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# “The Black/ Fitzhenry’s Castle” Clonmines Wexford ‘Garderobe Chute’

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*Proposed structural repair/restoration of  
garderobe chute opening – East Elevation*

**SMR No.: WX045 - 012001**

**Grid Ref: E. 684359; N. 613028 (ITM)**

**On behalf of the Codd Family**

**10<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

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## Abstract

*This report provides an overview of the “Black” or “FitzHenry’s Castle” with a particular emphasis on the question of whether the fracture visible on the east face of the tower-house is the location of the discharge for the garderobe/waste chute. It also makes a number of recommendations based on the conclusion that this is not the discharge point, a conclusion which is reached on the basis of the available evidence outlined in the report, as well as similar tower houses in the region.*



**Figure 1. East Elevation “Black Castle”, Clonmines, Wexford.**

**Scale bar is in 20cm segments. (Photo: Author)**



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# 1. Summary

## 1.1. Site Specific Information

- Site Name:** The “Black Castle” (a.k.a. “Fitzhenry’s Castle”) – marked **A** in *fig. 2* below
- Townland:** Clonmines
- SMR No.:** WX045 – 012001
- Grid Ref.:** E. 684359; N. 613028 (ITM - center point of monument)
- County:** Wexford
- Status:** Recorded Monument (National Monuments Act 1930).  
In private ownership: Joan Codd.

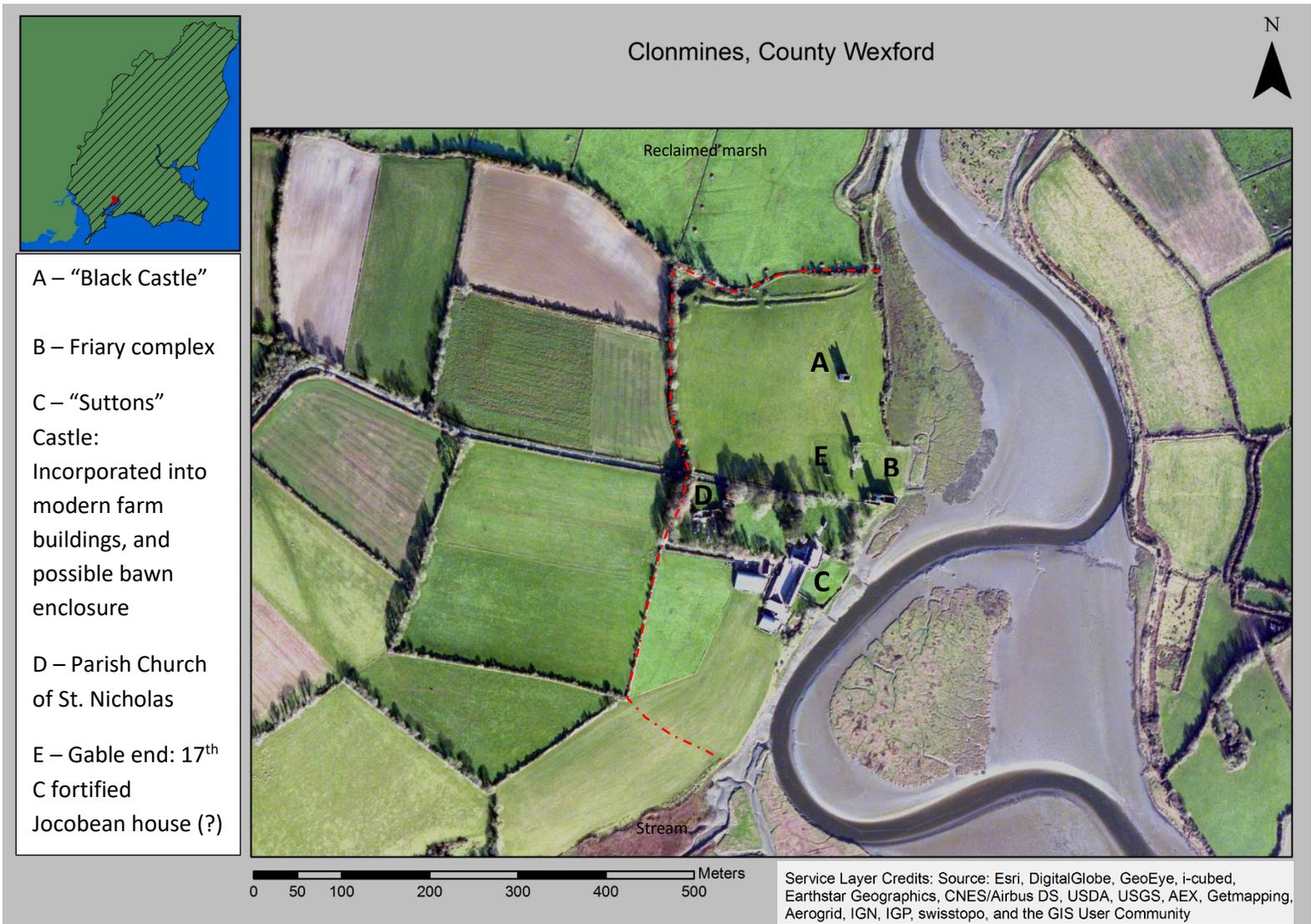


Figure 2. Site Location.

Map – A. De Volder.

10 October 2014

## 2. Introduction

Clonmines is recognized as a particularly fine example of a deserted medieval town similar to places such as Newtown Jerpoint (Co.Kilkenny) and Rindoon (Co. Roscommon), and contains one of the finest collections of Later-Medieval architectural remains to be found anywhere in Ireland in the context of what was once a medieval town/borough. The current works being undertaken on-site aim to continue the preservation of these structures for generations to come, as well as revealing more about the important medieval patrimony of the county.

The tower-house which is the subject of this report is part of the standing remains at Clonmines, County Wexford (fig. 2. A), and is located within the boundary of the medieval town. Clonmines lies at the head of Bannow Bay estuary, at the confluence of the Owenduff and Corock Rivers. The site slopes down to the estuary edge from east to west, as-well as along the northern and southern edge to another stream, forming essentially a peninsular surrounded by marsh and water on three sides (Appendix 1, fig. 3). The total area of town as postulated by Colfer (2002, 146) is indicated outlined in red in fig. 2, and amounts to approx. 29 acres, though there is the possibility that this area can be extended, based on recent fieldwork.<sup>1</sup>

Current scholarship maintains that the medieval borough of Clonmines was founded c. 1200 by the Anglo-Norman lord William Marshal (e.g.: Hore 1978, ii, 199 – 68; Colfer 2002, 143-45; Colfer 2004, 38-9, 73-6). There is however some evidence to suggest that the location may have already been of some importance, possibly the site of an existing settlement, of Hiberno-Scandinavian/Norse origin (Colfer 2004, 30; Paul Murphy 2004).

It is currently argued that Clonmines was established as a chartered settlement,<sup>2</sup> reflecting the pan-European phenomenon of borough foundation and economic expansion of the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, a process which William Marshal, as Lord of Leinster, is thought to have played a key role in advancing in the region, at a pivotal period in Irish and European history (Orpen 2003, 331). William Marshal had gained seisin to the land following his accession to the lordship of Leinster, and marriage to Aoife de Clare, after the deaths of Richard de Clare (lord of Leinster)

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<sup>1</sup> To put this in context: Wexford town – the area enclosed by the town wall was about 40 – 50 acres (Colfer 2002); Newtown Jerpoint the area of the deserted town is about 50 acres; New Ross – the area enclosed by the town wall was about 90 acres (Colfer 2002; Doran 2008).

<sup>2</sup> It was claimed by Agatha de Mortimer, Marshal's grand-daughter, that a "liberty" was granted to the town by William Marshal, its founder, (*Cal. Doc. Irl.* ii. No.1330). Historical references to the "town of Clonmines" range from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> C - see: (Hore and Hore 1978). The "borough of Clonmines" was in legal existence until the Act of Union.

and Hervey de Montmorency, who had previously held the Barony of Bargy<sup>3</sup> (Colfer 2002, 30 *ff*; Orpen 2005, 141 - 49).

As is evident from the standing remains, and doctoral research currently being undertaken at the location, the town appears to have prospered at various times during its history, and was largely abandoned sometime in the 17th century, slowly becoming the family farm it is today by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has been in the ownership, and home, of the Codd family since around 1850. There is also growing evidence that the foundation of the town may not have been on a green-field site, adding important additional information to the process of Anglo-Norman settlement in SE Leinster during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, and was possibly even more extensive than once thought. Furthermore, the standing Later-Medieval, and Early Modern, structural remains at Clonmines can tell us much about the changing economic, social and environmental conditions of the town and the southwest region of Wexford.

