

ST BRENDAN'S CATHEDRAL
CLONFERT
COUNTY GALWAY





ST BRENDAN'S CATHEDRAL CLONFERT COUNTY GALWAY

CONSERVATION PLAN

Prepared by
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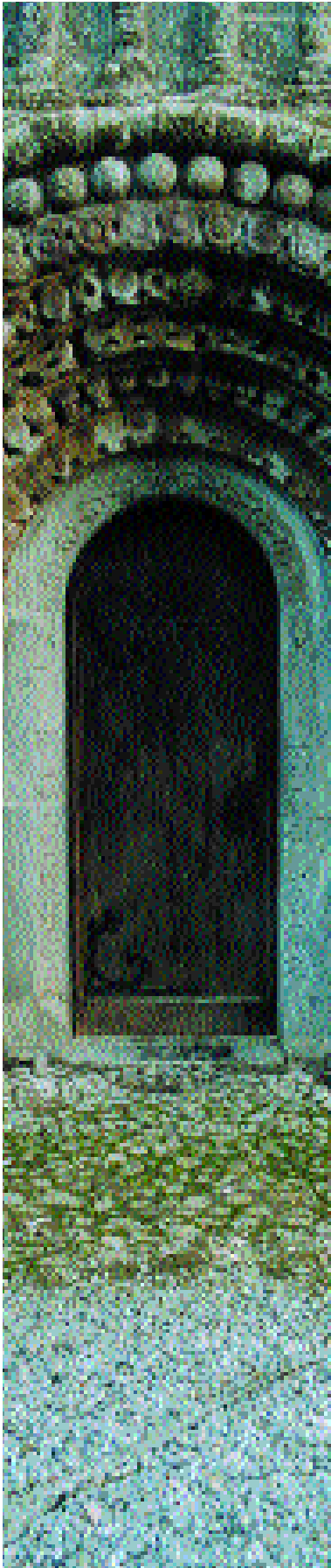
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APPENDICES

This Conservation Plan is based on the following extensive reports which may be examined by arrangement with the Heritage Council.

Appendix 1: Archaeological Background for Conservation Plan (Archaeological Projects Limited)

Appendix 2: Fauna Report (Dr Jervis Good)

Appendix 3: History of Clonfert Cathedral (Dr John McCafferty)

Appendix 4: Report on Wall Painting Evidence at Clonfert Cathedral (Ms Karena Morton)

Appendix 5: Flora Report (Dr Sharon Parr)

Appendix 6: Cathedral Furniture Report (Mr Fergus Purdy)

Appendix 7: Fenestration at St Brendan's Cathedral, Clonfert (Dr Nessa Roche)

Appendix 8: Report on Bats at Clonfert Cathedral (Dr Niamh Roche)

Appendix 9: Site Survey and Rectified Photographic Record of Clonfert Cathedral (ARC Survey Photographic)

Appendix 10: Report on Stone Conservation — West Portal (Mr Jason Ellis)

Appendix 11: Report on Stone Analysis and Conservation (Dr Sara Pavia)

FOREWORD

The Cathedral of St Brendan, situated in the peaceful village of Clonfert in County Galway, was once a major centre for worship and learning. Its magnificent Romanesque doorway is famous internationally for the beauty of its carved sandstone detail, and the symbolism of its iconography. Many experts have studied, analysed and written about its history, its associations, and its importance in the ecclesiastical heritage of the country. In spite of its international recognition, however, the burden of caring for this historic place falls on a small congregation and a local community whose resources were insufficient to provide the scholarly and scientific analysis required to provide a solution to the noticeable deterioration of the carved sandstone doorway, particularly in recent years.

The introduction of the Conservation Plan methodology by the Heritage Council in 1998, which was applied to Clonfert, has provided a practical vision for the repairs and conservation not only of the doorway, but also the cathedral building and its historic monastic settlement.

The Conservation Plan process draws together all the elements of the built and natural heritage in a historic place, as well as providing a forum for all interested parties to come together and agree the way forward. Through this process, the congregation and local community have been empowered to participate fully in the decisions taken, and to engage with the experts and with the statutory and other authorities.

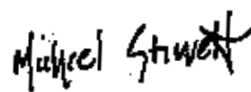
The Heritage Council has contributed this Conservation Plan to allow essential decisions to be taken in an inclusive and scholarly way, in the spirit of the Venice Charter:

‘The conservation and restoration of monuments must have recourse to all the sciences and techniques which can contribute to the study and safeguarding of the architectural heritage.’

(ICOMOS — the Venice Charter, 1964, Article 2)



Dr Tom O'Dwyer
Chairperson of the
Heritage Council



Michael Starrett
Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

St Brendan's Cathedral is an extremely significant building because of its continuous association with ecclesiastical history since the time of Brendan and because the surviving fabric reflects that history up to the present day.

The cathedral has benefited from a concerned and interested congregation and local community, both of which have initiated a great number of studies of different aspects of the site over the years. This research was of great assistance to the authors of the Conservation Plan.

The Conservation Plan methodology, originally developed by the Australian, James Semple Kerr, has proved to be an effective way of analysing and understanding the significance of a site, elucidating the problems and vulnerabilities, and using the knowledge gained to prepare detailed policies for protection and conservation. In this case, a team of experts in a wide range of disciplines was assembled and their reports were cross-referenced and developed into the detailed policies.

The surviving fabric of St Brendan's retains clearly identifiable important architectural and decorative elements from almost every century since the eleventh. Within the curtilage are an historic graveyard and the medieval Bishop's Palace with its associated woodland containing a magnificent yew walk in the form of a cross. The immediate vicinity is an area replete with archaeological potential, including the site of the Augustinian Abbey of Portu Puro.

Of paramount importance is the great Romanesque doorway, the outstanding architectural feature of the cathedral which is regarded as the best example of Romanesque decorative work of this type in the country. The doorway is in very poor condition. The surface of the carved sandstone is friable and decayed, and the detail is being gradually lost. It is the fragility of the doorway which provided the initial impetus for commissioning this Plan.

The policies contained in this Conservation Plan provide a detailed methodology for approaching the conservation of the doorway while recognising the importance of its setting within the cathedral and within the attendant grounds. The Plan also provides policies for conserving the other elements of the complex, recognising that the significance of the site as a whole is as important as the significance of its parts.

The vulnerabilities of the site lie not just in physical decay of materials or structural problems but also potentially in issues such as visitor management and long-term funding of maintenance and conservation works. The policies in the Conservation Plan also address these issues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The preparation of a Conservation Plan is a complex business involving widespread consultation. The authors were very fortunate in having the good will, support and help of a wide variety of people, not only in Clonfert itself, but also around the country as well as abroad.

The following were members of the Steering Group.

The Heritage Council	Mary Hanna, Architect (Chair)
Representative Church Body	Reverend Wayne Carney, Rector of Clonfert
National Monuments	Paul McMahon
Clonfert Community Development Association	Christy Cuniffe

Members of the church congregation and the people of Clonfert always made the authors and other participants welcome.

The staff of Galway County Council — especially Máirín Doddy, Conservation Officer, and Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer — was invariably helpful.

The Representative Church Body (RCB) of the Church of Ireland offered great assistance, particularly in providing access to its library facilities.

Expert advice from the following can be seen in the Appendices.

Alan Hayden	Archaeology
Dr Nessa Roche	Fenestration
Dr John McCafferty	History
Karena Morton	Historic Paint
Sara Pavia	Stone Analysis / Geology
Jason Ellis	Stone Conservation
Dr Jervis Good	Fauna
Dr Sharon Parr	Flora
Fergus Purdy	Timber Conservation
ARC Survey Photographic	Survey and rectified photography
Dr Niamh Roche	Bat Consultancy

The authors would particularly like to thank Mary Hanna and the staff of the Heritage Council for their unstinting support and assistance.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

St Brendan's Cathedral at Clonfert, County Galway, represents the story of Christianity in Ireland from earliest times to the present in perfect microcosm. It is of outstanding interest and importance by virtue of the completeness and representative nature of its historical experience. Because of its cathedral role and its association with St Brendan, there is a large amount of documentary evidence. However, apart from the cathedral itself, there is little physical



evidence of the history and development of the place. Although no archaeological excavations have been carried out, there is little doubt that future investigation will prove extremely fruitful.

Plate 1: St Brendan's Cathedral with the Romanesque doorway

There is evidence that many pre-Christian religious sites in Ireland were either subsumed into or developed as places of Christian worship. Although no evidence of pre-Christian use has as yet been found, it would not be surprising if Brendan had chosen such a site at which to found his church in c. AD 560. The site is typical of those selected for early Christian religious foundations. On an elevated 'spit' of land, it is protected to the north and south by low-lying boggy ground which floods in winter ('callows'). Within a larger context, the site is near the apex of a large, sweeping curve of the Shannon with the river to the north, east and south. At a time when the countryside was generally tree-covered and badly drained, the Shannon waterway afforded access. As well as providing the necessary conditions for settlement in the area, the Shannon was also a routeway for pirates and attackers of all descriptions over the centuries. Clonfert's strategic location at the border of two provinces also made it vulnerable to attack.

Figure 1: OS map (Discovery Series) showing the location of Clonfert



The present cathedral is the latest in a series of ecclesiastical buildings which has occupied the site since St Brendan's time. Today, the cathedral is surrounded by a complex of buildings, structures and archaeological remains relating to the occupation of the site from the early medieval period to the present. Extant records indicate that Clonfert was never a rich place. Arable land in the immediate vicinity is limited by its proximity to the callows area. The church is small for a cathedral, which may be related to the relatively limited settlement and its associated infrastructure throughout the history of this site.

Despite its site and small size, Clonfert has been regarded as a place of great significance since early times. Although the settlement was pillaged, burnt and destroyed on numerous occasions, it always regenerated itself rapidly, returning to its ecclesiastical functions.

FIRST PERIOD: 557 - 1111 (EARLY MEDIEVAL)

This period was generally one of consolidation, affirming the site as a place of pilgrimage and an ecclesiastical centre. Brendan is recorded as having built a church at Clonfert and was buried there on his death, 16 May *c.* 580. The names of the abbots are recorded. Throughout this period, and indeed throughout virtually all its history, the site has been associated with all major ecclesiastical reforms in Ireland. Early in the 7th century, Abbot Cummine (died 12 November 661-62) was a leader in introducing the Roman method of calculating Easter in the southern half of Ireland. St Cummine's letters and works provide evidence that Clonfert was a key centre of sophisticated Latinate scholarship in the early Church. Two abbots were important figures in the ascetic Celí Dé reform movement *c.* 800. The *Annals* record obituaries of a number of *saoi* or sages for the monastery. In 838, Abbot Feidhlimid Mac Crimthinn was declared High King of Ireland (*lan-ri*) at Clonfert. The fact that the King of Cenél Conaill set out from Clonfert on a pilgrimage to Rome in 1026 may be an indication of the significance attached to the place at that time.

The settlement was attacked and destroyed on many occasions, with the first recorded assault in 744. The Vikings attacked and burnt the settlement in 844-45. The monastery was again burnt in 1015, and a 'stone' church on the site was burnt in 1045 by the local Uí Máine clan.

It is recorded that a church was built on the site in AD 908. It is not known whether this is the present nave of the cathedral which is considered to date from the 10th or 11th centuries because of the simple 'barn-church' structure. The antae on the east and west gables are features of pre-Romanesque architecture in Ireland and are comparable to similar features on churches dated to this period.

In 1111, Clonfert was created a diocese at the synod of Rath Breasail.

SECOND PERIOD: 1112 - 1413 (THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD)

There is no direct evidence of the type or extent of the settlement in the early medieval period. However, there is certainly enough information to conclude that the site was in continuous use as a significant religious place; it is likely that it would have had buildings appropriate to a monastic settlement of the times.

The records from the medieval period are more complete — both in terms of documentary evidence, and of buildings and architectural elements remaining on the site. The first recorded bishop to accede to the diocese was Petrus Ó Mordha, the Cistercian Abbot of Boyle who was made bishop in 1152 at the Synod of Kells; this also confirmed the diocesan status of Clonfert. The deaths of two previous bishops are recorded but no information is available on their accession. The names of the bishops up to the time of the Reformation are generally Irish. However, there were three bishops with English/Norman names in the 14th century. In 1266, an Italian, Giovane de Altare, was appointed bishop of Clonfert and papal nuncio. He remained in Clonfert until 1295 when the pope transferred him to the archbishopric of Benevento in Italy. The preponderance of Irish names in the incumbency may result from the fact that the Norman conquest was not as complete in this area as in other parts of the country. The area around Clonfert remained a frontier zone on the perimeter of Connacht through which armies and raiding parties frequently passed.

Just east of the cathedral, there is a large rectangular raised area, now bisected by the roadway, which is said to be the site of the Augustinian monastery of St Mary de Portu Puro. It was reputedly founded by Turlough O'Connor, King of Connacht, in 1140-48.

Additional archaeological features nearby include a stream which may have been a mill-race, and a horse-shoe mound which is supposedly a burial place of four bishops or possibly a columbarium (it is located in the field called 'Pigeon Park'). It is said that the abbey was plundered by William de Burgh in 1202. In 1542-44, Henry VIII ordered that the monastery be united with the bishopric of Clonfert.

From about the same period as the Abbey of Portu Puro, a nunnery also existed at Clonfert. The original foundation may have been a 'double' monastery — for both nuns and monks — which was divided by the early 13th century. In 1223 the 'Church of St Mary' at Clonfert was 'confirmed to the Convent of Kilcreevanty' in the papal registers. This was when Kilcreevanty became the head house of the Arroasian (Augustinian) nuns in Connacht. The convent was probably suppressed in the mid 16th century.

It appears that the remains of St Cummine were enshrined in the cathedral in 1162 on the 500th anniversary of his death. Two fragments of a Romanesque shrine have been found in the area and may be part of his shrine. One of these has been incorporated in the church. Unfortunately, the other was stolen some years ago. As St Cummine was an important figure in the early Irish Church and closely associated with reform, it is interesting to note that this enshrinement occurred during a period when reform was again of great importance.



Plate 2: The Romanesque portal

After being burnt in 1164, the cathedral was re-built in 1167 under the patronage of O'Kelly of Uí Máine, a local king. Clonfert was again reported burnt in 1179. In the same year, a synod was convened at Clonfert by St Laurence O'Toole as papal legate. It is generally accepted that the west portal of Clonfert was an addition to an existing building. Various dates have been proposed, with the latest work (Tadhg O'Keeffe, 1994) suggesting a date of *c.* 1180, based on stylistic analysis and historical inference. If this date is correct, the installation of the portal may have been associated with the synod of 1179. It is also noteworthy that the Treaty of Windsor (1175) between Henry II and the high king, Rory O'Connor, introduced a period of relative peace in the West of Ireland after the turmoil which followed the Norman invasion of 1169. It is likely, therefore, that the planning and construction of this Romanesque portal, the most complicated in Ireland, would have occurred during such a period.

The chancel appears to be a later addition to the pre-existing 'barn' church. The magnificent east window is generally regarded as the high point of the Transitional style (current during the period when the Romanesque gradually gave way to the Gothic). It is ascribed to the 'School of the West' which was taken by Leask to represent a distinctive body of tradition in architectural style and sculpture, mostly west of the Shannon and current in the first half of the 13th century. Extant examples of the work of the 'School of the West' are found mainly in counties Mayo, Galway and Clare. Stalley and Harbison go further, ascribing the east window to an expert stonemason described as the 'Ballintubber Mason' or 'Master', in view of the high standard and precision of his work which reached its zenith at Ballintubber Abbey. Experts date the window to the first half of the 13th century; Harbison suggests a date of the second decade. It may be noted that this was again a period of relative peace after King John had granted Connacht to Cathal Croderg, King of Connacht and brother of Rory O'Connor.

The evidence for developments in Clonfert during the latter half of the 13th and the 14th centuries is sparse. North and south transepts were added but the date is unclear. The north transept has been demolished. The south transept contains a window on the southern side which appears to be of 13th-century date. The south wall contains external corbel brackets at eaves level which are also typical of the 13th century. It is of interest that the transepts are not directly opposite each other but appear to be slightly staggered.

The 'Clonfert Madonna' is a late 13th/early 14th-century artwork depicting the Madonna and Child. A small painted statue made of hollowed oak, it is one of a number of similar statues in the area. The others are located at Tynagh, Athlone and Galway. The statue is now located in the Catholic church of Clonfert and is a subject of veneration and pilgrimage which attracts many visitors. Repairs were carried out in 1945 when the infant's face was re-made in plaster. Although no longer on the site, the Madonna is an important part of the history of the place, a graphic illustration of Clonfert's continuity as a place of worship.

THIRD PERIOD: 1414-1636 (THE LATE MEDIEVAL)

As elsewhere in Europe, the 14th century was a period of famine, pestilence, war and declining population in Ireland. It is not surprising, therefore, that Clonfert too would have suffered decay during this period. By contrast, the 15th century was a period of renewal and development when the orders of friars — Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians — built widely.

