

# Rathfarnham Castle 2018

## Archaeological test-pits



GIACOMETTI

12/02/2018

LICENCE E4468

SD17A/0093

**SITE NAME**

Rathfarnham Castle (Phase 7 Works), Grange Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14

**CLIENT**

Office of Public Works, OPW Architectural Services

**PLANNING**

South Dublin County Council 17A/0093

**LICENCE**

Ministerial Consent E4468 & Metal Detection Licence R0336

**REPORT AUTHOR**

Antoine Giacometti MA MIAI

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**ABBREVIATIONS USED**

DoAHRRGA	Dept. of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
NMI	National Museum of Ireland
NMS	National Monuments Service
OS	Ordnance Survey
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
NIAH	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
LAP	Local Area Plan

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# Section 1 Introduction

## Report summary

Two test-trenches were hand excavated in the basement of Rathfarnham Castle in advance of OPW groundworks. Material and features dating to 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century were identified and recorded.

## Project description

Rathfarnham Castle is a Recorded Monument (RMP DU022-014), a National Monument (No. 628), and a Protected Structure. Over 17,000 objects dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and into the early 18<sup>th</sup> century were discovered during an archaeological excavation in Rathfarnham Castle in 2014 (Giacometti 2014; 2016). The OPW and National Museum of Ireland are now proposing to exhibit part of the assemblage at Rathfarnham Castle. This requires the refurbishment of three rooms in the castle basement. The aim of the project is to provide a secure environment for the artefacts and visiting public with the minimum of impact to the Protected Structure and Recorded Monument.



Room B8 facing east, showing 18<sup>th</sup> century paved stone floor. Decayed paving stones are darker in colour in centre of photograph.

As part of this project, the OPW are proposing to excavate two small trenches below the basement floor. In advance of these works, a programme of archaeological test-trenching at these locations was carried out to assess the likely archaeological impact of the proposed sub-surface works.

## Receiving environment

Rooms B8, B7 and B10 are part of the original Rathfarnham Castle basement constructed c. 1583 by Adam Loftus. Room B6 is an 18<sup>th</sup> century bow extension to the east.

Archaeological work conducted by the author in 2014 and 2016 demonstrated that rooms B7 and B8 originally formed a single larger room in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The existing paved stone floor is of early 18<sup>th</sup> century date, as is the partition wall between B7 and B8. Excavations below this floor level in the south and west of the castle basement identified early 18<sup>th</sup> century construction rubble and drain repair, overlying the original 16<sup>th</sup> century basement floor, c. 700mm

below the current floor level. Room B10, the northeast flanker, has a brick floor which is not original, and may also be of 18<sup>th</sup> century date. An assessment of three phases of plaster in room B8 by the author in 2016 demonstrated stratigraphically that all visible plaster dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> century or later. This is likely to also be the case in rooms B7 and B10.

Despite the extensive



18<sup>th</sup> century and later interventions these spaces retain much of their original 16<sup>th</sup> century character. Original window openings in the north of rooms B7 and B8 are visible (if modified) and part of an original 16<sup>th</sup> century sandstone mullioned window frame survives. The outline of 16<sup>th</sup> century fireplaces or ovens are visible in the southern side of rooms B7 and B8. The passage to the south of room B7 incorporates 16<sup>th</sup> century dressed quoins. The lower half of the doorway between rooms B7 and B10 incorporates carved stone doorjambs of the 16<sup>th</sup> century castle. The vaulted stone ceilings of rooms B7,

B8 and B10 are likely to be mostly 16<sup>th</sup> century in date.

Rathfarnham Castle is of national importance for architectural, historic and archaeological reasons. The 16<sup>th</sup> century character of the Rathfarnham Castle basement is of particular significance due to the extensive remodelling of the upper stories in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The existing basement provides an opportunity for visitors to appreciate the multiple phases of development of the structure.



Rathfarnham Castle basement; Giacometti 22/7/16

# Section 2 Archaeological excavation

## Sub-floor drain





The 16<sup>th</sup> century sub-floor drain was identified in the larger (western) northern basement (B8). One of the existing paving stone (L2; 640mm by 520mm) situated in southwest corner of northern basement room, 600mm from the south wall and 700mm from the west wall was damaged (top at 100.09m OD; base at 100.01m OD). This was lifted, exposing a brick-lined manhole, square in section measuring 320mm by 280mm, and oriented at 45-degrees from the room walls. The manhole was not centred under the paving stone, and two of the corners went under two other paving stones to the west and south, which is unusual for a manhole. The brick-lined manhole reached a depth of 650-

700mm below the 18th century floor level, coming down onto two layers of limestone paving slabs. The upper layer (at 700mm below the existing floor; 99.40m OD) is likely to represent the 16<sup>th</sup> century basement floor, while the lower layer (top at 99.26m OD) may be a sub-floor. Below these the drain was visible, lined with stone and with an arched stone vault beyond the manhole opening, wider than the manhole (perhaps c. 800mm wide). The drain was part-filled with water which did not appear to flow, indicating it was trapped. A level on the layer of silt at the base of the drain was at 1.70m below the existing basement floor (98.37m OD).

