COUNTY ROSCOMMON

ROSCOMMON ABBEY.

THE URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY
SURVEY

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URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY SURVEY

PART XX◯

COUNTY ROSCOMMON

JOHN BRADLEY

NOEL DUNNE

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and of the gatehouse.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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 chronicle 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 cannot 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 archaeological 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 described 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. ROSCOMMON

There are five sites of importance to urban archaeology in Co. Roscommon. These are the former boroughs of Ballintober, Boyle, Rindown, Roscommon and Tulsk (fig. 1).

The urban network which characterises the modern county was effectively formed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but the urban history of the county is much older. Roscommon itself was an important monastic town in the period before the coming of the Normans and was probably the only urban site in the county prior to the thirteenth century. The Anglo-Norman hold on County Roscommon was short-lived and lasted no more than fifty years in some parts of the county. During that time, however, they established three boroughs, at Ballintober, Rindown and Roscommon. The collapse of the Anglo-Norman colony in the mid fourteenth century meant that these boroughs were abandoned. This desertion has proved to be a boon to later ages and Rindown, for instance, is classed among the most important medieval settlement sites in these islands simply because so much of the ancient borough has been preserved without being built upon.

The late sixteenth century witnessed the determined effort by the English to conquer Connacht and hand in hand with conquest came colonization. In the early years of the seventeenth century two new boroughs were established and one old one was reformed, Boyle, Tulsk and Roscommon. Ballintober

was a village at this time but Rindown was completely deserted.

There is evidence for one other borough in Roscommon but its location can no longer be determined. This is the borough of Rathfernan, mentioned in a deed of 1333, which seems to have been located close to Ballintober (Knox 1903, 60). There may have been other boroughs but the historical documentation is lacking and we simply do not know.

This report provides an account of the archaeological remains at each of these sites and an assessment of the town or borough's importance to archaeological research. It outlines the areas within the towns where archaeological deposits are likely to survive and highlights the potential of these sites to increase our knowledge of the development of urban life in Ireland. Finally, recommendations are made as to how this potential can be best realised. Each town is provided with a map outlining its zone of archaeological potential in which the following colour code is used:

Pink: the zone of archaeological potential.

Red: extant archaeological monuments.

Purple: sites of known monuments.

Rindown is now deserted, Ballintober and Tulsk have shrunk in importance, but Boyle and Roscommon are expanding towns where modern redevelopment can threaten archaeological deposits. Uncontrolled redevelopment at any of these sites will destroy the fragile archaeological heritage of

Roscommon's historic towns 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.

BALLINTOBER

The placename Baile tobair Brighde, the town of Brigid's well, is derived from a hold well which stood outside of the graveyard, south west of Ballintober Church. The connection of St. Brigid with the settlement is a very shadowy one, however, simply because of the lack of pre-fourteenth century references to the site. There is a local tradition that there was a patron day at the well on 1st February but no one can recall when this was last held.

After the Anglo-Norman conquest of Connacht Ballintober was retained by Richard de Burgh and it became the centre of a manor. The exact date of the borough's foundation is unknown but it is probable that it was established shortly after 1235 when the lands came into Anglo-Norman possession. Our knowledge of the existence of the borough is dependent on a solitary reference and even that is not as clear as one would wish. After the death of the last of the de Burgh earls in 1333 an inquisition was held into their lands and this reported that the properties around Ballintober were largely waste and valueless. They had formerly been worth over £84 per annum but now produced merely £10 and all of that came from Ballintobber itself (Knox 1903, 59-60). This state of decay presumably reflects the aftermath of the burning of the settlement in 1315 by Ruadri Mac Cathal O Conchobair, a rival to King Felim O Conchobair (Misc. I. A.).

The inquisition of 1333 does not actually refer to burgesses at Ballintober but it leaves little doubt that there had been a borough there which consisted of five townlands, the same as its neighbouring borough of Rathfernan whose site is now unknown (Knox 1903, 59-60, 67; PRO London C/135/36/22). The inquisition describes the castle in a ruinous state and the account of the meadows, ploughland, woodland pasture, mills, and court pleas, all of which are returned as of no value due to the war, makes it clear that the days of the settlement were numbered. The castle was taken over by the O Conchobair's and during the later middle ages it was one of there most important strongholds and, indeed, it still survives in the hands of the family to this day.

The later annalistic references to Ballintober clearly indicate that some form of settlement continued to be associated with the castle. The well-known annalistic entry of 1434 recounting an attack on Ballintober by O'Kelly, MacDermot, and a son of O'Connor Roe recounts that a:

> "battle was fought between them and the people of the town in which many inside and outside the town were wounded. A burning wattle was thrown into the town, a house caught fire, an adjoining house also caught fire and finally most of the town. The bawn was also burned and much property in the town was consumed" (AFM)

Ballintober was also burned in 1487 (AFM) and again in 1489 when the annalist adds that "bawn of the town" was demolished

(AFM). The settlement appears to have been of little or no significance in the sixteenth century and is hardly mentioned. In 1617 the bawn, town and castle of Ballintober were granted to Sir Hugh O'Connor together with the grant of a weekly market and an annual fair (O'Conor Don 1889, 24). From the architectural evidence it is clear that the O'Connors renovatted a portion of the castle and built the parish church about this time also. In the census of c.1659 the population is given as 56 (Pender 1939).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. SITE OF BOROUGH

2. MARKET PLACE

3. BOROUGH DEFENCES

4. CASTLE

5. ST. BRIGID'S CHURCH

6. MISCELLANEOUS

1. SITE OF BOROUGH

The exact site of the borough is unknown but on analogy with other contemporary settlements it is most likely that it was situated in the area between the church and the castle. It may have extended south of the church along the ridge towards St Bride's Church in the modern village.

2. MARKET PLACE

The O'Conors were granted a weekly market in 1617 and it was presumably held in the area in front of the castle known as Fair Green (O'Conor Don 1881, 221 and Appendix G). It may be noted that the road, south of the green is quite wide, and is also a potential site of the market place and it could be that the cross base (section 6, below) formed part of a market cross.

3. BOROUGH DEFENCES

The annalistic references to attacks on the settlement in 1397 (Misc. I. A.), 1434 and 1489 (AFM) indicate that it was protected by some form of defences, probably of timber and earth. The 1489 reference states that "the bawn of the town" was demolished by O'Conor Roe and it may be that it was not rebuilt after this time. In 1574 Ballintober was included in a list of towns whose walls and gates were broken down (Cal. Carew Mss., 1601-3, 476).

4. CASTLE

The castle is first directly mentioned in 1315 when it was attacked by Ruaidri O Conchobair Ruadh (Misc. I. A.). In the inquisition of 1333 it is described as:

> "an old castle surrounded by a stone wall ... In the
> castle are ruinous buildings, a hall, a chamber, a

kitchen, and other houses, worth nothing beyond cost of repairs, because they need great repairs" (Knox 1903, 59)

Shortly after this date the castle seems to have come into O Conchobair hands and in 1375 it was swapped by Ruaidhri O Conchobair in return for Roscommon Castle (A. Conn; ALC). The castle was an O Conchobair stronghold throughout the later middle ages and there are frequent references to the holding of prisoners and hostages there. It was captured in 1426 by O Ceallaig (A. Conn.), in 1466 by MacWilliam Burke (A. Conn.), in 1526 by the earl of Kildare (A. Conn.), and in 1530, by O'Donnell who burned the castle and ruined it (A. Conn.). In the intervening periods between these attacks, however, the castle seems to have returned to O'Conchobair control.

In 1571 the castle was captured by Richard Bingham, president of Connacht, but like his predecessors he seems to have installed politically acceptable or tame O Conchobair's here (ALC), such as Dubhaltach O Conchobair who was installed by government forces in 1581. In 1585 the castle, together with twelve carrucates of land were granted to Hugh O'Conor (15RDKPRI, no. 4688) and he was confirmed in its possession in 1617 (O'Conor Don 1889). In 1598, during the Nine Years War, the castle had been captured once again by O'Donnell but after 1603 the O'Conors seem to have lived in it as the alte ations to the northwest tower indicate.

The castle consists of a quadrangular enclosure with polygonal towers at the corners. It is entered from the east through a twin-towered gatehouse, now much broken down and

overgrown. The remains of an external fosse, waterfilled in places, survive together with traces of an external bank on the north and west. The fabric survives much as it did in 1889 when it was described and surveyed by O'Conor Don but there have been a number of fractures in the masonry and some prop work has been conducted. The layout of the castle indicates that it was constructed c.1300 or shortly thereafter and the only substantial alterations to this plan occur in the northwest tower which has a fireplace with a chimney breast dated 1627. The parallels between Ballintober and Caernarfon were already noted by O'Conor Don but the statement, since repeated by Leask, that it was constructed by the O'Conchobairs is incorrect. It was evidently built by Richard de Burgh, earl of Ulster, whose descendants still owned it in 1333. De Burgh had served on Edward I's campaigns in Wales and doubtless derived the plan of Ballintober from his first hand experience there. A similar polygonal tower is to be found in his castle at Greencastle (Donegal) and there are hints that Sligo Castle was also of this form originally.

5. ST. BRIGID'S CHURCH

Despite the placename, showing as it does a veneration of St Brigid, the first reference to the church does not occur until 1607 (Cal. S.P. Ire. 1607-8, 68) when the chapel of Mullaghnedo alias Ballintober was granted to Hugh Hovedon. It was a traditional burial place of the O'Conors however and was a prebend of Elphin cathedral which suggests that it may

have been a pre-Norman foundation. The church had evidently gone out of use by 1721 when the McDermott Roe vault was built across its north wall.

Description

The remains of the church are located on the south side of the churchyard on a low ridge which slopes down gradually towards the south west to a marshy stream. Three walls survive of an originally rectangular building with approximate internal dimensions of 15.9 by 7.3m. The masonry is roughly coursed and consists of a mixture of spalls and larger limestone blocks; the jambs are of limestone.

The north, west and south walls survive although they have been refaced with modern mortared stone in places and the masonry is obscured in places by burial vaults. All that survives of the east wall is a series of stones protruding through the ground between the two O'Connor vaults, which seem to have been built at on east end of the church. At least the southern (19th cent.) O'Connor vault incorporates what appear to be the original quoins at its southeast end. The north wall, where it is not obscured by vaults survives to a height of 1.55m. The original facing of the west wall survives internally to a height of 1.4m but the outer face is concealed by a butressed wall of modern workmanship. The internal facing of the south wall survives for 12m from the southwest corner and to a max. height of 1.95 m. It has the remains of a blocked up doorway whose basal jambs survive

externally; these are pick dressed in early seventeenth century style and are quite similar to dressing on stones in the NW tower of the castle, where they are dated to 1627. Immediately inside the door is a sandstone stoop.

Monuments

The graveyard is surrounded by a relatively modern wall and an arc of high ground immediately south of the church indicates that the original boundary extended slightly further to the south than the present one. Within it are gravemarkers dating manily from the eighteenth century to the present day. Modern burial takes place in a new plot to the west which contained the original RC chapel, marked on the O.S. first edition maps. Portable objects located in the graveyard during the survey include a mortar, a stoup, four quernstone fragments, and a seventeenth century window head and mullion.

John Roirk. 1609.
Rectangular limestone slab set in the interior of the church. At the top of the panel are the initials IHS with the inscription in false relief below:

> PRAY FOR THE SOVLE OF/ THADY ROIRK WHO CAV/SED THIS MONVMENT TO/ BE MADE FOR HIS SON/ IOHN ROIRK WHO DIED/ THE 1 DAY OF AVGVST/ 1609/ AND WHERE THE SAID/ THADY IS TO BE INTERRED

Below the inscription is a panel with skull and cross-bones.

L. 185. W. 86.5

O'Connor. 1634.

Set into the east end of the nineteenth century O'Connor vault. Rectangular limestone slab decorated in false relief with a broad shafted cross with fleur-de-lys terminals; the cross-head is set within a lozenge panel from which the cross shaft descends to the base. At the top is the inscription IHS. The initials COC are present above the arms of the cross hile below is the date 1634. Small rectangles below the lozenge panel contain the initials P (in reverse) and F. At the centre of the cross-head are three plug holes which would originally have held a mount.

L. 150. W. 88.

6. MISCELLANEOUS

Cross

According to the O.S. first edition maps s stone cross was situated on the west margin of the road between the castle and the churchyard. Nothing now survives nor could any information be obtained about what happened to it.

Quernstone

Half of a rotary disc. Found in a field wall close to and south of the castle. Now in the possession of Mr John Brady at Ballintobber National School.

Ring-barrow. Rosmeen Td.

This appears in Cambridge aerial photogrph ALR 55,

approximately 50-60 m WNW of the castle. No trace of the barrow is now evident on the ground. The field has been tilled and this may have destroyed the monument. It is quite likely that it should be identified with "an dhuma" mentioned by ALC in 1581 when Brian Caech O'Coinneagain asked to be buried there "not for lack of religion but because of the lack of practice of religion in the churches of the time".

Stone head

Located at present in the garden of Mrs Daly's house in the village, the object was discovered about 1977 by a JCB while a trench was being dug near the house. It consists of a fairly spherical head with an elongated, almost pointed tang, at it base; it is probably of relatively modern date.
Max. H. 28. Max. W. 17. Depth 19.

Toberbride well

The placename, Ballintobber, indicates the existence of this well but it is not specifically referred to in the sources. In his Ordnance Survey letters O'Donovan points out that the wall was still to be seen in 1837 near the church at the foot of an aged tree. He states that it was no longer holy but was used for washing clothes and potatoes. Today the site consists of a natural hollow from which a spring issues a stready flow of water to the stream below.

Watermill

The inquisition of 1333 mentions a watermill at Ballintober which it describes as having been worth 66s. 8d. but it was now worth nothing (Knox 1903, 60).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

Ballintober is a good example of a deserted medieval borough, important to archaeological research because of its association with one of the most important Anglo-Norman castles in Connacht and because the settlement appears to have continued to be occupied under the patronage of the O Conchobair during the later middle ages. Accordingly it is one of the few very small number of boroughs which seem to have continued in occupation once the Gaelic Irish took over. The period of its special importance to archaeology then lies between the mid thirteenth and late sixteenth centuries. In the seventeenth century it became, in effect, an estate village.

The archaeological and documentary data indicates that the borough has been the scene of continuous human activity since the thirteenth century. Documentary records of Ballintober are relatively few, however, and in the future archaeological excavation is likely to be the principal means by which additional knowledge can be obtained.

Due to its relatively remote situation there has been little disturbance to archaeological deposits within the borough. Nonetheless in the past twenty years a ring barrow north west of the castle has been removed and the stone head and quernstone discoveries show that archaeological features are being uncovered and it is likely that more will be found in the future. It is important then that future developments,

particularly house building, should take the site's archaeological potential into account.

Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 2) delimits the area of archaeological potential within Ballintober. Its extent is based on the castle and former parish church, together with an area outside of them where peripheral features may occur. In the absence of archaeological excavations within the town nothing can be said about the depth of archaeological deposits.
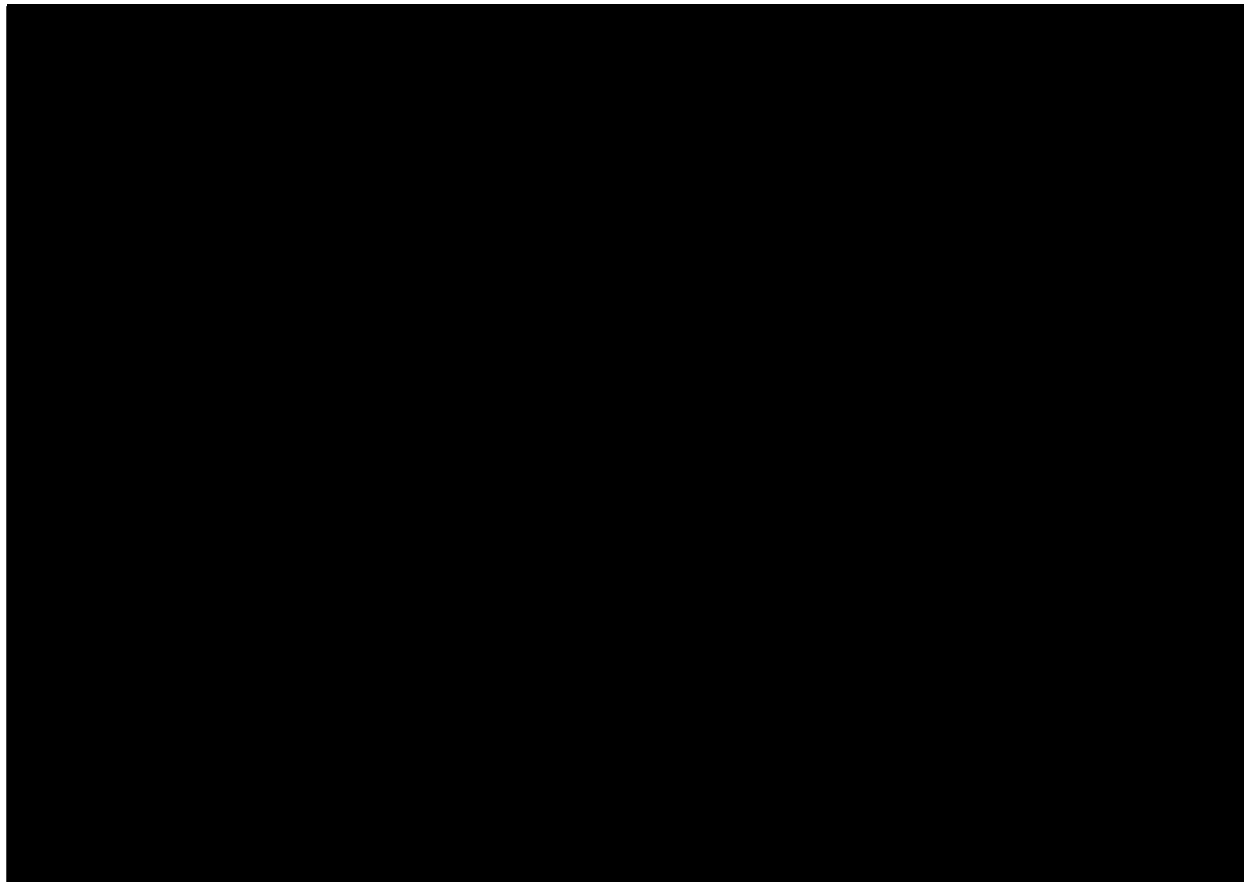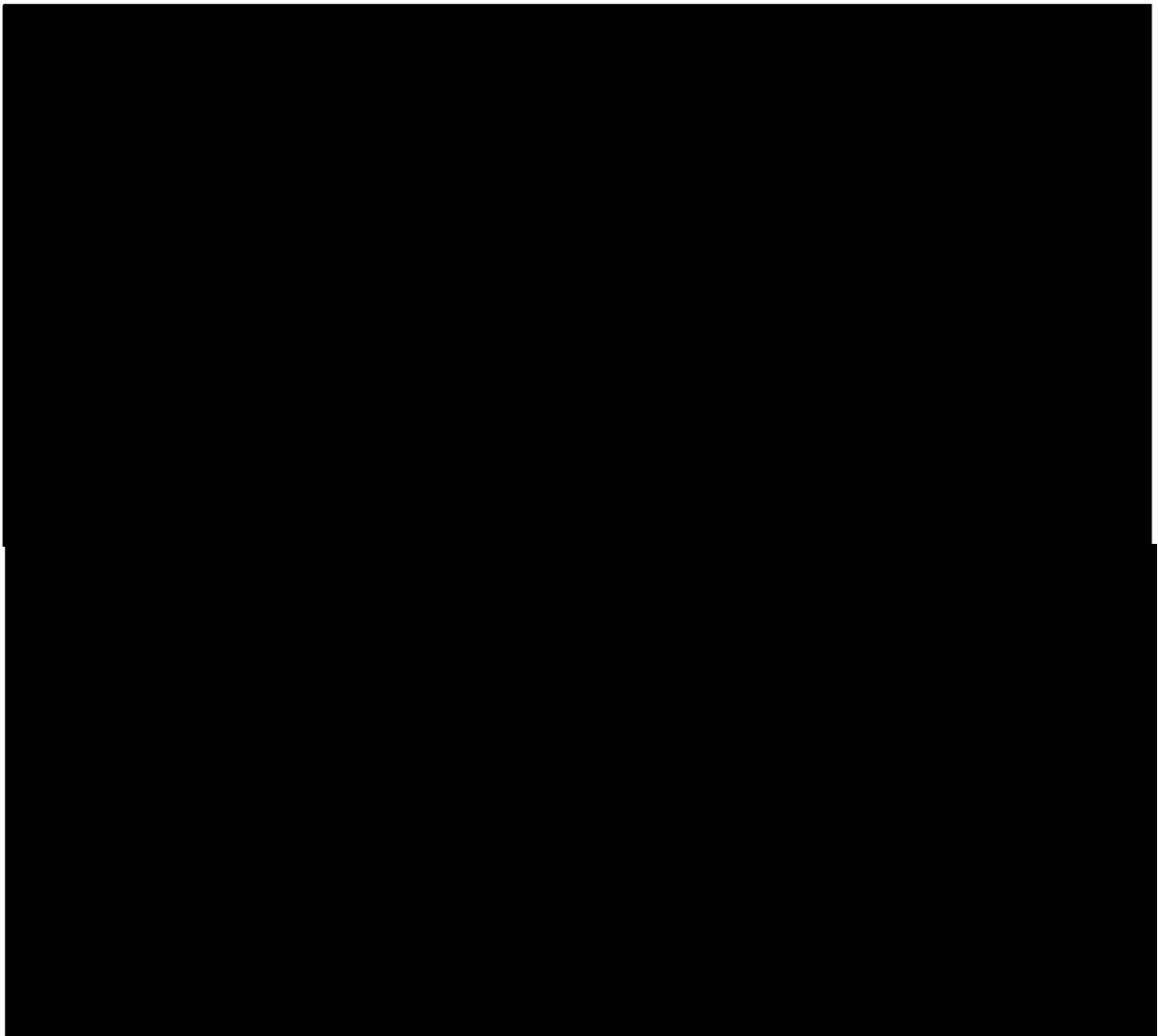
BOYLE

The town of Boyle was founded in the closing years of the sixteenth century but the site had been the setting for an important Cistercian monastery established in 1161. This monastery itself replaced an Early Christian church, known as Ath da Larc, and so it is clear that the site of Boyle town has been occupied for over a millenium.

Little is known of the Early Christian church site at Boyle. Gwynn and Hadcock (1970, 30) state that tradition maintained that St Comgallen was here at the time of St Patrick, while O'Donovan (in Sharkey 1927, 95) associated it with Mac Cainne, commemorated in the Calendar of Donegal on December 1st. The site of this early church is unclear and the claims which have been made that it was replaced by the later Cistercian Abbey must be regarded as unproven. The fact that Boyle was known as Ath da larc as late as 1197 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 30) cannot be used to prove that the abbey was built on the site of the older church because Mellifont, for instance, was known as Droichead Atha in the early years of the thirteenth century despite the fact that it was many miles from the ford in question.

The foundation of the Cistercian monastery provides a clear dateline, however, and it is possible to state that Boyle has been a continuously occupied site since at least 1161. There may well have been a lay settlement associated

with the town, similar to the Cistercian abbeys at Jerpoint and Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny, and possible evidence for this cpmes from the annalistic entry of 1243 which states that Aed O Conchobair led a crowd to MacDiarmata's house in Boyle and abducted his mother (A Conn., AU). The abbey itself was a centre of pilgrimage and this function in itself would have necessitated ancillary buildings (A. Conn.: 1231; ALC: 1242).

The site became important in the late sixteenth century as a result of the English endeavours to conquer Connacht. It had a number of strategic advantages arising from its position on the edge of the Curlews. First of these was the fact that once the Shannon had been bridged at Athlone, it was the furthest point that could be reached on the northwest route from Dublin to Sligo, without encountering a major geographical obstacle; secondly, it became the principal English base south of Sligo; and thirdly it was an essential base for maintaining control of the Curlews. These military requirements effectively generated the town of Boyle but it took some time nonetheless before the settlement was secure enough to prosper.

In 1585 Bingham, the president of Connacht, claimed that nothing survived at Boyle: "no stick or house standing in any stead" (Cal. S.P. Ire. 1586-8, 24) and it is repeatedly described as waste in a series of documents dating between 1587 and 1592 (Cal. S.P. 1586-8, 260; ibid. 1588-92, 378, 482). In 1593 Bingham complained that if Boyle had been a

town and inhabited that the Irish under Maguire would not
have been able to make their latest push into Connacht (Cal.
S.P. Ire. 1592-6, 118, 128). It may have been this raid which
convinced the government forces to take action because
between 1595 and 1603 there are many accounts relating to the
garrisoning of the town, and their most noticealbe feature is
a steady increase in the size of the garrison. In 1596 Boyle
was besieged by an army of 1000 Irish under O'Donnell and
Thomas Reynolds, the commander of the garrioson feared that
he would have to surrender because of the lack of food and
ammunition (Cal. S.P. 1596-7, 69, 71). Boyle was relieved,
however, and the garrison was reinforced (Cal. S.P. Ire.
1596-7, 94). O'Donnell subsequently reivested Boyle and cut
off reinforcements until Boyle was relieved by Sir Conyers
Clifford in 1597 (Cal. S.P. 1596-7, 97, 98, 102, 239). It was
beseiged again in 1599-1600 and although Boyle remained in
government hands until the end of the Nine Years War it is
clear that the town suffered badly in these sieges.

In 1603 Boyle was granted to Joseph Bingley and Joseph
King (Cal. S.P. 1603-6, 113). In 1608 the population
consisted of 37 Englishmen and 25 English Palemen (Cal. S.P.
1606-8, 547). By 1611, however, it was described as "well
populated" and as likely to return Protestants to parliament
(Cal. S.P. Ire. 1610-14, 162). The town was incorporated as a
borough in 1613 when it was to have: "a borough master, free
burgesses and community: to have twelve burgesses and an
indefinite number of commoners", the borough master was to be
elected annually out of and by the burgesses and he was to be

the judge of the Borough Court. The town continued to return members of Parliament until the Act of Union in 1800. The town continued to serve as a garrison during the seventeenth century (Cal. S.P. Ire. 1633-47, 489, 492) and the census of c.1659 gave it a population of 304 (Pender 1939).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. STREETS & STREET PATTERN

2. MARKET PLACE

3. FORT

4. EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE

5. CISTERCIAN ABBEY

6. MISCELLANEOUS

7. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY

8. LIST OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRAY FINDS

1. STREETS & STREET PATTERN (Fig. 8)

The street pattern of Boyle shows that it developed in two main stages. The first and oldest part was formed around the junction of Main Street, Bridge Street, Green Street and Eaton Lane. The second stage was an extension to the south, represented today by the market square and the Crescent. The first of these stages almost certainly belongs to the early seventeenth century while the second may have commenced in the late seventeenth century and proably continued in the

eighteenth. The are of Chapel Street and eaton Lane, on the Ballymote Road, is known locally as Irishtown, a name which may well derive from the seventeenth century.

2. MARKET PLACE

The market place of the original town was probably at the intersection of the main streets but it was clearly replaced by the formal triangular market place to the south.

3. FORT (Fig 8: bulwark; fig. 9)

This is situated in a commanding position on the east end of the summit of an east-west ridge, located between the Boyle river and a tributary to the north. It overlooks the Boyle river valley, including the town on the NE, ESE, SSW and W, and a valley between the ridge and the Curlew Mountains to the NNW and NE. It is almost certainly to be identified with the strong fort built in 1607 by Bingley and King (Cal. S.P. Ire. 1606-8, 150). In 1646 it is referred to simply as Boyle Camp (Cal. S.P. Ire. 1633-47, 489, 492). The census of 1659 records that there was a garrison of 94, including wives, at Boyle, 89 of whom were English (Pender 1939).

Description

The fort is pentagonal with bastions at the NE, ESE, SSW, W, and NNW. Four consist of flat-topped earthen platforms

while the remaining one, at the NE, is in the form of a pointed mound which is marked "Doo" on the O.S. 25" map. There is no evidence, however, that this represents a barrow although the possibility cannot be discounted. Its form is different to that of other barrows in the area.

The bastions are joined on four sides by broad, rounded banks, the exception being between ESE and SSW. The interior of the fort is flat and the only feature is a depression immediately inside the ESE bastion. Traces of lazybeds indicate that the interior was formerly tilled. The fort has an external fosse on all sides except between the ESE and SSW bastions; it is marshy, flat-bottomed and largely silted up. The marshiness of the silted ditches may indicate that they were originally quite deep.

The ditch is best evident between the NE/NNW and NNW/W bastions. Here its outer edge projects inwards in the form of a shallow V between the two bastions. Between the W and SSW, a modern earthen field boundary has been constructed roughly on the line of the outer edge of the ditch with the silted-up ditch bottom evident immediately inside. The same situation exists between the NE and ESE bastions, but here the modern boundary is in the form of a stone wall. There is a causeway in the ditch between the W ad NNW bastions. This is matched by a gap through the inner bank. The entrance opens into the summit of the ridge and is along its long axis. A bank outside the ditch on the NE/NNW and NNW/W sides may represent the remains of a grassed over wall footing. This feature is

continuous across the entrance causeway. The absence of a
bank and ditch between the ESE and SSW bastions may indicate
that the hillslope towards the town (SSE) was utilized as a
natural glacis.

Dimensions

Distance from the mid-crest of the inner bank between the
NNW and NE bastions to the SSW bastion: 66m. Level of the top
of NE bastion above the bottom of the ditch: 2.75m. Width of
entrance gap in inner bank, between the W and NNW bastions,
at top: 7.1m, at base: 4m. The inner bank has an average
width of 11.6m, an average internal height of 40 cm, and and
average external height of 1.45m. The fosse is 4.7m wide. The
outer bank is 2.6m wide on average and rises 70cm above the
fosse, and 15cm above external ground level.

4. EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE

The evidence for the existence of this early church site
rests on the identification of Ath da larc with Boyle, first
proposed by O'Donovan (in Sharkey 1927, 94-5; see Gwynn and
Hadcock 1970, 30). O'Donovan's suggestion that a turret of
the Cistercian Abbey was the remains of a round tower has
been followed by many writers (including Barrow 1979, 177-8)
but it is in fact a seventeenth century structure, probably
put up while the abbey was being used as a garrison. The
possibility that the Cistercians may have built their abbey
on an earlier site should not be discounted because this is
what happened in the case of Inch Abbey, Co. Down, but the

normal Cistercian practice was to seek out new sites and build on them afresh. Perhaps the site should be identified with the alleged church of St Attracta which Sharkey (1927, 64) states was "on the right bank of the river somewhere on the site of the present Convent of Mercy".