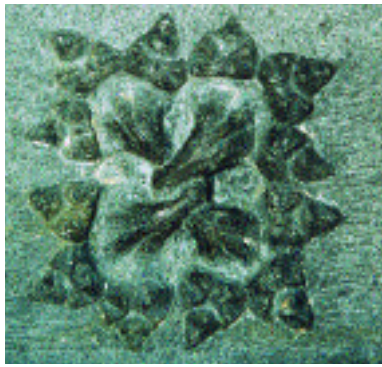
In 1414, the pope granted indulgences to those who contributed to the repair of Clonfert Cathedral and Abbey Church. Major works were carried out in the 15th century and are dated generally by architectural style because no exact dates are recorded. The works included:

- Construction of the west tower over the Romanesque doorway. This was made in the Franciscan style (although the church had Augustinian connections).
- Construction of a new chancel arch
- New transept arches
- Installation of an additional stone order at the rear of the entrance portal
- Installation of ogee-headed windows in the chancel
- Possible re-roofing of the south transept
- Construction of the wicker-vaulted vestry

The new stonework is decorated with symbolic motifs and figurative sculpture. The coat of arms of the Butlers of Ormond appears in two places on the chancel arch, indicating that they may have been the patrons for this work. The decorations include carvings of ecclesiastical figures (unidentified), a wyvern, a mermaid and floral motifs typical of mid to late 15th-century work. There are also coffin-shaped late medieval grave slabs, some still in the graveyard and some mounted on the walls near the church entrance.



Plates 3 and 4: Carvings in the chancel arch: an angel (left) and a mermaid (right)



Plates 5 and 6: Carvings in the chancel arch: a knot (left) and a dragon (right)

Representations made to Rome at this period give clues about the possible layout of settlement at Clonfert. Entries in the calendar of papal letters allude to ‘the square of Clonfert’ and to persons ‘building against the wall of Clonfert’. Although there is no other documentary evidence for this, it is possible that Clonfert, in common with many medieval towns, was walled.

During the 16th century, following the Reformation, there were disputes about the incumbency and control of Clonfert. Roland de Burgo (bishop, 1536-80) was recognised by both crown and pope. In 1541, the church and monastery were plundered and destroyed by the O’Melaghins. In 1542, the monastery was formally united to the bishopric but the last abbot remained until c. 1550. The monastery property was divided between the bishop and the abbot; on the abbot’s death in 1571, it went to the bishop. At that stage, the property included a water mill and c. 220 acres of land.

Clonfert is located close to three traditional fording points of the Shannon at Shannonbridge, Banagher and Meelick. These became important during the wars of the 16th and 17th centuries; fortifications, castles and batteries were installed to defend these crossings. Meelick Castle, held by the O’Connor’s, was attacked in 1557 by the Earl of Sussex.

In 1579, Elizabeth I considered erecting a university at Clonfert and wrote to the bishop of Clonfert as follows:

‘Orders to be observed by Sir Nicholas Malby for the better government of the province of Connaught.

Also where we are desirous that a college should be erected in the nature of an university, in some convenient place in Irelande, for instruction and education of youth in learning. And we conceive the town of Clonfert within the province of Connaught to be aptlie seated both for helth and comodity of ryver Shenan running by it, and because it is also neere to the middle of the realme whereby all men may with small travel send their children thither, we have thought good that you view the place, and consider with what charge the same may be circuited with a wall, and what buildings be already there, and what maintenance the bishopricks of Clonfert and Elfine (if they were united to that college) might give to the exhebiton of learned men there, and whether the other bishops of that province be not sufficient be not the same if they were well divided into several dioceses. Of all which we will that advertise your opinion to us, to end we may hereafter give

further order to our justice to assemble the bishops of the realme for a contribution to be yielded for the maintenance of learned men in that or some other convenience place in Irelande; for we find that Runagates of that nation, under pretense of study in the universities beyond the seas do retorne freight with superstition and treason are the very instruments to stirre up our subjects to undoubfulness an rebellion for whom we mean shortly to provide by parliament, and in the main seasons [we] will you to apprehend all such as you shall learn to remaind within your rule that be so evil affected.'

Subsequently, however, it was decided to build the university in Dublin (Trinity College).

The end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th were marked by a gradual unravelling of the results of the Reformation. In 1580, the Burkes threatened to expel the bishop and clergy if they 'refused to say Mass'. In 1595, the existing Bishop's Palace was destroyed or badly damaged. A lengthy process of litigation followed the suppression of the monasteries, and the revenues from the lands belonging to Portu Puro Abbey were only restored to the bishop in 1634.

In 1602, the bishoprics of Clonfert and Kilmacduagh were united.

EARLY MODERN PERIOD: 1637 - 1881

The 17th century was an eventful period in the life of Clonfert. A study of the Bishop's Palace was carried out by Caimin O'Brien under the title *A 17th-century house in Clonfert, Co. Galway*. The following relies heavily on this study.

It appears that the Bishop's Palace was originally a small rectangular building (7.7 x 5.45 metres internal dimensions, with a wall 1.1 metres thick) with a small stair tower at the north-east corner. (It is possible that the stair tower was an addition to the simple rectangular building.) This house pre-dates 1638 and may have been the building destroyed or damaged in 1595. During the incumbency of Bishop Dawson (1626–43), an extension was carried out on the west side. This extension seems to have been a hall which was presumably used for ceremonial and entertainment purposes, a development typical of the transition to less fortified dwelling places which was occurring at this time. Dendrochronology testing has dated the oak timbers of this section of the building to 1638. Caimin O'Brien considers it possible that the house was originally thatched because of the steep roof pitch and the absence of evidence of any original slating. Subsequently called 'Bishop Wolley's room' (Edward Wolley, bishop from 1664–84), the hall contained the two decorated timber panels featuring the Wolley coat of arms. A rare example of a 17th-century carved and painted timber post collapsed in 2002 and has been removed for conservation. It seems likely that Bishop Wolley carried out improvements and renovations to the cathedral as well as to the palace. The cathedral bell was re-cast in 1678. There is no evidence as to when the gardens and yew walk were laid out, but it may have been during the 17th century during the incumbency of either Bishop Dawson or Bishop Wolley.

Between 1684 (the year of Bishop Wolley's death) and 1691, the cathedral and palace became the property of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Episcopal revenues were then seized by James II and paid to the Roman Catholic bishops. In 1690–91, the Shannon became a defensive line between the Williamite and Jacobite forces. Sarsfield commanded defensive forces with detachments at Shannonbridge, Banagher and Meelick. Clonfert does not appear to have suffered significantly during this period of upheaval.

While there is very little information available about Clonfert in the 18th century, considerable alterations were carried out to the Bishop's Palace, with extensions on the north, east and west sides. The fenestration of the façade was completely altered. Georgian sash windows were installed, including a 'Venetian' window, and the façade was made symmetrical. Dean Swift visited Clonfert briefly in 1723 to meet his acquaintance, the then bishop, Theophilus Bolton.

It appears that the cathedral fell into disrepair during the 18th century. In 1793 and again in 1813, the Board of First Fruits made grants of £500.00 for repairs. Samuel Lewis' *Topographical Dictionary* of 1837 stated that the 'service is currently performed in the chancel which is too small' and the nave is 'about to be adapted' for use. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners had recently granted £484.15 for this purpose. Lewis also refers to the Glebe House. Named St Brendan's, it was built in 1817 with a gift of £400 and a loan of £400 from the Board of First Fruits. This house, sketched by Lieutenant Robert Smith in 1821, was demolished in the 1930s.

In 1804, the Grand Canal reached Shannonbridge, the Shannon's nearest crossing point to Galway Bay which was regarded as a likely landing place for a French expeditionary force. The canal provided a means by which men and materials could be moved rapidly, and it seems likely that this was one of the reasons for selecting this terminus. This again underlines the perceived strategic importance of the area around Clonfert. The canal was subsequently extended to Ballinasloe, passing through Clonfert. The 1838 Ordnance Survey map shows that there was a police barracks located at the bridge over the canal. By 1891, the barracks was relocated to the house opposite the cathedral (Devoy's house).

The Parliamentary Gazetteer of 1844 describes Clonfert as follows:

'Clonfert comprises simply two or three scattered private homes, the palace, the cathedral and the ruins of an old church.'

It describes the private houses as 'mere cabins' and the palace as being 'situated in the midst of a rather shabby demesne'. The 'ruins of an old church' are presumably the remains of the old abbey church. At that time, the 'sittings' were 150 and attendance 80. It is therefore clear that the nave had by then been brought back into use.

Lewis says that, in 1833, the estates attached to the diocese were vested in the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. In 1834, the diocese of Clonfert and Kilmacduagh was united with those of Killaloe and Kilfenora. When Bishop Butson (incumbency 1804–36) retired, Clonfert ceased to have a resident bishop. In 1836, the palace was leased to the Trench family who subsequently bought it, remaining in occupation until 1947.



Plate 7: The Butson Monument

Further repairs were carried out in 1856 when the cathedral is described as closed for some months.

It is difficult to identify works carried out prior to 1882; major works carried out by Canon McLarney during the 25 or 30 years after that date may have overlaid or considerably altered previous work. It is not known when the transept arches were filled in or when the north transept was demolished. On the south side, the stained glass window in the in-filled arch is dated 1863, although this may have been inserted at some time after the arch was closed off.

It seems likely that the nave (and transepts) were unroofed for a considerable time. It is possible that the transept arches were closed off at the same time as the nave was repaired, re-roofed and brought back into use. This appears to have happened after 1837. The present roof structure may date from the same refurbishment.

An early photograph (probably c. 1860) shows a Georgian-type semi-circular leaded fanlight over the entrance door which had been replaced by a plain fanlight in a photograph of 1900. The same early photograph shows that the east window was originally glazed with simple non-figurative stained glass (which was replaced in 1897).

In view of its present poor condition, it is noteworthy that Richard Brash in *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland to the close of the Twelfth Century* describes the west doorway as being ‘in a fine state of preservation’, considering its age.

THE MODERN PERIOD: 1882 - PRESENT

Canon Robert McLarney was made rector of Clonfert in 1882. Apparently a man of considerable energy and persistence, he embarked on a campaign (which lasted for at least 20 years) to raise funds and carry out major repair and refurbishment of the cathedral. He also obtained church furniture and fittings, and employed J.F. Fuller, a well-known ecclesiastical architect, to assist him in his projects. Canon McLarney was apparently a skilled publicist who wrote lengthy letters on the subjects of the cathedral’s history and refurbishment to various newspapers, including the *Irish Builder* and the *Irish Daily Independent*. He also engaged in public controversy over the appropriateness of his refurbishments.

On his arrival in 1882, Canon McLarney gave this vivid description of the condition of the cathedral.

‘Small trees grew on the roof of the belfry tower. The landings of the tower were in a state of decay. The walls of the interior of the Cathedral were covered with ugly modern plaster, and were reeking with damp. The Cathedral was literally the abode of the rat, the bat, and the beetle. Noisome insects crawled all over the place. Rats frequently ran along the floor during Divine service. The atmosphere of the Cathedral resembled that of a charnel house. The floor of the chancel was of wood, grotesquely painted in squares to resemble oil-cloth. This floor was greatly decayed. The pews were of common wood, high-backed, and narrow, in which it was impossible to kneel. The stonework of the east window and chancel arch was painted red, which gave it the appearance of wood. There was no vestry fit for use. The former rector robed in a nook behind the organ. The present rector had to do the same. The ancient sacristy, or vestry, was like a stable, only not so good. Grass and shrubs grew on the roof. The roof leaked. When rain came, it flooded the floor. The windows were unglazed. Boards were substituted for glass. The door of the sacristy had neither lock nor hinges. It was propped up with sticks. The props frequently fell down. On one occasion a stray donkey, grazing in the churchyard, wandered in by the sacristy door into the Cathedral. The churchyard was a mass of weeds and nettles, which were seldom cut down. The Cathedral bell had not been rung for years. Church music was unheard in the service for a considerable length of time. The stove was defective, and frequently filled the Cathedral with smoke. The Communion Table was rickety, and of common wood. One leg of the Table having become broken, it was patched up, and spliced in a very clumsy way. The cloth covering the Table was in shreds and tatters, moth-eaten, and decayed. An accumulation of the excrement of bats was frequently found on the Table.’

In 1900, the congregation numbered only 30 and was not in a position to fund major works. Canon McLarney therefore sought funds further afield — from diocesan clergy, from Church authorities and from public subscriptions. He

claimed to have received donations from many parts of the world and even from John Ruskin who:

'...although objecting, as a rule, to all "Restoration", was so much struck with the beauty of the Doorway of Clonfert Cathedral, that he sent a donation towards its preservation.'

By 1884, the walls had been 'thoroughly cleansed', the pews painted, a new Communion table and cloth installed, and a choir formed. The organ was described as being 'comparatively new'.

In 1894, Canon McLarney launched a public appeal which had raised £1,522.00 by the beginning of 1900. 'Restoration' of the chancel and vestry was commenced, and subsequently in 1899, works began in the nave.

Apart from re-roofing the nave and chancel in 1986, it seems that no major works have been carried out since Canon McLarney's time. The canon described the work carried out (up to mid 1900) as follows:

'The chancel has been thoroughly restored. The decayed wooden flooring has been removed, and specially designed tiles of the most costly kind laid down. The modern plaster has been removed from the walls of this part of the building, and the ancient stonework, as far as possible, pointed and repaired. Stone mullions have been placed in the windows, and all the windows in the chancel have now been filled with stained glass. The red paint has been removed from the stone pillars of the ancient east window, and also from the stonework of the chancel arch, and from the stone work of other parts of the building. Choir stalls and Canons' stalls of carved oak have been placed in the Cathedral. A Bishop's Throne, of beautifully carved oak, has been erected in memory of Bishop Young. The late Dr Samuel Gordon, the honorary secretary, and the late Archbishop Plunket, the patron of the "Meath" Protestant Industrial School, Blackrock, have expressed great interest in the restoration of Clonfert Cathedral, the Committee of the Institution presented a handsome Communion Table, of carved oak, to the Cathedral, specially made by the boys of the school, in accordance with Mr Fuller's design.

A brass Communion rail, designed by Mr Fuller, has been erected in the chancel. Suitable stone steps have been placed in the chancel. The sacristy has been thoroughly restored, without altering the ancient character of the structure. The modern plaster has been removed from the walls and from the ceiling, thus bringing to light the marks of the old hurdle-roofing. This was a very tedious work, and had to be very carefully done. The plaster had to be removed bit by bit. The roof and the floor have been concreted. New windows and new doors have been placed in this part of the Cathedral. A thorough system of drainage has been carried out around the entire building. The fabric of the roof has been repaired. The belfry tower has also been repaired. New landings had to be erected in the tower, the old ones having become quite decayed.

Last year the work of restoration of the nave was undertaken. The old high-backed square pews have been removed. The gallery at the west end has been taken down. Several beautiful arches, which had been filled up, some with brick, and others with lath and plaster, have been opened out. The modern plaster has been removed from the walls of the nave. These walls which are in many places cracked, and in very bad repair, have, as far as possible, been carefully pointed and restored. During the progress of the work of removing the plaster, the wall over the chancel arch was found to be in a very unsafe state, in consequence of a large beam of oak which had been supporting the stonework having gone into decay. This has now been effectively remedied. A new small bore, high-pressure, hot water heating apparatus has been erected in the Cathedral.'



Plate 8: The Bishop's Throne

Plate 9: A detail of the carved oak throne



Plates 10 and 11: A general view of the vaulted ceiling (left) and detail (right)

The RSAI (Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland) began to take a keen interest in Clonfert Cathedral at this time, visiting the site in 1890. Subsequently (probably c. 1899), Robert Langrishe, FRIAI, interviewed McLarney's architect, J.F. Fuller, and reported back to the council. Mr Langrishe concluded 'that nothing has been done which calls for action on the part of this Society'.

The removal of the interior wall plaster exposed the 15th-century transept arches. It also revealed the stonework and pointing to be in very poor condition generally. In view of this, it seems that a decision was made to replaster the walls with a coating of lime plaster 'decorated' with false masonry joints picked out by tuck pointing with mortar of a slightly different colour.

The source of yellow-brown sandstone — used to form the pointed arches over the baptistery, as well as the tomb, the round-headed architraves of the door openings in the baptistery and vestry, and a fire surround in the vestry — has not been identified, nor has its installation been dated. No documentary evidence has been found referring to it, although in style it is typical of the late Victorian period. It may be Mount Charles sandstone from County Donegal which became a popular building stone in the latter half of the 19th century and was used, for example, in the National Museum (in the 1880s). It is probable that it was installed as part of the works carried out by Canon McLarney.

In 1932, a diocesan architect, R. Caulfield Orpen, wrote to the then rector, Mr C.T. Burrows, proposing that the west door be replaced with a new oak door. He also suggested completing the treatment (presumably plastering) of those portions of the interior wall which had not been treated. As no evidence has been found of substantial works carried out between 1900 and 1932, Caulfield Orpen's letter may be evidence that little work was carried out after Canon McLarney's incumbency. Caulfield Orpen's letter refers to the stonework of the west doorway as follows:

'As regards the prevention, as far as possible, of the weathering away of the general stonework — This is a question to be cautiously approached — The old work is in a surprisingly good state of preservation and any restoration would be out of the question. I think deterioration would be largely checked by the application of some preservative, such as "Szerelmey Stone Liquid", or other similar preparation. Full particulars as to the method of application etc. would have to be supplied and the work most carefully handled.'

