

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



*prepared for*  
***Laois Heritage Society***

**lotts** architecture and urbanism  
**November 2015**

An Chomhairle Oldhreachta  
The Heritage Council



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
1.1.1 Outline Description .....	5
1.1.2 Location and Protection Status.....	5
1.1.3 Methodology for Conservation Plan.....	6
1.1.4 Phasing of the Conservation Plan .....	6
1.1.5 Project Team .....	7
<b>2.0 UNDERSTANDING THE SITE</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>2.1 Historical Chronology</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>2.2 Analysis of Maps and Historical Images</b> .....	<b>18</b>
2.2.1 Map of Tudor Plantation of 'Leis' and 'Offalie', c. 1563 .....	18
2.2.2 Carew Plan of the Fort of Maryborough.....	20
2.2.3 Map of Fort and Town of Maryborough, c. 1560 .....	22
2.2.4 Cromwellian 'Down Survey', 1656-58.....	25
2.2.5 Parnell Estate map of 1721 .....	26
2.2.6 Bridges estate map of 1766 .....	26
2.2.7 Daniel Grose engraving, 1792 .....	28
2.2.8 Map of Town Commission boundary.....	28
2.2.9 Ordnance Survey First Edition, 1839 .....	29
2.2.10 Ordnance Survey map of 1907 .....	31
2.2.11 Aerial Photographs.....	32
<b>2.3 Archaeological Excavations</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>2.4 Comparison to other Plantation Structures</b> .....	<b>34</b>
2.4.1 Fort of Leighlinbridge, 1546.....	34
2.4.2 Fort Governor, Daingean, 1547-48 .....	35
2.4.3 Fort of Blackford, .....	35
<b>2.5 Architectural Description</b> .....	<b>36</b>
2.5.1 Site of the Fort .....	36
2.5.2 Inventory of Surviving Fabric .....	37
<b>2.6 Summary Interpretation of Features</b> .....	<b>81</b>
2.6.1 Fort wall .....	81
2.6.2 Surrounding Ditch .....	81
2.6.3 Castle .....	82
2.6.4 Tudor barracks within Fort.....	83

2.6.5	Convent .....	83
2.6.6	Triogue River .....	83
2.6.7	Ridge of Maryborough .....	83
2.6.8	Mill site .....	83
2.6.9	Old St Peter’s Church and Graveyard .....	84
3.0	ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE .....	85
<b>3.1</b>	<b>National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) .....</b>	<b>85</b>
3.1.1	Fort of Maryborough (Reg. No. 12504200) .....	85
3.1.2	Presentation Convent (Reg. No. 12505169) .....	86
3.1.3	Old St Peter’s Church (Reg. No. 12504175) .....	86
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Preliminary Statement of Significance .....</b>	<b>87</b>
3.2.1	Architectural Interest .....	87
3.2.2	Historical Significance .....	87
3.2.3	Technical Interest.....	87
3.2.4	Archaeological Interest .....	87
3.2.5	Potential as a Significant Heritage Site .....	88
4.0	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT PHASE.....	88
4.1.1	Further phases of the Conservation Plan .....	88
4.1.2	Further Research, Surveys and Investigations .....	88
4.1.3	Consultation with Stakeholders .....	89
4.1.4	Recomendations for County Development Plan 2017-2023 .....	89
	<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>90</b>

## **Acknowledgements**

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1.1 Outline Description

The Fort Protector is a large rectangular fortress, the perimeter walls of which have survived over most of its circuit, embedded in the urban fabric of the town of Portlaoise.

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.

The Fort marks the establishment of the town of Portlaoise, which began as a fortified enclosure around its walls. 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. In 1920 the town was renamed after the Fort, the old name 'Maryborough' being changed to Portlaoise, meaning 'Fort of Laois'.

Today the interior of the Fort is subdivided into many separate properties, some large and some small. 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.

The aim of the Conservation Plan, of which this document is the first phase, is to create a policy framework to guide all future decisions on the development of the Fort towards its eventual restoration as an important heritage site presenting the history of the Tudor Plantation. It is felt that a properly presented Fort site would bring about the regeneration of the town centre, and become an important place for the interpretation of the history of the Midlands.

### 1.1.2 Location and Protection Status

Townland:	Maryborough	
Barony:	Maryborough East	
Civil Parish:	Borris	
Irish Grid location:	247130 198480	
NIAH Reg. Nos:	12504200 (Fort)	Rating: National
	12505169 (Presentation Convent)	Rating: National
	12504175 (Old St Peter's Church)	Rating: Regional
Protected structures:	RPS 468 (Fort)	
	RPS 475 (Presentation Convent)	
	RPS 186 (Old St Peter's Church)	

RPS 467 (Old St Peter's Graveyard)

Archaeological sites: LA013-041001 (Fort)  
LA013-041002 (Old St Peter's Church)  
LA013-041003 (Tower in convent)  
LA013-041004 (Old St Peter's Graveyard)  
LA013-041005 (Mill)  
LA013-041006 (Town defences)  
LA013-041007 (Burial)

### 1.1.3 Methodology for Conservation Plan

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. The aims of the project are:

1. To generate a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the Fort, including its historical context and building history, its archaeological potential, its architectural and defensive design features, and its current condition.
2. To assess its heritage significance and potential.
3. To identify the issues and pressures which can threaten its significance, including lack of understanding, physical decay and future urban development.
4. To develop 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.

### 1.1.4 Phasing of the Conservation Plan

This document presents the first stage of the project to develop a Conservation Plan for the Fort Protector.

The first stage has involved:

- Gaining an understanding of the historical context in which the Fort was constructed.
- A preliminary survey and interpretation of its surviving fabric.
- Formulating a working Statement of Significance, based on the understanding gained thus far.
- Identification of stakeholders with an interest in the future of the Fort.
- Some consultation to gain support for the project among property owners, local business people, heritage enthusiasts and interested members of the public.

The next stages will involve a more detailed record and analysis of the surviving fabric, to include an archaeological investigation and a detailed electronic survey; formulation of a definitive Statement of Significance; analysis of issues which threaten the significance of the Fort; and in consultation with stakeholders formulation of a set of policies to guide the future conservation and restoration of the site.

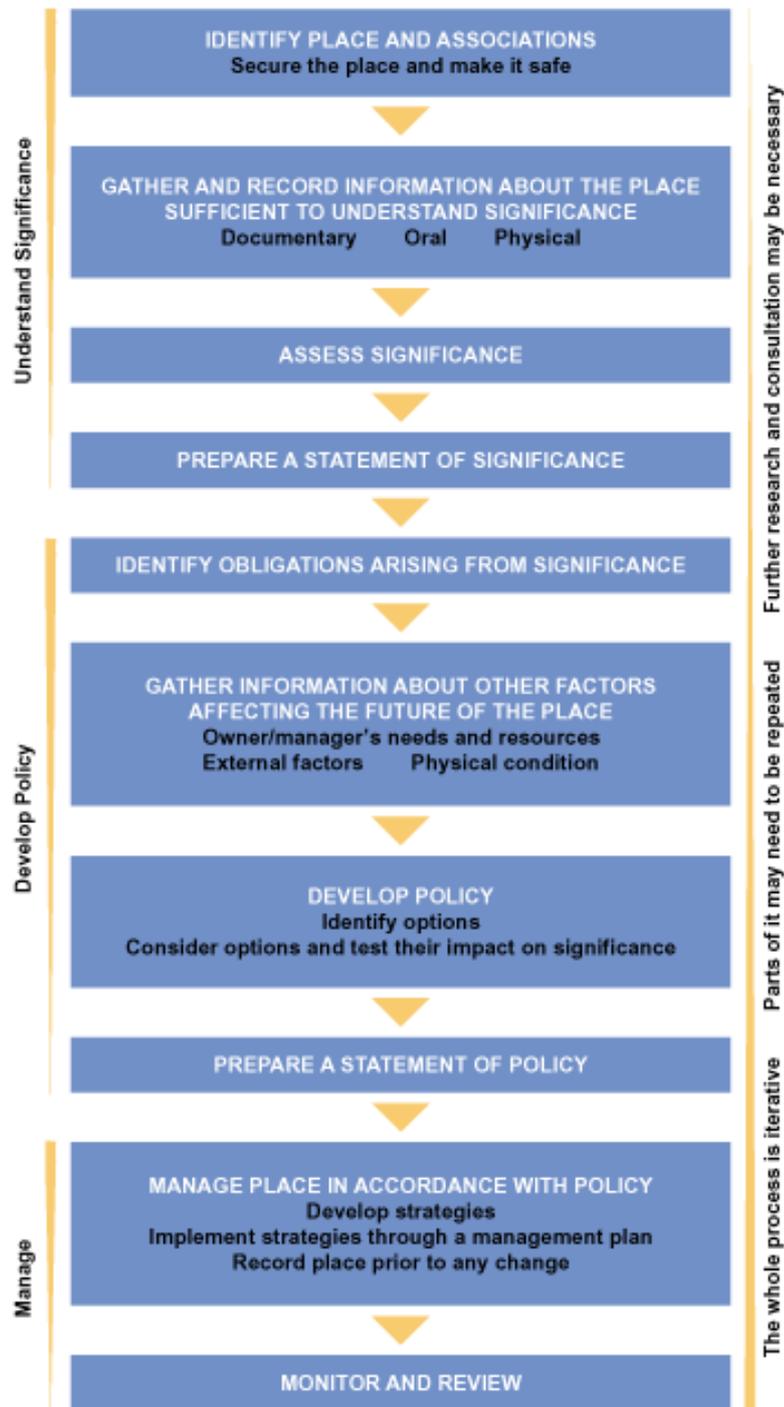


Figure 1: Diagram showing Conservation Plan methodology from the Burra Charter.

### 1.1.5 Project Team

This first stage of the Plan has been prepared by conservation architect Richard McLoughlin of Lotts Architecture, reporting 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.

## 2.0 Understanding the Site



Figure 2: Irish foot soldiers raid a settler's cottage, from J. Derrick's *The Image of Irelande, with a Discoverie of Woodkarne*, 1581

### 2.1 Historical Chronology

- 1167 Diarmait Mac Murchada (Dermot MacMurrough), king of Leinster and overlord of the O'Mores of Laois, is expelled and invites Anglo-Norman mercenaries to regain his kingdom, instigating the Norman invasion.
- 1171 Following the death of Diarmait, his son-in-law, Richard de Clare, the earl of Pembroke, known as Strongbow, is confirmed by Henry II as lord of Leinster. The loosely bound dynastic kingdom of Leinster becomes a Norman lordship and the former sub-kingdoms, including those in Laois, are granted to followers of Strongbow under the feudal system.
- 1189 William Marshall becomes earl of Pembroke and lord of Leinster on his marriage to Strongbow's daughter Isobel. Marshall, 'the greatest knight in Christendom' was regent of England during the minority of Henry III.
- 1247 Split of the lordship of Leinster, following extinction of the Marshall male line, into five equal parts around the manorial centres of Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny, Kildare and Dunamaise, each ruled by absentees. Dunamaise passed to the Mortimer family.
- 1270's Records of hostilities between native Irish in Laois and their Norman overlords. O'Mores and O'Connor Falys operate from several districts in Laois and Offaly which remained outside English control.
- c. 1340 Norman decline and Gaelic resurgence. Laoiseach Ó Mórdha (died 1342) succeeds in regaining control of the ancient O'More territory from Roger Mortimer. From this period English rule gradually contracts to the Pale, and nominal control of Ireland is vested in great Hiberno-Norman families such as Fitzgeralds of Kildare and Butlers of Ormond.



**Figure 3: “This is the attire of soldiers and peasants in Ireland, beyond England” drawn by Albrecht Dürer, 1521. From left, an Irish warrior with spear and quilted war coat, two Scottish gallowglasses each bearing the ‘claidheamh mór’ or great sword, one wrapped in a ‘feileadh mór’ or great kilt, and attending them two barefoot Irish ‘kern’ or peasant warriors carrying pole axes.**

1485 The beginning of the Tudor period marked a return to peace and stability in England, and a new focus of attention on Ireland. The Pale is under regular attack by Irish septs of O’Byrne, O’Toole, O’Connor and O’More, exacting ‘black rent’.

1534 Revolt of Silken Thomas, Lord Offaly and later tenth earl of Kildare (1513–1537). Thomas had been made deputy governor of Ireland when his father the ninth earl was summoned to London. In response to rumours that his father had been executed, the 21-year-old Thomas renounced allegiance to the king of England and led a rebellion.

Later the same year the split with Rome is formalised by the Act of Supremacy which declares Henry VIII ‘Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England’



**Figure 4: ‘Silken’ Thomas Fitzgerald, Lord Offaly and 10<sup>th</sup> earl of Kildare**

- 1537 Defeat and execution of Silken Thomas saw the confiscation of the earldom of Kildare to the crown, extending the Pale to the borders of Laois and Offaly. The nominal control of Ireland by great Hiberno-Norman families came to an end. Henry VIII adopted a new policy to rule Ireland centrally through English deputies, with a standing army.
- 1537 The Gaelic chief of Offaly, Brian O'Connor-Faly, brother-in-law of Silken Thomas and an ally in his revolt, is driven from his territory by Lord Leonard Grey, Lord Deputy from 1536–1540. The O'Connors had traditionally allied themselves to the Fitzgerald earls of Kildare.
- 1538 O'Connor submits to English rule, and is reinstated in his lands with the title 'Baron Offaly', but in spite of his submission continues to mount attacks on the Pale.
- Grey formally acknowledged the lordship of the O'Mores in Laois by his recognition of Piaras Mac Maol-Lochlainn Ó Mórdha in a succession dispute with his nephews. The O'Mores had traditionally allied themselves to the Butler earls of Ormond.
- 1540 Sir Anthony St Leger, Lord Deputy from 1540-48, 1550–51 and 1553–56, pursues a policy of moderation and conciliation, seeking to incorporate the lords of Gaelic Ireland into the Tudor state.
- 1541 Henry VIII adopts the title 'King of Ireland' under the Crown of Ireland Act of the Irish parliament, to replace the title 'Lord of Ireland' held by English monarchs since 1171.
- The new Kingdom of Ireland provides the framework for the granting of noble titles, and St Leger oversees a new policy of 'Surrender and Regrant', by which Irish clan leaders and gaelicised Norman lords would renounce the ancient Brehon system, and would hold their estates under English law, in subordination to the king. The Brehon system of elective lordship would be replaced by primogeniture, the succession of the first-born son, and clans would adopt the English language and English customs, in return for noble titles under English law, and with it protection from attack and membership of the Irish Parliament.
- Although most Gaelic leaders formally sign up to the system, the English manner of succession from father to eldest son proves to be at odds with the family-based succession of an appointed 'tanaiste' or heir-apparent, resulting in dynastic struggles rather than the stability which the settlement set out to achieve.
- 1542 Ruairi Caoch Ó Mórdha succeeds to the lordship of Laois and accepts the anglicised title 'Rory O'More of Lex' under the surrender and regrant scheme.
- 1545-6 Brian O'Connor-Faly, joins forces with his brother-in-law, the disaffected Giolla-Padraig Ó Mórdha, brother of Ruairi Caoch, to invade the O'More lands. The pro-English Ruairi Caoch is killed at the hands of Giolla-Padraig, who succeeds to the lordship of Laois. The two allies then launch an attack on the Pale ostensibly in support of the exiled Fitzgeralds.

