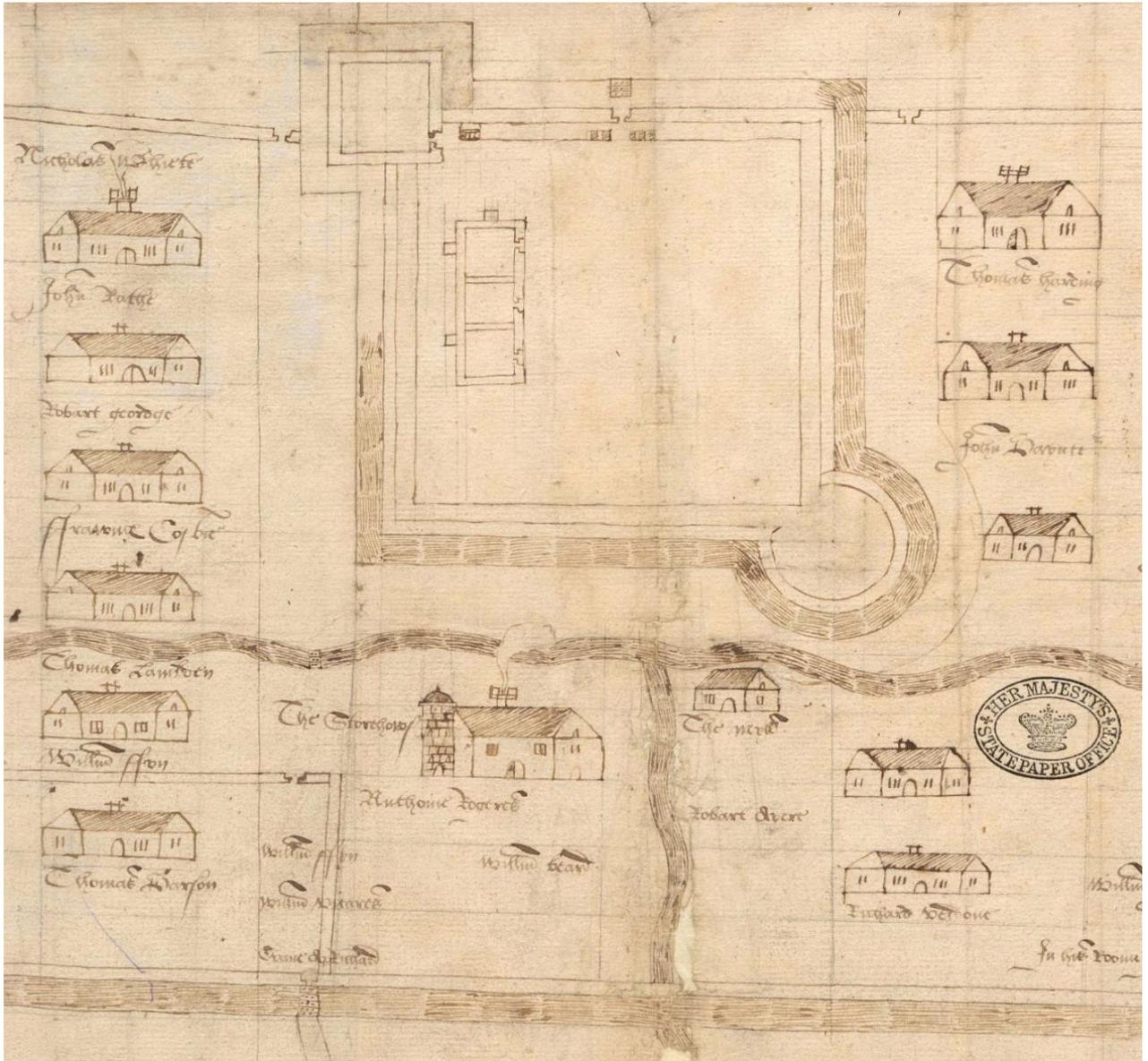


**Conservation Plan
(Phase Two)
for
FORT PROTECTOR
Portlaoise, Co Laois**



prepared for
Laois Heritage Society



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Steering group:

Michael Parsons, Laois Heritage Society
Teddy Fennelly, Laois Heritage Society
Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer, Laois County Council

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Figure 1: Odum's Mills, c. 1980
with earlier house and Fort in background (www.portlaoisepictures.com, courtesy of Mary Phelan)

1.0 Introduction

1.1.1 Outline Description

The Fort Protector is a large rectangular fortress, measuring 105m x 127m externally, which is embedded in the urban fabric of the town of Portlaoise. Commenced in 1547-48 as part of the suppression of the Gaelic Irish territories of the O'More and O'Connor clans, the plantation of Laois and Offaly followed shortly thereafter and was formalised in the creation of King's County and Queen's County in 1556. The Fort marks the foundation of the town of Portlaoise, which began as a fortified enclosure around its walls. Its significance is complemented by nearby sites relating to the genesis of the town: the churchyard and ruin of Old St Peter's Church to the west; a stone tower within the nineteenth century Presentation Convent to the east; the Triogue River and the Ridge Graveyard further east.

Today the interior of the Fort is subdivided into separate properties. Although 75% of the enclosing wall survives in some form above ground, the Fort remains widely unknown to the townspeople and to visitors, and its immense heritage significance is not appreciated.

1.1.2 Project Team

Phase II of the Plan has been prepared by conservation architect Richard McLoughlin of Lotts Architecture. Archaeologist Dr Eoin Sullivan contributed Section 5, and Subsection 6.4, relating to the archaeology of the site and, in addition, undertook the research in the National Library of Ireland and in the National Archives of Ireland which is interpreted in Subsections 2.2.4 and 2.2.5 and transcribed in the Appendix.

The design team have reported to a steering committee consisting of Teddy Fennelly and Michael Parsons of the Laois Heritage Society, and Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer of Laois County Council.

Members of the Laois Heritage Society also undertook primary research in the Cosby Papers and the Registry of Deeds, which is transcribed in the Appendix and interpreted in Subsections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3.

1.1.3 The Conservation Plan

This document is the second phase of a Conservation Plan, the aim of which is to create a policy framework to guide all future decisions on the development of the Fort to enable its eventual restoration as a heritage site. It is felt that a properly presented Fort site would promote the regeneration of the town centre and could become an important place for the interpretation of the history of the Midlands.

The Conservation Plan is being developed following the methodology devised by the late James Semple Kerr (1932-2014) and included in the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance.

Phase I of the Conservation Plan was completed in 2015. It involved:

1. An historical chronology, drawn from secondary sources, charting the context in which the Fort was built, the hundred years of its existence as a military stronghold, and its eventual decline into the background of the town.

2. An analysis of maps and images as primary sources for the changing form of the Fort over the centuries.
3. A site by site description of the fabric which survives today, covering 14 properties inside the wall and 10 around its perimeter, and including initial consultation with property owners.
4. A preliminary interpretation of the features identified in the documentary analysis and physical survey.
5. A preliminary assessment of significance.

Phase I is published at <http://www.laois.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015-12-02-Fort-Protector-Conservation-Plan-Phase-I-96dpi.pdf>.

Phase II of the Conservation Plan is a further development of this work to gain a better understanding of the Fort and to analyse the issues affecting its survival. This has included:

- A review of primary historical sources to gain more reliable understanding of the foundation and history of the Fort.
- An archaeological assessment, conducted by Dr Eoin Sullivan
- An electronic laser survey carried out by Apex Surveys, with funding from Laois County Council. This will be synchronised with a wider drone survey of the town prepared by Real Sim Ltd as part of a concurrent project to develop a Public Realm Strategy for the town centre.
- Formulation of a Statement of Significance
- Analysis of issues which threaten the significance of the Fort, including an exploration of some ideas for its future development.

A third Phase is intended for 2017 which will develop a set of management policies which eliminate or mitigate threats, and which bring about the informed conservation of all aspects of significance, especially where these may be competing interests.

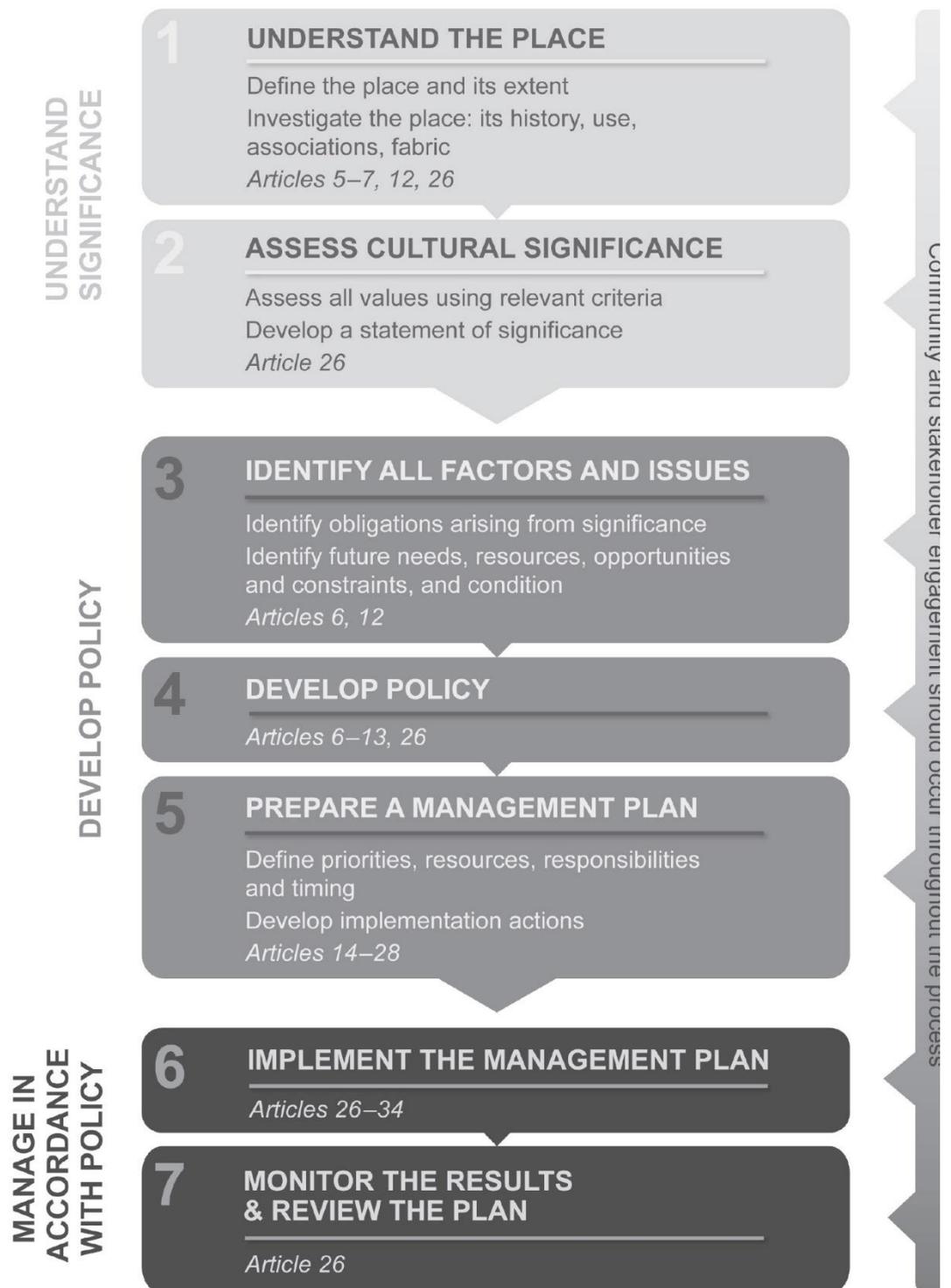


Figure 2: Diagram showing Conservation Plan methodology
(Source: Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, updated 2013)

PART I UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

2.0 Further Historical and Archaeological Research

2.1 Summary History of The Fort

In the first phase of the project an initial review was made of secondary sources in academic theses, published books and articles. In addition, a detailed analysis was made of historic maps from the Tudor period up to the most recent Ordnance Survey maps.

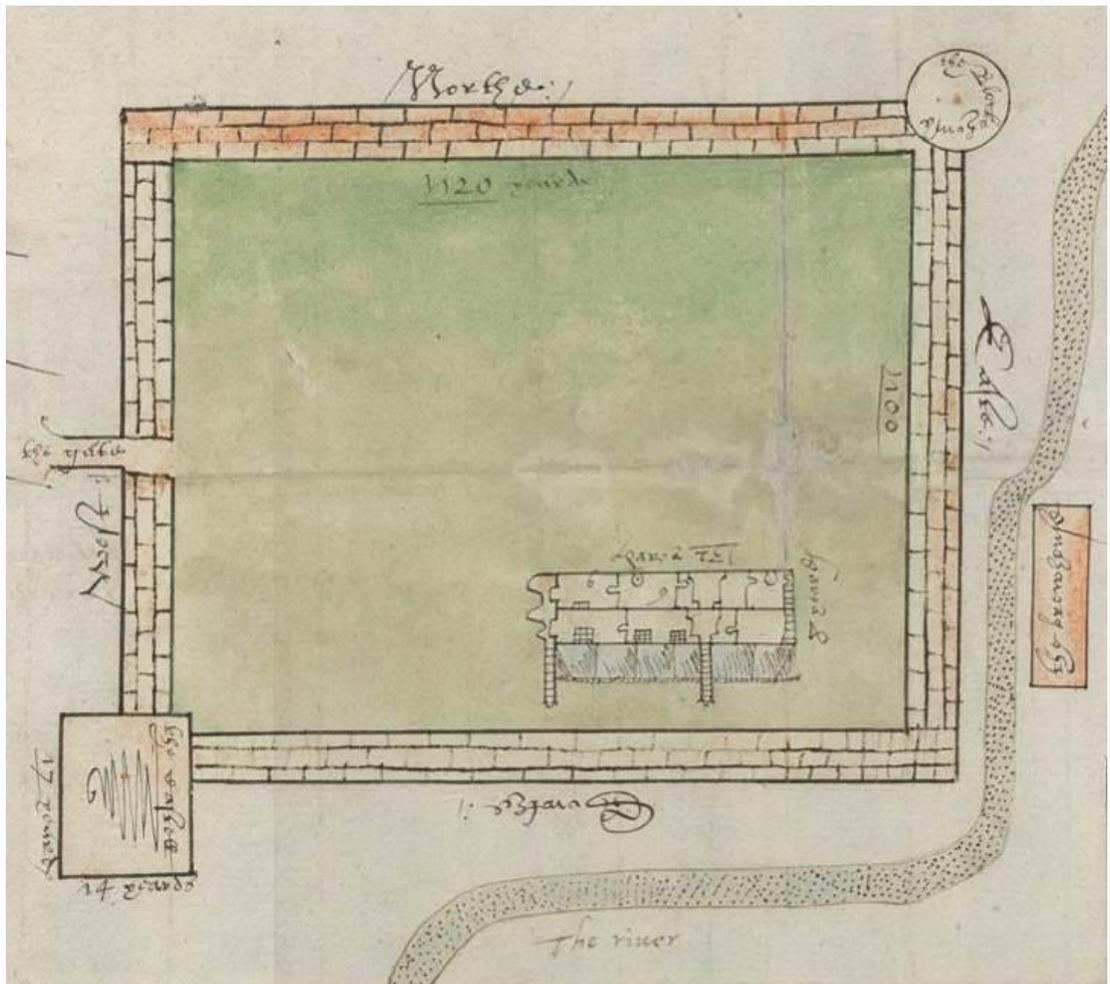


Figure 3 : 'Plot of the Forte of Maribrough', c. 1560

Map showing the castle on the south-west corner and the timber framed Barracks building inside the Fort (Hardiman Atlas, TCD ref. 1209/10)

The Fort Protector was built in 1548 by Francis Bryan, Marshall of Ireland, to enforce control over the O'More territories of Laois following the defeat the previous year of Giolla-Padraig O'More and his ally in Offaly, Brian O'Connor-Faly, by Sir William Brabazon. The Fort was built on the site known to the Irish as 'Campa' and housed a garrison sent from Dublin to secure the area under Sir Edward Bellingham, the King's Lord Deputy from 1548–1549.

A sister fort, called Fort Governor, was built at the former O'Connor stronghold at Daingean, and these new outposts supported garrisons already established at Athlone Castle and Nenagh, as well as the Fort of Leighlinbridge, built in 1546 to

guard the eastern bank of the River Barrow on the site of a dissolved monastery. At this time, Bellingham was also concerned with the defence of the coast against invasions from Scotland or France, and had instructed defences be erected at Galway, Kinsale and Waterford.

The building of the forts was part of a new push, instigated under Henry VIII, to impose English rule and law over the whole of Ireland, hitherto confined to the Pale and the confiscated territory of Kildare. The fort was named in honour of Edward Seymour (1500–1552), first Duke of Somerset, who briefly ruled as Regent of England during the minority of his nephew Edward VI, holding the titles ‘Lord Protector of the Realm’ and ‘Governor of the King's Person’.

As early as 1552 it was proposed that market towns be established at both forts. A first attempt in 1551 at a plantation of Laois and Offaly was unsuccessful, but in 1556, during the joint reign of Mary I and her Spanish consort Phillip, the territories were formally confiscated and two new counties were created, named Queen's County and King's County. The forts and their associated settlements were renamed Maryborough and Philipstown.

Early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth the new settlers came under attack from rebellious O'Mores and the fort was besieged. In 1560 both forts were ‘rebuilt and strengthened’ by Lord Deputy Henry Radclyffe, Earl of Sussex, and ‘passes were cut and new highways opened’. Francis Cosbie was made constable of the fort in 1565, and the nascent town thrived for a decade, being granted a market in 1567, borough status in 1569, and a corporation in 1570.

In the 1570s the Irish were again resurgent against Lord Deputy Sir Henry Sidney, but in 1577 virtually all of the Gaelic leaders of Laois and Offaly, including over 180 members of the O'More clan, were killed at a feast at Mullaghmast, Co Kildare, and the O'More leader Ruairí Óg was subsequently defeated and killed. In 1580, during the Desmond Rebellion of 1579–1583, the Annals of the Four Masters record that ‘Port Laoighse’ was plundered by John, son of the earl of Desmond, a party of its people killed, and armour, arms, horses and other property carried away.

The Nine Years' War (1594- 1603) was a turbulent time for the settlement and the town was burnt twice, in 1597 and 1598, by Owny McRory O'More and, in 1599, the famous Earl of Essex was ambushed at the nearby ‘Pass of the Plumes’ after having delivered provisions to the beleaguered Fort. The native Irish cause of regaining their lands were effectively ended by the defeat at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601, but the final pacification of the territories in Laois did not come until 1607, when the remaining leaders of the O'Mores and other families collectively known as the ‘seven septes of Laois’, the Kellys, Dowlings, Lalors, Dorans, Devoys and McEvoys, were granted lands in Co Kerry and transplanted.

In 1635, the Corporation of Maryborough was granted two fairs by Charles I. But four decades of peace were soon to end, and a decade of warfare began with the Rebellion of 1641, a consequence of the failure to assimilate the native Irish elite in the political settlement following the Elizabethan conquest and the plantations. Sir Rory O'More (c. 1600-1655), a nephew of Ruairí Óg was one of the four principal organisers of the rebellion. In the ensuing Irish Confederate Wars, Maryborough was taken by Owen Roe O'Neill and the Fort was surrendered by its Governor Sir William Gilbert to Sir Phelim O'Neill, the Confederate leader. It was held by the Confederates

from 1646 until retaken for the King in 1648 by Lord Castlehaven. In March 1649, following the execution of Charles I, the English Parliament appointed Oliver Cromwell to lead an invasion of Ireland in order to crush all resistance to the new English Commonwealth and to avenge the alleged massacres of Protestant settlers in 1641-42.

After 100 years as a military fortification the fort was taken by Cromwell's generals Hewson and Reynolds in 1650 and disabled as a military fortress. The Castle, which stood at the southwest corner, appears to have been destroyed at this time, leaving the remainder of the perimeter wall in place. A letter of 1685 from Lord Justice Boyle to the Earl of Granard, related that the fort was in the hands of 'great fanatics' and 'wholly neglected and almost uninhabited', also stating that 'the timber of the King's house that was therein carried away and the house demolished' (Hist. Mss. Comm Report 2, App. 1874, p.212; see transcript in Appendix 2). This may be a reference to a timber-framed barrack building shown on Tudor maps of the fort which may have survived the destruction by Cromwell's forces.

The castle ruins were recorded in a drawing by antiquarian Francis Grose in 1791, and were not finally cleared away until 1835. The Ordnance Survey Letters of John O'Donovan record that this was done "by Mr Graves" and that that the place where the castle stood was "about 200 feet to the rear of Mr Coleman's house in the town". (Letter of 6 December 1838 as transcribed in M. Herity (ed), Ordnance Survey Letters Laois, Dublin 2008))



Figure 4: Remains of the fort at Maryborough, pen and ink wash drawing, 1792 (NLI). An engraving of this drawing by J. Newton was published in 1793 in Volume II of "The Antiquities of Ireland" by Francis Grose.

A small military presence remained in the Fort, housed in the 'Old Barracks' on Tower Hill, until the 'New Barracks' (now the Garda Station) were built in 1809, taking the characteristic form of a Napoleonic-era fort with star-shaped corner bastions.

2.2 Preliminary Analysis of Primary Sources

A detailed analysis of primary cartographic sources was made in Phase I of the Conservation Plan. Review of written documentary sources was limited to secondary sources, and therefore an initial analysis of primary non-cartographic materials has now been undertaken. This analysis is not exhaustive but provides some more detailed insight into the history of the site and contributes to the understanding of its surviving fabric and archaeology.

2.2.1 Irish State Papers in UK National Archives, Kew

These provide primary sources for the establishment of the Fort and for the progress of the Tudor conquest of Ireland (to follow in Phase III).

2.2.2 Cosby papers

Mr Adrian Cosby of Stradbally Hall kindly allowed access to Cosby family records to Laois Heritage Officer Catherine Casey and Laois Heritage Society Chair, Michael Parsons.



Figure 5: Adrian Cosby and Michael Parsons viewing the Cosby Papers in Stradbally Hall

References contained in the in the Catalogue of the Cosby Papers by Gráinne Doran, then Archivist with Laois County Council, for the period 1556 to 1588 were viewed. These consisted of eighteenth-century transcriptions of original documents which are now lost. The following documents related to the Fort:

- Eighteenth-century transcript of a grant of Phillip and Mary, dated 10 September 1556, signed by William Deane, Deputy Clerk and Keeper of the Rolls, commissioning Frances Cosby gentleman as General of the Kerne

- Eighteenth-century transcript of letter of 14 July 1558 written on behalf of Queen Mary I to the Earl of Sussex, signed by William Deane, Deputy Clerk and Keeper of the Rolls, confirming appointment of Frauncys Cosby as general of the kerne.
- Eighteenth-century transcript of a grant of Queen Elizabeth in Latin, dated to the first year of her reign (1558) and signed by William Deane, Deputy Clerk and Keeper of the Rolls, to general Frauncys Cosby to be Sheriff of Kil[dare?]
- Eighteenth-century transcript of a grant of Queen Elizabeth in Latin, dated to the first year of her reign (1558) and signed by William Deane, Deputy Clerk and Keeper of the Rolls, empowering General Frauncys Cosbye to exercise Martial Law.
- Eighteenth-century transcript of a grant to Francis Cosbie, dated the last day of February in the fifth year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1563), of the religious house of Stradbally. The grant also makes reference (in Latin) to the captainship ? of the 'Castle of Maryborrow'.

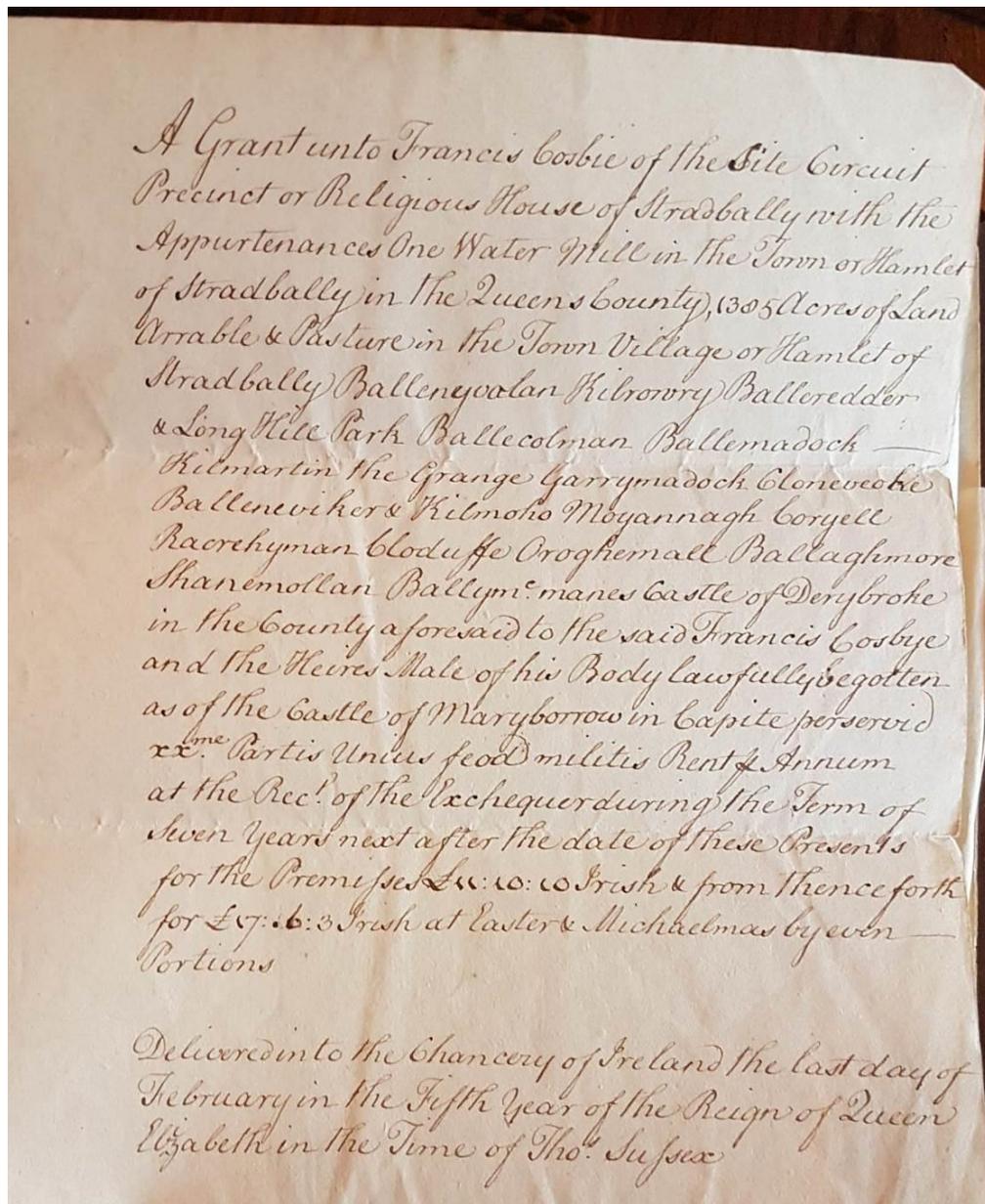


Figure 6: Eighteenth-century transcript of a grant of the monastery of Stradbally to Francis Cosbie, dated 1563.

2.2.3 Registry of Deeds

Research was conducted in the Registry of Deeds in Henrietta Street, Dublin, by Teddy Fennelly, Jackie Hyland and Michael Parsons of the Laois Heritage Society. The Registry of Deeds was established in 1707 to facilitate the registration of Deeds of Transfer of ownership or interest in properties. Some leases are also recorded, but original deeds are not held.

The aim of the research was to gain better insight into the history of the Fort after its decline and subdivision into individual lots, including a search for evidence of the form and position of the former Castle, known to have been the property of the Graves family at the time of its destruction.

In addition, it was hoped to clarify a suggestion, derived from analysis of a small town plan contained in Parnell estate maps of 1721, that the wedge-shaped area to the south of the Fort wall may have remained as an open market place until 1721, before being subdivided to form the present building plots on Main Street, extending from the corner of Railway Street to the 'Lower Square' and around into Church Avenue.



Figure 7: Enlarged extract from Parnell Estate map of 1721 showing a large open market place to the south of the Fort. Also shown are the Old Barracks and (possibly) the Castle (National Library of Ireland). Numbers refer to a list (possibly) of leaseholders and occupiers, which is partially illegible: 1) Counsellor Dixon's? held by? 2) Co Dixon's? 3) Ditto by Coun. Evans; 4) Ditto by Col. Wallers; 5) Ditto by the Clerk of the Church; 6) Col. Wallers by Mr Dodridge; 7) Ditto by Mr Foster; 8) Counsellor Evans by Doctor Walker.

The Laois Heritage Society members transcribed deed memorials and leases which contained reference to the Main Street and specifically the Fort, Castle or Barracks. The transcribed texts are reproduced in Appendix 1.

The following records appear to make reference to the fort, or might be associated with it through the mention of the Graves family:

- 1711: Lease from St Leger Gilbert, Kilminchy to Edward Knight of Maryborough, saddler: Three tenements, one in possession of Knight or his undertenants, one other in possession of Elizabeth Massey, widow, and one other in possession of

Edward Cruse, Butcher, nearing and bounding to the Main Street in Maryborough on the south, to the tenement now in possession of Mr Gray to the west, to the fort wall on the north and to a waste tenement formerly belonging to Samuel Wright on the east.

Reference to the same properties in 1716: from Gilbert St Leger of Kilminchy, to Bartholomew Senior; relating to “tenements on Market Street of Maryborough held by Edward Knight, Charles Bowen, Widow Paterson and Sidney Thompson – the first two tenements being some time ago demolished by fire, the other two in possession of John Daly as far as Bawn Wall”. The ‘bawn wall’ must refer to the fort wall, which suggests that the Parnell map is inaccurate as at least two properties extended up to its wall.

- 1714: George Thornton of City of Dublin and John Kelly, Clonreher; A “Great Stone House formerly used as an Inn”, subsequently leased in 1718 to Edward Dodsworth.
- Deed of 1717 relating to the same property: Edward Dodsworth, Maryborough and Rev William Percivall, Dean of Emly and Rev Benjamin Hawkshaw, City of Dublin. Lands in Antrim, Mill Quarter of Doone in Barony of Maryborough demised to Ed. Dodsworth by Alex Fitzgerald for 18 years from 1712. Also house backside and gardens in town of Maryborough held by said Edward by lease from John Kelly, Clonreher.
- 1729: From Barry Love of Maryborough and Murtagh Foley also of Maryborough; “Tenement of Richard Robinson formerly owned by Henry Knight, bounded on the north by the road to Church Street and on the south facing Thomas Byrne’s house – his wife Elizabeth Foley and Mr Graves, son of Robert Graves”.

