



ROTHE HOUSE PARLIAMENT STREET COUNTY KILKENNY

CONSERVATION PLAN

Elizabeth Ozmin, Babita Sharma and Gerald Wait

AN
CHOMHAIRLE
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THIS CONSERVATION PLAN IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING EXTENSIVE REPORTS WHICH MAY BE EXAMINED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH THE HERITAGE COUNCIL.

APPENDIX 1: RECORD OF CONSULTATIONS

APPENDIX 2: ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF HOUSE 2 AND NORTH WING

APPENDIX 3: ASSESSMENT OF CONDITION OF ROOF TIMBERS AND TIMBER WINDOWS

APPENDIX 4: SCHEDULE OF WORKS AND SPECIFICATION FOR ROOF OF HOUSE 2

APPENDIX 5: MATRIX OF VULNERABILITIES AND POLICIES

APPENDIX 6: CONTENT AND FORMAT FOR QUINQUENNIAL SURVEYS

FOREWORD

Rothe House is one of the earliest and most important historic places in Kilkenny, and indeed in the entire region. Saved from a very uncertain future by the dedication and tireless voluntary work of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, Rothe House now looks forward to its sixth century in the heart of Kilkenny's city life. The Heritage Council is pleased to assist the Society in planning that future by commissioning this Conservation Plan.

The Conservation Plan methodology, introduced into Ireland in 1998 by the Heritage Council, provides a framework and a vision for Rothe House and is a strong indication of the Heritage Council's support and commitment to Kilkenny Archaeological Society, to Rothe House and to Kilkenny, the home of the Heritage Council since 1997.



Dr Tom O'Dwyer
Chairperson



Michael Starrett
Chief Executive



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The authors have appreciated the assistance of many people and organisations in the preparation of this Conservation Plan. While many are mentioned in the report itself, we wish to acknowledge their support here.

For the Heritage Council, Ms Mary Hanna was an exemplary chairperson and ‘client’, ably supported by Mr Hugh Maguire and Ms Fionnuala Lynch.

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We have also benefited from the expertise of other members of our own professional organisations: Mr Michael Drury of Michael Drury Architects; and Mr Eamon Timoney, Mr Tim Strickland and Mrs Michelle Fielden at Fehily Timoney Gifford.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Standing on Parliament Street in Kilkenny, Rothe House is one of the few examples of late 16th and early 17th century merchant houses still surviving in the Republic of Ireland. Over the last 60 years, the Kilkenny Archaeological Society has, through sustained endeavour, conserved the complex consisting of three houses (dating respectively to 1594, 1604 and 1610) and the original burgage plot. Whilst the conservation works have been heavy-handed by modern standards, the complex today is remarkably faithful to the original and is, uniquely, open to the public.



Plate 1: Rothe House: Front elevation

This Conservation Plan has followed the format and process established by James Semple Kerr. A great deal of information was synthesised in developing an *Understanding* of the site (Section 3). This was greatly facilitated by the fact that the Kilkenny Archaeological Society had amassed a wealth of information over the last 50 years.

The *Significance* of Rothe House was derived from the details of its history, evolution and current uses (Section 4). Particular points of significance include:

- The urban setting on Parliament Street and the survival of the original burgage plot.
- The structures of Houses 1 and 2, where, in spite of overly intrusive restoration works, much of the original is legible, including the arcaded frontage.
- Kilkenny Archaeological Society collections housed in Rothe House are highly significant, especially the costumes and textiles, the library and paper archives, and the genealogy records.
- The tourism, education and presentation of the House are potentially of national significance although they require investment to realise their full potential.



Rothe House is beset by a variety of issues of *Vulnerability* which may threaten its continued survival (Section 5). Amongst these are external threats from future town planning, and inappropriate conservation and maintenance works. The imminent relocation of the Heritage Council to other offices in Kilkenny has brought the long-held aspiration — to re-unite the complete burgage plot into one entity — to reality. With this comes the necessity to take new and vigorous action.

Although the extensive collections acquired by the Kilkenny Archaeological Society are intrinsically valuable, the Society has been unable to provide adequate environmental conditions for their storage and display. The long-term care of these collections must be fundamentally improved.

While the house itself is potentially a hugely important heritage asset, this has not yet been realised, in spite of an EC grant which requires public access. Within the publicly accessible areas, the level of presentation is inadequate and under-resourced.

Finally, and most importantly, management underpins all these issues. Rothe House needs a degree of professional management and care which the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, as it is today, simply cannot supply.

In response to the various issues of *Vulnerability*, a series of *Conservation Policies* (Section 6) has been devised. A *Conservation Philosophy* has been articulated, supported by both general positions and specific policies. Fundamental to all of these is the creation, by the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, of a wholly-owned operating company which will undertake the future management and development of Rothe House on behalf of the Society. Specific policies in this Plan address issues such as urban setting, structural conservation, archaeology, the museum collections, tourism, education and presentation, and management and finances.

The vision for Rothe House involves ensuring the protection, long-term survival and enhancement of the complex, in addition to promoting and interpreting the history of the house to the public.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 THE SCOPE OF THE PLAN

This Conservation Plan aims to provide the following:

- A comprehensive understanding of Rothe House
- An understanding of its significance both as a rare structure and a historic place
- A measure of its vulnerability to harmful change
- Management policies and recommendations for related actions which will promote, conserve and enhance the special cultural significance of Rothe House and its immediate setting.

This Plan accords with international practice deriving from the ICOMOS *Burra Charter* and the principles developed by James Semple Kerr. It reflects the established processes of Conservation Plan preparation and the short, medium and long-term dynamics of a management cycle.

These aims can be defined as a series of objectives which are specifically linked to the requirements of the Plan as identified in the Heritage Council brief:

- Identify and explain why the site — and its various component elements and setting — is significant.
- Provide guidance on the day-to-day operation of the property.
- Serve as a baseline from which to evaluate the impact of new, specific proposals or developments.
- Indicate how that significance is vulnerable to change or damage.
- Set out the management interests of all the stakeholder organisations.
- Make recommendations for strategic management changes.
- Devise a set of policies for managing and developing the site, insofar as possible, in harmony with its significance.
- Provide full consultation with the stakeholders, with consideration for their concerns and interests.

2.2 THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

From the outset, it had been assumed that the preparation of this Plan would not involve in-depth research or survey recording of the structures. Its original objectives were to highlight and explain issues in principle, and to identify factors which will need detailed examination prior to the time of policy implementation. Sufficient work has been done to compile the Bibliography, which also details further available sources. New conclusions have been reached and are summarised in the text and gazetteer (see Appendix 1, Gazetteer). Systematic research and further programmes of study/investigation are also suggested in the Policies section.

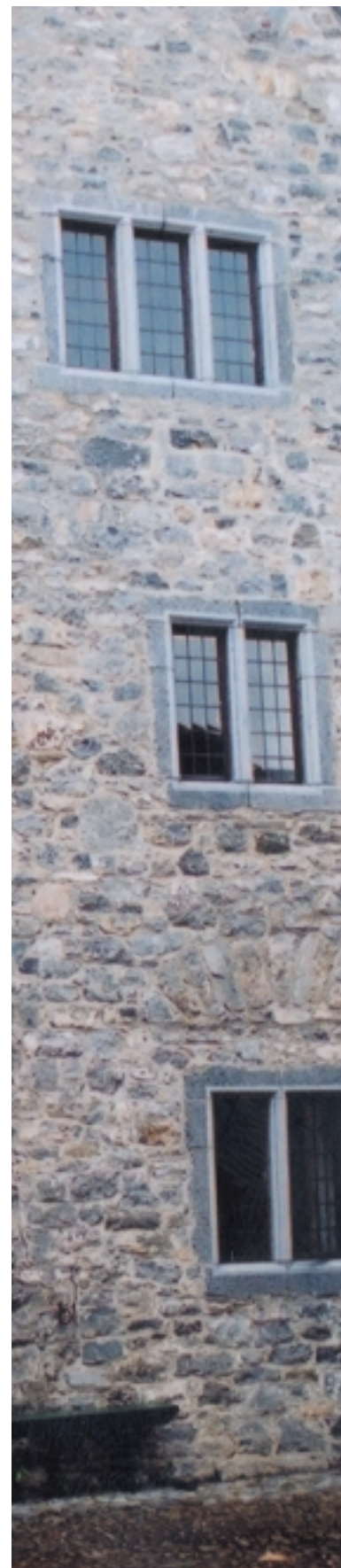


Figure 1: Site Location Plan



2.3

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CONSERVATION PLAN REPORT

The structure of this report follows the model originated by James Semple Kerr and replicated in the Heritage Council brief.

Section 3 endeavours to reach a useful *Understanding of the Property* from a variety of viewpoints.

The *Assessment of Significance* in Section 4 considers the many ways in which Rothe House is important.

Section 5 is a concise description of the *Issues of Vulnerability* which arise from a realisation of the significance of the place, both general and particular. Rather than being too prescriptive, this section simply states the issues.

Finally, Section 6 recommends a series of *Conservation Policies* for the management — in the widest sense — of the site. These Policies are designed to enhance and conserve the significant aspects of the site commensurate with the need to resolve the conflict between visitor management/access issues versus the conservation of an immensely important archaeological resource.

2.4

CURRENT OWNERSHIP, DESIGNATIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The Kilkenny Archaeological Society owns the freehold of Rothe House and the major part of the ancient burgrave plot which extends back from Parliament Street to the medieval city wall. The rear section of the plot, adjacent to the city wall, has also been in Society ownership for many years but has been leased until recently. The former Office of Public Works (OPW) site has been leased to KAS on the condition that it is turned into gardens (Figure 1). In the 1960s, the Society was instrumental in the restoration of the first house (fronting onto Parliament Street) and, in the mid 1990s, the complete restoration of the third house (Figure 2 shows the major components of the Rothe House plot). These were major achievements, and the Society can be justly proud of its accomplishments.

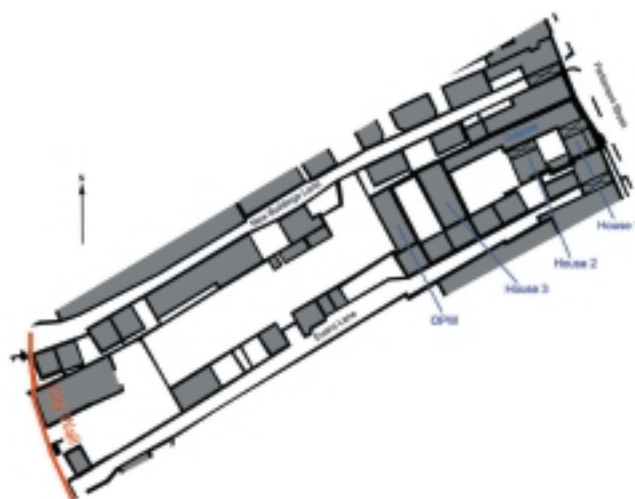


Figure 2: Modern Layout of Rothe House Plot (Based on OS 1999, After J Bradley 2000)

Since restoration, the Heritage Council has occupied the third house as offices; they are to move to other premises in the near future. Thus the immediate question of the future use of House 3 arises, simultaneously, with the re-acquisition of the rear burgage plot. These in turn create the opportunity to review the current uses and future development of the entire site.

Since the Society has had neither adequate financial resources nor expertise to undertake or commission a comprehensive Conservation Plan which would guide decisions regarding such dramatic changes in use, the Heritage Council has stepped in with funding. This Plan is the result.

The current statutory status of the Rothe House complex is as follows:

- It is listed as an element of the urban area of Kilkenny City in the Record of Monuments and Places.
- It is listed in the Area of Archaeological Importance — Urban Archaeological Survey County Kilkenny.
- It appears as a nationally significant structure on the Planning Authority Development Plan under List 1 of the Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan, 1994.
- It is listed as being of national importance in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Survey of Kilkenny.

2.5 THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

During 2001, the Conservation Plan team undertook a thorough process of consultation in which stakeholder organisations and individuals were involved. The following individuals and organisations have been consulted to date (see also Appendix 1):

- The Heritage Council. Individuals include: Ms Mary Hanna (Architectural Officer and Steering Group Chair) and Mr Hugh Maguire (Museums and Archives Officer)
- Kilkenny Archaeological Society. Officers and Members at the time of consultation include: Miss Una Hughes (President), Rev. Sean O'Doherty (Chairman), Mr Tom Halpin (Hon. Treasurer), Mr Michael O'Dwyer (Hon. Librarian), Mrs Lex Hyde (Hon. Curator), Ms Ann Tierney (council member), Mr Edward Law (council member), Ms Mary Flood (Administrator)
- Kilkenny Corporation
- Mr John Bradley (University College Maynooth)
- Mr Ben Murtagh
- Bord Fáilte
- South East Regional Tourism
- The OPW in Dublin made available archive materials from work done in the 1960s by the late Percy Le Clerc.

The organisations and individuals involved were immensely helpful, and the authors would like to extend their appreciation to them all. Without their support, the Plan could not have been completed.

The Plan process began in May 2001 with research, followed by two further periods of research and consultation: from 9-16 July and 22-27 July. A Draft Plan (without Policies) was completed in early October. Analysis and consultation continued through November, with the completion of the Plan in late December 2001.

2.6 THE CONSERVATION PLAN TEAM

Mr Eamon Timoney	Fehily Timoney Gifford: Project Director
Dr Gerald Wait	Fehily Timoney Gifford: Project Management, Synthesis, Assessing Significance, Vulnerability and Policies
Miss Babita Sharma	Fehily Timoney Gifford: Research, Understanding the Property, Assessing Significance, Vulnerability and Policies
Mr Michael Drury	Michael Drury Architects: Conservation, Architectural History, Understanding the Property, Assessing Significance, Vulnerability, and Policies
Mrs Elizabeth Ozmin	Michael Drury Architects: Conservation, Architectural History, Understanding the Property, Assessing Significance, Vulnerability and Policies

3. UNDERSTANDING THE PROPERTY

3.1 HISTORY AND SETTING OF ROTHE HOUSE

Rothe House is situated in a prominent position in the city of Kilkenny, facing onto Parliament Street. The limestone structure of this townhouse is much altered; in its current form, it has been restored to its original late Tudor design, with the removal of many later structures/annexes. The house is essentially 'E'-shaped in plan and is composed of three 3-storied houses with courtyards linked by a series of buildings on the northern side (Figure 2). The house is situated at the north-east end of the medieval burgage plot which runs from Parliament Street to the medieval city wall; the plot is 12-15m wide and 126m long and lies on a slope running down to Parliament Street. The plot is oriented north-east to south-west, with Parliament Street at the north-east end.

3.1.1 BRIEF HISTORY OF KILKENNY

Popularly known as the 'Capital of Medieval Ireland', Kilkenny was already the most important inland town in south-east Ireland by the time the Anglo-Normans arrived. From the mid 9th century through to the 10th and 11th centuries, Cerball Mac Dúnlainge (King of Leinster) and his successors, the Mac Gilla Pátraics (Bradley, 2000), consolidated the growth of their power. By the 12th century, they had a residence in Kilkenny in which they held court.

In 1169, the Anglo-Normans under their leader Richard Fitz Herbert de Clare (Strongbow) built a fort on a knoll on the west bank of the River Nore (the site of the present castle) and south of the existing settlement. This reflected the strategic importance of the crossing of the River Nore and established the importance of Kilkenny, which was reinforced by subsequent inhabitants of the castle.

William Marshall is credited with building the oldest parts of the castle in 1192. In the late 1300s, the Butler family, the Earls of Ormonde (later the Dukes), took over the castle and ruled for over 400 years, recovering from a temporary decline after Cromwell's arrival in 1650. Following the Anglo-Norman invasion, the construction of 'Hightown' was commenced and 'gradually assumed the name of Kilkenny, while the original *Cill Chainnigh* became Irishtown' (Hughes, for the Heritage Council, see Figure 3).

In the medieval period, the street upon which Rothe House stands is thought to have formed the northern end of High Street (Bradley, 2000). At the beginning of the 13th century, this area of unoccupied land belonged to the Church and was held in trust by Bishop de Rous. The colonists of the period applied to the Earl Marshall who in turn applied to the bishop for permission to construct buildings over this area in order to accommodate the growing population. Between 1202-18, it is thought that this street was added to Hightown (De Loughrey, 1976), although Bradley dates the development of this area to between 1207-31. This would suggest that High Street ran straight through the

centre of Kilkenny from one end to the other, joining Hightown and Irishtown (Hughes, forthcoming). In plan, the town appears to have developed in a linear manner along the length of the street (Figure 3). The burgage plots were also laid out at this point, with the majority of the plots fronting onto High Street, and those on the western side running back to the city walls. The plots on the eastern side ran either to the banks of the River Nore or to St Kieran's Street, also 'King Street', or 'Back Lane' on Rocque's map of 1758.