### 3. The Tower-house “Black” or “FitzHenry’s Castle”

The tower-house is a ubiquitous feature of the Irish landscape, in what has been described by one author as being the “most heavily castellated part of the British Isles by the seventeenth century” (Barry 1987, 186). It has been postulated that there were over 3,000 built between c. 1400 and 1650, with more than a thousand still standing “in various stages of conservation” (Colfer 2013, 162). This has lead authors such as Sherlock to describe them as “the Irish castle *par excellence*” (2011, 115). The dating, and chronological development of the tower-house is however viewed as being particularly problematic, with conflicting theories as to their origin and development, though the parliamentary acts of the of the 15<sup>th</sup> century are often seen as the impetus for their widespread growth (e.g.: Sweetman 2005; Colfer 2013; Bradley and Murtagh 2003, 215; Sherlock 2006, 2011).

Tower-houses are often described as being fortified residences which were built by a broad cross-section of society across both secular and ecclesiastical landowners, and merchants of Anglo-Norman and Gaelic descent. The focus of much of the research on tower-houses to date has been on their being in a rural context though, as is evidenced by Clonmines, they are to be found within towns and villages as well. The relationship between the two is something that is yet to be explored in greater detail (Bradley and Murtagh 2003).

Authors such as Colfer (2013) have noted that tower-houses are adapted to local requirements, with connections to many of the principal families in any given locality.

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<sup>3</sup> Clonmines lies in the Barony of Bargy which reverted to the lord of Leinster on his death. De Montmorency’s fief represented the modern baronies of Bargy and Shelburne which he received from the hands of Dermot MacMurrough, and later confirmed by his successor Richard de Clare (Orpen and Regan 1892, II. 3070-1).

Most Wexford tower-houses have first floor halls (over a vault at ground floor level) and “are well equipped with fireplaces and garderobes, especially at first-floor level” (Sweetman 2005, 157). Furthermore, Wexford tower-houses invariably fall into what Sherlock has described in his classification as “Group B” (located predominantly in the East of the country), with one or more floors over vault, with the principal chamber normally situated at the first floor over vault level (Sherlock 2011). The “Black” or “FitzHenry’s Castle” falls into this category, and its over-all footprint lies at mid-size range within Colfer’s classification of those 60 – 79 sq.m in size (2013, 164). Few tower-houses in Wexford have projecting towers so that the stairs and garderobes, where present, are contained with the main block of the building, as at Clonmines (Sweetman 2005, 155).

Hore (1978, ii, 68) and Colfer (2004, 2013) have connected the FitzHenry family with the castle, with Colfer additionally postulating that the name “Black Castle” maybe also be connected with a find of Viking silver in the area (2004, 30). The FitzHenry’s also held another local tower-house, at the possible manorial center of Kilcavan, which is located beyond the present settlement of Wellingtonbridge (Colfer 2013, 237).

#### **4. Description of “Black” or “FitzHenry’s Castle” - garderobe and chute**

Externally the tower-house is a rectangular structure (ext. dims 9.8m E-W; 8.1m N-S) consisting of five floors (ground, loft under vault and three over vault), surviving to the wall-walk, with good granite quoins and a base-batter. There were external structures connected to the North and south elevations.

##### **Wall-walk**

This was accessed (it no longer survives) from stairs in the N and E walls, with the remains of a look-out platform over the stair housing at the NE angle.

##### **3<sup>rd</sup> Floor over Vault**

The only visible features on this floor are the destroyed windows in the E and W walls. The floor (int. dims. 6.70m E-W; 5.80m N-S) is accessed from the stairs in the E wall, which is entered at the N end of the room through a lintelled doorway with cut granite surrounds.

##### **2<sup>nd</sup> Floor over Vault (Appendix 2, fig. 4 – Floor Plan)**

The floor is accessed from stairs in the E wall, which is entered at the S end (int. dims. 7.32m E-W; 6.19m N-S). It has windows with seats in the N and S walls, and a destroyed fireplace in the N wall. There are two chambers in the E wall each with their own lights. The floor was supported on corbels in the E and N walls, with a rebated ledge on the S wall. The chimney flue is supported on corbels on the outer face of the N wall from this floor.

The chamber in the N is a garderobe (int. dims. 1.16m E-W; 1.43 N-S) – see Appendix 5, fig. 10. The entrance is marked at A 2. The chute at this point is located towards the N wall and is 0.34m (E-W), 0.20m (N-S). fig. 11 D shows the chute opening visible from the floor below. The chute widens N-S down to the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor over vault discharge (fig. 11. Da).

### **1<sup>st</sup> Floor over Vault (Appendix 2, fig. 5 – Floor Plan)**

The floor is accessed from the stairs in the S wall at the SE angle, where a damaged doorway (Width 0.74m) gives access to the first floor over vault (int. dims. 6.3m E-W; 4.34m N-S). This floor has a damaged window in an embrasure with seats in the W wall, and a damaged window and robbed fireplace in the N wall. There are corbels for the ceiling in the W and N walls with a rebate on the other walls. There is a corner chamber (int. dims 2m E-W; 0.86m N-S; H 1.9m) in the thickness of the S wall at the SW angle. There is another chamber (int. dims 2.53m N-S; 0.85m E-W; H 1.93m) at the S end of the E wall.

The garderobe (int. dims 1.8m N-S; 0.86m E-W; H 2.2m) is situated at the NE angle in the thickness of the E wall (fig. 10). The entrance is marked as A 1. It is entered through a lintelled doorway (Width 0.66m; Height 1.85m) in the E wall.

There is a box-niche from the main chamber, which accesses the garderobe chute directly for the disposal of waste (fig. 10. B 1; fig. 11 B). There are no visible remains of a latrine seat, though the walls appear to have been robbed-out (fig. 10). The chute at the floor level extends from the N wall to the S (0.40E-W at S end; c.1m N-S). The chute widens to the S, from the N wall, and continues straight down to the base batter level (fig. 12 – visible from the floor below).

The discharge from the floor above exits in the N wall, which is angled towards the south and is lintelled (fig. 11, A1; Da).

### **Loft Under Vault**

The stairs give access through a lintelled doorway (Width 0.8m; Height 2.1m) to the first floor under the E-W vault, which has a rectangular window in the E and W walls. The floor was supported on corbels in the N and S walls, with a rebate above on all walls.

### **Ground Floor**

A pointed doorway (W 1.14m; H 2.04m) of dressed granite with undressed voussoirs towards the S end of the W side is protected by machicolation externally and a murder-hole in the lobby. The lobby leads directly to the ground floor (int. dims 5.13m E-W; 3.92m N-S) with five embrasures (two in the N wall), but the only lights are double-splayed loops in the E and W walls. The W loop may have been a gun-loop, or modified to be one (Dr. Kieran O’Conor, *pers. comm.*). From the lobby a mural stairs rises in the S wall, and there is a secondary doorway to the exterior in the S wall at the foot of the stairs.

Below the W loop (approx 0.85m) there is a drain opening, with a lintel, which extends all the way beneath the thickness of the base batter (approx. 1m), though blocked on the outside of the W face as it lies below the ground surface and W door lintel level by approx. 0.25m (fig. 7 – on plan in red, marked C & fig. 16, I).

## 5. Discussion

The garderobe/waste-disposal chute, as described above, is fairly typical in terms of its intra-mural arrangement found in other towers in Wexford and the South East of Ireland, falling within the same category’s described in Chapter 3, i.e. main chamber over first floor vault.

There is the possibility that what is described as a garderobe is in-fact a waste disposal chute, as the evidence for latrine seats is missing, though the walls have been robbed out in the chamber on the first floor over vault (fig. 11). There is also the “*slop*” niche box access from the main hall, which adds to this possibility, as how it could have functioned with a seat arrangement in place is not clear (fig. 10 & 11 marked - B). In terms of dating the tower this is an interesting feature as Sweetman has pointed out that garderobes were being replaced by the use of chamber pots at a later period, the contents of which were then sometimes disposed of into a waste-disposal chutes (as there is no evidence of seats), which then went straight down to ground level to exit the building “as if it were a garderobe”. This is before garderobes were generally replaced by the use of chamber pots in 17<sup>th</sup> century fortified houses (2005, 165).

The question of whether the chute at this tower-house exited above or below ground will be discussed in terms of the evidence of the structure, as has been described above, and other examples in the vicinity and of its type.

