The late-12th century gatehouse at Carrickfergus. (Perhaps 1178-90). The two-light round-arched window of the chapel on the left (east) tower. This represents a proposed reinterpretation of the gatehouse dating; it was previously considered to be c. 1220. See page 166.
Earls, Gunners and Tourists: The Past and Future of Carrickfergus Castle

A Conference Report and Commentary by Daniel Tietzsch-Tyler.

On Friday 28th October and Saturday 29th October 2011, the Castle Studies Group (CSG) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) jointly convened a conference on the subject of Carrickfergus Castle. Friday was an open conference for CSG members and interested members of the public that saw a programme of seven lectures delivered in Carrickfergus Town Hall. This was followed on Saturday by a half-day seminar, restricted to CSG members, which centred on a tour of the castle. The conference was very successfully organised on the ground by NIEA’s Terence Reeves-Smyth (Friday) and Paul Logue (Saturday). Between forty and fifty delegates (including speakers) attended the Saturday lectures and about fourteen delegates thoroughly enjoyed a complete tour of the castle on Saturday morning, guided by Tom McNeill and Paul Logue.

For CSG members, the main purpose of the conference was probably to learn more about one of the finest castles in Britain and Ireland and its wider context, and, for those who were able to stay on, to visit every nook and cranny of the castle including those areas not generally accessible to visitors. For NIEA representatives, it had a third purpose. The keep of the castle needs re-roofing and this work is to be part of a general renewal of the visitor experience. The NIEA representatives hoped that the visit of CSG and discussion arising from the lecture programme would generate ideas and discussion that could feed into this renewal. To this end, a sandwich and coffee break in the castle keep on Saturday was the setting for a focused discussion on these matters, though the discussion had begun at the start of the tour and didn’t end before the party disbanded.

Carrickfergus Castle is a fine example of an early Norman castle in Ireland (the Normans having arrived in Ireland a century after their conquest of England), begun c. 1178 and preserved through continuous occupation until it came into state care in 1928. The castle was constructed on an east-west trending mafic dyke that then formed a low ridge of rock projecting out into Belfast Lough, in County Antrim. The western foreshore is largely reclaimed today. At its core the castle comprises a tall rectangular keep within a small inner ward at the seaward end of the ridge (Fig. 1). The intact walls of a larger outer ward that was at one time divided into two, enclose the rest of the ridge. The dividing wall, close to the inner ward curtain, is now reduced to its foundations. At the narrow landward end of the outer ward is a large twin-towered gatehouse, its drum towers modified in post-medieval times - like the curtain walls of the castle - for artillery. The medieval castle was essentially complete by c. 1242 - or perhaps two decades earlier (more later).

Modification of the castle for artillery and for more acceptable garrison living conditions began in Tudor times with the insertion of gunports in the curtain walls and on the gatehouse. Many similar modifications were made over the next three centuries, with the construction of south- and east-facing batteries for larger and larger pieces of artillery, and associated storehouses and garrison accommodation. Despite these alterations, made according to continued military necessity, the complete preservation of the castle’s keep, curtain walls, gatehouse and towers makes this one of the finest castles standing in Britain and Ireland today (Fig. 2).

Friday 28th October

The presentations during the Friday conference followed two strands, intertwined during the day. The first strand dealt with great towers in general, both in a European and Irish context, as well as Carrickfergus in particular. The second strand dealt with conservation, restoration and public presentation issues, both general and specific to Carrickfergus. The following report will review the presentations on great towers first and then turn to conservation, restoration and presentation. Following a short welcome by the mayor of Carrickfergus, Alderman Jim McClurg, the conference programme was as follows:

Terence Reeves-Smyth (NIEA): Carrickfergus Great Tower and its Roof – Problems and Opportunities

Dr Pamela Marshall (CSG): Great Towers in Context

Dr John Goodall (Country Life): Evidence and Preconception: Restoring and Presenting Great Towers

Dr Kate Roberts (Cadw): Castle Conservation in Practice - Chepstow and Harlech Castles

Con Manning (DAHG): The Great Tower in Ireland

Dr Tom McNeill (Formerly Professor of Archaeology, Queen’s University Belfast): Carrickfergus Castle. The Evidence and a Way Forward

Dermot MacRandal (NIEA): Practicalities of Creating Replica Historic Roofs
Fig 1. A plan of Carrickfergus Castle, modified from Ó Baoill 2008 (NIEA, Crown copyright).
In the second lecture of the morning, Pamela Marshall talked about great towers generally in their wider historical and geographical context. The main purpose of Norman keeps or donjons appears to have been their visual impact on those whom their builders newly governed, to use a modern phrase: their ‘shock and awe’ effect. This is demonstrated by their great height but limited usefulness defensively and residually, and by the common inclusion of architectural features probably designed for display purposes. They acted as highly visible signs of social promotion.

