

Archaeological monitoring report

**Rush Tower House
Rush Demesne
Kenure
County Dublin**

**Community Monuments Fund 2022
CMF22-1-DF003**

**DU008-003
RPS No. 254**

Archaeological licence ref.22E0494

By

James Kyle BSc HDip MIAI
Archaeology and Built Heritage
Spade Enterprise Centre
St. Paul's Smithfield
North King Street
Dublin 7

On behalf of

Fingal County Council
County Hall
Main Street
Swords
County Dublin
K67 X8Y2

16th November 2022

**Archaeology
and Built Heritage**

Contents

List of figures and plates

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Historical and archaeological background	4
3.	Archaeological Monitoring	11
4.	Conclusion and recommendations	13

Figures

- Figure 1 Site location (ASI Historic Environment Viewer)
- Figure 2 Line of galvanised security fence in green around DU008-003 (Google Maps)
- Figure 3 Location of tower house in red on Rocque's Map of 1762 (North to right)
- Figure 4 Ordnance Survey, Dublin, sheet 8, c. 1838, Tower House location circled in red
- Figure 5 Ordnance Survey, 25-inch mapping, c. 1910, Tower House location circled in red

Plates

- Plate 1 Rush Tower house, c.1990, facing southwest (Christine Baker)
- Plate 2 View of Rush tower house c.1970's, facing southeast (Christine Baker)
- Plate 3 Hollow area to north of Tower House, post vegetation clearance
- Plate 4 Structural stone uncovered during vegetation clearance
- Plate 5 Eastern elevation showing height of window vs present ground level
- Plate 6 Vegetation removal from top of vault, facing west
- Plate 7 Rebuilding of corner tower, facing southeast
- Plate 8 Dressed quoin stone
- Plate 9 Mason's mark on quoin stone
- Plate 10 Soft capping on top of vault, at first floor level, facing east
- Plate 11 Eastern elevation post graffiti removal, with secured ope, facing west
- Plate 12 New steel security door on staircase/tower entrance
- Plate 13 Roof access metal plate and trap door hatch, facing northwest
- Plate 14 Partially rebuilt corner tower, with re-used quoin stone highlighted in red, facing southeast

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This archaeological monitoring report has been prepared by James Kyle of Archaeology and Built Heritage Ltd. on behalf of Fingal County Council, to detail the results of the archaeological monitoring of remedial conservation and repair works which were carried out between August and October 2022 at Rush Tower House (RMP No. DU008-003), a protected structure (RPS No. 254), which is located in Rush Demesne, Kenure, County Dublin (Figure 1). These works were carried out by James Oliver Hearty & Sons on behalf of Fingal County Council, with thanks to a grant of funding under the Community Monuments Fund 2022.