- 1546 Construction of the Fort of Leighlinbridge on the site of a dissolved monastery, and integrating a monastic tower house at its corner. Its plan form closely resembles that of the Fort Protector.
- 1547 Death of Henry VIII and accession of his son Edward VI, aged nine. The boy-king's uncle, Edward Seymour (1500–1552) assumes absolute control of England. Seymour had been created first Earl of Hertford by Henry VIII as brother of his third wife, Jane Seymour. He now became first Duke of Somerset, 'Lord Protector of the Realm' and 'Governor of the King's Person'. He was deposed in 1549, and executed in 1552.

In the absence of St Leger in England, the more hardline Lord Justice Sir William Brabazon invades Laois and Offaly, laying waste both territories over thirty days. Brabazon captures the O'Connor stronghold of Daingean and the O'More castle of Ballyadams. The two chiefs flee into Connaught.

In June the Regency Council under Somerset send Sir Edward Bellingham with troops and supplies to secure the territories. Bellingham serves as Lord Deputy from 1548–1549.

A garrison of 100 horsemen, 100 men armed with guns, 100 armed with battle-axes, and 100 pikemen or bowmen in addition to attendants are stationed in the subdued territory over the winter. Comerford suggests that this garrison was housed in the building which forms the core of the former Presentation Convent, marked 'Storehouse' on the early map of Maryborough.

Further research is needed to confirm the sequence of events more precisely, and the distinct roles of Brabazon, Bellingham and Bryan.



Figure 5: Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and 'Lord Protector of the Realm' from 1547-49 (painted by Hans Holbein)



Figure 6: Sir Henry Sidney, Lord Deputy from 1565–71 and 1575–78 (painted by Arnold Bronckhorst)

- 1548 Construction of the Fort by Francis Bryan, Marshall of Ireland. The Fort was named after Somerset, the Lord Protector. The Fort is referred to as 'Campa' in contemporary Irish documents. The Fort Governor in Daingean, fortress of the suppressed territory of Offaly, is also named in honour of Somerset.
- 1550 In a shift away from the policy of surrender and regrant, the Dublin government propose the idea of a plantation, financed by private enterprise. The new policy of displacement and plantation pursued in Laois and Offaly reflects a sentiment expressed by St Leger a decade before in a letter to Thomas Cromwell (1485-1540) in which he reported that the country is "much easier won than kept", "for unless it be peopled with others than be there already, and also certain fortresses there builded and warded, if it be gotten the one day it is lost the next". An order of 15 March forbids anyone of the name of Ó Mórdha to hold land in Leix.
- 1551 In the first attempt at a plantation of Laois and Offaly speculative leases are made to gentry of the Pale and to soldiers, but these fail to take hold.
- 1552 Henry Wyse described as captain of the Fort of Leix.
- 1553 Accession of Mary I. Mary restored the Catholic religion and married prince Philip of Spain in 1554, with whom she ruled jointly as King and Queen of England and Ireland, limited to her lifetime.
- Philip acceded as Phillip II of Spain in 1556, and ruled until 1598. During his reign the Spanish Empire reached the height of its global power, 'the empire on which the sun never sets'. He became known in Spain as 'Felipe el Prudente' (Philip the Prudent). In 1588 he launched the Spanish Armada against England of Elizabeth I.



Figure 7: Mary I, born 1516, reigned 1553 – 1558 (painted by Anthonis Mor)



Figure 8: Phillip II of Spain born 1527, reigned 1556-98 (painted by Titian at age 24).



- c. 1560 A third Fort is constructed at Blackford on the Kildare border near Stradbally.
- 1563 Second phase of plantation. The plantations were not universal across the lands of the new counties. Settlers preferred to locate close to the forts and to Carlow in the less isolated area along the River Barrow and in the area around Edenderry and Monasteroris.
- 1565 Sir Henry Sidney becomes Lord Deputy, having deputed previously under his brother-in-law the Earl of Sussex.  
Francis Cosbie made constable of the Fort. At this time the garrison consisted of one porter, one drummer, one ensign, one surgeon and 39 arquebusiers (cavalry bearing a muzzle-loaded firearm called the arquebus, forerunner of the musket).
- 1567 Maryborough granted a market, and continues to thrive until 1571.
- 1569 Maryborough granted borough status.
- 1570 Maryborough incorporated. Charter empowers the corporation to fortify the borough with ditches and stone walls. This suggests that the defences shown on the map of the town may have become inadequate.
- 1570s Gaelic leaders in resurgence, notably under Ruairí Óg Ó Mórdha, son of Ruairi 'Caoch'.
- 1572 O'Dunne territory of Iregan (Ui Riagain, now the barony of Tinnahinch), becomes part of Queen's County.
- 1577 In the Massacre of Mullaghmast virtually all of the Gaelic leaders of Laois and Offaly, including over 180 members of the O'More clan, were killed by English forces at a feast at Mullaghmast, Co Kildare.



Figure 10: Soldiers of Sir Henry Sidney carrying severed Irish heads. The woman's head is now thought to be that of the wife of Rory Og O'More, Maighr ad O'Byrne, the sister of Fiach McHugh O'Byrne.



Figure 11: Rúairí Óg Ó Mórdha, lord of Laois from 1557-1578, portrayed by John Derricke as a 'wild woodkerne and defeated rebel'.

- 1578 Ruairí Óg and his wife Maighréad O'Byrne, sister of Fiach MacHugh O'Byrne, were hunted down and killed soon afterwards.
- 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 rebellion culminated in the Plantation of Munster (begun 1586).
- 1581 Publication of John Derricke's *The Image of Irelande, with a Discoverie of Woodkarne*, a pro-English account celebrating Sidney's campaigns in Ireland with a set of twelve woodcut illustrations with verse narration. Although the Irish are shown in an unfavourable light, the book provides insight into the dress and appearance of the late sixteenth century inhabitants of Ireland and of contemporary English military equipment.
- 1597-8 During the Nine Years War (1594- 1603), the town was burnt in successive years by Uaithne MacRuaidhri Ó Mórdha (Owney McRory O'More). This war staged mainly in Ulster led to the 'Flight of the Earls' and the Plantation of Ulster (begun 1606).
- 1598 David Good recorded as vicar of St Peter's Church.
- 1599 The Earl of Essex ambushed at the Pass of the Plumes after having relieved a siege of the Fort.
- 1600 A band of Owney McRory O'More's men lured into the Fort and massacred by the governor Sir Francis Rush.  
The Mac Giolla Pdraig (Fitzpatrick) territory of Upper Ossory becomes part of Queen's County.
- 1607 Queen's County and King's County finally pacified. Remaining O'Mores and others belonging to the 'seven septs of Laois' transplanted to Co Kerry.

- 1635 Corporation of Maryborough granted two fairs by Charles I.
- 1641 The Irish Rebellion breaks out, a consequence of the failure to assimilate the native Irish elite in the wake of the Elizabethan conquest and the plantations. Sir Rory O'More (c. 1600-1655), a nephew of Ruairí Óg is one of its four principal organisers.
- 1642 In the ensuing Irish Confederate Wars, Rory succeeds in recruiting Owen Roe O'Neill from the Spanish service.
- 1646 Maryborough taken by Owen Roe O'Neill. The Fort is surrendered by its Governor Sir William Gilbert to Sir Phelim O'Neill, the Irish Confederate leader.
- 1648 The papal nuncio Rinnuccini takes refuge in Maryborough. Later that year the town is retaken by Lord Castlehaven for the King.
- 1650 Fort substantially demolished by Oliver Cromwell's generals Hewson and Reynolds.
- 1792 Remains of the Castle drawn by Daniel Grose.
- 1801 In his Statistical Survey of the Queen's County, Sir Charles Coote refers to the vestiges of the stronghold of the garrison of Maryborough: "one round tower is still preserved, and part of a square one, which was very strong; here the Governor resided and had a grand court. The gardens are yet taken care of &c."
- 1835 As recorded in the Ordnance Survey Letters, the last part of castle called the Maryborough Fort "was cleared away by Mr Graves". The letter states that the place where it stood is about 200 feet to the rear of Mr Coleman's house in the town.



Figure 12: Map showing locations and names of planter families (from Lane and Nolan).



to indicate battlements. The interior appears to contain some smaller structures or enclosures.

In neither depiction is the enclosure of the town shown outside of the Fort, which would seem to indicate that the settlement did not extend outside until some time later. By contrast, the depiction of 'Dinain' (Daingean) shows some settlement outside the walls, possibly reflecting the existence of the Fort as an O'Connor stronghold prior to its occupation by the English.



Figure 14: Extract from map of c. 1563 showing Fort Protector and its context

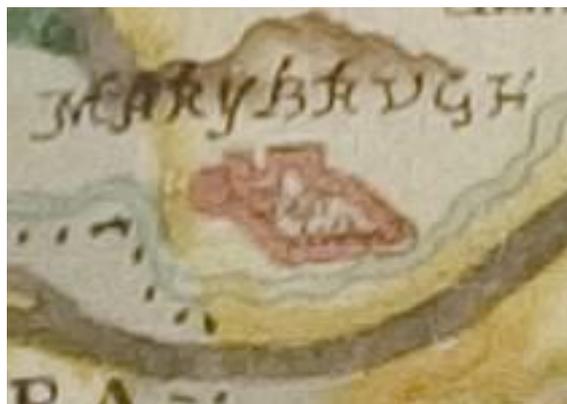


Figure 15: Extract from Carew version of the map showing 'Marybrugh'



Figure 16: Extract from map of c. 1563 showing the Fort Governor as 'Dinain', now Daingean

The site for the Fort was evidently chosen to command the open plain, using the natural defences offered by the Triogue River and the esker ridge. The Triogue is shown as a distinctly meandering watercourse, passing close to the walls. A ditch is shown around the walls of both forts at Daingean and Protector, coloured in black,

which may suggest an earthwork as opposed to a water filled moat. The esker, now known as the Ridge of Portlaoise, is shown running alongside the Triogue. Only parts of this ridge survive today, the section closest to the Fort being the Ridge Cemetery.

### 2.2.2 Carew Plan of the Fort of Maryborough

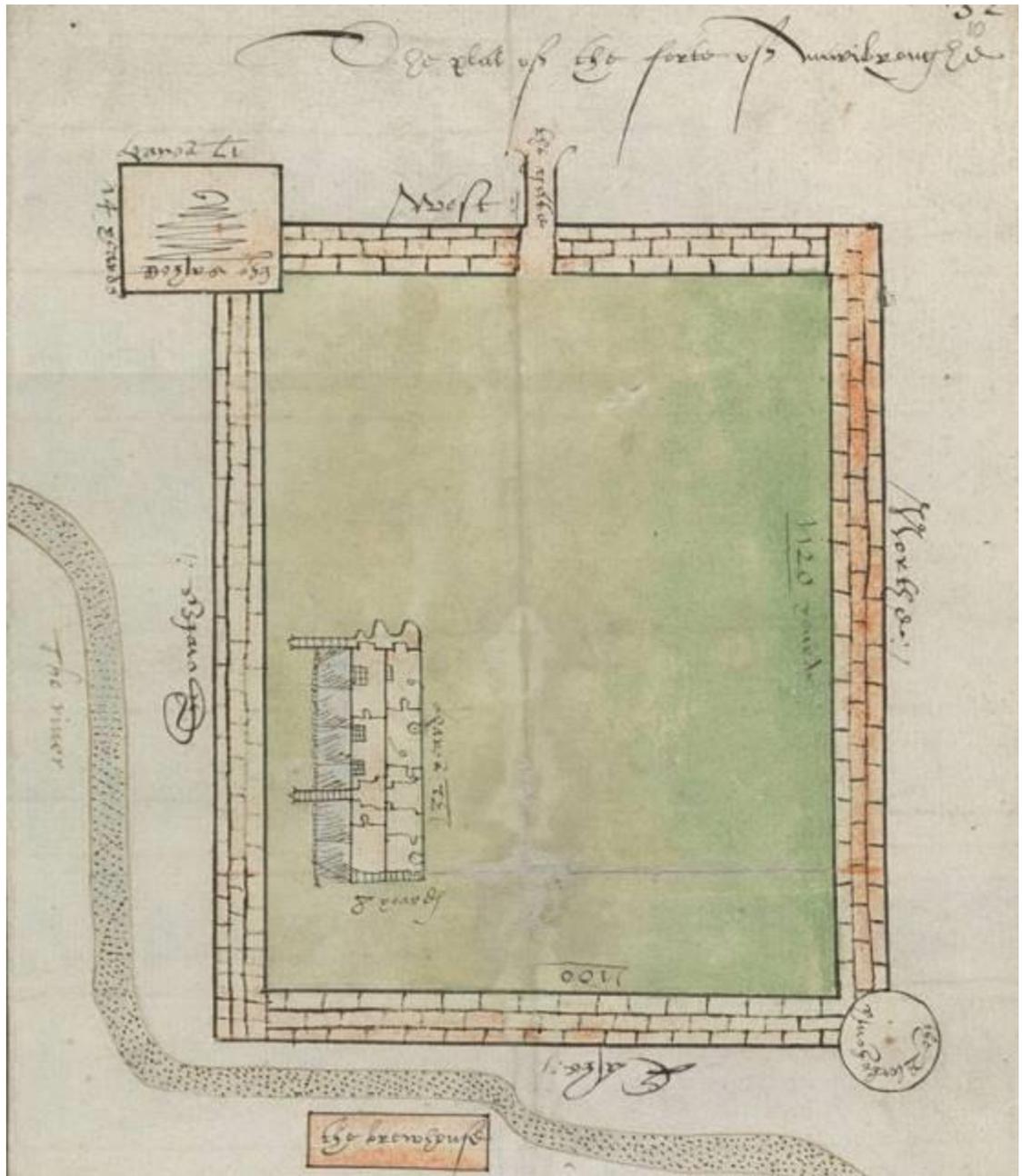


Figure 17: 'Plot of the Forte of Maribrough', c. 1560 (Hardiman Atlas, TCD ref. 1209/10)

An undated 'plot of the forte of Maribrough' is part of a collection of nearly 70 maps assembled by George Carew (1555-1629), now held by Trinity College Dublin.

Carew was a soldier and antiquary. He entered crown service in Ireland in 1574 under his brother Peter, and served in the army of Sir Henry Sidney. In 1576-77 he commanded the garrison at Leighlinbridge and was rewarded for a successful attack on Rory Oge O'More. In 1600-1603 he served as Lord President of Munster.

