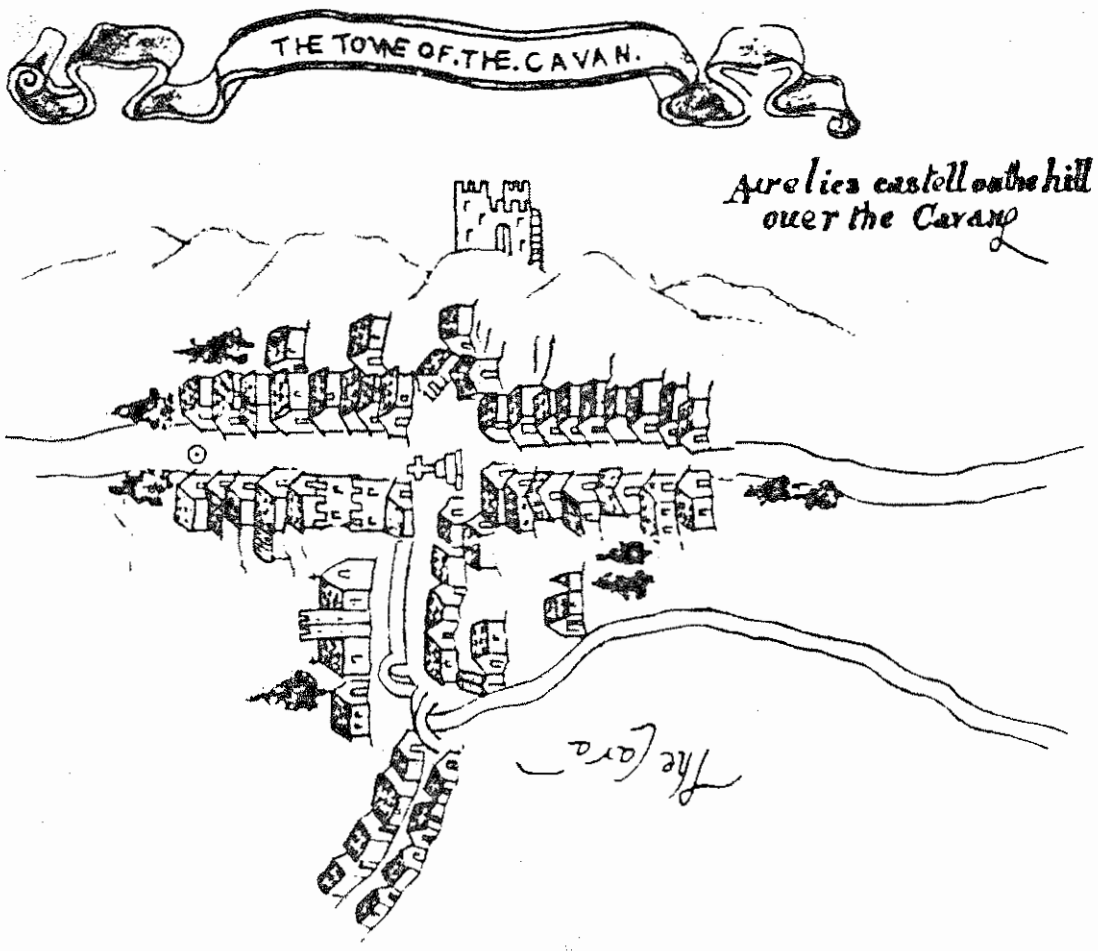
COUNTY CAVAN



URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY SURVEY

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PART XXVI

COUNTY CAVAN

JOHN BRADLEY

AND

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A REPORT COMMISSIONED BY THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC WORKS

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Towns pose one of the most formidable problems faced by archaeology today. Lived in and occupied over long periods of time, and often covering quite large areas, they are the most complex form of human settlement that we know of. Deep archaeological deposits have accumulated in most towns as a result of the long period of occupation and, accordingly, towns are among the most important areas of our heritage. However, towns are also the homes of modern communities, and are the centres of present-day business, industry and cultural life. The requirements of modern life has brought considerable change to many towns with extensive road widening, building schemes, housing estates and industrial development. The demolition of buildings and the digging of deep foundations has brought about irrevocable change in the appearance of towns, and change, in this century, means more thorough destruction than anything that has gone before. The problem for archaeology is not one of preservation, although this may be desireable, but of recording standing buildings and archaeological levels before they are destroyed. The unfortunate truth is that what is not recorded now has little chance of ever being recorded later.

By its nature archaeology is concerned with the past of ordinary people. The fragmentary building remains, pottery sherds and scraps of worked stone or wood which the

archaeologist discovers cannot be used to reconstruct political movements or great administrative changes. These parts of our past can only be glimpsed from documents, from what people who were alive at the time have observed themselves or heard related. Archaeological data, however, can tell us a great deal about the everyday life of ordinary people and the quality of that life in terms of the technological and economic resources of the particular time and place in question.

Urban archaeology may be defined as the study of the evolution and changing character of urban communities from their earliest origins until modern times; more especially it is concerned with the reconstruction of the natural and human environment within which and as part of which human actions take place. A methodical definition such as this, however, should not obscure the fact that urban archaeology is fundamentally concerned with the past of ordinary citizens, of the form of their houses and streets, of the business of their markets and workshops, of the style and arrangement of their churches, of health and disease, of the variety of cultural, religous and economic activity; in short, it is concerned with the life and death of communities ancestral to our own.

Development of Urban Archaeology

For long the study of the urban past has largely been the preserve of historians, sociologists and geographers and it

is only recently that the potential of archaeology to uncover the past has been realised. Part of the reason for this is the general lack of awareness that almost all towns have archaeological deposits. This stems in part from the incomprehension of the ordinary man-in-the-street that a town which is lived-in can have archaeological deposts at all: purely because it is lived in, one tends to think that everything of past ages, unless it is visibly standing has been swept away. In part it also stems from the fact that the construction on a vast scale of buildings requiring deep foundations has only occurred recently, and it is only as a consequence that archaeological deposits have come to light. It is also due to the fact that, in previous centuries, archaeological methods and techniques were not advanced enough to take advantage of opportunities even if they did arise. Until relatively modern times the buildings of one generation have been constructed upon the foundations of the last. As structure replaced structure the ground level rose slightly and over the centuries, in cities such as Dublin, considerable depths of archaeological deposits have accumulated.

It was at Novgorod in Russia that the potential of urban archaeology was first revealed. There, organic remains were found in large quantities and it became possible to reconstruct entire streetscapes and to chroniole the changes which happened in them as one generation succeeded the next (Thompson 1967). Gradually as excavation took place in England and Germany it became apparent that the rich

archaeological material in towns was not just a side-light on urban life but it could contribute greatly to our understanding of the archaeology of entire periods and regions. In Ireland the first scientific excavations were commenced at Dublin Castle in 1961 and excavations were to continue in Dublin for the next twenty years. The interest aroused by the High Street and, later, the Wood Quay excavations was widespread and it created an interest in the archaeology of other towns. To date, excavations have taken place in about twenty Irish towns.

Urban sites are important to the archaeologist for a number of reasons. Firstly, in all towns archaeological deposits form the earliest archive. Only a handful of Irish towns are referred to prior to 1200 AD and it is only during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that references become anyway common. Yet the urban life of many towns has continued unbroken since the twelfth or early thirteenth century, while the origins of others lie in the Viking, Early Christian and Prehistoric periods. Even when references occur they rarely throw much light on daily life and tend to be more concerned with political and administrative events. Indeed, most individual properties within towns have no documentation relating directly to them until the late-seventeenth or early-eighteenth century. To all intents and purposes, then, individual sites within towns may have remained completely prehistoric, in so far as they have no documentation, until the seventeenth century or later. Accordingly, archaeological excavation is important if one is

to gain any knowledge of the initial period of a town's foundation or of how a particular area evolved and was used.

