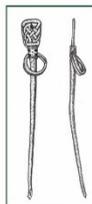
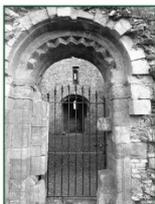


C O U R T N E Y • D E E R Y
ARCHAEOLOGY & CULTURAL HERITAGE

Building Assessment Report
Maturation Building,
St. Francis' Abbey Brewery Site,
Kilkenny,
Co. Kilkenny

Courtney Deery Heritage Consultancy

21st June 2019



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a building assessment of the former Maturation Building at St. Francis Abbey Brewery (SFAB) site, in the centre of Kilkenny City, which was undertaken to accompany a Part VIII planning application for the site by Kilkenny County Council. The proposed development will involve the demolition of the upstanding remains of the Maturation Building, and the location of the structure within a designated Architectural Conservation Area required a building assessment to be carried out.

The assessment comprised a desk study and a photographic survey of the structure and the report provides a context for the Maturation Building through a history of the brewery and a detailed cartographic analysis of the site.

The defining feature of the building when in use was the 22 maturation tanks which were part of its function and which created a distinct profile on the Kilkenny skyline. These vessels have been removed previously by Diageo on foot of a previous planning application, and as such the Maturation Building no longer has its distinctive character which was linked to its function. The demolition of adjacent buildings has also changed the industrial context of the site.

The redevelopment of this area has the potential to provide a more sensitive setting for a number of cultural heritage amenities within the area, including historic buildings (protected structures), the medieval church of St Francis Abbey (National Monument) and the River Nore.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. General

The following report details a building assessment of the former Maturation Building at St Francis Abbey Brewery site, in the centre of Kilkenny City (Figure 1), which was undertaken to accompany a Part VIII planning application for the site by Kilkenny County Council. The proposed development will involve the demolition of the upstanding remains of the Maturation Building, and the location of the structure within a designated Architectural Conservation Area required a building assessment to be carried out.

The assessment comprised a desk study and a photographic survey of the structure and the report provides a context for the Maturation Building through a history of the brewery and a detailed cartographic analysis of the site.



Figure 1 Site location

1.2. Background

The Maturation Building has been redundant since the cessation of brewing operations at the extensive Diageo St Francis Abbey Brewery (SFAB). Development of the site by Diageo over recent years has regenerated part of the SFAB site, including conservation and stabilisation works on Evans Tower and wall walk (McLoughlin 2018). A masterplan has also been created for the Abbey Quarter which guides the regeneration of the area to best protect and enhance the historic assets of the St. Francis Abbey.

The defining feature of the building was the 22 maturation tanks which were part of its function and which created a distinct profile on the Kilkenny skyline. These vessels have been removed previously by Diageo

on foot of a previous planning application, and as such the Maturation Building no longer has its distinctive character and can no longer perform its function. The industrial context of the building has also been significantly altered as part of the regeneration works which involved the removal of several adjacent structures.

1.3. Site Context

The site lies within the Kilkenny City Centre Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), as defined by the Kilkenny City Development Plan (KCDP) 2014-2020 (Figure 2).

