

# FETHARD TOWN WALLS

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## COMPLETION REPORT



October 2009

CARRIG  
BUILDING FABRIC CONSULTANTS

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## 1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Carrig Conservation were commissioned by South Tipperary County Council in partnership with The Heritage Council through the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) to undertake a condition survey and to supervise the conservation and essential maintenance of six sections of the Fethard Town Walls as part of the Capital Works Programme 2009.

Fethard Town Walls can be dated to c.1292 and are widely recognized as the best preserved medieval town walls in Ireland. The wall is a Recorded National Monument and is protected under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004).

Carrig carried out a condition survey on the 5th and 6th August 2009 from which a conservation report and specification for works were drawn up. Ministerial Consent for the proposed works was granted on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2009. As part of the conditions of the Ministerial Consent samples of mortar were taken from each section and analysed to inform the conservation approach and to match original pointing materials.

The conservation works were carried out by Anthony Morris Construction under the supervision of Carrig Conservation in association with Ivor McElveen. Archaeological consultancy was provided by David Sweetman.

The essential conservation and maintenance works to the sections included the removal of plantlife, the re-pointing of open joints, the flaunching of exposed wall heads and the consolidation of the masonry core.

All works have been completed in compliance with Ministerial Consent. The following document details the conservation approach, progress and outcome of works.

## 2 CONSERVATION APPROACH

The concept of the project was to conserve each section as a ruin by adopting a sound technical approach to the repair of the historic fabric based on best practice conservation principles as established by the Venice and Burra Charters. The work was out using traditional repair techniques where possible and using traditional materials.

### 2.1 Record

A comprehensive photographic record of each section of wall was taken before, during and after the completion of each stage of work. This photographic documentation preserves important historic information and serves as a lasting record of the monument.

### 2.2 Material Sampling & Analysis

Samples of mortar were taken from each section of the Town Wall and analysed to inform the conservation approach and to match original pointing materials. The results have been issued to the Architectural Heritage Unit of the DoEHLG and have been included in Appendix 1 of this document.

### 2.3 Condition Assessment

A thorough and comprehensive condition assessment was carried out to give a clear understanding of the decay mechanisms and condition of the historic fabric. This survey together with all other relevant information was used to produce a detailed conservation strategy for the national monument. The following is an overview of the principle findings:

2.3.1 Section A (Nat Grid Ref - x:220504.798 y:134981.665)

The section of Town Wall bounding the North of Martin Burke’s property is considered to be in need of remedial works to remove heavy blanket vegetation and treelife, re-point open joints, replace missing stones at base level and to stabilize the wall head to prevent further deterioration of the structure.

2.3.2 Section B (Nat Grid Ref - x:220618.114 y:135040.643)

The section of Town Wall bounding the North of Kitty Aherne’s property was partly conserved in recent years but further works are required to remove vegetation at high level, re-point open joints and stabilize sections of the stonework.

2.3.3 Section C (Nat Grid Ref - x:220677.754 y:135071.126)

The North Gate and tower is the only surviving gateway. Although works were carried out c.1990, the removal of vegetation, stabilization of masonry at high level and localized re-pointing of open-joints is now required.

2.3.4 Section D (Nat Grid Ref - x:220922.942 y:134980.009)

The section of Town Wall bounding the west of land in the ownership of South Tipperary County Council is largely in sound condition, having been re-pointed in recent years however works are required to repair a small section of collapse and to provide a capping detail at wall head level.

2.3.5 Section E (Nat Grid Ref - x:220954.087 y:134922.357)

A small section of the Town Wall is located in the property of Peter Grant. Works are required to remove limited vegetation and to stabilise the open core.

2.3.6 Section F (Nat Grid Ref - x:220846.735 y:134875.307)

The section of Town Wall bounding the south of Tim Robinson’s property is in poor condition with missing pockets of masonry recorded to the external face and an open core recorded to the inner face. Removal of an adjacent tree, repair of masonry and capping of the monument is recommended.



Fig.1: Significant plantlife and overgrowth to section A with associated open joints and areas of exposed core.



Fig.2: Erosion of the core and displaced stones at Section B.



Fig.3: Significant plantlife to the skyward surfaces of the North Gate and tower.



Fig.4: Failure of capping to Section D. Note the colonising of plantlife.



Fig.5: Exposed and loose rubble core to Section E of the Town Walls.



Fig.6: Breach in Section F of the Town Wall. Note that this has been temporarily blocked with a sheet of tin.