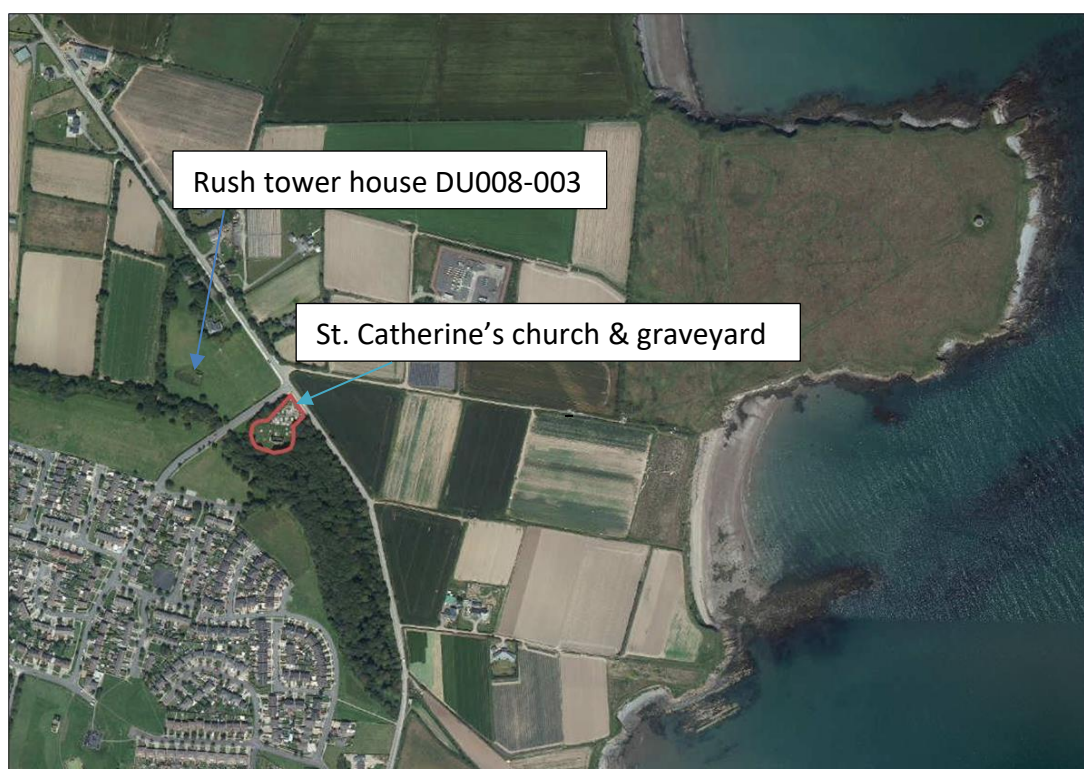


Figure 1 Site location (ASI Historic Environment Viewer)

- 1.2 Rush tower house is afforded statutory protection under the National Monuments Act (as amended) and is a protected structure listed on the Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023 (RPS No. 254). The structure lies within an OS zoning, whose stated aim is to '*provide recreational and amenity resources for urban and rural populations subject to strict development controls. Only community facilities and other recreational uses will be considered and encouraged by the Planning Authority*'.

Located in the vicinity of the tower house are two further monuments, St. Catherine's Church (DU008-004001), which was also the subject of works funded by the CMF 2022 (CMF22-1-DF002), and its surrounding graveyard (DU008-004003), which are located 100m to the southeast of the subject site and a holy well dedicated to St. Catherine some 120m to the south (DU008-005) (Figure 1). The tower house, currently surrounded by playing pitches, when

viewed in combination with the medieval church of St. Catherine is possibly reflective of a greater historical settlement in this area, of which there is no obvious trace on the ground.



Figure 2 Line of galvanised security fence in green around DU008-003 (Google Maps)



Plate 1 Rush Tower house, c.1990, facing southwest (Christine Baker)

- 1.3 The tower house was located within an overgrown, southeast-northwest oriented hollow in the surrounding landscape, most of which is the football pitches of Rush Athletic FC. There is no obvious trace of any possible associated features such as a bawn wall apparent on the surrounding ground surface, however it should be noted that the surrounding ground level

would appear to have been raised to some degree, judging by the dumped soil evident in the right-hand side of Plate 2 and the present ground level vs the window height at along the eastern elevation (Plate 5). Thus, any features associated with the tower house, such as a bawn wall, might be masked beneath this dumped material, at the original ground level. It is sadly not possible to suggest the original height of this monument, but it would have intentionally commanded extensive views of the coast road between Rush and Skerries in addition to the nearby stretch of the Irish Sea coastline, from Skerries south to Rogerstown, Portrane and Lambay.

The name Kenure is the anglicised version of *Ceann Iubhair*, the headland of the yew trees, although it is possible that given the antiquity of the site the *ceann* may be a transliteration of *cill*, which could relate to woodland or a church. The site is in the ownership of Fingal County Council and despite attempts to the contrary it has become a focal point for antisocial behaviour in the locale. The tower house would appear to have been at least a partial ruin since the middle of the seventeenth century (see below) and its more modern context was possibly that of a picturesque ruin on the landscaped estate of Kenure Park, the seat of the Palmer family, which was a large three-storey house c.1750, substantially rebuilt in 1827 and demolished in 1978. The planting along the western side of the R128 south of the tower house and scattered mature deciduous trees are all that survives of the estate apart from a hexastyle Corinthian folly (RPS No. 258, NIAH Reg. No. 11324028).

In an overall sense the tower house would appear to be structurally sound, however the 1980's works carried out on the structure, the partial rebuild of southwestern corner tower & staircase (Plate 1) and resetting of access to the interior have not stood the test of time, casual but concentrated vandalism and the use of the monument as a focal point for several decades of antisocial behaviour have taken their toll, as evidenced by the removal of the gate at the foot of the staircase, which would have prevented access and the damage to the railings which were imposed on the staircase for safety.

