SWORDS CASTLE
CONSERVATION PLAN

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Edited by Roberta Reeners

**Comhairle Contae
Fhine Gall**
Fingal County
Council

IMAGE CREDITS

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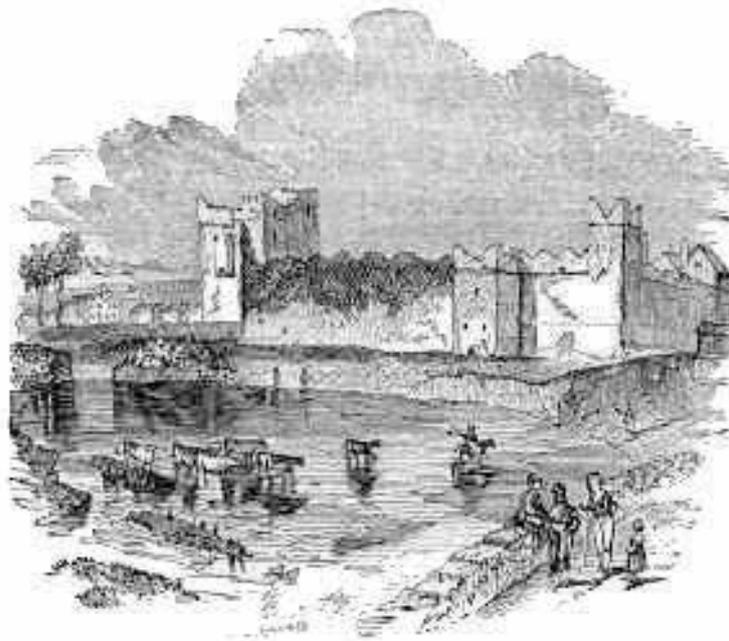
Conservation Team

The Conservation Team comprised Kelly and Cogan, conservation architects and lead consultants for the project; Courtney Deery Heritage Consultancy, archaeology consultants and plan compilation; Target Archaeological Geophysics, geophysical investigations; Lee McCullough Consulting Engineers, structural engineering advice and historic landscape and garden consultant, Finola Reid.

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FOREWORD

This Conservation Plan . . . sets out policies for protecting aspects of the castle that are of importance for the future.

The Conservation Plan model, developed by James Semple Kerr in the 1980s, is an invaluable tool for architectural conservation. Its methodology facilitates the examination of the many facets of historic places, by collating information, ascribing significance and devising policies for future management.

This Conservation Plan addresses a range of concerns regarding the preservation, conservation and presentation of above- and below-ground elements of Swords Castle. In seeking to re-affirm its significance and identify issues that hide this significance, it also sets out policies for protecting aspects of the castle that are of importance for the future.

Swords Castle is the best surviving medieval episcopal manor in Ireland and is a National Monument. With a rich assembly of historic buildings of great antiquity, it is a complex site representing at least 500 years of development, redesign, alteration, re-use and adaptation. It reflects the changing fortunes and lives of Dublin's archbishops and later owners and the architectural fashions of their times. The Plan has identified significant gaps in our understanding of the castle's building sequence and the location of potentially sensitive buried archaeological remains. This has been borne out by recent discoveries connected with stabilisation works to the Gatehouse.

Fingal County Council acknowledges the forensic efforts of the team devising the Conservation Plan in gathering together all that is now known about Swords Castle. The Council looks forward to filling in knowledge gaps to enable the monument to be reinvigorated and presented to the public, so that its significance becomes more widely recognised.

— *Fionnuala May, County Architect*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLATE 1: *Swords Castle: Constable's (North) Tower*

Swords town is about 15km north of Dublin. It is the administrative capital of Fingal and has in recent times become a commercial centre serving a large suburban population in the surrounding areas.

FIGURE 1: *Map of Swords and surrounding area*

Swords Castle, a National Monument, is the best remaining upstanding example of a medieval Episcopal Manor or Bishop's Palace in Ireland.

Swords Castle, a National Monument, is the best remaining upstanding example of a medieval (*c.* 1200-1700) Episcopal Manor or Bishop's Palace in Ireland. It is more commonly known as Swords Castle, and hereinafter referenced simply as 'the castle' or 'the monument' for the purposes of this plan. The castle closes the view to the north end of Main Street in Swords, and forms part of the town park public amenity area. It is bounded to the south by Bridge Street, to the east by North Street, and to the west by the Ward River. The Ward River Valley Regional Park lies to the north and west.

PLATE 2: *Aerial View — Location of Swords Castle*

The castle comprises a polygonal walled ward containing a large open space and number of buildings both ruinous and recently restored. The identification and former use of the enclosed buildings have been examined by previous studies, and the established nomenclature — the Gatehouse, Knights and Squires Chamber, Chapel, the Archbishop's Apartments and Constable's (North) Tower — has been retained in this report for convenience.
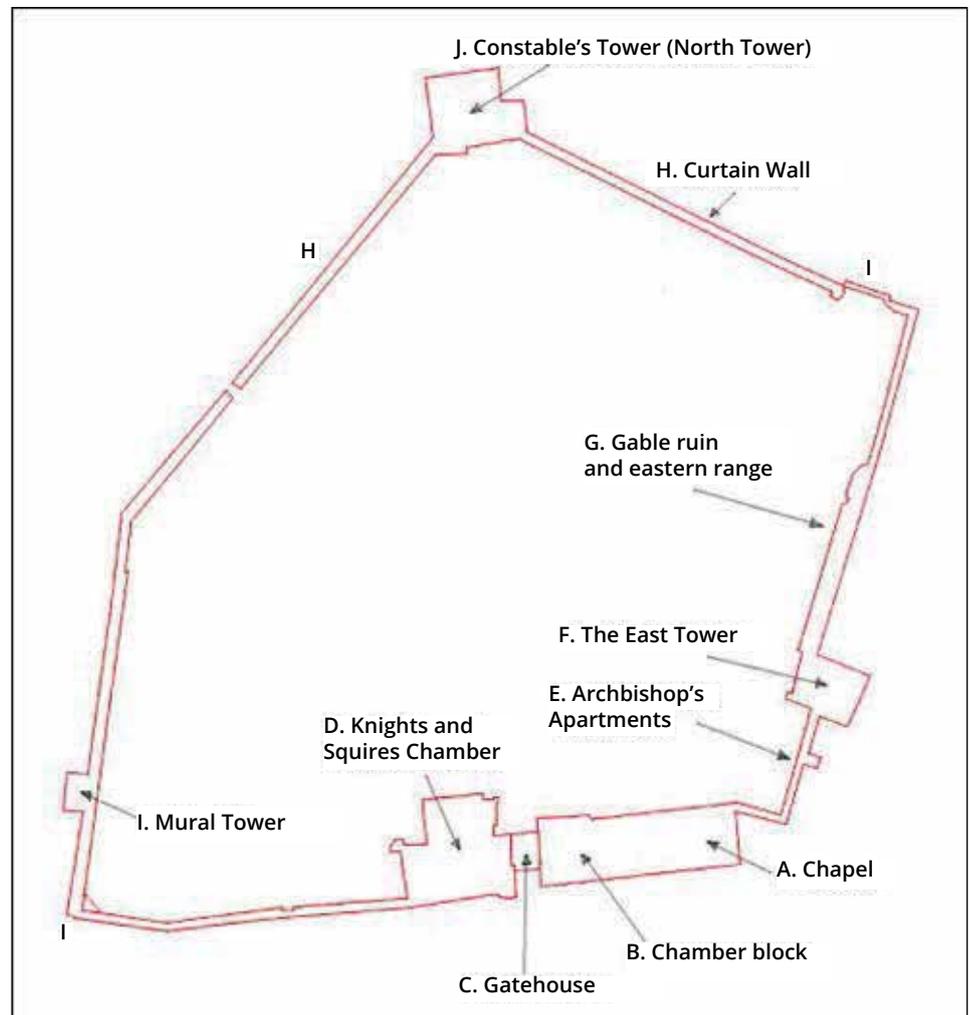
Figure 2: *Plan layout of Swords Castle*

BACKGROUND

The Plan was commissioned by Fingal County Council in order to:

■ Enhance the understanding of the monument by a full study and survey

■ Create a record of the existing knowledge base

■ Inform the policy makers at the local authority and at national level in relation to decisions about the monument and its environs

The context for commissioning this Conservation Plan has been the desire to find a suitable modern-day use for the castle in order to increase interest and public access to the site, while maintaining and preserving the significance of the monument.

The Plan for the castle provides the basis for the formulation of strategies for immediate necessary repairs, thereby improving the identity and public presentation of the monument and its setting in the long term. It will also assist in the preparation of a strategic planning framework to develop a greater definition of the historic precinct of the castle within a modern town and within the great public amenity that is the Ward River Valley Regional Park.

PLATE 3: *Main entrance under the Gatehouse of Swords Castle*

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Conservation Plan are to:

- Study the monument; assess its significance as a monument and its significance within its wider environment.
- Provide a tool to inform and manage the future conservation of the castle.
- Look at future uses for the buildings and external spaces within the enclosure.

To achieve these objectives it is first necessary to:

- Understand the history and development of the site.
- Understand the significance of the visible structures and the underlying archaeology.
- Understand the vulnerabilities that may give rise to damage or degradation of the conservation value of the monument.

Arising from this understanding, it is then possible to devise the necessary outcomes:

- Provide a plan for repairs and conservation works.
- Develop policies that advocate the appropriate terms of reference for protection and management of a monument or place, now and in the future.
- Make recommendations for the future sustainable uses and management of the site.
- Make recommendations for the development of our knowledge and understanding of the site.

SUMMARY OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The archaeology and history of the castle represent at least 500 years of development . . .

The castle is a testament to the survival of a nationally significant complex of medieval buildings surrounding a wonderfully designed enclosed space. The structures, open space and enclosing elements of Swords Castle were created with a dual purpose: as a residence for the Archbishop of Dublin (one of the most important persons in Ireland during the medieval period); and as an administrative centre for the largest, most enduring, medieval borough.

The archaeology and history of the castle represent at least 500 years of development, redesign, alteration, re-use and adaptation, reflecting the changing fortune and whims of the bishops and the architectural fashions of the time.

The monument bears the imprint of the archbishops, the stone masons, carpenters and other craftsmen who have all made a valuable contribution to the presentation of the castle today. As it stands, its complexity, the patterns of interrelationships between the various periods dating from the 13th century, and the survival of many of the remains all indicate that it is of national significance and is rightly designated as such.

It is a historic landmark and maintains a strong, distinct visual and physical presence over the town of Swords. However, despite its physical presence, its historical significance and its importance in the development and the layout of Swords town, the site has lacked public legibility and has largely gone unrecognised. The removal of structures at the entrance to the site in 2009 has somewhat improved this and has provoked local interest.

The public ownership of Swords Castle can be considered to be of significance, as responsibility for its future use and conservation is held by a single local authority, Fingal County Council.

It is a historic landmark and maintains a strong, distinct visual and physical presence over the town of Swords.

Plate 4: *Exterior Curtain Wall looking north*

Plate 5: *View of Chapel (south elevation)*

VULNERABILITIES

The vulnerabilities and threats to the proper conservation of the castle are set out in Part 5 under the following headings:

- Threats to the Fabric
- Protecting the Significance of the Monument
- Research and Knowledge Gaps
- Managing and Developing the Potential of the Castle
- Protecting and Enhancing the Setting

. . . it has become lost and forgotten locally, regionally and nationally.

Swords Castle, with its complex of buildings and the enclosed central space, has not enjoyed widespread public appreciation and interaction due to ongoing stability and necessary health and safety works. As a result, it has become lost and forgotten locally, regionally and nationally. Along with the immediate repairs required, the biggest threat to any structure is redundancy.

There are inconsistencies and knowledge gaps causing difficulty in understanding the site, which could lead to an inadvertent loss of material and an improper use of modern material. However, statutory designation (National Monument and Protected Structure status) ensures that interventions are now appropriate and properly considered to protect the integrity of the site in the future.

Funding for maintaining and servicing the monument is now limited, and this is a further challenge to ensure plans for the monument are sustainable.

SUMMARY OF POLICIES

To encourage public understanding and enjoyment of the monument, promoting physical and intellectual access and meeting the needs of a variety of users.

Policy 1 **PROTECTION**

To place the identity and conservation of the castle and the protection of its significance at the centre of future planning and management proposals for the monument and in the development of Swords.

Policy 2 **CONSERVATION, REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE**

To implement effective regimes for the maintenance and repair in the immediate, short, medium and long term, while protecting the significance and historic integrity, and observing best practice conservation standards.

Policy 3 **ACCESS, INTERPRETATION AND TOURISM**

To encourage public understanding and enjoyment of the monument, promoting physical and intellectual access and meeting the needs of a variety of users.

Policy 4 **ENHANCEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT**

To enhance the historic character and visual and physical presence of the monument, where appropriate, by consolidating eroded elements and removing intrusive elements.

Policy 5 **EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**

To develop an understanding of the castle through informed archaeological investigation and research, and secure the record of the preservation of the monument in an accessible, comprehensive archive.

Policy 6 **MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE**

To suggest schemes for the practical application of the Conservation Plan, retaining the significance and sense of place of the castle, and raising funds in order to do so.

PLATE 6: *Photograph of Swords Castle, 1880-1914*

'. . . seek to guide the future development of a place through an understanding of its significance.'

1.1   CONSERVATION PLAN METHODOLGY

The Conservation Plan principles enshrined in this process:

'seek to guide the future development of a place through an understanding of its significance. The methodology of a conservation plan is well suited to the study of complex and composite monuments in vulnerable, dynamic and changing environments. The objective is to evolve policies to guide works that are feasible as well as compatible with the retention, reinforcement and even revelation of significance. These twin concepts of compatibility and feasibility are the base on which the policies are built'. (Kerr 1999)

It is a pro-active process that defines:

- The location, physical composition and current presentation of a monument or place

- Why that monument or place is culturally or materially significant

- How that significance may be vulnerable

1.2   THE PROCESS

The Conservation Plan was carried out in two stages:

Stage 1: The information-gathering stage included an examination of published and unpublished documentary and cartographic sources (as listed in the Sources and References) and site inspection. Documentary research has been carried out in the following repositories:

- National Library

- National Archives

- University College Dublin, Architecture Library

- Trinity College Dublin Library

- Dublin City Council, Gilbert Library

- Archaeological Survey of Ireland

- National Museum of Ireland

- Fingal Local Studies and Archive Department, Fingal County Council

- Field notes and photographic archive of Leo Swan (supplied by Christine Baker, courtesy of the Swan family)

- Interviews with personnel involved in recent works

Stage 2: The review stage included policy formation and the preparation of recommendations. It sought to identify:

- threats to significance

- gaps in understanding

- conflicts between different significances

- policies to guide continuing issues

- feasible and sustainable recommendations

Consultations with relevant stakeholders took place throughout the process. These included discussions with David Newman Johnson, conservation architect, and Michael Lynch, former Senior Parks Superintendent for Dublin County Council and then Fingal County Council.

1.3   SOURCES

Historic Sources

A limited number of primary historical sources are specific to Swords Castle. The most descriptive contemporary accounts are within the Calendar of Archbishop Alen's register, otherwise known as the *Liber Niger Alani, c.* 1172-1534 (McNeill, 1950), which contains a remarkable description of the castle as it was in 1326. The subsequent 19th-century and later descriptions of the site are provided by D'Alton (1838), Reeves (1860, republished 1970), Stokes (1891), Smiles (1889) and Leask (1914). A recent reconsideration of the historical sources and architectural analysis of the castle was carried out by Stalley (2006). Fingal County Council has in its possession a report with transcribed handwritten correspondence between the Cobbe family and the Office of Public Works relating to Swords Castle in 1895-1901.

Conservation Sources

An extensive pre-restoration archive exists, with framework plans for the proposed reconstruction and restoration of the castle (CSU, 1986; Crimmins & Mandal, 1987; Swords Development Consortium, 1994), which includes recent ministerial consent applications (Fingal County Council, 2010). Commissioned by the Fingal County Council Parks Department, the documents include surveys of the site, photographic records, extensive historic and architectural analysis, detailed conjectural reconstruction illustrations and funding proposals.

Archaeological Sources

Archaeological excavation was carried out at the site as part of the initial conservation works in 1971 (Fanning, 1975). Over 30 years, archaeological monitoring has continued on an intermittent basis in and around the castle. Mid-excavation photographs and field notes have been recovered for archaeological monitoring works during the reconstruction of Constable's (North) Tower and the Chapel. Archaeologists who have worked at the castle were also consulted.

Cartographic Sources

Historical mapping for the site prior to the establishment of the Ordnance Survey is limited, comprising mainly the Down Survey Maps (1655), Rocque (1760), Taylor and Skinner's maps (1778) and Duncan's Map of the County of Dublin (*c.* 1821), none of which are particularly comprehensive or indeed reliable.

Photographic Collections

Many photographs of Swords are held in private collections. The photographs held in the National Library of Ireland were a valuable resource.

1.4 SURVEYS

Field and Photographic Survey

In addition to the desk-based assessments, physical research included specialised surveys, multidisciplinary team visits to Swords Castle, and a review of existing interventions and conservation work.

Rectified Photographic and Measured Survey

A rectified photographic and measured survey was carried out using computer-based surveying equipment, the results of which are included in Appendix A. The data points in the surveys have been related to the National Grid.

Geophysical Survey

Resistivity and ground penetrating radar (GPR) surveys were carried out, as they are especially effective at detecting buried stone remains, potential structural remains and areas of archaeological potential. The full report is included in Appendix B.

In addition to the geophysical survey carried out for the purposes of the present plan, two previous surveys were carried out (MacGarry, 1991; Whiteford Geoservices, 2000) at Swords Castle.

Resistivity and ground penetrating radar (GPR) surveys were carried out, as they are especially effective at detecting buried stone remains.
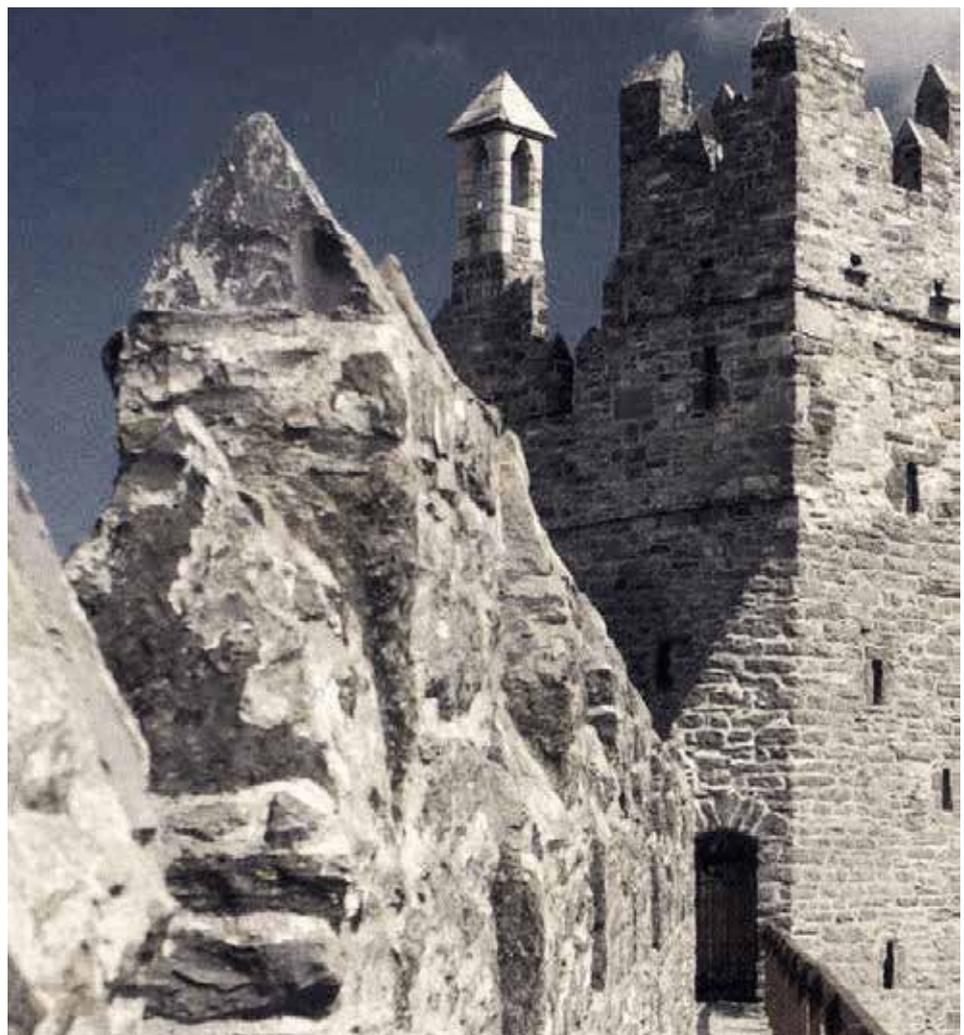
PART 2: UNDERSTANDING THE MONUMENT — HISTORY AND CHRONOLOGY

Plate 7: *View to Constable's (North) Tower*

2.1   HISTORY AND CHRONOLOGY

Although several distinguished scholars have studied Swords Castle, it remains reluctant to yield up its secrets. Documentary information on the early history of the castle at Swords is understandably scant. In addition, the buildings that we now see on the site are a collection of much-altered and much-modified structures containing elements from various styles and phases of medieval and modern building activity.

2.1.1 Swords Early Christian Monastery

A settlement at Swords existed from early Christian times when the monastic settlement dedicated to St Colmcille was founded on high ground to the west of the Ward River. In the Record of Monuments and Places, Swords is classified as a historic town (RMP Ref: DU011-034), and there is a large zone of archaeological potential surrounding the town. This zone contains many archaeological sites and monuments; it also indicates an area of increased subsurface archaeological potential associated with the development of the town. The sites recorded in the town are as follows.

RMP REFERENCE	SITE CLASS	TOWNLAND
DU011-034001-	Castle — Anglo-Norman masonry castle (Swords Castle)	Townparks (Nethercross By)
DU011-034002	Ecclesiastical enclosure containing:	Swords Glebe
DU011-034003-	Graveyard	
DU011-034004-	Church	
DU011-034005-	Round tower	
DU011-034006-	Cross	
DU011-034007-	Cross-slab	
DU011-034009-	Graveslab	
DU011-034010-	Graveslab	
DU011-034011-	Graveslab	
DU011-034014-	Architectural fragment	
DU011-034018-	Burial ground	
DU011-034013-	Ritual site — holy well	Townparks (Nethercross By)

TABLE 2.1: *The classification of monuments at Swords*

Swords town (RMP Ref: DU011-034) is at the heart of an area that was of particular importance in the medieval period. It is said to have owed its origins to the establishment of the early medieval foundation founded by St Colmcille who died in AD 597, though there seems to have already been an established population base in the Swords area prior to this.

The name 'Swords' derives from the Irish *Sord Colmcille* or 'St Colmcille's well', taken from the Irish word *sord* meaning 'pure'. The name is also given to a pagan spring or well (Joyce, 1995, 566). The well site was one of the principal sources of water supply in the town and is recorded in the Record of Monument and Places (RMP) (DU011-034/013).

PLATE 8: *RMP and Zone of Archaeological Potential*

The association of the early foundation of Swords with St Colmcille, who appointed St Fínán Lobhar (the Leper), could suggest a 6th-century date for the site's foundation (Gwynn and Hadcock 1988, 44). However, there are no contemporary documentary sources to confirm this. It has been suggested that Colmcille was the founder of Swords and that it was transferred to a Columban *paruchia* at a later date (*ibid.,* 44).

The Early Christian monastery was established on a ridge of high ground adjacent to the Ward River, known in medieval documentation as Reynen (Bradley, 1998). The foundation was first mentioned in the *Annals* in AD 965 when Ailill Mac Maenach, Bishop of Swords and Lusk, died (*ibid.,* 44). It was burned in AD 994 by Maelseachlainn and at several times thereafter.

The Round Tower is the only upstanding element of the original monastic establishment (and can be seen from the castle).

The Round Tower is the only upstanding element of the original monastic establishment (and can be seen from the castle); the medieval church tower belongs to a structure erected in the later Middle Ages. Three churches have been recorded at Swords, dedicated to Saints Fintan, Brigid and Catherine. It has been supposed that these churches were all located within the present Church of Ireland site (D'Alton, 1838, 264).

PLATE 9: *View of Round Tower from Constable's (North) Tower*

PLATE 10: *19th-century view of Round Tower and Church of St Columba*

2.1.2 The Vikings at Swords

One of the most notable events in the history of Swords was the funeral of King Brian Boru and his son Morrough, after the Battle of Clontarf in 1014. Howard Clarke (2004, 153) records that

'Brian Bórama's body was handed over to the Armagh clerics at Swords, then a church on the border of Fine Gall'.

The first contemporary documentary references to Swords appear in the late 10th/early 11th century when it became a target of attack by the Vikings of Dublin. This area became known as Fingal, or 'the land of the foreigners', a name that is still in use today. The *Annals of the Four Masters* (AFM) and *Annals of Ulster* (AU) record that in 1012 and 1016, Swords was burned by the 'Danes' or Vikings.

The close ties Swords would have held with the Vikings of Dublin made it a prime target for raids . . .

The Vikings held Swords in the 11th century. In 1035, Sitric, King of Dublin, burned and wasted Ardbraccan in the Kingdom of Meath, and Conor O'Melaghlin, King of Meath, had burned Swords in retaliation. The close ties Swords would have held with the Vikings of Dublin made it a prime target for raids by the O'Melaghlin Kings of Meath, who repeatedly attacked Swords in 1069, 1130, 1135, 1138, 1150, and 1166. In 1135, Swords was virtually de-populated by Conor O'Melaghlin, who was eventually killed by the Vikings at Lusk.

There is a reference to '*sixteen foreign burgess*' in the extent of the manor in 1326; the *burgagii forinseci* is a term used to describe Ostmen/Viking settlements. According to Bradley (1998), there may have been a Scandinavian settlement in addition to the monastery in the period prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans.