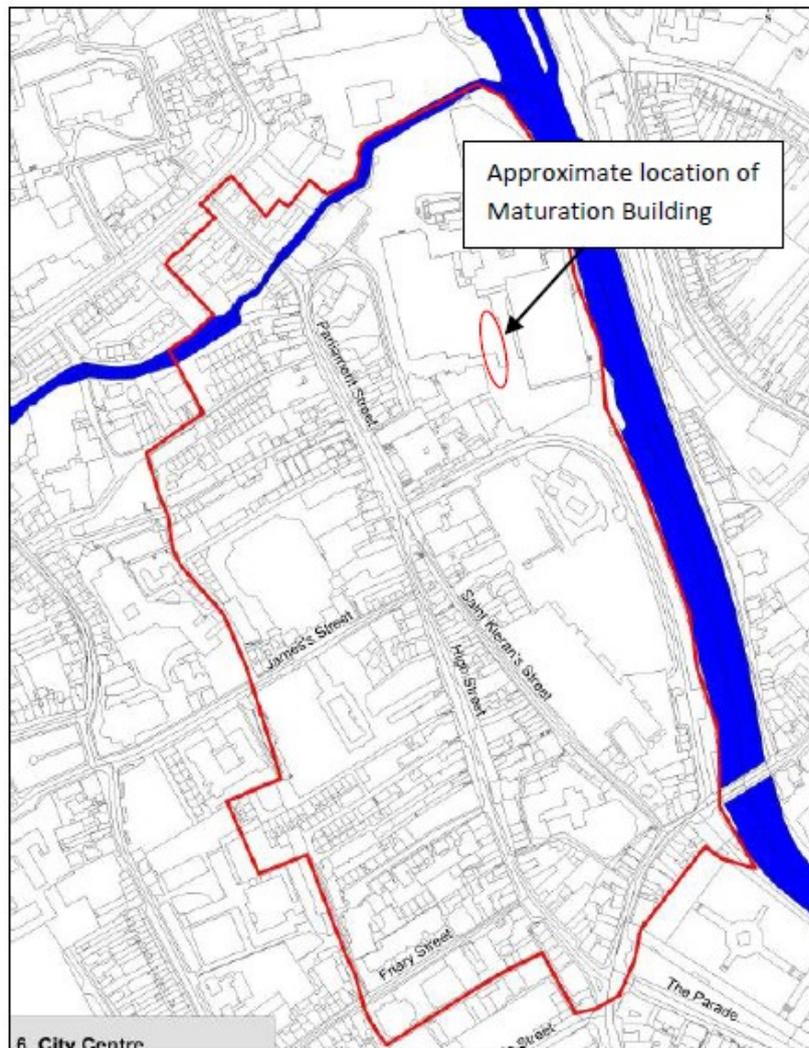


Figure 2 City Centre ACA taken from Kilkenny City & Environs Development Plan 2014-2020

The Maturation Building is located within Smithwick's Brewery (RPS B86, NIAH 1200087) as referenced in Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan (2014-2020), Appendix G. However the description given in

the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) for this reference number is of the historic entrance gate, railings and wall that surround the site and not for the buildings contained within it.

Also recorded in the NIAH survey is a structure within St. Francis' Abbey known as "The Sample Rooms" (NIAH 1200008), a detached three-bay single-storey gothic style building built c. 1875 which possibly incorporates part of the fabric of the medieval abbey.

The only other reference to the overall site in the RPS is 'St Francis Abbey Brewery, No 44 Parliament Street' (RPS B146, NIAH 1200085), which now houses a visitor centre. This Victorian structure, built c. 1882, has a redbrick façade and stone ashlar plinth at ground level. The original brewmaster house and office is located on the northern side of this courtyard and while it is much altered with unsympathetic building additions and finishes, the original structure is very much evident. The other sides of the courtyard are flanked by rendered buildings in use as labs and offices.

St Francis Abbey Brewery originally occupied lands to the north and south of the River Breaghagh, but this report will concentrate on those lands south of the river (referred to hereafter as 'the brewery site'). The structure under review is located within the southern half of the brewery site, which is located on the south bank of the River Breaghagh, with the River Nore flowing along its eastern side (Figure 3).