The origin of great towers is uncertain. Perhaps, as Pamela suggested, it may be found in tall monumental structures like the cylindrical Rotunda, constructed in the early fourth century A.D. as either a temple or a mausoleum for Roman Emperor Galerius as part of his Thessaloniki palace complex. Certainly, the Hall of Spanish King Ramiro I near Oviedo, built in the mid-ninth century, with its first-floor hall and appearance-balconies, and perhaps the now fragmentary hall of Frankish King Charlemagne’s palace at Aachen, built at the turn of the ninth century, seem to anticipate the great towers of the Normans.

The Norman great tower comprises two or more floors over a basement used for storage, but which also raises the high status rooms to a greater height. These rooms acted as halls for public ceremonial and feasting, and, more privately, as audience and residential chambers. The floors above the basement are usually entered from an external stair, commonly protected by a fore-building. In many cases, a second door from these upper levels could go nowhere except to an external appearance- or viewing-balcony for the lord of the castle. These often overlooked the adjacent town, an important crossroads or provided a significant view over the lord’s domain. Illustrated were the late tenth-century keep of Langeais, Indre-et-Loire, and the late eleventh-century hall-keep of Chester, both with such doorways. The towers often rose high above the accommodation within them, their high walls with blind windows, such as at Castle Hedingham in Essex, begun about 1141, or none at all, concealing the tower roof behind them. These were then further capped by corner turrets.
Pamela described the feasts and meetings in the keep’s hall as bonding affairs for the lord and his vassals. But these large rooms, difficult to heat and often located at such a distance from the kitchen that cold food must have been the norm, appear to have been poor living spaces. Instead, they too were intended to awe those coming into the presence of the lord. Frequently a separate domestic hall for more genial day-to-day living co-existed alongside the keep. Inside and out, these great towers marked the symbolic presence of the lord, both when he was actually resident and during his frequent absences.

Following a buffet lunch of soup and sandwiches, Con Manning talked about the great tower in an Irish context. There are only three large square Norman keeps in Ireland that could compare with those in France and England: Carrickfergus (Fig. 3a), Maynooth and Trim. Following the pattern of the homeland in south Wales and the Welsh borders that was common to many of

Fig. 3. Irish ‘Great Towers’: (a) Carrickfergus Castle keep, County Antrim; (b) Annaghyne hall house, County Galway; (c) Nenagh Castle circular keep, County Tipperary, with the arcade and battlements added in the nineteenth century; (d) Lackeen tower house, County Tipperary.
the original Irish Normans, cylindrical keeps such as those at Dundrum, County Down, Clogh Outer, County Cavan, Nenagh, County Tipperary (Fig. 3c) and Inchniquin, County Cork, became fairly common in Norman-occupied Ireland. At much the same time hall-houses were also built across Norman-occupied Ireland (Fig. 3b). These are something of a cross between an English manor house and a keep. Like keeps, they often have high outer walls that are windowless in their upper portion, where their high walls concealed a roof. Another type of great tower in thirteenth-century Ireland was the towered keep. These comprised a square tower with four circular angle towers, as at Lea, County Laois, Carlow, County Carlow and Ferns, County Wexford. Carlow Castle originally had two floors and a countersunk roof, but two centuries later the roof was raised and third floor windows inserted into the walls that previously concealed the roof.

It is thought likely that the rectangular enclosure castles that became common from the thirteenth century also often had a dominant tower, equivalent to a cylindrical keep. At Dublin, there is a debate as to whether the dominant tower that King John ordered to be built first was the slightly irregularly situated Bermingham Tower near the southwest angle or the larger, thicker-walled Record Tower at the southeast angle. Con favours the former, but the writer is more inclined to the latter. At Kilkenny, the White Tower at the southern angle is much larger than the other three and probably served this purpose. Limerick is more difficult to decipher since a tower presumably planned for the southeast angle was never built and the other three are of roughly equal size, but the northeast tower is certainly more impressive than the two riverside towers.