Secondly, towns usually possess a much greater depth of stratigraphy than any other type of archaeological site. Stratified deposits are important because they preserve the sequence of developments on a particular site and the wealth of finds associated with urban sites means that it is usually possible to date both structures and layers quite closely. This is particularly important because it makes it possible to establish tight chronologies for artefacts.

Thirdly, the archaeology of a region oannot be understood without knowing what happened to the towns within it. Each town is a unique expression of the history of its area and the destruction of its archaeology would leave an irreplaceable gap in knowledge of the evolution of the region.

The recovery of this information is threatened, however, by the increasing redevelopment and gradual expansion of our cities and towns. It is very difficult to foresee the effects of this redevelopment when the extent of archaeological deposits is generally not known to the Planning Authority and it has happened in the past that the archaeological significance of a site has only become apparent when building work was about to commence. It is important then that the areas containing archaeological deposits should be identified if the potential of this important part of our heritage is to be realised.

Purpose and Aim of the Present Survey

The Urban Archaeology Survey was established with monies allocated for the purpose by the Minister for Finance in 1982. Its purpose was to compile a corpus of archaeological information on Ireland's towns and to present it in such a way that it could be used effectively by the archaeologist, urban planner, property developer, or interested layman. In this regard the survey has been guided by a submission prepared by the Royal Irish Academy on Urban Archaeology which recommended that the report should have four aims:

1. "To evaluate critically the archaeological potential, both above and below ground of the listed towns".

2. "To emphasise areas where the archaeologioal deposits could be preserved by the judicious use of new building techniques and the presentation of open spaces, etc."

3. "To assess the level of destruction of the original townscape".

4. "To measure the effects of urban expansion on originally rural archaeological sites".

The chronological cut-off point beyond which material would not be included was 1700 AD.

The identification of sites which were urban centres before 1700 AD is not without difficulties. In many cases such an identification is dependent on the survival of documentary evidence. However, it was felt that it was better

to follow the existing work of Graham (1977) and Martin (1981) rather than impose new criteria. Accordingly the sites which are included here are those for which there is evidence of their status as boroughs prior to 1700 AD.

In the reports the material is presented as follows: the situation of the site is outlined and a brief account of its archaeological and historical background is provided. This is followed by an archaeological inventory which endeavours to catalogue both extant sites and those which are known from documentary sources. Although the amount of information on each town may vary the catalogue follows the same format for each entry, firstly detailing the information on streets and street pattern, and following this with an account of the domestic buildings, market places and economic features such as quays and industrial areas. The seigneurial castle and town defences are desoribed next together with the religious buildings of the town. The evidence for suburbs and activity outside the walls is then outlined and the inventory concludes with a summary of the archaeological excavations and a list of the stray finds. The inventory is followed by an assessment of the archaeological potential of the site.

INTRODUCTION TO CO. CAVAN

Towns came to the county relatively late in the history of Ireland. The Vikings never settled here, the Anglo-Normans made a vain attempt, and apart from the possibility of Drumlane and Kilmore, there were no centres which could have developed into monastic towns. It was not until the late Middle Ages that the town of Cavan itself was established.

Cavan, of course, occupies an important place in the history of Irish towns because it is the only example of a Gaelic town which has survived into the present. It evolved probably because the O'Reillys, the lords of Breifne, seem to have had a highly developed lordship and one chief, Owen, who died in 1449, is even said to have given a code of laws to his country. The O'Reillys were in close contact with the English Pale and were influenced by the developments there. In June 1579 O'Reilly consented to accept English government and to admit a sheriff. Brefne was shired but it was not until the end of the Nine Years War that anything effective happened.

Schemes for the plantation of Cavan were mooted very soon after James I's accession in 1603 but to carry out the plantation it was necessary to establish legally the forfeiture of the the county. On 8 August 1606 a packed jury decided that the rebellion of Sir John O'Reilly and his successors Philip and Edmund entailed the escheat of the

county. In the plantation that followed four baronies were assigned to the native Irish while three were assigned to the planters, Clankee and Tullyhunco to the Scots, and Loughtee to the English. As a result of this division the town of Cavan was to remain largely under Old Irish control until the Cromwellian settlement of 1651-3 but Belturbet, from the beginning, was an exclusively plantation town.

It is these two towns, Belturbet and Cavan, with which the urban archaeologist is especially concerned. Both were incorporated in the seventeenth century, Cavn in 1610 and Belturbet in 1613. It was intended that Virginia should also be incorporated but it did not obtain sufficient settlers to warrant it. The fact that Virginia is excluded from this report, however, should not be understood as indicating that it is not of archaeological importance. It simply falls outside our brief.

This report provides an account of the archaeological remains in Belturbet and Cavan, and it provides an assessment of their importance to archaeological research. It outlines the areas where archaeological deposits are likely to survive and highlights each town's potential to increase our knowledge of the development of urban life in Ireland. Finally, recommendations are made as to how this potential can be best realized. In the map outlining the zone of archaeological potential the following colour code is used:

Pink: the zone of archaeological potential.

Red: extant archaeological monuments.

Purple: sites of known monuments.

Uncontrolled redevelopment can destroy a town's fragile archaeological heritage and it is the hope of this report that the recommended steps will be taken in order to ensure that urban development and archaeological research may go forward together.

BELTURBET

The town is situated on the WNW/NW facing slope on the east side of the river Erne in the drumlin countryside of north central Cavan.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Despite the fact that Belturbet controls one of the most important fording points on the Erne between Kilmore and the sea it does not seem to have any settlement of importance prior to the Anglo-Norman invasion. The Anglo-Normans seem to have viewed this area of Cavan as an extension of the lordship of Meath and this seems to explain why it is that in 1196 Gilbert de Angulo, lord of Nobber, held land "beyond the lakes of Therebrun [Tir Briuin]". These lakes are normally identified as Lough Oughter (Orpen 1911-20, iii, 32). The Anglo-Normans had established a motte-and-bailey castle at Belturbet by 1211 but their attempt at conquest and settlement in this area was doomed to fail. Davies (1947, 82) has suggested that the castle of Belturbet was lost as early as 1213 in the aftermath of a raid launched by O'Neill on Clones. There can be little doubt, however, that the settlement was abandoned after the death of William de Lacy in 1233 when references to Anglo-Norman activity in Cavan

cease (Otway-Ruthven 1968, 92).

The motte was taken over by the native Irish and a stone castle was subsequently built by the O'Reillys. A tradition recorded in the sixteenth century related that the castle was sacked by Edward Bruce during his campaigns in Ireland (1314-17) (Davies 1948b, 90).

The strategic importance of Belturbet again asserted itself during the closing years of the sixteenth century. After the English capture of Enniskillen in 1593 Belturbet became important as an advance base for provisioning Enniskillen Castle (CSPI 1592-6, 201). The beginnings of Belturbet as a town can be traced to 1600 when it was first proposed to build a town there, garrison it and build a bridge (CSPI 1599-1600, 328; CSPCarew 1589-1600, 201, 505). Nothing was done about this proposal, however, until after the initiation of the plantation of Ulster.

In 1610 the site of the proposed town was granted to Sir Stephen Butler of "Bealetirbirt" who was then to undertake to build the town and provide it with a church and other facilities (Hunter 1981, 57). The original intention was to incorporate it once forty houses had been established but this was eventually reduce to half that number. Butler was given four years to procure twenty persons "English and Scotch and chiefly artificers and mechanics" who should be burgesses of the town when incorporated though "cottagers and other inferior inhabitants" were also envisaged (Hunter 1981, 58). Like other towns in the plantation, Belturbet was to be

built:

> "in streets and squares, in such manner and form as shall best suit [its] site and situation, and for the defence and decency of the said town" (ibid.)