Currently, the apparent chute exit is situated on the east elevation (fig. 8 – the location of the chute, width and the visible base level is marked in blue at G), at a height of approx. 0.75 – 0.80m above ground level (fig. 17 & 18). The opening appears to be robbed-out, and there is a fracture which extends along the line of the chute (fig. 8) to at least 2<sup>nd</sup> floor over vault height. The apparent exit shows no sign of any lintel. The fracture opening is approx. 0.42m at its widest point and approx. 0.80 – 1m high.<sup>4</sup> As is shown in fig. 17, 19 and 20 the chute at this level is filled with loose rubble (J)<sup>5</sup>, and the line of the coursing of the batter and chute appears to have been

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<sup>4</sup> This opening may have been caused by a weakening of the structure as water entered the chute and was unable to drain away, as it was blocked at this level. Once the east face failed/opened and was robbed-out at this point, this weakened the structure of the east elevation along the line of the chute

<sup>5</sup> The landowners placed large pieces of loose rubble and wood into the chute at this level so as to close it off, in order to prevent injury to livestock who could get stuck in the fracture (Ray Codd *pers. comm.*).

robbed-out – fig. 19 & 20 I. There is no indication of any coursing of the south and north face of the chute angled towards the east elevation of the tower as one would expect if this was a discharge point, but rather it is square and continues down (fig. 12, 13 & 22). While the chute widens from the floors above, and would appear to be favoring an eastern exit, the internal stone coursing doesn't indicate any angle, or slope towards the east face either, to a discharge at this level, as would be expected from a garderobe chute which exits above ground (see e.g. Leask 1995, 83). What appears as stone coursing of the chute, opening/angled towards the east face of the tower (fig. 19 – note line Ga which the edge of the chute) can be explained as stone coursing of the south of the chute's interior face that was tied into the coursing on the chutes interior east face (fig. 19 – at I – location of the robbed-out stone courses of the east face of the chute).

The opening is also off-center, to the S side, of the actual chute within the base batter (see fig. 15, and Appendix 7), and there is no edge to the interior chute coursing visible to indicate an opening, but rather there is evidence that it has been removed.

It is most significant that a close inspection of the current chute base (fig. 19, 19 & 20 - Gb) demonstrates that the surface appears to consist of a loose fill - a coarse to fine sand, with small stones and larger pebbles, under the larger loose cement block and stones.

There is no indication of a stone base within the dimensions of the chute itself; it would however appear that an edge to the chute is discernable that continues below the current surface marked Gb.

Outside of this, within the line of the base-batter, this is not the case and the surface appears solid and part of the interior of the base-batter – the fill therefore appears to continue below the visible base level - Gb as currently is within the chute, as does the stone coursing of the chute itself.

Furthermore, if the chute discharge was at this level in the east elevation it would be significantly above the original entrance door lintel (west), and therefore level with the ground floor, an unusual arrangement in towers of this date and layout, i.e. intra-mural chute, with hall above vault, etc. (Dr. Rory Sherlock, *pers. comm.* 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2014).

As illustrated in fig's. 8, 13, 17 & 18 the level of the base of the chute Gb, as it appears in the fracture, lies currently at approx. 0.75m – 0.80m above the lintel of the door/entrance on the western side of the tower, significantly above ground level.

It should be noted that there has been some soil build-up on the E. (and W), but as is illustrated the site slopes from W-E by at least 0.30 – 0.50m currently (fig. 3 illustrates the general slope of the site W to E.; Fig. 9 the slope W to E is visible in relation to the horizontal edge of the base batter on the castle and the ground/lintel level marked in red). This would obscure the discharge, and the drain, at this level. As is often the case the natural slope of the location

would be used for drainage, which is here oriented towards the shoreline on the east. Magnetic gradiometry done in the vicinity (Arnaud De Volder and Paul Murphy - Unpublished geophysics report) would further confirm this conclusion, as it appears there is a feature, possibly a ditch or drain, running from the east face of the tower-house towards the shoreline in the vicinity of the fracture.

When looking at tower-house's in the vicinity, such as at the probable medieval manorial center of Kilcavan (fig. 28) - which was possibly connected to the FitzHenry family, as was the tower-house at Clonmines – this tower does not show any signs of a garderobe chute exiting above ground level, though unfortunately much of the tower is in ruins (*it stands to approx. 4 story level?*). There is still a dwelling attached to the east wall of the tower as well.

Another smaller tower in the vicinity, located at Barrystown (the other side of the estuary - opposite Clonmines), which survives to the above ground floor vault level (fig. 23), had an intramural chute which does not discharge above the ground floor door-lintel height. The chute is contained in the NE corner of the wall, as at Clonmines (fig. 24 – A), and appears to continue straight down to the base.

Another local tower-house, Danescastle, does not have any garderobes, or chutes. Other examples such as Slade, Rathmacknee have intramural chutes that do not exit above entrance door lintel level (see: Colfer 2013, 169).

An example of a tower-house that has been excavated in the South East and shows a garderobe chute that exits to a drain, with a lintelled discharge at the base of the batter below the level of the entrance door-way, is at Kells Priory in Killkenny, and is shown here for illustrative purposes (fig. 27).

Where the chute discharge is visible in the base batter, rather than going straight down to a drain, these appear to be adapting to local topography, rather than a deliberate sighting of the discharge high enough to make it visible in the elevation/batter. An example of this would be at Ballyhack castle, though it must be noted that this discharge is at the level of the entrance door lintel level. (fig. 25 & 26 – B).

## 6. Conclusions & Recommendations

1. On the basis of the evidence presented above the conclusion is that the garderobe/waste chute at the "Black" or "FitzHenry's castle" continues down within the base batter, beyond the level of the fracture visible in the east elevation. This is not the level of the chute/waste discharge exit. It is certainly demonstrated by the edge of a chute being discernable at the base of the present opening, which continues down, and this can be ascertained without any excavation of the fill of the chute.
2. The only way to be certain about where the chute exits would be to excavate the fill of the chute under the appropriate license.
3. A small test pit in front of the E elevation would additionally resolve the question of the location of the chute discharge, which it is postulated lies at, or close to, the ground floor lintel level (Appendix 3, fig. 8; Appendix 7, fig. 17). It is also possible that it continues straight into a "French drain" below the batter, which runs to the shoreline.
4. The proposed reconstruction of a discharge opening at the level of the fracture as it currently presents itself is not recommended as it is the conclusion of the author that the original discharge lies at least approx. 0.75m below the current base of the opening.