A CCTV inspection of the drain was undertaken by Dyno-Rod Dublin (Benson 2017 ref 78558). The survey hit debris almost immediately so was unable to follow the culvert. From the CCTV footage directly below the manhole, the drain is stone-lined and stone-arched, in good condition, and part-filled with water. From the manhole, the drain extends northwest and southwest. To the southwest, the drain extends only a very short distance (less than 1m) and appears to end intentionally at the spine wall. To the northeast the drain curves immediately towards the east and may continue eastwards parallel to the spine wall. The CCTV survey only extended 100mm due to debris.

**DYNO-ROD**  
Drain Cleaning, Inspection & Repair

CCTV Inspection Photos

Job Number 78558	Surveyed by (Operator) A MAC MAHON	Base Unit DVIUPBL4CD	Date 08/12/2017
			
Start of Survey Length	Start node type, lamphole, reference CULVERT		
			
Water level 30% height/diameter	Survey abandoned - Remark: DUE TO DEBRIS		

## Test-pit 1

Four damaged paving slabs (Room B8: slabs C4, D3, D4, E4; 100.02m OD) were removed in the larger (western) northern basement, exposing an irregular area of subfloor measuring up to 2.30m east-west by 1.50m north-south. This area was selected as Test Pit 1. The centre of the test-pit was situated 2.48m from the west wall and 1.70m from the north wall.

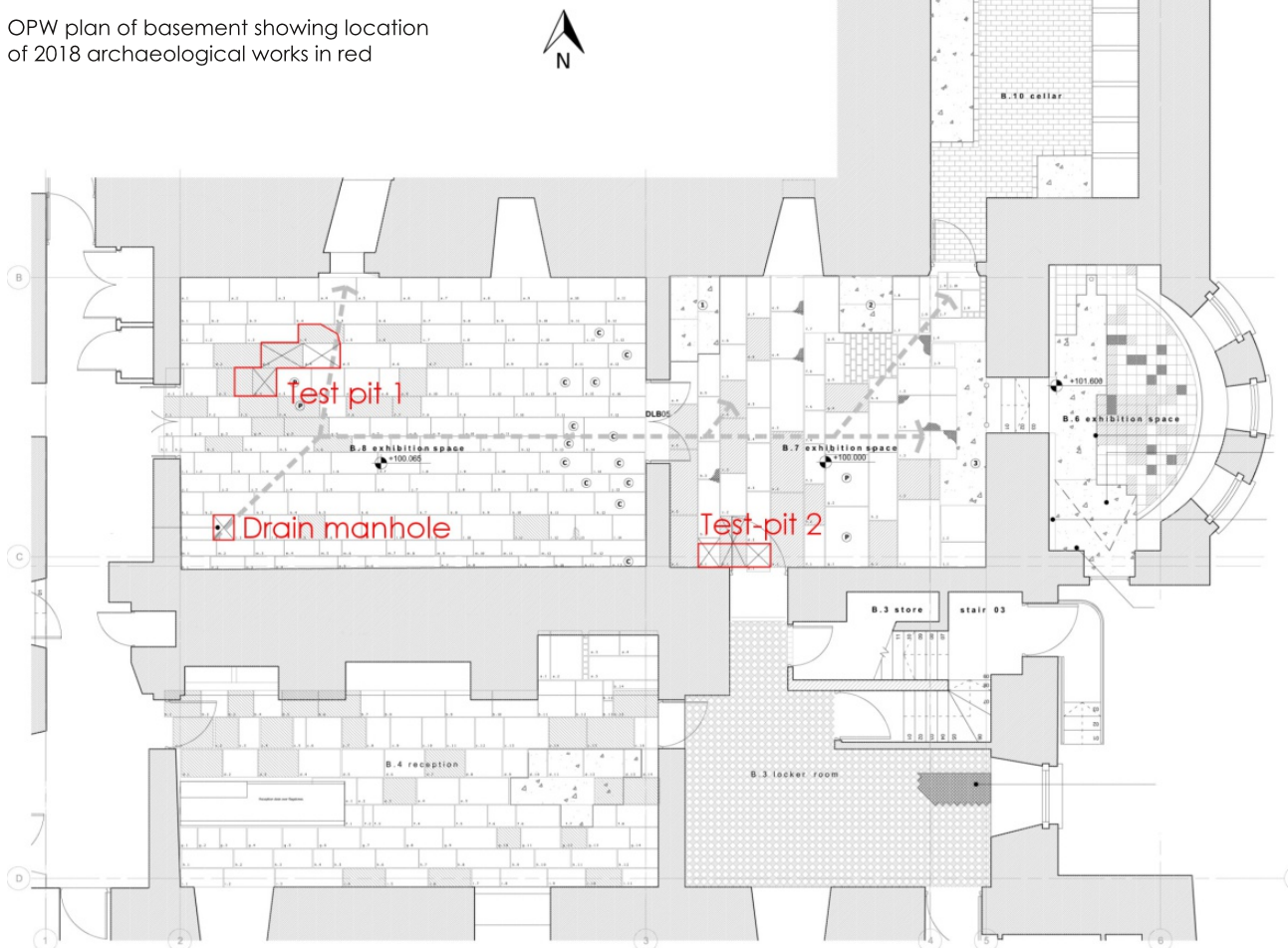
A thin (5mm) layer of mortar subfloor (C1aa) had been previously removed by the conservation stonemasons PMAC. Below it was a loose deposit of greyish-brown silty-sand 700mm thick (base at 99.26-99.32M OD) with inclusions of animal bone, handmade red-brick, mortar, bottle glass, tin-glazed wall-tile and lead fragments, with lenses of dumped ash and clay. The upper half of the deposit was darker with ferrous-coloured staining (C1a) while the lower half was paler with a higher proportion of mor-

tar (C1b). The dateable artefacts are consistent with the assumed early 18th century date of this phase of flooring.

