

## ‘Indeed a Town of Castles’; the Castles of Limerick City

BRIAN HODKINSON

Over the last eight hundred years the term castle has been used to describe a variety of structures within Limerick City: the following is an attempt to chronicle the use of the word.

King John’s Castle is the obvious starting point for a discussion of Limerick castles, but can be dealt with briefly. It was a royal castle, built with money from the royal purse but never visited by King John or any other English monarch. It is the only structure in the city that fits with the general public’s perception of what constitutes a castle, high walls, multiple towers and a large gatehouse. It was commenced in the first decade of the thirteenth century and occurs in documentation down to the present day. An underlying earlier ringwork castle, built during the first incursion of the Anglo-French into the city in the 1170s, was excavated some years ago but it is not mentioned in the sources.<sup>1</sup>

*Durmart le Galois*, a thirteenth-century French Arthurian tale, contains a fanciful description of Limerick. It is clear from the text that the author had never visited the town, but in it he mentions the nearby *chastel des molins* or castle of the mills, made from ten mills palisaded together.<sup>2</sup> It is almost certainly coincidental that at a later date the King’s Mill on Curragour Falls is described as a castle.<sup>3</sup> At the start of the fifteenth century, when a local merchant Thomas Balbein wrote his will he used a variety of terms to describe his various holdings around the city but reserved the word ‘castle’ for a single newly-built structure, which became known as Thom Cor Castle.<sup>4</sup> It was bequeathed to his brother, with the proviso that, if he chose not to settle in Limerick, then it would become Corporation property. Clearly his brother stayed away because in the 1654 Civil Survey it is listed as Corporation property.<sup>5</sup> It stood at the junction of Broad Street, High Street and Mungret Street, in Irishtown, and was demolished at the end of the seventeenth century. While nothing remains of the castle it is known from early maps and prospects of the city and appears to have been a tower house, of the familiar type dotted around the region. Its date, however, is early for a tower house, so it follows that it was probably an innovative structure in the Limerick area, which might account for the obvious sense of pride that Balbein felt when describing it. Elsewhere the present writer has noted that walling of the Irishtown probably commenced at the very end of the fourteenth century, so the castle may have been on the edge of the countryside when built, rather than being an urban structure.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For an outline history of the castle see Kenneth Wiggins, *Anatomy of a Siege: King John’s Castle, Limerick 1642* (Bray, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> E Mullaly, p. 92, ‘The Irish Topography of Two Arthurian Romances’, in H.B. Clarke and J.R.S. Phillips (eds), *Ireland, England and the Continent in the Middle Ages and Beyond* (Dublin 2006), pp 88-104; for original text see, J. Gildea, *Durmart le Galois* (2 vols., Villanova 1965-6) Vol 1.

<sup>3</sup> See below.

<sup>4</sup> B. Hodkinson, ‘Thom Cor Castle; a 14th Century Tower House in Limerick City?’ *JRSAI* (2005) Vol. 135, pp.119-129.

<sup>5</sup> R.C. Simington, *The Civil Survey AD 1654-1656, County of Limerick, Vol IV* (Dublin, 1938) p. 411.

<sup>6</sup> B. Hodkinson, ‘The Origin and Dating of the Name of Limerick’s Irishtown’. *NMAJ* Vol 49 (2009) pp. 1-5.



In his will of 1426, Nicholas FitzJohn Arthur of Limerick bequeathed to John Arthur, 'all the aforesaid tenements and lands with their appurtenances in wood, underwoods, copses, meadows, pastures, marshes, moors, fields, gardens, orchards, houses and castles'.<sup>7</sup> While the use of the plural may be formulaic, it is not possible to identify the castle or castles referred to, or state whether they are urban or rural. What is certain, however, is that the will cannot refer to any of the large seignorial castles like Adare or Askeaton whose ownership is known. The passage can only refer to smaller tower house type structures, and thus demonstrates that ownership of castles was beginning to percolate down to, and become an aspiration for, the merchant classes. As with Thom Cor Castle we seem to be dealing with early adoption of the tower house type.

