

The Walled Town Crier

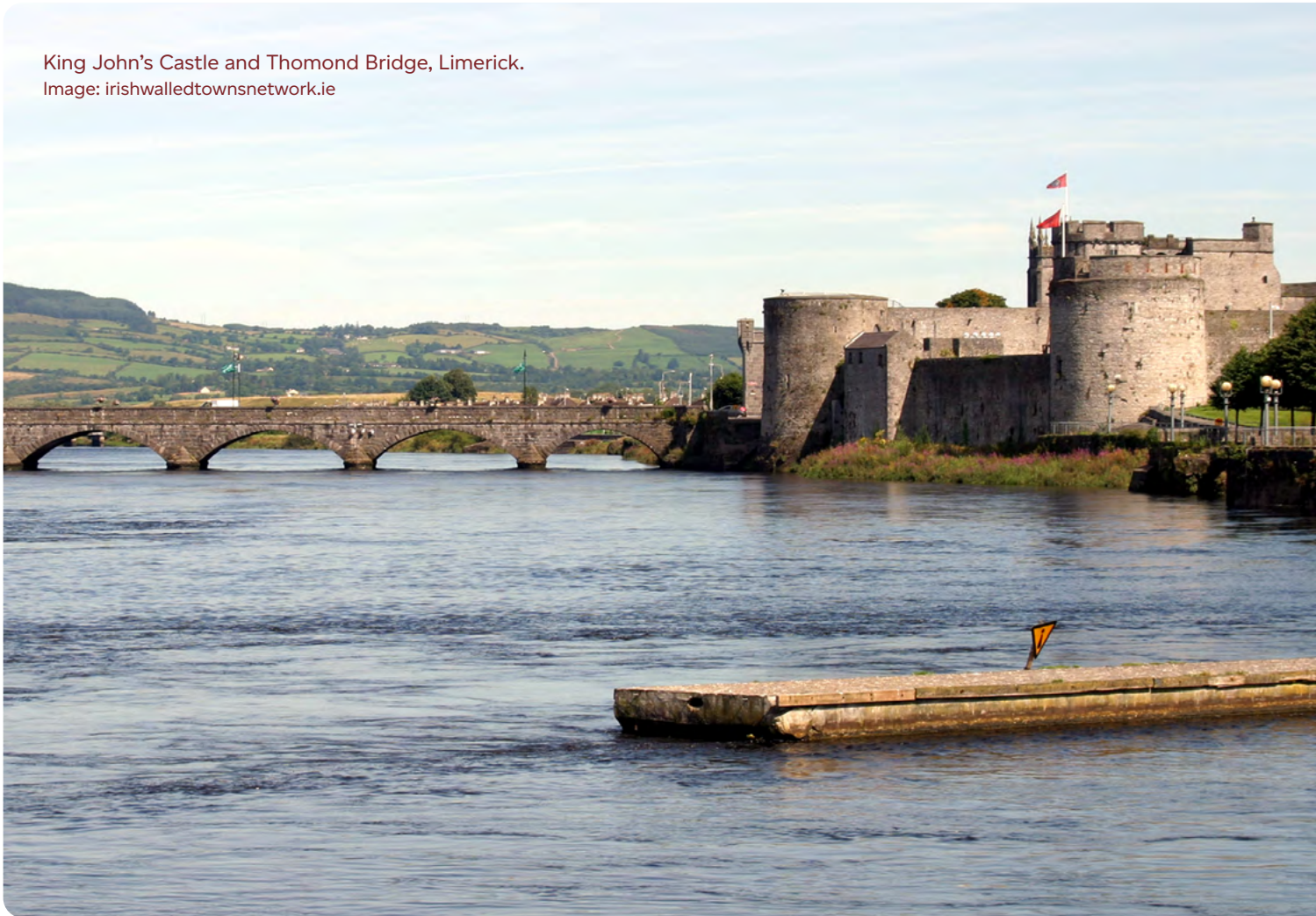
An Irish Walled Towns Network
bi-monthly magazine.

