

THE SAILORS HOME, O'CURRY STREET, LIMERICK



As described in the Buildings of Ireland Database (Reg. No. 21517010)

1.0 Description

Detached five-bay two-storey stucco enriched former sailor's house, built c. 1857, and later in use as a military barracks and a constabulary barracks (later Garda station). Similar stucco finish to sides. Plain cement render to rear elevation. M-profile hipped slate roof, artificial slate to front, natural slate to rear with black clay ridge tiles. Rendered chimneystacks with terracotta posts and cast-iron rainwater goods. Heavy moulded Roman cement parapet entablature surmounted by decorative cast-iron railing to front and side elevations. Blank central rectangular blocking course panel flanked by pair of s-scrolls. Rosettes to entablature frieze. Painted rendered walls over moulded rendered plinth wall. Vermiculated rusticated stucco quoins to all corners returning to rear elevation along with cornice and railing above. Multiple moulded circular vents to each floor with cast-iron grilles. Segmental-arched widow openings to first floor with heavy moulded architraves, stone sill and four-over-four timber sash windows. Segmental arched window openings to ground floor with flat moulded architraves, vermiculated keystones, limestone sills, and one-over-one timber sash windows. Triplearched lancet window opening to central bay over front door, with heavy moulded architrave, shared limestone sill and three slender timber sash windows. Square-headed door opening with heavy stucco doorcase comprising: flat-panelled pilasters with s-scroll consoles joined by heavy entablature finished by ribbed ogee capping; simple doorframe and double-leaf flat-panelled timber door, with rectangular overhead. The central ground floor window on the north side has been modified to form a door opening. The building is set back from the street from which it is enclosed by a rendered wall and piers and steel gates. Limestone rubble wall to side and large site to rear.

THE SAILORS HOME, O'CURRY STREET, LIMERICK

Appraisal

An imposing, decorative and very unusual building, which dominates O'Curry Street, and having a formally treated front and side elevations which gives this structure landmark qualities. Retaining all of its principal features this building remains one of the finest on the street and adds to its interest and variety.

2.0 Brief History

The Limerick Sailors' Home was designed by the Dublin architect and engineer Edward P. Nagle in late 1854 for the Sailors' Home Committee. This committee, composed of a group of leading Limerick gentry and MPs and chaired by Limerick merchant, James Spaight, had collected £213 in subscriptions by August 1854. It stood on land owned by Limerick Harbour Board at the southern edge of the city. The 1840 OS map reveals that it lay between Quakers' fields and O'Curry Street (then Frederick Street). To the west was Limerick Gas Works and the river.

The foundation stone was laid on 11 July 1856, and the building, constructed by Patrick McNamara for a cost of about £1,700, was finished the following year. A large square symmetrical five-bay two-storey building set back from the road, it is a broadly classical building with scrolled consoles either side of the door, prominent quoins and cornice, though the door canopy, upper central window and cast-iron parapet are unorthodox details. The window surrounds recall details on Co Limerick constabulary barracks of the 1870s. There were originally two large rooms on the upper floor which were probably dormitories, and rooms on the ground floor comprising a parlour, dining room, office, bar, pantry and kitchen. (*Munster News* 11 July 1857.) A decorated marble and stone plaque was erected in a ground-floor room to record the laying of the foundation stone. Although the *Munster News* description of July 1857 mentions the presence of mirrors and naval pictures it was not furnished and seems not to have been used as a sailors' home.

Instead, it lay empty (evidence for 1859 and 1865) until it was rented to Limerick City Militia in 1867. In 1872 the Harbour Board bought out the Sailors' Home Committee. The militia left in 1909. It was leased to the RIC in 1910 for 99 years and it was used as their barracks in Limerick until 1922. During 1922-3 Civil War it was occupied by anti-Treaty forces who set fire to it when they left. This was put out by local residents, possibly those in the houses immediately adjacent to the east, which had been built after 1900. The Garda Síochána, took up residence in 1922, repairing the structure.