References to the ‘bawn wall’ indicate that the depiction on the Parnell estate map of 1721 of a large market place extending to the fort wall is inaccurate, as these references show that at least two properties were located on the northern side of the Main Street.

The Ordnance Survey Letters record that the Graves family owned the site of the Castle when its ruined remains were eventually cleared away by them in 1835, and their name is recorded in current land registry maps for sites at the corner of Main Street and Railway Street. It is probable (though by no means not certain) that the sites recorded in the Registry of Deeds with reference to the Graves name were in this location also.

2.2.4 Materials held in the National Archives, Dublin

The preliminary scoping assessment of the National Archives of Ireland in Bishop Street, Dublin, consisted of consultation of Richard Hayes Catalogue, which records the primary source materials under four main categories. For this preliminary research, the main focus was upon ‘Places’.

This search uncovered a will of 1803 of a Mr Bartholomew William Graves, bequeathing to his son Henry Graves ‘that part of my holding that was formerly a barrack in the town of Maryborough and now divided into tenements, which I hold by virtue of a lease from Sir Henry Parnell Baronet invaluable forever’.

The Castle of Maryborough is known from other sources to have been in the ownership of the Graves family. However, this could not be the 'barrack' in question as this is shown to be completely ruinous in Francis Grose's depiction of 1792, and could not have been occupied as tenements in 1803. The reference must therefore relate to another building. It is possible that this was the 'Old Barracks' shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1837 at Tower Hill/Church Street, although this was still used as a barracks until the present Garda Station on the Abbeyleix Road was built in 1805.

Further research is therefore necessary to determine which barrack might have been referred to.

2.2.5 Materials held in the National Library of Ireland

The preliminary scoping assessment of the National Library of Ireland also consisted of consultation of the Hayes Catalogue, which records the primary source materials in a wide range of repositories, under four main categories. For this preliminary research, the main focus was upon the 'Places'.

The National Library contains four informative primary source references to Fort Protector in Maryborough. The full accounts are outlined in Appendix I.

- The earliest reference identified in this preliminary assessment was to a grant by Queen Elizabeth to J. Raff of land in Maryborough in 1568/9.
- We get an impression of the condition of the Fort at Maryborough in the late seventeenth century in a letter, dated August 1685, from Primate Michael Boyle to the Earl of Granard asking that Capt Hudson and his dragoones may be sent to make Maryborough fort his garrison, as it is in a poor state of repair, with the walls of the 'King's house' decayed and the timbers having been carried away.
- We also get an insight into some of the former governors of the Castle at Maryborough as they are mentioned by Richard Grahame in his petition to be made comptroller of the said Castle. Richard Grahame outlines how his family were in the King's service, when he mentions his uncles George Graham and Lieutenant Peter Graham, both of whom laid down their arms when Cromwell arrived to Ireland.
- There is also an undated petition by Sir W. Gilbert to the king for a grant of the fee farm of the Castle of Maryborough.

Three volumes contained within the National Library of Ireland are worthy of full historical analysis in order to produce the full historical narrative of the Fort Protector and its significance in the formation of the town of Maryborough. These volumes are:

- Book of Survey and Distribution for Counties Laois and Offaly;
- A volume containing a list of the burgesses and freemen of Maryborough
- Minute Books of the Corporation of Maryborough, March 1739 to Sept 1754.

As part of the preliminary research the Book of Survey and Distribution for County Laois was consulted. This book lists properties of land in 1641 and grantees and lands granted in 1666-8, with acreages.

A preliminary consultation of the volume containing a list of burgesses and freemen of Maryborough enables the production of a list of key personalities in Maryborough in the mid-eighteenth century. The volume runs to some twenty pages of alphabetically listed names. A sample of some of the individuals and their titles/occupations relating to Maryborough is contained within Appendix II. The occupations include, Sergeant of Fort, Sergeant of the Mace, Lieutenant of the Dragoones and Surveyor of Maryborough.

In time these names should be listed fully and will form an important part of the social narrative of the life and personalities in Maryborough in the mid-eighteenth century.

2.2.6 National Monuments Service – Photographic Archive

As part of this project members of staff of the Photographic Archive of the National Monuments Service were contacted to identify and consult any available photographic records of Fort Protector that were contained in the archive. The staff confirmed there were no photographic records of Fort Protector contained within the Photographic Archive of the National Monuments Service.

The Laurence Collection was consulted and was found to contain an informative image of the mill race associated with the Odlum's Mill that abutted the exterior of the north-east wall of Fort Protector in the current Fitzmaurice Place (Fig. 46).

2.3 Secondary Sources Consulted

2.3.1 Urban Archaeological Survey

The Urban Archaeological Survey for County Laois was published in 1984 (Bradley et al, 1984) and gives an account of the archaeological features of known urban centres in the county. The Urban Archaeological Survey established and mapped zones of archaeological potential for these urban centres, and recommended that proposed development within these zones be subject to archaeological assessment and mitigation at the planning stage of the development. This section is a summary based on extracts from the Survey that relate directly to the Fort Protector.

The reason for the choice of location for the ‘campa’ is uncertain, although the townland name of Borris is indicative of a medieval borough and it is possible that a hamlet survived in the area related to the medieval borough.

Fort Protector was created in the mid-sixteenth century as part of the English attempt to subdue territories of the native Gaelic clans of the O’Mores and the O’Conors. The Annals of the Four Masters refers to the fact that O’More and O’Connor were taken to England in 1548 and their land granted to the Lieutenant, Francis Bryan, Marshall of Ireland. Francis Bryan built two large ‘campa’, one at Portlaoise and one at Daingean, Co. Offaly. A map of 1550 shows a small stone walled town around the fort. The ‘campa’ known as ‘Fort Protector’ was renamed Maryborough in 1556. The town was “granted a market in 1567, borough status in 1569 and was incorporated by charter by Elizabeth in 1570”.

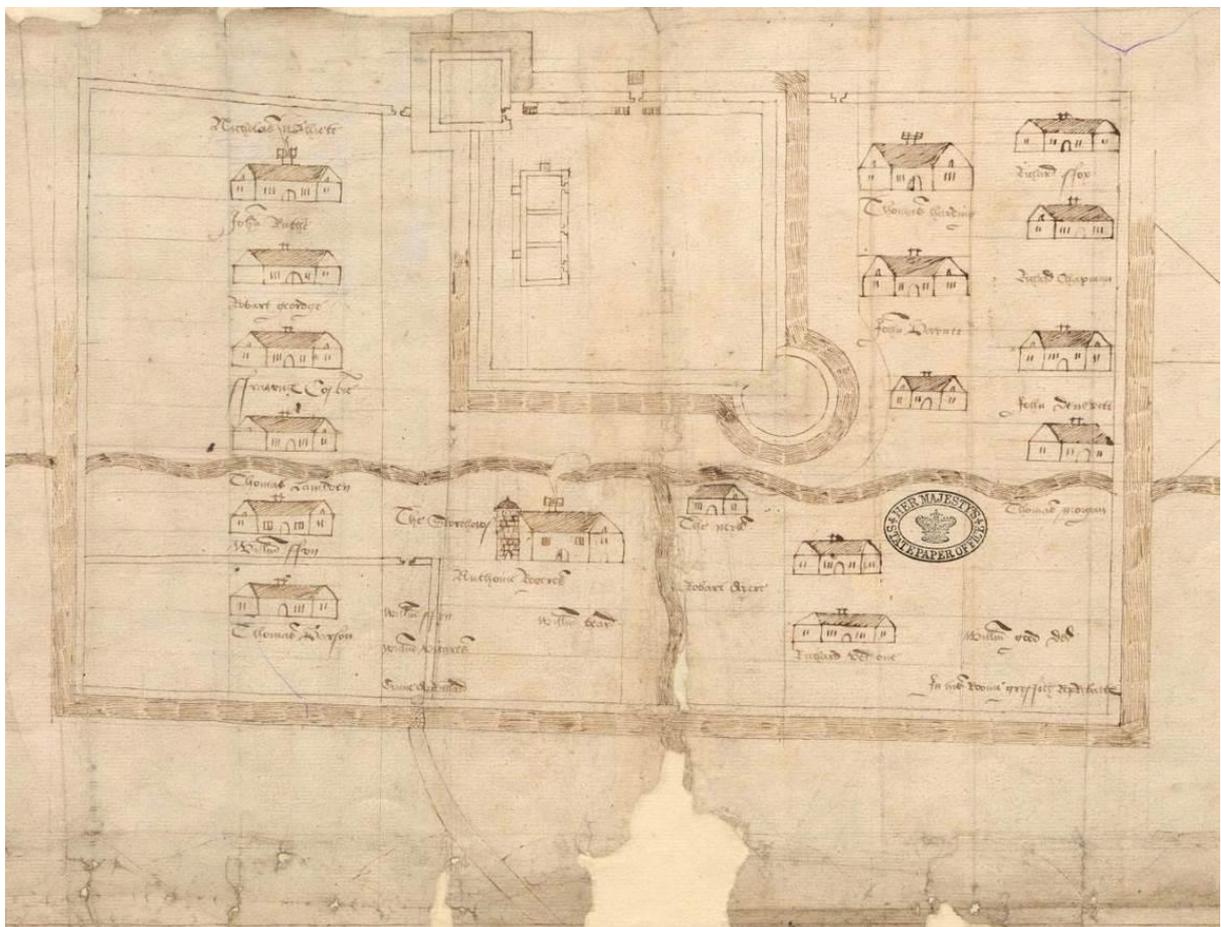


Figure 8: Map of Maryborough, c. 1560 (British National Archives, Kew MPF 1/277)

Little is known of the history of the construction of the fort bar the fact that Henry Wise was described as Captain of the Fort and Francis Cosbie was made Constable of the Fort in 1552 and 1566 respectively.

The description of the fort is based upon cartographic sources that show a rectangular enclosure (1,120 by 1,110 yards), with a rectangular tower (17 by 14 yards; now destroyed) at the south west corner and a projecting, three storied, circular tower at the north east corner. The antiquarian, Grose illustrated the surviving remains of the rectangular tower in the later part of the eighteenth century (Figure 4). The staff of the Urban Survey noted the 3m high wall of Fort Protector along Church Street close to the projecting circular tower/bastion and draw attention to the landscaped in-filled ground in this area of the school playground (Site 1).

An entrance is shown along the west wall as an external ditch or moat that was partly water filled. It is noted that the owners of the later properties gained the extra land of the ditch moat once it was backfilled.

The fort was demolished by the Hewson and Reynolds in 1650 (Feehan, 1985, p. 395). The Ordnance Survey letters refer to a rectangular building within the fort that was demolished around 1835 (OS Letters, Laois 1.74).

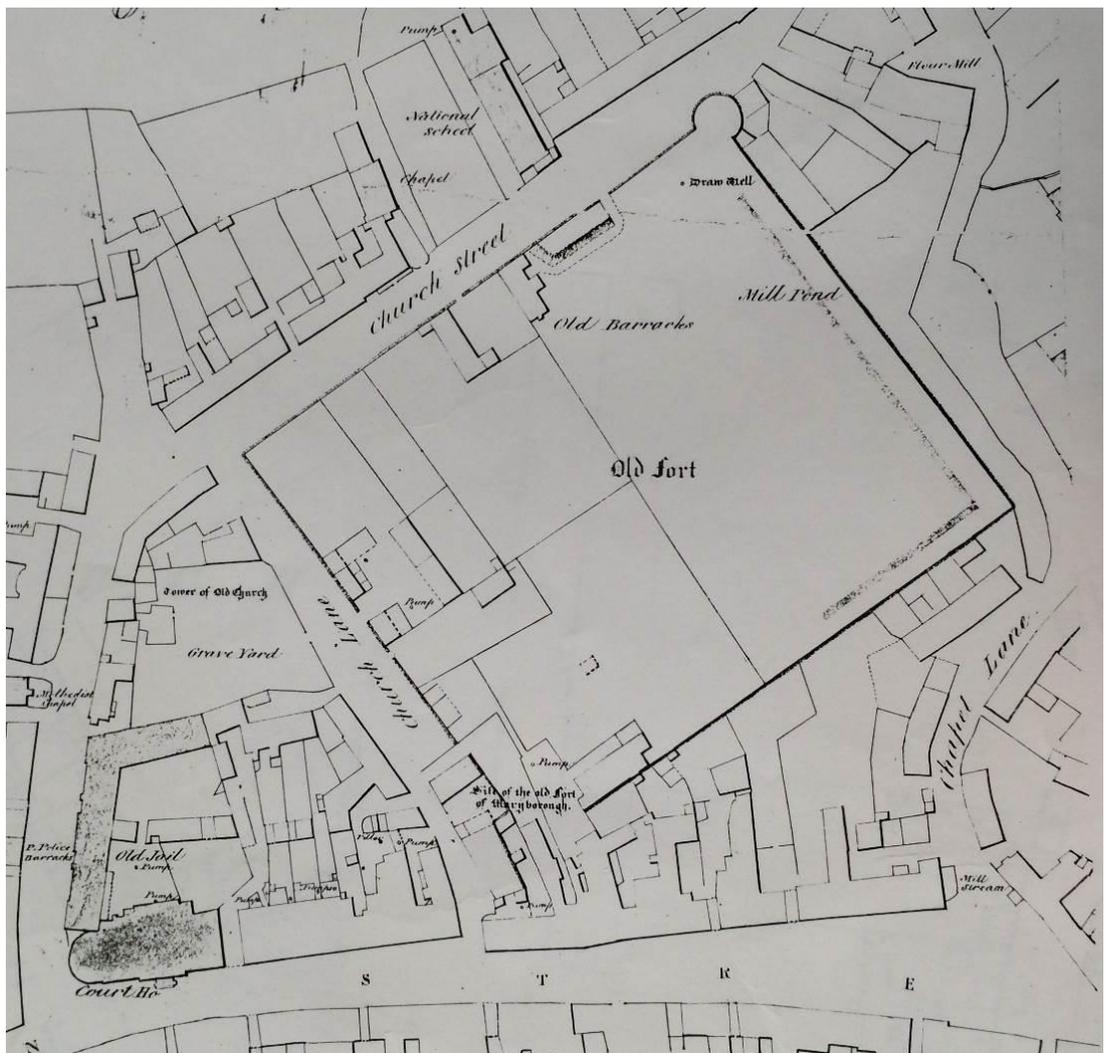


Figure 9: Ordnance Survey unfinished Town Plan of 1839, scale 5' to 1"

The cartographic sources depicting the town in the map of Maryborough dated c. 1560 do not show mural towers or gatehouses but merely two openings at either side of the fort and a probable opening in the east wall. An indication of the need for more adequate defences for the town is contained within the town charter of 1570 allowing the Corporation to 'fortify the borough with ditches and stone walls'.



Figure 10: Ordnance Survey map of 1907, original scale 25" to 1 mile.

2.4 Archaeological works within the Zone of Archaeological Potential

2.4.1 Summary of Archaeological Works

A number of developments have occurred within the zone of archaeological potential for Portlaoise that have either required an archaeological assessment in advance of construction or archaeological monitoring during construction. In order to ascertain the results from such archaeological mitigations, it was necessary to consult with the National Monuments Service (NMS) Archive Unit. These consultations revealed there to be a total of eleven archaeological licences issued over a twenty-year period commencing in 1993 within the Zone of Archaeological Potential as demarcated for the town of Portlaoise.

All the archaeological excavations relate to development-driven projects in compliance with specified requirements as part of the conditions for the granting of planning permission, in order to identify and protect the archaeological heritage of Portlaoise. The majority of these archaeological licences were for archaeological assessments, requiring the excavation of linear test trenches or test pits within areas of the site of the proposed development as specified by the archaeologist who held the excavation licence.

A detailed account of the results of the assessments that took place within the Zone of Archaeological Potential for Portlaoise is given in Appendix 7: Licenced Archaeological Assessments and Excavations and Appendix 8: Unlicensed Archaeological Monitoring.

The following is a synopsis of the results of those archaeological assessments that took place within close proximity to Fort Protector. (Site numbers refer to the locations shown in Figure 11).

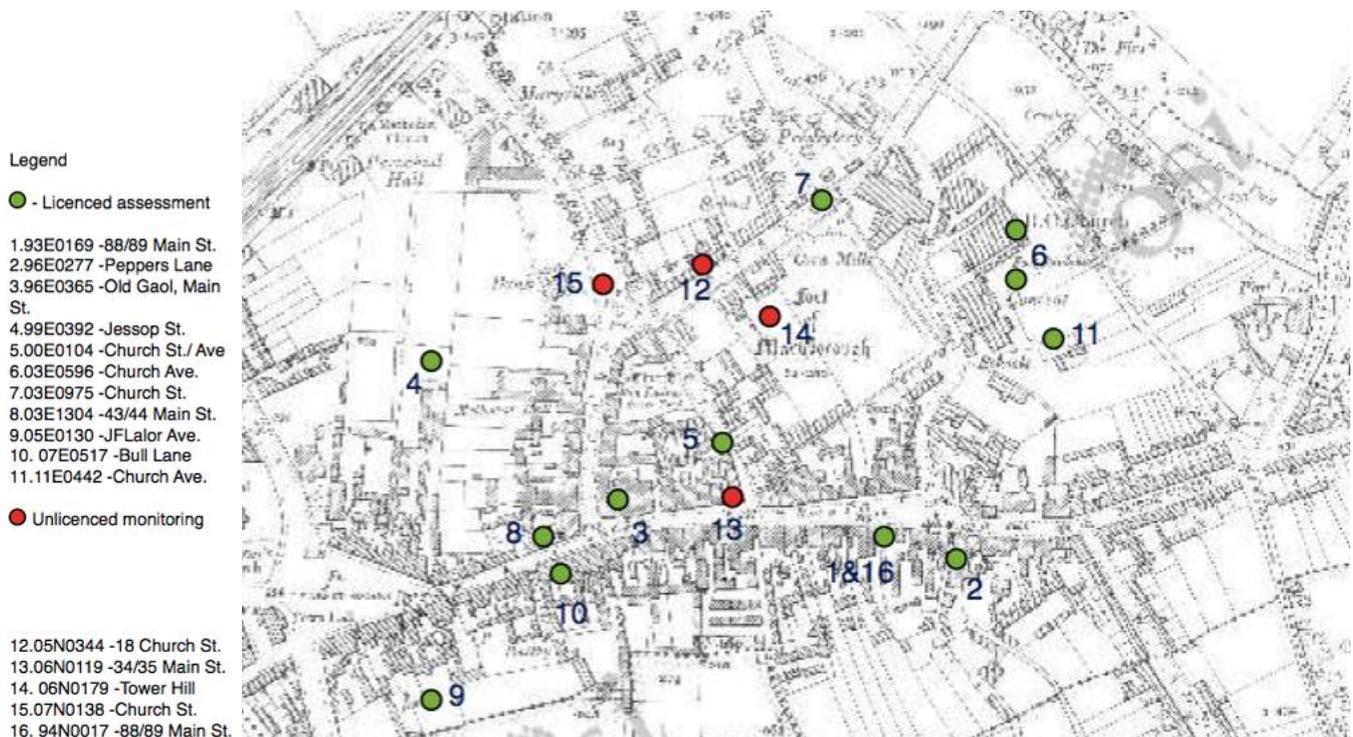


Figure 11: Locations of archaeological works, licenced and unlicensed

- Site 2: An archaeological assessment on Peppers Lane in 1996 revealed a 15m long surviving section of a mill race channel that was part of the mill race channel that fronted the eastern exterior of Fort Protector and supplied water to Odlum’s mills (Delaney 1996: 96E0277).
- Site 3: Only one full hand excavation of a site took place within Portlaoise, namely the redevelopment of the Old Gaol beside St. Peter’s graveyard. The excavation revealed five male skeletons in a graveyard within the courtyard of the Gaol (O’Reilly 1996: 96E0365).
- Site 4: We get a useful insight into the use of land surrounding the town of Portlaoise, from the assessment that took place on the site of the current Heritage Hotel on Jessop Street/Coote Street. This identified evidence for possible ridge-and-furrow cultivation along with the post-medieval pottery and stem of clay pipe fragments. The assessment also revealed a post-medieval property/field boundary and a shallow linear feature of unknown function (Delaney 1999: 99E0392).
- Site 5: The installation of Bord Gáis services along James Fintan Lalor Avenue, Main Street, Church Street and Church Avenue utilised disused water mains with

the result of limited interference to surviving archaeological strata (Paul Stevens 2000: 00E0104).

- Site 7: The archaeological monitoring of the installation of the Portlaoise Broadband Network in 2003/04 along the carriageway of Church Street enabled the identification of a cut, which the excavator interpreted as a possible cut for the ditch/moat at the exterior of the fort wall and close to the projecting circular tower/bastion (Delaney 2003:03E0975).
- Sites 8 and 10: The archaeological assessments of small development sites at 43/44 Main Street and Bull Lane revealed nothing of archaeological significance (Martin Doody: 03E1304 and Martin Doody: 07E0517).
- Site 9: Another interesting insight into the surrounding land around Portlaoise is seen in the results of the archaeological assessment for a retail unit just off James Fintan Lalor Avenue where the excavator identified that the site was used for cultivation in the past (Martin Doody: 05E0130).
- Sites 6 and 11: Two archaeological assessments on adjacent sites on the opposite side of Church Avenue give us good information about the topography and use of the land between the Fort and the River Triogue. The archaeological assessment of the Presentation College revealed the foundations of the nineteenth-century church. The land to the rear of the Presentation College revealed the existence of a possible subterranean passage/ drain immediately to the rear of the bay in the building and matched the location shown by Deigan (1991). The assessment revealed that the land was built-up ground to a height of c.2m above the subsoil, but there was a crude limestone wall at the base of the excavated trench at the north west of the site. The nature of the build-up of ground between Fort Protector and the River Triogue was explained in part as being related to the use of the land for the dumping of human cess in the seventeenth century until the municipal waste system was created in the town in the eighteenth century. The ground was built-up by a height of c.2.5m.
- Sites 12, 13 and 16: Several development projects within close proximity to Fort Protector necessitated archaeological monitoring. Three developments at Church Street (Martin Doody: 05N0344), Main Street (Martin Doody: 06N0119) and Main Street (Clare Mullin: 94N0017) were found to contain nothing of archaeological significance.
- Site 14: The construction within the Fort Protector of a surface car-park to the rear of Site 5 was archaeologically monitored. The monitoring revealed no features of archaeological significance.
- Site 15: The monitoring of the installation of a Bord Gáis connection along Church Street revealed that the present-day road is c.1.20m above the level it was at in the eighteenth century (Kerins 2007: 07N0138).

The results from the archaeological information gathered through the archaeological works in Portlaoise enables us to visualise Fort Protector as being on more steeply sloping ground than today, notably from the wall to the Triogue and from the north west along Railway Street. The land to the west of St Peter's graveyard was agricultural land at a higher elevation.

3.0 Electronic Survey

3.1 Creation of a Coherent Record

An electronic survey of the Fort wall was carried out to create a coherent record of the visible standing remains of the structure, and to put the various parts of the wall into context.

Roughly 80% of the perimeter wall of Fort wall survives above ground in some form, but the places where the wall is visible are isolated from each other within separate properties, making it impossible to view the surviving remains together. Behind Main Street and Railway Street standing sections are isolated from each other in rear yards, or within buildings such as O'Loughlin's Hotel, Kavanagh's pub and the Blue Door restaurant. The sides on Fitzmaurice Place and Tower Hill can be seen from the outer side, but a levels survey of the relationship to the profile of the ground inside the wall was needed.

The Ordnance Survey map alone does not allow proper assessment of the relationship to the original whole of each visible surviving part. No information was available on the relative levels and heights of the structure, and a proper picture could not be made of the gradient of the site on which the Fort Protector was built.

To generate a proper understanding of each surviving section of the wall, relative levels of the top of each part and of the base of the wall on the inner and outer sides are essential. This information will allow the project team to establish how each part fitted into the whole, and to correlate the relative heights of each part.

3.2 Methodology

An electronic laser survey was carried out by Apex Surveys Ltd over three days beginning on 20 October 2016, producing an accurate record of the standing remains of the Fort wall. Areas where historic masonry is exposed were recorded in rectified orthophotographs, and all accessible standing remains of the perimeter wall were measured including levels of primary features and of the ground surface on the inside and outside of the wall, all related to a common baseline.

The equipment used was Leica Scan Station P30/P40 long-range laser scanner, coupled with Leica Viva GS14 by Leica Geosystems.

The data gathered in the laser field survey was presented by Apex Surveys in a set of plans, elevations, orthophotographs and in a basic 3-D model.

3.3 Uses of the Survey

The Apex survey drawings were used by Lotts Architecture as the basis for a set of drawings showing the surviving fabric of the wall, differentiating fabric of original and later dates, and including some interpretation of the form of missing elements. These drawings are reproduced in stripped-down form in Appendix 9: Survey Drawings based on electronic survey by Apex Surveys.

The Apex survey will provide the data required to generate a representation in three dimensions of the entire surviving structure.

This can serve as the basis for visual representations of the Fort as it might look when conserved and restored. Such representations can be 'slotted-in' to an ambitious

three-dimensional representation of the town centre which Laois County Council have commissioned separately as part of a Public Realm Strategy, which is currently in preparation. That survey, generated by RealSim Ltd from data collected by drone can be used to set representations of the Fort in its current architectural and urban context within the town.

Vital to the understanding of the Fort will be the ability to demonstrate how it may have looked when still an active fortress in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Apex survey drawings and 3-D model will enable a more accurate interpretation of its original form. It can be used to create conjectural reconstructions of its possible historic appearance. As the basis data for a set of accurate scale drawings of the Fort, and for 3-D models and conjectural reconstructions, the electronic survey will be a valuable tool to communicate an understanding of the Fort Protector to stakeholders in the process and to the wider public, both in Portlaoise and further afield, demonstrating the significance of the site, and placing it in the context of other Irish fortresses and historic walled towns.



Figure 12: Field survey in progress

4.0 Archaeological Description of Fort Protector

(by Dr Eoin Sullivan)

Fort Protector is an archaeological monument and is protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014. The Urban Archaeological Survey delineates the walls of Fort Protector which are shown within the confines of the postulated walled town that developed around Fort Protector. The walled town is in turn demarcated within a Zone of Archaeological Potential. The Zone of Archaeological Potential assists researchers and the different professions to identify areas where archaeological mitigation should take place for planned developments thereby identifying and preserving (*in situ* or by record, i.e. scientific archaeological excavation) the archaeological strata and the archaeological heritage of Portlaoise town for future generations. The site is shown and described in the Record of Monuments and Places.

Fort Protector is described below on the basis of a series of seven contiguous lengths of Fort Protector's wall to enable continuity and cross referencing with the boundary numbers in the Inventory of Surviving Fabric of the Conservation Plan (Phase I) pp. 37-80. The individual sections present field observations, information gleaned from the cartographic sources of Conservation Plan (Phase I) and the information gleaned from previous archaeological works that have taken place within the vicinity of Fort Protector (Appendix 7: Licenced Archaeological Assessments and Excavations and Appendix 8: Unlicensed Archaeological Monitoring).

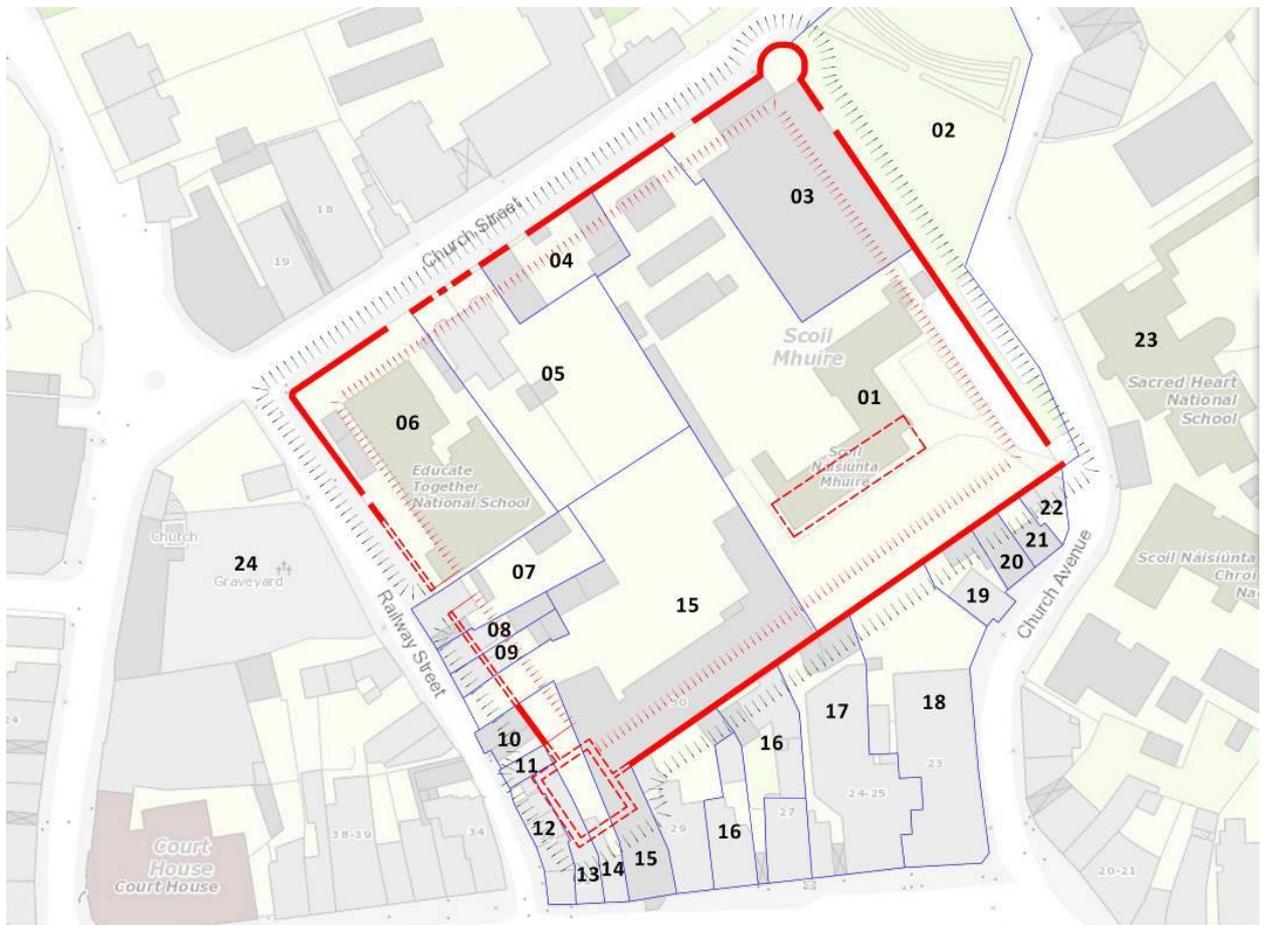


Figure 13: Overlay of Fort remains on contemporary map, showing individual properties (dashed lines represent features for which no above ground remains survive)

4.1 Site 3: Circular tower and abutting walls

4.1.1 Circular tower

One of the most visually prominent features of Fort Protector is the gapped circular tower located at the north east corner of the fort. The tower has an internal diameter of 8.2m and the walls are on average 1.5m thick. The average height of the tower walls are 5.7m externally. The tower is made of bonded blocks of limestone, of varying dimensions that are roughly coursed to the summit (Figure 14). The exterior of the tower is battered to aid defence, while the interior is relatively perpendicular to the present internal earthen surface. The south eastern external façade of the tower is in marked contrast to the remainder of the façade, notably at the joining of the circular tower and the south-eastern fort wall. The stone works shows signs of being repointed quite recently (Figure 15). The repointing reaches to the height of the upper internal level of the tower. The function of this is difficult to ascertain but it is likely the tower was breached during the early nineteenth century relating to the activities and functioning of Odlum's mill, where a roofed structure is indicated at this junction as shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1839 (Figure 9).