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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

King John's Castle and Thomond Bridge, Limerick.
Image: irishwalledtownsnetwork.ie



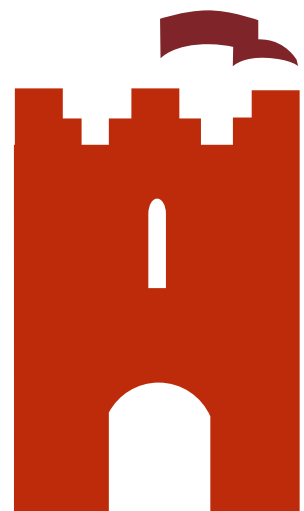
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Project Manager's Message

Hello everyone and welcome to the October 2024 edition of the Walled Town Crier.

This month marks issue 24 of the Walled Town Crier e-zine – a full four years of bimonthly issues!

In this issue of we're getting to know Limerick City and its not one but two walled circuits. We also have details of a new festival in Kilkenny City, programmed to coincide with the 700th anniversary of the 1324 Kilkenny witch trials.

There's a report on our recent annual conference, warmly hosted by Carrickfergus Museums, as well as our usual round up of news and updates from within and without the network.

I hope you enjoy the latest issue of the Walled Town Crier.

Warmest Regards,
Eimear
Eimear O'Connell,
IWTN Project Manager



Archaeological test trenching underway in Youghal on a recent visit. This is part of a series of investigative works funded under the IWTN Conservation/Capital Works grants scheme in 2024. Image: Daniel Noonan.

Getting to Know Limerick

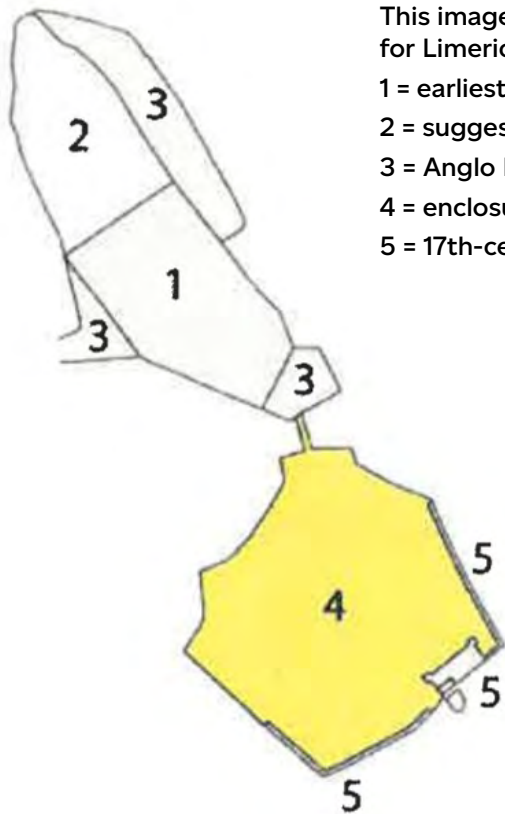


Members of the Irish Walled Towns Network visit a surviving section of Limerick's city walls in Irishtown, November 2023. Image: Eimear O'Connell.

Urbs Antiqua Fuit Studiisque Asperrima Belli (An Ancient City Well Versed in the Arts of War) – the motto on Limerick's crest commemorates this city's long history of defence and siege. Boasting not one, but two, walled circuits Limerick is a must-visit for anyone interested in Irish walled towns.

Sarah McCutcheon, Local Authority Archaeologist for Limerick City and County Council, and IWTN town representative for both Limerick and Kilmallock, has kindly put together the following text so that we can all get to know Limerick a little better.

Limerick is strategically sited on the river Shannon, where the river becomes tidal and is the portal northward through 13 of the 32 counties of Ireland. The Vikings recognised the value of the Shannon and established a longphort upriver from the site of the city. By 922 they had established a settlement on the island formed by the Shannon and the Abbey River. This was located to the south of the island and focused on the harbourage, with lanes leading down to the water's edge. This settlement would have had a defensive enclosure. It is possible that the basic function of Viking government, the Thing (a place of public assembly) and the Market Place were located outside the settlement to the north,



This image shows the proposed phases of construction for Limerick's defences.

1 = earliest Viking settlement;

2 = suggested Irish expansion of the Viking town;

3 = Anglo Norman expansion of Englishtown;

4 = enclosure of Irishtown;

5 = 17th-century siege defences.



