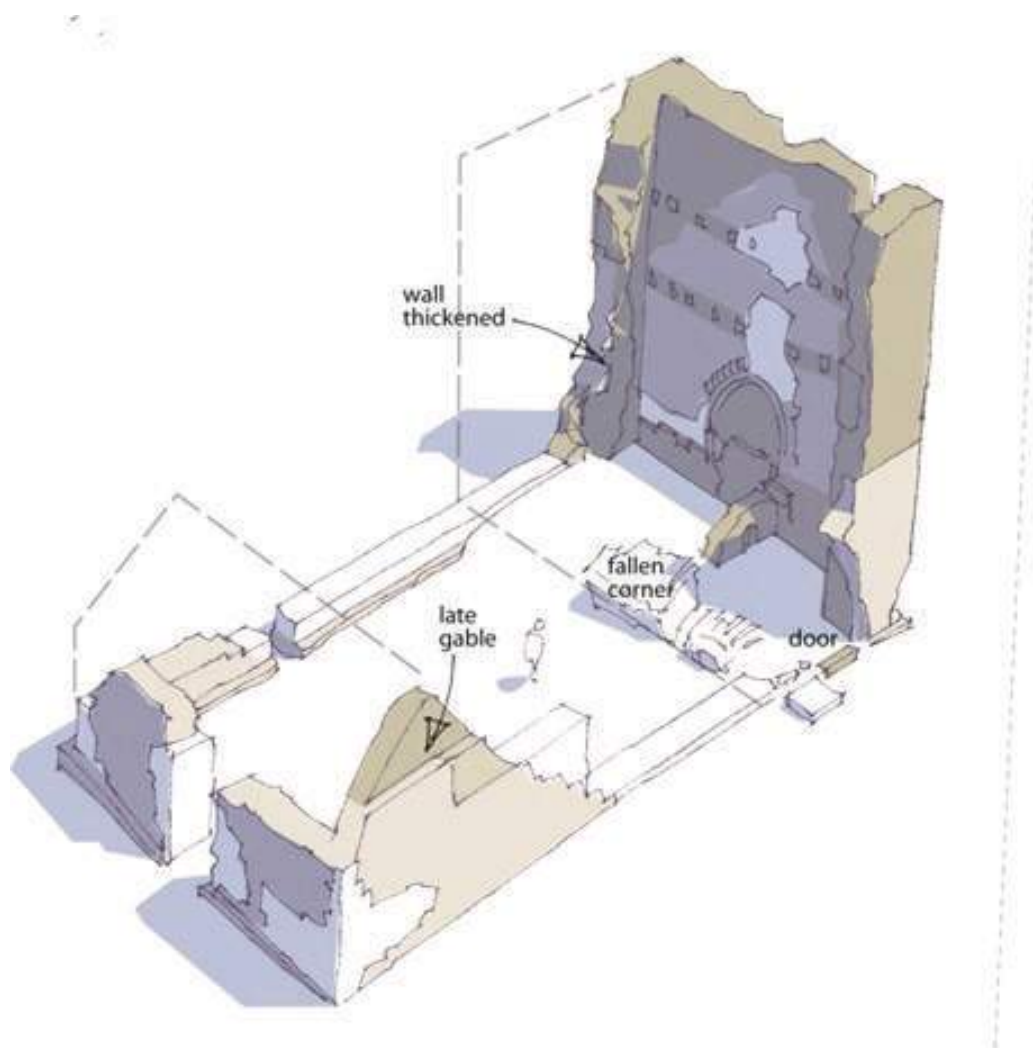
Oblique sketch of medieval church/ castle remains from southwest



Oblique sketch of medieval church/ castle east gable from southeast

CASTLE

The castle (LA018-031006) was built when the east end of the original church stood to full height. The chancel was removed, the arch was blocked, and a three-storeyed towerhouse reused the gable, and extended a short distance along the nave of the old church. Most of the tower has fallen and been removed, but a corner (probably southwest) lies across the interior of the former church. Sockets for first floor and second floor joists can be seen in the reused church gable, over the ragged start of a low barrel vault. A first-floor embrasure and defensive loop has been constructed in the southeast corner. The surviving fragment of north wall includes a ground floor loop and the side of an embrasure for a first-floor loop or window. The south wall fragment has the side of a ground floor door passage, with threshold slab, and the side of a first-floor embrasure.



Oblique sketch of medieval church/ castle remains from southwest

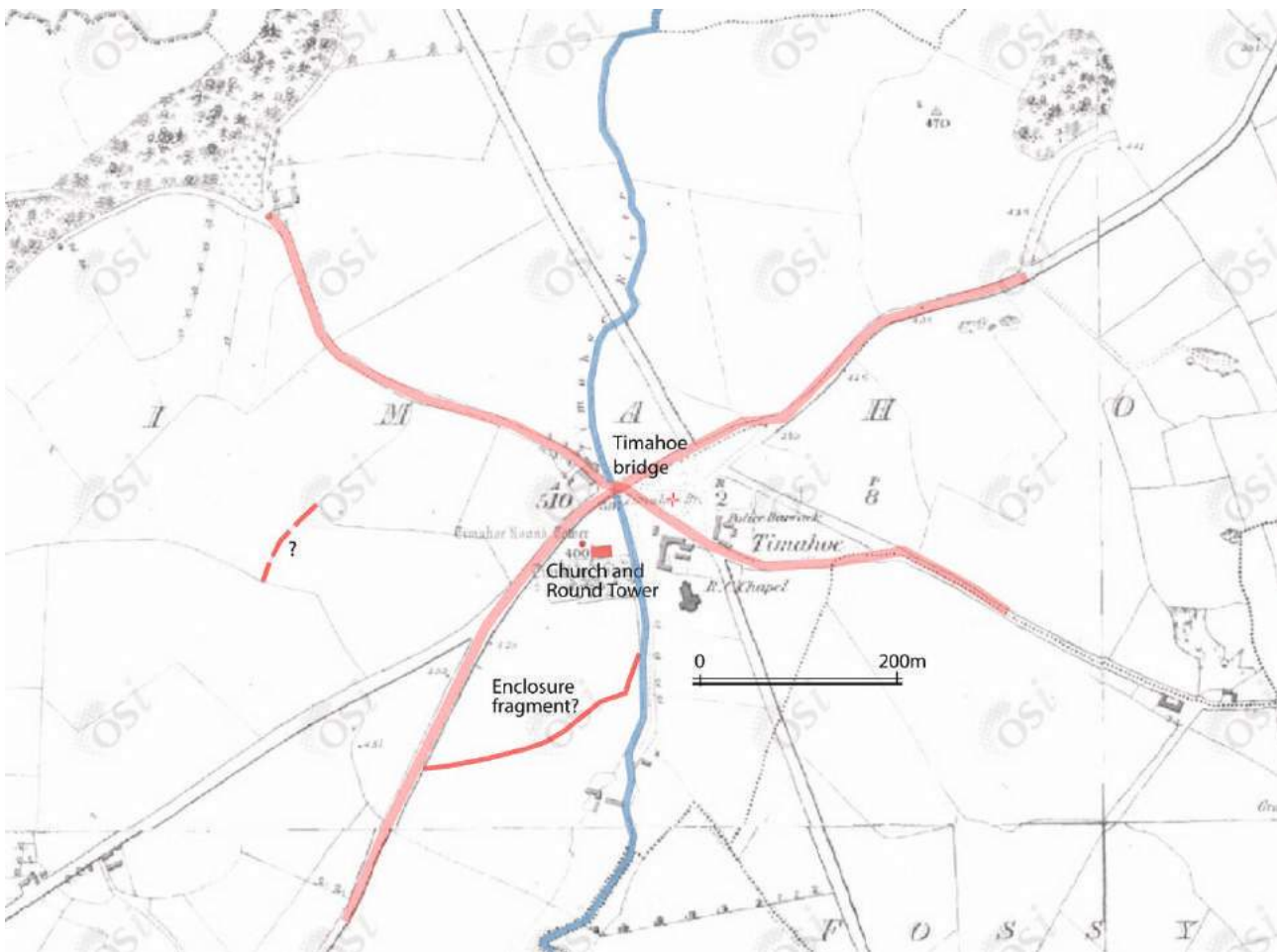
The north and south walls were thickened to carry the tower. A thin wall with a splayed opening appears to have divided the ground floor, under the vault.

The 1792 drawing of the site by Grose shows the towerhouse much as today, with little more than one wall standing. A pair of gabled buildings are standing to the west, the larger probably in the shell of the old church. The entire shell of the old church is shown roofed on the first edition OS 1/10560 survey of 1841. The larger of Grose's buildings is probably responsible for the gable standing today at the west end of the church (but without a window), and buildings probably extended east into the shell of the former towerhouse. Grose's gabled buildings may be part of the 16th century or 17th century castle, or may be more recent.

SITE CONTEXT

The OS survey of 1841 gives us the earliest plan of the site and surroundings. The older roads stand out against the newer straighter highways, and there is a clear crossing of older roads at Timahoe bridge, on the north side of the site. The river is the most prominent natural feature and must have formed part of an enclosure around both the church and the castle sites.

The walls or hedges around the castle are much as today. An orchard is shown to the south, and this enclosure still defines the south end of the churchyard. The north end is defined by the road approaching Timahoe bridge, on the 1841 map and today. A wall running west from the shell of the church survives as a low ridge today, running into undergrowth on the west side of the churchyard.



1841 OS survey, river and old roads highlighted, and possible enclosure

Early monastic sites often have concentric enclosures. There is nothing obvious in the topography of the present churchyard to suggest a former enclosing bank and ditch close to the medieval church and round tower, but a curving land boundary can be seen c150m to the south, converging on the river to the east and extending to an old road approaching from the southwest. Further pieces of the enclosure may be represented by a short arc c.300m to the west, and by a gentle bend in the line of the old road approaching the bridge from the northwest. The evidence is certainly not strong, but might improve after topographic and geophysical surveys.

The discovery of one or more prehistoric burials on site, an urn with human bones “under a flag near Timahoe Castle” (LA018-062), and “three pans of small bones...in the floor of the Castle of Timahoe” (LA018-031004) suggests earlier but unrelated activity here.

A tentative site evolution might run as follows:

1. Later first millennium AD. Monastic settlement beside river, enclosed, with church and other buildings.
2. Mid 12th century construction of round tower (facing principal church?).
3. 12th century? construction of large stone church
4. 16th century conversion of church to towerhouse and ancillary range.
5. 19th century construction of new church.

SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

The archaeological significance of the site at Timahoe owes a great deal to the round tower, but the ruined church is also a medieval building. Although the present village of Timahoe is built around a green on the east side of the river, the medieval settlement may have been on the west side of the river, within the present churchyard and beside the two roads converging on the bridge from the west. Settlement remains within the churchyard may have been disturbed by grave digging and by construction of the 19th century church, but any remains to the north, close to the bridge, should be in better condition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The enclosure pattern around the medieval site is unclear, but might be revealed by detailed topographic (LiDAR and 3-d laser scanning) and geophysical (resistivity and magnetometry) survey. The location and extent of the medieval settlement should be established ahead of further development of lands around the known monuments.

Dave C Pollock. June 2014.

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APPENDIX II: ART HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT: DR RACHEL MOSS

HISTORY

The foundation of the early ecclesiastical site at Timahoe is associated with St Mo-Chua (Luachra? d.654). In common with many early Christian settlements the site was strategically located, in the case of Timahoe at the point where a pass joined the ancient territory of Mag Recht in Loígis with Mag Lacha in Ossory (Smyth, 1982, p. 72).

Between the late ninth and early eleventh centuries it was evidently a place of some importance, with the deaths of abbots recorded in 880 (=883), [Máel-Cóemgin] 928 (=930), 969 (=971), 1001 (=1002), 1007 (=1008), a bishop, Coscrach, in 931 (=933). Deaths of other members of the community include a secnap [vice abbot] in 936 (=938) and an airch [ecclesiastical head] in 919 (=921). Reference to the death of a fer léiginn ('man of learning'/ teacher) in 951 (=953), hints at the presence of a school or scriptorium there.

There is little remaining evidence of the physical form of the ecclesiastical settlement at this time, aside from a possible trace of the original ecclesiastical enclosure in the curving field pattern to the south and east of the present graveyard, which is continued in the line of the road to the northeast. The earliest references to structures on the site come in 919 (=921), when the 'oratory of Mochua' was burned by Norse invaders and in 1069, when Gilla Mhuire son of Dubh, chief of the Crimthenann was killed in the doorway of the dertach [oak church] there, having sworn an oath on the 'caimmin' – possibly a crozier-reliquary kept at the site.

In 1142 the site was burned again, although the perpetrators and the extent of damage is not recorded. From this period on, references to the ecclesiastical site at Timahoe are more scant. The establishment of an Anglo-Norman stronghold nearby in the late twelfth century most likely led to the conversion of the existing church into a parish church, as was the case in many similar locations. The death of a comarba [an episcopally nominated lay guardian of a parish church and headman of the family in hereditary occupation of church lands] is mentioned in 1246, and the church was valued at 8 marks in the 1302-06 taxation records. Early accounts of the site, including Lewis' Topographical Dictionary, refer to the re-foundation of the site by the Ua Mordha dynasty at an unspecified in the later middle ages. This has been linked to the establishment of a Franciscan friary at the site, but there is no evidence that a community of this type ever existed at Timahoe.

Following the introduction of church reform, in a report between 1585 and 1587, the church of Teaghmochoo is listed as being 'ruinated but the lande not waste' (Archivium Hibernicum, 42 (1987), 3-11). Shortly afterwards, in 1603 it was granted to the Cosby family who constructed a fortified house in the ruins of the former parish church.

THE ROUND TOWER

The most significant of the early medieval structures to survive is the round tower, and it is for this, and in particular the tower's carved Romanesque doorway, that Timahoe is most famous.

The tower has not survived without some alteration. An illustration of it completed by Austin Cooper in 1782 shows the conical cap partially destroyed, and a doorway had been opened up at ground level. The illustration of the tower in Grose's Antiquities shows it with a cabin built up against the base. Repairs were carried out on the tower in 1880-81, including the replacement of the conical roof (but at an apparently steeper pitch than the original), some repointing and repairs to some of the window openings.

The tower as it stands today is roughly 29.59m with a base diameter of 17.54m. This is very close to the average height of surviving towers, which Stalley has pointed out may reflect a deliberate attempt to build towers to a height of 100 Carolingian feet, a number that would have held symbolic meaning (Stalley, 2001). The structure incorporates a variety of different stone types: the bottom is mainly local limestone and sandstone, roughly dressed, changing to sandstone ashlar and then to a poorer quality limestone.

The tower is divided into 'basement' and five levels. The base of the tower is furnished with a plinth with three steps. The doorway, at first floor level faces east north-east, presumably intended to face the original west door of the church at the site as is normal practice. The second floor is lit by two windows, one facing south east with a sculptured, pedimented frame, the other, facing south, is plainer with a round head. The third floor is lit by a single round-headed ope facing west south west, the fourth by a rectangular ope facing west north west and the upper storey by four windows, variously pedimented and round headed (though much repaired). The roof, as stated above, is a modern repair.

Of particular note is the doorway carved with Romanesque ornament, one of the few such examples in the country. Located almost 5m above the ground, its design is complex, consisting of four orders arranged in two pairs, separated by a short barrel vaulted space. The jambs of each of the orders are inclined slightly inwards. As one moves through the doorway, there are a series of steps, corresponding to each of the orders. The arches of the doorway are decorated with chevron ornament of various types and a sequence of low relief discs. Capitals are adorned with a series of heads, each distinctive, with beards and curling, interlaced hair. Similar human masks are also found on some of the bases. Other bases are bulbous, or carved in hourglass form. It has been suggested that one of the bases (on the third order of the north jamb) bears a male exhibitionist figure.

Although now very worn, the south-east facing window on the second floor also appears to have been adorned with sculpture. This comprised a moulded projecting pediment supported on moulded pilasters with human mask capitals and hourglass bases.

COMPARANDA

Round towers incorporating any Romanesque sculpture are relatively rare, the best examples being towers at Devenish, Co. Fermanagh, Ardmore, Co. Waterford, Kildare, and Disert Oenghus, Co. Clare. The closest surviving comparison to the carved doorway of the Timahoe tower is found at Kildare, now the only other tower to have a doorway carved with Romanesque ornament as elaborate as that at Timahoe, and there is also a record of a round tower at nearby Killeslin, Co. Laois, deliberately demolished in 1703, the 'ornamental stones of the doors and windows' of which could still be seen in 'little houses in the neighbourhood' in 1882 (Comerford, 1882).

The predominant decoration of the doorway comprises human mask capitals and bases and chevron ornament. Capitals (though not bases) carved with human masks are a particularly distinctive feature of the Hiberno-Romanesque, especially in Leinster, although western examples also occur at Annaghdown and Inchagoill (both Co. Galway). Potentially the earliest examples are found at Cormac's chapel, Cashel (c. 1127-34), and other examples with the same elaborately carved hair are found at sites such as Kilteel, Co. Kildare and Glendalough Co. Wicklow. By far the closest, stylistically, to the Timahoe examples are found on the Romanesque doorway at Killeslin. For example, one head on the base of the outer order (south side, outer edge) at Timahoe is almost a replica of one of the faces on the outer jambs at Killeslin.

Chevron also features prominently at both sites, although differing slightly in design. Like human mask capitals, this was one of the most common forms of arch decoration during the latter three quarters of the twelfth-century, though unusual on round towers, with Kildare the only other example to have a portal decorated with the design.

An unusual feature of the Timahoe doorway are the bases. Human masks on bases are unique to this site, and it is peculiar too that they are arranged in an unsymmetrical fashion, leading Brian Lalor to suggest an inexpert assembly of available pieces of sculpture rather than a carefully planned, purpose carved round tower doorway (Lalor, 1999). The inclusion of a male exhibitionist figure, although unusual is not unique. These figures are common in contemporary continental churches, and a roughly contemporary male exhibitionist is included in the chevron decoration of the east window at Rahan. Contemporary female exhibitionists occur in the Nun's Church at Clonmacnoise, and Rath in Co. Clare. The slightly bulbous form of the bases is mirrored at sites including Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow, Killeslin, Co. Laois, the Nuns' Church, Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly and Rahan, Co. Offaly.

Taking all of these comparisons into account it appears most likely that the doorway of the tower was executed by a sculptor or sculptors active in the Leinster area in the mid-1100s and that the construction of the tower most likely dates to the period around which the church site at Timahoe was burned in 1142.

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APPENDIX III: ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT: DR FIONA MCGOWAN

Ecological Report for the area around Timahoe Round Tower, Timahoe, Co. Laois



Dr Fiona MacGowan, Consulting Ecologist
July 2014

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1. INTRODUCTION

This ecological report comprises descriptions of the habitats, lists of plant and animal species recorded and suggested management measures for the biodiversity enhancement of the area surrounding the Round Tower in Timahoe, Co. Laois.

