## St Canice’s Cathedral, Close & Round Tower: Enhancing the Visitor Experience

<table>
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<th>Interpretive Opportunity &amp; Location</th>
<th>Interpretive Intervention</th>
<th>Map Key</th>
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<tr>
<td>A Interpretation, Wayfinding &amp; Directional Signing - Watergate (High Street / Parliament St / Irishtown)</td>
<td>A Along the main route from the Castle to the Cathedral, there is one sharp bend as Parliament Street reaches the bridge over the Breagagh River before crossing and turning into Irishtown. At this turn a small open space with a few trees to the south-east of the bridge is used as a car park. Not only does it offer a poor vista at the end of Parliament Street but visitors on their way north perceive the space to be a dead-end. In addition the sharp bend in the road completely obscures the Cathedral from view when approaching from the south. We believe there is a great opportunity to introduce an eye catching intervention – be it a banner or similar type structure on this site - that will close the vista from Parliament Street, draw people to the place with an interesting taster of what lies ahead and encourage them to continue their journey of discovery to the Cathedral.</td>
<td>A</td>
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B The religious precinct focused around St. Canice’s Cathedral is accessed on foot by ascending a flight of steps (known as Velvet Lane) with an arched stone gateway at the top. The flight of twenty-six cut-limestone steps, laid 1614, in groups of four (south) and twenty-two (north) with limestone ashlar parapet having cut-limestone coping supporting iron spike guards forms an important element of the archaeological fabric of Kilkenny while making an exceptional impression on the visual appeal of the streetscape. An early-surviving flight of cut-limestone steps built by Robert Wale (Wall) (fl. 1614), procurator of the adjacent Saint Canice's Cathedral, their construction employed locally-sourced limestone.
C Gaining access to the Cathedral Close from the Medieval Mile or Abbey Street means crossing Dean Street. This street was widened and re-developed in the 1990s to accommodate higher traffic volumes, which are pressed into the comparatively narrow Vicar Street (northbound) and Irishtown Street (southbound). The curving alignment of Dean Street, St Canice’s Place, Vicar Street and Thomas Street attest to the presence of an early ecclesiastical enclosure around St Canice’s Cathedral similar to that the curving street pattern and urban morphology found in Armagh, Kells, Trim and parts of Dublin. For those unable to mount the steps at Velvet Lane, the Coach Road provides a more gradual incline which brings visitors past the Deanery and into the Cathedral Close via the main entrance gate. While there is some finger post directional signing to the Cathedral at the intersection of Dean Street and Coach Road, this needs to be enhanced and made more apparent particularly for visitors approaching the site from Abbey Street.
| A Welcome & Orientation – St Canice’s Steps Pedestrian Gate | A In common with many Early Medieval monastic foundations, Cill Chainnigh was defined by concentric circular enclosures, the outermost (sanctior) following the curve of the street-pattern of Vicar Street, St. Canice’s Place, Dean Street, Thomas Street and Drysdal’s lane. An inner enclosure (sancticcimus) encircled the round tower, a principal church, graveyard and perhaps a number of oratories. In the late 16th–17th century a complex of about a dozen stone mansions formed a ‘Cathedral Close’ in a quadrangle around the cathedral. These buildings housed the ecclesiastical dignitaries of St Canice’s. What makes St Canice’s unique is the fact that its original Close survives intact, complete with its boundaries, gatehouse, Bishop’s Palace and a suite of buildings |
The rectangular cathedral churchyard may date from the time of the rebuilding of the Gothic cathedral in the 13th century (if not from the first 12th-century Romanesque cathedral), and may have represented a diminution of an earlier and larger ecclesiastical precinct around the ancient church. The raising of ground against the north and west walls of the churchyard to form a rampart might have been part of the medieval defences of Irishtown, or more likely are 17th-century artillery defences. In their present form, they are equally likely to include post-medieval elements of garden design. Urban defences were often used to create raised terraced walkways. The churchyard walls and rampart are a significant surviving component of the defences of Irishtown and are also of importance for being part of a designed landscape.

Retain existing site identification marker (see opposite)
### Welcome & Orientation - The South Doorway

The 13th century Cathedral of St Canice is the second longest cathedral in Ireland. The site on which the cathedral stands has been a site of Christian worship since the 6th century, traditionally founded by St. Canice. Built between 1202 and 1285 to replace a succession of earlier churches, the architectural style is early Gothic and it is built of limestone. It has been carefully preserved in its original style and form. It is richly endowed with many stained glass windows including the east window which is a replica of the original 13th century window.