The inspection of another Arthur family will, in 1475, took place, 'in the castle on the South side near the cathedral church of Limerick, and joined to the same church'.<sup>8</sup> No free standing castle type structure is known 'near' the church, so it appears that this must be a reference to the present day Glentworth Chapel, a later medieval structure added against the exterior of the original cathedral building at its south-western corner. It has a residential unit of a single room with fireplace above the chapel, accessed by its own spiral stairs from within the chapel. A print, by Hogg, of St. Mary's from the second half of the eighteenth century show this chapel, and the Consistorial Court to its east, as having stepped Irish crenellations.<sup>9</sup> The present day crenellations are obviously a later addition and may be the replacement of an earlier set.

The 1533 will of another Nicholas FitzJohn Arthur refers to a tenement in Quay Lane, which lay between the castle (*castrum*) of Dominic Comyn on the east and Trymys Lane on the west.<sup>10</sup> As in the case of Thom Cor Castle above, Comyn's castle was sufficiently different from the several stone houses listed in the document to merit its description as a castle, but what that distinguishing feature was is not specified. Unfortunately there is insufficient information to locate it within Quay Lane with certainty. It seems unlikely that it is the Comyn's (Galway's) Castle discussed below because we know that the property immediately to its west belonged to the Knights' Hospitaller until the dissolution of that order whereupon it passed to the Browne family.<sup>11</sup> A strong possibility is that it lay on the south side of the Lane, where the Civil Survey compiled some 120 years later, notes an Arthur property with a Comyn property to the east, in which case Trymys Lane is what later became known as Courthouse Lane.<sup>12</sup>

Fr Wolfe's description of Limerick in 1574 states that, 'For the most part the houses are made of quadrangular blocks of black marble and built in the style of towers or fortresses'.<sup>13</sup> If for towers and fortresses we can read castles then much of the town and especially the central portion appeared castellated. Early maps of the town certainly give this impression. The Hardiman map of c 1590, the most accurate of the early maps, shows a crenellated street frontage along the main street of the core town, with a

<sup>7</sup> E A MacLysaght and J.F. Ainsworth. 'The Arthur Manuscript'. *NMAJ* Vol. 8 No 1 (1958) p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> This can be viewed on the Limerick Museum.

website; [http://www.limerickcity.ie/WebAppsMuseum/museum\\_details.aspx?RowID=53300](http://www.limerickcity.ie/WebAppsMuseum/museum_details.aspx?RowID=53300).

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Ms, British Library Add Ms 31885, f. 236.

<sup>11</sup> B. Hodkinson. 'The Knights Templar's House in Limerick City', *NMAJ* Vol. 43 (2003), pp 118-9.

<sup>12</sup> Simington, *Civil Survey, County of Limerick*, p. 424.

<sup>13</sup> Brendan Bradshaw, 'Fr Wolfe's Description of Limerick City, 1574', *NMAJ* Vol. 17, (1975) pp. 47-53 p. 47; the original Italian is reproduced in an appendix in J. Begley, *The Diocese of Limerick in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Dublin 1927, pp. 507-8, where the words used are, 'torre o fortezze'.



scattering of crenellated buildings elsewhere in the north and south suburbs. The same is true of the more schematic 1587 Jobson map on which the later *Pacata Hibernia* map is based.<sup>14</sup> This castellated impression of Limerick is met again in a description from 1606, by Sir John Davies, 'We passed by Kilmalocke, a good corporate town, over so sweet and fertile country, unto the city of Limerick, which is indeed a town of castles, compassed with the fairest wall that ever I saw, under which runs the goodly river of the Shannon, which makes it a haven for ships of good burden'.<sup>15</sup> Clearly the standard stone built houses of the town, three storeys or more in height, with crenellations at roof level, gave visitors the impression of being castles.

A 1642 diary of the siege of Limerick Castle mentions three castles apart from King John's itself. On 19 May it records that 'The enemy layd at us more fiercly and from ye adioyning castle kild John Skegge, a little girle & boy & hurt some 3 women & children'. On 26 May there is mention of 'ye bridge castle', while on 7 and 9 June moves were made towards the surrender of King John's from 'Stretches-castle'.<sup>16</sup> Stretches or Stritch's castle lay in the area of the present Bishop's Palace and is discussed further below. The 'bridge castle' is presumably the towered gatehouse towards the western end of Thomond Bridge.<sup>17</sup> This leaves the 'adioyning castle' mentioned on 19 May. One has to assume that it overlooked King John's because of the ease of firing into the castle, so that eliminates the gatehouse at the east end of Thomond Bridge, described below as a castle in the Civil Survey. Nor is it Stritch's, which is named when it appears. The only conclusion is that it has to be one of the nearby stone houses on Nicholas Street; however, none can readily be described as adjoining.