The importance of biodiversity is a topic overlooked in the past but coming more to the fore these days. Biodiversity is all around us because it simply refers to the diversity of life on Earth – the diversity of species and the diversity within species. With Ireland being an island, our own unique biodiversity has developed over thousands of years and is there to be enjoyed by all.

Ecology refers to the science of studying plant and animal species in their homes (*eco* is derived from the Greek word for home *oikos*). In ecology these ‘homes’ are called habitats. Habitats are areas made distinct from each other by their vegetation and/or their landscape characteristics. Examples of different habitats would be hedgerows, rivers, woodlands etc. Co. Laois is blessed with a diversity of habitats of wonderful quality from the blanket bogs of the Slieve Bloom mountains to the Oak woodlands of Abbeyleix. Several examples of these habitats are recognised to be of international quality and have protection under European law (they are designated as Special Areas of Conservation - SACs). Timahoe is in the lucky position of hosting habitats of national importance in Ireland with the beautiful Timahoe Esker woodlands which are designated as a Natural Heritage Area (NHA). The woodlands are a wonderful and accessible spot from which to see Ireland’s native woodland biodiversity in all its glories, be it the magical blue haze of the bluebells in spring or the rainbow of colours in autumn.



Fig. 1: Bluebells in the Timahoe Esker woodlands

This report gives descriptions of the biodiversity of the site around the Timahoe Round Tower. This is done by describing and mapping the habitats present and listing the plant and animal species recorded during several site visits through the spring and early summer of 2014.

2. HABITAT DESCRIPTIONS

Habitats present at the site are classified according to Fossitt (2000). Fig. 2 is a habitat map of the area showing the location of each habitat type on the site. It is followed by written descriptions of the habitats featured in the map.



Fig. 2: Habitat map of the Timahoe Round Tower site

2.1. STONE WALLS & OLD BUILDINGS

(Fossitt classification: Stone walls & other stonework, BL1)

The stone walls that form the boundaries of the site prominently feature Navelwort, also known as Wall pennywort easily identified by its fleshy, dimpled leaves (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Navelwort in flower growing on wall at Timahoe

These walls also feature some cover of Ivy and two species of fern: Hart's tongue and Maidenhair spleenwort. Ivy is a very important native species that is of great value to wildlife. It is particularly important in winter as it is the only plant to have berries all through the season making it a vital food source for mammals and birds. Ivy's evergreen leaves are also popular hibernating spots for several species of butterflies and moths. It is acknowledged that Ivy can become a problem on old stone buildings where small roots that grow from its stems can damage mortar and slowly pull stones apart. Ivy is not a problem on the stone buildings and monuments at the site, however, its presence along the boundary walls and below the trees is of great benefit for biodiversity at the site.



Fig. 4: Maidenhair spleenwort fern



Fig. 5: Hart's tongue fern & Ivy

The castle and old church building feature the same plants (except ivy) with a few additions. Two grass species: the soft and downy Yorkshire fog and the notably harder Fern grass. This latter species feels quite stiff and is typically found growing on walls as it has a great capacity to survive dry conditions.



Fig. 6: Yorkshire fog grass.



Fig. 7: Fern grass

There are also a few flowering plants growing on the old walls. The plants are small and could be easily overlooked but growth conditions on these old walls are very difficult for plants, so you rarely see large, robust specimens. The white-flowered Thale cress and the pretty Changing forget-me-not were both noted on the old church walls.



Fig. 8: Changing forget-me-not growing on the old church walls



Fig. 9: Close-up of forget-me-not

2.2. RIVER

(Fossitt classification: *Eroding/upland rivers, FW1*)

The Timahoe river runs picturesquely along the eastern boundary of the site. The river bed is clear and stony with no aquatic plants noted along this stretch. A Dipper was noted flying along the river during an April visit. The presence of this bird species indicates good water quality and a healthy ecosystem.



Fig. 10: The Timahoe river and its associated fringe of vegetation at the eastern entrance to the site

The banks of the river feature a curtain of rich vegetation in the summer with tall Giant fescue grass and Rosebay willowherb. Watercress, once popular in the Irish diet grows along the west side of the river. Despite its edibility it is not a good idea to gather this plant in the wild for food, as it is a host plant to Liver fluke during certain stages of its lifecycle!



Fig. 11: Meadowsweet blossom



Fig. 12: Watercress

The foamy, creamy blossoms of Meadowsweet also grow along the river's edge. These have a beautiful sweet, honey scent and have long been used to flavour mead and beer as well as other uses.



Fig. 13: Giant fescue grass growing beside the Timahoe river.

2.3. GRASSLAND

(Fossitt classification: Amenity grassland, GA2)

The main habitat on the site, this is the grassland area around the buildings and the graves. The main area of grass around the graves and the buildings which is mowed regularly features only a few species such as Perennial rye grass and Daisy. It has a low biodiversity value because it features only a few species compared to other parts of the site.

2.4. TREE LINES

(Fossitt classification: WD5)

The Timahoe Round Tower site is blessed with many beautiful, mature trees. The most prominent species is the native Pedunculate Oak which is very much at home on Co. Laois soils. Judging by their size, the Oaks here are around a century old. This means they are only coming into maturity as the oldest Oak in Ireland lives across the way in Abbeyleix and it is thought to be somewhere between 500 and 700 years old!

Oaks are known as the Kings of the forest and they are hugely important for Irish biodiversity. A mature Oak tree is a habitat in its own right as it hosts numerous other species from ferns to moths to lichens to mosses. The picture in Fig. 14 shows a Navelwort plant growing on one of the Oaks at the site – a notably rare phenomenon. None of these plants are parasitic to the Oak, they just use the tree as a base from which to grow.



Fig. 14: Navelwort growing on a Pedunculate oak tree at Timahoe

The richest part of the site from a biodiversity perspective is the area under the trees where there appears to be a different mowing regime from the main grassland i.e. this area is mowed less and this favours various wildflower species.

Under the trees there are a wealth of wildflowers such as Tufted vetch, a member of the pea family with flowers like small purple sweet peas and Lords & Ladies – a plant with many names, it’s also known as Jack-in-the-box and also known as Cuckoo Pint.



Fig. 15: Lords & Ladies



Fig. 16: Tufted vetch

Another prominent flower is the delicate Cow parsley which also has the much prettier, more suitable name Queen Anne’s lace and the Dog violet. There are several grass species growing here such as: Yorkshire fog; Annual meadow grass; Cock’s foot grass and False oat grass.



Fig. 17: Dog violet

In springtime there is a very notable patch of Cowslips growing under a tree in the north-eastern corner of the site. This is a terrific demonstration of how slightly changing the grass-mowing regime can encourage beautiful wildflowers. The Cowslip has become increasingly rare in the last few decades. The reasons for its decline have been increased use of herbicides (weed killers) and increased grass mowing. Cowslips need time to set seed before they are cut. As is the case here at Timahoe, when the flowers are left to go to seed then we are rewarded with a beautiful cheery group of cowslips the following April.



Fig. 18: Patch of Cowslips



Fig. 19: Cowslip close-up

While the vast majority of the trees on site are Oaks, there are a small number of introduced species such as Horse Chestnut, Beech and Sycamore. None of these trees are native to Ireland and therefore do not have as high a biodiversity value as the Oaks but they are aesthetically very pleasing at the site providing interest through the seasons with their different flowers and fruit.



Fig. 19: Horse chestnut leaves & developing conkers



Fig. 20: Beech leaves & developing nuts

Along the southern boundary of the site and in the south-eastern corner, several shrubs are forming an understorey below the trees as they would naturally in a woodland setting. This gives a pleasant backdrop to the site and the shrubs give added interest. The dominant shrub species is the Elder which has beautiful creamy blossoms in early summer and purple berries in autumn. Both blossoms and fruits are edible and form part of many different recipes not least the delicious Elderflower champagne!



Fig. 21: Elderflower bush



Fig. 22: Elderflower close-up

Another shrub noted at the site in the south-western area is a type of Plum (*Prunus* sp.). The bushes appear to be derived from domestic Plum trees that could either have seeded from nearby gardens or there is the possibility that they may be derived from fruit trees grown on the site in the 19th century. Maps from this time indicate an orchard in the southern half of the site so this is a possibility.

2.5. SCRUB

(*Fossitt classification: WS1*)

The western section of the site is an area of scrub that was recently cleared of previously planted evergreens (possibly *Leylandii* cypresses), Willow and Elder bushes. In between the stumps of these bushes the area is dominated by Nettles and Brambles making it inaccessible to the public.



Fig. 22: Recently cleared scrub area close to the Round Tower

Other plants growing here include Buttercups, Hogweed, Thistles, Cleavers, Rosebay Willowherb and Hedge woundwort. The latter two species typically grow in recently cleared areas where they make use of the light. Interestingly Woundwort is the best plant to rub on a Nettle sting, far better than the more well-known Dock!



Fig. 23: Hedge woundwort



Fig. 24: Cleavers

3. FAUNA AT THE TIMAHOE ROUND TOWER SITE

3.1. BIRDS

The smallest members of the Crow family in Ireland, Jackdaws, were noted nesting in the Round Tower. Also as noted earlier, the Dipper was recorded at the Timahoe river footbridge entrance to the site.

The following birds were noted during site visits in April, May and June. These birds would either have been nesting on site or else nearby and they regularly use the site to find food or to roost in the trees.

Common name	Scientific name	Irish name
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Cág
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Gabha dubh
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Glasán darach
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Lon dubh
Blue tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Meantán gorm
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Rí rua
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Spideog
Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Glasóg shráide
Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Liatráisc
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Druid
Willow warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Ceolaire sailí
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Dreoilín
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Corcrán coille
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Fáinleog
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Colm coille

3.2. MAMMALS

No wild mammals were recorded during various field trips to the site. However, it would be expected that Foxes, Hedgehogs, Rabbits, Pygmy shrews and Wood mice use the site. No sign of a badger sett was noted on the site. There was an animal track noted in the south of the site. This is most likely to have been made by foxes and/or badgers that could be travelling through the site foraging for food.

Common name	Scientific name	Irish name
Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	Sionnach
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Graineog
Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Coinín
Pygmy shrew	<i>Sorex minutus</i>	Dallóg fhraoigh
Wood mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	Luch coille
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	Broc

A study of bats at the site was carried out in 2008 by Scott Cawley Ltd for Laois County Council's Heritage Office. This study found three species of bat roosting in the old Church/library building on site. The three species are: Common pipistrelle bats, Brown long-eared bats and Natterer's bats. A fourth species, Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*) was recorded during the 2008 survey using the site, most likely foraging for food.

An updated survey by Scott Cawley Ltd in July 2014 recorded only two species Whiskered bats (*Myotis mystacinus*) and Common pipistrelles roosting in the Fossy Church building. These mammals are a very important aspect of the biodiversity of the Timahoe Round Tower site. Ireland has nine native species of bat so the Timahoe Round Tower site

hosting nearly half of our native species types over the last few years is excellent for a small site. Bats are fascinating creatures and their presence on site will definitely be something to be celebrated and studied further in Timahoe.

Common name	Scientific name	Irish name
Common pipistrelle bat	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	laltóg fheascrach
Brown long-eared bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	laltóg fhad chluasach
Natterer's bat	<i>Myotis nattererii</i>	laltóg Natterer
Whiskered bat	<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	laltóg ghiobach

4. ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT AND BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT SUGGESTIONS

4.1. MANAGEMENT OF THE AREA CLEARED OF SCRUB

A large area along the western side of the site has been cleared of scrub. However, the stumps still remain, and the area has now become covered in nettles, brambles and cleavers. This needs to be cleared but in a very sensitive manner as this is a National Monument site, therefore the soil cannot be disturbed. This means that clearance work will have to be done by hand without the use of heavy machinery.

It is suggested that clearance work be done with hand-held machinery in the winter months when the nettles and brambles have died back thus making it possible to see where the stumps are. If it is deemed necessary, the stumps can then be treated in the manner the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) use to clear troublesome Rhododendron shrubs from ecologically sensitive sites. This involves the painting of the freshly cut stump with a 20% solution of Glyphosate (e.g. Roundup) between the months of October to April. This ensures the stump does not re-grow.

Once the area has been cleared, there are several possibilities for using this part of the site. The planting of an orchard is one of the suggestions below. This may be a very practical way of dealing with the difficulties at this part of the site. Once the fruit trees are planted as they mature, they will gradually shade out most of the troublesome weeds currently growing in this area and the old stumps will rot away by themselves. In this manner there would be minimal intrusion of the site.

4.2. ORCHARD

An old map of the site shows an orchard located in the southern half of the site (Fig. 25). Part of this area now forms part of the graveyard, however, the presence of an orchard in the past could be a cue to a future use of the site. Orchards can be a beautiful place to spend some time with their blossoms marking the arrival of spring and their fruit heralding autumn's arrival while providing a harvest for the community to share. In addition to their aesthetic beauty they also can be havens of biodiversity especially when growing in conjunction with wildflowers underfoot. Thus, an orchard can host a variety of trees and wild herbs which in turn attract a host of pollinating insects such as bees, hoverflies, butterflies and moths and these in turn attract various species of birds by day and bats by night. An orchard featuring a mix of apple, pear and plum trees would be possible. The presence on site of plum trees may be an indication of plum trees being present in the 19th century orchard.

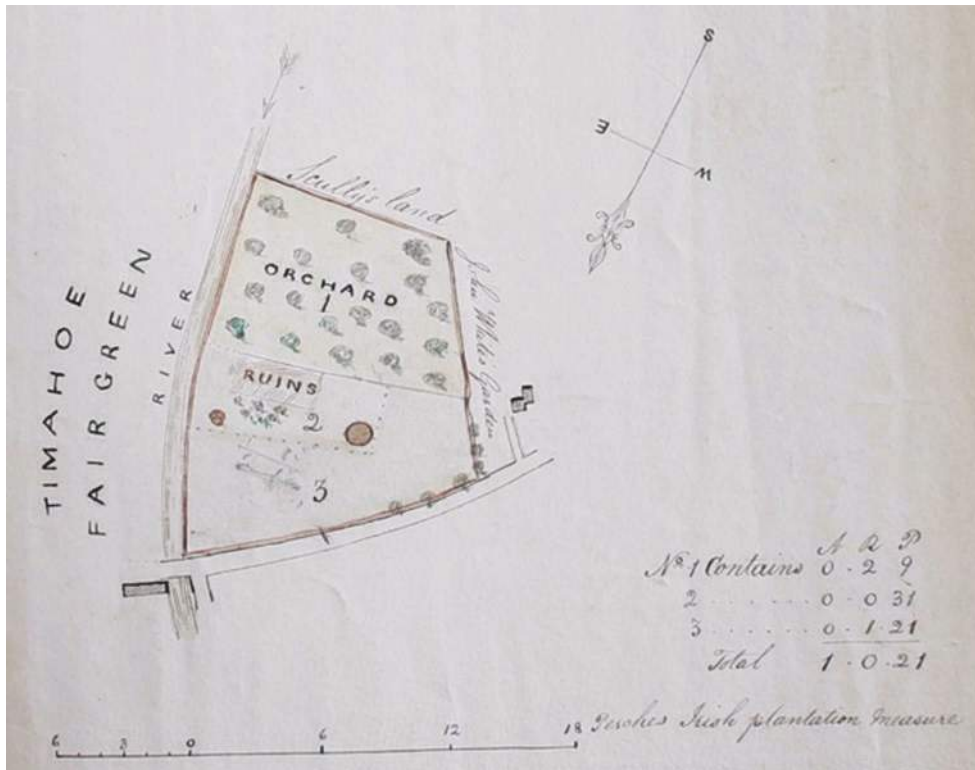


Fig. 25: A hand-drawn map of the Round Tower site from circa 1850

Seedsavers is an organisation based in Scariff, Co. Clare who have collected old Irish apple varieties and other fruit trees from all over the country. They will advise and supply the varieties best suited to growing conditions in Timahoe. Not only do these old varieties grow better but they also produce fruit that tastes much better than the minimal varieties available in the shops. Alternatively, a call could be put out to local people who may have old varieties growing on their land. These could be identified and propagated for the Timahoe orchard project. A Community Orchard will also provide a focus for various community projects such as a local 'Apple Day' where there could be apple games, baking with apples and apple juicing.

4.3. WILDFLOWER MEADOW

A wildflower meadow in what is now the cleared scrub area would make for a pretty picture. The cleared area could host a wildflower meadow on its own or better still as ground cover in conjunction with the orchard. Grass paths mown through wildflower meadows are always attractive inviting the visitor to walk through them (Fig. 26). For wildflowers to thrive, grasses need to be suppressed, this is why poorer soil is better for wildflowers. For this reason, it is normally advised to remove the topsoil (the top 15cm approximately) from a site where wildflower seed mixes are to be planted. Should this soil disturbance not be possible because of the National Monument status of the site then clearance of this part of the site with herbicide would have to be considered.

One plant in particular is important in the establishment of wildflower meadows – Yellow rattle. This plant is partially parasitic on grasses, so it can suppress their growth by 50% resulting in more space for wildflowers. Yellow rattle would fail if the seeds were to be planted in amongst the thistles and coarse grasses that are growing in the scrub area at present, so this is why either soil clearance or the limited use of herbicide should be considered. Wildflower seed mixes are best planted in the autumn and they generally take 2-3 years to become fully established. It is imperative that wildflower seed mixes are of Irish origin. Many of the wildflower seed mixes on sale are not of Irish origin, thus in their planting new species are being introduced and foreign genetic material is being brought in. There is a worry that the foreign plants will hybridise with local native plants and this can have serious repercussions. An example is the Spanish bluebell which has hybridised with the native bluebell in Britain leading to a decimation of native populations across Britain. Both Seedsavers and the Laois-based 'Design by Nature' company sell wildflower seed mixes of Irish

origin. The wildflower meadow can be supplemented in the years to come through collections of local wildflower seeds – another possible school project.



Fig. 26: Wildflower meadow in Marlay Park, Co. Dublin

4.4. COMMUNITY COMPOSTING

The field survey for this project revealed that parts of the site are being used to dump grass cuttings and other graveyard debris. A system could be devised where grass cuttings and other compostable waste could be disposed of/used in a designated composting area. A simple system of two small areas (1m² each – located beside each other) could be boxed off using wooden pallets in an open (i.e. not shaded) corner of the site. Composting works on the principle of 1 part green waste (i.e. grass and leaf cuttings, vegetable and plant waste) to 1 part brown (or dry) waste (i.e. woody twigs, dead leaves, straw, newspapers, cardboard). The secret is to get this mix right otherwise the compost becomes a slimy mess e.g. grass cuttings left to rot on their own. This slimy mess kills off other vegetation and therefore ugly, brown patches of dead vegetation are left where grass cuttings were thrown.

Some water is also needed to keep the decomposition process going, however, too much is not good, so it is recommended that the compost piles be covered during the winter. The idea behind the two-box system (also known as 'New Zealand boxes') is that when the waste has degraded to a certain stage it can be moved on to the next box. In so doing the compost pile is oxygenated - this is vital for the decomposition process. The compost can then be used for gardening and soil conditioning from this second box. There are several possibilities for the greater Timahoe community to help here, not least of which would be to get Timahoe National School involved where their cardboard and paper waste could be used in the new composting system.