Welcome to the Cathedral
Simple information on ‘what’s on’ today including the tour, other

The doorway can be cumbersome to open. It is two half doors that are very small, so some people are not able to fit through the half door and both sides of door need to be open most times. Possible remedies might include the installation of an activation sensor so that the two sides of the door open automatically as people approach the entrance.
A Visitor Facilities - No 1 Church Lane
- (Sexton’s House)

A. The Sexton’s House - originally the Precentor’s Manse House & Garden
(1640), stood and still stands to the west of the cathedral steps The precentor
was the first singer and leader of the choir and thus was accorded a house of
some substance. Although completely renovated in the 1870s and 80s, the
original entrance door can however be seen in its east gable wall and has a
round-headed surround. The Sexton’s House and the Colonnade are semi-
detached buildings. The glebe end of the Sexton’s house has effigies dating from
the 6th Century. An escutcheon is said to represent public recognition that the
King was the head of the Church instead of the Pope, circa 1547 – 1553.

Option A
Cathedral Close Tea Room; welcome centre; admissions; orientation; visitor
information; ‘what’s on’; gifts
B. The Deanery Coach House is presently used for storage purposes for the Deanery. This use is however confined to only a small part of the building leaving the remainder unused and underutilised. This has long been recognised by the Cathedral Vestry and a planning application was made in 1994 for the conversion of the building to accommodate a parish centre/shop/visitor facilities. Permission for this conversion was not however obtained at that time.

Option B
Deanery Coach House Tea Room;- welcome centre; admissions; orientation; interpretation, visitor information; ‘what's on’; gifts
Orientation & Overview - The Round Tower

The only standing building from Kilkenny’s Early Medieval past, the Round Tower was already erected when the second cathedral was built. The tower is about thirty metres high and the door is about two and a half metres above the ground. When the tower was new, it probably had a conical cap, but, as with most Irish round towers, this cap is missing. Though it is unclear as to when the Kilkenny tower was built, figures range from a completion date of around A.D. 700 to 1100. During the 19th century excavation, a number of skeletons were found, some completely within the base of the tower and some partially under the foundation walls, evidence that the tower was built within an existing cemetery, probably Christian, as the skeletons were found facing the traditional E-W orientation. It has been suggested, from holes and corbels in the interior, that the tower was constructed from the inside. Later excavations found evidence for the levelled embankment that surrounded the inner sacred space where the round tower stands. This bank covered a pit that was filled with waste from a bone and antler workshop dating back to the period 1000-1140 ca. AD. The date confirms the industry is related to the pre Anglo-Norman period when the cathedral was the chief church in Ossory and a major power centre. The high status of the site has also been confirmed by analysis of the charred plant remains from the pit. One of the most interesting was a single grape pip. This appears to be the earliest evidence yet found in Ireland for grape. Were grapes grown in early medieval Kilkenny? Or was this an import? Whatever the answer it underlines the status of the monastic site in the eleventh-twelfth centuries and also the fact Kilkenny was the height of sophistication long before the rest of the country.

The Round Tower can be climbed to give an unsurpassed vantage point to view the city of Kilkenny and the surrounding countryside. It is also an ideal location in which to provide an overview – a simple heads up schematic - of the Cathedral Close and its full assemblage of buildings and features as they currently and would have previously existed dating back to the eleventh century monastic site.
Visitor Information

‘Welcome to Saint Canice’s Cathedral, one of Ireland’s greatest church-sites. Christian worship began here nearly 1500 years ago and continues to this day.’

Through words and drawings visitors are introduced to St Canice’s Cathedral – its ancient past, its builders, its turbulent history and the last surviving medieval close in Ireland.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Discovery Points</th>
<th>Explore the history and heritage of the Close and its relationship with the city and wider community of Kilkenny. Include a wide ranging programme of interpretive touch points along the journey around the Close and into the city. Facilitate a series of walks, talks, events and projects in association with strategic partners in the Close such as the Heritage Council</th>
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| 1. The Robing Room & Colonnade | 'In the front of the house is a court planted with trees large enough for carriages to turn in and adjoining to the rear is a pleasant garden, well walled in and well planted with shrubs and well laid down with gravel walks and lawn, as any one would wish to be master of. In the garden is a summer-house (the Robing room) of a very good size with a fireplace, fit for drinking tea or a glass of wine and from this room a covered way leads to the best Cathedral in Ireland' (RCB library 762/1, quoted in Murphy 2006, Appendix 4).

The Bishop's Robing Room was built by Bishop Este in c. 1755 to provide direct access to the cathedral, and is shown on Rocque’s 1758 map in the corner of the Palace Garden (see page 8) The Bishop's Robing Room is in the south-west corner of the palace garden, where Church Lane turns a corner and formerly branched off to Drysdal's Lane.

