

The Butter Slip

Kilkenny City



Illustration by Roger O'Reilly

Outline Proposal for the undertaking of safety remedial works

for

Kilkenny County Council

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Core Data.

Structure : The Butter Slip Lane
Location : Kilkenny City Centre
Project : Proposed safety remedial works
Status : Recorded Monument SMR KK019-026059 (part of)
Owner : Kilkenny Borough Council

Date: 12 September 2014

Introduction:

Due to the number of increasing falls by pedestrians along the lane and particularly on the lower flights of steps, the Kilkenny Borough Council, in the interests of Health & Safety, instructed the undersigned in July 2014 to undertake a preliminary investigation and advise in the matter.

A dimensional survey was not undertaken nor was any documentation search made and in cognisance of the foregoing, this can only be considered as a preliminary report containing indicative observations and opinions. All such observations, opinions and recommendations are therefore given *without prejudice* and may be subject to verification. The report is written for the general use of Kilkenny Borough Council and may not be used by a third party without the knowledge or consent of the undersigned.

Description:

With its arched entry and stone steps, the Butter Slip, a narrow and dark walkway connecting High Street with St Kieran's Street (previously called Low Lane) is possibly the most picturesque of Kilkenny's many narrow medieval corridors. It was built in 1616 and was once flanked with the stalls of butter vendors and is understood to have been part of the former Langton mansion.

The walkway or lane descends from High Street to St Kieran's Street, with the gradient increasing along its lower reaches which comprises three flights of steps of varying numbers and regularity, the bottom flight being at a steep inclination where existing handrail provision is limited.

The upper section of the lane, which also has steps, has been recently re-paved with a non-slip surface treatment.

Archaeology:

An opinion was requested from C oil n   Drisceoil, Kilkenny Archaeology, who informally advised that while permission and a licence from the National Monuments Service would normally depend on the level of intervention being considered an archaeological assessment report may be required. However, the erection on safety handrails, should such be contemplated, and related works were not an archaeological matter. Further, as there was much evidence that the paving and steps had been altered, possibly on a number of occasions in the past, further disturbance would unlikely be an issue. It would be advisable, however, that any proposed groundworks should be Archaeological monitored.

Observations:

The surface condition of the lower section with steps is uneven with the various flights of steps having irregular goings and risers, with the actual toes of steps damaged in places. In some instances rainwater downpipes discharged directly unto the paving with no provision for take-away. It is

understood that the paving and steps have allegedly been the cause of accidents and are presenting a hazard.

Pedestrian use of the lane and steps was observed on an ad hoc basis during the months of July and August. It was noticed that on the lower descent a significant number of pedestrians became unsure of foot, which became more pronounced during inclement weather when, on occasions, the actual steps appeared to become difficult to navigate. This became even more pronounced on the last flight of steps leading unto St Kieran's Street, where the pedestrian descending the steps on the right, holding the handrail, would be inclined to move over to the left preparing to turn down the street taking the last two or three steps without support.

Pavement slippage was observed in wet weather on all the exposed pavement surfaces, which became more pronounced where the lane became uneven and off level, with an angle of inclination sloping down towards the lower St Kiernan's Street. It is understood that this situation can be considerably worse in winter conditions.

Proposal:

Due to the rather perilous nature of the steps and paving being unsure of foot, it is proposed that remedial works are undertaken to the steps and paving with the addition of a new support handrail(s).

It is proposed for consideration: -

Immediate:

- i. Provide proper gullytrap drainage for all rainwater downpipes thus removing all surplus surface water from pavement.
- ii. Provide new brushed tubular stainless steel hand rails as illustrated below, to include a centre piece on the bottom flight of steps. The design could be the same as used for St Canice's Steps, which could possibly become a 'signature' rail for any further handrail safety requirements in the heritage area of Kilkenny.
- iii. Additional handrails mounted on the side walls may be required but every effort should be made to utilise existing and retain all existing street furniture.
- iv. Consideration could be given to extending the handrail to the higher flights of steps and paving should this be deemed to be desirable.
- v. Re-set all steps by reversing with new toes tooled with non-slip inserts.