2.1.3   Swords in the Anglo-Norman Period — The development of the town

Before the Anglo-Norman invasion, the monastery and its possessions had been transferred to the Archbishop of Dublin. Swords subsequently became one of the principal archiepiscopal manors.

After the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169, the property of the monastery of Swords formed part of the lands of the See of Dublin, confirmed to Archbishop Laurence O'Toole in 1179 (McNeill, 1950). The extensive lands attached to the archbishopric were organised through a network of nine manorial centres: St Sepulchre (the principal manor), Tallaght, Rathcoole, Clondalkin, Shankill, Ballymore Eustace, Castlekevin, Swords and possibly Finglas (Wood, 1930).

. . . the property of the monastery of Swords formed part of the lands of the See of Dublin . . .
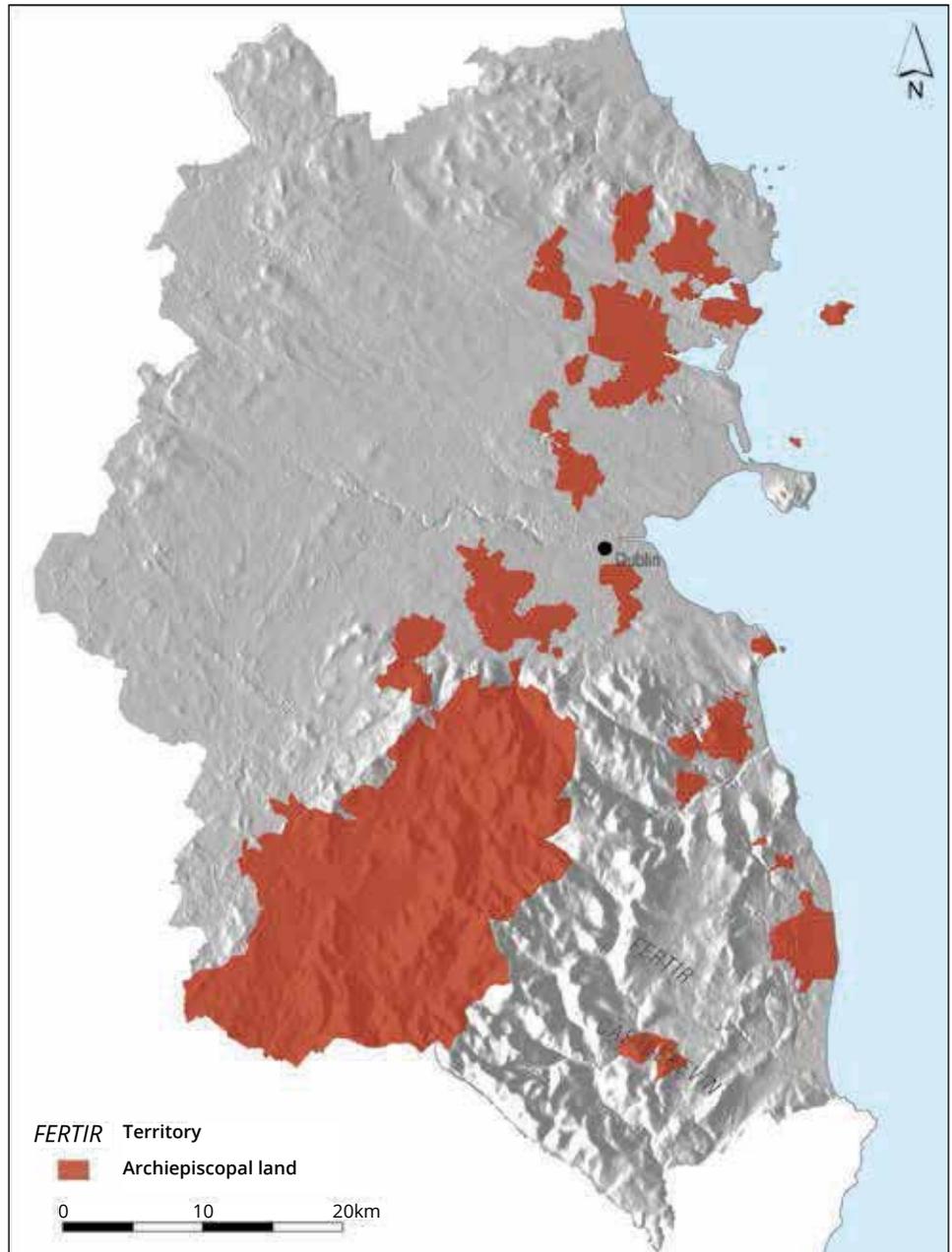
FIGURE 3: *Map showing the lands owned by the Archdiocese of Dublin in 1540. Principal manors of Dublin*

These manors represented the agricultural administrative units of the archbishopric, as they dealt with the lands, tenants and, most importantly, the valuable produce and the money that could be generated from them. Each of these manors was governed by a constable or seneschal. Privileges of the manors included having their own courts of justice (Courts Leet, Courts Baron and a Court of Record), where they were allowed to try all crimes except *'forestalling, rape, treasure-trove and arson'*. They also had free customs, freedom from certain taxes and services, freedom to impose their own fines; they had their own coroners, rights of salvage, and the right to maintain their own fairs and markets, and to regulate weights and measures etc. Punishments were administered in public — pillories and stocks were permitted. Swords grew to become one of the principal archiepiscopal manors. The manor at Swords is credited with being the source of about 40% of the entire income of Archbishop De Bicknor in 1325-6.

John Comyn, appointed Archbishop of Dublin in 1181 to succeed Laurence O'Toole, elevated Swords to prebendal status in 1191. In 1192, Comyn was granted a patent to hold an annual fair lasting a week at Swords at the time of the feast of St Columcille (9 June), the patron saint of Swords (Gilbert, 1861). The archbishop had a seneschal there and the ecclesiastical court had the right to try every plea except the four pleas of the Crown (Fanning, 1975). In 1197, King Richard granted a charter to Swords, by which each burgess was to pay for his burgage 12 pence annually, while in a charter that can be dated no more closely than to the years of his episcopate (1181-1212), he confirmed the burgesses of Swords in their burgages and gave them the liberties and free customs of Dublin, and established an annual rent of one shilling per burgage (Bradley, 1988; Ball, 1906).

Although there is no explicit mention of a castle at Swords a report of the murder of a constable, William Galrote, to Archbishop Comyn at the *'gate of the court of Swords'* does confirm the existence of an enclosure (Stalley, 2006).

The archbishops of Dublin built a number of residences in a ring around the city including those at Fingal, Cullenswood (Ranelagh), Clondalkin and Tallaght, as well as the principal residence at St Sepulchre's (located beside St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin) (Fig. 3). During the 13th century, the archbishops of Dublin resided at Swords occasionally, although their main residence was at St Sepulchre's. A sum of £100 was accounted for in the 1270s for the *'repairs of houses, mills, and other expenses in the manor of Swords' (*Betham, Account of Thomas de Caddisworth taken from Stalley, 2006).

The archbishops moved regularly between their residences, bringing with them a full household of people and goods. Thompson (1998) describes their procession from manor to manor:

'. . . The body that moved from one palace to another might consist of 50-100 people. The bishop and a small group of senor [sic] *officers rode on horseback. The furniture, linen and other movables preceded in wagons . . . Whether the remainder of the household rode on the wagons or had to walk is not clear but probably the latter.'*

Although there is no explicit mention of a castle at Swords, a report of the murder of a constable . . . at the 'gate of the court of Swords' does confirm the existence of an enclosure.

The purpose of these visits to their various 'manor houses' was to oversee and examine both the spiritual and material interests of the episcopacy. In a similar way to the feudal lords of the time, they carried with them the books and furnishings that they would use. These 'processions' must have been highly impressive affairs. The bishops themselves were taken by carriage while the other possessions came by horse and cart. Some of the retainers may have been on horseback but many would have had to walk (Thompson, 1998).

During this period to *c.* 1500, the archbishop's residence was referred to in correspondence as a 'manor'. There is no sense of it being a fortified residence, although the function of gathering rents for which it was principally intended would have required some level of security; the activities of archbishops such as De Bicknor also involved the operation of a type of medieval militia.

2.1.4 De Bicknor and the Inquisition of 1326

Archbishop Alexander De Bicknor, whose episcopacy lasted from 1317 to 1349, is one of the most important characters in the history of Swords Castle. A native of the west country of England (probably from Ruardean Castle in Gloucestershire), he became one of the most important and influential men in Ireland. He came to Ireland in the early years of the 14th century, possibly 1307, and held a number of official appointments leading to his becoming Chief Treasurer for the king in Ireland. He may have been nominated for Archbishop of Dublin in 1310, but the appointment was never made and John de Leche held the position from 1310, until he died in office in 1313.

De Bicknor served in the role of intermediary between King Edward II and the Duchy of Lancaster and later served the king for a period as ambassador to France during a dispute between Edward and the French king concerning the English-held lands around Bordeaux. He was selected to be made Archbishop of Dublin in a protracted process (typical of the time), and was eventually consecrated Archbishop of Dublin at Avignon during the period when the papacy was based in Avignon, in 1317. Another significant aspect of his life was the founding of the first university in Dublin, which was based at St Patrick's. In this as in other aspects of his life, he was unable to see the project through successfully. The institution continued to exist, at least nominally, but did not flourish and eventually ceased to exist about a century later (Gallagher, 1997).

Archbishop Alexander De Bicknor . . . is one of the most important characters in the history of Swords Castle.

De Bicknor was to lose much of his power after a series of setbacks in his later career, culminating in lengthy disputes with Ledrede, Archbishop of Ossory (including providing protection to Dame Alice Kyteler of Kilkenny who was accused of heresy and witchcraft), and another long dispute with the Archbishop of Armagh, who, as Primate of All Ireland, was entitled to precedence over De Bicknor. De Bicknor forcibly prevented the Archbishop of Armagh from showing precedence on at least two occasions, ignoring the specific order of the pope to permit it. Even with these challenges to his position, De Bicknor survived to remain Archbishop of Dublin until his death in 1349.

De Bicknor was accused of misappropriating finances to his own gain during his time at the Treasury, a serious offence as it reduced the monies available to the king. The accusation continued to be a thorn in his side until he eventually was 'cleared' in 1344, after having made repayments to the Crown. A formal Inquisition into his alleged fraud was held in 1326. Evidence to the Inquisition, quoted below, in relation to the wealth owned by De Bicknor at the time provides a detailed description of the extent and condition of the buildings at Swords.

'When being sworn [the jurors] *say on their souls that there are a hall; a chamber for the archbishop annexed to it, of which the walls are of stone and crenellated like a castle, roofed with shingles — there are a kitchen there with a larder, whose walls are of stone and roof of shingle, a chapel with stone walls and a shingle roof; there was a chamber for the friars with a cloister now thrown down; near the gate is a chamber for the constable and four chambers for knights and squires, roofed with shingles: under these a stable and bakehouse; there was a house for a derreria* [dairy] *and a carpentria* [workshop], *now thrown down.*
(McNeill 1950, 175)

In the haggard a grange constructed of poles and covered with thatch, a timber granary roofed with wooden boards; a byre for housing nags and kine; these easements they extend at no value, for nothing is to be got from them either by letting or otherwise, since they need great repair, as they are badly roofed.'
(McNeill 1950, 175)

The description contains all of the basic elements of a manorial residence of the time, the essential elements being hall, chamber and kitchen with associated outbuildings.

One must be mindful that any description given in such circumstances would have to be questioned as to the intention of the reporter. The description raises questions about the nature of the place, as it refers to there being a chamber for friars with a cloister. There is no knowledge that there ever was a friary or any association with friars. Possibly the archbishops may have allowed mendicant friars to have temporary lodgings on the site, but this would have been quite unusual at that period. The description contains all of the basic elements of a manorial residence of the time, the essential elements being hall, chamber and kitchen with associated outbuildings. The haggard, workshop and dairy were always located at a distance for sensible reasons of noise, smell and fire safety. Interestingly, the report refers to the stone walls of the chamber as crenellated 'like a castle', seeming to confirm that it was definitely not considered a castle at the time. The reference to a chamber for the constable and four chambers for knights and squires may indicate that these were all accommodated in the same building.

Fanning (1975, 48) has said that the dilapidated condition of the castle at this time indicates that it may have been attacked by the forces of Edward (brother of Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland) in the period 1315-17 when they waged a campaign in the north Leinster area. Given the weakness of the defences at Swords, it would not have been capable of sustaining a determined attack for very long. This may account for the description of the buildings as 'thrown down'. Records show that in 1324, Archbishop De Bicknor was building a new residence at Tallaght, so his resources might have been primarily devoted to that project. We know that De Bicknor spent some of the latter part of his life at Swords, so it is very probable that the manor was restored to considerable comfort for him to reside there.

2.1.5 The Period from the Inquisition of 1326 to 1700

The closing years of De Bicknor's episcopacy saw him embroiled in controversy, and with reduced power and influence following a long campaign to clear his name in relation to the fraud allegations and his unsuccessful contest with the Bishop of Kilkenny. During his last years, he is recorded as having been resident at Swords in the summer of 1346 and in April 1349, shortly before his death (Stalley, 2006).

His successors appear to have used Swords as a residence on very few occasions. The onset of the plague in the latter half of the 14th century may have been a factor, and it is known that the archbishops liked to frequent the manor at Tallaght, which had superior potential for hunting.

During the next 300 years, there are scant records of Swords. Nevertheless, Swords did continue to be important as a source of revenue, even if less used as a residence. The scale of building undertaken in the mid-late 15th century was considerable. The north tower and the walls on the west and north-west sides were built and crenellated. The light fortifications erected in the 15th century may have been carried out by Richard Talbot (1417-49) or perhaps by Michael Tregury (1449-71) who, in 1451, was given additional benefices to assist in the repair of his castles. The Knights and Squires Chamber was altered from three storeys to two storeys, and the Gatehouse was probably rebuilt at this time. Also, the alteration of the chapel to add the large east window was most probably made during this period (based on its architectural form and the fragments of tiles found by Fanning in 1971).

In 1484, it was recorded that Doctor Walton, Archbishop of Dublin, '*being blind and infirm, resigned his dignity, and reserved to himself for maintenance the manor of Sword during his life, which reservation was confirmed to him by Act of Parliament during the following year'.* (D'Alton, 1838)

Thomas Fitzsimons was appointed constable of the manor of Swords in 1547; thereafter, the Barnewall family maintained an interest in the constableship and tenancy (Reeves 1970).

It appears that, during the 15th and 16th centuries, there was a diminution in the value of Church properties through archbishops' 'dubious leasing practices' that resulted in some loss of control over the manorial lands (Refaussé and Clark, 2002). Later archbishops such as Loftus (founder of Trinity College Dublin) built houses, in his case at Rathfarnham *c.* 1588, from their own purse as private residences that were passed on to their own family successors. It may have been this lack of proprietorial ownership of the episcopal manors that eventually resulted in their less frequent use as residences.

The buildings were noted to be in disrepair by the late 16th century. The 'castle' (as it had then become known) was occupied by Dutch Protestant settlers. The description given in a letter from Sir Henry Sydney to Sir Francis Walsingham in 1583 records his view:

'I caused to plant and inhabit there about fortie families of the Reformed Churches of the Low Countries, flying thence for religion's sake, in one ruinous town called Surds (Swords); and truly, sir, it would have done any man good to have seen how diligently they wrought, how they re-edified the **quite spoiled old castell** *of the same town, and repayred* [repaired] *almost all the same and how godlie and cleanly, they, their wifes, and children lived. They made diaper and tickets for beddes, and other good stuffes for man's use; and as excellent leather of deer skynnes, goat and sheep fells, as is made in Southwarke.'* (Smiles, 1889)

The scale of building undertaken in the mid-late 15th century was considerable.

After the early 16th century, little building work was done at Swords. The castle came to national prominence again during the Wars of the Catholic Confederation in 1641 when the site was used as a rendezvous for Confederate forces and attacked and routed by the forces led by Sir Charles Coote. After the rebellion by the parliamentary forces that eventually led to the execution of Charles I, Ireland (the landowners in Ireland in particular) remained largely in support of the old king's family and opposed to the new government in London. In various parts of the country, forces were raised to oppose the new regime. On 5 December 1641, Luke Netterville of Corballis near Donabate issued a proclamation 'that the gentlemen of the county of Dublin should assemble at Swords upon pain of death'. On 8 December 1641, Netterville had raised an army of 1,200 men who were prepared to fight for religious liberty.

On the outbreak of the Irish Uprising of October 1641, Sir Charles Coote was appointed governor of Dublin and commissioned to raise a regiment. After taking Wicklow in November 1641, he marched north early in 1642, defeating the rebels at Swords and Kilsallaghan to secure the northern approaches to Dublin. He beat the men of Fingal out of their fortifications, and killed about 200 of them. As a reward, Coote was granted a large portion of the estates forfeited by the landowners of north Co. Dublin. Coote was accused of killing innocent civilians during his campaign.

There is no exact date for when the castle passed out of the ownership of the archbishop, Lewis notes (1837):

'James I, in 1603, granted to the archbishop of Dublin a confirmation of the privileges of the town, together with a weekly market on Monday; in this document the place is called the archbishop's manor of Swords. A grant of two additional fairs was made to it in 1699.'

'. . . the gentlemen of the county of Dublin should assemble at Swords upon pain of death'.

2.1.6 Swords Castle after 1700

The lands were eventually bought, between 1830 and 1870, by the Cobbe family of Newbridge House, Donabate. They used the lands for farming and fruit growing and planted an orchard within the grounds of the castle. A photograph from the Edwin Rae Collection shows how extensive the orchard was in the mid 20th century.

PLATE 11: *Castle orchard c. 1930-1970*

In this photograph, the trees are growing in the unkempt manner of an old orchard, so their productive life and management had diminished by this time. The path leading northwards to the small structure at the north wall is wide and being regularly used. The trees seem to be planted along it, so while this photograph resembles the layout depicted on the OS 25-inch 1865 map (Fig. 11), when carefully compared, there are differences in layout. However, neither the 1906 edition nor its 1937 revision accurately depict the positions of the trees in relation to the path and building. The loss of trees apparently continues, because the 1906 edition (Fig. 13) records 12 trees, and its 1937 revision records only 10 trees — the large lettering 'Castle (in Ruins)' and 'Chapel (in Ruins)' may have prevented the inclusion of the two trees that are depicted on the 1906 edition. The small roofed porch-like building in the photograph is the same one depicted on the OS 25-inch 1906 revision (Fig. 13).

PLATE 12: *Charles Cobbe, Archbishop of Dublin*

The Cobbes were originally from Steventon, Hampshire, in England. A landed family whose roots can be traced back to *c.* 1200, they held prominent positions in English society and public life. The founder of the Cobbe family in Ireland was Charles Cobbe, Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, who served as vice-regal chaplain to his cousin Charles Paulet, Duke of Bolton, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He moved from Winchester and established the Newbridge Estate outside Dublin in 1736 and went on to commission James Gibbs, one of the most celebrated English architects of the time, to design his new house. Newbridge House remained the family home until 1985, when it was purchased by Dublin County Council.

The Cobbes rapidly established themselves as a landed family in Ireland. The son of Archbishop Charles Cobbe was Thomas Cobbe MP (1733–1815), who was predeceased by his son, Charles Cobbe MP (1756–1798). The great-grandson of Archbishop Cobbe, also named Charles Cobbe (1781–1857), was notable mainly as having kept extensive diaries on Arthur Wellesley, later the Duke of Wellington.

2.1.7 Modern Times — Conserving the Castle

Dublin County Council obtained the lands from the Cobbes in 1985. After the separation of Dublin County Council into three new local authorities, Fingal County Council assumed ownership and subsequently facilitated a FÁS training scheme to do works to repair and conserve the monument. These works have continued since *c.* 1995 and were carried out under the direction of David Newman Johnson, conservation architect.

In the late 1980s, students of architecture in University College Dublin carried out studies of the castle. Drawings of the extant ruins were made and rectified photographic images were taken of the walls and buildings. In 1994, Swords Castle Development Consortium prepared a plan of Swords Castle for Fingal County Council, with particular emphasis on the recording of the history of the castle and the examination of the potential for tourism related to the historic and cultural importance of the monument. Arising from this study, Heritage International Ireland were commissioned and funds were made available for archaeological studies and works to repair/conserve/reconstruct the extant structures. Works to date include the reconstruction of the curtain walls, chapel and Constable's Tower (North Tower). These works are still ongoing and have been completed under the direction of David Newman Johnson, consultant conservation architect, engaged by Fingal County Council Parks and Heritage Properties Division. That work has been done under the auspices of FÁS training schemes where young men and women have been taught skills in masonry and carpentry to conserve and repair the castle. To date, the walls, the Chapel and Constable's Tower have all been restored.

In 2011, Fingal County Council advertised for an architect-led team of consultants to prepare a Conservation Plan, and a team was selected and appointed to carry out the commission.

2.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL VIEWS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE CASTLE AFTER 1700
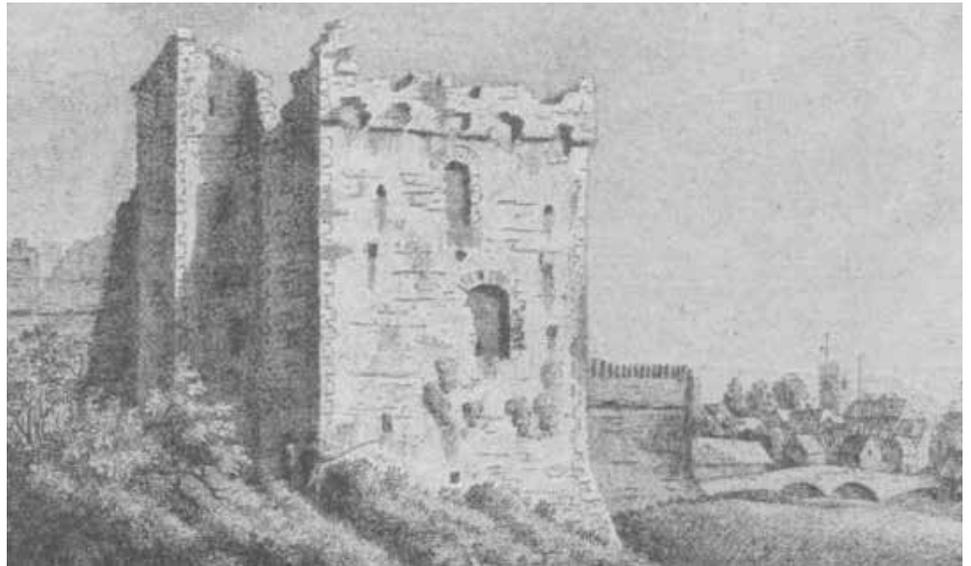
PLATE 13: *View of Constable's (North) Tower and battlemented wall by Daniel Grose, 1792*

PLATE 14: *View of the Gatehouse and adjoining buildings from the north-west*

PLATE 15: *Mid 19th-century view of castle from south-west showing the river in flood*

Daniel Grose provides two views of the castle. The first (Plate 13) is of the North Tower and the battlemented walls, which dates to about 1792 (Grose, 1792: 11-12, Pl 23 by T. Cocking *c.* 1790).

A second view attributed to Daniel Grose (Plate 14) has recently been published in the *Irish Arts Review*, Spring 2011, showing a view of the Gatehouse and the north façades of the chamber block and the Knights and Squires Chamber. Interestingly, it shows the Knights and Squires Chamber as inhabited or recently inhabited, as a sash window of 18th-century type is located on the north façade.

The un-attributed mid 19th-century view from Margaret-Ann Cusack (Plate 15) shows the castle from the west bank of the Ward River, with the river appearing to be in flood. There is also an A-profile roof visible on one of the buildings in the south range.

In 1904, Adams describes the grounds within the castle walls being laid out as an orchard and garden, as does Lewis (1837). Stokes states that the castle 'enclosed a large extent of ground now turned into an orchard' (1891, 510). This is confirmed by the layout of the interior as shown on the first (1836) edition 6-inch O.S. map (Fig. 4).

FIGURE 4: *OS 1st-edition 6-inch 1836*

In 1914, Leask published a short description of the castle, which included a brief account of the main architectural features. His survey of Irish castles also contains a brief note on Swords (1941, 72). He describes it as:

'Manorial in its character and not very strong in the military sense, though large in area and still completely walled on all sides. A picturesque building, with a chapel adjoined, guards the gateway and a small tower projects from the northern part of its five-sided perimeter. Neither of these buildings is so early as 1200 — the chapel is, indeed, probably of the fourteenth century — but there stood, on the east side, a hall building of the later part of the thirteenth century. Stepped battlements, typical of the fifteenth century, crown the curtain walls'.

D'Alton (1838) describes the castle as follows:

'the visitor approaches the embattled enclosure which yet presents considerable remains of the archiepiscopal palace, and of the old chapel dedicated to St Columb, the warder's walk round the castle walls, and several watch towers. On the line of the walls, at one side is the outer gable of a building, popularly said to have been that in which parliaments have been assembled. Its window is very remarkable for the millions [sic] and casements, which are all of a red sandstone unknown in this country. The whole interior of the edifice, as also of several others which were included in the existing walls, have been removed, and the circumscribed area cultivated as an orchard. In front of the castle is the village draw-well, beside which are the stocks, intended for the refractory portion of the seneschal's subjects, but now the usual roost of the village poultry'.

PLATE 16: *View of Swords Castle from west side, 1940-60s*

2.3   CARTOGRAPHIC RECORD

The earliest consulted historical map of Swords town is William Petty's Down Survey map of the Barony of Nethercross, which dates from *c.* 1656 (Figs 5 & 6). This map indicates that the medieval parish church and the castle at Swords lie on forfeited lands that formed 'Parte of Blackhall'. The castle is indicated as a simple tower. The written accompaniment to the map, the Civil Survey, records that, of 15 'lots' or landholdings ranging in size from one to 80 acres, many appear to be on the periphery of the town, while five are specifically described as being bounded by the town and lands of Swords. In the Parish map of the same year (drawn by Wilson & Weft), the manor is similarly indicated but with the notable addition of battlements.