Butler also had to "build or cause to be built ... twenty burgages or houses of stone or timber framed according to the form of building usual in England", and allocate two acres each to ten of these and one acre each to the remainder in an area to be known as the burgage field (ibid).

In 1610 conditions were proposed to Sir Stephen Butler of Bealetirbirt for establishing a market town here. In 1613 it received its first charter whereby the king, for the purpose of furthering the plantation of Ulster incorporated the village and its precincts into a borough.

The charter of incorporation, granted on 30 March 1613, empowered the inhabitants to return two members to parliament and it named the officers of the town as a provost, twelve free burrgesses and two sergeants-at-mace; the other officers were a treasurer, town clerk, herd, marshall-keeper or corporation gaoler, pound keeper, foreman of the market jury and weigh master (Lewis 1837, i, 203). Belturbet became an important centre of inland navigation trade with boats in use to exploit the potential of the Erne (Hunter 1981, 69). There was a carrying trade from Belturbet to Dublin and as early as 1612 a Belturbet merchant is found importing goods from Liverpool via Dublin (ibid.). The rapid success of the town

is indicated by the fact that in 1622 it had not just twenty but thirty-four houses (Hunter 1981, 72).

In the aftermath of Sir Phelim O'Neill's rising the town was occupied in 1642. The merchant shops were disposed of among the followers of O'Reilly who had taken the town and both the church and castle were burnt (Hunter 1981, 72; Davies 1948, 100). Depositions made in 1642 specify some of the commodities for which the dispossessed merchants claimed compensation and these provide an indication of the sort of goods which were available in the town. These include: "wares in the shop vizt broadcloth, kersies, frizes, hops, iron, steel, stockings, tobacco" (Hunter 1981, 72), while among the craftsmen present was in 1641 was a gunsmith (ibid., 71).

In 1618 Butler granted and confirmed to the corporation land amounting to 284 acres, also a weekly market and two annual fairs, and a weekly court of record, the whole to be held of him and his successors at a yearly rent of 30s (Lewis 1837, i, 202). The grant contained a clause whereby the inhabitants agreed to make themselves "ready at all times to be mustered and trained to arms whenever required to by Sir Stephen" (ibid.).

In 1690, the town was garrisoned by the Jacobite forces but it was captured by surprise by the Williamites who fortified it and built the two forts whose fragments still survive overlooking the town.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. STREETS & STREET PATTERN
2. MARKET PLACE
3. DOMESTIC HOUSES
4. BRIDGE
5. INDUSTRIAL AREAS
6. GAOL
7. MOTTE AND BAILEY
8. STONE CASTLE
9. FORT 1
10. FORT 2
11. PARISH CHURCH
12. MISCELLANEOUS
13. ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRAY FIND
14. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY

1. STREETS & STREET PATTERN

The town was laid out in a regular manner along two axes intersecting at right angles to form the Diamond. Butler St and Church St formed the NE-SW axis, and the lower part of Chapel Road and Upper Bridge St forming the SE-NW axis. Holborn Hill and Lower Bridge St are additions to this plan.

2. MARKET PLACE

This was located in the Diamond at the head of Butler

Street. A market house (now the town hall) was subsequently built at the south-western side of the Diamond.

3. DOMESTIC HOUSES

From Pynnar's survey, made in 1619, it appears that the newly erected houses of the town were built of "cage work", i.e. timber framing. They were inhabited by English tradesmen, who had each a garden, four acres of land and commonage for a certain number of cows and horses (Lewis 1837, i, 203).

4. BRIDGE

A bridge was built here by 1641 replacing the ford around which the town was founded in 1613 (Hunter 1981, 65).

5. INDUSTRIAL AREAS

Mill

After the foundation of the town Sir Stephen Butler retained the mill of Belturbet in his own possession (Davies 1948b, 99). Davies suggests that this was probably sited in Straheglin Td. to the south of the town.

Tileworks

Together with the mill mentioned above, Sir Stephen Butler also retained a tileworks (Davies 1948b, 99). Its location is unknown.

6. GAOL

The foundation charter of the town refers to the "marshall-keeper or corporation gaoler" as an officer of the corporation. In the eighteenth century it was located beneath the market house (Lewis 1837, i, 203).

7. MOTTE AND BAILEY

This motte was presumably constructed in the years after 1196 when Gilbert de Angulo is referred to as holding land north of Lough Oughter (Orpen 1911-20, iii, 32). The only direct reference to it occurs in the pipe roll of 14 John (1211-12) which makes clear that the motte had been built before September 1211 and that in 1211-12 it required only minor maintenance work (Davies and Quinn 1941, 36-8). As recounted above the Anglo-Norman hold on this area does not appear to have lasted long and the motte was probably abandoned after the death of William de Lacy in 1233 if not before.

Description

This is situated on Turbet Island in the middle of the Erne. The view from the site is quite confined to the immediate valley sides and it is evident that the site's importance rested in the control of the river crossing rather than in any dominating position. The monument is positioned so as to take advantage of a natural scarp whose slope has

been exaggerated on the NW and SE since the lowering of Lough Erne in 1934. The motte and SW parts of the island have a light woodland cover.

The motte is a semi-conical mound tapering from a basal diameter of 11.7 to 7.65m at the summit; it is 5.35m high but in places, because of the natural scarp, the summit is 10.6 m above ground level. The summit is slightly curved and sub-circular and the foundations of a mortared structure are present. There is an oval depression in the middle of the summit, measuring 3.4 by 2.35m and 1.23m deep. Steps have been inserted into the NNE side of the mound.

The semi-circular bailey is on the NW side of the motte. It is delimited by a bank which decreases in height (and its crest also decreases in width) as it approaches the motte. The bank is relatively flat-topped and has a simple gap forming the entrance. The interior is lunate and measures 2.25 by 6.95m. Steps have been inserted in the outer slope of the bailey's west corner.

The NE side of the motte and bailey is cut off from the NE end of Turbet Island by a wide almost flat bottomed ditch which has evidence of an external bank. The rest of the island to the NE is now lawned and landscaped. The site is cut off from the SW side of the island by a narrow straight fosse with flat base and steep outer side but, from its appearance, this seems to be modern.

8. STONE CASTLE

In the later Middle Ages a stone castle was built at Belturbet and it is represented on a number of sixteenth century maps of Ireland (Davies 1947, 90). Whether it was located on the site of Butler's House in Castle Hill or on Turbet Island is unknown. In the 1590s Sir Francis Rushe was appointed constable of the castle as is apparent from the fact that he was compensated for his rights to the castle in 1610 when the town was being established.

9. FORT 1: "Churchyard fort"

This earthen star-shaped fort is set in the most prominent position in the town, on the crest of a ridge running ENE-WSW. It dominates Belturbet and affords commanding views in all directions but especially to the west where it overlooks the basin of the river Erne. The C of I church stands centrally within it. The fort was constructed in 1689 by Colonel Wolseley (Davies 1948b, 100).

It would seem to have been originally square with salient angled bastions at each corner. However, only the south side of the fort, with bastions at the SE and SW, survives fairly intact. The SE bastion is bounded at the shoulder by a relatively flat topped bank which continues along the intermediate side towards the SW bastion where it is only evident on the SE side. Along the intermediate S side the bank is more substantial, higher and wider, than elsewhere. A

pathway runs along its inner edge in a depression parallel to the bank. A berm exists immediately outside the S bank and between the SE and SW bastions. External to the two bastions and the intermediate berm is a flat based ditch. This has had its base recut by a modern narrow trench.

The boundary of the west side of the graveyard is roughly on the line of the outer slopes of the bastions and intermediate berm. The graveyard surface west of the tower shows evidence of the intermediate west side and the adjacent sides of the NW and SW bastions but it has been greatly levelled out as a result of grave-digging. The faint trace of the NW bastion is evident immediately inside the NW corner of the graveyard, the N wall of which probably has been built against the scarped N side of the bastion.