## 2.4 On Site Work

Following the receipt of Ministerial Consent and approval of the conservation Method statement, on site work began on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2009 and was completed on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

### 2.4.1 Trials

Sample raking out and re-pointing panels were prepared by the contractor for the inspection of the conservation consultant. Images of the sample panels were issued to the Architectural Heritage Unit of the DoEHLG for comment.







### 2.4.2 Archaeology

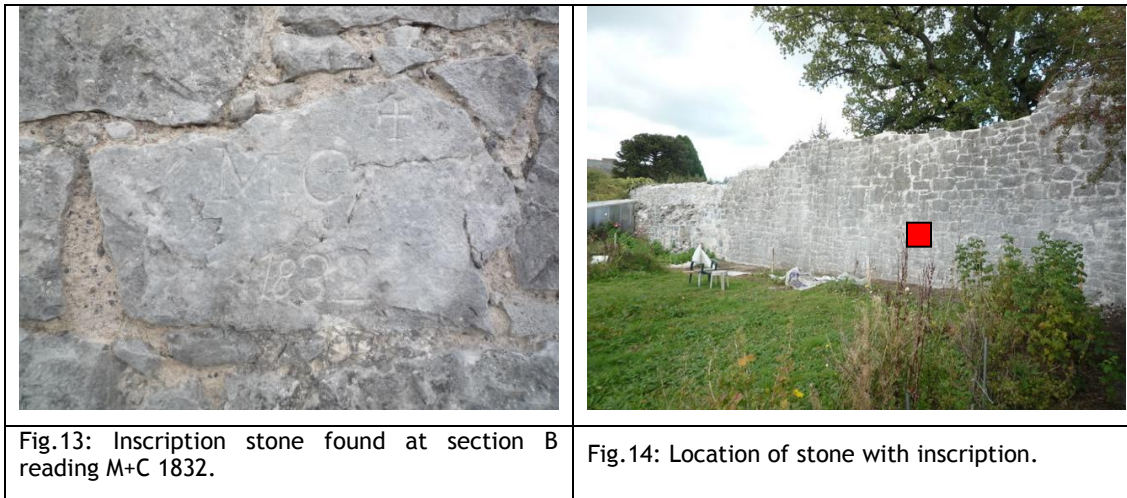
An aperture, thought to have been to locate a draw bar from a door, was identified during works to rebuild a breach in the wall at Section F. It is believed to relate to a later door opening. A sketch drawing of the aperture and its location has been included in Appendix 2. It is located 300mm deep from the outer face of the wall and approx 820mm from the inner face of the wall. It is 300mm above current external ground level though this has obviously changed as the levels

are dramatically different from those of the neighbouring castle pound. The aperture measures 170mm by 160mm and is 650mm deep. The breach has been blocked up as part of the current work however a non-ferrous metal marker has been inserted in the wall to identify the position of the feature for future possible investigation.

The remains of a post medieval key was recovered during works to the skyward surface of the North Tower.

An inscription was found on a facing stone at section B reading ‘ M + C 1832’ the inscription includes a small cross to the top right corner.

	
<p>Fig.7: Location of aperture at Section F.</p>	<p>Fig.8: Aperture located as Section F.</p>
	
<p>Fig.9: Aperture shown with measuring tape.</p>	<p>Fig.10: Aperture shown with measuring tape.</p>
	
<p>Fig.11: Non-ferrous metal marker located in the south face of Section F indicating the location of the aperture.</p>	<p>Fig.12: Post medieval key found during works to the North Tower.</p>



### 2.4.3 Progress

The project progressed in the following stages:

- Conservation of Section A comprising removal of significant plantlife, consolidation of the open core, re-pointing of open-joints and the flaunching of the wall head.
- Conservation of Section B comprising removal of plantlife, consolidation of the open core, re-pointing of open-joints particularly at high level and the flaunching of the wall head.
- Conservation of Section E comprising removal of plantlife, consolidation of the open core and the flaunching of the wall head.
- Conservation of Section D comprising removal of plantlife, consolidation of the open core where collapse had occurred in 2008, the removal of failed lime capping and the re-flaunching of the wall head.
- Conservation of the North Tower (Section C) comprising removal of plantlife and overburden to the skyward surface of the barrel vault, flaunching of skyward surfaces including the barrel vaulted area and the wall head and the re-pointing of open joints.
- Conservation of Section F comprising removal of plantlife, consolidation of the open core and two breaches in the south face of the wall, re-pointing of open-joints and the flaunching of the wall head.

Works were completed on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October and all site related detritus was removed from site by the contractor.

## 3 HERITAGE COMPLIANCE & SIGNING OF ON WORK

Work is to a high standard and has been carried out in accordance with the approved specification in compliance with Ministerial Consent.

### 3.1 Section A



Fig.15: Before - Overview aspect of Section A showing significant plantlife.