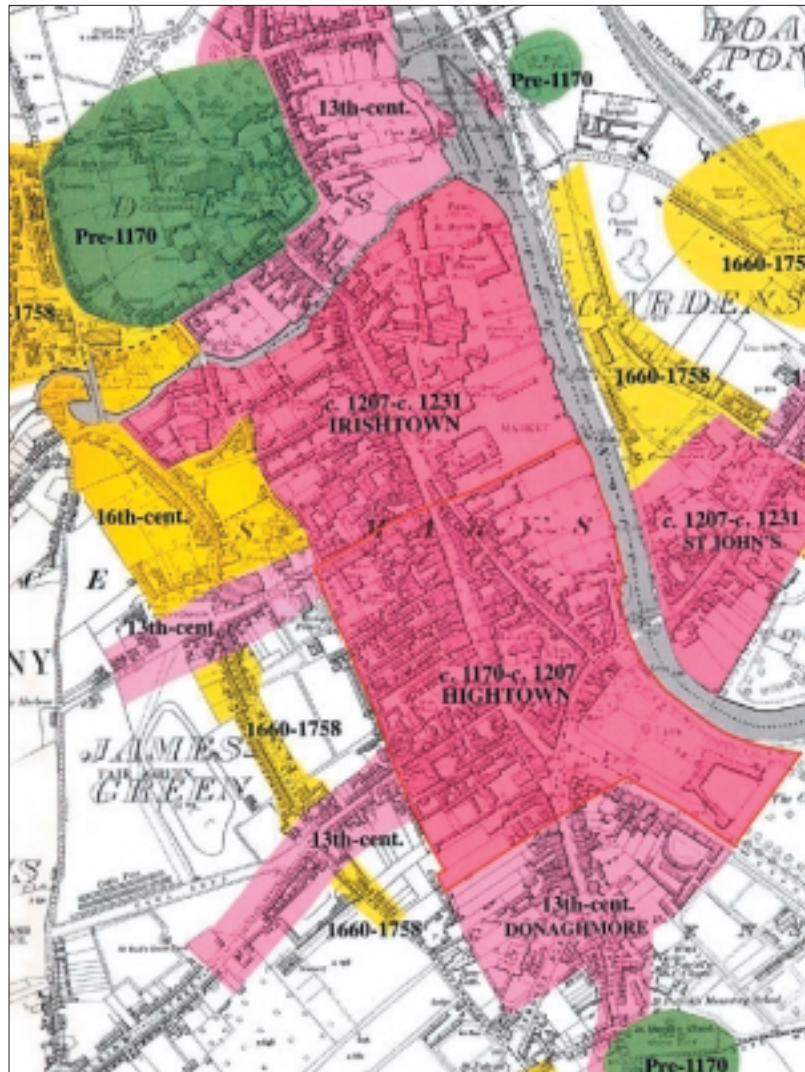


Figure 3: Historic Growth of Kilkenny to 1758 (Based on Rocque's Map, by J Bradley 2000)

By 1383-84, the plot which would later contain Rothe House became the burgage and townhouse of the Cistercian Abbots of Duiske Abbey, Graiguenamanagh (Bradley, 2000) (Figure 4). The abbey's lands were later forfeited under Henry VIII and granted to the Rothe family.

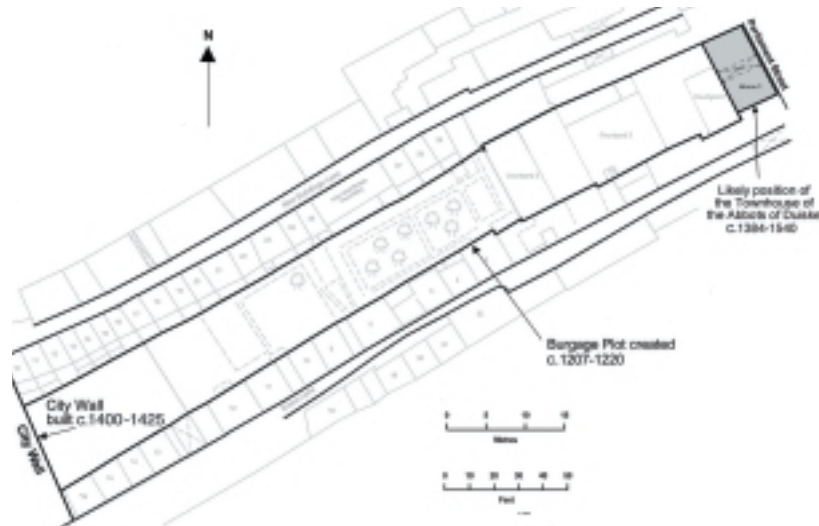


Figure 4: Phase 1 Site Plan c. 1220-1540 (after Ordnance Survey 1841)

The city walls were begun c. 1400, and presumably the stretch which underlies the rear boundary wall of the plot was built around 1400-25 (Figure 4). By this time, the development of Kilkenny, and specifically of Irishtown, was well advanced.

The lanes on either side of Rothe House may have been developed when it was realised that the burgage plots were too narrow to allow for commercially useful access along the length of the plots; nor did they permit any light into any structures beyond the front façade (Bradley, 2000). There is a marked regularity of layout of burgage plots in much of Kilkenny. The Rothe House plot corresponds to 3 perches in width (1 perch = approx. 5.5 yards). Plots of this width, interspersed with narrow lanes giving access to the back-of-plots, may be seen on the 1841 OS map on which most of the medieval layout is still legible. The pattern is for a 'wide' plot of 3 perches to be flanked by either narrow plots (of 1.5 perches) or lanes, or for two narrow plots to be flanked by lanes. It is hypothesised that the creation of the narrow plots, with very small individual holdings to which access was gained from the lanes, allowed for many more ('working class' free tenants) families to be accommodated within the town.

To the south of the house, Evan's Lane runs from Parliament Street to the line of the western city wall. Rocque's map of 1758 (Figure 5) shows it as 'Upper Evans's Lane' running to the city wall where there appears to be an extant tower and possibly a gap or postern. The lane then turns south following the line of the city wall until it joins St James Street. The 1841 map (Figure 6) shows it simply as 'Evans' Lane' terminating at the city wall. The 1842 map (Figure 7) shows a slight variation in 'Evans's Lane', although the route remained unchanged. By 1900 (Figure 8), it had acquired its present name, 'Evan's Lane'.



Figure 5: 1758: Kilkenny by J Rocque



Figure 6: 1841: Part of Kilkenny from the Ordnance Survey

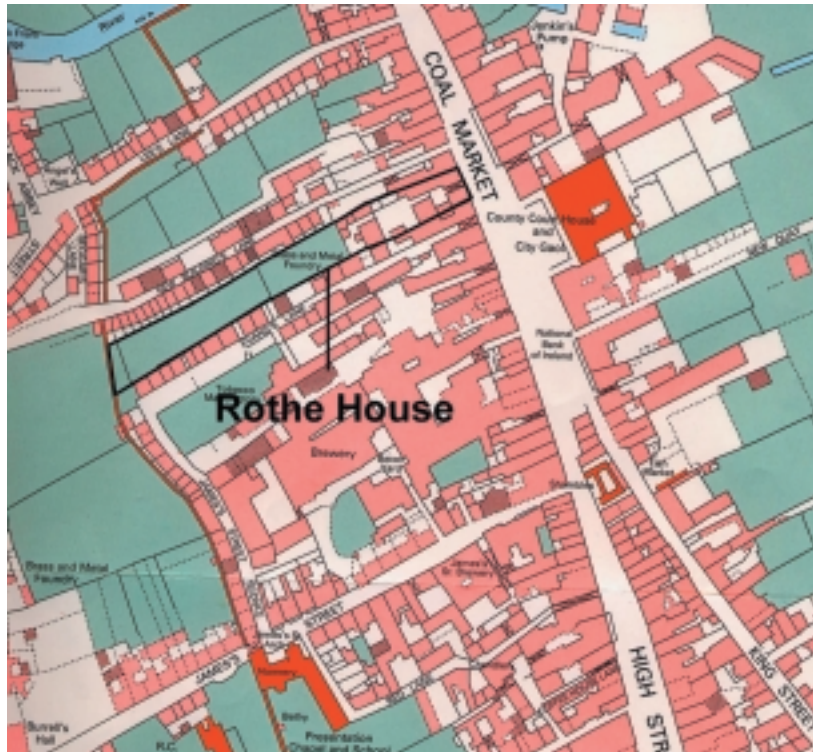


Figure 7: c.1842: Part of Kilkenny from the Ordnance Survey

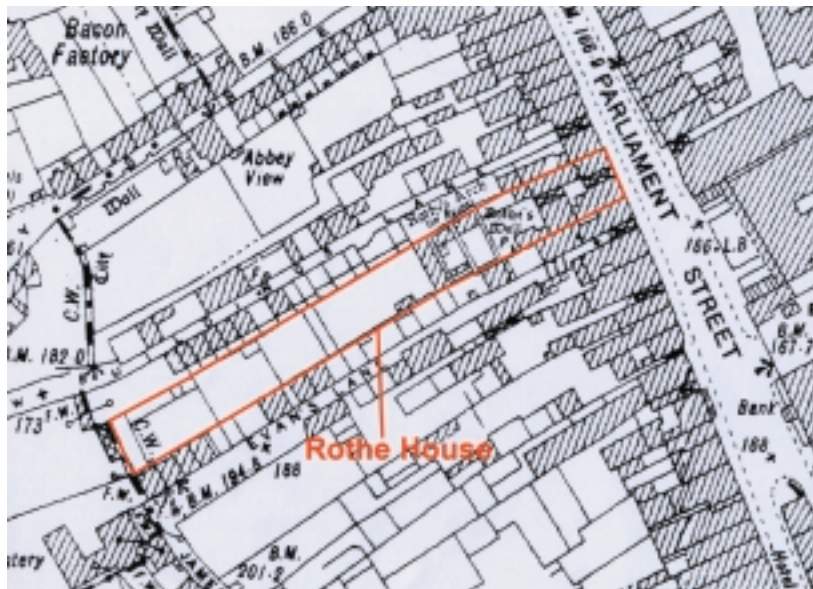


Figure 8: 1900: Part of Kilkenny from the Ordnance Survey

New Buildings Lane runs to the north of Rothe House, heading west from Parliament Street until it meets Blackmill Street to the west. The lane may have been named ‘From John Rothe’s new building, Third House, in Rothe House Yard’ (De Loughrey, 1976). Rocque’s map of 1758 (Figure 5) shows it as ‘New Row’, running through a breach in the city wall, at which point it is no longer discernable as a route. By 1786, it was renamed ‘New Buildings’, a name which coincides with the construction of New Building house between 1759 and 1772 (Murtagh, 1998). The 1841 map (Figure 6) shows the addition of ‘Lane’ to its

name, although following its modern day course. In 1859, it was referred to as 'Newbuilding Place'. Twelve years later, the 1871 map shows that the name had reverted to 'New Buildings Lane'.

Late medieval Kilkenny was a thriving economic centre with established and extensive trading links with continental Europe. Its commerce was based on the export of timber, stone and agricultural goods, and the import of silk, damask, spices and wine. The elite middle class of Catholic merchants which had grown in the town had entrenched itself within the fabric of its civic and social strata. They maintained a monopoly over the civic offices — Magistrates, Sovereigns, Mayors and Sheriffs — to the extent that 'a member of the Rothe family... was sovereign on eighteen occasions between 1440 and 1544; the Archers held the position sixteen times between 1434 and 1544, while the Shees were sovereigns on seven occasions between 1493 and 1544' (Bradley, 2000).

This class had begun to emerge in the late 15th century and on the whole consisted of ten to 15 families (Bradley, 2000) who maintained overall control over the city and its immediate hinterland until 1650. They consolidated their links with each other through intermarriage and maintained their position and wealth through owning land and engaging in commerce. The majority of these families were of Anglo-Norman descent with at least one relative in Holy Orders who had studied on the continent in France, Italy or Spain. The dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s provided them with a golden opportunity to increase their holdings.

As a result of its connections with the continent, Kilkenny's merchant class became increasingly aware of the Renaissance which was sweeping Europe. Some of its ideas may have filtered through to such 'enlightened' communities (although with some delay: for example, the effigies in St Canice's Cathedral are c. 150 years later than their continental counterparts). Although the somewhat stark nature of the houses of this period belies this resurgence, Rothe House demonstrates a slight fancy in the panelled piers of the arcade (Plate 1).

Kilkenny's merchants lived in great comfort — if not in the style of their houses, then certainly within the context of their homes. The will of John Rothe records the opulence of the possessions he bequeathed to his family. Included amongst the domestic furniture were '...all my drawing tables, bedsteads, cupboards, livery cupboards, virginals, wainscot, ioynt-stools, chairs, my great cipresse chest and cipresse counter... my pewter, brass, batry, iron beddings of feathers and flocks'. Rothe also mentions a tapestry coverlet 'sey greene hangings or curtyns of both my best bedsteads, in addition to plate, diaper, Holland and linen'. Indeed his will provides 'an almost unique insight into the living conditions of the wealthy urban middle class' (Bradley, 2000).

In 1642, a legislative assembly was held in Kilkenny — the 'Confederation of Kilkenny'. The Confederation was a provisional government set up by the Catholic Anglo-Irish and Irish to defend the Catholic faith and the rights of Charles I in the troubles between the king and parliament. The Confederation consisted of a General Assembly, an Ecclesiastical Assembly and a Supreme Council. The meetings of its three limbs were held in three different locations: the Supreme Council met at the castle, the General Assembly met at a site on Parliament Street, and some of the Ecclesiastical Assembly meetings are thought to have been held at Rothe House.

The Confederation was dissolved in 1648. In 1649, the execution of Charles I concluded the matter and in 1650, Kilkenny was besieged by Cromwell for a week before its ultimate surrender. In 1654, an order to clear Kilkenny was issued, with the citizens to be 'transplanted' to Connaught. A Civil Survey was then undertaken with a view to reallocating properties to those who had supported the 'right' cause. In terms of Kilkenny's and certainly Ireland's history, the impact of this transplantation of the merchant class came to be viewed as a ruthless stratagem calculated to destroy 'an educated and progressive class' (De Breffny & Ffolliott, 1975). The result of this tactic 'was a severe cultural setback to Ireland severing... many valuable links with the continent' (De Breffny & Ffolliott, 1975). On a wider stage, it also contributed to the decline of Kilkenny's importance.

At the same time, the 1654 Civil Survey records a distinction between the two ends of High Street by referring, for the first time, to its northern end as 'North Quarter'. At some time between 1202 and 1654, the northern end of the High Street, from Watergate to its junction with St Kieran's Street (and the rest of the High Street), was renamed. The reason for this is unknown.

In 1662, the Duke of Ormonde was granted most of the housing stock in Irishtown and Hightown. Although the grant was disputed by the Corporation, the matter was settled in his favour in 1676.

3.1.2 HISTORY OF THE ROTHE FAMILY AND ROTHE HOUSE

John Rothe Fitz-piers (mid 1500s-1620), a merchant and a major Kilkenny landowner, built the townhouse complex now called Rothe House in the period between 1594 and 1610. The Rothe family probably came to Kilkenny from Wales at some time in the 15th century; in origin they were Flemish (Healy, 1893). The Rotheres were one of the main wealthy and influential families to hold numerous civic offices in Kilkenny. John Rothe married Rose Archer, the daughter of another of the merchant class families, and in 1594, he set about constructing his first stone house. The impetus to build a prestigious city-centre dwelling would have been strong, providing Rothe with a venue for displaying his personal wealth and possibly his wares, as the ground floor street front is thought to have comprised a shop front.

Rothe is thought to have started in business in St Kieran's Street and is documented as an importer of silks, damasks and velvets.

The first house and its courtyard were built in 1594 (Figure 9). A shield bearing his coat of arms — an oak tree and a deer, with the arrow points of his Archer wife — are still extant over the entrance archway (Plate 2).

In c. 1604, behind the first house and to the rear of the first courtyard, Rothe built a second house with a further (second) courtyard (Figure 10). It is likely that practical issues may have governed the construction of the second house, as Rothe had twelve children. Within the second courtyard, he also constructed a well which can be dated to 1604 by a carved stone wellhead. A cistern and a mill were also erected in this courtyard. The houses were linked via a series of service rooms called 'outscales' along the northern side of the first courtyard.



Plate 2: Rothe Family Coat of Arms

It is thought that the third house and its courtyard had been constructed by c. 1610, as recorded in a damaged slab inserted in a wall near the well in the second courtyard (Figure 11). This building housed the great kitchen, the bakery, the brew house, storage rooms, and sleeping quarters for the servants.