Limerick coat of arms.

most likely where the castle now stands. The extent of the first phase of the town is represented by the Parish of St Mary and it is likely that there was an earlier version of the church, or a Viking temple at the present site of the cathedral. In 967 the Vikings of Limerick were defeated by the King of the Dál Cais and the settlement was captured, the resident Norse population gradually intermarrying with the Irish. It is probable that the Irish royal palace may also have been located to the north of the settlement.

The Anglo Normans captured the city briefly in 1175 but were forced to abandon it. Significantly, they established a ringwork castle on the site of the present-day castle, they also built Baal's Bridge at the south linking the island (Englishtown) with what was to become its southern suburb (Irishtown). When the Anglo Normans returned following the death of Domnall Mór O'Brien in 1194 major changes ensued. The City received its first charter in 1197, work on the Castle began in 1200 and Thomond Bridge was constructed. St Mary's Cathedral in its current form began to be built, Baal's Bridge was reconstructed and the southern suburb was laid out on its Y axis of Broad Street, splitting into John's Street & Mungret Street - still to be seen today.



St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick.
Image: irishwalledtownsnetwork.ie



King John's Castle, Limerick.
Image: Sarah McCutcheon.

The first recorded murage grant dates to 1237. Over the course of the next century the existing ramparts were replaced by stone walls, mural towers and gates. There was a further grant in 1310 specifically for walling the suburbs. This probably referred to the northern suburbs, absorbing the castle, extending northward to Island Gate and then returning south to absorb the walls of the Dominican Priory (founded in 1227) and St Peter's Nunnery (founded in 1171) before returning westward to meet the earlier line of defences on Bishop Street. A Franciscan Abbey had been founded in 1267 in the southwest corner of the island outside the defences. In 1340 there was a charter for Baal's Bridge to be built in stone. In 1370 the city was sacked by the Irish of Thomond.

A later 14th-century murage grant (1370) probably applied to the southern suburb of Irishtown, though it is most likely that there had been earlier earthen ramparts enclosing this area. The completion of the walls around the southern suburb gave Limerick its recognisable hour-glass shape. Walling of Irishtown continued through the 15th century. At its height, Englishtown on the island had 8 main gates with several minor ones, its walls extended for 1,650m and enclosed 14ha with another 0.5ha enclosed by the curtain wall of the castle. The walls of Irishtown extended for 1,375m and enclosed 13ha., with 4 gates and numerous mural towers throughout both circuits.



Recent works to level and consolidate the clay bank at this stretch of city wall in Irishtown have created a new area of green public space for residents. In August the Limerick Pipe Band were the first to perform on this new stage. Image: Sarah McCutcheon.



The surviving remains of John's Gate, incorporated first into the 15th century citadel and later into St. John's Hospital.
Image: Eimear O'Connell.



Recent archaeological excavations on Island Road have revealed substantial below-ground remains of the city wall.
Image: Sarah McCutcheon.

By 14th century the main streets of the city were lined with the houses of the leading merchants. These were originally timber or cagework with occasional stone houses. Fanning's Castle, off Mary Street is an extant example of an urban tower house type. The later stone houses had basements or undercrofts, initially floored in timber but often with later stone vaulting inserted. This was overlaid by three floors with fireplaces in the long walls and crenellations at roof level. There is a free standing wall of one of these houses in Nicholas Street, but many more remnants are concealed behind the modern render. A detailed description of the High Street in St Mary's parish in the 17th century included 49 houses on the east side of the street consisting of 37 stonework and 6 cagework. In the northern suburb by contrast 20 of 30 houses are cage work, 6 are stone and 4 plots are waste.

The end of the 16th century witnessed the Desmond rebellion, the subsequent plantation of Munster, followed by the Nine Years War

and ultimately the Flight of the Earls. Later in the century, the Confederate Wars resulted in the Confederate troops in 1642 besieging and taking King John's Castle. In 1651 during the Cromwellian campaign Limerick was besieged by Ireton & surrendered, this included a bombardment of the Castle by Cromwellian forces from Thomond Bridge. As a result, the city defences were extended and strengthened both inside and beyond the original line of the walls with batteries & forts. In 1652-53 in Irishtown, the Citadel was constructed, incorporating the existing 15th-century John's Gate, and John's Street was diverted to the west (Cathedral Place) where a new gate was constructed. In 1690 the first siege of Limerick was repelled and again defences were increased prior to the second siege in 1691, such as the earthen ramparts attached to the interior of the eastern stretch of the Irishtown walls which survive to this day.