Below this, two discrete dense patches of mortar at 99.32m OD (700mm below the existing floor) are likely to represent the remains of a 16<sup>th</sup> century sub-floor. The original 16<sup>th</sup> century sub-floor was not present within the test-pit.

Below this, a 200mm thick dense dark greenish-brown silty clay (C2) with inclusions of marine shell and charcoal at 99.26m OD. A fragment of green-glazed earthenware floor tile was recovered. This was underlain by a mixture of the same material and natural subsoil that probably represent a layer of trample dating to the 1583 construction of the castle (C3). It was in turn underlain by natural subsoil comprising a dense sterile greenish-brown clay at 99.03m OD, 1m below the existing floor. The sub-floor castle drain was not present within the test-pit.

OPW plan of basement showing location of 2018 archaeological works in red



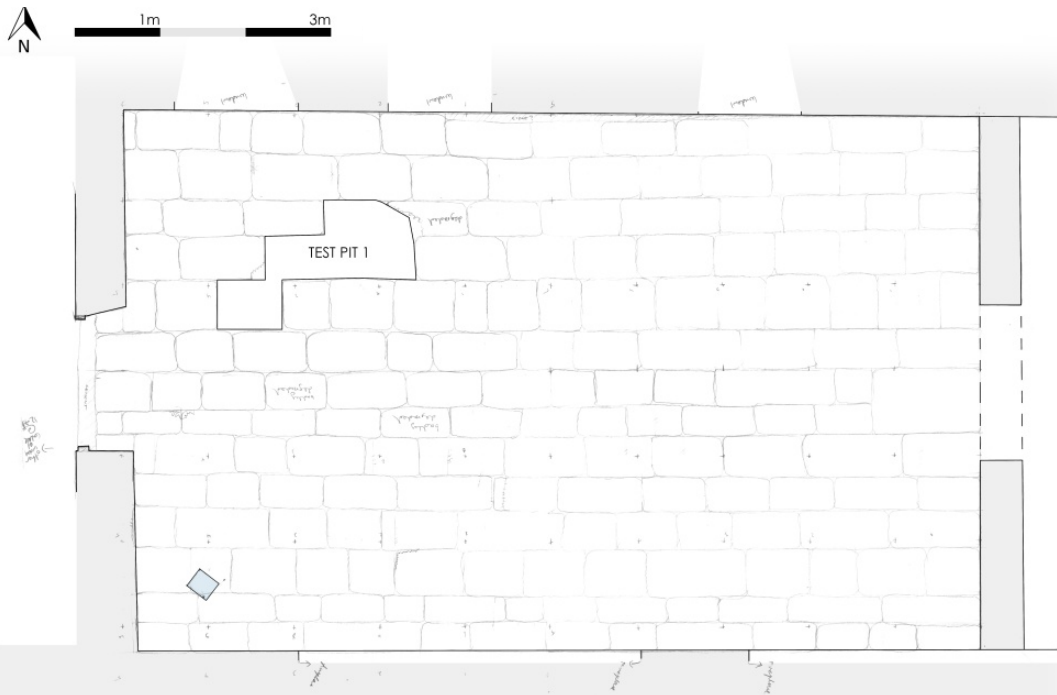




Test-pit 1 prior to excavation, following removal of 18<sup>th</sup> century paving stones, facing west

