

# THE LION TOWER AND OTHER WALLS, GALWAY, IRELAND

July 29, 2011 Declan Moore (Moore Group) Commercial Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Excavation, Medieval bastion of Galway City, Carbon nightclub, centre of Eglinton Street, G.A. Hayes-McCoy, Galway, Galway City, gas pipeline, Geography of Europe, Geography of Ireland, Ireland, Kells Co., Lion Tower, Lion Tower/City Bastion, Moore Group, proposed gas pipeline, spokesperson, telephone box, Tower House

For the first time in the history of the company, Moore Group's team are not nursing hangovers this morning.

By that I don't mean that it's a daily occurrence. No. Today is the day after Ladies Day at the Galway Races. Traditionally we'd take the Thursday off to gamble, carouse and revel, dress in our finery and consume copious bottles of champagne, while we watched the fleets of helicopters land and deposit the more affluent racegoers (back when times were good there would be over 300 helicopters a day flying into the Galway Races). And today has traditionally been our recovery day.

We gave the Races our thirties but like the tycoons, we stayed away this year...

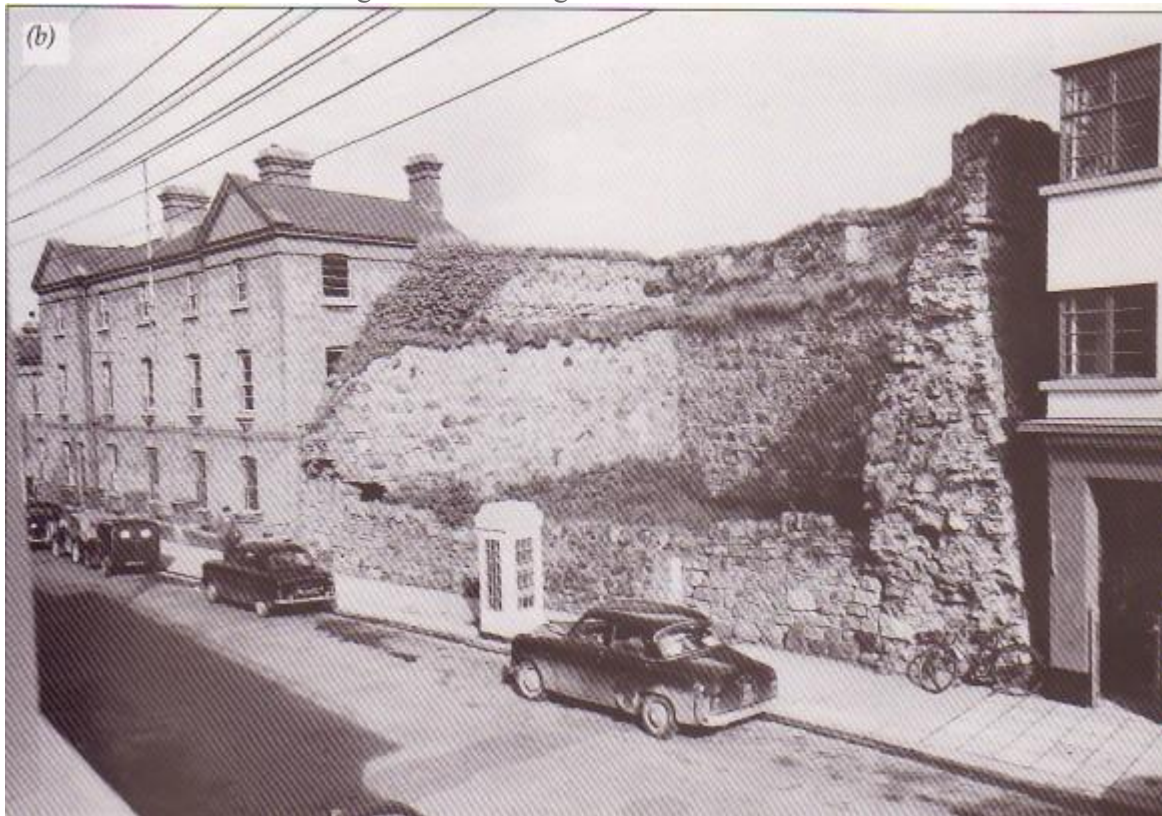
The Galway Races From [Samuca's Photostream](#)

The West of Ireland generally closes down for this week of the year and the week coincides with the 'builders' holidays (It's always struck me as odd that the rest of the Country and Non-Ireland continue as normal), so normally we close down for the Thursday and Friday.