There is a marked line c. 1.5m below the summit of the bastion and the fabric at this upper portion consists of slightly smaller blocks of stone and rougher attention to coursing that the lower portions of the bastion. This line matches the internal upper floor/platform level of the interior of the circular tower.



Figure 14: View of circular bastion from the north east looking towards Church Street

The line of three internal levels are clearly visible on the interior of the circular tower. The first and second levels are located a height of 1.70m and 3.80m above the present internal surface of the tower respectively (Figure 16). These levels are functional and would have enabled the defending occupants a vantage point to see people approaching and to defend the fort from a height. The tower enables flanking

cover from the summit along substantial portions of the north east and north western abutting fort wall.



Figure 15: View of circular bastion from the east showing repaired opening



Figure 16 Internal view of the round bastion showing the two levels

4.1.2 Architectural fragments

There are no identifiable architectural fragments within the circular tower, but there is a stone visible on the towers interior with the letters/initials 'TP' deeply and carefully cut into the stone (Figure 17). The stone is located close to the northern point of the circular tower and hence of the Fort. The stone is located c.0.40m below the line of the upper internal floor/platform level. The function and date of the initialled stone is uncertain but may be akin to a stoneworker's mark on works done for the construction/repair of the upper level of the circular tower.



Figure 17: Detail of initialled stone located at geographical north point of tower interior

4.1.3 Earthen embankment

The Ordnance Survey map of 1839 (Figure 9) shows an earthen rampart/embankment along the interior of the north-east wall of the Fort. The embankment would have been an extra defensive measure along the base of the fort wall, as well as facilitating the defence of the fort from the elevation of the fort wall. The Ordnance Survey map shows the location of a draw well at the northern corner of the fort, in the vicinity of the open entrance yard to the current County Council Depot, which was the former Odlum's Mill. The later Ordnance Survey map of 1907 (Figure 10) shows the earthen embankment running along the interior of the north-east end of the fort wall from the circular tower up the natural slope of Church Street and joining what was the early nineteenth century barrack building of Site 4 (see below).

4.1.4 Fort wall

The internal façade of the north-eastern part of the fort wall in the mill building is hidden behind a modern concrete wall. The external façade of this length of the fort

wall shows that the lower basal 0.40m of fort wall consist of three courses of small roughly regular sized stones as a foundation, which are overlain by a bonded mixture of stones, with no apparent line coursing, with the larger blocks measuring 0.60m by 0.40m. The upper portion of the wall of the mill is made from mass concrete that was poured on a concrete coping on the summit of the original wall of the fort (Figure 18).



Figure 18: View of fort wall south of the circular bastion from the east



Figure 19: View of interior of fort wall from the south west with interior of circular bastion to the right of picture

The internal façade of the north western part of the fort wall in the entrance yard shows the basal portion of the wall to a height of 1.60m above the present ground surface consists of irregularly sized and placed blocks of limestone. The upper 2.30m of the fort wall is slightly thinner and consists of irregularly shaped and placed pieces of limestone. The eastern half of this upper section of wall contains random pieces red brick and the wall façade is rough due to being roughly repaired at some stage in the past. The summit of the wall at the entrance gate to the yard contains a regular double line of red brick giving a gently sloping summit terminal at the entrance (Figure 19).

4.1.5 The external moat/fosse

The excavation of a linear trench within the carriageway of the road along Church Street was archaeologically monitored due to the location being within the zone of archaeological potential for Portlaoise and the site being with the proximity to the mid- sixteenth century fort. The archaeological monitoring revealed the presence of black sub surface deposits which were interpreted as possible fill of the fosse/moat as indicated at the exterior of Fort Protector as indicated on the Map of Maryborough that dates to the 1560s (Figure 8). The trench did not cut through the deposits to the base of the fosse/moat, but a possible cut for the moat was noted. The cut for the moat was located at the eastern end of Church Street, very close to the circular tower of the fort.



Figure 20: View of exterior of the southern terminal of the north eastern wall of fort from north

4.2 Sites 1, 2 and 23: Presentation Convent

4.2.1 Fort wall

The north-eastern portion of the fort wall, which now serves as the road frontage for Scoil Mhuire along Church Avenue, was lowered at some stage in the past, probably associated with the construction of the millrace for Odlum's mill. The wall survives to an average height in this section of c. 1.5m. The lowered section drops in height gradually along the length of the middle section of the fort wall. The wall was subsequently raised to a working level surface by the addition of concrete blockwork and a concrete coping for the erection of the present metal railing (Figure 20). The basal portion of the external façade of the wall is the original wall of the fort and was constructed using a mixture of rough pieces of limestone. The internal façade of this section of the fort wall is masked behind a raised embankment adjacent to the interior of the fort wall (Figure 21).



Figure 21: Detail of robbed out interior of fort wall and earthen embankment at southern terminal of north eastern side of fort



Figure 22: Detail of the interior of the fort wall at southern terminal Site 1 with bevel midway along the internal façade

The south-eastern portion of the fort wall is on average 2m above the landscaped present ground surface and is 0.65m thick at the summit. The wall is rendered along its full length of this section and none of the masonry is visible for inspection at the interior. There is a pronounced bevel along the length of the wall, located between 1.0-1.1m below the present summit of the wall and it protrudes c. 0.10m from the wall (Figure 22). The flat roof of the neighbouring site 20 is built onto the existing summit of the fort wall and reaches towards the centre of wall summit a distance of 0.35m from the external façade of the fort wall. During the time of the survey, it was not possible to gain access to inspect the fort wall for the neighbouring sites that have the external fort wall as their property boundaries, namely sites 19, 20 and 21.

Site 22 was visited, but only a small portion of the upper fort wall was poorly visible for a surface inspection.

4.2.2 The external millrace

A millrace and mill pond are indicated on the Ordnance Survey map of 1839 (Figure 9). The millrace appears to be a raised construction (Site 2), as visible in the photograph in the Laurence Collection (Fig. 45). It is possible that the fort wall was lowered as part of the construction of the millrace, as it may have served as a useful source of stone and possibly an alleviation from overflow, which would allow water to overflow on both sides. There are no surface indications of the millrace along Church Avenue/ Fitzmaurice Place, but the millrace was positioned partially along the line of the possible moat. The fact that the millpond and millrace were raised, may have had a beneficial impact on the survival potential of the moat along this side of the fort wall. The archaeological assessment in 1996 on a site on Peppers Lane (96E0277) in advance of development led to the discovery of a 15m length of a millrace channel on the site. The revetting walls were constructed using rubble limestone masonry. The channel was 2.5m wide and 1.5m high. The northern portion of the millrace channel had an arched roof made of stone and brick. The other portion of the millrace channel was originally open but had been filled in since going out of use in the late 19th century. The millrace on Pepper Lane was part of the millrace that was located to the exterior of the Fort Protector on Site 2.

4.2.3 The earthen embankment and site infill

An earthen embankment, which is a continuation of that in Site 3, is located on the three sides of fort walls that form the external boundary of Site 1, namely the northern part facing onto Church Street, the north-eastern part facing onto Church Avenue with the Presentation Convent on the opposite side of the avenue (Site 2 and 23) and the south-eastern part facing onto the rear of properties along Church Avenue (Sites 18-22 incl.).

The grounds of Scoil Mhuire have been extensively built up, with the probable importation of material onto the site. The northern part of the site, fronting on Church Street, is 17.7m in length and c. 1.3m above the level of the road frontage and the adjacent buildings of Site 4. This upper portion of the fort wall is 1.40m in height, 0.80m thick and is covered in render (Figure 23). The external height of the fort wall is 3.20m.



Figure 23: Artificially raised fort interior with view of rendered upper portion of fort wall from the south west

The return at the north-western corner of Site 1, along Church Street, is the upper portion of the wall of the building at the former barracks (Site 4) and the open roofed exterior to the south of the southern gable of the building (Figure 24). The walls of the buildings are rendered with pebble dash, but the basal portion of the wall is visible as a stone wall of rough blocks and occasional cobbles of limestone construction.



Figure 24: Artificially raised surface abutting southern boundary wall for C19th barracks (Site 4)

The central portion of Site 1 consists of a playground area surfaced with tarmac overlying probably rubble in-fill. The south-eastern portion of the site is landscape surface with grass that stretches 15m from the internal line of the fort wall. This area is raised and the south-eastern fort wall along this stretch is 2m in height above the

landscaped surface. The earthen embankment is not this wide and it is possible that the earthen embankment survives intact beneath the landscaped school grounds. Likewise portions of the earthen embankment may survive along the north eastern interior of the fort wall.

4.2.4 Adjacent sites that were subject to archaeological assessment (Site 23)

The sites on the opposite sides of Church Avenue have both had archaeological assessments prepared as part of either planned or actual development works. The site of Presentation Convent and former Catholic church were archaeologically assessed (03E0596) on the basis of a series of mechanically excavated test trenches (O'Flanagan 2003). The test trench revealed that the site of the former church consisted of a crypt that was filled in with the rubble when the structure was demolished. A series of walls associated with the church was identified in the test trenching. The excavations also revealed the steeply sloping nature of the original ground of some 2m below the present ground surface from close to the present position of culverted River Triogue.

Test trenches excavated to the front of the bay at the rear of the Presentation Convent revealed the presence of a stone structure that is perpendicular to the convent building and is 0.85m wide. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.70m through overlying unstable rubble and red brick. The structure appeared to be cut into deposits of a grey brown sandy soil. It was interpreted by the excavator as possibly a subterranean tunnel, relating to the one mentioned by Deigan (1991) or a drain.

Other trenches further towards the rear of the garden area of the convent revealed that the garden had been built up with the introduction of a brown silty soil. A test trench in the garden area of the convent to the rear of the site of the former Catholic church revealed the presence of a crude limestone wall just above the level of the underlying marl at a depth of 0.70m below the present ground surface level. The base of the wall is oriented diagonally to the church wall and the excavator considered it may pre-date the church. These sites would require further archaeological mitigation in advance of any proposed development on the site.

The demolition and subsequent construction of new boundary walls on the site of Scoil Chríost Rí were archaeologically monitored (11E0442) as part of the planning conditions for the approved development. The monitoring of the demolition of the buildings revealed the presence of organic deposits at a depth of 2.5m below the present ground surface level. Sherds of pottery, namely tin-glazed earthen ware and slipware indicate that the deposition occurred in the late C17th/ early C18th century (Myles 2011).

The construction programme necessitated the excavation of a small area for the insertion of a silt trap. The archaeological monitoring revealed an area of natural boulder clay at a depth of 2.5m. The boulder clay was overlain by a fine grey silt which was in turn overlain by three layers of organic clays, the lowest being a natural accumulation. The upper layers were a mixed deposit of organic clays (0.50m deep), with the upper deposit being darker in colour and produced animal bone and a sherd of tin-glazed earthenware. The other areas monitoring for the construction of two boundary walls revealed a similar soil profile to that of the silt trap area. On the basis

of the organic nature of the exposed soil profile and the datable sherds of pottery from the deposits encountered, the excavator pointed out that area was probably used by the inhabitants of Portlaoise for the disposal of human cess into the late seventeenth century.

4.3 Site 18: Proposed public library building

4.3.1 Fort wall

The northern perimeter wall of the car park behind the former Shaw's Department Store, the site of the proposed Portlaoise Branch Library, is the external façade of the fort wall, lying outside the interior façade of the south-eastern portion of wall described in Site 1 (above). The wall survives in good condition along this 18.80m length of original fort wall. The wall is between 3.20m and 3.35m in height above the present level of the car park. The wall is made of varying sizes of irregular pieces of limestone, with no apparent line coursing visible. There is a thin line course of small pieces of stone along the length of the wall at a height of between 2.10m and 2.40m above the present level of the car park (Figure 25 and Figure 26). This is just above the line of the metal car park signs. The upper c.1.10m of the fort wall leans slight inwards towards the fort, above the narrow line coursing. This line course relates to the bevel on the interior façade of the same section of wall in Site 1 (Figure 22), where in a similar manner the upper portion is thinner and the lower 2m below the thin line course slopes gently and gets wider at its base. There are no visible signs of discrete portions of repair at this section of the wall and it is probable based upon this surface inspection that the upper portion of the wall was built in one section. It is difficult to ascertain whether this was the original height of the fort wall or whether it was a major alteration to repair damaged portions of the upper summit of the fort wall, stretching along the rear of Sites 19-22 inclusive. This can only be further clarified with a surface inspection of the interior fort wall for these sites.



Figure 25: Detail of exterior of fort wall, showing thin line course, in Site 18 from the south west



Figure 26: View of external façade of fort wall in Site 18 from the east

4.3.2 The external moat/ fosse

The relevance of the curving property boundaries has been described in the Conservation Plan (Phase I) as being reflective of the former line of the external moat. There are two covered manholes in the car park, the closest one being 4.50m from the line of the fort wall and 5m from the eastern property boundary wall with neighbouring Site 19. The second manhole is c.10 to the south west of the first. The construction of these manholes has caused subsurface disturbance, but it may be far enough away from the line of the moat that it has done minimal interference.

The large enclosed car park enables controlled ease of access to one of the few, and by far the largest surviving sections of the fort wall which has not been disturbed by subsequent construction within close proximity to the wall. This section of wall offers the maximum potential for both research and preservation of a section of the moat, for which we have no exact details. Its presence offers a rare opportunity to uncover material from the fill of the moat and to tie this in with research on the opposite side of the wall to identify and possibly expose the internal embankment in Site 1, thereby enabling a full sectional view of the external and internal fabric and features of Fort Protector, in a safe working environment, where members of the public could visit the excavation as it progresses.

4.4 Sites 10-17: Main Street and the rectangular bastion/castle

4.4.1 Fort wall - Site 17

Two lengths of the external façade survive in situ at the rear of Site 17. The easternmost section is located to the rear of a kitchen area of the Blue Door and is

5.20m in length. This section continues behind a dry line wall to the rear of a secure store to the east which in turn joins with the wall on Site 18. The visible section of wall is 2.40m in height and is capped with a concrete coping. Above this, the structural works have taken place enabling access to the modern hotel function room and bathrooms at the interior of the fort. The wall consists of a mixture of pieces of rough stone with no apparent line coursing (Figure 27). The wall has sizeable sections of lime mortar on the façade.



Figure 27: View of external façade of the wall of Fort Protector in Site 17 (Blue Door)

4.4.2 Architectural fragments

There are no architectural fragments visible in the external wall façade, but there are two discrete pieces of flat faced stone both of which bear inscribed letters/ initials. The first and most visible bear the letters SB engraved on a block of limestone c. 0.55m by 0.30m. The stone is located between 2.50m and 3.00m from the western corner of the wall and is located a height of 0.70m above the present ground surface. The letters are simple and not carved with any great detail into the stone, but this could be due to the presence of lime render that covers much of the stone façade and which would have presumably hidden the letters from public view.

The second letters 'PB' are fainter and are only visible with the use of an artificial light source held at different angles (Figure 28). The stone is located between 3.95m and 4.30m from the western corner of the wall and a height from 1.30-1.60m above the present ground surface. It is interesting to note to location of the stone with the letters at a cardinal point of the fort, namely the exterior of junction point, where the north west/south east internal dividing walls joins the southern wall of the fort and joins with the old line of the south western rear wall of the 'Old Barracks' as shown

on the Ordnance Survey map (Figure 9). This may relate to the activities of the Ordnance Survey mappers when mapping the fort in the early nineteenth century.



Figure 28: Detail of faintly initialled stone on external wall façade at Site 17

A second length of the fort wall is located further to the west in Site 17, however it is masked by a substantial permanent freezer unit and was not available for a surface inspection.

4.4.3 Fort wall – Site 16

A length of the fort wall survives in situ in a compact yard to the rear of Site 16 (Kavanagh's pub). The section of fort wall is 10.40m in length and is 2.40m and 2.10m in height above the present ground surface at the western and eastern areas respectively. The wall is constructed with a mix of varying sizes of pieces of stone, some of which are natural linear blocks set on their lengths. There are portions that have a lime render on the façade. The wall tapers in as it rises upwards (Figure 29) and the wall summit is 0.60m in thickness. The summit abuts a mass concrete slab wall. A portion of modern wall survives at the summit of the western end of the fort wall. This portion of wall is set 0.40m back from the line of the lower portion of the fort wall and contains structural stone with structural red brick incorporated (Figure 30).

The fort is present further to the east of the yard in the single storey kitchenette to the rear of Kavanagh's pub. The wall is not visible but is located behind a dry lined wall of the kitchenette.

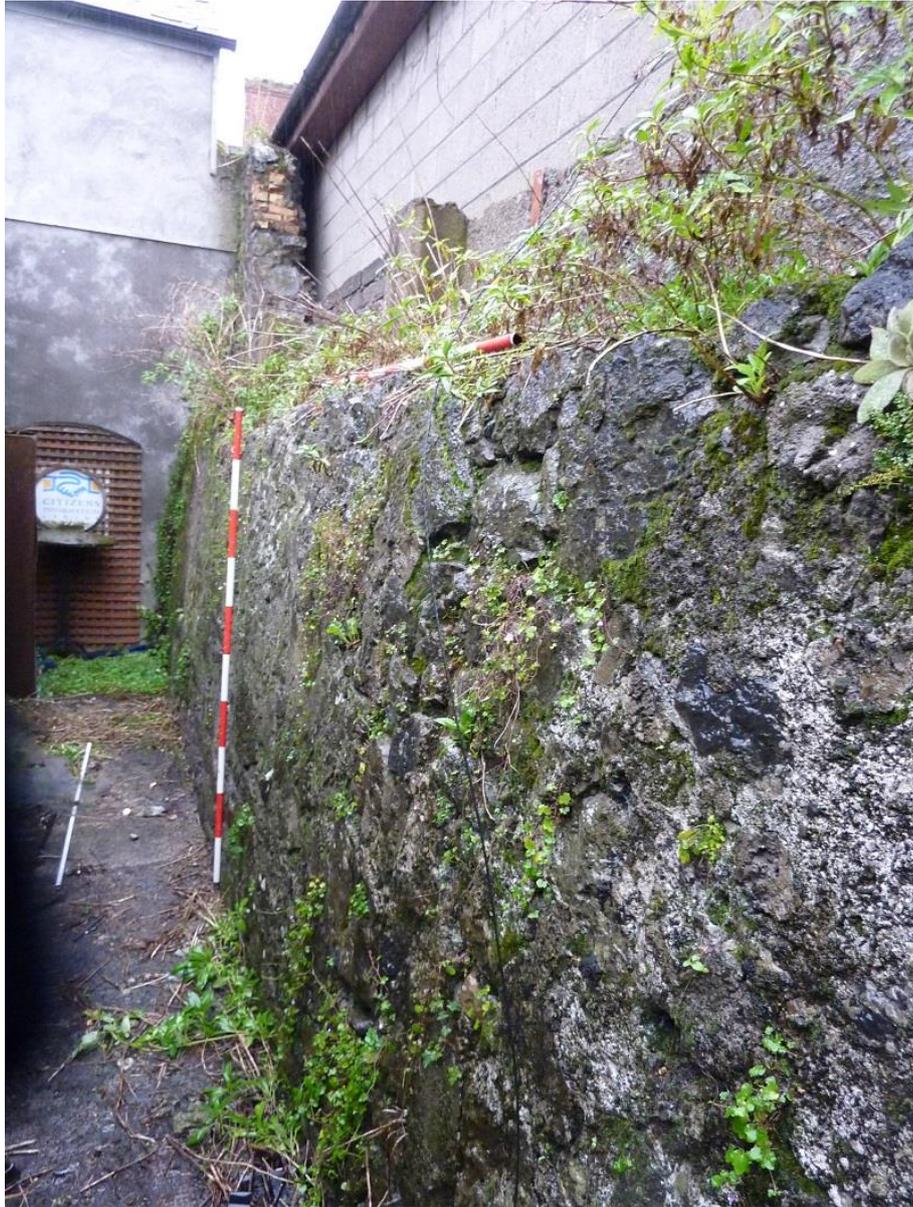


Figure 29: View of external façade of the fort wall in Site 16 from the east



Figure 30: Detail of later building activity abutting the summit of the fort wall (Site 16)

4.4.4 Fort wall – Site 15

A length of the fort survives in the open area and within the building of Site 15 (O'Loughlin's Hotel). The section of fort wall in the open area has been plastered over and painted. The eastern 3.20m of the wall is painted cream/white and there are steps leading up to a doorway, constructed in a breach in the wall which enables access to the kitchen area located at the interior of the fort. The wall is 1.10m wide at the doorway (Figure 31). The plastered section of the fort wall slopes gently to a height of 2.40m above the present ground surface level and there is a pronounced bevel that is c.0.20m high. Above this is an apparently additional piece of modern structural wall.



Figure 31: View of rendered wall to east side of modern breach in fort wall in Site 15 from the east

The adjoining length of the fort wall for the western 3.90m is faced with plaster and painted with a mural (Figure 32). The wall is 2.40m in height. The interior of the fort wall is masked by the lining of the structural walls of the hotel corridor that lead to and include the function room.



Figure 32: View of rendered wall (with mural) to west side of modern breach in fort wall in Site 15, seen from the east

The adjoining portion and the terminal surviving terminal of the south-eastern side of Fort Protector is located within the buildings of the hotel. The portion of the wall is painted white and has not been plastered over (Figure 33).



Figure 33: Detail of external façade of fort wall in Site 15

4.4.5 The rectangular bastion / castle

The location and presence of a rectangular bastion have been addressed in the Conservation Plan (Phase I) and this text should be read in conjunction with that report.

From this terminal in Site 15, we are in the area of the square bastion that was located diagonally opposite the circular tower in Site 3. There are no known historical references to a castle *per se* within the Zone of Archaeological Potential for Portlaoise. This is one area that would benefit from further research. The sources consulted in this Phase II of the Conservation Plan did not find detailed references to a castle of medieval date. However, it must be borne in mind that the terms 'fortification' and 'castle' are evocative (Bolton 2016, 111), the term castle often being used as political term of force as opposed to a nuanced structure with set features. The maps of the sixteenth century show a rectangular bastion, which was presumably set out from the walls of the fort in order to enable enhanced flanking fire. The historical documents, such as the deeds refer to a castle which is likely to be the rectangular bastion, but the extent and exact location and indeed the physical form is conjectural without sub surface evidence.

It is worth noting recollections of building contractor Richard Kirwan, who laid a sewer pipe down the centre line of O'Loughlin's Hotel (No. 30 Main Street) in the 1970s. He recalls a substrate of stone, contrasting to the ground conditions in the rest of Main Street. This may have been the remaining foundations of the Castle, or alternatively an area of bedrock on which it was sited.

4.4.6 Site 14

Site 14 is located within the vicinity of the former rectangular bastion. There are no known surface indications of a bastion within the site. The owner of the property is not aware of any basement being present in this property.

4.4.7 Site 13

Site 13 is located within the vicinity of the former rectangular bastion. A fortuitous walk past the site one evening, resulted in meeting the owner who was overseeing the replacement of a new shop floor in this property. The visit revealed that the shop contains a 1.50m deep basement. There is a possibility that the basement is deeper below the present ground floor level. The presence of a basement further to the north of the shop could not be ascertained.

The floor joists are sprung from a thick stone foundation that is oriented in a different direction to that of the shop wall. The southern end at the road frontage is 1.50m from the wall of the shop to the drop of the basement and this tapers to 0.80m at the end of the shop front. This means that the foundation is in excess of 1.50m thick, which appears to be curiously wide (Figure 34). There is a splayed opening in the foundation which is c. 0.80m wide at the wider eastern side. The splay is blocked up with what looked like hand-made yellow brick, but the cap has been painted over the years (Figure 35).

The nature and extent of the wall of the basement and the blocked opening are uncertain. The area would benefit from more detailed investigation in the future.



Figure 34: View of basement in Site 13 with blocked splayed opening to left



Figure 35: Detail of basement in Site 13 with blocked splayed opening at centre

4.4.8 Site 12

The occupants of the shops in Site 12 were unaware of the presence of a basement in their property. Site 11 abuts the rear of these premises and extends farther than them, thereby enabling access through a rear door to an enclosed yard shared with Site 11.

The demolition of the two buildings on the opposite corner of Railway Street (Martin Doody Unpublished Archaeological Monitoring Report for 33/34 Main Street, Portlaoise - 06N1119) revealed the existence of an earlier basement within the footprint of the building that was filled with modern debris. The monitoring of two engineers test pits to the rear of the property revealed a deposit of dumped modern rubble to a depth of 0.50m below the ground surface that overlay an undisturbed sandy gravel. No features or soils of archaeological significance were encountered during the monitoring of the site works.

4.4.9 Rear of Bergin's yard (Site 10, 11 and 14)

A small yard is located between Site 10 and Site 11 where the exterior of the fort wall is visible, although the fabric of the wall is covered by render. The wall is 3.30m in height above the surrounding ground surface, and the wall narrows from 2m above the present surface level to the summit.

The length of the fort wall in Bergin's yard is incorporated into the gable end of Site 10. The basal sloping portion of the fort wall as seen at the southern side of the entrance to O'Loughlin's hotel car park, has been incorporated into the gable end of the building of Site 10 (Figure 36). The basal portion of this piece of wall has been robbed out slightly.



Figure 36: Detail of internal façade of west side of fort wall to the right of picture with later ope to left of picture

The wall abutting the side of the Site 10 is set slightly back from the upper gable of the building. The lower portion of the length of wall in the yard has a curving base, which is not typical of the fort wall and appears to have been robbed out. The upper portion of the wall at the southern end, which is a later addition, has a reused piece of cut stone incorporated into the wall fabric close to the summit of the wall. The fabric of the wall indicates activity reflected in a possible recess in the wall marked by red brick insertions at the top corner and occasional fragments of red brick. This wall and the area of the yard warrant further investigation.

4.5 Sites 6-9: Fort entrance and adjoining wall

4.5.1 Fort entrance and later county animal pound (Sites 7-9)

The location of the entrance of Fort Protector is outlined in detail in the Conservation Plan (Phase I). The fort's entrance was within the area of Site 7-9. Recent changes in buildings and associated ground disturbance associated with the construction of the buildings over the site of the former county animal pound would indicate that no features or soils of archaeological would survive at this portion of the site. The animal pound was set deep below the level of the road within the line of the interior of the fort and stretched into the land of Site 6 (Teddy Fennelly pers. comm.).

The archaeological monitoring of the trench along Railway Street as part of the installation of the Portlaoise Broadband Network (03E0975) revealed a layer of red/brown redeposited silty clay that produced an animal bone of either sheep/goat. The deposit was overlain by 0.30m of aggregate road material.

A stone built box shore/culvert made of large mortared limestone slabs ran east/west along Railway Street. The feature had an average height of 0.67m and an average width of 0.38m and was filled with dark grey/black silt and sand. In addition, a wall made of roughly cut stone with a possible rounded top/ cap was exposed at a depth of 0.35m below the present ground surface. The wall was located at the southern end of Railway Street and extended beyond the trench. The surrounding soils produced white glazed ceramics and fragments of modern glass.

4.5.2 Fort wall at Site 6

The remaining northern portion of the western side of the fort wall and the western section of the northern fort wall is the property boundary of the Site 6. The line of the wall survives in situ, but has been lowered substantially and breached to enable vehicular and pedestrian access. The wall is rendered along the exterior and no architectural features of significance were encountered during the inspection of the surviving basal portions of the fort wall in Site 6.

Archaeological monitoring of the installation of Bord Gáis involving the excavation of a 20m long linear trench along Railway Street (07N0138, Church Street, Portlaoise) from the northern side of the roundabout, revealed an original ground surface dating from the seventeenth century, as indicated by sherds of pottery from deposits at a depth of 0.70- 1.20m below the current level of the road surface. This gives us a sense of the contemporary slope of the land when the fort was constructed in the mid sixteenth century.

4.5.3 Site 5: Archaeological investigations within the confines of the fort

The fort wall at the road frontage of Site 5 survives as a lowered garden wall, with a plastered façade. The interior is masked by garden shrubs.

The former garden area to the rear of site 5, in the western quadrant of the fort's interior was stripped of topsoil for the creation of the current surface car park. The mechanical stripping of topsoil was archaeologically monitored (06N0179 Delaney 2006) and revealed that most of the surface area consisted of made-up ground and only small parts of the site consisted of undisturbed topsoil with a depth of c.0.30m. The remaining original soil consisted of dark brown/ black silt with humified organics and contained glass, plastic refuse and sizeable quantities of brick, slate and paving stones. Occasional isolated pieces of cut stone were found in the topsoil. None of these were architectural fragments and none were associated with archaeological features or structures. No features or soils were encountered during the archaeological monitoring of the site.

4.5.4 Site 4: The Old Barracks

The Ordnance Survey indicates the location of the 'Old Barracks' on the 1839 survey (Figure 9). The present day building with wide arched door similar to a stable now is on the site of the former barracks (Figure 37). It would appear, based upon the details shown on the Ordnance Survey maps that the western boundary of the barracks was along the same line and perhaps incorporated into the linear internal dividing wall of the fort. At some period since the mid nineteenth century, presumably when the barracks went out of use, the western boundary wall of the former barracks was demolished and the newly constructed western boundary wall was built containing the arched doorway.



Figure 37: View of building on site of C19th barracks, original fort wall to the left

The new building line was set slightly to the east from the original building line and hence the protruding section along the southern gable wall of the present building. The northern gable of the barracks was bonded to the fort wall, which necessitated the removal of portions of the internal wall façade, which is clearly visible along with a small recess on the interior of the northern gable of the present building (Figure 38).



Figure 38: Detail of interior of fort wall within building and external structure walls bonded to the fort wall



Figure 39: View of interior of building in Site 4 showing c. C19th eastern wall of building

The eastern boundary of the current building was built further to the east along the original eastern building line of the two projecting rooms/entrances to the Old Barracks. A detailed analysis of the building is required to ascertain the sequence of the building, but there is a possibility that a portion of the southern gable boundary of the present building is the original fabric of the Old Barracks. Effectively the northern gable and possibly parts of the southern gable contain the original fabric of the Old Barracks. It is probable that the eastern and western walls of the present building are later constructions, with different building lines, the eastern one reflecting the furthest extent of the Old Barrack building, but probably not incorporating any of the original fabric (Figure 39).