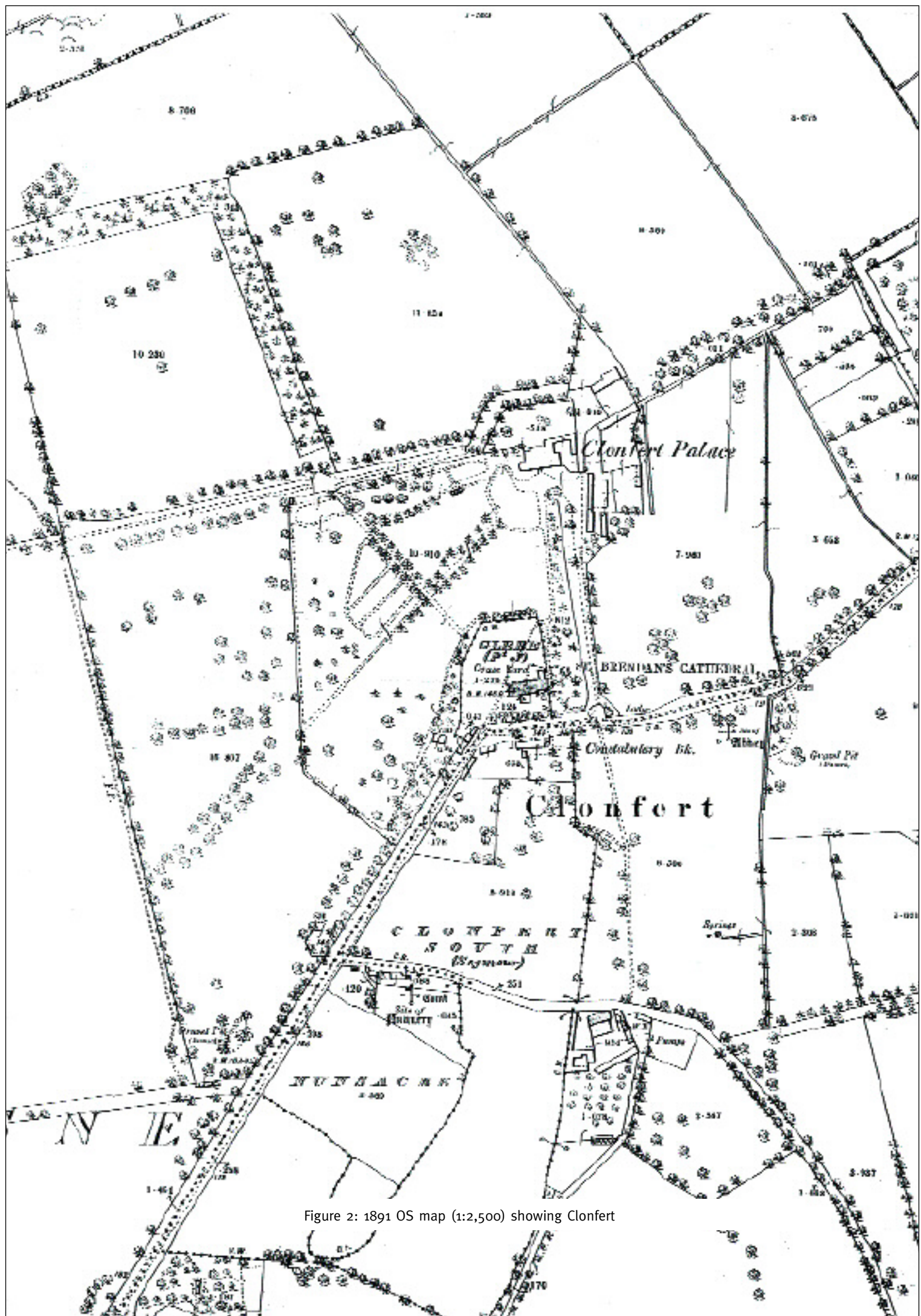
Further evidence states that this work was carried out in 1936. 'Szerelmey stone liquid', a proprietary product used to waterproof masonry, was developed c. 1841 and tested on the Westminster Houses of Parliament in 1859. Various forms of the product remained in use well into the 20th century. English Heritage has provided some information on the history and possible chemical composition of the material, including the results of a BRE (Building Research Establishment) chemical analysis carried out in 1928. However, the information is inconclusive and it is unclear whether the application of this material was a cause of damage to the stonework. Further investigation is required.

The Trench family remained in occupation of the Bishop's Palace until 1947 when the house was sold to the Blake Kellys. The farm buildings to the east of the palace were converted into accommodation by the new owners. In 1951, the palace was purchased by Sir Oswald Mosley, former leader of the British Union of Fascists. During Christmas of 1954, a major fire destroyed most of the building. The Mosleys left in 1955, giving the palace, grounds and woodland to the diocese when they departed. The palace has been derelict since. The converted farm buildings were purchased in the mid 1980s by the Emmanuel House of Providence and now provide a home for a vibrant healing and prayer centre.

In 1985, one of the four carved Evangelists on the pulpit was stolen, underlining the vulnerability of the church in the absence of appropriate security arrangements. (The figure was subsequently replaced by a copy.)

In 1986, the church was re-roofed at a cost of £37,000.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in Clonfert. Although the congregation is small, it is conscious of the extraordinary history of the place and anxious to preserve and maintain its historical continuity. Clonfert has benefited from a core of enthusiastic local people who have encouraged many expert studies of the various elements of Clonfert, including the buildings, the fauna and flora.



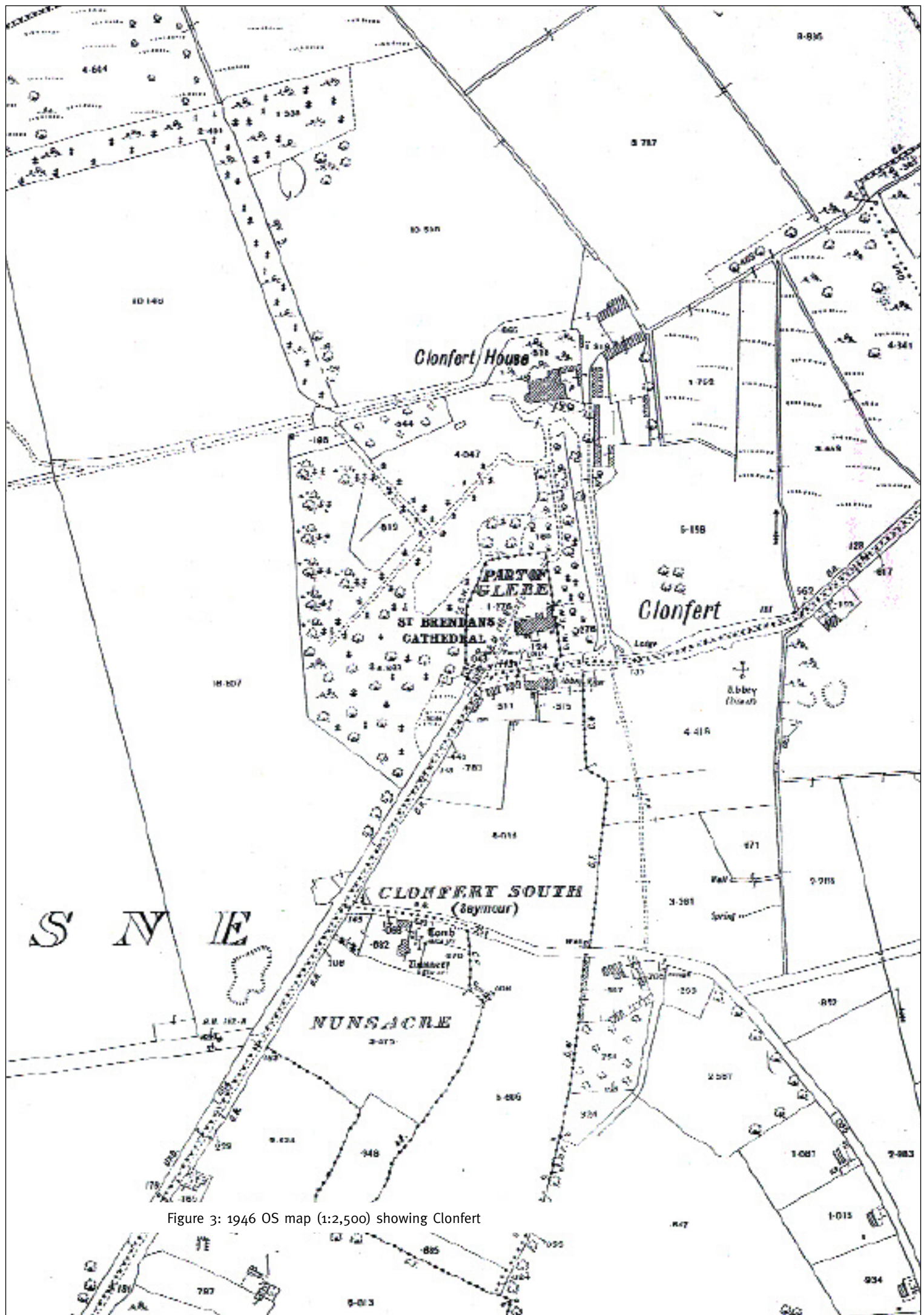


TABLE 1: KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF CLONFERT

c. AD 560	Monastery founded by Brendan
c. AD 580	16 May — Death of Brendan
c. 630s	Abbot Cummine writes letters urging conformity with the Roman dating of Easter
661-62	Death of Cummine
744	Clonfert burnt
802	Death of Abbot Muiredach mac Ólchobair, prominent in Celí Dé movement
807	War with <i>familia</i> of Cork; many Cork people slaughtered
838	Abbot Feidhlimid Mac Crimthinn declared King of Ireland at Clonfert
844-45	Clonfert burnt by Vikings
1015	Clonfert burnt
1026	King of Cenél Conaill begins his pilgrimage to Rome from Clonfert
1045	Clonfert burnt
1111	Synod of Rath Breasail elevates status of Clonfert to diocese
1140s	Augustinian (Arroasian) house, St Mary de Portu Puro, founded
1152	Petrus Ó Mordha, Cistercian abbot of Boyle, elected bishop at Synod of Kells
1162	Cummine's remains enshrined at Clonfert
c. 1167	Cathedral rebuilt with patronage of O'Kelly of Uí Máine
1172	Bishop Ó Mordha drowns in Shannon en route to Cashel
1172	Next bishop of Clonfert takes oath of allegiance to Henry II
1175	Treaty of Windsor
1179	Synod held, with Laurence O'Toole as legate; Clonfert burnt
1189 - 1203	Dynastic disputes of the O'Connors; raids by the Anglo-Normans
1202	De Burgh plunders Clonfert
1215	Cathal Croderg (brother of Rory O'Connor) granted Connacht by King John
1220s	Evidence that a double monastery is no longer in use; separate convent for nuns
1259	First mention of a Dean and Chapter at Clonfert
1266	Pope appoints a Nuncio to Clonfert
1302 - 1306	Papal taxation values abbey at £6; diocesan rents at £66.00
1321	Bishop Petit 'deprived' for unknown reason
1324	Clonfert left untouched in proposed unifications of dioceses
1414	Indulgences offered to those who contribute to the repair of abbey and cathedral
1435	Chapel of Clonkeen given to Observant Franciscans
1488	Value of church found to be below 100 marks
1536	First clash between rival Crown and Papal appointees for control of Clonfert; Papal incumbent, de Burgo, wins
1541	Church and monastery plundered and destroyed by O'Melaghlin
1542	Monastery united to bishopric but last abbot remains until c. 1550
1544	Bishop of Clonfert complains that revenues cannot be collected, having been seized by laymen
1571	Monastery valued at only £6
1579	Elizabeth I proposes a university for Clonfert but this subsequently goes to Dublin (Trinity College)
1580	Burkes threaten to expel bishop and clergy if they refuse to say Mass
1595	Existing Palace either destroyed or badly damaged
1630s	Bishop Dawson rebuilds/expands Palace
1634	Bishop recovers revenues of Abbey of Portu Puro
1644	Bishop Bayly consecrated in Oxford
1678	Cathedral bell recast
1680s	Bishop Woolley makes improvements to cathedral and residence; Revenues paid to Catholic bishops
c. 1684	Palace becomes property of Ecclesiastical Commissioners
1833 - 60s	Bishop Fitzgerald author of anti-tractarian 'cautions'
1882	Canon McLarney made rector and embarks on a 20-year campaign to raise funds for refurbishment of cathedral

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The general approach to assessing the significance of St Brendan's Cathedral Complex at Clonfert is adapted from that set out in *The Conservation Plan* by James Semple Kerr. It relies on an understanding of the physical attributes, uses, relationships and associations of the place up to and including the present.

The complex at Clonfert, comprising St Brendan's Cathedral, the former Bishop's Palace and associated grounds, is of exceptional significance.

1. It is one of the oldest ecclesiastical sites in Ireland, in continuous use as a place of worship and burial from its foundation by St Brendan up to and including the present.
2. The surviving fabric on the site reflects changes in ecclesiastical history from its foundation to the present day.
3. The cathedral building is of exceptional significance. It retains architectural elements of the highest quality from the 12th and early 13th centuries, particularly the west doorway and the east window, in addition to important interventions from the 15th to the late 19th centuries.
4. There is a completeness and harmony in the building's form, contents, architectural elements (especially the west door, west tower, east window, chancel arch, stained and plain glass windows and surrounds), and setting (the surrounding graveyard and former Bishop's Palace and gardens).
5. Its setting in the east Galway landscape of small woodlands, associated with both surviving and ruined demesnes and interspersed with fields surrounded by hedgerows, forms a spur of relatively dry land extending near to the banks of the River Shannon with its bogs and winter-flooding callows.
6. The cathedral complex and adjacent woodlands are important habitats for bats, barn owls and other fauna. Its setting within the larger landscape of bog and callows, with their characteristic flora and fauna, is also important.

In addition to the above, the site can be seen as an educational and archaeological resource: educationally, as a document of Irish ecclesiastical history; and archaeologically, as a source of further information about the nature of large medieval ecclesiastical settlements, of which Clonfert was such an important example.

Situated close to the River Shannon, the complex is one of a group of early ecclesiastical settlements (the other outstanding example being Clonmacnoise on the Leinster bank) whose origins date from a time when water transport along the river was much more significant than it is now. Their current isolation from the major east-west routes so important today must be seen in that context.

This layering of settlement and communication patterns over time continues to the present day. Notable modern examples include the building of the now disused Grand Canal spur to Ballinasloe and its later infilling by Bord na Móna for a new bog railway to facilitate exploitation of the bogs for electricity generation at Shannonbridge.

WOODS

WOODS

WOODS

GRAVE YARD

+49.87

+49.78

+49.19

ROCK

+49.56

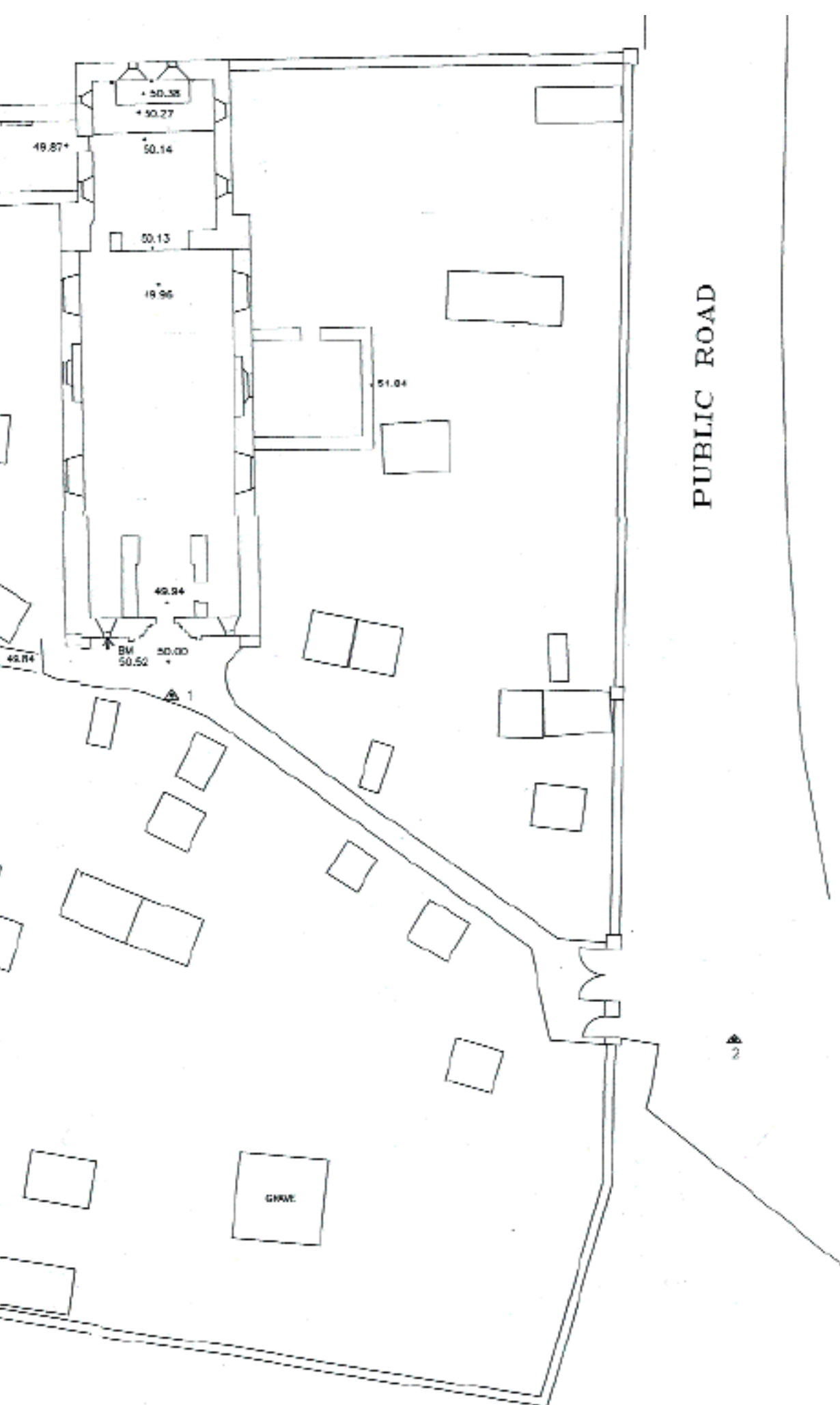


Figure 4: St Brendan's Cathedral Complex as it exists today



CONSERVATION POLICIES

1. EXPLANATION

The purpose of this Conservation Plan is to set out the policies which provide a guide for the future development and management of St Brendan's Cathedral and its associated buildings and lands. The Plan takes into account not only practical requirements for use but also the retention of significance.