In 1760 Limerick was declared an open city and the piecemeal demolition of the walls began.

Limerick City has been extensively archaeologically investigated since the 1980s as a result of major infrastructural projects. The city wall has been located below ground in both Englishtown & Irishtown. The double-towered West Watergate in Irishtown was one of the first excavations. Large scale excavations in King John's Castle have revealed the sunken featured houses of the Hiberno Norse residents as well as several construction phases of the castle including the fascinating siege and counter siege mining that took place in the 1640s. Recent excavations have revealed a section of the wall at the southern end of the northern suburbs at Island Road and there are future plans to establish the line of the defences along this eastern flank by reuniting the green space representing the city fosse or ditch on the exterior as well as exposing sections of wall where appropriate or marking the line in other areas. Limerick City & County Council has also taken over the running of King John's Castle which is the iconic attraction for the city, dominating the river side and the western approaches.

Work on the standing sections of wall in this area is on-going in 2024. The best upstanding section of wall in Irishtown is 170m in length between New Road and Old Clare Street and from 2021 to 2023 Limerick City & County Council with grants from the Irish Walled Town Network consolidated this wall including the base of Cogan's Tower. The remains of the clay bank on the interior of this stretch have been raised & levelled to form a usable public space and there are further plans to mark the next long below ground stretch of eastern wall along Old Clare Street.

Limerick's third iteration began in the late 18th century in St. John's Square with a fine terrace of stone houses. This began a planned gridded town layout delivered by private finance which has left us one of the best preserved Georgian quarters in the country.



Conservation works underway to a section of city wall in Irishtown in 2023. Image: Eimear O'Connell.

*This article is based on several sources: the [Limerick City Walls Conservation and Management Plan](#) (2008) by Aegis Archaeology, the summary article by Brian Hodkinson in *Irish Walled Towns* (John Givens, 2007), *A Place of Great Consequence* by Kenneth Wiggins (2016), but most notably from the many articles by Brian Hodkinson republished in *Aspects of Medieval North Munster: Collected Essays* (2012).*



Toil and Trouble



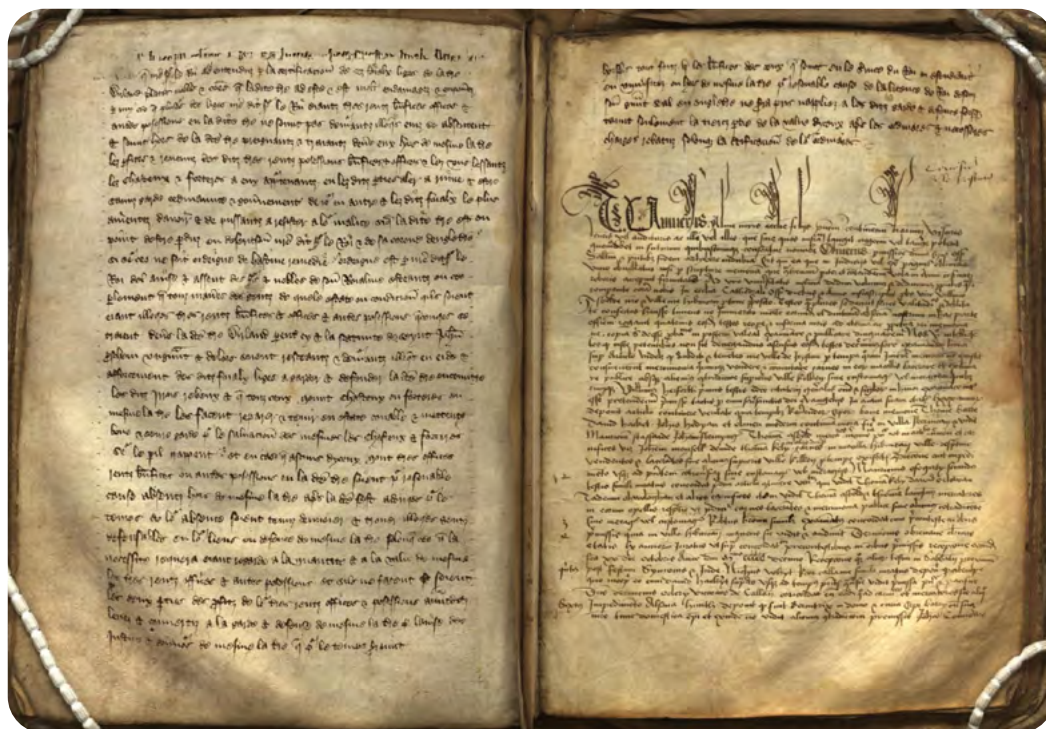
The visual identity for the festival was developed by Kilkenny-based animation studio Cartoon Saloon.