It is possible that the present rectangular Site 4 was originally two separate adjacent properties, namely the old barracks on the eastern side of the internal dividing walls of the fort and the building and yard on the opposing western side. At some stage, the two sites become one, with the demolition of the internal dividing wall of the fort, the demolition of parts of the old barrack building and construction of a new building slightly farther to the east and south. The southern extension was to the existing building line of the adjacent southern line of the yard. In the south west corner of the yard, a small structure, now removed, has access from the yard into the Site 5 which was a grassed open area prior to the subsequent construction of the Victorian style houses on the site. The access point was a simple doorway (Figure 40), which on the southern side of the boundary wall as viewed from Site 5 is reflected in the blocked area of red brick (Figure 41). An associated blocked up access point is also located at the northern corner to the rear of the yard in Site 5, located in the internal dividing wall of the fort. The access point like a doorway is block up with red brick (Figure 42) and the upper portions of the blocked doorway are visible on the opposite side of the boundary wall in Site 1.



Figure 40: View of northern side of blocked-up rectangular shaped doorway in c19th enclosed yard that enabled access to interior of the fort



Figure 41: View of southern side of blocked-up rectangular doorway that enabled access to yard associated with the C19th barracks

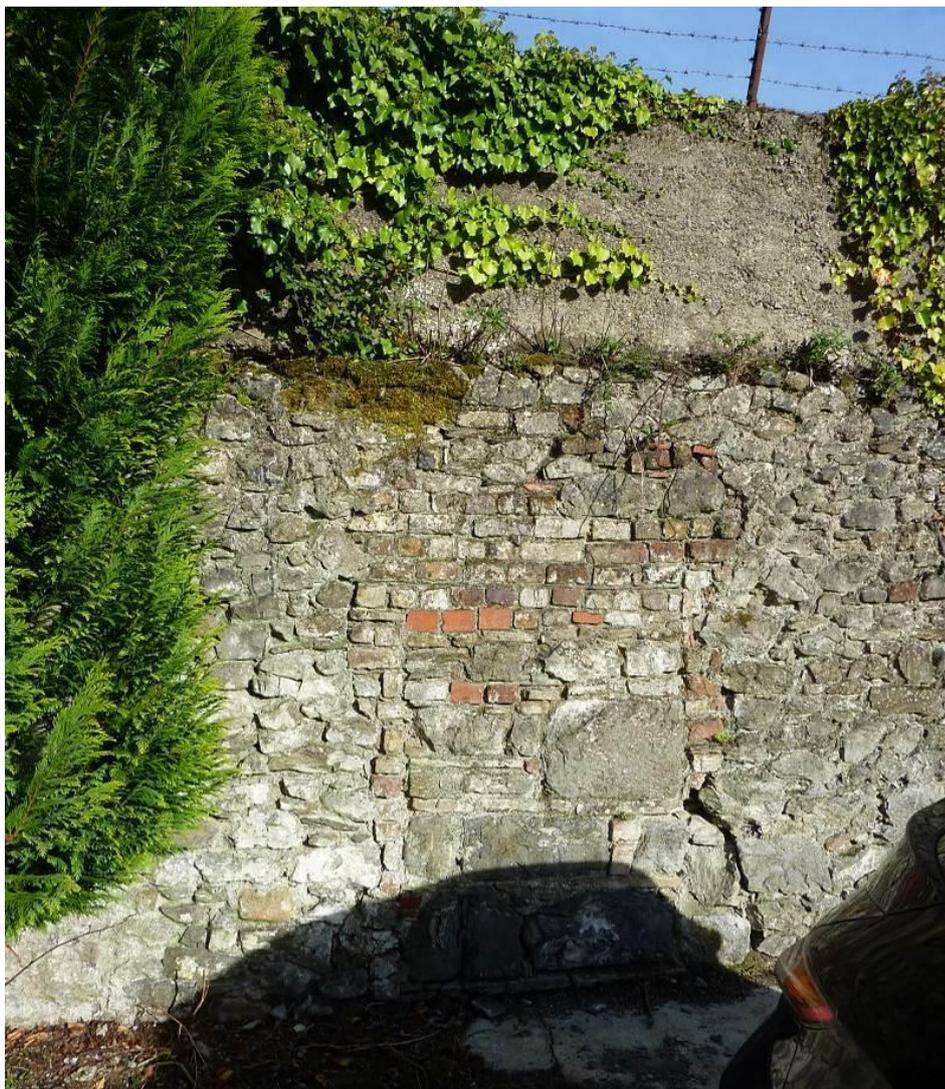


Figure 42: Detail of blocked-up doorway that enabled access from western (Site 5) and eastern (Site 1) internal division of the fort

4.5.5 Subterranean passages

There are accounts of subterranean passages/ tunnels in the vicinity of the Presentation Convent. Deigan (1991) mentions a tunnel being uncovered during restoration work in the convent in 1951, along a line from the centre of the bay to the rear of the convent. A subsequent archaeological assessment of the site in 2003, involved the mechanical excavation of a trench in front of the bay in order to identify whether there was any evidence of survival for such a feature (Deigan 1991, O’Flanagan 2003). The test excavation revealed the upper portion and exposed the sides of man-made stone feature that was 0.85m wide and ran perpendicular to the convent building. The structure appeared to be cut into deposits of a grey brown sandy soil and the trench was excavated to a depth of 1.70m. The overlying rubble of redbrick and stone was unstable and prevented further examination of the feature. The feature was interpreted as either a subterranean tunnel or a drain.

It is said that a second passage runs to or towards Fort Protector. To date there is no archaeological evidence for such a passage.

There is local knowledge of a subterranean passage having been exposed along Railway Street. The archaeological monitoring of the excavation of the test trench as part of the installation of broadband in Portlaoise along Railway Street in 2003/04 led to the discovery of a stone built box shore/culvert (03E0975). The culvert ran east/west along Railway Street. It was made using large mortared limestone slabs, had an average height of 0.67m and an average width of 0.38m and was filled with dark grey/black silt and sand. It is possible that the stone culvert discovered is the feature that is referred to locally as a subterranean passage.

4.6 Future direction

The production of the Fort Protector Conservation Plans is enabling the identification and analysis of various strands of information pertinent to understanding the archaeological heritage and significance of Fort Protector. The fort, despite the ravages of historical times and modern utilisation in the principal town in the County, is in the enviable position of having the best surviving intact surface expression of a Tudor plantation fort in the country.

Despite the fact that the fort is located in the town centre, it is perhaps fortunate that two sides of the fort (southern and eastern) are buffered by the presence of later buildings and associated yards. This has resulted in the probability of surviving ground with minimal subsurface disturbance. These sites offer an opportunity to obtain stratigraphic information, through archaeological excavation, that would give conclusive information about key physical features of Fort Protector. If archaeological excavations took place they should ideally be in the context of a research excavation which would be driven by the objective of answering specific questions we can ask of the fort.

4.6.1 The moat

The indication of the existence of a moat/ditch along the exterior of the fort circuit is shown on the historic maps of Fort Protector. To date there is no conclusive stratigraphic evidence of the presence of a moat and hence no information about the morphology of the moat in terms of width and depth and indications of any

associated features. The research has shown the archaeological monitoring of the construction associated with the installation of the Broadband Network in 2003/4 led to identification of a cut, which was interpreted as possibly being the cut for the moat. Due to the nature of the works, limited to a watching brief only, there was no opportunity to widen the excavation slit trench and ascertain the nature and extent of the cut.

Four locations have been identified that would warrant archaeological investigation and should produce evidence about the nature, extent and location of the moat.

- The present entrance to the car park at O’Loughlin’s Hotel along Railway Street, offers an opportunity to excavate a test trench that would generate stratigraphic information through a cross section of the fort wall, as it survives in its sub-surface context. The excavation would gather information about the foundation details of the fort wall and would identify stratigraphic evidence of the moat/ditch at this location.
- The external circuit of the circular bastion (along the footpath at the base of the bastion) is an ideal location for geophysical survey. The research has shown the identification of a possible cut for the moat (Delaney 2003) during the installation of the Broadband Network, however targeted geophysical survey around the circuit of the bastion should be able to identify the location and width of the moat. The results of the geophysical survey could be used as the basis for later targeted excavation of the moat.
- The grassed area along the exterior of the fort wall at Fitzmaurice Place, offers an opportunity to investigate the area of the moat, at a public space that can be controlled and enable the public see the progress of the archaeological excavation. The excavation would identify the impact of the industrial heritage (i.e. water channel) on any sub-surface remains of the surviving moat. The sub-surface remnants of the moat could be incorporated into the public space enabling public engagement through information boards that would outline the reasons for and the results of the archaeological excavation. The excavation results combined with the information from the previous archaeological assessments along Church Avenue (O’Flanagan 2003: 03E0596 & Myles 2011: 11E0442) would assist in the dissemination of knowledge about the presence and significance of the Fort, its topographical location and its role in the formation of the present-day town of Portlaoise.
- The car-park to the rear of the former Shaw’s department store offers a unique opportunity to investigate the best surviving, accessible and potentially undisturbed portion of the moat of Fort Protector. Whilst there are existing services, the sub-surface disturbance appears to be limited to the exterior of the moat. The site is an enclosed secure yard that offers a secure working environment for an archaeological excavation and one that would facilitate safe controllable public access to view the archaeological excavation. The moat once exposed and excavated could be incorporated into any future design that is planned for this open space when utilised as a public library.

4.6.2 The internal surface of the fort

A sizeable portion of the internal area of the fort offers potential to contain undisturbed ground, notably the school grounds (Site 1). The cartographic sources indicate the presence of a longitudinal structure at the southern side of Site 1. It is uncertain whether the historic reference of 1685 to the King's House, as being in a bad state of repair with the timbers removed, is referring to the longitudinal structure in the school grounds.

The northern portion of the school grounds adjacent to the wall of the fort is made-up ground and there is a possibility that geophysical surveying techniques can penetrate the overburden to identify underlying structures. The cartographic sources indicate the presence of an earthen embankment along the line of the interior of the northern fort wall. The only location where the embankment might have sub-surface survival along the northern fort wall is in this area of made-up ground. Targeted geophysical survey (i.e. ground penetrating radar) should be able to detect the presence of the embankment, if it survives.

The southern portion of the school grounds adjacent to the wall of the fort is worthy of geophysical survey as the ground is shallower and the likelihood of undisturbed buried features is good. The geophysical survey would aid in the identification of the earthen embankment that is shown on the cartographic sources and presumably survives in situ. The results of the geophysical survey should be used to design a methodology for a potential archaeological excavation of a portion of this area perpendicular to the fort wall. This would enable a link up with any archaeological excavation within the former Shaw's site and ultimately produce a stratigraphic section through the site, revealing the nature, extent and context for the external moat, fort wall, internal embankment and internal structures within Fort Protector.

The research has shown that the removal of topsoil during the construction of the surface car-park in Site 5 was archaeologically monitored and revealed that there were no structures or soils of archaeological significance. It is probable that due to the relatively shallow cover of topsoil, that the car-park area of O'Loughlin's Hotel (Site 15) has a low probability of surviving sub-surface archaeological material.

4.6.3 The rectangular bastion or castle

The form and location of the rectangular bastion is a question of great interest in terms of the future development of Fort Protector. There are no visible ground level surviving indications for the presence of a castle on the site, nor are there any known historical references to a castle. There is a possibility that the fort was built upon a former medieval bawn or tower house, but this is speculative. The historic engraving by the antiquarian Francis Grose may indicate a bawn wall surrounding an internal structure. There is no surface evidence for such a structure.

The area of Bergin's yard (Site 14) offers an opportunity to carry out a targeted geophysical survey within the yard to identify any sub-surface foundations associated with the bastion. The results of the geophysical survey would form the basis for any planned archaeological excavation within this yard area to reveal sub-surface archaeology.

4.6.4 The fort walls

The assessment based upon the visual inspection of the fort walls has shown slight fluctuations in terms of the height of the surviving sections of fort wall, with the wall being an average of 2.10-2.40m in height at the lower portion. The upper portions vary greatly in present day height, notably at the northern fort wall along Church Street. The variations at the eastern half are due to functional retention as garden walls and incorporation into later sheds and buildings for functioning businesses.

The assessment has shown that there are no visible remnants of the original fort entrance, which according to cartographic sources was located along the middle of the western fort wall. The best surviving portion of fort wall, along the southern and eastern portions of the fort reveal the consistent use of roughly coursed natural pieces of stone. There were surprisingly few identifiable pieces of re-used stone in the wall fabric. However, it must be borne in mind that several sections of the fort wall are rendered and so are obscured from view. The possibility for the identification of re-used cut stone still exists, but will only be visible if portions of the fort wall should be cleared of overgrowth or stripped of render.

The only re-used fragment of cut stone is located at the upper portions of the wall of Bergin's yard (Site 14) and is the base of a cut stone window, associated with either a previous building on the site or the St. Peter's church on the opposite side of Railway Street, which was built around the same time of Fort Protector. The re-used piece of cut stone is located at a later addition to summit of the wall.

In terms of defensive architectural features along the wall, there are no visible gun loops along the circuit of the fort, nor is there any evidence for crenellation (i.e. crenel (gap) and merlon (rise)) along the circuit of the fort wall. This is not surprising, as crenellation has an implicit association with status sites i.e. bawns which would not necessarily have been the preserve of Fort Protector and its role as a garrison.

The assessment of the fort has resulted in the identification of three stones bearing incised letters, possibly initials. The significance of these stones is uncertain at this point, but the one located in the upper portions of the circular bastion may be the initials of a craftsperson who worked on/oversaw the construction of the fort, or subsequent repairs to the circular bastion. Such features are interesting pieces of the cultural heritage of the fort that offer a connection between the former fort and the people who built or inhabited it.

4.6.5 Potential for community outreach

The archaeological assessment has identified a worthwhile avenue for the conservation of Fort Protector and community outreach. Specific portions of the fort are recommended for further archaeological works as part of the conservation and interpretation of the fort. There is a growing appetite amongst communities for gaining involvement in archaeological projects. There are unique opportunities in this conservation project to carry out some of the archaeological excavation as a community archaeology project, which could invite community members to partake in the activities of the archaeological excavation process.

In addition, open days and planned site visits for school children and interested groups would strengthen the profile and value of the archaeological excavation and the conservation of the fort in particular. It is recommended that a social media

platform for the Conservation of Fort Protector be established in the short term as a means of disseminating the information gathered together thus far to the local community and a wider culturally curious audience.

Links with other interested groups and stakeholders from similar projects (e.g. Enniskillen Castle) should be nurtured and field excursions organised.

Table 1 Archaeological actions recommended for the conservation of Fort Protector

Action	Short term	Long term
	<i>(less than one 1 year)</i>	<i>(between 1 and 5 years)</i>
Test trench at entrance to O'Loughlin's Hotel (Site 15)	Archaeological consultant	
Hand excavation of moat on Fitzmaurice Place (Site 2)		Community engagement
Hand excavation of moat in Shaw's yard (Site 18)		Development related excavation
Hand excavation of earthen embankment in school (Site 1)		Community engagement
Targeted geophysical survey in Site 1	Northern and southern boundary	
Targeted geophysical survey in Bergin's yard (Site 14)	Complete yard	
Targeted geophysical survey on Church Street	At basal circuit of Circular bastion	

5.0 Assessment of Significance

5.1 Architectural Interest

The Fort Protector marks the establishment of the town of Portlaoise, which began as a fortified enclosure on three sides of the Fort wall. It was one of two major plantation Forts built as garrisons of the newly conquered territories of Laois and Offaly.

Its significance is complemented by a number of adjacent sites relating to the genesis of the town, including a contemporary stone tower embedded within the nineteenth century Presentation Convent which adjoins the Fort to the east, and the Old St Peter's Church to the west.

5.2 Historical Significance

Building of the Fort commenced in 1547-48 as part of the suppression of the Gaelic Irish territories of the O'More and O'Connor clans. The plantation of Laois and Offaly followed shortly afterwards, and was formalised in the creation of King's County and Queen's County in 1556. This was the first English plantation in Ireland, following the Tudor policy to expand English control outside of the Pale. It was followed by the plantations of Munster (begun 1586), Ulster (begun 1606) and other smaller plantations. In international terms the Fort can be seen as the beginning of English colonial expansion, built 60 years before the settlement of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. In 1920 the town was renamed after the Fort, the old name 'Maryborough' being changed to Portlaoise, the Gaelic term used for town, meaning 'Fort of Laois'

5.3 Technical Interest

The construction of the Fort is of interest as an example of military engineering and fortification in the Tudor period.

5.4 Archaeological Interest

Fort Protector has the best above ground survival of a Tudor plantation fort in Ireland which makes it of national and international significance. The site is a known archaeological monument which is indicated on the Record of Monuments and Places and has statutory protection under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014. The site is not a National Monument, but all works carried out within the zone of archaeological significance associated with the fort must have the required legal approval from the Minister of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

The town of Portlaoise grew around the fort with associated businesses developing from the market function of the town. In recent years, several developments were the subject of archaeological assessments and monitoring briefs in advance of and during the construction stage respectively. The archaeological assessments have shown that:

- the interior of a substantial portion of the fort contained no identifiable archaeological strata and had a relatively shallow cover of topsoil.
- the moat as shown on the cartographic sources is present on Church Street close to the circular bastion.

- the adjacent sites of the former church (now demolished) and the former Presentation Convent are located on ground that was substantially raised during the late seventeenth century.
- the local lore of the existence of a subterranean passage linking the convent to the interior of Fort Protector, may be related to the existence of a probable passage to the rear of the convent in the garden area.
- the road carriageway along Railway Street contains a subterranean stone culvert and a coursed stone wall of unknown origin and function.
- the water channel associated with the industrial heritage of Odlum's Mill links to the remnants of a millrace channel identified on Peppers Lane.

The Tudor fort is of interest in terms of disciplines addressing issues of conflict. The moat of the fort if excavated has the potential to have the survival of the remains of those who perished in conflict situations and offer the potential to uncover artefactual objects in use at the time. The history of conflict associated with the fort is symbiotic with the history of St. Peter's church and graveyard, where many of the inhabitants of the fort and people who died in conflict or skirmishes were likely to have been buried.

The land was formerly under the control of the O'Mores and the question remains as to whether there was an earlier structure at this locations related to their control of the land prior to the construction of the Fort Protector. The location of the bastion is now limited in terms of opportunities for archaeological investigation, as the sites are functioning business premises and dwellings.

The known historical references to the state of disrepair of the King's House at Maryborough may refer to the building indicated in details on the cartographic sources. If the recommended geophysical survey progressed and identified the remnants of the structure, it would be one of the first Tudor buildings identified in the town of Portlaoise.

5.5 Potential as a Significant Heritage Site

Today the interior of the Fort is subdivided into many separate properties, some large and some small. Although 80% of the enclosing wall survives in some form above ground, the Fort remains widely unknown to the townspeople and to visitors, and its immense heritage significance is not appreciated.

PART II CONSERVATION ISSUES

6.0 Threats to Significance

6.1 Public Awareness of the Site

The Fort Protector is a largely unknown and under-appreciated site. Although it is generally known that Portlaoise was established as part of the Plantation of Laois and Offaly, it is not generally understood by the wider population of the county that there are substantial surviving remains of a key built feature of the plantation.

This lack of awareness represents a threat to the significance of the Fort. The Fort lies in what might be regarded as the 'backlands' of the town. It has only a minor presence in the urban landscape of the town, and many regard it as an ordinary stone wall like any other which one might see in a historic setting.

Such low regard can result in poor decisions being made on the future of the site, and lack of interest or opposition where damaging developments are proposed. Similarly, lack of awareness can facilitate erosion of the site through minor modifications within individual properties around its perimeter.

In order for the Fort to become accepted as an important part of the built heritage an increased level of awareness needs to be generated. The 'Old Fort Quarter Festival', which took place in the summer of 2016 as an initiative of local traders in association with the Laois Heritage Society and with the support of Laois County Council, marked a significant move towards wider public awareness. This Conservation Plan, as well as associated public consultation, public talks, newspaper articles, publications and features in broadcast media can help to embed the site in the public consciousness.

Achievement of the aims of the Conservation Plan would be furthered greatly if the Fort were widely recognised as one of the primary heritage sites of the county.

6.2 Multiple Ownership of the Site

The course of the perimeter wall of the Fort forms the boundary to, or bisects, 22 individual properties, and two other properties are linked historically to the site, namely the Presentation Convent (Site 23) and Old St Peter's Church (Site 24, see map opposite)

Conservation of a site which is subdivided amongst a large number of owners and occupiers requires a coordinated approach. To achieve success the Conservation Plan must recognise all of these parties as stakeholders, and the policies which are developed would need to be adopted by a key number of them.

Four property owners have the largest stake in the future of the site. These are the Presentation Order (Sites 1 and 23), Laois County Council (Sites 2, 3, 18 and 24), O'Loughlin's Hotel (Site 15), and the owners of Site 5. The Laois-Offaly Education and Training Board owns a large site within the Fort (Site 6), but have a lesser role to play as this site is substantially built upon. A number of smaller properties can play a significant part in the enhancement of the site, notably the owners of Sites 4, 13 and 14.

At present three significant properties are on the market (Sites 1, 4 and 23 - see Figure 43), each of which must be seen as key sites. Purchasers of these properties will become important stakeholders in the future of the site.

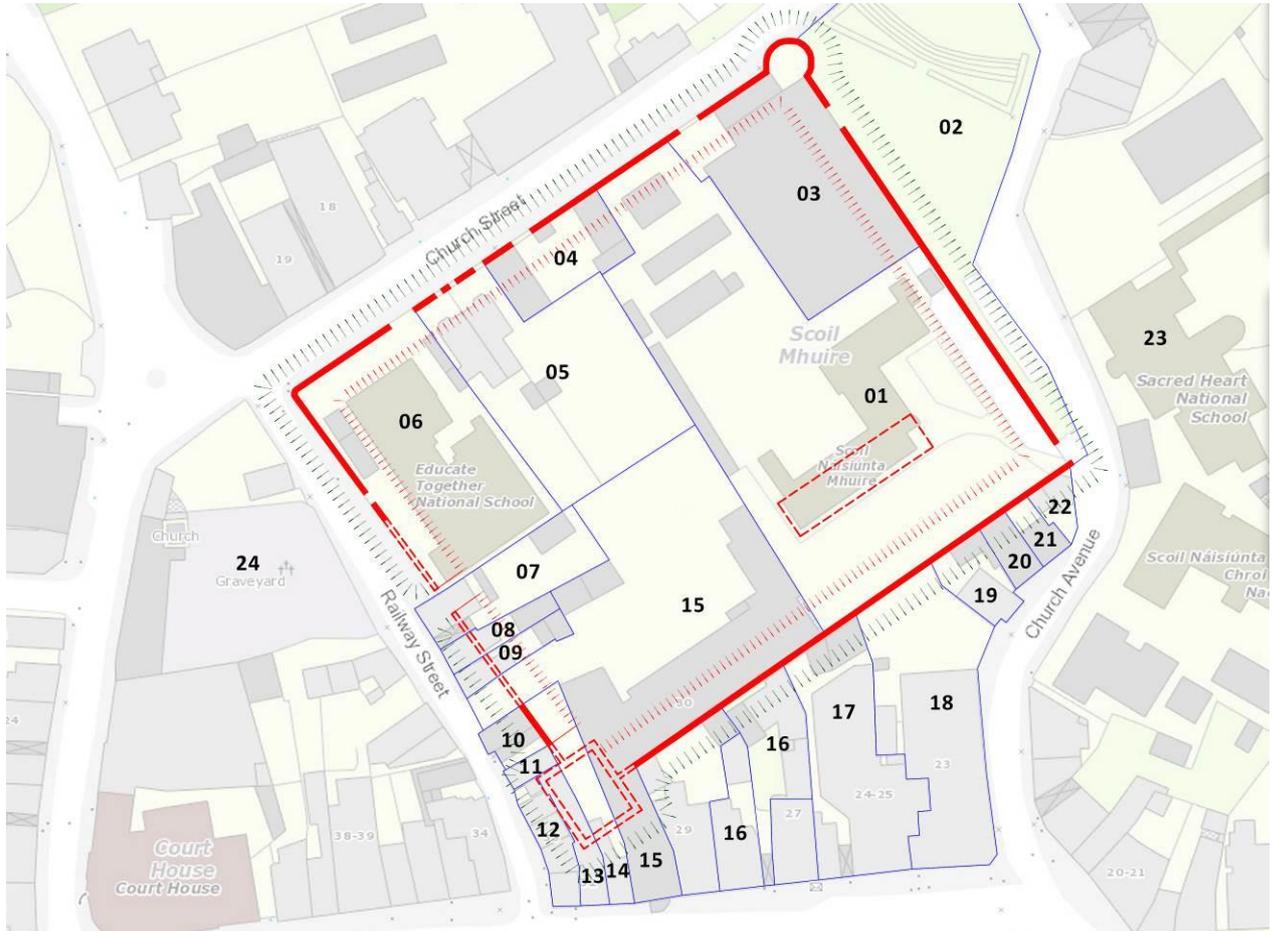


Figure 43: : Property boundaries within and around the Fort

6.3 Development Pressure

The Fort is located in the town centre and development over the centuries has encroached on its fabric, extending up to the south wall of the Fort over most of its length over what had been a large open market place, and building over the former defensive ditch. Already by 1837 urban development had begun to extend into the Fort, with the south-western corner subdivided into small plots around the site of the recently demolished Castle, and extending along Railway Street to the point where the Fort entrance had been located. By this time, the property divisions seen today in the remainder of the western half of the Fort had become established, although apart from the outbuildings referred to as the 'Old Barracks' and the internal boundary walls, none of the buildings standing today had yet been built.

However, up until the mid-twentieth century development was restricted to the western half of the Fort interior, and an aerial photograph of 1932 (Figure 44) shows a large open space, which was known as the 'Rampart Field', covering the eastern half. The photo shows what appears to be a green strip outside the eastern wall, occupying what had been a raised mill pond, also seen on historic Ordnance Survey maps and in a Lawrence Collection photograph of c. 1900 (Figure 46). The photo also shows a two storey range of outbuildings against the inside of the south wall, with smaller accretions, on the site now occupied by O'Loughlin's Hotel function room.



Figure 44: Aerial photo of the 'Rampart Field', Odlum's Mill, Catholic Church and Presentation Convent, 1932



Figure 45: Aerial view c. 1960 (www.portlaoisepictures.com)

By 1959, Odlum's Mills, which stood outside the Fort on what is now Fitzmaurice Place, had extended into the Fort, building a warehouse in the north-eastern corner,

and the remainder had been acquired by the Presentation Sisters who built the Scoil Mhuire primary school as a free-standing building.

The largest site within the Fort, the site of the Scoil Mhuire, is now part of an 8-acre land bank owned by the Presentation Order and the parish of Portlaoise, which has been placed on the market as a development site. Any commercial building development on the Scoil Mhuire part of these lands could have serious negative impact on the significance of the Fort protector as a heritage site.



Figure 46: Lawrence Collection photograph of Mill Pond, Catholic Church and Presentation Convent.

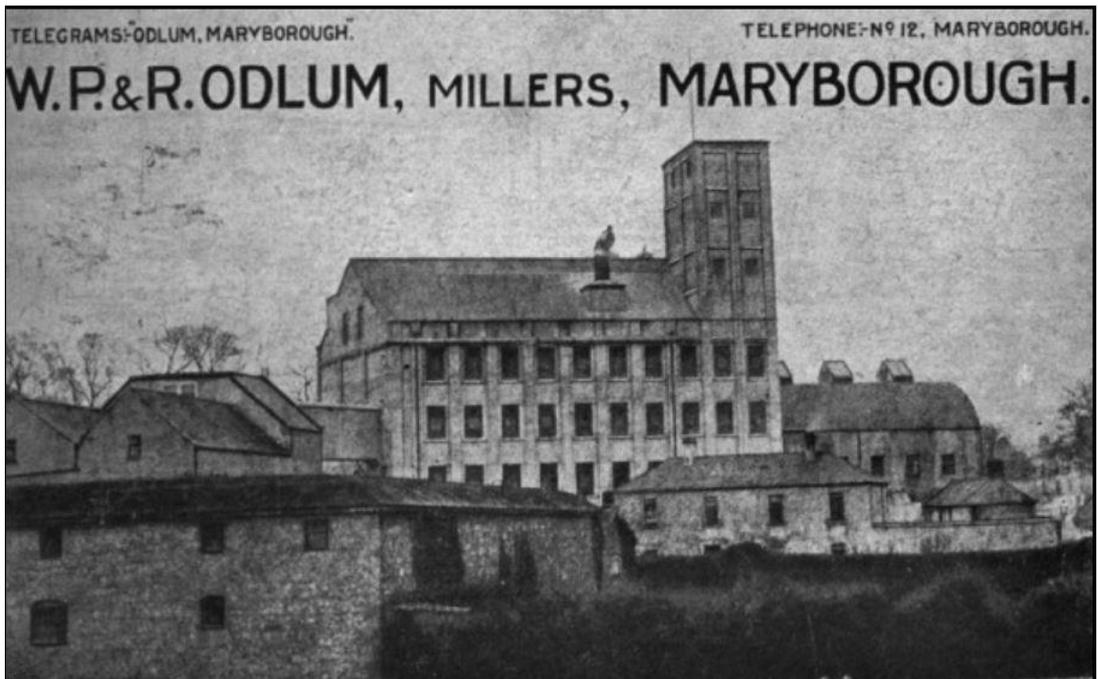


Figure 47: Image of Odlum's Mill, c. 1910 (www.portlaoisepictures.com)

7.0 Planning and Development

In order to safeguard the Fort site from commercial development, planning policies need to be put in place, which would safeguard the remaining open space in the interior of the Fort.

Such policies must ensure that any buildings constructed would reinforce the integrity of the historic site, rather than contributing to further fragmentation, or to the loss or incremental erosion of its significance.

Similarly, developments on sites adjoining the walls, or forming part of the urban setting of the Fort should be subject to planning controls which enhance the presentation of the Fort within the urban landscape of Portlaoise.

7.1 Adoption of the Conservation Plan

In order to facilitate the implementation of the policies and strategies adopted in the Conservation Plan, it would be important to aim to have its policies adopted by Laois County Council as part of the planning policy for the town and county.

The project team should therefore identify Laois County Council as a key stakeholder in the future of the Fort Protector and should engage in close consultation with all relevant council officials in the development of the policies of the Conservation Plan.

7.2 Development Plans and Strategies

7.2.1 Public Realm Strategy

A Public Realm Strategy is currently in preparation for the town centre of Portlaoise, commissioned by the planning department of Laois County Council. The Strategy is being developed by a multi-disciplinary team led by GVA Apelona, and including Lotts Architecture as architectural heritage consultant.