1.4 *The permitted works*

A survey was completed by MMA Consulting Engineers to inform the Condition Report, which was prepared under CMF 2021 Stream 2. The latter report was prepared by DKP Conservation Structural Engineers, and it included an itemized and costed conservation repair specification. The works were carried out in August-October 2022 and all works were archaeologically monitored under licence ref. 22E0494. The conservation repair works were approved by the National Monuments Service under Section 12 (3) of the National Monuments Act 1930, NMS Ref. NM06274.

2 Historical and archaeological background

2.1 According to 'Dalton's History of Dublin' the ancient manor of Rush extended over the lands of '*Balcony, Heathstown, Balscadden, Kenure, Ardlaw etc.*'. The manor itself was granted during the reign of Edward II to Edmund Butler in AD 1315, when he was created Earl of Carrick. Butler was granted lands in Tipperary, Kilkenny and also lands '*in the sheltered coastal area north of Dublin*' where his brother, Sir Theobald Butler, had died in 1299. However, this was most likely simply a confirmation of his title to the lands, since his brother is listed as renting out the lands in 1273 to a Fulk Mesoner. Indeed, the Ormond Deeds mention '*Kyniure*' (Kenure) earlier still, when Alexander de Sauvage is noted as '*undertaking to pay Sir Theobald le Boteiller (Butler) four marks rent out of land of Kyniure*'. Kenure is mentioned again in various documents dated 1278, 1295, 1312, 1318, 1446 and 1556¹.

In 1461 James, 5th Earl of Ormond, was convicted of treason and beheaded, because he had chosen to fight on the losing (Lancastrian) side during the War of the Roses. Edward VI granted his lands, including Rush, to "Our beloved cousin", Gerald Fitzgerald, but subsequently in 1467 the medieval manors of Rush, Balscadden and Turvey were granted to a John Pylkington. It appears however that the lands rapidly returned to the hands of the Duke of Ormond prior to the end of the 15th Century and during the period 1476-1484 the rental accounts of the manor show a John Spense renting Kynnewr (Kenure). By 1507, the Ormond's, in the person of Thomas the 7th Earl, were firmly back in possession of these lands and when he died, in 1515, Sir Thomas was noted as having '*seized of the manors of Rush, Turvey, Balscadden and part of Lusk*'.

In 1547, the lands were leased to one William Fitzwilliam, and in 1556 Thomas, 10th Earl of Ormond, appointed Christopher Barnwell as '*steward, receiver, surveyor, seneschal and chief sergeant*' of his lands in Dublin, Louth, Meath, and Kildare.

2.2 Kenure is not mentioned in the record of Archbishop Bulkeley's visitation of 1630, where worship took place at a public mass house in Rush '*upon that part of it which is called the land of the Kinge which is held by one George Delahyde*'². The Civil Survey 1654 mentions '*part of an old castle at Kinure*' an earlier name for Rush Demesne and thus it is possible that the tower house was already in ruins at that point³. In 1666 the Duke of Ormond had a confirmation grant of Kenure- 594 acres, and his attender the family of Echlin obtained a title in this manor (see below), which descended to Sir Robert Echlin in 1767 (D'Alton 1838, 216-7). James, the 2nd Duke of Ormond, was one of the first to join William of Orange and he inherited Kenure in 1703 and it was he who built the house, which stood until its destruction by fire in 1827. James

¹ <https://www.askaboutireland.ie/reading-room/history-heritage/big-houses-of-ireland/kenure-house/1100-1400/>

² Ronan, M.V. 1941. 'Archbishop Bulkeley's Visitation of Dublin, 1630' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, Vol. 8, 76-7.

³ <https://www.askaboutireland.ie/reading-room/history-heritage/big-houses-of-ireland/kenure-house/the-17th-century/>

enjoyed high favour during the reigns of William and Mary, and Queen Anne but, in August 1714 because of his support for the Jacobite attempt to restore the Stuarts to the throne, he had to flee to France. His property was confiscated, vested in the crown and he was impeached at the beginning of the reign of George I, thus ending the connection of the Butlers of Ormond with Kenure.