Fig. 27: Grass cuttings and graveyard debris at southern end of site

4.5. BIRDBOXES AND BIRDFEEDERS

The addition of a few bird boxes and birdfeeders to the site will add interest for the visitor as well as enhancing biodiversity. Simple plans for making these small structures or details of where to buy them are in Annex 2.

4.6. PLANT TREES

There is scope for planting small (3 to 4 trees) groups of native shrubs and small trees at the site to add biodiversity and aesthetic interest. Shrubs such as: Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*); Elder (*Sambucus nigra*); Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) and Guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*) all have features of interest around the year with all featuring beautiful flowers and fruit. Also, Holly is evergreen for winter interest. Two small trees that grow in the Timahoe area are Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and Bird cherry (*Prunus padus*). Both also feature pretty flowers and fruit.

It might also be worth considering planting a native Irish tree which has long been associated with graveyards – the Yew (*Taxus baccata*). The Irish form ('Fastigeata') of this tree has upright branches (Fig. 28). These branches feature striking red fruit in late autumn/early winter adding seasonal interest to this evergreen tree.



Fig. 28: Irish yew trees growing in a St. Michael & All Angels graveyard in Abbeyleix

4.7. INSECT HOTEL

The addition of a simply made insect or bug hotel will add to the site's interest for visitors as well as helping the biodiversity. These are simply made by re-using various materials from wooden pallets to old bricks to logs and bamboo canes. Lots of artistic talent and imagination can be used in their construction.



Fig. 29: Insect hotel at Seedsavers orchard, Scariff, Co. Clare

An accompanying notice outlining the purpose and results of the insect hotel would also be helpful as seen in the Donaghmede school's bug hotel as displayed at the Bloom Festival of 2013 (Figs 30 & 31).



Fig. 30: Bug Hotel built by Holy Trinity School Donaghmede, Co. Dublin

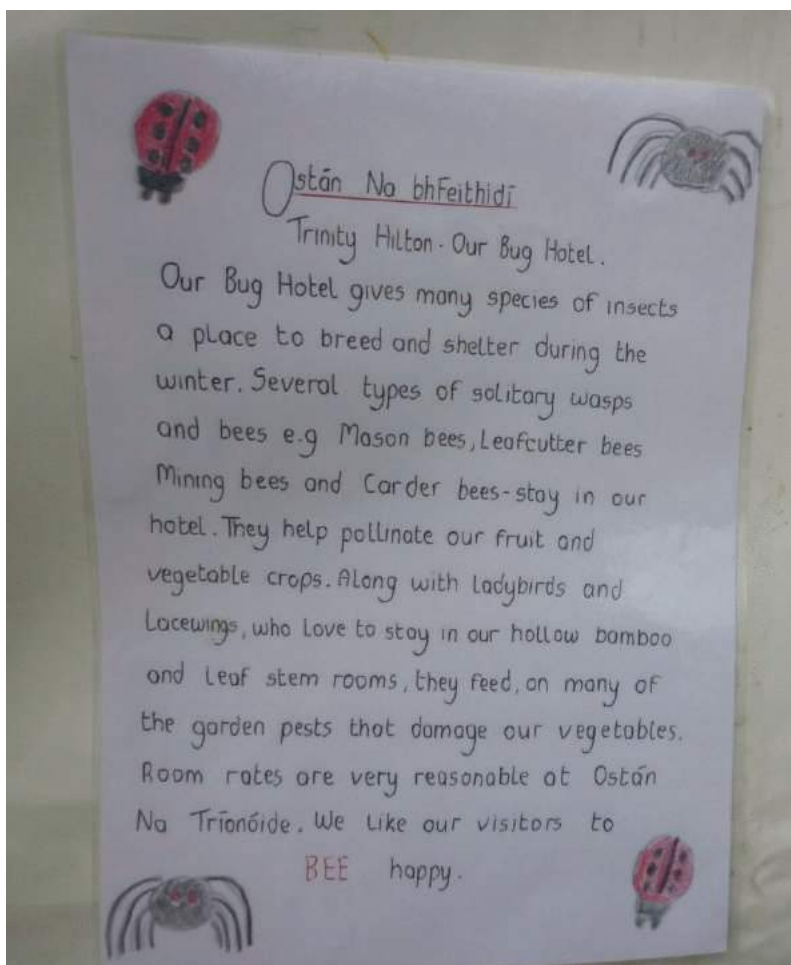


Fig. 31: Very informative notice accompanying the Bug Hotel in Fig. 30

4.8. WINDBLOWN TREE

An old Monterey Cypress tree blew down in the storms of February 2014. Every cloud had a silver lining and this opens up possibilities for the site. Fig. 32 shows a long table and bench recently constructed by a community in Co. Wicklow from knocked trees in their communal area. The community had a local carpenter come along for a day and

several volunteers worked with him for a Saturday in turning their fallen tree into the table and benches. As the table-top candles show the table and benches are being used for community picnics and barbecues.



Fig. 32: Community Table and benches made from fallen trees by Co. Wicklow community

ANNEX 1: PLANT SPECIES LISTS

Walls and Buildings

Common name	Scientific name	Irish name
Climbing plants:		
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	Eidhneán
Flowering plants:		
Thale cress	<i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i>	Tailis
Changing forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis discolor</i>	Lus mionla buí
Navelwort	<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Carnán caisil
Grasses:		
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Féar an chinn bháin
Fern grass	<i>Catapodium rigidum</i>	Feár raithní
Ferns:		
Maidenhair spleenwort	<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i>	
Hart's tongue fern	<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>	Créamh na muice fia

Grassland (Graveyard and under trees)

Common name	Scientific name	Irish name
Climbing plants:		
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	Eidhneán
Flowering plants:		
Tufted vetch	<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Peasair na luch
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Nóinín
Lesser celandine	<i>Ficaria ficaria</i>	Grán arcáin
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Caisearbhán
Cowslip	<i>Primula veris</i>	Sabhaircín
Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	Tuile thalún
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Feabhrán
Nettles	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Neantóg
Lords & ladies	<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Cluas chaoín
Goosegrass	<i>Galium aparine</i>	Garbhluas
Grasses:		
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Féar an chinn bháin
Perennial rye grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Seagalach buan
False oat grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	Coirce bréige
Cock's foot grass	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Garbhfhéar
Annual meadow grass	<i>Poa annua</i>	Cuise bliantúil

River banks

Common name	Scientific name	Irish name
Flowering plants:		
Tufted vetch	<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Peasair na luch
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Nóinín
Lesser celandine	<i>Ficaria verna</i>	Grán arcáin
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Caisearbhán
Rosebay willowherb	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Lus na tine
Curled dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Copóg
Herb Robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Ruithéal rí
Nettles	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Neantóg
Garlic mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Bóchoinneal
Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Airgead luachra
Watercress	<i>Nasturtium officinale</i>	Biolar
Grasses:		
Tall fescue	<i>Festuca arundinacea</i>	Feisciú ard

Tree lines

Common name	Scientific name	Irish name
Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Dair ghallda
Horse chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Crann cnó capaill
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Feá
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Seiceamóir
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Trom
Plum species	<i>Prunus</i> sp.	Crann pluma

Scrub area

Common name	Scientific name	Irish name
Brambles	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Dris
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Feabhrán
Hedge woundwort	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	Créachtlus
Rosebay willowherb	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Lus na tine
Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Neantóg
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Feochadán colgach
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Trom

ANNEX 2: BIRD BOXES

There are many different sets of instructions for bird box construction on the internet. The best examples are available from the Irish bird charity Birdwatch Ireland (www.birdwatchireland.ie) and the British bird charity the RSPB (www.rspb.org.uk). Both websites contain detailed instructions for making bird boxes and where to site them. The most important points to remember when positioning bird boxes are set out below:

- Ensure there is a clear flight path to the entrance of the bird box.
- Tilt the box forward slightly thus ensuring any heavy rain will hit the roof and bounce off rather than enter the box via the entrance hole/slit.
- Autumn is the best time to erect boxes as birds seek shelter in autumn and winter. Birds will often use the same box for nesting then the following spring.

ANNEX 3: HELPFUL READING MATERIAL

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Tubridy, M. & Associates. (2010). *Laois Habitats Survey*. Report prepared for Laois Heritage Forum, County Hall, Portlaoise.

ANNEX 4: HELPFUL CONTACTS, ORGANISATIONS & WEBSITES OF INTEREST

Laois County Council Heritage Officer: Catherine Casey, tel. 057 8664129

Laois Co. Co. Environment Awareness Officer: Ann-Marie Kelly, tel. 057 8664331

National Parks & Wildlife Service District Conservation Officer for Laois: tel. 076 1002590

Abbeyleix Bog Project: www.abbeyleixbog.ie

An Taisce: www.antaisce.ie

Bat Conservation Ireland: www.batconservationireland.org

Biodiversity public awareness website: www.noticenature.ie

Birdwatch Ireland: www.birdwatchireland.ie

Laois branch of Birdwatch: www.facebook.com/pages/Birdwatch-Laois

Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland: www.bsbi.org.uk

Coillte: www.coillte.ie

Crann: www.crann.ie

Design by Nature, native Irish wildflower seed mixes: www.wildflowers.ie

Dragonfly Ireland: www.habitas.org.uk/dragonflyireland

Heritage Council: www.heritagecouncil.ie

Irish Peatland Conservation Council: www.ipcc.ie

Irish Seed Savers: www.irishseedsavers.ie

Irish Wildlife Trust: www.iwt.ie

Laois County Council, Heritage Office: <http://www.laois.ie/LeisureandCulture/Heritage/>

Lichens: www.lichens.ie

National Biodiversity Data Centre: www.biodiversityireland.ie

National Parks & Wildlife: www.npws.ie

The Ordnance Survey of Ireland: www.osi.ie/mapviewer

Wildflowers of Ireland: www.irishwildflowers.ie

ANNEX 5: BIODIVERSITY & ECOLOGY DEFINITIONS & EXPLANATIONS

1. Biodiversity= the diversity of life

The diversity of all the organisms that occur on Earth – everything from birds to bugs to mammals to trees to reptiles to lichens to fish to mosses to amphibians to algae.

Biodiversity includes the diversity of:

- Individuals within a species (genetic diversity) i.e. you and me!
- Species within an ecosystem or habitat (species diversity) i.e. me and the spider on that wall!
- Ecosystems or habitats (habitat diversity) i.e. this building we're in and the fields outside.

2. Ecology

The branch of Biology that deals with the relations of organisms (living things) to one another and to their physical surroundings.

3. What is the importance of Biodiversity and Ecology?

Humans are an integral part of the Biodiversity of Earth and our actions can influence it in both a positive and negative way.

Ecology deals with the inter-relations between organisms and the places in which they live. This can refer to human beings' dealings and interactions with both the habitats and species around them. So Biodiversity and Ecology affects our lives every day without us even realising it!

4. Species = a type of living organism

Members of the same species can interbreed

All species have common names and scientific names (in Latin) e.g. Homo sapiens

5. Habitat = simply means the home environment of an organism or a number of organisms

Some species only found in one type of habitat e.g. a whale only found in the sea

Some species are found in a few habitats e.g. some grass species found in both open fields and woodlands

6. Ecosystem = a community of organisms all interacting with each other

Complex – it involves all sorts of different species and different groups of species e.g. in a woodland it includes: the birds nesting in the trees; the lichens living on the trees; the tree leaves rotting on the ground and the fungi living on them; the insects living in the trees (and the birds!) etc.

7. Ecosystem Services = all benefits humans receive from ecosystems

APPENDIX IV: REPRESENTATIVE CHURCH BODY LIBRARY RECORDS

The records held in the RCB library concerning Timahoe include:

Folio of original architectural drawings, signed by J Welland, Architect. Account Book: 1877 - 1920
Vestry Minute Book: 1921 - 1954

The records also include records of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Preacher's Book and Visiting Book from the late 19th and early 20th century.

DRAWINGS

The drawing folio includes both a set of working drawings on tracing paper, and finished drawings backed onto parchment; with only marginal differences noted between the two sets. An additional drawing notes minor changes to the bell-ringers' alcove on the west gable.

Only one drawing- the detail of the Belfry finial - is dated: 1855.

The drawings include hand-tinted ground floor plan, 3 elevations, cross and long elevations; and details of porch, doors, windows, roof structure, pews, pulpit, readers desk and altar rails.

The church is in most respects identical to the Church of Ireland church at Valentia Island, for which a similar set of drawings also survives and on which Margaret Quinlan Architects has also worked.

A sketch map of the site prior to the construction of the church notes an orchard to the south of the site, the ruins and round tower, on a site of little more than an acre.

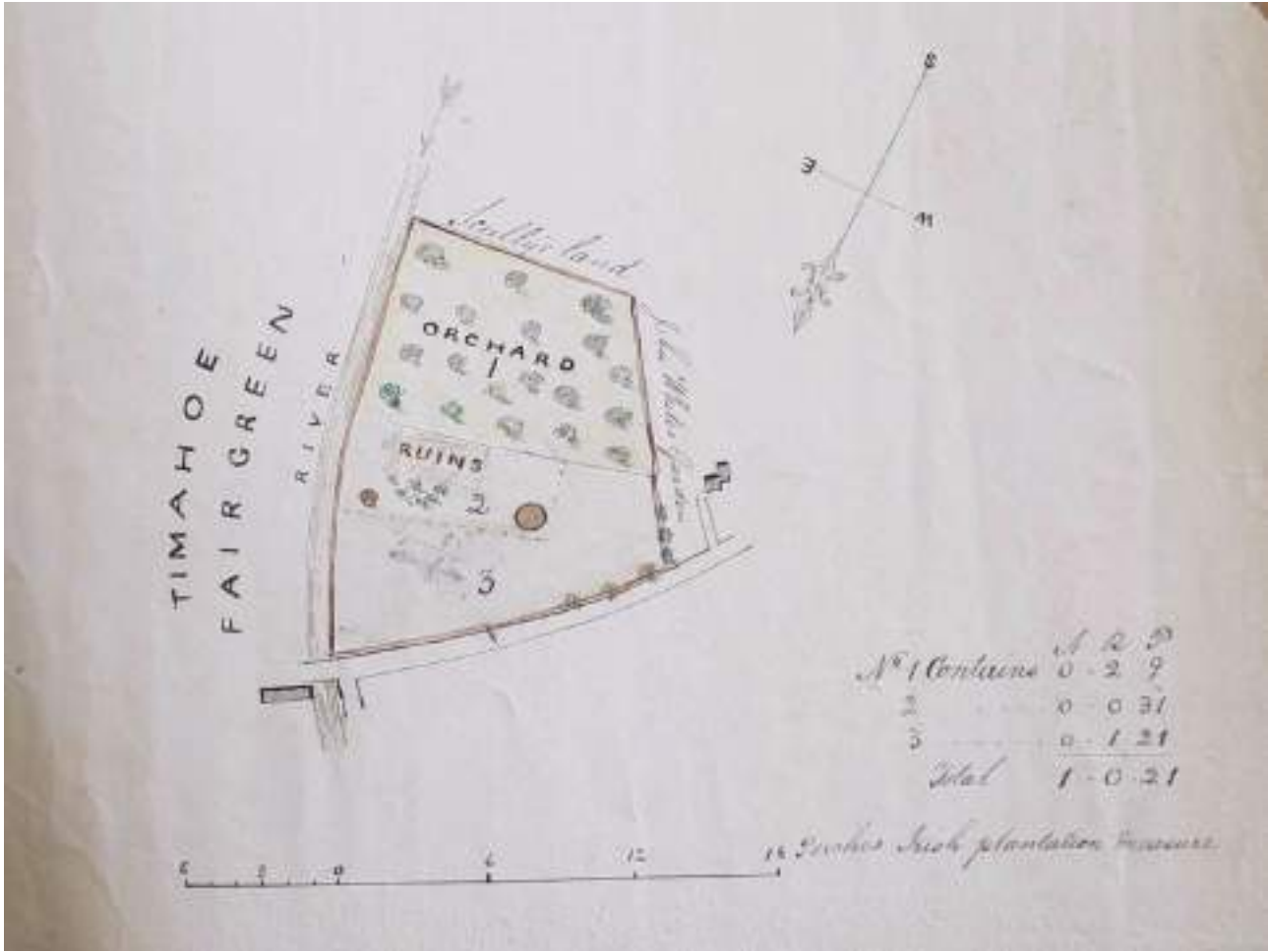
ACCOUNT BOOK

The account book primarily notes parishioners' subscriptions and remittances to and from diocesan funds, but does include a few references of interest to the physical development of the site.

In 1885, £20 was noted for the construction of a new wall and fencing around the churchyard by order of the Vestry.

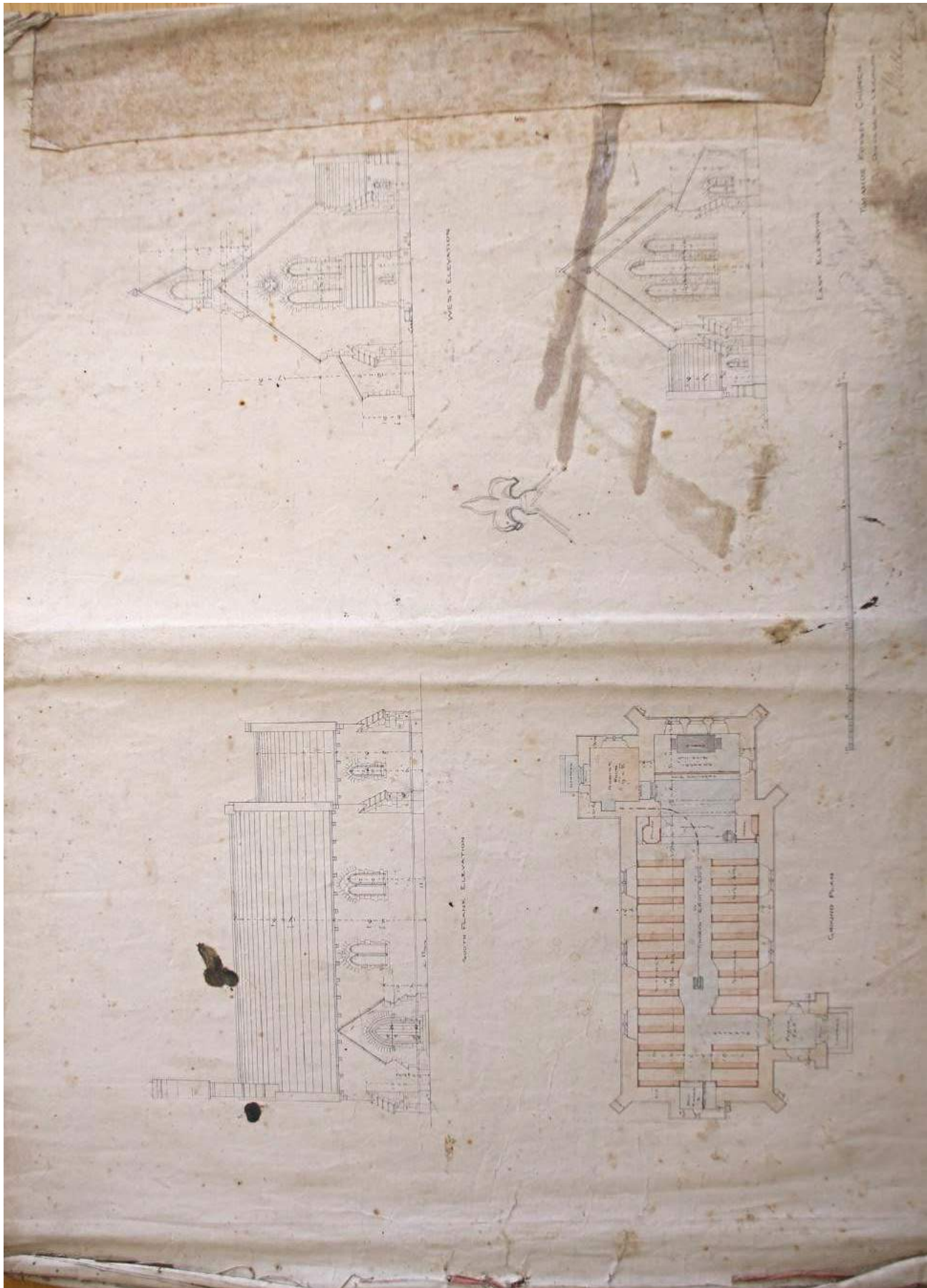
After 1915, small sums of money are paid annually to the Timahoe Burial Ground Fund to cover the maintenance of grounds, paths, etc.

