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OF

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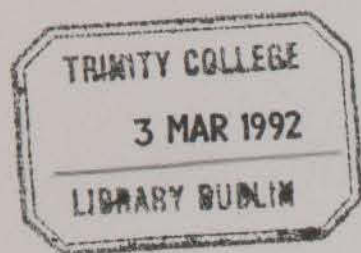
MARY Mc AULIFFE.

SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF Ph. D. AT

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DEPARTMENT OF MEDIEVAL HISTORY.

SEPTEMBER 1991.



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encouragement of many people. Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. T.B. Barry of the Medieval History Department for all his help, support, and encouragement. I would like also to thank all the staff of the Medieval History Department, especially, for providing the invaluable computers. During my years as a post-grad the seminar group have provided a welcome forum for debate, discussion, and help and I want to gratefully acknowledge the support of all members of the group, especially Lorna Simpson and Sean Duffy. I would also like to thank the staff of the College libraries for their assistance over the years, as well as the staff of the Royal Irish Academy, and the County Library in Tralee. Without the financial aid I received it would have been difficult to survey the remaining tower houses of Co. Kerry and for that assistance I am grateful to the trustees of the Grace Lawless Lee Fund. My family provided invaluable assistance in the field work and I would like to thank my Father and my brothers Liam and Jack for all their chaffering work and special thanks to my mother and Bridget for their invaluable help in surveying the tower houses in the Glenties area. Thanks also to all the people who gave me a bed for the night when I was doing the field work, and special thanks to the Presentation Sisters in Cahersiveen. Thanks to Antoinette for the tireless task of proof-reading and thanks to Nick for helping with the bar charts. I am very grateful to the staff in the Students Union for all their help and finally I want to thank all my friends for putting up with endless discussions on tower houses for so long.

This thesis is entirely the candidate's own work and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

Mary V. Kelly

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This thesis would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of many people. Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. T.B. Barry of the Medieval History Department for all his help, support, and encouragement. I would like also to thank all the staff of the Medieval History Department, especially, for providing the invaluable computers. During my years as a post - grad the seminar group have provided a welcome forum for debate, discussion, and help and I want to gratefully acknowledge the support of all members of the group, especially Linzi Simpson and Sean Duffy. I would also like to thank the staff of the College libraries for their assistance over the years, as well as the staff in the Royal Irish Academy, and the County Library in Tralee. Without the financial aid I recieved it would have been difficult to survey the remaining tower houses of Co. Kerry and for that assistance I am grateful to the trustees of the Grace Lawless Lee Fund. My family provided invaluable assistance in the field work and I would like to thank my Father and my brothers Liam and Jack for all their chauffering work and special thanks to my mother and Bridget for their marvellous help in surveying the tower houses in the Glenbeigh area! Thanks also to all the people who gave me a bed for the night when I was doing the field work, and special thanks to the Presentation Sisters in Caherciveen. Thanks to Antoinette for the tiresome task of proof- reading and thanks to Nikki for helping with the bar charts! I am very grateful to the staff in the Students Union for all their help. and finally I want to thank all my friends for putting up with endless discussions on tower houses for so long.

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Mary McAuliffe

SUMMARY.

This thesis is a comprehensive study of the tower houses of County Kerry and there is also some reference to the earlier castles of Kerry. In volume 1 all aspects of the tower house are looked into. The tower houses are placed in their historical context in chapter 2 on the History of Kerry. In chapter 3, on the castle and the tower house, the relationship between the preceeding stone structures, and other structures such as moated sites, and the tower house is looked at. In the fourth chapter the origins of the tower house are discussed; whether the tower house originated outside Ireland, or if there was a suitable climate, politically, economically, socially, and architecturally for the tower house to have an independent origin in Ireland. In chapter five the relatively controversial issue of the dating of tower houses as well as distribution is dealt with. The ways of dating a tower house and their reliability are looked at, as are the dates of tower houses in Ireland in general, and Kerry in particular. In the second part of this chapter the distribution of tower houses and the many factors affecting this distribution are looked at. In the sixth chapter the use or lack of use of the tower house in warfare, against thieves, withstanding sieges, and the use of the fastness in relation to the tower house is looked into. In chapter 7 the use of these structures as a residence is dealt with. Using many sources the type and quality of life to be expected in a tower house is discussed. In chapter 8 the architecture of the tower houses in Kerry is described, and in chapter 9 the few urban and church tower houses in Kerry are looked at. In chapter 10, the conclusion, the results of all the preceeding chapters are summed up.

In volume two the results of the fieldwork carried out are presented in the form of a catalogue. In this list is also included the early castles and the late 17th century / early 18th century "castles". The format of the catalogue includes the name of the structure, its location i.e the barony and an estimate of the ordnance survey location using the half inch map; also the date, or possible date if known, and the family which built or owned the structure also if known. Then there are the references to the tower house or castles, in annals, early guide books, lists, parliamentary documents etc and a brief summary of the 1841 Ordnance Survey description if it exists. Finally, there is a summary of the results of the author's fieldwork on the existing tower houses and castles. Also in volume two are the plates, plans, and maps.

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Mary McHale

INTRODUCTION

When dealing with tower houses in Kerry it is necessary to place the development of these structures within their historical context. In order to do this one needs a general overview of the history of the locality and the surrounding areas. In common with most other counties in Ireland part of Kerry was conquered by the Anglo - Normans. However, the invasion of Kerry happened about 45 years after the initial invasion of Ireland by the Anglo - Normans. In the context of castle construction, the invasion of Kerry happened at a time when there were many castles already in existence in other parts of the country, including the neighbouring counties of Limerick, Clare, and Cork. Indeed, castle construction was such a normal feature of the military architecture of the country by this time that, by 1220, new developments such as the polygonal and circular keeps had been introduced in other parts of the country. It would seem that the Anglo - Normans who invaded Kerry (the Geraldines and their allies) followed the same pattern as had the previous generations of invaders. That is, according to the annals, the FitzGerald and their allies built "castles" as they penetrated through the country. However, as is discussed in chapter 5 on dating, most of these "castles" were probably mottes. There is proof however, that the invaders had built castles at Castleisland (60) and Killorglan (118) by 1250. The history of this initial motte and possibly ringwork castle construction is important when discussing tower houses as many of these early sites were re - used by the tower house builders. Not only were these early Anglo - Norman sites re - used but many of the early Gaelic sites such as the ringforts and especially the promontory forts were also re-used by the

tower house builders. The relationship between these early sites, both Gaelic and Anglo - Norman, is discussed in chapter 5.

By 1270 Kerry was more or less evenly divided between Anglo - Irish north Kerry and Gaelic south Kerry. The river Maine formed the border between these two areas. However, this does^{not} mean that there were no Gaelic families in north Kerry. In the very north in the barony of Iarghticonnor, there was the surviving Gaelic enclave of the O'Connor Kerry family. This family had been one of the more important in the pre Norman era and were much reduced in power, land, and prestige in the post invasion of Kerry era, but the family held on tenaciously to a corner of north Kerry until the 17th century. Indeed they built one of the largest and most impressive Kerry tower houses at Carrigafoyle (67), although the O'Connor Kerry family, with their strongholds, technically owed allegiance to the Earl of Desmond. The O'Connor Kerry family and the other Irish families in north Kerry such as the McElligotts, the O'Moores, the Pierces etc were all sub - tenants/one of the Anglo - Irish rulers i.e the Earl of Desmond, the Lord of Kerry, or the Knight of Kerry. The fact that these families still held land and tower houses in the 14th and 15th centuries shows that the lesser land owners had not been displaced by the Anglo - Norman intrusion. The new owners simply replaced McCarthy Mor or O'Donoghue Mor etc as the overlord and many of the existing lesser Gaelic families held on to their land; and in fact did not lose their land until the late 16th century when many of these families fought with their overlord, the Earl of Desmond, against the crown.

In south Kerry the initial Anglo - Norman invasion had penetrated as far south as Dunkerron (91) where there is evidence of a motte. However after the battle of Callan in 1260 the Geraldines were confined to north Kerry and McCarthy Mor and the other great Gaelic chiefs such

as O'Donoghue, O'Sullivan, MacGillycuddy etc were confined to south Kerry. As with north Kerry there were enclaves of Anglo - Irish families in the lands of the Gaelic chiefs. Unlike north Kerry these enclaves were not spread out over the entire area but confined to a small corner of land south of the Maine, centred on Currans (82). This was the only area south of the Maine held by an Anglo - Irish family from 1260. The overlord of the area was MacCarthy Mor and his family owned or controlled the majority of the tower houses in the area including the most important structures such as Ballycarbery (27), Pallis (137), and Castle Lough (68). From the time of the invasion the FitzGerald's who later became the Earls of Desmond claimed overlordship over McCarthy Mor and the other chiefs, this overlordship was occasionally recognised by McCarthy Mor when it suited his purposes, but in practice the claim did not really effect the affairs of the families of south Kerry. Until the 16th century and the Plantation of Kerry there were two separate and diverse "kingdoms" in Kerry.

The tower house was the successor to the castle in terms of stone construction. In between and overlapping the age of the castle and the age of the tower house is the moated site. The relationship between the tower house and the moated site (not just the re-use of these sites by the tower house builders) is discussed in chapter 3. What was the relationship between the castle and the tower house? Was the tower house a direct successor to the castle and did it serve the same function? In other words are tower houses simply smaller castles or do they have a different function? Is there a significant gap between the construction of castles and the construction of tower houses and why did the construction of castles end and that of tower houses begin? The relationship between the tower house and the castles is discussed in

chapter 3 and the dating of castles and tower houses is discussed in chapter 5.

In the chapter on the origins of the tower house the reasons for the ending of castle construction and the beginning of tower house construction are dealt with. Among the many reasons discussed are the economic, social, and political reasons. The end of the castle construction in Ireland almost coincides with the ending of one particular era in early medieval Ireland. From 1170 to 1300 the conquest of the Anglo - Normans had continued and stabilized. Ireland was in the hands of a relatively stable, loyal, and financially secure Dublin government. Most of the original conquerors and their immediate successors were in the country and loyal to the crown and able to administer their new lands personally. The Gaelic chiefs were in full retreat, able to do no more than launch occasional raids on the lands of the Anglo - Normans. However, changes occurred in the early part of the 14th century which had a negative effect on the Lordship of Ireland and this change was on-going for the rest of the century. The beginning of the change can be found in the administration of Edward 1. His demands and those of his successors, for the money, men, and arms of Ireland began the political, social, and economic changes that created the climate necessary for the construction of tower houses.

These changes created among other things, a weak and financially insecure central government, increased the number of absentee landowners, gave more and more power into the hands of the remaining local lords, and allowed for the resurgence of the Gaelic chiefs. The effect the above mentioned changes had on the development of the tower house is discussed in chapter 4. Also discussed in this chapter is the effect, or lack of effect, the development of tower houses in Scotland and Northern England had on

the development of Irish tower houses. In terms of politics, society, and economics there are many similarities between Scotland and Ireland and to a lesser extent the North of England. The similarities and differences in the development of the tower house in these three areas, with reference to dating, architecture, owners etc is discussed in chapter 4. Also, since some Irish historians consider that the origins of the Irish tower house lies in Europe, the development of the European tower house and its effect on the Irish tower house is discussed.

For many years the starting date of the tower house was firmly set in the 15th century, especially to the period after the statute of 1429 when a grant of £10 was given to anyone who would build a tower house in the Pale to defend the area from the "wild Irish". More recent historians and archaeologists have been reconsidering this view. In chapter 5 the dating of castles in Ireland is discussed and the effect this dating and distribution of the castle had on the tower house. The dating of the castle in the surrounding counties and in Kerry itself is discussed, as is the gap between the ending of castle construction and the beginning of the tower house. Recently, many writers on the subject have felt that the gap between the castle and the tower house is minimal, no more than 20 - 40 years at the most. In chapter 5 the evidence for early 14th century tower houses in Ireland in general and Kerry in particular, and the reliability of this evidence is discussed. Also, the difference in the dates of tower houses in north and south Kerry, i.e the Gaelic and Anglo - Irish areas is discussed. In this chapter, also, the distribution of tower houses in Ireland and Kerry is discussed. It is generally accepted that tower houses were not built over 400 O.D. and although, Kerry is a very mountainous area there were at least 160 tower houses in the county. Compared to its near

neighbour Limerick which may have had over 500 tower houses this not many, but in relation to the low lying good farmland available in Kerry, this number is quite large. In fact the distribution of tower houses is quite clustered in a few areas. The distribution of the tower houses is discussed in relation to a number of factors. These include the re - utilisation of pre - existing sites, both Gaelic and Anglo - Norman, the availability of good farmland, the availability of water, the proximity to the sea, rivers, or routes, the proximity to the fastnesses in the mountains, bogs, or lakes etc. Other factors include the use or lack of use of strings of tower houses as defensive lines.

The uses of the tower house are discussed in chapters 6 and 7. In chapter 6 the use of the tower in war is looked into. Firstly the situation in medieval Ireland from the 14th to the 16th century is dealt with. This era was one of incessant violence, cattle raiding, thieving, and petty wars, as well as the occasional large scale wars of the greater lords, chiefs, and the government. The use of the tower house against these various and varying degrees of violence is discussed. The ability or inability of small mauradering bands of thieves or cattle raiders, who had few weapons and especially had no cannon, no back up in the event of a siege, and usually no time for a prolonged siege, to take a tower houses is discussed. The many ways of taking a tower house in the event of a siege is dicussed and the effect the advent of the cannon had on the tower house is also discussed. The defensive use of tower houses by the owners is discussed and also the surprising fact that many tower house owners abandoned their tower houses even before a siege and took to their fastnessses to await the withdrawal of the enemy. The effect the over-use of this tactic of withdrawing to the fastnesses and not facing the enemy in either open battle or from

behind the walls of a tower house, especially in the age of the cannon, is shown in the demise of the house of Desmond in Kerry in 1584.

The tower house was not only used in time of war, people also lived out their lives in these buildings. In chapter 7 the peacetime life of the medieval lord and lady (and their families) in the tower house is discussed. The opinions of the contemporary writers as to the quality of life in the tower house is looked into, these writers were usually contemptuous of the comfort offered by these structures, the furnishings, the food, and the people who lived in them. However, the tower houses were probably not as comfortless as these writers (mostly of English extraction and very biased against anything to do with Ireland) would have the reader believe. The type of furnishings, food, entertainment, sanitation, and lodging one could expect to find in a tower house is discussed. The existence of the Castleisland (67) Inventory of 1589 gives us some idea of the furnishings one could find in Kerry tower houses. The number of people who would have lived in or around these tower houses is also discussed as is the function of the tower house as a manorial centre, a school, a prison etc.

In chapter 8 the architecture of the tower house is discussed. There are only 40 tower house ruins in Kerry, and of these only about 15 stand to any height. However, using the evidence from the field survey, written and pictorial evidence and evidence from other areas in Ireland one can draw conclusions on the architecture of these tower houses. The architecture is discussed from the outside in, starting

with the type of stone used in the tower houses, the bawn, and ending with a discussion on the more unusual tower houses in Kerry. The fact that the architecture of each tower house in Ireland seems to be very similar is also true of Kerry, most of the tower houses vary significantly only in size. Some tower houses can lack a common

feature such as a chimney, fireplace, staircase, batter, bawn, vault, etc but it is very unusual to find an original addition to a tower house which is not found on another or many other tower houses.

Most of the tower houses in Kerry and elsewhere in Ireland are rural tower houses, built by landowners as the centre of their land. However, there are also a few urban tower houses in Kerry. These tower houses as well as tower houses that acted as manorial and borough centres and church tower houses are discussed in chapter 9. Many historians believe that the urban tower house is earlier than the rural tower house and there is evidence that this was the case in the east of the country. However, in Kerry the urban, manorial, and borough tower houses in fact begin at the same time as the rural tower houses or a little later. Only in Ardfert (8) is there slight evidence of an early 14th century tower house. In the other main towns of Dingle and Tralee the tower houses are mainly late 14th and 15th century (or even later) examples. Castles were usually manorial centres and it is not usual for tower houses to function in this way, and it is not surprising that the evidence for even the few tower houses that may have been manorial centres is quite slim. There are only two examples of church tower houses in Kerry, which is surprising, as the clergy here were as involved in secular life as elsewhere. In fact the most surprising thing is that one of the two extant examples was built by the Franciscans Friars, an order which was least involved in the secular life of the surrounding lords and chiefs. This is the last chapter and in the conclusion the results of this thesis are summed up.

THE HISTORY OF KERRY.

In the pre 10th century period Kerry was, like many parts of the country, divided into distinct tribal groupings. The three main tribal groupings in Kerry, were, the Eoganacht Loch Lein, the Corca Dhuibhne, and the Ciarraige. The Ciarraige (O'Conor Kerry) held lands corresponding to the modern baronies of Iraghticonor, Clanmaurice, and Trughanacmy, in the north of the county. In the west the Corca Dhuibhne (the O'Shea's) held the lands which correspond with the baronies of Cockaguiney, Iveagh, and West Magunihy. In mid and south Kerry the Eoganacht Loch Lein (Moriarty) held Mahunihy, Dunkerron, South Glanerough, and Beare.¹ By the 10th century the Ciarraige were the most powerful grouping in Kerry. The Eoganacht Loch Lein were once part of the powerful Eoganacht dynasty of Cashel but by this time were on the defensive from the ever advancing Ciarraige. By the end of the 9th century the Ciarraige were beginning to force the Eoganacht Loch Lein back. They were no longer regarded as kings of West Munster but simply kings of Loch Lein, in fact by 838-840 they had become so unimportant that the obituaries of their kings were no longer recorded while those of the Ciarraige were recorded.² In the west the Corca Dhuibhne were confined to the Dingle Peninsula and do not play a major role in the future history of Kerry. This is the situation in the 10th century when the Viking raids on Ireland began. There were undoubtedly raids by the Vikings on Kerry. There are records of sporadic raids on the Kerry coast e.g in 873 "Barid (a Norse leader) with a great fleet from Ath Cliath.....plundered Ciarraige

¹ See Map I (Baronies of Kerry).

² O"Corrain D. "Ireland under the Normans" 1972. pp. 3.

Luachra under ground, i.e, the raiding of caves".¹ However the Vikings did not escape lightly. In 869 Congal Mac Mic Lachtna, King of the Ciarraige, with his allies the Eoganacht Loch Lein, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Norse leader Tomrar at Dun Main in West Munster.² It is possible that there was some Norse settlement in Kerry. There is some placename evidence, in particular the name Smerwick. "Smer" is the Viking term for butter while "wick" means harbour. However, there is no substantial evidence of any long term settlement and by the 11th century the Norse influence had faded, although the Norse settlement of Limerick was only a short boat trip up the Shannon from the lands of the Ciarraige.

In the 11th century, events in Munster were to have an effect on the internal politics and power groupings in Kerry. During the early part of the 12th century Turlough More O'Connor had been attempting to make the high - kingship of Ireland a political reality. In Munster his main opposition came from the O'Briens and their rivals for the kingship of Munster, the Eoganacht of Cashel (the McCarthys). O'Connor's way of controlling the situation was to divide Munster and create two rival petty kingdoms for the O'Briens and the McCarthys. In dividing Munster O'Connor had granted to McCarthy the overlordship of the lands of Kerry. This partition was to have an immediate effect on the three petty kingdoms. By 1300 the McCarthy expansion into Kerry had begun; it was concentrated mainly on the lands of the Eoganacht Loch Lein, and it is here in Iveagh, Dunkerron north, and Magunihy that the McCarthy power became established. The intrusion of the O'Donoghues began some 20-30 years later - they had held land in west Cork but were forced back by the O'Mahonys. They invaded the lands

¹ A.I. 873.

² O'Donnovan. "Annals of Ireland" 3 frags, 1854 and O'Corrain 1972 pp. 51.

of the Eoganacht Loch Lein around Killarney, destroying the power of the O'Moriartys. By 1160 the O'Donoghues seem to have become established in Killarney. The struggle between the O'Donoghues and the Eoganacht Loch Lein continued for some time, with Muircheachtach O'Moriarty of the Eoganacht, king in 1200,¹ he however seems to have been the last of the native Eoganacht kings. The last Gaelic clan to invade and settle Kerry were the O'Sullivans; they intruded around the end of the 12th century. They had settled in the Suir valley in Tipperary, but pressure from the O'Briens and / or the Anglo-Normans drove them west around the 1190s. They settled in west Cork, the Kerry barony of Dunkerron south, and the Beare Peninsula. By the 13th century the position in Kerry had changed dramatically. In the south Desmond, stretching from Kerry to Waterford, was held by the McCarthys who were also the overlords of the petty kingdoms of O'Donoghue Mor in Loch Lein, O'Sullivan Mor in Dunkerron, and O'Suillavan Beare in Iveagh and Beare. In the north of the county the Ciarraige had, however, managed to survive, albeit in a less powerful, more vulnerable position, under O'Conor Kerry. They were effectively confined to Iriaghticonor. The reason for their survival could be that they provided a buffer between McCarthy in Desmond and O'Brien in Thomond. Whatever the reason for their survival they were one of the more important groups in Kerry, along with McCarthy, O'Donoghue and O'Sullivan when the Anglo-Norman expansion into Kerry began.

When Henry II came to Ireland one of the first Irish chiefs to submit to him was Dermot McCarthy Mor. However, this did not stop the Anglo-Norman advance on his territory. Internal difficulties between Dermot and his son provided the Anglo-Normans with the chance to

¹ A.I. 1200.

intervene and Henry granted the McCarthys "Regnum Corcagiese" to Robert Fitzstephen and Milo De Cogan, who invaded Desmond as far as Aghadoe (in Kerry) and then withdrew.¹ It is not clear if either Fitzstephen or DeCogan ever tried to seize the Kerry part of their grant. They settled around Cork and both soon died without heirs. The Anglo-Norman conquest was expanded in the early 13th century into Cork and Limerick. By 1185 pressure on the McCarthys was driving them slowly back into Kerry. Before actually pushing into Kerry the Anglo-Normans had an effect on its people. McCarthy was being confined to his Kerry lands, and the O'Sullivans deprived the Corca Dhuibhne of Dunkerron and Beare. The O'Donoghues had to abandon all their lands in Cork and concentrate on consolidating Loch Lein. By 1200 Kerry was firmly in the hands of the McCarthys with the other chiefs paying them homage, but the Anglo-Normans kept advancing.

Also, by 1200 there had been a raid by the "foreigners" on Glenn Aga(Glena near Killarney).² In 1199 John had granted Meiler Fitzhenry "Offearba" (the northern part of Corkaguiney), "Yoghenacht Loch Lein" "Assurus"(Dingle Bay) and Trughanacmy.³ In 1206 Meiler had sufficient grip on part of his lands that he could grant 10 caracutes of land on north Kerry to the Abbey of Connell.⁴ Meiler and his allies seem to have tried to consolidate their gains. In 1206 the annals mention that the 'castle' of Dun Loich (Dunlow,(93) near Killarney) was "built by the Galls".⁵ However, Meiler died in 1215-20 without any heirs. In the meantime a family who were to be very important to the history of Kerry were consolidating themselves in Limerick. In 1177-

¹ Barrington T. "Discovering Kerry". 1976. pp. 51.

² A.I. 1200:3.

³ Barrington T. "Kerry...". 1976 pp. 51.

⁴ ibid. pp. 52.

⁵ MacCarthaigs Book. 1206:7, A.I. 1207:3. This may be a reference to a motte and bailey as there is the remenants of a motte at Dunlow (93).

80 Shanid, near Glin, in Limerick was granted to Thomas Fitzmaurice (ancestor of the Earls of Desmond, the Knights of Kerry, the Lord of Kerry, etc). He died in 1213 but his sons continued the expansion of the family fortunes.

Two events c.1215 aided the second invasion of Kerry. Firstly the McCarthys had been involved in a succession dispute since 1205, between brothers, Dermot of Dundrinian and Cormac Finn. In 1215 warfare had broken out in earnest, which weakened the power and resources of the McCarthys and their allies. The Dublin Annals of Inisfallen record that during this period the "Foreigners overran.....Desmond and gained much territory and power and built castles and strongholds for themselves"¹ Secondly in 1214-15 Geoffrey De Marisco was justiciar and was granted lands in Dingle. As justiciar he had control of the lands of Meiler Fitzhenry, which had reversed to the crown, and he disposed of these to allies and supporters - including to the family of Thomas of Shanid. Therefore in 1215, with a serious war in Desmond and the support of the justiciar, Kerry was ripe for invasion and conquest.

MacCarthaigs Book give us a description of the invasion. It states that in 1214 (1215) "Donnchadh Cairbreach O'Brien and the sherrif,.....with the Galls of Munster and Leinster, came with Cormac....[McCarthy] to harry Desmond and to obtain supremacy over Diarmuid [of Dundrinian].² In the Annals of Inisfallen (A.I.), the Dublin Annals of Inisfallen (Dub. A.I.), and MacCarthaigs Book lists are given of the castles built by the invading foreigners. The sources say these castles were built in 1214-15, but more than likely, they were built over the

¹ Curtis E. "History of medieval Ireland". 1968 pp. 126. Dub. A.I. 1215.

² MacCarthaigs Book 1214"¹ "the sheriff mentioned may be De Marisco but in 1215 Thomas FitzAnthony was appointed sheriff of Decies and Desmond, so this is probably a reference to him."

period 1214-25. The castles were built along the rivers Maine and Roughty and around Killarney. Along the Maine castles were built at Currans (82), Molahiffe (134), Clounemelane (78), Castlemaine (71), Calanfersy (55) and Killorglin (118).¹ Other castles were built at Dunlow (93) and Airlock (4) - probably Muckross, Killarney.² A third set of castles was built along the Roughty at Dunkerron (91), Cappanacush (58), and Ardtully (12).³ There is also the remains of a motte at Aghadoe (1) which was probably built around this time. The settlers in Kerry were mainly the Geraldines. John and Thomas Fitzmaurice built the castles around the Maine and Killarney. Those on the Roughty were built by Carew while Airlock (4) was built by Roache.⁴

By 1220 the main Anglo-Norman family in Kerry were the FitzThomas's. Meiler FitzHenry had granted his land of Offerba in Corca Dhuibhne to John De Clahull, whose descendants remained there for generations. Elsewhere, according to Orpen, the distribution of land went as follows; the cantred of Ossurys (west Corca Dhuibhne) to Robert De Marisco, the cantred of Trughanacmy to John FitzThomas, and the cantred of Clanmaurice to Maurice FitzThomas, while Geoffrey De Marisco held the castle of Killorglin.⁵ The building of the line of castles, especially along the Maine, helped consolidate the settlement. The relationship between the settlers and the local Gaelic people seems to have been fairly peaceful. O'Connor Kerry, who was the main chief in the north, held onto Iriaghticonor. He held on because he was still a buffer, now between the Geraldines and the O'Briens in Thomond, and

¹ Orpen G.H. "Ireland under the Normans". 1911 - 1920 Vol III pp. 126.

² *ibid.* pp. 127 - 128.

³ Orpen G.H. "Ireland.....". 1911 - 1920 Vol III pp. 127.

⁴ MacCarthaigs Book, Dub A.I.

⁵ Orpen G.H. "Ireland.....". 1911 - 1920 Vol III pp. 130 - 131.

also as Sir Nicholas Browne said in 1597 " by reason of his woods and bogs, he was wont to hold his own".¹ The Geraldines and their allies consolidated their lands by war and also by good relationships with the local chiefs, with alliances, inter-marriage, and fosterage; for example, Robert De Carew married Raghewild, a probable daughter of Dermot McCarthy Mor² and by building and fortifying castles.

Although the line of castles along the Maine formed the boundary between north and south Kerry (therefore between Anglo-Norman and Irish) it was not until 1261 - 62 that the McCarthys finally drove the Geraldines back, and consolidated their rule in south Kerry. Up to this the Geraldines had used the internal quarrels of the McCarthys as an excuse for many raids. In 1234 the McCarthys were defeated by the "Galls" at Tralee.³ However, Cormac Finn McCarthy managed to keep the Geraldines at bay until the late 1240's. He did this by attacking them when they were weak and by aiding other Anglo-Normans against their own kind or against the Irish. However, no matter how successful the McCarthy Mor was, there always followed the usual weak period after his death when the succession struggle began. And in 1261 a huge effort was launched by the Geraldines to overthrow the successor of Cormac Finn, Finneen McCarthy. In 1261 a force led by William De Dene, the justiciar and including Irish and Anglo-Normans invaded south Kerry. The force included many of the barons of Munster, including the leading Geraldines.

The opposing sides met at Callan, near Kenmare in July 1261.⁴ The forces of the justiciar were routed and many of the leaders killed, including the head of the Geraldines in Kerry, Thomas Fitzmaurice and

¹ C.S.P.I. 1597.

² Orpen G.H. "Ireland.....". 1911 - 1920 Vol III pp. 135.

³ Mac Carthaigs Book. 1234:4.

⁴ A.I. 1261:10.

his son Maurice. This was the last serious attempt made by the Gearldines to invade south Kerry. This defeat weakened the Gearldines for many years. Immediately after, the victor, Fineen McCarthy raided and burned Geraldine castles, including Killorglin (118) and Dunlow (93).¹ However, the Gearldine settlement in north Kerry was not destroyed. Maurice FitzJohn had left a son Thomas (án Apa) and he succeeded to the Geraldine lands. From an inquisition taken in 1282 when Thomas came of age we know of some of the lands held by the Gearldines in Kerry. Thomas held the cantred of Trughanacmy, worth in his time £100, where lay the valuable lands of Killorglin, Castleisland, and the New Manor (Tralee).² Other Geraldine families such as the FitzMaurices (later) Lords of Kerry and Barons of Lixnaw held lands in Clanmaurice and on the Dingle Peninsuala. Thomas an Apa did much to restore the family fortunes after he came of age. He raided the victorious McCarthys and was so successful that in 1285 Donal Rua McCarthy complained of his intrusions to Edward I.³

The victor at Callan, Fineen, had died in 1262 and his death so soon after the battle had prevented the McCarthys from fully exploiting the chaos in north Kerry as they became involved in a succession struggle. However, one result of Callan was that the castles south and east of the river Maine e.g. those along the Roughty fell into Irish hands. By the time of the emergence of a successor to Fineen, i.e. Donal Rua, the Maine was more or less the permanent border between the different factions in Kerry. Donal Rua consolidated the gains of Callan. He drove the invaders out of Magunihy altogether. He and his allies, the O'Sullivans and the O'Donoghues, even raided into north Kerry, many

¹ MacCarthaigs Book. 1262.

² C.D.I. Vol II No. 1912.

³ Barrington T. "Kerry....". 1976 pp. 58

times, burning and plundering. For example in 1280 "the castle of Dunlow (93) was evacuated by its guards through fear of.....MacCarthaig,.....and it was burned after they departed".¹ He died in 1302-03 and was succeeded by his grandson.

In the north Thomas an Apa who had restored his families fortunes died in 1298 and he was followed by his eldest son Thomas(d.1307) and then his second son Maurice. Maurice inherited a well established settlement from his father. His lands were relatively peaceful and the urban centres of Tralee and Dingle were thriving towns, doing extensive trade in wool and hides; and importing such luxuries as Spanish wine and French cloth. Maurice allied with anyone who would serve his cause. In 1315-16 he raised an army to help support Edward Bruce. He supported this army by extracting coign and livery from the local population. He even turned against his own e.g he beheaded his cousin, the son of Nicholas FitzMaurice for killing Diarmuid McCarthy Mor in 1325.² In 1329, in spite of aiding Bruce, Maurice was created first Earl of Desmond: even so when Edward III came to the throne in 1330 he was one of the chief Anglo-Irish rebels. He refused to attend Parliament in Dublin in 1331 but did attend at Kilkenny. Because of this behaviour Maurice was arrested in late 1331 and spent two years in Dublin Castle.

In 1334 he was pardoned and Desmond restored to him. The Earl now proved he could be loyal to the crown when it suited him. He lead, with Ormond, an Irish expedition to the Kings war in Scotland. The Earl returned to Desmond very much in favour with the king and in total command of the Earldom, able in 1339, to resist a rebellion of the Knight of Kerry. The Earls peace with the crown did not last long. In

¹ A.I. 1280.

² A.I. 1325:2.

1341 he resisted efforts by the justiciar Sir John Morice to replace Irish officials with Englishmen. He marched, in 1342, to Callan, Co.Kilkenny with a large army, intending to form an Anglo-Irish party of Opposition, but he got little or no support from his fellow peers. By now with the help of some Anglo-Irish nobles and Irish chiefs, including McCarthy Mor he was in open rebellion. He was outlawed and his lands declared forfeit.

The government acted at once, the justiciar Ufford lead a campaign against him and his castles at Askeaton, Co.Limerick and the "great" castle at Castleisland (67) fell to Ufford after a siege. The Earl fled to the Irish but surrendered in 1346. He was, again, imprisoned but freed in 1349. He seems to have reformed after this, so much so, that in 1355 he was justiciar for a short time. He died in 1359 and was succeeded by his son John an imbecile who was replaced in 1369 by his guardian and uncle Gerald (Gearóid Iarla) the 4th Earl. The career of the fourth Earl shows how much the Gearldines had been gaelicised even at this stage. In fact, the Earl of Desmond and McCarthy Mor were more akin to each other than the Earl was to his Anglo-Irish peers. The FitzGerald had, at this stage, to coin a much used cliché become "more Irish than the Irish themselves". They had adopted many Irish ideas and customs. For example, it is known that the 4th Earl of Desmond was a patron of one of the greatest bardic poets, Gofraidh Fionn O'Dalaigh (d.1387), who was also under the patronage of McCarthy Mor. Also the Earls adopted many Irish customs such as fosterage, e.g. the 7th Earl of Desmond (James d.1462) was fostered among the O'Briens of Thomand.¹ There was also intermarriage with the Irish - in the early 1300's, John FitzMaurice, 5th Knight of Kerry married Magaret O'Brien

¹ Barrington T. "Kerry...". 1976 pp. 64.

of Thomond. On the other side Tadg McCarthy Mor (d.1428) married a daughter of the 4th Earl of Desmond.¹ The 4th Earl himself was steeped in Irish literature and is regarded as the originator of the Irish courtly love poem, a style still used by the 1st Earl of Clancarre (McCarthy Mor) in the 16th century. The Earls also used many of the Brehon laws and customs when it suited them, such as adopting coyne as part of their rights, even when these uses were outlawed by the crown and government. The periodic attempts by the justiciars and the government to halt this "degeneration" of the Anglo-Irish really had very little effect on the Earls of Desmond and the other Anglo-Irish families in Kerry.

In the south the succession of the McCarthys had gone fairly smoothly from father to son and the clan was no longer weakened by the vicious internal struggles. In 1325 Cormac McCarthy succeeded his father. By this time the McCarthys no longer called themselves "Kings of Desmond" and to a certain extent regarded the Earl of Desmond as their overlord and, occasionally, paid him tribute in the form of goods or cattle and assisted him in his wars. However, this did not mean that the McCarthys or the other Irish chiefs did not raid into north Kerry. Even a gaelicised Earl of Desmond did not escape the brunt of the Gaelic Revival. In 1370 the 4th Earl was captured by the O'Briens of Thomond and had to be ransomed. Also, the Irish chiefs were more than willing to side with the government if they suited their purposes. In 1352 Cormac McCarthy helped the justiciar Sir Thomas De Rokeby, in a campaign against a kinsman Dermot McCarthy, for which he received an extensive land grant in Muskerry and Coshmang, Co.Cork.² Cormac was not always at peace with the Earls. When he was strong

¹ Barrington T. "Kerry...". 1976 pp. 64.

² Nicholls K. "Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland". 1972 pp. 160.

enough he refused to pay tribute although the Earl claimed overlordship; the McCarthys finally submitted to this in 1395.¹ Cormac raided north many times. In 1348, for example, he went raiding into Dingle and "plundered it beyond the town of Dingle and the country from that on. It is impossible to estimate the amount of booty they carried off".² Cormac died in 1359 and was succeeded by his son Donal Og, who continued the same policies as his father. He died in 1390-91 and was succeeded by his son Tadg. It was Tadg who submitted to Richard II in 1395 and recognised the Earl of Desmond as his immediate overlord. He formed an alliance with the Earl and married his daughter. However, the McCarthys like the other Irish chiefs were not quietened so easily and were to prove a problem for the Earls and the administration again and again. Tadg died in 1428 and was succeeded by his son Donal Og.

In 1420 James FitzGerald became the 7th Earl of Desmond and he consolidated his territories and power on the basis of the Gaelic exaction of "coyne" and the censing of troops on the countryside.³ He became very powerful in the south - west. His territories stretched from west Kerry to Waterford, including the DeCogan lands in Cork which he acquired in 1421.⁴ As the lands included the castle of Carrigaline, which commanded Cork harbour the Earl controlled all the chief ports in Munster; Dingle, Limerick, Tralee, Youghal, and Cork. He maintained alliances with the junior branches of the family, for example, an indenture of 1421 between the Earl and the Lord of Kerry, bound the Lord of Kerry to answer to the Earl; to his assies for all assessments,

¹ Curtis E. "Medieval Ireland...". 1968 pp. 142 - 143.

² MacCarthaigs Book. Frag I 1395.

³ Nicholls K. "Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland". 1972 pp. 160.

⁴ Curtis E. "Medieval Ireland...". 1968 pp. 305.

burdens and levies whatsoever, as all other tenants.¹ On the Irish side he had the support of the O'Briens (among whom he had been fostered) and the McCarthys, the O'Donoghues, the O'Sullivans, and O'Conor Kerry paid him tribute. He allowed the Irish on his lands used the Brehon law in his courts. Curtis says of him "he was the first of the Old English to display fearlessly a power derived from feudal grants, Brehon customs and the usurpation of Crown rights, to rule most of a province as a palatine Earl, to reign over an Irish population as a Gaelic 'Ri' and, yet, in Dublin to be on the Council and among the peers of the Anglo-Irish state".² He died in 1462 and was succeeded by his son Thomas.

The new Earl inherited a powerful, independent, petty kingdom and wished to resist all attempts of government control of his lands. In 1563 he was, with the Earl of Ormond, leader of a Patriot and Home Rule Party. In 1463 the Earl was appointed Lord Deputy and he held a parliament in late 1463, where the futility and failure of some of the Statutes of Kilkenny was recognised when some ports were given official permission to trade with the Irish. However, the government was suspicious of the Earl because of his dealings with the "Irish enemy", and in 1467 he was removed from office and replaced by Tiptoft. Tiptoft was given free reign to consolidate the position of the Lancastrian Butlers (Ormond) at the expense of the Yorkist FitzGerald (Desmond and Kildare). He called a parliament at Drogheda in 1467 and launched an attainder against Desmond for "horrible treasons..... felonies, as well as in..fosterage, and alliance with the Irish enemies of the King, as in giving them horses, harnesses and arms."³ Desmond

¹ Curtis E. "Medieval Ireland...". 1968 pp. 304.

² *ibid.* pp. 1968 142 - 143.

³ *ibid.* pp. 332.

was arrested, convicted, and executed on the orders of Tiptoft and Edward IV in 1468. The judicial murder of the Earl horrified most of the Anglo-Irish and Irish and had the effect of driving the family of Desmond further from the control of the crown and government. His heir James established himself as Earl with the aid of McCarthy Mor. This Earl was more Irish than his father, he had married an O'Brien and with the whole south-west was totally alienated from the crown. In 1487 when Lambert Simnel was campaigning in Ireland the Earl aided him. James was murdered in 1487 and his brother Maurice took his place. He supported the claims of Perkin Warbeck in 1491 but was later pardoned by Henry VII. Maurice died in 1520 and was followed by his son James. This James conspired against the government and told the Emperor Charles V that he had an army of 16,500 foot and 1,500 horse at his command.¹ However James' conspiracies came to nothing and he died in 1424 and between then and 1436 when the 15th Earl succeeded there was a quick succession, in 16 years, of four Earls.

This quick turnover of Earls did not lessen their grip on the south-west nor did it reconcile them with the crown. The 15th Earl James was as suspicious and wary of crown interference as his ancestors had been. He was one of the leaders of the Geraldine League and helped the young heir to the disgraced house of Kildare to escape to France and then rose in revolt. The vague aims were to restore the house of Kildare, but the revolt ended without gain. James submitted and was pardoned; he undertook to suppress Brehon law, Irish customs, and traditions, and to introduce English ways to Munster.² However, this did not mean the Earl was reconciled to the crown. He refused to have his heir educated in England at the Kings court, preferring to preserve

¹ Sasso C. "The Desmond Rebellions". 1980 pp. 7.

² Ellis S. "Ireland under the Tudors". 1985 pp. 184.

both the strength of his earldom and an inbred sense of independence in his son and heir, by having him educated in Ireland.¹ There was some reconciliation, however, and James was Lord High Treasurer of Ireland from 1547. He used his office to curb clan warfare and raiding in his own lands but was unable to stop the feuding between his family and Ormond. The families feuded over land boundaries, overlordship of tenants, customs, taxes, the prize wines of Youghal and Kinsale etc. James died in 1558 leaving a strong Earldom to his heir the 16th Earl, Gerald

In the south Donal Rua had ruled for 40 years and died in 1468. The continuing independence of the McCarthys and the other Gaelic Lordships created serious administrative problems for the government and for the Anglo-Irish peers. Local lords had to defend their own frontiers against the Irish as there was little or no funding or aid available from the government. There had been a severe reduction in the monies the English crown was willing to spend on the colony in Ireland. This meant that the justiciar / Lord Deputy and his army were inadequately funded and armed and were unable to defend the land of the entire colony. During this period of the "Gaelic Revival" the colony was actually contracting and some of the Irish chiefs expanding their territories and areas of influence. Until the 1450s the McCarthys saw little or no interference from central government, or from the Earl of Desmond. The native way of life continued undisturbed, with frequent raiding and plundering of enemy territory. Also the succession of McCarthy Mor went from father to son for many years therefore the clan did not go through any serious weak periods for a long time. Tadhg McCarthy died in 1503 and was succeeded by his son Donal who died in

¹ Sasso C. "The Desmond Rebellions". 1980 pp. 38.

1508. There was now a succession dispute but one which did not lose the McCarthys any land or power. Cormac McCarthy emerged successful and died in 1516. He was followed by his son Donal (d.1550) and then by his son Donal. This Donal McCarthy Mor and Gerald, 16th Earl of Desmond, were the main players in Kerry during the next three decades and at the end of their lives the social and political structure in Kerry was completely changed.

Gerald began his time as Earl on the wrong foot with the government. The crown was determined to bring all independent noblemen into line and the Earl was determined to enforce his authority and be "king in his own country". In 1559 he was confirmed by the Queen in all his lands, seigniorties, jurisdictions, and privileges held by the previous Earls, but Gerald also wanted the prize wines of Youghal and Kinsale, rights claimed by the Earl of Ormond [the Queens cousin and also a favourite at the court]. The Earls had met over this quarrel in 1560, but had not sorted out the problem. Both Earls were summoned to London and agreed that their problems should be settled by the court. Elizabeth pardoned the Earls and allowed Desmond to return home. However, this truce did not last long. Gerald was trying to get the unruly family of the FitzGerald of Decies to submit to him and they called on Ormond for help. Both sides met at Affane in Co.Tipperary in 1565. The army of Desmond was defeated and the Earl wounded and captured. Both Earls were again summoned to London. They submitted their explanations to the Queen and the Privy Council. Back in Ireland, Sidney (the Lord Lieutenant) recommended that a President and Council be established in Munster to impose English law and that the Earls be forced to recognize and decision handed down by the

government in Ireland.¹ Also, in an effort to curb the power of Desmond, Donal McCarthy Mor was created the 1st Earl of Clancarre which meant he no longer had to regard Desmond as his overlord.

Soon after Warren St Leger was appointed 1st President of Munster but was soon removed from office as he seemed to favour Desmond. Sidney was also in trouble for being lenient towards Desmond. In 1566 the Earl was arrested and sent to the Tower of London where he remained for six years. This decision meant that there was no effective head of the Desmond FitzGerald family. In his place, his cousin James FitzMaurice, and his brothers, James and John, emerged as leaders. FitzMaurice was not in a conciliatory mood towards the English. He tried to enforce the Earls authority throughout his lands. FitzMaurice and his allies were dismayed over the imprisonment of the Earl and called all Geraldine leaders to arms, declaring their rights and privileges to be in danger. He was elected "Captain of Desmond". He upheld an army in the Irish manner, enforcing coyne and livery. He was also, for a time, allied with Sir Edmund Butler nominal leader of the house of Ormond in the Earls absence; a unity brought about by the threatening actions of the Parliament convened by Sidney in 1569.

This Parliament placed attainders on Shane O'Neill, and the Knight of Glin, outlawed "Captaincies of countries" and passed a bill allowing the Deputy to appoint ecclesiastical dignities in Connacht and Munster for 10 years.² These new bills insulted the nationalistic and religious feelings of FitzMaurice and his allies. In addition to planning action with Butler he tried to win the support of the Earl of Clancarre and the lesser Irish chiefs. In June 1569 he attacked Kerrycurrihy, Co. Cork, besieged the garrison and drove them into Cork. He said that the

¹ Sasso C. "The Desmond Rebellions". 1980 pp. 47.

² Ellis S. "Tudor Ireland". 1985 pp. 259.

Queen intended to impose a "newly invented religion" and urged all Munster to join him in preventing this.¹ However, not many answered his call and with the return of Ormond in 1569 the Butlers withdrew their support. FitzMaurice continued his rebellion and the government went on the offensive. In Limerick Sir^{Humphrey} Gilbert took about 20 castles and tower houses previously held by the rebels. FitzMaurice was further isolated when Clancarre submitted and was pardoned. In 1571 Sir John Perrot was appointed President of Munster and FitzMaurice was reduced to raiding from his recesses in the woods and elsewhere.

Perrot received help from Ormond and other Anglo-Irish nobles. Although it proved impossible to capture FitzMaurice while he remained in the fastnesses, his area of operation was reduced and the province was somewhat peaceful. In 1572 FitzMaurice was so reduced in arms and men that he submitted. At the same time the Earl of Desmond was released from the Tower on condition that he control FitzMaurice, support the religious settlement, and levy his legal dues without warring with his neighbours.² He was to stay in Dublin but he soon escaped to his lands. He did not go into rebellion although he was in contact with FitzMaurice, who was in Europe seeking aid in the fight against the new religion. The Earl regained most of his lands and tower houses / castles and he began to rule as he had before. For the next five years Munster was quite. The Earl proved to be relatively loyal to the crown. He began to disband some of his armed retainers and gave Sidney the understanding that he would no longer keep a private army. He agreed not to exact the old Gaelic dues and the strengthened government in Munster tried to make sure he behaved like an English noble.

¹ Sasso C. "Desmond Rebellions". 1980 pp. 124.

² Ellis S. "Tudor Ireland". 1985 pp. 265.

It remained fairly quiet in Desmond until July 1579 when FitzMaurice landed with Spanish troops at Smerwick, near Dingle. They installed themselves in a fort, Fort Del Oro (153), readied for them by Rice of Dingle. Desmond initially showed no inclination to join them and was indeed told by the President to crush FitzMaurice. Gilbert was dispatched with Sir Henry Davells to advise Desmond and deal with FitzMaurice. The Earl, however, refused to give troops to the government. In Smerwick the invaders divided, half remaining at the fort, and half under FitzMaurice leaving to recruit allies. Fitzmaurice was killed in a skirmish with the Burkes and so the only real leader on the rebel side was removed. However, the delay in getting troops meant that the government could not take advantage of FitzMaurices death. Then in late 1579 Sir John of Desmond murdered Sir Henry Davells, became leader of the revolt, and hoped to commit the Earl to the fight.. By the end of the year Sir John had c.2000 troops with him, but about 600 were with Desmond who was still sitting on the fence. Malby took over the campaign against the rebels and in October 1579 he defeated the main rebel army at Monasternenagh; this did not however, end the rebellion. Eventually Malby declared the Earl a traitor and he was forced into joining the rebels.

Ormond (the Earls arch enemy) now took control in Munster; he had control of about 2,500 men.¹ Ormond and the Lord Justice Pelham met outside Rathkeale and marched westwards, forcing Desmond back into Kerry. They attacked many of Desmonds castles and tower houses, taking Carrigafoyle (60) after a siege while the garrisons at Askeaton and Ballyinoghen Co. Limerick surrendered. In June Pelham marched through Kerry to Dingle burning as he went. Ormond came through

¹ Ellis S. "Tudor Ireland". 1985 pp. 280.

Iveagh also burning as he went. Desmond seemed finished, however, he was reprieved from an unexpected quarter. In Leinster James Eustace, Viscount Baltinglass, rose in revolt. The revolt was a fiasco and soon collapsed but it did encourage renewed trouble in Ulster and also reinforcements had arrived in Smerwick from Europe. Desmond used this opportunity to regroup and the government troops had again to march through Kerry to deal with the rebels. Lord Justice Grey arrived at Smerwick with a force of 6,437 men.¹ Desmond sent no help to the invaders and they were defeated and massacred. Grey and his army continued to suppress the rebellion brutally and caused famine in Munster. Desmond was still at large although he was reduced to his fastnesses with very few followers. By 1582 the rebellion was dragging on and Ormond was put in charge to end it once and for all. Ormond depleted the mauradering bands of Desmond supporters. In 1582 Desmond had c.2000 men and by early 1583 he had been driven into the fastness of Slieve Lougher and was reduced to c. 80 men. By this time all of Desmonds allies, including the Earl of Clancarre (McCarthy Mor) had deserted him. Then in November 1583 Desmond was captured in the woods of Glenagenty, outside Tralee, and killed. This ended the second Desmond rebellion.

Munster, and especially Kerry, had been devastated. The harvest of the rebellion years had been destroyed and famine was everywhere. Ormond knew that Munster could only recover if the fighting stopped and he called for a pardon for the surviving allies of Desmond. The Earl had left a son but he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. The vast estates of the Earl were declared forfeit and it was decided to plant them with loyal trustworthy Englishmen. Elizabeth commissioned Sir

¹ Ellis S. "Tudor Ireland". 1985 pp. 282.

Valentine Browne and others to prepare a survey of the Earls estates. They decided that there were 574,645 acres of land available for plantation in Kerry, Cork, and Limerick. The idea was to divide the land into twelve seignories of 12,000 acres. Each seignory was to have 86 households with 71 servant all of English extraction - a total of 8,400 new settlers. However, the plantation did not go to plan. A certain number of families like the Denny, Brownes, Herberts, Springs acquired most of the forfeited land in Kerry. Nor did they bring in the required number of settlers, but used the locals as tenants. So it was the upper echelon in Kerry that had changed and the lower levels of society remained fairly much the same. The new settlers were also soon dealing with the native chiefs who still held land. Clancarre had no legitimate son to succeed so under common law his heir was his daughter Ellen whom the crown wanted to marry off to Sir Nicholas Browne and Clancarre offered no obvious objection. However, she secretly married her cousin Florence McCarthy Reagh and when Clancarre died in 1588 he claimed the lands as did Clancarres illegitimate son Donal McCarthy. Donal McCarthy took advantage of the rebellion of O'Neill and O'Donnell in 1598 to attack the settlers and press home his claims, as did the the elder brother of the 16th Earl of Desmond who claimed all the lands back, he is known as the Sungan Earl.

Again Munster had to be defended, and this was done by Sir George Carew. He besieged Glin castle in 1600 and butchered the garrison. O'Connor Kerry then handed over Carrigafoyle (60) and Carew swept through north Kerry. He met the Sungan Earl at Kilmallock and defeated him. Florence McCarthy and the Sungan Earl were both captured and sent to the Tower of London by the end of the year. Very soon after the rebellion was over and the planters returned. From 1601 - 1645 the plantation was consolidated. The new families took possession of

all the lands, tower houses, castles etc of the defeated nobles. There was a brief revival of the Irish interests in 1641 when rebellion broke out. During the rebellion there was an uneasy alliance between the Irish and the Old English; i.e the McCarthys and the FitzGerald. However, after a success at Tralee the rebels were eventually defeated. This was the last action undertaken by the Irish and Old English to regain their lands and from now on the settlers stayed. The old order was gone. The Geraldines survived only in Glin and for a short time in Dingle. They were much reduced in power and lands as were the McCarthys in the south. The McCarthys finally failed in the male line in the 17th century and their remaining lands passed to the Herberts. The new settler ruled supreme.

THE CASTLE AND THE TOWER HOUSE.

Castles have their origins in feudal society. They also were part of the military conquest, and built where "the land was held by military service and a fortified residence was a privilege accorded to great land owners" ¹ This was very obvious in the Anglo - Norman conquest of Ireland. As soon as an area was conquered by the invaders, they put up a motte [or ringwork castle] from which they consolidated their conquest. When the area was relatively secure the motte or earthen castle could be replaced by a stone castle - from which the conqueror ruled the area and kept a military grip on his possessions. For example, it is thought that John de Courcy had constructed some of the castle of Carrigfergus by 1178. The keep and the rest of the castle were probably finished by 1210.² In his isolated "principality" in Ulster de Courcy was a thorn in the side of both the native Irish and the administration in Dublin. However, secure in his strongholds in Ulster de Courcy was able to harry and raid almost at will. Even military setbacks in the field could not dislodge him when he had the thick walls of Carrigfergus to retreat behind. Carrigfergus later provided a strongpoint for Hugh de Lacy in his quarrels with the crown and it took a determined King John and a large army nine days to take the castle in 1210.

In other parts of the country the Anglo - Normans were busily building their castles. Trim was begun by de Lacy to help consolidate his lands in Meath. Castles such as Greencastle, Co. Down, Adare, Co. Limerick, Dundrum, Co. Dublin etc were in existence by the early 13th century. With the consolidation of the conquest came the sub -

¹ Thompson M.W. "The decline of the castle". 1987 pp. 2.