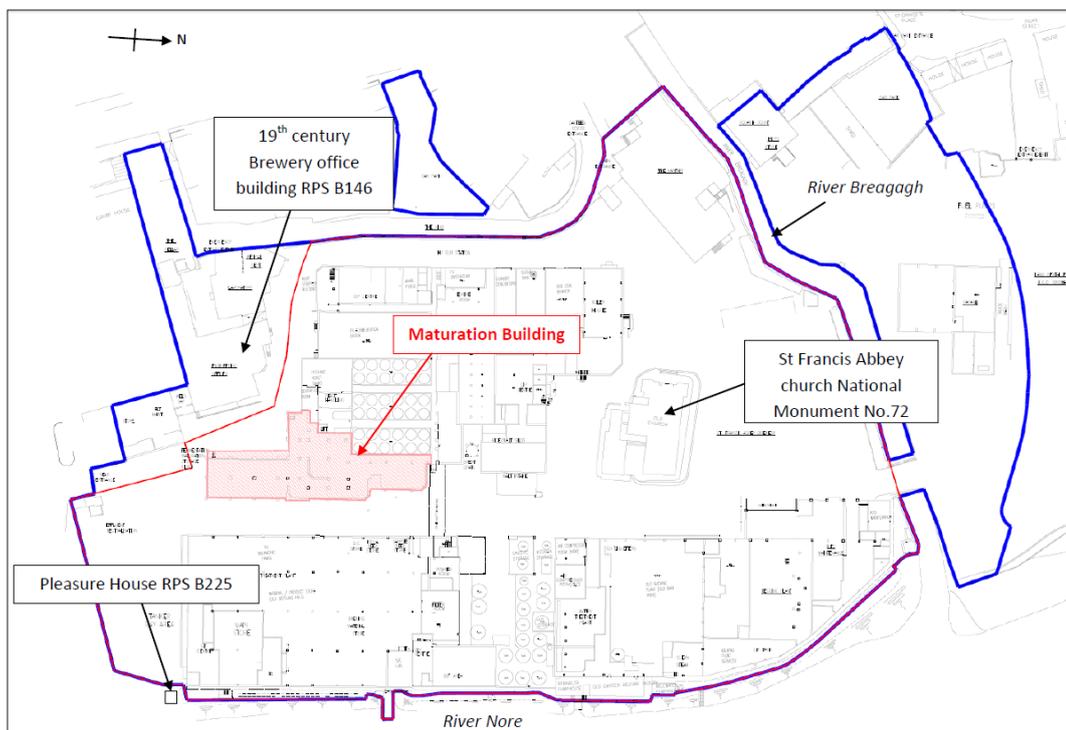


Figure 3 St. Francis Abbey Brewery Site

The medieval church of St Francis Abbey (National Monument No. 72; RMP KK019-026101) and part of the old city walls (including Evan's Turret and a wall walk) which are also considered a National Monument, are located within the brewery site. These monuments are situated c. 65m and c. 135m respectively to the north of the Maturation Building (Figure 3). In addition to the medieval abbey church, there are two other architecturally significant buildings within the brewery site, both of which are protected structures (Figure 3): the late 19th century St Francis Abbey Brewery office building (RPS B146, c. 15m west) and the Pleasure House (RPS B225, c. 60m east). None of the historic or protected structures will be affected by the proposed demolition works.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1. The Maturation Building

The Maturation Building comprises a single-storey concrete structure that was utilised as a support to the 22 large maturation tanks of the brewery which have now been removed. The late 20th century structure was an integral component of the brewery operations on the site, where the tanks were used for the maturation and storage of beer. Processes such as centrifuging and bottoming of yeast as well as maturation over 14 days took place in the Maturation Building.

The traditional maturation process involved storing beer in casks to allow them to mature naturally, thus improving the flavour (the German word 'lager' means 'storage'). In traditional beer production, beers would be 'lagered' or stored for as long as nine months. This allowed for the production of beer using the new season's malted barley and hops in the autumn when temperatures were mild, with fermentation occurring when the beers were stored in cellars over the cold winter, to be available fully matured as a light, fresh drink during the summer. With the advent of modern machinery and processes, such as rapid continuous maturation systems, the required flavour changes can be achieved within a few hours and storage times reduced to as little as three days.

2.2. History of the St. Francis Abbey Brewery

The site of St Francis Abbey Brewery has been enclosed within the city walls of Kilkenny since they were first erected in the 13th century. Following the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century, the Franciscan friary fell into disrepair. The abbey and the land surrounding it were granted for the establishment of a cavalry barracks at the end of the 17th century by the Corporation of Kilkenny. The grant describes the surrounding abbey precinct as 'the waste of Francis' Abbey' (Carrigan 1905), which gives some indication of its condition at that time, just prior to the establishment of the first commercial brewery on the site.

The brewery at St Francis Abbey is over 300 years old and, until its recent closure, was thought to be the oldest active brewery in Ireland. There has been a concentration of activity on the brewery site since the founding of the Franciscan Friary there in AD 1245. Although some of the early built fabric survives on the site, notably the 13th century abbey church (National Monument No.74), the intensive development of the site dates to its industrial use in the 19th century and 20th centuries.

Historically, Ireland produced ale without the use of hops as the plant is not native to the country, and there was generally a greater emphasis on the distillation of whiskey or poitín than on the brewing of beer. Hops added both flavour and preserving properties to beer, thus allowing it to be exported. Large quantities of hops were imported from England in the 18th century and during this period, the Irish parliament used taxation to encourage brewing at the expense of distilling, reasoning that beer was less harmful than whiskey (Coynes 1902). This coincided with the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, with the efficiency of the steam engine and innovations in the brewing process (such as the introduction of the thermometer in 1760 and hydrometer in 1770) allowing beer to be produced on a greater scale.