The building has not been inhabited for some time. The lease expired in September 2009. It is now a Protected Structure in possession of Shannon Foynes Port Company, the successor to Limerick Harbour Board.

THE SAILORS HOME, O'CURRY STREET, LIMERICK



Fig. 1: OS Sheet V.65 – City of Limerick – Town Map 1872

Note that the Sailors Home was not only surveyed outside but also inside, as all prominent buildings were in the Town Surveys

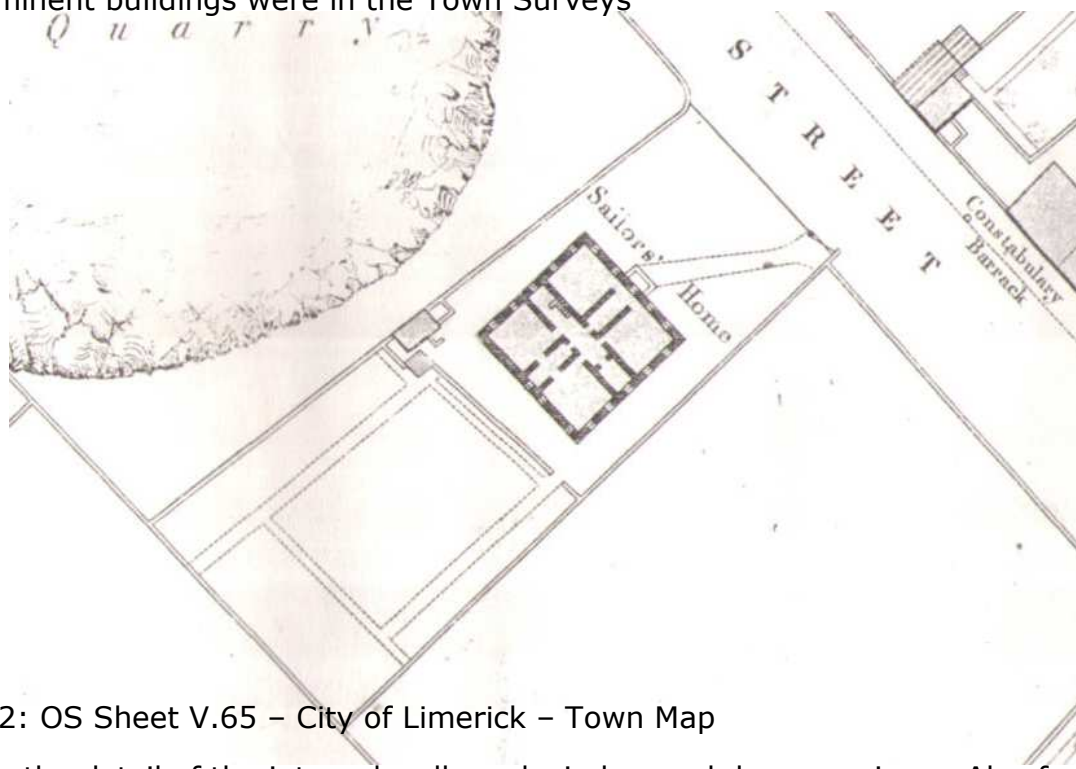


Fig.2: OS Sheet V.65 – City of Limerick – Town Map

Note the detail of the internal walls and window and door openings. Also formal garden at the rear.