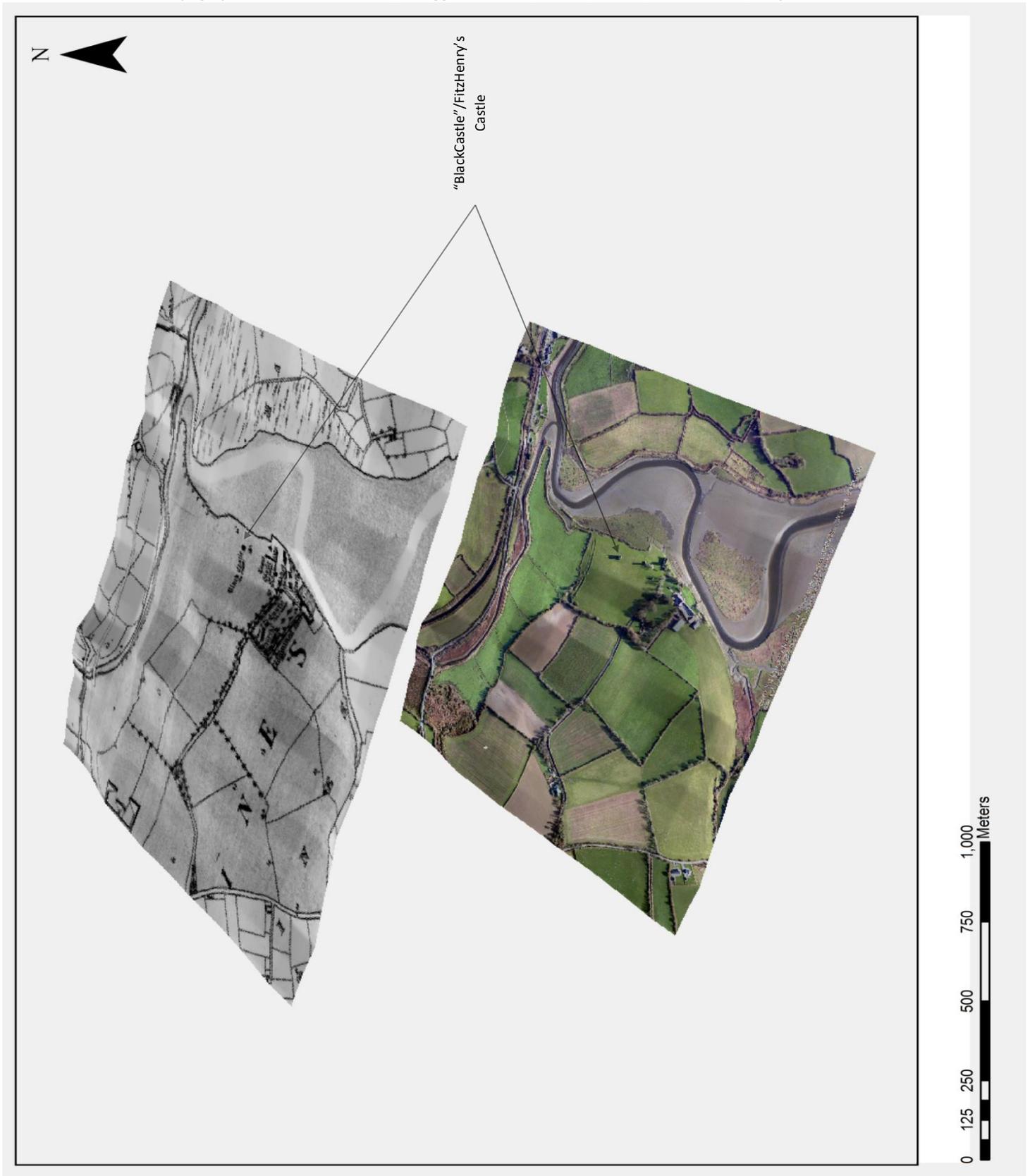
It would be advisable therefore to consolidate the fracture, closing it up again to prevent access into the chute at this level. The landowners have furthermore expressed concern about their livestock and people getting into the chute. It is recommended that the fracture is closed in such a way that the reconstruction is identifiable.

Allowance should also be made for drainage of rain water due to the fact that the current fracture was probably caused by water getting into the structure from the chute which is open to the elements, and the chute being blocked below the level of the current opening in the fracture, and therefore unable to drain water away below.

## Appendix 1 – General Site Topography

Figure 3. Historic mapping (1st Ed. OSI) overlaid on satellite imagery with a topographic model.

Topographic model - SRTM data (Z exaggeration of 2, Az. 315, Alt. 30, and hillshade) – by: A. De Volder.



## Appendix 2 – Floor Plans

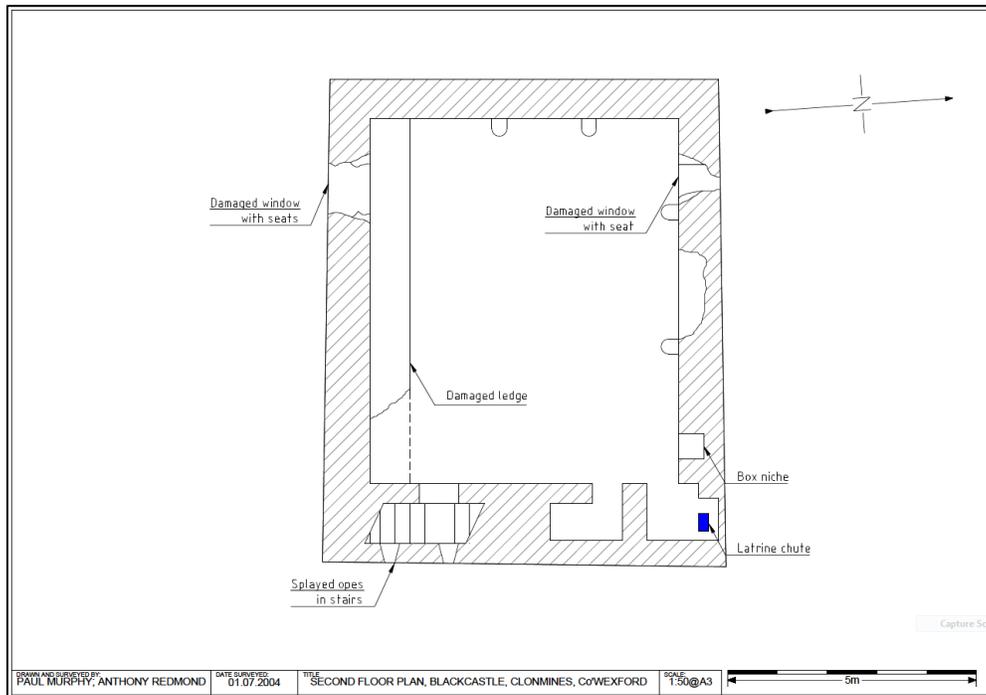


Figure 4. Second Floor Over Vault (garderobe/latrine chute marked in blue).

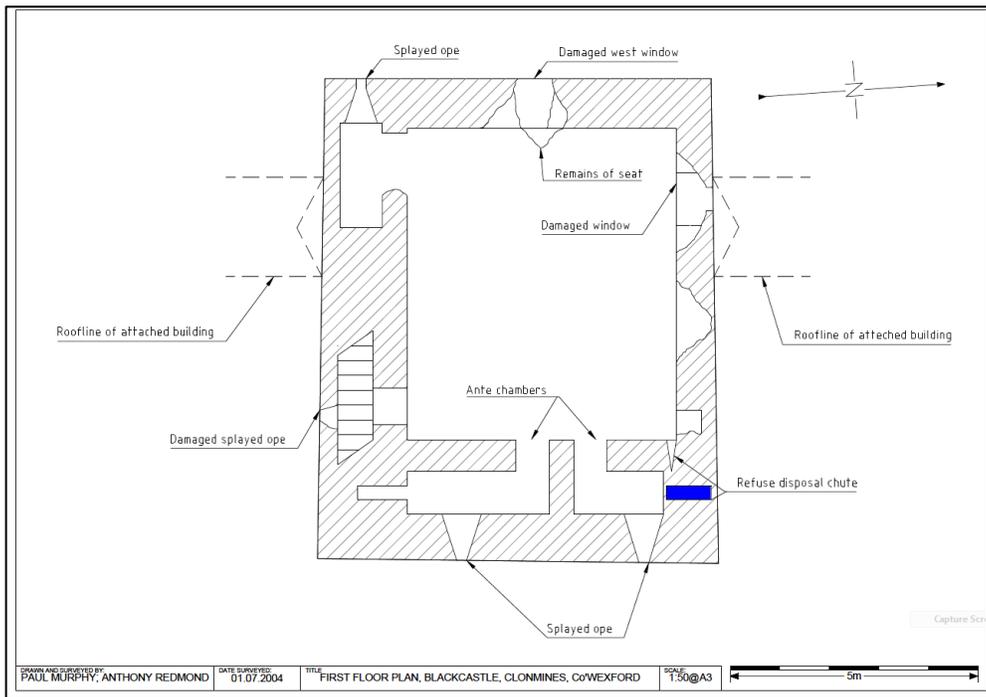


Figure 5. First Floor Over Vault (garderobe/latrine/waste disposal chute marked in blue).

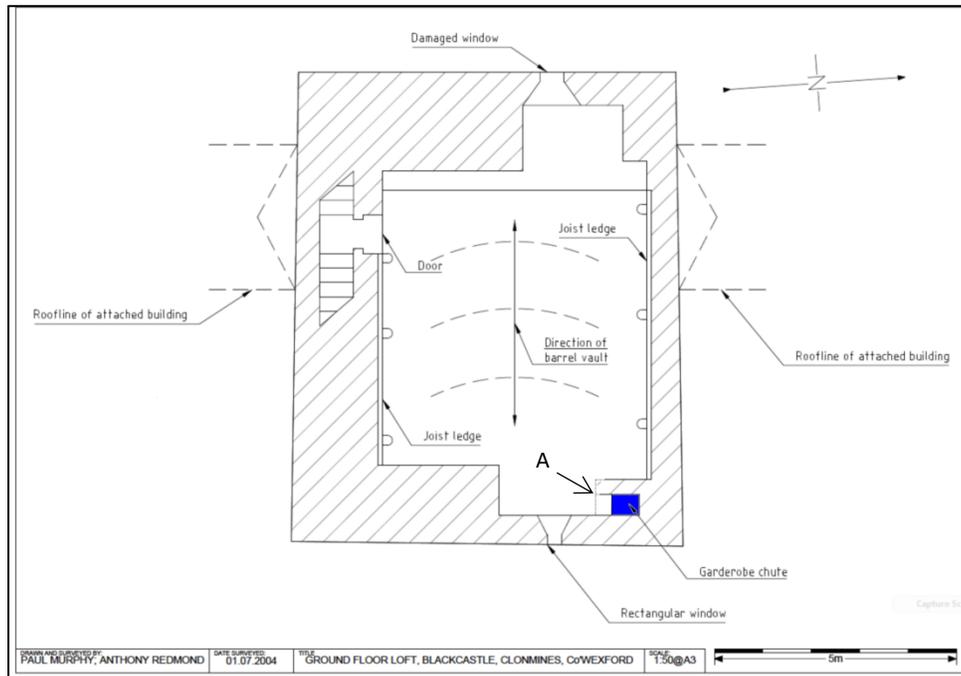


Figure 6. Ground Floor Loft Under Vault.