The coloured drawing shows the Fort in a composite plan-elevation with measurements of its principal features in contemporary yards. These consist of:

- The perimeter wall shown as 120 yards on the north side and 110 yards on the east side (Actual length subject to site measurements are c. 125 x 101m)
- The entrance to the Fort at the centre of the western side, marked as 'The Gate'.
- The round bastion on the NE angle annotated as 'The Blocke house'
- The tower at the SW angle measuring 14 x 17 yards and marked as 'The Castell'. This would equate to c. 14.5 x 17.5m. A note on the drawing in contemporary script describes this structure as:

*The tower beyng 17 yards longe and xiii yards broade cont [?] on the toppe by estimacon 238 square yards whch [which] beyng layde & bounded with leade every yearde \_\_\_ [value] pounds weighte amounte [or and unto] the \_\_\_*

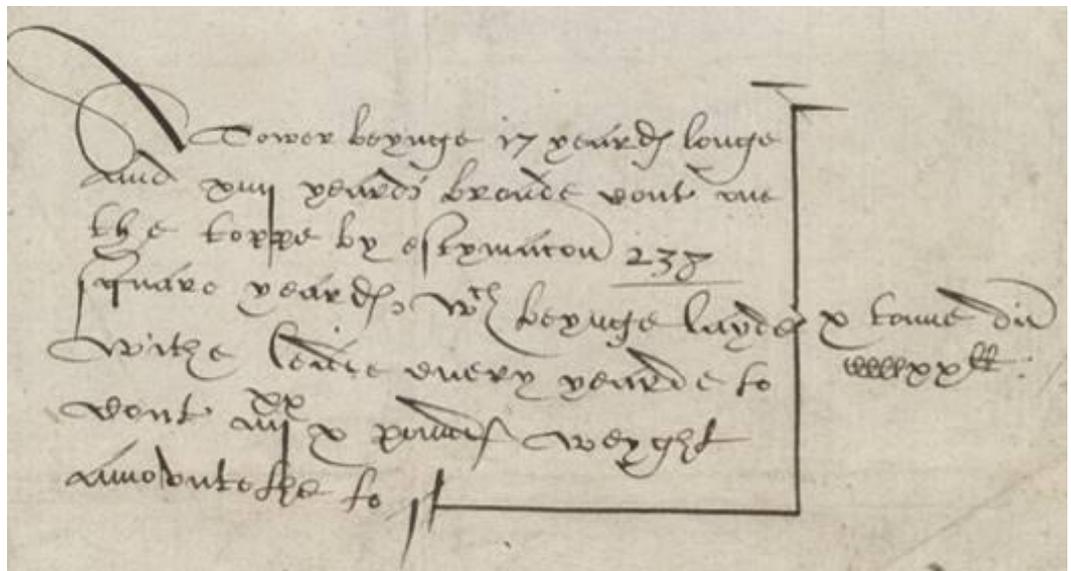


Figure 18: Note on Carew map (Assistance in interpretation of script from Bridget McCormack and Sinead Holland, Laois Co Library).

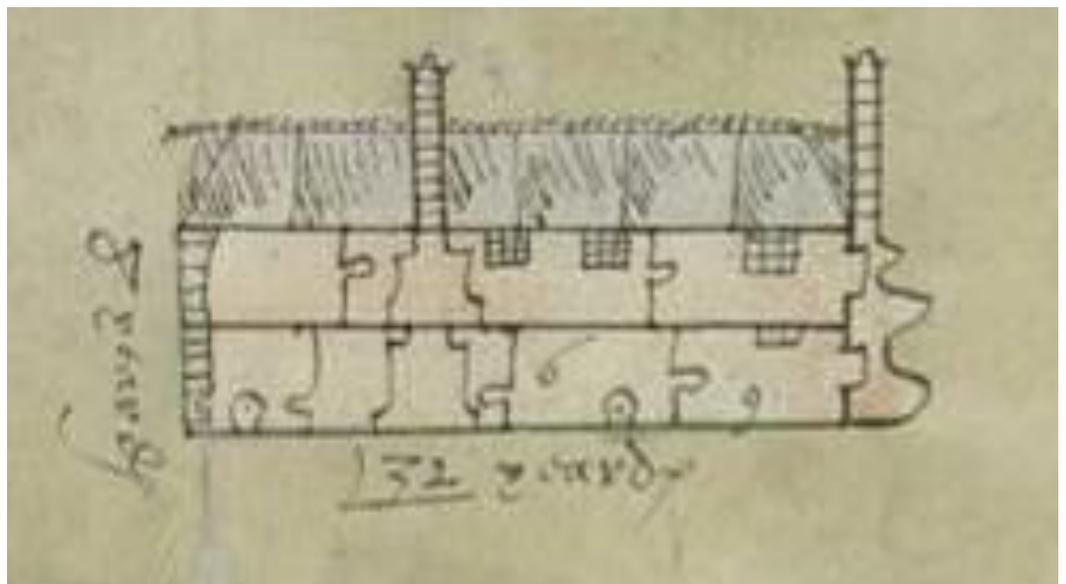


Figure 19: Depiction of barrack building within the Fort

- A freestanding building, presumably barrack accommodation, is shown within the Fort, close to the SW corner, measuring 8 x 32 yards. Based on the measurements of the surviving north and east walls this would equate to 7.5 x 29 m [check measurement on paper map]. The building is shown in a composite of plan and elevation. Its form suggests a timber-framed structure, with a trussed roof, possibly thatched, with windows below the eaves, a 'side-wall' chimney stack suggesting a hall interior, and an external gable chimney stack. This structure compares with vernacular dwellings of the period in England.
- The course of the former mill race is shown, presumably the original course of the Triogue, marked as 'The river'.
- The building which survives in the core of the former Presentation convent is shown, annotated as 'The brewhouse'.

The reverse of the map bears the following legend in a different hand, probably added by Carew:

*The Queen's County consists of Leax, ancyontlye O'More's lands, Slewmerge; inhabited also by the O'Mores; Glanmalirie, O'Demsies country; part whereof is in King's Countye; Iregan, O'Doyne's countrye.*

### 2.2.3 Map of Fort and Town of Maryborough, c. 1560

A map of unidentified origin and date, held in the British National Archives in Kew, depicts the Fort and town around the time of its foundation.

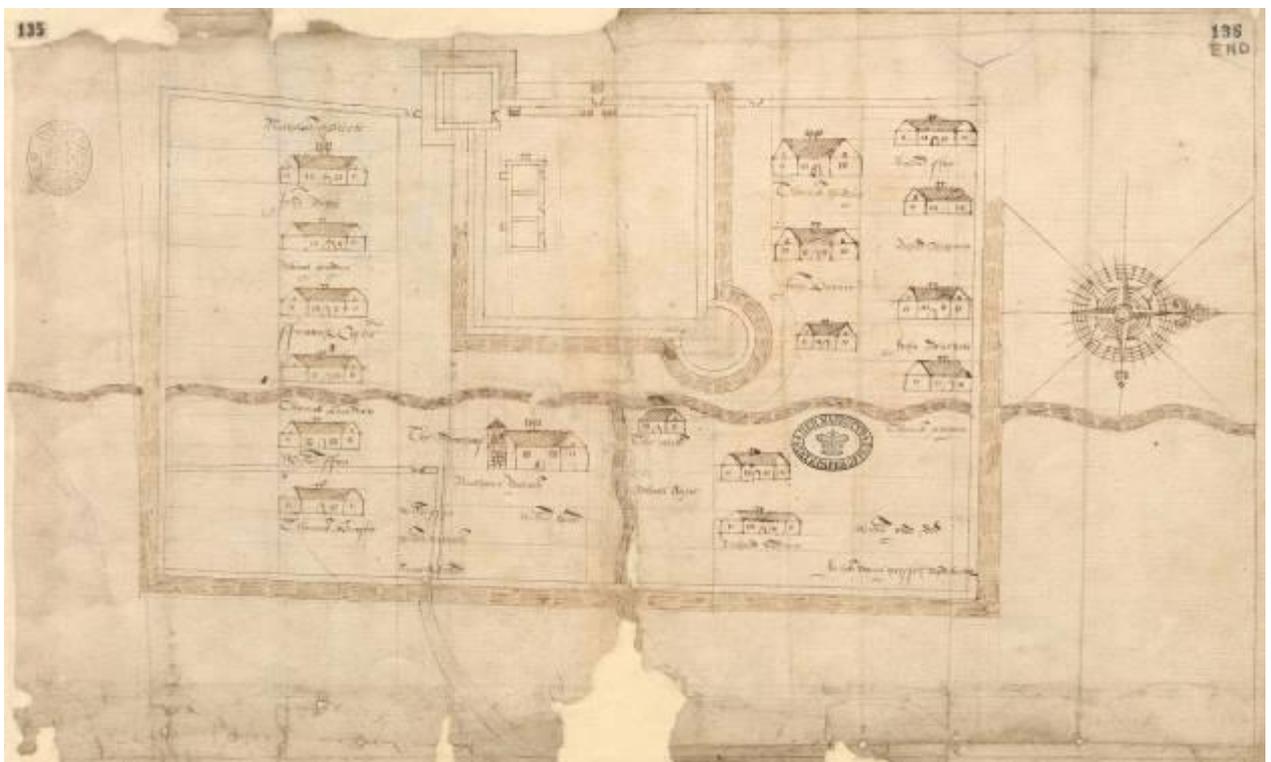


Figure 20: Map of of Maryborough, c. 1560 (British National Archives, Kew MPF 1/277)

The map, measuring 335 x 516mm (or 14 x 20 inches) and drawn in sepia ink, is schematic in nature and not to scale, but includes many details of interest. The original document was not inspected in writing this report, but a letter to the Leinster

Express of 1915 states that it bears the endorsement (presumably on the reverse):  
*Maryborough: John Tomkin: A plot of Maryborg, Lyinster: Colman.*

The main features depicted are:

- The Fort is shown as square on plan with a round flanking bastion and a square tower on opposite corners, the entire structure encircled on all sides by a ditch, with a gateway on the western side. The symbol for the ditch matches that for the river, possibly indicating that it was filled with water, although there is no connection to the river to supply the water.
- The square tower is shown having a doorway from the inside of the Fort. The round bastion is open to the interior.
- A bank or raised platform is shown around the perimeter, interrupted at the entrance gate and at the square tower, the raised level covering the full interior of the round tower.
- The barrack building is shown parallel to the south wall, having a tripartite plan with three doors and external chimney stacks.
- The Fort is surrounded on three sides (north, east and south) by the town, the western side of the town broadly aligning to the western wall of the Fort. The town enclosure is depicted in the same style as the Fort wall, although it is more likely to have been a palisade.
- The Triogue River is shown flowing through the town, following a meandering course, parallel to the eastern wall of the Fort.
- An earthwork is shown outside the wall on the eastern side and part of the northern and southern sides. It is unclear whether this continued all the way around, or petered out as depicted with the rise of the ground towards the west. The depiction of the three meeting points of this feature with the river appears to suggest it was not filled with water.
- The town is shown having two streets. One extends alongside the south wall of the Fort and continues to the east wall, with town gates at either end. The other street is shown narrower, running along the northern wall, with a town gate on the western end. It wraps around the round corner bastion, and connects to the space between the east wall of the fort and the river. A gate may be suggested where this space meets the southern street.
- Seventeen structures are shown inside the town. Six houses on the southern side are drawn in elevation south of and perpendicular to the main street, with the following names of seven householders written in contemporary script:

*Nicholas Whiete*  
*John Rathe*  
*Robert Geordge*  
*Ffraunce Cosbie*  
*Thomas Lambden*  
*Willian Ffyn*  
*Thomas Parson*

The easternmost house, that of Parson, is shown within an intramural enclosure, through which the southern street passes, with an inner gate as an additional defence to the town. The following three are written on the section of street within this enclosure, without houses:

*William Ffyn*  
*William Vicareg*  
*Evane Ap. Richard*

On the north side of the Fort there are two rows of houses, three close to the fort and four adjoining the northern perimeter. These bear the following householder names:

<i>Thomas Harding</i>	<i>Richard Ffox</i>
<i>John Payntor</i>	<i>Richard Chapman</i>
	<i>John Denovett</i>
	<i>Thomas Margan</i>

Two more houses are shown east of the round corner of the Fort., and two more names are given:

*Robert Ayere or Ap ere? (possibly relating the the mill)*  
*Richard Weldon*

To the right of these houses is written:

*William Good ded (deceased)*  
*In his roome Gryffith Ap. Robarte*

- The houses are depicted as single-storey, having four or five bays with two-storey gabled end bays, mullioned windows and central arched doorways, and central chimneys.

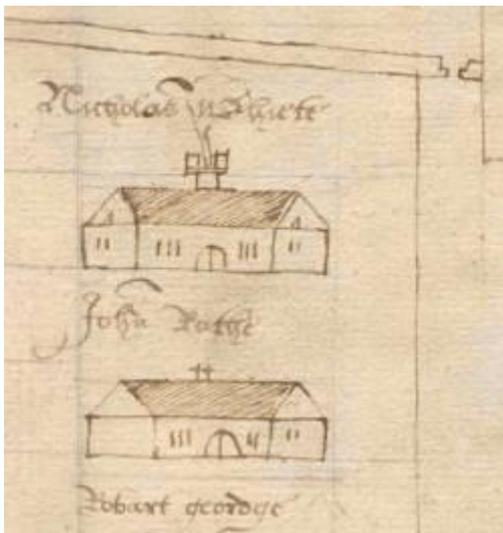


Figure 21: Typical house variations



Figure 22: The 'Store House'

- The largest structure in the town is shown adjoining the inner gate of the intramural enclosure to the north, and alongside the river. This is annotated as 'The Store Hows' and is shown as a two-storey building with a gabled three-storey end bay and a stone tower having a domed roof adjoining the inner gate, evidently of defensive purpose. Two further names are written below this house:

*Anthoine Rogers*  
*William Beard*

- Interpretation of script used here is taken from a letter printed in the *Leinster Express* of 6 November 1915 from a reader signing himself as M. J. B. This commentator noted the sprinkling of Welsh names (with prefix 'ap') amongst the early settlers of the town, stating that the family names Cosby and Weldon were the only ones to survive down to that time in the county.
- A mill is shown as a smaller three-bay structure with a two-storey gabled end bay. It is located at a branch from the river flowing east, probably a tail race, as seen in this position on later maps.
- Plank bridges are shown in three locations, at the entrance to the Fort, at the eastern gate of the town, and where the southern street passes over the Triogue.
- The esker ridge is faintly shown to the east of the town as a series of humps along the bottom of the sheet. A road is shown leading northeast from the town gate through the ridge.

#### 2.2.4 Cromwellian 'Down Survey', 1656-58

The Down Survey shows a 'Castle', 'Fort' and indicates the 'towne' lying south of them.