The gatehouse on Thomond Bridge is again mentioned as a castle in a diary of the 1651 siege, written from the perspective of the besiegers. On 14 June it records 'A battery of 28 guns being prepared against the castle on Thomond Bridge they began to play'. On the following day 'Our battery of guns and mortar peeces continued to play, those at the castle on the bridge, theise into the towne.' On 19 June an attempt to storm the castle failed, 'Haveing battered and attempted the possessing ourselves of the castle on the bridge, and our ladders proveing short we drewe downe gunns for a further battry there and this night layed many fagots under the wall of it in order there unto allarumd the towne in severall places', but it was successfully taken on 21 June 'Wee stormed and forced and possessed the castle on the bridge, where we found 3 barrels of powder there layed for blowing up the place; and strange it was that it tooke not effect, considering that the same had beene layed and that ours entred with the casting in hand granadoes before them. The guns from that called the Kings Castle playing on the bridge tower, our guns played on them and dismounted one of them'.<sup>18</sup>

The Civil Survey of 1655 notes eleven structures described as castles and encompasses a wider range of building types. These are: - In the Irishtown or South Ward, 'The

<sup>14</sup> TCD MS 16 L 10 (59) & British National Archives MPF 1/96; Maps 6 & 5 respectively in Eamon O'Flaherty, *Irish Historic Towns Atlas, No 21, Limerick* (Dublin, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> 'Observations made by Sir John Davys, Attorney of Ireland, after a journey made by him in Munster', in C.W. Russell & J.P. Prendergast (eds), *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland 1603-06*, (London 1872) p. 469.

<sup>16</sup> M. J. M'Enery, A Diary of the Siege of Limerick Castle, 1642, *JRSAI* Vol. 34, 1903, pp 163-187.

<sup>17</sup> See Brian Hodkinson, 'Old Thomond Bridge', *NMAJ*, vol. 45 (2005) pp 1-6.

<sup>18</sup> 'Proceedings of the forces in Ireland under Sir Hardress Waller and Lord-Deputy Ireton by Parliamentary army officers 1650-1651' in, John T. Gilbert, *A Contemporary History of Affairs in Ireland*. Volume 3, part 2., (Dublin, Irish Archaeological Society, 1880) Vol. 3, part 2, pp 218-263; pp238-40. Available on Corpus of Electronic Texts (CELT), [www.ucc.ie/celt](http://www.ucc.ie/celt). For a second description of these events see, Edmund Ludlow, *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow Esq.*, (Vivay, Switzerland, 1698), Vol. 1, pp 356-7.



Castle called the Shambles, being of the interest of David Rice and Bartholomew Rice by mortgage & Lease from the Corporation now made into a Cythadell', 'The Cytadele about St John Gate contains a great stone house with a Cross house the great Castle on the Gate and a lardge waste plotts of ground now made use of for a Cittadle', 'Tomcore Castle and the Garrett place therunto bellonginge Docttor Thomas Arthur the Elder lessee for 120 years, now made use of for Sytadle' and 'The great Sytadle about water gate, containing Nyne houses and Watergate Castle'.<sup>19</sup> In the middle ward, 'East of same: a stone house of a Castle now in the occupation of the said Ltt. Coll. [Warren]; scituated upon the North Corner of kea lane fronting East upon the heigh street. The shop and seller of wch the interest of Sr Nichollas Comyne, The midle Roomes to Gabriell Gallway, and the uper parte to Lawrenc Comyn morgadged to the said Gabriell Gallway for 50 li', 'A waste plott in the Centre thereof wth a Castle East upon the same' which had belonged to John Creagh, and, 'The next southward is one Castle, now in the occupation of Mr ffilkins'.<sup>20</sup> The first listed in this ward is usually known as Galway's Castle, but elsewhere is named Comyn's Castle.<sup>21</sup>