It will be important for the Laois Heritage Society to take part in public consultations as part of the development of the strategy and to make representations to the team to ensure that issues affecting the setting of the Fort are given due consideration, and to avoid conflicts with the aims of the Conservation Plan.

7.2.2 County Development Plan

A new Laois County Development Plan for 2017 to 2023 is currently in the drafting process. It will be important for the Laois Heritage Society to take part in public consultations and make submissions to ensure that concerns relating to the Fort are considered in the forming the new planning framework for the county.

7.2.3 Portlaoise Local Area Plan

The current Portlaoise Local Area Plan (LAP) for the period 2012-2018 emphasises the importance of the Fort Protector as a rare built element of the first significant English Plantation in Ireland, and identifies its potential to become an important heritage site with the capacity to greatly raise the profile of the town.

The LAP makes reference to a now superseded proposal to redevelop the part of the Fort interior owned by Laois County Council as a Branch Library and County Council Archive.

It would be important to make submissions in the development of the next LAP with the objective of ensuring that the planning policies developed in the Conservation Plan would be adopted into the LAP and thus elevated onto a statutory footing.

7.3 Redevelopment of the former Ecclesiastical Quarter

7.3.1 Former CBS Lands and Railway Station

The lands of the former Christian Brothers School provide a key development opportunity for the northern part of the town centre. This swathe of land extends northwards from the former school on Tower Hill on the northern side of the Fort to the Railway Station. This site has the benefit of an hourly train service linking it to the national rail network, and into a commuter service to Dublin.

Reactive approaches to the development of key sites of this nature will unavoidably focus on the interests of the development itself, and can miss opportunities for increased connectivity within the town and enhancement of sites such as the Fort Protector which lie outside the bounds of the development.

The development of the CBS lands has the potential to improve the standing and presence of the Fort Protector in a regenerated urban quarter. For this to happen it is recommended that a well-designed urban masterplan should be developed for this site, which would improve the standing of the Fort, and if possible introduce a new public route through the lands, whether it be a greened pedestrian walk, a cycle route or a vehicular street, linking the Railway Station to the eastern side of the Fort, to encourage the vitality and urban quality of Fitzmaurice Place and Church Avenue, and to serve the future redevelopment of the Presentation Order lands which lie to the east.

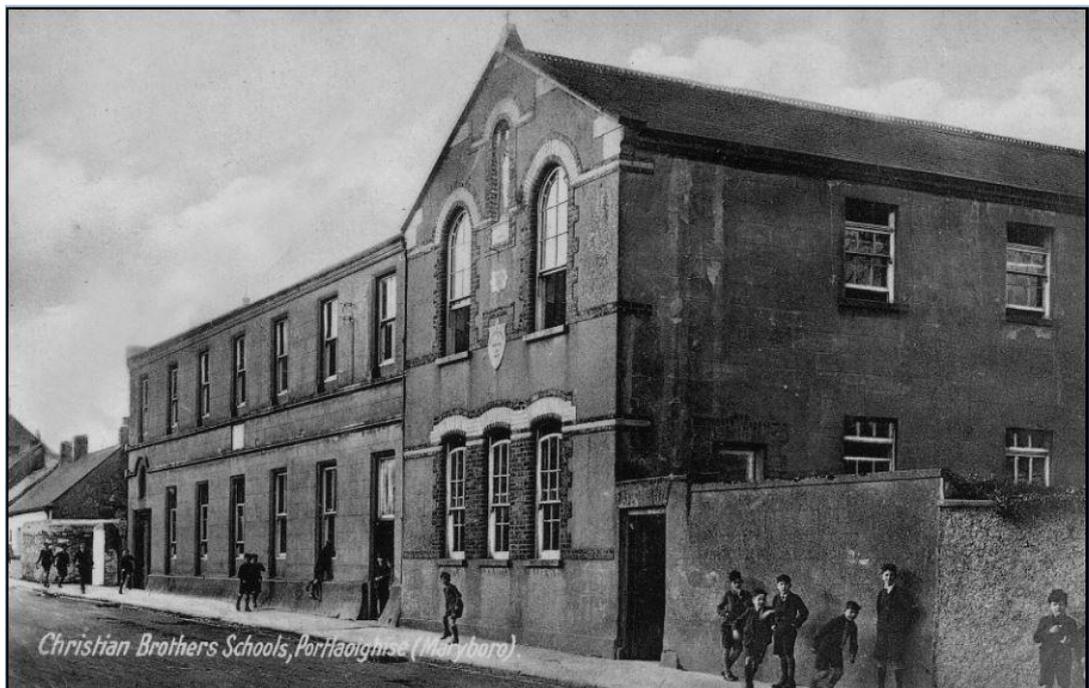


Figure 48: Former CBS School, c. 1928 (www.portlaoisepictures.com)

7.3.2 Former Presentation Lands

The former Presentation Convent lands are currently for sale. This 3.24 ha site (c. 8 acres) includes the Scoil Mhuire portion of the Fort, as well as the former Presentation convent incorporating the remains of the 'Storehouse', known to date back to the foundation of the town in the mid-1500s. The lands also encompass the site of the former Catholic Church of SS Peter and Paul opposite the Fort on Church Avenue, green areas extending behind these across the Triogue River to Ridge Road, the Presentation Scoil Chríost Rí including a collection of protected structures on Church Avenue, the backlands of Lower Main Street and Bridge Street extending as far as the eighteenth-century Portleix House on the Dublin Road opposite the entrance to the historically significant Ridge Graveyard (see Figure 49).

The form of development which takes place on this site will be of crucial importance to the future of the Fort Protector and its historic setting. Here, as with the CBS lands, a well-designed masterplan must form the basis for any development, in order to ensure that the proposal responds adequately to the wider urban issues involved in the development of the site.

The purchaser of the site would become an important stakeholder in the Fort Protector, and should be closely consulted in the development of the Conservation Plan. The policies of the Conservation Plan should not, however, become compromised by the vested interest of any future owner.



Figure 49: Presentation Convent lands, now for sale

To ensure the proper conservation of the Fort Protector, it would be important that any development of the Presentation lands should take account of the following:

- The area within the Fort (Site 1) should be preserved as open space. Any building within the Fort should be a public amenity structure, ideally assisting in the interpretation of the heritage site.
- The Presentation Convent building, as an important protected structure with protection under the National Monuments Acts, should be reused in a manner

sympathetic to the proper conservation of its fabric and features, safeguarding its setting and its association to the Fort.

- The underground tunnel thought to connect the Fort to the convent and extending beneath its rear garden should be protected, conserved and made accessible to the mutual benefit of both heritage sites.
- The protected structures within the Scoil Chríost Rí on Church Avenue, including the socially significant classroom structure known as the ‘Ha’penny Babies’ to the front of the site, should be retained and suitably adapted for reuse.
- A publicly accessible pedestrian connection should be created across the lands to connect the Fort Protector site and the Presentation Convent to the Ridge Graveyard, possibly integrating a potential Triogue linear park, in a way which would reinforce the understanding of the historical relationship of this sequence of heritage sites to the foundation of the town.

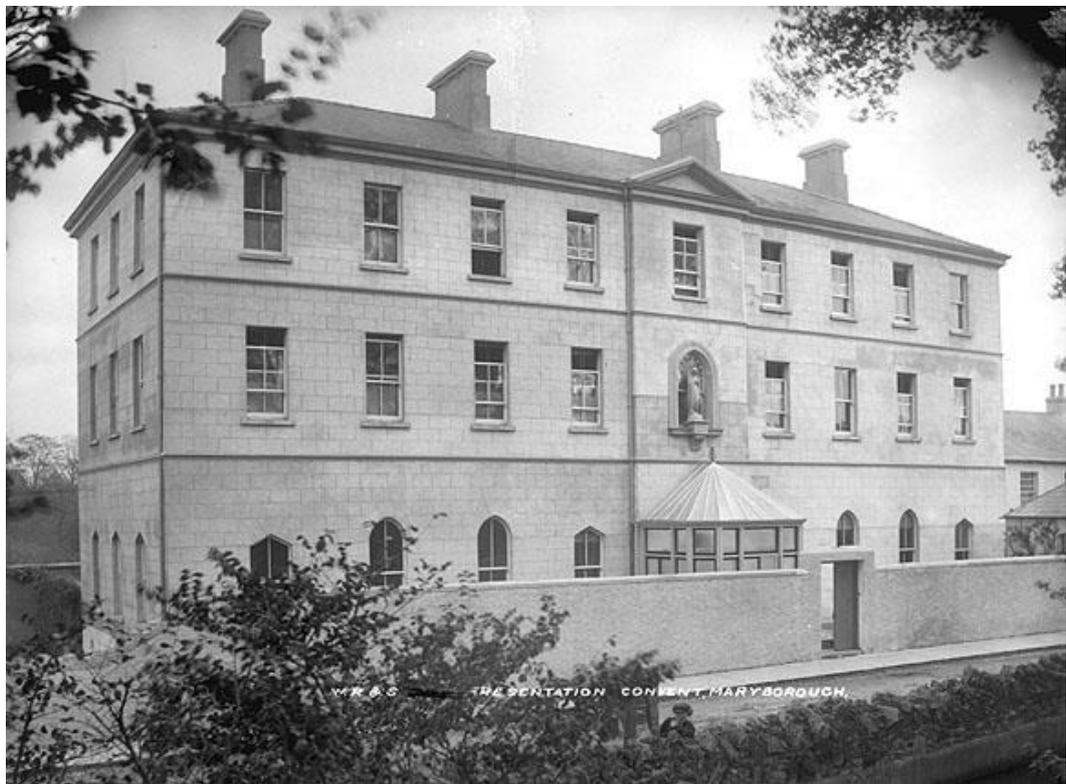


Figure 50: The Presentation Convent in its heyday, as recorded in the Lawrence Collection, c. 1900

8.0 Conservation of Surviving Fabric

The surviving fabric of the Fort is in poor condition, and conservation work is necessary in all areas. In order to reinforce the character of the Fort wall as an integrated site, rather than as a disparate collection of fragments, a coordinated approach to its conservation should be adopted.

8.1 Conservation Principles

All works should follow internationally accepted Conservation Principles, as defined by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in the Venice Charter of 1964, and in subsequent charters. These may be summarised as follows:

- Conservation work should be based on an understanding of the site and its historical development and the primary aim should be to retain and recover the significance of the site.
- Any alterations should be carried out in accordance with the principle of ‘minimal intervention’.
- Repairs to original fabric should always be favoured over replacement. Where replacement of an original element is unavoidable, this should be historically accurate in form and materials.
- Where lost elements must be reconstructed, these should aim for historic authenticity and avoid conjecture in as far as possible.
- Modern interventions should be reversible and if appropriate visually identifiable. New work should be recorded.
- Works should be carried out by suitably skilled craftspeople with proven expertise in their trade working with historic buildings.

In addition to the general principles articulated above, specific works should follow the DAHRRGA Advice Series publications, in particular Ruins, The Conservation of Masonry Ruins (Quinlan et al, Dublin 2010).

8.2 Presentation of Existing Wall

8.2.1 Conservation Approach

The conservation of the Fort wall might follow a number of different approaches. The correct approach should be selected, based on an evaluation of its justification under conservation principles.

- An approach of ‘restoration’ might be appropriate where sound evidence of the historic form of the Fort wall can be obtained, whether from written accounts, or through comparison to well-preserved comparable contemporary exemplars. Physical examination of the fabric of surviving Fort walls at Daingean, Leighlinbridge, Blackford or other plantation-era fortifications should inform such details, supported by written accounts or contemporary topographical depictions.
- An approach of ‘conservation as found’ would be appropriate where no reliable evidence can be found to justify alteration of the existing detail. In this approach, the fabric of the wall should be secured and repaired, and only those elements

restored where they have been locally reduced in height, and where evidence can be found elsewhere in the perimeter wall of its historic form.

8.2.2 Removal of Vegetation

The presentation of the wall would benefit from removal of vegetation, such as buddleia, valerian, ivy and Virginia creeper. This should be done in a manner which does not damage the fabric of the wall. Indiscriminate use of biocides should be avoided for reasons of public health and to prevent possible damage to historic mortars.

8.2.3 Rendered sections of wall

Some sections of wall have been coated with wet dash renders or smooth sand-cement. Other areas may retain remains of renders of dating from the original Fort.

The removal of renders should only be undertaken after careful consideration of its significance and of the damage which could be caused to the underlying masonry.

Render to the lowered sections of the Fort wall outside the former Vocational School and the pair of Victorian houses on Tower Hill have taken on significance in their own right, as they demonstrate how the fabric of the thick battered Fort wall became integrated into later buildings of architectural heritage interest in the town.

Similarly any render which might have been applied when the Fort was first built, or within its time as a military fortress would be of technical significance, and its composition should be analysed and recorded to inform any reinstatement work.

8.2.4 Isolated faces of wall visible in rear yards

The overall coherence of the Fort Protector remains would benefit enormously from conservation of isolated wall sections, such as the parts of the outer face of the wall visible in the rear yard behind O'Loughlin's Hotel/Medical Hall, to the rear of Kavanagh's pub, the Blue Door and in the rear of the future County Library on the former Shaw's site. These parts have been dislocated from the whole, and it would be important that a consistent detail be agreed for their presentation.

Ideally this would involve removal of later renders and pointing of the stonework with a soft lime-sand mortar based on the composition of that used in 1548.

These small projects might be applicable works for DAHRRG conversation grants administered by Laois County Council under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme, or for the Heritage Management Scheme administered by the Heritage Council.

8.2.5 Repairs to Fabric

Repairs should be carried out based on research into the detail found in comparable structures. This research should be covered in Phase III of the Conservation Plan. Analysis of renders may be required in order to specify specific works.

Detail and profile of wall copings, pointing style and composition, appropriateness of removal of renders or of reinstatement of lost renders will follow from this research.

8.2.6 Restoration of Missing Elements

Missing sections of wall should be reinstated where possible. This might include:

- The large door opening into the former Odlum's warehouse (Site 3), which connected into the former mill on Fitzmaurice Place (Site 2)
- The corner entrance into Scoil Mhuire (Site 1)
- The entrance into the Laois County Council cleansing depot from Tower Hill (Site 3)
- The opening into the former 'Old Barracks (Site 4), unless it can be established that this opening is of enough antiquity to be regarded as integral to the layered significance of the site.
- The lost section of wall in front of the extension of the former Vocational School (former Pound Site).
- Openings within sites to the rear of Main Street, if compatible with current building uses.

Lowered sections of wall should be restored to their original height, where this is known, such as the part which was replaced with concrete block along the frontage of Scoil Mhuire (Site 1) facing Church Avenue/ Fitzmaurice Place.

However, lowered sections of the Fort wall outside the former Vocational School and the pair of Victorian houses on Tower Hill should not be altered, as these have taken on significance in their own right, demonstrating how the fabric of the battered Fort wall became integrated into later buildings of architectural heritage interest, and thereby contributing to the overall heritage value of the Fort as it survives today.

8.3 Earthworks

8.3.1 Surrounding ditch

The defensive ditch or fosse which surrounded the Fort is important to the proper understanding of its military function and original form.

Opportunities should be sought for archaeological investigation which would provide better insight into the historic form of this ditch. Although it is probable in some areas that buried evidence may have been disturbed in later developments, archaeological examination and recording should be undertaken in any new development or in laying of underground services adjoining the outside of the Fort perimeter.

In particular, the rear sections of the plots to the back of buildings on Main Street and Church Avenue, identified by Bradley (Laois, History and Society, 1999) by the consistent kink in property boundaries, should be subject to such investigation.

The site of the future Portlaoise Branch Library will provide an ideal opportunity for archaeological excavation. Permanent exposure of any uncovered ditch as part of the open space provided on the site would be an enormous benefit in terms of the understanding of the Fort, and would be appropriate in the context of the cultural programme of the building.

8.3.2 Internal bank

An earthen rampart or embankment is shown inside the walls on the Tudor map of the Town and Fort, and also on the historic Ordnance Survey maps of 1839 and 1907. These have been interpreted by Kerrigan (1995) as a defence against artillery and as providing a fighting platform for the garrison at the same level as a gun platform within the bastion.

This bank is therefore a significant military defensive feature of the Fort. The bank survives today with the grounds of Scoil Mhuire, although widened in places and buried in an artificially raised area adjoining Tower Hill (Site 1). Examination of the internal face of the wall in the adjoining yard of the Laois Co Council depot on Tower Hill (Site 3) shows thicker un-faced rubble in this lower portion, its rough composition suggesting that it was intended to be covered beneath the bank, and its greater thickness indicating its function as a retaining wall to support the bank.

The restoration of this bank would enhance the understanding of the historic form and defensive function of the Fort. Restoration should be based on archaeological investigation to determine the actual historic profile.

8.4 Fort Interior

The subdivision of the Fort interior must be regarded as detracting from the proper understanding of its original military purpose. The subdividing walls, although dating from the eighteenth century are of historic interest in their own right, but the overriding importance of the plantation Fort should not be subordinated to concerns to preserve these structures.

9.0 Development as a Heritage Attraction

9.1 Economic Benefit of a Visitor Attraction

In recent decades, residents and managers of cities and towns have come to recognise the importance of historic settings to their economic well-being. Well-presented urban spaces which have distinctive character add to the vibrancy of towns and generate economic activity, whether through tourism or spending by local people.

Development of the area vacated by the schools and religious foundations of the Presentation Sisters and the Irish Christian Brothers opens exciting possibilities for a development of architectural quality, enriched by well conserved historic buildings adapted for appropriate new uses.

The development of the Fort Protector as a visitor attraction can have the potential to imbue a cultural dimension on this much-needed redevelopment of the northern part of the town centre. The location of the Railway Station adjacent to these developments would connect this part of the town to the national rail network. This potential new cultural quarter would be the first part of the town encountered by rail-based visitors, and it lies close to the principal hotels in the town centre (Figure 51).

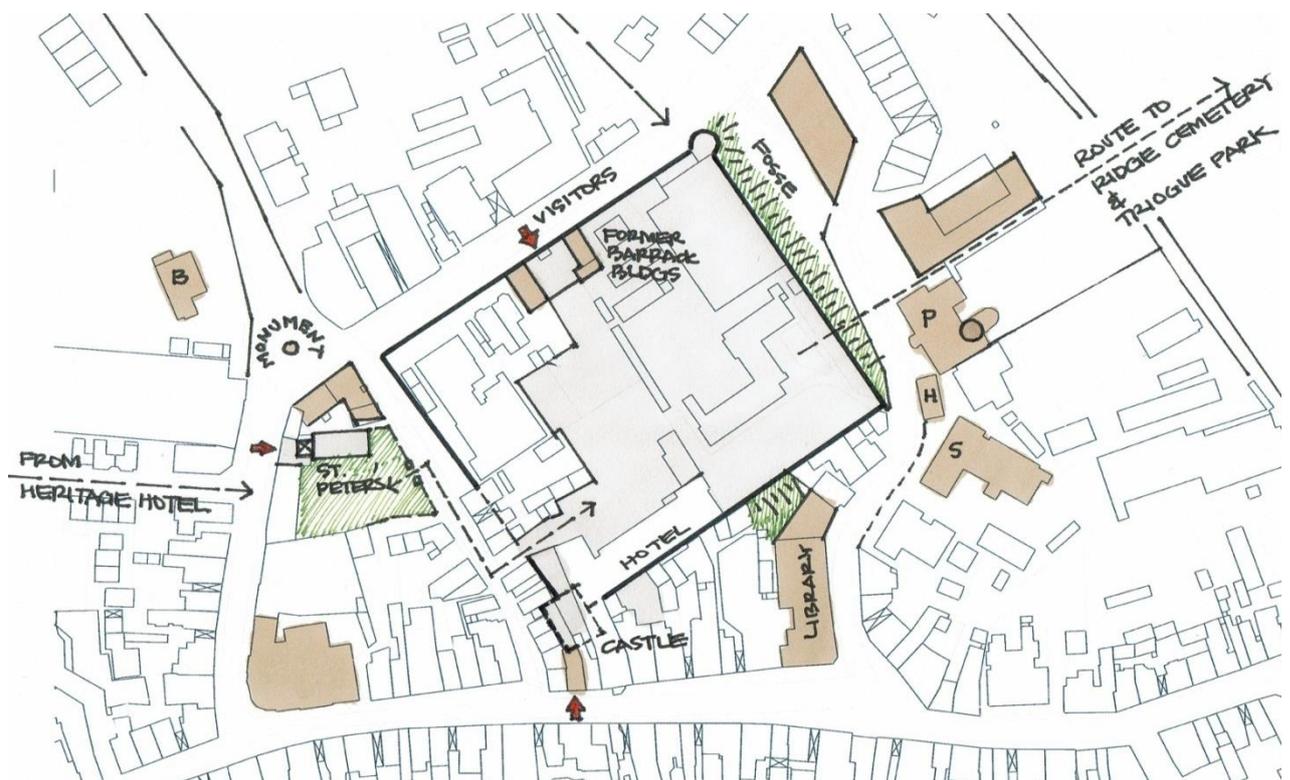
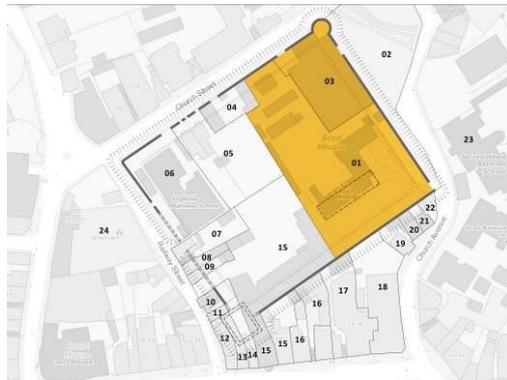


Figure 51: Site of the Fort Protector and surrounding sites of significant heritage interest

9.2 Potential for Assembly of a Heritage Site

The development of the interior of the fort as a visitor attraction would necessitate a degree of amalgamation of sites, whether under single ownership or under agreement between individual parties.

The following diagrams (Figure 52) show the potential which can be achieved by amalgamation of sites.



Amalgamation of the former Odlum's site and the vacated Scoil Mhuire (Sites 01 and 03) would reinstate an open space of almost half the original extent of the historic fort.



Addition of the former 'Old Barracks' (Site 04) would add considerably to the experience of the site. These historic structures carried on the barracks function of the fort until the construction of the New Barracks in 1805. They would provide an ideal historic setting for an exhibition and would reinforce the character of the site.



With the agreement of O'Loughlin's Hotel, the hotel car park might be reconfigured to give access to the fort interior from Railway Street. This entry point adjoins the gate to Old St Peter's and faces the front elevation of the former Presentation convent on the other side. This connection would enhance the understanding of the scale and setting of the fort.



Inclusion of the underused car park to the rear of the Victorian houses on Tower Hill would further add to the coherence and regularity of the space within the fort.

Figure 52: Potential for assembly of a heritage site within the Fort Protector

The site of the Castle of Maryborough lies within three plots on Main Street: Virgo (Site 13), Bergin's Jewellers (Site 14) and O'Loughlin's Hotel (Site 15). The surrounding ditch, and possibly elements of the castle structure, extend into the corner site at Railway Street (Site 12). The castle survived in ruins after its destruction

by Cromwell's forces in 1650, until it was eventually cleared away in 1835. Below-ground remains very probably survive within the narrow plots of Sites 13 and 14.

If these sites were acquired and the below-ground remains uncovered, they would significantly enrich the experience of the fort. Site 13 is fronted by a modest two-storey building of good historic character, and could form an appropriate access point to the fort site from the Main Street. This entry point would demonstrate the key position of the castle on high ground, as well as the story of how the fort became enveloped in the Georgian fabric of the town which grew up around it.

Site 13 does not connect directly to the fort interior. Therefore, the rear yard of Bergin's jewellery shop (Site 14) would have to be added to complete the connection to the rest of the historic site. This yard contains standing remains of the fort wall, possible below-ground remains of the castle, and would contribute a great deal to the understanding and interpretation of the historic fort.

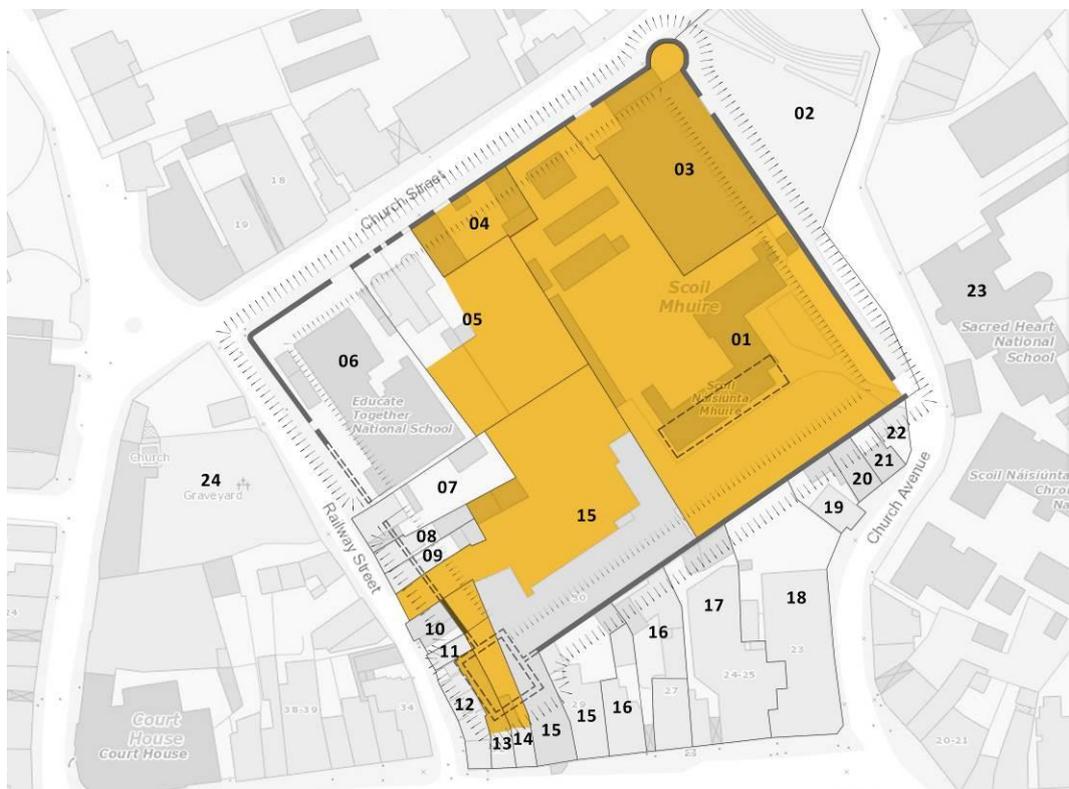


Figure 53: Largest achievable extent of assembled site within Fort Protector

9.3 Potential of a Restored Fort

9.3.1 Standing of the Town

A well conserved and appropriately presented Fort Protector would be a unique heritage site. Few towns in Ireland have a history so closely bound up with the Tudor conquest of this country. The development of a heritage site would create a direct link to that history. Currently there is only the vaguest of awareness, at national or even local level, that the name 'Port Laoise' refers to an actual physical structure, and the association of the town with the Laois-Offaly plantation is not usually made.

Restoration of the site could fundamentally change the perception of the town. The restored site would give greater meaning to the name 'Port Laoise' and the town

could become synonymous with this momentous period in Irish history, as Kilkenny is synonymous with the medieval period, or as Dublin is associated with Viking or Georgian history.

9.3.2 Connection to History of the Plantation

The plantation of Laois-Offaly was the first English plantation in Ireland, a new form of colonisation which eventually saw the conquest and anglicisation of the whole country, differing from the feudal order introduced in the Anglo-Norman invasion. This pattern may be said to have been a model for subsequent colonisation in North America and across the British Empire.

Whilst the more successful plantations of Munster and of Ulster have left a strong built legacy in terms of urban design, the built remains of the Laois-Offaly Plantation are more dispersed, and apart from academic study, little attention is paid to them. The Fort Protector if restored would be the key structure which could uncover and help interpret this under-represented period of history.

9.3.3 Presence within the Town

Since the demolition of Odlum's Mills and the creation of Fitzmaurice Place, the Fort Protector has re-asserted itself in a very modest way in the townscape of Portlaoise. However, the walls of the Fort are significantly eroded and the interior of the fort is inaccessible. Many townspeople, and most people in the hinterland of the town, are completely unaware of its presence.

The 'Old Fort Quarter Festival' in 2016 was a very successful first step in changing this situation. The festival illustrates the power of the Fort to form a strong identity for the town, and drew attention to the need to enhance its presence in the urban landscape. The fact that two full sides of the fort are exposed to view within the towns shows how dramatic the impact would be if it were fully restored and conserved.

9.3.4 Potential to Regenerate the Main Street

The restoration of the fort can become a driver for interesting developments to the rears of properties on Main Street. Three important businesses in the town centre, O'Loughlin's Hotel, Kavanagh's Bar and Venue and the Blue Door have rear sites which face the wall of the fort. In each case the wall is located within functional service yards, obscured from view or covered over by extensions, which were built in an ad-hoc manner without realisation of the significance of their setting.

Redevelopment of these yards to take advantage of the potential of the wall would help to re-define an 'Old Fort Quarter' in the centre of the town, making the yards into a key character feature of each business.

9.3.5 Presentation of the Fort Interior

Clearance of the fort interior would enable the scale and character of the fort to be appreciated. Geophysical archaeological surveys can help to build up a picture of how the interior was originally configured, including the form of the internal bank, position of a well, etc.

Reconstruction of some historic features may be appropriate in order to better understand the form and nature of the Tudor plantation fort. The form and location of the original timber-framed barrack building, known to have measured 8 x 32 contemporary yards, probably the structure referred to in a letter of 1685 as the 'King's House', would be of particular interest to uncover (Figure 54). If sufficient archaeological evidence were uncovered the reconstruction of this building using authentic construction methods of the period could be a very exciting project with the power to convey a direct understanding of the period to visitors.