From the Civil Survey? (quoted in TCD Down Survey website): *The Barony of Maryborough There is a Faire yearly upon the 24th of June and a market weekly upon Thursday granted by Charter to the Corpoacon of Maryborough, and kept in the said towne. Also two ffayres yearly granted by PAttent to Mr James Grace of Dublin, and to be held in the Corporaon of Marybourrough upon the first of May and 24 of August yearly.*

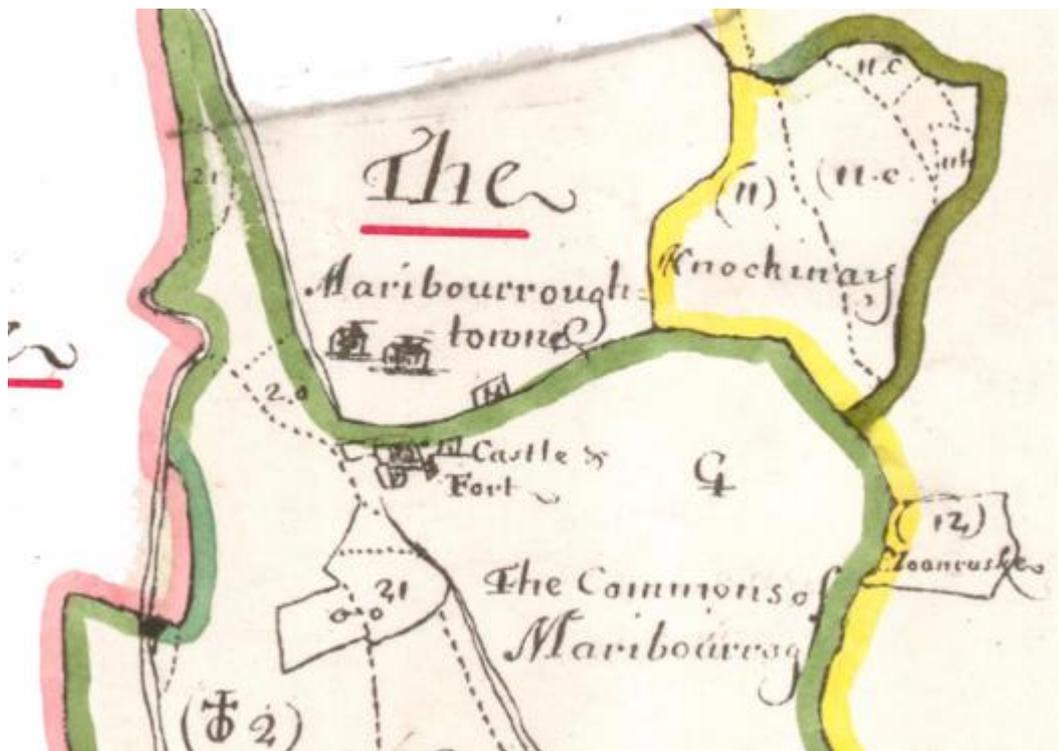


Figure 23: Extract from William Petty's 'Down Survey' barony map of Maryborough (North at bottom of the map)

### 2.2.5 Parnell Estate map of 1721

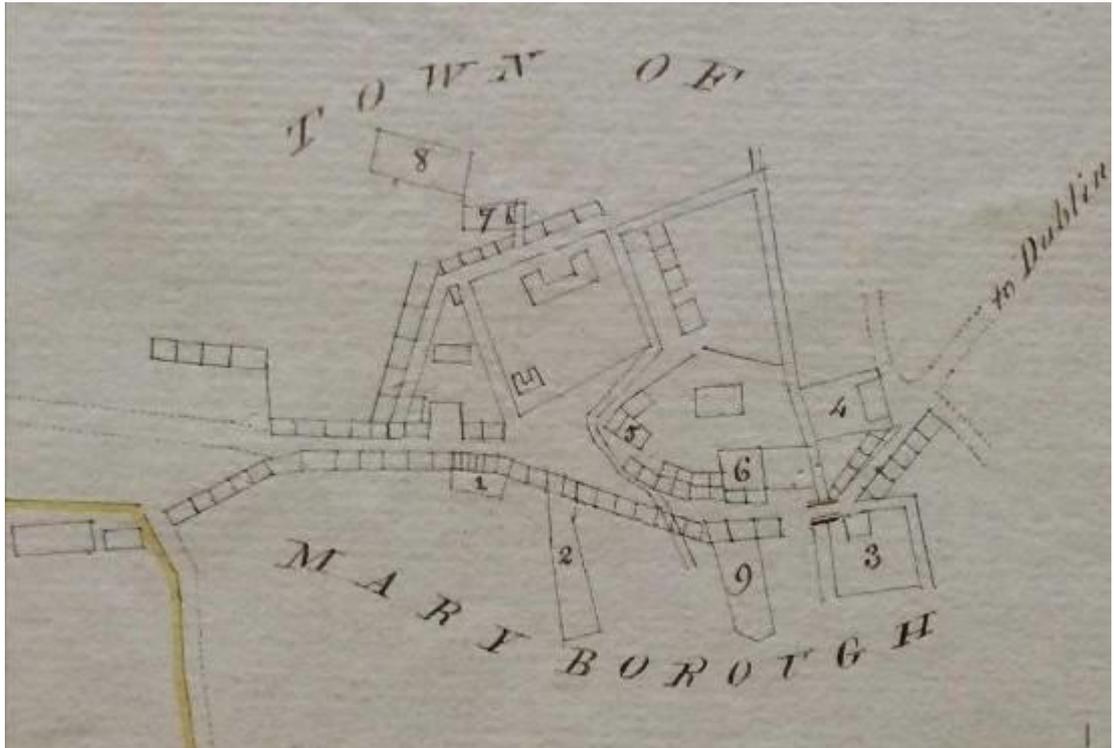


Figure 24: Enlarged extract from Parnell Estate map of 1721 (National Library of Ireland)

This map concentrates on the landholdings of the Parnell family in the Queen's County, but also includes this small map to show numbered properties in the town.

Although schematic and not annotated, the map is accurate in most details, showing the fair green at the site of Market Square, Main Street, the set-back at the earlier courthouse (also shown on Bridges map of 1766), the lower square, Bridge Street, the Triogue River in its present course, Ridge Road and Borris Road.

The outline of the Fort is shown, with Church Street, St Peter's Church, Railway Street, Tower Hill and Church Avenue/the millrace. Within the Fort, the Old Barracks and the Castle are shown. The Castle is drawn as a U-shape and appears to sit inside the Fort rather than on its corner. Given the schematic nature of the depiction, the outline might be taken to denote the edge of the street rather than the actual wall of the Fort.

More curiously, no houses are shown on the north side of this section of Main Street. This may be a simplification, but suggests the possibility that this area was an open square in 1721, as shown on the map. More research is needed to verify if this might have been the case.

### 2.2.6 Bridges estate map of 1766

The Bridges map is drawn at a larger scale and provides more detail. The purpose is to record the properties of the Bridges family (presumably the plots edged in red).

The Fort is not given prominence, probably reflecting its disappearance from view in the streetscape by 1766. Two-storey houses are shown on both sides of the 'Main Street of Maryburrow', with rear gardens extending to the Fort wall. The line of the

Fort wall is denoted by a row of small squares. The same style is used on the north side of the Fort and the south wall of St Peter's churchyard. A possible interpretation may be that these signify battlements.

'Church Lane' (Railway Street) is shown with single-storey houses backing onto the Fort over its full length. St Peter's Church is depicted with a small elevation showing a four-stage tower with pointed roof and weather vane, and a two-storey nave.

'Barrack Lane' (Tower Hill) has single storey houses on the north side only, leaving the Fort wall exposed to view as it is today, with houses only close to the NE corner, probably the barracks.

What is now Fitzmaurice Place is shown built upon. It is edged in red, probably denoting ownership by the Bridges family. The outline resembles the form of a star-shaped rampart, but more research might show this to be coincidence. A mill is shown in the same location as on the 1560s map of two centuries earlier.

'Bridewell Lane' (Church Avenue) is shown lined with single-storey houses, and these are on both sides where it runs parallel to the Fort.

The Castle is not shown, and the interior of the Fort is marked with parallel dotted lines, used elsewhere to signify gardens.



Figure 25: Extract from Bridges estate Map of 1766 (Local Studies Section Laois County Library)

### 2.2.7 Daniel Grose engraving, 1792

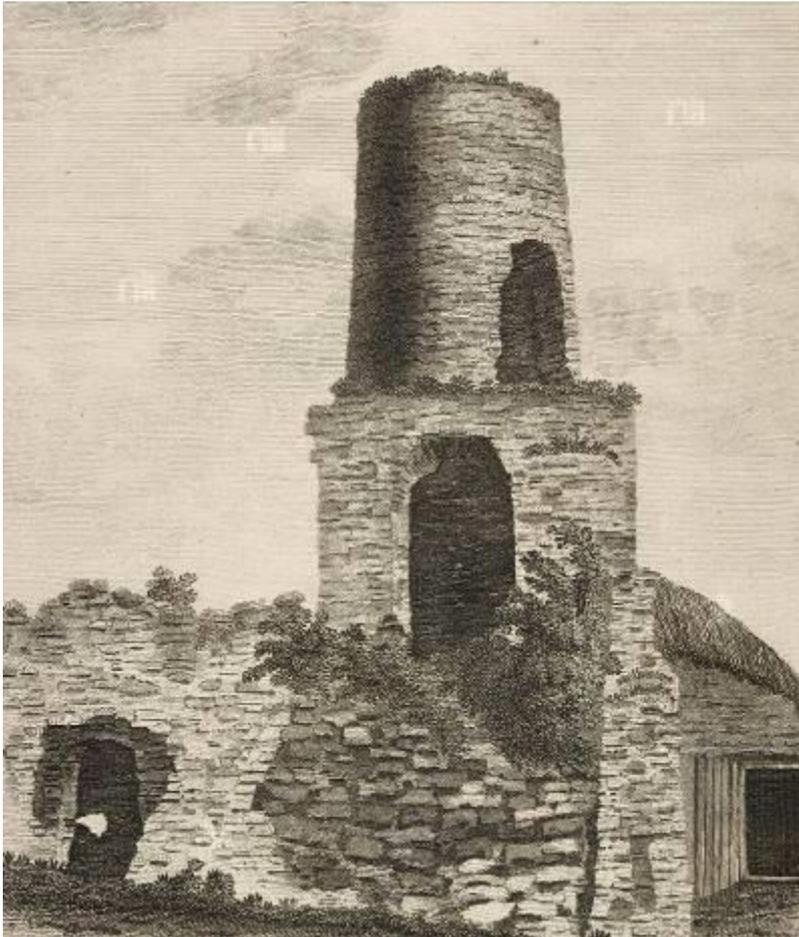


Figure 26: Fort in the Town of Maryborough, drawn by Daniel Grose, 1792 (National Library of Ireland)

Daniel Grose's depiction of the ruins of the Castle in 1792 is difficult to interpret. It shows an unusual three-storey structure with large openings at both upper levels, the top level being a slightly tapered cylindrical tower. The left-hand edge of the middle level is broken away at high level, suggesting that the structure shown is not the full width of the original castle. At ground level the ruin covers a greater area, and the thickness of the walls indicate that this is also part of the Castle structure.

A wall abutting the Castle on the right of the image appears to be a section of the Fort wall, tapered on the inner side similar to the standing sections which survive today.

The ground level is shown at a considerable incline, falling towards the wall. This is unusual given that the site of the castle is at the high point of the Fort site.

A possible interpretation of this drawing is that it depicts only a corner fragment of the original structure, which based on dimensions on the 1560s plan would have measured 14.5 x 17.5m. The round tower may therefore have been the cap house of a staircase in the corner of the building.

### 2.2.8 Map of Town Commission boundary

An undated map drawn in the graphic style of the Ordnance Survey shows the redrawn limits of the area controlled by the Town Commission, previously vaguely defined as a radius from the town. The map is signed by Thomas A. Larcom (1801-

1879) an official in the early development of the Ordnance Survey. It may be assumed to predate the first edition of 1839, as it shows the Castle, which had been demolished by the time of the first edition. Curiously, the Castle is shown away from the corner of the Fort as in the Parnell map of 1721.



Figure 27: Undated map of Maryborough, original scale 4 inches to 1 mile, signed by Thos. A. Larcom, Lt R.Eng. (Local Studies Section Laois County Library)

### 2.2.9 Ordnance Survey First Edition, 1839



Figure 28: First edition Ordnance Survey of 1839, original scale 6" to 1 mile.

The Ordnance Survey first edition map shows the Fort, internally subdivided in similar manner to today, but with fewer buildings. Notably the eastern half is unbuilt upon, the mill not yet having expanded into it, and the Scoil Mhuire not yet in existence. The site of the vocational school was split into two plots and a group of building (a pound?) stood on the site of the 1960's extension. The 'flour mill' and 'mill pond' are shown as well as the convent before its enlargement in the 1870's.

The line of the former ditch which surrounded the Fort is readily distinguishable in the pattern of building plots behind the Main Street. The plots along the street were evidently extended to the rear to cover in the ditch, which was divided out broadly perpendicular to the Fort wall.

A town plan at scale of 5 feet to one mile was prepared at the same time (unpublished). It shows the same features, but also the raised bank on the east and part of the north and south sides within the Fort, and a 'draw well' close to the NE corner.

The larger scale allows the site of the Castle to be examined in greater detail, but it remains difficult to identify the outline of the tower with any degree of certainty.



Figure 29: Ordnance Survey unfinished Town Plan of 1839, scale 5' to 1"

### 2.2.10 Ordnance Survey map of 1907

The 25' Ordnance survey map of 1907 shows relatively little change in the intervening 70 years, apart from the Victorian houses on Railway Street and Tower Hill and various outbuildings.



Figure 30: Ordnance Survey map of 1907, original scale 25" to 1 mile.



Figure 31: Contemporary view of Main Street showing buildings backing on to the site of the Castle ([www.portloaisepictures.com](http://www.portloaisepictures.com))

### 2.2.11 Aerial Photographs

A bird's-eye photograph of 1932 shows the eastern part of the Fort prior to the construction of Scoil Mhuire. Half of the Fort can be seen as an open unbuilt area, known locally as the 'Rampart Field'.

Fitzmaurice Place is shown built over by the industrial buildings of Odlum's Mills. The former mill pond had become a green strip of ground planted with trees outside the eastern wall of the Fort.

A range of stable buildings occupied the site of the present function room structure to the rear of O'Loughlin's Hotel.

The former Catholic church can be seen alongside the Presentation convent on Church Avenue, forming a Catholic precinct typical of Irish nineteenth-century town expansion.

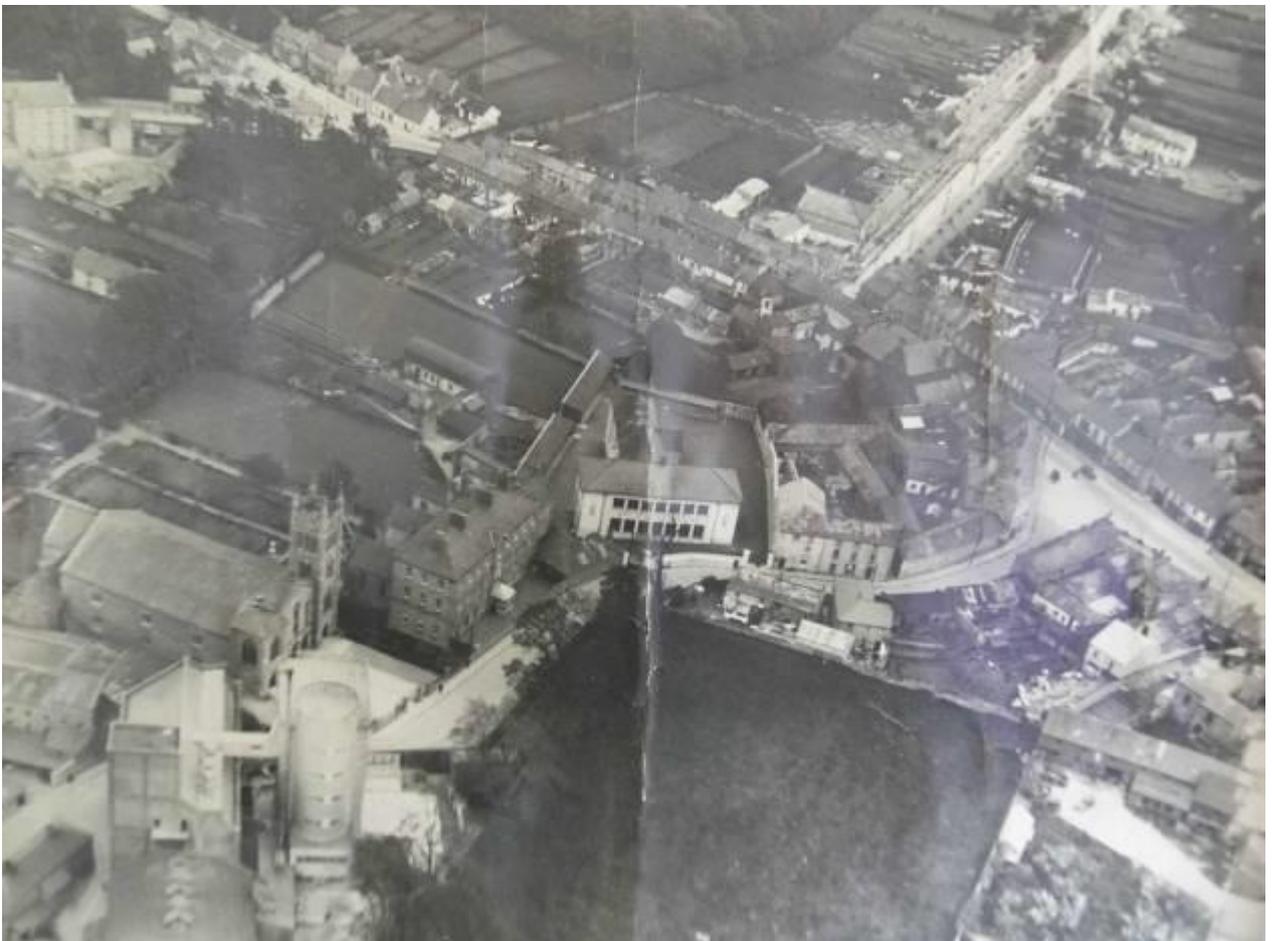


Figure 32: Aerial photograph, 1932 (courtesy of Sean Murray, original source to be confirmed)



Figure 33: Current aerial view (Google maps)

### 2.3 Archaeological Excavations

A full review of archaeological excavations was not made as part of this stage of the Conservation Plan. The information given below is taken from the notes on the Fort included in the Archaeological Survey of Ireland ([www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie), Site No. LA013-041001).