An interesting handwritten note; undated but entered between pages for 1915 and 1916 accounts, bemoaned the 'miserable present situation' of the parish; which had lost much of its income due to the disturbance caused by the land question and death and departure of key families.

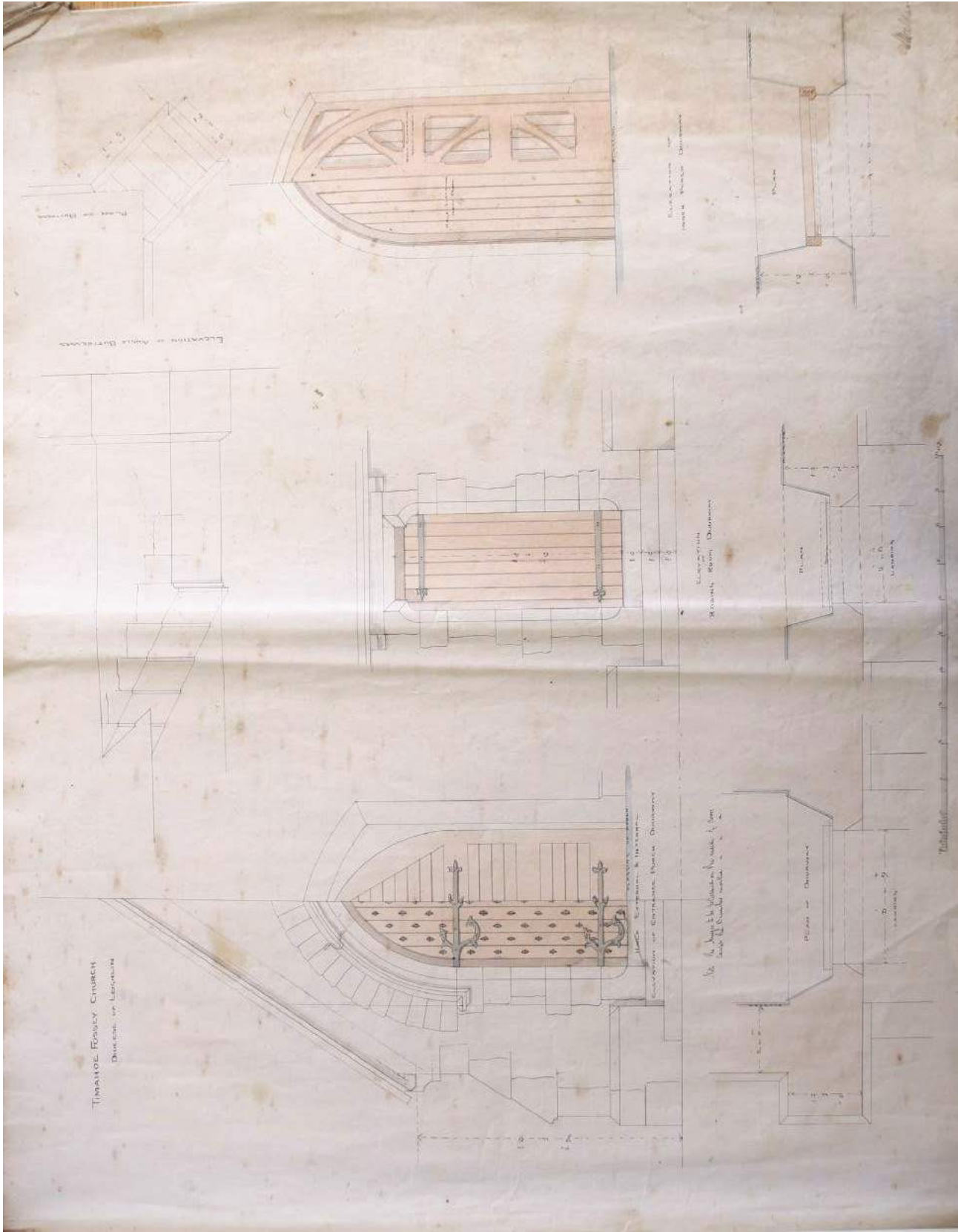


Site Map

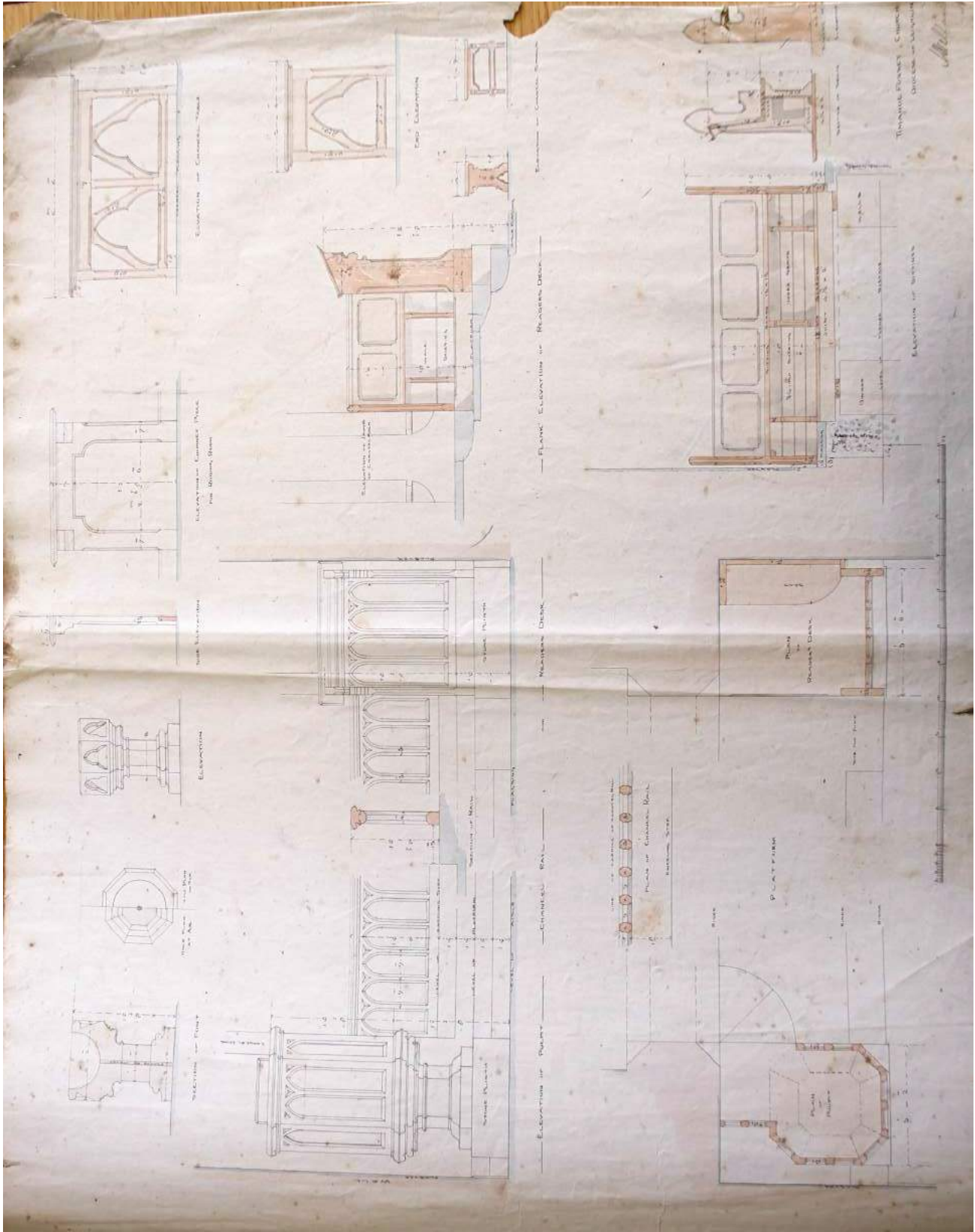




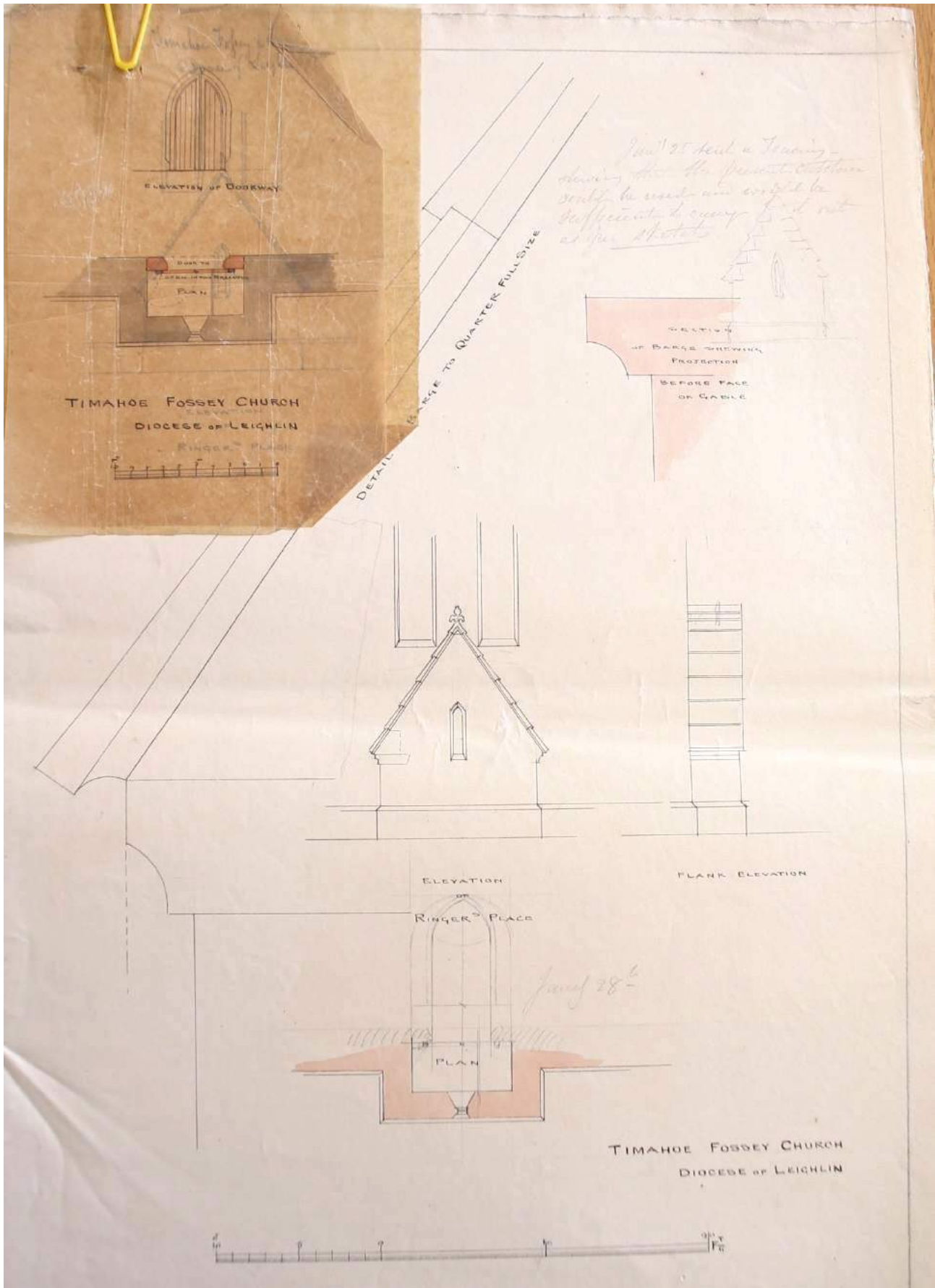
General Arrangement Plan, East, West and North Elevations



Porch and Vestry Door Details



Internal Joinery Details



Later changes to Ringer's Place

APPENDIX V: MAPS OF TIMAHOE, COSBY LIBRARY, STRADBALLY HALL

The manuscript maps held at Stradbally Hall include:

A Book of Maps of the Lordship of Timmahoe in the Queen's County, 1767

Design for a Village or Town intended to be erected at Timahoe... Timahoe: Estate of R.C. Cosby Esq, Exhibiting Drainage Works, 1874

A BOOK OF MAPS OF THE LORDSHIP OF TIMMAHOE IN THE QUEEN'S COUNTY, 1767

The book of maps, prepared by Jonathan Barker for Dudley Alex Sidney Cosby Esq, portrays the lands surrounding Timahoe, including arable and pasture lands, principal trees, roads, watercourses and buildings. Timahoe village is seen as a small collection of cottages. The monastic site comprises a round tower and adjacent structure which appears as a substantial, roofed habitable building, in an orchard setting. The maps are a fine example of 18th century estate mapping.

DESIGN FOR A VILLAGE OR TOWN INTENDED TO BE ERECTED AT TIMAHOE...

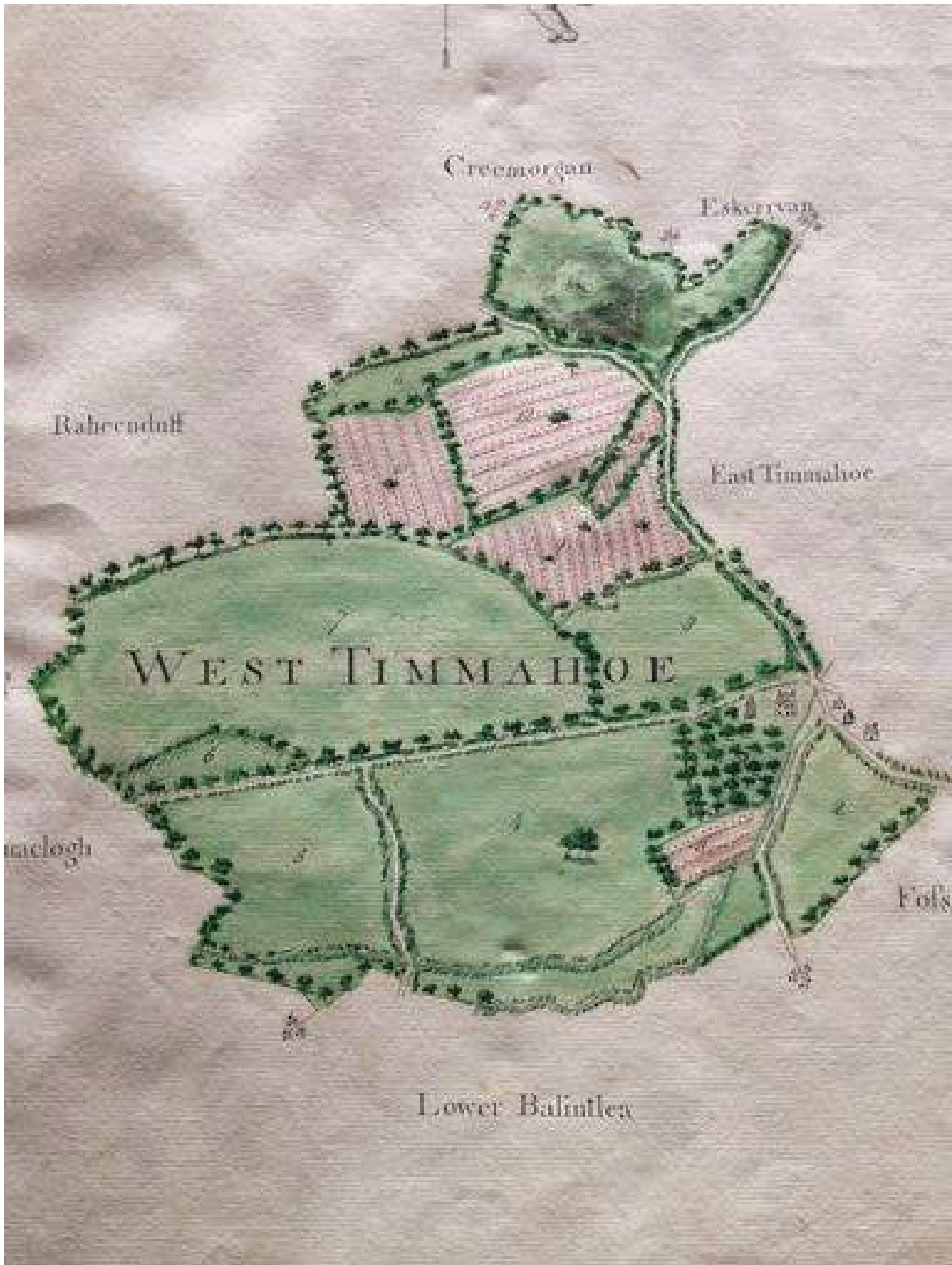
A drawing by William D Butler, Architect (1794-1857) for Thomas Cosby, Esq., proposing the redevelopment of the village around a perfectly circular Fair Green 280 feet in diameter. While undated, the drawing was probably prepared between 1820 - 50; Butler prepared similar designs for a concentric redesign of Dunleer, Co. Louth (1835 - 49). The proposals were probably prepared for Thomas Cosby (1785-1832) rather than his son, Thomas Phillips Cosby (1803-1851), and certainly predate the construction of Timahoe Church ca 1855.