The estate was subsequently granted to Sir Henry Echlin, who was a great character, but also a total and profligate rogue, and he lost the estate due to gambling debts. Kenure eventually became the property of Sir Robert Echlin's daughter, Elizabeth, whom Sir Robert had disinherited, and to whom he left one shilling in his will, because she had married the 'unsuitable' Francis Palmer, of Castlackleen, Palmerstown, County Mayo. The Palmers changed the name of the house to Kenure Park and General Sir Roger Palmer commissioned George Papworth to rebuild and enlarge the house after the 1827 fire. In 1838 Dalton described Rush tower house as *'the yet more mutilated remains of the arched baronial kitchen of a castle'*. Palmer's interest in architecture extended to the beautification of the surrounding landscape and the first edition of the Ordnance Survey (Figure 4) depicts the initial planting scheme around the demesne, preserving the tower house and so too the enclosure of St. Catherine's Church with a network of paths which took advantage of the antiquities on the demesne and indeed the stream running through the estate which was given bridges, weirs and a small island. Thus, the tower house's location in Rush Demesne, in the immediate grounds around Kenure Park, has possibly contributed to its survival through to the modern era, where it would appear to have been in some state of ruin since at least 1654.

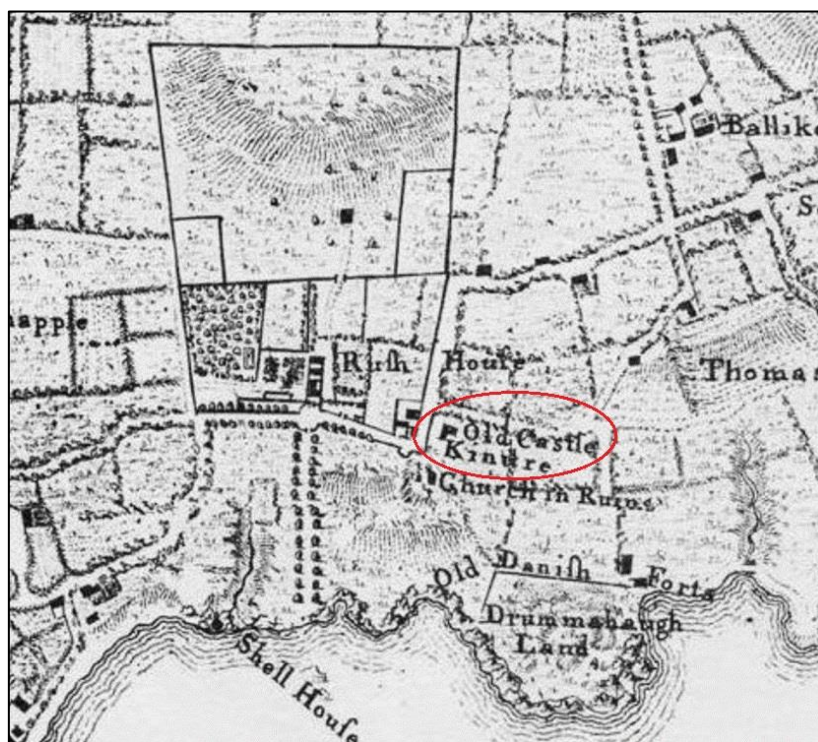


Figure 3 Location of tower house in red on Rocque's Map of 1762 (North to right)

2.4 Tower houses in Ireland are noted by Sweetman (1999) as being the least understood category of castles in the Irish landscape. They are a type of stone castle which is generally attributed to owing its genesis to the £10 grant introduced by the Dublin Parliament in 1429, during the reign of Henry VI, to construct 'a castle or tower' of sufficient strength 20 feet by 16 and 40 feet or more in height. The essence of the tower house is their verticality; their various composite parts-entrance-hall, guardroom, bedrooms, kitchen, living-room were all stacked atop each other, as opposed to side by side in the hall houses of England. In the majority of cases, there was at least one vault, often over ground floor, with the structure being four to five stories, possibly as many as six, but never less than three stories in height. Sweetman indicates that the type of tower house built in the eastern part of Ireland are generally earlier, more simple structures, which are small towers of three or four storey height, usually with one or more projecting towers at the angles to accommodate stairs and garderobes.

