

English and Irish Medieval Fortified Ecclesiastical Structures and the Bishop's Manor in  
Kilteasheen, Ireland.

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## **Abstract:**

In this research paper I compare Irish and English ecclesiastical fortified stone structures in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in order to isolate English stone mason influences. It examines the techniques used in the construction between the two types of stone structures by focusing on the materials used in the construction along with over-all architectural design of stone structures. Analysis of extant stone walls reveals the similarities and differences between the Irish and English ways of construction. The similarities and differences of these structures will perhaps show if the Irish copied English stone masons in their architectural designs, or if they improved on English designs by adding new techniques to their fortified stone structures. By examining the Bishop's Manor at the Kilitasheen site in Roscommon Co. along with the Kells Priory site in Kilkenny Co., Ireland (shown in Figure 1), it will demonstrate early evidence of whether or not Irish copied the English or developed their own way of construction for their fortified stone structures.



Figure 1: Map of Ireland displaying all of the different counties. (O'Callaghan 2005).

## **Introduction:**

When looking at the medieval period from A.D. 1066- 1480 in Europe archaeologists look at the impact that warfare played in the construction of fortified structures. By examining the fortified structures in Ireland in the 13<sup>th</sup> century it shows how a society can go from virtually no fortified structures to constructing massive fortified structures out of stone in a short matter of time. “The piecemeal conquest of Ireland by the Anglo-Normans, which commenced in the year A.D. 1169, had a fundamental impact on the Irish landscape. The introduction of large earthwork and stone castles was almost totally new to Ireland. According to Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales), whose writings are a contemporary source for the early Anglo-Norman settlement, the Irish used bogs and woods for protection” (David Sweetman 2000: 1). The goal of this paper is to show that the Irish used English stone mason’s construction techniques in order to build their own type of fortified structures to counter the English’s way of combat. This created an escalation of military construction in Ireland between the Irish and English forces. First it will look at the earliest constructions of fortified structures with ringforts, then hall-houses, and castles.

## **Background:**

### **Early Fortified Sites:**

Ringforts also called ringworks were the primary fortified structure the Irish used to defend themselves and property from other clans and the English. When studying Irish defenses these are one of the hardest structures to examine since, it is hard to recognize and date them. Mottes were originally used by the French in the construction of fortified structures. This is where we get the French word motte which means artificial hill. The second is bailey known also a bawn which means defended courtyard of a castle. By looking at these sites and the ideas of mottes and baileys it will provide evidence of English influences in architecture that they brought with them.

### **The Origins of Stone Fortification in Ireland:**

Before the Norman invasion in A.D. 1066 in England there is no evidence of stone fortified structures in England. The Normans from France brought with them the concept of stone fortified structures known as castles. It was Andrew Saunders who came up with the modern definition of what a castle is. "A fortified residence which might combine administrative and judicial functions but in which military considerations were paramount" (Saunders 1977: 2). Currently it is being debated whether or not the Irish had castles built prior to A.D. 1169 before the first recorded landing of the Anglo-Normans in Ireland. Terry Barry believes that the Irish did indeed built castles, but with the lack of archaeological evidence above or below ground it is hard to prove. His theory is that the stones from the early castles were incorporated into later buildings, or improperly excavated and dated by other archaeologists. When looking at the Anglo-

Saxon annals the Chronicle and the Irish Annals of Ulster in the eleventh century archaeologists noticed that the chronicles started using new terms from Latin and French to describe military fortifications in Ireland. “The very fact that these contemporary chroniclers were deliberately using new words borrowed from medieval Latin (castellum) or medieval French (chastel) for such important features in the landscape must indicate that something significantly new was being constructed on that landscape” (Barry 2007: 34). Some scholars doubt that these chroniclers are writing about castles of what archaeologists today believe is a castle, but are writing still about ringforts calling them castles. Archaeologists get this information from the Anglo-Norman chronicler Giraldus Cambrensis or also known as the Gerald of Wales and his work *History and Topography of Ireland*. “He wrote in his *History and Topography of Ireland* that you will find here many ditches, very high and round and often in groups of three, one outside of the other, as well as walled forts which are still standing, although now empty and abandoned” (McNeill 2000: 119). This description clearly shows that what he saw of Irish fortifications were of large defensive earthworks known as ringforts. Archaeologists do not refute that he did view the remains of ringforts while in Ireland, but that he only saw Irish fortifications in occupied Anglo-Norman Ireland. “Although Gerald was usually an accurate recorder of what he saw for himself in Ireland during his two visits in A.D. 1183-84 and again in A.D. 1185, it must be stressed that many of the O’Conor castles were well outside the geographical confines of the new Anglo-Norman lordship, and certainly far away from the eastern half of the country, where Gerald spent his time. Therefore, it is scarcely surprising that Gerald would not have possessed any knowledge of their existence” (Barry 2007: 34). With the recent developments of the excavations at

the Kiltasheen site in Co. Roscommon the Bishop's Manor is now the earliest known native fortified stone structure constructed in Ireland dating to the twelve century under the high lord O'Connor.