Finally in Ireland, we have the tower house (Fig. 3d), the most populous type of castle - if so defined - in any European state. These multi-storied towers probably appeared first sometime around 1400 and spread rapidly across the country through the fifteenth, sixteenth and into the seventeenth centuries. Unlike the earlier great towers, Norman and Gaelic Irish lords built them equally. They differ from Scottish tower houses or peels, where the main hall was usually on the first floor, in that the hall was on the top floor beneath the roof timbers. There, a central hearth often warmed it rather than a fireplace and chimney, emulating the conditions of the ephemeral timber and thatch halls of former times. Harking back to Pamela’s talk, these towers were clearly symbols of a newly realised social status, this time for the younger sons of local lords whose lands were apportioned between them.

Tom McNeill concluded the afternoon with a talk about Carrickfergus Castle, on which he wrote the seminal archaeological monograph published by Her Majesty’s Stationery Office in 1981. In part, Tom touched on the proposed refurbishment of the castle keep, but he also discussed some new (or renewed) insights into the building of the castle as a whole. The latter will be recounted in the context of Sunday’s tour and the lively discussion it prompted.

Carrickfergus Great Tower

The great tower or keep at Carrickfergus (Fig. 3a) was built as an integral part of the early inner ward of the castle, its north and west walls continuing up from the inner curtain without a break. The north curtain wall extends beyond the north-east angle of the keep with the same thickness as the keep walls, suggesting that the keep was originally intended to be slightly broader. The principal building stone throughout the castle is dark, locally derived mafic igneous rock. Old Red Sandstone from the County Antrim coast to the north commonly defines angles in the first several metres of the inner-ward curtain and the keep, presumably representing the first season or two of construction. Above this and throughout the walls of the outer ward, angles and features such as doorways, windows and garderobe chutes are distinctively defined by yellow Cultra sandstone of Permian age, found on and quarried from the opposite side of Belfast Lough in County Down. The keep is a relatively plain structure that rises through three storeys over a ground-floor basement. The tower is capped by what appear to be its original battlements, which once extended up into four angle turrets of which only two remain on the south side. The southwest and southeast angles are each supported by a three-quarter height buttress projecting in only one direction, south at the southwest angle and east at the southeast angle. Perhaps the eastward-extension of the lower part of the thick north wall at the northwest angle into the inner ward curtain was intended to be another such buttress, rather than for a larger keep, but there is no evidence for an intended buttress at the northwest angle. Internally, the keep was divided from the beginning into two chambers at basement (ground floor) level by a thick north-south orientated wall. A projection from
this wall into the east chamber houses a well and the stair down to the basement from the upper levels of the keep occupies the southeast turret. The first and second floors are divided into two rooms by a north-south wall that was inserted in the mid-sixteenth century, when many of the original windows in the south and east walls were also modernised and enlarged. At the same time, the third, now top floor had a large north-south orientated arch inserted beneath the roof (Fig. 4a). With a ceiling at nearly twice the height of the two floors below, this is the most impressive and well-lit space in the keep today, having the appearance - superficially at least, and on a much smaller scale - of the much earlier great hall at Castle Hedingham in Essex (Fig. 4b).

Tom argued in 1981 that there was originally a fourth floor occupying the upper part of this room, the evidence being a blocked doorway at this level at the end of a passage from the southeast stairway and five (presumably once six) surviving timber beam holes in the east and west walls. Tom suggested in 1981 that each floor might originally have been divided by an open, arcaded timber partition along the line of the later-inserted walls and top-floor arch – a timber equivalent of those in stone dividing the great Norman keep of Rochester Castle. This in turn would have eliminated the need for massive, 12-metre long, wall-to-wall timbers supporting the floors, which could instead have been half the length and rested on the partitions. In his talk, Tom showed a sketch for a third floor partition that implied no fourth floor, but would have allowed the partition to support a roof structure. If there was originally no fourth floor, perhaps the beam holes originally held timber or stone corbels supporting a timber ledge on which rested an originally more deeply countersunk roof. The presumed fourth-floor door might then have given access to the roof gutters, or might have served a gallery if the roof was always more-or-less at its present level.