FIGURES 5 AND 6: *Down Survey 1656; and corresponding Parish map*

John Rocque, in *An Actual Survey of the County of Dublin*, *1760* (Fig. 7), indicates the pattern of street development in Swords in the post-medieval period. The town is shown primarily laid out along a single main street, with what is now known as the Ward River flowing approximately parallel to the west. It is focused and aligned on the castle rather than on the earlier ecclesiastical centre to the west of the river. The castle is indicated; an enclosing element can just be made out and is in an almost cruciform shape. Structures appear to front onto Bridge Street and North Street. There are no structures between the western wall and the river. Several structures or subdivisions can be made out within the ward; however, no specific detail in relation to the plan form of the internal structures can be distinguished.

FIGURE 7: *Rocque, 1760: 'An Actual Survey of the County of Dublin'*

John Taylor records little additional detail on his 1816 map of Swords and environs (Fig. 8). However, the castle is described as an 'old fortification' and is shown erroneously as a rectangular fort with four corner bastions, and is aligned incorrectly with the Main Street.
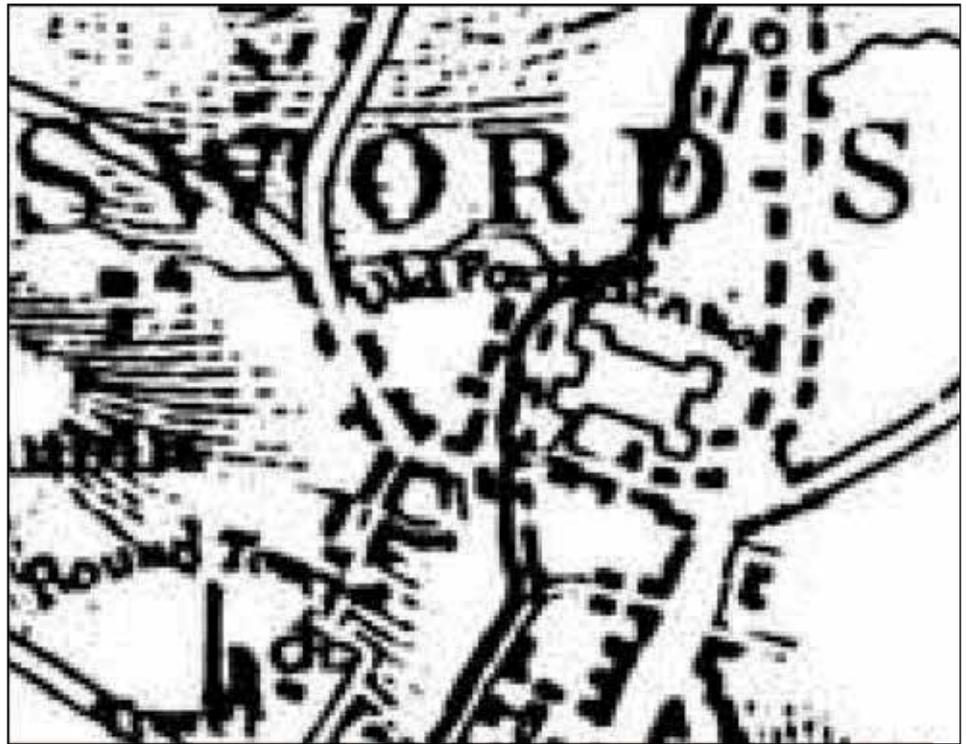
FIGURE 8: *Taylor, 1816*

The first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch 1836 map for Swords (Fig. 9) shows the castle in the townland of Townparks, and the familiar irregular pentagon plan form of the precinct is accurately mapped for the first time. By this time, the interior of the castle was well established as a garden; this is shown with diagonal hatching, which indicates cultivation and subdividing paths. Compared to nearby Swords House with its extensive grounds and gardens, Swords Castle is a very modest 'walled garden' layout of four main plots with perimeter borders, all defined and bounded by paths. The four plots are shown as being in cultivation, so it was clearly a cultivated garden that would have included flowers, vegetables and herbage, perhaps with bush fruits. No orchard trees are shown on this or the OS 6-inch 1872 revision, so clearly they were still too young and insignificant to be recorded or were not yet planted.

Along the western precinct wall, there is a circular feature that may indicate the presence of a lime kiln. There are structures shown either side of the entrance way; to the west is a linear structure running parallel to the entrance and along the exterior wall is a series of subdivided areas which form 'the Pound', ending with a small structure. East of the main entranceway is a large irregular block. With the exception of the Gatehouse structures, there are no structures shown in the interior. Along the eastern wall are two structures outside the walls, one which protrudes westward and another in the north-west corner. A large property abuts the north-eastern corner and the rear yards of several properties that front onto North Street. The revised survey shows the interior in use as an orchard, and the site is indicated as a 'Castle (in ruins)'.

FIGURE 9: *OS 6-inch 1836 edition (colour)*

The OS 6-inch 1872 revision (Fig. 10) has one significant change to the 1836 1st edition: the circular feature at the curved point of the west wall (east-facing) is no longer shown. Otherwise, the layout appears unchanged. No trees are shown on this edition. However, the orchard that appears on the OS 25-inch 1865 revision map must have been planted, so that would imply that the site was not surveyed for the OS 6-inch 1872 revision.

FIGURE 10: *OS 6-inch 1872 revision*

FIGURE 11: *OS 25-inch 1865 revision*

The area of ground changes from a simple Georgian layout of four cultivation plots into an eight-plot Victorian walled garden.

What is obviously different on the 1st-edition 25-inch map of 1865 (Fig. 11) is a radically altered and more complex layout of paths and plots. The area of ground changes from a simple Georgian layout of four cultivation plots into an eight-plot Victorian walled garden. The four main cultivation plots of the old layout were approximately similar in size, and these are now replaced by eight plots of varying sizes and shapes, and defined by the path system. It is likely that other paths were there but not recorded. All the main plots are populated with a number of deciduous trees except the plot at the south-east end containing only one tree planted close by the edge of the east-to-west path. This plot is subdivided so this could indicate an area of 'hard standing' closest to the buildings.

The trees generally appear to be randomly planted, but in the two long rectangular central plots, three trees are planted in a straight line on a north-to-south axis. The largest plot on the east side, which approximately corresponds with the raised ground level, has a certain formality to the planting. Here, four trees align with the central path and a further three run parallel with the north wall path. The spaces between trees may have been the sites of others which didn't survive.

At the south end of the enclosure in a separate area called the Pound, a row of six trees planted as a screen are shown close to the north-east facing south wall. Close to the pump house (P.H.), the wall path turns in towards the west wall and an entrance in the wall connecting with the river meadow.

On the east side of the garden, there is un-gated access into the walled enclosure from the rear garden or yard of one of the 19th-century terrace of houses. This house (or office) may have been part of the Swords Castle estate, given its direct access into the garden. In later years, it is closed off and is no longer visible. The section of east wall would provide evidence of these changes but it is choked in ivy and scrub.

The OS 25-inch 1865 revision map (Fig. 12) shows many trees planted on the site but not as an obvious formally spaced orchard layout. It is probable that there were ornamental trees and shrubs as well as orchard trees by this time.

The OS 25-inch 1906 revision map (Fig. 13) shows a traditional orchard layout, but the paths and borders have apparently gone or are simply overgrown and not recorded.

FIGURE **12:** *OS 25-inch 1865 revision map showing the castle and Swords Town*

These remaining 12 trees are shown in four strict north-to-south row patterns. However, the layout is representational because the site was unlikely to have been surveyed for this edition. The six trees in the Pound area are not shown. Interestingly, the open access from the rear garden of one of the houses of the 19th-century terrace has been closed off. The garden now seems entirely secured except for the main gateway on the south end.
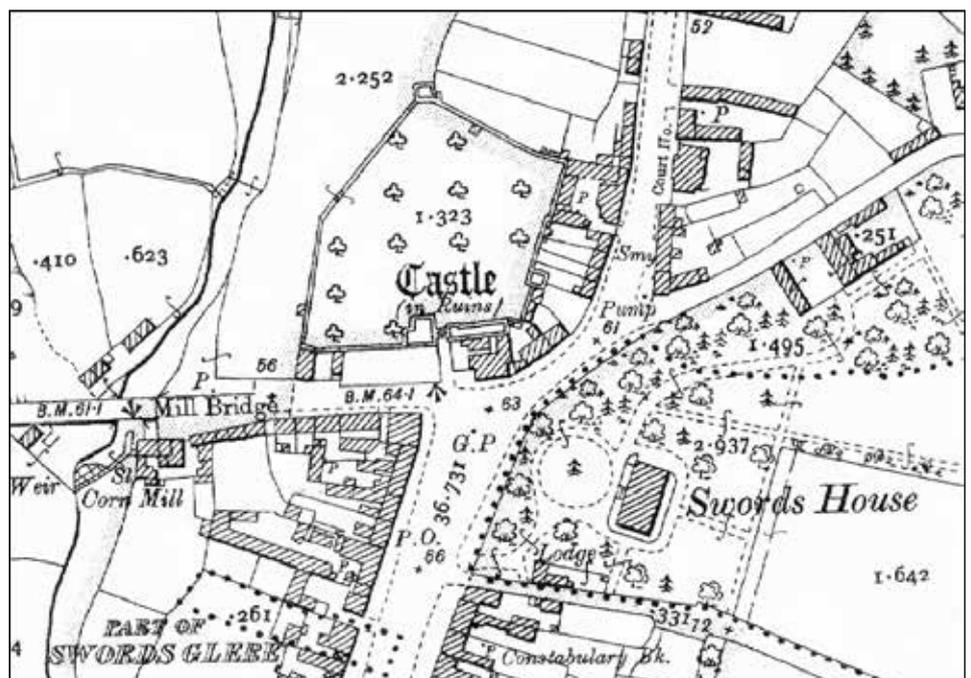
FIGURE **13:** *OS 25-inch 1906 revision*

2.4 OUTLINE CHRONOLOGY

Date	Event
500-600	Christian monastery at Swords founded by St Colmcille.
1179	In a Papal Bull of Alexander III, the manor of Swords is listed as part of the property of archbishops of Dublin.
1193	John Comyn, Archbishop of Dublin, granted permission for annual fair/market at Swords for eight days, after the feast day of St Colmcille on 9 June.
1180-1200	Probable first manorial buildings on site of present castle at the instigation of John Comyn. Also, first burgage plots set up in Swords with income to Dublin Diocese.
1212-1228	Samson de Crumba, constable of Swords Castle under Archbishop Henry, accused of murder.
1304	Archbishop Richard de Feringes noted to be at Swords.
1310	Alexander De Bicknor held Courts of Justice at Swords.
1325-26	Alexander De Bicknor, who had been the Treasurer of King's Finance in Dublin, accused of misappropriating the king's funds. His assets were seized and a description of Swords Castle given for the purpose of the Inquisition into his affairs ordered by the Crown.
1327	Possessions restored to Alexander De Bicknor.
1349	Alexander De Bicknor living at Swords shortly before his death.
1400-1500	During the episcopacies of Archbishops Richard Talbot (1417-49), Michael Tregury (1449-71) and John Walton (1472-84), fortification works carried out at Swords.
1500-1547	Castle waned as archbishops ceased to reside at Swords.
1547	Office of constable granted to Patrick Barnewall and his heirs in perpetuity; from this time the castle continued to decline.
1583	Sir Henry Sydney allowed about 40 Protestant families, refugees from the Low Countries, to live at the castle.
1641	Castle used as a rendezvous for the Confederate army, where they were attacked and routed by a Cromwellian force under Sir Charles Coote.
1794	George Tyner, *Traveller's Guide Through Ireland*, published 1794, page 2: *'entering Swords, on the R. just behind the town, is a seat of Mr Cobb's"...One mile from Swords, on the R. is Ballinadraught, Mr. Mercer's, and the ruins of Laundestown castle... a little further to the R. Newbridge, Mr. Cobbe's.'* This reference predates 1830 as the year the Cobbes acquired Swords Castle.
1830-1870	Conflicting historic accounts as to when the castle and grounds were sold to Cobbe family of Newbridge House, Donabate.
1837	Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, 1837, page 584: *'... and the archbishop's palace; the latter was a fortified structure in the centre of a court surrounded by embattled walls flanked with towers; these walls compose the whole of the existing remains, the enclosed area having been converted into a garden.'*
1838	D'Alton (1838) describes the castle enclosure: *'the visitor approaches the embattled enclosure which yet presents considerable remains of the archiepiscopal palace... The whole interior of the edifice, as also of several others which were included in the existing walls, have been removed, and the circumscribed area cultivated as an orchard...'*
1891	Stokes states that the castle *'enclosed a large extent of ground now turned into an orchard'* (1891, 510).

Date	Event
1930	Some repair work of the castle done by OPW.
1971	An archaeological excavation was carried out in SE corner of the site for OPW under Thomas Fanning. This revealed a medieval tiled paving and some previously hidden walls and artefacts, including a denier tournois coin of *c.* 1310.
1985	Castle purchased by Dublin County Council.
1986	An interim report on the history, structure and future possible uses of the site. Study by the Irish Architectural Archive in association with the Conservation Studies Unit, School of Architecture, UCD.
1987	Feasibility Study for Development of Swords Castle by Conservation Studies Unit, School of Architecture, UCD under Phillip Geoghegan.
1987	Study by Cathal Crimmins and Robin Mandal, Conservation Studies Unit, School of Architecture, UCD.
1991	Geophysical survey undertaken at Swords Castle.
1992	Archaeological monitoring of foundations and investigatory works overseen by Leo Swan.
1994	Dublin County Council ceased to exist and was divided into three local authorities, with Fingal County Council taking over ownership of Swords Castle.
1995	Plan for phased restoration of Swords Castle approved by Fingal County Council.
1996-98	Restoration of Constable's Tower by FÁS trainees working for Fingal County Council Parks Department under direction of David Newman Johnson, conservation architect.
1996	Archaeological monitoring at Swords Castle, Fingal County Council/FÁS restoration project. Phase 4: Foundations for fencing of an area outside the castle walls by S.P Johnston, archaeological consultant D.L. Swan.
2000	Geophysical investigations at Swords Castle undertaken by Whiteford Geoservices for ADS Ltd.
2001	Archaeological investigation by Eoin O'Sullivan for ADS of the area to south and west of the Gatehouse.
2000-ongoing	Work to Chapel, Curtain Walls and Battlements and Gatehouse by FÁS trainees working for Fingal County Council Parks Department under direction of David Newman Johnson, conservation architect.
2010	Proposals for repair and stabilisation of Gatehouse by Lisa Edden, conservation engineer.
2011	Archaeological monitoring under Ministerial Consent of structural works by ADS in entrance/gateway.
2011	Fingal County Council advertises for consultants to prepare Conservation Plans for Swords and Bremore Castles.
2011	Geophysical survey (resistivity and GPR) undertaken by Target Archaeological Geophysics.
2011	Elevation survey of buildings and walls at Sword Castle by B.D. Surveys.
2012	Analysis of three samples of stone from Swords Castle by G. D. Sevastopulo, Department of Geology, Trinity College Dublin.
2013	Completion of Conservation Plan for Swords Castle.

The castle has never been subject to a comprehensive archaeological survey. Until this has taken place, the proposed chronology of the upstanding buildings and how the site developed and was used is somewhat speculative and subject to change when further information becomes available. For example, there are large areas in the centre of the enclosure and along the eastern range that have never been investigated, leaving dating and use open to interpretation and discussion.

Given the use and reuse of the surviving structures over the centuries, the sequencing of upstanding buildings is a very problematic task.

As a result, a Plan dating the main phases of building should be approached with caution. While there is general agreement that Constable's (North) Tower and the crenellated parapet are noticeably later additions, most likely in the 15th century, there are conflicting accounts as to the general development of the castle from existing literature.

. . . dating the main phases of building should be approached with caution.

A study carried out by the Irish Architectural Archive and the Conservation Studies Unit (School of Architecture, UCD) in 1986 suggests that the earliest parts of the castle appear to have been located on the highest ground of the site in the north-east corner of the enclosure. Stalley (2006) tentatively suggests that the arrangement and layout of buildings to the east of the Gatehouse (not the structures themselves) may be the earliest on the site.

It is difficult to reach a firm conclusion about the nature and date of buildings and ranges without further archaeological excavation and consideration of the castle in the context of episcopal manors elsewhere. To find parallels similar in layout and scale to an archbishop's residence, one has to look towards Wales and England.

Appendix C contains a discussion on the interpretation of building fabric. This information has been compiled in order to guide future debate about the chronology of the complex.
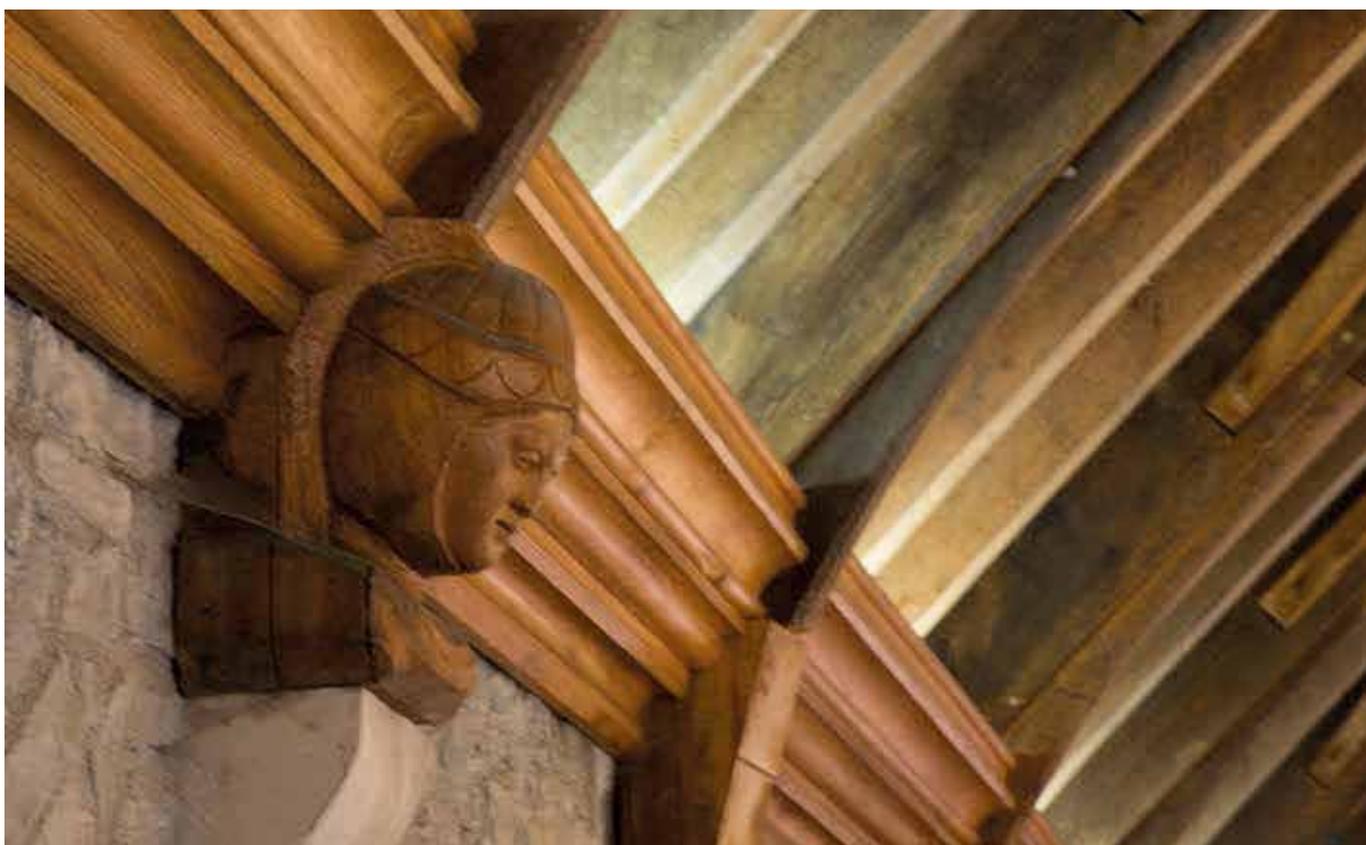
PART 3: UNDERSTANDING THE MONUMENT — BUILDINGS, FABRIC AND SURVEYS

PLATE 17: *Details of the reproduced tiles in the interior of the Chapel (based on excavated medieval pavement)*

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDINGS AND FABRIC

3.1.1 The Castle and Interior Space

The sheer size of the courtyard underlines the range of agricultural and administrative activities that were centred on the castle.

Swords Castle is located within the urban centre of Swords and forms a prominent position at the north end of Main Street. It lies adjacent to the award-winning architecturally designed administrative offices for Fingal County Council, along with the 19th-century historic stone Courthouse. This group of landmark buildings forms part of Swords' architectural and cultural identity and overlooks the beautiful meandering Ward River Valley Regional Park.

The castle acts as a vista closer to Main Street and its entrance through the Gatehouse allows a direct view towards Constable's Tower at the north of the site.

The castle is fully enclosed by a substantial masonry curtain wall. The wall is roughly 300m long overall and shaped like an irregular pentagon on plan measuring roughly 100m across west-to-east and 90m north-to-south. The height and thickness of the curtain wall varies significantly along its length. Putlog holes for the timber scaffolding indicate that they were raised in sections of about 2m at a time.

The castle consists of a group of buildings roughly contained within a polygonal ward made by the curtain walls of the castle on the north, west and south of the site, along with the structures that form the southern and eastern ranges.

The ground slopes across the site from east-to-west towards the Ward River, with an overall fall of 4.3m across the ward. Midway, a bank about 1.0m high runs north-south from the Gatehouse, thus dividing the enclosed area into an upper and lower 'court'. The lower court has been graded with compacted hard core to provide a reasonably level hard standing for construction site offices etc. in the north-eastern section, and there are no apparent problems with drainage or flooding. The upper court of the ward is predominantly grassed, with some scrub trees and a great deal of mixed vegetation along the eastern boundary.

The area contained within the curtain walls and enclosing structures is 5730m^2. The sheer size of the courtyard underlines the range of agricultural and administrative activities that were centred on the castle. The ground level inside is higher than outside along all the boundaries, except for the southern boundary where there is little difference in height. The greatest height difference is 2m at the NE corner. Along the eastern boundary, the height difference is generally about 1.5m. Along the west and NW boundary, it varies between 0.75 and 1.2m.

There is no visible evidence of free-standing historic structures within the open interior space. Geophysical survey has potentially identified the remains of former structures within the enclosed area. Surviving historic structures are limited to the structures adjoining the curtain wall, described below. The free-standing structures within the ward are confined to the several construction site offices, stores and toilets which are understood to be temporary structures. The plan layout (Fig. 14) shows the location of the principal elements.

3.1.2 Conservation Work

The renovated structures (Constable's Tower and Chapel) and walls have been carefully reconstructed in modern times and appear to be soundly built using traditional methods and materials. The reconstruction details seem to have been based on surviving structures from an appropriate era, such as Clara Castle in Co. Kilkenny (timber floor) and Athclare Castle in Co. Louth (vaulted masonry floor on wickerwork centring). Some of the reconstruction work was undertaken as part of a traditional craftsmanship training course.

The reconstruction details seem to have been based on surviving structures from an appropriate era . . .
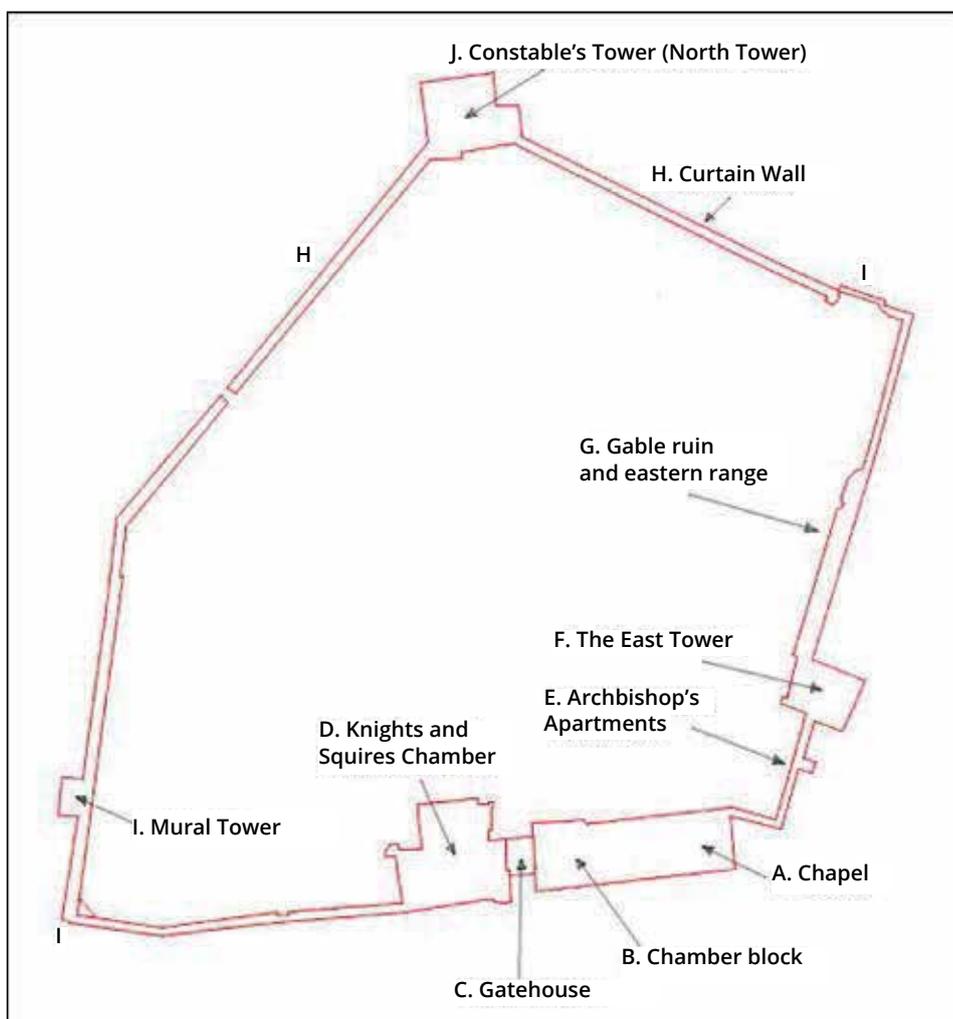
FIGURE 14: *Plan layout of key elements*

3.1.3 Stone and Mortar

The vast bulk of the masonry found in the buildings visible at Swords is a Dublin Calp Limestone that was most probably quarried in the vicinity of the site. This building material has been used very extensively in Dublin and is drawn from the underlying bedrock that in Swords is recorded in specific locations less than 2m below the surface. The colour of the stone is a mid-grey when dry, turning to almost black when wet. The mortar in the older sections of wall is a lime mortar using coarse grit as a binder.