In the North Ward, 'The stone house or Castle of Curragowre with two Mills therein seated the sd house being admeasured and now in the poion. of Cornet Thomas Bently. The said house & Mills devided as followeth Two third pts of the said house & Mills mortgadged by the said Thomas Arthur among other things to Alderman Nicholas ffanyng. The other third parte of the said house & Mills belonged to the said John Creagh', the 'King's Castle', 'A waste tenemt adioyning on the north to the little Castle or gate house on the east end of Thomond Bridge', and, 'A Stone Castle or house northwards of the said wast plott, on the high street on the east. A Cross stone house westward adioyning With a wast court. Now made a Cythadell or Garrison formerly owing unto the Corporation yearely 2s besides 6d for langable'.<sup>22</sup> This last in the list was, according to the Survey, the former property of Mr Stritch and therefore is the castle bearing his name mentioned in the 1642 diary of the siege.

Of these eleven castles, five have the word citadel associated with them. These citadels were confined to the north and south suburbs and were designed to hold a heavy garrison to overawe the Irish inhabitants of these areas. In the case of Stritch's and Thom Cor, the castle itself was the citadel, but in the remaining three the castle formed a part of a larger entity and it was the gatehouse on the city wall that formed the castle element. The Shambles, at the south end of Baal's Bridge, and St John's Gate, from cartographic evidence, were both simple rectangular gate-towers. The West Watergate complex consisted of a twin-towered gatehouse, the only such in the city, together with an internal rectangular gate-tower, giving a triangular plan. A rectangular tower stood adjacent to the inner gate on its north side.<sup>23</sup> The equation of gatehouse as castle can be seen again at the east end of Thomond Bridge.

<sup>19</sup> Simmington, *op. cit.*, pp 400, 406, 411 & 415, the gate at the south end of Baal's Bride, the existing John's gate in the hospital grounds, Tom Cor Castle and West Watergate respectively.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* pp 427, 431 & 435. Ffilkins castle may be the 'castle ruin' marked on the 1st edition of the OS.

<sup>21</sup> Geraldine Tallon, (ed.). *Court of Claims Submissions and Evidence 1663*, (Dublin, 2006), p. 325.

<sup>22</sup> Simington, *op. cit.* pp 442, 447-9, 449 & 449 respectively.

<sup>23</sup> The 1841 first edition OS 25ft to the mile marks a castle here. For excavation of this gate complex see, Ann Lynch, 'Excavations of the Medieval Town Defenced at Charlotte's Quay, Limerick', *PRIA* Vol. 84C No 9, pp 281-381 (Dublin, 1984); Christine Tarbett and Ken Wiggins, 'Charlotte's Quay, Abbey C Ward', in Isabel Bennett, *Excavations 1989*, pp 35-37 (Dublin 1990). For a reconstruction drawing of the gate complex, see John Elliott, *Medieval Limerick Today, An Illustrated Guide*, p. 20 (Limerick, 2009).



In the Survey the three major T- junctions of the town, one in each ward,<sup>24</sup> has a structure described as a castle standing next to it: the two in the suburbs are also called citadels. If this was a deliberate policy, then the reason Galway's/Comyn's Castle, in the middle ward was not designated a citadel is that there was no need to garrison it. While the other two castles lay in the suburbs into which the Irish population had been concentrated, Galway's lay in the middle ward, which had become the Englishtown.<sup>25</sup> The building appears to have been no more than an ordinary dwelling house and was in part a shop. Its elevation to castle status may probably derive from its location and possession of crenellations and not from any defensive pretensions.

The use of the word castle to describe Curragour mill probably arises from the fact that, as Philip's view of 1685 shows, it was crenellated.<sup>26</sup> It could have formed a minor strongpoint in its own right since it was only approachable from the land either across a narrow bridge running from a door in the city walls, or at very low water. Theoretically it could be re-supplied from the sea and, in the wrong hands, it would have provided flanking fire on the water gate of King John's Castle. Of the two remaining Survey castles, ffilkins stood away from the main street and was clearly not one of the regular townhouses, which, as seen above, were described by some as castles. It was probably, therefore, a free standing tower and the dimensions given in the Survey, 30 x 22 ft (9.1 x 6.7m), would put it towards the lower end of the range of Co. Limerick tower houses, on a par with Dysert, Rathnasaer or Lissamota in Co. Limerick and well under half the size of the other tower house in town, Tom Core Castle.<sup>27</sup> Creagh's castle stood on the east side of a waste plot measuring 24 x 20 ft and even had it occupied the whole plot it would have been exceedingly small. It is thus not clear what type of structure this was.

