

CONSARC

CONSERVATION

Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment



**FULLER'S FOLLY, NEWCASTLE WEST
Co. LIMERICK**

November 2023



CONTENTS

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION
- 2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE
- 3.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
- 4.0 PROPOSED WORKS & ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT
- 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

APPENDICES

- APPENDIX A PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

DATE	VERSION	AUTHOR	APPROVED	COMMENTS
31.05.2023	draft	UNM	UNM	-
16.06.2023	-	UNM	UNM	-
28.07.2023	Final	UNM	UNM	

Consarc Conservation

DUBLIN

South Great George's Street, Dublin 2
T. 01 9022557 | mail@consarc-design.com

BELFAST

The Gas Office | 4 Cromac Quay | Belfast | BT7 2JD
T. 028 9082 8400 | conservation@consarc-design.co.uk

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCOPE

This report has been prepared by Consarc, an RIAI accredited Grade 1 Conservation practice to accompany a Part 8 application by Limerick County Council. The application is seeking permission to refurbish Fuller's Folly as a tourist facility, to include café, exhibition space, outdoor market, and access to the Desmond Castle grounds.

This report has been prepared having regard for the status of the building, as an important historic building in Newcastle West, Co. Limerick. The overall policy is to retain, restore and enhance the integrity and significance of the building, and within its wider context. Any works to the site should be carried out in accordance with best conservation practice, as defined by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in the Venice Charter of 1964, and in subsequent charters.

This report has been prepared with regard to the government publication *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. Reference is also made to the Limerick County Council Development Plan 2022 – 2028.

A photographic record with accompanying marked up floor plans is included in Appendix A.

1.2 BUILDING STATUS

Record of Protected Structures (RPS)

RPS No: 1488 - Fuller's Folly_ South building
(and former offices of McCarthy & Patterson)
RPS No. 1489 - Ancillary buildings and structures to Fuller's Folly
North building (derelict), courtyard and adjoining L-shaped building. The L-shaped building is not part of this application.

There are several protected structures within close proximity of the site including:

RPS No. 1482 – Templars' Castle (Desmond Castle site)
RPS No. 1483 – Castle House (Arts & Crafts style within Desmond Castle complex)

RPS No. 1490 – Medieval Walls, Bridge Street
RPS No. 1491 – Curling's footbridge, north Quay
(named after the agent for the Earl of Devon)

There are several other protected structures within the town.

National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

The building has not been recorded on the NIAH.

Architectural Conservation Area:

The site is not in an ACA but is adjacent to ACA 11 'Newcastle West' which includes The Square, Bridge Street, Maiden Street and North Quay.

Archaeological Interest:

The site is within a zone of archaeological potential.
Desmond Castle Complex (NMS / OPW managed site)
RMP No: L1036-067002
National Monument Nos. 636 & 582

An archaeological impact assessment is being prepared by the archaeological consultant as part of this application.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 THE RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

Fuller's Folly is located in Newcastle West, to the southeast of the Desmond Castle, from which the town gets its name. A reconstruction drawing of the Desmond Castle suggests that the subject building stands on the site of a former castle gate. This is conjectural, but either way, the building is located either within the original castle or in the location of the original moat.¹ Access to the site is from Bridge Street and it sits on the north bank of the river Arra that runs through the town and is a tributary of the river Deel. A narrow strip of land separates the Folly building and the Desmond Castle from the river.

2.2 CHRONOLOGY OF THE SITE

Desmond Castle dates from the 13th Century and was a stronghold of the Earls of Desmond until their final demise in 1583. It expanded westwards during the medieval period and most of the structures were created in the 15th Century. Today, most of these structures have since been lost, but key surviving buildings include the Banqueting Hall and the Halla Mór. Other extant remains include sections of the enclosing bawn wall, a tower, part of which was later reused as a kiln, and Castle House, an Arts & Crafts style house and adjoining walled garden.

The Castle and associated lands were subsequently granted to Sir William Courtenay, Earl of Devon after the defeat of the Fitzgeralds. Much of the castle complex was lost in subsequent centuries. The OPW took it over in 1989 and has carried out extensive conservation works, primarily to the Banqueting Hall.