5. CISTERCIAN ABBEY (Figs. 9-19)

This was established by monks from Mellifont in 1161 after having unsuccessfully tried to found a monastery in three other locations (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 128). The founder is unknown but the history of the abbey in the middle ages is well known due to the fact that one of the major sets of medieval Irish annals, the Annals of Loch Ce, were recorded locally. The abbey was attacked in 1202 by a raiding party under William de Burgh and Cathal Crobhdearg O Conchobair and they spent three days pillaging the monastery (ALC). This raid is generally regarded as having delayed the completion of the abbey church which was not consecrated until 1218-20 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 128). In 1235 the abbey was raided by Anglo-Normans under Richard de Burgh and they stole vestments, plate and valuables from the sacristy for which they subsequently had to render compensation (A. Conn.). Boyle was to be the subject of other raids in 1243, 1284, 1296, 1309, and 1315 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 129; AFM, ALC, A. Conn.), while in 1398 Conchobair Mac Diarmata raided the monastery for stone in order to build his stronghold at nearby Lough Ce (A. Clon.).

The abbey became an important centre of local pilgrimage and this is evident from the references to individuals who died on pilgrimage there, such as Flaitbertach O Flannacain in 1231, and Donchad O Dubhda, king of Ui Fiachrach, in 1242 (ALC).

The annals provide some information on the abbey's building history. Apart from the consecration date of the church an important reference is one of 1402 when a papal indulgence was granted for the repair of the church which was described as suffering from the ill effects of war (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 129), presumably the raid of 1398. In 1471 the church was damaged and badly flooded as the result of a violent hailstorm when the annals describe the water as being so deep that a boat could be floated over most of the church floor (A. Conn.).

In 1569 the abbey was granted to Patrick Cusacke and it contained then the walls of the church and belfry, a cloister, hall and dormitory together with some ruined buildings (Archdall 1786, 604). In 1585 it is described as a garrison and until the construction of the fort in 1607 it seems to have been the principal stronghold of the government forces at Boyle. In 1607 the abbey was granted to John King and Joseph Bingley (Cal. S.P. Ire. 1606-8, 69) and this is what probably prompted them to build the fort.

Description (Figs. 9-10)

The remains consist of the church and fragments of the

claustral buildings, which were substantially altered in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the abbey was used as a barracks. The ruined east end of the church survives in good conditin together with the nave arcades. The outer walls of the aisles are missing, however, although their line can be traced. The processional doorway linking the south aisle with the cloister has been re-erected.

The church was built in four major phases between its foundation in 1161 and its consecration in 1218-20. These are: 1) the east end, including the transepts; 2) the first four bays of the nave's south arcade; 3) the first four bays of the nave's north arcade; 4) the remaining four bays of the nave and the west facade. All seem to reflect a proportional scheme which Stalley (1987, 70) has shown to consist of units of 56 and 42 feet.

Phase 1: 1161-c.1180.
The presbytery has a pointed barrel vault. The original arrangement of the east windows consisted of a double row of three round headed windows whose positions can be determined from the surviving string courses outside. These were replaced by three lancets in the thirteenth century. There is a sedilla in the south wall consisting of a single arched recess, covering a stone bench below. On top of the sedilla jamb is a finely carved Hiberno-Romanesque beast head in the form of a column swallower. The transepts each have two side chapels roofed, like the presbytery, by pointed barrel vaults, whose springing is marked by a string course. The

chapels are lit by a single window in their east walls. The capitals are decorated with plant and leaf designs and a finely carved example in the north chapel of the north transept shows a face leering out of leaves. A doorway in the south wall of the south transept gave access to the dormitory, while a door centrally placed in the wall of the north transept gave access to the exterior. A doorway, rather than an arch, links the north transept with the nave aisle. The style of the east end shows close parallels with Burgungian churches (Stalley 1987, 80-1).

Phase 2: c.1175-c.1180.

The presbytery is not accurately aligned with the rest of the church and there may have been a break before the commencement of the nave. This break is unlikely to have been for long however because the style of the arcade which is stylistically later than those at Baltinglass and Jerpoint suggests a date of c.1175-80. Indeed it could be maintained that the first four bays of the nave's south arcade, built with impressive cylindrical piers, represent a continuation of work in the transepts. The piers are made of ashlar masonry and support round arches of two orders, which rise from octagonal capitals and abaci. The bases, which alternate with thick and thin horizontal rolls, rest on square plinths with foliage spurs in the angles. The capitals are covered with simplified acanthus. The clerestorey windows are positioned over the arches. The dating of this phase is based on the fact that the arcade is stylistically later than those at Baltinglass and Jerpoint.

Phase 3: c.1185-c.1200.

The first four bays of the north arcade are of a completely different design to those on the south. The arches are pointed and have clustered piers, except for the fourth bay which has a plain octagonal pier. The central shaft in each pier cuts through the abacus and rises a short distance up the nave wall. The capitalso show foliage motifs with long stems terminating in narrow pointed leaves, some of which can be compared with those in the transepts of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin and accordingly suggest a date between 1185 and 1200. A stone projection on the fourth pier probably marks the position of the screen which separated the monks from the lay-brothers and Stalley had pointed to flanges on the three eastern piers which would have helped to ensure a smooth fitting for the choir stalls. The position of the crossing screen provides an explanation for phases 2 and 3 as the construction of the monk's choir.

Phase 4: c.1202-20.

This phase saw the completion of the nave arcade with the continued use of round arches on the south side and pointed arches on the north. The piers are square in plan with chamfered angles and their plainess is relieved only by a group of triple shafts on the inner faces supporting the inner order of the arch. Facing both nave and aisle, at the level of the spandrels, are long corbels, composed of triple shafts. Further corbels were inserted at the same time throughout the earlier parts of the nave. Their purpose was to support wall posts linked to the roof which would have

given the bay divisions a vertical emphasis. The west door has two orders of continuous roll mouldings and above it is a tall lancet window ornamented with chevron. This phase is characterized by a more extensive use of grey sandstone which helps to distinguish it from earlier work. The best known feature of this phase is the fine series of broad capitals, generally fitted above a group of three shafts, on which the sculpture is arranged as a continuous freize. Some have long stringy intertwined stems, while others have berries and fruits tucked under the leaves and palmette foliage is abundant. Seven of the capitals were ornamented with animals and human figures. The finest depicts a confrontation between two dogs and a pair of cockerels, fighting over some tiny creature, with a snale rolled into a coil belwo (south pier 5, west face). Another shows a row of six birds with their elongated necks intertwined (south pier 6, north corbel). The next pier has two naked men struggling with lions: one wields a sword while the other forces open the jaws of a lion with his bare hands (south pier 5, north corbel). Another shows four figures standing stiffly between trees (south pier 6, east face). Stalley (1987, 91) has suggested that the style of the western bays indicates that they were carried out by a master mason who was familiar with building practice in the English west country. Some of the leaf patterns on the capitals, however, may be inspired by earlier carving in the transepts.

The Crossing Tower

Although this has previously been viewed as an original

feature of the monastery it is a thirteenth century structure constructed perhaps at the same time as the lancets were inserted in the presbytery. It stands to a height of over 18.5mn and in Stalley's (1987, 143) opinion it is the most impressive thirteenth century Cistercian tower in Ireland. The western crossing arch rests on corbels with nailhead ornament and round abaci in contrast to the scalloped capitals and square abaci on the other arches. The presence of these older capitals gave rise to the view that the tower was of twelfth century date but the corbels have been inserted here as the disturbed masonry around them reveals. The room in the tower was reached by a spiral stair in the east wall, entered from the vault over the presbytery. The chamber had a wooden floor and simple pointed doorways opened into the roofs of the nave and transepts. The remains of a string course survive at the north west corner.

The Claustral Buildings

Due to the alterations in the seventeenth century little survives of these. The lower jambs of the Chapter House door display five orders of shallow roll mouldings and date to c.1200 (Stalley 1987, 253). To the south is the remains of another similar door which may have led to the parlour. The only building of the east range to survive is the sacristy which is entered through a round arched door. A room above the sacristy is fitted with a fireplace and may have functioned as the abbot's chamber (Stalley 1987, 167). Some of the dormitory windows are present.

The only building which survives of the south range is
the refectory which was arranged parallel to the cloister
walk. It is now used as a store for cut stone. The recently
reconstructed gatehouse on the west side of the cloister,
with its arched passage and porter's chambers, was built
after the Dissolution. A doorway in the north wall of the
entrance passage, however, looks to be of fifteenth century
date. The south side of the west range was remodelled in the
late sixteenth or early seventeenth century when the
defensive turret at the SW angle was built. There are traces
of a doorway at the west end of the south aisle which would
have admitted the laybrothers to the church directly from the
clositer.

Archaeological Excavation

Excavations conducted by Ann Lynch, on behalf of the
Office of Public Works, in the vicinity of the gatehouse
uncovered features associated with the seventeenth and
eighteenth century occupation including cobbled areas and a
small lime kiln. Underlying these features the foundations of
part of the medieval cloister wall were revealed. A stone
built drain, probably of fifteenth century date, was found to
run north under the nave of the abbey church. The finds were
for the most part post-medieval (Lynch 1985).

Guesthouse

Boyle is known to have possessed a stone guest house by

1202 (ALC) but its whereabout is unknown.

Stone cross

In 1312 a holy cross was erected at the monastery but it is not known exactly what it was (A. Conn.; Stalley 1987, 220).

Architectural Fragments

A large collection is housed in the refectory. These include sandstone mouldings from piers, doors and arches, dating mostly to the thirteenth century. Some limestone pieces, including an ogee-headed window, the pick-dressed arch of a round-headed door, and a seventeenth century bracket decorated with a human head (Fig. 12), probably from a fireplace, are also present. There is also a fine Romanesque arch fragment decorated with chevron and nailhead ornament. Some further Romanesque fragments are kept in the display room of the gatehouse. In addition there are five stoups, a trough-like object and a number of rotary quern fragments in the refectory.

Monuments

Abbatial slab. Early 13th cent. (fig. 13)
Tapering sandstone slab. In north transept. Decorated in relief with a gloved hand holding a foliate abbatial crosier. It follows a well-established design known from Cistercian houses outside Ireland (Stalley 1987, 205).

L. 154. W. 62-54.5. T. 10.
Hunt 1974, 216: no. 211.

Florence O Mailchanig (fig. 14). ?15th/16th cents.
Tapering sandstone slab. In north transept. Plain except for
an incised inscription:

+ FLORINT HV MAILCHANIG

The lettering is a combination of Lombardic and Roman.
Underneath Florint the letters PATRICIVS are lightly incised
in a similar script.
L. 181. W. 68-43. T. 10.

The style of cross-slabs 1-5 suggests that they are of much
the same date as the Florence O Mailchanig slab.

Cross-slab 1 (fig. 15).
Sandstone. In refectory. Incised cross with circular
terminals. Incised inscription: OR... It is tempting to
regard this as the beginning of an Irish inscription but the
fragment is too small to be certain.
L. 47. W. 31. T. 8.5.

Cross-slab 2 (fig. 16).
Coarse limestone. In refectory. In two fragments. Tapering
slab decorated with an incised cross, having circular
terminals, set within a framed border. There is a very worn
incised inscription in a combination of Roman and Lombardic
lettering: ....INGO.../IDMO.ILLIG...
L.137. W. 48-39. T. 9.5.

Cross-slab 3 (fig. 17).

Coarse limestone. In refectory. In two fragments. Incised shaft, lacking the cross-head. Worn incised inscription: VCHATHALAN.

Frag. 1: L. 43. W. 36. T. 8. (Max.)

Frag. 2: L. 24. W. 23. T. 8. (Max.)

Cross-slab 4 (fig. 18)

Sandstone. In refectory. Fragment of an incised slab with a two-line cross shaft and a border. Incised inscription: VSAID.

L. 23. W. 45. T. 8.

Cross-slab 5 (fig. 19).

Sandstone. In refectory. In two fragments. Incised cross with circular terminals and a foot with a lobed terminal.

Frag. 1: L. 36. W. 30. T. 10.5 (Max.)

Frag. 2: L. 50. W. 45. T. 10. (Max.)

6. MISCELLANEOUS

Assylin Church

Located west of the town overlooking a waterfall from which the church derived its name. It is the site of a monastery founded by St Colmcille (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 30). All that survives of the church is the eastern end of the north wall but there is a tradition of the discovery of the foundations of a round tower (Barrow 1979, 180). Sharkey (1927, 90-1) records the discovery of a souterrain complex

near the church. Within the churchyard are two Early
Christian graveslabs. O'Donovan records a tradition that
there was a village and a market here.

King House
Local tradition maintains that the original seventeenth
century King house was situated on the site of the later
military barracks.

Ringfort (Termon Td.).
A platform ringfort spanning the backgardens of three houses,
on the south side of Felton Road. The portion of the site
occupied by the middle garden has been completely bulldozed
away and is now a scrapyard for cars. A small arc of the fort
survives in the northernmost garden allowing a N-S diameter
of 27.9m to be measured. The bulldozing cut through the fort
to natural but archaeological deposits are still evident in
the north facing scarp. These comprise large quantities of
animal bone, charcoal and ash in a heavy humic brown soil.

Ringfort (Warren or Drum Td.)
A modern house called "Camera House" on the O.S. maps has
been built on this site. The bank or ditch depicted on the
O.S. 25" map for the WNW to SSW part of the site is not now
evident and is occupied by a landscaped lawn. NNE and ESE of
the house the slope has been scarped for a driveway beyind
which the lawn displays landscaping features in the form of
breaks in slope but none of these can definitely be
identified as a boundary of the site.

St. Patrick's Well. Termon Td.

Located on the south bank of the Boyle river in lowlying
marshy ground. The well is evident as a modern structure
surrounded by a wall of stone and concrete, open to ENE, and
roofed with concrete. A short distance ENE is a small
limestone boulder with two natural erosion runnels in its
upper surface, which are traditionally regarded as the
imprint of St Patrick's knees.

7. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE VICINITY OF BOYLE

The following are not shown on the accompanying map (fig. 6).

Carrickmore. Barrow.
Low convex mound surrounded by a ditch which is mostly silted
up and an external bank. Diam (crest of bank to crest of
bank): 31.5m.

Cashelfinoge or Lugnamuddagh Td. Barrow.
Titled "Doonamease" on the O.S. 6" map. The site is a well
preserved, regular, "inverted bowl" type of barrow. It is of
circular plan with a slightly dished top. Overall diam. 12m.
Max. H. 3.15m.

Cashelfinoge or Lugnamuddagh Td. Possible barrow.
Located immediately north of the ringfort in the same
townland. A small circular arrangment of hachures on the O.S
25" map may represent a barrow but the feature no longer
survives.

Cashelfinoge or Lugnamuddagh Td. Ringfort.

Dense coverage of tree and scrub vegetation. Sub-circular area surrounded by three banks and two ditches. Estimated internal diam.: 39 m.

Greatmeadow Td. Barrow

Titled "Doo" on the O.S. 6" map. Rather irregular sub-circular mound. Overall diam: 7m. Max. H. 1.75 m.

Letfordspark Td. Ringfort.

Slightly raised sub circular area surrounded by a bank and with good evidence for an external ditch. It has been disturbed by ploughing. There are surface traces of internal structures. Diam: 25m.

8. LIST OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRAY FINDS

Bronze flat axehead. From Boyle. UM 188:1913. Glover 1978, 46.

In addition the Ulster museum holds a palstave and a socketed bronze axehead which were found "in a rath, near Boyle". UM 306:1937, 392:1937. Glover 1978, 47-8.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

The Problems

Boyle is important to archaeological research because it is one of the few towns established in the Irish midlands

during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It was developed on the site of a Cistercian monastery which in turn may have succeeded the Early Christian church of Ath da larc.

Much of the street pattern of the seventeenth century town survives but no houses of this period survive. Almost certainly, however, the foundations of these house 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 Ulster Plantation.

The seventeenth century fort survives in good condition and it is important that the site and its vicinity should be kept free of building.

Archaeological Potential

Archaeology does not consist solely of excavation nor does it stop at ground level. The archaeological evidence for Boyle's past comprises all the physical remains of man's activities on the site of the town, from the sixteenth century until the present day. The surviving street pattern, property boundaries and standing buildings constitute the uppermost levels of the archaeological stratigraphy, and all are relevant to the study of the town's past. Documentary evidence also plays a role in reconstructing the history of early Boyle but for the wide range of human activity omitted

from the written accounts and for the early periods when
documentation is slight, archaeology is our only source of
information. The evidence of archaeology and topography, of
architecture and of documents, is complementary; each gains
from the existence of the others and the unrecorded
destruction of one form of evidence not only removes part of
a town's archive but also diminishes the usefullness of those
which are preserved.

The survey of its archaeology indicates that the town is
particularly important as an example of a sixteenth-
seventeenth century plantation. The only definite standing
buildings of pre-1700 date are the Cistercian Abbey and the
Fort. With these exceptions the destruction of buildings
above ground has been extensive, but the street pattern of
the seventeeenth century town is largely intact and
archaeological deposits are likely to survive behind the
street frontages.

ARCHAEOLOGY, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
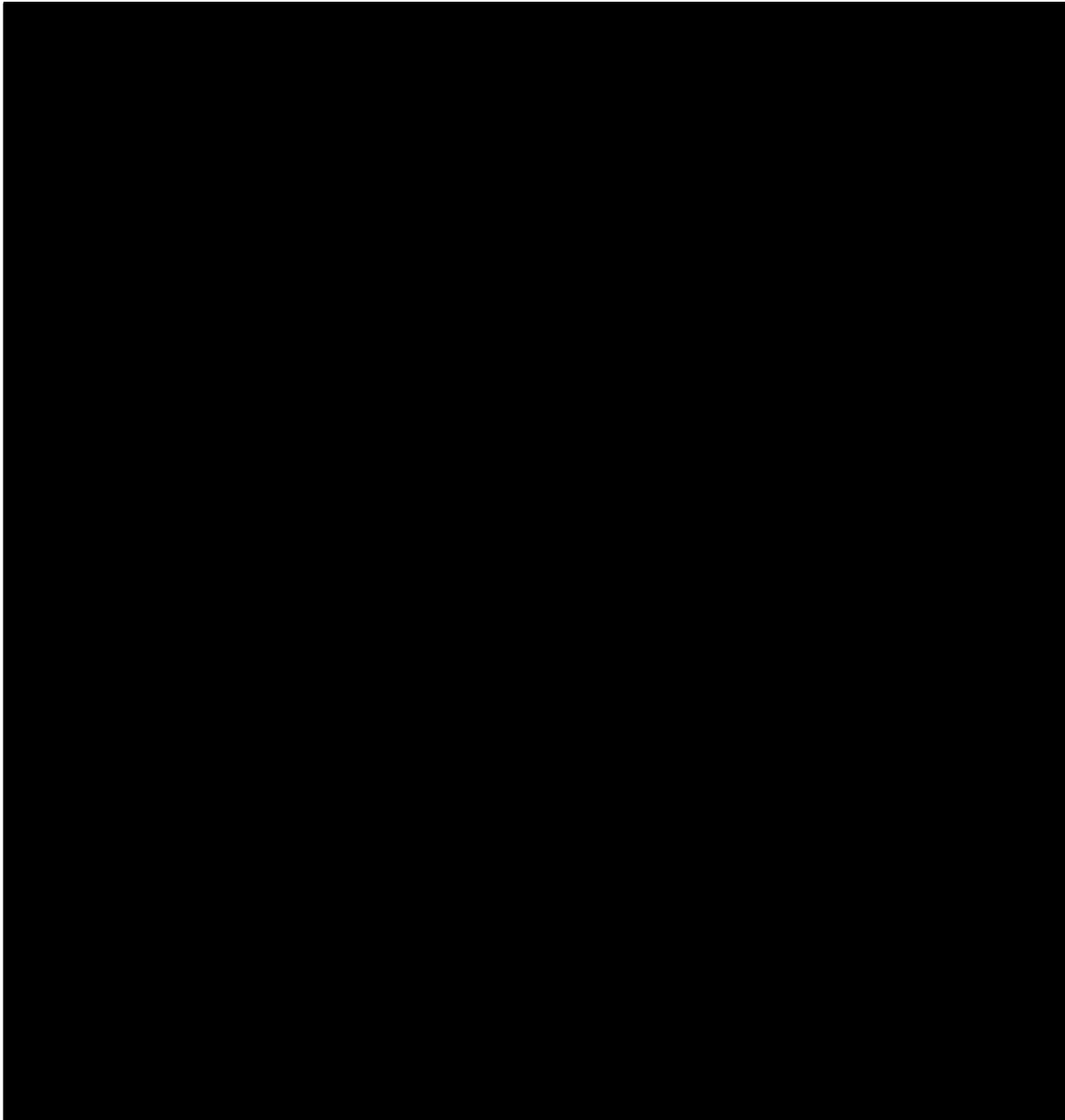
It is evident from the foregoing that archaeology is an
important means of learning about Boyle's past and of
understanding the character and detailed form of the town
today. This is more than just an academic pursuit because
without an appreciation of the factors which have shaped
Boyle's present character, 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 presents
serious problems for not only is there the pressure of
redevelopment and the high value of urban properties with
which to contend, but the sites themselves are often
difficult to define or evaluate; their full archaeological
potential may only become apparent when an excavation is
undertaken in advance of development or by observations made
while development is in progress. It is crucial, therefore,
that a concerted effort should be made to safeguard its
archaeological heritage and that adequate provision is made
for investigation in advance of any redevelopment. This is
best achieved by making the realisation of Boyle's
archaeological potential one of the objectives of its
development plan. The objective may then be 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. 6)
delimits the area of archaeological potential within modern
Boyle. This comprises the area of the seventeenth century
town, an area to the east incorporating the abbey and
stretching uphill to include the possible site of Ath da larc
in the vicinity of the modern Catholic Church. It also
includes areas round Assylin churchyard, St. Patrick's well
and the ringforts in Termon Td. and Warren or Drum Td. The
list of sites given in section 7 above, which fall outside
the area of the map should also be protected. 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
twientieth 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.
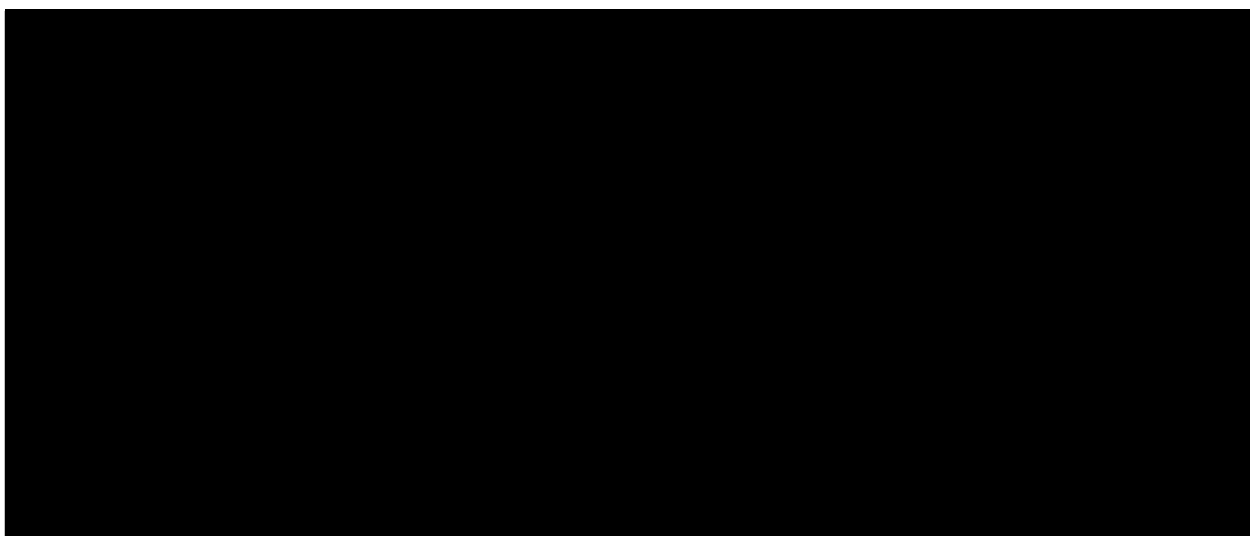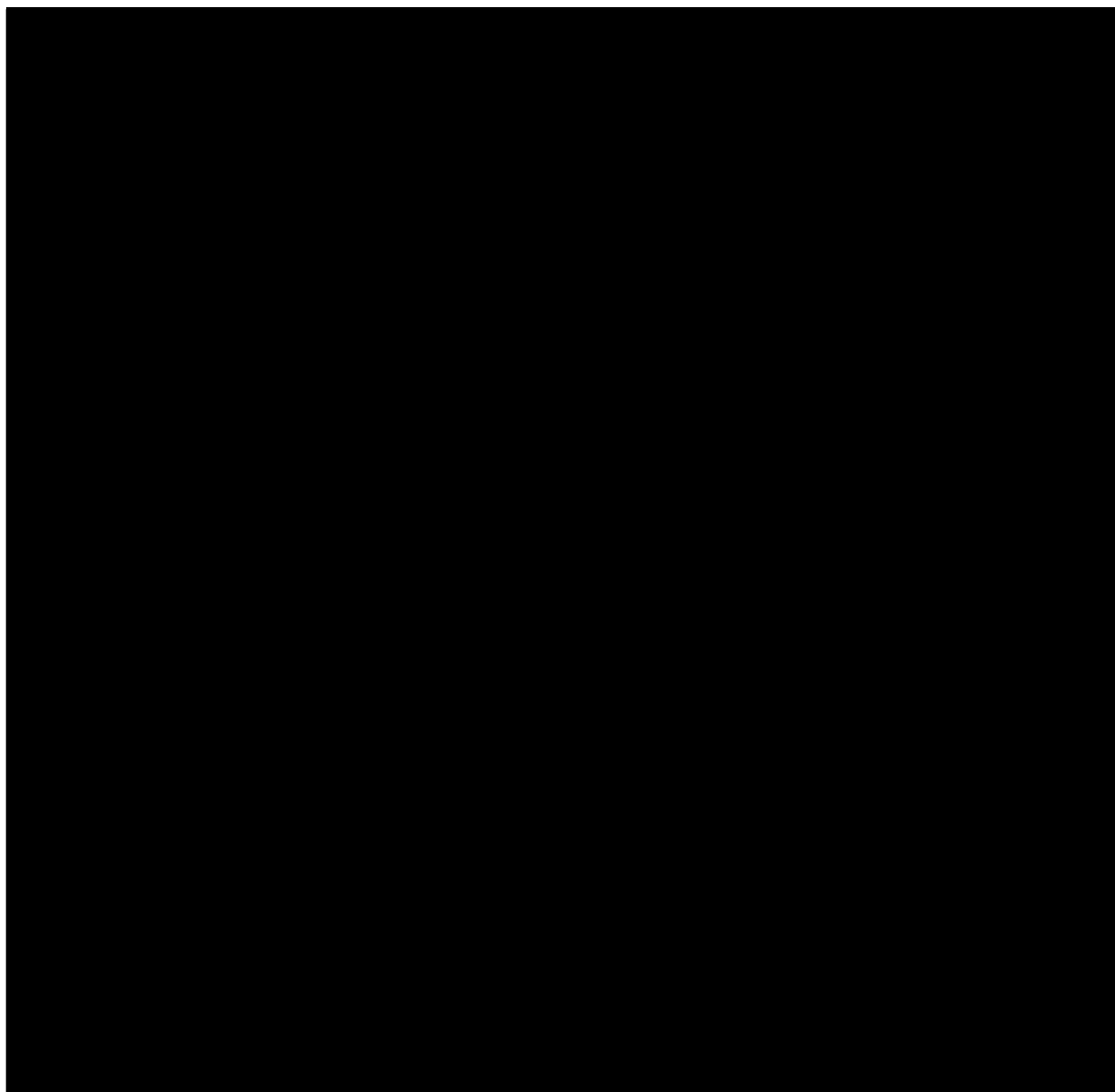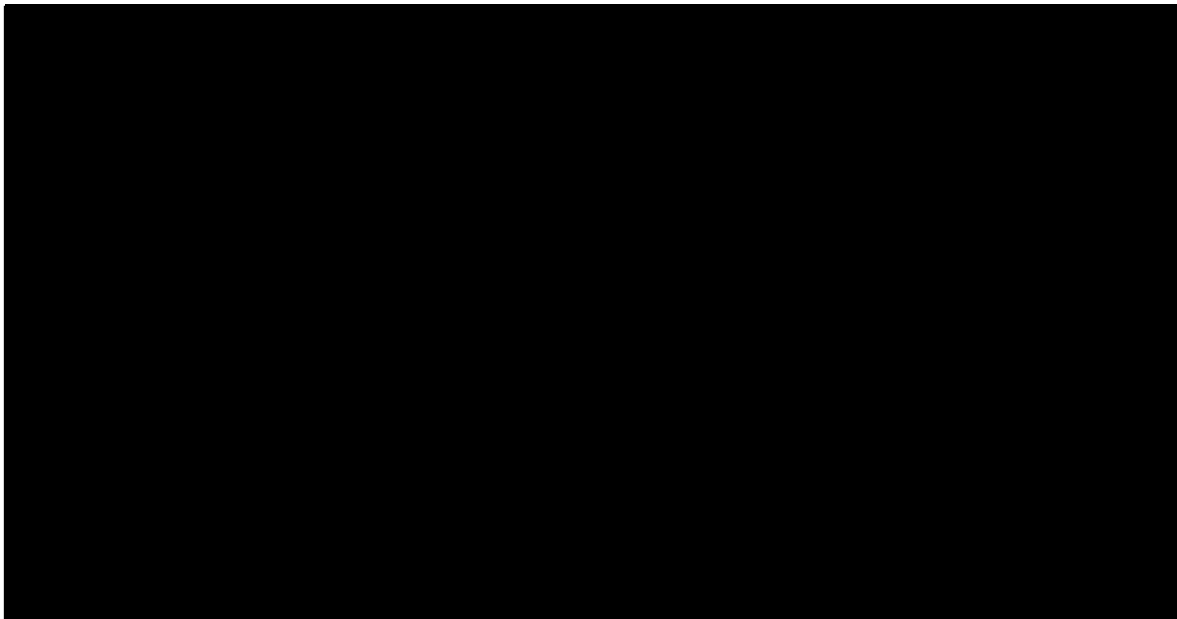
RINDOWN

The deserted town of Rindown is situated on the peninsula of St. John's Point, on the western shore of Lough Ree, some nine miles north of Athlone. The surviving remains constitute one of the most important complexes of medieval monuments in the country.

There is little physical evidence to indicate settlement before the coming of the Normans but the place-name Rinn Duin, "the fort of the promontory", is itself an indication of pre-Norman settlement. In 1156 Ruaidhri O Conchobair drew his ships over the ice from Bhean Gaille to Rinn-duin, during a particularly hard winter. The pre-Norman fort was most likely a promontory fort, consisting of that part of the peninsula south of the castle, where it is cut off by a bank and ditch. The recent discovery of an Early Christian cross-slab in the graveyard adjoining the medieval hospital of the Fratres Cruciferi indicates that this was an early church site, and it was almost certainly here that the two handbells, now in the National Museum of Ireland, were found.