The intermediate east side has its southern end bounded by the enclosing bank which extends here from the SE bastion. The remainder of the surviving east side is marked by a drop in ground level. No trace remains of the NE bastion or the intermediate N side because the N wall of the graveyard cuts across the fort here. At least part, if not all, of the NE bastion would have been built outside the present N wall of the graveyard. No evidence survives of an external ditch on the E or N sides.

There is no surviving evidence for an entrance feature or for the form of internal structures.

10. FORT 2: "Deanery Banks"

This is prominently located on the E end of a ridge running ENE-WSW directly opposite to the other fort. It was also constructed at the same time as fort 1, by Colonel Wolseley, in 1689 (Davies 1948b, 100). Only one side, the WSW, survives reasonably intact. The fort appears to have been originally square with triangular platform bastions set inside each of the four corners. The site is delimited by a bank with an external ditch. The bank runs continuously around the fort, forming two sides of each bastion as it does so. The third (or inner) side of the bastions displays only a shouldered platform. A gap midway in the W side is probably the original entrance and outside it is a flat causeway. The ditch itself is flat-bottomed. The N side of the fort has been incorporated into the modern field boundary and the bank here has possibly been renewed. The remainder of the fort has been removed by ploughing and no evidence survives of internal structures

11. PARISH CHURCH

This cruciform church has an eighteenth century appearance and the tower was added at the west end in 1814. The church itself was rebuilt by the Board of First Fruits in 1828-9.

The building may incorporate parts of an earlier structure because two seventeenth century windows are

present. Both are in the south transept, one in the east wall and one in the west. They are of three lights, round headed with hollow chamfered jambs and a hood moulding (Davies 1948a, pl xi:2). Davies (1948a, 79) considered the east window to be of 16th cent. work but the machine tooling indicates that it belongs to the nineteenth century rebuilding.

12. MISCELLANEOUS

Quernstone

Located on the bank of the Erne. Conglomerate. Bottom stone with a diam. of 62 cn.

13. ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRAY FIND

Bronze socketed axehead. From Belturbet.NMI 1897: 153.

14. SITES IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY

Ballinlough Td. Crannog.

Sited on a promontory jutting into the eastern side of Commons Lough. The site consists of a mound of gravelly boulder till with much stone exposed over the surface, indicating modern disturbance.

Clonosey Td. Monastic site.

This is a subcircular site enclosed by a slight bank with an external ditch. Diam. 38.1 (N-S) by 41.7 (E-W) m. Undulations

in the ground level outside the site, on the WSW represent relic field boundaries which may be associated with the site. The church remains are located slightly off-centre in the northern half f the enclosure. The remains of the west and north walls are evident as an L-shaped rise representing a covered-over wall footing. There is a sandstone bullaun with a single depression, a hollowed stone at the NW corner of the church, and part of a quernstone on the east side of the enclosure interior. The earliest graveslab dates to 1771. See Davies 1948a, 78.

Corporation Lands Td. Crannog.
On the western side of Commons Lough. The site is evident as a small circular mound, 42m (E-W) by 41m (N-S), rising above the lake foreshore for about 1m. There are lazy beds over part of the site indicating that it has been cultivated in the past.

Grilly Td. Castle.
No part of this site is now evident above ground level. The modern fields have been amalgamated and the land reclaimed. Faint undulations are present in the gound in the vicinity of the site and these may be all that remains of the "few mounds" which Davies (1947, 91) says marked the position of the site. It was probably built by the O'Reillys.

Rosskeeragh Td. Ringfort.
Small univallate ringfort incorporated into a field boundary. Set on the crest of a drumlin with good commanding views in all directions. Diam. 21m (E-W). A short distance N of the

fort is a small, low, flat-topped mound with a basal diameter of 15.6 (E-W) by 13.6m (N-S) tapering to 11.4 by 9.3m at the top. It is not clear if this is an archaeological monument, however, or simply the result of land clearance.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

The Problems

Beltubet is important to archaeological research because it is a fine example of the type of town which characterized the Ulster Plantation. More particularly it is important as an example of the average sized plantation town. In contrast with Derry, which has a well established historical and archaeological record, little is known of the smaller more typical towns. The plantation town was developed on a site which arealdy possessed a late medieval stone castle, probably of twoer house type, and which had also been settled by the Anglo-Normans wh built the motte on Turbet Island. It is not known if any settlements were associated with these fortifications.

The street pattern of the seventeenth century town still survives but no houses of this period are extant. Almost certainly, however, the foundations of some of these houses survive below ground level and their excavation would reveal information, for instance, on the regions of England from which the initial settlers came. It would also be important in determining their relationship to the housing of the other

plantations in Munster, the midlands, and north Wexford.

Parts of two seventeenth century forts survive and it is important that these sites and that of the Anglo-Norman motte on Turbet Island should be kept free of building. With these exceptions, and possibly part of the C of I parish church, the destruction of pre-1700 buildings above ground has been total.

The documentary records relating to Belturbet prior to 1700 are limited and in the future archaeology is likely to be the most important means of learning about the town's past and of understanding the character and detailed form of Belturbet today. This is more than just an academic pursuit because without an appreciation of the factors which have shaped the town's present character, steps taken to conserve that character will not be wholly effective, or worse, features basic to its unique identity may be unwittingly destroyed.

The protection of buried archaeological evidence in Belturbet is of importance therefore and this is best achieved by judicious use of planning constraints and by conditions attached to planning consents.

Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 2) delimits the area of archaeological potential within modern Belturbet. This comprises the area of the seventeenth century

town, together with an area around the two forts, and Turbet Island, the scene of Anglo-Norman and possible late medieval activity. Within this area the main disturbance to archaeological deposits has occurred along the street frontage as a result of the rebuilding of houses here in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Elsewhere, however, deposits are likely to survive and there is the strong likelihood of recovering house foundations, refuse pits, industrial areas, and workshops of seventeenth century date.

[redacted]

[redacted]

CAVAN

Centrally located within the county the town of Cavan is situated in a small area of flat ground overlooked on all sides by drumlins. The name is derived from Cabhan, meaning simply "a hollow place".

ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Cavan is unique among Irish towns in that it was established by a native Irish family, the O'Reillys (O Raghallaigh). The origin of the town can be traced to the conjunction there c.1300 of an O'Reilly castle and a Franciscan friary. The presence of some form of settlement there is indicated by the annalistic references to the burning of the "town" of Cavan by the English of the Pale in 1427, 1429 and 1468 (AFM; cf AFM: 1400, ALC: 1401). During the last mentioned raid the government forces were led by John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester. A clear indication of the growth of a commercial settlement by 1479-80 is provided by a statute of the Dublin parliament in that year:

> That whereas divers Irish merchants, lately supplied with stocks of goods by concourse of English merchants in Irish country, have lately found great means of

> destroying and injuring the markets of Athboy, Kells, Fore, Mullingar, th Oldcastle and other ancient English towns, by means namely [that] they have commenced markets in Orailly's country and in Offerroll's country, at Cavan, Granard, Longford and other places, which, if they are long continued will bring great riches to the King's enemies and great poverty to the King's subjects. Whereupon it is ordained by authority of the said Parliament that no English merchant shall take any goods or merchandise to any of the said markets of Cavan, Granard, Longford, or to any Irish country out of English country, or carry any goods from the said markets or make any concourse or resort to them, on pain of forfeiture of the said goods and merchandise and their bodies at the King's will. And that it be lawful for every of the King's subjects to arrest and attach such persons as will make attempt against this act or ordinance, and them commit to the King's gaol, and to forfeit all such goods as may be found with them, a moiety to the King and a moiety to the taker, except wine, beer and bread (Morrissey 1939, 819-21).