Fuller's Folly, as it became known, was built by William Fuller Hartnett (1804-1879) and dates from 1863. It was built presumably as a residence. He was a Cork-born linen merchant, who moved to Newcastle West in 1830s and set up business on Bridge Street. His wife died tragically at the age of 40, leaving him with a young family. He was a close political ally of Daniel O'Connell, but later switched his political allegiance to the Young Ireland movement and was jailed for a few months in 1840 because of his strong radical political views.

Later, Fuller Hartnett leased a plot of land beside the Desmond castle from the Earl of Devon. It is said Fuller Hartnett had a disagreement with Curling (agent for the Earl of Devon) and so built his own castle as a form of revenge or in a fit of pique. It was an expensive enterprise, reportedly costing £1 a stone to build. The building had little or no practical use, and virtually bankrupted him, and so it was known as 'Fuller's Folly'²

Fuller Hartnett died in 1879 and was buried nearby in Churchtown cemetery.

By the mid-20th Century, the garden of the site was adapted and used as an abattoir. Remnants from its use are visible on site, including the sloped concrete yard. An opening was made in the north garden wall, backing onto the castle, to provide access to the town through the castle grounds. The breach was subsequently built up again.

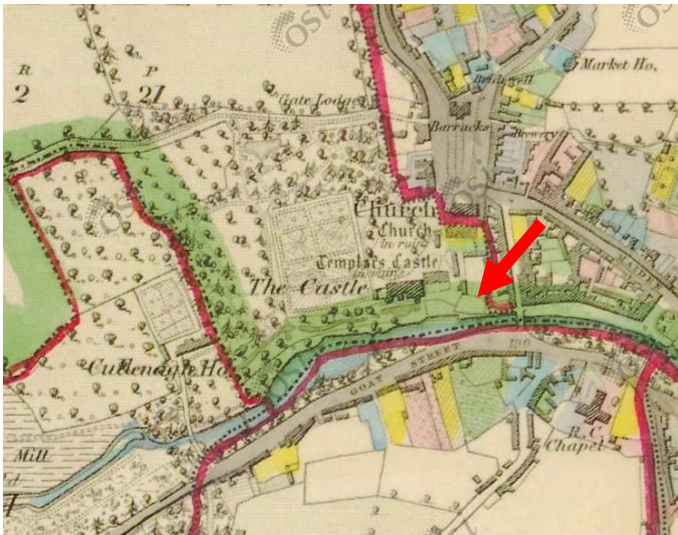
In c.1990s the south building was refurbished as the architectural studio of McCarthy & Patterson. It was re-roofed, and the interiors were replaced.

¹ Aegis Archaeology Report ref: 66-71, 26/05/23

² <http://www.patrickcomerford.com/2018/10/amid-graves-and-tombs-ruins-of-saint.html>

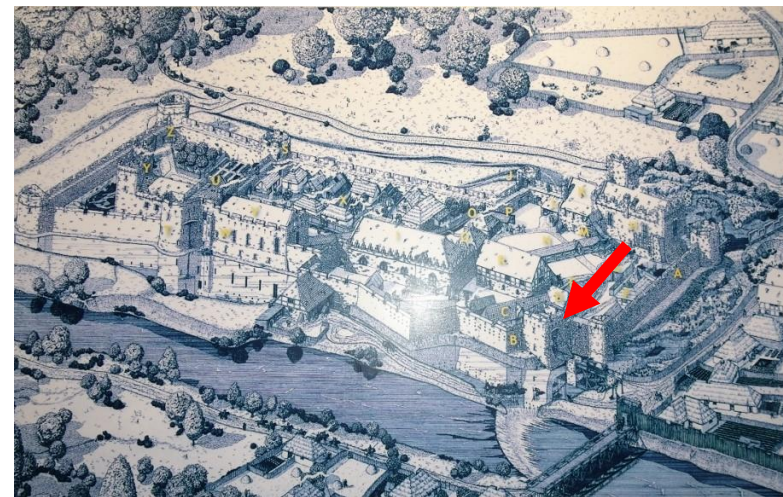
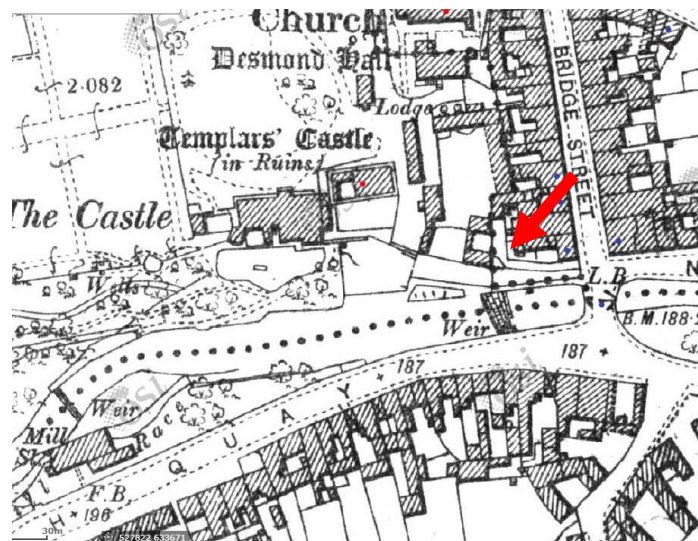
2.3 CARTOGRAPHIC IMAGES / REFERENCE