But this year, we're working like everyone else. Unfortunately the crèche isn't, so my day of archaeology started with toddler transport and grandparent delivery (ie.. delivery of child to said grandparents – he gets to go the races today!). Fortified now with bacon and coffee, I'm back in my home office and preparing to complete a monitoring report. In recent months we've downsized and the remaining 4 Moore's are working 'in the cloud'. Three have taken the week as holidays and are relaxing at their respective destinations, save Billy, who, presumably, is busy in

his home office writing up the notes from his weeks monitoring in Kells, Co. Meath and putting the final touches to an archaeological assessment of a proposed gas pipeline in Limerick.

The main archaeological feature I'll be writing about in my report today is a section of the medieval bastion of Galway City which was exposed during excavation works for a gas pipeline in the middle of the city as well as the foundation to an earlier defensive tower called the Lion Tower. The bastion wall was found near the centre of Eglinton Street, between Tower House and Cube or Carbon nightclub (not sure which – they didn't spell it with an initial K, though I'm sure they were tempted). The adjacent Lion Tower (and if there are Galway peeps reading – it is the Lion Tower and not the Lions Tower) foundation was found roughly 2m to the south east of the wall and consisted of a rubble foundation with an upper course of stone that appeared to be laid in an arc. We interpreted this as representing the circular base of the Lion Tower as depicted on the 1651 Pictorial map of Galway, although we had a very narrow area to work in and all the work was done in the evening with limited light.



The Lion Tower/City Bastion as it was in the 30's (we encountered the foundations in the roadway this side of the second car and the tower foundation opposite the telephone box)

The bastion wall was in good condition and constituted a substantial foundation measuring approximately 2.6m in width built of roughly hewn limestone rubble blocks bonded with lime mortar. Preliminary work on either side of the wall exposed a fair face with a slight batter along

the north west facing elevation, the south east face was more ragged. This section of the polygonal bastion was built around the earlier Lion Tower in 1646.

I normally spend the bulk of my time in the office, dealing with clients and potential clients, preparing prices and tenders, accounts and all that dull stuff. The rest of my time is in the field, monitoring pipelines or other construction related activity, site inspections or site visits for assessments of proposed developments, the occasional excavation (not too many of those around these days), and fieldwalking. My deep fear of animals of any description is a definite disadvantage, but I persevere – sheep – I’m desperately frightened of sheep, and dolphins.

Twenty years ago, I stumbled into archaeology, 80’s Ireland presented precious little opportunities but an opportunity to work on an excavation came up after University and I was hooked. Of course, I’ve stumbled a few more times since. Finding things like the bastion makes up for those dull days, as do the days when you find yourself up the top of a mountain, in driving rain, walking through deep bog up to your ankles.

In the early 1960s the late Prof G.A.Hayes-McCoy became a spokesperson for the preservation of the landmark “Lion Tower” described and pictured above (actually a section of the bastion). The ultimate failure of that campaign was a great disappointment to him and he later said that Ireland was forgetful about its past and that “we don’t bother to find out about it or to maintain our ancient heritage”, and, of Galway; “take my own city of Galway, it is now more prosperous than it was, but it is no longer distinctive. I do not believe that it is essential for progress that we should lose our heritage”.

The Day of Archaeology and other initiatives can help in curing that forgetfulness. Well done to all involved – a fantastic initiative, let’s do it again...