Fig.16: After - aspect taken following removal of the plantlife and consolidation of the wall.



Fig.17: Before - Loss of stones at base level to section A.



Fig.18: After - Patch repair of base stones to Section A.



Fig.19: Exposed core concealed by heavy overgrowth.



Fig.20: After - Consolidation of exposed core following removal of plantlife.



### 3.2 Section B



Fig.21: Before - Section B prior to conservation works.



Fig.22: After - Section B following removal of plantlife and re-pointing of masonry.



Fig.23: Before - Note the area of rebuild carried out during previous works c.2007.



Fig.24: After - Section of wall following consolidation and removal of plantlife.

### 3.3 Section C



Fig.25: Before - North Gate prior to conservation works.



Fig.26: After - North Gate following removal of plantlife and re-pointing of elevation.



Fig.27: Before - North Gate and tower prior to conservation.



Fig.28: After - North gate and tower following conservation works.



Fig.29: Before - Barrel vault to tower heavily colonised by plantlife.



Fig.30: After - Barrel vault following removal of plantlife and flaunching of skyward surfaces.



Fig.31: Before - Wallwalk and parapet over archway prior to conservation.



Fig.32: After - Wallwalk following removal of plantlife and flaunching of skyward surfaces.

### 3.4 Section D



Fig.33: Before - Section D prior to removal of plantlife and failed capping at wall head level.



Fig.34: After - Section D following re-flaunching and removal of plantlife.



Fig.35: Before - Wall head prior to works.



Fig.36: After - Consolidation of the wall head.

### 3.5 Section E



Fig.37: Before - Open core at section E. Note the plantlife.

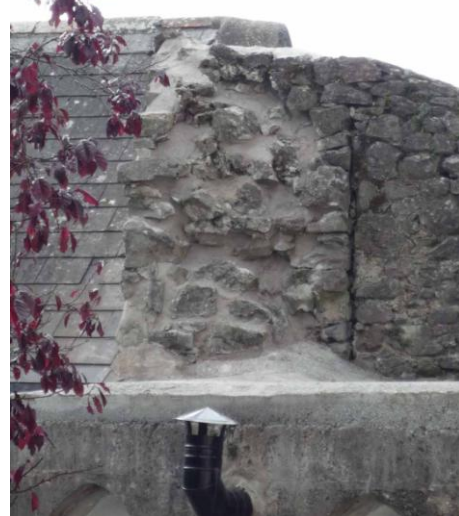


Fig.38: After - Consolidation of the open core at section E.

### 3.6 Section F



## 4 FUTURE MAINTENANCE

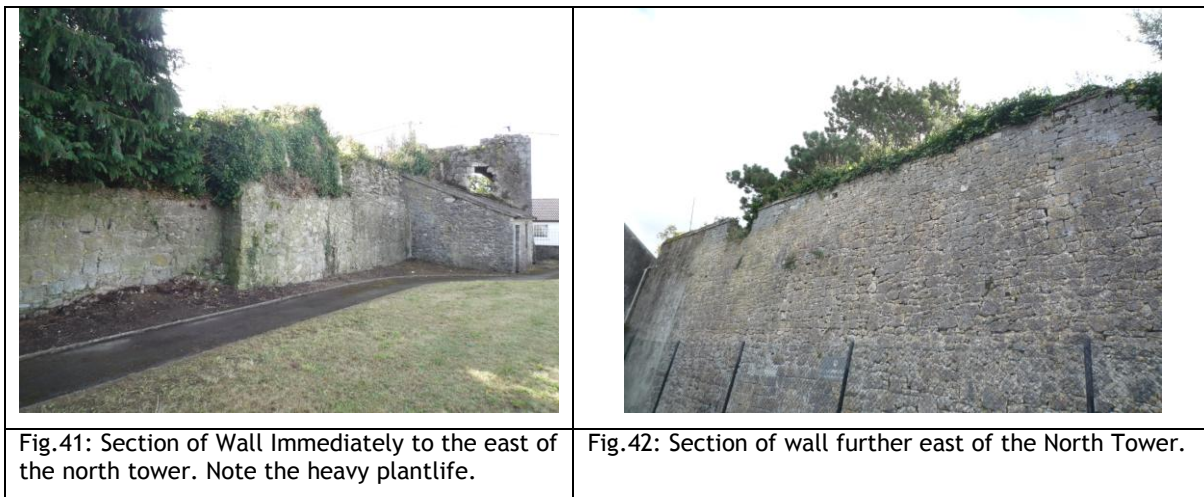
A maintenance regime should be implemented by South Tipperary County Council and property owners to facilitate the regular upkeep of the structures to include the removal of Plantlife - plantlife should be removed and not allowed to take root.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

It is recommended, subject to ratification of the Steering Group that conservation of the following sections are carried out under the Capital Works Programme for 2010.