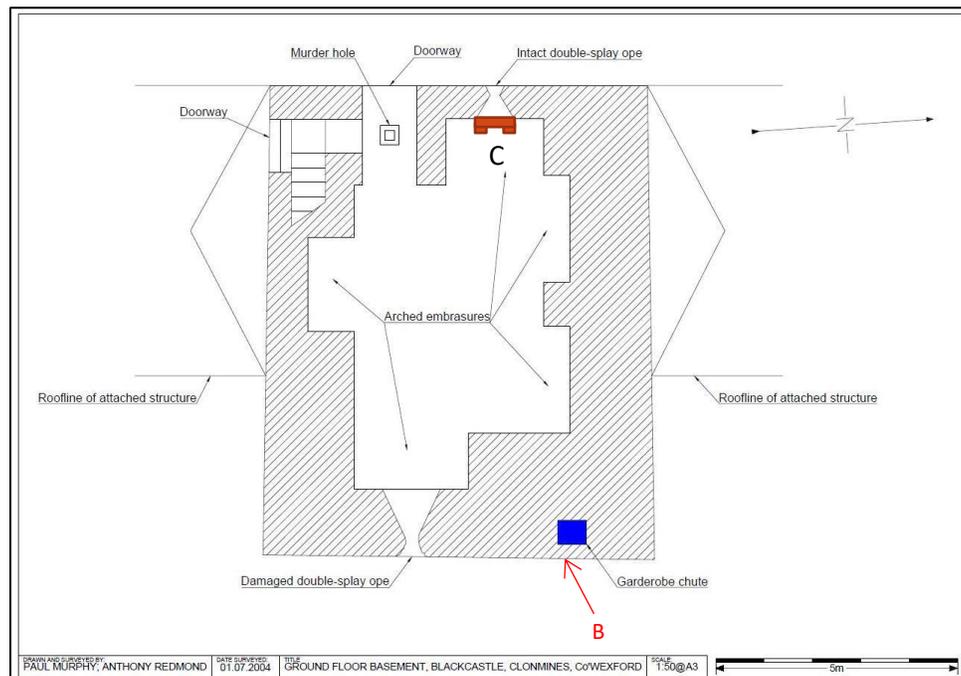
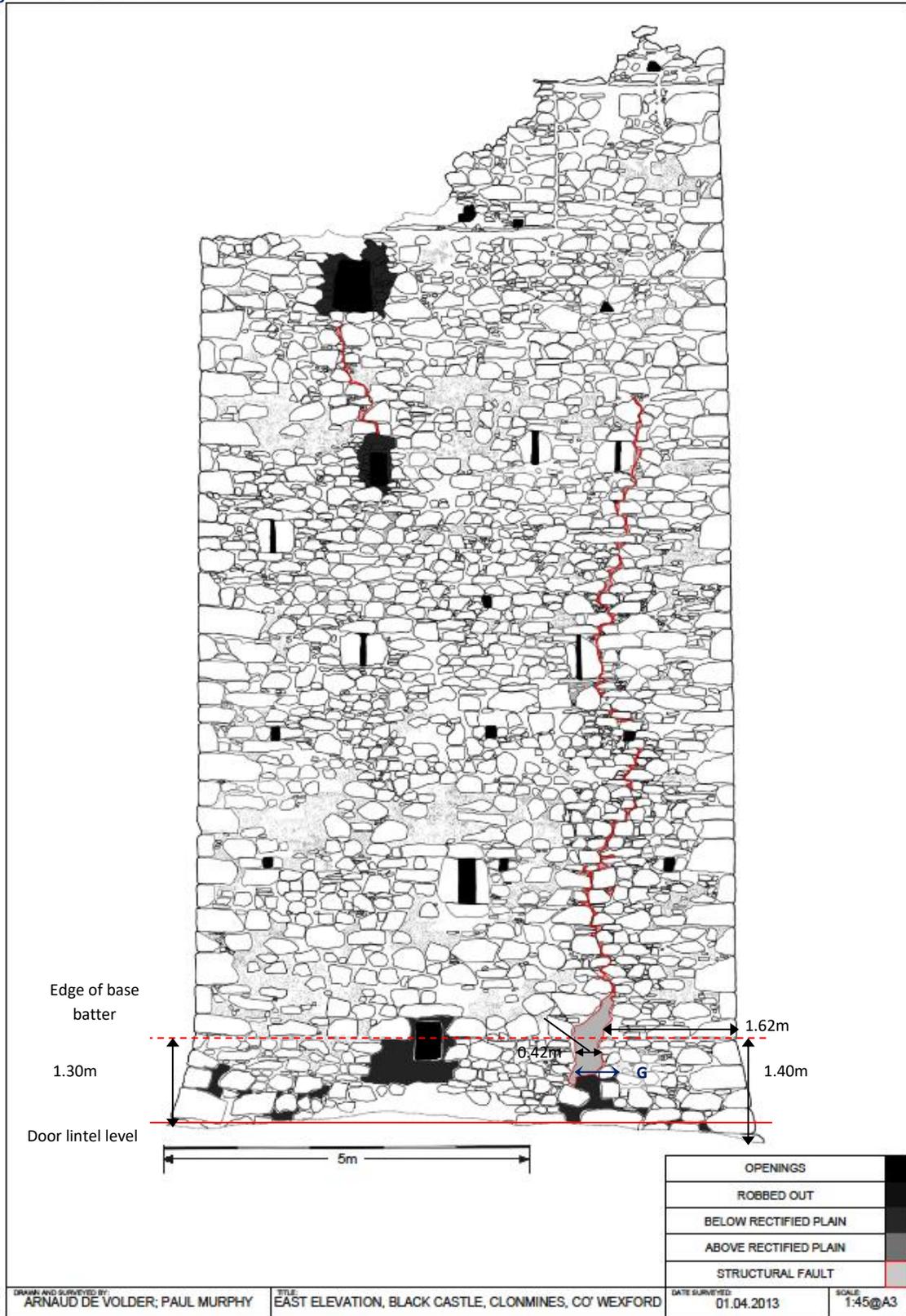


Figure 7. Ground Floor (garderobe/latrine chute marked in blue).

Original plans (Fig. 6 and 7) modified by author.