As part of the Portlaoise Broadband Project excavations were carried out in 2003 by Dominic Delany under licence number 03E0975. A cut was identified along Church Street, which may be associated with the ditch surrounding the Fort in that position.

Excavations at the western end of Church Street revealed a substantial culvert running immediately adjacent to the wall. Further study of the excavation report is needed to verify if this might suggest that the ditch was filled with water in the manner of a moat.

## 2.4 Comparison to other Plantation Structures

### 2.4.1 Fort of Leighlinbridge, 1546

D'Alton notes that the Fort Protector was one of four government forts built in the region in the period of a few years. The first of these was constructed on the River Barrow at the old bridge at Leighlinbridge by Lord Deputy Bellingham during his campaign against Giolla Padraig O'More and Brian O'Connor Faly as a fortified base reusing the substantial remains of a Carmelite monastery which had been suppressed in 1543.

A large rectangular enclosure 90m x 70m was built to enclose former monastic accommodation, and a pre-existing tower at the head of the bridge, known as the 'Black Castle' was adapted forming the NW corner. A circular tower was built on the opposite corner to flank the adjacent walls. The resulting Fort was remarkably similar in plan form to the Fort Protector, and may have provided the model for it.



Figure 34: Remains of Leighlinbridge Fort, built c. 1546

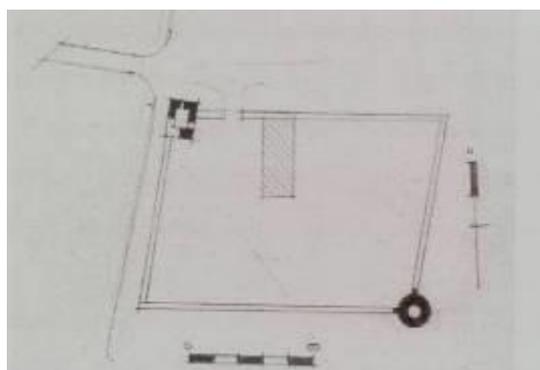


Figure 35: Leighlinbridge Fort (Drawing courtesy of Mairtin D'Alton)

## 2.4.2 Fort Governor, Daingean, 1547-48

The Fort in Daingean, named Governor also in honour of the Duke of Somerset, was constructed around the castle of the O'Connor Falys, which had been captured in 1537 and again in 1546.

D'Alton describes a substantial bawn of c. 85 x 80m either adapted or newly constructed around the pre-existing castle. The Fort had a gate tower in the centre of the west wall and a flanking tower in the centre of the remaining three sides.

The castle was converted to a dwelling in the eighteenth century and was demolished in 1927.

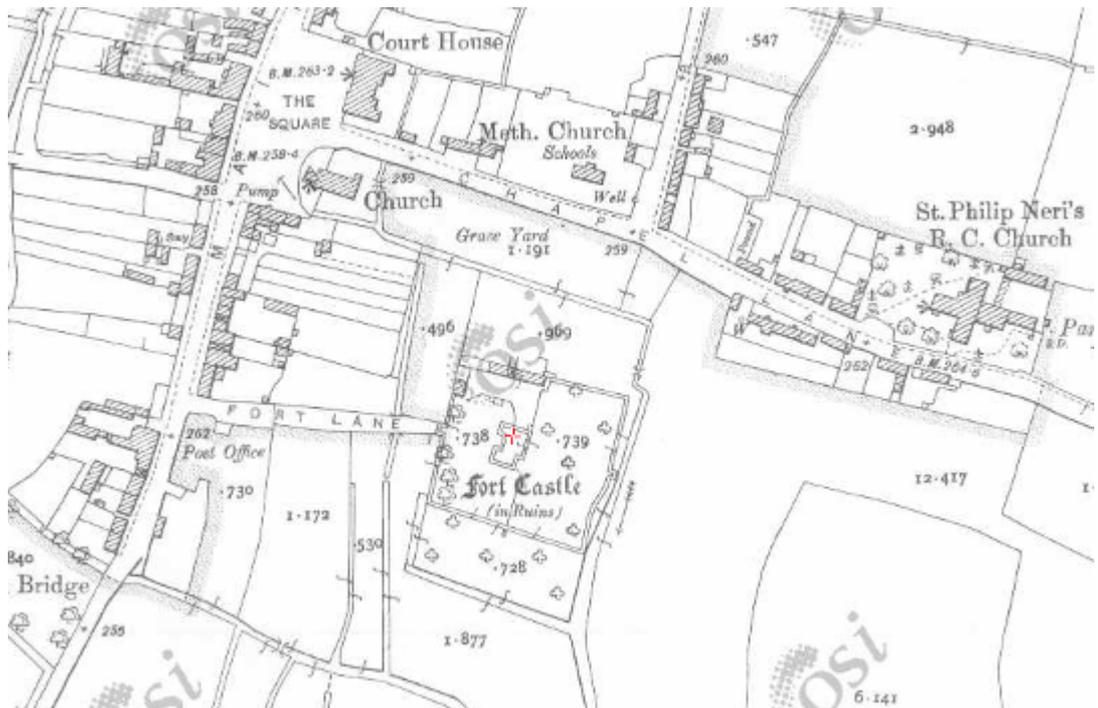


Figure 36: Daingean Fort, as shown on Ordnance Survey map of 1908

## 2.4.3 Fort of Blackford,

The smallest of the four forts was built at Blackford on the frontier between Kildare and Laois about half way between Stradbally and Athy. Various dates are suggested by D'Alton, possibly 1538 during the suppression of the Silken Thomas rebellion, or after the other Forts in 1560.

Analysis of the image on the Cotton and Carew versions of the map of c. 1560 indicates a square enclosure with diagonally opposed circular flankers to the north east and southwest, around a three-storey tower, some remains of which are still standing.

## 2.5 Architectural Description

### 2.5.1 Site of the Fort

The site for the Fort appears to have been selected to command a relatively flat expanse extending between the Sliabh Bloom Mountains to the northwest and the Dysart hills and Cullenagh Mountain to the east and south. An esker, the Ridge of Maryborough, formed a natural line of defence to the east.

The Fort was not built on the relatively flat area west of the courthouse, but on the sloping ground which extends down from there to the original meandering course of the Triogue River, which provided a water source for the new settlement. The Castle was positioned at the highest point on the southwest corner, and the Triogue curved around the southeast corner. The 'Store House' was aligned to the southeast corner on the other side of the Triogue to guard the entrance to the town which surrounded the Fort on three sides. The first St Peter's Church was built on an east-west axis to the west of the Fort.

Fort is located in the heart of the town of Portlaoise, set at an angle to the course of the Main Street, the buildings on the north side extending back to its walls. To the east the curve of the Triogue is reflected in the serpentine form of Church Avenue. Church Street/Tower Hill run parallel to the north side. Railway Street splays slightly away from the west side to bypass the corner tower which formerly projected from its corner.

The following description of the surviving fabric of the Fort is arranged by individual properties within or adjoining the walls, starting at the eastern corner and moving counter-clockwise around the site. The associated sites of the Presentation Convent and Old St Peter's Church are described with at the end.

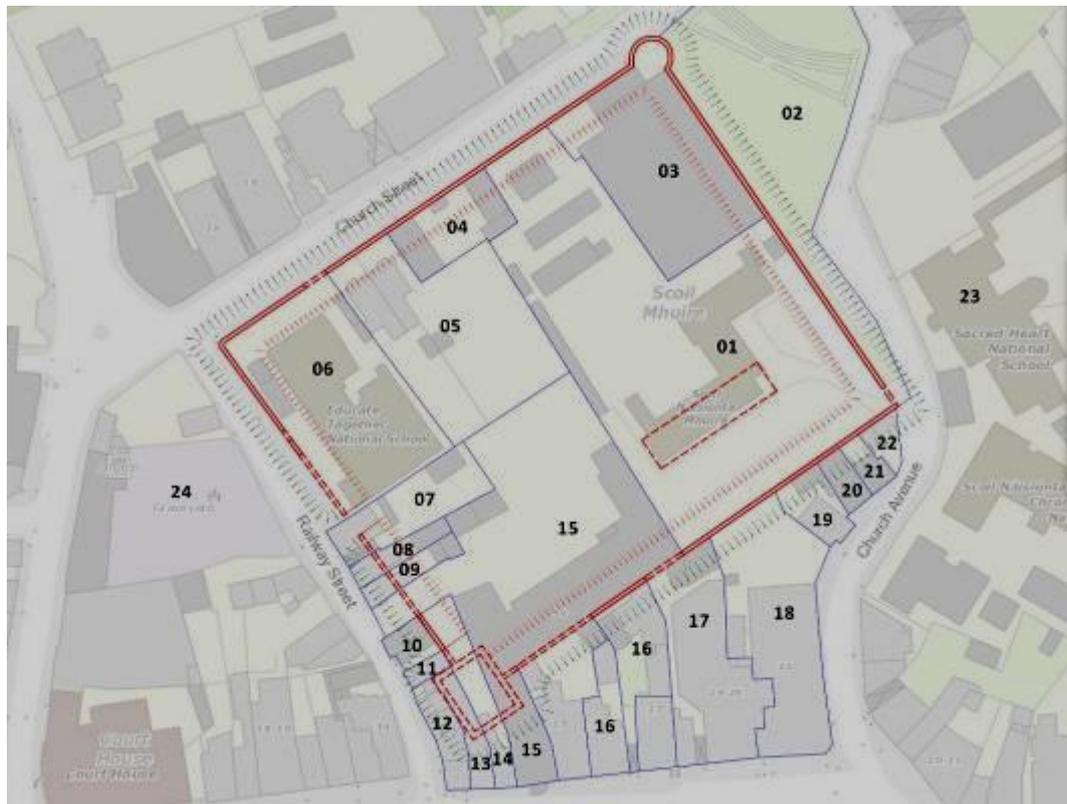


Figure 37: Property boundaries within and around the Fort, with numbers used in the inventory below

2.5.2 Inventory of Surviving Fabric

Site Number:	Name	Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire (Girls' Primary School)		
<b>01</b>	Address	Church Avenue	Eircode	R32 Y074
	Owner	K & L Diocesan Trust	Folio No.	24522F
	NIAH ref:	n/a	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image				
<p>South wall of Fort and internal bank</p>				
<p>Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The south wall of the Fort survives along the full length of the southern boundary of the site (00m), with an internal grassed bank, possibly the internal rampart shown in the OS map of 1839. A roughcast render finish has been applied. It is unclear if the crown of the wall has been lowered.</li> <li>– Over 50% of the length of the east wall survives forming the eastern site boundary, with similar grassed bank. This wall has been lowered over its full length to make way for a metal fence on a concrete plinth. The opening for the school gates forms a breach in the original wall.</li> <li>– The northern boundary of the L-shaped school site is formed by a c. 18m section of the north wall of the Fort.</li> <li>– The southern wing of the school building marks the approximate position and extent of the Tudor timber-framed barracks building.</li> </ul>				

Additional  
images



Inner face of East wall of Fort with bank



Higher section of wall adjoining mill site

<b>02</b>	Site Number:	Fitzmaurice Place plaza and amphitheatre (site of former flour mill and mill pond)		
	Name	Church Avenue, Fitzmaurice Place		
	Address	Privately owned	Folio No.	24906F
	Owner	n/a	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>West wall and corner flanker of the Fort</b></p>			
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The full length of the east wall of the Fort survives along the plaza, the site of a large flour mill until the 1990’s, and alongside the car parking bays on Railway Avenue, formerly the mill pond. The wall may have been lowered when the mill building on Site 03 was constructed. A wide gateway has created a breach in the wall.</li> <li>– The round battered flanker at the NE angle of the Fort wall survives at the corner to Church Street (popularly known as Tower Hill). A former opening in the tower has been built up with rubble stone in recent years.</li> <li>– This area is of particular archaeological interest as the earthwork ditch may survive below ground over some part of the length of the wall.</li> <li>– In the nineteenth century this was also the site of a triangular mill pond serving the former water mill which was located parallel to the former Catholic church on the eastern side of Fitzmaurice Place.</li> <li>– Several secondary sources refer to a tunnel which was uncovered in drainage works in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, assumed to have connected the Fort to the former Presentation Convent (originally the ‘Store House’)</li> </ul>				

Additional  
Images



Site of former mill pond



Doorway to mill



Repaired breach in flanker

Site Number: <b>03</b>	Name	Former Odlum's mill		
	Address	Fitzmaurice Place/Church Street (aka Tower Hill)		
	Owner	Private ownership	Folio No.	865L
	NIAH ref:	n/a	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p>Interior of round flanker</p>			
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A large industrial building with mass concrete walls has been constructed over most of the footprint of the property. The concrete walls have been built against the east and north walls of the Fort. Underground silos are assumed to exist within the site.</li> <li>– The round tower/flanker at the NE angle of the Fort forms the corner of the property, open to the interior of the site over c. one third of its circumference. The uppermost section of masonry above the level of the west and north walls is built of smaller stone, possibly an addition (or repair) dating from the various attacks of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The inner face of the wall indicates that there were two timber floors [closer examination needed].</li> <li>– The western edge of the site is c. 48m long, bounded over its full length by the west wall of the Fort, having a wide gateway forming a full height breach. The northern side of the site is c. 22m long, bounded over its length by the north wall, interrupted by a wide gateway into a small open yard from Church Street/ Tower Hill. The wall to the yard is c. 3.6m high above modern street level; it is battered on both sides, being c. 650mm thick at the top and c. 1.2m at the base. The inner face is vertical over the bottom 1.5m and not built to a smooth face, possibly indicating that this was covered by the earthen bank shown on the OS town plan of 1839. Both walls are slightly lower than the corner flanker. Closer examination is needed to determine if this is the full height of the wall.</li> </ul>				

Additional  
Images



**Corner flanker with different masonry in section which rises above walls**



**Wall detail**



**Inner face of wall showing vertical section formerly hidden under earthen bank**



**Flat roofed part of industrial building adjoining north wall**

<b>Site Number:</b>  <b>04</b>	<b>Name</b>	Former 'Old Barracks'		
	<b>Address</b>	Church Street (aka Tower Hill)		
	<b>Owner</b>	Privately owned	<b>Folio No.</b>	17740F
	<b>NIAH ref:</b>	n/a	<b>RPS ref:</b>	n/a

**Representative image**



**Old Barracks seen from Tower Hill. Wall in foreground is boundary to Site 01 (Scoil Mhuire). The tower of the Old St Peter's Church seen in the background.**

**Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:**

- Disused overgrown site occupied by barrack structures arranged parallel to each other at the eastern and western ends of the site.
- The northern boundary is c. 27m long and integrates the Fort wall over its full length, interrupted over its full height by a gateway. The wall has been reconfigured at either end of the site to form the gable ends of the two structures. Internal inspection of these structures is necessary to establish the extent of the Fort wall.