Rindown's possibilities as a bridgehead into Connacht first came to the attention of the Anglo-Normans in 1200-1 when John de Courcy spent a week ferrying his men across Lough Ree from Rindown, following his defeat in Connacht (ALC). Rindown was not occupied by the Normans until 1227 when Toirdelbach O Conchobair and Geoffrey Mareschal erected

a castle at Rindown. The town was evidently founded about this time because its market cross, bawn and ditch are mentioned in 1236 when Phelim O Conchobair attacked the town (A Conn). No charter of incorporation survives but references to a portreeve indicate that it was administered by a corporation.

Rindown underwent a series of attacks from 1229 until 1321/3, and it is last mentioned in 1342-3 when it was described as being in Irish hands (Berry 1907, 335). In 1544 the earl of Clanrickarde petitioned for the land of St. John's of Rindown. The castle may have been in ruins by this time because the grant eventually made to Christopher Davers and Charles Egingham mentioned only the hospital of the Crutched Friars and cottages in the town (11 RDKPRI, no. 1483). By 1574 Rindown was back in Irish hands but in 1578 it was granted to Thomas Chester and George Goodman on condition that they maintained one English archer there (13 RDKPRI, no. 3241). In 1605-6 it was granted to Edward Crofton as "the monastery of St. John the Baptist, alias the Crotched friars of St John the Baptist ... a slated church, belfry, cloister and all other buildings, gardens ... 6 waste cottages in the town of St. John's ..." (Erck 1846-52, i, 186). This and subsequent grants in 1608 indicate that the town had ceased to function and was now simply an estate (Erck 1846-52, i, 442-3; Russell and Prendergast 1874, 458).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN

2. MARKET PLACE

3. DOMESTIC HOUSES

4. QUAYS

5. MILL

6. BRIDGE

7. TOWN DEFENCES

    TOWER 1

    TOWER 2

    GATEHOUSE

    TOWER 3

8. CASTLE

9. PARISH CHURCH

10. HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST (FRATRES CRUCIFERI)

11. OTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

    CHURCH OF THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN CANONS

    POSSIBLE PROMONTORY FORT

    RINGWORK

    MISCELLANEOUS FEATURES

12. LIST OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRAY FINDS

1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN

The site of the medieval town of Rindown lies in the fields which are now used for sheep grazing between the castle and the town wall (figs. 21-2). The street pattern was

almost certainly linear, running from the gatehouse on the town wall to the entrance to the castle. The surviving house foundations lie along this line.

2. MARKET PLACE

There is now no trace of the whereabouts of the market place. The market cross is specifically referred to in 1236 (A Conn), and in 1292-9 the burgesses of Rindown accounted to the exchequer for the profits of the market (38 RDKPRI, 48).

3. DOMESTIC HOUSES (figs. 22-5)

The foundations of four houses survive, and these are probably to be identified with the cottages mentioned in the sixteenth century sources, mentioned above. House 2 pre-dates the field boundaries, which are of eighteenth century date and its ground plan does not conform with that of rural vernacular architecture of the the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.

House 1 (fig. 23)

The poor remains survive of an approximately square stone structure with present overall dimensions of 11.4 (NE-SW) by 10.9m (NW-SE). The only original wall facing is evident on the NE side while the line of the SW and Se sides is shown by grassed-over wall footings.

House 2 (fig. 24)

The site consists of two conjoined rectangular stone structures with their long axes orientated NE-SW. The fainter outline of two, or possibly three, further structures of similar shape are joined to their NW sides. Portion of a rotary quern disc was located in the course of the survey on the internal ground surface.

House 3 (fig. 25)
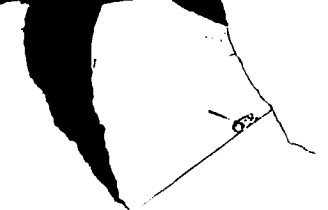
A low D-shaped cairn which represents collapse from a rectangular house. Only the east corner and a small stretch of the NE wall survive. Dims of cairn 20.6 (NW-SE) by 11.5m (NE-SW). Forty-two metres NW is the remains of a collapsed stone wall, now grassed over, which may represent the remains of an earlier field system associated with this house.

House 4

Some ten years ago the present landowner removed the remains of a house which he described as consisting of 5 to 6 rectangular rooms. The stone was incorporated into clearance cairns in the NE end of the present field.

4. QUAYS

There are a number of documentary references to ships at Rindown which indicate the former presence of a harbour. A ferry, linking Roscommon and Westmeath, is mentioned as operating out of Rindown in 1302-3 and 1315-16 (38 RDKPRI, 69; 39 RDKPRI, 55). No trace of quays survives today but it

may be presumed that the harbour was in the small cove, at the foot of the castle, marked "safe harbour" on the O.S. map.

5. MILL (figs. 26-8)

A mill is recorded at Rindown in 1273 when 45s were paid to Richard le Charpentier for steel to construct the mill (Claffey 1980), and this can be identified with the "mill, lately constructed at Randown", referred to in 1276 (Sweetman 1875-86 ii, no. 1022). Two maps accompanying the 1636 Books of Survey and Distribution show a windmill on the promontory, which can be identified from its position with the surviving remains. These consist of a cylindrical stone tower set on top of a round mound, surrounded by a ditch with an external bank. The cylindrical tower is of three floors and survives to its original height. The tower is of seventeenth century type but the mound on which it is built may have formed part of the medieval mill.

6. BRIDGE

References to a bridge in 1280-1 and 1305-6 relate to a structure which spanned the ditch separating the castle from the town (36 RDKPRI, 48). The masonry piers which supported the castle drawbridge still survive together with the foundations of the outer gate which protected the bridge on the town side.

7. TOWN DEFENCES (figs. 22, 29-31)

In 1236 Felimidh O Conchobair attacked Rindown and the captured the area within the bawn and ditch (dar in badun agus dar classaig) but failed to seize the castle (A. Conn). This would suggest that the town was protected by earthen defences. In 1251 Henry III granted aid for the enclosure of Rindown and the surviving wall almost certainly dates to this period (Sweetman 1875-86, i, no. 3159).

The remains consist of a stone wall, incorporating a gate and three mural towers, that extends NE-SW across the peninsula and which now forms the townland boundary between Rinnegan and Warren. At the NE tip a modern field wall represents rebuilding along the original line but a stretch of original wall survives between 20.7 and 25.2 m from the shore where it connects with a modern field wall running parallel to the shore. Between this modern field wall and tower 1 the wall survives to an external height of 3.15 m and has a base batter. The masonry consists of medium to large limestone boulders which are coupled with spalls to achieve a rough coursing. A continuous guilding course line is evident at a height of 1.65 to 2.1 m.

Tower 1 (fig. 29)

Rectangular at ground level, but open-backed above. At first floor level each wall contains an internally splayed loop, the arches of which do not survive. The wall between towers 1 and 2 undulates in external height between 2.9 and 0.9m. The external batter is present and the building course

line is evident at 1.1 to 1.3 m above ground level.

Tower 2 (figs. 29-30)

Rectangular at ground level, but open-backed above. At first floor level each wall has a splayed loop. Each of the loop's rear-arches originally possessed a wooden lintel, whose slots still survive. The external batter is evident on all sides. The stretch of wall between tower 2 and the gatehouse is the best surviving section of wall but there is one gap of 13m where it has been levelled and a modern gate inserted. Outside this gap is a ditch with slight external bank but these appear to be the result of modern machine quarrying. Portions of a wall-walk survive immediately adjacent to tower 2.

Gatehouse (fig. 29)

Originally a rectangular structure with a round arch on the exterior, represented now by a couple of springing stones. Part of the portcullis groove survives at a height of 2.2 m above ground level. The wall between the gate and tower 3 has a gap of 25m midway where it has been levelled and lies collapsed. Elsewhere on this stretch the wall stands to an external height ranging between 3.75 to 4.05 m. The building course line noted elsewhere is evident in places.

Tower 3 (figs. 29, 31)

Openbacked rectangular tower. The ground floor is filled with loose stone almost to the height of the putlogs which held the joists for the first floor. At first floor level there is a loop, with internal splay, in each wall. The

rear-arches had timber lintels similar to tower 2. Between
tower 3 and the modern field boundary running parallel to the
shore the wall decreases in height from 2.6 to 1.15 m and
there are gaps and areas of total collapse, with the original
wall surviving only in short blocks. The wall no longer
survives between this boundary and the shore, and it was
presumably removed to build the nearby St. John's House.

8. CASTLE (figs. 32-8)

Situated on a knoll at the north-east point of the
peninsula's waist where it overlooks a natural harbour of
Lough Ree to the north and is separated from the town by an
earthen bank and ditch.

Historical Background

The castle was one of the most important Anglo-Norman
fortifications in Connacht and remained in royal hands
throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. A
constable was appointed by the crown and he was responsible
for its upkeep and defence. It was the scene of much building
activity throughout the thirteenth century and particularly
from 1275 until 1302 when there are repeated references to
expenditure on the castle. The history of the castle in the
fourteenth century is one of decline and after 1344, when it
was in Irish hands, it passes out of history until the middle
of the sixteenth century.

Some form of fortification was probably present in 1201 when John de Courcy spent one week shipping his men and horses across Lough Ree from Rindown (ALC; A Clon. sub 1200) but the earliest direct reference to a castle is in 1227 when Geoffrey de Marisco and Toirdealbach O Conchobhair built a stone castle on the peninsula (ALC; AFM; A Clon. sub 1226). Two years later, in 1229, Rindown was burned by Feilimid O Conchobhair, leader of a rival O Conchobhair faction (ALC). It is not clear if the castle was burnt on this occasion or not but it is evident that the building was still unfinished four years later. On 15 July 1233 lack of funds compelled the suspension of masonry work on the castle ward in favour of the completion of Athlone bridge (Sweetman 1875-86, i, 2043). This reference indicates that the curtain wall with battered plinth was probably constructed in the 1230's (cf. Stalley 1978, 42). Work on the castle was picked up again in 1234-5 (35 RDKPRI, 37). The castle was not captured in the 1236 raid on Rindown by Feilimid O Conchobhair which resulted in the sack of the town (ALC; AFM; A Clon.).

Feilimid became king of Connacht in 1237 and there was peace with the Anglo-Normans until his death in 1265. His successor, Aed (d.1274) was a ruthless warrior who captured Rindown twice, in 1270 (ALC; AFM; A Clon. sub 1271) and 1272 (AU). The raid of 1272 appears to have been particularly severe because Rindown was described as levelled "leagadh" (AU; cf. CDI, v, no. 437). James de Bermingham was fined 400 marks for failing to keep the castle safe for the crown and "through his default it was thrown down by the Irish" (36

RDKPRI, 50). The government endeavoured to counter Aed by strengthening its castles at Athlone and Rindown and building a new one at Roscommon. Repair work was carried out in 1273-5 by the justiciar, Geoffrey de Geneville (36 RDKPRI, 40-1), and continued in 1276-8 by his successor Robert d'Ufford (36 RDKPRI, 35, 36). This included the construction of timber towers and the improvement of the fosse (Sweetman 1875-86, ii, no. 1412). In 1278-9 d'Ufford spent a further £3200-2s-5d on the castles of Rindown, Roscommon and Athlone which included repair of the castle, houses and bridge of Rindown (36 RDKPRI, 48). In 1285 Robert de Wollaston accounted for £67-3s-0d spent on the castles of Athlone and Rindown (37 RDKPRI, 30). In 1299-1302 Richard of Oxford, sheriff of Roscommon, was allowed £113-1s-2d to build a new hall, and a further 20s for superintending its construction (38 RDKPRI, 54). This hall is to be identified with the building extending south from the curtain wall, as Orpen (1907, 275) pointed out.

In 1310 Richard de Burgh asked for the guard of the castle as part of his plans to expand his holdings in Connacht (Sayles 1979, no. 86) but it is not known whether he received its custody or not. In 1332 Alexander Bicknor, archbishop of Dublin petitioned for expences incurred in the guard of Rindown while he was lord treasurer (1307-?; 1313-?) (Sayles 1979, no. 173). The burning of Rindown in 1315 by Ruaidri O Conchobair, king of Connacht, probably resulted in the capture of the castle as well because references to the castle subsequently decline (ALC; A Clon.). The last

reference to a constable occurs in 1327 (Carew Cal. Misc., 442) and by 1342-3 the castle was out of royal control. In that year the Irish Parliament complained that the castles of Rindown, Roscommon, Athlone and Bunratty were in the hands of Irish enemies because of the delays made by the Irish Treasurers in paying the constables their fees (Berry 1907, 335).

In 1578 the land was granted to Thomas Chester and George Goodman on condition that they maintained one English archer (13 RDKPRI, no. 3241). It is unclear whether any of these individuals lived in the castle or not but it is evident from the architecture that parts of the castle were refortified in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century and it is likely that the colonists were responsible. It is referred to in 1574 as the "bare castle" and belonged to the queen in 1603 (Cal. Carew Mss. 1601-3, 450, 476). There are no subsequent references to the castle and it is likely that it ceased to function in the early seventeenth century.

Description (figs. 32-8)

The castle consists of an ovoid curtain wall with a rectangular extension on the south-west. It is entered through a gatehouse on the north which is overlooked by the keep to the east. Much of the curtain wall and the interior is heavily overgrown with ivy. The foundations of three cottages with the footings of associated buildings and a dividing wall of nineteenth/ early twentieth century date are

also present.

The earliest part of the castle is the keep (figs. 32-4), perhaps to be identified with the "stone castle" constructed by Geoffrey de Marisco in 1227. The curtain wall was being constructed in 1233 and it is clearly an addition to the keep on the east side. The hall (fig. 36), on the west, is an addition to the curtain and is probably to be identified with the new hall mentioned in 1299-1302. The castle seems to have been abandoned in the fourteenth century when it is evident that parts of the curtain wall were demolished. The broken down parts of the curtain were rebuilt in the sixteenth century but the wall was thinner and not as high as in the thirteenth century; it is also characterised by the presence of plain rectangular gun loops. In addition the sixteenth century wall does not always follow the line of its thirteenth century predecessor.

The masonry is of coursed limestone with limestone quoins. With the exception of the keep, the standing remains are densely overgrown with ivy. The interior is further obscured by the presence of large areas of collapse, particularly the fallen southern side of the keep. The curtain wall survives best on the south side where it stands to its original height. Elsewhere parts have collapsed and rest upon the inner slope of the enclosing fosse. There is clear evidence of a deliberate attempt to destroy the fortifications with explosives on the external south face of the hall.

9. PARISH CHURCH (figs. 39-40)

The dedication of this church is not known and there are few documentary references to it. It was taxed at 15s. in the taxation of 1302-5 (Sweetman 1875-86, v, p. 224). On the O.S. first edition it is titled "R.C. chapel". North and west of the church are the remains of an L-shaped boundary wall which may have encircled the building originally.

The building consists of a relatively plain nave and chancel, linked by a pointed arch. There is clear evidence that the chancel was an addition but both the nave and chancel are probably of thirteenth century date. The masonry of the chancel consists of split limestone rubble and angled spalls with little or no coursing; the nave consists of roughly coursed limestone. The building is much overgrown and while some parts, notably the west end of the nave, stand to their full height, the building is in poor condition.

The east wall and the east ends of the chancel's north and south walls have an external base batter. The base of the east window, which consisted of two lancets, is present but the jambs are missing. The nave had a door in both the north and south walls but they are badly damaged, lacking jambs and arches. There are two windows in the south wall but only one survives in the north wall. North of the nave are the ruins of a small rectangular structure, which may have functioned as a penal chapel.

10. HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST (FRATRES CRUCIFERI)

The founders of this hospital were King John and Philip d'Angulo, according to Ware. If this is correct it means that it was founded before 1216. There are few references before the fifteenth century excaept for the occasional notice of a burial. By 1487 its revenues were insufficient for its maintenance. After the dissolution it was granted successively to a number of English colonists. In 1596 it was described as being roofed with shingles, and as having a cloister and three decayed buildings (Morrin 1861-2, ii, 158, 364). A belfry is mentioned in 1605-6 (Erck 1846-52, i, 186).

The remains of this building are situated immediately NW of the town wall (figs. 41-2). Only the church, which is oriented almost due south, survives. It is a rectangular structure with an unusual butressed addition at the north end. A number of alterations were made in the eighteenth century, particularly to the windows, but some of the original jambs, dressed in thirteenth century style survive. Externally the building has chamfered quoins at the NE and NW angles. The masonry consists of limestone rubble, poorly coursed.

The building was entered from the north through a centrally placed, lightly splayed doorway which is considerably obscured by the butressed structure. The principal window was in the south wall but it has been altered utilizing red brick and reused jambs. Two windows survive in the west wall. These mark original openings

because part of their jambs survives.

There are surface undulations in the graveyard immediately east of the church which indicate the outlines of former structures but no recognisable pattern can be determined. Within this graveyard are eight architectural fragments including parts of door/ window jambs and arches (fig. 43). The finest of these is a multi-moulded base for a cloister column (fig. 44). In the adjoining Catholic graveyard there are seventeen further fragments, including a cloister column, tracery fragments, the head of a single-light ogee-headed window and the head of a two light window. All are of limestone. A fragment of an Early Christian cross-slab came to light here recently during a clean-up scheme (fig. 45). It bears the letters AR from a broken inscription.

11. OTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

CHURCH OF THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN CANONS

Gwynn and Hadcock (1970, 207) note that this was founded by Clarus MacMailin, the founder of Loughkey Abbey, who died in 1251. They suggest that it should be identified with the parish church. The foundation seems to have been short lived.

PROMONTORY FORT

A NE-SW orientated bank-and-ditch system extends across

the peninsula's waist, cutting off the tip. It consists of two inner banks, a broad ditch, and an outer bank. Interpretation would suggest that it was originally a promontory fort, recut at the north-east end to form a surround for the curtain wall of the castle. The date of the fort is unclear, but the place-name indicates that it has a pre-Norman origin. It may have been built in the twelfth century by Toirdelbach O Conchobair or, indeed, it may even be the site of the fortress constructed by the Vikings of Lough Ree in the mid-ninth century.

The NE end of the system surrounds the curtain wall of the castle with quite steep, deep, V-profiled ditches and convex external banks. The form of the SW part of the system is different. here the ditch widens as it extends southwards and it is really a modified natural inlet of the lake. Outside the northern end of this stretch is a broad, flat-topped bank, with a further slight rise along its inner edge, possibly wall footings grassed over. This bank could be a modification of an earlier feature or it could have been constructed during the occupation of the castle. South of this bank is a stretch lacking this external feature. Towards the southern end of the ditch, SSE of the parish church, a broad convex bank is present outside the ditch, but it is unclear whether this is related to the ditch or to the church.

Immediately inside the northern end of this ditch stretch is a lightly round-crested, substantial bank with a gentler

inner slope. This bank decreases in size southwards before fading into the remains of a substantial, collapsed wall extending along the inner edge of the ditch. Three short single-course lengths of outer facing are evident along with a similar length of inner facing. Along the inner edge of this wall is a ditch of narrow V to U profile. Towards the SW shore the inner boundary fades back to an earthen bank once again without the inner ditch.

Inside this total boundary feature is a broad band with a gradual slope towars the exterior (NW). Bordering the inner edge of this band is a second boundary feature. In plan it is straight while in section it is broad and convex with a shorter inner slope. The middle band and this latter bank display slight ridging, indicating that they were subjected to lazybed cultivation in the past.

RINGWORK

It has been suggested that the earthwork surrounding the castle was a ringwork in origin (Barry 1987, 52-3)

MISCELLANEOUS

Clearance Cairns

Eleven large clearance cairns are present in the fields between the town wall and the castle. While these must include stone from normal agricultural clearance they must also contain stone from former archaeological structures.

Possible Medieval Field Boundaries

A number of collapsed drystone wall boundaries are evident in the wooded area at the SSE end of the peninsula. These predate the wood which was already established when the first O.S. map was published in 1837.

12. LIST OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRAY FINDS

1. Bronze crucifixion plaque. From St. John's, near Athlone. NMI R554. Harbison 1984.

2-3. Two iron ecclesiastical bells. From St. John's, near Athlone. NMI Wk.205 [R555], Wk. 210. JRSAI 110 (1980), 66.

A number of rotary quern fragments were noted within the walled area during the course of the survey. Some of these had been used as building stone in the field walls.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

Rindown is without doubt the finest example of a deserted medieval town in Ireland and, as an urban archaeological site, it is of national importance. It is significant on a number of counts. Firstly and most obsiously because it was the site of a prosperous borough settlement, established in the thirteenth century when the town wall, one of the best examples in the country, parish church and castle were constructed. Secondly it is important for what preceeded the Anglo-Norman borough. It is now clear that Rindown was the

finspot of the bronze crucifixion plaque commonly known as the "Athlone plaque", one of the best known pieces of Early Christian Irish metalwork. Together with the bells and the graveslab, it indicates that the pre-Norman monastery was an important one. An examination of the earthen defences associated with the castle has indicated that the promontory was fortified in pre-Norman times and that Rindown is quite likely to be the much sought after site of the ninth century Viking longphort on Lough Ree. The particular archaeological importance of Rindown, however, rests in the fact that the site has not been built on to any significiant degree since the fourteenth century. Accordingly the disturbance to archaeological deposits within the wall has been minimal by comparison with that which has occurred in many of Ireland's modern built-up towns. It is to be anticipated that traces of the original house foundations, refuse pits, property boundaries, etc. survive below modern ground level.

Within the past ten to fifteen years, however, a great deal of disturbance has been caused by the systematic plundering of the site by metal detector users. Their activities wer particularly noticeable in the field immediately outside (or NW) of the promontory fort ditch, but it was also noted in the other field within the wall. It is unlikely that the castle ditch or the castle interior has escaped metal detecting. Archaeological destruction has not been confined, however, to metal detecting. The interior of the Catholic graveyard, beside the Fratres Cruciferi church, has recently been partly levelled and cleaned up without any

archaeological supervision although it exposed several architectural fragments together with the Early Christian graveslab. Despite this damage, however, it is likely that a great deal of archaeological information remains to be discovered.

Parts of the town wall were removed in the past, probably to provide stone for building St John's House. The standing remains of the wall are in a desperate and dangerous state of repair with the heavier stones of both the inner and outer facing separating from the rubble core of the wall and collapsing. The landowner is not allowed stabilize the wall while the state, to date, has provided neither financial nor expert assistance to stabilize the wall. Although the gateway and towers appear to be in a more stable condition, most of their corners are undermined and this could lead to further cracking and collapse of these structures. The standing remains of the castle are quite soldi but much work needs to be undertaken to stabilize the structure and render it less dangerous. the nearby church also requires stabilizing. By contrast the windmill is in a good state of repair.
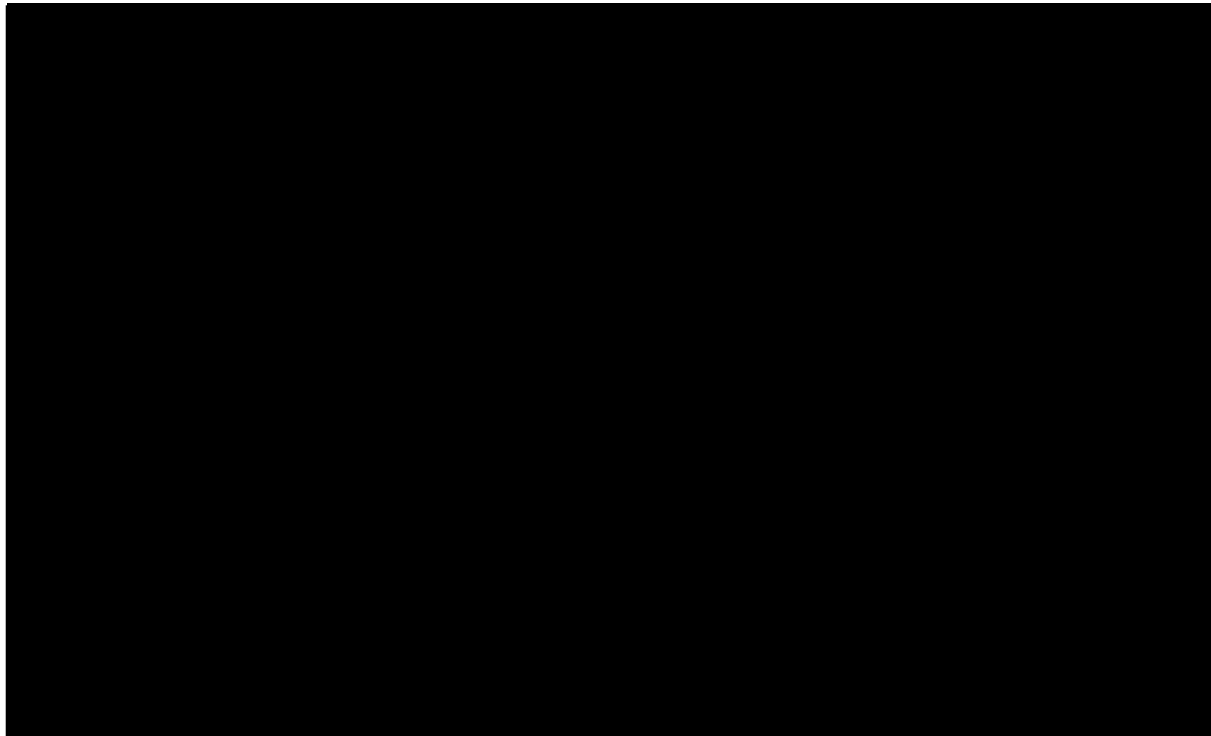
The domestic houses (nos. 1-3 in section 3 above) whose surface fetures survive need to be safeguarded if they are not to go the way of house 4 which was removed in the course of agricultural imporvement some years ago.

The "safe harbour" is a likely location for a future cabin cruiser jetty. Such a development, should it occur, must take into account the fact that this is also the

situation of the medieval harbour and that the remains of it
are likely to survive in the lakemud.

Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 20)
delimits the area of archaeological potential within Rindown.
This consists simply of the area of the peninsula cut off by
the town wall together with an area around the churchyards at
St. John's House, the site of the Early Christian monastery
and Anglo-Norman hospital. A small area outside the wall is
also included to allow for possible extra-mural features,
such as a ditch. In the absence of controlled archaeological
excavations nothing can be said about the depth of
archaeological deposits on the site.
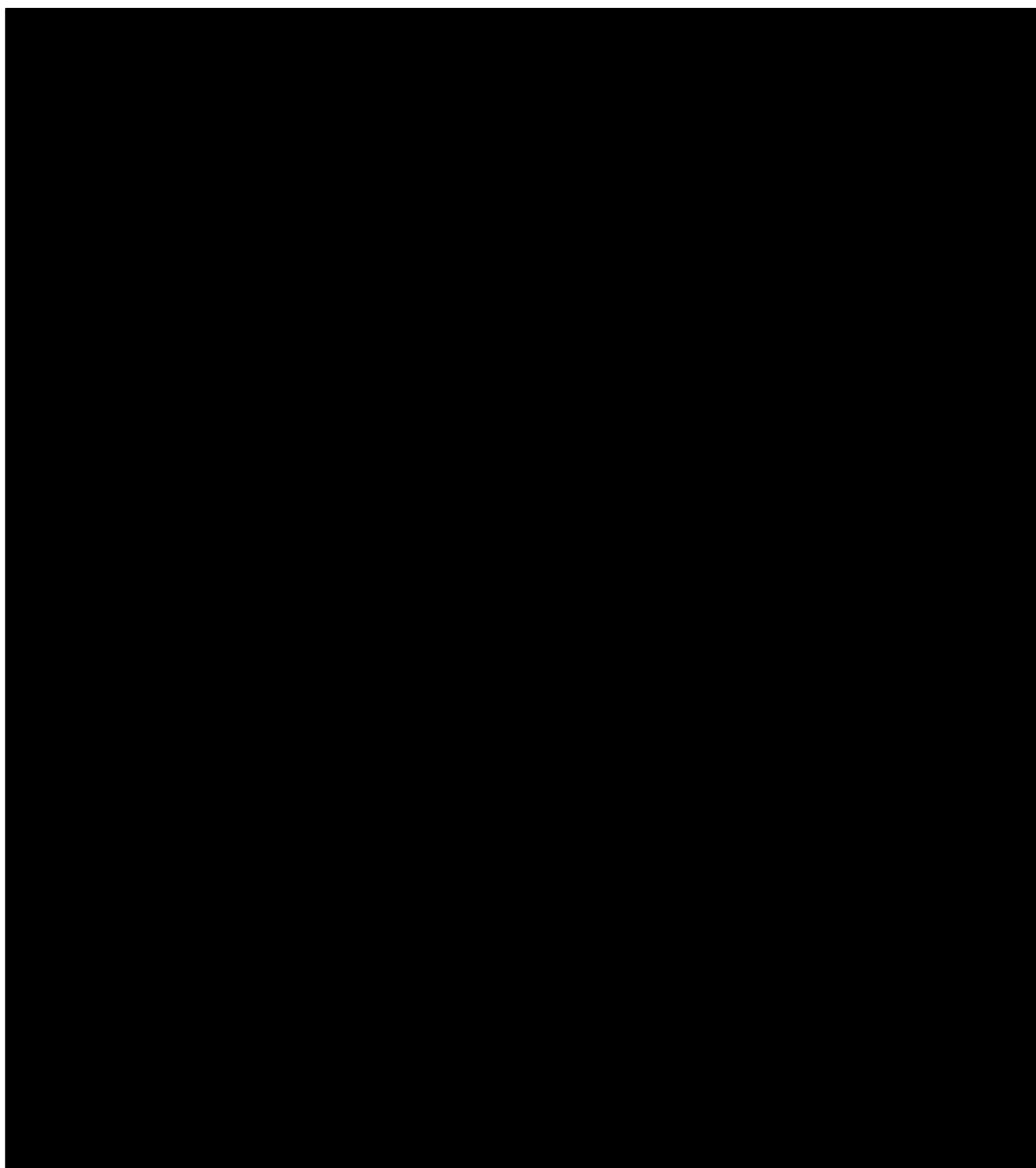
ROSCOMMON

The origins of the modern town of Roscommon lie in the
Early Christian church founded by Coman, a disciple of
Finnian of Clonard, and whose obit is given at 549 in the
Annals of Ulster. From the eighth century onwards it was
clearly a monastery of importance and the deaths of its
abbots and bishops are regularly recored in the annals. An
indication of its importance is provided by the fact that the
law of Coman was promulagated from here over various parts of
Connacht in 771, 779 and 792 (AU). It was attacked by the
Vikings in 807 (AFM: 802; A. Clon.: 823) and it was plundered
again in 823. In 1049 both the damhliag and regles of
Roscommona were burned (Chron. Scot.) while in 1050 the round
tower was destroyed (AFM). It was to this monastery that
Toirdelbach O Conchobair presented the fragment of the true
cross which was enshrined in the reliqiary now known as the
"Cross of Cong", and which was made at Roscommon in 1123 (A.
Tig.). The possession of a relic of this importance indicates
that Roscommon was a place of pilgrimage. The annalistic
entries relating to a raid on the settlement in 1135 state
that it was plundered "both houses and churches" (Misc. Ir.
A.: AFM), are suggestive of a lay settlement. Its
significance in the twelfth century is clear from the fact
that it was nominated as a diocesan see at the Synod of Kells
(1152) and in 1158 a synod of all the clergy of Connacht was
held there (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 191). It did not hold on

to its episcopal status, however, and was replaced by Elphin about 1170.