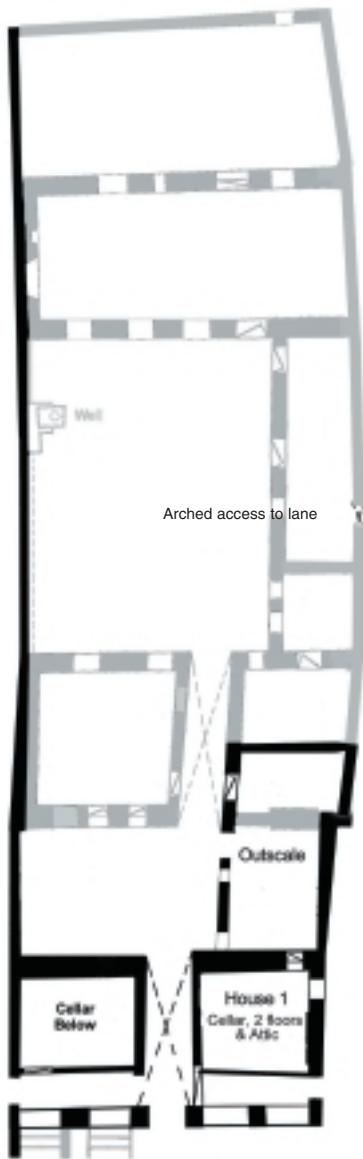


Figure 9:
Phase 2, House 1 and Outscale, c. 1594

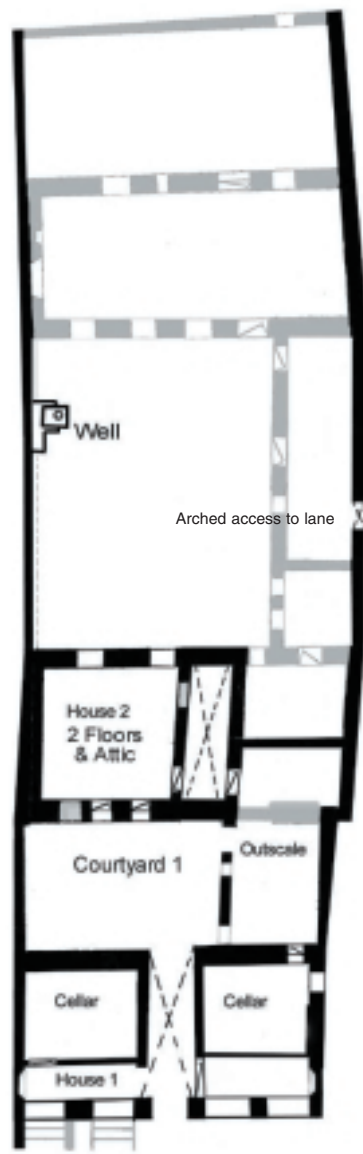


Figure 10:
Phase 3, Houses 1 and 2, c.1604

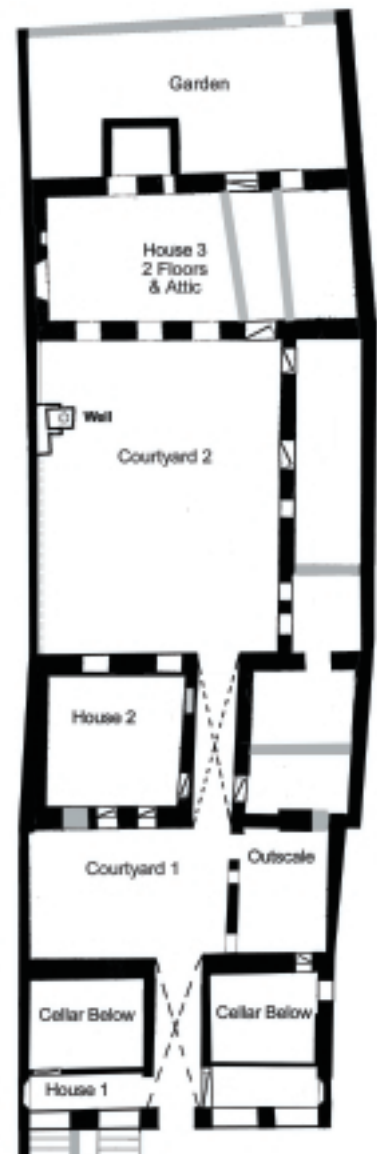


Figure 11:
Phase 4, Houses 1, 2 and 3, c. 1610

The burgage plot was completed by a garden to the west of the courtyard of the third house. Presumably, the steepness of the plot led to the construction of steps leading up to the garden, which lies today almost at the first-floor level of the third house. This area to the rear of the houses is also thought to have contained orchards, a dovecote and a 'castle' (possibly a mural tower) on the western side.

In 1609, when Kilkenny received its charter as a free city and county from King James I, John Rothe Fitz-piers was one of its first aldermen. He was subsequently elected mayor of the city in 1613.

In 1610, Peter Rothe (1590-1654), John and Rose's eldest son, took over the first house upon his marriage to Lettice Lawless. He may also have taken over the running of the business. John and the rest of the family presumably moved into the second house, although all of them shared the facilities of the well, mill, the kitchen and other amenities located in the third house. This situation may not have been ideal, however, as Rose is believed to have had a separate kitchen closer to the second house. In addition, John made great efforts in his will (written in 1619, the year before he died) to ensure that his wife would still have rights and access to various parts of the houses upon his demise. The will provides an invaluable inventory of the contents of the houses and the plot, information which may prove useful in attempts to understand or re-create the houses.

Although Peter inherited the majority of the estate upon his father's death, John was also generous in providing for the future of his wife and the remainder of his eleven children, and certainly for the aspirations of his other sons. Nothing is known of Rose's life after John's death. By 1612, John had erected a chapel in St Mary's churchyard, along with a tombstone for himself and his wife. However, when the grave was opened two hundred years after his demise, the remains of only one individual were discovered.

Peter was as civic minded as his father and was returned as an MP for Kilkenny City in 1639. In the 1640s, the Confederation of Kilkenny was held in Kilkenny (see above). Peter was a supporter of the confederate cause and a member of the General Assembly. He entertained the notable figures of the day in Rothe House and used it as a meeting place for the Assembly of Bishops on several occasions. One of the prominent ecclesiastics of the time was a distant cousin, David Rothe, Bishop of Ossory; tradition dictates that this was the house in which the bishops met and walked in the orchards (Lanigan, c. 1980s). When the Confederation collapsed with the advent of the Commonwealth, its supporters were dispossessed. A Confederate banner was later found in an oak-panelled partition in House 2 (Lanigan, 1967).

Like many of the rich merchants of the time, it is thought that Peter's properties were also confiscated, and in 1653, he and his household were removed to Connaught. A year later, Peter died. His place of burial is unknown. Since there is a discrepancy in the historical records for this period, it is unclear whether Peter was actually removed from Kilkenny. The Civil Survey of Kilkenny City in 1654 shows one 'Peirce Rooth fitz John' as the owner of Rothe House (Figure 12).

(Tenants when ye Towne was taken)		NORTH QUARTER	Length	Breadth	Rooms	Value in 1640
Peirce Rooth fitz John		A slated house stone walls pte of which house stands streetward and part 20 foot backward and a building on ye North side betwixt both all ye afores ^d buildings are answerable one to another to goe through the whole house.	44	22	16	30:0:0
		34	26			
		30	15			
		A Court yard conteyning one pch and a quarter small measure.	50	10	3	
		An Outhouse slated the walls stone fitt for laying in come & pte for a Stable Cowes &c ...				
		One Granary of ye lengh of the said house ...				
Another slated outhouse y ^e walls stone fitt for Lodging Chamber and a Kitchin.	48	24	7			
On ye west side		Another slated Outhouse ye walls stone built ag ^t an upright wall fitt for hoggs ...	22	6	3	
		One yard conteyning 5 pches and one garden and Orchard 60 pches small measure ...				
		In y ^e end of which Orchard stands a summer house next to ye Towne wall y ^e walls stone & ye Roole slated ...	20	14		

Figure 12: Extract of Civil Survey of 1654 from O'Dwyer 1994

It is thought that the powerful Ormonde Butler family exerted their influence during the Restoration of Charles II to return Rothe House to the family. As Peter had no surviving male heirs, Rothe House was restored to his eldest daughter, Rose. Rose married Richard Shee Fitz Marcus. Their son Marcus Shee of Walsheshays (Sheestown) is known to have been in possession of the house in 1690. However, he was outlawed as a Jacobite in 1691. There is some debate as to whether Rothe House was confiscated by the State, as there is evidence to suggest that Marcus managed to retain his other properties.

It is unclear exactly when or how the Rothes lost possession of the house or what happened to the family themselves. The new owner of the property, together with a large part of the city, was the Duke of Ormonde (O'Dwyer, 1994). The Duke leased the property, but it is unclear whether the whole site was let as one entity or whether various segments were individually leased. It is conceivable that the latter may have been true, given the size of the plot and the relative ease in which the property could be broken up. O'Dwyer (1994) has shown that, in 1701, the house was leased to Abel Butler for 'lives renewable forever'. This was later turned into a 'fee farm grant', effectively implying ownership by the Butlers. A lease dating to 1727 shows the house being let by Thomas Butler of Kilkenny to a William Johnson of Finglas for a sum of £200.

In approximately 1720, the name 'Coal Market' replaced 'North Quarter' on leases (O'Dwyer, 1994). It was named thus because 'it became the public mart for the sale of coal brought in from the Castlecomer mines' (De Loughrey, 1976). Maps of 1733, 1786 and 1841 all show it as 'Coal Market'. In 1860, it was renamed 'Parliament Street' after the Confederate Parliament of 1641-48 (Lanigan and Tyler, 1977).

There are few details about the house, its use and its occupiers/owners from 1725 to 1808. The information available suggests that the house suffered a decline in status (whether a rapid or a steady decline is unknown), but the garden and orchard were still in existence as recorded in a lease of 1727 (KAS, 1999).

In 1808, some of the rooms in the second house were being used as a private school run by the schoolmaster, George Buchanan. Two early 19th-century novelists, Michael and John Banim, attended the school c. 1803-10. John Banim later used a description of Rothe House in the novel *Father Connell* (published 1842). He wrote about the dark oak wainscoting and the beautiful plasterwork of the ceiling of the second house, noting that some of this was beginning to fall and thus implying that the condition of the house, certainly internally, was deteriorating. Banim also referred to a 'sharply arched door, which led to an elevated garden'.

A lease of 1811 states that Mary Butler, a widow from Pottlerath, had originally leased the property to Buchanan and that she was then in the process of granting a 19-year lease to Andrew Wolfe, from whom the 19th-century name for the house — 'Wolf's Arch' — derives (Figure 13). The house continued as a school until the late 19th century, by the end of which the second and third houses were roofless ruins. The area to the rear of the houses, formerly the garden and orchard, was at this time divided into two gardens and leased separately (KAS, 1999).

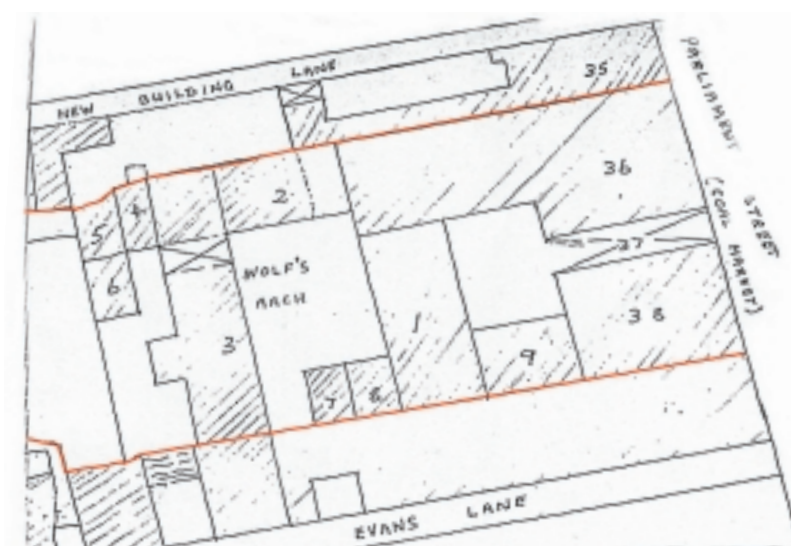


Figure 13: Wolf's Arch 1850 from O'Dwyer 1994

In 1830, the Ormonde rent book shows that the front part of the house (presumably the first house) was occupied by Ester Westerman (O'Dwyer, 1994). In 1843, the Willoughbys were in possession of the house. In a marriage

settlement between the Willoughby and Preston families, the property was half assigned to the bride's father, Richard Preston, to be held in trust for the newlyweds — Susanna Preston and William Willoughby. It was one of the Willoughbys who erected the shop front on either side of the arch (De Loughrey, 1976), but the date of this event is unclear.

In the *Proceedings and Transactions of the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society* for 1854-55, Richard Preston is recorded as having taken down and repaired the chimneys of Rothe House at his own expense as they were in a dilapidated and dangerous condition.

O'Dwyer's (1994) analysis of the Primary Valuation records from the 1850s onwards shows that segments of the house and cellars were being sub-leased to numerous tenants. The valuation records dealt separately with the front and the back of the house, the front being dealt with as three separate properties, numbers 36, 37 and 38 Coal Market (Figure 13).

A report to the Kilkenny Sanitary Authority in 1884 records that Rothe House was declared 'unfit for human habitation' (James, 1884) as the site was in a 'filthy and dangerous condition': the courtyards were used as piggeries, with no facilities for sewerage or drainage of human or pig waste.

By 1896-7, the Willoughby family had 'conveyed and assigned to Timothy O'Hanrahan houses and premises at Wolfe's Arch' (O'Dwyer, 1994). A solicitor, businessman and antiquarian (Bolguidhir, 1992), O'Hanrahan undertook the first programme of repairs and restoration works and is thought to have restored the second house. He was also a Gaelic enthusiast and established the Kilkenny branch of the Gaelic League. Once the second house had been restored in 1899, the League met in Rothe House where 'classes were held in the New Rooms in Wolf's Arch' (Bolguidhir, 1992).

For a short period of time, the former Kilkenny Archaeological Society (later the Royal Society of Antiquaries Ireland) exhibited their artefact collection in the house; this was later removed to the National Museum, Dublin.

The 1901 Census of Population Returns for Parliament Street West Side and Wolf's Arch were returned separately. The latter, Wolf's Arch, showed a nil return, indicating that it was uninhabited. The return for Parliament Street West Side showed that two unmarried individuals, O'Hanrahan and Michael McGrath, inhabited the property. Professionally, O'Hanrahan is listed as a bacon merchant and magistrate, McGrath as a clerk in a provisions shop. On the return for 'Out-Offices and Farm-Steadings', 14 outbuildings were listed: 5 stables, 1 coach house, 1 piggery, 1 boiling house, 1 turf house, 1 potato house, 1 workshop and 3 stores.

The 1911 Census shows nil returns for both Parliament Street West Side and Wolf's Arch showing that the property was completely uninhabited at this time.

In 1962, O'Hanrahan sold the site jointly to the (new) Kilkenny Archaeological Society and a Mr Brennan for the sum of IR£4,500. Brennan operated a butcher's shop at the northern end of what is now the museum entrance and shop of House 1. The Kilkenny Archaeological Society began a programme of restoration,

and officially opened the museum to the public in 1966. In 1980, the Society became the sole owners of Rothe House. By 1996, they had, with financial assistance from the EC, completed the restoration of the third house which had lain 'in complete ruin' (Hughes, 2000).

Figure 14 is a cartographic representation of the evolution of the property.

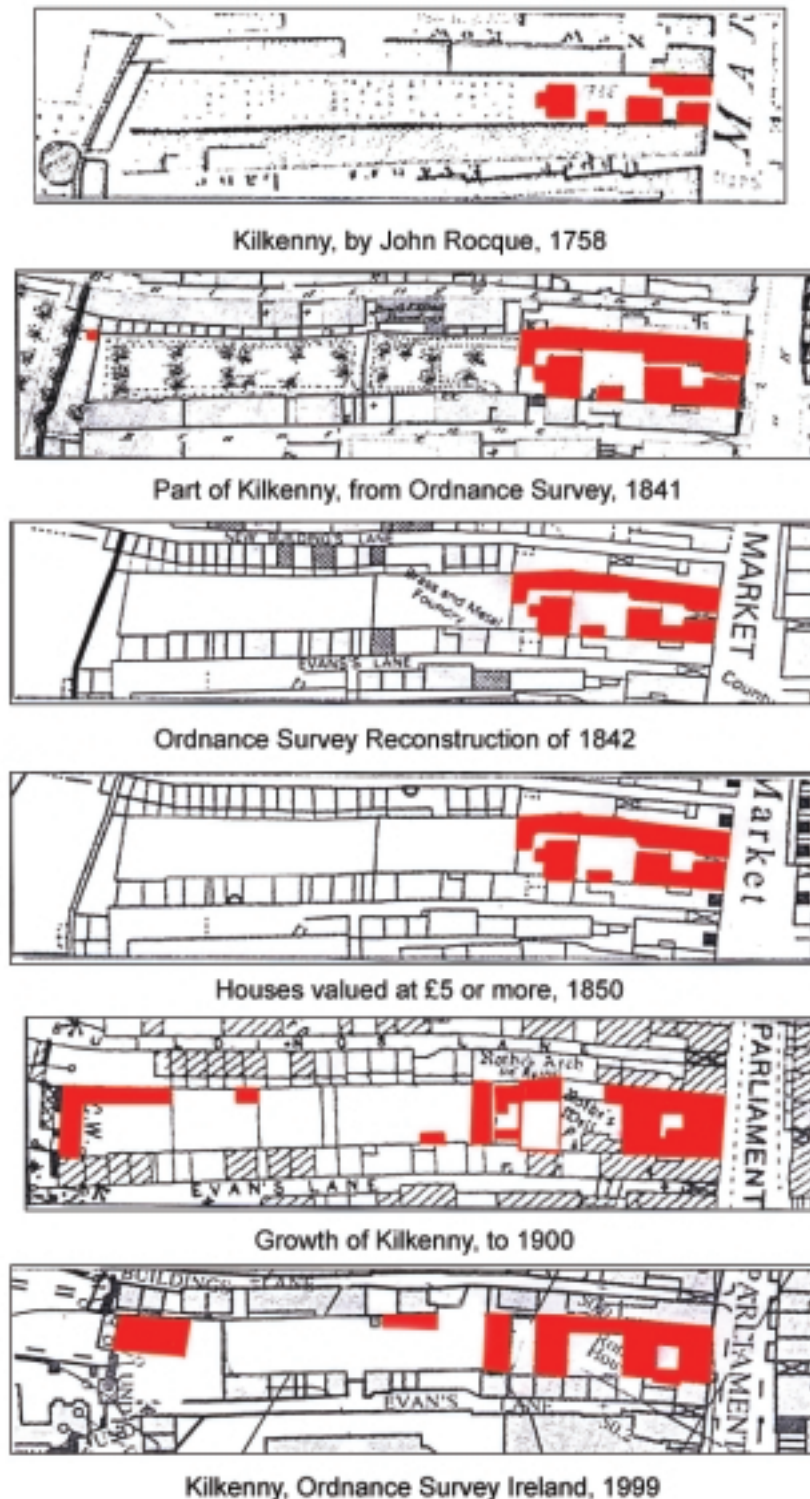


Figure 14: Evolution of Rothe House from 1758 – 1999

3.2 **ROTHE HOUSE: ARCHITECTURE, STRUCTURES AND CONSERVATION**

3.2.1 **THE SITE BEFORE THE CONSTRUCTION OF JOHN ROTHE'S FIRST HOUSE IN 1594**

Documentary evidence suggests that there may have been structures on the Rothe House site prior to 1594. A request in 1202-18 for the extension of High Street for the construction of houses suggests that it did not remain a greenfield site for the c. 150 years prior to 1383-84 when it was acquired by the abbots of Duiske Abbey for their townhouse.