### Appendix 3 – East Elevation

Figure 8. East Elevation



Appendix 4 – North Elevation

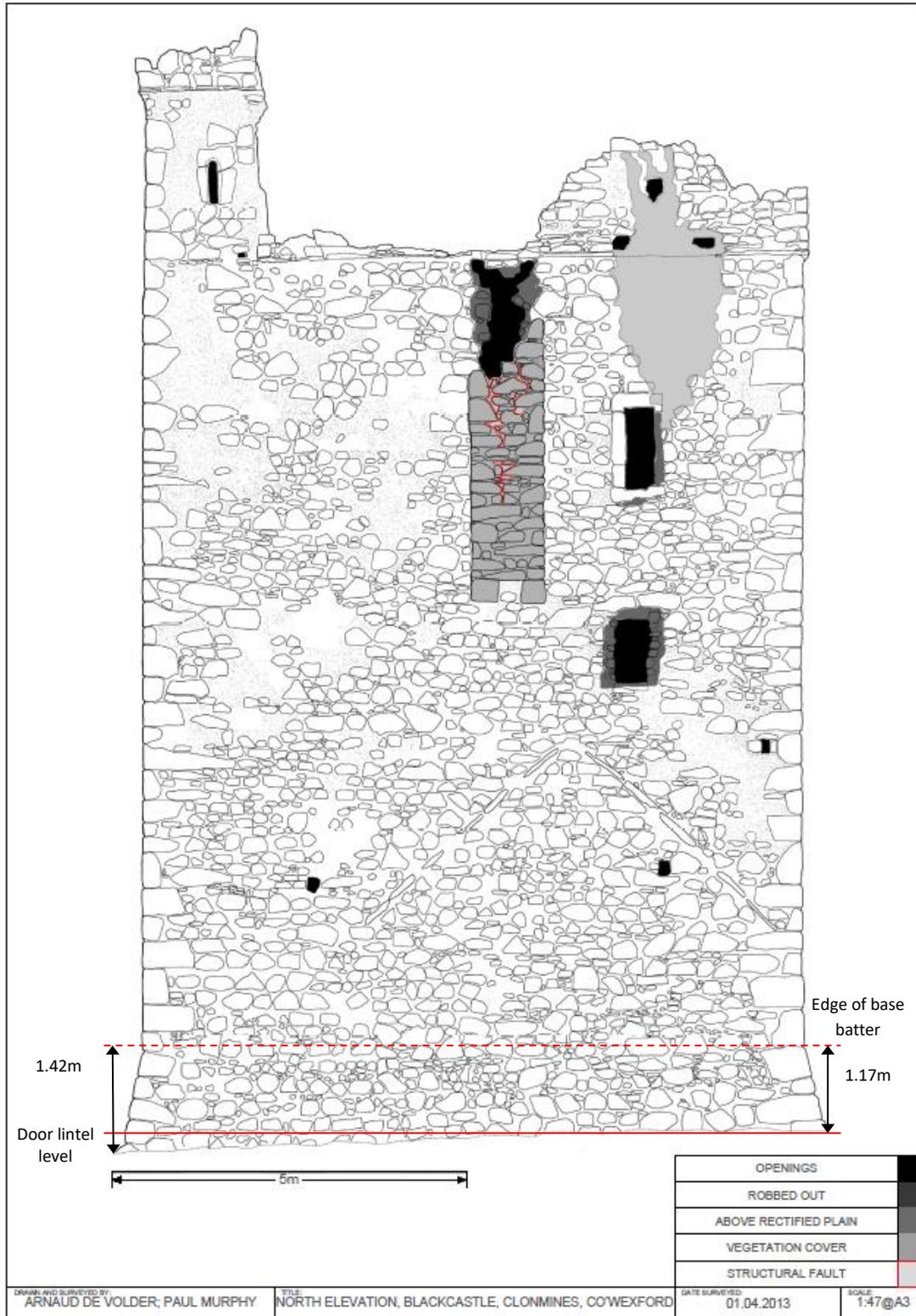


Figure 9. North Elevation

### Appendix 5 – Site Photographs (First and Second Floor over Vault)

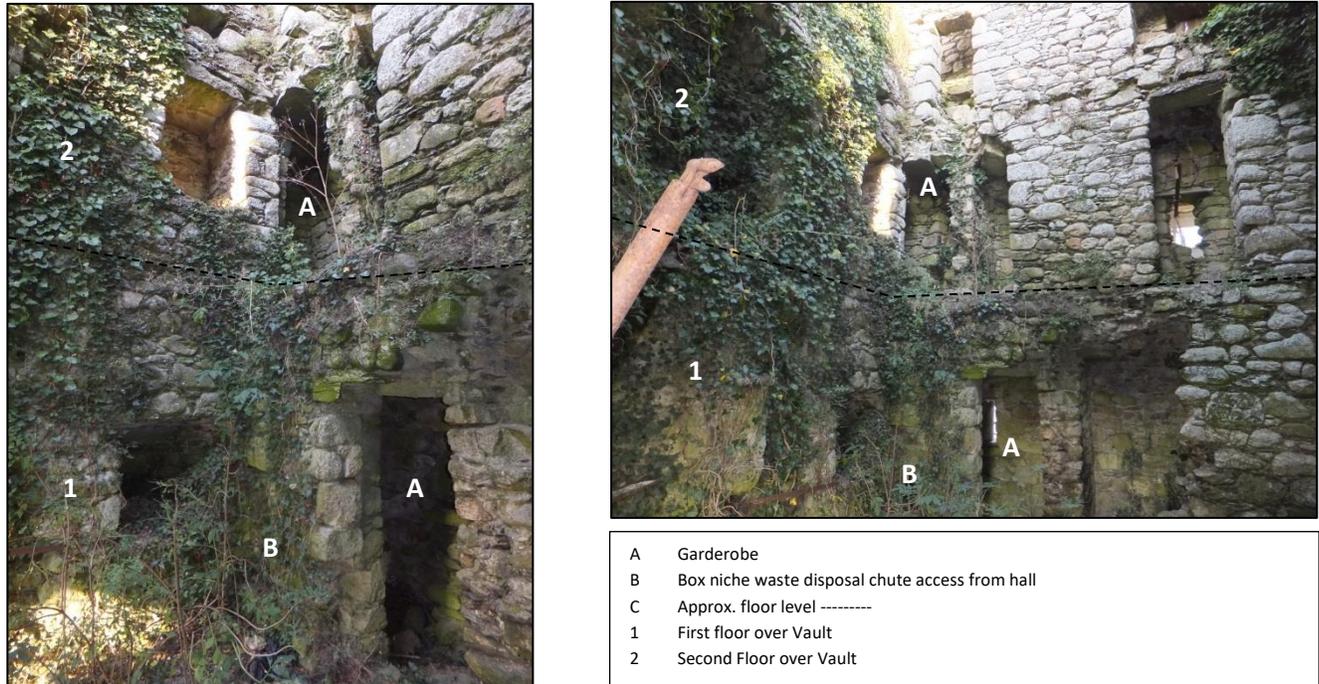


Figure 10. 1st & 2nd Floor over Vault. Looking NE/E.

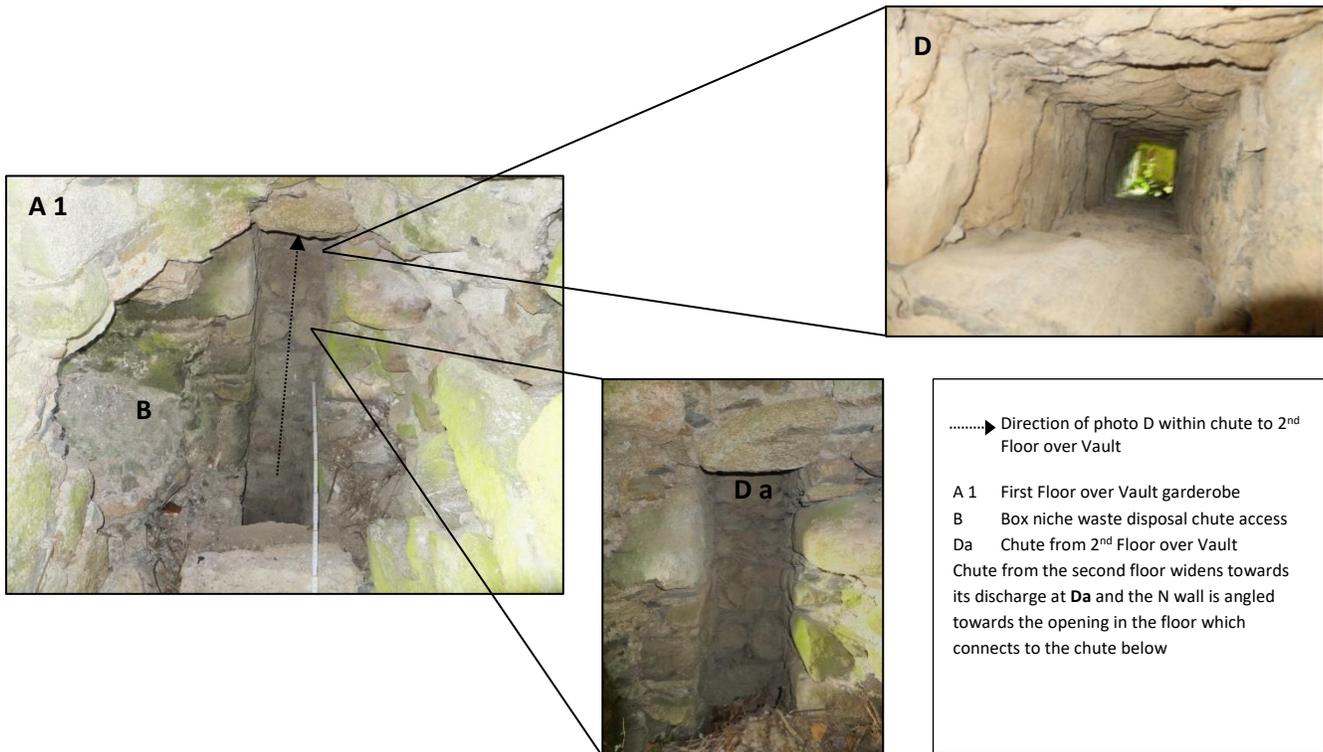


Figure 11. First Floor over Vault garderobe looking north. (Photo's: Author)



