

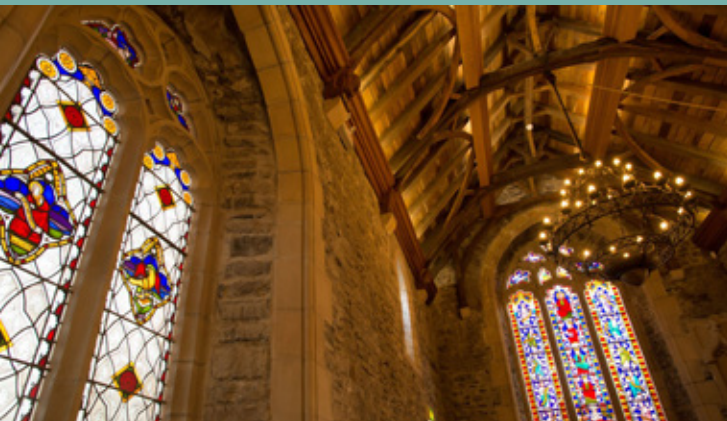
Gatehouse

The presence of a gatehouse was known from the early 12th century when the constable William Galrote, was said to have been murdered at the gate of the court of Swords. The ruins next to the gatehouse are known as the Knights & Squires. Originally a three storey building it went through several stages of rebuilding. In one corner a large 16th century brick-lined oven can still be seen.

The Chapel

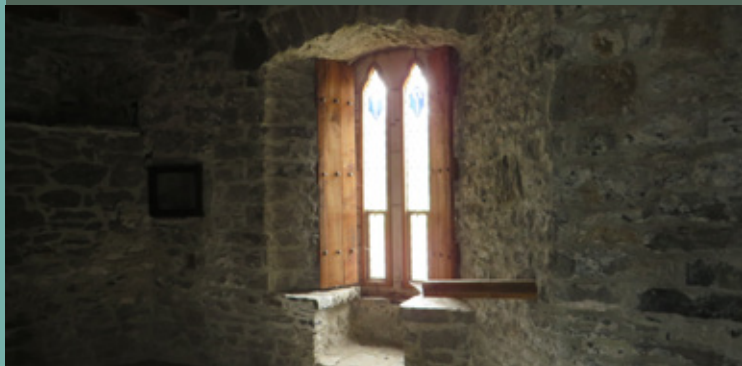
The Chapel is clearly visible as you approach the Castle from the Main Street. It is an unusually large chapel even for an archbishops residence. Since 1995 the chapel has undergone extensive reconstruction including the addition of a new oak beamed roof. If you look up to where the timber beams meet the walls there are a series of craved heads, based on the people working here at the time. New tiles made using traditional methods were based on those found during the 1971 excavations. New windows with images depicting the four Evangelists-Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have also been inserted.

The large north window depicts a Jesse tree, inspired by windows in Chartres Cathedral. The timber gallery leads to the Chamber Block. Also largely reconstructed it contains three floors of accommodation. At ground floor level, the undercroft was used for storage. Above this and entered by an external wooden stairs was a chamber probably used as a waiting area for visitors. On the second floor was the archbishops private chamber or solar where he entertained his guests.



Constables Tower

This tower was built during a period of fortification some time, after the 1450s. It is likely that the increase in defence was begun by Archbishop Richard Talbot or his successor Michael Tregury who received grants for repairs to his castles, during this time of upheaval. Constables Tower was restored between 1996 and 1998. A new roof was added. The new plank and timber beam floors are made of oak from Newbridge Demesne. There are two large chambers, next to which is a garderobe or medieval toilet. A chute would take the waste outside the north wall.



Curtain Wall

Linking all the buildings is a 300m long pentagonal curtain wall. It encloses over an acre of land that slopes down to the Ward River and is between 3m and 10m in height. The curtain wall is made of limestone bonded with lime mortar and was built in sections. Although there are crenellations and battlements it is more likely that the wall kept livestock in, rather than armies out.



Opening Times

March to October
9.30am-6pm Tuesday to Sunday

October to March
9.30am - 4pm*Monday to Saturday
(excluding bank holidays)
*last entry 3.30pm

For Tours

Contact Fingal Tourism

Tel: +353 1 8400891

Email: info@fingaltourism.ie

Location Map

Getting to Swords Castle:

By bus: Nos. 31, 31B, 33, 41

www.dublinbus.ie

By car: M1, R132, R122



SWORDS CASTLE

The Archbishop's Palace



Swords Castle

Swords Castle contains over 800 years of history. The castle was built by the Archbishop of Dublin, John Comyn, around 1200, as a residence and administrative centre. It is the best surviving example of an archbishops palace in Ireland. Recent excavations have shown that there was an 11th century burial ground here before the Castle.

Swords Castle was a manor house and administrative centre, rather than a serious defensive construction or castle in the accepted sense. The manor of Swords Castle covered a large area of agricultural land. Here in the castle, lands were granted, tenants were dealt with, and money collected. Swords manor provided almost half the archbishops annual revenue, comparable to an income of £6 million today.

An account of Swords Castle from 1326 tells us it had a kitchen, a bakehouse and dairy, stables and a carpenters workshop together with the archbishops hall, chapel, chamber and garden. A weekly Monday market took place outside on the main street. Excavations in 2015 showed that crab, oysters and fish were being prepared in a roughly cobbled yard. Pigs and wild fowl were being consumed, white bread



Medieval floor tile excavated 2015

was being baked and wine from the south of France was being imported for the archbishops table. There were buildings along the high ground to the east which are likely to be the oldest parts of the complex.

A decorated medieval tiled pavement, comparable to that in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin was uncovered here during excavations in 1971. The 1500s saw a decline in the value of the archbishops properties and despite the local Barnewall family having an interest in the tenancy, Swords Castle fell into ruin. The Cobbe family of Newbridge House, Donabate who bought Swords Castle after 1830, used the land for farming and planting an orchard.

