

KELLS ROUND TOWER: PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED



The Board of the Heritage Register, in partnership with the OPW, recently undertook a follow up visit to Kells Round tower to review progress and learn more about the conservation techniques and lessons learned from this important conservation project.

Kells round tower, located in Kells, Co. Meath stands beside the remains of the historic monastic settlement and dates from the 11th century. Notably, it features five windows at its uppermost level, strategically placed for surveillance of the roads leading into Kells, serving as an early warning system for approaching visitors or potential threats.

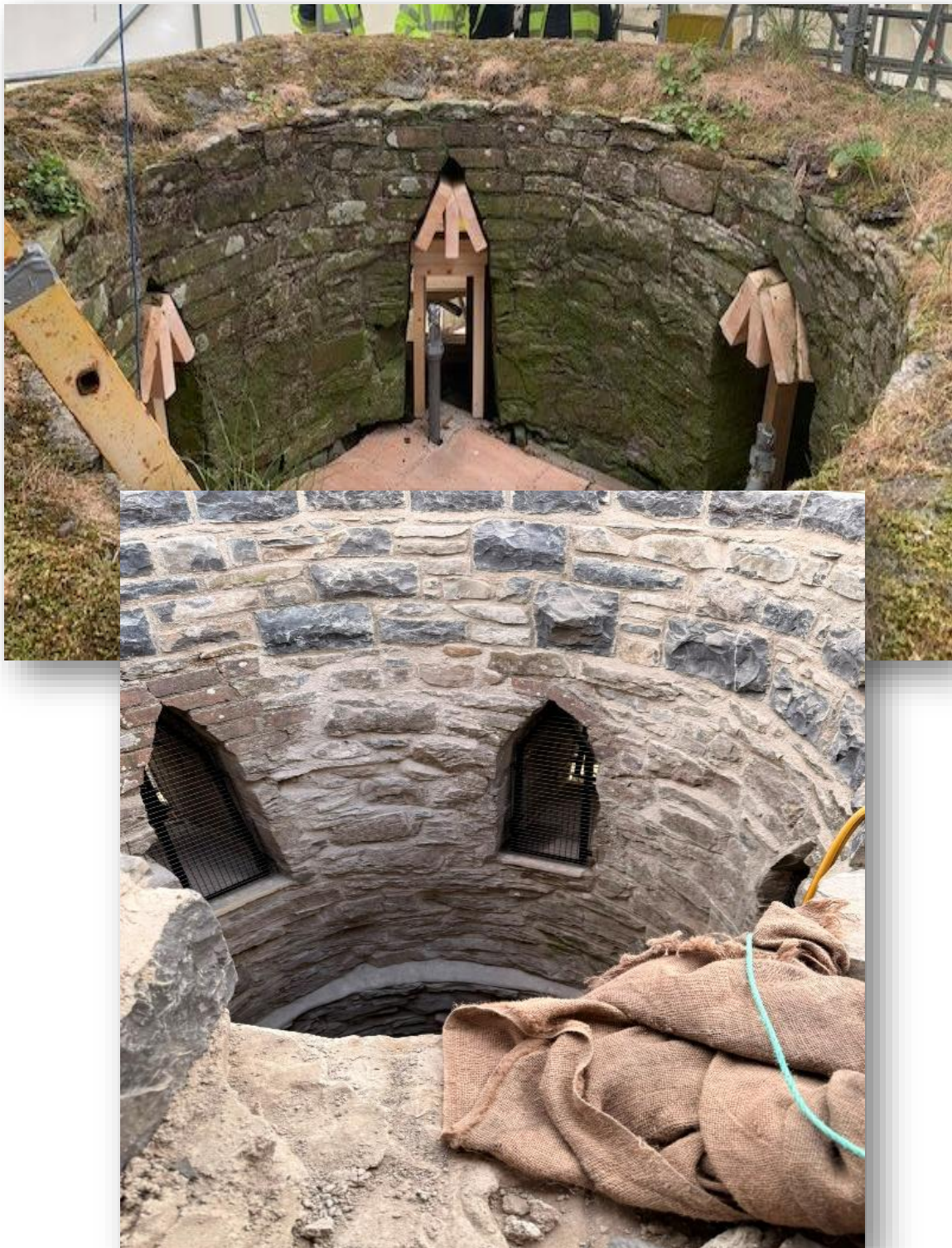
The tower stands approximately 85 feet in height and uncapped. As with many historic structures, evidence of its original appearance has been lost over time. Research undertaken as part of the conservation project has informed proposals for the tower's restoration and will include a conical stone cap similar to other surviving round towers.