The city wall was probably built c. 1400-25, but the date of the construction of the rest of the stone wall at present enclosing the burgage plot is unknown. An archaeological survey and analysis of the extant sections of wall should provide information on construction dates and the sequence of building. It is likely that sections of the walls pre-date the building of Rothe House, which would mean that the enclosing walls (or part of them) are the most ancient structure on the site.

3.2.2 **HOUSE 1**

John Rothe was already a wealthy merchant when he built his first house on the burgage plot fronting 'High Street', now Parliament Street. He and his wife Rose Archer had 12 children. Their first son, Peter, was born in 1590. Others had been born by the time construction of the house commenced in 1594. The proposed house, therefore, had to provide accommodation for Rothe's business needs as a merchant, as well as for the domestic needs of a growing family and servants.

The extent and nature of John Rothe's trading as a merchant is unknown; we only know that he was importing fine cloth. Secure storage for goods would have been required, with a business space facing onto the street, and a fine room or hall for social or business entertainment and discussion. The requirements of the family would have included accommodation for sleeping, eating, cooking, washing and sanitary facilities, as well as a convenient source of water. Access to the rear of the plot would have been required. So how did House 1 accommodate this brief?

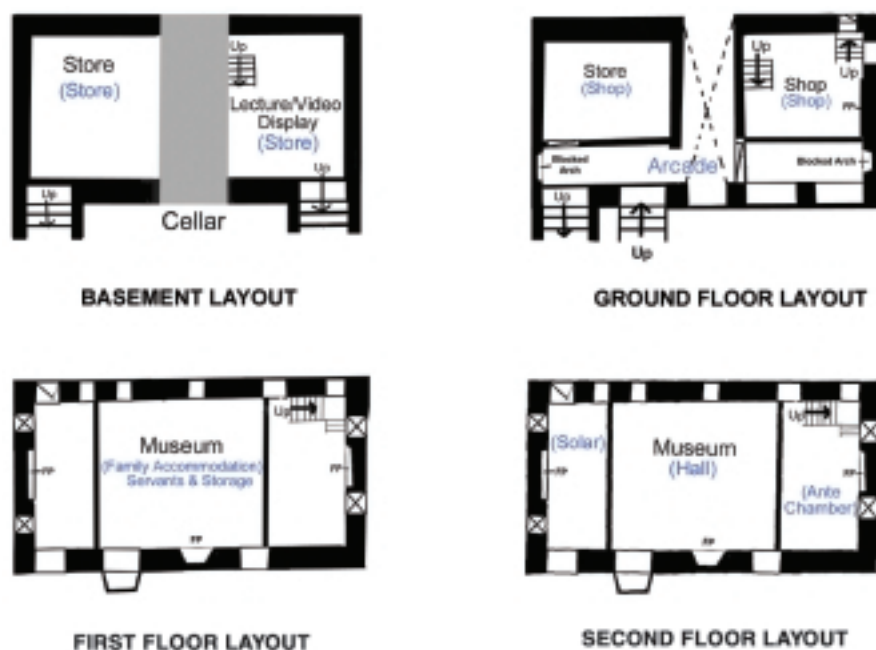


Figure 15: Layout of House 1, with former uses in blue

Referring to Figure 15 which shows the building in its present configuration, we can see the following:

- Basement Level — Cellars occupy the entire area.
- Ground Floor Level — An arcade, with access from both street and house, forms the frontage of the ground floor.
- The space or spaces behind the arcade form the remainder of the ground floor.
- First Floor Level — One large space occupies the entire area.
- Second Floor Level — One large space occupies the entire area.

The original sub-division of the spaces is not yet known. The covered passage from street level to Courtyard 1 at the rear of the property may or may not have formed part of the primary construction (an archaeological survey could confirm the sequence). Stair access may have been provided internally and/or externally. However the basement, ground floor and first floor accommodation would appear to fulfil the requirements of John Rothe's business needs for secure storage, a shop/trading area and a fine room or hall for entertaining guests.

The second floor must therefore have accommodated the needs of the family, of say four children (and possibly servants). Facilities for cooking, washing and sanitary arrangements would have been located a short distance from the house.

It is also possible that John Rothe built the first house for his business, while keeping his family in their previous accommodation in St Kieran's Street.

Externally, the house would have looked very different from what we see today. The stonework would have been rendered for protection against the elements and finished with, at the very least, a lime wash. Polychrome patterns or pictorial



Plate 3: Arched Passage from Parliament Street

imagery, possibly advertising John Rothe's business, might have decorated the exterior. Rainwater disposal would have been provided by stone gutters and chutes discharging rainwater over the pavement (probably flagged). These rainwater features no longer exist on the Parliament Street frontage of the building.

Windows would have had leaded lights with small panes directly glazed to the masonry and tied to ferramenta set into the stone window reveals. Opening lights would have been formed with simple wrought iron frames. Internally, it is known that at least some of the walls were panelled and the ceilings lavishly plastered. Rooms would have been opulently furnished in the fashion of the time to indicate the social and community status of John Rothe. His will confirms the richness of his possessions.

House 1, as it is today, results from restorations by Percy Le Clerc of the OPW in the 1960s.

3.2.3 HOUSE 2

The building of House 2 must have followed quickly after House 1. It is possible that its construction formed part of John Rothe's original plan due to the limited space available for family and servant use in House 1.

It is likely that access to the rear of the plot was not limited to the covered passage of House 1 (Plate 3) during the construction phase. It is unlikely that Rothe would have wanted the area in front of his new business premises to be disturbed by the clamour and clutter associated with the construction of the new house. An alternative access is likely to have been through the north boundary, from what is now New Buildings Lane (B. Murtagh has recorded an archway here).

If the maps are to be believed, House 2, comprising two floors and an attic, appears to have been built against the south wall of the plot, extending to within a few metres of the northern boundary (Figure 14, Rocque map 1758). An open space was created between the outscale of houses 1 and 2, but the northern gable of House 2 overlapped the western gable of the outscale (Figure 10; see Appendix 2 for evidence and arguments in detail), thus necessitating the incorporation of the second arched passage into the design of House 2. However, Rocque and subsequent maps show this un-occupied 'ell' as an open passage; without archaeological investigations, the discrepancy cannot be resolved. The height of the building was considerably lower than the present house, as indicated by the position of the stone chute on the south of the south wall.

Original building materials and finishes are likely to have been similar to those of House 1, given the short gap (if any) between the building sequences.

The original internal subdivision of space is unknown, but is likely to have followed a traditional pattern. The ground floor was probably used as a hall/parlour if the kitchen, washing and sanitary facilities provided for the first house continued in use. The upper floors, accessed by internal stairs (probably near the present circular stairs), would have provided chambers for the family and possibly a small retinue of live-in servants.

In 1604, a well was sunk to the west of House 2 adjacent to the south boundary (Plate 4).



Plate 4: Rothe's Well of 1604

By 1758 (Figure 14), outshots from House 1 extended along the north boundary past the east wall of House 2, possibly as part of the original construction of House 1 (cf. report by B. Murtagh in Appendix 2).

By 1841 (Figure 6), the outshots against the north boundary had been further extended to the west beyond House 3 where a wall encloses the garden area. The outshot is shown returning southwards against this east-facing wall. A staircase within this building would solve the access problem to the gardens at the present high level. The enclosure walls of the burgage plot and the east/west wall may be coeval. An archaeological survey and analysis should confirm the construction sequence. It is likely that these outshots were re-designed to form a link between the two houses at some time in the intervening 80 years, between 1758 and 1841.

The second house as seen today results from the restoration by Timothy O’Hanrahan at the end of the 19th century.

3.2.4 HOUSE 3

John Rothe’s businesses flourished during the period of the move to House 2. The size of his family also increased to four boys and eight girls. Both the business premises and the domestic accommodation must have been stretched to capacity and another house was required. Rocque’s map of 1758 (Figure 5) records this house (Plate 5) sited to the west of the well. It was ‘T’-shaped, free-standing and centred on the width of the plot with a clear space between the house and both the north and south boundary walls. The house is shown looking onto the garden without an intervening courtyard or wall. Again, this does not accord with the visible structure which clearly abuts both north and south curtilage walls.



Plate 5: Front Elevation of Rothe’s Third House of 1610

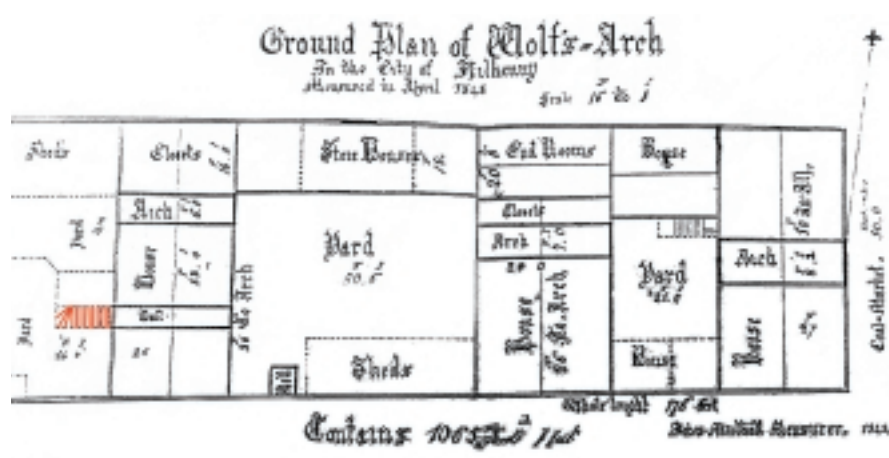
The building recorded by Rocque (Figure 5), located at the rear of the site and abutting the city wall, may be the 1615 castle and pigeon house referred to in Rothe’s will (Bradley, 2000, p. 25). The house continued to be recorded with a ‘T’-shaped footprint on OS maps up to 1900.

House 3 was completed by 1610 and is recorded in John Rothe’s will (1619) as being ‘his new house’. The building is recorded as having housed the great kitchen, the bakery, the brew house, storage rooms and sleeping quarters for the servants. This suggests a purpose-built house which serviced the needs of the re-organised family accommodation.

In the year in which House 3 was completed, the Rothes’ eldest son Peter and his wife took over House 1. This suggests that the rest of the family was accommodated in House 2, and possibly in the outshot of House 1 as well. John’s wife, Rose, is believed to have had a separate kitchen closer to House 2 than the newly built great kitchen. This kitchen could be the original kitchen built to serve House 1.

More research is needed to assess the architecture of House 3. As with House 2, the building materials and the external shell would have been similar to houses 1 and 2. The internal finishes would have been less grand and in keeping with a service building. It is likely that the internal walls were plastered and lime-washed on a regular basis for hygienic purposes.

The configuration of the original house is likely to have had two floors and an attic. The ground floor of the main structure accommodated the great fireplace and bread oven; a parlour may have been partitioned off at the opposite end of the room. The brew house may have been accommodated in the short leg of the 'T' on the western side of the house. Although this would have placed it at a distance from the well, it could have been supplied by piping water directly from the cistern. External staircases and an internal stair or ladder (Figure 16) to the first floor and attic would have provided access to the servants' quarters and storage rooms. The sub-division and arrangement of the servants' quarters and storage rooms is unknown; further research from similar sites might inform this.



3.2.5 THE GARDEN

The extent of the original garden appears to have remained unchanged and unaltered to the present day, albeit built upon and surfaced with concrete (Plate 6).



3.2.6 THE CONSERVATION/RESTORATION PROCESS — 1890s, 1960s AND 1990s

Each of the three houses has been thoroughly restored on at least one occasion. House 1 was extensively restored and repaired in the 1960s under the direction of Percy Le Clerc of the OPW. Documentation and photographic records relating to this work are held by Dúchas The Heritage Service. This restoration included the re-instatement or replacement of the first and attic floor structures in their original locations (no information has yet been found on restorations prior to the 1960s). The roof may have been replaced to match the previous/original structure. The roof coverings were replaced in slate. Stone rainwater channels were replaced with copper parapet gutters. Pointing and bedding of stone were undertaken in Portland cement-based mortar. External stonework was left exposed. An oriel window was rebuilt at first-floor level on the east elevation facing Parliament Street. Leaded lights were renewed in the mid 17th-century fashion with rectangular glass panes.

Internally, some concrete reinforcing was undertaken in the north cellar. The floor of the ‘shop’ at ground level on the south side was raised and replaced with a concrete slab. The original ground floors were probably of timber, based on a similar building at 21 Parliament Street (P. Manning pers. comm.), rather than of stone vaulting (note, however, the stone-vaulted cellars of Kyteler’s Inn, restored by Colm O’Cochlain). Plaster was removed generally from internal walls and the exposed masonry was painted. The undersides of the replacement floor structures were left un-ceiled.

House 2 was extensively restored and may have been extended laterally and vertically in the 1890s by Timothy O’Hanrahan (see Appendix 2 and Plate 7). Repairs and construction methods were undertaken traditionally with lime-based mortars, plasters and renders — bricks were introduced as walling material, particularly as relieving arches, window reveals and the reconstruction (or construction) of chimneys. The external walls were surfaced with lime-based render, a substantial amount of which remains *in situ*.

Stone windows were substantially replaced with timber and leaded lights with vertically sliding timber sashes. The roof was replaced with a new 19th-century roof. Further research is required to assess the restoration of the interior.

The restoration of House 3 has created a structure with a superficial resemblance to the original, but with little original fabric left. The paucity of records made during the restoration means that we cannot be sure of the authenticity of the work.

3.3 ROTHE HOUSE: CURRENT USES

Consultation with the two key stakeholders (the Kilkenny Archaeological Society and the Heritage Council) and numerous visits to the house have revealed an extensive variety of current uses and users of Rothe House. These are not exclusive categories, but rather are intricately intertwined. The following uses were identified, as shown on Figures 17, 18 and 19.



Plate 7: Rear Elevation of Rothe's second house of 1604 (with restoration work of 1890s)

Floor plan of the first floor of the National Maritime Museum. The plan shows three courtyards: Courtyard 3 on the left, Courtyard 2 in the center, and Courtyard 1 on the right. Courtyard 3 is adjacent to the Heritage Council. Courtyard 2 is adjacent to the Crossin Room. Courtyard 1 is adjacent to the Phelan Room. The Phelan Room is the largest room on the right. The Crossin Room is a large room in the center. The Heritage Council is a large room on the left. The Display room is a small room at the top. The Balcony is a small room at the bottom. Stairs are located in the Heritage Council, Crossin Room, and Phelan Room. Entrances are marked with 'X' symbols.

Floor plan of the first floor of the building. The plan shows three courtyards: Courtyard 1, Courtyard 2, and Courtyard 3. Courtyard 1 contains the Gaelic Language School and a Store Cellar Below. Courtyard 2 contains a Well. Courtyard 3 contains the Heritage Council. Other rooms include Toilets and Stores, Toilets, Display & Tea Room, Shop, and a Garden Office. Stairs are indicated with 'Up' and 'Down' arrows. A 'Backyard Area' is shown at the bottom right.

Figure 17: Ground Floor Plan of Rothe House

3.3.1 VISITOR ATTRACTION FOR THE PUBLIC

This category subsumes a variety of linked functions, each of which has an independent validity to some extent. For convenience, they are grouped together here and include: the shop/entrance in the northern ground floor room; the restored first floor of House 1 (Phelan Room); the artefact displays on the second floor of House 1 (Lanigan Room); and the costume displays (Costume Rooms: No. 1, first floor; No. 2, Chadwick Room linking to House 1; and No. 3, second floor in House 2). The day-to-day operation of the house falls to the Kilkenny Archaeological Society (see below).

3.3.2 USE BY THE KILKENNY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Rothe House serves as the headquarters for the Kilkenny Archaeological Society and is used by them for many events. The most important of these include: administering the day-to-day running of Rothe House; administration of KAS membership; Society meetings and lectures; hosting special events and exhibitions on behalf of Kilkenny City; housing and maintaining the library of archaeological, historical and social records of Kilkenny and region; housing the genealogical records and making a research service available to the public; housing Irish dance classes and the Gaelic League in the ground floor of House 2. Less directly linked to the other uses is the joint KAS/FÁS project based on the first floor of House 2 (Cronin Room). This government-sponsored training programme is located here to facilitate the entering of information into a genealogical database, to the great benefit of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society.

3.3.3 INTEREST IN AND USE BY THE HERITAGE COUNCIL

Shortly after its restoration, the Heritage Council rented House 3, together with the southern end of the ground floor of House 1 with its cellar, for use as offices and storage space. Similarly, since the restoration of House 1 in 1965, approximately two-thirds of the plot behind House 3 has been used by the OPW as a works depot. Both the Heritage Council and the OPW are to relocate to new premises in the near future.

