

## 1 The Moat

As you approach this ancient Castle, the presence of the moat creates a lasting impression. It's the only castle in Ireland to retain its flooded moat and it's rectangular shape encloses the Castle, the garden and the yard, creating a safe haven for men and animals in times of war or disturbance. It is also possible that the moat was created as an ornamental feature in the 18th century.

The moat is fed by a stream from the Greenhills area and flows into the Lansdowne Valley. The present bridge, by which you enter the Castle, was erected in 1780 and said to have replaced a drawbridge structure.

## 2 The Doors

The Entrance doors may date to the late Georgian period but embellished with medieval style hinges around 1904. In that year the Castle was extensively renovated by the Hatch family who had just purchased it.

## 3 The Tower

You are passing under the arched gatehouse tower, into the courtyard of the Castle. The arch is high enough to accommodate a loaded horse and cart. On your left is the door to the guardroom.

The tower appears to be the work of the 16th century stonemasons and was designed three stories high in order to give a good view of the surrounding land. Two lookout towers (known as captowers) give a clear view of all the western approaches to Dublin city, stretching from the Dublin mountains to the Phoenix Park.

These lands, including all of Ballyfermot and Terenure, were owned by the Barnewalls during the 13th to 16th centuries. They were a powerful Norman family who were intermarried with other land owning families in the Dublin area.

## 4 The Castle

### The Great Hall and Undercroft

The oldest part of Drimnagh Castle is the section to the left of the tower (as viewed from the courtyard). The original entrance to the castle is in fact the humble gothic doorway which lies directly beneath the steps and main entrance.

The Castle is entirely built of a local grey limestone known as calp. The stone was probably drawn from one of the many nearby quarries. The walls are about three to four feet thick.

## 5 Murder Hole

You can enter the Castle by the small gothic pointed doorway under the main steps but you must watch your head. Once inside, immediately above you is a 'murder hole'. This defensive device was a common feature of medieval castles. It provided the occupants with a rapid means of disposing of an intruder by pouring boiling oil or dropping missiles from above.

The staircase to your right was completely blocked up when work began to restore the castle in 1986.

## 6 The Undercroft

You are now standing in the vaulted undercroft, the oldest part of Drimnagh Castle. Note the daub and wattle type construction of the vault. The undercroft served as a safe storage area for the rest of the Castle. The brick constructed bread oven and fireplace was inserted at a later date to provide a kitchen for the castle. The vault construction provided a strong floor for the great hall above.

## 7 Stairs to the Great Hall

Proceed up the narrow stairs to the great hall. This section, including the spiral stair leading to the gallery and the gothic door, is new. This corner of the Castle has been completely altered as it was in danger of collapse. Only traces of the original staircase remained in 1986. Note the original garderobe (a primitive toilet) which once drained into the moat.

## 8 The Great Hall

Standing in the Great Hall, you will first be struck by the magnificent oak roof which is modeled on the only surviving example in Ireland - that of Dunsoghly Castle in Finglas, County Dublin.

The roof was made at the Castle over a period of one year, cut and assembled by hand from fresh Roscommon oak. The carved figures which support the roof trusses are representations of different people who have been working on the restoration - the carpenter, the stonemason, the foreman, the painter and the architect.

The opening in the roof is called a fumerelle, and was a feature of the medieval hall before the days of chimneys. The fire was lit on a hearth in the centre of the floor and the smoke wafted up through the roof.

The hall is the principle room of the Castle - where the master, his family and all his followers ate while musicians performed from the balcony above. The food was prepared behind a screen, underneath the balcony.

The massive fireplace and chimney was probably added in the 17th century not long after the stone mullioned windows were inserted. Much of the stonework for the windows and fireplace was missing and had to be carefully copied.

The heraldic emblems in the windows record the name of the principal occupants of the Castle - the Barnewall, Loftus and Lansdowne families. The tiled floor also employs heraldic motifs from the coat of arms of the Barnewall family. It is composed of 5,500 replica medieval tiles.

There had once been an intermediate floor in the hall to accommodate bedrooms above (most probably inserted during the 17th century when the stone mullioned windows were added. This floor had completely collapsed and, in 1986 when restoration work began, the hall lay in a state of total wreckage. The roof was about to cave in with mounds of rubble inside saturated by rain.



# Drimnagh Castle

## Guide

### 9 Main Castle Entrance

The style of the main entrance and flight of steps in the courtyard would suggest that they were also added in the early 18th century. Note the fine cut stone doorcase and the original 18th century paneled door.

### 10 Small Yard

This small yard may once have contained a dairy. From here its possible to see the original defensive form of the Castle, and the garderobe chute.

### 11 Folly/Garden Tower

This stone tower was probably erected in the 18th century as a decorative feature. A stone doorcase and an early window, possibly from the tower, were inserted into the outer wall to create an ornamental effect.

### 12 The Garden

A simple formal garden with apple trees existed here about 100 years ago. The formal garden is essentially 17th century in concept. It was designed in 1989 to compliment the Castle with its gravel paths contrasted by dark green box hedges. The garden is surrounded by a beech hedge and also features a hornbeam alley.

### 13 The Courtyard

The large courtyard provided a sheltered and safe area for all manner of work and it was originally surfaced with stone cobbles.