An analysis of three samples of carved stone from the castle has taken place (Sevastopulo, 2012) (Appendix D). The results showed that samples 1 and 2 are probably from the same or similar beds in the source quarry. Sample 3 differs in its coarser grain size, more complete cementation, and in the presence of a small amount of carbonate cement. All three samples are unlikely to be from the local Carboniferous rocks of north Co. Dublin because of their colour, the degree of sorting of the constituent sand grains and their relatively high porosity. The source is almost certainly from Mesozoic aged rocks, which have never undergone the burial of the older Palaeozoic strata. Mesozoic rocks in Ireland are confined to the north-east of the country. They are, however, relatively widespread in England. The closest comparison is with the Sherwood Sandstone Formation of Triassic age, which has been a source of building stone from Roman times onwards. The identification of cross bedding in sample 3 is consistent with a source in the Sherwood Sandstone, where this structure is ubiquitous. In England, the region with outcrops of Sherwood Sandstone closest to Dublin is the Cheshire Basin, but the formation is widespread in the Midlands, south Wales and south-west England.

Two other types of stone were noted during the field inspection.

PLATE 18: *Dundry stone*

Dundry stone (a pale yellow oolitic limestone, quarried near Bristol in south-west England) is found in isolated sections of the fabric as window framing to the Gatehouse (south façade), the Knights and Squires south-east stair tower and the west façade of Constable's Tower. In 1970, Waterman recorded the extent of the use of Dundry stone in Ireland; he found it extensively used in the south and east of the country (Waterman, 1970). Evidence to date has shown that it was only used sparingly in Swords, and it is highly likely that the pieces at the castle were sourced from another location.

Red sandstone has been used in the Gable Ruin on the east range for the tracery and also for the two voussoirs (parts of the pointed arch) to the Dundry stone window in the south wall of the Gatehouse. As demonstrated by the results of the 2012 analysis, this is an unusual building stone in Ireland.

Waterman (1970, 72) records the following building material at Swords Castle:

'In the mid-13th-century gatehouse block, the building west of the entrance has Dundry stone dressings to two doors and to a small loop, lighting a stair, at first floor. A trefoil-pointed light above the entrance arch is also apparently dressed in Dundry stone, save for the red sandstone head; and occasional pieces of the oolite are incorporated in the rubble walling of both gatehouse building and adjacent chapel. However in the late 13th or early 14th century chapel and in the late 13th century window lighting a probable first floor hall against the east curtain, the dressings are of sandstone. The largest of the mural towers, at the north-west angle, has a few dressings of Dundry freestone, in the embrasure of one of the second floor windows and in the basement door. In addition, a Cotswold oolite, perhaps Painswick stone, occurs in the entrance block, restricted to two dressings of the second floor door from the stair.'

PLATE 19: *Red sandstone tracery*

3.2 OVERALL CONDITION

The ruinous structures stand in various states of disrepair, and are discussed in more detail in the following sections. While some have been stabilised in modern times, or are currently scheduled for stabilisation work in the near future, others are showing signs that remedial work is required.

3.2.1 The Southern Range

The southern range contains four principal elements, which are described in turn:

- Chapel
- Chamber Block
- Gatehouse
- Knights and Squires Chamber
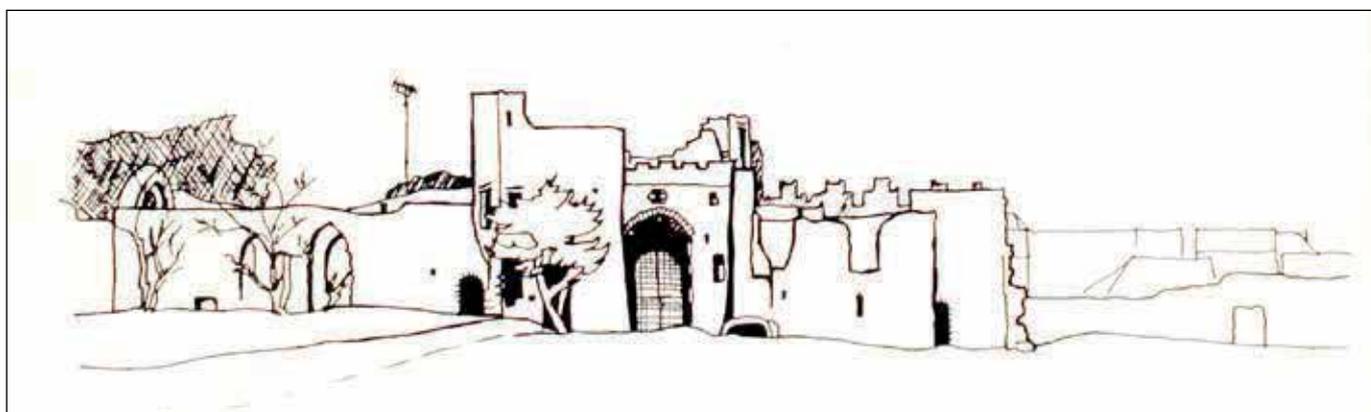
FIGURE 15: *Sketch of southern range* c. *1987*

A. Chapel

The Chapel is a single-cell structure that has been considerably repaired and reconstructed in the last 20 years; the building as it was *c.* 1987/8 was recorded by Crimmins and Mandel. The space contained within the walls is 15.3m long and 5.2m wide. There are two doors in the north wall at ground-floor level, one at the east end and another at the west end; the eastern door may originally have formed part of a porch.

The following elements all form part of the reconstruction works:

1. The walls have been partially reconstructed and raised in height. The reconstruction has included the crenellations, the opening up of the partially in-filled east window, the 're-creation' of the window opening on the north façade, and the new openings for the quatrefoil windows on the north façade.

2. A new roof clad with Welsh slate on timber boards on a timber truss format was used. The trusses are supported on wall plates that are in turn seated on stone projecting corbels.

3. The three large new Gothic-style pointed arch windows with stone tracery on the south façade and one on the north façade and the two new quatrefoil windows located at high level on the north wall.

4. The floor of the chancel at east end of the Chapel has been tiled with new tiles designed to a form and pattern based on the old tiles found by Fanning in the adjoining angled building during the 1971 excavations. The floor is raised at the eastern end by a single step at a point roughly 4.6m from the east end. A new timber gallery has been inserted into the west end of the Chapel linked by means of a new doorway connecting through to the first floor of the adjacent Chamber Block.

5. The west wall that divides the Chapel from the Chamber to the west has been reconstructed from ground level, including all the new openings.

6. The new gallery connecting the Chapel to the Chamber block at first floor.

7. New lighting and electrical services have been inserted.

PLATES 20 AND 21: *Interior of Chapel, east end, showing tiled floor (based on historic pavement) and the timber roof*

PLATES 22 AND 23: *Chapel: south and north elevations, new windows, tracery and stained glass*

The ornate double curved sandstone statue niche in the east wall is puzzling. It may have been a late alteration, having been relocated from elsewhere either on-site or from other religious buildings in the vicinity.

The existence of large windows on the south and east walls seems contrary to any defensive purpose of the compound and may indicate that the defensive purpose was not of real intent but rather to show the power of the resident.

A French denier tournois coin was found in the foundations of the north wall of the Chapel. The coin was struck at Tours, France; it dates from the period 1285-1314 and carries the mark of Phillip IV of France. The existence of the coin is important, as it suggests a date for the building of *c.* 1310, thus raising the possibility that this Chapel was in fact the Hall described in the Inquisition of 1326.

PLATE 24: *View of north façade of the Chapel, 1987*

B. Chamber Block

The Chamber Block has also been largely reconstructed during the current phase of works; the building as it was *c.* 1987/8 was recorded by Crimmins and Mandel. The new work includes the following:

1. Walls extended upwards to incorporate new crenellated parapets

2. New timber trussed and slated roof

3. New intermediate timber beam and plank floors

4. The reconstructed west wall adjoining the Chapel (see above)

5. New stone surrounds to door and window openings

6. New stone stairs

7. New concrete ground floor

8. Part reconstruction of the vaults at ground floor level

9. New lighting and electrical services have been inserted

PLATE 25: *Chamber Block, north façade*

The Chamber Block contains three floors of accommodation. This plan arrangement is very typical in the 13/14th century and is found in virtually all manorial residences of the time containing a solar (a French-Norman term describing a living area above ground floor level) over vaulted undercrofts at ground level. The vaulted undercrofts at ground floor were used for the storage of precious foodstuffs and other articles that needed high security. The solar was the archbishop's private chamber where he slept and entertained guests. In this case, the solar was at second-floor level, with a room below that was probably used by the archbishop's closest attendants and as a waiting area for visitors prior to seeing the archbishop. The original stone-lined four-light rectangular window on the south wall had timber-hinged lower casements and grooves for glass in the upper sections — this arrangement of employing hinged wooden shutters as a design feature was used when an open window was required with fixed glass above. The stone window frame used Dundry stone.

A door in the NE corner of the solar connects by winding steps to an external door that probably was over the original porch and connected by means of a pentice (an exterior timber balcony access walkway) that ran along the north wall of the Chapel to the Archbishop's Apartments building on the eastern range. Another doorway at first-floor level on the south façade leads onto a void and is puzzling since it runs contrary to any defensive purposes. It can only suggest that the walls were aligned differently at the time, extending southwards of the Gatehouse, or that there were other protective structures south of this building.

C. Gatehouse

The Gatehouse consists of an open-ended, barrel-vaulted space that allows entry to the castle grounds. It is aligned on a north-south axis with Swords Main Street. It has walls at first-floor level north and south that are supported on stone arches with window openings to both ends; the vault has partially collapsed, leaving a section at the south end.

There is no evidence of . . . significant defensive features.

The Gatehouse structure formerly had a first-floor apartment indicated by the window opening in Dundry stone on the south façade. The existence of a spiral staircase in the building to the west supports the view that this first-floor chamber may have been the Constable's accommodation prior to the building of the Constable's Tower in the 1450-1520 period. The spiral stairs connects to the upper floor apartment via a diagonal corbelled outer wall at the west end projecting proud of the building line. The front and rear walls at roof level are corbelled forward of the building line, and on the front there are openings for chutes (rainwater outlets from a parapet or wall-walk).

There is no evidence of a portcullis (a defensive drop-down gateway) or other significant defensive features. Stalley (2006) considers that the Gatehouse may be a late alteration or may have been crudely rebuilt at some point because of the way in which the southerly arch collides with an original window opening in the west wall of the undercrofts to the tower and its northerly arch meets the adjoining structure to the east in a straight joint. However, the connection to the stair tower, the existence of the Dundry stone window and the apparently contemporary stone work with the adjoining structures would point to it being 14th century in construction, probably rebuilt, as Stalley has suggested, at some later date but incorporating original elements.

PLATE 26: *Gatehouse, view from the south*

The structural condition of the vault over the Gatehouse is a cause for serious concern, as detailed below.

STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT: THE GATEHOUSE

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The ruinous Gatehouse is a major concern at present. The vaulted masonry has partially collapsed directly over the main entrance (which is open to the general public). Further deterioration would appear to be inevitable unless the vault is repaired and the upper structure is reinstated in some form to provide adequate weathering. The vault was not designed to project in cantilever fashion from the edges, so the collapse of the central portion compromises the natural design. It is not clear what remedial work has been undertaken to prevent unravelling of the voussoirs around the collapse. The most effective remedy would be to reinstate the vault. If this is not permissible, then the masonry will need to be anchored back to safeguard its structural integrity. In our opinion, it would be prudent to erect a safety net (or crash deck) below the partially collapsed vault to protect the general public from falling debris and masonry that may become dislodged due to natural degradation. This is a health and safety hazard at present.

PLATE 27: *Gatehouse, taken from the north*

PLATE 28: *Gatehouse, taken from the north*

D. Knights and Squires Chamber

The Knights and Squires Chamber building is so called from the description of 1326 (Stalley, 2006). It is now a two-storey building but was at one point a three-storey building, as the south boundary wall has been built over and through the original structure. It also bears the imprint of several phases of building/demolition/rebuilding, making it difficult to interpret correctly.

The building is ruinous and structural stability of individual elements requires immediate attention. The buildings clearly extended west, as the scars of broken walls and the remnants of a vault at the south-west corner indicate.

PLATE 29: *Knights and Squires Chamber, view from the west*

PLATES 30 AND 31: *Knights and Squires Chamber, view from north and NW corner*

PLATES 32 AND 33: *Knights and Squires Chamber, 2nd-floor doorway to void and 1st-floor corner entry to spiral stairs*

The ground floor of this building contains vaulted apartments. At first-floor level, there is a single room with access to the two spiral stairs in the NW and NE corners. Both connect from the ground to the (now missing) second floor. The stairs to the NE corner is encased in a circular turret, while the stairs at the SE corner is enclosed within a polygonal turret that may be a later alteration/addition (Stalley has pointed out that polygonal enclosures to stair towers are not generally found before the 15th century, an opinion also given by Wood in relation to comparable buildings in England) (Wood, 1994).

The very thin walls of the stair turrets (down to 300mm at their thinnest) again belie the defensive character of the exterior, especially on the southern polygonal turret, which was presumably always exposed to the exterior. The circular stairs to the north was altered to form a straight stairs from ground to first-floor level — possibly during the period when the Dutch Protestant group of refugees were settled in Swords in the late 16th century. The circular spiral stairs is the only one to give access to the room that formerly existed over the gate arch.

The soffits of the stone vaults contain remnants of medieval 'wickerwork centring' (a method used to support vaults during their construction). There are also remnants of lime render on the exterior walls that may be historic.

The presence of the Knights and Squires Chamber may seem peculiar in an archbishop's residence, but the archbishops were military men as well as men of Church affairs. It is recorded of Archbishop De Bicknor that one of his duties was to 'establish a militia for preserving the peace of Meath and apprehending all traitors and their abettors' (O Flaherty, 1870).

The exterior of this part of the complex contains several slit windows within stone-framed openings, and stone arch-headed door openings, one on the south wall to the exterior of the site and two on the west wall.

PLATES 34 AND 35: *Knights and Squires Chamber, south façade (2011 and 1987)*

STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT: KNIGHTS AND SQUIRES CHAMBER

The ruinous Knights and Squires Chamber is probably the greatest cause for concern at present. It would appear from visual inspection that the historic loss of the structure above first floor has permitted the elements to degrade the vaulted masonry over a long period of time. It is likely that the lime mortar jointing of the vault was compromised by several natural actions (such as washing out from rainfall, freeze-thaw action, root attack etc.), which effectively reduced the thickness of the vault and weakened it, causing it to drop and spread. The additional lateral thrust to the main entrance from the drop is considerable, and has been significantly increased by the well-intentioned addition of a heavy weathering screed. While remedial works (which await commencement) that have been formulated by others (Edden, 2010) may help to restore the structural stability of the supporting wall, it would have been prudent to prop the arch and reinstate the upper structure to restore weathering prior to embarking on concrete screeding and subsequent remedial work to the masonry. Permanent reconstruction of a properly weathered upper structure remains the most effective means of weathering the vault and is recommended.

3.2.2 The Eastern Range

The Eastern Range consists of parts of earlier structures whose form, extent and original use are uncertain, and which have always been thought to be the earliest features on this site. This part of the monument will yield most interest from future archaeological and architectural history studies. The crenellated walls that so dominate the other sides do not exist along the east side, and there is no evidence to suggest that they ever did.

The generally accepted view is that the first development did occur on this side via the building of disparate structures within a compound occupying the highest part of the site – the NE quadrant. It is possible that this compound would have been contained by timber palisades, and the village of Swords followed as a series of burgage plots beside/within the palisade area. Documentary evidence records burgages being granted as early as the 13th century. However, archaeological investigation is required to determine the overall phased nature of development and building chronology at the site.

It contains three principal elements, which are described in turn:

E. The Archbishop's Apartments/Audience Chamber and Oratory

F. The East Tower

G. The Eastern Range North of the Tower

E. The Archbishop's Apartments/Audience Chamber and Oratory

This two-story building is approximately 12.5m long and 6m wide, of which the east, south and part of the north walls survive. There are corbel stones evident in the east wall at first-floor level suggesting that the first floor was a timber beam and plank floor. The foundation layer of the west wall was exposed and recorded during Fanning's excavations in 1971. Fanning found medieval tiling *in situ* and burials. These are discussed in detail in the archaeological section (3.4) of this Plan.

The north and south walls appear not to be parallel, and part of the south wall has been reconstructed (again off line). The post holes and part of a partition structure at ground level found by Fanning suggest that the ground floor was sub-divided into separate spaces, but the single-space room above must have been one of considerable grandeur.

. . . the ground floor was sub-divided . . . but the single-space room above must have been one of considerable grandeur.

PLATE 36: *Archbishop's Apartments, view to south wall*

The east wall is *c.* 0.82m wide at the southern end and widens out to 1.2m at its northern end; on the outside, this wall is buttressed by a central stone pier supported on a concrete plinth.

The interior façade of the east wall shows two large relieving arches on the ground-floor wall. Above that is a row of stone corbels at first-floor level, confirming an early timber beam and plank first floor to this building.

The stone arched doorway . . . with carved ogee spring-stone and the cut stone jambs visible . . . is remarkable.

PLATE 37: *Archbishop's Apartments, view to east wall*

The central fireplace opening on the east wall appears to have been altered. The flue of this chimneypiece exits through the external wall above it (as was common in early medieval buildings). There are two window openings flanking the fireplace to the right and one to the left. These openings are different in shape and form, indicating several periods of building/alterations. The fireplace is probably a 15th/16th-century construct with additions.

The ogee-headed window in the south gable at a high level is a typical feature found in medieval houses from the 14th century, again indicating an early date for this building. The chute-stone and wall opening on the exterior south façade east of this window suggest that there was a parapet/wall-walk over.

The stone arched doorway connecting to the east tower at first-floor level, with carved ogee spring-stone and the cut stone jambs visible on the east side of the opening, is remarkable. The form of the arch closely resembles a form described in Leask (1941) as a 'Caernarfon arch', which he observed also in castles at Ballymoon, Co. Carlow (date of construction ascribed by Leask as 1310) and Ballyloughan, Co. Carlow. The slit window adjacent in the NE corner at the nodal point where this building abuts the east tower suggests a lobby arrangement, and that the two buildings were in use together at some point.

PLATES 38 AND 39: *View to doorway between the Archbishop's Apartments and the East Tower (left); Close-up of the 'Caernarfon arch' over the doorway (right)*

STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT: THE ARCHBISHOP'S APARTMENTS

PLATE 40: *External face of east wall*

The external face of the east wall at the Archbishop's Apartments (5.4m high internally, but 7.0m high externally) presents a number of loose and damaged stones, as well as voids from missing stones. The defective masonry in the wall and buttress should be consolidated.

PLATE 41: *View to East Tower*

F. The East Tower

PLATE 42: *'Keyhole' ope at first-floor, south wall of East Tower*

The tower immediately north of the Archbishop's Apartments is a ruinous structure consisting of north, south and east masonry walls extending upwards to three floors above a simple barrel vault at ground level oriented east-west. Only a 2.5m long section of the barrel vault still stands; the location of the west wall is unknown. The tower walls are 1.05m thick, suggesting an early date for this structure. The eastern end vaulting appears to have been aligned transversely to the east-west axis.

On the first floor, a large arch-headed doorway connects to the now-ruined Archbishop's Apartments. Beside this doorway, a slit embrasure opens to the SE, forming a curious feature. It has a resonance of similar arrangements at Lincoln's Archbishop's Residence, suggesting that this was either for the purpose of ensuring the archbishop was not disturbed when in chapel or in 'private discussions'.

In the chamber at first floor are two flat-headed rectangular windows with embrasures, one facing north and one south. On the second floor, a more decorative window faces south.

STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT: THE EAST TOWER

Two of the window openings in the ruinous East Tower appear to have defective arches and are liable to deteriorate if they are left in their current condition. It is possible that the masonry at either side of the arch has been consolidated to the point that it corbels out safely, but this is not apparent, so it must be assumed that the arch is at risk of progressive failure and eventual collapse.

G. The Eastern Range north of the East Tower

PLATE 43: *Possible ope*

There is a 15.2m long section of boundary wall, 1.05m thick, built with limestone rubble masonry. It is heavily overgrown with ivy immediately north of the tower.

North of this is a gable with a stone mullioned Gothic window, suggesting a building of which only the east wall remains with part of the north and south flanking walls. The window mullions are of red sandstone and show the remnants of tracery within it. Below the window are two recesses in the stone wall that may be later alterations or possible opes. Leask describes these openings as 'two small windows' (*JRSAI*, 1914, 262).

Between this feature and the north-east corner, the boundary wall becomes a low stone wall *c.* 0.84m thick (partially reconstructed with block work on the exterior face).

PLATES 44 AND 45: *Gable Ruin, taken in 1987 and 2011*

STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT: THE EASTERN RANGE

The condition of the east wall is in question because a significant portion of the wall is obscured by dense rampant vegetation, hindering both visual inspection and manual checking for loose stones etc. There are some signs that remedial work is required.

A variety of rampant shrubs is growing at the base of the east wall, both inside and outside the ward, as well as a couple of isolated young trees which, if left unchecked, may cause local damage. The young Sycamore tree, in particular, is very likely to impact adversely on the masonry in a relatively short space of time by means of wind-driven branch strike, gradual root up-thrust, and ground heave due to seasonal moisture drawdown.

Extensive areas of the east wall are covered by Ivy, which will tend to weaken the lime mortar joints and inhibit drying out. There is also widespread growth of invasive Buddleia, which will drive its roots deep into the masonry core, loosen individual stones, and eventually burst the masonry in time.

While the rampant vegetation gives the east wall a visually attractive 'romantic ruin' appearance, it is structurally undesirable for the above-stated reasons and should be carefully removed in its entirety as soon as possible. The removal of penetrating roots may require remedial consolidation.

The section of east wall at the East Tower (7.6m high internally, but 9.2m high externally) presents a significant lean outward from the ward towards the North Street Yard, but it is likely that the return walls provide stability. This wall should be monitored for cracking and progressive movement.

3.2.3 The Wall and Mural Towers

Completing the enclosing elements of the castle are the Curtain Walls (H) and the Mural Towers (I) and Constable's Tower (J).

H. The Curtain Wall

The west, north-west and north walls of the 'castle' have been substantially rebuilt with the recent works; they are crenellated with stepped merlons, with a newly built wall-walk on the interior of the battlements. The wall-walk is connected by doorways to the interior of the mural towers and Constable's Tower. The walls have a predominantly flat-faced exterior, with a very minor batter at the base for structural support.

The purpose of the walls and the crenellations appears to be designed to make the building and ward look like a castle rather than having any real use as defences. The lack of height would have rendered the archers/bowmen on the wall vulnerable.

PLATE 46: *Restored wall showing original fabric*

PLATE 47: *North Curtain Wall*

STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT: THE CURTAIN WALL

The Curtain Wall is typically random rubble brought to courses of weathered grey limestone in a well-graded lime mortar. The irregular face does not lend itself to precise measurement of vertical alignment — especially where extensive areas are covered in Ivy — but it is apparent (by eye) that most of the masonry is reasonably plumb. The apparently piecemeal evolution of the Curtain Wall presents a series of discrete wall faces which do not conform to a uniform horizontal alignment throughout. Within each facet, the masonry appears (by eye) to be reasonably true to line, but this is difficult to gauge accurately where the face is obscured by rampant vegetation.

The West Wall

The purpose of the walls and the crenellations appears to be designed to make the building and ward look like a castle rather than having any real use as defences.

The West Wall is roughly 45m long and presents an overall height of about 6.3m externally. The main body of the wall is 3.7m high internally to the walkway and tapers slightly from 1.5m thickness at its base. The parapet is 1.1m high and 0.4m thick. This wall terminates at a small, renovated corner tower (perched on an attractive triple squinch arch) beside an adjoining public house to the south; it extends to a wall angle to the north, and includes a ruinous structure (West Tower). This section of Curtain Wall appears to have been consolidated in modern times: the jointing appears to have been re-pointed; the stepped merlons of the crenellated parapet have been made good; and the wall-walk is open to the general public.

PLATE 48: *View to West Wall (interior)*

The North-West Wall

The North-West Wall is roughly 55m long and presents an overall height of about 6.4m externally. The main body of the wall is 4.2m high internally to the walkway and tapers slightly from 1.2m thickness at its base. The parapet is 2.1m high and 0.4m thick. This wall continues from a wall angle to the south, terminates at the renovated Constable's Tower to the north, and is breached by a postern gate. This section of curtain wall appears to have been consolidated, similar to the west wall.

The North Wall

The North Wall is roughly 48m long and presents an overall height of about 7.2m externally. The main body of the wall is 4.2 metres high internally to the walkway and tapers slightly from 1.0m thickness at its base. The parapet is 2.1m high and 0.4m thick. This wall continues from the renovated Constable's Tower at the west, and terminates at a ruinous structure (North Tower) to the east. This section of curtain wall appears to have been consolidated, similar to the west wall.

The section of North Wall at the North Tower in the north-east corner (2.3m high internally, but 4.8m high externally) also presents a significant lean outwards from the ward towards the Park, but it is likely that the returning east wall at the corner provides some restraint. This wall should be monitored for cracking and progressive movement.