THE SAILORS HOME, O'CURRY STREET, LIMERICK

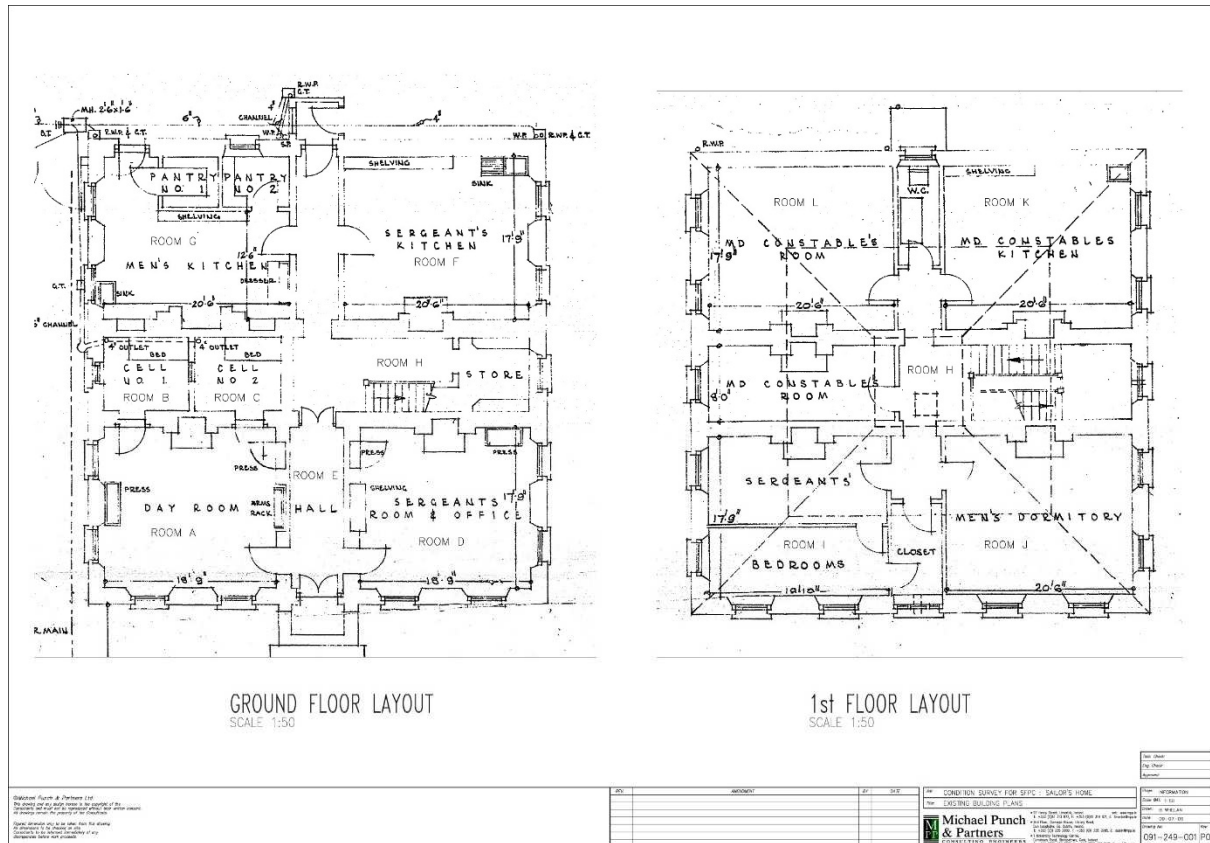


Fig.3: Floor Plans of the building as it was when used as a barracks.

3.0 Restoration Works

Once the building reverted to the control of Shannon Foynes Port Company (SFPC), then plans could begin to protect it from further deterioration.

Punch Consulting Engineers were appointed to carry out a detailed structural survey of the building and prepare an estimate for the works.



Fig.4: Photos showing typical damage from water ingress through the roof. First Floor ceilings severely damaged.

THE SAILORS HOME, O'CURRY STREET, LIMERICK



Fig.5: Photos showing typical damage from water ingress through the roof. Upstairs floors and walls severely damaged.



Fig.6: Photos showing typical damage from water ingress through the roof. Downstairs ceilings and walls severely damaged.



Fig.7: Photos showing typical damage from water ingress to windows inside and outside.

THE SAILORS HOME, O'CURRY STREET, LIMERICK



Fig.8: Photos showing typical damage to windows and cracking walls.



