[Date of release: 1985]

URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY SURVEY

PART III

COUNTY

WESTMEATH

JOHN BRADLEY

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY

ANDREW HALPIN

AND

HEATHER A. KING

A REPORT COMMISSIONED BY THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC WORKS

[Date of release: 1985]

LIST OF CONTENTS

Figures and Plates follow p. 138

/

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF PLATES

Pl. 1. Ardnurcher
        a) Motte and bailey from north
        b) Supporting pier for drawbridge, from south-east.

Pl. 2. a)Ardnurcher: St. David's Church: Peyton memorial.
        b)Athlone: St. Mary's (C of I) church: Handcock
          memorial.

Pl. 3. Plan of Athlone by Thomas Phillips, 1685 (NLI Ms.
        3137 [32]).

Pl. 4. Athlone
        a) Court Devenish from south.
        b) Wall plaque of John Marle 1621.
        c) Bourke plaque 1639.

Pl. 5. A Prospect of Athlone Castle by Thomas Phillips,
        1685 (NLI Ms. 3137 [33]). The view shows the
        Elizabethan bridge of 1566/7 with the castle as it
        appeared before its destruction in the siege of 1691.

Pl. 6. Athlone.
        a) The North Gate as depicted by Petrie in 1820.
           (From Cromwell's Excursions through Ireland).
        b) Stone plaque from the 1566/7 bridge.

Pl. 7. Athlone.
        a) Arms of Elizabeth I from 1566/7 bridge.
        b) Exhibitionist figure ("Sheela-na-gig") in Athlone
           Museum. Probably from Cluniac Priory.

Pl. 8. Athlone.
        a) Incised cross-slab from Franciscan Friary: OR DO
           CONLOC DO CHADAL.
        b) Incised cross-slab from Franciscan Friary: AILILL
           AVE DUNCHATHO.
        c) Castle: Keep from south-east.

Pl. 9. Ballymore.
        a) Motte and bailey from east.
        b) St. Owen's Churchyard: Chapel from east.

Pl. 10. a) Ballymore: stone tower (?castle) from south.
        b) Fore: St. Fechin's church. Figure on north side
           of chancel arch.

Pl. 11. Fore.
        a) South Gate from north-west.
        b) North Gate from east prior to conservation.

Pl. 12. Fore: St. Fechin's Church.
        a) General view from south-west.

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. WESTMEATH

The urban network which characterises the modern county has formed over many centuries. The largest towns, Athlone and Mullingar, are also the oldest, incorporated by the Anglo-Normans in the early thirteenth century. Both were the sites of settlements prior to the coming of the Anglo-Normans. Athlone was a religous centre and the site of an important bridge, while Mullingar belonged to the church of Lynn. Their development into towns occurred as part of the Anglo-Norman colonization of Westmeath. The towns were founded more for economic than defensive reasons. They were primarily market-places for the produce of the newly conquered lands and their function as strongholds only came later.

Apart from Athlone and Mullingar, the Anglo-Normans also established the town of Fore, while at Ardnurcher, Ballymore and Kilbixy, they founded boroughs, settlements which had the legal privileges of towns but the functions of large villages. There may have been others, such as Killucan beside the great motte of Rathwire, but the historical documentation is lacking and we simply do not know. The fourteenth century was a period of economic decline in Ireland and this was particularly apparent in Anglo-Norman Westmeath exposed as it was to attacks from the native Irish. Athlone, Fore and Mullingar declined during the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth- centuries but Ardnurcher, Ballymore and Kilbixy were abandoned.

The resurgence of English interest in midland Ireland during the sixteenth century brought prosperity to Athlone and Mullingar, but the other Anglo-Norman sites were simply forgotten. Fore continued to decline and its role was eventually usurped by the village of Castlepollard in the seventeenth century. Athlone and Mullingar were largely rebuilt, perhaps even re-planned, in the late sixteenth century but only one new town was incorporated. Kilbeggan was developed by the Lamberts and received its charter in 1613. The seventeenth century, despite its wars, was a century of economic improvement. Kinnegad appears to have been in existence by the end of the century and was the terminus of a coach route from Dublin by 1730. New estate villages, many of which form the basis of today's urban network, were also founded. Moate was laid out by the Clibborn family, and Castlepollard was developed by the Pakenhams. The landlord interest in village layout continued into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and is best reflected in Tyrellspass, winner of so many Tidy Towns awards, which was laid out in the 1820s by the Countess of Belvedere.

This report is concerned with the seven sites which had

urban functions prior to 1700 A.D. These are the Anglo-Norman towns of Athlone, Fore and Mullingar, the Anglo-Norman boroughs of Ardnurcher, Ballymore and Kilbixy, and the seventeenth century town of Kilbegan (Fig. 1). The 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 great 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.

Ardnurcher and Kilbixy are now deserted, Fore and Ballymore have shrunk in size and importance, but Athlone, Kilbeggan and Mullingar are expanding towns ripe for urban redevelopment in the near future. Uncontrolled redevelopment at any of these sites will destroy the fragile archaeological heritage of Westmeath's 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 hand in hand.

ARDNURCHER

The deserted borough of Ardnurcher is located on a ridge about 500 m north of the present village of Horseleap. The placename is a corruption of Ath an Urchair, the ford of the shot (Dinnseanchas 2 (1966-7), 115-7). The origin of the name is uncertain, however, although there is a tradition connecting it with the wounding of Conchobhar MacNeasa (Dinnseanchas 3 (1968-9), 22).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Apart from its traditional association with Conchobar MacNeasa the only evidence for activity on the site prior to the coming of the Normans is a somewhat doubtful reference to a souterrain in the castle bailey (Brownrigg 1788, 46). In the early 1170's, however, the cantred of Ardnurcher was granted to Meiler FitzHenry by Hugh de Lacy (Orpen 1892, 229). The manor was an important one and was well defended from an early date. The record in the Annals of Clonmacnoise for the year 1200 that:

> "some of Meyler Bermingham's people took the spoyle of the castle of Ardnurcher and burnt all the houses of the markett"

suggests that there was a substantial settlement here by that time. The settlement had attained borough status by about 1235 when a burgage in "Ardnurthur" is mentioned in a charter of Walter de Lacy (MacNiocaill 1977, 55). The settlement was in a frontier situation, however, and exposed to attacks from the native Irish such as that recorded in the Annals of Clonmacnoise for 1234 when Ardnurcher was burned by Fedlimid O Conchobhair.

Almost nothing is known of Ardnurcher in the Later Middle Ages but like much of the Anglo-Norman colony it seems to have passed out of Anglo-Norman control in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The castle, and probably the borough, were in Irish hands by 1422 when the sons of O Mailsechlainn attacked Ardnurcher which was held by MacEochagain (Freeman 1944, 461). In 1568 Ardnurcher was granted by Queen Elizabeth to Gerald, Earl of Kildare, and this may indicate the re-establishment of some form of English control.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY
1. BOROUGH SITE
2. DOMESTIC HOUSE

3. MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE
4. TOWN DEFENCES
5. PARISH CHURCH OF ST. DAVID
6. ST. BRIGID'S WELL
7. HOSPITAL

1. BOROUGH SITE

This was located to the west of the motte and was bounded
on the north-east and south-east by a defensive wall. It must
have extended westwards at least as far as the parish church
but the precise line of its western boundary is unknown.

2. DOMESTIC HOUSE

Nothing is known of the form or extent of domestic housing
within the borough but a stone house is specifically referred
to in a grant of c.1280 (Brooks 1936, 162).

3. MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE

The construction of a castle at Ath-in-urchair   is
recorded in 1192 by the Annals of Loch Ce. This may have
replaced an earlier structure put up in the 1170's. It was
built by Meiler FitzHenry but it passed into the hands of
Walter de Lacy sometime between 1207 and 1210 (Orpen 1911-20,
ii, 214; Otway-Ruthven 1968a, 80). In 1214 the castle was
raided by Cormac son of Art Ua MaelSechlainn (Orpen 1911-20,
ii, 303). After the death of Walter de Lacy in 1241
Ardnurcher passed to Geoffrey de Geneville (Otway-Ruthven
1968b, 410). In 1308 de Geneville surrendered his portion of
Meath to his grand-daughter Joan and Roger de Mortimer her
husband. Ardnurcher presumably remained nominally in Mortimer
hands until 1424 when it would have passed to Richard, Duke
of York, before finally reverting to the crown, in the person
of Edward IV, in 1461 (Orpen 1911-20, iii, 286-7). By 1422,
as mentioned above, the castle was in Irish hands and seems
to have been of little military importance in the Later
Middle Ages. Old accounts suggest that there was a stone
castle on the site. Piers (1981, 84), writing in 1682,
records that there was still an "antient stately structure".
The site was described by the antiquary John Brownrigg in
1788 and he noted a round keep-like structure on top of the
motte and some rectangular buildings in the bailey. He also
noted "caves" in the bailey (Brownrigg 1788, 46). These may
be the remains of a souterrain which would suggest that the
motte was constructed on top of an earlier ringfort.

Description (Pl. 1)

The motte and bailey is shown on the first edition O.S. map (1838) but it was omitted from subsequent maps and its position is outlined in red on Fig. 2. It is situated on a ridge running north-east south-west. The east end of the ridge was separated from the remainder by cutting a deep ditch and the interior was heightened to form the motte. The motte consists of a conical mound with a basal diameter of 51 m tapering to a flat sub-rectangular top measuring about 27 m east-west by 11.5 m north-south. It is 11.7 m high. There is a semi-circular shaped hollow at the west end which may be the remains of a building while there are grass covered rectangular foundations on the east side measuring 8.5 by 4.5 m.

A triangular-shaped bailey, with max. dims. of 38 by 25 m is located on the south side. The perimeter has wall foundations, some 1.2 m wide, on the west, south and east. There is a steep scarp on the east side towards the railway cutting. The site was planned in 1788 by Browrigg who showed two rectangular structures on the south side of the bailey adjacent to the perimeter wall but no trace of these is visible. The motte and bailey are protected on the south by a deep ditch, 18 m wide, with an external bank 1 m high. Brownrigg (1788, 48) describes a well at the west end of this ditch. The external bank may have functioned as part of the borough defences. The bank is penetrated by a roadway, 6.4 m wide, which leads to the site of a drawbridge in the south-eastern portion of the ditch. The two supporting piers of the drawbridge are present (Pl. 1b). These are of roughly coursed limestone and stand to a height of roughly 4.5 m. The northern pier, adjoining the bailey, is 9.1 by 3.1 m while the southern example, which has lost some of its facing stones, is 8.5 by 3.1 m.

There was a second entrance to the bailey on the south-west side which would appear to have been approached beneath the drawbridge along the bottom of the external ditch. The west side of the motte was further protected by a second bank and ditch cut across the ridge. The bank, of crescentic plan, is almost as high as the motte but the ditch is shallower than the external ditch of the bailey. Brownrigg noted two ditches cut across the ridge further to the west but these appear to be field divisions rather than defences. A stone wall runs north-west along the crest of the ridge from the motte to the road. Only its foundations survive and these are about 1.5 m wide.

4. BOROUGH DEFENCES

The medieval settlement was protected on the north-east by the external bank of the bailey ditch. This continues northwards as far as the road. A similar bank is present south-west of the motte where the outline of at least two rectangular projecting bastions can be distinguished. This

wall foundation terminates at a distance of about 160 m from
the motte, from which a cross bank runs to the north-west.

5. PARISH CHURCH OF ST. DAVID

The earliest reference to the existence of a church at
Ardnurcher is in 1259/60 when William de Geneville is
mentioned as rector (Sweetman 1875-86, II, No. 645). In 1400
it is described as a mother church with several daughter
chapels including one dedicated to St. Colman (Bliss and
Twemlow 1904, 314, 406). In 1568 it was granted "with its
members and chapels" to Sir Edmund Butler of Cloghrennan, Co.
Carlow (Curtis 1932-43, V, 65).   In   Bishop   Dopping's
visitation of 1682-5 the nave is described as "in bad repair
but the parishioners are mending it" (Ellison 1975, 3). He
further notes that the chancel was ruined, the windows were
unglazed and the floor was of earth.

Description
The remains survive in two sections, a rectangular building
(marked "Abbey" on the O.S. map, Fig. 2) on the graveyard
perimeter, and a masonry fragment immediately east of the
modern parish church (C of I). The rectangular structure has
max. dims. of 10.3 by 5.2 m. and only its foundations, which
are about 25 cm high and 50 cm wide, survive. The masonry
fragment east of the church is of roughly coursed limestone
with a rubble core. It is 1.55 m high, 3.5 m long and 1.5 m
wide. The remains of a window splay are present at the south
end.

Memorials

Peyton wall memorial. 17th cent. (Pl. 2)
Mounted on the south wall of the church porch with
demi-effigies on the east and west walls. It consists of two
rectangular stone tablets set within an architectural frame.
The upper tablet, a poor quality slate, is flanked by two
pilasters supporting a moulded shelf. The pilasters are
decorated with rows of beaded mouldings and the shelf
supports a tympanum flanked by two pinnacles. The lower
tablet is in five sections and is flanked by both
sugar-barley and undecorated pilasters. The sugar barley
pilasters have floriated capitals with bead moulding. The
tympanum has an open book incised THE BIBLE and along the
base THE HOSPITALL OF THE SOULE. The upper tablet is carved
in low relief and carries an elaborate achievement of arms.
Heater shaped shield with dexter: sable a cross engrailed or,
in the first quarter a mullet argent, for Peyton; sinister:
ermine, three fusils conjoined in fess sable, the centre one
charged with a crescent or, for Piggott. Above the
inscription on the lower tablet is an angel's head with two
trumpets emerging from flanking clouds and the words THE
TRUMPET SHAL SOUND THE DEAD ARISE. Incised Roman inscription:

HERE LYETH THE BODY OF GEORGE PEYTON LATE OF STR/
EAMESTOUNE ESQr WHO DYED MARCH THE 15 1698 IN THE/ 68
YEARE OF HIS AGE BY WHOM THIS MONUMENT AND VAULT WERE/
DESINED & CONTRIVED IN HIS LIFETIME FOR Ye BURIALL PLAC/
OF HIMSELFE & HIS PIOUS & VERTUOUS WIFE M. THOMAZEN
PEYTON/ ALIAS PIGGOT ONE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF Ye HONrd Sr
ROBERT/ PIGGOT LATE OF DISART IN THE QUEENS COUNTY
KNIGHT/ WHICH MONUMENT AFTER HIS DEATH WAS MADE & ERR/
ECTED AT THE COSTS & CHARGES OF ONE OF HIS EXECUTORS THE
HONble ROBERT ROCHFORT ESQr SPEAKER OF THE HOUS/ OF
COMMONS & HIS MAties ATTORNY GENll OF IRELAND.

Beneath the inscription is a skull, crossed bones and a
winged hourglass in relief. The flanking demi-effigies are of
smooth grey sandstone. Both have round faces and their arms
are crossed in front. The male figure has a shoulder length
curled wig and a full pleated coat over a shirt with small
cravat. His right hand rests over his heart and he may be
holding a small book. The female effigy has curled hair and
wears a flat head-dress with a veil falling to her shoulders.
She wears a cloak or cape over a square cut bodice with a
diamond shaped brooch on her bosom. She may hold a book in
her right hand.
Dims: H. of wall mon. 4. W. 2.04 m
      H. of Female fig. 60. W. 37 cm
      H. of male fig. 72. W. 38 cm
Fuller 1904-6; Upton 1921-5.

6. ST. BRIGID'S WELL.

    In describing the attack on Ardnurcher by the Ua Mael
Sechlainns in 1422 the Annals of Connacht note that the
brehon Cosnamach Og Mac Aedacain "followed the band westwards
out of the town to Topar Brigte" where he was killed. Bride's
well is still marked on the O.S. map about 1 km west of
Horseleap (Fig. 2). A small chapel, called Teach Brighde,
stood here in 1470 (Walsh 1957, 17).

7. HOSPITAL

This site is located some 1.5 km north-east of the borough in
the townland of Spittaltown. It has been identified as the
site of the "leper hospital of Ballenoragh" (Gwynn and
Hadcock 1970, 356; Lee 1974-5, 226).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTTIAL

    Ardnurcher is a good example of a deserted borough. There
is little evidence of disturbance and it is likely that

archaeological deposits are intact over a large area of the
site. The possible souterrain indicates that there may have
been an Early Christian settlement site here, probably a
ringfort. In turn, this suggests that evidence may survive
regarding the transition of the site from pre-Norman to
Anglo-Norman times. The period of the borough's desertion is
not known but the documentary evidence suggests the fifteenth
century. The surviving archaeological evidence indicates that
the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries was a period of
prosperity and it is likely to be well represented in
archaeological deposits.

Knowledge of the nature of the settlement in medieval
times is scant. Was it a rural borough or did it have genuine
urban functions? Nothing is known about domestic dwellings,
street pattern or the settlement's extent. The presence of
borough defences and the known stone house indicate that it
was a settlement of importance, wealthy enough to afford
their construction.

In summary, the archaeological data indicates that the
borough has been the scene of human activity in Medieval, and
possibly Early Historic, times. Historical documentation is
slight and in the future archaeological excavation is likely
to be the principal means by which additional knowledge of
Ardnurcher's past is obtained. The borough is not under
direct threat from development at present but its proximity
to Horseleap could mean that it will come under pressure from
housing constructors. In the immediate future, however, it is
more likely that threats will stem from agricultural
improvements.

Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 2)
delimits the area of archaeological potential within modern
Ardnurcher. This is based on the extant monuments, the motte,
church and stretches of the borough wall. The shaded area has
been continued outside the line of the wall for a distance of
about 150 m in order to allow for the presence of potential
extra-mural sites. In the absence of archaeological
excavations nothing can be said about the depth of
archaeological deposits.
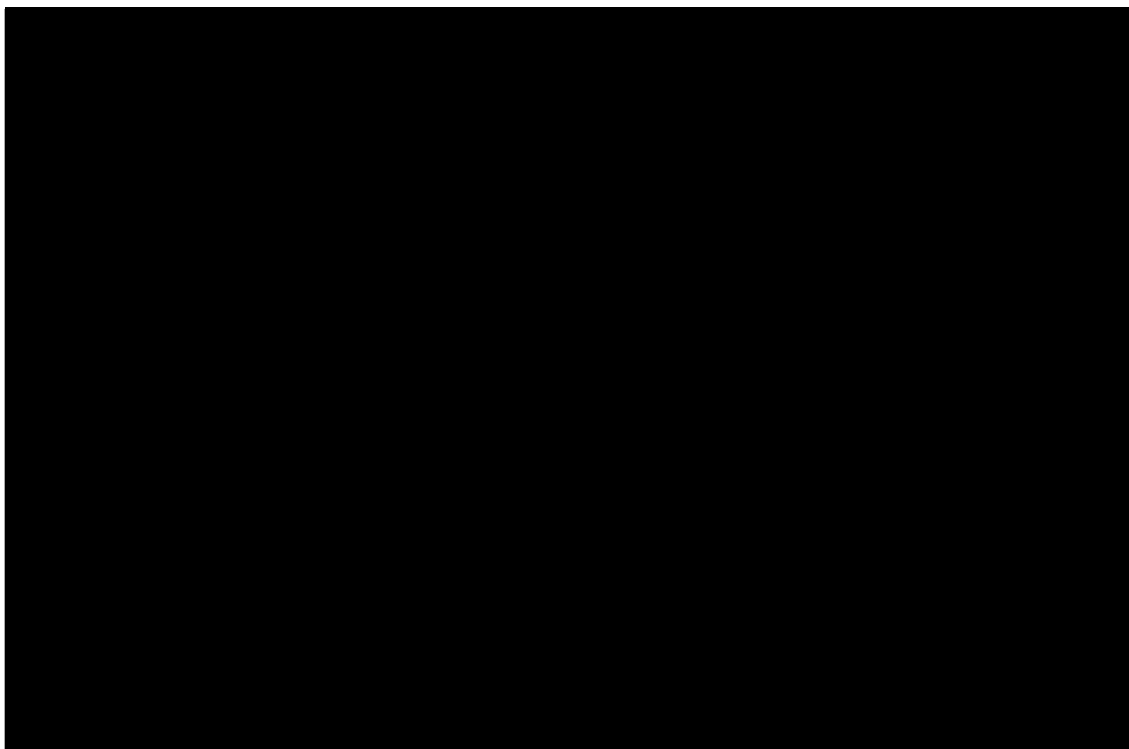
ATHLONE

The town sits astride the River Shannon just south of Lough Ree and is located on top of a broad ridge which forms part of the eiscir riada. Its name, Ath Luain "the ford of Luan", indicates that the town developed around a fording place. The wealth of prehistoric objects from Athlone shows that this ford was important from early times. By the close of the Early Historic period it is evident that the ford had acquired strategic importance as the main gateway between Leinster and Connacht. To the Anglo-Normans Athlone was the entrance to Connacht and the importance of its position is evident from the fact that since the Middle Ages all routes linking the eastern provinces with the west, including the Dublin-Galway railway, have crossed here.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric Athlone

A large number of objects were found in the course of drainage and works connected with the construction of the new bridge in the 1840's. Some twenty stone axeheads indicate the use of the site as a fording point during the Neolithic but there is no evidence to suggest that there was any permanent settlement here at this time. The presence of a portal tomb at Mihanboy, Co. Roscommon, 4.5 Km west of the town, however, suggests that there was Neolithic settlement in the area.

The Bronze Age is well represented in the material from Athlone. Its early phases are reflected in the gold lunulae, stone battle-axe, copper and bronze flat axeheads, and bronze rapiers. Gold ornaments of the Later Bronze Age are also present including bar torcs, penannular bracelets, "dress-fasteners", a "tress-ring", "sleeve-fastener" and a piece of "ring money". Later Bronze Age weapons and tools from Athlone include bronze spearheads, swords, socketed axeheads, a bronze shield, a socketed knife and a sickle. The frequency of occurrence of Bronze Age material suggests that the site was an important and much frequented fording point, although again there is no evidence for actual settlement on the site.

The Iron Age material includes an iron sword of Hallstatt type, a bronze ring-headed pin, a bronze bowl and two bronze mounts. Whether the relative scarcity of Iron Age material reflects a decrease in the frequency of use of the ford is not clear.

Early Historic Athlone

Among the artefacts of this period from Athlone are
bronze penannular brooches, ringed pins and harp pegs. The
first evidence for settlement is provided by five graveslabs,
four of which were found in the Franciscan Friary graveyard,
dating from the mid-eighth to eleventh centuries (Fanning and
O hEalaidhe 1980). Although there has been a suggestion that
the slabs were removed from Clonmacnois, they almost
certainly indicate a church site on the east bank of the
Shannon at Athlone. The quality of these slabs, which include
one apparently commemorating a King of Connacht, suggest that
it was an important church. There may also have been an early
church site on the Connacht side of the river (Stokes
1890-1a, 181; Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 110) but the evidence
is not clear cut.

The high incidence of Viking objects from near Athlone
suggests considerable Viking activity in the area. The
largest Viking period gold hoard known from Europe was found
in the neighbourhood of Athlone, probably at Hare Island in
Lough Ree, c.1802. A number of silver ingots and arm-rings
found at the same time may represent a separate hoard. Both
hoards have been dated to the second half of the ninth or
first half of the tenth centuries. Two richly decorated
silver armrings, of a type similar to some of those found in
the Hare Island hoards and presumably of the same date, were
found in the river Shannon at Athlone while a Hiberno-Norse
silver necklet of slightly different form is also known from
Athlone.

The earliest documentary reference to Athlone is to a
battle fought there between the men of West Mide and Connacht
in 899 (Chron. Scot.; AFM sub anno 894). In 998 the Annals of
Inisfallen record that Brian Boruma went to Athlone and took
the hostages of Connacht within one week. By this the
annalist appears to mean that the crossing into Connacht was
made at Athlone. In 1001 the Annals of Ulster note that "the
causeway of Athlone" was built by Mael Sechlainn, King of
Mide, and Cathal mac Conchobhar, King of Connacht. This was
apparently an isolated episode but from c.1120 until 1170
Athlone was the focus of intense activity because it formed
the essential bridgehead into Mide for Toirdealbhach and
Ruaidhri Ua Conchobhar, the expansionist Kings of Connacht
(Claffey 1970-1, 55). In 1120 Toirdealbach built a bridge
across the Shannon at Ath Luain and in 1129 he constructed a
castle there to defend it. Both had a troubled history in the
next forty years and the Annals frequently record their
destruction by the Ua Maelsechlainns of Meath and their
subsequent reconstruction by the Ua Conchobhars.

The importance of Athlone in the twelfth century was not
just as a bridging point, however. In 1168 the Annals of the
Four Masters state that the house ("teach") of Ruaidhri Ua
Conchobhar at Ath Luain was raided by the Cinel Eoghain with
the comharba of Derry who took away "gold, raiment and many
cows". The implication of this reference would appear to be
that the King of Connacht had a residence at Athlone. In

addition to the royal house the Cluniac priory of SS Peter and Paul may have been present on the east bank of the Shannon from c.1150 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 110). This concentration of settlements and structures is unusual in Early Historic Ireland and may have formed the focus for other ancillary domestic settlements.

Medieval Athlone

No details of the first arrival of the Anglo-Normans at Athlone are preserved. The Kingdom of Mide was granted to Hugh de Lacy in 1172 (Mills and McEnery 1916, 177) and the process of sub-infeudation and settlement began soon afterwards but it is unlikely that any effective inroads were made as far west as Athlone for some time. The original Anglo-Norman grantee of Athlone seems to have been Geoffrey de Costentin who was granted a cantred in Connacht adjoining Athlone in 1200 (Sweetman 1875-86, I, No. 137; Orpen 1907, 259; Claffey 1970-1, 55). He was also probably responsible for the construction of a motte at Athlone sometime between 1191 and 1199 (Orpen 1911-20, II, 129; Graham 1980, 53).

The visit of King John to Ireland in 1210 marks a turning point in Athlone's development. John de Grey, Bishop of Norwich, was appointed justiciar of Ireland as part of John's efforts to improve the administration of the colony and he appears to have recognized the strategic importance of Athlone as the gateway between the Anglo-Norman liberty of Meath and Connacht, still effectively in Irish hands (Orpen 1911-20, II, 281; Claffey 1970-1, 56). De Grey appears to have desired to establish Athlone as the joint seat (with Dublin) of English administration in Ireland (Claffey 1970-1, 56) and the first step in this plan was the construction of a new castle and bridge at Athlone in 1210. The castle was of stone and it is possible that the bridge was also stone-built. The new castle and bridge may have attracted further settlers and references to the vill and mills of Athlone occur in 1225 and 1235 (Sweetman 1875-86, I, Nos. 1261, 2289). The precise date at which the settlement achieved borough status is unknown but half a burgage plot on the west bank of the river was granted to St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin, in the early thirteenth century (Gilbert 1884, I, 224; cf. ibid. p.xxix). The importance of the settlement is further emphasised by the grant of an annual eight-day fair, to be held at the castle, by Henry III in 1221 (Sweetman 1875-86, I, No. 1010). It is noteworthy that the evidence for the early thirteenth century settlement refers mainly to the west bank of the Shannon. The earliest definite evidence for the a settlement on the east bank is a reference to the "town of Athlone on both sides of the water" in 1234 (35 Report Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 37). A reference of 1305 to "the bridge between "the castle and the town" suggests that by this date the main settlement was on the east bank of the river but whether this was the case from the beginnings of the Anglo-Norman settlement is unclear (Mills

1914, 65).

Athlone received monies to build a town wall in 1251 and
this may indicate that its security was threatened (Sweetman
1875-86, I, No. 3159). In the 1260's the settlement was
subjected to increasing pressure from the Irish of Connacht
under Fedlimid O Conchobair and his son Aedh (Orpen 1907,
263-70; 1911-20, III, 245-50). This reached its high-point in
1272 when, in the wake of his victory at Ath in Chip (1270),
Aedh captured Athlone, burnt it and destroyed the bridge.
With the accession of Edward I, however, greater attention
was paid to strengthening the Anglo-Norman colony and large
sums of money were spent on improving the castle defences of
Athlone between 1273 and 1279 (Orpen 1907, 270-1; Claffey
1970-1, 57). An indication that the town was still an
important seat of English administration comes from a
petition of 1289 which notes that on the death of Stephen de
Foleburne, justiciar of Ireland, many important documents of
the administration were kept in Athlone castle (Sweetman
1875-86, III, No. 558, p.255).

The town continued to experience further difficulties in
the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In 1290 the
Irish again attacked Athlone at a time when the bridge was in
a state of collapse (Sweetman 1875-86, p.273; Orpen 1911-20,
III, 32-4). In 1305 the threat of attack from the O'Farrells
of Annally in Longford was sufficient for the justiciar to
order that a galley "of at least 32 oars" be stationed in
Lough Ree to protect the castles of Athlone and Rindown
(Mills 1914, 64). In 1315, during the upheavals precipitating
the Bruce invasion, the town was burned by Ruaidri O
Conchobair who assumed the kingship of Connacht later in that
year. Thereafter the English administration gave up the
attempt to enforce its authority in Connacht and Athlone
increasingly became an isolated outpost on the western
frontier of the colony (Claffey 1970-1, 58). For the
remainder of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuroes
documentary information on Athlone is scarce suggesting that
the town fell into decline or was, as Claffey (1970-1, 59)
suggests, in Irish hands. Indeed in 1327 the royal grant of
alms to the friars of Athlone was transferred to Cashel
because Athlone was occupied by Irish friars (Gwynn and
Hadcock 1970, 243). The payment of a salary to the constables
of Athlone castle is recorded up until 1394 (Claffey 1970-1,
59) and it is worth noting that one of these, Thomas
Ocathisse, clearly of Irish extraction, is recorded as having
recovered the castle from the Irish in 1381 (Tresham 1828,
116 no. 17). During the late fourteenth and fifteenth
centuries the castle was frequently held by the Irish. In
1443 it was captured by Muirchertach O Cellaig and retaken by
James Dillon and William Boy Dillon (A.Conn.). In 1455 it was
"taken from the English" (AFM) and in 1490 it was again
captured by the Dillons (AFM). A letter of 1537 from the
King's council to Thomas Cromwell notes that Athlone castle
had been recently recovered from the Irish who had held it
for many years (Cal Carew Mss 1515-74, 124).

Post-Medieval Athlone

Athlone castle and the dissolved Priory of SS Peter & Paul seem to have been held by the Vice-Treasurers of Ireland from their recovery in 1537 until 1569 when the castle and estate were assigned to the newly established Presidency of Connacht which was to be based at Athlone (Murtagh 1980, 91). The return of an official presence gradually encouraged a revival in the town's fortunes. In 1566-7 a new bridge was built but despite a letter of 1567 which claimed that all Connacht had been tamed by the building of the bridge (Cal State Papers Ireland 1509-73, 346) Athlone's troubles were not over. In 1572 the town was burned "wholly to the ground" by James FitzMaurice FitzGerald and the sons of the earl of Clanricard with a force of Scots mercenaries (Cal. State Papers Ireland 1509-73, 477; Murtagh 1980, 91). In the following year it was burned again this time by the O'Moores and O'Connors (Cal State Papers Ireland 1509-73, 520). These burnings indicate that the defences of Athlone were deficient and probably in a state of disrepair (Murtagh 1980, 91) but various proposals to build new defences in the final quarter of the sixteenth century came to nothing (Murtagh 1980, 92-4). Nevertheless the late sixteenth century saw the expansion of effective English control over most of Connacht and this brought considerable stability and prosperity to Athlone which is emphasised in the granting of a charter of incorporation to the town by Elizabeth I in 1599 (17 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland 108, no. 6318; Stokes 1890-1b, 200-1) and confirmed in a charter of James I in 1606 (Cal State Papers Ireland 1606-8, 45; Stokes 1890-1b, 202).

In 1619 James I granted to the protestant townsmen of Athlone their own estates in fee farm together with 42 acres on the Westmeath side belonging to the castle "with the condition of building every one his house after the English manner and to inclose the town with a substantial wall" (Cal State Papers Ireland 1615-25, 437; Stokes 1890-1a, 183; Murtagh 1980, 94). A similar provision was made for the Connacht side in 1622 (Cal State Papers Ireland 1615-25, 351). This scheme seems to have resulted in the construction of substantial stone houses over much of Athlone (Stokes 1890-1a, 183; 1890-1b, 207) some examples of which survive to this day. The walling of the Leinster side of the town appears to have been completed by 1636 (Murtagh 1980, 95).

The town was captured by the Cromwellians in 1651 (Murtagh 1980, 95-6) and this appears to have been followed by an infusion of new settlers who brought new commercial vitality to the town as witnessed by the number of trader's tokens issued in Athlone between 1654 and 1660 (Stokes 1890-1b, 209). The fortifications on both sides of the town were strengthened between 1651 and 1654 (Murtagh 1980, 96-8) but these were unable to withstand the 1691 siege by Ginkel's army when extensive damage was done to both castle and town (Langrishe 1890-1b; Murtagh 1972-3).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN
2. DOMESTIC HOUSES
3. MARKET PLACES
4. THE BRIDGE
5. QUAYS
6. THE CASTLE
7. TOWN DEFENCES
8. ST. MARY'S PARISH CHURCH
9. FRANCISCAN FRIARY
10. CLUNIAC PRIORY OF SS. PETER & PAUL
11. HOSPITAL
12. MISCELLANEOUS
13. LIST OF STRAY FINDS

1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN

    The town is bisected by the river Shannon and the street
pattern of the town on the east bank differs from that on the
west (Figs 3-4). The plan of the east side was essentially
linear focussed on Church Street. This street broadens
towards the west to form a triangular market-place (Custume
Place) in which the Tholsel stood. At this point the street
divides, northwards to the North Gate, south along Bridge
Street to the site of the old bridge, and west to the present
bridge. Preaching Lane and Court Devenish, on the north side
of Church Street, are shown in the Phillips map of 1685 (Pl.
3) and are also old streets. Irishtown, stretching eastwards
outside the walls, formed a linear suburb.

    The west town was dominated by the castle and its plan
was less regular consisting of two east-west streets and one
running north-south. The castle lay to the north of the old
bridge and its route was continued westwards via Main Street
and High Street. Further north Market Place and King Street
formed the other east-west route, while Castle Street is the
only remnant of a longer street which according to Phillips'
1685 map (Pl. 3) continued along part of the site occupied by
the modern Catholic Church.

2. DOMESTIC HOUSES

    No medieval houses survive in Athlone and nothing is
known of domestic housing in the town before the seventeenth
century. A considerable amount of house construction seems to
have occurred about 1620 as a result of Wilmot's scheme
whereby protestants were granted lands in Athlone   on
condition of building stone houses "after the English manner"
(Cal. State Papers Ireland 1615-25, 437). Two Athlone houses
are known from this date, Court Devenish, built c. 1620
(Stokes 1890-1b, 207), and "Ginkel's House", built in 1626
and demolished in 1939 (English 1972-3, 185-9). Stokes

(1890-1a, 183; 1890-1b, 207) suggested that many of the buildings in Custume Place (then Victoria Place), Bridge Street and Church Street as far as Mardyke Street may be of seventeenth century date and this is supported by a number of seventeenth century heraldic plaques known from houses in this area. Piers (1981, 87), writing in 1682, described the Leinster side of Athlone as

> "fairly built as to outward appearance, most houses boasting of their neatly hewn coyns and arches; but most especially the curious workmanship of the funnels of their chimnies".

The surviving seventeenth century remains are located on the Westmeath side and this is largely due to the destruction of the Connacht side by Ginkel in the siege of 1691. Further destruction was caused in 1697 by an electric storm which destroyed at least sixty-four houses (English 1970-1, 88-9).

Houses on the East side

The fate of "Ginkel's House", demolished in 1939, is indicative of what has happened to most of Athlone's seventeenth century housing. It is likely, however, that old stonework survives behind some Church Street facades and many of the houses on this street have substantial basements built of coursed masonry although no dateable features could be identified.

Court Devenish (Fig. 5; Pl. 4a)

Built c.1620 this house was the scene of an engagement in 1648 during the Confederate wars (Stokes 1890-1b, 207). Its architectural merit was sufficiently outstanding in 1682 to merit special mention by Piers (1981, 87)

> "one house built backward from the street by one Devenish exceeded all the rest for politeness of architecture; but this beauty was all without doors, for within they were ill shapen and ill contrived".

Situated in the grounds of the modern Court Devenish immediately inside the north wall of the town; access is via Preaching (or Lucas) Lane. The south facade survives together with parts of the east and west returns. The fabric is in poor condition, overgrown and in need of repair; there is an earthen build-up of about 1 m over the ground floor and modern lean-to structures have been built in the interior. Some windows are missing transoms or mullions and the first floor west window is partially blocked with bricks. Seven window jambs are strewn on the ground around the building. The structure appears to have suffered heavily in Ginkel's 1691 siege and many of its stones have been used in the walls and rockery of the present garden and it is likely that they

were re-used in constructing the modern dwelling also.

The house was three storeyed and built of evenly coursed mixed masonry with dressed quoins and jambs. Most of the quoins are missing but the surviving examples have horizontal and vertical tooling. The windows, of two or three lights, are rectangular, mullioned and transomed with external hood moulding; all splay internally and have a flat rear arch. The window jambs are grooved for glass and have bar-holes.

The house was originally of H or half-H plan. The main entrance was centrally placed in the south wall; its jambs are now missing. There are the remains of a window in the section west of the door but otherwise the external ground level is quite plain. Internally there are two wall cupboards in the east and west sections. On the first floor there is a fine triple light above the door. The east section has two surviving windows and the jamb of a third, an arrangement which seems to have been repeated on the west side. The first floor arrangement of the east side is duplicated on the second floor. There may have been similar windows in the west section but it has been considerably altered. Two inscribed pieces of graffiti record early visitors: J.P. WITFORD 1857-63 (on the chamfer of the south-west window on the first floor), and 1737 A.D. R.H (on a stone east of the entrance).

"Ginkel's House". 1626.

The association of this building with the Williamite general Ginkel appears to be no older than 1850 and the original occupant for whom it was built is unknown (English 1972-3, 185). It stood in Custume Place at the north-west end of Church Street on the site of the present Genoa Cafe until its demolition in 1939. Photographs prior to its demolition survive from which it is possible to reconstruct some of its features (English 1972-3, pls. 11-12). The house was three storeyed and appears to have had a cellar or undercroft also. It was entered through a round arched door, approached from the street via a short flight of steps. The door had an external hood moulding with the date 1626 in false relief set into the spandrels. The moulded jambs ended in a chamfered stop decorated with a fleur-de-lis topped hour-glass motif. The building appears to have survived largely intact until c.1850 when it received extensive alterations including a new roof. Stokes (1890-1a, 183) recorded that prior to these alterations it had a circular window in the shop front and a steeply pitched roof with sky-light windows.

House Plaques

Four armorial plaques which presumably decorated house fronts are known. Only No. 1 survives in situ; 2-3 are in Athlone Museum and No. 4 is known from manuscript sources.

The Wilmot Plaque. 17th cent.
Rectangular. On the rear first floor of the present Saxone Shoe Shop, Church Street. Access is via Preaching Lane and the plaque is located over the roof of the sheds built on to the second house east of the lane. Decorated with an achievement of arms in relief. Heater-shaped shield with a mantling consisting of a torn and folded parchment decorated with rosettes. Three eagles heads couped and three scallops per fess. The arms may be those of Charles Wilmot, Lord President of Connacht (1616-25) or Henry Wilmot, Commissioner of the Presidency of Connacht (1644).
Dims. H.80 W.60 cm.

2. John Waple. 1621 (Pl. 4b).
Rectangular block of limestone from Church St. Carved in false relief with a heater shaped shield and an inscription in Roman lettering. The shield has two bends and three cross crosslets per fess; the date 1621 is incised below. Inscription: ERCTED BY IOHN/ WAPLE MARCHANT.
Dims: H.41 W.37 T.12 cm.

3. Unidentified Heraldic Plaque. 17th cent.
Rectangular limestone plaque with heater-shaped shield and mantling similar to 1 above. Removed from Hogan's on the south side of Church St. Engrailed shield with a bend sinister and a lion rampant overall. The family have not been identified but it could be either Gray, Lloyd, Price or Grace (May 1969, 46).
Dims. H.50 W.46 T.16 cm.

4. Dillon plaque. ?17th cent.
A stone mural tablet carrying the Dillon arms is mentioned in the Burgess Papers (English 1974-5, 256).

Houses on the West side

A number of long burgage plots survive on the south-east side of Main Street. Sean's Bar, 13 Main St., has thick walls; it is two storeyed with an additional third storey in brick and a late medieval stone built fireplace from a house on an island in Lough Ree. Preserved on the premises is a section of wattle partition removed from a first floor wall; this could be of seventeenth century date but it is not securely dated (O'Sullivan 1974-5, 232-3). Other houses in this street appear to have been similarly constructed. The houses in O'Connell St., however, are different in style and have basements below ground level like those in Church St.

3. MARKET PLACES

The town appears to have had two, one on either side of the river. Regarding the west side it is known that the right to hold a fair at the castle was granted in 1221, while a

grant of 1623 mentions the "market place" on this side (Irish Record Comm. 1830, 558). In recent times the market place was immediately outside the castle to the north-west but this site may date to the construction of the new bridge in the 1840's. The original market-place was probably adjacent to the castle in Main Street, near the old bridge (see Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1 (1869-75), 251).

On the Leinster side, the area of the junction of Bridge Street, Church Street and Northgate Street has been used as a market place since at least the late sixteenth century. In 1587 John Rawson was leased "the market place of Athlone" on condition of building a timber market-house (16 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland p.18 no.4941; Cal. State Papers Ireland 1586-88, 430). This was the predecessor of the tholsel whose construction was ordered in Athlone's charter of 1606 (Cal State Papers Ireland 1606-8, 45). The first stone tholsel was built in 1703 (O'Brien 1972-3, 190). According to Langrishe (1890-1a, 277) Church Street was formerly known as Leinster Market Street.

4. THE BRIDGE

The bridging point is undoubtedly the feature to which Athlone owes its origins and it is clear from the large numbers of prehistoric objects that it was an important ford from early times. The earliest reference to a structure across river is in 1000/1001 when Mael Sechlnaill, King of Mide, and Cathal Ua Conchobhar, King of Connacht, built a "tochur", perhaps some sort of causeway rather than a bridge (AU). The political ambitions of Toirdealbach Ua Conchobhar, King of Connacht (1114-56), gave the ford added importance in the twelfth century and control of the ford became the means of keeping Mide and the midlands in check (Ryan 1966).