Roscommon was in O Conchobair hands for the greater part of the twelfth century although occasion Anglo-Norman raids were made on the settlement, such as those of 1235 by Richard de Burgh and of 1260 by Walter de Burgh. The Dominican Friary was established in 1253 by Felimid O Conchobair and subsequent references indicate that there was a settlement between the friary and the St. Coman's church on the ridge to the north. St. Coman's had been transformed in the mid twelfth century into an Augustinian house and the documents refer to this settlement as Augustinina's Irish vill of Roscommon (Sweetman 1875-86, ii, no. 2008).

In 1262, in response to the participation of Aedh O Conchobair in the battle of Down, there was a "prodigious hosting of the foreigners of Erin" against Felimid and Aedh O Conchobair and in the course of this Roscommon was noted as a suitable site for a castle (Orpen 1910-20, iii, 239). Aedh succeeded to the kingship of Connacht in 1265, after Felimid's death, and he marked his accession with a series of raids on the Anglo-Norman settlments in the province. The response of the English crown was to confiscate his lands and grant them out to new comers. The crown's determination to pacify Connacht is shown by the fact that construction work began on Roscommon castle in September of 1268 (Orpen 1910-20, iii. 247). The succeeding six years witnessed a regular pattern of the capture of the castle by Aedh O

Conchobair followed by refortification but on Aedh's death in 1274 the settlement at Roscommon became more secure.

The settlement history of Roscommon at this time is complicated by the fact that there appear to have been two distinct settlements, the "Irish vill of Roscommon", which belonged to the Augustinians and the "king's town of Roscommon". Knowledge of the Irish vill is very slight but it seems that it was a pre-Norman settlement located between St Coman's Church and the Dominican Friary (Sweetman 1875-86, ii, no. 2008). It is distinguished on a number of occasins from the "king's town (ibid., iv, 604).

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The "king's town" is first referred to c.1283 when the mayor and community complained that it had just been burnt, that twenty-nine people had been killed and the town wall was knocked down (Sayles 1979, no. 39). The destruction referred took place before 1281 and it was evidently substantial. The settlement is described as having had a north gate and a bridge and that the destruction was so substantial that the burgesses took refuge on land given to them by the Augustinians outside the castle (Sayles 1979, no. 39; Mills 1905, 285; Sweetman 1875-86, ii, p. 408). The grant of a market to the Augustinians in 1282 at their Irish vill of Roscommon may have been an attempt to revitalise Roscommon (ibid., no. 2008).

Little is known of the subsequent history of Anglo-Norman Roscommon. In 1299-1302, however, the burgesses were seriously in arrears with their rent and owed £176 (38

RDKPRI, 54) and in 1307 the settlement was again burned by Edmund Botiller (A Conn, MIA, AU, A. Clon.). The Bruce invasion provided the opportunity in 1315 for the capture of the castle and the town by Ruaidhri O Conchobair (A. Conn.) and after c.1320 control of the settlement passed out of Anglo-Norman hands. In the process it also passed out of history. The references to Roscommon in the later middle ages all relate to the castle and the history of the borough under the O Conchobair is unknown. It might be guessed, however, from the fact that there was no settlement here when the English arrived in the late sixteenth century that the borough ceased to exist shortly after 1315.

The modern town owes its origin to the activities of Sir Nicholas Malbie who was granted the castle and the dissolved monasteries of the Augustinians and Dominicans in 1578. In 1581 he sent plans of his proposed town to London for approval (Cal. S.P. Ire. 1574-85, 312). The plans show the town situated immediately east of the castle and protected by defences. It is not clear if the town was bult in this position, however. It could well have been and was subsequently moved to its present position after the destruction of the town in 1596 and again in 1599. The burning of the town in 1596 was particularly severe and the English of Roscommon sent a petition seeking both compensation and the return of their land (Cal. S.P. Ire. 1596-7, 24, 198). This may indicate that the town was abandoned and that the present site was chosen only after 1600.

In 1611 Roscommon was described as likely to return protestants to parliament (Cal. S.P. Ire 1610-14, 161) and two years later it was incorporated. In 1659 the population of the town is given as 94 only eight of whom were English (Pender 1939).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1.   STREETS AND STREET PATTERN

2.   MARKET PLACE

3.   DOMESTIC HOUSES

4.   INDUSTRIAL AREAS

5.   TOWN DEFENCES

6.   ROSCOMMON CASTLE

7.   ROSCOMON CAMP

8.   ST. COMAN'S EARLY MONASTIC SITE

9.   AUGUSTINIAN PRIORY OF ST. MARY

10. DOMINICAN FRIARY

11. FRANCISCAN FRIARY

12. MISCELLANEOUS

13. LIST OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRAY FINDS

1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN

There are no references to streets in the sources and the street pattern, based on Main Street and Market Square is of

a type associated with seventeenth century town development.
A burgage plot pattern survives on either side of Main Street
which is probably of seventeenth century origin.

2. MARKET PLACE

In 1282 the Augustinians were granted a market at their Irish
vill of Roscommon (Sweetman 1875-86, ii, no. 2008). The
location of the market place in which this market was held is
unknown. The present market place dates from the seventeenth
century.

3. DOMESTIC HOUSES

Nothing is known of the form of housing in the medieval
or plantation town. In 1135, however, houses within the
settlement were burned in the course of a raid (AFM). The
reference suggests that there were secular dwellings
associated with the monastery and that there was a "monastic
town" at Roscommon at this time.

4. INDUSTRIAL AREAS

The manufacture of the Cross of Cong at Roscommon in 1123
points to the presence here of the workshop of a fine
metalworker. That this was not a one-off piece of metal
production is clear from the fact that the relics of St Coman
were enshrined in a reliquary of gold and silver in 1170

(AFM).

There is evidence for a mint at the town in the 1280 (Sweetman 1875-86, ii, p. 437) but it has been suggested that this was moved to Waterford since no coins are known from it (Dolley 1972, 11). Milling was carried on in the Anglo-Norman town and is mentioned, for instance, in an account of 1299-1302 (38 RDKPRI, 54).

5. TOWN DEFENCES

A number of references indicate that the Anglo-Norman town was defended. In 1278-9 money was spent on strengthening the ditch around the town (36 RDKPRI, 49, 53). A north gate is referred to in a document of 1299 (Cal Justic rolls, p.285) and in a document of c.1283 the walls are described as demolished (Sayles 1979, no. 39). The course of the medieval defences is unknown.

Evidence that the seventeenth century town was also defended is provided by a map of Roscommon, prepared by Francis Plunkett, in 1736 which depicts a gate at the south end of Main Street. The Hertforshire Public Records Office contains a series of eighteenth and nineteenth century deeds relating to a "messuage withour the gate on the west side of Roscommon town". The deeds probably relate to the same gate but the messuage was located to the west.

6. ROSCOMMON CASTLE

The site for the castle was selected in 1262 (ALC, AFM, A. Conn.) but building work did not commence until 1269. It was captured and burned in 1270 by Aed O Conchobair (A. Clon., ALC, A. Conn.) who captured it again in 1271 (AU) and 1272 (ALC; A. Conn.). These attacks were followed up by reconstruction work, particularly in 1275-6 after the death of Aedh O Conchobair (Sweetman 1875-86, ii, p. 235). The castle was captured again in 1277 (ALC, A. Conn., AFM) and this provoked a massive re-fortification in the years after 1278 (Sweetman 1875-86, ii, 357, 406, 537, 540 and no. 2335; ibid., iii, 75, 80; 36 RDKPRI, 48). These works included the construction of a wall "around the castle" in 1284 by William de Spineto (36 RDKPRI, 75) and accounts for the work of fortification continue until 1290 (Sweetman 1875-86, iii, no. 814).

A document of 1304 is particularly informative on the works being carried out. It accounted for the:

> "wages of an artilleryman formerly assigned to make and repair warlike engines and quarrels for Roscommon and other castles in Connacht. Also for strenghtneing the well with 3ft thick stonework so that it may be 5ft wide and 32ft deep to be completely covered in wood. Repairing and strengthening 3 drawbridges and 2 portcullises of gates and 2 outward bridges and gates added to bridges, to close the postern with stone and chalk to a thickness of 7 feet. To repair entrance steps

to hall and to cover the oriel of the castle. Also the cost of iron, lime, and timber for vaulting the tower near the hall towards the south with 2 arches and to make a conduit to carry water from Bridget's well to the lake. Total cost £19 4s. 8d (Sweetman 1875-86, v, pp. 116-17,: no. 306).

In 1305 the castle was badly damaged by Felimid O Conchobair and was rebuilt at considerable cost by de Ufford (Sweetman 1875-86, v, no. 434) and it was probably at this time that repairs were conducted on the bridge and houses of the castle (38 RDKPRI, 103).

The castle was captured and burned in 1315 by Ruaidhri O Conchobair (A Clon., A. Conn. AI) and the following year Felimid O Conchobair beseiged the town but subsequently withdrew (A. Conn.) but A. Clon. says that he succeeded in capturing Roscommon Castle down. After c.1320 Roscommon was in the hands of the O Conchobair family and it became a prize to be fought over by rival O Conchobair factions. In 1340 Toirdelbach O Conchobair imprisoned Aed O Conchobair in the castle; in 1360 it was burned (A. Conn., A. Clon.); in 1375 one annalist records it as being captured by Ruaidhri O Conchobair (AU) but another describes this event as a swap between Toirdelbach and Ruaidhri in which Toirdelbach gave up Roscommon Castle and many concessions in return for Ballintober (A. Conn.).

In 1394-5 Richard II granted to Toirdelbach O Conchobair Don the constableship of Roscommon Castle and this

effectively meant royal recognition of the status quo (Otway Ruthven 1980). The fifteenth century is marked by a struggle for control of the castle between O Conchobair Don and O Conchobair Rua with ownership occasionally alternating between them. In 1499 the castle was taken for the crown by the earl of Kildare who was then justiciar (AU; AFM) but it fell back into O Conchobair control, only to be taken again by the earl of Kildare in 1512 (AU; AFM).

In 1544 FitzWilliam Burke sought the castle from the crown by claiming that the O'Connors had usurped it (Cal. Carew Mss. 1515-74, 210) and by 1553 the castle was in Clanricarde's hands (ibid., 238). By the middle of the sixteenth century, when the English crown, was gradually asserting its authority over midland and western Ireland, the control of Roscommon (and other Connacht castles) was viewed as of great strategic importance. In 1558 Sussex was instructed that he must keep "Roscommon and other castles in his hands" (Cal. Carew Mss. 1515-74, 273). The O Connors evidently regained possession of the castle however because in 1562 Dermot O Conor Don was pardoned and declared he would hand up Roscommon castle to the deputy (11 RDKPRI, no. 455). In 1565 Sir Philip Sidney arrived and took over the castle on behalf of the crown (AFM).

In 1577 the castle was granted to Sir Nicholas Malbie (13 RDKPRI, no. 3134) who was instructed the folowing year to keep a force of 50 foot there (Cal. S.P. Ire. 1574-85, 139). In 1582 he submitted a series of proposed alterations to the

castle for goverment attention (Cal. S.P. Ire. 1574-85, 312).
After his death in 1585 the castle was held briefly by
Bingham, the president of Connacht, but it passed back to
Henry Malbie in 1587 (ibid., 475; ibid. 1586-7, 439). The
military importance of the castle was revealed in 1596 when
it was garrisoned against an expected attack from O'Donnell
(Cal. S.P. Ire. 1592-6, 537; ibid. 1596-7, 13). When it came
the castle held out for four weeks in the course of which 150
men starved to death, eleven were killed and twelve were
captured. The town was burned together with all of the
furnishings of the castle, including its timber stairs, and
the garrison's horses and ammunition were lost (Cal. S.P.
Ire. 1596-7, 24).

In 1599 O'Donnell attacked and burned Roscommon again
(Cal. S.P. Ire 1597-8, 313) and it was near capture once more
in 1600 (ibid. 1599-1600, 463). By 1602, however, there were
150 men under Malbie at Roscommon (ibid. 1601-3, 523). In
1609 Malbie's widow, Lady Sydeley, requested money to repair
the castle because of the damage which the garrison had
caused there during the wars (ibid. 1608-10, 258) and many of
the large windows in the east front probably date to after
this time. The castle remained the base of a garrison during
the Confederate Wars when it supported Parliament, as did the
town. Constables of the castle were still being appointed in
the 1660s and presumably it continued to function as a
garrison (Cal. S.P. Ire. 1663-5, 39; ibid., 1666-9, 70).

The remains consist of a quadrilateral enclosure with

massive D-shaped towers at the angles, a twin towered
gatehouse in the east wall, and a smaller rectangular
gatehouse in the west wall. The layout is of a well
established late thirteenth century type and its present form
is probably large the result of the work which occurred
between 1278 and 1290. The west gatehouse may be a survival
from the pre-1278 works because it is not aligned to the
walls on either side and it seems to be oddly positioned. It
has been pointed out by a number of scholars that the plan is
closely similar to that of some of the Welsh castles built
during the reign of Edward I and particularly to Harlech
which was commenced in 1283. Roscommon accordingly reflects
some of the most up to date concepts of castle design in the
1270s.

The courtyard encloses a space measuring 162 by 130
feet. The towers are joined by a curtain wall which survives
on thet east and west but it has been entirely removed on the
south and only a fragment remains of the north wall. The
documents suggest that it was enclosed by two external fosses
and the section which survives outside the site of the north
curtain may well belong to the outer of these ditches. The
gatehouse is the finest example of its type in Ireland and
protects a narrow passage some 3m wide. The appearance of the
castle was changed in the late sixteenth and early
seventeenth centuries when the number of floors in the east
gatehouse and the northeast tower was increased and the old
arrow loops were enlarged to accomodate windows with
mullions, transoms and external hood mouldings. As pointed

out above, however, many of these later features probably date to the years after 1609, when there were settled conditions at Roscommon, rather than the years after 1578 as has been previously thought (Leask 1944, 67-9; Harbison 1970, 210-11; Stalley 1978, pl. XVIa). Plans of the castle have been published by Leask (1944, fig. 40) and Stalley (1978, 44: fig. 3).

7. ROSCOMMON CAMP

A handful of seventeenth century references to Roscommon Camp (e.g. Cal. S.P. Ire. 1601-3, 39) suggest that there may have been an earthen fortification other than the castle. If so it is possible that it may have occupied the position of the later barracks, south of the town.

8. ST COMAN'S EARLY MONASTIC SITE

As outlined in the introductory section Roscommon was the site of a monastery established in the sixth century by St Coman. In the twelfth century this was taken over by the Augustinians who established a priory on the site. The survival of a number of Transitional stones at St Coman's (C of I) church indicate that the site of the pre-Norman monastery was located on the ridge overlooking the marshy ground of Loughnaneane to the north. No evidence for a monastic enclosure has been determined. One striking curvilinear boundary, however, is evident on the O.S. first

edition maps. It constitutes the eastern and southern boundary of Ballypheasan townland and is continued on the north by the eastern boundary of Cloonbrackna townland and is carried westwards in a field boundary, north of the castle, towards the sites of Lord's Well and Lady's Well. On the south west the curve is continued by the southern boundary of Ardnanagh townland. This is a large area of land and it may delimit the monastic property at Roscommon rather than the actual boundary of the monastery itself. In this regard it is interesting to note that Roscommon castle was built on Augustinian land and the Augustinians also gave land to the townsmen near the castle after the destruction of the "king's town" in the raid of 1277 (Sweetman 1875-86, ii, no. 2008; Sayles 1979, no. 80). From the annalistic references it is clear that the monastery contained at least one church of stone, in addition to houses and a round tower (AFM: 1050, 1135; Chron. Scot.: 1047).

9. AUGUSTINIAN PRIORY OF SS MARY & COMAN

Gwynn and Hadcock (1970, 191) suggest that the old monastery changed to the Augustinian rule in the 1140s and that the observance of Arrouaise was introduced by Toirdelbach O Conchobair at the prompting of St Malachy. There are indications that it was initially a double monastery with a convent of nuns in addition to its house of monks but after 1232 the evidence for this fades out (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 191). In 1578 the site, containing a ruined

church, a hall and cloister, was granted to Sir Nicholas Malbie (ibid.)

The site of the abbey is represented today by the C of I parish church which has a date stone of 1775 on it. The west tower incorporates a number of early features, however. A blocked doorway in the south wall of the tower has a number of re-used moulded fragments of late twelfth/ early thirteenth century date (fig. 51). These derive from a doorway of at least tow orders. Four round moulded jambs, on either side, are capped with transitional style capitals from an inner order. The arch with projecting keystone is modern. Similar jambs and capitals from the outer order are re-used for the sides of a window in the north wall of the tower at first floor level (fig. 52). A fifteenth century twin-light window with cusped tracery is built into the west wall of the tower at first floor level (fig. 53). Incorporated in the south wall of the tower at first floor level is a fifteenth century, single-light, pointed, cinquefoil-headed window. The arch stones have hollow chamfers but were derived from different windows. The stone in all of these reused features is limestone.

About 1917, according to the Roscommon Directory (Commercial and Historical) of 1920, workmen uncovered human bones in Goff Street while digging house foundations. These were regularly arranged in cemetery fashion and would seem to indicate that the churchyard originally estended further to the east.

10. DOMINICAN PRIORY OF ST MARY

Founded in 1253 by Felimid O Conchobair, king of
Connacht, the church was consecrated in 1257 (Gwynn and
Hadcock 1970, 229). It suffered in the conflict between Aedh
O Conchobair and the incoming Anglo-Normans between 1268 and
1280. It was burned in 1270 and the friars pleaded with
Edward I for the restitution of goods and provisions which
had been taken from them by the justiciar (ibid.). The friary
was damaged by lightning in 1308 (AU) but the extent of the
damage is unknown. In 1445 it is described as being in
disrepair from the effects of war and other causes, and an
indulgence was granted in order to help restore the buildings
(Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 229). In 1577-8 it was granted to
Sir Nicholas malbie (ibid.).

Description (fig. 54)

The friary is located on a slight rise overlooking marshy
ground to the NE and SE. Prior to land drainage this would
proably have been covered with water for part of the year.
The remains consist of the church and the foundations of the
cloister. The nave, chancel and north aisle are of thirteenth
century date; a transept was added in the fifteenth century
when a tower was also inserted and the east and west windows
were remodelled. The masonry consists of coursed limestone.
The masonry of the north transept is constructed with
carefully coursed limestone blocks whose outer faces were
coarsely dressed.

The east and north walls of the CHANCEL have a battered base externlly. The east window originally consisted of three lancets but it was replaced in the fifteenth century by a large tracery window of five lights. The north wall was probably lit by six or seven lancets but the remains of only four survive. In the south wall is a blocked door, which led to the sacristy, and to the east of it a partly reconstructed piscina and sedilla. The sedilla niche has an unsymetrical pointed arch with the fragmentary remains of triangular-sectioned pillasters, capped with moulded finials rising rrom its east side and centre.

The TOWER is represented by two short lengths of wall footing extending inwards from the south wall. The tomb of Owen O'Rourke (1837) is constructed over the western footing. Just inside the eastern footing is a blocked door which led to the cloister.

The NORTH TRANSEPT was an addition to the north aisle and incorporated its east wall including a thirteenth century lancet. The extension contains one two-light window in the east wall and it was lit by a three light window in the north wall.

The NAVE was separated from the aisle by an arcade of four arches, represented today by fragments of three cylindrical piers. The western respond is rectangular with chamfered edges and had a moulded capital. The easternmost pier is of two periods. The southern section is semi-circular in plan and has a moulded capital similar to that in the

western respond. The northern section is rectangular with chamfered edges and it has an inner order, also chamfered. The west wall contains a modern pointed door above which the position of three lancets can be determined. These were replaced in the fifteenth century by a four light traceried window. Internally the south wall has seven pointed niches with six lancets overhead admitting light from above the level of the closter roof.

Part of the west end of the AISLE survives and it is sufficient to indicate the position of a door in the north wall and of a lancet in the west wall.

Externally in the south wall the barge stones of the CLOISTER's north and west ranges are present. The wall footing at the east end of the south wall represents the remains of a lime-kiln. South of the church the original extent of the cloister is indicated by a rectangular depression.

Architectural Stones

A large number are stored in the basement of the SW tower of Roscommon Castle. These include fragments from the east and west traceried windows and an isolated base for a cloister pillar. The latter is of limestone, is multi-moulded and would have supported a pillar of paired octagonal shafts with a short joining plate (fig. 58).

Effigy said to be that of Felimid O Conchobair (fig. 55)

Coffin-shaped slab set in a pointed niche in the north wall
of the chancel. The figure is clothed in a loose ankle-length
robe covering the arms to the elbows. A long mantle reaches
from the shoulders to the feet. The figure wears a crown
decorated with fleur de lys and holds a sceptre in his right
hand. Hunt (1974, 42, 216) has argued on stylistic grounds
that the figure was carved c.1290-c.1320.

L. 215. W. 85-60.

Tomb front with gallowglasses (figs. 56-7). 15th cent.

The frontal of the O Conchobair tomb is formed of two slabs,
each divided into four niches containing the armed
figures. The slabs are not in their original position.

West slab: L. 126. H. 88. T. 19.

East slab: L. 127. H. 86. T. 19.

Hunt 1974, 216-17.

Panel fragment with two niches and part of a figure

From a monument similar to that from which the gallowglass
panels derive.

Hunt 1974, 217.

Lost fragment

D. C. Grose writing in the Irish Penny Magazine 1 (1833, p.
294) noted a carved effigial fragment two feet high in a
garde in Roscommon town which was said to have been taken
from the friary. Its whereabouts is unknown.

Fragmentary Coffin-shaped slab. ?13th-14th cents.

Limestone. Lower portion. Lying close to the sedilla.

Chamfered edge with a rounded moulding.

Max. L. 55. W. 50-45. T. 28.

Fragmentary coffin-shaped slab. ?13th-14th cent.

Limestone. Lower portion. Lying outside the west wall of the

north transept. Chamfered edges with a rounded moulding.

Max. L. 82. W. 52-50. T. 16.

John Verdon. 1656.

Limestone slab set in concrete at the foot of the monument to

Felimid O Conchobair. Inscription in false relief:

    PRAY FOR THE SOVLE OF/ IOHN VERDON WHOE DIED/ THE 26 OF

    IVLY 1656

L. 125. W. 90

A seventeenth century slab to John Hynde, recorded at the end

of the nineteenth century, was not located

Mems Dead ii, 353.

11. FRANCISCAN FRIARY

The Franciscans established themselves here in 1269 but

their house was burned in 1270 and it could not be restored

because the founder, whose name is not preserved, had died

(Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 258). The location of the friary is

unknown.

12. MISCELLANEOUS

Ardsallagh More. Ringfort.

Located on the crest of a gently sloping hill. Earthen platform with slight traces of an internal bank, external ditch and an outer bank. Diam: 39m.

Crannog. Loughnaneane Td.

Roughly oval grassy platform with maximum dimensions of 44 m N-S by 42 m E-W, and rising 40-50 cm in height above the surrounding reedy fen. It is cut by modern callow drains on the south and east sides. Archaeological deposits containing charcoal, stone and bone (both burnt and unburnt), are evident in the southeren drain. Portion of a rotary quernstone was picked up on the surface immediately east of the crannog and was presumably upcast from the drain. It comprises about one-quarter of an upper-stone with an estimated original diameter of 42-44 cm.

Possible crannogs. Loughnaneane.

We were informed by Mr Brian F. O'Carroll of APG International that three crannogs were evident on an aerial photograph of the marsh NW of Roscommon Castle. The photograph could not be found, however, for inspection.

Lord's Well

A square well surrounded on all sides by grassed over dry stone walling. The site is no longer in use.

Sharkey 1927, 396.

Lady's Well

A fairly square depression bounded by a low bank on three
sides and open to the ENE. It is no longer is use.
Sharkey 1927, 396.

Sculpted stones, Chapel Lane.

A group of five stones are set in the east face if a garden
wall at the east end of Chapel Lane and a sixth lies loose on
the ground below. The site is marked "Old R.C. Chapel" on the
O.S. first edition. The stones include a late 17th/ early
18th cent. crucifixion plaque (Timoney 1980, 142-6), two
matching slabs decorated with volutes, part of a lintel or
string course, a moulded capital, and a tracery fragment. All
are of limestone.

"Small castle"

In 1418 a small castle called Caislen na mallacht was built
opposite Roscommon Castle (A. Conn.; AU; AFM). There are no
standing remains.

St. Coman's Vat

Shown on the O.S. first edition a short distance SSE of the
Lanesborough Road the site is marked by a slight depression
in the ground within which is a small stand of hawthorn and
alder bushes. It was dried up in O'Donovan's time but he
records that it was said to be a good spring in winter.

Tobar Iheen

Noticed by O'Donovan who described it as a remarkable well
which supplied the town with water and lay "to the back of

the church and between it and the abbey" (Sharkey 1927, 998).
Its whereabouts is unknown.

13. LIST OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRAY FINDS

1. Gold twisted wire torc, square-sectioned. UM 173-1937.
Taylor 1980, Co Rm 20; Glover 1978, 50.

2. Bronze spearbutt. NMI W.170. Raftery 1983, 121.

3. Bronze ring-mail ornament. Found about 3 feet deeo in bog
adjoining "the old castle of the O'Conors near the town of
Roscommon". NMI W.1. Wilde 1863. 576-8 and figs. 487-9.

4. Coin hoard of 24 silver coins, the latest being of
Elizabeth I (1582). Found on the outskirts of Roscommon town
in 1968. Dispersed.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

Roscommon is an important site in Irish urban development
because of the clear documentary evidence for a settlement
here prior to the foundation of the Anglo-Norman borough in
the 1270s. It was established as a church site by Coman,
probably in the early sixth century, and annalistic
references in the eighth and ninth centuries indicate that it
was already a centre of importance. It rose to considerable
prominence during the eleventh and twelfth centuries when it
became a focus for secular as well as ecclesiastical

activity. An annalistic entry of 1135 mentions the burning of
both houses and churches at Roscommon, and it was almost
certainly the centre where the cross of Cong was made c.1123.
In 1235, when it was burned by the Anglo-Normans, it was
described as a baile, a clear indication that it was a
nucleated settlement. This baile seems to have survived the
coming of the Normans and is probably to be identified with
the "Irish vill of Roscommon" mentioned in 1282 and again in
1299.

The presence of a crannog is potentially a significant
feature in understanding the growth of Roscommon as an urban
site because it is a further indication of the locality's
importance in pre-Norman times. There is a considerable
amount of evidence to show that ecclesiastical sites had
urban functions in pre-Norman Irish society and the
association of a secular site with a church is an added
indication of this. The combination of church and settlement
site is best known from the royal crannog of Lagore which is
associated with the church of Dunshaughlin, a pattern
probably established around the middle of the seventh
century. The juxtaposition of crannog and early church site
at Roscommon forms a settlement complex similar to the
Dunshaughlin model, and suggests that the locale was becoming
a central place in pre-Norman times.

The Anglo-Norman borough appears to have been short lived
and there is no evidence for its existence after 1320. The
medieval archaeological deposits at Roscommon are likely to

cease around this time. The exact location of the Irish vill
or of the original Anglo-Norman borough is unknown. All that
is known of the irish vill is that it lay between St Coman's
Church and the Dominican Friary. The reference to a bridge at
the Anglo-Norman borough suggests that it was close to a
stream or river but it is possible that it was a bridge over
a dry moat.

In the late sixteenth century Roscommon became one of the
main bases in the English conquest of Connacht an importance
which was based largely on the presence of the castle. There
are suggestions that the late sixteenth century town was
quite close to the castle and it would seem that the layout
of the present town is due to remodelling which occurred
after 1600.

The archaeological and documentary data indicates that
Roscommon has been the scene of human activity from Early
Christian times. Documentary records of Swords are relatively
few, however, and in the future archaeological excavation is
likely to be the principal means by which additional
knowledge can be obtained.

The major disturbance to archaeological deposits has
occurred along the street frontage with the building and
rebuilding of houses and shops. It is likely, however, that
archaeological deposits survive behind the street frontage.

Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 46)
delimits the area of archaeological potential within
Roscommon. Its extent is based on the size of the seventeenth
century borough, the area between Church Street and Circular
Road (the potential site of the Irish vill, and an area
between the Market Square and the castle. On the south, an
area around the Dominican Frairy is outlined; on the
north-west an area around Loughnaneane crannog; and on the
east an area around St. Coman's Vat. In the absence of
controlled archaeological excavations within the town nothing
can be said about the depth of archaeological deposits.
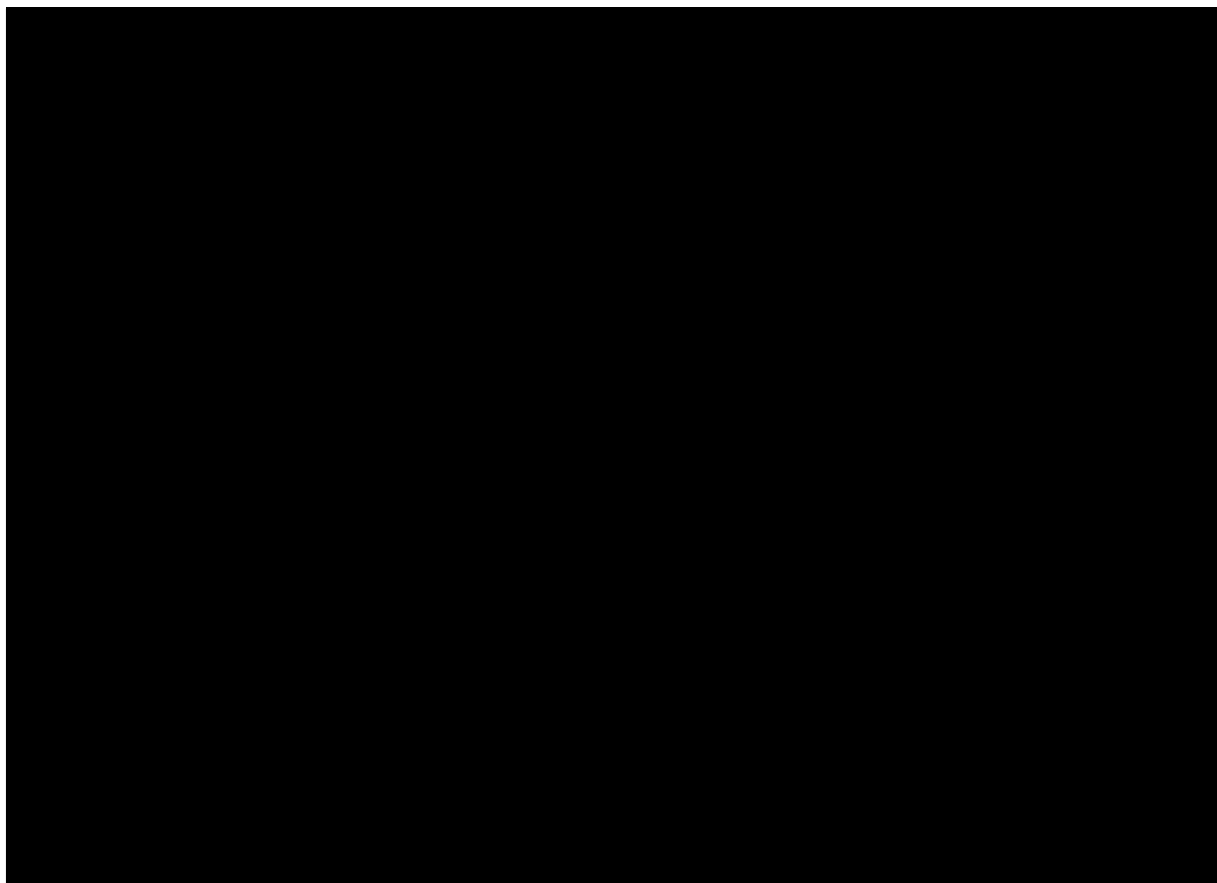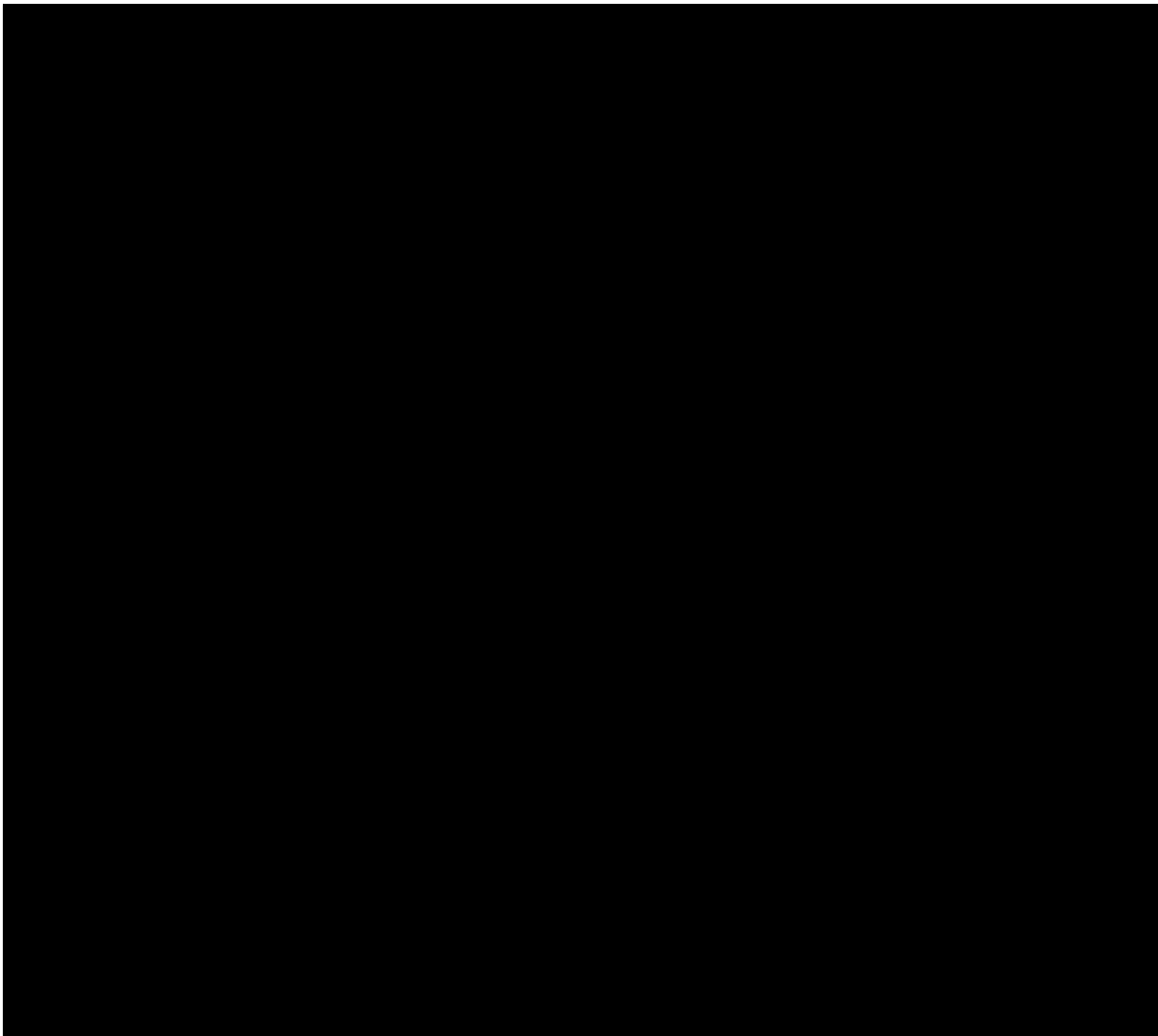
TULSK

The name Tulsk is an anglicization of Tuil Uisce, "flow of water", a name clearly derived from the prominent natural spring known as Tobernakirky which is still one of the village's main features. The origins of the settlement lie in the foundation of a castle here by O Conchobair Rua in 1406 (Misc. Ir. A.) and of a Dominican friary in 1448, apparently by another O Conchobair. The association of castle and friary at this date is an interesting one and it suggests that some form of village settlement may have been established in the fifteenth century. The earliest possible reference to a village, however, is to the burning of "Tulsk and neighbouring villages" in 1595 (Hamilton 1890, 439), which would seem to suggest that a settlement already existed by that time. From 1582 Tulsk was the centre of an English garrison which, based in the friary, remained in one form or another until 1601. By 1612 the settlement was evidently substantial because an attempt was made to give it borough status. An order was issued to draw up a fiant of incorportion which was subsequently confirmed by the lord deputy (Russell and Prendergast 1877, 307, 308). The aim of this incorporation was so that the settlement could return members to parliament but since no MPs were elected doubt has been cast on whether the incorporation actually took place or not. In 1662, however, Tulsk was incorporated as a "portriffe, fifteen burgesses and a commonalty for ever, with

liberty ... to send burgesses to all parliaments in the kingdom of Ireland" (Mahaffy 1905, 550).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN

2. MARKET PLACE

3. BOROUGH DEFENCES

4. CASTLE

5. DOMINICAN FRIARY

6. MISCELLANEOUS

1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN

The village is comprised of a single main street.

2. MARKET PLACE

In 1617 Christopher Delahoyde was granted a weekly market at his manor of Tulsk (Prendergast 1880, 146). This was almost certaily located in the mai street which is noticebaly broader than the roads leading into the village.

3. BOROUGH DEFENCES

A reference of 1593 to the "gate of Tulske" may indicate

that the borough was defended (Hamilton 1890). The position
of this gate and the course of the borough defences, if they
existed, are unknown.

4. CASTLE

The castle of Tulsk was built in 1406 by O Conchobair Rua
(Misc. Ir. A.) but it was destroyed the following year by
Brian O Conchobair and the Clann Donnchadha (A. Conn.; AFM).
It was evidently rebuilt, however, because it was captured in
1426 by Cathal, son of Ruaidhri O Conchobair, king of
Connacht, from Cathal Dubh O Conchobair (A. Conn.) but in
1430 the castle fell back into the hands of O Conchobair Rua
(AU). Tulsk and its prison (presumably the castle) were
demolished in 1485 by Ulick Og Burke (AFM) but the damage had
been repaired by 1490 when O'Donnell and the descendants of
Teig O Conchobair failed to take the castle. In 1499, on the
same expedition in which he captured Roscommon, the castle
was taken by the earl of Kildare (AFM). In 1501 AFM record
that Brian Mac Diarmata was slain by a dart thrown from the
castle but that no one confessed to the slaying. The castle
is mentioned in feuds between the O Conchobair Rua and the
Mac Diarmata in 1511, 1561, and again in 1577 (ALC). By this
time it seems to have fallen into decay because when the
subsequent English garrisons, established at Tulsk from 1582,
were based in the conventual buildings of the Dominican
friary.

Description (fig. 60)

O'Donoavan incorrectly located the castle remains at the abbey rather than the correct site some 300m north of the cemetery, known locally as "the fort". The site consists of a relatively flat-topped subrectangular mound. A bank which loops to enclose a roughly crescent-shaped berm SSW of the mound also extends along the shoulder of the mound on the ESE and SSW sides. This bank incorporates much stone and may be the remains of largely destroyed wall footings. A limestone slab, embedded in the outer face of the bank to the SE of the mound, has a dressed upper surface and originally formed part of the base of a splayed window. Although the slab is not in situ it almost certainly derives from a stone structure which stood on the site. This, together with the townland name of Castleland, supports the view that this is the site of Tulsk castle. Overall dimensions: WNW-ESE: 26.3m; NNE-SSW: 26.4m.

5. DOMINICAN FRIARY

This seems to have been founded in 1448 by Feilimidh O Conchobair but there is an alternate tradition that it was established by Phelim MacDowell (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 230-1). The history of the friary between 1448 and 1569, when it was leased to Patrick Cusake (11 RDKPRI, no. 1454), is unknown, but the friars were still in residence in 1574 (Cal. Carew Mss. 1601-3, 474). An English garrison was established at Tulsk by 1582 (ALC) when it was probably based in the friary. It seems to have remained here until 1601 but it is

not mentioned after that date.

Description (fig. 61-2)

The surviving remains consist of the south wall of the
nave (including a transpet arcade), the chancel area, and the
south and west walls of the south transept. All of these
walls, except for the est end of the chancel, survive for
most of their original height. The masonry consists of
coursed limestone. The nave and chancel appear to have been
built together in the mid fifteenth century but the transept
was added, probably in the later fifteenth century. In
post-Dissolution times the east end was converted into a
tower house.

No original features of the CHANCEL survive and its site
is occupied instead by the remains of a three-floored TOWER
HOUSE, probably to be identified with the house built by the
English at Tulsk in 1582 (ALC). The west wall of this
structure forms the present east end of the nave and very
little of its NE corner, east wall or the eastern half of the
south wall survives. No outer facing is evident along these
later stretches but the inner facing is evident for a couple
of courses in the NE corner and along the northern half of
the east wall. Otherwise the line of the structure's east end
is marked by grassed over collapse or by a break in slope. At
ground floor level the only feature is a segmental-arched
door in the north wall with traces of wicker centering. On
the first floor a fireplace is located close to the south end

of the west wall. The inner face of the NW corner curves
inwards, presumably to allow for the incorporation of a
wooden stairway lit by a splayed window in the northern end
of the west wall. At first floor level also the west splay
survives of a centrally located window in the north wall. On
the second floor there are indications of the former west
splay of a window in the south wall; there is a fine firplace
in the west wall where the mantleshelf, now only surviving on
the north side, projects beyond the flat arch of the
fireplace. Only the very western part of the north wall
survives at this level.

The NAVE has been considerbly interfered with by the
insertion of the Grace Mausoleum in 1868 and the Taaffe vault
at its west end. Parts of the south wall are obscured by a
monument to Catherine Kelly (1752); the packing stones around
it include a window mullion bearing mason's marks consisting
of "L" and "+". Between this monument and the tower house is
an original window with an inward splay and a segmental rear
arch. The western end of the south wall of the nave appears
to have been rebuilt. The west wall of the nave may be partly
replaced by a wall forming the west side of the grave of Hugh
O'Ferrall (1836).

The SOUTH TRANSEPT is entered through an arcade of two
pointed arches. The arches are chamfered and consist of two
ordres, the innermost of which rises from pointed corbels in
the responds. The central pier is a cylindrical column with
an octagonal multi-moulded capital. Two different masons

marks are evident on the dressed stone of the arcade, a four pointed star and a shallow inverted "V". The wall above the arcade is gabled. No features are evident in the west wall and most of the east wall has the appearance of having been rebuilt. The south wall contains the remains of a central internally splayed large pointed window.

A break in slope, to the north, extends in a westerly direction for 19m from the SW corner of the transept to the west boundary of the graveyard. This feature is likely to be the remains of an old boundary rather than footing for a building. It is again evident for a distance of 36m in the field immediately to the west, where it curves gradually along its length to the NW. Here it takes on the form of a BANK with a largely silted up ditch on its northern side. The feature may be related to the late sixteenth century defences of Tulsk.

Architectural Fragments

Within the graveyard are a series of loose structural stones, including four window jambs, one window sill, one door jamb, one gutter spout, and two cylindrical stones (diam. 15cm), all of limestone.

Monuments

Frances Gardiner. 1679.

In the SW corner of the transept. Only the limestone side panel of an altar tomb survives. It bears the inscription in

Roman script in false relief:

IHS CAPT EDW GARDINER ERECTED THIS TOMB/ FOR HIS WIFE

FRANCES GARDINER ALI/AS LANE WHO DYED THE V OF IULY/

1679

L. 216. H. 100 (max. exposed). T. 22.

There are four crucifixion plaques of eighteenth century date within the church.

6. MISCELLANEOUS

Ringfort (fig. 63)

Situated at the NW end of a low ridge, the site consists of a well preserved subcircular platform. A berm is present on the side between WNW and W. A U-shaped depression, which may be the remains of a structure, is present on its NE side. Some stone protruding through the grass indicates that it was bounded by a grassed over wall footing. Dims.: 35m (E-W) by 29m (N-S). It overlooks Tobernakirky well on the NNW.

Tobernakirky Well

The derivation of the name, "well of the hen", is unknown. The site consists of an excellent spring whose water flows a short distance northwards to join a stream which flows mid distance between the ringfort and the site of Tulsk Castle.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

Tulsk is one of the small number of midland boroughs established in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Its particular importance to archaeology lies in the fact that it may have commenced as a settlement in the fifteenth century and that it may be an example of a late medieval Gaelic market centre similar to Clones, Co. Monaghan, and Granard, Co. Longford.

The archaeological and documentary data indicates that the borough has been the scene of continuous human activity since the fifteenth century. Documentary records of Tulsk are relatively few, however, and in the future archaeological excavation is likely to be the principal means by which additional knowledge can be obtained.

Archaeological disturbance is as minimal as can be expected and has probably been confined to the street frontage. Elsewhere it is to be expected that archaeological deposits have survived in reasonable condition. The northern half of the eastern boundary wall of the graveyard has recently been removed, however, presumably to extend burial into the field to the east. The gateway to the friary has been knocked and a gravel access road constructed. In the process of constructing this road the remains of the east wall of the chancel/tower house was removed. Ivy has been stripped off the abbey and unless conservation work is carried out in the near future the structure will begin to

deteriorate. The ringfort and the castle site should be maintained as building free zones.

Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 59) delimits the area of archaeological potential within Tulsk. Its extent is based on the size of the borough together with an area around the friary site and the ringfort. In the absence of archaeological excavations nothing can be said about the depth of archaeological deposits.
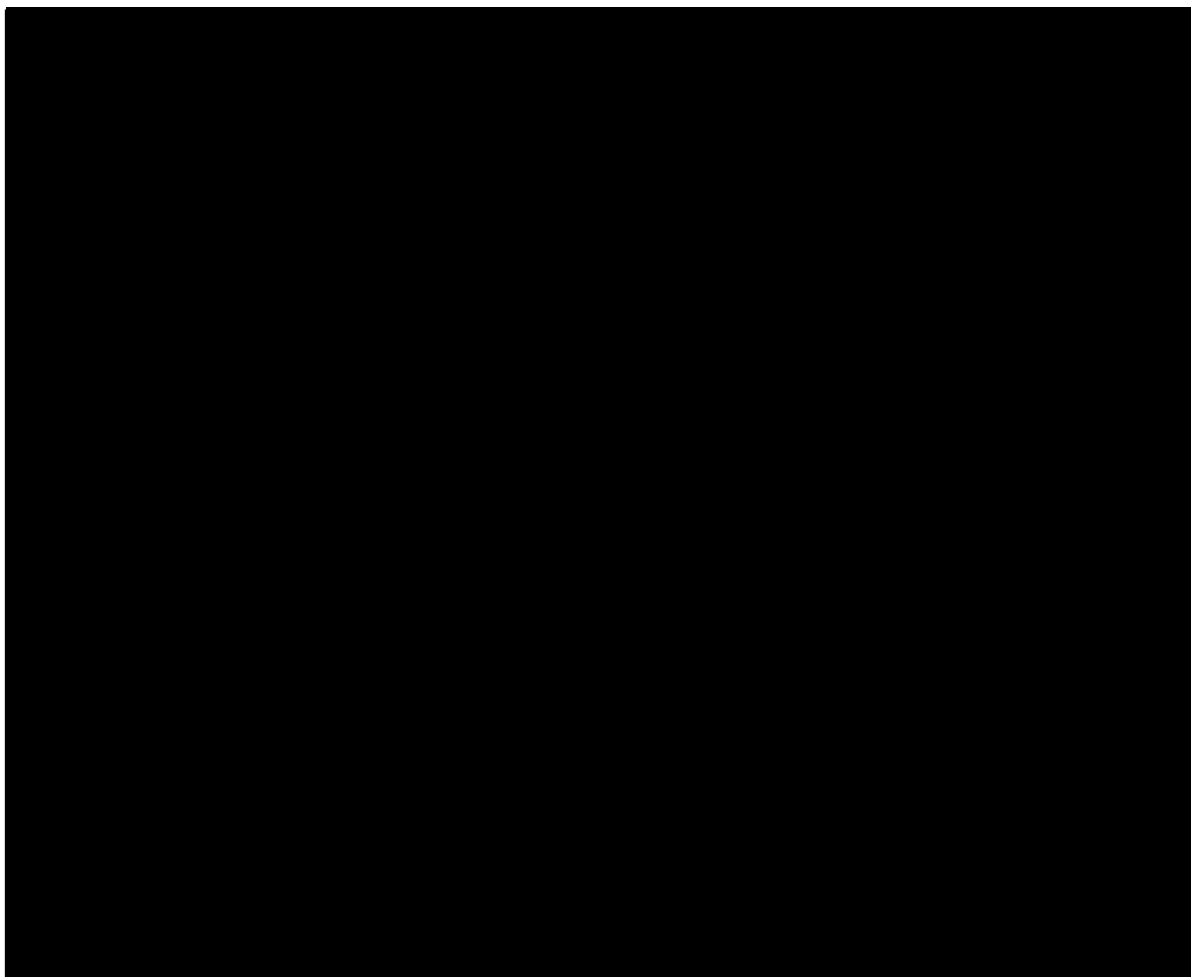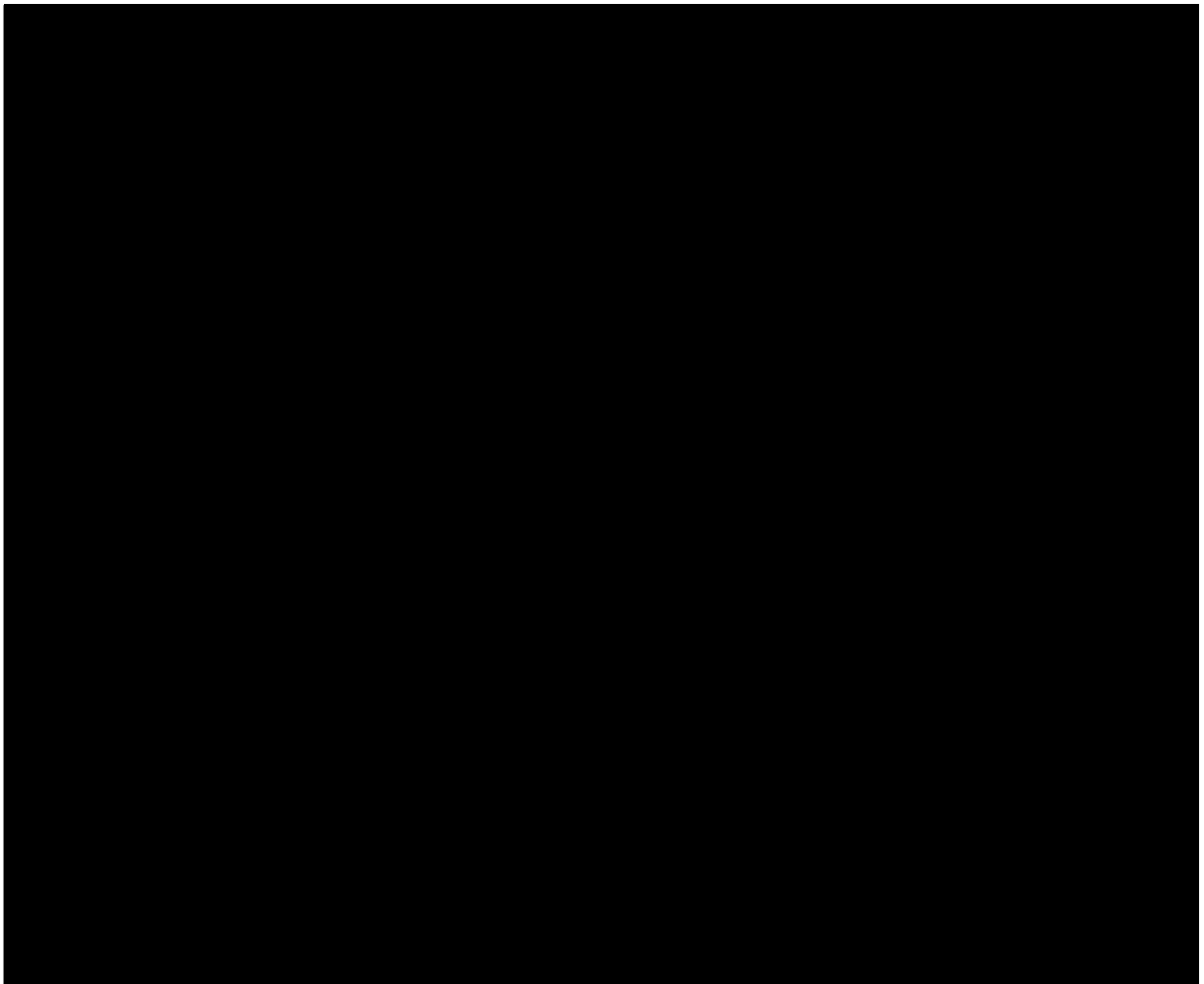
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A. Conn.: Annals of Connacht, ed. A. Martin Freeman. Dublin. 1944.

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

AI: Annals of Inishfallen, ed. S. MacAirt. Dublin, 1951.

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.

Chron. Scot.: Chronicon Scotorum, ed. W. M. Hennessy, London 1866.

Misc I. A.: Miscellaneous Irish Annals AD 1114-1437, ed. S O hInnse. Dublin 1947.

Journals

JRSAI   Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

PRIA   Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy.

RDKPRI   Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records, Ireland

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of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

COUNTY ROSCOMMON

	LAND OVER 122M
	LAND OVER 244M
	LAND OVER 366M

0   15Km

Fig. 1. County Roscommon: Location map of boroughs
         and towns.
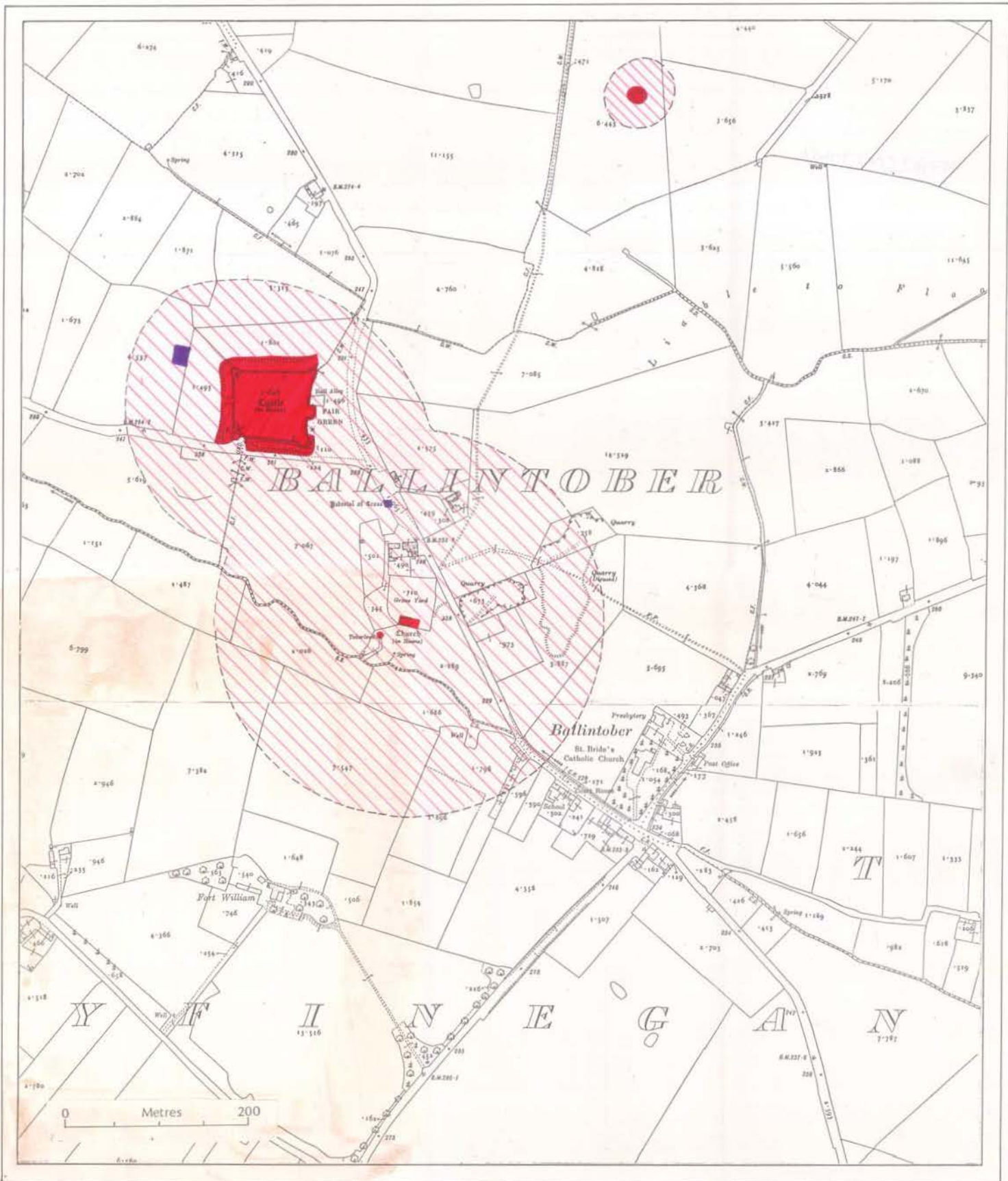
Fig. 2. Ballintober: zone of archaeological potential.

Fig. 3. Aerial view of Ballintober from the northwest
(Cambridge Aerial Coll.).

Fig. 4. Ballintober Castle: the southwest angle tower from
the west.

Fig. 5. Ballintober Castle: the northwest angle tower from
         the east.

Fig. 8. Boyle: zone of archaeological potential.
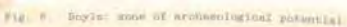
Fig. 7. Aerial view of Boyle from the west (Cambridge
Aerial Coll.)
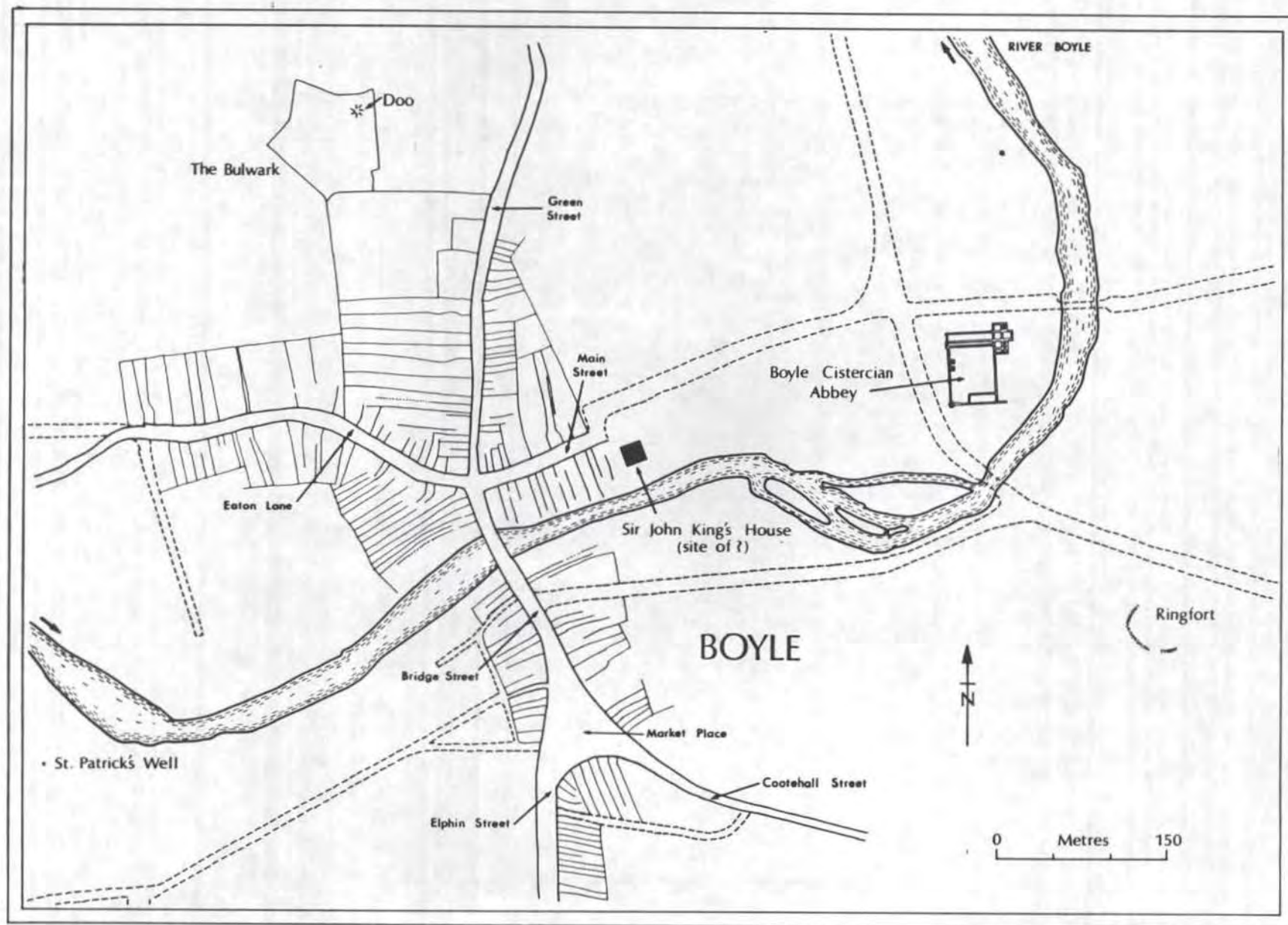
Fig. 8. Outline map of Boyle showing the principal
archaeological features.

Fig. 9.   View of Boyle Fort's northern rampart and fosse, from the west.