Fig.9: Photos showing typical damage to roof, central flat area and missing slates.



Fig.10: Photos showing typical damage to parapet wall and railing, also growth blocking gutters and causing damage.

THE SAILORS HOME, O'CURRY STREET, LIMERICK



Fig.11: Photos showing typical damage to parapet wall cantilever sections at rear and railing, also growth on walls causing damage.

Following the condition survey SFPC Management set about getting Board approval to undertake the works. Once Board approval was granted, Management appointed the design team in 2010. This consisted of Mattie Shinnors, Conservation Architect with Healy & Partners, Brian Hourigan QS of Edward Cotter Partnership and Kevin Clancy Engineer from Punch Consulting.

During 2011, planning permission was applied for and granted meaning that the project at last could proceed.

Following a tender process, Collins Building & Civil Engineering were appointed as contractors and immediately commenced the works. They removed all slates, stripped all battens, treated trusses and joists, fitted new battens and felt along with new natural slates. The entire internal flat roof space was replaced. The inside of the building was cleaned out and loose damaged plaster and timbers removed. Two internal walls at the rear had to be replaced with block as they were severely damaged. New concrete floors were laid on the ground floor and double joists were fitted to the upstairs floor. Repairs were carried out to the external render as necessary.

A specialist in timber conservation and treatment of dry rot, Garry Gleeson from Constructive Solutions, treated all timbers. Garry also removed windows and repaired in his workshop and refitted including balance weights. He also worked on the lead guttering in the central flat area and behind the parapet walls. The stairway was also treated.

The timber roof trusses were repaired by steel plate splicing as designed by Kevin Clancy. The cantilever sections of the parapet at the rear of the building were removed and new reinforced concrete section was moulded in-situ. New rainwater hoppers and downpipes were fitted including two new ones to the front.

All works were completed in December 2011 and the building has dried out since then. SFPC are very happy that the building has been saved while at the same time retaining most of the original fabric.

THE SAILORS HOME, O'CURRY STREET, LIMERICK

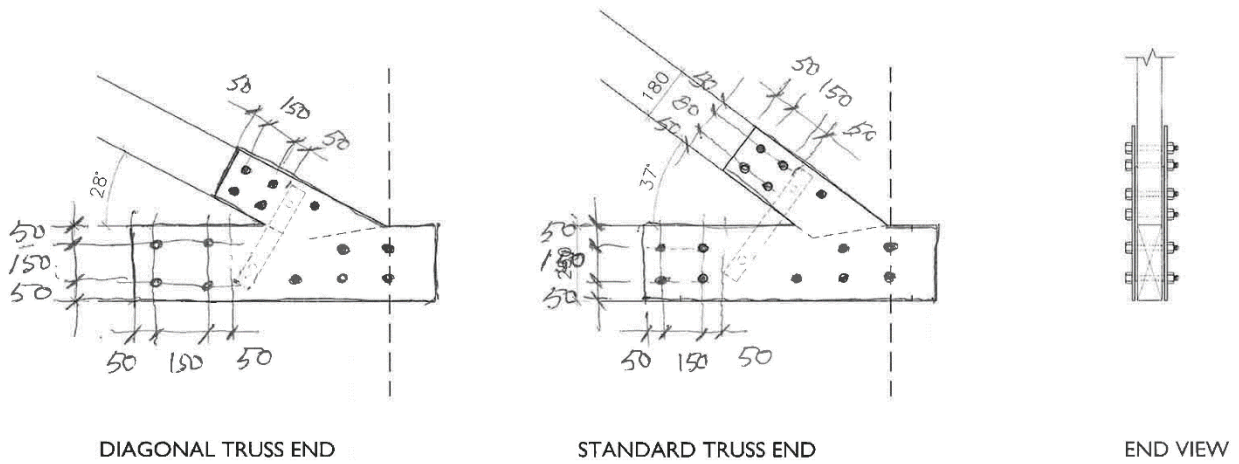


Fig.12: Design sketches for repairs to roof trusses.