The first documented brewery in operation within the grounds of St Francis's Abbey has its origins at this time. In 1706 a fee-farm grant for what is now a part of the modern brewery property was leased to Richard Cole by the Duke of Ormond. Cole established a partnership with John Smithwick, who came to Kilkenny in 1710. There is little documentary evidence for this first brewery, though it appears to have been a small retail operation. Although apparently successful, the business did not remain in the Smithwick family after the death of John; the first directory entry relates to a Patrick Brennan, who was listed in Pigot's directory for 1824 as a distiller on the site of the abbey.

Brewing prospered in the early decades of the 19th century and by 1814 Ireland was, for the first time, exporting more beer to England than it imported (Coynes 1902). The St Francis Abbey brewery was bought back by the Smithwick family during the boom brewing period; in 1827, John's grandson Edmund purchased a piece of freehold property, including 'a distillery and a brewery' through the Court of Chancery from the Ormond estate (O.K.R., 1989, Vol. 4, No. 1, 587). A large brewery was constructed on the site and by the mid-19th century, Smithwick's was one of only two breweries in Kilkenny; Slater's directory of 1856 lists Edmund Smithwick at St Francis's Abbey Brewery and Richard Sullivan in James Street.

The private company of *E. Smithwick and Sons* was established in 1898 and prospered in the early 20th century after winning military contracts for the sale of beer to garrisoned troops. When Sullivan's of James's Street closed around 1914, the property was bought by the Smithwick's Brewery, which provided much needed brewing machinery to support the market expansion. It continued to grow throughout the 20th century and from 1944 onwards the brewery distributed its beer on a national scale.

The brewery maintained a traditional 19th century plant throughout the 1950s, with no modernisation of the brewing machinery or processes. In 1965 Smithwick's became public as part of Irish Ale Breweries and was taken over by Arthur Guinness, Son & Company (Dublin) Ltd. A modernisation plan was launched in 1964 with the construction of a new brew-house. A large fermentation block, a storage vessel block and packaging plant were also installed. This 20th-century construction was subsequently updated and replaced by a 21st-century computer operated brewery.

By the time of its 2013 closure, the brewery comprised a bottling / kegging store, brew-house, maturation towers building, the Mayfair building (staff offices and facilities), sample rooms, laboratory, offices, cellar and visitor centre, on the south side of the river. North of the River Breaghagh, a cluster of modern buildings included a truck-wash, hop store / squash court, car-parking shed and fuelling tank facility.

2.3. Cartographic Analysis

Cartographic analysis demonstrates the numerous changes which have occurred to the built fabric within the brewery site, including the historical demolition and modification of buildings throughout the site.

2.3.1. Down Survey, City of Kilkenny, c. 1656 (Figure 4)

The Down Survey map of the 'Liberties of Kilkenny' shows the old town walls on both the east and west side of the River Nore, with two bridges crossing the river. The course of the River Breaghagh is not depicted on the map and St Francis Abbey is not indicated. It is possible that the abbey is represented by the structure shown on the south side of the northernmost bridge, though it is not named as such.

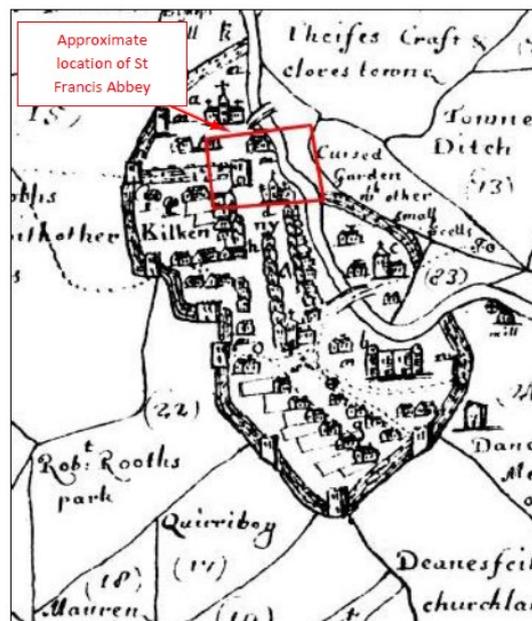


Figure 4 Down Survey map c. 1656 showing the City of Kilkenny

2.3.2. Rocque's map of Kilkenny, 1759 (Figure 5)

Rocque's map shows the remains of St Francis's Abbey standing within a large, predominantly open area extending east to the River Nore. The cloister to the south of the friary was taken down c. 1700 to make way for a barracks; the 'Horse Barracks' named on the map. The open area around the abbey, which is subdivided into four large plots of land, is in contrast to the built-up, compact nature of the surrounding city blocks.