### **Hall-houses:**

Next in the Irish fortified structures is the hall-house which date to the thirteenth century. "They are two-storey, rectangular-shaped buildings with a first-floor entrance and appear to have originated in the early thirteenth century. They have a defensive ground floor having only slitopes, while timbered first floor contained the hall and more open windows" (Sweetman 1999: 89). Most hall-houses would have wooden palisades encircling them for added protection and would also be found in association with other earthworks or churches. By being associated with churches they would also be dubbed as manor houses which people of great authority would reside. With hall-houses having no entrance on ground level they would construct a narrow staircase leading to the first-floor which had large windows for archers. Two more characteristics in hall-house architecture are base-batter and chamfered angles. These would add to the defense of the structure if the hall-house was being laid siege to. The base-batter and chamfered angles would help deflect the blows of battering-ram to the walls.

### **History of Bishop's Manor:**

The Bishop's Manor is located on raised ground overlooking the Boyle River which feeds into the Shannon River near the town of Kiltasheen, Co. Roscommon, Ireland which can be seen in Figure 2. In Figure 3 it shows an aerial photograph of what the site looks like currently sitting above the Boyle River. The medieval ecclesiastical site of Kiltasheen was first referenced in the *Annals of Connacht* in A.D.

1249. The site was used by Cathal mac, Aedh mac, and Cathal Crowderg O'Connor for military purposes for holding hostages from Breifne who they would later executed at the site. Four years later the Bishop of Elphin, Tomas O'Connor (first cousin to Feilim O'Connor) is recorded as ordering the construction of a cuirt, or palace, around A.D. 1253. The only other time the mentioning of the construction of the cuirt is from the annals of the King of England's court in London and the Pope's court in Rome. Other times the Bishop's Manor is mentioned in the *Annals of Connacht* is used in a military context. "The O'Reilley of Breifne again made incursions into Moylurg in A.D. 1256, and this time Aedh mac Feilim used Kiltasheen as a staging site to prevent the incursions. In the end, O'Connor and his forces decided to leave their horses, armour, and accoutrements at Kiltasheen and crossed into Breifne on foot. The last annalistic reference to Kiltasheen takes place two years later, when Aedh mac Feilim tore down the palaces at Kiltasheen and Elphin, to prevent the palaces from falling into the hands of Foreigners, or Gall" (Read & Finan 2008: 3). From the time it was constructed in A.D. 1253 to when it was demolished in A.D. 1259 it was also used as an industrial site which produced metal work and pottery. Since 2004 Dr. Thomas Finan from the St. Louis University and Dr. Christopher Read from the Applied Archaeology Programme at I.T. Sligo excavations have been done at Kiltasheen in order to uncover the Bishop's Manor. From their last season in the summer of 2008 they were able to uncover in Cutting I exposing the north-west corner of the hall-house which then allowed them to classify the Bishop's Manor as a hall-house based on construction techniques/methods used on the walls.