It is the roof of the keep that currently is the main cause of concern for Carrickfergus Castle conservation. The original form of the roof is not certain. Features at and just below parapet level, including an internal offset below the parapets and the interruption of these by the four squinches that originally supported four angle turrets (see further discussion below), suggested to Tom in 1981 that the keep might originally have had an octagonal roof. A mid-sixteenth-century drawing of the castle (Fig. 14) indicates that the keep was roofless at that time, but already had the top floor arch inserted. Slates on the subsequent keep roof were replaced in the mid-eighteenth century with lead and this roof was replaced in 1815 with two brick vaults resting on the top floor arch. These vaults were removed in 1930-1 and the present flat roof, countersunk more than a metre below the battlements, was erected after that (Fig. 10).
Monument Conservation, Restoration and Presentation

The second strand of the Friday’s proceedings was introduced in Terence Reeves Smyth’s opening talk. There he highlighted the immediate need to replace the roof on the keep of Carrickfergus Castle, which is failing to prevent water penetrating into the structure. Terence reviewed our understanding of medieval roof structures before suggesting that a countersunk M-profile roof might be appropriate for Carrickfergus keep.

Morning coffee was followed by two talks on conservation, restoration and presentation. John Goodall began by illustrating how public presentation of an historic monument is difficult and a true authenticity that reflects the full history of a monument can almost never be achieved. A well-preserved monument such as Carrickfergus Castle often has a long and complex history involving many structural changes to meet changing requirements, so what does one present to the public? In Castle Hedingham in Essex, visited by the CSG in April 2011, the floors have all been replaced, whereas Warkworth Castle in Northumberland has been restored as a ruin that is open to the sky. In Ireland, Trim Castle, County Meath, has also been restored as a ruin, with elevated timber bridges linking doors onto its former upper floors, but a modern, pavilion-type roof has been erected over it to protect it and touring visitors from the weather.

If the roof and floors of a monument are restored, the natural inclination is then to refill it with objects reflecting its historic occupation, commonly facsimile period furniture and wall hangings (in the absence of original artefacts). While cost usually means that this can only be done on a limited and arguably ineffective scale, this has been carried to its logical conclusion in the recent restoration of the Great Tower of Dover Castle, where Kit Surrey, a very talented theatre designer, recreated as complete a restoration...
as possible of how the keep might have appeared inside during the time of King Henry II (Fig. 5). This despite the fact that the keep was probably not completed in Henry’s lifetime and that he visited it only once during that period. In contrast, after the great fires in the state apartments of Hampton Court and Windsor Castle, in 1986 and 1992 respectively, careful restoration of the structural shells of the apartments could be followed by reinstatement of authentic period furnishings and artwork that had fortunately been rescued from the flames.

Realistic re-envisaging of the past interiors of monuments has been at the heart of restoration projects in recent years. The interior of the medieval manor house of Tretower Court in Powys, Wales has been lovingly recreated as it might have appeared in the second half of the fifteenth century, and the Palace and Great Hall of Stirling Castle in Scotland have been restored to represent the mid-sixteenth century. The presentation at Dover involved the carefully researched design of brightly coloured faux-medieval furniture, wall hangings that in some cases substitute for wall paintings and selected artefacts, as well as subtle lighting and smoke to create a total ‘medieval’ ambience. The veracity of the result has been much criticized in intellectual circles – often wrongly, and unfairly, interpreted as a criticism of the craftsmanship involved, but visitors cer-
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Fig. 7. Harlech Castle gatehouse: (a) the exterior façade seen from the bridge behind the turreted outer ward gateway; (b) a bird’s-eye view from the from the southwest gatehouse turret; and (c) the interior façade from the inner ward (muba 2009).

tainly like it. John concluded by stating that more general objections to such works include their common representation, as at Dover, of events that did not actually take place, their concrete certainty that frequently does not reflect the uncertain state of historical knowledge, and their need to reflect just one period of a monument’s history, the rest being neglected if not stripped away in the process.

Kate Roberts of Cadw followed John Goodall with another account of a restoration project that recreated the medieval interior of part of Chepstow Castle in Monmouthshire, southeast Wales. There, enough has survived of the decorative painted ornament used on the walls of Roger Bigod’s late thirteenth-century New Tower, subsequently renamed Marten’s Tower, to be able to reconstruct the likely appearance of the chamber interiors (Fig. 6). The tower itself has not been restored thus, though it has been refloored and given a modern roof, but the decorative scheme has been applied to the recently re-presented earl’s chamber, right at the heart of Roger Bigod’s new domestic range, La Gloriette, perched on the cliff top on the northern side of the lower bailey (Fig. 6). Kate concluded her presentation by discussing the feasibility of a similar presentation of the iconic Edward I gatehouse of Harlech Castle in north Wales (Fig. 7).