The East Wall

The East Wall is roughly 60m long and presents an overall height of about 4.8m externally for most of its length, rising to 9.2m at the East Tower. It is evident from the physical appearance of the wall that numerous buildings formerly adjoined it at various locations and have since been removed, either in their entirety or in part. The ground level within the ward is typically 2.5m higher than the ground level outside at this location. The wall thickness varies from 0.6m to 1.2m, depending on location, and there is no walkway or parapet. This wall continues from a ruinous structure (North Tower) to the north, terminates at the renovated Chapel to the south, and includes several ruinous structures. It is evident that some stabilisation work has been undertaken in recent times. For example, a masonry buttress with mass concrete base has been constructed on the outside of the wall at the Archbishop's Apartments to restrain the 7.0m-high wall where it is weakened by a flue. However, this wall does not appear to have been consolidated to the same degree as seen elsewhere. This might be due to difficult access where private dwellings have been built in close proximity.

The South Wall

The South Wall is roughly 80m long and presents an overall height of about 3.1m externally as it runs between adjoining structures. The ground level within the ward is typically the same as the ground level outside at this location. The wall tapers slightly from 1.0m thickness at its base, and there is no walkway or parapet. This wall continues from the renovated Chapel at the east, terminates at an adjoining public house to the west, and includes several structures (renovated Chapel, ruinous Gatehouse, and the ruinous Knights and Squires Chamber). This section of curtain wall appears to have been consolidated in modern times: the jointing appears to have been re-pointed.

I. The Mural Towers

There are four Mural Towers on the walls:

1. A small Mural Tower approximately 10m north of the SW corner of the site, this tower is mostly exterior to the curtain wall. Access by stairs from the interior of the site is provided up to wall-walk level.

2. The ruins of another Mural Tower are immediately adjacent to the NE corner of the site. The only remains now visible on the internal face are part of a stone vault at ground-floor level, with a curious rib at the point where it adjoins the north wall. This vault may have been the base of a building. On the exterior, there is a breakfront with cut stone quoins on the west corner and the scar of a gable, indicating a now-missing building to the north of this tower. The wall in the breakfront section is thinner than the curtain walls; the quoins suggest a date in the late 16th or 17th century for the alteration — perhaps the work of the Dutch settlers.

3. The angle tower on the SW corner of the site is flush with the external face of the wall. It is supported on a series of three squinch arches (that span diagonally across the internal corner), while the wall-walk is carried through by two openings in the superstructure of the tower. An opening in the east face of this tower suggests the wall-walk continued on the south boundary.

4. A Garderobe Tower located beside the junction of the west and north-west sections of Curtain Wall provided sanitary facilities for the castle. Its chutes exit through three points low on the exterior wall.

PLATE 49: *Mural Tower on West Wall*

PLATE 50: *Mural Tower on North Wall*

PLATES 51 AND 52: *Mural Tower at the south-west corner (external and internal view)*

PLATE 53: *Garderobe Tower*

J. Constable's Tower or North Tower

Constable's Tower has also been largely reconstructed during the current phase of works. There is a record of this tower as it was in 1986, recorded by Geoghegan *et al*. in a UCD study. The new work is largely as shown in proposed drawings made for Fingal County Council by Heritage International in 1996. The work includes the following:

1. Reconstructed upper parts of walls (mainly above string course) with wall-walk and crenellations

2. New timber trussed and slated roof

3. New intermediate timber beam and plank floors

4. New limestone surrounds to door and window openings in both grey Irish limestone and pale cream English limestone

5. New limestone chimneypieces

6. Repairs to stone stairs

7. New concrete ground floor

8. New lighting and electrical services

9. New cut limestone belfry atop the chimney on west façade

Constable's Tower is a three-storey structure that sits proud (projecting both internally and externally) of the wall, forming a bastion commanding the exterior space.

PLATES 54 AND 55: *Constable's (North) Tower 2012 (L) and 1987 (R)*

PLATES 56 AND 57: *Constable's (North) Tower from south façade 2012 (L) and 1987 (R)*

PLATE 58: *Constable's Tower interior, top floor. View of new roof trusses and boarding*

Constable's Tower is subdivided by vaulted 'cells' at ground floor and contains a large chamber with fireplace on both first and second-floor levels, with newly installed simple stone fireplaces. A subsidiary Garderobe block projects from the east façade, within which a Garderobe chute drops to discharge on the east side outside the walls. A large chimney on the west wall that is corbelled out *c.* 300mm from the wall is supported on a segmented arch located *c.* 3m over ground level. The first-floor chamber is lit by a two-light window on the north façade, while the upper chamber has two slit windows — one on the north and one on the east façade. The mural stairs and the Garderobe block are lit by several slit windows.

The mural stairs rises in the west wall and is connected to the wall-walk at first-floor level by a section of winding steps.

The upper part of the wall is projected out below roof level. A series of stone chutes throws roof water out beyond the wall line. The roof is crenellated to match the crenellations on the wall-walk. The crenellations are raised as a tower in the south-west corner, giving access to the roof. The chimney is terminated with a new square belfry and pyramidal roof.

3.3   SUMMARY OF GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY RESULTS

Electrical resistivity survey in 1991 highlighted locations of collapsed masonry, disturbance from excavation, and wall remains to the east; two structures and a possible boundary to the west; and a possible moat immediately outside the castle wall to the west (McGarry, 2001). It has not been possible to validate the findings from this early survey largely due to the use of inappropriate display formats of the project survey data. Conductivity geophysical survey in 2000 recorded suspected foundation remains to the SE and SW within Swords Castle (Whiteford, 2000), with no evidence for a moat to the west of the castle wall, or further features within the gardens facing Bridge Street.

Geophysical surveys comprising ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and resistivity survey were carried out as part of this Conservation Plan, as these are the most suitable methods for the detection of buried structures. Resistivity was carried out in the interior of the castle and outside between the castle walls and the river. Limited GPR was carried out along the eastern range and also in the area outside the castle to the west of the Gatehouse. The objective of the surveys was the non-invasive examination of the buried archaeological potential within the perimeter of the monument, providing information on any buried structures that may be present. By undertaking these surveys, it was hoped to obtain more precise information regarding the location, form and extent of buried structural remains.

At Swords Castle, no anomalies to support the presence of a moat beyond the curtain wall were recorded by either the electrical resistivity or GPR surveys. Neither were any structural features adjacent to the Chapel identified. Potential structural/foundation remains at the castle interior include electrical resistivity anomalies D, I and J to the west and east in Areas 5 and 6 (Fig. 16, Resistivity Survey). Area 1 GPR data demonstrate some correlation, with anomalies J via a concentration of strong reflections of slight linear/rectilinear form (B and D) at the same location. The level of interference noted from the GPR survey suggests that, where structural remains may be present at the castle interior, they have been significantly disturbed.

Area 2 GPR data display response patterns typical of modern service trenches and debris to the SW of the castle entrance. Potential structural features facing Bridge Street may be present (Fig. 17, GPR Survey). The remains of possible building foundations have been recorded by electrical resistivity survey in the area adjacent to the eastern range and also to the west in front of the Knights and Squires Chamber. The survey has indicted that these areas are of definite archaeological potential.

The geophysical survey results displayed high levels of modern disturbance and potential geological interference. The results indicate sources of modern interference, including metal debris, service trenches and landscaping. As a result, interpretation of the geophysical data from Swords Castle has been compromised by the levels of interference encountered. The potential that significant remains have not been detected elsewhere in the site due to this interference should not be dismissed.

Potential structural features of possible archaeological significance recorded from survey will require further invasive examination either by trial trenching or excavation. The geophysical survey interpretative plots will allow focused and strategic investigations to take place. Further invasive archaeological investigations in these areas would greatly assist in the continuing interpretation of this monument.
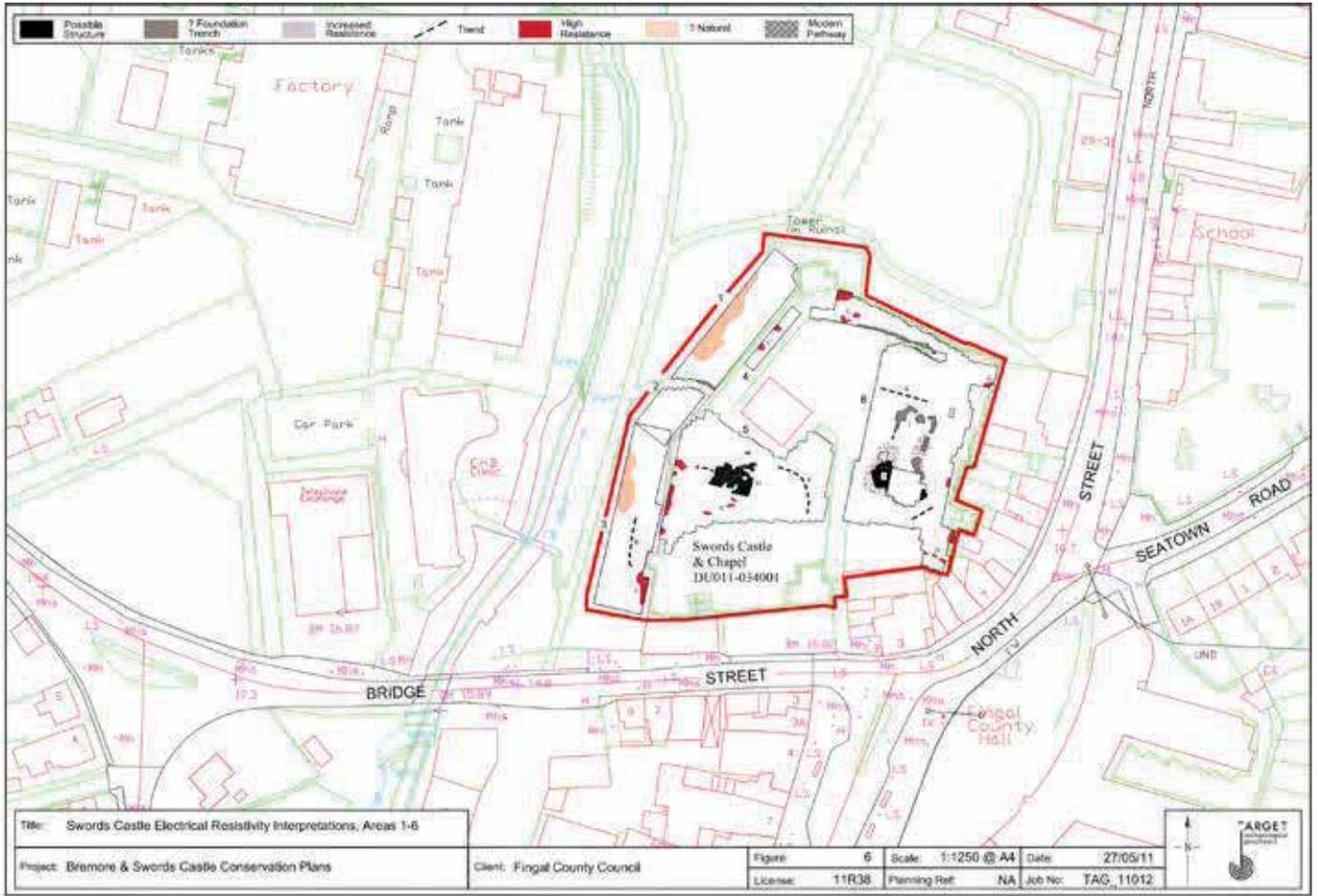
Figure 16: *Interpretation of resistivity survey results*

Figure 17: *Interpretation of ground penetration radar survey results*

3.4   THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

3.4.1   Introduction

This section examines the archaeological findings to date at Swords Castle and discusses the below-ground archaeological and potential of the site. Research and development-led archaeological monitoring and excavation have been conducted within and in the immediate vicinity of the walled precinct of the manor. A plan and discussion of the complex was undertaken by Leask in 1914 (Fig. 18). In advance of the conservation and reconstruction works, a full excavation was carried out by T. Fanning (1971) in the south-eastern corner of the site. In 2001, the removal of overburden immediately north of the Knights and Squires Chamber was carried out as an archaeological exercise to the top level of the archaeology (E. O'Sullivan, 2001) (Fig. 19). Unlicensed archaeological monitoring was also carried out during the reconstruction of the Constable's (North) Tower, the insertion of services and the restoration of the wall-walk and walls along the east and northern walls. The extent of this monitoring is illustrated in Figure 20.
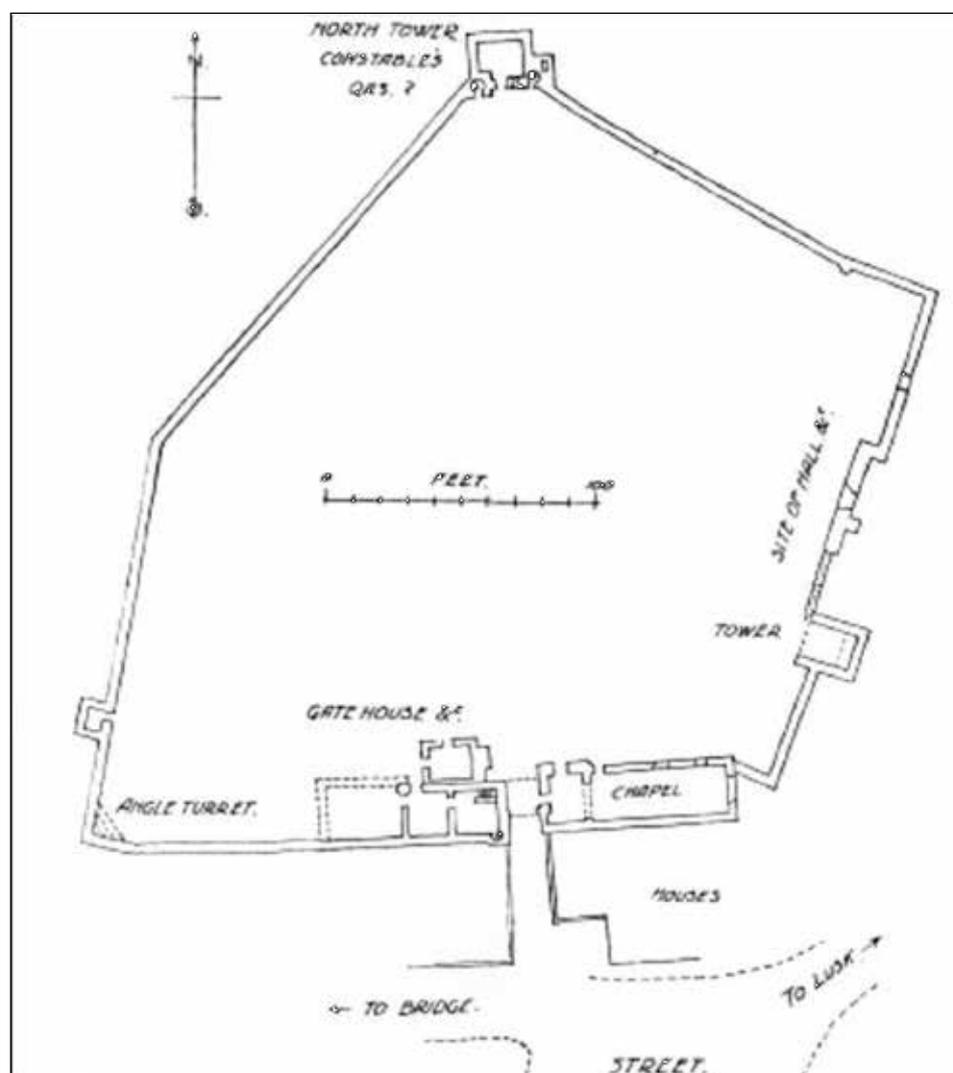
Figure 18: *Plan of castle by Leask, 1914*

3.4.2 Archaeological Investigation

Archaeological investigations were carried out in the following areas of the site:

- South-eastern Angle — the Chamber Block (B), Chapel (A) and site of the Archbishop's Apartments (E)

- South-western Area — west and north of the Knights and Squires Chambers (D)

- Constable's (North) Tower (J)

- Entrance Gateway (C)

- Works immediately outside the castle

3.4.3 South-eastern Angle

Full excavation in the south-eastern area of the castle was carried out in 1971 by Thomas Fanning. The excavation was confined to the Chamber Block and adjoining Chapel situated to the east of the castle Gatehouse and the area at the south-eastern angle of the curtain wall, thought to be the site of the Archbishop's Apartments. A number of excavation cuttings were also extended outside of the range of buildings to the north and east to *c.* 2m, with an area measuring 9m by 5m.

PLATE 59: *View towards the south-eastern range*
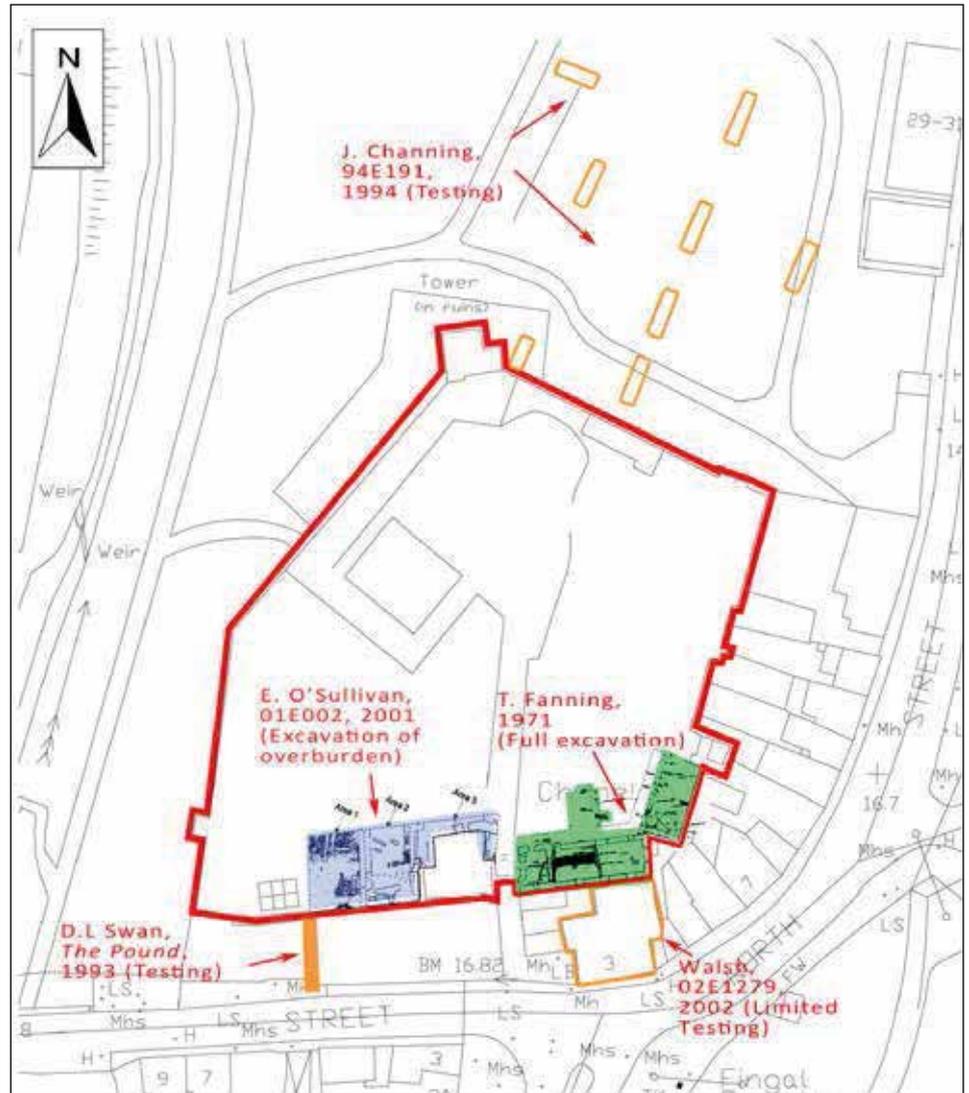
FIGURE 19: *Plan showing areas that have been archaeologically investigated*
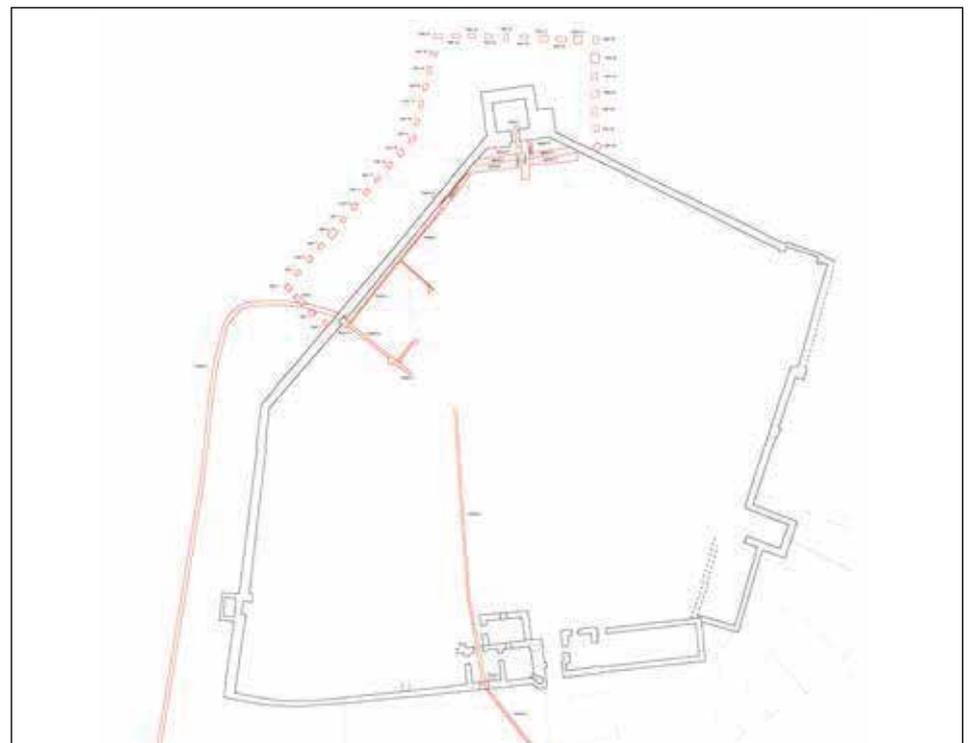
FIGURE 20: *Plan showing the approximate location of unlicensed archaeological monitoring during 1996-97*

3.4.4 Chapel and Chamber Block (A and B)

. . . a silver coin, a denier tournois for Philip IV of France (1285-1314) was recovered from a post-hole . . .

The original floor level of the Chapel was disturbed by the reuse of the structure as a stable in the 18th and 19th centuries. A central cobbled area, which post-dated 1800, destroyed all traces of the earlier floor levels. Limestone dressing from a window and a pair of dressed heel-stones from a doorway were reused within this surface. The basal course of the north wall of the Chapel was found to lie directly on the boulder clay without any foundation trench dug. Beside this wall, a silver coin, a *denier tournois* for Philip IV of France (1285-1314) was recovered from a post-hole, possibly a scaffolding hole. It is thought that the coin may have been lost in the course of construction. The coin dates to *c.* 1310, providing an early 14th-century date for the construction of the Chapel.

Undisturbed boulder clay was quite close to the surface at the eastern end of the Chapel — the area was disturbed by 19th-century gardening activities. Besides some modern material, and fragments of late (17th-century) wares, numerous pieces of decorated medieval floor tiles were recovered, numbering upwards of 500 fragments scattered throughout the deposits overlying the boulder clay. None of these tiles was found *in situ* and were concentrated only in this area of the Chapel. Fanning suggests that these fragments represent the remains of the original floor in the east end of what he describes as the sanctuary area surrounding the altar. A re-creation of a pavement of replica floor tiles (replicating some of the tiles found *in situ* in the neighbouring 'chamber' building) has been inserted into this area of the recently reconstructed Chapel. Immediately outside the Chapel door, a pebble floor was identified. Fanning suggests that it was associated with the lean-to structure mentioned by Leask (1914) that protected the external stairs to tower.

Excavation within the tower did not reveal any features of interest. The interior was disturbed by modern debris, and the original floor level destroyed by a French drain. Finds from the tower were few due to the 18th-century alterations. A foundation was found under the east wall of the tower, which led Fanning to believe that the Chapel was built later than the tower.
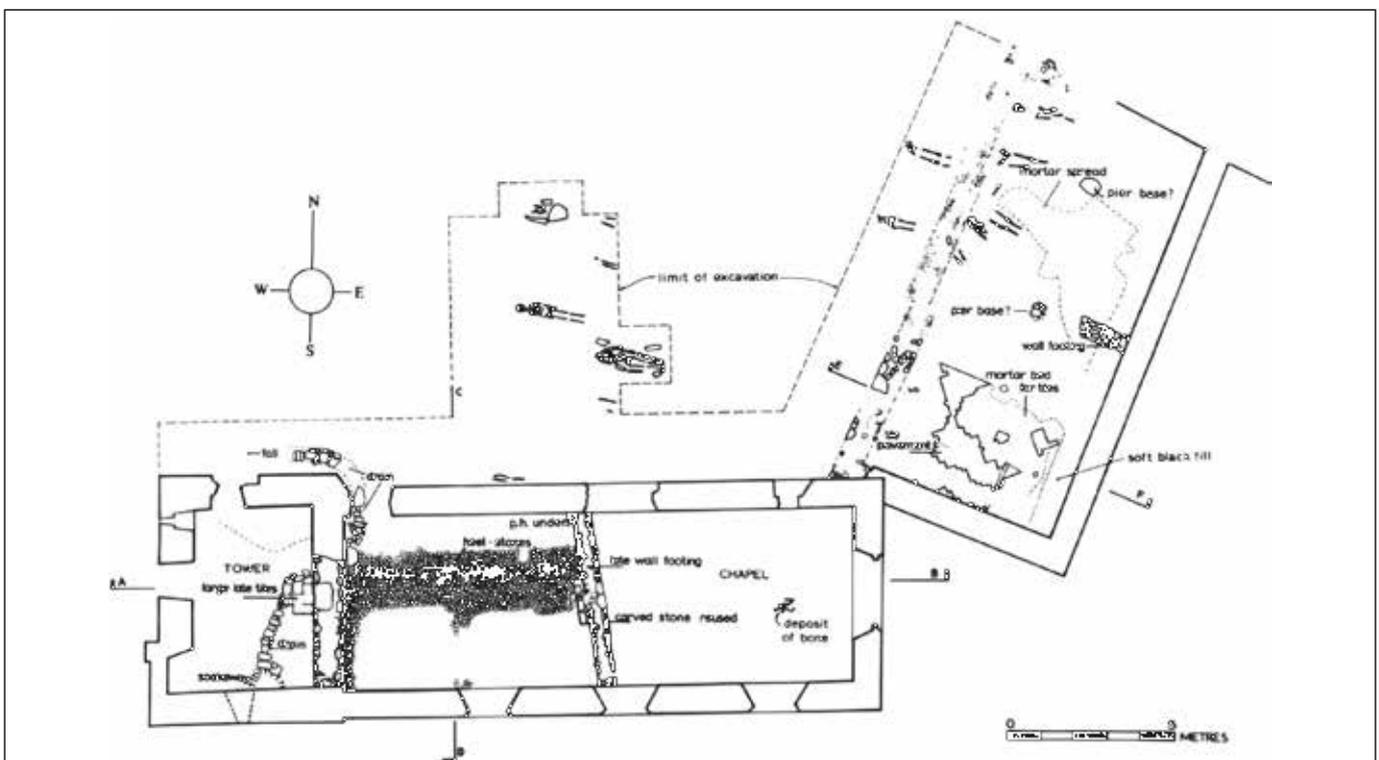
Figure 21: *Record from Fanning's report showing the areas excavated and finds made in the south-east corner building (Archbishop's Apartments)*

3.4.5 South-eastern Angle (site of the Archbishop's Apartment) (E)

. . . the patterns included a lion rampant, a lion's head, and geometric and floral designs arranged within borders . . .