Twelfth Century Bridges
At least six were built in the years between 1120 and 1159. The first of these, built in 1120 by Toirdealbach Ua Conchobhar was destroyed in 1125 (AFM; MacCarthy's Book). The second bridge was built in 1129 together with a protecting castle. Two years later the castle was struck by lightning and destroyed (A. Clon.) and it seems likely that the bridge was also burnt because A. Clon. record the construction of another (the third) bridge by Toirdealbhach in 1132. In 1133 both bridge and castle were destroyed by Murchad Ua Mael Sechlainn, King of Mide, and Tigernan Ua Ruairc, King of Breiffne (AFM). A fourth bridge, termed a "cliathdroichet" by AFM was built in 1140 and lasted until 1153 when it was destroyed by by Mael Sechlainn Ua Mael Sechlainn, King of Mide (AFM). This was replaced by a new bridge (the fifth) constructed in 1155 but destroyed in the same year (AFM). A sixth bridge was constructed in 1159 by Toirdealbhach's son Ruaidri but it was destroyed in 1162 (A. Clon.). Subsequently there is no record of the building of a bridge until the

coming of the Normans.

The twelfth century bridges from Athlone are among the earliest recorded from this country and it would be interesting to know their form and the nature of their construction. Unfortunately, it is difficult to assess the implication of the change in terminology from "tochur" in 1000 to "droichet" after 1120, and "cliathdroichet" in 1140. "Cliathdroichet" is usually translated "wicker- or wattle-bridge" and this might suggest little more than a causeway across the river. Hennessy (Chron. Scot. 342 n.1) ascribes the alternative meaning of "beam" to "cliath" and implies that Toirdealbach Ua Conchubhair erected a true bridge over the river. This translation, however, is not recorded in the R.I.A. Dictionary of the Irish Language. In a reference to a battle fought in 1146, A. Tig. records that the "cliath" (?beam) of the bridge of Athlone collapsed under the Connacht army and resulted in the drowning of many men. Whatever the precise meaning of "cliath" such a catastrophe suggests the existence of a true bridge rather than a causeway.

The Anglo-Norman Bridge
In 1210 a bridge was built by John de Gray, the justiciar, at the same time as the castle (ALC; A. Clon. s.a.1208-9). Work is again recorded at the bridge in 1232-4 and masonry work was suspended on the ward of Rindown castle in 1233 in order to permit the completion of the bridge at Athlone (Sweetman 1875-86, I, No. 2043; see 35 Rep. Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 37). Whether this work involved the completion of De Gray's bridge, begun twenty years earlier, or the construction of a new bridge is unclear but the deflection of masons from Rindown to Athlone suggests that the bridge was of stone. A stone bridge is specifically referred to in the acounts of the justiciar, Geoffrey de Geneville, for 1274-5 (36 Report Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 41) but again it is unclear whether this represents the rebuilding of the old bridge destroyed by Aed O Conchobair in 1272 or its replacement by an entirely new one. By 1305 the bridge was again in need of repair (Mills 1914, 65) and in 1306 Richard de Exeter, constable of Roscommon castle, received payment for "making a bridge at Athlone with a gate at the end thereof", presumably the western end (38 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 103). This is the last record of the Anglo-Norman bridge and its subsequent fate is unknown.

Sidney's Bridge 1566-7
In 1566 the Lord Deputy, Sir Henry Sidney, ordered a new stone bridge to be built (ALC; Ulster Jrl. Archaeol. 3 (1855), 41) and although it sufferred much at the hands of both sides in the sieges of 1690-1 it survived until 1844 when the present bridge was constructed (Joly 1881). Piers (1981, 85-6), writing in 1682, described it as

"a very strong, high raised and well-built bridge, in

the middle whereof stands a fair monument with some figures well cut in marble, together with Queen Elizabeth's scutcheon of arms and some inscriptions declaring the time and the founders of the building".

He also noted the presence of a "great drawbridge" at the western end of the bridge, and several undershaft mills at each end. The presence of mills, noted by Joly (1881, 78-9) in the nineteenth century, dates to at least 1578 when Edmund O'Fallone of Athlone was leased two watermills which he himself had built on the bridge (13 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 99). According to Joly (1881, 18) the bridge had nine arches and was 360 feet in length with a maximum of 14 feet in width (cf. Pl. 5).

Sidney's bridge stood about 50 m downstream of the modern bridge just south of the castle, linking Bridge Street on the east with Main Street on the west. It is perhaps a reasonable assumption that the twelfth century bridges occupied this site also but this remains to be definitely established.

The bridge was ornamented with a series of plaques which were removed prior to its demolition in 1844 and are now preserved in the National Museum of Ireland. In all thirteen plaques survive, eleven of which relate to the building of the bridge and the remaining two to its repair in the 18th century. It is difficult now to place them in their original setting but the first three were probably on top (see Joly 1881).

1. Rectangular. A demi-figure holds a plaque with the letters E.R. and a crown surrounded by scroll-work and knots in relief. It is slighlty damaged and the head of the figure is missing.
Dims: H.23 W.26 D.20 cm

2. Rectangular stone with a Tudor rose, an ivy spray (Pl. 6b). Inscribed in false relief:

GEVE TO CESAR THAI W/ IS CESARS AND TO GOD/ THAT WHICHE IS GOIS MAT 22.

Dims: H.21 W.81 D.10 cm

3. Three stone fragments. Incised inscription: GOD SAVE * QWEN ELIZAB; the ornament after SAVE is a Tudor rose.
Dims: H.21 W. 156 D.9 cm.

4. Worn rectangular panel with a bearded man wearing a long fur-trimmed mantle over a tunic. His right hand holds a ?pleated purse which may be suspended from his neck and his left hand is outstretched holding an animal which looks like

a badger but has been described as a rat (Joly 1881, 62-3). It has a very worn inscription: E R/ PETRVS/ LEWYS. Dims: H.67 W.49 cm

5. Rectangular. Carved in high relief with a male demi-figure in a narrow waisted armour of lames with cowters at the elbows. He holds a sword in an upright position in his right hand and his left hand rests on his waist and touches the garter which is worn knotted over his left shoulder. The head is missing. Below the figure is a small grotesque head with leavy swags protruding from his ears and held down by chains. On his left side there is a coat of arms surrounded by the garter with the legend HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE. The end of the garter rests on a parchment with an ivy spray and the motto INVI/ DIA . NOTI/ OB.
Dims: H.62 W.86 cm.

6. The main inscription. Carried on six stones (4 panels) in relief. There are commas between words and some letters are conjoined.

> THIS BRYGE OF ATHLONE FROM THE MAINE/ EARTH VNDER THE
> WATER WAS ERECTED AND MA/ DE THE NINTH YEARE OF THE
> RAIGN OF OVR MO/ ST DERE SOVERAIGNE LADIE ELIZABETH BY
> THE GRACE OF GOD QVENE OF ENGLAND FRAVNCE &/ IRELAND
> DEFNDER OF THE FAITHET & BY HE DEVICE AND OR/ DER OF SIR
> HENRY SIDNEY KNIGHT OF HE MOSTE NOBIL/ ORDEr THE 20 DAIE
> OF IVLIE THEN REINGE OF THE AYGE OF 38/ YERE L PRESIDENT
> OF THE COVNSEL IN WALLS AND MA/ RCHIS OF THE SAME AND L
> DEPVTIE GENERAL OF THIS HIR/ MAIESTIS REALM IR AND
> FINSHED IN LES THEN ONE YEAR BI/ THE GOOD INDVSTRI AND
> DIILIGENS OF SIR PETIR LEWYS/ CLERKE CHANTOR CATHEDRAL
> CHVRCH OF CHRIST/ CHVRCH IN DVBLIN AND STEWARD TO THE
> SAID L DE/ PVTIE IN Wc YEARE WAS BEGONE AND FINESHED THE
> FAI/ RE NEWE WOVRKE IN THE CASTHEL OF DVBLIN BESIDIS/
> MANY OTHER NOTABLE WORKIS DONE IN SODRI O/ THER PLACIS
> IN HIS REALME ALSO THE ARCHE REBEL/ (SH)ANE O NEYL OVER
> THROVEN HIS HEAD SET ON THE/ GATE OF THE SAID CASTEL
> COYNO AND LIVRY ABOLESHED/ AND THE HOLE REALME BROVGHT
> INTO SVCHE OBEDIENCE/ TO HIR MAISTIE AS THE LIKE
> TRANQVILITIE PEACE AND ...

Dims: a+b)   H.46   W.116
       c+d)   H.50   W.117
       e+f)   H.30.5   W.118 cm.

7. Rectangular plaque decorated in false relief with a man wearing late 16th century armour and a dog. The figure holds a ?ceremonial axe in the left hand an arrow in the right; his sword is suspended from a belt behind his back. The name ROBARTS/ DAMPORT is in false relief and AN OWER/ SEER OF THY/ S WORKYS' is incised below.
Dims: H.52 W 54 cm

8. Rectangular plaque with a shield in relief on which there is a porcupine, said to be the crest of Henry Sidney (Joly 1881, 25), surrounded by the garter and the words HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE. The initials H S are on either side below.
Dims. H.69 W.49 cm.

9. Rectangular plaque set with No. 10 in an elaborate surround decorated with renaissance style palmettes and foliage in false relief. Heater shaped shield with Henry Sidney's achievement of arms. It has elaborate mantling and the garter inscribed as No. 8. The letters H S occur below the shield. The shield is quartered with a pheon or broad arrow in the 1st and 4th and a lion rampant with bars in the 2nd and 3rd.
Dims: H. 87 W.84 cm.

10. Plaque with the arms of England on a heater shaped shield: three lions statant guardant and three fleur-de-lis in false relief (Pl. 7a). Above the shield on the chamfer are the incised words QVO ME FATA VOCANT and on the plaque a crown and the letters E. R. This may be the plaque removed to the bridge from the North Gate (see below).
Dims: H. 95 W.81 cm

11. Rectangular plaque with a heater shaped shield and garter with HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE. The centre of the shield has a ragged staff set diagonally which is considered to be the arms of Thomas Radcliff, Earl of Essex (Joly 1881, 45-6).
Dims: H.64 W.44 cm

12. Rectangular panel with a tooled surface and a male figure in relief. He wears a long gown, loosely belted at the waist over a shirt with sleeves caught into a tight fitting wrist-band. He has a short square cravat and the sleeves of the outer garment are wide and pleated at the shoulders. His left hand is on his chest and the right outstretched hand holds a small animal on a twisted rope. At his feet there is an incised inscription:

> PETRO LEWYS/ CLERICO DOMUS NR Q DISPENSA/ HUJUS OPIS Ps/ SICLE.

This stone may belong to the 1730 rebuilding of the bridge.
Dims: H. 75 W. 60 cm

13. Rectangular slab recording the rebuilding of the bridge in the first half of the 18th century. Incised Roman inscription:

> IN THE 4TH YEAR OF Ye REIGIN OF OUR/ SOVr LORD KING GEORGE Ye 2d 1730/ THIS PART OF Ye BRIDGE BEING 4 ARCHES IN/ Ye CENTER WAS VNDERTAKEN & REBVILT BY/ BENJAMIN

PRICE/ .T Ye EXPENCE OF Ye RIGHT HONble LADY/ KATHERINE
JONES & Ye CORPORATION OF ATHLONE/ THE HONble COLL RICHd
St GEORGE/ SOVEREIGIN/ & Ye WORK WAS COMPLEATED Ye YEAR
FOLLOWING/ WILLm HANDCOCK ESQi SOVEIr/ GUSTs HANDCOCK
ESQr SUPERVIZEr/ Mr IOHN PLUMER & Mr EDWIIN THOMAS/
OVERSEERS.

Dims: H. 68 W. 90 cm.

Other stones from the Bridge
14. A fragment which probably belongs to the 18th century
bridge is inserted into the porch wall of St Mary's (C of I).
It has an incised line showing the border between County
Westmeath and County Roscommom.

15. Athlone Museum. Rectangular sandstoneplaque. Two corners
are broken but the achievment of arms in high relief is
complete. The mantling is elaborate with helm and very tall
feathered cap of maintenance. The shield has a cross with a
lion rampant in the first quarter and a hand in the second.
Incised motto partly damaged ...VENI REDEO. Lightly incised
inscription on the upper corners:

    BUILT BY THE RIGHT WORSH.../ SIR THOMAS BOVRKE KNIGHT/
    1639.

Mr Thomas Walker informed us that this plaque was removed
from the bridge by his father.
Dims. H.96 W. 73 D.18 cm.

5. QUAYS

    No direct references are Known to quays in medieval
Athlone but their presence in the late sixteenth century can
be deduced from the placing of galleys here, under the
command of a water bailiff, in order to patrol the Shannon
(Murtagh 1978, 52-4). A galley was placed on Lough Ree in
1305 but it is not clear whether it was based at Athlone or
Rindown, where the remains of the medieval quay can still be
seen (Mills 1914, 64). The office of water bailiff was
established in 1571 and on the appointment of Sir Edward
Waterhouse in 1571 it was specifically stated that his
headquarters were to be in Athlone (Murtagh 1978, 52-3).
Initially there were to be two galleys but in 1588 this was
increased to four. References to other vessels at Athlone
until 1615 are listed by Murtagh (1978, 54).

    The presence of these boats presumably demanded the
construction of suitable quays, if none already existed. The
locations of these quays is uncertain but a request made in
1591 by Sir Richard Bingham for the return of half the "bawn"

of Athlone where Waterhouse had kept his boats; this may
indicate that the quays were in the vicinity of the castle,
perhaps on the site of the present quay (Murtagh 1980, 93).

6. THE CASTLE

The Pre-Norman Castle
     AU and ALC record that Toirdealbach Ua Conchobhar built a
castle at Ath Luain in 1129. It was burnt after being struck
by lightning in 1131 (A. Clon.) but it was obviously rebuilt
soon afterwards because its destruction by Murchad Ua Mael
Sechlainn and Tigernan Ua Ruairc is recorded c.1133-4 (AFM
sub 1133; MacCarthy's Book sub 1135). The destruction of the
fortress of Athlone is also recorded in 1153 (AFM), 1155
(AFM) and 1162 (A. Clon.) in each case by the Ua Mael
Sechlainns of Mide. It would appear from this that the fort
was rebuilt on a number of occasions although this has not
been specifically recorded by the annalists.

     The terminology used to describe the fort varies:
"caislen" and "caistel" in 1129, "dun" in 1134, "daingin" in
1153; "longphort" in 1155. It is not clear, however, whether
these terms reflect different types of structure or not.
Indeed the nature of this fort can hardly be guessed at.
Claffey (1970-1, 55 n.1) notes that Athlone is one of seven
twelfth century pre-Norman castles mentioned in the Annals
but nothing is known of the architecture of these castles and
it may not be safe to assume that they were ringfort-type
structures. The burning of the fort in 1131, however,
suggests that it was of timber rather than stone. Furthermore
the exact location of the fort is unknown. It may have
occupied the site of the present castle but Claffey (1970-1,
55) has suggested that the fort may have been on the east
bank of the Shannon and has cited the placename "The Bawn"
(from Ir. "bo-dhun") in the eastern part of the modern town
as a possible survival from the twelfth century fort. This
placename, however, is more likely to be derived from the
seventeenth century outwork which protected the Dublin Gate.
Whatever its form and location it is evident that the fort
was an important structure and the reference to the raid on
the house of Ruaidri Ua Conchobhar in 1168 suggests that the
fort may also have functioned as a royal residence.

The First Anglo-Norman Castle
     It is generally acceptd that the initial Anglo-Norman
fortification was a motte, probably built by Geoffrey de
Costentin (Orpen 1911-20, II, 129; Graham 1980, 53). In 1199
ALC record "a depredation .... committed on the foreigners by
Cathal Crobhderg who burned the bodhun of Ath". Ath was
identified by Hennessy as Ath Luain and this event has
consequently been regarded as indicating the latest date for
the construction of a motte at Athlone (Orpen 1907, 259;
Graham 1980, 53). Graham (1980, 52-3) suggests that Athlone

formed a part of the final western frontier of the Liberty of
Meath, a frontier which also included the mottes of Granard,
Kilbixy and Rathconrath. The construction dates of the latter
two mottes, in 1192 and 1191 respectively, dates the
formation of this frontier in his view. Accordingly a date
between 1191 and 1199 could be proposed for the construction
of the Athlone motte. Claffey (1970-1, 55) has suggested that
de Costentin may not have built a motte but merely reused the
Ua Conchobhar fort. This suggestion finds some support in the
ALC reference to the building of a castle "instead of Ua
Conchobhar's castle" in 1210. Even if the survival of the Ua
Conchobhar castle until 1210 were accepted, however, this
does not exclude the construction of a motte because mottes
were frequently built on top of ringforts and other
pre-existing settlements (Graham 1980, 51). Claffey (1970-1,
55) further suggests that de Costentin's settlement was sited
on the east bank of the Shannon but Orpen (1907, 263-4) was
of the opinion that the original motte was built, and could
still be detected, on the site of the present castle.

The Anglo-Norman Stone Castle
     The present structure traces its foundation to Bishop
John de Gray, justiciar of Ireland, who commenced a stone
castle in 1210 (ALC; A.Clon. sub 1208-9). In 1211 a stone
tower (?Keep) collapsed Killing Richard de Tuit and eight
others (Gilbert 1884, ii, 232, 279) and Orpen (1907, 262-3)
has suggested that this disaster might have resulted from the
construction of a Keep on top of a motte which had not
settled sufficiently to hold the weight. The castle was built
on land obtained from the priory of SS Peter and Paul
situated to the south (Sweetman 1875-86, i, Nos. 507, 693,
2289).

     Work on the castle is sporadically recorded during the
thirteenth century, in 1232-4 (35 Rep Deputy Keeper Public
Records Ireland, 37) and 1251 (Sweetman 1875-86, i, No.
3159). In 1273-4 the justiciar, Geoffrey de Geneville, spent
over £3500 on various projects including "repairs of the
castle and houses of Athlon" (36 Rep Deputy Keeper Public
Records ireland, 40). In 1276-7 Robert d'Ufford, the
succeeding justiciar, spent £2136 on fortifications and
buildings at the castles of Rindown and Athlone (36 Rep
Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 35; Sweetman 1875-86,
ii, p.267) and a further £3200 in 1278-9 on work at
Roscommon, Rindown and Athlone castles (36 Rep Deputy Keeper
Public Records Ireland, 48). It is likely that much of the
surviving medieval fabric of the castle, particularly the
river wall with its three-quarter-round towers at each angle
dates to this period (Orpen 1907, 271; Claffey 1970-1, 57;
Leask 1951, 42). Parts of the castle had fallen into neglect
by 1305 and repairs were carried out in 1306 by Richard de
Exeter, constable of Roscommon castle (38 Rep Deputy Keeper
Public Records ireland, 103). The Annals of St. Mary's,
Dublin, note the burning of the castle and town by Ruaidri O
Conchobhar in 1315 but Orpen (1907, 272), using the Irish

annals, has suggested that the castle was not captured at
this time. Little is known of the castle in the later
fourteenth and fifteenth centuries although it is clear that
it was frequently in Irish hands until recovered by the Crown
in 1537 (Cal. Carew Mss. 1515-74, 124). Thereafter the castle
remained in English hands serving as the residence of the
Presidents of Connacht after 1569 (Murtagh 1980, 81).
According to Piers (1981, 86) the president's appartments
were in the east wing overlooking the river. These were
largely destroyed in the 1691 siege when the castle sufferred
considerable damage as a result of bombardment by Ginkel's
artillery (Murtagh 1972-3, 176). These appartments are shown
by Thomas Phillips in a drawing of 1685 (Pl. 5) and have been
attributed to Sir William Robinson the architect of the Royal
Hospital at Kilmainham, Dublin (Loeber 1981a, 96). The castle
appears to have remained ruined until the 1790's when the
possibility of French invasion drew the attention of the
British authorities to the defence of Athlone. The castle was
considerably rebuilt following a survey by Lt. Col. Tarrant
in 1793 and further modifications took place during the
nineteenth century (Kerrigan 1980, 182-5).

Description (Pl. 8c)

     The castle presents itself to the present-day viewer as a
Napoleonic fortification but behind the artillery embrasures
and Martello tower-style keep, the outline of its medieval
defences can be distinguished. In plan the castle consists of
a pentangular curtain wall with a keep placed just west of
centre within it. The entrance is approached from the north
by a ramp constructed in the rebuilding after 1793. It is
likely that the medieval entrance was on the north side but
its exact location is unknown. The curtain wall is thickest
on the east (riverside) where it also appears to have been
considerably rebuilt. Two circular bastions project from the
east curtain wall and there may be the remains of a third in
the north-west angle. These may have formed part of the
thirteenth century defences but they are now almost totally
hidden by later masonry (Orpen 1907, 265). The keep is
decagonal and its base is concealed by a plinth. The upper
stories of the keep were removed in the 1793 works and, while
the wall fabric may be medieval, all visible features date
from that time.

7. TOWN DEFENCES

     The earliest notice of town defences is in 1251 when the
King made a grant of 80 marks to aid the enclosure of Athlone
and Rindown (Sweetman 1875-86, i, No. 3159). It is not clear,
however, whether this money was applied to the Leinster or
Connacht side or to both. Further information on the walls is
lacking until the late sixteenth century by which time, as
Murtagh (1980, 92-3) suggests, the walls had probably fallen

into considerable disrepair. Proposals to rebuild the wall
were made by Sir Nicholas Malby in 1576 but these appear to
have remained at the draft stage (Murtagh 1980, 92-3). Some
work was carried out, however, on the defences at this time,
particularly on the East and North Gates (Murtagh 1980, 93).
Extensive rebuilding did not occur until after 1619 when the
walls of the Leinster town were reconstructed as part of
Wilmot's rebuilding scheme for the town. The walling of the
Leinster side appears to have been complete by 1636 but the
Connacht side remained unprotected (Murtagh 1980, 95). In the
wars of 1641-53 some improvements were made to the
fortifications, notably the construction by the confederates
of a wall and gatehouse along the Leinster waterfront in 1643
demolished soon afterwards by the Cromwellians (Murtagh 1980,
95, 98). The Cromwellians themselves considerably
strengthened the town's defences between 1651 and 1654
(Murtagh 1980, 96-8) and several bastions were added to the
Leinster town while the Connacht side was fortified with
earthen ramparts. In 1682 Piers (1981, 86-7) described the
fortifications as follows:

> "The town on both sides of the river was in time of the
> late usurpers [the Cromwellian Commonwealth] very well
> fortified. The part on this [Leinster] side hath very
> strong walls with very large flankers of lime and stone,
> according to the rules of modern fortificaion. The
> inside of these walls and bulwalks was lined with a
> large rampart of stone and earth, the outside was made
> not easily accessible by a large deep graff; round about
> on the flankers were mounted several great guns. The
> town on the other [Connacht] side was also fortified
> with great ramparts of earth flanked, and a large deep
> graff. The works here were set with a quick-set hedge,
> which was well kept and neatly shorn...But...all this
> strength is of late vanished".

Although improvements were carried out by the Jacobites in
1689-91, these were essentially the fortifications assailed
and largely demolished by Ginkel in 1691 (Murtagh 1980,
99-103).

   A feature of the defences on the Connacht side was the
CONNACHT TOWER which stood to the north of the castle. Little
is known of its history and the earliest references occur in
the late sixteenth century (see 13 Rep Deputy Keeper Public
Records Ireland, 80: No. 3329, dated 1578). In 1581, however,
it is described as "an old ruinous tower" which would suggest
that it was built considerably earlier (13 Rep Deputy Keeper
Public Records, 136: No. 3697). Nevertheless the tower
impressed the Williamites in 1691 by the solidity of its
construction and they noted that it took more time to
demolish than any part of the castle (Murtagh 1972-3, 174;
1980, 93). Langrishe (1890-1a, 279) records that its ruins
survived into the mid-nineteenth century and that it was
removed during the Shannon improvements and the making of
Grace Road.

The course of the medieval defences on the Leinster side appears to have been incorporated into the early seventeenth century wall constructed for Wilmot but the line of the medieval defences on the Connacht side has been completely obliterated. There is good information on the course of the seventeenth century defences, however. On the Leinster side the wall had a semi-circular outline while on the Connacht side it is somewhat C-shaped.

Description

Athlone-in-Leinster
The wall enclosed an area of 14 statute acres. The works of 1652-4 appear to have largely obliterated earlier work except in one clearly visible section near Court Devenish. The wall was penetrated by two gates and had five bastions in addition to an outwork protecting the Dublin Gate. There is no indication of a river wall despite the reference to the construction of such a wall in 1643.

No trace survives of the demi-bastion which stood beside the Shannon on the south-east corner of the town. North of this, in the grounds of the modern Franciscan Friary, is a plain section of wall 64 cm wide. The upper sections are modern but the lower courses are similar to other surviving sections of the wall. From here the wall ran north to DUBLIN GATE whose site alone survives. The gate was built by Edmond O'Fallon in or before 1578 when it was leased to him (Morrin 1862, 18; 13 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 92: No. 3402). A lease of 1603 notes that it contained two chambers (Irish Record Comm. 1830, 93). It was demolished between 1691 and 1784 (Murtagh 1980, 92). The gate was protected by a pentangular outwork whose line is preserved in the back of the houses on the south side of Dublin Gate St. and it is possible that parts of its wall are preserved in the modern buildings here and in the "Bawn", on the north side of the street.

North of Dublin Gate the boundary wall of St. Mary's Churchyard is composed of the town wall. Here it is 75 cm thick and stands to a height of 2.8-3 m with modern rebuilding on top. Two sides of a pentangular bastion survive at the north end of this wall (Murtagh 1980, 100: D). Its walls are in very poor condition and are covered in ivy. It stands to a max. height of 2.5 and is 1.4 m wide at the base. From here the wall turned north-west through the Old Rectory grounds (now the Urban District Council offices) much of which is now used as a car park. The open space outside the wall-line at this point is known as the "Soldiers Field", and is explained as a place where soldier's horses were buried. A long section of wall stretches from the rere of the Prince of Wales Hotel to Lucas Lane; it is 1.5-1.6 m wide, 1.85 m high and survives in good condition with one complete bastion, portion of a second and a semi-circular tower. The complete bastion, known as the Garden or Royal Bastion (Murtagh 1980,

98), is pentangular and its wall is 2.25 m high with an external batter to a height of 1.5-2 m. One piece of cut stone from a window or door is built into the wall at this point. The wall continued to the north of Court Devenish where a semi-circular tower survives. This stretch of wall and the tower are of different masonry to the seventeenth century bastions and may be sixteenth century work. A musket-loop in the tower would also support such a date. At this point there is a 2 m difference between the ground level inside the town and that outside. The Wall of the incomplete bastion (Murtagh 1980, 100: B) is 74 cm wide and 2.4 m high. It carries a plaque which states: "The Old Wall of Athlone 1251". From here the wall ran westwards along Lucas Lane to the site of the NORTH GATE.

The NORTH GATE was situated at the junction of Lucas Lane and North Gate St. Unlike Dublin Gate its builder is not known but until 1578 it was in the possession of Robert Damport, provost-marshal of Connacht, when it was leased to Henry Brande of Trim (13 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 97: No. 3435). It is posssible that Damport, who acted as overseer for the construction of the bridge in 1566-7, was the builder as Joly (1881, 53-4) and Murtagh (1980, 92-3) have suggested. Joly (1881, 70-1) suggests that the older of two tablets representing Peter Lewis, another figure prominently associated with the construction of the bridge, was originally mounted on the North Gate. This plaque had been repositioned on the bridge but it was given to the Royal Irish Academy in 1844 (see plaque 10 from Sidney's bridge described above). It is a remarkable coincidence, however, that the description of the plaque on the North Gate given to Joly by an old inhabitant of Athlone corresponds closely with the figure of Damport which was also removed from the bridge in 1844. Whether it was Damport or Lewis who was represented on the North Gate, however, it would appear that the construction of the gatehouse is related to the building of the bridge and therefore a date between 1566 and 1578 may be suggested. Such a date is supported by the presence of another plaque bearing the arms of Elizabeth I recorded by an eighteenth century traveller (Murtagh 1980, 93). A print of c.1820, drawn by George Petrie (Pl. 6a), shows that the gate was rectangular and had three floors with battlements above. The passage was the most prominent feature of the ground floor and it had a rounded arch on the north side. Above the arch, at first floor level, was a rectangular plaque presumably the one bearing the arms of Queen Elizabeth. The north window of the second floor appears to have been rectangular while above it a drainage course supported the battlements of the wallwalk level.

From the North Gate the wall continued to the Shannon where a demi-bastion, set on a slight promontory, jutted into the river (Murtagh 1980, 98).

It is clear from Piers' description that these fortifications were of earth. They were roughly rectangular in shape, 640 m long and enclosed an area of approximately 4.3 hectares (11 acres); as with the Leinster town the defences do not appear to have extended along the waterfront (Murtagh 1980, 99). No trace of the earthen banks or ditches survive but their outline can be traced from seventeenth century plans. There was a demi-bastion at the north-eastern end, in the vicinity of the present main gate of Custume Barracks, from which the rampart continued west for about 90 m before coming to an acute-angled bastion. At this point it made a right-angled turn to the south and continued to the junction of Barrack Street and Pearse Street, where there was a GATE. From here it continued south for a distance of 80 m to where it formed a large bastion-shaped projection through which ran the principal western exit from the town. The present Bastion Street derives its name from this feature and the shape of the bastion is preserved in the line of the houses at the west end of Grattan Street. From here the defences continued south, just outside Abbey Lane, to a small corner bastion near Goldsmith Terrace where they turned east towards its south-eastern terminal at a demi-bastion beside the Shannon in the vicinity of the modern lock. Phillip's plan shows an opening in the south wall which probably represented the exit known as Peter's Port.

8. ST. MARY'S PARISH CHURCH

This church is described in a number of 17th century documents as being near the East Gate of the town (see Erck 1846-52, 67-8, 728). It is first referred to as St. Mary's in 1484 when Cornelius Odelay was the vicar (Twemlow 1960, 90) but the church was almost certainly established in the thirteenth century. The building was rebuilt around 1620 by Lord Grandison, while he was President of Connacht (Stokes 1890-1a, 184). This building was replaced by the present church in 1825-6 although the tower of the 17th century building still survives (Stokes 1890-1a, 180).

Description

The church is situated within its churchyard on the north side of Dublin Gate Street immediately inside the town wall. The seventeenth century tower stands on the south-west of the present church and is rectangular in plan with four floors and battlements above. The masonry is of coursed limestone with limestone quoins. The exterior has been heavily repointed and the east wall appears to have been substantially rebuilt. The base has a low uneven batter. The ground floor is entered on the south through a round-arched door with external hood moulding. It has a barrel vault and a single window in the west wall which has been blocked up. Access to the first floor is via a wooden ladder. Access to

the upper floors was not permitted. Externally, however, large round-headed windows are present in each wall of the third floor (belfry stage). The bell is reputed to be of seventeenth century date (Lewis 1837, 88) but we were not permitted to examine it.

Monuments.

De Renzi Wall Memorial. 1634.
Only a small fragment of a much larger memorial survives on the west side of the south wall of the nave (English 1978, 2). It consists of an apron and shelf in black marble. The inscription is on the apron in incised gold capitals:

> THIS MONVMENT WAS ERECTED BY THE RIGHT WORSHIPFVLL SIR MATHEW DE RENZI KNIGHT WHO DEPARTED THIS/ LIFE THE 20 OF AVGVST 1634 BEINGE OF THE AGE OF 57 YEARS BORNE AT CVLLEN IN GERMANY AND DISCENDED FROM/ THAT FAMOVS AND RENOWNED WARRIER GEORGE CASTRIOTT, ALS SCANDERBEGE (WHO IN THE CHRISSTIAN WARRE .OV/ 52 BATTAILES WITH GREAT CONQVEST AND HONNOR AGAINST THE GREAT TVRKE) HE WAS A GREAT TRAVELER/ AND GENERALL LINGVIST: AND KEPT CORESPONDENCY WITH MOST NATIONS IN MANY WEIGHTY AFFAIRES: AND IN THE THREE YEARS GAVE GREAT PFECTION TO THIS NATION BY COMPOSEINGE A GRAMMER DICTIONNARY AND CHRONICLE IN THE/ IRISH TONGVE: AND IN ACCOMPTS MOST EXPERT AND EXCEEDINGE ALL OTHERS TO HIS GREAT APPLAV../ THIS WORKE WAS ACCOMPELSHED BY HIS SONNE MATHEW DE RENZI ESQR AVGVST THE 22 1635.

Dims: H.24 W.126 cm.

2. Abigail Handcock wall memorial. 1680. (Pl. 2a).
On the south wall of the nave. Rectangular white marble tablet flanked by black pilasters with free standing white marble columns in front and flanking foliate scroll brackets. The columns support a black marble cornice with a black hour-glass painted on to a red and white marble. The cornice is flanked by scroll brackets and the apex is topped by a covered bowl. An achievement of arms is painted below the tablet which is flanked by white marble scrolls and supported on a black marble pedestal. Heater shaped shield divided per pale with argent, two cocks and a hand in chief sable with argent ermined sable on the dexter while the sinister has three deer's heads or on a bend azure background argent and a crown or on gules in the sinister chief. The motto is VIGILATE ET ORATE and the crest consists of a lion rampant holding a loxenge shaped medallion upon which there is a cock. The inscription is in script with Roman capitals:

> THIS MONUMENT/ WAS ERECTED IN MEMORY OF/ Ms ABIGAIL HANDCOCK/ DAUGHTER OF THE REVERnd/ THOMAS STANLEY & LATE WIFE/ OF WILLIAM HANDCOCK OF/ TNYFORD ESQr, BY WHOM HE/ HAD ISSUE 9 SONS & 7 DAUGH/ TERS WHO DEPARTED THIS/

LIFE/ THE 21st OF NOVbr ANo DOm/ 1680 IN THE 53d YEAR OF
HER/ AGE & LYES INTERRED/ UNDERNEATH THIS PLACE.

Dims: H.c.200 W.126 cm.
Loeber 1981b, 292

3. Ann and Richard St. George. Wall memorial. 1686
On the E end of the N wall of the nave. It consists of large
blocks of stone painted black with some gold decoration. The
centre tablet is divided in two with an achievement of arms
above and an inscription below. The monument is flanked by
pilasters which support a cornice with triangular pediment. A
heart-shaped panel rises from a central console within the
pediment, and protrudes above the apex. The panel is
decorated with a shield bearing a golden lion rampant and a
small heart below. There are two rosette-like roundels on
either side of the panel. The achievement of arms is in six
quarters. 1) Per fess a lion gules with a crown or overall.
2) Argent an equal armed cross with fleur de lis terminals
sable. 3) Three covered cups argent gules. 4) Six circles
and a rectangle gules argent. 5) Six scallops azure and a
fess dancette argent. 6) The sun or an estoile sable argent.
The crest is a demi-lion rampant gules with a crown or. The
inscription is in gold conjoined script:
> NEER THIS PLACE LYETH THE BODYS OF CAPTAIN RICH/ St
> GEORGE AND HIS PIOUS WIFE ANN ELDEST DAUGHTER/ OF
> MICHAEL PENNOCK OF TURROCK IN THE COUNTY OF/ ROSCOMON
> ESQ. HE WAS FOR SEVERAL YEARS GO/ VERNOR OF ATHLONE
> THIRD SON OF Sr RICHARD St GE/ ORGE KNt CLARENCEUX KING
> OF ARMS BY ELIZABET/ HIS WIE DAUGHTER OF NICHOLAS St
> IOHN OF LIDI/ ARD TREGOZ IN WILTSHIRE ESQ BROTHER TO Sr
> HENRY/ St GEORGE KNt GARTER PRINCIPALL KING OF ARMES/
> AND TO St GEORGE St GEORGE OF CARRICK DRUMROOSK/ IN THE
> COUNTY OF LETRIM KNt BORN AT HALLY St GEO/ RGE IN
> CAMBRIDGESHIRE THE 27TH OF MARCH 1590/ AND DEPARTED THIS
> LIFE IN ATHLON THE 24TH OF APRIL/ 1667 THE SAID ANN HIS
> WIFE WAS BORN AT TURR/ OCK THE 18TH OF NOVEMBER 1606 AND
> DYED IN/ ATHLONE THE 4TH OF OCTOBER 1643 TO WHOSE MEMO/
> RYS THEIR SONS ARTHUR AND HENRY ERECTED THIS MONUMENT
> ANNO DOMINI 1686.

Dims: H. c. 400 W. 258 cm.

Piscina. Date unknown.
Small yellow sandstone vessel with four lugs. Recently
presented to Athlone Museum. Flat-bottomed with smooth
sloping sides. One side with part of a lug is broken but the
pieces are there to complete it. It was built into a wall at
Clonbonny near Athlone but is considered to be originally
from St. Mary's. Undateable.
Dims: H.13 Max. Diam. 25

Missing Monument
A small grave slab was described by Bigger (1901-3, 272) as

lying at the east end of the churchyard. It was decorated with a ringed cross on a step with the letters RM and IHS. Probably seventeenth century.

9. FRANCISCAN FRIARY

The Annals of the Four Masters record the founding of the monastery of St. Francis at Athlone by Cathal Crobderg O Conchobair in 1224 but this date has been rejected by Gwynn and Hadcock (1970, 243) on the basis that the Franciscans did not arrive in Ireland until c.1224-6, when their first house was established at Youghal. The consecration of the church of the Friars Minor of Athlone in 1241 by Albert of Cologne, archbishop of Armagh, suggests that it was not founded until c.1240 (A. Conn.; AFM; A. Clon.; ALC). The founder is unknown but various families have been suggested including the Dillons, Digbies and de Burgos. In 1245 the friars received a grant of alms from the King but in 1327 this was transferred to Cashel friary because Athlone was then occupied by Irish friars (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 243). In 1398 an indulgence was granted to aid the repair of the Franciscan church of St. Mary, Athlone, which had been malicously damaged by fire (Cal. Papal Reg 1396-1404, 266). The friary was apparently destroyed in 1567-8 and its site was leased to Andrew Brereton of Monketon, Co. Meath, in 1570 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 243; 11 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 239: No. 1594).

A Franciscan residence was re-established in 1626 (Anal. Hib. 6 (1934), 147; Millett 1972-3, 161) and in the late seventeenth century, probably the 1680's, work began on a new friary and church. This building was never completed because of the fall of James II and the consequent poitical upheavals (Conlan 1978, 78; Grannell 1978, 52-3). A lease of 1578 mentions two tenements in Athlone near the North Gate, "by the house of the friars". Since these were apparently within the town wall, it is likely that the medieval friary was also, rather than on the site of the present "abbey" ruins (i.e. the 1680's church) which are located beside the river Shannon to the north the line of the town wall.

The present remains almost certainly lie on the site of a pre-Norman church, whose existence is attested by the discovery of early grave slabs (see below) and traces of an enclosure. This is to be seen on the south side, where it is delimited by the lane at the south end of the graveyard, Abbey road and the back of the houses in Lucas Lane.

Description (Fig. 6)

The remains consist of the church, a long rectangular building aligned east-west. This is adjoined on the south and

east by a sub-rectangular graveyard, recently cleared of its graveslabs in order to provide space for a park. The building has been rather savagely rebuilt and repointed as part of an Anco project and the grave slabs have been numbered and placed around the walls and along both sides of the lane to the south and west of the church. The masonry consists of roughly coursed limestone and the building has been robbed of all its jambs. Max. int. dims. 30.9 by 9.4 m. The walls are 92cm thick on average and survive to a max. height of between 4.5 and 5 m.

The east wall appears to have been completely rebuilt and the only features are two modern recesses constructed to accomodate wall-memorials. The north wall may have had a door near its west end but the masonry is too badly disfigured to be certain; a narrow round arched opening is situated in the centre of this wall and is flanked by two round arched recesses. The west wall shows signs of large-scale rebuilding and has an inserted flat-headed door of brick. The south wall has a blocked-up door at its west end and three round-arched windows with a slight internal splay. A round-arched recess is present between the first-and-second and second-and-third windows from the east; the westerly example has been filled with a 19th century wall memorial.

ARCHITECTURAL FRAGMENT?

Stone at Coosan Pt.
A stone, said to have been taken from the Friary, lies in the back garden of the public house at Coosan Point. The owner refused to give us permission to see it but examination of a photograph indicates that it is a small coffin-shaped stone decorated in low relief with a pointed arch on which is incised: GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO. In the spandrels on either side of the arch are angels heads and a leavy spray while inside the arch is a three storeyed battlemented castle with two animals on either side as supporters and another animal on top.

MONUMENTS

A number of Early Christian slabs have been found recently by members of the Old Athlone Society and are now in their museum at Athlone Castle.

Ailill Ua Dunchatho. 764. (Pl. 8b).
Athlone Museum No. 279. Roughly rectangular sandstone slab missing a small section of one corner. The decoration consists of an almost equal-armed ringed cross within a rectangular frame. The centre of the cross consists of a square enclosing a circle; the terminals are also square and bear foliage decoration. The arms of the cross have a fret pattern of interlocking T type while the frame consists of a broad band of a continuous fret pattern of the interlocking L

type. Incised inscription above the panel: AILILL AUE
DUNCHATHO. Ailill Ua Dunchado, King of Connacht, died in 764
(Fanning and O hEailidhe 1980, 7).
Dims: H. 82 W. 59 T.13 cm

Conloc and Chadal. Pre-1200. (Pl. 8a).
Athlone Museum No. 280. Damaged sandstone slab. Incised
three-line Latin cross with a central circular expansion,
containing a tetraskelion, and semi-circular terminals
ornamented with worn key patterns. The cross is outlined by a
two-line border with knots at the external angles. Incised
inscription flanking the stem : OR DO CONLOC DO CHADAL.
Dims: H.76 W. 52 T. 8.5 cm
Fanning and O hEailidhe 1980, 5-7.

Unknown. Pre-1200.
Athlone Museum No. 278 and National Museum of Ireland.
Sandstone slab. The upper half survives in Athlone and the
lower left corner is in the National Museum of Ireland.
Highly decorated ringed cross in false relief. The cross has
a square panel at the centre filled with interlace and
rectangular terminals at the end of lozenge-shaped arms. The
arms and terminals are also decorated with interlace and
spiral motifs. The ring is ornamented with pelta designs.
Outside the ring are the winged lion of St Mark and the
winged calf of St. Luke each of which hold a book. Above the
symbols of the evangelists are the pocked letters OR DO. The
fragment in the National Museum of Ireland depicts a winged
figure, presumably St. Matthew, and bears the incised letters
MUIR M below.
Dims: H. 37 W. 72 T. 10 cm
Fanning and O hEailidhe 1980, 9

Thorpaith. Lost slab. Pre-1200
Roughly rectangular slab decorated with a Celtic cross with
looped terminals and a circle in the centre. Incised
inscription: OR DO THORPAITH.
Fanning and O hEailidhe 1980, 9, 18

MacGanly. 17th cent.
In the mortuary chapel at the south-east end of the
graveyard. Large rectangular slab from a table tomb with a
vertebrate border of stems and fleur-de-lis in false relief.
The centre of the slab has two oval medallions within a
rectangular frame with a spray of foliage in the spandrels.
Inscription in Roman capitals in the left medallion:

     HEERE LYETH THE BODYES/ OF BRIAN MAC GANLY & BENMON HIS
     WIFE.