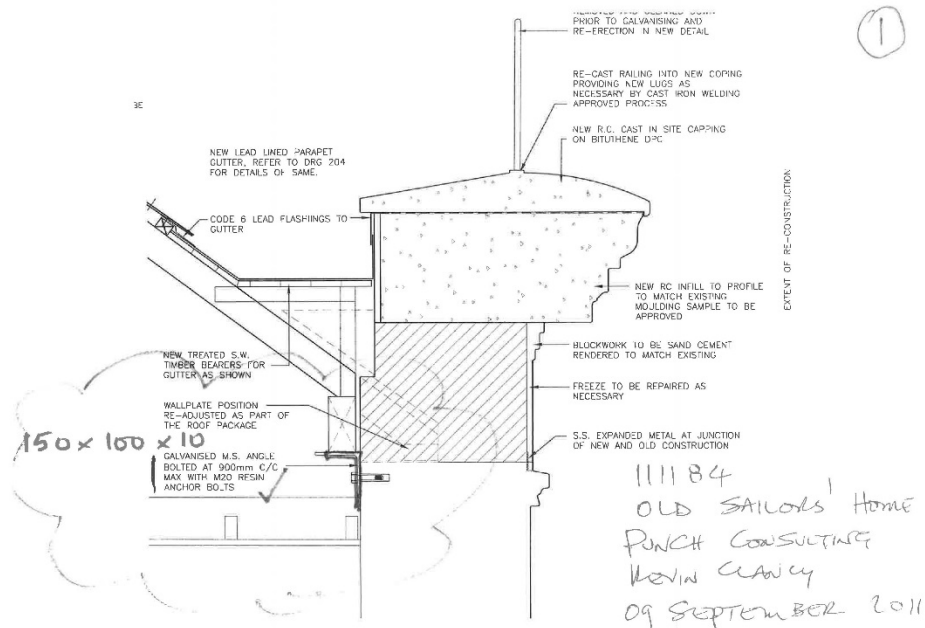


Fig.13: Design sketches for repairs to lead gutters and parapet walls.