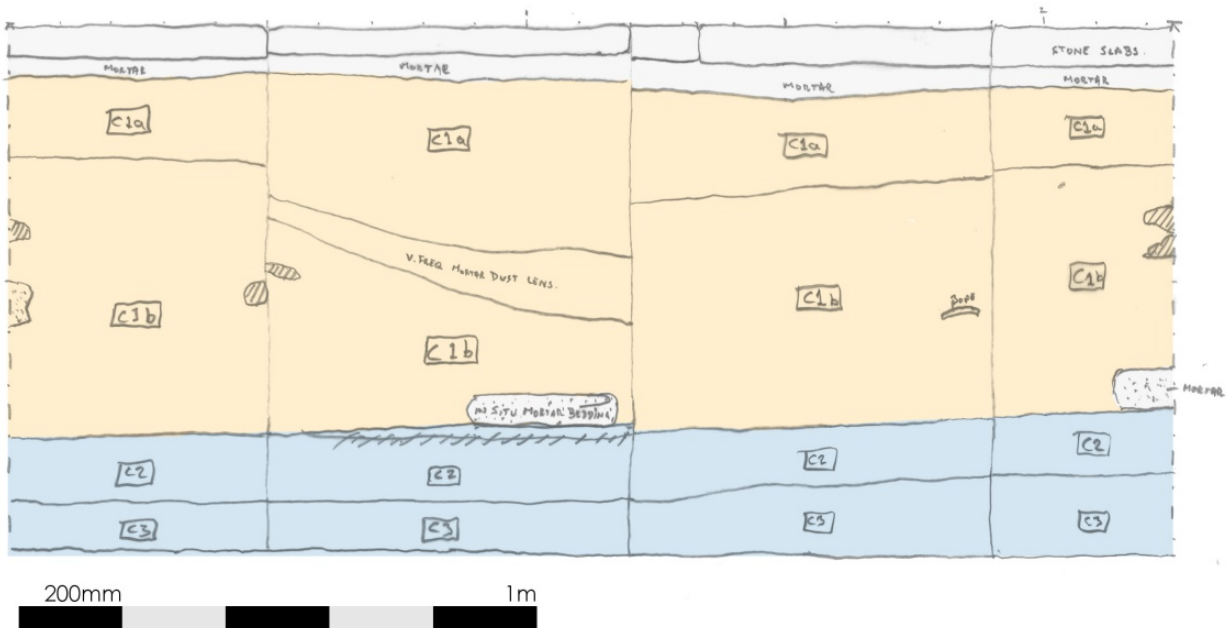
Test-pit 1 after excavation, showing natural subsoil at a depth of c. 1m, facing east





Archaeological plan of Rathfarnham Castle basement room B8 (northwestern room). This plan was surveyed in order to correctly mark the locations of the drain manhole (in blue above) and test-pit 1. The OPW baseplan contains a number of inaccuracies in terms of the placement of individual paving stone (presumably due to the fact that the room is not exactly rectangular) so could not be used for this purpose

south-facing section of test pit 1. Yellow-shaded layers date to the early 18th century, and blue-shaded layers date to between 1583 and 1700





## Test-pit 2

Three damaged slabs (Room B7: slabs B1, C1, D1; 100.02m OD) were removed in the smaller (eastern) northern basement, exposing a rectangular area of subfloor measuring 1.64m east-west by 0.65m north-south. This area was selected as Test Pit 2. The test-pit abutted the southern wall and doorway, and was 0.62m from the west wall.

A thin (5mm) layer of mortar subfloor (C4a) had been previously removed by the conservation stonemasons PMAC. Below it was a loose deposit of greyish-brown sand 600mm thick with very frequent small stones (C4b). This material was completely different to the material below the floor in test-pit 1 (C2) and contained very little animal bone and a clay pipe stem, but a large quantity of red-brick relative to test pit 1.

Below this was a cobbled floor (C6) identical to the cobbled floor identified in the southeast flanker during the 2014 excavations (Giacometti



Location of Test-pit 2 on OPW base plan, northeast room of basement

2014). This was uneven, and was situated between 610mm and 670mm (c. 99.38m OD) below the existing floor. The cobbles stopped at the line of the doorway to the north. Within the doorway the floor level stepped down to a paved and cobbled stone floor or threshold at

Pre-excavation view of test-pit 2, marked in orange, facing southwest. Archway of oven/fireplace is shown in blue







Test-pit 2 showing cobbled floor surface of late 16<sup>th</sup>, or possibly 17<sup>th</sup> century, date, facing east

715mm below the existing floor (99.31m OD). This compares with a level of 99.40m OD for the floor over the drain in the eastern basement room, and a level of c. 99.30m OD for the cobbled floor in the southeast flanker. A thin layer of dark black organic silt (C5) with frequent charcoal and no artefacts, 20mm thick, lay directly over the cobbled floor. This layer was also identified in the southeast tower. It is unclear if this floor is the original 16<sup>th</sup> century floor, or a later resurfacing predating the raising of the basement floor in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The excavation of Test-Pit 2 exposed the lower parts of a masonry arch in the south wall. The arch measures 4m wide and was thought to be a blocked 16<sup>th</sup> century fireplace. The excavation demonstrated that the arch did not continue down to the original floor of the basement and instead ended at 100.02m OD, exactly at the 18<sup>th</sup> century floor. This was a surprise, as the

18<sup>th</sup> century floor clearly post-dates the blocking up of the openings. The arched openings are therefore likely to represent a pair of raised ovens, raised fireplaces, or raised stores/shelves constructed behind a fireplace in order to keep things warm. It is possible they are simply structural and were never intended as openings, however the fill to the west is completely different from the rest of the 16<sup>th</sup> century wall masonry.

Very similar features interpreted as fireplaces with built-in ovens are present in the spine wall basement of the Bishop's Palace at Raphoe, Co. Donegal constructed in 1636-7 (Lacy 1983, 376-379), however it is unclear if the Raphoe openings reach the basement floor.

Below the existing floor level, the wall is plastered with lime with black (coal?) staining. This plaster pre-dates the early 18<sup>th</sup> century paved stone floor.