### 5.1 Section of Wall to the East of the North Tower

The section of wall immediately to the east of the north tower is in poor condition with heavy vegetation overgrowth and loss of masonry at wall head. Works to this section should include removal plantlife, re-pointing of stonework, consolidation where necessary and flaunching of the wall head.



### 5.2 Further Works to the North Tower

Consolidation of the opening to the east of the North Tower should be carried out in tandem with works to the adjacent section of wall to the east. This will include removal of plantlife, stabilisation of the opening, re-pointing of open joints and the installation of a railing to prevent trespass. In addition the splayed opening to the east of the North Tower should be unblocked and consideration given to installing railings.

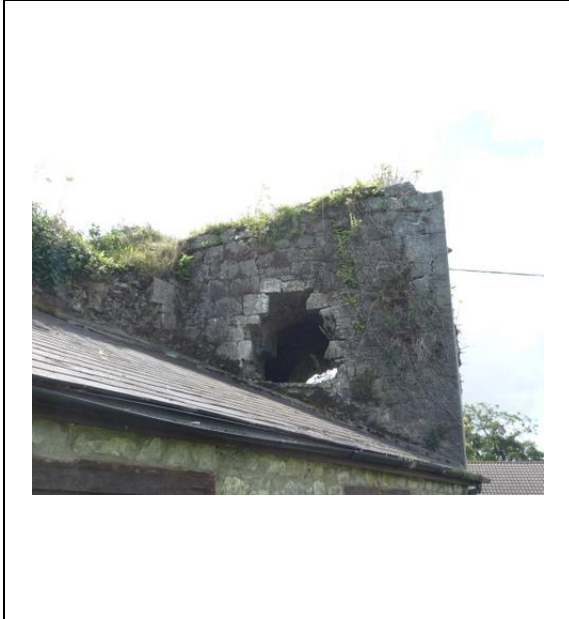


Fig.43: Works should be carried out the east elevation of the North Tower in tandem with works to the adjacent section.

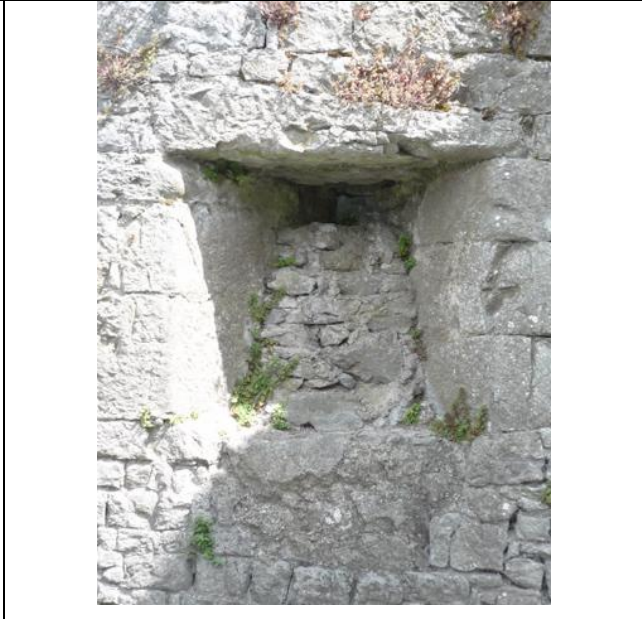


Fig.44: Consideration should be given to unblocking this opening and installing railings.

### 5.3 Section at Watergate

The condition and presentation of the section of the Town Wall to the west of Watergate is in poor condition. Although some works were carried out in this area c.2007 a large portion of this wall requires consolidation and repair. A corrugated lean-to structure abuts the southern face of the wall and it is recommended the council enter early negotiations with the landowner to seek its removal as part of this work.



Fig.45: Section of wall to the east of Watergate.



Fig.46: Lean-to structure at Watergate.

### 5.4 Section at Mart Yard

A large section of the Town Walls survives to full height at the Mart Yard, though this is now smothered in ivy and overgrowth. At least one archway/niche is recorded in this section of wall. Works in this area should include removal of plantlife, re-pointing of open joints and the flaunching of wall head level.



Fig.47: Section of wall at Mart Yard.



Fig.48: Heavy vegetation smothering the section of wall at the Mart Yard.

## APPENDIX 1 - MATERIALS ANALYSIS

**APPENDIX 2 - SKETCH DRAWING**



## APPENDIX 3 - APPROVED INVOICES