CHANCEL

SACRISTY

NORTH
TRANSEPT

TOWER

SOUTH
TRANSEPT

SITE OF
DAY ROOM

SITE OF CHAPTER ROOM

MODERN
BUTTRESSES

CLOISTER GARTH

CELLARS
UNDER
REFECTORY

SOUTH
AISLE

NAVE

SITE OF
NORTH
AISLE

CLOISTER WALK

KITCHEN

GATEWAY

TOWER
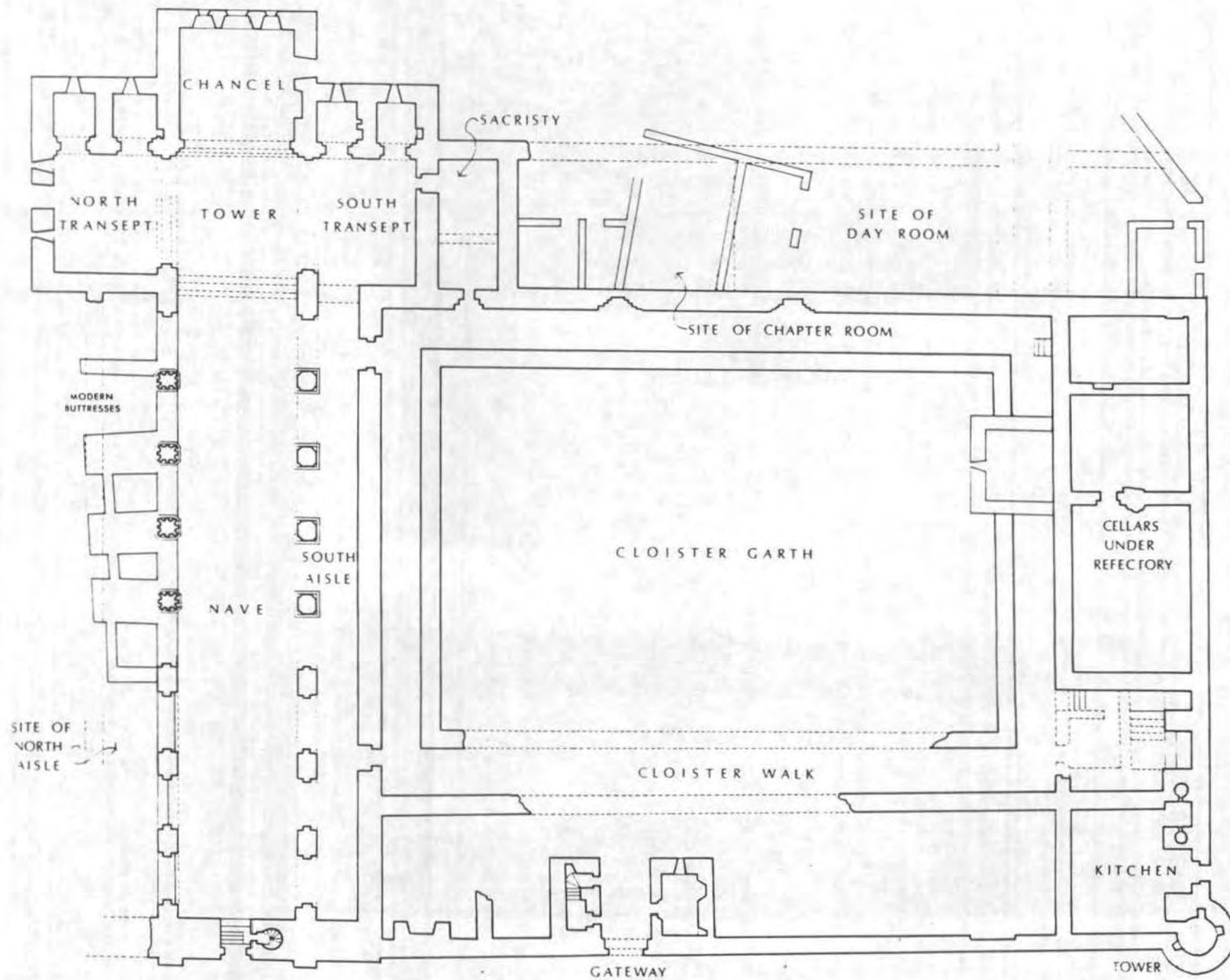
Fig. 10. Outline plan of the Cistercian Abbey, Boyle.
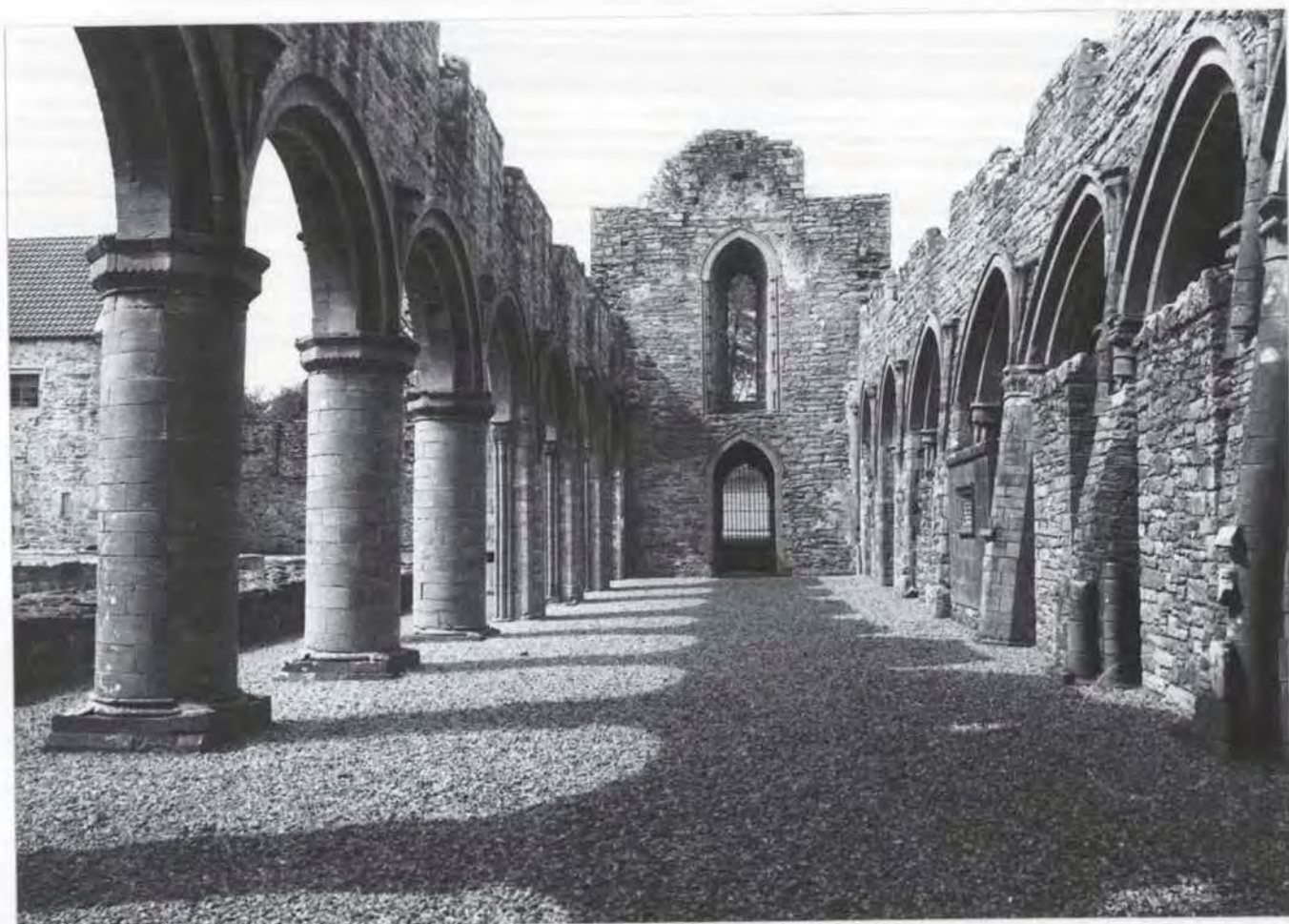
Fig. 11. The nave arcade, Boyle Abbey, viewed from the east.

Fig. 12. Seventeenth century corbel probably from a
          fireplace, Boyle Abbey.

Fig. 13. 13th century abbot's tomb, Boyle Abbey.

Fig. 14. Tomb of Florence O Maelchanig, Boyle Abbey.
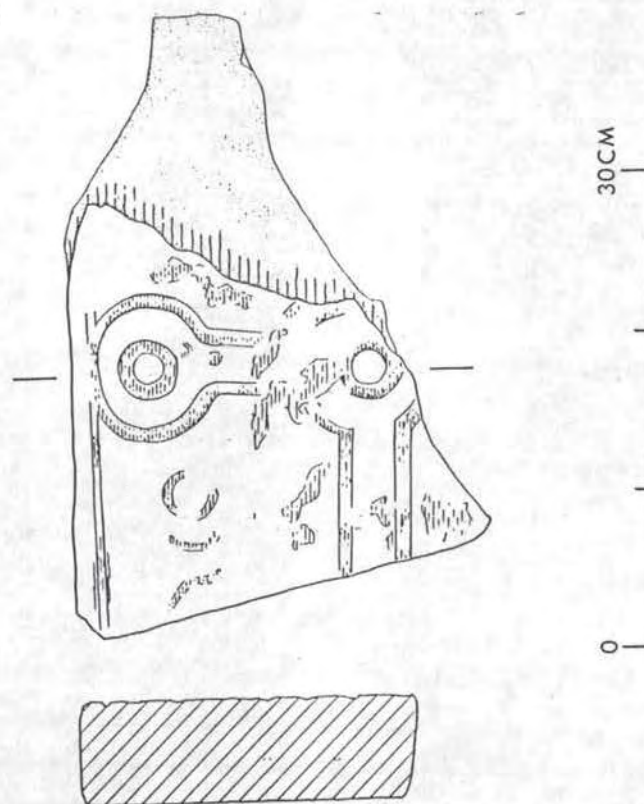
Fig. 15. Boyle Abbey: cross-slab 1.
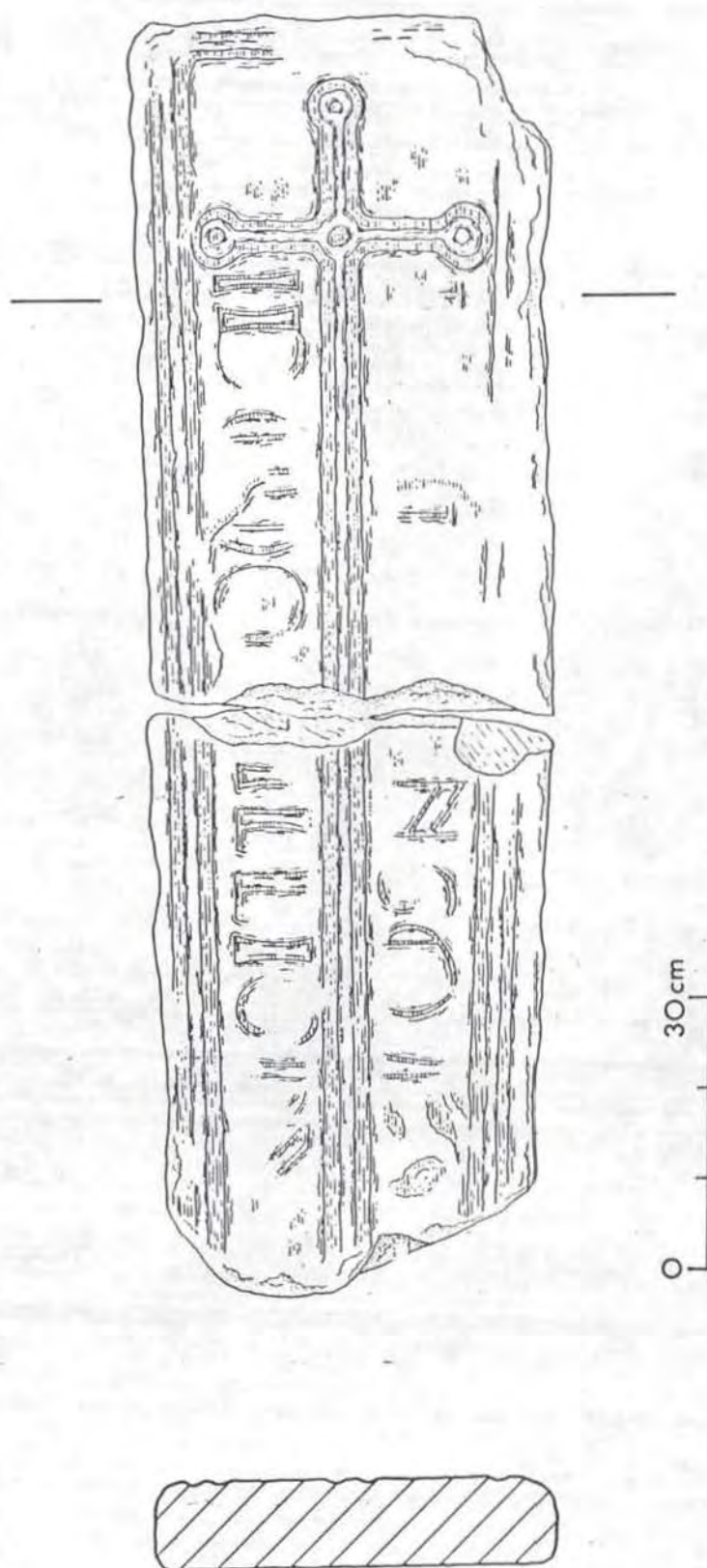
Fig. 16. Boyle Abbey: cross-slab 2.
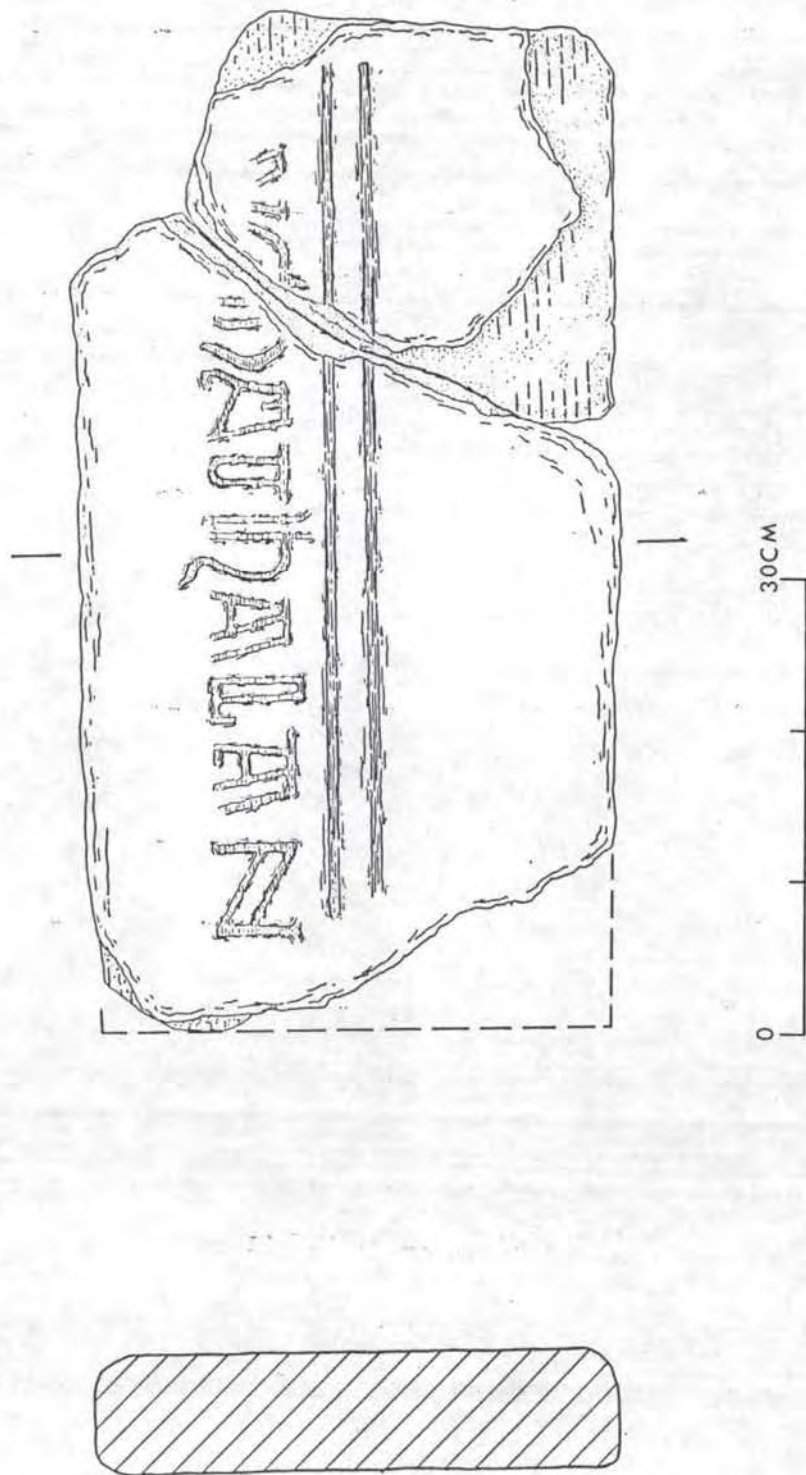
Fig. 17. Boyle Abbey: cross-slab 3.
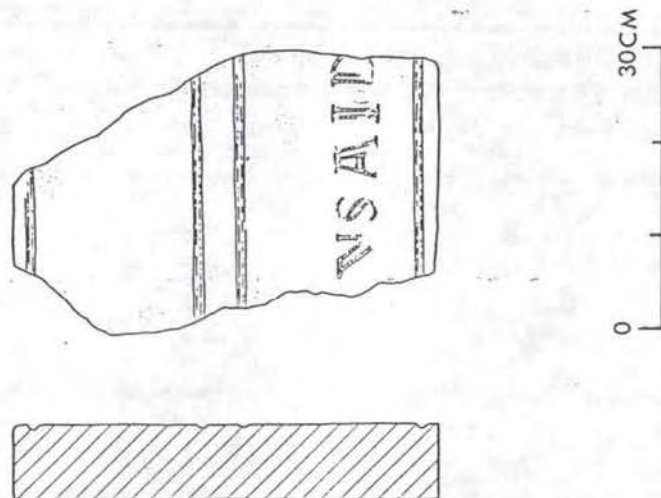
Fig. 18. Boyle Abbey: cross-slab 4.
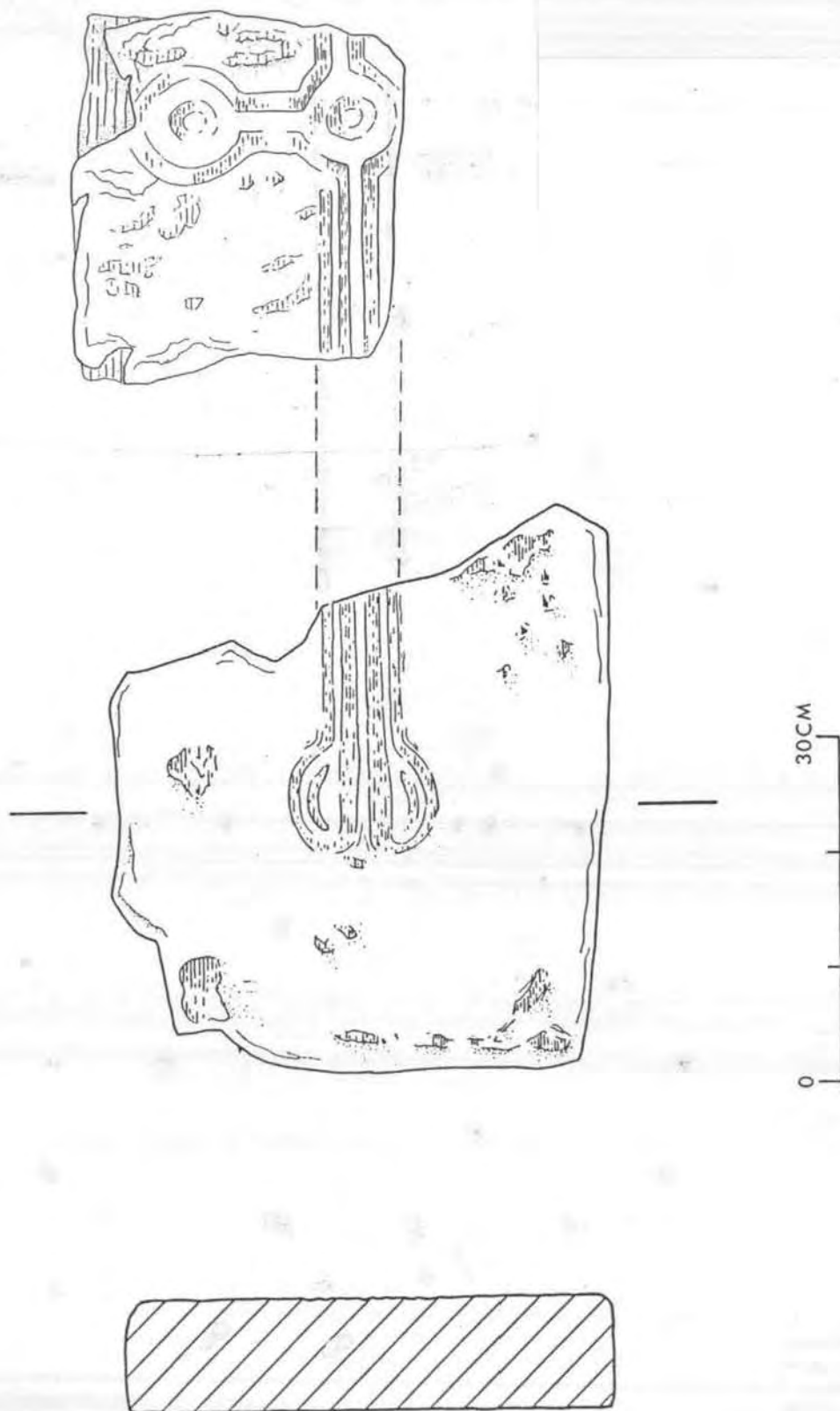
Fig. 19. Boyle Abbey: cross-slab 5.
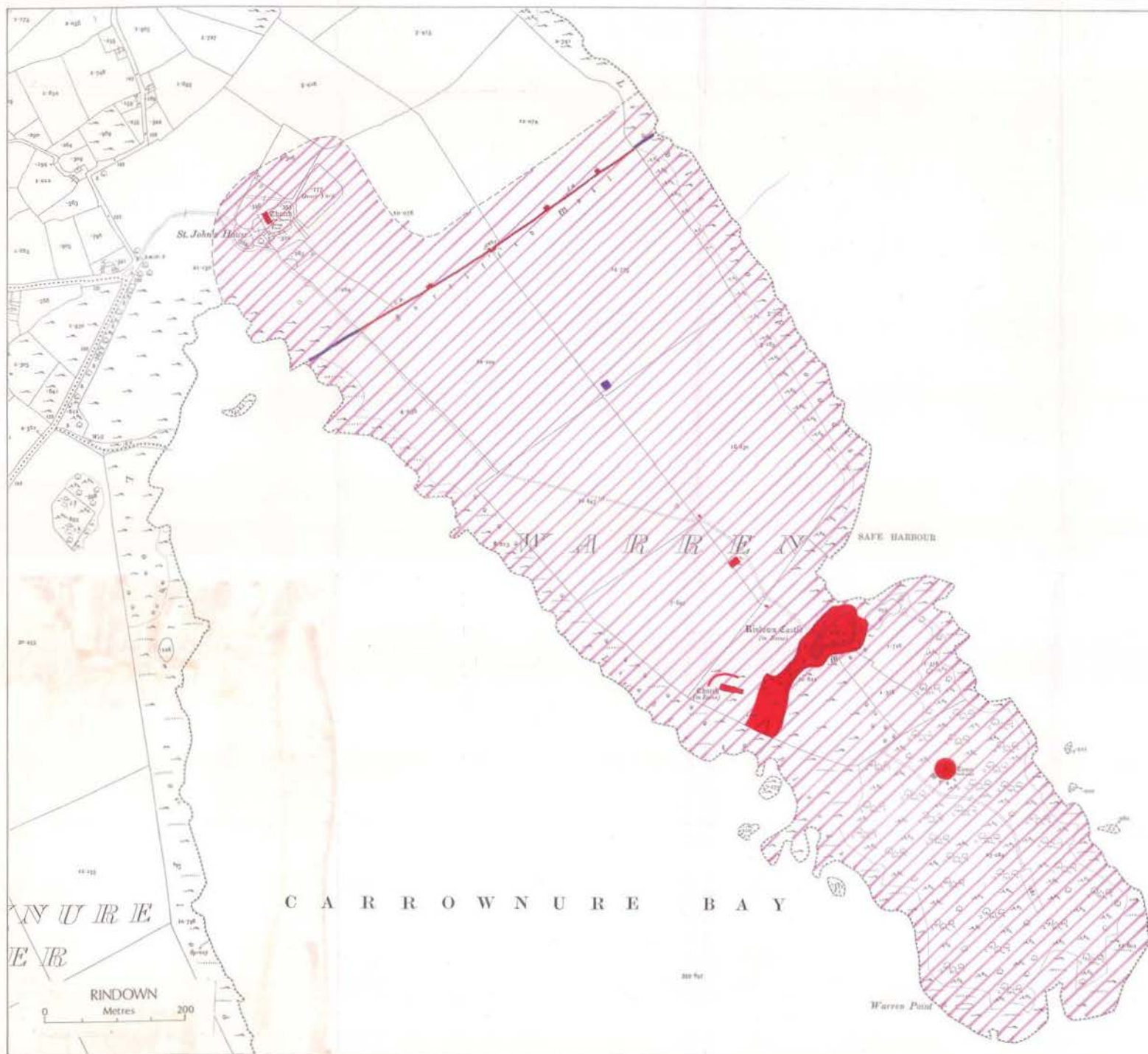
Fig. 20. Rindown: zone of archaeological potential.