The defensive nature of these structures is readily apparent; however, tower houses would have functioned primarily as the defended homes of a wealthy landowning class; they were erected by both Anglo-Irish and Gaelic families alike during the period from c.1429 to c.1650. Loeber (2001) notes the difference in functionality of a tower house depending on its ethnic origins, with those of the Gaelic Irish sited primarily for the security needs of the owner. By contrast the Anglo-Norman tower house was usually sited according to the presence of a church or manor. The tower house at Rush is an obvious product of the latter and it is depicted by Rocque in 1762 (Figure 3) as an L-shaped structure and labelled as '*Old Castle Kinure*', and it is the depiction which especially warrants note; in the context where the foot of the L would, in all probability, appear to represent the remains of the tower on the southeastern corner of the structure, no such corresponding feature is present in the northwestern corner. The angled lintel and pile of stone apparent in the photograph above (Plate 2) reinforce the SMR entry indicating the presence of an entrance doorway and tower/staircase at the northwestern corner, however the Civil Survey of 1654 actually records '*part of an old castle*', with the implication of the use of the word '*part*' being that the tower house was already in ruin by that date.

In 1858 the English antiquarian John Henry Parker made a fortnight's tour of southern Ireland. Among the numerous historic monuments, he visited he recognised a distinct class of free standing, castellated towers with similar architectural features, the tower house. Parker's appellation, however, was apparently not readily adopted by contemporary Irish antiquarians. T.J. Westropp, for example, preferred to use the term 'peel tower', a name derived from a broadly similar medieval building series found in Scotland and northern England. The term 'tower house' for this particular species of the castle genus only gained a wider acceptance from the 1930's onwards, thanks primarily to H.G. Leask.

As noted by the SMR, the overall context of the tower house has been much compromised by the insertion of the surrounding galvanised palisade fence/railing and the construction of the adjacent playing pitches. Furthermore, the build-up of material on the construction

horizon/former ground level of the tower which took place during the 1970's and the repairs/remedial works carried out in the 1980's and 1990's has arguably compromised the context of this monument even further. Thus, the remains of the monument, rather than being diminished, have actually grown in value. Especially when one considers the relatively low number of this monument type in Fingal.



Plate 2 View of Rush tower house c.1970's, facing southeast (Christine Baker)

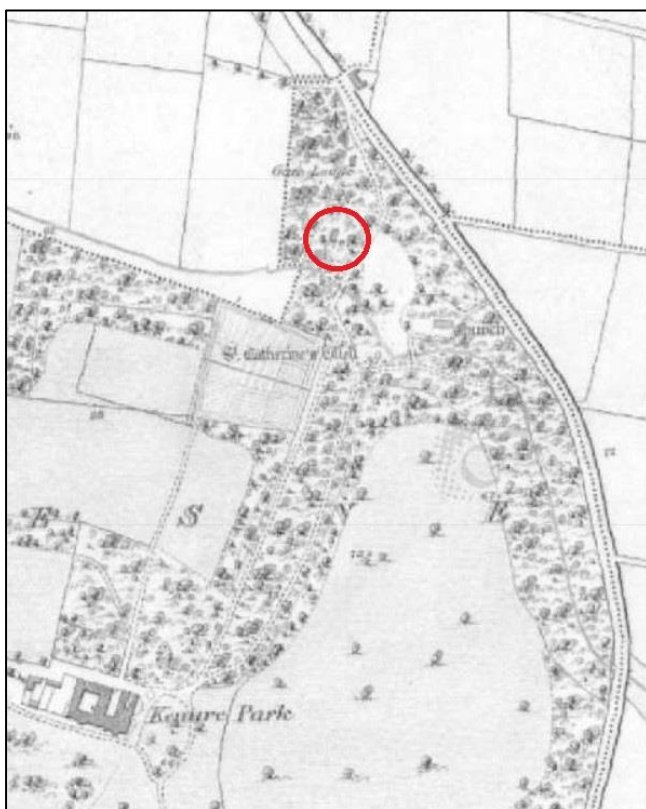


Figure 4 Ordnance Survey, Dublin, sheet 8, c. 1838, Tower House location circled in red

2.5 The 25-inch mapping (Figure 5) illustrates the demesne landscape with greater clarity, and it depicts the tower house as a rectangular structure to the northwest of the church (in ruins), surrounded by trees. The subsequent history of Kenure House is not a happy one. Unable to maintain the property, Colonel Roderick Henry Fenwick-Palmer sold Kenure Park to the Land Commission in 1964 for £70,000. Most of the land was divided up among local farmers, and the rest was sold to the County Council for housing and playing fields. The contents of the house – including artefacts from Pompeii – were auctioned that September with the sale lasting four days and realising £250,000. The Council was left with an empty mansion which for several years was leased out as a film set. In controversial circumstances the house, with the exception of its portico, was demolished in 1978.