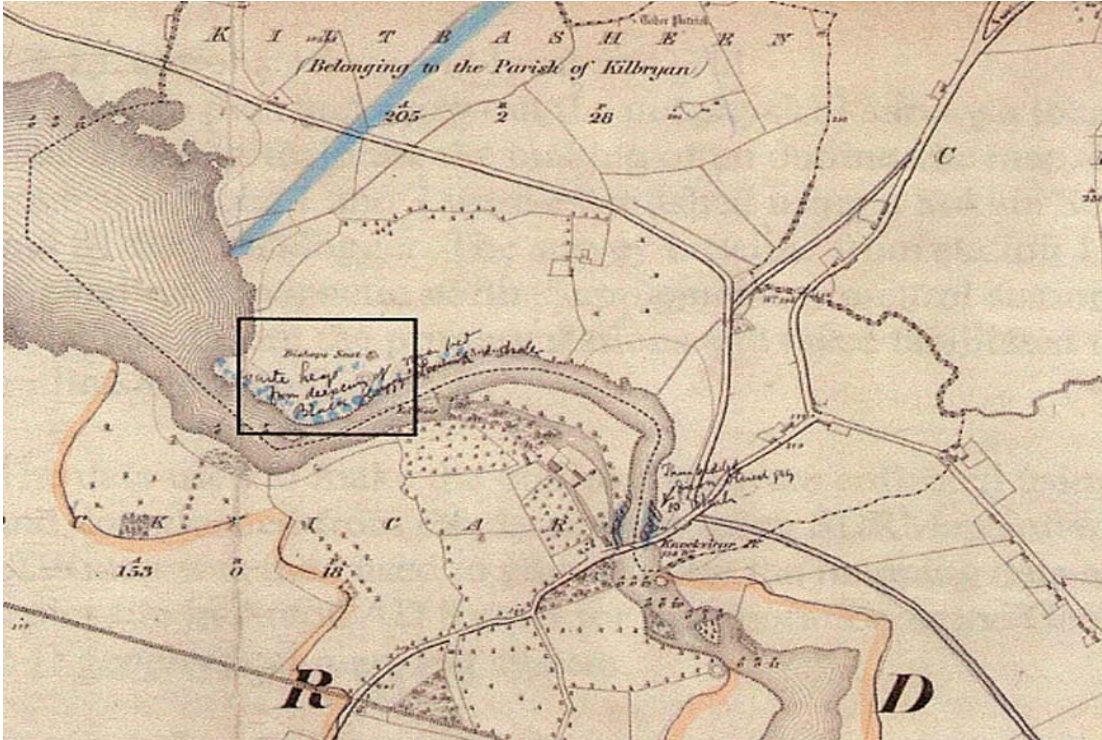


Figure 2: Map of the location of the Bishop's Manor on the Boyle River (Read & Finan 2008: 43).



Figure 3: Map of the location of the Bishop's Manor on the Boyle River (Read & Finan 2008: 43).



### **History of Kells Priory:**

The Kells Priory is an archaeological site in County Kilkenny, Ireland which is an Anglo-Norman influenced fortified ecclesiastical stone structure. After the Anglo-Norman invasion and partial conquest of Ireland in the twelfth century, Anglo-Norman great lords divided their acquired lands to lesser lords. The earl of Pembroke, William Marshal, acquired approximately two million acres of land in Leinster which he divided into the four smaller counties of Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny, and Kildare. In A.D. 1192 William Marshal granted Geoffrey FitzRobert barony of Kells Priory in Kilkenny. The Kells Priory sits on the Kings' River as seen in Figure 4, and was the seigneurial capital which acted as the main center of economics, military defense, and law for the county. "The construction date for Geoffrey FitzRobert's castle at Kells can be estimated as A.D. 1192 or 1193, because it would have been his first priority once he was granted the lordship. The remains of the castle consist of the motte and bailey. Approximately 500 examples of these Anglo-Norman monuments have been recorded, mainly distributed in the eastern part of Ireland" (T. Fanning & M. Clyne 2007: 21). Later additions to Kells Priory included a monastery founded by St. Ciara of Seir, a motte with a heptagonal curtain-wall of stone, a medieval parish church, and fortified Augustinian Priory of St. Mary. The site was occupied until around A.D. 1400, but local people still used the site for burials until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By being built A.D. 1192 which is 361 years before the Bishop's Manor in A.D. 1253 in Anglo-Norman controlled Ireland, it provides a good example of similar architecture and construction techniques used on the Bishop's Manor.



Figure 4: Map of the location of Kells Priory site on the Kings' River (T. Fanning & M. Clyne 2007: 17).

**Methodology:**

For my methods I will be looking at literature pertaining to Irish and English fortified structures during the medieval period. Also I will be looking at literature about ringforts prior to the thirteenth century in Ireland. When looking through all of my sources I will try to focus on the spatial layouts of these structures. This brings me to the next part of my methodology which will focus on the spatial layouts of these fortified structures. By looking at other archaeologists diagrams of excavated ringforts, hall houses, and castles it will allow me to compare these three types to indicate if there are any similarities or differences in the structures. My main focus will be on the Irish hall house site of Kiliteasheen in Roscommon County. I will use the methodology used from the 2008 summer field school at Kiliteasheen. Mostly I will be looking at their work that dealt directly with the Bishops Manor. They excavated using natural stratigraphy to expose the southwestern corner of the Bishops Manor. I will also look at the raw materials such as stones and mortar used in the construction of the stone walls. Then I will compare them to the materials used at the Kells Priory site in Co. Kilkenny. It will also allow me to gauge the effectiveness of these strategic defensive structures. Lastly I will look at the construction techniques used by the Irish and English in constructing fortified stone structures in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. I used all of this data to get a broader overview of evolution of fortification in Medieval Ireland by comparing early defensive structures like ringforts and contemporary English castles.