Excavation in the south-eastern angle of the precinct revealed the lowest foundation of a western wall of a rectangular structure, measuring 12.4m by 6m internally, and referred to as the Archbishop's Apartments. Within the structure at the southeast angle was evidence of an east-west division. Some set stones discovered along the same line and to the north may represent the bases of small piers. A mortar spread formed the floor level of the building. Overlying this were floor and roof tile fragments and a little medieval pottery. In the southern sector, underlying rubble and loose mortar, was a seam of purple roofing slate. Beneath this layer of slate was a thin layer of rubble which overlays a decorated medieval tile pavement *in situ*.

The pavement area measured *c.* 4m by 6m. It ran to the southern and western walls with its northern limits clearly defined by a row of half-tiles. The pavement was laid out on an east-west axis. It consisted of two types of decorated medieval tiles — stamped and linear-impressed. Line impressed decoration was most popular in the 14th century and continued in fashion until the early 16th century. The patterns included a lion rampant, a lion's head, and geometric and floral designs arranged within borders — these illustrations are quite distinct and were popular at the time. Many of these patterns also occurred on the fragments found within the Chapel; similar patterns are known from Mellifont Abbey, Christ Church and in St Brigid's Cathedral in Kildare. A recent discovery (1997) of an *in situ* pavement was found at the site of the Augustinian Abbey of St Thomas the Martyr in Dublin. Alan's *Liber Niger* (1326) describes the use of shingles in the roof structures at the site. Although evidence of this has yet to be found, green-glazed medieval roof tiles and cruder roof tiles were identified during Fanning's excavations.

Fanning suggests that the Archbishop's Apartments would have been nearby, possibly between the hall and the chapel, and he suggests that this structure was one of the chambers mentioned in 1326. He noted that chambers in comparative sites in England were divided into a reception room, a bed-chamber and a private oratory. Fanning suggests that in Swords the tiled pavement formed the floor of the private oratory in the Archbishop's Apartments (Fanning, 1973, 1975). The tiles articulate the wealth of the archbishops during this period. Some of the tiles are held in the National Museum of Ireland (NMI), Kildare Street, Dublin 2, and some are on display (NMI Habitat number C31:17/18). No definitive evidence that all the tiles have been removed from the site could be identified. While deemed to be unlikely, there is a potential that some of the tiles may remain *in situ* beneath the current ground surface.
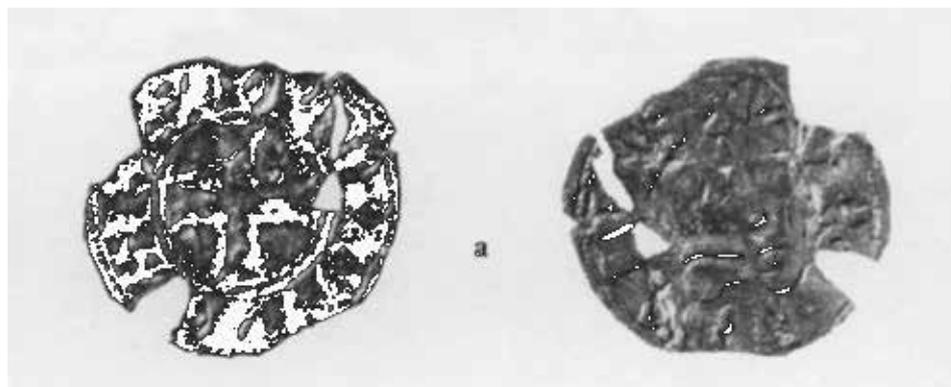
PLATE 60: *Record from Fanning's report showing both faces of the silver denier tournois coin found beside the basal course (foundations) of the Chapel*

The dating of the tiles proved to be problematic because Fanning uses 1324 as the *terminus* for the use of the manor, *i.e.* when Archbishop De Bicknor built the castle in Tallaght in favour of Swords; he suggests that the dilapidation described in the Inquisition of 1326 was caused by the abandonment of the site. It is now generally accepted, however, that the manor continued in use. The line impressed mosaic fragments at Swords and the *denier tournois* coin identified at the site suggest the early 14th-century construction of the Chapel/Hall and chamber block. Fanning concludes with a note of caution: if the tiles are later than 1326 (which is considered likely), this suggests that more structural work on the domestic buildings, as well on the defences, had taken place at the site well into the 15th century.

It is believed that the craft of making decorated floor tiles was brought to Ireland from England and Wales by the Anglo-Normans and was then developed by local tile-makers. Neutron activation analysis carried out on the tiles from Swords, along with tiles from Cheshire in England and Kells, Co. Meath, showed that the tiles were manufactured in Ireland, although the source of the clay for the Kells and Swords tiles was not the same (Hughes and Cherry, 1988).

Neutron activation analysis carried out on the tiles from Swords . . . showed that the tiles were manufactured in Ireland . . .
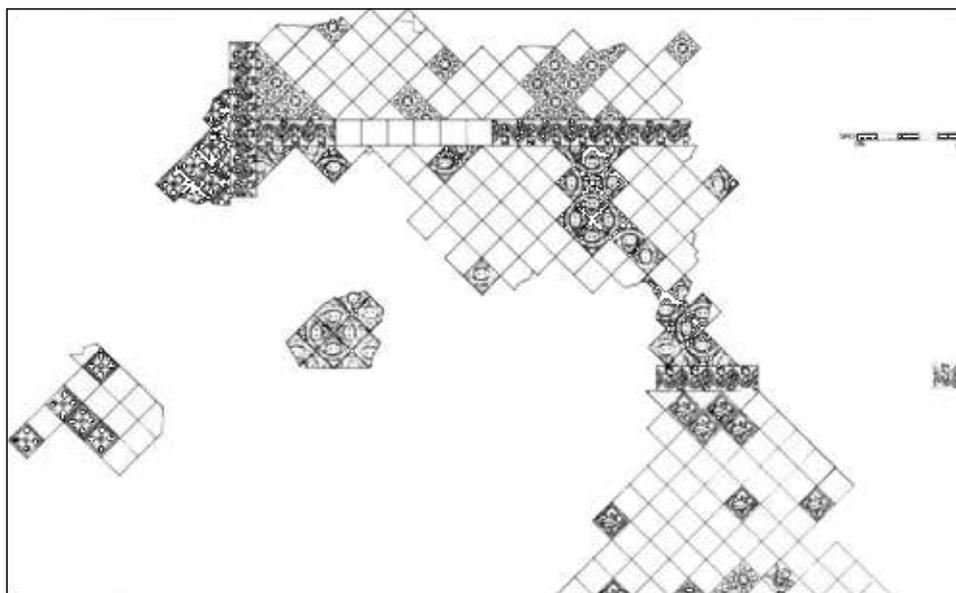
PLATE 61 AND FIGURE 22: *Record from Fanning's report showing location and pattern of the medieval pavement found* in situ *in the Archbishop's Apartments*

3.4.6 Burials

It appears that the bawn area of the manor was used as a burial ground when it was no longer occupied.

In a raised area immediately north of the Chapel, Fanning found a group of extended burials that were orientated east-west generally and placed in shallow graves. There was at least one formal grave consisting of a number of small slabs set on edge so as to form a rough cist. The skeletons showed various signs of disturbance and some displacement caused by the later planting of the orchard and gardening works. Another similar group of extended skeletons was within the area of the Archbishop's Apartments. They extended northwards from the north-east corner of the structure and were found to lay on either side of the wall-footings that were discovered, suggesting that the wall was standing when the interments took place.

The burials included males, females and children, and were broadly contemporary. It appears that the bawn area of the manor was used as a burial ground when it was no longer occupied. Despite the burials being in shallow graves, and the fact that no grave slabs have been identified, Fanning suggests that burials are associated with the late 16th-century occupation of the castle by the Dutch Protestants rather than to the 1641 skirmish between the Parliamentarian forces and the Anglo-Irish, to the Great Famine (1845-47) or to plague.

3.4.7 West and North of the Knights and Squires Chamber (D)

PLATE 62: *2011 investigation, west of the Knights and Squires Chamber, showing the terram layer of the 2001 investigation*

The removal of overburden to the top level of the archaeology was carried out as an archaeological exercise (E. O'Sullivan, 2001) in the area in front of and to the west of the Knights and Squires Chamber. The top of the archaeological level was identified *c.* 0.3m-0.95m (sloping from east-to-west) below the ground level recorded at the time which comprised overburden. The excavation revealed evidence of wall footings, paths and ground surfaces. The ground surface uncovered comprised a rough, stony surface crossed with paths and drains. Finds include a fragment of medieval moulding and occasional mortar bonding and a mixture of medieval and post-medieval pottery. Fragments of decorated tiles similar to those identified in the Archbishop's Apartments were also found. It is suggested that this area may have been used as a yard. The date of this ground surface is uncertain; however, owing to the presence of the architectural fragment, it would appear that the surface post-dates the original usage of the castle building.

The southern Curtain Wall was exposed, and its elevation revealed complex re-use and re-building works. These included the possible return of a barrel vault identified by a large clay filled gap in the wall and may indicate the continuation of a second barrel-vaulted room at the east end of the building. West of this, traces of joining stones for a wall perpendicular to the Curtain Wall provide evidence for an additional structure in this area. The elevation also indicates a possible doorway, which was subsequently demolished, and a splayed window was inserted in the later construction. There is also an arched doorway to provide access to the 19th-century garden.

Abutting the northern side of the gateway around the later Huguenot building, a stone footing was uncovered 0.30m below present ground surface.

The ground surface that was uncovered remains *in situ* beneath a protective terram layer. This area is considered to be of considerable archaeological potential and it is very likely that further medieval deposits exist beneath the layers exposed.

3.4.8 Constable's (North) Tower (J)

An examination of a photographic archive recording archaeological works that took place during the rebuilding of the Constable's (North) Tower in *c.* 1996/7 has indicated that archaeological monitoring had been carried out in conjunction with the reconstruction works.

. . . the exact areas that have been archaeologically resolved or preserved in situ *are not precisely known and are therefore vulnerable.*

The original ground level within the tower had not been exposed and there is a possibility that there are preserved archaeological remains beneath the existing floor within the building (personal comment by site foreman). The ground level immediately in front of the tower was taken down to the level that exists today by *c.* 1m, a terram layer was placed on top of this suggesting that there is *in situ* archaeological material here. A service channel to a depth of *c.* 40cm running from the postern gate along the western perimeter walls into the Constable's Tower was dug; although archaeological monitoring has been undertaken it is not known if any features were identified.

Unfortunately, for the purpose of this Plan, only a limited written record of this phase of archaeological work has been located and assessed (Phase 4). This presents issues in the continuing management and understanding of the site as the exact areas that have been archaeologically resolved or preserved *in situ* are not precisely known and are therefore vulnerable.

3.4.9 Gatehouse (C)

In 2011, archaeological monitoring under Ministerial Consent took place of a trench excavated for the purpose of laying a cable during the course of stabilisation works. These investigations took place beneath the gateway arch and along the entrance ramp and revealed a wall *c.* 0.8m wide, which ran east-west across the front of the gateway entrance. The width of the wall suggests a medieval date. Parallel to this wall, a further two considerably narrower walls parallel to the larger wall were identified close to the entrance at the street. The function of these walls is unknown and should be subject to further examination.

PLATES 63 AND 64: *The investigations under the Gatehouse, 2011*

3.4.10 Works immediately outside the Castle

. . . there is significant potential to reveal medieval archaeological remains.

Monitoring was undertaken of foundation trenches at 'The Pound' licensed premises on Bridge Street (Swan, 1994), which lies immediately outside the walled precinct to the south. This revealed a ditch that the archaeologist suggested was part of a moat that may have encircled the outer face of the castle wall. This feature was dated to the medieval period by the recovery of pottery (Swan , 1994, 33). Further archaeological testing adjacent to the castle — in 1994 in the green area to the north (J. Channing, 94E191) and in 1995 to the south on Bridge Street and North Street — did not reveal further signs of the ditch (Gowen, 95E243 and 95E244; Halpin, 99E0320). The recent geophysical survey carried out outside the western wall of the precinct did not reveal any features that might suggest the presence of a moat/ditch.

The investigations at Bridge Street in 1995 (Gowen, 1996, 29) and 1996 (Gowen, 1997, 38), in connection with the Health Centre development, revealed some post-medieval structural remains and a deposit of 'garden soil' containing medieval pottery fragments and a piece of a glazed medieval floor tile. Despite its proximity to the Ward River, no remnants of mill buildings or related mill activity were revealed. Limited testing at No. 3 Main Street, a premises that adjoins the curtain wall of the castle, did uncover deposits up to 1m deep that are medieval in date (Walsh, 2000, 188). This demonstrates that there is significant potential to reveal medieval archaeological remains.

3.4.11 Summary of Works

The status of Swords Castle as a National Monument recognises the importance of the buried archaeology present within the site, and as such affords the monument the highest level of protection. After Fanning's excavations, little new archaeological research work has been carried out at the site. With the exception of O'Sullivan's clearance works, subsequent archaeological work carried out at the castle predominately involved monitoring of piecemeal service works without preliminary impact assessments being carried out prior to the works taking place. Few monitoring interventions have been reported upon. Thus the cumulative impact on the integrity of the archaeological deposits and their evidential value is unknown.

An examination of the existing available records has shown that there are *in situ* archaeological remains within Swords Castle, the full nature and extent of which are unknown (with the exception of O'Sullivan's work at the Knights and Squires Chamber). These remains have been covered in a terram layer and backfilled with topsoil; other areas may be similarly treated but there are no records indicating them.

Known archaeological remains *in situ* include the area:

■ Beneath a terram layer in front of the Knights and Squires Chamber

■ Beneath a terram layer in front of Constable's Tower

■ Within ground floor interior of Constable's Tower

■ Potentially beneath a terram layer immediately outside the castle in front of the Chapel

In addition to the above-mentioned areas, the geophysical survey has also indicated areas of significant archaeological potential along the eastern range and in the south-western quadrant of the site. The extent and nature of these sites can only be established by carrying out invasive archaeological assessment.

Areas with in-situ archaeology beneath geotextile terram layer

GPR survey areas and approx. location of GPR anomalies

Resitivity survey areas and location of resitivity anomalies
(see detailed resitivity survey plan)

Areas archaeologically resolved

Areas where no archaeological investigations have been carried out
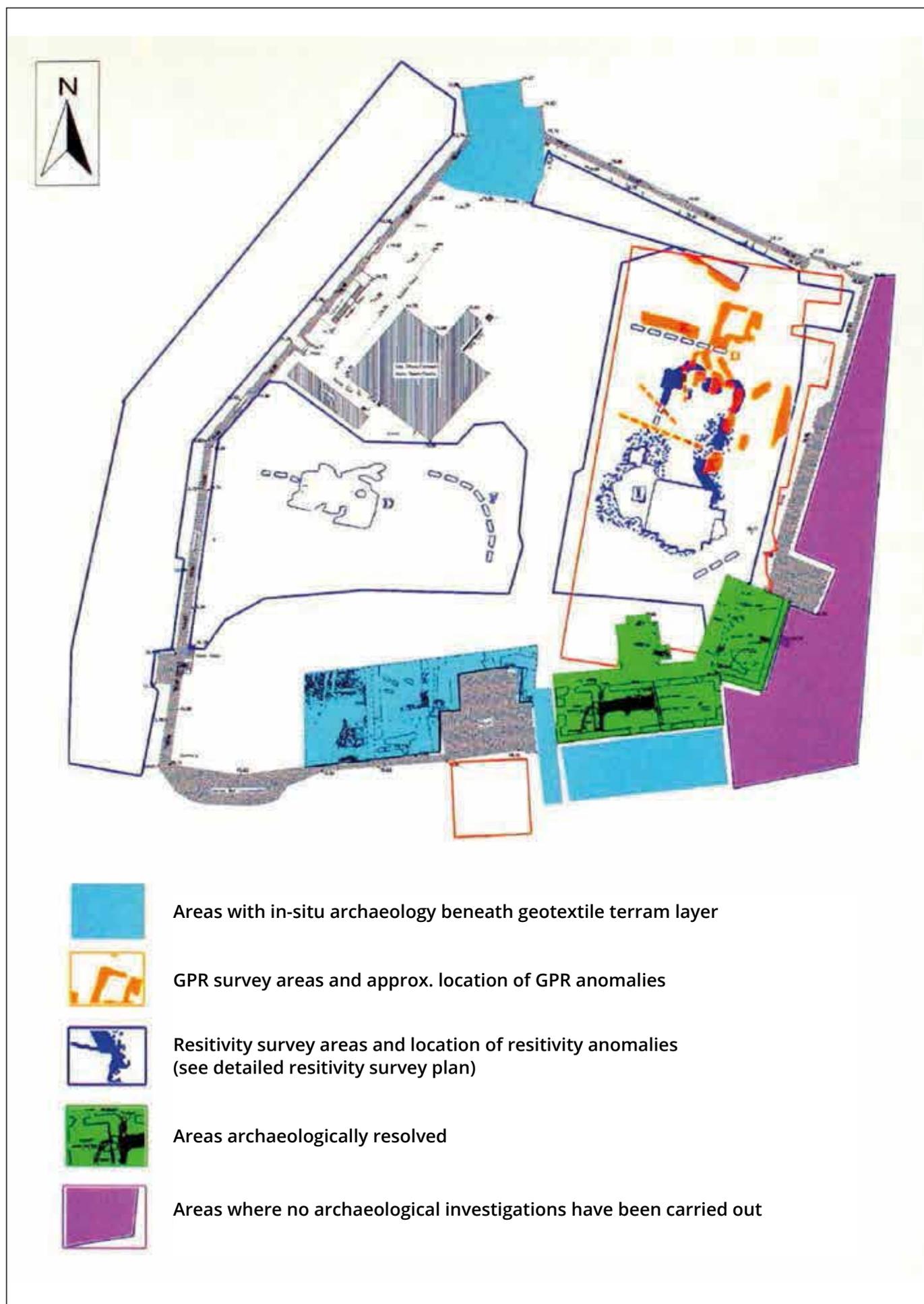
Figure 23: *Plan showing areas of archaeological potential*

3.5   HISTORIC GARDEN DISCUSSION

Following on from the monastic tradition, herbs and medicinal plants were commonly grown in early garden sites for domestic use, as well as for human and animal ailments.

Despite its relatively well-documented history, Swords Castle has little known, discovered or published history of the enclosed garden area of ground within its walls. We are reliant on snatches of information gleaned from documents referenced elsewhere and in the Conservation Plan. The 19th and early 20th-century historical Ordnance Survey maps are the main sources for information, so we must focus on these for some understanding of the site (Part II, section 2.3 Cartographic Record, Fig. 9 [1st edition, 6-inch, 1836], Fig. 10 [1872 revision (6-inch)], Fig.12 [1865 revision (25-inch)] and Fig. 13 [1906 revision (25-inch)].

In many early documentary sources, the area of ground was variously described as a bawn, a court, a ward, an enclosure and a haggard. It is well established from these sources that it was predominantly used to store grain and crops and probably livestock for short periods as needs be. While it was home to several bishops, there must have been some part of the site used for pleasure and cultivation, but no records were discovered to show a layout until the first Ordnance Survey map was published in 1843. It is likely that the food needs of people living on this site were locally supplied. It is only seven miles from Dublin and less than three old miles from the coast. The area abounds in estates and demesne landscapes so except during periods of social turmoil, food could be easily obtained. As a Church property, it is likely that the collection of tithes, taxes and monies also provided sources of food as payments. Despite the proximity of the river, there is no record of an ice house, a dovecote or meat store. There is no documentary evidence or contemporary accounts that Swords Castle had any significant garden within its bawn area. There had to be some gardening activity when it was used as a dwelling at various periods. Much later, in the 18th century, it is first described as possessing a garden and an orchard.

Archaeological investigation of the site should include seeking evidence of early gardening activity from the 15th to the 19th century. Following on from the monastic tradition, herbs and medicinal plants were commonly grown in early garden sites for domestic use, as well as for human and animal ailments. Evidence of such activity was found within the bawn of Barryscourt Castle, Co. Cork, which enabled the re-creation of a typical medieval herber and is a good example of such a garden of that period. It is reasonable to expect that Swords Castle, as a bishop's palace, also had a herber, a potager and a small ornamental garden of scented flowers and fruits.

The references in literature and descriptions of this site in the late 18th and 19th centuries refer to its orchard (Part 2, 2.4 Outline Chronology) and garden, but no description is given of them or their contents. The fact that an orchard existed and that cultivated trees in an orchard layout are clearly evident on the OS maps confirms this; the type of orchard remains unknown, but it is no earlier than the mid-19th century. Cherry, pear, apple, damson and plum orchards were cultivated in Ireland. Hops, vines, figs, nuts and bush fruits were also cultivated.

The documentary evidence for a garden in active cultivation is first offered by the historical Ordnance Survey (OS) 1st-edition map of 1836-43. It depicts the enclosed area of ground within the castle walls (originally its bawn or court) as a simply laid-out 'kitchen' garden divided into four cultivation plots with perimeter wall borders. The depiction of four main plots in cultivation, each plot bounded by paths and perimeter borders between the paths and parallel to the enclosing walls, would be a typical layout of a Georgian walled garden. No trees or orchard layout is shown on this edition.

If it were solely an orchard, the types of fruit it contained remain unclear. Was it cherries, pears, damsons or apples?

By 1865, when the survey for the 1st-edition 25-inch map was carried out, its layout was recorded showing it as a more sophisticated 'walled garden' with deciduous trees dotted about. While this edition shows the trees, the formal spacing and arrangement of an orchard is not evident, so it cannot be presumed that the area was then purposefully planted as an orchard. This edition also indicates the presence of scrub or shrubs, so there may have been a mixed assortment of fruit and ornamental trees. If it were solely an orchard, the types of fruit it contained remain unclear. Was it cherries, pears, damsons or apples? Since neighbouring demesnes such as Breckdenston (Brackenstown) were growing these fruits and others, it is not unlikely that Swords Castle may have also had a motley collection.

The 1872 OS revision of the 1st edition of 1836-43 does not record the dramatic changes of layout within the garden that are recorded on the 1865 map.

The 1906 OS revision depicts the bawn/court as an orchard for the first time, but by then no paths or perimeter borders are shown. Were they not evident by then; had they gone into an unkempt state and become totally overgrown? If they were still visible, why would the 1906 revision have overlooked or ignored them?

The 1937 OS map revision again shows an orchard layout, but with no paths or borders evident. So we are reliant on the 25-inch OS map of 1865, which portrays the garden during its most attractive and productive period. The paths are crisply marked on this edition. They are regular in outline and clearly defined in (what appears to be) their entirety.

What is recorded on all the editions and revisions of the historical OS maps are the main plots and perimeter borders, significant-sized trees and the main path system, and minor paths constructed of permanent materials. There is a hierarchy in walled garden path systems. In well-designed, properly laid-out and skilfully managed walled gardens, certain paths were for the sole use of the family and its honoured guests, while others were for the gardeners, garden boys, weeding women, labourers and domestic servants. The paths used for family and visitors were better constructed, their surfaces better finished and better kept than the working paths that were movable as needs be and inevitably muddy or dusty at times. It is known that surveyors did not record 'beaten earth' paths or grass paths, as these were not permanent features. Therefore it should not be assumed that other paths were not also present here in the garden of Swords Castle. The 1865 OS map hints that there were other paths here not recorded by the surveyor.

Any proposed restoration or re-instatement of the path system should take this into consideration. Redesigning this garden for future use without fully investigating whether the 1865 path system (or earlier one of 1836-43) was still extant would be a great loss of integrity.

Archaeological investigation of the site should include seeking evidence of previous gardening activity.

Today, what is still very evident is its 'microclimate' — or more precisely its 'macroclimate' — and its potential for heritage garden tourism. The use of the castle walls as a thermal benefactor is obvious when one enters the walled enclosure. The 'bawn', 'walled garden', enclosure or court of Swords Castle is similar in size to walled gardens in 18th and 19th-century demesnes. The protection and security afforded by the walls ensured that the orchard and garden were safe from vandalism and thievery, and the thermal effect of the walls created a milder 'microclimate' conducive to successful horticulture. This is still valid today.

PLATE 65: *Enclosed green area*

What makes this site historically interesting is that it has survived as a bawn, a court, and an enclosed garden site in the centre of a medieval town. The historical Ordnance Survey maps have recorded its use as a garden or orchard from at least the period 1836 to 1937, but various accounts and descriptions of the site record much earlier periods of agricultural, horticultural and orchard activity.