The building first appears on the 1897 map.



6 Inch First Edition OS. 1837
Arrow points to the location of the site

Baseline map from Historic Environment viewer



25" OS Inch map, surveyed 1897

Conjectural recreation of the Desmond Castle in the 15th Century.
Fuller's Folly is located where the south-east gate into the castle was thought to have been located.

2.4 EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION

The Site

The site is located to the southeast of the Desmond Castle, with access from Bridge Street. It comprises a building, orientated east – west, either side of an arched entrance, with a rear garden and a derelict outbuilding at the end of the garden. The garden is enclosed on two sides by the medieval walls of the castle.³ The south wall is contemporary with the building and contains a cut stone with the mason's mark.

The outhouse at the west end of the garden is roofless and covered in vegetation. The stone façade has a central stone archway, with mason's mark, and a window opening each side.

An adjacent 'L-shaped' building (RPS No: 1489) appears to be contemporary with Fuller's Folly but is under separate ownership and does not form part of this application. RPS No. 1489 also includes the derelict north building and the central courtyard. These are owned by Limerick CoCo and form part of this application.



North garden wall

The white looking patch in the centre is where the breach was rebuilt.



Outbuilding at the end (west) of the garden

The end wall and wall to the right contain medieval fabric.



South garden wall This wall is contemporary with the building. The arrow indicates the location of the mason's mark.

³ Aegis Archaeology Report ref: 177-35, 17/04/23

The Building

The building consists of two separate structures, connect by a courtyard. Each structure has a mono-pitch roof sloping into the courtyard. The roof to the main building was replaced c.1990s. The other roof has collapsed into the building. Enclosing walls are limestone, with cut stone parapet and crenelations. Walls are built in coursed rubble limestone, with ashlar quoins, archways, and window heads.

East elevation: Entrance from Bridge Street

Three bay two storey elevation, with single storey to the centre bay. An ached entrance in the central bay leads into the courtyard. To the left is the south building, with an arched entrance and aluminium door frame(amended during the 1990s works).

The window on the first floor is a 2 over 2 fixed pane, with stone mullions. has ornately carved ogee arches to the upper section, decorative round arches to the lower section, all contained within a stone carved hood mould. The north building contains a single window opening at first floor level.



Mason's mark on the keystone of the arch to the rear outhouse



Mason's mark carved into a stone on the south wall

It reads 'Built by WFH 1863'

The stone below reads 'F Collins Mason'

It is unclear if this is the original location of the two stones. They may have been relocated from elsewhere on the site, or inserted after the wall was built.



East elevation as approached from Bridge Street

Note the building at the end on the RHS is contemporary with Fuller's Folly with the same detailing and must have been part of the original complex. (RPS No: 1489).

South elevation: Facing the river.

Two storey two bay elevation addresses the river, framed by ashlar quoins and parapet. Stonework has been repointed in cement with recessed joints. Central arched aluminium window (amended during the 1990s works), arched head rebuilt, keystone, carved with WFH 1859. Upper floor has 2no. stone mullioned windows matching the window described above on the east elevation. Upper floor has 2no. stone mullioned windows matching the window described above on the east elevation.



