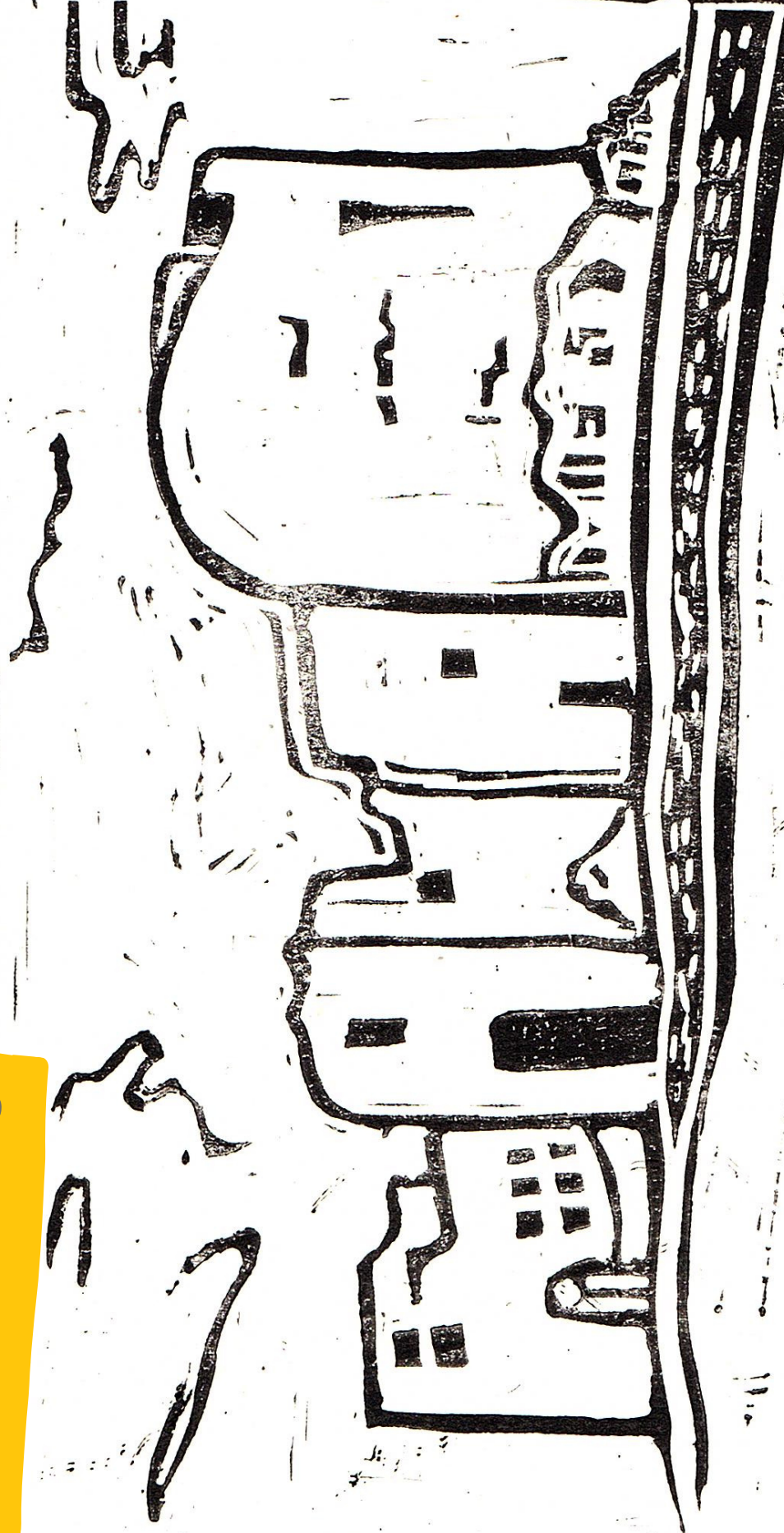


Roscommon Castle



Roscommon Castle was once one of the most important castles in Ireland. Robert de Ufford, the English King's Chief Justice in Ireland, began the building of this "Keepless Castle" with its beautiful circular towers in the year 1269 on lands taken from an Augustinian abbey.



Silent now, round towers of stone
No arrows fly, no cannons roar

Roscommon Castle

Roscommon Castle was once one of the most important castles in Ireland. Robert de Ufford, the English King's Chief Justice in Ireland, began the building of this "Keepless Castle" with its beautiful circular towers in the year 1269 on lands taken from an Augustinian abbey. Local Chieftain Aodh O'Connor took the castle in 1272, but eight years later lost it to English troops, and it was then rebuilt under orders from the King of England. In 1340 the O'Conors regained possession of Roscommon Castle, and held it for two centuries until 1569 when it fell into the hands of Sir Henry Sidney, the King of England's Lord Deputy.