## **Results:**

After looking at material from David Sweetman and Tom McNeil it gave me a strong background in the different classifications of fortified structures in Ireland. Along with that information I also looked at the archaeological site reports from Bishop's Manor, Co. Roscommon and Kells Priory, Co. Kilkenny to better understand the ecclesiastical fortified stone structures in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries in Ireland. First I looked at the dimensions of hall-houses and castles to see the visible differences in scale which archaeologists classify them. In Table 1 you can see multiple hall-houses and the information according to David Sweetman used to classify a hall-house based on their internal dimensions in meters. The average internal dimensions for a hall-house based on these sites are 11.3 x 6.0 meters. Taking that information and applying that to the Bishop's Manor (15.0 x 7.0 m) you can see that it is above average in its internal dimensions, but it still falls into the hall-house category. Comparing this with the information to classify an Irish castle in Table 2, archaeologists can see that the average Irish castles internal dimension is 14.4 x 8.4(meters). Besides having on average larger internal dimensions, castles also have more characteristics which distinguish themselves from hall-houses. By looking at the internal dimensions of Irish hall-houses and castles it is clear that Bishop's Manor comes close to average for castles, but lacks the other defensive characteristics such as a donjon, gate house, gate block, and angle tower in its design.

Table 1: Halls and hall-houses

Site	Internal dimensions (m)	Enclosure?	Added vault?	Other features
Annaghkeen (Galway)	11.0 x 7.5	No		Later division of ground floor. Turret vault wicker centred.
Ballynacourty Court (Galway)	6.5 x 3.5	No		
Cargin (Galway)	10.7? x 7.4	?	Wicker center	
Castle Carra (Antrim)	6.0 x 3.2	No	No	
Kilmacduagh (Galway)	11.3 x 7.0	No		
Moylough (Galway)	12.0 x 6.5	No	No	Spiral stair to second floor? Rebuilt above ground floor.
Shrule (Mayo)	9.5 x 6.7			
Witches Castle (Galway)	c. 9.0 x 4.5	No?	No	
Ballisnihiney (Mayo)	8.5 x 6.6	No	Original	
Delvin (Westmeath)	14? x 6.7		Modern	East end lost. Turrets at west angles. 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor added?
Dunmore (Meath)	14.6 x 6.4		Original	Angle turrets.
Clough (Down)	17.5 x 5.4	Bailey		Ground-floor hall on motte.
Lismahon (Down)	12.0 x 6.0	No		Ground-floor hall on motte.
Bishop's Manor (Roscommon)	15.0 x 7.0	No		Forebuilding is a possible ground entrance.

Note: Blanks = no surviving evidence  
(McNeil 2000: 151)

Table 2: Irish Castle's

Castle	Donjon	Gate house	Gate block	Angle tower	Hall size (m)
Ferns	Yes				20.0+ x 18.0
Carlow	Yes				16.0 x 9.2
Lea	Yes	Yes		No	14.0 x 9.7
Terryglass	Yes				14.6 x 10.5
Ardrahan					16.0 x 8.0
Athenry		No		Yes	13.0 x 7.4
Castle Carra		No	No	Yes	14.0 x 7.5
Castle Mora		No?		No?	14.2 x 6.8
Castlemore		No?		No?	15.0 x 9.0
Castle Grace		No	No	Yes	14.0(?) x 8.0
Clonmacnoise		No	No	Yes	14.2 x 8.0
Cahir			Yes	Yes	13.6 x 7.7
Glanworth			Yes	No?	8.5 x 7.3

(McNeil 2000: 146)

In the summer of 2008, the Kiltasheen field school started excavations along the outside of north-west corner of the building known as the *cuirt* (or hall-house). Prior to excavating the exterior of the wall it was believed that the structure was a church, but from excavating the wall it was clear that it was a hall-house. When looking for English influences on the earliest known native fortified stone structure in Ireland the main areas to look at are the raw materials used in the construction of the wall, the French punched dressing on the north-west corner stone, the plinth that runs along the base of the structure, and the fore-building which was built after the initial structure with the possible addition of a ground entrance.