Future:

Re-align and level all pavement areas and re-construct steps with regular and standard risers and goings, reusing existing paving stones.

Architectural Impact:

As the Butter Slip is presumably located within an Architectural Conservation Area, and being a public thoroughfare, it is likely that an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment would be secondary to Health & safety considerations. In any event, other than the erection of handrail(s) which are a reversible intervention, the proposed works will not materially affect the character of the structure in any way or any element of the structure which contributes to its special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest. Further, that the

proposed work being undertaken will be essential in providing safe passage and reduce the hazard of pedestrian falls.

It is to be noted that strict conservation principles should apply throughout any intended work and in all aspects of workmanship involved.

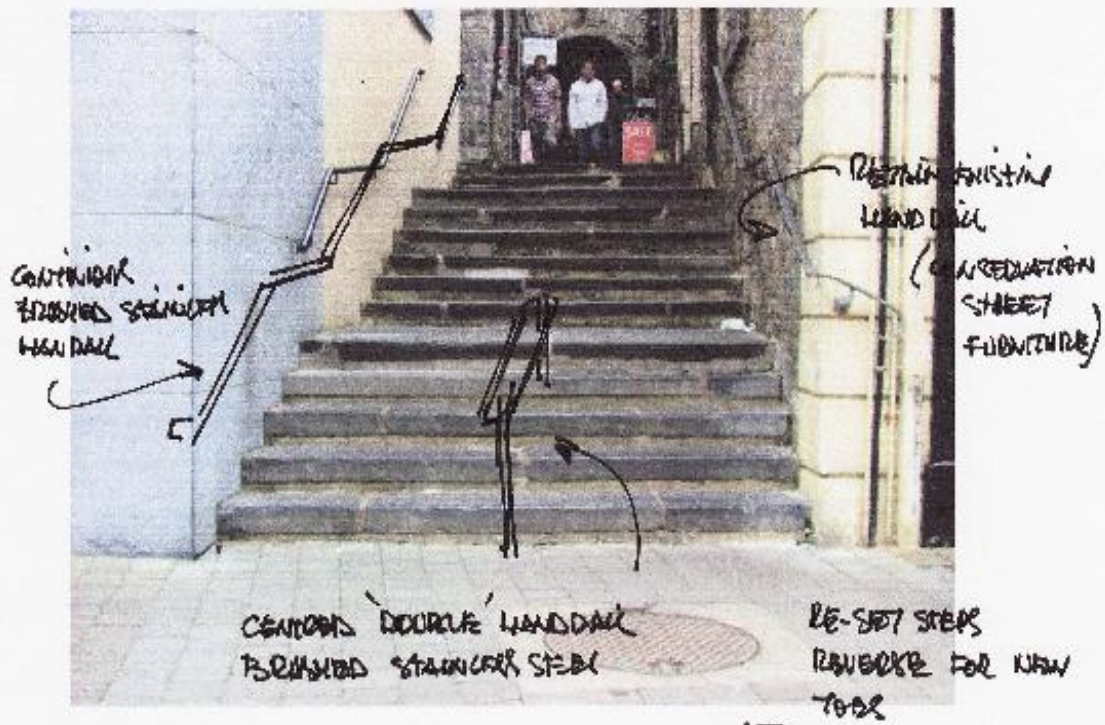


View of Butter Slip from St Kiernan's Street.

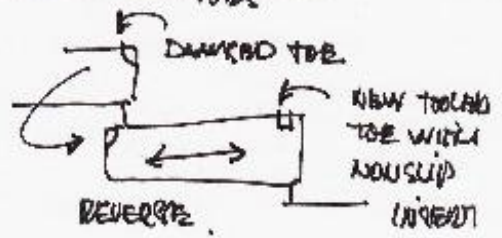
View of steps towards St Kiernan's Street



Pavement in middle of lane, at approach to lower steps.



PROPOSED SEPARATION WITH PROPOSED LEAD RAIL



Typical 18th Century worked stone paving and step detailing, disturbed and reset.



Example of rainwater downpipe failure.



View looking down towards St Kiernan's Street.



View looking through passage towards High Street.

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