Top - 16<sup>th</sup> century doorjamb from Rathfarnham Castle test-pit 2, facing south

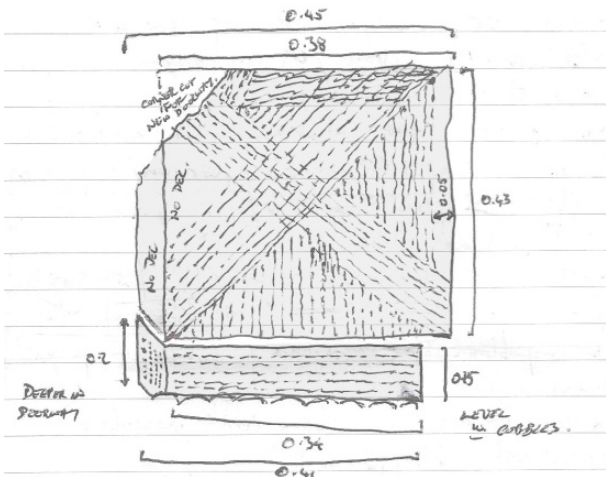
Bottom left - sketch of the doorjamb tooled finish

Bottom right - comparable tooled finish at Loughmoe Castle, Co. Tipperary, photograph courtesy of C oil n   Drisceoil

The excavation of Test-Pit 2 also exposed the 16<sup>th</sup> century door-jamb of the doorway running south from this room. Two stones survived below the 18<sup>th</sup> century floor from 99.95m OD. The upper larger stone (430mm by 450mm in size) displays a distinctive tool-mark finish of diagonal cross-hatched lines with a plain full-height chamfer. The chamfer and material matches the other identified 16<sup>th</sup> century doorways at Rathfarnham Castle, however the cross-hatched finish of the door-jamb stone face does not. The best comparison identified by the author is the finish in the doorjamb of the 15<sup>th</sup> century tower-house of Loughmoe

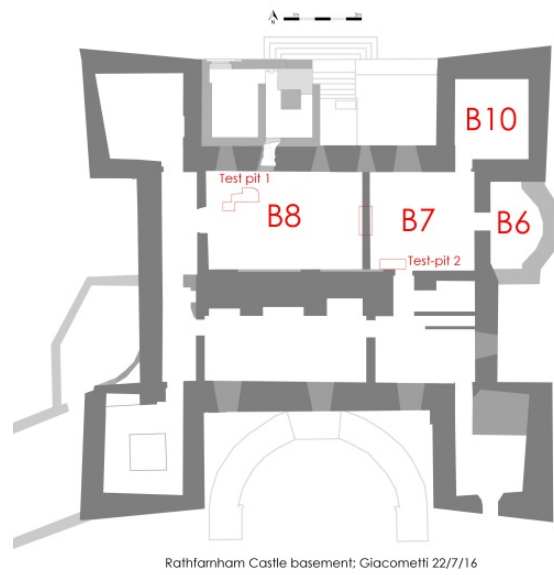
Castle, Co. Tipperary (pers. com. C oil n   Drisceoil), which was later converted into a fortified house not dissimilar to Rathfarnham Castle.

Rathfarnham Castle - finish on doorjamb in spine wall (E4468 TT2 Jan18)



## Partition wall

The partition wall running north-south and dividing the northern half of the basement into two unequal spaces was opened up as part of the exhibition works. An opening 1.82m wide and 2m high was created through this wall by workmen. Although initially thought to be sitting on the basement floor, the opening demonstrated that the wall slightly predates the 18<sup>th</sup> century paved floor as the floor does not extend below the wall, and instead abuts it. The paved floor to the west of the partition wall was 90mm higher than the floor to the east. The orientations of the paving in both rooms are also different. In each of the divided spaces the paving stones were oriented along the length of the room, which was east-west in the west room, but north-south to the east.



