The Urban Archaeological Survey: origins and legacy

The late Heather King said it best, when she stated in an article that the Urban Archaeological Survey (UAS) *'proved to be an invaluable tool for both archaeologists and planners'* (King 2003, 263). She wrote these words in 2003, and they have continued to hold true ever since. In the same article, she also encapsulated the *raison d'être* for the survey when it was launched in 1982: *'to advise and assist town planners in making proper provision for the pre-1700 archaeological features that survive above or lie below the surface of many Irish towns'*. And that is what it did. But as years passed, it has become so much more than just a tool for professionals of the building industry and archaeology. It became the first complete historical and archaeological survey of not only the existing cities and towns of Ireland that found their origins before 1700, but also of those that had started their existence as an Anglo-Norman borough in the 13th century, but never transitioned into modern agglomerations. In the thirteen years of the survey's existence between 1982 and 1995 a total of 240 settlements were surveyed. It therefore became an invaluable resource indeed for professionals and academics alike, a starting point for any further research on many different aspects of urban history and archaeology, from urban planning to the impact of monastic foundations, to the economic, social and cultural history of medieval and early modern Ireland.

Now, for the first time, and 30 years after it was completed, the Urban Archaeological Survey has been fully scanned and will be available online, for a new generation of planners, archaeologists, researchers and anyone with an interest in urban heritage, as well as for those, many, who have consulted them over the years and will now be able to do so from the comfort of their own computers. This brief introduction endeavours to present an overview of the development and achievements of the survey and of the men and women who have carried it out, as way of both informing those about to use this incredible resource about it, and thanking those who made it happen.

In the early decades of the archaeological survey, which had begun in 1965, the emphasis was on recording monuments located in a rural setting; urban archaeology was not within its remit and had been largely overlooked. Meanwhile, between 1974 and 1981, Dublin's Wood Quay excavations both uncovered one of the most spectacular archaeological sites ever excavated until then or since in Ireland and exposed the utter lack of protection of archaeological heritage at the time. A time when urban development was increasing exponentially across Ireland and threatened to destroy for ever evidence of the beginnings and development of Irish towns and how past inhabitants lived in them. At the same time, Wood Quay also highlighted how impractical and expensive the complete excavation of urban sites was in the context of modern planning and development. This is the context in which the Urban Archaeological Survey was born, as a solution to the various issues raised by Wood Quay, and which were sure to resurface again as more developments led to the discovery of more of Ireland's urban past. Such a survey would *'give local authorities planners sufficient information to zone archaeological sensitive areas so that development is reconciled with the need to protect urban archaeology'* (F94/1399/6, vol. 2, 100).

As early as 1977, the Irish Government approved the production of a study that would lead to a policy for urban archaeology. But Wood Quay continued to be the focus for the next following years and little advance was made, until the beginning of the next decade. In 1980 and 1981, meetings took place between the Royal Irish Academy's National Committee for Archaeology, the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the former standing committee of the National Monuments Advisory Council, that led to the publication by the RIA in July 1981 of a paper entitled 'a policy for urban archaeology'. This policy paper recommended that an initial survey of urban archaeology be carried out. Also in 1981,

the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (IAI) published its own guidelines on urban strategy, along with a short term strategy, also stressing the importance of the production of a preliminary survey.

It was recommended that the Department of Archaeology in University College Dublin, headed by Professor George Eogan, be commissioned to undertake this initial survey. Professor Eogan suggested John Bradley as the ideal candidate to lead such a survey. Ireland was of course not the only country where the questions and issues raised by an excavation such as Wood Quay were taking place at the time. The development of urban archaeology and recognition of its importance was a Europe-wide phenomenon, and Irish historians, archaeologists and geographers were involved in the debates taking place and the literature it produced. *The Comparative history of urban origins in non-Roman Europe: Ireland, Wales, Denmark, Germany, Poland and Russia from the ninth to the thirteenth century*, edited by two of Ireland's great urban historians and geographers, Howard B. Clarke and Anngret Simms, was published in 1985, and was a direct result of the impetus given to urban archaeological research by the Wood Quay saga, compiling papers from a 1978 conference as well as earlier, translated works, and newly commissioned ones. John Bradley authored one of the chapters, 'Planned Anglo-Norman towns in Ireland'. This paper, like John Bradley's work as part of the UAS, was partly based on the research he had carried out for his MA thesis, completed in 1977, on the medieval Irish town. It comes as no surprise, then, that John's name was put forward by Professor Eogan.

In May 1982, John submitted to the OPW a method and plan he was proposing to implement with the team he had assembled (F94/1399/6, 28). The official agreement between John and the OPW was signed the following month, establishing the Urban Archaeology Survey, as it was then called, as a three and a half year project, covering 93 towns. It quickly became apparent that more time would be necessary to complete the work as John had envisaged it. The UAS, under John Bradley's direction, grew to encompass much more than had been initially envisaged in the first meetings between the OPW and the RIA, becoming both an invaluable academic and practical resource for planners and archaeologists. The Survey identified zones of archaeological potential for each historic town and these zones were subsequently included in the Record of Monuments and Places published from the mid-1990s. These zones have proved invaluable in facilitating the statutory referral by Local Authorities of developments which may impact on archaeology to the National Monument Service who, on behalf of the Minister, advises on the archaeological mitigation of developments. On foot of this referral system, several decades of archaeological research, investigation and excavation has now been undertaken within urban areas providing us with detailed explanations of how towns developed and how the lives of their inhabitants progressed.