² Barry T.B. "Archaeology of medieval Ireland". 1987 pp. 56.

infeudation of the large land grants - and with this sub - infeudation came the construction of more and more castles, this time serving both as military strong points and as manorial centres. Strongbow [the Earl of Pembroke] was the first of the original invaders to begin sub - infeudation. For example, grants were made of the land of the Barony of Rebun [Laois] to one Robert de St.Michael, and in Rebun are the ruins of a motte and a later 13th century castle.¹ This was the usual sequence in consolidating the land grant. Firstly the colonists quickly put up a motte, and when the lands were secure, in the majority of cases, a castle was built. Sometimes, there was no initial motte - a stone castle was immediately built. This happened at Ardree [Co. ~~Kildare~~] where Hugh de Lacy built a castle for one Thomas de Fleming in 1181.²

In the initial invasion of Kerry by de Marisco and the Geraldines of Shanid many mottes were recorded as being built (see chp. 5). These mottes were all probably in place by the 1220's. However, since only north Kerry was eventually held by the Anglo - Irish it is only some of the mottes in this area that are later replaced by stone castles. The invaders also built stone castles without first building mottes, as at Tralee (158) and Castleisland (67). All the above examples show that one of the main functions of the castle was as part of a military conquest. Once the invader was firmly entrenched behind the stone walls it would be very difficult to dislodge him. This does not mean that the Irish did not, many times, take and destroy these castles. For example, in 1203 the new castle at Limerick was "slighted" by the men of Connacht.³ However, in the early years of the conquest the

¹ Orpen G.H. "Ireland.....". 1911 - 1920 Vol 1 pp. 383.

² *ibid.* pp. 383.

³ Dolley M. "Anglo - Norman Ireland". 1972 pp. 105.

Irish did not take and keep these castles, rather they destroyed or slighted them. As soon as the Irish retreated the castles were re-occupied and the control of the lands re-established. It is in feudal societies or societies heavily influenced by contact with feudalism that one finds the construction of castles. Prior to the Anglo - Norman invasion there was no castle construction in Ireland. However, soon after the invasion the Irish seem to have realised the military significance of stone castles, they began to hold on to the castles they took in war, for example, Killorglan (118) which was built by the Gealdines was in the hands of the Irish of south Kerry after 1261, and to build their own structures. These castles were used both in the defence of the lands not conquered and later, as bases from which to launch campaigns to regain lost lands.

Simpson defines the castle as the "private stronghold of a feudal lord"¹, while Thompson defines it as a "fortified residence in which fortification predominates over the domestic aspect of the structure".² In the first definition the word "private", in my opinion, implies a residence and this definition could be interpreted as the "residential (private) stronghold of a feudal lord". However, this definition does not mention the defensive nature of a castle. True the word "stronghold" implies defence but the all pervasive defensive function of a castle was such that to call it a "private stronghold" is to play down this all important function of the castle. Taking the other definition, there is in this the main idea of fortification, while also including the fact that a lord and his family usually lived in the structure. The rest of the definition is that the lord who lived in the stronghold "normally

¹ Simpson W.D. "Castles in England and Wales". 1967 pp. 4.

² Thompson M.W. "Decline....". 1987 pp. 1.

owned or controlled a large amount of territory around" the castle.¹ This includes the idea that this fortified residence also served as a manorial centre. Therefore, a castle can be defined as a fortified military stronghold, which would serve as a residential and^{as} a manorial centre. As Simpson states "when a lord held a castle, he held the territory and when he lost the castle he lost the territory".² The residential part of the castle was, especially, in the early years of the conquest, the least important aspect.

When the conquest was more or less secure and most of the manors created, castle construction slowed down. Because the Anglo - Normans were no longer actively conquering lands they were building fewer and fewer castles. The Irish had their own castles and had stopped retreating before the invaders. This does not mean that there were no wars. The usual raids and petty wars between and among the Irish and the Anglo - Irish continued. During this century (the 13th) the castle had been evolving architecturally. The first castles were usually free standing keeps surrounded by high curtain walls - the most defensive types being the circular keeps. Then as the century developed and the military function of the castle became less all pervasive, some attention was paid to the residential needs, the free standing keeps were abandoned in favour of stronger outer walls. The domestic buildings were then contained within the protective perimeter wall³ This does not mean that the residential function of the castle was now more important than the military function - however, since the conquest was now at its zenith and most of the Anglo - Norman lands were fairly secure, some residential needs could be taken into

¹ Thompson M.W. "Decline....". 1987 pp. 1.

² Simpson W.D. "Castles...". 1967 pp. 7.

³ Barry T.B. "Archaeology ". 1987 pp. 61.

consideration when building a castle. The building of large stone castles seems to have ended in the first quarter of the 14th century, some of the existing castles were re - fortified or re - edified in this century but very few large castles were built. There are many reasons for this. As already mentioned, the colony had reached its height in 1300 and indeed was in retreat by 1320, so no castles were needed for military conquest. The crown, which had been a major castle builder, had economic and military problems elsewhere and so did not have the interest or the finance to continue building in Ireland. With the decline of the colony came the decline in stone castle construction. This simultaneous decline serves to underline the military function of the castle.

The incessant petty warfare in the country demanded that the houses of the nobles and chiefs continue to be fortified. Research into tower houses by the more recent historians and archaeologists has shown that they were being built in the early quarter of the 14th century. In the chapter on origins the part the changing economic, military, and social situation in Ireland had on the development of tower houses is discussed. Briefly, the conclusion was that the change from a centralised economy and government to a decentralised one was one of the main factors in the development of the tower house. With so many absentee land owners, so many gaelicised Anglo - Irish lords who were only interested in preserving their position and lands, and a weak, impoverished central government incapable of taking or protecting any lands, the castle as an instrument of military action or conquest was no longer needed. The petty wars between the local nobles and chiefs which had taken the place of the wars of conquest led to the construction of the tower house.

In the Oxford English Dictionary a tower house is defined as (1) "the name of a solitary,...high, fenced house, a tower house or peel house too small to be called a castle" or (2) It is a general name, of modern writers, for small towers or fortified dwellings...consisting of a massive square edifice, the ground floor of which is vaulted and was the abode of the owner and his family..". The general idea in these definitions is that the tower house is a "small" fortified dwelling. In many cases it is true to say that a tower houses is a relatively small 5 - 6 storey dwelling built vertically for defence. However, there are also tower houses which are as large as any 13th century castle. For instance, Carrigafoyle (60), Bunratty, Co. Clare, Blarney, Co. Cork etc are as impressive as any of the 13th century castles such as Trim, Nenagh, Carlow etc. But can these structures truly be called tower houses? Under the above descriptions they cannot as they are definitely not "small" fortified dwellings. On the other hand they are primarily residences built vertically for defence so therefore they are tower houses!

Many of the definitions of the tower house emphasise the defensive element of these structures, as with the castle. The tower house can have a bawn wall which can be seen as a smaller version of the curtain wall, thick walls, narrow loops and slits, arrow - slits, battlements, etc. However, the defensive element of the tower house does not seem as all pervasive as in the castle. While the walls of the tower house are undoubtably thick - sometimes up to 10 m. thick - they are nothing compared to the massive 15 m.[?] or more thickness of the walls of the castle. Also, in the tower house, as explained in chapter 8, again and again the defensive nature of the tower house is compromised by residential needs. The walls may appear thick on the outside but inside one finds large window recesses, cupboard recesses, fireplaces,

stairs, garderobe chambers etc built into the thickness of the walls. In some cases the walls are compromised so much that they really are only 1 m. or less thick in places. Other defensive elements are compromised, for instance, in many cases the wall - walk and battlements would be of little or no use in an attack because of the chimney flues obstructing the defenders. This is not to say that the tower house has little or no defensive function, it does. Other defensive elements are usually left intact, such as the murder hole, shot - holes, narrow loops etc. However, unlike the castle the tower house can be defined, in degree of importance, as a residential, fortified dwelling.

Other important differences between the castle and the tower house are based on feudalism and military conquest. Castles were manorial centres from which the lord ruled his lands and were usually garrisoned by the castle ward provided by the feudal due of knight service. On the other hand a tower house may or may not have been a manorial centre, in fact it usually did not function as such. By the time of the tower house era the feudal rights and dues had more or less fallen into abeyance and it was usually with paid retainers, gallowglasses, mercenaries, and kern - a private army - that the tower house was garrisoned. The tower house could also be used as part of military conquests. While the nobles and chiefs could use a tower house as a base from which to launch an attack or raid it is not usual to find any one tower house central to a military campaign. The defensive function of the tower house was more as a protective cover for the lord / chief than as a military base. The strongest argument in their differences comes from the fact that castles were not usually built near each other, while tower houses are quite commonly found in clusters. A castle was the defensive centre of a large territory, even when this territory was

sub - infeudated and a castle built by the new sub - tenant, the territory was large enough to have the castles quite a distance from each other. On the other hand it is quite normal to find tower houses within three miles or less of each other - indeed in some cases one can see the neighbouring tower houses from the battlements of some structures. This is because the tower house was the residence at the centre of a large farm rather than a large land grant or territory. Indeed the same family may have owned or controlled all the tower houses in one area - which would cover a large land area, but no one tower house could be considered the centre.

The castle was the fortified residential stronghold of the great lord who owned large territories while the tower house was the residential fortified dwelling of all land owning classes in society, from the great lord to the lowest sub - tenant. Most land owners of any standing could afford to build a tower house. Dixon discovered that most builders of the "peel towers" on the English / Scottish borders while being considered lesser landowners were still able to afford the cost of constructing a stone dwelling house.¹ Most of these tower house owners were found to be worth over £100 at their death, even in the border areas, which were hit by continuous raids, profit from husbandry and farming meant that land owners could and needed to build these tower houses.² To be worth of £100 was quite considerable when one considers that the lowest classes were only worth from £3 - £10 per annum.³ It is the men worth over £100 - who were described as men of "no great standing" who built some of the peel house on the Scottish

¹ Dixon P. "Tower houses, Peel houses and border society". Arch.J. 1979 pp. 246 - 47.

² *ibid.* pp. 246.

³ *ibid.* pp. 246.

Borders.¹ In Ireland tower houses were also constructed by the "men of no great standing". That is, by the heads (tribal or feudal) of lesser families like the Clann Pierce in Kerry. The Clann Pierce were the owners of at least two tower houses, Ballykealy (32) and Ballymacaquim (37). This family were a lesser tribe who only held land in this small pocket of north Kerry, they were sub - tenants of the Lord of Kerry (FitzMaurice). However, they were able to build one substantial tower house at Ballymacaquim (37) [Ballykealy (32) is now demolished]. This example show that even the lesser families, those who only held what amounted to large farms were able to construct tower houses, as residences for the head of the clan and as fortified dwellings to protect the possessions of the head man and his family.

Simpson states that the tower house "really represents an abnormal development [in Northern England], due to the militarisation of society in the Scottish wars it is simply the hall - house plan upended for security".² This is also the case in Ireland. The constant state of war in the country meant that, though castle building had halted, the need for a fortified dwelling had not disappeared. However, the type of fortification needed was different. In the days of the military conquest, strong, stone structures capable of holding out against large armies and prolonged sieges were needed. In the tower house era when cattle raiding, harrying, and plundering was the norm, a stronghold that could be held against small raiding parties,^{was needed} and used only to protect the material possessions of the owner - not necessarily his lands as these were not going to be taken or conquered. The major difference between the castle and the tower house is that the castle evolved in a feudal, militaristic society of lord / conquerors while the

¹ Dixon P. "Tower houses, peel towers....." Arch. J. 1979 pp. 249..

² Simpson D.W. "Castles.....". 1967 pp. 127.

tower house evolved in a marcher [feudal / brehon] land owning, static society of cattle raiders. In the difference in society lay the difference in function from a military stronghold which was also a residence [castle] to a residence which was also a fortified stronghold [tower house].

In architecture the evolution from castle to tower house is more straight forward. As the tower house looks so like the castle it is obvious that the builders were influenced by the pre - existing stone structures. It is difficult to state if the tower house evolved directly from the castle. There is a short over - lapping period in the early 14th century, but there is also in this period evidence of the development of other types of fortified dwellings. In the late 13th century and early 14th century there is the development of the moated site. Most historians and archaeologists accept that these developed as a response to the unsettled conditions in certain areas in the colony - most were in isolated border areas where the Anglo - Norman farmers needed the water - filled moats and earthen banks topped by a palisade¹ to protect themselves and their possessions from the general lawlessness that prevailed. Obviously these moated sites were not a direct evolution from the castle but in many ways they are more akin to the tower house than the castle, in that both types of structure were built to protect the individual land owner and his possessions. There is also some documentary evidence of a type of "hall" structure being built in the late 13th century. There is a description of a one storey stone structure with a vault and a wooden upper floor at Callan in 1308 and a similar description for a building at Inch (112) in 1298.² These buildings no longer exist but would seem like an intermediate stage

¹ Barry T.B. " Archaeology....". 1987 pp. 84.

² C.J.R. 1308, 1298.

between a castle and a tower house while being neither one nor the other. Unfortunately, as no examples still exist, nor do they seem to have been widespread enough to constitute a family of buildings, it is impossible to state categorically that they were a fore-runner to the tower house.

The tower house is a structure which is similar in architecture to the castle and in function to the moated site. As with the tower house, the moated site could be, but was not necessarily, a manorial centre - and as with the tower house it was a fortified response to an unstable military situation rather than an integral part of a military conquest. The tower house was a further development of this idea of a fortified homestead. It comes when there was a breakdown in the feudal system in the "land of peace" and a time of incessant warfare throughout the whole country. No longer could the great lords, the kings, or the government rule vast tracts of land from behind the thick walls of a castle. Indeed many lords / chiefs could no longer afford to build these castles, while a tower house was within the economic range of even the lesser lords and chieftains. What was needed in this period was a stone fortified structure which protected a lord / chief, his family, and possessions - a stone structure similar in function to the moated site but with a little more emphasis on defence. The tower house is the direct descendant of the castle - but also in its own way different from the castle. As Thompson says the castle and the tower house are best described as a "different species within the same genus..".¹ This is not to belittle the great difference in the architecture and functions of the tower house and castle, but also it cannot be denied that there are similarities between both structures. However, in

¹ Thompson M W. "Decline....". 1987 pp. 2.

THE ORIGINS OF THE TOWER HOUSE.

In dealing with the tower houses it is necessary to explore the origins of this type of structure in Ireland and elsewhere. When the construction of tower houses began, in the early to mid 14th century, Ireland had only 150 years of tradition in stone castle construction. As already discussed in the previous chapter castles were introduced to Ireland by the invading Anglo - Normans, and there are parallels to be found in England, Wales, and Scotland to the motte and bailey, the ringwork castle, the moated sites, and the stone castles of the 12th century. These buildings were not indigenous to Ireland, and it was not until some 30 - 40 years after the invasion that the Irish chiefs began to adopt the new type of fortification. The first stone castles built in Ireland were the massive castles with rectangular keeps e.g the great keep at Carrigfergus, built c.1180 - 1205, Trim built c.1190 - 1200, Adare built pre 1226 etc. These castles resemble, to quite an extent, the stone castles built in England e.g Rochester, Chepstow, and Kenilworth etc.

The stone castles of Ireland continued to be changed and modified throughout the main 1180 - 1300 building period. In addition to the rectangular keeps, isolated within the great curtain walls, there are examples of polygonal and cylindrical keeps e.g Shanid and Nenagh, the great castles of Dublin, Limerick, and Kilkenny; castles built on extremely defensive and strategic locations e.g Castleroache, Co. Louth, built on a rock outcrop, and then the keepless gatehouse castles of the mid to late 13th century. There are parallels for all these types of buildings in England. The round castles do not seem to have appeared in England long before 1200, and these keeps are largely confined to the Welsh Marches. In Ireland the round keeps were built by the

Cambro - Normans and these keeps date mainly from 1200, with a few built in the later 13th century. For example, Shanid is first mentioned in 1230, the keep is probably earlier than this, dating from c.1210. The inspiration for these circular castles seems to come from Wales, where round Welsh castles such as Longtown (Monmouthshire) built c.1187 - 88 and Pembroke built c.1200 were erected by the De Lacy and the Marshal families respectively.

There are similar developments in England to the keepless castles of the late 13th century. By the mid 13th century the curtain wall and the gatehouse had become more important than the central keep. The gatehouse was now the most massive part of the castle, with the curtain walls having flanking turrets for extra protection; in England this type of castle appears as early as 1220 at Beeston. The culmination of these keepless castles in England were those built by Edward I in Wales, at Caernarvon, Beaumaris, Harleck etc. In Ireland the keepless castles appear about the same time e.g Roscommon was built c.1280, even earlier was Castlegrace which was built c.1250. The keepless castles continued to be built in Ireland to the end of the 13th century. Therefore, it can be stated that the development in castle construction in England and Wales had a direct influence on the construction of castles in Ireland in the 13th century. Even the architectural details in both countries are similar to a certain extent. In Ireland the castles were not as massive or complex as those, for example, at Conway or Caernarvon, but mirrored these castles and others on a smaller scale. In fact the influence of the great keep at Caernarvon can be seen in the use of the so - called "Caernarvon" arch in the doorways of some Irish castles e.g Ballymoon, Co.Carlow (built c.1310).

Another example, is Ferns castle where the window loops are typologically the same as those on the towers of Chepstow castle.¹

These examples and others show the influence English castle building had on the development of the Irish castle. There is one type of castle built in the 13th century which is peculiar to Ireland. These are the so-called "towered" keeps; i.e a strong rectangular tower provided with a massive cylindrical turret at each of its four corners. These keeps are of a type native to Ireland, having no forerunner in England, Wales or France in the 13th century. This type of castle is confined mainly to the eastern portion of the country. The first example seems to be Carlow Castle, built c.1231 by William Marshal the elder. Other examples include Ferns, Lea, Terryglass, and Dunluce, all of whose remains are fragmentary. Because of this it is hard to compare these castles typologically but they do seem to have been somewhat similar. Also these castles date from a time when in England, Wales, Scotland, and the rest of Ireland the keepless castle was very much in fashion. It is possible that these castles constitute a family of castles of Irish origin; in fact they may have been the inspiration for the 14th century English castles at Woodford and Nunney. It is important to remember, when searching for the origins of the Irish tower house, that here in the 13th century, there is proof of the innovative powers of some, at least, of the Anglo - Irish builders. However, these towered keeps were a minority and the main castle building period is almost a carbon copy of the English castle construction era.

Not only were the actual structures influenced by English fashions in the 12th and 13th centuries, most of the masons and builders were also of English origin. Architectural historians agree, that up to c.1300

¹ Barry T.B. "Archaeology....". 1987 pp. 62.

there was a constant flow of English masons across the Irish sea. Irish masons, in the pre 1170 period did have experience in stone construction, but it seems mainly confined to ecclesiastical buildings. However, the type of architecture used in the churches, abbeys, etc was Romanesque, a style long superseded by Gothic in England. The Cistercians had introduced the Gothic style to Ireland before the Norman Invasion, but it was not a widespread fashion by 1170. Most Irish masons were not accustomed to building stone defensive fortifications. The O'Briens i.e Turlough O'Brien, are reputed to have built stone castles before the Norman Invasion but no remains of these buildings have been found.

Much of the work done on medieval Irish architecture is confined to the ecclesiastical architecture; however, many of the opinions on post - invasion ecclesiastical architecture hold true for secular architecture. According to Stalley, the first Anglo - Norman churches, friaries, abbeys, etc were built by English masons, for example, the nave of ChristChurch was designed in the Early English architectural style by a master from the Severn valley.¹ It is impossible to state, for certain, that English masons were also used to build the early stone castles, as the names of the masons, are rarely, if ever, recorded. However, there is some indirect evidence of the architects relationship with England and Wales, especially in the first 100 years of stone castle construction. For example, in 1243 the King ordered that a hall be constructed in the castle of Dublin "after the manner of the Hall of Canterbury".² In this case it is probable that English masons were used as they would have been more capable of building such a hall than the Irish masons who did not have much experience in Gothic building.

¹ Stalley R. "Irish Gothic and English fashion". 1984 pp. 65.

² C.D.I. Vol I 1171 - 1251, No. 2612.

The builders of the earliest stone castles may have been English masons, but by 1200 at least, the Irish masons were being employed as builders. However, as R.A.S Macalister said " the native architects could never master the principles of Gothic"¹. The overall style of the Irish castles is Gothic, but a type of Gothic which is native to Ireland. One can see very clearly the stylistic links with England and Wales; according to Stalley the average Irish mason of 1250 had a good grasp of contemporary English fashion.² Many of the basic features of the Gothic style were used in the Irish castles, for example, the pointed arch and sometimes the vault, and other rarer features such as the "Caernarvon" arch etc. However, most Irish castles were ruder and less well built than their English counterparts, and most, while Gothic in aspect, had many features which were peculiar to Ireland. By 1300 (the later period of stone castle construction) there is, in Ireland, a style of building which, while very much influenced by English fashion, developed along similar but distinct lines.

As Stalley says the political, social, and racial complexities of medieval Ireland had a decisive bearing on the question of style.³ The local tastes of the lords or chiefs and the builders, the economic and political situation all had the effect of altering slightly the Gothic architecture, as imported from England and Wales in its pure form. Even as late as the mid 13th century the Romanesque influence was still to be seen on both ecclesiastical and secular buildings, combining with the Gothic and other local architectural features to produce a style that is distinctively native, yet similar to English architecture, a style known as "Irish Gothic. By the end of the 13th century the Irish

¹ Macalister R.A.S. "The archaeology of Ireland". pp. 1949 349.

² Stalley R. "Irish gothic.....". 1984 pp. 65.

³ *ibid.* pp. 66.

masons had a tradition, albeit a short one, in the construction of stone castles. Stalley says that the flow of English masons, ideas and fashions across the Irish sea was beginning to dry up by the end of the 13th century.¹ Now the Irish masons had less contact with and less respect for English fashions. It is now, at the beginning of the tower house construction period, that the architectural parallels with England are less noticeable. To find parallels to the new architectural developments in Ireland it is necessary to look elsewhere; to the north i.e. Northern England and Scotland.

In Scotland the history of the stone castle construction developed along similar lines to that of Wales and Ireland. Scotland was not invaded by the Anglo - Normans, but the idea of feudalism and with it the building of stone castles came from England. The sub - infeudation of Scotland was carried out by the Scottish kings. Excluding the "brochs" of c.1st century A.D. there was no tradition of stone defensive construction prior to the 12th and 13th centuries. As in Ireland the architectural styles of the early Scottish castles were heavily influenced by the English fashions. The architecture of most of these castles is very similar to, if cruder than, the architecture of the English castles. However, like Ireland there are also examples of local innovation in castle building. For example, there are a group of curtain wall castles in the Western Highlands all built on rock outcrops, or on the edge of the sea, enclosing the entire site and are so similar in architecture as to suggest the work of a school or group of masons and architects.² The architecture of these castles is, like the turreted keeps in Ireland, of local rather than national style, and show in Scotland that the masons and builders could be innovative. However, in general, the

¹ Stalley R. "Irish gothic....". 1984 pp. 66.

² Cruden S. "The Scottish castle". 1960 pp. 38.

architecture of both Irish and Scottish castles followed similar lines to English architecture until the 14th century. With the development of the tower house in Ireland and Scotland the lines of architectural similarity with English castle construction separate.

By the end of the 13th century the Anglo - Norman colony in Ireland had reached its zenith. The great castles of the initial conquest now served to protect the lands of the new lords. However, the Gaelic Resurgence and the contraction of the colony was soon to begin. In Kerry by 1261 the Irish in Desmond had defeated the Geraldines at Callan and confined them to north Kerry. In the rest of the country the lands of the Anglo - Irish were either remaining static or contracting. The Butlers had firmly established themselves in Kilkenny and Tipperary i.e. in the lands of Ormond. In Thomond the O'Briens, who had been under threat from the Anglo - Irish lords who had been granted their lands in the early 13th century, were by the late 1280's supreme in most of their lands. In Connacht the O'Connors continued to quarrel among themselves which allowed the De Burgo's (Burkes) to consolidate themselves. In Ulster the O'Neills and the O'Donnells were the most important Irish chiefs and ruled the lands west of Lough Neagh while their theoretical overlord, the Earl of Ulster, was in control elsewhere. In Leinster the deaths of many of the original invaders without direct male heirs had lead to the splitting up of the great lordships and in consequence an opportunity for the Irish in Leinster to raid and harass the settlers and to regain some land.

In the early 1300's the first signs of weakness in the government of the colony were to be seen. There was a general lack of interest in Irish affairs on the part of the crown. The growth in the power of the local lords and chiefs was not checked and the Dublin government began to lose control of areas outside of Leinster. The peace of the land

was disrupted by the growth of factions and quarrels between nobles and / or chiefs; e.g quarrels over lands and rights between the FitzGerald and the De Burgos or the FitzGerald and the De Vescys. The government was unwilling or unable to check the growth of private armies controlled by nobles, which led to the illegal use of "coyne", raiding and harassing of people and the laying waste of huge tracts of land.

The ability of the government to do anything was not helped by the constant demands of Edward I for money, men, and arms for his Scottish wars. Because there was little or no money left in the Irish exchequer to pay armies to garrison wards and protect the lands of the colony more and more control was given into the hands of the local magnates who used the new powers for their own purposes. Another problem with the diversion of men and money over-seas was the fact that absentee nobles were not present to defend their lands. The resurgent Irish chiefs took advantage of these poorly defended lands, raiding, burning crops and castles, and regaining some lost lands.¹ This breakdown of the observance of the laws and the rights of the crown, the widespread faction fights and local, petty wars, and the general decline into lawlessness continued virtually unabated for the early part of the 14th century. By the time of the Bruce Invasion in 1315 - 18 the Lordship of Ireland was effectively non-existent in many areas of the country. Most power was concentrated in the hands of the local magnates and their armies, and these nobles conducted raids and wars in a similar fashion to the Gaelic chiefs. For the years 1315 -18 there are references in the chronicles to a period of large-scale destruction of lands, castles and people from Ulster to Munster.

¹ Lydon J.F. "The Lordship of Ireland". 1972 pp. 138.

The impact of the Bruce Invasion and the Great Famine on the country was great. As Lydon states the country was depopulated and laid waste, the rule of law broke down in many places, feudatories broke faith and the government found the last vestiges of control slipping from its grasp.¹

Many of the Anglo - Irish nobles including the FitzGeralds began to act more like petty Irish kings than chief tenants of the crown. Maurice, the 1st Earl of Desmond (created 1329) was one of the more disruptive nobles; he had his own army or "rout" to which many men, younger sons of Anglo - Irish nobles or Irish chiefs, were attracted for the booty and prizes to be taken in raids. His destructive career lasted well into the 14th century and he certainly was not the only noble to indulge in this type of petty raiding and warfare, without much interference from the government which was now financially dependent on an uninterested crown in London. No part of Ireland was unaffected. With the death of the Earl of Ulster in 1333, without male heir, the province soon reverted to the control of the Irish chiefs and passed from the control of the crown. The Irish chiefs also contributed to the general chaos of the era. With the decline of the power of the government, so many absentee nobles and the gaelicisation and isolation of many of the other Anglo - Irish magnates many Irish families regained some ancestral lands. For example, one O'More declared himself Lord of Leix in 1342, where the Mortimers were titular possessors.² Even in the relatively stable Earldoms like Ormond and Desmond there were entrenched enclaves of Gaelic land and power, in theory holding the lands of the Earls, but in practice semi -

¹ Lydon J.F. "Ireland in the later middle ages". 1973 pp. II (prologue).

² Curtis E. "Medieval Ireland". 1968 pp. 213.

independent rulers. One such chief was O'Conor Kerry who managed to hold on to a pocket of land in the north-east corner of Kerry.

This expansion of Gaelic Ireland, and the lands of the gaelicised magnates meant a severe cut-back in revenue for the central government. The breakdown in local administration meant that the sheriffs or officials no longer collected customs and revenues on a regular basis. From providing a surplus to the crown in the late 13th century the Irish lands were now a draining financial liability. Because the crown was unwilling and unable to provide enough money to the Irish administration, it was unable to protect the 'land of peace' without the help of the magnates. Again and again as the century progressed more power was given into the hands of the local lords and the control the administration had over these lords decreased. Warfare became a constant fact of life in Ireland. The nobles, chiefs, and the government officials fought among themselves at various times. The most prevalent type of warfare and / or violence was cattle - raiding, looting, burning, and taking hostages not wars of conquest as in previous centuries. Both nobles and chiefs began to build up their own private armies to conduct these raids and wars.

In a list of armed forces of the Irish chiefs and nobles dated to c.1470 it is stated that " none of this land obeye the kings lawes, saving a part of four shires called Midth, Uriell, Dublin, and Kildare" ¹ In Leinster the McMurrough chief, who raided and harassed the four shires, had "200 horse.....a baytale (battle) of Galoglas and 300 kerne..."². In Desmond "McArtie Moore" Prince and Lord of Desmond had40 horse, 2 battles and 2000 kerne.....the Earl of Desmond....hath 400 horse, 8

¹ Price L. "Armed forces of the Irish chiefs in the early 16th century". JRSAL. 62C 1932 pp. 202.

² ibid. pp. 202.

battles of gallowglass, 1 battle of crossbowmen and gunners and 3000 kerne; the list also stated that the lands of Desmond "hated the kinges laws....."¹. There are 50 chiefs and nobles mentioned on this list, all of whom had sizable armies with which to disturb the peace. This list comes from the end of the 15th century but the problem of private armies began at a much earlier stage.

The end of the initial stone castle building era in both England and Ireland came when the conquest was at its height, however, the difference in England was that the crown never lost control. Except for occasional lapses when some over mighty subject caused disruption, the crown remained firmly in control. Unlike Ireland, private armies which developed were eventually crushed by the crown and never disturbed the peace for a lengthy period. Only one area in England has a similar political, economic, and military history to Ireland during these centuries; this is the northern areas, the border lands between England and Scotland. There was relative peace in these areas until the 1290's when the incursions of the armies of Edward I forced the Scots to take reprisals, i.e to raid and lay waste the lands of the north.

These raids by the Scots were similar to the raids carried out by all sections of the community in Ireland. The purpose of the raids was not conquest, but blackmail i.e harrying and raiding, carrying off of hostages and cattle either to weaken the military power of the north and / or to force the inhabitants to buy truces with money or supplies - something similar to the "Black rent" demanded by the Leinster Irish from the settlers there. These raids continued with great regularity through out the early 14th century, aiding the decline of the economy, the decline of the rule of law, and to an extent crown control in

¹ Price L. "Armed forces...." JRSAI 62C 1932 pp. 203.

northern England. During the reign of Edward III the crown's control and the military defence of the northern lands was very shaky. The 14th century criminal records show evidence of constant raids, petty thieving, and wasting of lands.¹ There were occasional periods of peace in the 14th century but, generally, the raiding was constant. These raids do not seem to have caused whole scale abandonment of lands but the economic prosperity of the north did decline.

The crown did try and defend these lands by establishing garrisons like Bewick, Carlisle, and Roxburgh, but as with Ireland, the crown did not have the financial ability to provide the necessary defence and, as with Ireland, this task was given to the local magnates. The Earls of the north like the Percys of Northumberland were paid to protect certain areas of the marches, in effect handing over to the magnates the local governing of these areas. The sort of alienation of the magnates which had occurred in Ireland did not happen to such an extent in the north of England and the crown did keep quite a deal of control, but less control than they had in the rest of the country. Many families such as the Percys profited from the wars, and up to the end of the 15th century the fees granted to the marcher families to protect the border - up to £1000 in some cases - were used to maintain private armies which could pose a threat to the political, economic, and military stability of the area. To an extent the area was as lawless as Ireland, with a similar if less serious decline in the official economy and central government control and it is here in the north of England that the tower house was constructed in large numbers. It can be said that the tower houses developed because of the threat of the Scottish

¹ Dixon P. "Tower houses, peel towers...." Arch J. 1979 pp. 39.

raids i.e it was the local conditions during the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries which made them necessary.

In Ireland it is also the economic, social, and political conditions of the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries that are the impetus behind tower house construction. With the passing of control from central government, garrisons in strategically placed great castles could be no longer relied upon for defence. Landowners wished to protect their herds, property, and family from the constant raids. The great Lord would be unable to personally defend the lands of a sub - tenant from these short - lived surprise raids so it was up to the individual landowner to provide for his own defence. In the pre - Norman period when warfare was also endemic the rath or ringfort provided the landowner with this sort of protection. Like the tower house the rath could only provide a certain amount of defence. In time of trouble the petty chief could drive his herds into his raths and install himself and his people behind the high banks. These sort of structures could only protect the chief from petty thieves and raiders, not from determined, well equipped armies. In the 14th and 15th centuries when endemic warfare was again part of Irish life the petty chief and noble needed protection against these raids. By this time the rath was practically obsolete as a defensive structure and there was also a 100 - 150 tradition of building stone defensive structures. However, the petty chief or noble could not afford nor needed to build a massive, strong castle similar to the keeps of the 13th century. What he needed was the stone equivalent of the rath, a relatively cheap structure which would serve both as a residence and a defence against the thieves and raiders. The solution was the tower house.

The breakdown in central control, especially by the end of the 14th century, provided the need for the continuation of construction of stone

defensive structures. However, there is some evidence of tower house construction from the very beginning of disintegration of government control. In chapter five there are examples of early and mid 14th century tower houses given. All historians agree that the 14th century was a period of instability, economically and politically, but I believe that rather than leading to an architecturally barren era, we have here the origins of the construction of tower houses in Ireland. The initial phase of tower house construction in the early 14th century was slow and not widespread, but tower houses did exist then and by the mid to late 14th century there is evidence that the tower house had become more widespread, in fact becoming the accepted type of fortified residence for all sections of the community from the greatest magnates and chiefs to the petty landowner.

By the 15th century the government had decided on concentrating on protecting only the so - called "Pale" area. Even here it did not have the financial ability to defend the ever shifting frontier which was constantly under threat from the Irish of Leinster. The solution to this problem can be seen in the statute of 1429, which states that any "liege-man....of [Dublin, Kildare, Meath and Louth] who chooses to build a castle or tower sufficiently embattled or fortified within the next ten years.....the Commons...shall pay....ten pounds by way of subsidy" ¹. This subsidy was a way of getting the local nobles to defend their own lands and in consequence the lands of the "Pale". The subsidy is confined mainly to the four counties of the "Pale" and was a response to both the instability of the area and to the proliferation of tower houses in the country in general at this time. We should not regard an entrenched, threatened, and bankrupt government as the chief

¹ Leask H.G. "Irish castles and castelated houses". 1951 pp. 76 - 77.

innovator behind the tower house; it is more likely, that by this time, tower houses had come to be accepted as the cheapest and best way of defending lands and property of individual landowners and of providing a certain amount of protection for the "land of peace". By 1400, tower houses were fairly widespread and have their origins in the breakdown of government control and the general lawlessness of the country in the 14th century.

A comparison with northern England and Scotland shows that the tower house in these areas also has its origins in lack of central government control and a general rise in lawlessness. As in Ireland tower houses in northern England can be dated from the early 14th century, and continued to be the standard type of fortified residence in this area through out the 14th and 15th centuries. Unlike the rest of England where central control meant less need of defensive structures, the north, having an element of the type of warfare endemic in Ireland, needed tower houses for defence. The situation in Scotland was somewhat similar to that in Ireland. Scotland was not conquered by the Anglo - Normans but the relationship between the two peoples was not always harmonious. From the late 13th, early 14th century Scotland began to experience an era of almost constant warfare. This began with the death of Alexander I in 1298, without male heir, and led to the war between the Bruces and the Balliols. This fight for the Scottish throne also led to the interference of Edward I in Scottish affairs, beginning a long period of disruptive English interference. Even though Robert Bruce eventually succeeded to the throne, peace did not last long. Over the next century most of the kings died violently and their heirs were young children, during whose long minorities over - mighty subjects took control. For example, David II succeeded in the 1330's but it not until the 1350's that he began to

crush the marcher lords who had taken control into their hands.¹ In the 15th century Scotland had three long minorities, during which the power of the magnates grew. Each king tried to win back power when he reached maturity and each died a violent death at the hands of the resisting magnates.

Through out this period, in addition to the internal strife between the magnates, the Scottish crown also had to deal with interference from the English kings who claimed overlordship over the Scots. The English marcher lords and the Scottish border lords were constantly raiding each others lands. There were also the constant threats from the English kings on the Scottish crown. In 1462 there was a plot by the McDonalds, with English help, to divide Scotland into two kingdoms but it came to nothing.² Both internal and external factions served to keep Scotland in a disturbed state for most of the 14th and 15th centuries. Like Ireland. there was a loss of central government control and a general decline in the rule of law. Local lords had powers and rights which should have been rightfully vested in the crown. They ruled their lands like petty kings and made constant war on one another and on the crown. In this lack of central government control and lawlessness we have, as in Ireland, the origin of the tower house. The endemic warfare of the 14th century not only caused a political and military crises but had an effect on the economy of Scotland as well. As in Ireland the revenues collected by the crown dropped sharply in the 14th and 15th centuries, and it [the crown] was unable to afford to continue building the great castles to protect its lands, powers, and rights. With the devolving of power to the local lords who had the advantage of collecting and keeping the local revenues, tower houses

¹ Mitchson R. "A history of Scotland". 1982 pp. 52.

² Mitchson R. "Scotland". 1982 pp. 75.

became the norm. The monies available from local revenues would support the building of a tower house not a massive castle. Most tower houses were not as strong or as large as such castles but they would provide enough defence to ward off petty thieves and raiders. Like Ireland the change in the social and economic conditions in Scotland in the 14th century made the tower house the most feasible type of defensive structure.

This is not to say that the tower house originated in a period of economic instability. The tower houses, although cheaper than the great castle, also cost money and time, and the builders needed a stable period in which to build them. However, it was the instability of central government that made these tower houses feasible. Many of the magnates grew rich on the proceeds of increased raiding. In Ireland, as already shown, nobles like the Earl of Desmond could afford to maintain huge private armies, at a time when the Irish justiciar was financially dependent on the English crown for even the smallest force. In both Ireland and Scotland the profits made by the landowners from raids and wars enabled them to build tower houses. A study of the border society in Scotland and northern England has shown that the majority of tower house owners were men of wealth, although the towers they built were plain, grim, unexceptional structures.¹ In Ireland, in particular, the economy of the areas outside government control was not as unstable as previously thought in the 14th and 15th centuries. It was a different economy to the one which had existed in the 13th century when the government had been able to collect the revenues and customs of most of the land of Ireland. The economy of the lands outside governmental control was more like the economic

¹ Dixon P. "Tower houses, Pelehouses, and the border society". Arch. J. 1979 pp. 246.

conditions of pre - Norman Gaelic Ireland. It was an economy based on cattle and goods rather than the value of lands and revenues. The drop in local revenues as collected by the government in the 14th century paints a false picture. Rather than being a period of economic instability, it was a period of loss of revenue for the government, and a period of a changing but relatively stable economy for the rest of the country.

The 13th century was the best economic time for the Irish Lordship. At the height of the Lordship the peace of the land was relatively undisturbed. The government collected revenues that were, for instance, more than £9000 per annum in the 1290's.¹ However, with the decline of the Lordship the revenues received by the government decreased, to an annual average of £1,200 in the early part of the reign of Edward I and hovered around £2,000 for the rest of the 14th century.² The reasons for the decline are manifold, for instance, the resurgence of the Gaelic Irish, the increase in cattle raiding and the endemic warfare, the Bruce invasions, the Great Famine, the Black Death, the gaelicisation of the Anglo-Irish, the contraction of the colony, absentee lords etc. All of these factors played a part in the decline in collected revenues, and these combined with the incessant demands for money and men by Edward I and his successors helped destabilize and weaken the structures and economies of the government. The worst years of this decline seem to have been the years c.1290 to c.1320 - 30, the era of the Bruce wars (and Invasion) and the Great Famine. Perhaps the beginning of the effects of the decline of the colony can be seen as early as the 1280's in the widespread construction of moated sites. Many archaeologists and

¹ Lydon J.F. "Ireland.....". 1973 pp. 38.

² Lydon J.F. "Ireland.....". 1973 pp. 38.

historians see these sites as a response to the increasing pressure on the settlers in the colony - most of these moated sites were concentrated in the areas of "interface" between the colonists and the indigenous Irish.¹ These moated sites were an initial response to the resurgent Irish and the inability of the government to protect the colony.

For many years economic historians saw the entire 14th and early 15th centuries as a long period of economic depression. For example, Chart in his "Economic History of Ireland" [1920] said "neither commerce nor agriculture can flourish in an atmosphere of unsettlement, such as prevailed from 1318 to 1485".² He further states that travel by both land and sea was too dangerous for trade to grow; the interior full of ungoverned Irish and rebels and the seas full of pirates.³ Even such towns and seaports as did exist had to operate from behind fortifications, handicapped by the precarious nature of both their supply source and demand. Leask also encourages this idea by writing of the architecturally barren 14th century; one cannot build in an unstable economy.⁴ This idea of a repressed, stunted economy has been accepted for quite some time, however, in recent years there has been some revision of this idea. It is true to state that the economy of Ireland, i.e the economy of the colony, received a tremendous blow in the late 13th, early 14th century, and the economic prosperity of the 13th century was never again achieved in the case of government revenues. A look at the annals and chronicles of the early 14th century shows how serious the situation was. For instance, the invading Scots in 1315 - 18 laid waste much of the land on the east coast and midlands from Ulster to Tipperary. The Annals of the Four Masters state that

¹ Barry T.B. "Archaeology.....". 1987 pp. 85.

² Chart D.A. "An Economic history of Ireland". 1920 pp. 21.

³ Chart D.A. "Economic history....". 1920 pp. 21.

⁴ Leask H.G. "Irish castles...". 1951 pp. 75.

"during the three and a half years...Edward Bruce..... spent in [Ireland] a universal famine prevailed."¹

The production of grain was most effected by the unstable conditions. The effects of purveyance, the devastation caused by the invasions, the burning and depredations of the lands of the colony by the resurgent Irish and the rebel Anglo - Irish naturally led to a severe drop in the annual yield of grain. However, unlike Chart, many recent historians now agree that production did recover. T O'Neill states that by the 1320's corn production was large enough both for the home needs and for export.² In the 1330's production of grain did decline in the south and west, but these areas were able to get adequate supplies from the Dublin - Meath area.³ Although the corn trade did decline, there are references through- out the 14th century to exports of grain from Ireland to the English ports of Bristol etc and some Continental ports.⁴ However, tillage was not as widespread as it had been in the 13th century, and the areas under cultivation continued to decline through out the 14th century. One reason for the swing away from tillage was the vulnerability of crops in a time when warfare was widespread and constant and the weather unpredictable. There are many references in the annals to the effects of both war and weather on corn / grain. For example, in 1309 William Burke attacked Rory O'Connor at Tirerill [Co.Offaly] and "destroyed much corn".⁵ In 1383 O'Concannon attacked the ClanMaurice lands at Brees [co.Galway] and "burned the corn".⁶ The weather also played a part for example in

¹ A.F.M. 1319.

² O'Neill T. "Merchants and Mariners in Medieval Ireland". 1987 pp. 29.

³ *ibid.* pp. 29.

⁴ *ibid.* pp. 23

⁵ A.F.M. 1309.

⁶ A.F.M. 1383.

1330 the "corn fields remained unreaped until after Michaelmas in consequence of bad weather".¹

This gradual decline in tillage and grain export, and the accompanying decline in the customs collected have given a false picture of economic instability in the 14th century. Tillage may have declined in many parts of the country, but this does not mean that the land was waste; on the contrary, with the decline in tillage, and export in grain, came an increase in pastoralism and the exports of products connected with herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. According to O'Neill cow hides and calfskins were, next to fish, Ireland's most important export in medieval times.² Because revenues and customs were not collected with great regularity or efficiency during the 14th century the government did not benefit from the trade nor are there any official reports to help estimate the volume or size of this export trade. However, a few references which have survived show that it may have been quite a large export trade. For example, in 1339, 1000 hides were exported by William White and Robert Lowys from Drogheda.³ Later in the century there is a record of over 34,000 hides exported to Pisa in one half year [1466-67].⁴ The other big export trade in Ireland was of fish products. Fish were very important in the medieval diet, there being over 100 days in the year when one had to eat fish for religious reasons. There is evidence of a good export trade in salted herring, salmon, eel etc from Ireland in the 14th and 15th centuries.

All these references point to a booming internal and external trade. The Irish seaports were dealing in exports and imports. Ireland traded mainly with England, Gascony, Bordeaux, Spain, and Portugal.

¹ A.F.M. 1330.

² O'Neill T. "Merchants and Mariners....". 1987 pp. 77.

³ *ibid.* pp. 77.

⁴ Lydon J.F. "Ireland.....". 1973 pp. 13.

Internally, trade was also in a much better condition than many economic historians previously believed. Much of the hinterlands around the towns and ports was in the hands of the Irish but, rather than living isolated in the fortified urban centres as Chart suggested, the merchants had to, and did, deal with the Irish. The Gaelic chiefs provided many of the hides and woollen products for export and were in the market to buy the luxury imports. As Cullen states "the economy in the Irish areas had also become more market orientated."¹ This trade had reached into the Irish / Gaelic economy. Cattle were the most important economic resource of the Gaelic Irish. The importance of cattle can be seen in the continuation of cattle raiding as a major factor in warfare right through to the 16th - 17th centuries. The Irish provided much of the raw produce for the hide trade in the 14th and 15th centuries. Parliament recognized this increase in trading with the Irish and tried to stop it as "the enemy take great return and benefits" from this trade.² However, urban centres were sometimes given permission to trade with the Irish; recognizing the fact that much of the hinterland lay in Irish hands and a town could not hope to operate a thriving market isolated and cut off from its natural hinterland. The Gaelic chiefs were part of the economy of Ireland, not a fully integrated part as yet, but nevertheless, they did benefit from both the export and import trade and from the internal trade. Even when not directly involved in trading themselves, the Irish chiefs benefitted from the booming market, e.g the chiefs along the coastline were able to demand money from tralers who fished the area. For example, the Trant

¹ Cullen L. "Life in Ireland". 1968 pp. 29.

² *ibid.* pp. 30.

family had the right to claim charges on any ship anchored or fishing in the Bay of Ventry [Co.Kerry] in the 14th century.¹

The people who seemed to benefit least from all this trading were the government and the crown. Since the beginning of the 14th century the local officials had found it increasingly difficult to collect the customs and revenues due to the crown. The decline in the revenues of the government is very obvious in the official documents and have been used, erroneously, to indicate a decline in the economy of Ireland. Major ports such as Dublin, Drogheda, and New Ross were within the control of the revenue collectors, but other places from where there was a large volume of trade, such as Youghal, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, and even small ports like Dingle and Sligo were outside the control of these officials. The government did try and get revenues from the increasing trade. For instance, in 1369 a special custom was put on all exports [fish, wine, beef, pork] but was only effective in four ports - Dublin, Drogheda, Carlingford, and Waterford.²

There is evidence of custom evasion, for example, the O'Malleys who controlled Clew Bay and Killary Harbour conducted a lively hide trade without interference from the custom collectors.³ It was also difficult to collect customs from most ports outside eastern Ireland, as witnessed by the small return in the 1369 custom duty. Even the amount collected from the four eastern ports is small, Dublin [£40.9.7], Drogheda [£11.7.0], Carlingford [£8.00.0], Waterford [£16.3.9].⁴ The evasion of customs must have been on a large scale, even in the eastern ports. For instance, Limerick does not figure in the returns of 1369, nor does there seem to be much revenue collected there in the 14th

¹ O'Neill T. "Merchants.....". 1987 pp. 34.

² Lydon J.F. "Ireland.....". 1973 pp. 63.

³ O'Neill T. "Merchants....". 1987 pp. 80.

⁴ Lydon J F. "Ireland.....". 1973 pp. 43 - 65.

century, yet for 1380 there is a report of 13,000 hides being shipped from Limerick to Flanders.¹ All these references show that while, the trading economy of Ireland was not in decline, the government was in serious financial difficulty. There was a serious depression in the economy in the years c.1290 -1320, when a type of "economic revolution" occurred and by the 1330's a new type of economy was developing. This new economy was more suited to the political and social conditions which had developed in the 14th century and indeed developed as a direct result of these conditions. With the decentralization of power, the breakdown in "English" law and order, the aggrandizement of the nobles and chiefs, and the endemic warfare, the return to pastoralism and raising huge herds of cattle was a solution to the vulnerability of crops in this type of political situation. Also, with the loss of control by central government both internal and external trade came under the control of the local chiefs and nobles, and they, not the government, received the benefit of this trade. For instance, the prize wines of Youghal and Kinsale were long a bone of contention between the Earls of Desmond and Ormond. The Earls of Desmond had the prize wine tax and the customs of Kinsale, Youghal, Cork, Limerick, and Baltimore as well as the profits of the fisheries in Limerick since 1497.²

With few exceptions the period of 1330 - 1485 was not a period of economic recession. Alongside this stable economy was a change in the political situation, from a dominance by the government in Dublin and its allies over most of the country, to a dominance by individual chiefs over their own areas and a state of almost constant warfare between the various factions. As already stated, the moated sites were a

¹ O'Neill T. "Merchants...". 1987 pp. 79.

² Sasso C. "The Desmond Rebellions". 1980 pp. 53.

response to the increase of pressure on the colony in the late 13th century. When the changing economy began to stabilize in the 1320's and the new political situation of endemic warfare became a fact of life a new response was needed. There is evidence that the great keeps of the 13th century were no longer relied upon for the protection of the land. For example, excavation reports would seem to indicate that Trim castle had fallen into disuse by the second half of the 14 century.¹ Also it is known that the other royal castles of Roscommon and Rindown [Connacht] had been abandoned in the 1350's;² other large keeps may also have been abandoned or fallen into rebel Irish or Anglo - Irish hands. With the endemic warfare and without the presence of the protective garrisons in the major castles the landowners had to provide their own protection. The political situation was similar to that which prevailed in pre - Norman Ireland, when cattle raiding was a very common occurrence. Like the ringforts, the tower houses could provide the necessary defence needed in a climate of petty warfare. They were not as defensive as the massive keeps of the 13th century, but could provide protection against surprise raiders and petty thieves, not intent on prolonged sieges. Economically the tower house cost less than a great castle and with the local lords benefiting from the booming trade most could afford to build a tower house.

In Scotland there are comparisons politically and economically to Ireland. Prior to the 13th century Scotland had been a Celtic society with a similar pastoral economy to that of pre - Norman Ireland. There was no Norman invasion of Scotland but a feudal society based on the social, political and economic conditions of feudalism was introduced from the mid 13th century. Feudalism in Scotland developed along

¹ Sweetman P.D. "Excavations at Trim ". PRIA 78C pp. 148 - 52.

² Barry T.B. "Archaeology.....". 1987 pp. 197.

similar lines to that of both England and Ireland. This development continued until the end of the 13th century when the unstable political climate forced a change. As in Ireland the records show a sharp fall in revenue to the government and this combined with the long minorities of the kings and the state of constant warfare weakened the position of the crown and strengthened the position of the baronial landowners.¹ As already discussed Scotland in the 14th century was like Ireland, a country of blood feuds, cattle raids, private armies, and a lack of central government control. In this situation what monies were created by a "war economy" based on pastoralism benefited mainly the local landowners, indeed in Scotland many of these landowners secured grants of "regality" which gave them virtually sovereign powers within their territories.² Also the system of the clan or kin group became more important as lesser men looked to their local lords or head of the clan to protect them and not the crown.

As with Ireland in this period an economy of sorts "a war economy" continued to function. Scotlands biggest export trade seems to have been fish and hides. Because of the strained relationship the English tried to prohibit Scottish trade during the 14th century, but evidence shows that this strategy did not work; for example there is evidence of German merchants in Ipswich, Boston, and elsewhere in the early 1300's in spite of the English prohibitions.³ The revenues of the Scottish trade were not totally lost to the crown but during the unstable periods and the long minorities many of the lords and baronial families were able to line their own coffers with some of the monies and revenues from both internal and external trade. In this similar

¹ Lythe S.G.E. "An economic history of Scotland 1100 - 1939". 1975 pp. 15.

² *ibid.* pp. 18.

³ Lythe S.G.E. "An economic history...". 1975 pp. 55.

political and economic situation the tower house was as popular and widespread in Scotland as it was in Ireland. Like the Irish chiefs and nobles the Scottish lord needed fortified residences capable of protecting the owner, his family, and possessions against raids. Also here there is a land owning class benefiting from a war economy and economically capable of building tower houses. Many landowners including the smaller landowners could and did build tower houses, but as Dixon has shown in his study on border tower houses etc most, if not all, owners of tower houses were men of some substance; at the very least "Lairds" or chiefs of their surname [headmen], worth at least £80 - £100.¹

Politically and socially the North of England was somewhat similar to Ireland and Scotland. Economically it was also similar with an emphasis on pastoralism. Again to refer to Dixon's study on the economy of the border society it was found that it was men of substance who were building the tower houses in this area. The men who built the tower houses were worth over £50 - £60 at least; it seems that the lesser "pelehouses" [small, roughly built barn like fortified houses] were built, in general, by the substantial peasant farmers who could not afford the larger, dearer tower houses.² In this examination of Scottish and northern English tower houses lies the reinforcement of the idea that tower houses originated in the political and economic climate particular to the 14th century. These "fortified" houses were essential in the environment of a pastoral economy and incessant warfare. Their origins described are in the 14th century but the question now is did the tower house evolved in one area before the other.

¹ Dixon P. "Tower houses". Arch. J. 136 (1979) pp. 146.

² *ibid.* pp. 246.

Until recently, architects, historians, and archaeologists have accepted the idea that "the erection of the fortified residence [in Ireland] is a century later than that of the Scottish prototype".¹ In Scotland the main tower house construction period is from c.1330 - c.1600; although there is evidence of tower houses as early as the late 12th century for example at Yester in East Lothian there was a "large rectangular stone donjon or tower houses" which has been assigned to the 1267 period.² However, the building of tower houses did not become widespread in Scotland until the 14th century. There are quite a few examples of early to mid 14th century tower houses, spread throughout Scotland for example, Drum Castle [Aberdeenshire], Theave [Kirkcudbrightshire], etc; evidence that tower houses were relatively widespread in Scotland by this time. The previous belief was that while tower houses in Scotland were being built in the 1330's they [tower houses] were not popular in Ireland until the 1420's [1400 at the earliest].

