



Ancient Sites & Buildings.

Bagenalstown Area

Vol 2, Site 11

Ballyloughan Castle

Map Location; 58—75. Discovery Series.

Map 68

The castle at Ballyloughan was built in the 'English Style' in the 13th c by a Norman lord.

However it was occupied for most of its history by members of the Kavanagh clan. ²In the sixteenth century it was the stronghold of one of their strongest septes the Clan Donough.

Following the defeat of the Confederation forces in 1641 the castle & lands were forfeited to the crown. Possession then passed into the hands of the Beauchamp family who in the 17th c built the large residence still to be seen nearby. Sketches of the building taken a century later show large gaping holes around window opes indicating that the cut stonework had been removed by then, presumably to build the 17th c residence. Most of the fieldstones in the curtain wall were also removed at that time..

⁴This residence was the home of Eleanor Beauchamp who in 1725 became the second wife of Walter Bagenal of Dunleckney and later the mother of Beauchamp Bagenal.

³Excavations carried out in 1955 found traces of a moat or fosse surrounding the site. Dimensions were 3m wide x 1 m deep. In common with wall heights and thickness this also indicates that defence was not a major consideration of the design.

To west of the complex the land descends into a hollow now full of rushes. This is probably the location of the lake from which the townland >

699 BALLYLOUGHAN

OS 19:3:2 (591,573) 'Ballyloughan Castle (in ruins)' OD 300-400 27459,15851

Castle Late thirteenth-century fortress consisting of rectangular court (c. 43m N-S, c. 46m E-W) enclosed by poorly defended curtain walls with double-towered gatehouse at centre of S wall. Low square towers on NE and SW angles and foundations of small square structure inside NW angle. Walls of squared granite blocks, irregularly coursed and enclosed by fosse (uncovered during excavations in 1955 (JRSAI 1962, 7)). Rectangular gatehouse with two circular towers of three storeys flanking arched entranceway. Stairwells in wall thickness and machicolation over entrance to towers at second floor level. Small rectangular tower on NE angle, also excavated by de Paor. Of thirteenth-century date, reconstructed as cottage in eighteenth century. The SW angle tower (int Dims 6m x 5.6m) has two storeys and has intermural passages and chambers. (JRSAI 1962, 1-14; Leask 1973, 72)

19:18

14-8-1987

Extract from the
Archaeological Inventory of Co Carlow-OPW

gets its name ie baile an Lochán. In the earlier years of its existence the castle was surrounded by a moat supplied from this lake, which subsequently dried out.

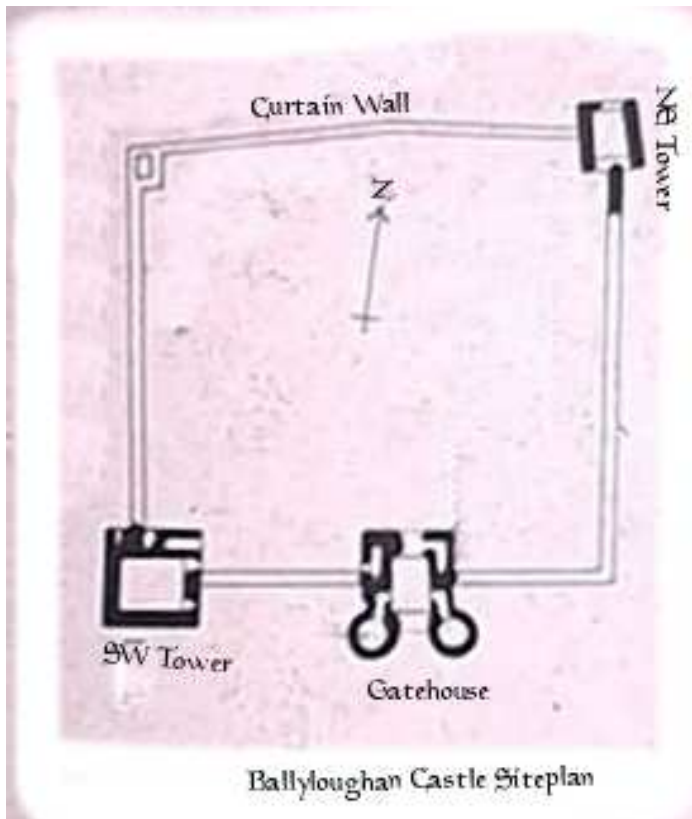
At the field gate leading in to the site a notice board erected by the OPW gives a brief history and includes a late 18thc sketch by Gross. The sketch shows the castle in ruins. Part of the curtain wall to south east of the Gatehouse still existed at that time. Three chimneys were shown of which only one remains.

The site is currently in the care of the OPW which have conducted repairs to make the building safe to visitors.

Artiste reconstruction of Gatehouse and SW Tower showing curtain wall, moat and bridge



1300 AD



Gatehouse

Note that the building was originally about 1 m lower than the present ground level. The vaulted ceilings of both towers and main building still exist.

Access between levels is by stairways and corridors within the walls, mainly on the East side. Each stairway/corridor has a lancet opening to provide light. Stairways in common with mediaeval practice elsewhere have an unfavourable runner to riser ratio ie sudden drop at each step, requiring considerable care to negotiate safely.