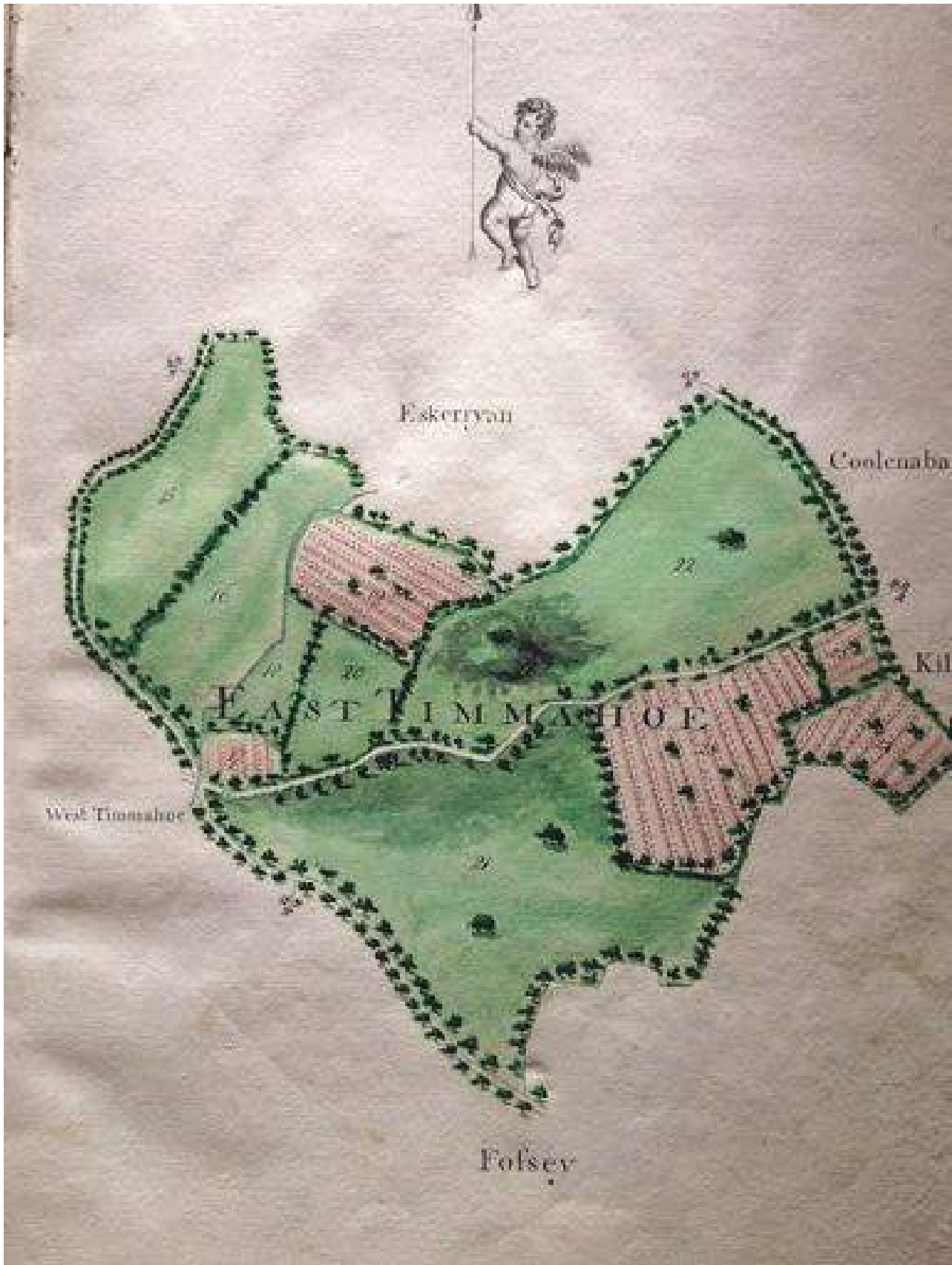
The proposals envisaged a complete architectural ensemble, resolving the convergence of multiple roads by dividing the village symmetrically into six segments. Four segments would each contain five houses facing the green, the end houses in each segment being bow fronted. To the west would stand a market house comprising a rotunda flanked by two storey pavilions, facing across the green to the monastic ruins which become part of the picturesque tableau of the village.

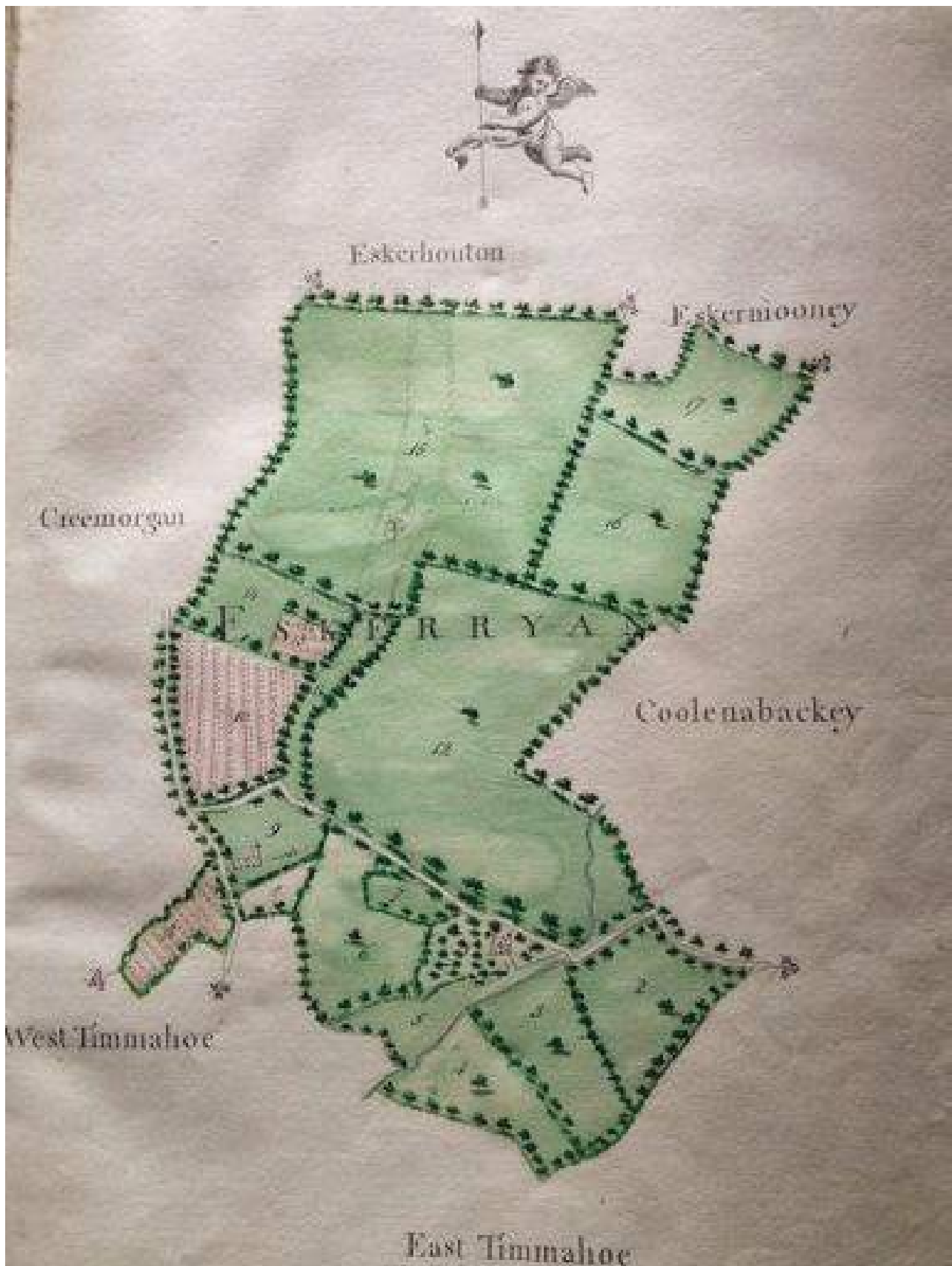
The drawing is a good example of the application of enlightenment principles to the estate improvement, and would have represented a very substantial investment by the Cosby estate. The road to the south labelled 'to the collieries' indicates a possible source of income for such investment, but in the event, the plan remained unexecuted.

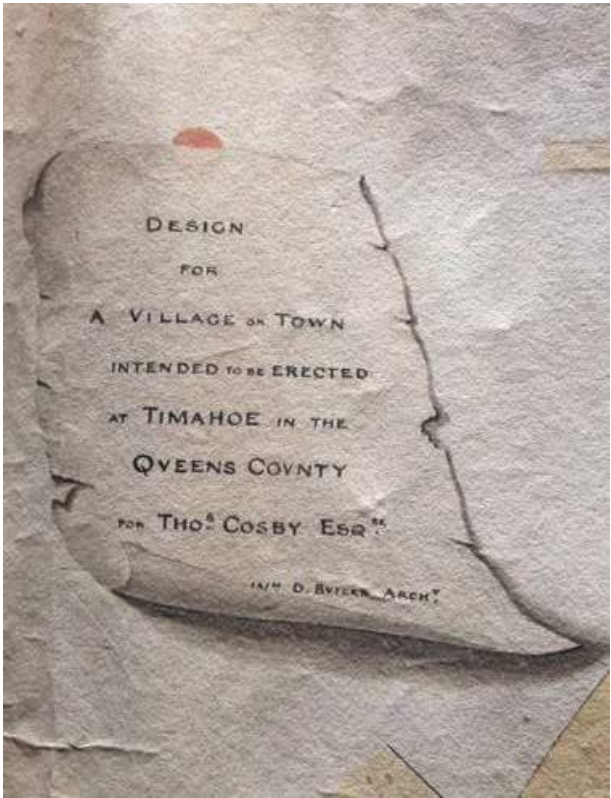
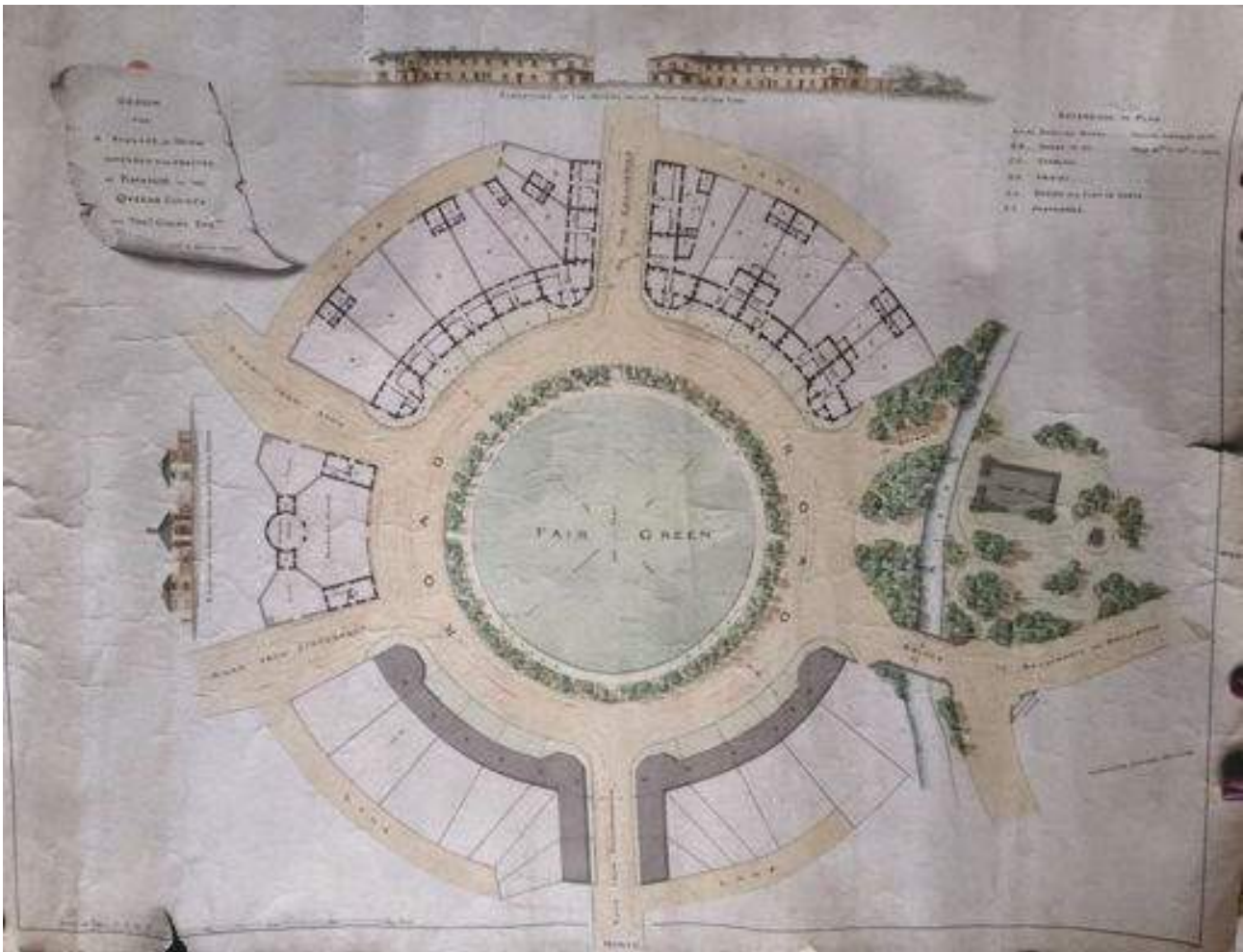
TIMAHOE: ESTATE OF R.C. COSBY ESQ, EXHIBITING DRAINAGE WORKS, 1874

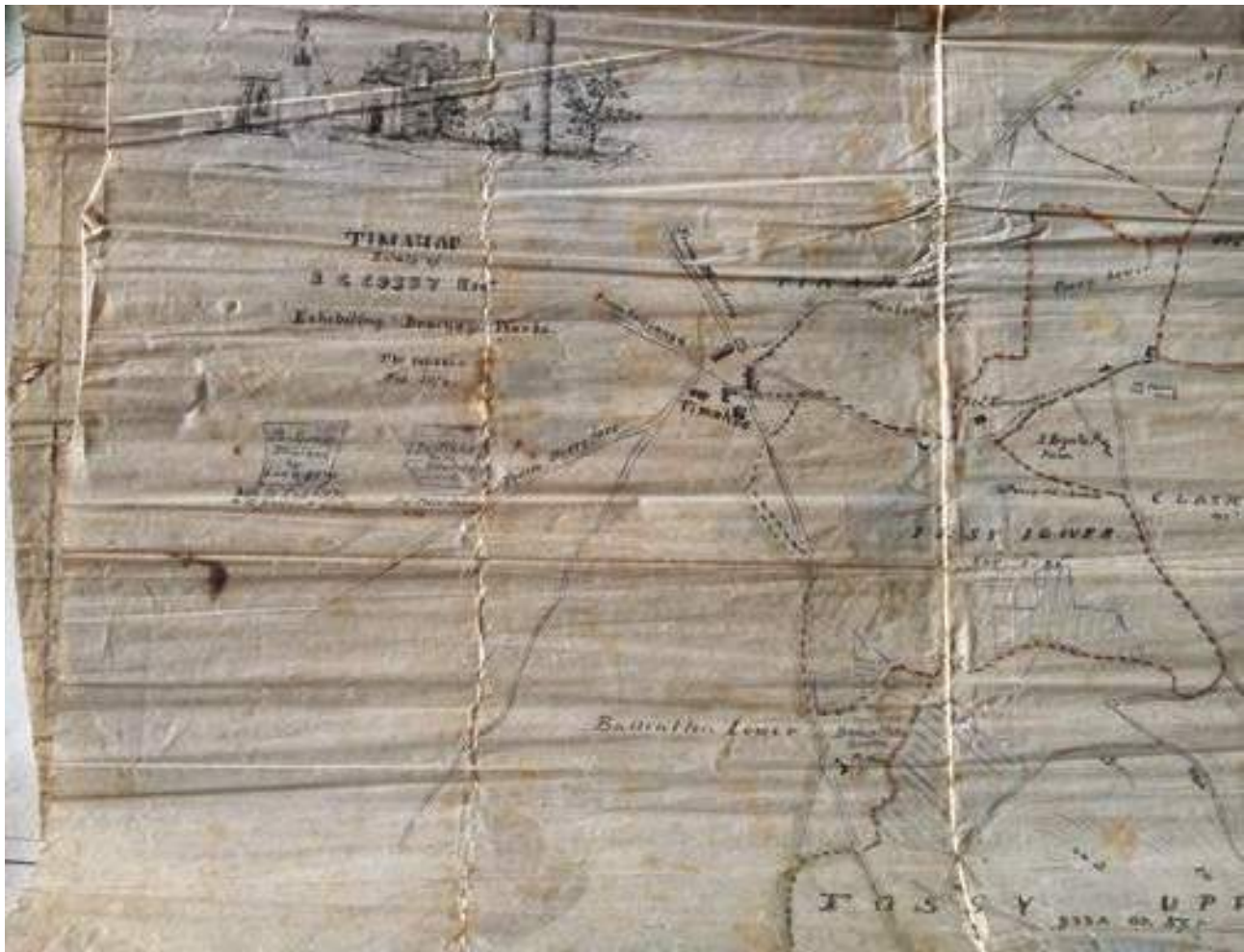
The 1874 map of Timahoe, laid out as a haphazard assemblage of houses, is in clear contrast with the grandiose but unrealised plans proposed a generation earlier. The map concerns itself with the more prosaic considerations of land drainage and improvement and while of inferior artistic quality to the earlier maps, is nevertheless illustrated with a rough sketch of the tower, ruins and new Fossey Church.











APPENDIX VI: JRSAI Article 1924, HENRY CRAWFORD (Courtesy of JSTOR)



The Round Tower and Castle of Timahoe

Author(s): Henry S. Crawford

Source: *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Sixth Series, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Jun. 30, 1924), pp. 31-45

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PLATE I.]

[To face page 31.



TIMAHOE ROUND TOWER.
(The East Side, showing how the Tower leans.)

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THE ROUND TOWER AND CASTLE OF TIMAHOE.

By HENRY S. CRAWFORD, M.R.I.A., *Vice-President.*

[Read 6th MARCH, 1923.]

TIMAHOE is a small village in the Queen's County,¹ about seven and a half miles south-east of Maryborough and a similar distance north-east of Abbeyleix. It occupies the centre of a broad and fertile valley, through which flows a clear and rapid stream. On the bank of this stream stood the early church from which the place is named Teach-Mochua:—The House of Mochua.

This saint is commemorated on the 24th of December in the *Martyrology of Donegal*: "Mochua, son of Lonan, of Teach-Mochua in Laoighis in Leinster. He was of the race of Eochaidh Finnfuathairt. Fineacht, daughter of Loichen, was his mother."

Archdall, quoting the *Annals of Munster*, gives the date of Mochua's death as 497. This is a mistake caused by confusion with St. Mochai of Aendruim or Mahee Island in County Down. Keating states that he died during the reign of Domhnall (624-39), but a note in O'Mahony's edition² explains that this refers to St. Mochua of Balla, County Mayo, who died in 637.