Fig. 21. Aerial view of Rindown peninsula from southeast.
(Cambridge Aerial Coll.)
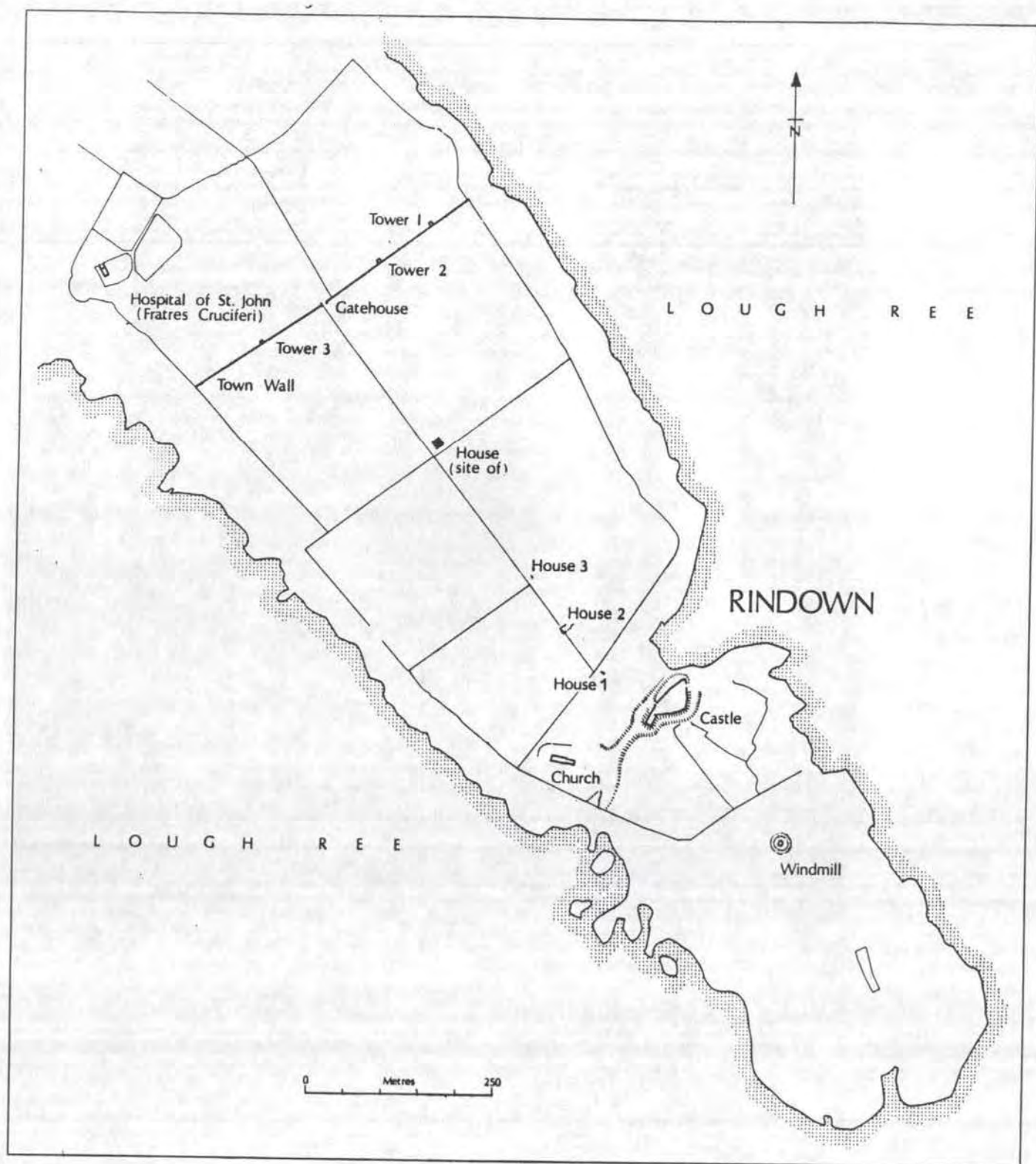
Fig. 22. Rindown: outline plan showing the principal archaeological features.
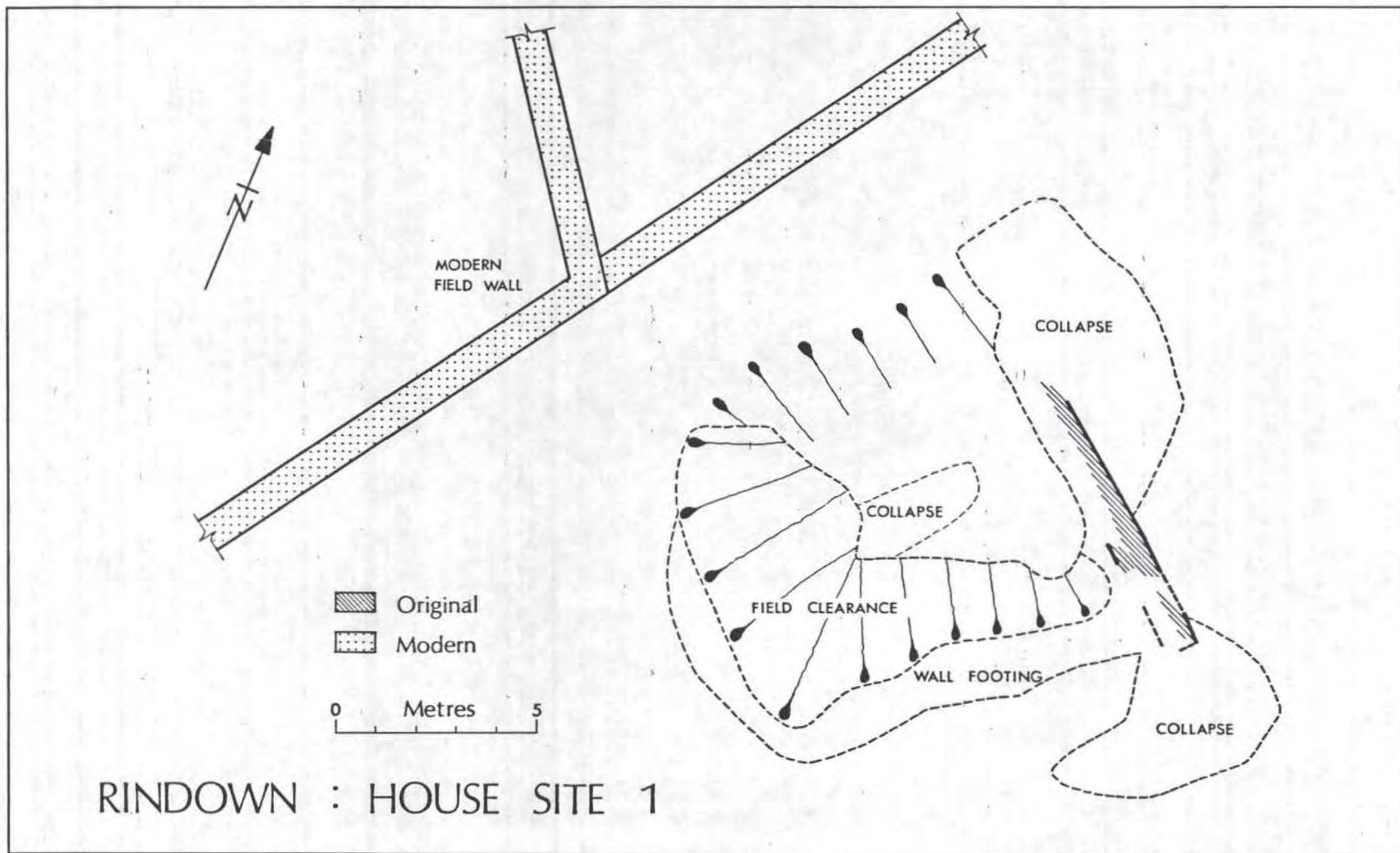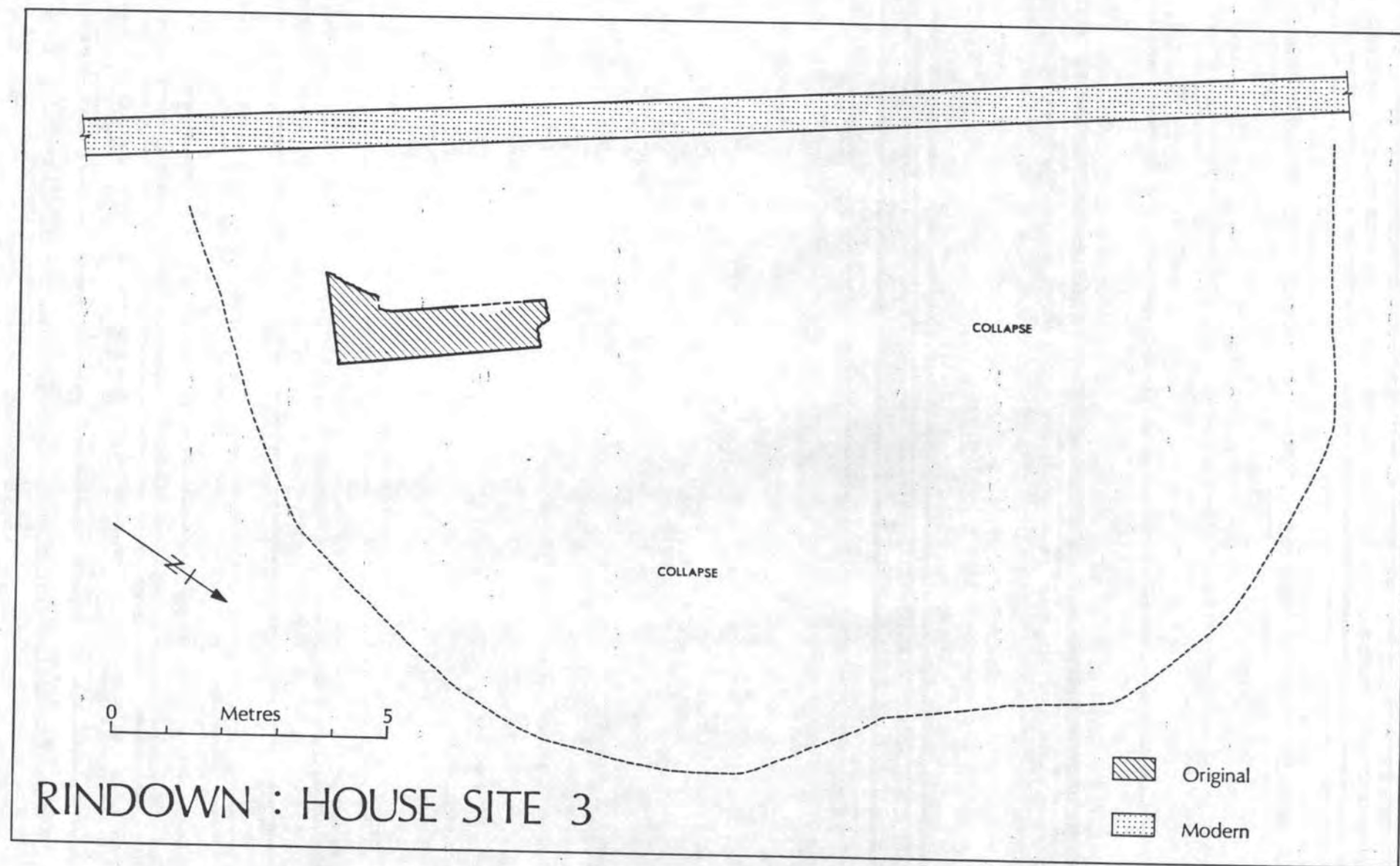
Fig. 23. Ground plan of house 1, Rindown.

COLLAPSE

COLLAPSE

LESSER
COLLAPSE

COLLAPSE

COLLAPSE

DOOR(S) ?

DOOR ?

MODERN WALL
COLLAPSE

LESSER COLLAPSE

COLLAPSE

LIMIT OF TREE TRUNK

Original

Modern

0   Metres   5

RINDOWN : HOUSE SITE 2
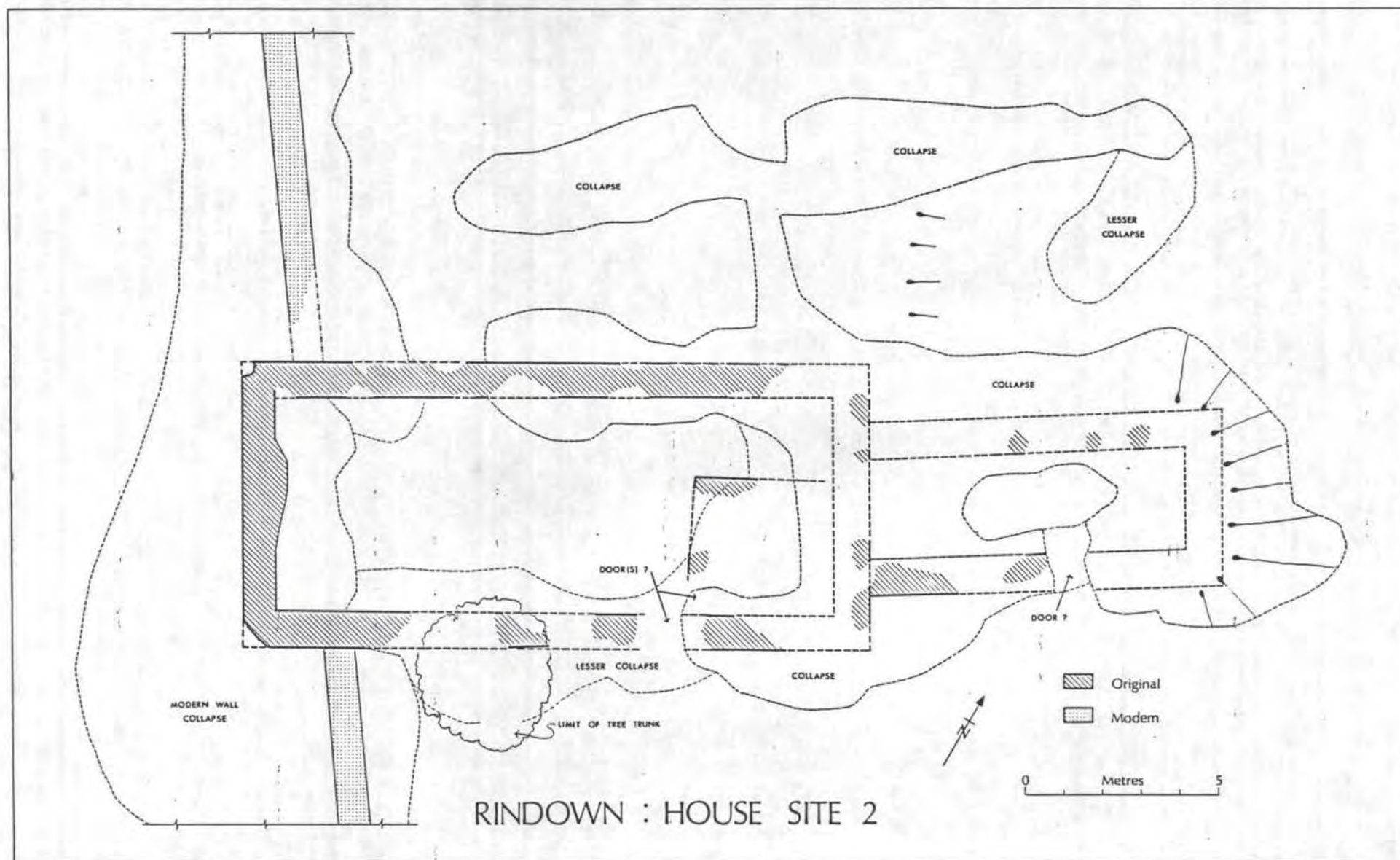
Fig. 24. Ground plan of house 2, Rindown.

RINDOWN : HOUSE SITE 3

COLLAPSE

COLLAPSE

0 Metres 5

Original
Modern

Fig. 25. Ground plan of house 3, Rindown.

SECTION A·B

0   Metres   10

MODERN WALL

A   B
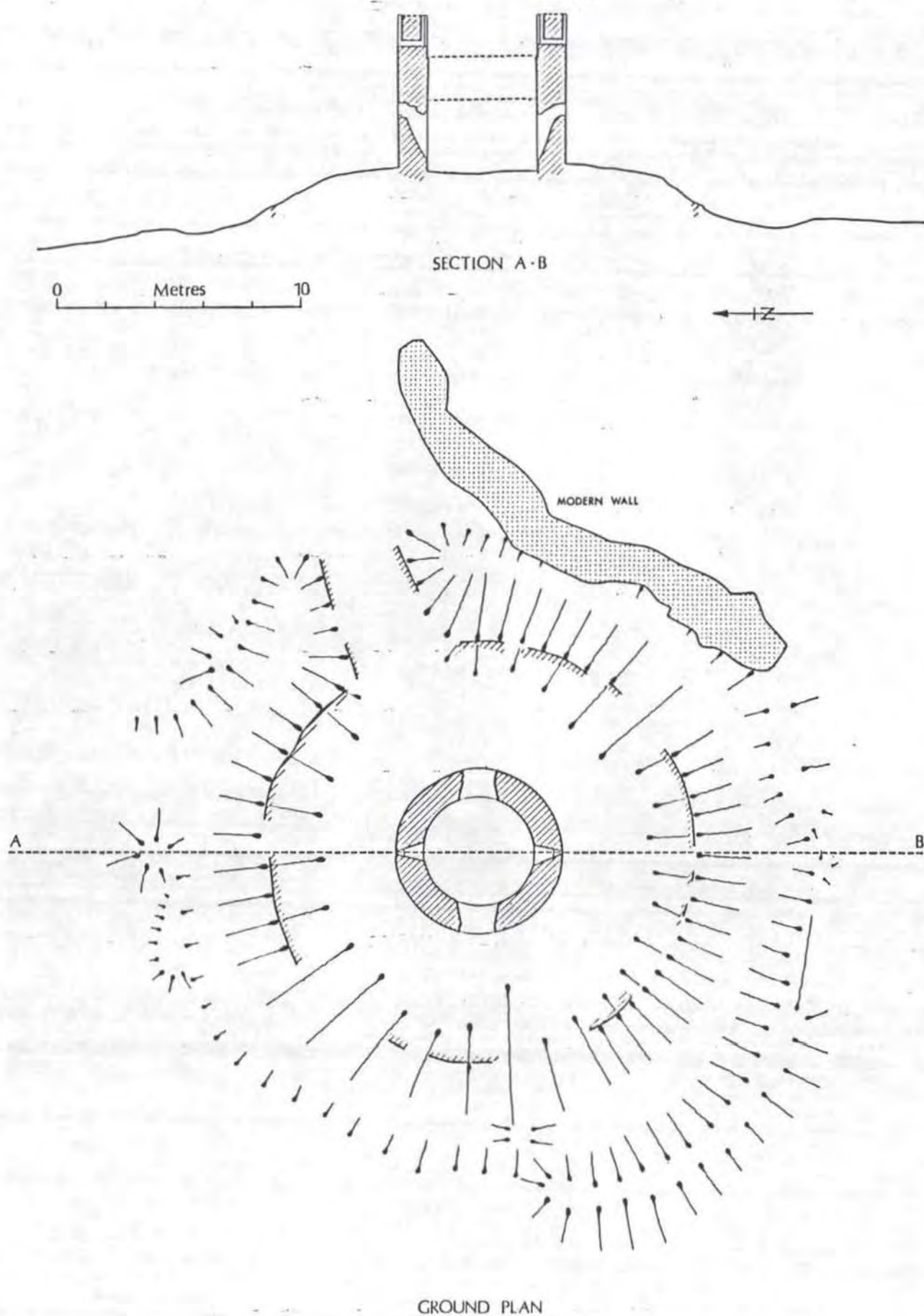
GROUND PLAN

RINDOWN : WINDMILL

Fig. 26. Ground plan and section of Rindown windmill and windmill mound.
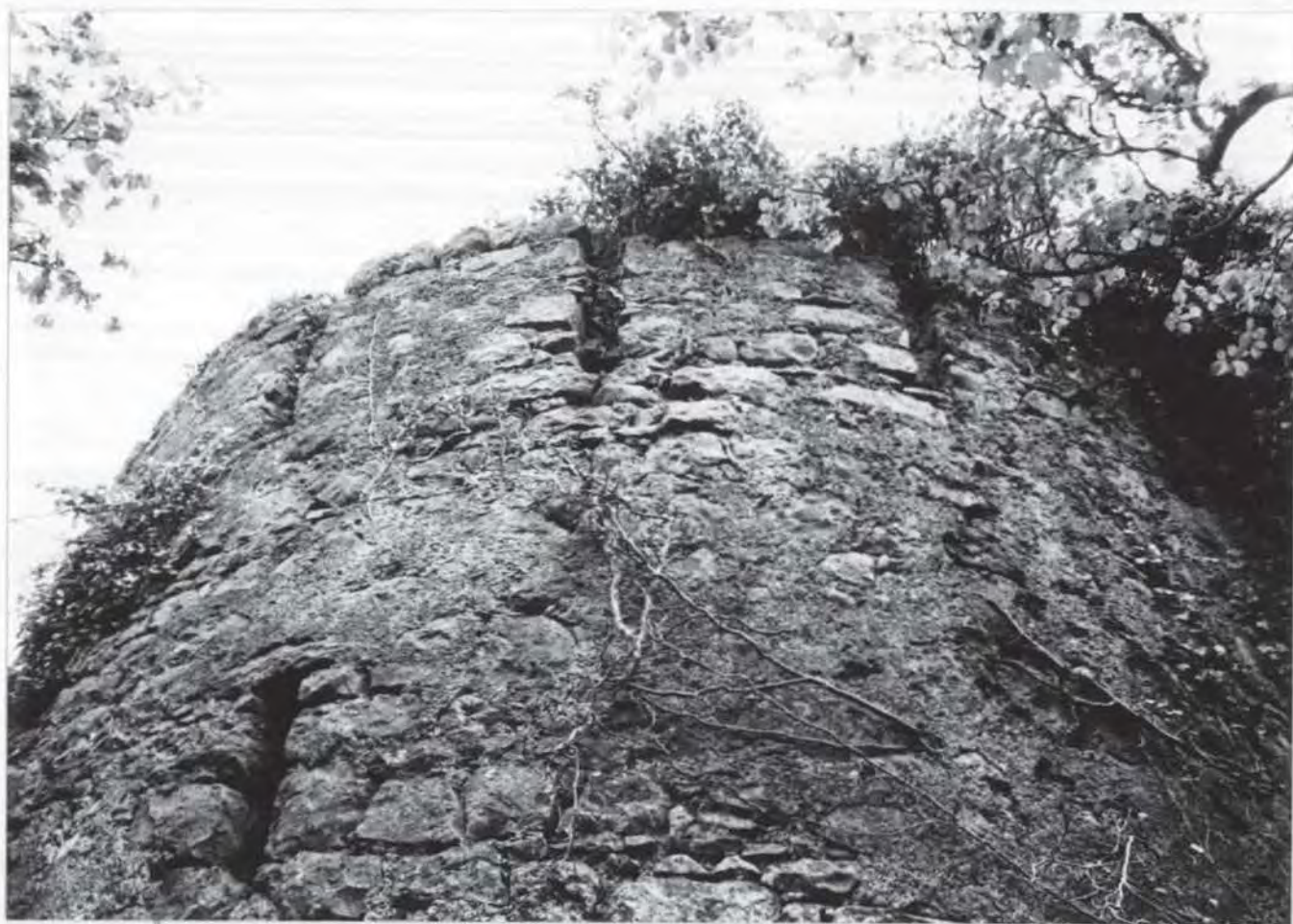
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SECTION

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

UPPER FLOOR PLAN

0   Metres   5
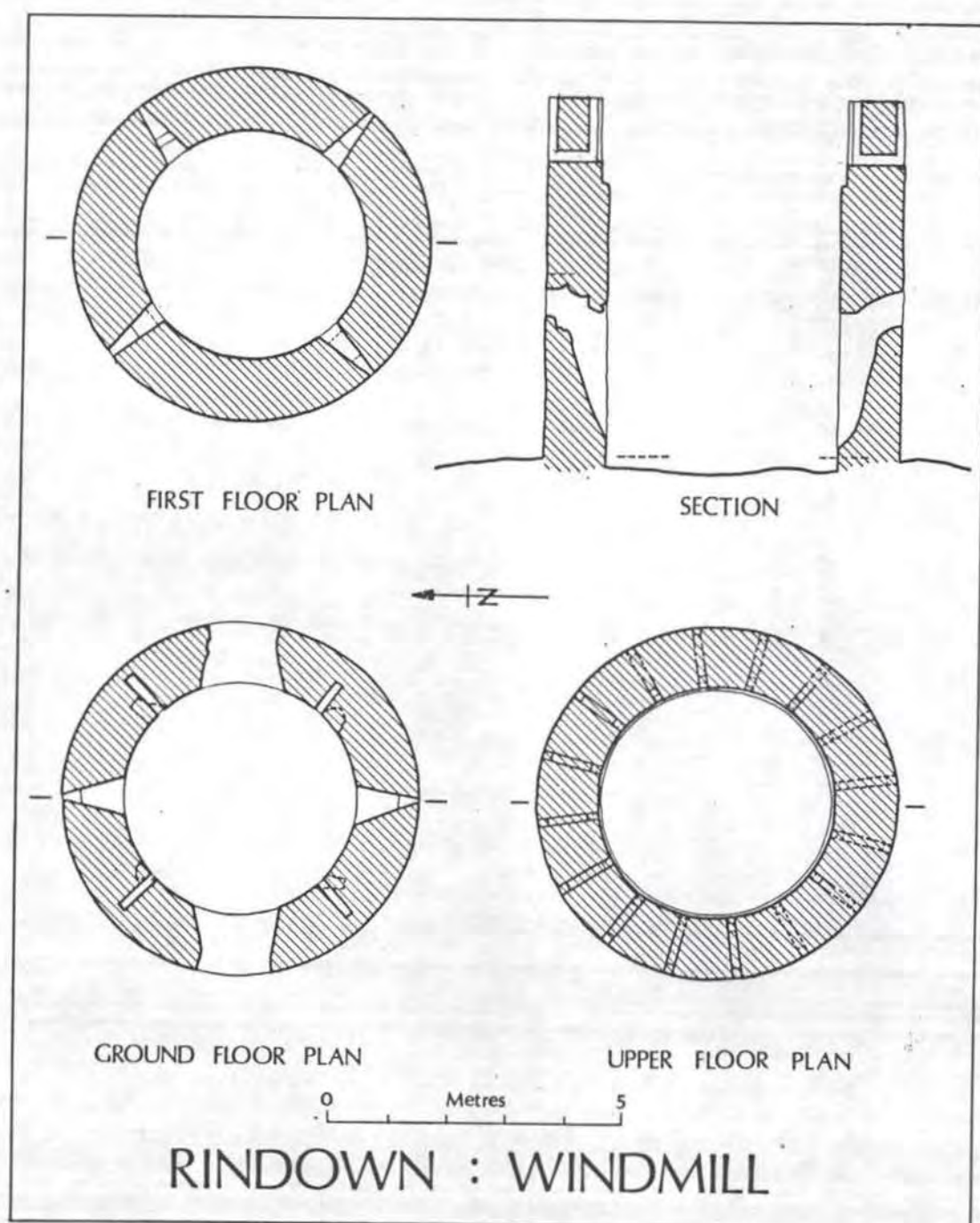
RINDOWN : WINDMILL

Fig. 27. Floor plans and section of Rindown windmill.

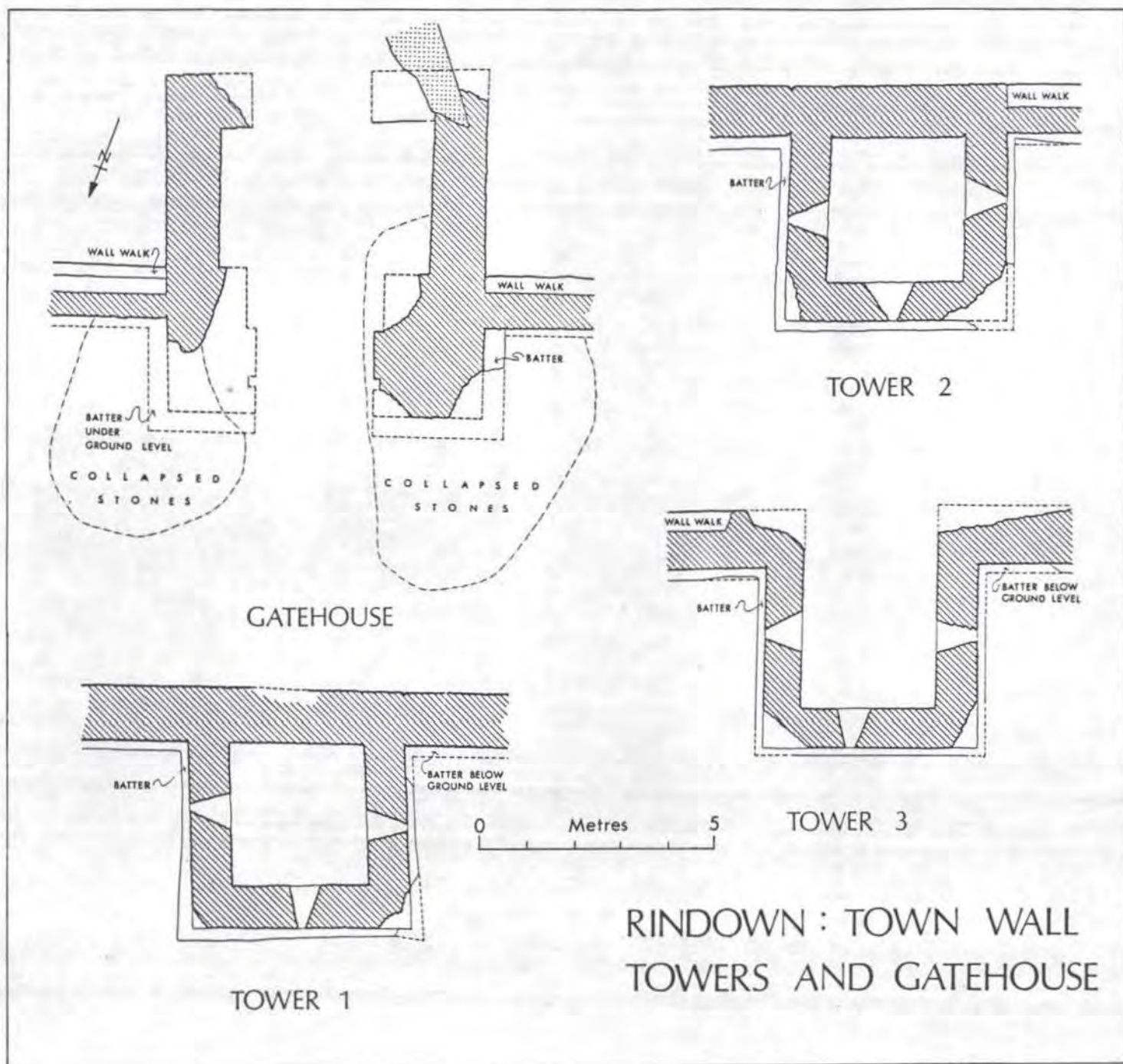Fig. 28. Rindown windmill, detail of the wall slots.

Fig. 29. Rindown: ground plans of the town wall mural towers and of the gatehouse.

Fig. 30. Rindown: view of mural tower 2 from inside the
town wall.

Fig. 31. Rindown: view of mural tower 3 from outside the
town wall.

OUTER GATE

DITCH

DRAWBRIDGE
FOUNDATION

HALL

KEEP

DITCH

RINDOWN CASTLE
GENERAL PLAN

0   Metres   15
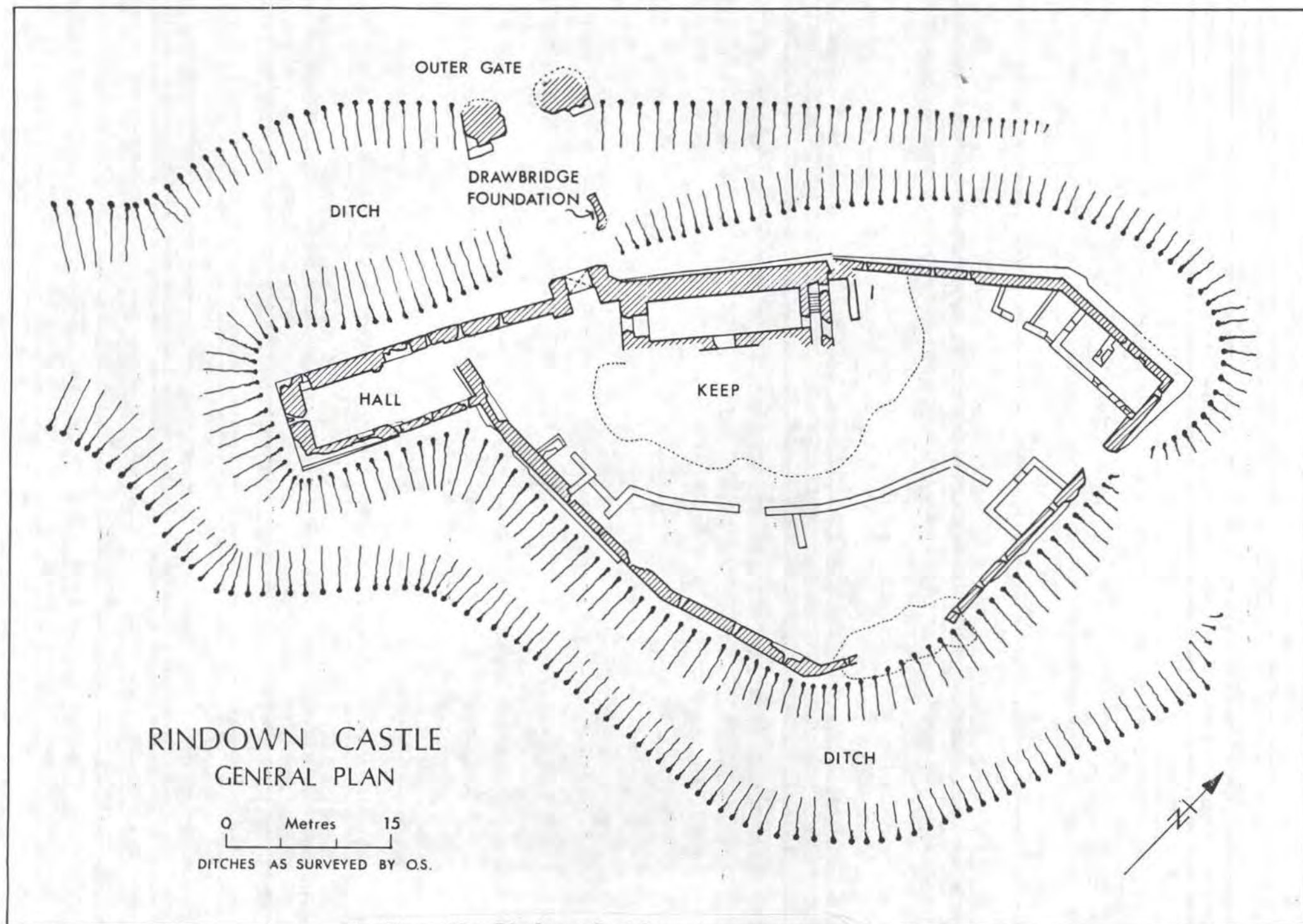
DITCHES AS SURVEYED BY O.S.

Fig. 32. Rindown Castle: general plan.

Fig. 33. Rindown Castle: view of the keep from the northwest

Fig. 34. Rindown Castle: the surviving section of the
vaulted ground floor, from the southwest.

Fig. 35. Rindown Castle: the entrance gate showing the portcullis groove.

Fig. 36. Rindown Castle: internal view of the hall, from the
northeast.

Fig. 37. Detail of the external face of the south curtain
wall, Rindown Castle, showing the blocked arrow loop
and merlons of the original thirteenth century
curtain.

