

## Rock of Dunamase (Dun Masc, the Fort of Mask)

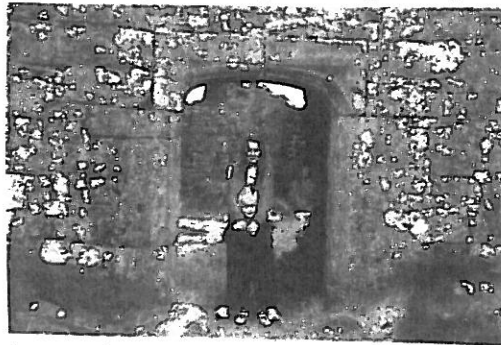
I'm currently in the car with my Dad and my little sister, driving up to the Rock of Dunamase. Right now all I can see is the tip of the castle. As we get closer the castle begins to look very high up. Now that I'm out of the car I walk up the steps to the entrance of the castle. The first hill I must walk up is very steep and my little sister's shoes are slipping a lot due to the loose gravel.

When we eventually get up to the top of this hill we are up very high. The views are spectacular. Everywhere you turn you see a gorgeous view. Hundreds, maybe thousands of different types of trees, bushes and flowers are in abundance. The grass is growing wildly and is blowing in the wind, and might I add it is absolutely freezing up here brrr my hands feel like ice. There are no signs of wild life here except for the odd bird you might see passing over head, there is nothing but a cold biting wind passing through the ruins of history that is known as the Rock of Dunamase.

I can imagine life here thousands of years ago, men dressed in heavy clothes all huddling together beside a big fire because it's their only source of heat. I imagine the men big and bulky with short beards and layers beyond layers of clothing, some possibly suffering with frostbitten hands. They are holding scary looking bows and arrows. Scarfing down a bowl of broth.

Looking at what's left of the castle I know that it was made of limestone. As you walk in there are two walled in areas to protect the people that were on guard. There is also a place where you climb over a platform and then there is a lower platform that you step into with a window in front for a guard, I got to climb into it and look at the run down window with all the rock crumbling, and the window so jagged it is hard to imagine what it would have looked like then.

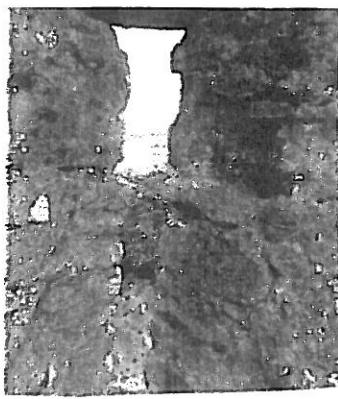
When you walk further in you see many arch ways which probably looked much more detailed and nicer all those years ago.



In the middle you can see big windows about a metre tall and half a metre wide, and even the windows are placed up high to be extra safe. Some of the walls have withered away but others stand up high straining from the wind. I'm guessing that the walls that fell down first were because of whatever way they were positioned they were being blown and battered by the wind the most. I believe that there was a roof made of stone many years ago keeping out most of the wind but some of the gusts just found their way in between the cracks and crevasses.

A bit closer down to the ground there is skinny windows so small that I can hardly fit my shoulder in it. They would have been used for safety reasons. They could use them to shoot arrows out of, but because they were so small and skinny people couldn't fit through them to get into the castle.

Alyssa McCann.



*The Rock of Dunamase is one of the most historic sites in Ireland. Its ruins date back to the medieval times. The rock stands forty six metres tall. They dug the area in 1990 and it showed that the rock was first settled in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It is sitting on top of natural rock. The castle was built in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Who built it is not known, Meiler Fitzhenry is a possibility, but others say that it was built by Cainen Masc. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the castle started to get run down because it was not maintained, but later got partially restored. The great thing about the site is that it's a popular tourists spot but it is not being over commercialised (no shops, restaurants or tours.) Even on the earliest maps of Ireland The Rock of Dunamase is on them! Dunamase has a great view of the Slieve Bloom Mountains which makes for a very good defensive settlement.*

*There are a lot of films made on the sight. This is a great site and anybody with a love of castles must go and see it, before it gets too commercialised. It should be seen now while it is still wild and rugged, free and beautiful in its own way.*

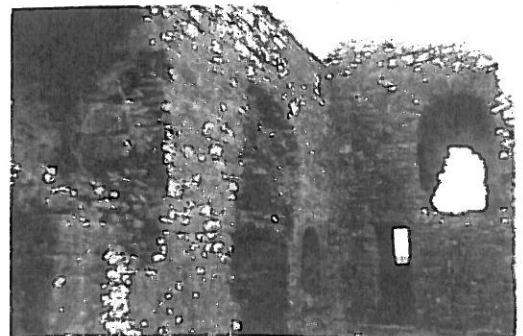
*The Rock of Dunamase.*

*My ears are burning,*

*And my tummy is turning.*

*The invaders have come,*

*Who knows where from.*



*I'm handed a sword and shield expected to fight,*

*Hoping I can manage around all this fright.*

*My first time into battle,*

*I wish I was home herding cattle.*

*The castle is towering behind my back,*

*Standing up high and staying intact.*

*Saying goodbye and hugging my wife,*



*Running as fast as I can for my life.*

*Shooting hundreds of arrows that are killing.*

*I rub my eyes before they start filling.*

*Hoping I will make it through the night,*

*And eventually will see the mornings light.*

*The castle is standing majestic and tall,*

*Many years will come before it shall fall.*

*For as long as I can I will stand by its side,*

*For it is I who will guard her with pride.*

*Poet: Alyssa McCann.*