The Annals of the Four Masters are more correct; they say, under the year 657:—"Mochua, son of Lonan, died." According to the *Cronicon Scottorum* the year was 654. The *Annals* also record the deaths of Abbots, Bishops and other dignatories of Timahoe in the years 880, 919, 928, 931, 936, 951, 969, 1001, 1007; stating also that the place was plundered and the oratory burnt in 919 and again in 1142.

In 1041 Cuciche Ua Dunlaing, Lord of Laoighis, with his son, and Cailleoc his wife, were slain at Teach-Mochua by Mac Conin, who was himself killed next day by Ua Broenan in revenge for this act.

In 1069 Giollamuire, son of Dubh, chief of Crimthannan, was slain by Macraith Ua Mordha, in the doorway of the oratory of Teach-Mochua; they having sworn an oath on the "Caimmin," which was in the possession of the son of Dubh. The murderer was afterwards killed near Aghadoe, "in revenge for Fintan, Mochua and Colman." O'Donovan believed the *Caimmin* (*i.e.*,

¹ There is a place of the same name near Prosperous in Kildare.

² Book II., p. 397.

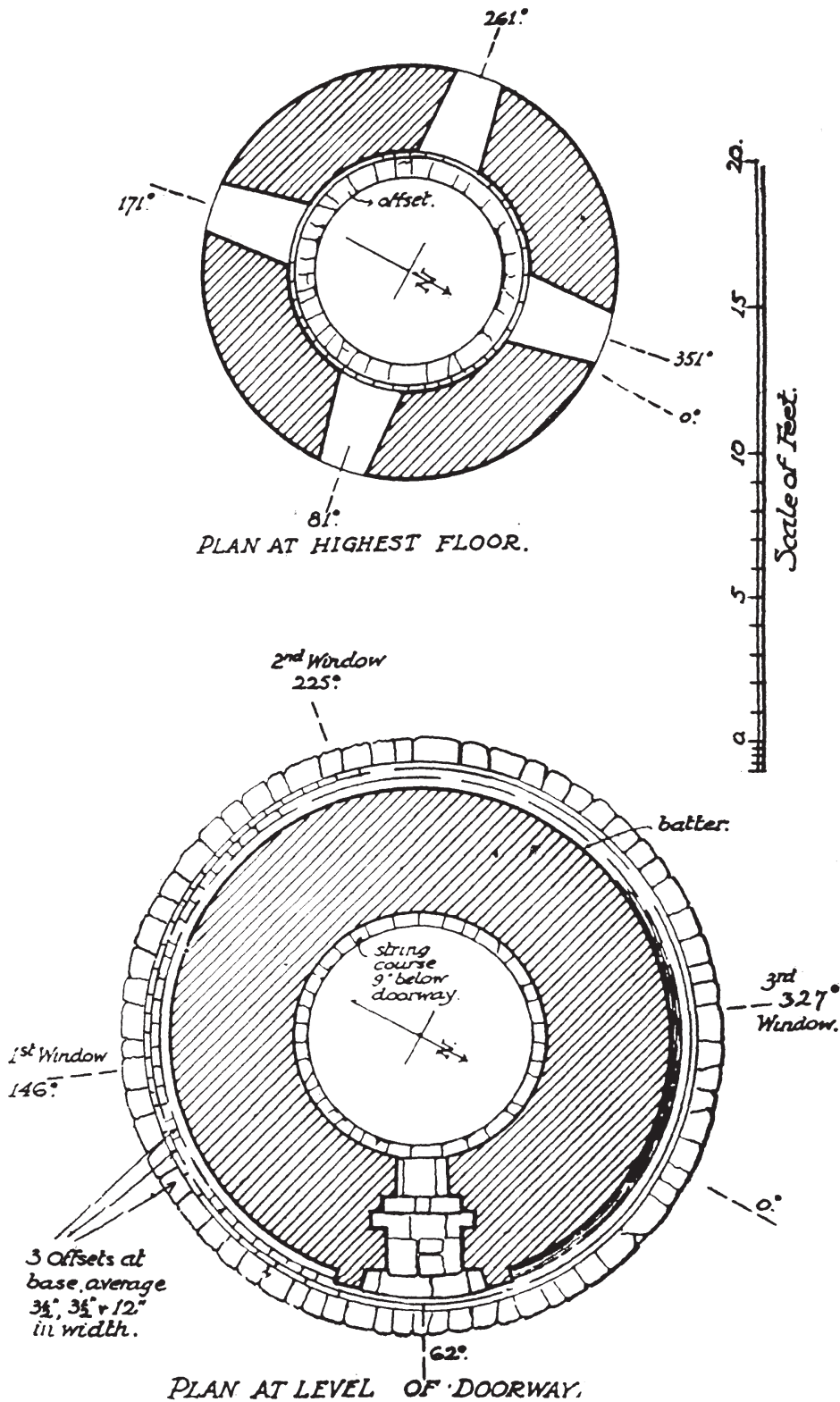


FIG. 1.—TIMAHOE, PLANS OF ROUND TOWER.

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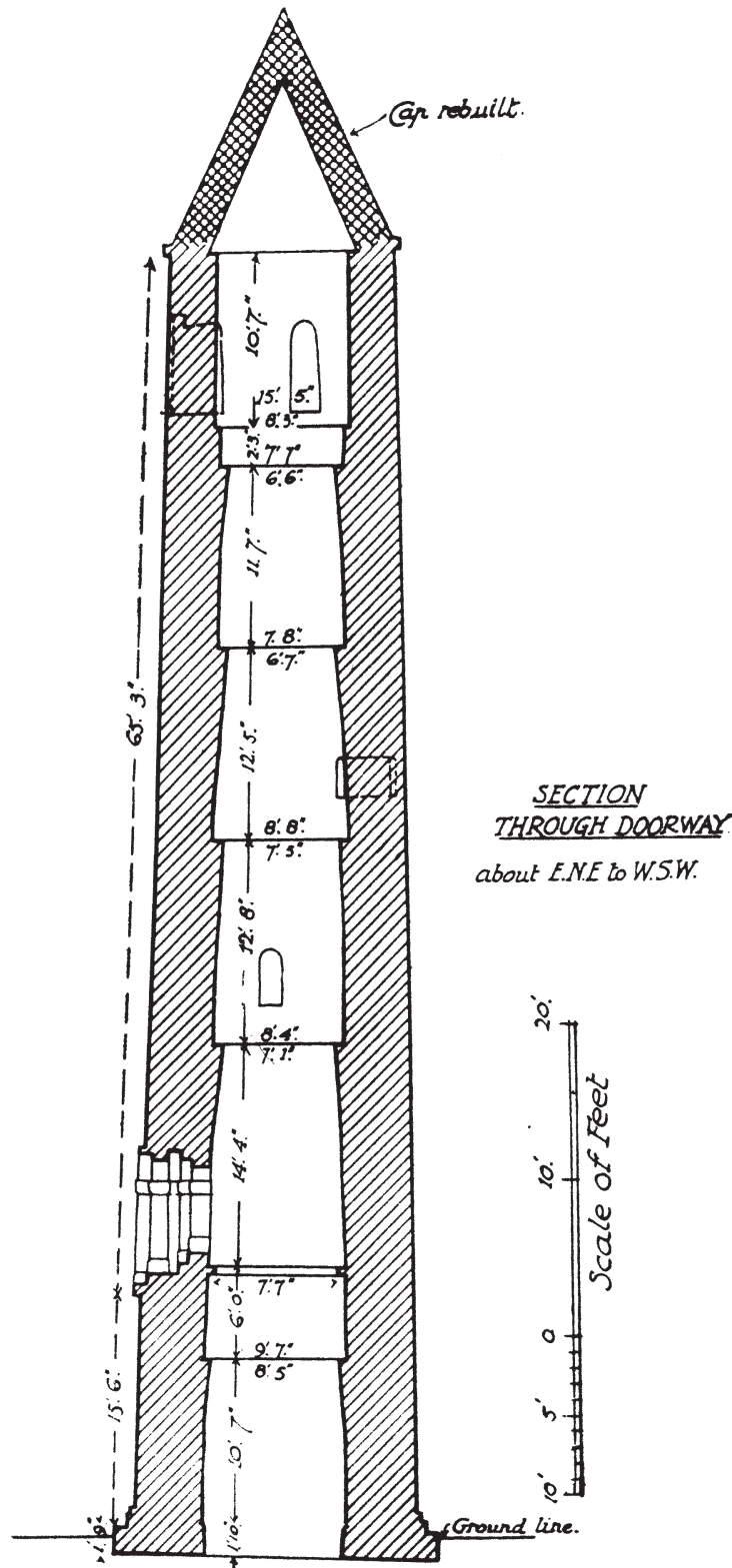


FIG. 2—TIMAHOE, SECTION OF ROUND TOWER.

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Curvulus) to be a crosier connected with these local saints. When employed on the Ordnance Survey he enquired in vain for it in the Timahoe district.

From Giraldus Cambrensis we learn that Hugh de Lasci in 1182 constructed many castles, and amongst them one near "Tachmeho" in the territory of Leix. This was for Meiler Fitz Henry, the husband of his niece; it was no doubt the large mote which still exists in good preservation about three-quarters of a mile south-west of the village.

The parish of "Tagmoho" was valued at eight marks in the taxation of 1306 as noted in the *Calendar of Documents relating to Ireland* (1302-7), p. 250; it is there wrongly called "Timalieve," but this is corrected in the errata. Lewis states that the Abbey was refounded by the O'Mores; and there are still some traces of a medieval ecclesiastical building as noted further on.

After the suppression of the Monastery the lands were granted to Sir Thomas Loftus and afterwards (in 1609) to Richard Cosby, probably by assignment, as Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas, married Francis, son of Richard Cosby.³ By some member of this family a castle was built; that is the remains of the monastic church were altered and fortified to form a tower and bawn, as may be seen at the present day.

Sir Thomas Loftus died in the monastery or castle of Timahoe in 1635. It is said that there were friars at Timahoe in 1650, and that they were killed by Colonels Hewson and Reynolds when they overran the Queen's County in that year.

The history of Timahoe is dealt with at length in Comerford's *Collections Relating to the Dioceses of Kildare and Leighlin*,⁴ and in O'Hanlon's *History of the Queen's County*,⁵ from which many of the foregoing particulars have been taken.

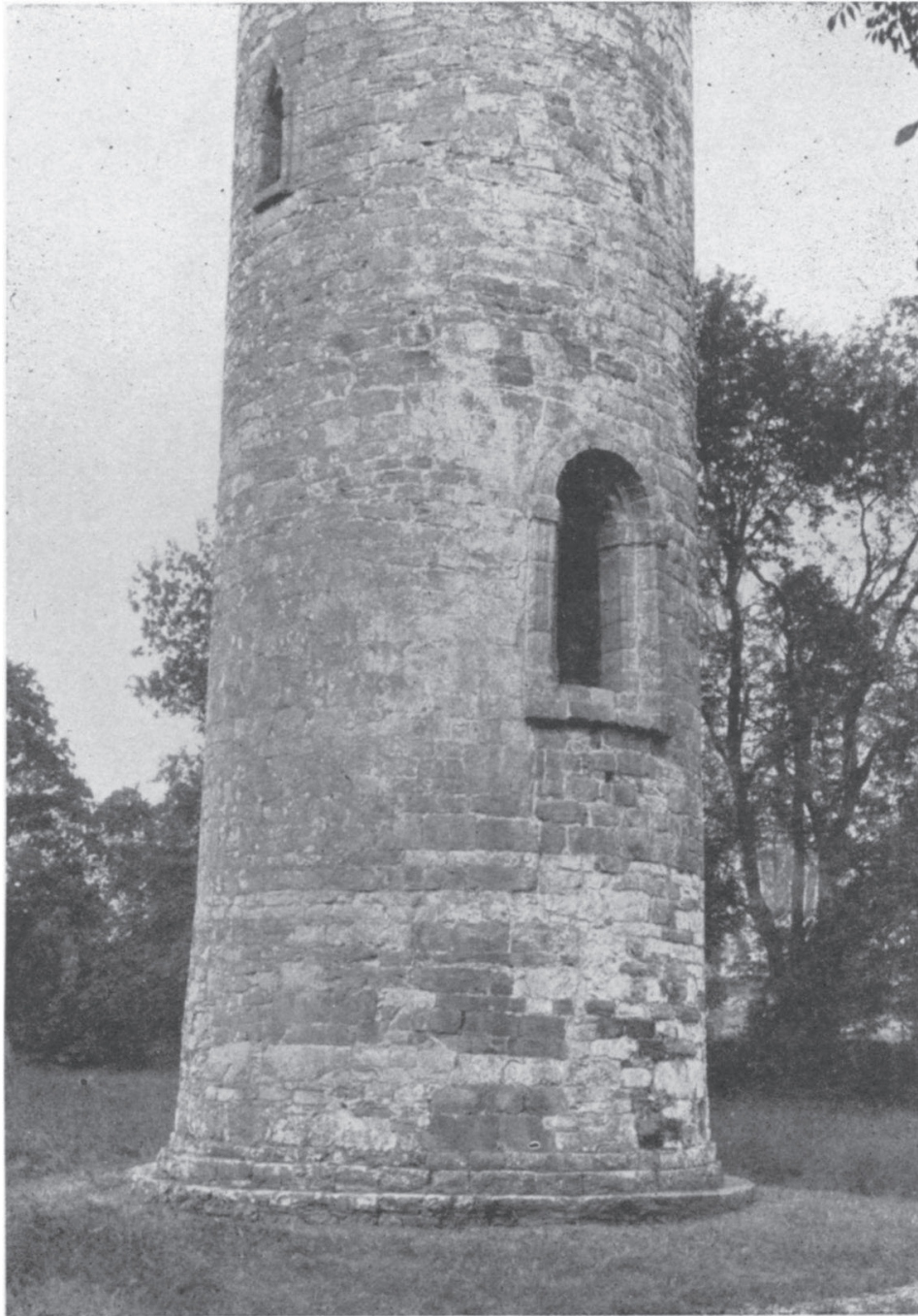
The houses of the village are grouped round a large fair-green, on which fairs of considerable importance were formerly held. According to an old resident, a sport was practised at these fairs which certainly "beat cock fighting," but which must have been found expensive. Stallions were set on to fight each other and large sums wagered on the result.

The stream already mentioned bounds the green on the south-west, and the ruins stand on the opposite bank close to a small modern church. The tower is certainly one of the most interesting of the Irish Round Towers on account of its beautifully designed and carved Romanesque doorway and window; as well as the excellence of the masonry which surrounds them. (Plate I.)

The total height is from 96 to 97 feet above the lowest or large

³ *Anthologia Hib.*, vol. iv. (1794), p. 349.

⁴ Vol. iii., p. 366. ⁵ Vol. i., p. 327.



TIMAHOE ROUND TOWER.

(The Lower Part, showing the doorway, window, and footings.)

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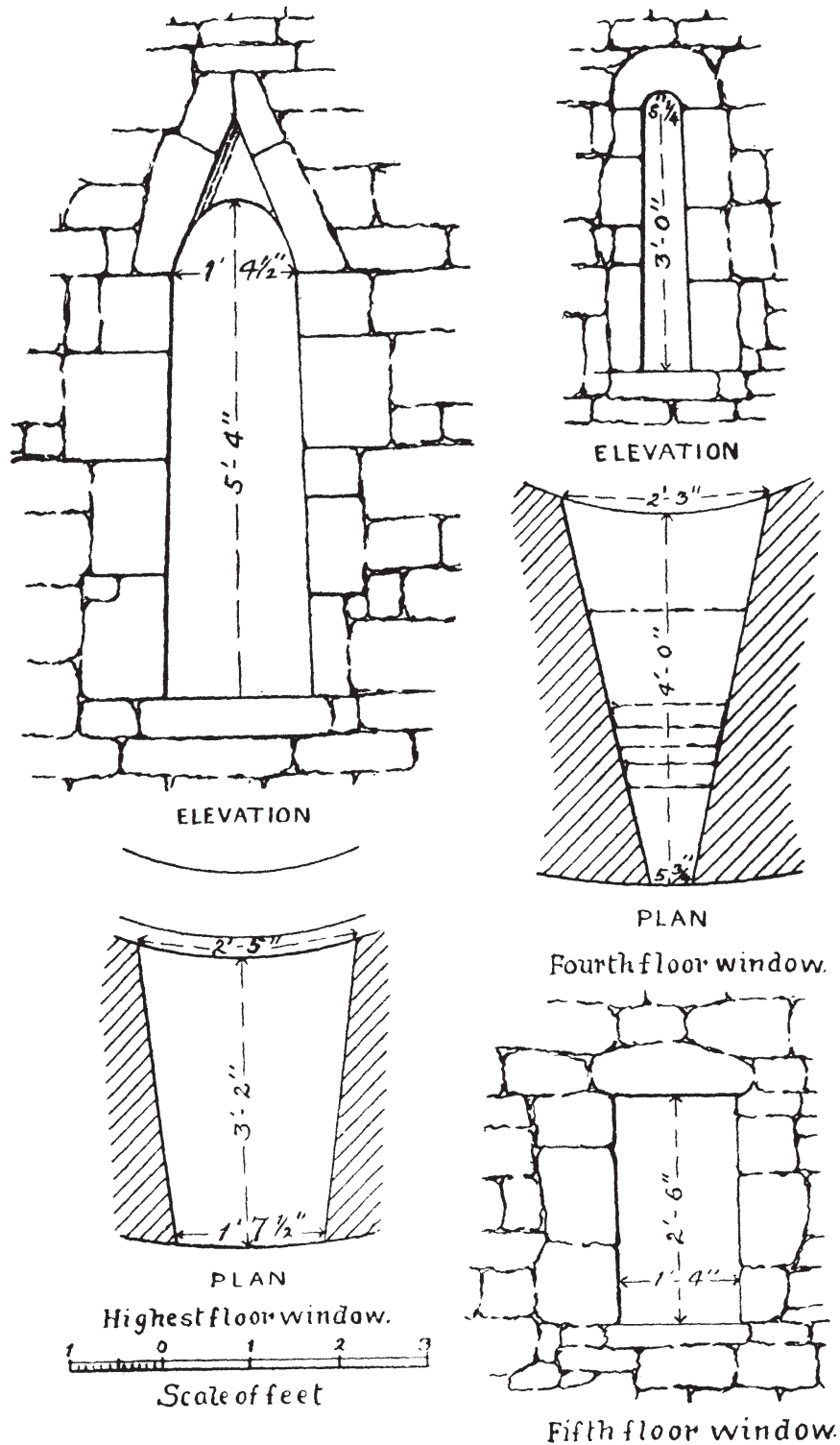


FIG. 3.—UPPER WINDOWS OF TIMAHOE ROUND TOWER.

offset of the foundation, which appears to have marked the original level of the ground. This tower, like many others, has little foundation, the large offset is 21 inches in depth, and as the

ground has been slightly lowered, one foot only is now below the surface. That the tower still stands is probably due to the great thickness of the wall, which distributes the weight over about 300 square feet. (Fig. 2.)