However, as has been discussed in chapter five, there is ample evidence that tower houses were also being constructed in Ireland in the 1320's; although there is no evidence of construction in the late 12th century as in Scotland. Leask and others believed that the origin of the Irish tower houses lay in Scotland; that the idea came to Ireland via Scottish settlers, gallowglasses, or from the Anglo - Irish nobles who had fought with the Edwards in their Scottish wars. However, there are many problems with this theory. The idea would be acceptable if it were still true that the Scottish tower house had a 100 year head start on the Irish tower house. There was plenty of contact between Ireland and Scotland in the 1300 -1400 period. During the

¹ Fleming J.S. "Irish and Scottish keeps contrasted" JRSAI 1909 pp. 176.

² Cruden S. "The Scottish castle". 1960 pp. 104.

early part of the 14th century many Anglo - Irish nobles took large armies to fight in Scotland. For example, in 1303 - 04 an army, sometimes approaching 3,457 men, was in Scotland with the Earl of Ulster and other leading nobles.¹ Through - out the century trade and personnel continued to cross the sea between both countries, mainly through Ulster and it is here there is a problem. Ulster was the part of Ireland nearest and having most to do with Scotland, yet it is in Ulster that there are the least amount of pre 16th and 17th century tower houses.

Ulster has always presented a problem when dealing with tower houses. The same political and economic conditions prevailed here as did in the rest of the country in the 14th century. The last Earl of Ulster was killed in 1333 and most of his lands were absorbed by the resurgent Irish or the De Burgo rebels. Here there was the loss of central government control, the breakdown in "English" law and order, the gaelicization of the local Anglo - Irish, resurgent Irish chiefs, and contacts with Scotland, yet there are less than 14 tower houses dating from the 14th and 15th centuries in the 6 counties of Northern Ireland. If the idea of the tower house originated in Scotland why did it not take root in Ulster, especially when there is the fact that Edward Bruce was in the province for three years with a large army. O'Danachair suggests that the Ulster chiefs of the time O'Neill, O'Donnell etc were too conservative to build in the new style.² No regional study has been done on the Ulster tower houses and it is not within the scope of this thesis to investigate the absence of Ulster tower houses, despite the political and economic conditions which prevailed in the 14th century, save to say, that the Scottish influence on the architecture of the part of

¹ Lydon J.F. "England and Ireland in the later middle ages". 1984 pp. 52.

² O' Danachair C. "Irish Tower Houses". *Bealodeas* 42 - 47 (1974 - 79) pp. 161.

Ireland with which there was most contact, was not very strong until the coming of the Scottish planters in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Scots had links with most other parts of Ireland, through trading and the gallowglasses. However, it would seem that tower houses existed in Scotland for only c.50 years before those in Ireland. Even these early examples are few and most such as "Crobbie Row" castle in Orkney (c.1145) are connected with the Norse settlers in the north east rather than the Scots. The dates of the construction of tower houses in both countries is almost contemporary and this shows that the origin of the Irish tower house did not lie in Scotland.

A brief look at the architecture in all three areas, Ireland, Scotland and northern England will show that the Irish tower house was not a prototype of the Scottish tower house. In all areas the basic concept of the tower house is the same; a fortified building where the accommodation is disposed of vertically rather than horizontally to provide the extra defence needed. In its basic form the tower house is of rectangular shape, two to three storeys high, with thick walls, narrow stairs, narrow window loops and slits, and maybe one to two vaults. In many tower houses there is a vault over the ground floor or the first storey in all three areas, for example, Ayton [Yorkshire], Cawdor castle [Nairnshire, Scot] and Donore, Co.Meath. Much of the architecture in all areas is similar, however there are also significant differences; i.e native and independent development in architectural style. After the earlier period the similarities between the Irish, Scottish, and English tower houses are less obvious. As Forde - Johnson states "in Ireland there is very little to match the large and elaborate towers of the later tower house era in Scotland" [1560-1670].¹

¹ Forde - Johnson J. "Castles of Britain and Ireland". 1977 pp. 165.

There are differences in stairs, crenellations, bartizans, angle loops, and other architectural features in all three areas. While Ireland, Scotland, and the north of England have a similar architectural heritage, the tower house evolved semi - independently in all areas. There was exchange of ideas and some architectural fashions but the origins of the tower house lie in the economic and political conditions of the three areas and did not develop from one area to another

O'Danachair and others have suggested that the 'fashion' came not from Scotland but came "directly from the European continent where fortified dwellings....were already appearing.....in parts of France, Germany and the Low Countries".¹ He plays down the defensive role of the Irish tower house, because he believes they were built in more settled times and in more fertile areas, unlike the Scottish tower house built in the unsettled border areas. However, new ideas on dating and distribution have shown that the defensive part of these structures was also important as they were built in a climate of warfare and needed for defence in both Ireland and Scotland. Taking a brief look at 14th century Europe, there is a also development of the "fortified" residence. Unlike England many of the countries and kingdoms of Europe were not unified and relatively peaceful under one crown or government. Even in France, where there was the building of less fortified palaces by the kings and chief nobles, fortified castles, and tower houses continued to play an important role in the strategic defence of the kingdom, lands, and possessions.² R.Allen Brown wrote that the equivalent of the stark, uncompromising tower houses of England and Scotland were to be found through out Europe surviving in

¹ O'Danachair C. "Irish tower houses....". Bealoideas 42 - 47 (1974 - 79) pp. 161.

² Anderson W. "Castles of Europe". 1970 pp. 181.

some numbers in south - west France and in Germany.¹ The earliest tower houses in Europe date from the early 14th century, as in Ireland and Scotland, although there were some late 13th century tower houses. Anderson states that the tower house in Europe derives from the 13th century custom of placing a solar tower containing the great chamber next to the hall in an unfortified house.² This may be so, but like Ireland and Scotland the most likely origin for the European tower houses lies in the native castles built in the 12th and 13th centuries. The fashion of building a high, fortified keep never did die out and military necessity required the building of such sites in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries.

There are similarities, in architecture, between the tower houses of mainland Europe and those in Ireland. The basic idea is the same, a fortified residence built vertically. As in Britain and Ireland the rooms in the tower house consisted mainly of the Lords chamber, halls, and bed chambers and as in Ireland and Britain the tower house could be the fortified part of an unfortified residence which could contain the main hall. Also some European tower houses were surrounded by a fortified courtyard or bawn. In Spain many of the frontier tower house had a bawn.³ However, there were also difference in architecture. For example, German tower houses lacked a wall walk which most Irish tower houses have. It is possible that the building of tower houses in mainland Europe influenced the building of similar sites in Britain and Ireland. Many nobles, especially English ones, were involved in wars in France. That is not to say that Irish nobles had no connection with Europe. We know that many Irish i.e the Gaelic Irish chiefs looked to

¹ Brown R.Allen. "English castles". 1962 pp. 58.

² Anderson W. "Castles....". 1970 pp. 223.

³ Cairns C. "Tower houses of Tipperary". 1984 pp. 13.

Europe, particularly France and Spain, for fashion, ideas, and alliances, rather than to England or Scotland. There are many examples of visits by Irish chiefs to Europe, especially chiefs who went on pilgrimages to, for example, Compostela in Spain and other famous shrines in Europe. For example, the father of Manus 'the Magnificent' O'Donnell went on a pilgrimage to Rome for eighteen months in 1510.¹ This traffic was a two way stream, there are references to European visitors to Ireland; Lough Derg was a relatively famous pilgrimage site. Some fashions were imported to Britain and Ireland from Europe, for example, some French influence can be seen in the Scottish tower houses, especially those with iron grilla which would enable larger windows to be inserted in a tower house, an architectural feature seen at its best in Sainaur, France.²

Some architectural features of tower houses in Britain and Ireland may be similar to and influenced by fashions in Europe, but it is impossible to agree with O'Danachair's theory that the origins of the Irish tower house came directly from Europe. The dating of the tower house is at most only some 50 years earlier than the Irish tower house, and there is less evidence of contact with European ideas than with Scottish ideas. Again there is here a simultaneous but independent development of a similar type of fortified residence because much the same unsettled political and military conditions existed in many parts of Europe. In conclusion, the origins of the tower house in Ireland, as in most countries, lay in the prevailing political, military, economic, and social conditions, especially if the area was decentralized from central government and experiencing incessant warfare. The tower house developed from the 12th and 13th century keeps common in most

¹ Cosgrove A. "Studies in Irish history". 1975 pp. 20.

² Anderson W. "Castles.....". 1970 pp. 227.

DATING OF TOWER HOUSES.

Dating of tower houses can be a very difficult, if not impossible task, and up to the latter half of this century there was very little work done on this aspect of the tower house. In the early 1900's T.J Westropp did some invaluable work on the "peel-towers" of Clare, Limerick, and Kerry, and was of the belief that these "peel-tower" had their origins in the great alterations in society and land tenure in the 15th century, although he dated a few back to 1380.¹ The belief that the tower house was no earlier than c.1410 - 1450 was put forward by Leask in the 1940's when he produced his "Irish castles...." . He stated that the 14th century was a period of little building activity.² However, from 1440 onwards Leask saw a tremendous building revival; and it was in this period that the greatest number of tower houses were built. For him, the origin of the tower house was in the "£10" castles of Henry VI i.e those buildings alluded to in the statute of 1429 where it states that "it is agreed and asserted that every liege man of our lord King in..(Dublin, Meath, Kildare, Louth) who choses to build a castle or tower...within the next ten years to wit 20ft in length,16ft wide and 40ft in height or more.....the Commons shall pay to said person to build said castle or tower ten pounds by way of subsidy".³ Therefore, Leask would agree with Westropp, to a certain extent, in dating the earliest tower houses to the early 15th century, although unlike Westropp, he does not allow for some earlier tower houses.

Apart from Leask and a few others very little work was done on the dating of tower houses up to the 1980's. Excluding the theses of Cairns

¹ Westropp T.J. "Clare peel - towers. ". PRIA. Vol 5 1898 - 1900. pp. 348.

² Leask H.G. "Irish castles ". 1951 pp. 75.

³ ibid. pp 76 - 77.

and Davin, most articles, books, and journals continued the idea that tower houses, in general, dated to no earlier than 1400. For instance, Craig believed the earliest datable tower house was Kilclief, Co. Down (built c.1412-1441).¹ O'Danachair does not agree with Leask's idea of an origin in the 1429 statute, stating it was unlikely that within a decade of the act of 1429 a great wave of building had spread throughout the country; it was much more possible that the act was in reply to a spate of building activity already underway outside the Pale.² However, he also states that hardly a single tower house was erected before 1400, and that the period 1450 - 1550 sees the construction of the great majority of tower houses.³ Therefore, up to recent times, the considered view of most historians and archaeologists was that tower houses dated to no earlier than 1400, with a very few as early as 1380.

In recent years there has been a flurry of activity in the area of tower houses, with several theses being submitted on all aspects of tower houses. In the area of dating, these theses have brought some changes into the original 1440 construction date. Davin has stated that there is evidence to believe in the existence of urban tower houses in Dublin in the early 14th century, but that they did not become common until the politically and economically calmer times of the 15th century.⁴ She gives examples of some small scale building activity in the 14th century. For example, for 1310 the Memoranda Rolls contain a record of a dispute between Hervey de Cruys and William Gryfford over stone walls on the manor of Rathcoffy, Co. Kildare; William had removed these stones from Herveys land to build a stone house for himself to

¹ Craig M. "The Architecture of Ireland". 1982 pp. 96 - 97.

² O'Danachair C. "Irish Tower Houses....". Bealodeas 1977 - 79 pp. 159.

³ *ibid.* pp. 159.

⁴ Davin A. "Tower houses of the Pale". 1982 pp. 117 - 121, 124 - 127.

defend the country against the Irish of Offaly.¹ This and other references are all of fortresses built in the towns and urban centres on English lands, e.g a 1331 inspeximus of a 1310 letter patent, which allowed Geoffrey de Mortone build a tower at the town end of the great bridge of Dublin and another at the corner of the town wall to the west of the bridge.² Joep in his article on this document sees this building as the ancestor of the 15th century tower houses which stood in Downpatrick, Carlingford and other urban centres.³

These references are proof that there was some building activity, and the building of tower houses, particularly in the urban areas, in the early 14th century. Davin states that the strongest evidence of early 14th century tower houses is mostly confined to the city of Dublin and the outlying areas, although there are a few indications that rural tower houses were being constructed by the mid 14th century, but were not really common and widespread until the 15th century.⁴ Cairns, on the other hand, believes that fortalices were being constructed elsewhere in the 14th century.⁵ He gives some examples of these early rural tower houses. In 1300 the Dublin government promised to pay £100 to John FitzThomas when he started to build a fortalice in Co.Offaly, again, to protect the land from the Irish enemy.⁶ In 1343 - 44 castles were being mentioned in the Marches to guard against the Irish; in 1388 - 89 two fortalices at Galbardstown, Co.Carlow were mentioned.⁷ In 1362 Lord Robert Savage began in Ulster "to build new castles in diverse places".⁸ By the late 14th

¹ Davin A. "Tower houses....". 1982 pp. 114.

² *ibid.* pp. 115 - 116.

³ Joep F.M. "A new document in the P.R.O.....". UJA 1959 pp. 116.

⁴ Davin A. "Tower houses.....". 1982 pp. 120.

⁵ Cairns C. "Tipperary.....". 1984 pp. 186.

⁶ *ibid.* pp. 186

⁷ *ibid.* pp. 186.

⁸ Cairns C. "Tipperary....". 1984 pp. 187.

century the Irish had begun building tower houses. In 1377 there is a reference in the Irish annals to the building of Lis-ard-abhla (Lissardowlin, Co.Longford) by Seoan O'Fearnail.¹ From 1400 the references to Irish built "castles" increase. For example, in 1413 the "bawn of Roscommon" is mentioned.² In Tipperary itself Cairns dates seven stone castles to the 13th century, and using several sources dated 8 - 10 to the 14th century and 18 to the 15th century.³ However, he states that most Tipperary tower houses are datable only to after 1525, mainly due to the increase in surviving documents for this period and to the introduction of particular architectural features which can be dated to this period.⁴ The bulk of Tipperary tower houses cannot be dated by source material but the available material shows that some tower houses existed in the 14th century. Both Davin and Cairns have shown that the previously accepted date is not correct; it would seem that the statute of 1429 was a response to a type of building that is 50 years if not a century old.

The actual *work* of dating a tower house can be quite a task! There is great difficulty in using documentary sources. If they exist at all they usually come from the later period of tower house construction i.e in Kerry most tower houses which are mentioned in documentary sources are from the mid to late 16th century. The first reference to Kerry tower houses in the annals (A.F.M.) is in the 1580's, yet many of the tower houses were built before this period. The sources most useful are the Irish annals, for example, the Annals of Inisfallen (A.I.), the Annals of the Four Masters (A.F.M.), the Dublin Annals of Inisfallen (Dub.A.I), Mac Carthaigs Book (McC Bk), etc. Unfortunately, the

¹ A.F.M. 1377.

² A. Conn. 1413.

³ Cairns C. "Tipperary....". 1984 pp. 181.

⁴ *ibid.* pp 181 - 182.

annals which continue into the 14th and 15th centuries are A.F.M., the A.Conn. and the A.U. which deal with events mainly in Ulster, Leinster, and Connacht. This means that while these annals are helpful in dating tower houses in the country in general, they are not very useful when it comes to Kerry, and there are no references to Kerry tower houses before the 16th century. There are, of course, annals which deal with Munster events in particular, for example, the Annals of Inisfallen, MacCarthaigs Book, and the Dublin Annals of Inisfallen. These annals all end in the early 14th century, but they give important information concerning early castle building in Kerry.

Before using these annals, it is necessary to discuss their reliability and the sources used or indeed misused by the compilers. In MacCarthaigs Book the deeds of the McCarthy Mor family are recorded. This annal was evidently transcribed in 1633 by Diarmuid O'Suilleabhain for Florence McCarthy.¹ O'hInnse says that this book may be identical to a collection of annals compiled for one Florence Mahoun, and known only from a passing reference in Ware - this compilation was done around the end of the 15th century.² There is also a close relationship between the Annals of Inisfallen and MacCarthaigs Book with the majority of entries being found in both annals. The value of MacCarthaigs Book is that it is a reliable source for the history of Kerry, and the south of Ireland for the early medieval period; although it ends in 1437, it nonetheless provides some very useful information on early castle and tower house building in Munster.

The other two main sources have similar names but are totally different in information and reliability. These sources are the Annals of Inisfallen and the Dublin Annals of Inisfallen. The A.I. was started

¹ O'hInnse S. "Miscellaneous Irish annals". 1947 pp. VIII.

² *ibid.* pp. IX.

in the monastery of Emly, Co.Tipperary and was there till c.1092, the latter part of the annal was written at Inisfallen, an island monastery on the Lower Lake in Killarney.¹ By the late late period in the annals 1092 - 1326, especially after 1130, events in Desmond and West Munster are given prominence and the McCarthys are the family most referred to. As with MacCarthaigs Book, the A.I. is useful for the early period of castle building but unfortunately the A.I. ends in 1450, and only four years between 1321 and 1450 have entries.

The Dublin Annals of Inisfallen, erroneously thought to be the Annals of Inisfallen for years, are perhaps the most frustrating of the sources. These annals contain much information on early castle building in Kerry, yet their reliability is much argued about. The compilation was made in c.1765 by a John Conry for the Rev. Dr. O'Brien, Bishop of Cloyne.² The compiler seems to have used many sources, among them the Annals of Tigernach, the Annals of Inisfallen, Chronicon Scotorum, Caithreim Thoirdhealbhaig, Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibn, Caithreim Cluana Tairbh, Foras Feasa ar Éirinn, and English sources such as Cambrensis, Ware, Hanmer, Marlborough etc.³ MacCarthaigs Book does not seem to have been a main source as there are only three common entries between the two annals, the most important being the list of castles built by the Anglo-Normans in c.1214, which is given in greater detail in the Dub.A.I. The reliability of the Dub.A.I. is in some doubt. This is because, while many entries are similar to references in more reputable annals there are some references which exist no-where else but in the Dub.A.I. It is possible that John Conry had access to a Munster annalistic source now lost to us;

¹ MacAirt S. "Annals of Inisfallen". 1951 pp. VII.

² ibid. pp. VII..

³ O'Cuilleain. "Dublin Annals of Inisfallen". 1947 pp 195 - 199.

but it is also possible that some references are invented or distorted to suit the purpose of the compiler. Thus, the best way to verify the Dub.A.I., is to find similarities between its entries and references in other, more reliable annalistic sources.

In the Annals of Inisfallen the last castle building reference comes in 1321, when Dun Meic Odmainn (West Cork) was rebuilt by Domnall Cairprech MacCarthaig.¹ In fact most references to castle building in these annals concern those built by the O'Briens or the McCarthys in Cork, Limerick or Clare; very few are mentioned in Kerry. As with A.F.M/, A.U., etc, the A.I. does not mention the de Marisco raid into Kerry and the number of castles supposedly built by him and his allies, as mentioned in MacCarthaigs Book and the Dub.A.I.. The A.I. does mention the building of a castle at Dunloe (93) in 1207,² but this is the only reference to castle building in Kerry in these annals. The annals do give indirect dates for some tower houses, as they refer to the burning of these places, to sieges, or to events which took place in the buildings, such as the death of the chief etc. For example, in 1261 Killorglin (118) and Dunloe (93) were burned.³ In 1280 Killorglin (118) was burned and razed and Dunloe (93) burned by the McCarthys.⁴ In 1390 Domnall Og McCarthy died in the castle of Loch Lein [Castlelough(68)].⁵ These references would indicate that by the early 13th century there were at least four castles in Kerry.

MacCarthaigs Book has many more references to castle building in Munster. It is probable that the Anglo - Normans had not penetrated as far west as Kerry before 1200 and there is no castle building in

¹ A.I. 1321.

² A.I. 1207.

³ A.I. 1261:11.

⁴ A.I. 1280:5, 1280:7

⁵ A.I. 1316:6.

Kerry before this period. We know that castle building in the nearby counties of Limerick, Cork, and Clare had begun by this time. In c.1197 the Anglo - Normans fortified the ancient motte of Knockgraffon [Co.Limerick] and made four wooden castles at Emly which were burned in 1195.¹ In 1199 they built a castle on the rock of "Karakite" [Carrigkettle, Co.Limerick] near Kiltelly, and several other castles throughout the county are mentioned prior to 1200-1206.² From 1200 on the references increase, although the Geraldine stronghold at Shanid is not mentioned until 1298, but it probably dates from the early half of the 13th century.³

Early 13th century castles in Cork include Ringa - Roga near Skibereen, Aghadoe [Killegh] built by the Carews, Ballinrea [Carrigaline] built by the de Cogans along with Barnakely [Castle Warren] and Carrigaline itself.⁴ In Clare, Westropp says the earliest example seems to be a wooden castle "near the Borowe" [Bromha] near Killaloe made by the English" in 1207.⁵ However, it is not until 1206 - 07 that we have a reference to an Anglo - Norman castle in Kerry, when Dunloe (93) is mentioned as being built by the Galls.⁶ In 1214 both MacCarthaigs Book and the Dub.A.I. give a list of castles built in Kerry by the Anglo - Normans. In 1214 MacCarthaigs Book says "a castle...." built at Ardtully (12) by Carew. Another castle [was built] by the son of Thomas [FitzGerald] at Dunloe (93) and one at Killorglin (118). A castle by the son of Maurice [FitzGerald] at Moyahiff (134)a castle built by Roache at Oirbhealach (4)...⁷ Here there is a reference to the

¹ Westropp T.J. "Ancient castles of Co. Limerick". PRIA No. 26 1906 pp. 64 - 68.

² *ibid.* pp. 64 -68.

³ *ibid.* pp. 65 - 66.

⁴ JCHAS 1911 - 1920. List of Cork Castles.

⁵ Westropp T.J. "Peel towers of Clare". PRIA 1898 - 1900 pp. 349.

⁶ MacCarthaigs Book 1206:7, A.I. 1207:3.

⁷ MacCarthaigs Book 1214.

castle of Dunloe (93) in 1206-07, however, the present site of Dunloe (93) consists of a rebuilt 16th tower house on top of the remains of a motte. It is possible that the first or both entries refer to a motte and bailey type structure rather than a stone castle. It would appear that Dunloe (93) was easily burned as the McCarthys razed it at least twice in the 13th century, in 1261 and again in 1280.¹ Of course, all the castles mentioned in 1214 in MacCarthaigs Book could be mottes rather than stone castles. Of the other sites mentioned Molahiffe (134), and Ardtully (12) are now tower house sites, Killorglin (118) had a 13th century castle [now gone] and the site of Oirbealach (4) is not known, although it was probably in the Muckross region of Killarney.

The Dub.A.I gives a much more extended version of this list of castles under a 1215 date. According to Orpen, we can group these castles as follows: (1) A string of castles along the river Maine at Currans (82), Molahiffe (134), Clounmelane (78), Castlemaine (71), Calanfersy (55) and Killorglin (118) all erected by John and Maurice FitzThomas of Shanid. (2) A castle built by the FitzThomas' at Dunloe (93) and another built by Roache at Airlech [Oirbealach] (4). (3) A group of castles consisting of Dunkerron (91), Cappancush (58), and Ardtully (12) erected by Carew.² This reference in Dub.A.I. extends the castle building activities of the Anglo - Normans in Kerry quite considerably, but its reliability must be queried. With the exception of Airlech (4) all the sites are known and have on them the ruin of a later tower house or in the cases of Castlemaine (71) and Killorglin (118) had the ruin of an earlier 13th century castle until at least the 17th century. Therefore, unless the compiler invented these sites and just happened to be lucky, or he knew of all Kerry castles and tower houses, we have to believe

¹ A.I. 1261:11, 1280:7..

² Orpen G.H. "Ireland....." 1911 - 1920 Vol III. pp. 126 - 129.

that he had access to MacCarthaigs Book and / or other lost annalistic sources with detailed references to Munster events and therefore this annal can be relied upon for the dating of these sites. By combining all the Irish annalistic references we get quite a number of references to "castles" built in Kerry by 1220-25.

1. Molahiffe (134) 1214-15.
2. Dunloe (93) 1206-07, 1215.
3. Castlemaine (71) 1215.
4. Killorglin (118) 1214-15.
5. Airloch / Oirbealach (4) 1214-15.
6. Currans (82) 1215.
7. Clounmelane (78) 1215
8. Calanfersy (55) 1215.
9. Dunkerron (91) 1215
10. Cappancush (58) 1215

Other possible early sites include Aghadoe (1) which is a round 13th century castle, comparable to Shanid. Also the great castle of Castleisland (67) is reputed to have been built by Geoffrey de Marisco c.1225, there are references to it in the mid 13th century and the ruins, although very broken, would indicate a 13th century castle. So, by the 1250's there are at least 13 "castles" in Kerry. Aghadoe (1), Castleisland (67), Killorglin (118) and perhaps Currans (82) [although very little is left to judge by] were 13th century stone castles: all the other sites may have been mottes, later succeeded in all cases, except Airloch(4), by a later tower house. There is no indication at any of these sites of an earlier stone castle, and Dunloe (93) and Molahiffe(134) and possibly Lixnaw (130) and Clounmelane (78) are the only sites with the remains of a motte. It is not possible to say what

type of structures were built on the other sites, but it is probable that they were used in the 13th century and all are now tower house sites.

Other sources useful in dating early stone castles include the governmental and English sources. These sources do give some new information on early castle building in Kerry. C.D.I. [Calender of documents (Ire)] has a reference for 1234 to Killorglin (118), "The king commands Maurice FitzGerald, Justiciary of Ireland....assign...a sufficiency for the maintenance of Kylorgelan...belonging to G.de Mariscius...which castle the king retains."¹ Also in 1298 the C.D.I. mentions the manor of Inch (112) Co.Kerry where there was a "chamber of stone with a cellar" surrounded by a "stone wall" and having other wooden buildings.² This description is similar to the manor of Callan given in 1307 which has a "wooden hall" as at Inch (112), although that at Callan was roofed by wooden shingles while that at Inch (112) was "thatched".³ In the 1307 description the structure at Callan is called a "castle" and it is reasonable to call the similar structure at Inch (112) a "castle". Otherwise there is very little evidence in the governmental sources which helps with dating Kerry castles. Most of the documentary sources used are helpful in dating the pre - 14th century activities of the castle builders in Kerry and show that many later tower house sites were occupied by some sort of pre 14th century military structure or "castle", but they do not help very much in firmly dating the earliest Kerry tower houses, especially as most of the Irish sources, in particular, end as the tower house construction era begins.

¹ CDI Vol II 1234. No. 2228.

² CDI Vol IV 1298. No 551.

³ *ibid.* No. 657.

The Anglo-Normans were building castles in Kerry since at least 1215, however, it is now necessary to explore when castle building stopped, and tower houses became the norm. As with stone castles, tower houses were probably being built in the counties surrounding Kerry before they were built in Kerry. In Clare, Westropp has dated the earliest "peel-tower" i.e. Newtown Clonlare built by Lochlann MacNarmara in c.1380.¹ In Limerick there are several "castles" built; in 1318 the castle of Thurlas was built, in Corcomoyth in the 1320s several "castles" such as that at Castletown Mac Enry were built and Brittas was built in the late 14th century.² In Cork there are constructions at Castle Arundel [Clonakilty], Castleisland [Schull] and Dungourney [Middleton] dating prior to 1315.³ Cairns shows that in Tipperary there were at least a dozen tower houses built in the 14th century e.g. Ballycahil c.1300 Camps castle c.1308 - 09 Cashel c.1318, and Drominagh c.1336.⁴

These dates show that there was some building activity in Munster in the 14th century, an era previously thought to be barren of new buildings. As with dating of stone castles, documentary sources are usually the most reliable. Unfortunately, we have to rely mainly on the A.F.M. and the governmental sources for this period in Kerry history as the other annalistic sources such as the A.I have ended. Another way of dating a tower house is by using its architecture, i.e. dating the building by the shape of its doors, or windows, or the existence of mid-wall bartizans, parapets, fireplaces, gun-loops etc. The presence of an original gun - loop in a tower house would most likely date it to after the early 16th century. There are references to hand - guns in Ireland

¹ Westropp T.J. "Peel towers....". PRIA Vol V pp. 351.

² Westropp T.J. "Ancient castles of Limerick". JRSAI 37 and Plea Rolls 1318.

³ JCHAS List of Cork castles 1911 - 12, 1917 - 18.

⁴ Cairns C. "Tipperary....". 1984 Appendix pp. 396 - 398.

from the 14th century but they do not seem to have become common until the 1520s - 1530s. In a 1480 list of the forces of the Irish and Anglo-Irish leaders there is a reference to the forces and arms of James the 9th Earl of Desmond, which states that his army included "gunners"¹ but there are no references to the use of these "gunners" in the late 15th/early 16th centuries. From 1500 the references to fire - arms in use in the wars in Ireland increases and by 1543 the Irish kern had a reputation as good "arquebusiers"² [arquebuses replaced hand-guns from the late 15th century]. Tower houses with original gun - loops can be safely dated to post 1525 and tower house with original ports for pistols can be dated to post 1575 as the first reference to a pistol in Ireland is at the battle of Affane in 1565. Therefore, both the presence of original gun - loops and pistol ports would give tower houses early and late 16th century dates respectively.

Other architectural details do not give as precise a date in most tower houses, there are as a rule, one or more vaults of stone in most tower houses, except the very late examples. Tower houses with parapets crenellated in the Irish "stepped merlon" style would seem to be dated from the 15th century on as stepped crenellations did not appear until then. Also, later tower houses have, in general, narrower parapets. In the case of fireplaces, it is generally accepted that the earlier tower houses did not have them, although some were later added to early tower houses, and a few late tower houses do not have fireplaces. However, the absence of a fireplace would nearly always indicate an early date. Doors and windows are not very useful in dating, as all tower houses have both similar and different types at all periods. All

¹ De Hoir S. "Gun loops in medieval and Tudor Ireland". Irish Sword No. 59 1982 pp. 80 - 81.

² State Papers III pp. 444.

styles of windows, flat, round, ogee occur together in tower houses; there is no rule tying any particular style to any period. Rectangular windows seem to have been unusual until the late 16th century, although earlier tower houses have rectangular window insertions. Doorways for most periods have all types of styles, except for the unusual "Caernarvon" arch (a flat topped doorway) which could date a tower to the early 14th century. Except for the late examples, all bartizans were square or rectangular and date from the 14th to 16th centuries and are no help in precise dating. However, the mid wall corner bartizan, common mainly in the west and south of Ireland, dates a tower house to the mid 16th to 17th centuries.

We cannot use much of the architecture of the tower house to date it. The problem is that many features of architecture were used before, during and after the tower house building era. We know that most of the early tower houses were rectangular in plan, small with a vault, a batter, window loops and slits, and possibly without a fireplace. Only in the last years of the tower house building era can one identify definite and important innovations; for example, the disappearance of the batter and the vault, larger windows, gun - loops, pistol ports, smaller wall walks etc. Therefore, a few tower houses can definitely assigned early or late dates, but most tower houses can only be dated, architecturally, to a very general period i.e. the 15th or 16th centuries. In Kerry, a few tower houses can be assigned fairly specific dates using their architecture.

(1) Listowel (129) - possible 1430's date (Plan 15). This building is similar in style to both Kilclief, Co.Down and Bunratty, Co.Clare. It has the same high external arch as Kilclief and Bunratty, and Kilclief may

have all been inspired by the gate house at Dover;¹. In turn, Bunratty and Listowel (129) may have been inspired by Kilclief. Kilclief is ascribed to Bishop John Cely who held the see of Down from 1412-1441.² and Bunratty seems to have been built before 1430 as Westropp refers to its repair by one Maccon MacNamara in 1433.³ This type of arch is quite rare and it would seem that Listowel (129) was inspired by or built at the same period as Bunratty and Kilclief. [Fig 7, Fig 15]

(2). Ballymalis (38). This tower house would be mid to late 16th century in date as it has a mid wall bartizan ascribed by Leask to this period.

(3). Ballinruddery (23) also has a mid wall bartizan and therefore, is mid to late 16th century in date.

(4). Killaha (117) mid wall bartizan therefore mid to late 16th century.

(5). Dunkerron (91) had an inscription of 1596 on one of its chimneys

Unfortunately, only a few Kerry tower houses are datable by their architecture. Of those that are substantial ruins the vast majority are very similar. Many tower houses are in such ruined condition that it is impossible to distinguish any architectural features and many of the tower houses are now gone altogether, recognizable only by a lump in the grass. Even in many of the substantial ruins, the surrounds are too covered with ivy to distinguish any features.

There are, however, some references in documents which help to date some Kerry tower houses. As already mentioned, the Irish annals, although more useful in dating the early stone castles, do give some revealing information. In 1316 the A.I. refers to the burning of the castle of " Mag O Flaithim [Molahiffe (134)] by Diarmuid McCarthy⁴.

¹ Craig M. "Architecture....". 1982 pp. 97.

² Craig M. "Architecture..." 1982 pp. 96.

³ Westropp T.J. "Peel towers of Clare...". PRIA 1898 - 1900 pp. 351.

⁴ A.I. 1316:6.

As already mentioned Molahiffe (134) was one of the "castles" built by the invading Anglo - Normans in 1215. The site of Molahiffe (134) is known and today there are the remnants of a man made mound, possibly a motte. However, on top of the motte is not a stone castle but a tower house. It is possible that the Anglo - Normans never built a stone castle here to replace the original motte and that the tower house is the building referred to in 1316. There is only one corner of the tower house still standing to a height of about 20 metres and is so totally ivy covered that it is impossible to distinguish any architectural features. It is possible to see that it was quite a small tower house and quite possibly dates from the 14th century.

Other dates of "castles" given in the Irish annals include 1390 when the A.I. mentions the death of Domhnaill MacCarthaig "in the castle of Loch Lein [Castlelough (68)].¹ In 1428 Tadc MacCarthaig "died at the castle of Baile Ui Chairpri [Ballycarbery (27)]² and in the same year his wife died in "the Caislean Mac Aeducain (2).³ These are the only tower houses mentioned in the A.I. and MacCarthaigs Book but these references show that it is possible that tower houses were being built in Kerry in the early 14th century and that there was definite tower house construction in the late 14th century, Castlelough (68), Ballycarbery (27), and Aglish (2) all being built in or about 1380 - 1410. It is possible that Castlelough (68) and Ballycarbery (27) were built in the same period as they seem to be similar structures. Ballycarbery (28) is a two storey structure with three vaulted chambers on the ground floor, while what is left at Castlelough (68) would indicate a two storey structure with at least two if not three vaulted chambers on the ground

¹ A.I. 1390.

² A.I. 1428.

³ *ibid.*

floor. However, in the Irish annals there is now a period of almost 100 years where there are no references to tower houses in Kerry. The A.I. and MacCarthaigs Book end in 1459 and 1437 respectively and it is not until 1510 that the A.F.M. mentions any Kerry tower houses. The reference in 1510 is to the taking of the castles of Castlemaine (71) and Pallis (137) by Garret, Earl of Kildare.¹ In 1511 Pallis (137) is mentioned again, as is Castlelough (68) in 1517.² These are the only references to Kerry tower houses in the A.F.M. until the 1569 - 1590 period when many of the Kerry tower houses are mentioned for the first time; yet we know that many of these tower houses are earlier than the late 16th century.

To find some more evidence we must turn to the governmental and English sources. In the Calender of Justiciary Rolls (Ire.) there is an entry for 1307 which describes the manor and castle of "Vyail" [Beal (45)]. It describes the intrigues in the FitzMaurice family over which son would inherit "Vyaille" when Maurice FitzThomas died.³ From this description we can gather that there "was an enclosure" for the "entrance" at the castle, and there were stables and a cellar; "David seeing the door of the cellar to the castle open, went into the cellar" and "they put their horses in the stable together".⁴ The site of Beal castle (45) is known, but there are no stone buildings left at all, all that is left are some clumps on the left side of a square area enclosed by a large moat. It is hard to say that Beal (45) was a tower house but its remains are either of a very small type of keepless castle or of a 14th century gate tower house. There is no evidence of a curtain wall or of any turrets which were usual in late 13th century keepless castles. Therefore, it is

¹ A.F.M. 1510.

² A.F.M. 1511.

³ C.J.R. (Ire) 1307 pp. 422 - 423.

⁴ C.J.R. (Ire) 1307 pp. 423.

possible that this is an example of an early gate house, a type of transition tower, which bridged the gap between the castle and the tower house.

Westropp gives a description of Beal (45) in J.R.S.A.I., he states that the tower had two floors under a vault, then another vaulted storey and a roofed upper room. All that remained in c.1910 was a greatly undermined staircase turret and the foundations of a side building.¹ This description certainly sounds like a tower house with the two vaults; although it cannot be proved that the building that Westropp saw in the 18th century was the same building described in 1307. However, the side building could possibly have been the stables mentioned in 1307. Here at Beal (45) it is possible that we have an example of a 14th century type of tower house. It is also interesting to note that both Molahiffe (134) and Lixnaw (130) are mentioned in this entry. FitzThomas is "lying in his bed at Moyfayth [Molahiffe (134)],² no type of structure is mentioned, but Molahiffe (134) was a major castle of the FitzMaurices and if it existed in 1316 it is possible that it existed as early as 1307. Lixnaw (130) was the chief residence of the FitzMaurice, Lords of Kerry, unfortunately, the only structure that exists today is the 18th century Lixnaw Court, the "castle" having been leveled in the last century. However, Hickson did see it and said it was similar to Ballymacaquim (37) which is a tower house so possibly this building was also an early tower house.³ Other possible early sites is Ardfert (8) said to have been built by Nicholas, Lord of Kerry in 1324, and re-edified in c.1590 and destroyed in 1641, so there are no ruins today.⁴

¹ Westropp T.J. "Promontory forts of Co.Kerry". JRS AI 40 1910 pp. 11.

² A.I. 1316.

³ Hickson M.A. "Notes on Kerry topography....". RHAAI 1881 pp. 360 - 361.

⁴ King J. "Co. Kerry, Past and Present". 1907 pp. 4.

Documentary evidence shows at least 3 - 4 probable tower houses built in the early 14th century, with a few more in the mid to late 14th century, and then the numbers increasing in the 15th century. This would support the theory that tower house construction began in the early 14th century; tower houses were not common in the 1320's but they did exist. Even official government sources support this theory. Leask said that the £10 grant of 1429 was to begin and encourage construction of tower houses, yet as early as 1300 John FitzThomas was to receive 100L for the construction "anew" of a "fortilice" in Rathangan Co.Kildare.¹ From 1300 to 1429 there are several other references to grants and / or permission received for the construction of "fortalices" mostly in the Pale region. So it could be said that the statute of 1429 was a response to an increased volume of tower house construction rather than the beginning of the era. Tower houses were more affordable for the majority of nobles and chiefs and easier and quicker to build than the great stone castles.

All the references to the early tower houses concern those built by men with Anglo - Norman or English names, and most of the grants for tower houses mention constructing them "against the Irish enemy", yet to-day many tower house ruins are to be found in what was in the 14th to 16th centuries Irish held territories. Before the coming of the Normans the Irish had no tradition of castle building. There are a few references in the Irish annals to pre - 1169 "caisleans" but these were probably not stone castles. In 1145 MacCarthaigs Book mentions the building of the "Easter" house of "Eas Duibhe" by Diarmuid O'Conor Kerry.² O'hInnse says this is a reference to Asdee castle (14) Co.Kerry.³

¹ CJR (Ire) 1300 pp. 362.

² MacCarthaigs Book. 1145:3.

³ O'hInnse S. "Miscellaneous Irish Annals". 1947 Index pp. 206.

However in Asdee (14) there are only the ruins of a square rath, perhaps this is what the annals refer to as the "castle".

The Anglo - Normans brought with them the tradition of stone castle building and by 1200 there were many castles in the areas conquered by them. Most of the early Anglo -Norman "castles" in Kerry had fallen into the hands of the McCarthys and their allies by 1260. By 1300 the Irish were building stone castles, in this year the O'Connors built the castle of Ballintubber which is a copy of Roscommon castle. As early as 1245 we have a reference to the " Sil Murry" [O'Connors and McDermotts of Roscommon] helping "MacMurris FitzGerald" [Earl of Kildare] build the castle of Sligo.¹ In Kerry in the 14th century there are references in the annals to Irish built strongholds and many of these sites seem to be tower house sites. Castlelough (68) must have been built before 1390 and the death of Domnall Og McCarthy there and Aglish (2) before 1428; the castle of Ballycarbery (27) is also mentioned in this entry for 1428.² In the Irish annals there are references to Irish built tower houses by the 1400's e.g. there are six castles mentioned as being built by men with Irish names- O'Feargail, O'Conchobair and Ruadh I Ceallaigh.³ Other references include one "William O'Ceallaigh, who spent 15 days.....building a small castle of Roscommon....in spite of the Galls and Gaels of Connacht " in 1418.⁴ In the 1420's "Bundowes was built by Brian O'Conchobair"⁵, showing that the Irish were building tower houses before the statute of 1429; and they were possibly building them from the mid 14th century.

¹ A.Conn. 1244:3.

² A. I. 1390, 1428.

³ O'hInnse S "Misc. Irish Annals". 1947 1405 - 1406.

⁴ A.Conn. 1418.

⁵ A.Conn. 1420's.

In conclusion, it must be accepted that the date for the starting point of tower house construction is the early 14th century. Tower houses were being built from c.1307 - 1310 by the Anglo-Irish and from the 1350's -1360's by the Irish, although the main building period is the 15th century. The statute of 1429 was a response to the incursions of the Irish into the Pale area, and tower houses being simpler in plan and cheaper to build than stone castles, were chosen as the type of structure to be built under the provisions of the statute. In Kerry there was castle construction from c.1215, mostly on sites later occupied by tower houses, and these constructions seem to have been mainly of the "motte" type. From 1307 - 1310 onwards there was a start to tower house construction in Kerry, and also in the other counties in Munster, e.g. Tipperary, Cork, Clare and Limerick. The first tower houses in Kerry, were most likely built by the Geraldines, i.e. either the FitzGeralds, (future) Earls of Desmond, or the minor branches of the family like the FitzMaurices. By the late 14th century the Irish of Kerry were constructing tower houses and this volume of building increased in the 15th century e.g. by 1490 the huge tower house of Carrigafoyle (60), the strongest "peel" tower in north Kerry had been built by John O'Connor Kerry. The bulk of Kerry tower houses were built in the period 1450 -1550, with a few built in the late 16th early 17th centuries. For example, the Desmond Survey of the 1580's mentions that in Ardarte [Ardfert (9)] "a new castle lately built anew with lime and stone".¹ while Ballingarry (19) is said to have been built in 1641 by Col. David Crosbie, although this may be a re - building of an earlier tower house. However, it is possible to precisely date only about one third of all tower houses in Kerry; based on these dates it can be said

¹ Desmond Survey 1587. pp. 5

that while most Kerry tower houses date from the 15th century there are a few, which from documentary and architectural evidence, can be placed in the early to mid 14th century and some which date from the 16th century. The dating of some Kerry tower houses to the early 14th century shows that this was not an architecturally barren period and that the tower house succeeded the castle quite quickly. The tower house may not have been common or usual until the 15th century but they were being built in the 14th century.

DISTRIBUTION OF TOWER HOUSES.

Tower houses are perhaps the most numerous archaeological ruins, excepting ringforts, to be found in Ireland. Estimates range from 3,000 to 5,000, the real number probably being somewhere in between. Despite their visual prominence on the landscape, not much work has been done on establishing the distribution patterns of tower houses. Before turning to Kerry it is best to get an over view of distribution patterns in the country. Beginning in Ulster - it is clear that there was a low concentration of tower houses here, especially when we realise that most of the tower houses that do exist were built by the 16th and 17th century Scottish Planters. Between the six counties of Northern Ireland there are about 100 tower houses, almost three quarters of these built after 1603¹. There are many reasons why Ulster is the least "crenellated" part of the country. The Anglo-Normans do not seem to have settled the area very heavily; although McNeill says that there are 120 probable mottes in Ulster.² These

¹ Cairns C. "Tipperary...". 1984 pp 154 - 155.

² McNeill T. "Anglo - Normans Ulster". 1980 pp. 85.

mottes, however, are concentrated in the north - eastern part of Ulster with only 10 mottes west of Lough Neagh. Another factor could be the fact that the last earl of Ulster died without male heir in 1333.¹ From this time the Irish in Ulster regained most of the land. The Ulster Irish were not unaffected by the English influences; they did build castles in their areas, but they do not seem to have copied the tower houses of the 14th and 15th century Anglo - Irish. This could be due to the infertility of the land the Irish held in Ulster or as O'Danachair suggests, in Ulster, "only a few great lords such as O'Neill.....ventured upon the new fashion in architecture".² Whatever the reasons in Ulster the majority of tower houses were built in the 16th and 17th centuries, during and after the Ulster Plantation.

In the English "Pale" in the 14th and 15th centuries the situation was entirely different to that in Ulster. Here there was the construction of tower houses on a large scale and it was to encourage the building of these tower houses in these areas to protect them from the "wild Irish" that the statute of 1429 was introduced.³ Davin has worked on the distribution patterns of tower houses in the counties of Meath, Dublin, Louth, and Kildare. She states that, in Dublin, the majority of tower houses were in an area south of the river Liffey and north and east of the Wicklow mountains.⁴ Tower houses were concentrated south of the Liffey mainly to stop Irish raiders crossing the river and penetrating into north Dublin, the majority of tower houses in this area were small structures, while those north of the Liffey where it was more peaceful were larger.⁵ In Co.Kildare the

¹ *ibid.* pp. 123.

² O'Danachair C. "Tower houses...". Bealodeas. 1974 - 1979. pp. 161.

³ Davin A. "Tower houses....". 1982 pp. 170 - 174.

⁴ *ibid.* pp. 173 - 174.

⁵ Davin A. "Tower houses....". 1982 pp. 173 - 174.

highest density of tower houses was in the north - eastern part of the county, having half the known total, with the remainder distributed evenly throughout the rest of the county.¹ The area with the densest concentration of tower houses was defined in the west by the Liffey and in the east by the Wicklow mountains. The only area without tower houses, between Clane and Kilcock, was too wild, too poor and disturbed to sustain any tower house construction.² Davin indicates that the majority of tower houses built in Kildare were not to protect the Pale, but to strengthen the Earl's of Kildare Lordship; the Earls controlled the machinery of government in the 15th century and could give their followers grants to build tower houses.

In Co.Meath, the distribution was heaviest in those areas which adjoined the marches, particularly along the southwestern and northern frontiers. Davin, again, sees the building of tower houses in certain areas coinciding with the lands of those who held power.³ For example, in 1447 a subsidy of 8 pence on every ploughland within the Libery and Cross of Meath was to be given to whoever wished to build a castle with those defaulting having to pay a fine of 20 marks.⁴ This act coincided with the appointment of the Duke of York, who held lands in Meath, as Lord Lieutenant. Tower houses in the eastern baronies were less dense, because like north Dublin, this was one of the more stable areas of the Pale. As in counties Dublin, Kildare, and Meath the highest density of tower houses in Louth was along the frontier area. In conclusion, the patterns to be seen in these four counties were that, in areas adjacent to the marches the tower houses tended to be smaller structures, suggesting an unstable political and social atmosphere and a

¹ Davin A. "Tower houses....." 1982 pp. 176 - 177.

² *ibid* pp. 179.

³ *ibid*. pp. 183.

⁴ *ibid*. pp. 184.

need for a fortified residence. Many of the subsidies, in certain areas, were to followers of whomever was in power. Tower houses were also found in association with churches and "cabbins" which highlights their manorial function; they were as a rule located in areas below 500m O.D, with good soils and absent from the more mountainous districts in the "Pale" and along its frontiers.

In Tipperary, Cairns has done extensive work on the distribution patterns. He found no grand military purpose behind the distribution of tower houses. For instance, there is a string of tower houses along the river Suir which looks impressive on a map but only two of the tower houses were controlled by the Earl of Ormond, the rest belonged to the Butlers of Poulakerry who were not very reliable allies of the Earl.¹ He also found very few examples of tower houses sited for solely defensive purposes, although a few were built on islands or had water defences. In fact tower houses seem to have been built less for defensive reasons, rather than on land of good quality. They were built to protect the landowners from petty raids. Even along the Suir tower houses were not solely defensive, but built by rich landowners on good farming land.² There are some basic patterns to tower house distribution. In most counties, including Tipperary, tower houses were rarely built in the hills. In Tipperary Cairns found that most sites were below 400m O.D. with only 10 as high as 600m O.D.³ In fact, the regions in Tipperary which lack tower houses are the mountainous areas i.e the Galtee range etc.

A general distribution map of Ireland does yield some surprises. For example, the most concentrated number of tower houses is not, as one

¹ Cairns C. "Tipperary....". 1984 pp. 158.

² *ibid.* 1984 pp. 158.

³ Cairns C. "Tipperary....". 1984 pp. 161.

might expect, in the east of the country where the Anglo - Irish and English had most control, but in the west and south west. According to Craig, if a line was drawn from Dublin to Galway some 70% of the tower houses would be found to lie south of it.¹ However, this is possibly too high a number. Studies in the north and east of the country have increased the number of tower houses there and as with most other archaeological sites the rate of destruction in the east is higher than elsewhere in the country. However, even taking these factors into account, it would seem that the south and west had the greater number of tower houses, possibly not as much as 70% but certainly far more than half. Only when the distribution pattern of the entire country has been studied will the true figures emerge. Even so it would seem that the south and west have a very high concentration of tower houses. Craig has provided some figures on the density of tower houses per county, and Limerick has the most with c.3.80 tower houses per square mile.² In Limerick there do not seem to be many tower houses built in hilly or mountainous areas nor are there lines of defence consisting of tower houses. Limerick lay mainly within the lands of the Earls of Desmond and while they owned or controlled the major castles and tower houses like Askeaton, Newcastle West, Rathkeale etc they did not control many of the rural, scattered tower houses. As with Tipperary these tower houses were built by individual landowners in the rich farmlands of the Limerick region.

Other counties with a high density of tower houses include Kilkenny, Clare, Wexford, Cork, Galway and, to a certain extent, Kerry. The high densities of Limerick, Kilkenny, and to a degree, Cork and north Kerry, are to be expected as these areas (good farmland) were

¹ Craig M. "Architecture.....". 1982 pp. 95.

² Craig M. "Architecture.....". 1982 pp. 95.

colonised by the Anglo - Normans. The distribution patterns in Cork follow the same patterns as in Limerick and Tipperary with less dense concentration in the more mountainous and poorer land of West Cork. Also, the tower houses were built, again, by individual landowners, both Irish and Anglo - Irish, to protect their own private interests rather than the interests of a noble or family. However, it is surprising to find high concentrations of tower houses in more "traditionally" Irish areas like Clare, Galway, and even Mayo. Here the distribution patterns are much the same, with the Irish builders and owners also avoiding the higher and poorer lands. For example, in Galway there are few tower houses in the western, poorer, rockier part of the county. A quick look at the distribution pattern of the country has shown some results. It can be said that tower houses were located below 500m O.D. and in richer, farming areas, built mainly by individual landowners; although in some areas, especially the border area of the Pale, tower houses were built as part of a defensive plan, but this is not a usual occurrence. Also, while there is a high density of tower houses in some of the eastern counties the highest concentration of sites seems to be in the southern and western counties. There is also evidence that, although the Irish began to build tower houses after the Anglo - Irish, the number of tower houses built by them is quite large, and by the late 15th century the tower house was almost as frequent in the Irish areas as in the Anglo - Irish areas.

With this general view of the distribution patterns of tower houses in Ireland, it is possible to turn to Kerry and see if these patterns hold true there. Taking a general view of a map of Kerry (Map 3, 4), we see that there are some areas with a relative lack of tower houses. These areas include the eastern border with Limerick (the Slewlougher mountain area). This area extends all over the eastern border of Kerry

with Cork, including the Stack mountain range, the Glanaruddery mountains, down through the Pap mountains to the Derrynasaggart mountains (which straddle the Kerry-Cork border) on into the Caha mountains of the Beara Peninsula where there is only one tower house. Other areas lacking in tower houses include the central area of the Iveagh Peninsula - which includes the area of the McGillicuddy Reeks, stretching as far as Caherciveen and Ballinskelligs. Other areas include the central area of the Dingle Peninsula and the Knockanore hills in the north - west of the county. The few tower houses built on the edges of these areas, or in the river valleys flowing through them, are mainly located at the 400m O.D. level. Some of these areas rise to over 1000m O.D. in places and is poor, rocky land so it is normal that there are few tower houses here. Since the mountainous, poorer areas cover a large part of Kerry, the tower houses are to be found mostly in clusters quite close to each other. For example, in the coastal area stretching from Tarbert to Ballyheigue (c.25-30 miles) there were 9 or possibly 10 tower houses (see map 4) - an average of almost one tower house every two miles. In the region around Tralee there are also about 8 - 10 definite and possible sites in a 10 mile radius around the town (see map 4). The other clusters are around the Killarney Lakes, along the river Maine, along the river Roughty in the south, a small cluster along the river Feale in the north, around the coast of the Dingle Peninsula and around Ballinskelligs Bay (see map 4). It would seem that these clusters developed mainly because these areas are all below c.400m O.D. and were the richest farmland in the county.

Who were the builders of these tower houses and why did they build them in certain areas? In north Kerry the lands colonised by the Anglo-Normans lay largely within the baronies of Iraghticonor, Clanmaurice, Trughanacy and Corca Dhuibhne (see map 1). The most

northern barony is Iraghticonor. In the north - western part of the barony there are five definite and one possible tower house ascribed to the O'Connor Kerry family. These include the large tower house at Carrigafoyle (60) which guarded the coast route from Limerick to Kerry. These are the only sites ascribed to O'Connor Kerry in the county. It would seem that he had a defensive string of tower houses from Glenalappa (106) to Carrigafoyle (60) enclosing all his lands. However, O'Connor Kerry did not control all these tower houses - those in Glenalappa (106) and Ahalanna (3) belonged to a minor branch of the family while the tower house in Tarbert (156) was the home of the tanist who was not always allied to the head of the family. Even the chief seat at Carrigafoyle (60) was not completely under the control of O'Connor Kerry - the Earl of Desmond could and did exercise his overlordship here. In the 1580's the tower house was removed from the hands of O'Connor Kerry by the Earl and placed in the control of foreign troops loyal to the Earl during the second Desmond rebellion.