The inscription in the right medallion was added later:

PRAY FOR THE SOVL OF CHRIS GANLY DEESESD Ye/ 16 OF MARCH 1701 & ANN RYAn/ HIS WIFE

The left end of the slab was subsequently smoothed down and carries an incised inscription in Roman capitals:

PRAY FOR Ye/ SOVL OF MA/ RK BEGG WHO/ DEPARTED Ys/ LIFE AVGVST/ Y 11 16.. AG/ ED 36 YEARS/ & MARGRETT/ Mc DERMOTT/ HIS WIFE

Dims: L.216 W.77 D.15 cm
Bigger and Hughes 1898-1900; FitzGerald 1904-6, 160.

Missing Monument
FitzGerald (1904-6, 160) records an uninscribed coffin-shaped slab decorated in low relief with an eight armed fleur-de-lis cross.

10. CLUNIAC PRIORY OF SS. PETER & PAUL

This priory was the only Cluniac house in Ireland. Some confusion surrounds the date of its foundation. Gwynn and Hadcock (1970, 110) question the reliability of the tradition that it was founded c.1150 by Toirrdelbach Ua Conchobair, pointing to the confusion of Athlone with the Cistercian monastery of "Benedictio Dei" at Kilbeggan, which was founded in 1150. The most recent study of the priory repeats the view that it was founded by Toirrdelbach c.1150 on the basis that a Cluniac foundation is unlikely to date any later because the Cluniac Order was rapidly eclipsed in Ireland by the Cistercians after that date (Conlon 1980, 74-5).

The abbey was clearly in existence before the building of Athlone Castle in 1210 because the priory received compensation for the land on which the castle was built. Later on in the 1280s the priory was further compensated for a pool in which the justiciar had built two mills (Sweetman 1875-86, ii, No. 2360; iii, No. 271, p. 125). Little is known of the history of the priory in the laater thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In 1362 William O'Tumulty was elected prior, apparently the first native Irishman to obtain the position (Grattan Flood 1913, 54) but it is noteworthy that every subsequent prior seems to have been of Irish blood (Conlon 1980, 77-80). In 1428 a papal indulgence was granted in aid of the priory church which was "threatened with ruin on account of the wars which have afflicted those parts" (Cal. Papal Reg. 1427-47, 22). There is no formal record of the dissolution of the priory but Conlon (1980, 80) feels it was probably suppressed by Sir William Brabazon, vice-treasurer of Ireland and constable of Athlone Castle after 1547. The priory was joined to the castle as an estate and it was generally held by the vice-treasurers of Ireland

until 1569 when it was assigned to the presidents of Connacht
(Murtagh 1980, 91). In 1572, when Athlone was burned by James
FitzMaurice FitzGerald and the sons of the Earl of
Clanricard, the priory church was in use as a store. In a
letter to the Lord Deputy, John Crofton stated that the
rebels and Scots had burnt the body of the church, where he
had his malt, biscuit and beer, and all of his brewing and
baking vessels (Cal. State Papers Ireland 1509-73, 477). In
the same source the president of Connacht noted that "the
steeple of the Abbey, where the store was, was well
defended".

The priory was dedicated to SS Peter and Paul but it is
referred to on at least two occasions as "de Innocentia"
(Sweetman 1875-86, ii, No. 1713; Cal. Papal Reg 1362-1404,
417). In 1583-4 the "Cistercian Priory of St. Benedict of
Athlone" was leased to George Alexander (15 Report Deputy
Keeper Public Records Ireland, 30: No. 4342; see also Cal.
State Papers Ireland 1606-8, 69). This presumably is to be
equated with the Cluniac house because there is no evidence
for a Cistercian monastery in Athlone and the reference to St
Benedict explained on the basis that the Cluniac monks were
Benedictines.

The priory was situated on the west bank of the Shannon
between Abbey Lane and Excise St. Phillips map of 1685 (Pl.
3) suggests that the church was cruciform. No trace of any
medieval buildings survives with the exception of a possible
fragment of the north-west nave return in Abbey lane. This
consists of two different widths of wall at a high level
above the present convent school yard. The western stretch is
130 cm long and 70 wide while the north side is 110 cm long
and 62 wide. The site of the church is regarded locally as
being occupied by the block which runs east-west between
Abbey Lane and Excise St. No traces of the domestic buildings
survie. Conlon (1980, 82-3) noted that these would have been
on the south but the construction of a church in 1804 and the
levelling of the site in 1930 would have destroyed any
standing remains.

MONUMENTS

Apart from the following a group of mortars from the site
are said to be in Elphin.

Head. Date?
Athlone Museum No. 40. Tenoned head of a tonsured cleric.
?Granite. Now set into a stone with the words "St. Peter's
Port". Long pointed face with damaged chin.
Dims: H. 19 W. 13 T. 33 cm

Shiela-na-gig. (Pl. 7b).
Athlone Museum No. 285. Abraded sandstone squatting figure.
The hands are clasped around the legs which are drawn up
under the chin and the vulva or anus is openly displayed. The

face has protruding lips and slanting eyes.
Dims. H. 40 W. 21 D. 20 cm
Woods 1907, 330; Weir 1980, 64 and Pl. 15.

11. HOSPITAL

Lee (1974-5, 225) has assembled the evidence for the
existence of a hospital outside the walls of Athlone, to the
east. It is first referred to as the "Spitell ground" near
Athlone in 1570 (11 Report Deputy Keeper Public Recordes
Ireland 239-40: No. 1594) and again in 1583 (13 Report Deputy
Keeper Public records Ireland 214: No. 4206). In 1612 it is
described as "the lands called "Spittle-grounds" and are said
to have formed part of the estate of the friary of Athlone
(Irish Record Comm. 1830, 244) while a survey of 1641
mentions a ruinous chapel with a spittalhouse outside the
East Gate, belonging to Dillon, earl of Roscommon (Stokes
1890-1a, 207). Two eighteenth century deeds allowed Lee to
locate the hospital more precisely. A deed of 1727 noted that
"Spittle house was bounded on the north and east by the hill
called Anchor's Bower and on the west by Irishtown, while a
deed of 1763 noted that the "lands of Spittlefield" were then
Known as Maredyke and were situated at the end of Irishtown.
The site of the hospital would appear to have been in the
vicinity of Sean Costello Street, where Mardyke Street meets
Irishtown.

12. MISCELLANEOUS

Brides Well
Site of a well dedicated to St. Brigid. There is nothing
there now.

Arcadin Well
A well site marked on the O.S. maps. Not checked.

Cooking House
Site marked by O.S. Exact status unclear.

Lost Female Effigy
Said to have been in St. Mary's Catholic Church and reputedly
found while digging foundations for either the church (in
1857) or the mortuary chapel (in 1939). It was broken by a
falling tree in 1959 but the whereabouts of the pieces is
unknown. It depicted an abbess in a long gown with pleated
skirt, wearing a low flat headdress with veil. Hunt (1974,
236, 244) dates it to the 16th century.

17th cent. grave slab.
Fragment outside the Athlone Museum. Decorated in low false relief with quarter of a ringed cross having incised crosses on the stem. Inscribed INRI on the ring and and the date 16.. is in one corner. Exact provenance unknown.
Dims: H.43 W.42 D.17

Dressed stones
Almost immediately north of the site of SS Peter & Paul's Priory, in a yard off Excise Street, is a ruined two storeyed house incorporating chamfered and dressed stones, some of which form part of an arch, similar in style to seventeenth century examples reported in the section on domestic housing.

Mortars and Querns
In the rockery of the modern Franciscan Friary are a number of mortars and quern stones whose provenance is unclear but some may be from Athlone.

13. LIST OF STRAY FINDS

Neolithic

1. Stone axe. From Custume Barracks, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI 1940: 118.

2. Stone axehead. Found in river Shannon opposite North Gate, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, 1847. NMI: R122.

3. Stone axehead. Athlone Museum No. 274. Found at St. Mary's Place, Athlone in 1973.

4. Polished stone axehead. From Athlone. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 2: Lot 6.

5. Stone axehead. From Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI 1942: 230.

6. Stone axehead. From Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI 1943: 185.

7-11. Five stone axeheads. Found in river Shannon at Athlone, Co. Westmeath, in 1843. NMI: W.43-6, 54.

12-14. Three stone axeheads. From river Shannon, near Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI 1945: 290-2.

15. Stone adze or axehead. Athlone Museum No. 154. Provenance not recorded. ?Athlone.

16. Stone Axehead. Athlone Museum No. 247. Provenance not recorded. ?Athlone.

17. Polished stone axehead. Athlone Museum No. 272. Provenance not recorded. ?Athlone.

18. Polished stone axehead. Athlone Museum No 273. Provenance not recorded. ?Athlone.

19. Polished stone axehead. Athlone Museum No. 275. Provenance not recorded. ?Athlone.

20. Polished stone axehead. Athlone Museum No. 276. Provenance not recorded. ?Athlone.

21. Stone hammer-axe. From river Shannon, about fifty yards above the bridge of Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: W.9.

Early Bronze Age

22. Carved stone battle-axe. Found in river shannon at Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: W.21. Wilde 1857, 80: Fig. 66.

23. Gold Lunula. Found near Athlone, Co. Roscommon, prior to 1842. NMI: W.5. Taylor 1980, between Co Rm 13 and 14.

24. Gold Lunula. Found near Athlone, 1848. NMI: 1893:4. Armstrong 1920, 56. Pl. VI:33.

25. Flat copper axehead. Type Ballybeg. From Athlone, Co. Westmeath. UM 207-1937. Harbison 1969a, 19: No.349.

26. Copper/ bronze axe-shaped "ingot" from near Athlone, Co. Westmeath. BM: W.G. 1523. Harbison 1969a, 22: No. 446.

27-8. Copper/ bronze halberd or dagger found in Athlone in 1778, and a bronze halberd or dagger found near Athlone in 1782. Walker 1788, Appendix 2, 153-4.

29. Bronze flanged axehead. Type Derryniggin. From Athlone, Co. Westmeath, before 1913. UM: 263-1937. Harbison 1969a, 61: No. 1871.

30-1. Bronze flanged axehead and bronze palstave. Found near Athlone, Co. Westmeath, the latter in 1950. NMI: 1968: 313.

32. Bronze flanged/ winged axehead found in bed of river Shannon at Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI W.212; A71.

33. Bronze winged axe/ palstave. Found at Athlone 1860. UM: 307-1937. Glover 1978, 47.

34. Bronze axehead. Athlone Museum No. 262. Provenance unrecorded. ?Athlone.

35. Bronze dagger/ halberd dredged from river Shannon above the new bridge at Athlone, 1847. Type Corkey. NMI: W.252; A50. Harbison 1969b, 9: No. 31.

36. Bronze rapier. Found at Athlone. NMI A28; W.119. Burgess and Gerloff 1981, 89: No. 749.

37. Bronze rapier blade fragment. From near Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: 1968: 239. Burgess and Gerloff 1981, 104: No. 374.

38-9. Two bronze dirks/ rapiers. From Athlone, Co. Westmeath. UM: 492-1937; whereabouts of other unknown. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 38: lots 272, 274; Glover 1978, 48; Burgess and Gerloff 1981, 99: No. 885.

40. Bronze rapier. From river Shannon (?) at Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: W.110. Burgess and Gerloff 1981, 75: No. 579.

Later Bronze Age

41-2. Two gold bar-torcs. Found near Athlone, 1848. NMI: 1893: 5-6. Armstrong 1920, 60, Pl. XII: 85-6; Taylor 1980, Co Rm 12, 13.

43. Gold "tress-ring". From Athlone, Co. Roscommon. BM: 1839.4-26.9. Taylor 1980, Co Rm 4.

44-6. Three gold penannular bracelets. Apparently found together near Athlone, Co. Roscommon, in 1841. Alnwick Castle, Northumberland. Eogan 1983, pp. 143-4.

47-8. Gold "sleeve-fastener" and "ring money". From Athlone, Co. Roscommon. BM: W.G.27,29. Eogan 197., 199: No. 34; Taylor 1980, Co Rm 5,6.

49-50. Two gold penannular objects. Found together near Athlone. NMI: 1893:7-8. Armstrong 1920, 78, 254-5, Pl. XVIII, 379, 388; Taylor 1980, Co Rm 10-11; Eogan 1983, p. 144.

51-2. Two gold "dress-fasteners". From Athlone, Co. Roscommon. Detroit Institute of Arts, U.S.A.: 53.274-5. Taylor 1980, Co Rm 7-8; Eogan 1983, 195.

53. Bronze basal-looped spearhead. From river Shannon near Athlone. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 45: lot 321, Pl. XIII.

54. Bronze spearhead with loop-holes in the blade. From river Shannon near Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Limerick Public Museum?. Jrl. Roy. Soc. Antiqs. Ireland 13 (1874-5), 315; Herbert 1940, 84.

55. Bronze looped spearhead. Found, probably in river Shannon, at Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: W.228.

56. Bronze spearhead. Found in river Shannon at Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: W.191. Wilde 1857, 501-2: Fig. 383.

57. Bronze spearhead. Found probably in river Shannon at

Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: W.89.

58-64. Seven bronze spearheads. Found in river Shannon drainage schemes at Athlone, Co. Westmeath, prior to 1848. NMI: A1 (W.82); A2 (W.80); A4 (W.72); A5 (W.106); A9, A12 (W.91); A16 (W.128).

65. Bronze spearhead. In river Shannon near Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Dept of Education Rep. N.M.I. 1931-2, 14.

66. Bronze spearhead. Found in a bog near Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: 1959:601.

67. Bronze spearhead with rivet holes. From Athlone, Co. Westmeath. BM: W.G. 1632. See Evans 1881, 314.

68. Bronze ribbed kite-shaped spearhead. Found at Athlone, Co. Westmeath, 1844. UM: 456-1937. Glover 1978, 48.

69. Bronze sword. Found in Athlone bog, near Athlone, Co. Roscommon. BM 1863, 1-22.116. Eogan 1965, 80.

70-73. Four bronze swords. Said to have been found together near Athlone, "upon an ancient battlefield". NMI: W.77; W.80; W.40; W.84. Eogan 1965, 140-3, 164; Eogan 1983, 144-5.

74. Bronze sword. From Athlone. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 41: lot 298, Pl. XIV.

75. Bronze sword. From near Athlone, Co. Roscommon. BM: 1863, 1-22, 155. Eogan 1965, 132.

76. Bronze Sword. From near Athlone, Co. Westmeath/ Roscommon. NMI: P242. Eogan 1965, 140.

77. Bronze sword. From Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: W.42. Eogan 1965, 26.

78. Bronze sword. Found in 1838 in a millrace, parish of St. Peter's, Athlone, Co. Roscommon. NMI: R1942.

79. Bronze sword. Found in river Shannon near Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford: 1884.119.308. Eogan 1965, 87; Allen, Britton and Coghlan 1970, 233-5: No. 121.

80. Bronze shield. Found in river Shannon at Athlone, Co. Westmeath, 1981. ?Private possession. Raftery 1982, 5-17.

81. Bronze socketed axehead. Found, probably in river Shannon, at Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: W.389.

82. Bronze socketed axehead. Found, probably in river Shannon, at Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: W.547.

83. Bronze socketed axe. Dredged from river Shannon about fifty yards above New Bridge at Athlone, Co. Westmeath, 1847.

NMI: W.496.

84. Bronze socketed axehead. Found near Athlone, Co. Westmeath in 1850's. NMI: 1968:353.

85. Bronze socketed knife. Found at Athlone, 1888. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 37: lot 270. Pl. XI.

86-7. Bronze sickle and bronze ornament. From Athlone. BM: 1862.12-9.3; 1864.7-14.96. Evans 1881, 201, Fig. 238.

88-98. Eleven jet beads. Found near Athlone. NMI: 1882:69. These may not be of Later Bronze Age date.

Iron Age

99. Iron sword. Dredged from river Shannon above New Bridge at Athlone, Co. Westmeath, 1847. NMI: WK.23; W.2; A.124.

100. Bronze ring-headed pin. Apparently found near Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: 1920:44. Raftery 1983, 154.

101. Bronze bowl. From Athlone, Co. Westmeath, possibly from river Shannon. Whereabouts unknown. Raftery 1983, 215.

102. Bronze bowl. From Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Formerly in the Dunraven collection, Limerick City Museum. It was auctioned in May 1980. ?Private possession. Herbert 1940, 86: No. 159.

103-4. Two bronze mounts. Found in River Shannon, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI. Raftery 1983, 255.

Early Historic

105. Bronze latchet. Found in the river Shannon, close to the monastery of Athlone. Vallencey

106. Bronze zoomorphic penannular brooch. From near Athlone, Co. Westmeath. UM: 846-1963. Kilbride-Jones 1980, 108: No. 66; Flanagan 1965, 111, Fig. 3C.

107-8. Two bronze penannular brooches from Athlone. BM: 1868.7-9.23, 26.

109. Bronze ringed pin. From near Athlone, Co. Westmeath. BM: 1868,7-9,28. Fanning 1974-5, 213: No. 5.

110-117. Bronze ring-brooches, pins and harp pegs (eight objects). From Athlone. BM: 1868.7-9.31, 33, 35, 44-48. Some of these objects may be of Anglo-Norman or later date.

118-9. Bronze ringed pin and bronze harp peg. From Athlone. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 53: lot 368 and 59: lot 400. Fanning

1974-5, 211: no. 3, Fig. 1.

120-122. Three bronze ringed pins. Found   near   Athlone,   Co.
Westmeath. NMI: 1882: 12, 14, 17. Kilbride-Jones   1980,   108:
?Nos. 67-8, 131: No. 117; Fanning 1974-5, 213: No. 8.

123. Bronze ring pin. Found   in   bed   of   river   Shannon   at
Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: W.336.

124. Silver armlet/ necklet. Found at Athlone, Co. Roscommon.
UM: 212-1913. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 66: lot   454,   Pl.   XIX;
Glover 1978, 50: Pl. I.

125-6. Two silver armlets. Found   in   the   river   Shannon   at
Athlone. Alnwick Castle, Northumberland. Bruce 1880, 94:   No.
528, Pl. XXIII.

127. Bronze pin with ten pierced   bronze   discs.   Found   near
Athlone, Co. Westmeath, 1898. NMI: S.A.   1927:66.   Dept.   of
Education Report on N.M.I. 1927-8, 15; Cat. Day Coll. (1913),
51: lot 355.

Anglo-Norman and late Medieval

128. Iron axehead. Found   about   2-3   m   deep   while   digging
foundations at Mardyke Street, Athlone, Co.   Westmeath.   NMI:
1960:778. Jrl. Roy. Soc. Antiqs. 92 (1962), 161, Fig. 13.

129. Circular   silver   brooch.   Found   c.1850's   beneath   the
foundations of an old house in Athlone. NMI: 1895:18.

130. Bronze spur. Found at Athlone. NMI: W.39.

130. Copper seal matrix of   Cistercian   abbey   of   Kilbeggan.
Found at Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: R.677. Armstrong   1913,
470, Pl. LI: 6.

131. Bronze seal matrix of the Cluniac abbey of SS Peter   and
Paul's, Athlone. Found at Athlone,   Co.   Westmeath   in   river
Shannon. Armstrong 1913, 468-9, Pl. LI:4.

132-4. Two brass buckles and one bronze bit boss. Found   near
Athlone. NMI: 1882: 27-8, 36.

Post-Medieval

135. Iron dagger. From   river   Shannon,   near   Athlone,   Co.
Westmeath. Rynne 1969, 137-43.

136. Broad flat double-edged iron blade. Found   several   feet
under   ground   on   site   of   the   new   bridge,   Athlone,   Co.
Westmeath. NMI: WK.49 (p.126).

137. Pair of bronze compasses. Found   in   river   Shannon   at

Athlone, Co. Westmeath. NMI: P.767.

138. Bronze beam of an ouncel. Found in river Shannon at Athlone, 1849. NMI: W.70.

139. Bronze globular cattle bell. Found near Athlone. NMI: 1882:43.

140. Bone crucifix. Found near Athlone. NMI: 1882:66.

141-5. Five bone objects (?amulets) and a stone plaque. Found near Athlone, summer of 1853. NMI 1968: 368-9.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

The Problems

Athlone is important to archaeological research for four reasons. Firstly, it was the site of an important prehistoric ford. Secondly, in Early Historic times it was a church site, and during the twelfth century a bridge, castle and Cluniac monastery were added. Thirdly, during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, it was the principal town of Anglo-Norman Westmeath. Fourthly, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the town was largely rebuilt and perhaps re-planned.

The number of prehistoric objects from Athlone is huge by comparison with that from other Irish towns. Most are objects of quality and while some were doubtless lost in fording the river others may well have been votive offerings deposited to appease the river god. There is no evidence for settlement in Athlone in prehistoric times but the great number of prehistoric finds indicate that the site of the future town was well known to prehistoric man. The problem for archaeology is to determine exactly what was there, a ford, a place of ritual deposition or both?

The evidence that Athlone was an early church site (on the spot where the Franciscan Friary was subsequently established) has only come to light recently. There are no documentary references to a monastery but the discovery of fine quality Early Historic grave slabs puts the matter beyond reasonable doubt. The nature of this church site remains to be determined. How far did it extend beyond the present graveyard. Is the curving Abbey Road a survival of the monastic boundary? Did the site extend into the area occupied by the County Hospital?

The twelfth century developments at Athlone are of considerable archaeological significance. The documents

indicate that there was a sequence of bridges and these have probably left buried traces in the river bed and perhaps in the banks on both sides. The construction of a castle and Cluniac monastery suggest that there may have been a larger settlement here in the mid-twelfth century, perhaps some form of village, rather than just three isolated features. The documents are no help here, however, and it is only through excavation that this part of Athlone's story will be revealed.

The archaeology of the Anglo-Norman town is particularly significant for the understanding of the changeover from the pre-Norman settlement to a fully fledged medieval town. Important too is the clarification of what happened during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Did it shrink in size and population? Was the town deserted entirely? Did it fall into Irish hands?

The date of the street pattern is uncertain but it is clear that it has remained largely intact since the early seventeenth century. Are Church Street and Northgate Street Anglo-Norman in origin and do they represent continuity from the medieval street pattern? Were the streets of Athlone completely redesigned in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries? What was the nature of the road surface at various times? Streets should be examined archaeologically if at all possible because they permit not only an examination of their surfaces but also allow the results of excavations on one side of a street to be linked with those on the other. This enables the reconstruction of entire streetscapes in the manner which has proved so successful at Novgorod.

The importance of determining the nature of the early bridges has already been mentioned but it is also important to discover what the form of subsequent structures was like because next to nothing is known of the form, date or size of these bridges.

Historically, the castle is one of the most important in the Midlands and it is evident even from a superficial examination that it has a complex structural history. The layout of the thirteenth century castle is unknown as are the forms of timber buildings which must have stood within the curtain wall, and the appearance of its external defences such as a moat. The castle is probably on the site of the twelfth century structure built to control the bridge and it would be of considerable significance to determine its size and extent. The nature of activity on the site between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries also remains to be discovered.

Nothing is known of the form or size of pre-seventeenth century housing in the town. It is important to know what sort of buildings the medieval inhabitants of Athlone lived in and how these changed through time. Only when such houses

have been found can assessments be made of the impact of
native Irish, British and continental building techniques on
Athlone's craftsmen. A great deal of information about
changes in building methods and fashions can also be derived
from stratified sites in which the remains of successive
houses are preserved. A great deal remains to be learned
about Athlone's seventeenth century houses and opportunites
to excavate sites of this period are also most important.

The course of the town defences outlined above needs to
be checked by excavation to determine whether it is correct
or not, and much remains to be discovered about the periods
of construction, the variations in building, the forms of
mural towers and gatehouses, and the extent of the town
fosse. In particular it is important to discover the exact
line of the medieval defences because these may have enclosed
a larger or smaller area that the seventeenth century walls.

It is unlikely that the opportunity will arise to
excavate on the site of St. Mary's Church but the opportunity
could occur at the sites of the Cluniac priory, and the
Franciscan friary. Our knowledge of the form, size and
character of these religous houses is negligible, and in the
case of the Franciscan friary, knowledge is confined merely
to the form of the seventeenth century church. It is
important to remember that the architectural features and
extent are only one aspect of the archaeology of religous
houses and the excavation of a medieval cemetery, such as
that conducted at York, can provide otherwise unobtainable
evidence about health, disease, diet, and mortality rates.

The extent of settlement outside the walls in Irishtown
is unknown and the contrast between buildings there and those
within the wall is also unknown at any period prior to 1700.

Archaeological Potential

Archaeology does not consist solely of excavation nor
does it stop at ground level. The archaeological evidence for
Athlone's past comprises all the physical remains of man's
activities on the site of the town, from its first use as a
ford to 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 Athlone, but for the wide range of human activity
omitted from the written accounts and for the early periods
without documentation 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 site of the town has been the scene of human activity in Prehistoric, Early Historic and Medieval and post-Medieval times. Both documentary sources and the known archaeological remains indicate that the town was occupied continuously from c.500 AD into the post-medieval period. With the exception of the Castle the standing archaeological remains are seventeenth century and Athlone's medieval buildings seem to have been demolished at an early date. The surviving remains comprise the Castle, the tower of St. Mary's church, the Franciscan friary and parts of the town defences. Although the destruction of buildings above ground has been substantial, the street pattern of the post-medieval town is largely intact and archaeological deposits are likely to exist over a wide area of the town. Accordingly there is the strong likelihood of recovering house foundations, refuse pits, industrial areas, and workshops.

ARCHAEOLOGY, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

It is evident from the foregoing that archaeology is an important means of learning about Athlone'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 Athlone'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 make while development is in progress. The castle alone enjoys statutory protection as a scheduled National Monument but because of the difficulties of scheduling urban properties, other sites within Athlone are unlikely to be given this protection. 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 Athlone'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. 3) delimits the area of archaeological potential within modern Athlone. In the absence of archaeological excavations within this area, however, little can be said of their extent and depth. Athlone has witnessed considerable development in recent years. The construction of the by-pass has almost certainly destroyed archaeological deposits in Irishtown. Elsewhere, however, there is little evidence for modern disturbance. Accordingly, archaeological deposits are likely to exist over the area of the walled town, and in Irishtown on the east and Connacht Street on the west. This area is shaded pink on Fig. 3 and the extent has been continued outside the walls slightly in order to allow for a possible fosse. On the north side of the town an area around the ruined Franciscan Friary (marked "Abbey") has been included because it is likely to delimit the extent of an early church site.
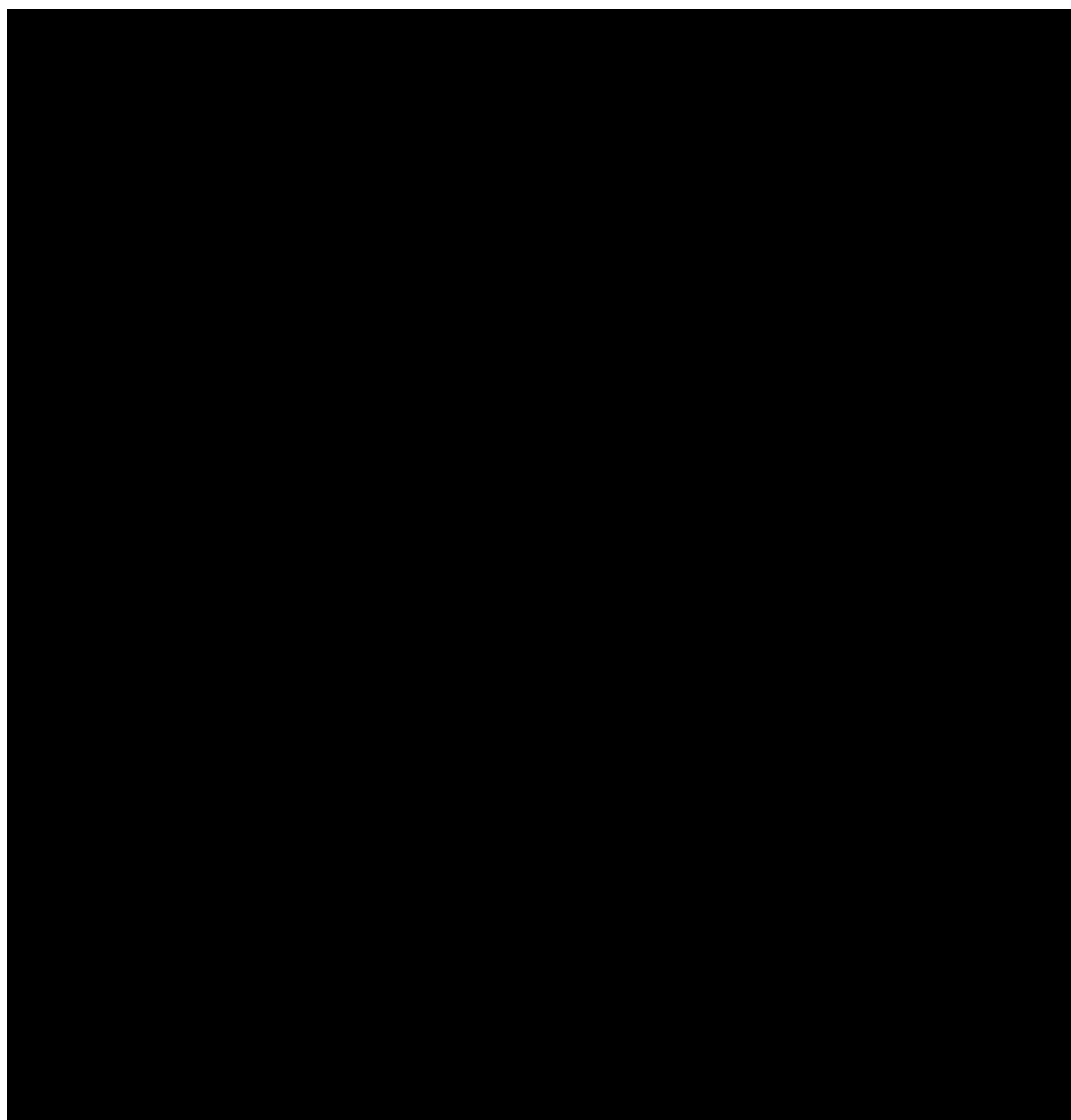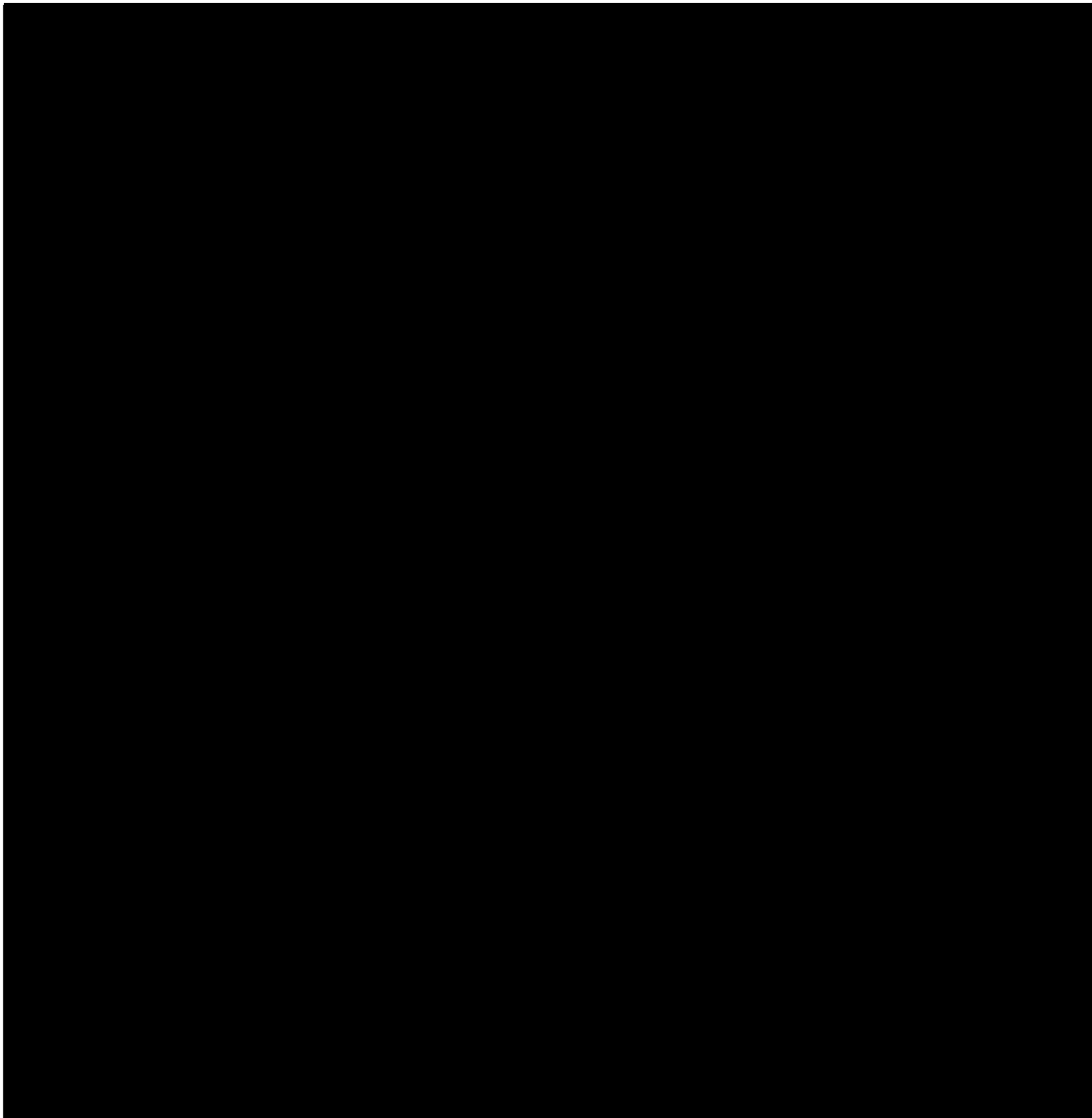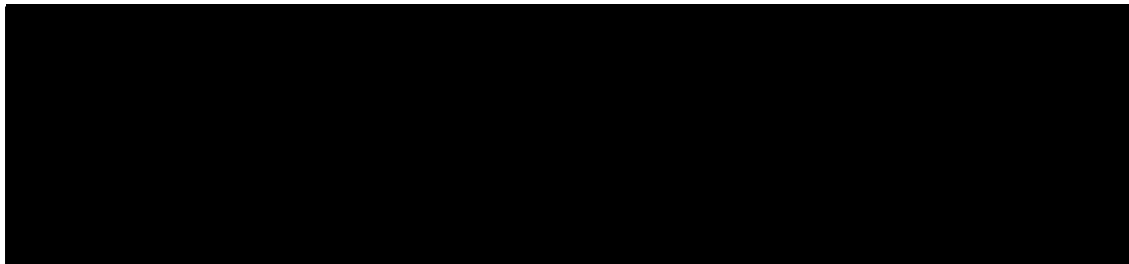
BALLYMORE

The borough of Ballymore Lough Sewdy, now called simply
Ballymore, is situated on a low 300 feet rise between the
high ground around the Hill of Uisneach, on the east, and the
basin of Lough Ree to the west, roughly midway between
Mullingar and Athlone, in south-west Westmeath. A story in
the Dinnsheanchas explains the name as Loch Seimhdidhe,
Semtell's lake, after the warrior Semtell who drowned while
bathing there (Walsh 1957, 331). Ballymore means simply
"large town" but the precise date when it came into use is
not known although it was evidently so-called by the
fifteenth century because it is referred to as "Lochside
alias de villa magna" in 1432, and "Baile Mor Locha
Seimhdighe" in 1450 (Walsh 1957, 330-1).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The earliest evidence of settlement in the vicinity of
the medieval borough is in the Early Historic period when
there was an important crannog on the lake. In 1033 Murchadh
Ua Mael Sechlainn was slain on the "island" of Loch Seimdidhe
(AFM). In 1131 it was plundered by Conchobar Ua Briain (ALC,
AFM) and in 1159 Ruaidri Ua Conchobair, King of Connacht,
marched to Loch Seimhdidhe, dragging eight galleys overland
and plundered "Inis Enain" (presumably the actual name of the
crannog), killing most of its people. The death of Aedh
Slaine at Loch Seimdidhe in 600 (AFM) may indicate that the
crannog was in use at this time but it is difficult to know
whether such an early dates may be relied on or not. It has
been suggested that a monastery was established here c.700
but the suggestion lacks supporting evidence (Gwynn and
Hadcock 1970, 374).

After 1172 Lough Sewdy became part of Hugh de Lacy's
Liberty of Meath. De Lacy kept Lough Sewdy for himself and
after the destruction of the castle of Killare in 1187 it
became the principal seigneurial manor of Westmeath (Orpen
1911-20, ii, 81; Graham 1980, 45). A substantial settlement
seems to have developed fairly quickly. In 1204 Walter de
Lacy was granted a fair at "Lochseveth" (Sweetman 1875-86, i,
No. 229) and the settlement acquired borough status before
c.1235 when a burgage is referred to (MacNiocaill 1977,
54-6). A convent of Cistercian nuns was established in 1218
and a priory of Augustinian canons c.1250.

After Walter de Lacy's death in 1241 Lough Sewdy passed
to John de Verdon through his wife Margery who was de Lacy's
granddaughter (Otway-Ruthven 1968b, 411). The castle of Lough

Sewdy now became the caput or centre of the de Verdon section of Meath just as Trim castle became the caput of the De Geneville area (Orpen 1911-20, iv, 174). In 1284 Theobald de Verdon received a grant of markets and fairs on his demense manors, including Lough Sewdy (Sweetman 1875-86, ii, Nos. 2303-4). In 1332 after the partition of the lands of Theobald de Verdun the manor of Lough Sewdy, including the profits and tolls of its hundred court and burgess returns was divided between de Lacy's four daughters and their husbands (Otway Ruthven 1968b, 416, 421-37). In common with much of the Anglo-Norman colony in Ireland, Lough Sewdy experienced severe upheavals in the fourteenth century when it appears to have fallen into Irish hands. In 1315, having spent Christmas there, Edward Bruce burned the manor (Gilbert 1884 ii, 347) and in 1338-9 it was stated that the lands of Thomas de Furnival at Lough Sewdy "are burned by the Irish and lie waste and uncultivated for want of tenants, and because no Englishman dared to live there on account of the Irish" (47 Report Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 31). This seems to have remained the case for the rest of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Two late fifteenth century documents describe the impoverished circumstances of the Augustinian priory, which presumably reflects the state of the settlement as a whole during this period. It this respect it is surely significant that the convent of Cistercian nuns was abandoned about 1470 (see below).

In 1540 the jurors appointed to make an extent of the priory of Lough Sewdy could not approach the neighbourhood "for fear of the Irish" (White 1943, 284, 280). In 1545 Henry VIII planned to make the parish church of Lough Sewdy into the cathedral church of the diocese of Meath and this suggests some degree of effective English control at that date. In 1561 Shane O'Rono was pardoned for burning the town (11 Report Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland 71: No. 365) and in 1566 both the town and "abbey" were leased to Thomas le Strange (11 Report Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland 129: No. 883, 128: No. 882). In 1606 the castle of "Balleemore-Loughsewdie" was granted to John Wakeman together with a weekly market and annual fair (Erck 1846-52, 268). This may indicate a slight improvement in the settlement's fortunes but little more is known of its history in the seventeenth century although the castle saw action in both the Confederate and Williamite wars.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE
2. ST. MARY'S PARISH CHURCH
3. AUGUSTINIAN PRIORY OF ST. MARY
4. CISTERCIAN NUNNERY OF ST. MARY
5. HOSPITAL
6. OTHER MONUMENTS

1. MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE

The earliest reference to the castle of "Loxeuth" occurs in 1211-12 (Davies and Quinn 1941, 31) but it is reasonable to assume that the motte dates from c.1187 when Lough Sewdy became the main Westmeath seat of the de Lacys. Confiscated by King John in 1210 the castle was returned to Walter de Lacy in 1215 (Otway Ruthven 1968a, 80; Sweetman 1875-86, nos. 596, 612, 719). In the partition of 1332 it went to William Blunt, husband of Margaret, third daughter of Theobald de Verdon. At that time it was stated that the castle had been burnt by the Irish and that there were no buildings on the site (Otway Ruthven 1968b, 429). This tends to support Orpen's (1911-20, ii, 81 n. 3) suggestion that the motte was abandoned in favour of a new castle of which the circular tower is a remnant.

Nothing further is known of the motte until the seventeenth century. In 1606 the castle was granted to John Wakeman (Erck 1846-52, 268) but it is not certain if this refers to the motte or not. The motte was refortified, however, in the 1640s and in 1693 it was stated that the stones of the chancel of the church were "used in Cromwell's time to build Loxeudy castle" (Ellison 1975, 11). Writing in 1682 Piers stated that the motte:

> "was divided from the mainland by a graff deep and large, with ramparts of earth and bulwarks; the ditch was so low carried, as to receive three or four foot of the restagnant waters of the lake, over which was by a drawbridge the entry into the fort" (Piers 1981, 79).

In 1690 the motte was refortified by the Jacobites but it was captured in 1691 after a short siege by the Williamites under Ginkel (Murtagh 1974-5, 242-6). The Williamite chaplain, Rev. George Story, described the "isthmus" on which the motte stood as:

> "formerly fortified with a double ditch and within that a stone wall....At the further end, next the broadest part of the lough stood a strong Danish fort now fortified with a ditch twenty foot broad and ten foot deep being also palisaded around" (Murtagh 1974-5, 244).

Description (Pl. 9a)

The motte is situated on a spur of land jutting into Lake Sunderlin and flanked on the east and west by marshy ground. The tip of the spur was adapted to form a large motte and bailey with enclosing bank and ditch. The only land approach is from the south where the motte is protected by a bank and ditch, 7.5 m wide, and stone-faced internally. The lake side is defended by a shallow ditch and the bailey. The motte consists of a conical mound rising from a basal diameter of m to a flat oval-shaped top measuring 19 m north-south by 15.5

m east-west. There are the remains of a raised platform, some 9.5 m wide, on the west side.

The bailey is situated to the north and is separated from the motte by a shallow ditch some 11 m wide. It is crescentic and measures 53 by 25 m. There are masonry fragments on the east edge of the bailey but it is impossible to determine what sort of structure is represented. The east end of the bailey is 1.5 m higher on average than the remainder. This is probably the result of seventeenth century refortification works because the raised area is connected to a seventeenth century bank which links the bailey with the lake shore.