Before and After Photographs of the Round tower and cut stone capping

The tower stands within the ancient monastic site where the book of Kells was kept during the medieval period, alongside several important high crosses. The book of Kells was stolen in 1007 and found some time later minus its gold filigreed case. The manuscript remained at Kells until 1654, when it was transferred to Dublin for safekeeping. It is now one of Ireland's greatest cultural treasures and located in Trinity College Dublin.

The restoration project facilitates crucial conservation work by skilled OPW stonemasons, helping to preserve this national monument for future generations.



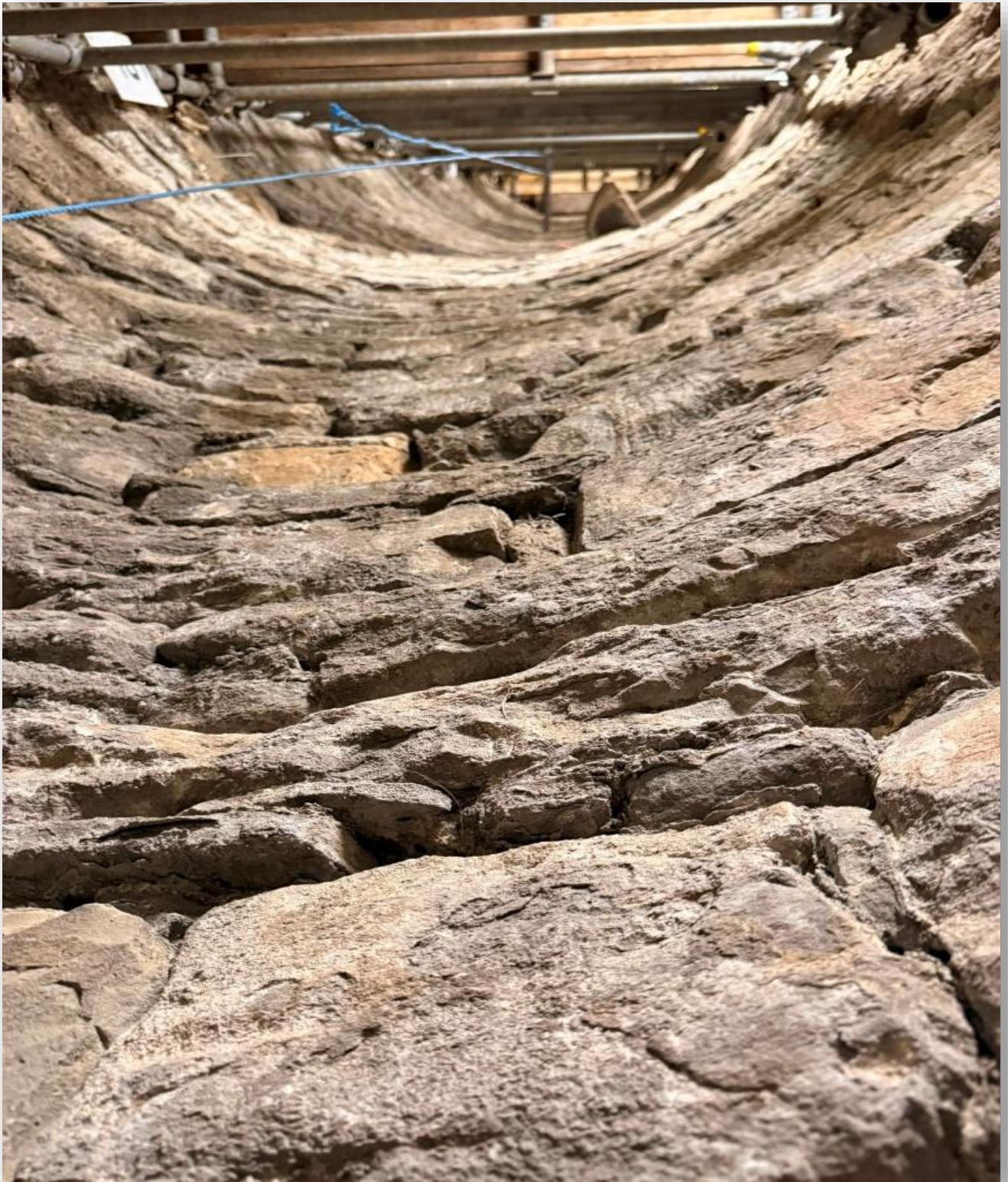
Before and After Photographs: Internal structure: Stonework and Window Conservation

Repairs to the mural tower included removal of vegetation, sourcing aggregates similar to the original and repointing the stonework.



Before and After Photographs:

Vegetation removal and the cleaning and repointing of stonework using appropriate conservation materials.



Internal Tower – The protruding stone may have been used for holding a candle.

The Heritage Register Board would like to express our appreciation to the OPW and the conservation team for their guided tour and comprehensive discussion of the techniques and methodologies used in the tower's conservation.