The most surprising aspect of the distribution of owners of tower houses are the few controlled by the Earls of Desmond. The Earls controlled fewer than 10 tower houses and most of these were in the Barony of Trughanacmy (mid Kerry). The Earls did control the major castles and tower houses in Castleisland (67), Tralee (158), and Castlemaine (71) all in strategic positions for defence; but the tower houses in the countryside were controlled by either minor branches of the FitzGerald or FitzMaurice families, other Anglo-Irish or by Irish families. The tower houses controlled by the FitzGerald could be placed within the control of the Earls - most of these tower houses were forfeited in the 1580's when the owners were defeated with the 16th Earl of Desmond in rebellion. For example, three tower houses north of the great castle of Castleisland (67), Ardnacragh (11), Kilmurray (121),

and Ballymacadam (33) which provided some protection on the mountain pass through Slewloughter (Map 4) into Castleisland (67) were owned by one Thomas Fitz - David Gerald (and his brothers).¹ These three tower houses were relatively important to the defence of Castleisland (67) and the Earls needed to control them. These three tower houses formed a small line of defence in the mountain pass, but this seems to have happened by chance. Two of the tower houses still exist, and they are small and would be very vulnerable to an invading army, especially an army with cannon. These tower houses were more useful for the protection of the individual owner and his possessions from small raiding parties or thieves, than forming a defensive line above the Earls castle in Castleisland (67), yet they could also serve as look - outs for the garrison in Castleisland (67). If this had been the original idea behind the construction of these tower houses it is possible that they would have been bigger and stronger buildings.

There was also what seems, on a map, to be a defensive cluster around the Earl's castle in Tralee (158). However, closer examination shows that only 3 of the 6 - 7 tower houses within the 10 mile radius were controlled by the Earl or a member of the FitzGerald family. The other 3 - 4 were controlled by the Knight of Kerry, the Lord of Kerry (FitzMaurice) and an Irish family McElligott. While the FitzMaurices and the Knight of Kerry (FitzGerald) did, for example, aid the 16th Earl of Desmond during his rebellion (1579-1584) there is proof that the families were not always allied to their overlord. As late as 1568 the Lord of Kerry resisted efforts to force him to join the rebellion of James FitzMaurice (a supporter of the imprisoned Earl of Desmond), i.e in 1568 James FitzMaurice besieged the Lord of Kerry at Lixnaw (130).²

¹ Desmond Survey pp. 35.

² A.F.M. 1568.

Among those fighting with the Lord of Kerry against the supporters of their overlord was O'Connor Kerry. Even later in 1577 a war broke out between the Lord of Kerry and the Earl of Desmond. The Earl took Ballymacaquim (37) from FitzMaurice and besieged Lixnaw (130).¹

The family who controlled most of the tower houses in north Kerry (i.e. in the baronies of Iraghticonnor and Clanmaurice) were the FitzMaurices, the senior branch of the family were the Lords of Kerry. The FitzMaurices owned or controlled about 15 tower houses in this area. From a distribution map (Map 4) of the area there seems to be two lines of defence using these tower houses. The first stretches from Beal (45) to Castleshannon (75) along the north - west coast of Kerry, excluding Leac (126) which was owned by O'Connor Kerry, but which the FitzMaurices took over when the Desmond rebellion began. The second line of defence is a line of 3 tower houses near or along the river Feale. There is proof that, at least in the late 16th century, these tower houses were in the control of the Lord of Kerry, although he or a member of his family did not reside in all of them. For example, Ballybunion (26) was occupied by the Bunyan family, reputed seneschals to the Lords of Kerry; Ballinruddery (23) was the home of the tanist (or heir) to the Lord. However, the Lord of Kerry did, in theory, control these tower houses and was, sometimes, able to make practical use of this overlordship. For example, in 1582 when his lands were being plundered by the English he "at once destroyed Lixnaw (130), Listowel (129), Beal (45), and Ballybunion (26)."² Here is proof that the FitzMaurice Lord of Kerry could rely on and control the tower houses of his family - to a certain extent. There is also proof that not all of his family and allies obeyed him. In the same year, (1582)

¹ A.F.M. 1577.

² A.F.M. 1582.

the " inhabitants of Ballymacaquim (37) and of Ballykealy (32)" refused to join in his "evil career".¹ These tower houses were also within the control of the FitzMaurices. This proves that while these tower houses belonged to the FitzMaurices or their allies and were somewhat within the sphere of influence of the Lord of Kerry, there was no formal planned line of defence which could be always relied upon. The tower houses were built by individual members of the family who, in theory, owed allegiance to the head of the family; but this allegiance was not always forthcoming. As with the Lord of Kerry's relationship with the Earl of Desmond, support could only be guaranteed when individual interests were at stake.

In west Kerry, i.e. the Dingle Peninsula the chief land owner was the Knight of Kerry - a minor branch of the FitzGerald family. Of the 15-18 tower houses in this area, the Knight of Kerry owned or controlled 6-7, including one in the port of Dingle. However, there does not seem to be any strategic purpose to the collective locations of these sites. Besides the Lord and the Knight of Kerry, the Earl of Desmond, and O'Connor Kerry (the chief land owners) tower houses were owned by individual families, both Irish and Anglo - Irish. These families included the D'Cantillons, Rices, O'Moores, Husseys, Ferriters, Pierces, McElligotts, and McDaniel etc. It is probable that families like the Browns and the D'Cantillons, as well as Irish families like the McElligotts, who owned mainly between 1-3 tower houses, were allied to the larger land owners. However, this does not mean that these families always obeyed their overlord. When the Lord of Kerry rebelled in 1582 with the Earl of Desmond the "Clann - Pierce" did not join them;² the Pierces had land around Clashmelcon and Causeway and

¹ A.F.M. 1582

² A.F.M. 1582.

held a possible tower house at Mineogohane (133), of the Lord of Kerry, yet they refused to join him and in doing so managed to save their land from forfeiture.

In 1580 almost the entire land of north Kerry was in a state of rebellion with the Earl of Desmond. In the forfeitures of the 1580's there is a long list of tower houses including tower houses owned by the Lord of Kerry, the Earl of Desmond, the minor FitzMaurices and FitzGerald, O'Connor Kerry, Husseys, McElligotts, etc - lands and tower houses were forfeited by almost every family, Irish and Anglo - Irish, in north, mid, and west Kerry. However, the Desmond rebellion was more the exception than the rule. It was unusual for an overlord to be able to involve all the families on his lands in his quarrels. These families built tower houses for their own defence not the defensive purposes of a particular family or overlord. While there seems to be some lines of defence, it is very rare to have all these tower houses in the control of one lord or family at the same time. The 1580's was one of the rare occasions that this happened. As was said by many of the contemporary writers the inhabitants of one castle were generally the enemies and rivals of another and the principle of self-preservation led to the construction of these structures as the only effectual curb to the violence of the violent and warlike lords and chiefs who lived in them. Most of the time the builders of the tower houses built them to protect their lands and possessions not from the "wild Irish", the English or the government, but from their neighbours.

In south Kerry the distribution pattern is even more chaotic. South Kerry - i.e south of the river Maine - is more mountainous, more afforested, and has much poorer land than north Kerry. There are fewer tower houses, especially in the central area of the Iveagh Peninsula, the Kerry - Cork border and the Beara Peninsula. South of

the Maine there are only 5 sites attributed to Anglo - Irish builders and these include Aghadoe (1) and Killorglin (118), both 13th century sites, built by the original invaders and later abandoned or taken into Irish hands. The other site is Castlemaine (71) built by the Earls of Desmond to guard the border against the McCarthys. Directly south of the Maine there are 3 - 4 tower houses attributed to FitzGerald builders but by the 15th century they were in McCarthy control; these are Clounmelane (78), Molahiffe (134) and Callanfersy (55). These three tower houses, with a fourth at Fieries (95) all belonged to or were controlled by McCarthy Mor and seem to constitute a defensive line on the border of the Earldom of Desmond and the Kingdom of Desmond. On the other side the Earl had Castlemaine (71) and Currans (82) to protect his border lands. This, however, is the only defensive line of tower houses in south Kerry. As with north Kerry, these tower houses were built by individual land owners on their lands, to protect themselves. Around the Killarney area, for example, there are two McCarthy tower houses, two O'Sullivan tower houses, one O'Donoghue tower house, two possible McGillicuddy sites, and an O'Mahony site. Aghadoe (1) and Airloch (4) are the other two sites, both 13th century castles. There does not seem to have been much cooperation between the tower house owners in any wars. For example, in the 1580's both McCarthy and O'Donoghue were allies of the Earl of Desmond. McCarthy Mor (Earl of Clancarre) however, seems to have realised he was on the losing side and submitted in 1583 and saved his lands from forfeiture. However, O'Donoghue continued to support Desmond to the end and was attainted for high treason. He had to forfeit all his lands around Killarney. McCarthy Mor was theoretical overlord of all these lands, including those of O'Donoghue Mor, but he could not nor did he try to force O'Donoghue to pursue the same course of action as himself.

McCarthy's position as the most important land owner however, can be seen from the distribution map, as he or his family controlled tower houses throughout south Kerry, while lesser lords like O'Donoghue, O'Sullivan etc were more or less confined to certain areas. However, like north Kerry, there is no proof of tower houses being constructed by McCarthy Mor or any other land owner for any other reason other than to protect the possessions and lands of the occupier of the tower house. In both north and south Kerry tower houses were, mainly, constructed by individual land owners for their own reasons; these tower houses were sometimes used by or connected with the wars of the overlord because of the allegiances or loyalties of their owners, not because of some grand defensive plan on the part of the overlord.

Why were these tower houses built on particular sites? As already stated it is rare to find a tower house built on land over 500m O.D. anywhere in Ireland. In Kerry this is also true, despite the fact that it is a very mountainous area. The vast majority of tower houses are either on or below 100m O.D, with a few at 200m - 300m O.D. and only one Ardnacragh (11) above this at c. 500m O.D. The areas chosen therefore, were not the high inaccessible and defensible hills and mountains, but the low lands, the richer farm lands, in fact, the less defensible areas. In investigating if the builders built near a ready water supply some surprising results turn up. Water is most essential for every day living, and to have a ready supply, especially in time of war or siege, would have seemed an important consideration. Some tower houses were on the banks of or near rivers and streams. They were built on these sites for both defensive and practical reasons. For example, Castlemaine(71) actually straddled the river Maine (on a bridge - Fig A). Its main function was to protect the border between north and south Kerry. This was the castle which Perrot besieged twice

because the possessor of the stronghold would "master Kerrie".¹ The practical side of the site was shown when the garrison was able to hold out in the 1572 siege and Perrot had to retire, and it took him three months to reduce the garrison in 1573. Then they surrendered because of lack of food, not water. Other tower houses with a fresh water supply include Carrigafoyle (60) which was built on an island in the Shannon.

Lixnaw (130), Listowel (129), and Ballinruddery (23) all had the river Feale flowing by their walls, while Ballymalis (38) and Dunloe (93) were near the river Laune and Ardtully (12) was near the Roughty. In Tralee the river Lea ran alongside the Great Castle (158) of the Earl of Desmond, and it was from this river that the castle got its water supply. We know this because of a report of the siege of Tralee in 1641 [when the Denny family owned the castle] which speaks of the besiegers [Irish rebels lead by Pierce Ferriter] diverting the course of the river and cutting off the water supply to the castle. The defenders are reputed to have dug thirteen wells, all of which were filled with stagnant, brackish and undrinkable water.² The castle was soon surrendered and the rebels won the day. Other tower houses built near streams include most of the tower houses on the north Kerry coast i.e. Beal (45), Pookenee (138), Browns Castle (49), Ballingarry (19), etc all have streams in or near the tower houses or bawn, or no more than a few yards away. At these sites it is possible to see where the occupants got their fresh water. Many more tower houses are near streams, rivers or lakes e.g. Moorestown (135), Portinarde (138), Ardfert (8, 9, 10) etc: however, many sites have no obvious source of fresh water. For instance, the tower house of Leck (126) is built on an

¹ C.S.P.I. 1572.

² Anon. "The siege of Tralee". K.A.M. 1914 - 1916. pp. 91.

island connected to the mainland by a very narrow causeway. Leck (126) is surrounded by the Atlantic (salt water) but there is no evidence of a fresh water supply within walking distance of the site. Here we have an example of an extremely defensive site, the only access to the tower house is across the narrow, easily defended causeway [there is no access from the seaward side], yet in time of siege, especially an extended siege, the defenders would have no access to fresh water. The tower itself was built on a rock outcrop where no wells could be sunk, the only way to provide for a siege was to store the water. But only so much water could be stored and it is unlikely that Leck (126) which was as defensible as Castlemaine (71) would have held out for three months in a siege. This shows that sites like Leck (126) were not built to withstand major sieges, by organised armies, but only to protect the owner from small raiding parties etc.

Water although an integral part of daily life does not seem to have affected the distribution pattern of tower houses in Kerry to any great extent. For every tower house built beside or near a river, stream or lake there are 1 - 2 more sites which have no immediate or obvious access to a fresh water supply. It is possible that, in some of these tower houses, wells were dug in or near the bawn or in the vicinity of the tower house, yet excepting the 13 failed well at Tralee (158), there are no references to wells at any other tower house. It is also very hard to detect where wells may have existed in the present day ruins and fieldwork has not turned up any wells on any site in Kerry. Therefore, the overall impression is that the builders of these tower houses sometimes, but not always and certainly not as a matter of course, considered the water supply in the siting of a tower house. Access to water does not seem to have been an overriding, major

concern and had only a minor part to part in the overall distribution of Kerry tower houses.

Some tower houses were built to control communications, trade. and travel routes. As already stated Castlemaine (71) spanned the river Maine and was built to control the movements of the McCarthys and the other Irish chiefs from south Kerry. Portinarde(138), just inside the Limerick - Kerry border, controlled the river Feale pass through the mountains of Slewloughter. This route was used by the English troops traveling into Kerry, for instance, in 1580 Pelham came through this pass and camped at "Fort Renard" [Portinarde (128)] on his way into Kerry.¹ Ballinruddery (23), Listowel (129) and Lixnaw (130) were all located further along the banks of the Feale. It is possible that one of the reasons for building these tower houses was to control the trading and fishing on the river (the Feale is long known as a good fishing river), or to use the river without hindrance. There are some tower houses built beside all the major rivers in Kerry, so control of the river trade and fishing seems to have played a minor role in the distribution pattern in Kerry. Some tower houses also seem to have been deliberately built to control land routes. As already stated the three tower houses overlooking Castleisland (67), although small, simple structures, may have functioned as look - out posts to warn the garrison in Castleisland (67) of approaching raiders or armies. However, it is impossible to say if a tower house was built near a route or if the route developed to serve the tower houses; also unless the route was very narrow, or enclosed by obstacles on either side (mountain,bog etc) tower houses would not have been effective, especially as alternate routes could be available to the enemy. Even if

¹ A.F.M. 1580.

the invading army took the route blocked by the tower house, it did not prevent the invaders from continuing on their way; in fact, sometimes the enemy used the tower houses as seen by Pelhams use of Portinarde (128) as a camp on the way into Kerry in 1580.¹

Tower houses could be built on the sea coast to control the trade and fishing. There is evidence that the McCarthys, from their base in Ardea (7), controlled all the fishing rights in Kenmare Bay. In 1553 it was reported that "Mac Finghin Dubh McCarty" of Ardea (7) received £300 per annum from the Spaniards for the liberty to fish in the river of Kenmare.² Other tower houses may have been used to control the trading and fishing in their areas, for example, Minard (132) could have been used to control some of Dingle Bay, while the Ferriters probably controlled the lands and seas around Ballyferriter and the Blasket Islands where they are purported to have had a second tower house. In north Kerry there is a tradition connecting the Browns of Browns Castle (49) to the sea; it is claimed that they were pirates and wreckers, while the D'Cantillons, who had 2-3 tower houses around this area, claimed wreckage from the sea as part of their inherited rights.

However, many of the coastal tower houses were built not because of the proximity of the sea, but for other reasons, i.e one of the best defensive sites were re - used promontory forts like Leck (126) and Pookenee (138) etc. As with land routes and water access the sea played a significant but minor part in the overall distribution pattern of Kerry tower houses.

¹ A.F.M. 1580.

² O'Neill T. "Merchants....". 1987 pp. 34.

Kerry is a very mountainous county, full of hills, wood covered mountains, lakes, and bogs. In addition to this Kerry had a large part of the five great forests in Munster which Hore said "formed the natural fastnesses and forests of the Earl of Desmond in Kerry" and provided retreats for the other chiefs and nobles as well.¹ These woodlands include Glengarrif - south Kerry / west Cork "one of O'Sullivan's impregnable retreats".² Glanerought near Kenmare, Leaneamore around the Lakes of Killarney, Glenflesk, and the wooded valley of the river Feale.³ In north Kerry the woods lay along the foot of the Stack mountains to Tralee, and the upper reaches of the river Feale were also wooded.⁴ North of Tralee lay the wooded area of Slibh-Mis and Glanakinty, where the 16th Earl of Desmond was caught and killed in 1584. (see Map 3). We have numerous references in the annals, in government papers and in other documents, of the use of woods, bogs and mountains as fastnesses in time of war. Even as early as the 13th century the Anglo - Irish in Kerry were abandoning their defensive positions, for example, in 1280 "the castle of Dunloe (93) was evacuated by its guards through fear of the McCarthaig, and it was burned after they departed."⁵ Other evidence of this sort of action is given in chapter six. Even as late as the second Desmond rebellion (1579-1584) the Anglo - Irish and Irish nobles and chiefs were using this tactic. Desmond himself rarely spent any length of time in any of his tower houses in Limerick or Kerry. For instance, in May 1582 he passed close to Castlemaine (71) where the vice - constable (Spring), although placed there by Ormond was sympathetic to the Earl's plight,

¹ Hore . "Woods of Ireland". UJA 6 1858 pp. 134.

² *ibid.* pp. 155.

³ Hore . "Woods....." UJA 6 1858 pp. 155 - 157.

⁴ McCracken M. "Woodlands of Ireland". IHS 11 1958 - 1959 pp. 280.

⁵ A.I. 1280:7.

however, the Earl did not use this to his advantage and take the castle, merely took some food and continued to hide out in the fastnesses. Most of the other nobles and chiefs spent the Desmond rebellion hiding in their traditional fastnesses.

From this evidence we know that the nobles and chiefs of Kerry made regular use of the vast regions of fastnesses available to them. Did this encourage them to build their tower houses in the vicinity of these fastnesses, to enable them to retreat quickly into the mountains or woods when the enemy was sighted? As has been already stated, the vast majority of Kerry tower houses were built in the low lying areas; however, from a distribution map it is seen that most of these tower houses are quite near areas which would be considered fastnesses. This could be because Kerry is so mountainous and wooded that it is hard to build a tower house any distance from a fastness. When taking an area that is not very mountainous a slightly different picture emerges. In the Barony of Iraghticonnor there a large low lying area with very few tower houses. In this area the only suitable fastnesses would have been the smallish woods along the coastal or the boggy centre of Iraghticonnor. It is possible that the tower houses were not built here because it was boggy land but it is not unusual to find tower houses in the centre of bogs. It was a very defensive place to build a tower house as there were usually only one or two approaches to the tower house which could be easily defended. Cairns mentions tower houses in bogs in Tipperary.¹ It is possible that the tower houses were not built here because the nearest fastnesses or retreats were inadequate for more than the occupants of the coastal tower houses. That is not to say that tower houses were always built

¹ Cairns C. "Tipperary...". 1984 pp. 147.

near wooded or mountainous areas. It is difficult to state categorically that tower houses and fastnesses are interrelated when it comes to distribution patterns. As Kerry is a very mountainous county most tower houses are near fastnesses, however it is interesting that the one area not really near any fastnesses has very few tower houses.

Building a tower houses near a fastness is a defensive tactic and this and other defensive considerations did affect the distribution of tower houses. Even in its simplest form i.e the small free standing tower, the tower house was, to an extent, defensive, with its thick walls, narrow windows, batter etc. To increase this defensive function bawns were built around many tower houses. To increase even more the defensive nature of a tower house certain types of sites were chosen. For instance, a tower house built on an island, or in the middle of a bog, or on a natural hillock, or on manmade defensive sites such as promontory forts, ringforts etc served a more defensive than residential function. Using a natural site was one of the easiest and cheapest ways of increasing the defensive nature of a tower house. One of the best naturally defended sites in Kerry was at Carrigafoyle (60). The tower house in built on a rock outcrop in the middle of the Shannon between the mainland and the larger Carrig Island. Not only is the tower house very large with 3 - 4 m thick walls, it also had a double bawn and the Shannon formed a natural moat between the inner and outer bawn walls.(Fig B)

Other tower houses on naturally defended sites include Minard (132) and Fieries (95), both built on natural hillocks which dominate the low lying countryside around them. From these tower houses the land could be watched and the garrison kept warned of approaching danger. Also, one of the defender's advantages was the fact that the besiegers had to attack uphill. Rivers and lakes also provided a natural defensive

aid to tower houses. Tower houses such as Ballinruddery (23), Listowel (129), Ardtully (12) had a river running past one or more of their sides. This meant that one or more of the sides was naturally defended and in the time of siege the defenders could concentrate their efforts on the remaining weaker sides. In addition to the naturally defensive sites the builders of tower houses sometimes chose to build on sites previously used, and made defensive by the early invaders, the early Irish chiefs or even sites left by earlier peoples. These sites include the ringforts, promontory forts, moated sites, mottes, and ringwork castles. As Kerry has a very long rugged coastline many types and sizes of promontory forts are found here. In his articles on Kerry promontory forts, T.J. Westropp described about 50 of these forts along the coastline from Beal (45) to Ardea (7)¹, even on the Dingle Peninsula there are 19-20 promontory forts alone.² Some of these sites are built on high cliffs surrounded on three sides by sheer drops and protected on a fourth by one or more deep fosses and high banks, extremely defensive sites especially when strengthened by the presence of a tower house. It is not impossible to see why the builders of the tower houses chose these sites

Along the western sea board there are 8 - 10 tower houses built on these earlier sites. These stretch from Leck (126) in the north to Rincaheragh (146) in the south. Leck (126) is built on an island connected to the mainland by a narrow causeway across a wide fosse. The island itself has a walled platform (with part of the north and west revetments remaining) Just south of Leck (126) stand three other tower houses all built in reused promontory forts, Doon (88), Ballybunion (26), and Pookenee (138). In Doon (88) and Pookenee

¹ Westropp T. J. "Promontory forts...." JRSAI 40 1910.

² Dingle Peninsula Survey.

(138) there are traces of the early earthworks and the fosse inside which the tower houses were built, while in Ballybunion (26) these have all but disappeared. Further down the coast there are the tower houses at Browns Castle (49) and Ballingarry (19). Browns Castle (49) stands to the north - west of a straight, wide, deep, fosse. There are no remains of a drawbridge across the fosses but there may have once been one. In Ballingarry (19) again, there is the site of a tower house on an island cut off from the mainland by a natural inlet. However, here there are the substantial ruins of a drawbridge, although the tower house is gone. At all these sites there are hut remains although it is impossible to tell without excavation whether these huts were associated with the tower houses or with the earlier promontory fort or both. Only for Ballingarry (19) is there a reference to numerous people living on the site and building huts. When Ballingarry (19) was besieged in 1642 by the Irish the whole site is reported to have been refortified by Col. David Crosbie and the defenders built huts in which to live.¹

It is perhaps curious to note that of the six tower houses built in promontory forts in the 20 mile coast line from Leck (126) to Ballingarry (19) four were built by, or are associated, with the FitzMaurice family, i.e. Doon (88), Leck (126), Ballybunion (26), and Pookenee (138). The other two were built by the Browns and the D'Cantillons who were allies of the FitzMaurices. From Ballingarry (19) to Ferriters Castle (99) there are no tower houses built in promontory forts, although, there are some promontory forts along this stretch of coastline. Ferriters Castle (99) was built on the inner bank of a "great entrenchment running across the headland." ² Inside this

¹ Anon. "Crosbies fort at Ballingarry". KAM 1 1908 - 1912 pp 232 - 235.

² Westropp T.J. "Promontory forts....". JRSAI 40 1910 pp. 204 - 210.

entrenchment there are some hut foundations and further along the headland is a second entrenchment with more hut sites on the inside. This second fosse was of no defensive use to the tower house and definitely belongs to the earlier promontory fort. The builders of the tower house probably strengthened and deepened the first fosse when they built the tower house.

In south Kerry the only promontory fort re - used in medieval times is Rincaheragh (146), on a headland south of Valentia. It has a fosse strengthened by a wall across the bank and has a small gate house tower in the centre of the wall. In the reutilization of promontory forts it is interesting to note that of the 8 major sites only one or possibly two were built by Irish families; these being Ferriters Castle (99) and possibly Rincaheragh (146) - the builders of this site are not known but, since it is in south Kerry, it is probable that they were Irish, although the locals say they were Trants, which is an Anglo - Irish name. The other six re - used promontory forts are all in north Kerry and all were built by Anglo - Irish families. In south Kerry there are coastal tower houses like Ballinskelligs (24), Ardea (7) etc, in fact in the Iveagh Peninsula the only low lying areas were on the coast but the Irish do not seem to have recognised the additional defence a promontory fort would add to a tower house, or if they did they did not feel the need to re - use these extremely defensive sites.

The Anglo-Normans, did, from the begining of the invasion, make use of pre - existing sites, like raths, monastic sites, promontory forts, raised raths etc and this tradition was continued by the settlers in Kerry; mainly by the FitzMaurice family. Promontory forts, although one the most defensive sites on the landscape are not the most numerous. Rathes or ringforts are the most widespread type of site to be found in the country. There is evidence that the Anglo-Irish re -

used these sites. On the Dingle Peninsula there is a tower houses at Rahinane (142), which is built inside a large embanked enclosure. Fanning and O'Brien refer to this site as a possible ring - work castle re - used as a tower house site parrallel to Raheen catle in Limerick.¹ However I believe this to be a ringfort; it is a large circular enclosure, surrounded by a bank and a fosse (and an outer bank) with a souterrain in the south - west side of the inner bank. The enclosure itself may have been strengthened by the builders of the tower house (the FitzGeralds) and the entrance made larger, which would make the site seem like a ringwork castle, which unfortunately is very similar to a ringfort and many are difficult to tell apart without excavation. Here we have an example of the reutilisation of an earlier ringfort.

Another possible reutilization of a ringfort is at Ardea (7) in south Kerry, which Barrington mentions as being built on the site of a fort ^{see gazetteer & 6" OS} ² Unfortunately the site is now levelled. The Irish and Anglo -Irish re - used pre - existing sites to a certain extent, but this re-utilization plays a very minor role in the distribution pattern of tower houses. The only real pattern that emerges is that the FitzMaurices seemed to appreciate the extra defence provided by the promontory forts. Two other promontoty forts were re - used in late medieval times. Dun an Oir (153) was re - fortified and strengthened by the Spanish troops who came with James FitzMaurice in 1579 and they remained there until defeated by Lord Grey in 1581. In the south, a promontory was re - fortified by the Cromwelliam army on Valentia Island (161) in 1642 to help quell the rebellion.

In addition to re-using pre - Norman sites in which to build tower houses, the Anglo-Irish and Irish also re - used early post Norman

¹ Fanning T and O'Brien K. "Earthworks at Raheen castle". N.M.A.J. 16 1973 pp. 31.

² Barrington T.J. "Discovering Kerry" 1976 pp. 299.

invasion sites, such as mottes, moated sites, and ringworks castles. The Normans introduced the motte as the " principal type of fortification on their newly acquired lands" .¹ As already discussed, it is possible that many of the so-called " castles" of the initial Anglo - Norman advance into Kerry were mottes. There are four mottes in Kerry, Lixnaw, Molahiffe, Clounmelane and Slaheny (near Ardtully), although surprisingly Glasscock does not place any mottes in Kerry in his distribution map. Of the four sites that do exist, three are at or near sites mentioned in the A.I., McCarthaigs Book and the Dub.A.I. as "castyles" built by the invading Anglo - Normans in 1215, i.e Ardtully (12), Clounmelane (78), and Molahiffe (134). Clounmealne (78) and Molahiffe (134) are both now tower house sites while Ardtully (12) had a tower house but it no longer exists. At Molahiffe (134) the remains of the motte are fairly obvious with the tower house built on top of it. At Clounmelane (78) the tower house is built on rising ground, but this is not a motte; however, the motte could have been flattened by the builders of the tower house. Neither the tower house at Ardtully (12) nor the motte at Slaheny remain today so it is impossible to speculate on their relationship with one another. At Lixnaw (130) there are no ruins of either a motte or a tower house, although the site of the tower house / castle is known, again it is impossible to speculate on what the relationship between the motte and the succeeding stronghold was here.

Of the other early sites two Aghadoe (1) and Dunloe (93) were definitely motte sites. The motte at Aghadoe is in association with the 13th century round castle there, while that at Dunloe has a re-built 16th century O'Sullivan tower house on top. Another possible re - utilization of a motte site is in Brosna (50). Westropp describes Brosna

¹ Glascock R.E. "Mottes in Ireland..". Chateau Gaillard VII 1975 pp. 96.

as probably of "English origin" like the motte of Killeedy, Co.Limerick.¹ From his plan it would seem to be a mound with a square platform on top (150ft across) with a bailey adjoining it.² The interesting thing about Brosna (50) is that it is mentioned in the Desmond Survey of 1587 as the "chief house or mansion called Brasenough" of "John M'Donnell of M'Awly".³ There are no ruins of a tower house on or near the motte or village of Brosna. It is possible that, if such a tower house existed it has now been destroyed or that the motte itself was still being used in the 16th century, although this is unlikely. Whatever the explanation it is clear that the area around Brosna, first fortified by the Anglo - Normans, was still an important head quarters for the local M'Awly (McAuliffe) tribe in the 16th century. Of the six possible mottes identified in Kerry, all are near or re - used for later castle and tower house sites. As with the re - utilization of early pre - Norman sites the re - using of mottes played a significant but minor role in the distribution of tower houses.

All the six possible motte sites were built in strategic locations, which dominated the surrounding countryside. These mottes are all probably post 1210; there is no indication at any site, except Aghadoe (1) that they were succeeded by a 13th century castle. An explanation could lie in the fact that all these sites except Lixnaw (130) were in Irish hands by 1262. The strategic significance of these *motte sites* was recognised by the Irish chiefs who built their tower houses on or near these mottes. However, these six possible motte sites only amount to half the sites mentioned in the annals in 1215, the other six sites also later have tower houses and / or castles, but there are no

¹ Westropp T.J. "Promontory forts...". JRSAI 40 1910 pp. 12 - 13.

² *ibid.* pp. 12 - 13.

³ Desmond Survey. pp. 29.

indication of mottes. Perhaps another type of early Norman fortification was used. In addition to building mottes there is now evidence that the Anglo - Normans also built military ringwork castles. For example, in Glasscock's distribution map of mottes most sites are in the east of the country, with only 24 in Munster and 4 in Connacht.¹

It has been suggested by Barry, Nicholls, and others that ringwork castles fill the gap in motte distribution in places like Cork, Waterford, Limerick, and Kerry etc.² The difficulty with ringwork castles is they look so much like ringforts that it is easy to mistake both types of site. North and mid - west Kerry was settled by the Anglo - Normans from c.1220 yet there are only two possible mottes from this area. However, there is a large distribution of ringforts in this area and it is possible that some of these sites are ringwork castles. Barry, in his distribution map of possible ringwork castles in Ireland, places three possible sites in Kerry, Killorglin, Parkavonear, and Rahinane.³ Rahinane (142) is a tower house site but, as stated earlier, it is a re - used ringfort. The ringwork castle at Killorglin (118) may have been a forerunner to the 13th century castle there, while the possible ringwork castle at Parkavonear has no associated tower house or castle, although this is in the Killarney area near the 13th century castle of Aghadoe (1). None of the other sites mentioned in the annals for 1215 (see Chp. 5) seem to be associated with either mottes or ringwork castles.

Moated sites are generally rectangular earthworks bounded by banks and moats of medieval date, usually found in isolated areas.⁴ In his distribution map of moated sites Barry places 12 definite and 3 probable moated sites in Kerry, most of which are in the Anglo-Irish

¹ Barry T.B. "Archaeology.....". 1987 pp. 45.

² *ibid.* pp. 45.

³ Barry T.B. "Archaeology...". 1987 pp. 52.

⁴ *ibid.* pp. 88.

north and mid Kerry.¹ Of these moated sites one was possibly re-used as a tower house site. This is the site at Beal castle (45); very little remains of Beal castle (45), although the moated site remains very much intact. From descriptions from earlier in the century we know what the site looked like. O'Donovan in the Ordnance Survey Letters says that the remains of the castle stood to a height of 50ft in the south-west corner and the walls were 6ft 6ins thick; this indicated a place of strength and the "square earthen fort" was "built with the castle" and is not an earlier Irish fort.² Most other commentators on Beal castle (45) believe that the "bawn" or "fort" was coeval with the castle. However, it is probable that the "bawn" which Westropp describes as a "large diamond shaped earthwork"³ is an earlier moated site on which Beal castle (45) was subsequently built. Dating of moated sites is generally accepted to be in the late 13th early 14th century period. For example, Kilmagoura in Cork was given an uncalibrated radiocarbon date of 1225+70 by Glasscock, while Rigsdale is dated to the end of the 13th century.⁴ Therefore, the moated site at Beal castle (45) was probably built between 1280 and 1300; there is a reference to a "castle" at Beal in 1307,⁵ the moated site could have been built twenty years before the gate-house / tower house which existed in 1307. This is the only moated site re-used by the tower house builders in Kerry.

Of the six possible mottes sites and three possible ringwork castle sites in Kerry all the mottes were later replaced by a tower house or castle and one of the ringwork castles was possibly replaced by a stone

¹ *ibid.* pp. 88.

² O'Donovan (ed) "O.S. Letters.." 1841 pp. 14

³ Westropp T.J. "Promontory forts..." JRSAI 40 1910 pp. 11.

⁴ Barry T.B. "Archaeology...." 1987 pp. 89 - 91.

⁵ C.J.R. (Ire) 1307 pp. 422 - 423.

castle. In addition there were 10 - 12 promontory forts re - used as well as two ringforts. This gives a total of 19 - 20 tower houses built on sites previously built in the pre and immediate post Norman invasion era. This is an estimate of just over 10% of all tower house sites in Kerry, built on re - used sites. This is not a huge amount but it show that the tower house builders recognised the strategic importance of these earlier sites. However, the most surprising thing about the distribution of tower houses and earlier settlement is that more early sites were not used by the builders of the tower houses.

In conclusion, it can be said that many factors played a part in the distribution pattern of tower houses in Kerry. The most general factor was that nearly all tower houses were built on low lying, good farm land. These tower houses were not all built by the overlord or the chief tenant of these lands but by all sections of the land owing class, right down to the petty noble and chief. The main reason for the construction of these tower houses was to protect the individual owner from petty raiders and thieves. In general tower houses did not form an intregal part of any lines of defence, although in most cases, the tower house owners were allies of the overlord and aided him in his wars. Sometimes tower houses were built for a particular defensive reason; i.e to protect a waterway, a mountain pass, fishing or trading rights etc. Other tower houses were built on very defensive sites, both natural and man made, although the defensive function of the tower house was not of over - riding importance. Although tower houses were usually built on good farming land, immediate access to an adequate water supply does not seem to have been a major concern. All of these factors played their own part in the distribution pattern of tower houses in Kerry. No one factor, except perhaps building in low lying areas was more important than the other, each factor, defence,

water supply, trade, pre - existing sites etc all played a minor but significant part in the forming the overall distribution pattern of tower houses in Kerry.

WAR AND THE TOWER HOUSE.

1.INTRODUCTION.

Warfare, petty crime, and violence was an every day factor of medieval Irish life. As discussed in the chapter on origins, the tower house was a response to this unstable life. Now I wish to look at the success of the tower house in withstanding the ravages of this incessant violence and warfare. The tower house was a relatively secure residence, but was it security against petty raids or security against wars and sieges or both? Before the coming of the Normans the Irish had no tradition of defending lands from stone castles, nor were their wars, wars of conquest, rather they were mostly cattle raids. In her book "From Kings to Warlords" Simms deals with the Early Christian and Early medieval Irish warfare and armies, in particular the wars of the Irish kings and chiefs. She states that in early medieval Ireland there was no such thing as a standing army at the disposal of the local king or chief.¹ However, there are references in some sources, like the Crith Gablach, which show that a king had the power to issue a legally binding summons to a hosting at a general assembly, providing it was a just hosting.² Changes had begun to take place in the armies of the Irish kings before the Norman invasion. Simms states that the Vikings played a significant part in these changes; they introduced superior weapons, for example, the battleaxe and the longsword.³ From now on the Irish kings were to keep larger numbers of household troops, and with the use of mercenaries and native kern, take part in large scale expeditions. With the Norman invasion the armies and type of warfare in Ireland changed. The post invasion era saw the

¹ Simms K. "From kings to warlords". 1987 pp. 116.

² *ibid.* pp. 116.

³ Simms K. "From kings....". 1987 pp. 117.

proliferation of mercenaries, both of the native kern and from the second half of the 13th century, the Scottish gallowglass.¹ They were employed by all factions in medieval Ireland, Irish and Anglo - Irish. With the introduction of these mercenaries the Irish armies were now semi-permanent bodies and much more formidable and more likely to cause trouble. In Kerry, the McSweeneys and the McSheehys were the main gallowglass families. By the tower house era (14th to 16th centuries) the Irish chiefs and Anglo - Irish nobles had standing armies at their disposal to conduct raids, expeditions, wars, sieges etc.

By the 14th century the type of warfare in Ireland had undergone many changes. This process was helped by the changes introduced by the Vikings, the Normans, and by the changes in the Irish legal and military system. The most obvious feature of Irish warfare in the medieval period was a jurisdictional one. Unlike England there was an absence of strong central control in most areas outside of the Pale. Because of this private wars between chiefs and / or nobles were the norm. The reason for these wars among the Irish chiefs and the gaelised Anglo - Irish was to gain control of people and livestock, not usually to extend the land of a chief or noble.² In the medieval Irish economy cattle, not land, were the symbol of wealth and power, while in an under populated country the loyalty and labour of tenants was much sought after. Therefore, the type of warfare which resulted in much killing was not feasible in Ireland. The methods used by the Irish chiefs and some of the Anglo - Irish nobles were cattle raiding, harrying, and plundering. The intention of harrying was to terrorize people into submission. The destruction of their property was to deprive the enemy of food and weaken the ability to counter - attack,

¹ Simms C. "*Warfare* ...". 1987 pp. 121.

² *ibid.* pp. 100 - 101.

especially after a cattle raid. The most common forms of warfare were cattle raiding and plundering. In a raid any and all movable goods, from armour to table cloths could be stolen, but the most prized booty was the livestock, especially the cattle.

Cattle were the most important element in petty warfare for many reasons. As already mentioned cattle were a symbol of wealth. Also in these raids, speed was essential for success and a raiding party moved faster driving a herd of cattle than trying to drag heavy armour or other booty. Surprise was a fundamental part of Irish warfare. If the enemy was forewarned the cattle could be herded into the bawns of the tower houses, but the bawns could not hold many cattle so they were usually driven into the safety of the woods or mountains. On the other hand the raiders, after capturing a herd etc, had to leave the area as quickly as possible, as the victim could raise a war party and go on a revenge raid or recapture the herd. Simms states that these types of raids were usually carried out by small bands of lightly armed men; only up to 140 - 150 men took part in the raids, usually combinations with the barefoot, lightly armed kerne making up a major part of the army.¹ For example, a party could be 140 kerne and 12 horsemen. The kerne were without armour having a sword and darts and perhaps a battle axe and later in the 16th century, a gun.² The chiefs and their kinsmen would be on horseback and armed with swords and spears.

In addition to the kerne and the horsemen the force, especially on large scale expeditions, may have been strengthened by the gallowglass, particularly from 1247 on where the annals record the presence of the first gallowglass.³ This was the type of warfare fought

¹ Simms C. "Medieval warfare.....". Irish Sword 12 1975 pp. 104 - 105.

² *ibid.* pp. 105 - 106.

³ Annals of Connacht 1247. Mac Somurili, King of Argyle, slain at Ballyshannon while helping Maolsheachlain O'Domhnaill against Maurice FitzGerald.

by the Gaelic chiefs and up to the advent of the stone built defensible places, they had no real tradition of defending their homesteads, that is, withstanding sieges or indeed besieging places of strength. By the mid and late 15th century the Irish were building tower houses in large numbers and using them in their wars. They could use them as bases from which to launch attacks, leaving a small ward behind to defend the tower house and the surrounding area. The importance of the tower house meant that the owner was willing to stand and defend it, no longer always fleeing to the fastnesses at the first sign of trouble and waiting until the trouble had passed; although this tradition did not totally die out. By the 15th and 16th centuries cattle raiding was still an integral part of Irish warfare but many other factors had also become causes for war. The capturing and keeping of land had become more important especially since the Irish were regaining some lost tribal lands and the remaining Anglo - Irish wanted to hold on to what they had. Defending and capturing stone castles and later tower houses also became a more important part of Irish warfare.

As already mentioned the armies of the Irish chiefs and many of the gaelicised Anglo - Irish were made up of three sections; horsemen, kerne and gallowglasses. The kern and gallowglass formed the largest part of the army. Both fought on foot using swords and pikes (later muskets), the gallowglass wore armour while the kerne did not. The gallowglass were the more professional part of the army, usually led by captains of Scottish descent and were very effective in the type of raiding and plundering warfare common in Ireland. They were essentially guerilla fighters and had no tradition of defending positions or of withstanding sieges. The gallowglasses were, therefore, less effective in defending the tower houses in the 14th and 15th centuries. The kerne were the least important, but most numerous part of an

army. On raids the kerne were most useful in firing houses, castles, or tower houses and in herding the captured cattle or people. In the 15th and 16th centuries the kerne were armed with handguns and Dymmok said that with training they could become expert gunners.¹ However, as with the gallowglass, the kerne had no tradition of defending fortified positions or withstanding sieges and were to prove less effective in late medieval warfare. The third and least numerous part of the army would be the horsemen, who were generally the chiefs / nobles and their kinsmen. The cavalries of the Irish chiefs / nobles were light cavalry; a small horse with a lightly armed and armoured rider. The light cavalry was more effective in the Irish countryside and was fast and able to flee across bog and marsh in the hit and run tactics of the type of warfare practised. This light cavalry was more suited to the Irish terrain than the heavy cavalry of the English; the government eventually learned its lesson and adopted the light cavalry for its campaigns in Ireland. The light horseman continued to be an effective force in Irish warfare up to the 17th century.

In the type of warfare practised in Ireland, bogs, woods, mountains, etc determined the tactics used; that is, the terrain led to surprise ambushes, short engagements, and retreats into the fastnesses. This was the type of warfare for which the kerne and gallowglass were best suited. Another of the tactics of the Irish against the government was to keep the war going as long as possible, and rarely or never actually engage the enemy troops in open battle. The government troops might have superiority in men, armour, weapons, and military tactics, but these were of no use against an enemy who refused to take the field, preferring to harry and ambush sections of the army and then melt

¹ Maxwell C. "Irish history from contemporary sources". (Dymmok) 1923 pp. 222.

back into the countryside. The government troops could capture some tower houses or castles, plunder and burn as they went, but they had a limited supply of food and would eventually have to leave; as soon as the main army left the Irish or Anglo - Irish soldiers could launch counter - attacks on any small garrison left behind and recapture the tower houses or castles etc. This type of warfare worked until the 16th century when changes and improvements in the armies and the supply lines of the government meant that the troops could stay longer in enemy territory. However, the Irish chiefs and the rebel Anglo - Irish nobles did not change their tactics to suit the new government tactics. The type of guerilla warfare of the 14th and 15th centuries continued and it was this that proved the eventual downfall of the great Gaelic chiefs such as the O'Neills and their counter-parts among the Anglo - Irish, like the Earls of Desmond.

11. WARFARE AND VIOLENCE IN IRELAND.

Petty crime and violence would seem to have been endemic in medieval Ireland. Many writers of the Tudor era regarded the Irish as a "nation of cattle - thieves and robbers" .¹ The main form of violence was cattle raiding, for example, in 1568 James, Earl of Desmond " with all the power of the Geraldines entered his land [FitzMaurice, Lord of Kerry].....and took all the cattle, burned the houses.....and is still killing his men".² Raiding was endemic in medieval Ireland and the tower houses could provide some sort of protection against these raiders. A list of goods taken in 1311 shows that nothing was considered safe. These goods were taken by Diarmait Mac Carthaig, when he and his men raided the "stronghold" of Seoan O'Donnachada. The goods

¹ Maxwell C. :Contemporary sources....". (Cuellar) 1923 pp. 319.

² C.S.P. (Ire) 1568 (ed) Hamilton.

include "...in equal numbers dogs and goats, hounds and sheep, beeves and pigs, cauldrons and helmets, vessels of measure and methers, laddles and breastplates, calves and kneeding troughs, platters and butter containers, swords and sieves..."¹ This list shows that everything, animals and possessions, could be stored in a stronghold in time of trouble, and the tower house served this function, as a type of stronghold or storehouse, especially if the attacking or raiding force had no intention of nor the ability, time or weapons to besiege a tower house.

Other causes of violence were the petty wars which the annals mention frequently. These wars could be inter - familial i.e succession disputes, raids involving the Irish and / or the Anglo - Irish, and quarrels between the government and everybody. For example, in 1200 "Glenn Aga (Glenn, near Killarney) was plundered by the foreigners"² In 1283 "Domhnall, son of Domhall Caipreach (McCarthy) and the others of the Ui Chaipri made a treacherous plot against Domhall MacCarthy".³ These references indicate the type of violence prevalent in Kerry up to 1300, mainly raiding, harrying, and plundering. The petty warfare and violence continued with the introduction of the Geraldines and through out the medieval period. In 1325 "Diarmait Mac Carthaig [i.e the King of Desmond] was slain by the son of Nicholas FitzMaurice."⁴ In 1464 war broke put between McCarthy and O'Sullivan Boy. Even among the Geraldines there was friction and violence. In 1472 " the young Earl of Desmond was set at liberty by the McCarthys and he disabled Garrett, the son of the Earl [of

¹ A.I. 1311.

² A.I. 1200.

³ A.I. 1283.

⁴ A.I. 1325.

Desmond]." ¹ In 1516 a " war broke out among the FitzGeralds and James the son of Maurice the heir to the earldom laid siege to Lough Gur." ² These petty wars were conducted by the chiefs and nobles with armies of hired gallowglasses, and kern. Many of them kept these soldiers, by using the Irish right, allowed under Brehon law, of coyne and livery. This meant that the soldiers and their animals were forcibly billeted on the people of the area in which they were operating and fed with food taken from the countryside; coyne and livery was in itself a form of violence, and there are many complaints to the government about the use of this right, especially by the Anglo - Irish. The government tried, periodically, to stamp out the abuse of coyne and livery but never really succeeded, and it continued to be used throughout this period.

As well as the violence of petty warfare among the chiefs and nobles, there was the violence of groups, robber bands, and individuals. The sources, such as the Justicary Rolls, give evidence of this type of violence. In 1306 it is recorded that one "Robert de la Roache, with John, son of Thomas....with great following of Irishmen deforced Will Ma.....of the 16 oxen and the 16 afers (heifers) {taken earlier by the sheriff for rent arrears of the said John}....and10 oxen, 16 afers and 20 cows in Okonly [Co.Limerick}....and said goods were taken into Kerry where the sheriff could not get them". ³ This reference gives an indication of the power of the Earl of Desmond, whose word, and not the word of the sheriff or the government, was law in Kerry. For example, at Ardfert in 1307 Thomas [son of Geoffrey FitzGerald] had to judge in "his own court" an "hibernius" who had stolen "3 afers" from

¹ A.F.M. 1472.

² A.F.M. 1516.

³ C.J.R. (Ire) 1306.

him.¹ Personal violence was also reported, for example, the court at Ardfert in 1295 had to deal with a case of murder "John Coltyr charged that one Hervey, son of Philip slew Walter Coltyr...and Thomas son of the said John slew [the aforesaid] Hervey."² In 1307 the Jury at Ardfert found that one "Ralph, son of Luo assaulted Maurice [Browne] and struck him on the head with an axe almost to the brain."³ The Laws of Munster of 1569 show how serious the problem of violence and thieving was. The Laws were meant to try to eradicate the robber bands. It was made legal for a "good subject" to "take and kill" thieves caught robbing and the "good subject" was to be given a 4d reward.⁴ In 1562 the Earl of Sussex reported on the greatest problems facing the government. He stated that "the stealing of bestial and the robbing of horse be the greatest matters that annoy the English people and disorder the government - which stealths and robberies be committed by light persons that have no dwellings of themselves nor places to keep their stealths in....they force those that have houses of their ow....to hide the stealths."⁵ The above is a clear indication of the problem of the robber bands, who raided from hideouts in the relatively inaccessible fastnesses, i.e the bogs, woods, and mountains. In 1571 one of the Laws of Munster tried to deal with the problem of people with tower houses, castles, strongholds etc aiding the thieves by declaring that person a traitor.⁶

Another problem among the Gaelic chiefs and the gaelicised Anglo - Irish was the election of "Captains of their nations". The government saw this position as essentially one of a war leader and in most areas it

¹ C.J.R. (Ire) 1307.

² C.J.R. (Ire) 1295.

³ C.J.R. (Ire) 1307.

⁴ Cairns C. "Tipperary....." 1984 pp. 48.

⁵ C.S.P. (Carew) 1562

⁶ C.S.P. (Carew) - Sussex Report 1571

was. For example, James FitzMaurice got himself declared "Captain of Desmond" before his rebellion in 1565 in Desmond. The government saw "Captains of their nations" as the "chief cause of their [i.e the nations] disobedience, rebellions and other enormities".¹ Other causes of the wide spread violence was the keeping of a standing army of gallowglasses and kern. The kern and gallowglass were essentially men of war and could, as Sussex put it, "hardly be restrained from stealing, preying and burning" ² The crown tried to reduce the number of kern and gallowglass by ordaining in 1571 that "sons of husbandmen. etc..should follow the same occupation as their fathers, if the son of a husbandman...etc.. will become a kern, gallowglass etc..he shall be imprisoned for a 12 month and fined"³. Also the keeping of horsemen by the lords or chiefs was forbidden, or the making of war except by licence from the Lord Deputy. These attempts to curb the violence in Ireland failed, as had earlier attempts, such as those by Poynings Parliament when war was to be allowed by licence only. Ireland was a violent society throughout this period.

WAR AND THE TOWER HOUSE.

The tower house was both a residence and a fortified stronghold. The architecture of the tower house shows the importance of its military role. This military role was both offensive and defensive. The tower house could be used to protect its owner from the ravages of robber band and thieves. It could be taken in a sieges but, usually in the face of a siege, which before the age of cannon could take a very long time, the tower house was relatively impregnable. A small garrison could hold off a relatively large force for some time, especially

¹ C.S.P. (Carew) - Sussex Report 1562.

² ibid

³ ibid

if the enemy had no cannon and the garrison had a stock of food and water. As well as using the tower house to protect cattle, people and property, it could also be used as a base for offensive raids in to enemy territory. For example, in 1510 " an army was lead into Munster by Garret [Mor] Earl of Kildare, the Lord Justice...and he erected a castle at Carrig-Cital [Co.Limerick] in dispite of the Irish"¹ The Earl could use his new stronghold as a base from which he could harass and control the O'Briens of Thomond. In Kerry, the FitzGerald held the border post [i.e the border between north and south Kerry] of Castlemain (71), from which they could watch the movements of the McCarthys into north Kerry, or launch raids into south Kerry. The use of fortified positions to conquer or control land was not a new tactic. Since the Norman Invasion the Anglo - Irish and then the Irish had been building stone strongholds to help attack or defend land. The use of a stronghold to attack and control continued with the tower house. We are told the English erected "the castle of Philipstown [Kings County] against the O'Connors" in 1546.² In 1547 " the Lord Justice [St.Leger] erected a fortification in Leix....where they left warriors to oppose O'Connor and O'Moore."³ By the late 15th century the Irish chiefs had begun to build tower houses in this fashion. For example, in 1540 "the castle of Leitrim was erected by O'Rourke while a great war was waged against him..he finished the castle in a short time and destroyed a great portion of Moylurg on his opponents."⁴ The Irish too had recognized the military significance of fortified strongholds.

The destruction of a stronghold to prevent an enemy using it was also prevalent in the tower house era. In the feud between O'Donnell and

¹ A.F.M. 1510.

² A.F.M. 1546.

³ A.F.M. 1547.

⁴ A.F.M. 1540.

O'Connor in 1510, the castles of Castlehill and Crosmiolina Co. Mayo were demolished "so that they were no longer habitable".¹ In 1557 the castle of Shannon Bridge was destroyed by O'Melaghlin and the English of Athlone.² In 1570 the Earl of Ormond destroyed Dunloe (93) castle in Kerry.³ Destruction of the castle or tower house by an invading force prevented the defender from reusing it to launch revenge attacks after the invaders had left. At other times the tower houses were destroyed by the inhabitants themselves, if forewarned of the coming of the enemy. In 1574 "the sons of the Earl of Clanrickard proceeded to destroy, burn, demolish, and completely consume every fortress....between Lough Gur and Killmallock...lest the English [might get possession] and dwell in them."⁴

This destruction by the owner or possessor of the tower house was to prevent the enemy from capturing and using it. To capture and keep a tower house meant that the enemy had a strong foothold in the land. In Connacht, Sligo castle was a bone of contention many times in the wars of the O'Donnells and the O'Connors. In 1494 Hugh Roe O'Donnell besieged and took Sligo.⁵ The next year [1495] Rory O'Connor won it back.⁶ Again in 1516 the O'Donnells had the castle and the O'Connors got it back because the O'Donnells were again besieging it in 1561.⁷ There are numerous references to the Earls of Kildare besieging and taking the tower houses of those who opposed them. In 1510 Garret Mor, Earl of Kildare marched on Kerry and took Pallis (137), one of the

¹ A.F.M. 1510.

