



'Passed to
the future'





A decorative architectural detail, possibly a corbel or part of a vaulted ceiling, is visible on the left side of the page. It features a series of pointed, shell-like structures and a small arched opening.

Introduction

Welcome to our new national headquarters and our new brand.

The move and our change of brand mark a new stage in the development and history of the Heritage Council. Since moving to Kilkenny in 1997 the Heritage Council has been seeking a permanent home. It has taken the time, patience, tenacity and enthusiasm of so many people to make this possible, in particular the present and past members of the Council itself.

With the move the Heritage Council will be better able to build on its achievements to date, exercise in full its statutory responsibilities and continue its partnerships to make our national heritage accessible to and enjoyed by as many people as possible.

History of the Bishops Palace

Construction of the Bishop's Palace started circa 1350 AD under Bishop Richard Ledred. This was immediately after the Black Death or plague. It seems that the population of Kilkenny had dropped as the Palace was built using stone from three churches in Kilkenny city that were demolished.

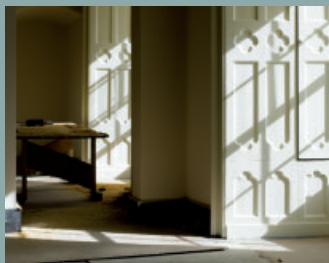
Bishop Ledred was a controversial figure who led the witchcraft trial of Alice Kyteler and his building of a new residence on a prominent position beside the Cathedral was a deliberate move to assert power. Investigations during conservation works have found that part of the building is likely to date from the fourteenth century.

Immediately before the Reformation (mid-sixteenth century) further works were carried out. These included the building of a three storey tower at the eastern end of the Palace. This was built by Bishop Milo Baron (1527-55) the last pre-Reformation Bishop of Ossory. Windows from this period were uncovered during conservation works and can be seen on the outside of the tower.



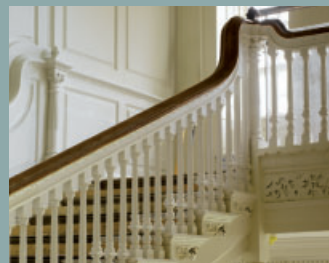
Kilkenny's Cathedral precinct suffered badly during the mid-seventeenth century wars and by 1654 parts of the building were described as being '*onely fitt for cattle*' and by 1660 '*all ruined and nothing standing but the bare walls without roofs*'.

Fortunately things improved in the late seventeenth century when large sums were expended on the building including a new roof, new rooms, as well as new windows and doors. In the early eighteenth century Bishop Charles Este (1735-40) greatly enhanced the building by adding



four rooms and the staircase at the expense of £1956. These stairs can be seen today. Archaeological excavations on the site of the new Pavilion uncovered the remains of a late-seventeenth - early eighteenth century kitchen.

By 1775 Bishop Newcombe (1775-79) was able to write to his brother in London saying that he found his '*present situation agreeable and even delightful...adjoining to the rear is as pleasant a garden, well walled in and well planted with shrubs....as any one would wish to be master of. In the garden is a*



summer house of a very good size with a fireplace, fit for drinking tea or a glass of wine and from this room a covered way leads to the best cathedral in Ireland....The country about is very pleasant and everything conduces to health and cheerfulness.'

Further alterations were made to the facade of the building during the late eighteenth - early nineteenth century. While the building does look like a Georgian structure it has hidden depths reaching back to the fourteenth century.

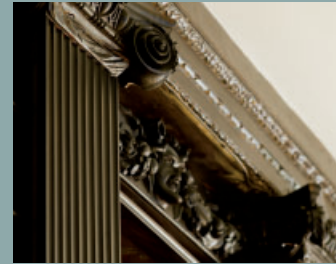
The Heritage Council's role

The Heritage Council saw the potential of this building in its search for a permanent headquarters in Kilkenny. It was larger than the incumbent bishop needed, and agreement was reached for the Heritage Council to purchase and conserve the building and part of the site.

There was some disquiet that a building in continuous use as a bishop's residence for 800 years was being pressed to a new usage. However, the bishops' connection with the site is not completely severed, as his new See house has been built in the grounds.

Using the conservation plan methodology introduced into Ireland by the Heritage Council, the historical significance of all

aspects of the building and site were documented. Based on a careful survey of its qualities, Consarc Architects drew up plans for the building's re-use. The Heritage Council, conscious of the rich tapestry of history that could be read in the buildings, was anxious to demonstrate that 'heritage' is a living thing, and that having a respectful attitude to heritage does not curtail creativity, or contemporary interventions. Accordingly, the



plans for the building included adding a pavilion of steel and glass on the site of the demolished former seventeenth century kitchens. The new construction is supported on the foundations of the surviving older structure below, an apt metaphor for the work of the Council.

The building is eighteenth century, or Georgian, in appearance, and this character has been generally retained as the dominant theme. The stair hall, with its elaborate carved timber balustrades, Venetian windows, panelled walls and

plasterwork ceiling was designed to impress in 1739, and still does today. It will continue to be used as the principal stairs in the daily life of the building. The functions of the Council were fitted into the existing spaces of the building, avoiding major alterations. The Dining Room at ground floor and Drawing Room at first floor are the two biggest rooms, and will be used for public meetings, and the Heritage Council's own deliberations, respectively. The first floor library will continue to be used as such, housing the works of the Heritage Council's publications grants scheme, and

much more. The bedrooms will be turned into individual offices. On the ground floor, the former bishops' private chapel will become an office, and other rooms will be made available for exhibitions.

As might be expected in a building of this age that has been in more-or-less continuous use, new finds often led to more questions, rather than providing firm answers. Throughout, the multiple layers of the building's history are presented within the framework of its eighteenth century character. For example,





the stone piers supporting the seventeenth century vaults are to be seen alongside later plasterwork mouldings, and the cut stone medieval window surrounds have been exposed but with timber sash windows. In the fifteenth century tower, the corbels that once supported a tower house floor and a wall of rubble stone have exposed the medieval character of the masonry.

Minor structural repairs were carried out. Modern services (heating, electrical power,

telecommunications, security) were threaded through the structure, respecting the principle of minimum intervention. A lift was installed after a thorough archaeological investigation of the minor rooms it displaced; the digging revealed much information about the previous internal arrangements, and the top of the lift shaft was kept below the existing roof. Lighting is by freestanding up-lighters, to avoid disturbing the wall plasterwork. Where modern interventions have to be made for fire safety reasons, they have

been executed in steel and glass, to differentiate them from the carved timber and plasterwork historical details. Great care was taken to restrict the impact of the construction process on the gardens and most of the trees and planted shrubs have been retained. As the new headquarters for the Heritage Council an important part of Kilkenny's built heritage has been preserved for the future. It is hoped that with its new use greater public access to and enjoyment of this historic place will be possible.

Our New Brand

With the move to its permanent home and new Headquarters the Heritage Council felt that it was an opportune time to revise our corporate identity.

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



The Heritage Council wanted its identity to more closely reflect its core values and highlight the essential connection between people and their heritage. Our heritage provides us with our sense of identity and place. It is a vital contributor to our economy and provides a spiritual and social storehouse that we draw on daily.

Our new corporate identity is titled Inheritance as it marks our unique identity and represents our genetic make up. The movement and lines of the print are reminiscent of topographical lines on a map, the age lines of a tree, the spiral of nature's natural form, the hairlines on animals, aged Celtic patterns and the natural flow of water.



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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