Additional  
Images



Former barrack structures seen from the upper floor of the former Vocational school



Detail of reconfigured wall



Gateway and battered Fort wall forming gable of western structure

Site Number:	Name	Breen and Manning; Laois International School		
<b>05</b>	Address	Church Street/Tower Hill	Eircode	R32 FK03 R32 V027
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No	20006F
	NIAH ref:	12504198 12504197	RPS ref:	260 259
Representative image	 <p><b>Fort wall reconfigured as garden wall</b></p>			
<p>Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pair of red-brick Victorian houses, formerly dwellings for employees of Odlum’s Mill, set back from the street with front gardens.</li> <li>– The building plots extend back over half the width of the Fort, to the same depth as the former Vocational School (Site 06) which adjoins to the west. The eastern house has a larger site occupying a considerable area behind Site 04 within the centre of the Fort area.</li> <li>– The frontage of the two houses is c. 17m wide, and is bounded by a lowered section of the Fort wall finished in ruled-and-lined render and breached by a vehicular gate and two pedestrian garden gates.</li> </ul>				
Additional Images	 <p><b>Site to rear</b></p>			



Rear of houses



Front elevations



Site to rear seen from Vocational school

Site Number:	Name	Former Vocational School		
<b>06</b>	Address	Railway Street, Church Street	Eircode	R32 WE02
	Owner	Laois-Offaly Education and Training Board (ETB)	Folio No	
	NIAH ref:	12504183	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p>NW corner of Fort wall, lowered as boundary wall to former Vocational School</p>			
<p>Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The former Vocational school is a significant building of architectural and social heritage interest, though not included in the RPS. It was built in Art Deco style in 1940s? with frontages to Church Street and Railway Street.</li> <li>– Fort wall has been lowered and rendered to form boundary wall along c. 30m frontage of Church Street and c. 32 m of Railway Street breached by two pedestrian and one vehicular gateway, each formed with deep rectangular Art Deco style piers. The inner face of the wall remains un-rendered. The corner is rounded showing that the angle of the Fort was curved.</li> <li>– An extension of lesser significance was added to the school on Railway Street in 1970s?? formerly the site of a Pound. Before the extension was built there was a deep pit on this site [more info needed] The Fort wall does not survive across the frontage of the 1960s extension.</li> <li>– A cannonball was uncovered during the construction of the extension. This is now displayed in a glass case in Portlaoise College, Mountrath Road.</li> <li>– The site of the gateway to the Fort was located mid-way on the western wall and would therefore have straddled the boundary between the 1970's school extension and the neighbouring Site 07.</li> </ul>				

Additional  
Images



Elevation to Church Street with lowered Fort wall breached by gates.



Unrendered inner face of lowered Fort wall on Railway Street



Footpath on site of former defensive ditch



Rounded NW angle of Fort wall



Extension on site of former Pound. Modern boundary retains no fabric of Fort wall



Extension seen from inside the Fort with boundary wall of blockwork

Site Number:	Name	Michael Kavanagh Cycles		
<b>07</b>	Address	3 Railway Street	Eircode	R32 PV29
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No:	
	NIAH ref:	12504184	RPS ref:	n/a

Representative image



View from Railway Street

Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:

- Substantial two-storey Victorian building consisting of dwelling over a shop with a large rear return. The historic building footprint crosses the line of the Fort wall. It is therefore unlikely that any standing remains of the Fort survive on the site.
- To the rear the site extends back to what is now the car park of O’Loughlin’s Hotel (Site 15) with a rubble stone boundary wall. There is a gabled outbuilding close to the end of the site.
- The site of the gateway to the Fort was located mid-way on the western wall and would therefore have straddled the boundary between this site and the 1960’s extension to the former Vocational School (Site 06). The gate would probably have stood opposite the entrance to the lane which skirts the southern boundary of St Peter’s churchyard. This position would have allowed troops entering the Fort a direct approach to the gate. It is unlikely that the churchyard wall would have been built in a position which blocked this approach. Further examination is needed to determine if the churchyard wall predates the closure of the Fort in the 1640s.

Additional  
Images



This churchyard wall to the left may mark the original approach to the Fort gateway



Context in Railway Street



Rear view from inside the Fort

Site Number:	Name			
<b>08</b>	Address	2 Railway Street	Eircode	R32 PWE5
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No.	7349F
	NIAH ref:	12504185	RPS ref:	n/a

Representative image



Front elevation

Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:

- Pair of two-storey Victorian houses with rear returns, built as a terrace with Site 07. The historic building footprint crosses the line of the Fort wall. It is therefore unlikely that any standing remains of the Fort survive on the site.
- The building plots are narrower than Site 07 and do not extend back as far. Some small ancillary structures occupy the end of the site,

Additional Images



Rear seen from interior of Fort

Site Number:	Name			
<b>09</b>	Address	1 Railway Street	Eircode	R32 T2YY
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No.	20151F
	NIAH ref:	12504186	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p>Front elevation</p>			
<p>Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pair of two-storey Victorian houses with rear returns, built as a terrace with Site 07. The historic building footprint crosses the line of the Fort wall. It is therefore unlikely that any standing remains of the Fort survive on the site.</li> <li>– The building plots are narrower than Site 07 and do not extend back as far. Some small ancillary structures occupy h end of the site,</li> </ul>				
Additional Images	 <p>Side wall facing entrance to O'Loughlin's Hotel car park</p>			



Rear returns



Rear seen from interior of Fort (single storey structure is separate property)

Site Number:	Name	Vejas Continental Food Shop		
<b>10</b>	Address	Railway Avenue	Eircode	R32 C598
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No.	
	NIAH ref:	n/a	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p><b>View from Railway Avenue. Note possible section of Fort wall incorporated in back wall</b></p>			
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Single storey structure used as a shop with a small yard to side. Gabled back wall appears to incorporate a c. 5.5m length of the Fort wall.</li> <li>– The building occupies the width of the former ditch surrounding the Fort. The alignment of Railway Street forms an acute angle to the wall of the Fort in order to pass the SW corner tower which projected forward from the line of the wall.</li> </ul>				
Additional Images	 <p><b>Entrance to O'Loughlin's Hotel carpark</b></p>			



Yard entrance to side



Section of Fort wall incorporated in back gable



Stub of wall where removed at carpark entrance

Site Number:	Name	Jack Nolan, Locksmith and Shoe Repairs		
<b>11</b>	Address	Railway Street	Eircode	R32 R7D1
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No	7322F
	NIAH ref:	n/a	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p>Front elevation</p>			
<p>Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Single storey shop extending to the line of the Fort wall, with small yard to the side.</li> <li>– The building occupies the width of the former ditch surrounding the Fort.</li> <li>– The back wall is of rubble stone. Although aligned with a portion of the Fort wall forming the back Site 10, the masonry does not match the battered face of that wall. It is therefore assumed that it has been rebuilt in the alignment of the Fort wall which would once have formed the property boundary.</li> <li>– The side wall is of rubble stone, and this would be a plausible position for the north wall of the Castle which formed the corner tower of the Fort, shown on Grose’s engraving of 1792. The unpublished OS town plan of 1839 uses the same thicker line for this wall as used for the surviving Fort wall. On the other hand, the thickness of the wall does not suggests a structure of defensive construction. It is possible that the wall may have built against the Castle wall, before the castle was demolished. Futher investigation is needed to resolve this question.</li> </ul>				

Additional  
Images



Rubble stone side wall



Context in Railway Street



Rubble stone back wall may incorporate fabric of Fort.

Site Number:	Name	Zara Jewellers; Property Properly; Istanbul Turkish Barbers; iRepair Shop		
<b>12</b>	Address	Railway Street; 33 Main Street	Eircodes	R32 CH26 R32 D96E R32 C448 R32 YT10
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No.	6355F; 12967F 857L; 2119L
	NIAH ref:	12506010	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p>Corner of Main Street and Railway Street</p>			
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Four small two-storey buildings, three on Railway Street, and one on the corner facing Main Street (no. 33).</li> <li>– The Castle or corner tower of the Fort formerly stood in this general area, but no fabric survives to show where it might have been. The Castle had already been demolished when the unpublished OS town plan was surveyed in 1839. This town plan marks the back wall of these properties in a thicker line used to denote the wall of the Fort, suggesting there was evidence at that time that it was part of the Castle.</li> <li>– The shallow form of the plots suggests that they may have been built against the Castle walls, across the width of the former ditch surrounding it.</li> <li>– The lease for No. 33 dates to 1824, around the time the remains of the Castle are believed to have been demolished.</li> <li>– The building behind No. 33 has been rebuilt since 1839 to meet the rear corner of No. 33. Prior to this the gable of no. 33 extended forward of the line of buildings in Railway Street.</li> </ul>				

Additional  
Images



Two buildings in Railway Street dating to before 1839. Red building was added later.



View from Railway Street



Nos. 32 and 33 Main Street seen in context at the corner to Railway Street

Site Number:	Name	Virgo		
<b>13</b>	Address	32 Main Street	Eircode:	R32 TF86
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No:	138L; 43F
	NIAH ref:	12506009	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p>Front elevation</p>			
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A small two-storey shop. The rear of the site was not inspected in this survey.</li> <li>– The rear of the site corresponds to at least a part of the site of the Castle. Archaeological remains may survive but it is unlikely that any fabric exists above ground.</li> <li>– The property is registered in two folios, which may indicate that one plot lay inside the former Castle and the other stood outside across the former surrounding ditch.</li> </ul>				
Additional Images <p style="text-align: center;">Insert image of rear yard</p>				

Site Number:	Name	J. Bergin Jeweller		
<b>14</b>	Address	31 Main Street	Eircode	R32 RC93
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No	12728F
	NIAH ref:	12506008	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p><b>Front Elevation</b></p>			
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A three-storey building with a long rear return and a shop at ground level. The site extends behind Sites 10-13 and includes half of the present vehicular entrance to the car park of O’Loughlin’s Hotel.</li> <li>– The rear part of the site formed part of the site of the Castle. Archaeological remains may survive but no fabric above ground could be identified.</li> </ul>				
Additional Images	 <p><b>Yard to rear on former site of Castle</b></p>			

Site Number:	Name	O'Loughlin's Hotel (formerly Aird's Hotel)		
<b>15</b>	Address	29-30 Main Street	Eircode	R32 XA43 R32 EFY8
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio Nos.	1627F; 9328F
	NIAH ref:	12506007; 12506006	RPS ref:	200
Representative image	 <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Front Elevation</b></p>			
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The site consists of a formally fronted three-storey hotel building at No. 30 Main Street extending across the line of the south wall of the Fort, connecting to a large area within the interior of the Fort. The area within the Fort is at higher level and comprises c. 20% of its area, encompassing several modern single-storey structures and a carpark entered off Railway Avenue. The adjoining plot at No. 29 Main Street is in the same ownership and consists of a formal three-storey building known as the Medical Hall which is integrated with the hotel at the upper levels, and has a yard to the rear bounded by a c. 21m long surviving section of the Fort wall.</li> <li>– There are two visible sections of the Fort wall. One is of exposed rubble painted white in a lobby connecting the rear dining room of the hotel with a beer garden behind the Medical Hall. The longer section forming the boundary to the beer garden is rendered. The wall is broken through in one location at higher level where it connects to a long function room which runs parallel to the wall inside the Fort, also extending behind Site 16 and part of Site 17.</li> <li>– The main three-storey hotel building appears to have been built in two parts. One extends back to the probable line of the ditch which surrounded the Fort. The other extends from here into the Fort itself. It is unlikely that any over ground fabric of the Fort wall or corner Castle survives within its footprint.</li> </ul>				

- Building contractor Richard Kirwan laid a sewer pipe down the centre line of No. 30 in the 1970's and 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.
- The party wall between Nos. 29 and 30 is c. 900mm thick. This may be a double gable, however the possibility that it might incorporate remains of the east wall of the Castle should not be ruled out without further investigation.
- The carpark to the rear gives a spatial sense of the extent of the interior of the Fort. The entrance from Railway Street is some 20m south of the original gateway, but it allows a view across to the former Presentation Convent, originally the 'Store House'. Boundary walls to Sites 01 and 05 are of rubble stone built at some point since the decommissioning of the Fort in the Cromwellian period.

Additional  
Images



Rear of Hotel. Tall hipped extension lies within the Fort, close to the former Castle.



Front elevation of No. 29



Section of wall to rear of No. 29 within lobby to No. 30



Section of Fort wall in beer garden to rear of No. 29.



Section of the wall in beer garden to rear of No. 29.