² A.F.M. 1557.

³ A.F.M. 1570

⁴ A.F.M. 1574.

⁵ A.F.M. 1494

⁶ A.F.M. 1495.

⁷ A.F.M. 1516.

chief strongholds of the McCarthys, and Castlemain (71), a stronghold of the FitzGerald.¹

Having a garrison in a tower house when it was besieged was only effective if help was nearby. The garrison needed protection from these sieges and access to the surrounding countryside for food and water. To prevent the garrison from submitting because of lack of food the supply lines needed to be kept open, however, once the allies of the garrison left the area the tower house was vulnerable. Cut off from food and water the garrison could be starved into submission, if the enemy had time to wait them out. Therefore, the military effectiveness of a tower house, in consolidating the gains of an invading force, was a reality only if the defending army was unable to besiege the garrison, cut off the supply line and win back the tower house. For example, in 1499, Bundrowes was taken by Donough O'Donnell; he was besieged the same day by O'Donnell and lost the tower house because he had no allies to come to his aid.² In 1499 Garret Mor took Tulsk from O'Connor, however, the Earl left the area soon after and Tulsk was recovered by O'Connor.

There are numerous examples of chiefs and nobles taking the tower houses of their enemies, garrisoning them with a loyal ward, only to lose them as soon as the main force left the area. For example, the two strongholds taken in 1510 in Kerry by Garret Mor, Pallis (137) and Castlelough (68) were soon recovered, as Castlelough (68) had to be taken again in 1517 by Garret Mor. Tower houses played an important part in the warfare of medieval Ireland, but its role was limited. Tower houses could be held out against wandering robber bands and most raiding parties, but a determined besieging army could take them.

¹ A.F.M. 1510.

² A.F.M. 1499

However, without the back - up of an army the besiegers usually did not hold on to the tower house once the main force had left the area. As long as the main force were in the area the tower house could be used to subdue the locals, once the main force left the tower house soon reverted to the original owners. This meant that the tower house was only of limited use in the subjugation of an area, either to chiefs, nobles or the government forces. This situation was to change with the improvement of supply lines, and the introduction of cannon.

ARMS, CANNON, AND THE TOWER HOUSE.

One of the biggest changes in Irish warfare in medieval times was the introduction of fire arms and, especially, cannon. The first reference to fire arms in the Irish annals is in 1487 when Geoffrey O'Donnell shot one of the O'Rourkes of Brefnie in a skirmish with a hand - gun.¹ However, it is more than likely that guns were in Ireland long before this, as some references in the English sources would indicate. In 1394 and again in 1399 Richard II is reported to have brought guns and gunpowder on his expeditions to Ireland.² On the 1399 expedition it is said he had "round store shot, gunpowder, bellows, tampons, firepans..", leaving these and other supplies such as 16 single cannon and 16 other cannon at Dublin castle when he returned to England.³ De Hoir mentions a document dated to c.1480 which gives a list of the forces and arms of the Earl of Desmond [James, 9th Earl]. He is credited with "400 horse, 8 battle of gallowglass, 1 battle of crossbowmen and gunners and 3,000 kerne".⁴ These sources show that guns were known of and probably in use before the annals mention

¹ Hayes - McCoy G.A. "Early history of guns in Ire". J.G.A.S. 1938 - 43 pp. 47.

² Taut. "Firearms in the 14th century". E.H.R. (26) 1911 pp. 678.

³ De Hoir S. "Guns in medieval and Tudor Ireland". Irish Sword 15 1982 pp. 80.

⁴ De Hoir S. "Guns " Irish Sword 15 No 59 1982 pp. 80 - 81.

them in 1487. By the early 16th century the use of firearms was quite common and widespread. Again and again the annals refer to their use by the government forces, by the Anglo - Irish and by the Irish. In 1494 a statute of Poynings Parliament ordained that "no manner person or persons from this time forward doe retain or keep in his house, garrison or place any manner ordinance or artillery i.e great gunne or hand gunne, except only longbow...upon pain of forfeiture of said ordinance.." ¹ This order shows that the use of firearms must have been a worry to the government by the late 15th century.

By the early 16th century firearms and cannon are common in Ireland. A reference to the death of a man by shooting at Tulsk in 1499 by the Burkes and the O'Connors show that the use of firearms had crossed the Shannon. ² From this time on the references are frequent. In 1523 "Teige O'Brien was killed by a shot of a ball". ³ By the 1520's the use of firearms seems to have become a normal part of Irish warfare. The effect firearms had on tower houses, in particular in sieges, was not huge. In some of the earlier tower houses shot - holes were added or they were automatically built in to the majority of later tower houses. Ordinance or cannon had a greater effect on the tower house. It is said that the age of cannon ended the effectiveness of the tower house, however, this did not happen right away. Cannon was known in Ireland from the early 15th century at the latest and the military effectiveness of the tower house lasted until c.1600 if not later. The government had most of the cannon available in the beginning but chiefs and nobles built up their own supplies. In 1516 O'Donnell was in contact with a French knight who promised to send him a ship with

¹ Hayes - McCoy G.A. "Early guns ". J.G.A.S. 1938 - 43 pp. 49.

² A.F.M. 1499

³ A.F.M. 1523.

great guns, which duly arrived in Killybegs.¹ In 1536 the council at Youghal sent to the Lord Deputy for a supply of ordinance to protect themselves.² In 1527 Castlemore (Co.Mayo) the seat of the O'Costellos was declared an "impregnable fortress...for it contained provisions, and every kind of engine...such as cannon..".³ By this time all sections of the community had access to cannon and could use this ordinance to besiege or defend the tower houses.

However, the use of this ordinance was not easy or effective. There were many problems, such as the dangerous unreliability of the cannon themselves. There are some references to cannon exploding from over-use or mis - use. Even as late as the Cromwellian era cannon were not to be relied upon. For example, when General Moore gained possession of Newry castle in 1642 he found the defenders had two cannon without chambers, and "so foule and rusty" that they could not be used.⁴ The main reasons that cannon were not effective in the Gaelic areas was that only a few possessed cannon, and many times where they did have cannon they did not have gunpowder nor the expertise to use the cannon. There are only a few references to Irish chiefs having cannon and even fewer to their use. It is known that Hugh O'Neill had cannon during the nine years war yet he failed to use it. Whatever the reasons cannon was not very important in the wars between the chiefs and the nobles. The government forces did have access to ordinance and to men who were trained to use it; successive Lord Deputies used cannon to their advantage where they could. It was, however, not possible to take ordinance to all areas. Cannon were big and

¹A.F.M. 1516.

² C.S.P. (Ire). 1504 - 1573.

³ A.F.M. 1527.

⁴ McCormish W.A. "The survival of the Irish castle in the age of cannon". Irish Sword 9 1969 - 76 pp. 18.

cumbersome and very hard to move around, especially to inland areas. There were thick woods, impassable mountains, unforded rivers, and practically non-existent roads to negotiate.

The easiest way to deliver ordinance where it was needed was by sea, and many Lord Deputies used this method. In 1580 one of the ships of Elizabeths Navy worked the Shannon river estuary and the Kerry coast, delivering to Pelham (acting Lord Deputy) the ordinance he needed to reduce the Desmond strongholds. It is also significant that the three barks which constituted the sea - power of James FitzMaurice (leader of the rebellion in 1580) were either captured or sent fleeing by the English ships and as such were not able to deliver any ordinance to the rebels. These are some of the reasons why cannon did not end the age of the tower house until c.1600 or after. The government possessed most of the ordinance and the expertise to work it, also the difficulty the Irish and Anglo - Irish had in getting hold of such arms. The bad traveling conditions also played a major part in preventing a fuller use of cannon in sieges etc. When cannon was present the tower house was more likely to fall, even the sight of cannon made many garrisons surrender immediately, for example, in 1535 Ferns castle was surrendered to Skeffington because the defenders feared the damage a battery might cause. However, it was not until later in the century when the quality of the cannon and the transport system had improved, and the availability of cannon was more widespread that the effect of cannon on the tower house was more noticeable. And it is later in the century that the effect of cannon on the tower houses of Kerry, in particular, is more noticeable; a fact which will be discussed later. Until the late 16th century the effect of cannon is quite minimal and there were other features of war in Ireland which had a more immediate effect on tower houses up to this period.

TOWER HOUSES AND SIEGES.

From the beginning of the castle building period besieging castles had been used as part of medieval warfare. In the early part of the Anglo - Norman era the tactics used by the Irish was to capture and burn (not keep) these castles. For example, the castle of Dunloe (93) was built by the "foreigners" in 1207 and was burned along with Killorglin (118) in 1261 by the McCarthys.¹ In 1280 "the castle of Dunloich [Dunloe (93)] was excavated by its guards through fear of the Desmumu and MacCarthaig and it was burned after they departed" .² Soon however the Irish were besieging and keeping the strongholds. For example, Cathal Crobderg found in 1195 that he could demolish many castles in Munster " but they were renovated again".³ Obviously raiding and burning the castles was not the answer. Instead the Irish began to keep the castles. For example, Dunloe (93), built by the Geraldines in their initial invasion in 1206-07, was taken over by the McCarthys after 1261 and remained in their possession throughout the medieval period.

There are numerous examples of tower house sieges in the annals and the English sources throughout the medieval period. Before the introduction of cannon there were many ways of reducing a tower house. If a force had enough time, patience, and men, the tower house could be surrounded for a lengthy period and eventually starved into submission. The defenders in a tower house could store up enough food for a long siege but in many cases a fresh water supply was a problem. Few tower houses show evidence of wells either inside the bawn or inside the building itself, the usual practise was to draw from

¹ A.I. 1207, 1261.

² A.I. 1280

³ A.I. 1195.

wells and / or rivers and streams etc outside the walls of the tower house. For example, in the siege of Tralee in 1642, when the English Planters were besieged by the Irish, the Irish diverted the course of the river Gabhail [Lea] which had provided the castle with water. The garrison dug 13 wells, which were all bad. The garrison eventually surrendered in August 1642.

Starving a garrison into submission was one of the longest and most time consuming methods of reducing a castle. For example, Hugh Roe O'Donnell besieged Sligo castle for the most part of a year in 1494.¹ In the first Desmond Rebellion Perrot had to besiege Castlemain (71) twice in 1571 and 1572, and spent three months before the castle in 1572 before the garrison ran out of food and water. The problem with starving a tower house into submission was that it kept a large force occupied and inactive for a long time and it gave the allies of the besieged time to raise an army which could attack the besiegers. There were quicker ways of reducing a tower house. In his chapter on the castle in war, R.Allen Brown describes some of the siege machines, other than cannon, used against English castles. These machines were usually stone throwing machines, like a "mangonel" which was an arm, with a sling at its free end, with a skeight of ropes stretched between upright posts; the ropes were twisted towards the target, the arm pulled down and a large stone or some such missile placed in the sling. When released the free end of the arm pulled down and the missile was hurled towards the target.² Other stone throwing engines included the "trebucket" and a "ballista" which could be used to hurl javelins.³

¹ A.F.M. 1494.

² Browne R. Allen. "English castles". 1962 pp. 174 - 178.

³ *ibid.* pp. 174 - 178.

It is impossible to say if these particular engines were available in Ireland. It is possible that the government forces had them, or some type of engines. In the annals there are references which indicate a knowledge of siege engines. For example, in 1478 "Rory MacDermot besieged the Rock [on Lough Key, home of Cormac MacDermot]. Engines were sent to him which had been constructed by the "carpenters of Fermanagh" ¹. "Rara" is the Irish word used to describe engines. O'Donovan indicates that the word "rar" is used in the Book of Lismore, fol 122, to denote a military machine by which stones were cast over the walls of castles and towns.² These stone throwing machines probably performed the same function as the English "mangonel" etc. Also in the reference [of 1487] it is stated that the carpenters of Fermanagh built the machines, indicating a knowledge of siege machines among the native Irish. The reference also states that "MacDermots {Cormac} only son was slain by a shot of an arrow discharged from one of these machines".³ This description sounds more like the giant crossbow "the ballista" described by Allen Brown. This and other references would indicate that both the Irish and the Anglo - Irish had knowledge of siege weapons similar to those used in sieges against English castles in England.

Another way of reducing a tower house was to undermine it, that is, to dig a tunnel and come up in the bawn or in the ground floor of the tower house or to weaken the entire structure and cause parts to collapse. However, in order to undermine the walls the besiegers had to get very near the walls; a dangerous job as the defenders could fire missiles, darts etc down on the miners. One machine mainly used in

¹ A.F.M. 1478.

² A.F.M. O'Donovan footnote pp 1108 Vol IV.

³ A.F.M. 1487.

the 16th and 17th centuries, which helped with undermining, was the "sow". At the siege of Ballyally castle, Co.Clare in 1641 there were two "sows" described in "Narratives illustrative of the contests in Ireland" (ed) T.Croften Croker in 1841. The sows are described as " 35ft longe and 9ft broade, it was made upon 4 wheels made of whole timber bound abaultt with hoopes of iron, three axel trees where on she run was great round bars of iron the beames she was built upon being timber....The hinder part of the sow was left open of there men to goe in and out of. the fore part of the sow had 4 dowres, 2 in the ruff and 2 on the lower parte....but were not open till theye came close to the wale of the castel, where thaie intended to work through the castel.....".¹

These engines i.e the sow, were to protect the men trying to undermine the tower house, they did not always work. The garrison could sally out and capture the sow which they did at Ballyally in 1641.² Also, the defenders could set fire to the roof of the sow or as they did at Tralee in 1642, crush the sow and the men in it by throwing a large rock from the castle. Another way of reducing a tower house was to burn it down around the defenders. In the annals there are numerous references to burnings. In 1434 O'Kelly, MacDermot, and O'Connor Roe attacked and besieged Ballintober, "one of the partyset fire to [wattle] and then cast the wattle into the bawn. It struck the side of a house, which caught fire and was burned, as was the adjoining house....the bawn was also burned".³ In 1454 Rory O'Donnell "burned the gate and door of the castle [Inch, Co.Donegal] and set the stairs on fire" thus destroying the least defensive parts of the

¹ Croften - Croker T. "Narrative Illustrative of the contests of Ireland". 1841 pp. 17 - 18.

² ibid. pp.

³ A.F.M. 1434.

stronghold.¹ There are many other references to the use of fire to reduce a tower house. The usual tactic was to fire the roof, the bawn or the door in order to gain access or to smoke the inhabitants out. All of these tactics, even when used successfully in reducing a tower house, were time, men, and weapon consuming. There are many references in the sources to armies spending weeks, months even years¹ before a tower house. The defenders in the tower house were quite capable of holding out until help arrived, or until the besiegers had run out of time. As already mentioned, supply lines were not very reliable and in most cases the besiegers could only stay at a siege for a very limited amount of time. With the increased availability of cannon however it did become harder to defend tower house and its time of usefulness was limited. However, it was not until the routes, roads, passes, etc were improved that ordinance was used to its full effectiveness; and the bad state of repair of routes etc prolonged the usefulness of the tower house long after the introduction of cannon to Ireland.

TOWER HOUSES AND FASTNESSES.

Tower houses were not the only defensive methods used by the Irish and the Anglo - Irish. They could also use the tactic of retreating to a fastness. Fastnesses can be defined as the woods, bogs, mountains, marshes etc where refuge could be taken in time of war. Sources from the time of the conquest comment on the tactic of using the fastnesses. There are references to the use of fastnesses in many of the Irish sources. For example, in 1365 it states "they (MacDonnells)...pursued MacMahon, chief of Oriel...who, with the chiefs of his territory was engaged placing their herds and flocks in the fastnesses of the country.

¹ A.F.M. 1454.

The men of Oriel were defeated and deprived of their arms and cattle."¹ Again in 1392 when Niall O'Neill attacked O'Donnell "the spoils of the territory were carried into the wilds and fastnesses of the country" while O'Donnell and his army remained behind to protect his people.² In 1457 the MacMahons of Oriel were again attacked, by Maguire of Fermanagh this time and the MacMahons went "with their cattle into their fastnesses."³ In all these examples the original Irish word used for fastnesses, recesses, wilds etc are similar. The most common word is "daingean" or some variation of it. In 1365 it is "diangean an tire" meaning literally the strong part of the land, or fastnesses. In 1392 the scribe wrote "so diamraib, agus so droibelaib" meaning the recesses (wilds) and fastnesses. Again in 1457 both entries have "daingnigtib" i.e the strong place. Sometimes the scribe does not say fastnesses, wilds, or recesses, but mentions the place of retreat. For example, in 1435 when O'Neill raided into Fermanagh "the inhabitants sent their cattle and all their movables westward across Lough Erne".⁴ The places mentioned as fastnesses are usually the most inaccessible places in the area, and a raiding force would have little or no knowledge of the terrain.

The uses of the fastnesses were many. As seen from the details given above the most common tactic was to send the cattle and movable goods to safety. The cattle of course were the most important element in Irish warfare. The raiders wished to capture as many as possible while the victim needed to protect his herds. Before the 14th century when the stone built fortified strongholds were not so common among the Irish, the best way to protect the herds was to move them to safe,

¹ A.F.M. 1365.

² A.F.M. 1392.

³ A.F.M. 1457.

⁴ A.F.M. 1435.

inaccessible places. Recesses and fastnesses had other uses as well. It was not unusual for a tribe or group being attacked, and indeed their chiefs and armies, to hide in the fastnesses until the danger had passed. Because the defender retreated to the fastnesses with his people and herds, the attacker had no goods or cattle to steal nor any army to defeat; he had to be content with, perhaps, burning some property, and then usually left the countryside. Because the defender had not engaged the enemy, his army was still intact, and could be used to rebuild all the property destroyed, or to launch a counter - attack on the enemy, catching them unawares. Shane (the Proud) O'Neill used this tactic many times against the Lord Deputies. In the 1560's when Sussex (Lord Deputy) launched many attacks each year on Ulster, Shane simply waited in his fastnesses while Sussex exhausted his troops and food supply in a fruitless attempt to find him and usually had to retreat in failure. Once the government troops were gone, Shane with his fresh troops would simply begin raiding Meath or the Pale again.

The idea of using the fastnesses seems to have been an integral part of Irish warfare. In the annals there are references to the actual fastnesses, i.e. the name of a river, mountain, or bog, an indication that people had traditional fastnesses that they used in time of danger. For example, in 1457 it is stated that the MacMahons went into "their fastnesses (of) Eoghanacht [still the name of a river in Ballybeg, Co.Monaghan] and Sliabh Mighdhorn [Co.Monaghan]"¹ There could have been some fort or temporary accommodation in these fastnesses, used by succeeding generations; possibly temporary wooden shelters which would not have survived. The use of fastnesses continued throughout the era of the tower house. As already mentioned the tower house

¹ A.F.M. 1457.

could be defended against lightly armed raiding party or thieves, and the bawn and / or sometimes the ground floor could be used to house and protect the cattle and movable goods. However, the Irish and to a lesser extent the Anglo - Irish, especially the gaelicised Anglo - Irish continued to use the fastnesses, in addition to their tower houses, as places to store goods, cattle and people in time of war. Cairns states that the Irish and Anglo - Irish used the woods as places of refuge although these recesses were less valuable than previously.¹ Many of the vast woods had been cut down by the 15th century for use in ship-building, charcoal burning, etc and contemporary writers such as Fynes Moryson found Ireland less wooded than they had expected. Even so the woods, mountains, bogs, etc continued to be used as fastnesses until the 16th-17th centuries.

Many contemporary writers stated that it was hard to find a way to make war on the Irish, for, as Moryson wrote, there is no - one to fight because "they will run away.....they think it no shame to run".² This was also, to an extent, true in the 15th and 16th centuries. There are many examples of the Irish or Anglo - Irish using both the tower house and the fastnesses. For example, in 1575 "Con O'Donnell remained concealed in the forests and wilds of his native territory" until sent a pardon by the Lord Justice Sidney.³ In 1565 when the sons of the Earl of Clanrickard rebelled it is said " the wilds, the recesses, the rugged and rough topped mountains.....were the only parts possessed by the sons of the Earl at this time.."⁴ In the "Glory of England" Gainsford shows some of the reasons behind the use of fastnesses. He wrote that "Ireland was divided into such fastnesses of

¹ Cairns C. "Tipperary...". 1984 pp. 57.

² Falkiner C. Litton. "Illustrations....." (Moryson) 1904 pp. 311.

³ A.F.M. 1575.

⁴ A.F.M. 1565.

mountain, bog and wood that it hath emboldened the inhabitants to presume on security.....where a few muskets...well placed...will stagger a petty army..."¹ In the wars between the Irish and the Anglo - Irish the unfamiliar terrain would slow down the attackers. The defenders would be used to this type of guerilla warfare so they knew that ambushes were relatively easy to set up in the fastnesses; the Irish and Anglo - Irish attackers also knew this so it is not usual for them to follow the enemy into his fastnesses. On the other hand the English were not used to this type of warfare and their cannon and cavalry were of no use when faced with an impenetrable wood or inaccessible mountain. Therefore, the fastnesses could provide protection for an army, and from a base in the fastnesses a small army could deal with most enemies, even the large armies of the Government.

Fastnesses as well as providing protection and concealing the users provided shelter and grazing for the herds of cattle needed to sustain the army in hiding. In Kerry, both the local Irish and the Anglo - Irish made use of the fastnesses, especially during the Desmond Rebellions. There were plenty of wooded areas, mountains, bogs, and lakes to which McCarthy Mor, the Earl of Desmond, O'Connor Kerry etc could retreat. There were five great forests which formed the natural fastnesses of the Earl of Desmond in Munster. These were the Great wood in Cork, Aherlow in Tipperary, Dolm - Fineeen in Decies, Clonlish in Limerick and Glenflesh near Killarney. The earls also had access to the Stack mountains near Tralee, and the wooded Shannon area in north Kerry and Limerick. In the south Glengarrif was one of O'Sullivan Mors most impregnable retreats, while the McCarthys could retreat to Glanerough and the fastnesses around Killarney. There were

¹ Maxwell C. "Contemporary sources..." (Gainsford) 1923 pp. 218 - 220.

also the fastnesses of "Ross-y-Donoughow" in Killarney, and the vastness of the Dingle Peninsula, the Clanmaurice woods of the Lords of Kerry and many other inaccessible and impregnable places.¹ All the chiefs and nobles of Kerry made use of these fastnesses before and during the tower house era. For example, in 1283 when Domhnaill McCarthy, King of Desmond with some of the Geraldines raided the lands of the Ui Chaipri in Cork the stronghold of the Ui Chairpri was abandoned and the inhabitants fled into south west Cork and the Beare Peninsula and "every place they could throughout Desmond, and the foreigners moreover obtained neither preys nor spoils."² The use of fastnesses continued up until the 17th century in Kerry, perhaps the most striking and extensive use of these fastnesses as well as tower houses came during the two Desmond Rebellions.

The first Desmond rebellion began in 1565, lead by James FitzMaurice, cousin of the absent / imprisoned Earl of Desmond. Almost as soon as the rebellion began FitzMaurice was basing himself in the fastnesses. In 1571 he attacked and burned Killmallock and his troops spent several days carrying the spoils of the town "to the woods and forests of Eatharlach (Aherlow)".³ Sometimes it seems that ~~and~~ Irish chief or noble would wait out a war or raid in the fastnesses rather than defend a tower house or castle. This would seem to be what Capt. Cuellar, a shipwrecked Spanish soldier washed up in Mayo in the 1590's is saying. He was brought to the tower house of one of the McClancys and while he was there an English force attacked. Cuellar states that the lord "withdrew to the mountains where had already preceded him, his people" and that the he [the Lord] was going there to

¹ MCCracken E. "Woodlands of Ireland". IHS 1959 pp. 280 - 281.

² A.I. 1283.

³ McCracken E. "Woodlands...". IHS 1959 pp. 280 - 281.

protect his people and Cuellar and his companions decided to defend the stronghold; they defended the stronghold for 17 days after which Cuellar says "the Lord sent dreadful storms.....and the Lord Deputy was forced to raise the siege and return..... to Dublin" ¹. The Spaniards had seen that the tower house was defensible against the forces of the Lord Deputy or even "twice as many" because "it was difficult to storm without artillery, for it was built in the middle of a very deep lake".² This tower house was probably Rossclogher, which stands in Lough Melvin, close to Bundoran. Here is an example of a chief abandoning an extremely defensible tower house as soon as the enemy was in sight. He was willing to leave his stronghold open to capture and destruction, as long as he and his people and cattle were safe in the fastnesses.

The tower house could be repaired or rebuilt as soon as the enemy left the territory, but people and property could not be as easily replaced if killed or captured during the defence of the tower house. Yet the Spaniards proved that a tower house could be held against government troops without loss of life and with a small garrison. There are examples, time and again, in the annals of chiefs and nobles leaving their tower houses open and empty when attacked by a large force, especially if the attackers were government troops. This would be more understandable if the troops had easy access to cannon but at the majority of these attacks the troops had no cannon, especially when raiding areas outside the Pale. This is not to say that all tower houses were immediately abandoned where the enemy was in sight. There are also many references to sieges in the annals, but the tactic of leaving the tower house undefended and waiting in the fastnesses for the enemy to leave was also used a lot. Presumably most of these

¹ O'Reilly. "Remarks on the narrative of Capt. Cuellar". PRIA 1893 - 96 pp. 211.

² *ibid.* pp. 210.

abandoned tower houses were retaken and rebuilt after the enemy left the area.

FitzMaurice and his allies were also willing to leave their tower houses open and empty or with little defence and no back up aid, while the army remained intact and untouched in the fastnesses. By 1570 - 71 the government had gone on the offensive. In Kenry and Connello (baronies in north Limerick) Sir Humphrey Gilbert is said to have taken and butchered the garrisons in around 23 tower houses; FitzMaurice did not even try to attack Gilbert or come to the aid of the beleaguered garrisons. The fall of all these tower houses gave Gilbert and the government control of most of Limerick and forced FitzMaurice westwards into Kerry, removing the plains from his control although he remained unassailable in his wood and mountain fastnesses. The fact that the English were able to take tower houses with such ease, helped by the small, badly armed garrisons that FitzMaurice left in the tower houses and the lack of back-up aid from his army, and the use of the infamous tactic called the "Pardon of Maynooth" i.e the killing of the garrison of the captured tower houses, possibly made FitzMaurice and his allies wary of defending any fortified position.

However, this does not explain why FitzMaurice left such strong fortified positions as Castlemain (71) undefended. This was the relatively impregnable stronghold, whose owner, Perrot (Lord President of Munster) said would "master Kerrie".¹ It was attacked by Perrot in 1571 and he had to retire because of "lack of powder"² and again in 1572 when the garrison was eventually starved into submission after three months. Even with cannon Perrot had to spend three months before Castlemain (71) and in all this time FitzMaurice did not

¹ C.S.P.I. 1571.

² C.S.P.I. 1571.

come to the aid of the garrison in this vitally important stronghold. When Castlemain (71) fell control of mid - Kerry, except for a few mountain fastnesses was in the hands of the government.

By 1573 control of most of the tower houses in the lands of the Earl of Desmond in Limerick and north Kerry was in the hands of the English. FitzMaurice was still at large but unlike him the English seem to have realised the importance of tower houses in winning the war. For instance, Perrot wanted to strengthen the tower house at Ballincarty in the Glen of Aherlow in 1573 to help flush out the rebels.¹ FitzMaurice never actually faced the enemy in battle and was not actually defeated, he still had control of a few fastnesses in 1573 when he submitted; however, he must have realised that control of the plains and tower houses of Limerick and Kerry was lost to him and the enemy was not going to leave the area that quickly this time and he could not stay holed up in the fastnesses forever. At the end of this rebellion the Earl of Desmond was released, to bring stability to the area, most of his tower houses were returned to him and Munster was relatively quite for a time.

By 1579 the Geraldines were in revolt again. By this time the Earl had in his control over 100 tower houses and castles, including the strategic strongholds of Askeaton, Glin, and Newcastle West in Limerick and Carrigafoyle (60), Castleisland (67), Tralee (158), Dingle (85), Castlemain (71), and the Spanish encampment at Fort del Oro (153) near Smerwick. However, the pattern of the first rebellion re-occured here again. In 1579 FitzMaurice returned from Europe; he landed at Smerwick with at contingent of Spanish soldiers, they encamped at Fort del Oro (153). FitzMaurice left soldiers there and he

¹ C.S.P.I.

made his way to the woods of Clonlish (Limerick), he was killed in a skirmish with the Burkes, so the Earl and his brothers James and John were in military control of the rebellion.

However, the Earl seemed to be a reluctant leader, he was the last of his family to get involved in the rebellion and after attacking and burning Youghal, he retreated to the Great Wood (Kilmore) of Cork. He was to spend the next three years wandering through the fastnesses of Limerick and Kerry. As with FitzMaurice, the Earl did not aid nor try to defend himself, any of his tower houses or castles. In 1579 Sir Nicholas Malby had been unable to take Askeaton, Co. Limerick because he had no cannon yet in 1580 Askeaton was abandoned by its garrison without a siege and taken over by Pelham. Also in 1580 Pelham had taken the strong tower house of O'Connor Kerry at Carrigafoyle (60). This huge tower house with its double bawn was defended by an Italian officer and some Spanish soldiers (O'Connor Kerry had retreated to his fastnesses). Ordinance was brought up the Shannon to reduce the tower houses and the entire garrison was put to death when the tower house fell. After the fall of Carrigafoyle (60) and the horrible fate of its garrison many garrisons in strong and defensible tower houses fled and left the tower houses open to the enemy.

By the end of 1581 loyal garrisons had been placed in Carrigafoyle (60), Askeaton, Killmallock, Adare, Cashel and other places in an effort to confine the Earl to Kerry. This plan worked and Ormond followed Desmond into Kerry and almost captured him at Castlisland (67) in 1581; the Earl was forced to flee into the bogs surrounding the castle leaving behind 2,000 head of cattle. In 1580 Pelham and Ormond had also taken Fort del Oro (153) and butchered the foreign soldiers. Neither Desmond nor his remaining allies had come to the aid of the garrison at Fort del Oro (153). These soldiers would have been

of great help to the Earl and the forces of Pelham and Ormond were operating well out of their area of secure influence, surrounded by hostile armies in the nearby fastnesses who could have, at the very least, cut the supply lines to the government troops perhaps forcing them to retire, yet no - one tried to help the beleaguered garrison, but left it to its fate. With Fort del Oro (153) in English hands and loyal (to the crown) garrisons installed at Dingle (85) and Castlemain (71) control of most of mid and west Kerry was in the hands of the government troops. In the south MacCarthy Mor had submitted to save his own skin and in the north the tower houses of the allies of the Earl fell, for example, the coastal tower houses of the Lord of Kerry at Beal (45), Ballybunion (26), as well as Listowel (129) and his seat at Lixnaw (130) were taken by the government troops. Most of the allies of the Earl either submitted without a fight or abandoned their tower houses and fled to their fastnesses.

There are many reasons why the Earl or his allies did not, in most cases, defend their tower houses. The English had access to ordinance, the ships of Admiral Winter were off the coast of Kerry during this period and was able to supply the government troops with cannon where and when it was needed with relative ease. However, the Earl did not even try to attack the besiegers of even the more important tower houses and as Warham St.Leger [Provost Marshall of Munster] said "theforces of Desmond " continued to operate "from the wooded and also inaccessible areas throughout Munster to burn the corn and to destroy the castles of their enemies so that the English could not use them..",¹ This tactic was used before and had succeeded, and presumably the Earl counted on the success of being able to wait the

¹ C.S.P.I.

enemy out in the fastnesses again. He was able to use his bases in the fastnesses to raid occasionally, for example, in 1582 he attacked and burned the lands of his enemy Ormond in Tipperary,¹ but without his tower houses the area he controlled was getting smaller and smaller, and by 1583 he was reduced to wandering the fastnesses of Kerry with a very small band of followers. Most of his allies and their armies had either submitted or had been defeated and killed. He was no longer able to raise even a raiding party and in November 1583 he was captured and killed in the woods of Glanageenty outside Tralee.

The Earl could not have won the war operating solely from the fastnesses. Because he did not defend his tower houses from the beginning he was never going to win the war. The age of cannon meant that the English could take all of his tower houses and better communications and improved supply lines meant that they could establish a permanent presence in his lands. The old tactic of retreating to the fastnesses to wait until the enemy left was of no use here as the enemy had no intention of leaving, and had the arms and manpower to remain in control of most of the Earls lands (except a few inaccessible fastnesses) once they had control of the tower houses. On the other hand the Earl did not have the arms or men to win back the tower houses, or indeed do little except stage the occasional raid. While the Earl could remain safe in the fastnesses for a long time, even a few years, he could not remain there forever and without the control of his tower houses the areas of security for him got smaller and smaller until he was eventually killed in one of his fastnesses. In fact, the Earl had lost the war by the end of 1581 when the last of his tower houses fell and it was only a matter of time before he was flushed out

¹ A.F.M. 1582.

of his fastnesses. This is not to say that the tactic of retreating to the fastnesses was never used again after 1585. As late as 1640 General Ludlow could still remark that "a fastness was better than a castle, because it could not be surrendered".¹ Fastnesses were still used occasionally by rebels but the late 16th century was really the end of large scale use of the fastnesses in the Irish wars.

CONCLUSION.

As proved by the defeat of the Earl of Desmond the Irish chiefs and nobles could no longer rely on the old tactic of waiting the enemy out in the fastnesses. The idea of leaving the tower houses open and undefended now made it easier for the government troops to establish garrisons and a presence in the area. By this time the transport system in the country had been improved and the government could keep distant garrisons, even in Munster, supplied with food, men, arms, and back-up troops if necessary. The enemy no longer wanted to leave an area where they had control of the tower houses and castles. On the other hand, most chiefs and nobles did not have the arms to win back by force any tower houses taken by the government troops, so in Kerry the death of the Earl of Desmond meant the total demise of the House of Desmond and the forfeiture of all their lands. Munster was in the control of the government and they were able to begin the plantation of Kerry and the other lands of the late Earl. Because he lost control of all his strongholds the Earl lost the war, his lands, and his life. Tower houses had been effective in this age of constant warfare. The petty violence, raids, and local wars all influenced the building of so many of these structures. As shown above, a tower house could be held by a

¹ C.S.P.I. 1640.

small garrison against a large force, especially if the attackers did not have ordnance. Even against cannon, a stronghold like Castlemain (71) could hold out for quite some time.

However, the best defensive use of tower houses was against the local raiding parties, who were not intent on prolonged sieges and usually could not reduce a defended tower house. Even with the proven effectiveness of tower house many chiefs and nobles were not willing to defend the property in a siege. It would seem that a tower house was expendable to the enemy, perhaps because it could be retaken and fixed up when the enemy left. With age of cannon, and the fact that the enemy could take not one but all the tower houses in a locality in a short space of time and remain there in control of the area, the tactic of retreating to the fastnesses lost its effectiveness. Even in the age of cannon tower houses were effective in controlling an area. The English recognised this when they placed loyal garrisons in most of the tower houses which fell to them, and from these tower houses they ruled the locality. The inability of the local chiefs and nobles firstly to defend their tower houses and then to retake them when they fell meant that they lost all power, in many cases, forever. The English seem to have seen better the military effectiveness of controlling a string of tower houses than nobles like the Earl of Desmond, who more or less allowed their tower houses to be captured. Tower houses continued to be relatively effective in their military role right up to 1700.

DAILY LIFE IN THE TOWER HOUSE.

When discussing settlement history, with regard to tower houses, it is possible to concentrate too much on the general aspects like dating, distribution, origins, architecture, etc while somewhat ignoring the fact that people actually lived in these structures. Unfortunately, most historians, writers, and annalists, who were contemporary with the tower houses also concentrate on the extraordinary events, such as sieges, wars, and great feasts and leave very little evidence of the day to day life of the occupants. However, there are some descriptions of everyday life in the tower house; the sources which are of most use are the descriptions and reports of the English and other foreign visitors, especially those people who visited in the 16th and 17th centuries. Unfortunately, these sources tend to be very biased against the quality of life in the tower houses and the people who lived in them. Even with these limitations it is possible to form some idea of what day to day life in a tower house was like.

The most distinctive and most numerous stone ruins on the Irish landscape are the tower houses. As we see them to - day, grey, cold stone, sometimes covered in moss and ivy, and open to the elements it is hard to imagine that people once lived in these buildings. But tower houses, in addition to being garrisons or safe havens in time of war, were also family homes. Many of the descriptions written by the 16th and 17th century soldiers and travel writers paint a fairly grim, austere picture of life in a tower house. For example, M.de la Boullaye le Gouz a 17th century French traveller to Ireland wrote " The castles of the nobility consist of four walls extremely high.....but they are nothing but square towers without windows, or at least having such small

apertures as to give no more light than is in a prison....".¹ As le Gouz was French perhaps he was more accustomed to the comforts of the French chateau, but even the English writers who would have been more accustomed to tower houses found the Irish tower houses uncomfortable. In the Travels of Sir William Brereton (1635) Clonmullen castle, Co.Carlow, home of the McMurrough Kavanaghs is mentioned; he says it was an " old, high, narrow, and inconvenient building.....and the chambers being narrow and steep".² Most other visiting writers and soldiers of this period have little nice or good to say about the Irish tower house as a residence. Of course, the English were coming from a country where comfort and aesthetics had superseded defence in the construction of a residence. The shift from fortified castle or tower houses to house (some still fortified but with much more emphasis on comfort), which had begun well before the reign of Elizabeth 1, was well established there. However, in Ireland with its constant warfare very few nobles or chiefs took the chance of building anything less well defended than a tower house, especially outside of the urban centres.

Because of the continuing need for a fortification the architecture of a tower house has some disadvantages when it comes to providing comfort to its inhabitants. Windows in most tower houses were non-existent on the first, second, and perhaps third storeys. Narrow loops and slits perform the function of letting in air and light. Because of the structure of the tower house the easiest place to put the stairs was in the thickness of the massive outer walls; however the defensive nature of the thick walls could not be totally compromised, so in most tower houses the stairs are quite narrow and dark. Luke Gerⁿon (a 17th

¹ Maxwell C. "Contemporary sources.....". (Le Gouz) 1923 pp. 62.

² Falkiner C. Litton. "Illustrations.....". (Brereton) 1904 pp. 389.

century writer) mentions this defensive element "the castles are built very strong and with narrow stairs, for security".¹ To increase the space in the tower house chambers could be built in the thickness of the walls, or in the corner turrets. The few examples given above paint a very gloomy picture of dark, dank, unheated buildings. However, these writers were so biased against the Irish (and some Anglo - Irish) and everything about them, including their residences that it is impossible to take them at face value. There are some other sources that offset the ideas of the foreign writers and by combining both sources it is possible to get some idea of what life in a tower house was really like.

Tower houses may not have always looked grey and cold. To - day all tower house ruins show bare stone walls but there are some references in the annals and other sources which indicate that tower houses were white washed on the outside, and perhaps inside as well. In the Annals of the Four Masters (A.F.M.) for 1572 there is a reference to the " white washed towers".² In 1580 it is stated, also in A.F.M., that the Burkes of Clanrichard destroyed all the "white castles of Clanrichard" when they rose in rebellion.³ In some of the bardic poems there is also indirect evidence of whitewashing. In his poem on the " Hospitality of Cu Chonnacht Og Maguire" Tadg Dall O'Huigin mentions the " white walled rampart" of the "bright hued" castle of Eniskillen.⁴ Aesthetically a white washed tower house would look better and more welcoming than a bare walled house. However, no white washed ruins remain to - day after centuries of weathering.

¹ Falkiner C. Litton. "Illustrations.....". (Geron) 1904 pp. 360.

² A.F.M. 1572.

³ A.F.M. 1580.

⁴ Maxwell C. "Comtemporary sources.....". (O'Huigin) 1923 pp. 335.

The basic plan of most tower houses was a thick walled building, between 3 and 6 storeys high, with between 1 and 3 vaults. The majority of tower houses had 3 - 4 storeys and 1 - 2 vaults. Each storey was divided into 1 - 2 big chambers. In addition to the stairs there could be small chambers built in the thickness of the walls or vaults, although these could be, as T. Croften - Croker said " confined and gloomy rooms".¹ The ground floor usually served as a storage area, for items such as grain, weapons, agricultural tools, household items etc. It was previously accepted that the cattle of the owner were driven into the ground floor in time of danger, but the ground floor in any tower house is not big enough to hold more than about 20 - 25 cattle, plus the entrance door in most sites was usually too narrow to allow cattle to pass in, therefore the basement was most likely used to store possessions rather than herds of cattle. There are references to the storage of items in tower houses and castles, especially provisions for war, which would be kept, more than likely in the tower house rather than in the exposed bawn. For example, in the A.F.M. in 1398 it is stated that "Mac Dermott went to....Boyle and took away all the provisions and the other storesto the castle of[Lough Oughter].² In 1419 when O'Donnell was marching against the small castle of Roscommon " he laid up a store of provisions in the Great castle".³ Except in the later tower house (and then only rarely) it is not common to find either a dividing wall or a fireplace in the ground floor. The only surviving tower houses with fireplaces in the ground floor in Kerry are Killaha (117) and Barrow (15). The ground floor also usually has

¹ Croften - Croker T. "Researches in the south of Ireland.". 1830 pp. 265.

² A.F.M. 1398.

³ A.F.M. 1419.

the narrowest window loops and slits, making it quite damp and dark and more suitable for storage than habitation.

The upper storeys of the tower house usually contained the living quarters of the resident family. Many of the contemporary descriptions of the tower houses are principally concerned with the two most important (to the visitors) areas in the tower house i.e. the lord's dining room and the bed chambers. In his description of the "castles" of Ireland Luke Geron states that the "hall is the uppermost room".¹ Geron and other writers concentrate mainly on this room as this is where the entertaining of guests was done. Geron states that "the Fyre is prepared in the middle of the hall",² perhaps indicating a lack of fireplaces in the tower houses he visited. Fynes Moryson also states that "the chief men in their houses make fires in the midst of the room."³ Many tower houses, especially the earlier ones, did not have fireplaces, but these represent a minority of sites. Most tower houses would have had at least one fireplace, usually in the main chamber; and the later tower houses can have three or more fireplaces in different chambers. Indeed as McLysaght states, a fire in the middle of a floor with the smoke escaping through an aperture in the roof would only be practicable in a one - storey building or in a castle where the lord's hall was on the top storey⁴ - as at Ballycarbery (27) where the main chamber is on the second (top) storey, and there is no evidence of a fireplace in the ruin. However, it is not very common to find the main chamber in the top storey.

When the main hall where the lord and lady did their entertaining was in the tower house proper it is likely that the chamber had a fireplace;

¹ Falkiner C. Litton. "Illustrations....". (Geron) 1904 pp. 360.

² *ibid.* pp. 360 - 361.

³ Moryson F. "Itinerary..". Vol III 1907 pp. 202 - 203.

⁴ McLysaght E. "Irish life in the 17th century". 1979 pp. 103.

however, the main hall was not always in the tower house. Sometimes a building attached to the tower house served this function. Moryson again mentions this "commonly, they [the lords] have a spacious hall adjoining the castles and built of timber and clay, wherein they eat with their family.....".¹ Stanihurst also refers to these buildings, calling them palaces "big and spacious, made of white clay and mud...roofed...with thatch".² He writes that the lord's "hold their banquets [in the palaces] but they prefer to sleep in the castle rather than in the palace because their enemies can easily apply torches to the roof[of the palace]....".³ From these references it would appear that adjoining halls, where they did exist, were not of stone, but of less substantial and enduring materials like wood and / or clay and mud. This fact is borne out by the ruins of the tower houses. On many sites there is evidence that there once was some adjoining building i.e the crease mark of the roof of a "hall" or some sort of building can still be seen on one or more of the walls of the existing tower house; or a door on an existing wall, especially on the upper storeys leading, now, to nowhere, but once may have lead into an adjoining building.

For example, in Kerry, there are several sites where there once was an adjoining building. At both Ballymacaquim (37) and Listowel (129) the outline of a hipp roof of an attached building (now gone) can still be seen on one wall. At Fenit (96) and Carrigafoyle (60) there is a door on the first storey which now leads to or from nowhere, but which may have once led from an attached building. Because these buildings were usually not of stone, they did not survive with the main tower house. There is no extant example of this type of "wooden" hall or "palace"

¹ Moryson F. "Itinerary.....". Vol III 1907 pp. 202 - 203.

² Lennon C. "Stanihurst". 1982 pp. 146.

³ *ibid.* pp. 146.

but the evidence from the contemporary documents and the scanty evidence at some sites does point to their existence. It is impossible to state if, according to Stanihurst, these attached "halls" were used more than the main buildings. Indirect evidence can lead to the conclusion that these "halls" were quite common. For instance, it is most unlikely that a fireplace or chimney would be incorporated in a wooden or mud building - so Moryson, Geron, etc could be speaking of these "halls" when they write of fires in the middle of the floor and the smoke escaping through an aperture in the roof.

Because of their insubstantial nature we can only speculate on the existence and function of these "halls". There is, however, little more substantial evidence. A few of these "halls" were built of stone and have survived through the centuries. One of the best examples of these is the Desmond Hall in Newcastle West Co.Limerick. This hall, which is also known as the Banqueting Hall, is not attached to the castle. It [the hall] is mentioned in the 1583 Desmond Roll as "the chief house of Desmond.....with ...a square castle....and a great hall..".¹ The "high tower" was for defence, the banqueting hall has no defensive features, it even has rectangular windows on the ground floor. Other sites with attached or unattached halls include Derryhivenny castle, Co.Galway, which had a long low building opposite the tower but within the bawn. The Earls of Desmond were also involved in the construction of a hall on the western side near the castle of Askeaton, Co.Limerick.² Unfortunately the Earls do not seem to have extended this tradition of building stone halls to any of their "castles" in Kerry. There are no ruins of any stone halls at any of the tower houses connected with the Earls.

¹ Westropp T.J. "Ancient castles.....". PRIA 26 1906 - 07 pp. 232.

² *ibid.* pp. 232.

At Ballycarbery (27) in south Kerry, a McCarthy stronghold, there is some indirect evidence of a stone hall, attached this time to the bawn wall. Pictorial evidence from the last century show a stone elongated building attached to the bawn wall and this building may also explain the presence of a garderobe in the bawn wall at the point where it was connected to this "hall" or building (Fig C). Unfortunately, this building no longer exists so it is impossible to speculate on its date or function. The fact the the "bawn" garderobe may have served this building could give it a medieval date and if so this could have been a "hall" of the type discussed. Also there is no evidence of a fireplace in the main tower, which is quite unusual as the tower was a major McCarthy stronghold so the attached building may have been the dining area. Also in south Kerry at Rincaheragh (146) there are the ruins of what may be a long hall. Rincaheragh (146) was built in a promontory fort. The tower was built to strengthen the entrance across the fosse and is very small - only two storeys high with very small chambers. Inside in the main promontory fort area is the ruins of a large, rectangular, earthen hall or house. It is impossible to tell if this structure was associated with the earlier fort or with the later gate / tower house. If it is medieval in date, it is the only surviving example of a "hall" in Kerry north or south. However, only excavation would give the answer to this problem. It is quite likely that some tower houses did once have (un)attached "Halls" in which the lord and his guests feasted.

Whether they feasted in the main tower or in an adjoining hall contemporary descriptions show that hospitality was very important in medieval Ireland. Dymmok says that the people of Ireland "delighted

in warr and great hospitality" ¹. Stanihurst wrote that "they [the lords] are men of great hospitality and you cannot gratify them more than by visiting their homes frequently or by extending invitations to them".² Guesting and feasting had been an integral part of pre - Norman Ireland. Guesting was the action of going to someone's house and demanding hospitality, while feasting was the voluntary entertainment by a lord.³ Exactions similar to guesting continued in post Norman Ireland right up to the 16th century. That is a tenant or sub - tenant would be forced to house and feed the lord and / or his men. For example, the Earl of Desmond was known to "have his people in coshery (i.e guesting) and to lodge 40, 60, 100 together under one roof"⁴. Therefore, it was usual for tenants in tower houses to have to cope with upwards of 100 people in residence.

In addition to the forced exactions of an over - lord most owners of tower houses also kept up the old tradition of hospitality - taking in wanderers and strangers and feeding them. Most particularly lords were anxious to feed the wandering bards and poets, who would provide entertainment in return for food, or conversely who could destroy a lord's reputation if denied hospitality. This tradition of hospitality can be seen in the acceptance of the writers of the extant contemporary documents into the homes of people they did not know. Moryson, Geron, Dymmok, Stanihurst, and others were invited to stay, free of charge, in many castles and tower houses. Because most of these writers came to Ireland towards the end of the 16th century and in time of war many of the people they visited were of Anglo - Irish or English extraction. However, the tradition of hospitality

¹ Lennon C. "Stanihurst.....". pp. 147 - 150.

² *ibid.* pp. 147 - 150.

³ Simms C. "Guesting and Feasting in Gaelic Ireland". JRSOI 108 1978 pp. 68

⁴ *ibid.* pp. 80 - 81.

prevailed in all sections of medieval Ireland. This is illustrated by the report from a 16th century Bohemian nobleman Jaroslav z Donina, Baron of Dohna, who was a guest of The O'Neill, at his [O'Neills] insistence.¹ The Baron found the quality of life even in O'Neill's house rather barbarous but was struck by the generous hospitality of the Irish.

Again using the contemporary descriptions and other sources there is evidence of the type of hospitality provided by the lords and chiefs. Luke Gerŕon gave a description of the hospitality he received when visiting a "castle" in the southwest in 1620. "The lady of the house meets you with her train.....Salutation past, you shall be presented with all the drinks in the house, first...beer, the aqua vitae, then sack, then old ale.....".² Again the love of the people for giving and receiving hospitality comes across when he writes " the lady tastes it [the drink offered] you must not refuse it....".³ This shows how much acceptance of hospitality gave honour to a lord and how integral a part of Irish and Anglo - Irish society entertainment of guests seems to have been. Gerŕon continues with a description of the feast laid out for the guests. During the feast guests were entertained by poets, bards, genealogists, harpers, dancers, and card players. Moryson writes of the poets or rather the "rhymers vulgarly called bards".⁴

In common with most contemporary writers Moryson felt the bards "in their songs extol the most bloody licentious men....to outrages, robberies...contempt of the king's laws".⁵ Stanihurst seems to have some understanding of the position of the poet / bard in this society;

¹ Quinn D.B. "The Elizabethans and the Irish". 1966 pp. 7.

² Quinn D.B. "The Elizabethans....". 1966 pp. 74.

³ *ibid.* pp. 75.

⁴ Falkiner C.Litton. "Illustrations.....". (Moryson) 1904 pp. 247.

⁵ *ibid.* pp. 247.

"Lords and gentlemen stand in great awe"¹ of these poets because they can bring honour to a lord with a praise poem or heroic sonnet or destroy his reputation with a few lines. Stanihurst mentions that the poems are "usually sung at all feasts and meetings by certain....persons whose proper function that is"². Other entertainment was provided at a feast by the "seanchaidh" (story-teller) who would tell stories of heroic ancestors and as Smyth writes cause "ignorant people to run mad and careth not what they do"³. Smyth differentiates between the poets and the bards - calling the former "Fillis" and the later "Aeosdan".⁴ These bards encourage outrages, rebellion, robberies, murders etc among their audience by composing rhymes praising men for the "many heades they have cut off.....many towns they have burned...many virgins they have defloured....many notable murders they have done, and in the ende they will compare them to Aniball or Scipio or Hercules...; wherewithall the pore foole runs madde and thinks indede it is so..⁵ Poets or "Fillis" were men of property i.e they had herds of cattle ^{not} ~~are~~ were of a higher social class than the bards. These poets, said Smyth, had "an adiction to prophecies"⁶ but also wrote praise poems like the bards.

In addition to the music, poetry, and song provided at feasts by the bards, poets etc sport of another type was provided by the so - called "carrows". Moryson writes that the Irish delighted in playing at cards and dice and these carrows who profess "to know the noble science of playing at cards and dice "infected the private houses of the lords."⁷ He

¹ Quinn D.B. "The Elizabethans....". 1966 pp. 42.

² Quinn D.B. "The Elizabethans....". 1966 pp. 42.

³ Smyth. "Information on Ireland". UJA 1858 Vol VI pp. 166.

⁴ *ibid.* pp. 166.

⁵ *ibid.* pp. 166.

⁶ *ibid.* pp. 167.

⁷ Falkiner C. Litton. "Illustrations.....". (Geron) 1904 pp. 248.

also states that they [the lords] would not only play for money but "also engage their lands"¹. Other forms of entertainment included dancing, Moryson mentioned many dances "they dance about the fire...in the middle of the room...and also matachine dances with naked swords...²" Luke Geron writes of the great "jollity" to be found at these feasts. "They feast sumptuously while they may lack delicacies in their cusine and elegance in their banqueting their tables have massive heaps of beef, pork and other food according to season"..³ .

While the "sumptuous" feast referred to by Stanihurst might not have been a daily occurrence in the tower houses, at least the descriptions of these feasts give us some idea of the type of food consumed by the people. Stanihurst mentions the type of meats eaten - beef and pork "they have a great appetite for well fed pigs but little taste for all kinds of fish",⁴ Geron also mentions the fact that meat is in plentiful supply at a feast "but illcooked and without sauce. "⁵ Many writers mention the fact that the Irish seem to like their meat under cooked. Other staples in the diet included milk, which Moryson said they " drink like nectar, especially a dish called Bonaclabber which is sour milk curdled"⁶. Butter also figured a lot in their diet "they swallow lumps of butter mixed with oatmeal".⁷ Most contemporary writers of foreign extraction were very comtemptous of this limited diet and regarded as deplorable the lack of hygiene in the cooking methods of the natives. However, the Irish diet may not have been as limited as these writers would have us believe.

¹ *ibid.* pp. 322, pp. 248.

² *ibid.* (Geron) pp. 322.

³ Falkiner C. Litton. "Illustrations.....". (Geron) 1904 pp. 322.

⁴ Lennon C. "Stanihurst....". pp. 146 - 150.