This year, Kilkenny marks the 700th anniversary of the Kilkenny Witch Trials with an exciting programme of events culminating in an exciting new festival, Kilkenny's Toil and Trouble. Kilkenny Heritage Officer Regina Fitzpatrick fills us in on the historical context for the 1324 trials and on the 2024 festival.

With themed events running throughout September, October and November, and a focused festival programme from 28 October – 3 November, Kilkenny's Toil and Trouble aims to de-mythologise the story of Alice

Kyteler and the witches of Kilkenny through a range of creative expression; balancing history education and entertainment, with engaging activities for the whole family. At the programme launch at St Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny on Friday 13th September, the visual identity of the festival, designed by world-renowned and Oscar-nominated Kilkenny animation studio Cartoon Saloon, was also unveiled. It is hoped that this event will shine a spotlight on the walled settlement of Kilkenny and spark curiosity about our medieval past.

The story of the Kilkenny Witch Trials is iconic in Kilkenny history but also has broader significance. On 3rd November 1324,



The Red Book of Ossory, written by Bishop Ledrede, contains an account of the events leading up to the 1324 witch trials (as well as the first known recorded recipe for whiskey!). It is currently on public display in Kilkenny for the first time, on loan to St. Canice's Cathedral from the RCB Library. Image: Toil and Trouble festival website.

Petronilla de Midia became the first person in Ireland to be burned at the stake for heresy for the practice of witchcraft in a dark episode of Kilkenny's history that would have reverberations around the world for centuries to come.

The Kilkenny Witch Trials centered around a wealthy Kilkenny woman called Alice Kyteler. Alice was from a family of Flemish merchants who had come to live in the Norman settlement of Kilkenny sometime in the twelfth century. Alice married her first husband William Outlaw in 1280. Outlaw was a merchant and wealthy moneylender and together they had a son called William who would later become involved in the family business. By 1302, after the death of her first husband, Alice was married to her second husband, Adam le Blund of Callan, also a moneylender; and by 1309, after the death of Le Blund, Alice had married husband number three Richard de Valle, a prosperous knight from Co. Tipperary. By 1324, when she was accused of witchcraft, Alice had acquired a fourth husband, the knight Sir John le Poer. By this time, Alice's wealth was so vast that even Edward II, King of England was featured in her list of debtors.

The first accusations of witchcraft were leveled against Alice by her stepchildren, the children of her second husband Adam le Blund who

felt aggrieved that their father had decided to bequeath all of his property to Alice's first and only son, William Outlaw. This accusation was brought to Richard le Drede, Bishop of Ossory. Le Drede was an English clergyman who had been radicalized in the papal court of Pope John XXII at Avignon. As a papal appointee, Le Drede attempted to put into practice in Ossory the principles that he had learnt at Avignon from the trials of the Knights Templar and the accusations against Alice Kyteler and her accomplices provided the perfect opportunity.

What followed was a lengthy trial which tested the boundaries of secular and clerical law in Medieval Ireland. The dramatic series of events included the imprisonment of Bishop le Drede in Kilkenny Castle, political wrangling in Dublin and a finding of guilty to six counts of heresy for Alice Kytler and eleven of her associates in Kilkenny. Alice managed to flee and avoid her fate but after seven rounds of torture her associate Petronilla de Midia was burnt at the stake on 3rd November 1324. William Outlaw, who was among those found guilty, evaded execution by - amongst other commitments - undertaking to lead the roof of St Canice's Cathedral. Little is known of the fate of the remaining convicted.

This extraordinary trial became a template for the witch burning craze that was to spread

across Europe over the following centuries. Featuring themes of power; wealth; church and state, there are many elements of this story that still resonate in society today and many reminders in our built landscape of the locations where the key moments of this story took place.