The classical building has an irregular oval plan, with a door to Church Lane. Parts of the fabric appear to be older than the 18th century and may be the base of a medieval tower associated with the medieval (mid 14th century) Bishop's Palace (remaining inside the existing 18th-century building) and with the Irishtown defences.

The possibility of working with the Heritage Council to use the Robing Room for shared events needs to be explored.

The Colonnade

'At the request of the Lord Bishop of Ossory it is unanimously agreed upon by the Revd. Dean & Chapter that his Lordship may at his own expence widen the Gate
way leading from the Church yard to the Pallace & put up Gates thereto which are to be kept locked and also that his Lordship may at his own expence make a covered way from the North Door of the Cathedral to the Walls opposite thereto and make a door in said Walls upon condition that the same be always kept in proper repaid by the present Lord Bishop of Ossory and his successors’ (Chapter Book St. Canice’s Cathedral 1672-1758, 347).

See above, the remains of iron bolts that tied the Colonnade into the walls either side of the North door of the North transept of the cathedral and opposite the line of the Colonnade.

2. War Memorials

Already famous for its collection of late medieval grave memorials St Canice’s Cathedral has one of the richest collections of military related memorials in Ireland and Britain, including

- Great War Memorial, east wall of porch,
- Connellan Memorial Window, south wall of south aisle, first window on left, on entering
- Webb Memorial, north wall of north aisle.
- World War II Memorial, west wall of porch
- Royal Irish Regiment, Great War Memorial, east wall of south transept
3. St Canice’s Library & the Organist’s Cottage

Built on the site of the thirteenth century manse house of the Prebendary of Blackrath, the Library incorporates a mural tower known as Blackrath’s Castle and its rear wall is built on the line of the town walls of Irishtown. In 1539 after the prebendary house fell into ruins, a new use for the building was found when Piers Butler, 8th Earl of Ormonde founded the free school known as the Earl of Ormonde’s school on this site. Other accounts indicate however that it was his widow, Margaret who founded the school in his memory after his death in 1539. A memorial records that Bishop Otway, who died in 1693 had willed that ‘my books and 200l. [pounds] in money, and more if needed, for the beginning a library for the cathedral church of St. Canice to grant for that use, the upper storey of the old school house, joining the almshouse throughout, for the flooring of which with substantial timber and boards; roofing and slating it; for desks and shelves and chains for every particular book; for windows, window shutts, doors and chimney to be built in it, I appoint 100l. owing to me by bill by Agmond Cuffe of Castleinch Esq, as likewise 90l. 10s. of Spanish and other foreign gold, be it more or less, now in the hands of George Thornton as by his notes now in my custody appeareth.’

The earliest known structure on the site was the Manse House of the Prebendary of Killamery built originally perhaps in the thirteenth century. The rear wall of the present Organist’s Cottage is understood to be on the line of the town walls of Irishtown and may very well incorporate standing remains or reused fabric from the wall

Books from the library are to be removed so that they can be catalogued in NUI Maynooth. Opportunities to use the library space in a more multi functional way need to be explored.
| 4. The Headstones                                                                 | There is a wide range of memorial stones in the graveyard surrounding the Cathedral. While many of the memorials are badly weathered there is, for example, a group of memorial stones dedicated to members of the Smithwicks Family. Looking to the future, we need to think about the ways in which the wealth of information contained in the headstones can be brought to the attention of visitors – perhaps creating a list of some of the famous families and prominent people around Kilkenny who are buried in the grounds. | 4 |
| 5. Black Rath Castle                                                               | At the north-west corner of the cathedral churchyard stood the manse or 'castle' of the Prebendary of Black Rath from the 14th century. Substantial remains of a medieval tower c. 5m square on the outside of the wall are located behind the library. The lower stage is reached through a pointed arch from the kitchen of the ground-floor apartment below the library. It has thick walls and a stone-vaulted ceiling which still bears the marks of the wattle shuttering. | 5 |
| 6. The Deanery                                                                    | The Deanery stands to the south west of the cathedral in its own grounds and has extensive west facing gardens through which the town walls would formerly have run. This has been the location of the deanery since at least the early seventeenth century. The Georgian features of the house however survive largely intact and little altered to this day.  

The line of defences around the cathedral churchyard seems to have continued and formed the back of the Deanery Coach House, though the building of the Georgian Deanery and the creation of its garden would have removed any traces of the wall.  