⁵ Falkiner C. Litton. "Illustrations....". (Geron) 1904 pp. 361.

⁶ Quinn D.B. "The Elizabethans.....". 1966 pp. 69.

⁷ *ibid.* pp. 65

Many contemporary writers were struck by the fertility of the soil. Payne mentions that the yields included " wheate, rye, barley, peason, beanes, oates, woade, rape, hoppes, hemp, flaxe, and all other grains and fruites that England any wise doth yield."¹ Father Good writes in W. Camdens "Britannia" that "they [the Irish] feed.....upon herbs and watercress, especially upon mushrooms, shamroots, and roots..."². In the "Castleisland Inventory of 1590" the list of provisions and victuals include wheat, barley, bean, meal, malt, butter, cheese, bacon, mustard, seede, salt, bread, hoppes, and onyons.³ As well as beef and pork the list includes other meates eaten by the people like mutton, venison and all sorts of game. Paye mentions "a great sort of swanes, cranes, pheasants, partiges, heathcocks, plovers, curlew,.....quailles.... as well as fish and shellfish such as " oysters, muskels, cockels, and samphiere about the sea coasts are to be had for the gathering"⁴. Therefore, while beef and pork may have been the staple diet of the "mere Irish" the food available in the tower houses would have been of better quality and variety. One thing served at the meals, which pleased the foreign writers, was the amount of drink, which included wine, beer, mead, ale, and usquebagh, which Moryson held was "the best in the world"⁵.

As well as being biased about the food the Irish eat the foreign writers were not very complimentary about the actual tower houses themselves. However, there is evidence that the tower houses were not as uncomfortable as these writers say. In the tower house proper there

¹ Paye R. "Tracts relating to Ireland". Vol I pp. 6.

² Quinn D.B. "The Elizabethans....". 1966 pp. 66.

³ O'Shea. Rev. K. "Castleisland Inventory". KHAJ 1982 - 83. pp 45 . This Inventory was taken for Wm. Herbert who had been granted the Earl of Desmonds castle at Castleisland (67) in c. 1587. It is a list of the contents of the castle.

⁴ Paye R. "Tracts relating to Ireland". Vol I pp. 7.

⁵ Falkiner C. Litton. "Illustrations.....". 1904 pp. 226

is evidence that the inside walls were white washed or plastered, and traces of this plaster survives in many sites through out the country. Most contemporary writers speak of rushes strewn about to make the stone or / and wooden floors more comfortable but also give the impression that the tower houses were sparsely furnished. Most mention a table in the main chamber. Both Moryson and Geron mention the lack of beds or the unhygienic quality of these beds where they exist, "and if a bed is available do..not expect canopy and curtaynes".¹ Paye, however, speaks of the similarity between the furnishings in Ireland and England.² It is possible that he was talking about the Anglo - Irish owed tower houses and not those of the Irish chiefs. The belief is that the furniture in Irish tower houses was less plentiful than in their Anglo - Irish counter parts. It is of the Irish chiefs that Moryson is speaking when he wrote they " set their meat upon a bundle of grass".³ Against this there are references to tables and other items of furniture in Irish tower houses. Geron refers to tables at these feasts, while an O'Huigin poem about Lifford, Co.Donegal mentions coverlets, tables and cupboards⁴. An Aodhagan O'Rathaile poem of 1670 describes the O'Callagan castle at Clonmeen Co.Cork and he mentions "speckled silks and garments of pure satin.....warriors playing at chessmen....coverlets being prepared.....wines newly opened....viands on spits and usequebagh on tables...".⁵ In the poem on the "Hospitality of Cu Chonnacht Og Maguire" Tagd Dall O'Huigin writes of " beds of down" being prepared unlike Moryson who said it was most unlikely to find a bed in an Irish tower house.⁶ These references show

¹ Falkiner C.Litton. "Illustrations". (Geron) 1904 pp. 361.

² Paye R. "Tracts.....". Vol 1 pp. 6.

³ Falkiner C.Litton. "Illustrations....". (Geron) 1904 pp. 361.

⁴ *ibid.* pp. 361.

⁵ Corkery D. "Hidden Ireland". 1924 pp. 17.

⁶ Maxwell C. "Contemporary sources...". 1923 pp. 335.

both the bias of the English writers when writing of the Irish and also that there was little difference between the furnishings in Irish and Anglo - Irish tower houses.

There is a source for Kerry which gives a complete list of the contents of one Kerry stronghold in the 16th century. This is the Inventory taken around 1590 of the contents of the Earl of Desmonds chief castle at Castleisland (67). After the Desmond rebellion the castle was forfeited and later (1587) granted to Sir William Herbert and he had the inventory "of the household stuff in the Castell of the Illande" made.¹ Castleisland (67) had been, along with Tralee (158), one of the the main strongholds of the Earls of Desmond and as such was bigger and better furnished than most other castles and tower houses. Also it is possible that some of the items mentioned could have been sent to the castle by Herbert and did not belong the the Earls, although Herbert had not taken up residence at this stage, so many of the items were probably already in the castle prior to 1590. Even so this inventory gives some idea of what could be found in a well furnished castle or tower house, although most tower houses probably did not have half as much furnishings as at Castleisland (67). Starting with the linen and bedding, the evidence is that contrary to Moryson's grievances about the lack of beds there was enough linen in Castleisland to dress several beds, including sheets of different types; holland, dowles, colour sheets, etc; and in the bedding there were featherbeds with bolsters, pillows, blankets, canopies and curtaynes of different materials and colours etc.² Other furnishings show that the walls and floors at Castleisland (67) and perhaps at other tower houses were not bare; there are eight peces of tapesty, carpets, window carpets, etc

¹ O'Shea Rev. K. "A Castleisland Inventory". KHAJ. 1982 - 1983 pp. 37.

² *ibid.* pp. 37 - 39.

mentioned.¹ Other pieces of furniture include stools, leather chairs, longboards, square boards, etc showing that the Earls certainly did not eat of rushes on the floor nor did they eat with their fingers as there are spoones, ladles, knives, silver spoones, silver cups and several different types of bowls mentioned².

Other interesting items mentioned include the "plate candlestik for the hall".³ As in all buildings like Castleisland (67) the rooms must have been quite dark because of the narrow windows so candles were needed to brighten the place up, especially in the great hall where the entertaining took place. Moryson mentions candles and in particular "the great candle made of reeds and butter set upon the floure in the middle of the great room".⁴ This may be the type of candle which the great plate candlestick would have held. Other items show the other functions of the tower house as a centre of a farming community and a place where many people were housed and fed. To a certain extent each tower house would have been self - sufficient. Most of the food needed and consumed would have been grown, harvested, butchered, gathered, and cooked by the inhabitants of the tower house. The Inventory gives lists of both the equipment needed to provide this food and a list of the type of food consumed by the inhabitants. Each owner of a tower house would more than likely have a herd of cattle plus some sheep, pigs, chicken etc. Beef, mutton, pork, fowl, and fish were quite plentiful in Ireland. There is also evidence that the bawn area in most tower houses would have been used to grow vegetables. In the description of Newcastle West, Co.Limerick it is stated that "within the walls [of the bawn] are many buildings....[and]...one garden, and in the

¹ O'Shea Rev. K. "A Castleisland Inventory". KHAJ 1982 - 1983 . pp. 37 - 39.

² *ibid.* pp. 37 - 39.

³ *ibid.* pp. 41.

⁴ Moryson F. "Itinerary....". Vol III 1617 pp. 203.

same, two fishponds. And outside the walls and near there are divers orchards and gardens...."¹

In some of the tower houses in Kerry there is indirect evidence of this use of the bawn; that is, local tradition speaks of an ancient orchard in the bawn both at Killaha (117) and Ballinruddery (23). Also most localities would have had their own supply of grain which the inhabitants of the tower houses would, more than likely, grind themselves. For instance, the inventory mentions "foure peces of iron wrough for a mill"² Also, in the Kenmare Manuscripts, there is a reference to a "grinding mill" at Pallace (137), which was one of the chief houses of the McCarthy Mor family.³ As well as the local produce there is also evidence that tower houses contained imported luxuries. Foreign, especially Spanish, wine was quite common on the tables of the nobility of the time. This Inventory mentions such foreign luxuries as "Spanish quilte of taffita redd...15 Welsh bushells of wheate meade...a grey gelding bought in London....silver and gold items etc."⁴ Other items mentioned show the other functions of a tower house or castle i.e its defensive function. There is a list of armour and munitions at Castleisland (67) showing it to be well stocked with defensive items. However, perhaps the most surprising items in the inventory are the "one hundred books of sundry sorts great and little" and of course the bible and a book of common prayer⁵. Perhaps the Earls of Desmond were especially well read and it is doubtful that many other castles or tower houses had such well stocked libraries.

¹ Mazwell C. "Contemporary sources....". 1923 pp. 63.

² O'Shea Rev. K. "Castleisland Inventory". KHAJ 1982 - 1983 pp. 37 - 43.

³ McLysaght E. "The Kenmare Manuscripts". 1970 pp. 144.

⁴ O'Shea Rev. K. "Castleisland Inventory". KHAJ 1982 - 1983 pp. 37 - 43.

⁵ *ibid.*

One factor that the inventory does not inform us on is how many people would have lived in Castleisland (67). As it was one of the Earl's strongholds it probably had a large population, including family, servants, labours, a garrison etc. However, it is difficult to estimate the number of people who would have lived in an ordinary tower house. Most of the references to the numbers of people in tower houses are from sieges, when over crowding was the norm. It is reported that the garrison at Castlemaine (71), an important fortress, was usually 10 - 12 men and this could increase to 30 in time of war.¹ In the siege of Tralee (158) in 1640 there were reported to be over 200 people in the Great Castle when it surrendered and that most of these then went to the tower house at Ballingarry (19) where they were again besieged.² These numbers are, however, for the inflated population in a tower house in time of war. How many people usually lived in a tower house in normal times? The non - combatant population of a tower house would be much larger than the garrison. This would include family, servants, gardeners, workmen, horseboys, and cooks etc. However, it is impossible to estimate how many, if any, of these people lived in the tower house or in buildings in the bawn and how many lived in huts and cabins outside the bawn. It is probable that the population of the tower house was higher in winter than in summer, as some people would be occupied in taking the cattle to higher pastures and would live up there with the cattle.

Rough estimates could place as many as 20 people, including the garrison, in a tower house; increasing more often than not with visits from poets, bards, harpers, carrows, and other visitors. Even with a low estimate of 10 - 12 people, living conditions in the tower house,

¹ Carmody Rev. J. "The story of Castle Mayne". KAM Vol 1 1908 - 1912 pp. 27.

² *ibid.* pp. 28.

especially in the smaller structures, must have been quite cramped. There is also very little evidence on how these people lived from day to day. There is evidence on the feasts and the pastimes but very little on the daily work in a tower house, especially the work of the women and servants. McLysaght wrote that in the 17th century [and probably throughout the medieval period] "men lived much out of doors, hunting, shooting...supervision of estates"¹ and in earlier times were out herding, cattle raiding, and defending their lands. The running of the tower house was probably left in the hands of the lady of the house. However, the only reference there is to the lady of the houses is in the description of Geron, who was met by the lady at the door in her role as hostess. More than likely the lady did nothing more strenuous than sewing, making preserves, and supervising the servants who probably did the manual labour.

The numbers of servants, labourers, workmen, and tenants etc serving and supplying the tower house could be huge. McLysaght mentions the ground floor at Lohort castle, Co. Clare which consisted of a huge kitchen, larder scullery, and pantry.² However, this is unusual as very few tower houses have anything other than a storage room in the ground floor. In no tower house is there evidence of cooking in the upper storeys. The main chamber may sometimes have had a fireplace but it is doubtful that the lord's dining hall was used for cooking. The possible alternative is that cooking for the house was done in an adjacent building - probably a wooden structure. It is also unlikely that many of the servants lived in the tower house. Most tower houses would have had a limited number of bed chambers, 4 - 5 at most, and these would have been reserved for the family, important guests, and

¹ Mc Lysaght E. "Irish life.....". 1979 pp. 110.

² Mc Lysaght E. "Irish life.....". 1979 pp. 94.

perhaps the senior officers of the garrison. McLysaght mentions that in Lohort the kitchen on the ground floor was the only place available to the servants on or off duty.¹ Since most tower houses do not seem to have had an interior kitchen the servants would have to sleep elsewhere. It is possible that some of the servants slept on the floor in some of the chambers of the tower house. Capt. Cuellar, a Spanish Armada officer shipwrecked off Mayo, who spent some time in a tower house said "they [the servants] sleep upon the ground upon rushes, newly cut and full of ice and water...."² Le Gouz also mentions the fact that the floors of the "castles" were covered in rushes "of which they make beds in summer"³. As already stated, most of the nobility in the tower houses would have had beds so it is possible that it was the servants, soldiers, and labourers that slept on the rushes on the floor. However, the tower house itself could only hold a limited number of people, far less than the number needed to service it. It is possible that some of the people lived in wooden buildings, lean - to's, or shacks built in the bawn. As with the tower house, the bawn could only hold a limited number, especially if it was also used as a garden and for storage, so the people had to live elsewhere.

It is possible that some, if not most, of the people who worked in the tower houses, lived outside the bawn but within the protective shadow of the tower house. Geron mentions in an indirect way the fact that most of the "castles" he saw were surrounded by houses i.e "in every village there is a castle....."⁴ As with the monasteries of old, the tower houses could have become semi - urban centres. That is people who worked for the owner would live near the tower houses, and so a

¹ ibid. pp. 94

² Crawford R. (trans) "Capt. Cuellar....Narrative". pp. 62.

³ McLysaght E. "Irish Life....". 1979 pp. 106.

⁴ Falkiner C. Litton. "Illustrations.....". (Geron) 1904 pp. 335.

village would spring up around the tower house. These settlements would, more than likely, have been of an insubstantial nature. Geron says that the "baser cottages were built of an underwood, called wattle and covered, some with thatch and some with green swedge."¹ Moryson wrote that the "meare barbarous Irish either sleepe under the canopy of heaven or in cabbins wattled and covered with turfe."² Because of the insubstantial nature of these houses they did not survive the centuries as well as the stone tower houses.

However, at some sites there is evidence of smaller buildings around the tower house. At Browns Castle (49) there are several houses sites near the tower house. Browns castle (49) was originally a promontory fort so it is difficult to state precisely that the tower house and the house sites are contemporary. This is the case with most re-used promontory forts in the county. At one, however, there is documentary evidence that the house sites are associated with the tower house. In 1641 there was a siege at Ballingarry (19); in the report of the siege it is stated that 200 or so people were besieged within the re-fortified promontory fort and that they built houses to live in.³ At the site today, there are many house sites and it is possible that these are the houses mentioned; unfortunately the tower house itself no longer exists. At Ballinruddery (23) there are also house / hut sites around the tower houses, more than likely contemporary with the tower house, as it is a site not previously used. It is likely, therefore, that some of the people working in the tower house or for the lord lived outside the bawn but around the tower house in a little "village" or hamlet.

¹ *ibid.* pp. 335

² Moryson F. "Itinerary.....". Vol III 1617 pp. 498.

³ Anon. "Crosbie's fort at Ballingarry". KAM 1912 - 1914. pp 232 - 235.

With so many people living in and around the tower house the hygiene problems must have been quite considerable. Moryson and other writers complain of the general lack of hygiene among the Irish and Anglo - Irish. Moryson wrote that "many of these gentlemens houses [are not] void of filth and slovenliness".¹ In the Journal of Sir William Brereton's journey to Dingle in 1580 there is a reference to the fact that the Earl of Desmond's castle at Castleisland (67) was "a high monstrous castel of many rooms....very filthy and full of cow dung"². However, it would seem that the rudiments of basic hygiene were catered for in most tower houses. Over three quarters of the tower houses in Kerry had a garderobe. Sewerage or smell does not seem to have bothered the lords or chiefs. Only at a few sites is there a method for getting rid of the sewage. At Carrigafoyle (60) and Castlélough (68), for example, the exits for the garderobes would have been washed by the sea / lake. At most sites the sewage had to be removed by manual labour. It is possible that the sewage was used to fertilise the gardens, especially those within the bawn. But the garderobe exits, especially those near the main entrance door, were not the most hygienic way of disposing of waste products.

The floors in the interior of the tower house would have been earthen on the ground floor and wooden or stone on the upper storeys. As McLysaght states they would probably have been covered with rushes, often a foot deep on the floors and the window sills.³ It would not be easy to keep these chambers clean, especially as there was no running water in any tower house. Personal cleanliness was also not a major concern for these people. There were slop stones scattered

¹ Moryson F. "Itinerary". Vol III 1617 pp. 498.

² Hitchcock. "Dingle in the 16th century". K.A.M 1912 - 1914. pp 207.

³ McLysaght E. "Irish life.....". 1979 pp. 106.

throughout most tower houses in which people could wash themselves, but these were quite small and water had to be hauled into the tower house by hand so the easiest way to wash was to go for a swim! If we also include the fact that the people considered the fumes of the garderobe to be good for preserving leather and fur, and stored there clothes in there - the smell of the people and the tower houses must not have been too fresh but then again they were probably no less hygienic than all the people of medieval times, none of whom were too interested in bathing. So perhaps Moryson et al are once again over emphasizing the unhygienic aspects of the Irish tower houses, and there should be considered no more or less hygienic than other residences of other countries at this time.

Tower houses could be used for many different purposes as well as just a family home. It could serve as a semi fortified storage base for crops, grain etc. Most tower house owners provided some sort of hospitality and entertainment for guests but there were also a certain group of wealthy men called "brughaidh" who were bound to provide entertainment i.e they were a type of professional hospitaller. They were usually wealthy landowners of the sub - chief class, for example the Mac Gillafhinein of Muintir Peodachain kept open house to all comers.¹ The O'Donoghues of the Glen in Kerry were also well known for their hospitality and tradition has it that they kept open house at their residence in Killaha (117). Other functions include being a centre for learning or a prison. Cairns mentions Redwood in Co.Tipperary which had a stone building beside it known locally as McEgans school, some sort of legal training may have gone on here as the McEgans were a family of hereditary lawyers.² Tower houses could also be used as

¹ Simms K. "Guesting....". JRSAI 108 1978 pp. 106.

² Cairns C. "Tipperary...". 1984 pp. 134.

prisons. In many ruins there are small chambers, usually windowless and quite difficult to get at, which are usually called, locally, secret or priests chambers. Possibly these chambers were used as prisons. At Carrigafoyle (60) there are two small windowless chamber on either side of the upper vault, while in Dunkerron (91) there is a large windowless and doorless chamber which could have been entered from a trapdoor in the roof.

Tower houses were also manorial centres. The most important manors in Kerry were those of the Earl of Desmond. In the Pipe Roll of 1297 - 98 the manors of the Island [Castleisland (67)] Killorglin (118) and Moynwyr are mentioned.¹ In the C.D.I in 1298 - 99 the manors of Tralee (158), de Insula [Inch (112)] and Killorglin (118) are mentioned while in 1300 New Manor (136) is added to the list². In the Inquisition of the lands of the Earl of Desmond in 1421 this list is enlarged to include Dingle (84), Ballymore, Tawlagh (155), Tarbert (156) and Kylbanwane [of the Bishop of Ardfert].³ At some of these manors including Tarbert (156) and Tawlagh (155) etc there was once a tower house. It is possible that the larger tower houses, especially those in north Kerry, such as Carrigafoyle (60), Ballinruddery (23), Listowel(129), and Minard (132) etc were manorial centres of the lord's lands, but there is no documentary proof of this. In north Kerry feudal law had been in force since the mid 13th century so manorial centres did exist. In south Kerry brehon law still held sway so there were not any manorial centres. In both north and south Kerry the tenure of the tower houses seems to have been relatively stable.

¹ Pipe Rolls Ed I. 1297 - 98

² C.D.I. 1298 - 99, 1300.

³ Ormond Deeds Vol III 1413 - 1509 No. 45 pp. 35, 1421.

Documentary evidence suggests that most tower houses were held by the same families for generations, at least until the upheavals of the late 16th and 17th centuries. For instance, the O'Connor Kerry family held Carrigafoyle (60) from c.1480 when it was built to c.1650 when eventually dispossessed under the Cromwellian settlement. Carrigafoyle (60) was held by the O'Conors of the Earl of Desmond. In fact, the Earls could and did claim total overlordship of Kerry, although it was only in north and west Kerry that they could really impose their overlordship. All the tower houses of the FitzMaurices, FitzGeralds, and the other Irish and Anglo - Irish owners of tower houses in north Kerry held them, in theory, from the Earl of Desmond. In south Kerry the major chief McCarthy Mor was also in theory a sub - tenant of the Earl of Desmond, but in practise only acknowledged this when it suited him. In practice, the McCarthys claimed overlordship of all of south Kerry and all the other families such as the O'Donoghues and the O'Sullivans etc. Inheritance of the tower houses, especially in north Kerry, was by primogeniture, although through most of the tower house period the tower houses in south Kerry also passed from father to son. In fact in most tower houses, [until the Desmond Rebellion], a direct line of inheritance can be traced from the builder to the holder in the late 16th century.

To-day the tower house may look cold and bare but as we have seen in their heyday they provided medieval lords, ladies, chiefs, and their families with a relatively comfortable residence. The thick walls, narrow loops and slits, narrow stairs, and inconveniently small chambers were compensated by the light of the large candles, the hanging of tapestries and carpets, the rushes on the stone / wooden floors, and the white washing of the walls. Food, drink, and entertainment were to be had in plentiful quantities in the tower house and most

contemporary writers, both foreign and native, are in agreement on the great hospitality to be had from the nobles and chiefs. Singing, dancing, poetry, storytelling, gambling, hunting, etc played an integral part in the lives of these nobles and chiefs (and their families) and served to make life more bearable in these "inconvenient" buildings. While the hygienic conditions in the tower houses were not a top priority they were no worse than in most medieval buildings. Tower houses provided people with a dry, comfortable, relatively pleasant, safe place in which to live, and store their possessions. Not only were they fortified residences, tower houses could also be used for more specialised functions like manorial centres and courts, schools, prisons etc. Despite the gloomy writings of Moryson, Geron, Stanihurst and the others it must be accepted that these tower houses were probably the most comfortable homes in Ireland at the time.

INTRODUCTION

In the three centuries of construction almost 200 tower houses were built in Kerry ; of these only about half are still visible to some extent on today's landscape. Of these 80 or so sites, only about 40 are actually recognizable as stone structures. This is again divided into about 20 substantial ruins i.e where the tower house still stands to in or near its full original height, with three or four walls still remaining; about 15 of these 80 ruins stand only to the first or second storey while almost 20 show only some stone fragments i.e a single wall or low stone foundations or in the case of one site Castle Gregory (66), only an inscribed pointed arched doorway and some other stone fragments - all of which have been moved from the original site to ornament the garden of a local family. The remaining 40 sites show no stone remains, although some recognizable earth and / or grass covered foundations are visible, while other tower houses are merely known from maps or locally as the site of a " castle " but no archaeological remains^{are} above ground. Therefore, when dealing with Kerry tower houses one is somewhat limited because of the lack of examples which can be used to detail all types of architecture throughout the three centuries of tower house construction. In particular, for the earliest period of tower house construction there is a severe lack of substantial architectural material. Because of this it is difficult to piece together the development of architecture throughout the tower house era.

However, within the limitations posed by the lack of existing architectural material it is possible to come to some conclusions on Kerry tower house architecture, especially when using existing material in combination with material available from other parts of the country. Where as, it is a disadvantage from a dating point of view, it is an advantage

here that much of the tower house architecture is relatively similar throughout the period and quite similar throughout the country. That is not to say, as will be explored later on, that builders in many parts of the country were not innovative to a certain extent; however, using material from Kerry and elsewhere, one can get a relatively clear idea of the types of architecture used in all periods of tower house construction.

Throughout the country the basic plan of the tower house was a rectangular 3-4 (or 5) storey building. Almost all the tower houses of Kerry, which have recognizable foundations, are of this shape (the few exceptions will be discussed separately). But the size of tower houses within this rectangular plan varies considerably. In the Statute of Henry IV there is an order for subsidies to be given to anyone who wishes to build a castle " in length 20 feet, in breath 16 feet, in height 40 feet " in Co.Louth.¹ These grants did not effect Kerry tower houses as they were confined to the eastern counties, however, the measurements given are an example of the smallest type of tower houses built. Kilmurray (121) in mid Kerry is an example of a small, basic, rectangular, tower house, having measurements of 7.50m by 8m approx., and is c.30m high. The majority of ruins which can still be surveyed in Kerry are much larger than this - some few are comparable to the largest tower houses in the country. However different their basic plan most tower houses will have one or more architectural details in common. In order to discuss and assess the architecture of these tower houses it is perhaps better to begin from the exterior of these sites and work into the building itself.

¹ Berry (ed) Statutes of Henry IV. No. IX. 1910 pp. 17.

BAWNS.

Some tower houses have a bawn built with or after the tower itself; other tower house builders reused earlier earthen defences or have contemporary earthen or natural defences, while a few sites would seem to have had no defences other than the thick walls of the tower itself. Where a bawn does exist its walls are usually not as thick as the walls of the tower. Where there is a bawn surrounding a tower house it is usually rectangular in shape, such as would seem to have existed around Ballycarbery (27), although only two walls of this bawn stand to-day. Sometimes the bawn began and / or ended at a wall or corner of the tower, i.e. one wall of the tower would not be surrounded by the bawn wall - as happens at Killaha (117). Double bawns also once existed at some sites such as Carrigafoyle (60) which had a natural moat from the Shannon between the inner and outer walls. Also as can be seen at Carrigafoyle (60) [Plate 14] there does not seem to have been much room between the bawn wall and the tower house. At the site the remains of one bawn wall still exists about 20m from the tower, however in ^aPacata Hibernia there is a drawing [Fig B] which shows an inner bawn between the existing wall and the tower, thus leaving, at most, about 7 - 8m between the inner bawn wall and the tower¹. As Carrigafoyle (60) is a very defensive site this could be a deliberate defensive ploy as the bawn walls, especially the inner walls, could easily be defended from the overlooking tower house.

The shape and defensive nature of the bawn wall could sometimes be dictated by the lie of the land around the tower house. Some bawns do not have a regular shape, for example, the bawn which once surrounded Leck castle (126). Leck (126) was built on an island and the bawn wall followed the outline of the island. As has been

¹ Stafford T. (ed) "Pacata Hibernia". 1896 pp. 120 - 121.

mentioned, the bawn walls are usually not as thick as the tower house walls, being on average 1-2m thick e.g the bawn walls at Ballycarbery (27) are c.1.70m thick, while at the base the tower house walls measure 11m. The architecture of the bawn wall was usually quite plain, with no crenellations and sometimes no wallwalk. Sometimes the bawn had no corner flankers or turrets, nothing except an entrance gate, as is the case with Killaha (117). The other main sites in Kerry all have either flankers or some other unusual architectural feature. At Carrigafoyle (60) the remaining outer bawn has one square corner flanker. The chamber in this corner flanker probably served as a guard chamber, in more recent times it was turned into a dove cot. It has a narrow, flat-topped door and splayed slits, covering both the interior and the exterior area. The bawn wall at Carrigafoyle (60) has no crenellation but it may have had a wallwalk. In the drawing [Fig.B] it is shown that the interior bawn wall also had corner flankers. These were round, unfortunately none of this wall remains to-day. Other sites which have corner flankers include Ross (147) where as well as corner flankers, there were also rounded gate flankers which protected the entrance to the tower house [Plate 1]. Flankers provided extra defence to the thin bawn walls by strengthening the corners and / or the more vulnerable gateway. Before the age of cannon these flankers could be used by defenders in a tower to prevent the undermining of the bawn.

At Ballycarbery (27) what remains of the bawn wall, which seems once to have enclosed the tower house, has some unusual architectural features. It has splayed flat - topped window slits throughout its length and a wallwalk which leads to an opening on the east wall near the north / east corner. There are narrow stone steps leading down into a tiny chamber which contains the remains of a garderobe. This

garderobe exits into the bawn, and also seems to have been the only garderobe as there is no evidence of one in the main tower house, although the entire south wall is gone so it may have been in this wall! It is unusual to find a bawn wall used for something other than defence, and the existence of the garderobe chamber weakens the bawn wall at this point. The reason the garderobe opens into the bawn could be to disguise the fact that there was a weak spot in the bawn wall. However there may be another explanation, pictorial evidence shows that there once was a building attached to a point on the bawn which seems in or near the garderobe [Fig C]. The garderobe may have served this building, however this building no longer exists so it cannot be said conclusively that the building and the bawn are contemporary or that the bawn garderobe is associated with this building. Whatever the reason it is still quite unusual to find a garderobe chamber built into a bawn wall.

Only about 6-7 sites in Kerry have the ruins of stone bawn walls. Some walls like those at Leck (126), Ballycarbery (27), Ballybeggan (25) and Ross(147) seem to be contemporary with the tower house, while bawns like that at Killaha (117) seem to have been built at a later stage than the tower house, the wall of the bawn does not fit properly onto the wall of the tower where the two meet and obviously was built after the tower house. The primary purpose of the bawn wall was protect the interior bawn area and to a certain extent the tower house itself. However, many bawns were weakened when chambers were put in the corners or in the thickness of the walls, so like in the tower house, defence gave way to creating more space. Stone bawns were not the only type which existed. Some bawns in Ulster were of "sods" and it is possible that mud or earthen bawns once surrounded some Kerry tower houses. However, these type of walls would not last as

long as the stone walls and there are none now in existence in Kerry. The only sites in Kerry still surrounded by earthen defenses are those built in re-used promontory forts and ringforts, such as Rahinane (142) [Plate 2]. Many sites do not seem to have been surrounded by any type of defense structures, stone or earthen.

With two exceptions none of the bawn walls in Kerry have a gateway. Presumably these bawn walls did have gateways which are now destroyed. At Ballybeggan (25) there is a stone pointed arched gateway in a field about 20 yards from the tower house which seems contemporary with but not associated with the bawn wall. At Killaha (117) the remaining bawn wall has a small, flat - topped doorway with a wooden lintel. It is probable that most gateways would be covered by flankers on either side or by corner turrets, especially as Craig states, after the introduction of firearms.¹ Cairns states that most gateways would have been large enough for wagons, and round-headed in shape.² There is one surviving gatehouse tower in Kerry at Rincaheragh (146). The gatehouse seems to have been two storeys high with two ground floor chambers on either side of a wide round headed doorway, which would be wide enough for wagons.[Plate 3]. There are no flankers on the wall to cover this doorway. The drawing of Carrigafoyle (60) [Fig.B] shows that the entrance to the bawn and tower house was the slipway on the seaward side and not a gateway covered by the flankers on the landward side. At Ross (147) the gateway conforms to the norm being between two round flankers. [Plate 1]. The gateway at Ross (147) is quite small, certainly not large enough to allow a wagon to pass through, so, except for Rincaheragh

¹ Craig M. "Architecture..." 1982 pp. 99 - 100.

² Cairns C. "Tipperary...". 1984 pp. 251 - 152.

(146) there are no examples of gateways comparable to those found by Cairns in Tipperary, in Kerry.

'SOFT-BUILDINGS'

As well as a bawn and / or other defences or no defences most tower houses would have been surrounded by so-called " soft-buildings". That is, buildings of earth or stone which served as store houses, dining halls, barns, or huts. In fact, sometimes, a hamlet would grow up in the shadow of the tower house. For example, Luke Geron said "In every village there is a castle..the baser cottages are built of underwood called wattle..."¹ Some of the buildings would have served the function of Dining Halls - like the stone Desmond Hall built near the Geraldine castle in Newcastle West, Co. Limerick. However, most of these buildings do not survive because there were built mainly of earth and / or wood. Many of the 16th writers on Ireland mention wooden buildings attached to the tower houses. Sometimes these buildings leave the trace of a gable mark crease on the wall of the tower house. For example, there is the trace of a building of a hipp-roofed building (now gone) on one wall of the tower at Listowel (129). At Ballybeggan (25) there is a small stone building attached to the tower with which it seems to contemporary. T.Croften Croker in his description of "Inch House" (110) which he says was the first home of the O'Donoghues of Glenflesk and older than Killaha (117) mentions " a nest of cabins " surrounding the building.² The drawing of Carrigafoyle (60) in Pacenta Hibernia [Fig B] shows a smaller stone building (2 storey perhaps)

¹ Falkiner L. "Illustrations.....". (Geron) 1904 pp. 355.

² Croften - Croker T. "Researches in S./ W. Ireland". Vol II 1830 pp. 177.

attached to the main building - unfortunately this building no longer exists ¹

Even if built of stone the attached or unattached buildings in or near the tower house would have had thin walls and therefore, like the bawn walls, be more likely to disappear before the thick walled tower houses. Where these subsidiary buildings were built of earth or wood it is unusual to find any archaeological remains. Because of a lack of remains on the ground it is necessary to turn to written and pictorial sources to establish what type of buildings did exist around the tower houses. Unfortunately, the most valuable source for tower houses etc, the Civil Survey does not exist for Kerry, except for two short extracts, which mention two tower houses, "a short butt of a castle " of Clashmelcon i.e Browns Castle (49) and Mineogohane (133).² At the tower house at Mineogohane (133) there was also a house and two cabins.³ Many of the entries for Co.Limerick often mention a castle, with bawn, and other buildings including houses, barns, cabins, mills etc.⁴ Because there is little documentary evidence for Kerry it is necessary to rely on other sources. Local tradition speaks of an old mill near Pallis (137) the home of the McCarthy. There are still the ruins of a lime kiln beside the tower house of Ballymacadam (33). In addition to houses, cabins, and mills, there were also, especially from the 17th century "big" houses or mansions built near or attached to the tower houses.

When the defensive nature of the tower house was no longer viable i.e in the age of cannon, the owners obviously wanted more space and comfort. Sometimes the buildings incorporate or supersede the smaller

¹ Stafford T. "Pacata Hibernia". 1896 pp. 120 - 121.

² Civil Survey Co.Limerick Vol IV pp. 500 - 501.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

tower house e.g at Kilmurray (121) where a large 18th century mansion totally over-shadows the attached small tower house. Not only were mansions attached to the tower houses but sometimes a structure was built which changed the whole function of the tower house. For instance, a large garrison barracks was built on to Ross Castle (147) and it became the centre of defence for mid Kerry for a time after the Cromwellian Wars. Most of the stone buildings near Kerry tower houses which provide architectural details come from a later period outside the scope of this thesis. Unfortunately, there are no stone buildings from the earlier period, except the architecturally barren lean - to or out - house at Ballybeggan (25). It is probable that, as many contemporary descriptions indicate, most of these buildings were of earth or wood with thatched roofs, or in the case of stone buildings having thatch or slate roofs. It is more than likely that most Kerry tower houses were attached to or surrounded by some type of building, stone, earth, or wood at some stage in their history; only much needed archaeological excavation of tower houses would perhaps reveal the existence and function of these ancillary buildings.

THE TOWER HOUSE

The tower house itself is usually more elaborate and substantial than any of the outer buildings or defences. As already mentioned, the basic plan is vertical in elevation and rectangular in shape; however, tower houses vary in size from small 2 - 3 storey buildings like Ardnacragh (11) to large 5 - 6 storey buildings like Carrigafoyle (60). Most tower houses would have been built using locally quarried stone. Therefore, a geological map of Kerry will give an idea of what type of stone was used in any particular tower house. Geological studies of Kerry are mainly confined to the more interesting areas of the Dingle

and Iveagh Peninsulas. However, even with these limited studies it is possible to state that almost all tower houses were built of local quarried or collected "field stones". For example, in the Dingle area there 5 - 6 different types of bedrock - as outlined by Warren et al.¹ At least one tower house was built in each different geological area. For instance, Ferriters Castle (99), Rahinnane (142) and Moorestown (135) are all built within the "Dunquin " rock grouping, which comprise of 'pale yellow, brown, grey and red siltstones and volcanics"² Of these three, Ferriters Castle (99) and Rahinane (142) are substantial ruins. Ferriters Castle (99) is the best example of the use of all types and colour of local stone. The tower house is built of predominantly yellow grey and red random uncoursed irregularly shaped siltstones - most likely these stones were collected nearby i.e fieldstones. The type of stone used in Rahinane (142) is grey yellow sandstone with some reddish stone. Rahinane (142) is built using compact random rubble which is coursed, some of the door and window surrounds are cut, and the quoins are cut and roughly coursed. What is left of Moorestown (135) shows a grey - yellow sandstone.

In other areas of Corca Duibhne the tower houses show difference in the type of stone used to correspond with the locally available stone - although most of the tower houses in the west and central Dingle Peninsula area are built with some type of sandstone / siltstone. For instance, Minard (132) is in the "Dingle group " of purple - red and grey - green conglomerates. Minard (132) is built using predominantly, reddish - purple sandstone with some grey sandstone. Most of the stone used in Minard (132) is cut and the stone is squared and built to courses, while the quoins are cut and coursed and all the

¹ Warren et al "Corca Dhuibhne". IAQS Fieldguide No. 1 fig 2 1986 pp. 4.

² Warren et al. "Corca Dhuibhne". IAOS Fieldguide No 1 1986 pp. 4.

surrounds the doors, windows, etc are cut. The stone used in Minard (132) was most likely quarried nearby. Unfortunately, none of the other known sites in this area have extant ruins - and towards Tralee, and the 10 - 12 tower houses in the vicinity of the town, we are moving into the "Tralee Group" of limestones.¹

Most tower houses in the mid and north area of Kerry are limestone structures. For example, Ballymullen (40) on the west side of Tralee town is of random squared limestone built to courses. Very little of this tower house survives and the remains are very ivy covered, but the surviving visible loops show that the surrounds were possibly cut and grouted. Another well preserved site is Ballybeggan (25) c. two miles east of Tralee (Map 4). The lower courses of this tower house are built with large squared limestone blocks. The upper part has smaller squared limestone blocks. The quoins are cut and stressed - the surrounds of the loops and doors are well cut and some are punch decorated. Further north there are the tower houses around the Listowel area. Listowel (129) itself is built of cut limestone blocks with string courses - and the quoins are projecting (Fig 1a). As with many north Kerry tower houses the surrounds of the loops doors etc are well cut and grouted. Listowel (129) also has a much weathered carved "head" decoration on one of the exterior blocks at the front of the building. Ballinruddery (23) which is near Listowel (but later in date) is also limestone built - although the cut blocks are uneven and random in this case; however the quoins are well cut, coursed, and project into the wall. (Fig. 1b) The loops and window surrounds are well cut and some are punch decorated. Along the coastline of north Kerry there is a string of tower houses, many of which differ from the usual north

¹ Warren et al. IQUA - Corca Dhuibhne Fieldwork No I 1986 pp. 4.

Kerry tower house - in that they are built of sandstone. These includes Browns Castle (49), Ballybunion (26), and what is left of Ballingarry (19) i.e the drawbridge. This is because around the Ballybunion area there is a sandstone outcrop. However, almost all the existing tower houses in north Kerry are of limestone blocks - except Carrigafoyle (60) which is in a category of its own as it is built of a slate type of limestone, very different from the usual random or squared blocks used in the other tower houses.

In mid Kerry i.e around the Killarney area and south to Fieries (95) most of the tower houses are of limestone. These include Dunloe (93) which was extensively rebuilt using redbrick - although the older remaining parts show that the original tower house was limestone built. Clounmelane (78) was built using limestone blocks which were built to courses - the quoins may also have been coursed but they no longer exist. Fieries (95) is also limestone built, although it is impossible to see as the ruin is completely overgrown. Molahiffe (134) the third tower house in this small area is built of cut and coursed limestone blocks [Fig. 1c]. As one heads further south the tower houses change again to sandstone. A geological map of the southern part of Kerry i.e the Iveagh Peninsula shows an area dominated by different types of sandstone.¹ For instance, Ballinskelligs (24) is built of reddish sandstone, random uncut, and uncoursed blocks, although the entrance is very a well cut pointed arched doorway. Other sites include Ballycarbery (27), Castle Cove (64), and Ballycarnahan (29), all built with different types of sandstone. Further up towards the Flesk River and on to CastleMaine (71) the tower houses, including Killaha (117), Castle Core (63), and Ballymalis (38) are all of sandstone. Most of

¹ Mitchell et al. "Iveagh Peninsula". IQUA Fieldguide No. 6 1983 pp. 46.

these tower houses are later examples, and are well built with cut and coursed stone e.g Ballymalis(42) (Fig 1d)

In most of these tower houses the surrounds of the windows, loops, doors, lintels, etc are of well cut stone. The above examples have shown that most if not all tower houses in Kerry were built using local stone. There are quarries all over the county so access to usable stone was probably not a problem, although there is no written or archaeological evidence of stone quarrying in Kerry in mediaeval times. The different types of mortar used also corresponded with the locally available materials; i.e in most limestone structures a type of lime and sand mortar is used. While nearer the sea, especially in Corca Dhuibhne, a type of sea - sand mortar was used. In north Kerry there are the remains of one lime kiln attached to the tower house at Kilcushnan (116) - which seems to be of mediaeval date. It would seem that the builders of these tower houses were relatively self sufficient, with most of what they need available locally.

BATTER

What the builders did with these materials is also very wide and varied. Starting with the exterior architectural features, one finds that while most tower houses are similar in form, each has a little of its own style and usually some individual detail. Perhaps the best detail to begin with is the batter. A batter is an inward inclination of the external walls from the base. It is both an aesthetic and a practical architectural feature. Most Irish tower houses have relatively shallow foundations, which would not support the huge weigh of the thick walls and massive vaults for very long without the support of a broader and thicker base. As the walls rise the batter becomes less pronounced, producing a tapering effect - with the thinner walls at the top, this

combined with upper storey rectangular windows helped to reduce the weight on the shallow foundations. Another practical advantage is that missiles dropped from the top of the tower house could bounce off the batter and strike the enemy on the rebound; while the aesthetic tapering effect seems to have been as pleasing to the mediaeval eye as it is today. Most Kerry tower houses have a batter, some more pronounced than others. It is the later tower houses (which also rarely have vaults) which usually have little or batter to their walls. Ballybeggan (25) has quite a pronounced batter to about the second storey and then it tapers off.[Plate 12] Fenit (96) shows very well the aesthetic qualities of a batter [Plate 4]; a broad base which tapers off in the upper stories, creating a vertical funnel look. All tower houses which have vaults also have batters; the foundations would never withstand the increase in weight created by the vaults, for example, Ballybeggan (25), Fenit (96), Ballymullen (40), Carrigafoyle (60), Gallurus (101), and Dunkerron (91) to name but a few. The tower houses with little or no batter are usually later in date e.g Ballinruddery (23), Castle Cove (64) etc. The slant produced by the batter effects the exterior walls only - the interior walls are level from the base up.

Some tower houses also have a plinth or other extra features which stabilize the foundations. The plinth usually projects from one side or corner of the tower house. At Fenit (96) which is built on a rock outcrop one of the corners is strengthened by a small stone plinth, which is almost undifferentiated from the tower house wall.[Fig 2] Again at Fieries (96) there is a tower house built on a rock outcrop with plinths at the N / E and N / W corners. The existence of the plinth strengthens the foundations against the volume of weight of the tower house and also protects the vulnerable corners against undermining in time of siege. Other methods were also used to stabilize foundations.

At Clounmelane (78) there is a unique and well preserved example of stepped foundations at the remaining north wall [Plate 5]. The existing stepped foundations do not run the entire length of the north wall. This could be because Clounmelane (78) is built on an uneven mound therefore the steps serve to level the foundations and stabilize the building. The presence of the stepped foundations (4 large steps above ground) could also indicate a very high building-unfortunately only the north wall stands to the height of c.4.25m so it is impossible to tell if the foundations were used for this purpose.

BARTIZANS AND MACHICOLATIONS.

Other external architectural features found on a tower house include bartizans, machicolations, and crenellations. A bartizan can be described as a turret projecting from the angle at the top of a tower - and these are the most common type of bartizan to be found on Irish tower houses. However, in west and south - west Ireland there is a variation to this feature to be found, usually mid - way up the corner angle of the tower house i.e a mid-wall bartizan. Some of the bartizans in Kerry are of the mid - wall variety. Bartizans at the top of walls are usually rounded at the corner angle. Those which are square protruding features are called box - machicolations. Most examples of both mid - wall and rounded corner bartizans come from mid and south Kerry. All types of bartizans and machicolations rested on individual stone corbels and were for firing on or dropping missiles on attackers. Ballymalis (38) has two of the best examples, in Kerry, of the mid - wall bartizans at the N / W and S / E corners. Each bartizan rests on five pointed stone corbels and both angle round the corner [Plate 6]. Both bartizans are roofed with slates and have gaps through missiles, oil, etc could be dropped and shot holes for muskets. The bartizan at

Ballinruddery (23) - the only extant example in north Kerry - is similar to those at Ballymalis (38). In both buildings the bartizans are approached internally from a chamber in the thickness of the corner wall. At Killaha (117) there is evidence that there once was a mid wall bartizan. A mid - wall bartizan is one of the few architectural features which helps in the dating of a tower house as they do not come into fashion until the mid 16th century.

The more common type of bartizan is the rounded variety at the top corner of the tower house. Examples of this include that at Castle Core (63) which is a mixture of a rounded bartizan and a box machicolation. That is the bartizan rounds the N / W corner - and then stretches almost the entire length of the north wall and appears more like a box-machicolation [Fig 3]. It also rests on individual stone corbels. Dunloe (93) has examples of both the rounded corner bartizan and the box machicolation; the corner bartizan rests on cut, pointed corbels, while the box machicolation rests on uncut square corbels. Both have spaces between the corbels through which missiles could have been thrown. Many more Kerry tower houses may have had these defensive architectural features - however a lot of tower houses do not survive to the height at which these features were usually inserted.

CRENELLATIONS, WALL WALKS, DRAINS, ETC.

As well as the above features many tower houses have battlements with some type of crenellation. However, the parapet wall and the crenellations, usually being quite thin, have disappeared from many tower houses. In the surviving examples the usual type is the "stepped merlon" Irish variety. The best example of the stepped merlon type is at Dunloe (93) [Fig 4]. At Dunkerron (91) there are the remains of the stepped merlons. These type of crenellations as well as

being decorative could provide protection for the look - outs who could hide behind the merlon in time of attack. There are crenellations at Ballycarbery (27) which are different from the usual type. The crenellations on the side turrets are much higher than those on the main wall.[Fig 4A]. At Rahinane (142) the crenellations are different again - with just two openings on each side of a large merlon - the openings adjoin the corner turrets on either side [Plate 7] Whatever the type of crenellations the function served was the same - to protect the defenders and give them opportunity to fire in relative safety on the attackers. As very few examples survive in Kerry it is impossible which type of crenellation was the most widely used.

Wall walks provided access to the parapets and probably once existed in most tower houses. Access to the wall walk was usually via a narrow stair from the top storey - or sometimes through a corner turret. The wall walk was the space between the battlements and the base of the roof. Some wall walks must have quite uncomfortable to patrol as they slanted towards drains placed just beneath the crenellations; these holes served to drain the battlements and the roof. In some tower houses there were no drain holes so the wall walk would slightly oversail the top to provide drainage. The wall walks themselves were usually of the "Irish" pattern i.e stone slabs with the joins covered by capping, creating a ridged effect which provided for more efficient drainage but also made it much harder to patrol the battlements. At Carrigafoyle (60) the wall walk is still intact and runs around the three surviving walls [Plate 14]. Here the wall walk does slant towards drain holes, but unlike most wall walks it is constructed of plain slabs. In many tower houses the wall walk no longer exists and where it does, in many cases, it is now inaccessible. However, the existence of drain holes and put - log holes once used to hold the

scaffolding for the construction of the wall walk or corbels which held this structure would indicate there was once a wall walk in the majority of tower houses. Rahinanne (142) has drain holes at regular intervals just below the battlements which indicate a now inaccessible wall walk. Later tower houses such as Ballinskelligs (24) and Killaha (117) have neither battlements nor a wall walk. In the case of Killaha (117) the many chimneys would interfere too much with a wall walk, here is an example of the tower house builders putting more emphasis on comfort (more fireplaces and chimneys) than on defence as happens in many later tower houses. The wall walk did serve two purposes, to provide the lookouts with access to most sides of the tower house and to keep the roof and battlements drained.

ROOFS, CHIMNEYS, AND ROOF TURRETS.

The roof itself could be of any type. Some could be gabled to provide room for the wall walk, some hipp shaped, pyramid shaped or some conical in plan. There are many examples of the gabled roofs in Kerry - especially among the later tower houses of mid and south Kerry. These include Killaha (117), Ballymalis (38), and Castle Core (63). Few tower houses in Kerry still survive to roof level, so it is impossible to state, with certainty, which type of roof was the most common. However, evidence, both existing and documentary, does point to a prevalence of either gabled or hipped roofs. Only one structure may have had a conical roof, the round tower house at Barrow (15), unfortunately, it does not survive to roof level. Also there is no evidence of what these roofs were constructed.

It is quite possible that many roofs, in common with other places, were thatched. Documentary evidence (see chp. 6) points to thatched roofs, making the roof one of the more vulnerable areas in time of

attack. Roofs may also have been slabbed, like the roof at Ardfert Friary tower house (10), or of timber like the unique example at Dunsoghley, Co.Dublin - although there is no evidence of roofing other than Ardfert (10) surviving in Kerry. Most of the surviving roofs also have a chimney. At Castle Core (63) the chimney is flush with the north wall, right on the gable, which would make the use of a wall walk, if one existed, impossible. The chimney at Ballymalis (38) stands in the north wall, inside the wall walk, so it does not interfere with it. The chimney has a tall narrow flue, the quoins on the flue are coursed and the caps are simple and oversail the courses. Ballymalis (38) has the best intact example of a chimney in Kerry [Plate 6]. Other examples are found at Killaha (117) which has three existing stacks, one at the gable and one each on the north and south walls. The chimney at the gable is small, while the other two are tall thin stacks with simple moulded caps. Many other tower houses have evidence of fireplaces but the chimneys no longer exist. It is the earlier tower houses which would have neither fireplaces or chimneys. It is possible that chimneys which are in or near the wall walk and impede the function of the wall walk are later insertions while those on the gable are more likely to be originals.

Other architectural features at the roof level include the turrets. Not all tower houses have turrets, however, those structures with battlements usually had roof turrets. Again, as with the battlements, there are few examples left in Kerry. At Fenit (96) a small rounded turret still survives on the S / E corner. There is now no access to this turret so it is impossible to see if it did provide access to the wall walk. Most corner turrets were probably used by the lookout for shelter, and to provide extra defensive power, especially where they over hung the corner. Some turrets could have been used for more unusual reasons,

for example, the turret at Dunsoghley, Co.Dublin was used as a prison.¹ Turrets vary in size and shape, either round or square. Rahinanne (142) [Plate 7] has two intact turrets at the S / E and N / E corners which are quite large. The turrets appear rectangular on the outside but are rounded on the inside. Both turrets are now inaccessible now but it seems they did provide access to the wall walks on the north and south walls. The turrets are higher than the battlements and access seems to have been from the wall walk, via a narrow stone stair set in the wall face. The function of these turrets could be to provide additional height to survey the surrounding area. There is also the remnant of a rounded (angled) turret at the monastic tower house at Ardfert (10), although there are no evidence of battlements. As is the case with the top of most Kerry ruins there are very few examples on which to base any ideas on the function of these roof turrets; suffice to say they seem to be one of the examples of defensive architecture, part of providing extra defensive cover to the inhabitants rather than extra space.

EXTERIOR DOORS, WINDOWS, ETC.

Architectural details of features such as window and doors differ slightly on the exterior. For example, it is quite usual to find window loops deeply splayed on the inside and only slightly or not splayed on the outside. Earlier in the chapter the fact that many tower houses have coursed or cut quoins was discussed. Only a minority of tower houses would have uncut quoins, even if the main walls are built of roughly or uncut rubble, as cut quoins both strengthen and stabilize the corners and are aesthetically pleasing to the eye. In most tower houses it is found that the surrounds of the doors and windows are of cut stone.

¹ Leask H.G. "Irish castles....". 1951 pp. 121.

It is also usually found in most tower houses, except the very latest examples, that all the windows on the ground, first, second, and perhaps third storeys are loops and / or slits. The width, height, and depth of these loops and slits varies from building to building; as does the degree and depth of the splay. For instance, at Clounmelane (78) the loops on the ground floor which are c.0.65m high and c.0.40m wide are not splayed, while those at Gallarus (101) are c.0.93m high and c.0.20m wide and have a c. 0.80m wide splay. Some loops at Minard (132) have a 1.10m splay. This is just a random sample to show the diversity in types and sizes of loops.

The architectural definition of a loop is a "long, narrow, vertical, opening usually widening inwards.....for use by archers; an arrowloop"¹. An unsplayed loophole would have been little or no use to an archer, and these type of loopholes are perhaps not intended for archers. Also slits provided an archer with little or no field of vision, so they could not have served as arrowloops. Many of the loopholes and slits served primarily to allow in light and ventilation; many are in positions from which it would be impossible for an archer to fire. For example, at Rahinanne (142) the stairs are lit by loops at which an archer would have had to have been in a half lying, crouched position to fire. Loops with an inward splay do give a better field of vision, but they also let in more light so there is no reason to believe that splayed loops served a purely defensive function. Jope states that the broad horizontal outwardly splayed loops are a Scottish influenced architectural feature found first in the Plantation houses of Ulster.² However, there are loops which are both inwardly and outwardly splayed in tower houses in Kerry which are earlier than the Ulster Houses. For example, at

¹ Harris C.M. (ed). "Historic architecture sourcebook". 1977 pp. 335.

² Jope E.M. "Scottish influences in the north of Ireland....". UJA 1951 pp. 38.

Ballinruddery (23) the loops have a deep inward and a slight outward splay. In fact most of the loops with both an inward and outward splay are found on the ground floor of tower house. For example, Listowel (129) [Fig 15], Ballymacaquim (37), and Minard (132) all have deeply splayed ground floor exterior loops, but while an archer or gunner would be given a wider field of vision by both splays it would also be easier for an enemy arrow or shot reach the defender through the splays, so again perhaps these loops were to allow in more light and air than to give more attacking power.