3.4 TIME LINE

- Mid 9th century to 10th & 11th centuries — Cerball Mac Dúnlainge (King of Leinster) and his successors, the Mac Gilla Pátraics, consolidated the growth of their power.
- 12th century — Mac Gilla Pátraics had a residence in Kilkenny.
- 1169 — The Anglo-Normans, under Richard Fitz Herbert de Clare (Strongbow), built a fort on the site of the present Kilkenny Castle.
- After the Anglo-Norman invasion, Kilkenny developed into two towns: Hightown and Irishtown.
- Early 13th century — The Church held the land on the present Parliament Street.
- Between 1202-18 (1207-1231), High Street (later Parliament Street) was added to the Hightown.
- By 1383-84, the plot (later to contain Rothe House) became the burgage and townhouse of the Cistercian Abbots of Duiske Abbey, Graiguenamanagh.
- Late 14th century — The Butler family, the Earls of Ormonde, took over the castle.
- The city walls were begun c. 1400, and the section that underlies the rear boundary wall of the Rothe House plot was built around 1400-1425.
- 15th century — The Rothe family came to Kilkenny from Wales.
- Between 1440-1544 — ‘a member of the Rothe family... was sovereign on eighteen occasions’.
- 1534-36 — The Abbey’s lands were forfeited under Henry VIII and granted to the Rothe family.
- Mid 1500s — John Rothe Fitz-piers was born.
- John Rothe marries Rose Archer.
- 1590 — Rothe’s first son, Peter, was born.
- 1594 — Rothe built House 1 and its courtyard.
- c. 1604 — Rothe built House 2, with a further courtyard, a well, a cistern and a mill in the second courtyard. The houses were linked via a series of service rooms along the northern side of the first courtyard.
- 1609 — Kilkenny received its charter as a free city and county from King James I. John Rothe Fitz-piers was one of its first aldermen.
- c. 1610 — House 3 and its courtyard were constructed, housing the great kitchen, the bakery, the brew house, storage rooms and servants’ sleeping quarters.
- The burgage plot completed by a raised garden, orchards, a dovecote and a ‘castle’ (possibly a mural tower) to the rear of the plot.
- 1610 — Peter Rothe took over House 1 upon his marriage to Lettice Lawless.

- 1612 — John had erected a chapel and a tomb for himself and his wife in St Mary's churchyard.
- 1613 — John Rothe elected mayor of the city.
- 1620 — John Rothe died; Peter inherited the majority of the estate.
- 1639 — Peter was returned as an MP for Kilkenny City.
- 1642 — A legislative assembly, the Confederation of Kilkenny, was held in the city.
- 1642-48 — It is thought that Ecclesiastical Assembly meetings were held at Rothe House.
- 1648 — The Confederation was dissolved.
- 1649 — King Charles I executed.
- 1650 — Kilkenny besieged by Cromwell for a week before surrendering.
- 1653 — The Rothe family was dispossessed and sent to Connaught.
- 1654 — Peter Rothe died.
- 1654 — An order was issued to clear Kilkenny, with its citizens to be 'transplanted' to Connaught.
- 1654 — Civil Survey undertaken; records the northern end of High Street as 'North Quarter'.
- 1662 — The Duke of Ormonde was granted most of the housing stock in Irishtown and Hightown. This was disputed by the Corporation but settled in his favour in 1676.
- Rothe House was restored to Peter's eldest daughter, Rose.
- Rose married Richard Shee Fitz Marcus. Their son, Marcus Shee of Walsheshays (Sheestown), is known to have been in possession of the house in 1690.
- 1691 — Richard Shee Fitz Marcus outlawed as a Jacobite. Some debate whether Rothe House was confiscated by the State, as Richard managed to retain other properties.
- 1701 — Rothe House was owned by the Duke of Ormonde but leased to Abel Butler.
- c. 1720 — The 'Coal Market' replaced the 'North Quarter' for the current Parliament Street.
- 1727 — Rothe House let by Thomas Butler of Kilkenny to a William Johnson of Finglas. The lease records that the garden and orchard were still in existence.
- 1758 — Outshots were built from House 1 against the north boundary extending westward beyond the east wall of House 2.
- c. 1803-1810 — Some of the rooms in House 2 were being used as a private school run by George Buchanan. Michael and John Banim attended the school.

- 1811 — A lease stated that Mary Butler, a widow from Pottlerath, had originally leased the property to Buchanan and was then in the process of granting a 19-year lease to Andrew Wolfe, from whom the 19th-century name for the house — ‘Wolf’s Arch’ — derives.
- 1830 — The front part of the house (presumably House 1) was occupied by Ester Westerman.
- 1841 — The 1758 outshots from House 1 against the north boundary were further extended westward beyond House 3, where a wall now enclosed the garden.
- 1843 — The Willoughbys were in possession of Rothe House. The date is unclear, but it was the Willoughbys who erected the shop front on either side of the arch.
- 1854-55 — Richard Preston took down and repaired the chimneys of Rothe House at his own expense as they were in a dilapidated and dangerous condition.
- 1850s — The house and cellars were being sub-leased to numerous tenants. In addition, the valuation records dealt separately with the front and the back of the house, with the front being dealt with as three properties, numbers 36, 37 and 38 Coal Market.
- 1860 — Coal Market renamed ‘Parliament Street’ after the Confederate Parliament of 1641-48.
- 1884 — Rothe House was declared ‘unfit for human habitation’ (James, 1884) as the site was in a ‘filthy and dangerous condition’.
- Late 19th century — Rothe House continued as a school. Houses 2 and 3 were roofless ruins. The garden and orchard were divided into two gardens and leased separately.
- 1896-7 — The Willoughby family ‘conveyed and assigned to Timothy O’Hanrahan houses and premises at Wolfe’s Arch’.
- 1899 — Timothy O’Hanrahan carried out a restoration programme which probably extended House 2 laterally and vertically. The Gaelic League transferred to Rothe House. For a short period, the former Kilkenny Archaeological Society (later the Royal Society of Antiquaries Ireland) exhibited their artefact collection in the house.
- 1901 — Census of Population Returns for Parliament Street West Side and Wolf’s Arch were returned separately. Wolf’s Arch was uninhabited. The return for Parliament Street West Side showed that O’Hanrahan and Michael McGrath inhabited the property.
- 1911 — Census shows nil returns for both Parliament Street West Side and Wolf’s Arch, indicating that the property was uninhabited.
- 1962 — O’Hanrahan’s heir sold the site jointly to the Kilkenny Archaeological Society and Mr Brennan.
- 1960s — Restoration of House 1 by the late Percy Le Clerc of the OPW.

- 1966 — The Kilkenny Archaeological Society officially opened Rothe House to the public.
- 1980 — The Kilkenny Archaeological Society became the sole owners of Rothe House.
- 1996 — The Kilkenny Archaeological Society completed the restoration of House 3.

4. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 DEFINITIONS AND CRITERIA FOR SIGNIFICANCE

The process of assessing cultural significance used in this study is derived from the *ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (Burra Charter)*. Article 1.1 of the *Burra Charter* defines *cultural significance* as ‘the aesthetic, historic, scientific or social values for past, present or future generations’. These were enumerated more as examples than a prescriptive list, and J. S. Kerr has maintained that ‘questions of significance should be tailored to each project after the assessor has analysed the... evidence’.

Thus the significance of Rothe House has been considered on the following criteria:

1	Urban Setting/Context	The importance of the structure within its urban townscape setting.
2	Historical and Archaeological	The importance of the place as evidence for understanding the past, for understanding ourselves, and to provide a context for the trends we experience today. a) Group value b) Documentation c) Diversity of features d) Potential for research/interpretation
3	Architectural	The creative and technical architectural accomplishments. Normally this is directly linked to the authenticity of the fabric of the structures. a) Rarity b) Survival/condition/authenticity
4	Museum and Archive Collections	The importance of the artefact and costume collections to inform about the past and to serve as an educational resource (see above). a) Intrinsic importance b) Link to Rothe Family/House
5	The House and Garden: Tourism, Education, and Presentation	The potential of the site to contribute to our understanding, to act as a focal point for educational, leisure and pleasure activities a) Potential for education/interpretation b) Potential as a Tourist attraction
6	Kilkenny Community / Social Value	The importance of Rothe House to the KAS a) For education b) For interpretation Community regard or value, and as a symbolic focus for identity.
7	KAS – Value	The importance of Rothe House to the KAS, which restored the houses and has used them as headquarters for half a century, as a symbol of identity.

Table 1: Criteria for Considering Significance

4.2 DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

One of the key elements of a Conservation Plan is its assessment of how important each element of a site is in terms of the criteria listed above. The means of doing so will be idiosyncratic to each site, but common to most will

be some form of relative hierarchy. The use of an elaborate system of scores is avoided here because it is prone to misinterpretation and lends a false sense of precision to a subjective process. Instead, a relative hierarchy has been used which helps to clarify the issues, but which does not impose a numerical value. It is recognised that assessing significance will always be a subjective process based upon current information. The current assessment of significance will undoubtedly change over the years — one reason for reviewing the plan on a regular basis. The following six-rung ladder of significance has been adopted for Rothe House.

Sites or features of exceptional/ international significance or which contain elements with a significance beyond national boundaries
Sites or features of considerable/national significance
Sites or features of some/regional significance
Sites or features of limited/local significance
Sites or features of unknown significance
Site or feature of no significance

Table 2: Ladder of Significance

Insofar as possible, significance has been assessed objectively, based on the intrinsic importance of the element. It is often the case that people's perceptions of the significance of an element are based on limited understanding — some elements may be far more important than many visitors or residents are aware. However, it is also true that some people and organisations may place a higher value on an element than might be objectively ascribed; if these people are in positions of influence, their perceptions carry weight. In the discussion below, 'intrinsic significance' is used except where otherwise noted.

4.3 URBAN SETTING/CONTEXT OF ROTHE HOUSE

The present urban setting/context of Rothe House is considered to be nationally significant because of the wide range of original post-medieval features which survive in good condition. These are discussed at greater length below.

The burgage plot on which Rothe House was built survives intact. This may not be unique, but there can be few in such an unaltered state. Therefore it is likely to be of national importance. In addition, the medieval city wall forms part of the curtilage of the Rothe House complex and is recognised as being of national significance.

It is significant that the Rothe House complex has survived the historical turmoil of the history of Ireland — the Cromwellian Campaigns, the Georgian redevelopment programmes, the Great Famine, 19th-century industrialisation and development, and considerable intervention in the 20th century.

The configuration of the original Rothe House development — that is, the consecutive building sequence of John Rothe's three houses — has survived intact. Rothe's sequential building programme is significant, as he deliberately built three independent houses rather than extending the first house to accommodate the needs of his growing family. In this, he followed the pattern of development chosen by his wife's family (the Archers) in their arrangement of

the Archer house fronting High Street West and the subsequent house built behind it, now known as ‘The Hole in the Wall’.

It is significant that the house was built by one of the oligarchy of c. ten families who controlled Kilkenny throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, and during the first half of the 17th century. The development of Rothe House took place at the peak of the oligarchy.

Rothe House has not survived unchanged, but remains the most complete of a group of about seven houses currently known to survive from the same period (Table 3). These were built by members of some of the families who were sovereigns during the period of oligarchy.

Family/House
‘The Hole in the Wall’ High Street W, built 1582-4. (<i>Archer family</i>)
Shee Alms House, Rose Inn Street W, built 1582. (<i>Shee family</i>)
Rothe House, Parliament Street 1594 – 1610. (<i>Rothe family</i>)
The Bridge House, John Street S – late 16th century. Survives in part. (<i>family unknown</i>)
Kyteler’s Inn, St Kierans Street E – 1473-1702. (<i>Kyteler family</i>)
Deanery, Coach Road W – 1614. (<i>family unknown</i>)
21 Parliament Street – late 16th/17th century. Survives in part. (<i>family unknown</i>)

Table 3: Houses in Kilkenny which survive from the same period as Rothe House

In addition to the identification of the buildings listed in Table 3, a brief and cursory survey of the centre of Kilkenny revealed that several other examples of 17th-century architecture may still survive behind later façades (see Table 4). These structures were largely identified through visible period features, e.g. window mouldings, chimneys, chimney pots etc.

Langton House, High Street E – 1609 location uncertain – this may be Pordylos Restaurant?
Shee House, High St, E - c1600 - this may be Pordylos Restaurant?
Berkeley House, Lower Patrick Street
A small house to the rear of Berkeley House
Building on the SW corner of High Street and Walkin Street
Building on the NW corner of High Street and William Street
Buildings on Parliament Street – these may be the Shee House at Parliament Street E built in 1608 and demolished/rebuilt in c1861

Table 4: Buildings in Kilkenny behind which earlier façades may survive

4.4 ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Despite the fact that repeated restorations and rebuilding have diminished the authenticity of much of the fabric, the architecture of Rothe House is considered to be nationally significant. Its architectural significance is discussed at greater length below.

Rothe House is a prime example of a house of Kilkenny’s influential merchant class. It was built in the English Renaissance style which was introduced to the south-east of Ireland by the 10th Earl of Ormond in the 1560s (Murtagh, 1993).

Although all three houses, their associated out-buildings and the garden/orchard fell into a considerable state of decay and disrepair over the centuries, the

original plan and basic configuration of the Rothe House group survives. This survival is rare — as a group, the buildings have served the many purposes of single and multi-family occupancies of the last four centuries.

The process of decay has been reversed by several campaigns of alteration, repair and restoration undertaken during the 1890s (House 2), the 1960s (House 1), and the 1990s (House 3).

Of the elements dating to c. 1600, the street elevation survives in its original form in many ways. Elsewhere, later restorations have all been hypothetical to some degree, with the consequent likelihood of some falsification of the interior, and in some case the exterior appearance.

The street elevation is arcaded, creating a covered area which may once have formed part of a longer arcaded thoroughfare at pavement level. This area may have been used for trading in association with the ground floor rooms (Plate 1). The best surviving comparison is with the 'Rows' in Chester, England (Brown, 1999). The original carved carboniferous limestone columns of the arcade survive. A passageway through the central arch leads to a courtyard at the rear (Plates 3 and 4). Set in the masonry above the passageway is the stone-carved coat of arms of John Rothe Fitz-Piers and his wife Rose Archer, dated 1594. Some worked stone window dressings also survive. At pavement level, a flight of steps leads down to a cellar below the southern arch of the arcade. A second cellar is accessed from the ground floor room on the north side of the house. Fragments of a flight of possibly original steps survive, leading from this cellar to the pavement. The cellars (or cellar, if they were originally one) are not large and may not have been built to store large quantities of goods. It is significant that John Rothe willed to his wife '...ye great cellar under ye forestreete building of my saide house...' for her own use, together with the room above and the staircase from the room to the cellar.

Some original elements survive within the complex of buildings such as the carved stone fireplaces and the remains of the great kitchen fireplace and bread oven. These fireplaces give an indication of how the associated rooms are likely to have been arranged.

The original well survives on the south side of the second courtyard (Plate 5), with a second (undated) well in the former OPW site.

Various dressed stones survive *ex situ*, including a complete stone window surround, from No. 1 Parliament Street standing near the well, and a pile of surplus fragments in the garden at present part of the OPW yard. These may be left over from the House 3 restoration or from earlier campaigns elsewhere in Houses 1 and 2, or alternatively from other houses in the area.

Beyond the enclosing wall of the third courtyard, the area that once contained John Rothe's gardens, castle and dovecote remains defined by the surviving walls of the burgage plot. There are many breaches in these enclosing walls, currently in a state of considerable disrepair. Although large sections of the garden have been concreted over and several buildings of a temporary/semi-temporary nature have been erected on the site, it is significant that these areas remain largely open, having escaped permanent redevelopment.

Archaeological recording, mortar sampling, and analysis during future repairs might identify phasing and chronology.

4.5 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The historical and archaeological elements of Rothe House are considered to be nationally significant because of the wide range of features dating from c. 1202 to the 1650s which survive in good condition. The fabric of the structure, much altered by rebuilding, is nonetheless legible archaeologically and therefore this significance is undiminished. The significance of the archaeological deposits is discussed below.

The burgage plot within which Rothe House stands predates the construction of the house and belongs to the laying-out of this part of Irishtown in c. 1202-18. The plot may well contain a wealth of archaeological remains from the 13th-17th centuries, as well as traces of John Rothe's garden and evidence of later uses (Plates 6 and 7).

Rothe House is one of a very few largely intact merchant's houses dating from the late 16th-early 17th centuries surviving extant in Ireland. Extensive alterations and changes have been made to the fabric of the structures — particularly in the 1890s, 1960s and 1990s. The authenticity of the fabric of the structures is low. As a consequence, if the individual elements are considered separately, the degree of alterations could result in quite low ranking in significance. However, its structural evolution is relatively well documented and potentially explicable through archaeological recording and, as one of few such structures surviving in Ireland, its group value is high; coupled with public access, it assumes national significance.

There are likely to be significant archaeological deposits below House 2, House 3 (as demonstrated in Archaeological Development Services report, 1991), the three courtyards, and the works depot to the rear of the plot where the Rothes' garden was located. Over time, archaeological investigations could add greatly to our knowledge of the early history of Kilkenny during the medieval period, the continuity in use of the plot into the 16th-17th centuries, the nature of trade and business during those centuries, and the Rothe family.

The walls of the burgage plot, one of which is on the site of the medieval city wall, are some of the few surviving that may date to the earliest foundation of this part of Kilkenny. The authenticity of the fabric of the walls is unknown, but would repay detailed investigation. The significance of these structures is potentially national.

A significant amount of documentary information has been loosely drawn together above which would repay more detailed study and analysis.

4.6 MUSEUM AND ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS

There are several collections housed at Rothe House which consist of:

- An artefact collection
- Costume and textile collections
- A painting collection
- A library and genealogy records

These museum and archive collections vary from locally to nationally significant. The artefact and paintings collections are of local/regional significance; the costume and textile collections are of national significance; and the contents of the library and the genealogical material are of national significance.

The Kilkenny Archaeological Society has accumulated the collections over a period of 60 years. It appears that three different documentation systems were used for logging and recording items; the degree of duplication and even the full extent of the collections are unknown. There are also various miscellaneous objects which may form collections; the extent of these is also unknown.