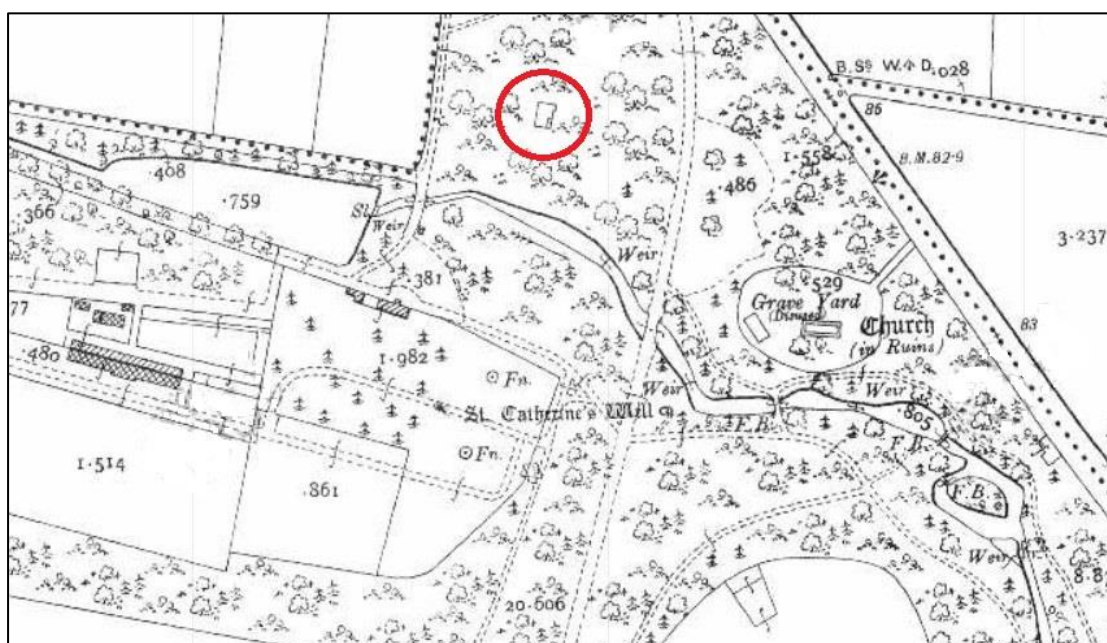


Figure 5 Ordnance Survey, 25-inch mapping, c. 1910, Tower House location circled in red

2.7 **RMP sites in proximity to the subject site**

Rush tower house (DU008-003) is a partially restored example of this type of monument; it is square in plan, surviving to first floor level, with projecting angle towers in the northeast and southwest corners. Built of coursed limestone masonry it has been the subject of previous restorative interventions in the 20th-century, before being fenced off in a bid to limit anti-social behaviour at the site. The site is located in parkland with playing fields in close proximity to the tower house. The tower house is afforded statutory protection under the National Monuments Act (as amended) and it is a Protected Structure listed on the *Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023* (RPS No. 254)

St. Catherine's church (DU008-004001) and its precinct are also the subject of works carried out under the CMF 2022 which were monitored by the author under archaeological licence ref. 22E0482. The church is also afforded statutory protection under the National Monuments Act (as amended) and it is a Protected Structure listed on the *Fingal County Development Plan*

2017-2023 (RPS No. 256). St. Catherine's general designation also incorporates two further monuments, the graveyard (DU008-004002), which surrounds the church and the two fragments of the 1631 Mensa tomb (DU008-004003), located on the interior of the church. The graveyard is also listed on the NIAH (Reg. No. 11351005), where it has been afforded a National rating.

Within a wider radius (300m) of Rush tower house the RMP only lists one further monument, a holy well (DU008-005), the site of St. Catherine's Holywell, which is no longer venerated, and this is located 100m south of the subject site.