Roscommon Castle

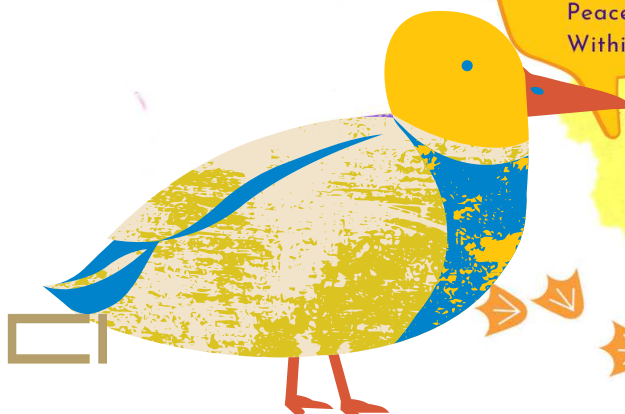


5. Roscommon Castle



Roscommon Castle

Silent now, round towers of stone
No arrows fly, no cannons roar
Peace and birds and flowers reign
Within the park at Loughnaneane.



Roscommon Castle

The grounds in which the present-day Roscommon Castle finds itself are indeed impressive. Loughnaneane still flows as it did centuries ago when its waters fed the castle moat.

From the edge of the lake, the Castle pales
And a sense of the strength of the earth unveils

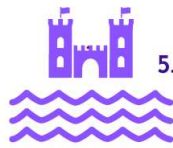


View across Loughnaneane to Roscommon Castle

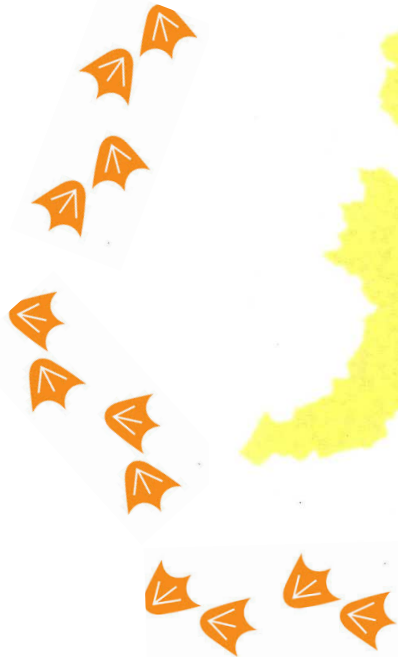
The grounds in which the present-day Roscommon Castle finds itself are indeed impressive. Far from the battle-ground of ancient days, the impressive remains of the Castle are surrounded by peaceful parkland. Loughnaneane still flows as it did centuries ago when its waters fed the castle moat, and the wildlife conservation area is a gift to all who wish to learn and appreciate the birds who feed here, and the unique flowers and plants which grow here.



Roscommon Castle

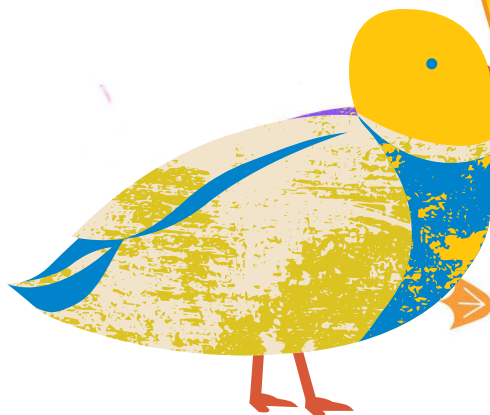


5. Roscommon Castle (view across the lake)



View across the lake to Roscommon Castle

From the edge of the lake, the Castle pales
And a sense of the strength of the earth unveils
Centuries have passed and people have gone
Water and grass and stone live on.



Roscommon Castle

Roscommon Castle, was once one of the most important castles in Ireland. The building of this “Keepless Castle” with its beautiful circular towers began in the year 1275 under orders from the King of England. Seventy years before this, the first keepless castles in Ireland had been built in Dublin and Limerick. The waters of its moat were drawn from the nearby lake, and a drawbridge across the moat connected it to the single gatehouse.

In keepless castles, the walls held circular towers. Defenders withdrew into the very thick walls of these towers when they were being attacked, supported by food storage and living space also contained within the towers. The walls held arrow loops facing both sides of the walls, meaning both the bawn (the outer defensive wall) and the outer castle walls could be defended very well.

In spite of being such a strong defensive structure, Roscommon Castle was besieged and changed hands several times. The O'Conor Kings of Connacht regained possession of the castle in 1340 and held it for two centuries till it fell to Sir Henry Sidney, the Lord Deputy, and then to Confederate Catholics until 1652, when it was badly damaged by Cromwellian soldiers known as “Ironsides”.

Professor Tadgh O'Keeffe of UCD tells us that Roscommon Castle was built by a French master mason named James of St. George, and that Roscommon Castle is an exact copy of some of St. George's castles in the South of France.

He believes that Roscommon Castle may have been a building experiment before some very large and famous keepless castles were built in Wales.

The curtain walls in the structure were 11.5 metres tall all around, which would have required an enormous amount of stone. An army of stone masons and labourers would have been at work here.

Roscommon Castle also contained enough space for gardens with raised beds for vegetables, herbs and fruit. It burned down in 1690 and fell into decay. Today its impressive remains can be visited in the peaceful surrounds of Loughnaneane wildlife conservation park.