The artefact collection is representative of the history of the region and is thus regionally significant. Rothe House does not have a clearly identified collections policy and until recently, artefacts were collected on an *ad hoc* basis. This has now been slightly refined whereby only items with a Kilkenny city/county provenance are collected. However, the relevance of the artefacts to Rothe House or to the Rothe family is limited, if not negligible. There is the potential significance for some elements of this collection to be used as an educational resource, with a selection of artefacts set aside to form a 'handling collection'.

There are no publicly accessible collections of costumes or textiles outside of Dublin; what is on display in Dublin is limited in scope. Springhill in Londonderry houses a fine and extensive costume collection which is far more 'glamorous' (Maguire, pers. comm.) than the one in Rothe House. The Rothe House costume and textile collections (Plate 8) are judged to be nationally significant, and would make a worthy focus for a national collection. A conscious effort was made to begin this collection in the early 1980s. Initially, it formed a small selection of late 19th-century ladies' gowns; accessories, textiles and children's and gentlemen's clothing were added later (Johnston, 1994). The date of the collections ranges from the late 18th century to the 20th century. In 1994, the collection numbered in the region of one thousand items (Johnston, 1994). The textile section is extensive and is representative of Irish and continental textiles ranging from lace cuffs and collars to linen table covers and bedspreads (Johnston, 1994). The range of this collection is quite broad. All the items have an Irish provenance. The display and storage conditions at Rothe House do not do justice to the collections and are wholly inadequate, threatening their long-term survival. Much like the artefact collections, the relevance of the textiles and costumes to Rothe House is limited.

The collection of paintings appears to be small-to-medium in size, with most of them on display (Plate 9). The full extent of the collection does not appear to



Plate 8: Costume Collection



Plate 9: House 1, First Floor (Phelan Room) with paintings on display



Plate 10: Library

be documented. They cover a wide variety of topics. Their relevance to Rothe House is limited and the link to Kilkenny tenuous.



Plate 11: KAS/FAS Genealogy Project

The library and other paper records form a large archive of material of unique national significance. Its content is mostly Kilkenny orientated, containing: journals, books and newspapers of Kilkenny interest; books on Irish history, topography, maps, genealogy; the family papers of the landed gentry; and a small photographic collection (Plate 10). Its curation is inadequate, as the lack of appropriate storage conditions and conservation measures have left the paper archive open to bright light and fluctuating temperatures which lead to desiccation. Much of the material (e.g. the historic newspapers) is too delicate for everyday use and should be digitised or microfiched. In addition, there does not appear to be a complete listing of the contents of the library. The collection could be enhanced through proper documentation and wider access.

The genealogy material has mostly been computerised through the joint KAS/FÁS project (Plate 11) and potentially provides regionally/nationally significant material. Combined with the rest of the library papers, it could form the nucleus for a 'one-stop shop' for historical information on Kilkenny and its former inhabitants.

4.7 TOURISM, EDUCATION AND PRESENTATION

The Rothe House complex is currently considered by tourist organisations to be highly (*i.e.* regionally) significant, but with the potential to be nationally significant as a prospective heritage resource. The tourism agencies are all agreed on this. This significance could only be realised if fairly radical changes in management and administration were to be made. In addition, the covenant that accompanied the Bord Fáilte/European Community funding for the restoration of House 3 specifically requires this structure to be open to the public and used for heritage interpretation.

In its present state, the garden has no real significance. However, there is considerable national potential for archaeological investigations to reveal evidence about urban gardens and orchards of the late 16th and early 17th

centuries. If the garden were restored to a city merchant's garden of c. late 16th-early 17th century (informed by the archaeological investigations), it has considerable potential significance as a tourist attraction and an educational facility. In addition, if the wall of courtyard 3 could be reduced, this would provide a view of the gardens from House 3 and reintegrate the house with the rest of the plot. If this were done, there would be considerable consequences for the significance and value of the site as a heritage attraction.

The artefact and costume collections are probably not significant tourist attractions in their own right, but would make worthy additions to a larger collection if displayed in more appropriate conditions.

The library and other paper records form a large archive of material of national significance. Access to the library is currently restricted to members of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society. The library is staffed only one evening a week at present. Access to the general public is therefore very limited.

From an educational perspective, Rothe House could have regional significance as a facility for short courses in subjects like history, geography etc. It could also be a venue for 'Life Long Learning' programmes, as well as resurrecting links with the local universities by providing specialist courses.

4.8 KILKENNY COMMUNITY/SOCIAL VALUE

It would appear from our consultations that Rothe House is considered to be a very important city monument and periodically used for a wide variety of regionally significant activities. It is a well-loved institution in Kilkenny, but perhaps more as an 'ideal' than as a place that is regularly used. This is probably best translated as 'locally' or 'regionally' significant, but the consensus seems to be that there is potential for this significance to be greatly increased.

Potential community use is limited by the size and layout of the rooms; for example, the ground floor of House 2 is almost exclusively used by the Gaelic League. The likelihood that the Heritage Council will vacate House 3 opens up many opportunities to reconsider the current uses. The Gaelic League's occupancy of the ground floor of House 2 could, for example, be transferred elsewhere in the complex and shared with other organisations so that such an easily accessible room is not left vacant for the vast majority of the time.

The garden is currently of limited significance (see Section 4.7). However, if taken into consideration within the burgage plot, it would require protection through city policies and planning/development controls, as these elements are potentially of considerable national significance.

4.9 KILKENNY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Although the Kilkenny Archaeological Society clearly has very mixed feelings and perceptions about Rothe House and the plot within which it sits, Rothe House is of great symbolic and emotional value to them. The Society is justly proud of their accomplishment in achieving the structural restoration of Houses 1 and 3 (and House 2 to a lesser extent). They clearly wish to see Rothe House flourish as a visitor attraction, to the benefit of local citizens, Kilkenny and Ireland as a whole. However, managing the complex places a heavy burden on their

resources. It is felt that the management of Rothe House has come to dominate the Society, to the detriment of its other functions.

4.10 SUMMARY OF OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE

The following table provides a summary of the significance of each of the individual elements within the context of the six-rung ladder approach (see Section 4.2):

Elements of the Rothe House Complex	Level of Significance
House 1	National
Courtyard 1	Regional
House 2	Regional-National
Courtyard 2	Local-Regional
House 3	Regional
Courtyard 3	Local-Regional
Garden	Regional-National
Artefact Collection	Local-Regional
Costume/Textile Collection	National
Paper Archive; Library	National
Paintings Collection	Regional
Genealogy	National
Miscellaneous Collections	Unknown
Burgage Plot	National

Table 5: Summary of Significance

5. ISSUES OF VULNERABILITY

The following discussion is necessarily critical of Rothe House, in the sense that it points out instances where the complex has been threatened in the past or where it could be vulnerable in the future. This must not be taken to be critical — in the sense of attributing blame — to any individuals or organisations. It is recognised that, without the contributions and tireless efforts of Society members over the years, there would now be no Rothe House to discuss. The point to be made is that the coming years mark a turning point in the history of Rothe House (as House 3 and the plot to the rear become available) and therefore represent a great opportunity. In order to make the most of the opportunities, it is necessary to take a dispassionate view of the past, to learn lessons from it, and make plans for the future.

5.1 ISSUES AFFECTING URBAN SETTING

The urban setting of Rothe House is judged to be of national significance for the following reasons:

- The plot on which Rothe House was built originates from the setting out of Irishtown between 1207 and 1231 and still exists intact.
- Dating from 1594, Rothe House was built on the street frontage of the plot and still presents a prominent and unique profile on the main thoroughfare of Parliament Street.
- The site of the original garden still exists.
- Many original post-medieval features remain preserved in good condition.

5.1.1 INSENSITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF SETTING

The house and garden have already suffered from insensitive development of adjacent sites and loss by demolition of sections of original boundary walls. The impact of insensitive development in the past has to a certain extent marred the overall character of the site in terms of visitor experience and its presentation. The site, although surrounded by 4-6m high boundary walls, is overlooked, especially in the ‘gardens’, by a multi-storey car park and a new residential development to the south. Upon entering the ‘gardens’, it is painfully obvious that being overlooked by an oversized modern development does not enrich the experience of visiting a historic property.

The new residential development along Evan’s Lane has also demolished a section of the historic boundary wall which may date to the founding of this part of Kilkenny. Although the demolished wall was to have been reinstated by the developer, this has not been done.

5.1.2 INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

Structural elements of this site may date back to as early as c. 1220. Future development and enhancement of the site as a visitor attraction may leave it vulnerable to unsympathetic development or modification (Plate 12). This must be avoided, as it would notably diminish the significance of the site. Future



Plate 12: Courtyard 2, with well.
Note modern houses overlooking the curtilage wall

changes, developments and other works should be seriously considered, be authentic and add to the integrity of the plot.

The site and setting will remain vulnerable to further insensitive development and loss of original fabric until such time as the essence of the original fabric is respected and valued and planning policies are conservation-led.

5.2 ISSUES AFFECTING ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Rothe House is a nationally significant building and is generally in good structural condition. However, limited and uncoordinated maintenance programmes in the past have rendered some elements of Rothe House vulnerable to external weather conditions, which, if left unchecked, could cause serious damage to the structure (see Section 5.2.2).

5.2.1 AUTHENTICITY AND UNDERSTANDING

The authenticity of Rothe House as a nationally significant building of the Renaissance period has been threatened by many campaigns of alteration, repair and restoration. The three houses as they exist today are the result of restorations undertaken:

- to House 1 in the 1960s
- to House 2 in the 1890s
- to House 3 in the 1990s

The absence of conservation policies is understandable for the works undertaken on House 2 in the 1890s (although the conservation philosophy of William Morris and his Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings [SPAB] would have been well known at the time). The development of such an ideology is reflected in Percy Le Clerc's work to House 1 in the 1960s, but his determined restoration philosophy is at odds with the gentler SPAB approach. The recent work to House 3 is also clearly a restoration rather than a conservation exercise. It is unfortunate that work in the 1990s was undertaken without sufficient regard for the surviving elements of House 3. Although houses 1 and 3 have been restored in the spirit of the original period, some aspects of the external elevations and the interior arrangements are conjectural to a degree. The external and internal arrangements of the 19th-century alterations to House 2 remain generally undisturbed.

Had conservation policies been in place when the most recent Rothe House restoration projects were carried out, it is likely that our knowledge of the original form, structure, materials, interior arrangements, decorative finishes, appearance and use patterns of the house would be richer and more extensive.

The three houses, the garden site and the surviving walls to the burgage plot will remain vulnerable to conjectural restoration until the archaeology of the complex, both above ground and below, is fully understood and conservation-led policies are in place (see also Section 5.3).

5.2.2 MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

The absence of a coherent maintenance programme constitutes a serious vulnerability in the future, especially since this may allow the attention of management to be diverted towards specific one-off opportunities or threats that may arise. This natural tendency must be resisted.

Despite the three major restoration campaigns, elements of Rothe House are showing the detrimental effects of inadequate maintenance, which, if left unchecked, will cause serious damage to the structure. At present, the principal threat is to House 2. The roof coverings, rainwater goods and windows are in very poor condition, permitting a continuing ingress of water in a number of areas. As a result, the integrity of the roof timbers, the wall heads and the window frames is increasingly vulnerable to decay. This threatens the library collections on the floor below. Unchecked, this threat could extend to the interior furnishings, the costume and textile collections, and electrical services.¹

The windows of House 2 are generally in poor condition and need attention. It must be ensured that any new windows are of an appropriate form, design and materials (timber sash). A report on the condition of the roof timbers and the timber windows, dated August 2000 and commissioned by the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, includes a schedule of remedial works (see Appendix 3). These are generally consistent with current recommendations; the architect responsible has produced a schedule of works (see Appendix 4) which were underway during the final production of this report.

Secondary threats include:

- structural stability of floors in all three houses (see Section 5.2.3)
- ongoing wear and tear
- fire hazards
- unpredictable disasters (see Section 5.6.3)
- health and safety (see Section 5.6.4)

5.2.3 STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS

The structures appear to be vulnerable to misuse through a lack of awareness of the physical constraints of the structures themselves. For example, the loading capacities for the 1960s floors of the first and second floor rooms of House 1 are unknown. This observation is immediately pertinent because visitor traffic has caused ‘spring’ in the floor of the second floor of House 1 (Lanigan Room) which is sufficient to topple artefacts displayed in the cases. The capacities of the various rooms for fire regulations are also unknown, and in the case of the first floor of House 1 and possibly the ground floor of House 2, it is entirely likely that attendance at some of the periodic major events may lead to unsafe numbers of people being present.

Constraints include:

- Floor loadings
- Fire regulations

¹ Such problems were identified prior to the commissioning of this Conservation Plan. House 2 has been re-roofed since this Plan was prepared.

5.3 ISSUES AFFECTING ARCHAEOLOGY: THE BUILDINGS AND THE GARDEN

The historical and archaeological aspects of the Rothe House burgage plot are judged to be of national significance. However, while collating information for the preparation of this Plan, it became abundantly clear that information about the site was dispersed and disjointed. This Plan provides a brief historical summary based on the information gathered to date, but it also illustrates that the significance of the structures and archaeological remains are vulnerable to poorly informed management actions. In order to maximise the future collection of information, links must be maintained with the maintenance plan and any future development.

5.3.1 RE-INTEGRATING THE BURGAGE PLOT

The original burgage plot and all three of Rothe's houses survive. This survival of houses and plot is very rare in Kilkenny and Ireland generally. Unless the structures and plot are integrated into one functioning unit, they will remain vulnerable to division and piecemeal loss. Further, the recent acquisition of the plot offers the opportunity to capitalise on this rare survival and transform the present OPW builders' yard into an attractive presentation of its historic appearance.

5.3.2 UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORY

Rothe House sits on a plot which is over 800 years old. Archaeologically and historically, the site holds information which has the potential to enhance both the current knowledge and its significance. Indeed it also has the potential for highlighting gaps in current knowledge and providing opportunities for targeting specific areas for research for the plot, as well as contributing to regional/national research agendas. There is a need for active research and investigation to enhance our understanding.

If left in its current state, the information is extremely vulnerable to:

- Deterioration (library conditions etc.)
- Remaining in the individual knowledge-base of KAS members
- Loss or dispersal

5.3.3 PUBLICATION

Work on the history of the house should be published, thereby disseminating information to the general public and the wider academic world. This will add to the knowledge of late Tudor merchant houses and the lives of the middle classes at that time. Greater awareness of the site and what it has to offer will increase its public profile, which could provide useful support in the future.

5.4 ISSUES AFFECTING MUSEUM AND ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS

Rothe House maintains several collections of varying significance: the artefact and paintings collections are of local/regional significance. Some individual

paintings are nationally important and are unique. The costume and textile collections are of national significance, and some items may be unique. The archive and other paper material in the library are of national significance. In addition, the Kilkenny Archaeological Society has also accumulated genealogical material that is judged to be of national significance.

5.4.1 RELEVANCE OF COLLECTIONS

The collections appear to bear little relevance to Rothe House or to the Rothe family. The current manner of collection has a wide remit, encompassing all items relating to County Kilkenny. The result of this has been a deluge of various artefacts loosely grouped into collections, but without any direct bearing on the house. The care and retention of many of these artefacts may be better suited to other accredited museums with the appropriate resources.

5.4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AND CONSERVATION

All of these collections, and the un-catalogued artefacts, are vulnerable to, and at risk from, inappropriate storage conditions, leaving items open to deterioration. Absence of environmental monitoring may leave items open to UV damage, insect and bacterial infestations, drying out, rotting etc. The collections are also vulnerable to misuse and overuse, especially in the case of some of the fragile volumes in the library. The majority of these points have been left unchecked in the past due largely to the lack of professional expertise, knowledge, and funds within the Kilkenny Archaeological Society.

5.4.3 DOCUMENTATION

Over time, the use of different documentation systems by various personnel has led to the absence of a complete catalogue. If items were to go missing for any reason, it would be impossible to provide the authorities with specific details. This was the case in the last few years, when the house was burgled. Documentation is essential if Rothe House is to continue in its current capacity as a regional repository. Once items have been donated (whether permanently or as temporary exhibitions), it is the responsibility of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society to ensure the long-term care and survival of those objects whilst they are in its care for future generations.

5.4.4 COLLECTION-SPECIFIC VULNERABILITIES

ARTEFACTS

The artefact collection is vulnerable to all the general points made above. The full size and nature of this collection appears to be unknown. Although many — perhaps a majority — of the items do appear to have been accessioned, the location of the items catalogued on the record cards needs to be confirmed. In addition, the nature and extent of any conservation work undertaken needs to be catalogued thoroughly. The collection appears to be compromised by storage and display conditions. The lack of environmental monitoring may have led to deterioration.

COSTUMES AND TEXTILES

The costume and textile collections do not seem to have been catalogued; their full extent appears to be unknown. The costumes are in three locations: those on display; those in storage in the back of the display case in House 2 (Plate 8); and those stored personally by the chairman of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society. Inappropriate storage conditions and the lack of care/maintenance and monitoring of the costumes and textiles may be compromising this collection.

PAINTINGS

The collection of paintings at Rothe House has not been catalogued. In addition, although conservation work has been carried out to restore some of the paintings, the extent of this work on individual paintings has not been detailed.

LIBRARY

The library currently forms an exceptional resource of national significance and would benefit from refurbishing and relocating to a more accessible space. Its contents need to be stored within environmentally secure conditions, ideally within the complex (Plate 13). The quality, quantity and the varied nature of the information it contains on County Kilkenny has the potential to be redefined as an important records office. Additionally, it could provide a much wider service for academics and the public alike, generating additional income in the process. However, the resources to provide this service need to be carefully considered.

GENEALOGY

The genealogy information, accumulated by the Kilkenny Archaeological Society and collated and computerised by the FÁS project, is nationally significant. It provides a good service and earns enough income to sustain its current level of activity (Rev. O'Doherty, pers. comm.). It could, however, be up-graded, with public access improved to provide a better service with greater public awareness of its existence. In addition, if its role were more focussed, gaps in the information currently held could be targeted for further research and integration. The genealogy and library services are complementary.