The seventeenth century fortifications were depicted in 1691 by Story (in Murtagh 1974-5, Pl. 16) but only traces of them now survive. On the south side the spur of land was cut off by a deep ditch which was defended internally and externally by banks. All trace of the external bank has vanished but the ditch is present. This ditch was almost certainly water-filled originally as Piers describes it. The ditch was crossed by a causeway defended by a drawbridge of which only some fragments of masonry survive. There were pentangular bastions at the east and west ends of the internal bank and traces of these are present. The motte was protected on the south side by an inner fortification having two rectangular bastions of which no trace survives. The east side of the spur was protected by a low bank while along the west side the ridge was scarped into the marshy ground below. The bailey was defended by a stone faced bank which skirts the lake-shore.

Finds of iron slag, cannon balls, musket shot and coins have been made by metal detector users in the peaty soil beside the lake shore immediately east of the bailey. Animal bones have also been found, during drainage, south-east of the motte.

2. STONE TOWER ?CASTLE

The function of this building has not been fully established. Identified on the O.S. map as Plary monastery (i.e. the Augustinian priory of St. Mary, see below) the remains have none of the features of a religous house. The earliest clear reference to the structure is in 1690, during the siege of Ballymore, when it is described simply as a "round stone castle" (Murtagh 1974-5, 244). The identification with Plary monastery is based on a local tradition recorded by O'Donovan in 1837 but his letter suggests that he was not entirely convinced:

"no remains of any buildings are visible except one small round castle, which, though it presents all the appearances of a strong military tower, is insisted upon by tradition to be a part of the monastery of Plary"

(Walsh 1957, 16)

If this local tradition was correct it is all the more
surprising that Woods, a resident of Ballymore, should have
described the building as "Ballymore Castle" in his Annals of
Westmeath, published in 1907 (Woods 1907, 197).
Architecturally the structure is difficult to date. It was
badly slighted in the 1690 siege and lacks diagnostic
architectural features. The circular plan and the wall
thickness are consistent with a late twelfth or early
thirteenth century donjon but the small arrow loops on the
ground floor are more typical of the fifteenth century. There
is no evidence that these loops are insertions and this
suggests that the structure is late medieval and is best
interpreted as a round tower house. For whom it was built, an
Irish lord or a religous house, can only be determined by
excavation.

Description (Fig.9; Pl. 10a)

   The remains consist of a ruined drum tower and wall
footings. The TOWER has a base batter and was probably three
storeyed originally but only two floors now survive. It is
built of roughly coursed masonry. Th walls are 2.15 m thick
on average and the internal diameter is 3.9 m. The tower is
entered at ground floor level from the south through a large
hole lacking any splay or jambs. It opens into a round
chamber with a pointed barrell vault. Two arrow loops open to
the north and north-west; these have flat lintelled rear
arches and are deeply splayed internally. The angle of the
roof vault appears to have necessitated the thickening of the
north wall internally and the insertion of a round arch over
the north arrow loop. Close to the door there are two holes
in the roof. The first floor is reached by a mural stairs on
the west of the entrance. The stair is barrel vaulted and lit
by narrow rectangular windows with internal splay. The floor
is filled with the debris from the collapsed upper parts of
the tower. The internal wall faces are lacking but it
probably had a large window in both the south and east walls.
The stair appears to have continued up to a second floor or
roof walk.

   There are two sections of wall immediately east of the
tower. That running east-west is 6.65 m long while the
north-south wall is 4.5 m. Both are approximately 80cm high.
There is a hollow, 4.25-4.5 m across, east of these footings.
The foundations of a longer wall are also visible south east
of the tower. They are discontinuous but run in an easterly
direction for 22 m before turning north for a distance of
4.65 m.

3. PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY

Today the parish is dedicated to St. Owen or Enain but it is clear that St. Mary was the medieval patron (Bliss and Twemlow 1904, 108, 452-3; Chart 1935, 37; Tresham 1828, p. 237 no. 90). Little is known of the church in the Middle Ages apart from the names of a few rectors. In 1545 it was chosen by Henry VIII to be the new cathedral church of the diocese of Meath (18 Report Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 147 no. 6797). It is not known whether the church ever functioned as a cathedral or not but its selection indicates that the church was a prominent one within the diocese. The chancel was demolished during the 1650's in order to provide stone to strengthen the castle defences (Ellison 1975, 11). Despite rebuilding in 1682 the church was described as ruined in 1693 (Ellison 1975, 11). A new church was constructed with the aid of the Board of First Fruits in 1827. It is now ruined and roofless. The date at which the parish church changed its dedication to St. Owen is not clear but it had occurred by 1693 (Ellison 1975, 11).

Description (Fig. 8; Pl. 9b)

The pre-1700 remains consist of a small ruined rectangular chapel in the south-east corner of the graveyard. The masonry consists of roughly coursed mixed stone with limestone quoins and jambs. The steeply pitched gables of the east and west walls survive almost completely intact. Maximum external dims. 8.4 by 5.85 m. The east wall is lit by a plain rectangular three light window with flat rear-arch and external hood mould. The north and south walls are featureless except for a shallow rectangular recess at the east end of the north wall. The walls stand to a height of 3.8 m and are 65 cm thick. There is a plain pointed door with internal bar-hole in the west wall. Externally there is a rectangular recess above the door which may have held a statue or plaque. The building is probably of early seventeenth century date and Cogan (1867, 493) regarded it as a mortuary chapel.

4. AUGUSTINIAN PRIORY OF ST. MARY

The founder and date of foundation of this monastery are unknown but Gwynn and Hadcock (1970, 153) suggest that it was established about the middle of the thirteenth century. They regard it as a small foundation, probably a dependency of Tristernagh, which existed to provide chaplains to the Cistercian convent nearby. It was burned by Cathal Og O Conchobair in 1363 and by the O'Kellys in 1394 (O hInnse 1947, 150). The monastery seems to have declined in the fifteenth century. In 1487 Ludovicus O mulynnan sought a transfer from the priory because "the poverty of his canonical position and the slenderness of the fruits of [the] monastery" could not support him (Twemlow 1960, 216). In 1492 the prior of the monastery, Bernard Ydalayd, stated that its

fruits were barely enough to support himself and one canon and complained of the obligation to provide hospitality for travellers (Twemlow 1960, 297-8). In the extent of 1540 the monastery is described as containing "a ruinous church and a small stone belfry". In 1542 it is more fully described as "a church with belfry, a dormitory, hall, three chambers, kitchen and two stables" (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 160). The priory was leased to Thomas le Strange in 1566 (11 Rep. Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 128: no. 882), granted to William Brown in 1594 (16 Rep. Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 249: no. 5856) and to Francis Shaen before 1597 (17 Rep. Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 65-6: nos. 6130-1).

In 1594 the monastery is referred to as Plare or Plary (16 Report Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 249: no. 5856) and it was also known as Clary (17 Rep. Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 65-6: nos. 6130-1, Irish Rec. Comm. 1830, 244), a name which Walsh (1957, 15 n.2) suggested was derived from blárach, a field. The site marked on the Ordnance Survey maps as Plary is the one pointed out to O'Donovan in 1837 but there are difficulties in the identification. The surviving remains seem to be those of a castle rather than a monastery and O'Donovan was troubled by this because he remarks that "though it presents all the appearances of a strong military tower, [it] is insisted on by tradition to be a part of the monastery of Plary" (Walsh 1957, 16). These remains are discussed above under the heading stone tower (?castle).

5. CISTERCIAN NUNNERY OF ST. MARY

According to Ware this convent was established in 1218 by a member of the de Lacy family. Little is known of its subsequent history apart from the names of some prioresses. It appears to have fallen into decline in the fifteenth century and it has been suggested that it was abandoned c.1470 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 313).

The site is not known for certain but it may be identified with the monastery marked on the O.S. maps at the southern end of Mullaghcloe townland where it borders on Clonnamanagh. Here there is a two storey farmhouse with thick walls which may incorporate parts of an earlier building. Two piscinas are built into the house, one in the entrance hall which is decorated with a trefoil in false relief; the other is in the bathroom and is not exposed to view. The owners informed us that the convent was located in the adjoining townland of Clonybane (pronounced Cloony mon).

6. HOSPITAL

Story's map of 1693 shows a plain quadrangular building
marked "the hospital", situated on the south-east side of the
village (Murtagh 1974-5, Pl. 16). There is no further
evidence, documentary or otherwise, for this hospital and no
sign of it now survives.

7. OTHER MONUMENTS

Crannogs. Lough Sewdy.
There are a series of small islands near the lake shore on
the north and east sides of the lake and it is likely that
most are crannogs. The early annalistic references indicate
that there was an important crannog here and this was
identified by O'Donovan in 1837 as the Big Island (Walsh
1957, 15). This island may have been the site of a residence
but it is too large to be artificial and cannot be described
as a crannog in the strict sense. A stone causeway is said to
lead from the shore to Big Island.

Circular earthwork. Mullaghcloe Td.
Raised circular platform on high ground overlooking the motte
and lake. Possible entrance feature on south and a slight
rise in the centre. Dims. 32 by 27.3 m.

Ringfort. Mullaghcloe Td.
Single bank and ditch with a counterscarp bank on the north
side. Internal diam. 44 m. The entrance is on the east and is
flanked by 3 stone uprights. There are internal traces of
walls and earthworks.

Earthwork. Clonyveey Td.
Immediately south-east of the crossroads on a knoll within a
wooded area. Circular platform with perimeter bank and a
slight rise in the centre. Diam. 19.5 m. There are irregular
traces of earthworks on the slopes of the knoll below.

Earthwork. Clonyveey Td.
On the east side of the Kilbeggan road, a short distance from
the site of the Cistercian nunnery. Large rectangular
platform set on a ridge. On the south-west side the platform
is 3-4 m high and has an external ditch. On the east it
slopes to ground level and lacks a ditch. In the field
immediately to the north are a series of hollows which may be
the result of human activity.

Battlefield site. Lugacaha Td.
This would appear to have been the scene of an engagement in
the Confederate or Cromwellian wars (Walsh 1957, 15).

Altar stone and holy well. Mullaghcloe Td.
On the side of the hill east of the motte beside the
Ballynacarrigy road. Holy well with a modern stone surround,
and a stonebuilt "mass table" with a rectangular inscribed
plaque set above. Only half the slab now survives but Cogan
(1867, 493) read it as: ME FIERI FECIT JOANNES DALTON,
SACERDOS 29 AUG. ANNO DOMINI 1689.
Dims: H. 40 W. 55 cm.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTTIAL

Ballymore is a good example of a shrunken borough. There
is little evidence of disturbance and it is likely that
archaeological deposits are intact over a large area of the
site. The historical references together with the presence of
crannogs in Lough Sewdy indicate that the site was important
in pre-Norman times. Apart from the crannogs there may have
been settlements near the lake shore and evidence may survive
regarding the transition from pre-Norman to Anglo-Norman
times. The known monuments indicate that Ballymore was a
substantial Anglo-Norman settlement but its extent is not
known, nor is the nature of its houses, streets, and
defences, if any. The form and layout of its medieval
religous houses is similarly unknown; indeed it is unclear
whether the stone castle (?tower) was a secular or religous
dwelling. The motte and bailey is an important site probably
containing evidence for the history of the settlement in the
fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in addition to an
important series of seventeenth century earthworks. The
historical evidence suggests a decline in the fourteenth and
fifteenth centuries but the nature of this decline and the
pattern of the Irish take-over remain unknown. The surviving
archaeological evidence indicates that the late twelfth and
thirteenth centuries was a period of prosperity and it is
likely to be well represented in archaeological deposits. The
seventeenth century is also likely to be well represented.

In summary, the archaeological data indicates that the
borough has been the scene of human activity in Early
Historic and Medieval and post-medieval times. Documentary
records of the site are few and in the future archaeological
excavation is likely to be the principal means by which
additional knowledge can be obtained. The borough is not
under direct threat from commercial development at present
but its position, mid-way between Athlone and Mullingar, is
ideal for a dormitory town and it is likely to come under
presure from housing developments in the near future.

Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 7)
delimits the area of archaeological potential within modern

Ardnurcher. This is based on the extant monuments, the motte, parish church, stone tower and site of the hospital. It follows also the approximate area of the town shown on Story's 1693 map. In addition a group of sites which fall within the immediate environs of the village have been highlighted. These comprise the altar and holy well in Mullaghcloe, circular earthworks at Mullaghcloe and Clonyveey, a rectangular earthwork at Clonyveey and the site of the Cistercian nunnery on the border of Mullaghcloe and Clonnamanagh townlands. In the absence of archaeological excavations nothing can be said about the depth of archaeological deposits.
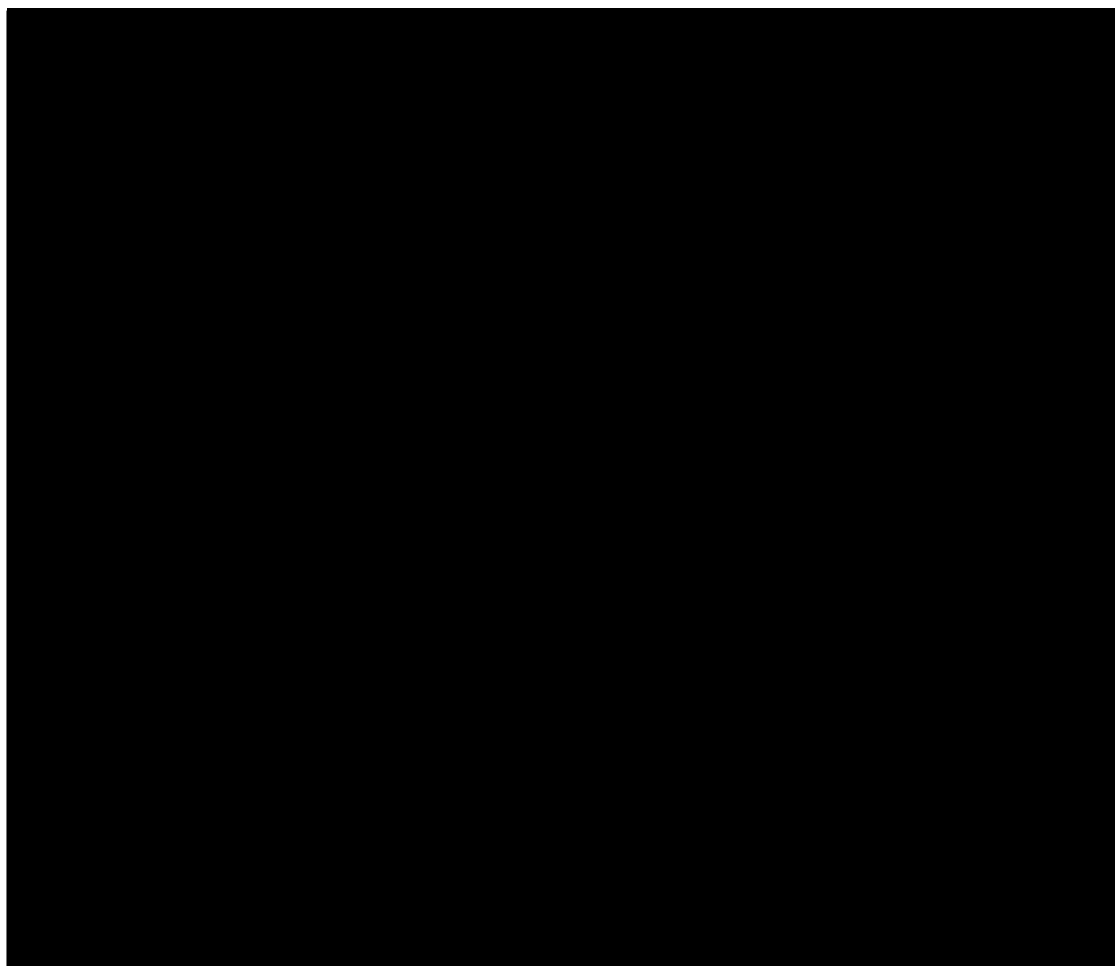
FORE

Fore is situated on the Kells-Castlepollard road in north-east Westmeath in a secluded marshy valley flanked by high ground on the north, east and south. The placename is derived from <u>Fobhair</u>, meaning a spring or well. This spring emerges from a rock known as Carraig Bhaile Fhobhair (the "Ben of Fore") on the south side of the town. O'Donovan noted three other wells in 1837, Tobar na cogaine, Dabhach Feichin and Tobar fualach (Walsh 1957, 63-4). The town has shrunk in size since the middle ages. The present village lies in the centre of the valley and stretches as far as the early monastic site on the west. The motte was built on higher ground to the east, while the Benedictine monastery, whose ruins form Fore's most striking feature, lies to the north.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Finds of a flat bronze axehead and a gold penannular bracelet indicate that the site of the future town was frequented by prehistoric man but the first significant settlement was the monastery founded by St Feichin in the seventh century. Many of its abbots are recorded in the annals, the earliest being Connfaeladh who died in 711. The monastery was plundered and burned on a number of occasions, a clear indication of its importance (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 36).

Fore was granted to Hugh de Lacy as part of the liberty of Meath in 1172 and in the same year De Lacy spent a fortnight at Fore and burned the monastery (A. Tig.). He may not have effectively occupied Fore, however, until c.1180 (Orpen 1911-20, ii, 81) and the motte was probably built sometime between then and 1186. The Benedictine priory was established before 1185 and the settlement had achieved borough status by c.1235 (MacNiocaill 1977, 55). Little is known of the town in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. On the death of Walter de Lacy in 1241 Fore passed to Geoffrey de Geneville from whom it passed to Roger de Mortimer in 1308 (Orpen 1911-20 iii, 286). It remained in Mortimer hands until the death of Richard, duke of York, in 1460 when it passed to the crown.

By the fifteenth century Fore was an exposed frontier town of the Anglo-Norman colony. Attacks by the Irish resulted in the burning of the priory in 1423 and of the town c.1432 (Seymour 1934; Tresham 1828, 229, 254). It was perhaps as a response to this that Henry VI made a grant of murage to the town which was subsequently reaffirmed in 1462-3 by his successor Edward IV (Berry 1914, 25). The priory was also fortified at about this time. In 1463 the manor was granted

to Thomas, earl of Desmond (Berry 1914, 301) and in 1475-6 to Christopher Nugent (Morrissey 1939, 455). Little further is known of Fore until 1682 when Piers (1981, 66) stated:

> "this town of Foure .... is at this day but very mean, the inhabitants very poor and live in small cottages"

It would appear then that the later fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a period of contraction and recession.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. STREET PATTERN & MARKET PLACE
2. DOMESTIC HOUSES
3. MOTTE AND BAILEY
4. TOWN DEFENCES
5. ST. FEICHIN'S CHURCH & EARLY MONASTIC SITE
    TEAMPALL FIONAIN
    THE SOUTERRAIN
    THE ANCHORITE'S CELL
    ST. FEICHIN'S MILL
6. ST. MARY'S PARISH CHURCH
7. BENEDICTINE PRIORY OF SS. TAURIN & FEICHIN
8. WAYSIDE CROSSES
9. OTHER MONUMENTS
10. LIST OF STRAY FINDS

1. STREET PATTERN & MARKET PLACE

The modern east-west road through the village may coincide for part of its course with the medieval main street. It is evident that it does not overly it exactly, however, because the present road bypasses both of the surviving town gates. The date of the present street plan is difficult to determine. The absence of clear burgage plots indicates a lack of continuity in the centre of the town and accordingly it is possible that the street pattern has changed considerably since the middle ages. Apart from the east-west street there are two other streets, one leading north towards the Benedictine priory, the other, a lane, running eastwards past Christian's Castle to the motte.

The market place is in the centre of the village and is of triangular plan, occupied by a small village green. The site of the town gaol lies to the north. A small seventeenth century cross has been erected on the green (see Wayside Crosses: Fore 1 below).

2. DOMESTIC HOUSES

None of the houses in the village have diagnostic pre-1700 architectural features but the masonry of some such as the Gaol, some walls at the rear of houses on the north side of the main street, the single storied shed on the east side of the Green, and the two storied house, now used as a farm outhouse, immediately north of the shed, may be of pre-1700 date. In the absence of detailed masonry studies, however, this remains only a guess.

The Gaol is perhaps the best preserved of these buildings. It is built of roughly coursed limestone and lacks jambs or quoins. Only the front facade and short returns of the side walls survive. It was originally rectangular with its long axis aligned east-west. It was at least two storied and has a slight batter at the base. The facade is 9.5 m long and the length of the east return is 2.35 m. The facade wall is 1.3 m thick and 3-4 m high but the west gable is slightly higher. The ground floor was barrell vaulted with a fireplace in the south wall which was later used as a doorway but is now blocked up. The remains of a spiral stair are present in the south-east corner.

3. MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE

Orpen (1911-20 ii, 81) suggests that the motte was built by the elder Hugh de Lacy (d. 1186) but Graham (1980, 53) indicates that it may have been constructed closer to 1192. The castle of Fore was one of those confiscated from Walter de Lacy by King John in 1210 but it was restored to him in 1215 (Sweetman 1875-86 i, No. 612). The motte was the centre of a large manor but after 1215 nothing is known of its history except the names of the individuals who owned it.

Description

The site is situated on a ridge which affords commanding views on the south and west, but the view to the north and east is blocked by hills. The motte consists of an oval-plan conical mound rising from a basal width of 42 by 24 m to a flat top measuring 26.2 by 16.8 m. The bailey is square (18 x 18 m) and lies south-west of the motte being separated from it by a shallow ditch 3.5 m wide. The motte and bailey is enclosed on the north, east, and south sides by a steep-sided ditch 7 m wide with a counterscarp bank, 8-10 m wide. A further short section of ditch, 2.2 m wide, with a bank 11 m wide, is present at the north-east end. On the south-west the front of the bailey is stone-faced and there is evidence for a causeway linking the bailey to the rest of the ridge. At the north-east end of the ridge there are grass covered earthworks for a three-roomed rectangular structure 17 m in length, with a circular depression at the west end having a

diameter of 6.7 m.

South-east of the motte are a number of banks and ditches running up the side of Gallow's Hill. These may be the remains of field fences but their date and function is unclear.

4. TOWN DEFENCES

During the Later Middle Ages Fore was a frontier town and although documentary references are slight it is clear that it was fortified in the fifteenth century. In 1462-3 Edward IV confirmed an earlier grant of murage by Henry VI, King between 1422 and 1461 (Berry 1914, 25).

Description

The exact course of the defences is difficult to trace. Apart from the two gatehouses only the wall foundations survive and these are difficult to distinguish from ordinary field boundaries. Drainage channels have been cut between almost every field and these have formed banks of much the same width and height as the town wall foundations.

The SOUTH GATE (Fig. 11; Pl. 11a) is a rectangular gatehouse built of fairly evenly coursed limestone. It stands on the south side of the road from Crossakeel opposite the modern St. Feighin's (R.C.) Church. Only the ground floor survives but the presence of a spiral stair on the west side indicates that there was an upper level originally. The passage is entered through a round arch 2.6 m wide. Some of the quoins are re-used stones from the Benedictine priory, and include one section of the cloister arcade. The north-east wall has an added external batter.

A bank, c.1-1.5 m high and 1.5 m wide, runs south-west from the South Gate up the side of the hill. It is connected to a crossing bank of similar size which skirts the base of the Ben of Fore and turns north-west to link in with the North Gate. These banks have a rubble core and there are traces of stone facing. Further protection appears to have been added on this side by scarping the side of the hill at two levels contiguous with the base of the Ben of Fore.

The NORTH GATE (Fig. 11; Pl. 11b) is a rectangular structure with rounded corners on the north-west and south-east angles. It is built of fairly evenly coursed limestone and is entered through a round arched gate, 2.6 m wide, which is blocked by a modern cross wall. The passage is flat-arched and short. Only the ground floor survives and there are no indications of internal chambers. A murder hole above the gate indicates that there was an upper level but all trace of it has been removed and is now replaced by

modern repairs. There is a slight batter and a string course
on the external west face. There are two large internal
recesses in the east and west walls at arch level and these
may have held eyes on which the gate was suspended.

There is no sign of defences on the north side of Fore
and presumably the wet marsh which occupies this area was
regarded as defence enough. The Benedictine priory was
protected by its own defences.

5. ST. FEICHIN'S CHURCH & EARLY MONASTIC SITE

The precise date of Feichin's foundation is unknown but a
date in the second quarter of the seventh century seems
likely. The deaths of its abbots are recorded in the Annals
from 705 until 1163. The monastery was a prosperous one and
was burned or raided in 745, 771, 804, 830, 870, 971, 1025,
1069, 1095, 1112, 1114, 1149, 1163, 1169, 1172 and 1176
(Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 36; Leask n.d. 3-4). These raids
indicate that it was a monastery of importance but it was
probably eclipsed, if not actually supressed, with the
foundation of the Benedictine priory in the 1180s. St
Feichin's church continued to be used throughout the Later
Middle Ages as a parish church, however, and as such it is
mentioned in the ecclesiastical taxation of 1302-6 and in a
lease to the Baron of Delvin in 1567 (Sweetman 1875-86 v,
259; 11 Rep. Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 164: No.
1089). The church was in ruins at the time of Bishop
Dopping's visitation of 1682-5 (Ellison 1975, 7).

The early monastic remains consist of a group of isolated
buildings on the west side of the village. These comprise St
Feichin's church, Teampall Fionain, a souterrain, the
anchorite's cell, and St. Feichin's mill. There is no
evidence for an enclosure or delimiting feature.

ST. FEICHIN'S CHURCH

This is a simple nave and chancel structure of coursed
limestone masonry (Fig. 12; Pl. 12). The nave measures 11.3
by 7.2 m and the chancel 5.86 by 5 m. Chronologically the
nave is pre-twelfth century while the chancel is an addition
of the thirteenth. The windows of the east wall were blocked
up in the fifteenth century and replaced by a single light.

The CHANCEL was carefully constructed in order to fit
within the space formed by the antae of the nave. The east
wall was originally lit by a twin-light window but this was
partly filled in and replaced by a single light cusped
ogee-headed window with hollowed spandrels and external
hood. The remains of the altar table are present beneath the
window; this has a rectangular recess and is decorated with
two deeply incised equal-armed crosses. The window is flanked

by two corbels whose function is unclear, and there is a wall cupboard on the south side of the east wall. Both the north and south walls have two rectangular windows with internal splay; these have flat rear-arches except for one on the south side which is pointed. Projecting from the south wall is a chamfered piscina with drainage hole. The basin is shallow and is 28 cm in diameter and decorated with a half moulding on the outer side.

The NAVE was originally a complete church with projecting antae and lintelled west door but most of its east wall was removed in order to form the chancel arch. This is a pointed arch of pink sandstone, plain except for a small figure carved on the lowermost springing stone of the north side facing into the nave (Pl. 10b). The figure is seated with his hands on his knees, and has a large round head with bulging eyes; the legs are crossed at the ankles and he wears a belted knee-length tunic. Portions of the north and south walls have been rebuilt and although they are largely featureless now, slight traces of a window are present at the east end of each wall. The west wall has a lintelled door with a batter splaying from 96 cm at the head to 110 cm at ground level. There is a rebate on the internal sides and an attempt was made to continue this on the lintel over the door. Externally the massive lintel is decorated in relief with an equal armed cross in a circle (Pl. 12b). High in the gable there is a wide flat lintelled window and there are also two corbels protruding from this wall.

Architectural Features

Window Moulding. 15th/16th cent.
Small fragment in the chancel. Chamfered.
Dims: L.38 T.20 cm.

Ogee-headed stone. 15th cent.
Chamfered window head of fossiliferous limestone. Set against the wall of the chancel.
Dims: H.40 W.46 T.21 cm.

Monuments

Cross Head. Pre 12th cent. (Pl. 16a)
Set on a corbel in the east wall. Small disc-headed cross with chamfered edges. Decorated in false relief with a lop-sided marigold design.
Dims: H. 40 W. 38 T. 8 cm.

Cross slab. Pre 12th cent.
Quarter of a granite slab decorated with an elaborate cross within a border. Only one arm, the central boss and part of the stem of the cross remain. The central boss and the cup shaped terminals are decorated with a geometric interlaced pattern.

Dims: H.74 W.54 T.12 cm.

Cross slab. Pre 12th cent.?
Sandstone/granite. Rectangular with slightly domed top. Now broken in half and very weathered. Decorated with a plain Latin cross in relief.
Dims: H.114 W.38 T.7 cm.

Grave slab fragment. Pre 12th cent.
On the north side of the chancel. Probably rectangular originally.
Dims: H. 76 W. 62 T. 10 cm.

Font. 13th cent. (Fig. 13)
Inside the door on the north. Fossiliferous limestone. Circular basin resting on a square columnar shaft which rises from a low square chamfered base. Moulded corners extend from the basin onto the shaft. These may originally have been decorated with heads but they are very weathered. The central drainage hole retains its lead lining.
Dims: H. 83 W. 63 Diam. of basin 46 cm.
Roe 1968, 117.

Monuments in the Graveyard

High Cross. Pre 12th cent. (Pl. 13b)
Large undecorated pierced ringed cross set on a concrete shaft east of the church. Fossiliferous limestone. The repaired head is in three pieces.
Dims: H.118 W.38 T.22 cm.

Grave slab. 13th-14th cent.
Coffin-shaped grey sandstone slab. Set upside down in the ground at the east end of the church. It is deeply buried but is decorated with an incised cross within a border.
Dims: H.78 W.42-50 (min) T.11 cm

TEAMPALL FIONAIN

    Piers (1682, 63) stated that Fore contained the ruins of three parish churches and it seems that the third church was called Teampall Fionain demolished c.1830 (Walsh 1957, 60; Stokes 1892, 7-8). It allegedly stood outside the North Gate but the unusual curve in the townland boundary at this point may preserve the line of an enclosure and this suggests that it may have been within the wall. Nothing is known of the church apart from its name and location. The dedication to an Irish saint suggests that the site is of pre-Norman origin but Teampall dedications have been shown to be post-1200 elsewhere in Ireland (Hurley 1980).

SOUTERRAIN

A souterrain was discovered in 1962 about 60 m south-east
of St. Feichin's church. It was found during the construction
of a hayshed and was considerably damaged before
investigation. It consisted of a short passage 6 m long, 1.3
m wide and 1.25 m high. It ran in a north-south direction
with the entrance at the north end. The souterrain curved
eastwards towards the south but its full length was not
determined because of collapse. It was built of poor quality
drystone walling, slightly corbelled and roofed with
transverse lintels about 45 cm wide and 30 cm thick (Rynne
1964).

THE ANCHORITE'S CELL

Situated west of St. Feichin's church at the foot of the
rock outcrop known as Carraig Bhaile Fhobhair. The history of
the site cannot be traced before 1300 but it is likely that
its origins lie in the Early Historic period. The chapel
Archeriorum is first mentioned in the ecclesiastical taxation
of 1302-6 (Sweetman 1875-86 v, 259) and it is mentioned again
as Archidiorum in the lease of the priory of Fore to the
Baron of Delvin in 1567 (11 Rep. Deputy Keeper Public Records
Ireland, 164: No. 1089). Bishop Dopping's visitation of
1682-5 identifies Archidiorum as the anchorite's cell at Fore
and records that it was then a chapel of St. Feichin's church
(Ellison 1975, 7, 8).

Description (Pl. 13a)

The remains consist of a late 15th/16th century tower
with a nineteenth century mausoleum of the Nugent family,
built in the style of a church, at its west end. A
rectangular sandstone plaque above the mausoleum door notes
that the tower was used for that purpose since 1680. The
plaque bears the Nugent arms and a relief inscription in
Roman capitals:

> THE RIGHT HONORABLE/ RICHARD NVGENT EARLE/ OF
> WESTMEATHE AT HIS OWN/ EXPENCES REBVILDED THIS/ CHAPLE
> AND CASTLE FOR/ THE BVRYINGE PLACE AND/ PIOVS VSE OF HIM
> SELFE AND/ HIS SVCCESSORS ANNO/ DOMINI 1680

The TOWER is rectangular with a projecting stair-turret
on the west side. It is two-storied and constructed of
roughly coursed limestone. Internally it measures 4.17 by
2.45 m. Externally the south-west corner is rounded 2 m above
the ground level and there is a buttress at the north-west
corner. There is a string course of recent date above the
first floor which supports the renovated stepped battlements
above. There is a pointed head with broad forehead and open
mouth on the west wall of the stair turret. A limestone

gargoyle projects above the first floor on the south wall; it is a winged animal but the face has been smashed off.

The tower is entered from the west through the Nugent mausoleum and since there is no sign of any other entry it indicates that there was originally a chapel on the north side of the tower. The ground floor has a pointed barrell vault with wickerwork centering. There is a single-light cusped ogee-headed window in the east wall and the south wall has a narrow rectangular splayed window with flat rear arch. The west wall has a pointed chancel arch leading into the mausoleum. The north wall has a round arched doorway opening into the stair turret but it is partly blocked by a seventeenth century wall memorial. The spiral stairs are lit by narrow slit windows with internal splay; the top of the stair has a corbelled roof. The south and east walls of the first floor have single-light rectangular windows while the west wall has a cusped ogee-headed window which opens into the mausoleum. There is a fireplace in the south wall and a large recess, probably a latrine, in the north wall. The latter is half filled, however, with dressed and cut stone. The original roof corbells are still in situ but the building was subsequently re-roofed from a wallplate. The upper courses of the tower are modern.

Monuments

Patrick Begley. Wall plaque. ?1616.
Set against the east wall of the mausoleum. Side panel of a grey sandstone table tomb decorated in relief with a crucifixion, figures, and angel's heads. Incised inscription in Roman capitals except for the first two letters which are in relief:

> EN EGO PATRICIVS BEGLE, SACRAE INCOLA EREMI/ HOC LAPIDV TVMVLO CONDOR, HVMORQVE CAVO/ RVPE SVR AERIA MONVMENTO ET SEDE SACRATA/ INTEMERATO ADYTO TV SINE LABE DOMO/ QVIS QVIS IS EST, ERGO, QVI CERNET BVTA VIATO/ DICAT EREMCOLAE SPIRITVS ASTRA PETAT AD 1616.

Left of the inscription is a crucifixion with Christ's head bent sharply onto the right shoulder. Mary stands with her hands joined on His right and John on His left. Above the cross are the sun and moon and the letters INRI are visible on the upper shaft. The foot of the cross has two skulls. On the right of the panel is a damaged figure wearing what is possibly a long mantle. The head is missing and the hands are by his side. Above the inscription there are three stylised angel's heads with outspread wings.
Dims: H.70 L.197 W.15 cm.
Cogan 1872, 566; Jrl. Assoc. Memorials Dead Ireland 1 (1891) 510; Vigors 1904-6.

Richard Nugent. Wall plaque. 1680.
Pink sandstone memorial inserted into the north wall of the

mausoleum. Set within a moulded frame, it consists of an inscription in Roman capitals in relief and an elaborate achievement of arms below.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE RICHARD/ NUGENT EARLE OF WEST MEATH/ ERECTED THIS MONUMENT FOR THE/ INTERRINGE OF HIMSELFE AND HIS SUCCESSORS AND ALSO IN SPETIALL/ MEMORY OF MARY COUNTES OF/ WEST MEATH HIS WIFE AND OF CHRISTOPHER/ LORD BARRON OF DELVIN HIS ELDEST/ SONN WHICH SAID COUNTES AND/ CHRISTOPHER ARE HERE VNDER/ INTERRD ANNO DOMINI 1680

The arms consist of a circular medallon with two bars ermine. The cockatrice is placed above a coronet and is surrounded by mantling. Below the shield is a skull and crossed bones, an hour-glass and the words MEMENTO MORI.
Dims: H.170 W.102 W. of surround 16 cm.
Jrl. Assoc. Memorials Dead Ireland 1 (1891) 59.

Table tomb pilaster. 17th cent.
Standing against the east wall of the mausoleum. Rectangular. It consists of an engaged column decorated with leavy designs supported on a draped base.
Dims: H.63 W.26 T.19 cm.

ST. FEICHIN'S MILL.
A small rectangular building north of St Feichin's church is pointed out as St. Feichin's mill. It is situated close to a spring and the ground is continuously flooded with water which runs around and through the building. The structure is of roughly coursed limestone with a very wide batter on the north side. The north and south walls survive to a max. H. of 3 m while the west gable is 5 m high. High up on the south-west gable is a stone with the inscription '549 T Mc D 1895'.

6. ST. MARY'S PARISH CHURCH.

The foundation date of this church is not known but it is probably coeval with the foundation of the borough. It is first mentioned in the ecclesiastical taxation of 1302-6 (Sweetman 1875-86 v, 259). It was leased to Christopher Nugent, baron of Delvin in 1567 (11 Rep. Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 164: no. 1089). Bishop Dopping's visitation of 1682-5 noted that the church was in disrepair before 1640 (Ellison 1975, 7).

Description

The ruins of this late medieval church lie in the old graveyard north of the modern St. Feighin's (R.C.) church.

They consist of the grass-covered foundations of the north
and south walls, a short section of the west wall and the
full gable of the east wall which is covered in ivy. Roughly
coursed limestone masonry with internal dimensions of 19.8 m
by 7.1 m. The east wall has a small single light ogee-headed
window with undecorated hollow spandrels and a hood moulding.
The west wall lacks features and stands to a height of about
3 m. Leask (n.d. 18) mentions a trough-shaped piscina beneath
a window jamb at the east end of the south wall but it is no
longer visible.

The Penal Chapel

The ruins of this building stand at the west end of the
graveyard. They consist of fragments of the north, east and
south wall which are possibly of seventeenth century date.
They are ivy-clad and stand to a height of 3-4 m with
internal dimensions of 26.5 by 5.05 m. Some plaster remains
on the returns of a late pointed door with cut stone jambs in
the south wall. There are two walls running north from the
centre of the church for a distance of c.2.5 - 4.5 m with a
distance between them of 6.2 m. Their function is unclear.

Architectural Fragments

Piscina. ?17th/18th century.
Rectangular block of fossiliferous limestone built into the
modern south wall of St. Mary's graveyard. Small round
bottomed basin.
Dims: H.24 W. 50 Diam. of basin 25 cm.

Window mullion and jambs. 15th/16th cents.
A number of dressed and cut stone fragments, including one
chamfered window mullion, are used as gravemarkers while
others have been built into the enclosing walls of the modern
graveyard.

Finial. ?15th cent.
H. 18 W.28 cm.

Monuments

Font. ?Medieval.
Half buried in the graveyard west of the church. Lichen
covered pink sandstone. Tub-shaped with circular basin. No
drainage hole.
Dims: H. c.40 Diam. of font. 45 Diam. of basin 30 D. of
basin 24 cm.
Roe 1968, 118.

Cross slab. Date?
Within the church. Upright limestone slab with an incised
equal armed cross with bars at the terminals.

Dims: H.90 (min) W.33   T.5 cm.

Remun Fitzsimons. 1613.
In the north return of the chancel wall. Small sandstone
block with Roman inscription in false relief:

> IHS/ REMVN/ FISIMVNs/ EIRES IN/ ?EPO(fai).   XIIII/
> nOVEMB/ 16XIII

Dims: H.23   W.23 cm.
Jrl. Assoc. Memorials Dead Ireland 1 (1888-92), 508; 4
(1898-1900), 134.

Oliver Nugent wall plaque. 1680.

Pink sandstone slab fixed to the north side of the east wall.
Nugent arms placed above an incised commemorative
inscription. The flattened shield has two bars ermine with a
crescent for the second son surrounded by elaborate mantling
and the crown and cockatrice of the Nugents. The motto is
DECREVI. Inscription in Roman letters:

> THIS MONUMENT WAS FIRST/ BEGUN FOR OLIVER NUGENT/ OF
> BELENA IN THE COVNTY/ OF MEATH ESQ BROTHER TO/ THE
> [H]ONORABLE RICHARD/ LOR[D] BARON OF DELVIN BY/
> chrisTOPHER NUGENT HIS/ Son aND HEIRE WHICH OLIVER/ DIED
> THE 17 of MARCH 1589 AND/ WAS HERE ERECTED AT THE COST/
> AND CARE OF ROBERT NUGENT OF/ CLONE GIRACH AND XPHER Nt/
> GRAND CHILDREN TO THE Sd/ XPHER OF NICHOLAS & ROBERT/
> SONS OF OLIVER Nt OF WILLIAM/ XPHER EDMOND & RICHARD/
> SONS OF JAMES Nt BOTH NEPH/ EUS TO THE Sd AND OF EDMOND/
> N GRAND CHILD TO THE Sd XPHER/ & THOMAS HIS SON FOR THE
> INTERRING OF THEM & THER/ POSTERITY ANNO DOM 1680/ GOOD
> XPIANS PRAY FOR/ THESE HERE INTERRD.

Dims: H.194 W.83
Jrl. Assoc. Memorials Dead Ireland 4 (1898-1900), 134, 487.

Robert Nugent. 1683.
Set into the south side of the east wall of the church.
Narrow sandstone slab with a worn incised inscription:

> THE MONUMENT WAS BUILT BY ROBERT NUGENT/ [SON TO JAMES
> FITZ CHRISTOP]HER OF BELEA/ [IN THE COUNTY OF MEATH ESQ.
> FOR] INTERRI[NG OF HIMSELF/ AND HIS SUCCESSO]RS AND/ [IN
> SPECIAL MEMORY OF HIS WIFE] E[LI]N[OR] N[UGENT/ OF
> BRACKLEN ESQRE WHO DI]ED/ [THE XTH DAY OF XBER ANNO
> D]O[MI 1683].

The missing letters are supplied from Isaac Butler's notes
(Jrl. Assoc. Memorials Dead Ireland 1 (1888-91), 508).
Dims: L.100 H.36 cm.

Missing Monuments

1616 slab.

Dr Beryl Moore, in her unpublished notes in the County
Library Navan, mentions the existence of a large tablet over
the north entrance to the penal chapel. It was dated 1616 and
depicted a figure in a hair shirt. Mr Paddy Healy also
mentioned to us that this was seen by him in one of the local
public houses but inquiries failed to locate its whereabouts.

7. BENEDICTINE PRIORY OF SS. TAURIN & FEICHIN

After the Anglo-Norman invasion the churches of Fore and
their endowments were granted, apparently by Hugh de Lacy, to
the Benedictine abbey of St. Taurin at Evreux in Normandy
(Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 106; Orpen 1911-20 ii, 82). This can
hardly have occurred before c.1180 while Gwynn and Hadcock
(1970, 106) have pointed out that this must have happened
before 1185. The endowments of the priory were increased by
Walter de Lacy in or before 1210 (Gilbert 1884 ii, 311).