The conservation policies were framed with the following in mind.

- Be flexible enough to facilitate the continued use of the site.
- Any repairs, adaptations or developments within the Cathedral Complex should retain or complement the character and quality of the existing structures.
- Existing or future patterns of development which might adversely affect the site and which might require modification should be identified.
- The future treatment of landscape features, plantings and structures outside the immediate boundaries of the Cathedral Complex which could affect its continued significance must be considered.
- The need to include conservation advice within the decision-making process of future developments should be emphasised.

The recommended policies which follow are preceded by the information on which the policies are based. Where appropriate, examples of treatment or options which follow from the policies are included. Policies should only be read in conjunction with the associated text as this will make the context clear and help interpretation.

The first part (Sections 2 — 15) covers policies with a general application. The sections which follow correspond with an actual approach to the complex, starting from the entrance to the graveyard, leading to the cathedral and its interior, then going from the graveyard via the yew walk and the former palace gardens, to the ruined Bishop's Palace.

Because of the extensive scope of this Conservation Plan, the assessments of significance of the individual elements are included as part of the preamble to the policies for that element. This makes information about a particular element more compact and accessible. Reference to the particular elements (buildings, structures, spaces and planting) is found in the detailed Contents.

LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE

While the Statement of Significance explains why Clonfert Cathedral, its associated buildings and attendant lands are of exceptional significance, the individual assessments set out their levels of significance. An understanding of these is crucial when developing individual policies.

The levels of significance used for the buildings correspond to those developed for the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH).

International Significance

Structures of sufficient importance to indicate the architectural heritage of Ireland in an international forum

(e.g. Custom House, Dublin; Casino at Marino; St Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork; Carroll's factory, Dundalk)

National Significance

Structures which make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage across the country at large

(e.g. Leinster House; Athlone Castle; Kilmainham Jail)

Regional Significance

Structures which make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage of their own region or area

(e.g. many Georgian terraces; successful works by well-known architects; well-designed historic shopfronts)

Local Significance

Structures which make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage within their own locality

(can be significant if part of a 'group' of similar structures or as part of architectural conservation areas)

Record only

Records of structures within a survey area which are not classified under any of the above headings

It is expected that structures rated 'Regional', 'National' or 'International' would be included on the Local Authority's 'Record of Protected Structures'.

In addition, items which are visually intrusive and which damage the character and spatial quality of the site may have 'intrusive' added to their assessment. While the preferred treatment of such items would be removal or modification, some may be necessary to the function of the place. Action may thus be deferred until changes of use or new developments make them redundant or make suitable alteration possible.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are taken from the Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (the Burra Charter) as revised 1999.

Adaptation — modifying a place to suit the existing use or a proposed use.

Compatible Use — a use which respects the cultural significance of a place. Such a use involves no, or minimal, impact on the cultural significance.

Conservation — all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance.

Fabric — all the physical material of the place, including components, fixtures, contents and objects.





Maintenance — the continuous protective care of the fabric and setting of a place. To be distinguished from repair, which involves restoration or reconstruction.

Reconstruction — returning a place to a known earlier state. Distinguished from restoration by the introduction of new material into the fabric.

Restoration — returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material.

2. BASIS OF APPROACH

The Burra Charter is a useful general guide to the conservation of sites such as Clonfert Cathedral Complex. It provides a flexible philosophical framework and recognises the need for the continued development associated with the continuing occupation of a site. Adopting Policies 2.1 - 2.3 will help achieve consistency and continuity of approach to the treatment of St Brendan's Cathedral Complex and surroundings.

Policy 2.1 The future conservation and development of the place should be guided by the principles of the Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (the Burra Charter) as revised 1999.

Policy 2.2 The statement of cultural significance and the assessments of individual items contained in more detail in the Policy sections should be accepted as the basis for future planning and work.

Policy 2.3 As a guide to planning future work, the policies recommended and options discussed throughout this document should be endorsed by the relevant Church of Ireland bodies and by other parties to the Conservation Plan.

3. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AND POLICY

In general, the greater the level of significance of a part of the place, the more care is needed in planning its future treatment. The intention is to retain and, where appropriate, reinforce its significance — including character, quality, and ability to reveal its past history.

Policy 3.1 The more significant a fabric, relationship, space or vista, the more care should be taken in planning work which may affect it so that the work will not reduce but reinforce its significance.

Policy 3.2 Where some reduction of significance is necessary to achieve overall conservation objectives, alternatives should be tested using a risk impact assessment methodology to reveal the least damaging approach. In general, the alternative which involves the least alteration of the fabric is preferable.

4. USE

St Brendan's Cathedral and surroundings form one of the oldest ecclesiastical sites in the country, one which retains its original use as a place of worship and burial. It is also one of the most architecturally important structures in the country; a significant part of the present building dates substantially from the 12th century.

The consistent history of ecclesiastical use is an important contributor to its significance. A continuation of that use must therefore remain the preferred option. Evolving concepts of religious or associated uses may require adaptation of existing structures as well as new building on or close to the site. As the place already has a very long history of adaptation, a continuation of the process is acceptable in principle. The way in which these objectives are achieved in practice, however, is important. These policies are framed to guide the process of conservation, while doing so in a way which is sufficiently general should other future uses be combined with the existing ones.

A complete conversion of the Cathedral Complex to other uses is undesirable, given the exceptional significance of its continuous use as a place of worship for over a thousand years. Since the complex and its surroundings are already a destination for cultural tourism, this use must be recognised and planned for so that a minimum of injury is done.

The site containing the cathedral and graveyard is the most significant, the most difficult to adapt for other uses, and of most value for cultural tourism. The structures outside this precinct are in a less good state of preservation and require short- to medium-term intervention to arrest their decay.

Policy 4.1 St Brendan's Cathedral should continue to be used for religious purposes.

Policy 4.2 The complex may continue to be adapted and developed, provided the work is the result of careful long-term planning which considers the policies set out in this Conservation Plan.

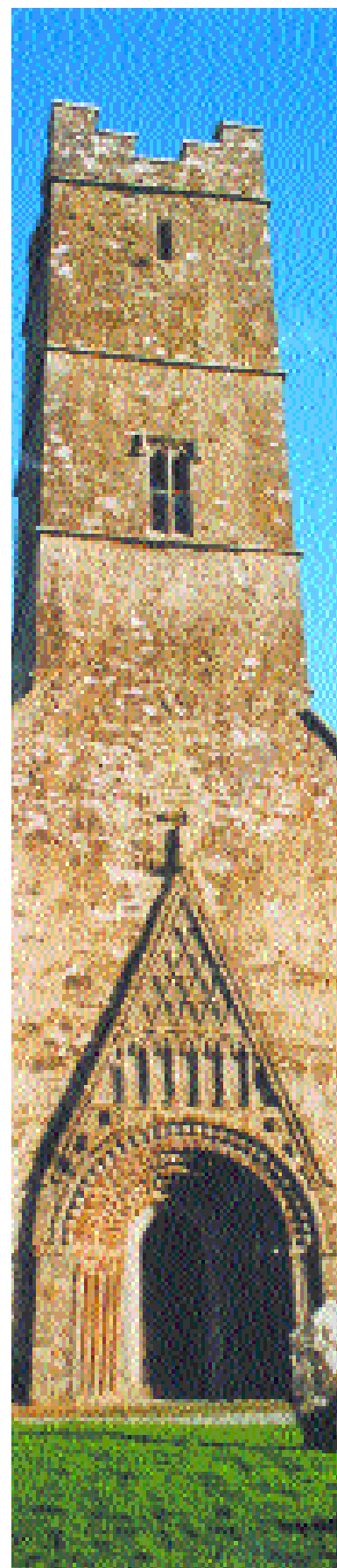
Policy 4.3 As defined in here, other uses may be introduced which are compatible with use as a place of worship and with the retention of the significance.

5. CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF COMPLEX

Policy 5.1 In any future work, the character and quality established by the layout and form of the structures, their designed relationships, their limestone and sandstone walls, lime-rendered finishes, slate roofs, and timber joinery should be retained or complemented.

6. CONTINUITY OF CONSERVATION ADVICE

Policy 6.1 Continuity of advice from appropriate and experienced conservation advisers should be provided to (or through) the mechanisms by which proposals for work on the place are developed.





7. RECORDING PRIOR TO MAJOR ALTERATION OR INTERVENTION

Policy 7.1 Structures or other elements of the complex should be recorded before alteration or major intervention (*e.g.* remedial works to the west doorway, or major landscape works to the former gardens of the Bishop's Palace). Original records should be kept in a safe place off site. Copies should be kept on site for easy reference.

Such recording will require:

- the correction of existing records (drawings and maps) so that they accurately represent and detail the layout, structures and materials before work starts
- the completion of an exterior and interior photographic record on durable stock
- the retention and appropriate storage of a sample of material of significance if there is no other surviving example retained in the complex
- a brief account of the work to be done, detailing the current state of knowledge and the basis on which the intervention is being planned.

8. EXCAVATION

St Brendan's Cathedral Complex represents the surviving core of a religious settlement many times its present size. It is essential that any work which disturbs the ground in the area defined as being of archaeological interest is done so that any loss of archaeological significance is minimised. Opportunities for learning more about the nature and extent of the settlement should not be lost.

Policy 8.1 Work within the Cathedral Complex precinct which involves disturbance of the ground should be planned and monitored in accordance with the procedures set out for areas of archaeological importance by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Policy 8.2 Work involving disturbance outside the Cathedral Complex precinct, but within the area of archaeological importance as set out in the Sites and Monuments Record, should be subject to Local Authority approval and conducted in accordance with the procedures set out by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for such areas.

9. REVIEW OF POLICIES

The policies contained in this document will require adjustment as they meet unforeseen circumstances and respond to developing needs.

Policy 9.1 This Plan and the policies it contains should be reviewed as the need arises but not later than five years after their initial adoption. Procedures for review mechanisms should be established by the bodies responsible for implementation of this Conservation Plan.

MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

10. MAINTENANCE, REPAIR & REMEDIAL WORKS

Like many church buildings, St Brendan's Cathedral experienced periods during which funding for maintenance and repair was inadequate. Long episodes of neglect punctuated by infrequent remedial activity is a costly way of looking after such buildings. Systematic, regular maintenance and prompt minor remedial works will ensure that these buildings survive for the foreseeable future. The exclusion of water from the structures and the removal of water from around the base of the building is the single most important part of a maintenance and works schedule.

Disrepair of the gutters and downpipes, lack of drainage for carrying rainwater away from the base of the downpipes, inadequate flashings which allow water into the disused heating system flue, high external ground level around the building, the hard concrete path against the north external face — all contribute to the current unhealthy condition of the cathedral. In addition, they compound and worsen other forms of decay which are affecting the sandstone west doorway.

Policy 10.1 The cathedral, with its associated grounds and structures, should be cared for by a planned maintenance and repair programme. This should be based on as complete a knowledge of the building and its materials as possible, along with regular inspection and prompt preventative maintenance and repair.

Policy 10.2 Particular care should be taken to ensure that water is taken from the building fabric and that drains and falls which carry water away from the base of the building are maintained, reinstated and/or created, as necessary.

Policy 10.3 Only those qualified and experienced in working with the relevant materials (stone, slate, lead, copper etc.) should be employed, and only under appropriate supervision.

11. SUPERVISION OF MINOR WORKS

Given the primary importance of good maintenance and prompt repair works, it is essential that those responsible for the care of the Cathedral Complex can rely on the services of a local person or persons with the appropriate training, experience and initiative to supervise and control these works, with the support of expert advice as necessary. In the long term, this is the most economical and least interventionist way to maintain the building in good condition and to safeguard its significance.

Policy 11.1 The bodies responsible for the management of the Cathedral Complex should ensure that people with appropriate training, experience and initiative are made responsible for supervising any work undertaken. They should be given continuing training in the care of historic fabric, and provided with sufficient resources for effective local supervision.



12. FUNDING ISSUES

As the conservation of this important place will require funding on a continuing basis, long-term financial planning will be necessary. While short-term, piecemeal funding is useful, it can never be an adequate substitute. A scheme of priorities is crucial if maximum benefit is to be gained from any short-term or once-off funding.

Policy 12.1 Because of the reality of limited resources, it is important that a scheme of priorities be put in place to take advantage of funding as it becomes available.

Policy 12.2 When seeking funding, management resources should be allocated which take the scheme of priorities into account.

13. MANAGEMENT

Although St Brendan's Cathedral is becoming better known and is already on the itinerary of several tour companies, there is no coherent policy which addresses the management of the site for users and visitors. Visitors are arriving in increasing numbers and at times which are difficult for the present management resources to supervise and accommodate. In particular, damage is being caused to the doorway because people are touching and brushing against it. Security is potentially a serious problem because of unsupervised, open access to the building. At present, car and bus parking is not a serious problem, but if visitor numbers continue to rise, the need for increased parking provision could cause a loss of character and damage the present significance.

Facilities, including toilets, are not in place for supervisory staff; almost no visitor facilities are provided on the site.

The safety of the congregation, of visitors and of those carrying out maintenance and other works requires careful consideration. For example, a section of the south transept has recently fallen and there may be a risk of further falling masonry. The Bishop's Palace is a dangerous building and some of the boundary walls are in a hazardous state.

Policy 13.1 Management's foremost concern should be the protection and enhancement of the significance of the place while allowing for continued use. A Management Plan should be established for users and visitors which takes full account of the needs of worship, cultural interests and educational resources.

Policy 13.2 In planning visitor access arrangements, the management must consider the vulnerability of the place, the resources available, and their compatibility with its use as a place of worship.

Policy 13.3 The Sacristan's House is considered an appropriate location for site supervisory facilities, provided sanitary and other services can be accommodated, and the findings of Policy 18.2 are followed.

Policy 13.4 At present, there are no systematic arrangements for assuring the security of visitors. An assessment of risk should be carried out and a safety statement prepared for the place as a whole.

14. ACCESS

At present, access into and within the cathedral is relatively good. Access to other parts of the site — including the yew walk, woodland and palace grounds — is poor.

Policy 14.1 Management plans for visitor access and others should comply with all statutory and building regulations.

15. SECURITY

At present, there are no systematic arrangements for ensuring the security of the place. The door of the cathedral is regularly left open, with no on-site supervision, and there is a range of further threats, including damage to the west doorway, theft or damage to the contents of the cathedral and graveyard, or fire.

Policy 15.1 A detailed inventory, including a photographic record of the contents of the cathedral and graveyard, should be prepared.

Policy 15.2 A comprehensive assessment of risk should be made.

Policy 15.3 Taking into account the limitation of available resources, realistic policies should be developed and implemented to protect against the various risks identified in Policy 15.2.

Policy 15.4 A disaster plan should be prepared.

INTEGRITY OF SETTING

16. SITE & SETTING

The site is defined as the Churchyard, Cathedral Building, Bishop's Palace, and the associated garden and woodland.



Plates 12 and 13: Tokens are still attached to the Votive Tree which is located in the woodland adjacent to the cathedral

17. **ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE OF INTEREST**

For the purposes of this Conservation Plan, the archaeological zone of interest is as delineated on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for County Galway. It should be borne in mind that future investigations may indicate the advisability of increasing the area of interest.

18. **APPROACH ROAD**

The approach road has provided access to the cathedral and Bishop's Palace since at least the 18th century and is a significant element within the setting. The present settlement along the road dates only from the mid 20th century. The population, previously settled along the Shannon, was moved onto the former demesne lands after the divisions carried out by the Land Commission. Over the years, the road was widened and the traditional field boundaries (hedgerows and dry-stone walls) replaced by modern walls. The character of the approach to the complex has consequently changed considerably and is now more open and much less intimate in scale. However, the immediately adjacent buildings and their associated stone walls form an extremely important part of the cathedral's setting. Although now in various states of repair, buildings such as the structure known as 'the Sacristan's House', Devoy's house and the farm buildings retain their historic character and original integrity.



Plate 14: The approach road to the Cathedral Complex

The following policies for the approach road are recommended to the relevant statutory authorities.

Policy 18.1 The removal of traditional road boundaries should be avoided in future developments.

Policy 18.2 The installation of services in the road or on its margins should be carried out in an appropriate way and should follow the procedures established by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and the Local Authority, for works in zones of archaeological importance.

Policy 18.3 No further road widening or realignment should take place on the approach road.

Policy 18.4 Existing services should be placed underground. Future services should be designed so that they can be installed underground.

Policy 18.5 The need to protect the cathedral's setting and the site in general must be foremost when assessing any proposals for development.

19. FORMER SACRISTAN'S HOUSE

Although it is an important element in the setting of the entrance to the graveyard and cathedral, the house is completely overgrown and inaccessible. Its provenance, history and purpose are not known, although it is commonly referred to as the 'Sacristan's House'. The following policies are recommended to the present and future owners.



Plate 15: The ruins of the former Sacristan's House

Policy 19.1 Prior to proposals for repair or redevelopment of the house, the vegetation should be removed to permit access. A full appraisal of the existing structure should be carried out.

Policy 19.2 The findings of this appraisal should determine the nature of any proposed redevelopment.