Dineley's 1680 description of Limerick, is reminiscent of Wolfe's and Davis's either side of 1600; 'The houses of this city are tall built with black unpolisht marble with partition walls some 5 foot thick, and have Battlements on the top, & the best Cellars, for so many, of any city in England or Ireland,' and 'The Anciente Lanes and Streets of this city are, for the most part Castle building, each Inhabitant having been so afraid of his neighbour, that many partition walls are six foot thick.'<sup>28</sup>

The Corporation Index of 1843 contains summaries of several later-seventeenth century leases of Corporation property that mention castles.<sup>29</sup> In a lease of 1655 to Gerald Fitzgerald four castles are mentioned, three of which, Tomene or Thom Cor, the inner gate at the eastern end of Thomond Bridge, and Stritch's, have been noted earlier. How the last one became Corporation property is unknown at present, but here it also given the alternative name of Rochford's Castle.<sup>30</sup> The only one not mentioned previously is 'New Gate Castle, with the walls over the gate and a small plot adjoining on the west side of the said Castle', which was re-released by FitzGerald to Hugh Montgomery in 1666. This is yet another example of one of the city gates, being called a castle. It stood in Nicholas Street on the line of the internal city wall dividing the northern suburb from the middle ward and was another rectangular tower. The earliest documentary mention of the gate is

<sup>24</sup> In modern terms, the junction of Church Street, castle Street and Nicholas Street in the north ward; Nicholas Street, Mary Street and Bridge Street in the middle ward; and Broad Street, John's Street and Mungret Street in the south ward

<sup>25</sup> See, Brian Hodkinson. 'The origin and dating of Limerick's Irishtown', *NMAJ*, vol. 49, (2009), pp 1-5.

<sup>26</sup> O'Flaherty, *op. cit.* Plate 2.

<sup>27</sup> For comparative plans see, M. Salter, *The Castles of North Munster*, (Malvern, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> Philip Shirley, with notes by Maurice Lenihan. 'Extracts from the Journal of Thomas Dineley, Esq., giving some account of his Visit to Ireland in the Reign of Charles II', *JRSAI*, Vol. V (new series) (1864-66), pp 443-4.

<sup>29</sup> Brian Hodkinson. 'The Corporation Index of 1840', *NMAJ* 1998-9, Vol. 38-39, (2006); entries 23, 41, 185 and 199

<sup>30</sup> Rochford has not yet been identified.



from 1392 when the King granted Richard Bultyngford the 'small tower annexed to the new gate' for life without rent, but its origin is much earlier.<sup>31</sup> Yet another example of a city gate being called a castle is found in a 1686 lease which records, 'All that the great stone Workhouse and Castle commonly called the Bridewell House and Main Guard adjoining to the North End of Balls Bridge in the City aforesaid together with all cellars, chambers etc.' From maps it is possible to say that this too was a single rectangular tower.

The final instance from the Index is a 1678 lease of 'A parcel of the Street or Lane called Monks Lane, on the south side thereof extending from the North Corner of the Castle belonging to the House in possession of Moses Woodroffe, by a straight line to the back street eastward, running by the East Wall of the City, containing about 10 feet in breadth and 87 feet in length, bounded on the East with said back street, on the south with the Garden and back House of the said Alderman, in the West with the said castle and on the north with the said street and Lane called Monks Lane.'<sup>32</sup> This is interesting because it implies that the house and castle are not synonymous; that the castle is only a part of the house. It is possible to read the whole entry as the lease of the back-end of an already subdivided burgage plot, with the front part, Moses Woodroffe's house, facing onto the main street. On the Hardiman map this corner and the main street to the south are shown as having a double row of blue roofed buildings. A possible interpretation of what is being depicted can be gained from Bourke's House, sometimes called a castle, further to the south. When Athlunkard Street was created in the 1830s several houses fronting onto the main street opposite Bridge Street were demolished and Bourke's property was one of these. What was left standing, to the rear of the property, was the north wall and what is visible today is the internal face. A line of spring stones indicates that a vault separated the ground and first floors, while the remains of a fireplace, at first floor level, houses the present day information panel, and a row of corbels below parapet level took the beams for the roof or floor of a missing storey. The present building on the Athlunkard Street / Nicholas Street corner has three storeys plus attic over a basement seems to have shared a party wall with the house on its south side, so it is likely that the demolished front part of Bourke's House was also three storey plus attic over basement, which would contrast sharply with the lower rear. The Hardiman map may be trying to depict this distinction and if so then it was probably the taller front part of the house that was Moses Woodroffe's castle.