South elevation facing onto the river.

West elevation: Facing into the garden.

Three bay two storey, with right (south building) projecting slightly. Central bay has archway with cut stone robbed out. (Not central on the elevation). Corbel stones to the inner arch. 2no. narrow, loop type windows, with ashlar surrounds, to the upper floor. Crenelated parapet lower than adjoining parapets. 2no. narrow, loop type blind windows to the upper floor of the south building. The north building has evidence of medieval fabric.



West elevation facing into the garden.

Internal courtyard elevations:

Coursed two storey dressed rubble stone elevations with eaves, gutters and downpipes.

South building: Blocked up arched entrance, with dressed stone robbed out (used possibly on south elevation) with blocked up narrow loop widow each side. 2no. narrow loop blind windows and 1no. large arched door (glazed in) to the upper floor.

North building: Square headed entrance doorway, flanked by window openings each side. 2no. window openings to upper level, and 1no. large arched full height door to the upper floor corresponding with opening to the south building.

The west wall of the courtyard is two storey. The upper section was plastered and was most likely roofed, providing first floor access between the north and south buildings, via the corresponding arched doorways.



North building



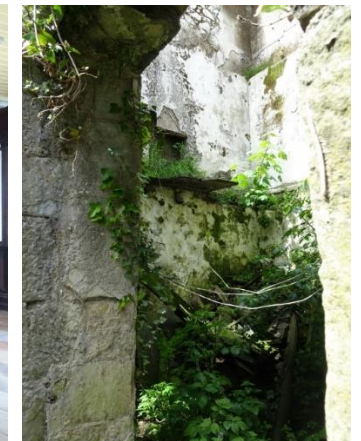
South building

2.5 INTERNAL DESCRIPTION

The building was refurbished in c.1990s as an architectural studio. As part of those works, a new first floor was built with access via a spiral staircase. This was inserted to provide a better floor to ceiling height at ground floor level. The roof was replaced and some of the window openings were altered. The only historic elements remaining are the enclosing walls, the corbel stones that would have supported the first floor in its original position, and the stone mullioned windows.



South building ground floor



North building

The north building is in a derelict state and was not accessible. The roof has collapsed but part of the roof structure is visible. The first floor has also collapsed. The internal layout cannot be assessed apart from a fireplace and cantilevered hearth stone on the east wall at first floor level. The internal walls retain their plasterwork.



South building first floor

3.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural

The building was commissioned by William Fuller Hartnett and executed by a stone mason F Collins. It is an unusual composition, with a central courtyard and a building either side. The original use is assumed to be a residence for the owner. It is built in the Neo-Gothic style and features some fine stonework, in particular the mullioned windows, inspired no doubt by its proximity to the Desmond Castle.

The mason's marks add an interesting detail to the overall composition.

Archaeological

The building is situated in an area of archaeological importance. It was built either within the footprint of the original castle or within the moat. Part of the building contains medieval masonry.

It is located just off Bridge street and on the banks of the river Arra in a very picturesque setting and it makes a valuable contribution to the town and to the area around the Desmond Castle.

Social

The building is of social significance. It was built by a local merchant with the story of its construction having become popular in local folklore.



View of the Folly looking south from the Desmond Castle.

Note the distinctive ledge on the west face of the north building, suggesting it was built on or over an existing structure.

4.0 SUMMARY OF PROPOSED WORKS & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Limerick County Council propose refurbishing the building and bringing it back into use as a tourist attraction and amenity for the town of Newcastle West.

Part 8 Notice:

Development of the West Limerick Tourism Hub @ Fullers Folly to include.

Refurbishment and renovation of the Fullers Folly buildings (which is a protected structure, RPS 1488 & 1489) and courtyard, and change of use to commercial, community and tourism.

Construction of a new building between the two existing structures.

Develop the buildings and site to include toilets, café, visitor information, retail, viewing area, interpretation and open courtyard space.

Develop a pedestrian link between the Fullers Folly courtyard and the riverside.