The attraction of the Cavan fair for the English traders was probably the cheap price of foodstuffs. A much later source of 1646, the account of Massari, dean of Fermo, described the fair as:

> attended by crowds ... great quantities of merchandise are brought thither by the people of the surrounding

> districts. I was amazed at the abundant supply, especially of animals and of all kinds of eatables, which were sold at an absurdly low price. A fat oxen cost three crowns; a fine wether three giulii; a kid or a pair of fat chickens, six baiocchi, and so on; for the supplies were as plentiful as money was scarce in the country (O'Connell 1937, 323).

The town was burnt again by the English in 1496 (AFM) which suggests that the parliamentary laws were not a complete success. Nicholls (1987, 404) has suggested that the inspiration for the growth of the settlement may have come from the Cavan family of MacBrady, who had established themselves as merchants at Navan and Drogheda. It is also attributable in part, however, to the gradual anglicization of the O'Reillys by their intermarriage and political links with the families of the Pale. By the mid fifteenth century the settlement was large enough to be regarded as a town. In 1558 the then lord, Maolmordha O Raghallaigh, in consideration of the fact that Bernard MacBrady had paved one of the streets of Cavan at his own expence, granted him the vacant sites for another street and for a watermill (MacNiocaill 1959, 134-5). In 1576 the town and monastery were destroyed by fire, apparently caused by O'Reilly's second wife. AFM give the following account:

> The great monastery of Cavan and [the town of] Cavan itself, from the great castle downwards to the river, was burned by the daughter of Thomas, son of the Baron

> [of Delvin], through jealousy. There was not so much destroyed in any one town among the Irish as had been in that town.

This entry is important in providing a clear indication of the location of the town to the west of the castle which is where it is shown on a map of c.1593 (front cover). This map shows Cavan as having two principal streets, a bridge, the Franciscan friary, a market cross, O'Reilly's castle and over fifty houses.

During the Nine Years War the loyalty of the O'Reillys to the goverment forces vacillated but the governement succeeded in establishing a garrison there by 1598 and perhaps earlier (Davies 1948b, 84, 101). This was withdrawn in 1599 but a garrison was re-established in 1601 by Sir Oliver Lambert (ibid). Shortly after the conclusion of the Nine Years War considerations of expense caused the garrison to be withdrawn and the government forces abandoned all fortresses in Cavan except Cloghoughter (ibid. 98).

As O'Reilly's chief seat and the only town of any size in the county, Cavan was earmarked by the plantation commissioners as the county town and was to be made a borough with 500 acres of town land (Davies 1948b, 100). The town was incorporated in February 1610 and its charter was granted in November of that year. The charter preamble states the reasons for the incorporation of Cavan. These were that the town was the only place of trade in the county, the only place where the justices could conveiently meet for assizes

and gaol delivery, and it adds that the inhabitants during the late insurrection had supplied the garrison and performed good and acceptable service to Queen Elizabeth (Lewis 1837, i, 318). The charter constituted the town and all lands within the compass of one mile from the stone house or castle in which Walter Bradie then dwelt, with the exception of the castle of "the Cavan", or O'Reilly's castle, and the two poles of land called Rosgolyan, the borough of Cavan (Lewis 1837, i, 318). Under the charter the corporation was to consists of a sovereign, two portreeves, twelve burgesses and an indefinite number of freemen, assisted by a recorder and town clerk.

Largely because of the town's loyalty in the Nine Year's War it ended up with a governing body distinctively different from the other Ulster corporations. The first sovereign, Walter Brady, and the two portreeves, Owen Brogan and Farrall M'Eregules, were old Irish as were most of the corporators, only two of which were settlers (Hunter 1971, 69). From the fragmentary evidence available it seems that the corporation retained much of its old Irish character up to 1641 when it fell to the supporters of Sir Phelim O'Neill's rising (ibid., 70). In 1690 the town was defended by the Duke of Berwick but, attacked by the Wiliamites under Wolseley, the town was burned and plundered. After the withdrawal of the Jacobites, however, normal town life was restored.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN

The street plan of Cavan is essentially linear consisting of one main N-S street, Main St, with Bridge St running away from to the west at right angles. These are presumably the two streets composing the town which are referred to in 1610 (Hunter 1971, 72) since both are also shown on the map of c.1593 (front cover). In 1558 Bernard MacBrady paved a strret in Cavan at his own expense in return for which he was allowed to open up a new street, perhaps Barrack Hill (MacNiocaill 1959, 134-5). In 1611 there is a reference to a

"vicus novus" or "new street" 'leading from the high crosses unto the Gallows Hill" (Hunter 1971, 72). Gallows Hill lies south of the town but the identification of this "new street" is puzzling. High Street is also mentioned at this time but it is presumably an alternative name for Main St.

2. MARKET PLACE

The right to hold a weekly market at Cavan was granted to John Binglie in 1603 (Davies 1948b, 100). This was subsequently transfered to the corporation when the borough was incorporated of the borough (Hunter 1971, 69). The market was evidently located in the Main St. The map of c.1593 shows a broadening in the strret where it meets Bridge St indicating that this was also the location of the sixteenth century market place.

Market Cross

The map of c.1593 depicts this as a Latin cross atop a stepped base (O'Connell 1937, 300-1). No trace of the monument survives today.

Tholsel

The charter of incorporation empowered the corporation to build a "common hall or toltshill" (Hunter 1971, 69). The twon hall is its successor.

3. DOMESTIC HOUSES

The map of c.1593 shows over fifty houses and provides some information on house types (cover9. Most of the houses are positioned, in the medieval manner, with their gables fronting onto the street and most have doors beneath the gables. Two are fortified stone houses of the tower house type. By 1613 at least two or three houses of lime and stone had been built by the townsmen (Hunter 1971, 71). The inn of Hamnet (or Hamlet) Steele is mentioned in 1639 while another inn, the "Signe of the Bull" was mortgaged in 1633 for £40 (Hunter 1971, 73). Lewis (1837, i, 318) states that a house was pointed out in Main St "till very lately" in which Cromwell was said to have resided. In other towns where this folk-motif appears it is normally in relation to a stone house of seventeenth century or earlier date.

BRADY HOUSE

Walter, Patrick and Thomas Brady built a castle in the town of Cavan before 1596 when it was destroyed by Philip O'Reilly (CSPI 1592-6, 541-2). Subsequently it was rebuilt (CSPI 1600, 420) and it is referred to in 1601 as the castle of Walter and Thomas Brady (Hunter 1971, 68). Walter Brady was a former Drogheda merchant and had been appointed crown constable and jailer of Cavan in 1584 (ibid.). He later became sovereign after the incorporation of the borough (Davies 1948b, 101). The castle is shown on Netherclift's c.1593 plan of Cavan (cover) from which it would seem to have been of tower house

form. By 1632 the house was held by John Whitman, an English merchant, although the Bradys coninued to be the largest single landholders in the town (Hunter 1971, 73).

TOWER HOUSE

A late sixteenth century account in the State Papers speaks of two castles in the town of Cavan (CSPI 1592-6, 299). This second "castle" is probably to be identified with the second tower house depicted on Netherclift's c.1593 map of Cavan town (O'Connell 1937, 301).

4. FREE SCHOOL

The plantation commissioners ordered that the abbey should be turned into a parish church and free school. It is known that it was built of stones taken from Tullymongan Castle in 1623 when its first master was appointed (Davies 1948b, 101).

5. WATERMILL

An inquisition of 1601 returned that Mulmory Oge O'Reilly was possessed of the castle and town of Cavan, apart from the Castle and land of Walter and Thomas Brady and one water mill (Hunter 1971, 68). This is presumably the same as the water mill referred to in 1558 which was built by Bernard MacBrady (MacNiocaill 1959, 34-5).