In this year's programme of commemoration, members of the public are invited to delve into the details of the Kilkenny Witch Trials through a series of events including a weekend-long conference, re-enactments and specialised tours along with author talks, exhibitions and a podcast which has been created by historian Fin Dwyer. Kilkenny County Council Heritage and Library Services have also produced an educational resource pack which will go to every primary school in the county and have initiated an intergenerational women's history project called Mná Feasa/Wise Women in which transition year students are being trained to record the life experiences of elderly women in their communities. Members of the public will also have the opportunity to see the Red Book of Ossory, written by Bishop Le Drede and on public display for the first time in 700 years at St Canice's Cathedral. The programme of events will culminate in a Civic Service of Atonement and Forgiveness in St Canice's Cathedral on 3rd November, 700 years to the day since the burning of Petronilla.

[Click here for more information about this programme of events](#)



"Step back in time to 1324 and uncover the chilling tale of Ireland's first Witchcraft Trial.

Discover the spells cast on society as we delve into the infamous Kilkenny Witch Trials. Learn about the powerful and wealthy Alice Kyteler, accused of witchcraft and heresy by the Bishop of Ossory, Richard Ledrede. Alongside Alice's story, explore the tragic fate of Petronella de Meath, the first person in Ireland to be executed for witchcraft.

Join us in commemorating the 700th anniversary of these dark events. Through this festival, we will explore the societal fears, power struggles, and personal stories that shaped this notorious trial."



Schools activity packs developed by Kilkenny County Council Library Service.

Conference Report



Carrickfergus Castle.
Image: Eimear O'Connell.

Our IWTN Annual Conference 2024 took place on 26-27 September in Carrickfergus and focused on Community Engagement with Place in Our Historic Towns.

We had a great turn-out across both days, and thanks is due both to Carrickfergus Museums for hosting us so warmly, and to the many speakers and attendees who made longer and shorter journeys to be there.

On Thursday 26th we were fortunate to have representatives from local and Northern Ireland heritage organisations join us to showcase their activities. Carrickfergus and District Historical Society's Cattle Battle board game was a particular hit!

Our conference was opened by Shirin Murphy, Carrickfergus Museums Heritage Officer and

our first speaker was Lee Robb from [Positive Carrickfergus](#), who spoke about Positive Carrickfergus's beginnings and development, as well as its ambitions for the town. Among its many achievements, the group has recently helped set up [a community-owned greengrocers in Carrick town centre](#).



Cattle Battle – the history-based board game developed by Carrickfergus and District Historical Society as a community engagement project. Image: Eimear O'Connell.



Seeking shelter from the elements on our tour of Carrickfergus's medieval defences. Image: Tom McCutcheon.



Visit to the roof of Carrickfergus Castle with Dermot MacRandal, architect. Image: Eimear O'Connell.

Marie McMahon, Managing Curator at [Tipperary Museum of Hidden History](#), gave a presentation on the [Rock, Paper, Scissors project](#) - a collaboration between the museum, local craftspeople, students from Coláiste Shliabh na mBan Clonmel and members of the Syrian and Ukrainian communities living in Clonmel, focused on traditional skills.

Timothy Dowling, of [Connaught Street and Environs Community Group](#), showed us some of the work that the group has been doing to help revitalise the historic Connaught Street area of Athlone.

Dermot Mulligan, Museum Curator at [Carlow County Museum](#), concluded the day's presentations with an entertaining account of the [St. Willibrord Project](#) - an international multi-agency collaboration between County Carlow and Echternach, Luxembourg, engaging with communities of faith and interest in both jurisdictions, and including a visit to the UNESCO World Heritage [Echternach hopping procession](#).

Our day finished up with a tour of Carrickfergus's medieval defences, bravely led by archaeologist [Ruairí Ó Baoill](#) from The Centre for Community Archaeology at Queen's University Belfast in the face of some very challenging weather conditions!

On Friday 27th our morning presentations were kicked off by Kevin Loftus of [ACT \(Accelerating Change Together\)](#) who filled us in on the group's work with communities in Ballina, Bartra and Lisdoonvarna.

Artist Maria Hitchcox presented The Wishing Tree Project, a creative community engagement project developed as part of the community consultation programme for Galway County Council's Heritage & Biodiversity Plan 2024 - 2030.

Creative Producer Hannah McCormick gave an introduction to [Pattern Makers](#) - a programme devised to provide a supportive and culturally appropriate environment for women from diverse communities to explore cultural experiences through creative tools.