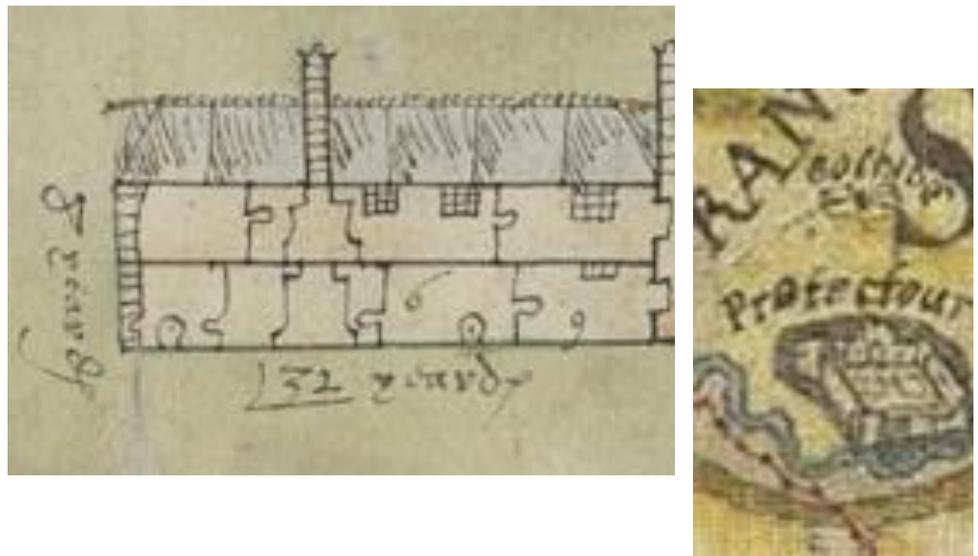


Figure 54 Timber-framed barrack building or 'Kings House' and Fort interior as shown on 'Cotton' map

9.3.6 Old Barracks on Tower Hill

Substantial parts survive of the eighteenth-century 'Old Barracks' (Site 4), shown on the 1837 Ordnance Survey map. These modest buildings are distinguished by a layering of fabric and features, which create a physical connection to the former military use of the site. As such they could form an appropriate point of entry where an exhibition of the heritage importance of the site might be interpreted.

The location of these buildings on Tower Hill is close to the Railway Station and is situated in one of the two sides of the fort which are most evocative of its historic form.

9.3.7 Castle Site

The narrow plot of Site 13 (Virgo) is likely to contain remains of the Castle of Maryborough within or beneath its semi-basement. If amalgamated into the wider site, this historic building could form a direct entry point to the fort site from the Main Street, which would reinforce the idea of an 'Old Fort Quarter' pioneered by an association of traders in that part of the street.

If below-ground remains of the Castle were uncovered and exposed they would enrich the experience of the Fort and its history, as it was in this Castle that many of the historic events recorded in historic sources took place.

Equally, the neighbouring plot (Site 14) is likely to contain remains of the Castle and would likewise make a valuable contribution to the overall coherence of the site.

9.3.8 Exterior Walls and Fosse

The long frontage at Fitzmaurice Place presents an opportunity to recreate the defensive ditch, which would enable the Fort wall to be presented in its original form as a military fortification. This would enhance the understanding of the fort and appreciation of its significance.

The revived ditch or fosse could also contribute to the greening of this side of the Fort, and would have potential as an attractive pedestrian route between the 'Lower Square' and the Railway Station. This route might cut through the former CBS lands to create a vista of the round bastion when approached through this route from the north.

9.3.9 Site of New Portlaoise Branch Library

The site of the former Shaw's department store connects the 'Lower Square' on Main Street back to the southern wall of the fort. This site has great potential to add to the story of the Fort Protector, as it encompasses the former defensive ditch.

A connection into the interior of the fort would not, however, be considered appropriate in this location.

9.4 Connectivity to the wider town centre

The development of the Fort Protector as a heritage attraction could form part of a 'chain' of heritage sites across the northern side of the town centre. This could consist of the following components.

9.4.1 Connection between Church Street and Old St Peter's Churchyard

The tower of St Peter's Church stands directly behind a small building on Church Street, now the constituency office of Brian Stanley TD. This site could form an appropriate access point to the churchyard. Alternatively, another access point might be created. The gate to the churchyard on Railway Street lies close to the entrance to the Fort Protector site at O'Loughlin's car park.

9.4.2 Connection to Presentation Convent and Ridge Burial Ground

Archaeological excavations could determine the location of the subterranean passages referred to in historic records and in earlier reports. An underground connection of this nature would form an evocative way to experience an historical military site of this nature.

An above-ground connection could also be made to the Presentation Convent, in many ways a sister site to the Fort Protector, encompassing the remains of the structure shown as the 'Store House' or 'Brewhouse' on early maps.

The Ridge Burial Ground on the natural esker to the east is also integral to the defensive history of the Fort Protector. The former convent garden to the rear might form a direct connection to that site, or alternatively a route might be created past

the small park at the War Memorial, with a new entrance to the Ridge from its northern side.

9.4.3 Tourist Potential

The restored fort can be imagined as a part in the wider story of the late medieval period. It can appeal to military historians, to people with an interest in history and heritage, but can also have much wider appeal.

The success of the HBO historical-fantasy television series 'Game of Thrones' has generated a public interest in the turbulent events of the late medieval period. Drawing its fictitious plot lines from a wide variety of historical events and figures, from the English 'Wars of the Roses' to Irish personages such as Silken Thomas and Gráinne Mhaol, the series presents to dramatic effect the violence and the intrigue of a period of political turmoil in which ancient power structures come under threat, recalling the bloody period in which the Fort was built, exemplified in the Massacre of Mullaghmast of 1577.

9.5 Funding opportunities

A feasibility study to examine these ideas, as well as the tourism potential of the site, would be an essential document to attract funding from bodies such as Fáilte Ireland or Laois Partnership, the local Leader group.

The potential for funding through the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) should also be explored.

10.0 Recommendations for Next Phase

10.1.1 Consultation with Stakeholders

Building on initial contacts made in Phases I and II, consultation with stakeholders will be an important part of the next stage of the process. Stakeholders will include:

- Laois Heritage Society
- Property owners of Sites 01 to 24 listed in this document
- Laois County Council
- Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) and the Heritage Council
- National Monuments Service in the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA)

In addition the following groups will be consulted:

- Irish Military History Society
- Downtown Portlaoise traders group
- Portlaoise Tidy Towns
- Fáilte Ireland
- Local historians and wider interested public

10.1.2 Further research

It is proposed that a professional historian specialising in the Tudor period might be commissioned to write an article on the history of the Fort from its inception and construction in the 1540s to its eventual decline by the onset of the eighteenth century.

The purpose of the article would be to place the fort and the Laois-Offaly Plantation in its historical context within Irish political and military history, as well as the wider context of the Tudor, Stuart and Commonwealth periods in English and contemporary European history.

10.1.3 Conservation Policies and Actions

The ultimate purpose of the Conservation Plan is to adopt an agreed set of policies in to guide future actions which would affect the future of the Fort Protector.

The understanding, assessment and consultation stages will form a basis for the development of a set of policies which are agreeable to all stakeholders. The policies should include a programme for the implementation of the Plan.

10.1.4 Publication of the Conservation Plan

It is proposed to merge all three phases into a single document for publication by the end of 2017.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Records from the Registry of Deeds

Transcriptions by Laois Heritage Society members Teddy Fennelly, Michael Parsons and Jackie Hyland. References to the Fort and its associated features, or sites appearing to adjoin the Fort have been printed bold.

Sample of Leases from 1708 to 1728

71A: 1708 to 1738.

Book 26; Page 20; No. 15483.

Lease 2 Feb. 1716: St Leger Gilbert Kilminchy to Bartholomew Senior

Tenements on Market Street of Maryb. held by Edward Knight, Charles Bowen, Widow Paterson and Sidney Thompson – the first two tenements being some time ago demolished by fire, the other two in possession of John Daly as far as **Bawn Wall**

Witnessed by John McDowell, Butler to St. Leger and Richard Hay, Coachman to St. Leger.

36; 280; 22306. Dec. 1722; Hugh Dickson to Hon Arthur Lord Doneraile. £7,000. Two-fifths of the town and lands Clonrake, Clonmoynon, Pallas, and several tenements in Town of Maryb in possession of Col. Walter Eyre Evans and others to some many hundred acres of improvable bog land.

50,258, 32913. Dickson to Lord Doneraile. Release of mortgage for £7,000 at several townlands (mainly as above), and tenements in Maryb commonly called Dun Cabbins tenement, Salmons, Mooneys, Cornelius Rosse's

81; 341; 57809: 28 Feb 1735: Jonathan Baldwin to James Campbell. Lands at Cooltoran and Ballytegan and "out of all of that" a tenement or plot of ground in Town of Maryb. Near lower stone brid[g]e then in possession of Jonathan Baldwin and all the houses built and improvements thereon ...

82; 474; 58652. 25 Aug 1729. Barry Love of Maryb. And Murtagh Foley also of Maryb. Tenement of Richard Robinson formerly owned by Henry Knight, bounded on the north by the road to Church Street and on the south facing Thomas Byrne's house – his wife Elizabeth Foley and Mr Graves, son of Robert Graves ...

87; 305; 61733. June 1737. Michael Jones, Dublin, and Rawlston Humphries and Arthur Lord Viscount Doneraile lands in Cork and Queen's County. Lands in Clonad 697 acres, Clonboyne 171 acres, Kilmanbought 103 acres, Clonkeen 368 acres, Ardlane 92 acres and tenements in Maryboro in possession of John Hone, William Morgan, Widow Hill, Thom Edwards, plot commonly called Lester's Holdings and Mannors Courts, Leets Hall.

Lease for Lives George Thornton of City of Dublin and John Kelly, Clonreher.

6; 108; 1514 [1714??]. **Great Stone House** formerly used as an Inn

21; 516; 12333. John Kelly Clonreher to Edward Dodsworth. **Great stone house** formerly in possession Joseph Partridge 8 April 1718. Now in occupation Edward Dodsworth, lease.

43; 284; 28205. Lease and release.

24 Feb. 1724. William Thornton of Singlassin, Dublin and George Thornton, son and heir, and John Parnell lands and two houses in Maryb. Stone house Caroll Conraghy did formerly dwell. Thatched house Patrick Brennan.

7; 149; 1953. Lease 24 Oct 1710. Henry Westenra of City of Dublin and Thomas Fitzgerald of Morett

Rathnamanagh 225 acres plantation and mass house lives Martin Scurlock, wife Penelope, son Thomas.

£34-15-0 first two years; £40-7-6 afterwards. And tub of good sweet butter, of 100 pounds weight at Christmas or 40/- in lieu

9; 142; 3388. Lease 23 Dec 1711. St Leger Gilbert of Killminchy and Edward Knight of Maryb. Sadler 3 tenements one in possession of Knight or his undertenants, one other in possession of Elizabeth Massey, widow, and one other is possession of Edward Cruse, Butcher, nearing and bounding to the main street in Maryb on the south, to the tenement now in possession of Mr Gray to the West, **to the fort wall on the north** and to a waste tenement formerly belonging to Samuel Wright on the east part. Lives Ed. Knight, John and Humphrey, sons. Rent £4 str

21; 74; 10801. Deed indented 25 March 1717. Edward Dodsworth, Maryb and Rev William Percivall, Dean of Emly and Rev Benjamin Hawkshaw, City of Dublin. Lands in Antrim, Mill Quarter of Doone in Barony of Maryb. Demised to Ed. Dodsworth by Alex Fitzgerald for 18 years from 1712 rent £8-11-0 str. **Also house backside and gardens in town of Maryb held by said Edward by lease from John Kelly**, Clonreher article dated 2 Oct 1710 rent £12 str and also lands of Burruss held by lease Dec 9 1714 from Rev Archdeacon Mathew Handcock for residue of term of 21 years at rent £14-9-8, also farm and lands of Kilmainham for 31 years from Sir Daniel Byrne Timogue dated 23 March 1712.

69; 290; 48360. May 1732 lease. Marriage settlement of Sir John Denny Vesey and Elizabeth Brownlow Lurgan Co. Armagh, tenement in Maryb in occupation Rev Mr Moss.

70; 283; 48366. Lease and release Oct 1730. Dame Mary Vesey, relict of Sir Thomas Vesey Bart. Late Bishop of Ossory and Sir John Denny Vesey only son of Dame Mary, Maryb. 2 acres Bowling green, 2 acres part of Commons of Maryb being about 60 acres also the house of Knockmay Pidgeon House windmill Booly plot other closes parcells of said commons on the hill westerly of Booly plots.

45; 465; 30044. Lease and release Oct 1725. Mortgaged for £300 str Thomas Grace of Rahenny in Co Dublin William Meredith of City of Dublin two fairs in town of Maryb. May Day and Bartholomew Day yearly. (and other similar leases to 1735).

41; 448; 26767. Lease July 1724. John Baldwin of Laragan and Joseph Baldwin of Aughnaharny Queen's Co. and Capt. Thomas Scaife of Maryb demised house where Scaife lived also house wherein James Preston lately dwelt for 27 years. Rent £10-15-0 first 19 years and £11 remaining 8 years.

43; 454; 28931. Lease and release. May 1725. Rev Thos Mosse of Maryb – John Kelly of Clonreher consideration £150 new stone house, malt house, brew houses, stables, Pidgeon House etc. purchased from Thos Carroll of Maryb.

43; 508; 29156. June 1725. John Hayes, City of Dublin and Char Lester of Maryb on one part and Christ Stone other part. £60 consideration. Plot of ground and backside wherein Robert Lester lately dwelt.

63; 453; 44372. June 1730. Brock Bridge, Parish of St Andrews Middlesex and Jonathon Baldwin surrender of lease new lease lands of Belad, 137 acres tenements and gardens by the East Bridge. 31 years lease £38 first 6 years, £52 remainder.

65; 216; 45158. March 1729. John Starling of Ennis Co Clare, Wm Starling of Ballycarna and John Chizelle, Clothier demised that piece of land on which he lately built a house and now lives **opposite the Barrack of Maryb**. 61 years.

54; 450; 36381. April 1726. Francis Patterson of Maryb, Victualler, Richard Lucas of Rathlaige, Gardiner. Cons. £33 house and tenement adjoining to Robert Lester's house with a waste plot of ground lying backward of the said lately in the tenure and possession of Richard Brennan Mercht.

61; 50; 40601. Oct. 1729. Thomas Graves Innkeeper son of Thomas Graves skinner and glover and William Laler of Maryb Innkeeper £30. Garden and backside or yard west bounded by lott of ground where Robert Lester Malthouse, Samuel Freeman with the – on the south Park, Ash Park or Island and on the north with the street of the said town of Maryb.

Deeds from 1740

5 June 1740

95; 540; 69018

Mathew Cassan in consideration of a marriage. Said William and May Handcock otherwise Baldwin. A yearly sum of £50 annuity and **the castle and fort of Maryborough and mill thereto belonging** and also out of the lands called Great and Little Burrow, Cloncrible and Curriers Bog in the whole six hundred acres more or less in the Barony of Maryb. Witnessed by Joe Baldwin, Dysart and James Cassan, Servant of the said Mathew Cassan.

310; 443; 207237

12 February 1776 Johnson to Wm Handcock, of Clonrusk, father of the said Jos. Handcock and the said Edward Johnson the deed that ... King Charles Secd. by sellers patent did grant unto Arthur St. George of Athlone ... **the Castle of Maryborough** with all the privileges ... **the Castle and Fort with the mill** (similar to above) for the term of ninety nine years ... release ... on condition of the sum of five hundred pounds

313; 77; 207379

Hancock to Cambie and ano. 4 March 1776. Joseph Handcock of Town of Maryb. and Solomon Cambie of Castletown in Co of Tipperary and Godfrey Hemsworth the Younger of City of Limerick of the second part and Edwd Ledger of Ballyrickard in Co.

of Tipperary of the third part. Reciting that **King Charles Secd by Letters patent under the seal of this Kingdom in 27th year of his reign did grant and demise to Arthur St George then of Athlone since dead the Castle and Fort of Maryborough** with the lands (etc as above) together with the Customs and dutys of a Custom or place? Day for every Plow that shall be plowing in the year of the said Barony of Maryb Portnahinch Slewmarginagh Cullinagh Stradbally and Ballyadams in the Queens Co. or three shilling Irish in lieu thereof to hold untathe? Arthur St George his Esons? and assigns for ninety nine years to commence from the Surrener or other determination of letters patent of the Premes? Therein recited to be granted to Sr George St George Knight during his good behaviour at the yearly rent of six marks that the P. Sr George St George died in 1711 whereupon the said term of ninety nine years commenced in possession that the said **Castle and Fort lands and premes** were by sevl. Mesne assignmes legally vested in the P. Josh Handcock for the rem of P term of ninety nine years that by the Articles... executed previous to the intermarriage of said Joseph Handcock with Elizabeth Ledger daughter o said Edwd Ledger date 5th April 1773 and made between the said Joseph Handcock and others the? Joseph Handcock did grant and agree with P. Elizabeth Ledger his Exors and Adms that he the said Handcock his heirs and as? more should in the three months next of the said intended marriage shd. be had and solemnises grant and convey unto the said Solomon Cambie and Godfrey Hemsworth and their heirs Exors and admors his Estate and interest in said premes In Trust that they the said Solomon Cambie and Godfrey Handcock should with all convenient speed absolutely sell the said Joseph Handcock estates and interests in and to their lands and premes to such good advantage as to them should seem meet that P. marriage was had solemnized by which said Deed of assignemnet of which this is as Meml. in pursuance of the said articles of agreement and in consid. thereof and of ten shillings the so.? Joseph Handcock did grant selling assign and make over unto the said Solomon Cambie and Godfrey Hemsworth all that the said **Castle and Fort of Maryb with the mill the said lands** of (etc as above) and also the duty and customs Day commonly called Plough Day for every plow that shall be plowing in the year (as above) or three shillings Irish in lieu thereof to hold to the P. Solomon Cambie and Godfrey Hemsworth their exors. admins and assigns from henceforth for the residue Meml. Of the ninety nine years ... yearly rent of six marks and also subject to annuity of sixty pounds a year payable out of the said lands to Mary Handcock widow and relict of Wm Handcock late of the Town of Mayb decd. and mother of the said Joseph Handcock for her life as her Isinture? And in lieu of Dower which said Deed of which this is a Meml. is witnessed as to the Exors ... by Joseph Handcock Solomon Cambie and Godfrey Hemsworth by John Evans and Jacob Bryan both of the City of Dublin Gent. Duly stamped... 4 March 1776

312;71; 207380

Cambie to Coote 4 March 1776. Both Registered at 11 in the Forenoon on same day. Almost exactly as above – Cambie and Hemsworth to Rev Charles Coote Doctor in Divinity and Dean of Kilfenora

31 December 1743 79339 (from 3373)

Thomas Mosse of Maryborough and Ann Mosse otherwise Julian his wife of the one part and John Pigott of Glasnevin (Dublin) ... were seized and possessed of the fourth

part of two thirds of the Town and lands of Listowell (Kerry) for and during the natural life of Elizabeth Juliana Shewell otherwise Julian wife of Henry Shewell of Ballygrennane (Kerry) ... likewise reciting that in a full assembly of ye Burgemt. Bayliffs Bugesses and Commons of the Borough of Maryb on 21 October last ... did then consent to make and perfect unto the said Thomas Mosse a lease of the River Triouge ... for the term of nine hundred and ninety nine years at the yearly rent of sixpence Ster. On which river Thomas Mosse hath since the said agreement erected and **built the foundation of two mills**... likewise reciting that Stephen Julian of Maryb ... did by articles of agreement 19 NOV 1742 in consideration of two hogsheds of Cyder whom the said Stephen given by ... Thomas Mosse to let unto him (Mosse) all that the low Course Meadows near the Town of Maryb then in the tenure and occupation of Thomas Egerton containing by estimation three acres of plantation measure ... be the same more or less bounded by the Commons of Maryb by the River Triouge Dennis Fitzpatrick's Meadow and John Dowlings Potatoe Garden for and during the lives of three such persons as the said Thomas Mosse should name at the yearly rent of three pounds fifteen shillings Ster by which deed Mosse and Ann his wife did grant bargain sell release and confirm unto ... John Pigott two thirds of Listowell (etc as previous) ... with all the edifices buildings waters water courses profits commodities and apper... to the several buildings belonging or appertaining together with all the timber the property of Thomas Mosse now lying on the said premises and the Commons of Maryb or elsewhere to hold said premises with their appert. Unto ... John Pigott his heirs and assigns for and during the continuance of ... terms and times ... Mosse and his wife were respectively entitled to ... (witnessed by) Wm Gray of Maryb Gent and James Galaugher of Glasnevin yeoman ... 6th July 1744 Barw. Delanore Dep Regr

No. 121870 (from 3380)

Mosse to Mosse 6th and 7th August 1756.

Thomas Mosse of Maryb ... Dye Rev Wm Mosse of Philipstown Kings County ... whereas ... Thomas being heretofore Intitled to one fourth part of Two Thirds of town of Listowell Co Kerry as also the Town and Tuck Mills commonly called Shipthorps Milllands with Lands thereto belonging as also that part of the River Triouge with all other water courses Liberty and Privileges to said Mills belonging situate on or near the Commons of Maryb by virtue of a lease by the said Corporation of Maryb to John Pigot Esq. in trust and for the use of ... Thomas Mosse as by the record of the said Corporation may appear for the term of nine hundred and ninety nine years from the 21st day of October 1753 yearly rent of sixpence Ster And further reciting that whereas Thomas Mosse being Intitled by Indented Deed 1st Dec 1743 in consideration of one hundred fifty pounds to him by Jn? Pigott

To hold to him John Pigott his heirs and assigns for during and continuance of the Thomas Mosses interest therein and further reciting that whereas ... John Pigott by a defeasance or Instrument in writing duly executed by him ... Thomas Mosses aforesaid Interest in the said premises and the aforesaid Deed ... declared that the true intent and meaning of the said Deed of Conv was and is that if the said Thomas Mosses his Heirs or Adms do on or about 31 Dec then next well and Truly pay or cause to be paid to ... John Pigott, his Heirs and Adms or assigns ... one hundred and fifty pounds with lawfull interest thereof that the said Deed of Conv. And also one Bond with warrant of attorney for confessing judgement thereon bearing equal date

of ... deed of the penalty of three hundred pounds conditioned for ... payment of one hundred and fifty pounds .. from Thomas Mosse to John Pigott shall be void and of no effect as by the said Defeazance may appear whereby it appears that the said conveyance to ... John Pigott was only a Mortgage subject to the condition of Redemption in the said Defeazance And whereas John Pigott the said sum of one hundred and fifty pounds with interest and that he has now in his power to convey the equity of redemption which he had in the said premises

Memorial witnessed ... Thomas Mosse for and in concideration of ... one hundred and forty six pounds to him paid by the said William Mosse did thereby bargain and sell and convey to the said William Mosse ... all Thomas Mosses right title and interest ... to the equity of Redemption whis Thomas had in the said premises to hol to ... Wm Mosse his Heirs and Adms ... for payment before the Thomas Mosses interest ... subject nevertheless to the condition that if ... Thomas Mosse Heirs (etc) shall –will pay Wm Mosse (etc) ... one hundred and forty six pounds on or before 7th Feb. next with lawfull interest the said Deeds (etc) ... penalty of two hundred ninety two pounds condition for ... one hundred and forth six pounds on 7th Feb, next shall be void to all intents and purposes with other usual covenants ...

Witnessed by Luke Dempsey, Price Dempsey both of City of Dublin ... Memorial by said John Dempsey (etc etc)

9th August 1756

James Saunders Dep Reg.

186361 (from 3391)

Senior to Graves 19 May 1747

Barw Senior of Maryb woolcomber demise and set unto Andw Graves of Maryb Innkeeper ... plot of ground in Town of Maryb wherein Gart Byrne decd. formerly dwelt and all appurt. situate on the West the holding wherein Andw Graves now dwells **on the North with the street or road leading to the Barracks and on the East with the Square before the Session House of Town of maryb** for nine hundred and sixty years from the 25 March last past at Thoo Pounds four shillings a year payable half yearly ... said lease witnessed by John Pilkington of City of Dublin and Mark Halfpen of Ballymoney in Queens County

James Saunders Dep Reg

Maryborough leases 18th and 19th centuries

Book 129; page 89; No:86361. 23 July 1747.

Barw. Senior, Woolcomber, to Graves, Innkeeper. Premises, north side of Street and on west bounded by ... where Graves now dwells **on the north side of the Street on road leading to the Barracks on the east of the square before the Session House of the town of Maryb**. For 960 years.

133; 333; 91352.

Warner Westenra to Jonathan Baldwin (various) and piece of ground in Town of Maryb near the Lower Stone Bridge ... yearly rent of £30.

135; 269; 91351. 2 June 1749. Do

172; 488; 117586. 20 June 1755.

Knowles, Ballybrittas, Inholder, to Handcock, Dysart, ... **on east end of Barrack Wall and facing the Bridewell or House of Correction – 7s 6d lease** ...

133; 161; 90058. 15 Dec 1748.

Sterling, Co. Kildare, Yeoman, to Lester

Lately held in possession of John Roe situate in Church Street ... William Cowen merchant, Edward Byrne, carpenter, John Roe, yeoman and Richard Swords, Gent all of Maryb and Digby Lalor ...

157; 556; 27 January 1753.

Bart Senior ... where Thomas Maguire lived by name of the Three Tunns and (etc.) by name of The Sign of the Red Cow ... he held by lease from St Leger Gilbert ...

615; 242; 460863. Bowden to Dunne 1808?

Peter Dunn Cooper of Maryb in consideration of £16 on north side of entrance gate to House of Industry.

30 May 1837. Book 10. P. 178; Dunne to Coleman.

Francis Dunn, Sheriff to Michael Coleman of Maryborough, Shopkeeper.

Robert Greaves, Rockview, did demise to James Coleman of Maryb **Lot No One consisting of dwelling-house tenement** in possession of Robert Graves deceased but then in possession of James Coleman ... **bounded on north by the Holding No. Two on the south by the Street of Maryb and on the west by the house lately built by Robert Graves** in possession of Michael Dowling **and in the east by the building in possession of Robert Fitzgerald** and also that **Lot No. Two being part of the Old Fort of Maryb converted into yard at rear of premises abovementioned ... bound on the south by Lot No. One ... on the north by James Molloy's holding, on the west by Church Lane and on the east by Robert Fitzgeralds holding** and also **Lot No. Three other part of Fort of Maryb called the Gardens bounded on the south by Doctor Stokes (or Stoker?) in possession of Redmond Clere on the north by Mr Mosses garden on the east by Mr. Mosses lawn or field on the west by the cottage wherein Thomas Greaves formerly lived** ... all which ... to hold unto James Coleman and heirs (etc) from 25 March then last past Lot No One for term of 100 years, Lot No Two for term of 56 years, and Lot No. Three for term of 56 years ... and subject to yearly rent of £40 to be reduced at end of term of 56 years ... ??? ... His Majesty's taxes ... at suit of Sylvester Young against James Coleman dereated? to Sheriff of Queens County ... at foot of £252-16-0 ... also Sheriff of Queens County did set up and sell at auction ... all estate right, title and interest of the said James Coleman, his heirs (etc) and said lots 1, 2 and 3 to said James Michael Coleman being the highest and fairest bidder purchased for £105 ... and Sheriff of Queens County did therefore ... in consideration of ... £105.

Appendix 2: References from the National Library of Ireland

(by Dr Eoin Sullivan)

Granard Mss: Letter of Primate Boyle to the Earl of Granard, saying the fort in Maryborough is in the hands of great fanatics and that Capt. Hudson should garrison it. Dublin August 29, 1685. (Hist. Mss. Comm Report 2, App. 1874, p.212)

1685 Michael Boyle, Primate Chancellor and Lord Justice of Ireland to Earl of Granard Dublin

Aug 29 [1685]

My Lord,

My Lord Tirconel, being wth me this morning tells me that ye forte of Maryborough is in ye hands of greate phamtatiques, both Governor and Deputy Governor, and he would advise that Capt. Hudson who is quartered in that town wth his dragoones, may be ordered to make ye forte his garrison, of ye fitness wherof I am much convinced because upon enquiry I finde ye forte wholly neglected and almost uninhabited. The wals of ye house much decay'd and as I heare ye timber of ye King's house yt was therin caryed away and the house demolished. I have thereupon signed the enclosed. Yt if ye Ge shall approve thereof and signe it, it may be returned by ye post unto, my Ld.

Ye Gees very faythfull and very hunble serv't

'Mich Armach C'

Graham Mss: Petition of Richard Grahame to be made comptroller of the Castle of Maryborough, giving an account of former governors. (Hist. Mss. Comm Rep7, App 1879, p.410)

Richard Grahame – The Castle of Maryborough, Queens County, Ireland, is in the King's grant. It was built by Philip and Mary, and all tenures by patent are held of this county by his Majesty's castle of Maryburgh. The last comptroller, Sir George St. George, sold his place to Mr. Fancok of Athlone, clerk to one of Cromwell's secretaries, who suffered the castle to go to ruin. Graham's family living in the county were also in the King's service till Cromwell came. His grandfather died in 1626; his troops were given to Sir. Adam Loftus, Thomas Graham being lieutetant. The petitioner's uncle, George Graham, died in August 1643, and his troops were given to Sir Henry Titchborne. His uncle, Lieutenant Peter Graham, both were all Grahams who laid down their arms when Cromwell arrived in Ireland, and never any were in command since. – He prays the office - signed by R. Grahame.

Salisbury Mss: Grant by Queen to J. Raff of messuages etc., in Marybroghe, Ratyvine and Bealaddo, in Queen's County, Ireland. March 20, 1569 (Hist Mss. Comm Rep Salisbury Mss, Pt. XIII, 1915, p.96).

J. Raff 1568/9 March 20 – Grant by the Queen to J. Raff, of messuages andc. in Maribroghe, Ratyvine and Bealaddo, in Queen's County, Ireland – 20 March 1568-9. Portion of seal. Parchment.

Historical Manuscripts Comm. Calendar of Manuscripts of the Most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, preserved at Hetfield House, Hertfordshire Pat. XIII

Cowper Mss: Pertition to Sir. W Gilbert to the king for a grant of the fee farm of the Castle of Maryborough in Ireland. No date (Hist. Mss. Comm. Report 12, App. 3, 1889, p.155)

Appendix 3: Accounts of Wills and Forfeited Estates in Maryborough

The copy of the will of Mr. Bartholmew William Graves

Hayes ref. – Graves, Bartholmew William, Maryborough (Portlaoise), Queen’s County (Laois). Gentleman. Will 8 November 1803 (T/1985) 8 Nov 1803. Itam.

Bartholmew William Graves wife Ann Graves £80 sterling per year paid out of the lands Coolkipirae (?) which lands are in the present possession of Thomas Thornell, Charles O’Neill and Widow Brennan. Eldest daughter Catherine Graves-rightful claim and demand in the Green or Commons of Maryborough which I hold by value of lease from the Corporation of Maryborough. 2nd oldest daughter Hargail Graves and third daughter Anne Graves £200.

‘I will and bequeth to my son Henry Graves that part of my holding that was formerly a barrack in the town of Maryborough and divided into tenements, which I hold by virtue of a lease from Sir Henry Parnell Bart invaluable forever my [word unclear] interest in said premises his mother Ann Graves to lease the interest until his is twenty one years of age for his [supposed?] aid and the rest of my children as their mother shall think proper’....

I leave John Carroll and my dearly beloved wife Ann Graves Executor and Executive to this my last will and testament. I leave Miss Jane Richardson Guardian of my children.