View across Fort interior to the 'Store House' / former Presentation Convent



Function room parallel to the Fort wall



Gable of function room seen from Scoil Mhuire (Site 01)



Structure backing onto boundary of Scoil Mhuire (Site 01)

Site Number:	Name	Kavanagh's The Wren's Nest, (includes site to rear of former Post Office)	
<b>16</b>	Address	27-28 Main Street	Eircodes R32 EP2K R32 KC03 R32 WRR0
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio Nos. 18395; 6763F
	NIAH ref:	12506004	RPS ref: 202
Representative image	 <p>Front elevation</p>		
<p>Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The site to the rear of No. 27, formerly the General Post Office, extends back to the Fort wall. This site is in the same ownership as Kavanagh's pub at No. 28, though the latter site does not adjoin the wall.</li> <li>– A section of the Fort wall c. 15m in length forms the rear boundary, much of it visible within a narrow yard behind an outbuilding built parallel to the wall.</li> <li>– The outbuilding runs parallel to the wall, at an angle to the main part of the plot which is perpendicular to Main Street. This pattern is seen also on Sites 15, 17 and 19 indicating that the original plots extended only to the line of the ditch which surrounded the Fort, and these rear structures were built over that ditch when properties were extended to the Fort wall itself.</li> </ul>			

Site Number:	Name	The Blue Door		
<b>17</b>	Address	24-26 Main Street	Eircodes:	R32 WFP3 R32 E181
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio Nos:	15338F; 8938F
	NIAH ref:	12506002; 12506003	RPS ref:	204; 201
Representative image	 <p>Front elevation</p>			
<p>Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Two adjoining properties, one a small shop on Main Street and the other a large building extending to its rear and back to the Fort wall.</li> <li>– C. 18m of wall survives along the rear of the site, some visible within a store building at the end of the site, and another section behind the back wall of a higher structure backing onto Scoil Mhuire (Site 01).</li> <li>– The property is in the same ownership as Site No. 15 and a connection has been made from the store to the long function room which runs on the inside of the wall. Due to the fall of the ground in main street, there is a level change of c. 2.5 to 3m from one side of the wall to the other.</li> </ul>				
Additional Images	 <p>Extension seen from Scoil Mhuire (Site 01)</p>			

Site Number:	Name	Former Shaw's Department Store (proposed library)		
<b>18</b>	Address	23 Main Street	Eircode:	R32 CH02
	Owner	Laois County Council	Folio No:	32237F
	NIAH ref:	12506001	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p>Corner seen from lower square</p>			
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A prominent corner building on the lower square, with a large utilitarian extension bounding onto Church Avenue. The unbuilt rear part of the site opens directly off Church Avenue and extends to the Fort wall where c. 19m survives across its full width, visible through gates from the street.</li> <li>– The site has been acquired by Laois County Council to be developed as the county library. This represents an exciting opportunity for the town centre and for the enhancement of the presence of the Fort.</li> </ul>				
Additional Images	 <p>Detail of Fort wall on rear boundary</p>			



Entrance to rear yard off Railway Avenue



Fort wall forming rear boundary of site



Rear extension

Site Number:	Name	Martin's Barber Shop		
<b>19</b>	Address	3 Church Avenue	Eircode:	R32 T02Y
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No:	
	NIAH ref:	n/a	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p>Front elevation</p>			
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– An L-plan house, the largest of four small properties on Church Avenue which back onto the Fort wall close to its SE corner. The houses stand on ground which was formerly the surrounding ditch.</li> <li>– The rotation of the front elevation is determined by the meandering course of the Triogue River, which became a mill race when the river was redirected, and is now culverted under Church Avenue.</li> <li>– The length of wall on this site is c. 11m. A narrow side passage leads to a separate two-storey derelict structure built against the Fort wall. No access was gained onto this site.</li> </ul>				
Additional Images	 <p>Site seen from rear yard of Site 18</p>			



**Derelict building to rear seen from Scoil Mhuire (Site 01)**

Site Number:	Name		
<b>20</b>	Address	Church Avenue	Eircode: R32 V0PF
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No: 5770F
	NIAH ref:	n/a	RPS ref: n/a

Representative image



**Front elevation**

Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:

- A late 20<sup>th</sup> century replacement building with shop at ground floor and rear yard. This is one of four small properties on Church Avenue which back onto the Fort wall close to its SE corner.
- The length of wall on this site is c. 7m.
- The house stands on ground which was formerly the surrounding ditch, adjoining the former course of the Triogue River, now culverted under Church Avenue.

Site Number:	Name		
<b>21</b>	Address	Church Avenue	Eircode: R32 XA4A
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No: 25774F
	NIAH ref:	n/a	RPS ref: n/a
Representative image	 <p><b>Front elevation</b></p>		
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A two-storey dwelling with back yard bounded by c. 5m length of the Fort wall close to its SE corner.</li> <li>– The house stands on ground which was formerly the surrounding ditch, adjoining the former course of the Triogue River, now culverted under Church Avenue.</li> </ul>			
Additional Images	 <p><b>Rears of Sites 21 and 21 seen from inside Fort</b></p>		

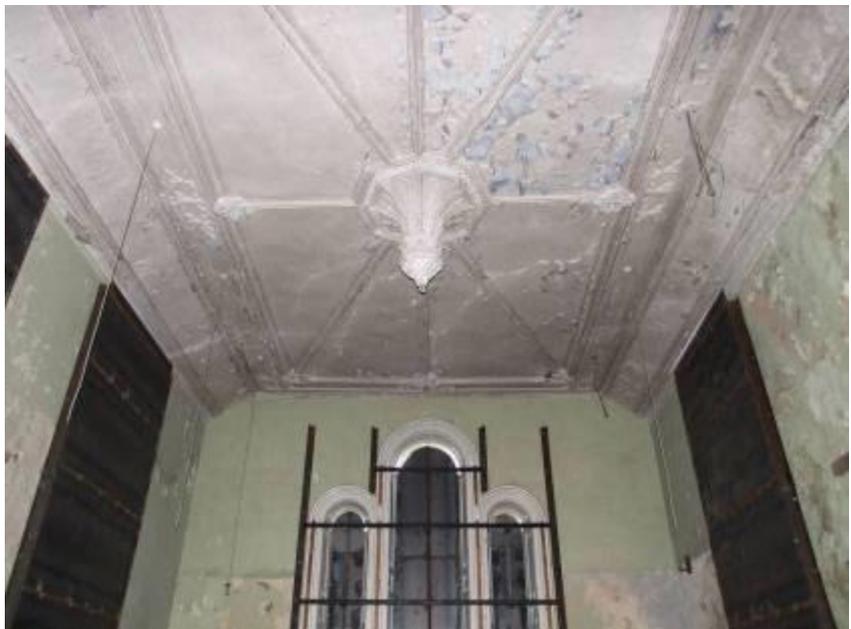
Site Number:	Name	Scully's Fruit and Veg		
<b>22</b>	Address	Church Avenue	Eircode:	R32 F973
	Owner	Privately owned	Folio No:	5771F
	NIAH ref:	n/a	RPS ref:	n/a
Representative image	 <p>Wall to side of property adjoining entrance to Scoil Mhuire (Site 01)</p>			
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A small plot backing onto the SE corner of the Fort wall over c. 7m of its length, with a later rubble stone wall and gateway to bounding onto Church Avenue.</li> <li>– The structures are single-storey open sheds used as a fruit and vegetable yard.</li> </ul>				
Additional Images	 <p>Google maps image of gateway to site</p>			

Site Number:	Name	The 'Store House' / former Presentation Convent		
<b>23</b>	Address	Church Avenue	Eircode:	R32 YP2Y
	Owner	Union of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Folio No:	
	NIAH ref:	12505169	RPS ref:	475
Representative image	 <p><b>Front elevation</b></p>			
Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A large three-storey convent incorporating several building stages, rated as being of 'National' significance by the NIAH.</li> <li>– The earliest stage known as the 'Storehouse' or 'brewhouse' was constructed at the time of the Plantation, possibly before the Fort itself, to house the first garrison stationed on the site in 1547, and then serving as dwelling for the Constable of the Fort. The round tower shown on the drawing of c. 1560 was retained and integrated into the building after it was taken over by the Presentation order and adapted as a convent after 1824.</li> <li>– The building took on its present form in 1872, and the round tower was raised to its full height, now having a prominent position in views from the Dublin Road, Ridge Road, and Well Road. The building has a series of grand rooms at ground level with good architectural features. It has been discussed since 1997 and is in derelict condition having suffered from vandalism, water penetration and timber decay.</li> <li>– Several secondary sources refer to a tunnel which was uncovered in drainage works in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, assumed to have connected to the Fort. Further investigation is needed to locate and record the tunnel and establish its significance within the Plantation complex.</li> <li>– A formal convent garden extends back to the Triogue at the rear, now overgrown.</li> </ul>				

Additional  
Images



View of rear



Interior of former chapel



Fabric of the round tower embedded at ground floor

Site Number:	Name	Old St Peter's Churchyard	
<b>24</b>	Address	Church Street	Eircode:
	Owner	Laois County Council [confirm]	Folio No:
	NIAH ref:	12504175	RPS ref: 186
Representative image	 <p><b>Churchyard and tower from Railway Street</b></p>		
<p>Description and Condition of Surviving Fabric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The church is believed to have been built soon after the formal establishment of the settlement in 1556, during the reinstatement of Catholicism as the official religion under Mary I. A small image on the Bridges estate map of 1766 shows a four-stage tower, with raised corners, a pointed roof and weather vane, and a two-storey three-bay nave.</li> <li>– Standing remains include a square tower c. 5 x 5m and c. 13m high, and the north wall of the nave, c. 18m long, forming part of the northern boundary of the site.</li> <li>– The tower was internally divided into five stages marked by beam pockets on the north and south sides, some penetrating through to the exterior. The parapet has been re-formed with mass concrete, and there are round headed belfry windows at high level on all four sides.</li> <li>– The original entrance from Church Street is blocked by a two-storey house built against the base of the tower. Within the tower the entrance to the nave appears to have been c. 1.5m higher, with a lower door to the space underneath, possibly a crypt.</li> <li>– The churchyard contains a large number of interesting grave markers and tombs. It is enclosed by a rubble stone wall with an arched entrance with a wrought and cast-iron gate. The undulating line of the south wall aligns with the approach to the Fort gateway from the west. Further investigation of the fabric of the church and boundary wall is necessary to achieve a proper understanding.</li> </ul>			

Additional  
Images



Image from Bridges estate map of 1766



Blocked entrance door to tower



Raised door from tower to nave



North wall of nave



View from churchyard



North and west faces of tower seen from Church Street



Interior of tower, east side



Churchyard wall to Railway Street and undulating south wall

## 2.6 Summary Interpretation of Features

### 2.6.1 Fort wall

The Fort wall survives in part on all four sides of the Fort, in some places modified or breached, and possibly lowered in height. It is built of rubble stone, and no evidence was found of a render finish.

Both faces are formed with a battered surface. On the inside, a more roughly finished vertical bottom section is visible in places, which may have been covered by the internal earthen bank, shown on OS maps of 1834 and 1907. The town plan of c. 1560 shows an internal raised walkway around the inside of the walls with steps where it is interrupted at the main gateway and at the corner castle. It is not clear if this was simply an earthen bank or if a further raised platform existed.

An accurately levelled measured survey of the full circuit of the wall is necessary in order to properly understand the surviving fabric and to enable interpretation of its historic form.

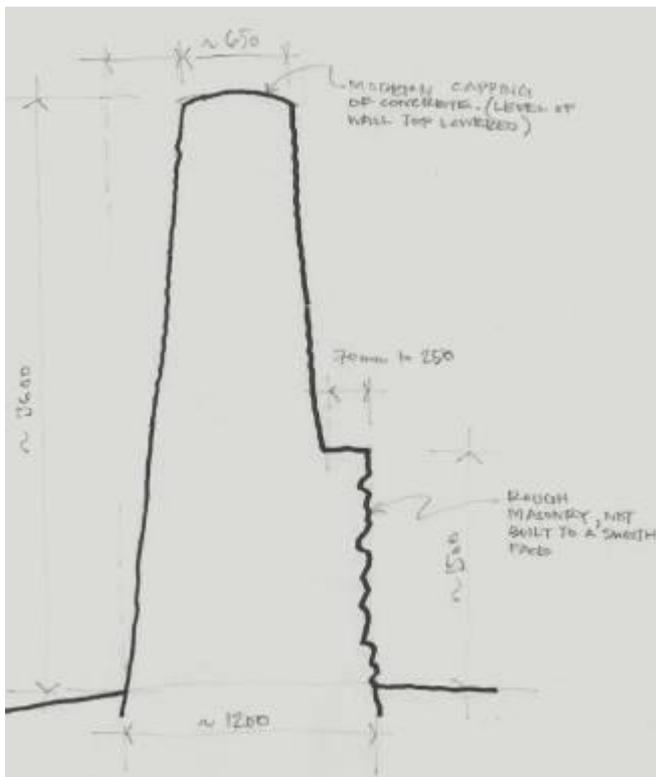


Figure 38: Sketch section of surviving wall at Laois Co Council depot



Figure 39: View of same section

### 2.6.2 Surrounding Ditch

An initial estimation of the position of the ditch has been made in the diagram below, based on traces which can be distinguished in the pattern of building plots and street alignments.

A review of all existing archaeological excavations would be needed to gather the available information on the form of the ditch which surrounded the Fort. The north west and south sides are largely built over or configured as public roads.

The yard of the former Shaw's department store, now the property of Laois County Council, would be a suitable site for test trenches which could provide valuable evidence of the form and historic profile of the ditch. This knowledge would be important baseline information to inform the brief for the proposed library on this site, and could influence its design in a very positive way.

Similarly test trenches might be opened on the eastern side at Fitzmaurice Place. Based on such investigations the historic profile might be reinstated along this side at some future date, where it would enable a visual and spatial experience and a better appreciation of the entire site.

### 2.6.3 Castle

An initial estimation of the historic position of the castle is shown on the diagram below. This derives from the dimensions given in the historic Carew plan, and an interpretation of how later buildings built around the castle might have left their imprint in the plot pattern.

Further examination of the buildings in this part of the site is needed. If feasible archaeological test trenches could be undertaken in unbuilt spaces within the area in order to locate the physical remains of the castle. This could lead to a clearer picture of this important aspect of the plantation Fort.



Figure 40: Estimated form of the Fort overlaid on the present day map

#### 2.6.4 Tudor barracks within Fort

The position of the timber-framed barracks building shown within the Fort in c. 1560 has been estimated on the above diagram, based on its position as shown on the map and the dimensions given. This corresponds closely to the south block of Scoil Mhuire. Archaeological remains of the building may survive in the adjoining area, though none are likely to have survived where the school building now stands.

#### 2.6.5 Convent

The convent is an important building incorporating fabric of the 'Store House' which is contemporaneous with the Fort and one of the earliest buildings in Portlaoise. The building is therefore to be included in the scope of the Conservation Plan.

A measured survey and physical examination of the ground level would allow closer identification of the earlier fabric.

#### 2.6.6 Triogue River

The course of the Triogue River was walked as part of this study with archaeologist Sean Murray and town residents Seamus Dunne and John Ireland, both having a firm knowledge of local history. The walk and conversation showed that the Triogue has been diverted on numerous occasions, to enable development and to improve the head race to the mill on Church Avenue.

The natural course of the Triogue to the north and south of the town follows a distinctly meandering course, similar to the now culverted mill race beneath Church Avenue. This matches the depiction on the map of Leis and Offalie, and the other Tudor period maps, which show it flowing between the east wall of the Fort and the 'Store House'.

At some point the natural course of the river was controlled to form a better head race to the mill, and the main flow of the river was diverted to a lower straight course. The OS map of 1907 shows a weir and aqueduct at a point on the New Road, now at the periphery of the town. From there the Triogue follows a straight course, skirting the town centre, since at least 1721, when it was depicted on the Parnell estate map with a bridge in the current location on Bridge Street. This line is assumed by Bradley to mark the extent of the town shown on the map of c. 1560. It appears probable that the ditch on the east of the town provided a readymade channel for the new course.

#### 2.6.7 Ridge of Maryborough

The Ridge Cemetery is the only part of the natural esker to survive in the centre of Portlaoise, the rest presumably removed to supply building gravel. This site is part of the story of the foundation of the town, having been a factor influencing the choice of the site for the plantation Fort.

#### 2.6.8 Mill site

The historic mill site is shown in depictions of the town since its foundation, and milling continued on the site since the closure of Odlums in the 1990s. The mill stood parallel to the former Catholic church on Church Avenue, with a tail race falling downhill to the Triogue.