Policy 19.3 Notwithstanding the outcome of Policies 19.1 and 19.2, any proposals for development of the building should, in form, materials and scale, respect the important contribution which the building makes to the setting.

20. CHURCHYARD — PERIMETER WALLS

The primary significance of the perimeter walls is that they define the churchyard. In their own right, they have a significance as historic masonry dating from at least the 18th and 19th centuries. The walls are generally in quite poor condition due to lack of maintenance, damage caused by vegetation and falling trees, and undermining along the east side due to a lower ground level in the adjoining palace grounds.

Policy 20.1 Woodland management policies and programmes should consider the need to prevent damage to graveyard walls and graves caused by falling trees.

Policy 20.2 A programme of remedial works to the palace grounds should be prepared and implemented, with immediate attention to remedial works on the eastern side which arrest the continued undermining of the graveyard wall.

Policy 20.3 A schedule of repair works should be drawn up for the graveyard walls and carried out in the context of a general maintenance programme for the site. As part of this, the timber gate at the north-east corner of the graveyard should be appropriately repaired and ultimately brought back into use.

Policy 20.4 The metal gates and railings at the entrance to the churchyard should be retained and protected by maintaining them with appropriate paint.

Policy 20.5 The gate piers (or at least one of them) have been identified as bat roosts. The maintenance and repair of the piers should be carried out without disturbing these roosts.

21. CHURCHYARD — GRAVEYARD PATHWAYS

The existing graveyard path which runs diagonally from the south-west to the north-east is a simple unkerbed gravel path. It provides a simple, unobtrusive, yet clear routeway to the door of the cathedral and through the graveyard.

Policy 21.1 The existing pathway should be retained as at present.

Policy 21.2 Where works or minor alterations are necessary, the pathway should be reinstated to match the existing.

22. CHURCHYARD — GRAVES

As the reputed burial site of St Brendan and because it has been in continuous use since the 6th century, the graveyard is among the most important in the country. It is of added significance in that it continues to be used by the local community.

Policy 22.1 The management and maintenance of the graveyard should be carried out in accordance with the guidelines prepared by the former Dúchas (now the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government) and published as *The Care and Conservation of Graveyards* (1997).

Policy 22.2 A management scheme should be drawn up for continued use of the graveyard which ensures appropriate selection of gravesites.

Policy 22.3 Given the historic character and importance of the graveyard, grave marking should follow traditional practice in materials and form.

23. CHURCHYARD — FUNERARY MONUMENTS

The graveyard contains a range of funerary monuments typical of many historic graveyards. While it has items of special interest, it is by no means unique in this regard. The monuments range from part of a possible shrine of St Cummine (dating from 1162) to Victorian family vaults and more modern headstones. The graveyard also contains many medieval and post-medieval coffin slabs and headstones.



Plate 16: St Brendan's Cathedral from the north-west corner of the graveyard



Plate 17: One of the Victorian tombs north of the cathedral

Policy 23.1 A detailed inventory and mapping of the monuments in the graveyard should be carried out. It should include an assessment and description of the condition of each monument.

Policy 23.2 A programme of conservation, repair and maintenance which is based on the information gathered in the inventory should be prepared. Measures which may have to be considered include the removal of particularly vulnerable monuments to a safe place, as well as the repair and resetting of monuments.

24. **FORMER GATE LODGE TO BISHOP'S PALACE**

This single-storey building is located on the east side of the access roadway to the palace, just inside the site boundary at the former entrance gate. During the last 50 years, substantial alterations have been carried out to the building, including the removal of an attached gate pier. The building is now so altered that it is unrecognisable, except by virtue of its location, as a former gate lodge.

Policy 24.1 The building should be retained as a dwelling house.

25. **AVENUE TO PALACE AND EMMANUEL HOUSE**

The avenue was once a formal approach to a 17th-century mansion and appears to substantially retain its original form. It also retains much of its probable original character, including the lines of broadleaf trees on either side. The line of derelict sheds on the east side, while outside the present ownership of the church, clearly forms part of the attendant grounds of the Palace Complex. The trees are clearly over-mature and may well constitute a danger to traffic and people passing along the avenue. The road appears to have been widened and has a recently laid macadam surface.

Policy 25.1 The Cathedral Complex is listed in the Record of Protected Structures in the Galway County Council Development Plan. Protection should be extended to the sheds on the east side of the avenue as they form an important part of the setting of a protected structure.

Policy 25.2 The condition of the trees should be assessed by a competent person, with appropriate measures identified and implemented as a matter of urgency. Should the necessity arise for the removal of trees, it is recommended that a programme of replanting be put in place immediately.

Policy 25.3 Although the current road construction is considered inappropriate, it would be unreasonable to propose reconstruction at this stage. However, when major works become necessary in the future, consideration should be given to a more appropriate construction.

Policy 25.4 Although the recent realignment of the roadway at the entrance to the avenue, including taking down and moving gate posts and walls, is considered inappropriate, it would be unreasonable to propose major alterations at this stage. However, in the future, as part of an overall management plan for the setting of the site, consideration should be given to designing a more appropriate entrance.

26. BISHOP'S PALACE

The Bishop's Palace was continuously occupied from at least the 16th century until 1954 and contains elements dating from the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. It retains surviving material, including floor and roof joinery dated to c. 1638 by dendrochronology, and a rare oak-framed window which had been covered up until recently. The joinery has recently been investigated in detail by Caimin O'Brien. The decorated timber panels and the decorated timber post, both of which have been removed for conservation, are very rare examples of 17th-century decorative work on timber.



Plates 18 and 19: The Bishop's Palace

The palace is an important element in the setting of the cathedral and thereby contributes to the overall significance of the place. It helps to set the Clonfert complex in a regional context because of its connections to the Eyres of Eyrecourt. It has been established that the palace is a habitat for bats and a barn owl.

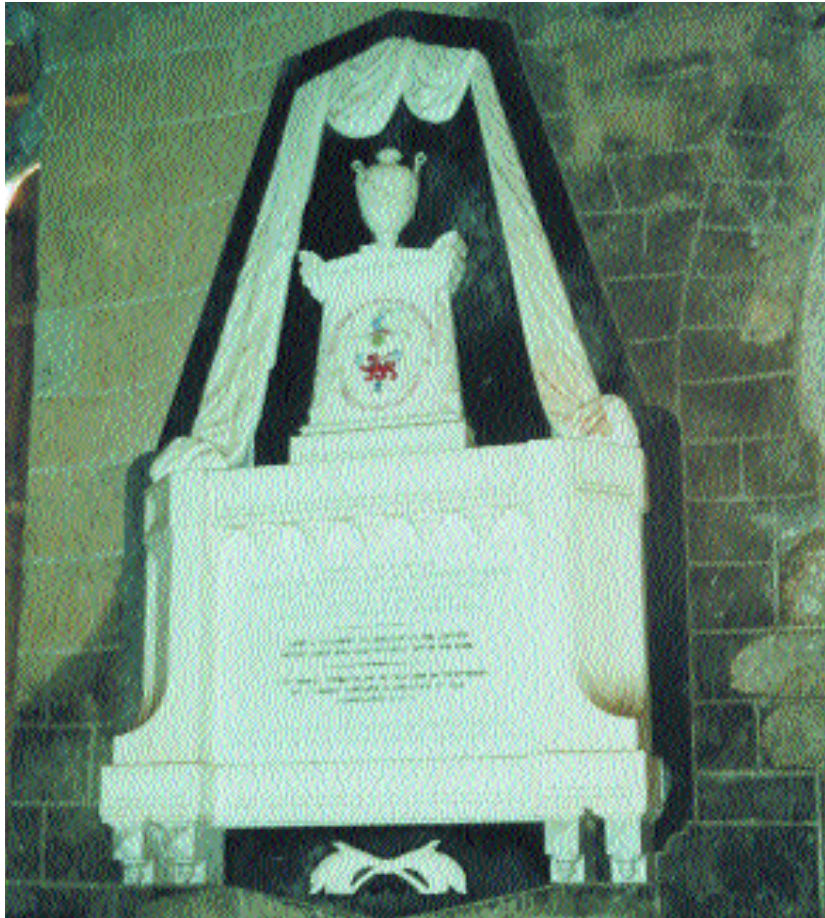


Plate 20: Another monument in the cathedral commemorates John Eyre

The palace is a building of national importance because of its age, its continuous development and change since its construction started, and its important surviving elements.

Policy 26.1 The palace should be fully recorded. This should include a detailed measured survey, full documentation and a systematic photographic survey.

Policy 26.2 Pending decisions on the future of the palace, historic timbers including roof timbers, the decorated post and the 17th-century window should be collected and stored in a safe place.

Policy 26.3 A policy decision should be taken which chooses between one of the following options.

1. If suitable future development on the site is identified, reconstruction of the palace should be considered an option.
2. Alternatively, the building should be made safe and permitted to decay naturally.
3. A third option would be to structurally stabilise the building as a ruin and provide for its future management as a sustainable habitat for wildlife.

Policy 26.4 Because of its significance as a wildlife habitat, no work should take place on the Bishop's Palace without prior consultation with the Wildlife Ranger.

27. FORMER PALACE GARDENS

The gardens were formally laid out and used both for horticulture and leisure within living memory. Paddy Conniffe has prepared a sketch illustrating his memory of the layout of the planting in the early 1950s. Remnants of garden features remain, including a filled-in well, the foundations of a glass house and an overgrown box hedge. The gardens form an important part of the setting for the palace and the cathedral, although they are not a significant habitat. They contain a variety of broadleaf and other trees including yews, some of which are in a vulnerable condition due to overgrowth.

The remaining boundary walls are of 19th century or earlier provenance and provide evidence of the historic development of the site. In particular, the high wall on the north side is formed of carefully cut stone which may be associated with the building of the nearby canal.

Policy 27.1 The exposed wall base on the east side of the church and vestry should be underpinned and protected from future undermining.

Policy 27.2 Boundaries including walls, fencing etc. should be made secure by repairing as necessary. In particular, the damaged front boundary wall should be made safe by refacing the inside.

Policy 27.3 The condition of the trees within the garden area should be assessed by a competent expert, with appropriate measures identified and implemented as a matter of urgency. Should it be necessary to remove any trees, a programme of replanting should be put in place immediately, replacing like with like.

Policy 27.4 Pending proposals for development in the garden area, the existing remnant features of the former gardens should be fully assessed and recorded, with means devised to protect them as fully as possible.

Policy 27.5 Pending proposals for the gardens, their use as a sheep pasture is an appropriate means of preventing the area from becoming overgrown.

Policy 27.6 Any proposals for development should not diminish or damage the role of the gardens as the setting for the palace and the cathedral.

28. YEW WALK AND WOODLAND

The woodland appears to have developed from a planted pleasure garden that has run wild. Most of the trees were probably planted, although some (*e.g.* sycamore and beech) are regenerating in spaces created by fallen trees. A number of plants in the ground and shrub layer are non-native introductions. It appears that the yew trees were originally planted as a hedge which has been neglected. There is evidence that some may be 350-400 years old and that replanting and management may have taken place at an earlier period. The remaining yew trees are vulnerable to wind-throw because of the overgrowth, the removal and thinning of shelter belting over the years due to changes in agricultural practice, and the exposure of roots as the result of soil erosion caused by animal and human activity.



Plate 21: The Yew Walk and surrounding woodland, with the Bishop's Palace at the end of the walk

The yew walk and woodland are significant because they were originally planted as a pleasure garden associated with the palace. They form an important part of the setting of the graveyard, cathedral and palace. The neglect of the woodland and yew walk over the years is connected with the overall neglect of the place and mirrors the decay of the palace and its gardens. The woodland provides an important habitat for badgers, bats, birds and other wildlife.

Policy 28.1 A programme of management should be instituted which would permit gradual removal of decayed yew trees and replacement with newly planted yews following specialist advice.

Policy 28.2 The woodland area should be protected from foraging animals by secure fencing designed to permit access for management and amenity purposes.

Policy 28.3 A minimal management programme for the woodland as a whole should be implemented so that its significance as a wildlife habitat is retained.

29. ADJACENT SHELTERBELTS AND DECOY WOOD

The shelterbelt and decoy wood to the north-east of the complex may be of significance as an important habitat. A red squirrel was photographed in the shelterbelt trees during the Conservation Plan study, only the second such sighting in many years. The shelterbelt may provide a foraging area and protected route for bats travelling to foraging areas. Historical map evidence shows that the present shelterbelt dates from some time in the 19th century (after 1838). There has been replanting or augmentation in recent years.

The decoy wood has an important historical association with the Cathedral/Palace Complex. Elaborate decoy traps were used in the 18th and 19th centuries to trap wildfowl. The traps were located on artificial lakes in woods and tended by a 'decoyman'. A headstone in Clonfert Cemetery on the grave of James Stanton, who died in 1754, has the title 'Decoyman' below his name. Other evidence, however, indicates that James Stanton may have been associated with another decoy lake at Caltragh near Lawrencetown.

The decoy lake appears to have formed part of the food-producing functions which took place on estate lands associated with the palace. Policies for the decoy wood and shelterbelt will require the agreement of adjacent landowners for access and for carrying out works. The following policies are recommended.

Policy 29.1 A policy for maintaining the shelterbelt should be put in place and should include a programme for appropriate replacement planting.

Policy 29.2 The decoy lake and the remains of the trap and decoyman's hut should be cleaned back under appropriate archaeological supervision.

Policy 29.3 A policy should be prepared for the conservation and maintenance of the decoy wood. This should include appropriate replacement planting and protection of the remnant historic features.

30. EMMANUEL HOUSE

Emmanuel House consists of a number of buildings which once formed part of the stable yard of the Bishop's Palace. After the sale of the house and grounds following the fire which destroyed the palace in 1954, they were sold separately. The buildings have been altered and refurbished, and several new constructions have been added since the site became home to the Emmanuel House of Providence in the mid 1980s. Since then, the site has been a centre of pilgrimage, prayer and healing which attracts many thousands of people each year, especially at weekends. The following policies are recommended.

Policy 30.1 The buildings form part of the attendant grounds of the Bishop's Palace and should therefore be protected by inclusion in County Galway's Record of Protected Structures.

Policy 30.2 The boundaries of the Emmanuel House property and that of the Church of Ireland diocese should be ascertained, agreed between the parties and demarcated on the ground.

Policy 30.3 Access to the site for buses and cars and the car parking requirements of the House of Providence should be identified. A strategy for accommodation should be drawn up in conjunction with the Local Authority and the site's other stakeholders. Traffic volumes are excessive for the carrying capacity or the character of the existing access, so consideration should be given to the construction of new access or parking areas away from the cathedral, palace and House of Providence complex.

31. CAR PARKING

Visitors to the cathedral and graveyard can park along the access road to the south of the complex, or directly against the south wall of the graveyard. Visitors to Emmanuel House continue past the graveyard and go left along the former avenue, past the Bishop's Palace and onward to the House of Providence grounds.

Policy 31.1 The present arrangements are adequate for the numbers visiting the cathedral and graveyard, giving a straightforward, direct and relatively unobtrusive access. These should be retained as long as requirements remain at present levels.

Policy 31.2 Should the requirement for visitor parking increase noticeably, construction of new access or parking areas away from the cathedral, palace and House of Providence complex should be considered.

Policy 31.3 New proposals for car parking should consider the requirement to protect flora and fauna, as well as the present intimate scale and low density of development in the area. The local Wildlife Ranger should be consulted prior to the formulation of any proposals.

32. APPROACH TO PLANNING FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The complex comprising the cathedral, graveyard and palace forms a site of very high significance. To protect this, it is important that the impact of any proposed development of lands or buildings adjacent to the complex be given due consideration by the community and the Local Authority.

Such developments could include building works, changes of use of existing buildings, alterations to field and road boundaries, changes in agricultural practice or forestry proposals.

Policy 32.1 In devising an integrated plan for developments in the area around the Cathedral Complex, the Local Authority should consider the proposals and activities of other State and semi-State authorities.

Policy 32.2 The Local Authority should consider the creation of an architectural conservation area around the Cathedral Complex.

33. RELATIONSHIP WITH RIVER SHANNON & CALLOWS

The River Shannon was formerly of great importance in the early history and development of the site. The ‘callows’, which flood in winter and are dry in summer, is a distinctive landscape with important specific flora and fauna which State and Local Authorities are already committed to protecting.

Policy 33.1 It would enhance the significance of the site if the historic links with the River Shannon were strengthened as part of the development of this waterway. Such development could include improved mooring for boats, allowing better access to the complex from the river.

34. BORD NA MÓNA

Bord na Móna operates extensive bogs to the south and north of Clonfert and has laid a rail track-way along the line of the 19th-century canal. A large complex of workshop buildings, paved parking areas and offices is located a few hundred metres from the site on the roadway leading towards the River Shannon. As this complex is due to be evacuated in the near future, development and change of use on this site could adversely affect the cathedral unless carried out with due regard to the points made in Section 32.

Policy 34.1 Any proposed change of use for the Bord na Móna site should be carefully assessed in accordance with the principles laid down in Section 32, ensuring that there is no adverse impact on the character of the Clonfert Cathedral Complex.

CATHEDRAL BUILDING EXTERIOR

35. WEST DOORWAY EXTERIOR

From present evidence, the doorway dates from the latter part of the 12th century and appears to have been added to an earlier church. While opinions about the exact date and patron of the doorway vary, the latest work (by Tadhg O'Keeffe) suggests a date of c. 1180. Records state that the church was burnt in 1179, the same year in which a synod was held there by St Laurence O'Toole. Installation of the doorway may be connected with these events.