5.5 ISSUES AFFECTING TOURISM, EDUCATION AND PRESENTATION

The best means of ensuring the continued conservation of historic structures such as Rothe House is through continued occupation and use. However, the reverse of this is that the structure becomes vulnerable to poor management, as conservation issues become secondary to current activities and functions. The use of spaces within a building complex is something which develops over time, often without a coherent plan.



Plate 13: Library Storage Facilities

5.5.1 ROTHE HOUSE

HOUSE 1

The first space which visitors encounter is the shop in House 1. This area is attractive and adequate, although separating visitor reception and payment of entrance fees from book and souvenir purchases might be beneficial. However, the entrance door is tucked away just within the arched passage (with a closed wrought-iron gate just beyond), giving the appearance of a private out-of-the-way entrance. An entrance with more 'presence' on the pavement might be more effective in attracting visitors.

The Heritage Council currently uses the ground floor and cellar, to the south of the entrance passage in House 1, as storerooms. These spaces will be vacated when the Council moves to alternative accommodation. In front of these rooms, the covered arches currently provide a semi-private area that all too often shelters vagrants and collects litter. In front of this, the cellar access (which is not original) attracts litter where it steps down from street level.

To the north of the entrance, the Kilkenny Archaeological Society shop occupies the ground floor, with video presentations of Rothe House in the second cellar. The rooms on the first and second floors are used for displaying furniture, exhibitions etc.

The ground floor rooms front the street, offering reasonably good means of access, and ought to be used for functions where maximum access is important. The window displays in both the ground floor rooms (particularly on the south) fail to attract visitor interest, compounded by poor lighting and presentation.

HOUSE 2

The Gaelic League currently leases the ground floor of House 2 (Plate 14). The extent of the League's use of this room is unknown, but it is periodic at best. For most of the year, this space stands empty and un-used. In providing this space to an external body, KAS has no use to which this large, reasonably well-appointed and easily accessible room could be put at present. It might be more effective if a number of the periodic users/functions could share a single space; e.g. the Society could also use this room, thereby providing easier access to meetings for older KAS members.

The KAS/FÁS project is currently housed on the first floor. This partnership has been beneficial to the Kilkenny Archaeological Society in terms of compiling a database for the genealogy research. There is no need for the FÁS project to be housed here, although it is understood to be ending soon.

HOUSE 3

The restoration of House 3 was partly funded by the EC with a grant of c. IR£162,000 (total cost of IR£500,000). South East Tourism recognised Rothe House as the interpretive centre for Kilkenny, and to this end arranged the restoration grant. A condition of the grant was that the building should serve as a heritage interpretation centre. To date, this condition has not been honoured

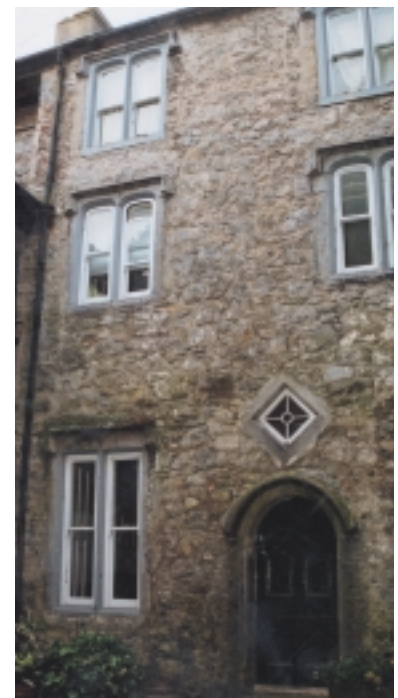


Plate 14: Front Elevation of House 2, with ground floor entrance to Gaelic League room

and the departure of the Heritage Council could now provide the necessary opportunity. Kilkenny is recognised as both a ‘Medieval’ City and as a ‘heritage capital’ for Ireland, largely due to the density of historic buildings and heritage attractions. Rothe House could potentially fulfil the role not currently served by other local heritage attractions — that of telling the story of Kilkenny. By not complying with the conditions stipulated for the use of EC funds, Rothe House leaves itself financially vulnerable to having to repay the grant.

5.5.2 UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Since Rothe House is a nationally significant building and tourist attraction, consideration should be given to universal access. Without such arrangements, a proportion of visitors will come away disappointed. Frustration can lead to poor publicity. Impending legislation will make accessibility to all buildings open to the public mandatory.

Following Government policy to adopt the principles of the Barcelona Declaration, 1995, made on the occasion of the European Congress ‘The City and the Disabled’, an Irish Disability Act is scheduled to be introduced in the Dáil in the near future. This Act will provide the framework for the implementation of ‘accessibility for all’. Commissioning an accessibility audit would provide Rothe House and the Kilkenny Archaeological Society with the basis for decision-making and implementation of a programme to provide universal access.

As a complex of nationally significant structures, Rothe House is visually attractive to the arriving visitor. The continued survival of Rothe House is very likely to depend upon attracting visitors (consider the interviews with all stakeholders; see Appendix 1). The presentation and marketing of the complex are consequently of primary importance. Conversely, poor presentation and the lack of a marketing strategy make the complex vulnerable to a drop in visitor numbers and income.

5.5.3 TOURISM

Rothe House is located on the main thoroughfare in Kilkenny and is midway between the two most significant and popular tourist attractions in Kilkenny: Kilkenny Castle and St Canice’s Cathedral. The current tourist trail runs from the castle to the cathedral, and vice versa, without stopping at Rothe House. In comparison to these two sites, Rothe House has a relatively low community profile as well as a lower national profile. If the profile of the house is not raised through marketing as an enjoyable experience of a historic property of national significance, the house is vulnerable to being omitted as one of Kilkenny’s main attractions. Without promotion, Rothe House will become relatively forgotten and its significance diminished.

5.5.4 VISUAL AESTHETICS

Rothe House’s exterior maintains the presence of a 17th-century stone building amongst its rendered neighbours. On closer inspection, window displays on the ground floor (the shop and Heritage Council storeroom) look tired and worn. A more attractive window display may encourage passers-by to stop and enter the shop. The front entrance is ambiguous and fails to attract visitors.

VISITOR CIRCULATION

The arrangement of the spaces in the Rothe House complex is disorientating and complicated for the visitor. There is no natural progression through the buildings, the museum or the collections. The opportunity to create a centre that is authentic, interesting, informative, inspiring, relaxing and peaceful must be grasped. Not doing so would leave Rothe House vulnerable to a new cycle of potentially unsympathetic uses.

Upon entry, the shop forms a pleasing diversion before beginning the main tour. The route taken through the complex is disorientating, not allowing the visitor to make any sense of the development of the site or the original uses of the rooms (e.g. the first few steps the visitor takes are through the back of the shop and across the courtyard to reach the first floor of House 1; see Plate 15). To compound this, although the literature available about the house is quite good (the leaflets and the booklet), none provides a map showing the route taken around the complex. There is also inadequate signage to direct visitors around the complex or to specific facilities.



Plate 15: Stairs in Courtyard 1 giving access to first floor of House 1 (Phelan Room)

5.5.6 LACK OF FOCUS

The visitor reaches the first floor to find this attractive room laid out in no particular period or theme. The objects, paintings and furniture are all of different dates and there appears to be an overall lack of focus for the room. Subsequent rooms similarly lack focus, an impression which permeates the tour. Generally, the tour leaves the visitor barely aware of the history of the house, its former occupants or uses and generally lacks any cohesion. The focus seems to be to display the collection of objects rather than to present the house. The house and collections are unconnected. The positive first impression is not maintained after entry and touring the complex; this may lead to visitor disappointment.

5.5.7 EDUCATION

In the past, the Kilkenny Archaeological Society has presented lectures and summer courses for teachers on a variety of topics, although this element has declined recently. Rothe House has the potential to link in with current learning initiatives and specialise in the provision of a series of programmes aimed at schools, adult education, teachers and academics, thereby widening access to information about Rothe House, the Rothe family, Kilkenny etc. Without community links, awareness of Rothe House will be limited at a local level. This would leave Rothe House potentially vulnerable to reduced public profile, diminished attendance and income.

5.6 ISSUES AFFECTING MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL STRATEGIES

The management and administration of Rothe House underpin all of the other activities and functions discussed above. Due to this central role, management effectiveness is critical in offsetting vulnerability to any or all of the individual threats. It is therefore valuable to consider reactive management as

‘vulnerability’ in its own right which could lead to the deterioration of Society assets (*i.e.* building conditions, collection conditions and financial accounts).

5.6.1 **ROTHE HOUSE MANAGEMENT**

Kilkenny Archaeological Society committee members determine all decisions, including the day-to-day management of Rothe House, at periodic meetings. As a direct result, management decisions are slow and may be hampered by the daily availability of committee members who involve themselves in detailed implementation. The management of the complex includes functions of: site management, administration, organisation of staff, genealogy enquiries, shop stock etc. and any of the house’s other functions.

The unsatisfactory management arrangements for the running of the house leave the affairs of Rothe House and the Kilkenny Archaeological Society increasingly vulnerable to protracted delays, with no one person directly responsible and authorised to take action. Decision-making and communication lines are unclear and confused.

Due to a lack of strategy and structure, the Kilkenny Archaeological Society is in a reactive role, with a lack of resources and limited staffing. It would be far more effective and productive if specific roles and functions were designed for a team which would administer the house, meeting on a frequent and regular basis. A professionally qualified Site Manager, supported by a dedicated team of professionals and volunteers, could run the house and carry out specific roles/functions, *e.g.* the day-to-day marketing, conservation, exhibitions, secretarial etc. to name a few, thus ensuring the smooth running of the house.

A new management structure is essential in providing the impetus for the introduction of a new pattern of use for Rothe House and meeting its resulting needs.

5.6.2 **BUDGET AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

It appears that the Kilkenny Archaeological Society operates on a rolling fund which covers a number of items (Table 6).

Income	Expenditure (major and/or recurrent)
Rent (from: HC, FAS, Gaelic League)	Maintenance and conservation
Legacies	Running Costs
Membership fees	Capital expenditure <i>e.g.</i> lighting, IT
Shop sales	Publishing annual review
Entrance fees	Salaries
Special events	Rates
Genealogy enquiries	Stock
Grants (<i>e.g.</i> Kilkenny Corporation)	Sundries

Table 6: KAS Income and Expenditure

As far as we are aware, Rothe House has no set annual (revenue) budget and no clear distinction between running or capital expenditures. Incomplete knowledge of basic running costs for the house and all it entails (*e.g.* a capital budget, see Table 6) could leave the Society with financial problems. Once a vision of the future of Rothe House has been agreed and adopted (see Section 5.8), a Business Plan should be developed. This would set in place the

opportunities to raise finances and to structure a financial marketing strategy and provide financial support for specific functions and projects (e.g. conservation and cataloguing of library collections). This could provide for the maintenance of the buildings and the collections. Without a Business Plan, activities and services would continue to be limited to available finances, resulting in diminishing assets (e.g. buildings, collections and financial savings). Once a budget has been established, grant-giving bodies could then be targeted to provide financial support.

5.6.3 DISASTER PLANNING

Rothe House, like all buildings, is vulnerable to unexpected disasters such as a major fire. This raises the issues of fire detection and fire prevention. Although the Fire Department carried out a fire audit five years ago, its recommendations do not appear to have been acted upon. The audit noted the following:

- only two smoke alarms observed in the whole of the complex
- only one fire extinguisher (which has not been serviced)
- no emergency lighting
- no exit signage
- no fire assembly points
- no evacuation route
- no evacuation procedures for staff, visitors or collections
- no way of accounting for the number of individuals in the complex at any given time.
- no fire drills
- no complete record of contents held securely off-site

House 3, while it is rented by the Heritage Council, has its own fire evacuation procedures. Since House 3 has only one means of exit (through the courtyards and out onto Parliament Street), it is essential that a combined disaster plan is established; otherwise the whole complex is vulnerable.

5.6.4 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Visitors and staff are currently at risk from a number of health and safety hazards:

- apparent absence of Health and Safety Plan although there is a Health and Safety Officer
- absence of fire/smoke detection system
- apparent absence of trained/certified First Aid staff
- no First Aid kit
- lack of emergency exit signage
- staff do not know how to use fire extinguishers

- lack of adequate protection on stairs (balustrades)
- irregular courtyard surfaces — slippery and forming a trip hazard
- windows on north side of Administrator's office are barred
- uncertainty regarding Public Indemnity and Employers' Liability insurances

5.6.5 SECURITY OF BUILDINGS AND CONTENTS

Security arrangements for Rothe House appear to be inadequate.

There is no formal documentation of the entry and exit of visitors, although the shop keeps a basic tally of visitor numbers. The gate is ostensibly locked, but as a consequence of tenancy, FÁS and the Heritage Council both have keys to the gate. The negative result of this is that the gate is not always locked when the shop opens (at 10:00am), allowing individuals to enter and remain unaccounted for during their visit.

Rothe House does have a burglar alarm which is linked to the alarm company in Dublin and the Gardaí. Sensors are situated in House 1, House 2 and the intermediate outscale. The toilet block is not linked to the system. There are two key holders.

There are no alarms on any of the display cases; only the cases in House 1 can be locked.

The first floor of House 1 (Phelan Room) is the only area to have closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras linked to the Administrator's office.

5.6.6 MANAGEMENT PLAN

The many aspects of the future of Rothe House must not be treated in isolation. In order to avoid management chaos, a heritage attraction such as this needs an integrated management plan which ensures that all aspects of the operation are mutually supporting and in harmony with each other.

5.7 ISSUES AFFECTING KAS AND COMMUNITY VALUE

The foregoing discussion has enumerated a number of issues which affect the Kilkenny Archaeological Society and the value of Rothe House to the wider community. One further issue that requires mention here concerns the management of Rothe House and the means of mitigating conflicts of interest between the Kilkenny Archaeological Society and other uses, principally tourism/public access. It should be clear that Rothe House holds a very special place in the hearts and minds of the Society — it is no less than a symbol of their identity and the product of 50 years of concerted and highly successful work. Nonetheless, the future of Rothe House will depend upon going outside the Society — visitors and funds generated by tourists will be the means of ensuring the continued survival and success of Rothe House. This will inevitably bring the two into conflict: the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, with its desire to retain much of the complex for their own uses; and the imperative to open the complex to more visitors. A careful consideration of the uses which the Society

makes of the complex must be balanced against the creation of an effective heritage attraction.

5.8 VISION

The Society's vision for Rothe House is based on the retention of at least part of the complex for their headquarters, library and meeting room. The continued conservation of the structures supports this aim. This is accompanied by a very real desire to open the complex for the enjoyment and appreciation of visitors and, if possible, to use Rothe House as a symbol of a revitalised Society.

6. CONSERVATION POLICIES

This Conservation Plan should be formally adopted by the Kilkenny Archaeological Society and endorsed by the Heritage Council, Kilkenny Corporation, Kilkenny County Council, the Gaelic League, FÁS, South East Tourism and Bord Fáilte.

The Conservation Plan should be reviewed on an annual basis (a table in Appendix 5 will facilitate this review). A brief statement of Conservation Philosophy is set out below, followed by General Policy positions (which apply to the complex as a whole) and Specific Policies (which apply to either specific elements or functions; cross references to Vulnerability are provided in square brackets).

This Plan has outlined an understanding of Rothe House, its significance, and issues of vulnerability. Section 6.8 of the Plan suggests a management framework to ensure the conservation of the significant and vulnerable elements of the Place and promote an understanding for the benefit of visitors.

6.1 CONSERVATION PHILOSOPHY

The most basic philosophic tenet of this plan is that Rothe House should remain the heart of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, benefit from long-term conservation, and be managed to maximise visitor enjoyment, appreciation and understanding. From this beginning several consequences flow:

- Conservation of the buildings, structures and burgage plot of Rothe House is of paramount importance.
- Further archaeological investigation and research will provide the factual knowledge and understanding of the site, supporting presentation facilities.
- Conservation-led presentation would ensure the integrity of both the structure of the house and of its contents. Visitor appreciation and enjoyment of the house derives from both the presentation facilities and the conservation of its historic fabric.
- Visitor appreciation, enjoyment and understanding are fundamental to maintaining and increasing visitor numbers. This applies directly to the house but would clearly have beneficial consequences for the wider community of Kilkenny.

The management of this monument should be undertaken in partnership with a range of other organisations with interests in Kilkenny. The range of organisations and individuals consulted in the preparation of this Plan provides the essential first step towards this, but the process initiated here must be continued.

6.2 GENERAL CONSERVATION POLICIES

These policies have developed out of the preceding sections. Where elements of significance have been identified and are vulnerable to threat, policies have been devised for retention, enhancement or appropriate relocation. Policies are

usually framed as a general strategy so that professional advice is brought to bear to determine practicability and detailed methodology.

One of the central policies in conservation and management plans is a programme of regular care and maintenance (which is a legal requirement of owners of historic buildings). This is appropriate for a number of elements of Rothe House where no particular conservation action is required at present. The policies and actions presented below are, essentially, exceptions to this rule of regular care. Unless a specific element is mentioned below, the conservation policy is effectively to maintain proper care and maintenance until appropriate professional guidance has been obtained.