Correspondence re. forfeited estates in Maryborough (Portlaoise)

Hayes re. – Account of forfeited estates in Maryborough (Portlaoise) district. (QRO/4/2/3/3) 26 May1806. Item.

To Mr. Walter
26th May 1806
No 98.
Honourable Sir,

In obedience to your orders of the 14th March and 24th [unclear] I beg leave to transmit you here with an account of the Arrears of rents of the Forfeited Estates in this District outstanding on the 25 March 1796, and on the 5 January 1806, distinguished the denomination of the land the amount due at each of these periods, and an account of the amount and particulars of the payment made out or chargeable on the produce of the forfeited estates for each year from 25 March 1796 to 5 January 1806.

I have the honour to be your faithful and obedient humble serv’t
Henry Moore

1806	£	s	d
	8	6	8

Payments made out of or chargeable on the Estate for each year.

Appendix 4: Selection of a sample of burgesses and freemen of Maryborough in mid-eighteenth century

(by Dr Eoin Sullivan)

Name	Location/ profession
Richard Brennan	Sergt of Fort
Jonathan Byrne	Shoemaker
John Boe	Sergt at Mace
Walter Bourke	School Master
Jonathan Baldwin	Marybo's Merchant
Josuah Byrne	Marybo's Stairmaker
Richard St. Geo Conveynors	Lieut Dragoones
Patrick Duignan	Marybo' Herd to John Green
Capt. Ellwood	Blue Horse
William Floyd	Marybo's Mason
Walls Gray	Lieutenant
Heuston Hill	Marybo's Surveyor Esq.
Robert Lester	Marybo's Apothecary
John Matthews	Marybo' Hatter
Capt. Robert Moore	
Lieutenant William Moore (Dead)	

Appendix 5: Extract from the Urban Archaeological Survey

An account of the features and extent of the zone of archaeological interest for the town of Portlaoise (John Bradley, Andrew Halpin and Heather King 1984. Urban Archaeological Survey Part VI).

“Port Laoise originated as a Fort created in the mid sixteenth century as part of the English attempts to subdue the territories of the O’Mores and the O’Connors during the reign of Edward (VI). In 1548, according to the Annals of the Four Masters O’Conor and O’More were taken to England and their lands were granted to the Lieutenant, Francis Byran, Marshall of Ireland. Byran built two large ‘campa’ one at Port Laoise and the other at Daingean, Offlay. In 1556 the Laois ‘campa’ known to the English as ‘Fort Protector’ or ‘Fort of Leix’ was renamed Maryborough. Map of 1550 shows a small walled town around the fort at that date. Granted a market in 1567, borough status in 1569 and was incorporated by charter by Elizabeth I in 1570.

Many settlers moved into the town at this time and the Fiants record a particularly high number of property grants in Maryborough between 1569 and 1571. (11RDKPRI nos. 1325, 1327, 1334, 1348, 1351, 1396, 1406, 1544; 12RDKPRI nos. 1624, 1649, 1689, 1774, 1802). IN 1580 the town was plundered by John, son of the Earl of Desmond (AFM). In 1597 it was burned by Onie M’Rory O’Mordha (Atkinson 1893, 167, 470) and it appears to have burned again the following year (O’Hanlon and O’Leary 1907-14, ii 476-8).

Difficult to know why Port Laoise was chosen in 1556 as the principal town of the new shire. One possibility is that it was built on the site of Newtown of Leys and that some part of the hamlet might have lingered into the C16th, this would explain the name of the parish, which is Borris almost certainly from a medieval borough”.

The Fort

“The ‘court’ or ‘mansion’ at the Campa built in 1548 (AFM) marks the first construction of a fort at Port Laoise, but precise details of its constructional history are not known. Henry Wyse is described as the Captain of the Fort of Leix in 1552 (Morris 1861, 28) while in 1566 when Francis Cosbie was made Constable of the Fort, its garrison consisted of ‘one porter, one drummer, one ensign, one surgeon and 39 arquebusiers (11RDKPRI, 119 No. 819).

The fort was demolished by the Cromwellians under Hewson and Reynolds in 1650 (Feehan 1985, 395). Within the fort was a rectangular building demolished around 1835 (OS Letters, Laois 1.74). It receives little antiquarian attention but Grose (1791, ii, pl. op. p.45) illustrates part of the remains, probably the rectangular tower, as it was in his day.

Description:

Situated on rising ground south-west of the Triogue River. The ground plan of the fort is preserved in a map of c.1560 (Pl. 16) and in another of the late C16th date, now in TCD (Pl. 17). These Plans show a rectangular enclosure, described as measuring 1120 by 1110 yards, with a projecting circular tower at the north east corner and a rectangular tower, described as 17 by 14 yards at the south west corner. The only entrance was the west wall, and a two-storied range of buildings, described as 132 yards long, appear in the south of the enclosure. An external ditch partly filled with water is shown on the plan of c.1560. This was subsequently backfilled and the

owners of properties on Main St. acquired the extra piece of ground adjoining the wall of the fort. The line of this ditch is preserved in the kink which a number of these allotments have near the fort. Miss Helen Roe informs us that a separate ground rent was paid for this extra stretch of land.

The remains consist of south and east walls, a circular tower at the north east angle, and a portion of the west wall. Sections are now concealed by later buildings and are inaccessible. The entrance was in the west wall in the portion which is now missing and the fort was protected by two towers, a rectangular example at the south west angle and a circular one on the north-east. The rectangular tower is missing.

The north-west corner forms the boundary wall of the Technical School. The gapped tower section of the wall survives to a height of 2.5m high and has an external batter. The north-west corner is rounded and from here the wall continues eastwards along Church Street where its remainder of the Church Street section is between 5-6m high but it is punctuated by entrances.

The circular tower at the north-east angle has an internal diameter of 8.2m and wall 1.5m thick. Internally two floor ledges are present indicating that the tower was a three storied structure. The tower and the eastern section of the wall adjoining it is incorporated into the modern flour mill. The southern end of the east wall borders Church Avenue where it has an external height of 3m but the interior is built-up by landscaped school grounds. The south wall also borders the school grounds and survives to a height of 3.80m. The remaining short sections are present behind the outbuildings and backyards of the houses fronting onto Main Street”.

Town Defences

“The c.1560 map of Maryborough shows that the small township around the fort was enclosed by a wall delimiting a rectangular area. No mural towers or gatehouses are indicated but two openings in the west wall, immediately north and south of the fort, and a probable opening in the east wall, are shown. A lease of 1569-71 mentions the ‘east gate’ of Maryborough (11RDKPRI 210, no. 1406). The town charter of 1570 empowered the corporation to ‘fortify the borough with ditches and stone walls’ which may indicate that the defences shown on the map of c.1560 were considered inadequate by then. There is no definite evidence, however for the fortification of Maryborough after 1570”.

Appendix 6: Relevant entries in the Record of Monuments and Places

The following records have been reproduced by Richard McLoughlin from the online Archaeological Survey of Ireland:

Site: **LA013-041002-**

Class: Church

Description: In the 1556 Plantation of Laois it was ordered that a church be built in every town within three years (O'Hanlon and O'Leary 1907-14, vol. 1, p. 436). The earliest historical reference to the existence of a church at Maryborough is a reference to David Good who is listed as vicar of Maryborough in 1598 (Bradley 1986, 53). In 1556 the Laois 'campa', known to the English as 'Fort Protector' (LA013-041001-) or the Fort of Leix', was renamed Maryborough in honour of Queen Mary. The fort attracted settlers and a map of about 1560 shows a small walled town around the fort at that date. Maryborough was granted a market in 1567, borough in 1569 and was incorporated by charter of Elizabeth I in 1570 (Bradley et al. 1986, 49). The medieval town consists of a walled town (LA013-041006-) enclosing a large settlement with a plantation castle (LA013-041001-) in the centre and a circular tower or castle (LA013-041003-) of sixteenth century date, a church (LA013-041002-) and graveyard (LA013-041004-) and a mill (LA013-041005-). Many settlers moved into the town and the Elizabethan fiants record a particularly high number of property grants between 1569 and 1571. In 1635 the town obtained a grant of two fairs from Charles I and in 1646 the town was captured by Owen Roe O'Neill but was subsequently retaken by Lord Castlehaven (Bradley et al. 1986, 49). Situated within its own churchyard W of the sixteenth century fort (LA013-041001-) of Maryborough the remains consist of the W tower and N wall of the nave of the church. The four storey rectangular tower (int. dims. 5.3m x 5.2m; wall T 0.9m) is entered through a rectangular opening in the E wall. There is a high round arched opening in the W wall, now blocked up and forming the back wall of a house in Church St. It was from this entrance that the tower and church were entered through. There is a blocked splayed opening or possible window in the N wall above the entrance. The first floor is marked externally by a string course above which the tower is stepped back slightly. The weathering for the sloping roof-line of the nave is visible in the E wall and indicates that the tower stood slightly NW of the church. The third floor was the belfry stage and has a round arched window in each wall. The church and graveyard was located outside the walls of the plantation fort but within the town walls, as shown on the c. 1560 map of Maryborough.

Compiled by: Caimin O'Brien

Date of upload: 17 December 2007

Site: **LA013-041004-**

Class: Graveyard

Description: The church (LA013-041002-) constructed c. 1556 (O'Hanlon and O'Leary 1907, vol. 1, 436) consists of the North wall of the Nave and the West tower built of roughly coursed mixed stone. Rectangular opening in E wall and blocked-up opening in W. wall. A external string course indicates the first floor. In E wall of second floor is a flat topped window and on each wall of the third floor is a rounded arch window. Otherwise featureless. Late medieval church in large graveyard with eighteenth and

nineteenth century headstones. The late medieval church and graveyard was located outside the plantation fort (LA013-041001-) to the west. In the 1556 Plantation of Laois it was ordered that a church be built in every town within three years (O'Hanlon and O'Leary 1907, vol. 1, p. 436) Earliest historical reference to the existence of a church at Maryborough is a reference to David Good who is listed as vicar of Maryborough in 1598 (Bradley 1986, p. 53). Situated within its own churchyard W of the Fort (LA013-041001-) of Maryborough.

Portlaoise Gaol and Courthouse

The present structure was built in the late eighteenth century as a gaol, possibly replacing an earlier one. (The adjoining courthouse, built at the same time, replaced an earlier courthouse destroyed by fire.) It served this function until 1830, and in recent years housed the town's public library. Current plans to reconstruct it and the adjoining buildings as an arts centre necessitated an archaeological investigation, as the complex adjoined the old churchyard of St Peter's (LA013-041002-004-).

Three cuttings were excavated by Thaddeus C. Breen under licence no. 96E365 in the courtyard. In two, soil containing brick rubble with mortar fragments was found to a depth of approximately 2m below the present surface. An intact ceramic pipe 0.3m in diameter, probably a sewer, was also found at this depth. Finds from these cuttings comprised pottery of mainly eighteenth-century date (possibly some nineteenth-century), along with glass and clay pipe fragments.

In the third cutting two skeletons were found (one incomplete owing to disturbance). They were identified as male, aged 23-25 and 25-30. The causes of death could not be ascertained. Traces of a coffin were present in one case, and it appears to have been slightly too small for the corpse. The skeletons were found at a depth of 1.1m and were oriented north-south, with their heads to the south. Part of a third skeleton was noted in the baulk but not excavated. Beside them, at a lower level, was the base of a stone wall or foundation, at least 0.8m thick. The top of this wall was 1.54m below the present surface, and above this was rubble similar to that found in the other cuttings. The presence of eighteenth- and possibly nineteenth-century material in the layer into which the burials were placed suggests that they represent part of a burial-plot attached to the gaol. The wall may be part of an earlier gaol building.

Compiled by: Caimin O'Brien

Date of upload: 17 December 2007

Site: **LA013-041007-**

Class: Burial

Description: Archaeological testing and monitoring were carried at the courthouse and old gaol, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, from December 1997 to February 1998. Thaddeus Breen had investigated three areas under this licence in 1996 (Excavations 1996, 62-3; Cahill and Sikora 2011, Vol. 2, 488). Two areas were investigated during this current phase. Trench 3 was dug in the south-west corner of the courtyard. It produced evidence of cellars associated with the courthouse and a cobbled area (pre-dating the present courthouse). The cobbled area was found to be quite extensive, as cobbles were found during monitoring in the courtyard area of the site to the south. Trench 1 was dug outside the north-east gable of the gaol. A building had been recently demolished here. It produced a cobbled area that may be associated either

with the building or with the other cobbles on the site previously mentioned. During monitoring of foundation trenches in the courtyard six skeletons were discovered. They were orientated roughly north-south, and all but one had their heads to the south. All skeletons were supine, with evidence of coffins. Skeletons 75 and 81 were complete. Skeleton 73's feet were truncated by a wall to the south. Skeleton 79 had been disturbed by the foundation trench to the east. Skeleton 77 was truncated from the pelvis up. Skeleton 91 was truncated from the patellae up. From the location of the surviving nails it can be suggested that the coffins were built of several pieces of wood tacked onto a frame. The coffin of Skeleton 75 seems to have had a thin iron band down the centre of the lid, which may have served to keep the coffin together or may have been a decorative strip. Evidence in support of the latter was found when, on closer examination of the metal, an impressed flower motif and swirls were noted. This gives the impression that some care was taken in the construction of the coffin. This is contrary to the impression given by the feet (they were squashed into the coffins) and the incorrect orientation. Perhaps the metal band was reused. It can be suggested that the coffins were built to a standard size as consideration was not given to individuals' dimensions. The fills produced post-medieval pottery sherds, glass and animal bone. The only directly associated finds were a copper-alloy shroud-pin on Skeleton 73 and the coffin nails and metal. Further monitoring did not reveal anything of archaeological significance (Bennett 2000, 125).

Archaeological monitoring was carried out in October 1998 on the final phase of ground disturbance works associated with the upgrading of Portlaoise Courthouse and the redevelopment of the old gaol into a new arts centre. The courthouse was built in 1789 and replaced an earlier structure destroyed by fire. The gaol was built at around the same time and remained in use until 1830, from when it functioned as an RIC barracks, until the 1860s. It was converted into a public library in the 1950s. Two phases of trial-trenching and monitoring preceded this programme of monitoring and were carried out between December 1996 and February 1998 (by Thaddeus Breen, Excavations 1996, 62-3, 96E0277, and Fiona Reilly, No. 370 above). These investigations found the remains of a graveyard in the courtyard of the old gaol, a cobbled surface that pre-dated part of the gaol and the remains of a structure outside its eastern wall. Five service trenches were excavated as part of the development, three in the courtyard on the eastern side of the courthouse (Trenches 1, 4 and 5) and two outside the eastern wall of the old gaol (Trenches 2 and 3). Trench 1 (22m long, 1.2m wide) revealed two phases of activity. Phase 1 consisted of a small pit cutting the natural clay at the southern end of the trench, which was filled with organic material containing 18th-century pottery. To the north of Trench 1 a large feature cutting natural was revealed. This was filled with heavy clays containing animal bone and occasional sherds of 18th-century pottery. This feature was cut by a large north-south-orientated limestone wall, 14.85m long, which also extended into Trench 4 (9.77m long, 2.65m wide), to the south. This feature was one of two walls making up Phase 2; the second was orientated east-west and ran off at a right angle from the first. It is likely that these walls formed part of ancillary structures associated with the courthouse. To the east of the old gaol Trench 2 (44.2m long, up to 1.7m wide) exposed two phases of archaeological activity. Phase 1 consisted of a large east-west-orientated pit, which extended into Trench 3 to the west, giving it a minimum length of 4.6m. It was 1.87m wide and 0.95m deep. The pit was lined with organic waste and backfilled with heavy clays. It also showed evidence of having

been recut. Phase 2 consisted of the remains of a north-south-orientated limestone wall exposed for 4.1m in section, which was abutted by an east-west-orientated wall to the west of it. This wall continued into the adjacent Trench 3, where the remains of a disturbed cobble and flagstone surface were exposed 1.6m to the south of it. These two walls formed part of the boundary wall enclosing the gaol precinct. To the north of Trench 3 sections of the southern and eastern walls of a previously identified structure were revealed. These walls enclosed the remains of a cobbled surface. The surface was sealed in places by a compact layer of cess and overlay the earlier pit described above. It is likely that this structure functioned as a stable, possibly associated with the RIC barracks (Bennett 2000, 125-6).

The present structure was built in the late eighteenth century as a gaol, possibly replacing an earlier one. (The adjoining courthouse, built at the same time, replaced an earlier courthouse destroyed by fire.) It served this function until 1830, and in recent years housed the town's public library. Current plans to reconstruct it and the adjoining buildings as an arts centre necessitated an archaeological investigation, as the complex adjoined the old churchyard of St Peter's. Three cuttings were excavated in the courtyard. In two, soil containing brick rubble with mortar fragments was found to a depth of approximately 2m below the present surface. An intact ceramic pipe 0.3m in diameter, probably a sewer, was also found at this depth. Finds from these cuttings comprised pottery of mainly eighteenth-century date (possibly some nineteenth-century), along with glass and clay pipe fragments. In the third cutting two skeletons were found (one incomplete owing to disturbance). They were identified as male, aged 23-25 and 25-30. The causes of death could not be ascertained. Traces of a coffin were present in one case, and it appears to have been slightly too small for the corpse. The skeletons were found at a depth of 1.1m and were oriented north-south, with their heads to the south. Part of a third skeleton was noted in the baulk but not excavated. Beside them, at a lower level, was the base of a stone wall or foundation, at least 0.8m thick. The top of this wall was 1.54m below the present surface, and above this was rubble similar to that found in the other cuttings. The presence of eighteenth- and possibly nineteenth-century material in the layer into which the burials were placed suggests that they represent part of a burial-plot attached to the gaol. The wall may be part of an earlier gaol building.

Compiled by: Caimin O'Brien

Date of upload: 17 December 2007

References: Cahill, M. and Sikora, M. (eds) 2011 *Breaking ground, finding graves - reports on the excavations of burials by the National Museum of Ireland, 1927-2006*, 2 vols. Dublin. Wordwell Ltd. in association with the National Museum of Ireland.

Site: **LA013-041001-**

Class: Castle (unclassified)

Description: According to the Annals of the Four Masters this fort was constructed by Francis Bryan, Marshall of Ireland, in 1548 on the lands of O'More. Originally known as 'Fort Protector' it was renamed Maryborough in honour of Queen Mary in 1556. Henry Wyse is described as captain of the 'Fort of Leix' in 1552, while in 1565-6 Francis Cosbie was made constable of the fort, at this time its garrison consisted of 'one porter, one drummer, one ensign, one surgeon and 39 arquebusiers', (Bradley

1986, p. 51). The town was burnt in 1597 by Onie M'Rory O Mordha and again the following year. (O'Hanlon and O'Leary 1907, vol. 1, 429, 430, 476, 477). The fort was destroyed by Hewson and Reynolds the Cromwellian Generals in 1650 (Feehan 1983, 395). The ground plan of the fort is visible on map c. 1560. A rectangular enclosure (1120 x 1110 yards) with a projecting circular tower at NE corner and rectangular tower at SW corner. Entrance in W wall and in the S of the enclosure were a series of two-storied building. Outside was an external fosse partly fitted with water. The remains consist of N, S and E walls with a circular tower at NE corner (diam. c. 8m, wall T. c. 1.5m) and part of W wall. Within the fort was a rectangular building demolished about 1835 according to the OS letters (O'Flanagan 1933, vol. 1, p. 74). Grose drew an illustration of the rectangular corner tower of the fort in the late eighteenth century (Bradley et al. 1986, 51).

Situated on rising ground SW of the Triogue River. The ground plan of the fort is preserved in a map of c. 1560 and in another of late sixteenth century date, now in Trinity College, Dublin. These plans show a rectangular walled area (1024m x 1015m), with a projecting circular tower at the NE corner and a rectangular tower (17 yards x 14 yards) at the SW corner. The only entrance was in the W wall and a two storied range of buildings, described as 132 yards long, appear in the S quadrant of the fort. An external ditch partly filled with water is shown on the 1560 plan. This was subsequently backfilled and the owners of properties on Main St. acquired the extra piece of ground adjoining the wall of the fort. The line of the ditch is preserved in the kink which a number of these allotments have near the fort. The upstanding remains consist of the N, S and SE walls, a circular angle tower at NE angle, and a portion of the W wall. Sections are now concealed by later buildings and are inaccessible. The entrance was in the W wall in the portion which is now missing. The NW corner forms the boundary wall of the Technical School. The gapped lower section of the wall survives to a height of 2.5m and has an external batter. The NW corner is rounded and from here the wall continues eastwards along Church St. where it forms the garden wall of two houses. The remainder of the Church St. section survives 5-6m high but is punctuated by entrances. Circular tower (int. diam. 8.2m; wall T 1.5m) at NE angle. Internally there is evidence for two floor offsets to accommodate the floor joists of a three-storey high angle tower. The tower and the eastern section of the wall adjoining it is incorporated into the modern flour mill (Ranks Mills). The S end of the east wall borders Church Avenue where it has an external height of 3m but the interior is built up by landscaped school grounds. The S wall also borders the School grounds and survives to a height of 3.8m. The remaining short sections are presently behind the outbuildings and backyards of the houses fronting onto Main St (Bradley et al. 1986, 51-2).

Excavations by Dominic Delany under licence number 03E0975 that were carried out in Church St during works carried out as part of the Portlaoise Broadband Project from June to December 2003. A cut, which may be associated with a moat surrounding the 16th century fort, was identified along Church Street. It was originally proposed to run the cable trench in the footpath close to the fort wall, but excavations at the W end of the street revealed a substantial culvert running immediately adjacent to the wall. At the E end of Church St a 1.25m square box was excavated that revealed a cut which probably represents the moat surrounding the 16th century fort (Bennett 2006, 297).

Compiled by: Caimin O'Brien

Date of upload: 17 December 2007

Date of last visit: 11 June 1990

Site: **LA013-041003-**

Class: Castle - tower house

Description: Located in the centre of the modern town of Portlaoise, behind the Convent. Circular stone tower house located to the E of the plantation fort (LA013-041001-) and marked on c. 1560 map of Maryborough as being situated within the town walls of the town. This circular stone tower house with base batter survives to full height and is incorporated into a nineteenth century convent that is attached to one side of the circular tower. Evidence of stone corbels indicate floor levels within the interior of the tower. On the 1560 map this stone tower had a two-storey gable fronted house with central chimney stack attached to its N face. Small stream ran between the plantation fort and the circular tower and is now represented by the modern road in front of the convent

Compiled by: Caimin O'Brien

Date of upload: 17 December 2007

Site: **LA013-041005-**

Class: Mill - unclassified

Description: Unlocated mill within the historic town (LA013-041) of Portlaoise known in medieval times as Maryborough. Mill shown on the map of c. 1560 east of the stream from the fort's (LA013-041001-) circular angle tower, its site is today occupied by Rank's Mills. Church Avenue now runs along the line of this mill race that powered the mill the location of which is now marked by the site of Ranks Mills. This mill race would appear to be the stream that is shown on the plan of c. 1560.

Area around Pepper's Lane, Portlaoise was investigated by Dominic Delany in the year 1996 under excavation licence no. 96E277. Archaeological test-excavation was undertaken in advance of a proposed commercial and residential development at Pepper's Lane, Portlaoise, in September 1996. The site is located about 150m south-east of the sixteenth-century fort. All OS 6-inch maps show a mill-race running along the site's eastern boundary. This mill-race was formed in the early nineteenth century by revetting the banks of a small stream which is clearly marked on the two surviving sixteenth-century maps of the fort and town. The mill-race powered a large flour mill (recently demolished) which stood on the site of a sixteenth-century mill outside the north-east corner of the old fort. The site is L-shaped in plan and measures 100m north-south by 12-32m east-west. A large nineteenth-century dwelling-house, due to be refurbished, occupies the north end of the site. Following demolition, three trial-trenches were mechanically excavated at the site. Trenches 1 and 2 were located close to the western and eastern boundaries respectively, and extended the full length of the area to be developed (i.e. 85m). Trench 3 was located between Trenches 1 and 2 and was 45m long. At the southern end of the site rubble overburden (0.4m thick) overlay a redeposited mottled grey/brown fine sand (0.7m thick). The sand overlay a natural yellowish-brown clayey silt containing pebbles and cobbles. The ground at the northern end of the site had been very disturbed by the

extensive building activity in this area. Rubble overburden (0.7m thick) and the remains of broken concrete and cobbled surfaces overlay a dark brown clayey sand with moderate inclusions of cobbles, pebbles, crushed mortar and brick, and flecks of charcoal and lime (0.25m thick). This overlay the natural reddish-brown clay. The broken remains of the mill-race channel (2.5m wide, 1.5m high) were located in Trench 2. The reverting walls were composed of rubble limestone masonry, and the 15m section which had been covered by buildings at the northern end of the site had a stone- and brick-arched roof. The fill within the roofed section was foul-smelling and a couple of disused sewer pipes entered the channel. A brown silty sand with frequent inclusions of pebbles, glass fragments, pottery sherds, animal bone and synthetic materials lay at the surface (0.15m thick). This overlay a deposit of coarse grey sand with moderate inclusions of flecks of charcoal, modern glass fragments and pottery sherds (0.5m deep, not fully excavated). The remaining section of the mill-race was originally open but had been gradually filled in since it became obsolete in the late nineteenth century. One section of the channel had been broken through and subsequently replaced by concrete piping. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered.

Compiled by: Caimin O'Brien

Date of upload: 17 December 2007

Site: **LA013-041006-**

Class: Town defences

Description: The plan of the town from around 1560 shows that the small settlement clustered around the Fort (LA013-014001-) was enclosed by a wall delimiting a rectangular area. No mural towers or gatehouse are indicated but two openings in the W wall, immediately N and S of the fort and a probable opening in the E wall are indicated. A lease of 1569-71 mentions the 'east gate' of Maryborough. The towns charter of 1570 empowered the corporation to 'fortify the borough with ditches and stone walls' which may indicted that the defences shown in the map of c. 1560 were considered inadequate by then. There is no definitive evidence, however, for the fortification of Maryborough after 1570. There are no surviving remains of the defences and it is difficult to gauge their exact route (Bradley 1986, 52-3). The E boundary of the town is probably preserved by the line of the Triogue River, the S wall was probably close to the townland boundary, while the W wall may be preserved in the line of Railway St. and Lyster Lane. The 16th century map shows two openings in the W wall, which may represent gatehouses. These lay immediately N and S of the fort controlling entry to Main St. and Church St. There is a similar opening in the E wall in Bridge St. An unusual feature depicted on the 1560 map is the presence of an intra-mural walled enclosure in the SE angle. Its function is unknown (Bradley 1986, 53).

Compiled by: Caimin O'Brien

Date of upload: 17 December 2007

Appendix 7: Licenced Archaeological Assessments and Excavations

(by Dr Eoin Sullivan)

The assessments and excavations listed in this section relate to sites of proposed developments in the vicinity of the Fort that required a licence for excavation at the pre-development stage.

Excavation licence number: 93E0169
Site address: 88-89 Main Street, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Martin Byrnes

Pre-development archaeological test excavation took place at the rear of 88-89, Main Street, Portlaoise. The site is located directly south of Main Street. The site was assessed on the basis of three mechanically excavated test trenches. The test excavation uncovered the remains of an east/west oriented trench in the western half of the site and a stone-lined drain/soakage trench that ran east/west across the centre of the site. No archaeological material indicative of a date for either feature were encountered. No further archaeological mitigation was required for the development.

Source: Martin Byrnes 1993 (Unpublished report) Report on the Archaeological Assessment of a Proposed Development at 88-89 Main Street, Portlaoise, County Laois (93E0169)

Excavation licence number: 96E0277
Site address: Peppers Lane, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Dominic Delaney

The pre-development archaeological assessment for a proposed development at Peppers Lane, Portlaoise required the mechanical excavation of three test trenches. The site, located between Main Street and James Fintan Lalor Avenue, contained a large C19th dwelling house and a smaller derelict outhouse, both of which were demolished prior to the archaeological test excavation. The site soil profile consisted of rubble overburden (0-00-0.40m) overlying a mottled grey/brown fine sand (0.40-1.25m) that overlay natural yellow/brown clayey silt (1.25m+). A deposit of compact brown clay/black peaty clay containing fragments of twigs and wood was uncovered in Trench 3. The deposit was c.1m wide and 1m deep, had no clearly defined edges and rested on the natural yellow/brown grey clayey silt.

The northern end of the site was heavily disturbed. The test excavation uncovered the remains of a mill race channel. The channel was 2.5m wide and 1.5m high. The revetting walls consisted of rubble limestone masonry and the 15m section which had been covered by buildings at the northern end of the site had a stone and brick arched roof. The remaining section of the millrace had been originally open but had gradually been filled in since it became obsolete in the late 19th century.

Source: Dominic Delaney 1993 (Unpublished report) Report on the Archaeological Assessment of a Proposed Development at Peppers Lane, Portlaoise, County Laois (96E0277)

Excavation licence number: 96E0365
Site address: Old gaol, Church Street, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Fiona Reilly

Pre-development archaeological test excavation took place at the Old gaol, Church Street, Portlaoise, which led to the full excavation of relevant portions of the site. The

courthouse was built in 1798 and replaced an earlier structure that was destroyed by fire. The gaol was built around the same time and remained in use until the 1830's. It functioned as an RIC barracks from the 1830's to the 1860's.

The archaeological excavation by hand, led to the discovery of five human adult male skeletons. The investigations found the remains of a graveyard in the courtyard of the old gaol, a cobbled surface that pre-dated part of the gaol and the remains of a structure outside its eastern wall.

Source: Fiona Reilly 1996 (Unpublished report) Archaeological Excavations at the Old Gaol, Portlaoise, County Laois (96E0365)

Excavation licence number: 99E0392
Site address: Jessop Street/ Coote Street, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Dominic Delaney

The pre-development archaeological assessment for a proposed development at Jessop Street/Coote Street, Portlaoise required the mechanical excavation of ten test trenches. The site, located between Coote Street and Church Street, along Jessop Street was the site of Kelly's Foundry, which was an early C20th iron works. The site of the proposed development stretched westwards from the corner of Church Street and Jessop Street to the road frontage of Coote Street. The Foundry was demolished and cleared in the early 1990's.

The eastern portion of the site were the gardens to the rear of the houses along Church Street. Two parallel test trenches were excavated in this area. Trench 1 was excavated to a depth of 0.70m and produced butchered animal bone, sherds of modern pottery ceramics and glass fragments. Trench 2 was excavated to a depth of 0.80m and a linear feature was located at the east end of the trench and extended a distance of 22.5m to the west and extended past the line of the trench. The feature (0.80m W; 0.2m T) contained a fill of silty sand with redeposited subsoil, charcoal and lime flecks. The upper fill of the feature produced two sherds of post medieval pottery. The excavator noted the discovery of several sherds of modern and post-medieval pottery from the subsoil, into which the linear feature was cut.

