

The Centre For Traditional Skills Lismore, Co. Waterford. 0863169230

Renovation of the flood barrier at The Strand Lismore

This structure had been neglected for many years and a combination of loss of stones from the top of the wall and build-up of flood debris at the bottom, meant that in some places it was not visible at all. A number of trees had grown up very close to the wall causing damage. One section had been demolished completely and in another place a cable had been run under the wall without proper rebuilding.

Waterford county council provided an excavator and cleared the build up from around the wall exposing a surprising amount of intact stonework. The trees were felled and the top of the wall was cleared off.

At this point it was possible to access the existing stonework. The river side of the wall was of good quality semi cut stone laid in 18 inch courses with a generous batter, ie it sloped inwards at the top. No punch or chisel work was evident but many of the larger stones had been shaped using a hammer or simple pitching tool. The stone was a mixture of local sandstone and slate, Cappagh limestone, and some Darbyshire Gritstone, presumably from Lismore castle's stone yard. The field side of the wall was vertical, uncoursed and built of uncut rubble. The top of the wall is over a metre wide and does not appear to have had any form of coping.

At some stage the wall had been added to, becoming wider at the bridge end. This may have been done after the wall was breached by a flood, the widening being done to strengthen the wall as it was repaired.

Dating stonework is notoriously unreliable but the style of coursed stonework and the lime mortar containing fragments of coal would suggest a 19th century, possibly post famine, date.

The first half of the renovation was carried out by a group of stone work students under my supervision. The existing stonework was carefully scraped clean and any loose stones were kept for reuse.

Using extra stone provided by the county council we rebuilt the missing sections copying the style of the original builders as closely as possible. Lime mortar was used throughout.

The second part of the wall was rebuilt by me, including a sizable section of battered riverside face.

John O'Neill