Castles also appear in several leases in the Registry of Deeds. A group of deeds dated between 1708 and 1726 probably relate to one and the same property, which in 1726 was described as the 'Castle, old walls and waste plot of ground', bounded by the High Street to the west, a back lane leading to Fish Gate on the east and Prison Lane on the north.<sup>33</sup> Another of 1802 refers to dwelling houses in James Street in the Irishtown, described by the name of 'Old Castle'.<sup>34</sup> It is unlikely this is either of the James Streets mentioned in O'Flaherty: the one is outside the Irishtown while there is no castle like structure shown on any map in the area behind St. John's Square.<sup>35</sup> The final castle, in a deed of 1741, is a one 'commonly called Whitmore's' in the Sheep Street area.<sup>36</sup> There is nothing to suppose that these are other than town houses.

<sup>31</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1391-96, p. 203. For the origins of the gate see Brian Hodkinson, 'The Topography of pre-Norman Limerick', *NMAJ* Vol. 42 (2002) pp 1-7.

<sup>32</sup> Monk's Lane lay on the line of the modern Exchange Lane, but was probably narrower.

<sup>33</sup> Registry of Deeds (RD) 1708, 6/1/1332 recites a lease of 1700; 1710, 45/31/27564; 1722, 71/443/51990; & 1726, 54/121/35111.

<sup>34</sup> RD 552/236/365969.

<sup>35</sup> O'Flaherty, *Atlas*, p.17.

<sup>36</sup> RD 152/276/101734.



St Mary's Cathedral archive is as yet uncatalogued but in it is a deed of 28 September 1789, which recites the earlier lease of 7 August 1700 of a property, part of the Hoare estate, bounded by the churchyard on the north, High St., (Nicholas St) on the east, Quay Lane (Bridge St.) on south and a laneway to the St Mary's on the west. The original lease was from Lord Blessington to Thomas Monsell, Henry Widenham and William Butler, and the property is described as the 'Ruinated castle walls and houses commonly called the great square'. This property lay between the Exchange wall and Bridge Street and includes Galwey/Comyn's castle mentioned above. The document does seem to hint that other buildings along this section of High street may have been deemed to be castles.<sup>37</sup>

A 1795 lease from Laurence Hickey Jephson to James O'Sullivan of Limerick, of a property in Little Curry Lane, Irishtown (National Library D27,922) contains a map showing the plot. It is bound on the east by the town wall, with little Curry Lane to the north and the 'lane leading from Watergate to Market House Lane (present day Curry Lane)' to the west. The adjoining properties to the south belong to Mr Gubbins and Mr Arthur. The north boundary runs straight from street to wall, but the southern one doglegs 90 degrees southward a short distance then turns again to narrow back down to the town wall. The shape is quite distinctive and can be seen on map 4 of the Limerick Atlas, between Garvey's Lane and Miller's Row. There is a rectangular building marked at the front of the site and just below it is written 'old castle'.

In the footnotes Maurice Lenihan provided for the printed version of Dineley's 'Journal' there is mention, of a Whittamore's Castle, which lay in Mary St. and was described as being 'worthy of the attention of the antiquaries'. Its exact location was not given, but again in all probability it was a stone town house, presumably named after Francis Whittamore who was mayor in 1681.<sup>38</sup> Herbert stated that Fanning's Castle, on the west side of Mary Street, sometimes went by the name of Whitemore's and was probably the Globe Tavern. His source was Lenihan's History, which also states this was sometimes called Sarsfield's Castle and the castle of Limerick.<sup>39</sup> If correctly identified this cannot be the similarly named Whitmore's castle noted above. Fanning's Castle is the best surviving example of a town house in the city, with three storeys over a basement and an attic. However, it does not appear to be a typical dwelling house because each storey has an external door, which must have led to a wooden staircase. This makes its identification as a tavern or inn quite plausible.