Finally, Jonathan Porter and Stephen Sheerin from [Carrickfergus Regeneration City Deal Project](#) presented the ambitious City Deal plans for Carrickfergus and the Social Value model for public contracts, which requires a percentage of the tender bid to be assigned to measures that will improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area in which the contract is to be delivered.

We finished with a fantastic tour of [Carrickfergus Castle](#) (thankfully in much better weather than the previous day) led by Jackie Webb, Historic Environment Division Ranger and Tour guide, with a rooftop visit led by Dermot MacRandal, Senior Architect with the State Care Heritage Branch of the Historic Environment Division. Dermot oversaw the [installation of a new green oak roof to the castle keep](#), completed in 2020, and was able to fill us in on all the details of the traditional oak construction.

Thank you to all who attended and participated.

News and Updates

IWTN Grants

A gentle reminder to all grantees that the (extended) drawdown deadline for IWTN Interpretation and Events Grants 2024 is 31 October. The deadline for IWTN Conservation/Capital Works Grants 2024 is 8 November.



Log in or register
to

Online Grants



Webinar: Heritage-Led Public Realm Enhancement

Dublin Civic Trust will hold a live webinar on 21st November on the topic of Living Spaces: Heritage-led Public Realm Enhancement. This will explore how heritage-led regeneration of the public realm in urban places can be successfully delivered, showcasing the positive benefits of investing in built heritage assets for social, environmental and economic enhancement. [Find out more.](#)

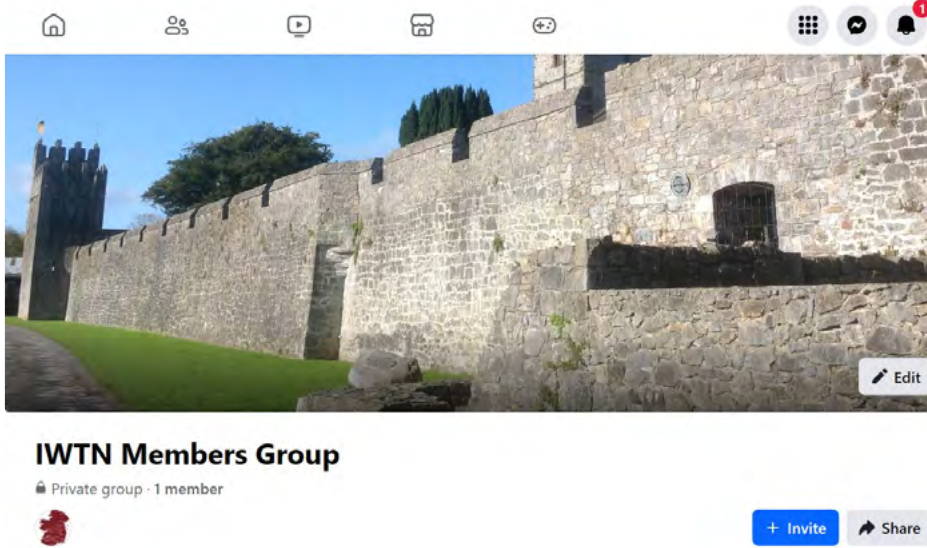
Podcast Episode

An inaugural Art & Heritage Day as part of the wonderful Sean Corcoran Series took place in Drogheda on Sunday 8th September. One of the programmed events saw historian Donal Fallon interview archivist and author Catriona Crowe. This interview has now been made available as an episode of Donal's Three Castles Burning podcast. [Listen here.](#)



Celebrating Community Oral Heritage

The Oral History Network of Ireland (OHNI) is holding a one-day event celebrating all the community groups and individuals who record, collect and preserve oral history, local memory and folklore across Ireland. The free event takes place on Saturday, 2nd November 2024 at Dunamaisé Arts Centre, Portlaoise. [Register here](#).



Members Facebook Group

An IWTN Members Facebook Group has now been set up and can be found [here](#). This is open to IWTN members only and is intended to make sharing social media content easier, and to function as a forum for the exchange of links and ideas that might be of interest.