Fore was frequently taken into the king's hands, and
delivered to a guardian, during the Hundred Years War because
it was an alien house dependent on a French abbey. In 1340
the·prior (and guardian), William Tessone, was granted part
of the revenues to support himself and five monks, possibly
the complement of the priory at this date (Seymour 1934, 64).
In 1384 the priory's revenues were committed to the prior
John Croys, who was to use them for the support of a chantry
consisting of the prior and three chaplains which again may
indicate the complement of the priory (Seymour 1934, 66-7).
The priory was fortified during the first half of the
fifteenth century in response to raids from the Irish who
attacked the priory lands in 1423 and again in 1428 (Seymour
1934, 68). William Englond, prior of Fore from 1418, and
William Croys, prior from c.1441, are both credited with
having erected "divers castles" for the defence of the priory
(Seymour 1934, 68-9; Leask n.d. 21-2; Tresham 1828, 254;
Berry 1910, 145). In 1445 parliament removed the priory from
Evreux and made it an independent house (Gwynn and Hadcock
1970, 106).

At the Dissolution the extent of the priory records
"certain castles or towers, and other houses or buildings of
stone at present in sufficient repair....they are very
necessary for the defence of the country against the attacks
of the wild Irish on the king's subjects" (White 1943, 271).
The priory was granted to Matthew King in 1540, Sir William
Seyntlowe in 1551, and Christopher Nugent, baron of Delvin,
in 1567 (White 1943, 271; Morrin 1861, 253, 500; 11 Rep.
Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland 164: no. 1089).

Description (Fig. 14; Pls. 13c-16)

Lying to the north of the village, the abbey is situated at the southern end of a knoll, known as Knocknamonaster, which is surrounded by wetground on all sides except the east. The remains consist of the priory complex and a series of outbuildings, including a dovecot, and earthworks on Knocknamonaster.

THE PRIORY COMPLEX

The buildings are grouped around a rectangular cloister (Fig. 14; Pl. 14). The church lies to the north, the refectory and kitchen on the south, apartments and other domestic buildings on the east and west. The basic layout of the monastery belongs to the early thirteenth century but it was considerably remodelled in a number of building campaigns during the fifteenth. In general it can be remarked that the size of the monastery contracted during the fifteenth century and new buildings were constructed in order to accommodate to the monastery's changing role. The thirteenth century church was a long narrow building with a chapel on its north side; this was shortened during the fifteenth century by the insertion of a tower at the west end and the blocking of the arches leading to the north chapel, which seems to have fallen into disuse. The original east range probably had a chapter room immediately south of the sacristy but during the fifteenth century this wing was totally remodelled in order to provide domestic apartments and a residential tower was constructed over the sacristy. The thirteenth century cloister enclosed a larger area than its fifteenth century counterpart. A new refectory was constructed in the fifteenth century immediately north of the old one, which was then demolished. The west range was also remodelled in the fifteenth century when its upper floor was converted into the monks dormitory.

The Church
This is a narrow building of roughly coursed mixed stone divided into a nave and choir by two rows of steps. The basic fabric is of thirteenth century date but a tower was added at the west end in the fifteenth. The east wall of the CHOIR is lit by three round-headed lancets. These have round rear arches and a wide internal splay terminating in jambs with concave chamfers. The inner sills slope downwards to a moulded stringcourse. The north wall has two round-headed windows, partly rebuilt c.1870, while in the south there is a twin round arched niche for piscina and ambry. The plaster on the inside of the niche is painted with a masonry design of rectangles, outlined in red-brown with red rosettes in every second space (Pl. 13c). Leask (n.d. 12) notes that this design was continued on the wall above the pisina but there is no trace of it now. Above this are two rows of stone corbels, supporters for the roof gutters, at different periods. A door in the south wall leads into the sacristy and

provides access to the stair leading to the Eastern Tower.
The north wall of the NAVE is largely featureless and was
rebuilt c.1870. A door near its west end opened northwards
into a narrow rectangular room of which only the foundations
survive. The west end is delimited by a tower added in the
fifteenth century. This has a stair turret projecting to the
north to which access is had directly from the nave. There
are four round-headed clearstorey windows in the the south
wall, one of which is blocked by the south wall of the
western tower. Immediately north of the nave are the
foundations a chapel which was reached through two arches in
the nave north wall but these were obliterated when the
modern wall was constructed.

Monuments

Two cross slabs are set against the external south wall of
the nave. Their findplace is not recorded but it is likely
from their position that they were found in the cloister and
probably represent the burial place of two priors.

Cross slab. 13th-14th cents.
Coffin shaped sandstone slab outlined by an incised line and
decorated with an incised cross patee with elongated stem.
The surface of the stone has been deeply scored.
- Dims: H.175 W.47-35 T.18 cm.

Cross slab. 13th-14th cents.
Weathered coffin shaped granite slab with an incised
fleur-de-lis cross.
Dims: H.168 W.48-30 T.18 cm.

The West Tower
This four-storied rectangular building with projecting
stair-turret was a residential tower. The ground floor has a
rectangular splayed window with an almost flat rear arch in
the north wall and a blocked-up opening (?window) in the west
wall. The west wall itself incorporates parts of the original
west gable of the thirteenth century church. The first floor
was supported on fluted corbels which project from the north
and south walls. Externally the jambs of the original west
door are present at the southern end of the west wall. The
first floor was barrell vaulted and has a rectangular window
in the north wall and a narrow flat-headed window in the
east. The second floor has a flat-arched rectangular window
with internal splay in both the east and west walls, a
fireplace in the west wall and a garderobe in the east. The
third floor has similarly positioned windows but these have
the addition of window seats. It would appear to have been
the main living room of the tower and has a latrine in the
north-west corner and a fireplace in the west wall. There is
a wall cupboard in the south wall and also a fine cusped
ogee-headed window with plain spandrels and internal window
seat. The corbels which supported the tower roof are in the
east and west walls; these consist of re-used thirteenth

century style capitals and bases which Leask (n.d. 13) suggests were taken from the nave arches leading into the north chapel. The fourth floor, the parapet level, is marked externally by a drainage course but its battlements are now missing. The stair turret was carried up above the parapet level but its crenellated parapet is also missing. Immediately west of the tower are the foundations of a small rectangular structure. Its contemporaneity with the tower is indicated by a fireplace in the west wall whose flue links into those on the tower's upper floors. A number of masonry fragments of cut and dressed stone are collected in the ground floor.

The Cloister Arcade (Pl. 15)
The cloister is reached through a pointed door in the south wall of the nave. The cloister arcade is delimited by a low wall which was built in 1912 upon the foundations of the original. Each side of the arcade was divided into three bays by broad piers and in each bay there were four sub-arches. Six arches have been assembled from fragments found in 1912. These show that the cinque-cusped and pointed arches are supported on shafted dumbell piers rising from rectangular bases. The pier spandrels were decorated with ogee headed niches, one of which displays an escutcheon of two bowed arms holding a cross-hilted sword with a wolf's head above (Pl. 15b). Some of the webs are decorated with a leaf design in relief. Leask (1960, 146) has pointed out the close similarity between this arcade and that at Bective, Co. Meath, which he suggests are the works of the same masons.

The East Tower
This was a residential tower built in the fifteenth century above the sacristy of the church. It is rectangular with a projecting turret at the south-east angle which accomodates the latrine and latrine chute. It has three floors with parapet and turret levels above. The ground floor (sacristy) has a low altar beneath the east window, which is a narrow rectangular slit with internal splay and flat rear-arch. There is a wall cupboard in the west wall and a blocked-up arch which originally gave access to the cloister. Leask (n.d. 13) mentions colour decoration on the wall plaster but this is no longer visible. Access to the first and second floors is by a straight stair against the west wall. The first floor is entered through a lintelled door; it has a barrel vaulted roof over a low chamber lit by a narrow window in the east wall similar to that on the ground floor. The second floor has flat arched rectangular windows with concave splay and window seats in the east and west walls. There is a latrine in the south-east corner, a later fireplace in the north-east corner and wall cupboards in the north and south walls. The latrine is lit by three rectangular slit windows with internal splay. A door in the south wall opens into the roof level of the south range, while on the north a narrow slit window with internal splay looks into the church. Access to the upper floors is by a spiral stair in the south west angle. The third floor has flat arched rectangular windows in

the north, south and east walls, the latter two of which have window seats. There is a latrine in the south-east angle turret, which probably had a timber floor originally forming a small chamber. There are three wall cupboards in the north wall and a small cusped ogee-headed window in the west wall. Externally there is a small granite head on the garderobe turret. The fourth floor is the wallwalk level protected by stepped parapets and having a bell-cote on the south wall. Both the stair and garderobe turret continue above this to turret level.

The East Range

This normally contains the chapter house, a passage to the exterior and apartments on the ground floor with the monk's dormitory overhead. The original thirteenth century structure probably contained these apartments but the rebuilding of this range in the fifteenth century has obscured them, and only the foundations of the thirteenth century east wall survive outside the fifteenth century wall. The chamber immediately south of the sacristy is too low and ill-lit to have functioned as a chapter house, while the chamber south of that again was evidently used as a dwelling room because it has a fireplace. Indeed the purpose of the fifteenth century remodelling appears to have been to provide dwelling rooms in this area.

South of the sacristy is a long fifteenth century building divided into two chambers at ground level by a barrel vaulted passage. The chamber immediately south of the sacristy, in the position of the chapter room, is entered from the cloister through a pointed door. It has a round barrell vault with two flat arched rectangular windows in the east wall and a recess in the south. The southern chamber is entered through a pointed door from the passage. It is also barrell vaulted. There is a fireplace and a flat arched rectangular window in the east wall, a recessed alcove with window and window seats in the south wall, a latrine in the south-west corner and small wall cupboards in the north and west walls. The first floor is reached by a stair on the north side of the passage which is entered through a pointed door. It opens onto a narrow lobby in the thickness of the east wall from which access to the northern and southern chambers is had by means of lintelled doors. The northern apartment has two windows in the west wall, while in the east there was a garderobe, fireplace and a window with window seat. It is evident that the southern apartment was built onto the refectory because a window in the refectory's east wall looks into it. A door in the west wall leads into the refectory. There are two windows, one with window seat, and a fireplace in the east wall, and two slit windows with internal splay and a garderobe in the south. A spiral stair in the south-east angle leads to the third floor which appears to have been the wallwalk level. Only a fragment of the third floor survives in the south-east angle.

The Refectory

The foundations of the thirteenth century refectory lie south of the cloister immediately east of the Kitchen. In the fifteenth century, however, a new refectory was built to the north of the old one. The ground floor, probably used as stores, was divided into three rooms. These internal divisions are represented only by footings. The easternmost was entered from the cloister through a pointed door, now blocked up. It is a narrow room with a splaying slit in the south wall and a door leading into the central chamber in the west. The central chamber is also narrow and is lit by a single slit window in the south wall and access to the western chamber is through a door in its west wall. The western chamber has a circular setting of stones roughly placed in the centre. There is a blocked window in both the south and west walls, and there is a blocked door in the north wall immediately east of the present opening from the cloister. The refectory was on the first floor. It was lit by three windows in the south wall and four in the north; each is flat-arched and rectangular with window seats. There is a window in the east wall and a door leading into the apartments of the east range. There is one window in the west wall and a service stair in the south-west angle linking the refectory directly with the Kitchen. Fragmentary remains of the wallwalk level survive above the service stair.

The West Range

At the south-western corner of the cloister a doorway leads westwards through a block of masonry which marks the position of a circular stair leading to the upper storey of the western range which was evidently the dormitory of the monks in the fifteenth century. The building was three storeyed with a barrel vault over the ground floor. It has a thirteenth century fireplace in the west wall with a hood or breast of stone supported on corbels above. The west wall was considerably thickened in the fifteenth century when it was cased both inside and out by new walling. During this rebuilding a new fireplace was formed in front of the old one, a garderobe tower was added, and the three windows, which are splayed internally and externally, were inserted. The east wall was also rebuilt, slightly to the east of the old one and it was at this time that the vault was constructed. The dormitory was on the first floor but only its northern half survives. There are three windows in the west wall, two wall cupboards and a garderobe, lit by two slits. One window survives in the east wall but there are traces of two others. The only surviving piece of the second floor is the garderobe tower and a section of the chimney flue immediately to the north. The south wall has been rebuilt in modern times.

The Kitchen

This lies on the south-west side of the refectory. It is a rectangular thirteenth century building with an oven on the south side. The north-east angle was remodelled in the fifteenth century when the new refectory was built. This remodelling consisted of the insertion of a new door and a

service stair linking the kitchen with the refectory.

The Mill
West of the kitchen are the foundations of a rectangular
building with a sluice at the south-west angle. It was
separated from the kitchen by a small chamber from which it
was entered through the east wall. The north and west walls
are gapped.

The South-west Gate
Immediately south of the mill, and at the south-west angle of
the complex, are the remains of a round-arched gate. Its
presence indicates that the monastery was originally bounded
by a precinct wall.

Buildings north of the Priory Complex
The flat ground between the abbey and Knocknamonaster has a
number of earthworks which presumably represent monastic
out-buildings. About 20 m north of the west tower is a
rectangular building, 15.8 by 6.3 m, whose walls of roughly
coursed limestone stand to a height of about 1 m. The dressed
jambs of a door are present in the west wall and, south of
it, the basal steps of an external stair. Leask (n.d. 16)
noted a fireplace at the north end but it is no longer
visible. East of this building are the grass covered
foundations of a wall running across the edge of
Knocknamonaster. A break in the foundations may indicate a
gateway.

KNOCKNAMONASTER

        This low hill north of the priory complex formed part of
the monastery precinct and was enclosed by defences. The
slope of the knoll was scarped near its base to form a
platform on the west, north and east sides. Outside this
there is a ditch with a counterscarp bank. The platform is
5.2 m wide on average while the ditch is 4.8 m wide at the
mouth; the counterscarp bank ranges in height from one to two
metres and is four metres wide. There are the remains of a
gateway on the north side with a stone built causeway leading
northwards from the knoll through the defences. The bank has
a gap on the west side also and another gate may have stood
here. The precinct defences probably continued on the east
side as far as the south-east gate but they have been
ploughed out and are not visible. There are a number of
irregular banks on top of the knoll but they do not conform
to any pattern and what they represent is unclear.

The Dovecot
    Located above the scarp, north east of the priory complex.
About half the building survives to a height of 1.2 m. It has
an internal diam. of 3.35 and the walls are 1.15 m thick. The
lower dressed jambs of an east door are present.

The South-east Gatehouse

This two storied rectangular building has two towers on the east facade. The south and west walls are battered externally and the remains of a small round archway are attached to the south-east angle. Some walls of a modern out-house survive on the west. The north-east tower was three-storied with small chambers on each floor. The ground floor is barrell-vaulted and divided longitudinally into two rooms. The northern room has a chimney in the north wall, and a splayed rectangular window and door in both the east and west walls. The southern room is entered from the north and has a fireplace in the south wall and a rectangular window in the east wall. The first floor is a single chamber with the remains of a tiled floor of recent date. The north wall has collapsed but there are three rectangular splayed windows with flat rear arch in the east wall and a small fireplace in the south wall.

8. WAYSIDE CROSSES

There are at least ten wayside crosses in the immediate vicinity of Fore. They are described here under the townland in which they are situated.

Ben 1. 17th cent.
Situated on the east side of the Fore - Oldcastle road within a recess a short distance from Clonageeragh 1. Plain disc-headed cross of conglomerate in two sections. The edges of the shaft are chamfered and the base, recorded by Crawford, is no longer visible.
Dims: H. overall 136 (min) W. of shaft 30 T.22 cm
Crawford 1928, 60: No. 11.

Ben 2. Uncertain date.
On the Oldcastle road, marked by the O.S. as "St. Feighin's". Raised platform of earth and stones but the cross is missing.
Crawford 1928, 60-61: No. 12

Clonageeragh 1. 17th cent.
On the west side of the Fore - Oldcastle road due north of Knocknamonaster. Oval disc-headed sandstone cross with short arms. Rectangular chamfered shaft in three pieces, lacking its upper shaft. One section is set in a roughly cut rectangular base resting on a stone plinth. One face is decorated with a cruicfixion in false relief. Christ is shown as a short crudely carved torso with His arms raised above His head following the shape of the cross. The head and feet are missing.
Dims: Shaft: H. overall 143 (min) W.of shaft 24 T. 18 cm
      Base: H.20 W.90 T.70 cm
Crawford 1928, 60: No. 10.

Clonageeragh 2
In a field on the west side of the Fore - Oldcastle road,

west of Hounslow House. Rectangular cross base with central
perforation roughly cut from a sandstone block. A small stone
mound is located beside it. A limestone gatepost, a spud
stone and a limestone water spout are also gathered here.
According to Crawford the shaft and head of a disc headed
cross were here but Moore (unpublished notes) records that
the cross-head was used to fill a hole about 1944.
Dims: H.18 W.62 T.58 cm
        Mortice 21 x 14 cm
Crawford 1928, 59: No.9.

Clonageeragh 3
In a field on the north side of the Fore to Castlepollard
road a short distance from Fore. Disc-headed cross in three
sections. The rectangular base is morticed and roughly cut
from a block of pink sandstone which is set upon a mound of
stones. The cross head is covered with shallow grooves and
has an upper shaft. The arms are missing and the edges of the
shaft are chamfered.
Dims: Head and shaft: H.60+30 W.27 T.16
        Base: H.16 W.58 T.58
        Mortice 30 x 20 T.10 cm
Crawford 1928, 58-9: No.8.

Fore 1. 17th cent.
Small disc headed cross with short arms and upper shaft. The
material is conglomerate and it is set into a conglomerate
base on the village green. The edges are chamfered and one
face is decorated in false relief with a crucifixion set
within a panel. Christ is shown as a small chubby figure with
short hair and a square perizonium. His head is upright, the
arms are horizontal and the feet are nailed separately. There
is a tri-lobed design in the spandrels under His arms.
Dims: H. 66 W. of shaft 22 T.15 cm. Crawford 1928, 62:
No. 16.

Fore 2. 17th cent.
Undecorated disc-headed limestone cross with short arms and
upper shaft built into a recess on the roadside outside St.
Feighin's School. The lower shaft is tapered towards the head
and it has chamfered edges.
Dims: H.136 W.28-21 cm
Crawford 1928, 62: No. 17.

Lakill and Moortown 1 & 2. 17th cent.
Four fragments of two crosses are on the north side of the
road a short distance west of the north gate.

1. Undecorated shaft fragment with chamfered edges set in a
roughly cut rectangular base.
Dims: Shaft: H.30 W.28 T.20
        Base: H.20 W.65 cm.

2. Two pink sandstone shaft fragments. One is part of the
Latin shaped cross-head. Both have chamfered edges and are

decorated in false relief. The cross-head has the lower part of a figure wearing a Knee-length garment on one face, and on the other the trunk of a man with his hands resting on his Knees. The smaller section of shaft has a lattice design on one face, the other is plain.
Dims: H. 57 (20+ 37) W.22 T.12 cm
Crawford 1928, 61-2: No.14.

LaKill and Moortown 3. 17th cent.
Squat undecorated disc-headed cross with short arms. On the north side of the Fore - Castlepollard road, about 1Km west of Fore. It rests on a roughly cut two tiered rectangular base. The upper and lower shaft is missing.
Dims: Head: H.38 W. across arms 62 T.16 cm
       Base 1 H.20 W.62 T.53 cm
       Base 2 H.16 W.76 T.56 cm
 Crawford 1928, 61: No. 13.

Missing Crosses

Fore 3
A disc-headed cross brought from St. Mary's graveyard to St. Feighin's.
Crawford 1928, 62: No. 15

FORE 4
A cross base placed beside Fore 2.
Crawford 1928, 62: No. 18

9.   OTHER MONUMENTS

Holy Wells

Tobernacogany
In the field north of the road from St Feichin's church. A holed stone of conglomerate is deeply buried in the ground beside this well. The "wishing tree", Known locally as the tree that will not burn, is in the same field.

Doaghfeighin
Delimited by a quadrangular setting of upright stones about 1 m square and 1 m high. The west side is formed from dry stone walling.

Toberfoolagh
A low grassy Knoll with a hollow in the centre.

Other Features

"Stonymound". Clonageeragh Td.
Immediately north of Knocknamonaster. Round stone mound 24 m
in diameter at the base tapering to an oval sloping summit
measuring 10 by 6.7 m. It ranges in height from 5 to 6 m, and
the summit slopes downwards from north to south. It is built
on the south end of a raised crescentic platform, 2 m high.
Some stone has been quarried from the side of the mound.
North of the mound there are the grass covered foundations of
two rectangular structures on the platform. The larger
measures 7.3 by 6.1 m, the smaller 6.4 by 5.2 m. There are
traces of a low bank delimiting the mound on the south-east
side.

Christian's Castle
Marked on the O.S. map it was presumably a late medieval
tower house but nothing survives on the site today.

10. LIST OF STRAY FINDS

1. Bronze flat axehead of Ballyvalley type. Found near Fore
Abbey, Co. Westmeath. NMI 1894:15. Harbison 1969a, 46:
No.1303.

2. Gold bracelet with expanded terminals. Probably Later
Bronze Age. From Fore Abbey, Co. Westmeath. NMI W.97. Wilde
1857, Fig. 582; Armstrong 1920, 94, 420, Pl. 18: 384; Taylor
1980, Co Wm 4.

3. Bronze harp peg. From Fore Abbey, Co. Westmeath. NMI 1934:
411.

4. Brass crozier-head from Fore Abbey, Co. Westmeath. NMI
L1931:13/ L1962:1. Archaeol. Jrl. 12 (1855), 277; Gentleman's
Mag. 44 (1855), 81; Jrl. Roy. Soc. Antiqs. Ireland 53 (1923),
172.

5. Base portion of a gilt bronze censer. Found at Fore Abbey,
Co. Westmeath. NMI 1891:19.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

The Problems

     Fore is important to archaeological research for two
reasons. Firstly, it is the site of an important Early
Christian monastery which was developed by the Anglo-Normans
into a chartered town and excavation will provide information
not only on the status of the early monastery but also on the

nature of the transformation from church site to town.
Secondly, Fore is one of the finest examples of a shrunken
medieval town in Ireland and undisturbed archaeological
deposits are likely to survive over a considerable area. In
addition to these the possibility of prehistoric activity on
the site also must be borne in mind.

The surviving buildings and the documentary evidence
indicate that Fore was an important monastery in pre-Norman
times but a great deal still remains to be discovered about
it. The extent of the early monastery is not known and there
are no clear traces an enclosure. The souterrain indicates
that there were domestic buildings associated with the
monastery and the nature, date and extent of these also
remains to be determined.

The archaeology of the Anglo-Norman town is important for
the understanding of the changeover from the pre-Norman
settlement to a fully fledged medieval town. The decay of
Fore seems to have begun in the fifteenth century but the
nature of the town's decline is not understood. It is
puzzling for instance that this is also the period which sees
considerable building activity in the Benedictine priory and
the construction of the town defences. The sixteenth and
seventeenth centuries are very much a blank when there is
little architectural or documentary evidence for any activity
on the site. Yet it is evident that the town continued to be
inhabited during this time.

The date of the present street pattern is uncertain but
it seems likely that a large part of the main street follows
the line of its Anglo-Norman predecessor. It would be
important, however, to have this point established beyond
doubt. Are there other deserted streets apart from that
leading from the village green to the motte? What was the
nature of the road surface at various times? Streets should
be examined archaeologically if at all possible because they
permit not only an examination of their surfaces but also
allow the results of excavations on one side of a street to
be linked with those on the other. This enables the
reconstruction of entire streetscapes in the manner which has
proved so successful at Novgorod.

The motte and bailey castle was established before 1200
but almost nothing is known of its subsequent history, nor is
anything known of its internal layout or duration of use.
Excavation, however, could throw substantial light on these
problems.

Nothing is known of the form or size of pre-seventeenth
century housing in the town. It is important to know what
sort of buildings the medieval inhabitants of Fore lived in
and how these changed through time. Only when such houses
have been found can assessments be made of the impact of
native Irish, British and continental building techniques on
Fore's craftsmen. A great deal of information about changes

in building methods and fashions can also be derived from
stratified sites in which the remains of successive houses
are preserved.

The course of the town defences outlined above needs to
be checked by excavation to determine whether it is correct
or not, and much remains to be discovered about the periods
of construction, the variations in building, the forms of
mural towers and gatehouses, and the extent of the town
fosse. In particular it is important to determine if there
were any defences on the north side or if the marsh was
considered to be defence enough.

It is unlikely that the opportunity will arise to
excavate on the site of the churches of St. Feichin, St.
Mary, Teampall Fionain or the Benedictine priory but it is
important to remember that the architectural features and
extent are only one aspect of the archaeology of religous
houses and the excavation of a medieval cemetery, such as
that conducted at York, can provide otherwise unobtainable
evidence about health, disease, diet, and mortality rates.

Archaeological Potential

Archaeology does not consist solely of excavation nor
does it stop at ground level. The archaeological evidence for
Fore's past comprises all the physical remains of man's
activities on the site of the town, from its first use as a
monastery 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 Fore, but for the wide
range of human activity omitted from the written accounts and
for the early periods without documentation 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 site of
the town has been the scene of human activity in Prehistoric,
Early Historic, Medieval and post-Medieval times. Both
documentary sources and the known archaeological remains
indicate that the town was occupied continuously from c.500
AD into the post-medieval period. The surviving remains
comprise the motte and bailey castle, the churches of St.
Feichin and St. Mary, the anchorite's cell, St. Feichin's
mill, the Benedictine priory, the north and south gates,
portions of the town wall and ten wayside crosses. A few

structures such as the old gaol may have masonry of pre-1700 date but it is impossible to be certain without excavation. Most of these buildings have survived because Fore continued to decline in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the finance necessary to replace the older buildings was lacking. It is for the same reason that undisturbed archaeological deposits are likely to exist over a wide area of the town and there is the strong likelihood of recovering house foundations, refuse pits, industrial areas, and workshops.
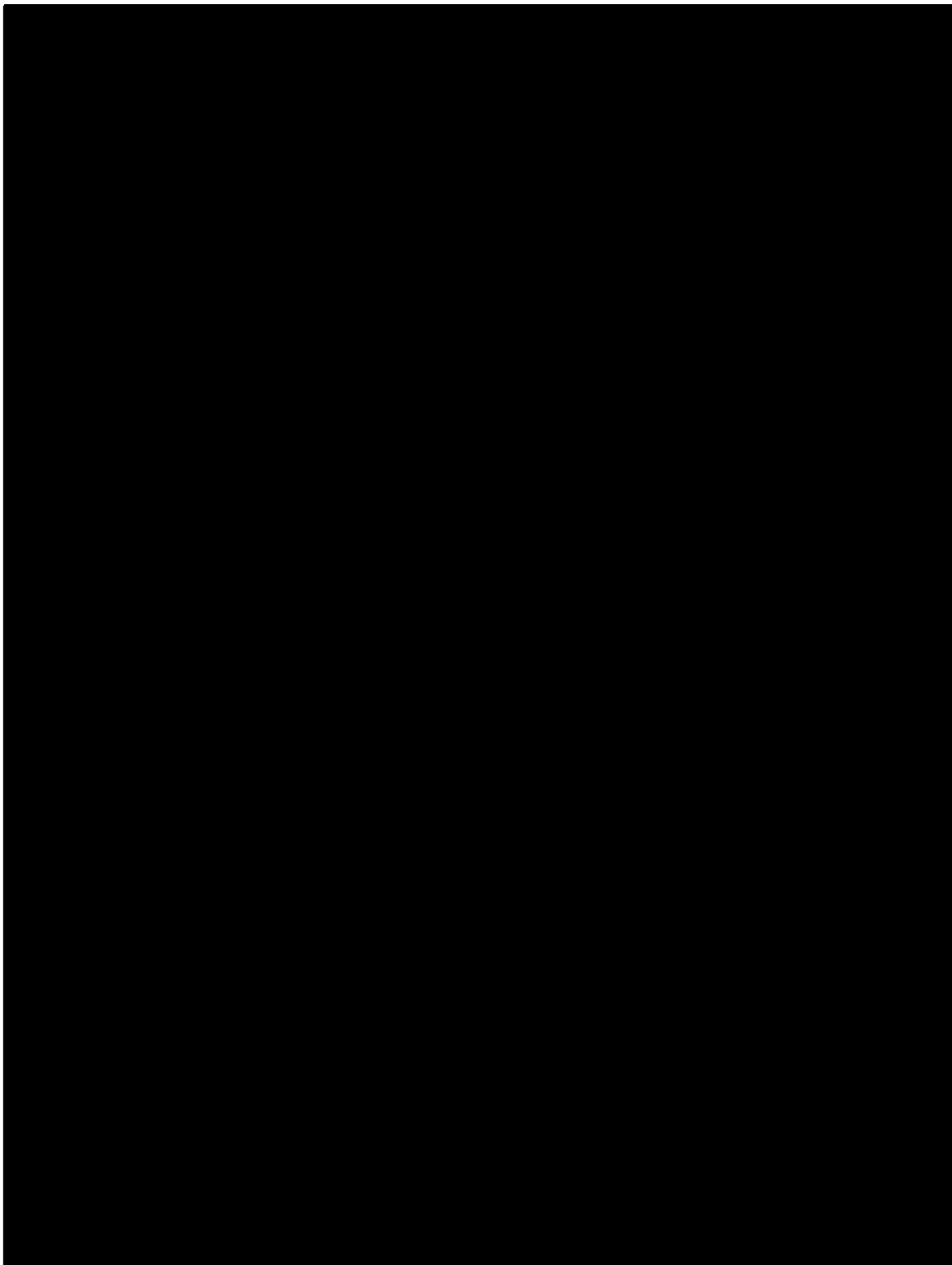
ARCHAEOLOGY, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

It is evident from the foregoing that archaeology is an important means of learning about Fore's past. 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. Of the standing remains only St. Feichin's church, the Benedictine priory and the town gates enjoy statutory protection as scheduled National Monuments and because of the difficulties of scheduling urban properties, other sites within Fore are unlikely to be given this protection. 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 Fore's archaeological potential one of the objectives of the county 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. 10) delimits the area of archaeological potential around Fore. In the absence of archaeological excavations within this area, however, little can be said of their extent and depth. There is little evidence, however, for modern disturbance and archaeological deposits are likely to exist over the entire area of the medieval walled town, and in the Benedictine priory (including Knocknamonaster). This area is shaded pink on Fig. 10 and the extent has been continued outside the walls slightly on the east, south and west in order to allow for a possible fosse. The area between St. Feichin's church and the Benedictine priory has also been included because it is in this area that the evidence. for the nature of the town's northern defences will be found. East of the town an area has been shaded around the motte and bailey (including

the earthworks on Gallows Hill), the site of Toberfoolagh, the site of Christian's castle, and the wayside cross described above as Fore 2. On the north side an area around the "stonymound" in Clonageeragh townland and the wayside crosses of Clonageeragh 1 and Ben 1. West of the town an area has been shaded around the wayside cross listed above as Lakill and Moortown 1.

KILBEGGAN

Kilbeggan is situated on the River Brosna in the low-lying countryside of south Westmeath. Its name is derived from Cill Becain, "Becan's church", and it indicates that it was the site of an early monastery. Nothing is known of its early history, however (Gwynn and hadcock 1970, 388; Walsh 1957, 274).

The early monastery was superceded by a Cistercian monastery c.1150 but the hstory of Kilbeggan as a town does not begin until the seventeenth century. In 1606 Sir Oliver Lambert was granted the site of the Cistercian monastery (Erck 1846-52, 267-8) and later in the same year he was granted a weekly market and annual fair at Kilbeggan (Erck 1846-52, 267). The town itself was formally established in 1613 when it received a charter of incorporation from James I (Irish Record Comm. 1830, 243). The nature of settlement at Kilbeggan before 1613 is unclear. The rectory of Kilbeggan is referred to in a document of 1589 which also mentions the "town" of Kilbeggan (16 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 97: No. 5322). The town prospered in the early seventeenth century and was granted two additional annual fairs in 1620 (Lewis 1837, ii, 51). In 1682 Piers (1981, 84) described it as "a corporate and market town, sending two burgesses to our parliament" with "an ancient bridge...[and] a church in repair".

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN
2. DOMESTIC HOUSES
3. THE BRIDGE
4. TOWN DEFENCES
5. PARISH CHURCH OF ST. JAMES
6. CISTERCIAN ABBEY

1. STREETS & STREET PATTERN

The town is laid out along a single east-west axis known as Main Street. This expands mid-way along its course to form a rectangular market place, now the Market Square.

2. DOMESTIC HOUSES

The burgage plot pattern of the seventeenth century town survives very well to the north and south of Main Street.

These plots have had houses on them since the seventeenth century but there is no visible evidence that any of the present buildings are older than 1700. This may be due in part to the concealment of old features behind modern facades and a careful watch should be maintained for seventeenth century architectural features when buildings along the Main Street are being renovated.

3. THE BRIDGE

The bridge may have been a factor which influenced the location of the town. It is first referred to by Piers (1981, 84) in 1682 who described it then as "an antient bridge...now of late repaired, of lime and stone". The present bridge over the Brosna is modern.

4. TOWN DEFENCES

There is no documentary evidence to determine whether the town was protected by defences or not but the burgage plots on the north and south sides of Main Street terminate in a continuous wall which could have functioned as the town defences. The wall lacks mural towers or defensive features, however. It is between 2 and 2.5 m in height on the south side and averages 60 cm in width.

5. PARISH CHURCH OF ST. JAMES

The parish church of seventeenth century Kilbeggan was located near the western limit of the town. According to Lewis (1837, ii, 51) this church incorporated some of the remains of the Cistercian abbey. The only remains on the site at the moment, however, are those of a church tower constructed in 1819. It is not clear if this church is on the site of the one mentioned in 1589 (16 Rep. Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 97: No. 5322) or if it moved to this site c.1613 with the incorporation of the town.

6. CISTERCIAN ABBEY

This abbey, De Benedictio Dei, was founded c.1150 as a daughter house of Mellifont, probably by members of the MacCochlain family (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 137). In 1213 MaelSechlainn MacCochlain, Lord of Delvin, died on pilgrimage to the abbey and in the same year his sons Ruaidhri and Maelsechlainn died there (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 137). In 1228 the abbey was made subject to Buildwas in England but judging by the names of its abbots it seems to have retained

an Irish character throughout the Middle Ages (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 137).

At the Dissolution the abbey was apparently granted to Owen O Morrain of Multifarnham (Walsh 1957, 274-5) but in 1550 it was in the possession of Francis Digby, alias Ros MacEochacain (Morrin 1861, 233). It passed through various hands until 1606 when it was granted to Sir Oliver Lambert (Erck 1846-52, 267-8). In 1682 Piers (1981, 84) recorded that "not so much as the rubbish" of the abbey was to be seen but according to O'Donovan the ruins survived until c.1830 (O.S. Letters Co. Westmeath ii, 326, 336). He stated that the abbey lay immediately north-west of the old burial ground south of the town. O'Conor (O.S. Letters Co. Westmeath i, 318-9) identified the Protestant parish church at Kilbeggan as the site of the "chapel of the monastery" but exactly what he meant by this is unclear. Nothing remains today except the disused graveyard located on a knoll south-west of the town which probably also marks the site of St Beccan's church.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTTIAL

Kilbeggan is important archaeologically for two reasons. Firstly because it is the site of both an Early Christian church, dedicated to St. Beccan, and a subsequent Cistercian monastery. Secondly because it is a fine example of a seventeenth century midland market town.

It may be suggested that the church of St. Beccan was located in or beside the old graveyard south-west of the town but definite evidence can only be obtained by archaeological excavation. The size and extent of the Cistercian abbey is unknown apart from the tradition recorded by O'Donovan that it lay north-west of the old graveyard. From the point of view of urban archaeology, however, it is the town itself that is the most interesting. The nature of its seventeenth century houses, whether they were timber-framed or stone-built is unknown. It also needs to be determined whether the town was protected by town defences or not.

Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 15) delimits the area of archaeological potential within modern Kilbeggan. This is based on the extent of the seventeenth century town together with an area around the medieval Cistercian abbey. In the absence of archaeological excavations nothing can be said about the depth of archaeological deposits. There is little evidence of disturbance, however, and it is likely that archaeological deposits are intact over much of the town.

KILBIXY

Kilbixy is situated to the south-west of Lough Iron, about eight miles north-west of Mullingar. As its name Cill Bigsighe, Bigseach's church, indicates it was the site of an early church founded by St. Bigseach. Little is known of it however until the coming of the Normans.

Kilbixy was granted to Geoffrey de Costentin by Hugh de Lacy (Orpen 1911-20 ii, 88) and it was probably de Costentin who was responsible for the construction of the motte here in 1192 (ALC). A borough seems to have been established at an early date. Burgages beside the Canon's ditch are mentioned in one of the "foundation charters" of Tristernagh priory, granted by Geoffrey de Costentin between 1200 and 1224 (Clarke 1941, 5). The Tristernagh charters provide much topographical information on Kilbixy including references to the church, the castle, the mill, the cross of St Columba, the bridge and the house of the old Irish chaplain.

Practically nothing, however, is known of the later history of Kilbixy. It presumably remained in De Costentin hands until the death of Richard de Costentin about the middle of the the fourteenth century (Clarke 1941, xi). Like the other medieval boroughs of Westmeath Kilbixy became increasingly isolated with the decline of Anglo-Norman power in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Clarke (1941, xiii) suggests that the castle of Kilbixy was destroyed in 1295 and the borough was attacked and burned during the fifteenth century. In 1430 it was burned by an Irish alliance under Domhnall O Neill (AU, AFM) and in 1450 it was burned again by the son of MacEochagain (AFM). In 1476-7 Kilbixy was held by Thomas Nangle, baron of Navan, who complained that the issues of his lands there and the fish from his weirs called the "great weir" and the "castle weir" on the river Inny were being illegally taken by members of the Dalton family (Morrissey 1939, 565-7). Thereafter the settlement vanishes from documentary records. The date of its abandonment cannot be established but it was clearly deserted before 1682 when it was described by Piers (1981, 76) as:

> "of old a town of great note, having, as tradition telleth us, twelve burgesses in their scarlet gowns, a mayor or sovereign, with other officers suitable to so great a port. Of this so great state, so small now are the remains, that you may justly say of it, what the historian says of the Veii in Italy,
>
> Laborat annalium fides, ut Veios fuisse credamus
> Florus.
> History even doubts whether the Veii ever existed.
>
> The only remaining foot steps that I have met with hereof, is first a large piece of an old square castle

called the Burgage-castle, and forty acres of ground
adjoining to it, called also, the Burgage-land,
corruptly for the Burgesses castle and Burgesses-land,
these being believed to have been the town-house and the
land belonging to the corporation; there is also on the
bank of our Iron-lake, not far from hence, a place which
in the Irish dialect sounds the Haven of the market,
this likely having been the landing place of such as
from the eastern banks had occasion to this
market.....Other remainders of ancient state I find
none, unless you will take for such the ruins, or
rubbish rather, of many ancient houses and castles,
besides which and some late built cabbins, nothing is to
be seen, but excellent corn of all kinds, so as it was
never more truly said of Troy, than it may be of this
town.

Jam seges est ubi Troja fuit
                                    Ovid
The golden corn now grows where stood proud Troy.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. SITE OF THE BOROUGH
2. MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE
3. ST. BIGSEACH'S CHURCH
4. ST. BRIGID'S HOSPITAL
5. OTHER FEATURES

1. SITE OF THE BOROUGH

     The borough is now completely deserted but its former
site is indicated by an extensive series of earthworks. It
was located in Baronstown townland and not in Burgess Land (a
subdivision of Baronstown Demense townland), as indicated by
the Ordnance Survey. It was situated in the field west of St.
Bigseach's church and its earthworks extend northwards as far
as the motte and southwards to the road but the western limit
is difficult to establish. The earthworks concentrate around
a triangular platform (?the village green) formed by the
interection of three streets, running west, south and east
from it (Fig. 16). There is a also a hint of a street running
northwards. Aerial photographs show three rectangular
platforms, which may be house foundations, two to the north
of the triangle and one to the south but these cannot be
distinguished on the ground. The field immediately to the
north has been subjected to ploughing but aerial photographs
again suggest that the earthworks continued here. In Burgess
Land, on the alleged site of the town, there are two water
filled hollows, a stone bridge (?recent) over a small stream
and the stone foundations of a small rectangular building in

the coppice beside the road.

2. MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE

The construction of a motte at Kilbixy is recorded in 1192 (ALC) and it is evident from the Irish pipe roll of 14 John that the fortifications were being strengthened in 1211-12 (Davies and Quinn 1941, 39). The castle was the centre of the De Costentin manor of Kilbixy and presumably stayed in their hands until about the middle of the fifteenth century when the last of the De Costentins died. Subsequently little is recorded of it. In 1682 Piers (1981, 77) refers to "a large piece of an old square castle called the Burgage-castle" adjoining the burgage land which is probably to be identified with the motte.

Description

Situated on a rock outcrop affording commanding views in all directions. It consists of a conical mound 11 m high, 32.5 m in diameter at the base tapering to an oval flat summit 19 x 17 m across. The summit was enclosed by a stone wall whose foundations survive to a height of 30 cm on the south, east and part of the north sides. Within this wall are the foundations of two rectangular buildings. The eastern building which was built on a plinth is the smaller. It measures 2.7 by 2.5 m and the walls, which are 65 cm thick stand to a max. height of 55cm. The western building measures 6.6 by 2.8 m. The motte is built of earth and boulders, material which appears to have been quarried from two deep hollows on the north and south-east of the site. The motte was surrounded by a ditch, 6 m wide, with a counterscarp bank, 3 m high and 1.7 m wide. A bailey appears to have been located south-west of the motte where a rectangular area was enclosed by a ditch 4.5 m wide.

3. ST. BIGSEACH'S PARISH CHURCH

The church of Kilbixy granted by Geoffrey de Costentin to Ralph Petit, archdeacon of Meath, in a charter of 1192x1218 is to be identified with this church, established before the coming of the Normans (Clarke 1941, 90). Shortly after the foundation of priory at Tristernagh it was granted to the Augustinian canons there (Clarke 1941, 91). The parish church of Kilbixy is specifically mentioned in 1259 (Clarke 1941, 122), 1492 (Haren 1978, 436) and 1540 (White 1943, 277). In 1682 Piers (1981, 77) described it as "the remains of an ancient and well built church, the mother of many churches and chapels about it, which had at the west end a very well built high tower or steeple". The present church, which is in ruins, was constructed c.1800. No medieval fabric survives

above ground but the semicircular enclosing ditch north-east
of the church may delimit part of the pre-Norman monastic
terminus.