A New Roof for Carrickfergus Castle Keep

For the writer and, judging by the open discussion at the end of the day, perhaps for the audience as a whole, the final talk of the day that followed Tom McNeill’s account of Carrickfergus Castle was perhaps the most interesting. Dermot MacRandal of the NIEA gave a quite technical account of the engineering constraints applying to any new roof construction for Carrickfergus keep. Beginning from the various stresses that affect timber roof joints, Dermot demonstrated that the ideal profile that will neutralise these stresses for any new roof must correspond to a catenary curve - the ideal curve that would be formed by a chain suspended between two points (Fig. 8a). We were shown examples of catenary curves in Gaudi’s architecture in Barcelona (Fig. 8b), and its close approximation in the profiles of the great stone gothic cathedrals with their flying buttresses, and even in the braced timber roofs on medieval halls and churches, which, if faced internally with timber, would have corresponded closely to a catenary curve. This can be seen in the restored, early
Fig. 8. Catenary curves: (a) the hanging chains of Gaudi’s Catenary model (Etan J. Tal 2009); (b) catenary arches employed in Gaudi’s Casa Milà in Barcelona (Error 2005); and (c) the restored Salle des États Généraux in Château Blois, Loire-et-Cher (Manfred Heyde 2009).
thirteenth-century timber-frame roof of the great Salle des États Généraux (Hall of the Estates General) of Château Blois, Loire-et-Cher (Fig. 8c). Even a cursory examination of the end-eighteenth-century brick-vaulted roofs over the two top floor chambers in the great tower at Dover Castle shows that their profiles, too, approximate catenary curves (compare Figs. 5a and 8c). Indeed, painted to resemble the roof at Château Blois, they could have provided the final touch to the medieval recreation of the Dover chambers.

Dermot concluded by suggesting a very simple roof construction for the keep at Carrickfergus, comprising two simply collared, hipped, timber-frame roofs that would rest in the centre on the sixteenth-century arch that divides the upper chamber of the keep (Fig. 9). While his preference - and the writer’s - would be for steel bolts to secure the timber joints, which would reflect the contemporary origin of the roof, the discussion that followed showed a preference for medieval-style timber pegs. In discussion, Tom McNeill argued that while he felt the evidence for an octago-
as the urban tower-houses throughout the adjacent town, were whitewashed at that time (Fig. 14). However, today’s widely-held concept of the medieval castle, when almost all have been stripped of render by time and disuse, and current popular approval of Carrickfergus Castle with its prominent pale Cultra stone detailing would make it impossible to reapply a render today.

Also discussed briefly was the wall, now foundations only, that once separated the middle and outer wards of the castle. Comment was made on the impracticality of its location so close to the inner ward and John Goodall suggested that it might have defined a low mantlet around the inner ward rather than a separate ward.

**The Keep**

The interior of the keep was toured from the ground up, after which the roof was visited. Returning afterwards to the main second floor chamber for sandwiches and coffee, the potential for presentation of the keep was debated.

The roof was the subject of much discussion. Tom demonstrated the features that he felt indicated an originally octagonal roof, notably: an internal stepped offset below each stretch of parapet, which might have supported the roof; and the interruption of the parapets by four squinches supporting the angle turrets, which Tom suggested must have been wider to support a continuous walkway (Fig. 10).

John Goodall and the writer noted that evidence from the south parapet suggested not so much a significant internal offset as that three rows of dressed Cultra stone have been quarried out of the wall, perhaps, John suggested, as part of the works on the vaulted roof of 1815. All the Cultra stone has been removed from the other three sides of the roof, giving the impression of a significant inset (though all agreed that a very shallow inset would have existed at the bottom of the robbed stone on the south side).
Fig. 11a. Left: Carrickfergus Castle gatehouse: the exterior, originally with two drum towers and a portcullis chamber over the gate passage between them, altered later for gunpowder weapons.

Fig. 11b. Above: Carrickfergus Castle gatehouse: the altered interior façade with, on the right, the nineteenth-century officers’ quarters over sixteenth-century storerooms.

