



Ballycumber Folly

Conservation Works 2019

Creative Ireland, Irish Georgian Society, Follies Trust, Offaly County Council

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme
2017-2022



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

RMcK 2019



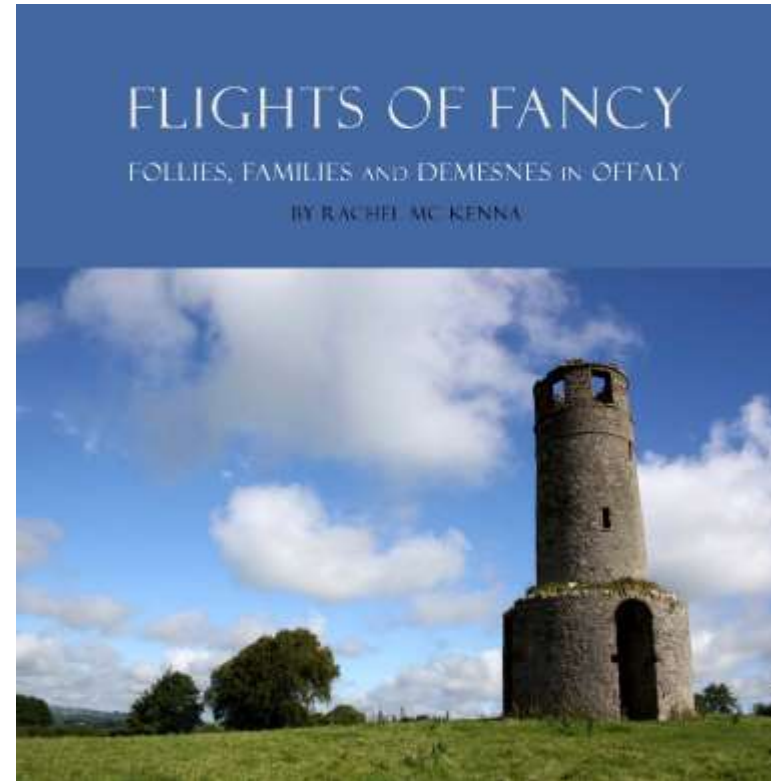
Drone footage 2018_1120



Ballycumber Folly 2013

Background

- Ballycumber Folly formed part of a survey of 11 Follies in Offaly carried out by Howley Hayes in 2013, commissioned by Offaly County Council with assistance from the Heritage Council
- Ballycumber House and Folly formed part of the publication *Flights of Fancy, Follies; Families and Demesnes in Offaly*, 2017



Ballycumber history

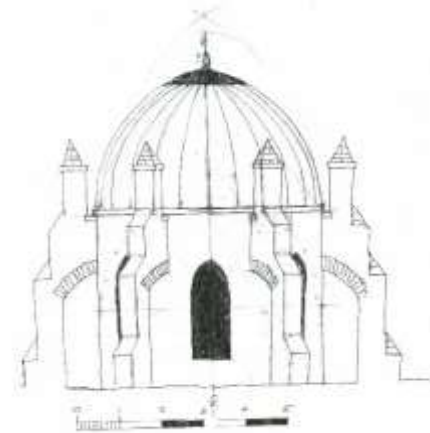
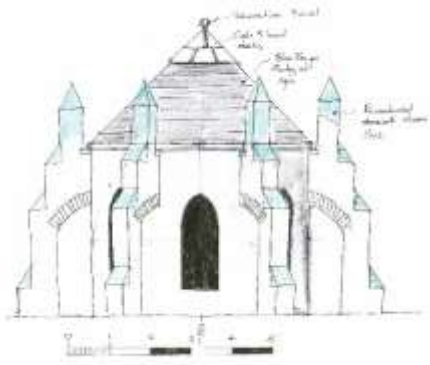


John Warneford Armstrong of Ballycumber estate was part of a long line of Armstrongs, many of whom lived in Offaly. The estate was first acquired by his great grandfather, **Andrew Armstrong (1669 - 1717)**, and passed on to his eldest surviving son, **Warneford Armstrong (1699 - 1767)**, in 1717. He married three times and had fourteen children and remodelled Ballycumber house. He served as Justice for the Peace and as High Sherriff for Offaly in 1738. It was during this time of improvement that he commissioned a bespoke sundial for the garden inscribed with his name. This sundial can be seen in photographs of the demesne taken in 1909. Ballycumber house then passed to his son George. **George Armstrong (1734 - 80)**, was John Warneford's father.

