

**Tower House  
at  
Glebe South  
Balrothery, Co. Dublin  
Archaeological Oversight Report**



**CMF24-1-DF002**  
**RMP No. DU005-057006-**  
**License No. 23E0833ext**  
**Finola O'Carroll**





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## Introduction

The tower house at Glebe South, Balrothery is an archaeological monument protected under the National Monuments Acts and registered on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP DU005-057006-). It is a small, rectangular tower house with later modifications, with a noticeable amount of brick insertions in window openings, in the interior, and forming the crenellations. It is in private ownership and is at the north end of Glebe South townland.

Funding was made available in 2022 through the Community Monuments Fund Scheme Stream 2 to carry out an appraisal of the monument from a structural, architectural, and archaeological perspective. A detailed report was produced which includes a full archaeological and historical background to the tower house which will not be repeated here.

In 2023 further funding under Stream 1 was awarded to begin the process of conservation and repair of the structure. A condition of the funding is that the works be subject to archaeological oversight and the author was granted an archaeological licence (No. 23E0833). Further funding was granted in 2024 to complete the necessary repairs, and the excavation licence was extended to cover these works.

### 1 Location

The tower house is located 30m to the south of the medieval church at Balrothery, RMP No. DU005-057003--and graveyard, RMP No. DU005-057005-- in Balrothery townland. It sits at about 47m OD.

The tower house is situated on an elevation, but the land is slightly lower than that on which the medieval church sits. It is to the south of a laneway which runs E/W south of the church and which also forms part of the townland boundary between Balrothery and Glebe South. The town itself lies NNE of the tower and church and there is a noticeable drop down to the street level. An open green area lies at the NE side of the church on this lower ground and was the site of the Fairgreen.

### 2 Conservation Works

In 2023 conservation works were carried out in the main chamber above the vault ceiling of the ground floor, the wall walks and the flagged roof at the west end of the tower house. Externally, the south and east walls were re-pointed as needed and windows pinned and stabilized as needed. The programme of works for 2024 was as follows:

#### Internal

Second floor chamber: unsupported masonry over the opening broken through into stair was supported by reinstating some missing core masonry; exposed core masonry at sides and soffit of opening into stair was consolidated; and a cracked lintel at north wall window was stitched.

Humus and other debris were removed from the top of the vault under archaeological supervision. Sand was laid to cover the exposed mortar and stone, and a waterproof covering was fitted and then covered with gravel. A drainage system was inserted to run water off from the vault.

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NHL sheltercoat and stainless-steel braces were fitted to the inner face of the western brick parapet.

#### North Elevation

Ivy and vegetation were removed; local repointing was undertaken where joints were eroded; the loose masonry in the opening at the base of the wall was secured; and a new rainwater spout was provided where one of the three surviving spouts was broken off. The trefoil headed window was re-pointed.

#### West Elevation

Ivy and vegetation were removed; local repointing was undertaken where joints were eroded; a vertical crack through the centre of the elevation was filled and repointed; stainless-steel helical bars were fitted over the full height of the crack; and a new rainwater spout was provided at the northwest where rainwater from the flagged roof at the west end exited via a now partly broken chute. There is a second, higher, rainwater chute at the south end of the west wall, but this was blocked by stone and mortar in the past and water does not exit through to any noticeable degree now. The chute is reasonably complete, unlike the lower, northern one which has been damaged and cut short.

#### Comments

It was noted that areas of the parapet and roof which had been cleaned and conserved last year were suffering from noticeable re-growth of plants in places. As access to these areas is difficult without scaffolding it is recommended that they be covered with some form of geotextile and gravel to suppress weed growth.



### 3 Removal of material from above the vault

The first floor above the vault was covered in weeds, soil and other detritus. In order to ensure that water seepage through the vault to the room below was excluded, or at least minimised, the material was removed down to the surviving mortar and exposed stones by trowelling back the accumulated humus and other material. Loose stone, Styrofoam, loose mortar and various modern finds (an early electric iron, part of a piston, shotgun cartridges, and old batteries) were noted.

The mortar exposed was quite friable in places, more solid in others (Plate 2). There appeared to be a number of layers to the mortar, in one instance, in the northwest corner, there appeared to be some of the humic material sandwiched between mortar layers (Plate 3). This may have been a result of wash from the walls, or there may have been episodes of re-mortaring the floor surface with inadequate cleaning of the deposits on it. The stones along the crown of the vault were exposed, running east to west (Plates 2, 3, and 5). The floor sloped from the crown to the south but was more level to the north.

Along the west, north, and east walls long narrow flagstones had been placed edging the floor against the wall (Plates 2-5). At the east end there was a patch of small stones, like metalling, in the centre running up to the wall and covering the flagstones at that point.

The opening from the stair into that first floor chamber was marked by a curving step up running from the left hand door jamb to the right (south) wall about 75cms from the right hand door jamb. This step was composed of two large stones shaped to fit (Plates 2 and 6) with one smaller one completing the arc on the south side.



Plate 1: Removing the humus from above the vault





Plate 2: View down to exposed mortar and stone over vault. North is to the top and the curved step from the doorway into that level is at the SW corner (bottom left)



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## References

O'Carroll, F. and L. Corrway, 2022. Archaeological Appraisal and Historical Background of the Tower House at Glebe South Balrothery, Co. Dublin. *Unpublished Report, CMF Stream 2, 2022*