Though not one of the tallest, it is one of the thickest of the Round Towers, its diameter being 18 feet 4 inches above the footings, and 14 feet 3 inches under the cornice, almost 80 feet higher up.⁶ The batter or slope is thus 1 in 40. The conical roof is a restoration, a few stones which remained in position on the east side served to give the correct angle of slope.

It has been noticed that the old engravings⁷ show the cap as more or less curved or bee-hive shaped, and the inference drawn that the restoration is incorrect; but the curved outline can only be due to its dilapidated condition; it is certain to have had a cap of the same pointed form as those of the complete towers.⁸

A doorway at ground level was broken in the north-west side many years ago, but is now built up. The tower leans so much to that side as to render the wall there practically upright. This involves a movement of about two feet at the top, caused, in all probability, by the making of the doorway.

The thickness of the masonry at the base (including the footings) is 6 feet 2 inches and the sill of the original doorway is 15 feet 6 inches above the large offset. The stone facing is curiously arranged; for a height of 9 feet above the base three varieties of work are intermingled; squared sandstone, squared limestone, and small rubble. The latter evidently represents a modern repair, but the mixed sandstone and limestone may be original, at least there would be difficulty in inserting such long stones. (Plates I. and II.)

From 9 feet to 35 or 36 feet the masonry is of squared sandstone; this material is the same as that of the carved doorway and window, and they are included in this portion of the building. The bondstones of the doorway are short and do not forbid its insertion, provided that the walls were cut to suit them, or that they were cut and placed to suit the irregularities of the original masonry.

The doorway, however, is most probably original, as both it and the window are of the same stone and workmanship as the surrounding masonry, and as the window is carved to match the

⁶ Two thicker towers only are mentioned in Mr. Westropp's list; those at Dysert O'Dea in Clare and Oran in Roscommon. See *Proceed. R.I.A.*, vol. xxi. (1898), p. 294, and *Jour. R.S.A.I.*, vol. xxiv. (1894), p. 155.

⁷ *Anthologia Hib.*, vol. iv. (1794), p. 349. Grose, *Antiquities of Ireland*, vol. ii. (1791), p. 11. Newenham and Hardinge, *Views of Irish Antiquities*, vol. ii., plate 32.

⁸ The photographs in Dunraven's *Notes on Irish Architecture*, vol. ii., show the tower before any repairs were executed.

doorway while at the same time it is well bonded in. The remainder of the tower to the top is built of limestone rubble, the openings in this part being plain. This difference suggests some

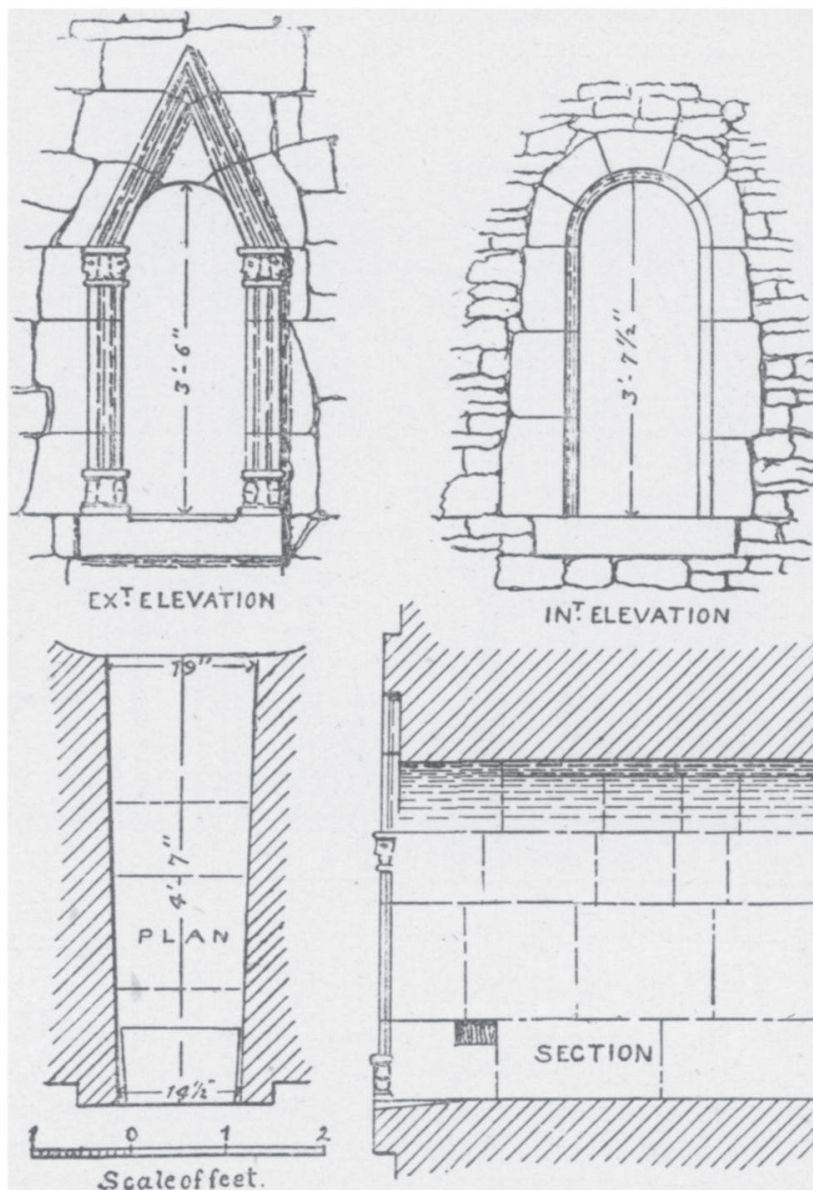


FIG. 4.—LOWEST OR PRINCIPAL WINDOW OF TIMAHOE ROUND TOWER.

delay in construction or else a partial rebuilding; though in the latter case some of the original sandstone blocks would probably have been inserted.

The floor at the entrance level was supported on a projecting string course; the other floors, of which there were four above the entrance and one below, rested on offsets. (Fig. 2.) It is

curious that the lowest floor was placed only six feet under the door level, thus allowing no headroom, though the space below this floor is over 10 feet in depth.

Each of the three stories next above that containing the doorway has one window; these windows are arranged in a spiral rising sunwise round the tower. The doorway faces 62° E. of N.

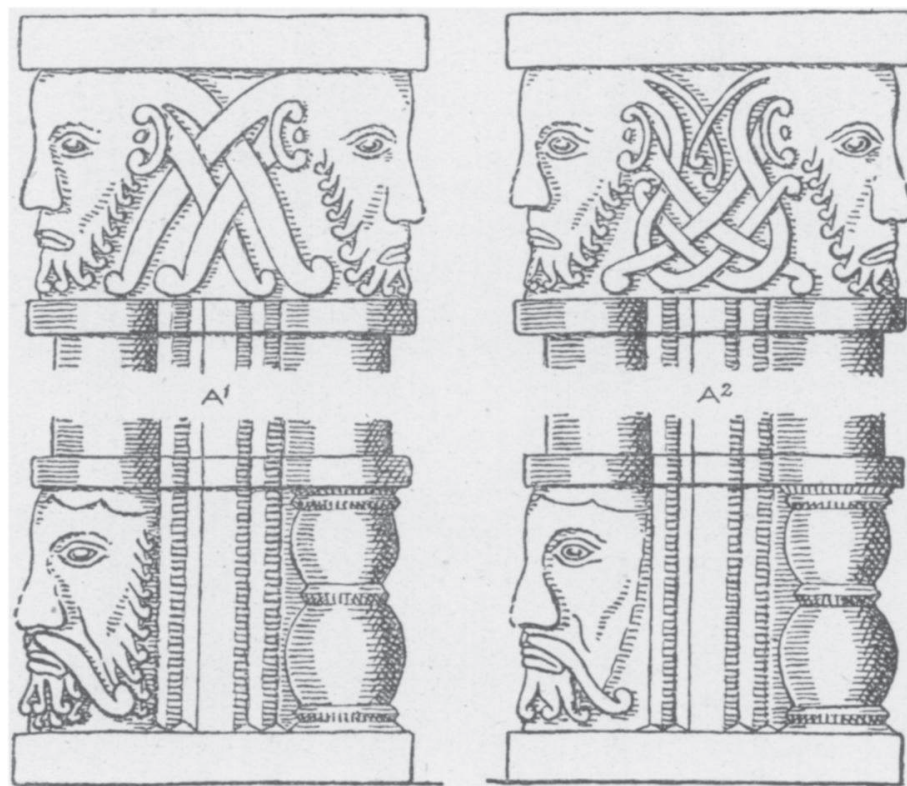


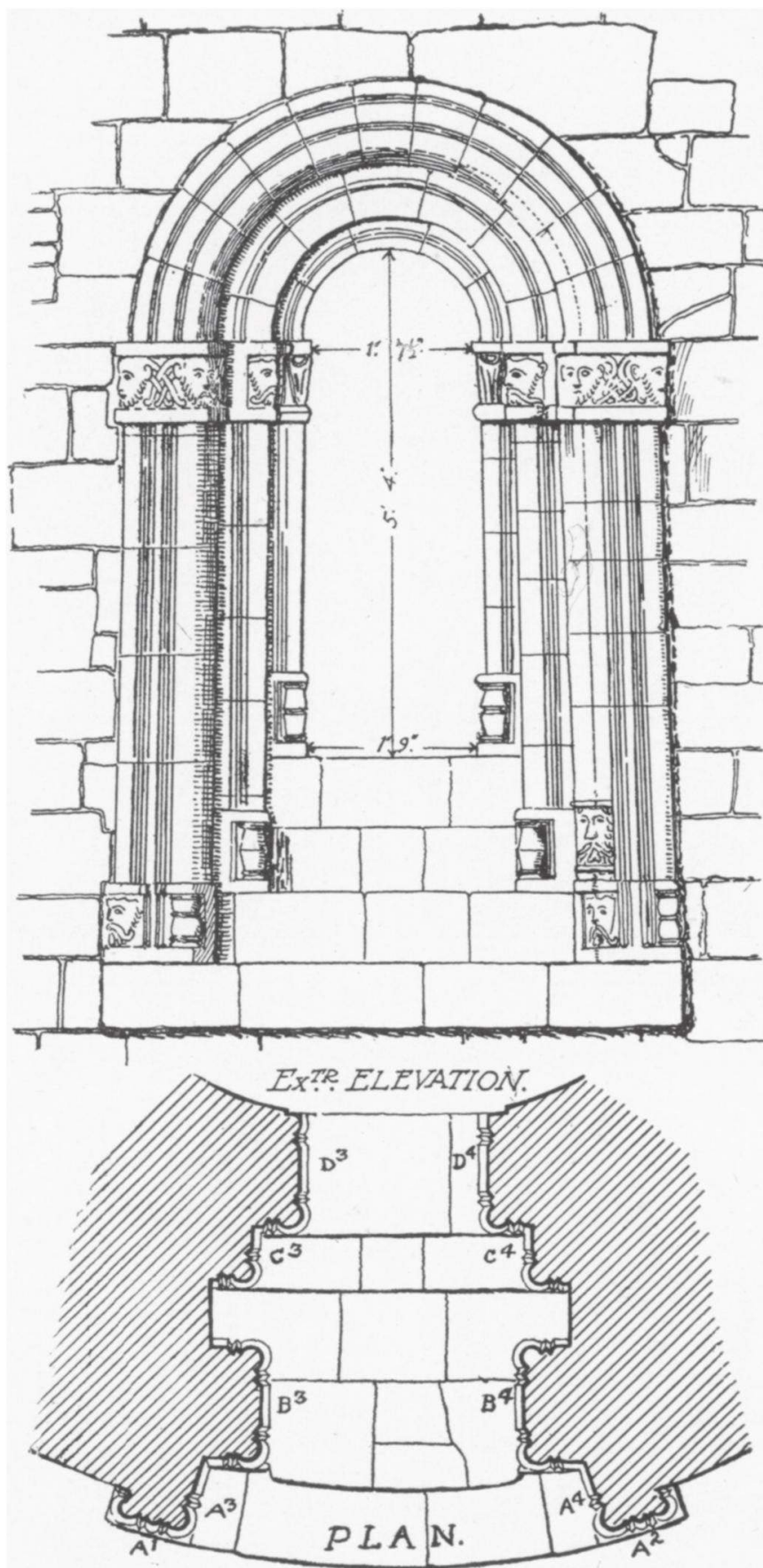
FIG. 5.—TIMAHOE ROUND TOWER, BASES AND CAPITALS OF FIRST ORDER OF DOORWAY. (Scale $1/8$.)

(The letters refer to the plan in Plate III.)

and the windows 146° , 225° , and 327° . Four large windows light the sixth or highest floor, these are about 9° from the cardinal points—that is, one faces 81° E. of N. and the others occupy corresponding positions as shown in Fig. 1.

The only additional features are the three offsets at the base and the cornice at the eave. The first or lowest offset measures 21 inches in height by 12 inches in breadth; the second 9 inches by $3\frac{1}{2}$, and the third 7 inches by $3\frac{1}{2}$. The cornice is a plain rectangular band 8 or 9 inches in height and projecting about 4 inches.

The windows of the sixth story have arched heads; they are 5 feet 4 inches in height, and taper in breadth from $19\frac{1}{2}$ to $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches. For a depth of 9 inches from the outer face the heads



THE DOORWAY OF TIMAHOE ROUND TOWER.
(Scale 1/28.)

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are pointed and run up 10 inches higher than the internal arch, thus forming a kind of pediment. (Fig. 3.) These windows splay towards the interior, as do those of the third and fourth stories; this is unusual in round towers, and may point to a late date. In addition to the offset which supported the floor there is another, 3 inches wide, under the windows; this was, no doubt, inserted to lighten the wall and increase the interior space.

The single window of the fifth story is merely a rough aperture 2 feet 6 inches in height by 16 inches in breadth; it does not splay. That of the fourth story is a narrow slit with a semi-circular head cut out of one stone; it is 3 feet high by $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide, splaying to 2 feet 3 inches at the internal face of the wall. (Fig. 3.)

The third story has the most interesting window, which, as well as the doorway, is included in the sandstone portion of the tower. These two openings are in fact designed in the same style, that of the eleventh century. (Plate II.) The window has a projecting architrave which runs up to a point above, and is carved to agree with the doorway.

Though the carving is greatly worn, mouldings can be traced on the pillasters, and heads on the capitals. The window head is semicircular, the opening being 3 feet 6 inches in height by $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, splaying to 19 inches inside. Its shape thus agrees with that of the four highest windows; they may indeed have been copied from it in a plainer form. (Fig. 4.)

The doorway, which opens on the second floor, is the most remarkable feature of the building, being much more elaborate than that of any other round tower.⁹ It really consists of two distinct doorways placed one behind the other, with a space of 7 inches between. Each of these doorways has two orders, and each order stands a step higher than the preceding one. Plate III. shows the plan and elevation.

The first or outer order is curved on plan, following the round of the tower; the others are rectangular. The clear aperture of the doorway is 5 feet 4 inches in height and 1 foot 9 inches in breadth, contracting to 1 foot $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches above.

The bases of the pillasters are decorated with human heads and moulded members of "hourglass" and "barrel" shape. These latter forms are hardly found elsewhere in Ireland, but there is on the pediment of the Clonfert doorway a pillar, the shaft of which is moulded like a balluster. The capitals of the three outer orders resemble those at Killeshin Church in the same county, except that animal forms are absent. They show

⁹ Kildare tower has the remains of a carved doorway of simpler type, and that of Carrigeen or Dysert Aengus, County Limerick, has an architrave with mouldings and pellets.

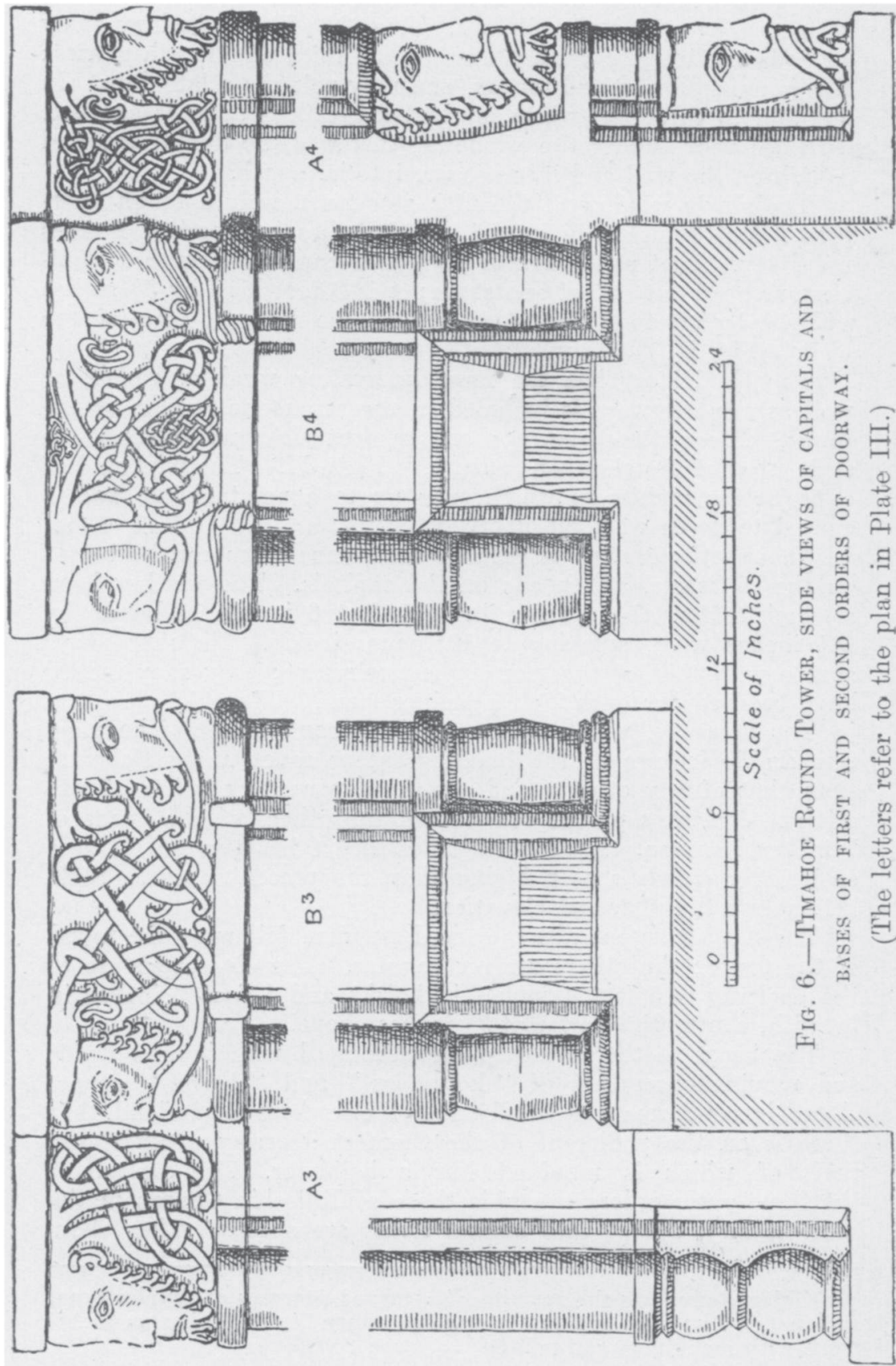


FIG. 6.—TIMAHOE ROUND TOWER, SIDE VIEWS OF CAPITALS AND BASES OF FIRST AND SECOND ORDERS OF DOORWAY.