Separate kitchen not found. Cooking and eating took place in the large room on first floor (as in farmhouses of bygone years). Large open fireplace was originally in left hand corner of this room. In 15th c it was moved to central location in gable wall.

Latrine or garderobe is located in wall space off this room immediately opposite entrance door. Slated roofing of towers and main A-roof.

SW Tower

Ground floor room accessed directly from the courtyard. Pleasant room on 1st floor accessed by stairway in North gable wall; has a fireplace, is well lit by windows with seats. Latrine off this room at NW corner.

NE Tower

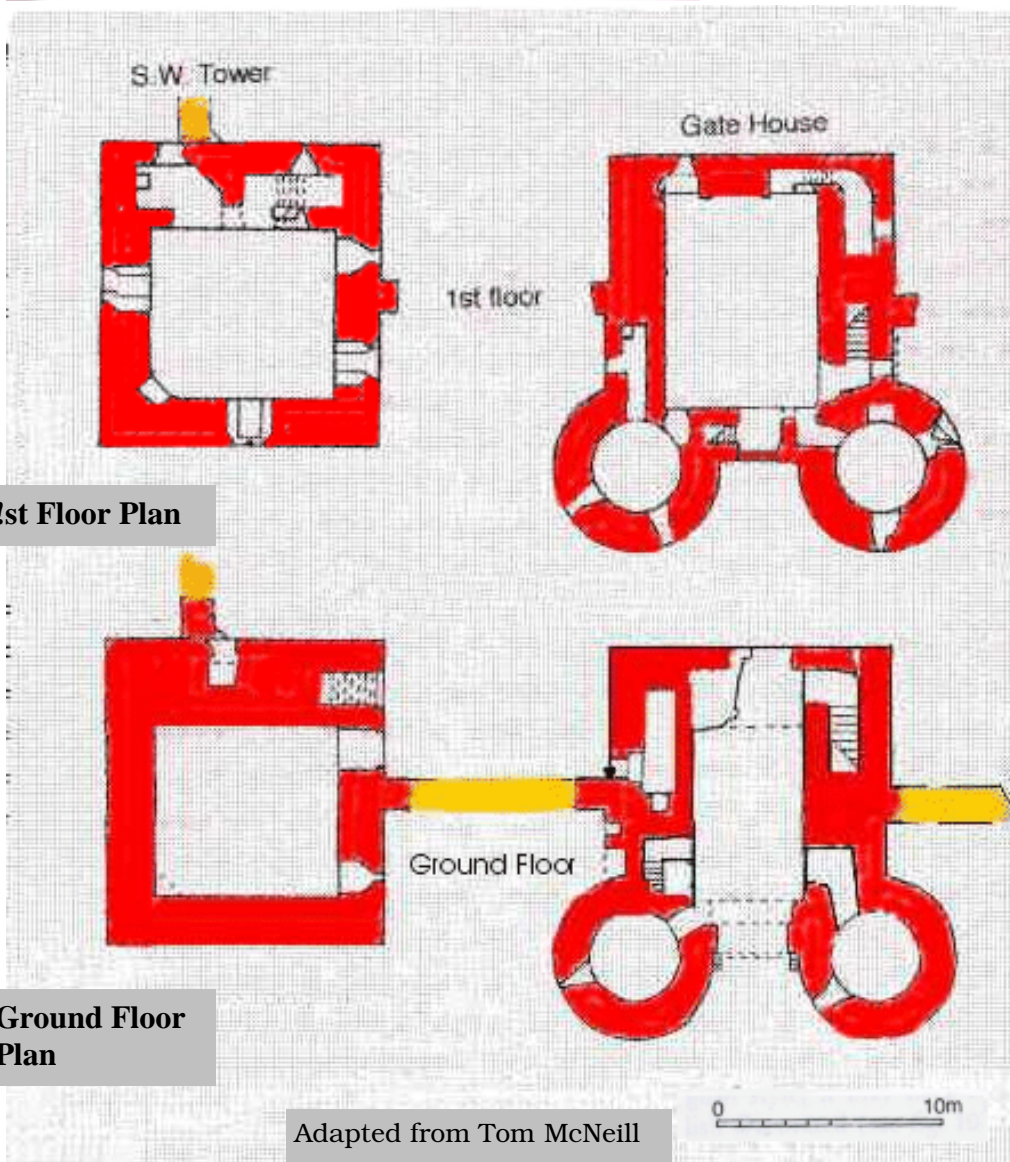
Two gables remain alongside a section of the East wall.

References;

- ¹ Castles in Ireland. Tom McNeill Routledge.
- ² Castles in Ireland. Tom McNeill Routledge.
- ³ Castles in Ireland. Tom McNeill Routledge.
- ⁴ Come Capture Castles in Co Carlow. Victor Hadden (1994)

Irish Castles and Castellated Houses. Harold.G.Leask (1941) Dundalgan Press, Dundalk

Archaeological Inventory of Co Carlow. OPW



1st Floor Plan

Ground Floor Plan