The central portion of the site that contained the site of the Kelly's Foundry was assessed on the basis of 5 linear test trenches (Trench 3-6incl.). Trench 3 produced several sherds of post-medieval and modern pottery from two layers of light brown sandy clay at a depth of c.0.40-0.70m along with pieces of animal bone, glass and brick fragments. Trench 4 showed the ground to be heavily disturbed by the presence of services and the foundations of the foundry. The trench produced occasional pieces of animal bone in brown/yellow clayey sand at a depth of 0.35-0.60m. Trench 5 contained a light grey sand deposit as a depth of 0.60-0.95m that when sectioned produced several sherds of post medieval pottery and clay pipe stem fragments and was interpreted by the excavator as possible ridge and furrow cultivation.

Trench 6 contained three contemporary cobblestone walls. Two of the cobblestone walls (II and III) were the northeast and southwest walls of a building. The east face of the trench was formed by a curved wall face (a) (H. 1m) made of roughly coursed limestone wall with slight base batter and lime mortar façade. This curved stone wall (a) abuts the southern end of a cobblestone wall (Wall I) (1.5m H, 18m L, 0.4m T) bonded with lime mortar. A stone lined drain (W. 0.65m; H. 0.5m), capped with sandstone slabs and filled with silt, ran north/south at the base of both walls (a and

I). The ground in the vicinity of the three cobblestone walls was composed of modern rubble fills.

The western part of the site was assessed on the basis of four test trenches (7-10 incl.). Trench 7 was excavated to a depth of c.0.70m and contained a grey/brown sandy silt deposit that contained organic matter (straw) and modern pottery sherds. A similar deposit occurred in Trench 5. Trench 8 was located at the western limit of the site and perpendicular to the road frontage of Coote Street, was excavated to a depth of 0.50m and consisted of hardcore fill overlying a cobbled surface at a depth of 0.40-0.50m and made of rounded cobbles.

The excavated trenches at the north west of the site (close to Coote Street), Trench 9 and 10, reached subsoil at depth of 0.35m and 0.25m respectively. A linear feature identified at the western end of Trench 9 had irregularly shaped termini and was c.6m in length. The fill of compact light brown silty sand and redeposited subsoil, was 0.22m deep and contained two sherds of post medieval pottery. Trench 10 was found to contain the disturbed skeletal remains of a large mammal, just below the surface at the east end of the trench.

The text excavation revealed the present of two linear features that were dated to the post-medieval period. One was interpreted as the remains of either a field/property boundary and the second was interpreted shallow linear features of unknown original and of limited archaeological significance.

Source: Dominic Delaney 1999 (Unpublished report) Report on the Archaeological Assessment of a Proposed Development at Jessop Street/ Coote Street, Portlaoise, County Laois (99E0392)

Excavation licence number:	00E0104
Site address:	James Fintan Lalor Avenue/Main Street/Church Street/Church Avenue, Portlaoise
Licence Holder:	Paul Stevens

The archaeological assessment of the route of the proposed construction of the Bord Gáis Éireann pipeline along James Fintan Lalor Avenue necessitated the mechanical excavation of a test trench. The test trench excavated to a depth of 1m, exposed orange/brown subsoil at a depth of 0.72m. The trench contained a drainage gully (0.45m W; 0.29m D) that was sealed by a buried sod. The gully contained C18th/C19th glass, porcelain and red earthenware.

The subsequent construction involved the mechanical excavation of a 520m long linear trench, from the south western end of James Fintan Lalor Avenue to the roundabout at the County Council offices. The excavation of the trench, within the road corridor, was archaeologically monitored. The monitoring revealed that there were no features or deposits of archaeological significance. The trench consisted of tarmac, overlying imported gravel and cobbles resting on orange/brown subsoil at a depth of 0.85m.

Subsequent monitoring of the installation of the gas pipeline along Main Street, with extensions from Main Street along Church Street, Church Avenue and Railway Street required the mechanical excavation of inspection pits and installation trenches. The installation was facilitated by the reuse of disused water mains on each of the roads. A small 8m long excavated trench along Railway Street did not reveal any features or

soils of archaeological significance. The monitoring of the inspection pits did not reveal any features or deposits of archaeological significance.

Source: Paul Stevens 2000 (Unpublished report) Archaeological Testing and Monitoring Report I: Fintan Lalor Avenue, Portlaoise, County Laois (00E0104)

Source: Paul Stevens 2004 (Unpublished report) Report on the Archaeological Monitoring Main Street and Railway Street, Portlaoise, County Laois (00E0104 Ext)

Excavation licence number: 03E0596
Site address: Presentation College, Church Avenue, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Neil O'Flanagan

The pre-development archaeological assessment of a proposed development within the grounds of the Presentation Convent (Area 1: Trench 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11) and the previously demolished Church (Area 2: Trench 1-4 incl.) required the mechanical excavation of nine test trenches. The C19th revived Gothic arcades of the demolished church surround the site of the proposed development as stone walls and blind arcades.

The four trenches in Area 1 revealed that when the church was demolished in the 1970's the rubble had been used to fill in the crypt of the church. The ground was subsequently levelled with some imported material and surfaced as a basketball court. Two of the test trenches (Trench 1 and 2) were located within the former church and two at the former entrance area to the church (Trench 3 and 4). There is a drop in surface level of c.2m from the northern corner of the site to an adjacent laneway under which now flows the culverted River Triogue. Trench 1 at the north eastern perimeter of the site contained six structural walls, all of which were identified as being part of the church. All were constructed using stone, bar one that was constructed using brownish redbrick. Trench 2 was excavated to a depth of 2.5m and consisted of rubble surrounding a stone wall that appeared to relate to the church. Trench 3 was excavated to a depth of 1.20m and consisted of rubble and re-deposited stony soil. Trench 4 revealed a stone wall that was interpreted as being part of a structure related to the church.

The five trenches in Area 2 revealed the presence of two features the nature of which were uncertain. Trench 5 was located close to the front of the bay to the rear of the Presentation Convent building. The excavated trench exposed the sides of a stone structure that was 0.85m wide and ran perpendicular to the convent building. The structure appeared to be cut into deposits of a grey brown sandy soil and the trench was excavated to a depth of 1.70m. The overlying rubble of redbrick and stone was unstable and prevented further examination of the feature. The feature was interpreted as either a subterranean tunnel or a drain.

Trench 6, 7 and 8 were located in the garden area to the rear of the convent. The trenches revealed that the garden had been built up using brown silty soil (Trench 7). Natural marl was encountered in the area at a depth of c.1.20m. Trench 8 revealed layers of rubble and modern pottery which were interpreted as being related to the construction of the convent and the subsequent formation of a garden area.

Trench 11 was located at the north west corner of the garden area to the rear of the former church. The trench revealed that marl as a relatively high level of 0.70m below the present ground surface. The excavation of the test trench revealed the presence of a base of a crude limestone wall just above the level of the marl. The

base of the wall is diagonal to the church wall and the excavator suggested that this wall possibly pre-dated the church. Further archaeological investigation was suggested in order to ascertain the archaeological significance of the wall base in Trench 11 and the possible subterranean passage or drain in Trench 5. No further archaeological mitigation has taken place on the site to date.

Source: Neil O'Flanagan 2003 (Unpublished report) Archaeological Assessment at Presentation College, Portlaoise, County Laois (03E0596)

Excavation licence number: 03E0975
Site address: Church Street/Railway Street as part of the Portlaoise Broadband Network, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Dominic Delaney

The chosen route for the construction of the Portlaoise Broadband Network, as part of the large Midland Regional Broadband Project was archaeologically monitoring during construction in 2003/04. The construction trenches were excavated along roads or verges and were excavated to a depth of 0.90m and 0.75m respectively. The monitoring along the streets within the zone of archaeological potential for Portlaoise namely Main Street, Coote Street, Grattan Street, Fintan Lalor Avenue, Ridge Road and Lyster Square did not reveal any features of soils of archaeological significance. Main Street consisted of gravel bedding layers overlying a compressed deposit of aggregate that in turn overlay the orange/brown silty sand subsoil, and was similar at Lyster Square. Coote Street, Grattan Street and Ridge Road all were quite similar with tarmac and road aggregate (c.0.20-0.30m in depth) overlying natural subsoil.

The archaeological monitoring of the trench along Railway Street revealed that the road material had an average c.0.30m. Beneath this was a layer of red/brown redeposited silty sand that extended to the base of the trench and produced an animal bone of either sheep/goat.

A stone built box shore/culvert was exposed in the test trenching. The culvert ran east/west along Railway Street. It was made using large mortared limestone slabs, has an average height of 0.67m and an average width of 0.38m and was filled with dark grey/black silt and sand.

A wall made of roughly cut stone with a possible rounded top/ cap was exposed at a depth of 0.35m below the present ground surface. The wall was located at the southern end of the Railway Street and extended beyond the trench. The surrounding soils produced white glazed ceramics and fragments of modern glass. During the monitoring of the linear trench along Church Street/Towerhill the excavator noted the exposed possible upper fill of the moat that once surrounded the fort. Though the trench was not cut to the base of the deposit, the excavator noted a possible cut for the moat at the eastern end of the street close to the circular tower of Fort Protector.

Source: Dominic Delaney 2003 (Unpublished report) Archaeological Monitoring at Fort Fortification, Church Street/ Towerhill, Portlaoise, County Laois (03E0975)

Excavation licence number: 03E1304
Site address: 43-44 Main Street, Portlaoise

Licence Holder: Martin Doody

The pre-development archaeological assessment for a proposed development at 43-44 Main Street, Portlaoise required the mechanical excavation of a one trench west of the centre of the proposed development. The test trench (10m L; 1m W) was excavated to the depth of the proposed basement (c.2.6m). The trench exposed rubble from previous buildings (0.5-1m) which stood on the site in modern times and consisted mainly of uncut stone, soil and red brick. The remainder of the soil profile was a homogeneous light brown sandy gravel with occasional large boulders throughout (some up to 0.50m across). Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered and no finds were recorded in the fill.

Source: Martin Doody 2003 (Unpublished report) Archaeological test excavation at 43-44 Main Street, Portlaoise, County Laois (03E1304)

Excavation licence number: 05E0130
Site address: James Fintan Lalor Avenue, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Martin Doody

The pre-development archaeological assessment for a proposed retail development located on the southern side and set back from James Fintan Lalor Avenue, required the mechanical excavation of a five linear trenches that were excavated to less than 1m depth to the formation level required for hardcore fill and construction beams of the building. The site was relatively undisturbed and the excavator identified possible cultivation features which indicated that the site was probably used as a garden in the past.

Source: Martin Doody 2005 (Unpublished report) Archaeological text excavation at James Fintan Lalor Avenue, Portlaoise (05E0130)

Excavation licence number: 07E0517
Site address: Bull Lane, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Martin Doody

The pre-development archaeological assessment for a proposed development located on Bull Lane required the mechanical excavation of a number of test trenches. The site is a linear site with the southern end fronting onto Bull Lane. The site is to the west of the present Post Office at Lyster Square. The northern end of the site is adjacent to the rear of the properties on Main Street. The test trenching uncovered the remains of outbuildings associated with houses on Main Street both at the northern and southern end of the development site. The excavator concluded that the remains were probably dated to the earlier part of the nineteenth century. No features or soils of archaeological significance were encountered during the archaeological assessment of the site.

Source: Martin Doody 2007 (Unpublished report) Report on the Archaeological Assessment of a Proposed Development at Bull Lane, Portlaoise, County Laois (07E0517)

Excavation licence number: 11E0442
Site address: Scoil Chríost Rí, Presentation Convent, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Franc Myles

The demolition of existing school buildings and the subsequent construction of a silt trap and boundary walls were archaeologically monitored. During the monitoring of the demolition of the buildings deposits of organic clay were encountered at a depth of 2.5m below present ground level. The deposition of the material probably occurred in the late C17th/ early C18th as suggested by the two sherds of tin-glazed earthen ware and a sherd of slipware they were recovered.

The construction of a silt trap, c.6m from the western side of the culverted position of the River Triogue, necessitated the excavation of an area measuring 6m by 5m. This area was excavated to the natural subsoil of boulder clay at a depth of 2.5m. This was overlain by a deposit of fine grey silt (0.45m depth), which itself was overlain by three distinct layers of organic clays. The lowest organic material (0.95m depth) was a grey silty clay containing vegetative matter and fragments of shell, which appeared to have accumulated naturally. A lense of possibly sterile light brown organic clay (0.20m depth) was sealed by a mixed deposit (0.50m depth) of black and brown organic clays, which was darker the deposit below and contained cinders, animal bone and a sherd of tin-glazed earthenware. This in turn was overlain by modern fill (0.30m depth) and the surface slab.

The construction of a new southern and northern boundary wall necessitated the mechanical excavation of a 32m and 18m long trench. The ground profile was consistent with that in the area of the silt trap. The trench for the southern wall revealed a 0.20m thick light brown organic clay produced a rim sherd tin-glazed plates, a sherd of Bristol/Staffordshire slipware cup and a piece of moulded plaster cornice or frame. The fill from the dark brown clay in the trench for the northern wall containing a dump of butchered cattle bone and sherd of C19th willow pattern white earthenware. The culvert wall was constructed of mortared rubble, with subsequent additions of concrete blocks and cement render towards the bridge.

The results of the monitoring led the excavator to suggest, on the basis of the organic nature of the materials encountered, that the area was used for by the inhabitants of Portlaoise into the late seventeenth century for disposal of human cess, redeposited from the latrine pits before the creation of a municipal sewage scheme.

Source: Franc Myles 2012 (Unpublished report) Archaeological monitoring and planning compliance report, Scoil Chríost Rí/ Presentation Convent, Portlaoise, Co. Laois (11E0442)

Appendix 8: Unlicensed Archaeological Monitoring

(by Dr Eoin Sullivan)

This list relates to monitoring work on development sites in the vicinity of the Fort carried out under a 'watching brief' during the construction stage

NMS ref number: 05N0344
Site address: 18 Church Street, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Martin Doody

The ground works associated with the site development were archaeologically monitored. The results of the monitoring revealed that the stratigraphy throughout the site was similar and consisted of a fill of stone and rubble (0.40m depth) that overlay a sandy clay. A deposit of dumped domestic material between 0.10 and 0.40m in depth was located to the rear of the former house and contained ash and C19th(two sherds of internally glazed brownware)/C20th crockery. No features or soils of archaeological significance were encountered during the monitoring of the site.

Source: Martin Doody 2005 (Unpublished report) Archaeological Monitoring of a Development at 18 Church Street, Portlaoise, County Laois (05N0344)

NMS ref number: 06N0119
Site address: 34-35 Main Street, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Martin Doody

The demolition of the upstanding building and associated groundworks were archaeologically monitored. The site is located on the western corner of Main Street/railway Street. The monitoring of the demolition revealed that there was no evidence of either medieval or post medieval structures or features in the fabric of the building.

The monitoring of the groundworks revealed the existence of an earlier basement within the footprint of the building that was subsequently been backfilled with modern debris including electrical equipment. The monitoring of two engineers test pits and a lift shaft to the rear of the property revealed a deposit of dumped modern rubble to a depth of 0.50m below the ground surface that overlay an undisturbed sandy gravel. A similar stratigraphy was identified in the area of the lift shaft. No features or soils of archaeological significance were encountered during the monitoring of the site.

Source: Martin Doody 2006 (Unpublished report) Archaeological Monitoring at 34/35 Main Street, Portlaoise, County Laois (06N0119)

NMS ref number: 06N0179
Site address: Tower Hill, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Dominic Delaney

The monitoring of the mechanical removal of topsoil to the rear of the Victorian house (Site No.5) revealed that most of the surface area was made-up ground and only small parts of the site consisted of undisturbed topsoil. The soil that did remain

consisted of dark brown/ black silt with humified organics and contained glass, plastic refuse and sizeable quantities of brick, slate and paving stones. Occasional isolated pieces of cut stone were found in the topsoil. There were no cut features or structural remains identified in the subsoil, which was on average, 0.30m below the ground surface of the topsoil. None of the pieces of cut stone were architectural fragments. No features or soils were encountered during the archaeological monitoring of the site.

Source: Dominic Delaney 2006. (Unpublished report) Archaeological Monitoring of Removal of Topsoil at Tower Hill, Portlaoise, County Laois (06N0179)

NMS ref number: 07N0138
Site address: Church Street, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Peter Kerins

The mechanical excavation of a 20m long linear trench to facilitate the provision of gas services to a domestic house on Railway Street was archaeologically monitored. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.20m and revealed that the tarmac and stone foundation (0.25m deep) overlying imported mixed soils (0.10m deep) containing redbrick and sherds of whiteware and brown pottery dating from the C17th-C20th, in turn overlay an imported red sandy clay (0.35m deep). These imported deposits overlay a natural old ground surface of dark brown stoney clay with a humic content. This deposit was at a depth of 0.70m-1.20m below the road surface and contained animal bone, sherds of black and red glazed pottery (C17th-C19th). Natural subsoil was not exposed in the excavated trench.

Peter Kerins 2007 (Unpublished report) Archaeological Monitoring, Church Street, Portlaoise (07N0138)

NMS ref number: 94N0017
Site address: 88-89 Main Street, Portlaoise
Licence Holder: Clare Mullins

The archaeological monitoring of the foundations and services of the proposed development took place after the initial archaeological assessment (93E0169). The monitoring did not reveal any features or soils of archaeological significance throughout the construction works.

Clare Mullins 1994 (Unpublished report) A Report on the Archaeological Monitoring of Foundation and Service Trenches at a site located at the rear of 88-89 Main Street, Portlaoise, County Laois (94N0017)

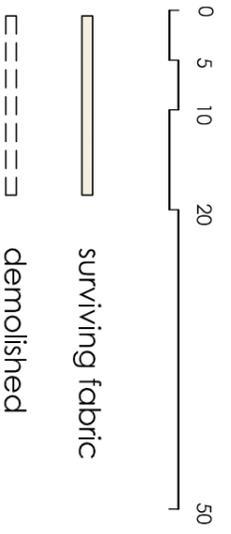
Appendix 9: Survey Drawings based on electronic survey by Apex Surveys

TOWER HILL

120 m



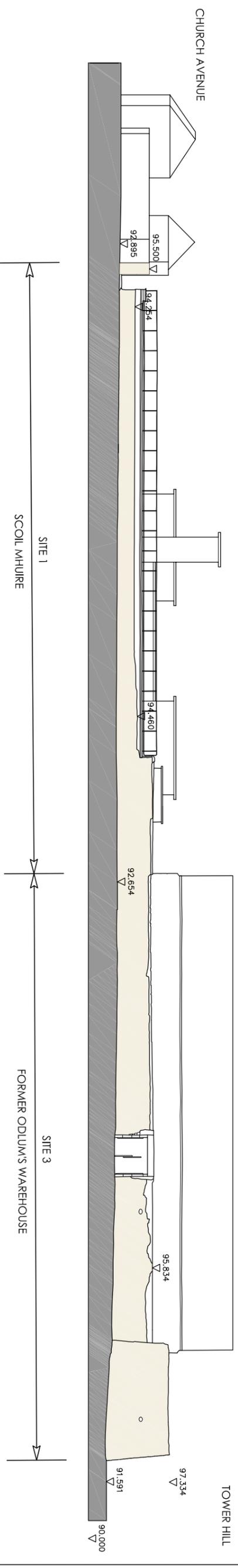
Estimated location of Castle measuring 17.5m x 14.5m based on contemporary map



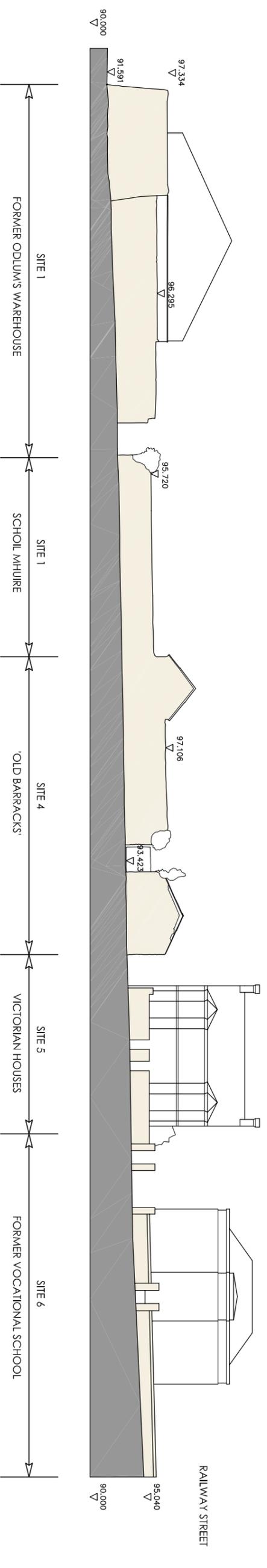
lots

architecture and urbanism

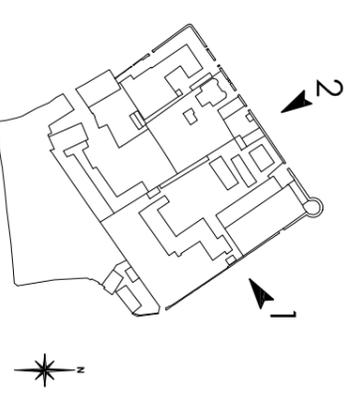
22 South William Street, Dublin D2 Tel. 01 677 1006 Email info@lots.ie



1: ELEVATION TO CHURCH AVENUE / FITZWILLIAM PLACE



2: ELEVATION TO TOWER HILL

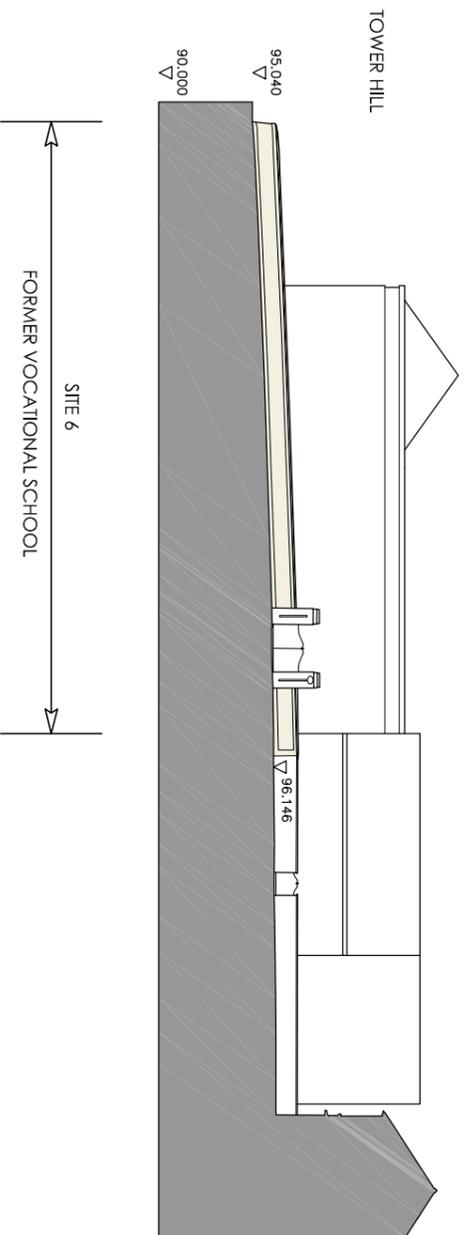


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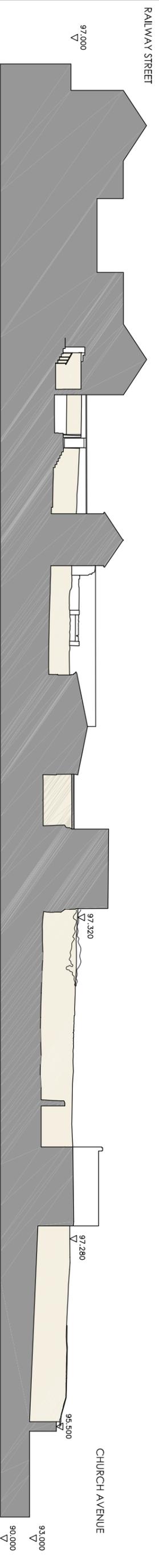
architecture and urbanism

22 South William Street, Dublin D2 Tel. 01 677 1006 Email info@lots.ie

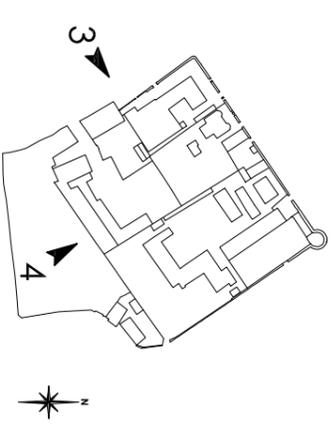
RAILWAY STREET ELEVATION



3: ELEVATION TO RAILWAY STREET



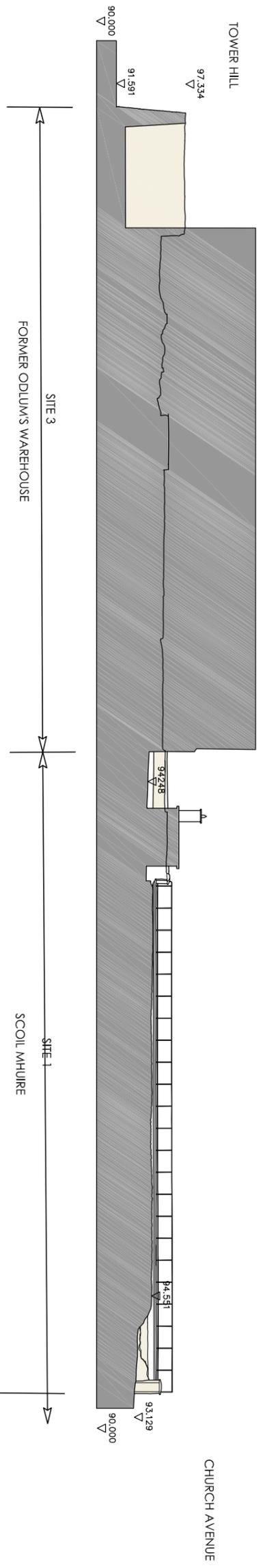
4: ELEVATION AT REAR OF MAIN STREET



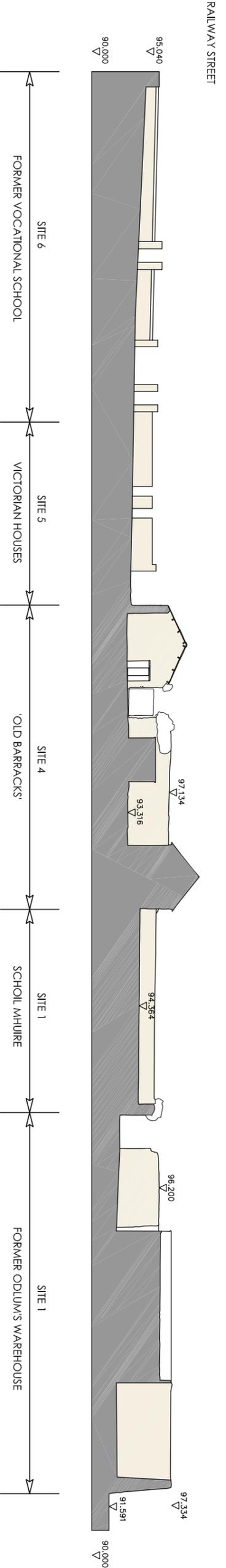
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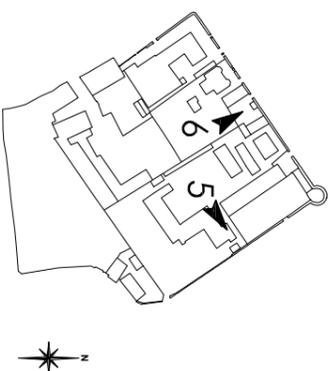
22 South William Street, Dublin D2 Tel. 01 677 1006 Email info@lots.ie



5: INTERIOR ELEVATION EAST WALL



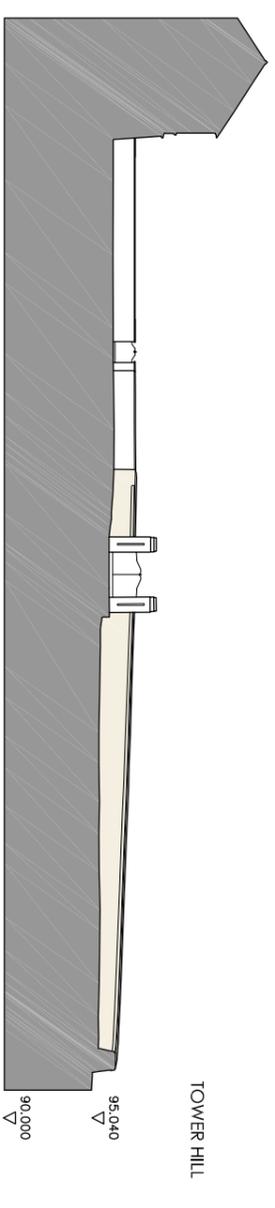
6: INTERIOR ELEVATION NORTH WALL



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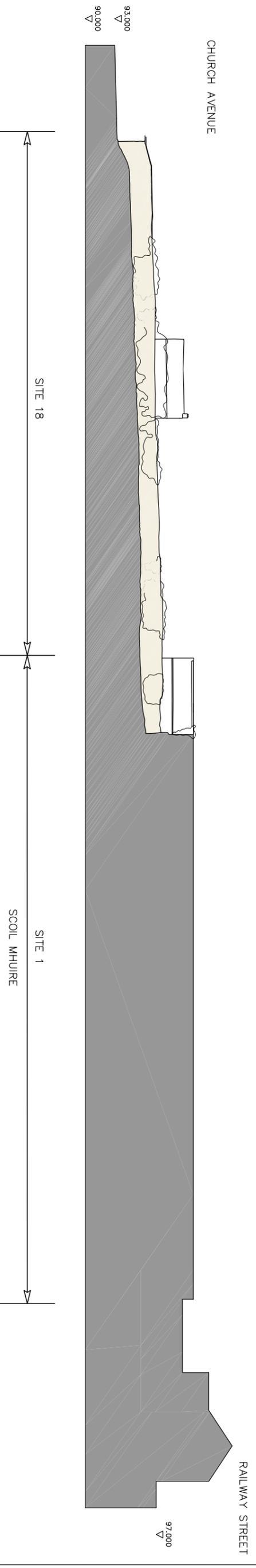
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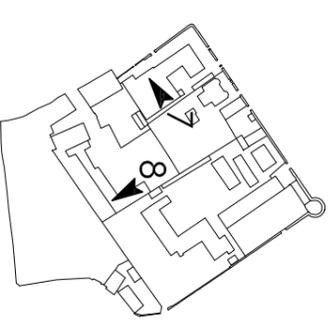
TOWER HILL



7: INTERIOR ELEVATION WEST WALL



8: INTERIOR ELEVATION SOUTH WALL



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