The main policy positions address the following objectives:

- Long-term protection of Rothe House from inappropriate developments.
- Long-term conservation of the most significant aspects of Rothe House as defined in this Plan.
- Encourage adaptations or new works which are compatible with the conservation of significance but which would enhance presentation and interpretation.
- Appropriate preservation of the well-preserved merchant's house of c. 1594-1617, supported by further primary archaeological and historical investigations, research and publications, will maximise visitor enjoyment and appreciation.
- Develop an education strategy, in partnership with local organisations and with purpose-designed facilities on site, to maximise the potential for Rothe House to serve as an educational resource for a wide range of subjects and topics.
- Maximise the potential for improving on-site visitor facilities which are commensurate with the authentic fabric.
- The Kilkenny Archaeological Society has committed itself to delegating the management of Rothe House to a wholly-owned limited company within the total control of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society (hereafter 'the limited company that will assume responsibility for Rothe House') under the direction of a Management Committee (see Policy 29).
- Maximise the value of existing infrastructure by improving universal access.
- Support tourism in order to strengthen the local economy and provide benefits for all local commercial interests.

6.3 **POLICIES TO PROTECT THE URBAN SETTING**

These policies are intended to ensure the statutory protection of Rothe House and its setting from inappropriate development within its immediate vicinity. Future development within the immediate vicinity of the house and in the wider setting of Kilkenny City should be essentially sympathetic to the surroundings, especially in the light of the new development proposals for the property

adjoining the south-east corner of House 2. The future setting of Rothe House can only be protected if the following measures are taken. The Kilkenny Archaeological Society should seek to ensure that the councillors and officers of Kilkenny Corporation act to conserve the historic fabric of Kilkenny.

Policy 1: The Kilkenny Archaeological Society will seek to remove the inappropriate concrete block wall created by the adjacent development on Evan's Lane. In the past, the absence of appropriate planning conditions, monitoring and enforcement have left this nationally significant site vulnerable to loss, thereby affecting its physical condition and lessening its future significance. [5.1.1]

Policy 2: The Society will seek to have the recently demolished curtilage wall rebuilt to match the existing boundary wall, albeit as a conjectural reconstruction. The future setting of the site needs to be protected through effective planning control. Planners may need to have a greater awareness of the requirements of historic structures and their setting in order to tighten planning controls. [5.1.1]

Policy 3: The Society and the Heritage Council will encourage Kilkenny Corporation to seek to address the issue of the height of the illegal three-storey development on Evan's Lane. [5.1.1]

Policy 4: The Society and the Heritage Council will encourage Kilkenny Corporation to exercise powers to ensure that conditions of planning consent for future developments in Kilkenny City are complied with and are in essence sympathetic to the surroundings. [5.1.2]

6.4 **POLICIES FOR ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE: STRUCTURAL CONSERVATION AND MAINTENANCE**

Policies under this section address the need for further assessment of the current condition of the fabric of the house and boundary walls in order to inform future maintenance programmes and halt deterioration, thereby reducing the risk that the lack of structural maintenance represents to the long-term survival of the structure.

Policy 5: The Kilkenny Archaeological Society (and the limited operating company it intends to establish to operate Rothe House) will, within one year, commission a Quinquennial Report to consider all aspects of the fabric of the building (grant-funding from the Heritage Council or other authorities may be available). A Quinquennial Report would form the first of a series of a rolling programme of surveys which would assess the condition of the fabric of the house. Its recommendations would create the basis for a prioritised and costed conservation and repair programme and determine the need for more detailed surveys of specific elements during intermediate years. The Report could be used to inform decisions about the appropriateness of any element of work to be carried out in the future (in advance of the Quinquennial Report, the roof of House 2 has been repaired). [5.2.1 – 3]

Policy 6: The Kilkenny Archaeological Society (or the limited operating company) will implement recommendations of the first Quinquennial Report and continue subsequent surveys thereafter. [5.2]

Policy 7: The Society (or the limited operating company) will seek to retain structural integrity and such authenticity as may be identified as surviving, as noted here and/or in the Quinquennial Report. [5.2.3, 5.1.2]

Policy 8: In order to avoid losing further archaeology (above and below ground), and to avoid unsympathetic development or modifications to existing structures, the Society (or the limited operating company) will seek to include the following processes, as appropriate [5.1.2, 5.2.2]:

- Brief for the project agreed by all interested parties.
- A conservation policy for the project.
- Agreed approval processes and lines of communication.
- Full photographic recording before works commence.
- An archaeological assessment and record of the site before works commence, an archaeological survey fully drawn, on-going recording, investigation, analysis, re-assessment, interim and final reports.
- Specialist reports on elements of the buildings.
- A specification and schedule of conservation and repair works for restoration/ preservation/conservation² as appropriate, based on policies of minimum intervention, repair of elements rather than replacement, and the replacement of elements beyond repair on a like-for-like basis.
- Continuing photographic recording during the course of the works.
- Illustrated documentary records and reports on all repair methods, techniques, materials and treatments used during the course of the works.
- Photographic recording on completion.
- Archived copies of documentation arising from the works.
- Schedule and programme for short, medium and long-term maintenance.

² Terminology

Distinguishing between the terms restoration, preservation and conservation acknowledges the evolution of sensitivities towards the care of historic buildings over the years. For the purpose of this Conservation Plan, the authors have interpreted the terms as follows:

Restoration: To return something to what it would have been, or is assumed to have been, at an earlier time. (This is, by necessity, a destructive process as it means the loss of later work.)

Preservation: To arrest change, to maintain something as it is now for all time. (This may be an appropriate philosophy for a historic building which no longer serves a continuing purpose but which one might visit to appreciate the values of an earlier era.)

Conservation: To treat with respect and to care for what has been left to us by those who went before. (The conservation process as it is seen today is one of careful recording and archaeological interpretation of that record, leading to an informed approach to the needs of the building. This approach values the surviving original fabric as witness to the origin of the building. It accepts replacement work by the generations which followed as a valid reflection of their era; as a result, the building becomes an index of changing times. All work will, in its turn, be seen as one of many past campaigns. Accepting this is to accept the principle of continuing conservation.)

6.5 POLICIES CONCERNING ARCHAEOLOGY: THE BUILDINGS AND THE GARDEN

The policies in this section seek to address issues arising from the significance of the site which are offset by the currently incomplete knowledge of the history and evolution of Rothe House, and the reintegration of the burgage plot. Publication and further investigation will enhance understanding of the site, thereby providing greater awareness of the house and its significance.

Policy 9: The Kilkenny Archaeological Society (or the limited operating company) will work to reintegrate Rothe House with the rear of the plot (*i.e.* the former OPW site and the remainder of the rear section of the plot) in order to regain its integrity as a single burgage plot. [5.3.1]

Note: There is a need for urgent short-term conservation works to be undertaken to some sections of the garden walls.

Policy 10: The Society (or the limited operating company) will ‘re-create’ John Rothe’s garden. This should be based on archaeological and historical investigations, leading to the creation of a garden which is sympathetic to the houses. If returned to their original state, the gardens and orchards could add appreciably to the overall significance of the site. [5.3.1]

Policy 11: The Society (or the limited operating company) will use every opportunity offered by approved works to undertake archaeological investigation of structures, burgage plot and garden to enhance the understanding of the site by establishing earlier evidence of the original layout of the gardens. [5.3.1, 5.3.2]

Policy 12: In accordance with its own aims, the Society will ensure publication of popular and academic literature on the history and nature of Rothe House, its evolution and role within Kilkenny and Ireland. This would prevent the dispersal or loss of accumulated knowledge about Rothe House. [5.3.3]

6.6 POLICIES CONCERNING THE MUSEUM AND ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS

Policies under this heading seek to refine the collections currently held at Rothe House, direct the compilation of any future collections, and secure the long-term care and survival of the artefacts retained and to be collected.

Policy 13: The Kilkenny Archaeological Society (or the limited operating company) will define a future Collections Policy, with professional consultation as appropriate, to guide the assemblage of future material. Any future collections policy needs to establish whether the collections will reflect the house and a specific period — in this case, Rothe House in the 16th-17th centuries. The library collections will have a wider remit, collecting material about County Kilkenny from all sources and for all periods. If future collections do not fulfil the

specific objectives laid out in the Collections Policy, they may again be vulnerable to being sidetracked and forgotten. [5.4.3, 5.4.4]

Policy 14: The Society (or the limited operating company) will seek suitable museums/repositories with which to deposit elements of the collections that do not support the Collections Policy (Policy 13) and the presentation and display of Houses 1-3 as set out in Policy 21. [5.4.1]

Policy 15: The Society (or the limited operating company) will identify material within the collections that support the 16th-17th-century history of the house as set out in Policies 13 and 21. Currently the known collections are intrinsically valuable but few appear to relate to Rothe House. [5.4.1]

Policy 16: The Society (or the limited operating company) will document and catalogue the collections retained to the standards produced by the Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works in Ireland (ICHAWI). To prevent further loss, it is imperative that these collections are assembled into some sort of order, their full extent quantified and their care/display/documentation put in the hands of professional staff. In essence, there is a great need for professional input on maintenance, conservation and display of the collections. [5.4.2, 5.4.3]

Policy 17: The Society (or the limited operating company) will commission professional conservators (via Museums and Archives Officer, the Heritage Council and ICHAWI) to advise on the care, storage and display conditions of retained collections. [5.4.2-4]

Policy 18: The Society (or the limited operating company) will provide a dedicated storage facility with controlled environmental conditions for all collections retained at Rothe House. [5.4.2]

Policy 19: The Society (or the limited operating company) will continue the library and genealogy services. For the present, these will be kept administratively separate, with the library remaining the property of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, but the two will be located together and overseen by the Property Manager (there may be advantages to amalgamating the two at some future date). This provides a great opportunity for enhancing the significance of both the library and of Rothe House. The library currently provides a research facility to a limited few. Greater access for academics and the general public, with a fee from non-members, would also provide an incentive to join the Society and boost membership. The future collection of material for the library would be directed within a wider context (see Policy 13). These facilities should be maintained according to advice from professional staff to provide the care and maintenance the records require. [5.4.4]

Policy 20: The Property Manager will oversee the care of all retained collections (see also Policies 29 and 30). [5.4]

6.7 POLICIES FOR TOURISM, EDUCATION AND PRESENTATION

The three component parts of Rothe House, with the integrated courtyards and garden, should be presented as a coherent whole. The policies in this section address the need for agreement on a new pattern of use for the complex (see also Section 6.2).

These policies also address the need for improving the presentation of Rothe House for the visiting public and more generally as part of the streetscape of Kilkenny. Policies for raising the profile of Rothe House and improving visitor circulation around the complex are also included.

Policy 21: The Kilkenny Archaeological Society (or the limited operating company) will seek to turn House 1 into an ‘authentic’ exemplar of a furnished early 17th-century merchant’s house... as authentic as buildings archaeology studies will allow. [5.4.1, 5.5.1]

Suggestions for Houses 2, 3 and the garden are:

- House 2 could become the administrative centre of the complex, meeting rooms for the Society and for hire to others on regular/irregular basis, the Kilkenny Archaeological Society Library, the genealogy information service and database, storage facilities etc. It is also likely to be publicly accessible in part. [5.5.1]
- House 3 might be the interpretive centre for Kilkenny, an educational resource centre, shop and teashop. [5.5.1]
- The garden should be re-created in John Rothe’s style, establishing a focus of interest and support for Rothe House. Outline plans should be prepared for the re-creation of the garden, with appropriate buildings which are sympathetic to the surviving structure. [5.5.1]

Policy 22: The Kilkenny Archaeological Society (or the limited operating company) will seek to make the access unambiguous, with a strong presence on Parliament Street. [5.5.1]

Policy 23: The Society (or the limited operating company) will commission an access audit and implement it to improve access for all throughout the complex. [5.5.2]

Policy 24: The Society (or the limited operating company) will seek to improve cross-marketing initiatives, linking in with the Castle and Cathedral. [5.5.3]

Policy 25: The Society (or the limited operating company) will seek to integrate exhibition design into the presentation of Rothe House, including the introduction of audio tours, signage and leaflets. [5.5.4-6]

Policy 26: The Society (or the limited operating company) will create a new visitor circulation route for the complex, with appropriate orientation signage. [5.5.5]

Policy 27: The Society (or the limited operating company) will seek to ensure that the visitor experience of the house is focused as set out in Policy 21. [5.5.1]

For example: The rooms in House 1 might be fitted out in the style of a 16th/17th-century merchant's house with appropriate furniture and objects. An exhibition could tell the history of the construction of Rothe House by John Rothe and the lifestyle that he and his family would have enjoyed. The exhibition might continue in House 3, expanding on the Rothe family and the oligarchy of families which influenced the growth of Kilkenny. This would lead into the story of Kilkenny from its earliest beginnings to the present day.

Policy 28: The Society (or the limited operating company) will seek to produce an Education Policy [5.5.7]. This could involve 'Life Long Learning' programmes for all ages which would offer the opportunity to increase awareness of, and widen access to, this nationally important house, gardens and its collections. In addition to lectures by current Society members, activities could be expanded and developed to include the following:

- In collaboration with the local authority, the creation of a schools' education programme covering historical topics and local study programmes
- Open days, walks and lectures, public and weekend events
- An Outreach Programme which visits schools and tells the story of Rothe House and its many different uses over the last 400 years
- A web page for Rothe House

6.8 POLICIES FOR MANAGEMENT AND FINANCES

Policies in this section seek to address the current deficiencies in the day-to-day running and financial management of Rothe House. A Business Plan will play an integral part in this process. These policies will also assess the future obligations of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society (and the limited operating company it intends to establish to operate Rothe House) in ensuring the health and safety of its staff and visitors. When these issues are resolved, a Management Plan (as described in Policy 31 below) should be commissioned ensuring accountability to protect public funding and investment. An appropriate management structure could then be put in place.

Policy 29: The Kilkenny Archaeological Society will take professional legal advice and appoint a Management Committee to carry out the long-term planning for Rothe House [5.6.1]. This committee should represent the major stakeholders and might consist of:

- 3 members of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society executive (duly elected by its council)
- The Property Manager
- 1 member nominated by the Heritage Council
- 1 member nominated by Kilkenny Corporation
- 1 member nominated by Kilkenny County Council
- 1 member nominated by the Civic Trust
- 1 member nominated by Dúchas The Heritage Service

- 1 member nominated by the Chamber of Commerce
- Other members who may be co-opted

This committee may, depending upon detailed legal advice, serve as the Board of Directors of a limited company wholly owned by the Kilkenny Archaeological Society which will be responsible for the operating and management of Rothe House.

Policy 30: Kilkenny Archaeological Society needs to develop an alternative management structure which delegates the day-to-day management of Rothe House and provides the impetus for long-term development plans for the enhancement of Rothe House. The Society (and the limited operating company it intends to establish to operate Rothe House) will write a job specification and employ a Property Manager to manage Rothe House. The first duty of this post-holder would be to produce a Business Plan. He/She would oversee the management of the collections, visitors and visitor facilities, the shop, genealogy archives, library opening hours, maintenance of the structures and garden, marketing initiatives, and management of staff. [5.7.1]

Policy 31: The limited operating company that will assume responsibility for managing Rothe House will commission a Management Plan to include:

- A business plan
- A marketing strategy
- An education programme
- A health and safety plan
- A disaster recovery plan

Policy 32: Issues of fire safety should be addressed, including fire safety management, appropriate fire detection and prevention systems. The limited operating company that will assume responsibility for managing Rothe House will initiate a Disaster Recovery Plan for Rothe House and an inventory of collections, indicating prioritised items. This is necessary to ensure the safety of visitors, collections, and of Rothe House itself. [5.6.3]

Policy 33: The limited operating company that will assume responsibility for managing Rothe House will commission a Health and Safety Plan. This should encompass adequate first-aid training for staff, emergency exit signage, awareness and assessment of risks and hazards in the complex. [5.6.4]

Policy 34: Kilkenny Archaeological Society and the limited operating company that will assume responsibility for managing Rothe House will consider nuisance and security issues which may lead to the installation of CCTV or the use of stewards to ensure the security of the buildings, the safety of visitors, and the security of the collections. [5.6.4-5]

7. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The completion of a Conservation Plan document is only the first step in a long-term process. The successful implementation of a Conservation Plan will depend on:

- The acceptance by major stakeholders of a common understanding of a Place, its significance, the points of vulnerability, and the range of policies set forth to mitigate the vulnerability
- Action by each stakeholder to support the Plan
- Appropriate allocation of resources by each stakeholder
- Coordination of implementation by the Directors of the limited company
- Periodic review of the Plan and the implementation process by Kilkenny Archaeological Society and the Directors of the limited company

7.1 ADOPTION OF THE CONSERVATION PLAN

The principles of the Conservation Plan must be adopted in their entirety. The methods of by which the objectives are achieved may vary in detail from those discussed above, as the focus shifts from the team of external specialists brought in to achieve this first step, back to the stakeholder organisations. Each will have to consider the Plan and the ways in which they can act to encourage the outcomes desired for Rothe House and encapsulated in the Policies above.

7.2 COORDINATION, RESOURCES AND PRIORITIES

The key to achieving the goals of the Plan depends on the creation of the organisation/company which is charged with the responsibility of developing long-range, detailed development and management plans for the Rothe House site in accordance with the policies set out above. The stakeholder organisations should play a role in supporting the actions of this new organisation as represented by the Management Committee described in Policy 29.

In the short-term, the over-riding concern will be the generation of funding to pump-prime works to both the buildings and to the rear plot.

Once the Conservation Plan has been adopted, priorities must be established for the implementation of the many challenges facing the new organisation.

7.3 ACTIONS FOR 2003

During its preparation, this Conservation Plans identified a series of conservation/ investigative actions which should, if possible, be undertaken in the coming year, in tandem with the management actions required to create the operating company. These include:

- Conservation of the garden walls: some areas are showing considerable deterioration.
- Small-scale archaeological investigations into the potential survival of garden features below the OPW works yard.
- Immediate professional conservation advice regarding care, storage and display of the collections, particularly the costume and textile collections.

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NOTES