Works to include all site development works for the buildings and site including utilities, drainage, landscaping and public realm.

Improvements works to the entrance from Bridge Street to the Folly including provision of pedestrian walkways.

4.2 CHANGE OF USE FROM OFFICE TO TOURISM USE

The building was most likely designed as a residence, but its subsequent use is unknown.

The site was used as an abattoir in the 20th Century. Changes to facilitate that use included laying a concrete yard, making an opening in the garden wall (north) and other minor changes to openings.

The main building (south) was converted to office use in c.1990s. While the work may not have been a sensitive restoration, it did ensure the building survived and remained in use for the past 30 years. Key features, including the overall form, openings, ornately carved windows, and internally the corbels supporting a first floor were retained intact.

The new use as a tourist attraction, adjacent to the Desmond Castle and the recently opened Greenway will provide an important facility to enhance the tourist offering in Newcastle West.

4.3 PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS / CHANGES

Proposed alterations to facilitate the new use include:

New main entrance through the existing courtyard:

- The courtyard will provide a central orientation space with vertical circulation and a gallery space. It will provide access to a rooftop viewing deck.
- The courtyard will be enclosed with a new glazed roof and treated in a contemporary idiom.
- It will be accessed from the garden (west) side.

South building:

- The 1990s interior will be stripped out and the space will be used as a cafe at ground floor level and an interpretation / exhibition space at first floor level.
- A central archway previously blocked up will be reopened at ground floor level and an existing arched doorway will provide access at first floor level.
- The mono-pitched slate roof will be replaced with a flat roof to facilitate a new viewing platform.

North building:

- This will provide ticketing and toilets at ground level.
- The building is derelict and so a new roof, first floor, ground floor and internal finishes will be required.
- The roof will be reinstated as a flat roof to facilitate a viewing platform.
- At first floor level, a window opening will be adapted as a new doorway to provide access into a presentation room, consisting of audio visual and seating.

Rear Garden:

- This will be used for activities such as outdoor seating for the café and an outdoor market area.
- The outhouse to the rear will be repaired and provide an additional seating area.
- To maximise the use of the garden, permeability through the site will be important. It is proposed to retain the existing south boundary wall and provide two openings. One will be at the junction with the building and the other will be a window opening or 'claire-voie' with railings to provide a view from the riverbank through to the garden of Fuller's Folly. The existing pedestrian access to the Desmond Castle will be retained.



**Visualisation from N21 looking towards the Folly & Riverside
by Healy Partners Architects**

4.4 IMPACT OF THE ALTERATIONS ON THE SITE

New Use:

The new use will have a positive impact on the building. It will enhance the character and the setting of the protected structure, the immediate environment and will offer an additional tourist facility in the town.

New Intervention:

The new interventions will have a positive impact on the building. They are essential for the long term survival of the protected structure and the site. They will restore the character and setting of the building in a clearly noticeable manner.

Alterations to Existing Fabric:

Roofs:

The change in the profile of the roofs to the north and south buildings from mono-pitch to flat roof construction will have a moderate impact on the protected structure, as it will alter the original roof form. The existing roof in the south building was constructed in c.1990s. The roof in the north building has collapsed, with only small sections of roof surviving. While there will be no loss of historic fabric, the buildings will be altered, and the original roof form changed. The roof profiles will not be visible, but the new flat roofs will provide the opportunity to have a viewing platform.

Window Openings:

The reuse of existing openings will minimise unnecessary loss of fabric and understanding of the building. One window in the north building will be adapted to form an entrance door. This change will have a slight impact on the protected structure, as it will change the character of the elevation, with affecting its sensitivities.

South Wall Openings:

Proposed openings within the south boundary garden wall of Fuller's Folly will provide a much needed visual link through to the Desmond Castle from the riverside. The main approach for tourist traffic to the Desmond Castle is from the N21. These openings will improve permeability through the site. The proposed openings will have a slight impact. The loss of part of the fabric of the wall will be noticeable and will bring about change. However, it will not affect the overall sensitivity of the site. It will provide better connectivity between the riverbank walk and Fuller's Folly, while respecting the integrity of the protected structure.