Castle Rag<sup>40</sup> seems to be a name given to two different buildings, one in Irishtown the other in Englishtown. Fitzgerald and McGregor recorded in 1827 that, 'The widow of Alderman Craven left by will a large house, near West Watergate, commonly called Castle Rag, for the reception of twelve poor widows to each of whom she bequeathed forty shillings annually. The building has long since been thrown down, but the charity is still well maintained by the Bishop, the Dean and the Mayor, who were appointed trustees'.<sup>41</sup> The first edition of the Ordnance Survey 5ft to the mile map published in 1841 shows a Castle Rag in Nicholas Street, on the west side of the street, just south of the Widows' Almshouses. In the Ordnance Survey Field Name Book, O'Donovan writes;

<sup>37</sup> My thanks to Noreen Ellerker for allowing access to the archives.

<sup>38</sup> Shirley, 'Extracts from the Journal of Thomas Dineley', p. 440.

<sup>39</sup> R. Herbert, p. 160; 'Limerick Shop Signs of the Eighteenth Century', *N. Munster Antiquarian Journal*, Vol. II, No. 4 (1941), pp156-66. Lenihan, *op. cit.* p. 760.

<sup>40</sup> No ready explanation of the name is given in any of the sources, so it is, perhaps, worth noting that Castlerag in Ballingarry appears to have been named after J. Ragge who was paid for repairs to the castle in 1653, T.J. Westropp, 'Ancient Castles of the County of Limerick', *PRIA* 26C, No. 10, (Dublin, 1907) p. 224.

<sup>41</sup> P. Fitzgerald and J.J. M'Gregor. *The History, Topography and Antiquities of the County and City of Limerick*, (Dublin, 1827), p. 606. See also report of the Irish Corporation Commissioners presented to William IV in 1835, p. 377.



Castlerag or Englishtown Market, 'on its site is a meat market and some houses and on the N. wall of one of the houses is to be seen the image of a saint called by some St Debora'.<sup>42</sup> From its location it would appear to have been the remains of a stone town house. It is not known if the Englishtown site was a successor to that in the Irishtown.

An undated, but probably later nineteenth-century, copy of the Crown Rental of the de Vesci estate lists, '33, A front corner castle', together with a waste plot, in the possession of Paul Farrell lying in Church Lane.<sup>43</sup> The properties in the rental are listed systematically by street in what appears to be a geographical progression, with the previous group on the Quay and the subsequent one on the north side of Quay Lane. This suggests that the lane in question was probably the one from Bridge Street to the Cathedral, but the present writer has never before heard this called Church Lane. If correctly identified then the castle must have been on the west side of the lane, because the block to the east was part of the Hoare and Kenmare estates.

The impression of a city of castles had gone by the nineteenth century to be replaced by one of - 'lofty houses built in the Dutch or Flemish fashion'.<sup>44</sup> There is, however, no reason to believe that there was any massive rebuild in the Englishtown. According to Lenihan, the old houses were simply clad in brick and their gables reconstructed in the new fashion.<sup>45</sup> In summary then the word castle has over the centuries been variously used to describe a royal castle, a tower house, the ordinary later medieval stone-built houses of the city, most of the main gates into the city, part of a side chapel in the Cathedral and a mill. The only uniting feature is that all seem to have been crenellated.

<sup>42</sup> John O'Donovan, *Field Name Book of the County and City of Limerick* (1840). Undated typescript copy in Limerick City Library, p. 384.

<sup>43</sup> De Vesci papers Ms 38 773 (2); manuscript with printed columns. The reference is to a box the contents of which do not appear to be individually numbered. The document lists tenants in 1757 & 1852.

<sup>44</sup> *Dublin Penny Journal*, No 67, Vol. II, Oct 12th 1833, p. 113; see also S. Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, (London 1837), p. 268.

<sup>45</sup> Shirley, 'Extracts from the Journal of Thomas Dineley', p. 440.