Social Media

Thanks to everyone as always for sending on social media content. Please continue to use the hashtag **#IWTN** on all network-related posts and to tag the relevant Heritage Council account:



[@HeritageHubIRE](#)

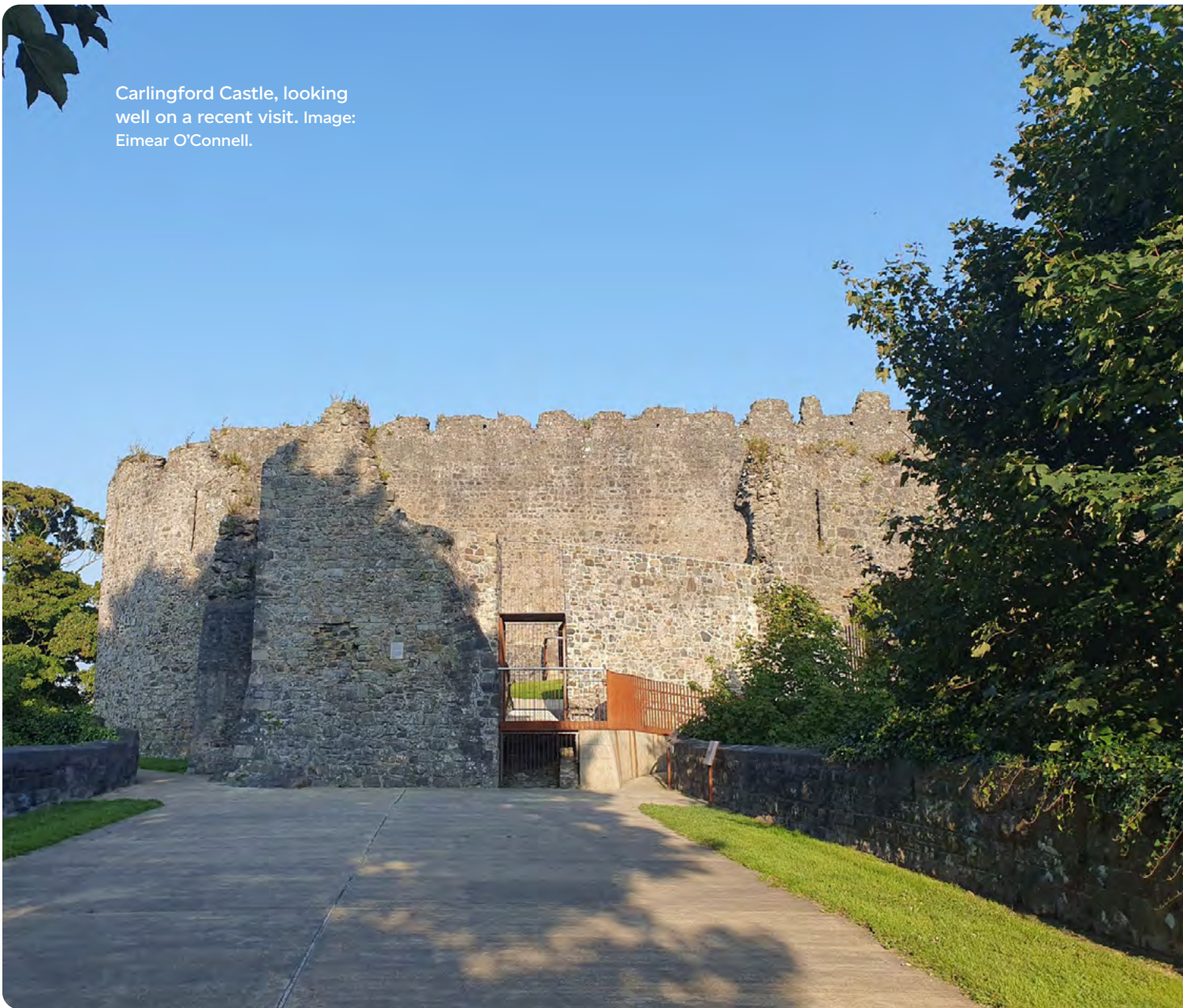


[TheHeritageCouncil](#)



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Carlingford Castle, looking
well on a recent visit. Image:
Eimear O'Connell.



Contact Us:

Please do get in touch at
iwtn@heritagecouncil.ie
if you would like us to promote news or
projects happening in your walled town
over the coming months.

www.irishwalledtownsnetwork.ie



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Local Authorities and community groups.



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