Rathfarnham Castle basement; Giacometti 22/7/16

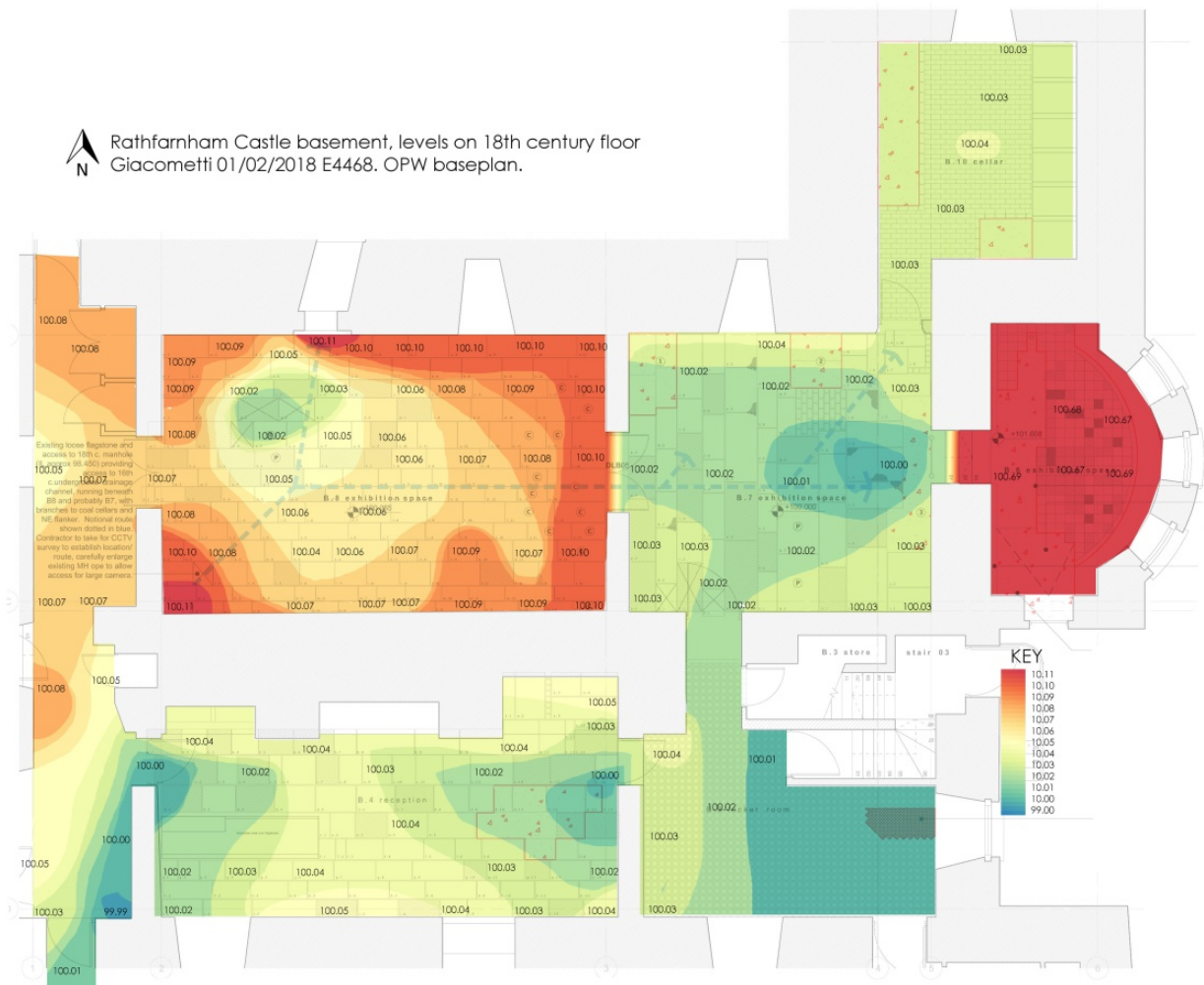
Plan of Rathfarnham Castle basement showing section of partition wall between rooms B7 and B8 removed in red

Room B8 facing west, showing partition wall prior to OPW works at rear of photograph





Rathfarnham Castle basement, levels on 18th century floor  
Giacometti 01/02/2018 E4468. OPW baseplan.



Contour map of levels on existing basement floor based on survey

## Levels on the floor

The levels of the basement are based on an OD level of 100.065m on the basement floor (Room B8 slab i7) on 2017 OPW drawing G16039.204 (Rathfarnham Castle Phase 7: Works for Floors (1) survey of existing floors). This compares with an OD level of 99.749m on the same point on 2014 OPW drawing 50208.03 (Rathfarnham Castle Phase 6: site services and drainage). It is therefore recommended that this reduced level (Room B8 slab i7) is checked.

Levels were taken along the full existing floor of the basement level. This floor comprises paving stones which mostly date to the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the north and west; a brick floor of uncertain date in the northeast flanker; and a

20<sup>th</sup> century tiled floor in the southwest.

Excluding the raised area of the bow window extension, levels on the basement floor varied by 120mm from 99.99m OD to 100.11m OD (levels based on 2017 OPW level). Differences in the levels show areas of wear, and are particularly evident at access points, for example the west access into the northwest room (B8), the south and east accesses in the northeast room (B7), the east and west access in the southwest room (B4), and access points along the western corridor. The wear patterns confirm that the two northernmost basement rooms were subdivided prior to the laying of the existing stone floor. Lower levels correlate roughly with increased wear and damage to the stone, but do not appear to correlate to the underfloor drain.



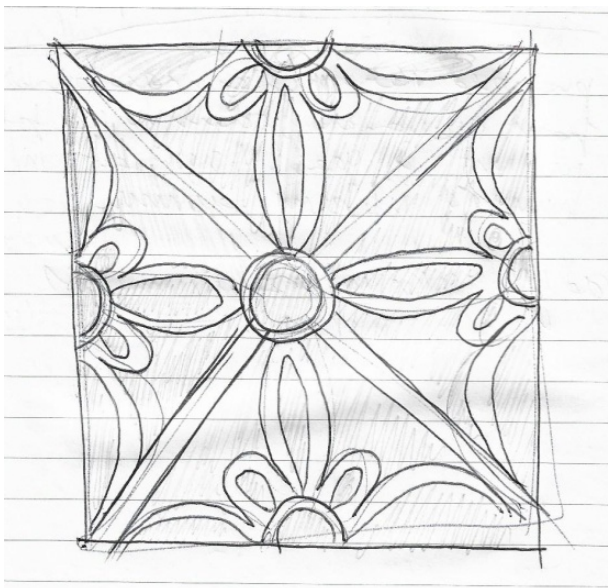
## Section 3 Artefacts

### Ceramic tiles

#### *Tin-glazed wall tiles*

Ten wall tiles sherds represent at least four tiles from Test-Pit 1: C1 One of these has a dark blue painted vase on white and is comparable to Dutch tile designs from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Four of the fragments represent at least two tiles with a pattern of manganese and white geometric strapwork with lines and circles. These were identified in the latrine excavation in the southwest flanker (Giacometti 2016), and have been previously described as Dutch and dating to 1750-1800 (Betts 2010, 176 in Meenan 2015). There are mortar adhesions to the rear suggesting they had been attached to a wall. This date does not correlate with the early 18<sup>th</sup> century context. Five plain white tile sherds were also identified and may have been manufactured in the Netherlands or in Britain.