Each Survey report provides information on the medieval and early modern urban centres within a specific county. The approach and structure of the 23 reports produced by John Bradley and his team remained consistent throughout John's tenure. The urban centres included were those for which evidence existed of their status as boroughs prior to 1700 AD, regardless of their character in a modern context. All of these volumes begin with a general introduction, highlighting the complexity and importance of urban centres and urban archaeology, and giving a brief summary of how its potential first came to light. This was followed with the purpose of the Survey, outlined in 5 aims: to evaluate archaeological potential; to encourage preservation; to assess previous destruction; and to measure the archaeological effects of urban expansion. Each report then contains its own introduction, specific to the county at hand, briefly summarising the types of urban settlements it includes and the urban centres that will be presented in the report. The reports use in-text references to a bibliography that comes after the main text, and before the images (plates and maps) – only in the case of County Kildare, the size of the report meant we had to separate the figures into a separate PDF file, while the overall size of the Dublin County and City report (originally produced as four volumes) meant the two

were split into two PDF files as well. Cork City and County are also split into two files, but in this case separate reports were originally produced for the county and city, years apart.

Between May 1984 and September 1990, a total of 23 reports were published under John's direction, on 22 counties and one city (Cork). The reports themselves were structured as alphabetical inventories of the towns. Each entry begins with the geographical situation of the town, followed by a brief account of its archaeological and historical background. Then comes the catalogue of all extant monuments and of those documented but with an unknown location. This always followed the same format, starting with streets and street pattern, domestic buildings, market places and economic features; then came castles and town defences, religious buildings, and suburbs and outside of walls activity, before a summary of excavations and a list of stray archaeological finds. The report concluded with an assessment of the archaeological potential of the town, as well as recommendations. We have made the decision to redact the latter, as they are now redundant following changes in planning legislation and procedures relating to urban archaeology since the production of the reports.

After John's departure from the Survey in 1991, the survey of the remaining three counties of Kilkenny and Tipperary (North and South ridings) was entrusted to Jean Farrelly, while County Cork's report was compiled by Suzanne Zajac. This final phase of the survey was marked by a change in direction and approach, the major difference being that only towns that had remained urban centres in a modern context, and contained known or suspected pre-1700 archaeological sites were included. Previously as was noted, even deserted settlements had been included, as long as they were identified as boroughs in sources. In another divergence from the original approach, modern towns and villages which have medieval monuments but no record of borough status where also included. Those changes were accompanied by a slight change in the name of the survey also, from 'Urban Archaeology Survey' to 'Urban Archaeological Survey'.

The format adopted differed as well, and it itself evolved from the production of the Kilkenny report in 1993, to those of County Tipperary in 1993-1994 and Cork in 1995. There is a short introduction to the three volumes, which outlines the approach and the format of the reports. Overall the choice was made to lean into the inventory style, instead of the more narrative approach of the first 23 reports; these more recent reports also benefitted from the progress of technology, as they were typed and formatted on more advanced computers, improving their readability. The historical background is presented as a chronology, and is not included in the Cork volume. The archaeological inventory follows, with each entry containing the type of site, the location in the town, a brief historical summary where possible, and a brief description of surviving remains, but no mention of excavations or stray finds. A list of sources is included in each entry instead of only in the general bibliography as previously (but not in the Cork volume). The inventory of towns is followed by one recommendation section (also redacted) for the whole county at the end of the report (and at the beginning for Cork), rather than for each town as was the case previously. Maps for the three reports were published in a separate volume, but within the same PDF for the online version, while black and white and colour plates and figures were included within the text of the reports rather than at the end. It is also important to note that hard-copy paper files where created for each of the monuments included in the Kilkenny and Tipperary reports, and these include photographs taken during fieldwork for the Urban Survey as well as monument reports and copies of relevant published sources. These are stored in the National Monuments Archive in Swords.

For the final report, that of Cork County, the criteria for inclusion was presented slightly differently, as being all pre-1700 urban settlements with a current Urban District Council; and locational information for each town was placed at the beginning of the entry, followed by the list of monuments within the inventory and the corresponding pages in the map volume. For each monument within the

town, an individual OS map number, designation, townland, National Grid, SMR (Sites and Monuments Record) number and date of visit was given, all new features.

The 15 years of the survey were punctuated by events such as the formal presentation of the Cork City report to Joe Bermingham, then Minister of State at the Department of Finance, taking place in October 1985 at the Cork Public Museum, and the launch of the Dublin report in Dublin Castle, in June 1988 by the then Minister of State at the Department of Finance, Noel Treacy. These may have ensured the Survey found a place in the public's mind, but the majority of its work was carried out without fanfare, by a group of men and women dedicated to the task at hand, who tirelessly travelled across the 26 counties to survey and record monuments, drew plans and maps, and conducted historical research.