### **Raw Materials:**

#### **Raw Materials used at the Bishop's Manor:**

When examining the stone walls of fortified structures it is important to look at the raw materials used in the construction in order to determine how effective the site was

defensively. The two parts that archaeologists look at are the stones that the masons cut to use for the walls along with whether or not they use a mortar to help bind the stones together to add extra support from siege weapons. In the exterior cutting of the Bishop's Manor in Cutting I in the summer of 2008 the out wall was excavated thus exposing the remains of the quoin or corner angle of the wall. The majority of the stones that the masons used in the construction of the walls come from local limestone and red sandstone quarries from Roscommon. "The wall fabric is composed of large, rough-cut, horizontally laid, sub-rectangular and angular, limestone and occasional red sandstone facing blocks measuring between 0.25m long by 0.42m wide and 0.14m long by 0.66m wide respectively" (Read and Finan 2008). The masons also used pinning stones to pack the areas between vertical joints and the bedding planes of the larger facing stones. "Pinning is a small stone, usually flat in shape, inserted into a mortar joint while the mortar is still soft to reduce the area of mortar exposed to the weather and assist carbonation. Also built in during the building process to balance large stones or to strike a level line" (McAfee 1997: 167). The pinning stones measured with an average of 0.08m long by 0.20m wide and 0.08m long by 0.06m wide. For the fill of the walls the masons used for fill small sub-angular stones and compact them together along with using a white lime mortar to help keep the stones in place.

### **Raw Materials used at the Kells Priory:**

When looking at the stones used in the architecture of the Kells Priory the masons relied on local limestone, chert, some red-brown sandstone, and some pale-grey to white sandstone. Most of the sandstone that was used on the site was from glacial deposits which were left behind from the last ice age. The pale sandstone that was used in

construction of the Kells Priory was probably brought in from the same quarries which the dressed sandstone was quarried from. The white limestone mortar used at Kells Priory is the same as the white mortar used at the Bishop's Manor. The advantages of using a lime mortar in the construction of Bishop's Manor and Kells Priory would allow the buildings to breathe since solid walls are able to dry out more quickly when wet. The flexibility of the structures allows the stones to move without cracking. Another benefit of using a lime mortar is the ability to make repairs to the wall when damaged. Finally the most beneficial reason that the stone masons used a lime mortar was its workability. Lime mortars are supremely workable when constructing a wall which allowed masons to fix any mistakes they saw along the wall.

### **Construction of the Stone Walls:**

When excavating the Bishop's Manor in Cutting I it was uncovered a series of five post holes situated in the north/north-west corner of the wall. The post holes F471, F483, F485, F487, F489, consisted of a sub-circular cut. "Its edges were constructed at a very sharp angle on all sides with the sides sloping vertically to a flat base with U-Shaped profile" (Read and Finan 2008). The post holes can be seen in the Figure 5 in Cutting I at the Bishop's Manor. They all had small packing stone fill in the post-pits which projected above the surface of the cut. The post-pits possibly represent the remains of a scaffolding platform which was used in the construction west gable wall of the hall-house. This information shows archaeologists the construction techniques the stone masons used in building the Bishop's Manor. The scaffolding displays a knowledge of building stone structures which is evidence of English influence in early Irish stone fortified structures.





Figure 5: Photo of the post holes in Cutting I at the Bishop's Manor.

### **Base-Battering and Plinth:**

Other features that are important in looking for English influences in the Bishop's Manor are the evidence of base-battering and the plinth. Base-battering is when at the base of a stone defensive structure is widened for extra durability and has an inward inclination of the exterior face of a wall. The way base-battering worked was in case of siege weapons like battering rams striking the walls was to deflect it upward lessening the force of the blow. An example of base-battering can be seen in Figure 6. A plinth is a continuous use of stone slabs that are at the base of a structure that act as support and trim around the building.



Figure 6: Cutting I the exterior wall of the Bishop's Manor showing signs of base-battering and a plinth.

### **Corner Stone:**

One of the key features at the Bishop's Manor is the corner stone of the north-west corner of the structure. This corner stone is unique because it has an unusual dressing which seems to show a finishing which did not spread to western Ireland until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. "The north-west corner also contains a stone with what may be rough punched dressing. Not normally associated with buildings in the west prior to the 14<sup>th</sup> century this may be an anomaly (punched dressing is associated with 13<sup>th</sup> century buildings at Kells and other ecclesiastical sites in Leinster) or it may be a later addition" (Read and Finan 2008). This is not a good example of punch dressing, but as of now this has been the only corner of the structure that has been excavated. In a close up in Figure 7, it shows in detail the punched dressing used on the north-west corner stone of the Bishop's Manor. To get an even clearer look of what the punch dressing looks like see

Figures 8 and 9. When looking at the Kells Priory in Kilkenny Co. it also displays use of masons using finishes on corner stones. It has punched dressing like that found at the Bishop's Manor, but it also displays another type of finish which dates to the twelfth century. "The first and more prevalent type is a pale-grey to white, medium to coarse-grained, quartz-rich sandstone. Some of the stones display diagonal axed tooling, where the fine sedimentary layering in the sandstone stands proud due to differential weathering" (T. Fanning & M. Clyne 2007: 66). An example of this can be found in Figure 9 of the axe tooling in diagonal lines. This technique is used on relatively soft stone like limestone or sandstone. "The broad axe marks indicate a method of taking a face out of twist other than using drafted margins" (McAfee 1997: 95). By looking at the tooling techniques used by stone masons on these two stone structures it allows archaeologists to date both structures along with looking at the spread of architectural designs from culture to culture.