The folly at Ballycumber is set within a designed, naturalised landscape, to the rear of the house. As with most follies it is built on high ground with wonderful views of the surrounding parkland and the tree - lined river walk which meanders along the banks of the River Brosna. It is a curious structure, circular in plan with soaring buttress, perhaps reminiscent of great cathedrals seen on distant shores.

The date of its construction has not been determined but has been estimated as either in the timeframe of at circa 1830. This date would place the folly within the time of **John Warneford Armstrong (1770 - 1858)**. His diaries date from around 1792 until 1848, ten years before his death 20 April 1858. The diaries contain extensive accounts of his travels abroad but unfortunately do not detail the construction of the folly. Conceivably it may have been built by his grandfather Warneford Armstrong during the remodelling of the house giving it a far earlier date of around 1766. Perhaps it was designed to celebrate the return of John Warneford Armstrong to the family home in 1826.

Process



- In 2018 the owner commissioned a report on proposed repairs to the folly carried out by Southgate and Associates
- Works commenced on site in July 2019 with Clancy and Partners
- Phase 1 Repair existing, 2019 - €37,773.20
- (Phase 2 Options for roof reconstruction)
- Funding was secured as follows to carry out Phase 1:
 - Owner
 - Creative Ireland
 - Irish Georgian Society
 - The Follies Trust
 - Offaly County Council

Clár Éire Hlánach
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Programme
2017-2022