**Appendix 6 – Site Photographs (Loft under Vault & Ground Floor)**

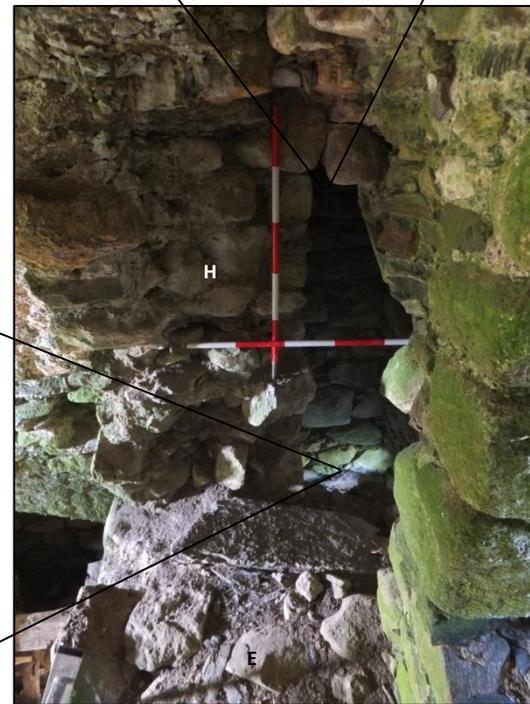


**Figure 12. Chute looking down towards Ground Floor from the First Floor over Vault - the opening in the East Elevation is visible to the right.**



**Figure 13. Ground Floor and Loft (looking east).**

- E** Approx. Loft floor level ----
- F** Lintel level: current floor surface lies 0.25m below the lintel level
- Gb** Approx. level of the bottom edge of the garderobe chute visible in the east elevation fracture (see “G” in fig. 8)
- H** Loft under Vault opening into garderobe chute (robbed out)
- Approx. ground floor/lintel level



**Figure 14. Robbed out chute opening (Ground Floor Loft).**



**Figure 15. Chute looking from Ground Floor Loft. (Photo's: Author)**



Figure 16. Possible drain below loop in W elevation.



Appendix 7 – Site Photographs (East elevation)

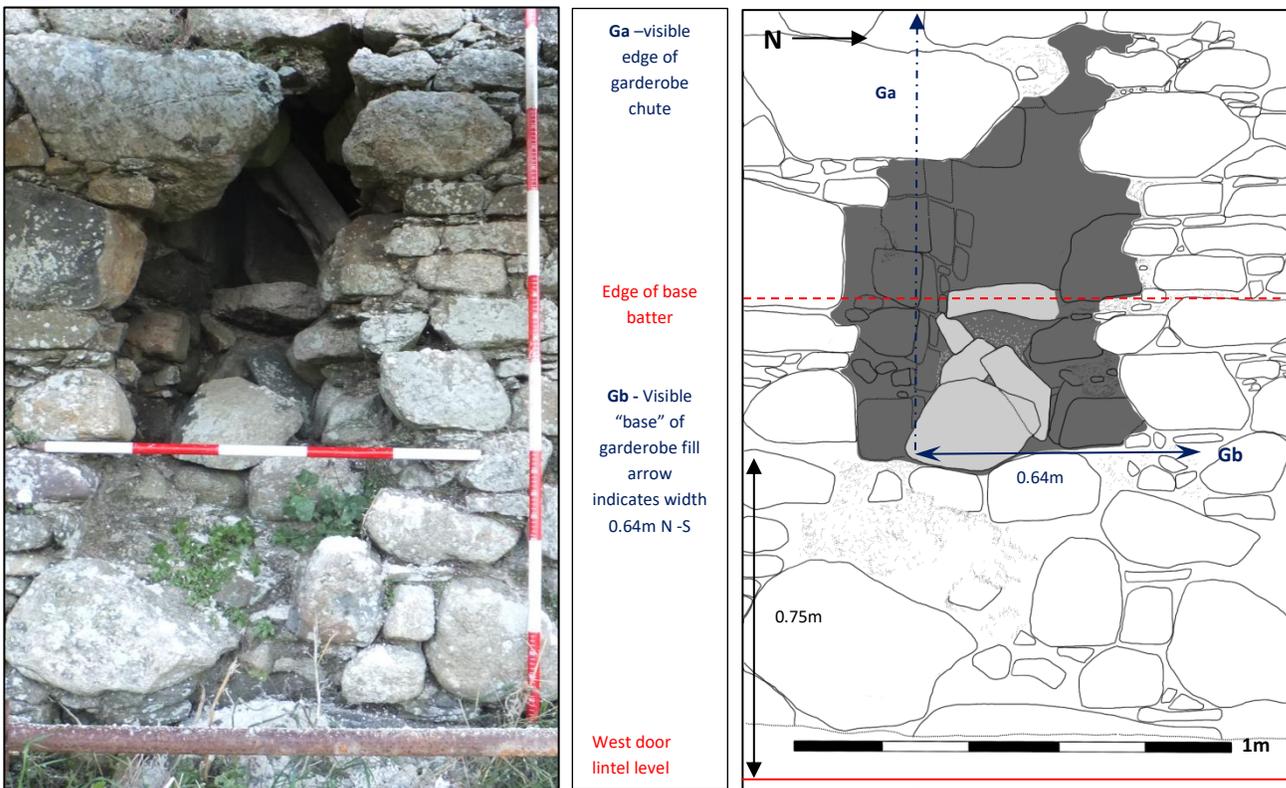


Figure 17. Scaled and Rectified photo of opening to garderobe chute.

Figure 18. Scaled & annotated drawing of opening to chute.

Scale = 20cm segments.  
(Drawing & Photo's: A. De Volder)

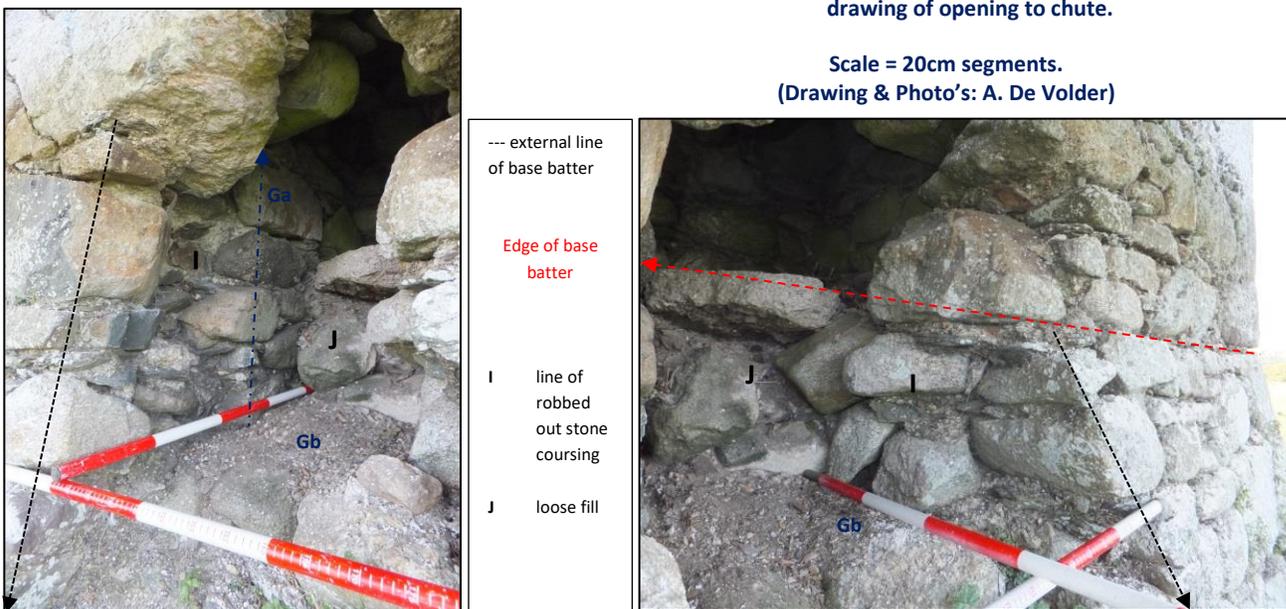


Figure 19. Chute opening looking south.