A significant change to the old orchard would have occurred when the Cobbe family took possession *c.* 1830. The Cobbes are recorded as 'planting an orchard' when they took over Swords Castle. It would seem from this account that the older orchard was grubbed out by the Cobbes and an entirely new one planted. This is not unusual for old orchards, as decayed, diseased, senescent or unproductive trees would be routinely 'grubbed out' when they became unsustainable and replanted with better varieties as they became available.

A comparative survey of the orchard at Newbridge House, Donabate, which has been documented, may yield further information. It may also provide suitable scion wood for propagation and planting historic varieties of fruit trees in Swords Castle garden.

PLATE 66: *Apple tree*

The few surviving apple trees growing at present in the east side of the enclosure date from the 19th to the early 20th century and are the remnants of the orchard planted by the Cobbe family. The largest of these is an old Bramley that is probably the oldest survivor. It and several other veteran fruit trees, all on the raised ground level, are relics of the old orchard and should be preserved, if possible.

Its unique relationship with Newbridge and the Cobbe family, as well as its rarity value for visitors as a surviving Archbishop's Palace, would ensure that Swords Castle could be developed as a major attraction and bring business back into this part of town. Its enclosed site is a unique feature that would be a safe venue for families with children.
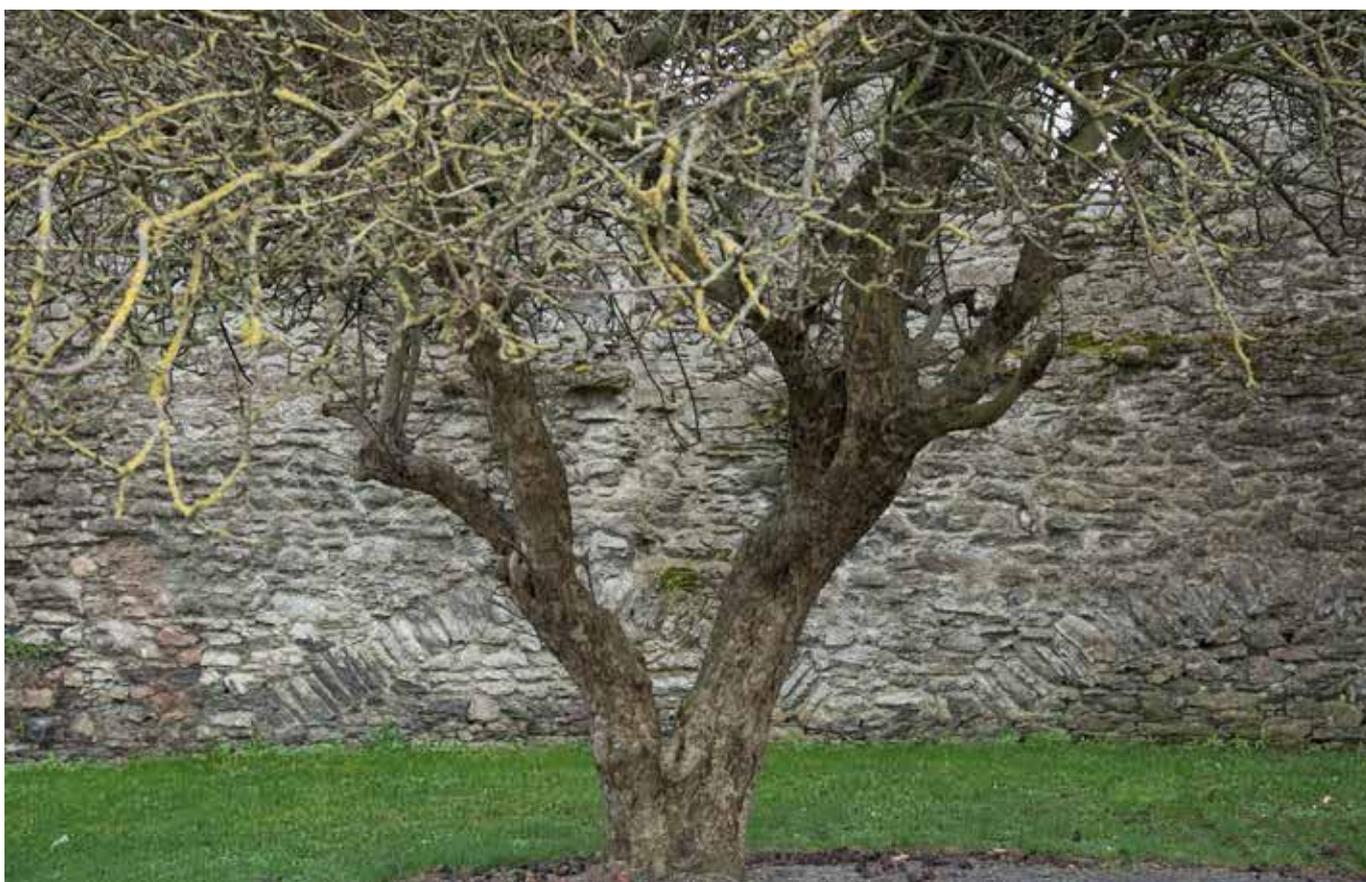
PART 4: ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

PLATE 67: *Constable's (North) Tower*

4.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MONUMENT

Swords Castle is the best surviving upstanding medieval episcopal manor in Ireland and is designated a National Monument.

The significance of Swords Castle is multi-layered and relates to aspects of its architecture, history and archaeology. The environment within the walls of the castle and its relationship to the urban and administrative centre of Swords is also of cultural significance and an important consideration for the future use of the monument.

PLATE 68: *Swords Castle, early 20th century*

4.1.1 Architectural Significance

This monument is primarily an Archbishop's Residence. It is semi-fortified but was never a serious defensive construction, as one would expect of contemporary Norman castles. It is this primarily residential aspect that makes Swords especially interesting as it differentiates it from the military castle developed by the Normans at the time.

In order to protect the unique identity of the castle, it is more appropriate to refer to the monument as *'The Archbishop's Residence of Swords Castle'*.

Its contribution to the local and regional landscape is of considerable significance as one of the extraordinary landmarks in north Co. Dublin overshadowing the development of the layout of Swords town. The recent removal of structures at the entrance to the monument has improved its physical and visual presence, provoking local interest.

Swords Castle is listed as a protected structure (RPS Ref: 351) in the Fingal County Development Plan 2011–17 and is protected under Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. As such, any works of alteration or addition to existing structures or new structures within the site that are proposed to be carried out by or for the local authority must obtain consent under Part 11 of Planning and Development Act, 2000/Part 8 of Planning Regulations. Repair and stabilisation works adhering to best practice conservation principles and methods do not require planning permission, where they have been agreed with the Conservation Officer. There is an opportunity through architectural design to place the castle at the centre of Swords town.

4.1.2 Historic Significance

In terms of its architecture and history, the Episcopal Manor at Swords is a complex site that represents at least 400 years of development, re-design, alteration, re-use and adaptation. It reflects the changing fortune and whims of the archbishops and later owners and the architectural fashions of the time.

Along with the archbishops, notable families such as the Barnewalls and Cobbes have been associated with the castle.

The gathering of the pro-Royalist forces in 1641 supported by many of the leading families in the area is an indication of the status of the location — although the ease with which they were defeated by the Parliamentarian forces may be a commentary on the lack of practicality of the castle as a defensive structure.

Through a research framework, there is an opportunity to fill in the gaps in the historical knowledge of Swords. Themes that could be considered include:

- The function and phasing of buildings
- The origin of design principles for an archbishop's residence, examples of which could be explored from Wales and England
- Further exploration of the recent past and the Cobbe family ownership

4.1.3 Archaeological Significance

Swords Castle is a substantial monument containing a rich assembly of historic buildings of great antiquity, of artefacts and architectural features.

The Minister for the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is responsible for the protection of our archaeological heritage using the provisions of the National Monuments (Amendments) Acts 1930 to 2004. Swords Castle is designated in the Records of Monuments and Places (RMP Reference No. DU011-034), as established under Section 12 (1) of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. The site is classified as an Anglo-Norman castle.

The site is a 'National Monument' as defined in the 1930 Act and is in the ownership of Fingal County Council. The provisions attaching to it in terms of development control and management rest in the context of Ministerial Directions. Section 14 (as amended by section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 2004) provides that, where a monument is in the ownership of a local authority, it shall not be lawful:

a) to demolish or remove it wholly or in part or to disfigure, deface, alter, or in any manner injure or interfere with it, or

b) to excavate, dig, plough or otherwise disturb the ground within, around or in proximity to it, or

c) to renovate or restore it, or

d) to sell it or any part of it for exportation or to export it or any part of it, unless done in accordance with a consent granted by the Minister. Breach of section 14 of the 1930 Act is an offence (section 14(5) of the 1930 Act refers) which may be tried summarily or on indictment. Significant penalties may apply on conviction.

Therefore Fingal County Council, as the guardian and the landowner of the monument as defined in the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004, **must** apply for Ministerial Consent for any works that fall within Section 14 a) to d).

4.1.4 Archaeological Potential

. . . there is an opportunity to find out more about how the manor worked on a daily basis and to tell the story of the people as well as the buildings of the castle.

Excavation and the monitoring of overburden along the southern sector of the site have demonstrated that stratified medieval and later deposits exist within the site. Datable artefactual and environmental assemblages are contained in stratified deposits and are likely to comprise a sequence dated from the 13th century to the present.

Geophysical survey has also identified several areas of subsurface archaeological potential. The work carried out on-site to date has indicated the potential richness of the subsurface archaeology and underlines the importance of further investigations at the site.

The buried archaeological remains within the precinct, especially along the eastern range and in the south-east area of the site, are potentially a valuable source of information about the administration of one of the largest manorial centres in north Co. Dublin and of the domestic life in the manor.

Through targeted archaeological investigation and excavation and environmental analysis, there is an opportunity to find out more about how the manor worked on a daily basis and to tell the story of the people as well as the buildings of the castle. For example, work can be carried out as to where produce was grown within the castle walls, what type of crop was grown and when.

4.1.5 Ecology — Opportunities for the Natural Environment

The symbiotic effect of encouraging and facilitating flora and wildlife will bring many benefits and rewards to the castle while increasing the biodiversity of the enclosed walled area.

PLATE 69: *Ivy-leaved toadflax*

The castle's close proximity to the river and its floodplain meadow offers huge opportunities for wildlife, especially if the walls are exploited as wild habitats and roosts. The walls act as thermal conductors, vertical cliffs and a protective environment for a great number of species.

The stone walls are already hosting a number of beneficial species of native and exotic flora, lichens, mosses, ferns and light herbage, all of which thrive because of the protection and opportunities that the walls provide. These should not be cleared when wall repairs are carried out, as they cause no threat to the fabric of the walls. Repaired sections of wall are already being re-colonised by light herbage, and this will increase the site's biodiversity.

PLATE 70: *Wall spleenwort*

The weathered sections of the walls are hosting a number of beneficial species of native and exotic flora, lichens, mosses, ferns and light herbage, all of which thrive because of the protection and opportunities that the walls provide. Wall spleenworts, polypody fern, ivy-leaved toadflax, wall pellitory and other desirable herbage were noted on the walls during site work.

Highly undesirable woody species such as bramble, common ivy, buddleia, perennial nettle, wall valerian, ragwort and feral snapdragon were also seen in the crumbling sections and in the scrub layer at ground level. These pernicious species should be removed as wall repairs progress and the ground area of the remnant orchard is cleaned.

PLATE 71: *Ivy, buddleia and ragwort*

PLATE 72: *Snapdragon*

The weathered masonry and lime mortar typically offer safe habitats to a number of insect species, butterfly and moth larvae, and this will encourage small birds and mammals to set up their nesting sites close by.

There are probably several species of bats in the area, and they should be recorded and their populations monitored and encouraged. These creatures benefit from the presence of the river and its floodplain meadow and the public park trees.

The adjoining public park area extends the scope and range of the native and exotic flora and fauna to thrive in and around the precincts of the site. Native meadow species could be encouraged by adapting traditional meadow management practices in selected areas of the public park, thus increasing the regeneration of native wildflowers. It also offers opportunities to be further developed as a wildlife corridor, enabling the wider local environment to benefit.

The use of exotic garden plants known for their scent, colour and fruiting/berrying qualities would greatly benefit wild birds, mammals, moths, butterflies and insects. Good horticultural practice can encourage the site in becoming a successful heritage attraction as well as a venue for passive events.

Good horticultural practice can encourage the site in becoming a successful heritage attraction . . .
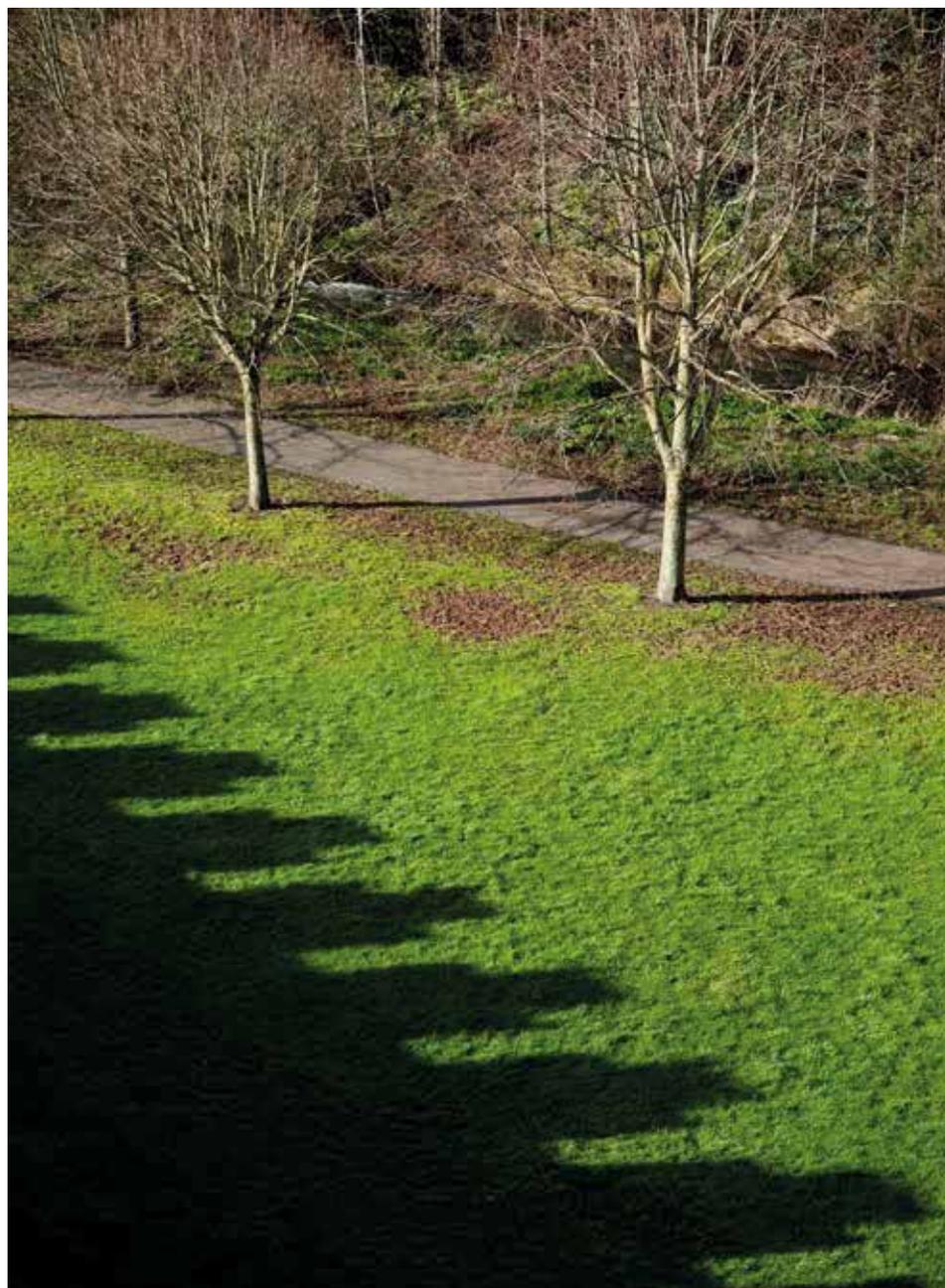
PART 5: ASSESSMENT OF CONSERVATION ISSUES

PLATE 73: *Image of Swords Castle and mill*

. . . identify the potential threats that could adversely affect the significance of the monument.

5.1 ISSUES AND VULNERABILITIES

In order to develop policies and recommendations for the management and protection of Swords Castle, it is necessary to identify the potential threats that could adversely affect the significance of the monument.

The monument at Swords is in a significantly better position than many historic sites, in that it is in a prominent position in a town, under the watchful eyes of the local residents, and in the care of its near neighbour, Fingal County Council, whose offices overlook it.

It has been subject to considerable works to enhance and protect it over the last century. The considerable time and expertise that have been expended on studying, recording and analysing it over the last 25 years is testament to the high value that it holds for the local authority and academic bodies involved in its conservation.

While the building is in the ownership and care of a local authority, this does not render it immune from the conflicting aspirations of those who have an interest in its future. Resources now are scarce; a complex of buildings of this size and such antiquity will need constant monitoring and maintenance.

5.2 THREATS TO THE FABRIC

In the 1980s, when the buildings were studied and recorded by UCD School of Architecture and by the Architectural Archive, the site at Swords contained a number of ruinous buildings in very poor condition and heavily choked by ivy, elder and other weed species. Since then, much work has been achieved in repairing, stabilising and reconstructing the following parts of the complex:

- The Chapel
- The Knights and Squires Chamber building west of the Chapel
- The Constable's (North) Tower
- The walls, crenellations, mural towers and wall-walk

These parts of the complex are now in a safe, stable condition and will not be a major demand on resources in the coming 20 years (unless there are proposals to adapt them for particular uses).

The parts of the complex that require stabilisation works are:

- The Gatehouse
- The Knights and Squires Chamber
- The Archbishop's Apartments and the ruinous buildings and walls on the eastern range

These structures all have structural masonry defects. Without a programme of repair and stabilisation measures, the buildings will deteriorate and be a cause for concern in relation to health and safety.

In the continuing repair and stabilisation works, it will be necessary to provide some new masonry and/or supports in steel or timber to ensure the security of the remaining fabric. However, with any new works, it is essential that the new fabric and materials and the adopted conservation practices do not contain any 'creative restoration' elements, and that architectural elements being incorporated are only those for which firm evidence of the original form and location is available.

It will be necessary to continue the works of conservation, repair and maintenance on the remaining parts of the complex, but subject to the stringent requirements of prior archaeological and architectural assessments as set out in this Plan.

Stabilisation work for the Gatehouse and the Knights and Squires Chamber is an immediate priority. While stabilisation of the historic fabric is required, no further reconstruction works on these ruined structures is deemed to be appropriate.

5.3   PROTECTING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MONUMENT

While the future of the site is safe in the general sense (and has been well cared for by Fingal County Council), there will be genuine requirements for new works to assist the survival of the remaining early fabric and make the complex a useful and educative resource for the future. These works will require the provision of some structures and some services both underground and over-ground, and these interventions could in some circumstances be damaging to the conservation values. New works should be sensitive to their site and also authentic in their own right, as the application of historic style to new buildings or artefacts will result only in a 'pastiche' design that will have no lasting value and will degrade the significance of the site.

5.4   RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

. . . there are some significant gaps in our knowledge that have a bearing on our understanding . . .

It is accepted and understood that Swords Castle is an important multi-period residential and administrative centre, with upstanding elements and extensive subsurface features that may have survived the 19th-century use of the site as an orchard. However, there are some significant gaps in our knowledge that have a bearing on our understanding of the location of potentially sensitive buried archaeological remains. This in turn has a bearing on any enhancement works proposed.

The current understanding of its phasing is based on the upstanding remains and contemporary written sources. The upstanding medieval structures at the site constitute a complementary body of evidence and, with the exception of the 1326 inquiry, surviving documentary sources are few for the medieval period.

The lack of understanding of the archaeological and historical development of the site has the potential to impact on the accuracy of the interpretational and educational material required for the monument to ensure that those using it are as well informed as possible.

5.4.1   Archaeological gaps in our knowledge

The following is a non-exhaustive list of gaps in the archaeological record of the site:

■ The nature, function and extent of the structures along the eastern wall indicated by the upstanding ruins and by the anomalous features identified in the geophysical surveys have indicated a potential for *in situ* archaeological remains in this area.

■ The nature and form of the geophysical anomalies identified in the south-western section of the site require test excavation so they can be fully understood.

PLATE **74:** *One of a number of burials recently identified under the arch of the Gatehouse at Swords Castle during stabilisation works*

■ Archaeological excavation will complement the scant historic documentation to develop a more accurate picture of the phasing of the buildings within the site.

■ The nature and extent of the site needs clarification, and the possibility of the western expansion of the precinct and the nature of the subdividing bank/break in slope that runs roughly north-south through the site should be explored.

■ There is a potential that further burials (outside of the Fanning [1971] excavation cuttings) could be present.

■ There is no definitive evidence that all the *in situ* tiles have been removed from the site, and some tiles or tile fragments may remain *in situ* beneath the current ground surface.

■ While some of the tiles have been located in the National Museum of Ireland, not all of them are accounted for; the whereabouts of the tiles needs to be researched.

■ The possibility of the re-examination of the skeletal evidence from Fanning's excavations in 1971 for dating purposes could yield interesting results. This material has to be located.

■ The nature of the possible archaeological layers/features covered in terram in front of the Knights and Squires Chamber, in front of and in the interior of Constable's Tower, and potentially beneath a terram layer immediately outside the castle in front of the Chapel, require archaeological investigation. The most recent monitoring work carried under the Gatehouse (2011 ADS) identified three parallel walls beneath the existing ramped entrance; reports are pending on this feature.

■ Archaeological investigation of the site should include seeking evidence of previous gardening activity.

■ The interior of the site falls away to the Ward River to the west; the sloping nature of the interior is interesting and requires further research.

■ The site lies adjacent to the Ward River. Alluvial deposits are of particular interest, as they frequently seal rich archaeological deposits and have a potential for environmental studies that detect changes in landscape use (particularly clearance and agricultural activity). No environmental archaeological work has been undertaken in the vicinity of the site, and it is likely that the many flooding events of the Ward River might provide valuable information, particularly in the western half of the site which formed part of the floodplain.

5.5   MANAGING AND DEVELOPING THE POTENTIAL OF THE CASTLE

Without sources of income, local authorities are now very limited in their ability to support conservation works; likewise, the Heritage Council has reduced its grants to only those applications where there is emergency need.

Cultural tourism and running concerts/festivals/markets/events can provide effective sources of independent funding but will require careful management to ensure no inadvertent damage is done to the complex. These potential one-off or occasional events may only require temporary measures which can be installed in a sensitive and easily reversible way.

However, the long-term provision of toilets, lighting, disabled access, facilities for catering on-site or adjacent to the site, as well as safe access and egress in the event of fire, and crowd control for events with large numbers, require careful assessment. Any decision to improve amenities and access needs to be carefully balanced with maintaining the integrity and authenticity of the castle and its setting.

5.6   PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE SETTING

Swords Castle does not exist independently. It benefits from being adjacent to the commercial and administrative centre of Swords and Fingal County. It is also well sited close to the Ward River and is an integral part of the Ward River Regional Park amenity.

Decisions regarding the future management and enhancement of the site and plans to strengthen the connection of the site with the town have to be based on a clear and robust understanding of the site and the potential issues and impacts that changes could cause.

The level of information required will reflect the scale of any proposed change, and where there is uncertainty, a precautionary approach should be taken to minimise any harmful effects to the archaeological and architectural remains.

5.6.1   Views and presentation of the Castle

Good urban design and planning will protect, maintain and enhance views to and from the monument. Any new development in the surrounding area needs to be sensitive to potential visual impacts on Swords Castle. The integration of the castle with the Main Street and civic quarter needs to be enhanced.

Any new development in the surrounding area needs to be sensitive to potential visual impacts on Swords Castle.

Plate 75: *View from Constable's Tower looking south to Main Street*

On the northern and western side of the castle, tree-planting in the park area will provide screening to developments in the near-medium range. On the south and eastern sides in the immediate vicinity of the castle, any new-build should be appropriate to the scale and height of the monument.

PLATES 76 AND 77: *View to the north (Constable's Tower and the park); and view to south-west corner*

The removal of buildings and redevelopment in this area afford possibilities that can be either positive or negative, depending on the design approach.

The buildings along the eastern range outside the castle provide an opportunity to locate services for visitors to the castle that will obviate the need to disturb areas of archaeological interest within the castle. A design competition could develop ideas for how best to use this area to provide ancillary facilities for visitors to the castle.

Although the existing buildings are not themselves historically significant, they are located in an archaeologically and historically sensitive landscape. The removal of buildings and redevelopment in this area afford possibilities that can be either positive or negative, depending on the design approach. An understanding of the medieval context is vital to inform any proposal for this area.

The main impact of a developed tourism use in the long term is the provision of a facilities' building to accommodate access control, ticketing, toilets, bookshop, refreshments area etc. There are two possible locations for an external facility building. However, both options would have to be subject to detailed feasibility study to understand all the issues involved so a comprehensive independent assessment can be made. The two locations are:

1. Adjacent to the existing entrance west of the Knights and Squires Chamber and connected to the interior courts via an existing blocked-up entrance west of the Knights and Squires Chamber.

2. Outside the site in the NE, which would necessitate a new corner access point being made in the boundary wall.

The opening up of the east side by removal and rebuild of structures will allow for the creation of a new urban space linking the Civic Offices, Courthouse and Swords Castle. A design competition for this space held by Fingal County Council would be a useful way of highlighting the significance of the site while achieving a high-quality design for the precinct.

PLATES 78 AND 79: *View of Main Street; and towards the Round Tower*

The opening up of the east side of the castle will permit the possible development of a walk along the exterior of the walls, which will have to be designed in a manner that will enhance the historic experience.

PLATE 80: *View to the Eastern Range*

5.6.2 Traffic

Lower traffic levels and speeds create a more relaxed ambience within the urban setting.