6. BRIDGE

A stone bridge is depicted on Bridge St on Netherclift's map of Cavan town (c. 1593). This occupied the same position as the present day bridge.

7. TOWN DEFENCES

Throughout the seventeenth century Cavan remained unprotected by a stone was wall but references to a "town ditch" in 1634 (Hunter 1971,73) indicate that there may have been earthen defences. The course of these defences is unknown. After 1616 Sir Oliver Lambert was granted lands at cavan on condition that he constructed a citadel and town wall but he built neither (Davies 1948b, 98).

8. TULLYMONGAN CASTLE

The date at which the O'Reillys moved their principal residence from Cloghoughter to this castle is unknown but it probably occurred during the fourteenth century. The castle is first refrred to in 1427 when it was demolished during an English attack on the town (AFM). It was burned again in 1468 when the town was attacked by English forces under Sir John Tiptoft. The castle was rebuilt, however, and it was clearly the main residence of the O'Reillys in the sixteenth century. It was the castle held by Sir Hugh O'Reilly at his death in 1582 and by Sir John O'Reilly at his death in 1596. Thereafter, however, the castle seems to have begun to fall

into disrepair. At the time of the plantation it was proposed not to repair it but to allow a servitor to use the beams and stones for the construction of a strong house on a more convenient site (Davies 1947, 90). In 1616 the castle was leased to Sir Thomas Rotheram but it was subsequently leased to Sir Oliver Lambert who was required to build a strong house or castle there (Hunter 1971, 71). Lambert made no improvements, however, and the ruined castle was still standing in 1621 (Davies 1947, 90).

The castle stood at the north end of a long steep-sided ridge known now as the Fair Green of Cavan. Its position tempted Davies (1947, 89) to think that it may have been preceeded by a ringfort and O'Connell (1937, 293) states that he could distinguish traces of such an "ancient rath". In Davies' time there were the remains of banks about 2.5 feet high indicating a roughly square enclosure, some 32 yards across. Historical accounts indicate that the bawn contained several buildings (Davies 1947, 89). O'Connell (1937, 293) states that a bronze coin of Diocletian (284-305 AD) was unearthed during excavations near the castle site while Lewis (1837, i, 318) states that human bones had been found "in great numbers on the side of the hill overhanging the town". This suggests that there were prehistoric tumuli on the hill before the castle was built. This would also explain the name Tulach Mongain "the mound of Mongain" since tulach normally refers to a prehistoric burial mound. Lewis (1837, i, 318) adds that the vaults and part of the foundation survived in his time.

9. FRANCISCAN FRIARY

This friary seems to have been established c.1300 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 245). It has frequently been confused with an alleged Dominican foundation in the town but as Gwynn and Hadcock (ibid., 232) point out, there is no evidence that the Dominicans ever established themselves at Cavan. In 1405 an indulgence was granted to rebuild the monastery because of the destruction it had received in recent wars; it was burnt again in 1451 through the actions of an inebriated friar and AFM gives a colourful account of this incident. It was burned again in 1468 when Sir John Tiptoft plundered the town (AFM). The monastery adopted the observant reform in 1502 and in spite of the suppression the friars remained here until 1608. A new house was established by the friars at Cavan in 1616 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 245). The monastery was the principal burial place of the O'Reilly lords of Briefne (O'Connell 1937, 303).

Although the friars hung onto possession it would seem that the friary complex functioned as a barracks when it was garrisoned by the English during the 1590s (Davies 1948b, 101). In 1592 it was granted to Edward Barret (O'Connell 1937, 321) and in 1604 to Theobald Burke, and later to Sir Thomas Ashe of Drumsheil, to Sir John King and to Sir Adam Loftus. During the reign of James I it was used as a courthouse (O'Connell 1937, 321) but the plantation commissioners ordered that it should be converted into a parish church and free school (Davies 1948b, 101). After the

1641 rising the Franciscans returned to Cavan for some ten years. A descripion of 1646 is of interest. It states that the friary was:

> "situated within a wood and was a marvellous structure, in the Ulster fashion, the church, cells, refectory and all the other appartments being of wood roofed with sods" (O'Connell 1937, 322).

O'Connell has inferred from this description that the town of Cavan was abandoned but it is much more likely that this mid-seventeenth century friary was actually located outside the town and was perhaps the successor of the monastery erected "in the vicinity" of the friary in 1616 (O'Connell 1937, 332; Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 245). The remains of the medieval church buildings were demolished in 1815 (O'Connell 1937, 335).

Description

All that survives of the site is the tower and portion of the west wall, both of which appear to be of eighteenth century date rather than seventeenth century as Davies (1948, 101) suggested. The west wall is incorporated into the west wall of the graveyard. The north and south walls depicted on the O.S. 25" map, and which link into the west wall with the tower, do not survive.

In the west wall is a blocked-up doorway with sandstone jambs and a round arch. The keystone and imposts project

slightly. A similar door is present i the west wall of the tower at ground level. In the middle of the east wall, at the same level, is a blocked-up doorway but this does not possess the moulded sandstone jambs of the other two doors. Above it is a segmentalheaded window.

The tower consists of three slightly stepped floors with a string-course delimiting the ground and first floors, on all but the east side, and another marking the first and second floors. The second floor contains four round-headed windows with moulded sandstone jambs. The tower is said to have been "restored" about 1750 but this may in fact have required complete rebuilding (O'Connell 1937, 335).

Architectural fragments

Davies (1948, 118, and fig.3) noted the presence of two carved stones, probably of fourteenth century date. One was a jamb with a filleted roll, the other was part of an arch. Neither could be located in the course of our survey.

Monuments

The cemetery was originally more extensive than the present enclosure. According to O'Connell (1937, 327) burials have been found over a wide area stretching from the town hall on the north to the bank of the Cavan stream on the south. O'Connell adds (ibid, 328) that broken sepulchral slabs of pre-1700 date were strewn around the graveyard and he mentions the presence of one dated 1690 commemorating Sir

Richard Moigne. No trace of these was found in the course of this survey. In the early nineteenth century a "massive stone sarcophagus, or stone coffin" was unearthed in Abbey St (O'Connell 1937, 337) but it was subsequently broken up.

O'Connell (1937, 337-8) adds that a cross shaft, some roughly carved stone heads, a font and three stoups from the friary were gathered together in a garden belonging to Mr Fegan, solicitor, in Casement [Farnham] St.

10. SITES IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY

Annagelliff. Church site.

This churchyard is on the crest of a drumlin east of Cavan town. The earliest gravemarker is one of 1740. No evidence of a church survives. The church was abandoned in favour of Gortnakesh during the reign of Charles I (1625-42) (Davies 1948, 77).

Kinnypottle Td. Ringfort.

Univallate platform ringfort. Entrance at ESE. Diam. 39.5 (N-S) by 42.4m (E-W).

Swellan Lower Td. Ringfort 2.

Marked "Drumgoon fort" on the O.S. 1st ed. Well preserved triple banked ringfort with internal diam of 37.4 (NW-SE) by 36.5m (NE-SW).

Swellan Lower Td. Ringfort 1.

The site consists of a sub-circular platform with a bank

along the shoulder of the platform and evidence of an external ditch. Diam. 33.7m (N-S) by 32.5m (E-W).

Swellan Upper Td. Ringfort.
Marked "Swellan fort" on the O.S. 1st ed. map. Well preserved sub-circular triple banked ringfort with internal diam. of 41.9 (WNW-ESE) by 45.3m (SSW-NNE).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

The Problems

Cavan is psarticularly important to archaeological research because it is the only example of a late medieval town founded by a Gaelic lord and represents one of the very few cases of indigenous urbanization in the history of Ireland. The form and layout of the Gaelic town does not seem to have been substantially affected by the Ulster plantation.