Looking to the future there is the possibility of using part of the Deanery as a multi functional area. In particular the basement. The deanery garden was used for a very successful fair in June 2014, showcasing the use of the space for open air events and potential mediaeval events. | 6 |
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<td><strong>7. Dean's Gate</strong></td>
<td>There are references to Dean's Gate from 1537, and it was sometimes called West Gate. In 1650, Cromwell gained access to Irishtown through this gate.</td>
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<td><strong>8. The Deanery Orchard</strong></td>
<td>The Deanery Orchard is a roughly L-shaped area which is fully enclosed by high walls and is entered through a narrow doorway opening from Coach Road to the west. Church Lane bounds the north of the site, dividing it from the graveyard of St Canice’s Cathedral. On the east, the site is bordered by the rear garden and house of the sexton of the cathedral. Prior to the construction of Coach Road, the grounds of the deanery included much of this site, with the eastern side being in the possession of the Precentor. The walled garden as it appears today owes its origins to the late 17th century and was used until recently as a vegetable garden and orchard.</td>
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<td>A new plan has been drawn up working with the sensitivities of the site. The plan incorporates the old boundary fence of the early christian site by using that as a pathway. It highlights the souterrain and makes an attractive area with additional information panels about the site.</td>
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<td><strong>9. The Bull Inn</strong></td>
<td>The Bull Inn, dated to 1602, was located on the south side of St. Canice’s Place and was a three-storey gable-fronted stone building surmounted by a stone chimney. There were four windows in the north gable, each with a hood-moulding; a doorway was centrally placed at ground level. It fell into a ruinous state by the end of the seventeenth century and was taken down in 1862 to second-storey level.</td>
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<td><strong>10. Archdeacon's Manse House &amp; Garden</strong></td>
<td>The Archdeacon’s Manse stood within the close, south of the cathedral and to the east of the cathedral steps. It had a small garden on its south side south of this and was described as wretched in 1884</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Location and Description</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>The Prebendary of Tascoffin Manse House &amp; Garden The Manse House of the Prebendary of Tascoffin was situated in the southeast angle of Vicar Street on an extensive site which ran back to the Bregoge river. Remains of the building were still in existence in 1884 when it was recorded that the building was occupied by Mrs. Connery's licensed premises.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Common Hall See 14</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Chancellor’s Manse House &amp; Garden The Chancellor had a Manse House and Orchard in Irishtown on the east side of Vicar Street, backing onto the River Nore with its southern boundary formed by the Bregoge river. In 1884 the building was serving as the Catholic Presbytery to the catholic parish of St. Canice but was demolished during the twentieth century.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Vicar’s Choral The Hall of the Vicar’s Choral was originally located to the east of the cathedral on the site of the old bishop’s palace where Common Hall Lane is located. The college was founded by Bishop Geoffrey St. Leger in 1287. The episcopal manse was granted as a residence and common hall and college for 8 vicars and 4 choristers in 1615 at which time it had probably moved to a new site in Vicar Street.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Vicar’s Choral House &amp; Garden The Vicar’s Choral House was a large building and in 1884 was modernised with the loss of its high gables and massive chimneystacks.</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Treasurer’s Manse House &amp; Garden The Treasurer’s Manse House was located close by the Chancellor’s House and also backed onto the Nore</td>
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<td>17. The Bishop’s Palace</td>
<td>Near the cathedral is the Bishop’s Palace. The bishop’s move to the site of the Bishop’s Palace occurred in the late 1350s during the episcopacy of Richard Ledred (1317-c.1361). The earliest part of this building dates from the 14th century, but it was added to and reconstructed many times over the centuries. Until recently the Church of Ireland Bishop of Ossory lived here, but it is now owned by The Heritage Council.</td>
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<td>18. Town Wall</td>
<td>Irishtown possessed its own Town Wall, the earliest murage for which dates to 1377. The line of the wall is thought to have traversed the grounds of the Palace but the vast bulk of it was removed as part of the nineteenth century landscaping. Possibilities for the Cathedral to be involved in any initiatives being undertaken by the Borough Council and / or the Heritage Council in relation to the Town Walls need to be explored.</td>
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<td>19. Troy’s Gate</td>
<td>Troy’s Gate is shown by Rocque as a narrow exit at the north-west corner of Green Street and Vicar Street, at the point that would have served as the northern entrance to the city for anyone approaching on the west bank of the River Nore.</td>
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PARISH UNDER MANAGEMENT OF SELECT VESTRY OF ST CANICE’S CATHEDRAL, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE RCB Shown with a RED LINE AREA OUTLINED UNDER DIOCESE COUNCIL IN CONJUNCTION WITH RCB Shown with a BLUE LINE

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ST CANICE’S CATHEDRAL, CLOSE & ROUND TOWER: ENHANCING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

- Interpretation / Wayfinding / Directional Signing
- Welcome & Orientation
- Visitor Facilities
- Orientation & Overview
- Visitor Information
- Discovery Point
- Pedestrian Priority / One Way System
- Worshippers’ Car Park
- Pedestrian Priority / Traffic Calming
- Primary Visitor Journey
- Alternative Visitor Route
- Future Visitor Route