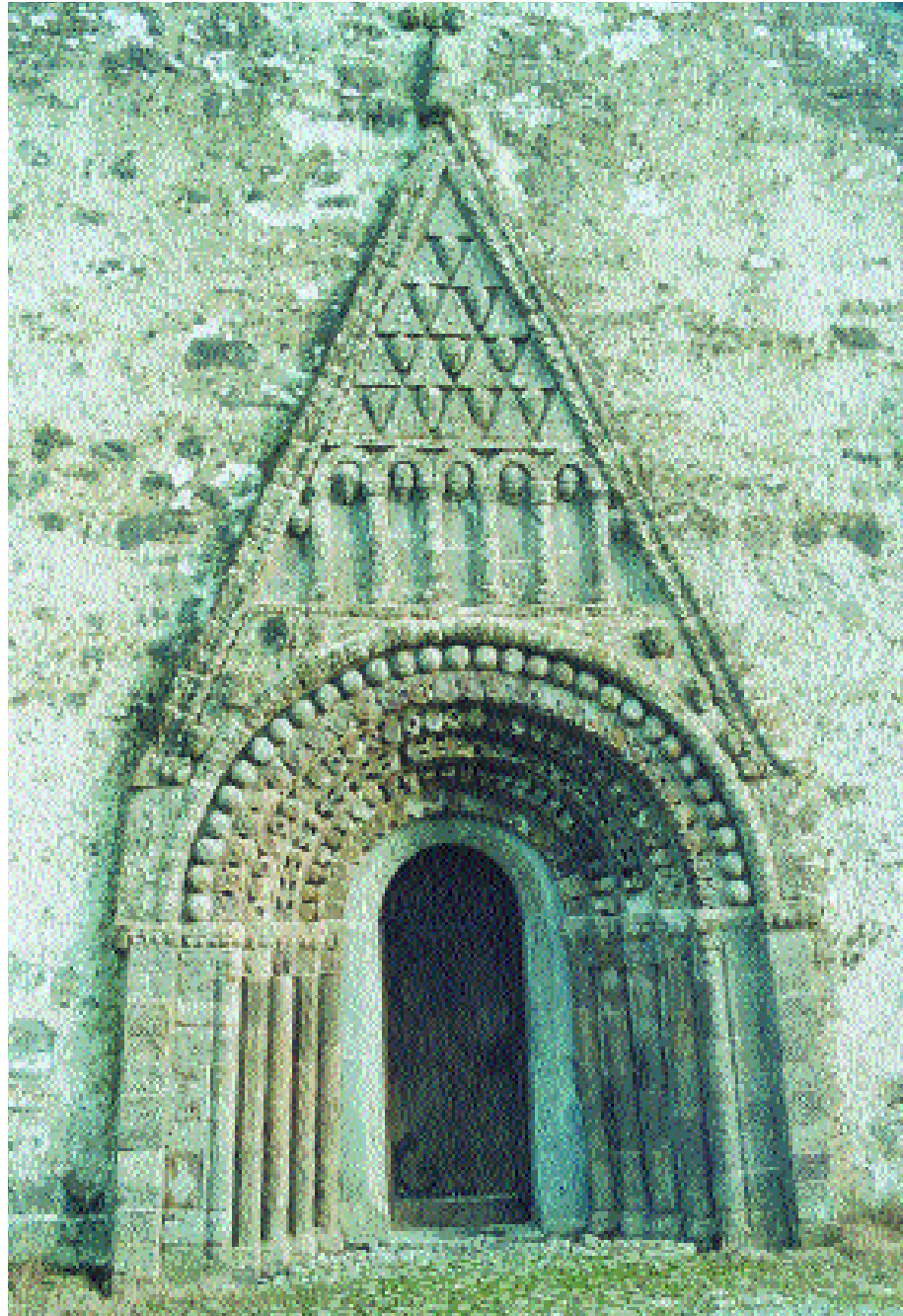


Plate 22: The West Doorway, dating from the 12th century



Plate 23: A close-up view of the carvings above the portal

The portal is of the tangent gable type, with an area of diaper ornament containing human heads above an arcade with the doorway below. The portal is carved in sandstone, the exact source of which has not been identified. The doorway consists of seven orders completely covered in carvings, with motifs from a variety of sources, including Scandinavian and western French. The jambs of the orders are inclined in the Hiberno-Romanesque style. There is a later insertion, probably 15th century, of an eighth order in limestone with vertical jambs.

The doorway is typical of late 12th-century work. The nearest examples of the style are to be found at Monaincha and Donaghmore; Leask has suggested that all three could be by the same master stonemason. Many other examples of late 12th-century doorways exist, including the Nun's Chapel at Clonmacnoise, and at Freshford and Roscrea. Clonfert is generally regarded as the high point of Romanesque sculptural art in Ireland. Traces of 'orange' colour were found on the sandstone.

The current door is a round-headed timber door inserted in 1936. A photograph from c. 1860 shows a Georgian-type door with straight doorhead and semi-circular glazed fanlight above.

The portal has been much studied over the years. All of the inspections up to c. 1932 record it as being in relatively good condition. In 1936, a chemical 'preservative' known by the trade name Szerelmey was applied to the sandstone on the advice of a diocesan architect. It appears that the rate of decay of the doorway has accelerated since about this time. However, it has not been possible to establish a direct connection between the application of the chemical and the acceleration of decay. The present condition of the doorway is very poor. The surface of the sandstone is badly damaged and is of an extremely friable consistency, with apparent loss of binder in the stone. The inner orders appear to be generally damp, indicating that moisture which may have penetrated the wall over and travelled through voids is exiting in the soffit of the doorhead. The doorway is currently decaying at a very rapid rate, and it has been noted that the surface of the stone work is constantly being degraded by visitors brushing against it involuntarily or touching it. A number of reports on the condition of the doorway have been prepared by Lithan Limited, English Heritage and others (see Appendices).

The doorway is further damaged by the growth of vegetation in the joints and possibly by the presence of lichens which have covered parts of the stonework. The mortar has been washed out from many of the joints in the pediment stones, permitting water which strikes the face of the building to penetrate the carved area and cause additional damage. Unsuitable repairs in cementitious materials which are likely to exacerbate the damage have been carried out in the form of pointing, patching and filling. There is an area of concrete paving directly in front of the doorway, and it is likely that rainwater falling on this area is being directed against the wall. This may be contributing to deterioration at the base of the portal. Rising damp also appears to be contributing to degradation at the base. There is concrete paving inside and outside, and it is likely that this acts as a barrier which prevents the evaporation of ground water, thereby increasing the water content of the soil at the base of the wall and exacerbating the effects of rising damp.

Policy 35.1 A repair and management strategy shall be adopted for the doorway and should address the policy points listed below.

Policy 35.2 The original source of the sandstone should be identified and samples retrieved for future testing.

Policy 35.3 Surface water should be diverted away from the base of the wall.

Policy 35.4 Moisture currently damaging the base of the doorway in the form of rising damp should be dispersed away from the doorway insofar as possible.

Policy 35.5 As part of an integrated set of measures to reduce water damage to the portal, the concrete paving in front of the door should be replaced with a permeable material.

Policy 35.6 In conjunction with an overall repair strategy for the walls, ingress of moisture into the inner orders of the archway from the core of the wall over should be tracked and measures taken to inhibit damage from this source.

Policy 35.7 Vegetation which is currently causing damage should be carefully removed.

Policy 35.8 Where Portland cement pointing, patching and plastering have been used in the portal, it should be carefully removed. The stonework should be pointed and repaired as necessary with lime-based mortar containing a pozzolanic additive, the precise mix to be determined following careful assessment of the existing mortars.

Policy 35.9 The gable mouldings on the pediment should be carefully repointed and repaired to ensure that water is diverted away from the decorative stonework.

Policy 35.10 The management and maintenance programme should take into account the damp atmosphere of the micro-climate in the graveyard and around the portal.

Policy 35.11 No pre-consolidation or consolidation of sandstone should take place until rigorous tests have been carried out on identical stone samples retrieved from the original quarry.

Policy 35.12 A visitor management programme should be put in place which would prevent visitors brushing off or touching the surface of the doorway. This may involve physical barriers, temporary enclosure or even redirecting visitor traffic through, for example, the vestry.

Policy 35.13 The lichens on the door should be identified and their possible contribution to damaging the doorway should be assessed by an appropriate expert.

36. WALLS

The cathedral has a long history of damaging attacks and fires, alterations and additions, changes in the fenestration and doors, and lengthy periods of rooflessness. As a result of these, the present walls have been greatly altered from their original condition. There has been much plastering and replastering, and different types of plaster can be seen. The walls generally contain evidence of an original thin layer of rough-cast lime plaster.

It is likely that the walls contain voids caused when cores were washed out during roofless intervals.

According to Canon McLarney, when plaster was removed from the internal walls, considerable scudding and pointing was necessary. In the end, the walls were found to be so uneven and in such poor condition that they had to be thickly plastered. The present internal plastering was formed with mock-joints in an apparent attempt to make it look like random stonework.

It is generally accepted that the existing church started as a 'barn' church, a simple rectangular building which was probably built in the 12th century. This is the section which now forms the nave. The west doorway was added to this building towards the end of the 12th century. It is thought that the current chancel was built shortly after the nave, probably in the early part of the 13th century. The south transept also appears to date from the 13th century, although this has been disputed. Some authorities consider that it may date from the 15th century because the filled-in transept arch stonework appears to be work which matches other 15th-century work in the cathedral. The tower is generally considered to date from the 15th century, having been built on the 12th-century west wall.

Policy 36.1 The building should be rendered in a rough-cast lime-based render. The mix should be determined after careful analysis of the existing plasters. Existing plaster remnants should be retained and incorporated into the new work insofar as possible.

Policy 36.2 The extent of voiding in the wall cores should be identified and appropriate measures devised to restore structural integrity where this is found necessary. Such measures may include the installation of ties, grouting, stone repairs and pointing.

37. WEST TOWER

The tower is approximately 25 metres high with a slight batter (*c.* 1 in 60) and is generally considered to date from the 15th century. Although the abbey was Augustinian, it is in the style favoured by the Franciscans. The tower is virtually square (*c.* 4 x 4 metres externally) and has three string courses. Just above the lowest string course, it has double ogee-hooded lancets on the south and west sides, a square-topped hooded lancet on the north side and a square-topped lancet on the east side. Immediately below the parapet string course are single square-headed opes on the south, west and north sides. The parapet, generally taken to be a 19th-century repair, is of the stepped type, although less finely made than those of comparable Franciscan-type towers.



Plate 24: The West Tower



Plate 25: Double ogee-headed lancets in the West Tower

The tower has rotated eastwards by approximately 400mm at the top and appears to have moved as a unit without any major disintegration. This type of movement could be caused by a settlement of *c.* 60-70mm along the east side of the tower base. These towers were normally built near the centre of churches using a different technique, supporting the west and east sides of the tower on screen walls with very small arched openings — similar to the west gable wall of Clonfert. In this case, the wall supporting the east side of the tower is absent and the support is in the form of a triple arch, with buttressing added to the east ends of the tower's north and south walls. This is an awkward structural system and the movement may have occurred when the tower was being erected or the adjacent walls altered (the side arches on the eastern side of the tower appear to be of 19th-century date). Alternatively, the buttressing may be a repair or enhancement of an inadequate structural system. The tower carries remnants of a thin coating of rough-cast lime plaster.

The double light windows are infilled with timber louvres. The rest of the tower windows are open.

The tower is a habitat for bats and birds; the windows provide access for roosting in the tower itself and possibly in the church roof. Damage to the interior of the tower is being caused by ingress of moisture, accumulation of bird droppings etc.

Policy 37.1 A detailed structural assessment of the tower should be carried out to determine why it is out-of-plumb and to ascertain whether the movement is continuing. Should action be necessary, the assessment should propose appropriate measures for repair.

Policy 37.2 A means of weatherproofing and partially blocking off the window openings should be designed and implemented, taking into account the importance of retaining necessary access routes for protected species.

38. SOUTH TRANSEPT

The south transept is generally considered to be a 13th-century construction because the round-headed lancet of very fine workmanship is in the 13th-century style. The limestone corbels, at eaves level on either side of the gables, are also features considered to be not later than the 13th century. However, some authorities have disputed the date and consider that the filled-in chancel arch, which is of 15th-century date, provides evidence that this is when the transept was built. It is argued that the transept arches on the north and south sides are similar to the chancel arch and the tower arches and that they constitute part of a major re-ordering and reconstruction of the church in the 15th century.



Plate 26: The South Transept, shown after removal of ivy and extensive repair (see Addendum)



Plate 27: The round-headed lancet suggests a 13th-century date for the South Transept



Plates 28 and 29: The limestone corbels on the gable end of the South Transept after repair

The transept has been unroofed for a considerable time, possibly since the destruction of the cathedral in the late 16th century. The walls are in poor condition, particularly the gable wall which has been damaged by heavy growth of ivy and natural weathering. It is possible that burials close to the wall base may have caused a recent collapse of a section of stonework at the south-east corner.

On the east side, there is a pointed arched doorway opening which may be of 19th-century provenance. This is protected by a steel gate which is currently unhinged and not functional.

Policy 38.1 A policy should be elaborated to stabilise, protect and maintain the transept in its present state. The measures listed in the following policies should be addressed as part of this overall policy.

Policy 38.2 Burials directly adjacent to walls should be discouraged (see Policy 22.1).

Policy 38.3 A management programme should be put in place to control future plant growth. In the short term, the ivy and other vegetation growing on the walls should be carefully removed under appropriate supervision.

Policy 38.4 Appropriate stonework repair and stabilisation measures should be carried out. These may include grouting, tying, pointing and rebuilding damaged stonework.

Policy 38.5 The walls should be pointed and plastered with an appropriate lime-based mix, the mix to be determined after careful examination of remnant plaster. Existing remnant plaster should be retained and incorporated as far as possible.

Policy 38.6 Long-term protection of the structure should be affected by capping the wall tops with an appropriate sacrificial hydraulic lime mortar.

Policy 38.7 Stones which have fallen from the external walls should be identified, numbered and stored in a safe location until they are eventually rebuilt into the damaged wall. (See Addendum)

39. EAST WINDOW EXTERIOR

The east window is a very finely carved and executed example of early 13th-century masonry. In the Transitional style, it is ascribed to the so-called 'School of the West' and more precisely, to a craftsman whose identity is unknown but who is described as the 'Ballintubber Master' (so called because works ascribed to him reach their high point at Ballintubber Abbey). Very similar work has been recognised at several other sites: O'Hynes Church at Kilmacduagh, at Teampaill na Righ in Clonmacnoise, at Boyle Abbey, and at Banagher, County Derry. Other examples of this type of work at Clonfert include the octagonal baptismal font and a fine burial slab found in the south transept. The window is a double round-headed lancet with engaged roll mouldings on the outside, roll moulded cill and a triangular hood uniting the two lancets on a central pier with a roundel under the hood.



Plates 30 and 31: The East Window: general and close-up views

An early photograph (c. 1860s) indicates that the glazing was changed from clear leaded glass to stained glass, probably by Canon McLarney at the end of the 19th century. No other changes in the window are apparent since its construction. The window is generally in excellent condition.

The east window is of international importance because of its exceptional design and execution, its completeness and good condition. It is a superb example of the art of the Transitional period.

Because of the excellent condition of the stonework, little or no work to the window is needed.



Plate 32: The octagonal baptismal font

Policy 39.1 As part of an overall management policy for the site, the windows should be examined at appropriate intervals by suitably qualified experts.

Policy 39.2 The external stonework should be carefully examined and, if necessary, pointing repairs should be carried out in a suitable lime-based mortar. The mix should be determined from careful examination of the existing pointing.

40. VESTRY EXTERIOR

The vestry is now a long, low building with an arched roof which comes down almost to the floor on either side. It is typical of additions made to churches in the 15th century. There are a number of similar examples, including Monaincha, County Tipperary. The building may have been of two storeys, with living accommodation above and the ground floor used as a secure store. There is clear evidence of wicker centring in the soffit. The roof is virtually flat and is covered with vegetation. A modern rooflight covers an ope which has been cut through the vault. The door on the west elevation may be a relatively modern insertion and may be associated with the rooflight. There are twin lancet-like windows in the north elevation which have Perspex 'glazing'. The various insertions probably date from Canon McLarney's work in the 1890s and the early 20th century.

There is a filled-in opening in the north wall of the chancel above the crown of the barrel arch. The opening has a timber lintel with a brick relieving arch over and was filled in with brick. The function of the opening is not known, although it may have been associated with the use of the upper floor of the vestry building.

The external wall of the vestry on the east side has suffered from undermining by the apparent removal of soil in the garden of the Bishop's Palace adjacent to the wall. The wall is also suffering damage from tree roots; much of this side of the building is overgrown with vegetation. The roof appears to be covered in some type of concrete material covered with a felt material. This requires further investigation.

Policy 40.1 The vestry should be repaired and maintained in its present use. Other compatible uses (defined in Section 1) are not excluded.

Policy 40.2 Vegetation should be removed from the walls and roof. Adjacent trees should be examined to determine the extent of the damage being caused by roots. If roots are causing damage, the trees should be removed.

Policy 40.3 The base of the east wall should be repaired by repointing, repairing stonework and underpinning, if necessary.

Policy 40.4 Repair work to the east wall of the vestry should be carried out in conjunction with a programme for maintenance of the adjacent garden.

Policy 40.5 The external roof surface should be investigated in detail. An appropriate weather-proofing arrangement should be installed.

41. NORTH TRANSEPT AND BOILER HOUSE

Nothing of the former north transept is visible above ground. It is reported, however, that the walls were found under the ground level during grave-digging in the past. This supports the evidence provided by the existence of the medieval cut stone arch in the north wall of the nave of the cathedral.