The street pattern of the sixteenth century town still survives but no monuments of pre-1700 date are extant although the sites of some, including O'Reilly's castle, the Franciscan friary, and the Brady tower house in the town, are known. Almost certainly the foundations of these and other structures survive below ground level and their excavation would reveal information on the nature of the late medieval Gaelic town and the impact of the Ulster plantation and Cromwellian settlement on it. It would be particularly

interesting to discover the foundations of one of the Gaelic houses and how the building style compares with contemporary houses elsewhere in Ireland, especially within the Pale.

The documentary records relating to Cavan prior to 1700 are very restricted in the information which they convey and in the future archaeology is likely to be the most important means of learning more about the town's past and of understanding the character and detailed form of Cavan today. As stated in relation to Belturbet this is more than just an academic concern because without an appreciation of the factors which have shaped the town's present character, steps taken to conserve that character will not be wholly effective, or worse, features basic to its unique identity may be unwittingly destroyed. It is particularly important that Cavan should protect its archaeological heritage because it is the only example in the world of a late medieval Gaelic town. It should be possible to exploit this unique fact economically, in terms of tourism and education, in the future but to do this the below fround archaeology of Cavan must be protected so that its potential can be properly exploited. At the moment this is best achieved by judicious use of planning constraints and by conditions attached to planning consents.

Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 4) delimits the area of archaeological potential within modern

Cavan. This comprises the area occupied by the sixteenth and seventeenth century town together with an area outside representing a penumbra or fall-out zone. North of the town the ringfort in Kinnypottle Td is also zoned for protection. Within this area the main disturbance to archaeological deposits has occurred along the street frontage as a result of the rebuilding of houses here in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Elsewhere, however, deposits are likely to survive and there is the strong likelihood of recovering house foundations, refuse pits, industrial areas, and workshops of sixteenth and seventeenth century date.

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AFM : Annals of the Four Masters, ed. J. O'Donovan, 7 vols. Dublin 1851.

ALC : Annals of Loch Ce, ed. W. M. Hennessy. 2 vols. London 1871.

AU : Annals of Ulster, ed. W. M. Hennessy and B. MacCarthy, 4 vols. Dublin 1887-1901.

Journals

JRSAI Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

UJA Ulster Journal of Archaeology

Other Abbreviations

CSPI Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland

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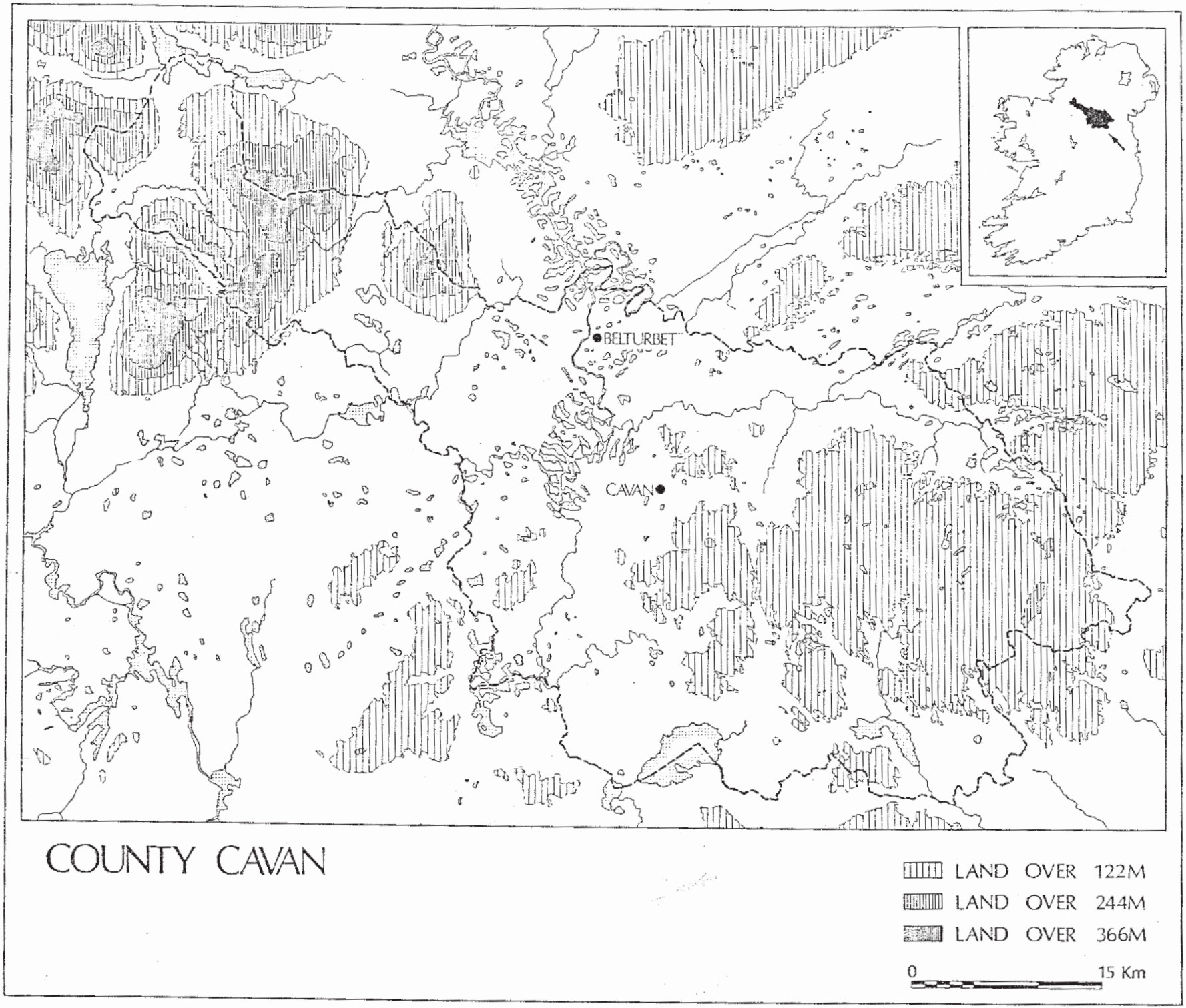


Fig. 1. County Cavan: Location map of towns and boroughs.


D R U M L A N E
C O N N Y
Kilconny
BELTURBET
(Urban District)
Erne Bridge
Riversdale House
Mill View
Creamery
Creeny Bridge
Landing Place
Electric Lighting Station
Orange Hall
Quay
Fair Green
Pleasure Garden
Convent of Mercy
Rectory
Erne Vale
Turbet Island
Castle & Fort
Widows' House
St. Mary's R.C. Church
School
Station
Goods Shed
Engine Shed
Carriage Shed
Level Crossing
Wind Pump
Cattle Pen
Dawson's Lough
Pump
U. D. Bdy.
C O R
Cottage
Well
0 Metres 200