### 14 Stable Building

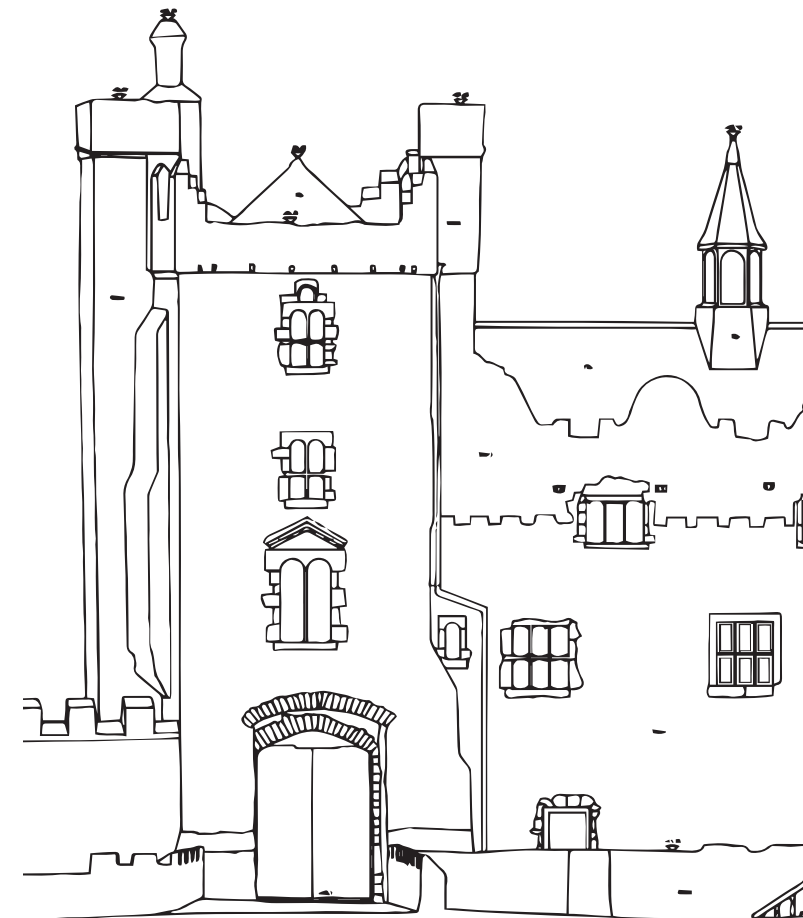
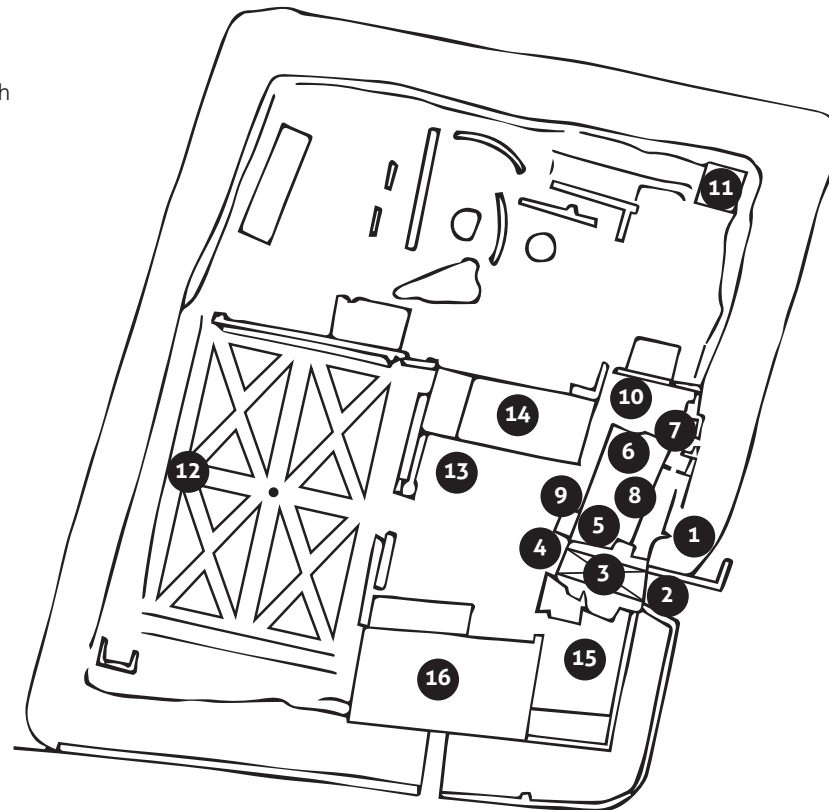
To the left is the stable building. This was originally a barn of late medieval or 17th century construction. It was substantially rebuilt by the Hatch family in 1904 to the form in which we see it today. A ballroom was created above the stables, and a gardeners house added on at the end. The wedding of one of the Hatch's was held here. Later, during the Christian Brothers first years, masses were celebrated in this building as there was no local church.

### 15 Yard

This yard has been used for workshops where traditional skills associated with the restoration of old buildings can be practised: stone cutting, joinery, ironwork, plasterwork, etc.

### 16 The Coach House

This building was erected after 1904 by the Hatch family to serve as a coach house and later a hall and dressing rooms for An Caislean GAA club.



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