Graves have been dug in the area of the transept over the foundations of transept walls.

After 1891, a boiler house was installed against the north wall of the nave by Canon McLarney. It appears on the 1915 edition of the County Galway 1/2500 Ordnance Survey map, sheet number 101/9.

The boiler house is ruined and no longer functioning. Corroded mechanical equipment remains but cannot be closely examined because access is impossible due to collapse of overhead material.

The principal significance of the north transept is the knowledge it provides of the medieval plan form of the cathedral. The heating system is not of significance in itself.

Policy 41.1 The location and extent of the north transept should be established by non-destructive means, without interfering with any existing graves.

Policy 41.2 Debris including pipework, machinery and building rubble should be carefully removed from the boiler house pit. The boiler house should be surveyed and recorded, after which a decision should be taken regarding treatment of the boiler house area. Existing drainage should be retained and repaired where possible. Treatment may involve: (a) back-filling with a loose fill material; or (b) complete removal of the structure, while ensuring minimal disturbance of archaeological material.

Policy 41.3 Where possible, archaeological remains at present below ground level should be left undisturbed unless there are overriding reasons to the contrary. Any necessary disturbance should be monitored by an archaeologist.

42. ROOFS

In the mid 1980s, the roofs of the nave and chancel were re-slatted and leaded using regular sized natural stone slate with red clay ridge tiles. Due to access difficulties, it was not possible to examine the roof closely during the preparation of this Conservation Plan.

The roof covering is important for weather protection, although some of the current materials and details would not be considered appropriate for a building of this type (*e.g.* the ridge tiles).

The significance of its structure is as a typical example of mid to late 19th-century church roof timberwork.

Policy 42.1 The roof should be maintained in weatherproof condition by a programme of regular inspection, maintenance and repair.

43. DRAINAGE SYSTEM

The drainage system includes gutters, downpipes and ground drainage. There are serious problems at present which include:

- Damaged gutters and downpipes
- Downpipes discharging directly into the ground without an overall drainage system to carry water away
- Vegetation holding water against external walls
- Ground level is higher outside than inside along north and south walls
- Rising damp
- Particular problems occur at the front door due to the hard-paved external surface.

Policy 43.1 As part of the policy to maintain the cathedral in a weatherproof condition, gutters, downpipes and fixings should be checked. Defective sections should be repaired or replaced with like-for-like.

Policy 43.2 Downpipes at present discharging into the ground around the base of the building should discharge into gully-traps and linked to a drainage system carrying water away from the building. Appropriate routes for this are along the line of the existing paths to the south-west and north-east. Digging of trenches will require monitoring or excavation by an archaeologist.

Policy 43.3 Removal of vegetation holding moisture against external walls should be carried out under appropriate supervision.

Policy 43.4 In general, it is not considered appropriate to decrease external ground levels. However, the concrete paving should be removed and a drainage system should be installed along the south, west and north sides of the cathedral. All excavation should be carried out under appropriate supervision. Proposed surface materials on the pathway should not prevent evaporation of excess ground water.

CATHEDRAL BUILDING INTERIOR

44. WEST DOORWAY

The oak door and frame, fitted in 1936, is set on the inner face of the west wall. The lower part of the doorcase is of sandstone carved with Romanesque motifs in a strong chevron pattern. The style is contemporary with the exterior carving but is clearly different and unrelated. The sandstone work is incomplete and is widely believed to have been taken from another location, either the cathedral itself or another building. Issues affecting the doorcase, other than those dealt with in the policy below, are generally those of the west wall and are discussed in Sections 35 and 36.

Policy 44.1 The oak door and frame, with its ironmongery, should be retained and maintained.

45. CATHEDRAL VESTIBULE — FLOOR

The floor has a concrete finish which is badly cracked in places. It appears that the concrete was overlaid with tiles which have been removed. The thickness of the concrete was not established but may have been a thin layer used for bedding the tiles. The composition of the concrete binder is not known but may be Portland cement, hydraulic lime or another material. Policies relating to the vestibule floor are as discussed in Section 52.



Plate 33: Looking towards the vestibule from the nave

46. CATHEDRAL VESTIBULE — WALLS

The description and policies relating to the vestibule walls are discussed in Section 53.

47. CATHEDRAL VESTIBULE — VAULT

The vestibule groin vault is probably of 15th-century origin but considerable renovation and repair was carried out by Canon McLarney in the late 19th century. The vault does not support the floor structure above, which is independently supported. Its significance lies in its integral role in the design of the tower which is a typical 15th-century addition to an existing church.



Plate 34: The vestibule groin vault



Plates 35 and 36: Two artefacts now in the vestibule: a carved head found in the ceiling; and a carved grave slab

48. TOWER — ACCESS

At present, access into the main body of the tower is through a hatch above the Butson Monument. It is difficult and unsafe. The condition of the timber structures (ladders, beams, floors, roof) is not known. Equally, there is no procedure in place for accessing the exterior of the tower for maintenance purposes. Providing exterior access to the tower may involve special arrangements for bringing machinery into the graveyard and for hard standings.

Policy 48.1 Permanent, safe access to the interior of the tower should be provided.

Policy 48.2 A plan for providing safe access to the exterior of the tower should be prepared. This may involve investigation of methods for gaining high-level access with mechanical hoists, the provision of entry to the site, and suitable hard-standing adjacent to the tower.

49. TOWER — HIGHER-LEVEL TIMBER STRUCTURES AND ROOF

All horizontal surfaces are covered with a thick layer of rubble, nest material, and bird and bat droppings. At present, several species of birds appear to roost in the tower; bats are using the open window lights to gain access into the body of the church. The construction details, date and significance of the higher-level timber structures are not known at this time. However, it is known that Canon McLarney installed new landings and carried out repairs to the tower. The stepped crenellations at the top of the tower appear to be 19th-century repairs or additions.

Policy 49.1 When safe access is provided, the structures should be inspected and necessary repairs should be identified.

Policy 49.2 A management programme of regular inspections, maintenance and cleaning work should be put in place.

Policy 49.3 The window louvres should be repaired and consideration given to installing meshes or other partial barriers to control the access of birds and bats, with due regard to the points made in Section 51.

50. TOWER — BELL

It is thought that the bell survives *in situ*, although it has not been seen since access became impossible in the 1970s. With proper access, it will be possible to make a full assessment of its features and condition (assuming it exists) and any supporting structures including ropes, pulleys, frameworks etc. The significance of the arrangements for bell-ringing can only be commented upon pending further investigation.

Policy 50.1 When the appropriate information is available, a repair, maintenance and use strategy for the bell should be prepared, taking into account the points made in Section 51 in relation to habitat.

51. TOWER — HABITAT

The tower has been identified as an important habitat for bats and birds, although the unregulated use of the tower as a wildlife habitat may be causing damage. The tower has a relatively high significance as a roost for a number of bat species or at least as a route to roost locations in the main cathedral roof. Careful expert analysis will be required so that a balanced policy can be developed. The future use of the cathedral is closely connected to the future use of the tower and may well impinge on its habitat role.



Plate 37: A bat photographed on the cathedral wall

Policy 51.1 Expert advice specific to different aspects of the tower should be obtained. This will permit adjudication between relative levels of significance so that an overall balanced policy for the tower can be established.

52. NAVE — FLOOR

The floor has a concrete finish which may cover an earlier stone floor. It should be cleaned off and its thickness, construction and condition checked. Richard Brash refers to grave slabs in the floor of the cathedral, but it is not known whether these were covered over by the concrete. It is possible that the 17th and 18th-century slabs now fixed to the south wall inside the cathedral were originally set into the floor and were relocated prior to installation of the new floor. It is also possible that earlier floors were of timber construction. The concrete was probably installed during Canon McLarney's renovations c. 1890. The present floor is in poor condition, with much cracking and penetrating damp. It is also likely that condensation is occurring on the floor surface.

It will be necessary to provide a new floor. The materials and construction details should be determined, taking into account the long-term plans for conserving and using the church as a whole. It may, for example, be appropriate to install necessary services in the void under a raised timber floor, particularly since the existing floor surface has relatively low significance.

Policy 52.1 A new floor finish is required. The choice of floor construction and finish should balance the aesthetic requirements of the interior space, safety and ease of maintenance, as well taking into account its possible use in facilitating the provision of services such as heating, electric cabling, plumbing and fire alarm system.

53. NAVE — WALLS

The walls are of considerable significance in understanding the evolution of the cathedral as they provide evidence of early construction and of numerous later interventions during the various phases of the building's history.

Analysis has confirmed that the present plaster finish is a lime-based material which appears to have been applied during Canon McLarney's incumbency. The plaster, with a high lime content, appears to have been smeared onto the walls, resulting in considerable variations in the finished thickness. In many cases, the smearing of plaster fades out and the stonework is exposed. Tuck joints were incised into the plaster and the joints finished with a tuck-pointing which is generally a lighter colour than the plaster. Older plaster, probably dating from the 17th-century reconstruction, was removed and replaced. Remnants of this older plaster can be seen in some places and they appear to have a yellowish colouring. This was probably done to give an impression of medieval stonework while covering surface irregularities, variations in materials and discolourations. This type of work appears to have been carried out on other buildings at about the same time (*e.g.* St Michael's Church Hall at Castlepollard and the Church of Ireland church of St John the Baptist at Eyrecourt).

The walls are generally in good structural condition, although there is a crack on the west side of the south wall which should be assessed and repaired if necessary. In a number of places, the plaster has been discoloured and damaged by ingress of moisture from gutter and roof leaks. Minor repairs may be necessary when the exterior has been secured. It has been established that the plaster finish is a material compatible with the wall sub-strata and is not causing damage. In view of this, the question of how to deal with the plaster becomes an aesthetic consideration. Very careful consideration must be given to the treatment of the wall plaster. The present finish is not aesthetically pleasing but it does represent a part of the church's history. A number of options are possible.

- Remove the existing plaster.
- Remove the existing plaster and re-plaster.
- Leave as is.
- Plaster over the existing plaster.
- Paint the existing plaster with *e.g.* lime-wash.

Policy 53.1 Decisions on the treatment of the wall should be made in the context of the overall plan for the continuing use of the cathedral.

Policy 53.2 Any alterations to the existing wall finish should be carried out using compatible materials and taking into account the long-term plans for the cathedral's use.

54. NAVE — WINDOWS

While some of the timber sash windows require urgent attention, the windows generally appear to be in good condition.

Nave windows are generally late 17th-century openings with stone surrounds, in a style which is found in other buildings of that period. Early 19th-century timber sash windows with crown glass and later 19th-century stained glass are in windows in the south wall.

The windows contained within the transept arches appear to be late 19th century and do not have the broad chiselled stone finish on the stone surrounds which can be seen on the earlier windows.

The two lancet windows in the west wall date from the 15th century and are glazed with Perspex. A mid 19th-century photograph shows a timber-framed five-pane arrangement with slender horizontal glazing bars.

Externally, the stained glass windows are protected by Perspex and mesh screens. These are not adequately vented and the mesh screens are corroding and staining the stonework below.

The windows are of considerable significance. They are especially important as evidence of the many different phases of the cathedral's construction and reconstruction from the 13th-century east window to the late 19th-century stained glass. They are also important because of the inherent interest and beauty of many of the features of the fenestration, for example the 19th-century stained and crown glass set in 17th-century tooled limestone surrounds. In particular, the east window is of national importance as it is one of the best examples of the work of the 13th-century School of the West.

Policy 54.1 A condition assessment of the windows should be carried out urgently and detailed repair schedules for each window should be prepared.

Policy 54.2 Window repairs should be carried out so that all historic crown and stained glass is protected and retained.

Policy 54.3 As part of an overall programme for repair and maintenance, the existing sash windows should be brought back into working order and used as part of the future environmental control of the building.



Plate 38: Looking through the chancel arch to the East Window



Plate 39: The East Window – left



Plate 40: The East Window – right

55. NAVE — ROOF

The nave roof structure consists of decorative timber trusses supported on small sandstone corbels set in the nave walls. The trusses support intermediate purlins which carry the rafters. There is a plain timber-panelled ceiling supported on bearers fixed near the rafter soffits. The structure is typical of mid to late Victorian Gothic Revival architecture, although the date of installation is not known. Access is difficult because of its height. The roof elements above the ceiling – slating battens and the upper parts of the rafters – cannot be viewed without removing the ceiling. There is no evidence of defects in the roof apart from minor damage to the ceiling panelling in a number of locations. However, water ingress at the eaves may well have caused damage which cannot be seen easily. The roof space above the ceiling is a habitat for bats and possibly for birds.

The main significance of the roof is as evidence of major work carried out during the 19th century.

Policy 55.1 A programme of regular inspection, maintenance and repair should be put in place.

Policy 55.2 Any remedial works should consider its present function as a habitat. An appropriate expert should be consulted prior to carrying out any works.

56. NAVE — ARCHES AT WEST END

The central arch is part of the structural support of the tower and appears to date from the 15th century. There are substantial finely cut limestone buttresses on the east side of the arch springings. The side arches are of brown sandstone and appear to be contemporary with other sandstone features (including the architraves of the door into the vestry from the chancel and the door in the south wall of the vestibule) and to date from the 19th century. The detailed sequence of construction in this part of the cathedral is unclear. In particular, the details of the features replaced by the sandstone arches are not known.

Although the arches are generally in good condition, there is clear evidence of rotation of the tower towards the east (discussed in Section 37). This has caused cracks near the crowns of the two side arches. There is evidence of rising damp in the buttresses on the east side and in the arch springings generally.

The screen wall containing the arches is composed of rubble stonework and finished in the same way as the nave walls (described in Section 53).

The arches are of high significance as evidence of the 15th-century insertion of the tower and major 19th-century alterations.

Policy 56.1 The cracks in the side arches should be filled with appropriate filler material and monitored for further movement as part of the monitoring programme for assessing movement of the tower structure. The pointing in the arches generally should be checked and repaired with material matching the original.

Policy 56.2 The screen wall containing the arches should be treated in the same way as the nave walls (outlined in Section 53).

57. BUTSON MONUMENT

The Butson Monument is significant as a memorial to a bishop and family which played an important role in the life of the cathedral in the first half of the 19th century. Christopher Butson was bishop of Clonfert and Kilmacduagh 1804-1836; his wife and grandson are buried in the vault; the bishop himself is buried in Bath, England. The family monument is located in the small chamber which opens to the nave on the north side of the cathedral vestibule. The chamber is cut off from the nave by a wrought iron rail. At present, access into the west tower is via a ladder supported on planks over the monument. Some of the stonework on the face of the monument appears to have been reworked and there is some damage. The iron railing requires refurbishment.

Policy 57.1 The area around the monument should be cleaned out and an alternative safe access to the west tower provided to prevent future damage.

Policy 57.2 The wrought ironwork should be repaired, conserved and coated with an appropriate protective coating to prevent future corrosion.

58. ORGAN

The organ is located at the east end of the nave. Its date and origin are not known, although it was described as being 'comparatively new' in 1884. At present, the organ is in poor condition, suffering from dampness and damage from bat and bird droppings. It should be cleaned and protected, with further investigation to determine the date and origin so that its significance may be established.



Plate 41: The organ, with the eagle lectern at left

The management and protection policies elaborated in Section 67 (Internal Furniture) also apply to the organ.

Policy 58.1 The organ should be examined, cleaned and serviced by an appropriate person. A long-term maintenance programme should be put in place so that it continues to be available for use in the cathedral.

59. CHANCEL ARCH

The limestone chancel arch is part of the major works carried out in the 15th century. It is built into a rubble stone wall separating the nave from the chancel. There is a small round-headed arch on the north end of the screen wall containing an oak door which provides access to the pulpit from the stalls in the nave. Canon McLarney records that he carried out substantial works to the screen wall. A flue and soot box for the heating system were installed on the south side of the arch at this time. The plaster finish to the screen wall is in the same style as that of the nave walls (Section 53). The oak door also appears to date from Canon McLarney's time.

The arch springings sit on capitals densely carved with medieval vegetal and other motifs typical of the 15th century. Some of the arch voussoirs are individually carved with angels, heads, animals and a particularly fine mermaid figure. It has been suggested that the symbolism (of the mermaid) is related to St Brendan's Atlantic journey. However, similar mermaid figures are found elsewhere (*e.g.* at Kilcooly Abbey, County Tipperary). Canon McLarney removed red paint from the stonework of the arch.



Plate 42: Carvings on the chancel arch: angels



Plate 43: Carvings on the chancel arch: bird-foot pattern



Plate 44: Carvings on the chancel arch: fish pattern

The screen wall and arch are generally in good condition. There is evidence of a filled-in vertical crack above the shoulder on the north side of the arch with associated repointing of the adjacent voussoir joints. However, the crack does not appear to have re-opened. The line of the flue on the south side of the screen wall can be seen clearly and it appears that the flue (which has no ventilation) is damp.

Policy 59.1 The flue should be examined as part of the preparation of a plan for improving and controlling the environment in the cathedral to see whether it can be refurbished and incorporated into such a plan. Alternatively, it should be vented, with direct ingress of moisture prevented by providing a louvered cover over the outlet.

Policy 59.2 The screen wall should be treated in the same way as the internal nave walls (see Section 53).

Policy 59.3 The pointing of the voussoir joints should be examined and repaired as necessary using materials compatible with the original.

60. CHANCEL — FLOOR

The chancel floor is covered with decorative Victorian glazed tiles installed by Canon McLarney. They were specifically designed for the cathedral and were

‘...considered the best and most expensive that money could buy. They were made by one of the best manufacturers in Britain: Messrs. Craven, Dunhill of Shropshire. The firm supplied the tiles to St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, Kildare Cathedral and Chester Cathedral.’