A high-quality traffic layout should be designed to:

- Reduce traffic congestion in front of the castle
- Improve the sense of safety around the castle precinct
- Increase the 'sense of place' and vibrancy

Traffic-calming should be built into any potential layout to promote pedestrian and cycle movement. Lower traffic levels and speeds create a more relaxed ambience within the urban setting.

There is opportunity in the form of a traffic management plan to examine the possibility of making the area in front of the castle traffic-free, or a pedestrian priority area with access only for public transport and service vehicles. The town of Swords has major roads to the east and north, thus allowing an opportunity to eliminate through traffic and for a civic quarter to be developed as a pedestrian priority environment.

The design of a civic quarter public space, including increased visibility and enhancement of the castle, is important to the economic and cultural success of the area.

5.6.3 Access

At present, the only access points to the castle are:

■ Under the Gatehouse. This vehicle access is wide and high enough to allow for cars, vans and small trucks. The size of this access makes it the first choice for emergency egress from the site.

■ A pedestrian access in the form of a small doorway exists in the south wall at the Knights and Squires Chamber.

■ The entrance from the park on the western curtain wall. This entrance has steps both inside and outside and is a pedestrian access only.

There is no easy solution to providing additional points of entrance and exit needed to meet the safety requirements when dealing with large numbers of people. To improve access to the monument, it is necessary to address both conservation and accessibility needs in an integrated and balanced manner.

In general, the eastern side of the castle presents the best opportunity for access on account of the existing ground levels, and also as the buildings outside the castle to the east can be re-used as ancillary facilities for castle visitors and staff.

However, due to the abundant vegetation, it was not possible to assess the architectural and archaeological detail in this area. Therefore, in advance of any feasibility study, the entire area should be cleared of any invasive plant species under ecological and archaeological supervision. A photographic survey accompanied by a narrative of the walls (internal and external) proposed for removal is then required. This information has to be accompanied by a traffic management plan in order to ensure the feasibility of the safe movement of vehicles into and out of this space onto the road network.

The proposal may also necessitate archaeological investigation in the form of test trenching so a full understanding of the archaeological potential of the area can be presented. This work has to be carried out under Ministerial Consent and in agreement with the National Monuments Service. It is advisable that advice is sought and that consultation with the service continues throughout this entire process. Collaboration with a conservation engineer would be prudent to ensure and secure the structural stability of the walls in advance of any excavation in and around them.

One possible location for an access point was identified in the field: make a breach in the boundary wall on the east side near the north-east corner. While this would involve the loss of historic fabric, it is thought from a visual inspection that the masonry is relatively late in construction.

The solution would involve the removal of masonry to create a breach in the castle wall. These interventions would have to be detailed and agreed with the National Monuments Service.

Another option would be to further explore the OS 25-inch 1865 revision, which shows that there was a breach along the eastern range that provided access from the rear of one of the structures facing onto the North Street. This appears to occur immediately to the north of the East Tower, shown on the map as a ruin (Rn.). On the OS 25-inch 1906 revision, this opening is no longer present.

Fanning (1975, 50) on his general plan of Swords Castle (after Leask, 1914) shows a breach in the eastern wall towards the north-east corner.

PLATE 81: *View to north-east corner of the castle and possible access location*

To improve access to the monument, it is necessary to address both conservation and accessibility needs in an integrated and balanced manner.
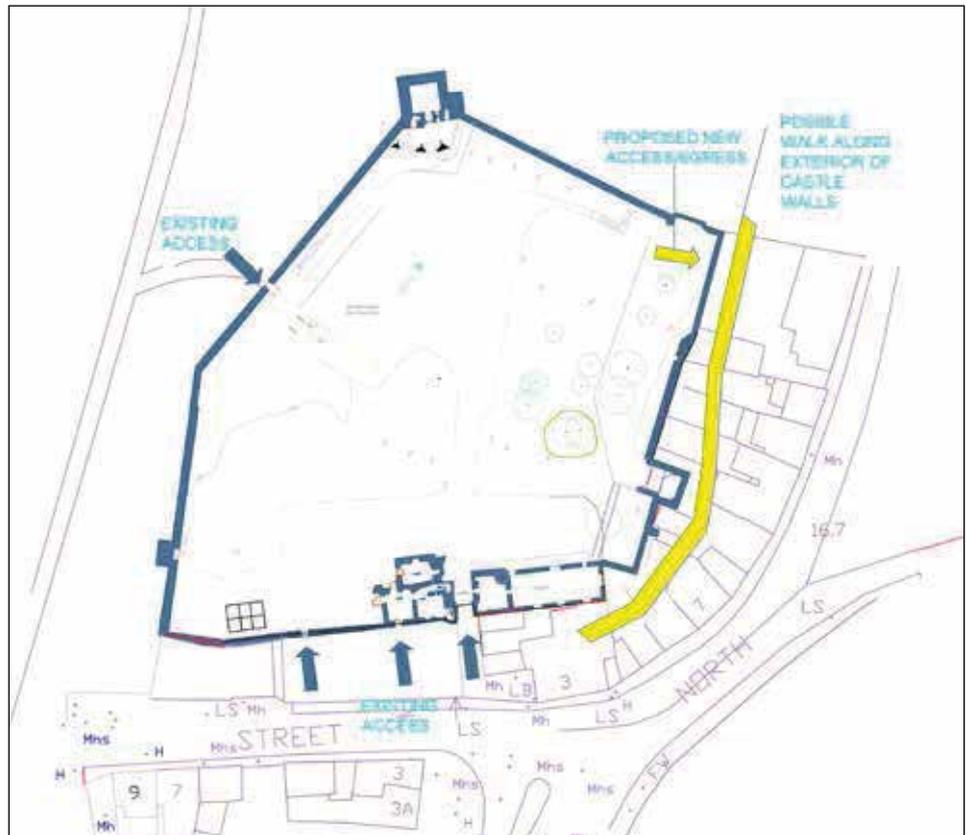
FIGURE 24: *Existing access locations and possible access way*

This eastern section of wall could provide evidence of these changes but it is choked in ivy and scrub. Under supervision, it would have to be cleared of the rampant vegetation in order that an assessment could be made, and to clarify the nature, extent and exact location of the breach (if there at all). If at all possible, the re-use of an existing (albeit blocked-up) breach would be preferable to creating a new opening.

Possibilities such as tunnelling or providing an access ramp into and out of the monument were considered, but were discounted due to archaeological constraints, visual impact and cost.
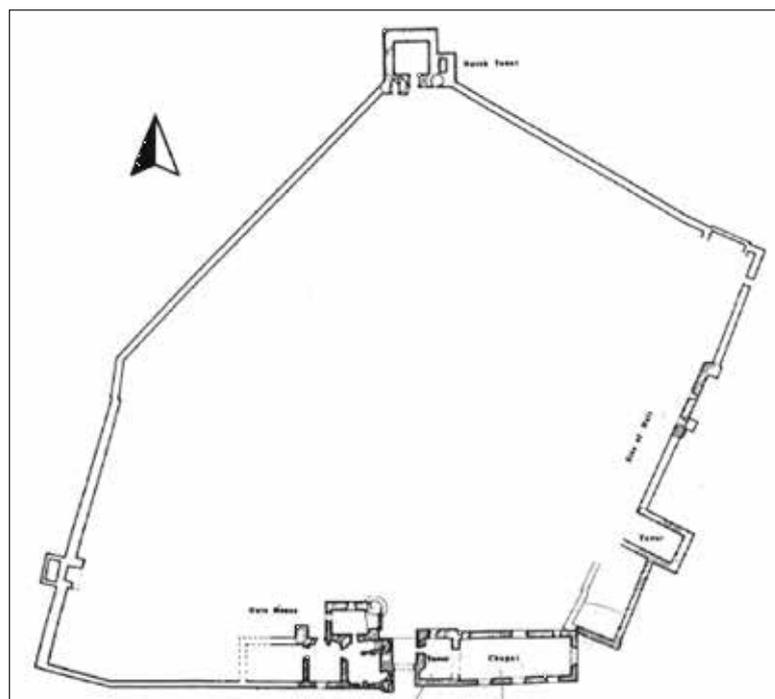
FIGURE 25: *Ground plan of Swords Castle showing breach along the eastern range*

5.6.4 Car Parking

Within the castle enclosure, there should be no vehicle parking apart from emergency use.

Car parks in and around Swords should be identified and recorded, along with their capacity, ownership and opening hours. Partnership strategies with relevant stakeholders about the possibility of using existing car parks at weekends and specified time periods in the summer could be devised and developed in order to increase accessibility to the castle.

Events that generate a major parking demand will require an events management plan if they are to be successfully accommodated. There is no easy way to deal with this issue locally. In similar events that have been held elsewhere in the Dublin area, parking has been provided remote from the facility and a connection provided to drop down visitors at a point near the actual performance area.

5.6.5 Interpretation of the Castle

For the tourist or casual visitor to Swords at present, the experience of visiting the castle is a puzzling one. Unless the visit is guided, there is no assistance in understanding the history or meaning of the place; no interpretative signage is present. Also, despite the many studies, there is no reference material that would be useful to those wanting to know a little more detail about the place. Without good knowledge and interpretation, misunderstanding of the significance of the site will continue and will ultimately weaken its historic value.

An immediate and low-cost measure that could be implemented while works are continuing at the site is the placing of temporary information boards that would present the castle to the general public.

PART 6: POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PLATE 82: *View of the interior of Swords Castle taken from Constable's (North) Tower*

. . . the enhancement and development of Swords Castle, the protection of positive values, the conservation of items of significance and the methods to address issues of vulnerability . . .

This section sets out policies which are directed to the enhancement and development of Swords Castle, the protection of positive values, the conservation of items of significance and the methods to address issues of vulnerability as previously outlined in this Plan.

The policies provide guidance which can be used to assess any proposed changes or actions to the castle.

POLICY 1   PROTECTION

To place the identity and conservation of the castle and the protection of its significance at the centre of future planning and management proposals for the monument and in the development of Swords.

Policy 1.1   Acknowledge the status of Swords Castle as a National Monument and that Ministerial Consent is required for any works carried out at the site.

Policy 1.2   Acknowledge Swords Castle as contributing to defining the historic status of the town, as a civic resource for its citizens, for visitors and for the historical and archaeological record of the town's development.

Policy 1.3   Ensure that the architectural, archaeological and historical significance of the site is communicated to visitors and a wider audience. Interpretation must be based on a full understanding of the historic fabric and retain, as far as is practicable, the key elements which have the power to inform and educate our understanding of the monument. The promotion of the castle should enhance the experience of visitors to the site and the respect they have for it, and ultimately ensure its protection.

Policy 1.4   Undertake timely and targeted archaeological investigation to inform conservation practices and detect historic garden features.

POLICY 2   CONSERVATION, REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

To implement effective regimes for the maintenance and repair in the immediate, short, medium and long term, while protecting the significance and historic integrity and observing best practice conservation standards.

Policy 2.1   Undertake any proposed conservation and repair with reference to the principles outlined in the ICOMOS Venice and Burra Charters (Appendix E), adopting an approach of minimum intervention, rather than restoration.

Policy 2.2   Develop programmes for structural maintenance and repair, with particular attention to urgently required actions (Part 7: Recommended Actions and Future Use). All ground work within the complex must be preceded by an appropriate programme of archaeological evaluation.

Policy 2.3   Develop, under archaeological supervision, a map that identifies all existing subsurface services within the castle complex. A record of these existing trenches/channels is to be kept with the conservation archive so they can be reused, if appropriate, in the future and minimise further unnecessary ground disturbance.

Policy 2.4   Ensure regular monitoring and checks by qualified conservation engineers and architects to address the effects of natural forces such as frost, rain, UV radiation etc. on the stone masonry. Ensure that appropriate measures are taken to remedy any damage done for the continued survival of the monument.

Policy 2.5   Develop a maintenance plan for the consolidated structures within the castle complex and consider potential future uses.

POLICY 3   ACCESS, INTERPRETATION AND TOURISM

To encourage public understanding and enjoyment of the monument, promoting physical and intellectual access and meeting the needs of a variety of users.

Policy 3.1   Urgent measures are required to ensure the health and safety of persons in or beside the castle — these are detailed in Part 7. In addition, all works within the castle must be done in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005).

Policy 3.2   Seek ways and opportunities to improve vehicular (service, maintenance and emergency) and universal pedestrian access to Swords Castle. Consider an alternative egress point at the north-east corner of the castle. Further investigation of this location once the invasive vegetation has been removed may provide various viable options.

Policy 3.3   Develop signage strategies and explore the use of new digital media such as 3D laser scanning and reconstruction, photo-real 3D animation technologies, on-site experiential installations and open air museums. These would be flexible and inexpensive ways to achieve an understanding of the use of the site.

Policy 3.4   Promote and create a presence on the web, detailing opening hours, car parking and amenities around the castle, and link to already successful cultural attractions in the Fingal area as an alternative day out in the short term. Promote complementary cultural attractions such as the Ward River Regional Park and round tower alongside the castle.

Policy 3.5   Develop a strategy to promote Swords Castle, and advance and exploit the relationship between Newbridge House, Swords Castle and the Cobbe family.

POLICY 4   ENHANCEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

To enhance the historic character and visual and physical presence of the monument, where appropriate, by consolidating eroded elements and removing intrusive elements.

Policy 4.1   Protect the visual character of the monument from inappropriate development.

Policy 4.2   Strengthen visual and physical links with other historical and archaeological sites in Swords.

Policy 4.3   Promote design initiatives that would exploit and enhance the location of Swords Castle within the town and civic quarter of Swords. The conservation of the castle provides an opportunity for sensitive new development that could complement and promote the civic quarter of Swords.

Policy 4.4   Seek permission to house the original medieval tiles revealed by Fanning's excavation at Swords Castle.

Policy 4.5   Record, conserve and preserve, if possible, the veteran fruit trees as part of the surviving garden plot. Consider other planting options under the guidance of a historic gardens specialist. Clear scrub, saplings and unsuitable vegetation from walls and ground area by manual and herbicide methods.

POLICY 5   EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

To develop an understanding of the castle through informed archaeological investigation and research, and secure the record of the preservation of the monument in an accessible, comprehensive archive.

Policy 5.1   Any conservation architect and/or archaeologist employed to work at Swords Castle must engage with the work that has preceded them and have an understanding of the site and its potential. The current knowledge of the monument and its issues has to be detailed in consent applications.

Policy 5.2   Encourage historical and archaeological research and analysis of Swords Castle and the town, and support the existing efforts of the local historical and archaeological societies in the promotion of public presentations, publications, lectures and displays.

Policy 5.3   Promote a programme of community archaeology partnered with the Institute of Archaeology of Ireland (IAI) to consider the identified knowledge gaps.

Policy 5.4   Develop a research framework and partnership with academic institutions for future archaeological, architectural and historical research and targeted investigation to increase the understanding of the monument and purposely contribute to the discussion of use and chronology of the site.

Policy 5.5   Create and maintain a conservation archive for all documentary, photographic, cartographic, conservation and survey material, to be held in the County Archive of Fingal County Council.

POLICY 6   MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

To suggest schemes for the practical application of the Conservation Plan, retaining the significance and sense of place of the castle and raising funds in order to do so.

Policy 6.1   Demonstrate that the future maintenance and repair of any proposed work is economically sustainable. The grounds for restoration or reconstruction should be clearly explained to visitors.

Policy 6.2   Seek funding for policy development and the preparation of plans arising from this Conservation Plan.

PART 7: RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND FUTURE USE

PLATE 83: *Apple tree in full fruit in the grounds of Swords Castle*

. . . a framework that can be put in place to assist in the long-term protection and promotion of the monument.

The conservation priorities documented in this Plan have established the need for:

1. Immediate stabilisation works

2. Further archaeological investigation works

3. Public information through signage, publication and promotion

4. Creation and maintenance of a proper archive on Swords Castle

The following recommended actions set out how to achieve these requirements in the immediate and short term, and suggest a framework that can be put in place to assist in the long-term protection and promotion of the monument.

7.1 IMMEDIATE AND SHORT-TERM ACTIONS TO PROTECT THE MONUMENT

There are several areas within the monument listed below where the existing masonry is precariously balanced and could, with little force, come down causing both terrible loss of historic fabric and also serious risk of injury to persons in the vicinity.

It is recommended that all of the vulnerable areas be augmented by infilling with suitable masonry, by additional support or stitching in ties or other appropriate structural measures in accordance with best practice and in accordance with the international guidelines cited above. **These works do not require planning permission as they are essential works being carried out for a local authority using appropriate conservation materials and methods, but will require Ministerial Consent for work on a National Monument.**

This monument is a complex arrangement of diverse historic masonry structures constructed over a very long period of time in piecemeal fashion. Accordingly, the current condition and structural integrity is not uniform but varies from location to location within the site. The Chapel, Chamber Block (structure to the west of the Chapel), Constable's Tower and stretches of Curtain Wall have been repaired and reconstructed in modern times and do not require further consideration from a structural viewpoint.

Throughout the monument, most of the historic masonry has been made good, but there are still areas where work is required. This has been divided into immediate and short-term works.

7.2 IMMEDIATE WORKS

Action 7.2.1 The partially collapsed masonry vault in the Gatehouse poses a health and safety risk to the general public entering the castle at the main entrance. A safety net or crash deck should be erected immediately to protect the general public from falling debris and masonry. Permanent repairs should be undertaken as soon as possible.

Action 7.2.2 Essential remedial work to the Knights and Squires Chamber has been formulated but has not yet commenced. This should be undertaken as soon as possible.

7.3 SHORT-TERM WORKS

Action 7.3.1 Monitoring is required at specific locations, as listed in sections 3.2 and 5.2 of the Plan, to verify structural stability of out-of-plumb walls. Additional remedial work may be warranted if the monitoring regime reveals progressive movement.

Action 7.3.2 Consolidation is recommended at specific locations, as detailed in sections 3.2 and 5.2 of the Plan, to restore structural integrity and ensure continued stability. This work should be undertaken as soon as possible to minimise progressive deterioration.

Action 7.3.3 Removal of rampant vegetation (ivy and buddleia) is urgently required to prevent structural damage. The removal of invasive roots needs great care and may also require localised remedial consolidation.

Action 7.3.4 On the basis of limited visual inspections, an initial evaluation of the castle's current condition and structural integrity has been provided, and appropriate remedial action has been outlined for identifiable structural defects of significance. Supplementary work may be required as noted below:

1. Knights and Squires Chamber first floor and corner stairs

2. The tower on the east range

3. The boundary walls on the east range

4. The south gable and west wall of the building between the Chapel and tower, where the medieval tiles were found

5. The gable containing the stone mullioned window on the east range

A plan of proposed works (Fig. 26) illustrates the immediate and short-term actions required, as well as the sequencing of proposed works. It also identifies areas that require a long-term maintenance plan.

J. Constable's Tower (North Tower)

H. Curtain Wall

**I. Wall leans out;
requires monitoring**

H

I

**Structures covered in
vegetation and ivy;
requires removal so a
structural and condition
survey can take place.**

**G. Gable ruin
and eastern range**

**Two window opes
have defective arches**

F. The East Tower

**E. Archbishop's
Apartments**

**East wall leans out;
requires monitoring**

**D. Knights and
Squires Chamber**

I. Mural Tower

**External wall requires
consolidation**

A. Chapel

I

B. Chamber block

C. Gatehouse

Immediate works
Structurally unstable – requires immediate repair and stabilization works

Short term works
Structurally stable? – requires monitoring and condition report

- Clear vegetation manually under ecological and archaeological supervision

- Record structure

- Stabilise\consolidate as required

- Archaeological excavation to accompany programme of works

Long term works
Stable – requires maintenance plan

FIGURE 26: *Plan of proposed works*

7.4   IMPLEMENTATION

The Conservation Plan is the beginning of a long-term process. Its successful implementation will depend on wide acceptance and as much active support as possible. According to the Plan, Swords Castle will be developed and maintained in such a manner that it will retain the significance of the place, facilitate public access, and add to the social and cultural infrastructure of the area. The desired effect is to generate an enhanced cultural experience when visiting the historic quarter of Swords.

In order to achieve the aims of this Plan, it will be necessary to:

- Establish a steering group comprised of people representing the statutory bodies, local/community-based initiatives and voluntary bodies with a specialist interest in Swords Castle whose remit will be to oversee the implementation and review of the policies contained in the Conservation Plan.

- Provision should be made within the Fingal County Development Plan to implement the recommendations/policies of Conservation Plans for heritage properties in Fingal County Council's ownership.

- Create a framework for annual review and planning for the continuation of any necessary surveys and condition assessments and works in line with recommendations set out in this study.

- Commission further studies and archaeological excavations as and when required, continuing to fill in the knowledge gaps and develop the understanding of the monument.

7.5   FUTURE USE

Any considered future uses have to retain the significance of the place, facilitate public assess into and out of the castle, and add to the social and cultural infrastructure of the area. Uses have to be socially, culturally and economically sustainable. The consultation process has indicated a shared aspiration that any future use should be inclusive and integrated.

The future use of Swords Castle could support a combination of uses listed below. This is not an exhaustive list, as there are other possible projects and uses that would comply with the conservation policies and enhance the castle.

7.6   IMMEDIATE USE

To ensure the immediate future use of the monument, it is imperative that works to secure, protect and stabilise buildings on the site, including essential repairs to building fabric, are carried out without delay and in accordance with statutory obligations. These should explore, identify and resolve the possibility of an alternative, additional access.

7.7   SHORT-TERM USE

In the short term, a programme of events and projects should be aimed at raising awareness and creating an appreciation of the site within the locality. Competitions could be designed to raise awareness locally and in the schools.

7.8   LONG-TERM USE

Long-term possible future uses for the entire complex include:

- Open-air weekend markets within the enclosed walled precinct, generating a sense that this is a place to gather and to roam.

- Open-air cinema on summer evenings.

- Amenity and recreational use to complement the adjacent Ward River Valley Regional Park.

- Venue for training, practice, rehearsal, performance and exhibition. The sloping nature of the interior has a natural amphitheatre effect.

- School tours should be encouraged and the educational value of the monument promoted throughout the locality.

- Annual festival celebrating local heritage and creativity, or simply Swords Castle Day to celebrate key events in the history of the castle:

  - 2014 – 1000th anniversary of handing over of Brian Boru's body after Battle of Clontarf in 1014

  - 2041 – 400th anniversary of 1641 attack

  - Celebrate the feast day of St Colmcille, patron saint of Swords (9 June)

All proposals for future uses have to be supported by an appropriate feasibility study and business plan. These studies have to address the social and cultural viability and economic sustainability of the proposed projects in the short, medium and long term, and ensure compliance with the policies and recommendations of the Conservation Plan.

GLOSSARY

arch, lancet	pointed arch found in Gothic architecture where the jambs of the opening curve inwards above the springing to meet in a point.
arch, ogee	pointed arch of double-curved sides, with the upper curve convex, and the lower concave.
arch, shouldered	form of opening where the flat lintel is supported at ends by corbel stones, usually curved section.
aumbry	a cupboard or storage opening in masonry walls, sometimes associated with storage of religious vessels in the context of a chapel.
bailey	ward, courtyard of a castle.
barbican	the outwork to a defensive gateway.
barrel vault	an extruded arch covering a room or open space supported on flank walls.
batter	the outward sloping lower part of a defensive tower/wall to a castle.
centering	the formwork to support an arch or vault during construction; *e.g.* wicker centering used wicker rods supported on a timber structure that left a characteristic indent in the mortar
constable	in medieval society, a person with judicial powers appointed by a higher authority.
crenellation	parapet battlements formed with a regular series of openings; used for shooting arrows or guns.
cusp	the point(s) within a Gothic window where the foils meet.
embrasure	form of opening in masonry for a door or window, or between merlons in a crenellated parapet where the sides of the opening are wedge shaped, wide at the inside, and narrow at the outside.
foil	small arc openings in tracery separated by cusps; *e.g.* trefoil = 3 arcs; quatrefoil = 4 arcs; cinquefoil = 5 arcs.
garderobe	privy or latrine, usually built on upper floors of castle or fortified building, with a vertical chute discharging outside near ground level.
hall	the main business, dining and living area of a castle or fortified house. The principal resident presided over meals at the high-table at the upper end of the hall.
hood	canopy of stone or timber formed over a fireplace to collect smoke.
hood moulding	form of protective hood over a window or doorway in masonry which follows the shape of the opening above the springing and is dropped vertically on both sides.
keep	the tower within a castle or fortified building, usually with the solar (bed-clamber of the principal resident) on top floor.
loop	narrow opening for light, ventilation and defence in medieval buildings.
merlon	the solid part of the crenellated parapet between the openings.
mullion	vertical bar dividing the lights in a window.
newel	the central pier around which a circular (or newel) staircase is formed.
pediment	a low, pitched gable having a classical form over a building or a building element.
pentice, pentise	a structure outside the masonry walls of a building used as a gallery and normally constructed in timber.
piscina	stone basin set in a recess in the masonry wall near the altar for the washing of hands during religious ceremonies.
portreeve	a medieval term for a person appointed to a position of authority, originally a port warden.
postern	the rear gate from a bailey.
shaft	a slender column.
shingle	a roofing tile made of cleft oak, commonly used on high-quality buildings in medieval architecture prior to the widespread use of slate after *c.*1700.
slit	a narrow window for defence, deeply splayed.
soffit	the underside of an arch, vault or floor.
solar	the private bed-chamber of the principal resident of a castle or fortified residence.
spandrel	the space over a door or window opening between the arch and its rectangular frame, or between a flat lintel and the arch above, usually decorated.
squinch	arch across internal angle of two walls.
squint	interior window allowing view into adjoining apartment.
transom	the horizontal member dividing the lights in a stone or timber window.
vault(ing)	the roof or floor above an apartment which has been formed in masonry; *e.g.* a barrel-vault is a form of extruded arch. Vaulting has many forms: fan, groined, lierne, quadripartite, ribbed, sexpartite; may be divided by ribs.
voussoir	stone cut to a wedge shape to be part of an arch.
wall-walk	the walkway formed at the top of a defensive tower or wall, usually protected by the battlements.
ward	see *bailey.*

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SWORDS CASTLE
CONSERVATION PLAN

**Comhairle Contae
Fhine Gall**
Fingal County
Council