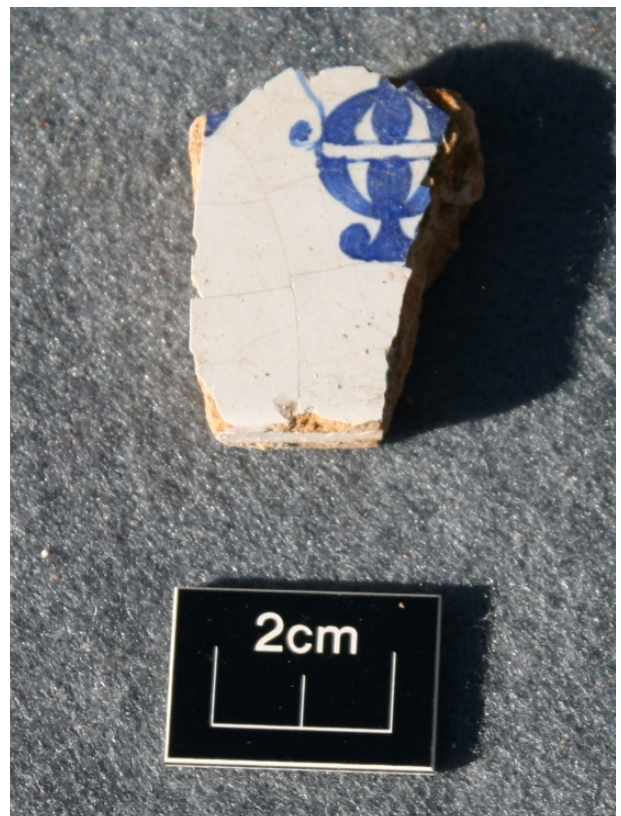
Sketch showing design of manganese and white tin-glazed wall tiles



Manganese and white tin-glazed wall tiles



Mid-17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch style tin-glazed wall tile with vase





### *Floor tiles*

A fragment of a lead-glazed red earthenware floor tile was identified in Test-Pit 1: C1. It is made in a rough fabric, oxidised to brick-red, with inclusions. The tile face was covered by white slip, then glazed on top and on the sides with a clear-brown lead glaze producing an amber-brown colour, and is 25mm thick. A second tile fragment from Test-pit 1: C2 is similar but with a bright green glaze and is 23mm thick. Floor tiles such as these were in use from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and a similar example was identified in the latrine (6:3067). Similar tiles documented in Waterford City, where Wren (1997, 360) has suggested they may be 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch imports.



Above and below: slipped and glazed floor tiles

### *Roof tile*

One fragment of green lead-glazed roof ridge tile with part-flattened top and curvilinear incisions along the upper side was identified in Test-Pit 1: C1. The fabric is a well-oxidised red earthenware with small inclusions. It is comparable to a roof tile assemblage dating the 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century in New Street, Dublin (Giacometti 2008).



Below: glazed roof ridge tile

### *Red brick*

Four fragments of hand-made red-brick fragments were identified in Test-Pit 1: C1, and 17 fragments in Test-Pit 2: C4. These were in very poor condition. The C4 bricks were of variable thicknesses, and match both previously identified 17<sup>th</sup> century and early 18<sup>th</sup> century brick identified during the 2014 excavations.

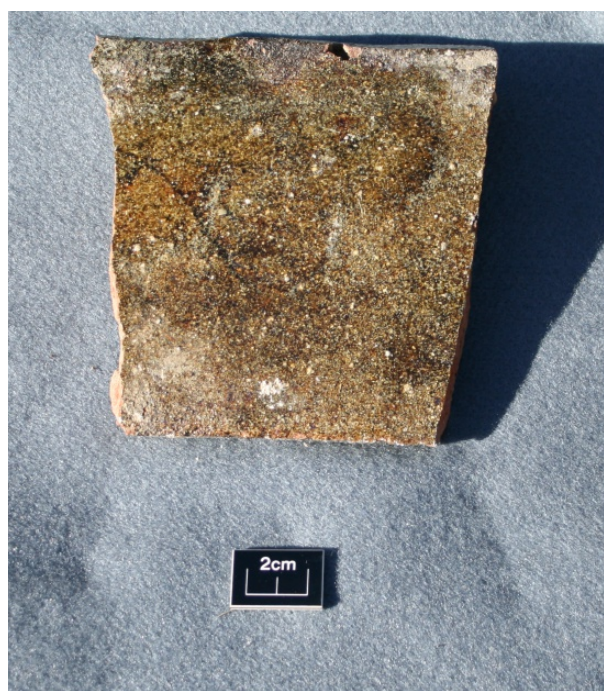
## Glass and ceramic objects

### *Glass*

Three fragments of glass were recovered from Test-Pit 1: C1. One sherd of dark green glass wine bottle rim and neck fragment, with V-shaped string rim, late 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century in date. A basal sherd from a similar bottle was also identified, in very poor condition. The third is a sherd from a pale green thin-walled vessel, either a phial or drinking glass, with air bubbles in the fabric.