The site of the Maturation Building lies at the southern end of this area and extends across the two southernmost plots. There is slightly more activity in this area, with some subdivision, as well as a long building plot with dog-leg return that backs onto the County Gaol and runs east from Market Street, before terminating at a possible laneway that accesses the river bank. The Maturation Building site incorporates the west end of the dog-leg return.

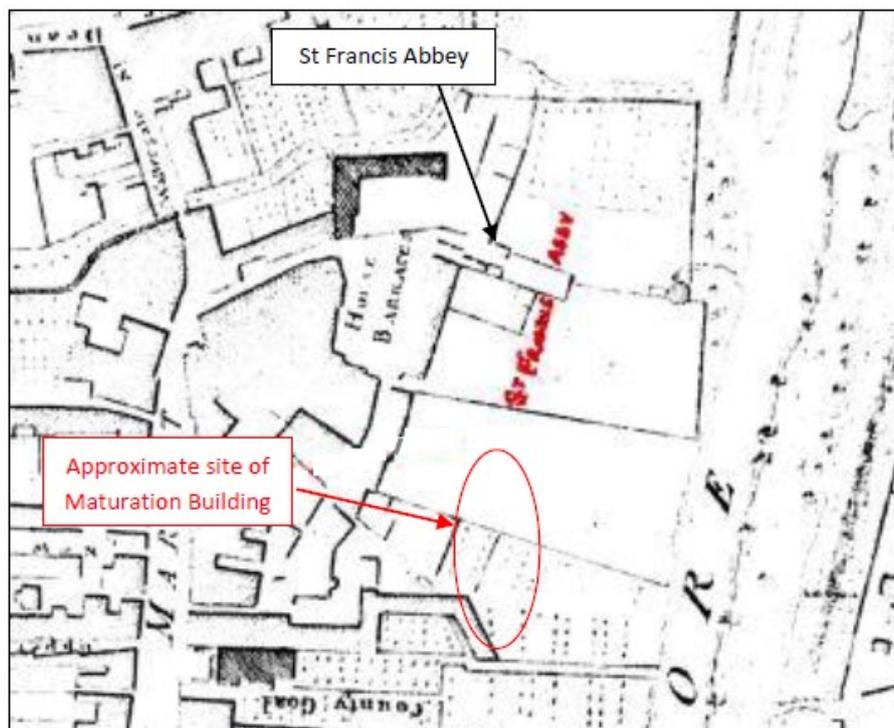


Figure 5 Rocque's Map of Kilkenny, 1758, showing St. Francis Abbey

2.3.3. Ordnance Survey First Edition 6-inch map, 1839-40 (Figure 6)

The formerly open site has been considerably developed since the earlier map, with the extensive Brewery buildings and a starch manufacturing plant joining the Horse Barracks ('Old Caval. Bar.'). the remaining abbey buildings (indicated as 'in ruins') and a 'tower' (also 'in ruins') marked to the east/northeast of the abbey church.

All of the development has taken place within the western half of the site, with gardens or orchards occupying the fields in the eastern half, along the bank of the River Nore. The brewery buildings and yards extend as far south as the long building plot with dog-leg return that was shown on Rocque's map and which, apart from an extension on its north side, appears unchanged. The site of the Maturation Building is otherwise occupied by the Brewery yards, a small structure and orchard / garden areas. To the south, the County Court House and City Goal is still indicated.



Figure 6 First Edition OS 6-inch map, 1839-40, showing approximate site of Maturation Building

2.3.4. Ordnance Survey 5 foot plan, 1872 (Not shown)

The brewery buildings underwent some expansion in the period between 1840 and 1872. Much of the area along the river bank remained as semi-formal garden / orchard areas with trees and a series of paths, though a large yard now extends from the brewery buildings to the river bank immediately south of the abbey church. A mill stream has been channelled from the river to the brewery, just north of the Maturation Building site, which is otherwise little changed. The long building shown on both Rocque and the first edition map appears to have been further altered and expanded, though the basic plan-form remains roughly the same. This seems to form the southern block of brewery buildings, separated from the main northern block by a yard.