Figure 7: The north-west corner stone of the Bishop's Manor that displays a rough punched dressing as a finish on the stone.

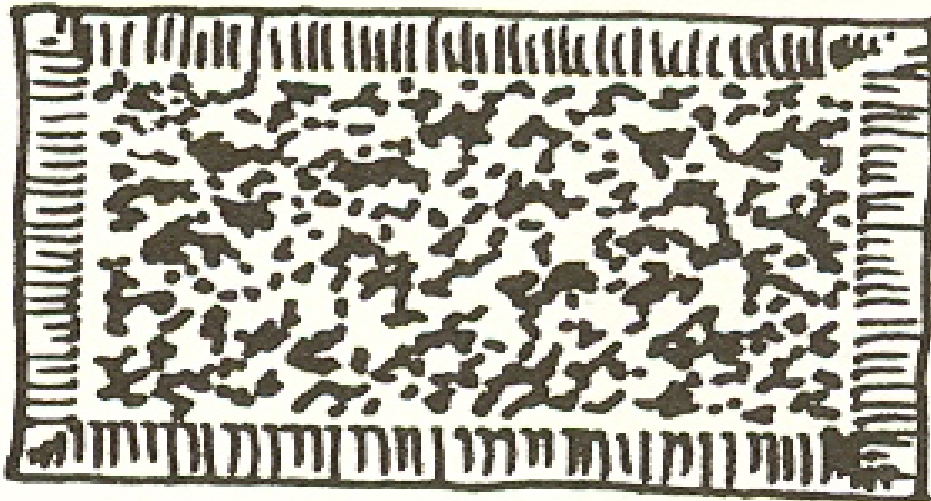


Figure 8: Example of rough punched dressing. (McAfee 1997: 94).



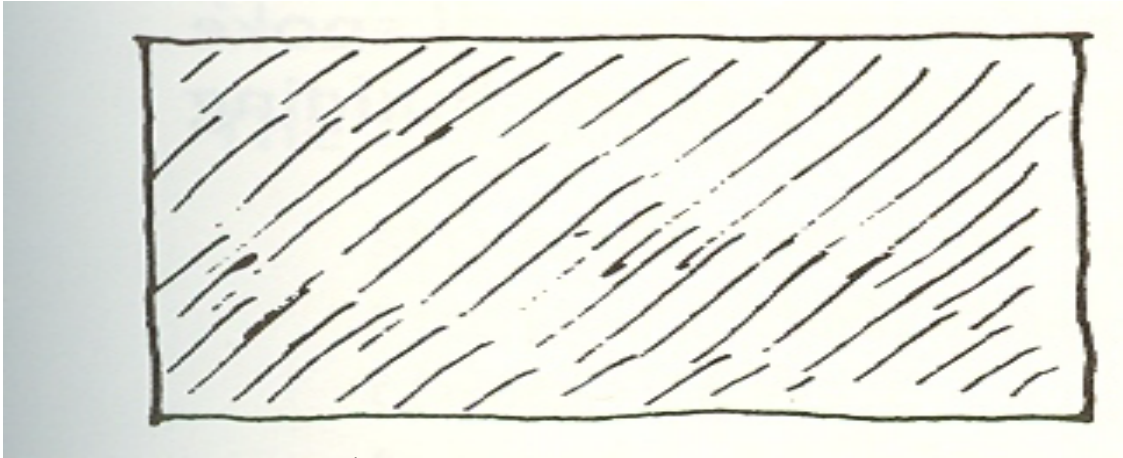


Figure 9: Example of c. 12<sup>th</sup> century work with axe marks finishing. (McAfee 1997: 95)

### **Fore-building:**

One of the more interesting and unexpected finds of the summer 2008 field school was the remains of what appears to be a fore-building. In Figure 11 is a photograph of the north-south wall of the fore-building. The fore-building had substantial amount of wall collapse which made it at first hard to identify, but after removing the collapse a perpendicular wall was exposed coming from the hall-house. “The projecting west wall of the fore-building runs the full width of the cutting i.e. 2m north-south with a returning north face exposed 1.84m north of the external north face of the hall-house. The returning right-angled north wall of the fore-building oriented east-west runs the full length of the cutting on its east side but is less intact towards its north-eastern end” (Read and Finan 2008). The fore-building is interesting because it does not seem to fit the rest of the original hall-house both in its design and the raw materials. By looking at the original design of the Bishop’s Manor it looked like the hall-house Ballisnheeney in Figure 10, but with the discovery of the fore-building the Bishop’s Manor now looks like the hall-house Annaghkeen in Figure 10.