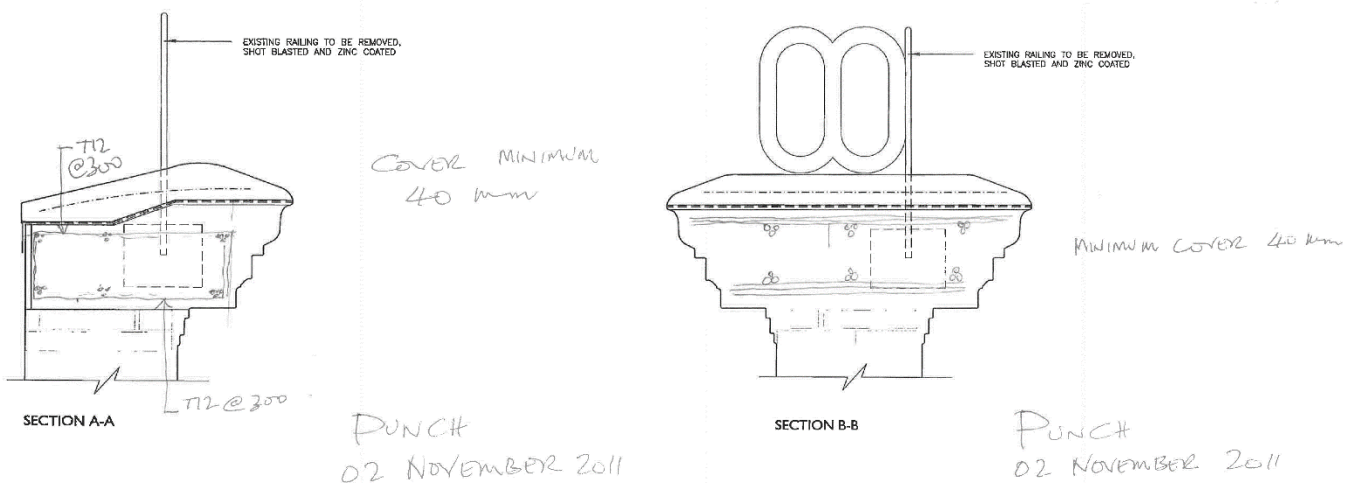


Fig.14: Design sketches for repairs to cantilever sections of parapet walls.

THE SAILORS HOME, O'CURRY STREET, LIMERICK



Fig.15: Photos showing repairs to timber trusses and central flat roof area.

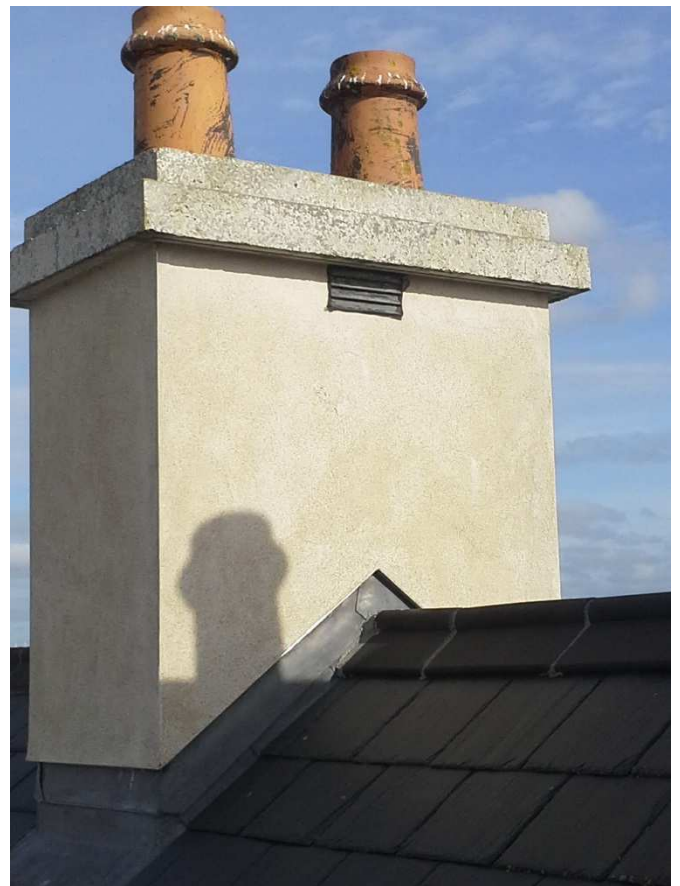


Fig.16: Photos showing new slated roof, new gutter sump and outlet with welded lead lining. Also repairs to chimneys including flashing, vents, render and pot refitting.

