

Inchiquin Tower, James N Healy, The Castles of Co. Cork (drawn 1980). From the north.

Inchiquin Tower

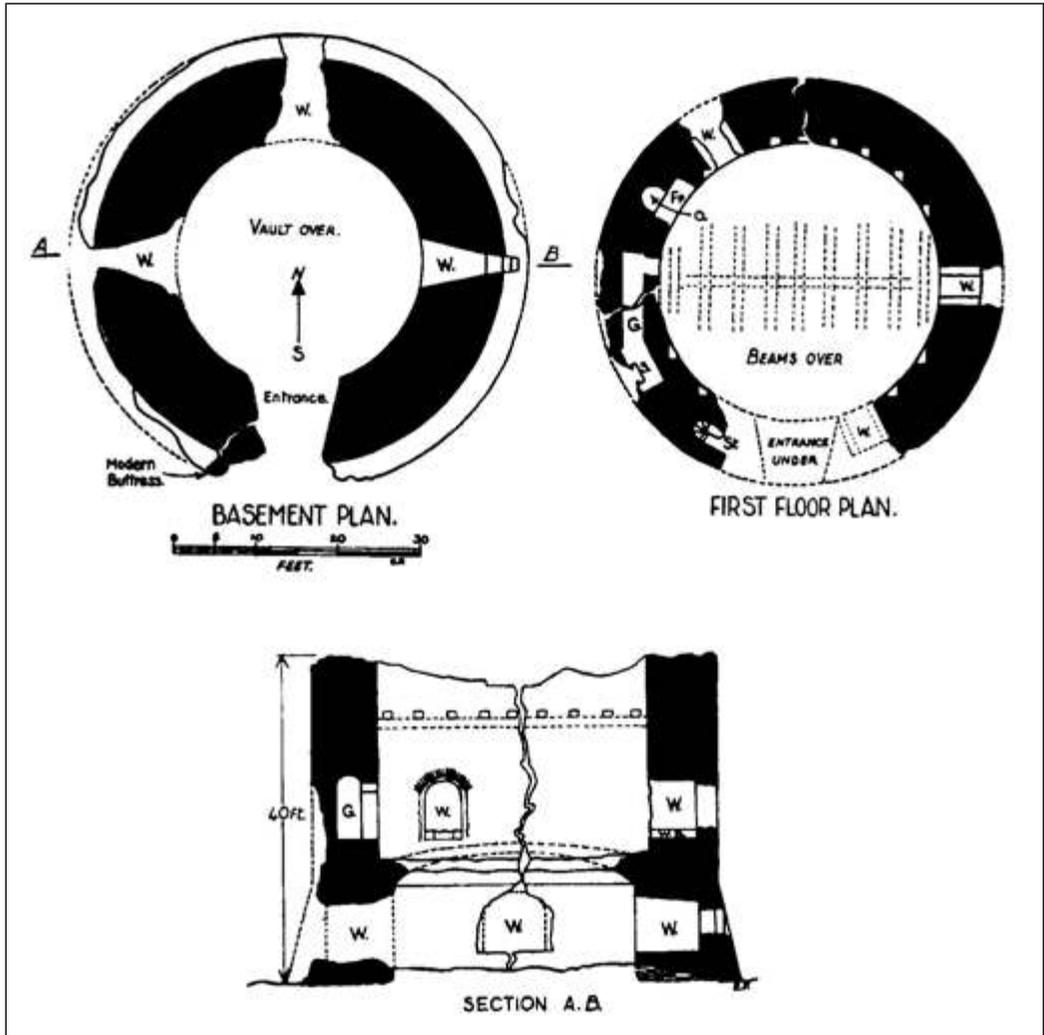
Location: Townland of Inchiquin, Ir. Inse Ui Chuinn (O’Cuinn’s island /water-meadow), Co. Cork.

Description: Directly on the north bank of the Womanagh river, the castle comprises a circular tower with an interior diameter of 9.25m (30.4 ft) and an exterior diameter of 16.75m (55ft). It survives to just over first-floor level, but with a large gap in the wall on the south side and vertical structural cracks on the north and west sides. There is a distinct base batter and traces of plaster finish on external and internal faces.

A ground-floor door in the wall to the south is missing its surround but has a drawbar socket on the east side, which shows that the sill was higher than present ground level. Window openings to west, north and east, widely splayed due to the external batter, have embrasures covered by lintels in the front and a vault to the rear. The

ground floor was covered by wicker-centred dome of which only the springing courses survive. There is a mural [spiral] stair, of which only a few steps survive, which rises from the west side of the ground-floor doorway.

Most of south wall has gone at first-floor level. First-floor windows to the north and east have broken openings covered by semi-circular vaults, with traces of stone seats in both. The shell of a fireplace and flue in the wall to NW has had its facing stones robbed. A mural chamber to the west contains a garderobe. Much of the inner and outer walls of the chamber have fallen, but it is covered by a plank-centred semi-circular vault. The roof over the first floor had wooden supports. There are opposing socket holes for a single large beam on the wall face to the west and east. This supported nine joists, the socket holes for which survive on the wall face to the north and



Inchinquin. Plan taken from Hartnett 1945. Possibly a 13th century tower. The ground floor was vaulted - by a wicker-centred dome.

south. On wall to the east, just above the level of these joist holes, is a squinch arch, supported by masonry corbels. This has been interpreted as 'a bed niche'. Hartnett (1945) considered the tower 'dated from historical and architectural evidence to the thirteenth century'. An inquisition of 1321 into property of Richard de Clare mentions 'a round tower built of stone' at Inchinquin; an inquiry of 1350 reported 'one stone tower worth nothing as it wants great repair'. The wicker-centred

dome suggests the tower was repaired in the 15th or 16th century. By then the property of the earls of Desmond, the castle was lived in by 'the old Countess of Desmond' until her death in 1604. It was apparently damaged by 'Cromwell's guns' in 1649.

Reference: P. J. Hartnett, 1945, 'Some Imokilly castles', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, Ser. 2, Vol. L, pp. 42-53, p. 144, p. 158. (This reference also includes a description of Castlemartyr Castle).



Inchiquin tower, currently in poor condition. View from the north. With an internal width of 10m and an external width of over 16m this puts it in the same league as the Pembroke tower in terms of its diameter and wall thickness at least. (7.7m x 19m inc. batter).

Inchiquin and floor joist configurations

The tower is referenced a number of times in a recent detailed discussion of floor joists and the problems of spanning and flooring round towers and a circular space. See Tom McNeill, 2003. Four Irish towers are examined: Dundrum, Clogh Oughter, Nenagh and Inchiquin, and comparisons are made to equivalent Welsh round towers. At nearly 10m internal diameter, Inchiquin was seen to be one of the widest spans in the group. Further discussion, with reference to Clogh Oughter was set out by Conleth Manning in 2013, noting that the tower has some

flooring affinities with Inchiquin (p. 199). This discussion had been previously rehearsed in more detail in *Château Gaillard* 25 (223-32).

McNeill, T. E., 2003, Squaring circles: flooring round towers in Wales and Ireland, in J. R. Kenyon and K. O'Connor (eds), *The medieval castle in Ireland and Wales: essays in honour of Jeremy Knight*, 96-106, Dublin.

Manning, C., 2013, *Clogh Outer Castle, Co. Cavan: archaeology, history and architecture*, Archaeological Monograph Series: 8, Dept of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin.

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