Fig. 38. The interior of the south curtain wall, Rindown
          Castle, from the north. The arcading has been placed
          on the original thirteenth century wallwalk.

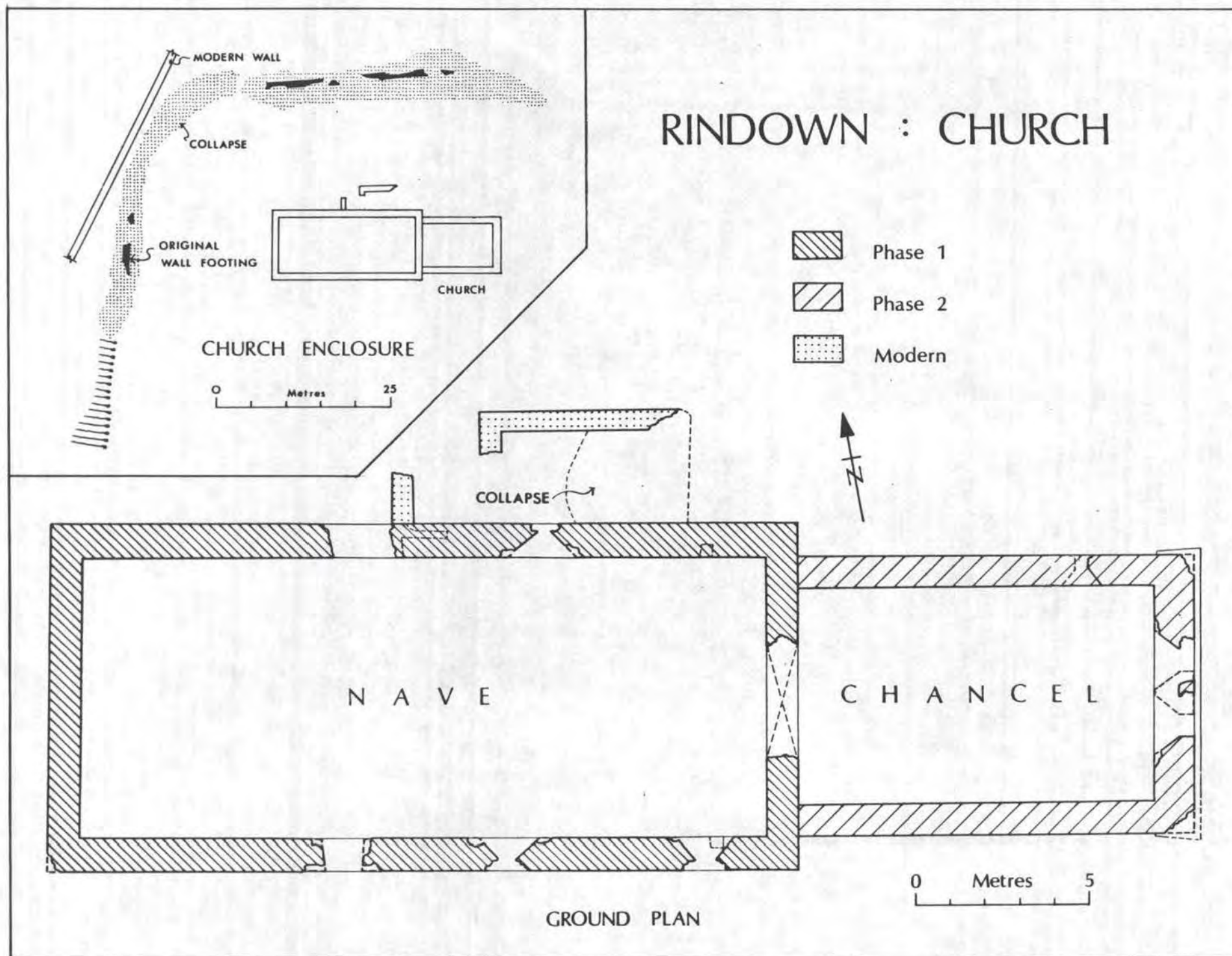Fig. 39. Rindown parish church, viewed from the northwest.

RINDOWN : CHURCH

MODERN WALL

COLLAPSE

ORIGINAL
WALL FOOTING

CHURCH

CHURCH ENCLOSURE

0   Metres   25

Phase 1

Phase 2

Modern

N

COLLAPSE

N A V E

C H A N C E L

0   Metres   5

GROUND PLAN

Fig. 40. Ground plan of Rindown parish church.

Fig. 41. St. John the Baptist's Church, Rindown, from the east.

RINDOWN :
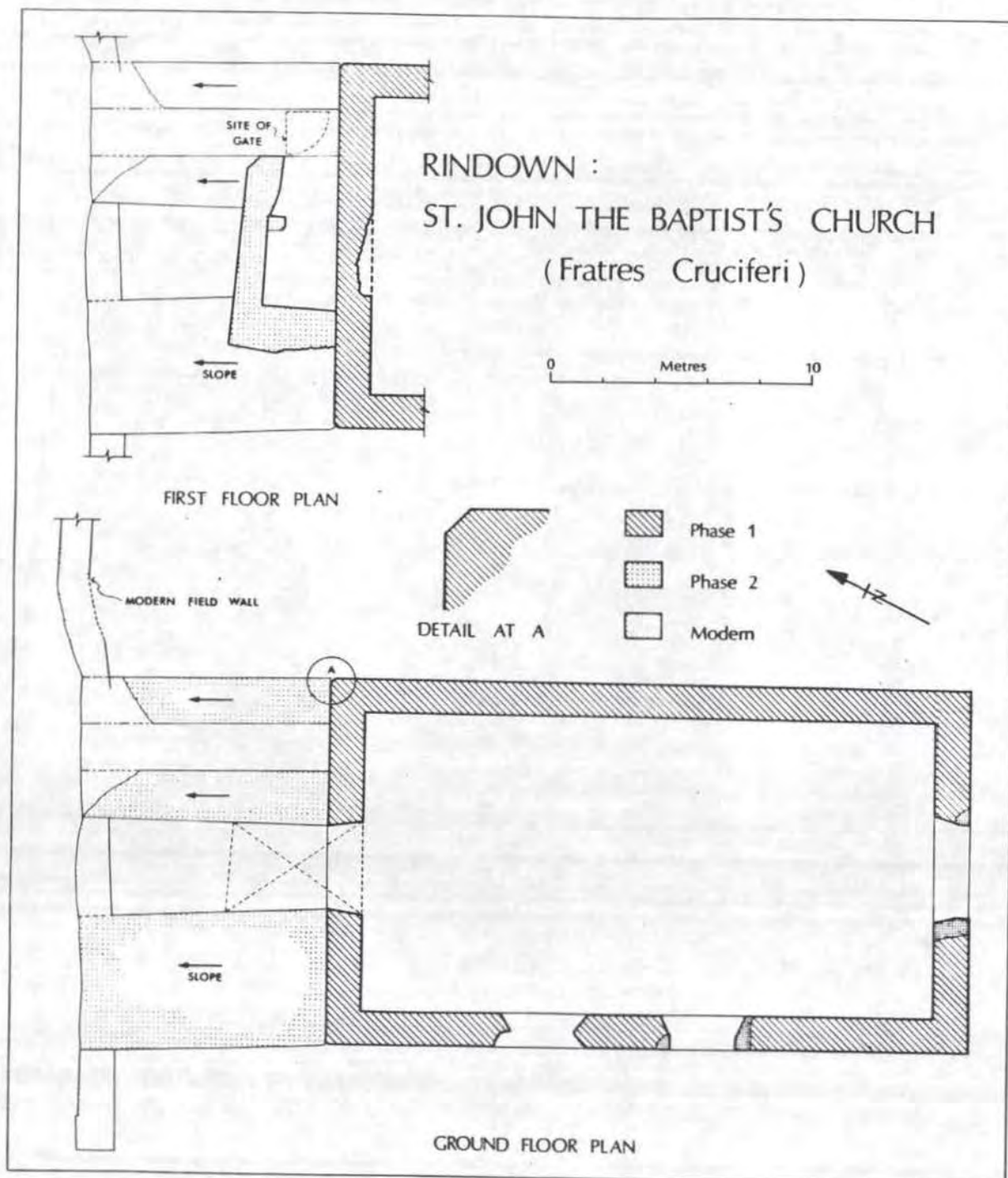ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S CHURCH
(Fratres Cruciferi)

Fig. 42. Ground plan of St. John the Baptist's Church
(Fratres Cruciferi), Rindown.

Fig. 43. Architectural fragments, St. John the Baptist's
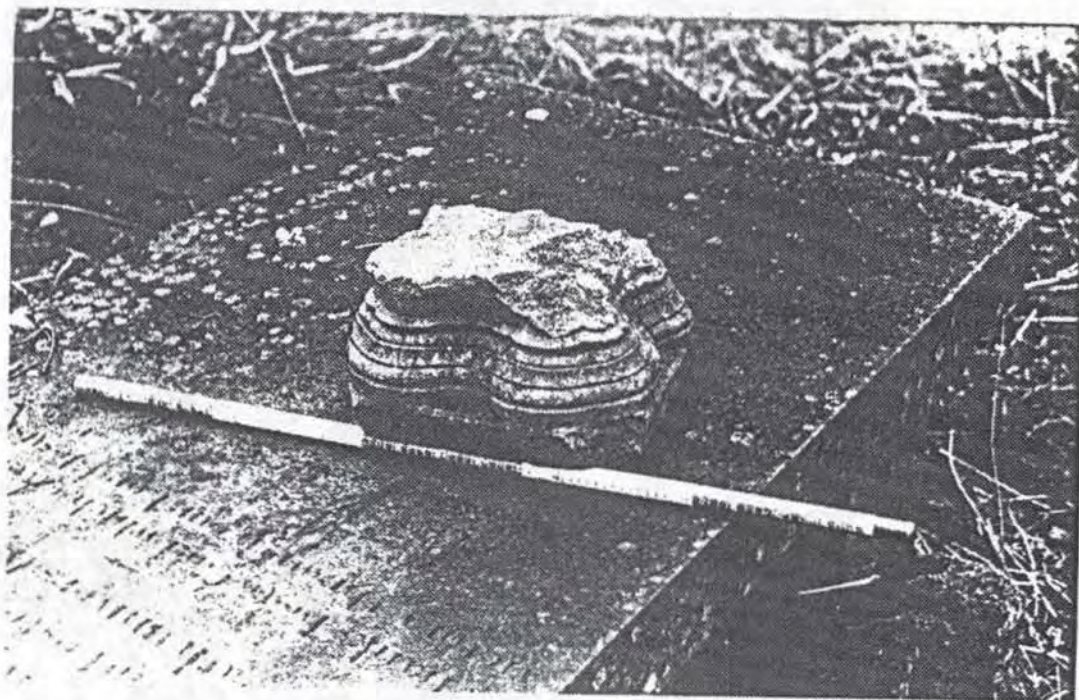Churchyard, Rindown.

Fig. 44. Claustral fragment, St. John the Baptist's
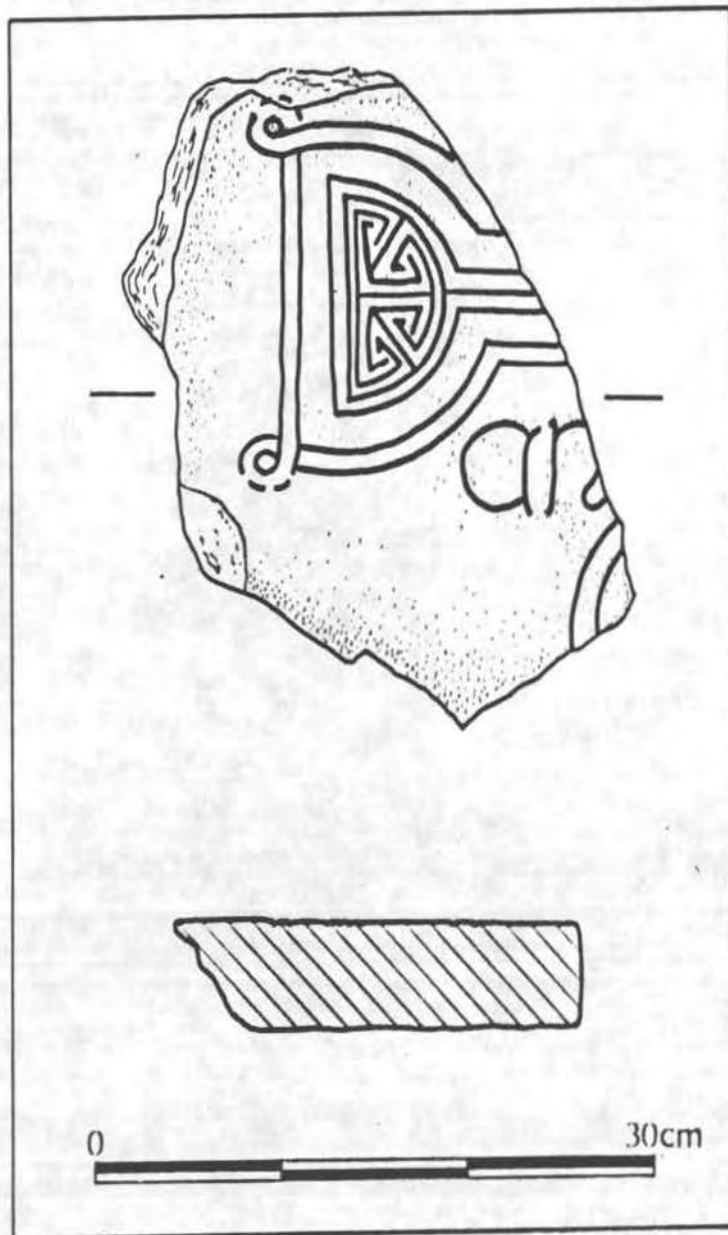Churchyard, Rindown.

Fig. 45. Early Christian graveslab, St. John the Baptist's
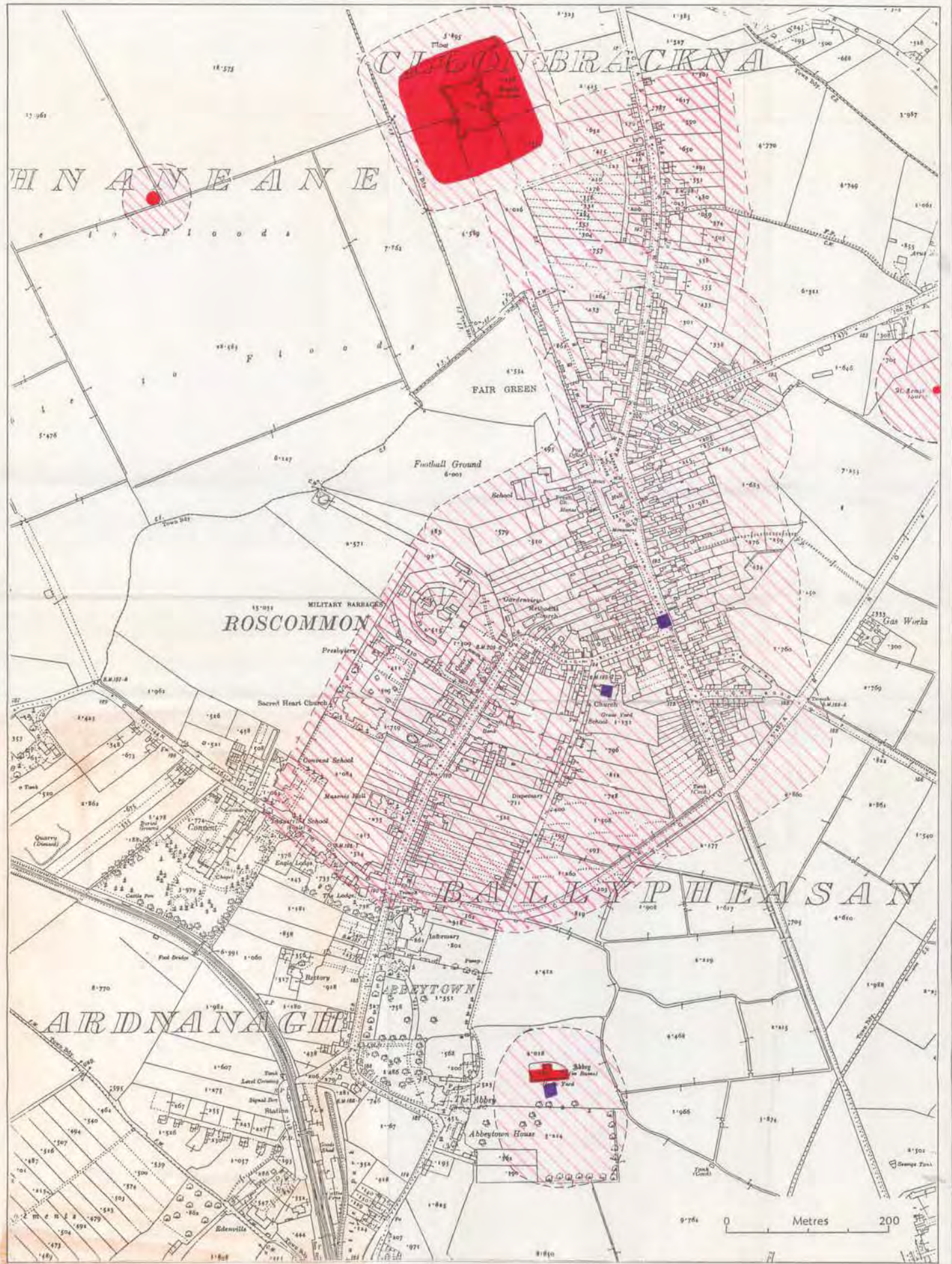Churchyard, Rindown.

CLOONBRACKNA

HNANEANE

FAIR GREEN

Footbll Ground
6·001

School

MILITARY BARRACKS

ROSCOMMON

Gardenview
Methodist
Church

Presbytery

Sacred Heart Church

Church

Grave Yard
School

Gas Works

Convent School

Masonic Hall

Dispensary

Convent School

The Lodge

BALLYPHEASAN

Infirmary

Quarry
(Disused)

Convent

Chapel

Castle Farm

Foot Bridge

Rectory

ABBEYTOWN

ARDNANAGH

Tomb
Level Crossing

Signal Box

Station

Abbey
(in Ruins)
Yard

The Abbey

Abbeytown House

Edenville

0   Metres   200

Fig. 46 Roscommon: zone of archaeological potential

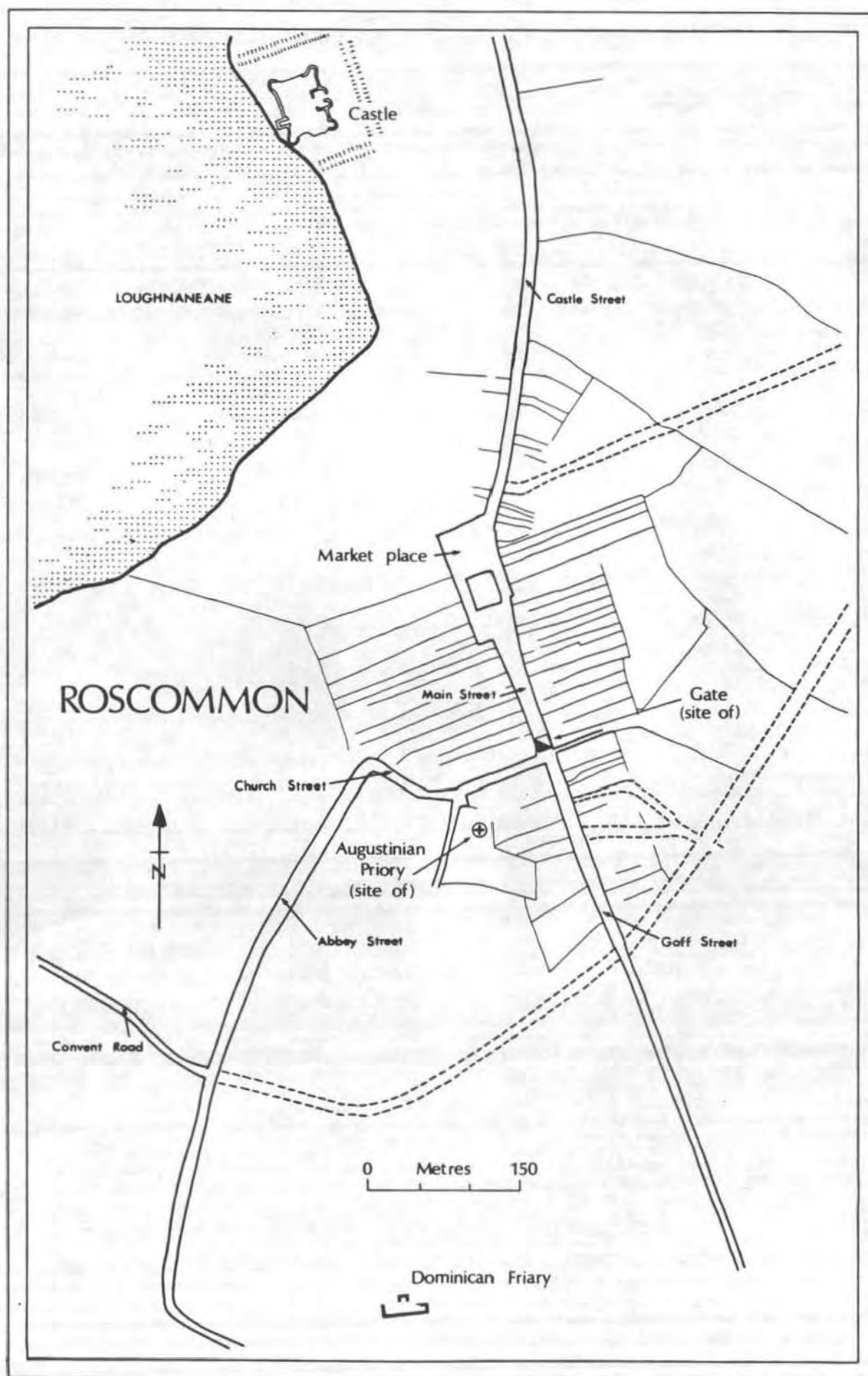Fig. 47. Aerial view of Roscommon from the north (Cambridge
Aerial Coll.).

Fig. 48. Outline map of Roscommon showing the principal
archaeological features.

Fig. 49. Roscommon Castle from the east.

Fig. 50. Roscommon Castle from the north.

Fig. 51. Blocked doorway in the south wall of the tower of
St Coman's Church, Roscommon.

Fig. 52. Window at first floor level in the tower of
St Coman's Church, Roscommon.

Fig. 53. Fifteenth century twin-light window in the west
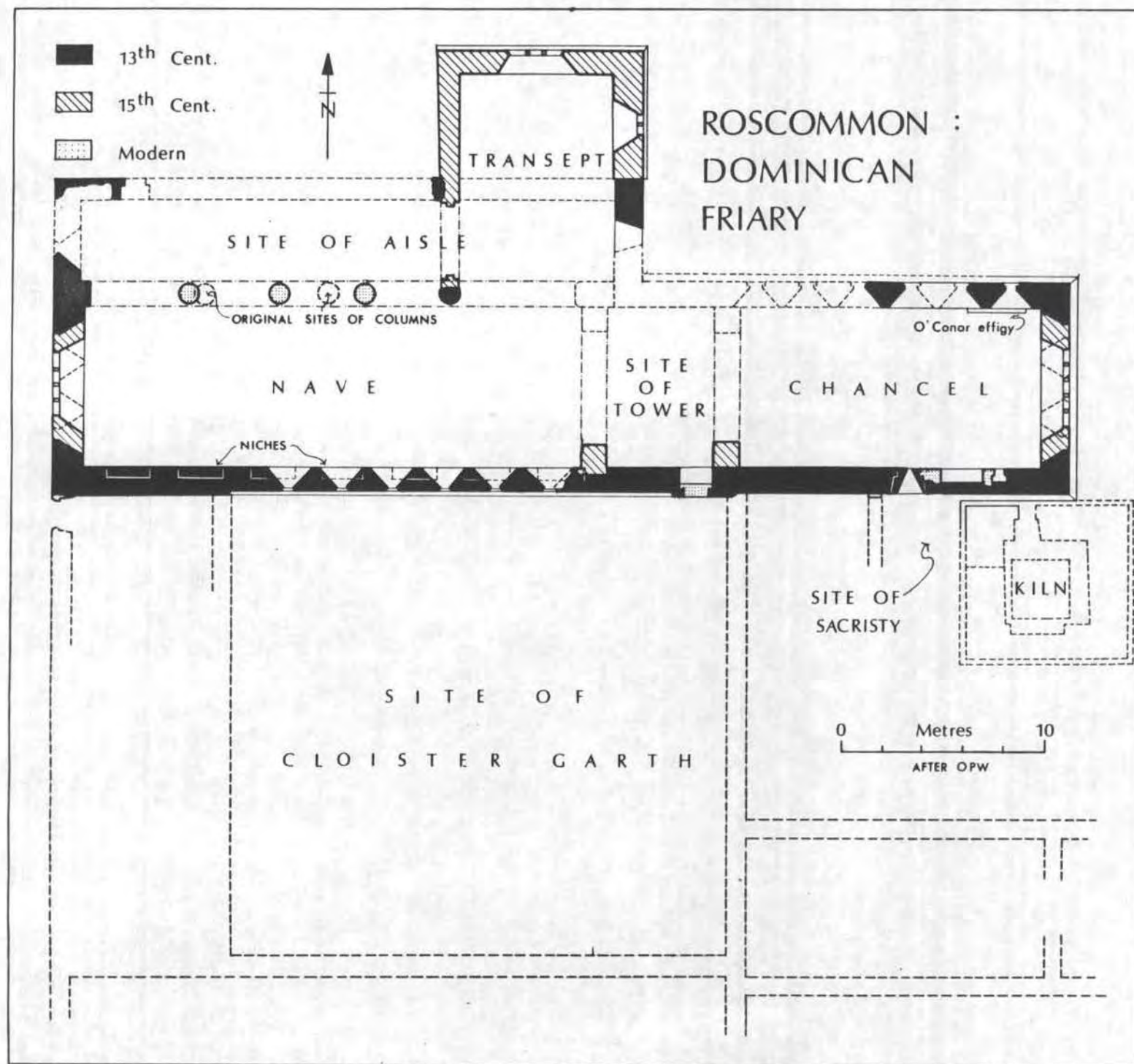wall of the tower at St Coman's Church, Roscommon.

Fig. 54. Ground plan of the Dominican Friary, Roscommon.

Fig. 55. The effigy of King Felimid O Conchobair in the
Dominican Friary, Roscommon.

Fig. 56. Detail of the armed figures on the side panel of
the tomb of King Felimid O Conchobair at the
Dominican Friary, Roscommon.

Fig. 57. Detail of the armed figures on the side panel of
the tomb of King Felimid O Conchobair at the
Dominican Friary, Roscommon.

Fig. 58. Probable fragment of the claustral arcade,
Dominican Friary, Roscommon.

Fig. 59. Tulsk: zone of archaeological potential.

Fig. 60. Tulsk: view of the site of the castle from the
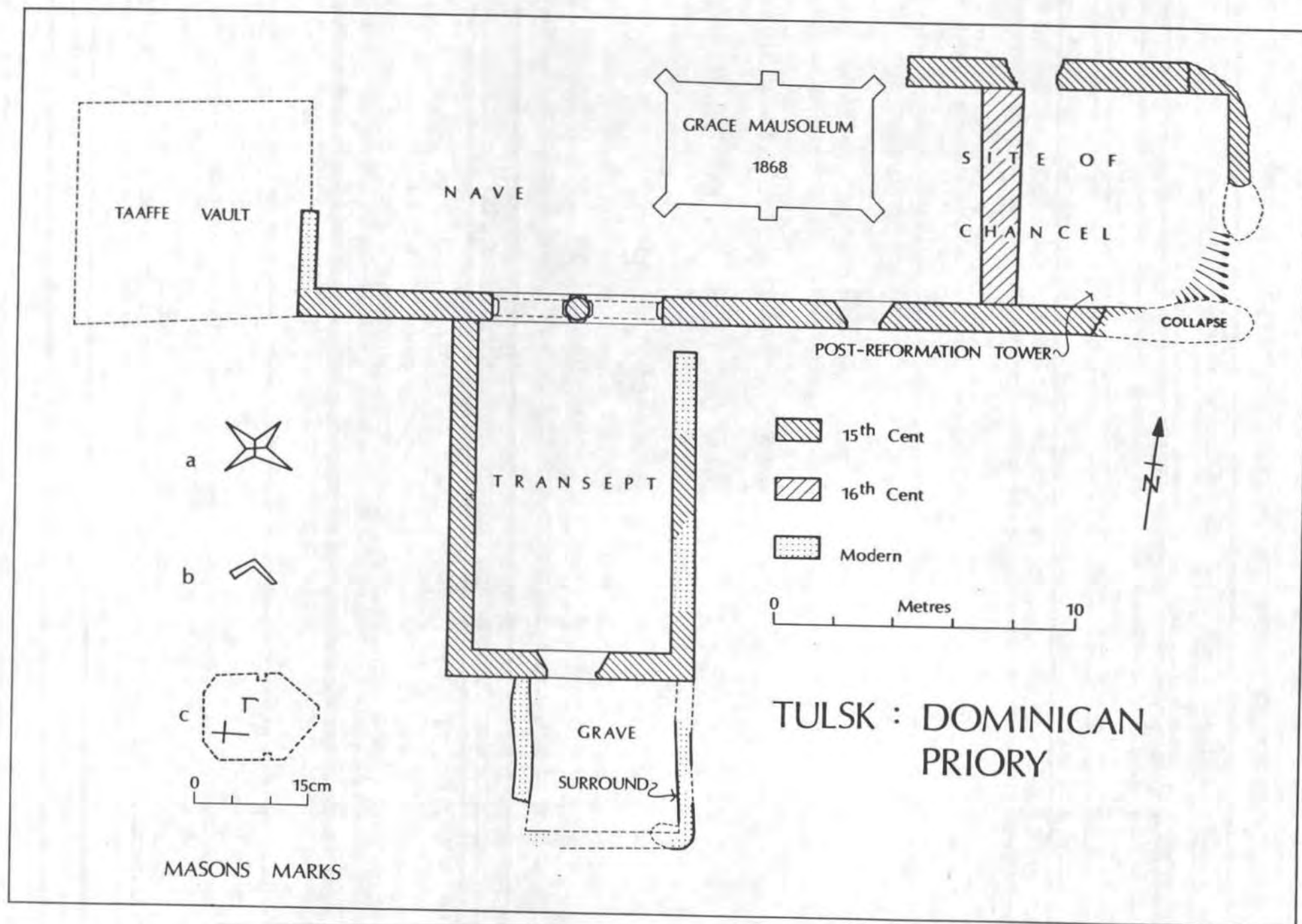   northeast.

Fig. 61. Ground plan of the Dominican Friary, Tulsk.

Fig. 62. The arcade between the nave and south transept
        of the Dominican Friary, Tulsk.

Fig. 63. The ringfort at Tulsk, viewed from the southwest.