THE SAILORS HOME, O'CURRY STREET, LIMERICK

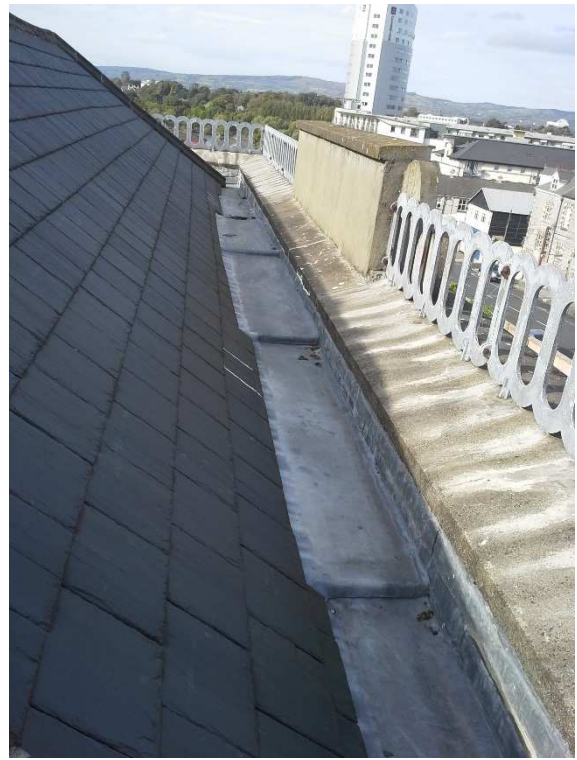
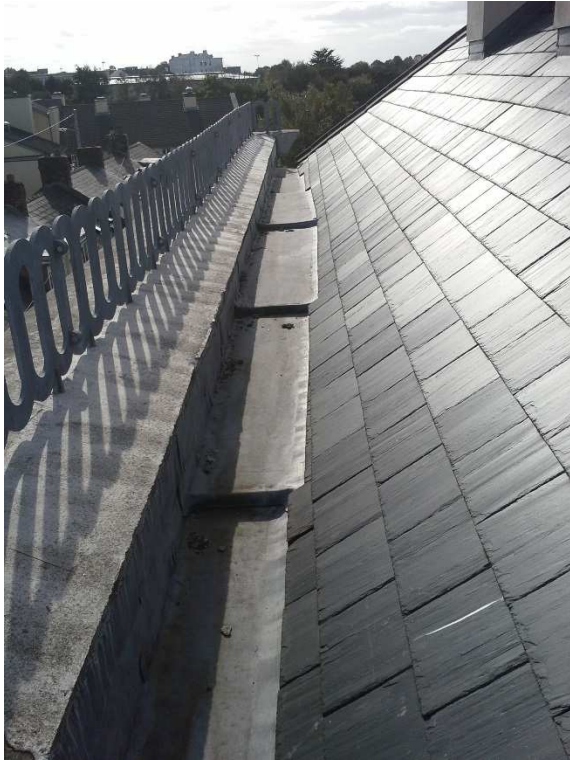


Fig.17: Photos showing new lead gutters stepped down from centre point to outlets into new cast aluminium downpipes.

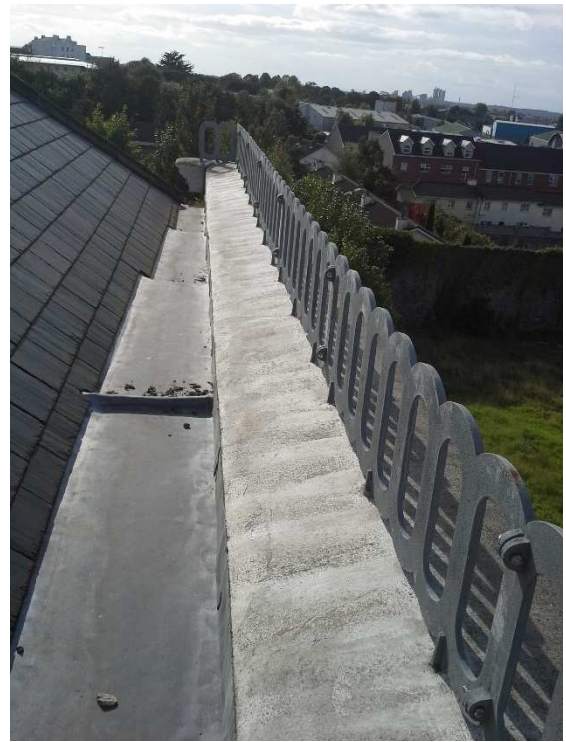


Fig.18: Photos showing repairs to cantilevered parapet sections at rear of building along with new render to tops of parapet walls and the refitted repaired and painted cast iron railing.

Shannon Foynes Port Company are happy to have this building used as part of Limerick City of Culture and also to be part of the Open House Limerick Festival.