As already mentioned, the surrounds of the loops and slits are cut and sometimes grouted on some tower houses. A minority of tower houses such as Ballinskelligs (24) have uncut exterior surrounds. This feature is not however confined to the earlier tower houses as a few late tower houses have uncut surrounds (Ballinskelligs (24) is a 16th century example). However, in the majority of cases the surrounds of the quoins, windows, doors would have been cut. In a majority of tower houses the cut stone surrounds are plain; here and there is found some decoration from punch hole grouting to carved stonework. At Ballinruddery (23) the cut limestone surrounds of some of the loops are punch decorated; while at Castle Cove (64) some of the have carved rounded heads with simple decoration. There is no rule governing what type of loops and slits are on any tower house of any date. Most tower houses have loops with pointed, rounded, chamfered or flat heads. For instance, at Castle Cove (64) in addition to the carved rounded loops there are also flat headed loops and slits. At Ballybeggan (25) there are examples of both pointed and flat headed loops; at Listowel (129) where most of the loop heads are pointed there are one or two with chamfered heads [Fig 15]. While many tower

houses may have one predominant type of loop or slit it is not unusual to find examples of all three types on one building

Loops and slits are to be found on the majority of tower houses but some also have rectangular windows. While loops and slits are to be found on all stories it is usual that the larger windows will only be found on the upper stories; more than likely above the second storey. Only at Dunloe (93) are there decorated, pointed, rectangular windows to be found on the ground floor - however, this tower house was extensively rebuilt in the 17th century and these windows are later insertions. In many cases the rectangular windows are more decorative than the loops and slits. As well as having cut and sometimes carved surrounds many of these bigger windows have carved window sills; these serve both an aesthetic function and also serve to keep the rain off whatever covering may be in the window. These carved sills can be seen at Ballinruddery (23) [Plate 8], Ballymalis (38), and Killaha (117). These bigger windows usually light the main chambers of a tower house. The main and biggest chamber at Ballycarbery (27) [Plate 9] was lit by at least two huge, elongated windows (one wall is missing) with pointed heads; unfortunately the surrounds are totally gone on the outside so it is impossible to tell whether they were carved or not. The rectangular windows could have either cut transoms or mullions or both. Ballinruddery (23) has windows which are transomed and mullioned [Plate 8] while Carrigafoyle (60) has mullioned windows. The windows at Ballymalis (38) are three mullion lights with decorated, pointed heads divided by a transom bar [Plate 6].

Most rectangular windows may have had glass, but more than likely glass was not used in the loops and slits. It is probable that the loops and slits and some bigger windows had wooden shutters, sometimes

the slots to keep the shutters closed are found on the interior of the loops and slits. Because of the smallness and awkwardness, loops and slits, even those with splays were probably not highly defensive architectural features. They would provide a certain amount of protection, but a splay, while giving a defender greater field of vision also put him (or her!) at greater risk of getting shot as the splay would also funnel in arrows and shots. The bigger the splay the more light and ventilation allowed in the tower house and this is probably the major purpose of splayed window loops and slits.

GARDEROBE EXITS, SLOPESTONES, SHOT HOLES ETC.

Other architectural features which can be found on the outside of the tower house include the garderobe exit. Not every tower house had a garderobe; and not all tower houses with garderobe have obvious garderobe exits. On rare occasions the garderobe opened into the ground floor, but most often the exit, if it existed, can be found along one wall of the tower house. Garderobe exits come in all shapes and sizes and most exits are usually found the opposite wall to the door; or at least around the corner. For instance, the entrance at Ballymalis (38) is on the west side while the garderobe exit is on the east side. The garderobe exit itself is usually topped by a large flat lintel [Plate 11] - although at Barrow (15) the sides of the exit are also defined by two large cut stones. The size of the exits can also range from the small opening at Dunkerron (91) to the large double garderobe exit at Castlelough (68). Only in two cases at Castlelough (68) and Carrigafoyle (60) is there an obvious way that the sewage was disposed of. The Shannon washes the exit at Carrigafoyle (60) at high tide and the exit at Castlelough (68) is washed by the middle lake in Killarney.

Otherwise the garderobes must have been cleaned by hand and the uses of the sewage are discussed in chp.6

There were no facilities for running water in any of the tower houses, so slop stones were used to rid the occupants of used / dirty water. A slop stone is a hole within the wall with a narrow sink inside and a sprout outside - most tower houses have several of these slop stones through out the building. These slop stones are usually quite plain but occasionally ones finds that the outside sprout may be fashioned as a gargoyle head or some such carved object - however all the existing slop stones in Kerry are quite plain. Other features to be found on the exterior of the tower house include the musket loops and shot holes. These features are to be found in tower houses of the later 16th century although some earlier buildings may have late insertions. Most of the Kerry tower houses with original musket or shot loops are in south Kerry. These include Killaha (117) which has a double musket loop covering the entrance door [Plate 10 A]. The musket loop appears as tiny round carved openings on the outside, but inside is the ope with the two long funnels into which the musket fitted. The loops actually gave the gunner no field of vision, they must just have fired blindly across the entrance. At Ballycarnahan (29), Rahinane (142), and Ballinskelligs (24) all in south Kerry, the musket loop covers the front entrance. At Rincaheragh (146) the shot hole is in an unusual position, in the roof of the entrance chamber, in the place usually occupied by the murder hole. Other tower houses with musket and shot holes include all those with mid wall bartizan and machicolations, including most of the tower houses in south Kerry e.g Ballymalis (38), Castle Cove (64) etc and one tower house in north Kerry, Ballinruddery (23). Other architectural features which appear on the exterior of some tower houses are less common. For example Castle Cove (64) may have the

only example of a shot hole at the apex of a sill in each wall in Kerry.(it was never finished)[Plate 11] Cairns recorded an example at Ballymacady in Tipperary.¹ Another unusual feature is a carved 'head' on the front wall at Listowel (129). Local tradition has it that this is the head of the ape who supposedly saved the 3rd Earl of Desmond (Thomas an Apa) from the Irish when he was a child. However the carving is now too weathered to determine precisely what it is. A carving of a fleur de lis over the door at Ballycarbery (27) was recorded in the last century, unfortunately it no longer exists today. Usually tower houses are quite plain on the outside.

The last architectural feature on the exterior is of course the entrance to the tower house. As with the windows, doors come in all shapes and sizes. Most have cut stone surrounds although this is not always the case. The entrance door can have a pointed, flat, or rounded arch; it can have a cut stone arch or a segmented arch. Only a minority of intact ruins in Kerry have examples of the original entrance. For instance, the pictorial [Fig B] and visual evidence for Carrigafoyle (60) shows that the original entrance was on the seaward side through a now destroyed attached building. There is a door (the surrounds are ruined) on the seaward side which cannot be used as an entrance and what may have been a smaller or postern door into the bawn on the land ward side is now used as the main entrance. Other sites show evidence of where the original door once stood. At Fenit (96) the wall which held the entrance is now gone but there are still the remains of a round post hole for the door showing where it once stood. At Ballybeggan (25) all that is left is a carved, punch decorated heel stone which shows where the doorway once was [Plate 12]. Most of the

¹ Cairns C. "Tipperary....". 1984 Vol II Fig 16.

surviving door surrounds are of well cut stone. In fact, the entrance at Ballycarbery (27) is the only example of a segmented arched uncut doorway. Also, there is no extant example of a chamfered doorway. All surviving examples have either rounded or pointed arches. For example, the doorway at Ballymalis (38) is of well cut limestone blocks with a semi circular arch. The doorway at Ballinskelligs (24) is of well cut sandstone blocks and also had a semi circular head [Fig 5]. Both these entrance ways have evidence of post holes for the door itself and the remains of beam slots which held the beams which secured the doors. Also, at Ballymalis (38), on the left of the doorway is a little shot hole barely visible from the outside but which enabled a gunner to cover the entrance from the inside. Many extant examples of doorways, especially those in south Kerry, are covered by these little shot holes which would be cut into the side blocks of the doorway or into the nearby wall, e.g Ballinskelligs (24), Castle Cove (64), Killaha (11) and Ballycarnahan (29).

There are no extant examples of doorways covered by shot or musket holes in north or west Kerry, although this does mean they did not once exist. Other entrances have pointed arch heads, for example Listowel (129) [FIG 15] and Barrow (15) [Plate 13]. As with the previous examples the surrounds of these two doorways are of cut stone (limestone in both cases). In all the extant examples the door-step, into which the door post was cut, is usually of well cut stone. Most of these examples also have evidence of beam slots. As already mentioned, only one site, Ballycarbery (27), has an example of a segmented arch; and this site along with Minard (132) are the only sites with evidence of external hinged iron grilles. In some sites there is evidence of an interior rebate into which the door opened, for example at Minard (132). Taken all together the doorways show a

surprising uniformity throughout Kerry, except for the fact that the examples with shot and musket holes are confined to south Kerry. One interesting and unusual example is the doorway at Castle Gregory (66). The cut and carved limestone doorway which is all that is left of the tower house has an inscription across the head of the doorway. It is in Latin and reads

V.D.M.A.I.HLIYVI./H.V:H.ET.E.M:M.E:E/O.B.MH.

Other than this most entrance ways are fairly similar and show no real architectural innovations.

THE ENTRANCE.

Moving on to the interior there are two basic ground floor plans which are found in most Kerry tower houses. (1) The entrance way leads straight into an undivided ground floor chamber. (2) It leads first into an entrance "hall" or "lobby" and then into the main ground floor chamber. Unfortunately, not many of the entrance chambers still exist; in fact, in many cases the wall which enclosed the entrance no longer exists. This could be because the door and the entire entrance was usually blown up or destroyed when a tower house fell to attackers. Only about twenty sites in Kerry have examples of either of the above mentioned plans, and this is a very small number on which to base deductions for ground floor plans in general. In north Kerry the most intact tower house is at Carrigafoyle (60) and although it was attacked by cannon in 1584 the entrance-way is still intact as it was on the seaward side and the attack came from the landward side. In fact the opposite wall was actually destroyed. The entrance here led into a turret which runs the height and length of the north wall [Fig 6]. When one enters the main entrance door, straight in front one finds the door

into the main chamber while to the left is the door leading to the spiral stairs which is in the N / E angle.

At Carrigafoyle (60) there is no evidence of the usual murder hole or guard chamber in the entrance way. At Listowel (129) the entrance now leads nowhere as the main block of the tower house has been destroyed but it is possible it once lead directly into the main chamber, the plan may have been similar to that of Bunratty, Co.Clare [Fig 7]. At Barrow (15) the entrance door leads to a small mural chamber entrance with a well cut pointed arch door leading to the spiral stairs and on the right a small cubby or guard chamber. In front is the door leading to the main chamber, the entrance way is covered by a murder hole placed in the floor of the small mural room above[Fig 10]. In west Kerry the only examples with complete ground floors are Rahinanne (142), Gallarus (101), and Minard (132). At Rahinane (142) the entrance is on the south wall [Fig 8]. The entrance chamber is very small and leads to a rectangular doorway opening on the east to the mural stairs and in front to the segmented arched doorway which leads to the ground floor chamber. At Gallarus (101) the entrance been totally blocked up. It was on the north wall but there is no door from the small mural entrance chamber leading to the main chamber;[Fig 11] it must have once existed as there is no evidence of a stairs from the small chamber and the interior of Gallarus (101) is now inaccessible, except by ladder.

The other example is Minard (132). The entrance is on the east wall and leads to a small mural chamber with the remains of a murder hole in the roof [Fig 9]. In mid and south Kerry the predominant plan is of a small mural chamber with a small, cramped guard chamber to one side and the door to the stairs on the opposite side. These examples include Ballinskelligs (24) where on the right is the guard chamber, with the

ope containing the shot hole which covers the entrance; there are no loops or slits in this small chamber, obviously to hide the fact that the entrance door was covered by the guard chamber. On the left is the opening to the spiral stairs while in front is the chamfered headed uncut doorway to the main ground floor chamber. As with most extant south Kerry tower houses the entrance lobby is covered by a murder hole from the floor above. Ballycarbery (27) has one of the more unusual ground floor plans, in that, the ground floor is divided into three chambers each with its own vault. [Fig 16]. Castlough (68) may have had a similar ground floor plan.

At Killaha (117) the actual entrance door no longer exists but its site is marked by the two musket loops which would have covered it. The entrance chamber is in a turret which extends the height of the west wall. The ground floor of the turret consisted of the entrance lobby which lead to a small chamber on the left which contains the embrasure of the musket loops; on the right is, unusually, a round turret (now almost totally ruined) which held the spiral stairs; in front of the round turret and blocked from the front entrance is the door to the main ground floor chamber. The door leading into the guard chamber has a well cut pointed arched head and the musket loops are unusual in that the large embrasure contains a double funnel for these holes [Plate 10A]. Only the bottom part of the spiral stairs remains and there is no access to the upper stories of the turret or the main building. Another unusual feature at Killaha (117) is that the entrance lobby is covered by a cross shaped musket loop from the main chamber [Plate 10B]. Other examples include Dunkerron (91) which has an entrance lobby with a guard chamber on one side, the door to the stairs on the other side, and the door to the main chamber in front; this also occurs with slight variations at Ballymalis (38), CastleCove (64), and Ballycarnahan (29).

Most of these sites have one or more of the following, shot holes, murder holes and guard chambers. These tower houses have many similar architectural features and would also be of similar dates and have the same basic ground floor plans. It is possible that other sites in south Kerry had different ground floor plans but without excavation there is no evidence of this.

TURRETS.

Earlier in the chapter the usual turrets, top corner or mid wall turrets were discussed. However, there are other types found in tower houses. These include corner turrets, either round or square, which rise the entire height of the tower house or turrets which are adjoined to one wall, rising in or near the entire height; really adding a small second building to the tower house. There are examples of tower houses with corner turrets through the country. Dunsoghley, Co.Dublin has a turret at each corner; the larger ones at the north - west and south - east corners have chambers while the smaller ones at the north - east and south - west corners contain stairs. Corner turrets serve a variety of purposes, they could contain the stairs as at Ballinskelligs (24) where a rounded (on the inside) turret contains the stairs. They also give flanking fire from loops and shots holes to the sides of the building. In most buildings the round turrets were the more defensive type while rectangular turrets usually held the stairs or extra chambers. The only example of a completely round turret in Kerry is at Killaha (117) but as little survives it is impossible to say if it provided flanking fire for the walls. Most corner turrets, be they round or rectangular, seem to serve the main function of providing room for the stairs and providing extra chambers, as at Ballycabery (27) where there are small chambers in the rectangular corner turret.

The other type of turret is the one which climbs the height of one entire wall. This occurs at Carrigafoyle (60) where there is a wall turret at the north wall, which rises one storey above the main building [Fig 6]. This wall turret contains the entrance lobby, the door to the stairs, and the stairs in a rounded corner at the N / E angle of the wall turret. The turret has small chambers at each level. Most of these chambers are quite barren, architecturally, containing only window loops, beam slots for the floor boards or corbels of the succeeding storey and recessed cupboards. There are no fireplaces or garderobes at any level. The function of the turret was to provide extra space for the inhabitants, perhaps these were bedrooms for the lesser members of the family or the servants. As mentioned before pictorial evidence [Fig B] shows an extra "two" storey building adjoining this turret, but it no longer exists so its function is unknown although it may have been to shelter / protect the slipway which must have lead to the main entrance way on the north wall. Other sites with these wall turrets include Killaha (117) where the wall turret had small chambers on one side and a round turret for the stairs on the other. Minard (132) seems to have had a similar layout, with a wall turret at the east end; this turret is not on the same level as the main building, being slightly higher at all levels thus it is more of a mezzanine wall turret [Fig 9]. Like other wall turrets it contains extra chambers, one of which, on the first floor contains the garderobe.

These wall turrets seem to serve only to provide extra space and perform no special defensive function. Where they exist, these turrets do contain the entrance and sometimes the shot or musket loops which cover the entrance, but otherwise have no defensive function. Also these turrets contain the stairs which weakens their walls at this point. In some cases like at Minard (132) access to the turret was from the

main building rather than vice versa. Minard (132) has a mural stairs in the wall of the main building. Sometimes the turret had a vaulted roof such as at Minard (132) and Carrigafoyle (60) or had no vault as at all the other examples. Otherwise the architecture of the turrets is plain and similar to that of the rest of the tower house. The turrets were usually lit by splayed loops and slits and had beam slots and / or corbels to hold the flooring. Minard (132) is the only example with anything other than recessed cupboards in its small chambers, although in most examples the first storey over the entrance lobby also has the murder hole. Most turrets also had doors, at each level, from which to communicate with the main tower.

THE GROUND FLOOR CHAMBER.

On the ground floor the communicating door was usually directly opposite the entrance door. As discussed above the usual ground floor plan was of an entrance lobby, with stairs and perhaps a guard chamber and a main chamber. However, there are some examples of the ground floor consisting of just the main chamber. What is left of Ballybunion (26) would indicate that the door opened into the main chamber. This may also have been the case at Fenit (96) and also occurs at Fieries (95) [Fig 16a]. At Portinarde (139) the entrance door also leads directly into the ground floor chamber. Another variation of the ground floor plan occurs at Ballycarbery (27) where the ground floor is divided into three chambers each with its own vault [Fig 16], this may also have occurred at Pookenee (138); there is only one small vaulted ground floor chamber left to - day but Westropp described three such chambers in the early part of this century¹. However the

¹ Westropp T.J. "Promontory forts in Co.Kerry" JRSAI. 40 1910 pp. 26 - 28.

majority of ruins still extant in Kerry do have the more familiar lobby and main chamber plan.

A minority of tower houses would have had two main chambers; as already mentioned, Ballycarbery (27) has three ground floor chambers, while at Dunloe (93) there is the remains of a dividing wall on the ground floor; however, it is more usual just to have one chamber. In some tower houses the door into the main chamber was not directly opposite the entrance door, for instance, at Killaha (117) the main chamber door is to the right of the entrance door to make the entrance more secure. The lobby itself could be commanded from the main chamber with a loop, slit or shot hole. For example, the entrance lobby at Killaha (117) is covered by a cruciform shot hole from the main chamber [Plate 10B].

There is usually no access from the main ground floor chamber to the upper stories. The stairs are either spiral in the angle of the main wall or corner turret or mural, but usually not accessible from the main ground floor chamber. This would serve the purpose of not having many people entering a room usually used for storage or stables etc and also would make this chamber more secure if the defenders had to barricade themselves in. It is usually accepted that the ground floor was used mainly as a storage area. In most cases the floor itself was earthen. The walls of the ground floor are the thickest and it is very unusual to find any form of light and ventilation other than the smallest and narrowest of loops and slits. However, there are some inconsistencies in the building of such thick walls and then putting huge embrasures which contain the loops and large recessed cupboards for storage. These recesses both weaken the walls defensively and, also, weaken the ability of the lower walls to carry the huge weight of the rest of the tower house. For example, in Ballycarbery (27) not only are

there huge embrasures for the loops but there are narrow stairs leading from the sides of these embrasures to the attic floors under the vault, thus weakening the main walls. At Listowel (129) the embrasures for the ground floor loops are large enough to allow for substantial window seats for the occupants. The reasons for building these deep recesses into the thick walls are not clear - some extra space and light is gained but the weakness caused to the main walls certainly offsets any gain.

Most ground floor chambers do not have fireplaces, or any other features, except for cupboard recesses. Very few sites give any indication that the ground floor could have been used for anything other than storage. At two sites can be found the remains of a ground floor fireplace. In fact the ground floor fireplace at Barrow (15) the only one in the building [Fig 10]. At Killaha (117) the fireplace is one of many through out the building; it is bigger and less well built than the others and may indicate that the ground floor at Killaha (117) served as the kitchen. The fireplace has slots from which crooks to hold pans could be hung and there is also a large recess with a small opening which may have been an oven or hotpress to the right of the fireplace. Other than these examples there is no further evidence that the ground floor was used for anything other than as a storage area.

VAULTS.

Where vaults do exist, in many cases, they are over the ground floor. A majority of tower houses would have one or more vaults; those which do not are usually later in date and would also have no batter. The building of a vault must have been very expensive as it requires skilled workmanship and vast quantities of stone, mortar and rubble; and in itself is a disadvantage as it put extra pressure on the

often shallow foundations. However, the battered walls helped to offset this and the vault had one major advantage in that it did help to make sections of the tower house fireproof. A vault above the ground floor would seal off the door area which could easily be set on fire, while a vault above one of the upper stories would seal off the roof, especially if it was of easily combustible material like thatch; and having two vaults effectively protected the middle sections of a tower house.

In Kerry tower houses the majority of vaults are found over the ground floor. The vaults are of a similar barrel vault type, built with packed, flatish, stones set in mortar which was initially held in place by a wicker work centring - much of which still survives in many vaults today. Sometimes an extra chamber is created directly under the vault, so essentially one can have one and a half floors underneath the ground floor vault. This happens at Ballycarbery (27) where the wooden floor for this extra chamber rested on stone corbels, and a small narrow stairs leads from the ground floor loop embrasure to the attic floor under the vault. Sometimes the vault is not over the ground floor but over one of the upper stories. The vault at Fenit (96) is over the second storey. If there are two vaults in a tower house they will not be found directly on top of one another. This is because the weight on the walls would be too much, especially on the upper levels where the walls are thinner. It is more usual to find the vaults over the ground or first storey and then over the third or fourth storey. For example, the vaults at Carrigafoyle (60) are over the ground floor and the third storey. This allows for better distribution of weight and of course fireproofs the middle section.

Storeys that were not floored by the vault usually had wooden floors. There are different types of flooring to be found in tower houses. The most common type is the beam wall plate type. This flooring is constructed by spanning an area with a series of joists running between opposite walls. In the tower houses the ends of these joists rested on the wall - plate which was carried by corbels or set into wall sockets. In most tower houses there are the remains of stone corbels, usually evenly spaced, which indicate that the flooring was of the wall-beam type. The best intact example is at Minard (132) where the timber floor of the second storey chamber was carried on corbel courses on the north and south walls. On the N / E and S / W angles there are beam recesses which would have held the ends of the wall-plate beam. At Fenit (96) there is the example of flooring constructed using major supplanting beams set in sockets in the walls.

According to Duggan there are two types of flooring in a tower house (1) double floor where the secondary joists support the primary joists - these floors can span greater distances than single floors, (2) beam wallplate held on corbels.¹ He divides the period into three categories. Early (1430 - 1475) when the double floor method was used. Middle (1475 - 1575) when the most common flooring was the beam wall-plate resting on corbels, and Late (1575 - 1675) when there is a return to the double floor method.² For example, Ballymalis (38) is in the third category, a 16th century tower house where the double floor method is used at all levels. Most of the intact Kerry tower houses would fall into the middle category i.e having floors constructed with the beam wall - plate resting on corbels. For example, at Gallarus (101) the principal floors are of this type. Smaller rooms or chambers,

¹ Duggan S. "Structural woodwork in tower houses". M.A. (UCD) 1982 pp. 3 - 7.

² Duggan S. "Structural woodwork....." M.A. (U.C.D.) 1982 pp. 3 - 7.

especially those in turrets, could be floored using lintelled flat stone flags, the room holding the murder hole was usually floored like this in many tower houses.. This was not the strongest method of flooring and many entrance lobbies no longer have any ceilings. Sometimes, there are corbels on the tower house walls which do not seem to be part of a beam wall - plate, these were usually to support temporary wooden trussing, which was used in the construction of the vault.

STAIRS.

Access to the upper floors can be provided in many ways. There are some examples throughout the country where the entrance to the tower house is on the second floor. This is a feature very common in Scottish tower houses and while rare in Ireland it is not uncommon. The only example in Kerry may be at Fenit (96), there was once a ground floor entrance which is now gone but there is also a well cut pointed arched doorway on the second storey. It is possible that this was also an entrance door and if so would have been reached by a wooden stair from the ground, there does not seem to be any internal access from the ground floor chamber to the upper storeys so access was probably through the first storey entrance door. However, in most cases the entrance is on the ground floor and the stairs is usually to the side of the doorway. The most common type of stairs is the spiral or newel stairs. In the majority of extant tower houses the newel runs from the ground floor to the top storey, with communicating doors at each storey. The newel is usually in a rounded angle, or turret near the entrance lobby. Sometimes, as at Balllycarbery (27) the newel is in a corner turret or sometimes, as at Ballinskelligs (24) it is in a corner which has been rounded on the inside to facilitate the newel.

The newel itself is usually well made and in many cases each individual stair is well cut, the stairs at Carrigafoyle (60) is a particularly fine and an unusually wide example. The newel sometimes continues a few steps above the top storey on to dead end / blocked wall, perhaps to give people more room to manoeuvre, especially when carrying objects up and down the narrow stairs. In most tower houses the main newel does not provide access to the battlements. This is usually provided by a short separate flight of steps which could be more easily used by the occupants of the main chamber. The newel is always very narrow, in most cases two people can barely fit side by side. This is both a defensive feature and also necessitated by the fact that the stairs is cut into the wall. A narrow newel would allow attackers to advance only in single file, making it easier for the defenders to hold off an attack. As most newels are built into the thickness of the walls they cannot compromise the strength and defensiveness of the walls too much by being wider than the minimum.

Other types of stairs include the mural stairs. The mural stairs runs the length of the wall and is normally steeper and will take longer than a newel to climb the height of a tower house. As can be deduced from its name the mural stairs is built into the thickness of the walls. At Rahinanne (142) there are mural stairs in the south wall [Fig 8]. The mural stairs is approached from the small entrance lobby. This mural stairs leads to the first storey chamber and then on to the second storey but has now collapsed at this point. Some other later examples like the 16th century tower house at Ballymalis (38) and Dunkerron (91) have mural stairs. It is more common to find a newel and a mural stairs in a tower house than to find a building with just mural stairs, although Rahinnane (142) has only the mural type of stairs. Where the mural and newel stairs are found together it is more common to find the

mural stairs on the lower stories connecting with the newel on the upper stories. This is because a mural stairs takes up more room and is better suited to the lower thicker walls while a newel was suited to the upper thinner walls. In Kerry where the newel does not begin until the upper stories there are no extant examples of lower mural stairs. For example, at Minard (132) and Fenit (96) the newel begins on the first floor. Also, at Gallarus (101) communication from the ground floor to the first and second storey must have been by internal wooden stairs as the stairs does not exist below the second storey.

Internal wooden stairs had the advantage in that they could be placed at different points on each storey making it more difficult for intruders to reach the upper stories. In some tower house throughout the country both mural and newel stairs are also divided i.e they do not run directly from the ground floor to the upper floor and for the same reason. For instance, a newel could run in a S / E angle to the first storey and in the N / E angle to the second storey. This defensive measure often occurs at the very top where the stairs to the battlements are separate from the main newel as at Carrigafoyle (60), also turrets on the battlements are usually reached by their own flight of separate stairs as at Rahinane (142). Even in sites where the stairs are not divided it is possible to find short flights of steps leading to hidden rooms in vaults or in the case of Minard (132) the mezzanine storeys of the turret are at a slightly level than the main chambers and would have been reached by a short stepped ascent separate from the main stairs.

In many cases there are no longer any stairs in tower houses which makes access to the upper stories impossible. In the case of the newel stairs, they were quite vulnerable placed as they were at the angles or in corner turrets - usually being the first thing to be undermined or

blown up in time of war. In some cases the stairs are simply weathered away, as at Killaha (117), while much of the ruin remains, the rounded corner turret which held the spiral stairs is almost completely destroyed and there is no access to the upper stories. In other cases as at Ballycarbery (27) the stairs are still there but are in a very unsafe condition. On the other hand at places like Dunloe (93) there is no evidence of a stone stairs on any storey so there must have been wooden stairs at all levels. However, the most common extant type of stairs in Kerry tower houses is the newel stairs and this type can be found in tower house of all dates. This, however, is based on a small number of tower house and in most of the extant ruins there are no stairs at all.

THE UPPER STOREYS.

Going on from the stairs to the upper storeys there are few examples from which conclusions can be drawn. Only about 30 sites in Kerry stand above the ground floor to any extent, and this includes sites where there is only one wall standing above the ground floor. However, using these sites, plus the documentary evidence available, and information available from sites throughout the country it is possible to build up an idea of what the upper storeys were like, architecturally. Generally on the upper storeys there is more evidence of habitation. Many tower houses have fireplaces in at least one chamber; also it is here that one usually finds recessed window seats, cupboards, garderobes, slop stones, etc. However, as discussed in the chapter on daily life in the tower house, entertaining and eating did not always go on in the main tower house, and sometimes even in the later sites there are no fireplaces or garderobes. For example, the tower house at Rahinane (142) does not seem to have any of the above

mentioned features. There is some evidence that there once may have been a second building attached to the main tower house and this may have served the domestic centre and there is some evidence of other buildings in the enclosure which may have served as domestic buildings. At many sites there is evidence that the tower house itself served this function and the best way of showing it is to look at the plans of the upper storeys of these buildings.

In many tower houses the plans of the upper storeys are quite simple, with one undivided main chamber and perhaps smaller chambers in the thickness of the walls or in the turrets. In many cases it is difficult to speculate on the function of these upper chambers, whether they were the main / lords chambers, dining rooms or bedrooms etc, especially if there are no architectural details other than windows. In many ruins the upper storeys no longer have floors and the division between these storeys can only be seen from the existence of the corbels or beam slots. In less than half the 20 or so complete ruins is there access to the upper storeys. In all cases the floors that are intact were of stone and usually these are the storeys over the vault, of course the original timber flooring in almost all tower houses in the country has disappeared, except at a few sites like Clara, Co. Kilkenny and Ross (147) where the heavy original oak floors are still in position.

The plan of the upper storeys is usually not complicated. The simplest plan is the undivided main chamber on each level. The smaller tower houses usually have this type of plan, for example what is left of Castle Core would indicate this simple type of plan [Fig 14]. Gallarus (101) is a typical example of this plan with a vault over the ground floor and an undivided chamber on each succeeding storey. Other tower house can be divide into different sections. For instance,

at Minard (132) the chambers on each level are divided into a main chamber and a mezzanine storey, which is slightly higher than the main chamber on each level [Fig 13]. The main chambers contain all the architectural details of an upper storey, the fireplaces, recesses, cupboards, corbels, etc while the smaller mezzanine chambers contain the murder hole and the garderobe. At Dunloe (93) the tower house is divided from the ground floor (there is no vault) by a single dividing wall. There also seems to be a dividing wall over the ground floor at Ballycarnhan (29) - over the vault - which created two chambers on the first floor(the tower house does not survive above this level).

The diving wall did not always create two equally sized chambers. For instance, at Ballycarbery (27), the upper floor is divided into a large sized chamber which possibly served as the lords hall and a second smaller chamber [Fig 12]. Another plan was where a side wall turret existed. As already mentioned, many tower houses have side wall turrets which run the entire height of the tower house. The turret are in effect smaller complete versions of the main tower house. For example, at Carrigafoyle (60) the side turret, as well as creating an extra chamber on each level, provides room for the spiral stairs, thus ensuring that none of the space in the main tower was used for this purpose. The chambers in the turret are all the same size and unlike the main building only the very top storey is vaulted. The chambers in the turret were most likely used as a storage area or as bed chambers as there is no fireplace on any level. The large main chambers possibly served the function of the lords hall, dining chamber, and main bed chambers, there are fireplaces in some of these chambers. One unusual aspect in the upper floors of a tower house are the "arcades" in the wall of the upper floor at Rahinane

(142) [Plate 7] Whatever the plan of a tower house it rarely varies from those described above.

FIREPLACES.

A fireplace is really a recess with a flue built into the thickness of the wall. It is on the upper storeys that one finds features such as fireplaces, larger windows, garderobes, window seats, cupboards, etc. It is held by many historians / archaeologists that most early tower houses do not usually have fireplaces on any storey. In many of the earlier tower houses there are no fireplaces, and where they do exist they are often later insertions. Craig used the presence or lack of a fireplace as a way of dating the tower house.¹ There is no proof to the contrary in Kerry, but there is also the problem that some later tower houses do not have fireplaces either, so this is not the most reliable of dating tower houses. For instance, Ballycarbery (27), a large, important, late 15th / early 16th century tower house does not seem to have had a fireplace at any level. It is possible that the idea postulated in chp. 7 on daily life in the tower house, i.e. that most of the cooking and eating was not done in some of the main tower houses but in a side hall is an explanation for the lack of fireplaces in some of the early and later tower houses. However, with few exceptions most 15th - 16th century tower houses would have at least one fireplace. As the ground floor was usually only a storage area it is unusual to find a fireplace here.

It is possible that the fireplaces in a tower house all share the same flue and chimney. However, in many places, especially the later sites, all the fireplaces would have their own flue. Fireplaces differ in their surrounds especially on the tops or lintels. The simplest type are those

¹ Craig M. "Architecture....". 1982 pp. 98 - 99.

tops composed of simple stone arches with perhaps a cut stone at each end. For example, the fireplace at Barrow (15) which, unusually, is on the ground floor, is topped by a simple arch comprised of individual cut stones. That at Castle Core (63) is also a simple stone arch with a cut stone ends and elongated cut stone sides. The fireplace at Ballinruddery (23) may have been of the same type but the top is too ruinous to see, although it does have the carved one piece stone sides. Most tower houses in Kerry tend to have this simple type of fireplace; where the lintel exists (and it is gone in most places) it can be one large carved stone or several carved stone pieces interlocking, held together by a key stone forming a z or "joggled" lintel. It is impossible to use fireplaces to date tower houses as a type, simple or joggled, as all types are used throughout the period.

Not all fireplaces have simple or joggled lintels without ornamentation. In some tower houses, especially the later sites, with several fireplaces, one can find carved shafts, sills, mantelpieces, etc. At Killaha (117) there are the remains of at least three very ornamented fireplaces [Plate 17], there may be another under an ivy covered section of the tower house. Killaha (117) has a large plain simple fireplace on the ground floor but the upper floor fireplaces are of very high quality and the work of a skilled craftsman. On the west wall the two most visible fireplaces are on the second and third storeys, with that on the third storey slightly to the left of the lower one. Both fireplaces have carved and ornamented shafts; the shafts bubble out where they meet the end stone of the arch and on these are carved a "fleur-de-lis". The sill above the fireplace is also very well carved [Plate 18]. Such carved mantels and sills are not common in Kerry tower houses. Killaha (117) is 16th century in date, but even the later tower houses do not all have such well cut fireplaces. Unlike other

parts of the country no tower house in Kerry has a fireplace with a name or date carved into the mantel, like for example, the 1575 date carved near the fireplace at Coole Castle, Co. Offaly. It is a pity that such beautiful examples of workmanship like at Killaha (117) should remain open to the weather and vandals. Examples of mediaeval craftsmanship are fast disappearing and such examples are well worth protecting.

INSIDE WINDOW LOOPS.

At sites like Killaha (117) each fireplace would open into its own individual flue, which is evident from the many chimneys which rise from the roof of this building. the type of chimneys found in Kerry tower houses was discussed earlier in this chapter. Other aspects of upper storey architecture include bigger windows, window seats, etc. While at many sites the upper storey windows may appear to be narrow window loops from the outside, it is not unusual to find, that on the inside the embrasures for these windows can be quite large. Even on the ground floor the inside embrasures and splays can sometimes be large, which does compromise the thickness of the lower walls. On the upper storeys it is quite common to find deeply recessed window embrasures. For instance, the window opes at Minard (132) are set in wide deep embrasures which contain the draw bar sockets and pivot holes for the shutters [Plate 17].

The embrasures have segmented arches and were constructed in the same way as vaults. That is, firstly erecting a timber support, then laying a wicker mat curved to the required shape on the arch. Then this was coated with mortar and the small rounded stones of the arch were set and grouted with mortar. When the structure dried the timber supports were removed (although sometimes one finds the small

beam holes which once held the trussing). The outline of the wicker mat can still be seen on many vaults, and arched embrasures constructed using this method. Many other sites such as Ballycarbery (27) have loops and windows which are set in very wide embrasures [Plate 9]. Of course putting such deep embrasures into the thickness of the walls does compromise the defensive function of the thick walls. It would seem that the only reason to put in such wide embrasures was to provide more space and some more light. It is possible that the wide embrasures were used as window seats although, only at Listowel (129) are there stone window seats. It is possible that wooden window seats were put in the embrasures, which of course, would not survive to - day. However, the reasons for and the uses of these deep and wide embrasures is still something of a mystery.

RECTANGULAR WINDOWS.

In addition to the window loops it is also more usual to find rectangular windows on the upper storeys. These rectangular windows are also usually set in wide embrasures. Rectangular windows and window loops can be found side by side on the same tower house, even on the same storey, although it is unusual to find rectangular windows on the ground floor. Many of the extant ruins in Kerry have examples of these rectangular windows from Ballinruddery (23) in the north to Ballycarbery (27) in the south. The windows at Ballinruddery (23) are set in wide shallow embrasures with a slight segmented arch. The transoms and mullions are well cut and the draw bar sockets for the shutters are still visible [Plate 8]. At Ballymalis (38) there are two different types of rectangular windows (1) similar to that at Ballinruddery (23) with cut transoms and mullions and (2) three ogee headed loops together to form a window, set in an arched embrasure

[Plate 6]. At Ballycarbery (27) the first storey chambers were lit by huge round headed windows - the remains of a cut stone appears on the side of one window. Most of these windows have the remains of draw bar sockets and pivot holes for the shutters. It is hard to say what material once covered the windows. Presumably in the later tower houses, especially in the bigger windows, glass was used. However, most loops and slits are too small and narrow for glass and these and some of the bigger windows were closed using wooden shutters as evidenced by the draw bar sockets.

Throughout the tower house, but most especially on the upper storeys one can find cupboard and press recesses. They are usually cubic in shape and sunk into the wall or the window embrasures. Since many dry goods and valuables were stored in the tower houses these cupboards were essential. The ground floor may have been used to store heavy goods and equipment such as grain, farm tools, arms ; however, the people living in the tower house also need space to store items needed for every day living and personal items. It would not have been practical to store goods in the chambers or against the walls as space was already at a premium, so cupboards were a necessity. It is actually surprising there are not more cupboards at most sites. On average there are about three cupboard recesses per chamber in Kerry tower houses; and in some sites only three or four cupboards throughout the building. Again as with the function of the wider embrasures it is hard to say what was stored in these cupboards, probably everything and anything. When a recess is in a garderobe chamber as at Minard (132) and Carrigafoyle (60) it safe to speculate that this cupboard was used for some sort of toilet paper, or if large, for storing clothes as it was believed that the fumes of the garderobe preserved the fabric.

SANITATION.

Sanitation must have been something of a problem to the tower house dwellers. In many tower house there is no indication that there were any indoor toilet facilities or garderobes. The garderobe, where it did exist, was usually in a small upper storey chamber or in the thickness of the wall. There are no completely intact garderobes in Kerry but originally the funnels must have been covered by a stone or wooden seat in which a hole had been carved. Presumably since there was no running water in any tower house the garderobe funnels had to be washed out with buckets of water brought in from the outside. Even the existing garderobes seem unhygienic, for instance, at Carrigafoyle (60) the funnel for the second storey garderobe meets with the funnel for the first storey garderobe at the first storey i.e the funnel goes down behind the garderobe seat. As already mention, some garderobes had wall presses. The garderobe usually exited at one side of the tower house away from the door, where the sewage had to be cleaned away, manually. In some case there is no evidence that the garderobes exited anywhere, which was probably very unhygienic. Even in the case of washing there are problems. Water had to be hauled in and dirty water gotten rid of. The way this was done was the use of slop stones, as described earlier. Sanitation does not seem to have played a very important function in tower houses and it is not surprising to find that even some of the late tower houses lack garderobes.

SECRET CHAMBERS.

All of the above architectural features are relatively common, however, some tower houses have features which are relatively

unique. It is not common to find secret chambers in many tower houses. These chambers could serve many functions, to hide valuables, goods, or family members in time of siege. For instance, there ~~is~~ are two small chambers in the side of the third storey vault at Carrigafoyle (60) [Plate 14]. It is impossible to tell what these chambers could have been used for. Even a child cannot stand upright in them and a grown person hiding there would have to squat or lie down - not very pleasant over a long period. Even the door into the chambers is tiny, being no more than 1m wide by 1m high. It is possible that these chambers performed the function of a type of safe, to hide valuables in, also these chambers performed the function of lessening the weight of the massive vault. Other secret chambers may have functioned as prisons. At Dunkerron (91) in south Kerry there is quite a large chamber to the side of the tower house which can only be reached from above, and is lit by one small loop. As the roof is gone it cannot be determined how the chamber was entered but it was probably via a trapdoor from above. Imprisonment is common in tower houses and there are many references in the annals so this chamber at Dunkerron (91) may have served this purpose.

EXCEPTIONAL TOWER HOUSES.

The best way to discuss the unusual architecture of a few Kerry tower houses is to describe each individual case. Most Kerry tower houses, while being different in size or having one or two features which are not very common, are in the end quite similar, however, there are a few which are different or exceptional buildings. Round tower houses are unusual but not rare, Cairns mentions several in Tipperary. However in Kerry there are only two round sites, one of

which is the 13th century round castle at Aghadoe (1) and the other is the round tower house at Barrow (15) [Plate 13]. Unfortunately, it is hard to precisely date Barrow (15), local tradition says it was built by the DeClahulls (a minor branch of the Fitzmaurices). It is built directly across the Fenit inlet from the more conventional tower house at Fenit island (96) [Plate 19]. It is possibly that both tower houses were built around the same time to guard the inlet; a third site (97) is mentioned around this inlet on some 17th century maps but there are no ruins visible to-day. Fenit (96) is a 15th century tower house and Barrow (15) would seem to be, architecturally, of the same period. Barrow (15) may have been influenced by Aghadoe (1) or some of the other round castles but it is impossible to say why the DeClahulls chose to build a round tower house. Barrow (15) seems to have played a more defensive role than is usual for a tower house in that it helps protect the inlet and perhaps the round tower house was seen as more defensive. Other than the fact that it is round Barrow (15) is really no different from other tower houses. The main entrance still exists and leads through a well cut pointed arched doorway to an entrance with the stairs on the left, the guard chamber on the right and the door to the main ground floor chamber in front [Fig10]. The entrance lobby is covered by a murder hole from a small chamber above. All the surrounds in the tower house are well cut and carved. The tower itself is built of roughly coursed rubble which is stepped out in the lower courses to allow for the uneven land on which it is built. The tower was about two storeys high and there is no evidence of battlements. On the inside the main chambers have been squared off and have the usual architectural features, loops set in wide embrasures, recesses, a spiral stairs, corbels, as well as a vault over the first storey. Access to the upper part is still possible, and the room with the murder hole is

still intact, it has a flagged floor. Architecturally the inside of Barrow (15) is similar to any other 15th - 16th century tower house, except that the only fireplace in the building is on the ground floor. A more unusual site is Rincaheragh (146) in south Kerry [Plate 3]. This building is on the site of an ancient promontory fort. The tower itself is more of a gatehouse tower rather than a tower house. The building is two storeys in the middle of a wall strung across the neck of a fosse which once defended the promontory fort. The entrance door is quite large with a rounded segmented arch. The ground floor is also unusual in that the entrance lobby runs to the back wall and the chambers are off to the right and left of this lobby.

The spiral stairs is in the S / E corner and leads to the first storey. The ground floor chambers are roofed with flat stone slabs and are lit by small loops. The entrance lobby has an arched stone slab roof. The building itself is quite small, the south wall is 6.70m in length and the east wall is 2.95 m in length. It is unlikely that the building could have housed anything more than a few people or a small garrison, however in the interior of the site is a grass cover earthwork which may be the remains of a hall; it is rectangular in shape and may have been associated with the gatehouse although without excavation it is impossible to be sure of this. Little is known about Rincaheragh (146) itself. Locals say that the Trant family were always associated with the "castle". There is no documentary evidence to suggest a date but on the first floor of the building itself over the entrance lobby is what appears to a carved shot hole which would suggest a mid 16th century date. Architecturally the building is something similar to the other crudely built 15th and 16th century tower houses in the area. Other sites, while not as unusual as Rincaheragh (146) do stand out.

Sites such as Ballycarbery (27) and Leck (126). Ballycarbery (27)

[Plate 9] is a big tower house, but not built in the style of the other south Kerry tower houses - see fig 16, 16a for a contrast between Ballycarbery (27) and a more typical small tower house - Fieries (95). . It was an important site, being one of the chief houses of the MacCarthy Mores. What is unusual is that it is more an oblong building rather than a vertical building. Also like sites such as the 12th century Grennan castle in Co.Kilkenny there are three separate vaulted chambers on the ground floor. Some architectural details such as the large main chamber on the first storey are also unusual. It has a feature not often found in a tower house, a portcullis, the slots of which still remain. Leck castle (126) on the north Kerry coast is also unusual, but more for where it is built, as it stands on a tiny "island", really a large rock cut off by a narrow chasm from the mainland. The tower house once filled the entire island, the bawn wall went around the perimeter edges. It has the remains of musket holes in the bawn [Plate 16] so the site must be 16th century in date. It was a very defensive site, only approachable by a very narrow causeway. To chose such a defensive and probably uncomfortable site (it is wide open to the Atlantic) in the 16th century may indicate a lack of security in the area.

The other unusual site which once existed was Castlemaine (71). Unfortunately, the ruin was completely leveled in the last century. Castlemaine (71) was, according to pictorial evidence built on a bridge across the river Maine [Fig A]. This evidence comes from Pacenta Hibernia and is fairly reliable. Pacenta Hibernia also has a drawing of Carrigafoyle (60) which is fairly accurate so there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the representation of Castlemaine (71). The drawing shows two main structures on the bridge, the taller building flat roofed and battlemented and the attached shorter building having a hipp roof.

There also seems to be a portcullis suspended by chains from the southern end of the building. It is impossible to date Castlemaine (71) accurately. It was on the border of north (Anglo - Irish) Kerry and south (Irish) Kerry and had been an important site since the 13th century. However, it is impossible to say if the building in the drawing is 13th century or later. It is unfortunate that such an unusual and important site no longer exists. Ballingarry (19) is unusual because of the remains of the original drawbridge [Plate 20], although the tower itself no longer remains. The drawbridge spans a narrow chasm and is built of sandstone rubble. There is some evidence that there may have been a small guard chamber beside the drawbridge on the island side.

CONCLUSION.

Taking an over view of tower house it is safe to say that Kerry tower houses on the whole conform to the norm, architecturally. While some individual innovations are found in some tower houses in general they are fairly similar to tower houses through out the country. We have no way of knowing who built these tower houses but taking certain areas it can be said that some builders or group of builders / masons must have operated. In south Kerry, for instance, there is a string of tower houses of much the same date, that are so alike architecturally, that they must have been built by the same builders or at least by builders with very similar styles and techniques. The tower houses like Killaha (117), Castle Core (63), Dunkerron (91), and Cappanacuss (58) etc are all similar in general style, while having some individual differences. In a previous chapter on war it was concluded that while the tower house had an important defensive function it was not the most important function. This conclusion is borne out by the evidence of tower house architecture. Many defensive architectural features are

found in tower houses, the thick walls, the bawns, the murder hole, musket holes, battlements etc. Obviously the tower house was intended to protect the owner, his family, dependents and goods and would do this against thieves or small raiding parties. However, again and again, it is found that the defensive nature of the tower house is compromised by the very people who built it. Putting deep ope and embrasures, chambers, stairs, garderobes, etc in the thickness of the walls defeats the whole purpose of having thick walls both for protection and to aid the shallow foundations in holding up the whole structure. A chamber in the thickness of the wall would lessen the defensiveness of the wall at that point by half and make it easier for any besiegers to break through; and the space gained by compromising the thickness of the walls is really not that much in any tower house. Architecturally it would seem that defence was important but not the most important function of the tower house. However, whatever the criticisms of the tower house builders, they did build structures that were meant to last and the many ruins on the landscape are a tribute to their abilities as builders.

MANORIAL, URBAN AND CHURCH TOWER HOUSES.

When dealing with urban tower houses in Kerry the area of study is confined to north Kerry. This is because this area was the only part of the county colonised by the Anglo-Normans. The definition of an urban centre has caused some controversy among Irish historians, because of the existence of the "rural" boroughs. Glasscock used this term to classify settlements where there is documentary evidence or references to burgages and burgesses, but which were never true urban centres or towns. These "rural" boroughs were primarily created to attract large numbers of English settlers to the new colony. In the early history of the colony lords of every degree were able to create these pseudo-boroughs, which were never more than nucleated villages in any real sense.¹ The advantages offered by these "rural" boroughs were many - fixed annual rents, freedom of alienation of burgages, a low fixed amercement, its affairs managed not by the manorial court but by its own hundred court, of which the burgesses were the only suitors.² However, unlike real urban settlements, the activities in these "rural" boroughs were of a purely agricultural kind, and only a small local trade may have existed. Studies in the development of these "rural" boroughs are limited, but they seem to have existed wherever the Anglo-Normans colonised the land at an early stage. For instance, Otway-Ruthven mentions 14 - 15 of these boroughs in medieval Kildare and Tipperary and more elsewhere.³

No real in depth study has been done on the development of urban centres in Kerry, and it is outside the scope of this thesis to provide

¹ Otway-Ruthven J. "History of medieval Ireland". 1968 pp. 116.

² *ibid.* pp. 116.

³ *ibid.* pp. 116.

this; however, some general conclusions can be drawn from the available material. In the pre - Norman period the great Early Christian monastic centres of Kerry i.e. Ardfert, Aghadoe, Ratass, Rattoo, Kilmekeader, Ballinskelligs etc may have functioned as proto - urban centres. The Vikings had never founded an urban centre or port on the Kerry coast line so these monastic centres were the only places that in some ways provided the function of towns. That is, as well as the monastic inhabitants, these centres may have attracted trades people, labourers, workers, etc. In many of the larger monastic centres there could be quite a large population. However, unlike the post Norman urban centres, these monastic centres did not function because of the presence of a court, or because of trade or agriculture; trade and agriculture were in many places secondary to the function of the monastic centres, so therefore they were never true urban centres, merely large nucleated centres of population. However, it is interesting to note that in common with the rest of Ireland, the Anglo-Normans of Kerry re-used some of the old monastic centres as their towns and boroughs.

As already mentioned, the urban centres in Kerry are confined to those established in north Kerry. The Geraldines failed to conquer the McCarthy lands in south Kerry and after their defeat at Callan in 1261, confined themselves to consolidating their north Kerry lands. The towns they built include Ardfert, Tralee, the port of Dingle, the borough of Rattoo, as well as the manors of Lixnaw, Duagh, Castleisland, Molahiffe, Currans, Castlemaine, Killorglin, Inch, Tarbert, Tawlagh, Ballymore, New Manor, and two sites which are unknown Moynwyn and Kylbanewane.¹ Except for Ardfert, Tralee,

¹ (a) Pipe Rolls 1297-98. (b) C.D.I. 1298-99. (c) Ormond Deeds. 1421. Inquisition into the lands of the Earl of Desmond. (d) Bradley J "Medieval Towns of Kerry"

Dingle, and perhaps Castleisland and Castlemaine there is no evidence that the other sites were little more than rural boroughs.

At Ardfert, Tralee, Dingle, and Rattoo there is evidence that there were fairly large populations and that these places were true medieval urban centres. However, in the other places there is no evidence of occupation at any time by a sizable population, yet, some of these places had manorial courts and fairs, and were evidently important centres. It is possible that they once had burgesses and burgage plots which were abandoned in medieval times but there is no evidence, to date, of deserted medieval boroughs in Kerry. Even without excavation, aerial surveys should have shown up some or any "lost" boroughs but this has not happened. The other explanation is that these places were not true urban centres but "rural" boroughs of the type described above. North Kerry was colonised in the early 13th century, when the setting up of these "rural" boroughs to encourage settlers was happening. It is possible that the Geraldines created some of these "rural" boroughs to get settlers to come to this remote and dangerous part of the country, and this is why there are references to manorial courts in the 1300's in places like Duagh, which never seem to have grown beyond small villages, which were totally agricultural in function and could not be called true urban centres.

All these centres were founded by the Geraldines, their sub-tenants or their allies. Ardfert and Rattoo were both Early Christian monastic sites while Tralee and Dingle served as ports. Unfortunately, there is very little evidence to show the foundation date of any of these places. The Annals of Inisfallen and McCarthaigs Book mention the foundation of "castles" (possibly mottes) at Molahiffe (134), Currans (82),

N.M.A.J. 1979 pp. 29, (e) Glascock R "Land and People" in New history of Ireland Vol II 1987 pp. 233.

Castlemaine (71), and Killorglin (118), in the initial invasion led by de Marisco and the Geraldines of Shanid in 1215. These references show only that these sites were of military significance, not that they were manorial centres from this period. However, there is some evidence that there were stone castles at Killorglin (118) and Castleisland (67) by the mid 13th century and they may have been functioning as manorial centres at this time. In 1245 there is a reference to Killorglin as the "kings castle"¹ and it could have been the manorial centre for the lands around it.

In a list of the lands and manors of Thomas FitzMaurice, heir to Desmond in 1297, the manors of New Manor, Castleisland, and Killorglin are mentioned.² However, this is very scanty documentary evidence on which to base the precise foundation dates of towns, manors, and boroughs in Kerry. It is probable that these settlements were well established by the 1300's. The initial foundations may have been in the 1220's but it is certain that the Geraldines concentrated their energies in consolidating their north Kerry lands after 1261 and all these sites were in place by the late 13th century. There is no evidence for any type of settlement in Tralee before the coming of the Anglo-Normans. The Anglo-Normans needed ports from which to conduct their trade and Tralee, standing near a sheltered bay, provided this outlet. There is no documentary evidence to date the founding of Tralee, but the establishment of a Dominican Friary in c.1243 suggests that the settlement was sizable by the mid 13th century.³ There were several "castles" in Tralee, one being the Great castle (158) of the Earls of Desmond. Unfortunately, the earliest

¹ C.J.R. 1245.