Fig. 11c. Left: The gate passage vault viewed from the outer ward, with the late-twelfth-century inner arch in the foreground and the off-centre, late-twelfth-century outer round arch embedded high in the far wall.
While Tom agreed with the writer’s observation that there was no indication that the squinches were ever wider than they are today, thus only sufficient to support the angle turrets and not a skirting walkway, he did suggest that perhaps timber bridges might have been used. Tom pointed out that the southern parapet did not communicate with the other three parapets, something that he felt was unlikely. The two northern angle-turrets no longer stand, but the mid-sixteenth-century drawing of the castle clearly suggests that they both had doors communicating with the two parapets they terminated (Fig. 14), with no requirement for a continuous walkway around them.

The spiral stairs in the southeast angle of the keep ascend from the basement to the roof and once gave access via the southeast turret and through the former northeast and northwest turrets to three sides of the battlements. To access the fourth side, one would have had to cross the third floor chamber to the shorter spiral stairs in the southwest angle, which rises to the southwest turret and gives access to the southern parapet only. This would infer, as John Goodall suggested, that this was a more private space for the lord’s household - one, in fact that faces away from most danger and also provides a fine view down Belfast Lough. This interpretation would make corner walkways redundant, and with them, perhaps, the notion of an octagonal roof. If the roof were hipped, as Dermot MacRandal suggests for its replacement, and countersunk only very little, it would easily fit under the squinches as they exist today.

The coffee break discussion mostly concerned the interpretation and presentation of the keep interior, and much was brought to this by the experience of Kate Roberts and John Goodall. One suggestion, made by others to NIEA, was that the castle be adapted for events such as weddings. This met with a sceptical response. The top floor of the keep itself was considered a viable possibility, though access through the keep would be limited to the narrow spiral stairs if, as some suggested, the intrusive modern stairs between first and third floors were removed for the sake of authenticity. Kate, however, warned that in her experience such events, once established as a revenue-producing mechanism, inevitably interfere with continuing conservation work. Rebuilding of the great hall in the inner ward was also largely discounted, mostly on the basis that its cost would never be recouped and would have to be considered as a capital investment. On top of that, it would most probably be rebuilt on the surviving foundations of a more recent building and thus would be a total fabrication, and, with this in mind, should the materials used recreate a reproduction medieval hall or something different reflecting more its contemporary nature? A final consideration would be the local traders reaction to state-subsidised competition for their existing businesses.

Various suggestions were made as to the interpretation of the different floors in the keep, ranging from the now quite commonplace, more-or-less full blown recreation of a medieval space as at Dover, to leaving the top floor open, much as now, so that the space can be appreciated. The writer suggests that the divided basement and the great undivided space on the top floor are probably much as they were from the beginning, though the latter then having a timber arcade rather than the later stone arch. These could perhaps be given an early-thirteenth-century interpretation, with the interior of the top floor recreated or partially recreated along the lines of Dover’s Great Tower or Chepstow’s Earl’s Chamber beneath Dermot MacRandal’s new open timber roof. The rooms on the second floor, divided in the sixteenth century, could then be used to interpret their sixteenth-century occupation, as could those on the first floor if not given over to audio-visual or exhibition space. There should also be access to the wall walks.

Gatehouse, Grand Battery and Officers’ Quarters

One of the most interesting aspects of Tom McNeill’s talk on Carrickfergus Castle and the discussion on the tour the following morning was a proposed reinterpretation of the castle gatehouse. An early example of a twin drum-towered gatehouse with a short gate passage between the towers and a portcullis chamber above (Fig. 11a), the gatehouse was much altered in the age of gunpowder. The drum towers were infilled at ground level, and their upper levels brought down and new battlements constructed for artillery. At the same time, the inner arc of each tower was taken off to give the gatehouse a shallowly concave, polygonal inner face onto which projecting two-storey gabled structures were later accreted (Fig. 11b).
Tom demonstrated a three-phase evolution for the gate passage. Most significantly, he suggested that semicircular arches at both ends of the gatehouse are earlier than previously thought. The outer arch, embedded high in a late-sixteenth or seventeenth-century arched façade, is clearly offset axially from the later thirteenth-century ribbed gate-passage (Fig. 11c). The inner arch, inset about a metre beneath a later segmental arch, is constructed of carefully dressed and set Cultra stone with simple chamfered imposts (Fig. 11c). Though interpreted in 1981 as a late-sixteenth- or seventeenth-century re-insertion (for want of a credible alternative explanation at that time), Tom now suggests it may be an original, in-situ feature of the gatehouse. Pamela Marshall suggested that there might have been a simple curtain wall around the outer ward with an arched gate that was later incorporated into the gatehouse. Looking at the exterior of the castle, it is also clear that the west curtain of the outer ward abuts against the west tower of the gatehouse. Significantly, this demonstrates that the gatehouse was completed before the stone curtain of the outer ward was built. Another feature of the gatehouse is a two-light, round-arched window in the first-floor chapel in the east tower of the gatehouse (Fig. 12). Though clearly of early date, the awkwardness of the window’s positioning has in the past been taken to suggest insertion into the tower after it was completed, though Tom concluded in 1981 that its insertion was probably contemporary with construction of the gatehouse. The window was viewed and discussed by the delegates, John Goodall recognising similarities with late-twelfth-century architectural details in Christchurch Cathedral in Dublin.