Font.
Octagonal limestone font, north-east of the church. Less than
half of the basin survives but it appears to lack a drainage
hole. There were four wide and four narrow panels. The lower
panels are chamfered inwards. Roe (1968, 123) regarded it as
of post-Reformation date.
Dims: H. 48   Diam. ext. 55   Diam. int. 42 cm.

Arch fragment.
Chamfered limestone fragment used as a grave-marker.
Dims: H.46   W.27 T.26 cm.

4. ST. BRIGID'S HOSPITAL

      The foundation of this hospital has been attributed by
Gwynn and Hadcock (1970, 351) and Lee (1974-5, 226) to Hugh
de Lacy on the assumption that he was responsible for the
construction of the motte in 1192. There is no evidence,
however, to support this association of de Lacy with either
the motte or the hospital and their suggestion that it was
established in the 1190's is without foundation. There are no
references to the hospital in the Register of Tristernagh
which records grants to that priory from its foundation until
the early fourteenth century. The earliest direct reference
to the hospital is in 1409 when Archbishop Fleming of Armagh
granted an indulgence to those who contributed monies to the
leper house (domus seu casella) of St. Brigid at Kilbixy
(Lawlor 1912, 131). Gwynn and Hadcock (1970, 351) suggest
that the hospital was suppressed along with Tristernagh
priory in 1540 but it is not mentioned in the priory extents.

Description

Situated within the graveyard, south-east of St. Bigseach's
church. Rectangular, three-storeyed building with walls
averaging 1.3 m in thickness. The masonry consists of roughly
coursed mixed stone with a rubble core. External dims. 14.5
by 9.45 m. The north, west and south walls stand to a height
of 8-10 m and are covered with ivy to a depth of 60-70 cm. A
2.5 m stretch of the east wall survives to a height of 70 cm.
The ground floor is filled with rubble but there are signs
that it was divided into two barrel vaulted rooms, along the
short axis of the building. There is a flat lintelled door
with internal splay in the south-east wall and an opening in
the north-west wall indicates either a window or a door.
Immediately east of the opening in the north wall is a curved
and lintelled recess, now blocked. The first floor has a
large rectangular window, with internal splay and round rear

arch in the north wall. The west wall has a possible door splayed internally with flattened arch and a bar hole on the south side. There is an opening in the south wall, which was probably a window. Projecting masonry on the south-west corner may indicate a small chamber here but it was not possible to determine it with certainty. The second floor rested upon a floor ledge but the thickness of the ivy obscures features above this level.

5. OTHER FEATURES

Holy wells

St. Bigseach's well. Ballynacrogy or Gallowstown Td.
Located about 650 m south-east of the borough. The ground here is marshy and the well is marked by a wooden sign and thorn bushes on which two rags were tied at the time of our visit. There are indications of a stone surround but it is largely obliterated through its use by cattle as a drinking hole.

St. Bridget's Well. Baronstown Td.
Marked by the O.S. and shown within the earthworks of the borough. There is now no trace of it.

Castle site. Cumminstown.
Situated on a grassy knoll overlooking marshy ground. A number of large boulders protrude from the knoll and outline the remains of a long rectangular structure with three chambers.

Earthwork ?ringfort. Ballynacrogy or Gallowstown Td.
Situated on a knoll surrounded by wet ground on all sides. It is delimited by a low bank and shallow ditch.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTTIAL

The earthworks at Kilbixy constitute one of the finest examples of a deserted medieval borough in Ireland. There is evidence of disturbance to the archaeological deposits by ploughing in the field north of the earthworks but elsewhere it is likely that archaeological deposits are intact over a large area of the site. The historical references together with the earthworks indicate that Kilbixy was an important Anglo-Norman borough and it is significant for determining when boroughs were deserted and why. The full extent of the borough is unknown as is the nature of its houses and streets. The hospital is one of the few buildings of its type to survive from the Middle Ages and it requires urgent protection.

Documentary records of the site are few and in the future
archaeological excavation is likely to be the principal means
by which additional knowledge can be obtained. The borough is
not under direct threat from commercial development at
present but it could easily be destroyed by agricultural
improvement in much the same way as the deserted borough of
Kiltinan, Co. Tipperary, which was removed about 1974.

Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 16)
delimits the area of archaeological potential. This is based
on the extant monuments, the motte, parish church, and
borough earthworks. The western limit of the earthworks is
difficult to define and it is possible that it extended as
far as the castle in Cumminstown. South-east of this area a
zone has been outlined around St. Bigseach's well and the
earthwork in Ballynacrogy townland. The site of Kilbixy town
as marked by the Ordnance Survey has not been included
because we have been unable to find any evidence that it was
part of the borough. In the absence of archaeological
excavations nothing can be said about the depth of
archaeological deposits.
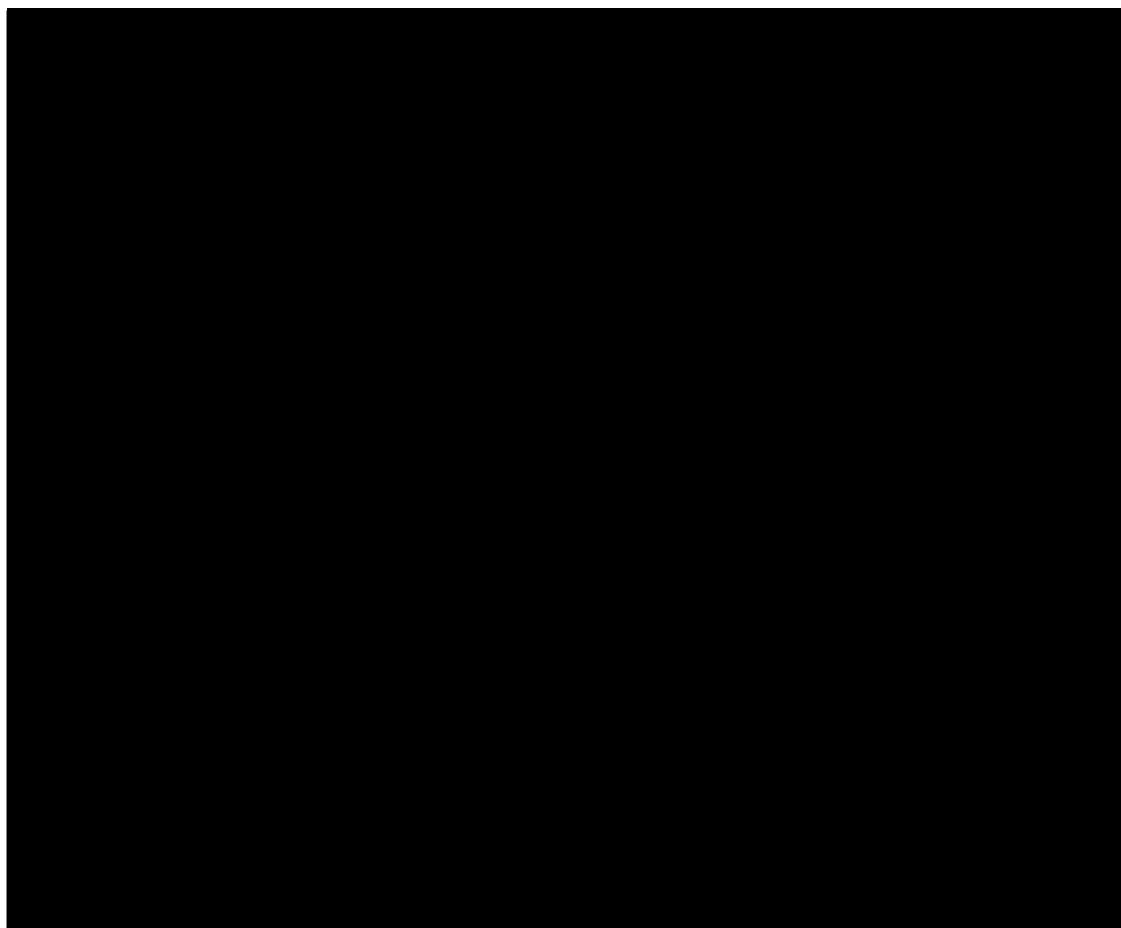
MULLINGAR

Mullingar, the county town of Westmeath, is situated in low-lying ground on the River Brosna between Lough Owel and Lough Ennell. The name is derived from _Muileann Cearr_, the wry or left-hand mill, and according to the twelfth century Life of St Colman mac Luachain it commemorates a miracle of the saint who caused the mill to turn left-handwise (Walsh 1957, 212-3). In many medieval documents the name is prefixed by Ad- or Ath-, indicating that the town stood on an important ford.

Prehistoric and Early Historic Settlement in the Mullingar Area

Settlement within the vicinity of the modern town in prehistoric and early historic times is attested to by the large number of finds of archaeological material. Five stone axeheads and a flint spearhead probably indicate activity in the Neolithic period. Bronze artefacts, including four flat axeheads, a palstave, three socketed axeheads, a razor-knife, a spearhead, a socketed knife, a socketed gouge and a hoard of scrap bronze reflect settlement in both the early and later phases of the Bronze Age. This is complemented by a number of Bronze Age gold ornaments, including a possible lunula, a bar torc, a ribbon torc, a penannular bracelet, a "dress fastener", two round boxes and a finger ring. Three bronze horse pendants extend the archaeological record of activity into the Iron Age. None of these objects, however, indicate permanent settlement on the site of the modern town. All that can definitely be said is that the vicinity was frequented by man throughout the prehistoric period.

The Early Historic period witnessed more substantial activity on the site of the future town. The story from the Life of St. Colman mac Luachain mentioned earlier records that the fort at Mullingar known as Dun Bri was given to the church of Lynn by Conall mac Suibhne, a seventh century king of Mide (Walsh 1957 84, note 2). The story occurs in a twelfth century life, however, and cannot be taken as an accurate account of seventh century events. But it demonstrates that Lynn held the land of Mullingar in the twelfth century on which there was a secular, and perhaps a formerly royal, fort. A number of Early Historic artefacts have been found at Mullingar and these give further support to the suggestion of a secular residence. These include a zoomorphic penannular brooch, two bronze ring-headed pins, three bronze stick pins, and a bead of blue and yellow glass. An important hoard of Anglo-Saxon coins deposited c.985 was found along with a number of gold and silver ornaments in what may have been a Viking burial at Marl Valley, which Dolley (1966, 31, 33, 51) suggests was near Mullingar.

Another coin-hoard of c.1025-50 was found at Mullingar in 1856 (Hall 1973-4, 79). The occurence of two iron ecclesiastical bells may be explained on the grounds that Mullingar belonged to the monastery of Lynn.

The Medieval Settlement of Mullingar

No direct references to the initial Anglo-Norman settlement of Mullingar are known but it is generally accepted that Mullingar was the chief manor of William le Petit, who was granted the manor of Magheradernon by Hugh de Lacy (Orpen 1911-20, ii, 86; Graham 1980, 47). Graham (1980, 53) suggests that le Petit's motte at Mullingar was built before Ardnurcher, which is dated to 1192. The growth of the town is similarly unclear. The parish church of All Saints seems to date to the late twelfth century and William le Petit was granted a four-day fair at Mullingar in 1207 (Sweetman 1875-86 i, no. 330). These two phenomena indicate that there was a nucleated settlement here from the beginning of the thirteenth century. The foundation, however, of the Augustinian and Dominican priories c.1227 and c.1237 respectively reflects significant activity in the second quarter of the thirteenth century. No early charters are known but a mention of the provost and bailiffs in 1297 indicates that the town corporation was in existence by this date.

Little more is known of Mullingar until the fifteenth century when the town was clearly experiencing difficulties. Indulgences were granted to aid the repair of the Dominican priory in 1432 and the Augustinian priory in 1444. In 1464 Mullingar was burned by the Ui Maine (A. Conn.) and in 1475 the townspeople had to buy off Aodh Rua O Domhnaill in order to prevent him from burning it (AFM). A reference to the provost of Mullingar in 1560 (11 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 58: no. 260) suggests that the town continued to function throughout the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. A new gaol was built after 1566. In 1572 Mullingar was plundered and burned by the Clanricard Burkes, then in rebellion against the governement (AFM). Three years later in 1575 the town was devastated by plague (AFM). A murage grant was made in 1584 but nevertheless the town was plundered and burned by Aodh MacUidir and Cormac O Neill in 1597 (AFM). The seventeenth century, however, was a period of prosperity. In 1661 Sir Arthur Forbes was granted the castle, two dissolved monasteries and the town of Mullingar as a manor; the town was made the assize town of the county for "its better peopling" (Lewis 1837 ii, 411). In 1682 Piers (1981, 77-9) indicates that it was a thriving town in which many of the old buildings were either restored or replaced and this impression of prosperity is supported by the twenty-three known traders tokens from the town (Macalister 1931, 103-5; Dolley 1973).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN

There is very little evidence on which to reconstruct the outline of medieval Mullingar but it is evident that the linear axis formed by Pearse Street and Oliver Plunkett Street has always been the basis of the town plan. These two streets, referred to simply as Main Street until the nineteenth century, are aligned east-west and probably represent, with their Dominick Street extension, the High Street "lying to the north of the Dominican house" mentioned in 1609 (Erck 1846-52, 725). Perpendicular to this axis are Martin's Lane and Castle Street on the north, and Church Avenue and Mount Street, on the south. The Blinde Street lying to the east of the Dominican house mentioned in 1609 (Erck 1846-52, 725), and the highway called "Bater Sedgre" in or near Mullingar, mentioned in 1573, cannot be identified today (12 Rep. Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 104: No. 2299).

Even a superficial glance at the town plan of Mullingar reveals that it developed in two major stages. The plan unit based on Dominick Street and terminating in The Square obviously belongs to a later period than the Oliver Plunkett Street- Pearse Street axis. Dominick Street is probably the later of these two units because the other can be associated with the parish church, which is an early feature. At a guess, a seventeenth century date may be proposed for the development of Dominick Street.

2. MARKET PLACE

During the Middle Ages the main street formed by Pearse and Oliver Plunkett streets almost certainly functioned as the market place. It is considerably broader than other streets within the town and the present Market Place and Market House were probably inserted in the seventeenth century.

3. DOMESTIC HOUSES

There are no remains of pre-1700 buildings within the town. From documentary references, however, it is clear that there were stone buildings within the medieval town. In 1381 a castle called the "stonhous" is mentioned (Brooks 1953, 303) and, in 1609, another called "Castlemulrono" (Erck 1846-52, 725). These were probably fortified houses similar to those at Ardee and Carlingford in Co. Louth, and Piers' (1981, 78) description suggests that they were still common in 1682:

> "The ancient buildings here were old fashionable castles, some of which remain yet, and some are demolished, and better or at least more commodious houses are built in their room"

Religous orders also held houses within the town but whether of stone or timber is not known. In 1578 "the Frankehouse" is referred to (13 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 78: No. 3318) and it is probably to be identified with the house of the Knights Hospitalers mentioned in 1541 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 341).

4. THE BRIDGE

The importance of Mullingar as a fording point has already been noted and there can be little doubt that this was a factor in the development of the town. The date of the construction of the first bridge is unknown but in 1569 "the bridge of Mullingar", is referred to as being near the churchyard (11 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 219).

5. MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE

Situated south of the town beside the river Brosna, William le Petit's motte, probably erected before 1192, survived until 1828 (Graham 1980, 47, 53). Very little is known of its history, however. In 1582 Mullingar Castle is listed among the forts of Leinster (Cal. State Papers Ireland 1574-85, 343) and, although one cannot be certain, this is probably to be identified with the motte. It is possible that this is also the site of the gaol built by Walter Hope in 1566 and referred to as the "castle or gaol" in 1584 (15 Rep. deputy Keeper Public records Ireland, 32: No. 4354). The site is now occupied by the County Buildings, none of which pre-date 1700.

6. TOWN DEFENCES

There is no evidence that Mullingar was walled during the
Middle Ages but it is unlikely that it could have survived as
a settlement into the sixteenth century without defences of
some kind. In 1584 the provost of the town and the constable
of the gaol were granted two annual fairs, the tolls of which
were to be used "in enclosing and fortifying the town" which
was described as "lying open to all attempts" (Morrin 1862,
48; 15 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland, 32: No.
4354). The only evidence that this may have been carried out
is the reference to "West Gate" in a grant of 1609 (Erck
1846-52, 725) and the street name Bishop's Gate Street, on
the north of the town.

The extent of the defences is difficult to guage but it
is likely that their boundary was formed by the river Brosna
on the east, by the line of Bishop's Gate Street and Friar's
Mill Road on the north and by the boundary of the parish
churchyard on the south. The motte and bailey may have been
linked to the defences but it is impossible to be certain.
The western boundary of the town is entirely conjectural in
the present state of knowledge. It has been noted already
that Dominick Street forms a separate plan unit, perhaps of
the seventeenth century, and accordingly it may be suggested
that The Square formed the western limit of the town.

7. ALL SAINT'S PARISH CHURCH

This church is first referred to in a charter of
c.1192-1202 when it was granted to the Augustinian priory of
Llanthony Prima in Wales by Simon de Rochford, Bishop of
Meath (Brooks 1953, 34-5). This grant was confirmed, and the
dedication to All Saints specified, by William le Petit in a
grant of c.1202-10 (Brooks 1953, 216). Further references to
the parish church occur in 1205 (Gilbert 1889, 349) and
1465-6 (Twemlow 1933, 470). In 1381 its cemetery is described
as lying between the church and the river Brosna (Brooks
1953, 303). At the Dissolution the church was still held by
Llanthony (White 1943, 316). Bishop Dopping's Visitation of
1682-5 notes that the nave and chancel had been recently
restored and were in good repair with a shingled roof and
glazed windows (Ellison 1974, 99), while Piers (1981, 78)
described it as "handsomely rebuilt" in 1682. This building
was demolished to make way for the present structure built in
1836.

Monuments

The Leigh slab is within the church but the others are in the
graveyard west of the church.

James Leigh. 1683.
Large rectangular limestone slab set into the west wall of

DALTON 1641.

Dims: H. 200 W. 61-54 cm.

17th cent.
Slab fragment decorated in false relief with a cross which
has fleur-de-lis terminals. Roman inscription:

     PRAY../ LES OF .../ I ACHI IN'

Dims: H. 90 W. 50 cm.

8. AUGUSTINIAN PRIORY OF ST. MARY

     Otherwise known as Domus Dei, this priory was founded for
Augustinian canons c.1227 by Ralph Petit, bishop of Meath
(Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 189). In 1444 an indulgence was
granted to aid the repair of the church (Twemlow 1912, 463).
At the Dissolution the extent noted that the church, belfry,
house and other buildings were necessary for the
entertainment of the Lord Deputy and for the defence of the
neighbourhood but it specified that the stone cloister could
be thrown down (White 1943, 286). The extent also mentions a
small castle near the site and a garden outside the east gate
of the house, which implies that it stood within its own
precinct wall. The priory was then functioning as a parish
church (McNeill 1922, 20). In 1560 the site of the "late
monastery" of Mullingar was granted to Sir Richard Tuite
(Morrin 1862, 439); "a small castle" mentioned in this grant
is presumably the one referred to in the extent, and
identifies this as the Augustinian house. Gwynn and Hadcock
(1970, 189) state that the name "Domus Dei" implies the
existence of a hospital, and that a building named "the
spittle" is mentioned in an inquisition of 1571.

     No trace of the monastery survives and its site is
difficult to determine precisely. It is marked by the O.S.
(Westmeath XIX-10) on the site of All Saints church but this
cannot be correct because All Saints predates the priory.
Piers (1981, 77-8) indicates that it stood at the east end of
the town and his account is to be preferred. The modern
Austin Friars Street probably derives its name from the
Augustinian friars who settled in Mullingar beforre 1643,
possibly on the site of the old priory (Gwynn and Hadcock
1970, 304).

9. DOMINICAN PRIORY OF THE HOLY TRINITY

     Founded in 1237/8 by the Petits (Fenning 1964, 106-7).
The Dominicans held chapters here in 1278, 1292, 1308 and

the porch. Achievement of arms in false relief showing two
impaled coats of arms on a heater shaped shield. The dexter
side has a lion rampant in the first and fourth quarter,
three eagles in the second quarter and two bars and a baton
in the third; the sinister side has two chevrons. The shield
is surmounted by a helmet with a torse and the crest is a
lion holding a floriated staff. The motto at the base is
VERTVS DVCIT HONORI. Incised inscription:

> THIS TOMBESTONE WITH VAULT AND/ PEW WERE ERECTED BY THE
> WORSHIP/ FULL Sr JAMES LEIGH KNIGHT AND/ DAME MARY HIS
> WIFE FOR THE USE/ AND BURYING PLACE OF THEM AND/ THEIRE
> POSTERITY ANNO DOMINI/ 1683.

Dims: H. 182 W. 103 cm.

Bryan. 1675.
Narrow rectangular limestone slab with one triangular end.
Broken and partly defaced. Decorated with the stem of a cross
rising from a stepped base. Roman inscription in false
relief:

> THE SOV ./ . BRYAN S/ N AND MAR/ ASY 1675 W C

Dims: H. 180 W. 60 cm.

Richard Elan. 1640.
Damaged rectangular decorated with a cross stem rising from a
stepped base. Inscription in Roman capitals:

> PRAY FOR THE SOV/ LE OF RICHARD/ ELAN AND NELL/ .ORE
> 1640.

A simple basket work knot is placed between the words Richard
and Elan.
Dims: H. 165 W. 46 cm.

17th cent.
Rectangular slab decorated with a Latin cross in low false
relief. Fragmentary inscription:

> PRA... OR THE SOVL/ ES OF THADEUS .V./ AND HIS WIFE R
> CC.

Dims: H. 203 W. 56 cm.

Gerald and Eilis Dalton. 1641.
Coffin-shaped limestone slab decorted with a calvary with
encircled transom and trefoil ended terminals. Roman
inscription in false relief:

> PRAY FOR THE S/ OVLES OF GARALD/ DALTON AND ELLIS/

1314 (Fenning 1964, 108) which would suggest that it was a house of some importance. An indulgence of 1432 granted in aid of the repair of the church mentions that "forty professed friars" used be maintained by the house but noted that the priory had "suffered so much from long wars and other calamities that hardly eight in priest's orders reside therein, and that the buildings of the church and house themselves are threatened with ruin" (Twemlow 1909, 446). In 1540 the extent of the priory noted that the thatched roof of the church was ruinous although the stone walls and window (sic) were "in sufficient repair" (White 1943, 290-1). It also noted a stone tower and other buildings "lately inhabited by the friars" but now "in decay and unoccupied" within the precinct, which was surrounded by a stone wall. The priory was granted to Sir Gerald Fitzgerald of Croyboy in 1540 (White 1943, 291) and to Thomas Gorie in 1564 (Morrin 1862, 43). In 1541, however, the site of the priory was set aside for a new gaol (Fenning 1964, 112) and this was carried into effect in 1566 when the site was granted to Walter Hope, a Dublin merchant, on condition that he build a gaol of which he was to be constable (11 Rep Deputy Keeper Public Records Ireland 139, 932). Piers (1981, 77 n) noted that "part of the bell-tower and some other ruins" of the priory survived in 1682 and that the sixteenth century gaol had been recently replaced.

A grant of the site to Thomas Hope in 1609 notes that the site was bounded on the north by the High Street and West Gate, on the south by the river Brosna and Commons of Mullingar, on the east by Blinde Street and on the west by the Commons (Erck 1846-52, 725). This clearly identifies the site as occupying the south-west corner of the town where it is correctly shown on the O.S. map. The site is now an open space used as a car-park. A stone lined well, possibly associated with the priory, is in the back-yard of the second shop on the south side of Dominick St. The seal matrix of the priory, depicting the Holy Trinity, and dating to the fifteenth/ sixteenth century is in the National Museum of Ireland (O Floinn 1978-9). The Dominicans returned to Mullingar in the seventeenth century and a chalice presented to the community in 1648 is kept in the Dominican Friary, Dorset Street, Dublin (Fenning 1966, 308).

10. HOSPITAL

The extent of the Dominican priory in 1540 mentions "an old hospital now thrown down" in a field called "Spyttelfield", then owned by the Dominicans (White 1943, 290-1). This was presumably located in the Spittalfields north of the town, perhaps in the vicinity of the present Mullingar Mental Hospital (Lee 1974-5, 227).

11. OTHER FEATURES

Friary site.
Marked on the O.S maps at the north-east end of the town this may be the site to which the Franciscans were reintroduced in the seventeenth century.

Church site
Brady (1940, 99) suggests that the "tanner's dry house" in Dowdalls's yard may have been used as a church from c. 1690-1730. This was located by tradition near the Presentation convent.

Irishtown Td.
Located north-west of the town this may have been a medieval suburb.

12. LIST OF STRAY FINDS

Neolithic

1. Stone axehead. From near Military Barracks, Mullingar. NMI 1934: 135.

2. Stone axehead. From Mullingar. NMI 1932: 6569. Dept. of Education Rep. NMI 1931-2, 11.

3-4. Two stone axeheads. From Mullingar. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 5: lot 22; 6: lot 24.

5. Polished stone axehead. From Mullingar. NMI 1968: 366.

Bronze Age

6. Gold lunula. Reputed to be from Mullingar area (but see Eogan 1981, 347-8). NMI: 1884:7. Taylor 1980, Co Wm 7.

7. Decorated flat bronze axehead. Possibly from Mullingar area. NMI W.74.

8. Flat bronze axehead of Ballyvalley type. Found near Mullingar 1851. NMI 1968: 308. Harbison 1969a, 38: No. 987.

9. Flat bronze axehead of Ballyvalley type. From Mullingar. Hunterian Museum, Glasgow B 1914: 271. Harbison 1969a, 38: No. 986.

10. Flanged bronze axehead of Derryniggin type. Found near Mullingar, 1850. NMI 1968: 314. Harbison 1969a, 62: No. 1894.

11. Gold bar torc fragment. Reputed to be from Mullingar area (but see Eogan 1981, 347-8). NMI 1884:6. Eogan 1967, 164: No.

17.

12-13. Two gold boxes. Reputed to be from Mullingar area. NMI
1884:8-9. Eogan 1981, 347-8.

14. Gold penannular bracelet with evenly expanded terminals.
Reputed to be from Mullingar area (but see Eogan 1981,
347-8). NMI 1884: 10.

15. Gold ribbon torc fragment. NMI 1929: 277. Taylor 1980: Co
Wm 9; Eogan 1983, 96: No. 48.

16. Gold "dress fastener". From Mullingar. British Museum
1921.6-21.1. Hawkes and Clarke 1963, 245; Taylor 1980, Co Wm
8.

17. Bronze looped spearhead. Found near the Barracks,
Mullingar. NMI 1968: 267.

18-21. Bronze palstave and three bronze socketed axeheads.
Found (not necessarily together) near Mullingar, 1850. NMI
1968: 330, 338, 346, 351.

22. Bronze socketed knife. Found at Mullingar. Ulster Museum
182: 1913. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 38: lot 271, Pl. XI; Glover
1978, 46.

23. Bronze socketed graver. From Mullingar. Ulster Museum
179-1913. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 36: lot 259; Glover 1978,
46. Cf. Evans 1881, 176.

24. Bronze knife/ razor with broad leaf-shaped blade. Found
near Mullingar in 1895. NMI S.A. 1913: 117. Cat. Day Coll.
(1913), 49: lot 338.

25. Hoard of scrap bronze. From near Mullingar. Hunt Museum
Limerick. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 49: lot 337; Doran 1981: 5.

Iron Age

26-7. Two bronze "pendants" (Y-shaped pieces). Found with a
now lost horse-bit at Mullingar. Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge
27.625. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 50: lots 342-4. Raftery 1983,
55, 73.

28. Bronze horse trapping. From Mullingar. British Museum
1913.7-15.1. Cat. Day Coll (1913), 50: lots 342-4.

Early Historic

29. Zoomorphic penannular brooch. From Mullingar. British
Museum 1913.7-15.4. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 54: lot 373;
Kilbride-Jones (1980), 97: No. 42.

30. Bronze baluster-headed spiral-ringed pin. From Mullingar, 1880. Private possession. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 53: lot 362; Fanning 1374-5, 211: No. 4.

31. Bronze ringed pin. From Mullingar. Cat. Present whereabouts unknown. Cat. Day Coll. (1913), 53: lot 368.

32. Bronze round-headed stick pin. From near Mullingar, 1844. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto: Sturge (ex-Bateman coll.) 918.33.33. Pryor 1976: No. 12.

33. Bronze round-headed stick pin. From near Mullingar, 1842. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto: Sturge (ex-Bateman Coll.) 918.33.32. Pryor 1976: No. 15.

34. Bronze stick pin with undifferentiated head. From near Mullingar, April 1843. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto: Sturge (ex-Bateman coll.) 918.33.55. Pryor 1976: No. 46.

35. Bead of blue and yellow glass. From Mullingar. NMI 1948: 65.

36-7. Two iron ecclesiastical bells. From near Mullingar. NMI WK. 213-4. Bourke 1980, 66.

38. Hoard of Anglo-Saxon coins deposited c.985. Found at Marl Valley, near Mullingar, 1841. NMI (Art & Industry) Coin Register: 39-52. Dolley 1966, 31, 33, 51.

39. Hoard of seventeen Anglo-Saxon and Hiberno-Norse coins deposited c.1025-50. From Mullingar, 1856. Hall 1973-4, 79.

Anglo-Norman

40. Small silver bulla with ruby. Found near Mullingar. Cat. Sirr Coll. (1841), 4: No. 62.

41. Gold stirrup finger ring. Reputed found near Mullingar (but see Eogan 1981, 347-8). NMI 1884:11. Armstrong 1914, 16: No. 8.

Post-Medieval

42-6. Five iron swords. Found in the neighbourhood of Mullingar. NMI R.2351-55.

47. Seal matrix of Mullingar. Found in the neighbourhood of Mullingar, 1880. Present whereabouts unknown. Woods 1907, 50.

Other

48-9. Two stone hones. From Mullingar. NMI 1968: 374, 376.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

The Problems

Mullingar is important to archaeological research for four reasons. Firstly, it was the site of a prehistoric ford. Secondly, in Early Historic times it belonged to the church of Lynn and was probably a focus for settlement. Thirdly, during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, it was an important town of Anglo-Norman Westmeath. Fourthly, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the town was probably expanded.

The number of prehistoric objects from Mullingar or attributed to its immediate vicinity is large, and like those from Athlone, most are objects of quality. There is no evidence for settlement at Mullingar in prehistoric times but the number of finds indicates that the site of the future town was well known to prehistoric man. The problem for archaeology is to determine exactly what was there, a ford, a place of ritual deposition or both?

Mullingar belonged to Lynn at least in the twelfth century and possibly as early as the seventh but the exact nature of the settlement there is unclear. Was it a secular site administered by the church? Was it a church site? Where precisely was it located?

The archaeology of the Anglo-Norman town is significant for the understanding of the changeover from the pre-Norman settlement to a fully fledged medieval town. Important too is the clarification of what happened during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Did it shrink in size and population? Was the town deserted entirely? Did it fall into Irish hands?

The east-west axis formed by Oliver Plunkett and Pearse streets is probably the principal medieval street of the town. This can only be confirmed by excavation, however, just as the nature of the road surface at various times can only be discovered in this way. Streets should be examined archaeologically if at all possible because they permit not only an examination of their surfaces but also allow the results of excavations on one side of a street to be linked with those on the other. This enables the reconstruction of entire streetscapes in the manner which has proved so successful at Novgorod.

The town was situated at a ford and it is important to determine the nature of that ford and of the early bridges which were built on its site.

The County Buildings occupy the site of the motte and bailey castle and although there are no signs of ancient features above ground, it is possible that features such as

a town's archive but also diminishes the usefullness of those which are preserved.

The survey of its archaeology indicates that the site of the town has been the scene of human activity in Prehistoric, Early Historic, Medieval and post-Medieval times. Both documentary sources and the known archaeological remains indicate that the town was occupied continuously from before 1200 AD into the post-medieval period. There are no standing remains of pre-1700 date, however, and Mullingar's medieval buildings seem to have been demolished at an early date. Although the destruction of buildings above ground has been almost total, the street pattern of the medieval town is largely intact and archaeological deposits are likely to exist over a wide area of the town. Accordingly there is the strong likelihood of recovering house foundations, refuse pits, industrial areas, and workshops.

ARCHAEOLOGY, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

It is evident from the foregoing that archaeology is an important means of learning about Mullingar'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 Mullingar'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 Mullingar'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. 18) delimits the area of archaeological potential within modern Mullingar. In the absence of archaeological excavations within this area, little can be said of the extent and depth of archaeological deposits. South-west of the seventeenth

the castle ditch survive below ground. The motte may have been built upon the site of the pre-Norman settlement and accordingly this is a most important area for determining the nature of pre-Norman Mullingar.

Nothing is known of the form or size of pre-seventeenth century housing in the town. It is important to know what sort of buildings the medieval inhabitants of Mullingar lived in and how these changed through time. Only when such houses have been found can assessments be made of the impact of native Irish, British and continental building techniques on the town's craftsmen. A great deal of information about changes in building methods and fashions can also be derived from stratified sites in which the remains of successive houses are preserved. Much remains to be learned about Athlone's seventeenth century houses and opportunites to excavate sites of this period are also most important.

The course of the town defences outlined above is speculative and it needs to be checked by excavation to determine whether it is correct or not. The periods of construction, the variations in building, the forms of mural towers and gatehouses, and the extent of the town fosse are at present unknown. In particular it is important to discover the exact line of the medieval defences because these may have enclosed a larger or smaller area than indicated above.

It is unlikely that the opportunity will arise to excavate on the site of All Saint's Church but the opportunity could occur at the sites of the Dominican and Franciscan friaries. Our knowledge of the form, size and character of these religous houses is nil. It is important to remember that the architectural features and extent are only one aspect of the archaeology of religous houses and the excavation of a medieval cemetery, such as that conducted at York, can provide otherwise unobtainable evidence about health, disease, diet, and mortality rates.

Archaeological Potential

Archaeology does not consist solely of excavation nor does it stop at ground level. The archaeological evidence for Mullingar's past comprises all the physical remains of man's activities on the site of the town, from its first use as a ford to 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 Mullingar, but for the wide range of human activity omitted from the written accounts and for the early periods without documentation 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

century friary a housing scheme is being constructed which
may have destroyed archaeological deposits. Deposits have
also been removed by the construction of cellars on the
street frontage of Pearse and Oliver Plunkett streets.
Elsewhere, however, there is little evidence for modern
disturbance. Accordingly, archaeological deposits are likely
to exist over the area of the walled town, and its extension
into Dominick Street. This area is shaded pink on Fig. 18 and
the extent has been continued outside the walls slightly in
order to allow for a possible fosse. On the north-east side
of the town an area has been delimited around the
seventeenth-century friary.
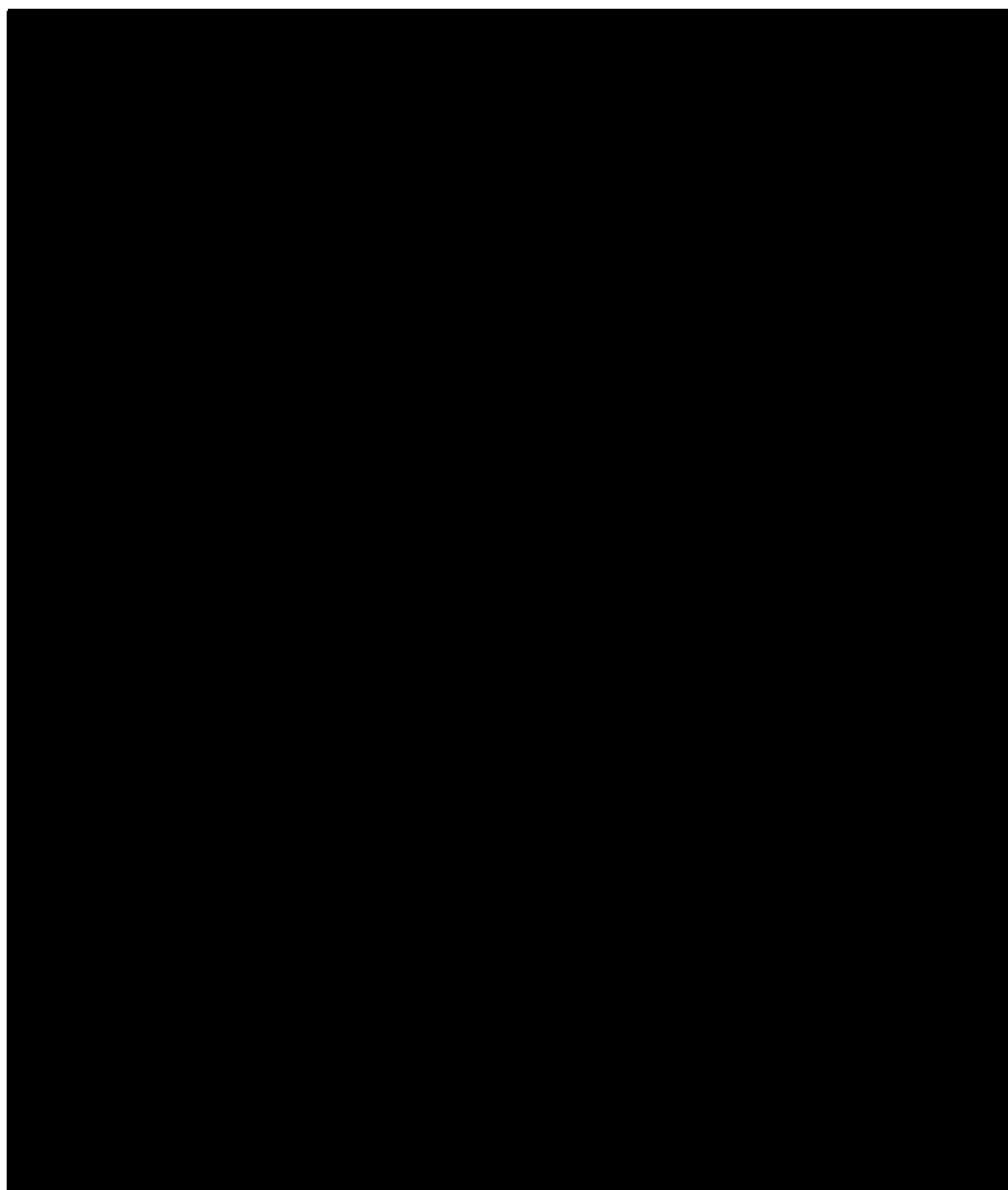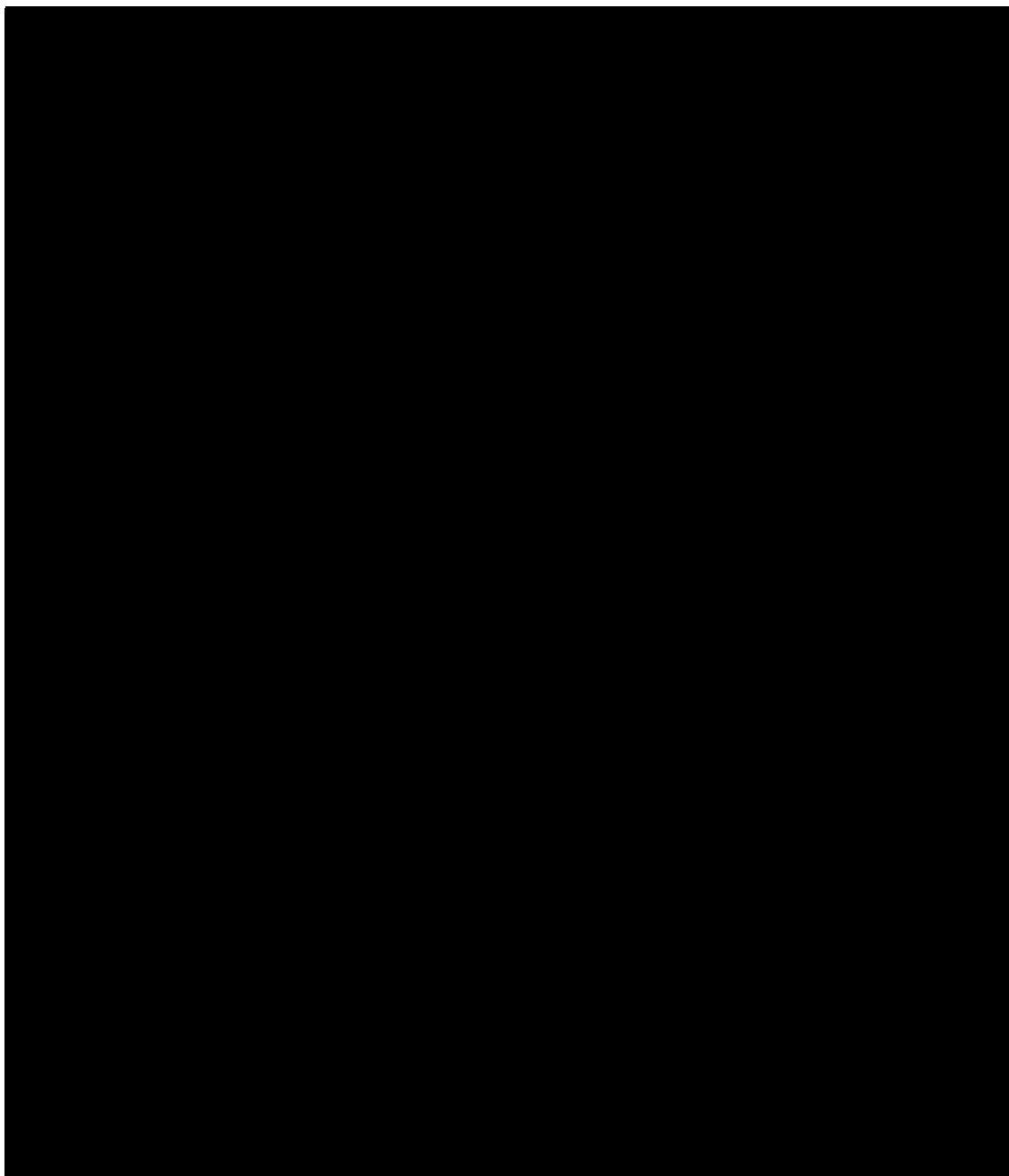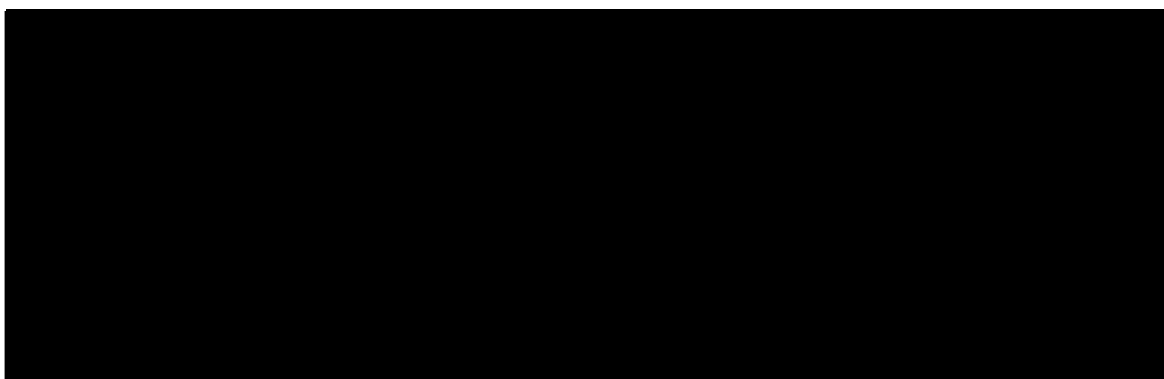
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

Irish Annals

A. Clon.: Annals of Clonmacnoise, ed. D. Murphy, Dublin
         1896.

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.