2.3.5. Ordnance Survey Revised Edition 25-inch Map, 1900 (Figure 7)

The brewery buildings expanded again between 1872 and 1900. The two large, separate blocks marked on the previous map have been conjoined and there is a notable expansion of the brewery eastwards, with structures now occupying three sides of the large yard on the south side of the abbey church. The possible laneway depicted on Rocque's map is now depicted as another mill stream, with access from the brewery and a possible pathway leading to the rear of the Court House & Bridewell.

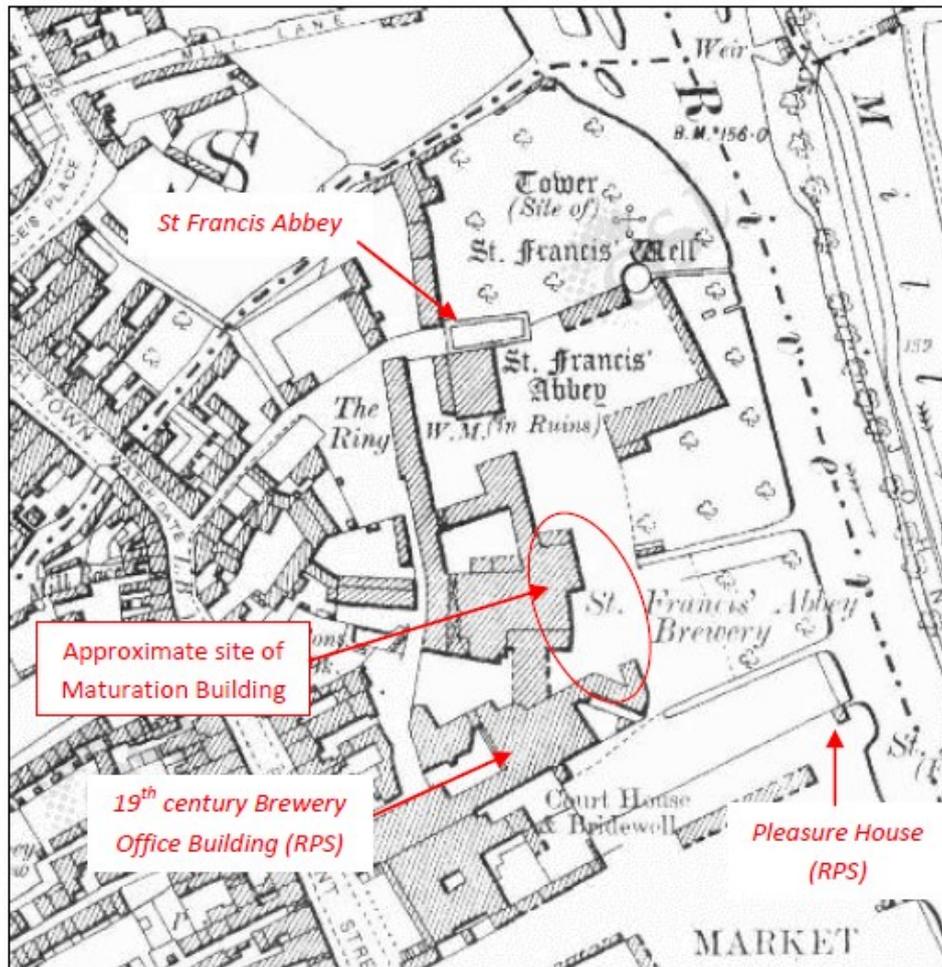


Figure 7 Revised edition OS 25 inch map, 1900, showing approximate site of Maturation Building and historic structures

2.3.6. Ordnance Survey Revised Edition 25 inch map, 1946 (Figure 8)

There is very little change between the 1900 and 1946 OS maps in the area of St Francis's Brewery and no change at all to the Maturation Building's site. No change to the brewery buildings is apparent. The garden area along the banks of the River Nore have been split in two with the northern half retaining its original character while the southern half has reverted to waste land.