There was general agreement that the whole ridge corresponding to the outer and inner wards was probably enclosed from the start of construction in the 1178, most likely by a timber palisade. Furthermore, on the basis of the evidence presented by Tom, it was deemed quite possible that the gatehouse was indeed constructed as early as the 1190s or even the 1180s, even if this meant that it perhaps stood isolated at the landward end of the ridge for a decade or more. This would make it as early as William Marshal’s revolutionary Main Gatehouse at Chepstow Castle, now well-dated dendrochronologically to the 1190s and which, Tom suggested, might also have stood isolated from the rest of Chepstow Castle while the curtains of the lower bailey were completed afterwards. In all probability, though, timber palisades enclosed the landward end of the ridge at Carrickfergus until the masonry curtain walls were constructed to connect the inner ward and John de Courcy’s equally revolutionary gatehouse.

The final discussion of Saturday morning, before the conference broke up, took place at the top of the steps outside the entrance to the gatehouse chapel. This related to the preservation and presentation of the Grand Battery, which lies behind the northeast-facing curtain of the outer ward, just inside the castle gatehouse (Fig. 13). The battery, which dates from the turn of the nineteenth century, was excavated in 2010 in the course of laying down a new drainage system for the vaulted storehouses below the battery and the officers’ quarters. Exposed, and preserved in situ, were traces of several phases of walls and cobbled surfaces corresponding to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architectural and military history.
tury barrack buildings. These overlay a sixteenth-century cobbled surface above the vaults, which ran beneath the existing nineteenth-century parapet wall at one point. This inferred gap in an earlier parapet suggests the former existence of a sixteenth-century gunport at that point, presumably one of several along this curtain of the castle and a new discovery in the castle’s story (see Emily Murray’s 2010 report in Archaeology Ireland, volume 24, for more details of the excavation).

Paul Logue led a discussion of suggestions for the presentation and protection of the newly discovered archaeology of the battery, now filled in again with loose material, if it were to be reopened for public viewing. One possibility mooted for its protection was to extend the ridged roof of the officers’ quarters as a glass box with a ridged glass roof over the excavated foundations of the rest of this building, and erecting a similar glass roof alongside it over the battery, with a glass wall just inside the present parapet. Similar work has just been completed by The Office of Public Works, controversially in some circles, on Boyle Abbey, County Roscommon. There, the tilting north nave wall and arcade - the latter infilled since antiquarian times and the wall supported by massive stone buttresses - has been dismantled and reconstructed upright, supported by a lean-to glass corridor corresponding to the north nave aisle. This aims to protect the mixed Romanesque and Gothic architecture of the arcade from the elements and provides a partially weatherproofed space for visitors without competing with or detracting from the monument. (for a computer-generated 3-D video of this restoration, go to the YouTube website: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RM2qGz8Hy1A).

With this discussion, the conference concluded as far as the writer and most remaining delegates were concerned. The preceding day and a half made up a particularly stimulating conference, one that not only threw new and interesting light on the probable history of Carrickfergus Castle, but also allowed delegates to participate in a very appropriate and current discussion on the best ways of presenting such monuments to a visiting public. Well done to all who organised the conference, to all the excellent speakers and tour leaders, and to all those who contributed to the lively discussions that ensued. The writer, for one, looks forward to returning to the castle in a couple of year’s time to see how the castle is finally interpreted.
Further Reading

For more information on Carrickfergus Castle, its history and archaeology, the reader should see:


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Fig. 6 (below) is taken from Coldstream, N. 2008, *Builders and Decorators: Medieval Craftsmen in Wales*. Cadw, Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff, page 54.

Dermot MacRandal himself kindly provided Fig. 9.