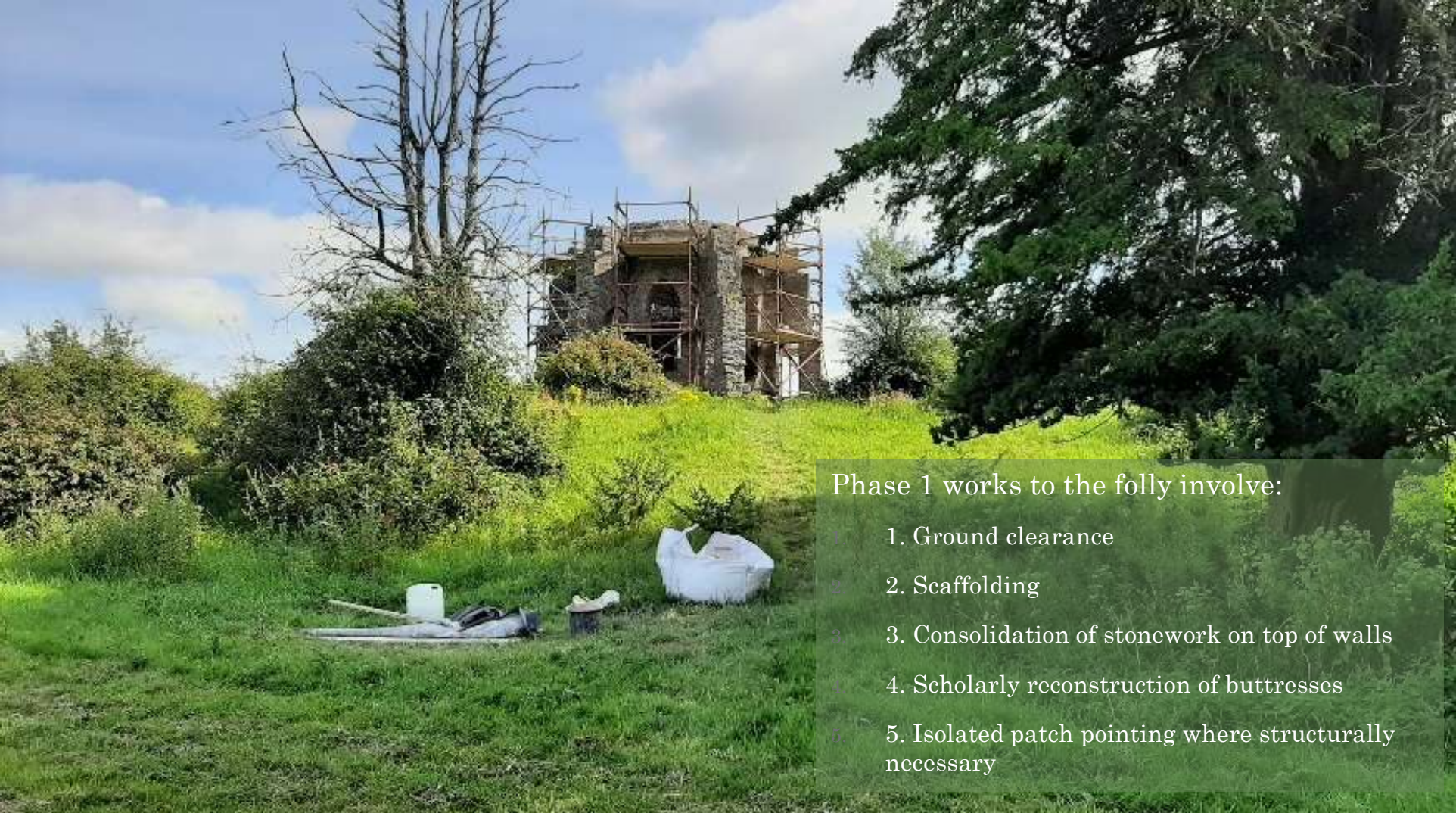
Follies Trust Visit

2019_0613



Heritage Week – Tour of House + Folly

2019_0821



Phase 1 works to the folly involve:

1. Ground clearance
2. Scaffolding
3. Consolidation of stonework on top of walls
4. Scholarly reconstruction of buttresses
5. Isolated patch pointing where structurally necessary

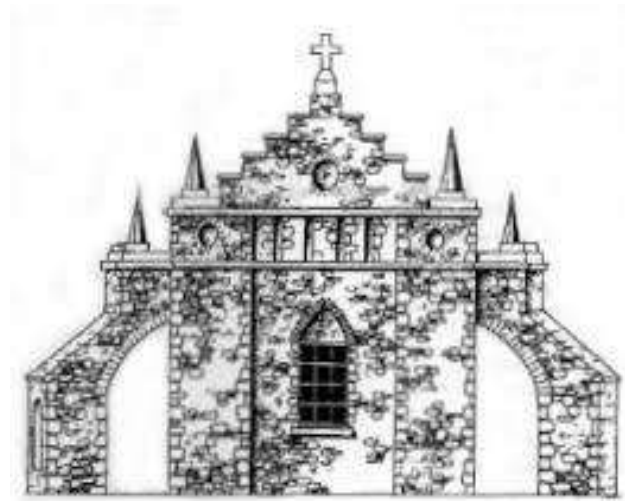
2019 Programme of works

Extract from Report by Southgate Associates

Batty Langley Lodge,
Castletown Estate, Leixlip



Bellevue Gothic Cottage, Lawrencetown, Co.
Galway – built possibly circa 1782 with other
Gothic aspects of estate. One of few examples of
flying buttresses used in garden buildings in
Ireland.



1. Ground clearance – internal and external



2. Vegetation removal and Scaffolding



3. Consolidation of stonework



Drone footage 2018_1120 + Site photos 2019_0801



Consolidation

Drone footage 2018_1120



Consolidation

Site photos 2019_0918



Consolidation and Buttress repair

Site photos 2019_1003



Consolidation and Buttress repair

Site photos 2019_1022



- The structure had suffered from ivy establishment and dissolution of the mortar at the top of the walls and sloping masonry to buttresses, due to exposure to rain and subsequent frost action.
- This had resulted in the unfortunate deterioration to the stonework rubble masonry above eaves level, but the eaves cut stones remained in position.
- Works involved treating and removing ivy.
- Unstable masonry was deep pointed with lime mix and pinning stones to match surrounding masonry.
- Mortar was pressed and recessed and pigmented with burnt umber to match original pointing.



Chimney – unblock and repair



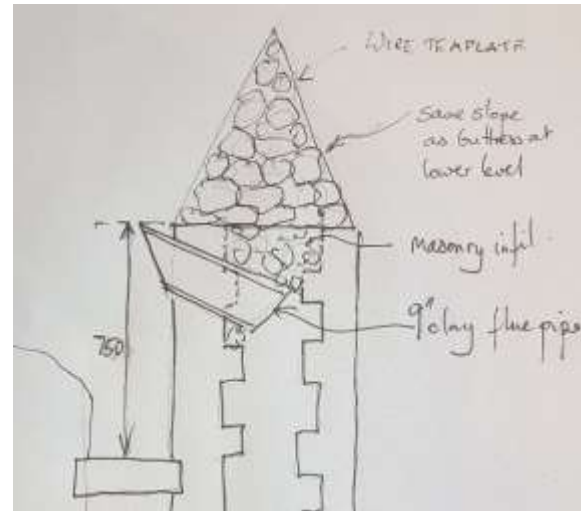
Chimney and flue (through buttress)



4. Buttress repair



Pinnacle + flue methodology





2019_1003

Progress to date

RMcK 2019



Capping and Buttress repairs

Drone footage 2018_1120



17 September 2019



03 October 2019



20 November 2018



22 October 2019



External doorway (river elevation) 2019_1022



View through doorway towards river 2019_1022 (+ former internal view)