² C.D.I. 1297

³ Bradley J. "Medieval towns of Kerry". N.M.A.J. 1979 pp. 37.

reference to this seigneurial castle comes in 1548 when "Sabina, heir of Robert Mac Leanye granted the Great Castel in Tralighe to James Earl of Desmond"¹ The Great castle (158) of the Earls no longer exists as it was demolished in 1826, although Smith saw it and his map shows it to have been on the north end of Denny street.²

Because Tralee was badly damaged in both the Desmond Rebellion and the Cromwellian wars and was rebuilt several times the original medieval layout of the town has all but disappeared. The Desmond Survey of 1587 states that it was "formerly a well inhabited borough, with a castle and edifices in it, formerly well and fully repaired, but now ruined and broken".³ Bradley states that the concentration of the small streets on the west side of the town on Smiths map suggests that this was the core of the old town with the castle located on the edge of these streets.⁴ It is not unusual to have the castle of an urban centre located on the edge of the populated area, especially if it was attached to the defensive walls or ditches. However, in the case of Tralee there is no evidence that the town was ever walled, there are no records of murage grants, nor is there any archaeological evidence of walls or ditches. There are, however, in the 16th and 17th centuries, a number of references to fortified residences within the town, including the Countess castle (81) of which there are some slight remains. It is unfortunate that none of the defences or strongholds of the main town in north Kerry have survived to the present. It can be assumed that the Great castle (158) was probably of 13th century date, but the Short castle (159), Rice's castle (160), and the Countess castle (81) were later in date and were most possibly tower houses [the ruins of the Countess

¹ Cal. Carew Mss. Misc. pp. 397.

² Smith C. "History of Kerry". reprint 1969 pp. 340 - 341.

³ Desmond Survey pp. 10-11.

⁴ Bradley J. "Medieval towns.....". N.M.A.J. 1979 pp. 38.

castle (81) show it to be a tower house]. However, it is impossible to state if these tower houses formed part of the defences of the town or if they were built in the defensive shadow of the Great castle (158).

The other port in Kerry of Anglo-Norman foundation was that of Dingle. Again, there does not seem to have been any pre - Norman settlement in Dingle and the place was founded purely as an Anglo-Norman trading port. The town may have been founded in the early 13th century but the first custom returns are not until 1278-79 when it seems to be well established as a port. Unlike Tralee, Dingle still retains some of the imprint of its medieval foundations. The street pattern is linear, consisting of the main street and the burgage plot patterns still survive on either side of it, and stretches back to a long linear boundary on the south, which almost certainly preserves the line of the town wall. There is no evidence of any 13th century castle or of the walling of the town before the 16th century. The first murage grant comes in 1569 when "£100 for the walling of the town of Dinglecoche in Kerreye" was given, although it does not seem to have been until 1585, after the Desmond rebellion, that this grant was approved.¹ It is also known that there were at least three tower houses in Dingle, they are all now gone but the sites are known. These were Rice castle (85) which stood at the junction of Main street and Green street, "Caislean na bhFiach" (86) which stood at the north end of Main street and Husseys castle (87) which stood on Main street. These sites would suggest that these tower houses stood in close proximity to each other and to Main street. The walls of the town can still be traced. These walls were rectangular in plan and enclosed an area of c.15 acres with some suburbs outside the walls.² The three tower houses were

¹ Bradley J. "Medieval towns.....". N.M.A.J 1979 pp. 35.

² Cuppage J. (ed). "Dingle Peninsula Survey". 1986 pp. 380.

inside the walls and do not seem to be associated with these walls in any defensive sense.

In many areas of the country there is evidence that castles and later the tower houses were incorporated in town walls to strengthen the defences of these walls. This happened in Dublin, Carlingford, Downpatrick, Ards, and other places. In Kerry the main town Tralee was never walled and the tower houses in Dingle were built before the walling of the town. However, these castles and tower houses were part of the defences of the towns. There are many references to the destruction of the Great castle (158) in the many wars, especially during the Desmond Rebellion when it was destroyed and referred to as "broken and ruined" in 1587.¹ Again in 1641 it was to this castle that the Planters retreated and were besieged in by the rebel Irish. In Dingle as well as the tower houses there were, at least by 1589, town houses which were described as "very strongly built with thicke stone walls and narrow windows like unto castles."² At least by the late 16th century Dingle must have been quite a well fortified town. Unfortunately, none of the three tower houses survive but they were probably 15th/16th century in date. No new tower houses were built with the new wall in the late 16th century, perhaps it was thought that the existing tower houses and strong houses provided enough protection. As with Tralee, Dingle suffered in the late 16th century and was in 1611 a "poor,ruined place",³ but trade soon restored the fortunes of the town.

The Anglo-Norman town of Ardfert was founded in the 13th century but Ardfert had been a monastic centre of some importance since the

¹ Desmond Survey. pp. 9.

² Cuppage J (ed). "Dingle Survey". pp. 380.

³ *ibid.* pp. 380.

6th century. From 1111 it was the episcopal see of Kerry and it has many ruins from the 10th and 11th century which show its importance. Ardfert was evidently an Anglo-Norman borough by 1297, if not earlier; in 1297 there is a reference to a burgess of "Ardart".¹ The defences of Ardfert may be earlier in date than either Tralee or Dingle. There is a record of a murage grant in 1286 to enclose the "vill of Ard" and later there is a reference to the collection of murage in 1311-12 which indicates that Ardfert was walled.² However, there are no remains of these walls (they may have been of earth or timber and were therefore more perishable) so it is not possible to estimate the size of the enclosed town, and also there is no record that there were any castles or tower houses built with or near these walls to help with defence. To-day in Ardfert the only tower house is the tower built in the 15th century by the Franciscan Friars on to their Friary, and this is just outside the town. However, there is some evidence that there may have been a 13th century castle. There are records of a royal prison in Ardfert in 1295 and in 1307 and these would suggest that a castle existed by this time.³ Also King mentions a castle of 1311 which was demolished in 1637.⁴ The possible site of this castle may have been near St. Brendans Cathedral, however, as no town defences have survived it is impossible to say where in relation to the castle were the town walls.

There are no remains of any tower houses in the town of Ardfert. But there may have been at least one late 16th century tower house, as the Desmond Survey mentions "one new castle, lately built with stones

¹ Cal. Just. Rolls (Ire) 1295-1303 pp. 128.

² Bradley J. "Medieval towns.....". N.M.A.J. 1979 pp. 33.

³ C.J.R.(Ire) 1295-1303 pp. 44. C.S.P (Ire) 1574-85 pp. 261.

⁴ King J. "Co.Kerry Past and Present". 1907 pp. 10.

and lime" in the "town of Ardarte".¹ Again this tower house is not associated with the town walls or defences. The other recorded borough in Kerry is at Rattoo. This is not very well documented and it is not until 1597 that there is a reference to a grant of burgage.² There is no evidence of a castle or tower house or walls at Rattoo. The borough may have been in the vicinity of the round tower and the pre-Norman monastic settlement. The four above mentioned sites constitute the Anglo-Norman urban settlement in Kerry. There were no parallel developments in south Kerry as the land remained in Irish hands until the 17th century.

Walled towns were a common feature in European history, and it is perhaps surprising that of the four sites mentioned, only one Ardfert, was definitely walled in the 13th century. The fact that Tralee and Rattoo never seem to have been walled and Dingle was not walled until the 16th century may indicate stability in the area. The history of the area is relatively stable, the Earls of Desmond remained in total and absolute control until the late 16th century, and while there certainly were raids and petty wars between the local lords and chiefs, these did not seriously disturb the area at any stage. The castles and tower houses in, for example, Dingle may have provided enough defence for the town. However, it is obvious that at none of these sites was there a concerted effort to build either castles or tower houses solely for defensive reasons. In Tralee the Great castle (158) belonged to the Earls of Desmond but the other tower houses were in the control of different families, for example the Short castle (159) was evidently quite near the Great castle (158) as the defenders jumped from one to the other in the 1641 siege. It belonged to the Rice family and was late in date,

¹ Desmond Survey pp. 5.

² Bradley J. "Medieval towns.....". N.M.A.J. 1979 pp. 36.

possibly of the 15th to 16th century. In Dingle the three tower houses belonged to the Knight of Kerry, the Husseys, and the Rices respectively. While these sites were all quite near each other there is no proof that they were built for defensive reasons or that they were ever in use at the same time. Unlike many walled (or unwalled) towns in the country the strongholds of towns in Kerry while strengthening the defences do not seem to have been built primarily for this purpose.

As Jope and Seaby state, defensive tower houses were known within towns from the 15th century in Britain and Europe.¹ Certainly the towns of Dingle, Tralee, and Ardfert were well established before their tower houses were built. The 13th century castles at Tralee and the possible one at Ardfert would have provided a certain amount of defence but this did not stop the 14th and 15th century builders from constructing strong walled tower houses within the towns. While a town provided a certain amount of protection it was still necessary to build tower houses. Even in the city of Dublin, with all its defences, there is proof that fortified tower houses were being built in the early 14th century.² These urban tower houses most likely served the same function as the rural tower houses, i.e a fortified residence. However, urban tower houses also served the extra function of adding to and strengthening the defences of a town, especially if it were a walled town. Even where these tower houses were obviously built by individuals, rather than as part of some overall plan of defence, they became part of the town defences to a certain extent. In Kerry it would seem that all the urban tower houses were built by individuals. There are no records of grants for strongholds to strengthen town defences

¹ Jope and Seaby "A new document in the P.R.O.....". U.J.A. 22 1959. pp. 116.

² Davin A. "Tower houses.....". 1982 pp. 116.

and even the Earl of Desmond did not build walls or tower houses to add to the defences of Tralee. However, the existing tower houses, even when built by individuals for their own defensive purposes, could be used in time of war in the overall defence of a town, therefore tower houses, whether built as part of town defence plans or by individuals, added to the security of a town.

Because the manor was an Anglo-Norman introduction to Kerry here again manors are to be found only in north Kerry. From the list of principal towns and manors in Ireland in 1300 by Glasscock there are seven manorial centres as well as the four above mentioned towns in Kerry¹. The most important centre was probably the Earl of Desmonds chief manor of Castleisland (67). It is possible that Castleisland (67) was a borough; it had one of the principal castles of the Earls although there is no documentary evidence for the existence of a borough. There is evidence, however, that it was a manor, from the list of manors of James, heir to the Earldom, in 1297.² After the initial Anglo-Norman invasion most of the manorial centres had a motte or a castle at their centre. In Castleisland (67) there is evidence of a stone castle by the mid 13th century, and there is a reference to the castle in 1231.³ The present remains are quite ruinous, scattered and in bad condition but suggest quite a large 13th century castle. The Desmond Survey of 1584 calls it a "high, monstrous castle of many rooms".⁴ Obviously this castle served the usual function as a manorial centre as did many other 13th century castles. Other manorial centres with 13th century castles include Killorglin (118) and possibly Currans (82) and

¹ Glasscock R.E. "Land and People c. 1300". 1987 A new history of Ireland. (ed) Martin et al.

² Pipe Rolls Edward I 1297-98.

³ Cusack. "History of Kerry". 1871 pp. 401.

⁴ Desmond Survey. pp. 16

Castlemaine (71). Killorglin (118) is reputed to have been built in the 1220's by de Marisco and then to have been taken over by the Knights Templar. There is a reference to it in 1245 in C.D.I. which shows it to have been in the kings hands. Unfortunately, no trace of Killorglin castle (118) remains but there is no evidence that the stone castle was ever replaced by a tower house. The structures at Castlemaine (71) and Currans (82) were also 13th century castles. There are references to "castles" being built at both sites in c. 1215.¹ The castle at Castlemaine (71) was built on a bridge spanning the river Maine and was destroyed in the last century. However, there is a drawing of the structure in *Pacenta Hibernia* which would suggest a large 13th century structure. At Currans (82) there is very little left of the building but the ruins would also suggest a 13th century structure, so both these sites had 13th century castles which served as the manorial centre for the areas.

All the other manorial centres may have had a castle or a tower house which functioned as the centre. Unfortunately, there is no way to prove one way or the other as there are no ruins at any site. As already mentioned, one of the more usual functions of a castle was to serve as a manorial centre, however, this is not always the case with the tower house. The tower house was first and foremost a residence (see chp.2) and it is not very common to find a tower house as a manorial centre. This is not to say that the tower house did not function as a manorial centre in some cases, it did but not as commonly as did the castle. There are many reasons why the tower houses were less suitable or used as manorial centres. These include the fact that most manors had been created by the 14th century and most would already have a castle (or a motte) which functioned as the manorial centre. As

¹ Orpen G.H. "Ireland under the Normans". 1911 - 1920 Vol III pp. 127.

well as the manorial centres mentioned by Glasscock there were manors at Tralee, New Manor, Inch, Dingle, Ballymore, Tarbert, Tawlagh, Kylbanwane, and Moynwyn.¹ All the manors mentioned by Glasscock, excluding Duagh probably had 13th century castles.

There is no real evidence that Duagh ever had a stone castle or a tower house. In the Desmond Survey of 1584 there is a reference to the "castle and bawn" of Crosshely. This Crosshely is not known but it could be a corruption of the Irish for Duagh which was Duabh - na - Feile or Cois - Feile. However, this is speculation as the only ruins within the present day parish are those of the tower house of Porinarde (139). Therefore, it is probable that no stronghold, either castle or tower house, existed as the manorial centre in Duagh, although there are references in the Pipe Rolls to manorial courts being held here. At Lixnaw (130) the only ruins are those of an 18th century mansion house. There are references to an earlier building which was still in existence in the last century. Ms. Hickson saw this ruin and says that it stood on an artificial hillock, was moated and resembled Ballymacaquim (37), as it was a strong square with narrow loops and slits.² If Lixnaw (130) did resemble Ballymacaquim (37) [and Ms. Hickson was a reliable and knowledgeable witness] then it was most likely a tower house as Ballymacaquim (37) is a typical late 15th / early 16th century tower house. This is very indirect evidence and the structure at Lixnaw (130) may have been of an earlier date in common with the other manorial centres already discussed. In the case of the other manorial centres, the sites of Moynwyn and Kylbanwane are not known, although the later may have been somewhere near Ardfert as it was a manor of the Bishop of Ardfert. In the case of Inch there was

¹ Pipe Rolls 1297 C.D.I. 1297 Ormond Deeds. (see pp 3 this chapter).

² Hickson M.A. "Notes.....". RHAAI 1881 pp. 360 - 362.

a structure there in 1307 which was described in the Justiciary Rolls.(Ire) and could possibly be a very small castle or the forerunner of a tower house (see chp. 5). At New Manor, Tarbert, Tawlagh and Ballymo, there are references to "castles" in the Desmond Survey.¹ Of course none of these sites have ruins but presumably these were tower houses as there is no documentary or other evidence for earlier structures. However, this again is very indirect evidence that tower house served as manorial centres in Kerry.

Tower houses were not necessarily built in the towns, boroughs, and manors of Kerry. While the 15th century tower house did form an integral part of the defensive fortifications of many towns, this does not seem to have applied to Kerry. The tower houses which did exist in the towns were not built as part of any overall defensive plan, or in conjunction with the town walls or ditches. In the 13th century when most of the towns and manors of Kerry were established the settlement may have centred on the strong castles built by the Geraldines. However, by the tower house era many of the towns and manors were in existence and the tower houses were additions to rather than the focus of a settlement. Even in the defended towns there was a need for a fortified residence and as with the rural tower house protection of an individual's property was the reason for building an urban tower house. Tower houses do not seem to have played an important role in the manorial centres of Kerry. Again this could be because the manorial centres were mostly established by the tower house era. It would also seem that these stone castles were not replaced by later tower houses except perhaps in the case of Lixnaw.

¹ Desmond Survey.

In architectural terms the urban tower houses do not seem to have differed greatly from the rural tower houses. There is evidence, especially in the east of the country, that urban tower houses were perhaps the first tower houses, dating from the early 14th century. These earliest tower houses do not seem to have been very large. Jope states that the earliest Dublin tower houses (c.1310) were not necessarily more than two storeys high, and the buildings were not battlemented and crenellated as were the later tower houses.¹ Murtagh in his study on urban tower houses does see architectural differences between the urban and rural tower houses, including not classifying the early "fortified houses" as tower houses; rather he says they are forerunners to the later tower houses.² This difference is not enough to distinguish these "fortified houses" from tower houses, even later rural tower houses like Ballycarbery (27) [two storeys] can be lower than the usual type of tower house. Urban tower houses may have been a little different in architectural style but these differences were not enough to classify them as a different type of structure altogether. Unfortunately, in Kerry, since no urban tower house survives it is impossible to say if the tower houses of Dingle, Ardfert, and Tralee were in anyway different from their rural counterparts.

CHURCH TOWER HOUSES.

Violence against the church was, like violence in lay society, an endemic problem in later medieval times. Because there was no real division between the church and the laity, the churchmen were as

¹ Jope and Seaby "A new document.....". UJA 1959 pp. 116.

² Murtagh B. "The fortified town houses of the English Pale in the late middle ages". UCD M.A. 1982 pp. 12 - 17, 32.

much part of the incessant petty wars and raids as the nobles and chiefs. As Nicholls states "the most striking feature....of the Irish clergy was the strongly hereditary character of the profession...".¹ He gives many examples of the son, grandsons, etc of clerics following the father or ancestor into the profession, indeed many times in the same office. For instance one Murtagh "Maurice" O'Kelly, Bishop of Clonfert (1393-1407) and afterwards Archbishop of Tuam had four sons, the second son Thomas became Bishop of Clonfert and then Bishop of Tuam; another son Connor was Abbott of the Cistercian Abbey of Knockmoy.² Of course, technically, this was an "abuse" as were clerical marriages, indeed non-celibate clerics were not allowed, however the same office was often held by the same family for generations.

While many of these men may have been genuinely holy the fact that an office in the church was regarded as an inheritance rather than a vocation certainly did not help the holiness of the church or to keep it isolated from the affairs of secular society. A great number of these clergy were more interested in the lands that went with the position than the saving of souls. Many of these clerics were like landowning nobles and chiefs than like holy men. Some of the high ranking clergy were more involved in the politics of the day than in the reforms of the Church. Many such as Bishop Bicknor were directly involved in the secular governing of the country. Because of the wealth and power of the Church the local nobles and chiefs often formed alliances with the local clerics. In many instances the local clerics were members or allies of the local landowning family. For instance, the Butlers of Ormond tried to dominate all aspects of life, lay and spiritual in their area. Many clerical positions were held by the Butlers or their allies. For

¹ Nicholls K. "Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland". 1972 pp. 92.

² *ibid.* pp. 95-96.

example, in the mid 16th century the Abbot of Inislough was a Butler, Athassal and Cashel were under the control of the Butlers and Cahir was held by an ally.¹ Of course as political allies of the local lords and chiefs the clerics were bound to get involved in their quarrels and wars. There are many references to clerics actually taking part in fighting. For example, in 1444 Cormac Mac Coughlan, Bishop of Clonmacnoise was slain in a battle with a rival faction of Mac Coughlans..and with him fell the Prior of Clontuskert, his ally.² In Kerry the local clergy also took sides in the wars of the local laity. The A.F.M. in 1577 states that "a war broke out between the Earl of Desmond.....and MacMaurice [FitzMaurice] of Kerry.....The young Abbot of Odorney [Abbeydorney] went over to the side of the Earl, and was slain by the shot of a ball, in the doorway of the castle of Lixnaw, which the Earl besieged..."³

Violence against the Church was not only caused by the political alliances of the clergy. The clergy also owned or controlled vast areas of land and with this land came huge herds of cattle, wealth, and power. Technically the superior of a religious house was the owner of the land or property and although there were limitations on his control of the property, nevertheless this land conferred on an abbot, priest, bishop etc much political and social influence. Some of the clergy used this power to become as powerful as the great nobles and chiefs. As the State Papers related in 1515 "the prelates are the chief cause of the mysorders of the land"⁴ as they neglected their religious duties. This is because many were more concerned with the power they possessed and how to use it to their own and their families benefit then with saying Mass. Because of this their houses, monasteries, palaces,

¹ Bradshaw B. "The dissolution of the religious orders in Ireland". 1974 pp. 23.

² Nicholls K "Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland". 1972 pp 100.

³ A.F.M. 1577.

⁴ State Papers. 1515.

churches etc came under attack in the same way that the castles and tower houses of the nobles and chiefs were attacked. For example, the Earl of Desmond burned Cashel cathedral in 1457 as he believed his enemy the Archbishop was inside. Nicholls states that in medieval times there was a growing disregard for the privileges of sanctuary and immunity claimed by the Church for its possessions.¹

Because the clergy were so involved in the social and political life of an area the separation of secular and clerical was unclear and the clergy, especially the high-ranking clerics, became merely powerful local magnates, who could legitimately be attacked by the armies of the local nobles and chiefs. Another reason for the growing violence against the Church was the fact that the buildings were used to store valuables, grain, and the possessions of the local people, especially in time of war. There is much evidence of churches being broken or sacked because of the treasures stored inside. This involvement in the social, political, and economic life of the laity meant that the Church was open to attack. Not all sections of the Church were as involved with the life of the laity, for instance, it is rare to find Friars involved in local wars etc. But a large section of the clergy was involved enough to state that the position of monasteries, churches, friaries, in many areas was quite perilous. Because of this many clerics, monks, abbots, and bishops felt it necessary to build fortified residences - tower houses- onto or near their monasteries, churches, palaces etc.

Tower houses built by the clergy were not as early as those built by the laity. Most of these church tower houses date from the 15th century. However, in Kerry, there were fortified strongholds on the Church land prior to this period. The main diocese in north Kerry was

¹ Nicholls K. "Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland". 1972 pp. 101.

the diocese of Ardfert and Aghadoe and although the diocesan centre was at Ardfert from 1111 there is a major monastic site at Aghadoe. At Aghadoe (1) there is a round 13th century castle built within the monastic site; this castle is similar to the Geraldine castle at Shanid. Most writers say it was the residence of the Bishops of Aghadoe but the Bishop lived in Ardfert. It is not known who built Aghadoe but it was probably built by the invading Anglo - Normans in the early 13th century during the short period they controlled this area. By the mid 13th century the land was back in Irish hands. There is no evidence that any of the local Irish, McCarthy, O'Donoghue, or O'Sullivan ever took over Aghadoe so it remained in the hands of the clergy there.

As Barrington states, because Aghadoe was in an Irish held area, the locals would not take kindly to rule by the Anglo - Irish Bishop of Ardfert and it was convenient to appoint an Archdeacon (of Irish decent) to rule in the Irish area.¹ The castle itself is built inside an enclosed earthwork (with a double ditch). According to King it is known as the "Pulpit".² This is not a typical Church stronghold as it was not originally built by the clergy nor was it built with the intention of protecting the monastic site. Aghadoe is on a prominent position overlooking the Lakes of Killarney and it is easy to see why the Anglo-Normans chose it as a military strong point. However, the clergy took over when the invaders left and the Archdeacons are said to have lived here. Perhaps they needed the protection from the local Irish who may have not been receptive to the rule of his (the archdeacons) master in Ardfert. The castle would certainly have provided protection to any cleric having trouble with the locals.

¹ Barrington T. "Discovering Kerry". 1976 pp. 202.

² King J. "Co.Kerry Past and Present". 1907 pp. 4.

Another site associated with the bishops was Rahinane [Rahoneen] (141) near Ardfert. Rahinane is not on the grounds of a monastic site; it is about 4 miles from Ardfert, however, it is said to be the residence of the Bishops of Ardfert. Rahinane is an unusual building, in that it appears square on the outside but is actually rounded on the inside. In the case of round castles the inside chambers are usually squared off - it is the opposite at Rahinane, especially on the 2nd storey where the main chamber is rounded off. It is not known who built Rahinane (141) - perhaps it was built by one of the Bishops, although there is no record of this. It could have been a local noble, most likely a FitzMaurice as they controlled the land in this area. There is no documentary evidence to show how this site came to be associated with the Bishops of Ardfert. However, as at Aghadoe, if needed, Rahinane (141) would certainly provide protection for an embattled Bishop.

A more typical example of a Church tower house was built in the 15th century by the Franciscan Friars at their Ardfert Friary. The Friars seem to have gone on a building spree in the 15th century as they also built the cloister, with its unusual four centred arches and the south transept, as well as the tower house. The tower built by the Friars is a fine, slender, well-built tower with 5 storeys, 2 barrel vaults and with all the usual architectural features of a 15th century tower house - one unusual aspect is that it is built onto the west gable. It has well splayed loops, well cut doors, garderobes, a slight batter, and a turret on the parapet. The tower house is still very much intact and it is possible to climb the spiral stairs to the top. The only thing missing are fireplaces, but the Friars probably used the tower as a sleeping area rather than a dining area, and of course the tower is connected with the church. Cairns wrote that he did not know of any Friars who

built tower houses,¹ however, here is an example. The Friars did not usually get involved in the political life of the locals and did not usually have to build fortified residences. However, it is obvious that the Friars in Ardfert (10) felt the need for protection in the 15th century, perhaps being so close to the location of the see of the more secular Bishops involved them in the political life of the area. The only reference to this tower being involved in the wars in Kerry comes during the Desmond Rebellion when one Captain Zouche used it as a base for his men for a short time. Whatever the reason, the Friars built a fine example of a late 15th century Church tower house.

There is only one more example of a Church tower house in Kerry. As with the urban tower houses all the examples of Church tower houses are in Anglo - Irish north and west Kerry, there are no examples in south Kerry. This is certainly not because the Irish chiefs were wont to respect Church property more than the Anglo-Irish, there are as many examples of Irish chiefs attaching Church property as Anglo -Irish nobles. Nor is it because the Gaelic chiefs did not encourage the newer orders to built on their lands. From the time of the invasion the newer orders were given patronage by the chiefs. For example, in c.1448, Donnell McCarthy helped found the Franciscan Friary at Muckross, but there is no tower house associated with this site. The Agustianians were associated with Ballinskelligs and Killagha (Milltown) and did some building on the site in the 15th century but no - where was a tower house built on Church or monastic lands. This could be because most of the orders which set up in south Kerry were Friars and here they kept to their policy of not getting involved in local affairs and therefore did not need to build tower houses.

¹ Cairns C. "Tipperary....". pp. 310.

The other site with a fortified residential tower added in the 15th century was at Killiney (119) - on the Dingle Peninsula. The site began as a Early Christian monastic site and was rebuilt again in the 13th century. In the 15th century a tower house was built onto the south east corner and a garderobe tower was added to the south wall. There are two storeys of the tower house left, with a vaulted ground floor chamber. There was access in the north wall from the tower to the church on the first storey, there also may have been a fireplace here. The garderobe chamber is a seperate small tower built onto the south wall of the church and could be reached from the tower house via the wallwalk. Again the tower house was probably built to provide a fortified residence for the clerics. The probable presence of a fireplace shows that the clerics may have lived fulltime here, not just using it as sleeping quarters as at Ardfert (10). Church tower houses were a relatively common occurrence in the 15th and 16th centuries. Because of the involvement of the clergy in the secular life of the locals, and the fact that they were prepared and willing to take part in the local petty wars of the period meant that the Church was not immune from attack. The clerics needed fortified residences as much as the laity and it is perhaps unusual that there are not more examples of Church tower houses in Kerry.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, tower houses in Kerry do not differ very much from tower houses in other parts of Ireland. Unlike the neighbouring counties of Limerick, Tipperary, and Cork there were less than two hundred tower houses in Kerry, therefore there are fewer structures from which to draw any conclusions. However, Kerry has other advantages when it comes to the study of tower houses. For instance, the very clear division of the county into a Gaelic south and Anglo - Irish north shows the difference of the development, dating, distribution, and architecture very clearly. It would seem that the tower house came to Kerry through the Anglo - Irish north. While there may have been tower houses in south Kerry by the late 14th century all other dating evidence points to the earlier (early 14th century) development of the tower house in north Kerry. This development follows much the same line of development of the castle in Kerry, with the invading Anglo - Normans building the first mottes and stone castles in the early 13th century.

The tower house was built as early as the first decade of the 14th century. There is evidence from Dublin and other areas in the Pale for these early tower houses. As mentioned in chapter 5 Davin, in her theses on tower houses of the Pale, was able to date some of the urban tower houses in her region to the early 14th century, although she does state that tower houses were not common until the 15th century¹. In the west and south - west of the country there is also evidence for a number of early tower houses; Cairns gives a few examples of early 14th century tower houses in Tipperary². In many of the counties in

¹ Davin A. "Tower houses.....". 1982 pp. 114, 117 - 121, 124 - 127.

² Cairns C. "Tipperary....". 1984 pp. 181, 186.

Munster there is some evidence of 14th century tower houses, for example, Westropp dated some of the "peel towers" of Clare to the 14th century, including Newtown Clonlare which he states was in existence in 1380.¹ In Kerry there is some indirect but relatively substantial evidence that there were tower houses, in particular in north Kerry, by at least 1320. Many of the original mottes built by the Anglo - Normans were replaced directly by a tower houses, with no large stone castle phase in between; there is no evidence of the use of mottes alone as late as the 14th / 15th, century so one cannot presume that the Anglo - Irish of Kerry were living in these structures until the tower house came into fashion in the 15th century! It is possible that the tower houses built on the earlier mottes were early in date. Indeed, for one of these re - used mottes, Molahiffe (134), there is a reference to a FitzMaurice residing there in 1307 and 1316.² Whether there was a tower at that stage is impossible to state, but the existing ruin would seem to be 14th century in date. Other sites for which there is an early date include Beal (45), Molahiffe (134), Ardfert (8), and Lixnaw (130).

Of these sites only at Molahiffe (134) is there ruins and the tower house there (built on a motte) is, possibly, 14th century in date. It is also interesting to note that nearly all the earlier references, excluding Molahiffe (134), are to sites in the Anglo - Irish north Kerry. It is not until 1390 that there is a reference to a tower house in Gaelic possession, i.e. Castlelough (68) which was in the hands of the McCarthys at this time. The general conclusion on dating of Kerry tower houses is that the Anglo - Irish were building tower houses in the early 14th century while the Gaelic Irish were building tower houses in

¹ Westropp T.J. "Peel Towers...." PRIA Vol V pp. 351.

² C J R (Ire) 1307, A.I. 1316.

the late 14th and early 15th century (Bar Chart 2). The earliest dateable sites still in existence, in addition to Molahiffe (134), include Ballycarbery (27) which is early 15th century in date and Carrigafoyle (60) which was built around 1470, most of the other existing structures are mid to late 15th and 16th century. When viewed in relation to the rest of Ireland the dating of tower houses in Kerry falls into a similar pattern. As Cairns, Davin, and others found in the rest of the country tower houses were being built from the early 14th century but are not really common until the 15th century.

The distribution pattern of tower houses is relatively similar throughout the county, although there are a few minor differences between the north and the south. The general pattern was that tower houses were built on good farmland with the majority below 400m O.D. When viewed in baronies it is very obvious that most of the tower houses were built in the barony of Trughanacmy. This barony contains the important centres of Tralee and Castleisland and, more importantly, some of the best farmland in the county, which, of course, is also below 400 O.D (Bar Chart 1). The barony with the least amount of tower houses is Glanarough which is the most mountainous of the baronies, containing the MacGillycuddy Reeks (Bar Chart 1). Also, because south Kerry is more mountainous than north Kerry the majority of tower houses are to be found in the north of the county (Map 4). Most of the tower houses were built by individual land owners who most likely owed allegiance to the local great Lord or Chief. This did not necessarily mean that these tower houses formed lines of defence for the Lord or Chief, the sources show that occasionally a family would not answer a summons to arms for their overlord and got away with these actions. However, in the Desmond Rebellions almost all the tower houses owners in north, west and mid Kerry answered the call to

the defence of the Earl of Desmond (chapter 6) and because of this there is an almost total change over in the ownership of tower houses in these areas in the late 16th century, from the local Anglo - Irish and Gaelic owners to the newly arrived Planters.

Other factors affecting distribution were water supply, access to river and sea routes as well as mountain passes and other routes. All these factors played a role in the distribution of tower houses. A significant minority of Kerry tower houses were built along the coast line, this is because the land along the coast was usually at a lower level than the land inland and, also, because of the re - use of the well defended promontory forts dotted along the coast line. Here there is also a difference between north and south Kerry. Only one tower house, Rincaheragh (146) in south Kerry, was built in a re - used promontory fort while at least 8 tower houses were built in re - used promontory forts in north Kerry. Tower houses were also built in re - used ringforts, in moated sites, and on top of mottes, in fact almost 10% of all Kerry tower houses were built in re - used earlier defensive sites.

Of course, fashion may have played a part in the construction and distribution of tower houses. It is a notable fact that most of the tower houses built in re - used promontory forts in north Kerry were built by the FitzMaurices so it may have been fashionable as well as a good defensive measure for members of this family to locate their tower houses in these sites. Also, in south Kerry there are about 10 tower houses ranging from Killaha (117) in the Killarney area to Ballinskelligs (24) in the far south which are so similar architecturally that they must have been built by the same group of masons or at least masons influenced by the same construction and architectural fashions. All these tower houses have much the same ground floor plan, all have

musket loops, all are 16th century in date, most of these structures had chimneys and machicolations or mid wall bartizans. However, some the tower houses in this area like Ballycarbery (27) is very different in date, style, and plan, but in the case of the other tower houses it could be said that the fashion of the time influenced in a slight way the style and location of these structures. There are no tower houses of a very similar style in north Kerry. All these factors played a part in the distribution of tower houses, and all these factors combined to give the distribution pattern seen on Map 4. As with other parts of Ireland the one major factor in the distribution of tower houses is their location on good, low lying farmland; usually built by individual landowners to protect their own lands, family, and possessions. Only in certain areas, like the Pale, are there deliberate defensive lines of tower houses, built to protect the land from the "Irish" enemy.¹ In other areas of the country tower houses were usually built by individual landowners for their own benefit. The other factors effecting distribution, as discussed in chapter 6, also played a significant role in the distribution of tower houses, countrywide.

The origin of the tower house in Ireland and therefore in Kerry lies in the prevailing social, political, and economic conditions at the time. As discussed in chapter 4 many historians and archaeologists had, previously, felt that the origin of the tower house lay in the influences from Britain, particularly Scotland, and Europe. In chapter 4 the history of the tower house in Northern England and Scotland is looked at. It is not surprising that these three areas (Ireland, the north of England, and Scotland) had relatively similar social, economic and political conditions at this time. In the north of England and Scotland

¹ Davin A. "Tower houses....." 1882 pp. 170 - 174.

there was loss of central crown and government control, not to the same extent as in Ireland, but enough to give some power and money into the lands of the local lords. Also, because of the instability of the society, there were constant cattle raids and petty wars as in Ireland, there was a need for fortified dwellings i.e. the tower house.

With the loss of central control, much of the local revenues were collected and retained by the local lords or chiefs, in all three areas. Therefore, along with the need for fortified dwellings because of the incessant warfare, the local lords and chiefs also could afford to build these tower houses because of profit from the collected revenues. Unlike the stone castles of the 11th (England and Scotland) and 12th (Ireland) centuries which were usually the political, manorial, and military centres of a large territory, these tower houses were the fortified residences of all landowning classes of society. These landowners needed to protect their possessions and families from thieves, raiders and small war parties, however, they could not afford to build the large stone castles which had been common in the 12th century. So the tower house was both affordable and practical. Therefore, the origins of the tower house in Ireland lies in the loss of central government control, the fact that power and the revenues from trade were benefitting the local lords and chiefs, and the fact that the endless raids and petty wars necessitated the building of fortified homes.

As with the large stone castles it would seem, with their bawns and their thick walls, that one of the main function of the tower house was defensive, and the tower house did have a defensive role. Again and again in the sources, both native and foreign, there are references to the tower house withstanding sieges, falling to the enemy in a siege, and being used as a base from which to launch offensive attacks. The

architecture of the tower house does indicate, to an extent, its defensive nature. Every existing tower house has one or more defensive architectural features. These include the murder holes, the musket and shot loops, the arrow loops, the bartizans, machicolations, merlons, and crenellations etc. Almost all the tower houses built in the mid to late 16th century have musket holes covering the entrance doors, and it is also very unusual to find rectangular windows on the lower storeys of any tower house. The era of the tower house was one of incessant violence, large - scale crime, constant cattle raiding, regular petty wars, and the occasional large scale expeditions of the greater lords, chiefs and the government. Obviously the tower house was used to protect the family and possessions of the owner against the bands of thieves and cattle raiders who plagued the country. The tower house was also used in the wars of the lords and chiefs, for instance, many of the tower houses of the Earl of Desmond or under his control were involved in sieges during the Desmond Rebellions.

However, with age of cannon, the improved communications and the fact that the enemy could stay in the area for a longer period meant that the function of the tower house in wartime changed. The enemy troops, especially if they were government troops, could stay in the territory for a much longer period because of improved supply lines. For instance, during the Desmond Rebellion the government troops were supplied with provisions and ordnance by the naval ships which were off the Kerry coast for most of the war. Before the introduction of cannon to the country it could take months, even years, to reduce a tower house in a siege. Even after the initial introduction of cannon this did not change as the routes were not good enough to allow those who possessed the ordnance to transport it to the required siege. However, by the mid to late 16th century improved routes, for

instance using ships to transport the ordnance, meant that cannon could be transported to most sieges. These improved routes also meant that the enemy troops could capture more tower houses than before and establish themselves indefinitely in the area of conquest. This also meant that the owners of the tower houses found it more and more difficult to re - take their tower houses.

Another factor which influenced the use of the tower house in war was the tradition of retreating to the fastnesses when an enemy was sighted. This practice was carried out by both the Irish and the Anglo - Irish. It meant that a tower house and its territory would be left opened and undefended. However, all the people, cattle, and possessions would be hidden in the fastnesses thus giving the enemy no reason to stay in the territory. In the 14th to the early 16th century the attackers did not have very good supply routes and could not stay long in the territory waiting for the opposition to appear. What usually happened was the tower house was destroyed in some way and the attackers then left the territory. When the area was clear the lord or chief and his people returned, fixed up the tower house and resumed life as usual. However, in the mid to late 16th century the attackers could stay longer in the territory, take more of the tower houses, and spend time trying to flush the opposition out of their fastnesses. In the late 16th century when the Earl of Desmond used this tactic of abandoning his tower houses and retreating to the fastnesses it backfired on him because the government were able to take most of his tower houses and keep the troops in the area for years, so the Earl lost both his lands and his life. Eventually, the continued development of the cannon, improved tactics in war, and improved communications and supply routes made this particular function of the

tower house obsolete and contributed to the decline and ultimate end in the construction of tower houses by the mid to late 17th century.

Most of the sources used to investigate the daily life of the occupants of these tower houses were foreign, and unfortunately most of these writers give the impression that the tower houses were cold dark uncomfortable residences. This may have been true to an extent. Because of the narrow loops natural light did not penetrate inside to a great extent, and with the thick stone walls the interior must have been hard to heat. These and other sources show that the occupants of these tower houses could do much to improve the quality of life within them. The bare stone walls could be whitewashed and hung with tapestries while rushes could be strewn on the floors. The lord or chief and his immediate family probably lived quite a comfortable life by the standards of the time. The sources tell of the furnishings, food, drink, and entertainment to be had in the tower houses. The lands owned by the lord or chief probably provided most of the food needed by the occupants with only luxuries such as salt and wine being bought.

There are also references to the entertainment provided for the lord or chief and his guests such as the bards, rhymers, singers, dancers, "carrows" etc. It is impossible to estimate how many people lived in the tower house, it is probable that the buildings and the immediate area of the bawn and around the outside walls of the bawn were quite crowded with the retainers, labourers, kern, mercenaries, etc needed to service the tower house and provide a retinue for the owner. In time of siege there are references to over 200 people in the tower house and within the protective shadow of Ballingarry (19). However, a tower house such as Ballingarry (19) could comfortably house only a family and some servants, perhaps up to 12 people. It is known that the peacetime garrison at Castlemaine (71) was about a dozen people

and this was probably one of the larger structures in Kerry. As discussed in chapter 7 it is probable that most tower houses only housed a dozen or less people in time of peace. If there were more than this number in a tower house the quality of life would not have been very good. As it was the emphasis on hygiene was very slight. However, when all the contemporary reports are taken into consideration, it would seem that tower houses were the best place to live in at that time!

The archaeology and architecture of the tower house shows that the actual tower itself was not the only structure. As well as the bawn in many sites there is evidence of other buildings. A crease in the tower wall can show that there was a building which was once attached to the main structure. In many cases this could be the wooden or earthen "hall" that many of the contemporary writers refer to. They mention that this hall, if it existed, was the location of the main or lord's hall where the dining and entertaining went on. This would explain why many tower houses, including some of the later examples lack fireplaces and chimneys, these would have been in or near the "hall". Also, on many sites there are the outlines of smaller hut or house sites which may have been the store houses or the quarters of the retainers and retinue of the tower house. The architecture of the remaining tower houses in Kerry shows both the defensive and residential nature of the tower house. Almost all the tower houses have murder holes over the entrance, while many sites of the later period have musket loops and shot holes. Many of the towers also have the batter, the thick walls, and the vault, as well as crenellations, bartizans, and machicolations etc. However, it is quite usual to find that the defensive nature of the tower house has been compromised in some way by the residential needs. Many of the narrow loops are set in

huge embrasures which provide a little extra space for storage or window seats but which compromise the thickness of the outer walls, especially on the lower storeys. Also, in many tower houses the stairs is in the thickness of the corner turret or wall thus weakening an already vulnerable point in the tower house. In the earlier tower houses the addition of a chimneys usually blocked the wallwalk at some point, making it difficult to keep watch for approaching attackers.

Of the possible 162 sites in Kerry only about 60 sites show any architectural details, and most of these are from the later period (Bar Chart 3). This is a small percentage on which to base conclusions on the architecture of tower houses, but the information on Kerry combined with information on tower houses elsewhere in the country makes it possible to draw some conclusions. Based on the architecture, the idea that the tower house became popular in the 15th century becomes very clear. The majority of remaining sites in Kerry and elsewhere are 15th or 16th century in date. It is not possible to be more precise than this in a lot of cases as the tower house architecture is quite similar throughout this entire period. Only in the mid and late 16th century are there some changes, for instance, in the west and south - west there is the introduction of the mid wall bartizan. Also, by this time the vault and the batter are no longer been built in tower houses and the majority of late tower houses would have had one or more fireplaces. It is also true, as proved by the few remaining sites, that the earlier tower houses were small in size and plain in architecture. These towers usually had a vault, a batter, narrow loops and slits throughout, no fireplace or rectangular windows.

In Kerry, the fieldwork on the remaining tower houses has shown that the majority were built with locally quarried stone. Surprisingly, it was found that the early tower houses could be as well built, with

cut stone surrounds, cut and coursed quoins, and roughly coursed string courses, as the later tower houses. In fact it is some of the later tower houses, like Ballinskelligs (24) which are built of rough uncoursed rubble. Because the name of the mason or builder of the tower house is usually not recorded we do not know if there was actually professional masons or tower house builders in existence. However, the very fact that so many of these structures have survived through the centuries is an indication of the proficiency and ability of the builders of these structures. The fact that tower houses are relatively similar, country wide, indeed Irish tower houses are similar to British and European tower houses, shows that there was a certain tower house fashion. The architecture of the tower houses of Kerry does not differ, in any significant way, from the tower houses in the rest of the country.

The basic plan is much the same, a rectangular building built vertically for defence. Usually there is no fireplace on the ground floor, as this area was generally used as a storage area. The upper storeys were the living quarters and it is here one finds the garderobes, fireplaces, cupboard recesses, rectangular windows etc. A significant majority of Kerry and Irish tower houses had vaults over one or more storeys and a batter to the exterior walls. Within this general architectural definition there were differences. Some tower houses, like Barrow (15) were round, some tower houses like Ballycarbery (27) were only two storeys and had three vaults on the same floor, some tower houses did not have a fireplace or a garderobe. Within Ireland, there were, also, some regional differences. For instance, the mid wall bartizan was found only in the west and south west. Within Kerry there were also regional differences, for instance, except for Ballinruddery (23) all remaining tower houses with mid wall bartizans

are to be found in south Kerry. It is here also that most of the examples of shot holes and musket loops, especially musket loops covering the entrance door, are to be found. Therefore, while the architecture of the Kerry tower house conforms with the architecture of tower houses in the rest of Ireland, there are certain slight differences which show the innovative abilities of the Kerry tower house builders.

Little work has been done on the archaeology of the tower house. There could be between 3,000 and 5,000 tower houses in the country yet very few have been excavated. It is perhaps ironic that most of the excavated tower houses are in the north of the country which has the least number. The excavation of more tower houses could provide much needed information, in particular with regard to dating. For example, all the pottery found at Dunboy, Co. Cork is late 15th century in date and this fits in with the 15th century date of the tower house¹. There have been no full scale excavations on any Kerry tower houses. Excavation on some of the Kerry tower houses is needed. For instance, there is firm documentary evidence that some sort of stone structure which may be an early ^{tower house} existed at Beal castle (45) in 1307, unfortunately, only the grass and earth covered earthworks remain. An excavation would help to sort these earthworks out and might prove conclusively that Beal (45) was one of the earliest tower houses in the country. Other tower houses have interesting earthworks in their vicinity which could prove to be huts, houses, "halls", or defensive earthworks on excavation. However, without the benefit of excavation one can only draw conclusions based on the information in the sources.

Much research work has been done on tower houses, and combining all these works helps towards a more complete understanding of the

¹ Gowan M. "Dunboy castle Co. Cork - a report on the excavation carried out by Dr. E.M. Fahy. JCHAS 83 - 86 1978 pp. 32 - 48.

dating, origins, and functions of the tower house. From this study of Kerry the function of the tower house in areas outside the sphere of government influence has been more clearly revealed. The fact that Kerry was divided into the Anglo - Norman north and the Gaelic south shows the difference in dating and, to an extent, in function of tower houses in these areas. By comparing and contrasting the results of this thesis with the results of other works, some conclusions on the general functions of tower houses in Ireland can be drawn. For instance, it was found that in Kerry, as in Tipperary, that tower houses did not form any lines of defence (chapter 6), and that these tower houses were built by all classes of the landowning society. On the other hand there was no evidence of the Friars building tower houses in Tipperary, while the only remaining intact church tower house in Kerry was built by the friars. Also it is surprising, compared to Tipperary and the Pale area, that there is only one round tower house in the county. These localised studies of tower houses are very important because it is by putting together the results from Kerry, Tipperary, the Pale, Wexford, Limerick etc combined with more excavation results that we will be able to see the overall dating, distribution, architectural, functional (in war and peacetime) pattern of the tower house in Ireland.

This study of the tower houses of Kerry has shown some expected and some surprising results. The previous conceptions that the earliest tower houses were in the east, i.e the more Anglo - Irish part of the country, was shown to be outdated. There were tower houses in Kerry and other parts of Munster as early as or at least within ten years of the first tower houses in the east of the country. Also, while the builders of these tower houses were influenced by the general patterns and fashions of the day, the existence of, for example, the mid wall bartizan, shows that these masons and builders were capable of

innovation in their work. This innovation as well as the political, social, and economic, factors discussed in the chapter on origins show that the origin of the tower house could and did lie in Ireland. While there may have been influences from Scotland and Europe in architecture and fashion the origin of the Irish tower house is in Ireland. As with the ideas on origins all the results of this work on Kerry can be looked at in the context of the whole country, and the function of the tower house in medieval Irish society can be better understood.

1. Author. *Col. J. H. Kelly's Irish 1700-1800* pp. 120.
2. Digby. *Medieval society* N.W.A.S. 1979 pp. 34-35.
3. Taylor. *Medieval society* N.W.A.S. 1979 pp. 37.
4. Kelly. *Medieval society* N.W.A.S. 1979 pp. 39.
5. *Map of Ireland* as above.
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Appendix 1.

Medieval Manors, bouroughs, and towns of County Kerry.

Name.

Reference.

Towns and boroughs.

1. Ardfert. Cal. Just. Rolls. (Ire) 1295 - 1303. pp. 128.
2. Dingle. Bradley "Medieval towns...." N.M.A.J. 1979
pp. 34 - 35.
3. Tralee. Bradley "Medieval towns....." N.M.A.J. 1979.
pp. 37
4. Rattoo. Bradley "Medieval towns....." N.M.A.J. 1979.
pp. 36.

Manors.

1. Ballymore. Pipe Rolls (Ed. I) 1297 - 1298.
List of manors on the lands of James,
heir to the Desmond lands.
2. Castleisland. as above.
3. Castlemaine. List of manorial centres (Glasscock

1987 pp. 233.

4. Castlelough. as above.

5. Currans. as above.

6. Dingle. Pipe Rolls 1297.

7. Duagh. Pipe Rolls 1297.

8. Inch. Pipe Rolls 1297.

9. Kylbanewane. Pipe Rolls 1297.

10. Lixnaw. Glasscock. 1987. pp. 233

11. Moynewyn. Pipe Rolls 1297.

12. New Manor. Pipe Rolls 1297.

13. Tarbert. Pipe Rolls 1297.

14. Tawlagh. Pipe Rolls 1297.

15. Tralee. Pipe Rolls 1297.

Appendix 11.

Known construction dates of the tower house and castles of County Kerry.

1. Aghadoe (1). 13th century round castle.
2. Aglish (2). A.I. 1428.
3. Airlock (4). Dub. A.I. 1215.
4. Ardfert (8). King (1907) pp. 10 1320.
5. Ardfert (9). Desmond Survey 1584.
6. Ardfert Friary (10). Built by the Franciscian Friars
c. 1450's.
7. Ardtully (12). MacCarthaigs Book 1214.
8. Ballingarry (19). 15th century, re - built by
Col David Crosbie in c. 1640.
9. Ballinskelligs (24). mid to late 16th century.
10. Ballybeggan (25). 15th century.
11. Ballycarbery (27). A.I. 1428. 15th
12. Ballycarnahan (29). 16th century.

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| 13. Ballyheigue (30). | Patent Rolls 1541. |
| 14. Ballymacelligott (35). | late 15th century. |
| 15. Ballymacaquim (37). | mid to late 15th century. |
| 16. Ballymalis (38). | late 16th century. |
| 17. Ballymullen (40). | C.J.R. (Ire) 1307. 14th century. |
| 18. Beal (45). | C.J.R. (Ire) 1307. 14th century. |
| 19. Callanfersy (55). | MacCarthaigs Book 1215. |
| 20. Cappancushy (58). | A.I. 1215. 14th / 15th century
tower house on top of a motte. |
| 21. Carrigafoyle (60). | late 15th century. |
| 22. Castle Core (63). | 16th century. |
| 23. Castle Cove (61). | 16th century. |
| 24. Castle Gregory (66). | 14th century. |
| 25. Castleisland (67). | 13th century. |
| 26. Castle Lough (68). | 14th century. |

27. Castle Maine (70). 13th / 14th century.
28. Castle Moore (72). 14th / 15th century.
29. Clounmelane (78). 14th century tower on a possible motte.
30. Countess Castle (81). late 15th century.
31. Currans (82). 13th century.
32. Dingle [Rice] (85). late 16th century.
33. Dingle [Knight of Kerry] (86) early to mid 16th century.
34. Dingle [Hussey] (87) 15th / 16th century.
35. Dunkerron (91). 15th century tower on a motte.
36. Dunloe (93). MacCarthaigs Book 1205, 1212.
re - built late 16th century
tower house on a motte.
37. Fieries (95). late 14th early 15th century.
38. Fenit (96). 15th century.
39. Ferriters (99). 15th century.

40. Gallarus (101). 15th / 16th century.
41. Inch (111). Hickson Old Kerry Records
1872 pp. 150. 1580.
42. Inch (112). CDI 1298.
43. Killaha (117). 16th century.
44. Killorglan (118). 13th century.
45. Kilmurray (121). 15th / 16th century.
46. Lick (126). late 15th early 16th century.
47. Listowel (129). 15th century.
48. Lixnaw (130). 13th century motte 14th /
15th century tower house.
49. Minard (132). 16th century.
50. Molahiffe (134) A.I. 1215. 14th century tower
house on a motte.
51. Moorestown (135). late 15th early 16th century.
52. Pallis (137). A.F.M. 1510.

ABBREVIATIONS.

53. Pookenee (138). 14th / 15th century.
54. Portinarde (139). late 15th century.
55. Rahoneen (141). late 14th early 15th century.
56. Rahinane (142). 15th century.
57. Rincaheragh (146). 16th century.
58. Ross (147). 15th / 16th century.
59. Tralee (158). 13th / 14th century.
60. Tralee [Short] (159). 15th century.

ABBREVIATIONS.

Ann. Conn.	Annals of Connacht.
A.F.M.	Annals of the Four Masters.
A. I.	Annals of Inisfallen.
Arch. J.	Archaeology Journal.
A.T.	Annals of Tigernach.
A.U.	Annals of Ulster.
BAR.	British Archaeological Report.
CBA	Committee for British Archaeology.
CJR	Calendar of Justiciary Rools.
CDI.	Calendar of documents relating to Ireland 1172 - 1307.
CPR.	Calendar of Patent Rolls (Ire).
CSP. (Ire)	Calendar of State Papers (Ire).
Dub. A. I.	Dublin Annals of Inisfallen.
EHS	English Historical Studies.
Hist. Geog. Res. Ser.	Historical Geography Reserch Series.
IAST	Irish Archaeology Society Tracts.
IAQS	Irish Association for Quarternay Studies
IHR	Irish Historical review.
IHS	Irish Hitorical Studies.
JCHAS	Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society.
JGHAS	Journal of the Galway Historical and Archaeological Society.
JKAS	Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society.

JOWS	Journal of the Old Wexford Society.
JRHAAI	Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland.
JRSAI	Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.
KAM	Kerry Archaeological Magazine.
KAHJ	Kerry Archaeological and Historical Journal.
Mac C. Bk.	MacCarthaig's Book.
Med. Arch.	Medieval Archaeology.
Med. Irish Hist. Ser.	Medieval Irish History Series.
Mis. Irish Annals	Miscellaneous Irish Annals.
N.M.A.J.	North Munster Antiquarian Journal.
OPW	Office of Public Works.
Ormond Deeds	Calendar of Ormond Deeds.
O.S. Letters.	Ordnance Survey Letters 1841.
PRIA	Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy.
PRO	Public Record Office.
TKAS	Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeology Society.
TRIA	Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy.
TCD	Trinity College Dublin.
UCC	University College Cork.
UCD	University College Dublin.
UJA	Ulster Journal of Archaeology.

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