4.5 MITIGATION

Overall, the utmost care shall be taken to ensure that architectural features will be protected with minimal damage to historic fabric.

As such, an RIAI Grade 1 Conservation Architect shall be retained as part of the design team, to advise on conservation of the historic building.

Due to the archaeological sensitivity of the site, any proposed work shall be carried out under Ministerial Consent.

- **New Interventions:**

Ensure all new interventions (New enclosure to the courtyard, Internal fitout & New openings in the north and south walls) are designed in a modern idiom and clearly identified as contemporary, while respecting and not overpowering the existing structures. The existing structures should be clearly legible.

- Alterations to Existing Fabric

Alterations to the existing structures and loss of historic fabric shall be offset by the reversal of previous inappropriate interventions, and the careful conservation and repair of the existing site. Existing stone from the boundary wall where the new openings are made, shall be reused for repairs to the building.

- Reversal of previous inappropriate interventions:

Removal of all cement from the buildings.
Rake out cementitious mortar from external walls.
Remove cement or gypsum plaster from the interior.
Remove cement archway from entrance door.
Remove 1990s fit out of the south building including:
spiral staircase, brick lining to archways, internal finishes, and fittings, etc.

- Repair works:

Repair archway on south elevation.
Repair archway to the courtyard where stone was robbed out.
Remove vegetation from the garden walls.
Retain existing lime mortar pointing.
Repoint where required in lime mortar.
Sensitively repair the outbuilding to the rear garden.
Ensure repairs are carried out like for like.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Fullers Folly is an important historic building and of cultural significance to Newcastle West. It is associated with a local merchant, William Fuller Hartnett. The building, including the courtyard and rear garden, makes a positive contribution to the town and the riverside setting.

5.2 The building is located in an area of archaeological significance and as such proposed works must be carried out under Ministerial Consent.

5.3 The building is in very poor condition but retains much of its original fabric. Mitigation measures include a full repair and conservation of the fabric of the building, ensuring its future survival and assisting the reversal of cumulative changes that have affected the authenticity of the building. An RIAI Grade 1 Conservation Architect shall be retained as part of the design team, to advise on conservation of the historic building.

5.4 The best way of preserving a building is to ensure its continued use. That often means providing for its reuse, without the loss of character. The project will enhance the town of Newcastle West and improve the tourism offering in the area and compliment the new Greenway amenity.

5.5 The new elements will be treated in a contemporary idiom. This respects the historic building, while clearly differentiating the new from the old, ensuring there is no conjecture or falsification.

APPENDIX A

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD





1. Main entrance & east elevation



2. Main building_south building



3. Cut stone window at first floor level



5. Carriage arch entrance to courtyard



6. Stone arch



7. First floor window_north building (derelict)



9. South elevation facing onto river



10. Cut stone window at first floor level



11. Cut stone window at first floor level



12. Ground floor window_rebuilt arch_date stone WFH 1859



13. Boundary wall_south_facing onto river



14. Rear of west wall built over medieval castle wall



15. Looking north_FF to RHS



16. North building



17. North blg_built over medieval fabric



18. L-shaped structure RPS 1489_under separate ownership



19. Traces of harling



20. North side of north wall



21. View of Fuller's Folly from the Desmond Castle



22. View of Fuller's Folly from the Desmond Castle



23. North building



24. North building



25. FF walkway once connected north and south structures via archway



26. First floor collapsed



27. Part of roof extant_rest fallen into building



28. Mason's mark_south side of archway



29. West wall of courtyard_note plaster on FF level_arrow locates mason's mark



30. Archway



31. Corbel



32. South building_north facade



33. South building_north facade



34. Inner face of courtyard entrance arch



35. West elevation



36. Inner face of south boundary wall_arrow locates mason's mark



37. Mason's mark_ 'Built by WFH 1863'



38. 'F Collins Mason'



39. Looking west to outhouse



40. Stone façade and archway



41. Mason's mark



42. Inner facade of outbuilding



43. North boundary wall



44. Opening in wall_subsequently blocked up



45. Detail



46. Interior of main building_ground floor



47. Blocked up archway



48. Original corbels



49. First floor window



50. First floor looking west



51. First floor looking east



52. Arched door_ corresponding one on the north building