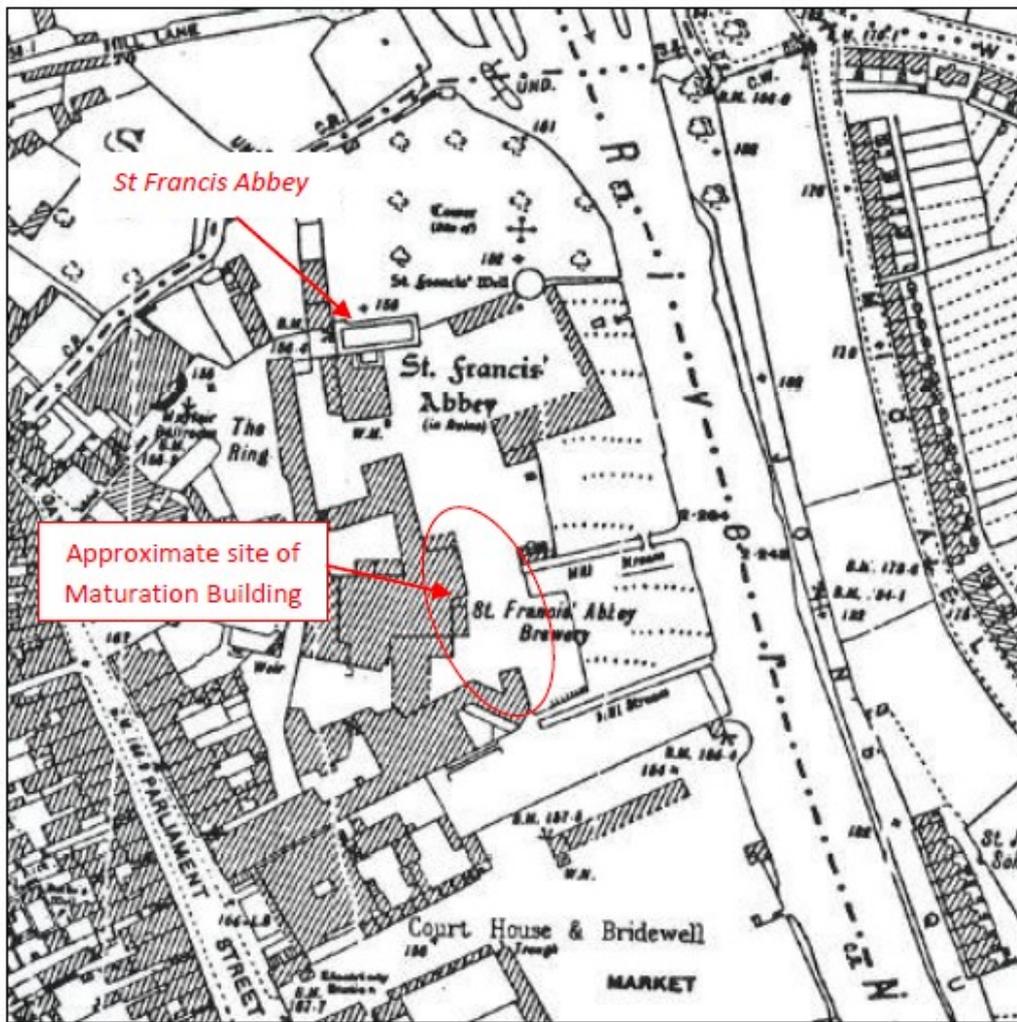


Figure 8 Revised edition, 1946, showing approximate site of Maturation Building

3. PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

A photographic record is detailed below of the current state of the Maturation Building. Previous work in the vicinity by CDHC included the preparation of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan Area Archaeological Strategy (CDHC 2016), which included a photographic survey of the Maturation Building undertaken in 2014. This provides a record of the building before the removal of the maturation tanks, and comparisons of the present survey with earlier images below demonstrates the effect the removal of the maturation tanks has had on the character of the building.

3.1. Building description

The Maturation Building is a single storey in-situ concrete structure, which was utilised as a support to the 22 large maturation tanks built in the late 20th century as part of the Smithwick's St Francis Abbey Brewery. The building comprises an accretion of structures mainly built in the 1980s and 1990s, with the main ground

floor structure being quite sizeable. The removal of the maturation tanks has exposed the interior to the elements, however, and some dilapidation and growth of vegetation is noted since 2014.

Adjacent buildings have now been removed, and the Maturation Building is now one of only a few left within the concrete surfaced complex which includes the National Monument of St. Francis Abbey (Plate 1).



Plate 1 Aerial photo of Maturation building and St. Francis Abbey (2019)

3.1.1. Southern Elevation

The southern end of this modern structure consists of two bays each with five by five panes of glass divided by a steel yellow frame. The substructure is robust in form with clear, symmetrical lines and a flat concrete plinth with openings for the maturation vessels forming the roof. A comparison is shown below of this façade at present (Plate 2) and before the removal of the maturation tanks (Plate 3).