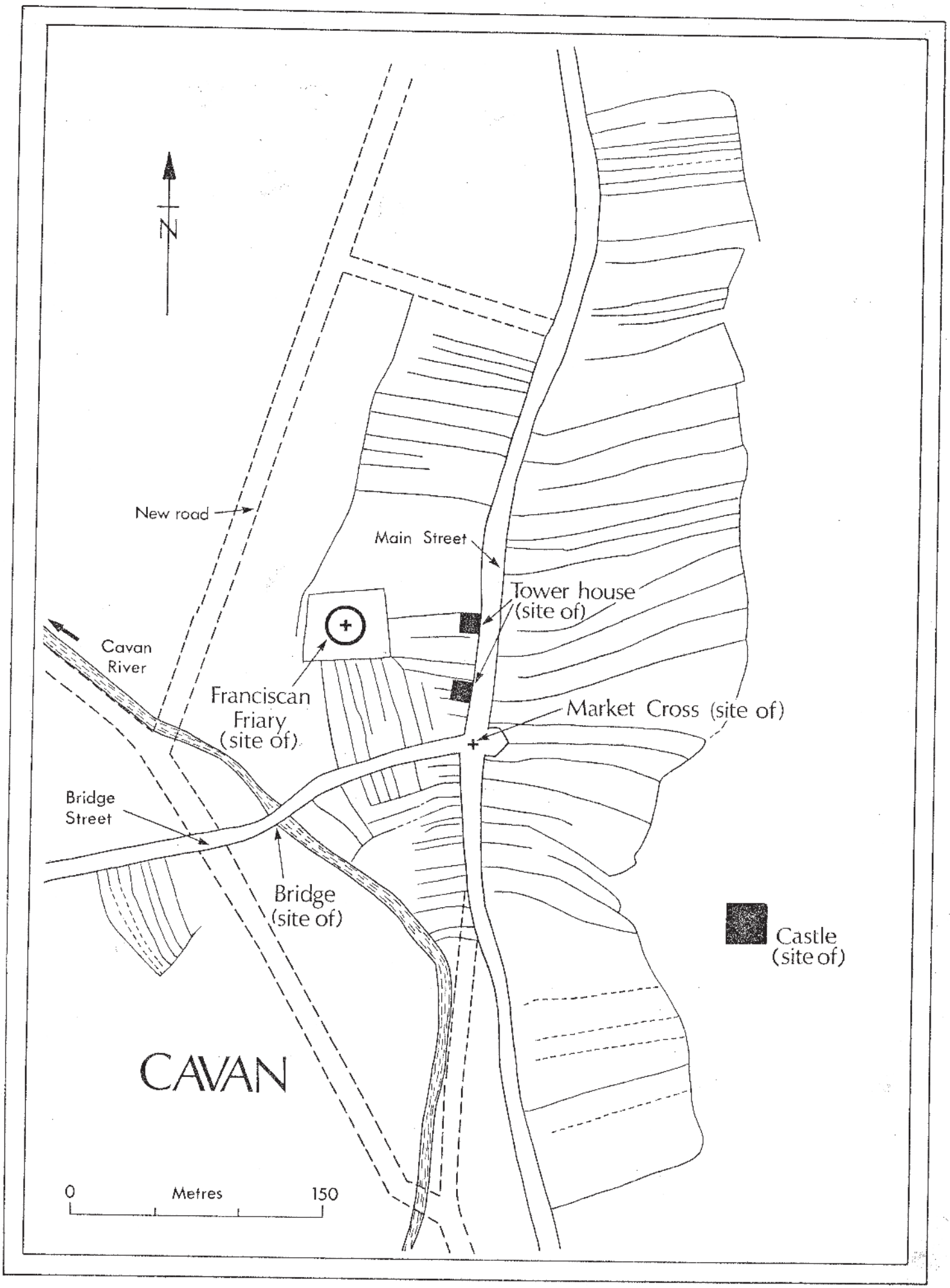
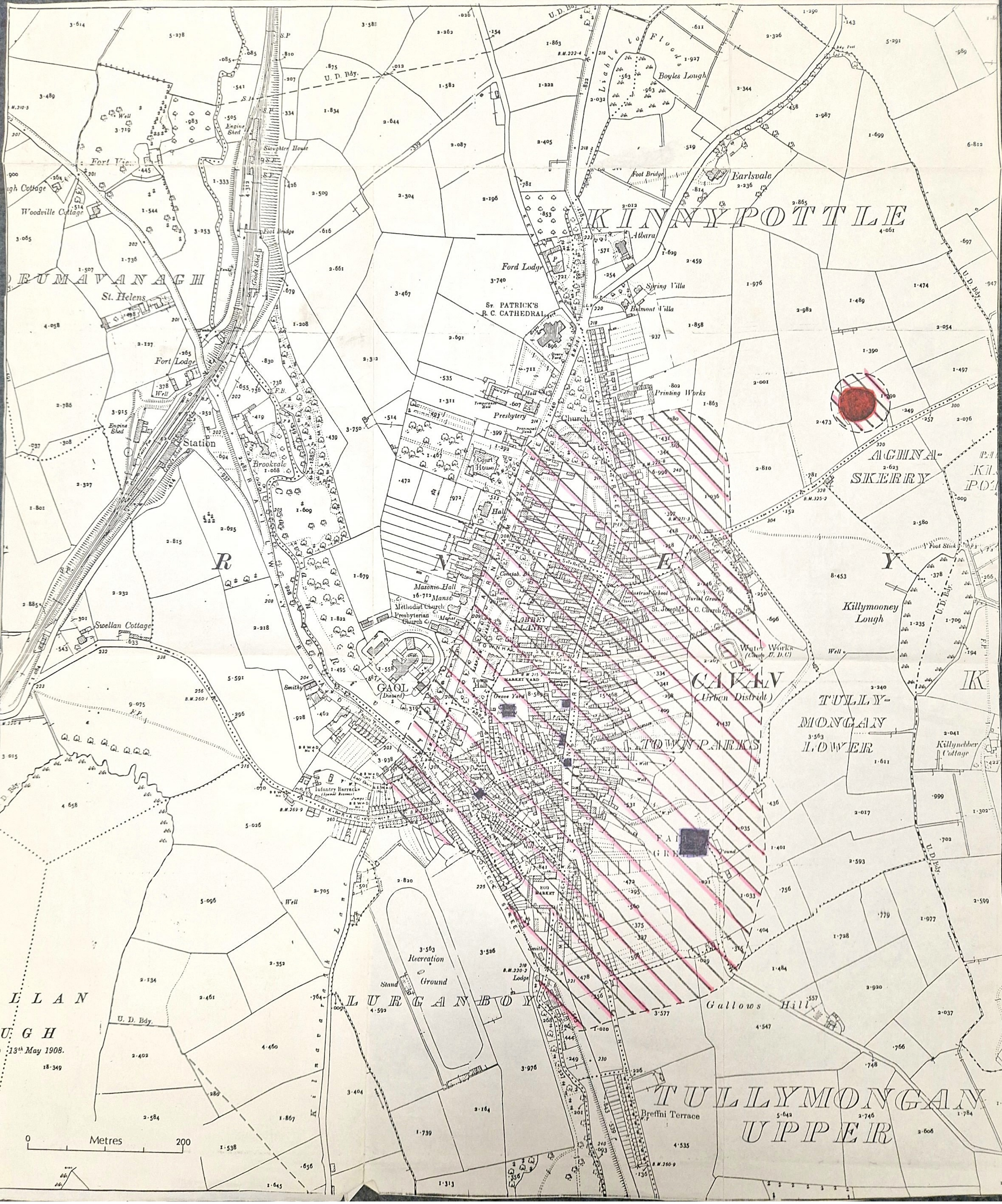


Fig. 3. Outline map of Cavan showing the principal archaeological features.



KINNYPOTTLE
DRUMAVANAGH
AGHNA-SKERRY
CAVAN (Urban District)
TOWNPARKS
TULLY-MONGAN LOWER
TULLYMONGAN UPPER
LURGANBOY
Gallows Hill
Killymooney Lough
Boyles Lough
Earlsvale
Athara
Spring Villa
Belmont Villa
Ford Lodge
St. PATRICK'S R.C. CATHEDRAL
Presbytery
Printing Works
Church
Court House
Hall
Masonic Hall
Manse
Methodist Church
Presbyterian Church
GAOL (Disused)
Town Hall
Industrial School
St. Joseph's R.C. Church
Water Works
FAIR GREEN
Station
Engine Shed
Slaughter House
Foot Bridge
Fort View
Woodville Cottage
St. Helens
Fort Lodge
Brookvale
Swellan Cottage
Infantry Barracks
Smithy
Recreation Ground
Stand
Lodge
Killynebber Cottage
Breffni Terrace
U. D. Bdy.
Liable to Floods
Well
13th May 1908.
Metres
0
200