Many of those involved – for a few weeks, months or years – went on to make their own mark in the world of archaeology, not least the late Heather King, who was principal archaeologist on the project from its beginning until 1991; not unlike John Bradley, Heather was remembered upon her passing as 'a great scholar and a remarkable archaeological excavator who mentored many young archaeologists'. Almost all UAS staff continued to work in archaeology, in the public and the private sectors: Noel Dunne (who joined in December 1985 as a team lead for the Connacht survey), recently retired from Transport Infrastructure Ireland; Andy Halpin, a co-editor on a number of reports, now an archaeologist in the private sector; Niall Brady (Co-Director of ADCO, archaeological consultancy in Marine and Underwater Archaeology); Conor Newman (now a senior lecturer in NUIG); Ben Murtagh (now working as an archaeological and historic building consultant); Leo Morahan (Director of fieldwork with the Achill Archaeological Field School); Jim Higgins (Heritage Officer for Galway City), or even Valerie Keeley, employed for a short time in 1983, who that same year established the archaeological consultancy firm that still bears her name. Ed Bourke, now head of the National Monuments Service paper and photographic archives unit, began in the UAS as a draughtsperson, before moving on to becoming a survey assistant. Other draughtspersons who continued on from Ed were Una Lee, Tanya O'Sullivan (now an archaeologist and independent researcher, based in Northern Ireland), John Wallace, and Conor McDermott (now Laboratory And Field Officer with the UCD School of Archaeology). Current colleagues from the National Monuments Service also include archaeologists Jean Farrelly, who led part of the second phase of the UAS (now with the Archaeological Survey of Ireland), and Hugh Carey, who worked with Jean on the North Tipperary survey. Also working with Jean were Elizabeth FitzPatrick (retired Professor of Archaeology in NUIG) on South Tipperary, and Barry O'Reilly (now Architectural Conservation Advisor in the Built Heritage Section, DHLGH) and Amanda Loughran (archaeologist) on County Kilkenny. Finally, County Cork, as previously mentioned, was compiled by Suzanne Zajac, now an archaeologist with Mayo County Council, John Cronin (founder and director of conservation, heritage and archaeology company John Cronin & Associates) and Jacinta Kiely (archaeologist and partner in Eachtra Archaeological Projects).

These are the names that could be gleaned from our archival material and the reports themselves; there may well be more we missed, to whom we heartily apologise if they read these words. All those involved, named and unnamed, should be sincerely thanked for their participation to this iconic project – we are grateful to all of you.

Early on in the Survey's time, John Bradley wished to see the reports published, and a publication committee was put together and met throughout 1988, comprised of Roger Stalley, Pat Wallace, Ann Lynch and David Sweetman. Unfortunately, time and financial constraints meant that it never happened. However, a copy of each county report was sent to the relevant county council offices and a selection of public libraries, available to all those interested; and John Bradley and other members of the Survey have also published their findings in a number of articles and monographs over the years

during and since the Survey took place; a few of which we have included in the bibliography following this introduction.

In total reports were produced for the 26 counties, with separate reports for Dublin City, Cork City, and Limerick City. A preliminary report was also published for Dublin City, which is included in the collection. Below is a list of the 30 separate PDFs available on the NMS website. We hope you enjoy this wonderful resource.

- County Carlow Urban Archaeology Survey (1990)
- County Cavan Urban Archaeology Survey (1990)
- County Clare Urban Archaeology Survey (1990)
- Cork City Urban Archaeology Survey (1988)
- County Cork Urban Archaeological Survey (1995)
- County Donegal Urban Archaeology Survey (1989)
- County Dublin Urban Archaeology Survey (1988)
- Dublin City Urban Archaeology Survey Preliminary Report (1986)
- Dublin City Urban Archaeology Survey (1988)
- County Galway Urban Archaeology Survey (1990)
- County Kerry Urban Archaeology Survey (1987)
- County Kildare Urban Archaeology Survey, text (1986)
- County Kildare Urban Archaeology Survey, figures (1986)
- County Kilkenny Urban Archaeological Survey (1993)
- County Laois Urban Archaeology Survey (1986)
- County Leitrim Urban Archaeology Survey (1988)
- County Limerick and Limerick City Urban Archaeology Survey (1989)
- County Longford Urban Archaeology Survey (1985)
- County Louth Urban Archaeology Survey (1985)
- County Mayo Urban Archaeology Survey (1989)
- County Meath Urban Archaeology Survey (1985)
- County Monaghan Urban Archaeology Survey (1989)
- County Offaly Urban Archaeology Survey (1986)
- County Roscommon Urban Archaeology Survey (1988)
- County Sligo Urban Archaeology Survey (1987)
- County Tipperary North & South Urban Archaeological Survey (1993-1994)
- County Waterford and City Urban Archaeology Survey (1989)
- County Westmeath Urban Archaeology Survey (1985)
- County Wexford Urban Archaeology Survey (1990)
- County Wicklow Urban Archaeology Survey (1989)

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