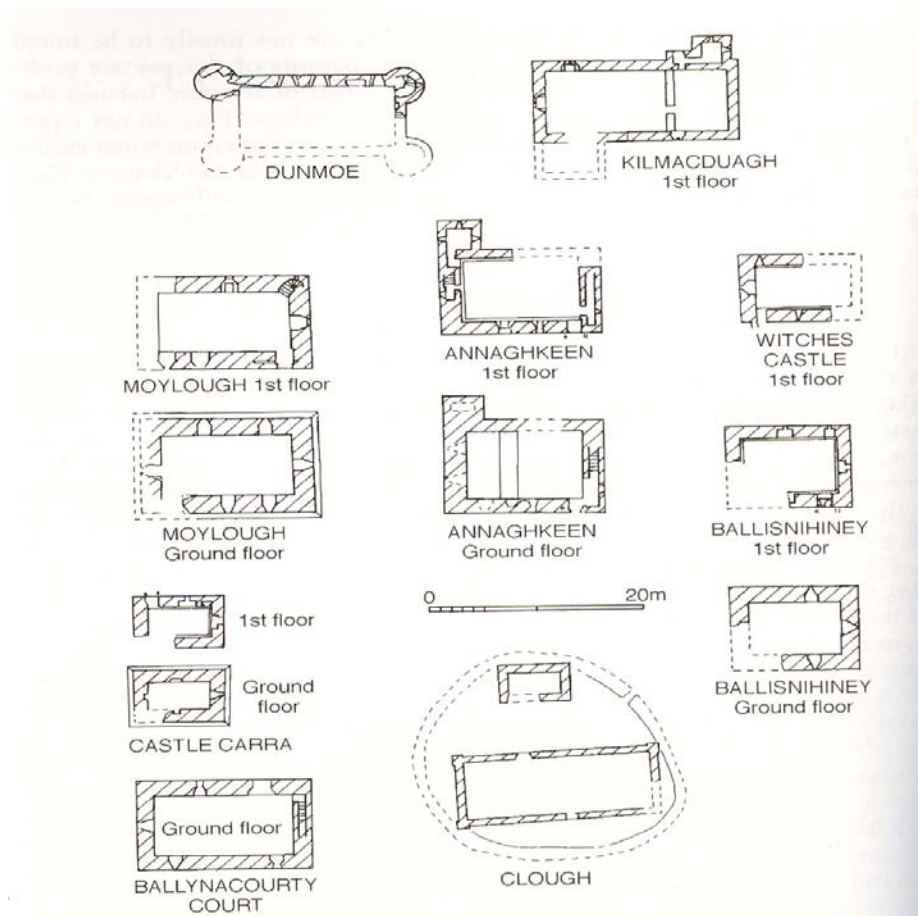


Figure 10: Plans of hall-houses. (McNeill 1997: 150).

Dr. Christopher Read believes that the fore-building is a later structure that was added on to the Bishop's Manor after its construction in A.D. 1253. "The differences in the construction and material fabric between both internal wall faces of the fore-building may argue that the north wall represents a later phase of construction than the west of the fore-building" (Read and Finan 2008). The fore-building could have a possible stairway on the ground floor of the Bishop's Manor that allowed for a ground entrance which would exclude the Bishop's Manor as a hall-house. Hall-houses have their entrances on the first floor of the structure in order to narrow the accessibility to enter or leave the manor thus making it a more defensible location with a small number of men. In Figures 11 and 12 the photographs show the fore-building that might have had a possible

stairway. Also notice in Figure 12 that the plinth does not follow the fore-building but remains at the base of the main structure along with the lack of base-battering on the fore-building. Another thing discovered with the fore-building which supports that it was used as a ground entrance instead of a tower is a possible doorway that can be seen in Figure 13 in the bulk of Cutting I. A theory is that the O'Conors feared that the Bishop's Manor would fall into the hands of the enemy so they destroyed the hall-house, but under the control of the Anglo-Normans they added the fore-building to the structure to allow for an easier way into the building by having a ground entrance. The fore-building needs further excavation in order to find its true purpose and discover if it possibly has a ground entrance with a staircase that leads to the first floor.



Figure 11: The fore-building and north main wall.