(The letters refer to the plan in Plate III.)

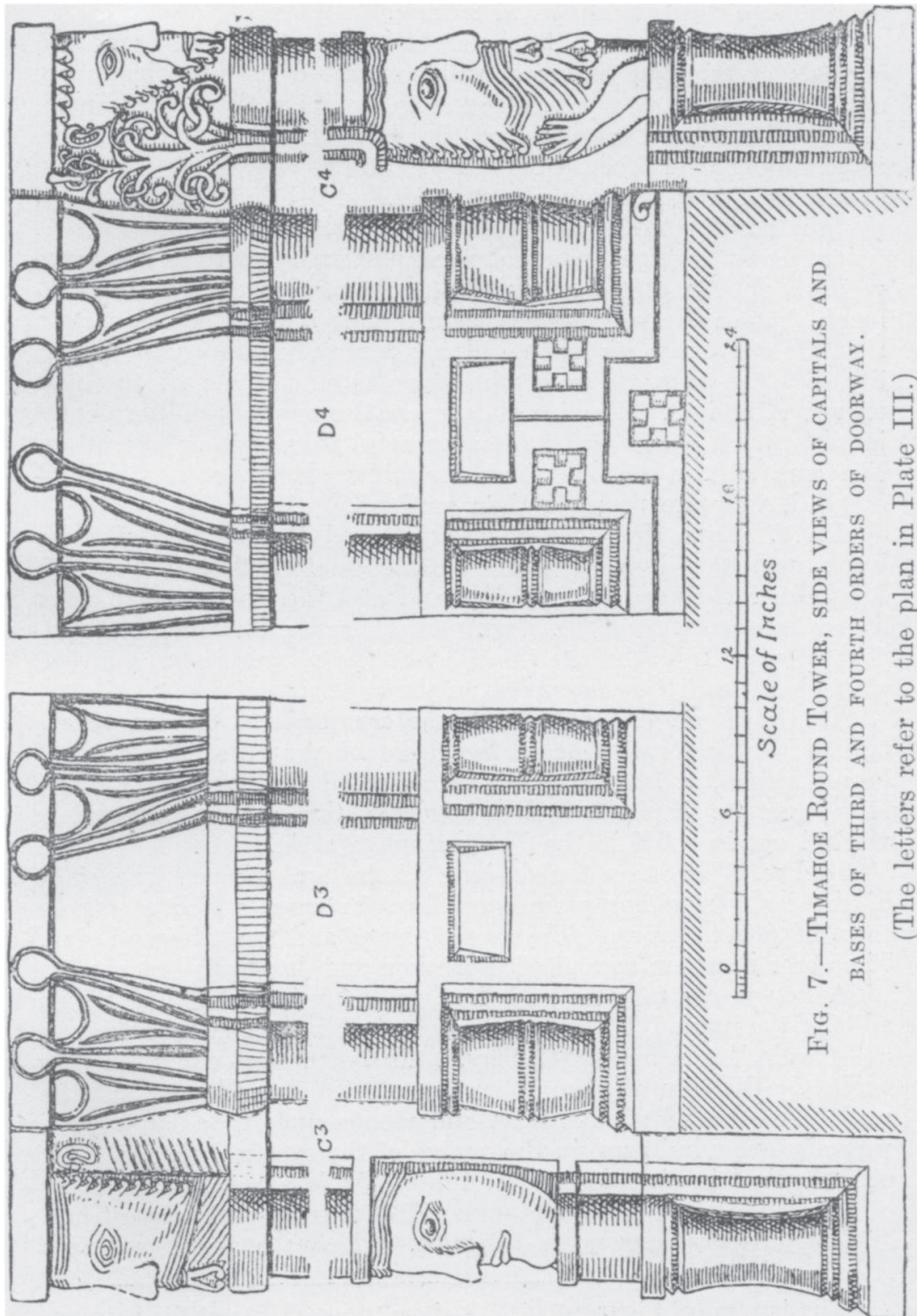


FIG. 7.—TIMAHOE ROUND TOWER, SIDE VIEWS OF CAPITALS AND BASES OF THIRD AND FOURTH ORDERS OF DOORWAY.

(The letters refer to the plan in Plate III.)

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at the angles human heads, the hair of which is interlaced in varying patterns. In the case of the fourth order, the capitals bear foliage designs incised in outline.

Figure 5 shows on a larger scale the fronts of the bases and capitals of the first order; it will be noticed that the bases are not symmetrical as the head on each occupies the dexter angle. An additional head is carved on the shaft of the sinister pillaster, immediately over that which appears on the base. It is not shown in Fig. 5, but may be seen in Fig. 6 below the letter A⁴; there is nothing to balance it on the opposite pillaster.¹⁰

Curiously enough an unbalanced pattern appears in the same position on the east window of the monastery church, Glendalough, but as the window has been rebuilt it is not quite certain that the stone is in its original place; it may have been higher up. Fig. 6 gives side views of the bases and capitals of the first orders, A and B. The interlacing on the capitals of the dexter jamb is much bolder and more successful than that on the other. The ears of the heads which face inwards have never been finished, they are no more than outlines.

Fig. 7 shows the sides of orders C and D; the first of these has a head carved on the shaft at either side. A flowering sceptre has been introduced behind the head at C⁴ in the same manner as on the doorway of St. Farranan's Church, Donaghmore, Co. Tipperary.¹¹ In each case the fillet of the pillaster serves as the stem, and the foliage is carved on the capital.

The heads on this order have the ears omitted or else placed to suit the pattern. One of the bases of the order D seems to be unfinished, at least it is less ornamented than the other. The foliage on the capitals rather suggests the outline afterwards worked out in relief in the Early English style.

In Fig. 8 are seen the designs on the arch rings. The soffit of the outer ring has plain mouldings between which are three rows of pellets or roundels, one of large and two of small size. The other rings are carved with chevron and dog-tooth ornament.

A few words may be added as to the ruined building which adjoins the Round Tower on the east and has been described as a "Castle" and as an "Abbey." In its present condition it is evidently the ruin of a small castle or fortified residence; but the walls show traces of alteration and reconstruction; a large archway also, now built up, in the centre of the east wall is decidedly ecclesiastical in character. (A, Plate IV., is a plan.)

The building forms a rectangle, 78 feet from east to west and 40 feet 6 inches from north to south. The walls are from 3 feet

¹⁰ The letters on Figures 5, 6, 7, 8 show the positions of the carvings on the plan in plate iii.

¹¹ *Journal R.S.A.I.*, vol. xxxix. (1909), p. 261.

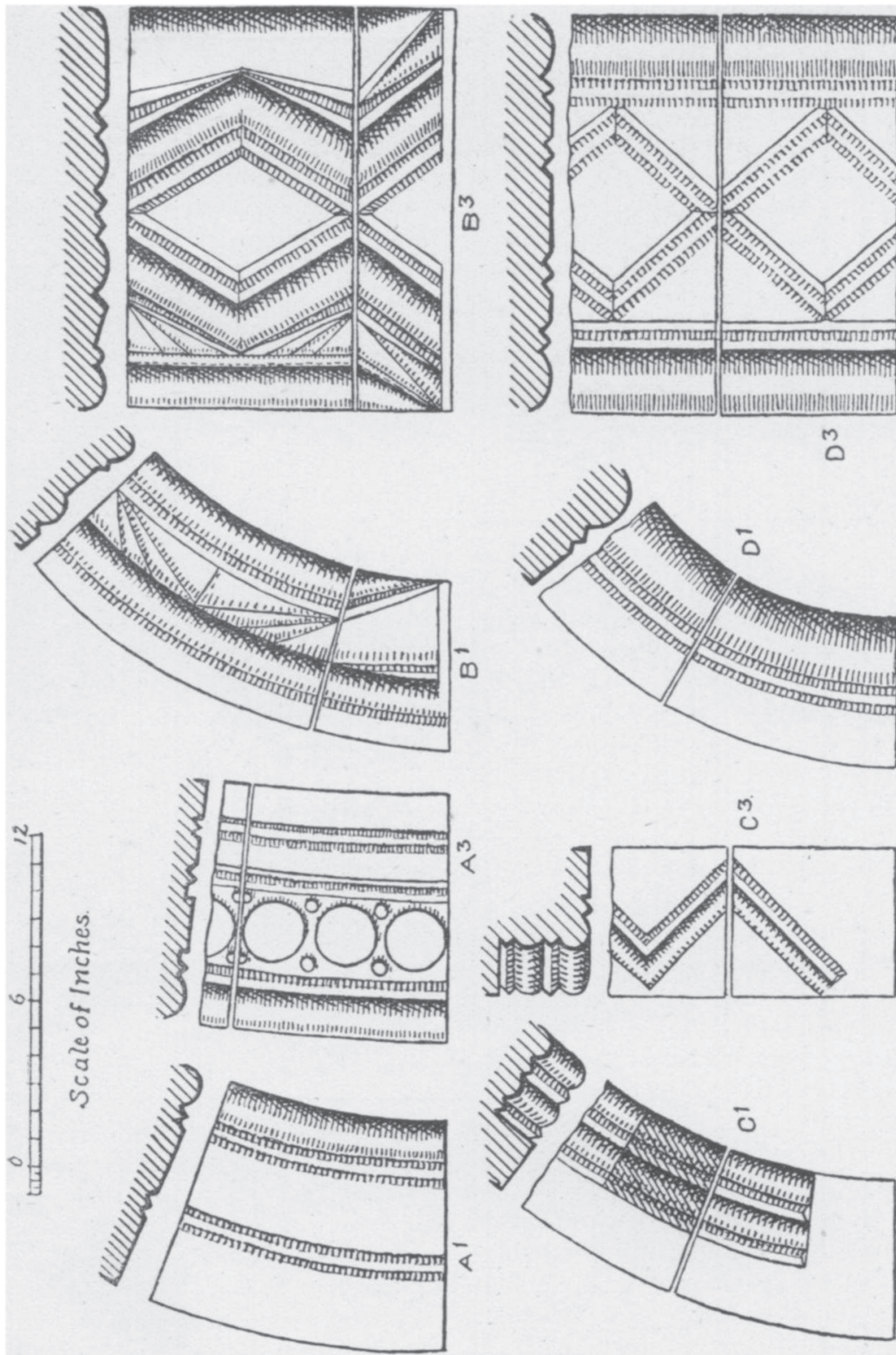


FIG. 8.—TIMAHOE ROUND TOWER, FRONTS AND SOFFITS OF ARCH RINGS OF DOORWAY.

3 inches to 3 feet 6 inches in thickness; the long axis lying 13° north of east. The eastern end is a tower the full width of the building and 20 or 21 feet from east to west.

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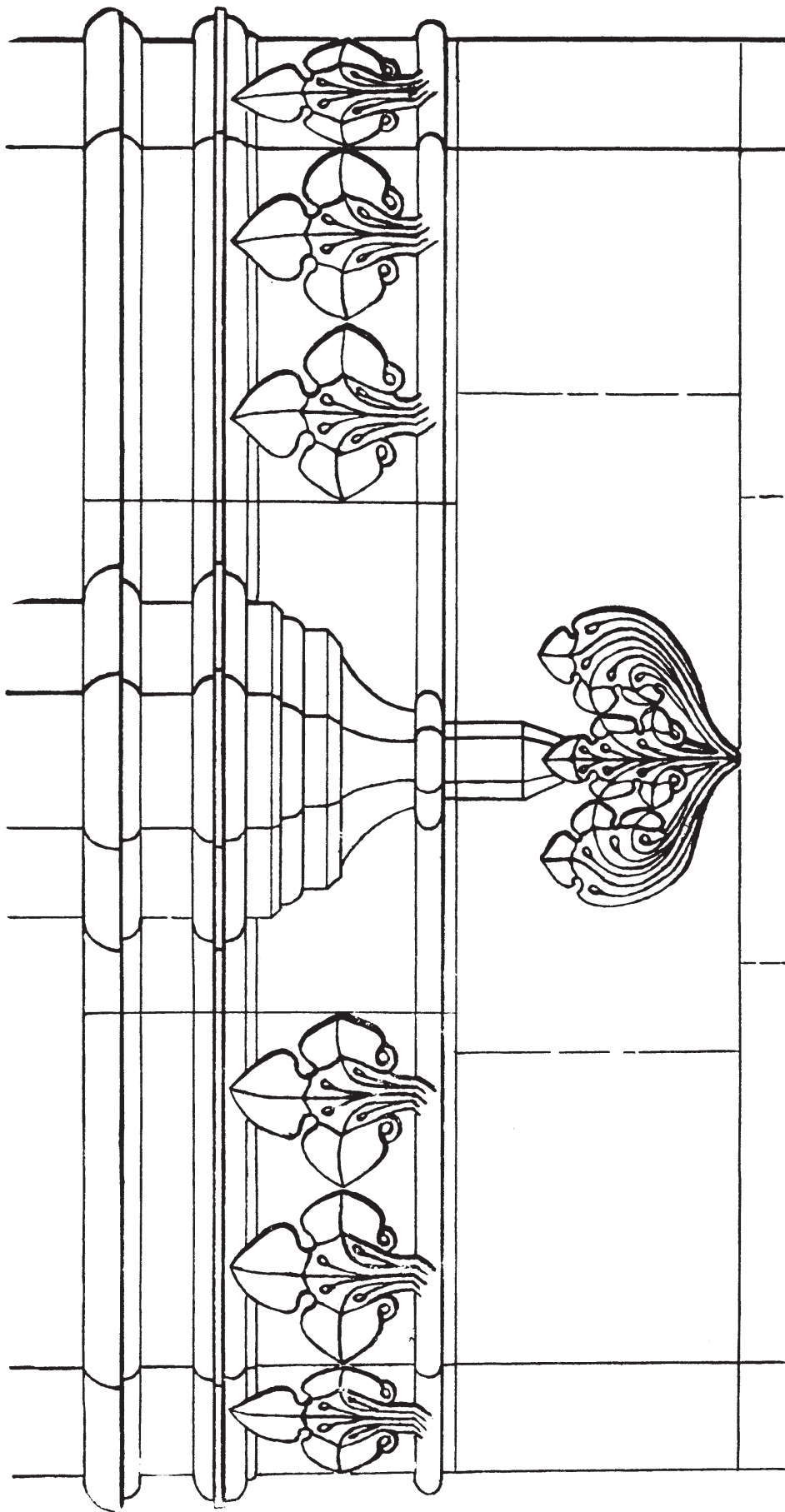


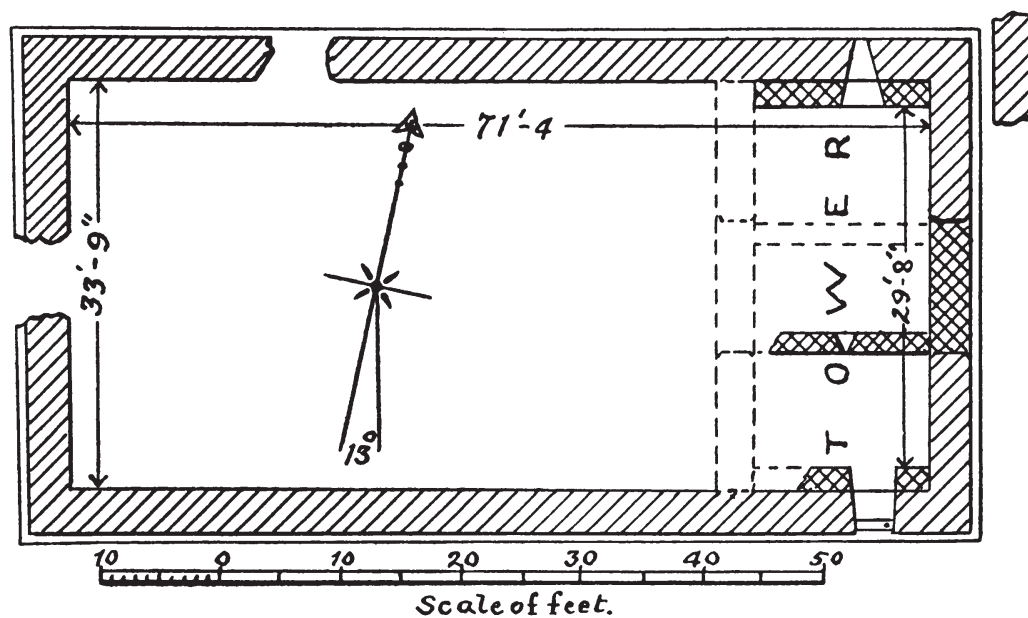
FIG. 9.—IMPOST AND CORBEL OF THE ARCH UNDER THE TOWER OF TIMAHOE CASTLE.

(This building seems to have been originally ecclesiastical.)

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TIMAHOE CASTLE FROM THE WEST.
(Showing the built-up Arch.)



PLAN OF TIMAHOE CASTLE.

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The east wall has a height of 43 feet; the others have been destroyed almost to the ground level, with the exception of a few feet attached to it at either end. (B, Plate IV.) These portions show that the north and south walls of the tower have been strengthened by the addition of two feet of masonry to the interior. The quoins and part of the exterior facing on the east are of sandstone, like that in the Round Tower; these blocks may have been taken from an older building; the rest is of limestone.

In the centre of the east wall is the pointed arch already mentioned, 10 feet 10 inches in span; 7 feet 8 inches in height to the springing and 14 feet 4 inches to the apex. This opening has all the appearance of having been the choir arch of a church; it is formed of chiselled limestone with each arris chamfered for a breadth of 4 inches; an inner arch, $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches, similarly chamfered, is supported on moulded corbels, the points of which are decorated with leafwork.

The imposts supporting the outer arch are also carved with detached leaves; this carving is well executed and evidently belongs to the fifteenth century. On the north side the mouldings and leafwork are fairly well preserved, and are shown in Fig. 9. At a subsequent period the archway was built up solid, and a vaulted floor inserted in front of it.

Higher up in the tower are the recesses which received the beams of two timbered floors; the first being 21 feet above the footings. On this floor a small chamber gives access to an angle loophole facing south-east. This loop is of squared limestone, the opening being 2 feet 3 inches by 3 inches; at either side is a small aperture 3 inches by 3 inches for gunfire. One of these is square and the other circular on the exterior; they are not formed with the same care as the loop, and appear to be later additions.

The portion of the building west of the tower does not present any features; the side walls are broken down almost to the ground and the end to a height of 10 feet. Originally this part must have been the nave of the church and afterwards a bawn or court attached to the castle.

In concluding this paper I must not omit to thank Mr. Charles McNeill for information as to the history of the place, and Mr. H. G. Leask for assistance in preparing the illustrations.



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