While the tiles are generally in good condition, the effect of possible chemical action caused by bat and bird droppings should be assessed. Dampness rising through the tiles is another possible source of damage to the glazing. In general, an appropriate programme of environmental control (Section 70) should assist in conserving the tiles.

The material of the sub-floor is not known. Because the floor surface is in relatively good condition, it is not considered necessary to investigate further at this stage.

The tiled floor finish is of medium significance as an example of a designed late Victorian cathedral floor finish.

Policy 60.1 Environmental control and general maintenance policies should take into account the need to protect and conserve the floor tiles.

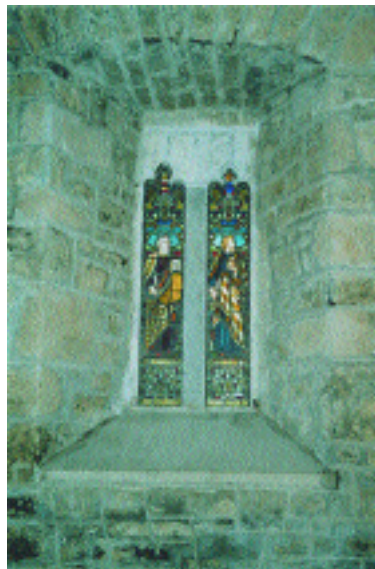
61. CHANCEL — WALLS

As with the nave walls, the chancel walls are of considerable significance in understanding the evolution of the cathedral. They probably date from the first half of the 13th century and are contemporary with the east window. The chancel appears to have been built on to the earlier 'barn' church which forms the present nave. There is some evidence that the chancel arch may have been filled in and the chancel used as a smaller church during a period when the nave was unroofed.

The walls are generally in good condition. The present plaster finish is the same as the finish to the nave walls. The options and policies considered appropriate for the nave walls also apply in this case.

62. CHANCEL — WINDOWS

The chancel windows (apart from the east windows) consist of ogee-headed lights — one double and one single on the north side and two double on the south side.



Plates 45 and 46: The two double windows on the south side of the chancel



Plate 47: A double window in the north chancel

The windows are in the style of the 15th century but the exterior details are slightly different in each case. The central mullions of the double windows were replaced; Canon McLarney refers to this work. The four stained glass windows on the south side, representing the four Evangelists, were a gift from 'a clergyman who does not wish to be named' in response to an appeal by Canon McLarney. The stained glass on the north side windows was provided in a similar fashion by a Dr Kenny of Treeton, Yorkshire. The glazing was made by Watson and Company of Youghal and is of regional significance.

Policy 62.1 A condition assessment of the windows should be carried out and repair schedules prepared. The assessment and schedule should include consideration of the stone framing as well as the glazing.

63. CHANCEL — ROOF

The chancel roof structure and supports are the same as the nave roof structure, although the span is slightly less. Both are in a similar condition and of similar significance. (The comments and policies of Section 55 apply.)

64. EAST WINDOW INTERIOR

The interior of the window is a carefully designed and excellently executed double round-headed lancet within roll-moulded round-headed splayed embrasure panels. The glazing is figurative stained glass dating from the late 1890s (probably by John Hardman and Co. of Birmingham). There is unusual densely-woven Celtic interlacing in the top and bottom panes.

The stonework contains traces of vermilion and blue paint in various locations — in the embrasure panels, under the cill roll moulding and on the vertical roll mouldings at the edges of the embrasures. The *Irish Builder* of 1 November 1899 records that:

'The red paint has been removed from the stone pillars of the ancient east window and also from the stonework of the chancel arch, and from the stonework of other parts of the building.'

While it is not known when the paint was applied, it is probable that the embrasures' panels were meant to be painted.

The interior of the east window is in good condition generally. There is evidence of past movement in the head of the right-hand (south) lancet embrasure. Some of the voussoirs moved and a repointing was carried out in a mortar which is darker in colour than the original. It is not known when the pointing repair was carried out but there is no evidence of movement subsequent to the repairs.

The policies proposed in Section 39 for the exterior of the east window apply to the interior.

65. VESTRY

The present interior of the vestry is mainly the work of Canon McLarney. Prior to the works carried out under his direction, the room was apparently unusable as it was without glazed windows, with a broken door and leaking roof. Canon McLarney wished to use it as a vestry and described the work in the *Irish Builder* of 15 February 1900.

‘The modern plaster has been removed from the walls and from the ceiling, thus bringing to light the marks of the old hurdle-roofing. This was a very tedious work and had to be very carefully done. The plaster had to be removed bit by bit. The roof and the floor have been concreted. New windows, new doors and a new stove have been placed in this part of the Cathedral.’

A chimney breast with sandstone insert was formed on the east wall, presumably for the stove mentioned by Canon McLarney. However, there is no flue, and the heating system which was installed shortly afterwards may have superseded the intended heating arrangements. Apart from the chimney breast, the vestry is a plain room which contains a few disparate pieces of furniture (Section 67).

The interior of the vestry is very damp, with green and black moulds on the walls. There is rising damp and ingress of moisture through the barrel-shaped ceiling. The floor is below the level of the ground outside on the north and west sides. There is no ventilation and the air is very humid.

The vestry is of significance as a typical 15th-century addition to churches of which there are other examples. It is also significant as an example of late 19th-century intervention in an older building.



Plate 48: A view of the Vestry

Any policy for refurbishment and maintenance must take into account the specific existing problems, including overgrown vegetation, leaking roof, rising damp in the walls and floor, exterior drainage, condensation, lack of ventilation, and floor construction and level.

Policy 65.1 A programme for eliminating dampness, environmental control and maintenance of the building should be put in place.

Policy 65.2 The Perspex 'glazing' in the lancet windows and the modern rooflight should be substituted with appropriate replacements.

Policy 65.3 Appropriate uses should be determined in the context of the overall management planning described in Section 13 (Management), and in accordance with Policy 40.1.

66. SOUTH TRANSEPT

The interior of the transept is overgrown. There are remaining areas of lime plaster on the walls. It is not known whether the floor survives or the nature of its construction. Some stone fragments from the graveyard are currently stored in the area. The description and policies in Section 38 apply.

67. INTERNAL FURNITURE

There is a range of church furniture in the nave, chancel and vestry. The nave contains six varieties of pew and other styles of seating. One unusual type of pew is of cast-iron framing and may be early 19th century. A set of 12 panelled pews has a pointed oak-grain finish and is also of an early date. At present, the cathedral is rather crowded with pews and other items of furniture, some of which were brought in from other churches, although it is not known which items were brought in, from where or when. The nave furniture is significant because it contains examples of different types of 19th-century pews, including the unusual cast-iron pews, and because it contains examples of traditional painted finishes.

The finely carved ornate oak pulpit with the figures of the four Evangelists is located in the nave and probably dates from c. 1900 — the same date as most of the furniture in the chancel. One of the Evangelists was stolen c. 1985 and has been replaced by a newly carved figure.



Plates 49 and 50: The oak pulpit (left) with a close-up view of one of the carved figures (right)

The chancel furniture includes the bishop's throne, Communion table, choir stalls and a carved armchair, all of which date from Canon McLarney's refurbishment. The oak Communion table was made by the boys of the Meath Protestant Industrial School in Blackrock, Dublin. The bishop's throne, carved in oak with a central panel commemorating St Brendan, was donated by a descendant of Bishop Young (1799-1800) in memory of his forebear. The carved oak armchair was made by W. Scott of Enniskillen.



Plate 51: A carved armchair in the chancel. Also note the ornate floor pattern

The vestry contains a few miscellaneous pieces of furniture, including a carved oak lectern, a mahogany library table and a number of damaged items. It is not known which pieces had an original role in the vestry.

Furniture in the nave and chancel is significant as a relatively complete set of church furniture dating from *c.* 1900. It is typical of the work of those firms of cabinet-makers and joiners who specialised in church furniture around this date. At present, the furniture is very vulnerable because of the poor environmental conditions in the cathedral.

Policy 67.1 Where furniture is identified as being of significance in the history of the cathedral, it should be kept in the building.

Policy 67.2 The provenance of the various types of pews and other miscellaneous items of furniture should be ascertained as far as possible.

Policy 67.3 The environmental control requirements for the protection and conservation of the furniture should be determined and incorporated into the overall environmental management policies described in Section 70.

68. FIXTURES

Fixtures include wall-mounted memorials in stone and brass, and the brass altar rail (as described in Canon McLarney's publication).

The brass and the later stone memorials are typical of 19th-century and early 20th-century church features. Their significance lies in their identification of family associations with the cathedral and its wider social and ecclesiastical history.

The significance of the brass altar rail lies in its integral part in the reordering of the chancel carried out by Canon McLarney. It was designed by J.F. Fuller, the architect employed by Canon McLarney.



Plate 52: Brass altar rails and the carved Communion table

The 17th and 18th-century wall-mounted memorial stones may have originally been laid in the floor and moved when the floor was concreted. They identify various people associated with the church.

Policy 68.1 Where fixtures are identified as being of significance in the history of the cathedral, they should be kept in the building.

Policy 68.2 The provenance of the various fixtures listed, where not known already, should be ascertained as far as possible.

Policy 68.3 The environmental control requirements for the protection and conservation of the fixtures should be determined and incorporated into the overall environmental management policies described in Section 70.

69. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Miscellaneous items contained within the cathedral include the medieval stone baptismal font, the remains of a Celtic Christian shrine, a carved stone animal head (possibly an otter or stylised dog) believed to be from the exterior roll-moulding of the east window and a late 19th-century brass eagle lectern.

The octagonal font is in the Transitional style and is likely to be of 13th-century date. Its date and style match those of the east window. The base is of timber and it is possible that it was originally wall-mounted.

The eagle lectern is typical of its time; similar lecterns are found in many churches. It was presented to Clonfert by the descendants of a former bishop and is inscribed accordingly.

These items are of significance to Clonfert because they are associated directly with the cathedral building, providing a link to its medieval history.

The conditions in which they are kept at present are not secure, and they are at considerable risk from damage or theft by unsupervised visitors to the cathedral.

Policy 69.1 Where items are identified as being of significance in the history of the cathedral, they should be kept in the building.

Policy 69.2 The provenance of the various fixtures listed, where not known already, should be ascertained as far as possible.

Policy 69.3 The items should be presented with relevant information on provenance and historical context in an appropriate and secure display.

70. ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS

Current environmental conditions are very poor. The building is insufficiently heated by inappropriate and damaging gas cylinder heaters. Provision for ventilation is inadequate: doors are kept closed for long periods, especially in winter; ventilation by means of opening sashes in windows is not possible because of the poor state of the timber windows. Ground levels outside the building are higher than inside and there is vegetation growth against external walls.

Policy 70.1 An environmental management scheme for the interior of the building should be devised. It should take into account the reasons for the current conditions, the environmental needs of the building fabric and the furniture and fittings, as well as the needs of the congregation and visitors.

Policy 70.2 The proposed environmental management scheme should be integrated into the overall management of the complex. It should consider the practical limitations, including the availability of ongoing funding and of staff to operate it.

Policy 70.3 The timber windows of the nave were designed to have opening sections to ventilate. It is important to the retention of the significance of these windows that they be repaired and incorporated into the functioning of the environmental management scheme.

ADDENDUM

The Conservation Plan for St Brendan's Cathedral Complex was completed in pre-publication format in 2001. Since that time, many of its policies have been implemented.

In addition to those mentioned in the Acknowledgements (page 11), assistance in the implementation of the Plan came from Canon Trevor Sullivan (Diocese of Clonfert), Kathleen Kenny (Clonfert Select Vestry), and Garry Miley (Conservation Architect).

With Dermot Nolan (co-author of the Plan, with Pat Ruane) retained as conservation consultant on the project, the Steering Group established priorities, and in the years 2002 – 2004, many of the Plan's recommended works have been carried out according to the amount of funding available.

The first tasks to be undertaken made very little visible impact, as a considerable amount of discussion and investigation was required before works could be carried out. (Page numbers below refer to that part of the text where policy details can be found.)

4. USE (PAGE 37)

The general principles and policies were adopted, and the cathedral remains a place of public worship.

6. CONTINUITY OF CONSERVATION ADVICE (PAGE 37)

The continuity of conservation advice has been maintained, and the Steering Group has at all times sought to achieve the highest quality of advice and expertise possible for each aspect of the project. Two workshops were held, with acknowledged experts in attendance to discuss repair and consolidation issues regarding the doorway, and to ensure that the highest level of expertise is being brought to bear on any decisions.

7. RECORDING (PAGE 38)

Complete recording has been carried out prior to, during and after each alteration or intervention.

8. EXCAVATION (PAGE 38)

Archaeological examination and/or excavation has both preceded and accompanied each intervention.

9. REVIEW OF POLICIES (PAGE 38)

When the Steering Group carried out a review of the Conservation Plan's policies at the beginning of 2003, it was noted with some satisfaction that many of the priorities had been addressed.

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

12. FUNDING ISSUES (PAGE 40)

A shortage of funding in 2003 prevented that year's programme from being carried out; however, in 2004, the programme was resumed. The project is being funded by the Heritage Council, Galway County Council, the Urban and Village Renewal Scheme and the World Monuments Fund.

INTEGRITY OF SETTING

26. BISHOP'S PALACE (PAGES 47 – 49)

The ruined Bishop's Palace was fully recorded by architect Gerry McManus, but no decision has yet been made about its future. The painted timber post mentioned in the Conservation Plan was found on the ground during 2002. It has now been removed to a secure location for conservation.

28. YEW WALK AND WOODLAND (PAGES 49 – 50)

Conservation was funded under the Millennium Woodlands Project. Decayed trees were cut down and the area cleared. Replacement planting remains to be completed.

CATHEDRAL BUILDING EXTERIOR

35. WEST DOORWAY EXTERIOR (PAGES 54 – 57)

To determine their exact composition, the stone in the doorway as well as the mortars and renders were analysed and studied by Dr Sara Pavia and Jason Bolton. An extensive search was carried out to find suitable matching sandstone for testing, and when this was found, testing began to establish whether a suitable consolidant could be sourced. Testing for weathering and consolidants continues. In the meantime, Jason Ellis, stone sculptor and conservator, carried out some works to the doorway in the summer of 2002; this included the removal of vegetation and some gentle repairs in lime mortar to improve the condition of the doorway and reduce water penetration as far as possible.

Ellis also carried out repairs to the stonework around the east window where some slippage had occurred.

Visitor access to the cathedral is now generally through the vestry, and plans are underway to provide a temporary barrier which prevents the doorway from being touched. Signs are in place to explain the significance of the monument and the reasons for protecting it.

The photographs on page 94 show work on the doorway during Summer 2002.





Samples of different mortars are prepared in order to select a suitable match for the doorway

37. WEST TOWER (PAGES 59 – 61)

As the tower was discovered to be leaning approximately 400mm out of plumb, extensive soil investigations had to be carried out to establish the cause. With burials quite close to the surface, this work was done under archaeological supervision. It was discovered that the installation of pipework for the central heating system in the 19th century might have contributed to the problem.

38. SOUTH TRANSEPT (PAGES 61 – 64)

When the ivy on the ruined South Transept was removed, it became clear that its thick trunks and branches were holding up the remaining stonework, rather than the other way round (A). So entwined had the vegetation become, and so unstable was the wall, that there was no option but to number the stones (B), take down a considerable amount of wall (C), and rebuild it (D). During this operation, the second missing finial stone was found and reinstated. The wall was finished with a sacrificial lime mortar capping.

The photographs (A - D) on pages 96 and 97 illustrate work on the South Transept.

39. EAST WINDOW EXTERIOR (PAGE 64)

This was repaired by Jason Ellis during 2002.

41. NORTH TRANSEPT AND BOILER HOUSE (PAGES 67 – 68)

The decayed boiler was removed from the underground boiler house, and the void filled with gravel to make it safe. This can be easily removed if the space is required in the future.

43. DRAINAGE SYSTEM (PAGE 69)

The concrete path around the building was believed to be the cause of rising dampness in the walls. This was removed, and the gravel paths restored. Some additional drainage was provided to ensure good water run-off.

(A)



(B)





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CATHEDRAL BUILDING INTERIOR

44. WEST DOORWAY (PAGE 79)

See 35 above.

48. TOWER — ACCESS (PAGE 73)

In 2002, temporary access was provided to the tower, allowing for the clearance of bird and bat droppings. Access ladders will be provided for future maintenance purposes.

49. TOWER — HIGHER-LEVEL TIMBER STRUCTURES (PAGE 73)

Some repairs were carried out in 2002, with further work planned in 2004.

50. TOWER — BELL (PAGE 73)

The bell was examined in Spring 2004, and found to be capable of restoration.

54. NAVE — WINDOWS (PAGES 76 – 77)

In 2003, the windows were removed and taken away in batches for repair by conservator Fergus Purdy. They were reinstated during Summer 2004.

64. EAST WINDOW INTERIOR (PAGE 85)

See 39 above.

65. VESTRY (86 – 87)

The provision of a drain outside the west vestry wall has improved the damp situation considerably. Further work is planned to stabilise the west wall, as former works had reduced its thickness and may have compromised its stability.

70. ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS (PAGE 91)

A heating system was designed for the cathedral by Buro Happold Engineers and submitted to Sustainable Energy Ireland for grant-aid. Although this scheme is now closed to funding for the foreseeable future, it is intended to proceed with the heating installation. Funding is being actively sought from a number of sources.

MARY HANNA

Architect, The Heritage Council

June 2004

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