Plate 2 Southern & eastern elevations, facing NW (2019)



Plate 3 Southern & eastern elevations, facing NW (2014)

3.1.2. Eastern Elevation

The exterior of the eastern elevation of the building is largely open with similar proportions as the southern and western sides (Plate 2, 4, 6). It comprises of three glassed bays each consisting of 5 x 5 panes and one half bay of 5 x 2 panes on the southern end in between mass concrete supporting columns. Mid way along this elevation, the exterior is formed of a brown brick. Further north again are two glass bays of 5 x 5 panes

framed by concrete and steel, and a brick corner wall which returns to a northern projection. This elevation comprises of a glass bay of 5 x 4 panes and a galvanised steel shutter on a roller flanked by 5 x 2 pane windows with a brick corner wall.

It is at this northern end that the building can be accessed. There are other emergency doors present on the south and western elevations. The tanks and piping which had previously been located alongside this elevation have been removed since the previous survey (2014; Plate 4).



Plate 4 Aerial view of eastern elevation (2019)



Plate 5 Eastern elevation, facing SW (2014)

3.1.3. Western Elevation

The western side of the structure is similar in proportion to the other two previously mentioned, however it does extend to the west forming a squat T shape plan. Doors provide access to the southwest end of the structure.

3.1.4. Main Access – Northern end of the structure (Plate 5)

The main access door to the building was located at the northern end of the structure, but this access has been much altered following the demolition of adjacent buildings and removal of the handrails and doorway (Plates 6, 7).



Plate 6 Eastern & northern elevations, facing SW (2019)



Plate 7 Access to the structure (2014)

3.1.5. The Interior

The interior of the building is largely open and the window bays provided natural light to the working area (Plates 8-10). The spaces are divided by rendered concrete columns. The floor is tiled and drains were intended to distribute any excess liquid or spills through a waste system. While in use, the bases of the maturation tanks protruded from the ceiling and were connected to a series of valves and pipes. Since the removal of these tanks, the large circular opes in which they were fixed have remained open, exposing the interior of the building to the elements. This has caused some growth of vegetation in the drains and algal growth on the tiles. Mildew has also been noted on the walls, leading to the disintegration of render.

The building would have been well ventilated with window openings within the glass pane structure and a number of emergency and double doors leading to the exterior. The only separate room in the structure functioned as a small sampling and quality control station. All internal fixtures have been removed.



Plate 8 Interior of the structure (2019)

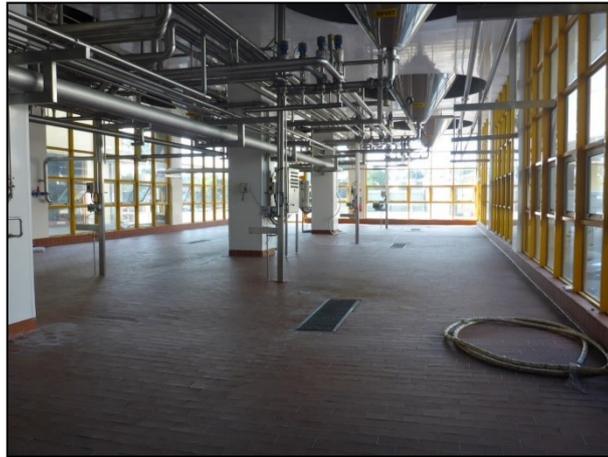


Plate 9 Interior of the structure (2014)



Plate 10 Detail of the interior (2014)

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The St Francis Abbey Brewery has a long-standing industrial presence in the city and associated structures, such as the Maturation Building and former maturation tanks, have become part of the Kilkenny skyline and did represent an important feature of Kilkenny's economic past and present. Although not of historic architectural interest, as a part of the overall brewery site, the late 20th century Maturation Building is of industrial and technical heritage interest and as such, the structure has been preserved by record through the historical background and photographic survey presented in this report.

Previous works on the site by Diageo involved the removal of the 22 maturation tanks which were supported by the concrete structure discussed in this report, along with all internal and external piping. As a result, the distinctive features which defined the character and function of this building are no longer present. The demolition of adjacent buildings has also altered its industrial setting.

However, the redevelopment of the area, including the demolition of the Maturation Building, provides an opportunity to provide a more sensitive setting for a number of cultural heritage amenities within the area, including historic buildings (protected structures), the medieval church of St Francis Abbey (National Monument) and the River Nore.

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