Figure 12: The fore-building close up with no base-battering or plinth.



Figure 13: The fore-building at the Bishop's Manor with a possible ground entrance.



### **Artifacts:**

During the summer of 2008 besides excavating the exterior wall in Cutting I the students also excavated the interior of the Bishop's Manor in Cutting J. It was in Cutting J that the students found some interesting artifacts that help support the historical annals. The three most interesting artifacts that were excavated are the small copper alloy buckle in Figure 14, bronze horse ring and tackle in Figure 15, and two 9<sup>th</sup> century Viking bone comb fragments in Figures 16-18. The copper alloy buckle would have been used by a member of the high rank in society which might indicate the presence of the Bishop occupying the Manor. The next artifact of importance is the bronze horse ring and tackle. This helps support the reference in the historical annals about the O'Conors using the Bishop's Manor as a staging point to cross the river to do raids on their neighbors. This helps support that presence of horses being corralled at the Bishop's Manor. The last important finds of the 2008 summer field school were the two Viking bone comb fragments. The bone comb is another sign that indicates the presence of a high member of society staying at the site. Originally the two bone comb fragments were thought to be from two separate bone combs, but it turned out they are from the same one. "A single artifact was retrieved from Cutting J comprising a small square fragment of a polished bone comb with portion of its rivet hole intact along one edge. Along one side of the bone comb fragment an intact toothed edge was exposed with one displaced tine at an angle to the others. The teeth comprised wafer tines set on edge with tapering, blunt headed tips. Along the lower edge of the upper surface and extending inwards from one edge, a number (3 in all) of impressed circles were identifiable upon close examination" (Read and Finan 2008). These artifacts provide valuable information about the people

that stayed at the Bishop's Manor which allows archaeologists to support the written record of the historical annals.



Figure 14: Small copper alloy buckle.



Figure 15: Bronze ring and chain from horse tackle.



Figure 16: Bone comb fragment A.



Figure 17: Bone comb fragment B.



Figure 18: Bottle of bone comb fragment B.

**Discussion:**

When comparing the Bishop's Manor to the Kells Priory they show similarities of spatial layout, architectural design, raw materials, and stone finishing techniques. Both sites have evidence of reusing Romanesque cut stones along with using sandstone and limestone for the construction of the buildings. Sandstone and limestone are the easiest raw materials for them to work with that are found in nearby quarries. Another common characteristic that both sites share is the use of base-battering to add as a defensive feature to protect against siege attacks. Also at the base of these fortified structures archaeologists have also uncovered a plinth that runs long the base of the stone walls. Another trait that both structures have is the use of dressings on some of their stones. In the Bishop's Manor the only stone found to have been tooled in the wall is the north-west corner stone while at Kells Priory there are multiple tooled stones. The dressing that the two sites share is the punched dressing which dates to the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The only major difference between these two structures is that the Bishop's Manor has no curtain wall for extra defense and a fore-building. The presence of the fore-building allows for the possibility of a ground entrance which would make it more like Kells Priory. By having a first floor entrance is the only major difference between the two if in fact the fore-building is not a staircase which allows entrance from the ground level. "It does not demand a great leap of faith to suggest that as well as the fine pottery and wine referred to by the contemporary sources, ideas and maybe even specialist builders and designers were also brought into the realm of the O'Conors to be used in constructing the latest types of castles there. Perhaps the O'Conors own stonemasons could even have constructed these castles themselves—there are many surviving examples of impressive

contemporaneous stone-built ecclesiastical structures such as the exquisite Cormac's Chapel on the Rock of Cashel in County Tipperary" (Barry 2007: 36). With all of these qualities that they share it allows for the possibility that the Irish might have been influenced by English design and techniques and incorporated them into their own early native built fortified stone structures.

**Conclusion:**

After looking at all of my data from the Bishop's Manor from the Kiltasheen site and the Kells Priory, Co. Kilkenny site along with the help of Dr. Christopher Read, I have reached my results on Irish architecture in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Irish for the majority of their construction techniques and spatial layouts have copied the English stone masons. Also from looking at the work and excavations that Tom McNeill and David Sweetman have done with hall-houses in Ireland it shows that the Irish basically followed an English mold in their layouts. This goes to show the impact of the English influence in Ireland during the medieval period. By introducing a more modern fighting force in Ireland it forced the Irish to respond quickly to copy the English invaders technology in order to bridge the gap between them. This allowed them to maintain their independence and repel the English for a couple more hundred years until they eventually fell at the hands of Henry VIII of England in A.D. 1541.

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Dr. Christopher Read from I.T. Sligo

Dr. Shirley Markley from I.T. Sligo

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