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

A. Tig.: Annals of Tigernach, ed. W. Stokes, Revue Celtique
         16 (1895), 374-419, 17 (1896), 6-33, 119-263, 337-
         420, 18 (1897) 9-59, 150-97, 267-303.

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.

Macarthy's Book, in Miscellaneous Irish Annals ed. S. O
         hInnse, Dublin 1947, 2-115.

Journals

JRSAI   Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of
         Ireland.

PRIA   Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy.

UJA   Ulster Journal of Archaeology.

Allen, I. M., Britton, D., and Coghlan, H. H. 1970.
Metallurgical reports on British and Irish Bronze Age
implements and weapons in the Pitt Rivers Museum. Occ. Papers
on Technology 10. Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford.

Archdall, M. 1786.
Monasticon Hibernicum. Dublin

Armstrong, E. C. R. 1913.

"Some matrices of Irish seals" PRIA 30 C, 20, 451-76.

Armstrong, E. C. R. 1914.
Catalogue of finger rings in the collection of the Royal Irish Academy. Dublin.

Armstrong, E. C. R. 1920.
Catalogue of Irish gold ornaments in the collection of the Royal Irish Academy. Dublin.

Berry, H. F. 1910.
(ed.) Statute Rolls of the Parliament of Ireland, King Henry VI. Dublin.

Berry, H. F. 1914.
(ed.) Statute Rolls of the Parliament of Ireland 1-12 Edward IV. Dublin.

Bigger, F. J. 1901-3.
"Parish church, Athlone", Jrl. Assoc. Preservation Memorials Dead, Ireland 5, 272.

Bigger, F. J. and Hughes, H. 1898-1900.
"The Abbey graveyard, Athlone", Jrl. Assoc. Preservation Memorials Dead, Ireland 4, 493-4.

Bliss, W. H. and Twemlow, J. A. 1904.
(ed.) Calendar of...the papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal letters vols. 5 (1396-1404) and 6 (1404-15). London.

Brooks, E. St.John. 1936.
(ed.) Register of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist, Dublin. Dublin.

Brooks, E. St. John. 1953.
(ed.) The Irish Cartularies of Llanthony Prima et Secunda. Dublin.

Brownrigg, J. 1788.
"A descriptive account of the fort of Ardnorcher or Horseleap...." Trans. Roy. Irish Acad. 2, 43-50.

Burgess, C. and Gerloff, S. 1981.
The Dirks and Rapiers of Great Britain and Ireland. Munich.

Chart, D. A. 1935.
(ed.) The Register of John Swayne. Belfast.

Claffey, J. A. 1970-1.
"The medieval castle of Athlone", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1, 2, 55-60.

Clarke, M. V. 1941
Register of the priory of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Tristernagh. Dublin.

Cogan, J. 1867.
History of the Diocese of Meath. Vol. 2. Dublin.

Cogan, J. 1870.
History of the Diocese of Meath. Vol. 3. Dublin.

Conlan, P. 1978.
"The 'Outlaw' friars of Athlone - 1916", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 2, 5, 38-44.

Conlan, P. 1980.
"The medieval priory of Saints Peter and Paul in Athlone", in Murtagh, H. (ed.) Irish Midland Studies (Athlone), 73-83.

Crawford, H. S. 1928.
"List of the Wayside Crosses near Fore, County Westmeath", JRSAI 58, 57-62.

Curtis, E. 1932-43.
(ed.) Calendar of Ormond Deeds. 6 vols. Dublin.

Davies, O. and Quinn, D. B. 1941
(eds.) The Irish Pipe Roll of 14 John, 1211-1212. Supplement to UJA 4 (1941).

Dolley, R. H. M. 1966.
The Hiberno-Norse Coins in the British Museum. London.

Dolley, M. 1973.
"A Note on the Seventeeenth Century Tokens of the O'Melaghlins of Mullingar", Riocht na Midhe 5,3, 46-8.

Ellison, C. C. 1974.
"Bishop Dopping's Visitation Book 1682-1685", Riocht na Midhe 5, No. 4, 98-103.

Ellison, C. C. 1975.
"Bishop Dopping's Visitation Book 1682-1685", Riocht na Midhe 6, No. 1, 3-12.

English, N. W. 1970-1.
(ed.) "The dismal ruine of Athlone", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1, 2, 88-9.

English, N. W. 1972-3.
"Ginkel's (and Wellington's) House, Athlone", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1, 3, 185-9.

English, N. W. 1974-5.
"The Burgess papers of Athlone", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1, 4, 254-62.

English, N.W. 1978.
"The Sir Mathew De Renzi Memorial in Athlone", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 2, 1-5.

Eogan, G. 1965.
Catalogue of Irish Bronze Swords. Dublin.

Eogan, G. 1981.
"The gold vessels of the Bronze Age in Ireland and beyond",
PRIA 81 C, 345-82.

Eogan, G. 1983.
Hoards of the Irish Later Bronze Age. Dublin.

Erck, J. C. 1846-52.
(ed.) A Reportory of the Inrolments of the Patent Rolls of
Chancery in Ireland commencing with the reign of King James
I, vol. 1, parts 1-2. Dublin.

Evans, J. 1881.
The Ancient Bronze Implements ... of Great Britain and
Ireland. London.

Fanning, T. 1974-5.
"Some Bronze Ringed Pins from the Irish Midlands", Jrl. Old
Athlone Soc. 1, 4, 211-17

Fanning. T and O hEailidhe P, 1980.
"Some cross-inscribed slabs from the Irish Midlands", in
Murtagh, H. (ed.) Irish Midland Studies (Athlone), 5-23.

Fenning, H. 1964.
"The Dominicans of Mullingar 1237-1610", Riocht na Midhe 3,
2, 105-13.

Fenning H. 1966.
"The Dominicans of Mullingar 1622-1654", Riocht na Midhe 3,
4, 299-314.

FitzGerald, W. 1904-6.
"Athlone: the Abbey burial ground", Jrl. Assoc. Preservation
Memorials Dead, Ireland 6, 160-2.

Flanagan, L. N. W. 1965.
"Ulster Museum: archaeological acquisitions of Irish origin
for the year 1963", UJA 28, 102-16.

Freeman, A. Martin. 1944.
(ed.) Annala Connacht: The Annals of Connacht (AD 1224-1544).
Dublin.

Fuller, J. F. 1904-6.
"Ardnurcher church", Jrl. Assoc. Preservation Memorials Dead,
Ireland 6, 608-9.

Gilbert, J. 1884.
(ed.) Chartularies of St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin. 2 vols.
London.

Gilbert, J. 1889.

(ed.) Register of the Abbey of St. Thomas, Dublin. London.

Glover, W. 1978.
"Irish antiquities from the eastern midlands in the Ulster Museum", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 2, 5, 45-51.

Graham, B. 1977.
"The towns of medieval Ireland" in Butlin, R. A. (ed.) The development of the Irish town (London), 28-60.

Graham, B. 1980.
"The mottes of the Norman Liberty of Meath" in Murtagh, H. (ed.) Irish Midland Studies (Athlone), 39-56.

Grannell, F. 1978.
The Franciscans in Athlone. Athlone.

Grattan-Flood, W. H. 1913.
"The Cluniacs in Ireland", Irish Eccles. Rec. 5th ser. 1, 52-9.

Gwynn, A. and Hadcock, R. N. 1970.
Medieval Religous Houses: Ireland. London.

Hall, R. 1973-4.
"A check list of Viking Age coin finds from Ireland", UJA 36-7, 71-86.

Harbison, P. 1969a.
The Axes of the Early Bronze Age in Ireland. Munich.

Harbison, P. 1969b.
The Daggers and the Halberds of the Early Bronze Age in Ireland. Munich.

Haren, M. 1978.
(ed.) Calendar of...the papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal letters 15 (1484-92). Dublin.

Harris, W. 1764.
(ed.) The Works of Sir James Ware......concerning Ireland. Vol. 1. Dublin.

Hawkes, C. F. C. and Clarke, R. R. 1963.
"Gahlstorf and Caistor-on-Sea: two finds of Late Bronze Age Irish gold", in Foster, I. Ll. and Alcock, A. (eds.) Culture and Environment (London), 193-250.

Herbert, R. 1940.
"The City of Limerick Public Library and Museum", North Munster Antiq. Jrl. 2, 2, 76-89.

Hunt, J. 1974.
Irish Medieval Figure Sculpture. Dublin-London.

Hurley, V. 1980.

"Additions to the Map of Monastic Ireland: the south-west", Jrl. Cork Hist. & Archaeol. Soc. 85, 52-65.

Irish Record Commission 1829.
Chartae, Privilegia et Immunitates: from 18 Henry II (1171) to 18 Richard II (1395).

Irish Record Commission 1830.
Irish Patent Rolls of James I. Facsimile ed. Dublin 1966.

Joly, J. S. 1881.
The old bridge of Athlone. Dublin.

Kerrigan, P. M. 1980.
"The defences of the Shannon: Portumna to Athlone, 1793-1815", in Murtagh, H. (ed.) Irish Midland Studies (Athlone), 168-92.

Kilbride Jones, H. E. 1980.
Zoomorphic Penannular Brooches. London.

Killanin, M. and Duignan, M. 1967.
The Shell Guide to Ireland. 2nd ed. London.

Langrishe, R. 1890a.
"The walls of Athlone", JRSAI 21, 276-9.

Langrishe, R. 1890b.
"The sieges of Athlone in 1690 and 1691", JRSAI 21, 280-1, 370.

Lawlor, H. J. 1912.
"A calendar of the register of Archbishop Fleming", PRIA 30 C, 94-190.

Leask, H. G. 1951.
Irish castles and castellated houses. Dundalk.

Leask, H. G. 1955.
Irish Churches and Monastic Buildings. Vol. 1. Dundalk.

Leask, H. G. 1960.
Irish Churches and Monastic Buildings. Vols. 2 & 3. Dundalk.

Leask, H. G. n.d.
Fore, Co. Westmeath: national monuments in the charge of the Commissioners of Public Works. Dunblin. No date.

Lee, G. A. 1974-5. "The Leper Hospitals of the Upper Shannon Area", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1, 4, 222-29.

Lewis, S. 1837.
A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland. 2 vols. London.

Loeber, R. 1981a.
A biographical dictionary of architects in Ireland 1600-1720.

London.

Loeber, R. 1981b.
"Sculptured memorials to the dead in early seventeenth century Ireland: a survey from Monumenta Eblanae and other sources", PRIA 81 C, 267-93.

Macalister, R. A. S. 1931
"A collection of the Irish Trader's tokens in the collection of the Royal Irish Academy" PRIA 40 C, 2, 19-185.

McNeill, C. 1922.
"Accounts of sums realised by sales of chattels of some suppressed Irish monasteries", JRSAI 52, 11-37.

MacNiocaill, G. 1964.
Na Buirgeisi XII-XV Aois. 1 vol. in 2. Dublin.

MacNiocaill, G. 1977.
"Cairt le Walter de Lacy", Galvia 11, 54-6.

Martin, G. 1981.
"Plantation boroughs in medieval Ireland, with a handlist of boroughs to c. 1500" in Harkness, D. and O'Dowd, M. (eds.) The Town in Ireland (Belfast), 23-53.

May, E. H. L. 1969.
"A walk around town", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1, 1, 45-7.

Millett, B. 1972-3.
"The superiors of the Franciscan Friary, Athlone 1626-1972", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1, 3, 161-3.

Mills, J. 1905.
(ed.) Calendar of Justiciary Rolls Ireland 1295-1303. Dublin.

Mills, J. 1914.
(ed.) Calendar of Justiciary Rolls Ireland 1305-07. Dublin.

Mills, J. and McEnery, M. J. 1916.
(eds.) Calendar of the Gormanston Register. Dublin.

Morrin, J. 1861.
(ed.) Calendar of the Patent Rolls of Ireland Henry VIII - Elizabeth. Vol. 1. Dublin.

Morrin, J. 1862.
(ed.) Calendar of the Patent Rolls of Ireland 18-45 Elizabeth. Vol. 2. Dublin.

Morrissey, J. F. 1939.
(ed.) Statute Rolls of the Parliament of Ireland 12/13 - 21/22 Edward IV. Dublin.

Murtagh, H. 1972-3.
"The siege of Athlone, 1691", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1, 3,

172-83.

Murtagh H. 1974-5.
"Ballymore and the Jacobite War", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1, no. 4, 242-6.

Murtagh, H. 1978.
"Elizabethan water bailiffs on the Shannon and the 'Athlone boats'", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 2, 5, 52-5.

Murtagh, H. 1980.
"The town wall fortifications of Athlone", in Murtagh, H. (ed.) Irish Midland Studies (Athlone), 89-106.

O'Brien, B. 1972-3.
"The Tholsel of Athlone", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1, 3, 190-5.

O'Floinn, R. 1978-9. "Medieval Seal Matrix from Gaulstown, Co, Meath", Riocht na Midhe, 6, 4, 84-8.

O hInnse, S. 1947.
(ed.) Miscellaneous Irish Annals (AD 1114-1437). Dublin.

Orpen, G. H. 1892.
(ed.) The Song of Dermot and the Earl. Oxford.

Orpen, G. H. 1907.
"Athlone Castle: its early history with notes on some neighbouring castles", JRSAI 37 (1907), 257-76.

Orpen, G. H. 1911-20.
Ireland under the Normans. 4 vols. Oxford.

O'Sullivan, J. C. 1974-5.
"Wickerwork partition in an Athlone house", Jrl. Old Athlone Soc. 1, 4, 232-3.

Otway-Ruthven, A. J. 1968a.
A history of medieval Ireland. London.

Otway-Ruthven, A. J. 1968b.
"The Partition of the De Verdon Lands in Ireland in 1332", PRIA 66 C 5 (1968), 401-55.

Piers, H. 1981.
A chorographical description of the county of Westmeath written AD 1682. Meath Archaeol. & Hist. Soc.

Pryor, F. 1976.
"A Descriptive Catalogue of Some Ancient Irish Metalwork in the Colections of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto", JRSAI 106, 73-91.

Raftery, B. 1982.
"Two recently discovered bronze shields from the Shannon Basin", JRSAI 112, 5-17.

Raftery, B. 1983.
A Catalogue of Irish Iron Age Antiquities. 2 vols. Marburg.

Roe, H. M. 1968.
Medieval Fonts of Meath. Meath Archaeological & Historical
Society.

Ryan, J. 1966.
Toirdelbach O Conchubhair (1088-1156) King of Connacht, King
of Ireland co fresabra. Dublin.

Rynne, E. 1964.
"Souterrain at Fore, Co. Westmeath", Riocht na Midhe 3, 2,
118-23.

Rynne, E. 1969.
"Three Irish knife-daggers", JRSAI 99, 137-43.

Scott, A. B. and Martin, F. X. 1978
(eds.) Expugnatio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland by
Giraldus Cambrensis. Dublin.

Seymour, St. John D. 1934.
"Some priors of Fore, Co. Westmeath", JRSAI 64, 64-71.

Stokes, G. 1890-1a.
[Antiquities in Athlone], JRSAI 21, 179-86.

Stokes, G. 1890-1b.
"Athlone in the seventeenth century", JRSAI 21, 198-215.

Sweetman, H. S. 1875-86.
Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland 1171-1307. 5 vols.
London.

Taylor, J. J. 1980.
Bronze Age Goldwork of the British Isles. Cambridge.

Thompson, M. W. 1967.
Novgorod the Great. London.

Tresham, E. 1828.
Rotulorum Patentium et Clausorum Cancellariae Hiberniae
Calendrium Hen II - Hen VII. Dublin.

Twemlow, J. A. 1909.
(ed.) Calendar of...the papal registers relating to Great
Britain and Ireland: Papal letters 8 (1427-47). London.

Twemlow, J. A. 1912.
(ed.) Calendar of...the papal registers relating to Great
Britain and Ireland: Papal letters 9 (1431-47). London.

Twemlow, J. A. 1933.
(ed.) Calendar of...the papal registers relating to Great
Britain and Ireland: Papal letters 12 (1458-71). London.

Twemlow, J. A. 1960.
(ed.) Calendar of...the papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal letters 14 (1484-92). London.

Upton, H. A. S. 1921-5.
"Ardnurcher church", Jrl. Assoc. Memorials Dead, Ireland 11, 236-7.

Vigors, P. D. 1904-6.
"Fore churchyard", Jrl. Assoc. Memorials Dead, Ireland 6, 410.

Walker, J. 1788.
Essay on Irish dress. Dublin.

Walsh, P. 1957.
The Placenames of Westmeath. Dublin.

Weir, A. 1980.
"Exhibitionists and Related Carvings in the Irish Midlands: their origins and functions", in Murtagh, H. (ed.) Irish Midland Studies (Athlone), 57-72.

White, N. B. 1943.
Extents of Irish Monastic Possessions 1540-41. Dublin.

Wilde, W. 1857.
A Descriptive Catalogue of the Antiquities ... in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy. Dublin.

Woodman, P. C. 1978.
The Mesolithic in Ireland. B.A.R. Brit. Ser. No. 58. Oxford.

Woods, J. 1907.
Annals of Westmeath.

COUNTY WESTMEATH

BOROUGHS & TOWNS

LAND OVER 122m   LAND OVER 244m

0   30Km
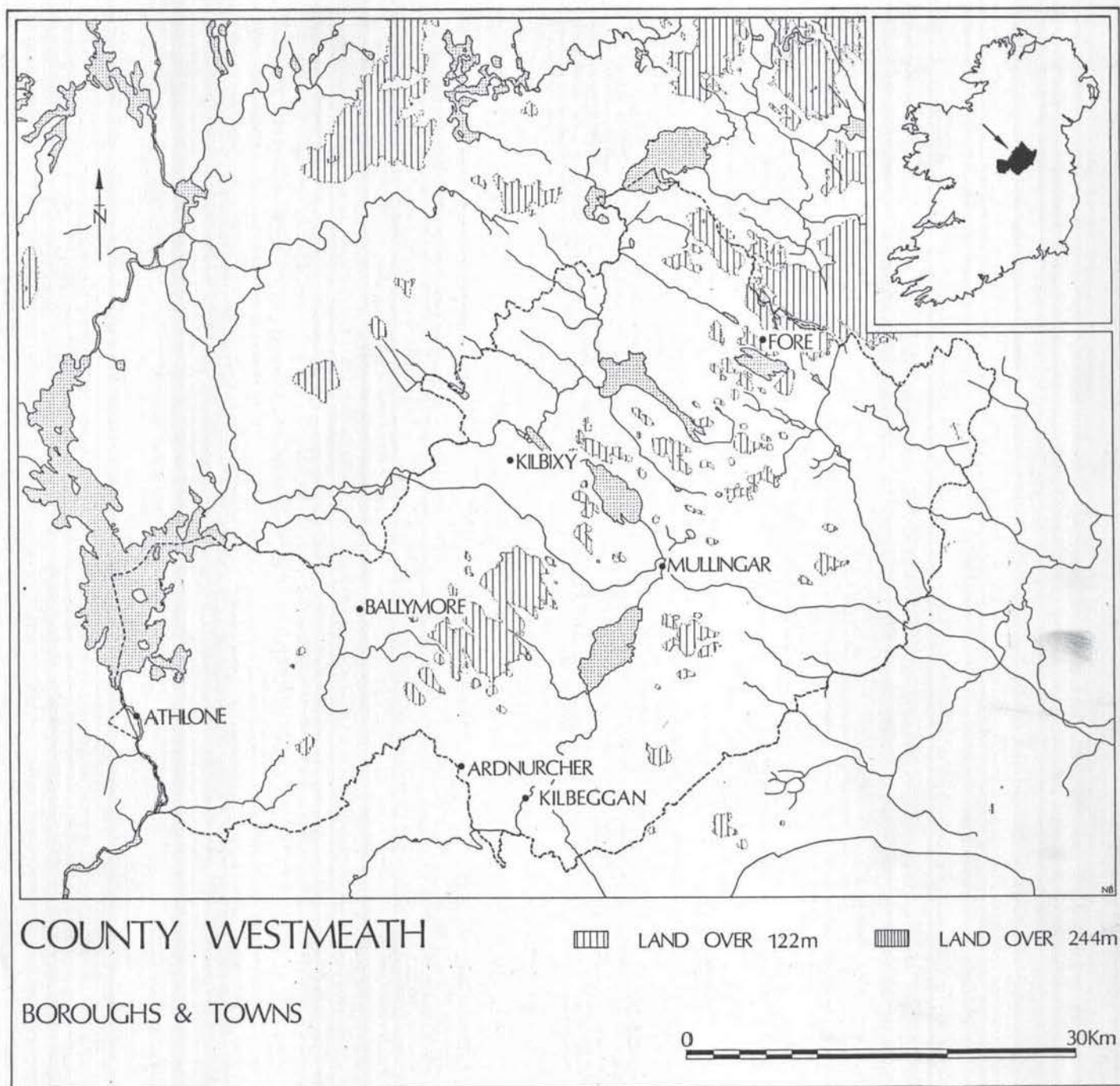
Fig. 1. County Westmeath: Location map of boroughs and towns.

ARDNURCHER

0 _____ 300 Metres

Fig. 2. Ardnurcher: Zone of archaeological potential.

Fig. 1. Athlone: Zone of archaeological potential.

ATHLONE

◩ Site of Gate

Franciscan Friary

RIVER SHANNON

North Gate

Court Devenish

St. Mary's Church

new bridge

Tholsel (site of)

Connacht Tower (site of)

Dublin Gate

Castle

old bridge (site of)

IRISHTOWN

CONNACHT STREET

Cluniac Priory (site of)

0   250
Metres

NB
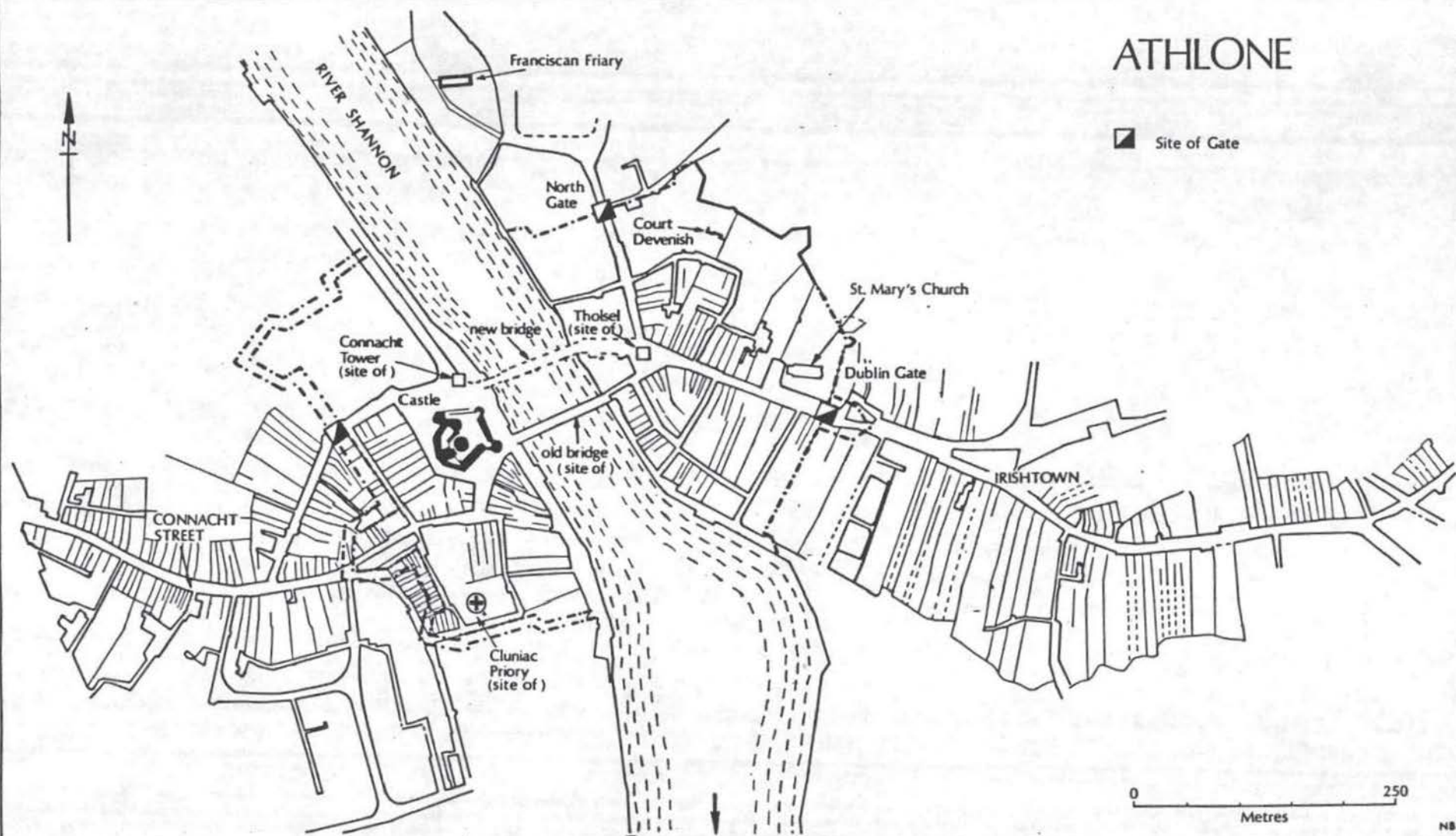
Fig. 4. Athlone: Outline map showing the major archaeological features

FIRST FLOOR

MODERN

ENTRANCE

RUBBLE
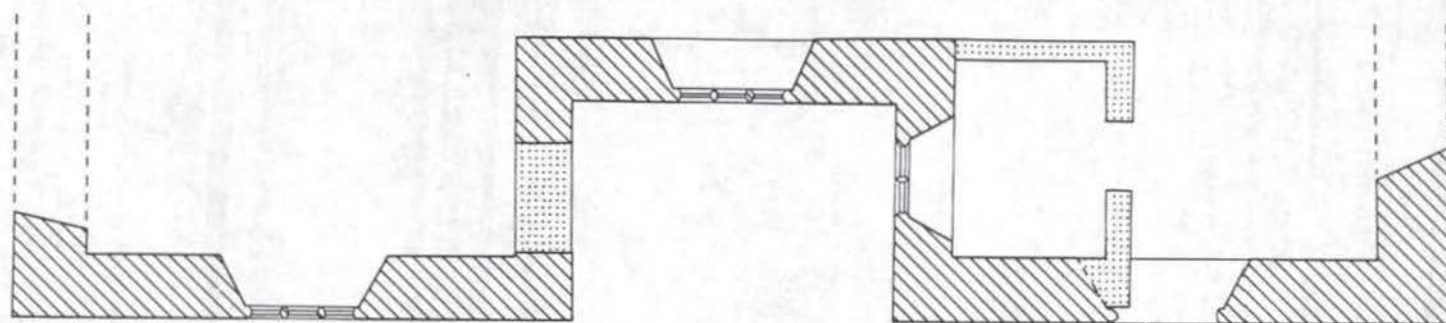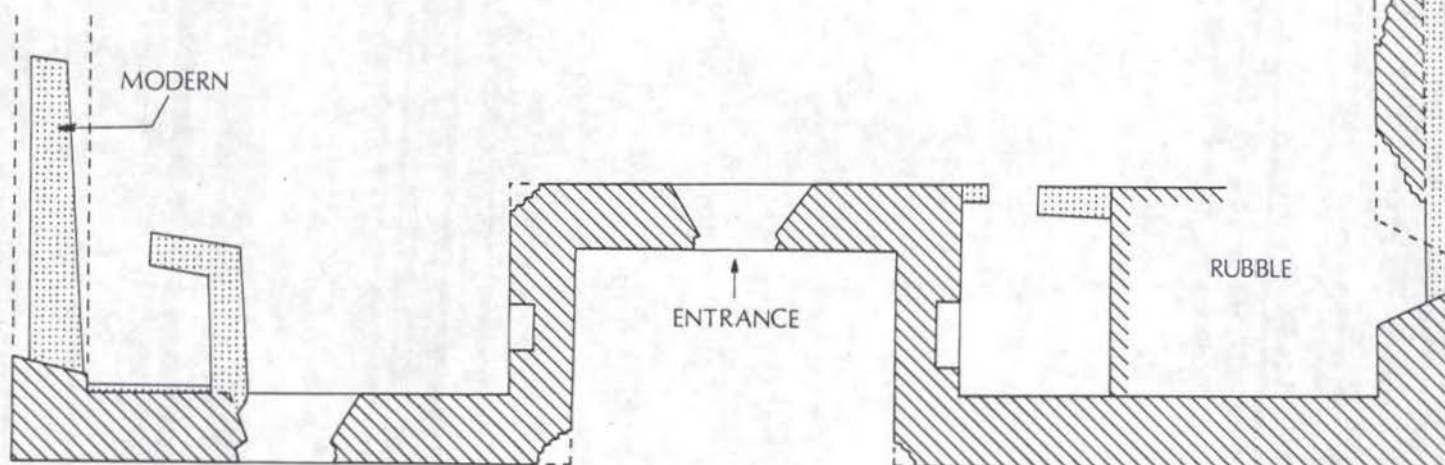
GROUND FLOOR

ATHLONE: COURT DEVENISH

0   Metres   5

Fig. 5. Athlone: Court Devenish ground and first floor
         plans.

Fig. 6. Athlone: Franciscan Friary: ground plan.

MODERN
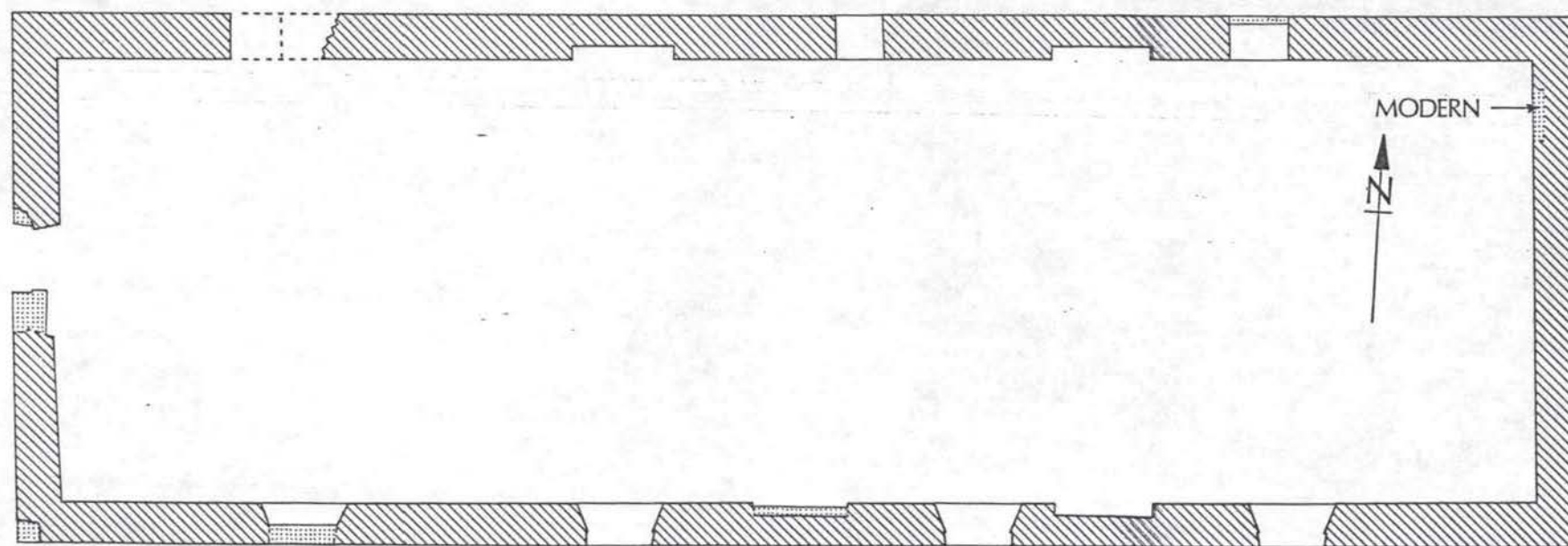
ATHLONE: FRANCISCAN FRIARY

0   Metres   10

Fig. 7. Ballymore Zone of archaeological potential.
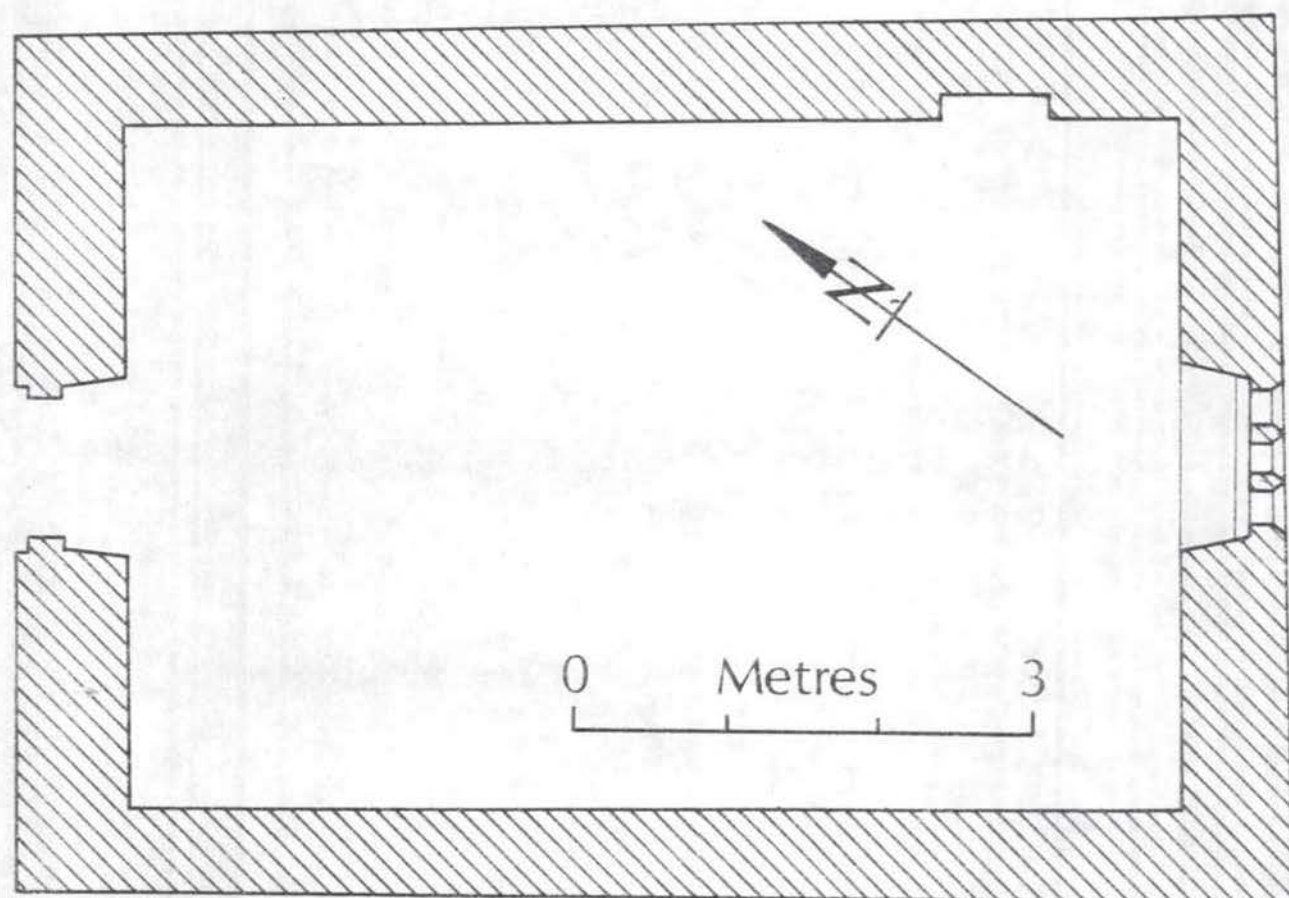
BALLYMORE: ST. OWEN'S

Fig. 8.   Ballymore: St. Owen's churchyard: chapel.

Fig. 9. Ballymore: stone tower ?castle.
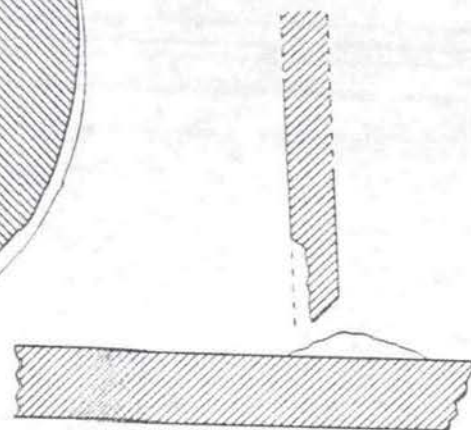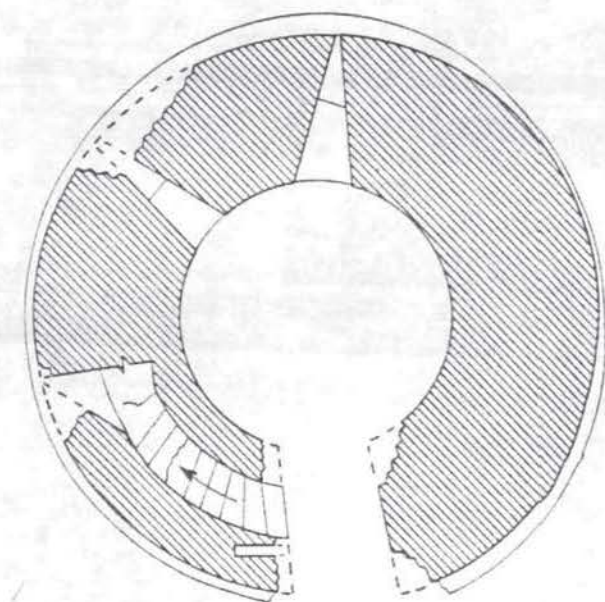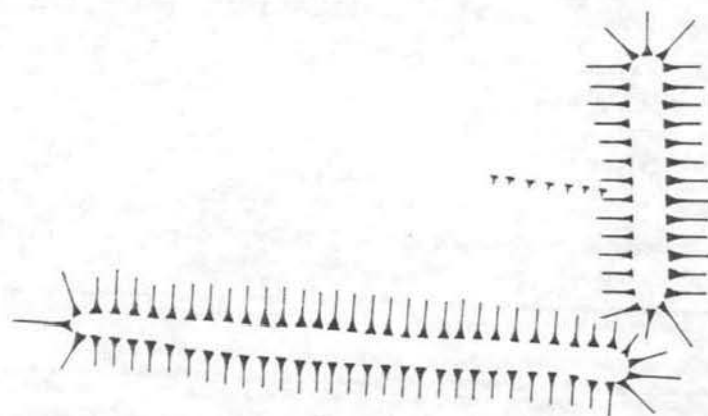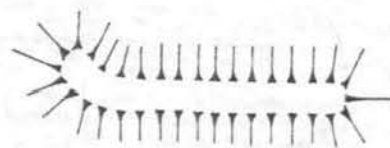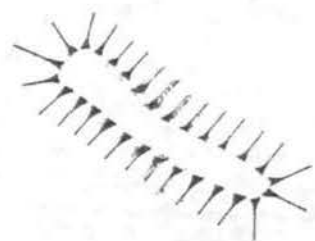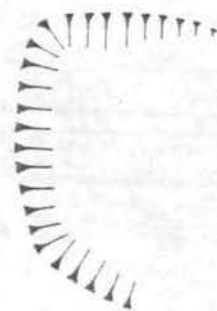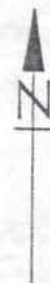
BALLYMORE
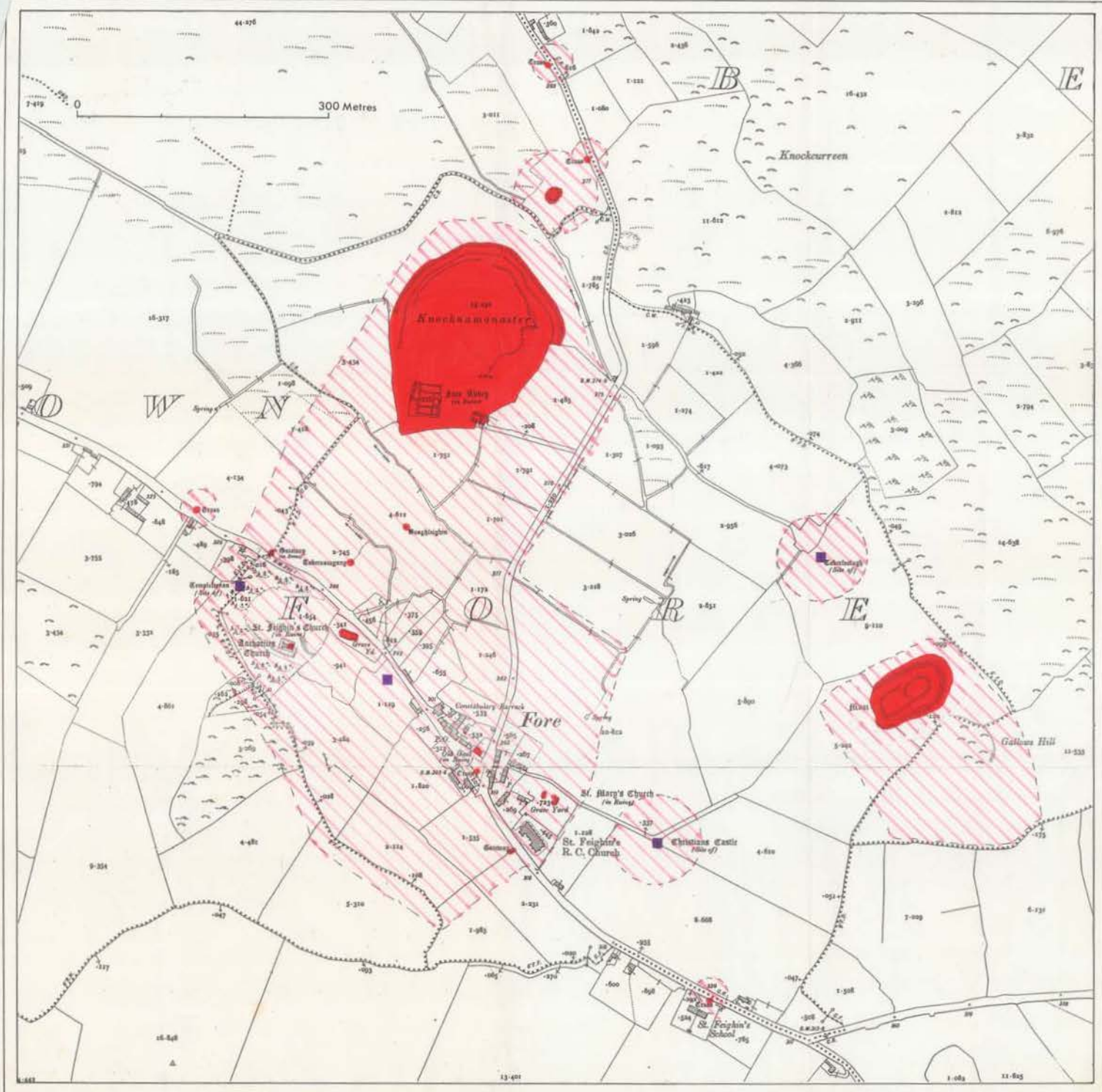
Fig. 10. Fore: Zone of archaeological potential.