### 2.6.9 Old St Peter's Church and Graveyard

The churchyard site is an important part of the history of the foundation of the town, and is therefore to be included in the scope of the Conservation Plan.

A true measured survey of the fabric of the church and detailed physical examination and analysis, including the boundary wall, are necessary to achieve a proper understanding of this site.

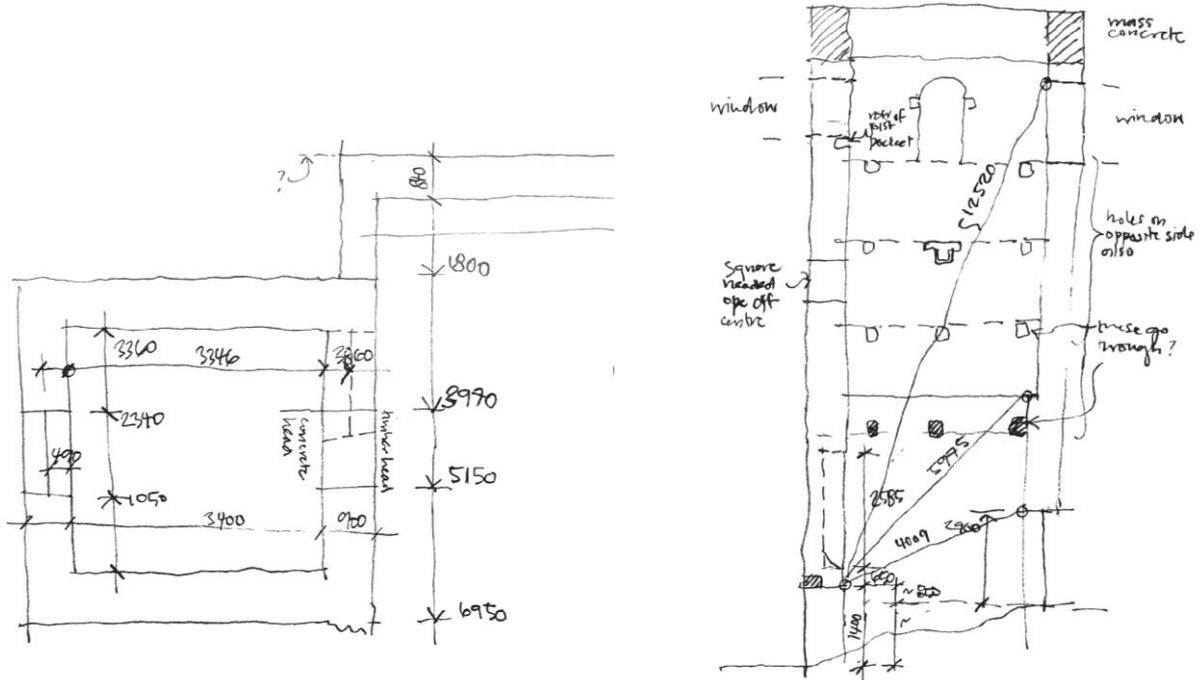


Figure 41: Rough measurements of St Peter's church tower in plan and section

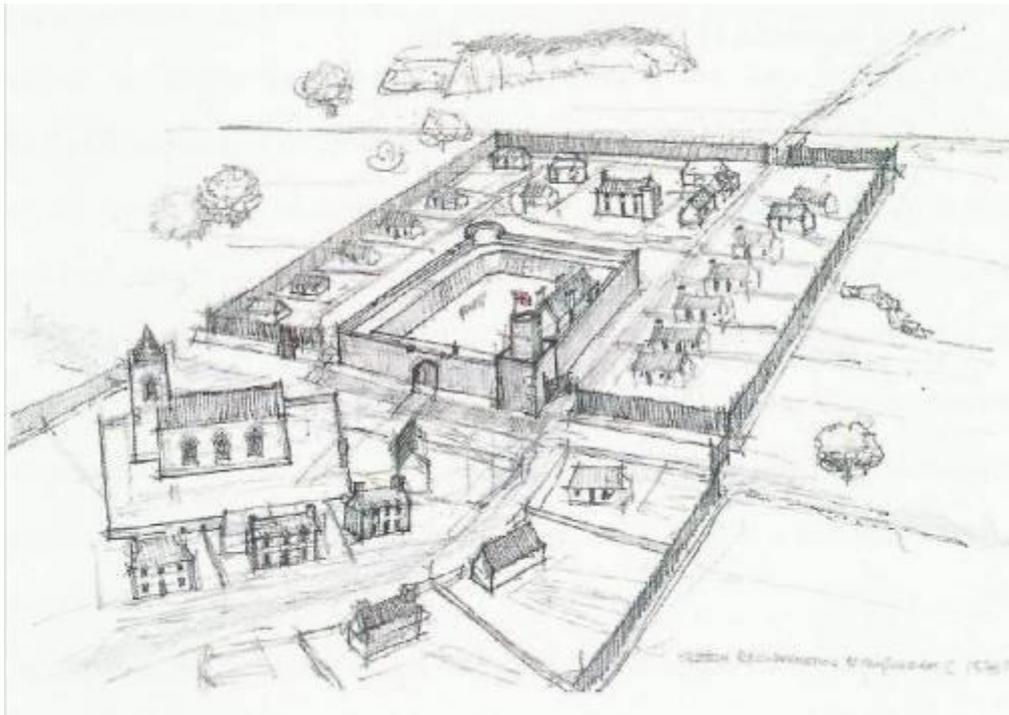


Figure 42: Conjectural reconstruction of Maryborough, c. 1570, by Mairtin D'Alton (courtesy of the artist)

## 3.0 Assessment of Significance

### 3.1 National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

In 2008 Laois County Council commissioned Lotts Architecture to prepare an architectural heritage survey of Portlaoise, following the NIAH methodology. This survey has since been integrated in edited form by the NIAH into its County Survey of Laois.

Three records relevant to the study are reproduced below. Some details have been superseded by the enhanced understanding achieved in the research for this Conservation Plan.

#### 3.1.1 Fort of Maryborough (Reg. No. 12504200)

*NIAH Summary Description: A square walled fort, built c. 1560, on rising ground south-west of the river Triogue, its outline enclosing about one hectare. It substantially survives and standing sections include most of the north and east walls and portions of the west and south wall with an impressive round bastion to the north-east corner. It is built of limestone rubble with a pronounced batter to the north wall, bastion and particularly evident on the shortened and rendered sections at the junction of Church Street and Railway Street. The round bastion is twelve metres in diameter, one and a half metres thick at the base and one metre at the top. A square tower at the south-west corner, illustrated in the late eighteenth-century views, no longer survives. The entrance was in the west wall, in the portion now missing along Railway Street. There is map evidence that there were substantial earthen ramparts inside the walls providing defence against artillery and a fighting platform. Its function as a fort was relatively short lived, the interior and possibly part of the defensive walls were dismantled by Colonel John Hewson in 1652-3 at the end of the Cromwellian wars. A 1721 map and the 1839 OS map indicate it contained barracks. New barracks were built to the south-west of Main Street in 1831. Gradually colonised during the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century, it is surrounded by the Catholic quarter on two sides, two schools were built within its circuit, in the south-east and north-west corners. The remaining section of the Odlum's Mills complex at the north-eastern corner is now a town council depot. There are also several houses and outbuilding within the fort. Sections of wall appear to have been incorporated into the garden boundary wall of two houses (12504197 & 12504198).*

*NIAH Appraisal: Built c. 1560, the outline of the fort and the settlement at Maryborough was recorded in a manuscript plan of c. 1563. It now contains two schools, several houses and gardens and part of a mill complex, underlining its size, and dominates the area north-east of Main Street. It has immense historical importance, Fort Protector at Maryborough and Fort Governor at Daingean (Co. Offaly) were integral elements in the plantation of the midlands in the sixteenth century. The fort at Daingean (Philipstown) no longer survives, adding to the importance of Maryborough Fort. It is the earliest historic structure surviving in the town and the historic centre of Portlaoise. The development within and around the fort show the evolution of the town and it forms an integral part of the character of Portlaoise.*

Rating: National

### 3.1.2 Presentation Convent (Reg. No. 12505169)

*NIAH Summary Description: Nine-bay three-storey over basement convent, built c. 1830 advanced and pedimented middle entrance bay surmounted by a cross at apex and with glass porch enclosing entrance door, incorporating the truncated remains of circular tower, built c. 1560, heightened 1872, now disused. The garden front is comprises a two-storey gabled entrance with bell-cote at apex, approached by a flight of steps, flanked by advanced gabled wings - a chapel and classroom (former chapel) wing, the south advanced gabled wing extended with twentieth-century two-storey flat-roof seven-bay bow. Slate roof with clay ridge tiles, hipped to main block, conical roof to tower, tall rendered stacks, cast-iron rainwater goods. Ruled and lined ashlar painted render, plat bands divide the storeys below a heavy moulded cornice, large variety of openings - square-headed, triangular, lancet and round-headed, moulded jambs to the lancet window on the first floor entrance bay with a statue bracket at sill level, raised architrave around the garden front door with side lights within a round arch with bracketed niche in the tympanum, round-headed graduated triplet in the storey above, flanked by narrow square-headed lights above round-headed examples below. Openings blocked, some with sash windows visible. Set behind a high boundary wall and shallow garden flanking the street and formal garden to the rear with a pair of statue plinths, orangery to north side, informal rockery/grotto to the east end and footbridge over the Triogue River. Decorative ironwork to gates at front and rear.*

*NIAH Appraisal: A building with a complex architectural development. Built as a convent in 1830 it incorporates elements of the 'Stonehouse' or 'Anthony Rogers' House' and a tower, indicated on a 1565 map of the Fort of Maryborough and surrounding settlement. It has evolved since then, marking important changes in the town. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the building was used for a variety of purposes - a constable's house, a gaol, an infirmary - in 1756 under the direction of Dr. Michael Jacob - and finally a convent for the Presentation Sisters from 1824. The tower was examined by local historian Michael Deigan in 1991, he described the basement as having walls 1.37 metres thick with a diameter of 4.1 metres.*

Rating: National

### 3.1.3 Old St Peter's Church (Reg. No. 12504175)

*NIAH Summary Description: An early modern church ruin, built c. 1556. A three stage, west tower survives, built with a mixture of roughly coursed limestone and sandstone blocks with flat lintel doorway at ground floor level in the east wall, indicating that the tower was at the west end of the church. Flat-headed window on second floor east wall below belfry stage and tall round-headed windows in the upper stage facing in cardinal directions. Put-log holes to second stage. A tall recess at first floor level in the interior of the east wall may indicate an entrance to a gallery level at the west end of the church. Set within partially walled graveyard, south west of former Maryborough Fort.*

*NIAH Appraisal: Old St. Peter's Church is one of the oldest structure surviving in Portlaoise and is generally dated to c. 1556, however it is not depicted on the 1563*

*schematic map of Maryborough Fort and the surrounding houses. The earliest definite evidence for its existence is a reference by David Good, vicar of Maryborough, in 1598. It is, however, clearly marked on the 1721 map of Portlaoise. As Portlaoise was a plantation town, it would appear that the area had no religious associations prior to the sixteenth century and that the foundation of the church possibly dates to as early as Queen Mary's reign. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, is said to have preached in the church on three occasions and found it to be "one of the most elegant churches in the whole Kingdom". With the re-location of St. Peter's Church to Main Street [correction: The Fair Green of Maryborough] in c. 1800 the building began to be neglected. The tower dominates the skyline and is a defining element in the character of Church Street and is an important element in the architectural, historical, social and archeological heritage of Portlaoise.*

Rating: Regional

## **3.2 Preliminary Statement of Significance**

### **3.2.1 Architectural Interest**

The Fort marks the establishment of the town of Portlaoise, which began as a fortified enclosure around its walls. 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.

### **3.2.2 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'

### **3.2.3 Technical Interest**

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

### **3.2.4 Archaeological Interest**

The archaeological significance of the site remains unexplored, however the standing structure can provide valuable insight into the history of human habitation in the town from the foundation of the site in the 1540's.

### 3.2.5 Potential as a Significant Heritage Site

Today the interior of the Fort is subdivided into many separate properties, some large and some small. Although 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.

## 4.0 Recommendations for Next Phase

### 4.1.1 Further phases of the Conservation Plan

The ultimate goal to which this Conservation Plan is directed is the eventual restoration of the Fort Protector as an important heritage site. It is felt that a properly presented Fort site would bring about the regeneration of the town centre, and become an important place for the interpretation of the Tudor Plantation and of the wider history of the Midlands.

To complete the Conservation Plan the following work remains to be undertaken:

- Further research, surveys and physical analysis
- Based on this a definitive Statement of Significance
- Consultation with stakeholders
- Analysis of conservation issues, to include threats to the significance of the Fort as a heritage site
- Development of an agreed set of policies to guide future actions which would affect the future of the site.

### 4.1.2 Further Research, Surveys and Investigations

1. Consultation of primary sources relating to the events of 1546-48, to uncover primary evidence pertaining to the construction of the Fort, the Storehouse and St Peter's Church. Possible sources would include the National Archives of Ireland, the Registry of Deeds and the Irish State Papers in the British National Archives.
2. Research in the Registry of Deeds into the origin of all properties bounding on and located within the walls of the Fort.
3. Full electronic survey of the standing remains of the Fort wall, and existing ground levels adjoining it, related to a common baseline. This would form a joined-up record of what survives, and would enable a 3-d model to be generated.
4. Measured survey of the ground floor level of the former Presentation Convent, to identify the sequence of building stages, including the surviving fabric of the sixteenth Storehouse.
5. Measured survey of the ruins of St Peter's Church to an appropriate level of detail.

6. Engagement of an archaeologist to analyse and record the standing fabric of the Fort and of St Peter's Church to an appropriate level of detail, as well as a full review of previous excavation reports.
7. Geophysical surveys in relevant areas if deemed useful by the archaeologist.
8. With the permission of relevant property owners, opening of archaeological test trenches in key locations to generate a better understanding of the historic form of the site, including the original ground level inside and outside, the form and nature of the internal bank and external ditch, and a more precise indication of the position of the Castle.
9. A feasible location for test trenching might be the former Shaw's yard which belongs to Laois County Council. Knowledge of the form of the outer defences around the Fort would inform the brief for the proposed library, and enable the design to respond to the Fort Protector in an informed manner, which should enrich the appreciation of the Fort.

#### 4.1.3 Consultation with Stakeholders

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

- Laois Heritage Society
- Laois County Council
- Property owners of Sites 01 to 24 listed in this document
- National Monuments Service in the Department of Arts Heritage and Gaeltacht
- Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN)
- Portlaoise Chamber of Commerce and Trade
- Portlaoise Tidy Towns
- Fáilte Ireland
- Local historians and wider interested public

#### 4.1.4 Recommendations for County Development Plan 2017-2023

Laois County Council Planning Department are currently in the process of preparing the development plan which will come into force in 2017.

Although the policies of the Conservation Plan have not yet been developed, Laois Heritage Society are making a submission in the initial phase of public consultation. The thrust of the submission will be to call on the Council to formally recognise the immense heritage significance of the Fort Protector, and to promote the recovery of its significance as a coherent site in line with the policies of an agreed Conservation Plan. The Society will propose the adoption of policies to make sure that all future development within the Fort and in its vicinity will facilitate the restoration of the Fort as a unified site in as far as is feasible.

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