2.8 Previous excavations in proximity to the subject site

A search of the *excavations.ie* database has revealed that three archaeological excavations/investigations have been undertaken with a 300m radius of the subject site, these were:

92E0205 refers to a licenced program of pre-construction archaeological test excavations which were carried out by Georgina Scally, 300m northeast of the tower house, at the site of the Loughshinny shore station, a part of the gas interconnector pipeline project. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered on that site.

2.9 Topographical files

Consultation with the National Museum of Ireland's Topographical files has revealed the townland of Rush Demesne to be a rich source of archaeological finds of varying era's and sources. The flint flakes (2004:208-211) and possible hammerstone (2004:193) recovered during fieldwalking represent prehistoric activity in the townland, but in the absence of a specialist analysis it is difficult to establish a tighter date range for these. The red earthenware (2004:195), fragment of East Gaulish Samian ware (2004:194) and two iron ingots (2004:191, 2004:192) serve to further underline the importance of the Drumanagh Promontory and its trading connections with the Roman world in the first centuries AD and some unidentified faunal remains (2004:196) were also uncovered during fieldwalking.

3 Archaeological monitoring

- 3.1 A detailed structural condition report pertaining to the site was prepared by David Kelly Partnership Structural Engineers (November 2021) as part of the site's application for funding submitted to The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage under the Community Monuments Fund 2021 (Ref. CMF21-2-DF003). That report contained a comprehensive schedule of conservation repairs for the building structure of the tower house.
- 3.2 Work on site commenced 26th August 2022 and this initially focussed on the removal of the vegetation growth from around the structure, internal to the surrounding fence and the removal of the vegetation growth from the hollow area (Plate 3), exterior to the galvanised palisade fence, to the north of the Tower House and an additional, non-see-through metal security fence was installed around the perimeter, on a temporary basis, to protect the works from vandalism. During the course of those works a large number of stone fragments were uncovered which could originally have been part of the Tower House. These were carefully set to one side for examination by the author and their subsequent re-use in the conservation works (Plate 4). In the absence of the vegetation, a consideration of the eastern elevation of the Tower House, post ivy/vegetation removal and the relative level of the window opes therein (Plate 5) set against the present ground level would appear to again underline the extent of the 1970's building up of the surrounding ground level.

The removal of the vegetation, which was on top of the barrel vault, at first floor level was undertaken (Plate 6) and following on from that the exposed surfaces of the walls at first floor level were flanchued to assist in water runoff and the damaged metal railings were removed to facilitate a partial rebuild of the existing corner tower to near first floor level (the height of the c.1980 repair) was undertaken (Plate 7). This made preferential use of any uncovered original dimension stone and architectural fragments, such as the dressed quoin stone (Plate 8), with its mason's mark (possibly an inverted capital G -Plate 9). Following the completion of those tasks a sealing puddle clay layer was applied to the external first-floor level, atop the barrel vault and a soft capping of grass turves was installed to protect the masonry of the structure and to prevent water ingress (Plate 10).

The removal of litter, pallets and other debris from interior and surrounds of structure was undertaken and the extensive graffiti removal was attempted from all elevations prior to the repointing of those elevations, where it was necessary. The repointing of the damaged areas of the barrel vault internally was then undertaken and a light reflective sandy coloured gravel ('Ballylusk') covering was applied to the floor of the interior. At all times during the rebuilding and repointing works a sympathetic lime-based mortar was used in an effort to replicate the original mortar employed during the structure's original construction.

At that point all of the opes (Plate 11) and the access via the reconstructed entrance (Plate 12) was sealed with galvanised metal security panels and any unused architectural and dimension

stone fragments were placed on the newly secured interior of the structure. Access to the 1st floor has been secured and preserved by a metal trap door and plate arrangement (Plate 13).

- 3.3 Separate to the CMF works detailed above, Fingal County Council have agreed to undertake the removal of the 1990's installed galvanised palisade fence which surrounds the site, in order to bring the newly restored and secured monument back into the public realm, this work will be monitored under an extension to the existing archaeological licence ref. 22E0494. Additionally, the structure will be lit at night, and it is hoped that the work undertaken as part of the CMF in conjunction with these measures will prevent further antisocial behaviour focussing on the monument by creating a highly visible public amenity.