Fig. 11. Fore: Town Gates.
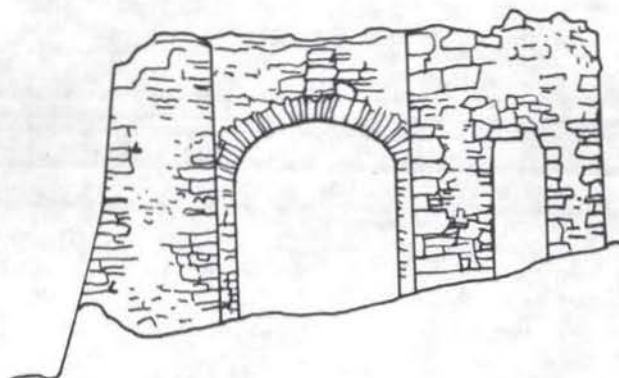
NORTH WEST ELEVATION
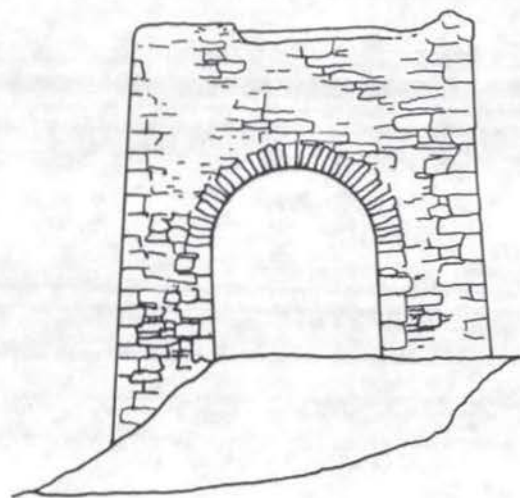
WEST ELEVATION
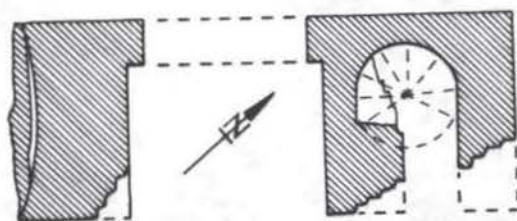
SOUTH GATE
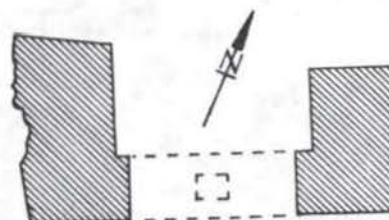
NORTH GATE

FORE: TOWN GATES

After LEASK

WEST ELEVATION

0   5 Metres

NAVE
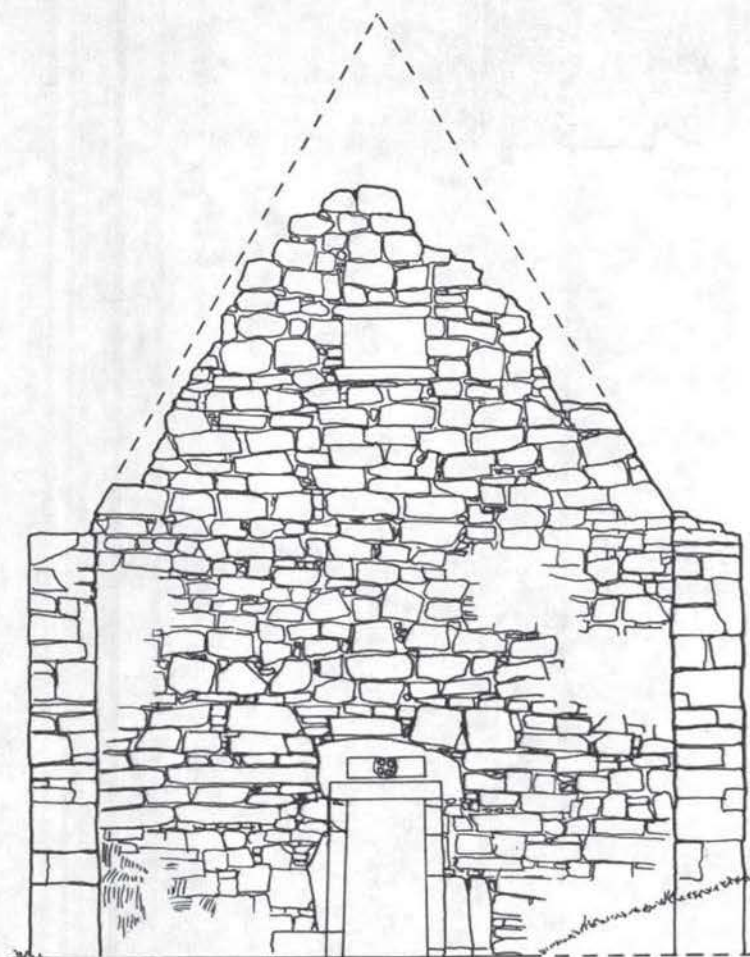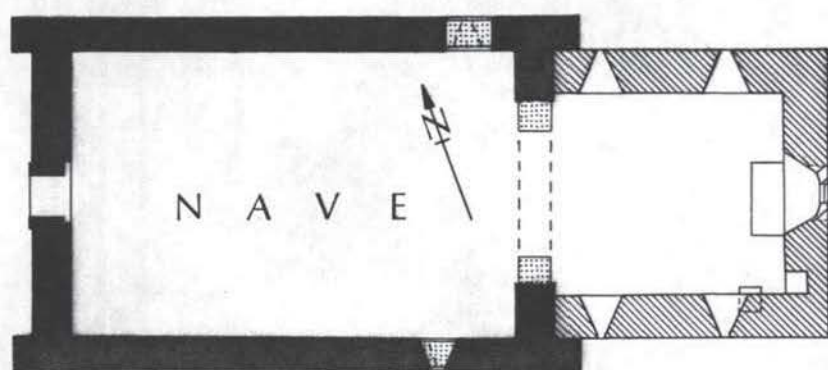
0   10 Metres

■ PRE 12th CENT.   ▨ 13th CENT.

▨ 15th CENT.   ▦ MODERN

GROUNDPLAN   AFTER LEASK

FORE : ST. FECHIN'S

Fig. 12. Fore: St. Fechin's Church: ground plan and west elevation (After Leask).

SECTION A-A

ELEVATION

B —   — B

PLAN B-B

ST. FECHIN'S:
FONT

O   cm   6O

after LEASK

Fig. 13. Fore: St. Fechin's Church: font.

CHAPEL

WEST
TOWER

N A V E   CHOIR

SACRISTY

CLOISTER

CHAPTER
ROOM ?

Original Foundations

STORES UNDER

REFECTORY

KITCHEN

ORIGINAL
REFECTORY

N

MILL ?

0   20 Metres

■ 13th CENT.   ▨ 15th CENT.   ▦ MODERN   ▢ FOUNDATIONS ONLY
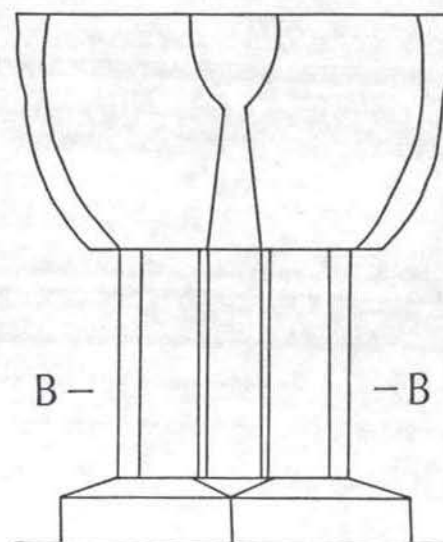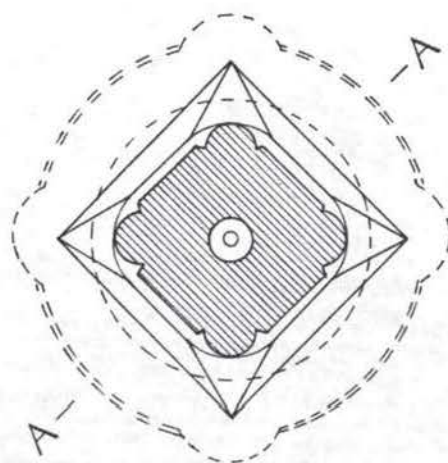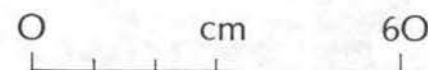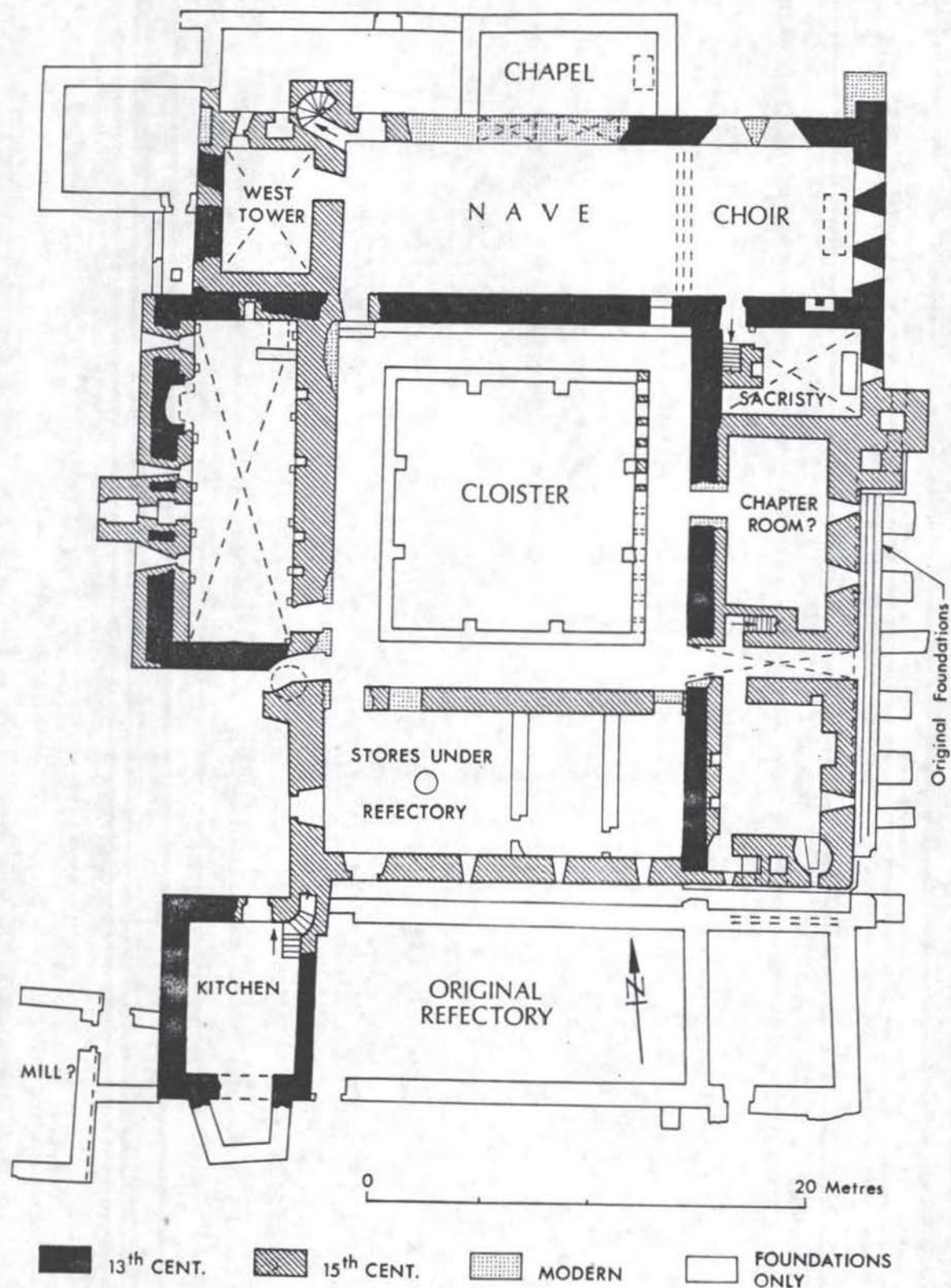
FORE: BENEDICTINE PRIORY

after LEASK

Fig. 14. Fore: Benedictine Priory: ground plan (after Leask)

AGHAMORE

ARK

Kilbeggan

Distillery

Church
Grave Yard

MARKET
SQUARE

FAIR
GREEN

School

St Mary's
Convent

Cemetery

Parochial Ho

St James
R.C.Church

Grave Yard

K   I   L   B   E   G

0 _____ 300 Metres
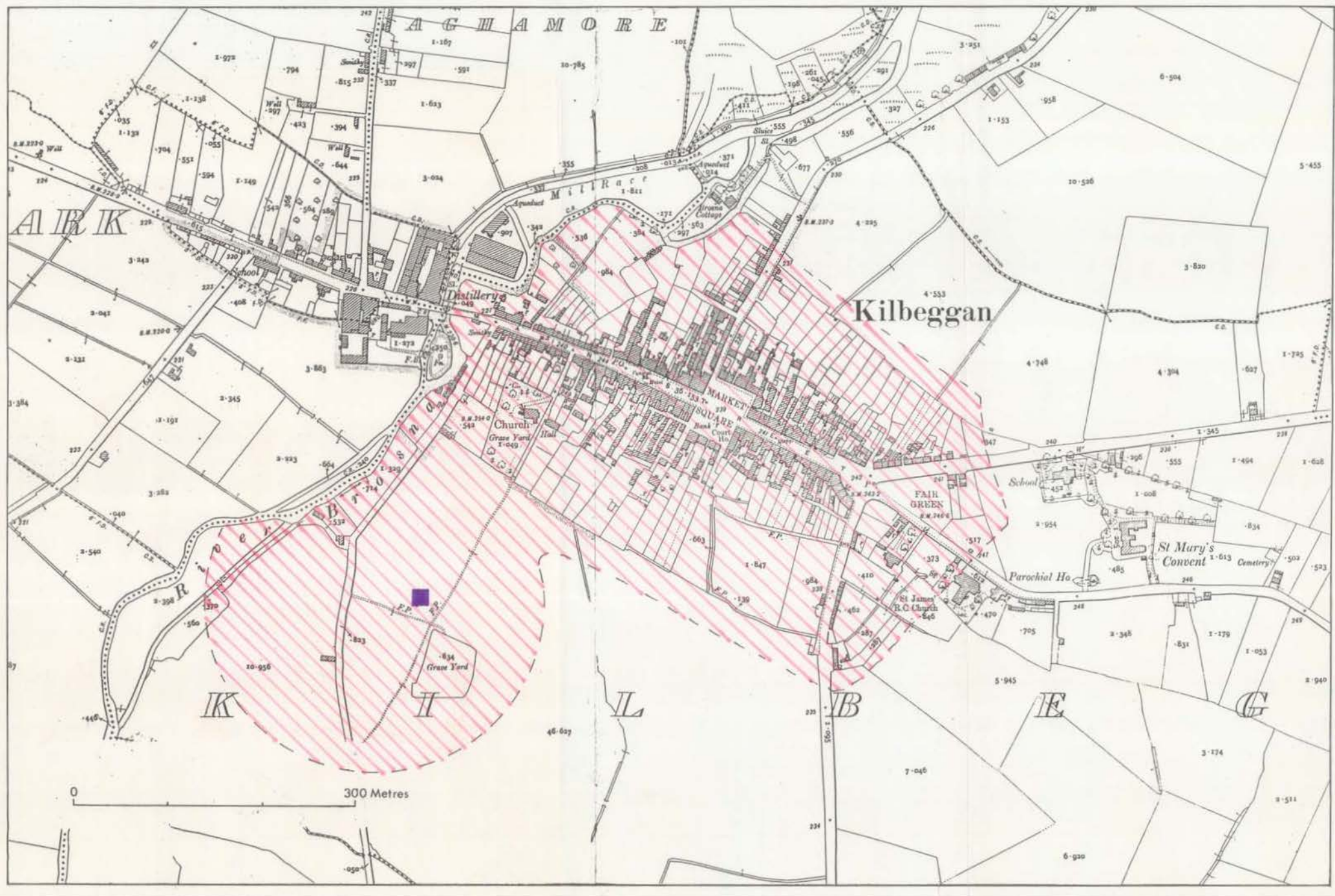
Fig. 15. Kilbeggan: Zone of archaeological potential.
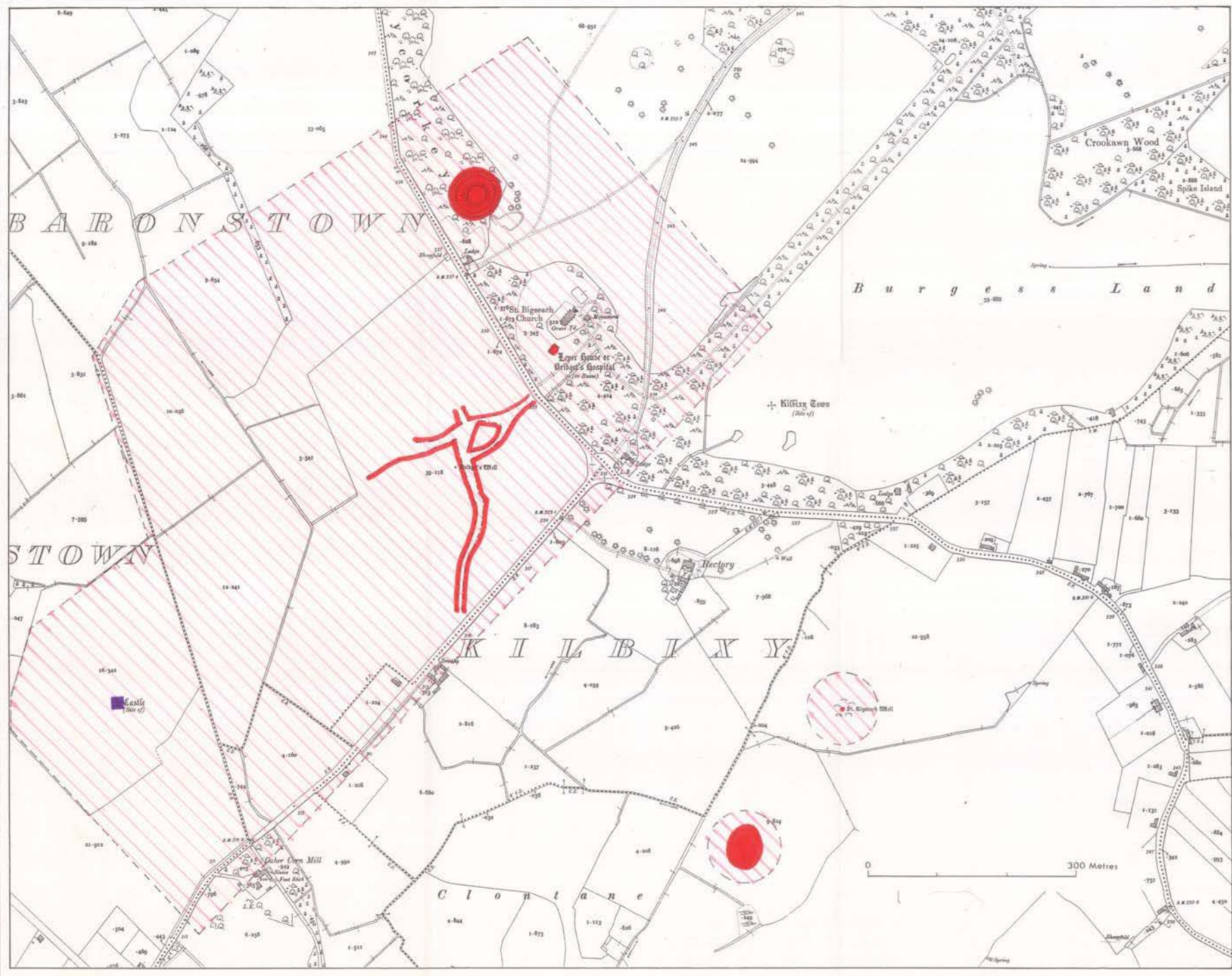
Fig. 18. Kilbixy: Zone of archaeological potential.

Fig. 17. Kilbixy: St. Brigid's Hospital: ground plan.

0   Metres   5

FOUNDATIONS ONLY
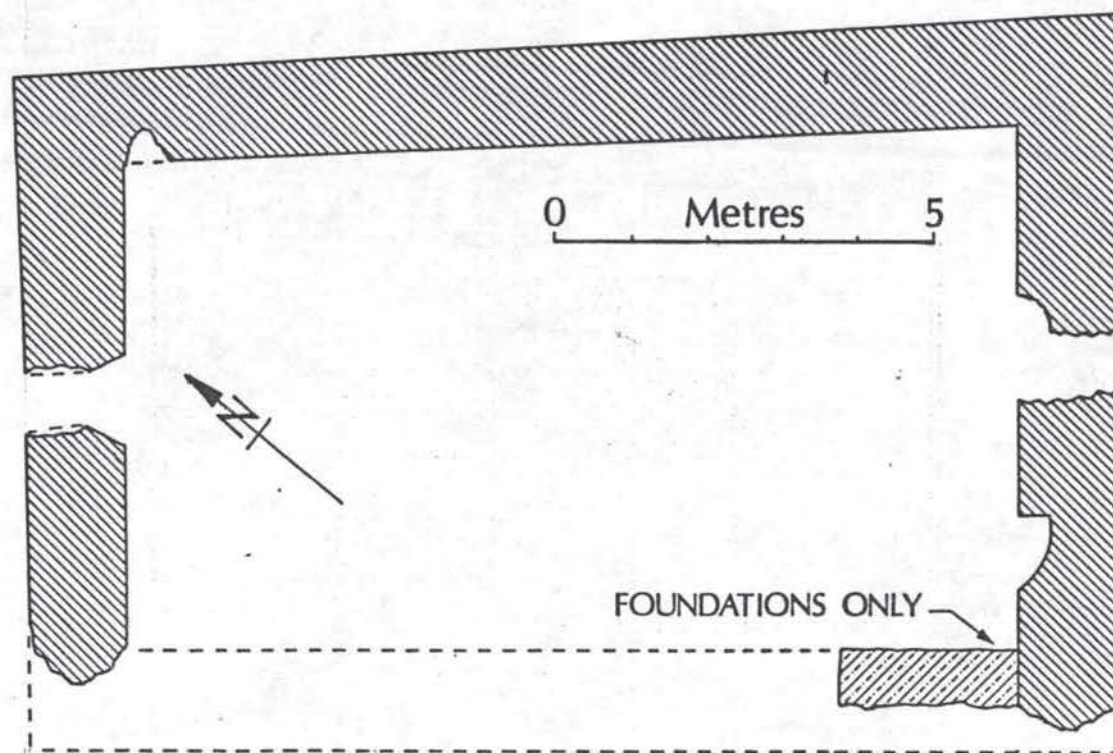
KILBIXY: ST BRIGID'S HOSPITAL: GROUND PLAN
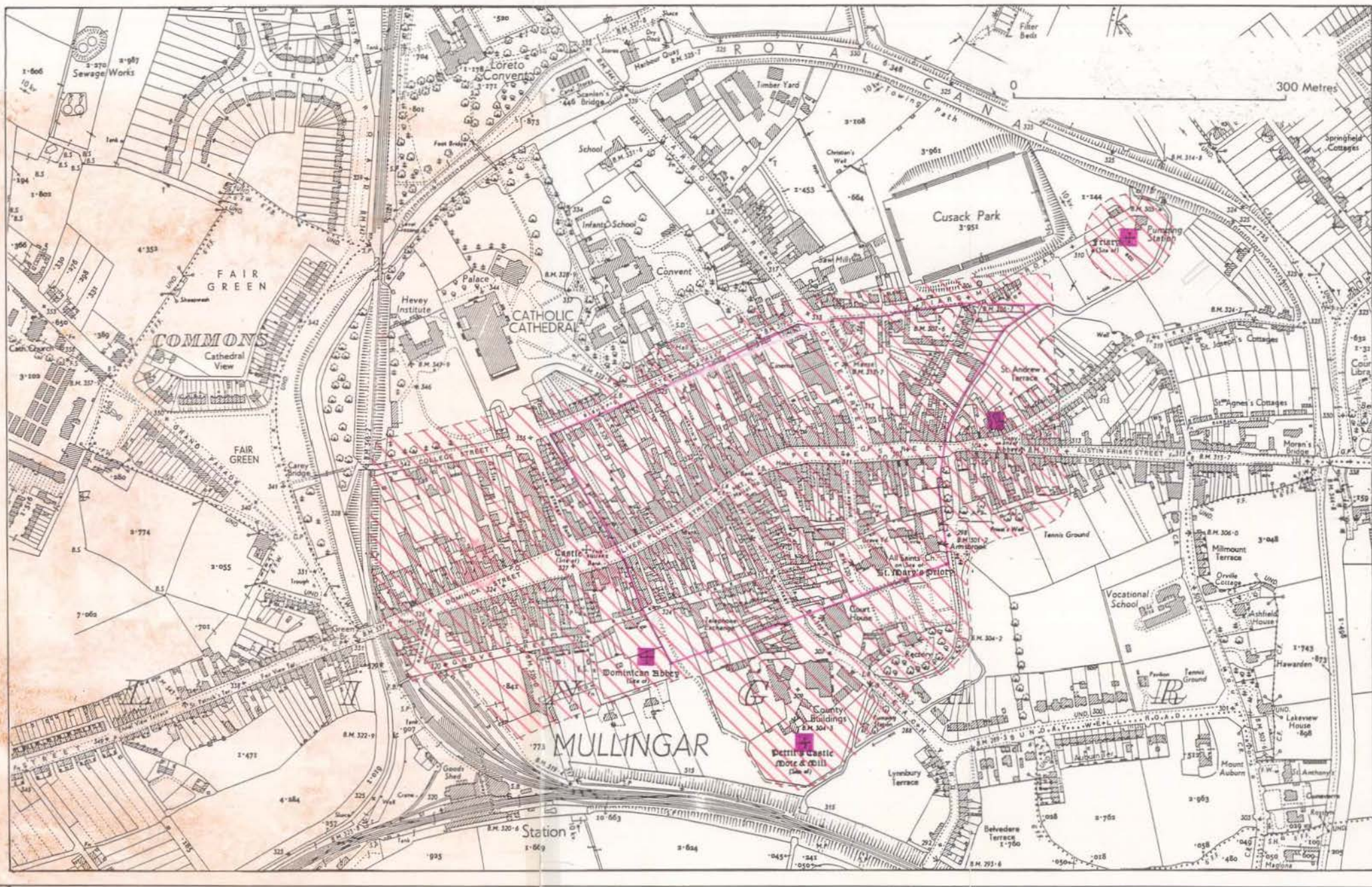
Fig 18 Mullingar: zone of archaeological potential.

MULLINGAR
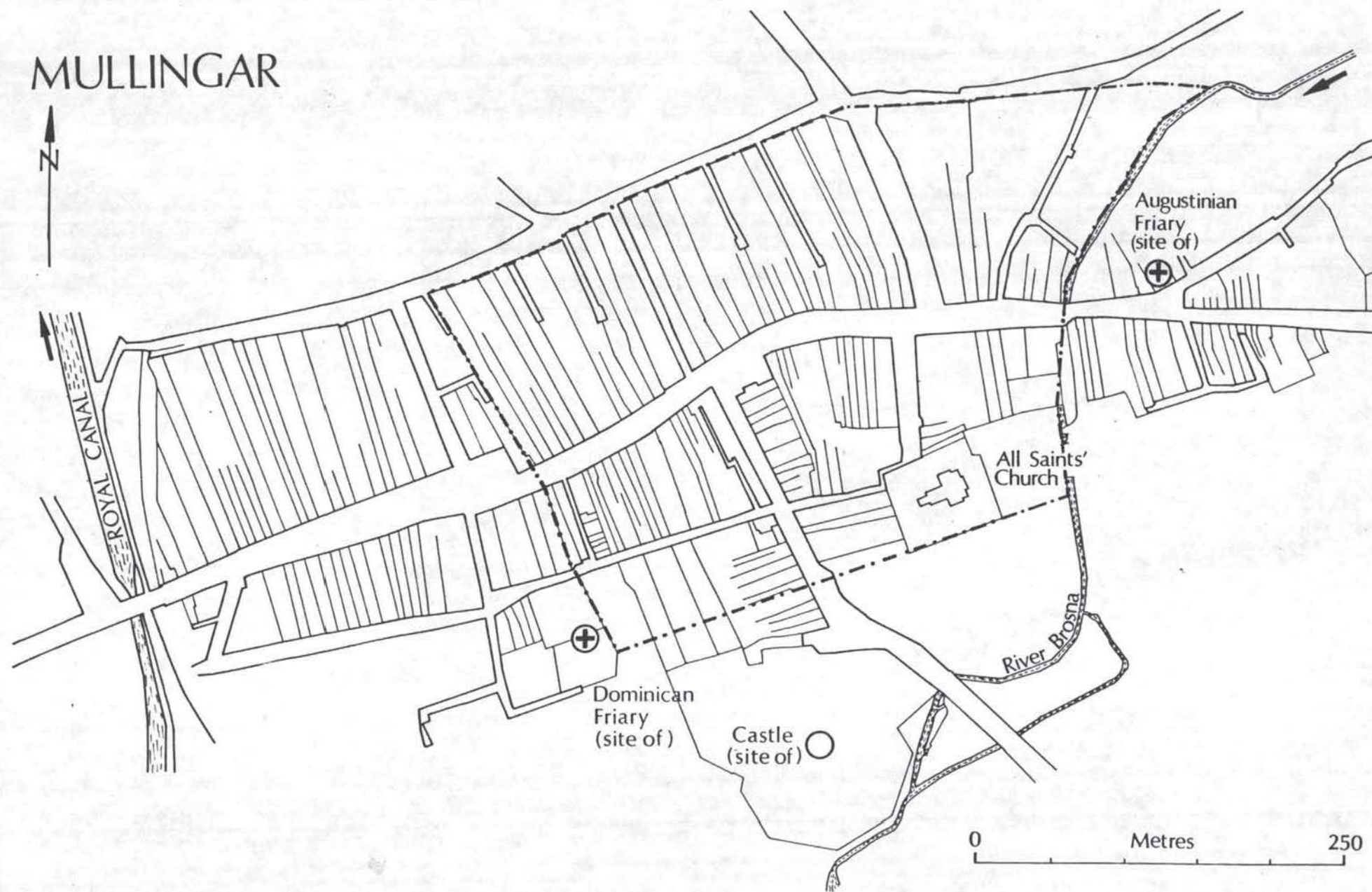
N

ROYAL CANAL

Augustinian
Friary
(site of)

All Saints'
Church

River Brosna

Dominican
Friary
(site of)

Castle
(site of)

0 .... Metres 250

Pl. 1.   Ardnurcher
        a) Motte and bailey from north
        b) Supporting pier for drawbridge, from south-east.

Pl. 2. a) Ardnurcher: St. David's Church: Peyton memorial.
b) Athlone: St. Mary's (C of I) church: Handcock
memorial.

Pl. 3. Plan of Athlone by Thomas Phillips, 1685 (NLI Ms. 3137 [32]).

Pl. 4. Athlone
    a) Court Devenish from south.
    b) Wall plaque of John Waple 1621.
    c) Bourke plaque 1639.

A Prospect of Athlone Castle

Pl. 5. A Prospect of Athlone Castle by Thomas Phillips, 1685 (NLI Ms. 3137 [33]). The view shows the Elizabethan bridge of 1566/7 with the castle as it appeared before its destruction in the siege of 1691.

Pl. 6. Athlone.
     a) The North Gate as depicted by Petrie in 1820.
       (From Cromwell's Excursions through Ireland).
     b) Stone plaque from the 1566/7 bridge.

Pl. 7. Athlone.
a) Arms of Elizabeth I from 1566/7 bridge.
b) Exhibitionist figure ("Sheela-na-gig") in Athlone
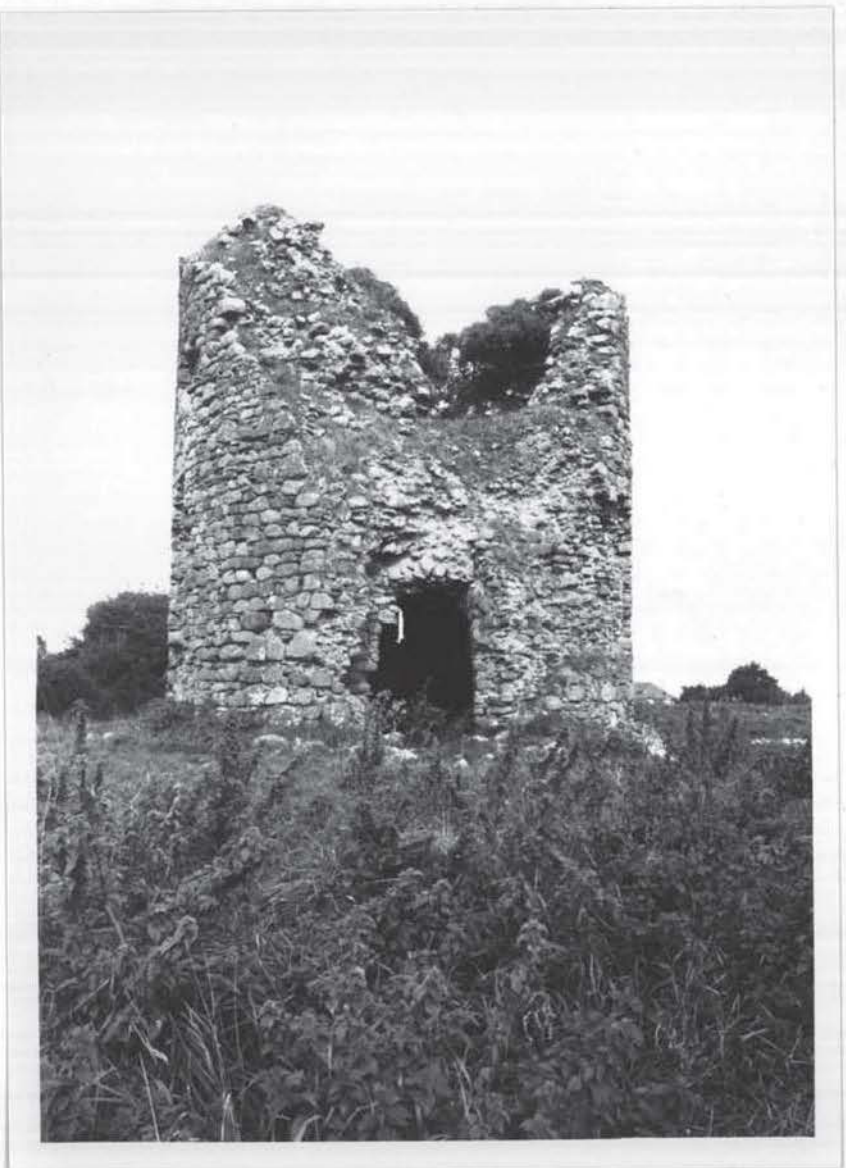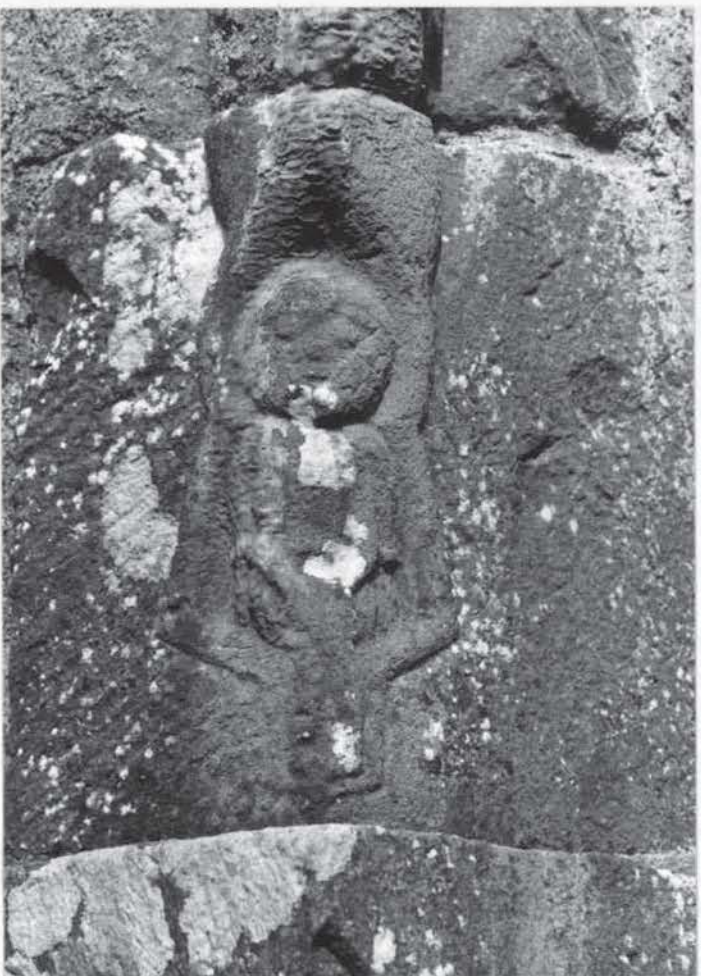   Museum. Probably from Cluniac Priory.

Pl. 8. Athlone.
a) Incised cross-slab from Franciscan Friary: OR DO
   CONLOC DO CHADAL.
b) Incised cross-slab from Franciscan Friary: AILILL
   AVE DUNCHATHO.
c) Castle: Keep from south-east.

Pl. 9. Ballymore.
a) Motte and bailey from east.
b) St. Owen's Churchyard: Chapel from east.

Pl. 10. a) Ballymore: stone tower (?castle) from south.
b) Fore: St. Fechin's church. Figure on north side
of chancel arch.

Pl. 11. Fore.
a) South Gate from north-west.
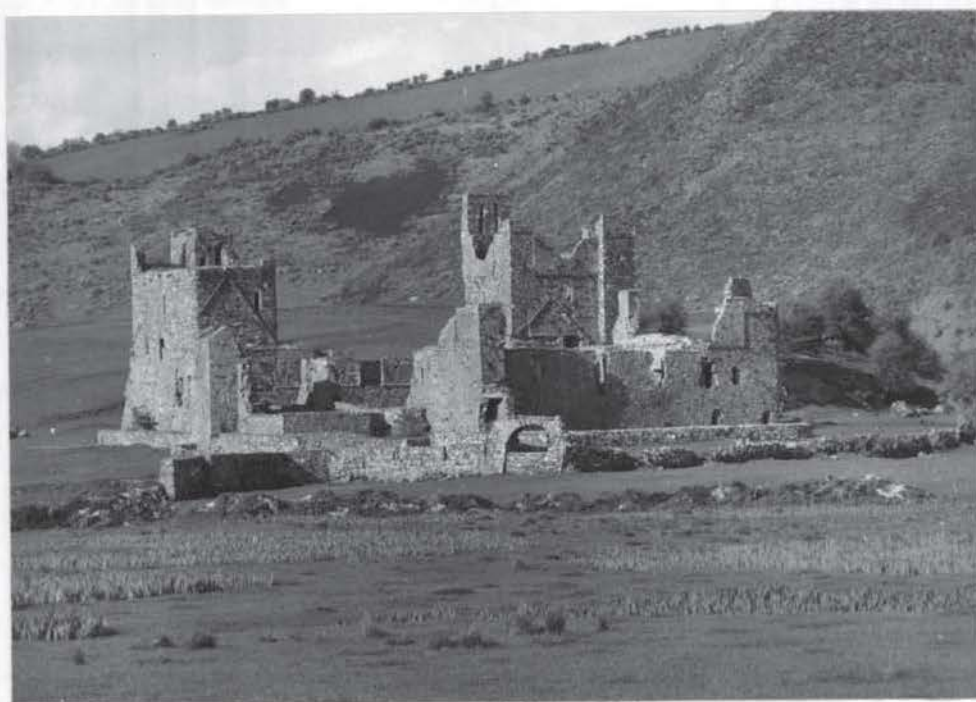b) North Gate from east prior to conservation.

Pl. 12. Fore: St. Fechin's Church.
a) General view from south-west.

b) West door.

Pl. 13. Fore.
a) Anchorite's Chapel from south-east.
b) St. Fechin's churchyard: undecorated ringed cross
c) Benedictine Priory: painted plaster above piscina
in church.

Pl. 14. Fore.
a) General view of Benedictine Priory with St.
Fechin's church in foreground
b) Benedictine Priory from south-west.

Pl. 15. Fore: Benedictine Priory.
a) Cloister arcade.
b) Cloister arcade detail.

Pl. 16. Fore.
a) St. Fechin's Church: cross head.
b) Benedictine Priory: columbarium from south

Pl. 17. Fore.
a) Disc-headed cross in Village Green.
b) Disc-headed cross near St. Fechin's school.
c) Shaft fragments of a cross near the West Gate
   (Lakill and Moortown 2).