### *Clay pipe*

Three plain clay pipe stems were found in Test-





Pit 1: C2. A fourth stem from Test-Pit 2: C4 has a roulette-stamped false relief trellis-pattern with five dots in each of the diamonds and a line in the spandrels. Similar decorated stems from the latrine date to c. 1700.

## Metal

### *Iron*

Three ferrous objects, possibly two large nails and one small nail, were identified from Test-Pit 1: C1.

### *Copper alloy*

A curved copper alloy fragment, possibly the folded rim of a fine bronze bowl or vessel, was recovered from Test-Pit 1: C1.



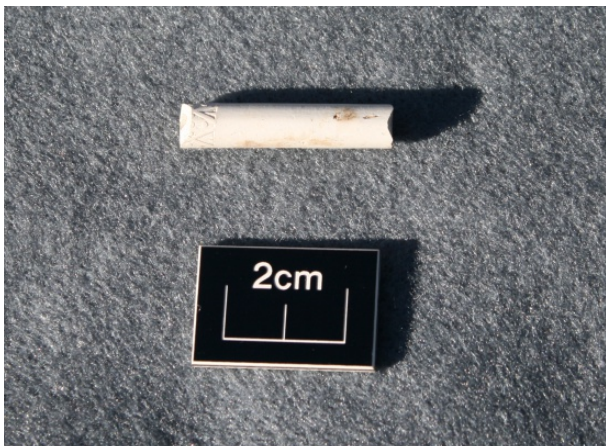
Top: iron nails

Left top: stamped clay pipe stem

Left bottom: green bottle glass

Right below: copper alloy vessel rim fragment

Right bottom: lead window came







### *Lead*

One looped fragment of lead window came with a H-shaped section. This was originally made for a window predating the Georgian sash windows inserted into the castle in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is tightly folded and looped, suggesting it may have been reused.

### *Other*

#### *Plaster*

A number of large fragments of plaster were identified from Test-Pit 1: C1. One of these was retained for analysis. It is a large fragment of lime plaster with concave front section, probably from a rounded ceiling, and with the imprint of overlapping wooden laths on the reverse



#### *Faunal remains*

583g of animal bone from Test-Pit 1: C1 and 49g of animal bone from Test-Pit 2: C4 was recovered. The bone is in good condition and represents meat and poultry food waste. Oyster and limpet shell were also identified.



Top: plaster fragment with impressed lathe marks

Centre: animal bone from C1

Bottom: marine shell from C1

## Section 4 Discussion

The test-pits identified a layer of early 18<sup>th</sup> century fill 600-700mm thick below the existing basement floor. This fill contains material of archaeological interest, including demolition rubble belonging to earlier phases of the castle such as floor and roof tiles.

The exact route of the drain running under the basement was not established during the investigations, despite the discovery of an 18<sup>th</sup> century manhole providing drain access. The drain was originally constructed in c. 1583, but was modified in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Elements of the 18<sup>th</sup> century phase of the drain are likely to be present below untested areas of the basement directly below the existing basement floor, and these are of archaeological significance.

The OPW proposed trenches measure 500mm deep and 400mm wide. The proposed trenches will not impact on any 16<sup>th</sup> century archaeological remains, but may impact on 18<sup>th</sup> century drain modifications depending on their exact location. These test-trenches must be archaeologically monitored and all artefacts identified within the fill should be retained and analysed.

The archaeological testing confirmed the early 18<sup>th</sup> century date of the existing basement floor.

The original 16<sup>th</sup> century floor level was identified 600-700mm below it. This was found to be cobbled in test-pit 2, but no floor surface survived in test-pit 1. The cobbling pre-dates the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, however it may not be the original 16<sup>th</sup> century floor surface, and for example it may represent a 17<sup>th</sup> century flooring. As both test-pits were located in the same 16<sup>th</sup> century room, it is probable that the entire basement room was cobbled at one time. A cobbled floor was also identified in the southeast ('oven') tower in 2014 at the same level. This contrasts with the 16<sup>th</sup> century paved stone floor in the southwest ('latrine') tower identified in 2014. It is possible that most of the basement was originally cobbled, with paving stones used to cover the route of the drain. The presence of two c. 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch-style slipped and glazed earthenware floor tile fragments within the early 18<sup>th</sup> century demolition rubble also suggest the possibility that some of the basement was tiled.

The test-excavation identified an in-situ 16<sup>th</sup> century door-jamb with unusual finishing marks, and demonstrated that the possible 16<sup>th</sup> century fireplaces in the spine wall of the north basement did not reach the floor, and were instead set into the wall at a height of c. 700mm.