4 Conclusion and recommendations

4.1 The works undertaken at Rush Tower House have served to arrest the decline of a much-abused monument in addition to its hopeful rehabilitation back into the consciousness of the greater local community. As mentioned previously, the removal of the modern, galvanised palisade fence is yet to be undertaken at the time of writing and that act, in combination with a sympathetic lighting of the monument will hopefully prevent its further misuse and damage by the antisocial element which had seen it the monument defaced and damaged. Such an approach is to be commended, firstly to ensure that any further decline, whether as a result of temporal or human forces, of the monument is arrested and secondly to bring the monument back into the social consciousness of the local community and to preserve it for future generations. The reuse of the dimension stone and where possible the architectural fragments such as the quoin stone (Plate 14), has greatly benefitted the monument and every effort was made from both a conservation and an archaeological viewpoint to ensure that the works, the materials and the methodologies used have all been in line with best practice. All works undertaken on site were subject to archaeological monitoring by the author under licence ref. 22E0494.

4.2 As noted above the overall context of the tower house has been much compromised thanks to the alteration and filling of the surrounding landscape in the latter half of the 20th-century. However, a geophysical survey undertaken by Joanna Leigh (14R0102) on behalf of Rush Athletic Football Club on the immediate environment of the tower house did appear to point to the likely presence of a buried historical landscape. Despite the depth of that built-up material, the data suggested a clear curvilinear response, possibly an enclosing ditch, to the southeast of the tower house. Linear responses were also noted, which possibly suggested further boundary features, and isolated responses were noted to the north of the tower house which were also of a possibly archaeological nature. The fact that there was some clarity provided by that survey, despite the c.1.2m of modern built-up material, heavily suggests that this monument was not always in the relatively isolated context that it finds itself in today, but rather it was at the centre of a reasonably contemporary historic landscape.

The solitary dressed quoin stone (Plate 14), in addition to some of the other architectural stone fragments, offer a tantalising glimpse of the upper floor(s) of the structure, which we can now suggest were somewhat ornate, with square quoins from first floor level and window opes which possessed glazing bar holes. As a result, the following actions are suggested in order to further investigate this enigma of a monument and to add to the overall appreciation of its heritage and significance:

- Possibly conduct a targeted archaeological investigation of the surrounding built up material to establish the depth of the original ground level and to inspect for the presence of a possible batter to the structure's sides and corners, in addition to an

examination of the subsurface walling of the corner towers to establish the original footprint of the tower.

- Subsequent to the above, conduct a review of existing examples of this monument and the current literature pertaining to this monument type to complete a more accurate history of the site.
- Using the new information mechanically remove, under archaeological supervision, a designated amount of that built up material to original ground level, clean and where necessary repoint the freshly revealed elements of the elevations.
- Due heed should be paid to the preservation of the context of this monument. It's current context, in an area of football pitches, which are on top of the layer of built-up material which surrounds the monument, serves only to obfuscate the tower and its former context. At the very least the further development of pitches, which could completely surround the tower should not occur, likewise the filling of the hollow to the north of the tower should not be undertaken and access to the newly restored monument should be retained at all times. The possibility of a reasonably preserved historic landscape and enclosure, which from the geophysical survey would appear to be broadly contemporary with the tower is one that should not be taken lightly. Likewise the overall low numbers of this monument type in Fingal should only serve to increase the value of this site.



James Kyle BSc HDip MIAI

for

Archaeology and Built Heritage
Spade Enterprise Centre
St. Paul's Smithfield
North King Street
Dublin

083 1509070

Plates



Plate 3 Hollow area to north of Tower House, post vegetation clearance



Plate 4 Structural stone uncovered during vegetation clearance



Plate 5 Eastern elevation showing height of window vs present ground level



Plate 6 Vegetation removal from top of vault, facing west



Plate 7 Rebuilding of corner tower, facing southeast



Plate 8 Dressed quoin stone



Plate 9

Mason's mark on quoin stone



Plate 10

Soft capping on top of vault, at first floor level, facing east



Plate 11 Eastern elevation post graffiti removal, with secured ope, facing west



Plate 12 New steel security door on staircase/tower entrance



Plate 13 Roof access metal plate and trap door hatch, facing northwest



Plate 14 Partially rebuilt corner tower, with re-used quoin stone highlighted in red, facing southeast