Figure 20. Chute opening looking north.



Figure 21. Interior of chute looking up from base batter.

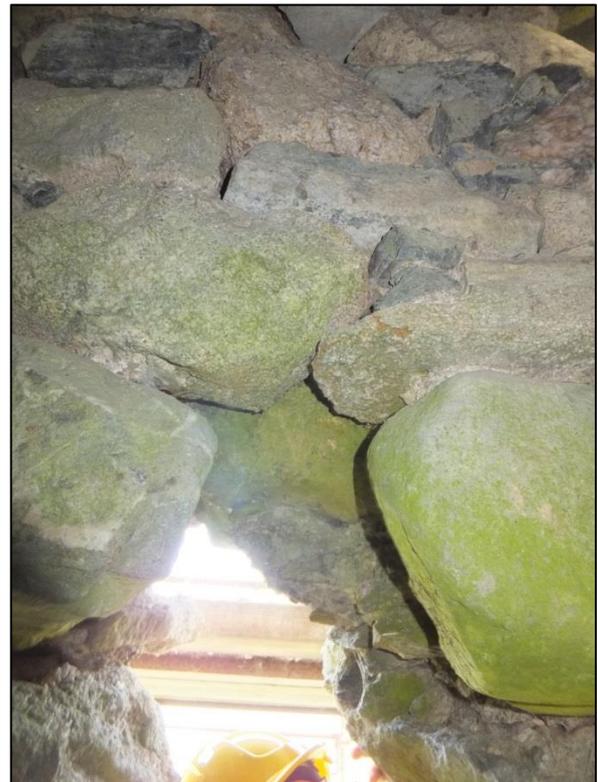


Figure 22. Interior E wall of chute from base batter.



## Appendix 9 – Comparative Material



Figure 23. Barrystown Castle (S and E elevations).

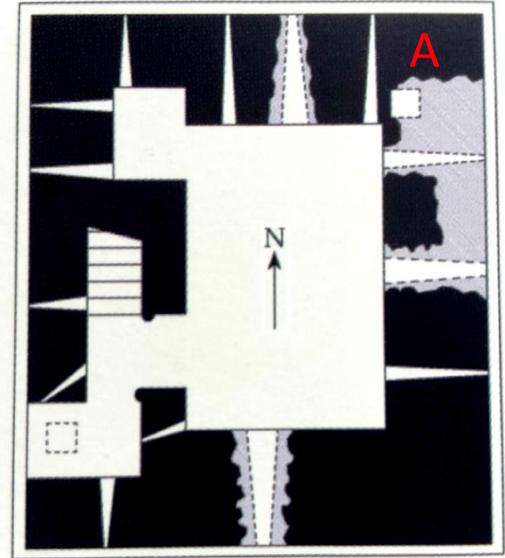


Figure 24. Barrystown Castle ground -floor plan.  
(Colfer 2013, 169)



Figure 25. Ballyhack Castle.  
(S - SW elevation. Photo: A. De Volder)

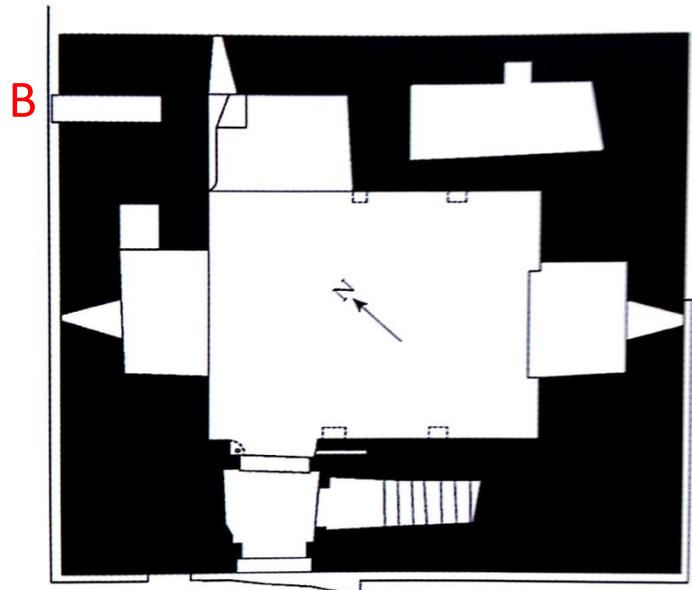


Figure 26. Ballyhack Castle ground-floor plan.  
“B” indicates the position of the chute, and chute discharge (Colfer 2013, 169).

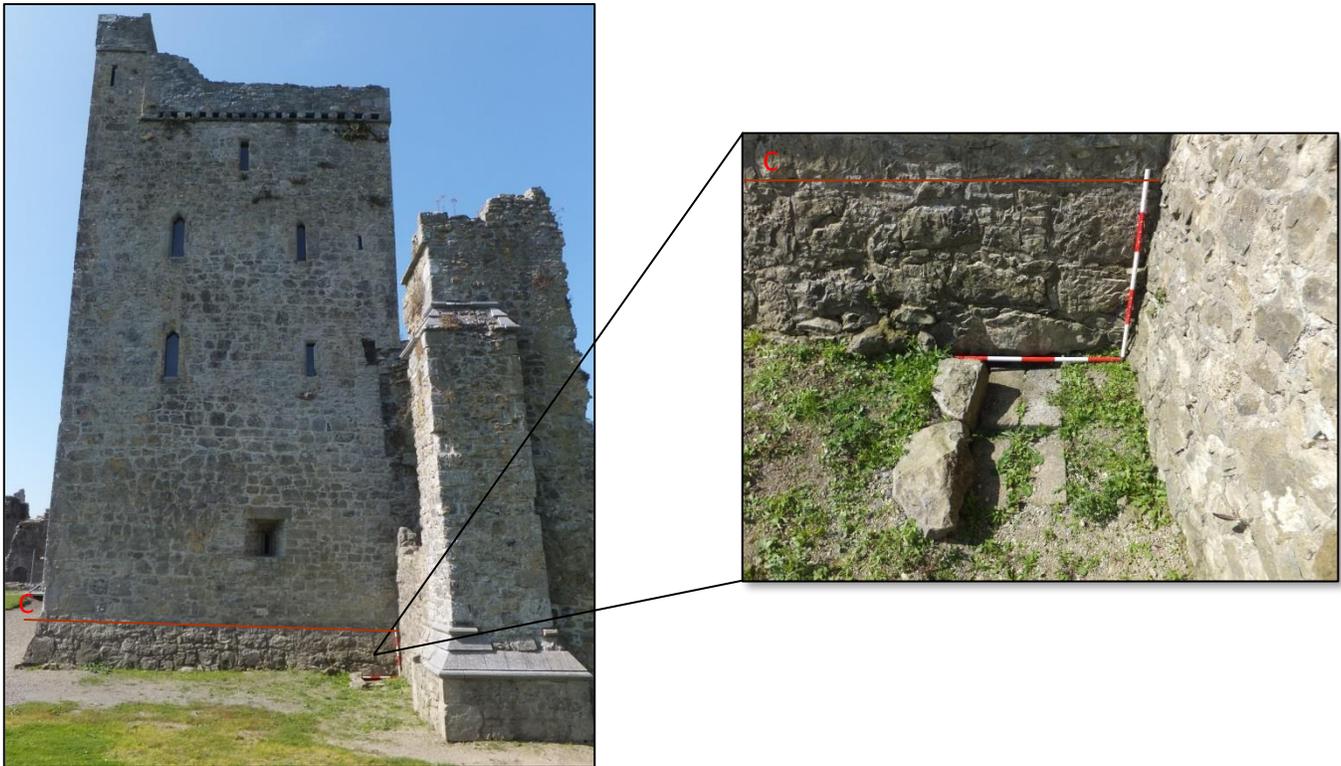


Figure 27. Kells Priory (Kilkenny), 15th/16th C (?) "Priors Tower" – East Elevation.

An example of a chute discharge, and drain, which has been excavated. Enlarged image shows the chute discharge (with lintel) and drain at/in the base of the batter. "C", and the red line, indicates the approx. level of the door/entrance lintel level (Clyne 2007, 60-63, 95-99). Photo's: A. De Volder.



Figure 28. Kilcavan castle - looking from the S - SE, showing the E wall of the tower (Colfer 2013, 178).

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